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Parsiana

February-March 1998
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Cover: (Clockwise from top left) Yasmin (Daji) Nanavati, Meher (Mistry) Castelino, Persis Khambatta (Photo: Savvy), Mehr (Jesia) Rampal and Pheroza (Cooper) Modi



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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

Ere seeking reservation

The contribution of our small but dynamic, philanthropic Parsi community in all spheres in our country especially for education is well-known within and beyond the borders of our beloved country, India.

Substantial contributions have been made by our community in the past in establishing numerous medical and engineering colleges, more particularly in western India, as a result of which seats were reserved for our community in such colleges. But regrettably despite the munificent contributions of our community, reservations of seats for our minority community have by and large lapsed with the passage of time.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet is therefore intending to make a representation to the Minorities Commission shortly for reintroducing the reservations at various colleges. But such a memorandum has to

be substantiated with requisite statistical information which is in the process of being collected.

We are, therefore, endeavoring to obtain information from the records of our leading Parsi newspapers and magazines to ascertain the assistance given by the Parsis in the past in setting up medical and engineering colleges.

In the meantime, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet will gladly welcome information on this subject from your readers. If you do have information, please post it or deliver it to our office whilst citing the source from which such information has been derived to enable us to pursue the matter.

All communications may kindly be marked to the attention of: Mr B. K. Laskari, Chief Executive, Bombay Parsi Punchayet, 209, Dr D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001.

B. K. LASKARI

Chief Executive, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

Spotlight on doctors

As an ophthalmologist practising in Bombay, I was happy to read under "Spotlight" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, October 1997) the achievements of our family friends Drs Minoo, Noshir, Cyrus and young Daraius Shroff who recently joined the Maulana Azad Medical College, Delhi. Perhaps it may interest your readers to know that our family is identical and the youngest Dr Dinshaw has joined in practise recently.

My late grandfather Dr Dinshaw M. Dastoor though not an ophthalmologist but a UK qualified optician and optometrist, founded the first optician shop in Bombay viz Dinshaw M. Dastoor at Fort, opposite the present Bank of India. Later he started 'Phiroze M. Dastoor' at Flora Fountain and one each at Poona and Ahmedabad, all three gifted to his brothers.

His son, the late Dr Homiyar D. Dastoor was a reputed and respected ophthalmologist in Bombay and I joined him in practise about 35 years ago. Hence like Daraius, Dinshaw is the fourth in the family tree.

Dr ADI H. DASTOOR

"Portraying Naoroji"

There appears a pencil sketch of an old man, drawn by Mr Firdos T. Shroff in Readers' Forum (*Parsiana*, September 1997).

It appears that Mr Shroff has prepared many such sketches, and by mistake he

has mentioned that the sketch is of Dadabhai Naoroji. It so happens that the sketch is of Jamsetjee Tata.

It may be of interest to know that Dadabhai Naoroji always wore a pugree, whereas Jamsetjee Tata's pictures have appeared wearing a pheta in some and a pugree in other pictures.

Incidentally, one look at the stamp at the top right in the Readers' Forum logo in the same issue of *Parsiana* clearly shows what Dadabhai Naoroji used to wear and what he looked like.

H. N. KANGA

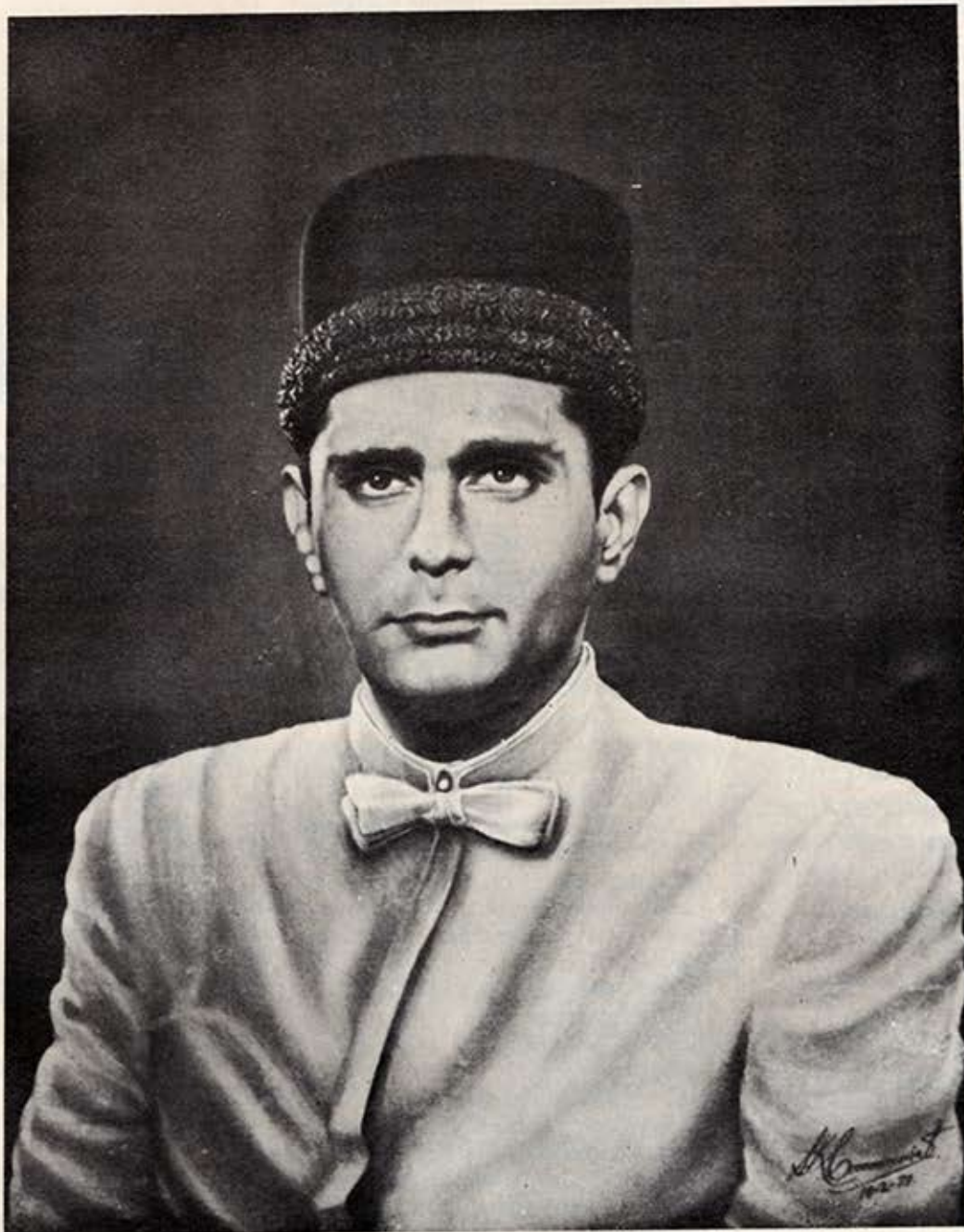
"A measure of mysticism"

The most important factor distinguishing any popular magazine from the rest is the type of subjects covered in it. Of course there are other factors like the format, spellings, headlines, pictures, ads, etc, but in my opinion they are of lesser value. A glance at a few lines of a magazine should convey which magazine it is. As a fairly regular reader of *Parsiana* for nearly 17 years, I found that it conformed to this test till August 1997. Various articles, news, book reviews, readers' views and editorial comments were concentrated on Zoroastrianism and Parsis.

And so I was surprised to read a book review ("A measure of mysticism," Books, *Parsiana*, July-August 1997) of Ervad R. R. Motafram's latest book by Faribourz Nariman. Soon after I procured a copy of the book, which is a comparative study of the Jews, the Mohmedans and the Zoroastrians. It is true that Motafram speaks of the orthodox Islamic view of God as a "merciless tyrant," a statement to which Nariman has taken serious exception. Not being a scholar myself, I am not in a position to judge who is right and who is wrong. The question which I would like to ask you is whether it is correct to include alien names of God like Rahman, Rahim, Muntaquim, Gaffar, etc in a Parsi magazine? If the name of the magazine had been Muslimiana, I would not have asked this question.

As a veteran scholar and an erudite reviewer of many scholarly works, Nariman should have thought about this point and restricted his observations only to Zoroastrian matters in Motafram's book. I am sure a large section of the Parsi readers would agree with me on this point.

V. J. CHOTHIA



**In Memoriam
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"Uplifting rural girls"

We read in "Uplifting rural girls" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1997) that some of our youths (girls) in India need assistance in their studies and boarding. We suggest that the trustees of the Choksi Home at Navsari initiate a yearly sponsorship for the eligible Parsi youths whereby the sponsor pays e.g. \$ 30 per month or \$ 360 per year for the youth's welfare. The school provides a pictured portfolio to the sponsor and a periodic report to satisfy the sponsor. This would provide the much needed assistance to the eligible youth and satisfaction to the sponsor of helping his own community.

Further, we have been to India often and have been touring a few beautiful places of your country. We shall highly appreciate it if you will be kind enough to print the addresses of your Parsi dharamshalas throughout India. These dharamshalas will give us access to make some advance booking when touring around your country.

M. GATTA

Ontario, Canada

The Editor replies

We had carried a list of dharamshalas in *Parsiana*, August 1986. If somebody

compiles an up-to-date list, we will certainly publish it in *Parsiana*.

"Identity in jeopardy"

In response to my request Mr Farrokh Vajifdar of London has sent me a copy of his original review of the book, *Zoroastrians in Britain* by John R. Hinnells, from which you had published only selected extracts ("Identity in jeopardy," *Parsiana*, February-March 1997).

On scrutiny, I find that you have essentially deleted all passages where Vajifdar is critical of Mr Khojeste Mistree's distorted dualistic theory which has also been propagated by Hinnells in his book.

You may be aware that there are many in the community (including myself) who are highly critical of Mistree's dualism. To suppress such genuine criticism is not editing as you claim, but a savage mutilation of a critical review.

Whereas many scholars have interpreted Gathic dualism as a choice between Spenta Mainyu (good mind) and Angre Mainyu (evil mind), Mistree has interpreted it as a fight between Ahura Mazda (God of good) and Ahriman (god of evil). Then he extends his theory to say that there are occasions when Ahura

Mazda becomes transiently incapacitated or temporarily non-omnipotent to fight Ahriman which lead to death, destruction and disasters in this world. Mistree does not accept death by natural causes or disasters as natural phenomenon. He attributes all such events to a god of evil. Mistree thus questions the omnipotence of God and the belief in monotheism (see Khojeste Mistree, *Zoroastrianism - An Ethnic Perspective*, 1982), which Vajifdar has criticized.

As an example of his distorted dualistic theory which Mistree has been propagating can be cited his recent utterances at the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in London from July 4-11, 1997, where he stated, "At the metaphysical level, I don't believe God punishes since he would be using the facilities of the god of evil. (*Parsiana*, July-August 1997)." Mistree's concept that Ahura Mazda cannot punish evil doers is anathema to the Zoroastrian belief in the omnipotence of God. When Mistree was questioned "whether Ahura Mazda is all powerful or not," he replied that the medieval text *Shikand Gumik Vizar* postulates the dualistic argument against monotheistic Christianity. Is Mistree suggesting that Christians believe in one

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God and Zoroastrians believe in two Gods?

Finally, I should say that by drastically curtailing Mr Vajifdar's critical review you have done a disservice to the readers. If you did not agree with Mr Vajifdar's comments, you could have added a footnote that *Parsiana* does not subscribe to Mr Vajifdar's views. Your regrets do no justice either to the book or to the reviewer.

D P. D. SUNAVALA

Khojeste Mistree replies

Prof John Hinnells' book *Parsis in Britain* is an excellent and scholarly documentation of the activities and times of the British Zoroastrians. As part of his work, Prof Hinnells has merely commented about my work in the UK and has indeed mentioned about the benefits which it has brought to many of the UK based youth, however unpalatable it may seem to some of my detractors.

Both Mr Vajifdar and Mr Sunavala are entitled to their views as indeed I am to mine. In my teachings I adhere faithfully to what is perceived to be "classical" Zoroastrianism at an academic level. The fact that my position is in consonance with the generally accepted academic position gives me the strength and inspiration to continue with my work.

As neither Mr Vajifdar nor Mr Sunavala have, to the best of my knowledge, read for a professional degree in Zoroastrianism, they are at a great disadvantage to comment and indeed challenge the validity of this long standing position held by academics. I presume that their rejection of the Middle Persian texts is largely a matter of their personal preference and choice, whereas my acceptance of these texts is as a result of my formal studies in Zoroastrianism, at university level.

Criticism has never deterred me from my work and my organization Zoroastrian Studies continues to be involved in the dissemination of Zoroastrianism on a global basis, both at an academic as well as at a community level.

I enclose for publication Prof Hinnells' response (dated October 15, 1997) to the president of the Royal Asiatic Society with regard to Mr Vajifdar's unscholarly book review.

Prof Hinnells' letter to the Editor of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (excerpts selected by *Parsiana*):

I want to stress that I am not objecting to academic criticism of my work, that is



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not merely proper, but healthy. What I am objecting to most strongly is the publication in the *JRAS* (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*) of religious bias. It is surprising that it was included, because the religious prejudice (not so much against me, but against my sources) is self evident. It does not, I suggest, reflect well on an academic publication when the editor of a communal newspaper picks up the bias, but an academic editor lets through such contemptuous phrases of the reviewer's religious opponents as "this pseudo-religious education" and "regressive ideas in his (Mistree's) preaching"... Publishing such arrogantly contemptuous remarks about Parsi religious teachers and high priests is surely indefensible in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*...

The reviewer, Mr Farrokh Vajifdar, had already reviewed that book elsewhere (*Parsiana*, February-March 1997) thus breaking academic convention in reviewing a work in more than one place. The editor of that journal had, I understand, edited that review and sought a second opinion which was published in full. The text of the *JRAS* review, however, betrays more of Mr Vajifdar's 'sectional' religious views than does the pub-

lished review in a community newspaper. It does not seem proper for an academic journal to provide a platform for sectarian bias, which is why, for the first time in my career, I seek to respond in print to a review of my work, something I normally consider inappropriate.

Mr Vajifdar's bias is evident both in his account of religious teachings and in his historical references. On pg 316 he refers to "the type of teaching which has gained currency among untutored orthodox sections and their youth. A prime mover in this pseudo-religious education is occasionally lauded by Hinnells: a Bombay preacher Khojeste Mistree. The author's claim that Mis-tree's rational arguments... have found acceptance here is unfounded; most of the intelligentsia have distanced themselves from the unwarranted intrusion of regressive ideas in his preaching."

The reference to "untutored orthodox sections" and to the contrast with "the intelligentsia" is evidently biased, and fails to understand the scholarly duty of presenting a balanced perspective on the whole subject under discussion. The assertions also greatly oversimplify the situation... It is not for me, an outsider, to say whether Mistree is religiously right

or wrong, though his teachings are consistent with the main thrust of the academic writings of Prof Mary Boyce, who was his tutor while Mistree studied for a degree in Zoroastrian studies (something Mr Vajifdar has not undertaken). In short, whether Mistree is spiritually right or wrong, he is influential and as a historian I should document his work. Mistree's teaching is not accepted by the recently formed group to which Mr Vajifdar belongs, the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO)...

In my writings and friendships I have always sought punctiliously to avoid identification with any particular group or religious point of view. What *JRAS* has published is as close to a sectarian perspective as it is possible to come with the Zoroastrian community. This is further evidenced in Mr Vajifdar's suggestion that the resurrection and the coming of a savior are not 'traditional' Zoroastrian doctrines. There is academic debate over whether they were part of Zoroaster's teaching, but there can be no possible doubt that they were part of the religion documented in many Middle Persian volumes... It is not for me as an outsider to say whether this literature contains spiritual truths, but as a historian I do not

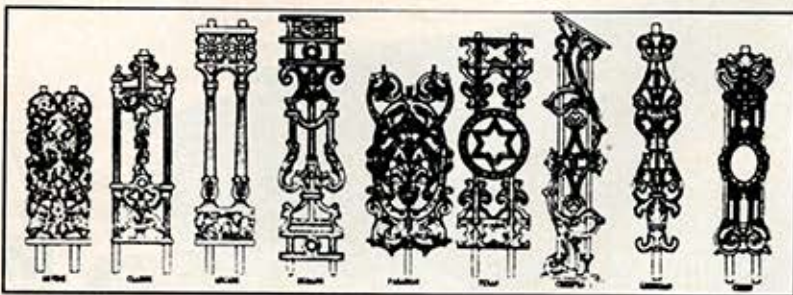
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understand how it can be argued that these teachings were not part of traditional Zoroastrianism...

The reviewer's offensive allusions to the vacillations of Parsi high priests, and the "unskilled propagandists" I had contact with refer to three leading high priests, all of whom have doctorates in Zoroastrian studies and have worked in Western universities (notably School of Oriental and African Studies, Harvard and the University of Mainz). They are especially offensive to the High Priest to whom the book is jointly dedicated, Dastur (Dr) K. M. JamaspAsa, honorary professor of Avesta and Pahlavi at Bombay University, who is gratefully acknowledged, alongside Mary Boyce, as having been my mentor. Again, the reviewer's religious bias is evident.

The assertion that "The accounts since the mid-1980s of the communities' associations... is deficient in historicity due to a selective propaganda upon which Hinnells has almost exclusively relied" is a further example of the reviewer's sectional prejudice. The account is based mainly on the official records at Zoroastrian House of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, for example minute books, correspondence files, etc. The comment is an allusion to the fact that the

WZO formed a breakaway body in the 1980s partly because of personality clashes, partly because of differences of religion and over a series of mutual re-cremations which I chose not to record (from either party) as not being the business of the outside world...

"More of The Parsis"

As nothing has been noticed in your pages further to Homi J. Rogers' report "More of The Parsis" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, February-March 1997), this corrective may be of some use to Mr Jal Hormusji Ardesir Vakil. He is there reported as having complained about the absence of mention of his late paternal aunt's work in the production of Volume I of the Menant-Murzbani *The Parsis*: "There is no reference to the pioneering work done by Ratanbai (but credit is given to) M. M. Murzbani who did not know the French language at all." How much more mistaken, on both counts, can anyone get?

Mr Vakil's paternal aunt, Ratanbai Ardesir Framji Vakil, was not only specially mentioned by Murzbani as translator of the first three chapters (Vol I), but also the subject of his sadness at her passing away at the pitifully young age of 26 in 1895. Her name, as translator,

appears at the head of each of the Chapters I, II and III in Volume I where on pg 20B her pensively dignified portrait is dutifully reproduced. What more could one reasonably want by way of acknowledgment, bearing in mind that portraits of both author Delphine Menant and her collaborator/continuator M. M. Murzbani are lacking?

Mr Vakil's huffy assumption that Murzbani did not at all know the French language is little borne out by the fact that as Barrister-at-Law (Middle Temple) and Officer d'Academie he had at least a working knowledge of it. Murzbani himself tells us so on pg i of his foreword; the fact that his "approximately literal translation" (whatever that means!) had to be revised by P. D. Khandalavala is surely no indication of his lack of French!

The 1994 (not 1992) reprints of Volumes I and II, and now III (1997) are most welcome, and it is not to ask too much of our enthusiasts to study them with proper care before firing off needless accusations, and not superficially skip through these extremely valuable pages so lovingly put together by Menant and Murzbani with the able participation of Ratanbai Vakil, Wastie Green, and now Anthony Mango. Nor must we forget to repeatedly thank Ms Jerroo Mango and

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youth. Based on this ideology, Sir Jamsetjee set about establishing the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsee Benevolent Institution (SJJPI), as an educational institution to be run on charitable lines. This noble Institution which bears his name, was founded on January 9, 1849, and is one of the noteworthy examples of his munificence.

Besides being the founder of SJJPI, Sir Jamsetjee was also the benefactor of many other public charities. The institutions which he founded and the public works which were commissioned by him continue to serve the citizens of India 139 years after his death. Sir J. J. Hospital, Sir J. J. School of Art, Sir J. J. College of Architecture, Sir J. J. Dharmashala (Home for the Destitute Aged), Bombay Pan-
jrapole, Mahim Causeway and the Poona Bund and Waterworks, are today living embodiments of his benevolence and philanthropy.

The eight primary and secondary schools presently managed under the auspices of SJJPI, are located in Bombay, Valsad, Navsari and Surat. These schools cater, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, to the academic requirements of over 6,000 boys and girls from various strata of society. The efforts of SJJPI to promote the cause of education have,

over the years, been widely acclaimed by the departments of education of the respective governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Though the schools managed by SJJPI are equipped with science laboratories, computer rooms and libraries, we feel that we should, in the larger interests of the students, consider upgrading and improving the academic activities of the Institution, in order to ensure that education is imparted on modern lines, in pleasant surroundings and using state-of-the-art teaching aids. The main areas where we propose to bring about an improvement are:

- undertaking repairs and painting to the SJJPI building in Bombay, which is a 125-year-old heritage structure located on Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Road;
- reconstruction of the school building in Surat;
- repairing and renovating the school building in Navsari;
- expansion of the existing computer laboratories;
- renovation and modernization of the science laboratories;
- supplying modern audiovisual teaching aids for our schools in Gujarat;
- providing the schools with new physical training and sports equipment;

•furnishing classrooms with new furniture and electrical fittings, wherever required.

In an effort to raise funds to meet the expenses for the above purposes, we propose to host, with effect from January 1998, for a duration of one year, a variety of educational, cultural and social events. Having faithfully catered to the educational requirements of the student community for 150 years, we fervently appeal to charitable institutions to extend their support and cooperation to SJJPI to assist us in realizing our objectives.

Your donation by cheque or demand draft should be drawn in favor of "Sir J. J. Parsee Benevolent Institution — Sesquicentennial Fund" and forwarded to us at 209, Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Fort, Bombay 400001. JAMSETJEE JEJEEBHAY

Chairman

Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsee Benevolent Institution

Aid for Bordi adarian

The members of the Zai Bordi Parsi Anjuman Fund appeal for funds to be utilized for the Bordi fire-temple.

The fire-temple building along with the priest's residence, kathi godown and the dadgah house are now over 80 years old. With minor repairs and maintenance work done by the Trust over the years, it

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has been possible to prolong the life of the buildings beyond expectation. Now there is a need for major repairs for which the trustees have been professionally advised that a conservative estimate would be around Rs 20 lakhs.

Although Gholvad is a small place with a small Irani-Parsi population, located in a green belt 160 km north of Bombay, it had the only adarian between Bombay and Udvada, till the one recently opened at Sanjan. The Bordi adarian was built as far back as 1916.

Bordi and Gholvad have a Zoroastrian population of only about 300 members, which includes children. In spite of the limited local resources, so far the trustees have managed to break even with the needed expenses with the help of donations received.

The magnitude of the current extensive repairs are way beyond the means available. Therefore, the trustees appeal to our Zoroastrian brethren to help the Trust by donating generously.

As the Bordi adarian is a revered and old institution, it needs special help to preserve it for future generations. Please send your contribution either by demand drafts or crossed cheques, in favor of "Zai Bordi Parsi Anjuman Trust - Bordi," Post Bordi, Station Gholvad, Dist

Thana, 401701. ROHINTON J. BATLIWALLA
President, Zai Bordi Parsi Anjuman Fund

Assist Khabardar's work

A. F. Khabardar was the first Gujarati poet who appreciated the freedom struggles of India and sang and wrote for national unity, selfless service, sacrifice, truth, non-violence and independence. In these present days of class and caste wars, of clashing self interests, his poems are of much importance and a fountain of inspiration. He wrote many good English poems also which have been appreciated by English critics and poets of England. He wrote on the holy *Gathas* too in English as well as in Gujarati.

In the birth centenary year of this national poet in 1981, we published the first part of the PhD thesis on this poet A. F. Khabardar's *Poetry — a Study* by Dr Dharmendra M. Master (Madhuram) in Gujarati. In 1990, four other books, *The Rest House of the Spirit, Leaf and Flowers, The Migrating Birds*, in English and *Manuraj* drama in Gujarati were published at Surat under the guidance of Dr Ratan Marshall. In 1992, the Gujarati book *Letters of Poet Khabardar* was published on behalf of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet. In 1994, the Gujarati book *Chayanika — the parodies of Khabardar*

was published on behalf of the Surat Parsi Panchayat. In 1996, the Gujarati book *Prose Articles of Poet Khabardar* was published on behalf of the Madras Parsi Anjuman.

Now, we intend to publish a volume of selected good poems of our Khabardar, who had published 19 Gujarati poem-books and five English poem-books as well as the verse-drama *Manuraj* in Gujarati. In this mission, we are fortunate to have received the valuable cooperation of Ms Manek Khabardar, granddaughter of poet Khabardar. But as the publication costs of this book would be in the region of Rs 25,000-35,000, please help us in our project by sending liberal publication assistance through bank draft or cheque or money order in the name of Prof (Dr) Dharmendra M. Master, Convener, Parsi Poet Khabardar Centenary Publications, C-3, Bajaj Vihar Colony, Post MIDC, Waluj, 431136, Via Aurangabad, Maharashtra. This will be our last and ninth publication.

The list of the donors will be published in the book and the copy of the book will be sent gratis to all donors. The audited accounts will also be sent to them after the publication of the book.

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In the lands of old,
Lived hunters and peasants
And priests and kings,
They worshipped the pagans
And gods akin.

In those days of yore
In those lands of old,
Rose a prophet of God
Oh, let his story unfold.

O Spitama Zarathushtra
From the day you were born,
Evil cried in fear
And heaven praised you in song.

Ahura Mazda's gifted servant,
You trudged the ancient land of Iran,
To teach the people His word.

For three thousand years and beyond,
We have kept His altars burning
Through toil and labor
Enduring trial and suffering.

Your words have been lost
Your fires destroyed
Your temples desecrated
Your followers persecuted.

Yet there still live a few
Who revere and believe in you.
O Spitama Zarathushtra, Prophet of old,
Through us again, let your work unfold.

We number but a few,
Lost in the evil of this world anew.

But all is not lost,
O Prophet of old,
Your spirit lives on,
Your people are strong.

Through Mazda's grace
We shall be bold.
Relighting those ancient altars
Gathering up His souls.

We shall not go quietly into the night,
We shall bring this world into His light.

Through your guidance and blessings,
Through your examples and teachings,
We shall proudly proclaim
That we still believe in your name.

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Events and Personalities

Willing to raise more

"Parsis are willing to donate generously for a worthy cause if they are convinced that their money will be utilized for the betterment of the community." This has been the observation of the Bardoli Jarthosti Anjuman which despite its limited corpus of two lakh rupees was able to raise Rs 20 lakhs to fulfil their objective of providing subsidized rental flats and shops to deserving individuals.

The complex was inaugurated on January 4, 1998 by Marazban Patrawala, member of the National Commission for Minorities who, whilst lauding the efforts of the trustees of the Bardoli Anjuman, urged other bodies to take a cue from this small anjuman. Shun white collar jobs and improve your status by dint of hard work and labor as did our forefathers, Patrawala

advised the youths.

The mayor of Bardoli Gautam Vyas, mamlatdar Ganpat Chaudhary, chairman of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) Shahpur Captain, president of the Vyara-Songadh Parsi Anjuman Dr Bahadur Jokhi and other dignitaries too addressed the gathering assembled from different corners of India and even overseas, as notes the write-up.

In his speech the president of the Bardoli Anjuman Jamshed J. Mohta mentioned that they had received a donation of Rs 7,50,000 from Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund, Rs 7,00,000 from the WZO, Rs 5,50,000 from various Parsi trusts and individuals, while Rs 2,60,000 was raised from the sale of their property and Rs 1,40,000 from the scrap of the old building. Finding

a balance of Rs 4,00,000 in their coffers after having expended Rs 20,00,000 on the new building, they are contemplating constructing one more floor if they can raise another Rs 3,00,000.

After having accommodated seven poor and homeless Parsi families from places other than Bardoli, they still have a waiting list of 60, they write. As announced the compere Rusi Besania, this project has been successful thanks to the efforts of the Anjuman's "dynamic and visionary" honorary secretary Pervez B. Mehta who raised the finance, planned and supervised the construction at the expense of neglecting his family and business.

On the occasion special honors were accorded to Mehta, Mohta and WZO's Dinshaw Tamboly for his "yeoman service to the downtrodden members of our

community." Other individuals named for their support and guidance in Bardoli Anjuman vice president Dau-latbanoo S. Mohta's vote of thanks were Besania, Scylla Vatcha, Burjor Antia and Jamshed



At the inauguration of Bardoli's new complex: Patrawala lights a lamp in the presence of (from left) Vyas, Captain, Mehta, Tamboly and D. Mohta; (below) a section of the audience, Photo: Suresh Vashi; (left) J. Mohta (center, back row) with project supporters

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Guzder. The chanting of *Chhaiyé hamé Zarathoshti* led to the function's finale, the ghambar.

Cheering the cricketers

The Parsi Pentangular Cricket Tournament "managed to kindle the spirit of competition by garnering the best Parsi players (from Jamshedpur, Calcutta, Secunderabad-Hyderabad and Surat) to come to Nagpur," mentions a write-up submitted by Sohrab Kanga. Whilst inaugurating the Tournament on October 29, 1997 at the Bishop Cotton School grounds, Aspi Bapuna, chairman of the Bapuna Group which sponsored the meet, stressed

on the need for Parsis to interact on a regular basis, pledging his Group's support to promote togetherness among Parsis.

The Bapuna Cup was won by Surat, and the runners-up were Calcutta, followed by Secunderabad-Hyderabad, Nagpur and Jamshedpur. The man of the series was Rustom Sethna of Surat, while Dinyar Mucadam of Calcutta got the best bowler's trophy, S. Irani of Calcutta was declared the best batsman, Jahan Mehta of Calcutta the best fielder and Yim Dotivala of Jamshedpur, the most promising youngster.

The event this year was organized by the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana, deemed the



At the Parsi Pentangulars at Nagpur (left) the winners, Surat team, being introduced to A. Bapuna; (right) Surat's Zubin Bhatporia receiving trophy from Dinshaw Bapuna while Gimi (left) and A. Bapuna stand applauding

pioneers of cricket in central India. The president of the Gymkhana Shiraz Gimi, who has been the chief organizer of the Tournament since its inception in 1975, is credited with many firsts, among them being the Night Cricket spectacular held regularly at Nagpur, mentions the report. Assisting him in organizing for the hospitality and comforts of the players were

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honorary secretary Mehroo Watchmaker, Taubenda Bhagwagar, Peshotan Mehta and Shiraz Doongaji among others.

The Pentangulars at Nagpur coincided with the 102nd anniversary of the Bai Hrabai Mullan Dar-e-Meher "in which a week long celebration including a variety of programs were planned to keep the visiting teams in good cheer..." Various competitions, talent contests, a slick fashion show and fireworks ended with a grand dinner-n-dance at the Billimoria Brothers Parsi Dharamshala on November 2, 1997, states Kanga. Next year the Tournament will be played in Surat.

(Left) Fashion show to celebrate Nagpur agiary's 102nd anniversary. (Right) An exercise in team-work conducted in Hyderabad by S. Rustomfram

The Bapuna Group which is "one of central India's premier corporate houses with business interests ranging from the manufacture of alcohol and IMFL (Indian made foreign liquor), to finance and non-conventional energy" takes an avid interest in sports. They also sponsor the Pure Gold Cup Cricket Tournament held under the auspices of the Vidarbha Cricket Association which forms the basis of selec-



tion of players from the region for the Ranji Trophy matches, notes the write-up. The Cup is named after one of the Group's products. Yet another game which has earned their support is bridge. Since 1990 they have been sponsoring the Banu Bapuna Memorial Bridge Tournament which is held immediately prior to the nationals.

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this transition with a rare flair and finesse.

Starved out of their ancestral family business by the dry policy ushered in by the Andhra Pradesh Government some two years ago, Sarosh and Zenobia Rustomfram decided to put their farmland on the outskirts of Hyderabad to more equitable use than as a mere rustic patch for themselves to retire to and rejuvenate from the pressures of city life. Zenobia, a trained youth (and marriage) counsellor started a learning center, inspired by the Outbound Foundation in Panchgani, to enable individuals to "explore values, attitudes and beliefs in a secure, non-threatening way."

The Rustomframs' Centre for Outdoor and Development Programmes aims at teaching FUNN (Fundamental Learning Not Necessary) to various age-groups through a better understanding of nature, by incorporating the 'outdoors' in the curriculum in a very informal manner. "We are both nature and outdoor lovers," informs Sarosh, who steadfastly refuses to develop this plot at Gandipet Village near Osmansagar, approximately an hour's drive from Hyderabad, in any environmentally-unfriendly manner. "It does scare away the corporates we would like to enrol in our character-building and personality-development programs." But modern constructions with "fancy five-star loos and air-conditioned conference halls" are a strict no-no in an atmosphere dominated by fruit trees and vegetable patches, personally cultivated by Sarosh. "I even plough the land here myself, with my two bullocks," informs Sarosh.

So, while preserving the character of the land, and putting their combined knowledge and experience (his of the land and soil, and hers in education) to use, the Rustomframs, armed with further training imparted by Outbound Foundation, now run courses from one to five days' duration at their farm for children, their parents, and corporate bigwigs. The courses combine training in gardening, rock-climbing, trekking, with management, meditation, and even fine arts, photography and yoga.

The Rustomframs currently aim at running programs for children, which through a series of well-planned activities "will teach them to think critically, express opinions confidently, be self-reliant, make choices within a moral context, and imbibe values of cooperation and team spirit."

The courses are very modestly priced, and include spacious and comfortable accommodation atop tree-top houses (machans) and in tents, nutritionally delicious food, basic medical facilities, creative learning tools and activities set to high safety standards.

Further details can be obtained from 395 Bank Street, Hyderabad 500001. Phone: 592357/4610718. Homi J. Rogers

Happily delivering

"Any hospital which has caesarean sections forming 25 percent or more of its total deliveries is in a questionable position. It is however very normal for this ratio to be around five percent," opined Dr Behram S. Anklesaria, president of the Societies of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Gujarat for the year 1997, in an interview with *City Speak*, October 3, 1997. The 1,200 plus gynecologists practising in Gujarat account for almost 10 percent of the all-India fraternity, mentioned Anklesaria who clarified that "nearly 90 percent of the deliveries are attended by midwives, qualified health workers, etc and not by gynecs. The system has been working well over the years...(with) about 80 percent of deliveries taking place at home and they are normal deliveries."

Ninety percent of Anklesaria's practice at the Dr S. B. Anklesaria's Hospital for Women at Ahmedabad is of the

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lower middle class and other backward sections of the city, mentions the article. "I am not promoting myself as a social worker or as a role model for the other doctors. In the long run we all end up doing what we



**Anklesaria:
health guardian**

are happy doing the most..." declared Anklesaria who had served as president of the Ahmedabad Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society during its diamond jubilee year in 1996-97 and has been recently elected senior vice president of the Fed-

eration of Obstetrics Gynaecology Societies of India (FOGSI).

Professor and head of the obstetrics and gynecology unit at the L. G. Hospital, the N. H. L. Medical College and the K. M. School of Post Graduate Medicine, Anklesaria has been serving as examiner for several universities and as inspector of various medical colleges in India on behalf of the Medical Council of India, notes his bio data. Specializing in endoscopy, fertility and menopause, he has contributed articles in the general Press, and scientific journals and publications brought

Cama in the limelight with wife Mehroo

out by FOGSI. Only last year he was invited as guest lecturer at the World Congress of Labour and Delivery: Journey to be made Safe.

To promote health education and welfare among the public Anklesaria has appeared on several TV programs. He is concerned that multinationals are dumping banned medical products in India, pointing out that tampons which have been banned in the US for the last many years after finding women suffering from "toxic shock syndrome" are now freely available in India.

To him also goes the credit of organizing an extensive audiovisual ongoing teaching program for sex education in Gujarat schools. As realized Anklesaria, "After all these years sex education is still almost incidental; a patchy haphazard exercise. There are no prescribed text books and that the state government is embarrassed to handle this issue is more than obvious."

Cama made Nagarbhushan

The title of Nagarbhushan was recently conferred on Jehangir R. J. Cama, chair-



man and managing director of the Cama Hotels Limited, by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. The honor was in appreciation of his services to trade and the respect he has earned as a citizen, notes a press release. His name was reportedly selected by an eminent jury consisting of Mrinalini Sarabhai, Arvindbhai Narottam and Udayan Chinubhai.

Nearly 20,000 people were present at the Sardar Patel Stadium to witness the presentation of the awards at a glittering



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function, writes Cama. Similar awards were also presented to those who had made outstanding contribution to industry, art, civic affairs, etc.

President's hospitality

He started the hotel to keep his sons in Indore. And now the family believes the hotel trade is the "very best business to be in."

