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Parsiana

December 1998
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2 Readers' Forum

7 Events and Personalities

14 Zoroastrians Abroad: FEZANA AGM by Arnavaz Mama

16 Leach and Weborny: A 'clean' business by Hilla Guzder

20 Lorrie and Rusi Gorimar: Come 'wave' with me by Gustasp Irani

24 Banking on its balance by Parinaz Gandhi

28 N. R. Kalyaniwala Agiary centenary: Ablaze in Ajmer

32 19th century Gujarat Parsis: Near and yet apart - 7

38 Monaz Tantra: Striking her way to glory by Aspi Ustad

40 Dina Mehta: A playwright at work

50 Milestones

Cover: Interior of Zoroastrian Bank's Bombay Main Branch

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Reach the inner fire"

I thank Mr Noshir Dadrawala for explaining why he is not ashamed to say that he worships fire ("Reach the inner fire," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1998). The self-assessment of his "intellectual awareness, ethical understanding and spiritual consciousness" is most impressive. He further writes about the "fire energies" within himself, the "spiritual energy" of the consecrated fire, and the "divine energies" within the universe all becoming one. Where or in what do they become one? He also writes of his spiritual ecstasy when he is praying before the fire.

First, let me say how fortunate he is to experience spiritual ecstasy — few human beings can say this with so much confidence. Secondly, I find it a bit difficult to equate all these energies and spiritual ecstasy he experiences with his comment about the fire being his object of worship. Where do all these energies

originate? Who created them? What does he mean by "spiritual"? Who is the creator of things "spiritual"?

Mr Dadrawala and I will never see eye to eye where Mazdayasni-Zoroastrianism is concerned, so I shall say no more about it — except to remind him of the words of our Holy Prophet Zarathushtra:

"Then did I realize Thee as the most bountiful one when the good mind encircled me completely. When I first became enlightened through Thy Words, Thou didst teach me how hard it is to induce faith among mankind, yet will I practise what Thou declarest to me is the best (Ys 43:11)."

"At the time when Thou didst command me, 'Go to Asha in fulness of knowledge' Thou hadst not revealed to me things unheard of; but Thou didst reveal them when, to dispel all darkness before me, Srosh, divine obedience, accompanied by the blessing of divine light, arose within me (Ys 42:12)."

"Then did I realize Thee as the most bountiful one, O Mazda Ahura, when the good mind encircled me completely. He declared to me that silent meditation is best for attaining spiritual enlightenment (Ys 43:15)."

"Now in truth I have beheld Him clearly in my mind's eye, knowing through Asha of the good spirit in word and deed, I can now see Mazda Ahura Himself (Ys 45:8)."

PERIN DIVECHA

Kent, UK

"Meaningless titles"

In Readers' Forum (*Parsiana*, April 1998) I read "Meaningless titles," a letter by Dr P. Sunavala. Granted, that the conferment of British titles in India can no longer be used by Indians in India! However, what Ms Dilnavaz Bhagwagar wrote about Maneck Dalal and Dr Jamshed J. Irani showed that the British still recognize the worth of those Indians who may no longer be their subjects, as well as highlighted the outstanding qualities of these two very clever and capable men and their achievements for the information of *Parsiana* readers.

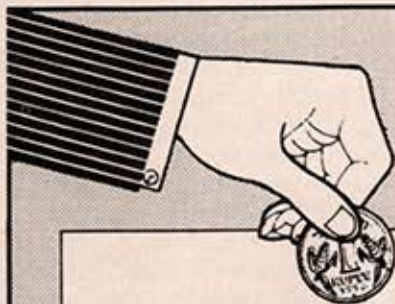
Surely, taking it for granted that Dr P. Sunavala is a Parsi, he should have felt some sense of pride that these two men belong to our small but brilliant community which has achieved so much for India and has even shone abroad.

Take for instance my own great-grandfather Mr Manockjee Cursetjee who founded a cosmopolitan school for Indian girls. The Alexandra Girls' English Institution began, way back in 1863, to give Indian girls of any community the opportunity to be educated in the English medium so that they could take their rightful place in public society alongside their Oxford, Cambridge or London trained husbands of those far off days instead of being left at home as "ornamental chattel" to cook and wash, produce and bring up children! The school was started with only 13 girls from respectable families, as that was the only criterion for admission. It is still going strong with over 1,000 girls. The school has never taken government grants to date though it has followed all the rules of the Government's educational edicts.

Mr Manockjee Cursetjee was the first Indian sheriff of Bombay in 1856 and again in 1863, as also the first Indian chief judge of the Small Causes Court at Bombay in front of whom the English barristers of those days were irked to plead their cases, yet all his judgements were upheld by the High Court at Bombay.

Then there was my father, the late Captain Kavas Ookerjee, who having taken his entire nautical training on the training ship *H. M. S. Conway* anchored on the River Mersey at Liverpool in England received his Masters certificate from the board of trade in London on August 11, 1911, empowering him to captain any seagoing steamship anywhere in the world. All through the First World War he was master of the *S. S. Zaynee* of the Persian Steam Ship Company plying between Bombay and Basra in the Persian Gulf.

From 1920 to the day he retired in 1948 he was marine superintendent of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company. His was the idea of opening a nautical training ship for Indian boys who could train to become master mariners without going to the UK, though their final examination papers had to be sent to the UK. In or about 1929, the *Dufferin* was opened for Indian cadets to be trained in India. Though unfortunately the credit was not given to my father, yet right through the Second World War years (1939-1945) my father used to go on this ship to take the final examination of



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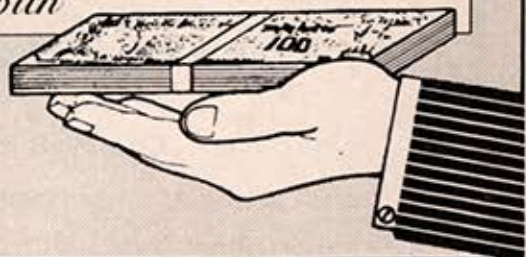
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the cadets. The then British Government of India appointed him, because of his vast experience and as a successful old *H. M. S. Conway* cadet. I used to accompany him, staying on board overnight for two nights as guests of Captain Digbybest who was the master of the *Dufferin*.

There was a special lunch for all the guests with Captain Digbybest at the head of the long dining table with Ms Digbybest at the other end and all of us arranged according to our standing. My father as the senior examiner was always on the Captain's right hand. Then we were given a ceremonial sendoff in the *Dufferin's* spacious launch back to Mazgaon pier from where we had been picked up on Friday evening.

More recently there was J. R. D. Tata, the most brilliant son India has produced in this century, at whose death on November 29, 1993 the flag of the Indian republic flew at half-mast on all government buildings in Bombay. He was a Parsi.

Whether we were under the security of the British Raj or under the doubtful safety of the present regime, the Parsis have not only enriched but added luster to the Indian soil. I write this with my

head held high because I am of old Parsi stock and am proud of the fact.

PERIN M. R. B. JEEJEEBHAY

Adopt a heritage book

The Asiatic Society of Bombay has undertaken a project entitled "Heritage of the Parsi Community." The project is to prepare an annotated catalog of all books, journals, articles and manuscripts on Parsis and Zoroastrianism available in the libraries of Bombay and the cities of Gujarat where Parsi settlements exist and existed, such as Surat, Navsari, Udvada, Khambhat, Bharuch and other such places. The idea behind this project is to make available to scholars and anyone interested ready reference on material available anywhere in these libraries on a subject-wise basis; thus facilitating research and study. The project has completed its first phase of covering the Asiatic Society Library and some other libraries in Bombay. In the course of this work many books, journals, manuscripts, some dating back to the 1600s have been found damaged and some beyond repair.

The Asiatic Society has started an "Adopt a Book Scheme" for this very purpose to conserve books and micro-

film those beyond repair, or doing both for the very rare and precious collections. The Asiatic Society of Bombay now has two laboratories, the Conservation Laboratory and Microfilming Laboratory, both dedicated to prolong the life of their valuable books.

Donors may adopt a book or any number of books either for conservation or for microfilming for Rs 1,000 or for both conservation and microfilming for Rs 2,000. Donors have a right to adopt a particular title or section or name a subject or discipline. Show how much you care by adopting one or more books for the Parsi heritage project.

The Parsi heritage project would like to take up the preservation and micro-filming of its collection on the same basis.

We appeal to book lovers and those concerned with preserving the Parsi heritage for posterity to join the "Adopt a Book Scheme" and contribute to this project. We can be contacted at Town Hall, Bombay 400023, E-mail: asbl@giashom2.vsnl.net.in. Tel: 2660956. Fax: 2665139.

Dr MANI KAMERKAR

Vice-President, Asiatic Society of Bombay and
Coordinator, Heritage of the Parsi Community Project

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For the affluent aged

The proposal for a senior citizens' home in south Bombay contemplated by Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) needs our full support. It's the need of the hour for all who are unable to bear the stress and strain of domestic and health problems alone. But please let us have a home with rooms and attached bathrooms (however small), furniture enough for comfort, good, wholesome food with room service if and when necessary, lift, TV and telephone facilities. Ideally there should be an in-house retired doctor and nurse who can give his/her service in return for free board and lodge and a supervisor who is paid well and has a humanitarian approach.

We do have many homes here and in Gujarat but they all cater to the lower class and leave much to be desired. Let this home be for the upper middle class who may want to be close to their relatives and friends in Bombay, as also the atash behrams and doongerwadi, good hospitals, etc since their own children are settled abroad. Many of these NRIs are deeply worried and concerned about their dear ones staying alone and facing all the hardships of weak health, domestic problems, etc in spite of being financially well-off. We are thinking of couples as also individuals who have lost their spouses. It should also have the warmth of a home and facilities for interaction with other residents through some activities and a common meeting place (or garden). All this may sound like a tall order equal to hotel accommodation.

Please remember we have more than enough senior citizens' homes coming up for the lower middle class but their service leaves much to be desired, with indifferent supervisors who are underpaid.

In most of these places, barring a few like the Parukh Dharamshala at Hughes Road, the trustees have left almost everything to the supervisor. In some cases the place may have airy rooms and dormitories at reasonable rates, but the management leaves much to be desired.

In one home the newly constructed blocks, in spite of all the facilities, are isolated far from the road. A couple which went with high hopes returned heartbroken because of the manager's indifferent attitude. Meals were to be cooked and supplied by his sister but were ordered from a nearby hotel and sufficient only for one person. TV and other facilities were at the discretion of the manager.

Such complaints from other homes should serve as an eye opener to improve the quality of lives of our senior citizens.

KUMI J. DAROOWALA

Overseas charities

Many Parsis, especially the young, have settled in good numbers outside India. It seems this tendency is steadily increasing. There are various reasons for the same. Some think that those who do so care very little about their coreligionists staying in India, their various institutions and especially places of worship, religious teachings, ceremonies, history, culture, etc. However, experience proves that it is not so.

In fact Parsis staying outside the country are more sympathetic towards their coreligionists in Surat, Navsari and Udvada. Noble-hearted Zoroastrians from the associations of Greater New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Greater Boston area, California, Arizona, Florida, Maryland and Philadelphia, have for long continued to be helpful to the needy of our motherland, our religious institutions, athornans, village folk, ruvan-khata kamdars and others.

Since 1984, Prof Eruch Munshi, Mehroo and Lovji Cama of New York have started collecting good amounts from fellow Zoroastrians of the above places and sending them as donations. Living miles away from their motherland they deem it their duty to contribute on the occasion of the Parsi New Year for the last several years. As per this practice this year too they sent a very liberal amount of Rs 1,85,948 to Surat. An equal amount was sent to Udvada and Navsari.

In 1984, Perin and Eruch Munshi started annual luncheon get-togethers. All luncheon expenses were borne by them. The first time, the amount collected was \$ 2,084. Since Perin's demise in 1993, Mehroo and Lovji have joined the noble cause. This year they collected \$ 13,200 from the various associations. We, who are connected with the Parsi Panchayat, Surat, various religious institutions of this historic city and those who get the benefit of this generosity feel so very grateful to them and thank them very sincerely for their kind thoughts. When we are passing through hard times these days, this help is very welcome and it will lessen our difficulties, to some extent, in maintaining the institutions and helping the deserving of the community.

► We salute our dear coreligionists who, though staying away from us, have kept

a place for us in their hearts.

Dr SAM S. BHACCA

President, Surat Parsi Panchayat

"The Top Ten"

We read with interest the announcement regarding nominations for The Top Ten in *Parsiana*, December 1997 and the Editor's request for names of Parsi/Zoroastrian 'greats.' This information is of particular relevance to us in the light of a project for which we are requesting suggestions and initiating discussions and which would take place in London in 1999.

Parsiana is rightly attempting to compile a list of outstanding Parsis/Zoroastrians. Our project aims, through photographic exhibitions, lectures, seminars and other means, to highlight the immense contributions made by the Parsis/Zoroastrians in various fields, be it by freedom fighters to the independence movement in India, by industrialists to the wealth of that country or in social, cultural and other spheres.

The project is at its very early stages and stems from a desire to highlight some of these tremendous achievements and, through this series of events, heighten the UK public's awareness of the legacy left by those whom we can, even today, justifiably be proud of.

We would be happy and grateful to receive and discuss suggestions from *Parsiana* readers and others. The scope and extent of the events will, of course, depend on the finances available. All correspondence may be addressed to the undersigned at: 52 Peterborough Road, London SW6 3EB, UK. Tel: 441717314153. E-mail: sargamasc@aol.com

SHIREEN ISAL-BARIA, ZERBANOO GIFFORD

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I wish to nominate Mr Maneck Behramji Javat of Karachi, Pakistan for his outstanding contribution to humanity, during the current century, through the cause of life insurance savings and protection.

Starting at the age of 23, he exposed himself relentlessly day in and day out to the market, persuading people to be self-sufficient and make their family units ready to face the storms of an uncertain economic future. There were initial setbacks, as is to be expected, yet he vigorously doubled his efforts and soon success followed. Maneck joined the insurance industry in 1955 with the American Life Insurance Company and remained on contract up to its nationalization in

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1972. He attended the College of Insurance at Surbiton, England for the inspectors course and practical training at London and Nottingham in 1962, and specialized in group life and group accident and medical insurance. Thereafter he qualified for the American Life Middle East education trips in 1963 and 1965, being the only person to qualify twice from Pakistan. Later he won the international award from the National Association of Life Underwriters of USA in 1965, 1966, 1967 and 1970.

There were other distinctions too: he qualified for American Life, Home Office Building dedication ceremony at Wilmington, Delaware, USA in 1967 as the only member from Pakistan; qualified for the National Quality Award of the Insurance Association of Pakistan in 1968 and 1969; double qualified for the American Life Agency Convention from 1965-70; won President Ayre's Field Workers Award Campaign in 1965 and stood first among the Pakistani field workers and sixth among the world Aliconians...

Since 1985 he has been working as life insurance consultant for multinational companies, industries and individuals.

The most singular achievement for Maneck was when his herculean efforts crowned him with success in qualifying for a seat in the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table Conference of USA, consisting of the world's most outstanding life insurance salesmen. They have to sell over one million dollars worth of life insurance, or its equivalent, in a calendar year. Maneck had to secure proposals worth one crore of rupees. And, during 1971, 1973 and 1975 he qualified to attend the Conference at USA. Maneck was the sole Pakistani to attend and to him fell the honor of hoisting the Pakistan flag at the Seattle Conference.

