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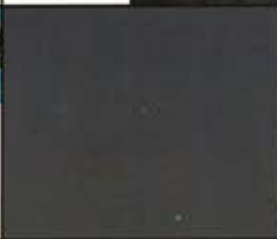
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"Federation's nod for..."

In the article "Federation's nod for World Council" (*Parsiana*, January 1997), you mention, "[FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) members voted overwhelmingly in favor of the (World) Council (of Zoroastrian Federations) as per a telephone message to Gandhi the following day...]"

I would like to inform you that FEZANA members have not as yet voted to join the WCZF. This will be an item on the agenda for our annual general meeting in August. What the member associations did support is the general principle of forming a world body whether through WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) or through a federation of world councils.

DOLLY DASTOOR
President, FEZANA

Arnavaz Mama replies

There seems to have been an error of perception. *Parsiana* regrets the misinterpretation.

"A question of priorities"

This is in reference to the report "A question of priorities" published in your journal (*Parsiana*, February-March 1997).

In this connection, I would like to categorically state as under:

• I have never described myself as one who repeatedly failed in the SSC exam, learned to repair radios and tape recorders and wanted to go to Dubai and while readying for the trip learnt of the demand for certain spare parts and started an import business.

The above words attributed to my speech are absolutely false, untrue and a figment of the imagination.

For your kind information, I passed my SSC exam at the very first attempt with first class distinction.

Until now my association with radios and tape recorders is limited to only playing them, hence to learn how to repair them professionally has always remained beyond me.

Hence the question of going to Dubai as a professional repairer of radios and tape recorders has never occurred. Let me also clarify that I have never been associated with the business of import of such items.

During my speech I had given an example of a Parsi youth, whom I happen to know, who had failed repeatedly at the SSC exam and subsequently learnt repairing of radios and tape recorders. As a result of his professional knowledge, he is now well established in Dubai in his respective field.

It seems that your learned reporter has mixed up the above issues and painted a very different picture. VIRAF N. CHINIWALA

Arnavaz Mama replies

My apologies for the error.

"We are here to defy..."

With reference to "We are here to defy extinction" (*Parsiana*, January 1997), I wish that among the photographs of the jashan and other events you had also included one of the late Nadarsha Aibara (the father of Yazdi Aibara, the present panthaky). I consider him (Ervad Nadarsha Aibara) as the guiding spirit of that Agiary. It is because of him and his wonderful nirangs that people started flocking to the Agiary in



Aibara: agiary's guiding spirit

large numbers. He really served his fellowmen irrespective of caste and creed and I feel that he should be honored by a Dasturpad — the word Dastur instead of Ervad should be added before his name in prayers.

NERGISH PLUMBER

"Global umbrella"

We have read the letter written by Mr Homi B. Minocher Homji (a dear friend of long standing) under the heading "Global umbrella" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, December 1996).

We all know that for well nigh 100 years, the community is divided between "traditionalists" and "reformists." Every religious grouping in the world has this problem. The only difference in the case of Zoroastrians is that this division is now acute as a result of declining numbers and the global spread of the community.

Mr Homi Minocher Homji offers a talk shop solution for this perennial problem, but before applying that solution globally should we not be made aware as to how it is being implemented in North America, since how long and with what results? So far, some of us, who have attended North American Zoroastrian congresses, have observed that deep divisions exist in North America too and when attempts are made to raise matters of concern to the community, they are quickly quelled by an edict from the chair "No controversial matters can be discussed."

Mr Minocher Homji opines that Zoroastrians are very opinionated and states that "strong egos, power politics and vested interests" are inhibiting the coming together of Zoroastrians globally. WZO's aim has always been to unite the community globally, to work for its upliftment, forward movement and welfare. To this end, its membership consists of anjumans/associations and individuals, in short, the community in its totality. WZO has a large membership of individuals throughout the world and also of many anjumans/associations spread all over the world. Since the aims of the WCZF are the same as those of WZO, established in 1980, may we please enquire as to whose "strong egos, power politics and vested interests" are preventing individuals and associations/anjumans/trusts from joining the WZO?

Mr Minocher Homji states, with some exasperation and without a shadow of doubt, that a body will be formed. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and

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"elected or nominated representatives would be invited to its membership from all over the world." This "could start on an experimental basis for a limited period of time." How strange! Repeatedly, WZO has suggested to those individuals and anjumans/associations that have not joined WZO to join it for a period of 10 years ("experimental basis"), work from within the WZO and if after the experience of 10 years, it is felt that the constitution of WZO should be changed in a certain manner, then WZO would be willing to consider the change after due debate and deliberation. WZO's offer is still open. Are the proponents of the WCZF prepared to accept it?

Mr Minocher Homji states in his letter, "Once this global body is formed and our continuity is ensured..." We are sure that you and your readers would not think that such a causal link exists between the formation of WCZF and the continuity of the community. The Zoroastrian community will continue in existence and prosper when individual Zoroastrians come together globally and the WZO committee responds to the wishes of the individual Zoroastrians. It is vitally important for every individual Zoroastrian to feel that he/she belongs to a world body and therefore contributes directly to its preservation and welfare. Such a feeling cannot be engendered in the concept of WCZF.

Implicit in the concept of WCZF is the notion that anjumans/associations are representative of the Zoroastrians living in their catchment area. It may be true in some rare cases but is it really universal? Is that true for Surat and Karachi Parsi Punchayets where trustees are selected and not elected. Do the BPP trustees really represent the Zoroastrians of Bombay? One only has to read the columns of *The Bombay Samachar* and *Jam-e-Jamshed* to know the answer. In the UK, there are about 7,000 Zoroastrians against a total local membership of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) of about 900 — only 12.9 percent of the UK population. Is the ZTFE representative? Do we as a community want oligarchy in an age of democracy?

Since its formation in January 1980, WZO has functioned as the only world body of Zoroastrians. It has helped displaced Zoroastrians from the Middle Eastern countries to settle in the West, it has represented Zoroastrians in their dealings with governments, it was almost registered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization but

for the letter against such registration sent to Paris by an ex vice president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, it has held major international conferences on Zoroastrian religion, culture and history in UK and overseas, it has recovered the assets of the deceased in one country for beneficiaries living in another country, etc. In addition, it has acted vigorously to raise the standard of living of poor Zoroastrians living from hand to mouth, something local organizations failed to do for decades, helped deserving medical cases, helped bright young Zoroastrians to gain further education in UK/USA, encouraged entrepreneurship, etc. In short, it has done all that a communal world body should do.

In the light of the foregoing, should the community not ask the question "What would another world body specifically do that has not been done or cannot be done by the WZO?" Let us hope that we receive an unambiguous reply to this simple question.

We would urge the proponents of the WCZF to think again and we sincerely hope and pray that good sense will prevail and that they would join WZO wholeheartedly, thereby uniting and benefitting the Zoroastrian community globally.

SHAHPUR F. CAPTAIN
Chairman, WZO, London, UK

"Teaching Gujarati..."

This has reference to the write-up "Teaching Gujarati in the UK," (Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, December 1996) by Arnavaz S. Mama. Mr Maneck Mehta, deputy director of the Lancashire based Preston College, comes out beautifully. Lest it misses the Parsi community, I would like to highlight what has been mentioned by Mr Mehta: that he considers himself to be a Parsi first, Indian second and British last. How very refreshing when compared to the cattlefeed on which generations of Parsis have been brought up. I refer to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's quote that "I am an Indian first and a Parsi afterwards." Through generations, this has been quoted ad nauseum by our "secular" Parsis.

Parsis must not forget that it was for the sake of preserving our religion that we left Iran. Hypothetically speaking, if a law were to be passed in India today that Parsis would not be allowed to practice their religion and that all the fire-temples would have to be dismantled, then it would be nothing short of a repetition of what had happened to our forefathers in Iran around 692 AD. In that scenario, we would again

be compelled to find another hospitable country which would allow us to practice our religion. It is in this sense that we all have to believe and practice "I am a Parsi first and an Indian afterwards."

Isn't it ironic that it had to be another Mehta to set the record straight by asserting that we are Parsis first? This should be an eye opener to all "secular" Parsis with misplaced patriotic fervor.

SAM M. BILLIMORIA

Benefactors, both

Let me clarify and add to your tributes to two of my many benefactors — Dinshahji



Seervai (left) and Malegamvala

Malegamvala ("Trust-worthy Malegamvala," In Memoriam, *Parsiana*, November 1996) and H. M. Seervai ("The legal legend," In Memoriam, *Parsiana*, July-August 1996). I came to know Dinshahji through Ms Ratanbai Merwanji Sett, in 1958, but Dinshahji was so kind and so eager to help any Zoroastrian that no Zoroastrian ever needed anyone else's introduction to him for help. He not only helped me much more than I had expected but also became my friend, philosopher and guide. I visited him so very often at Bombay House from 1958 to 1960 when I was a student at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and even thereafter when I visited India. He had virtually become my uncle.

He knew I was a priest and talked with me at length about our religion. His admiration for Dasturji Khurshed Dabu was boundless. I do not know of his interest in a Kerala guru or Vedanta which may have developed after 1960, but they do not to me in any way reflect a lack of enthusiasm for his own religion and people. He told me he visited fire-temples often, especially Thoothi Agiary.

Your tribute to H. M. Seervai rightly depicts him as not a very religious person, but that is only because he did not wear his religion on his sleeve or did not believe in practicing its outer layers and forms. Deep within, he was as true a Zoroastrian that Asho Zarathushtra wants one to be in the *Gathas*. His mind was always full of

vohumana (good thinking), his actions always suggested asha vahishta (best truth) to the whole nation, his exercise of his powers as advocate-general, etc was so judicious (kshathra vairya), not yielding to the corrupt government of later years and even standing up to the upright Morarji Desai in the 1960s, as I recall some instances Ms Feroza Seervai herself narrated to me then.

In 1946 Feroza and he instantly volunteered to help me even without knowing me upon learning of the sad turn in my family fortune, a help that has changed my destiny. "Such a person" indeed, as proclaimed by Asho Zarathushtra in Yasna 45.11, "by reason of his virtuous conception is an ally, a brother, or a father (of Thee), Wise Lord." He was also the founder of the Bombay Philosophical Society where I could feel his zeal for finding the higher truth in life.

Moreover, he was willing to serve the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) as a trustee in 1960 or so, but was defeated by a conservative candidate. If, as T. Andhyarujina asserts ("He goes by the law," *Parsiana*, November 1996), "five such men (Seervais) in India's legal system would change the face of the system," his election as a BPP trustee would have changed the face

of our BPP.

The way he actively shared every aspect of his life with Feroza decades before we knew of women's lib is yet another aspect of his truly Zoroastrian and Gathic character and the basis for his brilliant success in life.

Dr KERSEY H. ANTIA
Illinois, USA

Open to interpretation

Mr Farrokh Vajifdar has, perhaps unintentionally, omitted mentioning only one name from the long list of invited panel at the seminar on "Literature of the Zoroastrian Tradition," held in London, UK, sponsored by the World Zoroastrian Organisation ("Zoroastrian literature," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1996).

Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey's name is not mentioned. He spoke regarding "Notes on the Composition of the Avesta." The same lecture, by the same speaker (Dr Jafarey), was cancelled at the FEZANA annual general meeting held in Kansas, September 1995, due to protests from individuals and both the mobed councils: the Iranian (Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America), and the Parsi (North American Mobed Council).

The holy scriptures are the revealed words and Dr Jafarey has, too often, mis-

interpreted our scriptures through the Internet, lectures and writings.

Further, allow me to clarify as I was one of the members on the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario's task force on intermarriage ("ZSO's task force reports," *Zoroastrians Abroad*, *Parsiana*, July-August 1996).

Any discerning reader will question the counter-productive suggestion that although intermarriage is detrimental, we accept this harmful "change."

The task force's mandate was only to inquire into the incidence of intermarriage, why it happens and to suggest ways of preventing it. The acceptance/rejection of the children of such incidence was not the goal of the task force. In fact, it was pointed out that children of intermarriage themselves marry out. The proposition about the acceptance of children was included in the last and final meeting, after the draft was prepared and distributed.

The report presented indicates some puzzling conclusions:

- If intermarriage "was not desirable," and if it is accepted that children of intermarriage, in turn, marry out, why accept such undesirable change?
- Why was the task force set up in the first place to prevent such incidence unless, indeed, it was detrimental?

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•If religion is open to interpretation, whose interpretation will be accepted? There will be as many interpretations (opinions) as the number of Zarthustis and other students of our scriptures! Besides, if religion/scriptures are open to interpretation by individuals, is the religion or the "word" then termed "revealed?" Can we then be "People of the Book" if our "Book" is open to personal interpretation? **PERVIN J. MISTRY**

Ontario, Canada

"AZA goes Fasli"

While congratulating the New South Wales Zoroastrians for their progressive outlook in accepting the Fasli calendar ("AZA goes Fasli, Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, July-August 1996,) I would request the Australian Zoroastrian Association president Noshir Sachinwalla to consider the following:

Our calendar is mainly based on the seasons (fasals). From the seasonal point of view, the Fasli calendar would be correct for the northern hemisphere. After all, the calendar was evolved in Iran. As Australia lies in the southern hemisphere where the seasons are opposite those in the northern part, the Shehenshahi calendar could continue to be followed as it would be the appropriate one.

But the Australians should start adding the extra day every leap year, as in the Fasli calendar, to prevent their calendar from backsliding further and perpetuating the error. In the alternative, a new beginning could be made by them with the Fasli calendar itself with necessary adjustments conforming to seasons in the southern hemisphere.

HOMI F. BAGWALA

Reservation rights

Today the Parsi community does not have a single representative in either house of Parliament — Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, none in any of the 24 state legislative

assemblies or state legislative councils. The numerical strength of the Parsi community is such that we do not count in the political structure of any party. Earlier on, visionary leaders like the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Ms Indira Gandhi and Mr Rajiv Gandhi always saw that the members of the Parsi Zoroastrian community were given nominations for Parliament and state assemblies. For example, during the period 1985 to 1990 the late Mr Rajiv Gandhi, as president of the All India Congress Committee, gave nominations to three Parsis: Mr Burjor Pardiwalla to contest the Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections from Bulsar and who was even elected the speaker of the Gujarat State Assembly; Mr Daraius Nariman was given the nomination to fight from Jamshedpur to the Bihar State Legislative Assembly; and I myself was given the nomination to fight from Colaba for the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. But, alas, today there is no Parsi representation anywhere in India. The inward looking leadership of the Congress party in Bombay even denied nomination to Mr Rustom Tirandaz or any other Parsi candidate except Mr Noshir Mehta.

The tragedy of the Parsi community is that in 1947 when the Constitution of India was being framed they were represented

by leaders who had an egalitarian, Western education background, being rich and influenced by English social values. The Parsi community in India had then been offered one nominated seat in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha, but unfortunately the egalitarian Parsis lacked political foresight. On the other hand the leaders of the Anglo-Indian community were given two permanently nominated seats in the Lok Sabha and one to two nominated seats in the legislative assemblies in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which right and privilege they still enjoy though the number of the Anglo-Indian community is less than the Parsi community in India.

I had a meeting with the respected trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and have urged them that they should revive the demand for nominated seats or for a quota for Parsi students in engineering and medical colleges in Maharashtra at least. There were several nominated seats in educational institutions which were pioneered by the Parsis, but the then trustees/owners of such institutions unfortunately surrendered all the seats leaving today's Parsi students who obtain over 95 percent marks totally stranded in the fields of

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medicine and engineering. Even the Mandal Commission report has advocated the need for Parsis to be offered certain reservations for education and in the selection for professional services. This can be a good starting point. Today, there are hardly any Parsis selected in the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service or Indian Foreign Service, the principal reason being the reservations extended to members belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes who get selected even when they obtain only 40 percent marks whilst Parsi boys and girls obtaining distinction class marks can never get into these services.