Tehemton Meher Thanevala, his wife Banoo and their two sons Rohinton and Gev established the Hotel President in Madhya Pradesh's premier commercial city on May 7, 1990. The 65-room establishment located in the heart of the city is one of the three leading hotels in Indore, the others being the Taj Residency and Shreemaya Hotel.

Formerly landowners, the family had stables, godowns and a tennis court adjoining their home, Thanevala Terrace. "The horses went, then Dad stopped playing tennis. We didn't require the godowns so we decided to use the plot for a hotel," explained Gev who, when asked what aspect of the Hotel he manages, laughed and replied "everything."

Dad looks after the maintenance and upkeep, Rohinton, a noted lawyer in Indore, handles the public relations and Mum tends to the "communications," which means taking and conveying the innumerable telephone messages and other calls, say the sons. She gets annoyed when the boys don't show up for dinner due to other engagements, but, as the family explains, the hotel line is a 24-hour business.

What is the secret of success in the hotel business? "Cleanliness, quick service and the right location," says the bespectacled and mild mannered Gev. The



Paying their respects (from left): Bapsy Daviervala, Tirandaz, Modi, Guzder, R. Daviervala, Taleyarkhan, Kavarana and Master-Moos (Inset) Sanjan Memorial Column

Photo: Rusi M. Davar

Hotel is situated in the commercial hub of Indore, at a distance of half a kilometer from the main railway station, and eight kilometers from the airport.

"Maintenance," stresses the father, "is crucial in this line. Every small thing you have to look into." He shows us around a well appointed, spotless suite to emphasize his point. The two-room suite rents for Rs 1,575 a night plus taxes (10 percent luxury tax and five percent service charge). A regular single room costs Rs 775 plus taxes. The Hotel has a health club, a restaurant, a conference hall, an executive center and a travel agency, Presidential Travels.

Pointing out the long hours the family



has to put in, and the day-to-day problems of running a medium sized hotel in the state's largest city, the brothers insist it's not so bad. The pros greatly outweigh the cons, they say. "In which other business can you order chicken tikkas at two in the morning and be able to eat it (dressed) in your sudreh?" asks Rohinton with a laugh.

To Sanjan, with gratitude

Among the nearly 1,000 devout Zoroastrians who had gathered in Sanjan on November 21, 1997 were the chairman and trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet Jamshed Guzder, Silloo Kavarana, Rustom Tirandaz, and other stalwarts like Homi Taleyarkhan, Homai Modi and Dr Meher Master-Moos. They came by Gujarat Express which is permitted a special halt at Sanjan on Sanjan Day by the Western Railway, according to a news report.

As Sanjan Day (*mah Tir, roj Bahman*) marks the anniversary of the Parsis' landing in Sanjan in 716 AD, it should be declared a holiday at least in schools and other institutions run by the Parsi Punchayet, recommended Rohinton Daviervala, president of the Sanjan Me-

continued on page 172



Indore's Hotel President with owners Tehemton (seated), Rohinton (left) and Gev Thanevala

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Editing the *FEZANA Journal*

Computer engineer and editor-in-chief of the *FEZANA Journal* Roshan Rivetna speaks of her varied concerns

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The main problem is what to select and what to leave out," laughs Roshan Rivetna about her job as editor-in-chief of the *FEZANA Journal*, the quarterly newsmagazine published by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. During her recent trip to India she says she has collected "all kinds of interesting articles."

Working closely with Dr Rustom Kevala, chairman of FEZANA's publications committee who deals with a "broader perspective," taking an overall view of the *Journal's* contents, Rivetna deals with the nitty-gritty of gathering articles, entering all the material (some of which comes on floppy discs) into the computer and proofreading, designing layouts, etc.

Having adopted the concept of guest editors, members of the North American community, who are well versed in certain subjects, are assigned a theme two issues in advance, like for example mobeds and dar-e-mehers in North America or the age of Zarathushtra which had been edited by Sarosh Manekshaw or the *Gathas*, assigned to Yezdi Rustomji, or the theme of spirituality being handled by Dr Jehan Bagli. It is then their responsibility to collect, edit and proofread their assigned pages. Such "themes" do not claim to be dealt with comprehensively but do provide a cursory look at the respective fields for the benefit of the lay reader. Moreover, it gives the *Journal* "a different flavor." The mobeds and dar-e-mehers issue will also give an overview of agiaries and atash bahrams in the home countries with a brief look at how they are consecrated, says Rivetna. The material for youth pages is entirely prepared by the current youth editor Aaron Rustom. Most of the material is re-

ceived by Rivetna over phone and fax, she notes.

The deadlines are rigid: "We have to stick to the days of the program. There is no margin (for delays)," notes Rivetna who choreographs it all from her Chicago residence along with her own job at AT&T Bell Laboratories as computer engineer and the ubiquitous housekeeping. Mailing day is a quarterly event at their residence with sometimes 20 people, but normally six to eight, gathering to stamp and address the copies and "generally have a nice day together" after which Roshan Rivetna with her husband Rohinton despatch the edition from two post offices.

Roshan Patel and Rohinton Rivetna had met, married and left for Chicago, USA, all in the space of one month in January 1966, she recalls. Due to stringent foreign exchange regulations at the time, they were allowed to carry only eight dollars each. Rohinton had first landed a job with the American National Can Corporation [from which he retired after a full working life as director of environmental engineering (corporate) worldwide in December 1997 and continues as consultant] and his brother Dara — a source of moral support — was making his way through college, she adds.

They had found about 50 Zoroastrians in Chicago. The first few had come in the early 50s and the Zoroastrian Association of America had been formed but was floundering, remembers Roshan Rivetna. The Chicago Zoroastrians used to meet informally but people were wary of forming an association, viewing it as a possible source of friction. Eventually however "a letter was sent out signed by five or six persons to all Zoroastrians we knew of to arrange a meeting. Forty to 50 people came. They

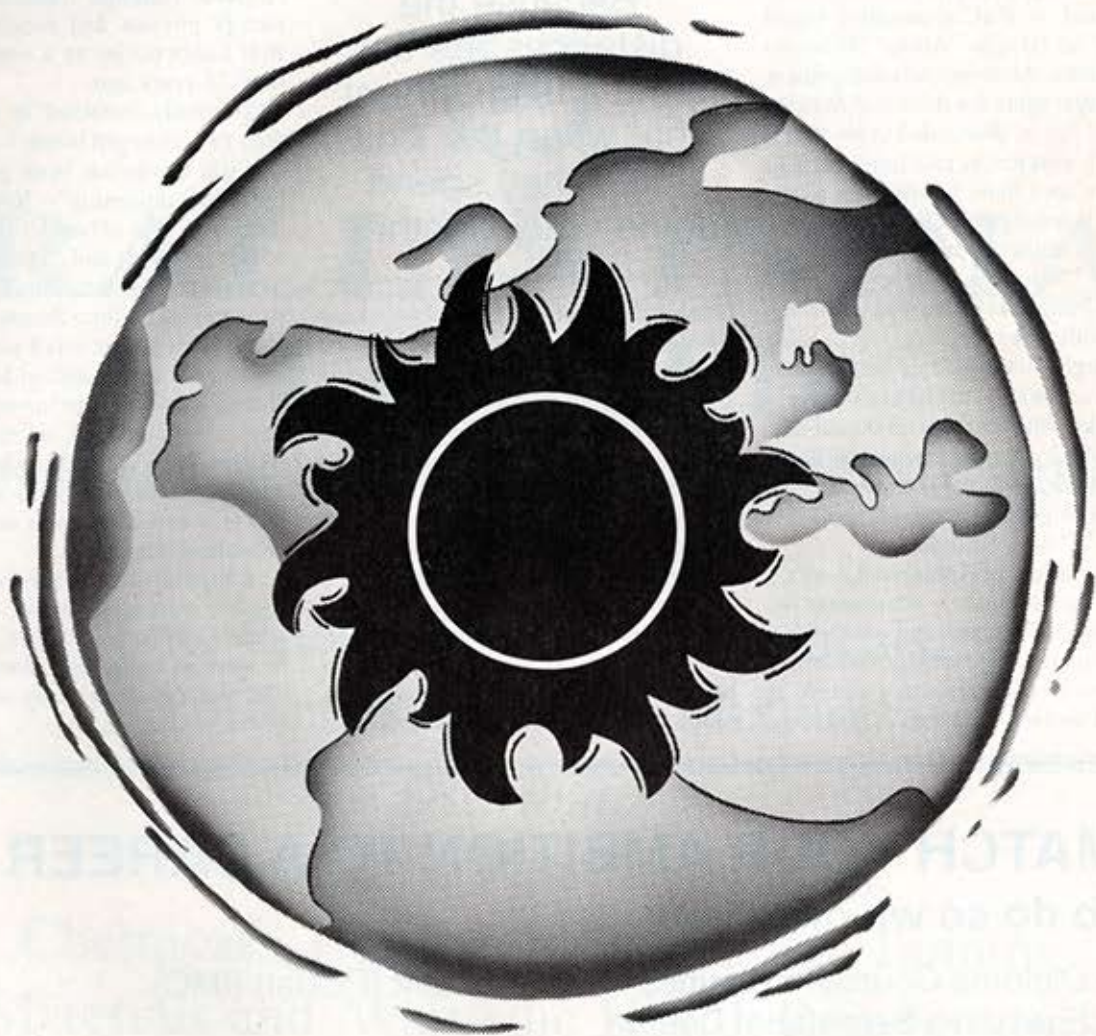
formed a small committee to write the charter of the association." The constitution was formalized and the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) was launched in 1975 with Iranian Zoroastrian Behram Faradia as its first president and Rohinton Rivetna as the first secretary.

It was during Rohinton Rivetna's subsequent term as president (he served in that office for eight years) that ZAC planned for and acquired its darbe meher. Though negotiations were begun with the Guiv Trust, the Association funded its own land purchase to the tune of \$ 55,000. The edifice cost an additional \$ 1,90,000 of which \$ 1,50,000 were met from a Guiv Trust grant. Even so the cost had been kept low because "Rohinton did the designing, contracting and supervising. He would go there twice a day. After the painting stage all cleaning, finalizing and finishing was done by (Association members). When we finished the building, there was nothing left in the kitty. Now there's a good corpus for maintenance. (We are) not relying on the Guiv Trust... (though) we've really maintained good relations with it..." Canada based Iranian philanthropist Mehraban Zarhoshty gave about \$ 30,000 towards a library, Roshan notes with gratitude and so far they have built up a wall of books including two suitcases from the collection of the late Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji.

The Chicago community now includes about 40-60 children who gather for religious education once a month. Kayomars Mehta organizes the religious classes for all age-groups with a teacher for each group, informs Roshan. The Sunday school at the darbe meher is preceded by a Chicago institution, regularly alluded to in their newsletter — the sleepover. "Because the distances are so great and it is important that when the kids meet they spend some time together," families volun-



Rivetna: a thematic approach



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teer to host the sleepovers in rotation. "Sometimes (the children) cook for themselves or go to the movies... There's no formal education involved," explains Roshan.

Alternating fortnightly with the Sunday school is ZAC's monthly board meeting at 10 a.m. About 70 to 80 people come. At noon everyone gathers in the prayer room for the *Atash Niyash*, followed by a dhansak-kavab lunch cooked in rotation by two families. The afternoon sees them involved in a discussion, listening to a talk, witnessing a jashan or learning western cowboy "line dancing." After tea they disperse to their far-flung homes, Roshan describes the monthly get-togethers.

"Though a lot of people believe that the Fasli calendar is the right calendar," ZAC holds Shehenshahi muktads and the *FEZANA Journal* carries the dates according to all three Zoroastrian calendars. The general approach is to "go slow on it," says Roshan.

In the context of Rohinton Rivetna's crusade to establish a representative world body of Zoroastrians, one with a mandate to negotiate with governments and international bodies in a variety of fields of activity, Roshan is unhappy

with Bombay's Parsi Press. "The *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Bombay Samachar* never publish Rohinton's letters in response to challenges from the WZO and

"Because the distances are so great it is important that when the kids meet they spend some time together"

Dinshaw Tamboly... (They) always keep asking 'Why a second body?' Even the FEZANA associations... didn't understand that what Rohinton is saying is complementary to the WZO," she notes. "Now that the WZO is agreeing to a council of anjumans, the only question is whether the second body will be within the WZO or separate," she adds.

Daughter of the late Jaloo and Khurshed Patel, Roshan acquired a BSc in Physics from Elphinstone College, Bombay and her masters in nuclear physics from the University of Pittsburgh, returning to India to work with

the Atomic Energy Establishment and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research from 1962 till her marriage in 1966. After she and Rohinton had settled in Chicago, she went to work with the Argonne National Laboratory in high energy physics and moved to AT&T Bell Laboratories as a computer engineer 15 years ago.

Currently involved in remodelling their two-storeyed house — their architect son Cyrus has been given a carte blanche at designing — Roshan juggles three hats: that of builder-contractor, of editor-publisher and of computer scientist, apart from her familial role. The Rivetnas' daughter Zenobia works as an art director for small newspapers in Boston but is a qualified landscape architect who wants to move back to her field. And Jamshed, an engineer now finishing his MBA from De Paul University of Chicago who was married last year to Tami, works with a firm of consultant engineers.

Rohinton who is involved in forming his own consultative company to address environmental concerns, is keen to work in India, says Roshan. Should that materialize Bombay will see more of the Rivetnas again.

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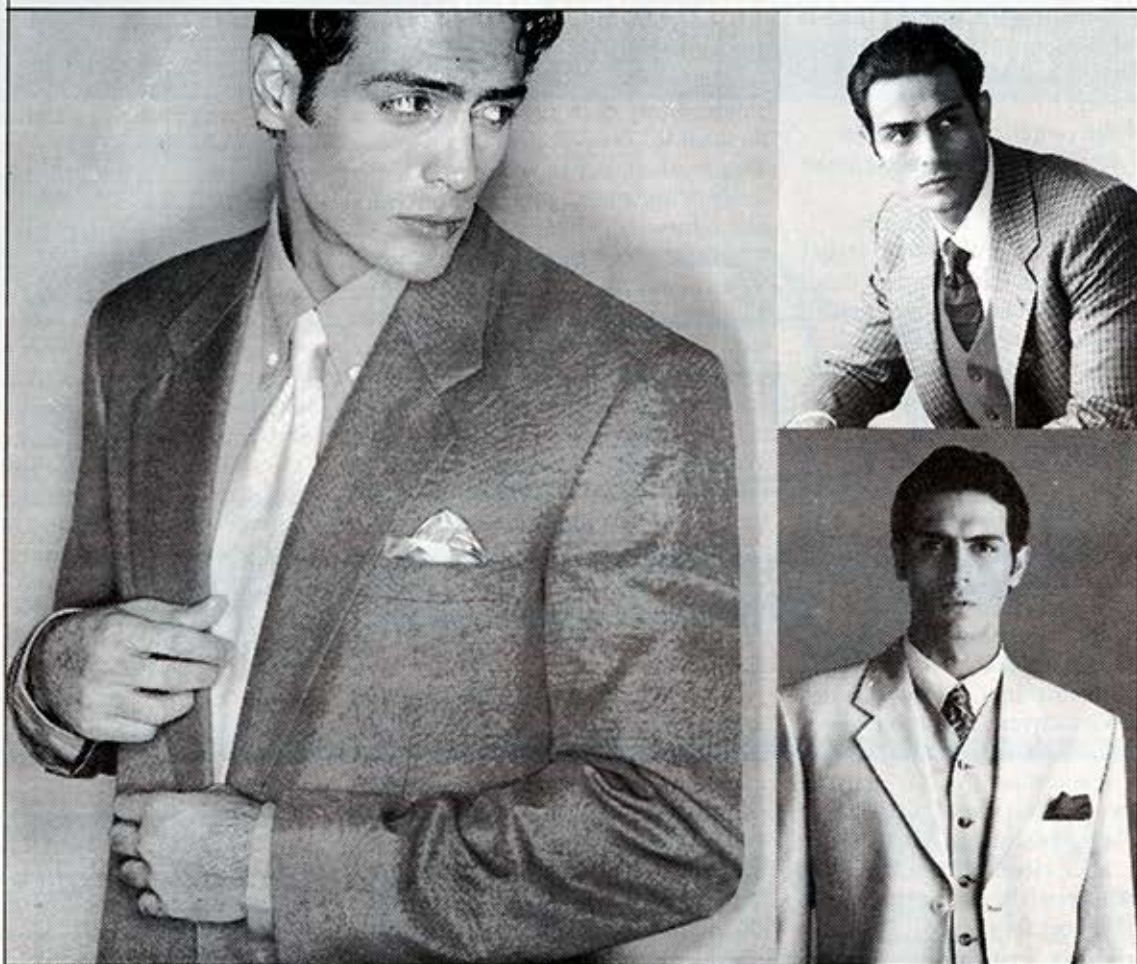
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Zarathushtra not Zoroaster

Following a presentation, "Zarathushtra, His Religion and Its Followers — Standardization of Names and Spellings" by Jamshed R. Udvardi, and a proposal by Bella Tata to use 'Zarathushti' instead of 'Zoroastrian' in the name of the next World Congress 2000, the recommendation of delegates at the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) annual general meeting in Crestone, Colorado, in August 1997 was to standardize on the following:

Name of the prophet: Zarathushtra
Name of the religion: Zarathushti din or daena or religion

Name of the follower: Zarathushti
Starting with the Fall 1997 issue, *FEZANA Journal* has adopted these spellings. The Federation hopes that all Zarathushtis, anjumans, associations and federations will gradually move to adopt these standard spellings.

World body

"The voice of an individual may not reach the the World Body but that of an organization will." Simultaneously, "if individuals do not have a chance of direct participation they will not have any sense of belonging or any attachment to the World Body." So reasoning the Zarathushtrian Cultural Center (ZCC) of Vancouver, Canada has circulated a skeletal plan to the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the proponents of the World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF) to consider, after clearing "their mind of the happenings of the past seven years." The plan has been forwarded to *Parsiana* by ZCC director Faribourz Rahnamoon.

Noting that a truly representative World Body is necessary, that the "WZO, in spite of all the good work, has never filled in the void except with its name" and that the proposed "WCZF has its own drawbacks," the ZCC has proposed a skeletal plan adding categorically, "We don't intend to be a third group." They seek active response from the community ("please send in your views to us. If you agree and don't have anything to add... send in a post-card and say you agree").

The ZCC suggestion is to divide the world into six regions. India, Iran, North and South America, Europe each comprise a region. Pakistan together with

the Middle East and Africa coalesce into the fifth one and Australia, New Zealand, Hongkong and other Pacific countries together form the sixth. The idea behind the groupings is to allow for a minimum of 10,000 members.

Every Zarathushti, member irrespective of age, would have .01 of the vote but it would be incumbent on everyone to belong to his/her local anjuman/punchayet/association. With an ingenious combination of direct and indirect voting, the ZCC plan requires the anjumans of each region to create a regional WZO by electing six directors. The head of the regional WZO, the seventh member, would be directly elected by individuals. Individuals 16 years and above have the right to vote. Votes of newborns to 16 years would be wielded by the head of the family in the case of direct voting by individuals.

The six directly elected heads of the six regions would also serve as directors of the World Body. The head of the World Body — the seventh member of the board — would however be elected by the anjumans/associations of the world.

The term of office of all directors/office bearers would be three years and no one may be elected for more than two consecutive terms in the same organization.

The strength of the anjuman's vote would be determined by the size of its membership, all members being fully paying members. The quantum of membership fee would however be kept so low that all individuals can afford to be members — "more as a token of mutual recognition and statistic" — and none should have an excuse not to pay. The annual payment suggested is one US, Canadian or Australian dollar, one pound in England, five Indian/Pakistani rupees and 10 tomans in Iran. The membership fees collected by the local anjuman would be paid to the regional WZO along with a proper list to provide for a proper statistical base for decision making and avoid dual membership. Membership fees thus are not a source of fund-raising which would need to be conducted independently.

The directors of the world/regional bodies would each be in charge of such portfolios as secretarial, fund-raising and charity, religious and educational, legal and political, cultural, liaison with other religions/organizations, etc.

Readers are invited to send in their views to the ZCC, P.O. Box 54115, 1562 Lonsdale Avenue, North Vancouver BC V7M 3L5 Canada (Fax: 1-604-9882061).

KZBM forward ho!

The Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal's (KZBM) annual report could vie with any corporate production. Printed on art paper and enlivened by seven two-color line drawings by young Zarathushtis aged between 11 and 17 years, the report forwarded to *Parsiana* by its president Toxy Cowasjee contains a mine of information regarding KZBM activities, accounts and membership profile.

Its 665 members as at the end of June '97 included 15 patrons, 578 life members, 72 ordinary members and 57 out-station members. The nine successful programs of the year were generally well attended but the live presentation of *Paradise* by Canadian Zoroastrians Shahrar and Shervin Shahrari — an interface between Zarathushtra and Cyrus the Great, also made into a video — was the KZBM's special project for Pakistan's 50th anniversary and had an attendance of 498 people.

The 'Three Generations Evening' had grandmothers, mothers and children participating with roles reversed. Though 98 people attended, only five families participated in the spirit of the function, informs the report by Navaz Aga, chairperson of the program sub-committee.

A light classical 'Concert by the Sea,' with popular disc jockey Richie highlighted on a rock, was followed by dinner and dancing under the *manekthari punam* (full moon) and was a hit with 222 participants not wanting to go home even after midnight!

A 'Bring and Buy' evening was organized to collect funds for two cosmopolitan charities when KZBM members were asked to bring a minimum two items of packaged food — preferably homemade. Priced by the KZBM committee and sold by volunteers, the ladies' efforts harvested Rs 37,000 in 45 minutes.

Among other KZBM activities, scholar Virasp Mehta who publishes the *Informal Religious Meetings* newsletter conducted a weekly *Gatha* discussion group with 22 youth participants over six weeks, informs Cowasjee's report.

continued on page 196

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From debate to dialog

Delegates from FEZANA briefed the Indian Federation on developments regarding the formation of a world body

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The Dalai Lama was speaking about ahimsa to (a gathering of) multicultural religious communities in a lighter vein: 'We say that the idea of ahimsa originated in India and many countries have benefitted by its export. Perhaps we have exported too much. We are left with a very small surplus.' I whispered in his ears, 'That too has been cornered by the Parsis!'" The smiling, bespectacled Dr Mohamed Shafi Qureshi, governor of Madhya Pradesh (MP), was addressing the executive council meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on February 1, 1998 at the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman's dharamshala hall. Other engagements had prevented Qureshi from inaugurating the meet which had begun on January 31. Reference to the event featured on Doordarshan and in the local Press.

A souvenir, containing messages from high dignitaries, brief histories of the Indore and Mhow anjumans as also an ad hoc list of "Parsee Firsts" was published on the occasion and launched by Federation president and Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed Guzder, a copy being presented to the governor. President of India R. K. Narayanan praised the community's "manifold skills... in politics, commerce, science, journalism (and) the fine arts." Vice President Krishan Kant called Parsis "role models for their countrymen," MP chief minister Digvijay Singh referred to them as "a peace loving and hard-working community" and Dr Tahir Mahmood, chairman of the National Commission for Minorities questioned, "How can India ever forget the great Dadabhai Naoroji and his community?"

Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman president Bomi Heerjee acknowledged the help and contribution of well-wishers and friends, notably the Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Educational Trust and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) "for



Thrity and Adil Dossabhoy with Freyan, Hormuzd and Arban

their generous help" as also the effort of his anjuman members. It is interesting to note that of the 12 office bearers of the Federation, as listed in the brochure, only five attended the meet.

The lovingly embellished first floor Gool Hall of the dharamshala complex, festooned with potted plants and flower baskets, had been rigorously inspected by a cache of security officers before the governor arrived. The star performer was the police dog Topsy, a four-year-old Labrador whom her handler, R. S. Jatav, referred to as an expert explosives sniffer, guaranteed to bark at anything questionable on those lines. Satisfied that all was well, Topsy pranced and played with her admirers!

As has been the case of late, with the question of forming a world body assuming center stage, there were several

Zoroastrians from abroad. Addressing the assembled anjumans were Dolly Dastoor, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and its founder president Rohinton Rivetna whose initiative at forging a constitution

for a World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF) had won a positive vote from the Indian Federation a year ago, albeit hotly contended by the representatives of the WZO. The WZO leadership had subsequently proposed an amendment of its individuals-based constitution to meet persistent criticism and address changing circumstances. The new scenario had resulted in a negative vote from FEZANA to the idea of founding another world body and votaries of both organiza-

tions were urged to find a rational amalgam. At the Indore meet, it was agreed that Rivetna would continue a dialog with WZO member Romy Sethna of the UK to hammer out an acceptable framework for international representation.

The gathering applauded the well-deserved recognition to eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in its Republic Day awards and the honorific Doctor of Laws by the University of Bombay. Also congratulated was Dr Jamshed Irani of TISCO who had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth II of England in the course of her recent visit to India.

Younger delegates to the meet were upset over the renewed postponement of the decision to appoint a joint honorary secretary — a position vacated by Eruch Desai when he retired as chairman of the BPP at the end of his term in

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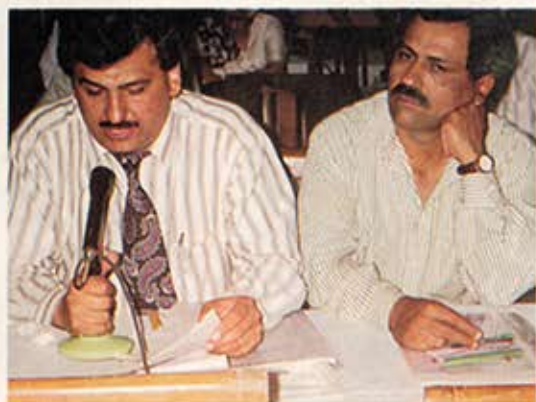


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L to R (1st row) Qureshi with one of the triplets, Hormuzd, Guzder, Heerjee, Gandhi; (2nd row) Dastoor, Rohinton Rivetna, Sethna, Eruch Irani; (3rd row) Patrawala, Engineer, Tamboly, Dalal; (4th row) Roshan Rivetna, Minoo Shroff and Tamboly, Dara Irani and Boman Irani



L to R (1st row) Silloo Kavaran, Dandiwalla, Eruch and Silloo Surti, A. Irani; (2nd row) Dadi Mistry and Dinshaw Joshi; Karanjawalla, S. Palkhiwala and P. Irani (Below) Launching the souvenir

1995.

As no host has emerged for the next annual Zoroastrian youth seminar the Federation's joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi has requested Jamshedpur to extend its facilities. Jamshedpur delegates Eruch and Silloo Surti agreed to convey the request to their anjuman.

At the anjuman dinner on the first night, the video *Paradise* was screened for the benefit of the gathering. Produced by Shahriar Shahriari and Shervin Shahriari of North America, the 40-minute presentation is meant to acquaint the youth of the community about prophet Zarathushtra's teachings and their impact on his followers as well as non-Zarathushtri contemporaries. It focuses on major events of history. Initially a live presentation, the video is in the vanguard of the

FEZANA education program and its proceeds (it's priced at US \$ 15, Indian Rs 300) are credited to the "Paradise Fund" which will finance the creation of more educational material, as noted Dastoor. Also circulated at the meet was a flyer on the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (7WZC), December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001. Billed as "A Zarathushtri Odyssey 2001," the Congress is being jointly organized by FEZANA and the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) where the luxurious Marriott Hotel has already been booked for the event.

The stars of the Indore meet however were the 10-month-old Dossabhoy triplets who have become mascots of the Indore Anjuman. Happily photographed with Qureshi, Guzder and a host of others, a fund for the triplets' education has already been launched with a 1.5 lakh rupee commitment from the WZO to be held in trust by the Indore Anjuman, as formally announced by WZO India president and BPP trustee Dadi Engineer. Since the Federation meet in Poona in June '97,

the BPP has been subscribing Rs 3,000 per month towards their welfare.

This meet of the Federation was slightly curtailed to enable the anjumans of Mhow, Indore, Ratlam and Bhopal to conduct their regional discussions on matters relevant to MP.

The next meeting of the Federation will be held in Bombay, June 13 and 14, 1998.

World body

While the Indian Federation at its Bombay meet in December 1996 had approved the formation of the proposed WCZF, and the North American associations who are members of FEZANA had agreed on an intent to do likewise, the latter's postal ballot of December '97 had resulted in a majority of the associations voting against the proposition. The WZO, in the interim, had proposed amendments to its own structure to incorporate some of the features of the WCZF, notably a hierarchical arm of institutional representation from anjumans' federations. While FEZANA members did not opt to join WZO at this juncture and felt that its proposals did not go far enough, they were averse to the establishment of another world body.

The expected impasse had however already been hurdled by Rivetna and



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Sethna meeting together at Washington DC along with WZO sympathizers Prof Farhang Mehr and Adi Davar to discuss how the two concepts can be fruitfully married. This was initially disclosed at an informal meeting held at the suggestion of Gandhi, between some of the Federation office bearers, WZO representatives and the visiting Zoroastrians.

The formal status report was presented by Rivetna the next morning: "A new age of cooperation, harmony is dawning. Will we recognize it? Grasp it?" Suggesting that "(we) work with what we have, not speculate on motives," Rivetna revealed that he had kept in touch with key colleagues including the Indian Federation delegates.

As sketched by Rivetna, representatives of the two parallel streams—WCZF and the individual arm (WZO's individual members)—"will come together on an international board...The merger holds great promise for the community worldwide." While counselling that "we make sure that we understand the concepts" to produce an institution of lasting value to the community, Rivetna expected that the team effort will bear fruit in two to three months.

Though optimistic about the future body's financial resources, Rivetna noted however that "the ethic of giving" had not yet found a strong enough root in the North American community and suggested that each Zarathushti could name a Zoroastrian charity in his/her will. Two other points Rivetna

L to R (1st row) Masani, T. Anklesaria, Mino Engineer, Pavri; (2nd row) Hakim, Bajan, Neville Vankadia, Dick; (alongside) Homi Palsetia and Dinsha Patel

made: "Charity is fine but dependency could be worse than insufficiency" and that the "leadership role must be shared by everybody."

Despite these agreements some of the usual acrimony of the debate did surface.

Giving a background for the benefit of the gathering, Federation vice president and president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) Lt Gen (retd) Adi Sethna referred to the strong Zoroastrian individualism: "They gave up a great deal of freedom when they constituted anjuman... and then came together as a Federation." Tracing the birth and history of the London based WZO, Sethna called them "the Jadiranas of the New World." His concern was the searching for roots among the Eurasian and mid Asian communities — "a new element of people of Zoroastrian origin." Stressing that even Shiite Iran was claiming Zarathushtra as one of its great prophets, Sethna emphasized the need for regular world censuses though he allowed that "they will take time to formalize."

Guzder recalled the earlier debates on setting up a world body in 1978 on the lines of the United Nations and that the question of who would bear the initial expenses was being considered



when the London body preempted the rest by establishing the WZO. "At that time they did not have a Dinshaw Tamboly or the funds they are now dishing out." He also had a query: "If there is a problem in the US or South Africa or Australia how are they going to redress it?"

Picking up the gauntlet Tamboly noted that the WZO dispenses five to six crore rupees per annum but has no corpus. "Because of our transparency, accountability...it enjoys the confidence of donors from all over the world. Had our punchayets been as transparent and as efficient there would have been no need for the WZO." He spoke of "a Zoroastrian incarcerated in Iran who was released on WZO intercession." Another case he alluded to concerned a young Indian Zoroastrian who unknowingly carried drugs in a suitcase with a false bottom which bears a death penalty in Mauritius where he was caught. The WZO "moved heaven and earth" and the penalty was reduced to life

imprisonment. "He is now studying law in captivity," concluded Tamboly.

Dastoor noted the significance of the FEZANA vote that turned "debate into dialog, bringing the two sides together."

She suggested that the negotiating team and their respective constituencies "should look into making the world body as broad based as possible" including religious bodies, educational institutions and "all vested groups of people with the good of the community at heart." It was also her contention that the community adopt a "paradigm shift... (that we make) a conscious decision that we will do what our leaders need us to do."

Engineer questioned the Federation's resistance to inviting the WZO formally to its biannual meetings (as members of their own anjumans, WZO representatives have always been present and persistent in their efforts to involve the WZO in Federation debates) and wondered aloud if the situation warranted the WZO's withdrawal from India. "Perhaps that day will come. There are other countries who need us but I sincerely hope the day never comes."

Defending the Federation's position Gandhi noted that the members of the

Federation are anjumans and to them minutes and invitations are circulated. "The WZO has never lacked any representation officially or unofficially on this body... (At) every Federation meeting you will find that WZO's case has been more than well proposed and well supported... So WZO has not suffered anything as a result of not having any hearing...on the floor of this house... When the project of rural welfare was going on at full steam...we used to invite Mr Dinshaw Tamboly officially."

Tamboly reentered the debate to announce that he had been initially invited by former BPP chairman and Federation president Dr Aspi Golwalla twice on the phone in connection with the joint WZO-Federation project to relieve the misery of poor Zoroastrians in rural Gujarat. Thereafter he had made it clear that he would not attend without an official invitation. "Today I am here as a BPP representative. If you want to discuss the WZO you must give WZO an official invitation."

Dastoor intervened in the debate to ask the blessings of the assembly on those who are negotiating. She was supported by FEZANA Journal's editor-in-chief Roshan Rivetna: "I hear

agreement that a world body/world council of federations should be formed... We also agree that we have very strong ties with the WZO. All we need is for Rohinton Rivetna and Romy Sethna to sit together and work it out."

The last snag was raised by Baroda trustee Baman Cama who wanted an Indian representative at the negotiations. He was supported by Poona Parsee Panchayat (PPP) president Dara Irani who asked if the Federation has authorized Rohinton Rivetna to have the dialog. They were reassured by Gandhi as also Rivetna who explained that a team of perhaps eight individuals would produce a draft which would then be circulated to the Federation members. It would "not be unilateral," Rivetna stated.

Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress Providing "a flavor" of the 7WZC scheduled in Houston, USA from December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001, Dastoor, who co-chairs the Congress committee along with ZAH's Homi Davier, said the aim was to have about 2,000 Zoroastrians from all over the world to attend. For that they are seeking to establish a fund which could subsidize young adults to participate

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from around the world. The North American community has been requested to donate two dollars per person per annum up to the year 2000. No decision on delegate fees has been taken hitherto.

One of the projects they have undertaken is the creation of a giant quilt by the sewing together of the logos of anjumans and associations of the Zoroastrian world. Also on the cards is a film festival of all Zoroastrian films, orchestral music and an olympics to be organized by the large sports-minded community in North America just prior to the holding of the Congress.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) and ZAH were among those who contended for the privilege of co-hosting the Congress with FEZANA. According to Dastoor, two major attributes contributed to the selection of ZAH: Houston provided the best infrastructure; also, summer airfares to North America are exorbitant and other areas are too cold in winter which for Houston is the best time of

year. The dates selected also allow the community to come together to bid adieu to the second millennium and welcome the third.

"We realize that visas will be a big challenge," Dastoor noted, adding that they were counting on Rohinton Rivetna's help in that area and of those working in the State Department of the US government. Rivetna requested the Federation to nominate a high-level person in India "with whom we can liaise."

Referring to the first business conference hosted by FEZANA in November 1997, Rivetna informed the gathering that 50 individual businesses had participated and that the next one is due in November 1998. "There is a thirst for doing business with Indian business concerns," he noted and added that they were working towards a Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce. He also referred to the Conference of United Religions in Bombay in February '98 which was being coordinated by noted scholar Homi Dhalla, adding, "United Faith activity gives Zoroastrians easy visibility." He hoped for Indian participation at the next Parliament of World

Religions in South Africa in 1999.

Youth affairs

The 11th All-India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar held in Baroda in November 1997 and Kaleidoscope, the Secunderabad event of January 1998 were the two most talked about events in the "youth" category. "The professionalism, talent which the community showed (at Kaleidoscope) was tremendous," noted Gandhi. His sentiment was endorsed by National Minorities Commission member Marazban Patrawala: "I have spent 20 years in youth organizations, but I was amazed with the organization of Kaleidoscope!" Bombay's Cyrus Dubash would have passed off as a professional singer, Gandhi added. He had asked for the bio data of some of the outstanding participants and suggested that the community take pride in their achievements and encourage them in their ambitions. Poona trustee Navaz Palkhiwala who was an invitee to Kaleidoscope described the event as "very lavish... everything was very systematic, very well organized... Every delegate had to take part in at least one program; there was no lazing around!"

