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Parsiana

June 1999
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Cover: The lobby at Poona's Ruby Hall hospital

Photograph by Bharat Ramamurtham

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Did I do wrong?"

The readers of *Parsiana* (February-March 1999) have been feted to a fable by Mr Nariman Wadia in "Did I do wrong?" Mr Wadia seems to be a natural storyteller as he has woven the story beautifully.

Whilst the identity of the Dasturji comes out quite fairly to the keen observer of the contemporary Parsi scene, there are two blunders which Mr Wadia has committed, perhaps unwittingly. Was the Dasturji "sitting next" to Mr Wadia in his car or was the Dasturji sitting on the rear seat so that Mr Wadia could "watch his eyes in my rear view mirror." We would like to believe that the Dasturji was sitting next to Mr Wadia so that he could "put his hand gently on my knee." Besides, the readers may kindly note in the very first paragraph the use of the past tense in "This Dasturji was extremely well regarded by all Zarathushtris."

But anyway, these inconsequential faux pas apart, the story is quite gripping and makes for delightful reading. I pity those who may not have been able to see the story in its right perspective. Mr Wadia, you really have a way about you. Give us some more.

SAM M. BILLIMORIA

Nariman Wadia replies

It was flattering to read your reference to my true story as a fable. Creating a fable requires an imagination, a flair for story-telling, and writing. My original letter was a simple narration of facts, and it was the simplicity of this narrative that seems to have attracted people.

Many people wrote to me, but only two persons, yourself and a lady from Canada, have been perceptive enough to actually put themselves in the driver's seat, and "catch me out" in what appear to be contradictory statements.

Sir, I have a Maruti van. It has a driver-side window mirror; so the rear view mirror has always been adjusted to give me a wide overall view.

The respected Dasturji was (note the past tense!) a tall man. It was, and still is, possible for me to observe not only the eyes, but the expression too, of anybody sitting next to me. Please believe me. Your belief would give validity to the story. The editors of *Parsiana* have hardly changed anything. What they did change was the title. The article was originally entitled, "A True Story." Not a very imaginative title; just completely truthful. The story was just that, a true story.

They too had understood who the Dasturji was; but respected my wish that his anonymity be preserved.

I enjoyed reading your comments, but could not understand your finding something odd in the use of the past tense. If you have been knowledgeable enough to figure out the identity of my Dasturji, then you know that he passed away several years ago. Please let me know if I am still missing something here!

"Behind the screens"

In "Behind the screens" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February-March 1999) the writers have unknowingly mixed up one point. To set the record right, we are exhibitors and not distributors. We have

exhibited, in our chain of theaters, M/s Twentieth Century Fox's blockbuster *Titanic* and are not the distributors of the same. However, I am very grateful for the article highlighting the entrepreneurship of my father Phiroze D. Mehta. Truly, he was a man with dynamic vision, dedication, commitment, humility and grace. We also applaud Mr Sidhwa's contribution to cinema.

DARA P. MEHTA

"The Renaissance man"

The purpose of the present letter is to clear a misconception that Dr Homi J. Bhabha wanted to fight shy of his responsibility to make a nuclear fission bomb, as a nuclear deterrent in the defense of the country, if the occasion so demanded, in an otherwise excellent article on Dr Bhabha by Jamsheed Kanga ("The Renaissance man," *Parsiana*, February-March 1999).

In fact, when China intruded into north-east India in October 1962, Dr Bhabha who then simultaneously held four important portfolios, viz chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC); secretary, Department of Atomic Energy; director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (then, Atomic Energy Establishment); and director and professor of physics, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, announced that he could produce an atom bomb within 18 months, but parliament negated his idea.

Had India exploded the atom bomb in 1964, today India would have become a permanent sixth member of the Security Council as a recognized nuclear weapons power (NWP). However, between 1964 and Pokhran I in 1974 the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was introduced which recognized only five permanent NWPs in the Security Council.

Though Bhabha's untimely death in January 1966 in the Alps has been attributed to an accident, I firmly believe it was an act of sabotage by a major western power in the hope that the death of India's top nuclear scientist would dash India's aspirations of becoming a NWP.

Unfortunately for the concerned major western power and fortunately for India, before Bhabha died he had built up a formidable cadre of nuclear



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scientists who showed India's capability as a NWP in Pokhran I in 1974 and again in Pokhran II in 1998. Bhabha's greatest achievement and contribution was that he left behind a legacy of trained nuclear scientists.

What is stated above shows that Bhabha was prepared to rise to the occasion. However, it should not be construed that Bhabha was only interested in India becoming a NWP.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"A welcome change"

Congratulations and thanks for a very interesting ("Did I do wrong" and "Because I care"); illuminating ("Guard the spiritual boundaries" and "Only priests, no pope"); enjoyable ("Food has no frontiers," "Cross connections in Cyberspace" and "Of Dossabhai, Duke's and Devka"); informative (covering the Navsari Atash Behram, J. J. and Panday Schools) February-March 1999 issue of *Parsiana*. A very welcome change from the "weighty" and oft repeated topics, as pointed out by K. R. Javeri in "Irrepressible Rhoda" in the Readers' Forum of the same issue. We are now bored with the doings of and carrying on of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the World Zoroastrian Organisation, and high theological discussions and want to know, to share with the ordinary "bawaji" struggling in this mundane world.

With reference to the article "In the eye of a storm" by K. N. Dastoor, I would like to inform you (without getting into theological discussions) that our small town is a world leader in eye donations — the Lions Club having made it their mission to seek eye donations and get the eyes implanted. The situation is such that members of the bereaved family (all non-Parsis) themselves approach the Lions Club with a wish for donation, believing that their loved one will live in the eyes of another. Of course the identity of the donor and donee are not disclosed.

Continuing Mr Adenwalla's spirit of sincere appreciation of "Dedicated doctors" I would also like to place on record the selfless services of Dr Noshir Sorabji Ellis of Tardeo, Bombay. His patients will vouchsafe for his nighttime visits, moderate fees and habit of "quietly placing money under the patients' pillows to buy their medicines." Over 80 by now, the family implores him to take it easy, but do you think he does?

In the same issue Dr M. K. Pavri writes about Parsis who have excelled in their fields — "The Top Ten." One such was the late Dr Soli Cooper, brother of Dr Rustom Cooper, who was an ophthalmologist of great repute. He represented India in many foreign meetings and was another of those doctors who felt charging fees was a necessary embarrassment. He too had his rooms in Charak Clinic. May their tribe increase.

Incidentally, there cannot be a top 10 among the Parsis. They're tops in all fields, so maybe we can compile the 10 Parsis in various fields — medicine, military, education, engineering, etc.

Your latest issue has warmed my heart, made me stand a little more erect, head held higher, because I belong to a fabulous community.

Keep it up *Parsiana* and Parsis.

SOONU JAL

Neemuch

"The Greening of..."

It is to the credit of our community — individuals as well as institutions — that they responded generously as well as with alacrity to the urgent need to mobilize funds for the Doongerwadi ("The Greening of Doongerwadi," *Parsiana*, October 1998).

Individuals attending the uthamna ceremonies have been unstinting in their voluntary contributions. The collections during the period November 15, 1998 to February 28, 1999 have been Rs 1,26,250, during which time 87 uthamnas were performed at the Doongerwadi. These contributions will play a very effective role in the maintenance and preservation of the Doongerwadi estate. Efforts are under way to not only create further awareness of this system of voluntary contributions that has been reintroduced but to fine-tune the same.

Various individuals have responded to our appeal and have contributed their mite in cash or kind towards the execution of work required to be carried out. Many others, viewing work in progress, have been motivated to extend their support as well, resulting in even more work being undertaken at the Doongerwadi.

The trustees take great pleasure in acquainting donors, well-wishers as well as members of the community at large that from the funds so received, the following work has been taken in hand and has been already completed or is

nearing completion:

- The two lower bunglis — Darvesh and Tarachand — have been fully renovated. The flooring has been changed and additional conveniences such as restrooms for family members that were earlier not there have now been introduced.

- The pavilion near the lower bungli has been repaired and the garden at that location spruced up.

- The nassakhana is undergoing renovation and repairs.

- Out of the five upper bunglis, Hodiwalla, Wadia and Bennet have been fully renovated and made operational. Work on the Bhabha bungli is in progress. Repairs and renovation of the Allbless bungli, which too is in need of major repairs, has been assessed and will be carried out in due course, as soon as the required donation is received.

- The restroom for mobeds adjoining the Bhabha bungli is also being done up.

- A Zoroastrian contractor is renovating the public conveniences near the upper bunglis totally gratis.

- There is a flurry of activity inside the estate, right from the planting of trees (over 600 of them), to enhancing the beauty of the area where the bodies are laid for the last respects before they are taken inside the dokhmas, by the planting of colorful flowers.

- The garden on the way to the dokhmas from the upper bunglis is being beautified.

- A donor has arranged for figures of Assyrian bulls to be sculptured and upon completion these will be located near the entrance of the sagdi.

- At the structures where the nassessalars and khandhias take their ritual baths and change clothes after performing their duties, geysers have been installed, the entire place is being given a fresh coat of paint, the roof repaired and new electrification of the premises has been scheduled.

- The pathway to the Bisney and Banaji dokhmas has been concretized. This will provide relief to the nassessalars and khandhias who earlier had to carry the bodies over rough terrain.

- Two donors have contributed for the purchase of two new Tata vehicles and their re-modification into hearses.

The work that has been done has all been on account of the tremendous support and cooperation that our commu-



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nity has extended and for which we the trustees are all very grateful.

It is the endeavor of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and the trustees to make the Doongerwadi estate an object of pride for the community, and continue our venerated system of dokhmenashini in a sublime and serene environment. It remains our good fortune that we have committed and dedicated individuals helping us in our efforts by providing voluntary services willingly and happily.

Whilst thanking all our donors, big and small, and our volunteers, we seek continued support for the Doongerwadi by way of donations. Those interested in supporting this noble cause may please send their remittances by way of cheques/drafts made out in the name of "Parsi Punchayet — Bombay" to: The Joint Secretary (Welfare), Bombay Parsi Punchayet, 209, D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001.

We, the trustees of the BPP, seek to preserve our heritage and pass it on to our future generation in a far better and healthier condition than we received it.

DINSHAW K. TAMBOLY

Trustee, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

"Understand your..."

Manijeh D. Bhabha's letter, "Understand your prayers" (*Parsiana*, July-August 1998), has raised several prime issues. She asks for "one of your readers" to answer five intriguing questions. In the event none has replied, could it be precisely because the prayers listed have not been understood?

It is not any intended disrespect towards Avan yazad but common sense which prevailed upon the learned composers of her *Yasht* and *Nyaish* to instruct her worshippers not to chant them after sunset. Firstly, the waters were to remain undisturbed during the darkened hours when *khrafstric* (monstrous) night creatures could frequent them, contributing to their pollution. Should ensuing daylight reveal such traces, then water could be fetched from undefiled locations elsewhere along its source. Secondly, it was forbidden to pour out any liquids at night for fear that it would strengthen the demonic presences thought to lurk about — and seeing that such nuisances always emerged from the north, why then! it was most dastardly to gratify them by decanting any towards that inauspicious direction. Our (Australian) coreligio-

nists should logically substitute south for north in these and related matters. The *Tir Yasht* has nothing to do with this affair, its figuratively meteorological contest, prompted by this asterism, taking place above water!

The answer to the *Wanant Yasht* question is straightforward. Note the places where clapping is prescribed — the first set (once, twice and thrice) is immediately after *angrahe mainyeush khrafstra* (the noxious creatures of angra mainyu): a sonic aid to the expulsion of such nuisances. This portion of the *Yasht* is in Avestan and chanted aloud. The second set (sounded in threes) happens after each occurrence of the august name of Faridun Athwyan in the Pazand section of the *Yasht* which is prayed in *baj*. One hastens to add that the clapping is not in *baj*! [As a general rule, in any "mixed" prayer, the Pazand is recited in an undertone (*baj*)].

We should by now be sufficiently acquainted with angra mainyu (ahriman) and his miscreations. Shah Namehists will recognize Faridun Athwyan as Shah Faridun; Avestologues will piously remember him as Thraetaona Athwya, the first physician (therefore the first healer whom one could hesitantly equate with the Roman Aesculapius), inventor of (counter-) magic, invoked in spells, incantations, and exorcisms and — most valiantly — the rescuer of fair damsels. Furthermore, he came from an illustrious family of cattle-barons. Quite some curriculum vitae, what! The clapping here surely acknowledges this.

Will hamdin Manijeh please take a leaf from her own book and now get to understand the *Tir* and *Wanant Yashts* better? The dedicatee asterisms were of great significance to their astronomer-composers for whom meteorology was of crucial moment. Calendar controversialists would also benefit through their study and recitation and come to realize why the correct time-reckoning was of such importance to our remote ancestors, wise beyond their eras. Let us all understand and respect our prayers, for they are both precious heritage and beautiful composition. As a tailpiece to this answer, if our pious hamdin were to revisit this world in Yazdegirdi 13,368, and (dare to!) gaze northward and upward on a starry night, she would be thrilled to see not Polaris around which the night sky presently revolves, but the great and good star Wanant (Vega).

The (Standard) Avestic yasna 52 does not form a part of the *Gatha* corpus. It judiciously separates the Vohu-khshathra and the Vahishtoish *Gathas*.

Yatu-ism, or *jadugih*, unfortunately yes, and not just in olden times: it rages insidiously on to this day. Will our priests ever speak out against this cancer in our midst?

Zarathushtrians (not Zarathushti or similar quirky distortions, please!) were indeed omnivores, with or without the sanction of the *Bahram Yasht* (unlike our enlightened hamdin, this obtuse writer cannot fathom her given reference. What he can regretfully affirm is that according to a clear enough *Vendidad* indication, some despairing Zarathushtrians were even reduced to partaking of their fellows for dinner at dinner. It was horrible, but it must have happened on occasion, for the *Vendidad* penalties for such desperate acts are also very extreme; the Pahlavi commentators were more compassionate.

FARROKH VAJIFDAR

London, UK

"The Top Ten"

On going through your *Parsiana* (July-August 1998), I read a letter on page 186 ("The Top Ten," Readers' Forum) wherein the 'Great Explosion' incident has been referred to. But, instead of Rustom Palamkote erroneously Sorab Palamkote's name was printed.

I am the daughter of the late Rustom Palamkote and I wish to bring to your readers' attention that it was Rustom Palamkote who died in the Great Explosion of 1944, whilst working as a chief fire officer. Rustom Palamkote showed bravery and devotion by entering the burning chamber of the warship which took his life on April 14, 1944 when the 'Great Explosion' (Godi-nodhadako) occurred at Bombay harbor. Besides, Rustom Palamkote was an active member of the St John Ambulance Parsi Division. He was a very good cyclist and a swimmer who saved many individuals from drowning. Mr Sorab Palamkote was his cousin.

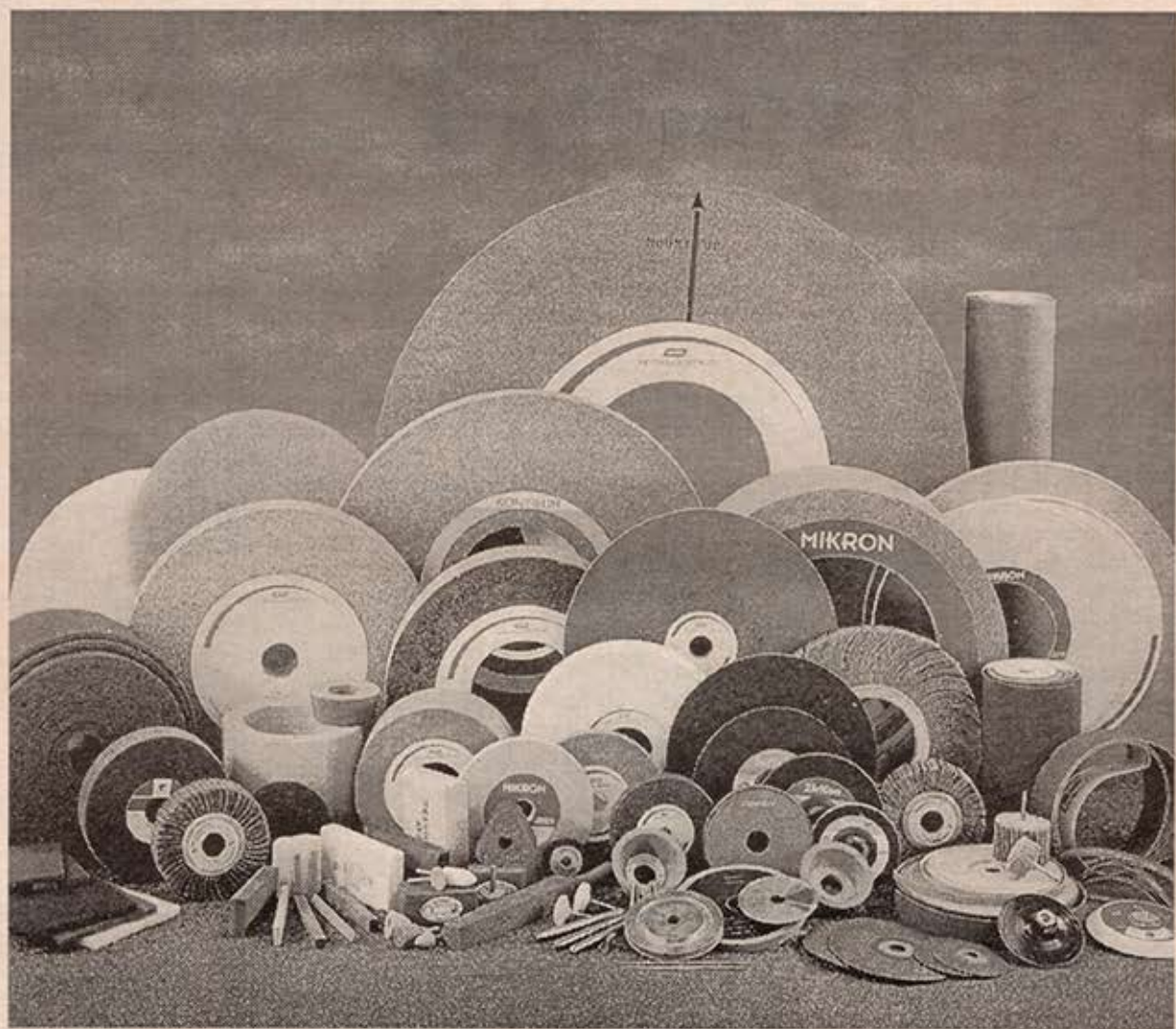
HOMAI R. PALAMCOAT

Zarathushti Orchestra

The organizers of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, scheduled to be held in Houston, Texas, December 28, 2000-January 1, 2001 would like the Zarathushti performing artists from

continued on page 39

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Events and Personalities

WZCF office inaugurated

"We know your dynamism. For you (Dr Homi Dhalla) it is a labor of love," said former Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla as he inaugurated the new office of the recently established World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation (WZCF). Dhalla's brainchild, the Foundation aims to republish some of the out-of-print books on Zoroastrian scriptures, history and culture and also to transmit old and flaking manuscripts and books on CD-ROM to better preserve the community's literary stock.

The small office, set up in what was once a godown of the Liaison Committee at Parsi Zoroastrian Colony at Tardeo's Chikalwadi, presently comprises a desk, chair and cabinet with provision for a computer towards which Sohrab Godrej, head of the House of Godrej, has contributed one lakh rupees, as noted WZCF, BPP (Bombay Parsi Punchayet) and WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) trustee Dinshaw Tamboly.

On hand to witness the quiet inaugural on the morning of Jamshedi Navroz were Bachi Tamboly and noted counsel and Athornan Mandal president Nadir Modi who is a co-trustee of the WZCF. Also a part of the small gathering was Banoo Roowalla, long-time secretary of the Liaison Committee who welcomed the new organization. She also referred to the water problems and run-ins with drug addicts that were a part of life at the Liaison Committee which helps disperse the charities of some of its associated trusts.

The Foundation has already started

training Yazdi Gandhi to work on the transfer of old books and documents on CD-ROM. Very involved with the center were president Dhalla's family members — wife Kamal, son Darius and daughter Anahita — who were busy dressing up the place with traditional chalk and flower garlands.

