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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Concretizing dreams"

In the write-up "Concretizing dreams" on the housing project of the Salsette Parsis Association (*Parsiana*, June 1997) we regret not having mentioned a few agencies which we wish to thank for making this great dream project possible.

They are our solicitors, J. R. Gagrati and A. R. Jani of M/s Gagrati and Company, who framed the scheme and gave it legal shape, our architect Rusi Khambatta of Rusi Khambatta and Associates who was originally responsible for designing the whole project, Fali Sarkari, chartered accountant, and M/s Arolkar and Associates for getting the scheme approved from the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

We also take this opportunity to thank all others associated with the project whose names may have been inadvertently omitted.

ASPI P. ENGINEER

Technical Consultant,

Persepolis Construction Company Private Limited

"Honor thy father..."

Khorshed Javeri's article on her father Rustomji Andhyarujina titled "Honor thy father..." (*Parsiana*, June 1997) is perhaps one of the nicest pieces of journalism I have seen in a long, long time.

That a daughter, and a married one at that, salutes her father for his trying efforts to bring up a family of seven in real rough weather is perhaps the ultimate acknowledgment of a child's reverence for her pater.

I was quite moved after reading the article twice. In the autumn of their lives, I was perhaps their only nephew (Rustomji and his wife Freny's) to have frequently visited them. Sitting with them for a couple of hours was an experience. His help, dedication and advice (both legal and otherwise) towards the Udva Anjuman, the Damanwalla Dispensary and the Iranshah problems went unsung... perhaps that was one side of Rustomji with which his daughter Khorshed was unfamiliar.

Rustomji was a very dear uncle to me and his wife Frenymai was instrumental in seeing me getting married and happily at that. I cherish the wonderful moments I have had with them. Rustomji always believed in the bond of consanguinity... a true father figure of the Andhyarujina family.

ROINTON H. ANDHYARUJINA

The article "Honor thy father..." (*Parsiana*, June 1997) was a touching tribute by a successful daughter who gives the credit for her success to her parents. It showed the love of a noble man for his companion who had stood by him through thick and thin; and it showed up the strong family values that prevailed among the Parsis half a century ago.

I salute the writer as much as her parents. Would there were more like her!

You should publish more such articles in *Parsiana*.

N. R. DALAL

You should publish more articles like "Honor thy father..." (*Parsiana*, June 1997). It feels so good to read about a family that weathered storms and succeeded. That brood of five children is one the community should be proud of.

R. BATLIWALLA

An eye opener

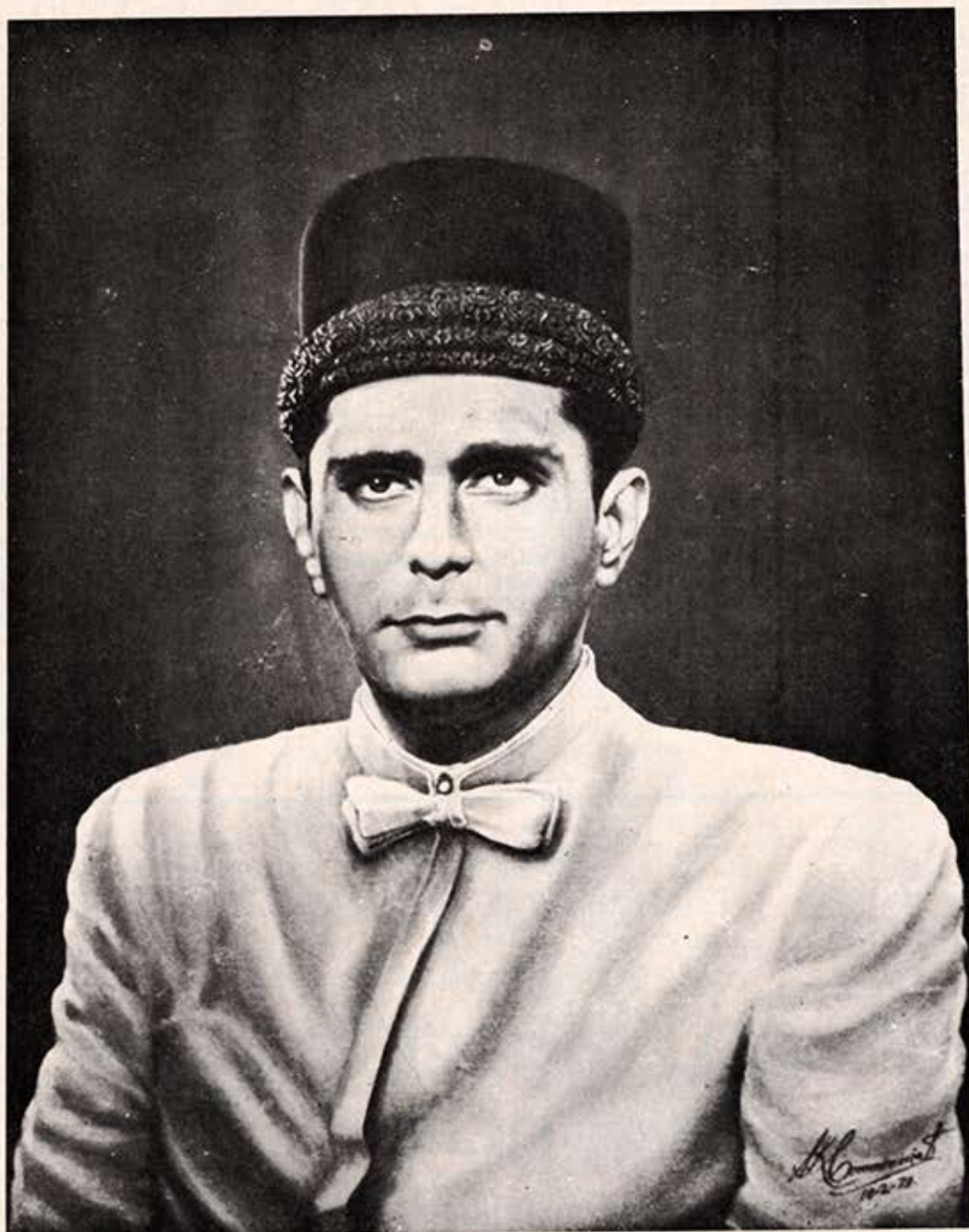
I was very happy to read in *Parsiana* that an Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians has been in existence since 1991 to uphold the rights of Parsi Zoroastrian women (who have married outside the community but have not renounced their Zoroastrian faith) to be free to practice all the rituals connected with our religion as normally practiced by Parsi Zoroastrian ladies.

It is now high time that we come out of a narrow mold which denies our Parsi Zoroastrian sisters the right to practice the Zoroastrian religion and to bring up their children as true Zoroastrians. The restrictions imposed by the bigotry of orthodox priests have to be vacated, if need be by legal measures, as the Indian Constitution gives equal constitutional rights to all women as enjoyed by their male counterparts. Recent judgments by the Supreme Court, in connection with restrictions practiced by other minority communities, should be an eye opener for our small but enlightened community.

In several cities in India, even children of Parsi fathers and alien mothers are restricted from entering places of worship till the navjote ceremony is performed.

A view of the first building of the Salsette Parsis Association complex





In Memoriam
Mr Fali Meherji Variava
Ex-Director

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Such ridiculous restrictions can only lead to ignorance about our religion for the unfortunate children during the most formative period of their lives i.e. up to seven or nine years till the navjote is performed. These children are not exposed to the sanctity of our places of worship and our prayers, and the first time in their lives they ever see the kebala is after the navjote ceremony. By such thoughtless restrictions we are ourselves depriving our children from learning and appreciating our glorious religion and its practices.

I personally would prefer intracommunity marriages as this has a lot of advantages in understanding each other's customs, culture, religion, etc. But if for any reason this has not been possible, then the children of Parsi Zoroastrian mothers and alien fathers should be permitted to be brought up in all aspects as Zoroastrians provided the non-Zoroastrian father has no objection and the mother has not renounced her Zoroastrian faith at the time of marriage. An increasing number of such children are being lost to our already depleted community.



Let us not delude ourselves that it is the quality and not the quantity that matters, as the fallacy of this quote will be evident in the next few generations. In spite of efforts to encourage intracommunity marriages, an increasing number of intercommunity marriages are taking place for a number of reasons, the commonest being that the heart wins over the head.

Dr M. D. DISAWALLA

Bangalore

Virtue brings victory

God in his eternal effort to protect mankind has taught them the art of peace, thrift, friendship, love and domestication of cattle.

When Zoroaster was born, all nature rejoiced. A divine light illuminated the world. The evil spirits tried their best to destroy the child but nothing worked.

In the next 15 years, Zoroaster refined his character in the sacred waters of compassion. He helped the aged; he healed the sick; he fed the hungry; he lightened the loads of the beasts of burden; he wandered among his fellows to comfort them in their hours of distress; he perfected himself as master in the practical art of independent living.

Miracle of miracles, Zoroaster had at-

tained honor within his own country. His greatest miracle was his ability to make gentle the hardened heart.

Rabindranath Tagore had written, "There can be hardly any question that Zoroaster was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion."

Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason that religion has its truth and its moral significance.

Zoroaster regarded Ahura Mazda as a seven-point personality — eternal light, wisdom, righteousness, power, piety, benevolence and eternal life.

The three cornered foundation of good thoughts, good words, good deeds — humata, hukata, huvarashta are strangely not mentioned in our *Gathas*. The *Zend Avesta* which is a book dealing with the nature of God, the duty of man and destiny of life says our duty is to teach friendliness to the enemy, righteousness to the wicked, wisdom to the ignorant and above all, to hate falsehood, to expose injury, whether to man or beast.

Well-being is not a duty but a joy. Virtue brings its own victory and vice its own defeat.

HOMI J. H. TALEYARKHAN



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The Young Men's Parsi Orchestra playing at Allbless Baug in the early '40s (seated on stage first and third from left are Nariman Khursedi and Nani Palkhivala)

Bands at baugs

Time was when our baugs and halls used to reverberate with music played by good Parsi bands: Kashinath's, Khodaiji's, Goody Seervai's, Nellie's. The host would invite band players to dinner and the leader of the band would be presented a bottle of good liquor. Alas! With the passage of time these bands, which used to entertain the gatherings with popular music and songs of yesteryear, put down their batons. Hardly do we now find a good Parsi band.

The void is filled in by taped music. Whether music is played by a band or is a recorded one, a host is burdened with an additional sum of Rs 1,000. The worst part is that this music must be stopped from being played at 9.30 p.m. Why can't the time be extended to 10 p.m. or 10.30 p.m.? Why should we Parsis remain docile and silent when other communities, on their festive days, are allowed to blare deafening music right up to midnight or even beyond?

BIKHAIJI M. ADENWALLA

This sagging image

This religious, intellectual, homogenous, enterprising and peace loving community which has contributed immensely towards the progress and prosperity as well as welfare of this country has been humiliated too.

Parsis themselves are to be blamed to some extent for creating this sagging image of our community. In the early part of this century, prestigious Parsi playwrights like Pijam and Kabraji used to churn out strong social dramas apart from comedies which used to captivate the audience. With

the passage of time, during the '50s and '60s some new brand of Parsi writers, movie makers, advertising agencies/television started a new trend of comedies, not knowing the humiliating consequences that would follow within a few decades. Then a favorite slogan was coined that Parsis can laugh at themselves. Not only that, but they appeared to be a bunch of buffoons.

Another reason for the degrading image of our community is our poor knowledge of Hindi and Marathi. Have you ever heard old Parsi ladies and gentlemen conversing with Hindi and Marathi speaking maid servants? When we have a great inclination to learn foreign languages like German, Russian and French why refrain from learning our own Indian languages that would definitely upgrade the image of a dwindling Parsi community? Besides, in the past, Parsis, both young and old, whether educated or uneducated were "willing workers." They believed in the dignity of labor. Not only that, they were loyal to their employers. The modern generation of Parsis is more selective in its jobs, profession and business and not prepared to face strenuous jobs. It is a fact that in the past Parsis were record holders and pioneers in sports like cricket but with the passage of time they

lost supremacy when the young breed of Parsi cricketers lacked real enthusiasm, interest and steadfastness. Today there is no Parsi cricketer in the Indian team. Some years back a Parsi cricket team went to England to play some matches with the English team.

Have you ever heard that an intelligent and peace loving people like the Parsis can create riots in the city of Bombay? In the year 1863, according to a book called *Mumbaichi Varnan* by Mr K. R. Mondker, some 50 robust Parsi youths created the riots. It so happened that some dog catchers made bold attempts to carry away some pet dogs from Parsiwada. To catch pet dogs was a great offence in those days. These 50 youths went on the rampage, even ordering all traders to down their shutters; not only that but an attempt was made to stop food supplies like meat. Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy as a respectable citizen of Bombay intervened in this matter and these youths were released from prison.

On August 15, 1997 India celebrated the golden jubilee of its independence with great pomp and show. Our political leaders and freedom fighters gave some good speeches recalling names of past freedom fighters and their unique contribution. May I know how many of them remembered the



names of great Parsi freedom fighters like Madam Bhikhaiji Cama, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji who contributed immensely in our freedom struggle? Who knows after another 50 years Parsis will have no voice in anything in this country.

D. D. NETERWALLA

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

Try it



*The feel and
fragrance of Satin*

CORRECTION

Due to an oversight, the second page of Readers' Forum was inadvertently repeated as the fourth page in the October 1997 issue of *Parsiana*. Since there is a mix-up in the two letters, "Any options for survival?" by Homi B. Minocher Homji and "Punchayet's preoccupation" by Pesi D. Muncherji, we are reprinting the letters in this issue. *Parsiana* regrets the error.

Any options for survival?

The Parsi Zoroastrian community is well aware of its inevitable demographic disaster before the middle of the next century, but does not seem sufficiently concerned to avert it. It prefers to look to its past glory and more recent achievements as a dike against the deluge. There is no attempt to mobilize public awareness or to form a think tank or to constitute a group of multidisciplinary wise men to even deliberate upon the subject. The Iranian Zoroastrian community is better placed in its demography and reproduction rate but as they migrate towards cities or to the West and fall prey to modernization, they too may soon find their growth stunted.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) recently gave some thought to undertaking a long-term plan of activity, right into the beginning of the next century. It issued a list of some 34 schematic helpful projects grouped into eight major sectors and circulated it to the Ontario community with a view to eliciting their choice of five projects therefrom in their order of priority. The outcome was:

- Encourage Zoroastrian youth (to participate) particularly by involving them in all activities of ZSO, including membership on the executive and other working committees;
- Assist the home-bound Zoroastrian elderly and the handicapped, with a network of voluntary care through friendly visits, meals, etc;
- Enhance the Zoroastrian faith and spiritual needs of the community by providing religious education, by age groups, and educating parents to maintain Zoroastrian practices in the home;
- Develop appropriate physical facilities for the community for housing of seniors and establishing a Zoroastrian cemetery.

This report and the format of projects has been circulated to the Zoroastrian Press in Bombay, Delhi and North America. A copy can be requested by mail from the ZSO, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, M2M 3S6, Canada. The objective is to get all Zoroastrians around the world thinking

about and deciding to implement the projects most suited to their long-term survival.

But this can only be viewed as a catalytic attempt to wake up to the dangers confronting us. In this writer's view what needs to be done additionally, is to constitute a global think tank of some multidisciplinary wise men, to deliberate upon the options we have within this crunch and then circulate their thoughts to all community associations around the world in order to seek their individual views and priorities. Could the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India or the Bombay Parsi Punchayet take a constructive and serious global lead in this matter and constitute such a think tank and, in these days of immediate 'e'-mail, also include some members from Iran, Pakistan, UK and North America? These will hopefully be the saviors of the community.

Prima facie what are these options?

- Do nothing because we cannot agree on anything. That is our current tradition: Ahura has helped us to survive 4,000 years and will continue to do so (hope springs eternal in the human breast!);
- Ask the youth to marry early a Zoroastrian spouse and produce more children (demographers and sociologists will consider such a behest ridiculous);
- Go back to the Gathic age of Asho Zarathushtra and open up the religion to all mankind. If all this seems 'so sudden,' then do it by stages e.g. acceptance of non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of mixed marriages and widows and those who had Zoroastrian parentage two or three generations back;
- Acceptance selectively of known non-Zoroastrians who are prepared to fully and solely accept the good religion and abide by its injunctions.

When considering these options one must keep in mind that the only other alternative is total numerical disaster and final disappearance. We have gone through a long period of Sasanian conversions and abundant non-Zoroastrian spouses. We are already carrying the genes of Dubra converts within India, much as we would like to deny it. Besides, what percentage of Parsis today continue to wear their sudreh-kusti and earnestly follow the Gathic or Vendidadian religiosity, behavior or purity whilst lured by hopeful miracles or showers of wealth (and in some cases, the evil eye) as promised by other faiths? Will our next generation, outside of India/Pakistan, even know or respect or follow our religious and behavioral practices or morality, particularly when non-Zoroastrian

spouses are outnumbering Zoroastrian spouses and we hesitate to accept at par such spouses and their children?

We are already in the process of gradually evolving into a different culture, influenced by the Judeo-Christian culture and education process abroad, and by the Hindu and Muslim culture by contact at home. If we do survive as a community past the middle of the next century, it will be in a form considerably different from the traditional or the present. Thanks to the telecommunication miracle, the world is shrinking in space and time. There is little room for survival of smaller ethnic faiths in their pure form. The challenge is to find out if and how we can survive such calamity and keep afloat. That is where our group of wise men should put on their thinking caps.

There do exist some assemblies/associations/Mazdayasni groups who have wisely held a far-sighted view of such tragedy and are busy converting many ethnics into the Zoroastrian faith at a level of purity we ourselves fail to achieve or take for granted. All praise to such pioneers, seers and saviors. But if we adopt the ostrich mentality of burying our heads in the sand and condemning them as a danger to our ethnic insulation, we will irreversibly damage our own existence. If we know any better and viable alternatives then let us proclaim them in the Press and face the community with such options. Else get under the caps of the wise men!

HOMI B. MINOCHER HOMJI

Toronto, Canada

Punchayet's preoccupation

The Parsi Punchayet may be doing their best to solve the housing problem of the community, but what they are doing is not good enough and it seems that the scheme is not executed in a proper and suitable manner. The board of trustees of the Punchayet consists of seven highly competent, wise persons, drawn from the cream of society, each experienced in his own profession. These trustees are not able to work in harmony. Different statements are issued by different trustees at different times and at times the same trustee is known to have expressed different views on the same subject.

The trustees have practically no time to devote to the welfare activities of the community except those concerning housing matters, considered to be a very lucrative business today. The flats once built could not be allotted to the needy for almost five

continued on page 56

Events and Personalities

Surat's mounting assets

Entrusted with the management of several institutions and trusts, the eight trustees of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) with Dr Sam Bhacca as president have been successful in augmenting their financial status as indicated by their accounts for the year ended March 31, 1997. They are in charge of assets valued at Rs 117,789,565.40, with investments accounting for Rs 86,264,459.38 and immovable property for Rs 24,025,468.65. While they have sent a comparative statement of their performance in 1997 as versus 1985, since they have not explained the rationale for choosing this 12-year evaluation, *Parsiana* has analyzed the recent figures with the 1995 statement of accounts, the latest available with us. Two years earlier their assets were valued at Rs 82,634,569.27 of which Rs 13,373,003.45 constituted immovable property and Rs 69,809,364.38 were shown as investments.

When studying the corpus of the different bodies, it appears that the SPP is most comfortably placed with Rs 40,909,346.87, the Nariman Home coming next in line with Rs 23,357,258.25 and the Parsi General Hospital with Rs 11,360,815.37.