Through your columns I would like to urge once again the trustees of all Parsi trusts, especially in Maharashtra and Gujarat, that there must be made some provision for reservation of seats in Parliament, state assemblies, and in educational institutions which had been founded by Parsi Zoroastrians. A case in point is the Sangli-Miraj Engineering College where even today two seats are reserved for Parsi boys seeking admission for engineering degree courses. I must compliment those Parsis who have protected this right to date which has benefitted dozens of Parsi boys.

As a newly appointed member of the National Commission for Minorities I have decided to take up this issue on a priority basis. But by myself I can do very little unless the whole community can come together on one plank. If we stand united we can do a lot and fight for these rights which will help the future generations.

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet have done yeoman service by taking up the problem of housing on a war footing, but they should not slacken their efforts to pursue issues which concern the community's future as a whole.

MARAZBAN J. A. PATRAWALA

Sonorous presentation

Dasturji Kukadaru's birth anniversary was most appropriately celebrated by Mr Parvez Katrak's excellent presentation on April 12, 1997 at the Aslaji Agiary.

The pious life of Dasturji Kukadaru, his achievements and miracles were vividly recounted in sangeet form. The audience was held spellbound by Mr Katrak's recitations rendered in a soul-stirring manner.

Mr Katrak is a man of simple living and high thinking. His selfless service and sincerity of purpose, his frank and philosophical approach to the subject appealed to the discerning audience. His sonorous

male voice and beautiful presentation endeared him to his listeners.

Such programs on topics of religious importance should be arranged more often for the benefit of the community.

Dr M. H. PANTHAKI

Keen to correspond?

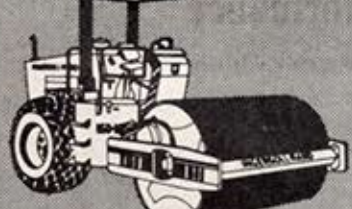
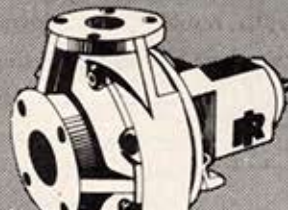
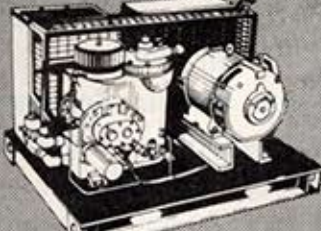
I am an educated Englishman, 62, married, life-long student and admirer of Indian culture. In order that I may contact a suitable correspondent to assist in my study of your great country I would like to correspond with mature, perhaps retired Indians of either sex, to discuss history, literature, poetry, music, philosophy, politics, sociology, environmental questions, linguistics, etc; in fact every subject except sport!

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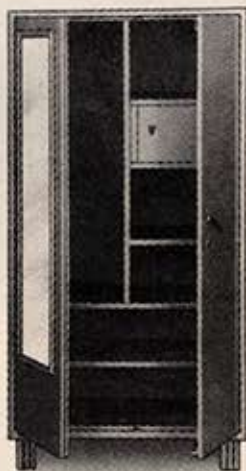
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Events and Personalities

Nature-friendly religion

In the presence of nearly 2,000 Zoroastrians who had gathered at Bombay's Radio Club on the occasion of the Ava Ardevisur Parabh on March 29, 1997, Dastur Kekobad Dastur was felicitated for completing 25 years as High Priest of Udvada.

Remarking on Dastur's dignity and humility, Kersi Limathwalla who was instrumental in organizing the function wished him many more years in office to guide and govern the destiny of the community. Cowasjee Dinshaw recalled Dastur's role, at the cost of his safety, when bringing the fire from the Adenwalla Agiary in Aden to Bombay and then to Lonavla.

A purse of Rs 2,01,101, collected within a fortnight,

largely through the efforts of Zarir Bhathena, was presented to the High Priest, according to the press release. Acknowledging the generosity and love of the community, Dastur thanked Ahura Mazda and the blessings of the Iranshah for giving him the opportunity to discharge his duties without fear or favor.

Earlier in the evening, Dastur presided over the jashan performed by 21 mobeds and a humbandagi. A minute's silence was observed in memory of the late Dinshaw Merchant who along with Rustom Kuka had revived the community tradition of holding the Ava Ardevisur and Farvardian parabhs 17 years ago. As pointed out

ed purely by religious sentiments and not any frills or meals.

In his educative talk, Ervad Nadir Modi described Zoroastrianism as an environment-conscious and nature-friendly religion that believes in going through nature to nature's God. Adding charm to the evening's function were the religious songs by Mani Mulla and her group. The Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, the Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association and The M. J. Wadia Agiary were the other institutions involved in the organizing of this event, as per a write-up.

ZOSTA gives gold

For the first time in its 17-year history, the Zoroastrian Student Teacher Association (ZOSTA) presented pure gold medals worth Rs 6,500 each, donated by Zarir Bhathena, to the three Zoroastrian students who had scored the highest percentage of marks at the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations of March '96. Farhad Tarapore of R. D. National College (HSC, 90 percent), Meenaish Dalal of St Mary's High School, Poona (ICSE, 94 percent) and merit lister Naval Daver of St Mary's High School, Bombay (SSC, 91.06 percent) received the awards at the ZOSTA annual prize distribution held on February 25, 1997 at the Framjee Cawasjee Institute. Almost 80 other young achievers received silver medals and certificates in recognition of their securing 75 percent and above at the Board examinations. Zoroastrian students scoring 60 percent and above at the degree examinations were also honored.

Roshen Driver, ZOSTA chairperson and principal of the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution (BJPC) congratulated the winners and said, "may you



Clockwise from top left: Dastur; Bhathena, Dinshaw, Dastur, Modi (partly hidden), Limathwalla and Rusi Bhungara; a section of the audience



Limathwalla, the Ava Ardevisur parabh is the only event of its kind in the community when such a large congregation gathers motivat



From left: Gold medallists Dalal, Tarapore (receiving trophy from Mody) and Daver at the ZOSTA awards function in Bombay

shine out in the world in your chosen careers." Dr Nawaz Mody, head of the department of civics and politics of Bombay University, advised the young scholars not to be discouraged by difficulties and announced, amidst applause, that the BJPC Institution, which had so far been running a school and junior college had been granted permission by the University to open a senior college in its commerce section.

Homi Ranina, the donor of trophies for degree examinations, exhorted the students to avail of the opportunities available in India and not be lured by the material successes of the western world.

Meher Dastoor, Headmistress of Shri Shakuntala K. I. Jain Girls' High School, and Zarine Basla, principal of the Maneckji Cooper Education Trust School with 32 and 26 years respectively in the teaching profession, were also honored. Other teachers felicitated were Homai Katgara, Banoo Shroff (35 years experience), Freney Sunavala and Gool Mehta (over 25 years), Gover Mistry, Roshan Elavia, Pervin Mehta and Amy Pardesse (over 15 years).

Graduates securing a first class also received silver coins and certificates. Among the toppers were Khushnoor Govadia (BA), Mehernosh Randeria and Molina Patel (BCom), Armin Asundaria and Persis Pochkhanavala (BSc), Nazneen Antia (BVSc and AH), Burgess Cooper (BE) and Rukhshad Moghal (BED).

Of the three gold medallists, Daver achieved the distinction of standing 15th on the merit list of the Bombay divisional SSC Board. He did his early schooling in the USA where his doctor parents, Gustad and Rekha, were doing superspecialization in their respective fields at the Texas Medical Center (Gustad is now Professor of Surgery at the Grant Medical College and

Sir J. J. Hospital, Bombay, while Rekha is Professor and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the same hospital). While in Houston, Naval was selected for SIGHT (Special Instruction for Gifted and Highly Talented Students) and won a trophy in the Regional Mathematic Olympiad, states his bio data. He has been a student at St Mary's School from standard five onwards and enjoys participating in elocutions, science quiz and essay competitions, according to his write-up.

Dalal, doing her BCom at the Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce in Poona, plans to follow in the footsteps of her chartered accountant father Marazban. Her hobbies include dramatics, swimming, badminton, music and travel.

The HSC topper Tarapore is currently studying electronics engineering at the Thadomal Shahani Engineering College. He likes to play the guitar and keyboard, sketch, read and "observe human and animal behaviour," according to his bio data.

ZOSTA, founded in 1979, has 55 principals, 305 teachers and 17 Parsi-managed schools in Bombay as life members on its rolls, as well as a large, but fluctuating, student membership. In keeping with its motto, Frashmi Aethrya (Progress culturally), it organizes a wide range of student-teacher activities.

On September 7, '96, a get-together of teacher-members was held at Cama Baug on the occasion of Teachers' Day. On October 7, 90 Zoroastrian children dressed in traditional attire celebrated the 167th salgreh of the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram in the fire-temple's main hall with religious songs and skits, and the presentation of charts and models made under the guidance of Zoroastrian Studies.

In December, an inter-school essay com-

petition on a religious theme was organized. Seminars and workshops on Zoroastrianism are held, aimed at awakening in young minds a love for their ancient heritage.

Hilla P. Guzder

Crash course for kids

About 110 students from five schools in Madras attended the one-day orientation course on the Zoroastrian faith hosted by The Madras Parsi Zarhosti Anjuman jointly with the The Madras Parsi Association (MPA). This was part of a non-formal certificate course for school children conducted by the Gandhi Peace Foundation that seeks to promote unity among different religious faiths, mentions MPA honorary secretary Zarin Mistry.

Being the first time such a workshop was organized in the city, Mistry writes, "The course was significant considering that our religion and community remain obscure in this part of the country." The program on January 25, 1997 at the Piroj Clubwala Memorial Hall was organized by Perviz Dara Bhote, who regularly represents the community at the Foundation's inter-faith prayer meets, with the assistance of the Parsi youth from Madras. With suitable demonstrations the audience was familiarized with the concepts of Navroze, the Navroze table, navjote, jashan, ghambars and the dokhmenashini mode of disposal of the dead. After a lively question-answer session, the students were made to participate in a simple quiz.

Commending the unique manner in which the course was structured as also the well-researched and interesting presentations by the Parsi youngsters, the secretary of the Foundation expressed his gratitude and admiration to the organizers, notes the press release.

Surveyor's master moves

Holding the highest national rating among correspondence chess players in India for the last 15 years, to Dr Aspi B. Surveyor also goes the credit for performing the "incredible feat of winning the national correspondence chess championship five times," writes chess historian Vijay D. Pandit. His accomplishment was recommended for entry in *The Guinness Book of Records* last year but, as conveyed correspondence editor Amanda Brooks, "We do not currently publish records for correspondence chess in the book. We however confirm that the details you left with our office have been added to our files in case we are able to review the situation in the future."

According to Surveyor, victory in correspondence chess is far more difficult than in over-the-board chess for the opponent has recourse to books, consultations with experts, even computers. Not only is there no prize money involved, the votaries of correspondence chess have to bear the costs of postal transmission of moves. As explained, at the national level, the competition rules pit 16 players, all-play-all simultaneously. Assuming that each individual game were to last for only 35 moves, it means a total transmission of 525 letters for every tournament, each of which lasts for approximately two years.

While it is played in the solitude of a participant's home without the tension of anxious onlookers, the rules of competition demand that a player on an average make five moves every single day for almost two years of scheduled play. There is further the botheration of non-receipt of replies which involves sending reminders, writing to the defaulter, the tournament director and the secretary of the Correspondence Chess Association of India which organizes such tournaments.

Surveyor has created this record of five titles in a decade, writes Pandit, "while teaching at 17 dental colleges (10 in India and seven abroad), doing research, acting as examiner and inspector of several universities...and dental colleges, as advisor to several state governments and local bodies, as consultant to Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited, not to mention his private practice as oral diagnostician and radiologist." He is attached to the Jaslok Hospital and Research Center as consultant maxillofacial radiologist.

In addition to presenting 121 papers at international/national/state/city conferences, Surveyor has published 73 scientific/research papers, according to his curriculum vitae.

He is the author of *Interpret Your X-Rays, Oral Cancer: The Risk Factors* and co-author of *Colour Atlas — Oral Diseases*. After completing his post-graduation in dental surgery, specializing in radiology, from the University of Bombay, Surveyor was selected as Fulbright scholar to do a certificate course in oral medicine-oral diagnosis from the University of Pennsylvania.



Surveyor: chess winning feat

While professional commitments have compelled 63-year-old Surveyor to discontinue with correspondence chess, he continues to play over-the-board chess, retaining his title of champion at the Dadar Chess Circle. Nearly three decades earlier he had tied for the first place at the all-India open S. K. Vaidya Memorial Tournament. Besides his proficiency in chess he holds the national service badge in scouting, enjoys dramatics and is the author of several plays and poems, according to the press release.

Penaz goes pop

She's dropped her surname from the inlay cards. And the nasal intonation in her voice. She's even changed the spelling of her name from Penaz to Penaz; and, more importantly, her 'attitude' as well, donning a suit instead of a sari. Penaz Masani with her curly mop has now gone pop!

Masani with her golden voice has risen above the average lyrics and turned out a good album, *Tu Dil De De* with Rahman Rajan, the Canada-based music director. The eight numbers featured vary from the frothy hip-hop feel of the title track, to the ballad-like quality, as in *Yaadein*. There's reggae (*O Jaan-e Jaan*), calypso (*When You Touch Me*), even an old-time sixties beat in *Tu Aur Main*. Masani displays a fine vocal virtuosity in rendering these widely ranged tracks, as she stakes her claim to join India's pop brigade. Produced by Magnasound, the audio cassette of *Tu Dil De De* is available for Rs 40, and the compact disc for Rs 150.

Homi J. Rogers

"Need for simple books"

"Our ancestors and community organizations recognized the need for imparting timely religious education to young Parsi Zoroastrian boys and girls starting from navjote age to high school...level," writes Marzban J. Giara in his preface to *Our Zoroastrian Religion*, a 52-page English translation of the late Ervad Fardunji N.

Rabadi's work. The navjote prayers and certain select topics were included in Rabadi's original booklet in Gujarati nearly 125 years ago. With the addition of new topics this compilation reportedly went into 16 editions. Realizing the "need for simple books such as this one," and also aware of the fact that presently "most young people do not know Gujarati," Giara, who found this book useful for his navjote class, decided to translate it into English "as a labor of love."

The booklet is divided into 25 chapters starting with "God" and ending with the "Era of Prophet Zarathushtra." The maximum number of pages are devoted to the Prophet and his miracles. All topics are dealt with in a question-answer format, be it an introduction to the amesha spentas and yazatas, the names of the *gahs*, days, months, *Gathas*, ghambars or certain brief references to Iranian roots, the significance of prayers, sudreh-kusti and the purpose of offering *loban* (incense). Relevant



Masani: impressing young audiences

quotations from the scriptures with their corresponding explanations make certain passages more meaningful.

While most questions are grouped together logically, bringing in the topic of one's duty towards God and belief in His existence when dwelling on the sudreh and its constitution seems rather incongruous. Typographically there may be very few errors but sentence construction is often awkward which could perhaps be the result of translation from Gujarati to English.

The price of the book is not mentioned but those interested in its availability may contact Giara at Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014. Telephone: 4166204.

English Patient welcome

It's not uncommon for a movie to boost the

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sales of a book. But normally the book that is the beneficiary is the one which has been converted to celluloid. This year, *The English Patient*, winner of nine Oscars including best picture, has sparked sales of not only Michael Ondaatje's Booker prize-winning novel on which the film is based, but also of another book: *The Histories*.

An account running into over 700 pages of the Greek wars with Persia, *The Histories* is written by Herodotus, the acknowledged "father of history," some 2,500 years ago. In the film, the mysterious burns patient (played by Ralph Fiennes) carries the book as a talisman, reading from it, scribbling in the margins, and pasting in letters.

