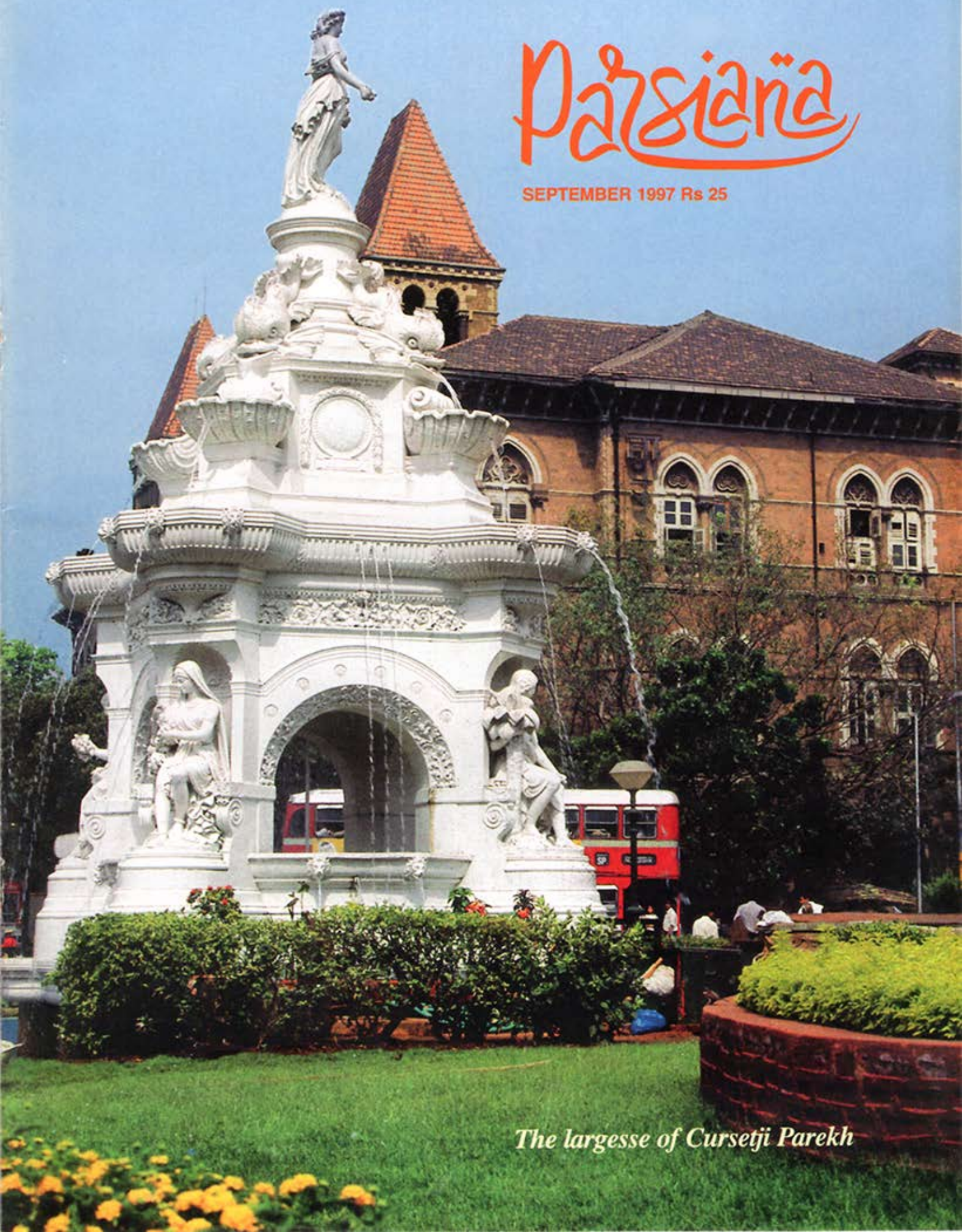


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Parsiana

September 1997
Volume 20 Number 2

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Parsiana is published by Jehangir R. Patel for Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd at C/o H. L. Roach, K. K. (Navsari) Chambers, ground floor, 39 A. K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400001 and printed by him at Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400001. Color processing, Comart Lithographers; black and white processing, Tricolour. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0971-3786. Phone: 2078730, 2072624. Fax: 2074541. For editorial enquiries phone: 2078183. E-mail: parvo@giabm01.vsnl.net.in. For subscription enquiries and payments: C/o Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, 300 Perin Nariman St (Behind Reserve Bank of India), Bombay 400001. Phone: 2658619, 2665661. Fax: 2654585.

Annual inland subscription for one year (10 issues) Rs 250; for two years (20 issues) Rs 475; for three years (30 issues) Rs 700. Foreign subscription rates: Seamount for one year Rs 450/US \$ 14/UK £ 9; for two years Rs 850/US \$ 25/UK £ 15; for three years Rs 1,250/US \$ 36/UK £ 22 (please allow six months or more for delivery from the time of publication). Airmail for one year Rs 750/US \$ 23/UK £ 15 (for Pakistan, Indian Rs 525); for two years, Rs 1,400/US \$ 43/UK £ 27 (for Pakistan, Indian Rs 975); for three years Rs 2,100/US \$ 60/UK £ 37 (for Pakistan, Indian Rs 1,450). For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 20 for bank charges; for US cheques add \$ 5; for UK cheques add £ 3. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favor of Parsiana and posted to GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001.



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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Open to interpretation"

Strange, is it not, that Ms Pervin J. Mistry from Toronto should now seek to interpret through innuendo and barely concealed malice, my letter to *Parsiana* apprising its readers of the WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) London conference of November 1996?

What is her letter in your April 1997 issue trying to get across? My complicity in suppressing until some last moment of Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey's name from the list of speakers at that excellent conference? Her accustomed denigration of Dr Jafarey's name and fame? Her pathological hatred of intermarriage and of the children from such unions? Her ardent preference of xenophobia over Zoroastrianism?

I can provide a straightforward response. At the time of my writing to *Parsiana* informing interested readers of the then pending conference, Dr Jafarey's name had not been proposed to the conference organizers: full stop. If Ms Mistry wishes

to make a *kachubar* out of this sparse ingredient, then that is her choice — and choice is something she stoutly denies Zoroastrianism has ever offered! But then her brand of religion hardly conforms to Zoroastrianism as is now increasingly recognized, but adheres to a certain level of Parsiism and as such doubtless finds a slot in *Parsiana*.

May it be specially noted that many of us in the UK have a soft spot for Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey and, if not always for his preaching, we do respect the personality of this good man who so respects Zoroastrianism.

FARROKH VAJIFDAR
London, UK

"The mirth of the man"

For Jimmy Pocha ("The mirth of the man," In Memoriam, *Parsiana*, April 1997), the seeds of acting, especially in Parsi Gujarati comedies, were sown in his Panchgani school. This writer was a boarder-student at the Parsi High School, Panchgani, the name being later changed to Billimoria High School. Jimmy Pocha was also one of the boarders there.

Our school used to hold a sports day and a concert day every May when Panchgani was full of visitors. For sports, there was no entrance fee but invitations were sent. As for the concert, the School used to charge five rupees and 10 rupees. One of the most popular items at the concert was a Gujarati comedy under the direction of one of the joint principals (who were also brothers), viz Rusi Billimoria, where Jimmy Pocha was the main attraction. He would appear on stage wearing a pugree, a long coat and a longer sudreh, a grandmother's *ijar* and velvet sapat and play the role of a typical elderly Parsi. The school boys seeing their hero acting, would burst out laughing, and the audience would join in.

This talent blossomed in full under the direction of Adi Marzban, both of whom are not with us, leaving the Parsi theater poorer.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

"Surfing surnames"

To supplement your list of surnames ("Surfing surnames," *Parsiana*, February-March 1997), allow me to list some additional surnames: Astor, Cowascama, Chehna, Hirji-Khurshed, Khapoliwala, Khusro-khan, Mugat, Tara, Vyarawala.

H. S. VAZIFDAR
Jamshedpur

"Whither, Parsiana?"

I had pointed out to you on an earlier occasion ("Whither, *Parsiana*?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February-March 1997) that your foreign subscription is largely underpriced. As a further example, I am quoting below the price of the monthly *Journal of the Indian Chemical Manufacturers' Association* (JICMA) which is very largely subsidized by advertisements from the chemical industry:

JICMA

Inland: Rs 300

Airmail: Rs 2,000

Parsiana

Inland: Rs 250 + Rs 20 (for Indian upcountry cheques) = Rs 270

Airmail: Rs 750 + Rs 180 (for foreign cheques) = Rs 930

The large difference in the price ratio clearly indicates that doubling the foreign airmail subscription of *Parsiana* is a worthy proposition which can also make your journal more viable.

The second issue which I want to raise, though it is besides the point, is what purpose is *Parsiana* serving by bringing out special issues on North American Zoroastrian professionals (January 1996 and May 1997) except glorifying those chaps in the New World who failed to return to their fatherland, and perhaps also to fill up the backlog of issues in *Parsiana*?

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

The Editor replies

In response to Sunavala's letter in the February-March issue, we had explained our reasons for not increasing our airmail rates unlike professional journals whose readers pay higher rates as the contents are of commercial value to them.

As regards the reprinting of the FEZANA supplement on North American Zoroastrian professionals, many of our readers welcome news on Zoroastrians settled abroad. And when such information comes to us on a platter, we are no doubt tempted to share it with our subscribers. No doubt such reprints do help to clear the backlog of issues as Sunavala states. On the other hand it is at a considerable cost as that issue comprised 92 pages while our normal issues would have been around 48 pages. Wouldn't his remark concerning Zoroastrians in the New World "who failed to return to their fatherland" hold true for all Parsis who did not return to Iran?



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While our readers do appreciate news of Zoroastrians abroad, many of them do undoubtedly miss the regular columns and articles. This is why in all these years *Parsiana* has opted for a reprint only twice and that too only because of the excellence of the material available for reprint and the cooperation extended by the publishers of the *FEZANA Journal* and the FEZANA office bearers.

"To teach, more than..."

While I was in Bombay several friends mentioned that they had read the review of my book, *The Zarathushtrian Saga*, in *Parsiana* ("To teach more than entertain," Books, September 1996) but that no mention was made as to where it was available. The book is available at Zoroastrian Studies, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Building, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Bombay 400023.

TINA MEHTA
Calcutta

Kaleidoscope - '98 beckons

The Twin Cities' Zoroastrian Youth League (TCZYL - Secunderabad and Hyderabad), which has been serving the community for 10 long years, is now proud to host for the first time, an All India Zoroastrian Literary and Cultural Youth Meet with a difference - Kaleidoscope - '98. It will feature a plethora of interesting competitive events to enable young Zoroastrians in the age group of 16-35 years to give off their very best, while equipping them to face the future with a complete feeling of identity, self-confidence and renewed vigor. It could thus help the youth to promote their talent as a profession or further cultivate it as a hobby.

The Youth Meet will be inaugurated on the evening of January 8 and the events and entertainment programs will be held for three days i.e. from January 9 to 11, 1998. The delegate fee is Rs 250 per head. With exciting cash awards and a host of fabulous prizes to the winners and others, the TCZYL hopes to make this event a memorable one.

The events planned are: stock exchange game, advertisement campaign, human resource development, debate, *antakshari*, quiz, singing, dancing, drawing/painting/sketching/commercial art, drama, musical instruments and creative writing. A personality contest, which will include a fashion show to choose the Zoroastrian Prince and Princess, will be a part of our valedictory function on the evening of January 11, 1998.

Accommodation, sumptuous food and the best of traditional Hyderabad hospitality would be provided to all delegates

from the afternoon of Thursday, January 8, 1998 till the morning of Monday, January 12, 1998.

Top personalities have agreed to be present at the inauguration and valedictory functions. The panel of judges for each event will include very eminent personalities from different parts of the country. It would be an excellent opportunity for the delegates to interact with the top brass of our country.

For further details, please contact the president, Mr Jehangir R. Bisney, 27, Raghava Ratna Towers, Chirag Ali Lane, Hyderabad 500001, Phone (Office) 201157, 204227, (Residence) 842217, 841723.

JEHANGIR R. BISNEY
Hyderabad

Disturbing the sanctity?

Recently, I received a community pamphlet called *Deen Parast* and was shocked to read in it about the desecration of our Banaji Atash Behram at Charni Road, Bombay. How can a house of God, which is the earthly home of our atash padshah, be converted into a place of merry-making, eating, drinking and causing disturbance and agony to the sentiments of those who come to worship with reverence and devotion to our holy fire? After all it is not an ordinary fire - it bears the name of padshah, and in it are the vibrations of our hoary past, our present and the future of our Mazdayasni Zarathosti religion. How can the trustees allow this kind of desecration to the very sanctity of our religious place for the sake of money?

Is it so necessary to make merry in order to perform a ceremony? By all means navjotes and weddings as well as jashans and other religious talks/lectures etc must

be allowed for the members of our community. But it is an absolute 'no-no' to drinking parties, shouting and making a nuisance of ourselves in the name of celebrations. For that we have other places - baus, hotels, private halls - where they can give vent to their feelings of mirth with 'kababs and sharaab.' But please spare us this atrocious spectacle in the precinct of our house of God. Let the deity remain in isolated splendor, and offer to the devotees some moments of peace and solitude which this beautiful Atash Behram is famous for.

GOOLOO R. MEHTA

Burjor Antia, managing trustee of the Banaji Atash Behram, replies

The allegations of desecration of the Banaji Atash Behram are not only false, but also misleading to the general public. The trustees wonder whether Ms Gooloo R. Mehta has personally visited the site/hall where the marriage and navjote ceremonies are held and dinner is served. As a matter of fact, the trustees have taken and are taking all possible measures to preserve the sacredness of the holy fire.

We may state that in our Atash Behram compound there are three separate buildings: one building houses the holy fire, where no serving of food takes place; there is another building about 20 feet away from the main building, called "Gambhar Hall" which is being used to give facilities to Zoroastrians for performance of jashan/navjote and marriage ceremonies and thereafter serving of food in the Hall during the monsoon and in the open place on the ground floor during the other seasons.

Under the trust deed, the Hall is referred

Banaji Atash Behram: housing the sacred fire Photo: Noshir Gobhai



Try it



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to by the settlor as Gambhar Hall for serving of food and it is not a new practice started by the trustees.

According to the *Random House Unabridged Second Edition Dictionary* page 538, the word "desecrate" means:

- to divest of sacred or hallowed character or office;
- to divest from a sacred to profane use or purpose;
- to treat with sacrilege; profane.

Would the use of the Hall for marriages, navjotes and dinner amount to desecration of the holy fire housed in the adjoining building? The statement of Ms Gooloo R. Mehta, "How can a house of God which is the earthly home of our atash padshah be converted into a place of merry-making, eating, drinking and causing disturbance and agony to the sentiments of those who come to worship with reverence and devotion to our holy fire?" is totally incorrect as the main atash padshah building is not used for any such purpose except worship or religious ceremonies.