Himself a deeply religious man, Maneck Javat sang with Benedict of Norcia that "To labour is to pray" and he was in total agreement with the dictum of Pope Pius XII who proclaimed: "Work is not only, for every man, a means of decent livelihood, but it is the means through which all those manifold powers and faculties with which nature, training and art have endowed the dignity of the human personality, find their necessary expression."

DADI R. SURTI
Karachi, Pakistan



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Events and Personalities

Preserving Parsi culture

"There's not a single institution that looks after the cultural aspects of the Parsi community. It needs to be done," says Dr Homi Dhalla, Zoroastrian scholar and founder president of the recently established World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation (WZCF). Co-trustee of the Foundation, which has been registered with the charity commissioner, Bombay, together with legal counsel Nadir Modi and Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) trustee Dinshaw Tamboly, Dhalla hopes to induct trustees from different parts of the world to make the Foundation "truly international." The trustees of the Incorporated Trust Funds of Hong-kong, Shanghai and Macao together with the WZO and other trusts are currently helping the Foundation to launch its five-part program to preserve and revive the community's cultural infrastructure.

The Foundation expects to function from its one-room office at Chikalwadi, Tardeo, Bombay, provided by the Liaison Committee thanks to the intercession of former BPP chairman and present chairman of the Zoroastrian Association Dr Aspi Golwalla, acknowledges Dhalla.

First on the Foundation's list of projects is the documentation of the community's history from 1947 to 2000 AC. This job has already been assigned to Hormazdyar Dalal. Capt Hormuzdiar Desai, trustee of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), is similarly working on the history of Navsari. Both dissertations are expected to be comprehensive with "a very wide horizon" including

economic, religious and social developments, says Dhalla.

To add to the two major libraries which are repositories of Zoroastrian history and religious scholarship — the KRCOI Library in Bombay and the Meherjirana Library in Navsari — the WZCF is in the process of opening a new center of learning at the Albert Edward Institute and Cowasjee Dinshaw Hall and Library at East Street, Poona. The large number of 1,500 titles in Zoroastrian and Iranian studies from the collection of Nagpur's Ervad Hormusji Pavri is currently being cataloged before being publicized to the Poona Zoroastrians and the Poona University, says Dhalla. WZCF would like to establish a similar facility in

South India — in Madras or Bangalore, he adds.

The WZCF's third priority according to Dhalla is the reprinting of old books. First on the list is Framroz Rustomji's *Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians* — now accomplished. The finance for the reprint was provided by the author's two daughters now settled in Australia: Dr Pilloo Rustomji and Jer Rustomji. *The Religion of the Good Life* by Sir Rustam Masani is next on the list of titles for revival. The works of Sir J. J. Modi and Sheriarji Bharucha, an anthology of Parsi Gujarati poets in the last 100 years including Ardeshir Khabardar, Jehangir Desai, Jamshedji Petit and Behramji Malbari are other ventures. "Audience or no audience, these things have to be preserved," Dhalla is categorical. These poets had probed into all aspects of life, he says,

hence their work provides a gleam into the Parsi mind as it unfolded in the course of a century. "We have just not cared to preserve things. I have an anthology of Malbari's poems culled from four books. Even the KRCOI doesn't have them!" Dhalla comments on the community's indifference, as people forced to fit into smaller residences in increasingly inflationary times shed items of no immediate use to them without pausing to ponder their intrinsic value.

The last and most ambitious project is to preserve Avesta-Pahlavi manuscripts and put them on CD-ROM which has a lifespan of 350 years according to specialists, says Dhalla. He cites the University Grants Commission's 15-crore-rupee project to put 170 libraries of the country on the Internet. "The 2,000 manuscripts of the KRCOI would get worldwide exposure on CD-ROM," he notes, adding, "The 500-year-old manuscripts at Navsari are crumbling. If nothing is done, they're gone!" The WZCF hopes to start the project with some manuscripts in private collections.

Teaching Gujarati to Parsi students has already begun, with Saturday morning classes at Girton High School catering to their own students plus those from the Lady Engineer, Cowasjee Jehangir and Panday High Schools. Similar classes are being conducted at the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and Bai A. F. Petit High Schools, and Dadar is the next location under consideration. Using the "play-way" method of teaching languages (which eliminates homework) followed by snacks, the Foundation hopes to create enough interest to hold competitions by the end of the year.

The revival of Parsi songs, *Shah Nameh* recitals and kirtans on regular basis are other ideas which the WZCF is



Dhalla: "We have not cared to preserve things"

Photo: Arnavaz Mama

exploring. Dhalla seeks to preserve old agriaries and sites like the Bahrot Caves (where the Iranshah was lodged for nearly 12 years during intense political strife in Gujarat) to which there is currently no easy access, no security and no cleanliness. Dhalla would like to create a motorable road to enable more Zoroastrians to visit the Caves. There is also an ongoing project of setting Gathic stanzas to western classical music involving Meher Jansen.

Well-known in interfaith circles, Dhalla was involved in organizing a Hindu-Christian dialog on conversion under the auspices of the World Conference for Religion and Peace (WCRP). He is the only Parsi on the board of the Inter-religious Federation for World Peace, New York and on the board of advisors of the Oxford-based Interfaith Centre. He has also been involved with the activities of the San Francisco based United Religions Initiative.

Acknowledging the guiding influence of the late Dastur Nowrooz Minochehr-Homji, Dhalla's interests include human rights, ecology, peace and education besides interfaith dialog. Near his Lonavala farm he says he invited school children from the vicinity

to plant 1,400 saplings of neem, tamarind, eucalyptus and casuarina and has urged farmers from the villages around him to look after them as future revenue earners. The project has been partly funded by the New York based WCRP.

Arnavaz S. Mama

Intellectual interaction

School children as also college students were given "a platform to intellectually interact with one another" at Brainstorm 1998, an all-Parsi quiz contest conducted by the Rustom Baug Association on September 13, 1998.

Twenty-five teams participated in the elimination round from which 16 teams were selected for the finals, writes the joint honorary secretary B. R. Gazdar in his report. The competitors who were divided into four groups vied for cash prizes gifted by Jamshed and Shirin Guzder, the Rustom Baug Association and those received in memory of Banu and Ervad Mahiyar, Framroze Dastoor and Meherji Rana.

Among the winning teams, the most notable performance was in the second group (standard VIII to X) where the victors were all from the Dadar Parsi Youths Assembly: Farzad Ghadiali,

Neville Pawri and Pervez Daruwalla. In the first group (up to standard VII) the winners were Danesh Taraporewala from St Mary's ICSE, Pashyn Sethna from St Mary's SSC and Zarvan Mistry from Christ Church. In the third group comprising junior college students the winners were Sharzad Sethna from Jai Hind, and Arzan Bhagat and Hoshidar Mistry from the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution. The fourth group which constituted senior college students from different colleges saw Porus Zainabadi from Lala Lajpatrai, Navroj Sanjana from Jai Hind and Rushad Kapadia from BVCOE emerge as victors.

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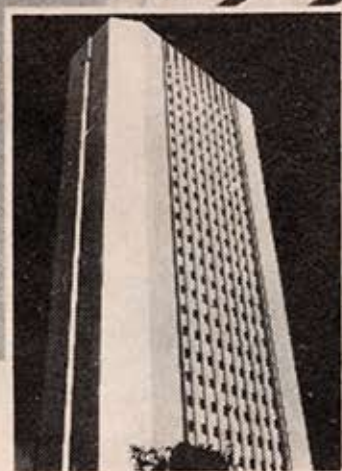
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Reaching for the Sky



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Fast on the net

Zoroastrian.Net, the new website launched from Bombay on August 21, 1998, has been chosen for the Best of the Planet People's Choice Awards 1998, notes a press release issued by Hilbur Daruvala. Competing with sites from companies like Pepsi, Playboy magazine, Ferrari and Apple Computer, Zoroastrian.Net was judged for the speed and ease of use of its site, design, quality of content, timeliness and the level of interactivity and use of technology. Their website <http://www.Zoroastrian.Net> which is entitled to carry the Best of the Planet Awards citation and icon will be put through two more stages of evaluation to decide the final winners, notes the release.

Conceptualized and designed by Larry Grant, Zoroastrian.Net has two parts: The first part aims to be the definitive site for all material on the Zoroastrian religion and the Parsi community, accommodating the views of famous authors and historical authorities. It also carries a news section announcing births, deaths, etc which will be published free of cost. In addition there is a provision for books and publications, famous families, personal profiles, classified adver-



"Simple but sincere" Zarathoshtis selected to receive awards from the Parvez Katrak Foundation at the felicitation function at Aslaji Agiary in March '98 (from left) Khurshed Sanjana, Eruch Billimoria, Maneck Chena, chief guest Dhanmai Madon, Parvez Katrak, Parvez Mehta and Jal Sarkari Photo: C. C. Gandevia

tisements, an extensive guide to agiaries, trusts, dharamshalas and Zoroastrian organizations and sites around the world. The complete *Gathas* and guides to all ceremonies and prayers will be incorporated soon to make it "the single largest source of information and communication within the community," as per the detailed write-up.

The Parsi Personal Touch in the second part is what gives Zoroastrian.Net its unique character, notes the article. It offers personal services, presently available only in Bombay and Poona, in the form of arranging all the logistics for navjotes and weddings, the saying of prayers at an agiary or at the doongerwadi, or arranging to visit the old or

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Piloo Jungalwalla with husband Nowshir (inset)



losophy on life absorbing. As he says in *Inhibitions*:

"What the eyes do not see
The heart does not grieve;
What the ears do not hear
There can be no fear;
What the tongue does not speak
There is nothing to retrieve, and
What the finger does not write
There need be no reprieve.
If thus we believe,
Then why must we live?..."

The last 10 pages of this book are devoted to "Quotes by N. S. Pochkhanawala" wherein he states, "The best thoughts are those which come without thinking."

Also in 1998 we had received another work from this author, *6 Short Tales*. The stories are of varying tastes: two fantasies, one reality, three fictions, each with a moral, be it the need for peace of mind over prosperity, the bonds of close ties, the healing presence of a godfather, the good and evil effects of poison, pursuing one's convictions, showing concern for the present rather than the future. As reads a blurb on the back cover, "Remember that in life fantasy can turn to fiction and fiction into reality."

Besides fiction and poetry which pre-occupied him in his later life, Pochkhanawala had applied his mind to financial, economic, industrial, political and other subjects as borne out by the different articles he has authored. Prior to his consultancy work he was involved with the erstwhile D&P Products (Private) Limited, manufacturers of the Dipy brand of processed food which he had co-founded. A graduate from the London School of Economics and Political Science, this son of Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala (the founder of the Central Bank of India) and Lady Sakerbai had also studied banking and law.

His books, published under the banner of Enespee Publications, always listed his many titles and promised of "more to come."

The mark of the mariner

"Based on his outstanding accomplishments to date and the noble example he has set for his peers and entire community," Capt Sam B. Aga was selected Man of the Year 1997 by the American Biographical Institute. He was conferred

ailing on behalf of those not able to do so personally.

Simply significant

"Every seven days there is a break in our calendar...To remind us of our loving creator, Dada Hormazd. The entire calendar is centered on Him and His beautiful creation," explains Piloo Nanavutty (Jungalwalla) in her 16-page booklet *Our Sacred Calendar - A Quiz for Young and Old* to help the readers comprehend the significance of Dae-pa-Adar, Dae-pa-Meher, Dae-pa-Din among the 30 *roz*s every month.

The logic behind the 30 days is effectively conveyed in a question-answer format so that even those who may know their *roz* days by heart without understanding the attributes they denote can henceforth grasp the basics. "Now that the 11th day is named Khorshed, the sun, will the 12th day be named Mohor, the moon?" This query posed in the book will remain with the reader for a long time. So too will the message for the cluster of Meher, Srosh and Rashna: "On the fourth day (after death) at dawn, Srosh (the guardian of all human souls, specially after death), with Rashna (who holds the scales of justice) and Meher (the just judge) leads the soul to Chinvat Bridge, the bridge of judgment."

Those interested in obtaining a free copy of this booklet, which serves as educational material for the Young Farohars of Delhi, should write to Brig A. S. Sahukar (Retd), joint secretary, Delhi Parsi Anjuman, Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Delhi Gate, New Delhi 110002.

While Piloo Jungalwalla continues to be committed to her religious pur-

suits, her late husband Nowshir who was a medical practitioner of renown having to his credit "humanitarian and professional accomplishments" was offered the 2000 Millennium Medal of Honor by the American Biographical Institute. In their letter of June 1998, nearly three years after his demise, the Institute announced "you are one of the few selected for nomination... for the century's most notable medal commemorating extraordinary achievement during the last 100 years."

"Then why must we live?"

"There is no greater joy than this,
To separate from here
My friend,
All wish yet unfulfilled
Will finally
Come to an end.
Wish no more to love or hate,
Not to have, not to wait,
And sorrow can
Never over-
take."

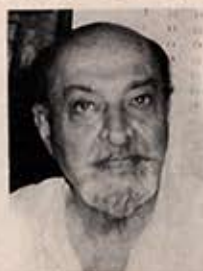
This was the last of Noshir Sorabji Pochkhanawala's 84 verses carried in *My Poems* which he published in 1998, a few months before the demise of this industrial consultant in October 1998. Written during the period 1937 to 1998, there is a certain pining, an element of unrequited love which permeates the poems and keeps the reader engrossed. The illustrations are catchy and his phi-



Pochkhanawala:
from reality to
fantasy

this distinction at a function on July 31, notes a press release. He was also named Man of the Year 1997 by the shipping fraternity of India and enjoys the honor of being listed in the sixth edition of 5,000 Personalities of the World which is an international recognition for service to the marine profession, adds the write-up from the Exim News Service.

He is a senior partner in Ericson and Richards, a ship and marine surveying company to almost all Indian and most foreign owned shipping companies, underwriters, salvage associations and protection and indemnity clubs. "Due to his strict no-nonsense and friendly work attitude, Ericson and Richards with Capt Aga at the helm has been appointed as non exclusive surveyor to various well known and respected ship classification societies like the American Bureau of Shipping, Germanischer Lloyd, Nippon Kaiji Kyokai... (and as) nautical safety inspectors for the governments of Liberia, Bahamas, Panama, Honduras..." states the release.



Aga: at the helm

Lucknow born Aga joined the training ship *Dufferin* in 1931, then gained expertise with different establishments like Scindia, Bombay Port Trust, P&O Lines, and is now respected for his varied practical experience of pilotage, ship and cargo surveys, cargo adjustment of ships, fire and quality surveys, pre-shipment surveys, etc. As chairman, president, master and member of numerous nautical institutions his versatility both on-shore and off-shore have been put to optimal use.

Dramatic felicitation

Several charges were levelled at him. The acting judge sentenced him to perform dramas regularly till the end of his life. This was the fate decreed for thespian Yazdi Karanjia of Surat at the mock trial arranged to felicitate him on the occasion of his completing 60 years in March 1998. As conveyed by Gujarati litterateur Dr Ratan Marshall, "This was a unique function where people gath-

Karanjia (left) being honored by Chandrakant Purohit as wife Veera looks on

ered in such large numbers that it was not possible to accommodate all in the auditorium." The entire performance which lasted for nearly four hours was telecast by the local TV channel for two consecutive days, we are informed.

The Yazdi Karanjia Group is credited with being the only drama troupe regularly performing Parsi Gujarati plays in all parts of the country. Recently they performed at Singapore and will soon be marking the 200th anniversary of their popular play *Behram ni sasoo*, written by the late Phiroze Antia, notes the report.