Enough reason to spark off a run on the tome by audiences who have loved the movie. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, sales of the paperback version of Herodotus' book surged 450 percent at Borders Group Incorporated, US, in the two weeks after the movie opened, and has kept on rising. At Rizzoli Bookstores Incorporated, sales of the Penguin paperback (priced at US \$ 10.95) soared to make it to the best-seller list in December.

Meanwhile Alfred A. Knopf Incorporated issued a \$ 23 Everyman's Library

hardback version with a movie photo slapped on the cover. Reports the *Wall Street Journal* that though the initial print run of Everyman's edition is usually 3,000, *The Histories* got 10,000.

A spin-off such as this should help Zoroastrians to rediscover their past, while being 'in' with the present. H.J.R.

Two Zoroastrian sites

Living Computers, a monthly magazine from Bombay on home computing, educational entertainment, multimedia and the Internet, has compiled a list of "The Best of India on the Web" for its Net sites pages in the April 1997 issue. The list, interestingly, features two Zoroastrian-related sites, a fine distinction for the community considering that the magazine claims to have "gone through most of the sites in-depth, and then...picked up a few of the sites and reviewed them." Say the editors: "Some sites are truly world-class, and several others are getting there."

The two Zoroastrian sites (re)viewed are on Parsi cuisine and the Avesta Web Server; the latter getting a three-star rating—one more than cuisine—of a possible maximum of five stars. The Avesta Web Server, states the review, records for pos-

terity all the ancient scriptures of Zoroastrianism. The site "gives a good overview of the religion and traces its evolution through the centuries." It can be accessed on <http://www.avesta.org/avesta.html>.

The second site mentioned covers "all the Parsi favorite" dishes from *gosht jardaloo ma, paatraa ni machhi, akuri, dhansak to dal ni pori and lagan nu custard*. It also gives some details, we are told, on Sir Ratan Tata Industrial Institute and Parsi Dairy Farm. The site is accessible on <http://www.ultranet.com/kapadia/cooking.html>. H.J.R.

SPOTLIGHT

In the Industrial Safety Performance Competition 1996, conducted by the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health, Pune and the Rotary Club of Poona-North, the first prize was bagged by White Cloud Filter Pads Private Limited, reports managing director **Rusy Kapadia**. The company qualified for this award among all factories employing up to 99 workers (except engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical, and electronic manufacturing plants).

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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"Religion is personal faith"

Singapore's Russi Ghadiali compares life in Bombay with that in the island state

Arnavaz S. Mama

"We are trying to ensure that the youth carry on the traditions and that the Association survives. We will be as flexible as we need to, to make that happen," says the Singapore Parsi Association president Russi Ghadiali.

The 150-member Association's New Year dinner at the Singapore Island Club on March 21, 1997 was almost fully attended by the Zoroastrians residing in the island state. Having organized a Navruz table, Ghadiali says they had to explain everything to their interested chief guest, the city state's minister for community development Abdullah Tarmuggi.

"Our children don't understand what poverty means. They are living in a very affluent society there," Ghadiali explained the rationale behind some of the Association's new social service projects to *Parsiana* in the course of an interview in early April this year. Community service for charitable institutions like the Red Cross, the local homes for the aged and the disabled where "time and dedication are required, not money" are being encouraged to get the community to work together. They also want to send one child each year to a Zoroastrian youth congress starting with the scheduled meet in London this July. Ghadiali says he has been looking for 10 donors who would agree to donate Singapore \$ 200 each towards the cost. At the time of the interview Ghadiali said he had seven commitments in the bag. The candidate selected to represent Singapore would be outstanding in his/her own field of endeavor. The selection would serve as a measure of the community's appreciation of the youth's achievements and help encourage the children to understand the community better.

A visit from a 14-member delegation from The Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hongkong, Canton and Macao, led by their president

Jal Shroff, has enthused the Singaporeans in establishing their own community center. "They said if we could get a piece of land from the government, they would work with us to raise funds," informed Ghadiali who was of the opinion that the



Ghadiali: "Go out"

impending political change in Hongkong was unlikely to affect the Zoroastrians settled there. To promote broader participation from Association members six subcommittees have been constituted, each comprising one committee member and three non-committee members. Apart from the aforementioned community service and scholarships to send children out, a youth service is designed to help children understand the role of the Association and seek their participation in its running. Other such committees deal with the Association's communications and finances. Communications between community members as also between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians has long been a "major problem in Singapore," says Ghadiali. A program called "Friends of the Parsis" is now being developed to share areas of interest with other associations/communities. As Ghadiali describes it, every month some prominent people would be invited to pot luck dinners to partake of Parsi cuisine. This idea has been borrowed from the Rotary Club of Raffles City where he had been president, Ghadiali confides.

The subcommittee on religion will be organizing informal talks. "Calling dasturs (alone) doesn't work. (People) want to know what's happening here, not after

death," says Ghadiali. So there will be open discussions, the freedom to ask questions and a welcome for the whole family if even one member is a Parsi Zoroastrian.

Ghadiali estimates the community's age profile to comprise 40 percent under 40 years, 30 percent between 40 and 50, and 30 percent above 50. Several couples have no child. Others have one or two. There is only one family he knows of that has three children.

Having been based in Singapore for over 20 years, Ghadiali was unhappy at the dearth of young Zoroastrians coming there. "The government is encouraging Indians with skills and qualifications," he informs, engineers, information technologists, managers, executives and entrepreneurs being particularly welcome. Professional education there is however restricted. For example, 70 percent of medical college admissions are reserved for people of Chinese origin, 25 percent for Malaysians, only five percent being available for the rest, he says.

Malaysia and China are also good places for Zoroastrian youths to explore, according to Ghadiali. Career opportunities are also emerging in Hongkong whence the Chinese, who had fled mainland China earlier, are now leaving. "Foreigners are coming to fill the gap. There is a shortage of people," avers Ghadiali. "Our community should start looking at these areas," he adds. Though he admits that some young Zoroastrian information technologists have been going to Singapore in recent years and that the recession has had an impact everywhere, he believes that more community members "should take up the challenge to grow, not just seek security." Surveying the economic horizon in Bombay he asks, "Today where are the jobs for Parsis here?" and identifies the bank jobs of yesteryears as a source of "big problems" as they promoted the yen for

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security and stifled risk taking. "Are you going to be left at that level with no growth? Go out. If you have the skills, you can grow."

Ghadiali traces parallels between the Parsi community in cosmopolitan Bombay and Singaporean society — a tiny state within the comity of Asian nations. Like the Parsi baugs in Bombay, people in Singapore are well housed. "There is so much security, they are so comfortable, they don't want to go out (of the country even though) the government is encouraging people to go out, to get more experience and exposure," says Ghadiali. Again, while military service is compulsory for its male citizens, Singaporean girls use the time to study and, like their Parsi counterparts, often find themselves way ahead of their prospective spouses. Marriages are on the decline, as is the birth rate. So the government has established the social development unit to undertake matchmaking, organize functions and trips to promote matrimony.

Having grown up in Bombay's Cusrow Baug, Ghadiali appreciates the vision of its founders and claims he values them more now than when he lived there. "Would we have survived without them?" he asks. The maximum marriages occur in the baugs because the children meet early, he says.

And when you come back after 50 years, your friends are still there, Ghadiali lists the advantages of the baugs. He contrasts this scenario with that in Singapore where

Malaysia and China are also good places for Zoroastrian youths to explore

he believes Parsi children don't meet because there is no community institution where they can all get together. "If I had money, I promise you I'd build a baug," he notes fervently.

Ghadiali maintains that one "can only guide children, not fight them." He believes in accepting non-community marriages because the world is changing. "How many parents have not talked to their children for 10-15 years? The time is gone," he notes sadly. Registering his personal view Ghadiali says, "Make a happy family rather than break it up." Noting that Parsi marriages are as prone to break up as intercommunity ones, he feels that parents should enjoy their children's happiness, sustain it

as long as possible.

Currently vice president of International Rectifier, Ghadiali is a navar-martab who started as a management trainee with E. Ruttonsha and Company. He thanks his late boss Jal Ruttonsha "for the little knowledge I do have of my religion." He says Ruttonsha gave up eight years of his life to the writing and production of the book *In Search of my God*. Pages of the manuscript were passed to Ghadiali who was then quizzed. "Because I was a priest, he felt I knew the religion! I told him, a Zoroastrian priest only knows how to pray."

The book initially disillusioned Ghadiali about the religion. He felt that he had been wrongly guided in the course of his training to priesthood. It was only later that he began to see that "My prayers are mine; my God (is) my God... Even if you don't understand (the injunctions), just follow them." Admitting that there is every possibility that good people may seek to be converted to Zoroastrianism — "I can't shut my eye (to that)" he concedes — Ghadiali urges fellow Zoroastrians not to blame the mobeds, not to challenge them by asking questions. But he maintains, "I don't see why we should discuss conversion if... religion is personal faith. Your own faith is the most important."

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A Hollywood love affair

Firoza Dalal treasures her grandfather's collection of Hollywood memorabilia

Hilla P. Guzder

They were the stars of Hollywood's "dream factory" in the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s — Douglas Fairbanks, Errol Flynn, Greta Garbo, Merle Oberon, Bette Davis, Clark Gable and many others. Audiences all over the world felt the fascination of their movies, they laughed and they cried with their Hollywood heartthrobs.

Today, half a century down the corridor of time, that era is long past. And not many fans, particularly in India, can claim to have a well-preserved collection of Hollywood memorabilia of days gone by, including photographs signed by some of the biggest names in Hollywood.

But that is just what Firoza Dalal claims. The photographs in her possession are cherished reminders of her maternal grandfather Dinshaw Shapurji Variava's heady days as a partner of Nagpur's Raj Vilas theater. Dalal, who works with the Essar group in Bombay, displays a pile of black and white enlargements in two sizes — 14" x 11" and 8" x 10". She picks up one which says, "To Mr Variava, may you have lots of luck in your new office." And looking at you is the face of Marlene Dietrich, the sultry *femme fatale* of Ger-

man descent known for her sensuous singing and acting in *The Blue Angel* (1930), whose cameo roles in *Witness for the Prosecution* (1958) and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) helped make the films box-office triumphs.

It's Mary Astor's turn now, "To Dinshaw Variava — may your fine publications continue to prosper!" Mary Pickford, "America's sweetheart" and second wife of Douglas Fairbanks, remembered for her portrayal of wholesome characters (*Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Daddy Long Legs*), accompanied her signature with "every best wish always." A youthful David Niven sent his "best regards" while a boyish Henry Fonda, whose first film was made in 1935 and the last (*On Golden Pond*, for which he won an Academy Award) in 1981 just prior to his death in 1982, wrote "good luck to you!"

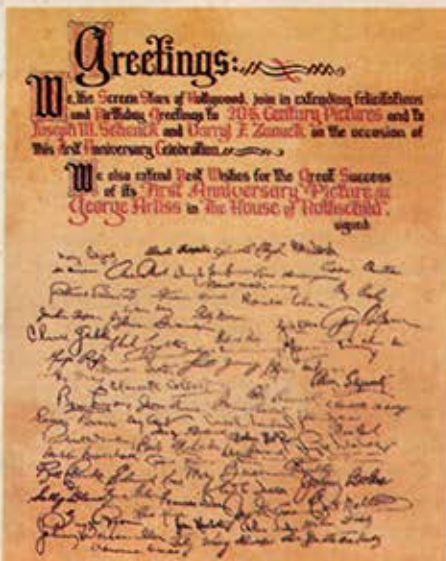
Dalal shows a signed picture of Charlie Chaplin, looking older and so very different from the character he made immortal in 70 films in his career — "the little tramp," with his baggy pants, enormous shoes, battered hat and bamboo cane. Chaplin co-founded United Artists Corporation in 1919

with Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and director D. W. Griffith, producing, directing and starring in, among others, *The Kid* (1921), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *City Lights* (1931), *The Great Dictator* (1940) and *Limelight* (1952) and receiving a special Academy Award in 1972 for his contribution to the film industry.

"Greetings to Dinshaw S. Variava! sincerely Walt Disney," wrote the man who won 26 Academy Awards and brightened the lives of millions of children with his creation of animated cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto and Bambi.

Hollywood heavyweight, Samuel Goldwyn, producer of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the war drama which won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1930, and *Wuthering Heights* (nominated for Best Picture in 1939 but lost out to

Dalal with "leading ladies" (left to right, top row) Fay Wray, Marlene Dietrich and Mary Astor; (bottom) Grace Moore, Merle Oberon and Constance Bennett
Star signatures (below)
Transparencies of photos: Chetan Mistry





Gone with the Wind) sent his autograph, "For Mr Dinshaw Variava — with best wishes."

Dalal also has unsigned photographs, among others, of legends like Fred Astaire ("can't act, slightly bald, can dance a little" said his screen test report!), fresh-faced Audrey Hepburn (she won the best actress Oscar for *Roman Holiday* in 1953), Frank Sinatra (who won an Academy Award for his non-singing performance in *From Here to Eternity*) and the six-foot three "yup" "nope" man Gary Cooper who won an Oscar for his performance as the determined sheriff in *High Noon* (1952).

Dalal displays two photos of Indian film star Devika Rani, one of which is signed "with very best wishes" and dated October 27, 1934. She has pictures of Ashok Kumar and a promotional invitation card signed by Sohrab Modi when his film *Jhansi ki Rani* was released.

"Grandfather loved movies. He probably wrote to the Hollywood stars and some of them responded by sending him their photographs for publicity," conjectures Dalal. "He was himself a very good tap dancer, tapping away on our family dining table in Nagpur. I lived with him from age seven as I was studying in the J. N. Tata Parsi Girls' High School and later at Hislop College in Nagpur while my parents, Beji and Aban Bajan, lived in Katni near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. My father runs a limestone business there in the name of T. C. Bajan and Company Private Limited. My great grandfather, Tehmurasji Cawasji Bajan, was a *malguzar* (landlord) of Katni while

Signed pictures of (top row): Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Charles Laughton; (bottom) Henry Fonda and David Niven; celluloid sweetheart Mary Pickford; Charlie Chaplin, a legend in his lifetime A film poster (below)

my grandfather, Cawasji Bajan, was given the title of Khansaheb. Many institutions in Katni have been the recipients of their philanthropy," states Dalal proudly. "Unfortunately for grandfather Variava, in course of time circumstances became such



that he had to give up his theater and take up work as an insurance agent. Rain or shine, he was ready for work, going around on his cycle even when he was 80!" narrates Dalal. He never really talked about his Hollywood memorabilia or how he acquired it, she adds. She does recollect, rather ruefully now, that she used to see her grandmother lining the *peenju* (meat safe) at home with Hollywood posters!

She displays the few posters that have survived the ravages of time — Laurel and Hardy's *Saps at Sea*, Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid*, Yul Brynner's *The Magnificent Seven* ("seven and they fought like seven hundred," says the blurb).

She then shows the publicity booklets wherein the big studios unveiled their prestige products: "20th Century Fox presents *The Robe* in the modern miracle of Cinemascope" says one of them. There is a booklet on Metro Goldwyn Mayer's (MGM) masterpiece *Gone with the Wind* made in 1939 and watched by the then largest movie audience (300 million) in history, winning 10 Oscars including the Best Picture and the Best Actress Award for the raven-haired Vivien Leigh's fiery portrayal of Scarlett O'Hara.