In the city of Bombay there are several agiaries such as Jeejeebhoy Dadabhai Agiary at Pilot Bunder Road, Cama Baug Agiary at Charni Road, Sethna Agiary at Tardeo and Saher Agiary at Warden Road where the adjoining halls or ground next to the agiary are given for such functions and dinner. Why should *Deen Parast* and Ms Gooloo R. Mehta choose not to find fault with the trustees of such agiaries but only with the Banaji Atash Behram Trust?

Deen Parast has found fault with the trustees of the Banaji Atash Behram, when they are providing facilities at cheaper rates for performing navjote and marriage ceremonies followed by dinner. From the income which we derive we are maintaining our priests and other workers, and we are giving them ex gratia payment and other facilities.

There is a great need in our community for the use of such halls for religious occasions, more particularly for mofussil people or those who are desirous of getting the ceremonies performed at short notice in Bombay. Under the circumstances, the trustees feel that they are doing a service to the community by allowing the Hall to be used. At the same time 100 to 200 people visit the fire-temple to take the blessing of the holy fire.

Let your readers note that there is no kababs and sharaab party going on in the Gambhar Hall of the Atash Behram as alleged.

The trustees repeat that the peace and the solitude of the ancient Atash Behram is not disturbed by giving the Hall for marriage or navjote ceremonies.

Internet invasion

At present any Dick and Harry can give misguiding opinions on the Internet on our great religion, without proper studies. Our young generation requires correct guidance to enhance their faith, respect and honor for our religion. Unnecessary controversy will not prove beneficial at all.

Confronting the ancient established customs, conventions and religious practices with the argument of "going with the times" is injurious as times are bad.

How can this freedom of opinion which destroys our faith be stopped? Shall we prove ourselves wise in time?

NOSHIR DABOO

Almedabad



Portraying Naoroji

A pencil sketch of the Grand Old Man of India - Dadabhai Naoroji was drawn by me. This marks his 172nd birth anniversary

which falls on September 4, 1997, and also serves to commemorate 50 years of India's independence.

FIRDOST SHROFF

Augment education fund

During the past 28 years our Mancherji Joshi Memorial Education Fund has given educational aid to thousands of Zoroastrian students. This was possible due to munificent donations received from benevolent institutions and generous individuals.

Out of the total income received by us last year from donations and investments amounting to Rs 5,25,842 we spent Rs 5,07,110 as educational aid and only Rs 2,251 for incidental expenses. Thus our generous donors are assured that the monies they donate are utilized only for educational purposes. Last year we received Rs 3,99,580 as donations. However, with the increasing cost of education, we are not able to help all the needy and deserving students to their full requirements.

After carefully scrutinizing over 550 applications last year, we granted help to 282 boys and 234 girl students. Out of

these, more than 65 percent were from Navsari and Surat cities and districts, belonging to weaker sections of our community, most of whose fathers were poor farmers or autorickshaw drivers or self-employed, doing small repair jobs.

While granting educational aid, our scrutinizing committee had given special consideration and granted extra educational aid to students whose fathers are full-time practicing mobeds or are working in agiaries as servants, to families having more than two children, and also to orphan students and students whose mothers have to single-handedly support the families.

We appeal to all Zoroastrian institutions and individuals to give us generous donations to enable us to further improve our service to the ever widening base of needy and deserving Parsi students.

Account payee cheques/drafts in favor of Mancherji Joshi Memorial Education Fund should be sent to: Mancherji Joshi Memorial Education Fund, C/o Jal M. Khan, 614, Jame-Jamshed Road, Mancherji Joshi Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014.

JAL KHAN

Trustee and Hon Treasurer, Mancherji Joshi Memorial Education Fund

Lessons from Diana

The days when walls in Parsi homes used to exhibit photographs of King Edward and Queen Victoria of England are mercifully over. And yet, the sudden death of Lady Diana in a car crash in Paris is, in some ways, a personal loss for many of us.

Not all the things she did in her short life are emulatory. Many disapproved of her romantic link-ups, with her riding instructor before her divorce and later with the now dead Dodi. But there were other, far more important things she did that set her apart from the staid and starched British royalty and made her the queen of everyone's heart.

More than all else it was her quality of selfless giving, her tryst with charity that endeared her to one and all. She gave heartily. She gave of herself and of her huge reservoir of love; and that, to me, is definitely a Parsi quality. In days when selfless charity is not fashionable, Diana has taught us that we too, if we choose, can be good and charitable Parsis. If we don't have material wealth, we surely can give love.

May Di's soul rest in peace. And, if there be reincarnation, may she be reborn a Parsi.

KHURSHED PASTAKIA

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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Events and Personalities

Block of controversy

The controversy had been simmering for over a year, with pleas and protests from the Parsi community. On September 11, 1997 the Bombay High Court admitted three writ petitions filed by way of public interest litigation by Cyrus Pooniwalla, N. Karbhari and others and the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties and others against the Rotary Club of Mumbai Sunrise, the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) and others. Raising the petitioners' ire was the Rotary Club's construction of a toilet block cum drinking water facility and public utility service center a mere 70 feet away, they say, from the revered 272-year-old Bhikha Behram well in Bombay's Flora Fountain area.

Chief Justice M. B. Shah and Justice S.

D. Gundewar however refused to grant interim relief, stating that the approval for construction had been given by the municipality as far back as May '95, while the petitions were filed only in June and July '97. The petitioners plan to file a special leave petition in the Supreme Court. The granite-facaded block, reportedly constructed at a cost of around Rs 20 lakhs, was inaugurated on the 50th anniversary of Indian independence (August 15, 1997).

The Bhikha Behram well, argue the petitioners, is a Grade I heritage structure, listed in the schedule of protected buildings, under Regulation 67 of the Heritage Regulations. These were notified by a government resolution dated April 21, '95

issued under the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act and are contained in the Development Control rules. The well itself was sunk in the year 1725 by Bhikhaji Behramji Panday who dedicated it and the surrounding lands in perpetuity for religious worship by persons professing the Zoroastrian religion, as well as for providing drinking water for the public and for maintaining the water trough attached to the well for horses and cattle. The well, claim the petitioners, is over 25 feet deep and is recharged by stream water which percolates from the surrounding areas and the well water is drunk by an estimated 1,000 persons every day, so it is vital to prevent contamination of the water source.

A delegation of prominent Zoroastrians, including Rustom Tirandaz, former municipal corporator, had met the municipal commissioner Girish Gokhale on April 28, 1997 and presented him an appeal signed by over 300 Zoroastrians, saying that the sentiments of the Zoroastrian community had been deeply hurt by the construction of a public toilet in close proximity to a place revered by them for generations. Since by that time the structure had been completed, they requested the municipal authorities to convert it to some other use — a police chowky, municipal godown, junkhar bhakar stall, etc, pointing out that there were several existing urinals in nearby areas for the use of the public.

The toilet block will not defile the well, counter-argue the Rotary Club and the BMC. The plumbing is so designed that the underground sewerage line will carry the flow of water further north and not towards the well. The minimum distance between the well and

Rotary Club's public toilet block; emblem on gate of Bhikha Behram well; hawkers outside the well





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the structure is about 113 feet, they state, and there is no prospect of any underground seepage or leakage.

The Rotary Club says the proposal for the construction of the toilet block was initiated in November 1994 as an act of philanthropy, in larger public interest. There is no commercial and/or profit motive involved. The BMC sanctioned the plans vide their letter dated May 28, '95. The existing old urinal on the site was demolished and the construction had been going on in full view of all passersby, so the petitioners could not have been unaware of the same. The Development Control rules were brought into force on June 1, '95 and the Heritage Committee constituted on February 27, '96. At the time the construction was sanctioned, Heritage Rule 67 was not in force, they argue. The well itself is not described as a religious place or a place of worship but as a "popular venerated social node in the city." Under Regulation 67, claim the respondents, it is necessary to ensure that the surrounding development does not mar the grandeur or view of the locality and the present structure is only a ground floor structure, "aesthetically designed and beautiful in appearance." A garden is also proposed to be set up which will add to the beauty of the area.

To reinforce their claim, they point out

that right across the road an extension to the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) is of a style in total disharmony with the old CTO structure.

Dr Viraf Kapadia, one of the petitioners, points out that garbage is being dumped near the newly constructed toilet block and that the area surrounding the well is overrun by hawkers who add to the uncleanness of the heritage precinct, although areas within 100 meters of a school, hospital or place of worship have been designated as "no hawking zones."

Hilla P. Guzder

Welcome Aavedan

Aavedan, the newsletter recently introduced by the Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians (AIMZ) has been planned as a bi-annual effort but the frequency and size varies, depending on the news they have to share with the readers, says the Association president Meher Amersey who has been mainly instrumental in compiling this publication. Their latest issue of September 1997 is a 12-page newsletter unlike the first two issues which started off as a two-page feature.

The common thread running through the first three newsletters is a section titled "Member Profile," wherein they have fea-

tured the background and success stories of their members: Dr Mani Kamekar, Ava Khullar, Dina McIntyre. The last issue profiling McIntyre became particularly lengthy because McIntyre's talk in Bombay on "The Notion of Love in the *Gathas*" has been reproduced so that this "most interesting and enjoyable talk" giving a "whole new perspective of the *Gathas*" could be shared with all the members.

Presently, they print about 250 copies of *Aavedan*. And even though members may not give Amersey any feedback on its contents, suggestions, like the one at the 1996 annual general meeting where it was recommended that *Aavedan* should be mailed even to non-members to spread an awareness of AIMZ activities, indicate that members do welcome it.

As per their newsletter's name, *Aavedan*, which means discussion/dialog, according to Amersey, "Our basic intention is to give information, to keep in touch," stresses the president who would be happy if it served "to promote interaction among members."

Moving muktads

Individual prayers are common during the muktad days. Not as common are the con-

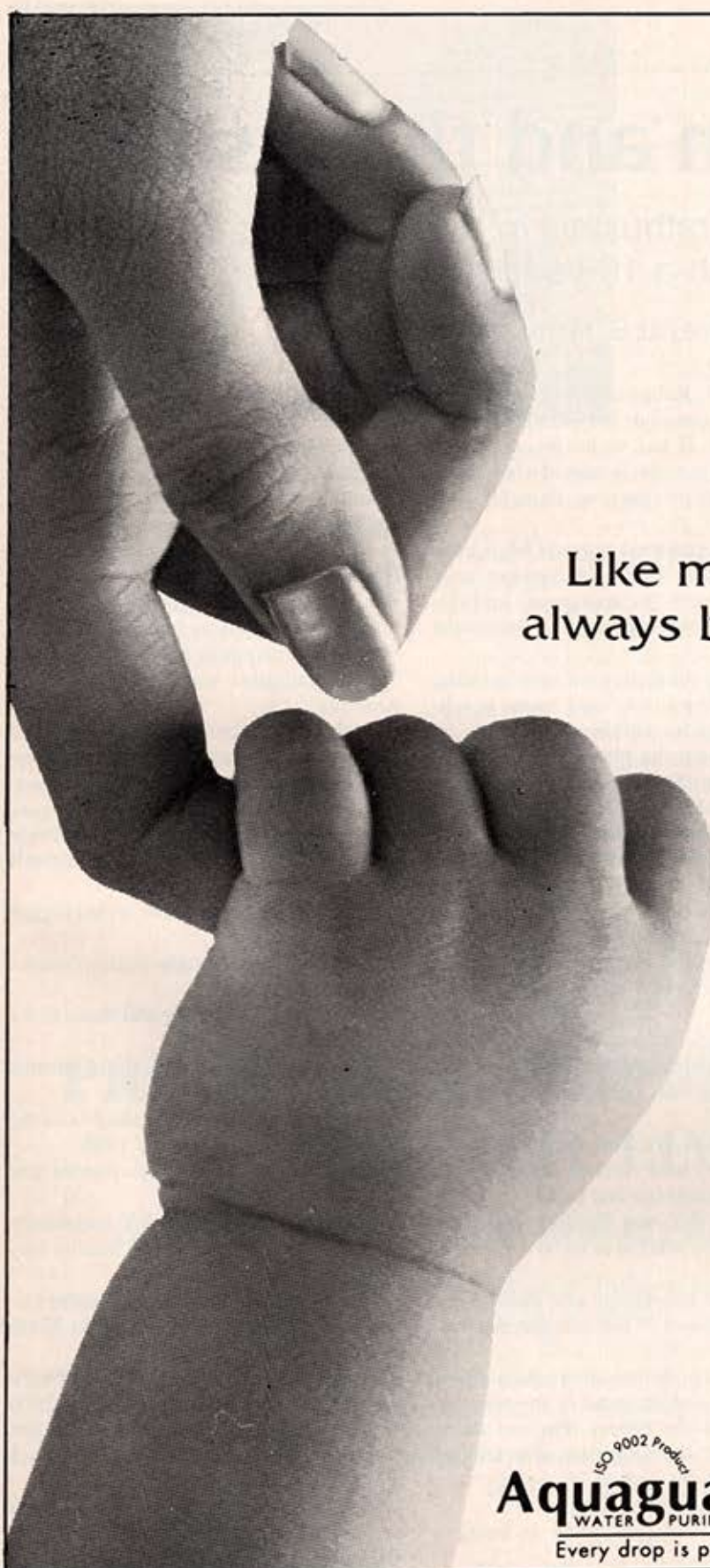
continued on page 30



*"In thinking Good Thoughts,
In speaking Good Words,
In doing Good Deeds,
We build the
Edifice of our Faith."*

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The mission and the vision

With faith and foresight Zarathushtis in North America prepare for the future with a 10-year strategic plan

Arnavaz S. Mama

"To develop a Zarathushti community in North America that is well-connected, well-educated, well-grounded in Zarathushti religious thought, values and ethics, respectful of diversity, strong in collective giving, economically prosperous—a community which will be recognized for its contribution in all aspects of religious and communal life."

This vision illumines the drafters of the 10-year strategic plan for the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Presented to its member associations at the annual general meeting (AGM) in Crestone in August 1997 by president Dolly Dastoor, the plan envisages a future of growth and continuous progress for the community in an atmosphere of trust. It is dedicated to creating infrastructures that would enable North American (NA) Zarathushtis to hold their heads high and be proud to say "I am a Zarathushti" and people will know who they are," note the compilers.

The vision has been compartmentalized into specific goals to be achieved within a specified time frame and an operational strategy that spells out some of the nitty-gritty that needs to be adopted.

The four major areas for collective goals identified as "shared spaces" according to Dr Rustom Kevala, Dr Farrokh Mistree and Dr Mehran Sepehri are learning to live a Zarathushti life, to preserve the religion of Prophet Zarathushtra; Thousand Points of Light aimed at putting the Zarathushti community "formally and clearly on the NA map;" external structures to work in cooperation with Zarathushti communities in other parts of the world towards a common goal of a united Zarathushti community; internal structures to provide "effective leadership in addressing the critical issues of our times with wisdom and righteousness." The last gains particular significance because the plan notes that "a community cannot have a religious vision, unless there is a sociopolitical vision and

will as well. Religiosity and spirituality cannot be enhanced and strengthened in the abstract. It has to be practiced and experienced in an environment where there is commonality of purpose, thought, word and deed."

The plan, endorsed at the AGM, is to be implemented by FEZANA member associations in parts "as appropriate and relevant to their own communities," notes the document.