A commerce teacher by profession Karanjia is the principal of The Cambay Institute of Commerce and founded the Yazdi Karanjia Group in 1959 under the guidance of his father. With the cooperation of his wife, siblings, children and friends, Karanjia produces light and innocent comedies, their main aim being to keep alive Gujarati theater and perform mainly for charitable causes.

A recipient of the Gujarat Gaurav Award by the government of Gujarat in 1994, Karanjia was awarded the Swar Sadhna Ratna for outstanding contribution in the field of art and drama in 1996-97.

Left his stamp

Hailed as the doyen of philately, Darabshaw Rustomji Mistry who died at the age of 91 on August 8, 1998 was best known for his collection of wildlife stamps. "He has more than 20,000 wildlife stamps carefully pasted onto 1,200 album pages. Some of the rare stamps date back to the 19th century," read the entry which first appeared in the *Limca Book of Records 1992*. His "zoo on

stamps" depicted birds, mammals, fish, butterflies, insects, reptiles, amphibians and pre-historic animals with each topic sometimes running into more than 100



Mistry: philately more than a hobby

pages, notes a write-up by Cyrus D. Sidhva of the Athornan Boarding Madressa.

Although he was attracted towards philately since his school days at the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee

Charitable Institution, it was only during his years of service with Volkart Brothers that he could collect a good number of Swiss stamps from discarded correspondence covers, mentions Sidhva. As noted *The Times of India* of December 25, 1966, "To this modest old man, philately is hardly a hobby — it is a labor of love, a way of life, chosen and cultivated with tender care through the long hard years of manhood and middle age." Former president and governing council member of the Empire of India Philatelic Society, Mistry is known to have participated in many national and international exhibitions and had won 48 awards, as per Sidhva's count.

As managing trustee of his grandfather's Jivanji Jamaspji Mistri Adarian in Sayedpura, Surat, during the centenary celebrations of the Agiary in 1997 he was felicitated for his 52 years of selfless and dedicated service to the Agiary, recalls his daughter Aileen.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



The changing guard

The 11th AGM of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America welcomed its third president

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The willingness to accept challenges to convention is revitalizing to the religion and it helps the religion to regain the moral strength which it must wield," noted outgoing FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) president Dolly Dastoor in her valedictory address at the Federation's 11th annual general meeting (AGM) at Rye Brook, New York on July 1, 1998. "Let us live and let live. If to keep harmony, we can all march to many drummers, we will create a comfortable Zarathushti space to accommodate all of 'us' of all different persuasions," she added.

New York's Framroze Patel, who succeeds Dastoor as president, was elected in a postal ballot by the member associations. Coming in as vice president is Ardeshtir Anoushiravani of Los Angeles. Rustom Kevala who had been chairman of FEZANA's publications committee since 1991 resigned to join the board as treasurer, a post vacated by Sarosh Collector. Mehran Sepehri and Mahrukh Motafram continue as secretary and assistant secretary respectively.

A direct result of the strategic plan adopted by FEZANA a year ago is the production of *The Zarathushti Religion, A basic textbook* compiled by Mobed Faribourz Shahzadi in collaboration with Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies (ZS), Bombay. Prepared under the CIMNA (Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America) banner it has been cosponsored by FEZANA and the North American Mobeds Council. A basic curriculum for religious education has been prepared and printed by the religious education committee to complement this text book aimed at expand-

ing the "knowledge base of the religion." *Paradise*, a docudrama on the life and thought of Zarathushtra, produced earlier, is part of the same effort. The second edition of the *Zarathushti in North America: Directory and Yellow Pages* now includes over 9,000 names as against the first edition covering 4,000

names, testifying to the increasing reach of FEZANA's member associations to community members and thereby providing a "better handle on North American (NA) Zoroastrian demography."

FEZANA itself counted a new associate at the 11th AGM as the Zoroastrian Association of Florida joined to increase its membership to 23 associations across the continent. The bound agenda and reports of the office bearers and committee chairpersons was a welcome innovation at this AGM.

Another achievement has been the recognition of FEZANA as a religious non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council, as noted Dastoor.

The creation of a FEZANA webpage, averaging 300 visits a day from interested people and a prototype Press kit have been aimed at providing greater exposure and awareness of the religion to other communities.

The Press kit prepared by FEZANA's public relations committee chaired by Jim Engineer was distributed to the member associations. Providing capsule information on the religion and the community, its history and scriptures, languages and literature, the kit is aimed at North American media requirements and gives substantial coverage to

FEZANA. In her covering letter Dastoor acknowledges the input of Bombay's Firoza Punthakey-Mistree and Khojeste Mistree of ZS in the compilation. To Montreal's Vahista Canteenwalla is ascribed the layout and presentation of the well-organized kit.

Summarizing their 1994-96 activities that resulted in the publication of the first edition of the *NA Directory*, project chairman Dr Noshir Langrana recounted that the visual basic program was developed by Viraf Commissariat who worked long and hard together with other ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) members to generate a consistent format for this data. The directory census project had generated approximately \$ 7,000, said Langrana.

"The second time around the data collection was a lot less painful," he added. The 432-page second edition of the *Directory* includes over 3,900 family entries with about 9,000 names, providing postal and e-mail addresses and phone and fax numbers.

Other information included in the *Directory* are listings of FEZANA's officers and committee chairpersons, NA associations, small groups, and dar-e-mehers, overseas Zarathushti organizations, the Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America and the North American Mobeds Council. An index of Zarathushti web pages and the *Zoroastrian Business Network Directory* are also included.

The printing and shipping costs of \$ 7,980 have been defrayed from an advertisement income of \$ 9,500. Priced at US \$10, postal copies of the *Directory* may be ordered from Langrana, 19 Brookfield Way, Robbinsville, NJ 08691 on a cheque payment of \$13 payable to FEZANA which includes a three dollar postal charge.

Co-organizer of the directory census project was Anahita Sidhwa. Census



Patel: in the vanguard
Photo: Porus Cooper

information sought included country of origin and year of birth, sex and religion. Canteenwalla and Dastoor worked to ensure that entries from all associations were made available and the 16-strong "volunteer Directory users group did an excellent (job of the) collaborative data entry and editing," reported Langrana. Apart from ZAGNY's Rohinton Cama and Sheroo Kanga, Langrana acknowledged Firoza Fitch's cover page graphics, Katy Driver's advertisement collection, Shahriyar Shahriyari's Zoroastrian business net information, Feraydoon Demehri's web page listings and Kaika Clubwala's assistance for printing and shipping.

The Zarathushti Religion Education Curriculum developed by the FEZANA education committee in collaboration with the two mobed councils of NA is enhanced with a list of available books and materials, submitted its chairperson Kayomash Mehta. It has been divided into six levels, each level to be covered in two years to coincide with 12 years of schooling, Mehta noted. Interested adults could use the curriculum at an accelerated pace, he added.

Mehta also presented a project to the AGM to start imaging and indexing Zarathushti scriptures, seeking an initial funding approval of \$ 3,000. "Over a period of several years, we could have all of our scriptures and rare manuscripts recorded in an electronic format for access, retrieval and archiving," he noted.

Also under investigation is the feasibility of establishing a higher learning institution on the lines of Bombay's K. R. Cama Oriental Institute. Noting that the cost of starting it at an existing center would be approximately \$ 2,000, Mehta added that the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago had offered the use of its library facility for the purpose.

According to the report submitted by Kevala on behalf of the publications committee, the FEZANA Journal now goes to 28 countries including Belarus, Greece, Russia, China and Hongkong. There is however only one subscription from Iran. Kevala also noted that despite the rise in subscribers in the US and Canada "many people still have not heard of FEZANA or the Journal" and requested Zarathushtis in the know to send gift subscriptions to such individuals. He acknowledged the effort of subscription manager Mehrdad Khosraviani in

increasing the number of subscribers.

With donations and sponsorship together nearly equaling the revenue from subscription, the Journal registers a small surplus. Their advertisement revenue is so small that Kevala reported, "We are debating whether we should solicit more ads or should we just accept the low ad

"We could have all of our scriptures and rare manuscripts recorded in an electronic format"

revenues and not clutter up the Journal with more ads."

The two-year-old FEZANA web site (www.fezana.org maintained by Rita Kapadia of AltaVisions) receives "250-350 hits per day," about 200 being from educational sites, universities, libraries, reported Kevala. Interpreting this to mean that Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti students "are interested in our religion and want to learn about FEZANA," Kevala underscored the need to keep the site up-to-date and relevant. He also hoped it would provide a link between FEZANA and all those Zarathushtis who have chosen not to join any formal association.

The web contents currently include an index of all articles in the Journal as well as selected articles plus information on latest happenings in NA. The World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 will also have a web page to keep people informed of the progress.

The domain name www.zarathushti.org acquired by FEZANA includes pages for the two mobed councils, links to other sites of Zarathushti interest together with a bibliography of books and relevant material on the religion available in college libraries in NA provided by professional librarian Aban Rustomji of Houston.

The publications committee is budgeting for a production assistant to help editor-in-chief Roshan Rivetna in her myriad duties including the entire typesetting and layout, collecting, sorting and mailing the Journal after it is printed etc. "The job would be ideal for a high-school student as the experience will count towards community service work which is required to gain admission at many universities," notes Kevala. They

are also considering the purchase of a high-quality photo and text scanner to streamline production.

A draft proposal for a FEZANA Trust Fund for Zarathushtis was submitted by Patel with the objective of providing financial assistance to Zarathushti students who have obtained admission to NA universities. The corpus of the Fund is expected to be generated through donations from FEZANA member associations, charitable trusts, institutions and individuals. Financial assistance could take the form of loans, credits or outright grants.

The proposal was approved at the AGM and an initial amount of \$15,000 was transferred from FEZANA coffers, of which \$10,000 was to be reinvested and \$5,000 to be used for scholarship once the process was established. Contributions of over \$1,000 were made from the floor in honor of Dastoor who had passionately espoused the project during her term as president, as notes a precis of the proceedings received by Parsiana.

FEZANA, which has been offered 35 acres of land near Crestone, Colorado for use as a religious heritage site by the Manitou Foundation, has decided to make an application for the property without any major commitment at this point. The pristine area comes with water and sewer connections. All development must conform to the covenants and restrictions of the Foundation's Environment and Architectural (E & A) Committee: Only 15 percent of the land is permitted to be disturbed for grading, construction of roads; total area under roof to be one percent of the total with building height limited to 35 feet which is the height of the tree canopy in the region.

According to Kevala's submission the total area under roof will be limited to 15,246 square feet. "Construction costs and costs of heating and cooling will limit the building size anyway. The building height restriction will permit a two-storey structure above ground, plus underground space if desired. Hence the conservation requirements do not seem to be overly restrictive."

The rugged and mountainous terrain, uncluttered by human settlements, reminded many in the FEZANA visiting group of Iran's Pir-e-Sabz and Pir-e-Banu in the deserts of Yazd where Iranian Zoroastrians congregate for a few days each year to renew their spiritual

continued on page 48

A 'clean' business

With large institutional clients and thriving retail outlets, Leach and Weborny is one of Bombay's oldest and biggest laundries

Text and photographs by Hilla P. Guzder

"When a passenger liner sailed into Bombay, Leach and Weborny would pick up 20,000 pieces of laundry, large and small, from the ship. The collection of clothes would itself take half a day and the entire consignment had to be washed and delivered within 36 hours. Charging a flat rate of less than one rupee per piece, only one bag would be actually counted, the rest would be packed by 100s and delivered on trust," recalls Aderbad Debu, partner of Leach and Weborny, one of the city's oldest laundries, reminiscing about the firm's early years.

"In the 1940s it cost four annas for a customer to get his shirt laundered, eight annas for pant dry-cleaning and the princely sum of Rs 2.50 for a suit! Today, laundering a three-piece suit would cost Rs 125," chuckles the short, spry and loquacious 85-year-old laundryman, his razor-sharp intellect recalling with clarity finer details of times long past. Interspersing the interview with receiving visitors, briskly signing cheques and issuing instructions to his staff, Debu states in gentle tones: "My word is law here, but I never say anything to hurt anybody." The God-fearing octogenarian keeps his head reverentially covered at all times with his Parsi topi.

The laundry, housed since 1956 in the present large premises at Mahalaxmi (Worli), is in the heart of an industrial area, surrounded by a proliferation of workshops, auto repair garages and other small and medium sized industrial units in a maze of narrow and crowded streets. "We bought these premises from the South Indian Insurance Company, Madras," informs Debu. "There used to be an aluminium-stamping concern here and we had to spend a good amount of money to make the place functional." Describing his laundry as the largest in Bombay in terms of volume and busi-

ness, Debu states that Leach and Weborny handles about 18,000 pieces a day, large and small, which include washing, dry-cleaning, dyeing and carpet cleaning. Hotels, restaurants, export



Debu: attending office regularly at 85

houses and pharmaceutical companies form a part of their regular clientele, while retail business is carried out through eight branches situated at Hamam Street, Fort (which is also their head office), Nana Chowk, Gowalia Tank, Mohammedali Road (Chakala), Byculla, King's Circle and Shivaji Park. Practically all washing is done by machine, with not even five percent being done by hand. All flat pieces are ironed by calenders (machines where cloth is pressed through rollers). "All our machines are imported and have given sterling service over years and years," declares Debu. The factory shed is a labyrinth of thick pipes, machine presses, tumble dryers, vacuum and shampoo cleaners, dry-cleaning machines and dyeing vats, with workmen trundling trolleys piled with clothes from one section to another. A fleet of vans parked

outside ferry the laundered linen to and from the various branches.

Leach and Weborny came into the hands of the Deboo ("I am the only one who spells my surname Debu," enlightens Aderbad) family on October 1, 1940 when Aderbad's brother Rusi bought the shop he was working in from its owner Kaikhushroo Limjibhai Panday. At that time the shop consisted of a small room in Hamam Street with a dry-cleaning section. Unaware of Leach and Weborny's history prior to that time, Debu displays two advertisements from *The Times of India*. One shows that the firm existed as far back as 1909 as "the leading tailors," with a dry-cleaning department and a boot and shoe department accompanying the tailoring section! The second advertisement dated 1924 publicizes Leach and Weborny's "business and office suits... smart and dressy..." with one suit costing Rs 45 and three suits Rs 125! By that time the firm had a branch in Poona as well.

Twelve years after he took over the business, Rusi bought a ready-made laundry at Jacob Circle, finally moving into the present premises at Mahalaxmi on Khordad Sal in 1956. Rusi remained the sole proprietor till 1985 when a partnership was formed just before his death. "Rusi was a member of the American and British institutes of laundering. He was abroad for two years around 1949 and that experience stood him in good stead," narrates Aderbad who himself started his working life not with Leach and Weborny but with the Tatas. "I was with Tata Aircraft during the World War II years. We used to repair damaged Spitfires at Dum Dum and Barrackpore and we had a complete salvage unit in Lucknow," he remembers. "We could repair one engine a day and after the War we disbanded 11,000 workers spread over four to five units."



*The family: 1. Aderbad
2. Darius 3. Dolly
4. Shapur 5. Surti 6. Soli
7. Astad 8. Late Rusi
9. rickrack hanging out
to dry 10. carpet cleaning
11. laundry department*





At the factory; retail outlet (right)

An accounts/administration/personnel man, his services were transferred to the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur in 1952, then to Tata Robins Fraser in '73. A posting brought him to Bombay two years later and he finally joined Leach and Weborny in 1978.