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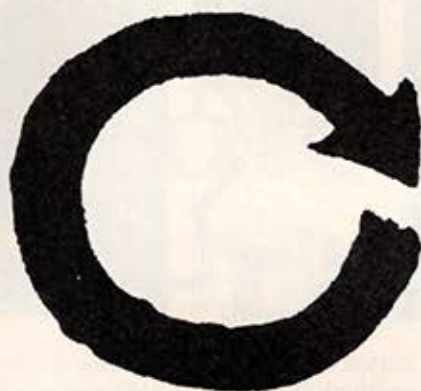
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she congratulated Secunderabad trustee and the Twin Cities' Zoroastrian Youth League president Jehangir Bisney and his team.

Kaizad Engineer of Baroda gave a synopsis of the Youth Seminar. They had encouraged participation from cities not represented at earlier events, like Bangalore, and all the delegates had been housed at a single venue to promote fraternization. There was a "better understanding of Zoroastrianism and the responsibility of being Zarathushti" along with a display of talent at singing, dancing and other arts, he recounted. Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA) president Porus Karanjawalla noted that Nadirshah Unvalla, the high priest of the Bangalore fire-temple had inaugurated the Seminar, describing the occasion as a "very great achievement." This may be noteworthy in view of the fact that historically Unvalla has been a steady antagonist of the Federation. The Baroda youths, the Baroda Parsi Panchayat and FOZYA shared the credits for the Seminar. Baroda trustee Dara Hakim related that it was the sentiment of youths at the Seminar that if more such events are organized they would not need to seek marriage partners outside the community.

K. Engineer also noted that his comperees in Baroda are planning other events like intercity meets and a new edition of the Baroda Parsi directory.

Perzid Daruvala of Ahmedabad re-

ported entertainment programs, sports, updating the Zoroastrian directory and yellow pages and organizing an intercity meet with Dahanu as the highlights of youth activities in the past six months.

Despite their diminishing numbers Calcutta youths remain fairly active with six of them attending the Baroda meet and three going to Kaleidoscope, informed Nauzer Batlivala.

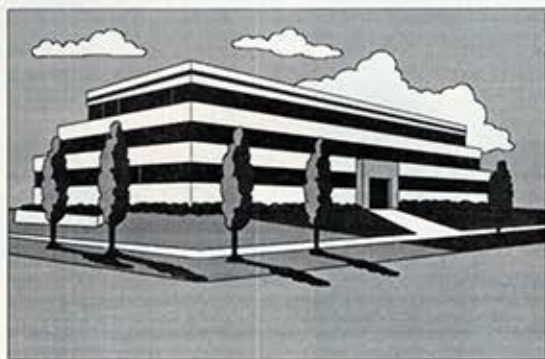
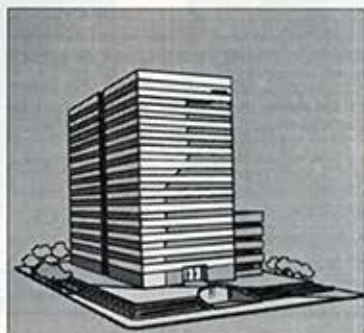
There were no youth delegates at this Federation meeting from Delhi, Jamshedpur or Jhansi. A. Sethna explained that school timings in Delhi do not coincide with those of western India. Giving a short description of the DPA youths' activities, he said that they had "taken over (and revived) the Delhi social center," arranged the usual tambola nights and a farewell meet for the Iranian ambassador. The Young Farohars, which began as a pre-navjote religious class, seems to have grown in activities, numbers and reach, as per his description. Darius Shroff, the fourth generation of the family that runs the charitable Shroff Eye Hospital to enter the ophthalmic field, had been offered admission to six medical colleges, Sethna revealed. Another individual from his area of whom Sethna made special mention is Major Firoze Patel who could easily win the Federation's excellence award for bravery in action but of whose achievements in army intelligence he was unable to cite a "chapter and verse recommendation

L to R (1st row) N. Palkhiwala, S. Palkhiwala, Batlivala, Phiroza Marker and Yasmin Bhot; (2nd row) Kalyaniwala and Mistry, Daruvala, Roshan Engineer and K. Engineer, Kasad

(due to the nature of his work). But we do have such youths," he was proud to note.

The Jamshedpur anjuman is willing to pay for the travelling expenses of their youths but "we have not enough children in the right age-group," lamented its delegate S. Surti. School age children however have a number of activities like sports, elocution and prayer competitions. The Jamshedi Navroze entertainment is generally provided by the younger children, she noted.

Responding to Gandhi's comment that Dr Jamshed Irani, KBE had expressed regret that there was no one from Jamshedpur attending Kaleidoscope and that he would speak to his anjuman about hosting a youth seminar, S. Surti noted that they have only 10 youths in the correct age-group. While they have accommodation and the support of TISCO and TELCO, very few trains stop at Jamshedpur and return bookings are difficult to make. Responded Karanjawalla: "Assure us finance and accommodation. FOZYA will do it." E. Surti agreed to report to his anjuman and hoped "to come up to your expectations."



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Jhansi's Ronnie Dick revealed that three girls from his city had found mates at the youth meets. Those who remained were unable to take leave to attend the present Federation meet.

Meherzish Kalyaniwala, who was adjudged the best contestant at Kaleidoscope, and Zeldia Mistry, both of the BPP Youth Club, noted that there was no dearth of young participants in cricket, volleyball, etc in Bombay. The peculiar problem of the Bombay youth is that they remain unrepresented on FOZYA because the multitude of youth clubs in the metropolis "quarrel as to who should represent" the city.

Poona Zoroastrian Youth League president and vice president of FOZYA Sarosh Palkhiwala reported that their football team goes to Bombay quite often. They were then preoccupied updating the Poona directory in time for Jamshedi Navroze and creating an all-India matrimonial bureau with one member from each anjuman as the local focus.

The Zoroastrian Youth League of Surat won the Irani trophy in cricket three times, noted Nauzer Kasad. They were organizing an All Parsi Youth

Sports Meet there, and an all-India Zoroastrian talent contest which could "upgrade the winner to international TV channels" was on the cards. "Unfortunately the youths in Surat are a bit divided," noted Kasad.

Dahanu's Pervez Irani reported that the English medium cosmopolitan school they had established was now fully recognized, this being the first year when their students will appear for the SSC board exams. There were a number of sports events to find the best talents and coach them in whatever activity they excel. Khushnaz Irani, for example, was being trained for shot put and discus at the Maharashtra state level. He also referred to the Ahmedabad youth who claims to have produced the world's longest agarbatti.

D. Engineer spoke of the excellent work "being done by the WZO youth wing: ameliorating the lot of the nassessalars in Bombay by personally ascertaining their needs, their pursuit of Project Udvada to help revive the community there, a harbor cruise, etc. As with the parent body, Engineer sought an invitation for the WZO youth wing to Federation meets, but Gandhi

(Above) Chaiyyé hamé Zarathoshti sang the Indore group for the governor; Guzder lighting the inaugural diya

(Below) The executive council in session

answered that a formal invitation was beyond his scope. He said it was for the BPP to decide.

The legal eagles

The question of a five percent service tax under the central excise law and its impact on community facilities such as dharamshalas and marriage halls was raised by Heerjee. Indore had received a letter from the department of central excise and taken the stand that "we are a religious body; we don't charge commercial rates; (the facility is) meant for the poor and needy," said Heerjee, seeking further advice from the council.

Dr Behram Masani of Mhow, himself a legal man, opined that the service tax would become applicable if the dharamshala is a public place with shamianas, pandals, etc. According to him, Bombay's Allbless and Cama

continued on page 124

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Kaleidoscope '98

A spectacular extravaganza

The first ever all-India Zoroastrian literary and cultural youth meet enabled the youths to display their talents and prowess

Homi J. Rogers

The band of dedicated youth workers from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad had put together a never-before witnessed extravaganza. They blitzkrieged the 150-odd delegates from some 12 cities in India with a stunning spectacle of cultural and literary events staged against the majestic three centuries old Quli Qutab Shahi tombs, or on the chic Chiran Fort Club grounds. Eminent personages from within and outside the state were in attendance.

Organized by the Twin Cities' Zoroastrian Youth League (TCZYL) under the leadership of Jehangir Bisney, the four day meet was held from January 8-11, 1998 in the courtyard of Secunderabad's Bai Pirojbai Chenai Parsi Dharamshala. The occasion? The first-ever all-India Zoroastrian literary and cultural youth meet — Kaleidoscope '98 (K' 98).

The faith that K' 98 inspired in all who attended it and judged the events was by itself a reflection that the meet had more than half-way accomplished what it had set out to achieve: showcase the inherent talent of Zoroastrian youths by helping them to discover and develop it. "Now if even half-a-dozen youths here make it big in their chosen activity, I would deem K' 98 to be a success," smiles Bisney. Going by the comments of the judges — all respected names in their chosen vocations — his hopes could be near-prophetic, and K' 98 a trail-blazer for the community in ushering in the next millennium with confidence.

K' 98, as conceived and developed by TCZYL, was an umbrella title for 13 events/contests spread over three days. The events covered a gamut of topics, from advertising and *antakshari* [singing songs starting with the last letter

(*ant akshar*) of the preceding song, turned into a high-profile, money-raking game by satellite television], to a knowledge of Zoroastrianism as tested by general questions and the painting/drawing of subjects.

There were drama, debating and dancing contests; also in vocal and instrumental music. Yes, the events chosen for the fest did call for showmanship, especially in the finale when a Mr and Miss Personality were selected. But then, as Bisney explains, "We did want to do everything on a grand scale. The concept of beauty contests has caught on, and we wanted to give some exposure to our youth in this sphere too." A point conceded, considering that the community has in the past given the country many a charming ambassador; and a win — or even participation — in a beauty contest in the days of MTV is a ticket to fame and fortune. Also, it may be noted that not only had the TCZYL announced a beauty contest and asked the candidates to bring three changes of dress — Western, ethnic and Zoroastrian — but also invested in a choreographer who rehearsed the 28 participants throughout the day, putting them through the rudiments of ramp-walking; and a hair stylist and beautician to give professional tips on make-up. Thus it may be said that K' 98 was a valiant and well-honed exercise to expose Zoroastrian youths to over a dozen disciplines in the cultural and literary spheres.

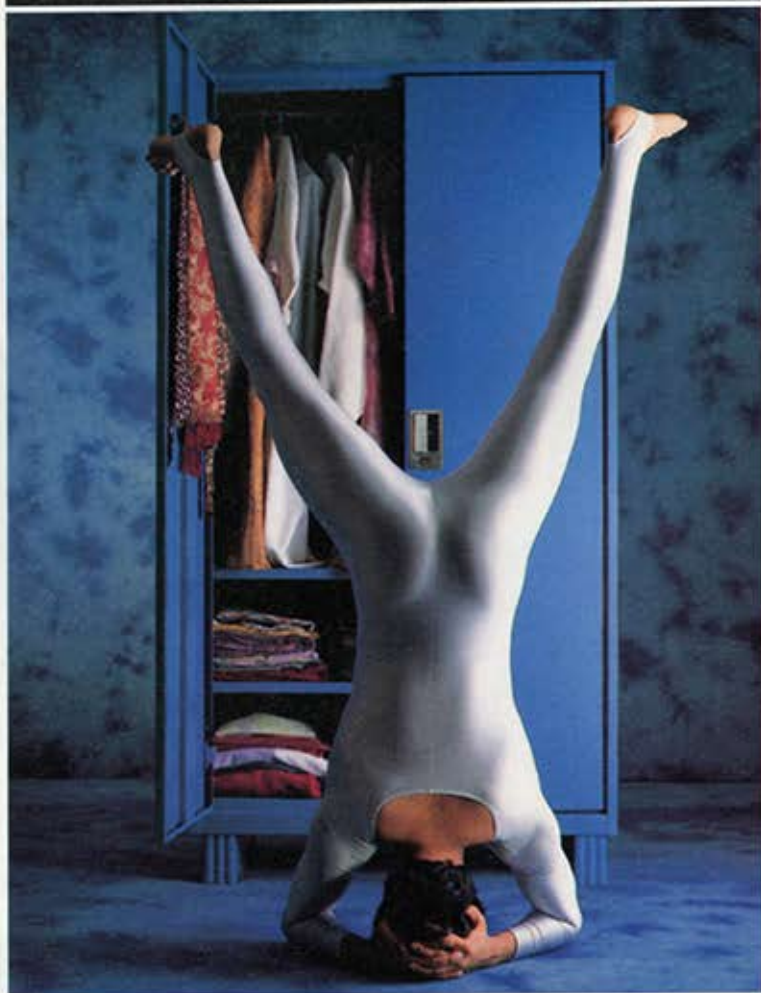
"In the forms we sent out to invite delegates," Mehernavaz K. Aria, the honorary secretary of TCZYL informs us, "we made it clear that it was mandatory for every attending delegate to participate in at least one and maximum

three contests." This ensured overall participation, unlike in other youth seminars where the young people often stray away from the proceedings, reducing the meet to a *khana-peena* (eat-n-drink) gathering. The TCZYL, as Bisney informs us, shedding false modesty, has always been in the forefront of organizing meets that have set standards. "Years ago in 1990 we hosted the 4th All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar, and the standard set by it has been difficult to match." K' 98, the organizers hoped, would surpass those standards.

Totally an effort of the youths of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, K' 98 was aided by the Zoroastrian residents of the cities in all possible ways, from providing organizational assistance to opening up their pleasant homes for delegates to reside in. TCZYL volunteers secured the support of the twin cities' blue chip companies into sponsoring the many events, raising large revenues to subsidize tremendously the costs of food and drinks served throughout the meet; and, much to our amazement, they were allowed to hold events at such exotic sites as the Archaeological Survey of India's protected Qutab Shahi tombs at Golconda on the city's outskirts, and to host a traditional *chowki* dinner on its lawns. (At a *chowki* dinner you sit cross-legged around a low stool in traditional Nawabi manner, savoring such delicacies as sheekh kabab, mutton *lukmi*, and the delicious *qubani-kameetha* dessert.) "We Parsis here have our contacts all the way to the top," winks Polly Chenoy, a retired Osmania University lecturer in English.

On the four nights that it was held, K' 98, true to its name, provided the assembled delegates with a kaleido-

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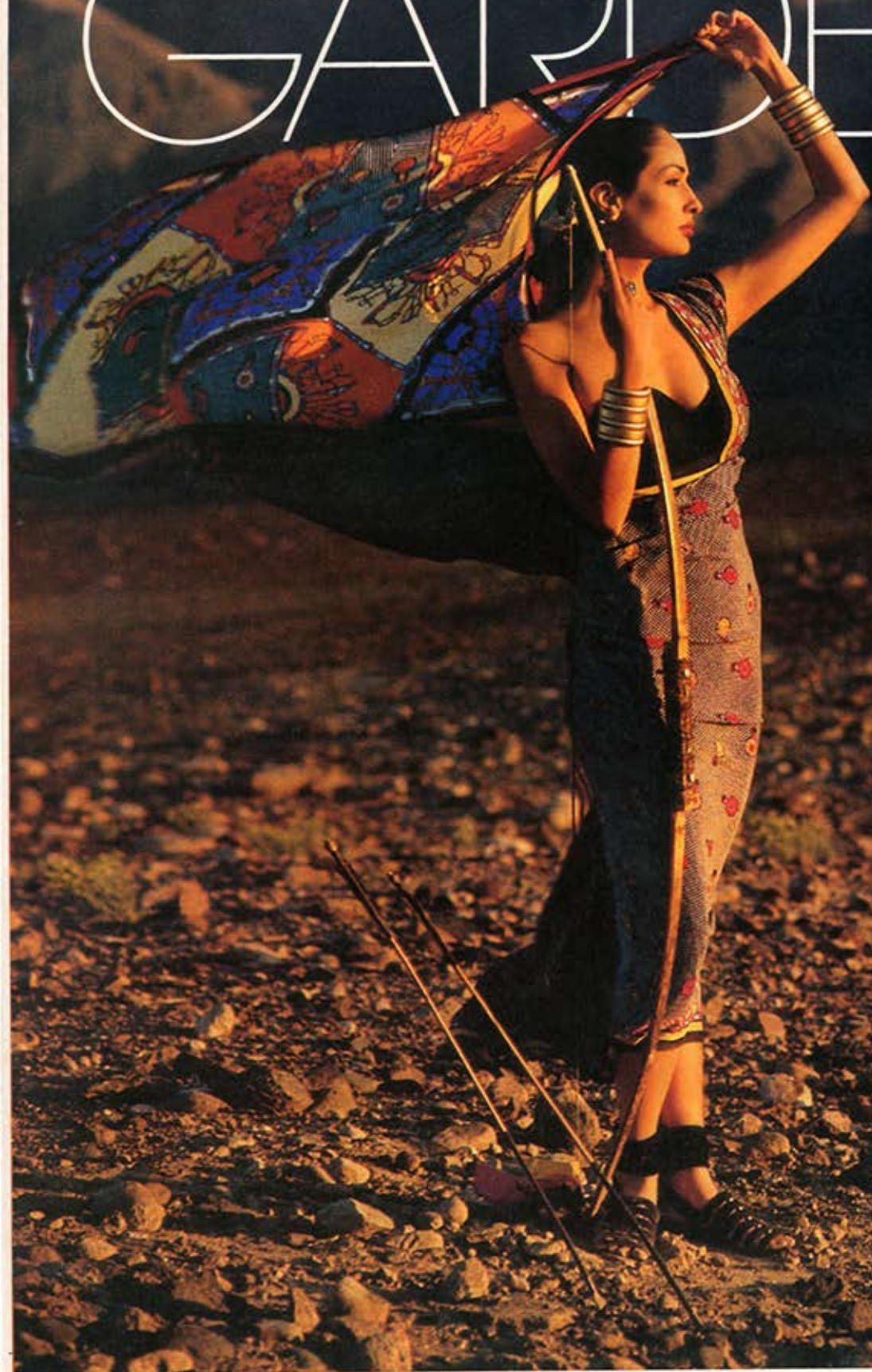
Top row (L to R):
Humbandagi at the
inaugural function –
Ervad Dara Bhathela,
Wadia, Vapiwala,
Contractor, Chenoy,
Tamboly, Aria,
Guzder, Bisney and
Mistry; Guzder
lighting the lamp
assisted by Wadia;
Irani presenting
Naznin Mistry the
Perin Parakh Memo-
rial Prize for the most
derserving Zoroas-
trian girl





*Middle row:
Tamboly releasing
souvenir, with Aria
and Guzder;
Rangarajan
presenting
Kalyaniwala the
outstanding youth
award; Masani with
Manekshaw
Bottom row:
Fashion show and
personality contest*

GARDEN





(Above) Art competition in progress;
(Right) Currim and Khambatta with
Pune delegates (standing from left)
Navaz and Sarosh Palkhivala and
Kashmira Udachia Photo: Navaz Palkhivala



scope of venues — and menus — to dazzle and to delight. The first night (January 8) was inaugurated in the spacious compound of the Secunderabad Dharamshala, situated right in the heart of the city. The pavilion in the courtyard linking the Dharamshala with the two halls was colorfully illuminated. A dais put up in front of the pavilion was peopled with the community's heavyweights: Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed N. Guzder, who was the chief guest; BPP trustee Dinshaw Tamboly, Gool Chenoy, president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, Capt Kayarmin Pestonji and Roda Mistry, the ever popular aunt(y) of the twin cities' youth and a four-times elected member of parliament, who were the guests of honor. Other special guests at the meet included Shahpur Captain, Ruby Contractor and Pheroze Vapiwala, of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, who had flown in from London. The speeches were mercifully short; and delegate participation was woven into the function from the word go, with the youngest delegate from each center being called upon to join Guzder in lighting the inaugural lamp.

The second night was like a climax in a play that lingers with you even after the curtain is down. This was the night at the Qutab Shahi tombs, where the singing competition was held, followed by the *antakshari* contest. A dozen youths confidently rendered numbers from Hindi films and western songs, including a finely-worded 'Catholic spiritual.' Remarked Penaz Masani, who

had been specially flown in from Bombay to judge the event: "It's been such a pleasure to be in the midst of a vibrant and mischievous audience. The biggest Parsi audience I've ever had." The pleasure was mutual: the delegates and members of some 300 Parsi families who reside in the twin cities enjoyed every moment of the show, and were elated at having Masani in their midst.

The *antakshari* finals followed the singing. Under blazing arc lights, complete with a live orchestra and a screen which showed video clips from selected movies as cues in the visual rounds, the *antakshari* was professionalism at its best. Earlier in the day, from 9.30 a.m. to well past noon the preliminary rounds had been held under a shamiana on the spacious grounds of the Zoroastrian Club, and four teams of three members each had made it from the dozen which had participated.

The finalists included the Zoroastrian answer to Spice Girls: a team of three spirited young women from Vadodara; a group led by Nauzer K. Kasad of Surat, a singer with a truly mellifluous voice who had earlier in the evening picked up a special prize from Masani for his singing and the local favorites, the TCZYL team, who with the crowds cheering for them, managed to narrowly — yet convincingly — skid past the others to win the competition.

Youths from the twin cities seemed to fare well in many other competitions as well, holding their own against more seasoned troupers from the bigger metros. In the drama competition, where unfortunately — and inexplicably — the participation level was very low [only four teams, including two from the Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY), Bombay], Hyderabad's Hoshang M. Chenoy walked away with the best actor prize for his humorous enact-

ment (with Secunderabad's Taheera Pestonji giving him support) of a lecherous doctor. Chenoy later also stole the Mr Personality title from under the very Parsi-ish nose of his colleague and active TCZYL volunteer, Sarosh Parakh, while a local lass, Shireena Toorkey in a resplendent gara must have given the selected Miss Personality, Bangalore's Kantili Sunawala, more than her share of anxious moments.

In the debate too, Hoshang Chenoy and Taheera Pestonji came up trumps, with Secunderabad's Yazad Boga and Rustam D. Bhote also storming in for a special consolation prize. "We ourselves never knew before K' 98 that we had so much talent in our midst," admits Bisney, elated at his colleagues' success, in not only the above events, but also in two other much-fancied and keenly-contested games, involving making money at the stock market, and creating an advertisement campaign, held on January 9 and 10 respectively.

The Money Market Game played out over the entire morning (simultaneously as the *antakshari* preliminaries) was a refreshingly different contest. Here, in keeping with the times, when flirting with mammon is no longer considered evil, 10 teams of two each were cast into the 'trading pit' at a hall booked at the swanky new Ramada Manohar Hotel. The teams were asked to chart their stock portfolio over three years, given a profile of the companies to invest in and a changing political scenario, the information being fed to them at the start of every session with a broadcast on the videoscope. Secunderabad's Manek N. Daruvala with Pune's Khushnaz Bharucha as his team mate, and Burjor Bulsara with Yazad Boga won the first two positions, towering above the rest. "They were real

pros at it," concedes Vadodara's Cherag Gyara, one of the participants who estimates that at least two months of dedicated work must have gone into structuring such a game.

Daruvala is a stocky Secunderabadian with an extremely sharp business sense which he continued to demonstrate the next day (January 10), in the creation of an advertisement campaign. He led his teammates Cherezad K. Pestonji (Hyderabad) and Khushnaz Bharucha (Pune) to another well-deserved victory by charting a sound marketing strategy to sell building material which would build a house in five days flat. (Will it fall in five days as well, queried the hecklers as he presented his campaign, joining in the fun by attacking the participants' smart headlines with equally smart one-liners.) The "Create an Ad" contest, from an option of two given hypothetical case studies, was judged by Bombay's Roda Mehta, a senior director at Ogilvy and Mather, who commended the mature quality of work presented by the delegates within just two hours of receiving the brief. It was unfortunate that her crisp comments on improving each of the ads she judged, and her introduction to advertising as a career were drowned in a cacophony of quips. These may have added to the fun ("Carumbo car? Sounds like *murambo, yaar!*"), but resulted in Mehta curtailing her address.

One speaker who held her own was 'home-grown' Kerman Rustamji, a professional management consultant. Rustamji took a two-hour (and post-lunch at that!) participative session on January 9 on "Human resources development and self actualization," opted for by a record 45 delegates (the maximum for a session). She won kudos from all of them for helping them towards self-assessment through a series of provoking posers and interactive exercises. Rustamji spelt out the road blocks to actualization, pointed out personality and character deficiencies that hold back progress, and gave to her young participants apt descriptions of a reactive and proactive person. Guzder, who joined the session as it was nearing its close, supplemented the discussion with valu-

able data from his own experiences and beliefs, and altered Rustamji's definition of a proactive individual from one who says 'I'll try to change my destiny' to one who acknowledges that 'wisdom modifies destiny.' By the end of the session (and day two), delegates had come to know not only themselves better, but even how fellow delegates perceived them, and left the hall with enhanced self-esteem: a positive contribution to the cause of strengthening Zoroastrianism through its youngsters. Viewed in hindsight, it can be said



Bisney and Wadia in conversation with Khambatta

that the *leit motif* of K '98 was to make Zoroastrian youths more confident of themselves and their abilities. The contests served to underline this fact, even if in a few cases (like drama, art and creative writing) the number of participants was abysmally low, depriving the winners of a sense of triumph since there was hardly any competition: everyone who took part, won. Yet, by giving lavish prizes in all events, the TCZYL aimed to encourage participation and reward it fully. We toted up the cash aggregate for prizes as being in the vicinity of one lakh rupees — gifts in kind raised from sponsors like Estelle, Raymond, etc.

Similarly, the speeches, though few and far between, and restricted mainly to the inaugural session and the valedictory function on January 11, encouraged venturesomeness. For example, Tamboly in his inaugural address exhorted youths to dream and do what they wished to do, echoing Robert Allen's words that they should not be swayed by the opinions of the average man. "Dream, and he thinks you are crazy; succeed, and he says you are lucky; prosper, and he claims you are

greedy." Guzder in his address (also at the inaugural function) sounded a similar note when he briefed the assembled gathering on BPP's envisaged scheme of setting up a Venture Capital to enable young people to start their own businesses, and hoped K '98 would "mark the beginning of Zoroastrian youths going into business."

The strain continued on the last day when Marazban J. A. Patrawala, member, National Commission for Minorities, presiding over the valedictory function spoke of the immense Parsi contribution to the country over the centuries. He expressed confidence that K '98 had helped the young Zoroastrians attending it in building character and inculcated in them a purpose and direction in life. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw echoed Patrawala's pride in recalling Parsi "men of caliber," adding with his characteristic jest that the community had, nevertheless, even produced its share of crooks.

Manekshaw, who shared the dais with a veritable roster of Parsi who's who, was honored at this function along with the recently-knighted Dr J. J. Irani, managing director of TISCO (Tata Iron and Steel Company), with a shawl presented to each of them by the function's chief guest, Dr C. Rangarajan, governor of Andhra Pradesh. Rangarajan in his brief address paid rich tributes to the Zoroastrian community and their contribution to society over the centuries. He lauded TCZYL's gesture in honoring men of excellence (eminent jurist N. A. Palkhivala too was to be honored, but couldn't make it due to ill-health) as "this is the best way of promoting excellence."

The valedictory function was followed by the presentation of awards to the winners, with Meherzish Kalyaniwala of Bombay bagging the award for the most outstanding Zoroastrian youth at the meet. The Shapoor Parakh Memorial Prize was awarded to yachtsman Lt Cdr Farokh Tarapore as the most outstanding Zoroastrian sports-person for '96-'97. Tokens of appreciation were also distributed to all those who had helped promote K '98. This included the ever-popular and affable Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans

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of India (FPZAI), who had been friend, philosopher and guide to the TCZYL from its inception. Remarked a humble Gandhi on receiving this well-deserved token: "The TCZYL has thanked all for making K '98 a reality. But now who's going to thank TCZYL for putting up such a fine show?"

Then, under inky skies lit by myriad stars, K '98 crescendoed to its promised blazing finale: the personality contest, interspersed with a fashion show and music/dance items. With its customary meticulousness TCZYL had ensured that the contest — billed as the high point of the meet — received the best in all departments, and it sure had pulled out all the stops. The judges were Persis Khambatta, a last-hour replacement for Mehr Jesia, television star Tanaz Currim, a hit with the crowds, Masani, Manekshaw, Begum Bilkees Latif and Brig Parvez Cowasji. The event lasted well past midnight. After a sumptuous dinner, guys and girls were on the floor dancing till the wee hours of the morning, exchanging addresses and promising to stay in touch, while the air continued to be rent at intervals with full-throated war/victory cries of Raa-van (the Vadodara youths' cry) and an equally

infectious parrot-like tweet originating from Pune, and imitated by all.

But after the innumerable *au revours* and cries receded, a question arose: where to from here? For over a decade, youth

**"We made it clear
that it was mandatory
for every attending
delegate to participate"**

seminars have served as fora for debate and discussion. In the mid-'80s, when globally the Orwellian spectre of Big Brother watching loomed large, and feminism donned different hues, such seminars questioned the values and equations in society. But now, with a new code sweeping across continents ("it's my life"), debates and speeches have become redundant and K '98 did come to grips with this changing reality. To quote Miss Personality, Kantili Sunawala, it "helped us to learn more about our religion in a fun way." Adds Ahmedabad's Shahvir Bharucha: "At the meet every delegate had the zeal to attend every session." Host cities' Sarosh Parakh puts

it rather poetically: "We wish this friendship, these beautiful moments are here to stay/So that in times to come, we teach the world to live the TCZYL way."

"We've all had a wonderful time together," exclaims Navaz Palkhivala of Pune as the event drew to an end. It was a sentiment unanimously echoed not only by all the delegates present, but even by the community akabars who had been invited in full strength for this youth fest.

"On a scale of one to 10," gushes Tamboly, "I would give the fest a score of 10." Tamboly, whom we saw mingling with Zoroastrian youths, observes to *Parsiana*: "The meet has reinforced my faith in our youth. They can take the community to greater heights, and we elders are ready to channelize and provide support" for this resurgence. Concur BPP co-trustee, Minoo Shroff, introduced by the organizers of TCZYL as their well-wisher and godfather for 10 years, "K '98 has proved our youth... Parsis have it within them to achieve a lot."

"We have been planning this event for over a year," reasons Tanaz K. Wadia, the charming honorary treasurer of TCZYL, who was in and about

continued on page 200

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Indore: a city of opportunity

A small, demographically balanced community thrives in Indore

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Excuse me, I have to meet my teacher," said Dr B. C. Chhaparwal, vice chancellor of the Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya as he hurried off to touch the feet of a diminutive 83-year-old who entered the Indore Anjuman's Gool Hall clad in a Parsi dagla with a black mukhmal cap over his white hair. Dr Jamshed Pohowalla, reverently known as the Father of Pediatrics in Madhya Pradesh (MP), had come to take his place in the assembly that awaited the arrival of Mohammed Shafi Qureshi, Governor of Madhya Pradesh on February 1, 1998. The stalwart is a former president of the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman.

Also present that morning was former member of Parliament Homi Daji, a dedicated advocate who still practices and offers free legal aid to poor litigants. He hurried away after the function to attend to his election-eering work.

Welcoming the governor was the Anjuman's current president, Bomi Heerjee, who during his career in the Indian Administrative Service had been secretary to the Government of India and advisor to the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. He had been commissioner of Indore and had chosen this city for his post-retirement abode.

Heerjee's three current priorities include a compilation of the Indore directory, the drafting of a new constitution for the Anjuman to replace the outdated one based on the old constitution of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and a reconstruction of the dharamshala building—a decrepit 100-year-old block currently used for storage. "That's enough to keep me occupied for some time," he notes.

According to Heerjee, Indore's 175 constituents are well spread agewise with several youths. The city being well placed for educational facilities and employment opportunities, its young Parsis do not feel the need to go

elsewhere. There are several young men who are entrepreneurs. Others work for Jet Airways or with Godrej. Indore's two satellite towns of Dewas and Pithampur are industrial hubs with Larsen and Toubro, Eicher, Bajaj and Hindustan Motors having their works there. Heerjee says the 20 km stretch from Indore to Pithampur is called "the Detroit of India."

Pohowalla came to Indore in 1941 because in Bombay the university refused to upgrade the pediatrics department. A lecturer to whom professorship was denied in his chosen field, Pohowalla learned of a vacancy in Indore from one of his teachers. He recalls a moderate Parsi community of about 500 involved in business or service with a dadgah and a dharamshala in place. His pay was Rs 180 per month which was hiked to Rs 200 when he married Jinni Ragina four years later. He says he used to cycle to medical school where his punctuality and strictness earned him both awe and respect. He joined the King Edward Hospital Medical School as tutor, was promoted to reader in pediatrics at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College, came to head its independent department of pediatrics and remains its emeritus professor of pediatrics and advisor in child health to the Madhya Pradesh government. After a stint with the World Health Organisation, Pohowalla went on to found the Chacha Nehru Hospital for Children.

In the immediate post Independence years the Government of India provided scholarships for higher medical education in England and Pohowalla who had acquired his MD from Grant Medical College, Bombay, earned his DCH from London and MRCP from Edinburgh by the end of that decade. In 1963 he was honored with the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh and elected Fellow of the National Academy of Medical Sci-

ences in 1966. A fellow of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics since 1977, the Academy felicitated him publicly on his 75th birthday. On that occasion Dr S. D. Singh recalled his own training under the master in an article in the Indore edition of the *Free Press Journal*: "Dr Pohowalla looked after me as a guardian. His interest in students was very personal... scolding them when necessary but only in his room... He moved from bed to bed... handling the children sometimes more affectionately than the mothers... In the department it was believed that anyone who has worked sincerely must lose weight, otherwise the person has not worked."

Jinni Pohowalla's family, the Raginas, were the first to start the Indore Cecil Hotel, an ice cream factory and a cinema hall. She remembers Indore as a "nice, quiet place, beautiful weather-wise with greenery all around" where her paternal uncle Khanbahadur Manchershah Ragina was a magistrate and president of the Indore Anjuman. Jinni says she has spent a large part of her life teaching tailoring and fashion designing.

Indore Parsis date the settlement with the arrival of Cowasji Edebam in 1873 followed by other families. They settled in a place near Navlakha which is now known as the Parsi Mohalla, writes Zarine Cama in the souvenir prepared by the anjuman for the executive council meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. They built a prayer room in the neighborhood which was upgraded to an atash dadgah by Hormusji Maneckjee Bhamgara in 1879 and tended by Mobed Dadabhai Madan until 1882. Thereafter three generations of the Rao family deputed by Dastur Hoshangji Jamaspasana were the resident mobeds there.

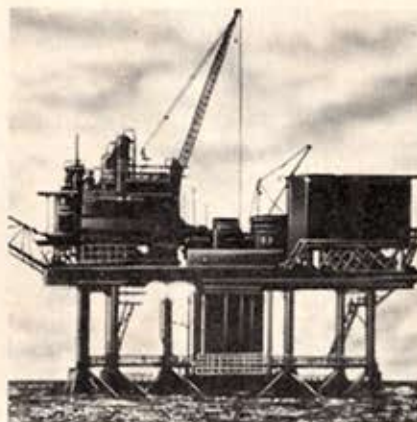
The dar-e-meher building was renovated in 1920 by Pallonji Edulji Plumber in memory of his son Dorabsha. In



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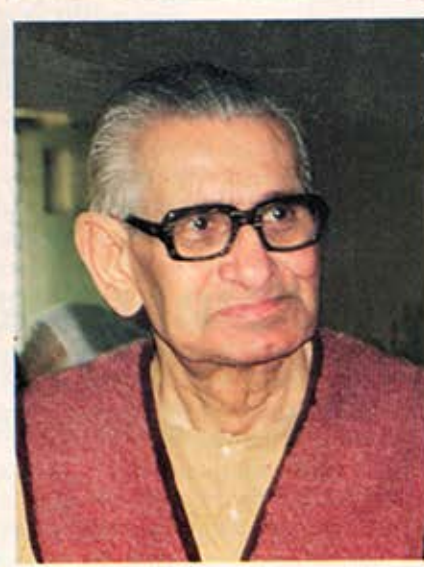


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Clockwise from top left: Anjuman property complex; main entrance; Ervad Behramshah Kapadia, panthaky of the Indore dar-e-meher; Daji; portraits of Hormusji Makasha Bhamgara and Gulbanu Godrej; Pohowalla with pet Sundari
Article continued on page 138

Welcoming Zoroastrians to the heart of India

The aging community of Mhow has accommodation to offer newcomers

Arnavaz S. Mama

The holy adaran fire of Mhow – the only consecrated fire in northern and central India – blazed with the offerings of the visiting Federation delegates which included “friends from across the seas,” as noted Mhow Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman president Group Captain Dhunjishaw Marker in his welcome address after the special machi prayers were completed. On conclusion of the executive council meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, several attendees had availed of the Mhow Anjuman’s invitation to visit their agiary.

The delegates were escorted around the precincts of the recently reconstructed agiary (1995). The original structure that housed the 150-year-old fire had disintegrated while undergoing essential repairs in 1994 and a modern building has taken its place, with the old photographs and portraits lovingly preserved.

