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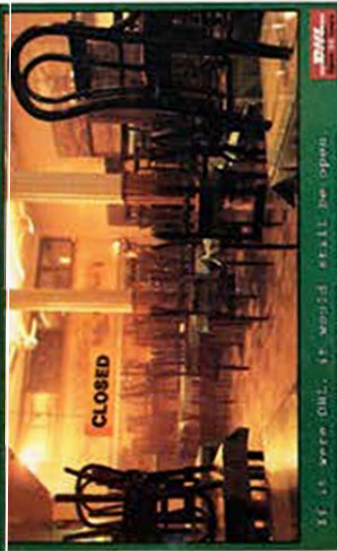


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Parsiana

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Volume 22 Number 4

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Lonavla's legacy"

Thank you for making the article about Lonavla's Daremeher your center spread ("Lonavla's legacy," *Parsiana*, July-August 1999). The story of this 'House of Light' is an outstanding account of philanthropy and miracles.

My grandfather, Rustomji Daruwalla was the priest in Aden until the protectorate gained independence. As a result, I have been told many times of how the fire was brought to India, when all the odds seemed to be against it.

In this highly intelligent era that we live, it seems that Zoroastrians have less faith in the power of Ahura Mazda. The practical stance that many of us adopt may well lead us to success, however history shows that the greatest feats have been achieved in the face of adversity, with no practical or scientific explanation.

For example, I believe that the death of the government inspector who had insisted on seeing the Aden fire before

it was flown to India can only be an act of Ahura Mazda's intervention, in that it allowed the fire's sanctity to be maintained — a most righteous cause.

An old sage said that 'where there's a will, there's a way' but an even older sage said that 'Happiness is unto him who is righteous for the sake of the best righteousness.'

FARHAD COOPER
London, UK

"Resurrection of Parsis"

Unfortunately it's because of people like K. Colabewalla ("Resurrection of Parsis," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1999) that this superb race may some day (God forbid!) be a 'has been.' All I am asking for is equality between Parsi males and females. Once again I reiterate that if Parsi men can marry outside our community and their children be wholeheartedly accepted by all and sundry, i.e. priests, punchayets, and the law (thank you, *Parsiana* Editor, for inserting the High Court judgement), then why not the Parsi ladies who marry non-Parsis?

Wake up and look at what is happening in our community elsewhere in the country. The trend has already begun where navjotes are being performed for children of non-Parsi fathers. Once the navjote is performed is it possible to try and stop them from being Zoroastrians? This is as of today. What about the mass navjotes in Gujarat by Dasturji Bode done years back?

I am not advocating conversion or any blasphemous change but only pointing out facts. It's this ostrich-like attitude of folks who hide their heads in the sand and believe all's well with their world that is responsible for the dwindling numbers of our race. Check *Parsiana* for the births, deaths and marriages and you will get some idea where we are heading. After all, my views are in the larger interest of the race and the continuity of this exceptional community. RODA D. HAKIM

Baroda

*Lonavla's Adenwalla
agiary* Photo: Homyar Mistry
(Homz Prints)

"The three Parsi myths"

With reference to the letters by Dr P. D. Sunavala, Dali Gundeia and Dr D. M. Disawalla ("The three Parsi myths," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1999), I wish to inform the above three gentlemen that without our very revered and time-tested rituals there can be no Zoroastrianism. They are trying to mock at the very foundations of the Zoroastrian religion without having any knowledge of the same. The least they can do is to strive to receive some knowledge about them. How can they suggest things which are totally unacceptable to the continuance of our religion in the true sense?

Do they know that there is an esoteric part to all these rituals, without which there will be no religion, only science. Instead of believing in the divine, we ask for scientific proofs and reasons. Even the Zoroastrian religion has no place for believers who see the religion with all sorts of doubts. If your own fathers and forefathers believed, why can't you? If you can't, first purify your mind and soul and to do that you will need bull's urine (*taro*) for a *nahn* (bath). Believe me, do this with faith and you shall find solace in all the practices of your religion of birth. Go to our religious scholars like K. N. Dastoor or Adi Doctor or Curset Patel (to name a few), they will surely enlighten you on our religion. Seek and you shall find.

The Zoroastrian religion cannot be simplified and understood by any science of this world. It needs something else to unlock all the secrets of our scriptures and rituals. If religions were structured on worldly sciences then there would be no need for the prophets who





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initiated the great religions of the world. What the scientists are doing is simply to unravel the mysteries of this world, which God Almighty has already packed in it millenniums before the birth of this material universe. We give Nobel Prizes to these scientists, but what can we give God who is waiting for us since millenniums? Nothing but an unquestioned, straightforward faith in him and his prophets and the religion of your birth, which is called *niji-Farshogard* in Zoroastrianism. Let us not be enemies of our own faith.

V. H. THANAWALLA

Poona

"Reach the inner fire"

In reply to Noshir Dadrawala's letters ("Reach the inner fire," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1998 and May 1999), I may state that all inner experiences are very personal, especially mystical/spiritual experiences. These come to people of all religions, of all walks of life, and of all ages. Most do not express these profound moments in terms of mental or physical, intellectual or spiritual energies. They only know their reality, they only know that they have experienced something which lies

beyond the scope of their natural perception. This is their inner knowledge, grasped and understood by their spiritual perception. Often it is the natural world which directs our inner selves to God.

Therefore, I do not mock Dadrawala, but if he senses "sarcasm" in my letter it is not due to his experiences he writes of so fulsomely but because, having experienced all these energies in such abundance, his final analysis and ultimate conclusion is, "Yes, indeed, with this intellectual awareness, ethical understanding and spiritual consciousness, I repeat, 'I am not ashamed to say that I worship fire.'"

This rather blunt statement dismisses the infinity of the one and only God and His spiritual attributes, it also dismisses His loving and compassionate relationship with His worshipper, His co-worker. To me, the reader, his statement presents the natural fire as Dadrawala's "god;" even though at one point he mentions "the spirit of the fire." Ahura Mazda is the essence of all He has created, so the worship of the fire would not satisfy me.

Hence my key comment (December

1998): "I find it a bit difficult to equate all these energies and spiritual ecstasy he experiences with his profession that fire is the object of his worship." It is possible that the connotation of the word "worship" is different. To me it means to adore, to pay homage to a spiritual being — to the supreme spiritual being and as I understand the act of worship, there is only one worthy of it.

To my question: "What does he mean by things spiritual?" Dadrawala quotes from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which defines spiritual as "of or concerning the spirit as opposed to matter. Concerned with the soul or spirit, etc., not with external reality."

Again, to my question: "Who is the creator of things spiritual?" the answer he gave was "Ahura Mazda."

If we acknowledge that Ahura Mazda alone is the creator of both the spiritual and the natural worlds — as the *Gathas* tell us — then He is the creator of the spiritual fire and spiritual light, as well as the natural fire and natural light; and if we acknowledge that His spiritual light enlightens our hearts, our minds, our souls, then He Himself is the spiritual light — in His attributes Vohu Mana, Vahista Mana, and Spenta Mainyu. Therefore He is the only Fire worthy of our worship and adoration.

It is such reasoning and pronouncements as come from Dadrawala that lay our community open to ridicule, and attach to us the label of "fire-worshippers," and make our religion into a "fire-cult."

All that Ahura Mazda has created is worthy of our deepest respect and reverence. It is through His natural creation that we may come to know Him. We may meditate upon His creation without it becoming a barrier to His spirit, to His mind; for though the physical contains His essence, it cannot contain Him. His power, His dominion, His divine laws of governance exist and function far beyond it — into infinity.

So how can my worship stop with the physical fire? How can I base my religion and my worship on the *Atash Nyaish*, instead of listening to the voice that speaks through the words of the *Gathas*? The voice of Asho Zarathustra.

The natural fire is finite, but the spiritual fire of Ahura Mazda is infinite. The natural fire certainly purifies all natural impurities, pollution and contaminations, but only the spiritual fire

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worry. In fact, with so much value for money, I've decided my second cupboard will also be a Godrej Storwel. There are so many

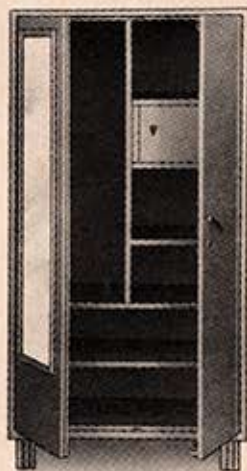
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purifies the heart, mind and soul of individuals. The physical light, in all its forms, chases away natural darkness. Only spiritual light can eradicate the darkness in an individual's mind and soul.

It is very true that Ahura Mazda's natural and spiritual worlds are intimately bound together, and are interdependent; but if we cannot ultimately distinguish between them, and we confine our worship to the physical, we limit our own spiritual growth, and the spiritual growth of the community.

If we fail to allow our minds to rise above what our physical eyes observe, or what our physical senses are aware of, such as the energies of fire, water, air, etc, then our souls, our minds remain fettered to nature alone. The natural world, however wonderful, beautiful and complex, is but a gateway which leads into another dimension — the spiritual dimension — a limitless, timeless dimension. The natural elements weren't meant to be the final objects of our worship, of our prayers; nor this world the final destination for our souls. But our souls were meant to grow, to mature, having been nourished by the experiences of body and soul.

Even such a powerful element as the fire has limitations, and must depend on other substances for its existence, whereas Ahura Mazda has none, for He is the spiritual fire. He has no form, yet He is seen in all He has created. He has no describable substance, except that of light — spiritual light — which is manifested in all other forms of light. He is the essence of all things within the universe and beyond it. He is life, wisdom, truth, justice and love; He is perfection. He has no beginning and no end — He is immortal; He is all-knowing, all-seeing.

Surely, Mr Dadrawala can understand why I say that he and I can never see eye-to-eye where our religion is concerned.

PERIN DIVECHA

Tunbridge Wells, Canada

"A negative reflection"

I so looked forward to seeing *Such A Long Journey* involving Parsi celebrities like author Rohinton Mistry and screenwriter Sooni Taraporevala. My disappointment was great when I found that the story had nothing whatever to do with the unsung saga of the heroic long journey over the centuries of staunch Zoroastrians fleeing religious persecu-

tion, whereas everybody has heard of the Jewish diaspora.

The only journey in the movie was a flying visit by rail to Delhi purely to meet a dying friend and record some secret alleged financial impropriety by Indira Gandhi, the widow of a Parsi parliamentarian. I was angered by the attempt to posthumously besmirch the financial integrity of a dedicated lady reared in the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi and one who was the granddaughter of the princely rich Motilal Nehru and the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru who gifted the ancestral home to the nation and sacrificed a very lucrative professional career to fight for the freedom of India and to serve independent India. What's more, this lady sacrificed her very childhood, her marriage and even her life in the service of the nation. She was the very antithesis of the often amoral politico on-the-take, rather a freedom-fighter gladly prepared to suffer for a noble cause. To gratuitously traduce the memory of such a sterling lady left a foul taste in the mouth as I emerged from the movie theater.

Like Jehangir Panthaky ("A negative reflection," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1999), I too found it difficult to stomach such a poor representation of the Parsi lifestyle in what was, to many of us, equivalent to a sort of Parsi premiere with a title suggestive of our long journey as refugees from religious persecution. Our minuscule community — we average about one Parsi per 10,000 Indians — played a major role in the broad advance from largely rural to modern India. Naturally the Parsis prospered and attained a lifestyle a notch or two above that of other huge communities. This telling fact of life was nowhere reflected in the very first major Parsi-based vehicle of mass popular public communication at home and abroad.

As everybody knows our tiny community is gradually disintegrating in the inexorable corrosive melting pot in this fast changing world. This makes it even more critical that we miss no opportunity to put our best foot forward while there is still time. I well



Roshan Seth (left) and Ranjit Chowdhry in a scene from *Such A Long Journey* Photo: Sharon Stephens

remember the stunning impact Richard Attenborough's blockbuster *Gandhi* had on the North American populace. And Gandhi became an almost instant household word in daily usage.

There is lesson here for us. Both 'Zoroastrian' and 'Parsi' are languishing for lack of global recognition... though they have such magnificent stories to tell of a millennium-long journey of undying devotion, come what may, to a noble religion of the Good Life. Some day this too will come to pass. Soon, I hope, through an exotic blockbuster of biblical proportions.

HOMI M. GILAN

Vancouver, Canada

"Help trace her roots"

A pleasant surprise and delight was ignited when I read "Help trace her roots" by Dilnawaz Lakdawala-Mahanti (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February-March 1999).

Coincidentally the root searched by Rose Koch of Bremen, Germany, directly concerns us, as we had lost track of my husband Firoze's late uncle Dhunjishaw Painter's family in China. This news item has been a godsend to us and we thank you for publishing this "search" article and especially Dilnawaz Lakdawala-Mahanti for being instrumental in reuniting a family that probably would never have met.

We are happy to inform you that we have already communicated with Rose Koch and her father Homi (Firoze's cousin).

Please do publish more of such "root searching" articles as I am sure there may be many Parsi families who have

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lost touch and may want to get together again.

HOMAI F. MISTRY

Trusteeship candidate

At the insistence of my numerous friends and well-wishers, I propose to stand for the office of the trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), upon the expiry of the term of Silloo K. Kavarana in March 2000.

Bhathena:

keen to serve Having been involved in the affairs of the Parsi community for the past many years, I do think I will be able to bring my rich experience to bear on the affairs of the apex body of the community.

By qualification and profession I am a practising chartered accountant and financial consultant. I am also a trustee of various charity trusts, notable among them being The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, where I currently hold the office of the joint honorary secretary.

I have a long and untarnished record of community service and I would now like to consider serving the community even more effectively as a BPP trustee.

I am sure I will enjoy the support of a large number of Parsis who feel the BPP is in need of a young, qualified, experienced and dedicated person.

ZARIR M. BHATHENA

Sanjan Day on Sunday

Greetings from Sanjan to remind you of your date with destiny — the celebration of the last Sanjan Day of this millennium on *roz* Bahman, *mah* Tir, AY 1369, corresponding to Sunday, November 21, 1999.

We celebrate Sanjan Day every year to commemorate the historic landing of our forefathers on the sacred soil of Sanjan. As usual, we will start with a jashan ceremony and end with a free community lunch.

As we will be celebrating Sanjan Day after seven years on a Sunday, we will have to prepare ourselves for a big congregation of around 2,000-3,000 devout pilgrims at an estimated cost of two lakh rupees. We have also embarked on an ambitious project of beautification of the Memorial Column by planting lawns, flowers and ornamental plants and also erecting a decorative fence and providing a new source of water supply. We intend to complete

the first phase of beautification before Sanjan Day at an estimated cost of one lakh rupees.

Your invaluable contribution sent in favor of "Sanjan Memorial Column Local Committee" to the undersigned at Khan Bahadur's Bungalow, Sanjan (WR) 396150, Tel: (02638) 66229/66459 will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged.

ROHINTAN M. DAVIERVALA
President, Sanjan Memorial Column Local Committee

Delhi Anjuman is 75

The Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) will be celebrating the 75th year of its origin. On this occasion, we are bringing out a special issue of *Dipanjali*, the house journal of the DPA. The theme as given by the president of the Anjuman, Lt Gen Adi Sethna, is "Delhi Parsi Anjuman in Zoroastrian studies towards next millennium." This subject is indeed very vast. The *Dipanjali* issue should contain information not known to the present generation regarding the activities of the DPA, the development of the Dharamshala, Bhiwandiwalla Hall, fire-temple and aramgah, besides continuing education on Zoroastrianism, the establishment of the Farohar

continued on page 49



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Events and Personalities

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"How to cope with stress," "Effective time management" and "How to be a winner" were the topics dealt with at the full day seminar organized and financed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) at Allbless Baug on September 19, 1999. Two hundred and twenty-seven Zoroastrian students from standards IX and X registered for the seminar were able to benefit from the expertise of Dr Mehroo Bengalee, former BPP trustee and vice chancellor of the Bombay University, management consultant Sarosh Dastur, and counselor Shailejha Mulay, notes a press release issued by BPP trustee and chairperson of the BPP education committee Dinshaw Tamboly.

Chief guest Bengalee's tips on proper methods to achieve excellence, attain higher goals and pursue a crisp master plan with specific techniques for self-study earned her a standing ovation. "A highly motivated and responsive youth" were then absorbed in the sessions conducted by Dastur and Mulay, the seminar ending with a summing up by Rati Wadia, principal of Queen Mary School and a vote of thanks by the head girl of her School Percis Ahresthani.

Farzeena Lakdawalla of Queen Mary School who secured 93 percent at the 1999 ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) examination was presented the Late Piroja Fali Forbes Award constituting a grant of Rs 5,000 and a silver plate, instituted by Sherie Ashburner of London. Farsheed Bamboat of St Mary's School who secured 92 percent at the same examination was rewarded with a grant of Rs 1,000 by Ashburner and a further Rs 1,500 by the BPP,

states the release highlighting the events.

In addition to Tamboly, BPP trustees Silloo Kavarana, Dinshaw Mehta and Rustom Tirandaz also attended the proceedings as did principals from dif-



From left: Tamboly, Lakdawalla, Roshan Palia and Bamboat
Photo: C. C. Gandavia

ferent schools who are on the BPP's education committee: Khorshed Bharucha, Navaz Sanjana, Dolly Edulbham, Bapsy Chubb, Diana Marfatia and Wadia. The efficient BPP administration team under the able leadership of Sheroo Master was present too.

As explained in the BPP handout, the BPP's education committee has launched multiple initiatives to induce better performance from students in the final year of their school to facilitate their admission to good colleges. The Spenta Coaching Classes provides additional coaching support in all subjects throughout the year with 67 percent of the fees borne by the BPP. "This year the BPP has sponsored 49 Zoroastrian SSC students with Rs 10,000 each for coaching in the Spenta Classes to become rankers in the final exams," notes the 1999 Monsoon edition of *The BPP*

Review which was revived in 1999.

Yet another press release issued by BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder dwells on the "three-year perspective plan which it is determined to pursue energetically to alleviate the acute housing shortage facing the community..." The plan envisages the building of 330 flats including 30 for transit accommodation, plus an additional 60 flats if statutory hurdles are overcome. The maximum, 110 flats, will be developed at Panthaky Baug where there is scope for constructing an additional 60, 100 flats are expected from the development of a new colony (acquiring an existing residential complex for revamping and building new flats); 50 through the purchase of flats in a cluster of two or more buildings; 40 from flats constructed at Dhunbai Villa, Vile Parle on donated land; and 30 flats as transit accommodation at Dadar Parsi Colony.

The total funds required for executing this plan would be over Rs 35 crores, with an additional four crores for an extra building at Panthaky Baug. "After a long while the BPP has been able to attract generous donations of Rs 7.6 crores from two trusts, six crores already received from the executors of the Maneckji Sett Trust, and Rs 1.6 crores expected shortly from the Hilla and Pesi Bharucha Trust. The transfer of development rights at one of our baugs has already helped raise nine crores as part payment. The balance of Rs 17 crores will be raised by way of interest free deposits and sale of some flats on ownership basis. The trustees are endeavoring to have a judicious mix between giving flats on lease at concessional rates to the needy and

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selling flats, to those who can afford to pay, on ownership basis on terms somewhat more favorable than the ruling market prices. A minimum of 50 per cent from the total will be given on licence basis to the needy at concessional rates," details the release.