The day also marked the launching of the WZCF's first republication, *Daily*

Prayers of the Zoroastrians with transliteration

Golwalla opening the WZCF office, with Dhalla beside him. Roowalla in the rear



tion and meanings in English followed by a free translation and explanation of each prayer. The reprinting work was undertaken by Union Press. The work of Framroz Rustomjee, a solicitor practising in the Supreme Court at Colombo, Sri Lanka whom Dhalla describes in the foreword as a "very loving and compassionate person," the *Daily Prayers* was first published in 1959. "Today, when we are on the threshold of a new millennium,

it is imperative that a work of this nature be available to guide young Zoroastrians. Every single prayer is pregnant with ethical values and echoes the teaching of our revered Prophet," notes the foreword.

In his introduction Rustomjee had emphasized that "A child may be taught to learn and to understand only one line of the text in one day. Not the slightest rush to memorize the whole prayer should be allowed." Bemoaning the trend to run through the prayers "parrot-wise," just to get the child ready for his/her navjote, Rustomjee notes, "that is tantamount to doing a gross injustice to the noblest gems enshrined in our scriptures. Each word of the text has a soul-stirring value of the greatest importance to human hearts. No man who genuinely understands the value and importance of each

word of our Avestan texts can ever drift from the path of righteousness." He acknowledges his debt to the great Zoroastrian scholars like K. C. Kanga, Behramgore Anklesaria, Sohrab Bulsara, I.J.S. Taraporewala and M. N. Dhalla "who have left behind... a lasting heritage of Zoroastrian lore..."

Rustomjee's children Jer Rustomji and Dr Piloo Rustomji not only gave the necessary permission to reprint the work but donated Rs 11,000 towards the expenses of producing 1,000 books, writes Dhalla.

The book is available for Rs 40 from the WZCF office and from Union Press.

Arnavaz S. Mama

Guide for the pilgrims

"Our devout and noble ancestors estab-



Giara: creating awareness through his publications

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
DADYSETT ATASH BEHRAM
(1783 - 1999)



By
Marzban J. Giara

lished atash behrams and dar-e-mehers for Parsi Zoroastrians to pray and to perform rituals as also to serve as community centers. They also established dharamshalas/sanatoria to facilitate Parsi Zoroastrian devotees to have a comfortable stay while on a pilgrimage as also to relax and recuperate their health physically, mentally and spiritually." So writes Marzban J. Giara in his introduction to the 320-page *The Zoroastrian Pilgrim's Guide* which he published in March 1999.

Since the book was out before the onset of the summer holidays and prior to Adar mah when many fire-temples celebrate their anniversaries, Giara was hopeful it would induce Zoroastrians to undertake pilgrim tours. In addition to giving information on the Zoroastrian places of worship around the world, like did his *Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples*, this handbook also carries details about various dharamshalas and sanatoria, their location, their accessibility, the name and contact number of the manager where available and the lodging and boarding facilities offered at these venues. A dharamshala is defined as a rest house with a typical congenial Parsi environment where one can stay for short periods of one to 15 days, and a sanato-

rium where one can stay for longer periods from 15 days to a few months. Both places offer spacious rooms and typically Parsi cuisine, ideal for those interested in low-budget trips. "A dharamshala/sanatorium is not a hotel," reminds Giara, "be prepared to put up with some shortcomings..."

As stated in the press release, "This book has been carefully compiled with a five-fold purpose: create awareness in our community about our places of worship, rest and recuperation; promote religious fervor and fellowship within our community; enable the Parsi Zoroastrian devotees to enjoy a comfortable stay at an affordable cost; lead to better utilization and maintenance of our community's resources and facilities, thereby fulfilling the wishes of the founders of these religious institutions; result in increased income for the mobeds/managers/trusts because of frequent patronage by the community members."

To induce readers to buy this "traveller's companion" priced at Rs 150, Giara has included useful telephone numbers related to travel, contact addresses and numbers of major Parsi institutions throughout the world, contact numbers for booking of baugs/halls hired on auspicious occasions and two useful maps: of fire-temples in and around Bombay, and a railway map of India. Those interested in obtaining a copy can contact Giara at Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014, Tel: 4166204.

A photograph of the Dadysett Atash Behram appears on the front cover and the Dadysett Agiary on the back cover of yet another booklet authored by Giara,

A Brief History of Dadysett Atash Behram (1783-1999). "The year 1999 coincides with the 200th death anniversary of Seth Dady Noshervanji Dadysett who established the Atash Behram," writes Giara in his preface. "The Dadysett Atash Behram, the first atash behram to be consecrated in (Bombay) has like all places of worship its own old-world charm and aura...Devotees experience the peace and calm while offering prayers away from the din and bustle of the city," he continues.

Included in the 40-page booklet are color photographs and the history of the Dadysett family, the history and layout of the Atash Behram, an account of the high priests and boiwallas who have served this institution and some of the oral traditions associated with this Atash Behram. Reportedly when a boiwalla once forgot to toll the boi during the Ushahin gah, an unknown force is supposed to have done the needful. He did it a few hours later and was questioned by the neighbors as to why the bells tolled on two occasions that night!

The layman would be interested to learn that the Dadysett Atash Behram, the Vakil Atash Behram at Surat, the Navsari Anjuman Atash Behram and the Iranshah Atash Behram at Udvada have a dadgah attached to them unlike the four other atash behrams which have an adarian fire housed in the same complex. The adarian connected with the Dadysett Atash Behram is located at Flora Fountain. Despite this being a Kadmi Atash Behram, the Bhagaria mobeds who were Shahenshahis opted to take shelter here and were allowed to perform their rituals for 13 years after they left the H. B. Wadia Atash Behram in 1884. They also took their bareshnoom at the Dadysett Atash Behram before proceeding to consecrate the Anjuman Atash Behram in 1897, it is stated in the booklet.

Published by Powerpusher Financial Services Private Limited, Bombay, there is no price quoted for this booklet dedicated to the memory of the late Sheroo and Homi Dinshawji Mistry.

Fragrant honor

"The largest incense stick measures 14 feet nine inches tall and six inches thick and was made by... Merzban Burjor Lahewala in Ahmedabad, India in September 1997," so notes an entry from the Keeper of the Records, Guinness Publishing. "On March 20, 1999, I re-



Lahewala with his incredible incense stick

ceived an acceptance letter and the certificate from *The Guinness Book of Records*, mentions Lahewala, "and the same will be published in the ensuing...2000 edition."

Nearly every day 1,000 claims from all over the world are made for entry to the *Guinness Book*, writes Lahewala, expressing his pride at being an Indian and a Parsi from Gujarat state to "have given a fragrant gift to my beloved nation (see "Impressive incense stick," *Events and Personalities, Parsiana*, September 1997)."

As per the details provided by Lahewala, the world's longest agarbatti weighs 6,300 gms and is handmade in three different colors. As the color changes, so also does the fragrance every 22 hours, burning for more than 66 hours continuously.

Port protests

"The people of Gujarat are firmly and totally against allowing the project to proceed any further, even though the

Celebrating its ninth anniversary, the Parvez Katrak Foundation felicitated five more silent and unassuming Zoroastrians on March 11, 1999 at a function at Bombay's Zoroastrian Colony (from left): Baji Bharucha, Dara Pochkhanawalla, chief guest Jal Pardivala, Katrak, Rusi Bhungara, Dara Behramkamdin and Farrokh Netarwala

Government of Gujarat has supposedly signed a contract with some port developer," notes a communiqué from the Kinara Bachao Sangarsh Samiti (KBSS), Umbergaon Taluka which is protesting against the Gujarat Maritime Board's intention to build ports at various locations including Dahej, Hazira and Maroli. "We are particularly concerned about Maroli," as for all practical purposes this would affect the villages of Saronda, Nargol, Umbergaon and Dehri, threatening the existence and livelihood of the villagers who survive on fishing and organic farming, mention the activists.

"This taluka is unique," asserts Rasheid Taleyarkhan, Bombay coordinator for the KBSS who is lamenting the Government's decision to "take over a beautiful rural plot and commercialize it. They think it is progress but to a man of common sense it is totally abhorrent." Hitherto the Government may have succeeded because they were "dealing with tribals but this time there are people who are aware of their rights," points out Taleyarkhan.

Once the port comes up, there will follow a powerhouse and later the ancillary industries, predicts Taleyarkhan, disturbing and disrupting the peaceful life in the neighborhood. So far the KBSS have lodged a protest with the Government and are presently generating support for their movement from the national, state and local groups, says Taleyarkhan. Undeterred by the Gujarat Government's decision to go ahead with the project, Taleyarkhan declares, "A government is supposed to be for the betterment and larger interest of the public. When a scheme is so

blatantly bad, we have to fight it."

While they did not wish to divulge their next course of action, saying that they would go to court only if necessary, Taleyarkhan was appreciative of the legal assistance they have received from Mahroukh Adenwala. "There already exist megaports in Bombay and Kandla which will probably lose business as cargo will be diverted to this proposed new port," Adenwala was quoted in *The Times of India* of April 8, 1999. However as per *The Economic Times* report of the same day, "Inefficiency, congestion and long turnaround periods for ships are causing major problems for cargo traffic at Indian ports...Problems are likely to increase with the growth of cargo traffic from 251m tonnes in 1998 to 415m tonnes by 2002. There will be handling capacity shortfall of about 90m tonnes at the country's 11 major state-owned ports by 2002...The private sector is being asked to bear in mind long-term traffic growth while building all-weather ports capable of handling large ocean-going vessels...Gujarat...is setting the pace for port privatization..."

What has particularly irked the KBSS activists is the alleged secrecy of the operations with the true intentions reportedly coming to light only around February 1999: "A couple of years ago when the villagers in Umbergaon questioned some of the people who were surveying the coastline, these people had answered that the Gujarat Government was planning to build at Maroli one or two jetties for the fishermen's boats which jetties would be linked with a railway line connecting Maroli to Bhilad...Later on, some men were



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Rana with his bright and sunny landscapes



seen to be drilling and digging... and when they were questioned they said they were from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission testing for oil. At the end of February 1999...the same men then confessed that they were surveying for this port project..." as per the communiqué."

Officials of Natelco (formed by the partnership of an Indian company and an American company, Unocal Corporation) were quoted in *The Times* as saying, "Why should we hide facts when this project has been undertaken at the initiative of the State Government?" Even whilst the exact site of the proposed port is yet not determined, Natelco argued, "The Gujarat coastline acts as a gateway for landlocked north India which accounts for two-thirds of India's trade volume..." In response to KBSS convener Lt Col Pratap Save's statement that "the project spans 780 acres and will require nine channels of 66 feet each and a three-kilometer lagoon. The villages (around 48) will have to be destroyed..." Natelco officials maintain that not more than 25-30 families might be asked to leave. "We have decided to circumvent villages during construction," reported *The Times*.

"The community sees in the plan a repetition of the '50s when the land to the tiller program uprooted Parsi farmers from south Gujarat, and then the Dahanu thermal power plant of the early '90s which cost Parsi/Irani wadi-owners hundreds of acres of their lands. The fear is greatest in Nargol which is covered in toto under the plan and Parsis in the village are particularly concerned over the Nargol Agiary whose sanctity could be threatened...The slogan of the



campaign is 'Bunder hatao, Nargol bachao' (shift the port and save Nargol)," stated a front-page write-up in *Parsidom*, May 15, 1999.

According to Taleyarkhan, barring one local gentleman Zal Irani, the rest of the members of the community are only armchair supporters. All activists supporting the cause of environment protection can take heart with the recent order reported in *The Times* of May 21 "that bodes well for all eco-fragile zones. The Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority, headed by Justice Dharmadhikari, has directed the Bombay Suburban Electric Supply to start the installation of a flue gas de-sulphurization (FGD) plant at its thermal power plant in Dahanu within six months..." The FGD plant is considered essential for the environmental safety of Dahanu and the well-being of its people, as has been the contention of those who have been battling since 1988 to save Dahanu from air and water pollution which could have affected the "sole surviving green lung on the Maharashtra — Gujarat border" had a coal plant been installed there.

The brighter side

"It is easy to see that Rana has full command of all that is demanded by memorable art. His landscapes are full of lush greenery and well lit," wrote art

critic Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni in *The Sunday Free Press* of March 14, 1999 when commenting on Behram Rana's eighth exhibition of paintings at the Jehangir Art Gallery from March 10-16, 1999.

"The landscapes of Rana are bright and sunny...The artist reveals himself as an individual who sees the brighter side of things...Rana...is an even-tempered artist who over the years has achieved great progress. His outlook is modern. He chooses varied subjects and being sensitive, he is affected by the happenings around him," stated a review in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of March 13.

Whenever he travels he takes photographs of the scenery that appeals to him, said Rana in an interview with the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of March 28, 1999. Sometimes he makes quick rough sketches of a landscape, both serving as a reference when he works on his paintings.

"I have explored a wide range of styles and portrayed a wider range of subjects — from the riots that traumatized (Bombay) to the still life of salt-and-pepper shakers. The media I have used are as diverse as oil, water and acrylic," declared Rana in his invite to the exhibition.

Senior manager, advertising, in Larsen and Toubro, Rana stated, "Few artists are lucky enough to have the best of both worlds — corporate and creative...Pure painting gives me a freedom of life that is beyond the discipline of my job. It brings me unique spiritual bliss." After his retirement in two-three years he is planning "to be a full-time



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painter and even do photography which I'm very good at. At the same time, I'm thinking of being a consultant for a leading advertising agency," said Rana whose past experience includes the work of a visualizer at the Inter-Publicity advertising agency.

The chosen voice

Competitors like Citizen and Titan watches, Bombay Dyeing and Garden Varelli, Santro and Matiz, Air India and Singapore Airlines, Lux and Dove soaps share one common asset: Khodus Wadia. Having lent his resonant voice for these and many other commercial advertisements totalling over 2,000, Wadia's is considered the "golden voice" ranked among the best talent in the media today. He has lent his voice to cassettes and CDs marketed by Polygram, notes a press release.

"In this age... where 'multi' is the operative word, it is only natural that we come across a personality with multi(ple) talents, skills and activities which range from theater to films, conducting workshops on the spoken word and lending his voice," states the release.

In the October 1998 issue of *Sight &*

Sound, their reviewer Charlotte O'Sullivan acclaimed one Indian actor: "Khodus Wadia's Sam is equally masterly..." Wadia had accepted the starring role in Waris Hussein's *Sixth Happiness*, a BBC-Kennedy Mellor Productions' film based on Firdaus Kanga's



Wadia: star of sound recording

autobiographical book *Trying to Grow*, mentions the write-up. Besides producing and directing *Save The Tree*, a public service film, Wadia is known to have produced and directed corporate films and audiovisuals for various companies. On the theater scene he has produced and acted in *An Inspector Calls* (directed by the late Adi Marzban), *The Business of Murder*, and *Stardust* (directed by the late Shafi Inamdar). His own direction was for *Chapter Two*, a Neil Simon comedy where he also performs a role on stage.

Over the years Wadia has been conducting individual training sessions for students aspiring to be voice-overs, newsreaders, veejays, television news reporters, and workshops in various aspects of voice and performance techniques, helping promising talent, adds the release.

Priceless spirit

"Everyone from the hoi polloi to the high profile were all there to pay their respects (to)... the gentleman farmer take off on his final journey from his most cherished plot of land," noted a write-up in *Citadel Pune*, March 1999 in its two-page feature on Pheroze Hataria "who stepped from one paradise to another," on January 26, 1999. "His heart belonged to that sprawling haven which is home to the most exotic variety of birds, flora and fauna. So attached was he to the paradise he had created that he would regularly make a trip twice a day at the appointed time in his vintage jeep which he drove himself," continues the article.

"And he always had an interesting nugget to narrate about every objet d'art which had a place of honor at his palatial residence," notes the article referring to him as "a collector extraordinaire whose spirit was as priceless as his collection..." No one can stop talking how he had managed to touch their hearts in his own inimitable way. His serene farmhouse at Mundhwa (see "The farm and the fortune," *Parsiana*, May 1998) was not just a picnic spot but what most people called "paradise regained." As one visitor wrote: "The place and the person behind it are both God's special ones."



Hataria: the gentleman farmer

Apparently he had also had a premonition that his days were numbered for not only had he charted out the exact area at his farm where he wanted to be cremated but he was also constantly checking with his lawyer if he had got the required permission for the same.

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International achievers

The Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC), due to be held in Houston December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001 will honor Zarathushti achievers on the international stage, notes Dinshaw Joshi, chair of the WZC Awards Committee. Though the categories of awards, the definitions and criteria are still being worked out, a preliminary framework envisages eight awards, seven of which are reserved for Zoroastrians and one aimed specifically at non-Zoroastrian scholars who have made "significant contributions to the knowledge of the Zarathushti faith, scriptures, history and culture," writes Joshi.

The other seven awards aim at recognizing outstanding Zarathushti contributions at the national and international levels:

- The Zarathushti Award "to recognize a Zarathushti who has made significant contribution in furthering the understanding of Zarathushti religion, culture and heritage among both Zarathush-tis and non-Zarathush-tis in his/her own country and internationally, and otherwise provided outstanding leadership and service to the community."
- The Professional Zarathushti Award for one who has excelled in his/her profession be it civil or defense service, the financial, legal, medical or other profession.
- The Humanitarian Service and Philanthropy Award to one who has given selfless service and/or wealth to alleviate the sufferings of fellow Zarathush-tis.
- The Cultural Award recognizes excellence in the performing and plastic arts.
- The Literary Award covers the fields of literature and journalism with specific reference to Zarathushti history, faith and culture.
- The Young Zarathushti Award is aimed at those under 35 years of age who have involved themselves with community affairs, contributing to the advancement of Zarathushti faith among Zarathushti youth and whose dynamism promises an outstanding future leader.
- The Posthumous Award will honor lifetime achievement at the international level during the past decade.

A call for nominations is expected in mid 1999. Readers may address their comments/suggestions to Joshi at 4515 Willard Avenue, Apt S-1609, Chevy

Chase, MD 20815-3619, USA. His fax number is (301) 6540001 and e-mail is dfjoshi@erols.com. The Awards Committee will finalize the categories, definitions and evaluation criteria based on the comments received.

ZAPA's new team

At its 34th general body meeting, 43 members of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA) elected its 1999-2000 board of directors. The team is led by Hutoxi Contractor, informs the *ZAPA Newsletter* of April 1999. It includes vice president Farhad Cama, secretary Meher Dastur, assistant secretary Zenia Ayrton, treasurer Khushru Kadwa and assistant treasurer Macky Sigantoria. The seven directors at large are outgoing president Behram Kapadia, Farhad Contractor, Cyrus Dastur, Veera Sigantoria, Zarin Balaporia, Shireen Cama and Jerroo Kadwa.

The elections were conducted at the Jamshedi Navroz function held at the Village of Clover Ridge at Murrsville on March 13.

The February 1999 edition of *ZAPA Newsletter* refers to a postal survey to determine the members' attitude toward the acquisition of cemetery plots by ZAPA for the future use of its members. Since the "response to this survey was very poor in spite of frequent reminders and discussion at the last two general body meetings," the project has been put aside at this time, declares the *Newsletter*.

AZA's complaint upheld

In response to the complaint from the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales (NSW) the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) "has chastened TCN-9 (TV Channel 9) for breaching two codes of practice in its inaccurate presentation of Zoroastrianism," notes the AZA bi-monthly newsletter *Manashni* of March-April 1999. In its program "Bewitched" on the *Today* show on September 12, 1997 Channel 9 had listed Zoroastrianism among alternate faiths like Witches, Satanists, Pagans, Rastafarians, Pantheists and Druids. AZA president Nauzer Bana had written to the network demanding an apology (see "Zoroastrian democracy in Sydney," *Parsiana*, July-August 1998) and a retraction but

had received a mere explanation from the presenter of the story, Annalie Taylor, stating, "Nowhere in the story did we refer to Zoroastrianism as a 'cult' or refer to Zoroastrians as 'Satan worshippers' or 'people who follow witchcraft.'"

