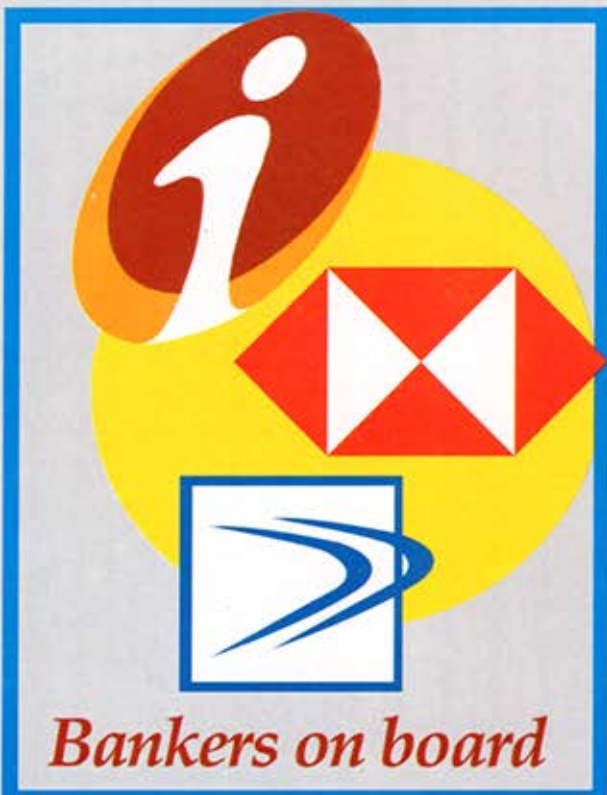


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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Confessions of a..."

I thought the article by Shernaaz Engineer entitled: "Confessions of a convert" (*Parsiana*, November 1999) was inappropriate. Even the Dasturjis who permitted Neville Wadia to embrace Zoroastrianism had said that this was a case of "reversion" and not conversion. Perhaps a more appropriate heading would have been: "A discussion on reversion." The community should be glad that the Wadia family thought it fit to revert back to its old Zoroastrian roots.



Wadia: reversion, not conversion

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"A negative reflection"

Jehangir M. Panthaky of Burnaby, Canada, is angry at the release in that

country of the film *Such A Long Journey* based on Rohinton Mistry's novel of the same name. He comes down heavily on the filmmakers for showing Parsis in a poor light, degrading the values of the religious teachings of Asho Zarathushtra, practicing pagan rituals and indulging in utter corruption and debauchery (*Parsiana*, June 1999).

Sooni Taraporevala, the screenwriter, in the same issue defends the film, quotes selected excerpts from reviews in three Canadian newspapers of March 1999 to show that all these reviewers seemed to have missed the debauchery, mockery, insults and ridicule Panthaky saw.

The Central Board of Film Certification in India chopped the film in eight places and gave an 'A' certificate when it was first submitted to the Board in April 1999.

An incensed Rohinton Mistry, the novelist, dashed off a letter to the Board "...the film is a faithful adaptation — there is nothing on screen which is not in the novel. If there are scenes which need suppressing because they are subversive of the common good, then, they are also in the novel and should be excised from there as well." The Canadian-British-Indo co-producers turned to the Board's revising committee asking it to reason out the prescribed cuts. The committee didn't just endorse the existing cuts, it recommended eight more! Thus the film has 16 cuts and an 'A' certificate.

Since much has been said in favor of and against *Such A Long Journey*, let your readers who might have seen it uncensored come out and give us their frank opinions and views on the film.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

"Sanctity of dokhmas"

As a youngster being brought up in Khareghat Colony (which borders on the Doongerwadi in Bombay) in the 1920s to 1940s I was witness to a large number of vultures hovering over the skies in this area. I had also observed that at the approach of a funeral procession towards the dokhmas, scores of vultures would vie with each other to obtain a perch on the top of the dokhma wall. The Doongerwadi area at that point of time offered a quiet and cool retreat for me to occasionally sit and study on

the benches provided, surrounded often by the wild peacocks which roamed fearlessly amongst abundant verdant surroundings.

Since the '60s the vulture population has drastically fallen threatening our centuries-old traditional way of disposal of dead by dokhmenashini. The reasons for this drastic reduction of vulture population are rapid urbanization, high-rise apartments near the Doongerwadi boundary wall, noise and air pollution of heavy vehicular traffic, deforestation, extensive use of pesticides which have weakened the shell of the eggs of most of the wild birds thus reducing the hatching ratio, etc.

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) are naturally apprehensive as they are the sole keepers of properties at the Doongerwadi.

The situation created forced the BPP to invite and consult Jemina Parry-Jones who is the director of The National Birds of Prey Centre at Newet in Gloucestershire in UK who submitted a detailed report to the BPP giving her comments for "captive breeding of vultures" so that if successful, our traditional method of disposal of the dead can continue. The BPP also sought advice from our vada dasturs, religious scholars and other prominent personalities. It is not known if any advice was sought from scientists, doctors, environmentalists, legal luminaries, etc.

Over generations we have been brainwashed into believing that Khorshed Nagirashni (powerful sun rays) and vultures are capable of disposing of a dead human carcass completely within hours. Nothing could be further from the truth. Besides, vultures are selective eaters of only acceptable parts of the carcass like muscles, liver, spleen, lungs, etc. In the wild, nature ensures that other predators like wolves, jackals, wild dogs, etc complete the process of disposal of the carcass. The vultures normally prefer to eat a carcass within 24 hours of death and they will not eat bodies having a high concentration of chemotherapeutic drugs or those embalmed with formalin or lead oxide.

Though scientific in approach, the report submitted by Parry-Jones lays down conditions which appear to be completely unacceptable and impractical. Parry-Jones herself has reserva-

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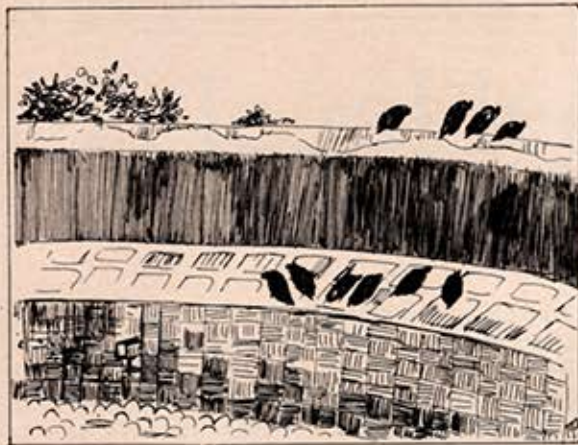
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Vultures atop dokhma walls

tions about the success of this scheme as it is new and untried. No government, either central or state, will ever give permission for the capture and transportation of young vultures from their natural breeding ground and habitat when they are at the stage of leaving their nests for an independent existence.

Specially trained staff will be needed to collect, transport and settle these young birds from their nesting areas which could be on the sides of steep cliffs or inaccessible parts of jungles. Vultures

are slow breeders as they breed only once in two years, and lay only one or two eggs. The incubation period is about 37 to 54 days and the young chicks take eight to 12 weeks to reach the stage of independent existence.

To begin with, 50 young birds have to be retrieved from their nests and transported to Doongerwadi without any harm during the transit. Further quotas of

about 50 birds per year will need to be supplemented till the captive birds' population reaches 200 in about four years at the Doongerwadi.

Special aviaries, at considerable expense, will have to be built to house these birds. The aviaries need to be constructed over steel/concrete posts and should cover the three functioning dokhmas and a considerable area around these by a strong steel mesh. The aviaries will need to be provided, besides shade, with perching platforms and nesting areas and regular, clean and adequate quantity of fresh water and water

pools for the birds to wallow after a meal. A veterinary doctor may need to be appointed to monitor their growth when kept in separate isolation pens.

Considering the above facts the BPP must decide if they have the time, funds and expertise to adopt this program or resort to any other acceptable and practical method of disposal of the dead.

Several religious groups all over the world have altered their traditional ways of disposal of the dead in keeping with the current existing conditions. In fact, cremation in electric crematoria is now widely used in UK, USA, Europe, Japan, etc due to the prohibitive costs of acquiring and maintaining burial grounds. In Ceylon, the Jawatte burial ground in Colombo is an unusual combination of a burial ground and dokhma. The old dokhma has been converted into a circular burial ground, adjacent to which is the present cemetery.

In "More 'Parsi myths'" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, July-August 1999) I had indicated that it is not possible or feasible to add approximately 1,000 graves per year for the dead Zoroastrians at Doongerwadi as the cost to construct and maintain such a large number of graves will be exorbitant. The only

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acceptable solution left now is to consign the dead bodies in an electric crematorium. I once again emphasize that there is no fire in the electric crematorium to defile as the dead body is turned to ashes simply by the intense heat generated by very high wattage of electricity. Don't we cook non-vegetarian food on electric stoves and in microwave ovens? The BPP will have to face the problem of shortage of nassessalars in the coming years and this should also be kept in mind while tackling the problem of shortage of vultures.

At the last Anjuman Committee meeting it was pointed out that in the year 1998-99 there was a total deficit of Rs 1.39 crores. In the previous year the BPP incurred a loss/expenditure of Rs 22 lakhs to maintain the Doongerwadi. We are now informed that BPP has earmarked Rs 40 to 50 lakhs to "change the facade of Doongerwadi" by planting more than 1,000 trees. Last year only Rs 15 lakhs were spent for the education and training of school leaving and college students and only Rs 11 lakhs to assist old and aging members of our community. Are we as a community so obsessed with spending more money for the dead than in helping young and old members of the community?

Dr M. D. DISAWALLA
Bangalore

The scarcity of vultures at the Doongerwadi in Bombay poses a serious problem for the very existence of the complex in the posh Malabar Hill locality and causes grave concern regarding the continued adoption of our ancient system of dokhmenashini. The problem is even more serious than the maintenance of the complex itself due to the heavy loss incurred by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) every year.

Multistoried buildings in the vicinity of the dokhmas affect the natural habitats of vultures besides the tranquility and environment. Loss of their habitats, including roosting and nesting sites, felling of tad and other trees, modernization of slaughter houses, the improvement of civil amenities, results in the fast disappearance of vultures from urban areas. In a recent article in *The Times of India* it was pointed out that vultures are vanishing from Indian skies at an alarming rate and have virtually become extinct in big cities like Bombay and Delhi. This is borne out by their acute scarcity in the Doongerwadi complex. Com-

plaints are being received that corpses remain lying in the dokhmas in a highly decomposed condition, undevoured by vultures, and are at times visible to the residents of skyscrapers like Grand Paradi, etc.

To overcome the difficulties arising in the matter, a foreign expert Jemina Parry-Jones was consulted by the trustees. In her report she suggested a project for the captive breeding of young vultures removed from their nests before they can fly. The number suggested by her is as large as 200, the largest group of captive vultures in the world. This is really a hazardous task, coupled with the risk of injury or death of young vultures at the time of removal, rendering thereby the entire exercise a doubtful process. Further, to find out persons experienced in the art of removing wild birds from their nests and breeding them in captivity will pose a serious problem, more so as this novel experiment would be tried for the first time in the long history of the BPP.

Even assuming that licenses are granted by state governments, it is pertinent to note that the project is intensive and of quite a long duration. It will also be very expensive. Alternative arrangements for the supply of fresh food in the form of carcasses of goats, cows, buffaloes, etc (on the days when the normal food supply from dokhmas is inadequate) will have to be made. Big refrigerators will have to be brought to preserve such food. Licence fee and the premium charged by state governments, while granting licence, will have to be paid. All this will cause a heavy dent on the financial resources of the BPP over and above the heavy loss incurred by the trustees every year in the maintenance of the complex, necessitating thereby circumspection and foresight on the part of the trustees in the matter. For the purpose it may be useful to have a balance-sheet prepared showing the cash flow, capital expenses incurred and recurring expenses to be incurred every year for implementation of the project to get a clear idea about financial obligations involved in the matter.

The expert observes that this report in something new and untried, implying thereby that the project suggested by her is experimental and its success cannot be ensured.

To meet the heavy expenses incurred by them to implement the project, the trustees may like to increase rawan sub-

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scriptions. If rawan subscriptions are increased the use of upper bunglis will further reduce, enhancing thereby the loss incurred by the trustees in the maintenance of the complex.

We are at the commencement of the new millennium. Some of the beliefs and notions regarding the dokhmenashini system prevailing centuries ago seem to be out of place at the present time, having regard to the rapid urbanization and dense population of a metropolitan city like Bombay and the awareness for the preservation of a healthy environment.

We must remain alert to the rapidly expanding number of environmentalists indulging in public interest litigation throughout the country. The possibility of a strong headed environmentalist filing a public interest litigation regarding the disposal of the dead in the Doongerwadi complex thereby affecting public health cannot be ruled out altogether. The very existence of the complex would then be in jeopardy, necessitating either the shifting of the dokhmas well outside the limits of Bombay at heavy expense to the trustees and the community, or alternative consideration of some other system like burial or cremation. The consensus in the community is against cremation and should therefore be ruled out altogether, leaving thereby burial as the only alternative to be adopted in the matter.

A committee of experts may be constituted to make an in-depth study of this complex matter and to make recommendations to overcome difficulties.

R. S. GAE
New Delhi

Don't degrade dokhmas

Many fellow Parsis and non-Parsis oppose and belittle our Zoroastrian mode of disposal of the dead.

Let me quote a part of an article written in *The Times of India*, August 1872 by Jamshedjee Pallonjee: "History tells us, and Herodotus and Ctesias distinctly mention that the ancestors of the Parsis were required to build their last resting abodes on hilly grounds. It was on the highest parts of mountains that they offered their religious sacrifices; it was there that they adored the sun, earth, wind and water. These four elements being held sacred, the dead body was not allowed to mingle with and pollute any one of them. The bones after being dried were consigned to mother earth."

In 1876, Monier Williams Boden, professor of Sanskrit, writes: "When the secretary had finished his defence of the Tower of Silence, I could not help thinking that how much such a system may shock our European feelings and ideas, yet our own method of interment, if regarded from a Parsi point of view, may possibly be equally revolting to Parsi sensibilities."

"The exposure of the decaying body to the assaults of innumerable worms may have no terrors for us, because our survivors do not see the assailant; but let it be borne in mind that neither are the Parsi survivors permitted to look at the swoop of the heaven-sent birds. Why, then, should we be surprised if they prefer the more rapid to the more lingering operation? And which of the two systems, they may reasonably ask, is more defensible on sanitary grounds?"

Dokhmenashini is the most natural way of disposing the dead body. During war and pestilence thousands of dead are thus consumed either by scavenging beasts or birds, whether they be Hindu, Muslim or European. Where was the manpower to bury or burn during such testing times? Nature, with the help of these natural scavengers, did the job, otherwise disease would invite more deaths.

Our dokhmas have been in use for the last 300 years and believe me, the remaining 50,000 odd Parsis may well find their last earthly abode in the future there. It is such a picturesque place, not an eerie place like the graveyard or the burning grounds, one sepulture for the prince and the pauper, no wasting of precious land, no tombstones or marble slabs, no labor of grave digging, no burning of the ever precious wood, thus helping conservation of forests, no ashes to pollute the water and land, no smoke to pollute the air. From a few square yards a whole community can be disposed of. Has any one seen an exhumed body? So horrible to behold and the stench unbearable.

A Parsi is a born environmentalist, from his infancy he is taught to respect nature and natural forces such as air, water, fire. In death he becomes a conservationist, again not defiling nature and doing the last act of charity, feeding the birds. Life living upon death.

Let not then anyone degrade our forefathers' last resting place, for that matter my resting place, of other Parsis and the next generation too. Read these lines of

wisdom penned by F. W. Champion: "Death inevitably follows life and death demands sepulture, which nature provides by means of one animal eating another's body — with no burial fees, no cumbering of the ground when interment so often takes place in another creature's body, no waste when the passing of one means food and hence life to another. Truly it is an impertinence or worse for any of us to try to find fault with a system that is so infinitely better, so infinitely finer, than the most wonderful works produced by the hand of man."

FILLI GORIMAR

No comforting prayers

Some two or three years ago we were shocked to know that at the Doongerwadi in Bombay our mobeds were not available for the bhoi patharna prayers through the night. After many desperate appeals a priest turned up but left after an hour saying that there was a shortage of mobeds and he was required elsewhere. The family was left without a priest's prayers which would have been so comforting through the night. This left us with no alternative but to recite the prayers ourselves.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees would do well to look into the matter rather than beautify Doongerwadi as was announced by the chairman at their last Anjuman Committee meeting at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute.

The Doongerwadi needs no garden or modern facade to add to its unique beauty.

P. NARGOLWALA

Behram Dastur, chief executive of the BPP, replies

The BPP provides facilities at the Doongerwadi for the family members of the deceased for the performance of various ceremonies prior to the body being consigned to the Tower of Silence.

It is the duty of the panthaky of the family and not that of the BPP to provide the clergy for various prayers and ceremonies.

Due to the reducing availability of mobeds many families face similar predicaments. In many places other family members generally sit and perform the bhoi prayers, and in some cases perform the duties of pallbearers. It would be best for the family members themselves to perform the bhoi prayers or take up the matter with their panthaky if he is not in a position to deputise a mobed.

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UK Zoroastrians

In the April issue of *Parsiana*, 11 pages were devoted to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) under the headings of "The making of an anjuman," "If the community wants a change..." and "Projects can bring people together."

Unfortunately, for some inexplicable reason, your interviewees made statements that are, to put it politely, untrue or substantially incorrect. Some months ago, there was a profile of Bailey R. Irani of the ZTFE, which also contained the same defect. Many Zoroastrians of the UK were astonished to note him being portrayed as a sort of knight in shining armor when Irani was primarily responsible for breaking the unity, peace and harmony of the community by concocting an untruthful statement which was choreographed as truth by his cabal of Shahrokh Shahrokh, the Sethna brothers, Rusi Dalal and Beroze Mody, the then members of the committee of ZTFE.

In the article "The making of an anjuman," reference is made to the ZTFE filing a suit against the Brookwood Cemetery Authorities in 1979. The article states "the outline of the deal worked out by the High Court in 1981..." This is inaccurate. The deal was worked out by me in consultation with the ZTFE counsel and was accepted by the Brookwood Cemetery Authorities which had approached us in the Court for settlement. This was then endorsed by the judgment of the Court.

Another inaccuracy in the article is the statement — "the conservatives won the vote in the association's annual general meeting..." No such vote was ever taken on the issue of non-Zoroastrians attending Fravardigan and muktad ceremonies at any annual or special general meeting. In fact, the "conservatives" were scared stiff about taking the opinion of the community on this issue and refused to do so.

The article refers to polarization of the community over the issue of non-Zoroastrian spouses attending Fravardigan jashan. There was no such polarization prior to 1985. It was created by the Sethna brothers in 1985 supported by Kersi and Silloo Jasavala, Mody, Dalal and Filly Maravala.