Also included in their immovable properties are the Surat Parsi Boys Orphanage, Nariman Girls Orphanage, Parsi Maternity Hospital and the Patel School. When comparing the reserve, development and sinking funds of the different properties, the Boys Orphanage continues to show a maximum, Rs 1,505,357.01 and the Patel School a minimum Rs 80,270.95. In 1995, their respective figures were Rs 1,255,391.04 and Rs 70,332.23. In the case of rent and income from land received, the Patel School continues to show Rs 127,536 as it did in 1995 while the Boys

Orphanage shows a drop from Rs 170,300 to Rs 101,655. For the SPP too the rent and income from land declined from Rs 764,573.16 to Rs 473,772.94.

Also within the purview of the SPP are the Parsi Surat Charity Fund, the Polytechnic Institute, the Alapaiwala Institute, the Dastur Meherji Rana Trust, the Dastur

Rs 35,750 from public trusts and Rs 13,191 from individuals in 1995.

In Master's stride

Manifold are the portfolios Sheroo Master has handled in the course of her association with the Bombay Parsi Panchayat spanning almost 40 years: educational, matrimonial, stipendiary, welfare... Appointed joint secretary of the Panchayat since July 8, 1997, she is now additionally required to oversee matters concerning the F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, the doongerwadi, elections, staff administration and allied welfare, states Master.

Having joined the Panchayat as an assistant even before she completed her postgraduation from St Xavier's College, over the years she has had an opportunity to work "with several benevolent trustees whose life's mission was and is the welfare of the community," mentions Master.

Involved in the Panchayat's different educational projects, principal among which are the Holiday Programmes for Youth, Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Scholarship, J. R. D. Tata Scholarship, Master's special interest and important contribution has been in the vocational guidance bureau. In fact she joined the Panchayat as assistant to the central employment bureau and the department of psychological services and vocational guidance bureau. In 1964 she had an occasion to visit the Scandinavian countries where she studied their vocational and employment agencies and thereafter submitted her report to the Panchayat, notes a press release.

Monitoring incoming donations by legacies, settlements, estate and corpus donations as also outgoing donations to anjuman and community institutions have



The building housing the Surat Panchayat office Photo: Ashvin Mehta

Darab Phalana Trust and the Sorabji Burjorji Dastur Darab Pahalana Trust.

Donations though, continue to pour in for the SPP: Rs 61,518.12 from public trusts and Rs 149,675 from individuals in 1997 as compared to Rs 52,444.02 from public trusts and Rs 158,676 from individuals in 1995. In both the years, the highest expenditure was incurred on education: Rs 7,625,552.20 in 1997 and Rs 5,146,676.07 in 1995. The Boys Orphanage too received sizable donations, Rs 107,135.68 from public trusts and Rs 22,007 from individuals, lower however than in 1995 when it was Rs 210,987 from public trusts and Rs 37,691 from individuals. The Girls Orphanage registered an increase in donations as altogether it received Rs 53,206 (Rs 43,350 from public trusts and Rs 9,856 from individuals) as compared to

fallen within Master's purview.

Devoting most of her time to the Punchayet, she finds she has limited energies at the end of the day to pursue other interests like reading and sewing. Given a chance, she does like to set out on tour, being particularly fascinated by sites of archeological interest. In a controversy ridden community she prefers to adopt the adage of 'live and let live' and has learnt to take in her stride the accusations levelled against the Punchayet by its critics.



Master: manifold duties

More than a religion

"This little book is not a thesis on Zoroastrian theology or a historical work on the Parsis. It is not a 'user's manual' either. It is just a humble attempt at introducing ourselves and our lofty religion to our friends and well-wishers of other faiths. It can also help the modern generation who know absolutely nothing about our religion or history... The material used in the following pages is neither new nor original," candidly admits the author Rustom C. Chothia in his introduction to the 35-page booklet *The Parsis And Their Religion*.

Starting with "Who are the Parsis?" and ending with a chart on the Amesha Spentas, the author has traced the antecedents of the Parsis and summarized the key tenets, ceremonies and customs which characterize their life-style so that "this little book can answer the most often asked questions."

When referring to the Prophet, Chothia writes, "Prophet Zarathushtra did not teach a mere religion. He taught a way of life. Also Zarathushtra did not teach a new religion. The Mazdayasni religion already existed at the time of his birth... But the people and the priests had corrupted it. Prophet Zarathushtra revived the religion and restored it to its pristine form." That Zoroastrianism influenced other religions is conveyed briefly by alluding to the commonality with Vedic Hinduism, by mentioning that the three wise men who greeted Christ with gifts at the time of his birth were Zoroastrians, by recalling that Prophet Mohammed's main adviser and guide was

a Zoroastrian named Salman-e-Farsi, by stating that the Buddha's main teaching of the middle path was borrowed from Zoroastrianism.

The familiar tale of the first Parsi migrants to India adding sugar to the bowl of milk brought by the natives is related with a new twist. The leader of the group dropped not sugar but a big golden ring into the bowl of milk, according to Chothia!

That Parsis contributed to the building of India is reiterated. But Chothia does not mention by name the three Parsis who were elected to the British Parliament, nor the names of the first Indian bank, the first Indian newspaper, the first ship that were supposedly pioneered by Parsis, nor the names of the biggest hospital and hotel built by Parsis.

Chothia's own interpretation of the religion is conveyed directly or indirectly in certain passages. On conversion: "When a person converts to another religion it is an insult to the person's religion of birth." "Just as a married man should not covet another woman, a Zoroastrian should not engage in worship of anything else. It is adultery." On intermarriage: "Most people who marry outside are ignorant of the religion and hence become indifferent to retaining our ethnic culture and values." On charity: "It is our duty to give at least 10 percent of our earning to religious and charitable institutions. Remember God is nobody's keeper." On prayer: "Babbling prayers for hours without piety or devotion

is of no use. Another important aspect of prayer is that it has to be backed by righteous living." On the status of women: "It is therefore necessary for a woman to be in the house and bring up the children rather than go to work and bring lots of money. Children, not money, will be the future of the community."

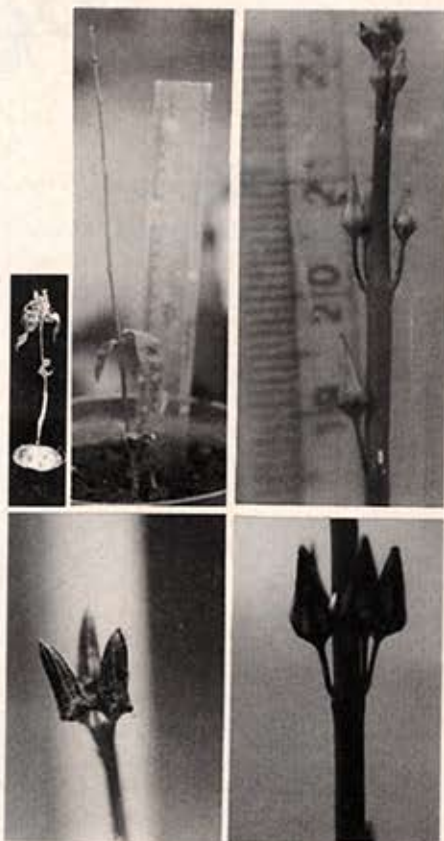
While it is difficult to overlook certain spelling errors like

Zoroastrian being spelt Zoroastrian occasionally, visuals in the form of illustrations and photographs make the book more readable. Those interested in procuring a copy should approach the author who is also the publisher at 757, Road No 7, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014, telephone 4148394.

A floral phenomenon

Botany books will now include a new species of plants named after Naoroji Godrej, the former managing director of

Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited. To be known as *Brachystelma Naorojii*, Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens have confirmed its status as a separate plant and have given permission to name it after the late industrialist, it was reported in *Godrej News*, the house journal of Godrej and Boyce, in its centenary issue, volume 4, 1997.



Botanical samples of *Brachystelma Naorojii*

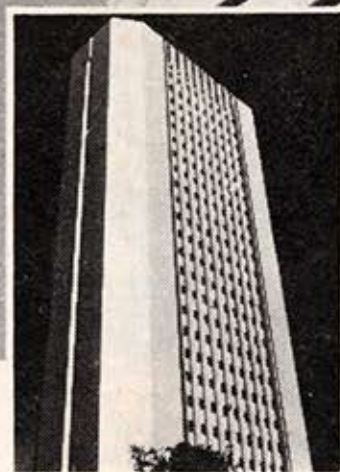
This wild tuberous plant, often eaten raw by locals, was discovered by Dr P. Tetali and his team from the Naoroji Godrej Centre for Plant Research (NGCPR) at Shinde-wadi in Satara district, mentions *Godrej News*. When combing the almost barren hill slopes of the nearby Gavade-wadi for rare and endemic (restrictedly distributed) plants in 1992, they came across this species which was then nurtured at the NGCPR nursery for two years after which it flowered. "That was essential for us for in botany a plant is identified by its flowers," Tetali was quoted in *The Times of India* of August 25, 1997. Attempts are now on to "seriously try and cultivate, propagate and multiply" the new species which is found only in the Western Ghats, said Tetali.

"It's a great honor for us in the Godrej family especially as only five to seven

THE PARSIS AND THEIR RELIGION



Reaching for the Sky



Two landmarks in Bombay – the Commerce Centre of the World Trade Centre Complex and the new Reserve Bank Building.

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Instituted for the best kindergarten teacher of Gujarat, the Hari Om Ashram Prerit Award (worth Rs 5,001) for the year 1996-97 was recently conferred on Armaity P. Choksey of Baroda, according to a write-up by Roxanne Kavarana. Head of the kindergarten section of Shreyas Vidyalaya, Choksey is reportedly a multi-faceted woman who not only has a flair for interior design, cookery and organizing cultural shows, but also holds a first class radio technician's certificate.

species of new plants are discovered each year in our entire region (including India, Nepal and Bhutan)," said Vijay Crishna, director, NGCPR to *The Times*. NGCPR aims to "initiate research and attempt preservation and conservation of rare and near-extinct plant species of the Indian subcontinent," stressed Crishna. The Centre presently houses 300 plant species of which about 70 are rare and endemic to the Western Ghats of Maharashtra. While the majority are medicinal plants, aromatic and wild edible plants, bamboo, timber and orchid species constitute the balance. The

Centre's eventual aim is to identify teams of growers and give them free seeds and saplings of rare plants, it was reported.

His mark on the mirrors

Looking into mirrors, behind mirrors and beyond mirrors is routine for artist Rusi Rutnagar who is constantly exploring new subjects and themes which he can paint on this glass medium. His latest exhibition at Cache, The Arts and Crafts Gallery in Bandra, had on view over 100 such mirror and glass paintings from November 7-12, 1997. Although he managed to sell 42 art pieces at this exhibition, he rates the viewer response as "average," indicating that he would have experienced greater satisfaction "if I had come home with less pieces."

While usually he undertakes exhibitions once in three years, Rutnagar held two during the last 12 months. Another recent development is that his paintings are on view and sale at the first class lounge of British Airways at Bombay's Sahar Airport. To buy a place of his own where he can permanently display his work is among his priorities now.



Prayers and floral tributes were offered at the statue of Veer Savarkar and the memorials of 16 other prominent freedom fighters on the occasion of 50 years of India's independence by some of the office bearers and members of The Bombay Parsee Association.

His mirror works span abstracts, figures and objects, sea and sandscapes, graphics and animals, and celebrity portraits of well-known names like Rajiv Gandhi, M. S. Oberoi, Charlie Chaplin...

His meticulously executed paintings are available in the Rs 3,000 to Rs 18,000 price range. An exception though is his 10" x 15" bust of Zarathushtra which is priced at Rs 2,500 because he would "like it to go into every Parsi home."

"The highly impressive 7' x 3' portrait of Marilyn Monroe at RGs (discotheque) is his personal favorite," notes an article in *Swagat*. At other discotheques like Cellars, Go Bananas and Cyclone too can his work be glimpsed.

Starting with the Oberoi pastry shop in Bombay, Rutnagar has also been commissioned to leave his stamp on the Ramada Palm Grove at Juhu, the Aurora Towers in Pune, the Leela Beach Resort in Goa.

Perfecting his fine art for the last 14 years, Rutnagar maintains, "Patience and concentration are the two prerequisites you need." He starts, though not always, with a free-hand drawing on paper, then transfers the sketch onto the back of a mirror after which he etches the area which he plans to paint. Next follows an acid bath for the mirror and later a wash with water. Once it is dry, he paints the exposed parts. While certain works can be completed within



Rutnagar: fascinated with glass

Photo: Prakash Rao

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hours, there are others on which he has to toil for weeks. His medium being so sensitive, he can't risk etching wrongly for then it would be almost impossible to camouflage it. The glass below must also not get scratched. This concern for details was imbibed by Rutnagar during his stint as interior designer at the architectural firm, Talati and Shroff. The motivation to launch his own venture was "to do something, which from start to finish was created by me."

Sethna's survey standing

Her forte being survey research and investigations as also advertising and communications, many are the organizations on which Arni N. Sethna left her imprint before succumbing to cancer at the age of 67 on June 11, 1997.

At the Indian Market Research Bureau she served as senior research executive. At Pathfinders, the research division of Lintas India, she worked as general manager. But many more years (almost seven) did she spend as convener of the Committee for Consumer Education for Schools and Colleges where she was instrumental in organizing training programs for school and college students and teachers, notes a write-up in *Keemat*, July-August 1997, the news-

letter of the Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI).

She was also committed to ensuring that consumer awareness is inculcated from a young age. Towards this end she strove,



Sethna:
consumer
vigilance

even approaching the government of Maharashtra to see that consumer education is included in the syllabi of standards IX and X, it was recalled.

"Her friends in CGSI will miss her, her gaiety, vigor and dynamism," added *Keemat* referring to her association with the complaints committee of the CGSI during which time she went about collecting affidavits from persons who had paid large amounts to Tabe clinic for the miraculous cures it was purportedly offering. "As a result of her efforts, Tabe clinic was issued an injunction by the Bombay High Court," debarring it from publishing misleading advertisements, mentions *Keemat*.

A graduate in sociology and marketing management from London University, Sethna is known to have undertaken social work for the handicapped, the hearing impaired and the blind. Even *Parsiana* had benefitted from her honorary guidance when

we were working on a readership survey.

Highway heists

Deterred by traffic jams on the highway have you been tempted to traverse the route by night? Better beware, for stone throwing and other measures to stop your vehicle and procure money from you is a common phenomenon in India, especially during festival days.

A frequent traveller by road from Bombay to Navsari, Piran Behram Doctor was on one such nocturnal sojourn when his Tata Estate was pelted with stones around midnight between Manor and Charoti in October last. Emboldened by similar experiences in the recent past, Doctor, who was travelling with his wife, father and children, drove on. Fortunately for them, the passengers in the car were unhurt although the vehicle was damaged, relates Doctor.

An unprepared novice might have halted his vehicle and faced even greater difficulties. But for a seasoned traveller like Doctor who due to work exigencies is compelled to take this route by night, there was nothing so alarming. Such incidents happen on all the national highways all the time, he states matter-of-factly.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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Perth Zarathushtis unite

The Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia (ZAWA) held its first Navroze luncheon at a hall in Perth, note Ruki and Farhad Mehta in a jubilant fax message to Farhad's father Behram Mehta.

Chairing the fledgling — we do not know what the Association's strength is so far — is Darius Pavri. Farhad Mehta is vice chairperson. The team includes secretary Firoz Pestonji, treasurer Mehernosh Buhariwalla and committee members Purveen Meher-Homji, Homee Wadia and Behram Cooper.

ZAWA can be contacted care of Pestonji at 10B Birch Road, Padbury, Western Australia 6025, informs the fax message.

FEZAA in the making

The birth pangs of the Federation of Zoroastrians in Australasia (FEZAA) has been recorded by its chief nursemaid, Capt Noshir Sachinwalla, president of the Sydney-based Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA), the largest association in the area. His letter of May 4, 1997 to fellow Zoroastrians recounts how Dr Sam Kerr and he had been working on the idea since it was mooted in October 1995 and the basic aims and principles were circulated to other associations in the region.

"We have come to realize that to form a federation is a mammoth task involving more people, a large expense and maintenance," writes Sachinwalla. Several questions plague the organizers:

- "Is the involvement, commitment and finance from the surrounding region and from Sydney (sufficient)?"
- "Who should be part of the preparatory committee?"
- "What should be included in the constitution?"
- "Who should be the representative body?"
- "Should the word 'Religion' be incorporated?"

- "How should it be financed?"
- "What are your aspirations, hopes and expectations?"
- "What safeguards should be incorporated?"
- "Do you have any suggestions or recommendations?"

The Myanmar Parsee Religious Headquarters from Yangon, Burma has heartily supported the formation of FEZAA, writes Sachinwalla while president Jamsheed Sidhwa of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zarthushtian Anjuman of New Zealand has congratulated the AZA for its decision to use the Fasli calendar as its official calendar.

Fifth time president

An unprecedented feat was accomplished by Homi Khambata when he was elected vice president of the Karachi Gymkhana (KG) for the fifth time for the year 1996-97, informs the *Parsi Sansar Ané Lok Sevak*, dated January 4, 1997. Khambata secured the highest number of votes (1,208 out of 1,450). He is reportedly the only Zoroastrian among its 11 managing committee members.

"The KG was founded in 1886 on a vast tract of land leased from the government. From that time almost until the creation of Pakistan the club was reserved exclusively for members of the European community," notes its centenary celebrations souvenir. For a monthly fee of Pakistan Rs 400, its 6,000 members can avail of the facilities of the cricket grounds, tennis lawns, swimming pool, squash and badminton courts and billiards, bridge and card rooms, informs Khambata adding, "there is no life membership." "A most popular and homely place... we have the honor of having our Prime Minister, chief minister, the Governor of Sind, judges of the supreme and high courts, ministers, senators, top government officials, industrialists, members of the diplomatic corps and leading citizens of Karachi," Aslam Maniar,

chairman of the centenary celebrations committee writes in the brochure.

At the KG, where quite a few members are Zoroastrians, there is one day every month which is a Parsi Day, when only



Parsi food is served, Khambata gives an insight. "Muslims are very fond of Parsi food," he says "having a particular liking for dhansak with kababs and *patra-ni-machhi* (pomfret pieces coated with coco-

nut chutney and steamed in banana leaves)."

The Khambatas moved to Karachi after partition when Homi's father Bomi, who was in charge of the credit facilities of the Central Bank of India, was transferred to its Karachi branch. Bomi was elected vice president of the KG in 1971 and 15 years later became its president. He died in office in November '87. As a tribute to its late president, the Gymkhana's cricket pavillion was named after him, reminisces Homi.

Giving an insight into the Zoroastrian life in Karachi, Khambata notes that there is a lot of religious awakening among the youth in Pakistan. "There are several talks and debates on religion. Classes on Zoroastrianism are held too. Parsis are very well off. You will not find a single Parsi begging." Women do intermarry and non-Parsis are allowed to view the face of the dead. The (Parsi) women in Pakistan are quite "fashionable and don't wear a burkha." Except at the swimming pool, where there are separate timings for females and males, women mingle quite freely with the opposite sex, says the bachelor matter-of-factly.

On the political scene too, "there is a special seat for minorities in the senate and provincial assemblies." Parsis take an active part in politics. Currently there are three Parsis in the political arena: Yezdiar Kekobad, Minoo Bhandara and Dinshaw Anklesaria, Khambata tells us.