Eventually the AZA referred the matter to the ABA, whose response has been quoted in *Manashni*: "On viewing the segment, the ABA is of the view that a link between Zoroastrianism and witchcraft would most likely have been made by most viewers, based on the fact that the segment predominantly comprised Witches, together with the related comments made by the report and the Rev Tim Costello."

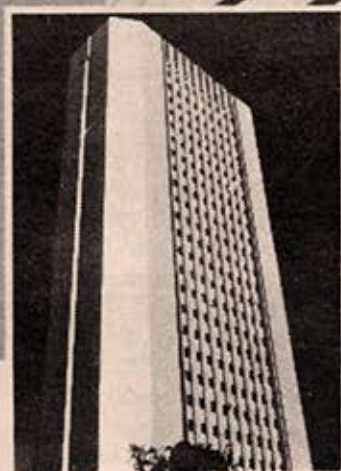
The ABA was of the view that "TCN-9 had breached clause 4.3.1 of the code in that they did not present factual material accurately. They were also of the view that TCN-9 breached clause 7.8 of the code in that it failed to advise a member of AZA NSW that she should refer the matter to the ABA if not satisfied with TCN-9's response."

TCN-9 has responded to the ABA, acknowledging that "the Zoroastrian religion was not adequately distinguished from witchcraft," although the Channel had no intention of describing Zoroastrianism "as akin to witchcraft." Channel 9 has also stated that it would retain AZA as a contact for the *Today* show on minority religions to prevent any repetition of the breach. The ABA will also continue to monitor the channel to ensure compliance with its codes of practice.

Bana further notes in *Manashni* that he has written to the chief executive officer of Channel 9 asking for an apology "as a salutary gesture." In his letter Bana notes, "It is unfortunate that the matter entailed a referral of complaint by the AZA to the ABA when the matter could have been redressed by a simple apology. I note that in your response to the ABA dated December 11, 1998 you now acknowledge the finding by the ABA that the Zoroastrian religion was not adequately distinguished from witchcraft, although there was no intention by Nine to describe Zoroastrianism as akin to witchcraft."

"The AZA never sought to impugn your intentions but only sought rectification for the misrepresentation and improper association of our religion

Reaching for the Sky



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with the cult of witchcraft. A lack of proper research on the part of the 'Nine Network' is no substitute for justifying a position by recourse to intransigence.

"You will have discerned from our communications that members of our faith were deeply hurt and still feel that though redress has been attained through the auspices of the ABA, an apology from the 'Nine Network' has not been forthcoming. This is only a salutary gesture but it would mean so much to our community, particularly if such an offer was ameliorated by an invitation to participate in a future program which may devote a segment on our religion which is little known in the wider Australian community..."

For the first time the NSW Ethnic Schools Board has already sanctioned part-payment of its 1999 Sunday School grant to the AZA, informs Bana, complimenting his wife Arnaz for her relentless effort towards obtaining the grant.

In its September-October 1998 issue Bana had referred to the unanimous support from the general body to the management committee's suggestion to undertake an extension of the AZA House with a new building. The agenda now calls for a project development plan before the fund-raising committee can approach its major donor-supporters. The new building is meant to house additional Sunday School classes, a general hall for committee meetings and possible caretaker/visitor accommodation. A playground for children has also been envisaged.

Kersi Meher-Homji is back as the editor of *Manashni*, referring to himself as the "boomerang editor," and adding, "Throw me anywhere and I come back!" For nearly two years *Manashni* had been edited by Dr Sam Kerr and others.

When Glen Emerton chose Leif Bunyan as his wife from among 250 eligible ladies and married her on a radio contest, they had never met until they exchanged their wedding vows at the Sydney Hilton's ballroom, writes Meher-Homji. The wedding telecast the same evening was conducted by "marriage celebrant" Behroze Bilimoria.

Bilimoria made "several references to the unusual nature of the wedding but

nobody seemed to mind," Meher-Homji quotes the *Sydney Morning Herald*, adding that Bilimoria "appeared calm, poised, choosing just the right words to suit the unique event." Bilimoria has appeared on TV programs *Temptation* and *Blankety Blanks*, he adds.

An association in Russia

Four Zoroastrian families — two from India and one each from the USA and Pakistan — have banded together to form The Zoroastrian Association of Russia (TZAR). The Moscow-based group holds a religious class every fortnight followed by typical Parsi cuisine, notes Burzin Atashband in a letter to *Parsiana*.

Consisting of various professionals the group regularly receives copies of *Parsiana*, *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* and newsletters from Zoroastrian Studies and the Zoroastrian College. Keen to have more members, Atashband says he may be contacted at Universal Procurement Systems Pte Ltd, Priorova Street 24, block 2, Russia 125130 Moscow. Tel: 1566318, fax: 4509513, e-mail: tzar99@hotmail.com.

ZAWA on the Web

The Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia, based in Perth, now has its own website, informs its president Homee Wadia in an e-mail to *Parsiana*. Inviting the Zarathushti world to visit them on <http://webace.com.au/~zawa> Wadia notes, "We'd love to have your opinions."

Chicago calling

Anticipating the Zoroastrian community in and around Chicago to reach 1,000 in the next decade an expansion program for the Darbe Mehr is underway.

The first phase of the three-phase project of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) has been completed at a cost of US\$21,103, notes ZAC president Hosi Mehta in a letter to potential donors. They have thereby acquired enhanced kusti rooms, hand washing facilities and a second entrance to the prayer hall.

The next phase will concentrate on increasing the size of the hall, providing space for children's, youth and seniors' activities, as well as classroom space. A larger kitchen, larger washrooms compliant with local regulations, additional storage for coats and other

material and more parking area are targeted requirements.

The construction cost of a 2,000 sq ft addition to the building is estimated at \$140,000 at the rate of \$70 per sq ft without a sprinkler for fire protection or the cost of kitchen furnishings. If the fire department insists upon the installation of a sprinkler, it will entail substantial additional cost, notes Mehta.

The intention of expanding the prayer room to the north and south is currently being held in abeyance.

Mehta anticipates that the costs will add up to \$200,000 while the building expansion fund is currently \$41,804.61. Considering that the Darbe Mehr had been erected in the late '70s at a cost of \$190,000 including all furnishings Mehta notes, "Perhaps the estimated cost will be less if the same atmosphere of togetherness prevails as it did when we built the Darbe Mehr. It will be up to us to control the cost but it pales into insignificance compared to our community's potential," he adds.

The 16-year-old Darbe Mehr's roof is also in need of repair.

The accompanying pledge form recognizes nine categories of donors. The entire wing will be dedicated to one who pledges \$200,000. The children's, youths' and kitchen areas will be donated to those pledging \$25,000 each. The 'grand benefactor' title goes to donors of \$10,000, 'grand patron' to donors of \$5,000 and 'patron' to those pledging \$2,000. Those who pledge \$1,000 will be considered sponsors while well-wishers may donate what they please. The donations can be in one lumpsum or up to 24 monthly instalments.

The February '99 edition of the ZAC newsletter discusses the plans for increasing the hours when the atash dadgah burns continuously. Religious committee chairperson Ervad Pesi Vazifdar wants to plan towards a continuously burning fire. The initial decision has been to gradually increase the hours while the fire burns continuously, supporting the additional expense through a nominal pledge per family. The recommended amount is \$1 per day, \$30 per month or \$360 per year per family unit.

"Based on the response, we initially plan to keep the dadgah lit for six to eight hours per day on weekends. As we generate more funds, we will gradually increase the hours until one day we

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realize the dream of a continuously burning atash dadgah in the Chicago area," notes the newsletter. Eight pioneering families have already begun contributing to this cause.

The March edition of the newsletter notes that the ZAC board discussed an offer of \$ 250,000 toward the establishment of a traditional consecrated fire temple built in North America. Their estimate of the completion and ongoing maintenance of such a project however amounted to one million dollars and it was decided to forego the offer as ZAC does not have the financial and other requisites for such a major project at this juncture.

The newsletter also notes that "some of the conditions attached to the offer do not align with the practices we have followed at ZAC with much success."

In the meanwhile an anonymous donor has contributed a marble table to the Darbe Mehr for additional mukhtad vases.

The May '99 edition of the ZAC newsletter urges its readers to contribute towards the Dastoorji Kotwal Research Fund established by ZAC about six months ago. The projected goal of \$ 23,000 is meant to help Kotwal, who recently retired as the High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram, to complete his transcription, translation and commentary on the *Herbedestan* and the *Nirangestan* in four volumes. An additional volume will be devoted to comprehensive Avestan and Pahlavi glossaries.

Kotwal is collaborating on the work with Prof Philip Kreyenbroeck, chair of Iranian Studies at Gottingen University. In a recent letter to Soli Dastur, Kreyenbroeck has underlined the urgency of the matter: "Parts of the text are too technical for any Westerner to interpret without the help of a Zoroastrian priest with a really deep knowledge of ritual, and I know of no other living priest whose knowledge even remotely matches Dasturji's. Therefore, if any part of the *Nirangestan* were to be left unfinished during his lifetime, our knowledge would be forever incomplete."

ZAC is concerned that only \$ 3,000 have been collected so far.

The newsletter also notes that Kotwal has been nominated for the American Biographical Institute's 2000 Millennium Medal of Honor for his outstanding

contributions.

Those inclined to help are urged to contact Zenobia and Zubin Tantra at (630) 924-1076 or e-mail them at ztantra@web-town.com.

Firdausi's *Shah Namah* is now on the web, informs the ZAC newsletter, online at <http://classics.mit.edu/Ferdowsi/kings.html>.

There are also several websites on G6PD which stands for Glucose-6-Phosphate Dehydrogenase. A deficiency of this enzyme in the red blood cells results in hemolytic anemia under the influence of certain drugs. A number of Parsi Zoroastrians, especially males, are prone to G6PD deficiency, also known as Favism since fava beans can also lead to hemolytic anemia in some G6PD deficient persons.

The websites cited by the ZAC newsletter are:

- The G6PD Deficiency Home Page (<http://rialto.com/g6pd/index.htm>)
- The Favism Home Page (<http://rialto.com/favism/index.htm>)
- Tee Koon Hien's Page on G6PD Deficiency (<http://members.tripod.com/~TEEKOONHIEN/g6pd-title.html>)

Other related sites include:

- Table listing the compounds commonly reported in the literature that may induce hemolysis in G6PD deficient individuals (<http://rialto.com/g6pd/table2.htm>)
- Info on Dr Ernest Beutler (<http://www.scrippsclinic.com/doctors/dr1615.htm>). Dr Beutler is an authority on G6PD deficiency and has researched it for a significant portion of his life.
- Research Article on G6PD by Dr Beutler (http://rialto.com/favism/en_ch58.htm) This article includes a list of drugs to be avoided by people with G6PD.
- The G6PD Bibliography (http://rialto.com/favism/bib_g6pd.htm).

Individual achievers

•Cainaz Vakharia, a military intelligence officer currently stationed at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, was promoted to Captain in the US Army last November, informs the ZAC newsletter.

•Cyrus Todiwala, the award winning chef of London's Café Spice Namaste has introduced his "dynamic, eclectic and infinitely pleasing brand of modern Indian cuisine to American audiences" in the form of his book *Café Spice Namaste*, notes the ZAC newsletter.

Challenging inequality

When Dr Zenobia Nadirshaw won the Award for Challenging Inequality of Opportunity presented by the Standing Committee for the Promotion of Equal



Opportunities (SCPEO), its chair, Dr Jennie Williams acknowledged her work both as an academic and practising clinical psychologist. "Her work has helped the clinical

psychology profession in identifying ways forward in service planning and service delivery of psychological issues and in the educational curriculum field and in clinical practice." She won the award at the Society's 1997 annual conference at the Edinburgh Conference Centre, Heriot Watt University where the theme was "Different and equal: Insider's view of working with diversity and difference" where Nadirshaw's paper was judged the best.

Having worked with Britain's National Health Service (NHS) for over 20 years, Nadirshaw has a wide range of experience of teaching and training, lecturing and researching on mental health and learning disability, notes the article in *The Psychologist*.

Head of the psychology services and lead clinician for learning disability at the Riverside Mental Health Trust in London, Nadirshaw is chair of Ethnic Advisory Counselling in Hounslow which helps victims of alcohol abuse and a trustee of the Mental Health Foundation. She has been involved at all levels within The British Psychological Society on race and culture issues, focusing on the national level on the impact of social inequalities in the context of mental health. Joint author of *Double Discrimination* and *On Women, Mental Health and Good Practice Training Pack*, Nadirshaw has written and spoken widely on women's issues and on race and minority ethnic communities. She is the first clinical psychologist to hold the chair of the Transcultural Psychiatric Society (UK) and has worked tirelessly to identify the disadvantages and discrimination faced by ethnic minorities in the NHS, notes the article.

Married to Zubin Nadirshaw, the daughter of Mehroo and late Rustom



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Gotla of Bombay is one of the Asian women profiled in the book, *Women of Substance*. Nadirshaw herself saw the award as "a welcome validation from the British Psychological Society on issues relating to inequality and inequity of psychological services for a portion of British society who remain invisible to the profession and outside the boundaries of health and social care systems."

Peer recognition

A news release from the American College of Radiology (ACR) declares that Farhad Contractor, MD of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania has been named a fellow of the ACR. The announcement was made during an ACR annual meeting devoted to the National Conference on Breast Cancer. The ACR is a national organization serving 32,000 radiologists, radiation oncologists and radiological physicists.

The son of Dr Minocher and Dina Contractor of Surat, Contractor was one of 103 new fellows nominated by the

College's Board of Chancellors, notes the release.

Fellowships in the College are awarded to members for significant scientific or clinical research in the field of radiology

or significant contributions to its literature, notes the write-up. Other criteria for selection include performance of outstanding service as a teacher of radiology, service to organized medicine and an outstanding reputation among colleagues and the local community for long term superior service.

All rounder Dabu

With an award from the regional Board of Education for his academic and extra-curricular achievements, 12-year-old Behzad Dabu of Liverpool, New York is the son of architect Navroz Dabu and computer programmer Binaifer Dabu and great-grandson of the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu of the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram. His proud grandparents Noshir and Gulchaher Dabu of Ahmedabad enumerate Behzad's athletic, theatrical and artistic achievements in a letter to *Parsiana*.

A karate black-belter whose other love is basketball, Behzad's team plays

the regional basketball league every year, emerging winners in 1998. His favorite artistic activity is street painting. He has won twice in the youth category from among "artists who come from all over to flaunt their colorful art on the pavements."

Performing with the local drama group in Syracuse, New York, Behzad had begun as a child model winning a trophy at the age of four. Since then he has taken part in television movies sponsored by the city's local TV station.

Orthodontist Sukhia

The first Pakistani to be honored with the fellowship of the Academy of Dentistry International, dental surgeon Hoshang Rumi Sukhia has provided care and dental assistance to the disabled and mentally handicapped children of Karachi, notes a press release. An orthodontist whose interests include the study of different languages and cultures, Sukhia has traveled widely in Europe and the Far East on community research programs pertaining to oral care. He is inclined towards both clinical and research activities in orthodontics and general dentistry, notes his curriculum vitae.

An alumnus of the de' Montmorency College of Dentistry and the University of the Punjab, Sukhia is currently enrolled in a two-year masters program in orthodontics at Marmara University.

Religion and life in the US

Writing in *ANNALS*, the publication of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Raymond Brady Williams examines the impact of migration from India and Pakistan on the religious framework of the United States. In an article titled "Asian Indian and Pakistani Religions in the United States," Williams discusses the effect that the immigrating Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims and Parsis have had on their American cousins as well as on the host society which had hitherto been largely Judeo-Christian.

Referring to the Parsis, Williams says, "Now approximately 6,500 Zoroastrians and Parsis from India and Iran reunite two strands of the religion in American cities, already with four Zoroastrian buildings: one each in Chi-

cago and New York, and two in California. The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America has a membership of 17 associations in the United States and four in Canada that sponsor publications, conferences and youth activities. These immigrants from India and Iran speak different languages and preserve two distinct cultures and two interpretations of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians are unique among religious groups in rejecting converts not born into the religion; offspring of marriages (to) people outside the community are not eligible for membership. They often interpret their experience as immigrants to America as a second migration like that of their ancestors from Persia to India in the 10th century and say that American Zoroastrianism will constitute a vital and reformed form of the religion."

Writing about the different ethnic and religious groups generally, Williams notes, "The greatest perceived threat to the integrity of the family is marriage to a person distant from the family by race, ethnic group, caste, religion, country of family origin, or social class. Parents' preferences for marriage partners reflect this list. Because arranged marriages are the traditional pattern in India and Pakistan, the American pattern of young people's searching for partners and even living together prior to marriage is very threatening to the immigrant families. Friendships and dating between boys and girls in a multicultural and multireligious society are occasions for great tension between parents and children. Religious groups often provide safe locations for intergenerational discussions of these issues and of the future of Asian Indian and Pakistani families. Religious leaders mediate such negotiations between the generations."

While South Asian Muslims have been active in building institutions that propagate Islam "Some Hindus, some Jains, and the Parsis think that conversion to their religions is impossible."

The increasing numbers of Muslims — both immigrants and converts from the African Americans — is reflected in "the inclusion of Muslim imams in the schedule of opening prayers for the U.S. Congress, provision of Muslim chaplains in prisons and other governmental institutions, and the invitations to Muslims to have the Id celebration in the White House."



Williams also notes that significant numbers of the children of Indo/Pakistani immigrants seek to learn about their own religion by enrolling in college courses on the religions of India. The Hindus are establishing a Hindu university in Florida and the Muslims are developing a religious school network and an Islamic university. "These educational initiatives will help shape American education into the new century," opines Williams.

Predicting the likelihood of American society becoming more religious in the coming century, Williams concludes, "The crystal ball does not reveal whether the result will ultimately be a breakdown in the civic order that provided the foundation for religious freedom and economic opportunity or a renewal in the American experiment, which is unique in human annals, in preserving freedom and democracy that has attracted immigrants and sheltered our common life. One best faces the nagging fear of the former with fervent prayers for the latter and all sorts of good work to enhance its likelihood."

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Manna

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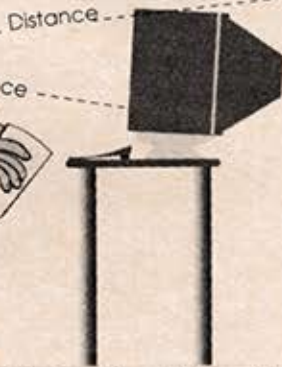
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"Blossom and bloom"

Speakers at the Holiday Programme for Youth highlight the Zoroastrian hallmarks of honesty, integrity and charity

Hilla P. Guzder

"This is the first time in my 81 years that I am addressing an all-Parsi (youth) audience and I'm not sure what the reactions will be!" stated chief guest Russi Mody, chairman of Mobar and ex chairman and managing director of Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO), at the inaugural function of the 13th Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY). "It gives me very deep pleasure to be here among young people," he continued, as he believed he had given up his own youth just a couple of weeks ago!

"I have never read a book on management in my life. I may have read just a chapter here or there. I practised management, but not by books!" asserted Mody who came from Calcutta for the function. To the crowd of eager young faces before him Mody advised: "Of the 10 Commandments in the English Bible, I would pick out two — do unto others as you would have them do unto you and love thy neighbor as thyself. Practise these and I guarantee you will not have trouble. You don't need to go to a management school to learn this."

Minoo Shroff, Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) trustee who chaired the function on April 11, 1999, described Mody as a "great communicator, a man manager par excellence" who, in his 53 years in TISCO, rose from trainee to chairman, heading 70,000 employees.

In a frontal attack on Indian politicians Mody, who was also at one time the chairman of Air India and Indian Airlines, ridiculed the "halo we wear around our heads," with India being called the "greatest democracy in the world," with a culture of 2,000 years behind us. "We have millions of Brahmins, backward class, forward class, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, etc, but we don't have an Indian! How are we going to have an India without Indians?" thundered the mercurial Mody whose 'shoot straight from the shoulder' attitude has embroiled him in many

a clash with the authorities, both in government and industry. "Bihar's shocking poverty made me literally weep when I stood for Parliamentary elections last year," he told his awestruck audience. It is India's disgrace and shame, he asserted, that 50 years after independence, there are millions who have no drinking water. "How the hell can you live without water," he bemoaned, "yet millions of our people do."