The article states that "the new management team of the ZTFE have had no part in the verbal warfare as they were not on the scene in 1986 and the years that followed." I do not think that the latter part of this statement is true. I do

recall discussing this matter with Dorab Mistry at a private function and telling him that his sitting on the fence is not going to help the community. In addition, I know that Perses Sethna and Rushna Master were both members of the ZTFE who had decided to sit on the fence in 1986. Whether Farokh Byramji, Adi Bilimoria, Faroukh Sorab were members then or not I do not recollect. At least three, Mistry, Master and Sethna have now decided to come off the fence on the side of being conservative along with the others.

(Hence) Sorab's statement — "we are not carrying any 1986 baggage" — is simply laughable. No doubt, Sorab and his colleagues may like to project this image but regrettably, it is not true. The present ZTFE managing committee carries in full measure the 1986 baggage of personnel and policy.

It is reported in the article that Malcolm Deboo had asserted that the move of the ZTFE from Russell Road in Kensington to the Zoroastrian House in West Hampstead was opposed by Cyrus Mehta and Faridoon Madon. This is totally untrue. Mehta was in full support of the move and so far as I recollect, so was Madon.

The article refers to the formation of The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and states that its constitution was drafted "hastily." This is not correct. It took the committee of ZTFE well over 18 months to debate and discuss the constitution of the WZO not amongst themselves only but also with others outside the UK. It is a myth to say that the constitution of the WZO was suddenly conjured up because of the events in Iran.

Coming to the question of trusteeship election, reference is made to Dr Firoze Munshi as being "acceptable to the WZO wing of the community." This statement implies that the WZO committee was approached and had agreed to the nomination of Munshi. No such thing ever took place. Even if it had, the WZO committee would have informed Mistry that it had nothing to do with the election of a trustee in a local association. The article goes on to state "WZO's Rumi Sethna, Captain and Prochy Colabawalla also wrote letters protesting vehemently that I had done wrong by taking nominations from the floor." It seems that Mistry and some of the members of his committee suffer from a WZO syndrome. It is high time that

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Mistry and his colleagues realized that many members of the WZO from London are members of the ZTFE and have a right as ZTFE members to decide on local issues as they deem fit. I am sure that Rumi Sethna and Colabawalla wrote letters to Mistry as members of the ZTFE, just as I did and not as members of the WZO.

Describing Mac Dinshaw as "a WZO sympathiser" is a laugh. However, with the treatment he has received from Mistry and his colleagues, he might well turn to be a WZO supporter.

Mistry it seems was unwilling to "risk seven years of attrition" in case Dinshaw became a trustee. This beggars belief — for why should there be attrition? On what basis does Mistry think there is going to be attrition? And in any case, trustees have very limited powers under the ZTFE Constitution and cannot conceivably deflect the committee from following its course. All this is just hogwash. The simple truth is that Mistry preferred Kersi Jasavala, a member who was responsible in tearing asunder the unified social fabric of this association in 1986. Congratulations to Mistry on his most admirable choice. Surely, his choice will unify the community!

The election of a trustee at the special general meeting held in November 1998 and the happenings at that meeting and subsequently have been given a spin in the *Parsiana* article by Mistry, which was revealed to be far, far from the truth at the re-convened special general meeting for the election of trustee in June 1999.

I now refer to the article "Projects can bring people together." In the UK, there are Zoroastrian organizations besides ZTFE. It is reported that Dalal was piqued as ZTFE is not considered "a representative body." Let us examine his claim to be "representative."

The Zoroastrians of South London (ZSL) is a charity properly registered and holding its own functions both social and religious. Its membership clause allows non-Zoroastrian spouses to become members in their own right. This is not possible under the ZTFE constitution. So how does ZTFE represent the 300 or so ZSL membership's viewpoint?

The North-West Zoroastrians based at Manchester held a debate that children of mixed marriages have a right to have their navjote ceremony performed. The ZTFE was invited to speak against the motion but declined to do so. The

debate took place and the motion was carried by a huge majority. The secretary of the Manchester organization sent a summary of the debate through me to ZTFE to print in its quarterly circular. As always, the ZTFE did not have the courtesy to acknowledge or the courage to print this statement. If so, how does ZTFE claim to be representative?

It is obvious that Dalal finds it unpalatable that Noshirwan Cowasjee's Fravardin prayers are attended by almost double the number of Zoroastrians attending the ZTFE prayers at Brookwood. With regard to his quip as to why WZO does not function in Chicago or Toronto or Timbuktu, the answer is very simple. WZO is a world body and functions globally. The local associations must do what is required locally. If WZO's help is sought, then WZO gives a helping hand.

Finally, allow me to state that I write this letter as a long-standing life member of the ZTFE — just in case Mistry thinks otherwise.

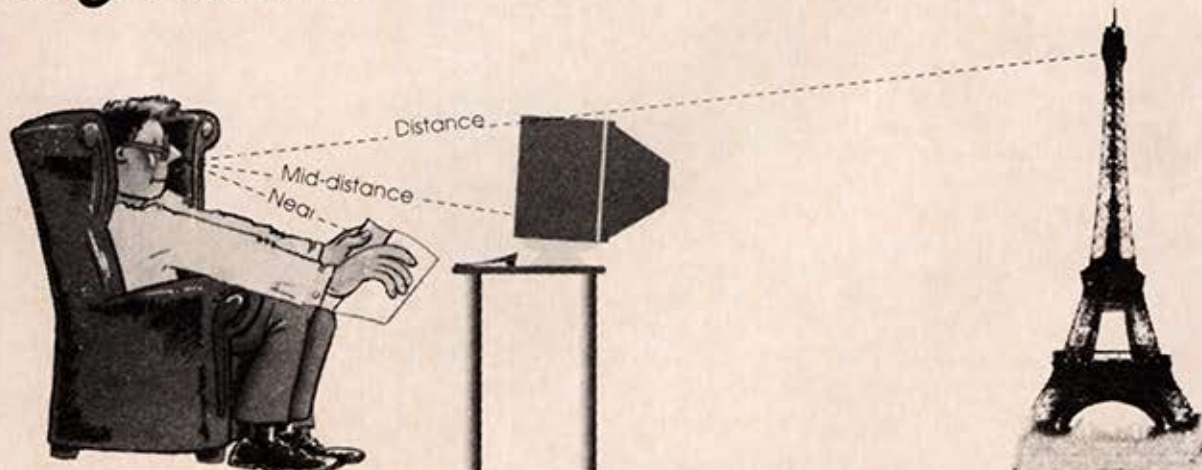
S. F. CAPTAIN

UK

Arnavaz Mama replies

By a subsequent article titled "Electing a trustee" (*Parsiana*, September 1999) we have tried to present the other side of

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the picture as it emerged from a letter from Rohinton Irani enclosing copies of speeches and letters of Mac Dinshaw and Rumi Sethna.

In the original article, the statement "the conservatives won the vote in the association's AGM..." refers to the fact that the conservative candidates for managing committee elections won, and the liberal candidates lost, in 1986.

Rumi Sethna, Shahpur Captain and Prochy Colabawalla were prefixed with the possessive adjective "WZO's" not on the basis of any statement by Dorab Mistry but as an editorial aid to *Parsiana* readers who may not be aware of the relative importance of the individuals to their associations. It did not mean that they were not ZTFE members.

As for the alleged inaccuracy regarding the 1981 arrangement worked out by Captain on behalf of the ZTFE, may we refer him to the booklet titled *Homage to Zarathushtra* published by the ZTFE on March 21, 1983. It (pg 10) states, "The case was heard in the High Court at Strand, London on April 2, 1981 which was attended by Shahpur F. Captain. In the afternoon of April 2, 1981, an outline of a deal was made to the Brookwood Cemetery Authorities and which was finally agreed to by them in October 1982." The write-up goes on to enumerate the major points of the deal. We are glad Captain has now fleshed out the details of the legal arrangement.

On a musical high

With the year 2000 just behind us, there were in the British Press and media the inevitable opinion polls as to who was the 'best this,' or the 'greatest that' in various fields of human endeavor. And of course, music featured pretty high in all of this.



Freddie Mercury: all time favorite

In the "best song" category, No. 2 on the "all time" list was *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The composer and performer? One Freddy Mercury (Farok Bomi Bulsara) and Queen. In the "best group" category, No. 2 on the "all time" list

was Queen, whose prime player was one Freddy Mercury.

At sporting events worldwide, sup-



Udvada's Hotel Majestic: glory restored

porters of the winning team almost always sing *We are the Champions*. The composer and singer? One Freddy Mercury. At other contests and the like, losers are greeted with (albeit in jocular mode) *Another one bites the dust*. The composer and singer? One Freddy Mercury.

I believe we Parsis are debating as to who the "greatest ever" Parsi was. Unless a Parsi was nominated an "all time" No. 1 in the world in any field of human endeavor, I suggest that this debate be brought to an immediate halt, and that valuable time and resource be diverted to more important and productive issues such as relieving poverty amongst Gujarat farmers, augmenting our medical funds, the training and upliftment of mobeds, care for our lonely elderly, providing orphans with as good a start in life as possible. Doubtless there are numerous other worthy causes also, worthier than trying to resolve "The greatest Parsi" debate. RAYOMAND DIVECHA

London, UK

Managing Majestic

When we were children, we often went to Udvada during our summer holidays. In Udvada we stayed at Majestic Hotel opposite the sea. In those days it was owned and run by Minoo Patel whose name was synonymous with excellent Parsi cuisine and gracious hospitality. Patel passed away at a relatively young age, taking the grandeur of the Hotel



with him. His staff and many others in the village felt orphaned. Patel's widow Khorshed vowed to keep her late husband's memory alive and continued to run the Hotel with the help of experienced managers.

But for various reasons it didn't quite work out. I was sad to learn that the Hotel was in bad shape for want of repairs which would cost a great deal. I couldn't help thinking of the days of glory when the Hotel would be ringing with the sound of happy guests and the servants would sail past with trays laden with pulao-dar, marghi and custard. The sound of the waves crashing on the shore would complete this heavenly ambience.

Enter Neville Godiwalla, the very well-known star caterer from Bombay who has also taken over the running of Globe Hotel in Udvada. When Godiwalla was confronted by the rather run-down, neglected state of Hotel Majestic, he vowed to restore it to its former glory. Work started at a furious pace and before long Hotel Majestic was once again wearing a new coat, blue this time,

continued on page 46

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Events and Personalities

Grand opera house

"I have had the opportunity to visit many an opera house in Europe and America but this Theatre can claim to be better than any in the world," declared chief guest Dr P. C. Alexander, governor of Maharashtra, who in the absence of the President of India, K. R. Narayanan who was down with a viral fever, presided over the inaugural function of the Jamshed Bhabha Arts Complex at Bombay's Nariman Point on November 24, 1999.

"The Rs 40 crore dream, with a proscenium stage and a seating capacity of 1,150 will be available for Western and Indian music, plays and other performing arts. Part of the design is an orchestra pit as well as (an alternate) provision to add three extra front rows which takes the seating capacity up by 200," according to a news report in the *Express Newslite* of November 25.

The complex was one of J. R. D. Tata's dream projects, recalled Jamshed Bhabha, founder trustee-in-charge of the National Centre for the Performing Arts (and brother of noted scientist the late Dr Homi Bhabha) after whom the Theatre has been named. "The Theatre has been completed against all odds," he added. Two years back while it was still being built by Patel, Batliwala, Manohar and Associates, there had been a massive fire at the site, noted a report in *The Times of India* of November 21.

The inaugural performance at the Theatre was by flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, followed by a concert from the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra from the UK. In an-

swer to those who seek a justification for this extravagant project, culture critic Shanta Gokhale noted, "It's a pity this country has so much poverty that we feel



(From left) Dr P. C. Alexander, Akama Alexander and Jamshed Bhabha at the inauguration of the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre (facing page)

guilty about having elite spaces like this. At least now we will get the big orchestras and ballets that earlier went only to Delhi." According to theater veteran Alyque Padamsee who was also quoted in *The Times*, "I think it's about time (Bombay) got a grand theater considering that after Calcutta, this city is the theater capital of India...The Tata Theatre is not a theater but an auditorium, perfectly suited for a classical solo performance, while the Homi Bhabha Auditorium is too out of the way."

Scholarship on Srosh

"Srosh receives more devotion than any other yazata," commented Prof Sindhu Dange, former head of the department of Sanskrit, Bombay University, when

releasing *Sraosha in the Zoroastrian Tradition* authored by Dr Philip Kreyenbroek. At the function organized by the Athravan Educational Trust (AET) in July last, Dange complimented Kreyenbroek's "sensitivity" in dealing with this yazata and commended the AET for supporting academic endeavors including co-sponsorship of national seminars organized by the department of Sanskrit on themes requiring in-depth study and dissemination of knowledge of the Avestan people of Indo-Iranian stock, notes a write-up by Binaifer Bharucha-Sahukar giving the highlights of the function.

While the author was unable to attend the release of the book, AET trustee Khojeste Mistree referred to Kreyenbroek's scholarship and his warm feeling towards the community. According to him Kreyenbroek's thesis was the definitive work on Srosh and would remain so for probably the next 50 years, having traced the role and functions of this divinity from the *Gathas*, the *Younger Avesta*, the Pahlavi texts and the *Persian Rivayats*. To enable Indian readers to experience the beauty of Srosh, the book was on sale at an introductory price of Rs 150 at the Zoroastrian Studies office, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Building, Ground Floor, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Bombay 400023, states a press release from the AET.

Mistree expounded on the main characteristics of Srosh in his 55-minute speech titled, "The importance of Srosh yazad in the Zoroastrian scriptures," de-





AET trustees (from left) Pheroza Godrej, Mistree and Ranina with Dange (center) Photo: C. C. Gandevia

scribing him as "the club-wielding, vice regent of Hormazd in the physical world and a yazata who was second in importance to Hormazd." He believed that Srosh has no evil counterpart and therefore was the only divinity of the Zoroastrian pantheon who is said to be unafflicted by evil and hence considered important in the after-life rituals. He also gave an enlightening translation of the *Srosh Baj* prayer explaining how it constituted the basis of every Zoroastrian ceremony or ritual.

The function had commenced with an Avestan blessing in honor of Srosh yazad recited by Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji who then proceeded to give its translation. The meet was brought to a close by AET trustee Homi Ranina who proposed a vote of thanks, calling upon the audience to give a standing ovation to Mistree, writes Bharucha-Sahukar.

77 years, for the young

Nearly 30 trophies were distributed to the prize winners by the guest of honor Khorshed Daboo, director of Jam-e-Jamshed Publications Private Limited at the annual function organized by the Iran League on October 23, 1999 at Bombay's Cama Baug, states a press release. She was impressed with the laudable work of the Iran League office bearers who were committed to encouraging Zoroastrian youth. The Iran League in turn honored *Jam-e-Jam-*

shed for its valuable services to the community for nearly 167 years.

Commending the activities of the Iran League over the last 77 years, chief guest Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, announced that every year his trusts would contrib-

ute three crore rupees to Parsi and cosmopolitan charities, adds the write-up.

Whilst summarizing the main features of Iran League, the day's convenor Vispi Dastur urged the gathering to pay homage to the Kargil martyrs and the late supporters of the League, Homi Taleyarkhan, Amy Jehangir Shroff, Roshan Driver and Marazban Patrawala. The welcome address was delivered by vice president Cowasjee Dinshaw while the second vice president Cyrus Lalkaka proposed the vote of thanks.

The function, which started with a jashan ceremony followed by a ham-bandagi, ended with the singing of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarathushti*, the national anthem and a contributory dinner. Homai Bulsara's melodious Parsi monajat was also enjoyed by the audience, adds the write-up.

Lessons for life

Like butterflies in checks and stripes, they flitted around the emerald green lawns, dancing and singing, happily playing along as they imbibed new ideas and concepts, and yes, lessons too.

Learning can be fun. This is the core principle around which the entire curriculum of education and activities is built at the unique Udayachal Primary School at the Godrej township in Vikhroli in suburban Bombay. And at a recent workshop hosted by the School

for children from 46 schools in the vicinity, we too had a rare chance to step into a world where children chirped like inquisitive birds and smiled as they painted and pasted, and cut and crafted and, on the way, learnt some of the most important lessons that life has to offer.

Divided into four groups, the kids were asked to create meaningful collages from the scraps of paper kept in the center of the room. Slowly, the pictures took shape...creating different images of a green world. Our smiles faded as the kids were told to tear the pictures they had so painstakingly put together. Grab a piece for yourself, said the instructor, and soon the little hands grasped useless scraps. Where is your world now? Gone, was the crestfallen response. The eight-year-olds had learnt the value of cooperation versus competition.

Formal subjects like language and grammar also receive unique treatment with more stress on the spoken word and the development of communication skills, rather than nonsensical rhymes set in another world, another context. An attractive seascape with billowing paper waves had sentences left with blanks. The kids had to sift through a neatly lettered pile of words to fit in the correct one. Reading, spelling, comprehension, vocabulary all meshed together in an integrated whole. And this was just one of the "grammar games" the Udayachal teachers had put together for their little guests.

In another section of the vast, open hall, we watched the creation of 'wealth from waste.' A discarded coconut shell pasted over with peanut shells made a lovely bowl. Khyati from the S.V.D.T. School in Ghatkopar beamed as she carefully fixed a pink arc of a broken bangle to make a smile on a cardboard face. "Best of all I have done here today is the craft." But Shashikant from Madhumati Vidyalaya disagreed: "The singing and dancing was best. I love music."

Everywhere in the cool, sprawling school we saw hands-on evidence of the simple philosophies that have won Udayachal much acclaim. In the music room, pebbles inside a discarded tin of talc made lovely jingling sounds. And ice-cream sticks, a pen stand. "Till the fourth standard, children are taught each subject, be it mathematics, environment studies or lan-

At the Iran League function (from left) Rustom Tirandaz, Guzder, Dinshaw, Daboo, Lalkaka and Dastur





Choksey (standing, right) and Sohrab Godrej (center) at a workshop hosted by the Udayachal Primary School

guage, through music, games, handicraft and excursions," explained principal Shirin Choksey. "There is very little written work." She has personally brought in most of the innovations. Spellings, says this award winning educator, are taught by action phonics. And no, the children do not face major adjustment hassles when they are juxtaposed from this test-free, stress-free environment to the harsh world of the larger system. "We give them a strong foundation. And the communication skills to build on it," she says.

Established in 1955, with just a handful of students, by Cooverbai Vakil, Udayachal today has 945 students in the primary section. Admission is open only to children of Godrej employees; and the fees are subsidized. A nutritious mid-morning snack is supplied to each child. The School exhibits its social concerns with the rule that only two children from each family are allowed admission at any given time.

As we reluctantly prepared to leave this happy world, a little lad, dressed in the blue shorts and blue and white checked shirt uniform of Udayachal proffered a charming posy of flowers. "They are from our own garden," he

said. We looked at the fresh, beaming faces before us. Flowers and children blossom equally well in this educational garden of Eden, it would appear.