Among his other interests he includes cooking, "because I am a connoisseur of food" and gardening and does social work in his spare time, but "anonymously," he clarifies. He would like to see relationships improve between India and Pakistan in their 50th year of independence.

Roxana A. Driver



Gool and Homi Amrolia celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary at Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver, Canada last September. Greetings and best wishes were received from HM Queen Elizabeth, the Governor General and the Prime Minister of Canada, informs their niece Tehmi Anklesaria. (L to R): Daughter-in-law Persis, Homi, Gool, granddaughter Roxanne, daughter Sheroo and son Dinyar.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

Unfurling freedom's flag

An overview of the life and work of Bhikhaiji Rustam Cama, one of India's foremost revolutionary freedom fighters

Dr Nawaz B. Mody

The arena of the great struggle for the independence of our country was not confined to the boundaries of India alone. There were many revolutionaries who lived and worked abroad, who did their best to attract world opinion in favor of the independence movement of India, who rendered political and diplomatic help, provided arms and other assistance to their colleagues in India, and trained other revolutionaries in the use of arms.

Madame Bhikhaiji Rustam Cama was one of those outstanding Indian revolutionaries in Europe who, even before the First World War, came to be known as the high priestess of Indian nationalism. Her portrait appeared in French papers along with Joan of Arc. It was a unique tribute to her indomitable spirit.

Born on September 24, 1861 in an affluent Parsi family in Bombay, her father was Sorabji Framji Patel, her mother Jaijibai. Bhikhaiji's father was a prosperous businessman and the family's affluence was reported by British intelligence reports. Sorabji Patel had formed a trust giving thirteen lakhs of rupees to each of his sons and one lakh rupees to each of his eight daughters.

Bhikhaiji was educated at the Alexandra Native Girls' English Institution where she gave evidence of a receptive mind and a flair for languages. That she was strong headed, spirited and unconventional even from her early years has been documented. The social standing of her family can be judged from the fact that her father was able to arrange a match for his favorite daughter Bhikhoo with the scion of one of Bombay's wealthiest and best known Parsi families—Rustam Cama, son of Kharshedji Cama, the renowned Oriental scholar and his first wife Avabai. The marriage which took place in 1885

was not a happy one. Impatient with her husband who held more conservative views, had little interest in public life and accepted the 'benevolence' of British rule,



Cama: "Freedom is a conquest and never a bequest" Photo: Bombay University
Transparencies of photos: Chetan Mistry

Bhikhaiji gradually drifted away from him. She used to say that she was also wedded "to the uplift of my countrymen, both social and political." She enthusiastically followed the proceedings of the first session of the Indian National Congress and thereafter. She grasped its significance and the opportunity it offered. At the time of the outbreak of the plague epidemic in Bombay in 1896, she threw herself whole-

heartedly into the task of nursing the sick and dying.

Her work amongst the plague victims, her awareness of the ravages of famine and economic depression that had ruined the country left an indelible mark on her sensitive heart. Her marriage, never a happy one, broke up and within a few years they were separated, though never actually divorced. She turned to politics and vowed to fight to liberate her country from alien rule.

In 1902, owing to ill health she had to go abroad for treatment and an operation. It took almost 35 years for her to return to the land of her birth.

Cama lived in England from 1902 to 1907. During this period a remarkable transformation took place in her personality and she earned the epithet "Mother of the Revolution."

After regaining her health she sought an avenue for service. She enthusiastically started her political work in England under Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, who was the first to shape her career. She actively canvassed for his election to the British House of Commons. Through Dadabhai she got the opportunity to meet many eminent Indians involved in India's freedom struggle. She also developed an enduring friendship with Perin Naoroji, Dadabhai's granddaughter.

It was Dadabhai who introduced her to Sardar Singh R. Rana through whom she met Shyamji Krishna Varma. Rana and Varma brought a more pragmatic direction into her life. She also came under the influence of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the Italian liberators who had inspired aspiring revolutionaries all over the world. She soon drifted away from the politics of 'petition' to the ranks of militant extremists.



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The Cama family around 1890: (standing, L to R) Spittama, Rustam, Bhikhaiji, Freany M. Murzban, Saashyant, Threaty J. Patel, Jehangir and Sarosh; (seated, L to R) Ashish A. Namdar, Maneckbai (Kharshedji's mother), Kharshedji, Aimae (Kharshedji's second wife) and Pouruchishti R. Cama

Photo: Alexandra School

Cama was closely associated with the Indian Home Rule Society founded by Varma in 1905. The aims of the Society were to secure home rule for India and carry out propaganda in the United Kingdom. Cama also wrote for *The Indian Sociologist*, a penny monthly published by Varma which was an organ of the Indian Home Rule Society and was very critical of the moderates in the Congress.

Cama and Veer Savarkar

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar came to London in 1906 as the recipient of the Shivaji Fellowship awarded by Sardar Singh Rana. In London, Savarkar established the Free India Society which has been described as the recruiting institution of the Abhinav Bharat Society (New India), which was

modelled on the lines of Mazzini's 'Young Italy.' Cama became a member of the Abhinav Bharat Society and took the oath sworn by members of Abhinav Bharat pledging themselves to fight under its revolutionary banner against the British tyrants. She never tired of repeating: "India will be independent, India will be a republic; Hindi the national language; Devanagari the national script."

Bande Mataram — Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's hymn — had been adopted as the national hymn by the revolutionaries. Cama attached great importance to these words.

With Savarkar, Cama came to establish a close bond. After arriving in Paris, she established the New India Society on the lines of Abhinav Bharat. Later on the Society came to be known as the Paris Indian Society. (According to historian V. S. Joshi, Burjorji Godrej, father of Pirojsha Godrej, was the vice president of this unit of Abhinav Bharat.)

Savarkar and Cama both believed in the efficacy of violence. The latter particularly started advocating Russian nihilistic methods of individual terrorism. She stated, "I want to speak on the methods, as I cannot keep quiet since such tyranny is

going on in our country and so many deportations are cabled every day and all peaceful methods are denied to us."

The difference of opinion between Mahatma Gandhi on the one hand and Savarkar and Cama on the other is well known. When Gandhi visited London in 1906 to promote the cause of Indians in South Africa, he had an argument with Cama on the question of independence for India. In response to Gandhi's request not to talk of independence at that stage, she had strongly asserted that "India must have independence here and now."

In Paris at a meeting to condemn the arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1907, Cama made an inspiring speech: "I wish I could break open the very prison doors and bring out Lajpat Rai. Lajpat the patriot should not be left to breathe the foul air of captivity. For he who loses his liberty loses his virtue. Freedom is a conquest and never a bequest."

In April 1908, Savarkar completed the writing of his epic *The first Indian War of Independence-1857* in Marathi. Cama was closely associated with the publication of the book. Moreover she, with the help of M. T. Acharya, translated the entire book into French for its second edition — a

mammoth task. Both Savarkar and Cama wrote extensively and their articles were widely translated for worldwide distribution.

Savarkar meanwhile started training his assistants in the use of arms and making bombs with the help of the Russians. Cama, having accepted the need for recourse to violence as inevitable, organized the actual training of young revolutionaries in the use of arms and manufacture of bombs. She became the moving spirit behind Abhinav Bharat in Europe and also the receiver and manager of its funds.

In 1909, Savarkar was sought to be implicated in the Nasik Conspiracy Case. Savarkar had managed to get smuggled to India 20 Browning automatic pistols and ammunition from Paris concealed in the false bottom of a suitcase. A week before the guns arrived, Savarkar's brother Ganesh was arrested in Bombay. The police found a copy of the *Bomb Manual* in his house. The British police sought to implicate Rana and Varma with the case. To save her colleagues, Cama in an act of unparalleled courage took the unprecedented step of making a signed declaration at the British Consulate in Paris, taking on the entire responsibility of having sent the pistols to India.

This was followed by the great struggle launched by Cama to save Savarkar from the clutches of the British. Cama, Varma and Rana took up the issue on an international plane and even succeeded in referring Savarkar's case to the Hague International Court. When he was eventually imprisoned, she regularly sent Rs 30 per month to his wife and Baba Savarkar. This fact has been gratefully acknowledged by Savarkar in his writings.

Savarkar's letters from the Andamans to his brother Narayanrao reveal how deeply he was impressed by Cama's loyalty. In his letter of March 9, 1915 he wrote, "I was very much afraid that owing to the invasion of France you would be unable to hear from Madame Cama — who had ever since my coming here been a second mother to you and who had so nobly and so faithfully stood by us in the darkest hour of our life." In later letters he worried as to how she would pass her days in exile. It was indeed no surprise that the ardent advocate of militant Hindu nationalism should have high words of praise for the Parsis.

During his presidential address at the 19th session of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha at Karnavati (Ahmedabad) in 1937, Savarkar stated: "The Parsis have ever been working shoulder to shoulder

with the Hindus against the English domination. They are no fanatics. From the great Dadabhai Naoroji to the renowned revolutionary lady Madame Cama, the Parsis have contributed their quota of true patriots, nor have they ever displayed any but goodwill towards the Hindu nation which to them has proved a veritable savior of their race. Culturally too they are most akin to us."

Unfurling the flag

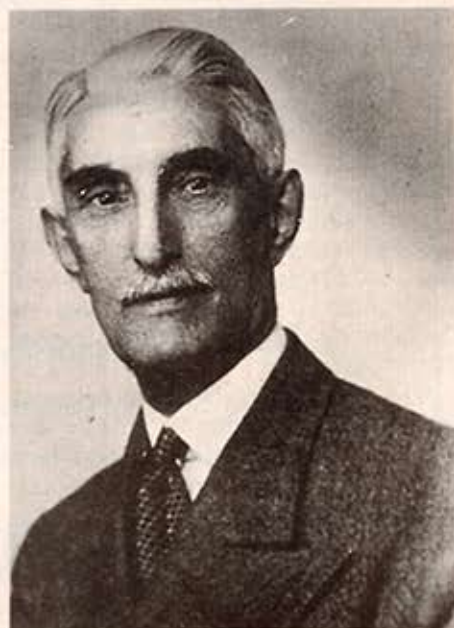
Madame Cama's 'crowded hour of glory' was at the Second International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart in Germany on August 22, 1907 which was attended by nearly 1,000 delegates from different countries. She made her mark in history and it is perhaps the most significant act of her entire career. To expose the atrocities of the British, to raise the rebel flag in front of an international gathering required defiant courage of a high order. This she had in ample measure.

Cama made a brilliant speech at the Congress. While conveying the greetings of the Indian people who had been suffering at the hands of the British capitalists, she described the deteriorating economic condition in the country which was suffering from the ravages of famine. She made a fervent plea for human justice, human rights and independence of the Indian people.

Unfurling the flag she held in her hand she said: "This flag is of Indian independence. Behold, it is born. It is already sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youth. I call upon you, gentlemen, to rise and salute the flag of Indian independence. In the name of this flag I appeal to lovers of freedom all over the world to cooperate with this flag in freeing one-fifth of the human race." She was greeted with thunderous applause.

Cama moved a resolution at the end of her speech demanding complete independence for India, something even most of the Congress leadership could not think of then. It was Cama who had the foresight to envisage this. The president of the session ruled that the resolution could not be put to vote because it had a procedural flaw. However he overwhelmingly supported the sentiments expressed in it. It took several decades for Indians to take up the slogans of Cama and decide on the national flag.

The flag Cama unfurled was a tricolor designed by the early Indian revolutionaries and was said to be inspired by the flag



From top: Perin Naoroji Photo: Hindustani Prachar Sabha, Munchersha Godrej Photo: S. P. Godrej and Cama

of the French revolution proclaiming the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, according to one version. As per this, in the original flag on the red strip at the top there were seven lotuses indicating seven Indian provinces, the yellow strip in the middle had "Vandemataram" inscribed in Devanagari. In the green strip at the bottom were the sun and the moon as symbols of the Hindus and Muslims. This flag was first hoisted in Green Park, Calcutta on August 7, 1906 — Boycott Day. This flag was also hoisted at the 1906 session of the Indian National Congress under the presidency of Dadabhai Naoroji. Hemchandra Das Kanungo, another revolutionary in Paris, described the flag thus: red, saffron, blue, in that order. The red at the top with eight half open white lotuses to saffron at the center with "Vandemataram" in Devanagari and blue at the bottom with a sun on one side and crescent moon and star on the other. Later Kanungo claimed that he had made the flag in Paris for Cama to attend the Stuttgart Congress. In this version it is not clear who designed the flag. There is of course a striking similarity between the two flags — the Stuttgart flag of 1907 and the swadeshi flag of Calcutta of 1906 with minor differences. This proved that the flag hoisted in Calcutta in 1906 had reached the revolutionaries.

The other view attributes the designing and making of the flag to Savarkar and Cama in August 1907. This flag was also a tricolor. Savarkar was inspired by Mazzini's flag for Italy which was also a tricolor and had the slogan "Young Italy" written over it. The Indian flag had three strips — green, saffron and red. On the green strip there were eight lotuses depicting the Indian provinces. The color green represented courage, saffron, victory and red, strength. In the middle in the saffron strip, "Vandemataram" was inscribed in Devanagari. On the red strip the sun and moon were depicted. There was no star in this design.

As per this version Madame Cama herself brought the rich satin silk for the flag and sewed it.

Cama once again unfurled the flag on February 20, 1909 at a meeting of the India Society in London. And she declared that she would henceforth make her speeches under the Indian flag, which she did.

The subsequent accounts of the fate of the actual flag are confused. Biographer Dr Minocher Contractor states that the flag was smuggled into India along with other records of the revolutionary patriots by the well-known socialist leader Indulal Yagnik

and kept hidden in Bombay. While in prison he revealed to G. V. Ketkar, the grandson of Lokmanya Tilak, the location of the records of the revolutionaries. This bundle contained Cama's original flag. On August 18, 1937 after his release, Savarkar unfurled the flag and placed it in the Library Hall of the *Kesari* and *Mahratta* office in Poona.

Another version states that Cama brought the flag back with her when she returned to Bombay in November 1935. One Rustom Jehangir prevented her belongings, including the flag, from being confiscated by the British police when she was taken to the Parsee General Hospital.

As a journalist

Cama's interest in journalism was apparent even during her married life in Bombay.

"The Parsis have ever been working shoulder to shoulder with the Hindus against the English domination"

Khorshed Sethna in her book *Madame Bhikhaiji Rustom Cama*, describes the quarrels which occurred between Cama and her husband while she was running a journal on social work and reform with his help. However, she and others are incorrect in stating that Cama helped Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in starting the *Bombay Chronicle*. Cama left for England in 1902 and did not return to India till November 1935. The *Bombay Chronicle* was begun by Mehta in 1913 and he himself died in 1915 so Cama could not possibly have assisted him with the *Chronicle*.

Cama wrote extensively in Shyamji Vama's *Indian Sociologist* till it closed down in 1922. The journal *Bande Mataram* was launched in September 1909 by Cama and Lala Har Dayal. The money for *Bande Mataram* was invested by Cama on condition that she would personally read and edit every word. Later Cama was to bemoan her poor financial condition, sadly stating that *Bande Mataram* was able to survive only on account of her self-denial.

She penned the fiercest attacks on the British in *Bande Mataram* and published it from Geneva in order to avoid embarrassing the French whose hospitality she enjoyed. Though they did not succeed in persuading the French authorities to hand Cama over to them for her anti-British activities, the British banned her from ever entering India.

British intelligence described her as "the notorious Parsi lady of Rue de Ponthieu." Cama was also connected with the publication of the short-lived *Talwar*.

Internationalism

Cama was the first Indian revolutionary to be impressed by Lenin. Russian comrades used to call her India's Joan of Arc. Lenin reportedly invited her to reside in Russia but she did not accept.

She maintained very close contact with Russian revolutionaries like Mikhail Pavlovich in Paris. She was attracted by the Narodnik tactics of individual terrorism. Later, however she realized that a successful revolutionary movement needed mass support.

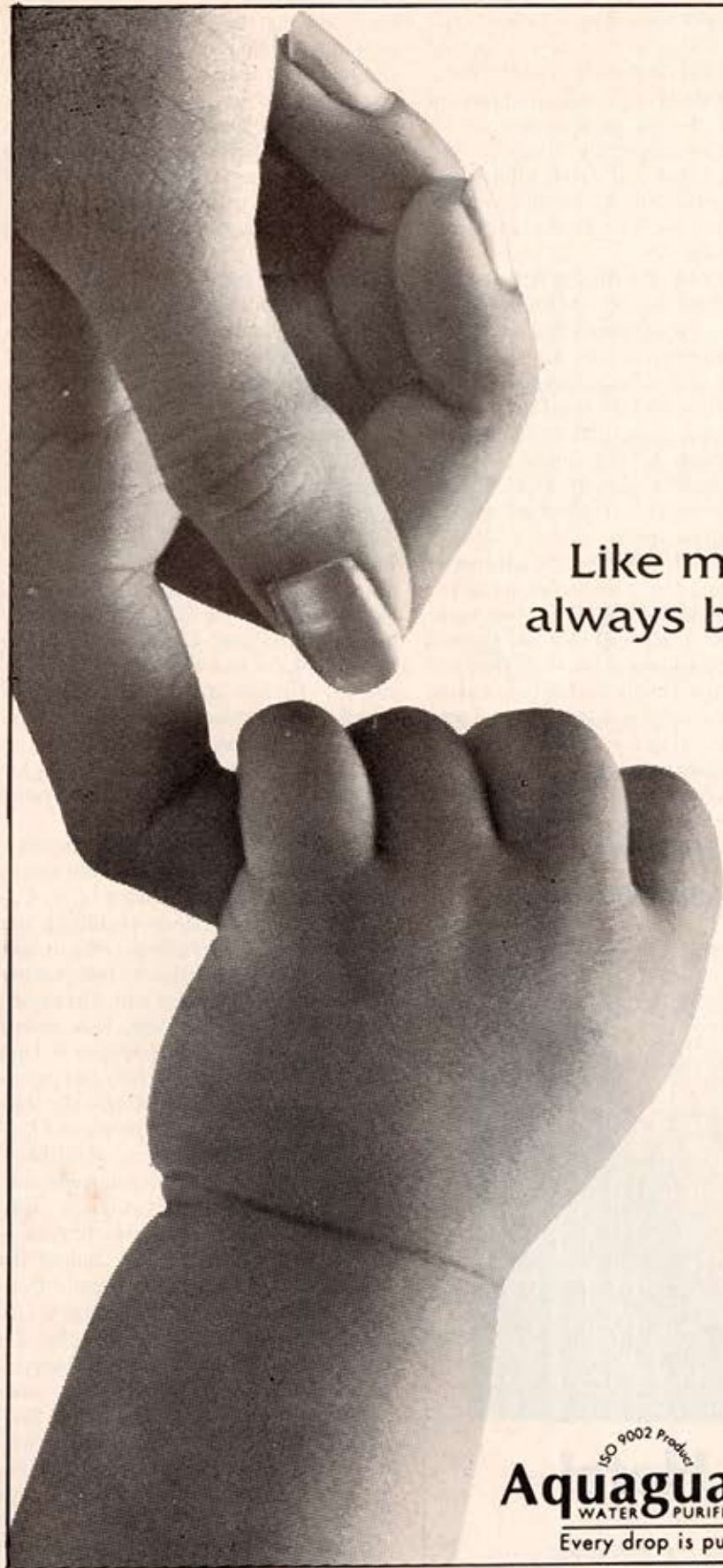
Cama was particularly interested in the writings of Maxim Gorky. She was in correspondence with him and had sent him some Indian revolutionary literature. Gorky had asked her to write an article for the Russian magazine *Russian Democracy*. Cama replied to Gorky on October 31, 1912 accepting his offer. The letters are preserved in the Gorky archives together with Cama's photograph picturing her next to an unfurled Indian flag. The inscription on the photo reads, "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God," the tenet which Cama devotedly espoused.