Soliciting suggestions from the community on other viable sources of raising finance, Guzder writes, "What will also assist the trust immensely is public opinion in the community prevailing upon those who have been privileged to occupy flats in our colonies at licence fees/rents which are a pittance by today's standards, to voluntarily come forward to do their bit for those who are less fortunate and have been waiting in queue for years." He was critical of such beneficiaries who instead of assisting the BPP even refuse to pay the service and security charges and a reasonable share of the repair costs.

The BPP press note dated September 6, 1999 refers to the munificent donation of Rs 35,100,000 from Faridoon and Mehraban Zartoshty of Canada, "philanthropists beyond compare," who have specified that their monies be capitalized and the interest: from Rs 87,75,000 be used towards the third

child scheme of the BPP; from Rs 87,75,000 to provide support towards medical relief of needy Zoroastrians; from Rs 87,75,000 towards encouraging Zoroastrians in their pursuit of education; from Rs 87,75,000 towards financial support and alleviating the housing problems of Zoroastrians intending to get married. Once the interest on these investments commences, members of the community will be able to avail of these funds, specifies the press release requesting Zoroastrians to discontinue sending applications for these purposes to the Zartoshty brothers.

The Monsoon edition of *The BPP Review* also refers to the Venture Capital Fund being registered as a company and awaiting funds from various participants. Meanwhile, a few young dynamic entrepreneurs have already received interest free loans from the Punchayet under the head of Self Employment Assistance. The newsletter refers to the monies sanctioned to a dentist to start his clinic, to a jeans manufacturer, and to a lady to set up her beauty parlor.

Eight of the 16 pages of the *Review* "sent to each and every member of the Samast Anjuman" dwell on the subject of universal adult franchise, citing the

opinion of the trustees who are in favor of and against amending the present electoral scheme. A further two and a half pages are devoted to listing the donors to the BPP's appeal for the armed forces casualties, the sums totalling Rs 13,24,572, not counting the Rs 5,00,000 pledged by the BPP. The color page in this issue of the *Review* is devoted to the BPP's 13th Holiday Programme for Youth, giving a pictorial summary of the proceedings.

Relief and respite

Parsis are the most peace loving, law-abiding, dedicated people who believe that work is worship. The contribution of Parsis to Bombay and India cannot be forgotten. These words by Raj K. Purohit, minister for housing, labor, parliamentary affairs and employment, warmed the hearts of the audience assembled to celebrate the Shahenshahi New Year at Bombay's Kamaniwadi on August 20, 1999, noted a press release issued by Dini Travels, the organizers of the function.

The program commenced with a tribute to the late Capt Freddy Merchant who died in a battle accident in the recent Indo-Pakistan conflict. The gal-

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From left: Deboo, Master-Moos, Purohit and Diniar Mehta

lant soldier's mother Dolly and wife Mina were honored with shawls and flowers. (Diniar Mehta of Dini Travels and the World Zoroastrian Organisation also took the initiative to collect funds for the Merchants' two little daughters, as a contribution towards their education expenses.) Entertainment during the evening was provided by Marzban Mehta and his troupe who regaled the audience with old Parsi songs and garbas.

Among the invitees present on the occasion were *Jam-e-Jamshed* director Khorshed Deboo, Zoroastrian College president Meher Master-Moos, Salsette Parsis Association trustee Eruch Hodiwalla, Marine Drive Citizens Association secretary Minoo Dalal, Col Sukhinder Singh and Col P. K. Khanna of the Army Headquarters, Bombay and Member of Parliament Jaywantiben Mehta who joined in the garba, the finale of the evening, states the release.

Commending the efforts of Diniar and Shiraz Mehta of Dini Travels who had earlier organized the Parsi Fiesta and Navroze Dhamaka, Ervad Yezdi Panthaki, president of the Godrej Baug Residents' Association, said that "Bombay had not witnessed such a program which brought the community together" on this auspicious occasion, according to the report.

Served his motherland

His comrades from the Military Headquarters, Bombay sub-area, were there to pay Capt Freddy Hosang Merchant the final salute at Bombay's Doongerwadi. The juniors saluted the coffin, the seniors placed wreaths, and after the bugles were sounded, the highest officer lifted the Indian flag off the body and handed it over to the martyr's widow,

While on military duty with the ongoing "Operation Vijay," 29-year-old Merchant died in a battle accident at the Rann of Kutch border with Pakistan on July 22 following eight years and 11 months of service in the Army. His formation had been deployed there since May 1999 and after two days he was to proceed to Kargil. Prior to that he had been posted as staff captain at Headquarters 75 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group at Bhuj in Gujarat, the details were provided by his mother Dolly.

After his graduation in commerce from Vartak College, Vasai in 1989, Merchant was selected for training at the Officers' Training Academy (OTA) in Madras. The following year he was commissioned into the Fourth Battalion of the Assam Regiment as second lieutenant while the battalion was posted at Secunderabad. It was here that he got married to Col Sukhinder Singh's daughter Mandeep Kaur (Mina).

While serving with the 4 Assam Regiment, he also saw service in Sikkim/Manipur, and the Uttar Pradesh-Tibet border, was appointed adjutant for three years, and graduated with excellence in the young officers, commandos, regimental signal officers, anti tank officers and junior command courses of the Army, according to his curriculum vitae. He had moved to Bhuj as staff captain last year.

Born in Jhansi, Merchant had been keen to join the armed forces since his school days at St Mark's High School, Jhansi from where he passed his ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) examination. Two years prior to his graduation, he lost his father Hosang who

Dubash (left) receiving memento from Munde
Photo: Studio Suder

was employed with the Indian Railways. His mother tried to dissuade him from joining the services, but his resolve was firm, she recalls.

"With his men he was very popular because of his professional competence, dedication, loyalty and yet humane and approachable nature. Freddy was very fond of playing the guitar and singing which his men loved," notes a press release. Reportedly, just two days prior to his demise he was counting his blessings for being able to serve the Army, marrying a lovely lady and fathering two adorable daughters, Anahita, aged two years, and Riya, aged four months.



Merchant: committed to the Army

Entrusted to the police

"This is the single largest contribution made to the state police in its 138-year history," commented director-general of police Arvind Inamdar referring to the Rs 25 lakh donation made by philanthropist Naryman Dubash to the Police Research Centre for setting up an ultra modern police museum at Aundh in Poona, according to a report in *The Times of India* of September 29, 1999.

"During my lifetime I have helped in my own modest way towards social activities, but none has given me more happiness than the chance to give a donation for erecting a befitting museum, a grand police memorial," 72-year-old Dubash, an automobile engineer by training, who has donated mu-



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nificent sums towards the Zoroastrian priests, the Wadia Hospital and Maternity Home, the Marathi Patrakar Sanghatana besides many other causes, was quoted in *The Express Newslines* of September 29. "Every time during festivals and emergencies, my heart goes out to the policemen who are the keepers of the law in Maharashtra...Because of their effective help, we are safe..." added Dubash.

The museum which is planned along the lines of the Black Museum of the Scotland Yard in London is estimated to cost three crore rupees of which Rs 1.5 crore was to be raised by the entire police force of the state by contributing a day's salary, it was mentioned in *The Times*. Work on the Memorial which has been designed by noted architect Hafeez Contractor is expected to be completed within a year. On the seven-acre plot, assigned by the State Government, the Memorial will accommodate several granite slabs with flamed finishing on which the names of the 1,100 state police personnel who laid down their lives in the course of their duties since Independence will be engraved. Between the slabs will be planted champa trees so that the flowers may constantly fall on the engraved names. A fountain with a 20-foot-tall red colored water jet will also be installed at the site of the Memorial, according to the news report.

At a function held at the office of the director-general of police, the deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, Gopinath Munde presented Dubash a certificate and a memento, states a press release. Dubash's donation "is a real recognition for the police, particularly at a juncture when there is large-scale criticism of the entire department," Munde's remark was quoted in *The Express Newslines*. There was also mention of Dubash contributing to the Bombay High Court by donating towards the installation of three computers.

Family feat

Three generations of the Guzder family have created history by together clocking a total of 130 years in the service of the Rotary Club, states *Channel A*, the in-house publication of AFL Limited (formerly Airfreight Limited).

The father, Nusserwanji Guzder, joined the Rotary movement in 1933 and died at the age of 98, recording 100 percent attendance right up to the end!

His son Jamshed, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and founder president of AFL, joined the Rotary Club of Bombay, Main (one of the oldest and largest clubs in India) in 1947, while his grandsons Cyrus and Farokh have put in 26 years and 18 years respectively with the Club. "The world president of Rotary had termed this achievement unique as there must be very few families who have such a long service in Rotary," states Jamshed who has served as vice president, president and district secretary and who refused the district governorship due to lack of time.

The Club had earlier presented Jamshed a Distinguished Service Award in the form of a silver salver while in May 1998 the district governor gave him a silver lapel pin, unique in Rotary, for completing over 50 years as a Rotarian. This year Guzder received a trophy for the "best senior citizen" and another award in July 1999 from district 3140 "in recognition of the stupendous work" done by him through the years.

"I feel very strongly about the Rotary movement," remarks Jamshed. "It is a way of life, a code of behavior similar to the 'good thoughts, good words, good deeds' we have in Zoroastrianism."

Hilla P. Guzder

Indian invitees

The only two Indians hosted in New York by Carolina Herrera for a viewing of her Spring-Summer 2000 collection were high-profile columnists Bachi Karkaria and Shobha Dé. They were among the select international audience, which included media representatives of not only the fashion and glamor magazines but also some very staid publications, in attendance at the Bryant Park in Manhattan on September 13, 1999.

"It was a cut and dried, professional trade show," remarked Karkaria, with Herrera's Monday morning slot being followed in quick succession by other designers who were a part of the Fashion Week. The invitees were then taken to lunch at Restaurant Orienta, "which is presently considered the hottest place



Herrera (center) flanked by Karkaria (left) and Dé in New York

in New York," related Karkaria, after which they got an opportunity to interact with Herrera whom Dé described as "a woman of astonishing beauty," in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of September 23, 1999. The evening of September 13 saw the opening of Herrera's first salon at New York where she presented her eau de cologne, '212 for men.'

Known to exude "wicked charm," Herrera at 50-plus, continues to turn heads with her trim figure and energy packed manner," stated the *Afternoon*. "After launching her best-selling fragrance '212' (in Bombay) a few months ago...Herrera has been eyeing the sub-continent as a potential market," noted the report.

The guiding spirit

"Her genuine interest...to spread the guiding light amongst as many young girls as possible saw her emerge as a leader, both loved and respected by every guide whose life she touched," noted a condolence resolution passed by The East Bombay Bharat Scouts and Guides District Association in honor of Guider Aloo Kanga who died on May 28, 1999 at the age of 72. "Guider Kanga was consulted on matters of protocol, training, guiding events, appointments, guide programs and activities by every office bearer of the guide section and she answered, always keeping the best interests of the movement in mind," added the resolution referring to her dedication to the 123rd Guide Com-

continued on page 60

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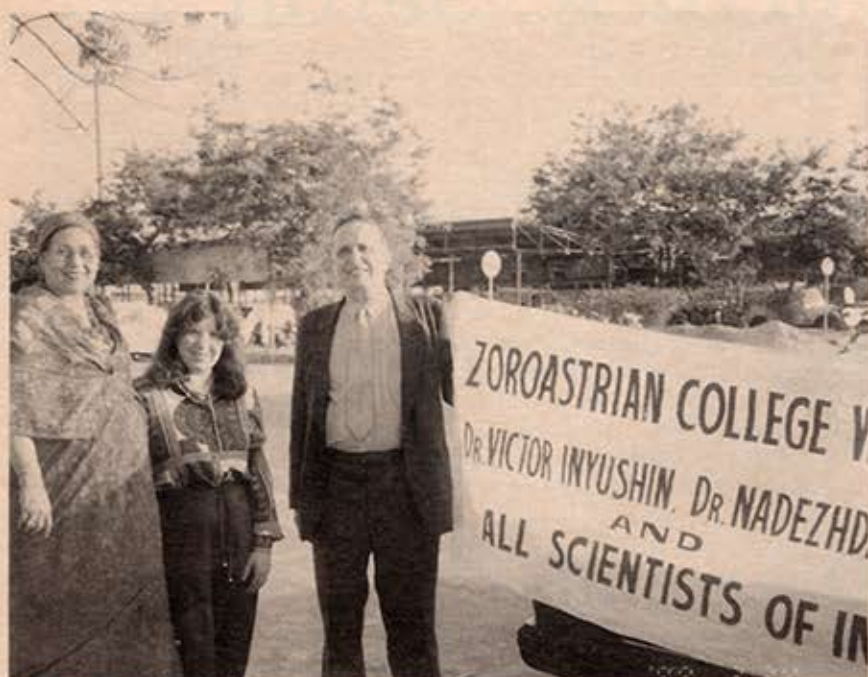
KEYNOTE - WATER - THE UNIQUE VISIT OF PROF. DR. VICTOR INYUSHIN OF KHAZAKHSTAN TO ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE SANJAN - REPORT.

In March-April 1999 marked a Scientific Research turning point for India. The World Renowned Khazakh Scientist who deserves the Nobel Prize, visited India sponsored by Shapoorji Pallonji Company and others globally, to train

Defence Ministry Scientists and Companies technologists in the latest WATER PURIFICATION TECHNOLOGY Methodology. The visit culminated from 18 years collaboration between Zoroastrian College President Dame Dr Prof

MEHER MASTER-MOOS and Khazakh State Al Farabi University Head of Bio-Physics Dept. PROF. VICTOR INYUSHIN on Bio-Energetics Aura Research.

Since World War II the global waters environmentally are polluted by underground and under-water nuclear tests. The resultant pathogeneus water is death force water with the spiral of life energy reversed in every molecule. Diseases such as Cancers, Aids and Genetic mutation have resulted from these pathogeneus waters spoiling the soil and crops growing on such polluted soils; and even the rain polluted clouds. Scientists in Europe, North America and Japan and ex-USSR were desperately researching



Upper: Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos welcoming Prof. Dr. Victor Inyushin and Dr. Mrs. Nadia Nadezhda to India.

Lower: Seminar at Zoroastrian College Sanjan in March 99 with Ministry of Defence Scientists including Dr. Ram Gopal of Defence Water Laboratory Jodhpur, Scientists from DIPAS Delhi, TIFR Bombay, and technologists from Ion Exchange and Shapoorji Pallonji's SIV Factory with Prof. Victor Inyushin, Dr. Nadezhda, Dr. Meher Master-Moos, Mrs. Bapsy Davierwalla, Ervad Yezdi Karanjia and others.



methods to reverse this pathogeneus water spiral. Only one Scientist succeeded, - The Khazakh Prof. Victor Inyushin thanks to the MAZDAYASNIE MONA-STERIE collaboration of Ancient Cosmic Wisdom - ILM E KHSHNOOM. His grandmother came from the Iranian ancestral stock of the Caucasian people. He inherited the knowledge of the Maghavs and put it into practice for the Universal Benefit of the modern times people of the Earth.

PROF. INYUSHIN'S technology equipment is put for demonstration in the College grounds so that people from all countries can come to India and easily see it, functioning, and thus decide to make use of it, worldwide.

The equipment is placed in the well, the building overhead tank, attachment to taps for drinking pure life force full water and the septic sewage tank for recycling water.

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BUILDINGS; 8. SEWAGE WATER PURIFICATION FOR CITIES; 9. MOST IMPORTANT IS THE CHANGE OF PATHOGENEOUS NUCLEAR RADIO ACTIVITY POLLUTED WATERS INTO SAFE DRINKING WATER FULL OF LIFE FORCE.

THE METHODOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT includes a combination of entirely natural modes of treatment.: (a) natural electricity from trees; (b) generators for using current from trees; — Atash e Urvajist — (c) sunlight — chromo therapy; (d) lazer purification equipment. There are no chemicals used at all.

The superiority of this technology is that it provides safe drinking water full of sparkling life force - Prana energy. Unlike the outmoded methods of ultra violet radiation which kills the bacteria including the useful ones, Prof. Inyushin's technology does not kill the anaerobic bacteria but renders them unconscious; thus even Jains can drink this water.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre gave the test reports of the C.O.D. of the well water and reported it had dramatically come down from 25 to 8. The same technology was used at the SIV factory near Coimbatore to treat factory effluent waste water pol-

luted with heavy lignin colouring and chemicals; and the C.O.D. was successful lowered from over 12,000 to less than 500.

Inyushin's methodology is very successfully in rendering the well water safe for drinking even during the monsoon. The village people can have preventive health care because they will not suffer from water borne diseases; and so villagers in India and other countries will surely benefit if this system is installed in village wells.

Also **FACTORIES HAVING CHEMICAL POLLUTED BAD WATER EFFLUENT TREATMENT PROBLEMS CAN MAKE USE OF INYUHSIN'S WATER PURIFICATION TECHNOLOGY.**

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"Love among the viruses"

Virologist Kersi Meher-Homji chronicles
cricketing events and those of Zoroastrians in Sydney

Arnavaz S. Mama

"I always do things I like to do," asserts Kersi Meher-Homji who is into his 11th term as the editor of *Manashni*, the newsletter of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales, which has "a print run of 250 but enjoys the readership of over 1,000 all over the Zoroastrian world."

A cricket commentator with several publications and a best-selling author, apart from his long-term work as a virologist, Meher-Homji is a man of many parts who carries his achievements so lightly he could blend into the background if you didn't take care, and the loss would be entirely yours!

Parsiana caught up with Meher-Homji on September 3, 1999 when he was on a brief visit to Bombay after the cricket tests in Sri Lanka which he had covered for the *Sun Herald* newspaper and *The Indian Down Under*.

Having migrated to Australia with a pregnant wife and no job in 1970, Meher-Homji notes cheerily that it was Australia's national game — cricket — that lured him there in preference to other beckoning areas like Canada and the US. He used to write about cricket for the *Kaiser-E-Hind*, *The Times of India*, *Himmat* and *Sportsweek* while he worked at Bombay's Haffkine Institute researching the polio virus. That's where he met his wife Villie as she worked towards her MSc under Meher-Homji's guidance and "love (bloomed) among the viruses," he grins.

Once in Australia both husband and wife became affiliated to Sydney University where he has left behind the conquered smallpox virus on which he worked in the initial years to metamorphose into a genetic toxicologist trekking genetic mutations caused by com-

mon toiletries. That work resulted in his team developing the Ame's test that detects the power of a chemical to cause mutants. Thereafter Meher-Homji has been a quality control officer in the virology department screening blood donations for HIV and Hepatitis B and C viruses. The coded samples evolved at Sydney University are now used in blood testing laboratories in Malaysia, New Zealand and all over Australia, notes Meher-Homji matter-of-factly. In the meanwhile Villie has been testing potential cancer-curing compounds on cancer cells, assessing the effectiveness of new drugs.

The union has produced two non-science-minded boys: Jehangir, 29, who is working in an advocate's office with an MA in industrial history and a degree in industrial law under his belt. A brilliant debater, he has represented Sydney University in inter-university and inter-school competitions and is currently toiling towards his LLB degree; the 21-year-old Zubin will graduate in economics this year, as notes the boys' father.