"We, the Screen Stars of Hollywood, join in extending felicitations and Birthday Greetings to 20th Century Pictures and to Joseph M. Schenck and Darryl F. Zanuck on the occasion of this First Anniversary Celebration..." says a printed letter, containing the signatures of Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Cary Grant, Johnny Weismuller, Gin-

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Reaching for the Sky



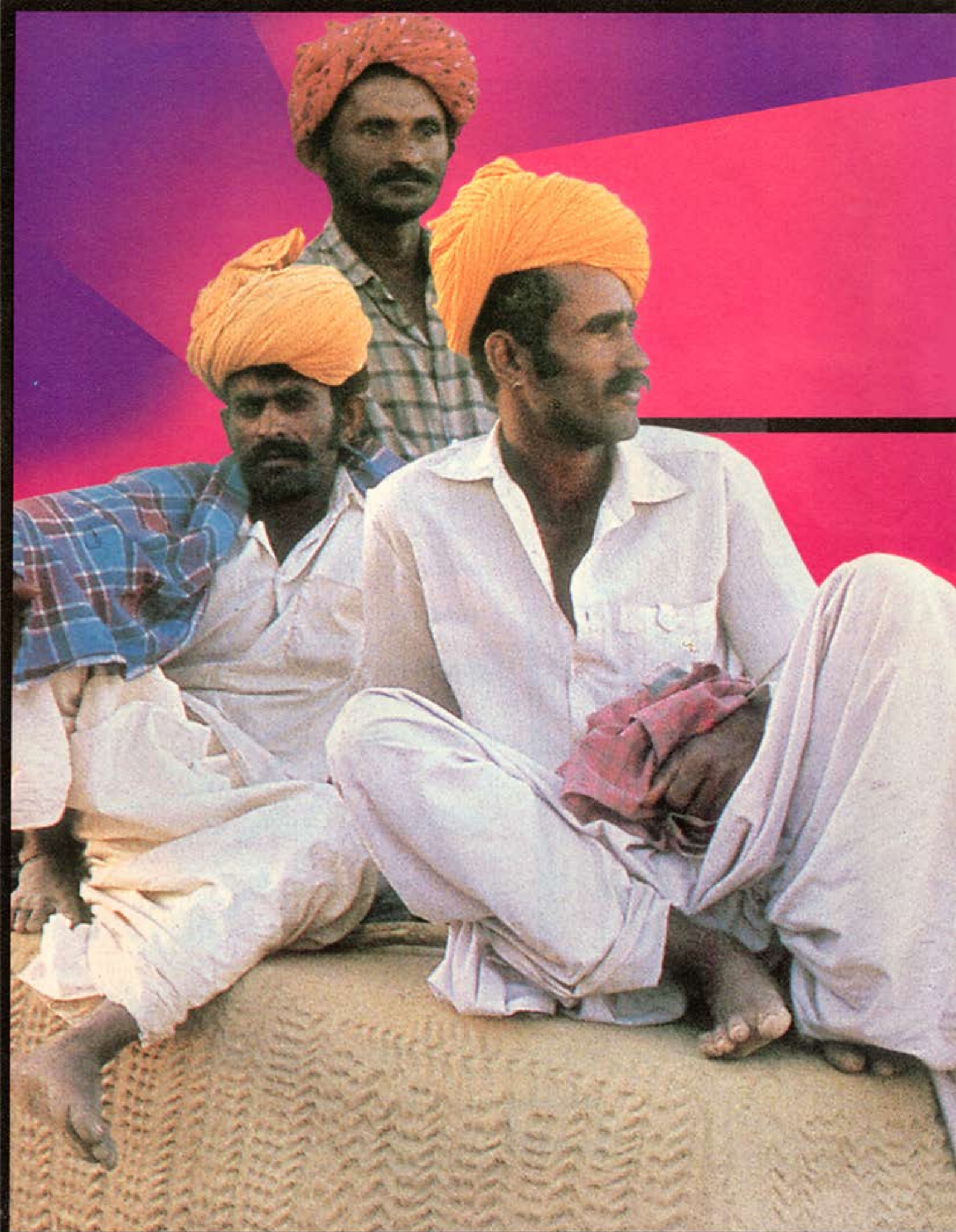
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The Pen of *Parsidom*

Through his newly launched newsletter Dara Kadva says he intends to expose the ills facing the community

Parinaz Gandhi

"While laudably covering religious matters, social events, commercial and entrepreneurial developments and tales of achievements, the present Parsi Press has looked the other way in matters relating to the neglect of trust funds/lands, rampant financial manipulations in housing and real estate matters, flagrant corrupt practices in housing allotments and such other issues which are crying out for attention." Perceiving such a glaring "void in information," in February this year Dara Kadva launched *Parsidom*, an eight-page bilingual newsletter in English and Gujarati, with the intention of tackling subjects that require "boldness, forthrightness and a no-holds-barred approach which only an independent publication can provide."

As conveyed by Kadva in his written response to our fax queries, "The Parsi community is sitting on an information inferno...waiting to be blown up soon, causing enormous damage to the community's proud image in India and abroad, and also damaging its social structure immensely."

Besides bringing to the fore issues concerning trust property and administration, over the course of three months *Parsidom* has reiterated the need for Parsi representation on governmental bodies and reservation of seats for this minority community. It has also called for the imposition of a ban on animal slaughter in Bombay and Pune on Bahman mahi, Bahman roj (June 19, 1997) to support the sentiments of Parsis who abstain from eating meat on that day!

Barring one or two items which are carried in both the English and Gujarati sections, Kadva uses his discretion to distribute the other news contents depending on the readers' demands. Also of consequence is "the fact that many readers, mainly in Bombay/Maharashtra, do not know Gujarati at all while Gujarati readers do have a reasonable understanding of English." An unexpected development is

the high demand for *Parsidom* from Gujarat Parsis who "seem to be virtually starving of Parsi news," states the editor. Beyond Maharashtra and Gujarat, requests for copies have gener-



Kadva: a glaring "void in information"

ated from Delhi and other towns of India as also regions like Hong Kong, Sydney, London, New York, Toronto, mentions Kadva. To gather news he is assisted by other writers and social workers who are eager to pub-

litize certain issues. However, the write-ups in both the languages finally bear 56-year-old Navsari-born Kadva's style, keen as he is to highlight salient points and provide new angles to generate discussion within the community. The self-imposed silence by the Parsi Press has contributed to the unaccountability of trustees, he insists. "The community is on a downhill path on all fronts for the last two decades or so and we are simply sailing with the current but not doing anything to stop it...This is primarily because we have no strong leadership...We also do not have a *vada dasturji* to control the waywardness of upcountry mobeds... Declining population, inter-caste marriages, paucity of babies, lack of educational and employment opportunities, migration abroad are the main ills that can be solely attributed to the inaction of our tired leadership which is too engaged in the distribution of patronage among itself and cannot galvanize the youth..." maintains Kadva. Advocating the need for reforms in the present electoral and trust system, Kadva recommends that adult franchise should be introduced and further, an akabar should not be permitted to hold office in

more than five trusts concurrently.

Through his column, "In My Opinion" in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, Kadva had been frequently venting his ire on the state of affairs in the community. The idea of bringing out his own newsletter struck him two years earlier, after which he was involved in the preparatory work and obtaining the necessary sanctions from the registrar of newspapers in Delhi. Among the titles suggested for the newsletter, *Parsidom* earned instant approval, says Kadva. Having spent many years of his life in the Gulf region where sheikdom, kingdom, principedom are in vogue, he got the inspiration to coin the term *Parsidom* to connote "an area of Parsi influence without power." During his stay in the Middle East, Kadva had served as managing editor of *Kuwait Times* and also *Arab Times*. Thereafter he was the Abu Dhabi bureau chief of *Khaleej Times*. On his return to Bombay in 1988 he was affiliated with *The Times of India* as supplements editor and with the *Jam-e-Jamshed* as columnist. His experiences in the Gulf region have prompted him to work on *Gulfocus*, a newsletter he will be launching in July 1997 as per the same format as *Parsidom* but targeted at readers settled in the Middle East or those interested in developments there, briefs the editor.

In the production of *Parsidom*, Kadva receives assistance from his wife Mharukh (their eldest daughter Kaneejeh is married, son Kayomars is studying music in Sydney and another son Kersi is learning computers in Bombay). Human effort alone is not sufficient for a publication, it requires financial input too. "Publishing is a costly business," pointed out Kadva in the inaugural issue, seeking donations from readers to maintain a weekly schedule for the newsletter which was hoping to survive without subscriptions and advertisements. After the first two issues, "the production limitations of a small commercial press

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The Parsi Brand Equity

The BPP's Holiday Programme for Youth participants were urged to maintain the advantages of belonging to a well liked community

Text by Arnavaz S. Mama • Photographs by C. C. Gandevia

"Impressive buildings only stand if they have a solid foundation. We aspire to give you the foundation to bear the stress of life," Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed Guzder told the youths who had completed the month-long Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY), the BPP's star social service program tailored for those who had just finished school.

Held at the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable High School and Junior College, April 26 to May 22, 1997 the 11th edition of the popular annual event saw 163 enrolments for the camp comprising 85 boys and 78 girls, including 13 from other cities including Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bardoli, Dahanu, Mhow, Navsari, Pan-

hgani, Pune and Surat. They represented 52 educational institutions, as informed Diana Marfatia, the program's long-standing popular coordinator. The group that she described as "hardworking, committed, competitive" had been exposed to a variety of information on career opportunities, leadership, body language and sex education, Zoroastrian religion and history, yoga and natural medicine; had witnessed karate and judo demonstrations; had partaken in public speaking, self awareness and parent-child workshops; had had a first-hand exposure to the election process including the preparation and delivery of manifestos; had engaged in elocution, dramatics and debates as well as the

design and execution of fashion shows; had played cricket, football, indoor games; had rendered social service including the cleaning of agiaris and the doongerwadi grounds, entertaining old people, organizing a blood collection drive (65 bottles collected, courtesy St George's Hospital); had visited the Braille Press, the Society

At the HPY (first row, left to right) Malegam, Marfatia, Balaporia and Shroff. Second row: Guzder with Lawyer, Bakhtawar Chenoy, Farah Lawyer and Mehroo Irani. (Middle) Panthaky, Taleyarkhan, Siodia, Lilaowala and Bamji. (Extreme right) Ghadiali



for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Hindustan Lever complex.

One of the aims of the program is to bring the dispersed Zoroastrian contemporaries into contact with each other, utilizing the long break after the SSC, ICSE examinations. Ten years of the HPY had benefitted about 1,500 young Zoroastrians and had yielded four marriages, according to senior BPP trustee Minoo Shroff who presided over the inaugural program. "That's not a mean achievement (for) a community where the age of marriage is so late and...there is a general aversion to get together," said Shroff.

Commenting on the new scenario where young management trainees start at incomes of Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 per month — an emolument known only to managing directors of companies a bare five years ago — Shroff referred to the tremendous opportunities available to the youth in India today. "Each one of us wants to be successful in life but... the measure of success tends to vary," he noted, enumerating the criteria for success as hard work, determination, dedication, tenacity and stamina. Quoting Singapore's former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, the man who raised Singapore's per capita income beyond that of UK citizens, Shroff added, "Life is an endless marathon without a finishing line." We are not all born equal. Some have the stamina to make it, many don't." Though only a few people can get to the top, Shroff told his young audience "a lot of us can have self-fulfilling lives." What one decides to do, how one does it and the satisfaction one receives from utilizing the capabilities one has, were some measures of success that Shroff enumerated, even as he emphasized the need to choose the vocation that one finds personally congenial and cautioned them about

the "hiccups along the way... Each block that you climb should make you more humble... Humility to superiors is duty... to inferiors, nobility."

"We as members of the Parsi community are a very privileged lot," noted auditor Yezdi Malegam, chief guest at the inaugural. Referring to the community's "standard of living which is perhaps much higher than that of many other communities," the medical, housing and educational facilities, the opportunities and degree of recognition "disproportionate to our numbers in the country," Malegam asked, "Do these benefits pose a danger to the future of the community?"

He sought to gauge the community's capacity for survival in the light of historian/anthropologist Arnold Toynbee's theory. In his monumental *Study of History* Toynbee had enunciated that the most important civilisations were created by the people who could meet the challenge of a changing environment, like the Egyptians

who cleared the marshes of the Nile when faced by drought, like the white Americans who went west, risking comfort, facing danger while seeking opportunity. Toynbee referred to such communities as "border people" who had the grit to survive and prosper while others succumbed. Malegam drew attention to the danger to the Parsi community of "accepting the benefits our forefathers provided as rights, not recognizing changes that the environment demands." According to Malegam the young people who have gone abroad are like Toynbee's border people as were our immigrant forefathers whose conscientiousness and toughness won the community respect and admiration in India. They have made a success of their lives. "We can do the same thing in this country... We (must) respond to the challenge and the youth of our community are the spearhead."

Noting that "the core of progress is the individual and therefore if you develop the



L to R (from top) Ziyen Contractor and Pashna Munshi with Lawyer; Janice Disawalla with Roshan Driver; Nariman, Percy Vaid, Lawyer and Danesh Chinoy; Taleyarkhan and Aniza Patel; Nariman with Silloo Kavarana; a view of the audience

individual, you develop a community," Malegam said the role of the Punchayet is not to preserve posterity or the community's comfort but to "maintain the character of our community." Describing the attribute as "difficult to define but easy to recognize," the low-profile, much respected professional (see "The corporate sleuth," *Parsiana*, July-August 1996) referred to the HPY's multifaceted activities with approval, particularly sports, which teaches one "to accept defeat with grace and success with humility."

Speaking of the community's 'Parsi' label as "brand equity" — the characteristic that distinguishes one product from another, recognized by the user as a guarantee of quality, consistency — Malegam noted, "All of us who have the benefit of coming from the Parsi community enjoy the brand equity that goes with it — integrity, social consciousness, environmental concern." He urged the youths to ensure that this brand equity is maintained: "The youths...are an advertisement for the Parsi community...enhancing our collective value and therefore our individual value."

"The story of life...is that hurdles are never over," Vispi Balaporia, dean of Bombay University's arts faculty told the youths at the end of one chapter of their

lives, on the threshold of another. "Build on your hopes, your dreams, your ambitions, but don't be embittered if you don't get immediate results," she cautioned. Though the overall current demand is for the commerce stream there are many opportunities opening up for arts students

"We as members of the Parsi community are a very privileged lot"

with a variety of combinations available, suggested the professor, emphasizing the need to build inner strength and honesty of purpose. She particularly advised the youths, "Do not try to destroy those in the way (of success)."

Veteran politician Homi Taleyarkhan who was chief guest at the valedictory function emphasized the need to promote a "trusting relationship between students, teachers and parents" for maximum educational benefits. Noting that after 50 years of independence, "a cardinal principle of the Constitution — free education up to the age of 14," had failed to percolate through

the Indian population, Taleyarkhan suggested to each young Zoroastrian to "make at least one person literate. The unrighteous man is often an uneducated man," he reasoned.

Zeena Lawyer, managing director of Associated Breweries which produces the popular London Pilsner brand of beer, was the day's guest of honor. Noting that "girls today can run their father's business as successfully as anybody," Lawyer referred to the traumatic months following her father's death and the pride she possessed in maintaining the quality of her product. For the aspiring young women in the audience who would be juggling career and family responsibilities in the future she had a special word of advice: "Plan your day well in advance. Time management is extremely important."