She put her internationalist ideas in perspective by conducting regular correspondence with the Irish Republicans, the Polish Nationalists and the freedom fighters of Egypt, Turkey and Morocco. During September 1910, Cama was frequently visited by Farid Bey, the Egyptian leader, in connection with the holding of the Egyptian National Congress in Paris in the last week of September. The holding of the Congress was banned by the French Government as a result of which the venue had to be shifted to Brussels. Before departing for Brussels, a meeting took place between the Egyptians and the Indians where Cama was present along with others including Perin Naoroji and Burjorji Godrej.

When the First World War began, Cama wrote in her paper calling upon Indian troops to lay down their arms as India was not concerned with the War. For this she was interned by the French government in Vichy and Bordeaux. She was allowed to stay on in France only because of her French Socialist and Russian friends. This in all probability saved her life.

The woman and friend

It is necessary to understand what Cama was really like as a person. British govern-



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ment reports on "Political Trouble in India 1907-1917" described her as "anarchical, revolutionary, anti-British and irreconcilable." Undoubtedly, she was a fierce rebel who advocated and even incited violence. But beneath this surface lurked the warm-hearted woman who was generous towards young revolutionaries and became for many, their adopted mother.

Many of her relatives shied away from her. Cama always remained nostalgic about home, was eager for photographs and maintained contacts. She never forgot her native tongue and retained Indian food habits. As a young woman she was very attractive but aged rapidly. Throughout she remained sociable and gregarious and retained her impassioned hunger for human kinship and affection. She had friends among the Parsi business community including the Coopers, the Dinshaw Petit family, the Saklatwallas. She also had close links with Munchersha and Pirojsha Burjorji Godrej as well as Burjorji himself.

She was also a practical woman who managed her money matters quite efficiently. With advice and guidance from business friends she invested her money wisely so that even when the British government deprived her of the income from her trust, she could manage. It was only

due to circumstances beyond her control during the War years that she was hard up. She lived simply in an old pension in Paris.

Her attachment to her family persisted to the end though most of her family members had practically disowned her. She remembered and asked after them. She even looked after her brother Ardeshir in Paris at the time of his death even though he disinherited her.

When asked why she did not return to India in her old age she had replied that it was because the British wanted her to give them a written apology for her 'misdeeds' and guarantee that she would not take any part in politics. She declined to give this saying that she would like to address political meetings all over India. She also told Harendranath Chattopadhyay that she had taken an oath never to go back to India on a foreign passport.

Age crept upon her with its infirmities and problems. Her skull had been cracked in a motor accident and she had to be operated upon. She had also undergone a cataract operation and later her face was paralysed. Financially she had lost heavily. Thirumal Acharya was one of those who helped her during her ill health. It was a deplorable situation.

In 1935, Sir Cowasji Jehangir met her in

Paris. By that time she had a paralytic stroke. According to Muncherji N. Cama, she told Sir Cowasji that she wanted to return to India. Sir Cowasji took the initiative, collected medical certificates from the doctors in Paris and also suggested that she should give a declaration that she would not take part in political activities, something she had refused to do for the last 15 years.

Finally on June 24, 1935, Cama wrote from Hotel Delft in Paris: "Being 75 years of age and naturally very feeble, I am anxious to go to India to spend the rest of my days in my birthland, amongst my numerous relatives and friends."

"I undertake not to take part in politics, direct or indirect. I have obtained written statements of my doctors which explain my state of health."

The reply from H. F. Knight of the British government described her as a "notorious seditious who was one of the recognized leaders of the Indian revolutionary movement in Paris." Later Knight went on to say that she was a "naturalized French subject." He also stated that her relations with her husband were at breaking point in 1913 itself. It was unlikely, according to him, that her relatives would look after her in Bombay and some arrangements would have to be made for this.

Cama returned to Bombay in November 1935 and was taken to the Petit Parsee General Hospital by a relative of Sir Cowasji Jehangir. Friends including the Savarkars and Perin Naoroji came to visit her. Her husband also tried to meet her but she did not agree to meet him. She passed away on August 13, 1936. It is indeed shocking that national newspapers did not even take note of this. The only two papers who reported this as a news item after two days were the *Bombay Chronicle* and *Kaiser-E-Hind*. Perhaps the news was deliberately suppressed. The first public obituary which appeared was Chattopadhyay's tribute to Cama which appeared in the *Kaiser-E-Hind* of August 23, 1936. Indeed she was truly a leader who was unwept, unhonored and unsung in her own country. (An appeal has been made by the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations Committee to the trustees of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital to honor Cama's memory by installing a commemorative plaque and photograph in the room where she spent her last days.)

Cama left behind a will which she signed on February 16, 1936. In it she left her jewels, furniture and physical assets to the

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trustees of the Bai Avabai Petit Orphanage for Parsi girls. The major share of her then meagre estate of about Rs 54,000 was bequeathed to her family agiary, the Framji Nusserwanji Patel Agiary at Mazgaon. That Cama remained a deeply religious Zoroastrian throughout is amplified by the fact that her muktad ceremony is performed every year even today in the Patel Agiary.

Cama had blazed a pioneering trail on India's political scene. In days when even brave men were afraid to associate themselves openly with revolutionary activities, this fearless woman joined the ranks of the revolutionaries abroad. Her career as a maker of modern India was to be carried out while in exile abroad. Her fiery oratory often stunned her audiences, her dynamic personality and her own life example made her an effective leader. She was one of the earliest women to enter the field of politics in India and was followed by persons like Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant.

All her life Cama had dreamt of an India, free and united. That dream was neither fulfilled in her lifetime nor later. Even today regional and communal feelings are tearing our nation asunder.

Edited extracts from a paper presented by Dr Nawaz Mody on February 15, 1997 at the first national seminar on the "Contribution of the Parsis to Western India between 1818-1920." The seminar, held at the Sir Cowasji Jehangir (Convocation) Hall of Bombay University was organized by the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations Committee and sponsored by the Gulestan and Rustom Billimoria Trust.

Dr Nawaz Mody is the head of Bombay University's department of civics and politics, the chairman of the board of studies in politics and the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta professor of civics and politics. She is also a member of the University academic council, management council and the Senate. She was earlier the dean of the faculty of arts.

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She dared to defy

Madame Cama's 136th birth anniversary celebrations include an exhibition, seminar and commissioning of a ship in her name

Hilla P. Guzder

Sparrows scouted the high vaulted ceiling of Bombay University's Convocation Hall, adding a twittering accompaniment to the University choir as they sang *Bande Mataram*.

As a tribute to Madame Bhikhaiji Rustam Cama, the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations Committee presented an exhibition and seminar on September 24, 1997 in honor of the freedom fighter's 136th birth anniversary. Chief guest Sohrab Godrej, chairman of the Godrej group of companies, inaugurated the exhibition, while veteran Gandhian Dr Usha Mehta presided over the seminar.

The exhibition traced the landmarks of Cama's personal and political life, displaying for the first time material obtained from archival sources in India and abroad. These included rare photographs of Cama's family and her associates in Paris, her correspondence with Russian writer Maxim Gorky, cuttings from French newspapers of the time, her original death certificate, etc.

The master of ceremonies, Homai Modi, trustee and joint honorary secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and a member of the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Celebrations Committee, announced that the Indian Coast Guard was to name one of its fast patrol vessels (FPV) after Madame Cama at a ceremony in Calcutta on that day. (The 300 tonne *CGS Bhikhaiji Cama* is the seventh in a series of Priyadarshini class FPVs and is to be based on the eastern seaboard in Madras, according to Coast Guard sources. The Coast Guard has almost 20 vessels named after famous freedom fighters and personalities, including Annie Besant, Kamala Devi, Jijabai and Razia Sultan.)

The chief guest in his speech referred to Madame Cama as an "exceptional patriot." He noted that members of the Godrej family knew her personally and that he had heard many stories about her life through his uncle Munchersha. Deeming it a "touching and very great honor" to have been invited to inaugurate the exhibition on

Cama's life and work, Godrej complimented the organizers on their detailed research. "So thorough a job has been accomplished," he remarked. Godrej lamented however that "basking in freedom, we feel that our work is over." Had Cama been alive today, he said, she would have



Sketch of Madame Cama from postal stamp

"deplored the opportunities that have been wasted" in the 50 years since independence. "Have we really won our freedom?" he questioned, adding that as long as the country is not economically strong, political freedom does not really mean anything. Fifty years down the line, India has the "dubious distinction of being among the 10 most corrupt countries in the world." He emphasized that the freedom won should not be lost through economic instability. What we need, he suggested, are more "Indian multinationals, not foreign ones."

In his address, Homi Taleyarkhan, vice chairman of the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Celebrations Committee, lauded the role of women like Madame Cama, Kasturba

Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Annie Besant and many others. "It was a tragic pity that Madame Cama died alone, uncared for, unsung," he stated and that her worth came to be recognized much after her death.

Dr Y. D. Phadke, a scholar who according to Modi has "worked and researched extensively on the national movement," delineated the sacrifice and suffering of women freedom fighters. Women from all walks of life, even the tribals of Bihar and Nagaland, had offered resistance to British rule, he observed. They were often harassed by the police, interrogated and tortured to make them disclose the names of their associates, he said. Even after their release from prison, they found it difficult to secure a job. Many died "unwept, unhonored," he stated.

In a powerful oration in Marathi, Vikram Savarkar, nephew of Cama's close associate Veer Savarkar, enumerated stories and incidents from her life. V. S. Joshi, the author of 19 books on the role of revolutionaries in the Indian freedom movement paid his tribute to Cama despite his advancing age and poor health.

Dr Nawaz Mody, the head of Bombay University's department of civics and politics and the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Professor of Civics and Politics who is also the member secretary of the Pherozeshah Mehta Celebrations Committee, disclosed how difficult it had been to collect old records and details of Cama's life. Mody, also a member of the University's management council, urged a "major project to look into old French records," as a large part of Cama's life had been spent in France, "the refuge of the oppressed people of the world." Describing Cama as the "first feminist" she pointed out that Cama, born on September 24, 1861, was the daughter of a prosperous businessman, Sorabji Framji Patel and that she was married, at what was then considered the late age of 24, to Rustam, son of the noted Oriental



Clockwise from top left: Nawaz Mody (right) with Usha Mehta; Taleyarkhan, Vikram Savarkar and S. Godrej at the exhibition Photos: Hoshi Patel; CGS Bhikhaji Cama at the shipyard; at the function commissioning the ship in Calcutta Photos: Indian Coast Guard

scholar K. R. Cama. Despite her affluent background, she plunged into politics, suffering exile and deprivation in furtherance of the cause dear to her heart. Despite her anarchist and communist associations, explained Mody, Cama wanted her death ceremonies to be performed according to Parsi rites. Even today, her muktad prayers are being said at the Framji Nusserwanji Patel agari in Mazgaon.

In her presidential address, Mehta complimented Mody on the "excellent exhibition," terming it "one of the most apt ways of celebrating the golden jubilee of India's independence." She advocated "keeping green Madame Cama's memory by taking up research projects" as there still might be material lying unexplored, old photos rotting in dusty godowns. She suggested that a "permanent memorial" in honor of Cama be erected in Bombay to "make up for" the earlier lack of appreciation. [A postal stamp

had been issued by the Government of India to mark the centenary of her birth, and on January 26, 1962 the Sachivalaya Road in south Bombay was renamed Madame Cama Road. Her portrait painted by the late Coomi Dallas of the Surat Parsi Pragati Mandal was installed in the Central Hall of Parliament on August 2, 1989, 82 years after she unfurled the Indian tricolor. The Museum of Revolutionaries (Swatantrya Veer Savarkar Smarak) at Shivaji Park in Bombay has a hall named after her, while the Bhikhaji Cama Place is a bustling commercial complex in New Delhi.]

Regretting that she herself did not get an opportunity to work with Cama, Mehta stated, "It would not be correct to say that Parsis are outsiders to India," adding that the Godrej family too had been very active in the freedom struggle and that Sohrab Godrej was "a roving ambassador of peace and goodwill."

In her vote of thanks, Nawaz Mody thanked the vice-chancellor, Dr Snehlata Deshmukh, for visiting the exhibition and for her support. The students and staff of the political science, history and French departments had "worked very enthusiastically" on the project, she stated, while the French consulate had provided the photo of Jean

Jaures (the renowned French socialist who helped Cama go to Stuttgart to attend the Second International Socialist Congress in 1907). Among the host of individuals she thanked were Jamshed Guzder, industrialist [also Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman], whose Shirin and Jamshed Guzder Trust was one of the sponsors, the BPP (the other sponsor), trustee Silloo Kavarana, Godrej for providing photographs of his uncle Munchersha, Ketu Mehta, solicitor and director and trustee of the Alexandra Girls' English Institution (where Cama had studied), and Freny Mehta, principal of the school, for making available old school records.

Earlier, Homai Modi jocularly informed the audience that in the last few months, Nawaz Mody, the driving force behind the exhibition, "ate, slept and drank Madame Cama, disturbing me in my bath, meals, sleep, etc to share all the new details she had researched."

By the time the seminar ended, the hordes of office-goers treading the pavements outside the hall on their weary way homewards had dispersed. The University garden was shrouded in darkness, its glowing Rajabai Clock Tower standing sentinel over the silent streets of Fort.

A memento of the Meherjis

On the occasion of the agiary's 150th anniversary the heirs of the Meherji brothers and others paid the founders a memorable tribute

Parinaz M. Gandhi

They minted money, literally. They built rest houses, conveniently. They erected a dam, impressively. They did... The meritorious deeds of the Meherji brothers, Viccaji and Pestonji, came to light recently during the sesquicentennial celebrations of the fire-temple they founded in Secunderabad. Just as they provided facilities for posterity, the present trustees paid a lasting tribute by inaugurating a park, a children's playground and a waterfall on the first day of the five-day festivities which began on August 6, 1997.

Actually the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Seth Viccaji-Seth Pestonji Meherji Parsi Fire Temple, reportedly the oldest Zoroastrian place of worship in southern India, catered to the needs of all segments of the Zoroastrian community. For those religiously inclined, there was the jashan led by Dastur (Dr) Kaikhushroo JamaspAsa of Bombay's Anjuman Atash Behram, an audiovisual presentation by Rati and Dady Wadia of Bombay on the holy sites of Iran and fire-temples in and around Surat and Bombay, and the navjote ceremony of Peshdad Pilcher and Malcolm Tarapore. Intellectual fare came through the speeches made by the invitees and a quiz competition on the Zoroastrian religion, customs, rituals, traditions, culture and eminent personalities. Jollity was known at the time of the thanksgiving ghambar on the last day.

"A carnival mood prevailed on the premises of the temple as young, old and children enjoyed every moment of the salgirah celebrations. The temple and its surroundings were colorfully decorated with series-bulbs," mentions a write-up in *The Hindu* of August 7, 1997. The event received "wide media coverage from Doordarshan and ETV and all the newspapers," in English, Telugu and Hindi, writes the president of the Agiary Trust, Hilla S. Moos.

Among the best attended functions though was the program on the evening of

August 6 when despite rains over 800 were present at the Parsi Dharamshala to witness the garlanding of the portraits of the founders and Dr Kaikhushroo Jivanji, Pestonji's grandson who was the founder



A new arch heralding the sesquicentennial celebrations

of the Trust, and presentation of shawls and mementos to the dignitaries.

The first set of the replicas of the Pestonshahi sicca, which were reproduced by the family and donated to the Agiary to generate funds, was presented by the chief guest of honor Jamshed Guzder to Eddie Aibara, the well-known ex-Ranji Trophy cricketer and one of the oldest members of the community. Another set of coins together with the history of the agiary was given to Mehra Lashkari, a resident of the agiary and daughter of one of their panthakies. The siccas will also serve as a keepsake for the dignitaries and outstation guests.

Earlier, the priests of the Twin Cities — Ervad Hoshang Bhandara, Ervad Jehangir Pilcher and Ervad Farokh Ghadiali of the Seth Viccaji-Seth Pestonji Meherji Parsi Fire Temple, Ervad Dara Bhathela and Ervad Aspi Patel of the Khan Bahadur Seth Edulji Sohrabji Chenai Anjuman Dar-e-

Meher, and Ervad Kavas Umrigar and Ervad Tehmtun Unwalla of the Bai Maneckbai Nusserwanji Chinoy Agiary — who had participated in the jashan with JamaspAsa and Ervad Fareedoon Maneckji Turel of Surat had been presented garlands and *perammis* by Moos. Shawls and mementos donated by Jall Noria were distributed to the priests by Guzder. The chasniwallas too had been respectfully garlanded and thanked and all the employees of the agiary were given gift cheques by trustee Rashid Mehta.

Zoroastrianism is a simple religion with a great degree of ethical content, reiterated JamaspAsa in his talk. Children should know from their grandparents about the social conditions prevailing in the past, recommended Lt Gen Adi Sethna, president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman who was the guest of honor, urging that such conversations should be taped for posterity.

The aim of the quiz competition was "to instil interest and knowledge about our religion in a manner that would interest the Zoroastrians and build in them a feeling of pride and faith in our ancient religion," according to the organizers. "It was a keenly contested event and generated a lot of enthusiasm and interest amongst the community and the last two months saw entire families involved in studying and preparing for the same."

The quiz master Sarosh Parakh was assisted by Mehernavaz Aria and Tanaz Wadia and questions not answered correctly by the teams were put to the audience. The competition was divided into three categories: 14 years and below; 15-25 years; and 26 years and above. The three-member teams vied for the five cash prizes plus gifts in each category.