The AZA which developed its Darbe Meher six years ago after winning a long and acrimonious lawsuit initiated by its neighbors, has to ensure that there are adequate fire alarms and smoke detectors and that the sound decibels are kept very low, informs Meher-Homji. Its thriving Sunday school needs more space and on the agenda is a new wing whose construction cost is estimated at A \$ 250,000-300,000. The AZA's four-acre property is more than adequate for the purpose and fund gathering is the community's current preoccupation, informs Meher-Homji.

The last annual general meeting

(AGM) on August 15, 1999 voted in a new management team as most of the older board members had served their two-year quota. The 1999-2000 board of directors is led by AZA veteran Capt Noshir Sachinwalla with Dinaz Mistry as vice president, Yasmin Toddywalla, secretary and Farokh Batliwalla, treasurer. The three members at large are Mehravan (Naazi) Marzbani, Virstine Yazdanparast and Anahita Engineer, informs Meher-Homji.

The '99 AGM rescinded an article in the AZA constitution that limited management committee office bearers to a two-year term. The article had been instituted in 1991 with the obvious intention of preventing monopolization of office. In practice however it transpired that too few people desired to offer themselves for community service, explained Meher-Homji and the impugned article prevented those devoted to the community from continuing in office. The resolution to delete the said article was proposed by AZA's long-term resident priest Ervad Peshotan Katrak and seconded by former president Purviz Kolsawalla.

The '99 AGM also made a volte face on the AZA's rose garden project which had been approved at the 1998 AGM, as per *Manashni*. The idea was to create a memorial rose garden, surrounded by a walk-around and shrouded by tall sentinel evergreens, where the ashes of cremated Zoroastrians could be sprinkled. The idea had been associated with Katrak who with his wife Shernaz had accepted the responsibility of financing the project. However, there had been a lot of rethinking on the project — the nay-sayers believed it would devalue the AZA property apart from being out of sync with usual Zoroastrian practice. Instead of the envisioned little plaques on the stones in the garden to commemorate the dead, Marzbani suggested in a letter to the then AZA president



Meher-Homji: a man of many parts
Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama



HAVE A HAPPY DIWALI

Nauzer Bana that the purpose would be better served if the families so inclined remembered their dear ones by the provision of scholarships or other donations in kind.

Eventually, despite Katrak offering to scrap the provision for scattering ashes in the rose garden, the mandate of 38 voting against the proposition versus 14 for it (there were 10 abstentions) led to the scrapping of the proposal with due acknowledgement to the Katraks' generosity.

Incoming president Sachinwalla has suggested that the AZA buy a plot of land within the cosmopolitan cemetery for the exclusive use of Zoroastrians, says Meher-Homji.

Before president Bana relinquished office, he had the satisfaction of receiving an official apology from Channel Nine's *Today* show wherein Zoroastrianism had been dwelt upon on par with witchcraft and other pagan beliefs on September 12, 1997. "As you know, Nine has accepted the decision of the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) that Zoroastrianism was not adequately distinguished from witchcraft, although there was certainly no

intention by Nine to describe Zoroastrianism as akin to witchcraft. Nine did not intend to portray Zoroastrianism in a negative light at all. Nine regrets any hurt that might have been caused to the Zoroastrian community by any misinterpretation of the program," wrote its corporate counsel Ben Reichel.

At a special night at the Hurstville Community Centre on July 24, Zubin and Khushrou Bilimoria performed at the Mukesh Night presented by maestro Avijit Sarkar. Their renditions of the melodies associated with Raj Kapoor hits like *Andaaz*, *Mera Naam Joker* and others revived the memories of an appreciative audience which clamored for encores, as notes Meher-Homji in *The Indian Down Under*.

Other outstanding events were a couple of lectures by Prof Kaikhosrov Irani who has been appointed visiting professor in philosophy at the University of Sydney, informs *Manashni*. He spoke on "The Enlightenment Teachings of our Holy Prophet Zarathushtra" and on "The Prospect for a Perfecting Humanity" and addressed a special 2½ hour session for the youth explaining Zoroastrian philosophy. At the time of the Meher-Homji interview, the AZA had been preparing for an intensive two-day session on various aspects of Zoroastrian theology by Zoroastrian Studies founder Khojeste Mistree. The four-day lecture series together with a slide show on Iran was a great success, as notes a report by Bana in *Manashni*.

An interesting topic highlighted by a letter from Mr Sethna in the May-June edition of *Manashni* examines the appropriateness of holding Xmas celebrations within the Darbe Meher. Sethna's letter noted, "We Zarathushtris are law-abiding, peace loving and adaptable people, as our history of thousands of years bears witness. The word adaptable does not at all mean subordinating our traditions, culture and above all our religion. The staging of a Christmas party (a non-Zarathushtri custom) right inside the very heart of our Darbe Meher is in itself an act of subordinating our traditions and culture. Would any member of the management committee (past or present) lead me:

- To a Christian church where birthday(s) of Lord Buddha, Lord Krishna or Hazrat Mohammed is celebrated?
- Any Hindu or Buddhist temple, Sikh gurudwara or Muslim mosque where a Christmas party is staged right inside

their places of worship?"

Reasoned Meher-Homji in an editorial, "The reason why we, a microscopic community, have survived for so many centuries — maintaining our religion and culture — is our adaptability. Over hundreds of years we have celebrated different festivals in our adopted country, viz Diwali, Christmas, Holi, Id, Sankranti, Easter, Ganpati ... as social events without compromising the tenets of our own glorious religion. But for this adaptability and sharing of festivities we could have been decimated before Y1K (year one thousand) let alone Y2K! We should follow our faith (Zoroastrianism) but partake in the festivities of a country where we reside as social get-togethers."

The AZA counts about 600 Zoroastrians among its members (200 families) from a total Zoroastrian population in New South Wales of approximately 1,000, says Meher-Homji. On the anvil is the formation of FEZAAS (Federation of Zoroastrians in Australasia) which would also include New Zealand, Singapore and Hongkong, on which Dr Sam Kerr, Sachinwalla and Kolsawalla are working. Manpower is the stumbling block. "People say time *nathi*. (In my opinion it would be) a herculean job to get it off the ground," says Meher-Homji.

Meher-Homji himself is a "nine to five writer — 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.," he jests. He's currently working on an update of *Cricket's Great Families*, a 1980 publication. Also from the Meher-Homji stable is *Famous Debuts and Swansongs in Cricket*. "Cricket is in my family; my uncle had played in a test for India," he exults.

A source of amusement is how people — most often the English — see in him a resemblance to Australian Prime Minister John Howard. The incidents were enough to provoke a tongue-in-cheek article (see "My face is my mistake, Sir," I say," page 43).

Pragmatic, understated, Meher-Homji believes "intermarriage is fine if you get a good partner," quoting the instances of Sachinwalla's German wife Helga, generally attired in a white sari who was navjoted in Iran and who has taught the children their navjote prayers, etc, Shirley Mahabeshwarwalla who was a long time editor of *Manashni* before he took over and Katrak's wife Shernaz who "encourages her husband in every way" despite being a staunch Catholic.

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Muktad in Dubai

"I have an inner strength and greater sense of belonging towards the community after having prayed for the muktads for the first time," said 15-year-old Ervad Kairuz Navder, the youngest of a team of seven priests led by Ervad Daraius Dastur, who performed the stum, afringan and farokhshi prayers "faultlessly on time and with every possible attention to ensure traditional integrity and strict laws of purity," note Jasmine Tavadia and Mahrukh Cooper in an e-mail report. The first ever muktad prayers in Dubai were synchronized with the bajceremonies performed daily at the Boyce Agiary at Tardeo, Bombay.

While the seed of the idea had been germinating in the heart of long-term stalwart Percy Tantra, the logistics were taken in hand by a core team beginning June 1999: Consulting Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal for ritual correctness, importing a large new afargani and stone from India (which passed through the customs without a hitch, note the authors) while Bobby Khambatta created a marble idhoro and tailor-made iron and marble-topped tables for the vases. Fourteen muktad vases were consecrated at a fire-temple in Bombay and brought to Dubai "without them being touched by anyone," notes the report.

No non-Zoroastrian was allowed into the Tantras' large dining room which was emptied by Percy and Zarine Tantra and "converted into a serene and much-loved 'dadgah' area" three days before the ceremonies began. Throughout the muktad days Mahrukh Khambatta and Katy Madon led a tireless team of ladies through the cooking sessions beginning at 3 a.m. The event brought old and young volunteers together washing and cleaning vases and preparing them for the day with fresh flowers. "It is rare to witness or experience this sustained level of personal and individual commitment and community participation for such a ritual," emphasizes the report. Divas, prayer books, sandalwood and flowers were provided for the laity, catering to a weekday attendance of 20-40, graduating to 80-100 on weekends. The jashan on the fourth Gatha saw a congregation of 120 "even though everyone had been discreetly told to have only one member per family attend (Dubai being home to almost 400 Zoroastrian families, as per the report), due

to lack of space." Some Zoroastrian families from Muscat also drove down for the event.

"The icing on the cake," according to the report, was the largely attended public lecture by Khojeste Mistree on "The significance of the muktad ceremonies" at Avari Hotel which gave the audience the opportunity to link theory and practice, especially for the youths. "Working daily for the muktads at un-earthly hours was an exciting, cleansing and uplifting experience for me," noted 16-year-old Neville Daruwala. "This ceremony has brought a special unity and spiritual harmony within the community here," commented Dara Rajwadevala. For Roshni Pithawalla, "The feeling of 'muktad né pagé pareené' (after making obeisance to the muktad), going to work was wonderful."

A farewell to Bhumgara

When Mani Bhumgara retired as membership secretary of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), her meticulous record keeping, eye for detail, tact and persistence were recalled by WZO chairman Shahpur Captain. Having been a founder member of the WZO, Bhumgara spoke about the organization wherever she went, converting her listeners to the cause, noted Captain who also referred to her forthright and outspoken comments at WZO committee meetings.

Though never involved with the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) Captain narrated how the "small... but wiry and gritty" lady had beavered away at the problem of getting the Reserve Bank of India to permit the transfer of nearly three lakh rupees that had been donated to the ZTFE when then president Jehangirji Moos had sought funds for a new Zoroastrian House. While Moos and Captain had labored in vain for years, Bhumgara produced results through her numerous contacts in Bombay and finally a sum of about £ 3,000 was remitted to the ZTFE by the bank in India, attested Captain.

Bhumgara's retirement on health grounds earned her a special resolution at the WZO annual general meeting appreciating her services and wishing her well in the years ahead.

The Garden and the Fire

"I have always been interested in how

religious faith affects peoples' lives. For my undergraduate thesis I studied notions of heresy in medieval Iran to try to understand how a society draws the boundary between tolerance and intolerance," Nerina Rustomji told *Dawn* correspondent S. Azam Ali during an interview in Quetta's Balochistan Library.

In the piece published under the title "A Parsi girl scholar of Islam" in *Dawn* (August 1, 1999) Ali describes her as American Presidential Scholar in History at Columbia University. Earlier she had held the Hofstadter Fellowship in History and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship also at Columbia. She is at present adjunct professor at Fordham University and teaching assistant at Columbia University.

Proficient in Arabic, Persian, French and English, Rustomji graduated in history and Middle Eastern studies from the University of Texas, going on to a double masters from Columbia in history and philosophy. Currently engaged in doctoral studies in "Islamic Society," Rustomji is working on her dissertation "The Garden and the Fire: the Materials of Heaven and Hell in Medieval Islamic Culture," as notes the *Dawn* article forwarded to *Parsiana* by Noshir Mana of Karachi.

The daughter of Purvez and Aban Rustomji, her paternal grandfather Shiavax was a pioneer journalist who edited the *Quetta Times* until his death. Her paternal grandmother Gool is a social scientist and social worker. Her maternal grandfather T. N. Hodiwala, a renowned engineer, is remembered for his immense contribution to the rebuilding of Quetta after the earthquake of 1935. Rustomji, who migrated to the US with her parents and brother Arish as a kindergarten child, often comes to Quetta to meet Hodiwala who she says has had a great influence on her academic career.

There was a time when foreign policy issues had engaged Rustomji. Not any more. After her PhD she plans a life devoted to education and academics, increasing respect for human dignity, and indulging her hobbies: reading, listening to music, traveling...

Dessai's gold

"You represent what girl scouting is all about," noted Robert L. Pete, president



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Dessai, flanked by the county supervisor, displays her award

of the Board of Directors as he awarded the Gold Award from the Girl Scout Council to Freny Dessai.

The resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California, honoring Dessai lists her achievements. A member of Troop 64, Dessai has served as troop patrol leader, program aide and community service aide clocking over 200 hours of service. In the process she aided a visually-impaired woman studying at Santa Rosa Junior College by entering her assignments on computer. She also developed a web page for her Konocti Girl Scout Council to facilitate and enhance communication between the Council, its girls, leaders and the community. The resolution, co-signed by four supervisors and the chairman, "anticipates that Freny Dessai will have a heart and spirit of gold throughout her adult life."

Subsequently Dessai received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition and a letter of congratulations from Mike Thompson, member of Congress from the First District of California. Recognizing Dessai's hard work and dedication, Thompson states, "It's not easy to devote yourself to a task and to do all the things that are necessary to be successful. I'm sure it meant a lot of sacrifices for you personally and for your family..."

In a similar letter of congratulation Dianne Feinstein, US Senator for California notes, "At a time in our society when so much needs to be done, it is comforting to know that tomorrow's leaders are comprised of young women like you." And California Governor Gray Davis commended her "on behalf of the people of the State of California."

Other commendations and certifications have come from the California



Engineer (center) with Ricoh award

Scholarship Federation awarding her life membership and registering her "consistent and superior scholarship and service" and from Peggy Soberanis, executive director, Girl Scouts. Writing on behalf of the Girl Scouts of Konocti Council Soberanis notes, "This is the highest honor a young woman of your age can achieve. It requires a great deal of commitment, enthusiasm, leadership and skill to attain this level of distinction."

Behram Rustomji of Karachi who provided the relevant material to *Parsiana* notes that Dessai is the daughter of Soonamai and Jamsheed, ex Dadar Parsi Colony, Bombay who have now settled in Santa Rosa, California. According to him Dessai is the grandniece of the late Sherene B. H. J. Rustomjee who had served the Girl Guide movement in India with great distinction.

Engineer's Ricoh award

Beating 17 other contestants from the region Percy Engineer claimed the Best Sales Person award for 1998 from Ricoh Europe B. V., notes a press release. Sharjah-based Engineer is the assistant sales manager from Jumbo Electronics who won the individual trophy for having sold the maximum Ricoh copiers and plain fax paper machines.

Ricoh annually rewards its outstanding sales staff with incentive holiday trips, this year the destination being Bali, Indonesia. It was the fifth trip for Engineer in the course of his 11-year career with Jumbo Electronics, informs the write-up. On earlier occasions Engineer had been to Japan, Barcelona, Bangkok and Mexico.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

Presiding over



Valuing all life, Dr Silloo Bhagwager is endeavoring to protect it through the Plants and Animal Lovers Society
Parinaz M. Gandhi

Mr Chaiwala, the canine, happily wags his tail, jumps around in circles despite his bandaged paw, unable to contain his joy at seeing Dr Silloo Bhagwager at the clinic at the unexpected afternoon hour. Refusing to leave her side, one of the assistant veterinarians had to literally carry him away. Another dog though was content to continue his afternoon siesta on the wooden settee beside us unmindful of the interview being conducted within earshot.

They are but two of the many quadrupeds who have found a haven at Bhagwager's clinic at Ferena, opposite the Fariyas Hotel at Colaba in Bombay. There is *Ice-Cream*, the oldest resident who throws a tantrum with every new arrival; *Vodka*, the black cat, whom nobody wanted to adopt because of her color; *Lizzie* with her twisted, stunted legs who plays surrogate mother to the orphaned pups and kittens staying with her...

And the mainstay of this miniland of domestic animals is Bhagwager who casually attired in a shirt and pants with a mop of curly hair framing her face seems to be more preoccupied in tending to their needs. Her clinic serves a dual purpose — she conducts her private practice as a veterinarian

from here and looks after the stray and abandoned creatures brought to her in the course of her duties as president of PALS (Plants and Animal Lovers Society).

"Sterilization of stray cats and dogs, medical treatment for the street dogs who are frequently infested with maggots and vaccination against rabies" is the prime concern of PALS, explains the soft-spoken Bhagwager as she takes us on a tour of her clinic. Perched on a refrigerator was one cat, another was being readied for the sterilization operation, being brought there by a thoughtful lady who had seen it wandering down the streets. Lying on the surgical table was Chaiwala whose paw was being treated with laser acupuncture. In the bathroom were stacked trays, laden with kittens. After they complete two or three

months, they will be sterilized and then released. Puppies have to be three or four months of age before they can be sterilized, Bhagwager points out. To make known that these animals have been sterilized by PALS, they are also tattooed with the letter 'P' while they are still under the effects of anesthesia, tattooing being less painful than branding.

Since the cost of sterilization of one animal works out to Rs 500, PALS welcomes contributions from those who can afford to give. Of course, for animals without owners, the cost is often borne by PALS. In the case of larger dogs, PALS sterilizes them and sends them to shelters for postoperative care run by the WSD (Welfare of Stray Dogs) which has shelters at Mahalaxmi and Vashi with Daisy Sidhwa officiating as the contact person) or IDA (In Defense of Animals where Sudnya Patkar is one of the contacts).

"People generally are kind," observes Bhagwager, "but you have to draw their attention that animals require care. It is only when they see you caring for the little animal that you can expect them to show the same consideration." If residents could look after the strays in their localities and approach PALS for help, when necessary, the situation would be under control, she feels.

She recounted the inhumane condition in which street dogs were earlier housed by municipal vans, housed in cramped pens for three days and then put to sleep. The mother dogs crying out for the puppies would be electrocuted, the little puppies would be gassed... "It was sickening," she mentally relives the horror chambers. So under the initiative of N. Alimchandani, a group of animal lovers collected funds from wealthy Jains, Parsis and others to start a sterilization program in the early '90s.

PALS took shape towards the end of 1993 and was registered as a voluntary organization focussing on the welfare of stray animals and birds and also on the care of plant life in the city of Bombay. Framing the constitution and getting the necessary sanctions was the effort of vice president Capt Hormazdiar Desai. Bhagwager gives him credit for "doing the total



Bhagwager bandaging a canine at her clinic

Photo: Chetan Mistry

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PALS volunteers in action: planting saplings; feeding strays; offering a haven to the injured; and bringing warmth to the inmates at The Shepherds Home for Aged Women



groundwork." An unexpected impetus for their work came from the late Khorshed B. Umrigar, Bhagwager's aunt, whose will had provided funds for the cause of animals. "She would tell me, 'When you need the money, you will get it,'" Bhagwager remembers her words. As their work expanded, so did their corpus or trust funds which presently approximates Rs 15 lakhs, according to Desai.

Membership to this organization is open to those aged 18 years and above, on payment of Rs 500 as life membership. They are required to fill out a form stating they are "interested in promoting the care and welfare of plants, animals and birds, to prevent cruelty to them, prevent their maltreatment and to work for inculcating a positive, kind and humane approach towards them..." There are presently some 200 plus members on their register.