Ervad Rumi Panthaky, initially of Surat, who graduated from the Athornan Madressa at Dadar, Bombay and acquired a masters in history from St Xavier’s College, Bombay now officiates as the panthaky. His brother Jimmy, also from the Madressa, assists him and conducted the machi prayers. At the agiary are a few rare books including an original Pahlavi copy of the *Vendidad*.

Mhow – an acronym from Military Headquarters of War – had belonged to the Holkars who ceded it to the British under the Treaty of Indore in 1818. A provision of the treaty allowed the British to station troops in the area and the British army moved in in 1835 with the Parsis as camp followers – contractors, engineers, suppliers. And the British encouraged them to build so that Parsis came to own large properties some of which were let out to the British. Many

of them are still in army hands, says Mhow Anjuman’s honorary secretary Behram Masani.

A strange ambiguity now prevails over the ownership of these properties, none of which are less than 70 or 80 years old. The land had been given under the Bengal Governor General’s order of 1836: “a piece of land applied for and grant given,” in Masani’s words. However, the army retained the right to resume the property and the Indian army has been showing a sporadic interest in reestablishing its ownership since 1972. Owners of houses have been receiving letters asking them to show that they are not unauthorized residents, said Masani.

The Parsis are allowed to repair their properties and utilize their gardens but no reconstruction is permissible. When the agiary collapsed and had to be rebuilt “the army winked because of several high army officers among our population,” says Masani. On the periphery of the cantonment however land costs about four to five lakhs a *bhiga* (approximately 60 percent of an acre) and new homes have sprung up, mainly of retired army officers.

Some of this property, vested in the Mhow Anjuman and redundant to its needs, is now available on rent to Parsis from other areas, if they choose to apply. Somewhat old-fashioned, the homes are described as spacious and comfortable. Many such properties though technically occupied have no full-time residents and, without regular upkeep are deteriorating, informs Masani.

The Mhow dokhma is used about twice a year with Ratlam and Khandwa residents also consigning their dead here. The agiary’s three chasniwalas work as nassessalars along with volunteers from the community. Situated three miles outside the Mhow cantonment, the dokhma,

consecrated in 1840, sits on hilly land given by the Holkar maharaja partly as a gift and partly, later in 1881, on nominal land revenue. Cowasji Jallerected boundary pillars at his own cost. “By a Station Order dated March 29, 1890, the hill was placed out of bounds for soldiers and by an order dated February 14, 1932 aeroplanes were forbidden to fly over the dokhma and for an area of 300 yards outside the Tower,” states Masani. An original sagdi on the hill was later enlarged and dedicated to the community by Khan Bahadur Edulji Ghasvala in 1885, adds Masani.

After the geh sarna at home the body is conveyed up the hill to the Tower of Silence by jeep and trailer and the road leading to the Tower is another source of friction between the community and the army. Built by Khan Bahadur Dhunjishaw Dotiwala in 1932 at his own cost, the five-mile public road connects the cantonment to Baircha Lake and a branch from it reaches the dokhma. Both roads were entrusted to the army on condition that it maintain the branch road as well. “Sad to say, the army has failed to carry out this work. The Cantonment Board, Mhow, has passed a number of resolutions that the ‘road be maintained as usual’ without any implementation. (It) is regularly used by villagers as well as army vehicles, but neither the central nor state governments take the work of repair in hand and the condition of the road continues to deteriorate,” notes Masani. Also, because of firing ranges in the vicinity, there are no birds frequenting the hill, he adds.

In 1900 Cooverji Dotiwala built and furnished the Dotiwala Hall with an attached kitchen in memory of his relatives Alibai, Dinbai and Jerbai and in 1937 a pavilion was added to it. Here

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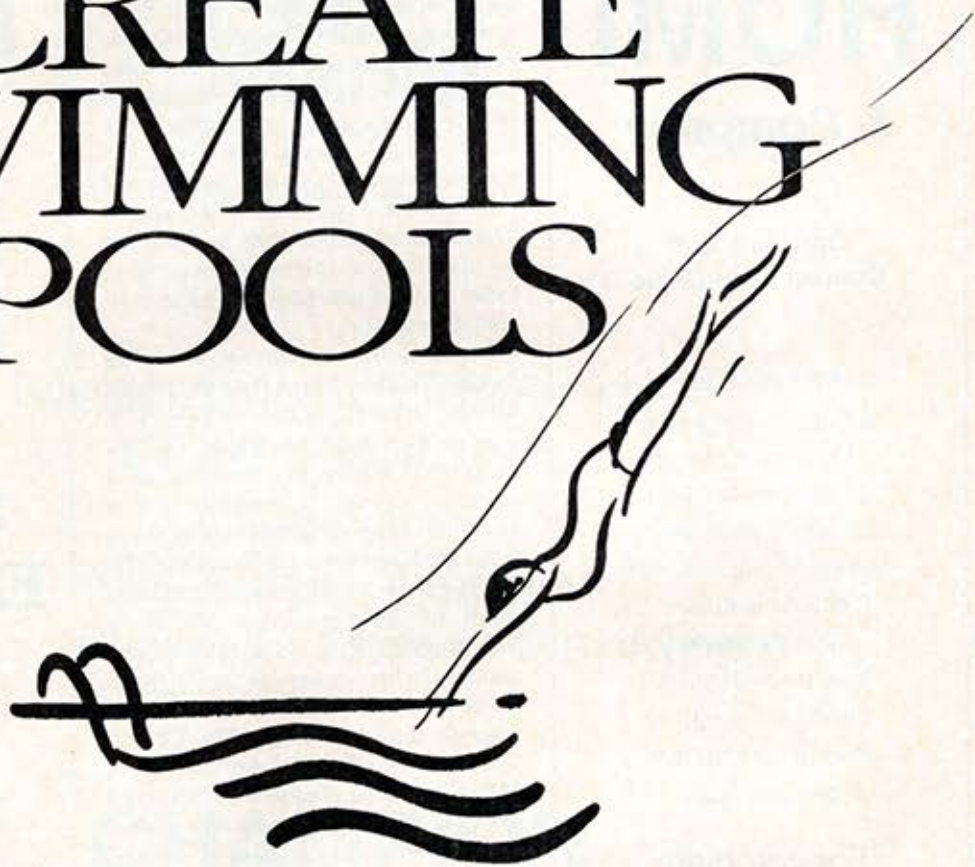


Left to right (top): sagdi which faces the dokhma; entrance to the agiary (center): some members of the Mhow

anjuman; Rumi Panthaky with the Vendidad; (bottom): atash dadgah in the urvisgah; portrait of a Parsi – the

Mhow anjuman requests any readers who can identify the gentleman to please inform them

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the community meets on festive occasions and here the visiting Federation delegates were hosted to a hearty lunch by the Mhow Anjuman whose managing committee of 11 members is elected every three years.

Mhow Parsis had also been deeply involved with educational activities in their area. In 1886 Edulji Birdi opened a small cosmopolitan English School. In the same year Khursedji Edulji had started two schools -- the Khan Bahadur Edulji Pestonji Anglo-Vernacular School and the Khan Bahadur Edulji Pestonji Zoroastrian High School. The latter incorporated the Khan Bahadur Khory Girls School which had been established in a building constructed by Manekji Khory in the agiary campus. Thereafter this building was used as a dharamshala and later converted into residential quarters. Today four nursery schools are being run by four efficient and experienced Parsi ladies, writes Erach Merchant in the Federation souvenir.

A public library known as the Bai Pirojbai A. Dadabhoy Library was built by Ardeshir Masalawala in 1930. It is now defunct, notes Merchant.

In 1875 Edulji Pestonji donated a building to start a hospital named Dorabji Pestonji Charitable Dispensary. Later the Khan Bahadur Byramshaw K. Illava Public Charity Trust donated a ward for Parsis at the Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital in Indore and endowed a hematological section there.

The Mhow Town Hall, village schools, the R. C. Jall Public Charity Trust, the R. C. Jall Law College in Mhow were the creations of Rustomji Jall, the Mhow representative to the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. He also contributed to the Defence College Mhow School of Business Administration which is affiliated to the University of Indore, states Merchant. Lit by kerosene lamps Mhow was electrified in 1928 when E. C. Cowasji built a power house, notes Merchant.

Time was when the Mhow community numbered a 1,000 individuals. Today only about 100 remain. There are some who reside in Mhow and work in Indore which is a fast growing industrial center with a very large automobile industry. This economic growth in the neighborhood and the ready hospitality of the Mhow Anjuman render it a good place for young Parsis seeking the opportunity to begin a new life outside decaying Bombay.



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The perils of policing

Dr Ratan Marshall chronicles, in a new edition, the exploits of Ardesar Kotwal, Surat's legendary police chief

Hilla P. Guzder

"The various improvements effected in the city of Surat and its villages, which we see even today and which are so minutely described ... can never be considered except in connection with this popular Kotwal. What Baron Hausmann was to Paris, what Joseph Chamberlain was to Birmingham, what Pherozeshah Mehta was to Bombay, so Ardesar Kotwal was to Surat. He fought against every obstacle that would have terrified a less enterprising man to reclaim the city of his birth to law and order...." J.R.B. Jeejeebhoy had stated in his Introduction to Dr Ratan Marshall's book *Ardesar Kotwal*, on the life and exploits of the legendary police chief of Surat who was also the first president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) from 1841-1856.

Marshall's first book on Kotwal, written in Gujarati, was published way back in 1946. As part of the bicentenary celebrations of Kotwal's birth, a new, 60-page, more compact edition of Marshall's earlier book, also in Gujarati, was published by the Surat Parsi Panchayat Prakashan in 1997. The book was released by Bhagvatikumar Sharma, a well-known literary figure of Gujarat, at a function organized by the SPP on December 21, 1997. A portrait of Kotwal, painted by Arun Jardosh, was also unveiled by Dr Sam Bhacca, president of the SPP. The portrait is to adorn the walls of the Ratanji Manekji Enti Dharamshala as anjuman meetings are often held there.

Tracing Kotwal's family history, Marshall's book recounts that around the year 1743, Ardesar's great grandfather Sorabjee Cowasjee, known for his expertise in horology, was summoned from Surat to the imperial court at Delhi by Emperor Akbar to repair a clock, a gift from the Sultan of Turkey, which had so far defied the ingenuity of local

repairers. The journey from the banks of the Tapti to the banks of the Jumuna took an arduous four months. The Parsi clock repairer was welcomed at the gates of the city by a special escort and accommo-



Sharma releasing Marshall's book as Bhacca applauds
Inset: Marshall

dated in a mansion. Endowed with the natural gift of seeing the obvious through the complicated, he soon set the clock right. So pleased was the emperor that he conferred on Sorabjee the title of Neksautkhan (Lord of the Auspicious Hour), and among other honors, presented him with a jaghir near the city of his birth, Surat. During his 16-year stay in Delhi, Sorabjee consolidated the position of the British at Surat by obtaining valuable firmans from the Moghul emperor, by which the English assumed authority over the political functions of the Nawab of Surat.

Sorabjee's two sons also received favor from the Moghul court. Barjorjee, the elder, was exalted to the title of Beheremandkhan (Lord of Prosperity) and Pestonjee, the younger, to Talyarkhan (Lord of Good Fortune). Barjorjee's eldest son, Dhanjishah died in battle when, as representative of the Mandvi state, he accompanied the troops sent to quell a religious revolt. His

widow was conferred a political pension by the government, the first Parsi lady, the book states, to receive such a mark of honor under the British regime. The widow and her two sons, Phirozshah and Ardesar, were taken under the special protection of Nathan Crowe, the head of the English factory at Surat. Phirozshah later rose to be Principal Sadar Amin, judge of the Surat court and British agent for some native states.

In his introduction written in English, reprinted in condensed form in the new edition, Jeejeebhoy describes Kotwal, who was born on June 29, 1797, as "a noble specimen of an athletic family, in his person he was stately and dignified, while his stature was tall and awe-inspiring." The book relates that Kotwal's early education had included fencing, which stood him in good stead when he was appointed head of the police in Surat. He joined government service as a clerk, rising to become native superintendent of police of the Surat villages and later Surat city, native agent of the native states, Principal Sadar Amin (chief judge of the Sadar Adawlut), etc. During the inundation of Surat in 1822, he worked strenuously for six days and nights to save the hapless people from premature death, in recognition of which he was presented with a Dress of Honor and a richly caparisoned charger by the governor, Sir John Malcolm when he visited Surat seven years later.

Marshall relates that life in Surat during Kotwal's time was a canvas stained by frequent robberies and murders. From Cambay to Daman, pirates plundered, making Surat their headquarters. Bhils, Tarwaris and Pindharis frequented Surat city, and neither the rich man's mansion nor the poor man's cottage was immune from depredations. When Kotwal became the police chief of Surat, he thor-

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oughly overhauled the police department. "He established patrols to do duty after sunset, faced the miscreants in their dens... hunted some of them out of the city, a few of them he reclaimed and employed in his own service as spies, ... without letting his zeal degenerate into fanaticism," notes Jeejeebhoy. In 1830, the book recounts, the Bombay (British)

**"He established
patrols to do duty
after sunset, faced
the miscreants in
their dens..."**

government honored him with a medal, the title of Bahadur and conferred on him a jaghir. During the great fire of 1837, which destroyed hundreds of houses in Surat, Kotwal once again worked ceaselessly to provide relief to its unfortunate citizenry.

A dark cloud drifted over Kotwal's career when R. D. Luard, a newly appointed judge of Surat, suspended him, pending investigation of the charge of unlawful conspiracy. The Government of Bombay appointed a commission of inquiry which terminated in an honorable acquittal, the book narrates. To reinstate the principal Sadar Amin to his former office, a grand durbar, one of the six held in his honor in his lifetime, was held, "a guard of honor with band and colors escorting him to the courthouse..." Kotwal relinquished office in 1849, living in retirement till he passed away in 1856.

Marshall's painstaking chronicle of facts long forgotten also contains quotations from English and Gujarati historical sources including noted historian Henry George Briggs. In his monumental work entitled *The Cities of Gujarashtra, Their Topography and History*, Briggs eulogizes: "Among the natives of Western India he (Ardesar Kotwal) stands alone for his abilities, his energy, and his unwearied zeal for the Government he served, the country which gave him birth and his countrymen refuge in exile."

The soft-cover second edition, printed by Farzan Graphics of Surat, can be obtained free from the author, c/o Parsi Panchayat Board, Shahpore, Surat 395003, on despatch of a three rupee postal stamp.

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"Parsi women, tiger women"

Despite her academic qualifications the author was discriminated against in a male-dominated milieu

Dr Ketayun H. Gould

This article is written with only one purpose in mind: consciousness raising. It challenges some very entrenched Zarathushti stereotypes about their status in North American social structure. The myth can be summarized as follows: We Zarathushtris do not need to be classified as a minority of color/women of color under affirmative action laws because we have the qualifications to make it on our own without government intervention.

This story is about one person who learned that life is not that simple. The other party in this case was an academic bureaucracy. But it could have been any number of organizational structures. The process would have remained unchanged.

I came to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1968 with all the qualifications and honors to make me believe implicitly in the merit system and my ability to climb the academic ladder. As usual, there were fewer females than males in my department, and some of us were women of color. As a brand new assistant professor, I had a vague uneasiness about my starting salary but it was explained away as being due to a bad budget year.

About 18 months after my arrival at Illinois, the uneasiness came to a head. Three faculty persons — an English-woman, a Korean woman and myself — marched to the board of trustees office to look up the department salaries. After a thoroughly unpleasant reception, it turned out that the University could only provide salary information that was two years old. The bureaucracy had taken a very calculated step. In 1969-70, the affirmative action guidelines had just added women to the list of minorities of color as being eligible for redress for past discrimination. The case for equal pay for equal work was to be made by comparing a female faculty's qualifications with a male colleague whose cur-

rent salary was higher.

We had no choice. We asked, then demanded repeatedly for information on current faculty salaries. The department was blatant in its refusal to comply. The main obstacle in obtaining the information was the fact that the universities were not compelled to follow affirmative action guidelines, until Title IX was enacted in 1972. That was a few years down the road. A mountain of memos and counter-memos followed, resulting in acrimonious departmental relations and many sleepless nights.

After much anticipation, Title IX turned out to be a paper tiger. The procedure to determine salary inequities involved the examination of an individual faculty's merit ranking and salary ranking to decide if there was a mismatch. It is not difficult to guess what happened next — the rating was performed by the same department head who had discriminated against us in the first place.

A perusal of the salaries demonstrated that the discrimination was far worse than anybody had imagined. There was no recourse left except to go outside the department to a university committee — a step that would certainly make you a pariah in the eyes of people with whom you worked every day.

All of my colleagues except one, a tenured associate professor, and myself, an untenured assistant professor, felt that they could not withstand the pressure of such a move, and dropped out. I was asked whether I too wanted to stop at this juncture. After all, I could have been fired. I thought about it, but I had faith in my qualifications and my ability to stand up for my rights.

In my appearance before the university committee, I built a strong case for salary discrimination. I was confident because I had quantitative data to make my points: a favorable count in all the areas delineated by the affirmative action guidelines such as publications,

years of teaching, experience, etc in comparison to a male colleague who earned a much higher salary.

The committee commended me for my record. They regretted, however, that they could not defy the university's procedures. They had to take the department head's lead and concern themselves solely with a mismatch between merit and salary ratings. After all the effort plus living through departmental pressures and threats, my salary was adjusted by \$ 200!

However, that was not the end of the story. I was taught a further lesson. Somebody in the university committee called up one of my faculty colleagues who did not dare oppose the dean, and invited him to submit a vita to the committee. Without lifting a finger, the dean's favorable merit ranking resulted in a salary adjustment of \$ 700. At this point, I had to weigh my options. Did I want to take my case outside the university to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (a waiting period of years) or sue the university?

I was spared having to make either of these decisions by an event that rocked the department and shocked even the most conservative faculty. Colleagues had urged me to run for a position on the executive committee. Somehow, the secret ballots that would have certainly elected me to the committee were tampered with by two faculty members — a fact that was revealed a year later by a secretary who was responsible for the ballot box.

No one could deny the heinous nature of this offense. This was a turning point, a wake up call. The faculty finally acknowledged that something had to be done to right the process that had gone so wrong. My tenure and promotion to associate professor sailed through with no problems. The salary discrepancy, however, was never addressed.

It took the department head's retire-

ment and the selection of the next dean to announce that he was not going to accept the position without a commitment to deal with this issue once and for all. No internal rankings were going to determine salary inequities since no one had any confidence in this procedure. He was going to appoint an outside committee of well known faculty from various departments to address the problem. Finally, my salary was adjusted by thousands of dollars. I say adjusted because it did not address the question of redress for past discrimination.

My promotion to full professor went through with flying colors. In the intervening years, I organized colleagues in three professional organizations to pressure these institutions to establish commissions on the status of women and ethnic minority concerns. I served on all of these commissions. I chaired the university committees that were established to address similar concerns. In the department, I continued to be the spokesperson for faculty concerns. Circumstances had put me in that role, and now colleagues expected me to continue to fulfill the leadership promise.

Was this experience painful? It was

painful beyond belief. Would I do it over again? Without any hesitation. I could not not do it. Was I discriminated against because I was a woman or because I was a member of the minority community? The answer is both (double jeopardy), because the stereotypes of both groups lulled the University into thinking that it was going to be an easy fight. Did the whole experience change me? Completely.

Like many Zarathushtis, I had a chip on my shoulder about my abilities and an exaggerated notion of the North American society's recognition of the success of this miniscule community. I realized that it is easy to maintain a favored position as long as the status quo is not challenged. Zarathushtis, as a small minority, are well aware of this fact and have followed this policy historically, for societal survival.

However, like every other ethnic group in this culture, Zarathushtis will have to learn that in an era of competition, the system ignores groups that do not articulate their demands as a coherent force. At times, self-preservation requires a pro-active rather than a passive stance.

I was asked this question more times than I can remember. Was there something in my background that prepared me for this fight? I had to explain my answer to my faculty colleagues. Perhaps this audience will understand the response without any elaboration: "Parsi women, tiger women."

(Edited and reprinted with permission from FEZANA Journal, Summer 1997.)

Dr Ketayun H. Gould is professor emerita in the School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the United States. She is a partner, along with her husband, in Independent Scholars Associated in Stafford, Virginia. She opted for early retirement to pursue her research and scholarship. Her writings have dealt with two main areas: feminist theory, models and practice frameworks in the area of women and ethnic minority concerns, and historical and demographic studies of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in India. Currently she is authoring a book on the historical and demographic decline of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in the rural and urban areas of Gujarat.



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To honor those worthy...

Every coreligionist should assess his or her contribution to the religion and the community

Ervad (Dr) Hoshang J. Bhadha

As an athravan serving the traditional Zarathushtis of Southern California, I have written this article to enlighten those who have wandered in search of materialistic pleasures of life, ignoring their religious identity and their role as Zarathushtis towards themselves, family and community at large.

It is very unfortunate that the majority of Parsis in India, US and around the world are ignorant of the correct recitation of *Avesta manthras* and its effect on their lives. For the last nine years that I have been teaching prayers and religion to a small group of orthodox Zoroastrians, I have witnessed many unfortunate ones outside this group following non-Zoroastrian beliefs. Those who have emigrated from India brought with them idol worshipping and beliefs of Hindu and Christian religions, which are affecting the beliefs of our future generations. In such family environment, we can anticipate the type of religious upbringing and future of young members of the family. For example, during my last religious class, I asked an eight-year-old boy to name our Prophet and he replied, "Shridev, Shri Ram, Hanuman." With such non-Zoroastrian influences, we can hardly rely on our future generation to follow the footsteps of our forefathers to preserve our religion. This ignorance of our religious customs, traditions and rituals is the prime cause of all inconsistencies in the Zoroastrian community.

Our prayers are not just a literary composition involving the behavior of various creations of Ahura Mazda and stories of so-called mythical characters in Iranian history. They have allegorical meanings and explanations that go beyond human imagination and understanding. Though we may understand some parts of His divine plan, we can never have the wisdom to understand His original version.

Establishing community associations, organizing congresses, social functions and family gatherings are healthy sources of developing links among various groups around the world. However, it does not guarantee preservation of our religious traditions, rituals and practices in its true form. It does not help our next generation to practice and recite our sacred prayers in correct pronunciation. It does not help them to understand what they are expected to do when they visit an agiary, an atash behram or just kindle a fire at home. It does not help them to understand their spiritual identity and the mission of their soul in this material world. It does not give them a chance to know the *alaats* given to us by Asho Zarathushtra to defend ourselves from 'harmful elements' on this planet. It does not help them to know the resources required in case of any unforeseen incident happening in their family. It does not help them to help themselves by reciting prayers for the benefit of their material and spiritual life.

Our religion is based on rituals, ceremonies and religious traditions. If we cannot maintain them in their entirety without getting them corrupted by our materialistic aspirations, there is no need to call ourselves the followers of the Mazdayasni Zarathushti religion. There is no need for an initiation ceremony or prayer book in one's house when one doesn't believe nor have faith in the religion to practice our *manthras* and *tarikats*.

Today, non-Zoroastrian beliefs are openly practiced and propagated in our community. Besides, different cultures, traditions and teachings of non-Zoroastrian scholars have always influenced our community. Idols of Sai Baba, Meher Baba and other saintly individuals and religious idols prominently displayed in Zoroastrian homes are a com-

mon sight. It is also common among Zarathushtis to make charities to Hindu temples, churches and roadside worship places than to be charitable for the maintenance of agiaries and atash behrams. A decreasing number of devotees visit our sacred agiary and atash behram and very few wear the sudreh kusti and recite the *mathras* in correct pronunciation.

From Sai Baba pooja to the spirit of Jalbava in the Banaji Atash Behram and magical powers in Aslaji Agiary — people have started believing in any supernatural phenomenon to further their materialistic gains. They are the ones who prefer to visit Shirdi, Novina celebration and such holy places and occasions to satisfy their material or spiritual aspirations than to visit our agiary or atash behram which could be next door. A perfect example is of Tata Colony at Tardeo. There is a small Sai Baba mandir at the corner of the street where some Parsis join others in pooja, offering flowers, food and money for its maintenance when the Kappawalla Agiary is just a few yards away. In the recent past, we had a few cases of some 'learned' trustees trying to close down our agiaries that are in the least operational condition. Miracles happen when you practice our *manthras* and lead a life prescribed by our Prophet. The presence of these spiritual beings at certain places is not to make you rich and successful. Besides, by birth we all are obligated to follow the Zarathushti religion and do *farzyat* prayers, no matter where, when and how we live — rich or poor, happy or in misery. The unfortunate sign is, people tend to relate doing prayers only for gaining materialistic rewards and pleasures. How many of you were consistent in going to an agiary only during your school or college examination? How many times have you been to Udvada strictly for prayers and

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not for enjoyment at the nearest resorts? How many times have you committed yourself to recite prayers? Have you ever spent your free time in reading religious books or contacting someone to know more about our religion?

In western countries, there are several groups organized under different names for socializing which ignore their socioreligious obligations towards themselves, their family and the community at large. We have several independent associations from ultra-liberal to orthodox with differences in their ideologies and preferences. There are four associations among less than 400 Zarathushtis just in Southern California! Do we need to split the community by having various associations? Can we survive and preserve our religion by a divide-and-rule policy?

Organizing youth congresses and youth organizations will help youngsters to socialize and get acquainted with our society. However, it may not guarantee knowledge of their religious identity. The decision-makers are those parents who know nothing about our religion or its inheritance. Attending a religion class once a month is like a

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burden for most parents who conveniently justify their absence by unreasonable excuses such as, "It is too far for us to attend," "I am too old to attend a religion class, whatever I know is enough," or "My son feels uncomfortable sitting with the younger crowd."

**People tend to
relate doing prayers
only for gaining
materialistic rewards
and pleasures**

Obviously, these parents are to be blamed for not giving their children an opportunity (which they themselves never had) to learn prayers and religion. Do you think once-a-month religion class is too much to ask for in return for your child's future?

Internet and e-mail help in spreading Zoroastrianism among Zarathushtis. However, that cannot compete with religious classes conducted by a priest or knowledgeable person. Besides not everyone has e-mail or Internet to access

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On the religious front, our so-called intellectuals and wealthy bureaucrats are making decisions on "what to do and what not to follow" type of questions related to religious rituals and traditions. If the community is not educated in religious matters, especially in our rituals and traditions, no one is going to oppose any kind of accommodation or convenience so propagated.

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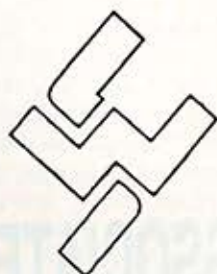
evaluate your contribution to our religion and community. This does not mean a one-time service and then blowing your horn to gain power or attention in the community. The majority of us including our intellectual reformists demonstrate attitudes that can be described as egocentric, diplomatic and self-centered.

A community prospers by collective action and following a prescribed path. We do not need people who use their social status to influence others in religious matters. We need to recognize those who can impart a true version of our religion.

It is common among Parsis to prefer someone other than his/her community members to share venture, friendship or companionship. Why are we unsuccessful in collaborating our ideas and expressions in making socio-religious decisions? The answer lies in one expression — superiority complex among the majority — an attitude that has caused serious damage to our community development. Everyone tries to prove himself right. Like for instance, our community membership is scattered worldwide and each group has different ideologies and perceptions of practicing our religion.

It is a fact that the socioeconomic condition of a family is correlated to the mental, physical and psychological ability of its members. It influences a person's outlook on the society in which he/she lives. Our community has always projected a very refined and intelligent picture among the locals of whichever country we chose as our residence.

We need to develop a network system to help people in employment, housing, transportation, matrimony and religion. We need to coordinate efforts of specialists and volunteers in each of the above fields. They may be from different states in the US and/or India. It will encourage many associations to contribute to the needy Zarathushti directly rather than end their obligation by publishing an article in their association newsletter. This type of networking will even motivate someone to help a needy person by going beyond one's professional capability. We need to formalize these groups and publish their names, contact address and area of his/her speciality in helping the needy in the newsletter published by the executive committee of this special group (Helping Hand) around the world. A



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special committee in India must provide this list to all those who emigrate to the US, Canada or other countries for higher studies or residency and simultaneously inform their state associations about their arrival. There is a history of Zoroastrian immigrants, especially students, being swayed by the false glamor of Western surroundings and for being corrupted beyond repair. We need a group/association who could bring such immigrants into the mainstream before they get lost in the wilderness of the cultural roller coaster. We need someone to 'care' for our future generation.

We must encourage knowledgeable priests in our group or community to conduct classes on prayers and religion to bring consistency in understanding our rituals, traditions and practices. There is truth in the assertion that if the majority understand and believe in *bunak pasbani*, the intrinsic value of reciting *Avesta manthras*; and knowledge of applying religious taboos and *alaats* in our lives, we would seldom face controversies like interfaith marriage, belief in other faiths, non-Zoroastrian practices, navjote of a non-Zoroastrian or allowing a non-Zoroastrian in rituals.

We should stop wasting our energy in defining a Zarathushti or translating *Gathas* to convince people that one's version of religious interpretation is superior to others. Leave our rituals and traditions in their original prescription and concentrate on developing a strong infrastructure to mobilize our resources for the benefit of the entire community. Leave religious alterations in His hands.

No matter how many people recommend solutions to the existing problems, if there is no change in the Zoroastrian approach to work as a team, keeping aside grudges, differences, selfish motives and above all egocentric attitudes, no suggestion or strategy can work to our benefit. Collectively, we must dedicate ourselves to practice and preserve our religion and develop a pathway to the success and survival of our next generation.



Ervad (Dr) Hoshang J. Bhadha conducts religion and prayer classes in Southern California. He offers religious services only to those Zarathushtis who believe and practice the traditional Zarathushti religion. His articles are published on the Internet web-site Traditional Zoroastrianism.



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Reach the inner fire

Let not Mazdayasni Zarathushtis say they worship fire which is only a creation of Ahura Mazda

Perin Divecha

When the *Life* magazine of the *Sunday Observer* published an alphabetical list of cults, with "Zoroastrianism" under Z, there followed letters of protests from Zoroastrians.

Perveez Dadachanji wrote: "I was shocked to find Zoroastrianism among the cults in your *Life* magazine..."

Rusi Dalal protested: "I am writing to you on behalf of our Zoroastrian association to record our members' total dismay and outrage on denigrating our noble and ancient religion to the level of one of those many cults..."

K. P. Jasavala wrote: "To our great amazement and disbelief we were shocked to read in *Sunday Observer's Life* magazine (May 14, 1995) that the pure and ancient religion of Iran — Zoroastrianism — is described as a cult..." Burjor

Avari expressed similar sentiments. They also mentioned Zoroastrian influences on Abrahamic religions.

On the very, very rare occasions — two, to be exact — when the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) committee have chosen Zoroastrians to speak for the whole community in or on the media, they have chosen the unknowledgeable, ill-informed and those of cultish tendencies. What in heaven's name do they expect?

It is natural for outsiders to believe that Zoroastrian House represents the whole UK community, and that those they choose to speak on our behalf voice the views and religious beliefs of us all. But we know this is not so. Two of those chosen said that we worshipped fire; another said that she did not understand

a word of her navjote prayers because they were in a very ancient language, and that she was given cow's urine to drink. She could have explained the purpose and significance of the ceremony and of the sudreh and kusti — that is, if she had bothered to educate herself; she is old enough to have done so.

Except for the oft repeated: "We believe in good thoughts, good words and good deeds," I have heard nothing which could reflect or explain Zoroastrianism as a religion.

Among Zoroastrians, there are some who are more concerned about the "purity" of their Parsi/Iranian race — which history denies — than preserving their religion: some of our young are not in the least bit concerned about either. There are others to whom

our religion, as preached by Asho Zarathushtra, is of much greater importance. This they are striving to preserve. This does not mean that they have no respect or love for their ancestors: rather they realize that their ancestors were what they were because of the religion Asho Zarathushtra left in the keeping of his followers.

At least the compiler of the list of cults did make one very important point, which escaped the protestors, for he wrote: "(Zarathushtra), spurned by his compatriots for what they considered his monotheistic revelation..." The compiler recognized the fact that the religion Asho Zarathushtra taught was a monotheistic revelation, which was, at first, spurned. And our history tells us that even after it was accepted, when the Holy Prophet

died, aspects of the old religion were reintroduced.

Is the situation all that different today? Why do we keep silent when co-religionists confess to the worship of fire? Why are they not shocked, dismayed, or outraged when so-called Mazdayasni-Zarathushtis say they worship fire, which is, after all, a creation of Ahura Mazda? Fire has not the power to create anything, whereas Ahura Mazda has created everything good in His good creation, both in the world of spirit and in the world of nature, and this includes the fire. And by the power of His divine laws, that are generated on the natural level, has made it possible for human beings to ignite fire. All natural elements have energies entrapped within them; this enables humans to ignite fire with the power or energy of the sun; or through friction of two rocks or sticks: this is according to God's laws of nature. But can human beings reconstruct or convert fire energies into spiritual bodies as certain individuals and publications claim? Asho Zarathushtra taught that Ahura Mazda alone is the divine source of the natural and the spiritual or inner fire, and of the natural and the spiritual light.

The *Gathas* reveal the existence of the one and only spiritual God, the divine Creator, the wise lord, the father of Asha — the divine law that governs both the natural and the spirit worlds. He alone is uncreated spirit, and He alone has the power to create spirits and souls. His is the supreme mind, the sublime mind, supreme intelligence and wisdom. He is the infinite, perfect and immortal being, who alone is worthy of worship. So the *Gathas* say.

Yes, the sacred fires should be respected and venerated, but this respect and veneration would come naturally if we recognized Ahura Mazda for what He





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is. Yes, we worship and adore the Amesha Spentas because they are Ahura Mazda's attributes; yes, we revere the fravashis of the holy ones, and all the spiritual beings Ahura Mazda has created. If we recognized Ahura Mazda as the only one worthy of worship then every other respect and veneration due to His good creation would come naturally to us.

On BBCTV last autumn, a Zoroastrian priest, participating in one of the *Sacred Place* series, said that we worshipped fire because it is the purest natural element; and that is why the priests cover their mouths, so as not to pollute the fire. Then on Radio 4 on July 6, 1997 we heard Mr Noshir Dadrawala say, most emphatically: "I am not ashamed to say that I worship fire."

Of course they have the right to worship fire if they so wish. Freedom of choice, specially that of worship, is every individual's God-given right. Asho Zarathushtra preached this freedom. He realized that nothing less would or could

be acceptable to Ahura Mazda: this freedom extended to our thoughts, words and deeds. Nothing but truth and sincerity in worship, and in individual thoughts, words and actions would bring God's divine plan of salvation to fruition. There can be no force or coercion, no sitting on the

fence for the individual. Each one must make his/her own choice without any threat being held over his/her head; be they priests or laity.

Although these good people have the right to worship fire, it is important that they clarify that it is their personal choice, not accepted by all Zoroastrians.

Asho Zarathushtra made his choice of worship very clear; he told us which fire he worshipped: "O Ahura Mazda, we yearn to see and reach up to your inner fire. This fire is our final goal and ultimate hope, and He alone shall light your faithful followers through life (Yasna 34.4)."

Again in Yasna 47.6: "As the fire of Ahura Mazda is our ideal, He is also our reward, for He shall ignite His latent

righteousness (Asha) and devotion (Armaiti) within us."

Ahura Mazda's inner fire is His supreme spirit (Spenta Mainyu) and His sublime and good mind, His divine wisdom (Vahista Mana, Vohu Mana); and we worship Him with and in our inner selves (our hearts, minds and souls).

If they feel they do not, and or they cannot make him the only, and the full focus of their worship and adoration, why do they call themselves Mazdayasnis? If they do not wish to abide by the teachings of Asho Zarathushtra as given in the *Gathas*, why do they call themselves Zarathushtis (Zoroastrians)?

Why can't we observe our rituals, and hold on to our true traditions in the light of the revelations made in the *Gathas*? Can someone give me an adequate answer, please?

A retired teacher residing in Kent, UK, Perin Divecha states her life "has been a search and an education, and my interest has always been in literature, history and religion; in short, the story of the human race."



Why do we keep silent when coreligionists confess to the worship of fire?

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An easy exit

It is preferable to pray for an easy deliverance rather than a painfully long life

Rustam S. Sidhwa

A very dear friend of mine, having enjoyed years of success, good health and prosperity, in the autumn of his life found himself wasting away with dread diseases. He seemed booked for misery, along with his family, for the remainder of his life.

His wife, sons, daughters and relatives — as well as friends and well-wishers who came to know of his predicament — raised their hands to the almighty, to holy prophets and spiritual masters in supplication for his return to health and strength. Efforts were directed to different systems of medicine, psychic sciences, holistic and other systems of healing, prayers, meditation, concentration, etc.