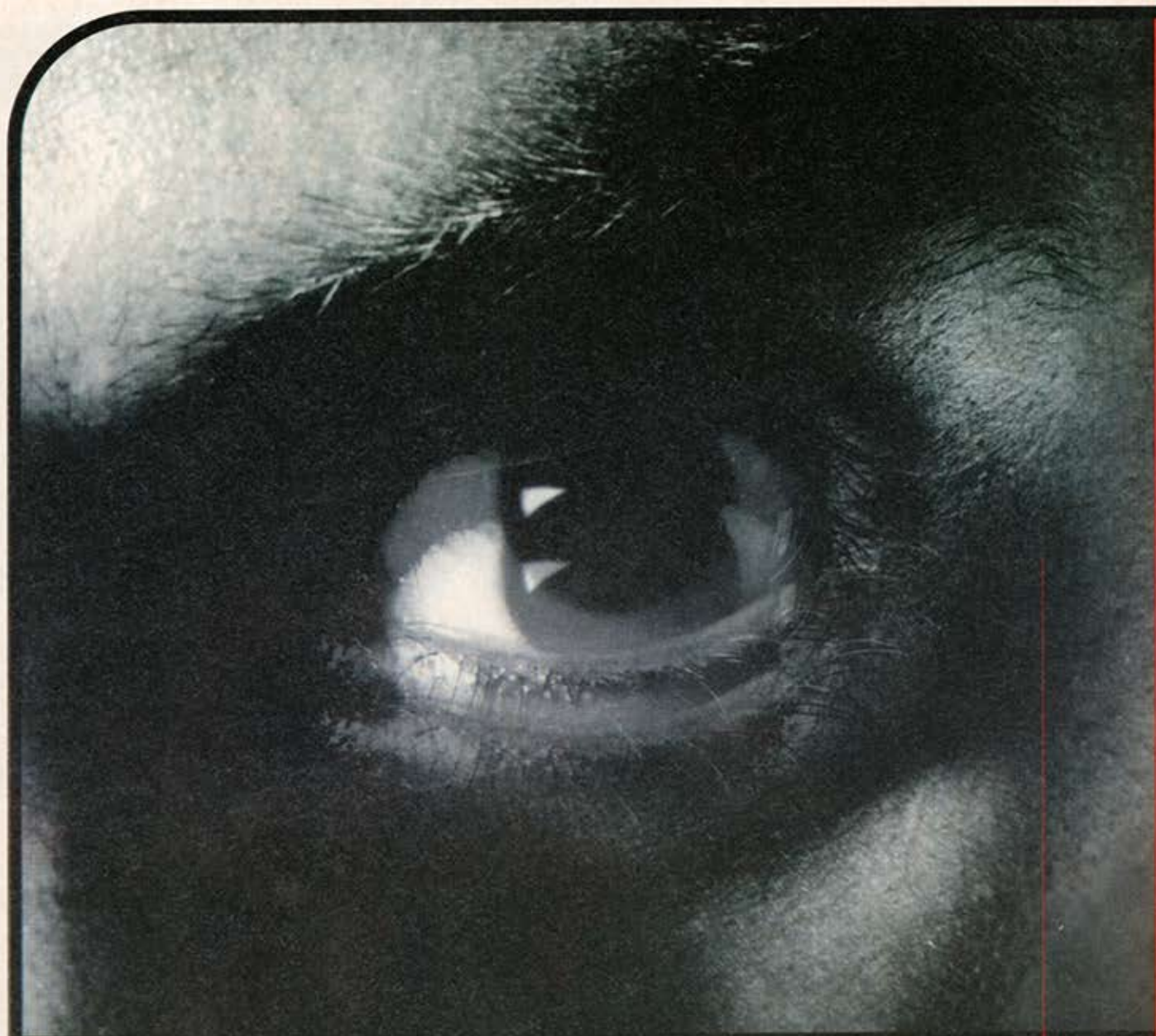
Gifts were in store for the two newly initiated boys too whose navjote expenses were borne by the agiary. The *perammis* received by the boys have reportedly been placed in a fixed deposit account in their names for their college education.

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Above: Pestonshahi sicca replicas

Top row (from left): a view of the Seth Viccaji-Seth Pestonji Meherji Parsi Fire Temple; the portraits of Viccaji Meherji, Dr Kaikhushru Jivanji and Pestonji Meherji; Sethna inaugurating the park and waterfall. Center row (from left): Moos presenting a replica of the sicca to Guzder (Pestonji in the back-ground); devotees attending the jashan; the newly landscaped waterfall. Bottom row (from left):



Edulji Turel inaugurating the children's playground; the initiation of Malcolm Tarapore and Peshdad Pilcher; the congregation in attendance at the navjote ceremony



Jashan in progress (top); posing for a group photo (center) and a section of the gathering attending the jashan prayers (bottom)



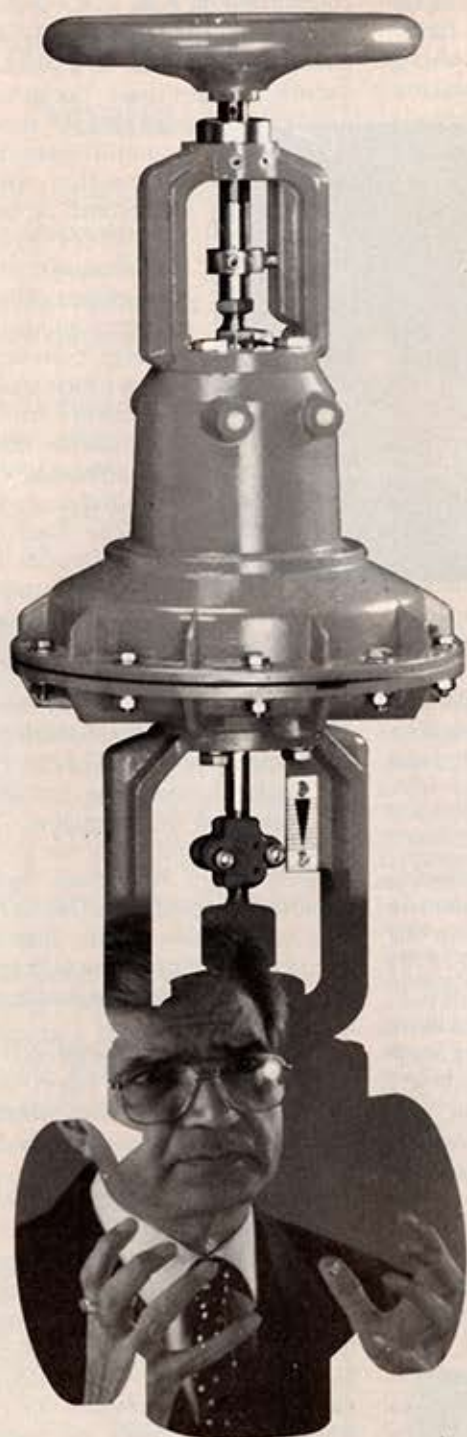
"We have received a most encouraging response to the offer of replicas of the Pestonshahi sicca," writes trustee Capt K. F. Pestonji in his report on the celebrations. Available on sale for one year till August 1998, the cost of a set of two mounted silver coins weighing around 11.5 grams each in an attractive presentation pack with a brief history of the coins and the brothers, is Rs 450. For inland postage, add Rs 25, for overseas, Rs 50, to the demand draft/cheque favoring "The Old Parsi Fire Temple Trust," and mail it to the trustees at 128, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Secunderabad 500003, Andhra Pradesh.

"They blazed the commercial trail"

The only coins believed to have ever been minted by a Zoroastrian family in India, the Pestonshahi sicca bore the initials of Pestonji Meherji, the younger of the two brothers who was permitted by the Nizam of Hyderabad to mint coins in the Aurangabad Mint. "Over a crore of such coins in silver and copper in various denominations were struck at the Aurangabad Mint from 1832 to 1842," notes a press release from Pestonji. (The Pestonshahi sicca was part of the collection of rare Indian coins displayed at Numismatica-97, an exhibition jointly organized by the State Museum and the Numismatic Society of Hyderabad on the eve of 50 years of Indian independence.)

Hailing from a family of agriculturists originally from the small seaport of Tarapore in Thana district, Viccaji and Pestonji chose to venture into the fields of trading and banking as well. They began by farming the revenues of a small "mahal" named Aseri in the Bassein district under the government of the Peshwas. The farming of the land and sea customs of the northern and southern Konkan, and the land customs of Poona, Ahmednagar and a part of the Khandeish zillah was also entrusted to them for many years, according to the write-up. "They blazed the commercial trail in those railroad-less days," mentions the write-up, by constructing at their own expense "cartroads through the Ghats, providing facilities for crossing certain rivers by erecting halting places and caravanse-rais for travellers, repairing tanks and wells, and installing cotton screws and presses."

Regarded as the pioneers of the cotton trade between the Nizam's dominions and the Bombay presidency, it is said that the



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effective measures adopted by them enabled the traffic in cotton from the Berars to Bombay to rise from 500 bullock cartloads in 1826 to 2,00,000 cartloads in 1836 "the value of which to England and India can in those days only be estimated by hundreds of crores of rupees."

In 1835 they secured a letter of recommendation from the Bombay Government to the British Resident at Hyderabad "and thanks to his good offices the firm of Pestonji Viccaji was established in Hyderabad to develop and improve trade communications... At the highest period of their prosperity in trade which was from 1835 to 1845 they had their head office in Bombay with branch offices in every important town of the Bombay presidency and also in Calcutta, Singapore and China."

Impressed by the performance and integrity of the brothers, in 1836 the Prime Minister of the Nizam, Maharaja Chundoolal, invited them to open a cothee or banking house at Hyderabad (later it came to be known as Viccaji's Hotel) and make pecuniary advances to the State. In return, the Nizam mortgaged to the brothers the revenues of the valley of the Berars together with the province of Aurangabad, and made them in-charge of the revenues of Balapur, Akola, Parbhani and other districts. They were allowed to retain a small armed force for which they had to pay the Nizam the usual feudatory homage or *nazarana*.

The downfall of the brothers began in 1845 when Chundoolal was succeeded by Raja Rambuksh. The government defaulted on the repayment of loans and their firm was ordered to relinquish and restore all the taluks assigned to them. "The process of ejectment was attended with bloodshed and casualties on both sides," states the release. They had to liquidate all their assets and properties to pay back their creditors and they retired into private life. Later, though, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Sir Salar Jung I is supposed to have made up for the past acts of injustice of the Nizam's government.

Close to the village of Parnali, gifted to the brothers by the East India Company, Viccaji had built a dam across the Banganga river to shut out the salt water tides from the river. Fresh water was thus made available for drinking and irrigation purposes.

Besides public utility works, the brothers also built religious institutions of significance to Zoroastrians. Whilst further details were not available, the write-up states, "They built no less than five dar-e-



Guzder (at the mike) with (from left) Sethna, Mistry, JamaspAsa and Dittia

meher at Tarapore, Belapur, Hyderabad and Secunderabad, and four towers of silence at Belapur, Hyderabad, Sholapur and Aurangabad."

Preserving the sanctity

"Strangely, while the Parsis were concentrated in Hyderabad, the agiary was built in Secunderabad," noted an article in the *Deccan Chronicle* of August 10, 1997 which further cited the explanation of K. F. Pestonji: "Secunderabad, the new city in those days, was the place where a big, open land was still available. The Meherji brothers were very particular that certain basic norms should be adhered to: one, the fire-temple should face the east, and secondly, there should be more space on the northern side than on the south."

"The temple is tucked inside a large compound, away from the maddening traffic of M. G. Road," stated an article in the *Andhra Pradesh Times* of August 17, 1997. Colonial in appearance, the structure has dominant round columns supporting the entablature, wrote Pestonji. On the side is a large verandah running through the entire depth of the building wherein are held religious functions and gatherings. "The building built on strong foundation has withstood the test of time," noted Pestonji.

No further particulars about the agiary or any detailed historical records were available from the organizers of the celebrations.

As was gleaned from the Gujarati tome *Parsi Dharmasthalo* which has cited its source as *Parsi Prakash*, Volume I, the

dar-e-meher in Secunderabad was first consecrated on Adar roj, Aspandad mah, corresponding to September 3, 1839 in the Gregorian calendar. Six years later, it seems, the brothers purchased land adjoining the dar-e-meher to build thereon a new dar-e-meher which was consecrated on September 12, 1845 by Dastur Noshirwanji Jamaspji Jamaspasana of Poona. The edifice, mentioned the write-up, bears marble tablets on which are inscribed couplets in Farsi.

As mentioned in the *Parsi Prakash*, Volume I, which has quoted a report from *The Bombay Samachar* of October 14, 1847, the brothers were able to

get consecrated a dar-e-meher in Secunderabad on September 12, 1847 (Behram roj, Aspandad mah) at the hands of Dastur Jamaspasana. For the regular maintenance of the fire-temple the brothers purchased the adjoining bungalow of Col Haffkeine and declared themselves and their heirs the trustees of this institution. On being conferred a scroll of honor by eminent Zoroastrians of Hyderabad, Pestonji responded, "We must thank God for His blessings." Four dar-e-meher, four dokhmas and 17 dharamshalas were built by Viccaji, according to a report submitted by Marzban Giara.

Initially the dar-e-meher, according to the *Deccan Chronicle* report, was managed by the family after which it was decided that a trust should be formed comprising basically of all descendants of the original founders. "So particular were the descendants about the agiary's sanctity that at one time when the temple was caught in a dispute between the head priest who claimed that he was the owner of the temple, they had fought up to the Privy Council to preserve the sanctity and the management," mentions the *Deccan Chronicle*. In addition to Moos, Mehta and Pestonji, others presently on the trust board are Roda Mistry, Cyrus Irani and Bazun Dittia.

They are intent on retaining the sanctity of this hallowed place for, as commented Pestonji, "Even today you have a lot of people who have seen the aura. All of them have said that (the agiary) has a very large and very strong aura around it which not just attracts people but gives them peace of mind."



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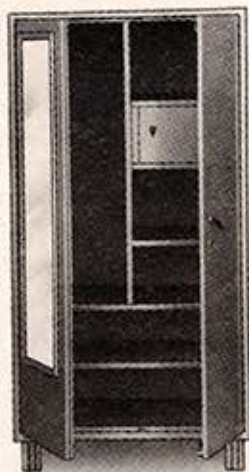
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The world body in perspective

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America has opted in favor of having a single world body of Zoroastrians

Arnavaz S. Mama

With the North American community voting in favor of a single body, the debate on the formation of a representative world body of Zoroastrians, one with the authority to speak for the community (in all its many ramifications and beliefs) on the stage of an increasingly shrinking world, has entered a new phase. The 22 member associations of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) voted 28.14 to 20.71 against the motion "FEZANA join the World Council of Zarathushti Federations (WCZF) as a founding member." There were 5.14 abstentions. (The FEZANA constitution enables its member associations to divide their votes to represent individual 'ayes' and 'nays' at the grassroots.) There is a total of 54 eligible votes and the simple majority needed to pass the motion was 50 percent plus one, i.e. 28 votes, notes FEZANA president Dolly Dastoor in a letter dated December 12, 1997 notifying member associations, FEZANA officers, committee members and other small groups of Zoroastrians in North America of the results of the mail ballot. As Dastoor notes in her letter, "There has been a 100 percent response from all the associations."

Zoroastrian activists believe that our microscopic community has a substantial part to play in an international society that is only now becoming conscious of the need to preserve the environment and each other — a mandate that Zarathushtra gave his followers aeons ago. Here, as in every other aspect of communal life, Zarathushtis belong to two vocal schools of thought.

The formation of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) in 1980, with a mixed bag of individual and association members, has effectively channelled peoples' energy towards what was hitherto perceived as the most important job at hand — the economic amelioration of a large slice of the population struggling for survival in rural India and Iran; care of an

aging community with a plethora of health problems where cures are increasingly expensive; provision against the growing apathy, especially among the youth, who find the unequal struggle for higher education and job skills frustrating, debilitating, depressing; motivation of an athravan class whose self-respect has been eroded by ignorance and lassitude.

In its 17-year existence the WZO has increasingly and successfully focussed attention upon these problems and by dint of dedicated work of a few individual professionals and donors has helped many an individual and family out of the doldrums of want and illness, provided funds for small entrepreneurs, made provisions for poor mobeds and nassessalars and even set up a professionally managed home for the aged (in Navsari).

The hastily drafted WZO constitution (the WZO had been set up to help Iranian Zoroastrians fleeing from Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1978) largely emulated the constitution of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE).

Then, a few years ago the WZO amended its constitution to provide equal status to non-Zoroastrian spouses. It also eliminated clauses dealing with international representation to avail of tax benefits as a UK based charitable organization. It has continuously and unambiguously professed to follow the liberal interpretation of the *Gathas* and hence won the support and acclaim of liberal Zoroastrian individuals, many of them of unimpeachable standing within their own local communities, both on professional and personal planes.

However, its mishmash of individual and association members, each having a single vote, has led to concerted attack as it is intellectually befuddling to believe that a lone Zoroastrian's opinion is equivalent to that of a body like e.g. the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) which represents over 50,000 Bombay Zarathushtis (BPP

trustees are directly elected by donors and indirectly by about 20,000 Bombay based Zarathushtis on its general register). And on that issue, despite the concerted attempts of WZO representatives to woo the BPP and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) which *Parsiana* has witnessed since 1984, the stalemate continued. For years on end WZO representatives speaking at the FPZAI executive council meets verbally agreed to two demands from the Indian Federation before the latter would even consider joining the WZO:

- The FPZAI sought a list of members of the WZO to gauge its actual strength
- The FPZAI wanted a change in the WZO constitution that would ensure anjumans a separate and overriding vote over certain areas of community policy.

At the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay in 1985, a bicameral scheme was mooted for the WZO at a special session. It envisaged two chambers — one of anjumans and the other of individuals — each having jurisdiction over specific areas of policy.

The arguments have been replayed over the years with no follow through. The FPZAI claimed the WZO representatives made no concrete offers after returning from the meets. In the course of an interview with WZO chairman Shahpur Captain, *Parsiana* had enquired why its membership list was held so close to the WZO chest. Captain volunteered to send *Parsiana* the list in question. The interview "Captaining the WZO" was published in the February-March 1996 issue; *Parsiana* is yet to receive the promised list.

The question of a representative world body dates back to the First World Zoroastrian Congress in 1960. It has assumed urgency in the 1990s for two reasons: The growing technological changes in the world that have annihilated distances and the formation in 1987 of FEZANA.

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With FEZANA growing in strength both numerically and intellectually, its founder and first president Rohinton Rivetna pursued the idea from 1991 and took the opportunity of presenting a draft constitution for a World Council when several international Zoroastrians congregated in Chicago to attend the Second Parliament of World Religions (the first one had been held a century ago). Here Zarathushtis received respect and acclaim from the international congregation, in large measure due to Rivetna's personal involvement with the organization of the Parliament. Among those present at the meet to discuss the formation of the Council were also WZO representatives. At that stage it had been mooted that the Council could be created under the WZO umbrella with significant modification of the WZO constitution. It was a sort of revival of the bicameral idea suggested in 1985 but even after 1993 there was no attempt to change the WZO constitution.

It may be the acceptance of the idea of the WCZF as a viable proposition by FPZAI and an anticipation that FEZANA may follow suit that seems to have at last activated the WZO leadership. Even so, no drafts of its proposed constitutional changes (see "A new structure for the WZO?" page 44) have been circulated for general debate.

The refusal to join the WCZF does not, however, mean that FEZANA is ready to join the WZO. Thanking Rivetna for "promoting and sensitizing the community to the concept of a hierarchical representation," Dastoor writes, "Almost all the associations have felt that the current structure of WZO is not adequate for a world body as it is not properly representative and the proposed amendments do not go far enough. The prevailing sentiment from each of the associations was in favor of only one truly representative apex world body which would be capable of representing the Zarathushti community on issues requiring political/humanitarian/doctrinal intervention."

"It was felt that a world body must be more inclusive, and have representation from the mobeds' councils, as well as from the institutes of learning all over the world. It was the wish of all that the proponents of both WCZF and WZO should dialogue and come up with a viable solution within a specific time frame which would be satisfactory to all."

"Given this sentiment of our associations in North America, and the sentiment prevailing in other parts of the world as

well, I would strongly urge the leadership of WZO as well as of the still to be formed WCZF, to show vision, flexibility and foresightedness by taking this opportunity to dialogue with each other to find a viable organizational solution which would result in the community getting one fully

**"The world body's
constitution should
mandate that all its
officers are
internationally elected
by all member
federations/
associations"**

representative world body which would speak for all — individuals, associations and federations.

"I also strongly urge the leadership of WZO to correct the perception, right or wrong, which is generally prevalent, of an 'entrenched management' as mentioned by several associations. I trust that the leadership of WZO will interpret this vote as a measure of goodwill of the North American community to transform WZO into a truly representative world body encompassing the basic principles of WCZF, namely that the several associations that now exist should have proper representation in the global affairs of the community in one world body."

"I hope that the dialogue initiated towards that end by Adi Davar and Rohinton Rivetna in August 1997 and since pursued by them in November 1997 can lead to the proponents of WZO and WCZF to realize this community objective. I would like to offer my services, to both, in achieving this objective."