Sarita Sawhny

Environmental consultant

Among the select individuals from the world chosen for honorary membership of the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1999 was Prof Soli J. Arceivala of Bombay. He is reportedly the first Indian to receive this "highest accolade that members of the civil engineering profession can bestow on their peers," notes a press release from the Indian Environmental Association of which he was founder president. Around 10 individuals each year have been receiving this distinction since 1853 and Arceivala joined the select band of 162 living members on October 20 at a ceremonial banquet at the Society's annual

convention in Charlotte, USA, mentions the write-up.

His citation commends him for being a "noted environmental engineering professor and international consultant (with) a distinguished career in the shaping of environmental protection activities in developing countries of the Middle East, India and South Asia..."

Presently chairman emeritus of Montgomery Watson Consultants India Limited, Arceivala has also been given credit for founding the first Indian consulting company in the environmental field involved in waste treatment and reuse of water in industries. He was director of the Government of India's National Environmental Engineering Research Institute and had served as regional advisor for environmental health with the World Health Organisation's regional office for Europe. The Harvard graduate was chief of the United Nations Development Programme concerning environmental health in 11 countries in the South East Asia region, states the write-up summarizing his achievements.



Arceivala: credit for the consultant

Arceivala has narrated his experiences in the national and international field in the three books he has authored.

Literary honor

Recognizing his contribution to the field of education, the South Gujarat University has decided to confer the Doctor of Literature (DLitt) degree, the highest honor bestowed by a university, on Dr Ratan Marshall, announced *The Indian Express* of October 19, 1999 in its *Surat Newline* pages.

Officer on special duty at the Surat Parsi Panchayat, Marshall has "contributed immensely towards education of the underprivileged," stated *The Indian Express* further introducing him as the first student of Bombay University to be awarded a doctorate in Gujarati literature. Marshall will be presented the honor at the next convocation of the South Gujarat Univer-



Marshall: the written word

sity, according to the report which mentioned that the University syndicate had decided to award him the DLitt in February 1997 but the item never came on the senate agenda.

Author of several Gujarati books, Marshall has just finished work on his soon to be published compilation detailing the princely charities made by Parsis for the benefit of the cosmopolitan society in Surat, he wrote in a letter to *Parsiana*. Besides keeping green the memory of the donors, it will also serve to highlight the institutions created by their generosity. Prior to this, Marshall was involved in the publication of his collection of short stories, *Narinar Haiyan Sonanan Haiyan*, dwelling on Parsi characters and society.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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Congress 2000

From Sydney, Australia, Dr Sam Kerr and his childhood friend Behram Irani are planning an exhibit of rare Sasanian coins at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, informs the November edition of *Congress Calls*.

Violinists, pianists, oboists, a cellist, a double bassist and a clarinetist have come forward to join the World Zarathushti Orchestra being planned by Cyrus Mehta and Pirooz Cooper. But they are in need of trumpeters, horns, bassoons, flutists and many more string players, says *Congress Calls*. The program is expected to include the *Gatha*-inspired work of Meher Madon-Jansen and the clarion call *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarathushti*.

Zarathushti Games

The Sixth Zarathushti Games were kicked off on July 2, 1999 when Jahangir Mehrkhodavandi and some others ran the 11 miles from Westminster Dar-E-Mehr to the gym at the California State University, Long Beach, carrying the torch to light the opening flames, writes Rustom Khosravian in *Manashni*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston. Mobed Rostam Shahrzari recited the *Avesta* thereafter. The three-day Games with about 200 youths participating (45 under the age of 12) were a precursor to the Seventh Zarathushti Games planned as the preamble to the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in December 2000.

Basketball, volleyball, track and badminton were the features on offer. The intense competition "one has to see... to believe," writes Khosravian. They came from Vancouver, Texas, North Carolina, Arizona, Illinois, Massachusetts, Florida and Ohio and a sole competitor from Australia. India, Iran and Pakistan were unrepresented. Almost 90 percent of the participants were Iranian Zoroastrians and most of the announcements were in Persian to the chagrin of the non-Iranians, informs Khosravian. Houston's seven-member team bagged five medals, he notes happily.

Though the Games ended with a candle flame passed by a Californian child to the Houston representatives, the Houstonians, who gave the gathering an inkling of the 2000 year event, have already planned kick-off practices to get

the team into shape for the big event later this year.

In and around Toronto

While "the Zoroastrian community in and around the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) is increasing at a steady pace, the premises at which we meet and socialize has remained stagnant," notes Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) president Kobad Zarolia in their November 1999 newsletter. With "no intention of disturbing the present setup at the Darbe Mehr," Zarolia suggests the setup of a new facility to fulfill the needs of the community and "enhance the level of intra-community activities." As a first step in the new millennium he suggests the purchase of the requisite land "with the sole idea of investing in our youth's future."

In the meantime a major system upgrade — both hardware and software — has been completed on most of the computers at the Darbe Mehr and the ZSO information technology subcommittee is offering a variety of computer programs to cater to various individual members' needs and to enhance their computer skills. "The youths can do their projects or essays, executive subcommittee members can utilize (the computers) for preparing the minutes of their meetings, budgets, etc and our respected seniors can even play their card games," beckons the September '99 newsletter. Special courses are also arranged at \$15 per person.

"It's been six months since Minoo Treasurywalla passed away and in this short period we realize how Minoo's life has contributed to pulling us together as a community in North America," writes Putli Mirza in the ZSO newsletter of October 1999. "My first contact with him was 22 years ago when he conducted the religion classes for children. We worked together for 11 years seeing the classes grow and develop. Through these years I experienced Minoo's vision and expectations for our community. I knew that prior to the formation of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario he was an active member of the Zoroastrian fraternity, helping and guiding new Zoroastrian arrivals in Ontario. Minoo was the founder president of the ZSO in 1972.

"Before emigrating to Canada, Minoo held various executive positions in industry and commerce in India from 1940 to 1965. His last position was as president and director of Indexport, a subsidiary of Hindustan Lever. Minoo emigrated to Toronto with his family in 1965. In Canada he joined Hydro Mississauga. His astute management skills and foresight were recognized by his appointment to the position of treasurer and secretary of Hydro Mississauga where he worked till his retirement in 1982.

"In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the Zoroastrian community and Canadian society, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) presented him with the Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Award in 1991. He was also awarded "The Confederation of Canada, 125th Anniversary Medal" for his contribution in Canada, his service to the chronically ill, counselling troubled youth and his assistance to those less fortunate than himself.

"Minoo was a role model for our fledgling community... who readily served on various committees of ZSO and FEZANA."

Toronto Zoroastrian youths have been making their mark on the host community:

- Neville Rabadi, the first Zoroastrian in Canada to complete his military officer's training from the Royal Military College in Kingston has taken up his position as maintenance platoon commander and forward logistics group commander with the Canadian Contingent United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in Israel, informs the ZSO newsletter.

- Kekoo Gatta volunteered 10 days in Albania assisting in relief efforts that entailed the distribution of clothes, food and hygiene products to Kosovar refugees, notes the newsletter.

- Nozer Kotwal led a band of volunteers in helping out the homeless through extendicare services, brotherhood meals on wheels, spousal support groups, etc. Their hard work and dedication has been



Treasurywalla: visionary leader

THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

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

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



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



Union Press, 13, Homji Street,
Bombay 400001.



recognized by the Temple Har Zion, records the newsletter.

Mehernaz Lentin of Industry Pictures based in Toronto is planning the creation of a documentary titled *Journey of the Magi*. Based on the book by Dr Paul William Roberts, Lentin's project is conceived as a two-hour Christmas Special for the year 2000. She has appealed to fellow Zarathushtris to help her out financially, says the newsletter.

If music be the food of love...

Karachi-born Zane Dalal conducted the Florida Philharmonic for a series of four concerts in October '99, two of them being chamber orchestras, informs the November edition of *What's On*, the newsletter of the Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal (KZBM). The talented and articulate Dalal explained to the audience what they were about to hear, conveying his own passion for music. The enthusiastic audience responded with standing ovations. After the last concert at Pompano Beach, the mayor presented the key of the city to Dalal, notes the newsletter.

Karachi calling

Understanding Learning Disabilities

was the burden of Diana Dinshaw's message to the Karachi community during a break from Eagle Hill Outreach where she teaches in the US. The four workshops she conducted along with the video presentation she had prepared explained the disorder caused by a dysfunction in the central nervous system. It did not mean that the afflicted child lacked intelligence but that he or she needed a skilled and patient tutor to help overcome the handicap and promote development in other areas, notes *What's On*.

The KZBM's second annual inter-colony skit competition at the Hotel Metropole found all the groups had scripted their own plays, largely round drawing room topics, writes Sunnu Golwalla. But the Katrak Hall team left all the others behind. Their *A Flower of a Different Colour* centered round a mentally deficient woman's association with her neighborhood children, shunned and accepted in turn. The sensitivity of the script and the players moved the entire audience, making the team the undisputed winner, notes Golwalla.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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LINKS

As announced in our November issue, beginning this month we are introducing the "Links" column which will enable interested readers to interact with each other as pen pals. We are grateful to Furrokh Panthaki for funding this venture.

Farhad Savak Master
B-4 Ashok Society, Khushad,
Opp Lions Hall, Baroda
390007.e-mail: farhadmaster
@hotmail.com Age: 24 years
Sex: Male, unmarried
Interests and hobbies: Reading technical books on engineering; taking up social work; and everything to do with computers.

Khushnuma Savak Master
Address and e-mail same as above. Age: 21 years
Sex: Female, unmarried
Interests and hobbies: Basketball (national player); touring; and communication

Sam M. Billimoria
266, Patel Building, Opp
Central Plaza, Girgaum,
Bombay 400004. Age: 60
years. Sex: Male, married
Interests and hobbies: Chartered accountant who enjoys current affairs; religious subjects; Parsi history; economics and capital markets

Adale Patel
H/24, Cusrow Baug, S. B.
Rd, Bombay 400039
e-mail: adalep@hotmail.com
Age: 38 years
Sex: Male, widower
Interests and hobbies: Movies; music; conversing in German; and collecting antiques.

Those interested in interacting with Zoroastrians from around the globe should send us the following details: full name, address, e-mail contact, age, sex and marital status, vocation, interests and hobbies.

A world body of federations

The long-proposed World Council of Zoroastrian Federations will dovetail into the World Zoroastrian Organisation at a future date

Arnavaz S. Mama

The immediate establishment of the World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF) headquartered in Bombay has been proposed by the representatives of international regions at a meeting in Bombay. A proviso declares that this Council will be merged with the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) as and when the latter is satisfactorily restructured to meet the requirements of a truly representative world body.

The resolution — endorsed by Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees Jamshed Guzder, Minoo Shroff, Silloo Kavarana, Dinshaw Mehta, Rustom Tirandaz and Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi on behalf of India, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe's (ZTFE) president Dorab Mistry for Europe and the UK, Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) president Framroze Patel and world body facilitator Rohinton Rivetna for North America, and Noshir Sachinwala, president of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales for Australia and New Zealand in the teeth of concerted opposition by WZO representatives Dadi Engineer and Dinshaw Tamboly who also happen to be BPP trustees — will need to be ratified by their parent bodies before the WCZF can be registered.

The three-day meet (January 11-13, 2000) which declared the final draft (October 1999) of the revised memorandum and articles of the WZO inadequate, has recommended that a committee of WCZF continue to dialog and work with the WZO to develop an acceptable superstructure.

The meeting of the regions was held as per the FEZANA resolution of June 1999 to examine the final draft pre-

sented by the WZO. Iran declined to attend, Dr Mahyar Ardeshtari noting in a letter to WZO president Rumi Sethna his satisfaction with the revised draft while reiterating that the headquarters of the WZO should be transferred to Iran from its current location in London, UK. The Singapore representative Russi

required to report substantive issues. Decisions of the Board are supposed to be made by a simple majority, thus reviving the bugbear of equal weightage to members representing the anjumans/associations of major areas of the world and to members representing individuals. The articles of association stipulate

that while the chairperson will be elected by simple majority from among the 32 members of the Board at each annual general meeting — the office to alternate between the Federations' and Individuals' Councils — three office-bearers viz the executive vice president, honorary secretary and honorary treasurer, would be elected for three-year terms and shall necessarily be permanently resident in the UK.

A small professional secretariat comprising of a secretary-general, secretary and treasurer in London is envisaged, which will be fully monitored by the executive incumbents on the Board of Directors. The authority to sign cheques is restricted to these three office bearers plus the year's chairperson, any two signing together. Moreover, while the draft constitution is said to be in consonance with English Corporate Law it is explicitly provided that section 293 of the UK Companies Act 1985 shall not apply, thereby releasing WZO office bearers from the need to relinquish office on reaching the age of 70, or any particular age.

According to Article 51, "The International Board may meet together for the despatch of business at such places and at such times as they may think fit, and make regulations for summoning and holding their meetings and for the transaction of business thereat, and they may from time to time determine the quorum necessary for the transaction of business at their meetings. Until other-



L to R (top) Guzder, Gandhi, Engineer, Tamboly; (below) Rivetna, Patel, Mistry and Sachinwala

Ghadiali was expected but did not attend. A. B. Madon, chairman of the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan, endorsed the draft in a letter to WZO managing committee member Toxy Cowasjee. The plenary meetings on the 11th and 13th in the BPP board room were also attended by WZO's India based representatives, its president Sethna having declined to attend. On the 12th the regions deliberated in camera at the Dadar Athornan Madressa.

The revised WZO charter incorporates a Council of Federations and a Council of Individuals, each composed of 16 members, to work independently of each other on their assigned objects. The two bodies together form the WZO's International Board of Directors which is supposed to be responsible for all policy and strategic matters and to which the presidents of the two Councils are

wise determined, five Board members shall form a quorum. At least one Board meeting shall be held once a year in a place in the UK. Any five members of the Board may summon a Board meeting, by a request in writing to the secretary-general."

The Federations' Council is supposed to comprise of two representatives of each of the eight regions delineated. Assigned votes on the basis of one vote for 500 or less Zarathushtris, India and Iran have 100 each, UK and Europe 22, North America 40, Australia and New Zealand six, Pakistan and Middle East seven, Far East and South Asia 4, Africa three. The voting is required to be in writing (and not by proxy) to the secretary-general.

The Individuals' Council's 16 members are required to be elected by every eligible individual member of the WZO casting one vote, personally or by proxy, from among those nominated regionwise.

The WZO's major assets are its name and the goodwill created by the India team, notably Dinshaw and Bachi Tamboly's dedication to the task of matching international philanthropy to individual needs under the WZO banner. The attendant publicity has however led to the criticism, voiced by Tirandaz, that the charity is "sacrificing institutions on the altar of individuals."

The WZO's refusal to divulge the size and content of its membership (Dinshaw Tamboly volunteered that 7,500 copies of the WZO house journal *Hamazor* are printed, earning Mistry's compliment, "You are the most candid face of the WZO!") and its adamant equation of the voting rights of an individual to that of an association, has been underlined by the FPZAI, the ZTFE and other organizations. Moreover, the two decades of its existence have seen little, if any, change in the coterie controlling its affairs in the UK, leading to former FEZANA president Dolly Dastoor's earlier charge of "entrenched management," a charge strongly endorsed by Mistry. As currently constituted, its membership is open to non-Zoroastrian spouses reflecting the liberal attitudes and actions of the UK committee. Strangely, the stalwarts of WZO India espouse a more conservative approach, the president of its youth wing even seeking to prevent the navjote of the child of an intermarried couple in Bombay, noted Mistry.

Although the call for a world body had been made at the First World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) in Tehran in 1960 there was little action until the WZO was established in 1980. Its attempts to woo the BPP and the Indian Federation to join it stalled on the issue of the voting rights of its individual and anjuman members. But while the BPP/Federation have avoided joining the WZO until it is suitably amended, the WZO has succeeded in welcoming influential individuals who, representing anjuman members on the FPZAI/FEZANA, have ensured that no other rival body is floated. Thus, attempts to establish an Inter Regional Zoroastrian Congress Committee in Bombay after the fifth WZC in 1990 were scuttled on the ground that it would become a rival to the WZO, as ruefully noted Homai Modi, the joint honorary secretary of the fourth and fifth WZC, who attended the meet as an observer.

Several drafts of a world body of federations were presented by Rohinton Rivetna, to no avail until the mood changed at the sixth WZC in Tehran in 1996. The ground swell reached a high when the FPZAI by a majority vote agreed to be a founder member of the World Council of Zoroastrian Federations in 1997. Though a similar mood prevailed in FEZANA, a WZO filibuster led to a majority vote against founding the WCZF and the expression of a desire to see an amendment of the WZO to incorporate the role of the apex body of federations. Accordingly Rivetna was urged to negotiate a viable WZO constitutional change with the latter's Rumi Sethna. Responses to a first draft circulated in 1998 were said to be incorporated into the final draft of 1999 which nonetheless drew considerable flak from the assembled representatives as it was seen to perpetuate the original flaws by roundabout means. This was particularly resented by the 350-year-old BPP and 130-year-old ZTFE who, despite their historic past, were willing to accept the 20-year-old WZO as an umbrella body in the interest of community solidarity if it executed the required amendments.

The meet began with an Avestan benediction by Ervad Parvez Bajan. A draft resolution, with two major points, sought to focus the discussions:

• "resolved that having reviewed the proposed charter of the restructured WZO, dated October 1999, carefully section by section, and having resolved some issues with WZO delegates present at the meet-

ing, remaining issues be forwarded to WZO for further negotiations and iteration through the regions;" and
 • "resolved, that, in the interim, until consensual agreement is reached on the charter of the restructured WZO by the regions, as a first step the Council of Federations be formed, and that the Council of Federations begin its operation with due dispatch and haste, in a manner that will facilitate its inclusion within the restructured WZO when finalized."

Despite Rivetna's philosophical presentation on the need for harmony and consensus, the resolution raised Engineer's ire. Noting that the revised WZO constitution "incorporates almost all suggestions received from various parts of the world," he demanded to know "the purpose of today's meeting" and questioned the authority of the assembled representatives to form another body. Letters of endorsement from Dastoor and former AZA president Perviz Kolsavala were quoted to prove the acceptability of the draft constitution even though the current incumbents of both offices, seated at the table, had a different tale to tell. Echoing the liberal WZO's historical antipathy to the orthodox ZTFE, Engineer challenged the latter's right to represent "Europe's huge Iranian Zoroastrian population" which according to him bears greater affiliation to bodies in Germany, France, etc. "My point is, is this a meeting of regions or associations?"

Eventually the gathered delegates justified their decision to proceed with the WCZF on the ground that while the WZO continued with its 'politicized' philanthropy, simultaneously stalling major reform of its constitution, the representative bodies had already lost 15 years and could ill afford to lose what may be several years more before an acceptable constitutional change of the WZO is effected. "We are missing... opportunities to represent ourselves as a world community," noted Rivetna. Zoroastrians need to have a say in Global Ethics, at the United Religions of the World, be prepared to cope with the large issues as they come up, he maintained. Mistry contended that proxy votes from indebted Zoroastrian individuals will negate the votes of the associations on the International Board: "40 proxy votes from Gujarat will negate all votes of FEZANA, 23 proxy votes from India will negate the vote of Europe."

continued on page 38



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Valiv's sacred glow

The initiative of Bomi Sachinwalla, guidance of religious scholars and support of local residents helped consecrate the new Darb-e-Mehr in Valiv

Text: Zarasp Irani • Photographs: C. C. Gandevia

The entire building does not have a single electrical lamp or fixture. The hall and sanctum sanctorum are lit by wick lamps (burning oil, not kerosene). The structure is naturally ventilated with louvres and air ducts at the floor level and a high ceiling to enable hot air to escape from the top and cool air to circulate from the bottom. Thus the structure conserves energy and is also environment friendly.