Pinning the blame squarely on a handful of politicians — the Laloos, Mulayams, Jayalalithas and Phoolan Devis — and bureaucrats, Mody declared that the decline in the quality of leadership has led to the deterioration in the country. "Our community has led in many sectors — nuclear energy, industry, banking, etc," he asserted and exhorted the assembled youth to grasp the present. "Destroy us old fellows, we have failed you completely. Ask yourself the question: 'What is my experience here (at HPY) going to do to me, will I be able to help my country?'"

"Fast first, then feast," guest of honor Madhusudan Kasbekar, ex director-general of police, counselled his teenage listeners. It is necessary to have a five-year plan for your immediate career and a 20-year plan for the future, he advised. "Two frogs fell into a pail of butter-milk," he narrated. "One did nothing to help himself, so he sank and died; the other kept struggling to get out, stirring the buttermilk with his feet till it finally turned into butter! He ate a little, jumped out and survived!" The moral of the story — banish all negative thoughts, continue to think positive. Kasbekar also enunciated his 21-day theory — continue a good habit for 21 days, after that you will find that it has become a part of you. "Cultivate also the art of public speaking," he said, "it teaches you to think fast on your feet and that might prove useful in the boardroom later!"

HPY, often commended as the BPP's

star program, saw an enrollment this year of 100 boys and 85 girls from 62 different schools all over India. Of the 31 students who came from places like Baroda, Ahmedabad, Dahanu, Surat, Navsari, Poona, etc the BPP provided boarding and lodging for a record number of 20 youngsters who had no relatives or friends to stay with in Bombay. Over the almost four-week duration of the course, HPYites were provided lunch, a drink twice a day, a stationery folder and taken by chartered bus for outings, etc, all for a token fee of Rs 250, with the BPP putting in a subsidy of almost one and a half lakh rupees, according to program coordinator Anupama Sharma. "Give yourself a fair chance to blossom and bloom," senior coordinator Diana Marfatia ("the linchpin of the Programme," said Shroff) told the students, "and this is possible only if you are regular and committed to the Programme." "We do face the problem of drop-outs," Priya Bhujwala, ex-HPYite and senior co-organizer told *Parsiana*, "with about 10 percent of the students not attending regularly or not taking active part in all the events."

HPY is tailored to tap the talents of youngsters who have just completed their ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education), SSC (Secondary School Certificate), or CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) exams. Weary and often jaded after battling the intense competition and the rat race for marks at the board level, the boys and girls face fun and frolic in the form of a fashion show, a personality contest and a wide spectrum of competitions — cookery, Master Quiz, elocution, essay writing, etc. Standing as they are on the threshold of their careers, HPY lays out a spread of options, with eminent Parsi and non-Parsi achievers giving the students the benefit of their experiences in the professions, defence services, hospitality industry, the media, etc. The



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From left, top row: Bhujwala felicitating Mody with Mehta and Kavarana behind; Kasbekar with Tirandaz and Driver. Middle row:

Farshid Bamboat, Kainaaz Ranji and C. Dastur with Khusrokhani; Aga, Billimoria, Farzan Randelia and C. Dastur. Bottom row: Shroff makes a

point as (l to r) Kavarana, Mody, Kasbekar, Tirandaz, Driver and Rustomi Anklesaria look on; Basla at the mike Photos: C. C. Gandevia

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spirit of spirituality is sought to be sparked with lectures on religion; self-awareness and leadership skills are honed through group projects. Visits to the Braille Press, the Parsi Ward at the J. J. Hospital, and the F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla (home for aged Parsis), the cleaning of an agiary and the performing of a navjote of a poor child, meeting terminally ill children through the Make-a-Wish Foundation, a blood donation drive, etc jog the students' social conscience. A sporting spirit is fostered through cricket, football, volleyball, chess, arm-wrestling, etc. "HPY builds strong bonds of friendship," observed Zarine Basla, principal of the Maneckji Cooper Education Trust School, speaking on behalf of the principals of the participating schools. "Through the perfectly chalked out Programme, students learn that they have to control their own destiny, live by the choices they make for their careers."

Short skirts, straps and stilettos, natty suits and blazers were much in evidence at the valedictory function on May 5, 1999, with the boys and girls discarding the ubiquitous teenage dress of jeans and T-shirts in favor of formal wear for the prize distribution. "This year's HPY had two unique aspects," Marfatia informed the audience. "The children have been so enthused by the religious sessions that they have asked for more lectures even after the course, in June and July, from Zoroastrian Studies, after Khojeste Mistree's return from Iran. They have also opted to continue the social service aspect, visiting old age homes and hospitals to entertain the elderly, with or without us." Declared BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder who presided over the function: "God gives those who give to others." Decrying the tendency to say "*maaroo naseeb aj kharaab hatoo, hu su karoo* (my destiny was bad, what can I do)," Guzder appealed to the boys and girls to dig in their heels and try again if faced with failure. "Don't be satisfied with a measly job, become an entrepreneur instead."

*Top: A happy HPY team (l to r) Master, Khory, Gandhi, Bhujwala, Sharma, Marfatia, Panthaki (partly hidden) and Aga Photo: Hilla Guzder
Middle: Guzder flanked by Sharma (left) and Marfatia
Bottom: A section of the gathering*

Photos: C. C. Gandevia



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Winners all (top row, l to r): Mistry (right) with Billimoria; De Vitre and Khushrookhan; Irani. (Second row): Raimalyala; Parizad Contractor, Sanobar Bagli and Natasha Buhariwala; Dordi, Rashna Bhagalia and Mithraem Bharucha
Photos: C. C. Gandevia

Guzder told the gathering that the BPP had recently received a letter from C. L. Sharma, special ambassador to India and Asia and deputy director general emeritus, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) that the world body wished to preserve Zoroastrian culture and heritage, including heritage sites, religion and priesthood, archival material, contribution of the Parsis to politics, industry, science, music, institutions, charities, etc. Terming it both "amazing" and "wonderful" that a world body should think of preserving our

heritage, Guzder appealed to the community to make an extra special effort to be conscious of it too.

"I have had no godfathers at any stage of my life," stated chief guest Hoshang Billimoria, managing director, Tata Donnelley Limited. Billimoria recalled how as a schoolboy he had cried when he learnt that he had scored 99 percent in arithmetic at the SSC exam, perplexed and dismayed as to how he had lost that one mark! An academic topper throughout his days in commerce college, his vice principal once asked him to go to Gujarat in the midst of an Indian summer to dig a well as part of a social service program. His horrified parents dissuaded him, and the authorities saw to it that the best student award went not to him but to the student who dug the well! At an interview for a scholarship abroad, a partner of a leading firm of chartered accountants did his utmost to point out to

Billimoria, who had stood first in the university at the BCom exam (and was the only student to obtain a first class) that it would be much better if he stayed and worked in India rather than abroad. It was only later that he learnt that the gentleman's son had applied for and been awarded the scholarship!

After his studies in the UK, both Billimoria and his sister Aban felt it a duty to come back to India to look after their parents who, ironically enough, died within two-and-a-half years. "The heart ruled the head," he stated. "When I joined Tata Press (as the company was then known), it had endemic problems. The Tatas were out to sell the company. Yet we have turned it around and made it into a blue chip company. I feel very bullish about the future..."

Seeking a rejuvenation in the Parsi community, Billimoria appealed to his coreligionists not to rely on the Parsi Punchayet for everything, not to use it as



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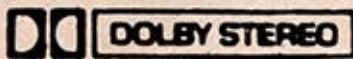
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a crutch. "Be open to the thought of leaving a dying metropolis like Bombay. You will be better placed in other cities in India and abroad," he observed.

"Since I'm the last man in, I'll go fast in the slog overs," quipped guest of honor Homi Khusrookhan, managing director of Glaxo India Limited and Burroughs Wellcome India Limited. Categorizing students on the threshold of their careers as type A (who know exactly what they want), type B (who have no clue at all) and type C (who believe that it is all fated), Khusrookhan revealed that he had himself wanted to be a doctor, but did not have good enough marks, so he drifted into commerce. "As a kid, I had to struggle with certain subjects, so I would lock myself in a room with blackboard and chalk and teach myself the subject," he disclosed. "Once you acquire the ability to teach, you will be a better student... results are not as important as the process of learning."

The hallmarks of the Parsi community, believed Khusrookhan, were honesty, integrity and charity. Defining integrity as "the ability to enjoy the trust of others," Khusrookhan advised the boys and girls to develop values which are "personal and deep inside" and it will be "your value system which will magically tell you what path to take, it will become a reflex action." Spurred by the presence on stage of BPP trustee Dadi Engineer (known for his ability to recount jokes while addressing audiences), Khusrookhan ended his speech by narrating the story of a little bird who lay on the snow in Siberia with a broken wing, freezing to death. Moved by its plight, a passing horseman picked it up, made a hole in a pile of dropping nearby and put the bird into it. Revived by the heat, the little creature started to sing. A wolf heard it and ate it up! Moral of the story: it's not necessarily your enemies that put you into the fertilizer, it may be your friends as well, so while in the fertilizer, keep your mouth shut!

The prize distribution saw a preponderance of girl winners. Terming co-organizers Bhujwala, (who has been with HPY for the last six years), Fabian Panthaki, Vinifer Gandhi, Merzeen Aga and Shirzad Khory "the right and left hands of HPY," Marfatia described Bhujwala as "this most excellent, lovely human being" who was in the midst of her MA exams but still found time for HPY. "It is the easiest thing in the world

to work with a person as inspiring and motivating as Diana," responded Bhujwala. Lauding literary organizer Panthaki, Marfatia stated that the literary section has "matured and diversified" under Panthaki, a first year BSc student of St Xavier's College.

Among the recipients of flowers were BPP joint secretary Sheroo Master ("the solid backbone of HPY," said Marfatia), chief executive Behram Dastur, deputy chief executive Mehli Colah and BPP trustees Guzder, Shroff, Engineer, Dinshaw Tamboly, Silloo Kavarana, Rustom Tirandaz and Dinshaw Mehta. The trustees of the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution — Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Rustomjee Jeejeebhoy, Rustom N. B. Jeejeebhoy and Khorshed Dabu — and principal Roshen Driver were commended for their support to HPY as the program is conducted in its premises. "Its spacious rooms, its arches and its lovely ambience are reminiscent of what our city once was, our community once was," remarked Shroff wistfully. Thanking all the guest speakers, resource persons and judges, Sharma made particular mention of Homai Modi and Capt Hormazdiar Desai, trustees and joint honorary secretaries of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute for judging over 150 essays (with the winners pocketing over Rs 4,000 in prizes donated by the Zarhosty Brothers).

Greeted with cheers and whistles were this year's Ms HPY, Zenia Irani, and Mr HPY Afshad Mistry who were crowned by celebrity singer/VJ/actress Raageshwari and TV/film personality Shahrukh Bharucha. "HPY helped me settle my choice of career," stated Mistry, while runner-up Cyrus Dastur quipped that his "phone bills went down" as HPY kept him productively occupied for a month! Toranj Raimalvala, Delna Dordi, Dastur and Dilber De Vitre emerged triumphant winners in their respective groups. "The competition is tough, but healthy. We are taught to take defeat in good spirit," remarked De Vitre to Parsiana. "There is so much interaction and teamwork. Making friends is the best part," commented participant Behnaz Mistry.

With the BPP providing HPYites the option of continuing to stay in touch by becoming members of the BPP Youth Club (which meets once a month), Marfatia hoped "the youth would give back to the community and country what they have taken from it."

What the doctor ordered

From a three-bed nursing home, Poona's Ruby Hall Clinic has grown to be amongst the largest private hospitals in the country

Hilla P. Guzder

The first impression is of spaciousness. Wide green granite steps lined with potted plants lead into a vast glass-fronted lobby. The various OPD (out-patient departments) are clearly marked in large, bright, colored letters — medical, surgical, orthopedic, dental, etc. Doctors' consulting rooms are dotted all around, thronged with patients' awaiting their turn. An atrium with its glass ceiling allows the light to come streaming in, giving the premises a cheery look.

The fully air-conditioned, recently opened new wing of Poona's Ruby Hall Clinic (RHC) at Sassoon Road near the Poona railway station encompasses within its 2,00,000 sq ft a 46-bed intensive care unit meant both for intensive coronary care and general intensive care, making it one of the largest in India. The Cardiac Centre on the second floor houses four fully steel-lined operating theaters and a big recovery room to provide special post-operative care. Six Hyundai elevators carry you swiftly to the upper floors of the six-storeyed structure. The 88 deluxe patients' rooms range in price from Rs 1,200 per day to Rs 2,000 per day for the suites. Well-appointed, with attached bathrooms and all modern amenities including a TV and telephone, the rooms look out onto a verdant vista of treetops.

Reported to be one of the largest private hospitals in Maharashtra, the new wing when fully operational will raise RHC's bed strength to 500, putting it in the league of the largest private hospitals in the country.

"When I came here I had nothing. I was born in Madras. My father Behram worked in the railways and I came to Poona with my family in 1922 when I was two years old. We were a very middle-class family and it was my

mother Freany who inculcated in me the spirit to survive the odds," states Dr Keki B. Grant, chairman and managing trustee of the hospital. Popularly known in Poona as Hector Grant (a nickname given to him in childhood in admiration of an old family friend), Grant founded RHC as a three-bedded nursing home in 1959. "I have an obsessive personality," he states blandly, as his wife Tehmi gives a quiet chuckle and adds: "Whatever he puts his hands to, he carries to the limit. It was a trifle hard for me in the beginning, but now I'm used to it!"

At a time when most senior citizens retire into the comfort of their favorite armchair, 79-year-old Grant and his team have set up a state of the art new wing designed by Bombay architect Kamal S. Malik in the hospital's ruby (40th) year. The foundation stone was laid in May '95 and the past three years, they explain, have been a whirl of appointing architects, builders, contractors and coordinating the work of various agencies. An all-important and taxing task has been the raising of resources for the project, mainly in the form of loans from banks and financial institutions. Unexpected cost escalations have seen the final figure climb to Rs 42 crore from the originally estimated Rs 26 crore. "Our main difficulty at the moment is of course finance. We are still sorting out all the teething problems, coordinating the needs of patients and doctors and conveying the same to the concerned agencies. This has resulted in cost overruns," specifies Tehmi Grant. "It's a real wonder we have managed to remain sane," laughs Bomi Bhote, the hospital's chief executive officer (CEO), "in spite of the multiple problems created by multiple doctors' egos!" The Kamalnayan Bajaj Trust, Poona-based TELCO (Tata

Engineering and Locomotive Company Limited), Cummins India, Finolex, Dr N. A. Kalyani, Rusy Shroff of Hong Kong and many others have been generous donors. But as interest rates continue to mount, Grant is an anxious man. All donations, large or small, will be gratefully accepted, states the RHC brochure. Being a public charitable trust, 50 percent of the donations are exempt from income-tax under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act. Donations to the hospital's Poona Medical Research Foundation enjoy 100 percent tax deduction.

Taking *Parsiana* on an exhaustive (and exhausting!) tour of the new wing, Tehmi Grant graciously acknowledges greetings from nursing, technical and subordinate staff, at the same time briskly issuing instructions and sorting out complaints and grievances as we stride along brand new corridors. "There are about 400 consultants on our panel, of which 60-70 consulting doctors come on a regular basis," she says.

The chief cardiologist at the RHC's Cardiac Centre is Keki and Tehmi's son Purvez who returned to India after a 10-year stay in England. "It feels great to work in Ruby Hall," he declares. "Our Cardiac Centre is number three in the whole of India in the total number of angiography and angioplasty cases. We have done more angiographies and angioplasties than any other institution in Maharashtra, including Bombay. Almost five percent of cardiac cases are from Bombay, he details, and patients come from all over India and recently even from the Middle East as "we are slightly cheaper and offer personal attention." A coronary bypass, states Bhote, can be done for less than one lakh rupees, which includes the surgeon's fees, hospital expenses, etc.

**“We have done
more angiographies
and angioplasties
than any other
institution
in Maharashtra
including Bombay”**



*Top and alongside: the hospital's
different departments*

Photos: Machhinra Pardesi

Below: Entrance of new building

Photos: Bharat Ramamutham





Top, alongside and bottom: the geometry of the new wing

Photos: Bharat Ramamutham

Center: Keki and Tehmi Grant



the choice of surgeon being the patient's. "We have six specialist cardiac surgeons and our 46-bed intensive care unit would be among the world's largest," he believes. In the last two years, 600 open heart surgeries have been performed on poor patients, with only the cost of material being charged for, according to hospital sources.

"We do a lot of work for the poor and our general wards are always full," informs Tehmi Grant. The large number of mofussil patients including farmers have of course given rise to a large number of additional problems! "People come from the villages with their bags and bedding, bringing their own food, etc. For every one patient there are a dozen anxious relatives camping in the compound! One of our biggest headaches is handling these large crowds. We propose to set up a 'yatri nivas' on the premises where the out-of-townners can leave their baggage as well as stay for a while. We have to tackle this problem in a humanitarian way," enunciates Bhote. Between April '98 and February '99, RHC expended almost Rs 55 lakhs treating over 1,300 free and concessional patients, according to hospital records. "Unfortunately, very few Parsi patients avail of the free or concession facilities. We would like to do more for the Parsis," points out Bhote.

Described by Tehmi Grant as "our most efficient and dynamic CEO," Bhote heads a staff of 80 doctors and 1,000 class II, III and IV employees. "We have had some difficulty recruiting new nurses," observes Tehmi. "Many come here, learn the ropes and then depart. The Parsis and Anglo-Indians of old used to make very good nurses." Adds Bhote, "We are going to open a nursing school on the sixth floor of the new wing from August 1, '99." Almost 100 nurses live in the staff quarters within RHC's four-and-a-half-acre complex.

Present Parsi staff includes Dr Rustam Wadia, neurophysician, who has been with the hospital for 35 years, and his wife Manek who runs the blood bank. Jaloo Kanga, Grant's secretary for over 40 years, Dr Roshen Master and her son Dr Firdaus, both psychiatrists, Aloo Ichaporia, lab-in-charge, Gool Patel, advisor on general management, Bapsy Gandevia of the cancer center, consultants Dr Noshirwan Edul and Dr Roda Irani, Dr Russi Ma-



rolia, anaesthetist and his son Dr Gayo, dentist, Brig Rusi Bajina, materials manager, Soli Bharucha, chief engineer, Kamal Palia, dietician, Shenaz Tarapore, in charge of the linen, Shirin Mehta of housekeeping, Mehernavaz Vakil, patient coordinator and others.

"It is very satisfying that there are a number of young Parsis graduating as doctors in Poona," observes Tehmi. "Students today have to be really smart, hardworking and dedicated, else they may not be able to make it because of the intense competition," adds Keki. Do they see a moral deterioration in our community? Both husband and wife shake their heads emphatically. "No, there is no moral deterioration. Only our numbers defeat us," comments Tehmi.

It was in 1960 that Keki Grant bought over the property of Ruby Hall (so named after Ruby, the wife of Sir David Sassoon, the bungalow's original owner) with a loan from the Bank of Maharashtra. The loan was fully repaid by 1964 and two years later the Poona Medical Foundation was formed as a public charitable trust, with all assets acquired from 1959 being transferred to the Foundation by Grant. Slowly, patient facilities were expanded. A side cottage became C Ward, the bungalow itself was vacated and be-

Top: Dr Purvez Grant lights the lamp as (l to r) his father, Dr R. B. Gulati and Thermax's Anu Aga look on

came B Ward. An intensive coronary care unit with just two beds and a cancer center were among the first to be started in Poona in the early '70s. RHC has remained in the forefront of medical diagnosis and treatment, with early introduction of state of the art technology like color doppler echo-cardiography, magnetic resonance imaging, lithotripsy, microsurgery, laser surgery, etc. "Over 2,000 copies of our quarterly journal, *Ruby Pulse*, go out among the medical fraternity all over Maharashtra," informs Tehmi Grant. With Dr Wadia as editor, the journal chronicles RHC's plans and progress, presents erudite research papers and reports on medical conferences, and has its own brand of humor to lighten life: "Try to suffer from the disease for which you are being treated. Remember that your doctor has a professional reputation to uphold!"