When a person's time for passing on arrives, the spiritual hierarchy responsible for receiving his soul encounters great interference: from those who seek to restore his health and from those who would extend his life.

As regards the first, with hundreds interceding for his good health, temporary and relaxable burdens usually get alleviated. Intercession, out of grace, is granted, depending upon the spiritual strength of the interceder. Spiritually advanced souls may petition that he be granted good health and thus make the crossing comfortable for all concerned. Where, however, the burdens are permanent, only the grace of a highly advanced spiritual soul can change the situation. There must be some special reason for such intercession, otherwise justification for the change does not exist.

As regards the extension of life, requests for short extensions are granted out of grace, such as that of relatives or friends living at distant places who want to see the patient before he passes on. Also requests for short extensions for some particular work that has to be completed, are justified. Long exten-

sions are granted depending on the aggregate intercessions of relatives and friends or, in serious cases, spiritually advanced souls can intercede on his behalf. What good it does to the individual is difficult to judge. Between the desire of the patient, on the one hand, and that of his relatives, immediate friends and well-wishers on the other, what polarity is created is difficult to assess. The patient desiring immediate release and others desiring an extension of his life for some mundane purpose, can create difficulties. Should the friends not be circumspect in what they plead for, and permit the patient to have a free hand in his own deliverance? Of what use is the request for long life if the patient is to suffer more pain? Even spiritual law protects the individual's independence and spiritual masters as a rule refrain from such interference.

Different religions have established their own traditional methods to deal with such situations and guide humanity. But all life is evolving. Creative knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment are on-going revolutionary processes. They do not wait for anybody. The divine spirit uses human beings in its forward march. The establishment of new spiritual societies and movements is a strong indication of the change which we see coming. New thoughts, new dimensions and new concepts have started emerging. The New Age, the Aquarian Age of Enlightenment, is settling in, and cannot be prevented. In the multidimensional forces of unity and diversity, the divine spirit has the upper hand.

There is a Jewish saying, "As above, so below." It is believed that a spiritual hierarchy above governs matters that concern creation, including this earth. It keeps changing, according to a system established by its own rules. It is alleged that there are spiritual cabinets

with the almighty and the prophets at the apex, supported by a mighty spiritual force (also called the Heavenly Hosts), but of this I have little knowledge, apart from what comes from the extant religious tracts and holy books, which must be accepted on faith.

But from the new thoughts and concepts that are recently creeping in, it appears that a hierarchy of spiritual masters — living, physically embodied souls — govern life and death. Whether there are separate groups for different areas, religions, etc., I do not know. It is also alleged that the record from life to death of each individual catapulted onto this planet, is set out in registers called "Akashic Records." These can also be inspected by other spiritual masters gifted with high grace.

The question, therefore, that arises is what prayer or blessings should be invoked for a person who is in deep distress. Would it not be better if we pleaded with Ahura Mazda (or with our own respective holy prophets and spiritually advanced souls) that our dearest friend may be granted health and long life, if they are due to him, as recompense for his good life; and, if that is not possible, to accept his wishes for an easy exit, with prayers to the spiritual hierarchy to receive him with honor and glory straightaway, and to lodge him in paradise, commensurate with his attainments in this life? As regards the other desires of friends and relatives, we plead that they may be granted under the canopy of Their grace, so that our dear friend's loss may not create difficult situations.

This small prayer can be expanded appropriately. The wish of the person most affected must stand supreme.

This is the last article authored by Justice Rustam Sidhwa (see "Sidhwa's benchmark," page 198, *Parsiana*, February-March 1998) before his demise in 1997.

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The edifice of education

The Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsee Benevolent Institution celebrates its 150th anniversary, as well as 125 years of its heritage building

Hilla P. Guzder

The imposing sandstone structure with its colonial facade of archways and columns on Bombay's bustling Dr D. N. Road was built even before its more famous neighbors, the Gothic Victoria Terminus and the Bombay Municipal Corporation building, had been completed.

On November 20, 1872, the Viceroy of India, Lord Northbrook had opened the door of the then partially completed building of the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsee Benevolent Institution (SJJPBI) with a silver key, in the presence of the governor of Bombay, Sir Philip Wodehouse, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, second baronet, and a small gathering of invitees.

On November 20, 1997, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, seventh baronet, presided over the celebrations to mark the building's 125th anniversary. In recent years much of the space beneath the beautiful arcade had been usurped by the ubiquitous Bombay hawker, but on that day the red carpet lay all the way out onto the street, leading the distinguished invitees into the venerable structure. Adorning the entrance hall was an artistic reproduction of the building done in rangoli by the students and art teacher of the Sir J. J. Girls' High School housed within its portals. At the foot of the broad stairway, the rose-bedecked bronze statue of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, first baronet, benevolently surveyed the scene from within its archway. Curtains of flowers and glowing divas adorned the well outside the old lift.

On the first floor, Ervad Dhunjishaw Karkaria of the Sir J. J. Alhaibaug dadgah (at Abdul Rehman Street, now shifted to Pune) led the priests in thanksgiving. Of the seven mobeds, three were students of the Sir J. J. Fort Boys' High School, also situated within the build-

ing — Farzad Ravji of standard six, Asdin Dhalla two classes his senior, and Jimmy Mogal of standard nine.

Barely two months later, on January 18, 1998, the institute witnessed a second celebration — a jashan and gambhar in honor of the sesquicentennial (150 years) of the establishment of the trust, which was founded on January 9, 1849, by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, first bar-

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onet, 25 years before the structure was built. "I shall ever wish my name to be connected with every endeavor to diffuse knowledge amongst our people," Sir Jamsetjee had stated. Cementing the founder's dream through a century and a half, the SJJPBI today runs eight primary and secondary schools in Bombay, Surat, Navsari and Valsad, catering to the educational needs of over 6,500 boys and girls from all strata of society.

The three Bombay schools housed within the heritage structure are the Boys' and Girls' Schools and sister trust Sett R. J. J. Primary School presided over by principals Vijay Joshi, Hemavati Pal and headmistress Huaftred Kotwal respectively, with a combined complement of over 2,200 students. At the sesquicentennial celebrations, marked by a total absence of speeches, history came alive with the students of the Girls' School recreating scenes from

the School's past — little girls in *jhablas* and *topis* listened attentively to their older counterparts in beautiful saris with *kors*, heads demurely covered with *mathabana* and *sor*, imparting the rudiments of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. Gaily decorated classrooms showcased the art and craft of the students of the Primary School, while the secondary sections presented a colorful exhibition of India's scientific and cultural achievements.

The girls' enthusiastic enactment of scenes from India's struggle for freedom from the British, complete with revolutionaries, faces covered with black hoods, being hung from a pole generated much interest among invitees, and exhaustion among the young actresses as they went through their well-rehearsed lines scores of times for the benefit of the curious!

The morning witnessed a jashan ceremony led by Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, with Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji, Ervad Kersasp Karanjia, principal of the Cama Athornan Institute, two of his young students and Mogal, Dhalla and Ravji of the Sir J. J. Fort Boys' High School among the 11 participating priests. The genial host and chairman of the SJJPBI, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, seventh baronet, wife Lady Shirinbai, son and heir Rustom with wife Delara and 12-year-old son Jehangir, mingled with the galaxy of guests which included Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), who is also a trustee of the SJJPBI, BPP trustees Silloo Kavarana and Rustom Tirandaz, ex BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla, Homi Taleyarkhan, Sohrab Godrej, Ketu Mehta, Homai Modi, Pheroza Godrej, Khojeste Mistree and a host of others. Also present were SJJPBI trustees Prof Khurshed Sheriar, Homi

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Top row: The SJJPBI heritage building Photo: Chetan Mistry; statue of Sir J. Jejeebhoy, first baronet, at the foot of the staircase Photo: Nazneen K. Vajifdar, Spectravision Labs; Sir J. Jejeebhoy, seventh baronet, and Lady Jejeebhoy cutting the cake on the building's 125th anniversary Photo: Vijay Joshi; Principals Hemavati Pal, Vijay Joshi and headmistress Huafreed Kotwal. Middle row: Students recreate the early history of the Girls' School Photo: N. K. Vajifdar; jashan in progress Photo: Hilla Guzder. Bottom row: School trustees (L to R) Mody, R. Jejeebhoy, Gherda, Sheriar, Morris, Sir J. Jejeebhoy and Cooper Photo: N. K. Vajifdar; architectural confectionery Photo: H. Guzder; inter-school art competition Photo: Karunakar Boloor



D. Mehta, Sohrab Morris, Kersi Gherda, Dr Burjor Cooper and Minoo Mody (Rustomjee J. R. B. Jeejeebhoy was unable to attend). Exchanging reminiscences were ex-students and staff, including ex-principals Nergesh Bamji and Silloo Irani. Dhun Majra and Mahrukh Kotwal, headmistresses of the Sir J. J. Princess Street Primary School and the Sir J. J. Parel Primary School, Dolly Desai and Bomi Mehernosh, principals of the R. J. J. High Schools at Navsari and Valsad respectively, and headmistress Katy Zaveri of the Sir J. J. Primary School, Valsad were also present. Scouts and guides maintained order among the crowd of poor Parsis eagerly awaiting their turn at the gambhar tables laid out in long rows under a special shamiana in the courtyard.

As part of the year-long sesquicentennial celebrations beginning January 1998, the trustees propose to undertake major renovations to the Institution building at an estimated cost of Rs 38 lakhs and have released a public appeal for funds. According to school sources,

the noted firm of architects, Talati and Panthaky-Associated Private Limited is to provide its services free of charge. While functional changes will be made,



Dadachanji and Jejeebhoy

Photo: Hilla Guzder

the trustees hope to retain the building's old-world charm, with old family portraits presently hanging behind dusty filing cabinets being restored and relocated at prominent places.

"We also propose to illuminate the stone facade of our Grade A heritage structure and have approached Airfreight/DHL to be the sponsors," en-

lightens Sir Jamsetjee in his gentle manner. "The Parsi Punchayet, whose offices occupy the third floor, have agreed to remove the row of air-conditioners

jutting out of the windows, which mar the beauty of the facade. Our relations with the Parsi Punchayet are very cordial, they help us and we help them whenever necessary." Explaining that the offices of the Punchayet have been located in the building ever since it was built, as the first baronet was also the chairman of the Punchayet, Sir Jamsetjee states that traditionally it was taken for granted that the baronet

would be the chairman, as indeed the first five baronets were. It was only during the time of the sixth baronet that the tradition was broken due to a technical hitch. Adds future baronet Rustom, "Parsis commonly refer to our building as the Parsi Punchayet building. We hope that by the end of this year we get sufficient publicity to clear this popular misconception."

Rustom delineates plans for the Schools' progress during the 150th year:

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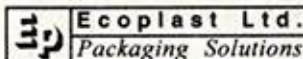
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Though established as a Parsi institution, the Schools in Bombay and Gujarat today have less than 300 Parsi students out of a total strength of 6,500 students. "In spite of the present ratio of Parsi to non-Parsi students being 1:20, we shall continue to retain our identity as a Parsi establishment," declares Rustom. Poor Parsi students pay no tuition fees, they get free uniforms, free text-books, free RTI (Sir Ratan Tata Institute) lunch, etc. The Bhojan Fund was started way back in 1908 and a Milk and Nutritional Fund provides mid-morning milk or biscuits or cheese or chocolates. Religious classes are held for the benefit of Parsi students, and young boys who are navar-maratabs are encouraged to participate in the annual jashans. The Schools turned cosmopolitan in 1957/58 due to the paucity of Parsi students.

The Bombay schools being aided schools, girls in the secondary section study free (up to the third child only). Since last year, education for boys in the secondary section has also been made free, in keeping with the recently introduced government policy of free secondary education for boys as well as girls, according to school sources. Students from standards one to four pay between Rs 15-20. Reasonable 'extras' include computer fees of Rs 30. In the K.G. section, the fees are Rs 100 per

month, states Khurshed Shroff, secretary of the SJJPI, who is himself an ex-student. "I remember I used to travel all the way from Kalyan to Bombay from 1941-52 to attend this School. We used to pay two annas as fees! Both my sisters also studied here and we would be accompanied on our daily train rides by our father who used to work in the Fort area." Shroff continued his ties with the



Three generations: (seated, left to right) Jejeebhoy, grandson Jehangir, Lady Shirinbai, (standing) Delara and Rustom Photo: Chetan Mistry

Institution by joining it as an accountant in 1955. "I am indebted to this Institution. Our association appears to be from the cradle to the grave," he quips.

Shroff also narrates instances of loyalty of other ex-students to their alma mater. Nowroji R. Mistry, an ex-student who had done well for himself and settled in Singapore, was a regular donor. Now deceased, the trustees of his estate still send an annual donation of seven to eight lakh rupees as per his bequest, recounts Shroff. Keki Jokhi of Hong Kong recently made a very handsome donation of over one and a quarter crore of rupees for the R. J. J. School building in Navsari, he adds.

Early years

A detailed chronological account of the SJJPI's early history is to be found in the *Centenary Volume* authored by Jal H. Wadia, ex-principal of the Sir J. J. Boys' High School, as well as in the biography, *Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the First Indian Knight and Baronet*, by Jehangir R. P. Mody. According to the authors, the idea of founding a benevo-

lent institution was mooted as far back as 1842 when Queen Victoria conferred on Jamsetjee a knighthood, bestowed on an Indian for the first time (the baronetcy being conferred in 1857). In June, Sir Jamsetjee's friends and admirers gathered at his residence, Fort House, (much later known as Handloom House which burned down in a devastating fire) to present him a "civic address of congratulations," accompanied by a testimonial of the value of Rs 15,000. This was to constitute a fund to be called, with his permission, the "Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Translation Fund." The objective of this fund was the "translation into Gujarati of books written in European or Asiatic languages, ancient as well as modern, and for distributing the same either gratis or at a low price among the members of the Parsi community in furtherance of their education," observes Wadia.

Delphine Menant's seminal work *The Parsis* also refers to the establishment of the SJJPI. In Volume III, translated from the French by Anthony D. Mango, it is stated, "In offering his thanks, Sir Jamshedji Jijibhai, told them that he wished to combine with this project, another, conceived by him long before, with the objective of coming to the assistance of the poorer members of the community in Bombay, Surat and elsewhere in the Presidency. 'You know,' said he, 'the miserable conditions of life for some of our race, and the hopeless ignorance in which their children are growing up. My wish is to create a fund whose income shall be applied to the assistance of these poor people and to giving them the benefits of education. I propose to invest three hundred thousand rupees in Public Funds, and put them in the hands of trustees, who will use the income generated for the purpose that I have mentioned.'

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details of the schools, stating that by the 1890s there were a total of 23 schools, seven in Bombay and 16 in Gujarat. "The High School of the Institution is among the best known of the presidency High Schools," she states, adding as a testimonial a list of successful candidates from 1864 -1889, together with the positions they occupied!

The Sir J. J. Fort Boys' High School, originally known as the Central English School, was the first to be founded on October 17, 1849 with 200 students, in a building in Bora Bazar Street where Sir Jamsetjee had his "pedhi" or business premises. Later it moved to Churchgate Street (*devalwalo mohallo*, somewhere near Saint Thomas' Cathedral and the present Akbarally's, explains Shroff,) and from there to two houses close to the present site. But the shortage of space made it imperative for the School to have a more spacious building of its own. The present site, where the great fire of Bombay of 1803 is said to have started, was purchased for Rs 58,428 in 1866, according to Mody. The adjoining land with stables, belonging to Jivaji Maneckji Vatcha, was also purchased for Rs 30,256 and a strip of land adjoining the road was

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brought from the government for Rs 5,760 — a grand total of Rs 94,444 for the land alone!

Construction started in 1870, but the foundation stone of the building was officially laid, in the presence of the governor of Bombay, Sir William Fitzgerald and Sir Jamsetjee, second baronet, on February 21, 1871, after the rear portion was partially completed. The *Centenary Volume* reveals that the stone carried inscriptions in English, Gujarati and Pahlavi. In the cavity was placed a glass jar containing a portrait of the founder, the plan of the new building, a history of the Institution, an abridged calendar of *The Times of India*, a Parsi calendar of Yazdegardi 1240, a Gujarati almanac, the *Bombay Gazette*, *The Times of India*, the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and a few coins — a sovereign, a rupee, half rupee, quarter rupee, two anna, one anna, half anna, quarter anna and even a pie! (A fourth floor was added in setback to the original three-storied structure in the early 1940s.)

Two vernacular girls' schools were opened on August 17, 1850, one at Alhaibaug and the other in Fort, in an era where 90 percent of parents were against sending their girls to school,

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states Mody. Added to the task of persuading reluctant parents was the difficulty of finding trained lady teachers! Five years later, another vernacular girls' school was opened at Dhobi Talao. Initially, the subjects taught were arithmetic, language, embroidery and sewing, followed by physical education, 'sanitary science,' with 'household bookkeeping' and English being introduced in 1905. According to Wadia, a matriculation class was opened as late as 1942 in the Girls' school, 78 years after the first lot of boys had appeared for their matriculation!

Presently, the schools encourage a range of curricular and co-curricular activities, including scouts and guides, judo, nutrition (cooking and bakery), school band, Junior Red Cross, Interact Club, etc. "Our girls, though they are not from an affluent section of society, participate and win prizes in inter-school quiz and elocution competitions, dancing and rangoli contests, etc and I am very proud of them," states the present principal of the Girls' School, Hemavati Pal who succeeded Nergesh Bamji when she retired in 1977 after a long innings of 40 years, including a quarter century



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as principal and three years as directress. Pal is presently the convenor of schools, 'A' and 'B' wards, (in charge of liaison between the 55 schools and junior colleges, the Education Department and the SSC Board, including the conduct of SSC examinations), and was honored in 1986 by the Government of Maharashtra with a Best Teacher Award.

Besides the three schools housed in the heritage structure, the SJJPI also runs the Sir J. J. Princess Street Primary School, and the Sir J. J. Parel Primary School which moved into a spacious new building in 1989, explains Shroff.

Schools in Gujarat

The SJJPI had been founded especially for the Parsis of Bombay and western India. By 1864, it had under its protective wing 21 schools and six girls' classes in Surat, Bharuch, Udvada, Navsari, Valsad, Bilimora, Tarapore and Arav. Gradually, however, the smaller units were amalgamated into the larger ones.

"The day-to-day affairs of our outstation schools are managed by local committees, which in Surat comprise mainly of Parsi Panchayat members," reveals

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The Sir J. J. Surat Shahpore Secondary and Higher Secondary School, under principal Noshir Avari, is an aided school up to the twelfth standard with almost 800 students and is situated in a building purchased a couple of years ago at a cost of over Rs 50 lakhs, enlightens Shroff. The Sir J. J. Surat Shahpore Primary School and K.G. classes with almost 2,000 students under headmistress Jayaben Joshi, is unaided and is sorely in need of reconstruction, as it is situated in various dilapidated premises belonging to the Surat Parsi Panchayat. The Sir J. J. Primary schools in Navsari under headmistress Pauruchisti Kadodwala, and in Valsad educate over 1,000 students.

Dolly Desai, principal of sister trust Sett R. J. J. High School in Navsari, is also a recipient of a Best Teacher award from the Government of Gujarat and students of the Sett R. J. J. High Schools in Navsari and Valsad have figured on the merit lists of the SSC and HSC examinations in Gujarat, informs Shroff.



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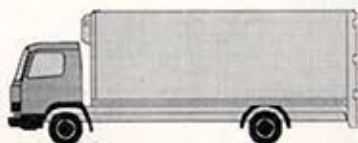
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The present chairman of the SJJPBI, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, who is also the chairman of the Sir J. J. Charity Fund,

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inherited the title in 1968. The sixth baronet had no sons, only daughters, he explains, so the baronetcy passed to the nearest male descendant. "My grandfather was the third son of the second Sir Jamsetjee. My own father died way back in 1947, so the title passed to me," he discloses. A few months before he became baronet his mother passed away, he says, exactly eight days after her flat



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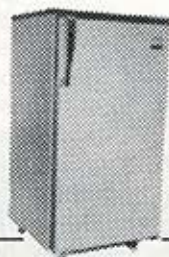
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in White House behind the Taj Mahal Hotel was destroyed in a major fire which started on a lower floor. A neighbor came to her rescue and moved her to safety, but the house was gutted, with many valuable library books, manuscripts, etc being destroyed. "That was very hard on us," he recalls. "When I became baronet, my first thought was, 'How will I be able to manage all this?'"

"Parsis demand charity as a right and there is too much dependence on freebies. No other community provides housing to the extent ours does"

But things have turned out fine with passing years," he opines in his unassuming manner.

Sir Jamsetjee elaborates on the active interest the trust is taking in reviving the Parsi ward at the Sir J. J. Hospital, helped by BPP trustee Silloo Kavarana and others. "Godrej has made a small garden where the elderly patients can sit in the open air. We have at the moment 33 patients, but there is an upper room which has not yet been handed over to us, which has space for a further eight to 10 beds," he informs. Though the Jejeebhoy family is no longer involved in the running of the hospital or the Sir J. J. School of Art, both the institutions have maintained good relations with the founder's family and "we are always invited for major functions," he observes.

Rustom believes that it was Sir Jamsetjee, the first baronet, who was greatly instrumental in introducing the concept of trusteeship into India, much before Mahatma Gandhi did. "The rich hold wealth for the benefit of the poor. There should be total transparency and accountability in handling trust funds. Our trust accounts are fully open to inspection. Trustees should also keep abreast of the times and carry their institution forward in keeping with changing requirements."

Rustom narrates an interesting tale about the building of the various Alhaibaughs by the first baronet. Jamsetjee, he relates, was resting one afternoon out in the open when a *fakir* (sooth-

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sayer) named Alhai passed by. Noticing a peculiar marking on Jamsetjee's feet, the fakir predicted great things for his future. "If what you say is true," replied Jamsetjee, "I will honor your memory by building baugs for the poor." The Alhaibaugs were originally constructed for housing and Rustom mentions that gambhars used to be held up to the 1940s at the lovely stone building that is Bombay's Alhaibaug at Abdul Rehman Street. "The dadgah fire there had burned for over 100 years and had acquired its own sanctity. Four years ago, we shifted this fire to Pune where it received a tremendous response from the Pune Parsis. I remember that as the motorcade carrying the fire, escorted by outriders, arrived in the wee hours of the morning, scores of Parsis were waiting to receive it and accompany it to our Sir J. J. Agiary where it was installed."

The Alhaibaug in Surat is well situated on the prominent Ring Road and the trustees are trying to develop the property by rehousing the original tenants (19 families) by building 60 new flats (on a charitable basis) and commercial premises, continues Rustom. Most of the tenants, he says, are willing

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to move, except the four or five who are adamant. "We have been trying for one and a half years to get them to shift, even offering incentives like geysers, granite kitchen platforms, etc." If the development goes through, the trust will derive a substantial benefit, which will be ploughed back for the benefit of Parsis, he observes. "Unfortunately, Parsis demand charity as a right and there is too much dependence on freebies. No other community provides housing to the extent ours does."

The Sir J. J. Charity Fund also runs agiaries in Navsari, Surat and Pune, dharamshalas in Khandala and Udvada. "The government is seeking to acquire our land in Udvada and we are trying to counteract it by developing the property. We have the plans but unfortunately we do not have the finances," he discloses, disappointment apparent.

High on the current agenda, however, is the enthusiastic planning of the various functions of the year-long sesquicentennial celebrations. "Our minds and bodies may be at other places," muses Rustom, "but our hearts are here with the Sir J. J. Parsee Benevolent Institution."

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MAZDA



FROM DEBATE TO DIALOG *continued from page 50*

Baug would come under its provisions. He suggested the filing of a writ petition if the tax was otherwise applied. Lawyer and PPP president D. Irani argued that the premises would be deemed commercial if the facility is available for use on payment to other communities. In Baroda, where the Pirojsha Godrej Hall is hired out, the Panchayat has concluded that it is better to pay the five percent tax, informed Hakim, adding, "If you don't come to a conclusion fast enough, you might have to pay retrospectively."

In Jamshedpur, the dharamshala hall has been recently renovated after shifting the four men who had been living there to an alternate accommodation. A provision has also been made for availability of Parsi food. They are now worried by the service tax question, said S. Surti. Asked Gandhi, "Does the dharamshala itself become a service institute?" D. Engineer, a solicitor with special expertise in excise law, has invited the anjumans to write to him regarding their individual status.

A query that has repeatedly surfaced at Federation meets concerns Parsi marriages in the mofussil. Pleading ignorance of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, these marriages are normally registered by the officials under the Special Marriage Act, which bars the application of the Indian Succession Act's special provisions for intestate Parsis. When Mhow's Masani raised the issue once more, Patrawala explained that Indian states under local rulers in pre-independence India had not recognized Parsi laws. He now suggested that the Federation and concerned anjumans contact eminent Parsi lawyers and get them to request the

National Commission for Minorities to amend the situation. The Commission could then push it through parliament.

Another contentious legal detail concerns the need for a probate if the will concerning any property is made within the area under a high court jurisdiction like Bombay. Masani, who had been witness to a case where the property was lost to a legal heir for want of a probate, sought action against this legal requirement. Opinion however was divided with D. Irani noting that "a probate only makes sure that some innocent person is not deprived. It ensures the authenticity of the will."

Apart from the National Commission for Minorities, there are state minority commissions in some areas, though not in all states. For example, the Maharashtra Minorities Commission was dissolved by the current government. What rankled some of the delegates was that there was no Zoroastrian representative on some of these state bodies. There is no Parsi member of the Madras Minorities Commission (MMC), said Gandhi adding that, according to the Federation's coopted member Mani Clubwalla, the MMC had volunteered to look after the community there and the Madras Anjuman did not want to lose goodwill by pushing the issue.

Noting that there is a Zoroastrian member on the West Bengal Minorities Commission, Patrawala suggested that the Zoroastrian associations of MP, for example, could together draft a memorandum to chief minister Singh, quoting their total number in the state. He was hopeful that the "educated and liberal" chief minister would act on it, adding that such requests often come in from other communities like the Jains, Bahais and Jews.

Tipsy (above), sniffing for explosives

As an association with an adarian, the Mhow Anjuman enjoys the 80G exemption from income tax on donations. The facility is available to any anjuman which maintains a fire-temple. Masani advised the gathered delegates. In his view Udvada would be eligible under section 10/23/C5 of the IT act.

Defunct anjumans

Although Surat Parsi Panchayat's officer on special duty and the one-man coordinator of the Federation's defunct anjumans project Sorab Katpitia did not attend the Federation meet, he had sent a letter briefly updating the issues at hand which Gandhi read out to the assembly.

The Surendranagar property is now in the Federation's hands. The issue regarding Zoroastrian community property in Ratlam has also been revived. Katpitia and P. Irani of Dahanu together met an old trustee of the Tarapore dokhma property from whom they were able to acquire the bank account number of the trust in an effort to find where the trust is registered and also its registration number. Once these particulars are ascertained, P. Irani will follow up at site.

The documents relating to the Tithal dharamshala premises are now in the possession of Gandhi and Bombay businessman Merwan Irani and they have succeeded in invoking the cooperation of the Bulsar Anjuman. The vast seaside property had nearly been sold for a song to a Jain trust, a deal that had been squelched at the intervention of M. Irani. The issue now lies in the Bombay High Court but in the meantime fresh encroachment is taking place on the now open land.

Matters concerning the Disa anju-



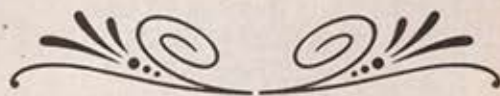
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man property are now being handled by Karanjawalla of Ahmedabad under Katpitia's guidance.

Gandhi urged Federation delegates to establish Parsi ownership, the survey number and other relevant details of defunct anjuman properties that they may be aware of, before the Federation can take on the onus of trying to retrieve them for the community.

Individual anjumans

The general body of the Allahabad Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman meets every quarter, informed its president Capt Homi Dandiwalla. There is no membership fee but its assets are gradually rising. "If we can't get a mobed, I've volunteered to do the geh sarna," Dandiwalla noted.

The 2,200 strong Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet has constructed four flats from the funds donated by the Mhowdawalla Trust, stated Karanjawalla. The Punchayet aids the community through its medical, food grains, education, youth welfare and agricultural funds.

Nine families, of whom five are of mixed marriages, constitute a total Zoroastrian population of 45 in Bhopal. The aramgah (with a bungli) needs a boundary wall, noted its president Dara

Pavri. He spoke of a graveyard and land in Itarsi where no one is left to take care of it.

Though the Borivli Association was not represented at this executive council meet, its secretary Khurshed Pastakia had faxed a letter detailing its activities over the past six months: two religious lectures by Roni Khan and Ervad Nadir Modi and two fun programs — a Shehenshahi Navroze party and the annual moonlit cruise complete with a live band, drinks and dinner on board!

With the incorporation of two trustees under the age of 45, the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Funds now has a total of five trustees, informed Batlivala. The "reasonably small and happy community — everyone is at least on 'sahebji (hello)' terms... lets its hair down on weekends with basketball, cricket and football" but constant emigration is thinning its ranks.

A handsome donation has enabled the DPA to renovate its aramgah and give its agiary a facelift, informed A. Sethna. A new Nowshir Jungalwalla Hall is under construction on their dharamshala campus and the DPA is now on the Internet. There is much

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research on Parsis and their functioning by educational and other institutions like Hamdard. "Parsis could progress and become a very valuable part of society by education, intelligence, honesty and integrity. There is 100 percent literacy — but it's just that. We need intellectual ferment," stressed Sethna and suggested that lectures at Bombay's K. R. Cama Oriental Institute be circulated through the Federation.

Heerjee described the Indore Zoroastrian Anjuman as a small, happy community that "meets on occasions, shows great response at moments of joy and sorrow."

Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman vice president Aspi Irani noted that the Anjuman's Palghar land yields the means for them to support students in Boys' Town, the Parsi founded public school in Nasik, and for other grain, medical and educational help. Its regular liaison with the Iranian consulate had been helpful at the time of the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran, acknowledged Guzder.

The 85-member Jabalpur Parsi Anjuman which includes three families from Katni, received Rs 1,22,000

for earthquake relief plus Rs 56,000 in insurance compensation, announced its president Dolly Bajan. This has enabled them to repair the walls, ceilings and roof tiles of the poor blocks and the dharamshala building. New construction work is to begin in a month's time, he added. Their aramgah is in a bad condition, badly overrun by the scheduled castes living in the vicinity. Also, there is a shopping complex around it. There is no resident mobed since 1993 and just five to six members below the age of 40. The rest are all 70 plus.

The knighting of J. Irani was a big event in Jamshedpur and the Jamshedpur Parsis were ready to receive him at the airport with their *aachoo-michoo* tray, informed S. Surti. He hosted them to a dinner.

Three educational associations have pooled funds but there are "not enough applicants." On the other hand, many educational funds are reluctant to fund new educational streams like computers, hotel management or catering. As one-third of the graves in the aramgah belong to families which have now completely died out, the Jamshedpur association toyed with the idea of building houses there but it was voted down,

she added.

Though Mhow has 97 members on its rolls, only 22 actually reside there as informed Masani, and the majority were in the 70 plus age-group. This has resulted in misuse of properties as they remain unoccupied and dilapidated. The anjuman has decided to file eviction suits against non-resident tenants. Even so there is spare housing available at Mhow, reasonably spacious though old fashioned, and the Anjuman has been inviting Parsis to move over and reside in Mhow which is an hour's drive away from Indore and its satellite towns where jobs are plenty.

Poona is the boom town of the Zoroastrian circuit with its trustees having an upbeat tale to tell. Plans for the construction of 17 buildings of 20 flats each have been passed. Plans for a dharamshala and a clubhouse have also been sanctioned, said D. Irani, and construction is due to begin in three months, thanks to a donor, courtesy Tamboly. "We want to ensure that no Zoroastrian will be able to say that he can't marry because of lack of accommodation," noted D. Irani.

At one of the two dokhmas there were no direct water and electricity

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connections and the approach roads
were also dilapidated, D. Irani described
the scene. Now the total 1.75 kilometer
stretch has been resurfaced with a two
lakh rupee donation from the WZO via
Tamboly and the direct connections
are in place. Their next project is to
renovate the ravan bunglis for which an
additional three lakh rupees have been
arranged from the same source.

With over 125 crores worth of im-
movable property to maintain under
urban land ceiling and trust deeds their
annual income of Rs 4.5 lakhs was
falling very short, said D. Irani. But
thanks to the Incorporated Trustees of
the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of
Hongkong, Canton and Macao, they
have almost doubled their *anaj* (grain)
and medical grants and tripled their
educational help to the community, he
informed the gathering.

When the youthful team of Poona
trustees — now in their second term
barring one who retired and has been
replaced by an even younger N.
Palkhiwala — made all their plans for
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ties, they realized that their constitu-
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maintaining dokhmas or building a dharamshala. The charity commissioner allowed them to amend the constitution accordingly, though it meant some delays to the projects. They even filed suits against five tenants and won, and have accommodated three families so far in the vacated premises, reported D. Irani.

In Ratlam where Parsis have settled since more than a century there are now 48 individuals, said Tehmtan Anklesaria. The financially comfortable community spends mainly on education. They meet on festive occasions and conduct a trip to Udvada along with the Indore Anjuman. T. Anklesaria noted that Gustad Anklesaria is on the Minorities Commission of Ratlam city.

With a budget between Rs 12 and 15 lakhs the Baroda anjuman concentrates on helping the economically deprived. Last year 60 passengers availed of their dharamshala and the Panchayat has acquired a brand new Maruti hearse thanks to a two lakh rupee donation made possible by Tamboly, informed Hakim. The youth wing is bringing out the third edition of their directory. The dokhma has been walled in and their next project is a clubhouse for old and young. It is expected that the Stree Mandal will operate from the clubhouse once it is completed.

Those attending the Federation meeting were: Porus Karanjawalla and Perzid Daruvala from Ahmedabad; Capt Homi and Shireen Dandiwalla from Allahabad; Baman Cama, Dara Hakim, Nauzer Kasad and Rusi Kasad from Baroda; Dara Pavri from Bhopal; Jamshed Guzder, Silloo Kavarana, Dadi Engineer, Dinshaw Tamboly, Behram Laskari, Sheroo Master and Marazban Patrawala from Bombay; H. S. Havaldar from Burhanpur; Nauzer Battivala from Calcutta; Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Dadi Mistry and Keki Gandhi from Delhi; Shiraz Daruwalla, Gulu Sataravala, Dara Unwala, Jasmine Bharucha, Col Cyrus Master, Minoo Engineer, Bomi Heerjee and Dara Unwalla from Indore; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Dolly Bajan from Jabalpur; Eruch and Silloo Surti from Jamshedpur; Ronnie Dick from Jhansi; Phiroze Illava and Behram Masani from Mhow; Dara Irani, Eruch Irani, Sarosh and Navaz Palkhiwala, Boman Irani, Kersi Daruwalla from Poona; Tehmtan Anklesaria from Ratlam; Dinsha Patel

and Homi Palsetia from Saronda and Nauzer Kasad from Surat. Dolly Dastoor, Dinshaw Joshi, Rusi Dalal, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna and Gulo Austin were the special invitees. The Press was represented by *Parsiana*.

A 'learning' community

The contribution of the Parsi community to the building of modern India cannot be summarized in a few words. Its services to society in general and the world at large would also form topics for many research studies. What is however truly remarkable, in my view, is the quiet and unobtrusive manner in which the members of the community have gone about achieving excellence in many spheres of national life.

These days we hear management experts talking about the 'learning organization.' The learning organization is described as one where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new patterns of thinking are nurtured, where



collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. If one goes by this description, one can certainly

describe the Parsi community in India as a 'learning' community which has continuously updated and adjusted its responses to a turbulent world with the poise and confidence of a white-water surfer...

The community has enriched itself by reaching out to the rest of the society and absorbing the best practices from everywhere. When we speak about the contribution of any individual or a community to society at large, we do consider what they have given and what they have taken. The Parsi community can certainly feel proud that they have given much more to the country and society than they have taken from either of them...

I am sure that in a forum of this kind where distinguished members of the community from different parts of the country come together you would, amongst other issues, also be pondering over the many problems that our society faces today. We live in turbu-

lent times and unless men and women of character and conviction stand together holding one another's hand, it would be impossible to stem the tide of corruption, obscurantism, communalism and casteism that is sweeping across our country. At a time when we see that even young men and women are becoming increasingly cynical and helpless, for standing up to these disruptive forces we have to draw sustenance from our collective inner strength. The Parsi community can certainly give us a lead in this too as they have demonstrated time and again that it is not numbers but commitment and inner strength that help us to overcome adversity.