Anti-rabies vaccination cum awareness drives were held on weekends in and around the slums of Cuffe Parade and the Colaba market area by PALS in conjunction with WSD last year. On Sundays, volunteers from WSD come to PALS to replenish their stock of medication. In the coming year PALS has been entrusted with the responsibility of sterilizing all the dogs in Navy Nagar for which a barrack will be made



available to them. An ongoing feature is the mini camps they hold in places like Vashi, Arnala and Karjat for the vaccination and sterilization of animals in these areas. Their next camp was to be held at Panchgani. Since all the animals under her care at the clinic need her presence, Bhagwager does not undertake these out-of-Bombay trips. She

has her team of veterinarians, Dr Vidya Shankernarayanan, Dr Rewathi Mukhavilli, Dr Priya Dahanukar and Dr Priya Mundkur who share her responsibilities, ably assisted by anchor persons Kurush Mistry and Veena Pinto and other staff members of the clinic who respect her like an elder sister.

One of their popular projects is Pet PALS, where the lonely women at The Shepherds Home for Aged Women and the blind children at the Happy Home and School for the Blind are treated to the company of special pet dogs, thanks to the initiative taken by Dr Sangeeta Vengsarkar-Shah, with assistance from Gauri Apte. As mentioned in their literature, "Research and studies have revealed that immense psychological benefits accrue from interaction with animals, particularly for orphans, prisoners, the aged and the mentally ill... Besides, studies have also indicated that



pets reduce stress and help rapid recovery after heart attacks." Vengsarkar-Shah additionally does free electrocardiograms for the animals treated at the PALS clinic, gratefully acknowledges Bhagwager. Dr Padam of the Om Clinic and Dr Hingorani's X-ray laboratories where they can avail of free services are also a boon to PALS. "Maneka Gandhi (former union minister for environment) is a godsend," notes Bhagwager. "She is a marvellous human being. Because of her we get good support."

While Bhagwager names a few Zoroastrians in Bombay like Diana Mehta, Soonu Mehta and Mehroo Mistry who volunteer for animal welfare work, there are "more non-Parsis who take the initiative to help animals and fight for their rights," she feels. Members of the Zoroastrian community "are distancing themselves from nature's creation. As they become more progressive and prosperous, they are becoming more intolerant...I don't know what's happening to the Parsis." She elaborates on their aversion for stray dogs and refers to the brutality meted out to ownerless dogs who were ruthlessly beaten up by residents of a Parsi colony. "Just as all humans are not friendly, all dogs are not friendly," concedes the veterinarian while making out a case on behalf of the timid variety who usually have to bear the brunt of the ill feelings generated by the aggressive members of their breed.

Members of PALS feel strongly as do those involved with Beauty Without Cruelty when animals are treated cruelly in a circus, or used in films, or as guinea pigs for experiments, or their products used for garments and accessories, or slaughtered for food, or tethered to chains in a zoo, or used as joy rides at the cost of the animal's life.

They may not have the funds and resources to fight legal battles like other animal welfare organizations, prominent among them being Ahimsa and IDA, but they do rejoice when victory is won on behalf of victimized animals: when the blind lioness was rescued from a circus, when camels were banned from the beaches in Bombay.

Do not patronize pet shops. Caged birds are sad. Let them fly free, reminds the 1999 desk calendar brought out by PALS which carries true life stories and photos of the animals who have touched their lives, as also information on the organization and other bodies which are engaged in similar welfare work in Bombay.

At PALS, the members are concerned too about saving the wetlands and forests. "The tiniest of creatures is vital in the ecosystem of our planet," they believe. They are working towards revitalizing the Malabar Hill area by saving pockets of greenery in that locality and initiating plant activity before it is encroached by slums. Clearance for an aromatic garden at the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind at Tardeo was recently received, mentions Desai, referring to the path breaking efforts of their plant committee under the chairmanship of Dr Vispi Meher-Homji. PALS has actively supported the campaign against the use of plastic bags and advocated the use of cloth carry bags.

The dokhmenashini mode of disposal of the dead is favored by Bhagwager for she believes it "has a scientific tone to it." According to topographic requirements and convenience the body should be disposed, says Bhagwager who has spent eight years of her life in Canada. After her schooling at the Convent of Jesus and Mary, Byculia she studied

PALS office bearers (from left) Bhagwager, Perin and Hormazdiar Desai

science at the Sophia College and St Xavier's, graduating in microbiology, and then completing her postgraduation in veterinary studies at Bombay in 1966. Having come in contact with a lady vet when she was yet a child had strengthened her resolve to pursue the same calling, she recalls. Whilst in Canada she was employed in a veterinary facility, doing studies cum work before she returned to Bombay to resume her practice here.

"Zoroastrianism is a happy, liberal religion. That's what I like about it," says Bhagwager who is very glad to be associated with it. "Religion is of the heart. It's a very personal thing for me. You don't have to demonstrate it; to put photos all over the walls." Believing in the efficacy of prayers, the spinster notes, "Community prayers are a good idea." She is keen though that like men, women who have married out of the community be permitted to initiate their children as Zoroastrians. "The world is changing. We can't live in an ivory tower. Every human being is a human being first."

It is intelligence that places a human being at the top of the food chain, points out Bhagwager, even though the sense of smell of animals is remarkable, permitting them to detect cancer before a doctor can confirm it, to predict the onset of convulsions before a patient knows it, to rescue those trapped. "They can experience sadness, pain, just as we humans. We can bully them only because of our intelligence," says the veterinarian as she stresses on the interdependence of all creation where mankind is but "a part of the global whole."

The lady and the lager

All India Brewers' Association's first woman president Zinia Lawyer wants a country-wide policy for breweries

Hilla P. Guzder

"In Germany, beer is called 'liquid bread.' It is the common man's drink in the western world. In China there were almost 800 breweries, now consolidated into 500, and beer is sold like a soft drink there. But in India beer is considered a luxury item! The state governments use the beer industry as a punching bag. We have a long line of 17 taxes that hit us in making a bottle of beer!" states Zinia Lawyer, director of Associated Breweries and Distilleries Limited (ABD) who was in August 1999 elected the first woman president of the All India Brewers' Association (AIBA).

Poised, articulate and comfortably in command, Lawyer delineates the tasks ahead: "The beer industry needs help. Duties and taxes account for a whopping 40 percent of the cost whereas all over the world it is 20 percent." Beer making, says Lawyer, is an agro-based food industry and beer should be delinked from hard liquor. "You don't drink beer to get a kick. Our main aim is to persuade policy makers to redefine IMFL (Indian made foreign liquor) as 'not including beer.'" Noting that it is easier to export the amber brew than it is to transport and market it in the different states of India, the AIBA president asserts that the industry seeks New Delhi's guidance to formulate an all-India policy. "We want beer to be brought under the food processing ministry, out of the purview of the different states with their chopping and changing policies. Fortunately, Delhi seems to have woken up." AIBA has its headquarters in Bangalore and a membership figure of 50 breweries (out of the approximately 53 existing breweries) from all over India, states Lawyer.

Noting that a nip (180 ml or three-

small pegs) of medium range whisky costs Rs 30 while a bottle of beer costs around Rs 40, Lawyer believes a bottle should cost about Rs 20 for it to be competitively priced. Breweries, she elaborates, work on volumes and are extremely capital intensive. While it may cost only five crore rupees to set up a distillery, it costs Rs 30-40 crores to set up a 200,000 hectoliter per annum brewery, she estimates. Beer is produced from malted barley, states a hand-out supplied by the company, and barley is extensively grown by farmers in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The spent grains left after the production of beer are fully utilized

as nutrient cattle feed. Hops add the flavoring, she explains. A glass of beer contains more proteins than a glass of milk, she avers, with the added advantage of no fat or cholesterol, as well as low calories compared to, for example, a glass of apple juice or a cola.

Noting with pride that ABD will be celebrating its 25th anniversary in February 2000, Lawyer states that ABD is to the best of their knowledge the only brewery in the world owned and run by three women, with Lawyer's mother Mehroo Irani being the chairperson and younger sister Bakhtawar Chenoy and herself the directors of the company. The brewery was started in 1975 by their father Noshir Muluk Irani, a builder of repute whose Bakhtawar Construction Company has to its credit several well-known buildings in Bombay like El-Cid, Meher Apartments, Aderbad at Khareghat Colony and Bakhtawar at Nariman Point where ABD's offices are situated. "It was Daddy's love for beer that took him into the beer industry," smiles Lawyer. Bakhtawar too loves to quaff the golden brew, she

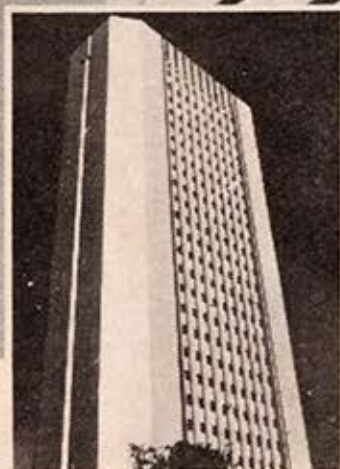
says, whereas "I like to watch other people drink beer!" Has being a woman been a deterrent or an advantage in the business world? "A combination of both," she replies, adding as an afterthought that in the balance it may have been more advantage than disadvantage! "Some mindsets however do need to change," she remarks. Lawyer was awarded the IIM-Cinni Fan Bronze Trophy for the best woman entrepreneur in 1985, the Vijay Ratna for marketing excellence, presented by the then Prime Minister Chandrashekhar in 1991, the Rajiv Gandhi Gold Medal of Merit for Management in 1992 and numerous other honors and shields.

Lawyer became her father's "right-hand man" straight after college in 1974. When ABD started brewing operations at its factory in Thana (now New Bombay), Lawyer was involved with the planning of the inauguration, the marketing, advertising, etc. "Daddy passed away suddenly in London in 1985 and is buried in the Brookwood cemetery there," she relates. Mehroo and Bakhtawar joined the company after his death. "We are all extremely attached to the company," states Lawyer who is divorced. Mehroo Irani sees to monetary and other aspects and visits their old office at Cowasji Patel Street at Fort where the accounts department and the offices of Bakhtawar Construction Company are located. "I still attend office every day," notes the septuagenarian chairperson with pride. Bakhtawar deals with the promotions, marketing and publicity, says Lawyer, "and I do all the rest — look after production, joint venture proposals, coordination, etc." A recent entrant is Lawyer's daughter Farah who has just completed college. "Now she sits on my right hand, learning the ins and outs of business. It is only by taking part in all the aspects of the company that you eventually find your niche," declares Lawyer. Son



Lawyer: heading the beer industry

Reaching for the Sky



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Clockwise from top: The ABD triumvirate, Chenoy, Lawyer and Mehroo; the flagship brand London Pilsner; ABD plant at New Bombay and the late Noshir Irani



Rustom is still studying, as are Darius and Nazak, Bakhtawar's two teenaged children.

Lawyer terms "the personal touch" one of ABD's major strengths. "We can take quick decisions among the three of us. The management is transparent and people have easy access to us. And we do pride ourselves on the quality of our beer." Last year ABD entered into a licensing agreement with the Philip-

pine-based San Miguel Corporation to brew and market San Miguel beer. Reputed to be among the world's top 20 largest selling beers, San Miguel's single brewery, San Fernando Brewery in the Philippines, brews six million hectoliters of beer a year which is more than the entire production of all the breweries in India put together. Lawyer had informed the gathering at the product's frothy launch at the Taj Ballroom on April 27, 1998. "The quality of San Miguel beer is monitored on a daily basis. Their brewers come here and samples go across to Manila for testing. They are very strict about quality," specifies Lawyer. With a state of the art bottling and Kronen canning line, states their brochure, ABD produces a range of mild and strong beers, with alcoholic strengths ranging from five percent V/V (volume by volume) to 13 percent V/V. The company's flagship brand, London Pilsner, has won awards at the World Selection of Beers for five consecutive years. "We launched India's first low calorie beer, London Diet," informs Mehroo and ABD pioneered





At the launch of San Miguel beer in India

the concept of draught beer with London Draft. The Maharaja Premium Lager is brewed especially for export and finds a good market in Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies, with trade inquiries also coming in from the USA and Europe, states their company profile. ABD has also entered into a technical collaboration with H. Dasappa Breweries Private Limited in Bangalore to brew and bottle ABD's brands for sale in the southern states of Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. "The feasibility report of our Goa project is underway," declares Lawyer.

Does she drive herself too hard? "Yes, I believe I do. I am particular about detail and do get annoyed if people can't meet my expectations," she laughs. She loves to walk, she says, particularly near the sea as walking "clears the mind and rejuvenates you." Other relaxations are aroma therapy and yoga which she does at home. Scuba diving used to be a favorite recreation but "one needs to get away to Maldives or Lakshwadeep for that" and right now, she says, all she can manage are short snatches in Goa.

"One looks at religion in a different perspective later in life," opines Lawyer who calls the whole family "reasonably agiary-going." She herself visits the fire-temple at least once a month, often just on the spur of the moment. The family patriarch, Noshir Irani, had been the president of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman and had served it in some capacity or other for 14 years, his obituary had noted (*Parsiana*, March '85). "Our community (Parsis and Iranis) is however basically disappearing,"

comments Lawyer. "Our foreign guests often ask us 'who are you' and are amazed when we inform them that there are only very few (about 90,000 plus the Zoroastrians in Iran) of us left worldwide." Some adjustments have to be made for survival, she believes, including perhaps allowing the performance of the navjote of children of Parsi women married outside the community, if the husband so agrees. Finding a spouse is difficult, she comments, and couples seem to want at best two children.

"In fact, the one-child family seems to be becoming the norm," remarks Bakhtawar, with servant problems, work-related problems, etc being instrumental for declining Parsi population, particularly in Bombay. "The Punchayet could set up more creches for the children of working women," she suggests, adding that the Parsis in Poona "seem to be better off." With husband Bezan a horse trainer, the Chenoy's visit Poona often. The late Noshir Irani owned about 24 race horses, many of whom won prestigious racing events like the 1000 Guineas, Indian Derby and The Oaks. "We still own horses," conveys Lawyer, "and I do involve myself in the Bombay season, but find it difficult to find time for the Poona races."

In keeping with the community's tradition of charity, the family had two years ago built and equipped the Noshir Muluk Irani Medical Centre for diabetes control, inaugurated in February 1997 (*Parsiana*, June 1997). This was

"Mummy's pet project," state Mehroo's daughters who add that their mother is still "fully involved with it." Situated within the Masina Hospital complex, the Centre was conceptualized by Mehroo in memory of her husband who died of diabetes-related complications. "The Centre is doing very well," enunciates Mehroo. Dr H. B. Chandalia, who had been a friend of the late Noshir Irani, is "one of the leading diabetes specialists in India and he is doing very good honorary work at the Centre," Mehroo points out. Lectures are held for diabetics and their families and there are always plenty of outpatients, she says. "The Masina Hospital authorities are considering shifting their old operation theater into the new theaters we had constructed here," informs Mehroo.

ABD has its standard, yearly charities, enlighten Bakhtawar and Zinia, including the Red Cross Ball and company sponsorships for projects of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ("we all love dogs"), associations for the blind and physically handicapped, cancer patients, etc. ABD likes to help out for charitable functions, state the sisters. London Pilsner has been the official sponsor for over a decade for Hash Houses Harriers, a group of effervescent expatriates who have formed an international club who 'run for fun' in Bombay every month. London Pilsner also sponsors car and motorcycle rallies, billiards, snooker and golf tournaments, says their brochure.

A glass of beer contains more proteins than a glass of milk, with the added advantage of no fat or cholesterol

Golf enthusiast Mehroo is the secretary of the Bombay Presidency Golf Club at Chembur and was the captain of the ladies' golf team for many years. "I still play golf every Saturday and Sunday," she chuckles.

ABD is currently in the midst of enhancing its production capacity. Laments Lawyer: "The beer market is not growing as much as the industry wants it to. With international brands like Foster's coming in, the arena has become more competitive. More reason why the central government should intervene and provide us an equal playing field. If they do nothing, the future is bleak. If, however, the definition of IMFL is changed and beer is delinked from hard liquor, I foresee a tremendous future for the beer industry."

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Confessions of a convert

In his last interview the late Neville Wadia shared his reminiscences of his childhood and family

Shernaaz Engineer

Met Neville Wadia as the lights were dimming on his last act; a little before the curtains were to close on him forever. He was well into his winter. Rather unwell, too. In constant touch with Dr Farokh Udawadia, although apparently unfazed by his health contingency.

Amazingly, he didn't let his ailing physical condition unduly cloud his equanimity. Or his enjoyment of everyday pleasures and pursuits. Still went to the Wadia Cup races at Mahalaxmi (with which his family has had a long association since the days his uncle, Sir Cusrow Wadia, chairman and chief steward of the Royal Western India Turf Club for 12 years, gave a four million rupee interest-free loan). Yes, Neville Wadia continued going to the races, enlivened by Bombay Dyeing fashion shows and Man-hunts, sitting beside grandsons Ness and Jeh in his Sunday best. He let Jehangir Nicholson photograph him looking natty in his smart suits, ties and pocket kerchiefs. Met friend R. V. Pandit on free evenings. Attended office at Bombay Dyeing on most days of the week when he was in Bombay.

It was here that I met him. Twice. At the stately Neville House at Ballard Estate, in his spacious and very elegant office on the fourth floor with portraits of his father, Sir Ness Wadia, on prominent display, five yellow roses in a crystal vase on his imposing antique oak desk.

He was cheerful, friendly, and understandably apprehensive about being interviewed. His recent conversion to Zoroastrianism (a little over a year old then), was still causing consternation and controversy among the Parsi community's devout. He didn't want to stir another storm by speaking up. "Besides, I'm rather long in the tooth now," he

had smiled, alluding to his advancing years. "Who would possibly be interested in anything I had to say?"

I persisted. He'd led an interesting

of his life proved captivating, especially since he seemed to enjoy the trek back in time himself.

Spent his early life in England. "I have very pleasant memories of growing up in a lovely house in Liverpool. I was born there in 1911 (August 22)," Neville Wadia began. He was educated at Malvern Worcestershire and Cambridge ("I was never studious, but enjoyed myself immensely"). The youngest of three, two older sisters preceding him, his father chose to bring them up abroad because the humid Bombay weather proved inclement for his mother, Lady Evelyn.

He was happy with his life until 1931, when his father's indifferent health changed everything. "I said to myself, all right now, let's get to work." So he sailed to Bombay along with his father on the liner *Viceroy of India*. This was not the first time he was making the journey by sea. "We used to undertake long and tedious journeys by boat regularly throughout our childhood. In 1916, during World War I, our boat was torpedoed by a German submarine. Luckily, the lot of us were saved." But, just about.

They were brought down on the ship's ropes into a lifeboat bobbing alongside, only to be battered and soaked as the boat made its way through a storm in Malta. The young Neville contracted pneumonia. Sir Ratan and Lady Tata were also aboard. It is said that Lady Tata's precious jewels went down with the ship. Lady Evelyn was prudent to carry hers with her.

So, early one morning in 1931, Neville Wadia came to Bombay, not on a holiday, but to work. He reached his father's residence (Strachey House), and sat down to breakfast. Outside, a Rolls



Wadia: returning to his Zoroastrian roots

life. Scion of the famous Wadia clan, grandson of the awesome and inspirational Jerbai, marriage to Mohammed Ali Jinnah's daughter. His conversion was just one among the many fascinating chapters in his life. Surely he wouldn't want to let it all slip by unchronicled.