"My only hobby is medicine," declares Keki. "In 1954 I did a survey of 5,000 people in village Indapur (80 miles from Poona) for coronary diseases, only to find that the incidence of heart problems is almost the same in city and village people, brought

about mainly by smoking and tobacco." The doctor himself leads a disciplined life, walking the nine-kilometer distance from RHC to his home in Kondhwa every evening, undeterred by Poona's chaotic traffic and attendant pollution! His spartan diet includes boiled fish and vegetables at night, a cup or two of tea or coffee through the day. Old time movies on TNT or the soothing notes of Western classical music provide the prescription for relaxation.

Chary neither of challenges nor criticism, the doctor treads the path he thinks fit. After his medical studies at the Grant Medical College and the J. J. Hospital in Bombay, he chose to go to Boston, USA to learn the latest in the then relatively uncharted field of cardiology under Dr Paul White, considered to be the father of modern cardiology. Back in Poona after three years, he set up the cardiology unit at the B. J. Medical College and Sassoon General Hospitals. After a 10-year stint at

Jehangir Nursing Home, his independent spirit found its elixir in setting up RHC from scratch. Honors that have been bestowed on him include a fellowship of the American College of Chest Physicians, founder fellow of the Indian College of Physicians and pro-

In the last two years, 600 open heart surgeries have been performed on poor patients

fessor emeritus in medicine and cardiology from the Sassoon General Hospitals.

"If Dr Grant does the digging, Tehmi Grant holds the spade," quipped a Parsi patient to *Parsiana*. Nurturing the matrimonial bond through 49 years (the couple will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary on January 8, 2000) and raising two children, Purvez and Zareen, Karachi-born Tehmi is a science graduate from Bombay University. As coordinator of the new wing, her administrative acumen and

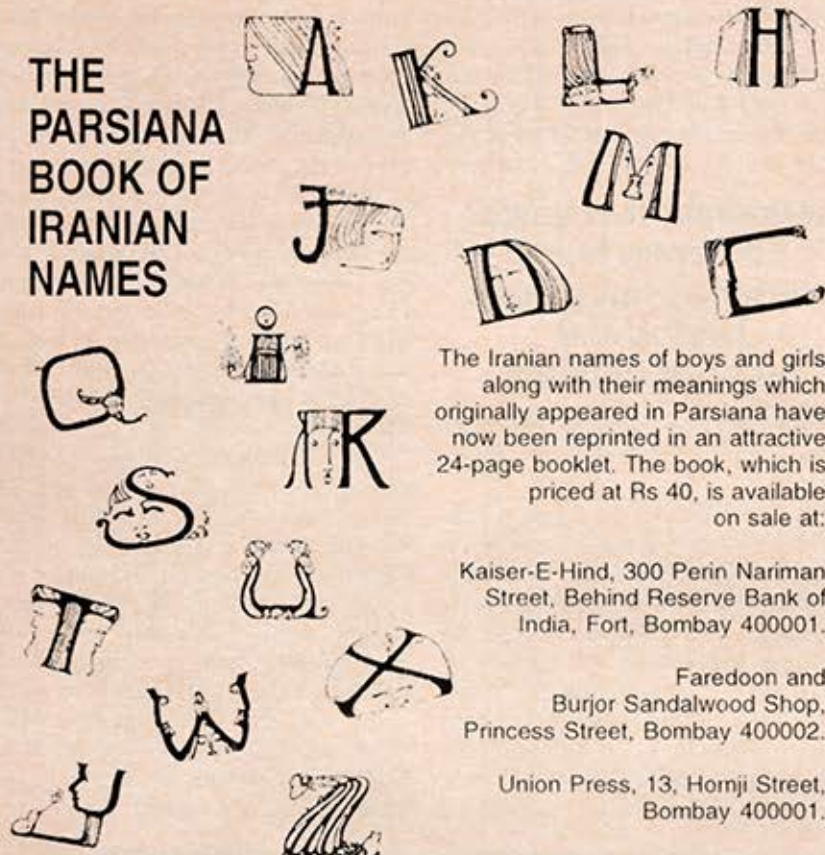
years of experience see her tactfully turning away an unqualified but persistent job seeker, while signing cheques, pouring out tea or answering queries from the PR (public relations) department. Tehmi has been the president of the Poona Parsi Panchayat and is involved with various schools in Poona. She is the managing trustee of the National Council of Women and the University Women's Association. Her green fingers won her a gold medal from the Poona Rose Society as one of the pioneers of rose growing. She swims, laughingly terming herself "a fixture" at the Poona Club swimming pool.

Keki anticipates that new modalities of medicine will come in with the new millennium. "For the last 30 years we have been recognized by Poona University as a teaching institution for postgraduate studies. We have interns in every field — neurology, gynecology, cardiology, surgery, medicine, etc," observes Tehmi. "Our aim is to make Ruby Hall run like a smooth, well-oiled machine, to provide the best health care in Poona. We want to make RHC a renowned medical center."

Below: A 1950s picture of newlyweds Keki and Tehmi (center) with family



THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES



The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in Parsiana have now been reprinted in an attractive 24-page booklet. The book, which is priced at Rs 40, is available on sale at:

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

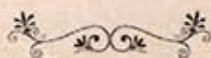
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READERS' FORUM

continued from page 6

around the world to come together and celebrate as we launch our odyssey into the next millennium. With this in mind Cyrus Mehta and Pirooz Cooper, musicians from New York and Connecticut, have developed the concept of a World Zarathushti Orchestra.

We invite Zarathushti musicians from all over the world to be part of the Orchestra. Professionals as well as amateur musicians of all ages who have attained a certain level of proficiency to play in an orchestra are invited to apply. The pieces will be selected based on the response and will be sent to the selected participants.

Rehearsals will take place two days before the event, on December 26 and December 27, 2000. All participants are expected to have become proficient with the music prior to the conference. If there is a concentration of musicians in a particular city or area, they will be encouraged to have their own group rehearsals in advance of the main rehearsals in Houston.

Please send in details of your name, address, phone and e-mail and the instrument you play. Please also answer the following on your personal playing history:

- How long have you played your instrument?
- List at least three major pieces in your repertoire.
- Have you played in an orchestra or other ensembles?
- Are you currently playing with an ensemble or orchestra?
- How often do you currently practice?
- What pieces can you sight-read comfortably?
- Any additional information you would like to offer.

Please send your application and queries to Pirooz Cooper, 253 Spring Water Lane, New Canaan, CT 06840-6526, USA. Telephone: 203-966-3895.

Applications can also be sent to Cyrus Mehta (e-mail: cyrusmehta@aol.com). Telephone: 212-686-1581 (Work) or 212-662-0932 (Home).

Visit our website www.fezana.org/wzc2000

DOLLY DASTOOR and HOMI DAVIER
WZC2000 co-chairs, Houston, USA

Help aspiring doctors

It is a universally known fact that a sound education is the most valuable

gift that one can give to the youth. Investing in our youth is akin to investing in the future of our community.

Our community has produced an outstanding cadre of doctors, in every area of medicine. If this tradition is to continue it is imperative that those of our youth who are interested in and qualify for medicine must be given the necessary support, to offset the disadvantage that they face on account of the reservations policy pursued by the government.

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have decided to take a lead in this matter, with a hope that other trusts will also follow suit, and extend substantial financial support to Zoroastrian students who are interested in and qualify for the medical discipline. The BPP trustees have specially earmarked a very substantial amount for this purpose and are capitalizing the same. The interest would be used to achieve the objective.

The scheme will operate in a very simple manner:

- Zoroastrian students who are interested and qualify for the medical discipline should send their applications for financial support to the BPP.
- Depending upon the number of applications received, the funds available at the material time, and other relevant data taken into consideration, the BPP would consider extending financial support on an annual basis, for the duration of the course. Naturally, for the support to be renewed, it would be incumbent upon the beneficiaries to justify it by their fine academic performance.
- The support would be by way of an interest-free loan, which the beneficiaries would repay to the BPP, in instalments, once they begin their medical practice and are settled in their careers. This would enable recycling of the funds, thereby allowing more of our youth to pursue the medical career.

The BPP trustees hope that our youth will take advantage of the facility being offered, and that members of the community will extend their cooperation to this scheme by contributing generously towards the same.

Applications seeking assistance may be forwarded to the Joint Secretary (Welfare) and donors may send cheques or drafts, payable to "Parsi Punchayet Bombay" at the following address: Bombay Parsi Punchayet, 209, D. N.

Road, Fort, Bombay 400001.

SHERO O. MASTER

Joint Secretary, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

Select stamps

Your Readers' Forum is headed by a panel depicting postage stamps portraying Parsis. Presumably, so far, India has printed only five such stamps. Pakistan has issued one stamp honoring a great Parsi of Karachi, Jamshed Nusserwanjee. Would you consider printing this stamp in your panel?

ARDESHIR COWASJEE

Karachi, Pakistan

The Editor replies

To our knowledge India has honored nine Zoroastrians on postage stamps with two stamps each on Dadabhai Naoroji, Jamsetji Tata and J. R. D. Tata and one each on Homi Bhabha, Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Madame Bhikhaiji Cama, Pherozesha Mehta, Jal Cooper, Ardeshir and Pirojshah Godrej. We have designed three different logos, each bearing different stamps, for use in *Parsiana*. Jamshed Nusserwanjee's stamp features in this issue.

Be safe and sound

In April, a 77-year-old Parsi lady living alone, Mehroo Sanga, was brutally murdered and her Napean Sea Road apartment ransacked by robbers. This is the fourth murder of an elderly Parsi lady staying alone in Bombay in recent months!

Could you please, through the columns of *Parsiana*, warn all Parsi families whose elders are staying alone in Bombay that old Parsis are particularly being targeted by robbers and killers? This may be due to the fact that Parsis are usually perceived as possessing precious heirlooms in their homes. Robbers who target Parsi homes are no longer merely looking for radios and VCRs, but are after gold and diamond jewelry, antiques and cash.

Elderly members of our small community who are left all alone after a spouse passes away and/or heirs having emigrated are especially vulnerable. I offer the following suggestions to all elderly Parsis staying alone in Bombay and elsewhere in India:

- Please deposit all your precious jewelry and cash and important documents like share certificates, bonds, etc in a bank locker. Do not flaunt any jewelry when you go to weddings or navjotes.

The days when one could wear these items and walk around with safety in Bombay are long gone. Do not even wear false jewelry; it is almost equally dangerous. If you have heirs, distribute the same amongst them now, rather than wait until after your death. Keep only that much cash at home as is needed to take care of immediate expenses. Nowadays, in Bombay at least, cheques are accepted by wine merchants, pharmacists, doctors and grocers, so keeping a lot of cash at home is no longer necessary.

- Instal a good peep-hole in your door. You should be able to scan the entire outside passage so that no person can hide in a corner and escape detection. In addition instal a very strong chain or safety lever so that the door cannot be forced open by an intruder. Also, if the landlord/society does not object, have a second (double) door fitted which opens outwards and which has a small window with bars through which small articles and mail can be received without opening the door itself.

- Instal a loud bell (like the ones used by cashiers in Irani restaurants) outside the apartment with a button inside the apartment. Inform the watchmen and neighbors that you will sound the bell in the event of an emergency.

- Do not open the door to strangers under any circumstances. Asking for a glass of water is a common ruse. Other ruses include posing as a cable TV technician, gas cylinder delivery man, courier or salesman for novelty items.

- After a spate of robberies in our building at Bandra (West) last year, the police mobile patrol regularly comes and takes a round of our building. They even keep a log book of their visits. Tenants can form a group and petition the nearest police station's inspector-in-charge to send a police detail to your neighborhood regularly. There is no charge for this service but contact and feedback must be maintained with the concerned law enforcement officer regularly or else the patrolling may slacken after some time.
- Ask close relatives to maintain a regular check on the elderly through phone calls and visits.

- If possible obtain a householder's insurance policy, listing in detail all articles of value. Jewelry must be valued by an authorized valuer accepted by the insurance company before the policy is issued.

ARDESHIR DAMANIA
Davis, California, USA

New name for airport

On March 24, 1999, the Government of India decided to rename Sahar International Airport after Chhatrapati Shivaji.

Let me take readers of *Parsiana* back to the year 1990. In that year, there was a lively correspondence in the English print media when readers of various newspapers had suggested the Sahar airport at Bombay be named after Mr J. R. D. Tata, the father of civil aviation in India. This writer was one of the advocates.

In fact, I had gone a step further. I had made a strong representation to Mr V. P. Singh, the then Prime Minister of India, to rename Sahar Airport after Mr J. R. D. Tata.

Whilst forwarding a copy of the said representation to Mr Tata, on May 5, 1990, I had urged that Mr Tata should not feel diffident about the renaming of Sahar Airport after him, whilst he was still alive. In support, I had quoted how Victoria Docks in Bombay was renamed Indira Docks, when Indira Gandhi too was alive.

Unlike the Government of India which did not care to reply to my representation, Mr J. R. D. Tata promptly replied to my letter on May 24, 1990.

I quote below a few extracts from his letter which will show how modest and humble Mr Tata was:

"While I am grateful for your gesture in appreciation of my services to Indian aviation, I must express my inability to accept the proposal for a number of reasons including the other proposals already publicly propagated in favor of naming the airport after Shivaji Maharaj, Dr Ambedkar or Pandit Nehru and the fact that I have personally done nothing significant for the development of the airport.

"I shall, of course, always be available to the Government of India to advise and help in connection with the expansion of the airport, if required, but there would be no possibility of my agreeing to name it after me during my life. So I hope you will do nothing further to pursue your proposal."

Nine years have passed since then, when Mr V. P. Singh is no more the Prime Minister of India and Mr J. R. D. Tata has passed away.

BHIKAJI M. ADENWALLA

Allowing for the state of the airport it may be just as well it was not named

after J. R. D. Tata — Editor

Seek reality

The initials ZTFE translate into Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. The reason for inclusion of Europe is not fully understood. Its justification seems illusory, unless of course it is a veiled puffed-up title overdue for comeuppance. This association has hitherto demonstrated an almost total involvement/interfacing, etc primarily with the Zoroastrian diaspora in and around London, UK. There has been little or no evidence of any meaningful interest/overtures towards Zoroastrians in mainland Europe. Hence, one may aptly question the validity of including Europe in the apparently grandiose title which translates into a misnomer.

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of ZTFE on November 16, 1997, the outgoing president pleaded for assistance in regard to affairs pertaining to Zoroastrians in Europe. This was readily offered with evident sincerity. To equip itself for rendering meaningful service the managing committee was requested by letter (dated November 25, 1997) to furnish for proper study precise requirements, bereft of ambiguity/expediency, enveloping openness and candidness. As yet, the expected courtesy of any response has not matured. This discourtesy evokes the following queries to the managing committee of ZTFE:

- Is this committee cognizant of the need for such action or averse to putting pen to paper?

- Does it lack knowledge of its precise requirements in this context and by its 'silent treatment' intends to 'sweep the matter under the carpet'?

- Is this committee shy/diffident to engender openness of interfacing perhaps, as a matter of expediency/chicanery?

At a further AGM of ZTFE on November 8, 1998 (almost a year later) the president Mr Dorab Mistry, when alerted to the aforementioned scenario, unequivocally agreed to meaningfully clarify the matter 'shortly.' The further 'silent treatment' shown leads one to query if the ZTFE stands for:

- Marginalizing the Zoroastrians of mainland Europe on the altar of expediency?

- Shielding them from the rabble behavior of disruption often witnessed at Zoroastrian House?

- Avoid exposing them to a gang of

nonentities, specialized in delivering trivialities and statements void of content?

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

A special task

In every aspect of mortal life
Be it small or full of strife
Our struggle between the forces
of light and darkness
Help us, only the good to harness.
Given a free will to choose
Each man for himself, win or lose.
A special task to us is given
Our lives, by these commands are driven.
Good thoughts, good words and
good deeds
Much wisdom in these simple seeds.
Grant us the courage to live up
to those creeds
May it be for bigger or much
smaller needs.
And such is the central element
of Zarathushtra's message
To help us, as before, to get through
life's passage.
This tenet, simple but profound
Be with us till we're heaven bound.
For the cosmic battle of good and evil
Within every Zarathushti is driven.
Glorious and blessed be the ties
that bind us all
Through life's winter, spring, summer
and fall
United in Ahura Mazda and
Asho Zarathushtra
As was in the past and in all the
upcoming millennia.

DINAZ (SORAB) KUTAR ROGERS
Albany, Oregon

Spiritual awakening

Minocher Nusserwanji Pundol was born in India on September 23, 1908. Some 15 years prior to his demise on November 19, 1975, the divine ruler of Koh-e-Demavand, Pak Saroshavarez Murzban Saheb communicated with Minocher. Prior to this divine contact Minocher had displayed no spiritual powers or taught aspects of Zarathushti religious and astrological knowledge. Thereafter his abilities shone through and he explained even the most profound of concepts in a simple manner that could be understood by one and all. When our people took his advice and followed his teachings their lives changed immeasurably. Faithfully practice the tenets of our Zarathushti religion correctly and you will experience numerous blessings. Of these the most have been experienced

through constant daily recital of our ancient and very powerful manthra of *Kshnaothra Ahurahe Mazda*, which specifically means "Glory be thine Oh Dadar Ahura Mazda."

Minocher saheb's aim was to:

- Revive the faith of Zarathushtis in Dadar Ahura Mazda, Asho Zarathushtra and our consecrated atash.
- Encourage all Zarathushtis to visit the Iranshah Atash Behram as often as possible.
- Wean Zarathushtis back from following other faiths, marrying non-Zarathushtis, smoking and the daily observance of non-Zarathushti practices like making a wish and then blowing out candles on birthdays.
- Discourage belief in the false translations of our holy *Avesta* manthra made by scholars and academics.
- Uphold the custom of dokhmenashini and discourage Zarathushtis from having their bodies cremated or buried.
- Consecrate an atash adarian near the Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada.

Going from door to door Minocher saheb succeeded in creating a spiritual rejuvenation amongst India's Parsis that subsequently reached out to all parts of the world. Minocher saheb began his religious endeavors with a handful of followers who by the time of his demise numbered several thousands. Even thereafter under the leadership of the very popular Udvada mobed Behramshah Bharda, who consecrated our Pundol Atash Adaran on November 14, 1976, The Pundol Group continued to grow ever larger. After his demise three Udvada mobeds took charge of The Pundol Group. Finally during the early 1990s Godrej Minocher Pundol took charge of it. Until the advent of Minocher saheb absolutely no one could explain the true significance of our religious ceremonies like *boi*, who is and who is not a Zarathushti, why non-Zarathushtis should not attend our religious ceremonies or come before our consecrated atash, the effect of wearing sudreh-kusti, recital of *Avesta* manthra, and dokhmenashini, etc.

Besides continuing the work begun by Minocher saheb the present activities and achievements of The Pundol Group are:

- maintaining the Pundol Adaran in Udvada
- offering sandalwood to eight atash behrams and three adarians every day
- encouraging trips to eight atash behrams

- organizing trips to Diu where we first landed in India and to Bahrot and Vansda where the Pak Iranshah resided
- free distribution of sudrehs and kustis to poor Parsis

- the sending of lecturers all over the world
- the distribution of books and religious articles through the Pundol Adaran
- performance of religious ceremonies in memory of our beloved Minocher saheb.

In living memory no Zarathushti has done as much as Minocher saheb to rejuvenate our sublime Zarathushti religion. Only The Pundol Group is dedicated towards the teaching of the true knowledge of our Zarathushti religion as imparted to us by The Pak Magav Sahebs of Koh-e-Demavand.

Lastly but just as importantly only The Pundol Group has the vision, faith and courage to prepare all Zarathushtis for the arrival in the near future in India of our 100th Rainidar Saheb Behram Varjavand.

CYRUS R. R. COOPER
London, UK

Books available

Several titles on Zoroastrianism and the history of the Parsis are available with me. Among them are: *Mazdayasni (Part I and II)*, *Afrin! Zarathustra*, *The Saga of the Aryan Race*, *4111 Names for Zoroastrian Boys and Girls* and others. Those interested may contact me at Hoshie's Books, The Reward, 220, Javji Dadaji Road, Tardeo, Bombay 400007, Tel 4968361.