His younger brother Soli, who is also a partner, has been with the laundry since 1944 and is in charge of outdoor work, site visits to hotels, ships, etc. "He is a good PRO and has fine contacts," observes Debu. Brother Eruch's son Shapur, another partner, has also been with Leach and Weborny for over half a century and is the manager of the head office at Fort. Partner Darius, who is also Eruch's son, looks after purchasing, repairs, etc. "a general major-domo," notes Aderbad, eyes twinkling. Eruch's son-in-law Soli Surti, another working partner, is also at the factory in charge of general work, certain hotels, pharmaceutical companies, etc. In charge of the running of the whole factory is partner Dolly Dinshaw Deboo, a cousin's daughter who joined in the early '50s. "It's a difficult and often thankless task," comments Dolly. Garment quality is inferior to what it was earlier, clothes do not have fast colors, prints wash off, buttons melt and "we have to deal with complaints over the years have ranged from excess staff to hugely excess billing by the electricity department!"

Of Aderbad's three children, ("the greatest event of my life was when I got married in 1945 to Roda Gustad Karai," beams Debu), daughter Kamal Jamshed Antia has been working with the Bank of Baroda in Jamshedpur since the age

of 21, son Astad is an internationally acclaimed dancer (and a 'sleeping partner' in Leach and Weborny, states Debu), whilst the youngest Gulshan works as an Italian speaking tourist guide in Bombay, mainly handling Italian groups. "My whole family, parents, wife, children, were all born in Navsari," communicates Aderbad. Father Shapoorji was an "abkari" contractor, with shops selling country liquor in Mhow and Indore. Aderbad's brothers Bejonji and Eruch ran the shops till their own demise a few years ago, while sister Freny met with a tragic end at the age of 15, when she fell into a well while on a picnic with young friends.

Rusi and Aderbad's early education was at the Zoroastrian Boarding School in Deolali, where the groundwork of their religious as well as secular education was laid. "In school, a prayer before lunch and dinner and thanksgiving before tea was mandatory. By turns every day, a boy had to stand up and pray aloud so he had to know his prayers! We also learnt our prayers on the knee of our *mai-mamai* (mothers and grandmothers)," explains Aderbad, with sibling rivalry among a brood of young children ensuring that each child tried to pick up the prayers faster than the others!

Graduation was from Bombay's Sydenham College, where he sharpened his accounting skills in a class of 90 boys and one girl! "I also learnt Avesta-Pahlavi as a second language in college," asserts Aderbad, "and I can still read the language."

Bemoaning the fact that religious education is not given to children today, Debu stresses the value of religious classes and humbandagi. "Our commu-

nity has become so Anglicized that conversation within the family is in English, not Gujarati." A firm believer in the power of prayer, Debu's prayers include the *Atash, Khorshed, Meher* and *Mahbokhtar Nyaish* recited from memory, while his wife, he says proudly, prays seven *yashts* for two hours every day.

Terming mixed marriages "difficult to stop," Debu believes however that the size of the community is not of paramount importance. "Whatever the quantity, the quality remains. Oh, yes, I see a good future for our community as there is still honesty of purpose. People will think five times before telling a lie, and it is circumstances around them that often force them to lie. Our community will improve, the religion will sustain itself."

In the evening of his life, Debu still attends office religiously every day including Saturdays for half a day. Afternoons are spent on an easy chair in front of the television, with a brief snooze often induced by the ennui of the film on the screen! Relaxation is in the form of solving newspaper crosswords, keeping up with current sports events, etc. "I used to do gymnastics in school, Roman rings were my speciality. I played table-tennis and cricket. That is why I am fit even today," discloses the octogenarian whose stock reply to concerned questions about his health is, "I am better today than yesterday!"

Neither does the question of who will succeed him in the business unduly perturb him. Placing his faith in the younger generation, he calmly enunciates, "God is great. If you are honest and sincere, He will look after you and your establishment."

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Lorrie and Rusi Gorimar's 'Flagship' business sells national, corporate and custom-made flags to clients all over the world

Gustasp Irani

Rusi Gorimar's feelings towards Saddam Hussein of Iraq are ambivalent. Like most Americans he hates his guts. And then again, each time the Middle East dictator rattles his saber, it is good for his family business. Rusi and his wife Lorrie sell flags which Americans love to wave when in the grip of patriotic fervor and no one seems to stir these feelings better than Saddam. Indeed, when the Iraqi strongman overran Kuwait and the allied troops, led by the USA, countered with the highly successful Desert Storm, the business was booming like never before. "There was a point when we had run out of US flags and our two daughters (Leila and Megan who pitched in during their free time) started to sell US flags with 49 stars (there are now 50 stars for the 50 states) from our historic flags stock. That was till we found out and stopped them," says Rusi.

Flagship Distributors, the name by which the family business is known, is more than just into selling US flags which, undoubtedly, account for a large part of their turnover. They stock and sell almost every kind of flag available, Indian included, at their store located at 3746, Sixth Avenue in San Diego, South California. Indeed, you can even buy gay and lesbian flags if you are interested and this is not really surprising since every summer the community organizes a parade down the street where the shop is located. Little wonder, the signboards over their shop as also the clock shop adjacent to the flag shop often lose their 'L's during this annual pageant!

But like any other enterprise, selling flags is a serious business. Lorrie looks after the day-to-day affairs while Rusi, a qualified electronics engineer and a full-time employee of Dynamic Instruments,

chips in during the evenings and over weekends, assisting with the financial, marketing, purchasing and order processing aspects of the business. "Flagship is more than just an across the counter, retail outlet. We also handle a lot of corporate accounts, each one hav-

places where US bases are located. Sales through the Internet account for the majority of our sales from abroad. The return on investment on the Internet is the best I have encountered," says Rusi.

Another avenue of sales comes from corporations that fly US flags and possibly state or corporate flags with their own logo from their headquarters or their subsidiaries. Flags flown by corporations can vary in size from 5'x8' to 20'x30', depending on the height of the flagpole. "These flags reflect the pride of their corporation and as such are designed and manufactured by us to exacting requirements." A world-famous customer of Flagship is Sea World of San Diego which exhibits its pride in America by purchasing large US flags as also flags of the 50 states three to four times a year.

On going through Flagship's brochure (which incidentally was designed and printed in India), one gets an idea of the complexities involved in the business. It is not only the variety of flags available but the fact that they also come in different materials and sizes, from small hand-held flags to large 20'x30' sewn ones that flutter above corporate headquarters and military bases. An interesting sidelight provided by Rusi is that a US flag, when flown on US soil and from one flagpole, must always be flown above all other flags.

Flagship also stocks accessories like hoisting ropes and loops and even emblems, like the bald eagle, that perch on top of flag posts. "We have to carry a fairly high inventory to process an order quickly to stay competitive. When you add it all up, we have to lock a lot of dollars into the business," says Rusi. A crucial part of the operations is determining what to carry and sourcing the material from different manufacturers.

Equally crucial is marketing. Flag-



Rusi and Lorrie Gorimar: selling flags is a serious business

ing its own flag and special requirements," Rusi explains. Some of Flagship's clients include Sony, Coca-Cola, Ryan Aeronautics, NASA Johnson Space Center and the US Navy.

"Schools are also our major customers. Every school in the US is required to fly a US and their state flag (such as California state) on their grounds. Besides a US flag is mounted in every classroom and the auditoriums. This creates a large demand for flags," he adds.

"The Internet has created a large customer base for our business. Our web page <http://www.flagdist.com/flagship> has placed Flagship in the international market. Our orders come from Canada, Mexico, Great Britain, Japan, Australia, Germany, to name a few countries. Orders from the US military are also received from Japan, Saipan and other



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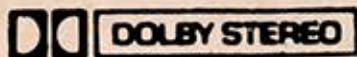
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ship has its own 800 (toll-free) number - 1 (800) 25 Flags. In USA and Canada, this is a special facility whereby anyone, hopefully a potential customer, calls the number free as the charges are reversed and billed to the 800 number. Before subscribing to this facility, Rusi had decided to paint the shop's phone and fax number on the rear window of the mini family van that Lorrie drove each day to work. "At first I thought the idea was quite crazy but on the second day after Rusi had painted the number, I arrived at the shop and on the answering machine was a message from a person, who had been driving behind me on the highway, asking me to call him back as he wanted to know more about our flags," says Lorrie with a laugh.

What made the Gorimars invest in flags? The answer is quite simple. Lorrie's father initially owned the business and was looking to retire and so in 1980, they bought it before anyone else could make him an offer. "My two daughters were quite grown up by then and going to school. I felt I had the time to look after the business. And of course, Rusi promised to help," says Lorrie who graduated with a degree in journalism from San Diego State University and worked as a journalist prior to the birth of the girls. "It seemed the ideal situation at the time. I could keep my job and we had our own little family business," Rusi adds.

But if they thought it would be a bed of roses, they were soon jarred into reality. To keep the business going it took commitment in terms of time and effort. The couple soon realized that they had to grow in terms of the products and services they offered and expand their market to make the business profitable. More importantly, they made certain that their two daughters were not deprived in any way as a result. There was always time to take them for their music classes [Leila plays the flute and baritone (a brass wind instrument), while Megan the flute in marching bands] and other activities. They even bought the girls their own horse, Buckley, which is housed in a riding stable near their home in Escondido not far from San Diego.

Rusi, now a youthful-looking 51, is a contented and happily married man with two beautiful teenage daughters, a good

job and a family business to fall back on. He does not dwell too much upon the early days when at the age of 21 he first arrived in the USA as a student in pursuit of the American dream. When he does talk about those early years, he is guarded

**"The return on
investment on the
Internet is the best I
have encountered"**

and you can almost feel the unstated pain of a young lad, who till then had been sheltered and protected by his family back in Bombay, suddenly

having to fend for himself in an alien world.

Rusi laughs as he recalls that all he had in terms of a survival kit was the ability to fry an egg — something his mother taught him a few days before his departure. He learned the rules of survival on his own quickly — sharing canned food and an apartment with other homesick Indian friends with whom adversity had cemented a lasting bond of friendship. Rusi graduated with a BSc degree in physics from K. C. College in Bombay, a BS degree from California State Polytechnic University in electronics engineering followed by a masters from San Diego State College.

After graduation, he joined Spectral Dynamics Corporation with whom he worked for 10 years. He was in the communication business for the next 10 years when the company was purchased by Scientific Atlanta. When the original promoters of the company sold out and started a new company, Rusi joined them and worked for his third engineering firm. It was a move that might have been expected, for to Rusi old ties mean a lot. Indeed, he makes it a point to return to Bombay as often as possible and on each trip the family tries to slip off to spend a few days at Lord's Central Hotel in Matheran and revive happy childhood memories. Lorrie and their two daughters just love the Indian adventure.

Rusi is not a religious man in the conventional sense of the word though he does wear a sudreh-kusti, partly because he had promised his father never to remove them. Lorrie, born a Unitarian, is not particularly religious either and the two feel that their girls will choose their religion when they grow up. To them, the important thing is to live the good life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds and to strive to express this message in their personal lives.

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Banking on its balance

Shifting from its low-key stance The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Limited is targetting new clients and higher business

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Glass panels and cabins, customer-friendly counters and the efficacious use of space with a mezzanine floor replace the earlier ambience of a Parsi charitable trust office. Originally the headquarters of The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Limited, the premises at Bombay's Horniman Circle are now used for one of the six branches of the rapidly expanding Bank which expects to open five more branches in the near future.

The aesthetic decor of all their branches and offices is a matter of pride for the present managerial team who believe that in today's age the ambience is equally important. "Making the customers feel at home," is their main objective, explains the Bank's managing director Keki Taraporevala. Thanks to the patronage "of our very good customers all our branches were able to show a profit even in the first year of operations," he adds.

Sure, the number of Zoroastrians on their premises outnumber members of other communities even whilst the 71-year-old Bank endeavors to shed the exclusive Parsi image associated with it. As reports the Bank chairman Jehanbux Gandevia, "I was the moving force to make it non-communal. Our advances which were originally Rs 11 lakhs are now nearly Rs 40 crores. It is only because of the other communities."

While a cooperative bank is able "to cater to the needs of small people," it has to operate within the framework of certain "guidelines and restrictions which are outdated," regrets Gandevia. By law, 60 percent of their advances have to be made to the priority sector where only recently occupations such as agriculture and hire-purchase were included. The maximum borrowing limit for individuals now stands at Rs 1,80,00,000 and Rs 3,60,00,000 for associates. For housing, a maximum loan of Rs 5,00,000 to be repaid within 10 years is permitted. Facilities for vehicle finance, loans for

machinery and equipment, overdrafts/loans against shares/units are some of the other services offered at Zoroastrian Bank. Recovery though is always doubtful in the case of the small sector. Yet the Zoroastrian Bank enjoys a reputation of having virtually the lowest overdues (barely one percent non performing assets) among all cooperatives because "we are very particular about recovery," emphasizes Taraporevala. Not many Zoroastrians choose to avail of the advances offered and while the Bank management has encountered many self-employed Parsis in the course of their transactions the general impression is that entrepreneurship within the community should be better.

For account holders, The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank offers competitive and effective services with all operations at all the branches being computerized, extended banking hours, teller facility, an increase of one percent in the interest rates on savings accounts (as compared to other nationalized banks), speedy processing of applications as decision making is very fast, and a one-to-one relationship between the banker and the customer who feels at home here. They give 15 percent dividend to their shareholders, the maximum permissible as per the banking regulations. Telebanking and the creation of their own website is next on their list of priorities.

In fact, since Gandevia took over as chairman in 1991 and Taraporevala joined the Bank in 1993 the Bank has shown phenomenal progress. After obtaining a banking licence in 1994 they have been able to pursue the commercial banking policy, says Gandevia.

In the course of their last financial year ending March 1998, the Bank showed an increase in deposits from Rs 50.81 crores to Rs 76.26 crores, representing a growth of 60.14 percent as compared to the average banking growth

of 18-20 percent. Their advances increased from Rs 23.43 crores to Rs 38.46 crores, an increase of 64.16 percent which we are informed is the highest in the banking industry. Their operating profitability likewise showed a rise from Rs 2.50 crores to Rs 3.35 crores, an appreciation of 34.28 percent. Taraporevala takes pride in giving us these statistics.

Benefitting from the returns that have accrued to them after they availed of the new banking licence, this primary co-operative bank has now set itself a target of obtaining a scheduled bank status by the turn of the century. This can only be possible if they show deposits of Rs 100 crores and retain that progress for the next six months. Since they have neared Rs 90 crores, they are fairly optimistic about upgrading the Bank although they may face difficulties for, as points out Gandevia, "When the entire industry is in a slump and business is going down, to maintain our tempo is more important. A good foundation has been built; now it has only to be consolidated."

The rationale for seeking a scheduled bank status is explained by Taraporevala: "We can avail of RBI (Reserve Bank of India) remittance as also refinance facilities. We would then be in a position to accept deposits from local bodies, quasi government bodies and religious and charitable organizations where the prevailing limits would be removed. Guarantees issued by us would be accepted by the state/central government and so too would cheques drawn on scheduled banks be accepted by the state and central government." Although presently they are governed by the Maharashtra State Co-operative Act, 1960, once they are recognized as a scheduled bank they would come under the purview of the Multi State Act and hence could even commence operations in Gujarat where they are sanguine about



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The new look of Zoroastrian Bank and its key constituents: (facing page, clockwise from top left): central office, Bombay Main branch, the Poona branch, before and after it commenced operations and the Andheri branch with Taraporewalla (in suit, center) and Banatwalla (in suit, right) (Above) The directors of the Bank and Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees at the Dadar branch (left) and Tardeo branch with Gandevia (left) and Dinshaw Mehta

getting support from Parsis.