He relented. Reluctantly. But once he started speaking, eyes twinkling, pink cheeks flushing (six months of the year spent living in Switzerland accomplished that in spite of ill health), there was no holding back. My foray into flashbacks



Above: As a young man with father Sir Ness and (below) in Parsi attire

Photo: Spectravision Labs

Royce landaulet pulled up at the door. Sir Ness adored cars, and kept a fleet. The fourth car imported into India, a French de Dion Bouton, was bought by Sir Ness, who apparently enjoyed driving it himself. Neville told his father that the landaulet had come. Yes, his father replied, it has come to take you to the mills.

Barely had he finished his breakfast, than the young Wadia lad was whisked away to work. "I had to be there by seven in the morning. There were no special privileges because I was the boss' son. You don't learn anything if you don't start at the bottom and work your way up. Years later, I applied the same discipline to my son Nusli. I'd be there with a cold sponge to get him out of bed first thing in the morning. I don't think he liked it too much then, but he realizes the value of that today. He understands why I did it, and thanks me."

Talking of the family tradition of discipline, it is said that Neville Wadia's paternal grandmother, Jerbai, was a formidable person with an acute business sense and strong convictions. Each morning, her sons, Ness and Cusrow, were expected to stop at her home, Bella Vista, on their way to work. There, over tea, they discussed the matters of the mills, of which Jerbai kept a close track. Sundays, they were to have lunch with Mother. If they failed to do so, Jerbai would pointedly have lunch sent to them to remind them of their lapse.

Neville Wadia has a few memories

of his legendary grandmother. "I remember seeing her for the first time in 1921. I was about 10 then, and had come down with both my sisters for the Christmas vacation. She had asked to see us, because we were her only grandchildren. I remember her as a very strong lady, very forceful in her views."

It is no secret that she was very disturbed by her son Ness' conversion to Christianity. His marriage outside the Zoroastrian fold must have been a great disappointment to her. A devout Parsi, it is said she spent hours praying each day and reading the *Zend Avesta* in a special room

facing the sea.

At this point, I had to ask Neville Wadia about his own conversion to the Zoroastrian faith at the ripe old age of 80-odd. What could he possibly have hoped to accomplish by it? Why did he do it? He explained: "I grew up a Christian. My father converted to Christianity shortly before his marriage to my mother who was, of course, a Christian. They were both very devout, and we were brought up that way. As I grew older I grew more and more disillusioned with Christianity, with the Pope's call against abortion and family planning in this age of AIDS. Besides, I was seeing all the discord and war in so many countries like Yugoslavia in the name of Christianity. All this was very

disturbing.

"However, all the while that my discontent with Christianity grew, I never believed it was possible to return to my Zoroastrian roots. Very late in my life did the high priests give me the go-ahead. And the first time I was actually able to step inside an agiary, I was

"There were no special privileges because I was the boss' son"

delighted." He said this with great joy, although he did confess that agiary-going hadn't become a too-frequent ritual. "I do wear my kusti and say my prayers every morning," he added. "Just the basic prayers because at my age, I must admit, my memory isn't as good as it once was."

That wasn't entirely true. And fortunately, for the purpose of our interview he could recall in vivid detail almost every incident associated with his life. Like how he met his wife, Dina. "I met Dina through her grandmother, Lady Dinmai Petit, wife of the second Baronet," Neville Wadia recollected. "I had become very fond of the grandmother, a blind lady, who was very uncanny about her perceptions of people. A lot of times she would catch hold of me and ask me uncomfortable questions, and I would try and brush her off, but most of the time her instincts would be right."

And so from the grandmother to the granddaughter, Neville Wadia found himself completely charmed. Alas! The trance of romance was soon broken. "When I wanted to marry Dina, her father, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was furious. He said, here I am trying to create a separate Muslim state away from India and my daughter wants to marry an Indian! I remember going and having a long talk with him, but he was irreconcilable to the idea. He said things would be all right if I converted to Islam. I didn't want to. It was not a religion I knew too much about, and my father was a devout Christian. He would have been very upset. So Dina converted to Christianity, and we got married in a little church (All Saints) at Malabar Hill on November 15, 1938. Her father never came for the wedding."

continued on page 48



Treasured on the Island - 4

Labor and law

With their grasp of legalese and skill at negotiations,
Zoroastrians held responsible positions in Ceylon

After being shipwrecked in the turbulent waters of the Indian Ocean a handful of Parsis landed in Ceylon in the early 17th century. In the 18th century, some adventurous Parsis had sought to establish themselves on this beautiful island as planters and shopkeepers. By the 19th century the community was so well respected that on the formation of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in 1839, Hormusjee Espandiarjee and Shapoorjee Hirji were the only two non-English members invited thereon.

At the turn of the 20th century Zoroastrians in Ceylon numbered less than a hundred, reaching their peak of over 350 prior to World War II. Then followed the exodus and today around 60 Zoroastrians remain in Sri Lanka (see "The Zoroastrians of Serendip," *Parsiana*, January 1999).

Starting with the July-August issue, *Parsiana* is chronicling the achievements of prominent Sri Lankan Zoroastrians of the 19th and the 20th century. These are edited excerpts from Behram Kaikhushroo Billimoria's historical compilation, *The Parsees in Ceylon*, culled from the memoirs of Framroze Rustomjee and K. D. Choksy. Written about nine years ago, factually there may be a change of circumstances for some of the individuals mentioned herein although we have imposed on Sri Lanka's respected legal light Kairshasp Choksy's time to check the episodes for accuracy.

The first instalment detailed the success story of Dady Muncherji also known as Dady Parsi who was a merchant held in high esteem by the locals as also the Europeans who patronized his shops. Transport facilities too came within his purview in the early 19th century and there are references to his establishment running the palanquin facilities for the convenience of passengers.

The coffee estate and exports of

Cowasjee Eduljee Colombowalla earned him substantial wealth and he used a part of it to donate a burial ground for Parsis in Colombo, mentioned the second instalment. (This old burial ground in Kottanchina was in use prior to the present one on Jawatte Road, acquired for the community by Pestonjee Dinshawjee Khan.) To Framjee Bhikhajee and Company goes the credit for making possible the influx of many Parsis from India. The Khan Clock Tower and the Crippled Children's Ward bear testimony to their largesse. Framjee House was the venue for all Parsi festivities and it was also customary to have an "open house" for all Parsis every Sunday, it was recounted.

The rags to riches story of Rustomjee Muncherjee who had assiduously toiled to build up his business empire and invariably presided over every meeting of the community was related in the third instalment. Among the leading professionals of the 20th century were Homi Framroze Billimoria who enjoyed the distinction of serving as the first Ceylonese (the previous incumbents being English) chief architect of the public works department of the government and Dr Rustom Pestonjee who had served the King during World War I and returned with distinctions in war service. Some of the imposing structures erected by Billimoria are the Independence Hall, The Elphinstone and Majestic Theatres and Navroz Baug. As superintendent of the Leper Asylum in Hendala Pestonjee played host to the Parsi community every Christmas when they gathered there to celebrate the occasion with the patients.

Another revered medical practitioner was Dr Dadabhoy Pestonjee Banajee who had served the Maharaja of Morvi before being appointed member of the Colombo Municipality, states this fourth instalment. Even though the Maharaja

followed Banajee to Ceylon to persuade him to return, Banajee's wife would not allow it for one of his duties was to taste the food before it was served to the Maharaja which she felt could endanger his life. The legal fraternity's claim to fame was Nariman Kaikhushroo Choksy who was appointed King's Counsel and his son Kairshasp who officiates as President's Counsel. The Prayer Hall and priest's residence known as Navroz Baug were constructed by Meherbai who was keen to fulfil her husband Pallonjee Nowrojee Kapadia's dream project.

The Parasmani Hall which is in use by the Parsi Sports Club was the combined effort of Framroze Rustomjee who donated the land and Ruttonshah Rustomjee who bore the cost of construction, it is explained in the fifth instalment. As per Ruttonshah's last will, every year the community is invited to a dinner at the Navroz Baug on a date close to his death anniversary. The academician Kaikhushroo Billimoria, who as principal of the Dharmaraja College was responsible for building up the center of learning into a reputed institute, was always happy to host Parsi visitors to Kandy as theirs was the only Zoroastrian family resident there.

Many other outstanding Parsis have their roots in Ceylon. Professional, business and/or family commitments may have persuaded them to settle in other lands. But their accomplishments are fondly recalled in the final episode of this treatise on Sri Lankan Zoroastrians.

...

In 1884 came to Ceylon Kaikhushroo Dadabhoy Choksy. Born in Surat in 1863 he was educated there. He joined the firm of D. B. Khan and Company in Bombay in the year 1882 as a book-keeper, and then came to Ceylon. He joined the firm of Framjee Bhikhajee and

Company as a bookkeeper. He became manager in 1895. Later on he was appointed attorney of the proprietors of the company and served them until his death in 1938.

Choksy was one of Ceylon's leading Parsi residents. He was a committee member of the Rustomjee Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy Scholarship Fund at the Ceylon Medical College; committee member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and vice president of the Friend-in-Need Society; member of the Indian Mercantile Chamber and president thereof in 1932. He was a trustee of the Ceylon Parsi Anjuman Trust Funds from 1923 and president of the board of trustees from 1929; president of the Indian Club in 1931. K. D. Choksy was a learned gentleman well versed in the Zoroastrian scriptures and afforded religious instruction to the Parsis and took a very prominent part in the affairs of the Parsis till the date of his death.

He was married to Dinbai (daughter of Framjee Pestonjee Udhnavala) who died in Colombo in December 1904 aged 37 years. He had four daughters and one son. Three of his daughters married and settled down in India but his son Nariman and his daughter Aimai remained with him in Ceylon.

After a remarkable career at St Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, and at the Law College in Colombo, Nariman took his oath as a proctor of the Supreme Court of Ceylon in 1917. He then teamed up with the well-known police court lawyer, Merrill Pereira and established the firm of Merrill Pereira and Choksy. He then joined the firm of F.J. and G. De Saram for a short time. In the meantime he qualified as an advocate and in 1923 started practice in the original courts as well as in the appeal courts and built up a very lucrative practice. His name and fame spread and in 1947 he was appointed King's Counsel. He was later accommodated on the Bench of the Supreme Court where he served from November 1951 to August 1952 after which he reverted to his practice at the Bar. In 1952 he was appointed to chair a committee of inquiry on local government in Ceylon. His report has

been of such value that it is continually in use. At the end of 1960 he retired from practice and took to business. He joined the firm of Hentley Garments of which his son Rointun was a director. He continued in this business till he passed away in 1973 aged 77 years. He was married to Khorshed, the daughter of C. N. Lakdawalla and they had three sons and three daughters. Khorshed died in 1976 aged 69.

Kairshasp (Kasi) Nariman Choksy followed in his father's footsteps and enrolled as an advocate of the Supreme Court in 1958 and soon became well-known for his skill and knowledge of the law. In September 1981 he was appointed President's Counsel and there is hardly a case of importance in the civil courts — be it the district or appeal or Supreme Court — in which he does not appear for one or other of the litigants. Apart from this he is director of many companies which seek his knowledge by placing him on their boards. He takes an equal interest in matters connected with the community and is a trustee of the Ceylon Parsi Anjuman Trust for the past many years. He is also a past president of the Parsi Sports Club. He is married to Freny Faramroze Cooper and they have three sons, viz Jamsheed, Khursheed and Vishtasp.

Rointun, the second son of Nariman, has taken to business in a very big way. He is the chairman and managing director of Hentley Garments, which had the unique distinction of being the first Ceylonese enterprise to ship garments to Soviet Russia many years ago and they are among

Navroz Baug benefactors Pallonjee (above) and Meherbai (framed photo, alongside) with Freny and Kairshasp Choksy



the large exporters of garments to all parts of the world. In conjunction with his wife he is also actively interested in the establishment known as Gillo's which is renowned for its ice creams and fast foods.

Pheroze, the third son, is an architect who now has his own firm known as Choksy and Raheem.

When Cowasjee Eduljee Colombowalla left for Bombay the business he had established was taken over by Nowrojee Pallonjee Kapadia who carried on his business in Fourth Cross Street under the style of Nowrojee Pallonjee and Company. In 1891 he invited his son Pallonjee to join him in his firm and changed the name of his business to P. N. Kapadia. He then handed it over to his son and left for Bombay.

Pallonjee Kapadia carried on the business and amassed a considerable fortune until his death in Bombay in 1923 at the age of 64 years. He imported wheat flour, sugar, rice, ghee, dried fruit and kerosene oil. He had a dairy in Bambalapitiya and turned to the manufacture of soap in Kotahena, Colombo. He bought many properties, the principal among which was his shop at Fourth Cross Street, Colombo. He was secretary of the Ceylon Parsi Anjuman Trust Funds and a member of the committee of management of the Parsi Priest Maintenance Fund started in 1912. He took considerable interest in the activities of the Parsis and their affairs in Ceylon and set apart a portion of his grounds in Fifth Lane, Colpetty, Colombo for constructing a prayer hall for the Parsis and a residence for the Parsi priest but died before his project was established. His widow, Meherbai, constructed this prayer hall and residence now known as Navroz Baug and handed over the property to the committee of management of the Colombo Parsi Priest Maintenance Fund.

Jal, the fifth child of Pallonjee, put up his own palatial residence in Colpetty where presently the Golden Topaz Casino functions. He was generous to a fault and

there were many instances of his generosity, one of which was his donation of a pavilion on March 11, 1939 for the Notts Cricket and Athletic Club in the Victoria Park. This pavilion was declared open before a large gathering of Parsis and other Ceylonese friends by the governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott. This gesture was prompted by the fact that the Notts Club had come to an agreement with the Parsi Sports Club to allow them the use of their grounds for cricket practice. This pavilion is still in existence but it has now been greatly enlarged and houses a government office. Jal was keen on cricket and for one year captained the Parsi Sports Club, of which he was also a past president.

In 1898 arrived in Ceylon Dinshaw Pirosha Billimoria. He was engaged in insurance business from the time he arrived in Ceylon. He was a prominent Parsi citizen and died in 1959 aged 78 years. He was forensically inclined and waged many battles of a forensic nature with the trustees of the Ceylon Parsi Anjuman Trust Funds. He was an agent of the Oriental Life Insurance Company of Bombay. He was a member of the then Ceylon Garrison Artillery and rose to the rank of lieutenant. He was a very popular figure among all the Ceylonese of every race and creed and was received socially by all communities. He was a keen sportsman and took interest in all sporting activities. In 1951 His Majesty conferred on him the honor of member of the Order of the British Empire, and later in 1953 the Coronation Medal.

We now come to the year 1899 in which there seems to have been a considerable influx of Parsis. To quote from *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* edited by Arnold Wright in the year 1907: "The Ceylon Wharfage Company Limited was formed in 1899 for the purpose of taking over and extending the old established business of the Wharf and Warehouse Company Limited, which came into being in 1875. They had a large labor force and it is estimated that the company's check roll average would show a daily staff of close on 5,000 men. One feature of the Company is the successful employment of Parsis for exercising immediate su-

pervision over the labor, eight specially selected men having been engaged in Bombay and sent to Colombo."

There is hardly a case of importance in the civil courts in which he does not appear

and string of other boats for the loading and unloading of cargo coming in and leaving Ceylon, attracted the attention of a number of Parsis who came over to Ceylon. Due to their strict honesty and integrity they were promoted to be superintendents over the very large labor force of this extensive business concern.

Among the Parsis who joined the Ceylon Wharfage Company at the fag end of the 19th century was young Dorabjee Muncherjee Mehta (known to all in Colombo as Mr Mehta). He had the ability to calm and control all types of laborers however obdurate they may be. They always carried their woes to Mr Mehta, who sympathized with them and saw that relief was granted to them immediately. Unarmed and single-handed, Mr Mehta commanded the laborers who were most obdurate and recalcitrant to resume work and his command was the law. The Wharfage Company held Mr Mehta in the highest esteem and never once faltered in carrying out his requests for the laborers. The laborers loved and cherished Mr Mehta who was a leading figure in the port of Colombo. He was simple and humble; he moved about in a rickshaw from early morning to late in the evening and was the last officer to leave his post. He married Pirojbaai and had two bril-

Well built by Pirosha Nagla at the Parsi Burial Ground

liant children named Pheroze and Alamai.

Towards the close of the 19th century there came to Ceylon Ruttonjee Pestonjee. *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* has this to say about him: "Mr Ruttonjee Pestonjee, a member of the Parsi community hailing from Bombay, carries on business as general merchant and commission agent at 16, Keyzer Street, Pettah, Colombo and the variety of goods he deals in is remarkable. Commencing business in 1899, he is now a large importer of Indian, Australian and American flour, which is supplied to local merchants and bakers, and of rice from India and Burma. He also deals in American pepper drill, which is the chief material used in the manufacture of the clothing universally worn in the colony, in American carriages, Japanese rickshaws, wines, spirits, beer etc, while the principal articles of export are cocoa, cardamoms, tea, desiccated coconut and fibers which are sent to the United Kingdom and Germany."

Framjee Pestonjee Billimoria came to Ceylon at the close of the 19th century and after a short service at the Ceylon Bakery under Limjeebhoy Billimoria opened his own bakery called the Kaiser Bakery which also became renowned for its bread and cakes. After World War I he renamed it the Britannia Bakery. Framjee was married to Meherbai who died in 1953 in Colombo. He had two sons, Naval and Rustom, and six daughters. He died in Colombo in 1956 aged 84. He was a flamboyant character and was a well respected person in the Fort of Colombo. The Britannia Bakery was started at the corner of York Street and Chatham Street but later on was shifted to Hospital Street.

Pirosha Manekji Nagla came to Ceylon from Bombay with his wife Cooverbai and family of three daughters (Naja, Themina and Shirinbai) and two sons (Jehangir and Homi) in the last decade of the 19th century. He set up as a broker in commodities and later set himself up as a general merchant



and commission agent in his shop in Fourth Cross Street. In 1904 he requisitioned the services of his nephew, Dosabhoj Hormasjee Markar, who came over from Bombay to assist his uncle. Pirosha was of the priestly clan and had been ordained a navar in India. He did honorary service among the Parsis of Colombo when the service of a priest was needed on any occasion. He lived a singularly unostentatious

He had the ability to calm and control all types of laborers however obdurate they may be

life, first at New Moor Street and later at Rifle Street, Slave Island in Colombo, referred to as "Parsi Mohallo." His sons attended schools in Colombo. Pirosha built a valuable well at the Parsi Burial Ground at Jawatte and donated it to the community on August 31, 1891. This is in use to date by all Parsis. The memory of Pirosha will be long cherished by those who knew him in the early part of the 20th century. He appears to have lost a son in February 1898 and he lies buried in Jawatte. His wife Cooverbai, daughter of Hormusji Cowasjee Markar of Peshawar, died in Colombo in 1908. Pirosha died in Colombo in 1923 at the age of 75 years.