HOSHANG K. BULSARA

A negative reflection

We are writing to express our anger on the release of the film *Such A Long Journey* based on Rohinton Mistry's novel of the same name. Its content is nothing less than an insult to the intelligence and honor of the Zoroastrian descendants of ancient Persia.

We recognize that the screenplay is based on a novel and is, therefore, fictional. However, the Parsis portrayed in this film are shown to degrade the values of the religious teachings of Asho Zarathushtra, practise pagan rituals and indulge in utter corruption and debauchery. In short, it is a negative reflection of the Parsi community in India, and by extension, of all Parsis. If, in fact, the behavior portrayed in *Such A Long Journey* is based on events that the author recalls from his experience in India, it is a sorry reflection on Parsis and makes me question the value of the commu-

nity's survival.

It is a pity that Parsi Zoroastrians participated as screenwriter and actors in this project. They have contributed to the shameful depiction of their own people. Would the non-Zoroastrian actors have participated in a film that reflects so badly on their culture, religion and community?

Zoroastrians are in desperate need of a renaissance. They need to re-discover the nobility of Zoroaster's teachings and to renew their pride in their heritage. Instead, *Such A Long Journey* demonstrates to the world the community's lowest common denominators.

It is a great pity that a Zoroastrian such as Rohinton Mistry, who has the ability to show the world who and what we are, has made such a mockery of a community that was in our youth able to hold its head high and celebrate its members' great achievements. To write a book, even one as celebrated as *Such A Long Journey*, limits the damage to our reputation to those who bother to read. Making a movie, in the hope of exposing an even wider audience to its message, exposes the Parsis to even wider ridicule. Perhaps in future efforts Mr Mistry will redeem himself by making an effort to inspire the community.

JEHANGIR M. PANTHAKY
Burnaby, Canada

Soonil Taraporevala, screenwriter, *Such A Long Journey*, replies

Even though viewing a film is a subjective activity, it is as though Mr Panthaky has seen a completely different film from the one that is on the screen. Most audiences who have seen *Such A Long Journey* have been moved to laughter and tears. Mr Panthaky was violently angry and deeply disgusted instead. I have been trying to figure out the reasons for his displeasure, since he does not care to be specific in his letter.

What his letter does do however, is make *Such A Long Journey* sound like it's a combination of *Kamasutra* and *The Satanic Verses*. And the fictional half of my brain imagines Mr Panthaky, in his house in Canada, issuing a *fatwa*. For those who haven't seen *Such A Long Journey*, don't take Mr Panthaky's word for it. You will be disappointed if you come looking for debauchery. *Such A Long Journey* is about ordinary people, Parsis and non-Parsis, how they struggle and survive against overwhelming odds, with their compassion, faith, and yes,



Roshan Seth and Shazneen Damania
in *Such A Long Journey*

even their sense of humor, intact. It is not a story about humorless saints and perfect people. If that is the story Mr Panthaky wishes to see, he should write it himself.

Such A Long Journey was nominated for 12 Genie awards (Canada's equivalent of the Oscars), it won three. It has been a box office success across the length and breadth of Canada. There was a special screening of the film in Ottawa for the Canadian Parliament. It has been reviewed in every Canadian newspaper with great affection. I quote from a random selection of Canadian reviews (it has yet to be released in other countries) only to make this point: that these reviewers seem to have missed the debauchery, mockery, insults and ridicule that Mr Panthaky saw.

"People can relate to a great film, regardless of the setting. *Such A Long Journey* is this kind of film. It is a warm and rewarding film about the triumph of the spirit under adversity." *The Gateway*, March 4, 1999

"Thanks to the universality of its characters and humanistic underpinnings, this is a tale that is by turns wry, tragic, violent and life-affirming." *Monday Magazine*, March 11-17, 1999

"*Such A Long Journey* is a wonderful, beautiful and emotionally moving film. The relationships were rich. The messages unfolded like a flower coming into bloom... This film is about universal ideas and values. Love. Loyalty to a friend. Our hunger to believe in

something. The possibility of sharing that grace with others." *National Post*, March 5, 1999

Etc, etc, etc — all in the same vein. In case there is any doubt about the truth of the above, I will enclose with this letter the package of reviews for *Parsiana* to verify.

When I started writing the script six years ago, I asked Rohinton Mistry to tell me what the essence of his book was about. He replied: "It's about how a little man survives everything that life throws at him, without losing his humanity."

Gustad Noble, the main character, is not Noble in name only. In his life and deeds we see true Zoroastrianism at work. Rohinton Mistry has no need to redeem himself. It is Mr Panthaky's reaction that is the matter of shame.

Past pupils

The issue of January 1999 brought news of two of my pupils. Dr Yasmin Thanavala receiving an award for Excellence in Profession at the 11th North American Zoroastrian Congress at Rye, New York. What a pleasure to see Yasmin's intelligence, drive and hard work justly rewarded! Then on page 20 a familiar face peered out, our own ex-student Homee Wadia! Never can the St Xavier's Boys' Academy forget him and his capers! It was wonderful reading about his views and realizing that that clever, practical boy is still as sensible as he ever was. It was a joy to have taught him. It is a greater joy to know what a right thinking, humane man he has grown into. Homee's spirit is one that I have always admired, even though he was dubbed "The Holy Terror" of our school!

The issue of December '98 had an article on Dina Mehta. Also interesting, especially the credit given to Jiten Merchant, director of *A Sister Like You*, and also an ex-student. He was one of our most outstanding thespians on the Academy stage. A little disappointing was the letter: "For the affluent aged," (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, December 1998) on NRIs doing social work for the affluent. Does no one think of the middle-middle class? What a pity that we don't study the organization of such homes in the Christian community and start something on the lines of the Even-Tide Homes in Bangalore!

AMY BHAL

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

Once afire in Neemuch

Barely a score of Zoroastrians remain in
Neemuch to worship at the 101-year-old Dar-e-Mehr

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"There was a time when 35 of us from the Jal family would be sitting down for a meal together. Today there may not even be two," states Pheeroze Jal to illustrate how the Parsi community in Neemuch has been gradually dwindling, leaving just 15-20 members from five families to participate in each others' joys and sorrows.

Not surprisingly, there were only around 35 Zoroastrians in attendance at the centenary celebrations of their Seth Cawasji Jeevanji Mevawala Dar-e-Mehr on January 17, 1999 to mark the 101st anniversary of the agiary in Neemuch. Bomi Heerjee, president of the neighboring Indore Anjuman, was the chief guest on the occasion. A jashan in the morning followed by an intercity meet of the anjumans of Madhya Pradesh (MP), with sightseeing in and around Neemuch in the afternoon and evening were the highlights of the day when guests from Indore, Udaipur, Mhow and Ratlam enjoyed the hospitality of their Neemuch coreligionists.

Situated on the border of MP and Rajasthan, Neemuch enjoys a salubrious and temperate climate throughout the year. It stands about 150 miles from Ajmer, between the military cantonments of Nasirabad and Mhow and amidst the historic capitals of Gwalior, Chittor and Indore. The British knew it as Nimach (an acronym for the North Indian Mounted Artillery and Cavalry Headquarters) Cantonment established by the British resident Maj Gen Sir David Ochterlony. The largest opium growing area in the country, having 85 percent morphine content, is located in Neemuch. The Government Opium Factory and the recently built alkaloid factory are the other landmarks. As the Neemuch Grain Mandi claims a turnover of about

one crore rupees per day, it is important from the commercial point of view too, the details are enumerated in their souvenir brought out on the occasion of the Dar-e-Mehr's centenary.

new rooms at the Government Civil Hospital.

"Around 50 years ago nearly half of Neemuch belonged to Parsis," states Jal. Among the first members of the community to reach Neemuch was Cawasji Jeevanji Mevawala, a civil contractor. The Victoria Barracks that he built are known to have housed the British troops in 1936 and thereafter served as the training center for the Crown Representative Police (subsequently renamed Central Reserve Police Force). The Parsi Bawdi (well), Cawasji Mansion and many other buildings were also erected by Mevawala who opted to change his surname to Contractor.

Realizing the need for a fire-temple in the area to sustain the religious fervor of the growing Zoroastrian population (there were 150-200 of them nearly 100 years ago), he instructed his three sons Cooverji, Pheerozeshaw and Framji to build an agiary in his name and hand it over to the Neemuch Parsi Anjuman. Contractor died in 1889 and as per his will his sons built the Dar-e-Mehr

which was consecrated on *mah* Amardad, *roz* Spandarmad YZ 1267 corresponding to January 17, 1898. The architecture and layout of the fire-temple was entrusted to Bhikaji Nariman Marfitia.

The requisite *ijashne* and *vendidad* ceremonies prior to enthroning the fire were conducted under the instructions of Dastur Khurshedji Jamshedji Jamaspasa who had come from Mhow for the purpose. The first jashan too was performed by Jamaspasa with the first



Neemuch Dar-e-Mehr named after (left) Cawasji Mevawala. Right: Pheerozeshaw Jal

Those not familiar with the area may be surprised to learn that Pheerozeshaw Road, one of the main streets of Neemuch was built by Parsis, that water for the Fawara Chowk in the middle of the city is supplied by the well dug by Parsis, that the Government Middle School was built by members of the Mevawala family, that Jamshedji Park opposite the fire-temple is named after a community stalwart, that Zoroastrians financed the construction of three new class rooms at the Government Higher Secondary School and three



Above: Khursheed Contractor who was felicitated by the Anjuman
Right: Participants at the centenary celebrations posing for a group photo (above) and partaking of chasni at the agiary



panthaky of the agiary Ervad Rustomji Dadabhoy Dordi officiating in all the ceremonies. Thereafter at the community gathering of the Neemuch Parsis, Pheerozeshaw Pestonji Jal, who had donated the land on which stands the Dar-e-Mehr, was elected the first president of the Anjuman, the historical nuggets are provided in the souvenir.

Even prior to the agiary in their midst, there was built by Aderjee Bhikaji Erawa in Neemuch a Tower of Silence along with a bungli in 1877. Near the Tower is an aramgah where still exists the tombstone of Sohrabji Rustomji Mirza, dated YZ 1241, corresponding to 1871 AD. Erawa was head clerk in the Mewar political agency and there were "many other well decorated Parsis who were in government service in and around Neemuch," mentions Jal.

From the Contractor family, Cawasji's great-granddaughter Khursheed Contractor in whose name the cinema house Khursheed Talkies was built by her father Jehangir, is the lone surviving member in Neemuch. The firm Pheerozeshaw and Company, founded

by Cawasji Contractor's brother-in-law Pestonji Jal (he was the father of Neemuch Anjuman's first president Pheerozeshaw Jal) in 1834, remains with the family who operate their business as general merchants and dealers of Bharat Petroleum Limited and Yamaha from their premises on Pheerozeshaw Road. Pheerozeshaw's brother Bapuji was a member for 50 years of the Neemuch Cantonment Board which subsequently became the Municipal Council, mentions Pheeroze Jal. Bapuji had also been made Khan Bahadur and his enterprising nature earned him the Kaiser-E-Hind medal.

Descendants of the Jal family continue to serve the Anjuman to this day with Pheeroze Jal's mother Mani being the president and his brother Noshir the treasurer. Jer Mody is the secretary of the Neemuch Parsi Anjuman. In addition to the Dar-e-Mehr and Tower of

Silence, the Anjuman also owns the buildings in the agiary compound which are rented out as residential cum commercial premises, plus some farmlands, all of which have to be judiciously managed to ensure maximum returns for the Anjuman.

Considering that the eldest in their midst is 94 years old, and the youngest nine years, with the majority being over 50 years, the Neemuch Anjuman is deliberating on the proposal put forth at the celebrations to constitute an association of anjumans in MP. Presently they have Ervad Rohinton Karanjia who ministers to the members' religious needs and tends the agiary fire but they also know that the status of their Dar-e-Mehr fire has been reduced from an adarian to a dadgah because there was a spell when they could find no priest to offer the mandatory *boi* prayers at the change of five *gahs*. Lest the Anjuman's

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Bungli near the dokhma needs extensive repairs

assets valued at over two crore rupees suffer a similar fate for want of Zoroastrians in the city, the proposed association of MP anjumans would ensure that community properties are not misappropriated, it was pointed out.

Among the other families who had settled in Neemuch, happily engaged in

their business or profession or service, were the Marfatias, Tavadias, Postwallas and Commissariats. Some like the Tavadias are no more. This family had seven sons of whom only two married, when they were well past 50 years of age! Over the years, many started to migrate to the cities, rues Pheeroze Jal who recommends that Zoroastrians suffering in Bombay should think of relocating to Neemuch. "You can stay com-

fortably on Rs 2,000 per month in Neemuch," claims Jal. Vegetables are available for two or four rupees per kilo, he discloses.

"Around 50 years ago nearly half of Neemuch belonged to the Parsis"

Not his father's generation, but the one before that should get credit for building up Neemuch, for succeeding in their enterprises, for earning good money, believes Pheeroze Jal. They were the ones who slogged: "*Pathar phodi né paani kaariu* (cracked stones to draw water)."

Regrettably, the subsequent generations were not able to maintain their status and hold which proved disastrous for the small, isolated pocket of Zoroastrians. As Jal further points out, "It is unfortunate that the discipline, the values, the *sanskaras*, the heritage of which Zoroastrians were once so proud is now getting lost."

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WZO's new office

The parent body of the World Zoroastrian Organisation establishes its own office in Bombay

Arnavaz S. Mama

Two efficiently equipped rooms comprise the new Bombay office of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), UK. Situated atop the building Shanti, in line with the Banaji Limji Agiary, the office comprises two work areas, a waiting room and a director's cabin. There is even a little pantry tucked away — all laid out by architect Rustom Hathi who, since he designed their Senior Citizens' Centre in Navsari, has become the WZO's in-house designer. He is overseeing their new constructions in Navsari and, presumably in Sanjan, when they start the work in converting the Davierwala Bungalow there into a holiday center for the underprivileged of the community as per WZO, UK vice president and Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Dinshaw Tamboly who also manages the three WZO trusts in India. The cost of setting up the WZO's Shanti office has been financed by former WZO chairperson Dr Shirinbano Kutar in memory of her husband Dastur (Dr) Sohrab Kutar. (The office of the WZO's India chapter continues care of Union Press.)

Technically these premises belong to the Seven Seas Securities Private Limited (SSS) formed by Tamboly and his wife Bachi. After acquiring permission for international funds to deal in real estate the Tambolys invited WZO, UK to buy SSS shares. Now, only one share each belongs to Tamboly and Bachi, the balance of 60,000 having been acquired by the WZO. WZO chairman Shahpur Captain and WZO president Romy Sethna are now directors of SSS. If after three years this office shuts

down, they will be permitted to repatriate the funds, informs Tamboly.

The rural welfare project is proceeding apace from its base in Navsari with Firoze Panthaky and Farokh Cassad working together with Bachi. The entrepreneurship project, fully financed by

autorickshaws and one taxi were recovered and given to others to run, he adds.

The Senior Citizens' Centre's 20 inmates (as against a capacity for 44 — hitherto this facility has been restricted to the underprivileged of the community) enjoy indoor games like carrom and become quite competitive. December 31/January 1 was party time with noted Bombay solicitor Burjor Antia as guest of honor. (Antia is now a trustee of all the three WZO India trusts, viz The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust, The WZO Trust for Women and Children, and The WZO Trust Funds informs Tamboly.) Over Jamshedi Navroz the whole lot of them were sent for a four-day outing to Udvada's Noshirwan Hotel.

A residential building of ground plus three stories with ample parking space has been constructed at Navsari on a property gifted to the WZO by the Chichgar family in memory of their grandparents. The family has settled abroad. Development funds were provided by the Maneckbai Jejeebhoy Trust. They have already received applications for allotment of

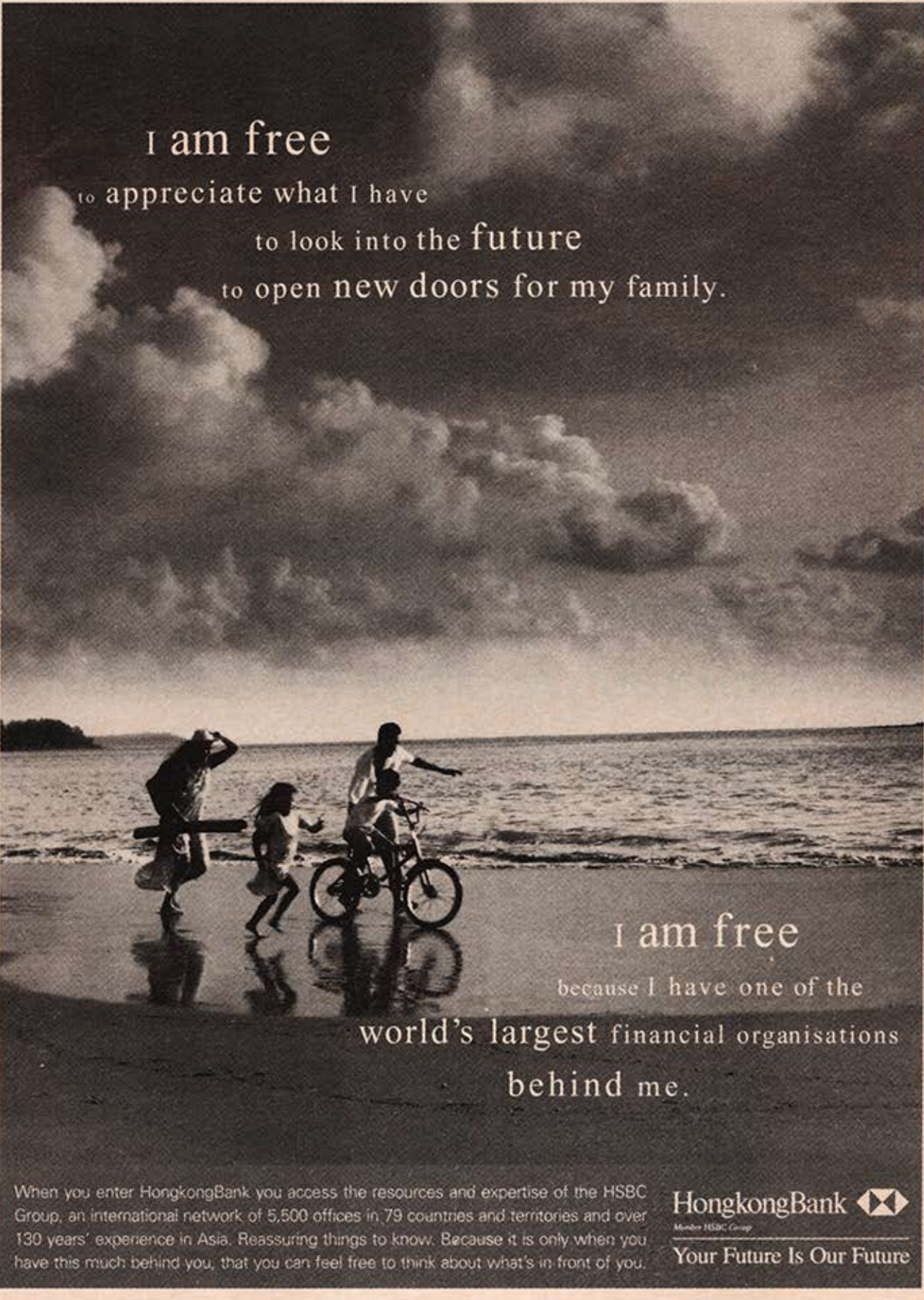
which only one or two are from Bombay, the rest being mainly from rural areas around Navsari, but allotments are yet to be made, says Tamboly. Another plot has been acquired opposite Sohrab Baug near the Atash Behram where they are planning 25 to 30 flats in a four-storied structure.

Twenty-four mobeds get monthly support from the Athornan Mandal-WZO scheme for mobeds thereby ensuring that they remain full-time mobeds, informs Tamboly. The WZO youth wing



(Top) Tamboly in the director's office. (Below) Keki Palia helping with the administration

the Maneckbai Jejeebhoy Trust continues to give interest-free loans to entrepreneurial candidates who are required to repay the loan in 40 equal instalments. By March 31, 1999 they had received over Rs 50,35,000 in repayments, informed Tamboly. So far they have encountered only five to six "bad cases" who are basically lazy, and three



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— of which Sarosh Bana is president, Mancher Karbhari, vice president and Mehernosh Daruwalla, treasurer — raised four lakh rupees through their Jamshedi Navroz function. Tamboly looks upon them as the next line of workers in community service: "committed, dedicated... hopefully a nucleus for the future."