They are targetting not only Indian residents but also Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) with the introduction of two new schemes in 1998: Non-Resident (Ordinary) Account and Non-Resident (External) Rupee Account whereby individuals enjoying NRI status can open current, savings and term deposit accounts with funds remitted from abroad or by sale of foreign exchange while on a temporary visit to India, subject to certain regulations. Interest from NRE accounts is exempt from income-tax, balances are exempt from wealth tax, and gifts to relatives in India are exempt from gift tax. Currently all foreign exchange business is routed through the Oman International Bank, Bombay which has arrangements with offices in New York, London, Switzerland, Germany and Hongkong. Zoroastrians overseas having relatives in India should subscribe to these facilities, recommend the Bank's managers.

The managerial and executive team has been considerably revamped bringing in many new hands and minds with varied past experience at national and foreign banks. Assisting Taraporewalla in looking after the day-to-day affairs

are general manager Farokh Banatwalla, senior manager Aspi Katgara, manager (credit) Hidayatullah Shaikh, manager (audit and accounts) Noshir Paghdwalla, manager (EDP and operations) Viraf Chinoy, secretary Dolly Mistry, branch manager-Bandra, Hilla Avari, branch manager-Andheri, Homi Engineer, branch manager-Tardeo, Pesi Pithawalla, branch manager-Dadar, Jehangir Umrigar and branch manager-Poona, Tehmas Bharucha.

The Bank's expenses on their staff (numbering 91) to their total income is going down, points out Paghdwalla. "That is because we have very good industrial relations," elaborates Taraporewalla. "We are good paymasters (compared to other cooperative banks) offering (several) facilities and bank holidays. We stay like a family and even I as the managing director mix with the staff of the different branches." All their branches are showing a profit thanks to the effective control from their central office at Kushesh Mansion, Fort, and regular branch meetings, he feels. The fact that many of their employees voluntarily come to work on many bank holidays, speaks volumes for their commitment, opines the managing director. This Bank prides itself on having a very high percentage of staff productivity where the business per employee is Rs 12,600,000 (reportedly one of the highest among all banks in India).

Yet another plus point for them is their "very enlightened board of directors," declares Taraporewalla specifying that they have three chartered accountants and four bankers on the board. Working with Gandevia on the board are Cawasjee Dinshaw (vice chairman) and the other directors Homa Petit, Bacha Keeka, Dadi Contractor, Kavas Petigara,



Kerssie Wadia, Rustom Irani, Nalin Vissanji, Hoshang Kohina, Shernaz Mehta and Dara Contractor. They meet every month and the specially constituted committees like the business development committee and audit committee appraise the board of new developments. Acknowledging the contribution of the different "constituents and members of the Bank who have helped in expansion," Gandevia specified the efforts of his co-directors, the chief executives who planned out the strategies and the staff members who executed the policies.

The encouragement of cooperation, thrift and self-help among its members were the main objectives for establishing this Bank on June 17, 1927 (see "Banking on its diamond," *Parsiana*, January 1988). The intention was to help Parsis in need of money and draw them away from indigenous money-lenders who were charging exorbitant rates of interest. Before Gandevia, the late Noshir Pochkhanawala and Rustam Gagrut had served as chairmen here when the affairs were being handled by "a conservative but prudent management."

The Bank's new policies, the new look (thanks to Sangeeta Merchant and Sanjeev Panjabi of Spasms Designers) have helped improve the institution's functioning and popularity. "The Bank is poised to maintain its rate of progress and growth and achieve the status of a premier banking institution," the chairman exuded confidence at the last annual general meeting in August 1998. Taking pride in offering personalized services and meeting the need-based requirements of their clients, they like to live up to their motto: "A bank that is big on tradition and trust."

Ablaze in Ajmer

Funds and devotees maybe limited but the Ajmer Zoroastrians' devotion and dedication enabled them to celebrate their fire-temple's centenary

Parinaz M. Gandhi

In the historical city of Ajmer in Rajasthan, history was created once again when barely 50 Zoroastrians now remaining in the area took the initiative to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Ajmer Parsi Agiary on June 24, 1998. As commended eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala in the *Centenary Souvenir*, "It is heartening to learn that in spite of the dwindling numbers in our community we can still find selfless and dedicated Zoroastrians who keep the fires of our faith burning bright in our fire-temple...for hundreds of years despite the constraints they often have to face."

When many agiaries are closed "due to lack of funds or absence of devotees, we are indeed fortunate that our small dwindling community is ever alive to the situation and spends time and money on individual and collective prayers and rituals," acknowledged Adarbad Motafram, joint secretary of the Shri Ajmer Parsi Jarthosti Anjuman in his editorial in the *Centenary Souvenir*. He further exhorted the youth "not to try for greener pastures outside Ajmer but to try to keep pace with the world from this great city of ours. I implore our elders to guide their destinies along these lines so that the emigration is arrested and our unity is preserved."

As one who has always paid homage at the Ajmer Agiary whenever he happens to be in the vicinity, Tata Sons director Shrivastav Vakil wrote in the *Souvenir*, "Notwithstanding the fact that there are no rich Parsis in Ajmer, it is a matter of pride that the Parsis of Ajmer have not only kept the Agiary in a decent manner but also the sanatorium. I am proud that hundred years have passed, empires have dissolved and yet this holy place has continued to give light and service to the community."

Just as the printed *Souvenir* detailing the history of the Agiary, the Anjuman and the principal stalwarts of Ajmer will remain for posterity, so too will the

memento in the form of a 50 gram silver coin which bore the replica of the Ajmer Agiary on one side and the asho farohar on the reverse. This memento was presented during the centenary celebrations to Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza who was the chief guest on the occasion, his son Ervad (Dr) Peshotan Mirza, the



Ajmer Agiary's centenary silver coin

panthaky of the Agiary, Ervad Aspi Charna, Ervad Kaikhshru Dumasia (Dastur), Ervad Adarbad Motafram, and the Anjuman's senior citizens — Jerbanoo Mehta, Bucktawar Dumasia (Dastur) and Sillomai Motafram, according to a press release describing the celebrations, sent by the Anjuman secretary Dr Aspi Contractor.

As mentioned in the *Souvenir*, Mehta, at 90, is the seniormost resident of the Anjuman, having first come here as a young bride from China. She was the first Indian lady to give a lecture at the prestigious Government College in Ajmer. S. Motafram has been described as a very pious and religious person whose regular attendance at the dar-e-meher "must be second only to the resident panthaky sahib."

The celebrations were officially inaugurated with the lighting of the traditional diva and cutting of the centenary cake by the chief guest in the presence of the Ajmer residents as also those who had converged from Surat, Bombay, Jaipur, Kota, Jodhpur and Indore to participate in the two-day event. On June 24 as also June 25, the maachi in the Havan gah was offered on behalf of the Anjuman by the resident panthaky. The

hama-anjuman jashan on both the days was led by P. Mirza.

Another feature common to both the days was the address by Dastur Mirza. While on the first day he spoke on "Parsi scriptures," the second day was reserved for "Ancient homelands of Parsis and their landing in India." He was then called upon to answer queries from the floor.

There was an extra dose of religiosity on the second day when P. Mirza delivered a talk on "Holy Fires in Zoroastrianism." Among the others to address the delegates were Charna, president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) Dr Sam Bhacca and member of the National Commission for Minorities Marazban Patrawala. The guest speakers as also Sohrab Katpitia and Me-heramai Katpitia were presented a memento.

The added attraction on the first evening was music by Kersi Mistry, Jaloo Bhesania and Mahazarin Bodhanwala, dance by Pearl Doctor and mimicry by Hutokshi Hansotia. On the second day they had organized a captivating Iran slide show by Rati and Dadi Wadia.

The guests and members were accorded a warm welcome by Ajmer Anjuman president Nariman Mehta. "It is good to be well descended but the glory belongs to the ancestors," declared N. Mehta in the *Souvenir*, advising, "we should ponder on what we are... Our youth should channelize their energies for productive purposes and not fritter away their talents on divisive and fissiparous causes." He chose to offer a special gift to Contractor for "his exemplary dedication to the Ajmer Agiary repair and maintenance work and for successfully organizing the centenary celebrations."

In his vote of thanks Contractor appreciated the cooperation extended by various institutions/associations/funds/anjuman and Zoroastrian residents and ex-residents of Ajmer. He was particu-

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From left: (Top row) Ajmer Agiary and its panthaky Charna being felicitated by Phiroz Navder. (Second row) Aspi Contractor (left) being felicitated by H. Mirza; on the dais Aspi Contractor, Bhacca, N. Mehta, H. Mirza, P. Mirza, Charna, Keki Dastur. (Bottom row) Bhacca; Patrawala, Gulnar Marfatia; Piloo Navder and Ajmer residents regaling the audience with their welcome song

larly thankful to the president and board of trustees of the Wadi Bunder Ghambar Fund and the SPP. He further stated, "Each and every member of this small Anjuman cooperated and left no stone unturned for the grand success of the two-day function." In addition to the president, secretary, joint secretary, the others currently serving on the executive committee are vice president Maj (Retd) Noshir Marfatia, treasurer Jal

Bodhanwala, joint treasurer Ratan Tavadia and member Phiroz Navder. While N. Mehta has been at the helm for the last 16 years, his father Erachshah was the longest serving president of the Anjuman for 34 years until his demise.

The credit for decorating the Agiary, the stage and the pandals with flowers and chalk go to Gulnar Tavadia, Marook Gandevia and their band of volunteers.

continued on page 44



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Gujarat Parsis: Near and yet apart — 7

The parting gift

The dead were respectfully laid to rest and their memory kept alive through charitable deeds

That the howl of a dog at night is believed to foretell a death or other evil in his master's family; that the persistent cawing of a crow is supposed to be the harbinger of bad news are some of the superstitions frequently repeated among Zoroastrians. What may not be as well known is the notion that the spasm of breath in sneezing or in yawning is the work of an evil spirit which should be countered with the words "Broken be ahriman." And that a drawn tooth or cut nails are to be buried four inches below the ground whilst reciting the sacred texts.

Insights into the life-style, value systems, code of conduct, performance of elaborate ceremonies among the Parsis of Gujarat in the latter part of the 19th century can be had from perusing the *Bombay Gazetteer*. The relevant chapters of the compendium which had been sent to us by the noted Bombay dentist Dr Dinshaw F. Boga are being edited and carried over seven instalments of *Parsiana*.

In the first instalment we learnt how the Parsis landed on the shores of India, how circumstances led to subsequent migrations and an increase in their numbers. Though reputed to be kind and considerate, even at that time dissensions were known to exist among different factions.

Being shrewd traders and businessmen they were seen flourishing along the Malabar coast, recalled the second instalment. Not only were they known to own the most beautiful villas and gardens in Surat, but they were also reputed for not having a single beggar amongst them.

The dress and ornaments worn by the priests and laity, the nature of their dwellings, their life-style and preoccupations found a mention in the third instalment. With Parsis, eating and drinking are

religious duties which help to drive away the evil spirit, it was stated therein.

Their religious beliefs, their mode of celebrating auspicious occasions and feasts were referred to in the fourth episode. In the midst of this rejoicing they were also enjoined to observe a code of behavior that prescribed wearing of sudreh-kusti and covering the head and feet at all times, thanking God before every meal and keeping silence whilst eating!

The customs accompanying first pregnancies, births and navjotes were detailed in the fifth instalment. When a much awaited male child was born, instead of the child, some cowdung was shown to the mother, supposedly in the best interests of the mother and the child. Women who were barren after years of marriage observed different vows in the expectation of improving their fertility.

Elaborate were the marriage rituals too and, as noted the sixth instalment, the poorest Parsi could hardly marry his son for less than Rs 400 or his daughter for less than Rs 250. In the first year after the betrothal, gifts were sent to the girl's house by the boy's parents on 21 occasions, but the girl's side had to reciprocate the presents on only five occasions.

Most of the practices accompanying death rites seem to be preserved to this day as is indicated in this last instalment. There were some noticeably different customs too: for three days after a death no food was cooked in the house of mourning, except for dogs. To save the soul of a Parsi man who died without a male issue, it was mandatory to announce an adoption on the uthamna day. Often too were donations to charitable causes made on this day.

...

When life has gone the body is washed, carried to the ground floor of the house, dressed, wrapped in old, freshly-washed

white cotton cloth, and laid in a corner of the front hall either full length or with the legs crossed. When the floor of the hall is of earth, the spot on which the body is to be laid is marked off by drawing a line round it. The surface of the enclosed space is broken and on it the body is laid. If the floor is of cement or of stone, the body is laid on one or two stone slabs which are set on the floor, and the ground covered by the slabs is marked off by a line drawn with an iron nail. A wooden floor, either plain or covered with stone slabs, is never used for laying out the dead. The body is laid north and south with the feet towards the north. A lamp fed with clarified butter is kept burning at the head and a priest repeats prayers and burns sandalwood and benjamin in a censer in front of the body.

Except when a death happens at night, the body should be carried to the Tower of Silence as soon as possible after death. The bier-bearers must always be Parsis. They are known as nassessalars and are paid and set apart as body-carriers by the Parsi Punchayet or local board. When the Tower of Silence is at a distance, the body is sometimes carried in a bullock-cart which is immediately after broken to pieces and buried near the Tower. When a body is carried on men's shoulders the number of bearers must not be less than four in the case of an adult or two in the case of a child. When the body is taken in a cart the number of bearers must be not less than two. In places within easy distance of a Tower of Silence, the bearers bring an iron bier and lay it near the body. The bier is a plain iron bedstead without the canopy, standing about six inches from the ground and with two long side-rods to rest on the bearers' shoulders.

The women of the family and their friends sit on carpets within doors a little

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way from the body wailing and crying. The men and their friends sit outside and in the streets in long rows on benches or on carpets. A number of priests attend and say the prayers for the dead. Two of them, chosen for the occasion, stand at the threshold opposite the body and the bier, and begin reciting the *Ahnavad Gatha*, a portion of the *Yasna* which is called *geh sarna*. In the midst of the recitation the two priests turn round, the attendants lay the body on the bier, and a dog is brought to look on the face of the dead and drive away evil spirits. Then the two priests again turn towards the body and recite. When the reciting is over the priests leave the door, and the wailing and crying which has ceased for the time begins afresh. The male friends of the dead go to the door, bow, and in token of respect for the dead raise their two hands from the floor to their heads. After the body is laid on the bier it is covered with a sheet from head to foot.

The two attendants bring the bier out of the house, holding it low in their hands, and make it over to four more bearers outside, who like the two attendants are dressed in freshly-washed white clothes. All the men present stand while the body is taken from the house and bow to it as it passes. The body is carried feet foremost, and after the body follow priests in their white dress, and after the priests the friends of the dead. All walk in couples, each couple holding the ends of a handkerchief. At the Tower of Silence, which is generally some way from the town, the bier is set down at a little distance from the door. When all have again bowed to the dead, the bier is taken by the bearers into the Tower where the body is lifted from the bier and laid on the inner terrace of the Tower. The clothes are torn off and the body is left to the vultures. After the body is laid in the Tower, before they return to their homes each of the funeral party has a little cow's urine poured into the palm of his left hand and recites the *Nirang* prayer. They wash their face, hands and feet at a well near the Tower, and repeat the *kusti* prayer. Then they go home.