The Manijeh Pirojsha Sachinwalla Dar-e-Meher, consecrated on November 14, 1999, Shahenshahi *roz* Ashishvagh, *mah* Khordad, assumes significance for although there are 42 agiaries in Bombay (island) this is the first one built on the other side (mainland) of the Thana Creek, pointed out Ervad (Dr) Rooyintan P. Peer. It will serve the religious needs of some 250 Zoroastrian families presently living in the Vasai-Virar sub-region as well as of future residents of the area, added Peer who was the mentor and took a lead role in performing all the ceremonies as per their precepts and practice prior to the installation of the fire. To consecrate the fire of the Dar-e-Meher, yasna (ijasne) ceremonies were performed commencing November 10, culminating with a vendidad ceremony during the pre-dawn hours of November 14. *Baj* ceremonies were also conducted regularly on all these days. Peer's father Ervad (Dr) Peshotan Peer had conducted the jashan ceremony during the foundation stone laying on May 1, 1996.

The cooperation extended by the Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian residents of Valiv village, taluka Vasai, in Thana district played a major role in bringing to fruition the dream of Bomi Sachinwalla, managing trustee of the Dar-e-Meher, acknowledged the architect benefactor who had managed to raise Rs 23 lakhs to erect this Dar-e-Meher.

Only through *Ahunavaria*, will of God, can one complete a mission. We are but the physical media to carry out the appointed tasks, remarked Sachinwalla at the inaugural function.

Nearly 2,500 devotees who had come from all parts of Bombay began arriving at the Vasai Road railway station at about 8.30 a.m. The organizers had arranged for buses to transport them to the site which is about six kilometers away. The jashan ceremony commenced at 10 a.m. and was graced by the presence of Dasturs (Dr) Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, Dr Hormazdyar K. Mirza, Dr Firoze M. Kotwal, Ervads Dr Peshotan H. Mirza, Dr Rooyintan P. Peer, Aspandiar Dadachanji, Noshirwan Kanga and others. Following the jashan which lasted for 90 minutes the gathering partook of the chasni.

A shamiana was set up across the road to enable the devotees to attend a brief function which followed. A short but entertaining recital of old Gujarati Parsi songs by the duo Marzban Mehta and Marzban Wadia set the gathering a-clapping, after which the dignitaries took the stage.

In early days each house had a fire, stated Kotwal in his address to the gathering. He touched upon the past history of Vasai, stating that in 1745 AC 17 families resided at Vasai. At that time two priests from Navsari were employed by them to conduct prayer ceremonies. Hence, Vasai was once again seeing a return of Zoroastrian settlers, after the earlier ones were forced to flee by the Portuguese. Kotwal then led the gathering in reciting a small prayer, wishing that the fire consecrated at Valiv would always be glorious and continue burning.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) would shortly start construction of 85 flats at Valiv village as there was no extra FSI (Floor Space Index) available

to the BPP for constructing flats in Bombay, stated BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder. He also announced a large grant for supporting a third child born to Zoroastrian parents (not children of mixed marriages) up to the age of 18 years. He said that the scheme had so far supported 80 families and he wished that many more Zoroastrian parents would set aside their financial worries and play their role in increasing the community numbers.

Adi Bhiwandiwalla, one of the trustees of the Dar-e-Meher, proposed a vote of thanks, after which the assembly dispersed for a vegetarian lunch. The two other trustees of the Dar-e-Meher are Sachinwalla's siblings Pinky Patel and Aspi Sachinwalla.

The day's proceedings over, the gathering returned to their homes, near and far, knowing that there is yet another house of worship where they can enjoy the benefits accrued by the recitation of prayers and performance of religious ceremonies in a scientific manner.

Simply spiritual

Bomi Sachinwalla has devoted his entire life to the worship of fire as it is the most supreme form of energy yielding great benefits to those who fervently worship it, he believes. This Dar-e-Meher has been dedicated to the memory of his mother Manijeh as she had made great sacrifices to educate and encourage him in his endeavors in life. Thus was he inspired to pay his debt to her and to the religion in which he was born.

An architect by profession, Sachinwalla is an alumnus of the Sir J. J. College of Architecture, Bombay. He came to reside in Valiv village in 1974 and started his practice as an architect (see "Tread the chosen tract," *Parsiana*, January 1998).



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1st row: Well outside the naturally illuminated Dar-e-Meher and Bomi Sachinwalla

2nd row: Entrance to the dadgah, Peer addressing the audience with Mirza, Kotwal, Guzder and Sachinwalla on his left; jashan ceremony in progress

3rd row: Gathering at the inaugural; main gate of the Dar-e-Meher



The entire structure of the Dar-e-Meher is made from dressed blocks of black basalt. Rough and smooth sandstone have been used for the flooring and paving. A well fed by a natural spring has been dug near the entrance and is also built of slabs of dressed black basalt. The reason for building the structure in this fashion, Sachinwalla revealed, was to enable the vibrations of the prayers and the burning fire to be absorbed by the

structure. The practice of paving the walls of the sanctum sanctorum with glazed ceramic tiles is unscientific as the material does not absorb the finer vibrations emanated by the recitation of Avesta prayers during the boi ceremony, he added.

He then announced his intention of building 65 flats and a community hall for Zoroastrians on a plot of land which belongs to him opposite the Dar-e-Meher.

India: "center for opportunities"

ICICI Bank under CEO Hoshang Sinor moves ahead innovatively with a series of new banking products and e-commerce initiatives

Hilla P. Guzder

From the days of Central Bank of India's founding father Sir Sorabjee Pochkhanavala, Parsis have had a strong bond with banking. In this issue, *Parsiana* profiles three leading bankers in the country and the changing countenance of banks in India in the new millennium.

Cascading ripples of water flow uninterrupted from ceiling to floor on either side of an enormous, glistening lobby. On the fourth floor, the blue of the pool is ringed by green lawns and flowering bushes. "This garden attracts so many beautiful birds," says Hoshang Sinor, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of ICICI Bank, pointing to the elevated greenery outside his office. A short distance away, giant construction cranes stand stark against the sky, workmen's hovels dot the Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bombay's newest commercial hub situated near the airport, where the ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India Limited) corporate office is situated.

"I have been in banking for 34 years, but it seems as if I started my career just yesterday," reflects Sinor in soft, measured tones. "I was a posthumous child, my father Noshirwan died when I was about to be born. It was my mother Meheran, a teacher in a school in Bhavnagar in Gujarat, who brought up my sister, two brothers and myself." Stating that he actually wanted to pursue a legal career, Sinor narrates how one day, when he was in the second year of LLB and already employed with Central Bank of India, one of his professors from Siddharth Law College told him to visit the law courts situated near Victoria Terminus. "I was horrified to see how the lawyers were clamoring after customers. It was like a fish market!" he recalls. To further dissuade him, his professor told him it would take at least 10-15 years to establish his

practice, unless of course he had relatives at the Bar! "I had to support myself right from the beginning. There was no way I could wait for a decade to start earning money," smiles Sinor. And so he continued to work first in Central then in Union Bank of India, moving from the clerical cadre to junior officer then to senior management position by 1977 (see "At ICICI Bank's helm," *Business, Parsiana*, October 1999).

When he joined ICICI Bank, one of the new generation private sector banks, as executive director in '97, Sinor was motivated, he says, by the challenge of building a new organization rather than rebuilding an old one (the public sector Central Bank where he had been posted as executive director in '96). "We are positioning ourselves between the public sector banks and the foreign banks which have the advantage of the great financial strength of their parent organization. We seek to retain our Indianness, yet provide the quality of service of international banks," he explains.

ICICI Bank, states Sinor, was the first bank in India to introduce in 1997 Internet banking which circumvents fixed brick and mortar branch timings by allowing customers access to their accounts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from the comfort of their home or office. "Infinity, as our Internet banking is called, offers you access to your accounts from anywhere in the world. You can transfer funds with the click of a mouse from one ICICI Bank account to another, order cheque books, ask for demand drafts, make Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited or electricity payments. We are looking towards income-tax payment too," elaborates Sinor. It took two years to develop the encrypted language for security arrangement. "To check for safety, we go into the process of hacking from time to time," he declares. With its website www.icicibank.com and 15,000 users

already using Infinity, the Bank had targeted one lakh Internet users, including NRIs (non-resident Indians), says Sinor. On January 21, 2000, the Bank recorded another first by launching India's first credit card which enables customers to view transaction details and make payments over the Internet, states *The Economic Times*, January 22. Its international card, named Solid Gold, includes a Global One Calling Card, adds the paper. ICICI Bank also plans to introduce Web ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) to encourage the use of the facility provided by Internet banking even among customers who don't have a PC or Internet connection, according to *The Indian Express* of December 10, '99. The Bank has also launched an Internet payment gateway, christened I-payment, to handle cash transactions of its clients over the Net, states *The Economic Times*, December 2, '99. Satyam Infoway Limited, India's largest Internet Service Provider, and ICICI Bank recently signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) for online distribution of retail banking products and services, notes *The Economic Times* of January 20, 2000.

Hitherto the largest of the private sector banks, ICICI Bank finds its position challenged by the proposed merger of TimesBank with HDFC (Housing Development Finance Company) Bank. "The merger means they will have a balance sheet the same size as ours," asserts Sinor. Prophesying this as a sign of the times, Sinor believes that in three to five years' time foreign banks too will be more aggressive. "Acquisitions and mergers will lead to new names emerging. Established old banks may disappear, or reemerge in a new avatar," he predicts.

Established in 1994 under the new banking policy of the Government of India, ICICI Bank has its registered office in Baroda and corporate office in Bombay. Its 71 branches, 12 extension



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counters (affiliated to a branch, which provide all routine banking facilities at a separate location) and 125 ATMs (as of mid-January, 2000) are situated in urban, semi-urban and rural locations across 14 states, according to figures provided by the Bank.

"Our Bank's major strengths are well laid down systems and procedures, advanced technology, and the ICICI lineage," notes Sinor. With a 45-year-old organization with a large asset base behind it, "we don't have to hunt for good customers." With gross income shooting up to Rs 633.08 crores from the previous year's Rs 343.54 crores, the Bank made a profit after tax of Rs 63.36 crores, up from the Rs 50.22 crores of the previous year, according to the fifth annual report 1998-99.

ICICI Limited, founded in '55 at the initiative of the World Bank, Government of India and sections of Indian industry, is a diversified financial services group, states an e-mail from the company. Its business consists primarily of corporate, project and working capital finance and, more recently, personal loans, retail deposits, etc. Through its recent issue of American Depository Receipts, ICICI equity is now listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Imbibing the best of American corporate culture, ICICI provides its over 1,000 employees working in ICICI Towers in Bombay an ambience where creativity can prosper. The staff can enjoy, if they so desire, a fruit lunch in the cheery atrium, or a workout in the gymnasium!

Terming ICICI's "human capital" a major asset, Sinor asserts that almost 50 percent of high level positions at ICICI Limited are manned by ladies, including four senior general managers and deputy general managers. Girls from even traditional Maharashtrian and South Indian families are very career-oriented, he notes, often sitting in the office till late in the evening, hoping however that by the time they reach home late at night an obliging mother-in-law or husband would have got the

dinner ready! "Mobility is not an issue for them, they will willingly take up a transfer, be it as far away as Noida or Calcutta," he states. Contrast this, he notes grimly, with the lack of competitiveness among the Parsis working in banks. "Even in my days at Central Bank and Union Bank of India, I observed that Parsis would rarely compete for promotions," he enunciates. A transfer from the Gowalia Tank branch to the Pedder Road branch would invite moans ("but there is no direct bus to Pedder Road") while going from Grant Road to Andheri was like going to the moon or Mars!

In his own working life, 55-year-old Sinor names two individuals as being particularly important "net contributors" to his growth — P. F. Gutta, ex chairman of Union Bank and S. P. Talwar, now deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Gutta was a short man, he describes, but tall on courage and discipline who worked 18 hours a day. Working as Gutta's secretary for a while changed his perception, says Sinor. Talwar gave him a new dimension on human values — that it is not just how much you know but how you take the people along with you that is important.

"I have few good words about the Parsis of my generation. We have thrown up the least number of leaders or eminent personalities, except possibly in the professions," he maintains. "We have lost 30 years (between the 1960s and 1990s) by grumbling that things were not happening the way we want. It has been a waste of a generation." In

complete contrast, he declares, were the Parsis of old who adventurously traversed the route to China or crossed the ocean to Zanzibar. Sinor pins his faith on today's youngsters in the 13 to 15 age group, who are not easily overshadowed by their parents. "Parsi mothers should put their sons as early as possible as far as possible," he quips. The generation of henpecked husbands will be, he hopes, a thing of the past!

In his own personal life, Sinor places his mother and his wife Nekcheher, whom he married in 1972, high on his list of "net contributors." It was his mother, who passed away on January 7, 2000 at the age of 92, who "pushed him out" of Bhavnagar to Bombay after Inter Commerce saying there was no future in the small town with its Gujarati medium education, he relates. "I go to the agiary every day, either morning or evening. That is my wife's contribution. She has played a tremendous role in my life," he acknowledges. The couple have no children. Being avid movie buffs, Sinor says he and Nekcheher love to watch films on the silver screen, rather than on the idiot box. "Cricket is also a passion with me," he reveals, having played the game in his younger days. He plans to take up golf "pretty seriously soon."

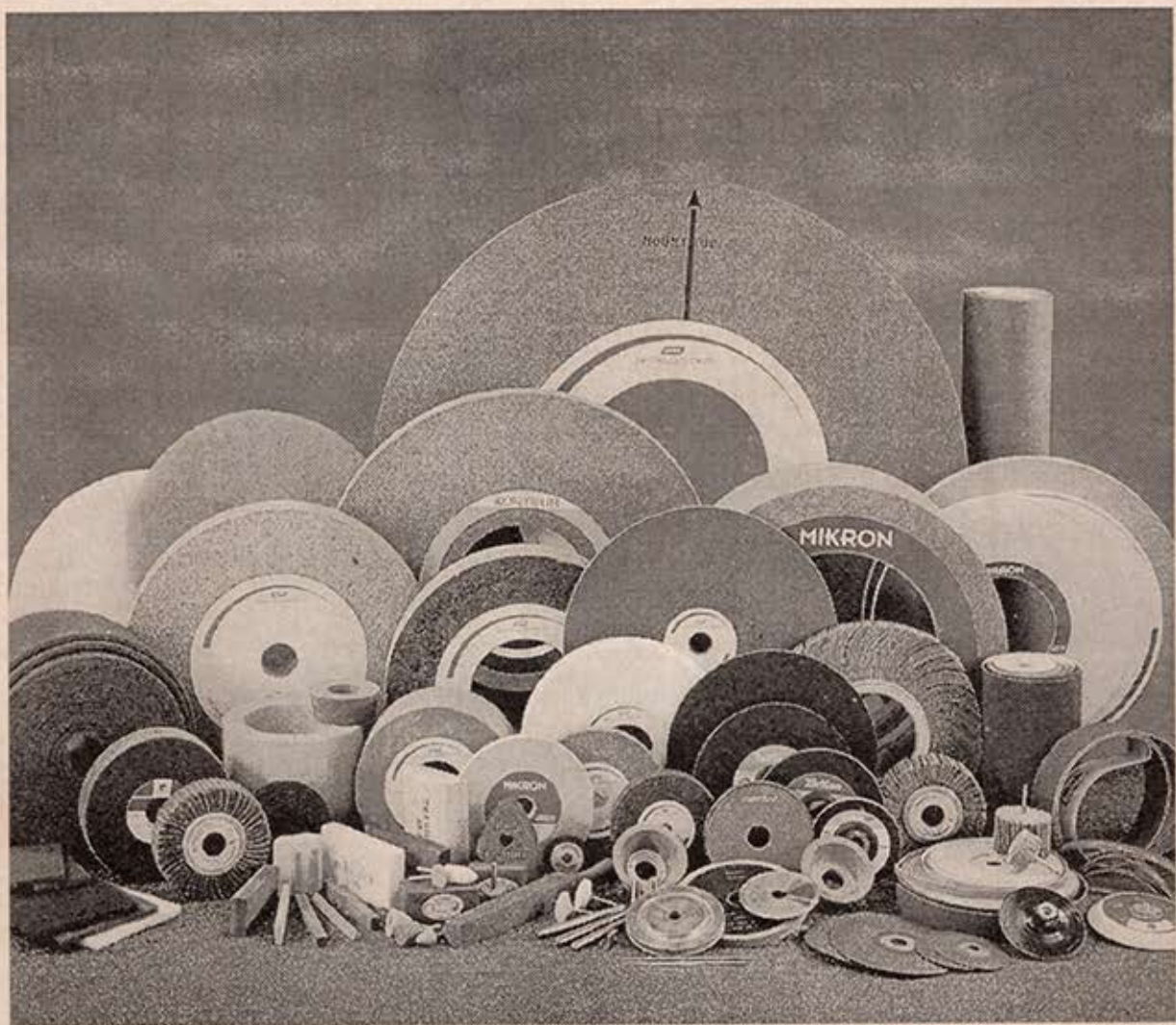
For Zoroastrians good times are coming back, believes Sinor, with more and more youngsters, including school-going children, visiting agiaries, getting married at a younger age and having children earlier too. "Parsis are highly individualistic," he opines and it is a good sign that they are looking at business once again. "But why do some Parsi organizations still function in the 'dharamshala style'?" he queries. The introduction of universal adult franchise in the community may result in a degree of politicking, he reasons, but at least it

continued on page 38



Sinor inaugurating a branch in Secunderabad and (above) at ICICI Towers Photo: Hilla Guzder

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As the first Indian CEO, Zarir Cama aims to strengthen HSBC's personal banking division and build strong ties with customers

Hilla P. Guzder

A pair of majestic, seated bronze lions guard its imposing portal. The distinctive red and white HSBC hexagon logo proclaims its presence in the heart of Bombay's Flora Fountain precinct. "Working in India today is comparable to working overseas. That India is integrating with the rest of the world is not just a story," states Zarir J. Cama, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC), who has spent a 50-50 ratio of his working life in India and overseas.