Whenever the school has a vacation, "the parents get enormous tension as to what they are going to do with their children at home... an innate fear as to how the children are going to spend their time," New Era School principal Gool Ghadiali enunciated the benefit of the HPY from the parents' viewpoint. Speaking on behalf of the principals of the participating schools, she complimented the organizers on the

continued on page 34

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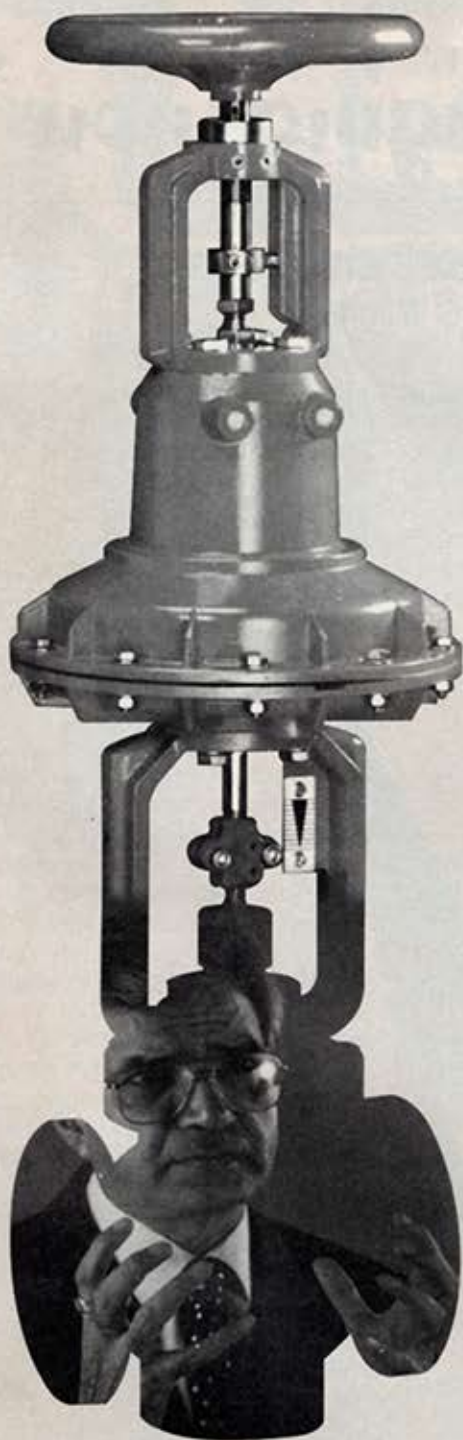
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"Things are changing now"

Anuradha Guptan

From Kathak and ballet Astad Deboo has evolved his own dance style

He is known for pioneering modern dance in India and internationally acclaimed for his distinctive and original dance style. He is said to have performed in as many as 55 countries across the globe. His performances have thrilled distinguished audiences including the royal families of Japan and Thailand. He has danced at prestigious venues such as The Great Wall of China, the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington DC and the Chelsea Theatre, London.

These are just glimpses of the illustrious career of Astad Deboo, one of India's finest contemporary dancers and recipient of the Sangeet Natak Academy award for 1996. Deboo was presented the award for his outstanding work in the field of 'creative dance.' Though pleasantly surprised and pleased with the recognition, Deboo is sceptical about this translating into actual support for his work.

Among the first to introduce modern dance in India, Deboo has had to work hard to make a place for himself in an environment dominated by classical dance. "In India," he says, "people have set notions about everything. Whatever does not fit into the conventional mold is promptly dismissed. And since Indian classical dances have always been story-based, modern dance with its abstract themes is not easily appreciated."

The main problem, as he sees it, is getting sponsors. It is a vicious circle: to cultivate a receptive audience you need promoters, and promoters won't come forward unless assured of a good audience. "But things are changing now," he adds. "In '91, I was invited to dance at

the Khajuraho Dance Festival and then at the Elephanta Festival of dance and music. These are mainly for Indian classical dancers and just getting invited there was like breaking the ice. But the pace of change is slow. To date I've not been able to perform in Bangalore and Madras, though I have attended conferences and held talks on

modern dance in these cities."

Deboo inherited his love of dance from his mother. He remembers as a child watching her learn dance and music. He himself started his initial training in Kathak when he was just six years old from Guru Prahlad Das at Jamshedpur. Besides Kathak, Deboo later trained in Kathakali from Guru

Krishna Panicker. The journey from classical Indian to contemporary dance was not a path chosen consciously by him, but "more of a gradual process." After finishing school he wanted to join the Film Institute at Pune, but his parents were keen on a college education for him. So he took up commerce at the Podar College in Bombay. It was around this time that Uttara Asha Coorlawala came down to Bombay from New York with the Murray Louis Dance Company. Deboo happened to be involved in a workshop conducted by Uttara and for the first time in his life was exposed to Western dance.

While watching the Company perform, he became aware of the potential of the human body. It made him curious and want to try out different things. That was the beginning of a number of explorations for Deboo. He began looking out for books on dance at the USIS library and started seeing more of other classical dance forms. "I was curious but had no guidance. There were no institutions in India then where one could learn modern dance. So I decided to go overseas to study it," he explains.

Was that what set him off on his famous trip around the globe, you wonder. "No," he says. "I had dreamt of hitchhiking even before any of this happened. A school friend had done it and the sheer adventure of it had excited me. Fortunately, after finishing college, I got admission to the Martha Graham school through Uttara. Now my dream had a purpose to it. I told my parents that I wanted to hitchhike



Deboo: "In India people have set notions"

through Europe before going to the States for further studies. They supported me and it all came through." And their support has been with him ever since, he tells us.

Deboo left the country on a cargo ship as a deck passenger. His first destination was Tehran where he had his first television show. He had two and a half months to survive in Europe on the meager sum of money he was carrying with him. The payment for his performance on TV showed him a good way to keep him going. After that he tried doing shows wherever he went. When he did not get paid, he did it for the exposure it offered him. From Tehran, with the help of his thumb, as he puts it, he went on to Turkey, Greece, Italy, Geneva, Germany and finally reached England.

In London Deboo joined the London School of Contemporary Dance, teaching Kathak techniques to the class as return payment for his training in the Martha Graham dance style. He also took ballet classes because ballet is the foundation of modern dance. The whole process of un-learning Kathak and learning something new turned out to be a challenging and revealing experience for Deboo. It helped him realize all that his body was capable of and also to understand the limitations of training in one exclusive dance form. "Our Indian dances are all earth connected whereas ballet is kind of 'above.' I found that the body was made to do a lot of things which I felt were not natural. There was a certain amount of emotion but not the kind of *bhakti* or spirituality which is very much the soul of our dance even today. With Indian dance the movements flow, but when I was learning ballet or even the Martha Graham technique it was painful."

When his UK visa expired, Deboo moved on to Canada and from there to Japan with the help of some friends. Japan was "love at first sight" for him. He was completely fascinated by the Japanese way of life. The reverence, discipline and determination to be perfect that went into everything the Japanese did struck a chord in him. One of the special memories he has of his sojourn in Japan is doing a body painting dance show with an American painter. Dipped in huge canisters of paint, his body smeared in a multitude of colors, Deboo would dance on a white canvas spread on the dance floor.

After Japan, it was short stints in Indonesia, Korea and Malaysia before eventually going to America. On his return, he took to learning Kathakali from Guru

Krishna Panicker, being involved at the same time with two dance companies, the American Pilobolus Dance Company and Pina Bausch with whom he worked for some time.

Deboo's own works range from pieces of abstract bodywork to narrative pieces to dance dramas based on political satire. In one of his popular works, *Lakdi Ka Raavan*, a political satire, he plays Raavan as the modern day politician. The play depicts the torturous reign of Raavan and the sufferings of his subjects till they finally rise



Deboo is drawn to the abstract

against him and he meets his doom. In *Insomnia*, an abstract work, the entire piece is performed on a base of two horizontal pipes on which he could just rest his neck and ankles while the rest of him remained suspended in mid-air. The dance is an interpretation of the restlessness of a person unable to sleep. "It was really fascinating," he explains, "to know the extent to which I could push my body to remain absolutely straight like a plank of wood and not sink into the mid-space below."

In another highly acclaimed piece, *Asylum*, Deboo uses his toe to depict the characters of a child, lover and tormentor alternatingly, the whole dance being based on a lunatic's interaction with his toe. His other famous creations include *Broken Pane*, which is a depiction of a drug addict's sufferings; *Chewing Gum*, again an abstract work which has him dancing in a small box with a sheet of elastic; and

Mangalore Street which is a dance drama set against the backdrop of a street by that name in Bombay.

Deboo has also done large collaborative shows with puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee in India, and with Maya Plisetskaya the prima ballerina of the Bolshoi theatre at the Pierre Cardin theatre in Paris. With Bharat Natyam dancer Rohinton Cama, Deboo shares a good rapport and has even performed with him. So, too, has he danced with Dodo Bhujwala. However, there has been no interaction between him and Shiamak Davar, their forms of dance being quite different from each other.

For the last six years Deboo has been actively involved with Calcutta's Action Players, a theater company of hearing impaired thespians. His relationship with the company started with a workshop he conducted for them in which he helped them coordinate movements and found a way of giving them a beat by breaking the music into a count. After which he has done a number of shows with them. "They work with different objects whereby you create different spaces for them," he explains. Working with them is a wonderful and challenging experience for Deboo from which he derives immense satisfaction.

Deboo loves doing dances, no matter in what context or form the opportunities present themselves. It is this approach that has led to short stints in Bollywood as well, doing dance sequences in two films. And he wouldn't mind doing more if he had the chance. "I am not averse to the idea. I do like to watch some of today's Hindi film songs. They are quite entertaining even if they tend to be repetitive," he admits. Anything related to the performing arts interests Deboo, be it music, theater, cinema or working with the handicapped.

By and large the Zoroastrian community doesn't respond to his dance performances. Few appreciate or even understand his style and form of dance. There is very little interaction with the community as far as his dance is concerned, says Deboo who regards himself as a practicing Zoroastrian who wears the sudreh and kusti, and goes to the agiary when he feels the need to do so.

Over the years other dancers' opinions on Deboo's style have ranged from the highly critical to patronising; speaking of which he says, "Many Indian dancers have now started innovating dance forms. They turn around and tell me what I am doing is Western while what they are doing is innovative Indian. Which is not true because so

many of my themes are based on everyday Indian life or political satire which is very Indian. I have used Dhrupad music by the Gundecha brothers in my shows. Just because I do not use heavy Kathakali technique as a base, does not mean that my work is Western. It is just an individualis-

"Many choreographers are stepping out of the traditional mold and beginning to work in the contemporary format"

tic style that is developed by taking different elements and forming a body of work. You have to look at it in its totality." He is a little disappointed by the fact that even today few of our leading dance performers have seen his work. He wishes that every dancer would view a lot of other dancers' work with a certain open-mindedness.

However, according to Deboo, more is happening in the contemporary dance scene in India today than a few years ago. "One sees a lot of changes taking place today," he says. "Many choreographers are stepping out of the traditional mold and beginning to work in the contemporary format. Today leading dance performers like Chandralekha, Daksha Seth and Mallika Sarabhai all have their own companies and are creating their respective styles. However, they do tend to stick to themes and ideas they feel safe with. I still find a lack of abstract, social and political work."

So, where does he see himself as a choreographer today? "Well," he says, "I am still learning, experimenting. There's a long way to go. I often meet people who ask me, 'You're still around?' and I tell them, 'Yes, I am still around. And going strong!'"

A HOLLYWOOD LOVE AFFAIR
continued from page 22

ger Rogers and a host of stars who had captured the world's imagination.

Like a conjurer, Dalal then pulls out a pack of tiny playing cards, just 3 cm x 4.5 cm in size. They are the "Broadway Fortune Telling Cards," presented with "SECRETS — the paper with the most stories." Each card has a photograph of a popular star on one side and a message on the reverse. "Maurice Chevalier, Paramount star — you'll have to choose money

or happiness." "Joan Crawford, MGM star — you'll have many suitors." For Bette Davis, Warner star — it's "an early marriage," for Gary Cooper "it's o'er land and sea you'll go," while Clark Gable's message is more sinister, "money coming through a death."

Dalal opens a copy of the 1933 *World Film Encyclopedia* — a veritable treasure house of information with 1,000 film biographies, with actors and actresses' real names, birthdays, marriages, etc, illustrated with art plates of studios, scenes and stars. There is a picture of a lavish outdoor set used by Cecil B. De Mille in the making of *The Sign of the Cross*; there are pictures of the MGM casting office in Culver City with crowds of "extras" waiting hopefully for a job.

"It was grandfather who taught me to value things. I think this collection is very valuable, I may sell it if I get a very good price," states Dalal. She mentions that Ravi Gupta, the managing director of National Film Development Corporation, had seen her collection and opined that she had enough good material for an exhibition. Dalal plans to approach international valuers and seek their expert opinion. The signatures on the photographs have not yet been authenticated.

"Whatever I am today is because of my grandfather," relates Dalal. "He was always encouraging me to do things, to achieve! 'Rough and tough *bano*,' he used to say." She remembers him as a friendly, helpful person, a well-known figure in Nagpur. She tends with care his movie memorabilia, in a manner befitting the patriarch who treasured Hollywood at home.

THE PEN OF PARSIDOM
continued from page 26

plus the cost factor" compelled the frequency to be brought down to three editions a month. While individuals "showed admiration and sympathy and gave donations, the real expectation from the trusts, industrial houses and companies did not materialize," discloses Kadva who has given himself a six-month deadline after which he will perforce introduce subscriptions, advertisements and sponsorships instead of the present set-up where any written request for inclusion on the mailer list is acceded to, free of cost.

In the meanwhile *Parsidom* plans to continue as a "humble, small size publication." As optimistically stated in the first issue, "We remain hopeful that we shall be able to make our presence felt and make our contribution for the larger welfare of Parsis."

THE PARSI BRAND EQUITY
continued from page 30

"long, strenuous hours of thinking, planning and execution."

Coordinators Marfatia and Monaz Dixit worked with the support of the BPP staff including chief executive Behram Laskari, additional joint secretary Sheroo Master, Bakhtawar Dastur and Persi Mistry. Aiding them were HPY alumni Khorram Siodia, Ashdeen Lilaowala, Fabian Panthaky, Parizad Tirandazi and Teenaz Bamji who continue to be members of the BPP Youth Club — a body that provides continuing voluntary contact for the youths at the end of each HPY camp.

This year too, as on earlier occasions, the youths had requested that the camp be prolonged, noted Marfatia. Extra social service meets were on the cards as was photographer Boman Irani's offer of a workshop for photography enthusiasts. Participant Diana Nariman who had begun the program not knowing "what was expected," said she found that "the spirit of giving, so dominant in our Parsi culture, was emphasized. Whatever was needed was done... New vistas, new doors, opened..."

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Leaves from a diary — II

Hilla P. Guzder

A Parsiana reader identifies the unknown diarist

When our December 1996 issue carrying extracts from an 1896 diary penned by an unknown Zoroastrian reached the home of one of our subscribers, 76-year-old Aloo Shiavux Mistry (née Banaji) of Bombay, it was the pictures of old Bombay which first attracted her attention. She started to read the diary.

"In the evening I with Misses Tehmina, Goolbai and Master Maneckjee went for a drive to the Victoria Gardens," wrote the anonymous diarist. To her surprise, Aloo realized that Master Maneckjee (but a child of three or four in 1896) was none other than her own father and his sisters were Tehmina and Goolbai!

"At night my poor sister Bachoobai under travail," continued the writer. Aloo knew that Tehmina, Maneckjee and Goolbai's mother's name was Bachoobai and this was therefore her own grandmother. And Nusserwanji Limji Banaji had been her grandfather's name! Realizing that the family being referred to was none other than her own, she delved deep

into the recesses of her mind, recalling words and events that had taken place when she was a young girl more than half a century ago. Putting memories together, she came to the conclusion that the unknown diarist was her grandmother Bachoobai's brother, Ardeshir Edulji Davar.

The jigsaw seemed to fit perfectly when she read, "I proposed Tehmina's hand in marriage to my friend Rustom (D. J. Mistry) but he refused the offer..." She knew that Tehmina and Rustom had been married around the year 1900, they being none other than her husband Shiavux's own parents! (As was common during yesteryear, Aloo Banaji was married in 1939 to her father's sister's son Shiavux Mistry — see family tree.)