On reaching home they do not enter the house till they have again washed their face, hands and feet and again repeated the *kusti* prayer. They then enter the house and at once bathe and change their clothes. Men who have been at a funeral cannot eat, work or mix with their friends till they have bathed,

and their clothes must be washed before they are again used. When a married man dies his widow at once breaks her glass bangles and in their stead wears gold or silver bracelets. While she remains a widow, that is until she remarries, a widow does not take part in any ceremonies connected with joyful occasions. Every morning for three days after a death, rice is cooked and laid on the veranda for dogs to eat. The place in the house where the body was laid is

Until she remarries, a widow does not take part in any ceremonies connected with joyful occasions

railed off and is not used for one month if the death occurs between the eighth and 12th month of the year and for 10 days if the death occurs between the first and the seventh month. During the time the place is thus set apart a lamp is kept burning on it and a jar filled with water and with flowers in its mouth is set where the head of the deceased lay.

About three in the afternoon of the third day after death a meeting is held in the house of mourning. The guests seat themselves on benches, chairs and carpets, and recite prayers of repentance on behalf of the dead. While the guests are praying, two priests if the dead was married and one priest if the dead was unmarried, lay several trays of flowers and one or two censers or incense-burners in front of the spot where the body was laid, or in the hall of the fire-temple, and, standing opposite the censer and flowers, recite prayers. When the prayers are over, the son or the adopted son of the deceased bows before the high priest who makes him promise to perform all religious rites for the dead. Parsis believe that a man cannot be saved unless he has a son. If he has no son a Parsi must adopt one of his blood relations, or failing that a distant relation, or failing that any Zoroastrian. The adoption must be declared at the uthamna or third day ceremony. The friends of the deceased then read a list of charitable contributions in memory of the dead. This ceremony is called uthamna — rising from mourning. The flowers in the trays are

handed round and the people are sprinkled with rose water and retire. To the priests and the poor the rich distribute alms and sacred shirts.

Next morning before dawn, white clothes, cooking and drinking vessels, fruit and wheat cakes called *darun* are consecrated to the dead in the fire-temple. A suit of clothes and a set of vessels are given to the family priest. The rest are used by the family and the fruit and cakes are eaten. After this is over, about four in the morning the grief-raising ceremony is repeated. For three days after a death except for dogs no food should be cooked in the house of mourning. What food is required is as a rule sent cooked by near relations. During the three first days of mourning no relation of the dead, wherever he may be, eats flesh. For the first 10 days and sometimes longer, female friends and relations come to the house of mourning and are received in the hall by the women of the house, and remain there from morning to noon. Similarly kinsmen and friends call at the house for a few minutes in the morning and evening for the first three days. They are received by the men of the house and seated in the veranda or near the veranda on carpets, benches or chairs. At morning, noon, evening, midnight and at four in the morning priests are engaged to recite prayers during the three first days. On the fourth day a feast is held especially for priests, and friends are also asked to join in it. A little of the food cooked on this day is sent to all relations and friends who make a point of eating or at least of tasting it. On the 10th and the 30th day after death, the death-day in each month for the first year and subsequently yearly death-day ceremonies in honor of the dead are performed.

Till 1865 AD in all parts of Gujarat, and still in parts of the province which belong to the Gaekwar, local councils called *anjumans* or *punchayats* settled all Parsi social and religious disputes. In 1855 AD the spread of European ideas and the decline of the power of the leading families among the Bombay Parsis resulted in the formation of a Parsi Law Association. After 10 years, as the representations of this body seemed to express the wish of the more powerful and intelligent section of the community, the government passed two Acts, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865 and the Parsi Succession Act of 1865, defining, amending and

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During the three first days of mourning no relation of the dead, wherever he may be, eats flesh

making comfortable to Parsi customs the law relating to Parsi marriage, divorce and succession. Since 1865 the Parsi communities in Imperial Gujarat bring all disputes regarding marriage and succession to the regular law courts where, in accordance with the procedure provided under these Parsi Marriage and Succession Acts, the judge is aided by Parsi delegates nominated by the government after consulting the leaders of the local community. In the Parsi settlements within the limits of the Gaekwar's territory, disputes regarding marriage are still settled by the local councils.

In Navsari, which is the earliest and one of the most important Parsi settlements, the council or anjuman is composed of the high priest, and the leading priestly family of the Desais as chief members, and the representatives of some other priestly families as members. If the matter in dispute touches the excommunication of a member of the community or some other point of public importance, the meetings are attended by all adult male Parsis. Meetings to allow remarriage, to hear complaints of priestly irregularities and other matters of less importance are attended only by the leading members. The local council of Navsari has the special power of forbidding the marriage of a widow or a widower unless the council is satisfied that all claims for ornaments or clothes brought by the relations of the former wife or husband have been settled. In Navsari and other Parsi settlements in the Gaekwar's territory the local council anjuman regulates the succession to property and in disputed cases decides who shall be declared the adopted son. In marriage disputes it tries to effect a friendly settlement of quarrels between husbands and wives and exercises a check on bigamy. The council has no power to annul a marriage with a second wife during the lifetime of a former wife, but, on pain of being cut off from all social and priestly rites and from the use of the fire-temple during his life and of the Tower of Silence after his death, they can force the bigamous husband to provide a maintenance for his first wife.

Since the passing of the Parsi Mar-

riage and Succession Acts of 1865 none of these powers have been exercised by the local councils in Imperial Gujarat. In fact the local councils in Imperial Gujarat now occupy only the position of trustees of the public funds belonging to the several communities. The funds of the Surat Parsis have been in charge of the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet at Bombay since 1841 AD, the leading Parsis of Bombay having largely contributed towards its endowment. The disposal of the annual income from these funds is in the hands of a body of nine of the leading Parsis of Surat who hold office for life. Appointments to vacancies in this body are made by the surviving members subject to approval of the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet at Bombay who have the right of veto. In Broach, Ahmedabad and other towns and centers where Parsis are numerous enough to have a local council, the councillors are wealthy and influential priests or laymen.

The powers which all local councils exercise are at present confined to the management of public funds, care of the Towers of Silence, control over the establishments (including corpse-bearers) connected with the Towers, and the carrying out of the *gahambar* feasts. Subscriptions to public funds among the Parsis of Gujarat are mostly the result of alms which their sacred books enjoin Parsis to make on joyful family occasions and on the third day after a death. The chief uses to which the Parsi public subscriptions are put are charitable allowances of food and clothes to poor and needy Parsis, maintaining Parsi schools, meeting the expenses of the six *gahambars* or yearly feasts, and maintaining public fire-temple and Towers of Silence and the establishment of corpse-bearers. In all these works of charity or public usefulness the Gujarat Parsis are helped by the Bombay Parsis. Many of the most prosperous families of Bombay Parsis have moved from Gujarat to Bombay within the last century and a half. Many Bombay families keep up house and other hereditary property in Gujarat and the whole Bombay community at all times and especially in times of distress have freely lent their help to the Parsis of Gujarat.

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Striking her way to glory

Carom champion Monaz Tantra has won the Shiv Chhatrapati Award for outstanding sportsperson

Aspi P. Ustad

She took to this sport mainly as a pastime. She used to watch members of her family play the game every evening yet she hardly got a chance to play one full game. "That's how my carom career started," remembers Monaz Kaizad Tantra (née Cooper), back from Sri Lanka after playing in the Independence Cup Carom Tournament between the two countries. A member of the doubles team in the three-test series, Tantra won all the tests she participated in. A recent winner of the prestigious Shiv Chhatrapati Award for '95-'96 for outstanding sportspersons announced by the government of Maharashtra in 1998, Tantra received a trophy, citation and cash of Rs 25,000 at a function in Nagpur on September 14, 1998.

The game of carom has come a long way since it was introduced by the Britishers during their colonial rule in India. Tantra relates. When spinning and weaving mills were established workers had to stand for nearly six to eight hours a day working on the weaving machines. In the evening when they returned home, a game of carom would help them relax as the game is played sitting down, she explains.

"The important carom tournaments in India are the Federation Cup and the nationals and based on this I'm ranked number two in the state, with my archrival Anupama Kedar being number one," she laughingly comments. In the Federation Cup, she was a runner-up in 1997 at Akola.

Taking a walk down memory lane, 24-year-old Tantra recalls that the first time she participated in the junior nationals at Delhi, she won the singles as well as the team championship. In 1992, at the Trivandrum junior nationals she was runner-up in the singles, doubles and team event, "a triple crown you may call it," she

laughs. She was a little disappointed at not having the opportunity to participate at the national level when she was a sub-junior, else "it would have been a very rare occasion when a player starts participating in the nationals at a



Clockwise from top left: With husband Kaizad; carom concentration; receiving the Award from Ms Alexander

sub-junior level and moves on to the senior national level."

Tantra elaborates that she had to miss the nationals in 1991-92 and 1992-93 due to her college exams. In December 1993, she represented Maharashtra at Bokaro (the steel city in Bihar), losing in the pre-quarterfinals in the women's singles, but reaching the semifinals in women's doubles. From then on there was no looking back for her.

"In 1995 at Faridabad I won the

women's doubles, partnering Nalini Bulinjkar. The next year I captained the Maharashtra team at Hyderabad and stood eighth overall amongst women. In 1997 I once again led the Maharashtra

team at Chandigarh and stood sixth. This year I was again selected to lead the state, securing third place overall amongst women, with the team achieving the runners-up position," Tantra has the statistics

at her fingertips.

Tantra details the tournaments she has won at the state level. "In 1994, I created a record of sorts, by sweeping a hat trick of titles, viz. singles, doubles as well as team championship." In 1996 however she won the doubles tournament at Alibag, but lost in the quarterfinal round in the singles.

Tantra's first state level tournament was a championship played at Dadar in which she had entered in the sub-junior group. She was too good for the rest of the field and won the tournament in her group, and was runner-up in the junior group as well. She also managed to reach the pre-quarterfinals in the women's singles group, quite an achievement for a beginner who learnt many things along the way.

The world of carom also has its own ranking tournaments, observes Tantra, elaborating that many countries in the world are called carom playing nations. "Besides India and Sri Lanka, Germany, UK and Switzerland are full-time playing countries," she declares, adding that

continued on page 46

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A playwright at work

In *A Sister Like You* Dina Mehta explores domestic violence

Every time fiction writer/playwright Dina Mehta read about a battered wife she fought incessant silent battles, on an emotional level, inside herself — till one day she received her wake-up call. She learnt that in the front wing of her own building a husband was routinely brutalizing his wife, beating her up. And one night when her screams became impossible to bear, her immediate neighbors sent for the police. But the wife flatly denied the abuse, she denied the severe beatings, the victimization.

Mehta remembers that the neighbors felt aggrieved. They felt that the wife had, by her personal choice, declined to escape her entrapment; that all she had to do, with the police on the scene, was to accuse her husband of assault — attested to by the visible bruises and lacerations on her body — and storm out of the flat with her son. Yes, they had a boy. About eight years old.

But without the skills to live alone, lacking independent means, unsure of her acceptance in her own community and indeed, in her own parents' home, where was the wife to go? Indian parents usually advise the abused daughter to stay within her marriage to maintain the *izzat* (prestige) of the family, to keep her misery under wraps — or how would her younger sisters get married? But for a battered wife to walk out of her marriage without specific information on her options, without financial, legal, emotional resources and support, seemed to Mehta to correspond to nothing less than the abuse itself.

The aftermath of the visit from the law was that within months the family moved out of the building, and was not

heard of again. But wondering what had happened to the wife troubled Mehta enough to invite speculation in fictional terms — her way of connecting with the



Mehta: vital and vibrant
Photo: Varghese Fernandez

victim, of sharing her trauma. Mehta does not see herself as a crusader, but when the story evolved in her head and the characters happened, the problem of domestic abuse became more real for her. If it is fiction, Mehta believes, it means you've taken mental — even psychic — possession of a happening, re-realized it. Then, depending on whether it's a story or a play you are offering, you invite your reader or the person in the audience to grapple

with the problem in her own mind long after she's finished the story or left the theater. You have engaged her imagination, her concern; and sometimes even her indignation, for concern is feckless till passion steps into it.

This, then, was the genesis of Mehta's two-act play, *A Sister Like You*, which was nominated in the South Asia category for the British Council New International Playwriting Awards 1996, and was on the judges' shortlist in the UK last year. Specially commended as "an accomplished piece of work which tackled the theme of domestic violence with great passion and understanding" and for its "three-dimensional, flesh-and-blood" characters, *A Sister Like You* was presented by the Play Reading Forum on September 22 and 23, 1998 at the British Council Theatre in Bombay.

Within the context of violence against women, the play also takes a searching look at the relationship between two sisters. They have both been in love with the same man and it is the younger one, Kavita, who marries Pradeep, only to

find herself in the clutches of a vicious brute. Years of abuse and two daughters later, Kavita is forced to seek the help of her embittered elder sister Shanti, whose estrangement from the family has pushed her into independent living. Initially, an implacable Shanti repulses her battered sister, but when Kavita is charged with killing her husband, Shanti staunchly supports the younger woman as she prepares for the legal battle ahead.

As Mehta worked on the play, a clear divergence emerged in the way Indian women suffer their brutalization in differing socioeconomic classes. Kavita is educated, westernized. A spunky girl, she is a rebel even in a no-win situation. With all the punishment he inflicted on her, Pradeep could not break her spirit and she fights back.

On the other hand Janki is illiterate. She washes utensils for Shanti and despite her brother-in-law's terrible abuse of her sister, Janki feels that Sonal ought to bear up with her lot. For Janki the ideal woman is docile and compliant and fashioned by nature to be man's obedient servant. And she actually believes that sound beating comes from a healthy lust for your woman, and a devoted wife should welcome this perverted sign of desire in her man.

Directed with sensitivity by Jiten Merchant and with a fine cast of readers, the play touched the right chord with its audiences. Dolly Thakore's Shanti was intelligent, tough, but not without heart. Denzil Smith could have introduced a little more tension in his role as Tushar, the quiet young man in her life who is instrumental in making Shanti change her attitude towards her sister. As the ravaged Kavita, Dipika Roy now simmered, now spat venom, now was affectingly vulnerable. Television personality Nikhil Kapoor made an excellent gone-to-seed Pradeep, and Naagesh Bhosle was brilliant as Dhondhu, Janki's brutal brother-in-law.

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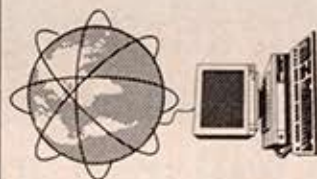
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maid Janki who held the audience captive. Limited by her lack of education and despite believing blindly in all the "ugly disqualifications" dished out to her sex, Janki is large-hearted and loyal and irrepressible. And Gupte plays this role with a bounce and vigor — and choice Marathi expletives — that make her irresistible.

A Sister Like You was a welcome change from the usual Western imports — cheap or stylish — that flood the English stage in Bombay. It is only too easy, Mehta feels, to borrow, imitate or plagiarize that bit of fluff from West End, or that heavyweight from Broadway, because the homework has been done for you elsewhere; whereas an original play demands a total involvement of the imaginative vision of an entire production team.

But that is a challenge that must be met if we are to evolve an authentic Indo-English stage. For theater is not a long distance echo from other lands, but an indigenous plant — an assimilation that intimately involves our own soil, roots, air, water and sunlight.