On October 1, '99 Cama became the first Indian, and the first Zoroastrian, to head the Bank's operations in its 132 years in India (see "Banking on Cama," *Business, Parsiana*, October '99). "The difference between being number two (he was deputy CEO earlier) and number one is very significant in terms of responsibility. The CEO is entirely responsible to the HSBC Group chairman for everything that happens in India. That the singular responsibility is yours comes across very clearly!" he smiles. "I am a decision-taking person, not bureaucratic. I believe in building strong relationships." Cama maintains that the biggest single driver of change in India has been advances in communication. "Young people are not steeped in colonial hang-ups, their perceptions and aspirations are different," he remarks, adding that the average age of HSBC's employees would be the higher end of the 20s age-group. Indians, he notes, are today the largest group of non-British staff worldwide of HSBC and that, he believes, is testament to their abilities. Currently, HSBC's CEO in the Asia/Pacific region is also an Indian — Aman Mehta.

As country head, Cama oversees a network of 26 branches in nine cities. "We aim to claim a larger share of the customer's wallet, give our clients what they need," he declares, happy about the fact that HSBC has forayed energetically into retail (personal) banking. HSBC, popularly known as



Cama opening a personal banking branch in Madras

HongkongBank in earlier years, provides a range of banking services — 24-hour phone banking, AnyTime Money (at 67 Automated Teller Machines all over India), AssetVantage for high value customers, car loans, home loans, depository services, etc. Their credit card business has made India the third most important credit card center in Asia, after Hongkong and Taiwan, states the 1998 annual report and accounts of HSBC Holdings plc (the parent company). "No, we are not downsizing our corporate presence. This is an addition, not a shift," states Cama. As head also of HSBC Capital Markets India Private Limited and HSBC Securities India Holdings Private Limited, Cama aims to position his Bank among the leading foreign banks and financial services providers in India. Mergers, he

asserts, are not of the highest priority as foreign banks are precluded from taking over more than a 20 percent stake in Indian banks. "There is a deep pocket risk. The risk/return ratio isn't appropriate," he elaborates.

Founded in Hongkong and Shanghai in 1865 to serve the needs of the merchants of the China coast, HongkongBank has been one of Asia's leading financial institutions since its early days. Far from being exclusively British, its first provisional committee contained, according to the Bank's printed history, American, German and Scandinavian merchants, Bombay-based David Sassoon and Company and two Parsi members representing Indian trad-

ing houses! In Japan, where it opened its first branch in Yokohama in 1866, it acted as an adviser to the government on banking and currency. In 1888 it was the first bank to be established in Thailand where it also printed the country's first bank notes. A Group entity, The Imperial Bank of Persia which obtained in 1889 a banking concession from the Shah, issued bank notes there as well, but political vicissitudes compelled the Bank to shut its office in Tehran in 1951. "We've been closed down in Indonesia, nationalized in Burma, asked back into Indonesia, forced out of Cambodia..." Group chairman Sir John Bond is quoted in *Select*, (Issue 24), HSBC's personal finance magazine in Asia. In India, the Mercantile Bank (originally established as the Mercantile Bank of Bombay in 1853) was acquired in the 1950s by HSBC, which gradually integrated its business under its own name. HSBC was rated the world's

Reaching for the Sky



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strongest bank by *The Banker* magazine and the 'best bank in Asia' by *Euromoney*, stated Cama in the Group's 1998 annual report.

In the present liberalized economic environment in India, Cama expresses disappointment that HSBC's position has slipped in the "BT Banks' Scoreboard" as researched by the fortnightly magazine *Business Today* (November 22-December 6, '99). For the year ending March '99, though income had increased to Rs 954 crores, net profits at Rs 53.76 crores had taken a fall from the previous year's Rs 72.73 crores, according to their '98-'99 annual report and accounts of the India branches, which also mentions that noted solicitor Rusi Sethna is the chairman of the Indian Advisory Committee. In the past year, HSBC in India had invested substantially in the areas of property, technology and advertising to grow the Bank's business, explains Malini Thadani, manager, public affairs. With HSBC undertaking a global branding exercise, "greater profitability and creation of shareholder value" are among Cama's goals.

Born in Bombay in 1947, Cama schooled at St Paul's in Darjeeling. "My father, Col Jal Cama, was the first Parsi to join the army as a horse soldier in 1932," he relates. As his father's work necessitated transfers, after his boarding school education Cama joined New Delhi's prestigious St Stephen's College from where he did his BA (Hon) in English. "Delhites found the name Zarir rather uncommon, so they abbreviated it to Z, from which it turned into Zed, which is what they still call me in HSBC," smiles the banker. After graduation, Cama's desire to proceed to Oxford came to nought as, in the restrictive socialist environment of the '60s, he could not obtain the release of the necessary foreign exchange from the government. Though he had secured admission into the Indian Institute of Management at

Ahmedabad, soon thereafter came an offer from Citibank which he accepted, working there for about nine months. When he moved to the HSBC Group in 1968 he was, he says, among the first batch of Indians taken into the "covenanted (executive) cadre." After that his career kept unfolding — two years training in London, chief accountant of the Bank in India, as notes his bio data. In 1982, for the first time, he says, two Indians were given a posting overseas, with Cama joining the Bank's then head office in Hongkong. After another two-year stint in India, it was off to Saudi Arabia where he became deputy managing director of the Saudi British Bank Limited, a Group associate. The assignment in Saudi Arabia was chal-

lenging, he discloses, as was his last posting at the head office in London when, as senior executive, global banking services, HSBC Holdings plc, he reported directly to the Group's CEO. The HSBC Group, states their fact sheet, has 5,000 offices in 79 countries and territories, assets of US \$ 497 billion as on June 30, '99 and 20 million customers worldwide! The Bank's website is www.hsbc.com.

Cama's wife Sheliella (née Damania), 16-year-old daughter Nyresa and 13-year-old son Yashan

live in London where the children are schooling. "I am very proud of my community," observes Cama. "We are known wherever we go. India has treated us wonderfully but we are getting marginalized because of our small numbers — 75,000 Parsis in a country of a billion people!" Migration is sad but inevitable, foresees Cama. In the next 50 years, Parsis will migrate to other countries leaving behind in India the coreligionists who are too old, too economically weak to move or those who do not wish to leave their wealth or property behind. "No, we will not die out. We will rejuvenate, grow and have a distinct identity, possibly in North America," he comments, clarifying that it is not only Parsis who are migrating. Young people from other communities are doing it too, wishing to make their lives where they feel they have a better chance.

Defining himself as a practising Zoroastrian, Cama says he values his sudreh-kusti, prays at least a short prayer every day and visits the fire-temple twice a month or so. "Parsi children should be actively encouraged to speak Gujarati," he recommends, smilingly stating that though resident in England his children at least understand the language! Though he would, of course, prefer marriages within the community itself, the happiness of a young intermarrying couple is to be considered, he believes. The choice between dokhmenashini or cremation should be left to



Family portrait (l to r): Sheliella, Zarir, Yashan and Nyresa

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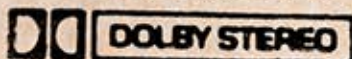
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the individual though it would be a pity, he observes, if the green belt of Doongerwadi were not to survive. Universal adult franchise is part of the modern world, so voting rights should be given to all Zoroastrians. "What are we afraid of?" he queries.

As one who has an esoteric taste in reading (fiction and non-fiction), Cama finds the cultural scene in Bombay "active and dynamic" and enjoys all kinds of music and dance. Plans for later years include travel in Africa and Latin America which he says he has not really seen. "My big passion is the preservation of heritage," he reveals, personally involving himself in HSBC's avowed aims to conserve heritage. Among other causes, HSBC co-sponsors the Banganga Festival each year (when acclaimed musicians perform to raise funds for the restoration of the stone tank at Walkeshwar holding holy waters and the temples alongside). HSBC is also actively involved in supporting the Horniman Circle Association's aim of conserving the buildings in one of the Fort's oldest precincts. "I am content," says Cama, "in making a meaningful contribution through my work."

INDIA: "CENTER FOR..."

continued from page 32

will throw up younger leadership with new ideas. Navjoting of children of inter-community marriages should be a case of individual liberty is his belief. Dokhmenashini is a good principle, he says, as it means offering the body to the birds, an act of charity even after one is dead and gone. "We will succeed in hanging on to this principle," he observes, though the maintenance of doongerwadis may become increasingly difficult.

Never having opted to leave the country of his birth, Sinor remarks that he is "bullish on India." Smiling serenely he says, "We are comfortable in chaos! The Indian mind is better, so we wriggle out of our difficulties." India will emerge a center for opportunities, he predicts, and there will be a "reversal trend" in five years' time, with many who had emigrated opting to come back.

For the moment, Sinor is looking to more challenges in the banking field, happy to be a part of progress. "But after retirement I will totally change my lifestyle. I have gained so much from society, I would like to give back, contributing not just to the Parsi community but to society at large," he says.

A WORLD BODY...

continued from page 24

A major change is the unanimous agreement to locate the WCZF in Bombay because in Mistry's words, "This government listens most to the concerns of the community." Endorsing the decision "on behalf of 20,000 Zoroastrians of North America," Patel felt he was "truthful to the sentiments of his constituents." Thanking the BPP for its hospitality, Sachinwala noted he was "happy about what we've achieved," and looked forward to "go ahead and do something... work in harmony and good spirit."

"I am not willing to go with you," Dinshaw Tamboly told the regional representatives who had been commendatory of his role in the WZO. "Good luck to you, but I won't be a part of it."

In a last ditch attempt to avert the crisis Engineer introduced a new resolution which noted:

- *"resolved that the regions other than those who have already supported and agreed with the final draft charter of the restructured WZO dated October 1999 after carefully reviewing it section by section and having discussed some issues with WZO delegates present at the meeting, forward the said issues and remaining issues to WZO for further negotiations and iteration through those regions;" and

- *"resolved that in the interim, as a prelude to the formation of a Council of Federations composed of federations and associations as members of the restructured WZO and which will be an integral part of that institution, informal networking among those regions be commenced in order to agree on the details of that Council's organization and operations within the said institution based on the October 1999 final draft of its charter which has already been supported and found acceptable by many regions."

Engineer's proposal was rejected. Advised Gandhi, "Our proposal is not acceptable to the WZO representatives; their proposal is not acceptable to us. Put both on record."

As Guzder concluded, "There are fundamental and basic differences of opinion but we're not fighting with each other. In time these differences in views will be reconciled with Ahura Mazda's blessings. We have accepted each other's viewpoint even though we haven't signed a common document."



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"Value equations are changing"

TimesBank managing director Nani Javeri believes there is no longer a big gap in service standards between foreign and Indian banks

Hilla P. Guzder

"I love fresh challenges. Work is great fun — I enjoy my job," states Nani B. Javeri who joined TimesBank Limited as managing director (MD) in November '98. Tall, hair and mustache flecked with grey, Javeri's robust complexion bespeaks his sojourn in foreign climes. "After a 32-year career with ANZ Grindlays Bank, 11 of which were spent abroad, I joined TimesBank to take on the challenge of building a young company," he explains. Following the merger (subsequent to the *Parsiana* interview) of TimesBank with HDFC Bank, Javeri will leave TimesBank and take on a new assignment.

"ANZ was my organization for three decades and with postings as far apart as London and Melbourne, the experience of living and working in different cultures has been invaluable. As Indians we are second to none, particularly in terms of volume of work and education," Javeri asserts. Higher education is at a discount in many countries with young people joining the workforce soon after their 'O' levels, he remarks. The commitment to learning is improving however, he has observed, with a marked change between 1990-98 in Australia. "I'm happiest in India," he adds with a smile!

One of the new generation private sector banks, TimesBank started operations in 1995, with Javeri taking over in '98 from N. G. Pillai, the Bank's first MD. "We have taken quite a few strides in the past one year," he says. TimesBank was the first Indian bank to introduce the debit (Access) card which is like "your savings account in your wallet," elaborates Javeri. Accepted at department stores,

restaurants, petrol pumps, etc., the cardholder's bank account is automatically debited when the card is used. "The debit card is used for typically small value items instead of paying cash. There is no interest cost and so it is a completely separate product from a credit card," he observes. The card can be used at shops and establishments displaying the Maestro logo, as well as at non TimesBank ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) sporting the Cirrus logo, according to Times Bank's publicity leaflet.

TimesBank was also the first to introduce ATMs at the airports at Hyderabad and Bangalore, with Bombay and Delhi on the anvil as well, informs Javeri. "We have promoted the latest technology and the best in world practices, at a price considerably less than foreign banks," he asserts. "Value equations are changing. Individuals are asking why they should pay more (for the same service). With 39 branches all over the country, and 43 on site/off site ATMs, TimesBank had 1,80,000 clients within three years of its establishment, according to its

website (www.timesbank.com). Recording a net profit for the year 1998-99 of Rs 27.06 crore, the net profit for the first nine months of the current financial year had already jumped to Rs 27.87 crore, according to *The Economic Times*, January 14, 2000. "But more important than profits is profitability," asserts Javeri. "It is quality that counts, not quantity, margins not volumes."

TimesBank was promoted by The Times of India Group, the largest publishing house in the country with a combined readership for its newspapers and periodicals of over 15 million, states its website. The Group's interests also spread across music, television, radio and the Internet, with its portal site www.indiatimes.com being among India's most popular sites. With the Jain family of Bennett, Coleman and Company Limited, the Group's flagship company, having been major shareholders in the Punjab National Bank before it was nationalized, the family had a long association with the banking industry.

Javeri took his first steps up the banking management ladder when as a lad of 20 he joined National and Grindlays Bank (as ANZ Grindlays was then known) as a management



At his daughter's wedding (l to r):
Amith, Shirin, Laila and Nani

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Mauritius

trainee in 1966. It was his first experience of Bombay life, being born in Kanpur in 1946 and educated first at the elite Doon School in Dehra Dun and then at Delhi's St Stephen's College from where he did his BA (Hon) with history and economics. His father Behram served in the army on a short commission, looked after the family business in Kanpur which included owning and managing cinema halls which were later sold, and subsequently worked with the State Trading Corporation in Delhi and other government organizations in various capacities. With a long family presence in Kanpur, the Javeris had set up the Seth Behramji Navroji Javeri Daremeher consecrated on March 21, 1930 which was handed over by the family to the anjuman in the 1970s. With the number of Parsis in the town dwindling steadily, the family had suggested that the agiary lands be sold as they were in a prime commercial area and a corpus created. But the local Parsis turned down the suggestion, laments Javeri. "We Indians have a unique way of shooting ourselves in the foot," he quips. About seven years

ago he paid a nostalgic visit to Kanpur after a gap of almost 25 years. Though "not the most livable of places," parts of Kanpur are still nice, he opines, but there are very few Parsis remaining.

Laughingly Javeri states that Parsis in India have been at two ends of the scale! There are the "hugely patriotic people who have contributed a hell of a lot to this country" and there are those to whom "everything about the country is bad." Out of every 100, not more than five will be doers, the other 95 just quarrel! "This disturbs me," he comments, as does the "politiking in trusts."

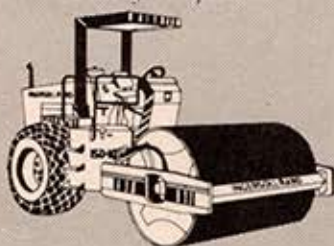
Religious laws and beliefs originating in the eighth century cannot apply, he says, in the 21st century. "Many laws have outlived their utility, clearly there is need for change," he remarks. Whether it be a question of dokhmenashini, or intermarriage or the navjoting of the children of such unions, it is a question of individual choice, he maintains. "Let us discuss rather than be told what to do. Logic is important. Today even my young staff at work will not accept anything without a logical explanation." Though a believer in the faith, Javeri

says he is "not well versed" in religious matters. "My wife Shirin makes up for it," he adds. The couple have one daughter, Laila, who is in London following her marriage in November '99 to fellow Bombay management student Amith Karan.

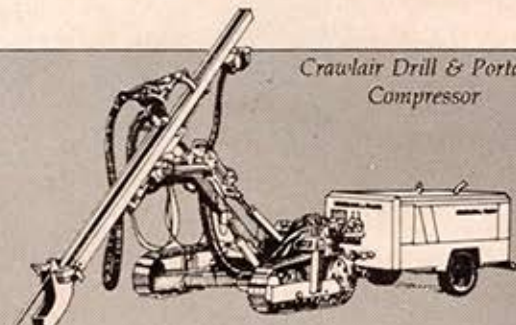
A keen sportsman in his student days, having played billiards, squash, cricket, football, etc, Javeri jests that he is now an armchair sportsman and critic! "I love country music," he says and a recent "very interesting" pastime is surfing the Net.

Commending Indian democracy for having survived for half a century, Javeri notes that Winston Churchill had predicted that in a few years' time the country would break up. "We were 420 million at the time of independence; we are a billion now. Indians have the will to move faster. Unfortunately economics is ruled by politics. But you can't hold down such a talented group of people and the resources the country has," he declares. "You have to provoke people to change, to motivate them to make their own karma. I, for one, am committed to the country. We will ultimately find our way!"

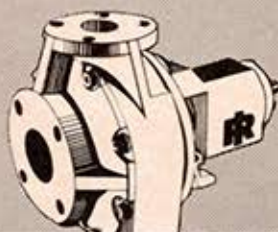
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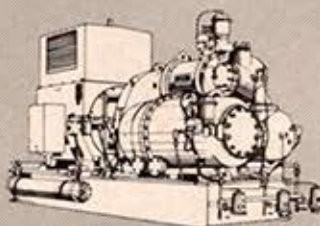
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Treasured on the Island - 6

Feeling the pulse

Many Zoroastrian professionals, particularly in the medical field, left an indelible imprint

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

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

Starting with the July-August 1999 issue, *Parsiana* has been chronicling the achievements of prominent Sri Lankan Zoroastrians of the 19th and the 20th century. These are edited excerpts from Behram Kaikhushroo Billimoria's historical compilation, *The Parsees in Ceylon*, culled from the memoirs of Framroze Rustomjee and K. D. Choksy. Written about nine years ago, factually there may be a change of circumstances for some of the individuals mentioned herein although we have imposed on Sri Lanka's respected legal light Kairshasp Choksy's time to check the episodes for accuracy.

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

...

In the course of this and earlier instalments several individuals have been named for the successful conduct

of their pursuits in Ceylon. There have in addition been other meritorious achievers who having roots in Sri Lanka have been cited in Behram Billimoria's compilation and are hence worthy of mention here.

Among the professions where many Zoroastrians have shone is the field of medicine. Dr Pilloo Framroze Rustomjee, considered a prodigy in medical work, was instrumental in organizing and running the accident service of the General Hospital of Colombo. Being shunted by the government from one station to another, he opted to make his home in Australia.

One of the first four Ceylonese to be made a Distinguished Citizen by the then Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake in 1948 was Dr Jamshed Dadabhoy Nusserwanjee who was a popular physician and surgeon. A senior eye surgeon of the Government Eye Hospital in Colombo, the largest in Ceylon, Nusserwanjee had also been conferred a Coronation Medal in 1953. Yet another eminent eye surgeon was Dr Dhanjishah Pirosha Billimoria who commanded an extensive practice. His nephew Dr Russi Billimoria also made a name for himself as an eye surgeon and conducted a free eye clinic once a week in Wellawatte and Dehiwela.