In 1899 Dr Dadabhoj Pestonjee Banajee and his wife Maneckbai (née Davar) came to Colombo. He had qualified in India and worked for many years under the Maharaja of Morvi. He settled down to practice in what was then known as Soysa Buildings in Slave Island opposite the Slave Island railway station. The building is still in existence and the portion occupied by Dr Banajee is at present (in 1988) the Castle Hotel. When Dr Banajee came to Ceylon the Maharaja followed him here to persuade him to go back but Maneckbai was against this. The reason was that Dr Banajee's job was to taste the food before the Maharaja partook of it and Maneckbai felt her husband's life was in danger. Dr Banajee continued to build up a good practice till he passed away in 1916. He served as a member of the Colombo Municipality from 1911 to 1916. *To be continued*

OBSERVATION

'My face is my mistake, Sir,' I say

Along with his uncommon surname the writer worries that he has a very common face

Kersi Meher-Homji

Recently at the Wynyard station in Sydney I was approached by a man with a small moustache and a glazed look in his beady eyes. "You," he said, looking in my direction. "You!" he repeated. "You're the President. No, I mean the Prime Minister. You're John Howard, aren't you?"

I was taken aback but dismissed his remark as an illusion suffered by a man under the influence of a beer binge and thought no more about it till...

I was walking back from the Sydney cricket ground with my nephew after an Australia-England day-nighter a few months ago when we were surrounded by a group of happy people near the Central station. They were fervent supporters of the English cricket team and merrily chanting, "Barmy Army, Barmy Army." Then they spotted me and simultaneously shouted: "That's John Howard. Hi Johnny!"

Enough to make one sit and ponder. True I have bushy eyebrows, I wear non-trendy glasses and am balding. It shook me up. It also made my nephew shake with laughter and soon it became a party joke.

Not that I am a newcomer to MIS (mistaken identity syndrome). The other day at a garage sale I was greeted by a lady saying, "Good morning, again." The "again" bit intrigued me. Soon she returned with a used video camera and a price tag. "I've reserved this for you after your request and did not sell it to anyone else."

Once I was at a restaurant with my wife when a young, attractive girl smiled at me and said, "Hi Harry, haven't seen you in ages!" It took me a long time to convince my wife about my innocence.

Although I have an uncommon surname, I must be having a very common

face with a double in almost every port. It's a frightening thought. It must be my karma; my past haunting my present. I'll explain.

My only claim to fame is that my uncle Kharshed Meher-Homji played one cricket Test for India against England in Manchester, 1936. When bitten by the writing bug in my teens, I cleverly but honestly used K. Meher-Homji as my byline for the cricket stories I submitted for publication in *The Times of India* and other major publications in Bombay. It was done in the hope that an editor would mistake me for a former Test cricketer and print my amateurish efforts. Call it

name-dropping, but the ploy seemed to work. When I migrated to Australia in 1970 I wrote a weekly column "From Down Under" for the Indian sports magazine *Sportsweek* and continued with the K. M-H byline.

Now the shoe was on the other foot. My uncle would jokingly brag to one and all that it was he who wrote those columns from Australia. He must have fooled a few because when he died in 1982 aged 71, an obituary notice in India stated: "When he retired from first-class cricket, he settled in Sydney and continued writing cricket articles from Down Under."

That makes me a genuine ghost-writer of this article, penning it 17 years after my reported 'demise.'

Or look at it the other way. You can forget Hasan Raza, Mushtaq Mohammad or Sachin Tendulkar who played their first Test match aged 14, 15 and 16. That obituary note makes me not only the youngest Test cricketer but also the only one to play a Test before I was born. Before I was even conceived!



Meher-Homji: a victim of mistaken identity

Deadly deficit

The bunglis at the Doongerwadi should be notified as places of public worship to earn rebate for Zoroastrian donors, recommends the author

Rustom S. Gae

The encroachment by non-Parsis on the Doongerwadi complex requires urgent and appropriate action by the trustees.

The recurring deficit in the maintenance of the Doongerwadi complex is a cause for real anxiety to the trustees. Though the deficit for the year 1998-99, Rs 18,61,101, is less than that of Rs 22,28,896 for the preceding year, the statement by a trustee that "the accumulated deficits have now grown so enormous that it is not possible for the BPP (Bombay Parsi Punchayet) to continue absorbing them" is worrisome indeed. How long can the BPP bear the burden of recurring deficits? Donations received from the members of the community are the primary source of income for the complex. It is gratifying to note that handsome donations amounting to Rs 31,37,444 (64.27 percent of the income) were received during the last financial year. I trust the same zest will be shown in the future.

To arrest the recurring deficits here are a few suggestions for the consideration of the trustees:

The old practice of voluntary contributions at the uthamna ceremony in memory of the deceased, recently revived, should be encouraged and implemented. The collection of a modest amount, just over two lakh rupees, is not really encouraging. Being a resident of New Delhi, I am not aware of the modality adopted for the purpose in Bombay but no doubt the relatives and friends of the deceased will readily make some contributions in his *naiyat* or memory and thereby commemorate his name. Collection boxes, placed on the veranda of the bunglis and the adjacent pavilions will also prove useful for the purpose.

By way of transparency, the contributions so received (except those received anonymously) may be announced at the end of the uthamna ceremony and the list displayed at a prominent place in the complex or in the office of its manager. Every contribution exceeding a specified amount may be acknowledged in the

columns of Parsi media. Moneys so received may be judiciously utilized for the maintenance of the complex.

Scarcity of vultures in the Doongerwadi complex is another matter of concern to the community.

Care must be taken to ensure the dokhmas do not offend the sensibilities of residents in the neighborhood and ultimately give rise to a health problem in the area. The trustees recently sought the advice of a foreign expert on the subject and I trust the heavy expenses incurred by them by way of consultation fees for vulture breeding (Rs 1,70,217), prove justifiable and lead to an increase in these birds of prey.

It is significant to note that many Parsis who use the Doongerwadi facilities prefer booking the lower bunglis where only the *geh sarna* is performed, while the other rites are performed in an *agiary* or *atah behram*. This reduces the occupancy of the upper bunglis where four days' ceremonies are performed and consequently there is a fall in the subscriptions collected from them.

During the last financial year, 1,004 deaths were reported from the Doongerwadi complex in Bombay. The two lower bunglis were used for 381 rawans, whereas the five upper bunglis were used for 623 corpses. This accounts for moderate collections at the uthamna ceremony, and affects the rawan subscriptions too.

Maintenance of the upper bunglis for four days at a stretch is naturally more costly than the upkeep of lower bunglis which provide just the bare necessities for a day or a part thereof. The trustees must consider reducing expenditure for the maintenance of bunglis (e.g. the number of bunglis in use, the staff employed for the purpose, etc). Also ways and means need to be explored to encourage the use of upper bunglis. If this object can be achieved, the complex deficit can well be reduced.

My final suggestion for reducing the deficit relates to section 80G (2)(b) of the Income-tax Act, 1961. This section al-

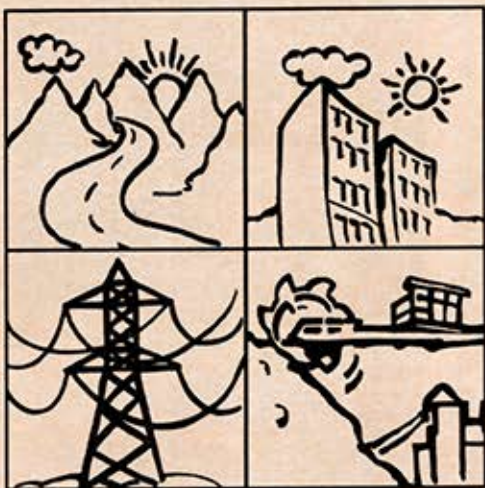
lows the deduction of 50 percent of any sum paid by an assessee as donation for the renovation or repair of a place of public worship of renown throughout any state or states notified by the central government in the official gazette. Public worship as against private worship connotes worship by the public or a section of the public, e.g. members of the Parsi community, and not worship by a particular individual or individuals only.

These bunglis are institutions established for religious purposes where solemn prayers are recited and ceremonies performed by priests in a quiet, dignified manner for four days for the soul of the deceased. They are considered sacred and consecrated places of worship, or sanctums, by the community. Any person may attend and witness the ceremonies conducted here. Several of the mourners present offer prayers, while others observe silent meditation to bid a grave and sincere farewell to the deceased. These bunglis are thus treated as places of public worship from the point of view of the Zoroastrian religion. And as such they are "places of public worship of renown throughout the State of Maharashtra" as contemplated by section 80G (2)(b). This is a fit and proper case where the government may be requested to notify the bunglis accordingly under the said section. Thereupon potential donors may be motivated to make handsome donations to the Doongerwadi fund for the renovation or repair of the bunglis, and consequently the deficit of the complex may be gradually reduced. This important suggestion, if duly implemented and processed, will prove really efficacious.

Rustom S. Gae, a former law secretary to the Government of India, is presently a senior advocate practising in the Supreme Court of India. He is known for his expertise on subjects relating to fiscal laws, company law and constitutional law.



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An Olympian attitude

Competing in the Special Olympics in the USA Jehangir Ghandy wins three medals in cycling

Hilla P. Guzder

He came home from the Special Olympics held in North Carolina, USA with a gold medal, a silver and a bronze. Practicing on a Hero racing model cycle with a special raised seat to accommodate his six-foot-four-inch height, Jehangir Ghandy, a student of the S. P. J. Sadhana School for the developmentally handicapped, fought against odds to achieve the honor.

"There are hardly any facilities for a cyclist to train in Bombay, so we sent Jehangir for two months to Jamshedpur," explains his mother Silla. "He built up speed and stamina on the roller (stationary cycle) and practised on the quiet roads of the TISCO (Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited) residential complex and the undulating test track there under the care of Krishna Krishnaswamy and Aftar Singh (former Indian national cycling champion) who coached him."

But the road to the USA as part of the Indian Special Olympics contingent was long and hard and 20-year-old Ghandy had first to qualify at the state level. "He had tried four years ago also, but had failed to qualify," explains his father Sarosh who has been with the Tatas for 40 years and was till a few months ago executive director in TELCO (Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company Limited). Sarosh is presently the managing director of TELCON, a company created by spinning off TELCO's construction equipment division. This time, however, Jehangir was short-listed with athletes in other disciplines for a training camp in Hyderabad. It was in March '99 that competitors with the best timings were finally selected at the training camp in Bangalore. "Conditions at the training camps were pretty bad and Jehangir lost weight due to the long training and poor food," bemoans Silla. The bureaucratic demands of the government made things harder. "They can be so cruel and insensitive some-

times," she says.

In the US, however, the athletes were "beautifully looked after." Lodging in the university campus at Raleigh and all meals were free, with fruit, snacks, etc being generously provided. "There was a lovely playing field, with music and programs every evening both for

'99 and at the opening ceremony it was announced that the names of all the 7,000 participants from 150 countries would be put on a compact disc and carried into space to be kept on MIR, the space station!

"Jehangir started cycling eight years ago. He had practiced so hard he was sure he would win," smiles Silla. Adds Sarosh, "I was very happy he could go but a little apprehensive as to how he would feel if he did not win!" But win he did — a gold for the 10 km race, a silver for the 5 km and a bronze for the open road race. "We had sent him with a non-g geared cycle, but since other competitors were riding a geared cycle, Silla managed to procure one for him too. Fortunately he had ridden a geared cycle earlier so he was familiar with it," explains Sarosh.

"Not only Jehangir but his parents have worked equally hard for him," remarks Radhika Khanna, vice principal and art teacher at the Sadhana School. "Jehangir's functional abilities have improved after he came to us but he still has a speech

problem. His mother and father have been very supportive, very cooperative. They tried very hard to secure donations for the other students to meet their expenses. Not all parents are like that." Of the 11 students of Sadhana School selected for the national meet held in Chandigarh in September '98, Radhika Bhatia,

who won a gold and a bronze in swimming, and Ghandy were the only two to make it to the USA as part of the 17 Special Olympians of the Maharashtra squad which returned with 17 medals — four gold, seven silver and six bronze!

"Jehangir can live close to a normal life," explains Khanna. "Some disabil-



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Ghandy (top) in the USA and (center) with his medals; at the felicitation (below) from left: Khanna, Ghandy, Michael Ferreira, Bhatia, P. V. Joshi and Sister Gaitonde

the competitors and their parents." The games were held from June 25-July 4,



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ity will remain, but which of us does not have some disability or other! At Sadhana School we teach the children to carry themselves, present themselves. Jehangir is well-groomed and handsome, in fact he is good-looking enough to be a model! He is an affectionate, caring boy." Declares Sarosh: "In the four years since he joined Sadhana School, Jehangir has become much more confident. They have a five-year graduation program for the children and Jehangir will probably graduate not next year but the year after that as he has missed quite a lot of schooling because of his cycling." Currently he is doing the vocational course in handicrafts — drawing, stencil-painting, block-painting, etc, narrates the father as his son proudly displays one of his spray-painted works of art. He has many friends in School, says Jehangir, and he most emphatically likes Bombay better than Jamshedpur (where he spent the earlier part of his life till the family moved to Bombay four years ago). Food favorites include McDonald's burgers, pizzas and bhel-puri!

"Life is full of important choices," states his trendy T-shirt emblazoned with colorful pictures of cars which are his passion. "Show him any car and he will tell you its make," laughs Silla. "He has a collection of car pictures and he loves magazines like *Overdrive* and *Auto India*." Recreation includes swimming in summer and playing golf at the United Services Club. "Jehangir has very good hand-eye coordination and has learnt to play golf practically on his own," says his father.

The youngest of five children, of Jehangir's four sisters the eldest Zia Kairus Tarapore lives in Delhi, Sonia Viraf Mehta runs a special education school and vocational training center in Jamshedpur, Tushna Hormazd Antia divides her time between Bombay and Poona and Thea works at the Zodiac Grill at the Taj in Bombay. Paternal grandfather Sir Jehangir 'Joe' Ghandy was the managing director of TISCO in the late '40s and '50s, maternal grandfather Shavak Nanavaty was also TISCO's managing director! Jamshedpur has been home for decades for both branches of the family.

Does Jehangir aim to participate in the next Special Olympics four years hence? Yes, he replies. It is after all, as the ribbons on his three medals state, all about attitude.

CONFESSIONS OF A CONVERT *continued from page 39*

The next four decades of Neville Wadia's life were devoted almost entirely to his professional commitments. After his father died in 1958, he took over as chairman. He oversaw considerable modernization in the mills. He also gave vent to his latent creativity by designing the new buildings of the mills himself. He imported the latest machinery from abroad, and pushed the turnover up several fold.

When he celebrated 25 years as a director, a reception was held in his honor. But, with touching modesty, he asked, "Why just me? Why not everybody who has completed 25 years with the company as well?" Since that year, every employee who has completed a quarter century's service with Bombay Dyeing is felicitated with a reception and a silver medal, designed by Neville Wadia himself.

In 1977, at the age of 66 and with 48 years at Bombay Dyeing behind him, Neville Wadia decided to retire. "I passed on the company to my son," he said. "A lot of my friends were surprised. It put them in an awkward position because they still wanted to continue as chairman of their respective companies, and thought I was setting a wrong precedent. But my logic was simple: why block the growth of younger people?"

Neville Wadia continued: "Once I passed the reins over, I stopped interfering with the running of the company, although Nusli continues to ask for my advice and suggestions. He's always been a respectful boy," Neville Wadia revealed of his son. "There used to be the impression that he was rude and bossy, but he isn't like that. I'm happy with the way he's handling things. I am also delighted that both my grandsons, Ness and Jeh, have joined the business. And like their father and grandfather, they've started from scratch at the mills."

There was a sense of fulfillment as Neville Wadia spoke about his life. As though he had made his peace with everything and everybody. He spoke of his home in Switzerland (a village called Morcote near Lugano) where he lived with a servant for six months every

year. "They don't have any concept of servants in Switzerland," he smiled, "but they permit me to have one."

As he spoke, he handed me several transcripts of old speeches he had given at the various Cusrow Baug Navroz functions he had presided over down the years. He was involved with most of the Wadia Trust properties in one way

or another, and proud of them. He spoke of the various baugs: Cusrow Baug, Rustom Baug, Jer Baug and Ness Baug (which he himself leased from Fali and Dinshaw Petit and added annexes to).

"When I wanted to marry Dina, her father, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was furious"

Other than the baugs, there were the two family hospitals, Nowrosjee Wadia Maternity Hospital and Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children. And the Wadia College in Poona, to which a management wing was being added to be named after him. Neville Wadia had enough to keep him occupied till his last days.

He had another thing going for him, which I discovered later when going through his old speeches: a great zest for life. He saw this as a typically Parsi attribute. "We are really international in our outlook," he'd said in a speech in 1974. "You will always find a Parsi in the remotest part of the world. Another thing which helps us is wherever we go we enjoy ourselves. Blessed with a good palate not only do we relish our own patia and dhansak, but all cuisines be they French, Chinese, or from any other part of India. And, what is more, we are not only fond of good wines and liquor to go with it, but we are connoisseurs."

That pretty much summed up how Neville Wadia had lived his own life. It was a good life, enhanced in considerable measure by his own genteel grace that took everything in its stride. Till the very end, he had a sharp mind and an inherent composure and charm that made an interesting combination. Perhaps, if the circumstances of his life had been different, he could well have played a more prominent role in the affairs of the Parsi community.

Shortly after our interview, Neville Wadia passed away. It seemed pointless then to sit and write out his story. But I had promised him his life would not slip by unchronicled. He would be embarrassed by the idea of a tribute, but a toast in his memory would make him happy. Raise one, if you will.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 8

Club for children of navjote age, etc.

We have attended a number of inter-faith seminars held in Delhi, addressed by Gen Sethna and other representatives. In view of our interaction with personalities of inter religious faiths, we are also seeking someone who can send us an article with regard to "Zoroastrian studies towards next millennium" or "Zoroastrianism in the next millennium."

Apart from the above, we would welcome articles of general interest, poems, reminiscences of the old residents of Delhi (Old Delhi and New Delhi) if possible with bits of fun and humor and photographs so that the contents are palatable to youths, adults and the aged. Please write to Brig Adi K. Sahukar at JK Corp Limited, Link House, 4th Floor, 3, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002, Phone (Off): 3353670, 3311112, (Res): 6437450, Fax: 3712680/3716607.

The original will be returned to the persons concerned after publication at our cost.

Brig ADI K. SAHUKAR
New Delhi

Follow his footprints

I am researching the medical history of Bombay in the late 19th century and would like to get in touch with descendants of Sir Nasarvanji Hormusji Choksey (died 1939), who was a prominent medical man of the city in the years 1890-1920. He was the first medical officer at the homeless leper asylum at Wadala, worked later during the plague epidemic at the Arthur Road Infectious Diseases Hospital and was active in the medical politics of the period. I think one of his sons became a health officer of the Bombay Municipality.