The truth of this was felt instinctively by the audiences of *A Sister Like You*. As the story of battered wives unfolded before their eyes, the people up there on stage and those seated in the auditorium re-created each other because they shared the same ethos, the same problems. There was a complicity here, an intensity of communication became possible, a certain vitality took over — something shared and hot!

So much was accomplished in two evenings by accomplished readers and an ace director. More such presentations are on the anvil in the coming year but what the play deserves is a full-scale theater production. Any would-be sponsors out there listening?

Errata

In "Defining Zoroastrian commitment" (*Parsiana*, September 1998), there were errors in the captions for two photographs for which we apologize.

The two photographs with their appropriate captions are being carried here:

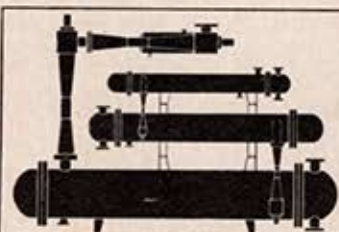


From left: Firdosh Mehta,
Yezdi Rustonji and Farhang
Mehr

From left: Farrokh Mistree,
Kaernerz Dotiwala and Bella
Tata



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ABLAZE IN AJMER

continued from page 30

Gandevia further served as master of ceremonies at all the sessions. At the inauguration, Piloo Navder, Mahrukh Bodhanwala and Tavadia recited a prayer, and Piloo Navder also led the group in a humorous welcome song.

"On the occasion of the centenary of our Agiary, the present dwindling Parsi community of Ajmer (which includes 16 families) salutes their ancestors for their wisdom, charity and farsightedness. The religious and trust institutions which we have inherited from them has enabled us, even today to perform religious ceremonies as per the traditional tenets of our Zoroastrian religion," wrote Contractor in his review of the Ajmer Anjuman and Agiary.

The munificence of distillery contractor Naoroji Rustomji Kalyaniwalla who purchased the land and undertook the construction of the agiary building in memory of his colleague Framjee Naoroji Ballabhai Kalyaniwalla was recalled. The foundation stone of the agiary had been laid on March 29, 1897 by Dhunjishaw Dinshawji Mehta, superintendent, Commissioner's Office, Ajmer. The requisite religious ceremonies were

performed by Ervad Fareedoon Rustomji Modi and as instructed by the vada dastur of the Deccan, a capsule with a message was buried. The untimely demise of the benefactor that same year compelled his son Kuwarji Naoroji Kalyaniwalla to

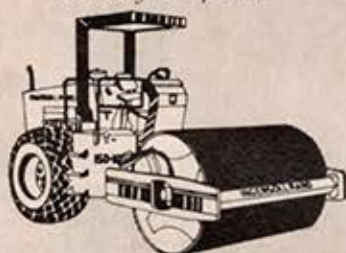
"Do not try for greener pastures outside Ajmer but to try to keep pace with the world from this great city of ours"

fulfil his father's dream. The consecration of the fire for the new agiary was undertaken in memory of the deceased Naoroji by his father Rustomji Dadabhai Kalyaniwalla. The High Priest of the Deccan, Sardar Khan Bahadur Dastur (Dr) Hoshangji Jamaspji along with Dastur Khurshedji Jamshedji, Dastur Dorabji Rustomji Sanjana, Ervad Pestonji Rustomji Kanga and Ervad Fareedoon Rustomji Modi performed the consecration ceremonies on *roz* Dae-pa-Adar, *mah* Bahman, (July 19, 1898) and Kuwarji dedicated this Agiary to the Parsi Anjuman.

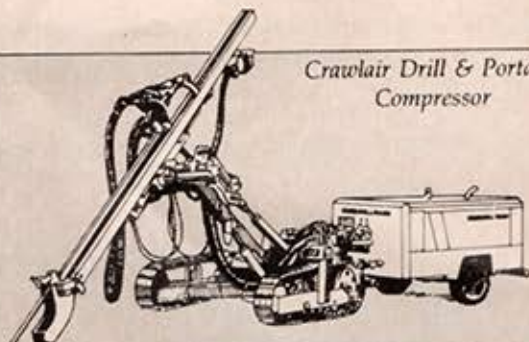
The first managing committee comprising president Kuwarji Kalyaniwalla, secretary Pestonji Diwan, and trustees Dadabhai Sumariwalla and Bhikhaji Taraporewalla signed an agreement with the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, Bombay (BPP), to open an account in the name of Shri Ajmer Jarthosti Anjuman Religious Funds. From the donations raised by the Ajmer residents, a sum of Rs 1,133 plus three and a half percent Government promissory notes worth Rs 2,000 were assigned to the BPP which account is still operational.

In the first decade of the 20th century Ajmer could boast of the Rustom Framna Dharamshala Block and Ghambar Hall donated by Munchershaw Rustom Framna of Bombay as also a road leading to the Parsi Tower of Silence financed by Rustomji Rustom Framna of Jaipur. The jashan hall and the room for the last rites at the doongerwadi were constructed in 1939 from a donation by Shirinbai Jehangirji Mehta. The chowkidar room at the doongerwadi was made possible by Dinshawji D. Mehta. The new blocks of the Dharamshala came up in the mid '60s and mid '70s — the Sukhia Blocks donated by Aloomai

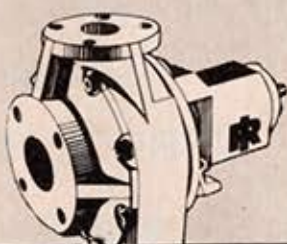
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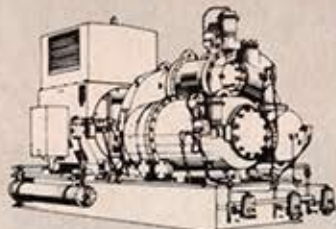
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Sukhia, the Ratibai Block donated by Rustomji Contractor. The construction of the stage and the kathi store was thanks to donations from Nadirshaw Doctor and Sorabji Bodhanwala respectively. The late Armaity Contractor got the Rustom Framna Dharamshala Blocks

"On the occasion of the centenary, Ajmer's present dwindling Parsi community salutes their ancestors"

renovated in memory of her husband Jehangir in 1978. As mentioned in the *Souvenir*, the single largest donation to the Anjuman has come from her estate.

Although there is no history of the early Parsi settlers in Ajmer, it is inferred that during the 19th century a sizable number of Parsis resided in Ajmer and the nearby cantonment town of Nasirabad. By 1888 they already had a consecrated dokhma (reportedly the only one in the whole of northern India) and sagdi (courtesy Dadabhai Sumariwalla). The earliest mention of the name 'Shri Ajmer Parsi Panchayat' with the date 1891 was found on utensils donated by individuals for use in religious ceremonies.

Founded by King Ajay Pal Chauhan in the seventh century, Ajmer (which derives its name from Ajay-Meru, meaning invincible mount) came into prominence during the reign of the Rajput king, Prithvi Raj Chauhan. Over the years it has witnessed change of guard from the Rajputs to the Mughals, Marathas, Scindias, British and on to independent India gaining eminence as a convergence of different religions. Located within its proximity are the dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti and Lord Brahmaji's Temple which attract pilgrims from all over the world. The Zoroastrians, of course, take pride that the oldest fire-temple in northern India is in Ajmer.

As noted Dastur H. Mirza in his message, "For a century this Agiary (has) guided the religious life of Parsis of Ajmer and surrounding places. During these hundred years, thousands of Zoroastrians have recited *Atash Nyaish* and other prayers and invoked blessings of Ahura Mazda through the holy fire. May this holy fire continue to blaze in this place for centuries to come..."

STRIKING HER WAY TO GLORY

continued from page 38

the world body i.e. the International Carom Federation is based in Germany, the secretary of which is an Indian, Bangaroo Babu from Madras.

Initially Tantra started playing carom at various Parsi colonies, viz. Tata Colony, Captain Colony, Cusrow Baug, etc where a majority of her partners were male not female. That helped her sharpen her skills to a great extent, she believes.

Appreciating the support she has received from her family, Tantra compliments husband Kaizad. "He is my practice partner and has given wonderful support," she enthuses, much to Kaizad's delight! Practice sessions are conducted at home and finances for participation in tournaments are raised from her own resources.

Her brother Khushroo is a national level referee and has been of immense help too. "Khushroo has taught me all the rules of the game. That has made me perfect. We work as a team," she adds. "Carom runs in our family. My father, the late Rusi D. Cooper, mother Homai, uncle Soli, sister Dilshad and brother Khushroo are all carom buffs. The first tournament I won was the one played at

Tata Colony where I paired with my uncle Soli Cooper in the mixed doubles. It was an exciting moment for me." To her knowledge, there are no other Parsis at the state or national level in carom.

Fond of reading, swimming, music and travelling, Tantra completed her BCom from Sydenham College. Following it up with an MCom from Bombay University, she is currently working with Monarch Video.

On the subject of religion, Tantra states, "I believe in our religion very strongly and that is the main reason why I'm successful today." Kaizad adds, "We are religious fanatics, anything to do with religion and we are for it!"

Tantra opines that our youth basically cannot be called a deprived lot. "They have everything in life. If they strive a little bit harder they can achieve excellence in whatever they do. We are not a community of have-nots, we are a community of haves. We have had people like Jamsetji Tata, Pirojsha Godrej, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy who made not only their own careers but made possible the careers of hundreds after them. We should all take a cue from this and follow. Our youth especially should learn."

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THE CHANGING GUARD

continued from page 15

ties to the religion, noted Kevala. Others found it a good site for study and meditation, holding religious conferences and even for building a fire-temple and seminary to train young mobeds in the future. Kevala noted that a young Zarathushti had remarked that we need a place like this for the Zarathushtis of the future and should not miss this opportunity even if the older members of the community do not have the foresight or vision to make proper use of this land at this time.

Kevala proposed a four-phased plan for the use of the land, keeping community resources and the Foundation's E&A guidelines in mind. The progressive stages are the provision of spiritual renewal facilities; a study center; prayer hall and priests' quarters; consecrated temple and seminary. The very first stage would require the completion of access roads, the provision of water and electricity at an estimated cost of \$ 50,000. Envisaging a large building with a meeting room and kitchen to be rented to groups of Zarathushtis through the summer would require an additional \$100,000.

The study center would become fea-

sible as additional funds become available. With a family residence for a director who could conduct religious workshops, participate in studies with visiting scholars and explain the religion to visitors, the site would grow into a "Zarathushti spiritual community" during the summer, visualizes the plan.

Noting that "many Zarathushtis are already setting aside legacies in their wills for such purposes," Kevala's report notes that a prayer hall, dadgah and priests' quarters may be built any time a donor appears.

Accepting that the consecration of a temple or dadgah would require much time and resources, the report notes, "Once the temple is consecrated, it will become one of the most spiritually important sites for Zarathushtis from all over the world. The proposed plan... for a study and spiritual center... will greatly enhance the visibility and prestige of our community in the western world. It needs funding, it will need planning and much work, but it will be a legacy that will place Zarathushtis on a strong and permanent footing in North America. Its significance is far beyond anything we have done on this continent so far."

World Zoroastrian Organisation

(WZO) president Rumi Sethna's report on the major draft changes in the WZO constitution marked the culmination of the AGM. Since the FEZANA membership voted in 1997 in favor of a single world apex body in the form of a restructured WZO, a dialogue has been continuing between Sethna and FEZANA's first president Rohinton Rivetna who had presented the blueprint of an alternate body named the World Council of Zarathushti Federations. Sethna reported on draft changes in the WZO constitution whereby "associations, federations and individual members can coexist within the WZO with separate functions and decision-making structures in their councils and yet come together at the board level to take decisions on the community's global affairs," as per a report sent by Dastoor to *Parsiana*. While reporting substantial progress towards the goal, Rivetna noted that differences requiring further discussions and negotiations remained. He was urged to continue the dialogue and requested to send a progress report by October 1, 1998 to all associations for their feedback.

The meeting ended with the introduction of the new team by Dastoor and a vote of thanks to the outgoing team.

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MILESTONES

Intercommunity marriages registered both at the Old Customs House as well as at the MHADA office in Bandra (East) for the seven-month period of May to November 1998 find a mention in this issue of *Parsiana*. However, names that could not be confirmed as Zoroastrian have been omitted from the list.

The Old Customs House registered 21 intercommunity marriages plus seven civil marriages, whereas the figures at the MHADA office were 21 and one respectively.

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 43 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 22 and 45 years, averaging at 32 years.

As compared to 16 births in Bombay in November there were 58 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Bombay Towers of Silence. Fourteen victims fell prey to heart disease of whom six were 80 years and above. The

other killers were pneumonia/lung disease (11), old age/general debility (five), cancer (four) and liver disease (three). Two patients each succumbed to malaria, septicemia and kidney failure. Isolated cases registered for November were: osteomyelitis (inflammation commencing in bone marrow), prostate hypertrophy (increase in the size of tissues or structures of the prostate), atherosclerosis (deposition of fatty substances in the arteries), osteoporosis (loss of bone density due to excessive absorption of calcium and phosphorus from the bone), Alzheimer's disease, brain disease, drug abuse, stroke, diabetes, hypotension (low blood pressure), asthma, anemia, nervous disorder, myasthenia gravis (a disorder characterized by marked fatigability of voluntary muscles) and intestinal obstruction with intestinal gangrene. The eldest to die was a 97-year-old lady as compared to the youngest: a 52-year-old male. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for November, in Bombay, was 76 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 breakdown 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.