A senior ENT surgeon at the General Hospital in Colombo was Dr Rusi Cawasjee Rustomjee. He was a member of the Ceylon Medical Corps and was mobilized during World War II.

The credit for eradicating malaria from the island goes to Dr Kursetjee (Baba) Jamshedji Rustomjee who was appointed malariologist when he was in government service. Thereafter he was involved in the treatment of cancer patients and establishing the Cancer Society.

After winning a gold medal in surgery Dr Sarah Nadirshah Ruttonjee went

to the UK for further studies and finally started her practice as a psychiatrist in the USA.

Yet another popular physician was Dr Dinshaw Bhicaji Gandeia who came to Ceylon in 1915 in the midst of the Sinhala-Muslim riots. With his cheerful disposition and healing touch he remained in Ceylon for 40 years until his retirement when he returned to Bombay.

The president of the Sri Lanka Radiologists Association was Dr Minocher (Mino) Nusserwanjee Jilla who had earlier served the Ceylon Army Medical Corps as a commissioned officer, studied radiology in England and on his return took charge of the newly formed radiology unit of the Ceylon Army.

Seven of Jilla's eight brothers were directly or indirectly recruited for government service: Jamshed (Jimmy) worked in the harbor as afloat superintendent, Dadabhoy (Dady) was a lieutenant colonel in the Army, Savak was with the Garrison Artillery during World War II, Faredoon (Freddy) was superintendent of police, Nariman and Kershasp joined the Navy, Homi joined the civil aviation department and was commandant of the Ratmalana Airport.

Among those who had served the government in the field of law were the compiler of this treatise Behram Kaikhushroo Billimoria who was selected as the first crown proctor permanently attached to the attorney general's office, and Homi Rustomjee and Noshir Rustomjee (brothers of ENT surgeon Rusi Rustomjee) both of whom qualified as proctors of the Supreme Court of Ceylon. When the renowned science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke discovered some treasure trove in the south of Ceylon, the government tried to claim it but Homi Rustomjee gave an opinion which was finally accepted by the government.

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Wadia's winning ways

Swimming in the elevated environs of Kathmandu in the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, 16-year-old Bombay girl Zeba Wadia clinched the gold medal in the 100 meters (m) breaststroke for women in a record time of 1 minute (min) 19.09 seconds (sec), sinking in the process the record set by Ceylonese swimmer Deepika Chunmugham in 1991. Keeping up her quest for gold at the Eighth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Kathmandu in September/October '99, Wadia stopped the clock in the 200 m breaststroke as well, with a new meet record of 2 min 50.95 sec. A third gold came her way in the 4x100 m freestyle relay, with the Indian girls eclipsing in 4 min 16.36 sec the old record set by Indian swimmers in 1984, according to press reports.

"We had trained very hard at the Bangalore camp before the SAF Games. Our coaches were expecting results, so I was a little nervous and concerned about my timings," states Wadia. "The whole team had to be at the pool every day, whether our event was scheduled for that day or not, so there was not much time for anything else like sightseeing, etc. An international meet gives you a different kind of exposure and so is definitely better than national tournaments." Just prior to the SAF Games, which saw the participation of swimmers from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, Wadia had swum in the Asia Pacific meet in Delhi, pocketing two bronze medals in the 4x100 m freestyle and medley relays as part of the Indian squad, but an individual medal had eluded her.

Going for gold again in the 54th National Aquatic Championships in Bombay in December '99, Wadia outclassed the competition with two new meet records. In the 100 m breaststroke, she powered ahead to sink the old mark with her fastest timing of 1 min 18 sec. She grabbed a gold in the 200 m breaststroke as well, though she failed to better the existing record. "The water in the Andheri Sports Complex pool was heavy (due to the chlorine and chemicals)," she explains, and there was

no other record in the women's events, Wadia being the only one to break two records. There were no electronic touchpads, some swimmers suffered cuts due to cracks in the tiles and there were no screaming spectators, particularly on the first two days, to get the adrenaline flowing, she recounts. "There are not many people interested in the sport in

dedicated than they are in Wadia's home state. Though she had a coach earlier, currently Wadia trains on her own, without the services of a regular coach. Facilities provided at competitions are often poor, she comments, with participants having to share beds (sometimes there are no beds at all, only mattresses!), food supplements not given, etc. For the SAF Games and the Bangalore training camp before the event, the Indian government bore the expenses, explains Wadia. She would love to train abroad, she says, but finding sponsors is very difficult.

Presently, the FYJC (First Year Junior College) student at N. M. College at Vile Parle plans to concentrate on academics. "There are new subjects in the commerce stream which require my attention," she declares and there are no big swimming competitions coming up in the near future.



Wadia: seeking international exposure

Bombay," notes Wadia, adding with a laugh that the nationals, plagued by problems, had first been postponed from October to December, the venue shifted from Poona to Bombay and swimmers who had come from all over India were not sure even till the last day whether the competition would take off at all! "But once it started, things went smoothly. Rules were enforced more strictly than they had been earlier. The first false start meant disqualification, so the swimmers were taking no chances!" she narrates.

In the 50 m breaststroke, Wadia flirted with her own record set two years ago at the nationals by breaking it twice on the same day — first in the heats (37.30 sec) and again in the final (37.12). Garnering more medals (silver and bronze) in other events, Wadia had the distinction of standing second, behind overall women's champion Richa Mishra (Police). With Maharashtra women suffering a virtual drought for many years, Wadia is the only female swimmer from the state to win at the senior national level since the days of Maharashtra champions Anita Sood and Persis Madon over a decade ago, according to swimming sources.

"Swimming in Karnataka is much better, as they put a lot more into the sport there," observes Wadia, with both coaches and competitors being more

Striking silver

"At Okinawa, I missed gold by a fraction of a point. The Japanese girl who stood first scored just 0.04 more than I did," says 19-year-old karateka Jasmin Amalsadvala. The judging at the First Okinawa Traditional Karate-Do and Kobudo World Tournament in August '99 was on the Olympic style, with the highest and lowest scores of the five to seven judges (depending on the event) being discarded and the average then taken, she explains.

Keeping her nerve in the huge indoor stadium which seats over 20,000 spectators, Amalsadvala competed against 14 opponents from all over the world in the kata (series of actions in a dance form), she says, to clinch the silver medal in the girls' age group of 15 to 19 years. "Jasmin really surprised us all by the level of her performance," remarks Sensei Pervez Mistry, chief instructor of the 35-year-old Academy of Martial Arts (AMA), India, which is affiliated to the International Okinawan Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Federation. Mistry led the Indian team of 19 competitors, most of whom were from Bombay. "Jasmin did not buckle at all, she performs well under stress," states Mistry who is an inter-national referee. The AMA is a founding member of the

Maharashtra Karate-Do Association and the All India Karate-Do Federation.

After the competition, Amalsadvala went on to obtain her second degree black belt by passing the theory and practical examination in Okinawa, states her proud father, Homi, himself a fourth degree black belt who has visited Japan five times, representing India once at a tournament in Tokyo. Homi is joint vice principal of the AMA with Burge Cooper who is the president of the All India Karate-Do Federation and on the international panel of referees and judges who frame rules and regulations. Cooper is commercial manager, marketing services, Air India, whose son Jehangir stood ninth in the boys' (16-19 years) kata event at the meet.



Amalsadvala: aiming for Olympics

"Kata involves minute attention to detail, including body posture, etc and as we had gone for the tournament a few days earlier, the Japanese instructors put in a lot of effort over us — they were willing to make us do the same thing 100 times to get it right!" remarks Jasmin. Expenses for the trip had to be borne by the competitors themselves, says Homi who was the team manager, adding that Jasmin received a sponsorship from the Sir Dorab Tata Trust.

On the current and long-term agenda is Jasmin's training for the Olympics in 2004 in the women's open category.

"I train very seriously, both morning and evening for about five hours daily," she asserts, as karate has very recently been accorded approval as an Olympic sport by the International Olympic

Committee. "Karate is not a weapon, it's a self-defence, a discipline involving self-control," muses the Jai Hind College student, who is in the first year (commerce) of junior college. She says she is not afraid of being hurt or injured during training or competition. "I am not holding myself back at all," she comments. A keen runner during her school days, Jasmin says she is "not too sure if this (karate) will be her career," but she certainly would like it to be a standby career where she could both teach and learn.

Having developed her liking for karate through her father, Jasmin states that her mother Khorshed too has been most supportive. Of her two siblings, the eldest Armin, now married and a mother, evinced no interest in karate at all, while brother Sam, who is currently on board ship, obtained his brown belt before moving on to body-building! "I feel great about Jasmin's performance," says Homi who has trained with Mistry since 1969. Homi takes karate classes at the Bombay International and New Activity Schools and at The Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution where their main

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READERS' FORUM

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Godiwalla's favorite color. So now Godiwalla runs two hotels in Udvada, the Globe and the Majestic.

During the Christmas holidays last year, a group of 30 people from Germany and Switzerland stayed at Hotel Majestic for two weeks in order to participate in a residential course organized by my sister Dilnaz and me. Godiwalla extended his full cooperation, from personally choosing an appropriate menu to arranging the get-together for the turn of the millennium which we celebrated there. This course for the foreigners offered a glimpse into the rich and diverse life and culture of India in general and Gujarat in particular. ABAN BANA

Funds for Frohar Films

Frohar Films are making an educational program for television on Zoroastrian religion and culture aired by DD2 Metro Channel every Sunday at 12.30 p.m. So far 15 episodes have been telecast and the viewers' response is very good. The serial will be initially presented in 19 episodes by eminent priests and religious scholars and we are planning to complete 52 episodes.

To make the serial more interesting,

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Lady from Bombay, senior executive in Gulf country, hospitality industry, for 14 years. Wishes to meet Parsi gentlemen around 45 years old, widowers/divorcees included, interested in marriage. Those with children, even more welcome. Her family is in Bombay, though lady wishes to settle anywhere else. Was married for a short period, which is now history. No children. Personally, good looking, well schooled, spends time at gym and swimming. She will be able to meet personally at Bombay or other places around the globe.

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we are including interviews and discussions by eminent global personalities from the community, performances and enactment of Parsi culture and incidents by well-known theater artists, kirtankars, music directors and singers.

Since this is a pioneering project and will cover all the aspects of Zoroastrianism, it will educate the lay public in the salient features of the religion. It will also be an invaluable educational tool for the children of our community.

The Channel is not paying the production cost of the program. We have to bear the entire cost through voluntary donations and sponsorships. We have started the project with initial donations of around Rs 1,10,000 from individuals, well-wishers and trusts. Up to now we have been able to collect Rs 4,70,000.



We are spending nearly Rs 40,000 per episode, including telecasting fees to Doordarshan.

We are therefore dependent on generous donations/sponsorships from philanthropic organizations to continue the project. Your assistance in monetary terms will be highly appreciated in our endeavor to project our religion to a wider audience. For further inquiries please contact the undersigned on 4126185 or write to Frohar Films, P. O. Box 4112, Bombay 400007, Tel: 3895952.

SILLOO P. MAHAVA

Production-in-charge, Frohar Films

Prophet's portraits

With a fervent desire to finance the navjote of poor Zoroastrian children in the remote villages and towns of Gujarat and elsewhere I am selling beautiful pictures of our Lord Zoroaster, 7.6" x 8"

in size.

Having printed 2,200 copies I have sold some at Rs 25 each and collected an amount of nearly Rs 9,000.

Through the good offices of prominent social worker Rati Peshotan Peer I was able to sell quite a few pictures. She had also distributed them to children winning prizes in prayer and elocution competitions.

I expect to collect Rs 55,000 from the sale of 2,200 pictures. All Zarathoshti mandals, societies or associations who could contribute their mite for this worthy cause may contact me at 1, Disney House, Ground Floor, Near Navyug College, Rander Road, Surat 395009.

JAL D. COOPER

Surat

Whither, Parsiana?

Since July 1992, I regularly read *Parsiana* here in London to keep in touch with the news of my community.

No doubt our Zarathushti community is dwindling, yet, by the grace of Ahura Mazda, they have now spread and settled happily practically in all the four corners of the world, and *Parsiana* serves as a vital communication link between them. In the absence of such a good magazine, our community would be unaware of the activities and developments taking place around the globe.

We do not have a Zarathushti or Parsi broadcasting station like the other world communities have, but at least we could proudly say that we do have *Parsiana* — a magazine which provides us with the news and views of the Zarathushti people all over the world.

It is very essential for the Zarathushti community to have a well organized communication network so that, Ahura Mazda forbid, in the event of political trouble or natural calamity the voice of our Zarathushti people could be heard loudly and clearly.

F. J. PAJNIGAR

London, UK

May wisdom dawn

In the new millennium, may Ahura Mazda bless all members of the worldwide Zarathushti community, individually and collectively, with:

Serenity to accept the things they cannot change / Courage to change the things they can; and / Wisdom to know the difference.

DINSHAW JOSHI

Chevy Chase, Maryland, USA

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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The glory of the *Gathas*

Dina G. McIntyre

The Gathas, The Hymns of Zarathushtra, translated by D. J. Irani. Edited with an introduction by K. D. Irani. Forward by Rabindranath Tagore. Reprinted in 1999 by The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Opposite Lion Gate, Fort, Bombay 400023. Pp: 94. Price: Rs 65 (for sale in India and Pakistan only).

Dinshaw J. Irani, a practicing lawyer and friend of both Poura Daoud and Rabindranath Tagore, had a lifelong love affair with the *Gathas*, a love inherited by his son, Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani. Dinshaw Irani translated portions of the *Gathas* many years ago. He hoped to publish a complete translation, but departed this life before doing so. His dream has been turned into reality by his son, Prof Irani, a formidable authority himself on the message of the *Gathas*. Prof Irani, edited and published his father's completed manuscript, giving us a gem of less than 100 pages.

This book contains the original forward by Tagore who had studied Dinshaw Irani's translation. Tagore reminds us that "So long as man deals with his God as the dispenser of benefits to the worshipper... he tries to keep him for... the tribe to which he belongs. But directly the moral or spiritual nature of God is apprehended... then the idea of God... transcends limitations of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. Zarathushtra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God... and offered it to the universal man. (He) said, when enlightenment came to him: 'Verily I believe Thee, O Ahura Mazda, to be the supreme benevolent providence, when Srosh came to me with the good mind, when first I received and became wise with Thy words! And though the task be

difficult, though woe may come to me, I shall proclaim to all mankind Thy message, which Thou declarest to be the best (Yasna 44.10, pg 9)."

Tagore was also moved to quote the following verse: "When I conceived of

Thee, O Mazda, as the very first and the last, as the most adorable one, as the father of good thought, as the creator of truth and right, as the lord judge of our actions in life, then I made a place for Thee in my very eyes (Yasna 31.4)." (The edited versions are slightly different).

An introduction by Prof Irani follows the forward, in which he briefly discusses: What are the *Gathas*? The Content of the *Gathas*, The Theology of the *Gathas*, The Non-

Theological Content of the *Gathas*, Notes on Gathic Terms and Theological Concepts. And in a Synopsis of the *Gathas* he gives us his bird's eye view of each of the 17 chapters.

Prof Irani explains that the type of religion preached by Zarathushtra is "a fusion of a view of the world and a way of life offered to the prospective believer to be adopted upon due reflection as worthy of acceptance (pg 15)." He sees Asha as "the ultimate Truth... the ideal form of existence of the world as envisioned by Ahura Mazda... Acting in accordance with Truth is the right thing to do, hence Asha is also translated as Righteousness (pg 15)."

The "Good Mind, Vohu Mana, in itself a divine creation... enables us to grasp Asha, the ideal Truth... (pg 16)" Spenta Armaiti, "another aspect of divinity... inclines us to move from the right conceptions to right actions... Here we can crystallize the oft-repeated trilogy of Zoroastrianism: good thoughts, good words, and good deeds (pg 16)." Prof Irani concludes by saying: "The focus of Gathic teaching is one of a world afflicted with suffering,

inequity and imperfection, the goal being to transform it and bring it to perfection, that is, in consonance with Truth, by the comprehending power of the good mind. Such a perfecting world would progressively bring satisfaction to all the good creation... This achievement depends on enlightened human thinking and right-minded human resolve. These are the religious goals according to the *Gathas*, and bringing them about, the commandment of Ahura Mazda (pg 17)."

Prof Irani has chosen to number the chapters of the *Gathas* consecutively within each *Gatha* (as did Irach Taraporewala), instead of using the traditional Yasna numbering; but he has also included the Yasna numbering for convenient reference. Like Taraporewala, he believes the *Gathas* should start with Yasna 29, rather than with Yasna 28.

In summarizing *Ahnavaiti* 6 (Yasna 33) Prof Irani states: "There are several verses of venerative prayer in this Ha, but the last verse is a particularly striking one. For there he (Zarathushtra) offers the breath of his life, his good thoughts and good work as if they were sacrificial offerings to Ahura Mazda. What a contrast from traditional practice (pg 22)!"

In summarizing *Ahnavaiti* 7 (Yasna 34), where Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda about the proper form of worship, Prof Irani reminds us that in the *Gathas*, "The essential form of worship is...the life of good thought, word and deed (pg 22)." In discussing *Ushtavaiti* 2 (Yasna 44), he says Zarathushtra "seems to be suggesting that social amelioration through righteousness is the highest form of veneration (pg 22)."

The translation by D. Irani (as edited by his son), follows. This is not a literal translation. Rather, this lawyer, scholar and devoted Zarathushti seeks to convey the meaning and beauty of Zarathushtra's thought as he understood it. The objective, I think, was to give a reader who was not interested in delving into the multi-dimensional layers of Zarathushtra's thinking, a version of the *Gathas* that expressed Zarathushtra's vision in language the reader could relate to. In this objective, I think D. Irani has succeeded, as these examples show:

"O Ahura Mazda, and O Spirit of Truth and Right/...grant me and my followers such authority and power through





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Truth./That with the good mind, we may bring the world peace and happiness./Of which Thou, O Lord, art indeed the first possessor (*Ahunavaiti* 1.10, Yasna 29)."

"So may we be like those making the world progress toward perfection./May Mazda and the divine spirits help us and guide our efforts through Truth./For a thinking man is where wisdom is at home (*Ahunavaiti* 3.9, Yasna 30)."

"The faith that is the best for all that are.../And which has for its intelligent aspiration realization of Thee, O Mazda (*Ushnavaiti* 2.10 Yasna 44)!"

"Grant me Thy gracious help, as a friend might give to a friend./Grant me, through Truth, the acquisition of the riches of the good mind (*Ushnavaiti* 4.2, Yasna 46)."

"When shall good men come to understand and spread Thy wisdom, O Mazda?... (*Spenta Mainyu* 2.10, Yasna 48)"

"According to Thy Faith, O Mazda, the choice of Righteousness is its own vindication./The choice of evil, its own undoing... (*Spenta Mainyu* 3.3, Yasna 49)"

"All these questions do we ask./That receiving guidance from Truth, we may work for the welfare of creation... (*Vohu-Khshathra*, verse 5, Yasna 51)"

And Zarathushtra's advice to brides and grooms: "Let each cherish the other with Righteousness./Then surely the reward of a happy life shall be yours (*Vahishto-Ishti* verse 5, Yasna 53)."