Providing religious education material and developing a certificate course in religious studies for children and adults by 2002 is among the plan's first goals. In accordance with this priority the education committee of FEZANA has developed a certificate course for religious studies for children and the Kankash e Mobedan has developed an interactive CD program for religious studies. A video, *Paradise*, has been created by Shahriar Shahriari and Shervin Shahriari with the active support of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia.

'Leading a Zoroastrian life' has been subdivided into identifiable goals:

- To be identified as a distinct religious community
- To be able to articulate our beliefs, history, ancestry and cultural heritage with adequate knowledge and pride
- To ensure that our children and their children know what it is to be a Zarathushti
- To have the knowledge and tools to ensure perpetuation of our religion and values
- To increase pride in and appreciation of the doctrine and practices of the religion
- To preserve the deeper religious disciplines which distinguish us as mentioned in our scriptures

The action plan envisages:

- Instilling a sense of pride in being a "Zarathushti"
- Defining values and ethics leading to a "Zarathushti way of life"

•Promoting these values and understanding of the religious practices through holding open forums and debates at congresses and seminars

•Printing essays on specific subjects dealing with values and ethics for daily living as well as in business and professions in North America

•Holding seminars for parents on how best to impart these values to children

•Preparing manuals for individuals on "The Zarathushti way of life in North America"

•Developing community service projects for youth and young adults based on Zarathushti values both on this continent, Iran and India (Zarathushti Peace Corps)

•Developing literature on meaning of religious practices, prayers, rituals, festivals and customs

•Publishing historical and archeological books

•Developing *Gatha* study guides, courses and musical scores

•Encouraging the reading and study of the *Shah Namah*

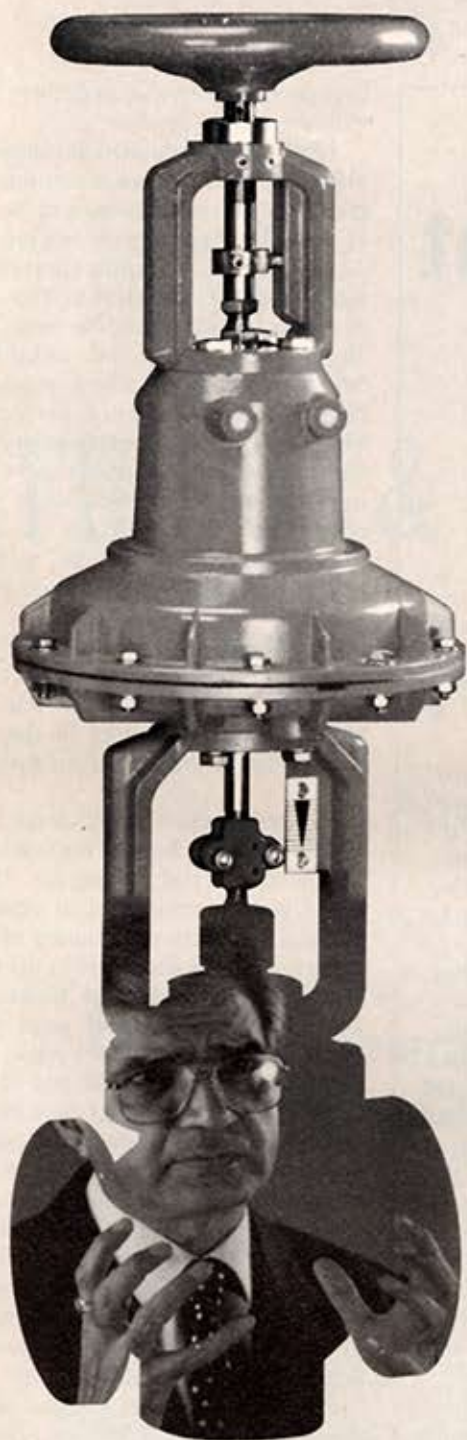
The milestones towards these pursuits include:

- Preparation of public relations kits on the Zarathushti religion by July 1998
- Preparation of manuals for parents and teachers by July 1998
- Developing youth exchange community service projects for India and Iran by July 1998
- Sponsorship of books on Zarathushti festivals and customs as practiced in North America by July 1999
- Commissioning of a book on Zarathushti way of life in North America by July 2000
- Encouragement of interested Zarathushtis to develop *Gatha* and *Shah Namah* courses and guides

Towards the goal of a well connected community, the plan aims to:

- Develop and promote the *FEZANA Journal* as an effective communication me-

continued on page 34



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Iranian influence — 3

The beacon of light

The Yasht dedicated to Mithra is but one of the influences of this ancient religion on Zoroastrianism

Dr Mani Kamerkar

"Contact between India and Iran goes back to prehistoric times... The Hindus stand in close kinship with the Iranians with regard to tradition, religious beliefs, ritual observances, customs and manners. These early ties are reflected in the similarities of the languages of India and Iran... Avesta and its commentaries help us in the proper comprehension of the early religious and linguistic history of India." This summation came from Dr Mani Kamerkar in a paper presented by her at a conference of the Indian History and Culture Society. Titled "Zoroastrian Iranians and their influence on Indian religion and culture," edited excerpts from this paper are being carried over three instalments of Parsiana.

In the first episode we learnt of the common ideals propounded in the Vedas and the Gathas, and how, once differences arose, similar sounding terms

came to connote opposite meanings. After outlining the main tenets of Zoroastrianism, Dr Kamerkar concludes that "the path of Iran was that of karma-yoga... attainment through service of humanity."

That the Mauryan palaces were built as per the style of architecture in Persepolis, that India contributed a third of the revenues of Darius' empire, that coins of the Sasanian type bearing inscriptions in Nagari and Pahlavi have been found in the north-west of India was conveyed in the second instalment.

Other than India, Zoroastrian influences were evident on Mithraism and the Roman empire, as reported in this final instalment. The doctrine of the four ages of the world that is evident in the Judeo-Christian view of historical time is believed to have originated in Iranian mythology.

Outside India also Zoroastrian influences emerged. It is in the framework of the religion of the ahuras, hostile to the cult of the devas, that Zoroaster's message should be understood. He concentrated on his God, the wise Ahura, by means of an escort of entities, the powers of all the other gods, in array against the forces of evil.

Although Herodotus wrote that the Iranians had no temples, some have been found, in the shape of terraces, of towers, of square rooms; also *charotaqs* (sacred buildings having four gates or doors) are scattered over most of Iran. Permanent

altars exist from the Sasanian period and are depicted on Sasanian coins with a burning fire.

The Magians, though not originally Zoroastrian, apparently became acquainted with the Prophet's teachings not later than the fourth century BC. They had the monopoly on religion at the Achaemenian court. The term *magus* was still used in the Arsacid period. Then, under the Sasanians, a hierarchy developed, with the creation of the *magupat*, or chief of magi, and of its superlative *magupatan magupat* (coined on the model of *shahanshah*, 'king of kings'). The *ehrpāt*, (ervad) originally

a religious teacher, was especially entrusted with the care of the fire.

Mithra and Mithraism developed as an offshoot of Zoroastrianism. Mithras was a god of the ancient Iranians and the Aryans of India. The Aryans made him one of their 12 high gods. In the Zoroastrian religion he was an angel of light who fought on the side of Ahura Mazda against the forces of evil. The Zoroastrian scriptures called Mithras "the heavenly light." The Iranians carried their belief on Mithras to Assyria and Asia Minor, where many people identified him with the sun. Mithraism took on the form of a mystery religion, with elaborate rites and ceremonies. It came into the ancient Roman world about 75 BC and was a principal competitor of Christianity for 200 years.

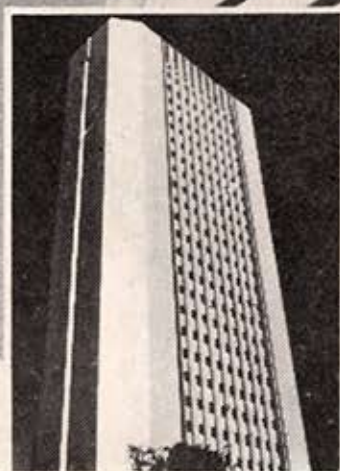
Mithraism was the worship of Mithra, the Iranian god of the sun, justice, contract, and was in pre-Zoroastrian Iran known as Mithras and adopted in the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries.

In some Indian Vedic texts the god Mitra (the Indian form of Mithras) appears both as 'friend' and as 'contract.' The word Mitra may be translated in either way, because contracts and mutual obligation make friends. In short Mithra may signify a kind of communication between men, and whatever establishes good relations between them. Mithra was called the mediator. Mithra was also the god of the sun, of the shining light that beholds everything, and hence was invoked in oaths. The Greeks and Romans considered Mithra as a sun god. He was probably also the god of kings. He was the god of mutual obligation between the king and his warriors, and hence the god of war. He was also the god of justice which was guaranteed by the king. Whenever men observed justice and contract, they venerated Mithra.

The most important Mithraic ceremony was the sacrifice of the bull. Opinion is divided as to whether this ceremony was pre-Zoroastrian or not. Zoroaster denounced the sacrifice of the bull, so it seems likely that the ceremony was a part of the old Iranian paganism.

Beginning with Darius (522-486 BC), the Iranian kings of the Achaemenid dynasty were Zoroastrians. But Darius and his successors did not intend to create political difficulties by attempting to eradi-

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cate the old beliefs still dear to the heart of many nobles. Thus, the religion of Zoroaster was gradually contaminated with elements of the old, polytheistic worship. Hymns (the *Yashts*) were composed in honor of the old gods. There is a *Yasht* dedicated to Mithra, in which the god is depicted as the all-observing god of heavenly light, the guardian of oaths, the protector of the righteous in this world and the next and, above all, as the archfoe of the powers of evil and darkness — hence, the god of battle and victory.

In the mixed religion of the later Achaemenid period, however, the Zoroastrian aspects clearly dominate the heathen aspects; the sacrifice of the bull, abhorred by every Zoroastrian, is never mentioned. Local aristocrats in the western part of the former Iranian empire retained their devotion to Mithra. The kings and nobles of the region between the Greco-Roman and the Iranian world still worshipped him.

There is little notice of the Iranian god in the Roman world until the beginning of the second century but, from the year 136 AD onward, there are hundreds of dedicatory inscriptions to Mithra. The old traditional Iranian ceremonies with a new Platonic interpretation enabled Mithraism to

become acceptable to the Roman world. Within a few generations, the Roman world had completely assimilated the Iranian god.

Zoroastrianism also influenced and was influenced by other religions. One of the most pervading and dominant mythological themes to be noted in the *New Testament* was that of the ages of the world. The prophet Zoroaster and his followers in Iran had taught a doctrine of the four ages of the world in which 3,000 years' length was divided into three millennia. Ahura Mazda (the wise Lord) was symbolized by light and later called Ormazd, and dwelt in infinite time with Ahriman symbolized by darkness. Ahriman, like Satan in Christianity, went against the wise Lord. The four ages of the world created after the fall of Ahriman depict the successive stages of the struggle in finite time between the lords of good and evil for the allegiance and the souls of men. In the last millennium of the fourth age a savior (Saoshyans) will come and inaugurate the last judgment and the new world in which truth, immortality and righteousness will prevail and finite time will merge with infinite time.

The theme of the ages of the world and its attendant subthemes that came prima-

rily from Iranian mythology were transformed by apocalyptic literature which flourished in Judaism, and then Christianity from about the second century BC to about the second century AD into a historical context.

Today very little is remembered about Zoroastrians who form an extremely small minority of about a hundred thousand all over the world, the majority of whom live in western India. They are still contributing a great deal to the development and culture of India. Their contribution to the Indian culture, to Hinduism in particular, is profound. The simple and straightforward ethics of their religion may help find a solution to many problems India faces today.

Concluded

A historian interested in Parsi history, Dr Mani Kamerkar is vice president of the Asiatic Society of Bombay. She was former director, College Development Council of the S.N.D.T. Women's University in Bombay. She has also served as principal of the Nanavati College.



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Alms and the man

In addition to the Dresden diamond he owned, Cursetjee Parekh had wealth enough to create charitable institutions that stand 100 years after his death

The wealth that he earned he parted with, either voluntarily by donating lakhs in charity, or involuntarily when the share mania of 1864-65 deprived him of his fortune. But the institutions created by Cursetjee Furdoonji Parekh continue to stand even 100 years after his demise in 1896.

In Bombay, he was instrumental in building the Furdoonji Sorabjee Parekh Dharamshala located at Khareghat Colony on Hughes Road near Chowpatty. This institution for blind and disabled Parsis was erected in 1845 in his father's memory, mentions *The Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*. Further details on this Dharamshala, managed by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), were gleaned from Sapur F. Desai's *History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat 1860-1960*.

Therein it is related that in January 1835, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy had recommended to the Panchayat that Parsis from the mofussil areas who are unable to support themselves in Bombay, be housed, fed and clothed in a house on Hormusji Wadia's land at Doongerwadi. That same year, Kharshedji Cowasji Banaji who had bought property at 'Pandushethvali Doongerwadi' from Wadia's heirs offered about 23,000 square yards of his land to accommodate Jejeebhoy's proposal. Originally there was a bungalow and some out-houses on this area where the facility was introduced. However when the bungalow became too ramshackle, Cursetjee and his brother Jamsetjee volunteered to reconstruct the building and name it after their father. More an infirmary than a dharamshala now, the BPP is constrained from transferring this institution to

the suburbs and commercializing on this property for, as per Banaji's original stipulation, the Bombay Panchayat was bound to maintain "these blind, lame and other such heirless persons in this place" or risk the ownership of the property reverting to Banaji's heirs.

In Surat too was a dharamshala founded as also two other institutions in Furdoonji's name. Information on these establishments in Surat was sent to *Parsiana* by Dr Ratan Marshall, special officer

of the Surat Parsi Panchayat. According to his sources, it was in January 1863 that Cursetjee wrote to the then collector of Surat, R. Croft, offering to construct a dharamshala for "desi musafaro (Indian passengers)" on government lands near the station. His proposal being accepted by the government, Cursetjee donated Rs 30,000 towards this cosmopolitan rest house which had separate rooms assigned for Parsis, Christians, Muslims and Hindus, as also special accommodation for women passengers. While the Parekh Dharamshala falls within the purview of the Surat District Panchayat, the Parekh Dispensary which is a part of the Maskati Municipal Hospital and the Parekh Technical School are managed by the Surat Municipal Corporation.

Popularly known as Parekh Hunnarshala, the Parekh Technical School started functioning in 1862-63 following a donation of Rs 46,500 from Cursetjee. Barely five years later when the then director of public instruction Sir Alexander Grant decided that the income from Cursetjee's endowment be used to send students from Surat to Bombay's Sir J. J. School of Art, the Hunnarshala fell into disuse. To rectify matters, in 1876 Cursetjee appealed to the then director of public instruction to restore the original status. His request was granted on the proviso that henceforth the management of the School would be controlled by the Surat Municipality. In 1910 the School was shifted to a new building with N. M. Wadia of Bombay donating Rs 9,500 in memory of his mother Bai Motlibai to start a workshop installed with the necessary machinery.