On the welfare front, in education, health-care and in the protection of the environment we need much greater effort and commitment from right-thinking individuals, non-government agencies and community organizations. Earlier, governments — central and state — used to draw up all plans for development and ask for support of community groups and voluntary bodies to implement them. It is however being realized that community action can achieve much more than what government departments and agencies can achieve. It is therefore time that community groups and non-government agencies take the lead in planning and implementing welfare schemes and for the government to play the supporting or facilitating role.

I wish you all success in all your plans and endeavors. I would be only too happy if I could in any manner be of help or assistance in finding solutions to some of the problems that the community could be facing in our state or elsewhere.

(Excerpted from Madhya Pradesh governor Dr Mohamed Shafi Qureshi's address to the executive council meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, February 1, 1998 at Indore)

Know the system, beat the system

"Please have a proper census first. We are the only community of which the National Minorities Commission (NMC) has no exact figure... Data is very important for any government legislation. If you lack information about your community, no one else is interested." Marazban Patrawala, Zoroastrian member of the NMC was highlighting the attitudinal factors that fet-

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ter the community. In addition to data, will and determination and the method we use to overcome our problems were the other factors of consequence, he enumerated.

As far as the census is concerned, a project that has been bogged down for various reasons including lack of funding, Patrawala suggested that the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) employ Zoroastrian youth during the summer vacation to get the ball rolling. "Employ them with a one-page form. Pay them per month or per form... In six weeks 80 percent of data" will be at hand, he stated.

Noting that "to beat the system, you must know what the system is," Patrawala informed the gathering that most minority communities get weeded out of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) at the viva stage and there is not a single Parsi member of parliament or of any legislative assembly to speak up for the community. There is an "inbuilt slant in the UPSC. Scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST) and other backward communities (OBC) have preference (because) we don't count in the system of voting... In the early days merit was the criterion.

*We wish the Parsi Zoroastrian community Jamshedi
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dignity and glory till eternity. Amen.*

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CONCEPT

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Patrawala informed the gathering that the NMC had asked the Government of India to amend the law to enable at least 10 percent of UPSC and national bank selectors to be members of minority communities. Unfortunately the government was dissolved, so the matter rests.

Thanking the BPP for its "great work in housing," Patrawala suggested it now focus on education. Terming it "shameful" that "Parsi boys and girls with 95 percent marks can't get admission," he urged the BPP/Federation to "go within the system and see where you can fit them. Give donations and in return ask for nomination rights for at least 10 years... There

is a five percent quota for NRI donations in educational institutions, especially engineering... There are several rich Parsis abroad. Appoint a senior educationist/administrative officer (we have retired IAS/IPS officers) who can pursue the matter day in and day out. You are only lacking in will, for you have the resources. The Sindhis came to Bombay as migrants. See how many colleges they have built. A Sindhi student gets preference. Parsi boys and girls don't get a position even in the dustbin of the system! Where 50 could come up (with) a little direction, application of mind, only five will!"

He urged the gathering to make a list of all educational institutions started by Parsis. Referring to the Sangli engineering college which had a few reserved seats for Parsis (which had lapsed and now two have been reinstituted) and whence a number of Parsi engineers had graduated, Patrawala noted that 26 of them are in high positions in NASA (the US' National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and elsewhere. He claimed to have taken up the cudgels with the Maharashtra government to restore the four seats for Parsis in the Grant Medical College which were wiped out. In Bangalore there is one seat each in engineering and medicine which were wiped out but some Bangalore Parsis "wrote to me and they

have been reinstituted."

Patrawala pleaded for a chronological list of Zoroastrian educational institutions, adding that the University Grants Commission chairperson Dr Armaity Desai was willing to help but no Parsi educational institution had approached her.

Noting that economic survival was very important, Patrawala announced that the NMC had forced every national bank in the last six months to disperse up to 10 percent of its resources to recognized minority communities, which had been part of Indira Gandhi's 15-point program. When the NMC asked for reports from the banks, it was revealed that three banks have not honored this provision at all. "Among Zoroastrians I want to include everyone professing the Zoroastrian faith... If you feel your application has been brushed aside, feel free to contact me," he told the Federation delegates. "If you bring your problems, I can put them before my colleagues." He noted that the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) can also be approached for loans. (The NMDFC can be reached at Ambedkar Bhawan, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055. Tel: 3555633 and 3555634.)

Holding the "lack of direction in religion" — conflicting issues on tenets and their interpretation — as the reason why many youths are indifferent to the religion and the community, Patrawala reiterated his earlier suggestion made at the Pune meet, to create an apex body of vada dasturs — a council to hand down decisions on the faith. "All Parsis won't like it but (there will be) some finality for the young people" whose confusion is more acute because of websites on the Internet. The plethora of private trusts that manage agiaries and atash behrams and "impose their views on mobeds" added to the confusion. "How do we find a solution, make Zoroastrianism the sheet anchor of young lives?" he asked.

As an example of how the NMC can help, Patrawala related how the Jamshedpur agiary had been penalized by the income tax authorities as a commercial establishment on the basis that the mobed was selling sandalwood and divas. Jamshedpur anjuman and Federation vice president Homi Bodhanwala wrote about it to Patrawala who, thanks to the intercession of the then

finance minister P. Chidambaram, was able to get the necessary exemption for the agiary. The gist of Patrawala's message was, "You have to fight for yourself. If you don't, no one else can fight for you."

"Changing realities"

Declaring that "the future belongs to those who prepare for it today," FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) president Dolly Dastoor said the diasporic Zoroastrian community needs to move away from the defensive focus on survival. It is "important for our psyche to



open to other experiences," build infrastructures and accept that religions reflect the environments in which they live. Different expressions of

the faith are "not right or wrong, just different," she stressed.

Speaking of the people who make up FEZANA as for the most part from India and Pakistan, they nonetheless were a community reflecting "the changing realities of the countries we live in." Developing a concept of Zoroastrians in North America with unique experiences both religious and socio-cultural, Dastoor noted that "(we require) our own brand of solutions." Faced with changing technological cultures, "old solutions do not apply; band aid, ad hoc solutions won't do." Emphasizing the need to be creative, the practising psychologist noted that each settlement needs to be "judged according to the realities."

Chalking the challenges that Zoroastrians face, Dastoor noted the lack of leadership and vision: "We need to decide what we want for ourselves, our children, their children." Create a think tank to set priorities with a "willingness to solve problems based on knowledge," she suggested.

Pressing for an international organization with "vision, mission and mandate," Dastoor noted that Zoroastrians can no longer compartmentalize themselves, that the "talented but individualized people" need a "paradigm shift in consciousness" to take decisions based on Vohu Mana and "create a vibrant international fabric."



INDORE: A CITY OF... continued from page 65

on 5.25 acres of land granted by the Holkar Government (Indore was then a princely state). It had been constructed from generous donations including Rs 3,000 in memory of Dinshawji Nana-bhai Masalawala. A rest house was built by Dinshaw Shapurji and the heirs of Framji Rane had a sagdi built and sanctified in 1897, writes Cama.

Many an Indore Parsi won titles, initially from the Holkars and later from the British. In 1920 Godrej Edulbehran came to Indore and started an automobile business, Noshervan and Company, in the name of his son who later joined him. The business flourished and the name became a local by-word, notes Cama, with Godrej serving as president of the Anjuman from

1949 until his death in 1965. His son Noshervan was then unanimously elected and served for the next 22 years.

Kavas Hall which had been built by Meherwanji Cooverji Dotiwala of Mhow in 1918 in memory of his son and gifted to the Indore Anjuman in 1921 was rebuilt by Godrej Edulbehran and his family at a cost of Rs 60,000 in 1963 and Gool Hall added above it as per the inscription on the commemorative plaque.

Parsi doctors are said to have dominated the Indore medical fraternity for over 40 years — surgeon Dr Sagoo, physician Dr G. Anklesaria, hospital superintendent Dr Dundas, renowned gynecologists Dr Motabai Thanewala and Dr Junglewala, dentist (and long-term secretary of the Indore Anjuman) Dr Sohrab Cama and child special-

1st row: Dar-e-meher entrance and inner precincts; 2nd row: Indore anjuman secretary Minoo Engineer, vice president Dara Unwalla, Shirin Heerjee, Dinoo Master and Gulu Satarawala; Jinnie Pohowalla and grandson; Heerjee (below)

ist Pohowalla were big names in their respective fields.

Among entrepreneurs the Anklesaria family's bicycle showroom is billed as the largest in Siyaganj and is now being run by the third generation of the family. Burjor and Aspi Irani are said to have survived competition from multinationals in their soft drinks business and own an ice factory and fruit juice shop. The Empress Hotel was owned by the Jawrewalas and the Sarosh family owned the Rest House. More recently the Thanewala family has built Hotel President and Restaurant Landmark along with other travel agencies, informs the souvenir write-up.





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Tehmuras Marfatia was a district judge and Jal Patel and Meherjee Thanawala were prominent advocates.

The community's current mascots are Hormuzd, Freyan and Arban Dossabhoy — the triplets who have endowed Indore with new lustre. Born to Thrity and Adil Dossabhoy, the parents' first reaction was one of shock when the results of a sonography was revealed to them, in the fourth month of pregnancy. By the time of delivery Thrity was carrying 15.5 lb of weight (her one rib has been bent in the process, she says) with complete bed rest from the fourth month and the last six weeks spent in hospital. The babies were born by caesarian delivery on Hormuzd *roj* which is why the first arrival was named Hormuzd. Thrity is grateful for all the help she received from Adil and from her own mother.

The babies have different blood groups, say the parents. The eldest Hormuzd is B negative like Adil and the younger two (there is a 13 seconds difference between each) are AB negative like Thrity.

Adil recalls that he had been told to keep 10-15 bottles of blood ready for Thrity. He could arrange for only six but the first bottle caused a reaction and the transfusion was stopped.

The boys have begun to crawl around but the girl Freyan is said to be born "slightly premature" with a depleted sugar level. As for their horoscopes, Adil, who works for Bakelite Hylam looking after heritage surface textures in MP, was happy to note that they would be well-off economically and settle abroad and that the girl and younger boy "will never separate."

The Unwallas, the Camas, the Ilavias, the Engineers, the Masters, the Jalnawallas, the Satarawallas and the Iranis are other families who have contributed to the community, many of them being deeply involved in the hosting of the Federation delegates. A recent addition is Viraf Cooper from Bombay who stays at the Parsi Dharamshala, 80, Usha Ganj, behind the Chawni Police Station, Indore. He has sought to make his career in aviation as a commercial pilot at the M.P. Flying Club Limited in Indore, a training institution approved and subsidized by the government of India. Cooper is keen that other Parsi boys also avail of the facilities and invites prospective trainees to write to him or to the Club at Civil Aerodrome, Indore-Bhopal (MP).

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DANCE

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Rashna Homji and husband
Hong Kong Ballet



Among the heady celebrations for the handover of Hong Kong in June last, was a series of gala performances of a new dance drama, *The Last Emperor* at the 1,800-seat Performing Arts Center in the heart of Hong Kong. Prime movers behind this spectacular production of the Hong Kong Ballet company were classical ballet dancer Rashna Homji and her husband, dancer and artistic director

Stephen Jefferies. The preceding year they had been invited to Hong Kong to take up their latest challenge—to turn the Hong Kong Ballet into a top-notch, international, classical ballet company.

Rashna [daughter of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) founding vice president Homi Homji and Villie of Toronto, Canada] and Stephen moved to Hong Kong in 1996 with their children Lara, 12, and Christopher, 10, following a dancing career spanning over 30 years on the other side of the world, with the Royal Ballet in London. Stephen was appointed artistic director of the government funded Hong Kong Ballet. Rashna is artistic director of the Hong Kong Ballet Group, a collaboration of dance schools in Hong Kong, currently working on a production of *Swan Lake*. She is also guest teacher at the Hong Kong Ballet company, the National Ballet of China in Beijing, the Shanghai Ballet Company and the Academy for the Performing Arts in Hong Kong.

Because her feet were weak and "turned in," Villie Homji had enrolled six-year old daughter Rashna in ballet classes with a British lady in Karachi, Pakistan, where the family lived, and where Rashna was born (in 1951). Rashna showed exceptional promise as a dancer, and quickly passed with hon-

ed by ballet

usband Stephen Jefferies are gearing to turn the into one of the foremost international troupes

Roshan Rivetna

ors a series of examinations with the British Royal Academy of Dancing, in Karachi, greatly helped by Zarine Balsara who took over the ballet school and Rashna's training from the British lady Ms Watson.

In 1962, when Homi was appointed head of the Social Affairs Division for Asia and the Far East with the United Nations (UN), the family moved to Bangkok, and Rashna resumed ballet classes under a French and a Thai teacher.

From Bangkok, with currency exchange restrictions no longer a damper, Rashna could travel to London to realize her dream of auditioning with the British Royal Ballet. Encouraged by past ballet teachers and Royal Academy examiners who all proclaimed she "had the makings of a dancer," Villie and Rashna, now 12, traveled to London.

The audition at the Royal Ballet school was short. Just a half-hour. Of the 25 girls auditioning that day, she was the only one accepted into White Lodge, the residential lower school of the Royal Ballet. "But there are no guarantees," the principal told Villie, "as she grows up, if she becomes too big physically, she may never be a dancer." To prepare for this, the students were all drilled to repeat 10 times a day: "I may be a teacher, not a performer."

But Rashna was a "born performer" as the principal told Villie when Rashna graduated three years later, and was selected to join the exclusive upper school of the Royal Ballet.

At the Royal Ballet, Rashna was the first Eastern woman in the history of the Royal Ballet to be accepted into that prestigious school.

Her first break at a 'real performance' came when she was 18, and still at the

upper school. Two dancers of the Royal Ballet Company were taken ill while on tour in Vienna. With little time to prepare, Rashna and another girl were selected and flown to Vienna overnight to take the sick girls' positions in the corps de ballet. It was a performance of *La Bayadère* at the Vienna Opera House, and a night to remember for Rashna.

Upon graduation she was accepted into the Royal Ballet Company, and her dancing career reached new heights. She played a number of solo and principal roles: in *Les Sylphides*, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Invitation*, *Solitaire*, *Concerto*, *La Fête étrange* and others, performing at the Covent Garden Royal Opera House in London, as well as with the touring Sadler's Wells Ballet Company and in guest performances all over the world.

In 1972, Rashna married dancer Stephen Jefferies, a "shining star of the Royal Ballet." He has been compared to the likes of the legendary Rudolf Nureyev and Merce Cunningham. "Among the Royal Ballet dancers of the 1970s and 1980s," says a Sadler's Wells magazine, "only Stephen Jefferies could be ranked with the legendary artistes of previous generations." After 19 years as principal dancer, 10 of them as senior principal, Stephen became a charter principal in 1993.

In 1976, Rashna and Stephen took a one year sabbatical, and danced with the National Ballet of Canada delighting Canadian audiences, especially all the Parsi friends of the Homjis. She danced the *Pas de Trois* and *Prologue* variations

Homji in The Sleeping Beauty

Photo: Anthony Crickmay

Jefferies in The Prodigal Son



in Rudolf Nureyev's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Shortly thereafter, fate dealt a hard blow that cut Rashna's dancing career short. Just before going to Canada, she had a knee cartilage operation, and had given some thought to giving up dancing, but decided against it. As she was about to rejoin the Royal Ballet after the year in Canada, an accident in class — a kick in the back of the knee — ruptured the cruciate ligament. Unfortunately this was not diagnosed until much later, and she underwent a second cartilage removal operation. But the knee kept swell-

ing, she could not dance, and eventually had to make that difficult decision she had been so hopefully delaying.

But fortune smiled on her once again, and Rashna was invited to fill a vacancy in the post of ballet administrator for the Royal Ballet School. Her association with the Royal Ballet since childhood, and a wealth of experience — running a theatrical agency, a beauty therapy course, a business and book-keeping course, and teaching (at Arts Educational Schools as well

as guest teaching at the Royal Ballet School) — had made her eminently suitable for this position, which she held until their move to Hong Kong.

As for their new challenge in Hong Kong, it has all the makings of a great love affair. Stephen Jefferies is viewed as the "man for the job" as the Hong Kong Ballet is poised to reach new peaks as one of the foremost classical ballet companies in Asia.

(Reprinted with permission from FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997.)



Homji (inset) Photo: Anthony Crickmay and (below, far right) in a performance of the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden Royal Opera House in London Photo: Roland Bond



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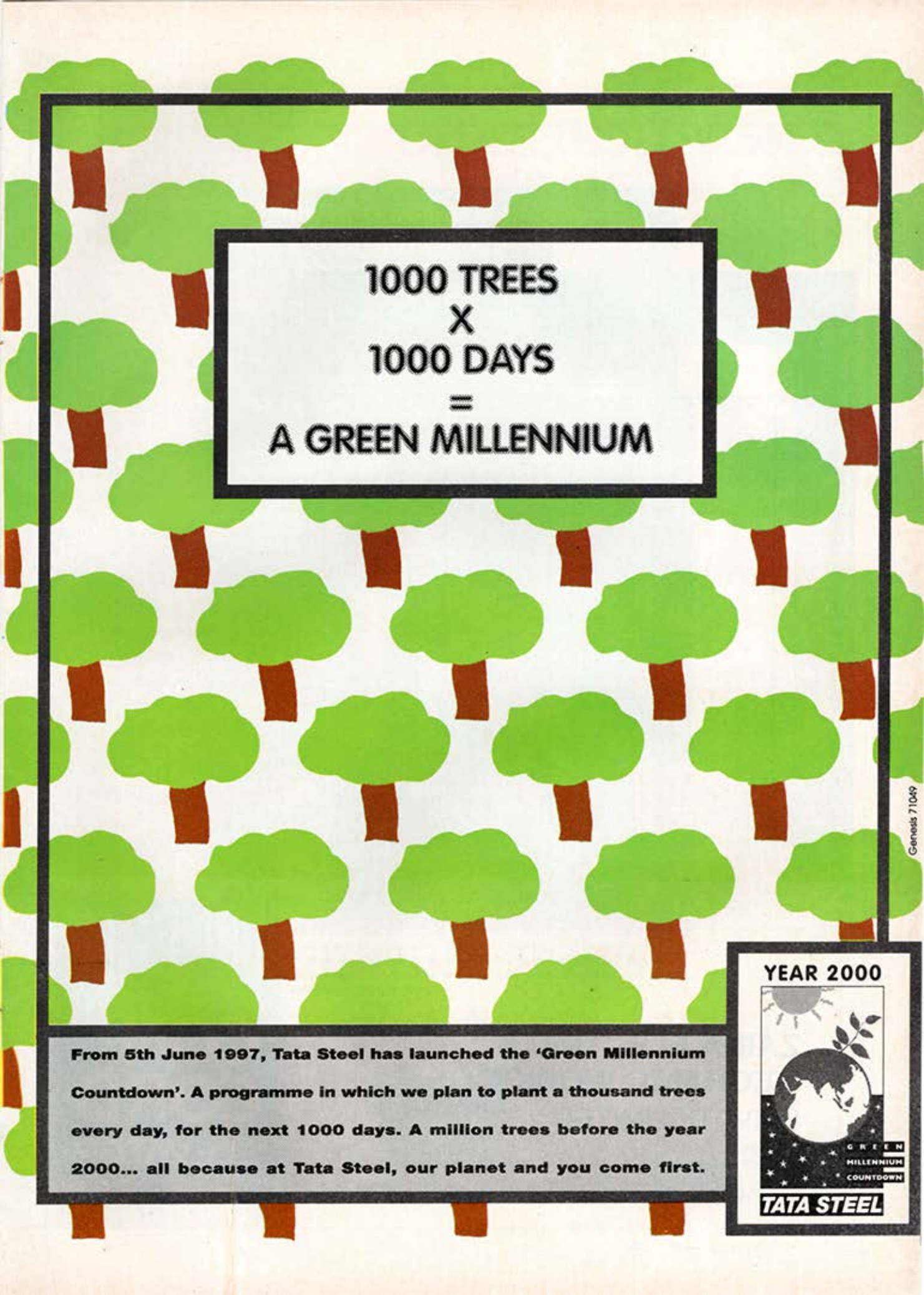
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seven or 12 kinds of edible greens were planted: peas, wheat, lentils, barley, millet, beans and rice or sesame seeds, corn, broad beans, green beans and kidney beans on top of 12 mud columns that had been built in front of the Shahanshah's palace. Whichever grew the best was in turn chosen for next year's harvest.

Before March 21, the entire house needs to be cleaned thoroughly; all unwanted items to be given away or thrown out; and new clothes, including a kusti, should be bought for Norooz, as also presents!

Panjahe (mokdad ceremony) jashan is held five days before March 21, when we are entreated to pray to our dead.

On the last Wednesday of the year, that would be the night of Tuesday, bonfires are set (for the returning of the fravashis). This night is called '*Chahr-shambah Suri*' meaning 'Red Wednesday' or, as was known in ancient times, as 'Jashan Suri,' meaning 'fire celebration.'

Before the bright, fiery night begins, the young disguise themselves and start knocking on neighbors' doors, carrying with them an empty bowl that they ask to be filled. Most households prepare for the banging on their door by buying walnuts, pistachios, dates, raisins, hazelnuts, dried apricots, fresh and dried figs, dried nectarines, peanuts and Persian delights which they can offer. Also offered are chocolates or homemade pastries and sweets including coins, embedded within the mix. This sweet and nutritious bowl is called 'ajeel.'

The young make their presence known by making an announcement in the form of a song proclaiming that today is the night of *Chahr-shambah Suri* with the New Year following soon thereafter. The household would offer their delights to the excited youngsters in return. Bonfires are lit on rooftops, or mostly in gardens, streets or in especially allocated areas in the city where a large number of people gather to enjoy the celebrations. These sites have a huge bonfire blazing to a height of more than 20 feet. Beside the main bonfire would be set small ones, so that each person is capable of jumping over the fire for joy, while singing in praise of the fire. (The young and the old must jump over the fire if they seek to fulfil their wish. The flames destroy all evil spirits from the body). The bowl of 'ajeel' which has been filled, is now passed around the fire and the goodies

eaten. Towards the end of the celebration each person prays while offering to the fire some 'efsand' (i.e. wild rue dried seeds) which have been held in one's right hand, while praying for evil to be destroyed and separated from you by the fire and all good to be given to you from the fire (which must not be breathed upon). Likewise, burning embers are brought into the house and



Carpet depicting Persian court scene

circulated to bring health, warmth, blessings and to remove evil from the house.

The fire which is lit from all rooftops in Iran was meant to guide the fravashis home. The dancing and singing is to show our happiness to our ancestors, that we have not forgotten the teachings of our past. They too join in our happiness and achievements of the past year before returning to Ahura Mazda in a blaze of glory. The ashes must be later scattered away from the house.

On New Year's eve a light must burn in every room in the house, while the Haft Sheen table is laid. To start with one should have a circular table, preferably wooden (circle represents the sun and the never ending cycle of life.) This table needs to be placed in a prime position within the house, so that when visitors come to visit during the Norooz period, they have the chance to see the beauty of your table. Also it needs to be in a place that can be kept untouched for six days (minimum), or 13 days (maximum).

The cloth that is to adorn your table and would be the foundation of the Haft Sheen table, needs to be white, because it is the sign of purity in the Mazdayasni

religion. The white additionally serves as a good contrast for the flowers and motifs decorations that will be placed on the table.

On the table should be placed: the holy *Avesta* (for prayers and reminder of the greatest gift from Ahura Mazda); *Shah Namah* of the immortal Firdaosi Toosi (reminder of the greatness of our ancestors); picture of our holy prophet, Zarathushtra (signifying our honor and respect for our greatest teacher in life); photo of Mount Damavand, because for us Aryans it is a sacred mountain and the place where Shah Fraydon sought victory over Zohak and brought freedom and happiness to Iran, also where the holy *Avesta* and the great works of the Aryans is kept forever; three candles (representing the holy light and advocating good thoughts, good words, good deeds); flag of Iran (*Darafsh-e-Kavayane* or Shah's flag, green, white and red with the lion and sun in the center. This has been the national flag of Iran for 1,000 years); mirror (reflection of happiness and one's beauty, and the never ending world) to reflect the light from the burning candles; home-made bread (sign of plenty); clear water (symbol of Anahita) with a leaf placed in it, such as a pomegranate leaf (fruit of paradise). Also water in a clear see-through vase with three goldfish placed in it (representation of life and freshness); coin, preferably golden and Sasanian that would have a holy fire altar on one side and the image of Shahanshah Yazdegird Shahriar, light of lights, on the other. Today some also use the Pahlavi coin, which has the Shahanshah Aryamehr's head on one side and the lion and sun on the other (representation of wealth and king's order).

Only seven items are necessary to represent the seven Ameshaspands. The seven *sheen/seen* recommended are: *sheer/milk*=life; *sharab/wine*=prosperity; *shakar/sugar*=happiness; *shaaml/candle*=light; *somagh/sumac*=birth; *seeb/apple*=health; *sonbol/hyacinth*=beauty. If some of the above cannot be found you can also use: *serkeh/vinegar*, *samanou/a* sweet porridge made from germinated wheat, *seer/garlic*, *sabzi(shesha)* (edible) vegetables, *senjed/dried lotus fruit*, *sekeh/coin*, *sheriny/pastries*, *shabool/wall flower*, *shelolajujube*, *sheshal/glass*. The amount of each item depends on the size of your table. (Today a mixture of the *sheens* and *seens* is used. It is important that the

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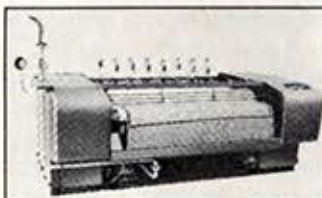
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beginning of the items relate to the word 'Shady' in Iranian, which means happiness.)

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The table should contain: seven fruits, seven vegetables, seven sweets, which add up to 21, signifying the 21 volumes of the holy *Avesta*.

Boiled eggs, (sign of birth) decorated usually by the children, also adorn the table. The designs include three colors of the Iranian flag, floral designs, painted scenes of Iran such as Damavand, Cyrus the Great's tomb, Takht-e-Jamsheed. Some make the egg into an image of a king by placing a cardboard cut crown on it with a small base to hold it in place. It is customary for each family member to decorate an egg. A form of competition is set in the family to see who comes up with the best design. A flask of rosewater on the table invariably greets the guests.

Some may not be financially capable of laying a Haft Sheen table. Others may not do so for personal reasons such as the passing away of a loved one. They should still share this occasion and event by visiting friends or relatives.

The national anthem should be played to herald Norooz (song about the glory of Iran). The exact time of the vernal equinox would be known by the sounding of cannons, TV/radio broadcasts or from calendars and newspapers. All the family is seated around the beautiful table. On the precise moment that Norooz arrives the young especially keep an eye on the bowl of water as it is said that at this time the leaf or the goldfish will start moving when the sacred bull who has got tired after a long year supporting the earth on his horn, uses his other horn to support the world.

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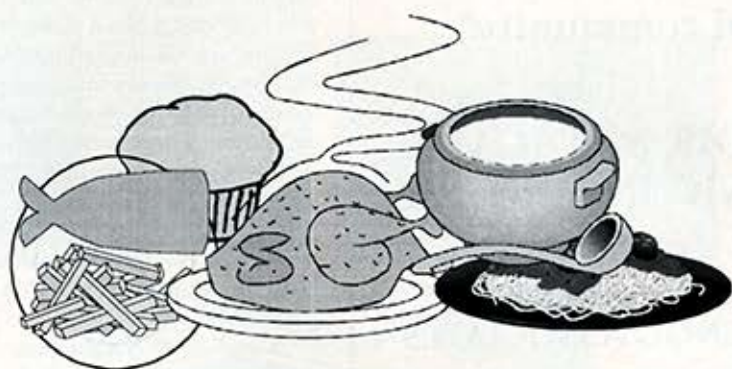
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The older members of the family greet the kids and each other with kisses and the offering of sugar, sweets and new bank notes and coins and presents to the youngsters.

Reading from the holy *Avesta*, tying a new kusti, burning the old in a silver bowl and burying its remains in the garden are the religious rituals observed.

According to mythology, the two important characters of Norooz, who bring joy and laughter to the young and old are: Hajji Firuz/Phiroz, welcomer of the New Year, who entertains the masses. He's young, joyful and vibrant, wears all red with a red cap and a black painted face and carries a tambourine, singing and dancing, telling jokes. Amou Norooz is the bringer of gifts and Norooz messages. He's old, wise and father-like, wears a white hat, floral patterned clothes, long white beard, and carries a sack or bag full of presents for the kids.

In the Pahlavi period (1925-1979), special troupes of singers carrying torchlights would move throughout the provinces of Iran, singing special songs a month before the coming of Norooz to inform the people of the approach of Norooz. (Under the Pahlavi regime a revival of all Zarathushtrian customs took place.)

A traditional Norooz meal constitutes: *sabzi polow mahi*, *sabzi polow* which is rice and vegetables eaten with white fish. This meal is symbolic of bounty (rice), growth (vegetables), and freshness (fish). Of course many other dishes are prepared, but what is essential for the table and must be eaten is *sabzi polow*. Fresh herbs, such as coriander, dil weed, parsley and chives in equal amount are chopped finely and then cooked with the rice. The fish should be white (*mahi-e-safid*), grey mullet being first choice, or herring, haddock or cod.

Norooz lasts for 12 days, and on the 13th day (April 2) which is known as *Seezdah Badar*, everyone must leave the

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house and throw the trays of green which they had grown into running water (river, stream or in a lake). To stay indoors is considered bad luck.

Visits to parks and countryside are made with friends and relatives and a picnic basket that should last for the whole day is packed. Iranian dishes that each family has made with fruits, cakes and drinks are shared and there is singing and dancing and playing of games.

Young girls sing: "The 13th day outside for good cheer/ Before another year/It will bring a husband dear/And a child in my arms." The girls tie blades of grass into knots and make a wish they would like fulfilled in the coming year. This symbolizes unity and joining of the male and female in life.

Edited excerpts from a passage readied by the author for his book Aryana.

Takht-e-Jamsheed

Takht-e-Jamsheed was no ordinary capital. It was the heart of the Achaemenian empire and its main use was for the celebrations of Norooz, when not only Iranians but people from other provinces of the empire joined in the celebrations and brought gifts to the King of Iran. In the past Takht-e-Jamsheed played a role as a symbol of unity and was, as is Norooz, a cultural bonding of the Achaemenians to their past heritage.

Takht-e-Jamsheed, when translated into English literally means the 'Seat of Jamsheed,' while 'Perseptolis,' a Greek word which the West has adopted when referring to the site, means in English 'destroyer of cities,' a deliberate mistranslation from the poet Aeschylus. (From that name has come Persepolis, a corruption of the Greek by which the Palace has

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commonly, though incorrectly, been known ever since.) Therefore it is not only a wrong name for the palaces of Darius, Xerxes and other kings of Iran but an insult to the history of Iran and the site.

It was Alexander who set out to destroy Takht-e-Jamsheed and its splendor and greatness. By its destruction the people of Iran did not lose faith or hope and most certainly did not lose their identity. Even in its ruined state it holds its greatness. It took 164 years for its construction, yet no slaves were used in building it. No other empire in the world can lay claim to this very important fact.

It was Shahanshah Aryamehr who after 1,320 years reminded the people of Iran and the world of the greatness of its culture, civilization and contribution. The 1971 celebration of the Iranian empire on the ruins of Takht-e-Jamsheed could be considered one of the greatest historical events of the 20th century. From the ashes that Alexander had left behind once again the immortal armies of Iran arose in their full splendor and glory for the world to see.

Alexander set out to destroy it, but in his very actions he preserved it, as its ashes kept the stone intact from natural erosion. Today we see that even though no one attacked Alexander's palace, yet nothing remains of it. This is a lesson in history, those who set out to destroy will in time destroy themselves.

Today in Iran and abroad Takht-e-Jamsheed has become a symbol of freedom and the revival of Iran. Its very stones give pride to us Iranians and put fear in the hearts of our enemies. Yet it should not be forgotten that Takht-e-Jamsheed is in ruins and needs to be reconstructed. Only then can justice be given to its true glory.

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Beauty and the Book

After a rewarding career as a model and actress, Persis Khambatta chronicles the success of former Miss Indias in her book *Pride of India*

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"Money is not everything. Success is also not everything," Persis Khambatta who has "gone round the circle of success in life," shares the lessons she has learnt in the course of her progress from being a Miss India winner to an international model to a star in over a dozen films to authoring *Pride of India*, her latest venture. "When you are successful, everyone is with you. When you are at a low period, they are too busy. I think life is much more than that," she adds.

This impressive glossy book she views as "an achievement, more than any film career." It chronicles almost four decades of Indian beauties highlighting "the achievements and struggles of Miss Indias and will be an inspiration for the women of tomorrow," reads the blurb on the back cover. The nine months of sweat and commitment that went into the research and compiling of this 228-page opus published by Parijat Media Limited may be regarded as her "gift to India." Priced at Rs 1,495, Khambatta insists, "I didn't do this book to make money. Nothing from this book will go into my pocket; no royalties."

The proceeds of this book are to be directed to the Missionaries of Charity and in fact this work is dedicated to Mother Teresa whom Khambatta considers "the most beautiful woman. There is not one Indian who has given love the way she as a foreigner did. Who's touched a child with leprosy?" wonders Khambatta, impressed that Mother was carrying on extensive social work without new communication tools like a fax machine. And considering that the win-

ners at national and international beauty pageants invariably refer to Mother Teresa's dedication, Khambatta feels she is giving them a chance to support the missionary work by increasing the sales of the book.

At the launch of this coffee-table



Khambatta (holding the book) flanked by former Miss Indias

book on October 8, 1997 at the Taj, all the 60 advance copies were sold for Rs 5,000 each. The former Miss Indias in attendance at the function were made to sign the copies wearing gloves specially provided for the occasion, she recalls. Thereafter Khambatta says she has kept no tabs on the sales figures. "I am not a marketing person. I only wanted 100 percent creative rights." From the designing of the cover to selection of photos to the layout of every page, she wanted the last word. "I didn't want any gaudiness but a book which people would be proud to have. Quality is important," she maintains and is happy that the designing of the book won a CAG (Communication Arts Guild) award in February 1998.

It must be a record of sorts that three

people from the same community bagged the Miss India title for three consecutive years in the '60s. Meher Mistry (Castelino) won the crown in 1964, Khambatta in 1965 and Yasmin Daji (Nanavati) in 1966, also qualifying as Miss Universe, third runner-up. It

was two decades later that Mehr Jesia (Rampal) won the Miss India title in 1986. In 1972, Pheroza Cooper (Modi) was the runner-up for the Bharat Sundari title, a pageant initiated by *Femina* whose winners represented India at the Miss World contest.

By earmarking the proceeds for the Missionaries of Charity, it is not that she intended to deprive the Parsi community of any generosity,

clarifies Khambatta who is very proud of the fact that she is a Parsi. It was her great grandfather Ratanji Faramji Sethna who instilled in her as a child the necessity to reserve 10 percent of one's earnings for charity. After all you give 10 percent as agency commission, to business managers, to lawyers, why not then to charity, she reasons. Material things never mattered to her, she states, citing that if someone needed her fur coat, she would unhesitatingly part with it. Raising \$50,000 for the victims of the Latur earthquake, and serving as chairperson of The Community of Living Foundation, Iowa were some of the other social causes with which she was associated.

She is perturbed therefore that the new generation in the community is only yearning for "money-money... Where are the likes of the older generation, what they did, what they stood for?"

Jamvaa Chaalo Jee !



Navroze Mubarak !

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Top (from left) Cooper (Modi), Mistry (Castelino)

Photo: Jeetendra Arya and Khambatta

Below (from left) Daji (Nanavati)

Photo: Femina and Jesia (Rampal)

Photo: Homyar Mistry, Homz Prints

There used to be so much goodness, kindness, honesty. Now we seem to be more into car shows and horse shows. Maybe I am wrong."

As a kid, Khambatta wanted to be an airhostess so that she could travel around the world. In a picturesque style she writes in the book, "I was blessed to blossom in India's garden of beauty and

venture through the paradise of this world." She had studied at Bombay's Villa Theresa and Walsingham Schools before modelling became an all-time consuming affair. Among the significant landmarks in Khambatta's early life have been her crowning as Film Princess in 1963 by Raj Kapoor, as Miss Angel Face (equivalent of Miss Bom-

bay) in 1965 before she won the Miss India title; receiving the Press Award for the Best Newcomer of the Year for her role in K. A. Abbas' film *Bombay Raat ki Bahonmein*. She also had an opportunity to model for one of Pierre Cardin's shows in Bombay in the late '60s.