And finally, like a clarion call, this verse from the *Spenta Mainyu Gatha*:

"With Truth moving my heart./With best thought inspiring my mind./With all the might of spiritual force within me./I venerate Thee, O Mazda, with songs of Thy praise./And at the last, when I shall stand at Thy gate/I shall hear the echo of my prayers from Thy abode of songs (*Spenta Mainyu* 4.4, Yasna 50)."

One can only hope that it will be a long time before Prof Irani is called to stand at Ahura Mazda's gate. He has, over the past 50 years, been the quintessential and beloved teacher of our community, spreading Zarathushtra's word all over the planet from community gatherings to great universities, with his inimitable style, humor, humanity and rational thought. Now he brings us this translation of the *Gathas*, which combines in layman's language the poetry and inspiration of the father, with the thoughtful insight of the son, both truly deserving Zarathushtra's accolade — world healer.

SPORTS

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dojo (school) is situated. Homi works with Creative Outdoor Development Education Private Limited (of the Magnum group), managing boy scout and girl guide outdoor trips, etc. "I like travelling too," comments Jasmin, "but most of it is through my karate."

Pourushasp's punch

Also garnering laurels at the Okinawa competition was 11-year-old Pourushasp Mehta who stood fourth in the junior kata event for boys under 12 years. "This was my first international experience of a kata competition," states Mehta. "The standard was much higher, but we had been so well trained I found it easy to cope." In Okinawa for seven days of competition and training, Mehta says the environment, the roads, etc were so



Mehta: first international competition

very clean and the people friendly despite the language barrier.

Training since 1994 under Shandai Neville Mistry at the Fellowship School Dojo at Gowalia Tank, Mehta says he finds karate "damn interesting and enjoyable." Commends Pervaz Mistry, "Pourushasp is a very conscientious student. He is also great fun to be with, he can sometimes have you rolling on the floor with his one-liners!" Predicting a great future for the young karateka,

Pervaz Mistry remarks that Pourushasp has the added advantage of "massive support from his family," with his parents Farrokh and Roxana having "equal aspirations" for their son in the sports and academic arenas — a change, he notes, from the usual run of parents who believe that studies are the be all and end all of the child's wonder years!

"We had to raise our own funds for this trip," states Farrokh, gratefully acknowledging the support received from the Alama Talati Trust, the Sir Dorab Tata Trust, P. F. Davar Trust, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, etc. The Young Zoroastrian Society, which is the parent body of the 16th East Bombay Bharat Scout Group and the 71st East Bombay Guide Group (to which Mehta and Jasmin Amalsadvala belong) honored their two achievers with a monetary reward.

Pourushasp received his sho-dan (first degree black belt) in the Goju-Ryu style in August '99, just prior to the competition after one and a half months of rigorous training. Narrates Farrokh, "There is a written exam for one and a half hours, where the student is tested on the history of the karate movement in Japan and India, followed next day by a three-hour nonstop practical exam involving katas as well as basic movements such as kicking, boxing, punching, various pushups and squats, etc done 100 times without stopping, and all this on a tiled floor." Presently a seventh standard student at St Mary's School (ISC), Mazagaon, Pourushasp sharpened his interest in karate in '96 when the world chief instructor (of the International Okinawan Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Federation) came to Bombay and conducted a training program at the University Stadium's indoor tennis courts. "Currently he trains for one and a half to two hours thrice a week," asserts the father who runs a stationery and printing business. Daughter Zeena who is a First Year Junior College student at Lala Lajpatrai College, evinces no interest in learning karate. Pips in Pourushasp, "There are many bad people in Bombay and it is good to know how to defend yourself. The exercise is also good for health." The experience of living in tents at camps of the Zoroastrian scout group, cooking one's own food, etc is another experience Pourushasp enjoys immensely, he says.

Compiled by Hilla P. Guzder

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 20 and 39 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 48 years, averaging at 29 years.

As compared to 23 babies born in Bombay in the last month of this century, there were 61 deaths. Twenty-four patients fell prey to diseases of the heart, of which 16 were in the 80+ age-group. Pneumonia and lung related diseases felled seven lives whereas four victims succumbed to hypertension. Brain disease, old age/general debility and diabetes took a toll of three Zoroastrians each. Cancer took two victims. Bronchitis, cerebral malaria, uremia, pyopneumothorax (pus and air within the pleural

sac), viral encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), urinary tract infection, liver disease, Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body), intestinal obstruction, arthritis, fever, lymphoma, malnutrition, tuberculosis and kidney failure were the isolated cases registered for December. A 27-year-old youth was also lost to the community. The age range fluctuated between six months and 101 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for December, in Bombay, was 78 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry

data from areas where the anjuman do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by four hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the break-up of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to *Velvin and Yazdi Billimoria* on December 1, 1999
A girl to *Armin and Dinyar Deboo*; December 2
A boy to *Vahbiz and Sam Gandhi*; December 2
A boy to *Kashmira and Joji Mathew*; December 4
A boy to *Armin and Neville Dotivala*; December 5
A boy to *Meher and Farrokh Mirza*; December 5
A girl to *Kamal and Darius Moos*; December 6
A girl to *Shanaz and Sarosh Buhariwala*; December 9
A boy to *Kashmira and Farrhad Vakharia*; December 9
A girl, *Ferzin*, to *Dogdau and Darayus Mehta*; December 10
A girl, *Samarah*, to *Rashna and Abdeali Mamaji*; December 11
A boy to *Monaz and Cyrus Darbari*; December 13
A girl to *Delnaz and Adil Mistry*; December 14
A girl to *Maharukh and Sarosh Pavri*; December 14
A girl to *Dilnavaz and Shahrugh Talati*; December 15
A girl to *Dilnavaz and Jamshed Sethna*; December 17
A boy, *Zeus*, to *Parvana and Adil Busha*; December 18
A boy to *Jasmine and Kurush Gandhi*; December 19
A girl to *Roshni and Darayus*

Palsetia; December 19
A boy to *Zenobia and Minoo Buhariwala*; December 20
A boy to *Farzana and Rayomand Daruwalla*; December 20
A boy to *Minnie and Zarir Rao*; December 25
A girl to *Parveen and Rajeev Hemmadi*; December 27

MARRIED

Freanahita Hoshang Tata and Hanosh Viraf Dubash; December 1
Shernaz Dara Pochara and Burzin Homi Vimadala; December 1
Bakhtawar Dhanjishaw Baldawala and Sairus Boman Bapooji; December 2
Hushnavaz Nozer Irani of Dahanu Rd and Faroukh Dhanjishaw Dastur of Dahanu Rd; December 2
Tannaz Homi Bookbinder and Rayomand Rustom Karkaria; December 2
Farzeen Freddy Balsara and Zubin Darabshaw Tarapore of Lucknow; December 2
Tenaz Pervaz Dabu and Zubin Minoo Aga of London, UK; December 3
Delnaz Percy Chichgar and Behram Phiroze Mehta; December 3
Yasmin Homi Jila of Calcutta and Daraius Firoze Panthaki; December 3

Farrah Parvez Buhariwala and Yezdi Minoo Daruvala; December 4
Benaifer Minoo Dumasia and Kurush Homi Deboo; December 4
Hufrish Eruch Zaiwalla of Dahanu Rd and Gayomard Jamshed Driver; December 5
Farzana Faroukh Irani and Jamshed Hoshang Palsetia; December 5
Shiraz Bhikhaji Makujina and Marzban Rohinton Pavri; December 5
Hufrish Jal Kasad and Shehzad Pesi Homavazir; December 6
Firoza Soli Bastawala and Khushroo Bomi Lala; December 6
Mehernaz Dara Godrej and Mehernosh Rohinton Badhniwalla; December 9
Shiraz Jamshed Panthaki and Tehmaas Sorab Gorimaar; December 9
Monaz Sorab Kanga and Aspi Burjor Lord; December 9
Kaynaz Minoo Pithawala and Khushru Jimmy Billimoria of Thana; December 10
Abnaz Gaive Nagporewalla and Murzban Pesi Dadiburjor; December 10
Khushnoor Noshir Kapadia and Zahirab Aspi Wadia; December 10
Delnaz Hoshi Khodaiji and Parhad Firoze Amra;

December 11
Hutokshi Adi Mehta and Phiroze Soli Colabawalla; December 11
Zenita Byram Rana and Zarksis Edulji Ichhaporia; December 11
Shirazi Minoo Forbes and Kurush Erach Bhagat; December 12
Hufrish Viraf Ichhaporia and Hormuz Minoo Gowadia; December 12
Zarine Eruchsha Daruwalla of Vithalwadi and Cyrus Darayus Irani of Vasai; December 12
Farzeen Sohrab Madon and Darayus Kali Sethna; December 12
Shalaka Maharvan Irani and Jamshed Sam Singaporewala; December 12
Shireen Rattan Surveyor and Shapoor Minoo Bhavnagri; December 13
Ruby Perviz Dubash and Zarir Sarosh Buhariwala; December 14
Paricheher Dhunjishaw Fanibanda and Cyrus Sam Singaporewala; December 14
Roxanne Sohrab Nicholson and Mehernosh Dhunjishaw Ichhaporia; December 16
Khurshed Parvez Patel and Firdosh Noshir Anklesaria; December 18
Peenaz Jal Bagli and Tahemtan Firoz Dhamodiwala; December 18
Zeenia Khushroo Bode and Ronnie Hoshang Mirza; December 19
Anahita Pervaze Dubash and Khurshed Tehmul Wadiwalla; December 19
Khushnuma Khurshed Karkaria and Zubin Naval Mistry; December 21
Binaifer Dali Bharucha and Cyrus Kersi Balsara; December 24
Nilufer Seriyar Crawford and Polad Nozer Daruwalla; December 24
Kashmira Framroze Workingboxwalla and Bobby Parvez Langrana of Sydney, Australia; December 24
Michelle Cavaz Majai and Malcolm Nozer Desai; December 25
Behroze Keki Malegamwala and Kaizad Adi Patel; December 25
Ronak Sarosh Dhanda and

Shapur Darius Wadia;
December 25
Zenobia Bakhtyar Italia and
Parvez Cyrus Siganporia;
December 26
Farinaz Rusi Kutar and
Nozer Jal Morena of Surat;
December 27
Hufrih Naval Charna and
Marzban Cawasshaw Variava;
December 27
Aban Tehmuras Poonegar
and Zubin Jimmy Anklesaria;
December 28
Farida Soli Irani and Adil
Ratan Baja; December 30
Yasmin Hosang Gagrati and
Freddy Rumi Daruwala;
December 30
Jennifer Dadi Gazdar of
Deolali and Ardaveraf
Khurshed Doomasia of
Bangalore; December 30
Phiruzi Meher Mehta and Adil
Nariman Kasad; December 30
Kashmira Kersi Bhajiwalla
and Farhad Parvez
Nagarwala; December 30
Dinaz Cooverji Wadia and
Ratan Bhikaji Guard of Vasai;
December 31
Beroz Dara Contractor and
Khushru Dinshaw Siganporia;
December 31

DIED

Perin Adi Batliboi (65),
residing at 21, Dubash Bldg,
Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes
Rd, 400007; November 30
Mithamai Nariman Dordi (87),
Lam Bldg, Lower Parel,
400012; December 2
Pesi Khurshetji Madon (80),
17, Rustomji Bldg, Sleater Rd,
400007; December 2
Behram Dinshawji Sethna
(89), Sleater Hse no 2, Sleater
Rd, 400007; December 2
Alamai Kaikobad Ginwalla
(97), S/2, Cusrow Bldg, S. B.
Rd, 400039; December 3
Darashaw Nawrosji Hodiwalla
(90), 14/17, A-2, Rashmi Bldg,
Lallubhai Shamaldas Rd,
Andheri (W), 400058;
December 3
Naja Rustom Mullan (88), 759,
Rd no 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; December 3
Jal Hormusji Vakil (81), Naju
Mans, 54, Wodehouse Rd,
400005; December 3
Banoo Dara Adrianwalla (90),
Sheri Hse, Cawasji Patel St,
Fort, 400001; December 4
Minoo Nadirsha Appoo (84),
D/1, Shapur Bldg, V. P. Rd,
400004; December 4
Daulatbanu Faramroze
Cooper (78), Nawab Manzil,
Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034;
December 4
Meherwanji Dinshaw Mehta
(95), 5, Sleater Hse no 1,
Sleater Rd, 400007;
December 4
Pirojsha Fakirji Daruwalla
(Tantra) (88), 275/O, Umrigar
Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo,
400007; December 5
Keki Behram Kerawalla (42),
281, Sidhwa Bldg, Princess St,
400002; December 5
Maneck Merwanjee Patel (95),
M/30, Cusrow Bldg, S. B. Rd,
400039; December 5
Dilber Rustomji Sethna (72),
13, Vakil Block, Khareghat
Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007;
December 5
Kamal Kersas Vesuna (27),
7/C-9, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; December 5
Dolly Ardeshir Irani (85), 19,
Mahalaxmiwalla Bldg, Sleater
Rd, 400007; December 6
Najumai Hormusji
Mandviwalla (76), Cooper
Bldg, Marazban Clny, Dr A. R.
Nair Rd, 400011; December 6
Jal Khurshedji Mistry (88),
C/o Keki Kamdin, Adam Mhl,
Tardeo, 400034; December 6
Dinshaw Faranji Bharucha
(74), 203/C, Deepa Apts, Virar
(W), Dist Thana, 401303;
December 7
Mitha Rustom Marzban (95),
A, Gowalia Tank Bldg, A. K.
Marg, 400036; December 7
Jini Ardeshir Wadia (82),
Karim Bldg, Next to Super
Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007;
December 7
Silloo Jeejeebhoy Dubash (79),
26, Hughes Rd, 400007;
December 8
Fakirji Meherwanji Bharucha
(101), 681/A, Kapadia Bldg,
Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; December 8
Ketty Naval Billimoria (72),
Cama Bldg, Kashinath St,
Tardeo, 400034; December 8
Banoo Pirojshaw Puniwalla
(77), 504/C-1, Parsi Salsette
Co-op Hsg Soc Ltd, Off
Jijamata Rd, Andheri (W),
400093; December 8
Perin Behramsha Vaghaiwala
(70), B/12, Peace Heaven, St
Andrews Rd, Bandra, 400050;
December 8
Minoo Jehangirji Wadia (79),
Karim Bldg, Next to Super

Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007;
December 9
Pilo Jamsheer Dalal (85),
Dubash Bldg, 38, Walchand
Hirachand Rd, Fort, 400038;
December 10
Aloo Bomi Gandevia (76), 650,
Karani Bldg, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; December 11
Ardeshir Merwan Irani (67),
Aditya Apts, A/602, Shimpoli
Rd, Chikuwadi, Borivli (W),
400092; December 12
Ratan Manekji Gai (76),
12/A/15, Panthaki Bldg, S. V.
Rd, Andheri (E), 400069;
December 13
Khorshed Darabsha Mehta
(64), 4/25, Sethna Bldg, Old
Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd,
400007; December 13
Jinny Framji Wadia (85), 4,
Hirabai Block, Malcolm Bldg,
Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
December 13
Nargis Homi Karani (68),
Fiona, 176, Juhu Tara Rd,
400049; December 15
Shirin Nariman Dordi (90),
11/PP, Ambewadi, B. G. Kher
Marg, 400006; December 16
Amy Eruchsha Mehta (81), 54,
T/1, Rewati, Akash Ganga,
2nd Rabodi, Thana, 400601;
December 16
Farhaan Jimmy Guard
(6 mths), 73, Patel Apts,
Tembi Naka, Thana (W),
400601; December 17
Nergish Jimmy Anklesaria
(66), N/7, S. B. Bharucha
Bldg, Andheri (W), 400058;
December 18
Minoo Phiroze Engineer (53),
C/7, Captain Clny, Tardeo,
400034; December 18
Farrokh Rashid Irani (69),
693, Zaveri Block, Dr Dinshaw
Master Rd, Parsi Clny,
400014; December 18
Burjor Pirojshaw Patel (80),
797, Jesia Bldg, Jame Jamsheer
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
December 18
Hilla Dhunjishaw Bharucha
(95), 14, Badat Manzil, Mehella
Patel Agiary Lane, Grant Rd,
400007; December 19
Gulshan Nariman Sarkari
(50), Neelsheel Soc, 180/A,
Police Stn, Vile Parle (W),
400056; December 19
Goolbai Kaikhusru Irani (97),
B, Daruwala Bldg, Grant Rd,
400007; December 20
Gool Pirojshaw Sidhwa (90),
F. S. Parukh Dharamshala,
Hughes Rd, 400007;

December 20
Ratan Darasha Merchant
(83), Gadaiwadi, Sakoli Giriz,
St Xavier's Church, Vasai,
Dist Thana, 401201; Decem-
ber 21
Noshir Shiavux Cardmaster
(83), Modi Lodge, 13, Vatcha
Gandhi Rd, New Gamdevi,
400007; December 23
Jal Sorabji Vazifdar (83), 24,
Maison Belvedere, 107, M.
Karve Rd, 400020;
December 23
Phiroze Kaikhusru Engineer
(83), 681/A, Khareghat Rd,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
December 24
Arnavaz Rohinton Mehta (57),
Kamdin Bldg, Mehella Patel
Agiary Lane, Grant Rd,
400007; December 24
Nergis Minocher Dotivala
(81), 511/A, Ratan Manor, R.
P. Masani Rd, Matunga,
400019; December 25
Shapoorji Byramji Jalnawalla
(54), 202/C, Poonam Apts, Dr
A. B. Rd, Worli, 400018;
December 25
Aloo Burjorji Shroff (85), 31,
Gajendra Niwas, Karelwadi,
Thakurdwar, 400002;
December 25
Mani Dadabhoy Vazifdar (85),
Shandilya Villa, Worli Sea
Face, 400025; December 25
Edi Sawakshaw Cooper (86),
17, Shanker Sagar, Sophia
College Rd, Breach Candy,
400036; December 26
Thrity Pheroz Khambatta
(84), 21, Casa Grande,
Little Gibbs Rd, 400006;
December 28
Navroz Sorabji Vandriwala
(58), 115, Monalisa, St John
Baptista Rd, Bandra (W),
400050; December 28
Rutti Kekoo Nazir (90),
Commonwealth, Nariman
Point, 400020; December 29
Dara Nusserwanji Poonegar
(70), Sleater Hse no 1, Sleater
Rd, 400007; December 29
Aloo Hormaz Saderwalla (84),
4, Meher Villa, Malcolm Bldg,
Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
December 31

CALCUTTA

MARRIED

Asbana Patel and Jamasp
Taraporewalla; December 2
Azarmi Nusserwanji and
Nauzer Gotla; December 5
Gulnar Bapooji and Yezdi
Mistry; December 23