Color portrait of Parekh courtesy
Bombay Parsi Panchayat

Photo: Chetan Mistry



Projects supported by Parekh: (top row) Technical School (left) and Dispensary housed in Surat's Maskati Hospital
Photo: Marshall and Surat Parsi Panchayat;

Dharamshala in Bombay; plaque at Flora Fountain, front of the gold medal instituted for religious studies
Photo: Homyar Mistry, Homz Prints

The victims of the Gujarat famine of 1863-64 were fortunate to find a benefactor in Cursetjee. From June 3, 1864 he arranged to give one *sér* (approximately ½ kg) of rice every day for three months to 3,000 deserving people of Surat. He also sent rice for distribution in the same way amongst the poor of Bharuch through Bomansha Baheramji Vakil. Additionally he sent 7,000 sacks of Bengali rice to the grain company in Surat. He spent Rs 87,896 on disbursement of grains in Surat and Bharuch, Marshall provides the details, not counting the nearly Rs 75,000 expended on the indigent during Cursetjee's earlier tour of Gujarat. To send 500 sacks of grains to the Portuguese authorities for distribution amongst the poor of Diu, he must have borne nearly Rs 5,000. "His contributions and donations to dispensaries, *pinjrapoles* (shelter homes for unwanted animals), schools, libraries, etc amounted to Rs 4,00,000," states the *Parsi Lustre*.

Flora Fountain, the well-known landmark in Bombay, substantially owes its existence to Cursetjee for he is said to have been the first person to contribute towards its cost. His donation of Rs 20,500 in 1864 tantamounted to almost 50 percent of the total expenses incurred on its installation. Referring to its origin, Marshall recalls that earlier it was intended that the fountain be prepared in London, laid in Victoria Garden, and be named after Bombay's then governor Sir Henry Bartle Frere. However, by the time the components for the fountain arrived from London, Frere had left Bombay. Thereafter it was decided that it would be installed at the south end of Esplanade Road where it continues to stand to this day except that with the passage of time its original name, Floral Fountain, got abbreviated to Flora Fountain, it is believed.

Yet another institution to benefit from Cursetjee's largesse was the Madressa in Bombay named after Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy for whom Cursetjee had great respect. Towards the maintenance of the Madressa and to finance monthly scholarships of Rs 30 each for two outstanding students of the Madressa he donated sums totalling Rs 55,000. Two academically brilliant students were to receive gold medals in memory of his father Furdoonji, it was further recounted by Marshall. As enunciated in the *History of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet*, the gold medal was to be presented to a student who stood first in MA with Avesta and Pahlavi. Pestonji Kooverji Motivala was the first

recipient of the Parekh medal. In the course of a century, barely 27 have earned this award with the last recipients being Ervad Pervaz Bajan and Sam Doctor who qualified for the 14 carat gold medal in 1992.

The association with Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's name had commenced several decades earlier for Cursetjee was formerly a partner in the firm of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Sons and Company until its dissolution in 1850. Thereafter he carried on trade independently with Europe and China where he amassed his princely fortune of which he made benevolent use. Indeed

"To have insisted on his dues would have hopelessly wrecked their fortunes"

some of the merchants too with whom he interacted benefitted from his kindness of heart. As notes the *Parsi Lustre*, "Instances are known of his having waived his claims to profits amounting to lakhs of rupees accruing to him when he saw that to have insisted on his dues would have hopelessly wrecked their fortunes."

As a mark of appreciation, a European firm, Thomas Cardwell and Company named one of their ships *The Cursetjee Furdoonjee*. Cursetjee in turn had named the two large sailing vessels built by him, *Sir Jamsetjee Family* and *Albert Victor*.

Other honors to come his way were his appointment as justice of peace, the sheriff of Bombay and as trustee of the BPP, a post he held for almost 35 years. He also enjoyed the privilege of holding a seat at the Petty Sessions Court.

Well known among the immovable properties owned by Cursetjee was the famous Grants Building at Colaba, then valued at Rs 35 lakhs. His movable assets included Dresden Drop, one of the celebrated diamonds of the world worth six lakh rupees. He may have lost his fortunes in the share mania, but not the affection and respect that he had earned from members of all communities which fortified him to bear his loss for the next three decades until his demise at the age of 85. For after all, as reports the *Parsi Lustre*, "No genuine appeal to relieve distress was ever made to him from any part of the globe but it was responded to with an alacrity and handsomeness beyond the expectations of those from whom it proceeded."



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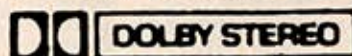
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Delna Khambatta expresses her artistry through her paintings on glass

It was a scintillating spectrum of shades — no dull greys or muddy browns for her. The brilliant hues of Delna Khambatta's painting on glass made her stall one of the most colorful at the "1997 Society Collection" exhibition held at the World Trade Centre in Bombay from October 3-5, 1997.

The Ahmedabad-based artist calls her hobby venture "Glass-e-Facts," glass and acrylic currently being the medium of her artistic expression. To enhance the effect of her stain glass painting, she uses etching, sandblasting and mirroring. Her paintings are easily identifiable and abound in themes from nature — birds, animals, trees, flowers — as well as figures. "Life on glass," wrote one of the admiring visitors at the exhibition, "class glass" commented another in the visitors' book. Khambatta uses colors from Singapore and Japan and many of her paintings have an Oriental flavor. "Oh, I can't explain my fascination with Japanese art. It's like a stamp which declares that the work is solely mine," she declares.

A commerce graduate who has also done her LLB, Khambatta held her first exhibition of stain glass paintings in 1993 at the Gujarat State Lalit Kala Academy in Ahmedabad. Over a hundred exhibits were on display again at the same venue in February '97. The exhibition was reportedly visited by 3,000 people over three days, with a number of Ahmedabadis making written requests in the visitors' book for her to start classes to teach stain painting. "I could have minted money if I had started classes," she says, "but money is not a priority. Nor am I

much interested in retail outlets. People come to see my paintings, if they like them they buy them. I do not take commercial orders due to my other activities. I am very particular in my commitments and believe in keeping my promises. I do art as a hobby, it is the appreciation from people that is important."

In May '97, Ahmedabad Doordarshan featured a half-hour program on her work on "Yuva Darshan." "A TV crew had visited my exhibition in February at the Lalit Kala

Kendra and were impressed. A few days later, they interviewed me at my house and shot a lot of footage of my paintings, how they are done, etc. They briefly interviewed my mother Persis too as she had been a commercial artist earlier and I have inherited my love of art from her. My work had also been featured on the ATN (TV) Gujarati news in February this year," explains Khambatta.

She herself has had no formal training in glass painting and has learnt it on her own, she says, through trial and error. Her interest was kindled in 1991 when she started attending hobby classes. From a fun-time activity, painting became a passion.

"I derive inspiration from anything," she observes. "The minute an



idea gets hold of me, I can't wait to put it on glass." Her art involves skill and an enormous amount of patience, she

Khambatta with her paintings on glass

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thing myself, including the painting of the frames," she says, adding that a frame is not merely something that holds the painting, it is very much a part of it. She uses cane (natural and polished), nuwood and aluminium frames, carved frames from Sahranpur and frames with terra cotta bead work and motifs. Sometimes she uses no frames at all! *Green Web*, a painting on acrylic, has its edges cut in the shape of leaves, while *Proud Peacock*, also on acrylic, has the feathers cut into shape to eliminate framing.

To add variety to her style, Khambatta utilizes decoupage, lacquer, embossed and three dimensional effects, and experiments with mixtures of metallic and stain glass colors. In *Murlidhar*, she introduces a brilliant silver outline in lieu of the conventional black lead outline, in *Ganesh Almighty*, she uses a sequential arrangement of pearls and beads.

Her collection includes paintings on glass jars, antique artefacts and jewelry. She also does fabric and oil painting. "I don't restrict myself to painting. I see myself being creative in other crafts too," she remarks, adding that she is thinking of branching out into ceramics and pottery. She has also won prizes in recipe contests without trying out

the dishes herself! She just imagines what the taste will be like and sends in the entry form!

Khambatta also takes an active interest in Pioma Industries, a company established by her father Areez, which manufactures the popular soft drink concentrate Rasna. Attending office every day is a must, she says. "My parents have from childhood instilled the proper values in their three children. I am proud to be known as a Parsi. The desire to wear the sudreh-kusti, to marry within the community, etc has to come from inside. Unfortunately, not all parents of the past generation have passed on their values to their children, hence the community is now faced with the problem of increasing inter-marriage. Community property too has not been well looked after and a lot of it has been lost due to improper planning. On my visits to Bombay, whenever I see the beautiful baugs and so many other structures constructed by the Parsis of yesteryear as well as the statues of eminent Parsis, I feel renewed pride in our community," she asserts.

In her art, Khambatta paints what she feels. She does not believe in sacrificing her spontaneity. "Glass has become my mirror, a mirror that reflects my thoughts and creativity," she declares.



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Hitting the Right Note

Hilla P. Guzder

Twelve-year-old Zeenia Mirza steps into the Hindi pop scene with her first video track and audio cassette

The song is lively, the video images colorful. "Abhi chhoti hoon main," croons 12-year-old Zeenia Mirza as she swirls and twirls her way through Esselworld, portraying the dreams of a young girl aspiring to make her mark in the world. Released in May '97, her debut video track has been aired on all leading television channels – Zee TV, MTV, Channel V, Music Asia, El TV, Home TV, Sony and Doordarshan, she states.

Zeenia's debut audio cassette of the same name was also released in May. Billed as the first "all-pop children's album" by BMG Crescendo (India), *Abhi chhoti hoon main* has eight numbers, including the title track, with rhythms and words that appeal to children. The music was composed and arranged by music director Merlyn De Souza who also directed singer Mehnaz's album *Miss India* and who is a part of the pop group Mantra, enlightens Zeenia. "I am a great fan of Shammi Kapoor and we have included a medley of his film songs in my cassette," she observes. Her song on Hindu-Muslim amity has also been featured, she says, in BMG Crescendo's *Ekta* cassette released on August 15, '97 to commemorate the golden jubilee of India's independence, with pop celebrities like Anaida, Mehnaz, Baba Sehgal, Bashir, Mantra and others teaming up in a show of solidarity. An earlier version of *Ekta* with Zeenia singing *People of the land* along with other pop artists had been released last year, she explains.

"I prefer singing Hindi pop, rather than English, as Hindi is

Mirza; with parents Kersi and Jasmine; jacket of audio cassette

more widely understood here. An English album may not work in India. On the day my audio cassette was recorded, I was unwell with a cold and fever but the recording studios are booked so much in advance that they could not shift the date. I enjoyed the recording, however, as everyone was encouraging me," she remarks. The sale of her album has been "beyond expectations," declares her father Kersi, an officer with Union Bank of India in Bombay, who manages and carefully monitors his daughter's singing career. The cassette has sold particularly well in Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Calcutta, and the north-east, he observes. Zeenia displays a pile of fan mail she has received – letters from Assam, Bihar and other states, with some fans asking her advice on their own singing, others

requesting her to send them her autographed photo, with one admirer from Haryana even painstakingly pencilling a sketch of the singer's face for her to autograph and return to him!

Last year Zeenia signed a three-year contract with BMG Crescendo, giving them exclusive recording rights. "I enjoy doing live shows too and this year I have signed up with well-known actor Anupam Kher's media entertainment company which will promote my shows," she discloses.

To fine tune her voice, she has started training in Indian classical music with ghazal singer Rochna Dahanukar. "I like learning ghazals, bhajans, etc. My voice has improved with classical training and I see myself changing my style," she observes.

As a child star, Zeenia has been singing,

dancing and acting on stage since the age of five. She has performed for the Dynasty Culture Club (Smiley-n-Frub Kid's Club) and danced as part of Zubin Soorty's troupe in a show by Remo Fernandes for the Ganesh Utsav in Pune in '92. She featured in "Body to

Body, Soul 2 Sole," a fitness and dance program, with dancer/choreographer Shiamak Davar's troupe on Zee TV, and was also among his group for the opening ceremony of the National Games in Pune in '94. "I love Shiamak's choreography," she remarks, though she no longer goes for dancing lessons.

When she was eight, Zeenia played a lead role as the little girl lost in the forest in Graffiti



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Production's *Punch-a-Tantra*, enacting the well-known animal fables in a children's play filled with catchy tunes, humor and lively choreography, performed enthusiastically by Davar's jazz dance students.

Last year, Zeenia was selected to play a brief role as a deaf and dumb girl in the BBC film *Trying to Grow* produced by Kennedy Mellore. For the part, she underwent a three-month crash course in the language of the deaf and dumb from Beroz Vacha, director of the Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf and DeafBlind.

When Motorola Pagers launched their product in India in December '94, she sang at their promotional show in Delhi and lent her voice for their advertisement jingle. She has posed for the camera in advertisements for Britte Plastics, HMT watches, Ravalgaon, LIC, GIC, etc. states her biodata and has been interviewed by Annu Aggarwal for "Oye-MTV" and on FM (All India Radio) for the program "It's my day." She sang at the 60th birthday celebrations of Donald Duck at Hotel Retreat in Bombay, and has performed at five-star hotels and at private parties with the Clowns-R-Us group.

Audiences at Parsi New Year "Dhinga-Masti" shows and at the Dadar and Marine Lines Parsi gymkhanas, the Parsi Food and Trade Festivals, etc have heard her sing. On a brief visit to Hong Kong in October/November '97, she demonstrated her versatility by singing popular English numbers for the Hong Kong Zoroastrian Association at their Halloween party and Hindi songs at the Diwali ball organized by the (Indian) Fellowship Association at a five-star hotel.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) has been very supportive, states Kersi. "We approached them for financial help and they considered our case. Dinshaw Tamboly, managing trustee of the WZO Trust, is a result-oriented man, a man of action. He does not keep you dangling for an answer, it's either a firm 'yes' or a firm 'no.' They have given us financial assis-

tance for the promotion of talent within the community, so that Zeenia can, as he has stated in his letter to us, be 'a credit to her family, community and country.'" Jamshed Guzder, philanthropist and Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman, has also been most encouraging and has "stood by Zeenia," remarks Kersi. Khorshed Bharucha, the principal of Dadar's J. B. Vacha High School where Zeenia is an eighth standard

student, has been very understanding, granting her leave of absence for shows, etc, he adds. Giving priority to studies as well as singing, Zeenia remarks that she enjoys what is called a "cultural period" in school, with music, dance and song. "It's not just all studies, there's needlework and computers and games every Tuesday after school. I play volleyball and I also enjoy swimming."