Dr N. H. Choksey lived on Napean Sea Road. I would appreciate receiving any information, old letters or photographs of Sir Nasarvanji or his descendants. Those in the know may contact me at Flat 11, 5th Floor, Shanti Kutir, Marine Drive (Netaji Subhas Road), Bombay 400020, e-mail: shubha@pandya.ilbom.ernet.in

SHUBHADA S. PANDYA

Unify calendar

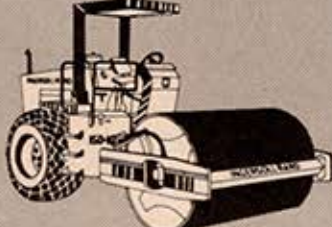
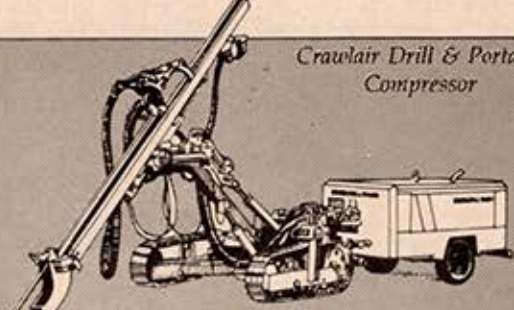
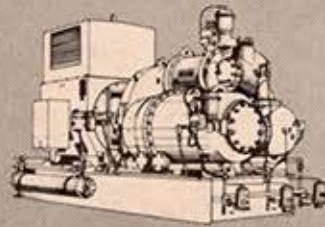
I am addressing this to my Parsi friends for their cooperation in expressing their opinion on whether or not there should

be one standardized calendar for all Parsis.

Presently the Parsis have three calendars, according to which the Kadmis have their Navroz in July, the Shahenshahis a month later in August, and the Faslis on March 21.

The smallest of small communities having three New Years at different times of the year sounds ridiculous. But what is worse, it saddens one's heart to know that because of this, all Zarathushtis cannot really get together and celebrate their festivals or participate in religious occasions, other than Jamshedi Navroz on March 21 at the time of the vernal equinox.

Because of the calendar confusion, hundreds of Parsi Zarathushti families outside Bombay are drifting away. They are clueless about the day on which their Pateti, Navroz or Khordad Sal falls. It hurts me to point this out, but I know of families who have not seen or referred to a Zoroastrian calendar in many years. Most do not want to. Some because both the spouses, though Zarathushtis, are not of the same sect. In such cases what happens to the children, the future of our community, can

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well be imagined. To those who live in remote places, or ivory towers, it probably does not matter.

If the Kadmis and the Shahenshahis believe that their calendars are correct (I too was born a Kadmi), then what are they celebrating on March 21? Isn't March 21 a very important religious festival for all Zarathushtis? Isn't it the beginning of spring and the start of the geophysical year?

Could it be that the Kadmis and Shahen-shahis have long since been reconciled to the fact that Jamshedi Navroz is the correct New Year, but for reasons best known to themselves are hesitant in acknowledging it?

It behoves us to admit the error in our calendars as early as possible and realign it, as in our glorious past, to start at the vernal equinox to synchronize it with the seasons. There already exists such a calendar, we Zarathushtis refer to it as the Fasli calendar. All we have to do is to agree to adopt it as "The Calendar."

The World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) 2000 is scheduled to meet next year. If a large number of Zarathushtis think a unified calendar is in the interest

of the community, the Congress may be persuaded to include the issue of a unified calendar on their agenda. If the calendar reform is found acceptable at the WZC 2000, maybe in the new millennium we can all get together to celebrate the first ever FIKS (Fasli/Irani Kadmi/Shahenshahi) Navroz.

Please let me know at 610, Craig Ave, Campbell, Ca 95008, USA, Tel: 4083793301, Fax: 4083794296, e-mail: rusi@sorabji.org whether you feel calendar reform is necessary or undesirable and whether you and your family follow the Fasli, Kadmi or Shahenshahi calendar.

RUSI SORABJI
California, USA

Retain Parsi names

Over the years, I have observed to my great regret that newborns in the community are given either unheard of names or anglicized, westernized or Christian, Muslim, French, Russian sounding names whilst ignoring names used by our forefathers. As it is, most of the names used by the previous generations tended to be in abbreviated form, such as: Hormuz became Homi, Ardeshir became Adi, Arnavaz became

Arnie, Shirin became Siloo, Jamshed became Jimmy, Tehmtan became Tim, Faramroze became Fali, Burjor became Baji.

It would certainly be understandable if the community were to give up some very funny sounding surnames which have no relevance to the person's profession nor where he comes from, e.g. Sodawaterbottleopenerwala, Working-boxwala, Hodiwala, Cabinetmaker, Ghaswala, Palkhiwala, Batliwala, Screwswala, Daruwala, Darukhanawala, Olpadwala, Vania, etc.

I for one believe that if the Parsi community is to retain its roots and identity for posterity, then we should revert to using good old Parsi names in their original form, thereby ensuring the continuity of our culture into the next millennium. Whereas most people of other faiths who have emigrated from their homelands go to great lengths to find the roots and culture their ancestors might have belonged to, the dwindling Parsi community seems to be moving in quite the opposite direction! As it is the Parsis are worried about becoming a lost tribe in the next 50 years. Naming our newborns with any

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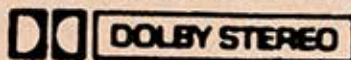
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other but Parsi names is not going to help. It is encouraging that at least some Parsi families living abroad try to retain the Parsi culture, not only by naming their children traditionally but also by taking great pains to create an awareness in their children and to practice the Zoroastrian faith the best they can in a foreign environment.

Under the circumstances, someone should publish a list of original Parsi names as used by our forefathers, from which parents of newborns in India and abroad can have a choice of selection.

BURJOR POONAWALA

The sacred sudreh-kusti

A sudreh is regarded as the dar-e-meher of the fires possessed by a Zarathushti ravaan. In other words by wearing a sudreh the ravaan of that Zarathushti is protected by Meher Yazad. The sudreh should be made of cotton cloth (muslin) only because white is a symbol of purity and cotton cloth offers strength to recited prayers. The sudreh should also have nine joints (nine being the number of our religion) and a gireban, i.e. a pocket to hold one's good deeds. Lastly but not the least, there should be a tiri/triangle to ward off the attack of evil from the left and back side of the body — three being the number that represents our community is most often symbolized to mean holy trinities. This is why when reciting *Ahura Mazda Khodai* we denounce the forces of darkness by gently moving the ends of the kusti over and towards the back of our left shoulder.

The kusti must be made from sheep's wool because sheep are regarded as innocent and their wool possesses magnetic powers which attract the prayers recited by a Zarathushti. The kusti is actually made from 72 strands of cotton called tars, which relate directly to the 72 Haas of the Yazashne, i.e. its chapters and the 72 Pak Magav Sahebs of Koh-e-Demavand. The six laris/tassels on the ends are linked to the six Pak Magav Banus of Koh-e-Demavand.

To many people the mention of divine beings and our holy mountain of Demavand is just that — a mention of them. However to those of us who know the true nature of our sublime religion, behind these few words of Koh-e-Demavand lies our complete faith... the Zarathushti religion. For instance the word kas, which means circle/hidden, is often associated with kas-e-aipi being the



Kusti: a divine link with God

spiritual terminology to denote the protective encirclement of a Zarathushti ravaan's environment. Yet interestingly enough we also have Demavand-e-Koh/Kas-e-Demavand considered throughout the ages as a hidden Zarathushti realm upon Mount Demavand.

One should never wear a broken kusti or torn sudreh, because just like their removal, by not wearing them, one's divine link with the above mentioned beings is removed after nine minutes.

It is through fire that we advance spiritually, hence the constant admonition to come before our consecrated atash. Such however is the justice of Dadar Ahura Mazda that the performance of *Jasme avanghe mazda* whilst placement of the index finger of one's right hand onto knots made at the front into the navel will result in the brightening of one's ravaan. Consequently the significance of sudreh and kusti should never be underestimated.

CYRUS R. R. COOPER
London, UK

Respecting religion

I read the *Parsiana* regularly but in many of the articles the contributors denigrate the religious practices, especially the present practices among the Parsi Zoroastrian community, as outdated.

I would ask such contributors to show a little bit of tolerance towards some of the old practices and customs which have been handed down by the elders through experience. If they find them to be outdated, they should accept them with humility rather than rebel



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and show disrespect towards religious practices which embody hidden tenets.

All traditions and customs of the Zoroastrian religion are valid provided they do not violate any inalienable right of the members of the community.

DORAB P. PATEL

Sealed and buried

Jal Cavasji Bordiwalla (Jithra), my brother, is a landlord possessing about 10 acres of land on which grow chikoos, mangoes, rice, etc at Khoomar Pada, Bordigaon, roughly about a mile and half from Zai Bordi, Thana district. He volunteers as a khandhia whenever a Parsi death occurs. The land belonged to our great, great grandfather Sorabji Edulji, more than 100 years ago. Sorabji and his descendants, right up to Jal, have also been managing Bordi's Cama Dharamshala, Cama's Inn, which is more than 100 years old. During summer and winter Bombay Parsis used to come here on vacation. At present the Inn is in a dilapidated condition and a court case is pending for its rightful possession from Gaon Panchayat.

In season, our forefathers used to conduct picnic parties to the Bahrot hills. At Bahrot pahad we used to per-

form a jashan ceremony. The dates of the jashan ceremony were written on paper, the paper sealed in bottles and the bottles buried under the land. During King Jadav Rana's time Zoroastrians who came from Iran took refuge in Sanjan which is about five or six miles from Zai Bordi. When Sanjan was invaded Zoroastrians shifted the atash padshah from Sanjan to Bahrot. At Bahrot, two or three arches were carved. These arches are still there and on nearby lands the jashan ceremony papers will be found.

In India, Parsis are well-known for their charity, their goodwill towards all, and they never fail to respect the rich, the poor and the authorities. Unfortunately, Parsis have failed to pay due respect to Jadav Rana by performing a single jashan ceremony in his memory or erecting a memorial.

RUSTOM C. BORDIWALLA
California, USA

Doffing her topi

This time on Behram roz, when I went to Udvada, I was reminded of a cute, chubby child two or three years of age, whom I had seen earlier in the hall of the Iranshah. She was picking up prayer

books and piling them up, picking up sandalwood from the khumcha and handing it over to the boiwalla. Her father, who was praying, tried to stop her, in vain.

Then as we all moved to the agiary next door, she was left alone in the passage. She went to pat the dog lying in the sun. She saw me, pointed her small finger towards the sun and said "hot" and then pointed towards the dog. Then she removed her topi and put it on the dog's head who looked at her with baleful eyes and kept on resting.

It was a most generous, bold gesture, which I will never forget by a small girl towards a dog.

Z. M. ZEND

Impressive imp

Your readers who might have seen the film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, winner of many awards, must have been enchanted by the acting of a small brat, with mischievous eyes, playing impish pranks with his hero-friend Shahrukh Khan.

The other day, the same child, seven-year-old Parzaan T. Dastur, appeared on television where he was one of the guests on the Movers and Shakers' series. The host Shekhar Suman, first danced with

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Dastur: future star

lad, under proper guidance, may one day become a promising actor. It would be interesting to learn how the child copes with so many engagements, at the cost of his schooling. Also, when and which was the boy's first assignment?

Our community should be proud that we have such a budding child artiste.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

Parrot Talking Diary

The Indian Association for the Visually Handicapped is a charitable institution dedicated to the welfare of the blind in India. One of our objectives is to create awareness among the blind about the development of latest technology so that they can benefit from the same and make themselves independent in their work environment.

We have recently come across one such product, i.e. the Parrot Talking Diary that can make the blind, the visually impaired and those suffering from dyslexia, who are either self-employed or working as professionals, self-reliant without having to depend on others for their daily work.

The Parrot Plus V3 pocket size, battery-operated, talking personal secretary manufactured by a company abroad is based on voice recognition technology. It performs seven speaking functions with its very easy to use phone book, voice notepad, appointment book, clock, calculator, telephone assistance and selection control panel with mike, speaker, digital keypad and function keys for recording, editing and fast forward/rewind etc. The most exciting feature is that there is no language restriction and it works not only in English but also in any Indian language with voice feedback. It also has computer connectivity for transfer of data.

him and then asked some questions about the boy's role in the above film. The child replied in a slow, hesitant voice, innocence spread over his face.

We also see this boy in many spot commercials on different TV channels.

For more information you may contact: Indian Association for the Visually Handicapped, IAVH Electronic Reading Centre for the Blind, Vidyarthi Vidyapeeth Bhavan (University Club House), B Road, Churchgate, Bombay 400020. Tel: 022-2838550, Fax: 3738499, e-mail: iavh@usa.net

K. RAMAKRISHNA

Chairman

Indian Association for the Visually Handicapped

Pen pals column

Parsiana is an excellent way of communicating community news as well as providing a forum for Parsis to express their views.

Parsiana could also provide a significant way for Parsis in different parts of the world to establish contact with each other and form relationships. My proposal is that *Parsiana* start a Pen Pals page as a regular feature of the magazine. The Pen Pals page would not be intended primarily for matrimonial purposes, though pen friendships could lead to marriage. The primary purpose would be for readers of your magazine to befriend fellow Parsis with similar interests, but residing in different countries or cities.

From a community perspective, the Pen Pals page could contribute to community spirit and cohesion among Parsis from different parts of the world.

FURROKH PANTHAKI

London, UK

The Editor replies

Beginning with the January 2000 issue, *Parsiana* will introduce a Pen Pals column. (We have tentatively decided to name it "Links" though readers are welcome to suggest other titles which we could consider and then finalize.) Those interested in interacting with Zoroastrians from across the globe should send us the following details: full name, address, e-mail contact, age, sex and marital status, interest and hobbies.

Since Furrokh Panthaki has very thoughtfully taken the initiative of funding this column there will be no charge for those desirous of participating in this column.

"The Top Ten"

My late husband Justice Dinshah Pirosha Madon, first Parsi judge of the Supreme Court of India, should be included among the Parsi greats.



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In March 1983 Justice Madon was elevated to the bench of the Supreme Court of India. In 1967 he had been appointed the Chief Justice of the



Madon: landmark judgements

of the Bombay High Court. Two of his many landmark judgements, namely, The Press Censorship Judgment (which was against the Government), and The Disprin Case were both reported in the *New York Times* as well as in the *London Times*.

Justice Madon was appointed the One Man Commission of Inquiry into what are called the Bhiwandi Riots although the inquiry covered several other nearby places. His seven-volume report was accepted in toto by the Naik Government and this report was acted upon immediately. Moreover, the first volume of the Madon Commission of Inquiry contains step-by-step procedures for conducting such inquiries.

He was the Grandmaster of Freemasonry in India for several years and was regarded in high esteem by the heads of Freemasonry of England, Scotland as well as America. He was the only Indian freemason to be conferred the 33rd degree (the highest in Freemasonry) by the American free-masons. His papers are now kept in the archives of 33 degree freemasons.

The University of Bombay invited Justice Madon to deliver at least three lectures under the Kashinath Trimbak Telang Lectureship Endowment. Justice Telang was an outstanding young judge who died in his thirties. The theme of Justice Madon's lectures was "The Constitution and the Judiciary." Sadly, on the very day that he got his fatal heart attack he had been writing the concluding chapters. He passed away on June 24, 1994 at the age of 73.

Dr KHORSHED D. P. MADON

Bandra Association's 50

The Bandra Parsee Association is celebrating its golden jubilee this year.

Those of you who are from Bombay will know that a large number of Parsis reside in the suburbs. The Association's membership extends from

Bandra to Andheri and over the years it has helped a large number of families with medical, educational and other financial aid.

We are having an entertainment program and a fund-raising drive and have set ourselves a target of Rs 10 lakhs. This amount will be credited to the corpus of the trust and only the interest thereon will be used for the various charitable objectives. We estimate we can help about 40 Parsi families meet part of their needs.

We look forward to the Zoroastrian community in India and abroad to help us to help the needy. Donation cheques from Indian residents may be drawn in favor of "The Bandra Parsee Association." Zoroastrians abroad may send their donations in the name of "The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust," to The Bandra Parsee Association, C/o Sam Choksey, 602, Kakad Apartments, 4, Pali Road, Bandra (W), Bombay 400050.

Prof KHURSHED SHERIAR

President, The Bandra Parsee Association

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES



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

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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 32 and 48 years, the arithmetic mean — the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides — being 40 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 39 and 72 years, averaging at 50 years.

Deaths outnumbered births (11 babies) as usual with 67 Zoroastrians breathing their last in Bombay in September. Eight victims were in the 80 and above age-group from among the 17 who fell prey to heart disease. The other killers were cancer (nine) and pneumonia/lung disease and diabetes (six each). Septicemia took a toll of five lives whereas three patients succumbed to hypertension and two each to old age/general debility, brain disease and hypoproteinaemia (deficient protein in the blood plasma). Isolated cases included intestinal obstruction, Alzheimer's disease, gastritis (inflammation of the stomach), anemia, ascitis (free fluid in the peritoneal cavity), obesity, thrombo-angiitis (clot formation with an inflamed vessel), viral meningitis, paraplegia (paralysis of the lower limbs), bronchiectasis (dilation of the bronchial tubes), kidney failure, dementia, asthma, bronchitis, shock due to head injury, cachexia (malnutrition) and respi-

ratory infection. Two youths (22 and 29 years) were also lost to the community. The eldest to breathe his last was a 98-year-old male. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for September, in Bombay, was 77 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman 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 anjuman 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 break-up 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.

AHMEDNAGAR

DIED

Meher Behram Nagarwalla (50), mother of Zavareh and Zarin on February 15, 1999

BANGALORE

DIED

Fram P. Unvalla, husband of late Dhun and father of Nauzer and Yezdi; September 10

BARODA

BORN

A boy, *Farhad*, to *Alice* and *Cyrus Palsetia*; September 18

DIED

Alamai Rustomji Kavina (85), mother of Eruch and Noshir; August 27

Gayomard Hormusji Mehta, husband of Shirin and father of Cyrus and Pearl; September 11

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl, *Tanaisha*, to *Niloufer* and *Zarkis Italia*; May 22

A boy, *Arzaan*, to *Monaz* and *Mehernosh Mistry*; August 31

A girl, *Anahita*, to *Havovi* and *Ramiyar Karanjia*; September 1

A boy to *Nina* and *Rumi Palsetia*; September 1

A boy, *Viraj*, to *Kamal* and *Dara Pardiwalla*; September 3

A boy to *Monika* and *Karl Patel*; September 5

A boy to *Tanaz* and *Godrej Bhathena*; September 7

A boy to *Zia* and *Munchi Shroff*; September 8

A boy to *Kamal* and *Kaikhushru Taraporevala*; September 12

A boy to *Pearl* and *Kaus Peer*; September 14

A boy to *Khureshan* and *Nariman Amaria*;

September 15

A boy to *Dilnawaz* and *Mahendosh Daruwalla*;

September 18

A boy to *Mahrugh* and *Adil Pagdiwalla*; September 25

MARRIED

Sherazade Rusi Jall and *Keki Cusrow Patel*; September 2

Sherezad Edulji Soonawalla and *Kersi Hormusjee Edibam*;

September 10

Bakhtawar Dadi Damania and *Rohinton Dorab Chesun*;

September 11

DIED

Maneksha Jamshedji Bagwadiya (63), residing at

T-24, New Ava Baug, Opp S. T. Depot, Navsari, 396445;

August 31

Bacha Nadir Cooper (78), 9, Queens Court, Opp Oval

Maidan, 400020; August 31

Jal Jehanbux Madon (81), 2/12, Khushnooma Apts,

Carmichael Rd, 400026;

September 1

Bapai Jal Billimoria (84), C/4, Imperial Mhl, Khodadad

Circle, Dadar, 400014;

September 2

Rustom Burjorji Daruwalla (71), 15, Ardeshir Dadi Cross

Lane, 400004; September 2

Hoshang Bapuji Langrana (69), 939, Bhimkatchi St,

Nanpura, Surat, 395001;

September 2

Freny Hormusji Arajawalla (86), Gool Mans, 88,

Walkeshwar Rd, 400006;

September 3

Pirojsha Khurshedji Sethna (91), 303, Mahalasa Villa,

Azad Ngr no 3, Veera Desai Rd, Andheri (W), 400058;

September 3

Cursetji Ardeshir Dastur (98), Soona Villa, Malcolm Baug,

Jogeshwari (W), 400102;

September 4

Keki Bomanshaw Baam (63), 6/1, Seth Nusserwanji Tata

Bldg, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 5

Bapuji Framji Baria (83), P/11, Nowroz Baug, Dr S. S.

Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;

September 5

Roshan Kaikhushroo Nejadkay (61), 73, Vijay Chmbs, Tribhuvan Rd, 400004; September 5

Sheroo Phiroze Siganporia (74), B-102, Ahuna Apts,

Edulji Rd, Charai, Thana,

400601; September 5

Khushroo Kaikhushroo Dastur (87), 11, Rajesh Mans,

Dinshaw Wachha Rd, Churchgate, 400020;

September 6

Banoo Jehanbux Mehta (52), Vaishali Co-op Hsg Soc,

Sainath Ngr, Borivli (W), 400103; September 7

Meherji Manchershaw Satha (82), Kuka Sadan, Dr

Ambedkar Rd, Lalbaug,

400012; September 8

Mehermai Jehangirji Siganporia (85), R/38, Nowroz

Baug, Dr S. S. Rao Rd,

Lalbaug, 400012; September 8

Shiavax (Shavaksha) Ratansha Vakil (82), Windmere, 55,

Cuffe Parade, 400005;

September 8

Zarine Rustom Khory (89), 21/1, Kapadia Bldg, Panthaky

Baug, Andheri (E), 400062;

September 9

Kersi Nariman Mowdawalla (40), Amee Varsha, Evershine

Ngr, Vasai, Dist Thana,

401201; September 9

Maneckshaw Jamshedji Chothia (74), R-6, Cusrow

Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039;

September 11

Minoo Nariman Hodiwalla (64), Botawalla Bldg, 18,

Raghavji Rd, Gowalia Tank,

400036; September 11

Rati Homi Mehenti (77), 1B/38, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg

Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel,

400012; September 11

Keki Dosabhai Bhesania (71), A/7, Nowroz Baug, Dr S. S.

Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;

September 12

Sam Jehangir Commissariat (69), 44, Jamsaji Apts, Sleater

Rd, 400007; September 12

Homai Noshir Master (82), 3, Petit Block, Baram St,

400007; September 12

Gool Homi Panthaky (77), 11,

Engineer Bldg, Sleater Rd,

400007; September 13

Jamshed Faramroz Mehta

(52), Tarachand Bldg,

Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd,

400007; September 14

Fili Meherji Mojia (63), 811,

Jame Jamshed Bldg, Jame

Jamshed Rd, Dadar, 400014;

September 14

Mehroo Soli Udwadia (73),

203, Trisandhya, B. Dadasaheb

Phalke Rd, Dadar, 400014;

September 14

Dinamai Framroze Bacha
(85), 35, Jame Jamshed Bldg,
Jame Jamshed Rd, Dadar,
400014; September 16

Maneck Sorabji Bharucha
(76), Irfanabad, 145-A, St
Cyril Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
September 16

Gover Jamshed Irani (84),
402, Acropolis, Lokhandwala
Complex, Andheri (W),
400053; September 16

Khurshed Ratanshaw Tolat
(72), A-103, Vaspan, Ahura
Co-op Hsg Soc, Dr S. S.
Rao Rd, Parel, 400012;
September 16

Hilla Kaikhushru Kapadia (89),
Serene Villa, 16K, Navrange
Marg, New Gamdevi, 400007;
September 17

Ruttan Dhunjishaw Shroff
(91), G-6, Shapur Baug, V. P.
Road, 400004; September 17

Silloo Phiroze Daruwalla (68),
A-1, Nowroz Baug, Dr S. S.
Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;
September 18

Perin Fredoon Khambata (70),
14/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria
Rd, Byculla, 400027;
September 18

Coomi Pervez Sethna (60),
Union Bldg, Opp Grant Rd
Stn, 54, Sleater Rd, 400007;
September 18

Vahbiz Hormusji Shroff (86),
B1, Eden Hall, Dr Annie
Besant Rd, Worli, 400018;
September 18

Minoo Pestonji Billimoria
(60), A/7, Khosravi Est, S. K.
Bole Rd, Dadar, 400028;
September 20

Goola Kaikhashroo Guzder
(90), 17, Vijay Bhavan, St
Sebastian Rd, Bandra (W),
400050; September 20

Mani Dady Messman (76),
Perin Villa, Malcolm Baug,
Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
September 20

Darab Dinshaw Mistry (67),
4/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd,
Byculla, 400027; September 20

Shirin Kaikhusru Daruwalla
(92), Q-4, Cusrow Baug, S. B.
Rd, 400039; September 21

Minoo Khodadad Irani (51),
204, Old Sitaram Bldg, Prin-
cess St, 400002; September 22

Najan Sorab Pavri (95), J-12,
Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; September 22

Bakhtyar Erach Mehta (79),
E-2/22, Shanti Niketan Soc,
Near Shreyas Cinema, L. B. S.
Marg, Ghatkopar, 400086;

September 23
Shirin Dhunjisha Sethna (84),
A, Usha Sadan, Colaba,
400005; September 23

Burjis Homi Amalsadiwalla
(22), 722/A, Dr Dinshaw
Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; September 24

Havovi Burzore Chothia (29),
757, Jashan Committee Bldg,
Rd no 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; September 24

Sheroo Piroshaw Arya (83),
Motiwala Mans, A. K. Marg,
400036; September 25

Parvez Jehangir Gazdar (55),
1/6, Wadia Block, Malcolm
Baug, Jogeshwari (W),
400102; September 25

Comma Burjorji Kolah (80),
14, Krishna Nivas, Roshan
Ngr, Borivli (W), 400092;
September 25

Khoshed Jivanji Makhania
(75), Minerva Mans, Near
Super Cinema, Grant Rd,
400007; September 25

Sam Dinsha Nariman (93), 6,
Ness Baug Annexe II, Nana
Chowk, 400007; September 25

Dina Framji Batliwalla (76),
New Khan Bldg, Chikal-
wadi, Grant Rd, 400007;
September 26

Manek Hormasji Dotivala
(91), C/3, Ness Baug, Nana
Chowk, 400007; September 26

Alamai Hormusji Irani (78),
13, Gitanjali, Nehru Rd,
Santacruz (E), 400055;

September 26
Frenymai Savaksha
Taraporewala (78), United
Chmbs, Maganlal Ngr, Charni
Rd Jn, 400007; September 26

Katy Barjor Daboo (70),
Queens Chmbs, 89, Queens
Rd, Marine Lines, 400020;
September 27

Khoshed Pirojshaw
Photographer (78), Kharas
Hse, 61, Queens Rd, 400020;
September 27

Fardoonji Dosabhai Karbhari
(87), F-1, 35/36, Godrej
Hillside Qrts, L. B. S. Marg,
Vikhroli (W), 400079;
September 28

Pilamai Dosabhai Paliwalla
(84), B, The Reward, Next to
Ganga Jamuna Theater,
Tardeo, 400007; September 28

Mehra Behramji Forbes (90),
262, Mancherji Sheth Bldg,
Tardeo Rd, 400007;
September 29

Dhanjisha Dosabhai
Sukheswala (79), M/6, Dalal
Est, Lamington Rd, 400008;
September 29

Gool Jehangir Engineer (83),
B, Yusuf Mans, Khetwadi
Back Rd, 400004;
September 30

Minoo Burjorji Pastakia (63),
B/10, Peace Haven, St
Andrews Rd, Bandra (W),
400050; September 30

Khoshed Minoo Sutaria (54),
9/4, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; September 30

CALCUTTA
MARRIED
Soumeta Basu and Nawzer
Medhora; May 9

DIED
Dolat Ardeshir Kaka, mother
of Sam, Freny and Aban;
September 23

HYDERABAD
BORN
Twins (girls), *Simonil* and
Spenta, to *Feroza* and *Cush-*
row Jassawala; September 23

MADRAS
MARRIED
Piroja R. Lilaoonwala and
Darius Belgamwala; March 27

POONA
DIED
Banoo Jehangirji Batliwalla
(76), A/206, Manush Darshan,
Fatima Ngr, 411013; July 2

Roshan Hoshang Patel (69),
108, Carlisle Court, Clover
Village, Wanawadi, 411040;
July 6

Hazeer Jal Commissariaj
(45), A/7, Mantri Memories,
4/0, South Main Rd, Koregaon
Park, 411001; July 26

Dosan Manekji Penty (85),

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1999*	This issue	1999*	This issue	1999*
BIRTHS						
Boys	2	50	1	8	3	15
Girls	11	64	2	3	1	12
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	3	135	1	8	—	6
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	9	1	1	—	3
Females married out	—	4	—	—	—	2
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	32	355	9	72	14	37
Females	37	365	15	66	12	33
CREMATED						
Males	—	2	—	1	—	—
Females	—	2	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 1999 (January 1999–November 1999 issues)

Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as *Parsi* as *Parsi* does not have a breakup of those cremated.

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

C/o Nergish R. Sethna, 3/8, Canopus Apts, Boat Club Rd, 411001; August 5
Perin Faramroze Irani (87), 585, Sachapir St, 411001; August 7
Mehra Jal Mistry (84), 591, Sachapir St, 411001; August 12
Jehangir Hormusji Wadia (88), 6, Alexandra Rd, Gorpadi, 411001; August 17
Mitha Dorab Pandey (86), 8, Synagogue St, 411001; August 22
Phiroze Kaikhushru Engineer (98), 17/A, Mody Clny, Synagogue St, 411001; August 23
Shirin Behram Irani (54), 5/4, Ardeshir Baug, 411002; August 24
Ardeshir Pestonji Divecha (85), 7/A, Mody Clny, Synagogue St, 411001; September 3
Aloo Minoo Dinshaw (85), Nawaz Hse, Ma Perviz Rd, 411001; September 6
Piloo Jehangir Kaikobad (86), Utopia Gloria, B/11, 68, Wanawadi, 411041; September 19
Burjorji Cawasji Karkaria (78), 3, Triveni Ngr, Hadapsar,

411028; September 19
Burjor Faramroz Gagrati (73), 70, Lullanagar; September 20
Samary Keku Patel (67), 5, Dr Coyaji Rd, 411001; September 21

SURAT

DIED

Dhanmai Dadabhai Nogamawala (72), Akash Ganga Apt, Vanki Bordi, 395003; September 5
Jal Behramsha Dadinath (89), Parsiwad, Gopipura, 395001; September 19
Jerbanoo Burjorji Patelwala (68), Nama-ne-Hosang, 102, Vanki Bordi, 395003; September 29

CANADA Ontario

BORN

A girl, *Donya*, to *Mehrnaz* and *Fereidoon Khosravi*; August 28
 A boy, *Comyar*, to *Armita* and *Behdad Babakan*; September 11

PAKISTAN Karachi

BORN

A boy, *Jamshed*, to *Benafshey* and *Daravoush Kolah*;

August 27

DIED

Banoo Shavak Khambatta (84); March 24
Jal Faramroze Golwala (82); March 28
Bomanji Behramji Solan (85); March 29
Mini Jal Karanjia (95); April 3
Faroukh Cowas Vachha (58); April 4
Jemi Gustad Mehta (78); April 13
Rustom M. Falfeli (64); April 24
Savakshaw S. Khajotia (80); April 27
Rusi Pirojshaw Kerawalla (76); May 5
Daulat Burjor Rabadi (72); May 14
Gulchar Ardesher Irani (78); June 7
Soli Nadershaw Bharucha (81); June 20
Julian J. E. Kaikobad (70); June 25
Roshan Speetaman Arjani (53); July 16
Dina Behramji Solan (72); July 16
Goolcher Faredun Dadchanji (80); July 19
Tehmina Hormusji Dalal (92); July 20

Shireen Phiroze Dariwalla (72); July 28
Rustom Jehangir Mehta (82); August 11
Kharmen N. Irani (73); August 28
Faramroze Jamshedji Andhyarujina (74); September 19
Behli Mehrji Mistry (71); September 30

USA California

DIED

Mitra Sohrab Khosraviani; July 2
Khodadad Bamasi, husband of *Parinaz* and father of *Semira* and *Kevin*; August 11
Rustom Ardesher Lal (91), father of *Ardesher*, *Dhunjishaw* and *Aban* in *Antioch*, August 16

Florida

DIED

Morvarid Ardesher Harvesf in *Jacksonville*; July 23

Illinois

BORN

A boy, *Zal*, to *Roxanna* and *Behram Daboo* in *Naperville*; August 30

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 16

pany, subsequently renamed the 6th East Bombay Bai B. S. Bengallee Girls' School Guide Group.

During her nearly 55 years of association with the guiding movement, Kanga's first responsibility was as assistant guide captain and gradually her command expanded as district guide captain, district ranger leader and district training commissioner. As one of the seniormost leader trainers at the national level, she conducted various training courses and in recognition of her meritorious service was conferred the Silver Elephant, the highest award in guiding, in 1995.

"Camps with her were full of fun and learning experiences," recalls her relative *Pheroze Lashkari*. "She was a strict disciplinarian too and anyone who had any contact with her would not be able to forget her loud, authoritative voice which commanded respect (and) put everyone on alert," he added. "But behind the tough exterior that she always projected she had a very gentle and loving heart." *Lashkari* recalled the many instances when she went out of pocket to accommodate young deserving children in guiding activities, the

special consideration she accorded to the handicapped children of the Helen Keller Institute and the SEC Day School who were included in her guiding activities.

"Kanga's heart overflowed with generosity and this is explicit in the various funds she has established in the Bengallee School," mentioned a press release issued by the principal of the School, *Zenobia Daroga*. She founded the *Shirin Irani Library Fund* in memory of a guider who died very young, the *Staff Benefit Fund* although she herself worked as the School supervisor for 20 years in an honorary capacity, the *Guide Fund*, and helped the School in its purchase of audiovisual infrastructure like slide-o-matic equipment, epidiascope, synchronizer and multimedia computer system, declared the press release.

To keep alive her memory and her services the guiders of her School have taken the initiative to start a fund which will help defray the expenses of the poor and needy guides of the School. Donations for this may be forwarded to the School, at 42, Sir *Vithaldas Thackersey Marg*, Bombay 400020, Tel: 2031577.

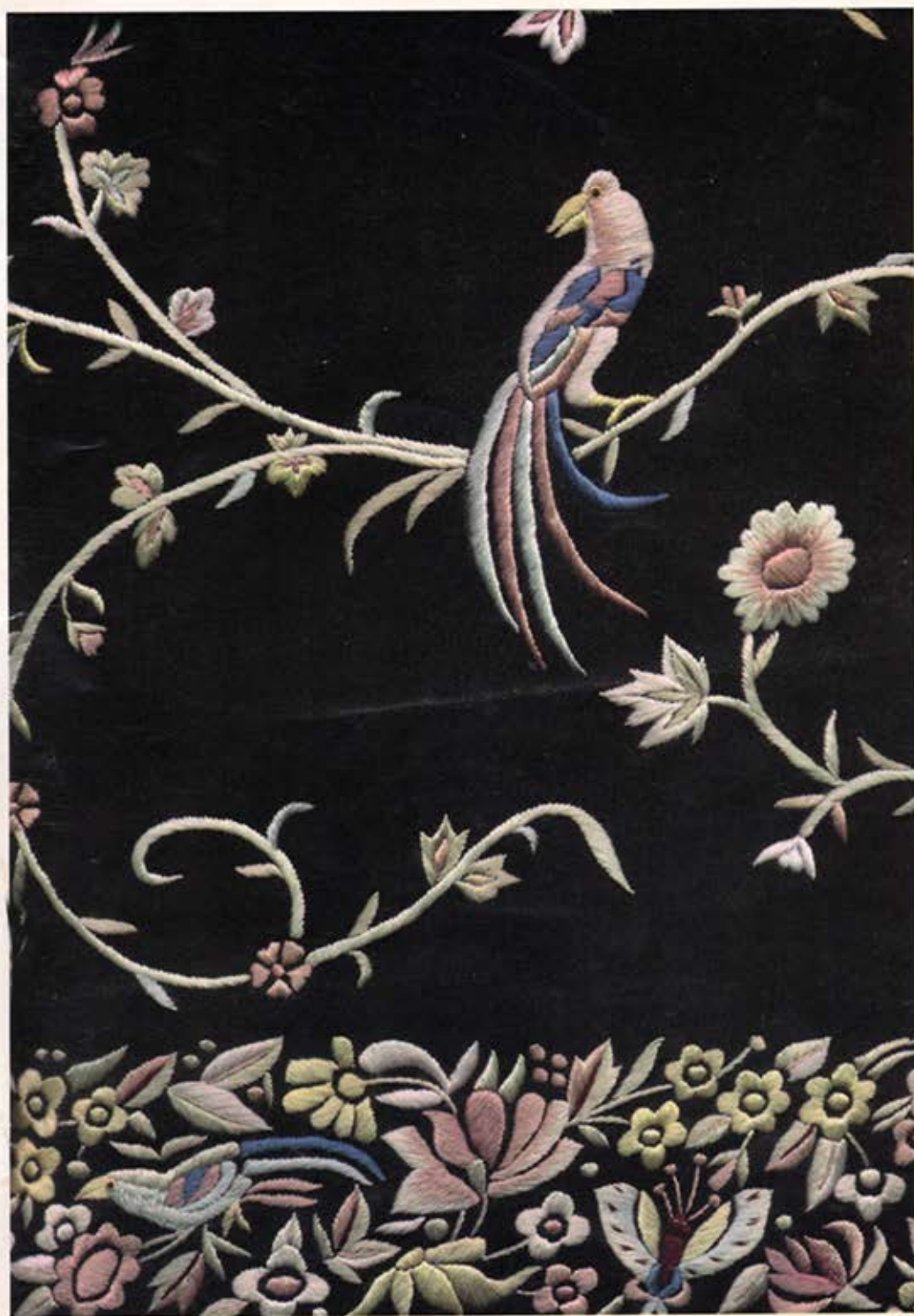
Compiled by *Parinaz M. Gandhi*

Change in publishing schedule

In order to comply with postal regulations whilst minimizing mailing costs, the *Parsiana* publishing schedule is to be modified. Instead of February-March and July-August being two-in-one issues, only June-July will be a composite publication. January and February will be separate issues whereas earlier there was no issue for the month of February. March will be a special *Jamshedi Navroz* issue, and August, the special *Pateti* issue.

The calendar that we published last year in December will now constitute the issue for that month. Readers will continue to receive the same number of issues as previously and the same quantum of editorial matter, if not more.

Parsiana is now on schedule thanks to your support. Your assistance has made it possible for us to upgrade our computer equipment. We thank our loyal subscribers and generous advertisers and donors for bearing with our delays all these years.



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