The London based ZTFE has kept a vote on this issue in abeyance. With a younger committee in the saddle the ZTFE's first priority seems to be to end the 12-year feud with the WZO leadership, acknowledging the fact that the WZO was spawned by the ZTFE to begin with, as notes its incoming president Dorab Mistry.

While WZO sympathizers tended to be concerned about a new organization "splitting the community" and its resources of men and money, Rivetna had been at pains to ensure that the two organizations have complementary — not competitive — roles

to play.

Rivetna, who had mooted a memorandum of understanding between the two bodies, stated in an open letter dated June 15, "I see no need to re-sculpt what has been so fruitful and successful — there should be no rush to transform the WZO. Let us, rather, fine-tune and develop each of them to best accomplish their own mandate. As our community grows from strength to strength, I see even more Zoroastrian bodies with global scope and stature, developing to serve our communal needs. Let us not constrain the willing spirit. Rather let us nourish and nurture all initiatives to create an institutionally rich community."

The acrimony of the debate as recorded in the Parsi Press in Bombay led respected Iranian philanthropist Mehraban Zartoshty, himself a WZO committee member, to write a strong letter dated June 6, 1997 to WZO supporter Noshirwan Cowasjee of London, asking, "What is wrong with you and your colleagues? Why are you concerned about another world body whose aims and objects are different from WZO? You have claimed that they are going to divide the community. While in fact the way you people have been alarmed and started writing letters and articles and playing power games and creating havoc, is going to divide the community... I wonder, is WZO trying to help the Zarathushtis worldwide, financially, politically and creating unity worldwide or just wants to be world power?"

Dinshaw Joshi, former president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc (ZAMWI) and chairman of FEZANA's awards committee has circulated an article titled "The WZO: Is its claim to the status of a 'world' body sustainable?" dated July 29, 1997.

"That the WZO has been in existence for over 17 years and that it has done excellent socioeconomic work particularly for the Zoroastrian community in India are irrelevant to the issue of whether it is the body that should represent Zoroastrians worldwide," writes Joshi.

"WZO executives have stated that WZO was organized as a result of the need expressed at the first three World Zoroastrian Congresses for a 'world' body to represent Zoroastrians internationally. If so, WZO founder members should have drafted the Constitution, By-laws and Rules and Regulations for the proposed world organization, detailing the organization's objectives, functions, membership, administration, funding, procedure for electing

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officers, etc., circulated the drafts of these documents worldwide among all associations or groups of Zoroastrians wherever they then existed, and after incorporating comments received, submitted the final draft to a subsequent World Zoroastrian Congress for approval and ratification. To my knowledge, this has never been done. Hence, WZO cannot rightfully claim to have the authority to represent Zoroastrians worldwide," he adds.

"WZO also claims that since it has members from different parts of the world and they are representatives of all Zoroastrians of those areas, it is a 'representative world body.' The question that begs an answer is, 'Who appointed these representatives? Were they elected or appointed by the Zoroastrians in the areas they purport to represent?' Since these individuals, however prominent and respected, were neither elected by North American Zoroastrians nor appointed by FEZANA to represent North American Zoroastrians in the WZO, they can hardly consider themselves ambassadors from North American Zoroastrians to the WZO world body," maintains Joshi.

Challenging the membership structure of the WZO by analogy to the UNO, Joshi writes, "How can a world organization have individuals as members?... WZO as a world body having both individuals and associations as members would be like the UN having both the countries and the individual citizens of the same countries as its members." Acknowledging that many WZO members are "highly respected stalwarts of the community," and that disfranchising them would be difficult for the WZO, he nonetheless considers it essential that the WZO do just that if it "wants to be recognized as a truly 'world' body."

According to Joshi, the WZO chairman had addressed a letter dated June 16, 1997 to the North American Zoroastrian associations proposing a revised organizational structure for the WZO as a world body. Describing this proposed structure as "complicated, flawed and deficient," Joshi notes that "in the new organization, WZO executives from United Kingdom will constitute the permanent executive body for WZO. This executive body will be in addition to the international management board representing individuals and associations worldwide. This proposal raises two questions: 'Why is it necessary to have a separate executive board and, even if necessary, why should its officers be only from UK?' Again taking the analogy of the

United Nations, would the international community tolerate if the UN Secretary-General and other top UN executives were always from, say, USA because the organization is located in New York? WZO's reorganization proposal implies that the

"Distribution of administrative and executive work among officials living in different countries simply does not work"

existing WZO executives from UK do not want to relinquish their hold on the organization and want to continue to exert control over the world body also when it is formed."

Additionally Joshi suggests that "the world body's constitution should mandate that all its officers (president, secretary, treasurer, etc) are internationally elected by all member federations/associations (and not just limited to UK) and, more importantly, that these officers can hold office only for two consecutive terms of two years (as is the case in FEZANA)." A "permanent secretariat of paid employees" could be based wherever the body is registered which should pose no problem with the modern telecommunication facilities available. Moreover Joshi maintains, "In the absence of a constitution which would be legally binding and govern the future management and operations of the world body, it would be hardly correct for any Zoroastrian federation or association to support WZO's claim as (a) representative body of Zoroastrians worldwide."

At the FEZANA AGM in Crestone in August 1997, WZO committee member Adi Davar of Washington sought to answer the question whether such a world body should be formed "through a restructuring of the WZO... or as a separate world body." As published in the WZO bulletin *Hamazor* (Autumn-Winter 1997) Davar recounted Rivetna's attempts since 1991 to raise the community's awareness about the need for such a representative structure and his earlier attempts to structure it within the WZO framework. "But in 1994/95 WCZF's proponents suddenly began talking of forming it as a separate world body. They asked the existing one, WZO, 'to join WCZF.' Is it any wonder, they got

a rebuff?...

"We should also be aware that the Indian Federation and ZTFE genuinely do not believe in navjotes of children of mixed marriages and marriages with non-Zoroastrian spouses. While these beliefs must be respected and have a place in our community, the question which we in North America should carefully weigh is, whether these beliefs of WCZF's key proponents as well as locating its headquarters in India, could have implications for the liberal views of many associations in FEZANA and hence our youth and future generations."

Davar referred to the WZO offer as "a viable and negotiable blueprint of far reaching changes in its structure, as requested in Tehran in June 1996. The approach agreed there, and repeatedly recommended by community leaders since 1991, must be explored..."

"WZO's blueprint seems to offer much more than WCZF:

- a representative council of associations/federations, with objectives far more relevant than WCZF's of networking and representing Zoroastrians with international organizations and governments;
- a better balance of 10 country and regional groupings, having equal representation in the council — not dissimilar to the way in which states are represented in a senate in any federal set-up with a bicameral legislative system;
- a more generous voting basis of a minimum of one vote for every association having 1,000 or less Zoroastrians living in its jurisdiction and one more for every 1,000 over that, in contrast to WCZF's of only one vote for 10,000 members in an association/federation...;
- an arrangement which ensures that the votes of WZO's individual members' constituency simply cannot affect the representative council's work and responsibilities."

Neither Captain nor Davar has offered an explanation why the WZO dragged its feet, hitherto. Comparing the WZO offer to the bicameral US legislature Davar notes, "In democratic countries like ours having bicameral legislative systems, you vote for your district representative to represent your convictions on specific subjects in the lower house of representatives, and you vote as well for your state senator to represent your views on other subjects in the senate. The same democratic concept is adopted by WZO."

Noting that the WZO chairperson would be an office rotating "every three years



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between India, Iran, North America and UK," Davar justifies the need for the UK members of the board to constitute its executive committee: "Repeated experience of international bodies, even in today's telecommunication age, suggest that distribution of administrative and executive work among officials living in different countries simply does not work." Referring to "perhaps over 30 percent of the Zoroastrians in each of our areas (who) have not joined our associations," Davar asks, "How are they to be given a representative voice, if WCZF represents associations/federations alone?... How does one also cope with the vested rights of Zoroastrians who joined WZO, and are making sizeable contributions?..."

"WZO's re-structuring blueprint provides such a prudent and simple solution by: retaining an individuals' council for this sizeable mass of Zoroastrians, and charging it only with specific responsibilities germane for it; and creating a representative council for associations/federations, and charging it with those through which it can best serve our global community."

In an attachment to his paper answering questions regarding the WZO structure and operations, Davar notes that its "elected trustees do not represent countries or regions... into the board." He described the process of the creation of WZO as "ad hoc... international leaders from countries with major Zoroastrian populations were invited. Those who participated were from Canada, India, Iran, UK and USA. After the draft constitution was forged, it was sent for comment to all associations then existing all over the world, and thereafter finalized."

Writing as executive director of the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress Dr Mahyar Ardeshtiri notes in a letter dated August 7, 1997 to BPP chairman and

FPZAI president Jamshed Guzder, "The Sixth Zoroastrian Congress did not endorse the creation of a new world body (WCZF). It recommends changes in the constitution of WZO to accommodate the views of the anjumans and, if agreed by a majority, its venue be moved to Iran. Hence we are opposed to proliferation of world bodies which results in duplication of work, waste of money and manpower."

In a letter to Captain dated August 26, 1997, the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal president Toxy Cowasjee notes, "As you know we are primarily a charitable organization doing similar work as WZO but in Pakistan only... Rohinton had an excellent tenure as president of FEZANA and if he could be convinced to join WZO and give his expertise or do the things he aims to do with WCZF along with WZO instead, the Zoroastrian community will truly benefit."

In an e-mail communication to concerned individuals and the larger North American associations, scholar priest Dr Jehan Bagli of Princeton, New Jersey, recapitulates the main points of criticism against the WZO. He then notes, "To put the above structure of WZO in proper perspective, it is important to remember that at the time when the body was formed in 1980, many of the associations and federations were not in existence. The situation has now changed considerably with the mushrooming of representative associations particularly in the West. However, a sizable number of individual Zarathushtris still does not belong to local organized bodies, defeating their objective to fully represent the community."

Bagli voices the oft repeated concerns: "Is it rational for a community of around 200,000 worldwide to have two world bodies?... Can we lavishly afford to spread thin our valuable human resources over the leadership and bureaucracy of two major organizations? We know very well how severe a strain it is for the executives of any Zoroastrian body to muster funding even for worthy causes. Can we truly afford the luxury of having two world bodies, and is that money well spent?"

In an effort to bridge the chasm Bagli notes, "The issues here are not about winning or losing, victory or defeat. Those involved must realize that compromise and sacrifice of personal sentiments must prevail where necessary. The crucial issue here is, what is best for the community at this point in time..."

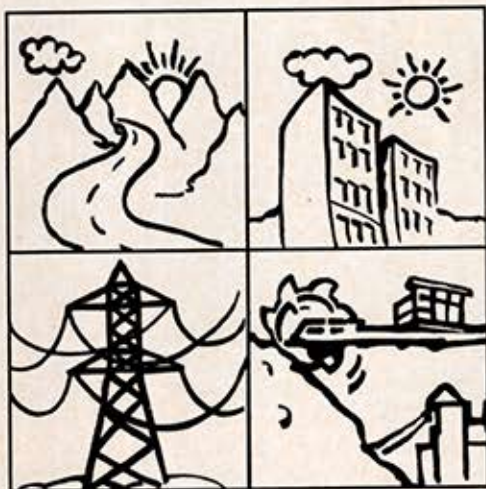
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A new structure for the WZO?

Arnavaz S. Mama

"It has become clear over the last few years, that the many pockets of Zoroastrians across the world, including in North America, Australia and New Zealand have formed numerous associations with democratically elected boards. Except in India, most have not yet coalesced into country federations, while those in North America have chosen to form a bi-country federation. WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) has increasingly felt that as the community's world body it must respond to this prevailing situation," writes WZO chairman Shahpur Captain in a letter addressed to "All anjumans in India," dated August 15, 1997.

To accommodate "the representative claims of organizations," Captain proposes that they "should be encouraged to form a democratic hierarchical structure of country or regional federations, and eventually through their council, play an effective and influential role in the community's global affairs."

The plan for restructuring the WZO envisages the creation of "WZO country chapters or federations" to which an individual association/anjuman would belong on becoming a WZO member. "Thus, there will be federations/chapters in Iran, USA, Canada, Pakistan/South Asia Region, etc, like the one in India," he explains. Tentatively, 10 major country or regional federations/chapters have been demarcated, viz Canada, India, Iran, UK, USA, Africa/Gulf/Middle East region, Australia/New Zealand region, Europe region, Far East Asia region, Pakistan/South Asia region.

Representatives of the associations/anjumans of the country or region in question would direct the work of that federation and elect from among themselves two members to represent it on the WZO's world council of anjumans (CA) to be created under the WZO umbrella. There will thus be a maximum of 20 members on this world council.

Simultaneously a council of individuals (CI), of equal number, would be "elected" by individual and family members of the WZO.

The two together constitute the WZO management board, the chairman of the board being chairman of the WZO, to be elected by rotation from major countries. Where 30 percent of the board members "are uncomfortable with a recommendation received from either council" it will be passed to "an independent advisory



Captain: accomodating organizations

committee of wise Zoroastrians for study and recommendation. The board will be guided by that advice."

The WZO's new voting system will be based on guesstimates of Zoroastrian population in the relevant geographical areas. This will include those who are neither members of anjumans nor of the WZO and the weighting formula suggested is one vote per every 1,000 Zoroastrians plus one for every additional 1,000 or fraction thereof. Associations with less than 1,000 members also get one vote.

The responsibilities of the two councils have been delineated in part. The council of anjumans is seen as the apex networker and coordinator, cutting across national boundaries. It will also be up to the CA to identify local and international matters of major concern to the community.

The organization is aimed at fostering bonds of identity and heritage to overcome different ethnic and national backgrounds; the perpetuation of the faith and its values, especially among Zoroastrian youth; unity and cohesiveness within the community and better projection of itself among its various hosts. Hence the CA is expected to provide effective solutions to the often less

than ideal state of affairs prevailing in various parts of the world "through bridging differences of beliefs, traditions and practices," notes Captain.

Apart from this intra-communal work the council of anjumans, as part of the WZO, is expected to represent and protect Zoroastrian interests with governments and

international organizations, promote the Zoroastrian presence at interfaith and inter-cultural meets and promote study of the Zoroastrian response to critical global issues such as social welfare and human rights which, according to Captain, "will face humanity in the 21st century." Other duties include the organization of a worldwide community census every decade; assist in the holding of triennial World Zoroastrian Congresses and ensure a followup on those deci-

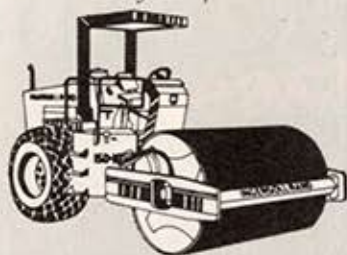
sions; undertake referendums on the basis of "WZO study, proposals and agenda for action."

"Residual responsibilities under the constitution would be handled by the CI," writes Captain. "Any major issue concerning the community will be put to the majority vote of the grassroots community, through each local association," he adds.

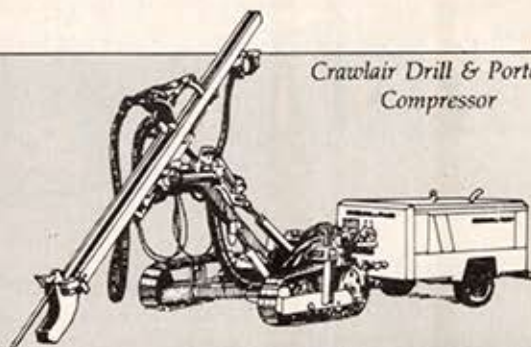
"UK members on the CI, including the executive vice president, will help handle the administrative work and execute Board decisions," notes Captain because the WZO's headquarters are in London. Anticipating a significant workload, Captain moots a professional secretariat including a secretary-general, a treasurer and, eventually, a secretary for each council, part-time to begin with. He also deems it prudent to secure these aims through "a tested community world body which you know has served it meritoriously over 17 years, rather than seek to do so through a new untested separate organization with its additional operating overheads."

Though there are separate provisions for making changes in the rules and regulations and the constitution of the WZO, no draft of a new constitution, as such, accompanies Captain's four-page letter (plus three annexures).

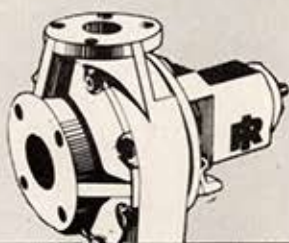
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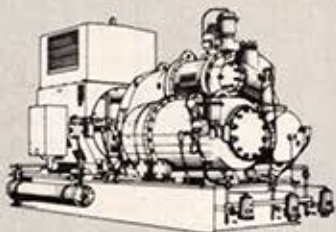
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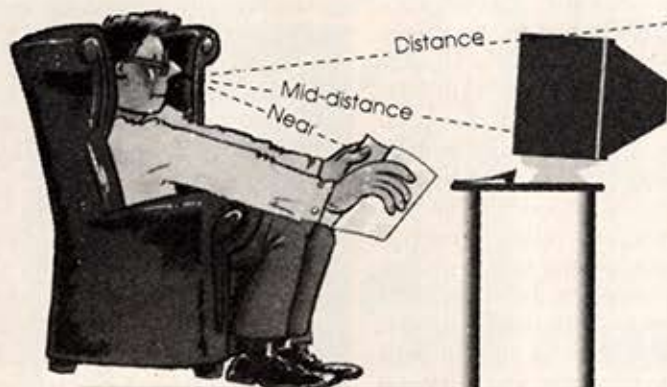


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A union of federations

Arnavaz S. Mama

"As the erstwhile marginalization of religions is giving way to close collaboration and partnerships among the religious institutions, it is now becoming easier, and all the more imperative to develop a formal structure for 'coming together...' for responsible dialog with commitment and follow-up. Such a dialog and follow-up actions are not conceivable in any meaningful way between tens of thousands of individual Zarathushtis scattered across the globe, or even between the hundreds of large and small Zoroastrian anjuman and associations," notes founder and former president of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) Rohinton Rivetna, in an "open letter to all interested persons" dated June 15, 1997.

Referring to the historical Zoroastrian custom to form an association/anjuman "wherever a few Zarathushtis settle," Rivetna cites 78 anjumans in India, 21 in Iran, 21 (22 since August '97) in North America, five in Pakistan, four in Australia, three in Europe, two in New Zealand and one each in Hong Kong, Singapore, Bahrain, Sri Lanka "and numerous other areas of the world." The Indian and North American anjumans having successfully come together as federations (since the past 22 and 12 years respectively), Rivetna says that this structure (individuals→associations→regional federations) "has developed over the years with the mandate of the community" and therefore cannot be bypassed. Maintaining the effectiveness of the hierarchical chain, Rivetna notes, "I give great credence to the collective intelligence of our community — listen to its beat. Organizers and leaders must set course accordingly," shoring up his case for the need for a World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF).

Rivetna sees the WCZF as a coordinating, networking and facilitating body in which each constituent would be ensured

complete administrative and religious autonomy. It would however have the mandate to represent and speak for the world Zoroastrian population, facilitate the setting of common goals and "give a gentle direction to our common destiny... coordinate and orchestrate the study and resolution of issues and significant projects that cross national boundaries."



Rivetna: "We shall improve, and refine"

Specifically the holding of world adult and youth congresses with adequate follow-up action, representing Zoroastrians as an NGO (non governmental organization) in international and interreligious fora, conducting a world census of Zoroastrians, holding referendums/surveys on matters of global significance to the community, "coordinating and facilitating the evolution of common practices among Zarathushtis" are part of the WCZF purview.