Residents of Lalbaug's Nowroz Baug, Zeenia's mother Jasmine is a housewife who takes great interest in her daughter's singing career. Brother Rashid, a black belt in karate who has won numerous trophies and has been honored by the WZO, the Mancherji Edalji

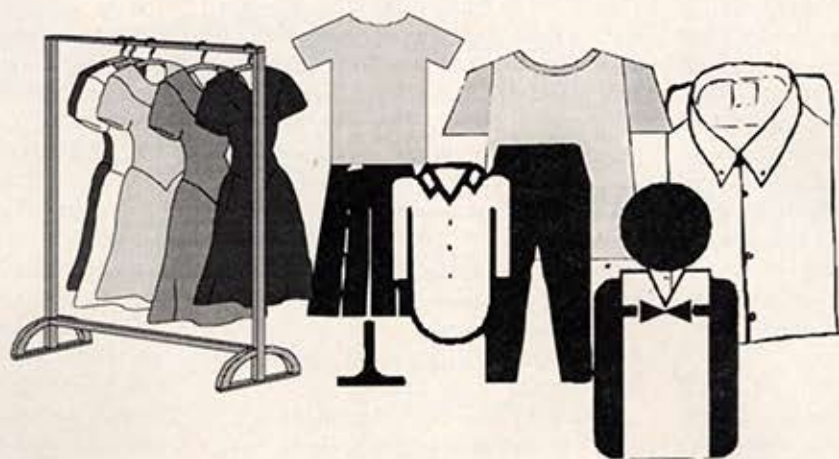


At age nine with brother Rashid

Joshi Memorial Trust, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations for Welfare and Culture and other bodies for his excellence in karate, is currently training as a sea cadet and is away from home. The family are staunch believers in Zoroastrianism with regular daily prayers and visits to the agiary. "I am certainly very proud to be a Parsi," states Zeenia. Conductor Zubin Mehta and singer Penaz Masani are high up among the musicians she admires.

Approaching 13, with one album under her belt, Zeenia now stands at the crossroads. Looming ahead is the difficult transition from child star to mature artiste. With solid support from her family and her own hard work and commitment, she aims to fix on herself the spotlight, on a platform already crowded with entrenched and aspiring pop stars.

"I would like to become an established and recognized singer with awards to my credit," is how she visualizes her future.



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EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 10

gregational prayers, humbandagi, for the 10 days as recited at Dadar's Rustomframna Agiary. Led by the panthaky of the Agiary Ervad Fareedoon K. Kutar, the young and old devotees join in the prayers at 6.30 every evening during the muktad days.

Organized by the Dadar Jashan Trust for over two decades, "it is a delightful experience," states Marzban Giara, when the gathering jointly chants prayers before the neatly laid tables of flower vases, with the fragrance of sandalwood and incense permeating the air. The humbandagi is followed by talks on religious subjects and "so great is the enthusiasm for listening to the lectures that...the devotees scramble for seats or stand and listen in rapt attention," mentions Giara.

The discourses this year were on simple topics like the "Power of *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*," "Friendship with Ahura Mazda," "Lessons from the holy *Gathas*," "Zoroastrian marriages," "Five *gahs*," and the speakers who offered such intellectual fare were Kutar, Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar Karanjia, Ervad Soli Mulla, Gustad Forbes, Rustom Chothia, Armaity Dhallia and Aban Sethna.

The function at Dadar was organized by Coomi Dastur, acknowledges Giara who recommends that such activities "deserve to be replicated in other Parsi colonies" for the benefit of greater numbers.

Energizing Thermax

The change in management necessitated by the demise of the dynamic Rohinton Aga, a lockout for two months at its chemical plant, poor market conditions, all contributed to Thermax Limited showing a four percent decline in net profits from Rs 45 crore in the financial year 1996 to Rs 43 crore the following year, as per a write-up in *The Economic Times* of June 13 to 19, 1997.

This professionally managed, zero debt

company now has Rohinton's widow Anu Aga at the helm as executive chairperson with Abhay Nalawade as the managing director. Remaining now in the Aga family which owns 62 percent of the equity, as per *The Economic Times* report, is the Agas' daughter Meher Pudumjee and son-in-law Pheroze who are involved in the finance and international divisions respectively, after having handled the company's export affairs in the UK. Son Kurush died in a road accident in early 1997. While Meher Pudumjee was inducted into the board of the company in July 1996, as per 54-year-old Anu Aga's statement to *Business India* (June 30-July 13, 1997), "Thermax is an institution and would be managed by the best professionals at any given time in the future. Such a person could be a professional not related to me in any way or could be a member of the family."

The main business of the company continues to be process heat systems with a stronghold in boilers. Thermax is also believed to have pioneered absorption cooling — heat based cooling — in India in the range of 30-1,500 tonnes of refrigeration. Since chemicals are the key raw materials, they felt the need to diversify into chemicals. To handle the waste they produced, being an environment conscious company, they further diversified into pollution control and waste management, their activities and market control is summed up by *The Economic Times*. They are market leaders in Kenya and Bangladesh, and now targeting South East Asia, the Middle East, the CIS countries and Africa.

Recently they tied up with Culligan International, a US-based company, to enter the domestic, commercial and industrial segment for water purification. They plan to be the first to offer a string of new products like water in hot and cold dispensers of five litres, point of entry water purifiers for residential colonies, hotels,

offices, etc, water vending machines at places like railway stations. Another joint venture, Thermax Fuji Electric Limited manufactures process control equipment and

systems for industries like steel, power, petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. Thermax Energy Performance Services will carry out a complete study of energy usage in a customer company and will design systems to save moneys through proper utilization of energy, the details of the joint ventures are enumerated in *Business India*. "New ventures, a tighter business focus and declining inventories are pointers to better times at Thermax," believes *Business India*.

Improving with age

At 91 years of age, Jehanbax Aderji Kapadia of Calcutta does not only participate in international track events, he also wins prizes. Recently at the XIIth World Veterans' Athletic Championships in Durban, South Africa in July 1997, when nearly 6,000 individuals from all over the world competed, he was the only Indian among approximately 100 participants to win three silver medals, notes a press release. Kapadia: Running in the 90-94 years age-group, he won silver medals in the 100 m, 200 m and 400 m sprint.



He seems to be improving with age, for Uncle Kap, as he is popularly known, had won two bronze medals at the XIth World Veterans' Athletic Championships in Buffalo, USA. Actually, Kapadia got involved in competitive athletics at the age of 78 when he entered the 100 m sprint in the West Bengal Veterans' Athletic Meet in 1984 and stood first in the 70-75 age-group although he was eligible to compete in a higher age bracket. Thereafter he has been a regular competitor at national and international meets, invariably bagging prizes. In fact at two national meets, he has bettered the existing record, according to a family source: a timing of 41.5 seconds in the 200 m run at the IX National Athletic Championship in 1987 when he participated in the 80-84 age-group; a timing of 19.7 seconds in the 100 m dash, in the 85 plus age-group at the 1991 nationals.

"He has side-stepped the rocking chair and is spending his time limbering up daily, perfecting his style, building his stamina, improving his speed and displaying rare determination and youthful zest," observes his daughter Zarin Rustomji.

Born in Bharuch, Kapadia "came to Calcutta in 1956 after having retired in Jamnagar, and adopted the Calcutta Parsee Club as his own. Snacks for the canteen were



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planned and prepared in his house by his wife and children. His friends and his children's friends joined in too as the Kapadia home became an open house for club meetings and preparations. Tennis was his first love and he excelled at the game," notes a citation presented to him by the Parsis of Calcutta on the eve of Khordad Sal on August 27, 1997 to salute "his indomitable spirit" which displays "a shining example in fitness and competitive zeal."

Impressive incense stick

With his gigantic incense sticks (14 feet, nine inches in length, six inches in diameter and weighing six kilograms), Merzban Burjorji Lahewala of Ahmedabad has claimed a place in the *Limca Book of Records* as also the *Guinness Book of World Records*. This novel *agarbatti* "burns continuously for more than 60 hours, and its unique feature is that it has different fragrances which change every 16 hours," writes Hector Vesuna who is presently in charge of the Central Bank of India's Zonal Staff Training Centre at Ahmedabad.

The sponsors, organizers and participants had a thrilling time at the Parsee Monsoon Games held at Bombay's Rustom Baug on August 24 and 31, 1997. From the 16 teams which competed for supremacy in football and tug-of-war, Dodgers were the winners in both the events while the Cusrow Baug team was the runner-up in football, and the Rustom Baug team, the runner-up in tug-of-war. The Fair Play Award was presented to Malcolm Baug. Sponsored by Peekay Wines, Union Press and Leopold Cafe, the meet which was held under the auspices of The All Parsee Sports Club was organized by Zarir Shroff and Farhad Irani.



On the occasion of the golden jubilee of India's independence, 36-year-old Lahewala's statement as reported in the Press mentioned, "I had decided to do something which could bring laurels to Gujarat not only at the national but also international level. Since I was in the business of making incense sticks, it suddenly struck me that I could make the tallest incense stick in the world. And finally I have done it." Working on this project for six hours daily for nearly two months, Lahewala was able to succeed in his venture.

The cost of this incense stick would be approximately Rs 900, mentions Vesuna, informing that one such was recently donated to a religious festival where it burnt for more than 60 hours attracting a large, curious crowd from all parts of the city.

Lahewala with his incense stick

Lahewalas is a household name amongst the Parsis of Ahmedabad, states Vesuna, serving the community during times of joy and bereavement, because it is the only Parsi store in the city which can supply items needed for Zoroastrian rites and ceremonies.

Interested in Iran?

For the past few years, Zoroastrians all over the world have, once again, started taking a keen interest in Iran, their spiritual motherland. In response to this need, a number of Zoroastrian tour operators, especially from Bombay, have emerged offering various packages to suit diverse budgetary and other considerations. Asfandiyar Sohrab Gotla is one of them. For the benefit of those wanting to know more about Iran, and particularly those planning to visit the country, Gotla has compiled and published a useful, 115-page pocket-size booklet titled *Guide To Zoroastrian Historical Places In Iran*.

Gotla has attempted to provide a bird's eye view of different places in Iran of historical, spiritual and cultural interest to Zoroastrians. Among the important centers, he covers Tehran, Hamadan, Kerman-shah, Esfahan, Shiraz and Yazd. He also provides information on Pasargade, Persepolis, Naqsh-e-Rostom, Pir-e-Norestan, Set-e-Pir, Pir-e-Sabz, Pir-e-Banoo Pars, Pir-e-Nauraki and Pir-e-Herisht.

Of further interest to the reader would be the information on seasons, food specialties, distances by road, common Farsi phrases and generous doses of inspiring Farsi quotations. Gotla also takes the reader through the various "dos" (what to shop for, what to savor, what to look for) and "don'ts" (what





Dhalla at Mt. Hiei

Homi Dhalla. Representing the Zoroastrian faith, Dhalla participated in an international conference held in Hiroshima on August 6, to commemorate the day when thousands perished in the atomic bomb blast in 1945.

Two days earlier he was present at the Religious Sum-

mit Conference held in Kyoto where he presented the Zoroastrian viewpoint on peace and human rights. At an interreligious prayer meeting held at Mt Hiei, on the outskirts of Kyoto, he recited Avestan prayers on peace, notes a write-up summarizing his overseas tours.

To combat religious persecution and infighting, the United Religions Initiative was formed as a "scaffolding upon which the religious and spiritually-motivated people of the world could stand to ultimately form the United Religions." Intended to serve as a global force which

would bring together the world's religions on a daily, permanent basis in pursuit of peace on earth, United Religions was conceived by the Episcopal Bishop of San Francisco, William Swing, mentions Dhalla who, along with Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago, was invited to participate in the deliberations at the Stanford University from June 23 to 27, "to determine the research and development needed to move the dream of a United Religions Charter to reality by the year 2000." Additionally, Dhalla conducted the Zoroastrian prayer service one morning and recited verses from the *Avesta* emphasizing the concept of peace and harmony.

SPOTLIGHT

President of the Rotary Club of Bhopal South, **Dara Pavri**, was presented the Special Appreciation Award in June 1997 "for exemplary efforts and excellent performance in honoring Rotary with action and vision during 1996-97." Under his presidentship, the Rotary Club of Bhopal South was also adjudged the "best club" in the district comprising of 50 Rotary clubs in Madhya Pradesh and a part of Gujarat, according to a press release.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

women should not wear, what everyone should avoid doing or taking with them to this theocratic Islamic state).

Published in 1997, this well printed booklet (available from the author at B-9, Anand Vihar, St Martin's Cross Road, Bandra, Bombay 400050, Tel: 6452247) would serve as a useful and handy travel guide for all those visiting Iran for the first time.

Noshir H. Dadrawala

Fora for peace

Movements that promote peace and resolve conflicts invariably seem to draw Dr



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ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

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dium, encourage gift subscription outside North America as also to other interfaith organizations, public libraries, university libraries with religious studies departments, centers for Zarathushti studies, etc to increase awareness of the Zarathushti religion in North America.

- Update, publish and distribute directories at local and national levels at regular intervals to keep Zarathushtis connected

- Identify reasons why small groups choose not to form associations; provide legal and infrastructure assistance to those small groups who do wish to form associations

- Increase communication between diverse groups by engaging them in projects with a common goal

- Organize activities to help the frail and fragile of the community

- Organize and support on regular basis, youth congresses, interactive seminars for constructive dialogue between youth and adults, sports activities and camps

- Include ZYNA (Zarathushti Youth Network of N. America) in all FEZANA activities; include youth in all sub-committees; encourage member associations to send youth representatives to FEZANA AGM and/or congresses and provide funds to facilitate that

The milestones for the achievement of these goals include increasing subscription to the *FEZANA Journal* by five percent every year; revision of requirements for FEZANA membership with the goal of five small groups joining the Federation by 2002; recirculation of a 1993 document, *Guidelines for enhancement of Parsi Irani understanding* ("Implementation of this rests at the local and personal level. FEZANA can create awareness that solutions to problems exist"); by AGM 2007, three percent of the management board should be from the 20-30 age-group.

Also on the agenda is the creation of funds for loans, businesses, scholarships for religious education and other higher education through an economic council so that by 2002 there would be very few unemployed Zoroastrians in North America and by 2007 some large-scale entrepreneurship activities would be in place. The goals of the council are:

- To develop and implement economic programs that would benefit various segments of the NA Zarathushti community

- Each association should have a committee to help Zarathushtis to become economically stable

- Encourage and assist Zarathushtis to set up businesses and employ other Zarathushtis, encourage national and international Zarathushti franchise, have an inventory of assistance available through all levels of government, financial institutions and other funding agencies

- Recognize and encourage demonstrated talent among young Zarathushtis through granting of awards

- Establish substantive funds for college scholarships and/or loans to encourage and facilitate higher education to give a strong message to the youth that the com-

**"A community
cannot have a
religious vision
unless there is a
sociopolitical vision
and will as well"**

munity is there to help before they are asked to serve the community

- Establish scholarships for religious education

- Make community service part of college loan agreements

- Facilitate retirement living for the elderly

- Organize business expos

Planned gifts using charitable trusts leveraged by insurance; trust funds; volunteer contributions per project by individuals and associations; united way; tithing are the fund raising options under consideration.

Other internal infrastructures include the establishment of:

- Small study groups to study and make recommendations on topics determined by the FEZANA president as relevant to the attainment of the vision of the community
- A Council of Elders to review and vet the findings of each study group, advise the president on difficult and divisive issues and arbitrate any conflict within the community.

Initially, an ad-hoc and temporary "Advisory group," nominated by the president, would formulate detailed proposals for the establishment of study groups and the Council of Elders. It will recommend chairpersons for different study groups for proposed issues, to be appointed by February 1998.

By April 1998 each association is expected to name two respected NA Zoroastrians for the seven-member Council of

Elders. A priority is the creation of groups to study specific issues facing the community in depth. Their recommendations would be forwarded to the Council of Elders.