On the basis of information provided by Aloo Mistry and her daughter Armaiti, *Parsiana* presents for its

readers the ancestral tree of the diarist's family — the Davars as well as the Banajis (of Fort's Banaji Limji Agiary family). Not much is known of the diarist himself, nor have we been able to find his photograph. The diary had been given to *Parsiana* by Sylla Vatcha. The Banaji Limji family tree was given to *Parsiana* for perusal by Dadi K. Banaji, trustee of the agiary.

The photographs of Tehmina and Rustom, Maneckjee and Jerbanoo with their children were provided by Aloo Mistry. The photographs of Bachoobai, her other daughter Shirinbai with husband Merwanjee Panday were presented by Shirinbai's grandson, Zarir Rustom Joshi.



Above: Maneckjee and Jerbanoo Banaji in the 1930s with their children (from left) Phiroze, Daulat and Aloo and Avabai Colabawalla, Jerbanoo's mother

Right: Bachoobai Banaji photographed in the 1940s

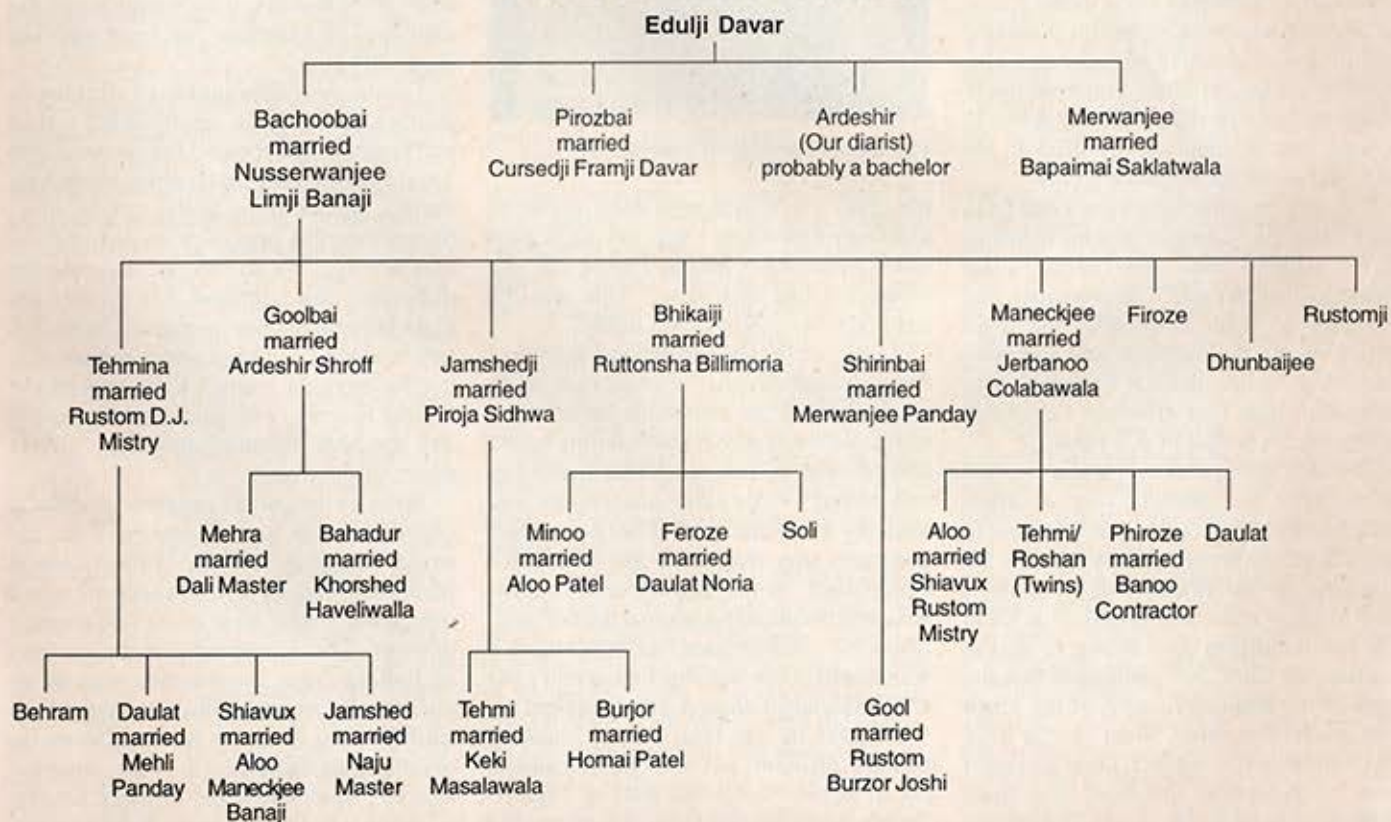
Transparencies of photos by Chetan Mistry



Below: Shirinbai and Merwanjee Panday in 1917
 Right: Tehmina and Rustom Mistry around 1910 with Daulat and Shiavux (center)



THE DAVAR FAMILY



"If life is a party..."

Ruksana Mehta

Katie Pastakia's heroic suffering was alleviated in the care of compassionate people

As I ponder over the past, I wonder what control, if any, we have over the milestones, or even the less significant events of our life in this world. There is a view that we have multiple choices and are therefore rulers of our destiny. Conversely, others believe that only chance or fate can explain the events unfolding in time and space.

It was at a jashan in the home of a friend, that Behram Pastakia, someone I knew only by sight, chanced to sit by my side. After the prayers were over, I turned to him and introduced myself. In the ensuing conversation I offered to assist his wife Katie in any way I could since she had been diagnosed as suffering from ovarian cancer. Having experienced health problems myself, I was anxious to help but also cautious about avoiding embarrassment should my offer be rejected. I suggested to Behram that he mention my offer to his wife, and leave the decision to her.

The very next morning I got a call from Katie Pastakia. "Can you take me to hospital for a blood test?" she asked. "I am unable to drive myself." Thus we met, and continued to meet frequently, the main purpose being the transport and company I provided for her medical treatment. Our friendship, trust and affection developed slowly over a period of 3.5 years.

The first serious conversation we had on our very first meeting was on death. Katie brought up the subject as we drove to hospital that morning. Knowing that the prognosis of her illness was terminal, I tried to gloss over the subject. But Katie was too intelligent and strong to accept less than the truth. She mentioned that she knew of my medical history, of my brush with death. She said, "Most people have not thought on this subject, I feel you must have." I expressed the view that since death is inevitable for us all, our choice was to face it with grace and equanimity,

or with fear and terror. I also remember quoting to her what I had once read somewhere: "If life could be viewed as a party which we all attended, some of us would go home early, while some would want to stay till the very end." I told her that given



Pastakia: a profile in courage

the choice, I would personally prefer to make my exit while I was having a good time. I remember her smiling at me and saying, "I like that view." This was the only time we talked about death.

In the early days of our association, I had some apprehensions about how Katie would handle the inevitable, and how I would accept her progressive failing health and the eventual parting. All my fears were unfounded. With calm acceptance and amazing grace she carried her heavy burden every step of the way. She never once complained in my hearing about the illness which caused her a great deal of pain, discomfort and perhaps fear in her heart. I watched her cope with the loss of hair after chemotherapy. I observed that her right leg was larger in size than the left, making balance difficult and sometimes causing her to topple over as she walked. I feared for her as she gasped for breath during the smallest exertion.

Then came a time when she was deemed to be in remission. Katie was happy, grateful and very relieved when her treatment was stopped. She mentioned to me that chemo had reduced the quality of her life to "nothing." Unfortunately, the aggressive return of her disease made it necessary to restart her treatment in a few months.

While she always astounded me with her courage, Katie also puzzled me by her reaction to an injection. She could cry like an infant when she saw the needle approach her arm during the chemotherapy. This recurring scene was perhaps embarrassing to her, as well as to the medical staff. We talked about the situation and she explained that the fear had been with her since childhood.

On the next appointment I decided to distract her from the approaching ordeal and began to "interview" her for an article I said I was writing on courage. I kept up a barrage of questions at the critical time. Sometimes this approach helped. As she said simply, "We all have to deal with the difficult." She admitted that for her the night brought out the "monsters of fear and terror which I can keep under control during the daylight hours." Katie was an excellent listener, with empathy for people and was able to contribute to any subject under discussion.

Even as her cancer progressed and she coped with the loss of energy, Katie insisted on going to work at the National Institute of Health (NIH) where she was a research scientist. How ironic and tragic, I thought — being employed in the sanctum of finding cures for diseases, and being afflicted by an incurable one yourself. It surprised me that she would always request me to drive her to work after her morning session of chemotherapy. On one occasion when her morning had been particularly stressful and exhausting, I asked



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her why she insisted on going to work. "I identify myself by the work I produce," she said. "I feel awful doing nothing at home. I also enjoy the feeling of achievement." I can still see Katie saying this in my mind's eye. Her colleagues went beyond the call of duty in assisting and welcoming her at work. Many gave up their leave for her and helped her deal with a host of problems. Their compassion and affection for Katie was touching.

Katie was the only child of a middle-class Bombay family. She was encouraged by her parents to excel at her studies. They repeatedly reminded her that she was capable of doing wonderful things in life, that no goal was beyond her grasp. Looking back on her life, Katie frequently expressed gratitude for her dad, now aged and almost completely blind, and for her mother whom she adored. She had great love for Indian dancing and the piano. She could not pursue her love of dancing since, in keeping with the times, her parents viewed it with disfavor. Her skill at the piano however, was a source of great joy and comfort to all in her times of anguish. Katie had continued her postgraduate education by winning scholarships to the UK. She had earned her masters and doctoral

degree in research before going to the USA and finding employment at the NIH.

Katie married a colleague, Dr Behram Pastakia, in 1983. As a young married couple they led a normal life, fulfilling the demands of career and family. The light of their lives was their only child, their daughter Mehr. Katie tried to be a parent in the same mold as her own, putting emphasis on education, discipline and self-reliance. To meet the demands of medical care, her work schedule and her inability to drive, Katie made a few hard choices. She let others handle her household chores. She also took the decision of letting Mehr, now 10 years old, walk alone to a friend's house for a ride to summer school. This decision caused her a great deal of anxiety as she waited by the telephone to hear that Mehr had safely reached her destination. Mehr progressed to become an excellent dancer in *kuchipudi* — a classical Indian dance style, and went regularly for piano lessons.

Katie put up a brave facade regarding her illness for her daughter's sake. Yet in her own way, she also prepared Mehr for the inevitable parting her illness would force on them. Unable to move at this stage without a wheel chair, Katie continued going to work where a wheel chair awaited

her arrival.

The number of friends who cheered Katie on was indeed remarkable. I could only guess that she had touched many lives in the nicest ways. Cooked food was always being brought in by friends, and many volunteered their time to take her for the medical care she required. Katie once referred to all these friends as her "guardian angels." What was surprising was that the friends not only spanned many cultures and multiple economic levels, but also many age groups.

Sometimes I would have to brace myself to enter Katie's home with a determinedly cheerful exterior, making every effort to behave in a normal way. I think she appreciated that, and enjoyed having friends call in. In the early days she made the effort to wear a wig or put on a scarf to cover her loss of hair. In time she was reconciled to her lot. It became normal for us to see Katie in her hairless state, and those of us who loved her saw her radiate an inner beauty.

In our conversations she always "called it as she saw it" — there was truthfulness always, tempered with kindness. In my very last conversation with her, she said she was at peace and forgave all who had



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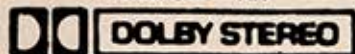
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ever harmed her. In constant pain, her mental faculties were intact till the very end. Often I found myself pondering a quotation I had chanced upon: "What I can give is never as much as I get from the giving." How true! Katie enriched me constantly.

Katie's mother rushed in from Bombay to be with her dying daughter. Her mother's presence gave Katie solace and joy. One cannot even guess at the agony of this mother who kept her own emotions under check, helping her only child face the unknown. Katie's husband faced many challenges with equilibrium, including the prospect of becoming a single parent. Katie took her suffering well. Unable to turn, sit up or walk without help, she lay quietly in bed with her eyes closed. As we watched the end approach, we could not help but admire the courage and fortitude she exemplified.

At one level, she was aware that time was running out. She made her last wishes known to a lawyer. She left instructions for the disposal of her last remains — but at another level she seemed to think the end was distant. She spoke of her need for health insurance in the future; she perceived a need to build up her strength by eating healthy foods for which she had no appetite; and she even insisted on having her teeth cleaned by her dentist who worked on her at home, three days before the end. Katie frequently said that love for her daughter gave her the determination to fight for her life, and she fought valiantly — every inch of the way!

On the afternoon of December 14, 1996, at the age of 45, Katie slipped away from this world — leaving behind family and friends who will remember and miss her always, sometimes desperately. A few of us gathered together in her home that evening to say our final goodbyes privately. As I sat in the living room downstairs, the decorated Christmas tree placed near the window seemed to remind us that life goes on, even as the sound of tranquil prayers floated down.

The funeral was remarkable for the crowds that came to pay their last respects. Mehr's plaintive plea to her mother to return was heartbreaking, as was the bursting of the dam that had long held Katie's mother's emotions in check. We who sat in the funeral home were all united in our common grief, and barely an eye remained dry.

Katie's suffering and pain are over, that is my only consolation. I also draw comfort from my belief that death is a part of life, and not an end.

With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

Gentlemen in Business

R. M. Lala

Life's Flag Is Never Furlled — Godrej, A Hundred Years 1897-1997, Volume I by B. K. Karanjia. Published in 1997 by Viking Penguin Books India Private Limited, 210, Chiranjiv Tower, 43 Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019. Pp: 265 + xxi. Price: Rs 295.

There are times in the history of a nation when, amid crises and chaos, leaders of great vision and stature emerge and a part of their greatness descends on those who live in their shadows. Author and journalist, Burjor K. Karanjia, who has chronicled the 100 years of the House of Godrej, feels that India in the early 20th century was at such a point of time when it covered, in a brief span, the track of centuries.

He says, "It was a great time to be alive. A time to dream great dreams. There was a tremendous upsurge of activity everywhere. India's underdeveloped economy was undergoing a rapid transformation, as if the energies of the entire nation were bent by one common urge, not only to be free, but to eradicate the vestiges of age-old poverty and misery of the masses."

Karanjia begins the Godrej story with the early development of Bombay as the backdrop. "Two factors," says he, "helped the city to become what it is today: able British administrators who had the vision and the means to mobilize the resources required for translating that vision into reality; and innumerable Indians of all races and creeds who helped to implement and execute the bold plans being made for the city's development."

Karanjia, as if on the wings of a time machine, takes us through the era when palanquins and *palkhis*, drawn by sweating hamals dotted the streets of Bombay, and Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee was celebrated as "the most successful imperial pageant ever staged." Cinema, Karanjia informs us, came to India during the monsoons of 1896. The Bombay edition of *The Times of India* dated July 7, 1896, carried an advertisement inviting its readers to reach Watson's Hotel, Kala Ghoda, at 7 p.m. to witness "The Marvel of the Cen-

tury, The Wonder of the World."

The Godrej story itself begins with Ardeshir B. Godrej, the visionary patriarch of the family. In 1894, young Ardeshir, fresh from law studies in Bombay, had gone to argue a client's case on behalf of a well-known firm of solicitors in Zanzibar. The case went well. Narrates Karanjia, "Ardeshir conducted his



Industrial pioneers Ardeshir (left) and Pirojsha

arguments not with flamboyance but with calm and reasonableness, when, during the course of argument, an unforeseen difficulty arose. The truth would have to be twisted in his client's favor, the sort of thing that the usual lawyer takes in his stride. But Ardeshir was an unusual man. He refused." He returned to India. The legal fraternity in Zanzibar lost a scrupulous lawyer. But India was to find an industrial pioneer.