Shrikanth Sriram; July 27
Shahnaz Bahadur Master and Yazad Homi Patel; August 4
Keshmira D. Patel and Jitesh S. Mamtara; August 7
Roshan Burjor Vazifdar and Niranjana Dharshi Parikh; August 12
Nazneen Rusi Mirza and Viraf Rusi Vatcha; August 18
Firoza Desai and Kizkhakke Pachuveecha Ravindranath Menon; August 24
Lorraine Jennifer Maelzer and Sarosh Jenjor Dastur; September 1
Sophia Mohsin Merchant and Cyrus Farrokh Mody; September 11
Binaifer Mukadam and Ashu Khanna; September 24
Kashmira Jimi Nanawati and Anna Bhau Kavare; September 28
Dilnawaz Phiroze Bilimoria and Girish Hansraj Chawla; September 29
Rashna Aspi Cooper and Ripple Mukund Marfatia; October 1
Shabnam Eruch Mirza and Ashrat Meher Mehta; October 3
Vidyamani Shetty and Aftab Jhangoo Jokhi; October 9
Freny Ardaviraf Kerawalla and Behram Ardeshtir Irani; October 12
Babsy Cyrus Mody and Sideman Nasir Tharadra; October 16
Neeta Arvind Mhatre and Navroz Phiroz Behramram; October 23
Zenobia K. Surti and Elmar Peter Schoetz; October 30
Dimple Ghosh and Rahul Jamshed Hakim; October 31
Anahita Maneck Sethna and Phiroz Ardeshtir Kerawalla; November 1
Jasmine Keki Patel and Behram Rustomji Surty; November 1
Farida Jal Satha of Nagpur and Tehmtan Nariman Toorkey; November 1
Aloo Keki Chothia of Valsad and Burgis Jamshed Aibara; November 2
Yasmin Pirojshaw Ichhaporia and Sarosh Jehangir Ghodawalla; November 3
Nazneen Adi Pohocha and Zubin Nariyosang Karkaria; November 5

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to *Maharukh and Percy Khandhadia* on November 6, 1998
 A boy to *Hutoxi and Mehernosh Zaveri*; November 6
 A boy to *Arnavaz and Vinod Iddya*; November 9
 A boy to *Delnar and Kaizad Irani*; November 9
 A girl to *Zena and Maneck Mavji*; November 11
 A girl to *Harsha and Mehernosh Heeramanek*; November 13
 A girl to *Veera and Marazban Dalal*; November 15
 A boy to *Pervin and Farhad Contractor*; November 17
 A boy to *Furzeen and Nasha Jassawalla*; November 18
 A boy, *Behram*, to *Shiraz and Vispy Kapadia*, brother to late Fareena, Sanaya and Vahishta; November 18
 A boy to *Khubcher and Kerman Mehta*; November 18
 A girl to *Anahita and Firoze Mondegari*; November 20
 A girl to *Nelly and Percy Bhesania*; November 24

A boy to *Anahita and Neville Dhabhar*; November 24
 A boy to *Jenifer and Kershasp Carnac*; November 25
 A girl to *Jasmine and Darayus Mistry*; November 28

MARRIED

Sushma Dilbahadur Chhetri and Beheram Ratan Cooper; May 3
Rasna Lamba and Ravi S. Mishra; May 16
Paricheher Zarir Mistry and Shahzad Cavas Contractor; May 21
Preeti Karkhanis and Nozer Tarapore; May 27
Vahbiz Kersi Udwadia and Runy Zarir Bilimoria; May 28
Preeti Girdharilal Shroff and Rayomand Naval Hiloo; May 28
Ella Maria Castellino and Shahriyar Behram Atai; May 29
Debarali Chatterjee and Kaizad Kersi Driver; May 29
Shirley Pesi Moos and Husain Hasanali Merchant; May 29
Delnaz Jimmy Patel and Parvegn Noshir Patel; June 2
Farida Kotwal and Neville

Mehta; June 10
Charulata Arun Popat and Neville Dossu Bharucha; June 15
Rebecca Smith and Firdos Jamshed Mubarak; June 17
Jacqueline Dattatraya Quenim and Sam Hormusji Divecha; June 18
Urmila Moolchand Kothari and Porus Rohinton Peshotan; June 19
Linda Kamal Marshall and Darayes Behram Shaw; June 20
Ruby Keki Avari and Molanalli Raviraja Shetty; June 25
Ferzeen Homi Ranji and Nikhilesh Lalit Bijlani; June 26
Hutoxi J. Patel and Ravindra C. Malvankar; July 3
Parizad J. Palia and Manoj Sinha; July 6
Manisha Kunjbihari Dube and Adil Rohinton Sodawaterwalla; July 9
Jeroo Sam Patel and Vishal Rally; July 16
Velvin Ratansha Saher and Yazdi Pesi Billimoria; July 17
Patsy Joachim Canados and Neville Sorab Mehta; July 20
Shirin Minoo Wadia and

Parizad Dinyar Wadia of Ahmedabad and Hanoz Dinshaw Mogrelia; November 5
 Khushmuna Nariman Fataki and Poras Parvez Saktalwalla; November 5
 Niloufer Love Contractor and Sudhir Virendra Singh; November 5
 Khurshed Minocher Balsara and Jamshed Zarir Sethna; November 6
 Parizad Minoo Damania and Rohinton Minoo Badorawalla; November 7
 Pretty Eruch Patel and Adil Dhunjishah Fitter; November 7
 Yasmin Behram Patel and Darayus Parvez Nalladaru; November 8
 Sharmin Erach Damania and Jimmy Pervez Hiranane; November 9
 Hamedra Doraib Vasi and Daraus Godrej Irani; November 9
 Ferruzan Rusi Khambatta and Rashid Rusi Surti; November 9
 Perizad Sarosh Gandhi and Freddy Noshir Bharucha; November 10
 Nazneen Dali Bhesania and Histasp Merwan Khambata; November 10
 Rashna Parvez Palsetia and Vaspar Faramroze Kolah; November 11
 Ayesha Astad Parakh and Darius Fardoon Soonawalla; November 11
 Farangiz Zarir Satarawala of Jodhpur and Freddi Sheri Gyara; November 12
 Hufirish Meherji Avari of Navsari and Porus Minoo Palia of Dhrangadhra, Gujarat; November 12
 Jasmin Sheri Shroff and Sheroy Homi Daver; November 14
 Farida Viraf Irani and Sarosh Merwanji Poonawalla; November 14
 Armaity Scheheriar Vasunia and Sarosh Kersi Amaria; November 15
 Shahnaz Bahadur Master and Yazad Homi Patel; November 15
 Kamalrukh Khurdad Anklesaria and Adil Homi Mehta; November 16
 Kainaz Mehermash Munshi and Hanoz Phiroze Patel; November 16
 Mahazaver Kersi Marolia and Kurush Dara Patel;

November 16
 Dikhush Bejan Patel of Dahanu Road and Kurush Soli Ready money; November 17
 Hufirish Aspi Irani and Kaizad Fali Patel; November 19
 Neerja Kamwal Chowdhary and Sorab Kharshedi Bhabha; November 20
 Gayatri Ghansham Laungani and Nitash Hormaz Irani; November 20
 Maharokh Parvez Nalladaru and Paurusasp Dinshawji Magol; November 20
 Neeta Shrichand Hamdev and Porus Kersi Khareghat; November 21
 Yasmin Sorabjee Zaiwalla and Adil Erachshaw Lakdawala of Surat; November 22
 Ayesha Shiraz Gimi and Yezdi Firoze Patel of Dahanu Road; November 22
 Dikhush Nash Mehta and Khushnud Adi Irani; November 23
 Meher Adi Karkaria and Fali Adi Hovoy; November 24
 Zenobia Fali Sidhwa and Adi Rusi Patel; November 24
 Zona Mary Rai and Mehermash Homi Bhabha; November 27
 Loreta Agnello Rebello and Rohinton Tehmtan Byramji; November 27

DIED
 Mani Aspi Irani (63), Room no 38, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; November 1
 Burjor Minocher Sidhwa (60), Lady Ratan Tata Bldg no 3/10, RTI Comp, Gurunank Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; November 2
 Pilloo Minoo Bilimoria (76), Pallonji Hse, New Charni Rd Jn, 400004; November 4
 Shiavax Rustonji Dubash (84), 8, Bora Masjid St, Fort, 400001; November 4
 Nargish Erachshaw Elavia (71), E-1, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; November 4
 Mota Jal Ichhaporia (87), Khorshed Abad, 724, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 4
 Coomi Phiroz Kapadia (82), Ratti Villa, Motibai St, Tardeo, 400007; November 4
 Jer Framji Mehta (85), Pallonji Mans, 43, Cuffe Parade, 400005; November 4
 Mani Pestonji Vajifdar (75), 164, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; November 5

Freny Eruch Daruwalla (70), Dawoodi Mans, Sleater Rd, 400007; November 6
 Rati Sohrab Kotwal (82), Mody Mans, Mereweather Rd, 400039; November 7
 Dolly Keki Unwalla (71), 206/62, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; November 7
 Meherbai Pestonji Dalal (86), 12, Wadia Block, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 8
 Goolbanoo Ratanshaw Disawala (72), 13, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 8
 Shero Bhikaji Boga (60), 301, Vatcha Gandhi Bldg no 2, Vatcha Gandhi Rd, Gamdevi, 400007; November 10
 Bomi Darabsha Daruwalla (53), Karanjia Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; November 10
 Amy Phirojsha Ghista (88), Ashley Hse, Opp Colaba Post Office, 400005; November 10
 Banoo Cooverji Kerawala (86), Boyce Bldg, Chikalwadi, Grant Rd, 400007; November 10
 Noshir Jehangirji Rana (95), 4/44, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; November 10
 Rohinton Kaikhushru Sachinwalla (60), 12, Usha Kiron, 2nd Pasta Lane, Colaba, 400005; November 10
 Bakhtavar Ruttonshaw Patel (96), 5, Oval View, 150, M. Karve Rd, 400020; November 11
 Freny Bejonji Desai (76), B/4, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhoobitalao, 400002; November 12
 Amy Sam Nariman (82), 6, Ness Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007; November 12
 Jehangir Pallonji Nicholson (87), Minoo Mans, 51, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 12
 Nariman Meherwanji Patel (70), R-39, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 12
 Gool Rustonji Wadia (63), Room no 11, Mistry Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Dadar, 400014; November 12
 Dinamai Manchurshaw Aspar (94), 19, Laxmi Nivas, 12th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; November 13
 Frenibai Behram Badshah (97), C, Sagar Sangeet, Near Colaba Post Office, 400005;

November 14
 Pesi Maneckji Batliwalla (85), A/44, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; November 14
 Jer Faredoon Mehta (81), 6/5, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; November 14
 Rashid Kaikhushru Irani (80), Manek Bldg, Opp Navjivan Soc, Lamington Rd, 400008; November 15
 Ratamai Erachshaw Marfatia (80), C-25, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 15
 Adi Maneckshaw Daruwalla (75), C/26, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 16
 Khurshed Jehangir Mistry (74), 112, Mehr-Naz, Cuffe Parade, 400005; November 16
 Minoo Ardeshir Damania (60), Yusuf Mans, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; November 17
 Rusi Jivanji Patel (75), 22/B-1, Dhunbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (E), 400050; November 17
 Viraf Hormasji Singpurwala (55), Mistry Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, Near 10th Lane, 400004; November 18
 Falli Sorabji Nanjee (82), Patel Bglw, 11th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; November 19
 Paridokht Khodayar Meherbani (70), 23-F, Fatima Manzil, Dr Maheshwari Rd, 400009; November 20
 Rutty Homi Bharucha (88), Moti Mansion, 10, BEST Marg, 400039; November 21
 Najamai Nariman Udachia (87), E-11, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 21
 Freny Sorabji Bharucha (78), M-2-32, Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; November 22
 Phiroz Behramji Limki (76), Mithoo Villa, 749, Rd no 6, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 23
 Faramroze Sorabji Shroff (86), 29/A, Sethna Bldg, Nowroji Seth St, Off Girgaum Rd, 400002; November 23
 Burjorji Navroji Dabdi (72), 1, Tata Bldg, Dhunbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; November 25
 Sam Hormusji Divecha (68), The View, 165, Dr Annie Besant Rd, Worli, 400018; November 25
 Sorabji Faramji Punegar (78),

7, Malegamwalla Bldg no 2,
M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016;
November 25

Homai Godrej Dadina (66),
Old Framji Cama Bldg,
Zoroastrian Clny, Tardeo,
400007; November 26

Jimmy Behramji Karbhari
(65), 5, Sayaji Bldg, Balaram
St, Grant Rd, 400007;
November 26

Ratanshaw Dinshawji Boga
(79), Naju Mans, Nawab
Tank Bridge, Dockyard Rd,
400010; November 27

Nergish Rusi Kheshwala
(59), 12, C. D. Sethna Bldg,
Golanji Hill, Parel, 400012;
November 27

Aloo Maneck Master (82),
Patel Palace, 580, Jame
Jamshed Rd, Matunga,
400019; November 27

Eruchshaw Jivanji Press (90),
688/10, P. A. Hormuzjee Bldg,
Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi
Clny, Dadar, 400014;
November 27

Naval Khurshedji Dastur (60),
2/17, Mahalaxmiwalla Bldg,
Sleater Rd, 400007;
November 28

Burjor Ratanshaw Bastawala
(65), 34, Owners Court, Near
Strand Cinema, Colaba,
400005; November 29

Burjor Ardeshir Birdy (52), C,
Dullabh Bhavan, New Charni
Rd, 400007; November 29

Goolcher Cawas Movdavalva
(93), F-27, Cusrow Baug,
S. B. Rd, 400039;
November 29

Jal Ardeshir Kharas (82),
Mohamedbhoy Mans no 7, S.
Patkar Marg, Kemp's Corner,
400036; November 30

JABALPUR

DIED

Perin Bomansha Wadia (77),
Duplex A-3, Aarti Dias Apts,
50, Denning Rd, 482001;
November 5

POONA

DIED

Ratansha Framji Dhalla (84),
6, Royal Home, Baner Rd,
Aundh, 411007; October 3

Feroze Sohrab Tarapore (74),
A1-F2, Noble Apts, Gultekdi,
411037; October 12

Homi Nariman Mehta (90), 3,
Sholapur Bazar Rd, Camp,
411001; October 22

Sarwar Rustom Irani (72),
840, D. M. Rd, 411001;

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1998*	This issue	1998*	This issue	1998*
BIRTHS						
Boys	9	95	—	1	2	40
Girls	7	80	—	4	3	31
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	43	203	—	7	—	14
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	23 ■	37	—	1	—	1
Females married out	19 ■	36	—	1	3	7
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	27	448	4	101	3	38
Females	31	467	4	84	5	39
CREMATED						
Males	—	7	—	—	—	—
Females	—	4	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 1998 (January-December issues)

■ Totals for May to November 1998

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.

*Running totals for 1998 (January-December issues)

■Totals for May to November 1998

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.

October 23

Jamshed Burjorji Commis-
sariat (80), 3/17, Five Star
Apts, Bund Garden Rd,
411001; October 31

Tehmi Cawas Gandevia (83),
N-3, Konark Puram II,
Kondhwa Khurd, 411048;
November 1

Dinoo Jamasp Madon (70),
C-19, Kalpana Empress, Saint
Patrick's Town, Hadapsar,
411013; November 4

...

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

MARRIED

Hutoxi Sachinwalla, daughter
of late Helga and Noshir, and
Reginald D'vine, son of Ida
and Joseph; October 24

CANADA

British Columbia

BORN

A girl, *Shawna*, to *Seema* and
Shahrokh Yazdani in North
Vancouver; November 1

DIED

Keki Khambatta (59),
husband of Koomi in
Victoria; September 12
Pilloo Behram Khambatta
(84), mother of Homi, Bomy,
Yezdi and Thrity Bhatena in
Vancouver; September 20

Jamshed Patel (75), husband
of Nergish and father of
Cashmira Holt in Surrey;
October 9

Ontario

DIED

Thrity Patel (37), wife of
Firoze and mother of
Raymond and Parizad in
Toronto; August 30
Ardaviraf Daruwalla, husband
of Nergish and father of
Nilofar Sethna, Gulshan Irani
and Percy; October 12

FRANCE

Paris

MARRIED

Roxanne Godiwalla of
Bombay, daughter of late
Freny and late Rohinton, and
Francis Ledru; July 12

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED

Aloo Byramji, mother of
Kershaw and Feroze;
October 12

UK

Middlesex

DIED

Bachan Dinshaw Nekoo (96),
102, Nursery Rd, Pinner;
October 1

USA

Illinois

DIED

Khurshed Khory, wife of
Firoze and mother of Noshir
at Chicago; October 16

New Jersey

BORN

A boy, *Rayhan*, to *Manek*
and *Khushrav Nariman*,
brother to Viraf;
April 5

MARRIED

Shirin Khambata, daughter
of Aloo and Rustom, and
Gregory Scott Ford, son of
Marcia and Burton, at
Bernardsville, Somerset;
May 30

Texas

BORN

A girl, *Ava Diane*, to *Amy*
and *Shahrukh Sanjana* at
Houston; September 1
A boy, *Asad Mahmood*, to
Rubina and *Farid Khan*,
brother to Tanya and Sarah
at Houston; September 9
A girl, *Alyssa Mir*, to
Sanobar and *Aderbad*
Tamboli at Houston;
October 11

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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