Presenting the sixth draft of the WCZF's proposed constitution and by-laws, prepared in conjunction with Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary of the FPZAI (Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India), Rivetna notes, "Please keep in mind that this constitution is intended to be a living document. As we start to function we shall improve and refine it through constitutional amendments, which process has to be kept simple to facilitate that." Copies endorsed to 43 interested persons (including two high priests each in India and Iran) apart from the four principal (founding) regions — India (FPZAI), Iran (Tehran Anjuman), North America (FEZANA), Europe (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe) and 10 other potential member regions — also provided a form for comments/suggestions/feedback/approval.

The 19-page constitution and by-laws spells out its primary objects. These include:

- working with governments of respective countries with regard to matters pertaining

to Zoroastrian communities and their welfare, Zoroastrian monuments, and Zoroastrian archeology, as required, and establish consultative status with global bodies, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian;

- helping Zoroastrians to acquire a broader sense of identity based on their common religious heritage; strengthen the ties and bonds between all followers of the Zoroastrian faith;

- dealing with matters arising with regard to assets of defunct Zoroastrian organizations anywhere in the world, at the request of the concerned member region;

- promoting formation of not-for-profit international associations of Zoroastrian professionals, businessmen, industrialists, educationists, social workers, and other such broad occupational categories, in order to network and establish support systems to encourage entrepreneurship, industry and charity among Zoroastrians.

The secondary objectives include:

- to promote, perpetuate and teach the message of Zarathushtra;

- to encourage traditional offerings of charity and benevolence among Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians;

- to nurture, perpetuate, sustain and support the Zoroastrian faith and Zoroastrian communities living anywhere in the world, paying particular attention to the youth.

Membership of the WCZF is open to any Zoroastrian federation, union of associations/anjuman/societies in such geographic areas as India, Iran, North America, Europe, Australia, Pakistan, UAE, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka or any other self-governing political region in which a minimum of 50 Zoroastrians reside. This provision applies to future migrations also; in the reverse, where Zoroastrian population in a region declines below 50, its WCZF membership would stand terminated.

Where several associations exist in a region, the one representing the major segment of Zoroastrian population in the area has the authority to become a WCZF member with the proviso that it undertake

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to liaise with the other organizations there and lead them towards the formation of a federation in the region.

The criteria for membership, apart from the binding acceptance of the constitution and by-laws, require that the body file a written application with the WCZF secretary for approval by a simple majority of the Council; be registered under the relevant laws of its own country as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving the religious and other needs of the Zoroastrians of the area; have a minimum of 200 Zoroastrians living in the region it represents (but in no case less than 50); agree to pay all its dues within 90 days of the beginning of each fiscal year.

A member who engages in activities detrimental to the WCZF's declared objectives could be expelled if 75 percent of member regions vote against its continued membership of the Council. It would however be allowed 90 days after notification to submit a defense. Conversely, each member region has the right to terminate its membership of the WCZF through a written resignation accompanied by a full statement of accounts and dues.

The Council may be quartered in any of the founding regions after seeking the consent of the member region and ensuring that its operations do not infringe upon that member's autonomy. The member region is at liberty to withdraw its consent after giving due notice.

The fiscal year of the Council would hinge upon the fiscal year as prescribed by the laws of the host country. Minimum annual subscription for the founding members is set at US \$ 1,000 (or its equivalent) and that of other members at US \$ 500. Member regions are urged to pay higher amounts voluntarily, in accordance with their capacity to do so.

It is envisaged that the Council's work will be financed principally through contributions and donations. The majority of the Council's endowments are expected to be deposited in the largest, government backed secure investment though it is open to invest (less than 40 percent) in real estate or in moderate risk securities.

Created in painstaking detail, the draft constitution covers 14 articles, many with several subsections. The WCZF's governance clause declares that the Council will be "managed by its membership; the member regions shall collectively exercise all powers normally exercised by the board of directors or trustees of a not-for-profit religious corporation and delegate

continued on page 51

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best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

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Hunt for the oriental treasures

When poring over countless manuscripts in Gujarat, Jamshed Katrak found interesting material which he compiled into *Oriental Treasures*

Capt Hormazdiar J. M. Desai

Jamshed C. Katrak, in his preface to *Oriental Treasures*, writes: "The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI)... founded in 1920 a research scholarship through the munificence of Mr and Ms Jehangir R. Patell, for a period of one year for the investigation, examination and research of old manuscripts written in Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazand, Sanskrit, old Gujarati and other Iranian and Indian languages, lying in the private libraries of Parsis... in Gujarat. Particular attention was to be paid to the colophons of those manuscripts."

Entrusted with this research work by Dr Jivanji Modi, Katrak travelled extensively and studied, in depth, various manuscripts in personal and private libraries in Surat, Broach, Ankleshwar, Navsari, Gandevi, Bulsar, Nargol, Udvada, Adajan, Bhatha, Siganpore and Saronda. Every month, he submitted reports which were examined by eminent scholars like Dr Modi, M. P. Khareghat, G. K. Nariman and Ervad B. N. Dhabhar. The printing of these reports, bound in three bulky volumes, was considered prohibitive. Even the condensed version in a tabular symmetrical form was prohibitively expensive for the KRCOI.

Katrak, realizing that these precious manuscripts should be known to future oriental scholars, generously undertook to publish the *Oriental Treasures* at his own cost. Khareghat who wrote the foreword to the book emphasizes, "The work is manifestly the result of great labor, learning and intelligence, and its publisher must

have entailed great expense." The *Oriental Treasures* is, "With deepest devotion, love and gratitude, dedicated to Mother Superior Gloria — the life and soul of the Mazdayasnan movement in Europe, America, India and the rest of the civilized world."

The author states: "This is a unique work of its kind, never published before. Over a thousand manuscripts written in nine different Iranian and Indian languages, ancient as well as modern, dead as well as living were searched as well as examined in the private collection of 63 Parsi owners living in different parts of Gujarat. The remaining 31 were residing in different towns and villages." Most of the ancient, beautiful, rare and valuable manuscripts were located in Surat, Broach, Bulsar and Navsari and are on a wide variety of subjects. In addition to the original Zoroastrian scriptures, they include Avestan writings with Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati versions.

They also include Sanskrit translations of the Avestan, Pahlavi, Pazand, Persian and Gujarati texts. There are manuscripts on science, chronology, geography, travels, rhetoric, logic, ethics and moral sayings, philosophy, theology and religion, mysticism, Sufism, lexicography, philology, polytechnics, music, cookery, perfumery, astronomy, astrology, geomancy, books of fate, dreams, medicine, pharmacy, sexology, physics and mathematics.

In the tabular descriptive statement printed in *Oriental Treasures*, Katrak has also given the colophons, that is inscriptions mostly on the last page or folio of the manuscripts, giving the name, often with lengthy genealogies of the scribe, of the patron if any, and date and place of writing.

The nine appendices in the *Oriental Treasures* are most informative and educative. They include topics such as immigration and earliest struggles of the Parsis in India, landing at Diu, arrival at Sanjan, the 16 Sanskrit shlokas, consecration of the Iranshah Atash Behram at Sanjan, Neryosang Dhaval, battles at Sanjan, Variav and Bahrot, flights therefrom, early Parsis in Sind and Punjab, settlement at Cambay, testimony of Persian Rivayats, early history of Parsis at Navsari, Broach, Ankleshwar, Surat, Bulsar, Udvada, Daman, Thana, Kalyan and Bombay, and some leading Parsi dasturs, mobeds and behdins of old in India. This book is a treasure house of history of the Parsis in India and would greatly interest all those with a scholastic bent of mind.

The *Oriental Treasures* is undoubtedly Katrak's magnum opus. He has also authored, in Gujarati, other books, viz the *History of Nanabhai Punjia*, An-



Katrak (above, and right) being received by Shahbanu Farah in Iran

cestor of the Davar Modi family of Surat, 1935; *True causes of the Downfall of the last Zoroastrian Empire of the Sassanids in Iran*; *Literary Talks*, Bombay, 1949; *Afsun-i-Shah Faridun*, 1959; *Marriage in Ancient Iran*, 1965; *The Age of Zarathushtra*, 1968 and the *Iranian and Oriental Papers*.

As an eminent scholar, Katrak attended the All India Oriental Conferences in 1941, 1943, 1948 and 1949. He was a Persian scholar of the Government of Iran during 1959-60. He ably represented the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay at the First World Zoroastrian Congress held in Tehran in October 1960. At the invitation of the Government of Iran, he attended the World Congress of Iranologists held in Tehran in 1966 and read a studied paper on *The Age of Zarathushtra*.

Katrak graduated from Bombay University as a scholar in Avesta and Pahlavi. He subsequently obtained a certificate in ancient Iranian languages and was a Sanskrit prizeman, Sir J. J. Zarthoshty Madressa.

The *Oriental Treasures* need to be much better publicized. If internationally reputed scholars are familiarized with *Oriental Treasures*, a new dimension would be given to research, oriental learning, scholarship, culture and literature.

Are the oriental research institutions and the Zoroastrian community going to let this priceless, rare treasure-house of knowledge slip out of their hands?

Katrak has given detailed addresses of the owners, when he examined the rare books in the private libraries. I firmly believe that with the help of the anjumans and Zoroastrian organizations in the towns mentioned in *Oriental Treasures*, and with the help of the legal heirs and successors of the owners, it may still be possible to retrieve many of these rare books and manuscripts. Unless these manuscripts are secured from their present owners and preserved in a prestigious institute such as the KRCCI, they may permanently be lost to scholars and to posterity and may end up in secondhand book shops. We must act very expeditiously, effectively and decisively.

Trustee and joint honorary secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Capt Hormazdiar Desai mastered in Persian literature before acquiring his LLB degree. He was promoted to the Indian Administrative Service in 1962 from the Maharashtra cadre which he joined after wartime army service with the South East Asia Command. Desai co-founded the National Association for the Blind and has published seven books, several of them on the rights of the disabled.

A UNION OF FEDERATIONS

continued from page 48

certain business to the executive officers and the executive director...by a simple majority of all eligible votes." Any procedural or operating rules adopted by the Council would be annually reviewed by the president and the honorary secretary. Member regions are expected to implement the Council's decisions made in the general assembly (GA) in their geographical areas. However it provides for a member to elect to receive the decision only as a recommendation if it bears doctrinal or socio-economic import and to so inform the Council. On the Council's part, such a decision "shall be based on a proposition that has received an adequate study of all aspects of the issue, including the changing world in which Zoroastrians live, and reasonable consultation with those espousing varying viewpoints. Complete details of the proposition including a fair statement setting out the pros and cons shall be circulated to the member regions and an opportunity given to them to express in writing their views after consulting their respective constituents. The process may take several months or even years. The Council's decision will thus reflect a unanimous or majority view arrived at on the basis of proper study and wide consultation."

The GA is viewed as a coordinating body and as a "forum for discussions and deliberations" for the benefit of the worldwide community. It will also conduct the Council's routine and administrative work, ensure execution of decisions and serve as a secretariat in the absence of a secretariat. It will comprise executive officers including one president, four vice presidents (one each from the founding member regions), an honorary treasurer, an honorary secretary and three honorary vice secretaries. The total number of non-office bearer members of the GA would, together with all the office bearers excluding the president, equal the total number of eligible votes. Each member region would be free to appoint its representatives on the GA provided the nominees are bonafide residents of the region and affiliated to one of its member associations.

The terms of the president and non-office bearer members of the GA is one year; that of the office bearers, two years. Everyone except the president would be entitled to reappointment at the end of their terms.

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Recreating Cama

Burjor K. Karanjia

Madame Cama by Shirin Darasha. Published in 1997 by A. R. Gala for Navneet Publications (India) Limited, Navneet Bhavan, Bhavani Shankar Road, Dadar, Bombay 400028. Pp: 157. Price: Rs 35.

In a note prefacing her novel on the life of Madame Bhikaiji Cama, the author states: "My novel is a fictional biography, for though I've tried to authenticate the facts and important milestones of Madame Cama's life as faithfully as possible, I've also used my imagination to create characters and events which may not have existed in her life, but which add flesh and blood to her personality and to the era in which she lived."

The author, Shirin Darasha, who became principal of the J. B. Petit School after a brilliant academic career, has done the task she set herself superbly well. Written in a simple narrative style, without any flourishes but exploiting to the full the dramatic highlights of Madame Cama's extraordinary career, the novel grips one's interest as it unfolds the early struggles and later achievements of a remarkable woman whom Darasha considers "the greatest Indian woman of her day and one of the greatest Indians of all times."

The warmest tribute one can pay this remarkable novel is that within the space of 150 pages, Madame Cama is made alive from her birth in 1861 to her death in 1936.

Bhikaiji Cama (née Patel) showed two characteristics even as a growing girl. A total independence of character and a nature that was remarkably high-principled. She did not do all that she wanted to do. She did only what her conscience told her to do.

The Patel family, pro-British by tradition, did not like her to attend meetings then being held by the Indian National Congress. She attended these meetings nevertheless, and even invited a few patriotic friends to her home, to the consternation particularly

of her mother. Her father too was pro-British, but he doted on his daughter and tended to overlook her "trespasses."

Even as a young girl, Bhikaiji had a strong sense of service. During the plague epidemic in Bombay, the Parsi Punchayet had organized a Parsi field hospital. Bhikaiji used to go to the hospital every day and attend to the sick and dying against the wishes of her own and her husband's family. She was married by then to Rustam Cama of the Cama family. This experience at the hospital opened Bhikoo's eyes to the ravages of famine and poverty on the masses of her people.



Darasha: bringing Cama alive

Her differences with her pro-British husband along with the sudden death of her father, brought about a crisis in her life. She broke up with her husband and left India to go to Europe. Her meeting with Dadabhai Naoroji in London deepened her feelings of patriotism. He asked her to work for him and the Indian National Congress. She campaigned energetically for Dadabhai's election to the House of Commons.

Through Dadabhai she met Sardar Singh Rana belonging to a princely Rajput family of Kathiawar and a young man named Shamji Verma who was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar deeply influenced by the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. The two men were leaders of a band of Indian revolutionaries in London. Verma was responsible for the founding of India House in London at 65, Cromwell Avenue. Dadabhai Naoroji was present at the inauguration. An early entrant was the zealous Veer Savarkar.

By 1905, influenced by Rana and Verma and having read a lot of European revolutionary literature, particularly by the great Italian revolutionary Mazzini, Bhikoo became a revolutionary herself. Her writings in various newspapers and periodicals drew vivid pictures of the cruelties of British misrule, the pathetic plight of the majority of the people and the need for a violent

uprising. Bhikoo also became a member of Abhinav Bharat, a revolutionary organization, which believed in armed struggle. In London at India House, Bhikoo presided over a meeting to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the sepoy uprising of 1857.

She travelled to Paris, New York, Berlin and Geneva. In America, at a press conference at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, on October 28, 1907, she was introduced as "an Indian woman who dares to speak not only for her country, but for the repressed humanity of the world." In Berlin she undertook a lecture tour to enlighten Germans about India's political problems. In September 1909 she launched a monthly magazine called *Bande Mataram*, which became the voice of revolutionary India. Bhikoo's fame spread through Europe. The French called her "la citoyenne Cama" and the American Press hailed her as the "Mother of the Indian Revolution." The British, of course, labeled her "an anarchist, a revolutionist, anti-British and irreconcilable."

It was Cama who raised the Indian tricolor for the first time in Europe at Stuttgart in August 1907. After an impassioned speech, she unfurled the flag she had kept hidden, calling it "the flag of Indian independence sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youth." She was a trailblazer in that she thought and talked of swaraj, complete independence for India, decades before anyone else did, as far back as in 1905-1907.

Her work in Europe over, she returned to Bombay in 1936, 75 years old, frail and ailing. She was admitted to the Parsee General Hospital where she survived for eight months till she died in August 1936, unwept and unsung. It was years after her death that Indians gave her the recognition due to her as one who played a prominent role in India's struggle for freedom. India's recognition, alas, came long after the world's.

Darasha has rendered a truly national service by writing this insightful novel. This reviewer feels that it should be compulsory reading for all Indians — except that it is so interestingly written that no compulsion would really be needed to make one read it! An added attraction are the illustrations and sketches, which are based on the photographs of J. B. Petit High School girls who enacted the play, *Madame Cama*, before the play was made into a novel.

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 18 and 36 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 25 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 22 and 38 years, averaging at 29 years.

As per the data collected by *Parsiana* there were 18 births in Bombay for the month of November compared to 73 deaths. Heart disease claimed 26 victims of whom 10 were above the age of 80. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (10), brain disease and cancer (seven each) and hypertension (four). Kidney failure took a toll of three lives whereas two Zoroastrians each fell prey to diabetes, ulcer and old age and general debility. Anemia, Parkinson's disease, septicemia, bronchitis, asthma, nervous disorder, cerebral malaria, peritonitis (inflammation of the delicate serous membrane which lines the abdominal and pelvic cavities), viral fever and high blood pressure were the isolated cases registered in November. The age range fluctuated between 40 and 93 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at

birth, in Bombay in November, was 76 years.