While some leaders were waging a political battle, Ardeshir, like Jamsetji Tata just before him, was convinced that without economic self-reliance, freedom for India would remain a distant dream. British goods sold in India at the expense of Indian goods (at times, of as good a quality if not better) were forging the chains that kept the country subjugated. The British had, therefore, to be beaten at their own game. Indian goods had to be manufactured in India that would be as good as the imported ones — and cheaper.

Says Karanjia, "It was characteristic of

Ardeshir to whom challenges were the stuff of achievement that he should have begun by trying his manufacturing skills on a product that would test them to the utmost and could be put to a highly specialized use." The product was surgical goods. He failed to break the British monopoly as earlier, Jamsetji Tata had failed to overcome the British stranglehold on shipping.

Ardeshir made a small beginning by hiring a tiny shed beside the Bombay Gas Works at Lalbaug at Rs 20 a month, and started the manufacture of locks in 1897. From locks, safes were to follow. Ardeshir cleared the prevailing misconception that the heavier the safe, the more secure it was. He stressed that it was the design, not the weight, that made all the difference. The 16-corner bend of Godrej safes made them fire, fall and burglar-resistant.

Having taken a major step forward in achieving total self-reliance in security engineering, one would think that Ardeshir would have sat back content to consolidate his gains. But it wasn't in his nature to do so. Gains, in a monetary sense, meant little to him. He wanted just enough for his needs and his needs were spartan. He was restless unless he was trying out new things, exploring yet newer avenues to self-reliance as if seeking to capture some mysterious inner vision.

Long before soap manufacture was known to India, Indians were using their own cleansing agents like soap suds for washing and gram flour for bathing purposes. Ardeshir therefore decided to try his hand at manufacturing soap. In 1920, he produced the first toilet soap to be made purely from vegetable oils and sold commercially. Economically, it was a sound proposition because plentiful supplies of vegetable oils were then available within the country. Socially, too, the experiment was blessed because it respected religious sentiments by replacing animal fats from which foreign soaps were made.

Today, we have film stars who endorse beauty products like soaps. In Ardeshir's time, national leaders did that. For exam-

ple, Rabindranath Tagore declared, "I know of no foreign soap better than Godrej, and I have made it a point to use Godrej soaps." Mahatma Gandhi was approached by a competitive soap-maker for his blessings. Gandhiji replied "I hold my brother Godrej in such high regard and he is of such a charitable disposition that if your enterprise is likely to harm him in any way, I regret very much I cannot give you my blessings."

Ardeshir fervently believed in *swadeshi* products. To the surprise of his nephews, he once threw British-made and attractively-packaged biscuits out of the window, admonishing them that they should think of eating biscuits only after they were made in India; adding that, anyway, home-made *chapatis* were healthier.

There was, however, never any rancor in his dealings with the British. Carefully hidden behind his serious demeanor, was a puckish sense of humor. A British friend once remarked, "You know, Mr Godrej, we British are today on top of the world." Quick came Ardeshir's retort: "Well, I'm glad to hear that because, as you know, the world goes round, and what's up has got to come down."

Ardeshir was a simple man who believed in unostentatious living. He would take public transport or walk to his destination, using a car only late in life at brother Pirojsha's insistence. He was a man of considerable culture and a voracious reader, particularly of literature and philosophy. His brother, Pirojsha, was fond of books, too. Every morning, Ardeshir spent a few minutes at the Vachagandhi Agiary on Hughes Road. "But," says the author, "he was truly religious in the sense that he lived his religion, particularly in the practice of philanthropy." In 1921, he donated three lakhs of rupees (nearly three crores today) to the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

He also had his share of misfortunes. Tragedy struck Ardeshir immediately after his marriage when his young wife, Bachubai, still in her teens, accompanied by her cousin, Pirojbai S. Kamdin, went up the Rajabai Tower for a bird's-eye view of the city. They were followed up the stairs by a ruffian (the son of a well-known

millionaire) whose threatening demeanor so alarmed the girls that, panic-stricken, with no way to escape, they jumped off the railing to their death in the University Gardens, 200 feet below.

The event caused a sensation in the city. There was an outcry in the Press. Typical



At the wedding of Nadir Godrej to Rati Vaghaiwalla: (standing, left to right) Adi, Vijay Krishna, Soonu, Pheroza, Dosa Naoroji, K. N. Naoroji, Burjor and Jamshyd; (sitting, L to R) Sorab and Jai. (alongside) Naval

of the sense of outrage and commiseration were the words of J. R. B. Jeejeebhoy, "They (the two girls) loved the name of honor more than they feared death. It was a glorious immolation, the triumph of the soul over the flesh, for which the annals of Bombay seek for any similarity in vain."

Tragedy drives some men to despair, it ennobles others. Ardeshir never spoke about his loss. He did not remarry and died childless, showering great affection on his brother Pirojsha's children.

While Ardeshir did not care for money in itself, his brother Pirojsha demonstrated that money used properly can do a lot of good. Money, to Pirojsha, was for consolidation and expansion, for greater employment and bigger benefits to workers.

Profits were religiously ploughed back into the business, taxes were paid to the state. When taxes reached a punishing level, Godrej decided to set aside 32 percent of their profit for charity.

Pirojsha was far ahead of government legislation in the labor benefits he provided. He and his son Naoroji (Naval), knew each worker by name.

Karanjia, who himself worked at Godrej at the start of his career, returned to Godrej

a couple of decades later. He draws attractive vignettes of executives who made the House of Godrej tick. The Godrej story is not limited to industrial excellence and enlightened concerns. It is also a very human chronicle of strong, determined persons, gifted with vision and talents, who pioneered a large and unique business empire. For example, Naoroji Godrej was capable of stripping off his shirt if a machine went wrong, and set it right. His brother Burjorji, a learned scientist was humble and straightforward. The best known among the brothers in our time is Sohrab (fondly called Soli) whose interests lie in the field of philanthropy, wildlife, the environment and family planning. Perhaps no industrialist of our country has travelled as widely as he has — including a visit to the Antarctic.

Mr S. P. Godrej's passion in life is the preservation of the environment — a passion he inherited from his father, Pirojsha. Godrej have shown at their Vikhroli plant how industry, far from spoiling the environment, can enrich it. Their schools are models. The vision of the founders and the second generation was to create a prosperous, caring nation by their concern for their staff and society. And the third generation which has taken on the challenges, will feature in a yet-to-be-published Volume II.

Karanjia, in his tribute to Pirojsha, quotes, "He never sold the truth to serve



Author Karanjia

the hour/Nor pattered with eternal God for power..." The importance of this book for today lies in the fact that it portrays 'gentlemen' in business, at a time when the business ethos is ruthless and unethical. This is the legacy that the young Godrejs inherit. We wish them luck in their endeavor to live up to it.

The only criticism one could have of the book is that in today's world of high speed and pressures, it moves at the leisure of Victorian times. The text could perhaps have been much more compact, eliminating minor details or keeping them in an appendix, if need be.

Emphasis on ethics

Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar P. Karanjia

Social Philosophy as Found in the Sacred Books of the Zoroastrians by Dastoor N. D. Minochehr-Homji. Published in 1996 by Mr B. K. Laskari, chief executive, Parsi Punchayet, 209 Dr D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001. Pp: 203 + vi. Price: Rs 135.

Originally a thesis submitted in 1960 by the author to the University of Bombay for his Master of Arts degree in sociology, this book richly draws its source from *yasht* literature. In his introduction the author speaks of the values in the Zoroastrian religion which made Iranian history and culture "a factor of real importance" in world history. The book is a treasure trove of references from Avestan and Pahlavi scriptures, from the *Shah Nameh* and other literature on the topics covered here. In fact, just on the basis of the cross references one can gauge Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji's deep study and mastery over his chosen field of sociology.

The first chapter starts out with an explanation of the "all comprehensive term Asha, the fundamental law of the universe." The author has explained the composite scheme of *ameshaspands*, their *hamkars* (co-workers) and their work. He has dealt with virtues like love, charity, joy, truth, education, mercy and forgiveness which spring from the seven *ameshaspands*.

The author deals with the institution of family in Iran after the advent of Prophet Zarathushtra and speaks of the impact of his moral and ethical teachings on it. The topic of marriage, "a very important socio-religious institution and a sacrament," forms an important portion of the second chapter covering in detail the different types of marriages in Iran. It ends with a description of the ideal man, woman and child and the ideal education to be provided to children according to the *Avesta*.

A short chapter deals with an important institution of Iranian society — the four-fold professional class division into priests, warriors, agriculturists and artisans. Minochehr-Homji deals with a hitherto little known institution of Iranian society — the *anjoman*, the controlling assembly of el-

ders whose purpose was to regulate the religious (ethical and ritualistic) and social affairs of its members. The head of the *anjoman* was called a *rad* or *ratu*. This *anjoman*, constituted of responsible persons of the community, had the power to settle disputes, set punishments and exercise general control over the members. Ceremonies like marriage were to be performed in the presence of the *anjoman*.



Minochehr-Homji:
"right conduct is above
everything else"

The most voluminous chapter of this book concerns Zoroastrian ethics. It begins with an explanation of the constitution of man and goes on to deal with the Zoroastrian concepts of Daena, Sraosha, Mithra, Veretraghna, Rashnu, Ram and Ashi. The descriptions involve a lengthy summary of the respective *yashts* dedicated to the above divinities and unique analytical tables giving the contents of the *yashts*.

Dealing with the Zoroastrian philosophy of life after death, the author attempts topics like the faculties and acts on which the future life of the soul depends, the divine tribunal, a description of heaven, hell, Chinwad Bridge, reward and retribution to the soul. This chapter ends with a complete translation of the Pahlavi-Pazand text the *Aogemaide*, which the author calls "The Zoroastrian sermon on death."

The last chapter is a summation on the final goal of men in this mortal world and the universal renovation. In this chapter the author discusses the *Khvarenangh Yasht* (popularly known as the *Zamyad Yasht*) "to substantiate facts regarding the renovation." The book ends with references to renovation from the Pahlavi books *Zand Akasih* (Iranian or Greater *Bundahishn*) and *Dadistan-i-Denik*.

One's final impression is that the book should have dealt more with sociology and the social aspects of religion, rather than Zoroastrian theology and angelology with which it is replete.

The author's penchant for simplifying the concepts of the Zoroastrian religion is evident throughout the book and so is his affinity for going beyond the written word. In this context the clarification offered

about 'sea' Vourukasha is noteworthy, as here the author has proved beyond any doubt the oft-repeated truth that words — common as well as proper nouns — should not be taken at face value but should be viewed in their scriptural context, as they stand for different things at different times. In the same vein, Minochehr-Homji gives the allegorical significance of the Prophet's sons and daughters as suggestive "of the stages of progress of his mission." The author also gives a "detailed treatment" of the scheme of the Prophet's future 'sons' and 'their mothers' in the latter half of the last chapter.

The point emphasized in this book is that "right conduct (is) above everything else," surely above mere rites. The author's preference for ethics over rituals is again evident when he says that religion as "the repository of values... advances the world to perfection." The ethical aspects of the Zoroastrian religion are thus over-emphasized and the ritualistic aspects are grossly neglected in the book.

Prof K. D. Irani observes in the Foreword, "Zoroastrianism is an old religion... which places upon its modern scholar the responsibility of interpreting the terms and propositions of a literature embedded in cultural layers of different periods of antiquity."

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet needs to be commended for publishing this book. One only wishes that it had been brought out earlier, preferably during the lifetime of the late author.

CORRECTION

Sorry we 'slip'-ped

Apropos our review, "Wicked Wicket Ways (*Parsiana*, November 1996)," of Kersi Meher-Homji's book *Hat Tricks*, we stand corrected on our statement that the book's index does not make a mention of Baqa Jilani and Chetan Sharma, both performers of a hat trick, whose achievements have been featured in the book. An ever-vigilant Meher-Homji points this out to our review-weary eyes by helpfully sending a xerox copy of the index page with the relevant entries highlighted. We apologise for the 'slip.' However, in our defence we may state that while almost all entries are indexed by surname, and though Baqa Jilani is referred to as 'Jilani' in the text, the index strangely catalogs him under 'B' as Baqa Jilani.

Yet, with true 'gentleman-cricket' spirit, Meher-Homji concedes our point suggesting that "limited-overs internationals

should have been given more space." He is also "grateful" that we pointed out omissions of Mubarak Ali's and Nyalchand's Walsh-like hat-tricks, and promises to add these items if a reprint of the book is undertaken.

Homi J. Rogers

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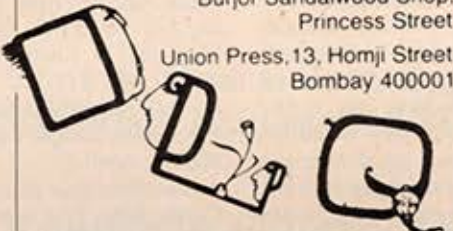
THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in Parsiana have now been reprinted in an attractive 24-page booklet. The book, which is priced at Rs 25, is available on sale at:

Kaiser-E-Hind, 300 Perin Nariman Street, Behind Reserve Bank of India, Fort, Bombay 400001.

Fareedoon and Burjor Sandalwood Shop, Princess Street

Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Bombay 400001



Addendum

Due to an oversight the photo credits for certain pictures in the February-March 1997 issue were omitted. We list below the photographs along with the names of the respective photographers: pictures of the inauguration of the Pherozechah Mehta Bhavan, Turan Jamshidian, Gool and Dinshaw Joshi, Khorshed Jungalwala, Sir Dinshaw Petit and a few pictures of the 10th All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar (AIZYS) were shot by Arnava Mama. Other photographs of the 10th AIZYS were by Homyar Mistry of Homz Prints. The pictures of the Navsari Parsi Association honoring Dastur Mirza were by Adi Sudder. For the photograph of the book release function of *The Parsis*, credit goes to Noshir Desai. The transparencies of Rohinton Chinoy were by Chetan Mistry. The omission is regretted.



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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 22 and 44 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 30 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 27 and 46 years, averaging at 33 years.

The Bombay Towers of Silence registered 49 deaths in April as compared to 15 births. The major killer — heart disease — took a toll of 13 lives of which nine were 80 years plus. Eight Zoroastrians fell prey to lung disease and pneumonia whereas cancer claimed seven lives. Six patients succumbed to old age and general debility, four to brain disease, three to bronchitis and two to kidney failure. The six isolated cases registered for April were septicemia, vehicular accident, dementia, hypothyroidism, Parkinson's disease and uremia. The youngest to die was a 10-year-old boy as compared to the oldest, a 102-year-old lady. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth, in Bombay in April, was 76 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.