External structures are contemplated to strengthen links with Zarathushti and other religious organizations, the scholar community and the secular world. These include the development of a strong and effective Worldwide Zarathushti Council; a center for Zarathushti studies in North America; and a Zarathushti Spiritual Center in North America. The plan anticipates that the NA Congress in 1998 will highlight interfaith activities. A proposal for a Zarathushti Spiritual Center was drafted and submitted to the Manitou Foundation in July 1997. Approval for FEZANA to join the World Council of Zarathushti Federations (WCZF) is expected to be decided by a mail vote by December 1997.

FEZANA received its consultative status as a non governmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations' Economic Council in May 1997. The charter for the United Religions Initiative is currently being compiled and it is hoped that the community will participate actively in the 1999 conference in South Africa. The community is also being encouraged to offer "a gift of love at the Millennium Event in 2000."

These and other avenues to develop spirituality, promote greater mingling through cultural, food and business expos, and procedures for conflict resolution are being explored. Among schemes of special significance to individual Zarathushtis will be the establishment of social welfare mechanisms, individual and marital counselling services and retirement centers. A unified calendar, a consecrated place of worship, a Zarathushti chamber of commerce and a bank are other foreseeable goals.

An appendix acknowledges inputs for the plan from Khorshed Jungalwala, Freney Ranji, Jimmy Mistry, Mazda Antia, Katayun Kapadia, Pervin Davar, Dinaz Weber, Nergish Mehta, Roshan Rivetna, Sepehri, Anahita Sidhwa, Shida Anoshiravani, Behram Kapadia, Ardeshtir Anoshiravani, Adi Davar, Ness Lakdawala, Dinshaw Joshi, Gev Nentin, Sarosh Collector, Noshir Langrana, Soonamai Desai, Kayomars Mehta, Kaemarz Dotiwala, Adi Unwala, Dilshad Antia, Natalie Vania, Rohinton Rivetna and Jamshed Mavalwala. Kevala, Mistree, Russey Sumariwalla and Bella Tata were the consultants.

"We are here to stay"

FEZANA's new projects demonstrate a commitment to future generations

Crestone, where the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America's (FEZANA) 1997 annual general meeting was held, is described by president Dolly Dastoor in a letter as a small village, 7,500 ft above sea level, 200 miles south of Denver, Colorado, with no large town near it. "This area is considered as very spiritual by the native American people and Ms Hanne Strong, president of the Manitou Foundation has set aside 1,200 acres as a Religious Heritage Site where different world communities can enjoy nature and learn about each other. The Zarathushti community through FEZANA has been offered 35 acres of land," informs Dastoor.

Fixing the AGM in Crestone was a way of bringing leaders of the North American Zoroastrian community together "to see for themselves the validity and utility of the land." Sixty delegates attended – the highest number for any AGM so far," as notes Dastoor. On the eve of the meet Ervad (Dr) Jehan Bagli had organized a round table panel discussion on "Spirituality in the Zoroastrian religion," with Keki Bhote, Firoz Jungalwala, Firdosh Mehta, Pervin Mistry, Farrokh Mistree and Aaron Rustom taking part. A write-up from Ervad Jal Birdy, president of the North American Mobed Council, was distributed as he had been unable to attend.

The AGM heard a presentation from the Zoroastrian Association of Houston's (ZAH) Homi Davier on the plans for the World Zarathushti Congress (WZC) in 2000.

Clockwise from top left: Rustom, P. Ichaporia, Jungalwala, J. Mistry and T. Aresh; Mistree (speaking), Rustom, and Kevala; Sepehri, Collector, B. Deboo (backing) and Dastoor (speaking)

Houston will be the host association and Davier will co-chair the Congress committee with Dastoor. Other members of the World Congress 2000 committee include vice co-chairs Mistree and Sarosh Maneckshaw; program co-chairs Khorshed Jungalwala, Kaemarz Dotiwala and Yezdi Rustomji; fund raising co-chair Rustom Kevala; international liaison Rohinton Rivetna; treasurer Sarosh Collector; joint secretaries Behroz Daruwalla and Arnavaz Sethna. Bella Tata, who chairs the FEZANA Congress Committee, the presidents of FEZANA and the ZAH managing committee will also be part of the executive board.

FEZANA office bearers for 1997-98 include Dastoor of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, as president, Framroz Patel of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York as vice-president, Collector of ZAH as treasurer, Mehran Sepehri of the Zoroastrian Association of Northern California as secretary and Maharukh Motafaram of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago as assistant secretary.

Retiring secretary Katayun Kapadia was profusely thanked. Roshan Rivetna was appointed editor-in-chief of the *FEZANA Journal*

with Kevala continuing to chair the publications committee and oversee the *Journal*.

Another feature of the 1997 AGM was the decision to use the words 'Zarathushti' instead of Zoroastrian and 'Zarathushti religion' instead of Zoroastrianism in all official FEZANA correspondence. The decision was the result of a generally accepted need to standardize, as explained in a paper presented by Jamshed Udvadia of Michigan who is now on the *Journal's* editorial team. The Fall 1997 edition of the *Journal* notes, "Formal change of the spellings in the names of our associations and FEZANA itself would take several years, but the effort would be worthwhile."

The decision of FEZANA to join the World Council of Zarathushti Federations (WCZF) as a founding member has been deferred to December 1, 1997 after presentations were made by Rohinton Rivetna outlining the structure of the WCZF and Adi Davar explaining the revised structure proposed by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO). "Firdosh Mehta and Farhang Mehr presented critiques on the two structures and outlined the implications for FEZANA," notes Dastoor.

In her president's report Dastoor referred to the "fervor and dedication of member associations" which led to the sponsorship of seminars and conferences to generate interest in the doctrine, history and social structure of the religion, making knowledge more accessible to young and old. She noted however that the response to the *Research Journal* published by FEZANA's historical research and preservation committee has not been as encouraging.

Welcoming the advent of the Zoroastrian Education and Research Society as an addition to scholarship on the continent, Dastoor hoped that the "proliferation of these societies do not undermine the activities and mission of the Federation...



but rather they will complement and enhance the work of FEZANA."

The FEZANA website has been visited by 1,468 people in the last three months, she announced. Important events of interest to the community, an index of the past issues of the *Journal* as well as abstracts of lead articles in the *Journal* are featured on the web. Plans are afoot to feature references to latest research on various aspects of Zoroastrianism as well as news items from member associations and FEZANA committees.

Referring to a negotiated settlement between two member associations of Northern California, Dastoor noted, "By maintaining transparency in all our actions, we, the officers of FEZANA, have tried to create a climate of trust among all Zarathushtis on this continent. We have taken the opinions of people into account and tried to maintain objectivity, fairness and respect for all viewpoints, be it religious, social or political. While respecting the autonomy of member associations, the officers have offered mediation in disputes between and within member associations... This offer of mediation is open to all who wish to make use of it."

1997-98 will be her final year as FEZANA president, notes Dastoor and says she is intent on developing a solid financial base for the organization. "To fulfill the mission and vision of FEZANA we need money, we need money so that no member of the community is deprived of education or of medical treatment because of lack of funds, and we need to develop mechanisms for the disbursements of these funds," she said.

According to Dastoor, Zoroastrians in North America should now be beyond the defensive survival syndrome and concentrate on consolidation. "We are here to stay, to consolidate our presence and take our rightful place, center stage, in every facet of North American life as Zarathushtis. The organization of the World Zarathushti Congress 2000 on this continent is a testimony of the confidence the Zarathushtis of the two mother countries, Iran and India, have in us; it is the recognition they have given us of the roots we have established as we grow as a viable community in North America... If we have confidence in ourselves and in our next generation, the artificial boundaries among

ourselves of 'we' and 'they' will disappear and we will create space to accommodate all of 'us' of all different persuasions."

Welcoming the Zoroastrian Association of the Rocky Mountains, FEZANA's latest member whose hospitality the FEZANA delegates enjoyed in Crestone, Dastoor particularly thanked its president Romy Engineer and member Bucky Amaria, even as she hoped more small groups of Zoroastrians as in Detroit, San Diego, Florida, Atlanta and Ottawa would organize themselves into associations and join the Federation.

"We need to grow not only at the individual level but also at the structural and organizational level," Dastoor said. "We need to establish ourselves by way of more associations, more anjumans, more community centers, more foundations for education, for medical treatment, agencies for social, psychological and religious counseling, professional and business networks. We need to put down deep roots from which strong oaks will grow for the next generation..."

"The future belongs to those who prepare for it today." A.S.M.

A gift to the spirit

The development plan of a Zarathushti Spiritual Center at Crestone was submitted to the by Dastoor, Kevala and Rohinton Rivetna. The tract, sited on ancient spiritual land of the American Indians has some facilities of the University of Colorado nearby and has the Carmelite, Buddhist and Hindu orders already settled on their apportioned areas. The 35-acre plot was offered to Rivetna by Hanne Strong at the Second Parliament of World Religions in 1993.

To be utilized in six stages, the proposers envisage that the first use of the land would be for the spiritual renewal of interested Zoroastrians in the pristine surroundings: communing with nature, meeting other Zoroastrian families or groups there for rest and recreation and as a primitive camping site for youths. The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America estimates an initial outlay of \$ 20,000 to complete access roads and to provide water, electricity and supervision. US \$ 10,000 have already been pledged and are immediately available, notes the report.

As money comes in by way of pledges and donations FEZANA expects to build a central kitchen, meeting hall, library, etc

in the second phase. One or two energy efficient shelters/cabins will also be made available for visiting Zarathushtis and for associations holding retreats, summer camps, etc. Hopefully, these first two phases will be completed by 2000 when Zoroastrians from all over the world will arrive for the seventh World Zarathushti Congress.

Caretaker and resident cabins constitute the third stage of activity. The proposal is to lease half to one acre to spiritually inclined Zoroastrian individuals or husband/wife teams wishing to build permanent summer or year-round residences



Zarathushti "pilgrim fathers" at Crestone

for their post-retirement stay. One of these could act as caretakers or be appointed directors of the Zarathushti Spiritual Center, if so qualified. The cost of construction would be borne by the residents with the stipulation that ownership would revert to

FEZANA after their passing.

A study center with library, conference halls and other facilities for major meetings, retreats, etc constitutes the fourth phase of development activity. By then it is estimated that five to 10 families would be living permanently in Crestone and there would be some vacant cabins constructed from donations to accommodate visitors or scholars invited to study religion, write papers, books, etc.

A prayer hall, dadgah and priests' quarters may be built any time a donor appears, notes the report, adding that many Zoroastrians are setting aside legacies in their wills for such purposes.

A consecrated temple and seminary would mark the crowning of the Spiritual Center project as also the aspirations of Zoroastrians in the New World. Such a temple/seminary would be the first outside the Indian subcontinent and Iran.

The plan "will greatly enhance the visibility and prestige of our community in the Western world. It also has the potential of becoming one of the most sacred and important sites for Zarathushtis worldwide." The drafters of the plan expect that eventually the Center may be handed over to a mobed council or separate charitable foundation specifically created for the Center's management. A.S.M.

Sexual violence in Rwanda

Reshad Forbes

Shattered Lives — Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Conflict and its Aftermath, report by Binaifer Nowrojee. Published in 1996 by Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6104, USA. Pp: vii+103. Price: Not mentioned.

This shocking account — a mere 103 pages — will unalterably affect even the most insensitive reader's view of the world. Its message is brutal, to the point, very sad and without relief. The genocide in Rwanda during the months of April to July 1994 — as well as the profoundly evil acts of sexual violence, mutilation and slavery committed by the perpetrators on nearly 500,000 women — is documented brilliantly in this lucid report compiled by Binaifer Nowrojee with the involvement and assistance of various international organizations: Human Rights Watch/Africa, Human Rights Watch, Women's Rights Project and the International Federation of Human Rights.

Survivors' experiences form the crux of the report. The introduction succinctly conveys the substance of the book: "During the 1994 genocide Rwandan women were subjected to sexual violence on a massive scale, perpetrated by members of the infamous Hutu militia groups known as the Interhamwe, by other civilians and by soldiers of the Rwandan armed forces, including the presidential guard. Administrative, military and political leaders at the national and local levels, as well as heads of militia, directed or encouraged both the killings and sexual violence to further their political goal: the destruction of the Tutsi as a group. They therefore bear responsibility for these abuses."

In a thoughtful observation the author explains: "Rape in conflict is also used as a weapon to terrorize and degrade a particular community and to achieve a specific political end... The humiliation, pain and terror inflicted by the rapist is meant to degrade not just the individual woman but also to strip humanity from the larger group of which she is a part... The shame of the rape humiliates the family and all those associated with the survivor."

Sexual violence in Rwanda was directed against Tutsi women (or Hutu women married to Tutsi men, or sympa-

thetic to the Tutsi cause). We learn in 'Background' that the perpetrators of the genocide (and the events preceding), were primarily Hutu political leaders and the military, i.e. the government in power since the revolution in 1959 when some 20,000 Tutsi were killed, the rest being driven out of Rwanda into exile.

During the 1980s and early '90s the Tutsi, many still in exile, were gaining back power and there were several skirmishes with the Hutu as a result. The by-now insecure Hutu leadership resorted to ruthless campaigning through the Press

**"Rape in conflict
is also used as a
weapon to terrorize
and degrade
a particular
community"**

and national radio, and a fierce propaganda war was waged against the Tutsi. At the same time militia groups were being formed, consisting chiefly of unemployed young men trained to kill. Arms were being obtained, and the administration was committed to paving the way for a full-scale attack against the Tutsi — a genocide of horrifying proportions which eventually took place in April-July 1994, killing almost one million people, predominantly Tutsi.

One aspect of the propaganda was aimed directly against Tutsi women who have traditionally been considered more beautiful, alluring, than their Hutu counterparts. It was therefore easy at such a time for the media to accuse them of being somehow dangerous. As one Tutsi woman recalled, "The word used was *Ibuzungerezi* (beautiful and sexy). It led to jealousy, to a hate I can't describe... I was told that I couldn't work in certain places because as a Tutsi woman I would poison the others."

The book outlines the status of women in Rwandan society, which is similar to the orthodox view of women in our own coun-

try. "Rape victims in Rwanda have been reluctant to disclose publicly that they have been raped... because they fear rejection and shame..." Also, the victim remains fearful as in several instances the violator continues to live within the community. There is also an overview of the international laws against gender-based crime — and the practical difficulties, and often negligence, in enforcing them. According to a United Nations report on violence against women, "rape remains the least condemned war crime..."

The most disturbing section of the book contains first-hand experiences of sexual torture experienced by the survivors. "Women were individually raped, gang-raped, raped with objects such as sharpened sticks or gun barrels, held in sexual slavery or sexually mutilated. In almost every case, these crimes were inflicted upon women after they had witnessed the torture and killings of their relatives, and the destruction of their homes. Some women were forced to kill their own children before or after being raped."

Bernadette, one of the survivors, recalls: "They killed all the men and boys (of the commune)... After they finished raping me they threw me in the river to die along with my children. My children all drowned but the river threw me back."