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

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

AHMEDABAD

DIED

Eruchshaw Gustadi Bhatporia, husband of Zarine and father of Daraius, Kurush and Arnavaz on November 3, 1997

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to Mehernaz and Yazdi Bhor; November 4
A girl to Farah and Nader Parakh; November 4
A girl to Roxanna and Jayesh Shah; November 5
A boy to Farzana and Daraus Mojgani; November 9
A boy to Jasmine and Porus Mistry; November 10
A boy, Burzin, to Firuzi and Jamshed Rao; November 15
A boy to Zarin and Percy Rustomji; November 16
A girl to Farzana and Nevil Mistry; November 18
A boy to Abhan and Noshirwan Irani; November 19
A girl to Tanaz and Khushroo Mody; November 19

A girl to Nergish and Vishwanath Shetty; November 19
A boy, Delzar, to Pinky and Yezdi Banji; November 21
A girl to Bakhtavar and Homi Mistry; November 22
A boy to Gulrukh and Behruz Irani; November 23
A girl to Yasmin and Rushad Udwadia, sister to Farhad; November 24
A boy to Shiraz and Minoo Tarapore; November 25
A girl to Kashmiri and Dinyar Aga; November 28
A boy to Mahazarin and Hoshang Dumasia; November 28

MARRIED

Kashmira Dara Mehta and Farrokh Homi Bhatthana of Secunderabad; September 21
Tehnaz Kersi Bharucha of Baroda and Mehernosh Hoshang Patel; October 10
Jasmine Keki Balsara and Rashid Boman Parva;

October 14
Monaz Hosang Madan and Sharookh Erach Randelia of Pune; October 18
Freny Bapu Mithaiwala and Kaizar Godrej Kotwal; October 28
Khursheed Dadi Wadia and Cyrus Marzban Marfatia; November 2
Shehnaz Ardeskar Kerawalla and Rustom Mehervan Billimoria; November 3
Banoo Mehernosh Dastur and Adil Rustom Makoojina; November 8
Daisy Pervaz Bulsara and Hormuzd Meher Bharucha; November 10
Mehernaz Bomi Mody and Naushad Jimmy Mistry of Australia; November 10
Khushmun Dara Avari and Rayomand Jimmy Taila; November 10
Dhanu Homi Engineer and Cyrus Shavak Bhatthana; November 11
Mahatab Rusi Gandevia of Thane and Pervaz Dinyar Bajan of Thane; November 13
Arnavaz Jehanbux Daver and Kersi Rusi Mistry; November 13
Jasmine Homi Patel and Farhad Rusi Bharucha; November 14
Naazneen Noshir Mody and Farhad Noshir Daruwalla; November 14
Nilufer Gev Vaid and Mehernosh Sam Rana; November 14
Parivaz Homi Irani and Burzin Jangoo Printer of Aurangabad; November 15
Sanobar Parvez Patel and Sharukh Keki Anklesaria; November 16
Niloufer Eruchshaw Kolah and Mehercher Homi Hakim; November 16
Shirley Feroze Master of Nasik and Arjasp Dady Motafaram; November 16
Percis Firoze Vandrewala and Ardeskar Sorab Billimoria; November 17
Delnaaz Soli Guzder and Cyrus Boman Irani; November 17
Dinaz Dinyar Daruwalla and Neville Jehanbux Raimalwala; November 17
Katy Rustomji Mistry and Farhad Rusi Damania; November 18
Aftab Kaikobad Bhangara and Kerman Rusi Damania of Thane;

November 18
Kainaz Aspi Kharas of Surat and Mehernosh Dara Dumasia; November 18
Fargish Jamshed Fitter and Kaizad Pervaz Mistry; November 18
Hutoxi Gustad Wadia of Surat and Eric Minoo Randeria; November 20
Ketayun Darabsha Poonawalla and Kaizad Behram Sukhia; November 20
Delnaz Sam Mistry and Hoshang Soli Zaveri; November 20
Rashna Rusi Pithawala and Neville Jal Daruwalla; November 21
Sehnaz Cawasha Bacha of Nagpur and Khushroo Rustom Irani of Devlali; November 23
Dinaz Loveji Kapadia and Navzad Noshir Cooverji; November 24
Dogdau Jehanbux Dhamodiwala of Navsari and Darayus Rustom Mehta; November 24
Azmin Faredoon Kaifer of Dahanu Rd and Neville Behram Mehta of Dahanu Rd; November 24
Khurshah Maneck Boywalla and Nariman Phiroz Amaria; November 25
Binaifer Erach Buhariwala and Vispi Rohinton Badhniwala; November 27
Mahanaz Hormaz Yegtaahi and Sarosh Kaikhushroo Irani of Gholvad; November 27
Meher Jimmy Unvala and Farokh Minocher Cooper; November 28

DIED

Khorshed Sheriyar Irani Damubed (87), 3, Patel Bldg, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; November 1
Burjor Hormasji Contractor (87), C/o C. J. Vervatwalla, Mota Parseewad, Valsad, Gujarat, 396001; November 2
Keki Hormasji Doongaji (88), 3/1, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; November 2
Dhunmai Rustomji Ghadiyally (70), Room no 2, 189, Hirabai Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; November 2
Homi Darabsha Parelwala (79), Old Petit Mans, Noshir Bharucha Marg, 400007; November 2
Jal Darashaw Masalawalla (87),

Bhiwandi Hse, 92, Cumballa Hill, 400036; November 3
Adi Nariman Mody (80), Najoo Villa, Vakola Bridge, Santacruz (E), 400055; November 3
Hirabai Murzban Commissariat (88), 11, Hormuzd Bldg, Dadaji Konddeo Marg, 400027; November 4
Khorshed Keki Ghadiali (85), C/o Behram D. Mohta, J-14, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; November 4
Nergish Keki Cassad (69), 17, Lotus Court, 196, Jamshedji Tata Rd, 400020; November 5
Kaikhushru Behramsha Nagwaswalla (85), Room no 8/9, Kach Bglw, Tukaram Javji Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; November 5
Perviz Jehangir Pastakia (67), Daulatram Mans, Kirtledge Rd, 400005; November 5
Dhanjisha Shapurji Sadri (70), C/o N. D. Sadri, D-1/54, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; November 5
Nariman Hormusha Dotiwala (87), C-3, Ness Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007; November 6
Soli Rustomji Mistry (65), Captain Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; November 6
Maneck Dhunjishaw Vandrewala (55), 780, Karani Mans, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 6
Sohrab Peshotan Unvala (68), Zarin Lodge, 103, TPS-4, Opp Bhabha Hosp, Bandra, 400050; November 7
Rusi Pestonji Dalal (64), B/102, Twin Towers, Prabhadevi, 400025; November 8
Gool Sorabjee Korkhau (81), Shroff Chmbs, 259, Bazargate St, 400001; November 8
Dhuni Nariman Mistry (75), Avabai Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; November 8
Aloo Nariman Mowdawalla (63), B/102, Amiyarsha, Vasant Nagri, Vasai (E), Dist Thane, 401201; November 8
Jal Hormusji Amaria (72), 6/2, Khan Est, Station Rd, Mahim, 400016; November 9
Boman Shapurji Chothia (74), Sita Kunj, 164, M. Karve Rd, 400021; November 9
Mehra Faramroze Dadachanji (86), Wilson Bldg, Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; November 9
Noshir Nanabhoy Langrana (77), LII 4, Tata Hsg Centre,

Lallubhai Park Rd, Andheri (E), 400058; November 9
Hilla Dinshawji Buhariwala (89), 10, Kanchan Mrig, Coal Dungri, Sahar Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; November 10
Nargish Darabshaw Karani (83), 2, Marine Chmbs, Marine Lines, 400020; November 10
Banoo Navroji Kharas (70), DKL-2, Sharon Apts, I C Clny, Cross Rd No 3, Borivli (W), 400103; November 10
Dady Rustomji Meherhomji (89), Marble Arch, 52, Peddar Rd, 400026; November 10
Homi Faramroze Sukhia (67), 22/23, Soona Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 10
Dhuni Bomi Pesikaka (77), 16, Hormuz Baug Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; November 11
Minoo Phirozshah Deboo (68), 1, Maryland Rd, Paddington, London W9 2DU, UK; November 12
Roshan Dorab Satha (75), 82-A, Empire Est, 147, August Kranti Marg, 400036; November 12
Aloo Fardoonji Bhabha (82), 36/A, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; November 13
Ardeshtir Jehangirji Langrana

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1997*	This issue	1997*	This issue	1997*
BIRTHS						
Boys	9	92	-	6	1	19
Girls	9	94	-	4	-	25
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	40	213	1	3	1	9
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	-	21	-	1	-	4
Females married out	-	19	-	-	-	1
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	33	411	11	97	2	32
Females	40	434	16	94	-	27
CREMATED						
Males	-	3	-	-	-	-
Females	-	5	-	1	-	-

*Running totals for 1997 (January-November 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.

(85), Room no 8, 654, Firdoshi Rd, Near D.P.Y.A. School, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 13
Behram Kaikushroo Mistry (77), Jehangir Mans, 73/1, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 13
Eruch Manchershah Bhabha (75), 12, Ilava Bldg, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; November 14
Dolat Rustom Choksi (68), 23, Strand Hse, Opp Strand Cinema, Colaba, 400005; November 14
Eric Phiroze Shroff (60), B, Khalakdina Ter, Gowalia Tank, 400036; November 14
Rustomji Pestonji Daruvala (93), 10, Vatcha Block, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 15
Banoo Hoshang Godha (90), 258, Bazargate St, (Perin Nariman St), Fort, 400001; November 15
Zarin Kersi Master (45), Petit Block No 3, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; November 15
Shera Rustomji Patel (89), Noor Mhl, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, 400034; November 15
Katy Fardoon Pauwalla (56), 8, C. M. Banaji Bldg, Forjett St Cross Lane, Gowalia Tank, 400036; November 16
Soona Jimi Shroff (78), 7/C,

Monisha, St. Andrews Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; November 16
Keki Jamshedji Vapiwala (70), C/75, Abhishek Apts, 2nd Cross Lane, Lokhandwala Complex, 400053; November 16
Aspi Cawasji Chhayela (60), C-8, Captain Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; November 17
Coomi Keki Haevae (73), Pallonji Hse, Raja Rammohan Roy Rd, New Charni Rd, 400004; November 17
Perin Hoshang Irani (75), 20, Yusuf Manzil, 12th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; November 17
Shapur Kaikhashroo Irani (67), Haji Habib Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; November 18
Sam Pirojshaw Shekary (79), C-19, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; November 18
Mehra Adi Anklesaria (87), Motibai Bhavan, Proctor St, Grant Rd, 400007; November 21
Dosan Jehangir Suratia (87), 789, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 21
Yasmin Hoshi Sahiar (40), 3/2, Meherhomes Co-op. Hsg Soc Ltd, Station Rd, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 22
Coomi Adi Shroff (73), Row Hse no 1, Powai-Vihar, A. S. Rd,

Powai, 400076; November 22
Khorshed Noshir Shroff (76),
 F/16, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd,
 400004; November 22
Nergish Rustomji Ichhaporia
 (66), Room no 4, Parekh Bldg,
 Gilder Lane, Tardeo, 400008;
 November 23

Tehmina Dinshawji Mistry (90),
 10/11, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
 400034; November 23

Rati Jamshedji Soonawala (81),
 K-Villa, Malcolm Baug,
 Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
 November 23

Goolbai Maneksha Mistry (91),
 764-A, Banu Hse, Dr Ghanti Rd,
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 November 24

Naja Maneckji Cooper (91),
 515/C, Meher Mans, R. P.
 Masani Rd, Matunga, 400019;
 November 25

Banoobai Framroze Mistry (78),
 B. B. Merwan Bldg, Opp Grant
 Rd Stn, 400007; November 25

Mehru Rustomjee Guzdar (85), 19,
 Contractor Chawl, Sussex Rd,
 Byculla, 400027; November 26

Freny Pirojsha Italia (84),
 C/o 238, Akhalwaya Hse,
 Dr Cawasji Hormusji St, Dhobi-
 talao, 400002; November 26

Boman Kaikhusru Irani (84), 6,
 Maneck Bldg, 112, Lamington
 Rd, 400008; November 27

Coomi Rusi Marolia (78), 7, Bai
 Ratanbai Tata Bldg, 38th Rd,
 Bandra, 400050; November 27

Kersasp Nadersha Rana (72),
 Billimoria Bldg, 7/C, Proctor
 Rd, 400007; November 27

Pirojshaw Burjorji Ustad (85),
 273, Agiary Chawl, Dr S. S. Rao
 Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;
 November 27

Aloo Noshir Patel (65),
 Tarachand Bldg, Old Khareghat
 Clny, 14, Hughes Rd, 400007;
 November 28

Jaloo Sorab Coachman (81),
 22-C, Nawab Tank Rd,
 Sakarwadi, Mazgaon, 400010;
 November 29

Jamshedji Jhangirji Cooper
 (76), 14, Anil Bhuvan, Opp
 Firdosi Restaurant, Parel,
 400012; November 29

Pestonji Faramji Mistry (91),
 573, Umrigar Bldg, Chira Bazar,
 J.S.S. Rd, 400002; November 29

Burjor Hormasji Poonager (93),
 11/19, Khareghat Clny, Hughes
 Rd, 400007; November 30

CALCUTTA
 MARRIED

Feroza Jeejeebhoy and Faroukh

Mogrelia; November 16

DAHANU

DIED

Rustam Dinshaw Irani
 (Kermani) (71), brother of
 Mehelli and late Homi and
 Bahman; November 4

DELHI

DIED

Freny Batliwala, wife of
 Peshotan and mother of
 Pouruchisty Yezdi Batliwala,
 Percy and Thrity Farokh Sidhwa;
 October 29

Peshotan Kekobad Batliwala,
 father of Pouruchisty Yezdi
 Batliwala, Percy and Thrity
 Farokh Sidhwa; November 10

Percy and Thrity Farokh Sidhwa; November 10

NAVSARI

DIED

Sheroo Adarbad Dastoor (72);
 November 6

POONA

DIED

Hutokshi Merwan Patel (47),
 8/2, Bhrama Horizon,
 Lullanagar, 411040; October 3

Tehmi Sorabji Poonawalla (92),
 1-B, Dr Coyaji Rd, 411001;
 October 6

Minoo Gustasp Nagarwalla (84),
 86, Koregaon Park, 411001;
 October 10

Phiroze Cawasji Engineer (86),
 Raj Garden, Survey no 43,
 Kondwa Kud, 411048;
 October 11

Prochee Phiroze Nariman (59),
 Perin Meher, Dr Ambedkar Rd,
 Aurangabad, 431001; October 13

Senam Aspi Irani (65), 687,
 Kamdhenu Park, 411040;
 October 19

Banoo Jehangir Khatau (85),
 850, Dastur Meher Rd, 411001;
 October 19

Dina Rustom Banaji (71),
 C-2/104, Natasha Enclave,
 NIBM Rd, Kondwa, 411048;
 November 6

Eruch Eduljee Mehta (74), 56,
 Krishna Kunj, Old Poolgate,
 411001; November 6

Banoo Fali Lord (50), 44/4,
 Sassoon Rd, 411001;
 November 6

Allan Keki Tavadia (88), 14,
 Castellino Rd, 411001;
 November 9

Jerbai Jamshedji Meherhomji
 (84), 61, Pushpak Soc, Kalyani
 Ngr, Nagar Rd, 411014;
 November 13

Behram Gustasp Gustave (73),

JOIN

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B-201, Nityanand Complex,
 Bund Garden Rd, 411001;
 November 15

Jamshed Naorojee Bandoowalla
 (79), 16-B-2, Dr Ambedkar Rd,
 411001; November 16

Dina Burjor Kavarana (77), 3,
 Narsimha Soc, 194, Boat Club
 Rd, 411001; November 25

SECUNDERABAD

DIED

Aloo Balsara (68), wife of
 Kekobad; October 9

SURAT

DIED

Kaikhushroo Nusserwanji Bhot
 (79), Sayedpura, 395003;
 November 1

Khorshedbanoo Darabshaw
Panthaki (70), Village Adajan,
 Dist Surat; November 2

Minoo Babuji Dordi (61),
 Machlipith, 395003;
 November 10

Shavaksha Fakirji Mogal (52),
 Village Mahuva, Dist Surat,
 364290; November 11

Anahita Tehmuras Patel (26),
 Muglisara, 395003; November 22

Shirinbai Baharamji Surati (85),

Rustompura, 395002;
 November 23

Ardeshir Hormasji Bhethna (90),
 Khatkiwad, 395003;
 November 24

...

USA

California

DIED

Pheroze Engineer, husband of
 Perin and father of Kelly, Dinaz
 Weber and Prochy; October 8

Houston

BORN

A boy, *Naadir*, to *Ouvie* and
Behramji Mehta, brother to
 Mitra; November 14

DIED

Minoo Sanjana, husband of
 Jerroo and father of Roda and
 Rusty; October 29

San Diego

MARRIED

Jasmine Irani, daughter of Silloo
 and Khushru, and *Firdaus*
Aryana, son of Dolly and late
 Behram, October 11

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

On a milk mission

Parinaz Gandhi

Died: Dr Noshir Navroji Dastur, 84, former director of the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) who had also served as dairy development advisor and joint commissioner (dairy development) in the ministry of food and agriculture (New Delhi), on June 12, 1997 in Bangalore.

"The members of the Indian Dairy Association (IDA), while remembering the commendable work done by Dr Dastur in promoting dairy education and research in India, and particularly in dairy chemistry, feel that a void has been created... (His) life-style and ethics have become a benchmark for the future generations to emulate," noted a tribute in *Indian Dairyman*, the newsletter of the IDA. What is presently known as the IDA was formerly the Indian Dairy Science Association of which Dastur was the founder joint secretary. Besides serving as a member of its executive committee he was also on the editorial board of the Association which brought out two periodicals, *Indian Dairyman* and *Indian Journal of Dairy Science*. Similar roles as secretary and editor were undertaken by Dastur for the Society of Biological Chemists (India), notes a write-up.

At the NDRI he served as director and was earlier the head of its dairy chemistry department and the dairy education and training division until he took over as officer-in-charge, western regional station. "The traditions and high ideals set by him... have made what NDRI is... today, recognized the world over," acknowledged an obituary in *Milk Track*, the newsletter of the Alumni Association of the Dairy Science College.

The first principal of the Dairy Science College, in appreciation of his contribution to this institution, the alumni of the College instituted the Dr Dastur Award, given every two years, for outstanding achievement in the dairy field.

Dastur himself had received innumerable awards in the course of his illustrious career as listed in *Indian Dairyman*. In 1965 he was bestowed the Moudgil Prize of the Indian Standards Institute (ISI). Eight years later he was conferred the Tamapatra by the President of India on the occasion of NDRI's golden jubilee. In 1989 he won the H. K. Sen Memorial Medal from the Institute of Chem-

ists and in 1992, the Dr Kurien Award from the IDA. Two years later he was honored with DSc (honoris causa) from the NDRI (deemed university) during its first convocation in 1994.

For eight years he was emeritus scientist at two technical institutes, one of them being the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). During his association with the

ICAR he was involved with the scientific panel on dairy education and dairy science. He had chaired the ISI committees on dairy equipment and milk products, and the central committee for food standards, it was mentioned in *Indian Dairyman*. Additionally he was a member of a working group constituted by the International Dairy Federation and the International Standards Organisation on Milk

Products.

With the Punjab University too, he had enduring ties. He was the dean, faculty of dairying and animal husbandry, served as member of the senate and subsequently became secretary and chairman of the board of dairy education.

A science graduate from Bombay's Wilson College, Dastur had worked with the Indian Institute of Science and earned his MSc from the Bombay University. Thereafter he did his research on milk and blood lipids at the Hannah Dairy Research Institute in Scotland and obtained his PhD degree from the Glasgow University. His post-doctoral investigation on dairy products were conducted at the Low Temperature Research Station, Cambridge. On his return to India, he started as a junior dairy chemist at the Indian Dairy Research Institute, noted a profile on Dastur.

"His long association with milk chemistry culminated in the study of minor pigments," it was reported in *Indian Dairyman*. "These studies have helped to bring out special aspects of the traditional methods of ghee manufacture."

"Dr Dastur will always be remembered for motivating a large number of young men and women," as eulogized in *Milk Track*, "and (for) introducing a high level of professionalism in the dairy industry."

The dairy scientist is survived by his wife Silloo.



READERS' FORUM
continued from page 8

years. Had the flats belonged to them and been built with their own money, would they have allowed the flats to remain vacant, without getting any remuneration?

In the old days, many lower and middle class families were residing in private buildings owned by Parsis. Because of the rising cost of repair and maintenance, the owners are forced to sell their properties and the Parsi families are ejected from their homes, no doubt with undisclosed compensation. These tenants are in a position to compensate, to an extent, in order to get a house.

Another highly controversial and disagreeable aspect is the rotation of families from one sanatorium to another.

The members of the community, who are aspiring to get Punchayet flats and who may be deserving, are also no angels. There are families who have more than one flat, unoccupied for over 10 years, reserved for their children to occupy the same when they grow up.

Nobody can expect any individual, however rich or poor, or any institution to be one hundred percent efficient or above board. We are all human, born with virtues as well as weaknesses, to a smaller or greater degree. With more power and higher position there is the possibility of allowing oneself to commit more mistakes and there is likelihood of one becoming arrogant also. The Punchayet and the members of the community are trying to hoodwink each other and in the end the sufferers are those who may be desperate for accommodation.

What was good enough for yesteryear may not be relevant today. We must move forward according to the changed circumstances. It is fashionable to install a couple of computers to make the organization appear modern but that is not enough; there is need to change the work ethics and basic attitude. What is perhaps required today is a young, dynamic and energetic leader who is trusted implicitly by the community. We want action, quick, fair and just decisions.

The present day management technique calls for highly specialized and efficient, but well paid bare minimum work-force. It is recommended that a commission be appointed, consisting of eminent persons, not even remotely connected with the Punchayet or the Parsi community, to review the organizational set-up of the Parsi Punchayet and recommend suitable measures for its proper, speedy and efficient working.

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