AGRA

BORN

A boy, *Malcalm*, to *Jenifer* and *Porus Debara* on November 6, 1996

AHMEDABAD

DIED

Hoshang Pirojshah Contractor (67), husband of *Rashna* and father of *Shezad*; April 23, 1997

BOMBAY

BORN

Twins (girls) to *Farnaaz* and *Burjor Sethna*; April 3
A girl to *Behroze* and *Hoshang Engineer*; April 12
A boy to *Seema* and *Homiya Patel*; April 13
A girl to *Natasha* and *Rishad Lalla*; April 15
A girl to *Khurshid* and *Vispi Palkhiwalla*; April 16
A girl to *Hufiz* and *Cyrus Poonawalla*; April 17
A boy to *Kashmira* and *Behram Billimoria*; April 21
A boy to *Suzanne* and *Fali Poncha*; April 21
A girl to *Armaity* and *Noshir Shroff*; April 21

A girl to *Villu* and *Vicky Irani*; April 22

A girl to *Farzana* and *Viraf Master*; April 22

A girl to *Kamal* and *Rustom Titina*; April 28

A girl to *Pouruchisti* and *Cawas Dubash*; April 29

A boy to *Pervin* and *Homiya Wadia*; April 29

MARRIED

Hutokshi Rusi Ookajee and *Hoshedar Ratansha Zaroliwalla*; April 5
Aban Kaikaus Mistry and *Yezdi Phiroze Chinoy*; April 6
Kashmira Naval Daruvala and *Behram Pesi Dubash*; April 8
Nilofer Adi Anklesaria and *Viraf Jamshed Anklesaria*; April 13
Dhun Dossabhoy Kamdin and *Aspi Burjor Chhapgar*; April 13
Anahita Neville Modi and *Xerxis Soli Daruwalla*; April 13
Rashna Gev Pastakia and *Rohinton Tehmuras Sanjana*; April 13
Yasmin Homi Kapadia and *Naozar Minoo Dittia*; April 17
Farahnaz Faredoon Parvaresh

and *Kayomerz Boman Irani*; April 18
Shernaz Minoo Driver and *Porus Keki Irani*; April 19
Rookzain Keki Daruwalla of New Delhi and *Armin Minoo Sorabji*; April 22
Benaifer Aspi Wadia and *Jarir Pesi Hira*; April 25
Venus Adil Dubash and *Percy Darabshaw Mehta*; April 26

DIED

Manijeh Cawasji Engineer (87), residing at F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 1
Dinoo Jehangir Jabbar (71), 100/1, Sant Tulsidas Apts, 826/8, Dastoor Meher Rd, Poona, 411001; April 1
Ay Soli Shroff (66), Nariman Bldg, 162, M. Karve Rd, 400021; April 1
Homai Framji (Ghadiali) (93), 139, Minoo Lodge, Tardeo Rd, 400034; April 2
Arman Meherbun Khosravi (35), Clifton Bldg, Prof Almeida Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 2
Jal Cawasji Powwalla (83), 26, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 2
Shazad Soli Irani (39), Kemas Cottage, Patel Pada, Dahanu Rd, 401602; April 5
Nergish Rustomji Bengali (66), 22, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008; April 6
Phiroze Eruchsha Minocherhomji (70), 5/1, Sir Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; April 6
Darabsha Bejonji Bulsara (87), Devidas Mans, Balaram St, 400007; April 7
Tehmina Ruttonshaw Dungor (90), Jehangir Mans, A. Podar Marg, 400020; April 8
Rustom Bomanji Garda (91), 1-5/U, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 8
Franey Pheroze Katrak (93), 94/B, Pandey Hse, August Kranti Marg, 400036; April 10
Rustomji Ratanshaw Patel (76), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 10
Jal Nariman Bhaisa (82), E/1, Sea Face Park, Bhulabhai Desai Rd, 400026; April 11
Soonabai Ardeshtir Irani (95), 9/31, Sion Mans, Sion (W), 400022; April 11

Coomi Nariman Mistry (75), 9, Transval Ter, P. B. Marg, 400008; April 12
Fali Nusservanji Vazifdar (63), 803/B, Adajania Hse, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 12
Kersi Burjorji Billimoria (70), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 14
Freny Jehangir Avasia (74), 611, Pateti Block No 3, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 15
Jal Kaikhushru Bardi (80), Hardinge Hse, Gowalia Tank Rd, 400036; April 15
Sarosh Aspy Minocherhomji (10), Lady Dorab Tata Bldg No 3, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 15
Perin Rustomji Mistry (72), 275/B, Captain Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; April 15
Dolly Boman Irani (68), 1, Park Hse, 81, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; April 16
Mani Nadirshaw Shroff (70), F/13, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 16
Shirin Rustomji Daruwalla (85), 35, Ratan Mans, Forjett St, 400036; April 17
Coomi Sohrab Mistry (82), Ahura, 84, Sion Rd, Sion (E), 400022; April 17
Hilla Kaikhushru Sarkari (97), CoolShanagh, N. Gamadia Rd, 400026; April 17
Farida Jamshyd Sethna (44), 82, Goolestan, 34, B. Desai Rd, 400026; April 18
Ratti Keki Chinoy (82), 286/A, Bhatia Co-op Soc Bldg, Princess St, 400002; April 19
Parvez Noshirvan Dastur (62), Panthaky Hse, Behind Panthaky Agiary, Off Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 19
Minoo (Minocher) Kaikhushroo Lakdavalala (79), 34, Jupiter Apts, 41, Capt P. Pethe Marg, Cuffe Parade, 400005; April 19
Adi Jehanbux Mody (75), 1, Dhanjibhoy Bomanjee New Bldg, Nawab Tank Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; April 19
Edu Faramrose Dhondy (80), Jehangir Towers, 10, Setalwad Rd, Off Napean Sea Rd, 400036; April 20
Dinbai Faramrose Printer (Makhania) (94), 2, S. R.

Contractor Bldg, Sussex Rd,
400027; April 20
Burjor Rustomji Dudhmul (72),
Karani Bldg, Raja Ram Mohan
Roy Rd, Grant Rd, 400007;
April 22

Jamshedji Jehangirji Dumasia
(68), 34, Irani Bldg, 7th
Khetwadi Lane, 400004;
April 22

Sorab Dorabji Motafram (96),
84-D/1, Bharucha Baug,
S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058;
April 23

Barzo Irach Taraporewala (75),
14, India House No 2, August
Kranti Marg, 400036; April 23
Zarin Keki Dumasia (55), 220/B,
The Reward, Tardeo Rd,
400007; April 24

Banubai Shawakshaw Hansotia
(93), D/8, Cusrow Baug,
S. B. Rd, 400039; April 24
Banoo Tehmuras Shroff (83),
211, Major Vetrinathan Rd,
Colaba, 400005; April 25

Dhuni Framroze Dariwala
(86), Haji Habib Bldg, Naigaon
Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014;
April 27

Ardeshtir Ratanji Udawadia (88),
B, Awabai Petit Chawl, Balaram
St, 400007; April 27

Tehmina Pirojsha Laher (96),
9/D, Mistry Bldg, M. P. Agiary
Lane, Balaram St, 400007;
April 28

Savaksha Behramji Morena (76),
786/A, Khareghat Rd, Parsi
Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 28

Cawas Khurshedji Bharucha
(90), E, Wassiamull Bldg, Grant
Rd, 400007; April 29

Dosibhai Dinshaw Dadiburjor
(102), 202, Jewel Tower, St Paul
Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 30

Noshir Framroze Mistry (88),
Ahunavar, 617, Jame Jamshed
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
April 30

INDORE

BORN

Triplets (two boys and a girl),
Hormazd, Arban and Friyan, to
Thirya and Adil Dossabhoj;
April 19

LUCKNOW

DIED

Freny Anklesaria (73), wife of
Behramshah and mother of
Kerfegar and Farshogar;
April 20

MHOW

DIED

Kairus Masalawala (23), son of

FIGURES AT A GLANCE *									
	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	1996	1997	This issue	1996	1997	This issue	1996	1997
BORN									
Boys	4	98	31	3	9	5	---	34	3
Girls	11	118	30	1	4	3	---	38	6
MARRIED									
Parsi	13	193	120	---	6	1	---	19	---
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	---	25	---	---	3	---	---	2	1
Females married out	---	20	---	---	2	---	---	7	1
DIED									
CONSIGNED									
Males	24	457	143	14	98	39	---	68	9
Females	25	502	164	19	89	42	---	48	11
CREMATED									
Males	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Females	---	1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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.

Jer and Kersi and brother of
Shirzad; April 15

NAVSARI

DIED

Daulat Sadri (75), wife of Pesi
and sister of Najamai Jalejar
Bacha and Mithamai Pallanji
Bacha; April 3
Roshan Kasad (69), wife of
Sohrabji and mother of Yezdi,
Zarir and Mahrukh Mehernoz
Billimoria; April 19
Shirinbai Fareedoon Maktedar
(75), C/o Cyrus Chiniwala,
Desaiwad, Mota Falia, 396445;
April 21

Bhikhaji Dhunjishaw Variava
(80), husband of Perin and
father of Parvez, Pervin Pervez
Kumana and Khorshed Dhunji
Vaghchipawalla; April 22
Sheramai Cooverji Rajvadevala
(68), mother of Dara, Veera
Sarosh Irani, Zarine Jamshed
Irani, Gulshan Parvez
Sopariwalla and Shiraz Percy
Patrawalla; April 23

Cavasji Khurshedji Kotwal (96),
father of Khurshed and Maneck;
April 27
Najoo Navroji Tamboli (82),
mother of Bachi Dinshaw
Tamboly and Sorab; April 30

POONA

DIED

Avan A. Kapadia (75), Avan

Abad, 826/13, Mahadji Shinde
Rd, 411040; March 2

Hilla Savak Nicholson (89),
1968, Gafferbag St, 411001;
March 2

Pestonji Phiroshaw Daverwala
(96), 6/2, Virdhawan Garden,
Salisbury Park, 411037; March 4
Cawas Jehangir Jeejeebhoy
(53), 4, Stavelly Rd, Iron Gates,
411001; March 8

Homai Firoze Dastur (79), 2/22,
Guruprasad, Bund Garden Rd,
411001; March 11

Sorabji J. Poonawalla (90), 1/B,
Dr Coyaji Rd, 411001; March 12
Shelia Ardeshtir Irani (75), 70,
New Bazaar, Kirkee, 411003;
March 13

Khorshed Phiroze Bhanja (96),
29/A, Kahun Rd, 411001;
March 14

Phiroza Merwan Irani (76), 2/7,
Ardeshtir Baug, Nana Peth,
411002; March 19

Noshir Sherry Irani (30), 19,
Sethna Bldg, Parel Tank Rd,
Bombay, 400012; March 24
Minocher Sorabji Cooper (99),
202, Shahjanand Complex, East
St, 411001; March 29

Ardeshtir Rustom Irani (69),
B/14, Parmar Ngr, F/I,
Fatimanagar, 411001; April 3
Bomansha Rustomji Balsara
(74), C-5/6, Kubera Park,
Lullanagar, 411040; April 14
Piroja Dhunjishaw Aga (96), 12,

Boat Club Rd, 411001; April 15
Katayan Eruch Soonawala (77),
6/11, Sachapir St, 411001;
April 26

Tehmy Jal Javeri (85), 304,
Lilac, Raheja Gardens,
Wanawadi, 411040; April 27
Kurush Rohinton Aga (24), 12,
Boat Club Rd, 411001; April 30

PORBUNDER

DIED

Dolat Bharucha (89), wife of
Ardeshtir and mother of
Khushroo, Tehmina, Roda Naqvi
and Meheryar; April 30

SECUNDERABAD

DIED

Khorshedbanoo Poonegar, wife
of Nariman and mother of Shirin
Jehangir Hormusji; April 17

SURAT

DIED

Dinshaji Manackshaw Patel
(85), Nanpura, 395001; April 1
Savaksha Edalji Elavia (78),
Village Rajpardi, Dist Bharuch,
393115; April 6
Dolathano Ratansha Umrigar
(84), Bajanji Kotwal St,
Nanpura, 395001; April 17
Gool Dhanjishaw Todiwala (70),
Dehla St, Rustompura, 395002;
April 27

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

The mirth of the man

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Jimmy Ardeshtir Pocha, 71, veteran actor of yesteryears known for his comedy roles in Adi Marzban's productions, on September 22, 1996 in Bombay following cancer.

With his superb timing and ludicrous attire, his tall frame dressed in a half-buttoned Parsi dagla exposing the sudreh-kusti on his portly midriff, the hemline of his baggy khakhi trousers altered to display his red socks and canvas shoes, a sling bag hung over his shoulder, there was no mistaking Pocha's entry on stage. His presence was a must in every play and variety revue produced by Pesi Khandalavala and staged by Marzban's Co-operative Players, reports his singer wife Uma who often shared the stage with him and was occasionally the butt of his jokes too, although she is best known for her sensational hit, *Bombay meri hai*. Recognized as the "Danny Kaye of India," his forte was comedy. "He did straight roles also," mentions Uma, "the only problem was that the audience would start giggling the moment he made his entry."

"Adi Marzban, Pesi Khandalavala and Jimmy Pocha, they made Parsi theater the roaring success it was in the 50s and 60s. Adi was the director, Bombay's first genuine full-time theater man. Pesi looked after the production, the organization, the sale of tickets. Jimmy, sometimes known as Jamaji after one of his more famous roles, was the star. The Parsi theater was all comedy, there was no place for tears in it," states a tribute in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of September 24, 1996. "Jimmy would come on the stage and start exchanging jokes with the audience, one-liners off the cuff, Adi Marzban would join



(From left): Khandalavala, Pocha and Marzban: their forte was comedy

him, playing the straight man, Goody Seervai would strike up the band. They were happy times," reminisced *The Afternoon*.

"Besides acting and singing (and playing a screeching violin sometimes) he was the stage manager — and a most efficient one at that — for all Adi's productions," states Uma. "Highly disciplined himself, he expected discipline from everyone else," she continues. "Woe betide those who were not present at least one hour before the show or who did not follow instructions." At the condolence meeting in his honor, held three days after his demise, their daughter Tina acknowledged, "He was so honest — blunt, forthright, rude, obnoxious, call it what you may but you were never in any doubt as to what he meant or where you stood with him."

Not only did he entertain audiences on stage but was a regular on Marzban's popular Gujarati series, *Buddhi Dhansak Mandal*, on All India Radio. In one of the earlier favorite Doordarshan series *Avo Mari Sathé* too did Pocha feature, as also in other television plays. Marzban's tribute to Pocha was recalled by Jehangir Chaina in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of September 29, 1996: "Jimmy has been my loyal colleague since many years. Apart from being a fine actor he is a good singer and a wonderful comedian. To him I dedicate one of my earlier variety revues, *Adhi Kalakni Hasahas*." After Marzban's demise, he associated himself with the productions of Burjor Patel, Hosi Vasunia and Dinyar Contractor.

The thespian's histrionic talents however had been honed by Marzban who noticed his potential at an amateur dramatics production of St Xavier's Technical

Institute while Pocha was a student there. In fact, even during his school days — Pocha was first at Bombay's Bharda High School for Boys and later at Billimoria High School in Panchgani — he could impress spectators with his performances.

His involvement with the theater manifested in yet another way. For almost 15 years he worked as manager of the Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium and for 10 years thereafter, of the Sophia Bhabha Auditorium, impressing patrons with his natural managerial skills and flair for public relations.

Known to be a "very devout Zoroastrian," he would never retire to bed unless he had done his kusti, even if it be at 2 or 3 a.m. after returning home from a show, recalls Uma. Notwithstanding his "greatest respect for the community," he had chosen to be cremated so that his wife, a South Indian Hindu Brahmin, could be present by his mortal remains. They came from varying backgrounds, he enjoyed his non-vegetarian food, while Uma is a strict vegetarian. Yet committed as they were to each other they never sought to impose their views, preferring instead to adapt to the different life-styles. When their children Adi and Tina had to be navjoted, it was the mother who learnt and taught them the Zoroastrian prayers, discloses Uma, formerly a medical practitioner with the Bombay Municipal Corporation and presently director of Avehi, an audiovisual research center.

"He had a great passion for animals — especially dogs and horses," reveals Uma. Pocha was equally at ease with children and could play with them for hours, making him a favorite with the kids at their residential complex. He enjoyed holidaying in Mahabaleshwar and was fond of nature. His concern for wanton tree felling was recalled by an admirer, Subhash Sampat, in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of September 27, 1996: "Jimmy is unforgettable. He has left an imprint of a Parsi character in my heart and mind."

Describing her dad as "weird," Tina remembered him tucking her into bed to the accompaniment of jokes instead of fairy tales! "Needless to say, as I got older, the jokes got more raunchy." At the condolence meeting she therefore felt that "instead of irritating my father by reading some sentimental stuff from Kahlil Gibran, I'd like to dedicate a joke to him."

Pocha is survived by his wife Uma, son Adi and daughter Tina.

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