Perpetue, another survivor, recounts how she was raped by a group of 20 men over two days. "All the young women killed at the river were raped... On the third day (they) saw that I was not able to walk anymore (and) told me that I had already died and could go..." Witnesses narrated that some of the perpetrators did not even stop at raping the corpses of individuals they had killed.

The author informs us of the aftermath of the genocide. There are the severe health problems — including sexual diseases of every kind — and between 3,000 and 5,000 children born of rape who now need to be dealt with. Additionally, the women, who feel ostracized and severely scarred psychologically and emotionally, have to rebuild the scattered pieces of their broken lives.

There are currently 80,000 genocide
continued on page 40

In praise of the Prophet

Roni K. Khan

Afrin! Paigambar Zarathosht by Adil Firoze Rangoonwalla. Published in 1997 by the author, M/4, Dalal Estate, Lamington Road, Bombay 400008. Pp: 90. Price: Not mentioned.

Adil Rangoonwalla's latest book is a paean to Asho Zarathushtra, right from the color portrait that fills up the front cover to the closing words of thanksgiving on the last page. In between these two, in nine well-planned and well-penned sections, we find the life story of the holy Prophet ranging all the way from the advent of his mighty *khoreh* and *fravashi* upon the earthly plane to the return of his immaculate soul to the high heaven from whence it came. But this is not merely a biographical narrative, for the author skilfully uses the key events in the Prophet's life to open windows on certain aspects of the Zarathushtrian religion. "In fact, this book explains the religion of Zarathushtra through his life and the many miraculous events going with it," is how he describes his work.

Rangoonwalla's familiarity with the scriptures is evident from the many quotations he provides from various sources, but he does not flaunt his scholarship: the quotations are always as pertinent as they are illuminating, and all technical references are relegated to footnotes. This is not a daunting tome — it is a readable little book which is well within the grasp of our questing youth for whom it seems to be mainly targeted, and as a youth himself, the author is in a position to understand this audience.

The Zarathushtrian scriptural lore is frequently clothed in allegory and metaphor which makes things sound confusing and sometimes even nonsensical to the uninitiated, and many a writer has committed spiritual howlers by failing to delve beneath the literal outer meanings of some profound scriptural terms and concepts. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 AC), the great Hebrew scholar, had this to say: "Every time that you find in our books a tale the reality of which seems impossible, a story which is repugnant to both reason and common sense, then be sure that the tale contains a profound allegory veiling a

deeply mysterious truth; and the greater the absurdity of the letter, the deeper the wisdom of the spirit."

Happily, Rangoonwalla is seized of the fact that "much of scriptural writing is extremely cryptic and needs to be deciphered," and makes a spirited effort to provide the esoteric explanations for some



Author
Rangoonwalla

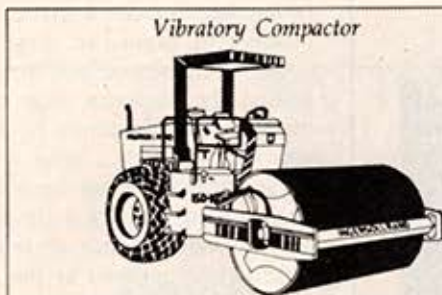
seemingly inane or baffling exoteric statements. This is an admirable feature of the book and lifts it above the ordinary and the sterile. Most of the time his deeper explanations satisfy, but on a few occasions one wishes that he had dealt even more exhaustively with certain landmark events in the Prophet's career — for instance, by drawing from noted savant Behram D. Pithavala's insightful exposition (*In Search of Divine Light*, pp 27-31) of Asho Zarathushtra's five steps to prophethood culminating in his great fifth initiation in the presence of Ahura Mazda; or from Phiroz N. Tavaria's inspired account (*A Manual of Khshnum*, pp 315-319) of the Prophet's final service to the world when he shattered the consolidated manifestation of evil termed *Turbaratur* (*tur* = evil, *bar* = a carrier vehicle, and *atur* = a form of fiery energy) and passed away from this earth.

In the holy *Gathas* the supreme spiritual title *ratu* is assigned to the exalted divinity Spenta Armaiti. It is also assigned there to Asho Zarathushtra. This concordance immediately indicates the divine nature and stature of the Prophet. Rangoonwalla rightly decries the present-day trend to portray Ratu Zarathushtra as merely a great philosopher, an original thinker, a visionary, a wise man or an inspiring intellectual, and correctly points out that "the way he has been portrayed in our scriptures is much different from what has been spoken and written about him in recent times."

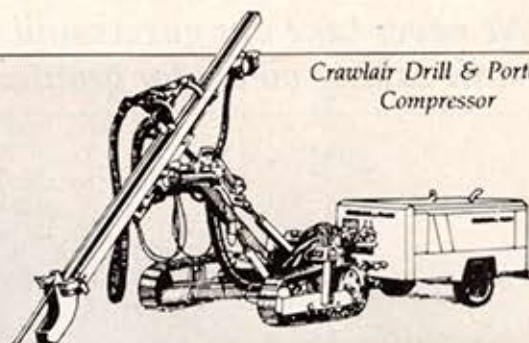
In fact, it is the central thesis of the book that "the Prophet, even as a human, was no ordinary human... this Yazatic Being assumed a human form for an earthly mission." This is no vainglorious exaggeration on Rangoonwalla's part. Our youthful author backs up his assertion by quoting chapter and verse from the sacred *Avesta* to establish, in a masterly section fittingly called *The Yazata of the Renowned Name* (this from a direct reference in *Yasna* 3:21 and 7:21), that Ratu Zarathushtra "is to be adored, revered and worshipped like a Sacred Being, like a Divinity; rather, the Holy Zarathushtra has to be worshipped as a YAZATA."

In substantiating this thesis, Rangoonwalla also offers a fascinating sub-section called *The "Yazata" Issue in a Nutshell*, where he sums up, in point form, K. R. Cama's confirmatory views on the subject as advanced by this celebrated savant in his Gujarati volume *Paigambar Asho Zaratoshtana Janamarano Aheval, Avesta Uparthi* ('An Account of the Life-span of the Holy Prophet Zarathushtra, based on *Avesta*'). Just one of these points may be quoted here to illustrate the thrust of the message: "Nowhere in the *Avesta* is there a *Khshnuman* [i.e. dedicatory formula for invoking a divinity] for a human being. All *Khshnumans* available are those for Ahura Mazda, the Ameshaspands and the Yazads. The only one known among all mankind to have a *Khshnuman* is Zarathushtra."

In today's environment of religious doubt, denial and denigration, it is as refreshing as it is heartening to witness the forthright faith and reverential regard with which a knowledgeable Parsi youth approaches his Prophet and his religion. Never mind the few instances of typographical carelessness or some strange spellings that mar an otherwise fine presentation on high quality paper and in elegant typeface — what really matters is that Rangoonwalla writes with an uplifted mind and his work is uplifting. Our community would be transformed if his fellow youths would literally and figuratively lift some leaves out of his book.

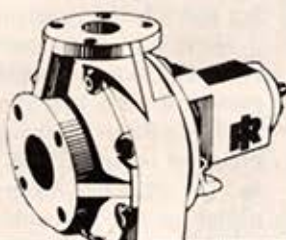


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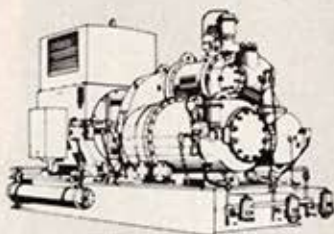


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SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN RWANDA

continued from page 37

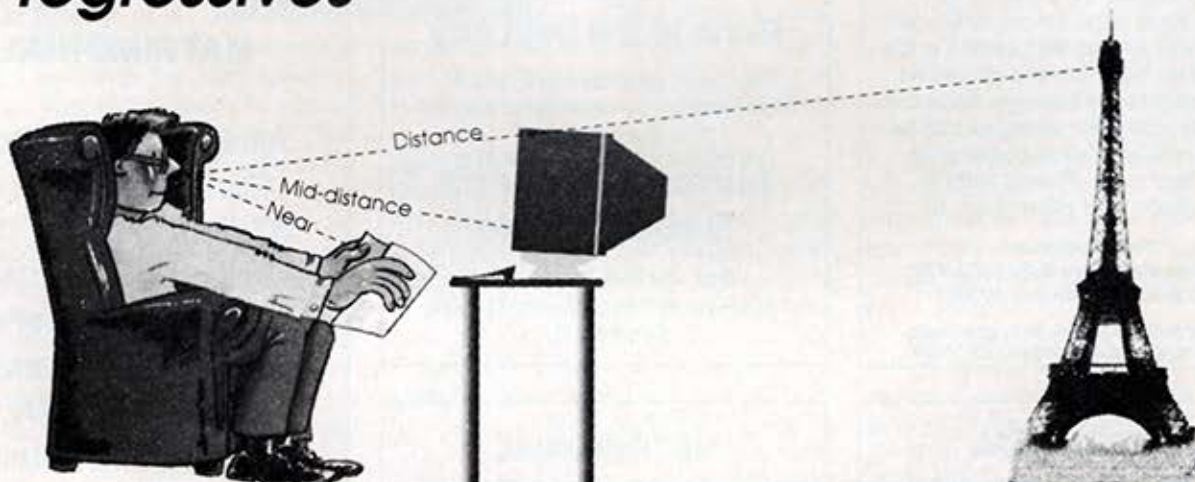
cases pending in Rwanda. But the author states, "Given the problems within the (Rwandan) judicial system... and the reluctance of women to come forward because of stigma and fear, the likelihood of justice for Rwandan rape survivors remains distant. Impunity for the perpetrators of rape will... send a message to Rwandan women that the sexual violence against them was not a crime."

The events leading up to the genocide were largely ignored by the international community. However, in its aftermath, the US and some European countries have already spent millions of dollars in repairing and rebuilding where possible.

Were the events narrated in this book recounted as a work of fiction, it would be passed off as a horror epic of the basest kind. But this is no fiction. The horrifying portrayal is replete with lessons for all of us. Yet what has history taught us? The events of the genocide are events with which we are already familiar: the ethnic-cleansing within the former Yugoslavia and Nazi Germany, not to mention the genocide committed in Russia, China and Cambodia, in this century alone.

These are events which form dark and shameful blotches on the story of man, but they have had little effect on the world's conscience.

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The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 26 and 60 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 38 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 30 and 73 years, averaging at 44 years.

There were 76 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Towers of Silence compared to 17 babies born in Bombay in September. Twenty patients succumbed to heart disease, the major killer, of whom 12 were above the age of 80. Brain disease and pneumonia/lung related diseases claimed eight lives each whereas seven victims fell prey to cancer. Cerebral malaria and septicemia took a toll of three lives each and anemia, old age and general debility, diabetes, hepatic encephalopathy, liver disease, gastro-enteritis and hypertension of two each. Kidney failure, uremia, malnutrition, gastro-intestinal haemorrhage, shock due to haemorrhage, pyrexia (elevation of body temperature above normal), nervous disorder and malaria were the isolated cases registered for the month of September. The coroner's report was pending in the cases of six deaths. The youngest to die was a 32-year-

old female as compared to the eldest, a 95-year-old lady. A 38-year-old was also lost to the community. The life expectancy at birth in Bombay, for September, was 75 years.

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

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl, *Farzeen*, to *Ruby* and *Zubeen Nallaseth* on August 14, 1997
A boy to *Nilufer* and *Meherwan Katrak*; August 25
A girl, *Meher*, to *Gulshan* and *Abad Wadia*; September 1
A girl to *Nina* and *Hoshang Guard*; September 3
A boy to *Mehermaz* and *Yazdi Arethna*; September 5
A boy to *Meher* and *Kurush Dastoor*; September 9
A girl to *Behroze* and *Yezdi Patrawalla*; September 10
A girl, *Farah*, to *Persis* and *Viraf Mistry*; September 12
A girl to *Tinaz* and *Farhaad Unvala*; September 13
A boy to *Nilufer* and *Vispi Damania*; September 17
A boy to *Rashna* and *Jamshed Cooper*; September 18
A boy to *Rashne* and *Mahiyar Panthaki*; September 19
A girl to *Tannaz* and *Arshad Khan*; September 20

Twins (girls) to *Kamal* and *Jamshed Mehta*; September 23
A boy to *Hoofrish* and *Keki Nagporewalla*; September 23
A girl to *Prochi* and *Dara Elavia*; September 27
A boy to *Shahzarine* and *Ravin Mehra*; September 28
A girl to *Shireen* and *Khushru Mistry*, sister to *Liana*; September 28

MARRIED

Ruby Rustomji Birdy and *Dhunjishaw Ardeshir Bamji*; September 5
Jasmine Rustom Cooper and *Sharukh Homi Major*; September 5
Anahita Daryush Irani (*Ektashanaz*) and *Danesh Fardoon Irani*; September 10

DIED

Adi Framroze Hoyvov (76), residing at *Guzder Mans*, *Princess St.*, 400002; August 31
Dhunjishaw Surti (89), *Hormazd Mans*, *Javji Dadaji*

Marg, Tardeo, 400007; September 1
Fakirji Barjorji Buhariwalla (90), 23, *Bacha Mans*, *Gilder Lane*, *Lamington Rd.*, 400008; September 2
Adi Framroze Keeka (83), D-5, *Rustom Baug*, *Victoria Rd.*, *Byculla*, 400027; September 3
Jehangir Dhunjishaw Chothia (88), 9-C, *Unique Apt.*, *Varde Marg*, *Off Turner Rd.*, *Bandra*, 400050; September 4
Rustom Kaikhushroo Dadachanji (82), 5/8, *Khan Est.*, *M.M.C. Rd.*, *Mahim*, 400016; September 4
Kati Tehmtan Dalal (69), 741, *Patel Bldg.*, *Parsi Clny.*, *Dadar*, 400014; September 4
Piloo Dhunjishaw Sidhva (84), *Sea-Shell*, 13, *Darabshaw Rd.*, *Off Nepean Sea Rd.*, 400006; September 4
Meher Kaikhushru Banaji (86), *Dilnavaz Bglw.*, *Lallubhai Park Rd.*, *Andheri (W)*, 400058; September 5
Dinshaw Cawasji Oomrigar (76), *The Cliff*, *Pochkhanawala Rd.*, *Worli*, 400018; September 5
Nadir Adi Reporter (45), *Annexe no 1*, *Ness Baug*, *Nana Chowk*, 400007; September 5
Naju Phiroze Mistry (75), P-21, *Nowroz Baug*, *Lalbaug*, 400012; September 6
Nergish Sorabji Mistry (76), *Dadiset Bldg.*, *Wadia St.*, *Tardeo*, 400034; September 8
Pestonji Dorabjee Rabadi (80), 573, *Umrigar Hse.*, *Chira Bazar*, 400002; September 8
Dolly Pestonji Sethna (67), 6, *Temple Ter.*, 55, *Forjett St.*, *Gowalia Tank*, 400036; September 8
Bachubai Cawasji Bhesania (93), 11/24, *Tata Clny.*, *Sir Ratan Tata Rd.*, *Tardeo*, 400034; September 9
Goolhai Homi Cooper (86), 6/A, *Ness Baug*, *Nana Chowk*, 400007; September 9
Mota Erach Sanjana (72), *Minerva Hse.*, 71, *M. Karve Marg*, 400002; September 9
Khorshed Minoo Wadia (73), 24, *Guide*, 16, *L. D. Ruparel Marg*, 400006; September 9
Farokh Cawasji Marker (73), 14, *Jairajbhai Bldg.*, 28, *Forjett St.*, 400036; September 10
Vispi Marzban Dalal (83), G-3, *Breach Candy Apts.*, *Bhulabhai Desai Rd.*, 400026; September 11
Jer Nusservanji Engineer (74),