Prospects are not quite as rosy on the world body front. "It looks like we may be back to square one," notes Tamboly ruefully. Sethna and FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America)'s Rohinton Rivetna had held prolonged negotiations for a world body constitution for WZO which had been accepted by WZO's managing committee and was due to be put before a special general meeting, says Tamboly. According to him Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India is insisting on a 75 percent representation for anjumans on the world body. "We will go only up to 50/50 (otherwise it) would mean that the individuals' say would be completely diluted and very difficult to

implement because over the years we have collected substantial assets. We've built a solid base of individual members. We can't just wish them away!" Tamboly is emphatic.

The bone of contention between the Indian Federation and the WZO has been the equal voting rights enjoyed by an individual and an association/anjuman in the WZO constitution, so it does seem as though both sides are holding on to their original positions.

"If FEZANA and the Indian Federation join together to form another body, so be it! The WZO will continue to do what it can. We're not going to pack up and go away! In the new scheme of things will the BPP continue to enjoy veto power? Without veto power will the BPP go into it? (BPP trustees) Rustom Tirandaz and Dinshaw Mehta keep talking of (the BPP as) the apex body of the world."

Tamboly informed *Parsiana* that philanthropist Naryman Dubash had suggested the formation of a council of dasturs but despite the efforts of Ervads Pervaz Bajan and Antia, nothing came

of it. "Whenever there's adversity there's opportunity. But it must be seen and grasped," Tamboly spelt out his credo. He is concerned that the BPP was mentally written off by people although "the board is now very cohesive and the basic thrust is shifting from housing to education and medical care. A fund of over a crore of rupees is being earmarked whose annual interest will be used to help defray the high cost of medical education that individuals are becoming increasingly unable to afford. Help to entrepreneurs is also underway with a dentist and a garments manufacturer being the first two beneficiaries. Tamboly has a lot of hope for the newly launched *The BPP Review*, the BPP's newsletter, with its nine-member editorial team. Also there is "no longer the master-employee mentality" between the BPP trustees and the administration, he says, crediting the BPP chief executive Behram Dastur as having started on-the-job training courses in basic management for the staff since the past two to three months with a program administered by Dr H. Athreya.

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9821043157, 9820143157. Call these two magic numbers and almost any errand you want within Bombay will be attended to. A McDonald's hamburger delivered to your office at Nariman Point. A blood test report to be picked up from the pathological laboratory in Colaba and delivered to your doctor's clinic in Dadar. A balcony ticket for the 6.30 p.m. show at Regal cinema, to be delivered to your home at Andheri. The phone bill to be collected from your residence, paid and returned. No matter how absurd the task may seem, be it business or personal, Jimmy Talati, an energetic man of 58, will get it done. It is his business to do so and he runs it under the name of Farnaz Couriers.

"Farnaz Couriers is more than just another courier company. We do far more than just collect and deliver packets and parcels. I don't know of anyone else who provides the kind of personalized service we do," says Talati. Personalized to the extent that he will inform you if the air conditioner in a movie house for which you want tickets is not working. Or if a parcel cannot be collected, rather than return empty-handed, he will immediately call back explaining the circumstances so that you know exactly what the problem is and take steps to solve it.

Noted columnist Anil Dharker marvels at the brilliance and simplicity of Talati's efforts. Writing in *The Times of India*, he observes that it is only after someone has the ingenuity to make it happen that one starts to appreciate the convenience of the personalized courier service that Talati provides.

Being a pioneer Talati admits has its special problems, especially when it comes to explaining what exactly is the nature of his work. A Brand Equity report in *The Economic Times* credits

Talati with refining the concept of a service provider of everyday "conveniences." It goes on to state: "such services can be termed FMCSs or fast moving consumer services."

Talati however sees things a little differently: "I suppose you can call us time merchants." Elaborating on the concept he adds: "What we are doing is selling time to people who value it. The time we save them by doing necessary tasks, like paying their electricity bill for instance, can be invested more productively."

Another way of looking at Farnaz Couriers, according to Talati, is that it provides a temporary peon to individuals, small businesses, the self-employed or anyone who cannot afford to employ one on a full-time basis. "Even businesses with their own peons find it more convenient to get certain tasks done through us. This way they can use their staff more efficiently in the office rather than have them wasting time standing in a queue or waiting for a bus."

In just a few years the business which started as a home based operation has grown large enough to move into a separate office of its own near Metro cinema. Most of his new business comes through advertisements placed in the local papers and by word of mouth: happy clients pass on his telephone numbers to others who could use his services.

It was around 9.30 in the morning when we visited the premises and Talati opened his office by switching on his two mobile phones. Almost immediately one of them started to ring. The person at the other end of the line had an urgent job. Certain car components had to be picked up before 12 noon from a friend's home in Wadala and delivered before 3 p.m. to a garage at Lalbaug.

Talati scribbled down the details in a logbook and assured the caller the job would be done.

No, Talati did not know the caller; this was the first time the person had got in touch with his office. "My business survives on credit as I collect only when the task is completed." Charges are nominal and depend on the nature of the work and the time involved. For instance the charge for paying a telephone or electricity bill (that includes collecting and returning it from your home/office) is around Rs 25 per bill. Likewise home delivery of movie tickets costs Rs 25 per ticket in addition to the ticket price. ("Not only am I saving you time, but I also save you two trips to the movie house: the up and down to buy the ticket at the advance booking counter. Now if you live in Borivli or Andheri, you will appreciate the service I am providing.") Urgent jobs, especially when they involve taking taxis, naturally cost more.

The risk of people not paying is very real but Talati is willing to take the chance. He believes that in addition to hard work, trust ("faith in humanity," as he terms it) is an equally important investment in his business. Yes, there are a few occasions when people have not paid for his services but such instances are rare and Talati treats them as occupational risks. "For each one person who dupes me there are hundreds who bless me," says Talati. And their blessings are his bank of goodwill. "It is a satisfying feeling knowing that I am able to earn a living serving people," says Talati.

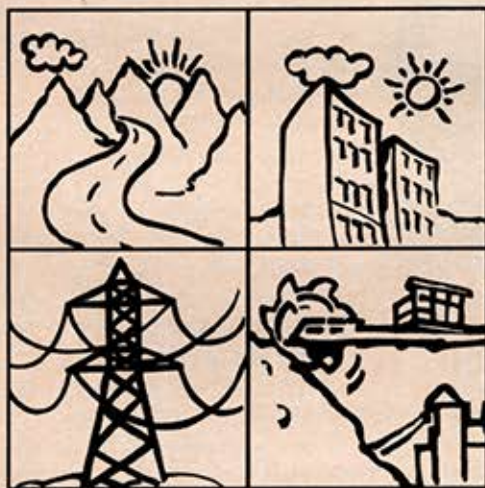
Those who know Talati realize that this is not an empty platitude. His services are free for charitable institutes and senior Parsi citizens (above the age of 65 and living alone). The only request that Talati makes in such cases is that they do not insist on urgency and allow him to fit their work into his schedule. Also don't be surprised if you find that the deliveryman attending to



Talati: offering a unique service

Photo: Gustasp Irani

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With wife Khorshed and children Homi and Farnaz

Photo: Gustasp Irani

your call is handicapped, Talati believes that their lives are difficult enough and they deserve whatever breaks they can get. And Talati pays them the same salary as his able-bodied staff members.

Currently there are 12 members on his payroll. But Farnaz Couriers is a family run business in the true sense of the word. Talati's wife Khorshed and his two college-going children Homi and Farnaz help out in whatever way and capacity they can. In fact they formed the backbone and support system when he started out on this new venture.

And it all started with *Jerry Maguire*. Cadbury Schweppes had used the movie to launch their new soft drink in India, Canada Dry. As part of the promotional drive they offered home delivery of movie tickets on condition that the recipient buy one six-pack case of the drink at a special introductory price. Talati was appointed to execute the operational side of the campaign. Once the job was over, people kept ringing him up and requesting him to buy them tickets for other movies, at a service charge naturally.

Talati realized that if people were willing to pay for making home delivery of movie tickets, they would also be willing to pay someone to perform their errands and odd jobs. It was a niche that had been long ignored and Talati decided to fill it, and with much success we might add.

The fact that he was past 50 and pioneering a new trade did not faze him unduly for the truth was that he was on a familiar wicket — movies, which had been his passion and line of work ever since he could remember. After completing his Inter Science at National College, Bandra (he passed out of school from St Xavier's near Metro in 1954) he

ventured into the real world of cinema. Over the years he exhibited movies in theaters in Nasik and Ahmednagar as well as at matinee and weekend morning shows in Bombay.

He developed a particular skill for writing catch phrases and slogans that would lure the public into the halls.

(There was a time when his Hindi translations of English titles at Alexandra cinema made regular news in the city's evening papers.) Other movie distributors and cinema halls soon recognized his talent and drafted him into writing advertisement copy for them. This led to the establishment of Farnaz Advertising that was later the platform from which he launched his new avatar as a time merchant.

But time, according to Talati, is running out for the Parsi community. The numbers are dwindling and there seems to be very little anyone can do about it. It is a matter of pure mathematics: $1+1=1$ when you are looking at reproduction equations. And since Parsi couples are unwilling to put the formula into effect more than twice in their lifetime, it will never balance. "Look around you. Most Parsi families have one or at maximum two children. We are not even replacing ourselves. We are doomed to extinction," he laments and he cannot see where the solution lies.

What the community can do while it is still around is be true to its religion, Zoroastrianism. According to Talati, one finds Parsis in almost every other house of worship, be it a mosque, temple or church. Yet in fire-temples entry is restricted to Parsis only. If Zoroastrianism does not allow conversion, then the least the community that professes the religion can do is be "loyal" to it. "You have to be loyal to the family you are born into," says Talati.

Of course, Talati has a very healthy respect for other religions though he may not worship at their altars. In fact his business is built on the foundation of trust in all humanity regardless of their faith. According to him, without this there was no way he could have ventured into uncharted territory and succeeded as a "time merchant."



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

Rave about the brave

Hormazdyar S. Dalal

Parag: Parsi Samajni Gatha by Bapsy Engineer. Published in 1998 by Navkalp Publication, C-502, Kausambi Flat, Near Four Roads, Mahalaxmi, Paldi, Ahmedabad 380007. Pp: 107. Price: Rs 75.

Bapsy Engineer is one of the very few Parsi authors, not more than five or six, writing in chaste Gujarati. Not much known as a Gujarati writer to Bombay Parsis, she is fairly popular with readers in Gujarat for her short stories for children. She has also won a couple of prizes from the Gujarat Sahitya Sabha.

Parag is a major collection written for adults by Engineer. It is outstanding for the author's command over the Gujarati language as spoken in Gujarat; and for her selection of 28 episodes of valor involving Parsi men and women mainly of the last century.

The 28 episodes not only evoke the past history of the community, but also throw light on the bold, brave and generous lifestyle of its members. The language always fits the subject; the characters are life-like, appearing in flesh and blood before the readers' eyes. Engineer's prose is simple, poetic, her imagery strong and flowing.

The book is in two parts. Part one has nine episodes dealing with Parsi wrestlers, expert *shikaris* and professional gunmen of an age gone by. The collection opens with a beautiful pen-picture of "Mahran Mamavaji-Mamajina Jamanaman (in the days of my grandfather and grandmother)." It evokes memories of an era that has disappeared: rigid in some ways, it was yet simple, happy and prosperous. Again, the language used by Engineer in re-creating such an alluring domestic picture is simple yet forceful.

Parakrami Palan is the first episode in part one, under the general title "Parsi Pahelvano." Engineer has graphically narrated the heroics of Palan, a brave and bold spirit. Once, when friction

cropped up between Vansda and Dharampur, two small states in Gujarat, Palan led the small Dharampur army and won the battle. And when the Navsari ruler deprived him of his favorite horse, he decided to regain the mare at the cost of his life. He was a trained warrior with a heart of steel.

In those ancient days when dacoity was common, Palan was a terror. His name was enough to send shivers in the bandits' hearts. He always stood by the poor and the weak to protect their lives and property against the heartless exploiters.

Another such fearless soul was Pesi Wadia of Billimora, a brave swordsman. Engineer describes him successfully in her inimitable prose.

Of the seven more such episodes, the one that strikingly appealed to this reviewer narrates the prowess of Darabshah Mody, his wife Rattanbai and old mother Maneckbai. Skillful hunters, all three were brave and ready to face the dangers of life. "Three Shikaris" is a story to remember.

Other heroic figures dealt with in this section are 'Manchi Pahelvan,' 'Rustom Ekdast,' 'Shahpur Sandh,' 'Veer Burjor' and 'Bejon Gando.' All of them are true characters who lived a hundred years ago.

But if the men of yesteryear were fearless and trained wrestlers, Parsi women were in no way inferior to them. Not only did they possess brave hearts, they were also religious and given to works of charity. In fact, religion was their strength. 'Punya-Swarup Kooerbai Darasha Contractor' was one such lady, a widow who decided to save hundreds of human lives and animals facing death due to successive droughts in Gujarat. Another such large-hearted lady was 'Paropkari Dhanbai' who pulled down the roof of her house to save men, women and children from the fury of the Tapi.

There were others too. Putlibai, a creative writer of repute, daughter-in-law of Kaikhushru Kabraji, wrote for *Stree Bodh* and other well-known magazines of the time and edited *Chambers' Short Stories* in the last century. And if Meherbai, the wife of Dorab Tata was an outstanding social worker, founder member of the Bombay Presidency Women's Council and National Council of Women, Meherben Contractor was a world-famous puppeteer who won an award from the Sangeet Natya Academy in 1984.

In the second part of the book Engineer has also included men who were excellent in their chosen fields of work and had gained fame. They are Dastur Meherji Rana and Rustomji Ghorkhodu or 'Parsi Rustomji' as described by Gandhiji in his biography, who was once instrumental in saving Gandhiji's life in South Africa when he was mobbed by a huge crowd. Khurshedji Banaji, a fearless Parsi had the courage to face his white superiors for his rights, and others like Prof Feroze Davar, whose names will figure for ages in Parsi history.

But perhaps the most attractive piece of the collection is "Tapiné Smarane." In this prose poem Engineer has described the fury, as also the beauty of the river Tapi. In powerful images she has captured all the moods of the Tapi she has experienced. As a daughter of Surat, she has done full justice to this famous river of Gujarat.

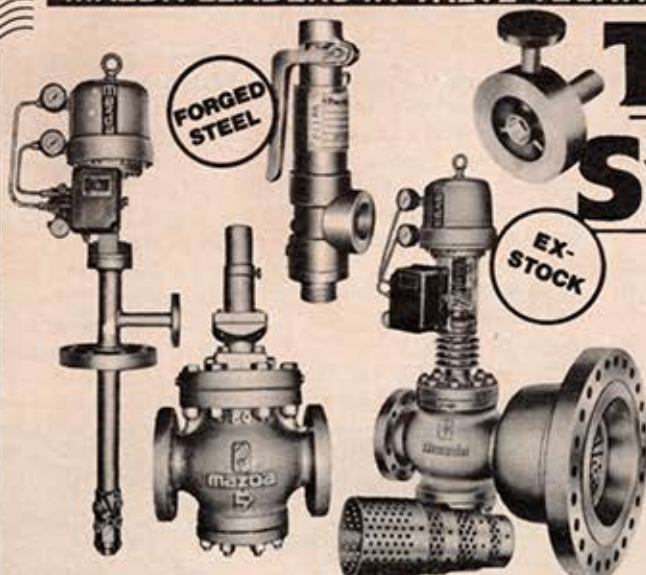
Other writers like the late Dhunsukhlal Mehta and Jyotindra Dave have sung the glory of Surat, but they left out Tapi. Perhaps they did not like her ferocious temper. But Tapi is mother personified for all the Surtis. She is furious as well as kind. Engineer has seen both sides of this mother, and her word-picture of Tapi will live in Gujarati literature for a long time to come.

Another attractive feature of *Parag* is the short piece written by way of an introduction, "Dhanyavad," by the noted writer Shri Raman Soni. Surely *Parag* will be welcomed by all lovers of Gujarati language and literature.



Engineer: simple, poetic prose

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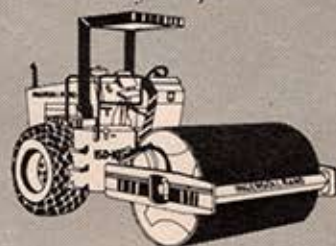
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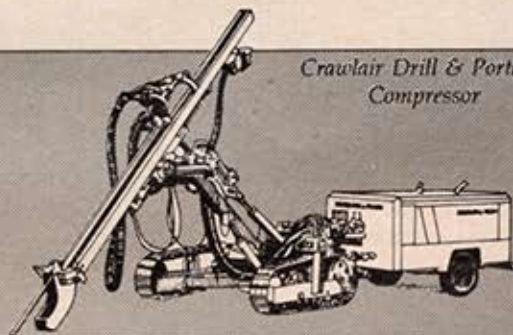
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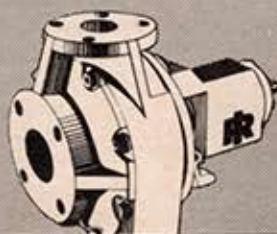
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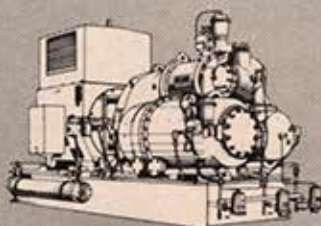
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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 23 and 33 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 39 years, averaging at 30 years.