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two assignments to come her way were fashion shows for Fortnum and Mason, and Simpsons. Her international acting career started with the English movie, *The Wilby Conspiracy* opposite Sidney Poitier and Michael Caine. Then followed others like *Conduct Unbecoming* with Sir Richard Attenborough and Michael York, *Star Trek — 'The Motion Picture'*, *Night Hawks*, *Mega Force*. She was also invited as guest for the TV shows hosted by Johnny Carson, Phil Donahue, Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas. She enjoys the distinction of being the first Indian to present an Academy Award in 1982 and featuring in Blackwell's Best Dressed list for the same year, her achievements have been enumerated in the book.

In the course of her rise to success, there have been times when she has had to live on a bag of potatoes for a week. "If today I can eat at the best places in the world it's because I've worked hard for it," mentions Khambatta.

Not surprisingly, some of her associates like to label her as "Persis-tent." Yet another take off on her name was "Purrsis" that she adopted during the *Star Trek* days. When friends stroked her bald head, she would teasingly purr like a pussycat.

"Persis is like a legend," she remembers being hailed. "And when you put on a little weight, nobody recognizes you," she regrets. "I haven't changed. I am the same kind, humble person. Among the known Parsis abroad, no one mentions me. Shouldn't my community respect me?" she asks rhetorically.

When she was abroad, she had read the scriptures of different religions and several books on philosophy and self-improvement. That is when she realized that she did not need to be "a martyr and a victim. I'm fine the way I am. I don't have to carry others' burden on my shoulders. God has made me what I am and He's made us all perfect."

Her relationship with God has been a one-to-one interaction since childhood, she recalls. Her parents being divorced when she was but two years old, God has played the role of a father-figure in her life with whom she shares her innermost thoughts and fears. Endeavoring to give up her cigarette smoking she says she playfully chides God for not giving her sufficient help,

firmly believing that "everything happens as per His will. I used to believe in my will. I have mellowed since," she confesses.

As a child, she was brought up by her mother Jeroo to respect all religions. On different days of the week she and her older brother Dinshi would be taken to different shrines. This influence remained with her even when she had settled abroad and invariably on her trips to Bombay she would reserve one day to visit all these shrines wearing trinkets round her neck depicting the emblems of various faiths. In fact, her



Khambatta: "live by my values"

mother was at a temple on the day of the Miss India contest in 1965 when a flower fell on her, instinctively convincing her that it would bring glad tidings for her 16-year-old daughter. Over the years, Khambatta has enjoyed the experiences of Muktananda's meditation and presently frequents the Christian Science church where 90 percent of the congregation must be Parsis, she discloses. Having ceased to wear the sudreh and kusti since her modelling days, Khambatta is shocked to see the self-proclaimed religious type having no qualms about using abusive language even on their way to the temple. "I'd rather do good deeds," she says believing that Zarathushtra's message of good thoughts, good words and good deeds is "the only truth."

Content with her single status, Khambatta is convinced, "Only God's love is unconditional. Human love being conditional, I don't think it would let me grow as a flower. It would suffocate,

crush..." Having witnessed the lies and dual standards in relationships she maintains, "I like to live by my values, principles which I think are right." She is particularly wary of people with little integrity and ethics, of those who demean their inferiors, stripping them of their dignity.

A community that is known to be "educated, generous and sophisticated, Parsis do have 'class,'" she has observed. Maybe it is because "of assimilation during the British raj; money cannot buy class," she points out. Another striking feature she has noticed is "Parsis getting stubborn with age (in contrast to) others you see mellowing with age." Just because a Parsi woman marries a non-Parsi how can she cease to be considered a member of the community, wonders Khambatta who finds this man-made law on religion "ridiculous."

Nepean Sea Road, where she resides, used to once belong to Parsis and was considered one of the most elite localities, she relates. In contrast, in close proximity to her now are the nouveau riche whose lifestyle she finds appalling. Having returned to India after 30 years abroad Khambatta is little able to empathize with their indiscipline, their noisiness, their litter, giving animated accounts of how these same citizens who show little consideration for their neighbors can be so well behaved when they are touring overseas. "If just once a year each one of us could come out of the house and clean the street where we live, the world would be a cleaner place," she is convinced.

"Only when there is quietness can your mind create," she emphasizes and refers to the disorientation she has experienced when walking out of a discotheque blaring jarring music. "Life is a school. The hardest lesson to learn was forgiving — to forgive yourself and to forgive others..."

"I am proud of being an Indian, how can I make India proud of me?" has been the goading factor for Khambatta. "People like me should get into politics," she laughs. Would she have liked to contest for a seat? "Nobody is backing me, yaar," she states before continuing on a more serious note, "Every Indian should vote. When they don't, they are responsible for what they get." There is no solution since "nobody wants to change." The remedy she prescribes is, "Each one should change one's self and there'll be improvement."

A family ritual

Khusro F. Rustamji

Religion and History of the Parsees by Meherbanoo Kekobad Marker. Published in 1997 by the author. The book is available from Toxy Cowasjee, 2 A, Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530. Pp: 170. Price: US \$ 20 or Canadian \$ 25.

I was first attracted to this book by the cover and the print, and was glad to see that it has been printed in Pakistan. Secondly, I liked the idea of the grandma teaching religion to her family; and what a learned family it turned out to be. It is a ritual in every family of the mother talking to her children about the elements of the faith and laying stress on truth. Those tender teachings seem to last the longest, and those angry eyes "juthu bolékh ké (are you telling lies)" appear again and again whenever we try to stray from the truth.

Meherbanoo Kekobad Marker, a noted social worker of Karachi, has enunciated the elements of our faith in a simple and direct form.

The chapters on the life of the Prophet give information in a simple way on his birth and teachings. Those who criticize rituals will find it interesting to learn their origin, and the reason for following them in our life.

The author gives a summary of Zoroastrian history and tells us about the time when Zarathushtra appeared and began to emphasize the faith in one God. Various Persian dynasties appeared and passed into history. Names like Hoshang, Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes and their deeds show why the Persian Empire was able to last for thousands of years. We learn from the book that there are several colonies of Zoroastrians in Yazd, Kerman, Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz.

The chapter on the Parsees in India gives some idea of the courage behind that great adventure of leaving Persia to escape from persecution. It shows the diplomacy with which our ancestors settled down and were accepted by the people of India.

There are various other items of information such as the composition of the fire in atash behrams, the training of priests and the glorious contribution of the poet Firdausi to our faith.

In this day and age when every person is keen to understand the laws of nature, we must lay more stress on the pristine teachings of Zarathushtra which have remained unchanged in the *Gathas* for 4,000 years, and have protected us in persecution, and refreshed us in migrations wherever we have gone.

I wish Marker had tried to encourage modern thinking on the origin of the earth and the development of man. Today's young are not as uneducated as we were. They are on the Internet, watch the Discovery channel,

have bolted down in their minds features of biology, and protection of the environment on which there is emphasis in the Zoroastrian religion. Any conflict between religion and science today arises from the fact that there have been accretions to the pristine words of the Prophet. What Zarathushtra has said in the *Gathas* is inscribed on the tablets of eternity. What has crept into the faith are many interpretations which were suitable for the times but are not in step with today's reality, and are now out of date. Many have turned away from religion because of that. The true faith is the path of *asha* in conformity with the injunction to think right and act nobly. In fact, *asha* also requires a spirit of scientific inquiry. Perhaps the most important element of our faith is the insistence of Zarathushtra on all matters being judged individually by each person, which emphasizes responsibility, and brings out why it is the religion of consequences.

John R. Hinnells says, "A religion which has lasted twice as long as Christianity will obviously have changed in the course of history. If a religion is to be meaningful to its followers then it must change to some extent. In order to meet

the different needs of farmers on the Asian steppes in ancient times; of educated, cultured Sasanians, of oppressed Iranian villagers and of city-dwelling Parsis, Zoroastrianism has had to adapt and change."

I hope this book will inspire us to know more about the Zoroastrian faith. They say a little knowledge of God takes you away from Him; a deeper knowledge brings you closer to Him.

Be brave and pray

Hutokhshi P. Cooper

Faridoon Conquers Zohak from the Shah Nameh of Firdausi with Spiritual Interpretations compiled by Silloo Mehta. Published in 1997 by The Mazdayasni Connection, 9528 Walker Street #5, Cypress, California 90630, USA. Pp: 48. Price: not mentioned.

That the Mazdayasni religion originated in antiquity and preceded Zoroaster is the first lesson that was brought home to my seven-year-old son Malcolm when he started reading *Faridoon Conquers Zohak*.

The book narrates one of the tales of the *Shah Nameh* of Firdausi and is based on Ervad Kaikhushroo N. Dastur's stories in *Parsi Pukar*. It is illustrated with imaginative sketches of life in the yonder world of ancient Persia by Dr Homai Kasad. The graphic arts and cover design by Firoze (Phil) Dinsha Avari are reminiscent of the designs and archetypical images that adorn our books, agiaries, homes and *sésés*.

The story of Zohak is not for the faint-hearted. Reading it, one realizes that greed, gore and conflict were potent story ingredients even thousands of years ago. So were heroes with supernatural powers. This story has Zohak murdering his father to ascend his throne. The son's corruption then grows, epitomized by the growing snakes on his shoulders. These snakes have to be daily fed on human brains.

Then comes the spiritually mighty Kaveh who has lost his sons' lives to Zohak and his snakes. The fight between good and evil begins, promising to keep children rooting for the simple, materially poor but spiritually rich, good guys. The blacksmith Kaveh Ahangar, Faridoon and his mother Faranak, and the holy men and sages in the country lead the good citizens in a mighty battle



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and snatch power from the evil, cruel and corrupt King Zohak and crown Faridoon as the rightful king.

The anxiety that may be felt initially by some children is calmed and gradually surpassed by the reverential awe inspired by the simple but powerful Kaveh as well as Faridoon. Faridoon carries the mighty cow mace, a weapon made celestial by his offering of prayers to Ahura Mazda. The prayers strike terror and destruction in the evil camp. The image of Kaveh carrying his rustic but

then from God-fearing astrologers who interpret the dream for him.

Faridoon, Faranak, the holy cow Poormaye and the wise old men aiding the cause of good epitomize spiritual power as perceived in ancient times. The hand of Ahura Mazda moves smoothly through it all, promoting good in society, rewarding the just and punishing the corrupt.

It moves palpably and powerfully when it stops a stone from rolling down the mountain and striking Faridoon. It

glowing leather flag is apt to stay with a child for a long time. The sweet-tongued, evil Iblis (the very devil himself), is a warning to man not to fall for flattery and hanker after seductive worldly power and someone else's wealth. Yet even the evil Zohak gets an ill-deserved warning, first from God in the form of a dream,

reduces the depth of a mighty river so that good men can cross it by foot, and it destroys an evil ring of magic spells around Zohak's palace. Ahura Mazda's power, it is suggested, can be harnessed for the greater good if righteousness is combined with prayer, meditation and belief in one's convictions.

The process of conquering Zohak is important in demonstrating the efficacy of the yazads (especially Sarosh Yazad), the nirangs of the Mazdayasni religion and the importance of living a righteous life. Patience as a virtue also emerges, as it took what seemed like a lifetime of struggle and sacrifice for the holy Faranak to see her son Faridoon crowned king.

As compiler Silloo Mehta says in one of the interpretations that intersperse the tale, "The story of Zohak is more than 10,000 years old. Therefore, we do not have to think of it in terms of our times... Zohak was the king who was nourished by... evil beings. To fight him, special weapons were required. They were not like atomic bombs or hydrogen bombs. They had in them special kinds of energy — spiritual energy. These weapons in turn released energies and forces which could combat the forces and energies

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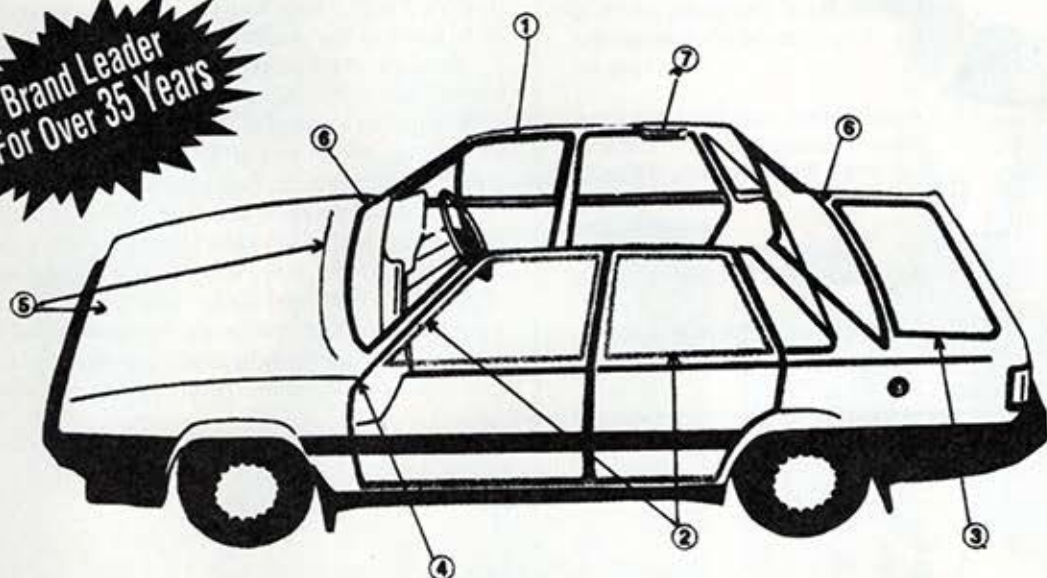
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THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES



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:

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

Fareedoon and Burjor Sandalwood Shop, Princess Street, Bombay 400002.

Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Bombay 400001.

made by Satan and his evil beings."

Pruned from the tale, prudently, are some parts concerning the complicated relationship of old King Jamshid's sisters Arnavaz and Shehr-i-naz with Zohak, as told in the original *Shah Nameh*. These would have been difficult for young readers to grasp.

The poetic beauty of the *Shah Nameh* is exchanged for prose in this version for children. Yet, Mehta ably captures the dramatic content and religious fervor of the day with its strong supernatural and esoteric beliefs in good and bad magic, the efficacy of prayer and meditation and the prophetic potency of dreams.

The struggle to live righteously is given epic proportions, for the evil within and without man is hard to overcome completely. "Even today Zohak exists underground (in our unconscious psyche)... licking thin, every night, the chains that bind him... only to have the daylight (reason) thicken them again at the crack of dawn."

Throughout the story, Mehta advances her position on the importance of praying in the original language (which may be questioned by some of the younger generation), as well as the concepts of the power of nirangs and of developing a telepathic relationship, as Faridoon did, with a spiritual master.

Mehta's convictions about the above as well as about the Mazdayasni faith are evident throughout in her treatment of the *Shah Nameh* story. It is a book that can be digested by children about seven years and above. The graphic nature of the evil depicted here makes me hesitate to recommend it for younger readers. It can definitely be used for older age groups to promote discussion on the esoteric parts of the Mazdayasni faith.

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Backing yoga

Dina Mehta

Yoga For Back and Joint Disorders by Hansa Jayadeva Yogendra and Armaiti Neriosang Desai. Published in 1997 by Dr Jayadeva Yogendra for The Yoga Institute, Prabhat Colony, Santacruz (East), Bombay 400055. Pp: 187. Price: Rs 300.

Do you slump in your chair when you work at the computer? Slouch over the files and ledgers on your desk? When you stand do you look like an ungainly question mark with rounded shoulders (the Dowager's hump it's called when acquired by the female of the species) and protruding stomach?

Such undesirable postures over a period of time tell on our muscles and bones and are often the cause of degeneration of the spine, stiffness of the joints and other orthopedic problems.

But if we have caused the problem, the solution — round-the-clock posture awareness and simple stretching movements — is also within our reach. So we have a choice, is what this book tells us. Co-authored by Hansa Jayadeva Yogendra and Armaiti Neriosang Desai, who teach at the prestigious Yoga Institute in Bombay (the oldest of its kind in the world, established in 1918), the introductory chapters of *Yoga For Back and Joint Disorders* make it plain that we invite a host of physical ailments on ourselves. But if we create our own disorders, by lack of exercise, wrong diet, stressful living and unlimited desires, we also have the choice of living simply, relaxedly, with awareness of our inner resources and innate healing powers. Indeed, awareness is the key.

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Be aware of what you are doing; more importantly, be aware of what you are thinking, for what happens to your body first happens in your mind. Fears, tensions, impossible job deadlines, interpersonal conflicts, anxiety over money, etc subject the muscles to un-

necessary contractions and spasms as much as wrong posture over the years. What is recommended in these pages is a holistic approach to health. Simple lifestyle changes, like eating selectively, exercising more, substituting negative thought patterns with positive ones, have made a difference to patients suffering from such serious complaints as cervical spondylosis and rheumatoid arthritis. But it is not suggested anywhere in the book that self-diagnosis or self-medication is good enough for orthopedic complaints. Again and again it is stated that your problem re-

quires medical attention and may worsen without it. Also, that unindicated medicine can be harmful.

For this reason a comprehensive chapter on medical specifics has been included in the book (chapter three) with guidelines for treatment suggested by a



Desai (left) and Yogendra: stress on posture awareness

qualified orthopedic surgeon, Dr P. S. Mantora, who assists at The Yoga Institute. In simple terms, but without sacrificing scientific facts, Mantora acquaints us with the anatomy of the spine and muscles of the entire

back, and the holistic strategies evolved to deal with pain: pain in the cervical spine or the neck (of the literal as well as the metaphoric kind!), the lumbar spine or lower back, the shoulder, the knee, the heel...

Along with medical attention and rest during the acute phase, treatment suggested for each complaint includes a

list of *asanas* (yogic postures) that help, and a list of those that should be strictly avoided in that particular disorder.

This is invaluable knowledge, further amplified in chapter four, which is all about *asanas*. Given in alphabetical order, they are to be performed smoothly and mindfully, by coordinating breathing and body movements. Each *asana* is taught step by step. Copious color plates and sketches demonstrate the correct postures. Indications and counter indications are listed in at-a-glance charts, as well as physiotherapy exercises and their equivalent *asanas*. The experiential benefit of a particular *asana* and the philosophy underlying it are stated in a few words. For example, the *makrasana* (crocodile pose), when perfectly held, induces the attitude of letting go. The philosophy behind *padmasana* (lotus pose) is that one can live in the world yet not be affected by it — like the lotus.

Care and love have gone into the compilation of this glossy, handsome volume printed on art paper. One of Bombay's well-known orthopedic surgeons, Dr K. V. Chaubal, makes this observation in his foreword to the book: "Doctors usually prescribe drugs, I would prescribe a book." One can see why.

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EVENTS & PERSONALITIES

continued from page 30

memorial Column Local Committee which organizes these celebrations every year. It should also be marked as a Red Letter Day on Parsi calendars, he urged.

The occasion serves to remember with gratitude Dastur Naryosang Dhawal who sought protection and the Hindu king Jaji Rana who granted refuge to the community over 12 centuries ago.

Others serving on the Committee are secretary Nariman Balsara, treasurer Gustasp B. Jussawala, and member Dosabhai Oliaji. The late Naval Nariman of Parsi Dairy Farm was also a member at the time of the last celebrations.

Rent authority

He must have answered more than one lakh questions from the public on the subject of rent control laws and housing



Vajifdar: duly respected

society regulations. This is the guesstimate advanced to indicate advocate Kooover C. Vajifdar's popularity with the readers of *Mid-Day*, *Manorama*, *The Daily*, *The Economic Times*, *Sunday Observer*, *Accommodation Times*, *Jam-e-*

Jamshed and *The Bombay Samachar* in addition to several other periodicals.

Having been in the legal profession for the last 40 years, "the best of advocates and solicitors (of Bombay) respected his opinion and many housing societies were saved the expense and trouble of going in for litigation," states a tribute in the *Jam-*

High priests and mobeds at the jashan on February 7, 1998 to celebrate the 151st salgirah of Cusrow Baug's Nusserwanji Hirji Karani Agiary. (Below) Chief guest, retired justice Bakhtawar Lentin addressing the gathering at the evening function, flanked by Jamshed Guzder, (left) chairman of the Agiary Trust, and Bomi Hansotia, managing trustee



Nawaz Dinyar Marfatia (center) was crowned Miss Mumbai '97 at a function at the Hotel Leela on December 22, 1997. The 18-year-old FYBA student of St Xavier's College who aspires to be a top model was one of the 18 entrants vying for the Cococare sponsored contest in association with Island Magazine, it was stated in Blitz, December 27, 1997. Photo: Blitz

e-Jamshed of August 31, 1997. "The 36,000 cooperative housing societies (in Bombay) will surely miss the legal advice of Mr Vajifdar and it will take a long time for the void to be filled," notes the *Jamé* write-up following 78-year-old Vajifdar's demise on August 24, 1997 at Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital after a brief illness.

For *Parsiana*, he had contributed a series of articles, "Wedlock's end" on the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act which had been carried over six instalments of *Parsiana* in 1992.

Among the different institutions which had conferred awards on him were the Indian Merchants Chamber, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Accommodation Times, Estate Agents Association.

He had authored three books on the

subject of his expertise: *Rent Act Easily Explained*, *Society Act and its Implications*, *Know Your Housing Society Act*. He had also expressed his views on the Maharashtra Rent Control Bill 1993. Shortly before his demise he was invited to Dubai to address the Non-Resident Indians and reached several thousands in Mauritius and Seychelles through the Internet, notes an article in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of August 26, 1997.

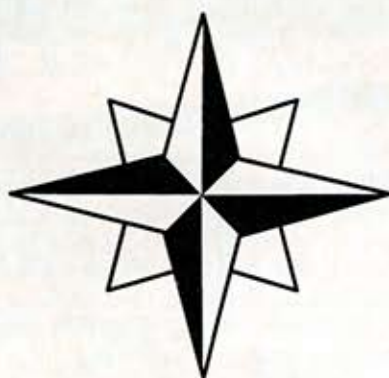
Helping the poor and the needy through the Lions movement, Vajifdar was the past deputy district governor of the Lions Club and seniormost past president of the Lions Club of Cuffe Parade. As a freemason he had been deputy grand master of the Grand Lodge of Western India. An avid chess player he was president of the Dadar Chess Circle, his biographical details were recounted.

Goal in sight

For securing the second position among all visually impaired students of the Arts faculty at the HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination, Bombay division, Tanya Sam Balsara was conferred the Lion Archie D'Souza Award by the National Association for the Blind in September 1997. A student of St Xavier's



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College, Balsara, who had scored 70 per cent at the examination, earned a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 1,100, she reveals.

Specializing in psychology and sociology, with French, 18-year-old Balsara has to commute to town daily from her residence at Jogeshwari. Fortunately for her, sister Lara who is in the 12th standard at the same College, can accompany her on the journey. The fact that her best friend from school (Lady Vissanji Girls Acad-

Balsara (right) being conferred the award

emy) was also going to Xavier's helped Balsara who had always been keen on joining this College. While she does sit in at most lectures, attendance being compulsory now, for her exam preparations she takes xeroxed notes from her friends which are then audio recorded by her mother or someone else, she explains.

A career in hotel management or with

the airlines is what the spirited teenager is aspiring towards. "She does not allow her handicap since birth to come in the way of living life to the fullest," notes a write-up sent by her father Sam Balsara who is the chief executive of Madison DMB&B. Enjoying the companionship of her many friends Balsara loves talking on the phone, listening to western pop music and dancing. She is ever willing to journey, preferring the climes of a hill station, she states.

Reaping rewards

Harvest, a play about the human organs bazar which won the \$ 2,50,000 (Rs 86 lakh) Aristotle Onassis International Drama Award in Athens in September 1997, was written by Manjula Padmanabhan who started her writing and designing career with *Parsiana* in 1973. There were 1,470 entries from 76 countries, mentioned her sister Geeta Doctor in *The Week*, July 20, 1997.

As book illustrator, cartoonist, columnist and progenitor of the comic strip character Suki, Padmanabhan has been an established byline for more than 20 years. Her forays into play writing, film scripts and short stories are not as well known. In an interview with *Outlook*, December 15,

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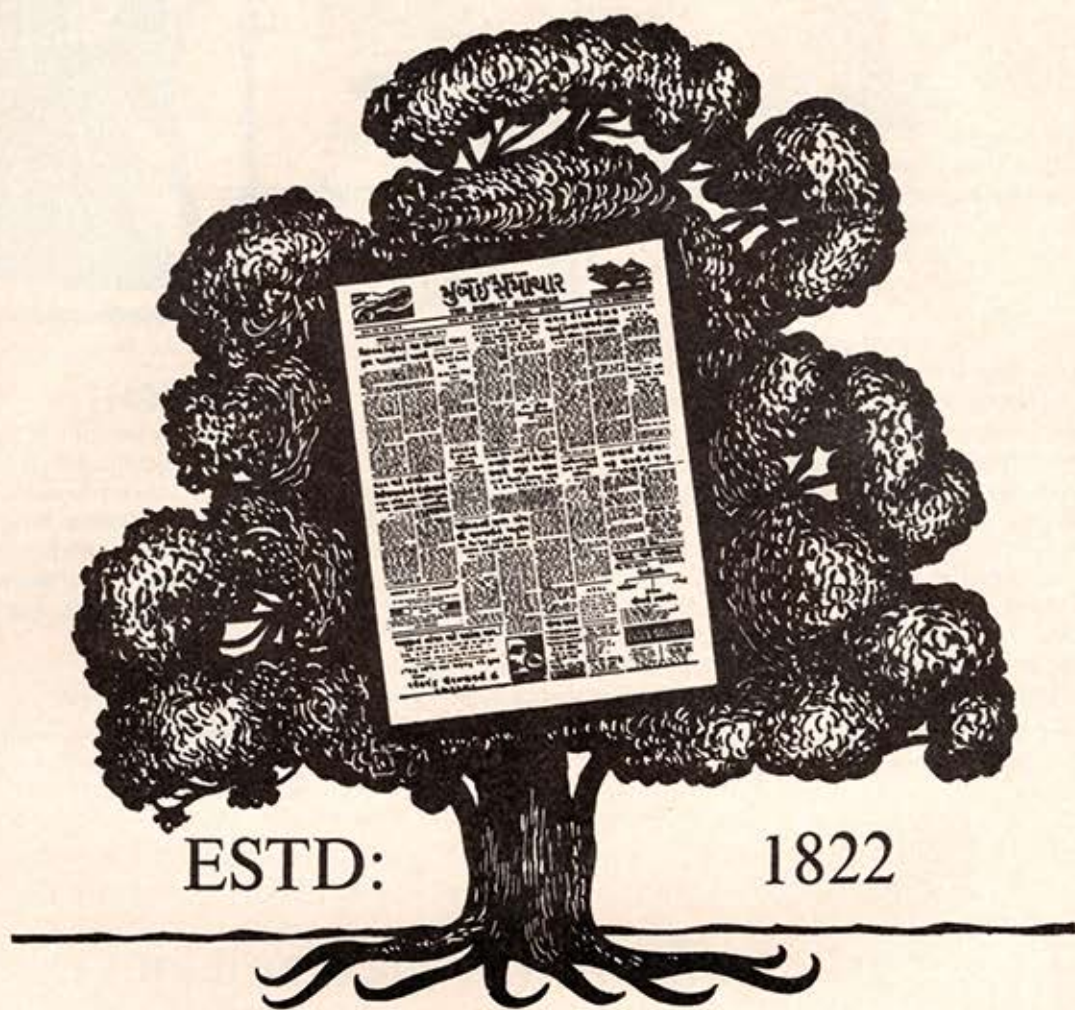
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1997 she relates how she saw a small announcement in an Australian paper inviting entries for the Onassis Award and started writing *Harvest* in great earnest. "In utter secrecy and within a self-imposed deadline of three months, rewriting and revising every single day," *Harvest* took form.



"The reason my story-telling veers off into science fiction or the surreal is because it enables me to cut loose from the annoying constraints of realistic detail," mentions Padmanabhan who confesses, "I've not had a life easy for others to recognize." The 43 years of her life have been like a rolling stone, stemming from growing up in many places as a diplomat's daughter, almost like a "privileged nomad," in the words of her sister.

"Writing *Harvest* has been Manjula's best kept secret. She could not bear to face another rejection with yet another unpublished or unperformed play," writes Doctor a regular editorial contributor to *Parsiana* in the early years.

Fusing horror with hilarity, *Harvest*, a three-act play set in a Bombay chawl in the year 2010, has been described as a "sav-



Padmanabhan with her creations: the May 1974 cover of *Parsiana* depicting four leading community poets and sketch drawn for an earlier issue

agely funny vision of the cannibalist future that awaits the human race. It is a parable of what will happen when the rich denizens of the First World actually begin to devour bits and pieces of the Third World poor." In what is essentially a modern morality play, "there is not one improbable situation or a single boring line,"



writes Sunil Sethi in *Outlook*.

SPOTLIGHT

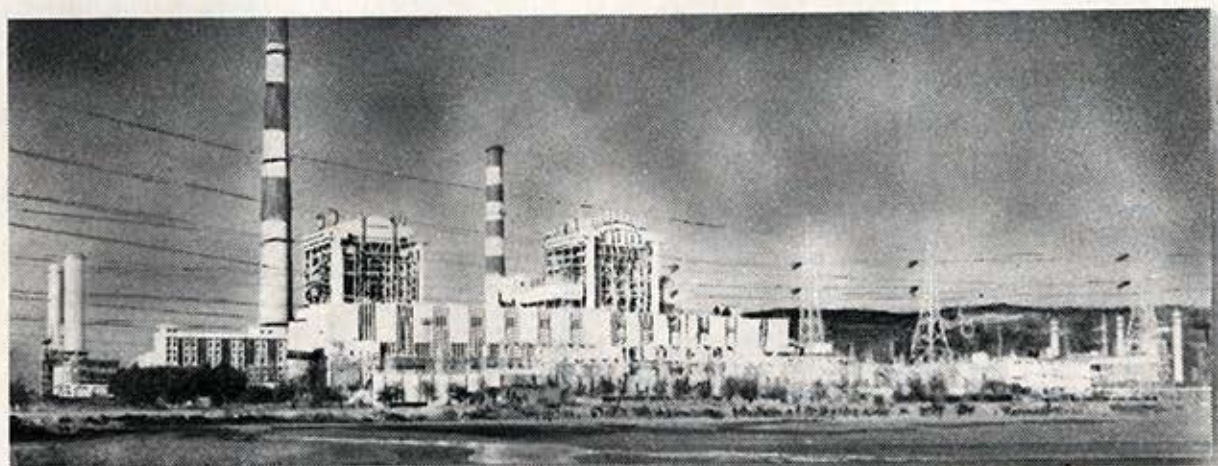
A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court had given time up to March 16, 1998 to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and Rotary Club of Mumbai Sunrise to "amicably" find a solution, including the possibility of shifting, in the conflict over the construction of a public toilet block near the Bhikha Behram well.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 19 and 36 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 25 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 24 and 46 years, averaging at 29 years.

As compared to 84 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Towers of Silence in Bombay in February, there were 12 babies born. The major killer — heart disease — claimed 34 patients of whom 21 were above the age of 80. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (11), brain disease (seven), cancer (five) and hypertension and old age/general debility (four each). Two victims fell prey to diabetes. The varied isolated cases registered in February were toxemia (the generalized poisoning of the body by the products of bacteria or damaged tissue), kidney failure, perforation of the intestine, uri-

nary tract infection, hypoglycemia (decreased blood sugar, attended by anxiety, excitement, perspiration, delirium or coma), osteoporosis (loss of bone density due to excessive absorption of calcium and phosphorus from the bone), filariasis (infestation with a parasitic, thread-like worm, found mainly in the tropics and subtropics), haematemesis (vomiting of blood), carbon monoxide poisoning, bronchitis, leukemia, septicemia, liver disease, vertigo, haemorrhage and shock due to multiple injuries to vital organs, asthma and Hodgkin's lymphoma. A still-born baby girl was also lost to the community. The age range fluctuated between 23 and 96 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth, in Bombay in February, was 75 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 breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

February 16
Rashna Gev Dhunjibhoy and Aspi Pesi Pithawalla;
February 16
Auzita Fariborze Kaovasia and Hoshang Mehraban Samya of Rockville, Maryland, USA; February 16
Shiraz Soli Mandroina and Filly Hoshang Bapuna;
February 17
Jennifer Behram Soonawalla and Kershasp Rusi Carnac;
February 19
Parizad Adi Ichhaporia and Jamshyd Bomy Patravala;
February 19
Meher Minoo Daruwalla and Pervaz Faramroze Dhanidaduna; February 20
Keshvar Adi Vakharia and Kali Hoshi Buhariwalla;
February 21
Binaifer Jal Sadri and Keki Rusi Jaorewala; February 22
Farnaz Pheroze Patel and Hoshang Sohrab Modi of Thane; February 22
Azita Rashid Rateshtari of Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA and Rustom Behram Kaovasia;
February 23
Romana Khushru Irani and Aspandiyar Kaikushroo Kawasia; February 25
Dilnavaz Jehanbux Jijina and Jamshed Pervaz Sethna;
February 26
Veera Jehangir Hataria and Kaizad Sam Bhacka;
February 28

DIED
Tehmina Sorabjee Irani (81), residing at B. B. Merwan Bldg. Opp Grant Rd Stn. 400007; January 31
Silloo Nariman Bhagal (74), Dr Kerawalla Bldg. 307, Tardeo Rd. 400007;
February 1
Perin Ardeshtir Bhungara (61), Homi Mehta's Bglw, Behram Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 1
Maneck Dhunjishaw Kapadia (78), Rutton Manor, 39, Garden Rd, Colaba, 400039;
February 1
Dady Maneckji Parekh (79), 275/F, Old Khan Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, 400007; February 1
Dhanjishaw Dadabhoy Vesuna (89), B7/16, Mistry Bldg, Dr Shirodkar Rd, Parel, 400012;

AURANGABAD

DIED

Prochee Nariman (59), wife of Phiroze and mother of Aashdin and Zubin on October 11, 1997

BOMBAY

BORN

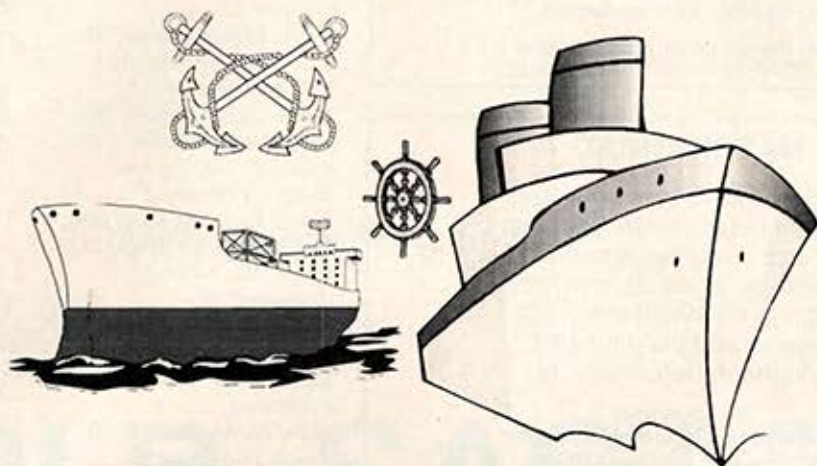
A boy, Kurush, to Armaity and Rohinton Chiniwala; October 21
A boy, Anosh, to Jasmine and Firdosh Bacha; February 3, 1998
A girl, Zayra, to Daanish and Zyros Zend; February 4
A boy to Yasmin and Naozer Dittia; February 7
A boy to Pervin and Hosidar Daji; February 10
A boy to Nelly and Cyrus Katak; February 10
A boy to Aban and Minoo Elavia; February 11
A boy to Phirooze and Zarir Shroff; February 12
A girl to Pervin and Hoshang Variava; February 12
A boy to Anahita and Darius Pandole; February 19
A boy to Lily and Behram Antia; February 20
A boy to Kamal and Rohinton Bhathena; February 27
A girl to Nilofer and Yazad

Damanier; February 28

MARRIED

Avan Adi Tarmaster and Rustom Hector Cavina; November 15, 1997
Ayesha Jehangir Bilimoria and Jamshed Bejon Madon; February 1, 1998
Yasmin Noshir Bharucha and Phiroze Hoshang Mehta; February 1
Kamal Eruch Kodia and Hormazd Rusi Sidhwa; February 1
Binaifer Baji Khambata and Kaizad Minoo Pardiwalla; February 2
Kermeen Dinyar Bharucha and Hormuz Erachshaw Avari; February 3
Vabiz Kersi Boocha and Shadrakh Keki Pavri; February 3
Jasmine Jamshed Irani (Sabzeh) and Shavir Homi Roshni; February 3
Parizad Sheri Shroff and Mehernosh Dinyar Bhagat; February 5
Nancy Jal Dolasa and Mahabarin Farokh Bhesania of Charai, Dist Thane; February 5
Avan Sam Taraporewala and Eruch Jal Patel; February 6

Nilofer Lovji Adajania and Rayomand Sam Kasad; February 7
Despina Farrokh Umrigar and Hushedar Homi Mehta; February 7
Tanaz Jal Daruwalla and Vispi Dara Driver; February 8
Navaz Sam Fitter and Behram Rusi Mohta; February 9
Aban Bamanshaw Kasad and Syras Keki Bharucha; February 10
Suzanne Adi Irani of Dahanu Rd and Percy Sorab Chowdhry; February 10
Parizad Cyrus Patel and Hushedar Homi Divwala; February 12
Rashna Hoshang Bilimoria and Maneck Minoo Palia of Vapi; February 13
Nazneen Nautzer Vakharia and Zubein Dhum Buhariwalla; February 14
Armin Bomi Hansotia and Neville Godrej Dotivala; February 15
Pinaz Jamshed Thanewala and Sarosh Kersy Tata; February 15
Khurshid Jehanbux Tata and Dinshaw Framroze Variava; February 15
Nilofer Minoo Patel and Viraf Minoo Mahuwalla;



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USA based girl, age 29, professionally qualified, seeks life partner willing to settle in USA. Write full details with photograph to:

The Advertiser
Parsiana, Matrimonial (Feb-Mar/4-98)*
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*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

MATRIMONIAL

Alliance invited from educated young man for our UK born and educated daughter of outgoing personality, aged 30, willing to settle in the Western world. Please send bio data with photograph (returnable) to:

The Advertiser
Parsiana, Matrimonial (Feb-Mar/2-98)*
GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001

*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

February 1

Dadi Eruchshaw Adajania (76), Room no 7/C, Dubash Bldg, Avabai Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; February 2
Zia Hoshang Dastoor (23), Modhvanik Vidyarthi Bhuvan Bldg, 15, Swami Gyanjivandas Rd, Near Dadar Stn, 400014; February 2
Dinshaw Kavajji Dubash (70), B/10, New Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 2

Minoo Bhikaji Elavia (70), 5/5, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 2

Jer Nariman Gheyara (89), B/17, Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; February 2

Piroja Ratansha Italia (86), Mahalaxmiwala Bldg, 18, Sleater Rd, 400007; February 2

Frenie Fredoon Kerawalla (75), C/14, Ruston Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 2

Freni Jal Mehata (75), B, Rupali Park, Irani Rd, Dahanu, Dist Thane, 401601; February 2

Feroze Framroze Patel (71),

Suryodaya Bldg, 7, Juhu Rd, Santacruz (W), 400054; February 2

Naja Dinshaw Amalsad (87), C/o J. D. Katrak, Rati Hse, 17, Gola Lane, Fort, 400001; February 3

Phiroza Merwan Kolah (71), K/8, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; February 3

Marzban Ardesheer Bharucha (56), 5/3, Atur Apts, Minoo Desai Marg, Opp Fariyas Hotel, Colaba, 400005; February 4

Dinamai Sorabjee Zaiwalla (76), Chamarbaugwala Chawl, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; February 4

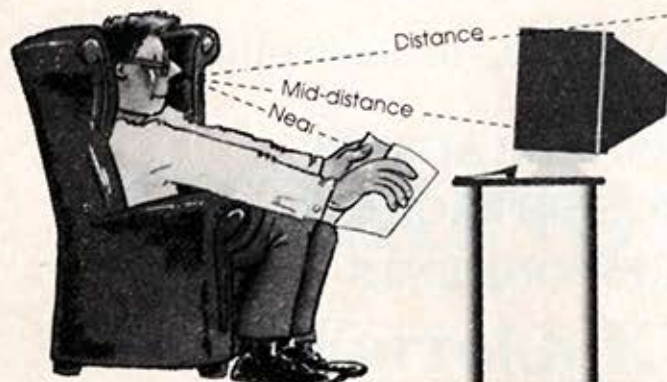
Jamshedji Hormusji Divecha (85), 7, New Contractor Bldg, Sussex Rd, Victoria Garden, Byculla, 400027; February 5

Perviz Mancherji Kapadia (77), Shalimar, Netaji Subashchandra Bose Rd, 400021; February 5

Nariman Meherwanji Bhagalia (96), 12, Deepali, St Cyril Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; February 6

Dhun Cavas Bilimoria (56), 788, Avabai Mans, Jame

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little Shreya doesn't have the
slightest hope of facing the future,
unless she gets an education. And
that's where you come in. To
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come true. Through Nanhi Kali,
you can become the foster parent
of a little girl like Shreya. By
giving Rs 100 a month towards
her education, your 'daughter'
will be put into school and in fact,
you will receive regular reports
about her progress including a
photograph. Nanhi Kali is a
special project of the K. C.
Mahindra Education Trust -- a
Trust set up by one of the most
reputed industrial families in
India. A Trust that's been
working since 1953 to promote
education and enlightenment
across the country. Since Nanhi
Kali literally means 'little
flower', with people like
you, we hope to repair the broken
petals of thousands of such
underprivileged little girls. So
please don't turn the page yet.