21-A, *Jer Baug*, *Dr Ambedkar Rd.*, *Byculla*, 400027; September 11
Kersi Jal Mistry (56), *Sarkarbai Bldg.*, *Marzban Clny.*, *Gilder Lane*, 400008; September 11
Dhunjishaw Phirozshah Dharwar (84), 86, *Dev Chhaya*, *Tardeo Rd.*, 400034; September 12
Khodadad Behram Irani (74), *Ibrahim Clny.*, *Devlali Camp*, *Nasik*, 422401; September 12
Homi Rustomji Karanjia (75), 10/19, *Malegamwalla Bldg.*, *Old Khareghat Clny.*, *Hughes Rd.*, 400007; September 12
Hilla Phiroze Pithawala (68), 33, *West Minister*, 294, *Duccan Causeway Rd.*, *Sion*, *Chunabatti*, 400022; September 12
Aban Sharukh Appoo (38), D/3/64, *S. B. Bharucha Baug*, *S. V. Rd.*, *Andheri (W)*, 400058; September 13
Nadirshaw Eruchsha Pardiwalla (61), *C/o Amy H. Pardiwalla*, 29-7/A, *Navjeevan Soc.*, *Lamington Rd.*, 400008; September 13
Jal (Jalegar) Bapuji Dalal (93), 5/3, *A. H. Wadia Baug*, *Parel Tank Rd.*, 400033; September 14
Rusi Homi Mistry (46), 275-D, *Soona Bldg.*, *Chikalwadi*, *Grant Rd.*, 400007; September 15
Dara Framroz Anklesaria (87), *Jaiphal Ter.*, 31, *Forjett St.*, 400036; September 16
Maneck Rustamji Chowkidar (64), *C/o D. K. Gandhi*, *Sleater Hse no 1*, *Sleater Rd.*, 400007; September 16
Adi Dinshawji Hansotia (72), 275-D, *Soona Bldg.*, *Chikalwadi*, *Grant Rd.*, 400007; September 16
Aspy Adarbad Panthaky (48), G-3, *Maitri Bldg.*, *Golanji Hill Rd.*, *Parel*, 400012; September 16
Jehangir Kaikhushroo Elavia (76), 11, *Mody Bldg.*, *Gamadia Clny.*, *Tardeo*, 400007; September 17
Meherbai Dinsha Oostad (95), *Sushil*, *Arthur Bunder Rd.*, *Colaba*, 400005; September 17
Khorshed Byramji Shroff (77), 2866, *Irani Bldg.*, *Next to Maru Hosp.*, *Sopari Baug*, *Parel*, 400012; September 17
Rustomji Ardeshir Vajifdar (85), 57, *Humlog Soc.*, *Shankar Lane*, *Kandivli (W)*, 400067; September 17
Burjor Peshotan Sidhva (79), 3, *Shirin Van*, *T.P.S.II*, 4th *Rd.*, *Ghatkopar (W)*, 400086; September 18
Rustom Dhunjishaw Siganporia

(82), B-17, Deepanjali, Raje Shahaji Marg, Vile Parle (E), 400057; September 18
Perinbanoo Sohrab Bhada (79), Khodaiji Bglw, Malcolim Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; September 19
Piloo Maneckji Bharucha (80), 1, Nagin Mhl, 82, V. N. Rd, Churchgate, 400020; September 20
Perin Shavak Chikhlivala (77), 9-B, Gulnar, John Baptist Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; September 20
Fali Nursarwanji Kharas (78), Readymoney Bldg no 3, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, 400034; September 21
Nusserwanji Rustomji Fitter (91), Bhicoo Cottage, 66, Lam Rd, Devlali Camp, Dist Nasik, 422401; September 22
Dhunjishaw Piroshaw Guzdar (88), Kama! Mhl, Carmichael Rd, 400026; September 22
Jer Bomanji Guzdar (78), 9/7, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 22
Nadar Bhikhaji Karanjia (85), 7, Nawroz Bldg, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 22
Dosu Manchershaw
Karkhanawala (82), 102, Dadyseth Hse, Dadyseth Agiary Lane, 400002; September 22
Banoobai Sorab Irani (85), Ramwadi, Dahanu Rd, Dist Thane, 401602; September 23
Homai Darabshaw Khambatta (71), Jehangir Mans, Next to Metro Cinema, A. P. Marg, 400020; September 23
Gool Homi Modi (95), Palacimo, Silver Oak Est, Warden Rd, 400026; September 23
Fali Fakirji Tantra (90), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 23
Darabshaw Dosabhai Wadia (73), 5/16, Tata Clny, Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; September 23
Gahver Bejonji Chacha (93), 21-A, Surya Kiron, Pan Gully, Cumballa Hill, 400026; September 24
Faramji Shavaksha Kumana (71), 694, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 24
Roshan Khurshedji Mulla (73), C/13, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 25
Motibai Aspandiyar Irani (81), M-42, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1997*	This issue	1997*	This issue	1997*
BIRTHS						
Boys	8	72	-	6	-	16
Girls	11	79	-	4	4	22
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	3	166	-	2	-	8
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	-	21	-	1	-	4
Females married out	-	19	-	-	-	1
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	43	333	9	80	4	27
Females	34	361	7	69	4	26
CREMATED						
Males	-	3	-	-	-	-
Females	-	5	-	1	-	-

*Running totals for 1997 (January-September issues)

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.

400039; September 26
Jal Dadabhoy Madon (75), Lucky Mans, Janmabhoomi Marg, Fort, 400001; September 26
Hosi Burjor Mistry (58), 13/10, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 26
Noshir Darabshaw Pithawalla (67), C-1, Avabai Petit St, Balaram St, 400007; September 26
Jehabakus Jal Balsara (72), Room no 1, Sayaji Naguji Block, 9-A, Balaram St, 400007; September 27
Cawas Rustomji Daruwalla (50), E-28, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 27
Mehroo Homi Marfatia (68), Poonam Bldg, 139, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; September 27
Arnavaz Pervaz Rustomkhan (32), Jehangir Villa, 107, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; September 27
Shavak Muncherjee Bharucha (86), E, Mancher Manzil, 35-C, Jairajbhai Lane, 400008; September 28
Nergis Nariman Bulsara (88), 16, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 28
Noshir Godrej Gandhi (87), Firuz Ara, 160, M. Karve Rd, 400021; September 28
Jimmy Dinshaw Havewala (83),

F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 28
Freny Behram Udwadia (81), Dhun Abad, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 28
Padam Pestonji Constable (75), F/2, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; September 30
Noshir Cawasji Engineer (49), 782, Ready Money Bldg, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 30
Khorshedbai Byramji Guzder (72), 3/A/60, D. G. Ngr, Vasai (W), 401201; September 30
Dhunj Behramshaw Khambatta (77), Old Cama Bldg, Zoroastrian Blocks, Chikalwadi, Grant Rd, 400007; September 30
Jal Ardeshir Seervai (78), E-14, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; September 30
Nergis Nanabhai Vazir (80), Ebrahim Mans, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; September 30

CALCUTTA

DIED
Threety Fali Kapadia, mother of Khushcher Tankha and late Hoshang; September 21

JAMSHEDPUR

DIED
Cawas F. Bengalee (87), September 8

POONA

DIED
Naja B. Karkaria (87), 39/40, Triveni Ngr, Hadapsar, 411028; August 8
Homi K. Irani (76), 206/D, Panchratna Apts, Bhairoba Nala, 411013; August 22
Kaveh H. Bharucha (85), Saken, Valentine Soc, North Main Rd, Koregaon Park, 411001; August 24
Limji P. Bhatena (65), D/11, Kumar Kunj I, Opp Shivalkar Udyan, Wanowrie, 411040; August 30
Jal D. Haveliwala (88), Fakru Hse, Masjid Rd, Khandala, Dist Pune, 410301; September 10
Bejon R. Fisher (72), 10, Dr Coyaji Rd, 411001; September 12

SURAT

DIED
Tehmurasp Dadabhai Jungalwala (80), Machlipith, 395003; September 1
Khorshed Dorabji Patel (77), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; September 3
Shaheriyarji Hormasji Ghadiyali (79), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; September 5
Janifar Sharukh Mehta (9), Post

Dholikuva, Tal Chikhli, Dist Valsad, 396521; September 14
Kersi Dinsaji Mehanti (68),
Luharpole, Wakibordi, 395003;
September 16

Alan Pirojshaw Contractor (79),
Dutch Hse, Dutch Rd, Popat St,
Nanpura, 395001; September 17
Dinamai Nariman Munshi (73),
Village Akhakhhol, Tal Kumraj;
September 18
Jalager Jamshedji Elavia (67),
Village Kumas, P.O. Amletha,
Dist. Broach; September 22

AUSTRALIA
New South Wales

BORN
A girl, *Simin*, to *Armeen* and
Noshir Khan; July 24
A girl, *Kainaz*, to *Prochi* and
Khushrow Mehta, sister to
Kaizad; August 1

DIED
Soona B. Mistry, mother of
Freny Mehta; August 18
Kety Damania, mother of *Farida*
Aspi Jussawalla; September 29

JAPAN
Tokyo

DIED
Rusi Dinshaw Ghista, husband

of *Midori* and brother of
Banoo Maneck Ghista and
Rati Farrokh Katrak;
September 14

PAKISTAN
Karachi

DIED
Dinshaw J. Gandhi (76);
August 2
Jehangir E. Tarapore (74);
August 19
Rati Sohrab Bhathela (67);
September 20
Shirinbai D. Sethna (92);
September 20
Kaiku Dorab Gyara (75);
September 29

UAE
Dubai

BORN
A girl, *Parinaz*, to *Goolshum* and
Viraf Variava, sister to *Percy*;
September 4

USA
New York

BORN
A girl, *Iyanah*, to *Sooni* and
Firdaus Bativala, sister to *Jahan*;
July 7

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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Mrs Purviz R. Shroff

Pioneering travel

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Nariman Jehangir Katgara, 70, partner of Jeena and Company and director of Travel Corporation (India) Limited (TCI) who was the founder president of The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), on July 7, 1997 in Bombay following cancer.

"Nari, as we all affectionately called him, was a pillar of the travel and tourism industry for over five decades. He pioneered in promoting India as a destination in the global markets. His vision and farsight in the development and promotion of Indian tourism will be cherished and remembered by all segments of the industry for all times to come," acknowledged O. P. Ahuja, vice chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) India Chapter, in his condolence letter.

"As a founder member of PATA India Chapter, Nari was actively involved in Chapter affairs and through his mature guidance the Chapter grew from strength to strength," adds Ahuja. His presence at the PATA International meetings contributed to India getting a "high profile...that otherwise would never have happened," writes Camellia Panjabi, director and senior vice president of The Taj Group of Hotels. "I admired his ability and skill to see through all unnecessary maneuvers and ensure that they did not affect India," she further mentions in her condolence letter.

Besides earning the Pioneer of the Pacific, and the Award of Merit from PATA which he had served in various capacities, in recognition of his dedication to the trade, PATA bestowed upon Katgara its highest honor i.e. life membership of the Association, in 1987. A few years later he was invited by PATA to join the board as a director and as a trustee of the PATA Foundation, notes a press release from Jeena and Company.

Although he was more active with PATA, Katgara had attended an annual convention of the American Society of

Travel Agents in Mexico as early as 1949, earning the distinction of being the first Indian to participate in this meet, states the press release. At the Universal Organisation of Travel Agents Association, Katgara had served as deputy director for the year 1974-75, and two years earlier he was vice president of the International Congress and Convention Association, as stated in *Jeena News*, August 1997.

The TAAI which he was instrumental in founding in 1951 observed a minute's silence in his memory at its annual convention in September 1997 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Earlier this apex body had conferred on him its highest honor, the Agastya Award, as also a special award to commemorate his 50 years of dedicated service to the travel industry, and the Indian Association of Tour Operators had bestowed on him the Hall of Fame Award.

He was referred to variously as "a legend and institution," as mentioned Nandini Verma, senior vice president of Jetair Tours Limited, as "one of the doyens of the industry," as stated Glenn Abraham of Consolidated Freight Forwarders Private Limited, who specified, "it is really regrettable that this trade will not see the caliber, quality and integrity of such a person ever again."

A founder member of the Air Cargo Agents Association of India as also the Air Cargo Club of Bombay, he had served as president of both these organizations. He had also been appointed director of the International Airport Authority of India in 1989. Being a managing committee member of the Bombay Custom House Agents Association, he was involved with various other subcommittees and was chosen to chair the golden jubilee celebrations of this institution.

Katgara was deeply involved in the development of both travel-tourism and freight forwarding during the 53 years of his career, points out Meher Bhandara, manager-publicity, TCI. "To transform

India from being a land invaded by conquerors to a country attracting the largest tourist traffic on the subcontinent was a constant challenge to him. To mold and develop a freight forwarding industry that today is acknowledged worldwide" was also his goal.

Joining his family business, Jeena and Company, as an apprentice at the age of 18 after his education at Bombay's Proprietary High School, after three years of experience in travel and freight forwarding, Nariman and his brother Adi had to take charge of affairs following the sudden demise of their father. TCI was conceived in 1961 to meet the need for a tourist consortium specializing in looking after the needs of foreign tourists in India. Today TCI has 23 branches in India and sales offices in Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, Milan, Paris, Frankfurt, Barcelona, Madrid, London, Toronto and New York, according to the press release.

"Nari was a first-rate professional who understood the potential of tourism as an industry in the Indian economy and the relevance of providing value for money to the customer," notes an obituary in *Travel Trends* in its issue of August 1997.

Not only at a professional level was Katgara known for his hospitality but at a personal level too has he been remembered for his various kindnesses, courtesies, amiability and willingness to give guidance and encouragement to those who sought his counsel, as acknowledged various comrades in his fraternity. "In our small outfit we've tried to bring up Parsis but they are not willing to shoulder responsibility," Katgara had noted in an interview with *Parsiana* in 1987. "They are willing to remain clerks for the rest of their lives..."

Through the Katgara Foundation which he was responsible for starting, funds are meted out to those in distress. He was also involved in the working of the D. E. Mithaiwala Agiary Trust and the Shri Godavara Varasiagi Trust Fund. As trustee of the Mithaiwala Agiary he took on the onerous task of constructing a building to house poor Parsis on the Agiary property, states the press release.

Happy to see that his Parsi customers are "always proud of their own religion when travelling," Katgara had noted in the *Parsiana* interview, "with whatever little knowledge I have (of Zoroastrianism), even I promote it."

The country and community conscious travel agent is survived by his wife Coomi and sons Jehangir, Cyrus and Sam.



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