DIED

Najoo Ardeshtir Batlivala,
mother of Marzban;
November 22

John Darius Colah, son of
Dolly and Kakey, husband of
Perviz and father of Tina
Servaia and Cyrus;
December 11

DELHI

BORN

A girl, *Kainaz*, to *Tooshna* and
Homi Gandhi; December 24

POONA

MARRIED

Shireen Postwalla, daughter of
Nina and Noshir, and
Ardaviraf Sinor, son of late
Maneck and Gayomard;
December 2

SURAT

DIED

Faramroz Dinshawji
Daruwala (72), Pore
Mohallo, Nanpura, 395001;
December 1

Jalejer Hormusji Kapadia
(90), Popat Mohallo, Nanpura,
395001; December 11
Katayun Bahdoorsha
Lakdawala (96), Vanki Bordi,
395003; December 21
Alunay Hasotiya (66),
Umarwada Clny, Ring Rd,
395003; December 23
Barjorji Rustamji Patel (60),
Chalthan Tenements, C/7,
Bhatar Rd, 395003;
December 29

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

MARRIED

Mahrukh Behrane and
Nohirwan Patel in Sydney;
December 26

DIED

Khushroo Irani, husband of
Lal in Sydney; November 16

CANADA

Ontario

BORN

A boy, *Rayhan*, to *Niloufer*
and *Shachin Srivastav* in
Toronto; December 30

Quebec

MARRIED

Nina Wadia, daughter of
Minoo and Homi of UK, and
Raiomand Mirza, son of
Minnie and Khushroo in
Pointe-Claire; July 3

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1999*	This issue	1999*	This issue	1999*
BIRTHS						
Boys	11	77	—	9	9	29
Girls	12	93	1	6	4	29
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	56	254	4	12	2	12
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	28	—	1	1	5
Females married out	—	20	—	—	2	6
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	27	455	4	89	2	48
Females	35	477	3	70	2	40
CREMATED						
Males	—	2	—	1	—	—
Females	—	2	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 1999 (January 1999-February 2000 issues)

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

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

HONGKONG

BORN

A boy, *Rushad*, to *Meher* and
Tehmasp Parekh; November 7

USA

Alabama

MARRIED

Anahita Dutia, daughter of
Gool and Ardeshtar, and *Clint*
Peinhardt, son of Carolyn and
William in Huntsville;
August 7

California

BORN

Triplets, *Asha*, *Parisa* and
Arya, to *Yazdani* and *Dariush*
Namiranian; October 16

MARRIED

Binaifer Irani, daughter of
Shireen and Dinyar of Irvine,
and *Travis Bird*, son of Donna
and late Danny in Huntington
Beach; August 7

DIED

Noshir Buhariwalla (56) of
London, UK, father of *Zahl*
and brother of *Faram*;
October 22

Florida

DIED

Morvarid Mehraban Harvesf,
mother of late *Keikhosrow*,

Hooshang, *Katayoun*

Farahmand and *Tabandeh* in
Jacksonville; July 23

Illinois

BORN

A girl, *Sarah Elizabeth*, to
Laura and *Shahriar Mobed* in
Chicago; December 15

MARRIED

Jodi Erin Peter Shields and
Sean Dastur, son of Margaret
and Khushroo in Elgin;
September 11

DIED

Goolbai Jalejar Patel, mother
of *Baji*, *Dara*, *Viloo Viraf*
Darukhanawalla and *Arnavaz*
Adi Vakharia in Chicago;
December 22

Massachusetts

BORN

A boy, *Zaal*, to *Firoza* and
Farhad Panthaki in Boston;
May 1

A boy, *Zarius*, to *Parastu*
and *Jamshed Dubash* in
Shrewsbury; July 28

South Carolina

BORN

A girl, *Karina*, to *Sofia* and
Khushroo Tata in Columbia;
November 10

Tennessee

BORN

A boy, *Jehan*, to *Perin* and
Farhad Narielwala in
Chattanooga; July 1

Texas

BORN

A boy, *Rustin*, to *Mitra* and
Babak Soroushi in Dallas;
August 4
A boy, *Behram*, to *Gulshan*
and *Neville Dossabhoj* in
Houston; August 10
A boy, *Zaal*, to *Keshvar* and
Kali Buhariwalla in Fort
Worth; November 22

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

WANTED

Manager for book
shop in Fort area.
Person must have
administrative and
marketing abilities.

Write to:

The Advertiser (Shop)
GPO Box 892
Bombay 400001

A legal legend

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Shavakshah (Shiavax) Ratanshaw Vakil, 82, legal adviser to the Tata group of companies, director of several well established firms and erstwhile trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet on September 8, 1999 following pneumonia.

"I had known him since my junior days and found him a very warm-hearted and generous person. I have many pleasant recollections of my association with him at the Bar and otherwise," recalled the attorney general of India, Soli Sorabjee.

"Shiavax Vakil as we knew him was quite a formidable solicitor and a public prosecutor," acknowledged India's former solicitor general Tehmtan Andhyarujina. "He was an authority on foreign exchange and wrote the first small book on it. Incidentally I still keep it... Later he was a competent help in the corporate world of the Tatas. We do not get such versatile solicitors these days," he continued.

Vakil had earned a reputation as a public prosecutor of Bombay, government pleader, prosecutor for customs and Reserve Bank and special prosecutor for the Government of India, states his bio data. As partner in the legal firm of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and Caroe, Vakil is known to have assisted his mentor Noshirwan Kavasji Petigara in the Mahatma Gandhi murder trial. He also made news in the 1960s when he defended Commander Kavas Nanavati in the sensational murder trial which saw huge crowds in the court room as the trial progressed.

"His legal acumen spanning a diverse range of laws and the prompt and practical advice he gave over a period of

about 26 years as legal advisor to Tata Sons and the group companies as well as the charitable trusts with which he was associated" was recalled at a meeting of

the board of directors of Tata Sons Limited, noted a condolence letter from the chairman Ratan N. Tata.

"He was an institution unto himself at Tata's," noted K. M. Thanawalla, managing director of Barmag India Private Limited. Associated with Herdillia Chemicals as a director for a long time, Vakil "made himself available even

at short notice and always took a pragmatic view of any situation," wrote managing director R. M. Pandia.

Vakil was a director in several other companies too, prominent among which were The Associated Cement Companies, Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company, Pennwalt India Limited, E. Merck, Rolex Watch Company, Gokak Patel Volkart Limited, Indian Resort Hotels Limited and the various Tata companies, including Tata's holding company, Tata Sons. For nine years he served as chairman of the local advisory board in India of the Bank of America.

"He was a motivator," summed up his legal assistant Roshan Master who had worked under him at Mulla and Mulla and subsequently at the Tatas. Even a routine task like comparing opinions and drafts should be viewed as a learning experience and not as a boring chore, he impressed upon them. Under his supervision, he would encourage his juniors to develop the confidence to handle cases independently.

That behind the thick rimmed glasses and hard exterior was a very kind and

compassionate soul was the experience of all his comrades. "I have never met a man who was so good to the poor," confessed his close colleague Nani Palkhivala. "In our discussions he always took the side of those who were poor," he added.

"He had a one-minute gruff exterior, which took people by surprise, but it melted in seconds and without fail he proved to be not only an excellent legal advisor but a person who always went out of his way to help others," reminisced Phiroze K. Dotivala of Jamshedpur. "I remember such instances. One cannot forget his photographic memory and the speed with which he dealt with complicated matters, making them look so simple."

A member of the governing council of the Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre from its inception until his demise, being a close associate of its founder Lokumal Chanrai, he was viewed as "a great source of inspiration to us in deciding the policies of our Hospital," wrote its director (finance) R. C. Dalal. Vakil was equally involved in the workings of the Bai Hirabai Tata Memorial Trust, the J. N. Tata Navsari Memorial Trust, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust, the Sarvajanik Seva Trust and the Maneckji Cooper Education Trust School where he was trustee for many years. "I was always amazed at his grasp and sense of practicality. He was indeed the founder of the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation which was his brain child in a way, as he planted the seed in our mind and helped us set it up," acknowledged trustee Phiroze Lam.

"He did not believe only in cheque book charity," disclosed Master. Time permitting, he would personally visit the different institutions, she said, listing the many causes to which he gave of himself generously: Sir J. J. Dharamshala, the Parsi Ward at the J. J. Hospital, the leper colony managed by Fr Aurelius Maschio, St Catherine's Home, the Shanti Avedna Ashram for terminal cancer patients, the National Association for the Blind, the slums at Dharavi, the ophthalmology departments at the KEM and Nair Hospitals... While originally he was a very avid reader of English, Gujarati and Persian, some of the textbooks having been preserved from his college days, with failing eyesight he



Vakil: an institution unto himself



Vakil (center) serving as moderator prior to the 1984 BPP trusteeship election contested by Fali Poncha (left) and Homi Ranina (right)

seemed to be more drawn towards charitable acts. Vakil firmly believed that appeals for medical assistance should be promptly attended to and even on the day of his demise he was preoccupied with these letters, adds Master. Invariably he would give his counsel free of cost to charitable and religious trusts.

He had to be operated upon nine times for his failing eyesight, mentions his younger son Hormazdiyaar, a partner in Mulla and Mulla. Did his father inspire him to join the legal profession? "Not at all," candidly confesses the son whose first love was car racing. "We had totally different views," elaborates Hormazdiyaar. "He was a workaholic... In the almost 50 years we had together, we went for two holidays as a family. And yet, if I had a problem, he was always there." After his wife Prochi's demise the previous year, Vakil seemed to have lost interest in life, observed Hormazdiyaar with elder brother Neriyaosang, a management consultant, mentioning that "she was the spiritual force behind him."

In the last year of his life he consciously or unconsciously parted with all the treasures he once held dear, the beautiful wall hanging of Persian kings facing Hormazdiyaar's desk being gifted to the son just a couple of days before his demise. "He taught me to appreciate art," mentions Hormazdiyaar, adding that theater was the only recreation for which his father made time, being a regular at the National Centre for the Performing Arts.

He wanted his children to learn things

for themselves, comments Neriyaosang. And whilst all comforts were provided to the family, he did not believe in spoiling the children, adds the elder son acknowledging that it "has helped me in life today." He also gave his father credit for teaching him "to stand up for what you believe in even if the odds are against you." The value "of being flexible in life, to get up after a hard knock and to empathize with the poor and the needy" are some of the other lessons he learnt from his father.

Born in Blantyre (now Malawi) in Africa where his father was also a lawyer, Shavakshah's early education was in a municipal school in Surat and thereafter in Sarvajani High School. After his matriculation he joined MTB College and passed his BA. He then taught Persian for a short while at the J. J. School in Surat until his interest in law brought him to Bombay. During his law studies, he topped the class in the first year LLB examination, and stood first again in the final law examination, states his bio data. Being one of seven siblings, when he needed to contribute to the family earnings and finance his legal studies, he joined the Central Bank of India as a clerk, all his humble beginnings being never forgotten by him. While pursuing his articles of clerkship with Edgar Martin Chambers of Crawford Bayley and Company he was financially helped by the Sir Ratan Tata Trust to which he was ever beholden. Subsequently he passed his advocate's examination and later the solicitor's examination when he scored 97 percent in the paper of practice of the High Court on the original side which record stands to this day, notes a profile on his life. Thereafter Shiavax and his brother Navroze (Naval) Vakil started their own

firm Vakil and Vakil but since clients would not come to their fledgling firm and preferred the more established names, Shiavax opted to join Mulla and Mulla.

Throughout his life he retained a soft corner for Surat and helped "the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) in every possible way. It would be no exaggeration

to state that in all the trials and troubles, the trustees of the SPP always looked to him for support, advice and guidance," noted a tribute from Jehan Daruwalla in *The Bombay Samachar* of September 19, 1999. In fact, the offices of the Surat Panchayat were kept closed on September 9 as a mark of respect to Vakil whom they considered their legal guide and guardian, valuing his independent thinking and his counsel on religious, charitable and trust laws, recorded a condolence resolution forwarded by SPP chairman Dr Sam Bhacca. Even when they went to him without a prior appointment, he was always willing to accommodate them in his tight schedule, they gratefully acknowledged.

Well-read in all the religions, Vakil, an ordained navar, was especially close to the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu with whom he must have had innumerable discussions on Zoroastrianism, notes a family source. Schemes for amalgamation of deteriorating agaries and for the education of Parsi priests to create a cadre along the lines of the Society of Servants of Jesus were uppermost in Vakil's mind at the time of his election as trustee to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), according to his election manifesto published in *Parsiana*. During his tenure as trustee of the BPP from November 1972 to July 1975 he "served... with singular devotion and distinction," noted the condolence resolution passed by the board of trustees.

"A trustee is under an obligation to act with utmost good faith in relation to the affairs of his beneficiaries," he had publicly announced when criticized for bringing to the knowledge of the community the insanitary conditions prevailing at the Doongerwadi. "He should not suppress a material fact coming to



Vakil (center) sought police protection when attending the Panchayet board meeting in 1974

his knowledge which affects the interest of the beneficiaries," he was convinced. In his clarificatory statement carried in *Parsiana* ("The living and the dead," September-October 1973) Vakil declared, "Between December 1972 and September 1973 I have gone inside the Towers of Silence several times (on many occasions with one of my co-trustees Dr A. Golwalla) with a view to ascertain their condition. I have also on several occasions checked the issue of paucity of birds..."

"It is a myth to suppose that even during the months when the birds are there 'in plenty' the flesh of the bodies of the departed is substantially consumed by the birds. There is a paucity of birds, whatever the reasons may be, with the result that substantial parts of the bodies remain untouched. Small portions are eaten not only by vultures but by crows and kites.

"Every human carcass is consigned to the well (bhandar) on the next day after it is laid to rest. When the bodies are lowered in the well, they are consigned one over the other like dead carcasses of animals and remain so in that state for months rotting and stinking in the process of decomposition."

While this subject is currently a cause for grave concern due to the paucity of vultures and residents in the vicinity complaining about the stench, with his characteristic foresight the visionary Vakil had declared nearly 25 years ago, "It is no use suggesting breeding vultures because they cannot thrive in these

conditions. We should lift the ban on priests not to perform funeral ceremonies (for those opting for other modes of disposal)...There is no tyranny in the world greater than spiritual tyranny. There is no religion greater than truth."

Five years ago when business magnates Neville Wadia and his son Nusli chose to return to the Zoroastrian faith, it was Vakil who issued a notarized certificate attesting that their navjotes had been performed (see "A Zoroastrian again," *Parsiana*, October 1994).

Among the religious institutions he had served as trustee were the Cama Baug Agiary, the Kuppawalla Agiary and the Sardar Sorabji Ratanji Patel Dar-e-Meher of Poona. Vakil himself frequented the Dadysett Agiary daily until he was unable to climb the flight of steps leading to the atash adarian and yet he had told his son that he wanted no prayers said after his death. The day of his paidust, Fravardin roz, Fravardin mah, being observed as all souls' day, there was a massive turnout at the Doongerwadi. "He led a very devout and a disciplined life," summed up Hormazdiyaar, and died in his sleep holding the prayer *maala* (beads) in his hands which he was wont to carry on his person, even outdoors in the pocket of his safari suit.

Vakil chose to describe himself as an "orthodox but orthodoxy as I understand it is different from the way in which it is practised by these people... I'm a realist by nature and if you face reality, if that is a sign of being a reformist..."

The respected solicitor is survived by his sons Neriyaang and Hormazdiyaar, brothers Nariman and Phiroze, and sisters Gul and Aloo.

FEELING THE PULSE

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The second Parsi to be appointed as chief architect was Hormusjee Jamshedji Billimoria (the first being Homi Framroze Billimoria) who after his retirement joined the University of Moratuwa where he served as the first head of the department of architecture.

To Roshan Framroze Nusserwanjee goes the credit of being the first journalist to be granted an interview by Sirimavo Bandaranaike after she became the world's first lady prime minister. Roshan (Dr Jamshed Nusserwanjee's brother's daughter) was working with the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon.

The first Parsi lady to qualify as a Bachelor of Arts at the University College of Ceylon was Dhunbai Cowasjee Nilgiri who then became a teacher at her alma mater, Clifton Girls' School. Another lady educationist in Ceylon was Heera Nadirshah Ruttonjee (Dr Sarah Ruttonjee's sister) who was the vice principal of the Ladies College in Colombo before she chose to settle in the USA working as associate professor of English at the State University of New York.

Ladies who have made their mark in the social welfare field are Alamai Dorabjee Mehta (now Wadia) who qualified as a barrister-at-law from the UK, returned to Ceylon to practice as an advocate and after her marriage is settled in Bombay working as president of the International Association of Planned Parenthood. The first Ceylon girl guide to be honored as the Queen's Guide in Ceylon was Perviz Burjor Bhoory who was presented the award by the then governor general. Her mother Piroja had attended on soldiers at the Welisara Military Hospital during World War II and was the first Parsi lady to be elected as president of the Parsi Sports Club being good at tennis, table tennis and cricket.

Dr Russi Billimoria's son Pheroze had first earned a name for himself in motocross before he became a leading golfer representing his island in overseas competitions. Likewise Soli Edulji Captain was also a keen golfer winning many trophies in Ceylon golfing.

In the field of music Pheroze Dorabjee Mehta's (Alamai's brother) mastery of the keyboard was well-known. Working as a professor of chemistry in the UK he continued to give pianoforte recitals in the UK as also Ceylon. *Concluded*



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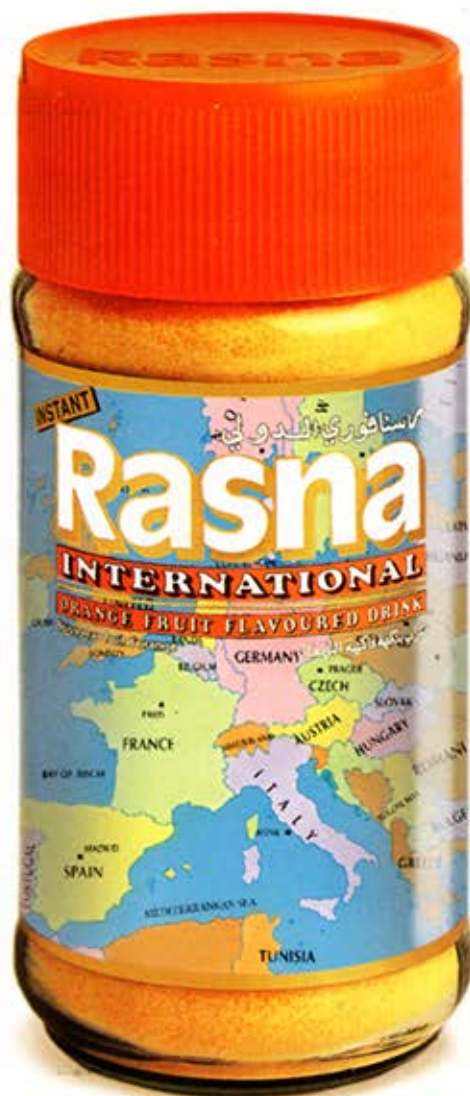
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