As compared to nine births in Bombay in April there were 96 deaths. Heart disease, the major killer, accounted for 41 deaths of whom 23 were in the 80+ age group. Pneumonia/lung disease claimed 13 lives, old age/general debility, seven, cancer, six and kidney failure, four. Three victims each fell prey to diseases of the brain and liver, and hypertension. Diabetes, asthma, anemia, bronchitis and cerebral malaria felled two patients each. Among the nine isolated cases were atherosclerosis (the deposition of fatty substances in the arteries), Alzheimer's disease, "haemorrhage and shock due to cut throat injury," death due to hanging, intestinal obstruction, multiple traumatic fracture of the skull and ribs, arthritis, septicemia and tuberculosis. A stillborn baby girl and five youths, aged 16, 24, 30, 34 and 39, were also lost to the community. The coroner's report was still pending in the case of one death. The eldest to breathe her last was a 94-year-old lady. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for April, in Bombay, was 74 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

Hilla Kersy Lalkaka (72), mother of Eruch and Dinaz Hosi Wadia on April 9, 1999

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to Tanaz and Neville Buhariwalla; April 1
A girl to Hutoxi and Khurshed Anklesaria; April 14
A girl to Khushi and Cyrus Vevaina; April 15
A girl to Gulshan and Dinshaw Rasaldar; April 19
A girl to Parveen and Rajeev Gupta; April 20
A girl to Khurshed and Cyrus Marfatia; April 22
A girl to Jernaz and Mehernosh Mehta; April 23
A girl to Jasmin and Hoshang Kuka; April 28
A boy to Natasha and Rishad Lalla; April 30

MARRIED

Mahrukh Dady Lam and Sorab Minoo Panday; January 6
Parizad Rohinton Kasad and Zubin Parvez Zarthoshti-mansh; March 11
Meher Minoo Patel and Freddy Faranroj Bhesania of Bhesan; March 28
Niloufer Phiroze Sirvala of Poona and Rayomand Jal Solai; March 28
Jennifer Rohinton Shroff and Piruz Navroze Taraporevala; April 2
Meher Homi Bhathena and Tehentan Behram Damania; April 4
Hutokshi Jamshed Kadkhodai and Rayomand Homi Gimi; April 4
Nazneen Homi Madan and Jamsheed Naval Patel; April 8
Monaz Adi Colabawalla and Nozer Barjorji Mehenty;

April 11
Kainaz Jimmy Khan and Farzan Bomi Vaid; April 19
Dilnavaaz Noshir Mistry and Cyrus Minoo Contractor; April 22
Kashmira Soli Patrawala and Adil Kobad Limbawalla; April 24
Benafser Rusi Canteenwalla and Hushidar Eruch Bhathena; April 25
Hutoxi Minoo Mistry of Thane and Jehangir Noshir Sagar; April 30
Jennifer Dali Wadia and Shahrul Dali Sukheswalla; April 30

DIED

Zarir Keki Engineer (49), residing at Room no 4/2, Petit Sanatorium, A. K. Marg, 400036; April 1
Mani Pochaji Munsiff (70), 280, Bhivandiwala Hse, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 1
Meherji Dadabhoi Wadia (83), 6, Taher Bldg, 11, Jalbhoy St, Girgaum, 400004; April 1
Perviz Beji Manjra (24), Room no C-18, Seksaria Bldg no 2, Seksaria Compd, S. L. Marg, Parel, 400012; April 2
Pesi Pherozesha Bharucha (78), Meher Mans, Below Tardeo Bridge, 400008; April 3
Behram Noshir Machliwala (43), 600, Bacha Manor, Jame Jamshed Rd, Matunga, 400019; April 3
Sheriyar Diniyar Poonawalla (56), Room no 6, Toddiwalla Chawl, Sunmill Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; April 3
Naushir Fakirji Kerawalla (80), Dr Doshihai Home, Byculla, 400027; April 4
Nerges Maneckshaw Katrak (89), 668, Desai Bldg, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; April 5
Keki Jal Chinoy (62), 149 A/27, Transval Ter, Corner of Grant Rd, 400008; April 6
Shapurji Hormasji Colah (87), 3/36, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; April 6
Jahangir Ratanshah Damania (91), 10, Batliwalla Bldg, Khan Est, Chhotani Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 7
Dhunjji Eruchshaw Jeejeebhoy (64), 14, Mehta Bldg,

Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; April 7
Freny Porus Mehta (88), 117-A, Dariya Mhl, 80, Napean Sea Rd, 400006; April 7
Pesi Kaikhushroo Sanga (82), 31, Jaiphal Ter, Forjett St, 400026; April 7
Mehroo Kaikhushroo (Kaikobad) Ichhaporia (92), Room no 62, 64-66, Kashinath Bldg, Cadell Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 8
Kaikhushroo Bejonji Ashavaid (82), Indian Surveyor Hse, 315, S. B. Rd, Fort, 400001; April 9
Jamshed Eruch Dinshaw (47), 603-B, Seagull, Sherly Rajan Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 9
Dadiba Pestonji Mandvewala (80), P-14, Shapurji Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400058; April 9
Nariman Pestonji Udwadia (75), Motlibai Wadia Bldg, Chikalwadi, Grant Rd, 400007; April 9
Rustom Kaikhushroo Banker (88), Nariman Bldg, Opp Cooperage Bandstand, M. K. Rd, 400021; April 10
Khorshed Eruchshaw Limki (87), 789, Kerawalla Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, 400014; April 10
Parin Burjor Chhapgar (80), 8/10, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; April 11
Piroja Rustomji Daruwalla (79), M-11, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 11
Gool Naswanji Kharas (75), 15/6, Sir Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; April 12
Mehroo Dossoo Sanga (75), 101-B, Diamond Court, Napean Sea Rd, 400006; April 12
Naval Hormusji Bativala (81), 5/C-1, Petit Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 13
Firoze Jamshedji Damania (55), Dubash Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; April 13
Piloamai Maneckshaw Gandevia (84), 677, Society Bldg, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; April 13
Meher Adi Mistry (68), B, Banoo Mans, Cumballa Hill, 400036; April 13
Perin Sorabji Nadodwalla (76), 24, Station Ter, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 13

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Khorshed Homi Sagar (78), 1A/18, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; April 14
Parvin Jawahar Havewalla (50), Room no 11, 5, Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy Lane, Fort, 400001; April 15
Hira Sam Mistry (89), 22, Wadia Bldg, Marzban Clny, Dr Nair Rd, 400011; April 15
Homai Homi Nanji (80), 6, Unneetha, R. A. Kidwai Rd, Wadala, 400038; April 15
Homi Muncherji Nanji (87), 6, Unneetha, R. A. Kidwai Rd, Wadala, 400038; April 15
Mehra Cavas Bode (82), 87, Shirin Manzil, Chandanwadi, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 16
Erdzad Hormaz Khandhadia (16), Readymoney Bldg no 1, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; April 16
Gool Rustom Kuka (78), 12-A, Lalit, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; April 16
Cyrus Adi Bomanbehram (39), F-7, Captain Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; April 17
Vira Pessi Gandevia (78), 22-23, Adhish Bldg, 12-14, Sorabji Santok Lane, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 17
Byram Gustadji Kavarana (74), Sai Ashish, Opp Peter Dias Rd, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 17
Freny Dinshaw Kotwal (88), Nowroz Bldg, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 17
Rustomji Hormusji Marolia (82), Damania Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; April 17
Hira Kaikee Mody (83), F-34, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 17
Keki Behramji Satarawalla (81), N. M. Wadia Bldg no 16, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; April 17
Nargis Dali Daruwalla (74), B-304, Dinshaw Apts, Luncique, Navsari, 396445; April 19
Ratanbai Manekshaw (83), A-10, Sai-Darshan, 70, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 19
Tehmina Rattanji Nasirabadwala (80), G-20, Godrej Baug, Off Napean Sea Rd, 400036; April 19
Cawas Pallanji Damania (87),

Zaveri Bldg, M. S. Ali Rd, 400007; April 20
Freny Framji Dollicoooca (77), K-2, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 20
Shera Burjorji Mistry (87), R-36, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 20
Russi Bhikaji Anklesaria (75), Empire Est, 44A, Cumballa Hill, 400026; April 21
Dina Shavakshaw Cooper (81), 194, Talaty Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; April 21
Rustamji Nadirsha Kias (88), 52, Tata Clny, Parel Tank Rd, Parel, 400012; April 21
Dhunmai Bomanshaw Mehta (95), C/o D. R. Madon, 7, Pali Hill, Bandra (W), 400050; April 21
Phiroze Sorabji Daruwalla (86), 80, Irani Hse, Janmabhoomi Marg, Fort, 400001; April 22
Murzbah Ardeshtir Choksi (85), Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 22
Chandan Jamshed Jijina (59), F, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 22
Gustasp Kekobad Nadirshah (82), Gool Mans, Dinbai Petit St, Balaram St, 400007; April 22
Maneck Sorabji Wadia (82), Jer Mans, Gowalia Tank Rd, 400036; April 22
Nusserwanji Khursetji Driver (90), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 23
Goolbai Jamshed Irani (90), Room no 29, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; April 23
Nadir Rustomji Merchant (66), 4, Cyres Bldg, Gauthan Lane, Andheri (W), 400058; April 23
Jaloo Pestonji Bhadha (67), 21/3, Multani Bldg, Khambatta Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; April 24
Katy Ratanshaw Daruwalla (74), 2nd Agiary Bldg, Dr S. S. Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012; April 24
Najamai Nariman Morena (94), C-14, Captain Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; April 24
Mehroo Rohinton (65), Bhedwar Bldg, Khan Est, Mahim, 400016; April 24
Russi Kharshedji Shapurji (83), Keshav Bhavan, Khetwadi, 7th Lane, 400004;

April 24
Hormuzdji Dorabji Todiwalla (84), Danawalla Bldg, Opp Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 24
Cavas Nadirshah Bhaisa (63), 4, Sir Dorab Tata Bldg No 3, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 25
Rustom Dhunjisha Balsara (30), 1, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; April 25
Dolly Baman Desai (77), A-408, I. C. Clny, Vaibhav, Mukunda Ngr, Holy Cross Rd, Borivli (W), 400103; April 25
Gool Savak Dubash (77), Marble Arch, 52, Peddar Rd, 400026; April 25
Nari Minoo Karaka (69), Shiv Shanti Bhuvan, 146, M. Karve Rd, 400020; April 25
Homai Ratan Patel (83), 1/3, Fiona Apts, 17, Juhu Tara Rd, 400049; April 25
Jerbanoo Jalejar Patel (88), 19/3, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; April 25
Perinbanoo Rustomji Vaid (79), Parsipada Village, Surangi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli; April 25
Jimmy Sorabji Dadachanji (78), 291, Bawla Bldg, Nana Chowk, 400007; April 26
Pillloo Dhanjisha Damania (82), Room no 14, 173/175, Banaji Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; April 26
Noshirvan Bomanji Dhabhar (90), Seervai Bldg, 20, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 26
Baby girl of Firuzee Jehangir Kalvachvala (stillborn), N-4, Shapurji Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 26
Shapur Manekji Mistry (94), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 26
Dinamai Murzbah Vevaina (78), 669/7, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; April 26
Naval Jehangir Wadia (82), Nadirshah Dinshaw Bldg, 2, Babulnath Rd, 400007; April 26
Jeejeebhoy Nasserwanji Dubash (79), 26, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 27
Dara Hoshang Pochkhanawala (65), 10, Albless Bldg, Thakurdwar, 400002; April 27

Rustomji Sorabji Kotwal (65), J/8, Shapurji Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 28
Keki Faramroze Nallaseth (78), E/6, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; April 28
Dhan Dara Patrawala (69), 9, Albless Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Grant Rd, 400007; April 28
Aloo Fardunji Desai (84), Rock View, Raghavji Rd, Cumballa Hill, 400036; April 29
Freny Boman Irani (58), Room no 215/216, 260/B, Kuka Sadan, Dr B. A. Rd, Parel, 400012; April 29
Sorabji Burjorji Jithra (93), Banaji Bldg, Forjett St, Gowalia Tank, 400034; April 29
Jamshed Jehangirji Vajifdar (82), I-1, Cuffe Castle, Cuffe Parade, 400005; April 29
Minoo Dadabhoy Gandhi (77), 4, Ness Baug Annexe 2, Nana Chowk, 400007; April 30
Rustomji Dinshawji Gandhi (92), 27, Godrej Bldg, Navazbai Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 30
Noshir Rustom Irani (78), 811/14, Jame Jamshed Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 30
Vispi Minoo Irani (34), Halima Manzil, Forjett St, 400036; April 30
Mani Jamshedji Kapadia (72), Ali Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; April 30
Banoobai Peshotan Katki (87), 7-3/U, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Road, 400039; April 30
Fali Burjorji Mehta (82), Sakina Palace, Raghavji Rd, Gowalia Tank, 400036; April 30

CALCUTTA

BORN

A boy, *Urvaksh*, to *Feroza* and *Faroukh Mogrelia*; April 18

DIED

Mani Pesi Ghiara, mother of Rohinton, Jal and late Noshir; April 4
Nergis Jila, mother of Nilufer Godia and sister of Perin N. Guzder and Khorshed A. Wadia; April 4

DELHI

BORN

A boy, *Armaan*, to *Prithy* and *Zubin Gandevia*, brother to *Tania*; April 26

SURAT

DIED

Rattanshaw Bomanji Karanjia (84), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; April 22
Tehmina Jalejer Cooper (85), Sneh Sagar Apt, Vanki Bardi, 395003; April 26

CANADA

Ontario

BORN

A boy, *Shawhin*, to *Farahnaz* and *Ramin Dehmoubed*; March 19

PAKISTAN

Karachi

BORN

A boy, *Zarwan*, to *Yasmin* and *Aspi Sethna*; March 6

DIED

Kaikhushroo N. Irani (74); January 26
Hilla Hoshedar Kotwal (65); February 14
Rustom E. Master (65); February 15
Shirin Godrej Kandawalla (93); February 24
Jerbai Nariman Vatcha (85); February 28
Shera Sorabji Hirjikaka (83); March 15

UK

BORN

A boy, *Darayas*, to *Caroline* and *Zarthustra Amrolia*; November 8, 1998

Berkshire

DIED

Sam Phiroze Mistry (66), Kwestu, Harts Lane, Burghclere, Near Newbury, RG20 9HF; January 9, 1999

Essex

DIED

Dina Faramroze Kapadia (81), 33, Church Hollow, Purfleet, RM19 1QJ; February 9

Hertfordshire

BORN

A boy, *Xerxes*, to *Anahita* and *Rohinton Aderianwalla* of

Barnet, brother to *Xarius*; January 27

DIED

Boman Gustad Mama (67), 10, Kirkdale Rd, Harpenden, AL5 2PT; October 25, 1998

Leicestershire

DIED

Bamanshaw J. Kasad (71), 122, Wand St, LE4 5BU; March 6, 1999

London

BORN

A girl, *Dilber*, to *Arnavaz* and *Jashi Mogal*, sister to *Tishtar*; September 16, 1998
A boy, *Yazad*, to *Spenta* and *Cyrus Unwalla*; April 6, 1999

DIED

Homai Keki Madon (81), 3, Morven Rd, Tooting Beck, SW17 7NA; February 17
Mani Dominic Dias (81), 72, Willmore End, SW19 3DF; May 14

Middlesex

BORN

A girl, *Natasha*, to *Rosanna* and *Zubin Khambatta* in Hounslow, sister to *Ross*;

March 10

DIED

Homai Minoo Wadia (62), 30, Shenley Rd, Heston, TW5 0AD; January 15
Noshir D. Patel (77), 63, Convent Way, Hayes, UB2 5UE; February 18
Bhikhaji K. Mullan (77), 23, Cameron Lodge, 81, Stanley Rd, Hounslow, TX3 1YX; March 18

Suffolk

BORN

A girl, *Delshad*, to *Armita* and *Kaikobad Forouhar* of Ipswich, sister to *Kaizad*; April 24

Warwickshire

DIED

Khorshed Phiroz Avari (68), 7, Hollypece Hse, 53, Pimberly Rd, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7TA; November 4, 1998

USA

Georgia

MARRIED

Farima Esphandiar and *Dariush Khosravi*, son of *Parvin* and *Shahrokh* in Atlanta; November 8

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	1998*	1999	This issue	1998*	1999	This issue	1998*	1999
BIRTHS									
Boys	1	116	26	2	3	5	6	51	6
Girls	8	92	29	—	5	2	5	35	5
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	15	262	114	—	15	4	2	19	2
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	—	63	9	—	1	—	—	2	1
Females married out	—	56	14	—	1	—	—	9	—
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	47	481	165	1	125	39	8	55	12
Females	49	513	170	3	114	26	10	47	13
CREMATED									
Males	—	11	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	7	1	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 1998 (January 1998-June 1999 issues)

○Running totals for 1999 (January 1999-June 1999 issues)

Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as *Parsiana* does not have a break-up 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.

Illinois

BORN

A girl, *Trishtrya*, to *Farzeen* and *Xerxes Cama*, sister to *Stivant* at Chicago; April 24, 1999
A girl, *Shanaya*, to *Binaifer* and *Bruce Bedford* in Chicago; April 28

DIED

Arvin Rao (16), son of *Mani* and *Murli*, brother of *Anita* in Chicago; April 12

Massachusetts

BORN

A boy, *Darian*, to *Jasmin* and *Firdaus Bhathena* in Boston; August 25, 1998

Pennsylvania

DIED

Dinamai Parabia, mother of *Sam*, *Perin*, *Minoo* and *Ratan* in Scranton; March 24, 1999

Texas

MARRIED

Diana Medhora of Karachi, Pakistan, daughter of *Cooverbai* and *Keki*, and *Adil Balsara*, son of *Zarin* and *Fali* in Houston; January 1

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

Venerable Vajifdar

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Noshir Hormusji Vajifdar, 88, former president of the Nilgiri Zarhosti Anjuman and author of three books on Zoroastrian prayers, on January 14, 1999 in Ooty following cardiac arrest.

"A man of knowledge and wisdom...Vajifdar led from the front. His was a leadership to emulate and admire. One by example!" noted Sripathi Rao, a charter member of the Rotary Club of Ootacamund, in his tribute to Vajifdar. "Always so generous and willing to donate...he was the epitome of humility," recalls his colleague.

He bequeathed lakhs of rupees to charity and among the institutions which benefitted from his largesse are the Nilgiri Zarhosti Anjuman, the Lady Willingdon Home for the Elderly, the Pope Paul Mercy Home, the Blis Eye Hospital, the Indian Red Cross Nursery School, mentions Sam Choksey who is the executor of Vajifdar's will.

Although he was not ordained as a priest, invariably it fell to Vajifdar's lot to recite prayers for the community at Ooty. Every year he would lead the community at the *Adar mah* *Adar roz* and *Fravardigan* prayers. The author of three books, *Let Us Pray*, *Teach Me to Pray* and *Prayers for Parsi Children*, Vajifdar felt it necessary to teach children to recite prayers in a language they understood. Children should be initiated into the faith and ordained as priests at a later age when they are able to understand the significance of the ceremony, he had advocated in an interview with *Parsiana* (see "The Well Placed Anjuman," April 1990). All distinctions between behdins and athornans should be abolished, he had advised.

"We have no dokhmas and thank God for it. Thank God for other things we don't have," Vajifdar had candidly stated. "We have no dastur, no agiary and no holy fire. We manage very well and are free from dogmatic pressures."

Vajifdar had chosen to settle in Ooty

after his retirement in 1970. His holidays with his wife Freany (she had predeceased him in 1988 after nearly 50 years of companionship) too were spent on the hill station where his widowed mother-in-law Mary Cama had taken up residence. Vajifdar had started his career at the Imperial Bank (now known



Vajifdar: service before self

as the State Bank of India) in the despatch department at Rajahmundry and over the next three decades he gained varied experience at different branches in different departments until he resigned as secretary and treasurer of the Bank when the managing director's post was denied to him in favor of a man six years his junior, it was mentioned in his written memoirs.

Over the years he was transferred about 25 times whereby he covered the length and breadth of India, Pakistan and Rangoon in Burma. Since he had no children, he was usually considered the most apt candidate to assume new responsibilities, he explained the rationale. During his career he clearly recalled the advice of the agent at his first posting who told him that banking was a tricky business and he should believe only half of what he saw and nothing of what he heard. The intermittent years brought him in contact with memorable personalities. It was at his last posting in Madras that he remembered being received at the station by nearly 100 staff members each with a garland in hand. And while his first vehicle, a Hercules bicycle, was bought at the first posting for Rs 50, his first car, a second-hand Morris Minor was bought for Rs 15,000 during his stay in Karachi. A piano, though, was a must-buy for Vajifdar at every destination except Jullundur where none was available, wrote Vajifdar who enjoyed playing the instrument, having obtained his licentiate from the Trinity College of Music, London. He had also served on the committee of the Delhi Music Society.

Born in Karachi, Vajifdar had matriculated from the Bai Virbaiji Sopariwala Boys School there before proceeding to Bombay for his college education. He was for two years at St Xavier's College and later at the Scottish Church College from where he graduated in economics with an overall fourth ranking. Whilst at Xavier's, he had earned the tennis doubles title for the College and cricket too he played throughout his college days. When he was playing the game for the Calcutta Parsi Club, at one time both his father and he were on the same team, it is noted. In later life, he made time for golf.

Following his graduation he did a postal course in accountancy from the Davar's College of Commerce, Bombay and passed his Government Diploma in Accountancy. Later he cleared the exams of the Indian Institute of Bankers, securing the first place in India for the part II course, winning a gold medal for the highest marks in the subject of banking. "In a fit of nationalism, I offered the medal to the government for Morarji Desai's gold bond scheme and have felt sorry for it ever since," he confessed.

Many other interesting nuggets are conveyed in his 21-page autobiography replete with information on his family (his maternal grandfather Khan Bahadur Kavasji Hormusji Katrak was responsible for acquiring land for Karachi's Katrak Parsi Colony and had been knighted when he was nearing 90 years) and business associates.

There is no reference though to the road in Ooty which is named after him nor to the *Ooty Almanac*, the credit for the publication of which in 1979-80 has been given to him by the then Rotary president Sripathi Rao who describes it as being "a very precious reference book." As charter president of the Rotary Club of Ootacamund Vajifdar was also instrumental in framing the Rotary invocation which is now used in many other clubs besides theirs. For 24 years he was editor of their Rotary bulletin, *Panorama*.

As Vajifdar had written in his memoirs, "Change is a fact and necessity of life, and Ooty itself is changing fast." At the age of 84 he noted, "What my final tally will be in God's kingdom I cannot say but I hope to continue being useful till the end." Service above self was his message for all.

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