Nanhi kali³

A project of K. C. Mahindra Education Trust
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Yes, I _____ would like to adopt a 'Nanhi Kali' like Shreya. Enclosed is my cheque of Rs 1,200 (@ Rs 100 p.m.) in favour of K. C. Mahindra Education Trust for one year's education. Please do send me progress reports and a photograph. Instead of one Nanhi Kali, I would like to adopt _____ Nanhi Kalis for _____ years. Thank you. • Anonymity of donor is assured. • All donations are exempted under section 80G of the Income Tax Act.



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; February 6
Pervin Mehernosh Dubash
(51), 8, Khareghat Clny, N. S.
Patkar Marg, 400007;
February 6

Peshotan Hormozji Kaka (82),
Sakarwadi, Nawab Tank Rd,
Mazgaon Dock, 400010;
February 6

Marazban Behramji Madon
(84), 5/8, Bradys Flats, Sorab
Bharucha Rd, Colaba, 400005;
February 6

Kersi Jehangirji Mehta (64),
4B/5, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; February 6

Gustad Kaikhushru Patel
(72), 10/A, 668, Desai Bldg,
Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031;
February 6

Baby girl of Persis Shahzad
Wadia (stillborn), 39, Shirin
Bldg, Colaba Post Office,
400005; February 6

Dady Nusserwanji Batliwala
(83), 409/C, Libra Bldg,
Lower Kharodi, Marve Rd,
Malad (W), 400095;
February 7

Homi Nusserwanji Bhoot (85),
54, Vijay Chmbs, Tribhavan
Rd, 400004; February 7

Freny Nariman Patel (70),
Post Nargol, Via Sanjan, Dist
Valsad, 396135; February 7

Pilloo Nariman Surti (88), C/o
Noshir Dumasia, 795, Dosai
Mans, Jame Jamshed Rd,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
February 7

Nariman Tehmurasp Daver
(84), 24, Palkhiwalla Hse
(Tara Manzil), Dhobitalao, 1st
lane, 400002; February 8

Noshir Khodabux Mody (66),
B/1, New Wadia Block,
Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari,
400102; February 8

Kumi Khurshedji Daruwalla
(85), 111, Umargaon Bldg, Dr
Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012;
February 9

Aloo Jal Mody (72), Dhun
Bldg, Sant Gadge Maharaj
Sanatorium Rd, Dadar,
400014; February 9

Dhunjisha Rustomji
Bhagwagar (70), 8/9, Sir
Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; February 10

Dinshaw Dosabhai Karai
(73), Ajit St, Malesar,
Navsari, 396445; February 10

Shera Ardeshir Nania (85),
A/10, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; February 10

Behram Kaikhushroo Patel

(60), Lam Bldg, 173, Delisle
Rd, 400013; February 10
Gustad Jehangirjee Tampal
(70), R/34, Nowroz Baug,
Lalbaug, 400012; February 10
Daulat Aspiandiar Dinyarian
(85), 6/607, Bridge View, 16,
Hansraj Lane, Byculla,
400027; February 11

Jal Eruchshaw Maloo (71), C,
Durlabh Bhavan, Jalbhai St,
Grant Rd, 400007;
February 11

Dossan Dadabhoy Tavadia
(82), 3, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg
Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel,
400012; February 11

Behram Jehangir Bhappu
(76), Hari Niwas, Mathew Rd,
400004; February 12

Shera Jal Billimoria (83), 6,
Jehangir Mans, A. Podar
Marg, 400020; February 12

Sheru Dhunjishaw Mehta (75),
Botawala Bldg, Tardeo Rd,
400007; February 12

Mani Jamshed Munsiff (82),
M/13, Palm Springs, Cuffe
Parade, 400005; February 12

Tehmurasp Kaikhushro
Contractor (88), C/o Room
no 19, Cricket Club of
India, Brabourne Stadium,
Churchgate, 400020;
February 13

Aloo Rattan Engineer (80),
11/12, Tata Bldg, Tardeo Rd,
400034; February 13

Noshir Gustadji Guzder (81),
12, Banaji Hse, Contractor
Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim,
400016; February 13

Darabshaw Pestonji Karanjia
(81), B/1002, Ahura, Edulji
Rd, Charai, Thane, 400601;
February 13

Sorab Dhunjisha Mistry (85),
Readymoney Bldg no 2, 17,
Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo,
400034; February 13

Darabshaw (Dara) (Dorab)
Navroji Patel (85), 75, Shreeji
Hse, Mint Rd, Fort, 400001;
February 13

Najoo Minocher Vimadlal
(80), Cama Bldg, Murzban
Clny, Gilder Lane, Lamington
Rd, 400008; February 13

Nariman Hormusji Marolia
(68), G/9, Shailesh Apts,
Anand Ngr, Vasai Rd (W),
401202; February 14

Tehmina Framroz Panthaki
(83), 2B/30, Tata Mills Co-op
Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd,
Parel, 400012; February 14

Feramroz Khudabux
Pouredahi (80), 607,

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Sukhadwala Bldg, J. S. S. Rd.
Opp Wadiji Atash Behram,
400002; February 14
Homi Dorabji Sepoy (71),
3/29, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg
Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel,
400012; February 14
Minoo Nuservanji Kerawala
(57), 783, Patel Home, M.
Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; February 15
Katy Pallonji Karanjia (73),
8/4, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; February 16
Nergish Eruch Sidhwa (59),
5/24, Kapadia Bldg, A. H.
Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd,
400033; February 17
Mehru Minoo Wadia (55),
4-C/13, L.I.C. Clny, Borivli
(W), 400103; February 17
Khorshed Keki Gandhi (84),
A/8, Pearl Clny, 205, Dr
Ambedkar Rd, Dadar (E),
400014; February 18
Dhun Noshir Mawalwalla
(83), 22, Petit Widows'
Chawl, Mody St, Fort,
400001; February 19
Gool Jamshed Mistry (68),
9/16, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; February 19
Adi Pagadiwala (78), B/6,
Amar Ashirwad, Agiary Rd;



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February 19
Sarvar Rustomji Rashid
(Irani) (72), 5, Baharistan
Bldg, Vikhroli (W), 400083;
February 19
Shirin Dinshaw Bhesadia (81),
C/19, Godrej Baug, Off
Napean Sea Rd, 400026;
February 20
Bacha Rustomji Malegamvala
(88), Dhunbad, 23, N.
Bharucha Marg, Grant Rd,
400007; February 20
Motan Dara Mehta (82), 9/D,
Harbour Heights, N. A.
Sawant Marg, Colaba,
400005; February 20
Jal Khurshedji Mowdawalla
(79), Mumtaz Manzil, 63,
Wodehouse Rd, 400005;
February 22
Darab Bomanji
Pochkhanawala (82), 11/6,
Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd,
Byculla, 400027; February 22
Dhummaji Jalejar Umrigar
(88), 166/1, Maqbul Bldg, Hill
Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
February 22
Roda Pesi Ayem (82), Jer Mans,
19, Gazdar St, Thakurdwar,
400002; February 23
Nergiz Savak Kotwal (89),
B/9, Contractor Baug, Mori

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*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

Statement of Ownership & Other Particulars about Parsiana: Form IV (See Rule 8)

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Nationality: Indian
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Proprietor: Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd, 39, A. K. Nayak Marg, Bombay 400001
Shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital: Jehangir R. Patel, Veera J. Patel and Simin J. Patel, address same as above.

I, Jehangir R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
Sd. (Jehangir R. Patel) 1 March 1998

Rd, Mahim, 400016;
February 23
Ratamai Hirjibhai Patel (91),
5/1, A. H. Wadia Baug,
Parel Tank Rd, 400033;
February 23
Hormusji Ardeshir Wadia
(81), 52, Forjett St, 400036;
February 23
Freny Rohinton Godiwalla
(58), 13/B, Sai Niketan,
345, Mount Rd,
Mazgaon, 400010;
February 25
Dinbai Jehangirji Patel (94),
Alpaiwalla Bldg, M. M.
Chothani Rd, Mahim, 400016;
February 25
Pesi Rustom Billimoria (85),
283/A, Yusuf Mans, 204,
Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;
February 26
Nergish Erachsha Mistry (59),
286, Princess St, 400002;
February 27
Kety Pirojshaw Mohta (73),
Shirin Mans, Shankarsheth
Rd, Opp Grant Rd Stn,
400007; February 27
Nariman Manekshaw
Daruvalla (73), M/8,
Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
400012; February 28

CALCUTTA

MARRIED

Devika Dutt and Sohrab
Setna; December 26, 1997

DIED

Homai Framroz Buchia,
sister of Dadabhoy and late
Fareedoon; February 19, 1998

POONA

DIED

Piroja Cawasji Bharucha
(90), 470, Centre St, Camp,
411001; February 8
Jamshedji Jivanji Shroff (80),
Canopus Apts, Boat Club Rd,
411001; February 16
Bachamai Phiroze Siganporia
(77), 88, DSFA Gurudwara
Rd, Camp, 411001;
February 19
Viloo Minoo Damania (59),
5, Vilman, 202/1, Nagar Rd,
411006; February 21
Ardeshir Jamshedji
Masalawalla (76), 1956, Dr
Saldanha St, 411001;
February 26

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DIED

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GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001

*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

(70), Timaliawad, Nanpura, 395001; February 1
Homa Faramroz Bhesania (54), Village Bhesan, Dist Surat, 362020; February 2
Homi Rustamji Palia (69), Vankibordi, 395003; February 3

Homi Darabshaw Patel (65), Lam Bldg, Lower Parcel, Bombay, 400012; February 5
Adil Nanabhai Masalawala (45), Village, Siganpore, Dist Surat; February 5
Noshir Pastanji Patel (76), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; February 16
Meharbai Ratansha Master (97), Kotwal St, Nanpura, 395001; February 18
Firoz J. Dukandar (76), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; February 25

AUSTRALIA New South Wales

MARRIED

Toranz Davar, daughter of Freyni and Adi, and *Keith Wildy*, son of Jan and Greig; December 14, 1997

CANADA Calgary

DIED

Hilla Jamshed Khory, mother of Sheriar and Farouk and sister of Perin Mathur; September 28

Montreal

DIED

Goolbanu Eruchshaw Mirza, mother of Khushru and Freddy; December 16

Toronto

BORN

A boy, *Zurwan*, to *Pearl* and *Khushru Chothia*; September 18

Vancouver

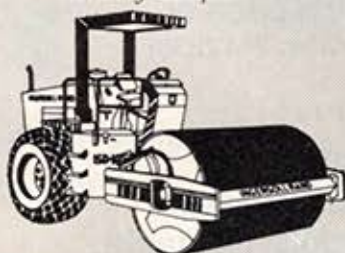
BORN

A boy, *Arshaam*, to *Roya* and *Jehangir Mojgani*; August 25
A girl, *Anahita*, to *Azita* and *Raiomand Parsi-Feraidoonian*; September 5

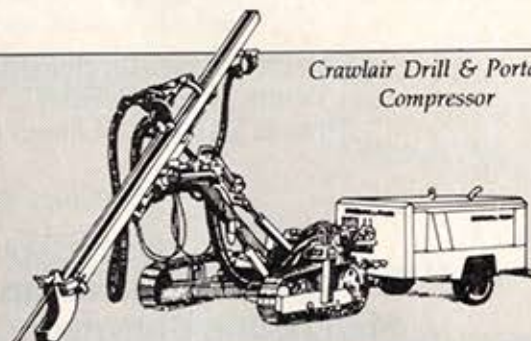
MARRIED

Farzaneh Salles of Tehran, daughter of Homa and Rostam, and *Jamshid Kavooosi* of California; November 8

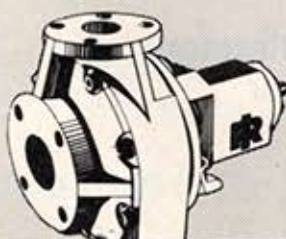
Vibratory Compactor



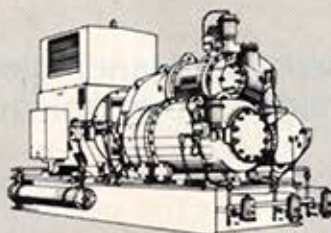
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DIED
Rashid Irani (65), husband
of Margaret and father of
Yasmin and Parween;
October 10

Victoria

DIED
Jini Kooka (75), mother
of Rashna Charania,
Nerges, Yezdi, Farrokh
and Meher; October 3

NEW ZEALAND

Hamilton

DIED
Freddie Nariman Rao
(43), husband of
Bakhtavar and father of
Furzan and Vizina;
January 16, 1998

PAKISTAN

Karachi

BORN
A girl, *Naomi*, to *Neena*
and *Yazdyar Haveliwala*;
December 5, 1997

DIED
Jamshed Sorabji Cooper (58);
January 23, 1998
Piroja Jamshedji Dotiwalla
(97); January 28
Hoshang Maneckji Dastur

(67); January 30
Hoshang Cowasji Sethna (76);
February 5
Mehru C. Vachha (84);
February 5
Shaheryar K. Felfeli (68);
February 9
Goolcher M. Vatcha (75);
February 10
Perviz Behram Lohar (78);
February 13

Quetta

DIED
Daulat Meherwan Irani (82);
January 24

UAE

Dubai

BORN
A boy, *Kayras*, to *Farzana*
and *Percy Engineer*;
December 15, 1997

UK

London

DIED
Feroze Madon (93),
brother of Naval;
November 19

USA

Arlington

BORN
A boy, *Zane*, to *Arbez* and



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Hoshang Patel, brother to
Zara; February 2, 1998

Boise, Idaho

BORN

A boy, Sean, to Shahnaz and
Sharukh Chhor, brother to
Sanaya; January 23

Lewisville

BORN

A boy, Danesh, to Keshmira
and Mehli Bam; February 11

Miami

BORN

A boy, Zane, to Lyla and Sam
Todiwalla; September 11, 1997

Rochester Hills, Michigan

BORN

A girl, Rashna, to Mr and Mrs
Soonawalla; December 23

San Jose, California

DIED

Kourosh Jamshidi (36), son of
Behman and Jamshid and
brother of Fariborz.
Khushrow, Dolly Bhojti,
Parichehr Kademi and Mahin
Soroushian; October 21

San Ramon, California

BORN

A girl, Marina, to Natasha
and Daraius Mehta;
October 2

Suwanee, Georgia

BORN

A boy, Connor Ryan, to Farida
and Richard Tinker, brother to
Scot Allen; January 19, 1998

Virginia

BORN

A girl, Connie Sarah, to Cathy
Mac and Kersi Bhiwand-
walla; December 23, 1997

MARRIED

Spenta Dinshaw and
Farshad Hormozdyan;
January 31, 1998

Washington

BORN

A boy, Dara, to Mandana
and Bahram Shahriari;
November 10, 1997

Westminster, Maryland

BORN

A boy, Cyrus, to Armaty
and Marzban Darowalla;
November 11

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

FIGURES AT A GLANCE *

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	1997 [○]	1998 [★]	This issue	1997 [○]	1998 [★]	This issue	1997 [○]	1998 [★]
BIRTHS									
Boys	10	104	15	---	7	---	10	27	5
Girls	3	101	13	---	4	2	5	33	---
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	37	275	74	---	5	---	2	11	1
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	---	52	---	1	2	1	---	5	---
Females married out	---	44	---	---	---	---	1	2	---
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	39	451	82	7	115	15	8	42	5
Females	46	474	95	8	99	15	8	41	6
CREMATED									
Males	---	6	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Females	---	7	---	---	1	---	---	---	---

○Running totals for 1997 (January 1997-February-March 1998 issues)

★Running totals for 1998 (January 1998-February-March 1998 issues)

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

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

Bombay: The Telling Figures

During the last decade, since Parsiana started computing the figures in 1987, intercommunity marriages in Bombay had been registering an increase. For the year 1997, although the actual count of intercommunity marriages, 96, showed an increase of 19 over last year's tally of 77, in terms of percentage representation there is a decline. The percentage of intercommunity marriages works out to 26 as versus 28 in 1996. This percentage is calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to the total number of marriages (96:371). If calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to community marriages (96:275), it is 35 percent (still lower than the 39 percent of 1996). Of the 646 Zoroastrians who married last year, 52 males and 44 females married out of the community as versus 43 males and 34 females in 1996.

But while the intercommunity marriages rose by 19, the count of community marriages increased by 78 over the pre-

ceding year's figure of 197, thus giving a total tally of 371 marriages in 1997.

Once again the births registered a decline. The 205 births (104 boys and 101 girls) known to Parsiana indicated a decline of 11 over the previous year's figure of 216 when there were 20 more female babies born (98 boys, 118 girls). Our information on births being accessed from only four hospitals in south and central Bombay, we presume that Parsiana accounts for around 50 percent of the births in the community in Bombay. This still means that the birth rate in the community is less than half the death rate.

The death toll of 938 Zoroastrians includes those (925) who were consigned at Bombay's Towers of Silence and the 13 (six males and seven females) cremated in the city. While there were 25 less deaths this year as compared to last year's total of 963, there were nine more cremations in 1997 as compared to the four of 1996.

This despite the fact that only the data of those cremated at the Chandanwadi crematorium is culled by us and not the other Bombay crematoriums. The details of those consigned at the Doongerwadi sent to us by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet show that 451 males and 474 females were consigned in 1997 as compared to 457 males and 502 females the previous year.

The mean Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB) in 1997 was 75, the same as in 1996. The highest LEB, 78, was in the month of July, and the lowest, 71, in December 1997.

Listed below are the 1997 figures pertaining to the community in Bombay as collected by Parsiana:

Born: 205
Boys: 104, Girls 101
Marriages: 371
Parsi 275, Intercommunal 96
Died: 938
Consigned: 925
Males 451, Females 474
Cremated: 13
Males 6, Females 7



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ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

continued from page 36

Eager to promote its youth, KZBM sponsored the winner of its essay contest, Farishte Dinshaw, to the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in London in 1997 and submitted the names of 100 Pakistani Zarathushti youths for inclusion in the second edition of the *World Zoroastrian Youth Directory*, informs the report.

Addressing the demographic issue the KZBM produced its second Zarathushtrian address and telephone directory, establishing the figure of Pakistani Zarathushtis at 2,567 as of March 1997. They are now making an effort to collect data on births in the community, requesting medical officers of various hospitals to provide sex-wise data on Zoroastrian births during the 90's.

Loan schemes exist for entrepreneurship and education. Rs 2.5 lakhs were advanced to a gent who provided the best feasibility and collateral, notes the report. On the educational front they are trying to provide school fees as well as private tuition costs where applicable. The education subcommittee has a member specialized in children's learning disabilities and suitable remedial action for a few such identified youngsters is on the anvil.

The report by Hilla Kotwal, chairperson of the education subcommittee, indicates that students are prone to be carried away by the current trend for MBAs without assessing their own capabilities. Also, though the KZBM requires its donees to mail biannual progress reports, it is an agreement not generally implemented by the students. They also require the loan amount to be repaid in full if study on the agreed course is discontinued.

Other help the KZBM provides the youth included a two-day seminar on the career choices available. They also organized a talk by educationist Dr Rummi Gazdar, chief executive of the Bangkok based journal *Let's Go Study Abroad*. Gazdar advised the youth that foreign education is more easily available in the US, Japan, Thailand and Philippines while Australia and Canada have fewer opportunities to offer. Again, Thailand and Philippines provide the same quality of education as Japan or the US, at less cost. He had also advised them to learn the correct process for applying for visas before filing their papers with the consulates and to seek

the guidance and recommendation of the principals of their educational institutions before applying to colleges abroad.

The KZBM's other subcommittees work in the areas of general and child welfare, rehabilitation and medical help. Like other Karachi based Zarathushti institutions the affluent KZBM registered a total income (donations plus dividend income) of Rs 3,891,325 as against its expenses of Rs 1,550,276 at the end of June 1997.

Deaths in Karachi

According to the *Informal Religious Meetings* newsletter of February 14-March 15, 1998, there were a total 38 deaths in Karachi in 1997. This figure compares to 50 in 1996 and 42 in 1995. In the 1990s, the highest number of deaths took place in 1992 when Karachi lost 61 Zarathushtis. Since then, barring 53 deaths in 1994, the total number of deaths has been receding. At the same time the average age at death has risen from 75.64 in 1992 to 77.71 in 1995. This year the average age at death for men was 72.66 and for women 79.32, with a maximum nine males dying in their 70s and a maximum seven females in their 80s. Two females survived to the age of 92 as against zero males. Due to deaths, the total number of the community has declined by 684 since 1985. There is no information on migrations from Pakistan.

Irani's gold

"Through your professionalism and dedication you've created a new standard of service, one that challenges all of us," wrote Global Consumer Banking general manager Nadeem Hussain to Tanaaz Jimmy Irani, conferring on her Citibank Karachi's Gold Award. The citation read that she was selected for "exemplifying the highest standard of excellence and achievement in serving Citicorp customers." Irani was adjudged outstanding in the areas of professional competence and teamwork and exceptional in her work quality and timeliness as well as in problem solution. She now begins to identify the best practices outside Pakistan to employ them locally and has been selected to take part in an audit in Europe as a guest reviewer in Germany and Belgium.

Art is the catalyst

"Many of our US executives feel they are at a disadvantage compared with managers from other countries," Dr Farrokh Langdana told the *Business News* reporter who interviewed him. Having taken over as director of Rutgers University's flagship executive MBA program, Langdana has introduced art and culture into its course, including visits to museums, art galleries, the theater and musical concerts.

According to Langdana, "Knowledge of the arts and architecture is woven closely into the corporate culture" of Europe. The Rutgers summer program involves visits to Cambridge, London



Langdana: letting imaginations soar

and Prague when executives taking the Rutgers MBA interact with their European counterparts. "The British managers would chat casually about Elizabethan facades and Tudor architecture. We felt really intimidated," he remarked.

Apart from keeping up with the Joneses, internationally, Langdana also theorized that an induction into the arts could stimulate creative thinking whether the catalyst be classical music or classical literature. "People who excel do so because they have sharp bursts of innovation," he said.

Justifying this unorthodox curriculum, Langdana notes that such innovativeness is "the main difference between our program and others." Borrowing an idea from London's *The Economist*, Langdana has also introduced a short story contest into the course where the first few paragraphs are provided to the students who are then expected to let their imaginations soar. "We want the executives who come out of our program to be creative and stand above the executives that other MBA programs are cranking out."

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama



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Sidhwa's benchmark

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Justice Rustam S. Sidhwa, 69, former judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan as also the United Nations (UN) International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, on March 31, 1997 in Karachi following cardiac arrest.

Referring to Sidhwa as "a noble man who always stood for truth, righteousness, fair play, justice and service to humanity," Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, the present president of Pakistan, remarked in his condolence letter, "he was a real *darvesh* who lived less for himself and more for others."

"His sound knowledge of law, analytical approach, deep appraisal of facts and rational conclusions," were commented upon by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Sajjad Ali Shah at a full court reference in Sidhwa's honor in Islamabad on April 15, 1997. "Law journals and periodicals are replete with his judgments published therein which speak volumes for themselves demonstrating indisputably his ability, knowledge and proficiency in all branches of law," added the Chief Justice commending his landmark judgments involving the Federation of Pakistan or the President of Pakistan. At the commencement of any hearing Sidhwa was always found sitting in prayer, his eyes closed for a couple of moments, recalled Shah.

"He sat with us for less than three years," acknowledged the then acting Chief Justice of Pakistan Nasim Hasan Shah at the full court reference on the eve of Sidhwa's retirement in 1992. "Even in this short period (he) exhibited a remarkable originality of mind and displayed complete independence of outlook."

A judge should hear the matter with an open mind but rule on the case with his heart totally aligned with the head was Sidhwa's belief as recalled by Dr Khalid Ranjha, advocate general, Punjab at the full court reference in 1997. In his determination to dispense fair justice, Sidhwa always tried to reach

the crux of the problem. "While hearing criminal matters his lordship displayed a very pragmatic approach. He often said that an investigating officer always knew the real facts but seldom gave true evidence in court," stated Ranjha. "He had compassion and yet he was firm," observed Ranjha, adding, "Having achieved the place that he did, he never flaunted his position, legal acumen or



Sidhwa: rational conclusions

knowledge. He appeared alone and shy, however, to people who cared to get closer, he was warm, affectionate and indulgent."

Sidhwa was called upon to judge on the domestic front too as he admitted to Ranjha when introducing his mother and his wife on the occasion of his silver wedding anniversary celebrations. In his inimitable style he joked, "Sometimes these ladies do not get on too well with each other. Anyhow, I make no hesitation in telling them that neither of them is entitled to impinge upon the rights of the other."

His election by the UN General Assembly as one of the 11 judges to serve on the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague was considered a befitting tribute to his "high credentials as an outstanding jurist, and a manifest reflection of the confidence reposed in (his) honesty and impartiality by the international community," remarked Wasim Sajjad, current chairman of the

Senate of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Particularly significant was the fact that Sidhwa, despite being a Zoroastrian, was chosen to represent his Islamic nation on the Tribunal which examined the atrocities perpetrated on Muslims in the Bosnia-Herzegovina region.

During his term of office from 1993 until 1996 when he resigned due to ill health (he was suffering from cancer), "Judge Sidhwa made outstanding contributions to the laying of the foundation for the work of the Tribunal, its legal thinking, and to the cause of justice in the former Yugoslavia," stated UN secretary general Kofi A. Annan in his condolence letter. Similar sentiments were expressed by the president of the Tribunal, Antonio Cassese who wrote, "Judge Sidhwa was a very wise and perceptive member of the Tribunal and his contributions to the work of the Tribunal have a historic value which can be measured only by time itself." He is supposed to have been at the forefront while drafting a two-volume handbook prescribing rules and regulations and other procedures to be adopted by the nascent Tribunal.

Prior to this appointment Sidhwa had served as minister for law and parliamentary affairs and irrigation and power in the Caretaker Punjab Government for three months. His longest term of government office was as judge of the Lahore High Court from 1978 to 1989. His book, *The Lahore High Court and its Principal Bar, 1866-1988* is considered the only source book on the history of this institution. Yet another long innings Sidhwa served was as administrator general and official trustee, West Pakistan from 1966 to 1978. The highlights of his career were carried in a pamphlet circulated by the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan at the memorial meeting on April 27, 1997 in honor of Sidhwa and the late Justice Dorab Patel. As early as 1968 the government of Pakistan had nominated his name for inclusion in the United Nations register of experts in legal and other fields.

The same year, 1950, in which he completed his law graduation from the

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Punjab University, Sidhwa had also passed the Central Superior Services Examination. He was even offered the post of superintendent, central excise and land customs, and later the post of cantonment executive officer. But he declined both and opted to enrol as a pleader in the District Courts of Lahore in 1951, as an advocate in the Lahore High Court in 1953 and as an advocate in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 1958. He had acquired proficiency in both the civil and criminal fields, and made frequent appearances in the superior courts on behalf of the state and the government. "He always used to come to the court fully prepared and would render assistance in a manner which was highly appreciated..." acknowledged the chief justice. Alongside his legal practice he also taught at the Punjab University Law College for over two decades as recalled by grateful students who are now well established names in the profession.

The building blocks for the Surat born Sidhwa's character and personality were laid during his school days (primary schooling at Cathedral School, Lahore and Senior Cambridge from St Anthony's High School, Lahore), as analyzed by Sajjad Ali Shah. His middle school was five miles afar from his village which he used to attend by foot, traversing a distance of 10 miles daily. This then was the beginning of traits and characteristics "of achieving goals with persistent determination, hard work and honesty of purpose." But travelling was not the only hurdle for the young Sidhwa. Being the only child of a widowed mother (his father had died when he was but nine years of age), to assist in the management of Excelsior restaurant on McLeod Road, Lahore, which was the family's only source of income, he was often manning the cash register, it was related in a write-up by Teenaz Javat.

With The Lahore Parsi Anjuman he continued to have enduring ties until his resignation as president of the Anjuman in 1996. Since 1959 when he started as managing committee member, until the end, his services were enlisted for legal work concerning the Anjuman affairs and properties, notes a resume by the Anjuman honorary secretary B. H. Engineer.

"Mr Sidhwa has served the Parsi community of Lahore, both as mentor and as an active member of various trusts with a humility and zeal to be

emulated," it was mentioned in the centenary brochure of the Bai Avnabai Ardeshir Cooper Agiary Trust. As managing trustee, chairman and patron of this Trust at various times he has been given credit for dispensing good legal advice, for handling the finances of the Trust in impeccable order, for his involvement in the building of the Agiary on its present site, and for serving as the guiding spirit in organizing the centenary celebrations of the Agiary in 1993 and compiling a history of the 100-year-old fire-temple.

He had also found time to work on *The District Grand Lodge of Pakistan, 1869-1969*, a source book on the history of Masonic lodges in Pakistan under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of England. He was a very active member of the District Grand Lodge of Pakistan. Being a keen philatelist, he not only collected stamps and first day covers, but authored *Sidhwa's Catalogue, Pakistan Stamps, Errors and Varieties, 1947-1978*, the only such compilation. In fact, writing could be listed among his hobbies, mentions his daughter-in-law Zarnak, who being a secretary by profession "had the privilege of typing out all (his) articles." His interest also lay in astrology and metaphysics.

Known to be a deeply religious Zoroastrian, he had great respect for Islam too, its Muslim saints and its Sufi philosophy. In his article, "The sacred sojourn," carried in *Parsiana*, February-March 1997, he had compared the attitude of Zoroastrians setting out on a pilgrimage to Udvada with his Muslim associate's proceeding to Mecca and had expressed concern about the future of the Zoroastrian religion and its priests. "Spiritual levels are not raised by financial benefits, though these may remove some of the irritants... Our own spiritual evolution can bring about the necessary changes in the mental and spiritual levels of our din dasturs... I only implore all pious souls to maintain their faith," he beseeched. "They should constantly seek something higher, something which will raise their spiritual levels. By so doing, we will be spiritually stronger and bring about a general revival to meet the challenges of the new millennium..."

The respected judge is survived by his wife Roshan, sons Yazdi and Sohrab, and daughters Kermin Soli Parakh and Dhun Farokh Setna.

KALEIDOSCOPE '98...

continued from page 60

the various venues, coordinating effortlessly with colleagues and 'starguests' (some with inflammable egos) with oodles of tact and omnipresent cellphones. Adds Bisney, "The planning started some time in September/October 1996, when we realized that we would be completing 10 years of service to the community. Around that time we put forth a proposal to host the '97 Youth Seminar." But a last-hour decision by the convening body, Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA) accorded the privilege to Vadodara, as that city had not hosted one earlier. The TCZYL however, having already got into the act, decided to go ahead with the planning and execution of a youth meet on their own soil. Bisney, a founder-president (and currently treasurer) of FOZYA had noted from his experience (and he has plenty of it, having attended eight of 11 meets) that such fora seldom have a focus. "Elders spoke and youngsters were forced to sit and listen. There was very little involvement of the youths themselves." He sought to remedy this failing, and the seeds of K '98 were sown.

Probably, so as not to invite uncharitable comments on holding a parallel youth meet, the TCZYL pegged K '98 right from the start as its way of celebrating a decade of service, and latched on to the theme of 50 years of Indian Independence to bill it as a double commemorative tribute.

Yet perhaps it's not premature, to write an elegy on the decade-old manner of conducting youth seminars. As Bombay's HPY coordinator Diana Marfatia says, "It's time to do away with annual conferences that waste our time..." K '98 had a purpose, and TCZYL ensured it was well served. But whether it could be a format for future youth seminars is for the youths to determine. Bisney himself is sagely non-committal. "Personally," he says, "this may be our last go at such a mega-event. The core group of TCZYL now has other priorities," eyes veering off with paternal attention to his two small children. "It is now for the next lot to come forward, and take on the work. Of course, we shall be around to guide and assist them." And is the next batch revved up to replicate the event? "All good things don't come to an end," tinkles Tanaz Wadia, "they only get better." Though in what direction may remain a moot point.



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