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Where movement is a science

Parsiana

May 2000
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Cover: Restored portraits of a young girl (courtesy Hiramaneck and Sons) and a Parsi gentleman (courtesy The Classic Source)

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Representation without..."

Aspi D. Moddie has unfortunately tied up the universal adult franchise (UAF) issue with the deficit incurred by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) on the upkeep of its housing colonies ("Representation with responsibility," *Parsiana*, March 2000). The election of the BPP trustees is held once in seven years, whereas the housing rents have to be paid regularly every month.

But certainly, the loss incurred by the BPP in maintaining its housing colonies needs consideration. If 80 percent of the tenants in the BPP colonies pay pittance rents of only Rs 17-30 per month and contribute only 25-50 percent of repair costs thus causing the BPP to incur expenses of Rs 1.4 crores in excess of the rents received, then what prevents the BPP from implementing the recent Maharashtra Rent Control Act which permits an annual increase of five percent in rent?

Of course the landlords' lobby considers this five percent annual rent increase too meager considering the long periods during which the tenants have doled out abysmally low rents, and they have therefore appealed in the Supreme Court. But until the Supreme Court decides the final quantum of annual rent increase, the BPP can at least go ahead with the five percent increase as formulated by the Maharashtra government.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"Insulting Iranis"

I realize the frustration Farokh Falahati must be feeling when Iranis are referred to as "jungle" by Parsis ("Insulting Iranis," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 2000).

But he should realize it is only the frivolous Parsi who does not know where his roots are, whether in Vansda or in Iran, who will call his own father "jungle."

The rank and file of the Bombay populace have accepted Iranis as a hard working, practical and frank lot.

Whereas the Parsis left thousands of acres of land, ploughed by their fathers for centuries in Gujarat, and opted for cosy bank jobs in Bombay, the Iranis, who have come for the last 100 years only, went back to the soil despite no finances and covered the entire Dahanu taluka from Palghar to Umargaon with chikoo orchards.

I run a bakery in Fort and I meet a cross-section of Parsis. If ever a bearer comes with some specific requirements when he comes to buy my bread, I am sure his boss must be a Parsi. They want cheap, fresh, hot, clean, wholesome, soft and a long list of other requirements before they buy a loaf of bread. There are types and types of Parsis. But there is one incident I will never forget. There was a shortage of bread all over Bombay. One poor Parsi lady came and I offered her some bread. She reluctantly accepted and when she stepped out of my bakery and saw a poorer person begging, she gave half of her meager quota of bread to the starving person.

Parsi, thy name is charity, is correct. So look at the nobler characteristics of the Parsis and Iranis.

Z. M. ZEND

Sanctity of dokhmas

Although one-and-a-half-years have

passed since I first wrote on the "Three Parsi myths" (*Parsiana*, January 1999) there does not appear to be even a glimmer of light in the dark wells of our towers of silence.

The letters in your February issue by Dr M. D. Disawalla and R. S. Gae have clearly proved beyond doubt, the utter futility of the various methods proposed for increasing the vulture population. Even as early as 1972, the legal legend Shrivastav Vakil had stated: "It is a myth to suppose that even during the months when birds are there 'in plenty,' the flesh of the bodies is substantially consumed... and (they) remain so in that state for months rotting and stinking." On the other hand, I was surprised to read the opinion of some others which tantamounts to saying that 'if we haven't got the birds, then we must manufacture them.' It's like what the French Queen Marie Antoinette is supposed to have remarked, "If the people don't have bread, then let them eat cake."

Why don't we once and for all take a decision that the disposal of the dead in doongerwadis, no matter how good and hygienic it might have been in the past, is just not possible under the circumstances prevailing today? Last month, at my instance, the trustees of the Poona Parsee Panchayat had a meeting with some prominent citizens of the town to discuss this issue. Some people had taken photographs which showed not more than four birds sitting there at any one time. Due to this, bodies have been lying uneaten for months on end, and every now and then one of the towers has to be shut down for cleaning and burying the uneaten bodies in the adjacent ground.

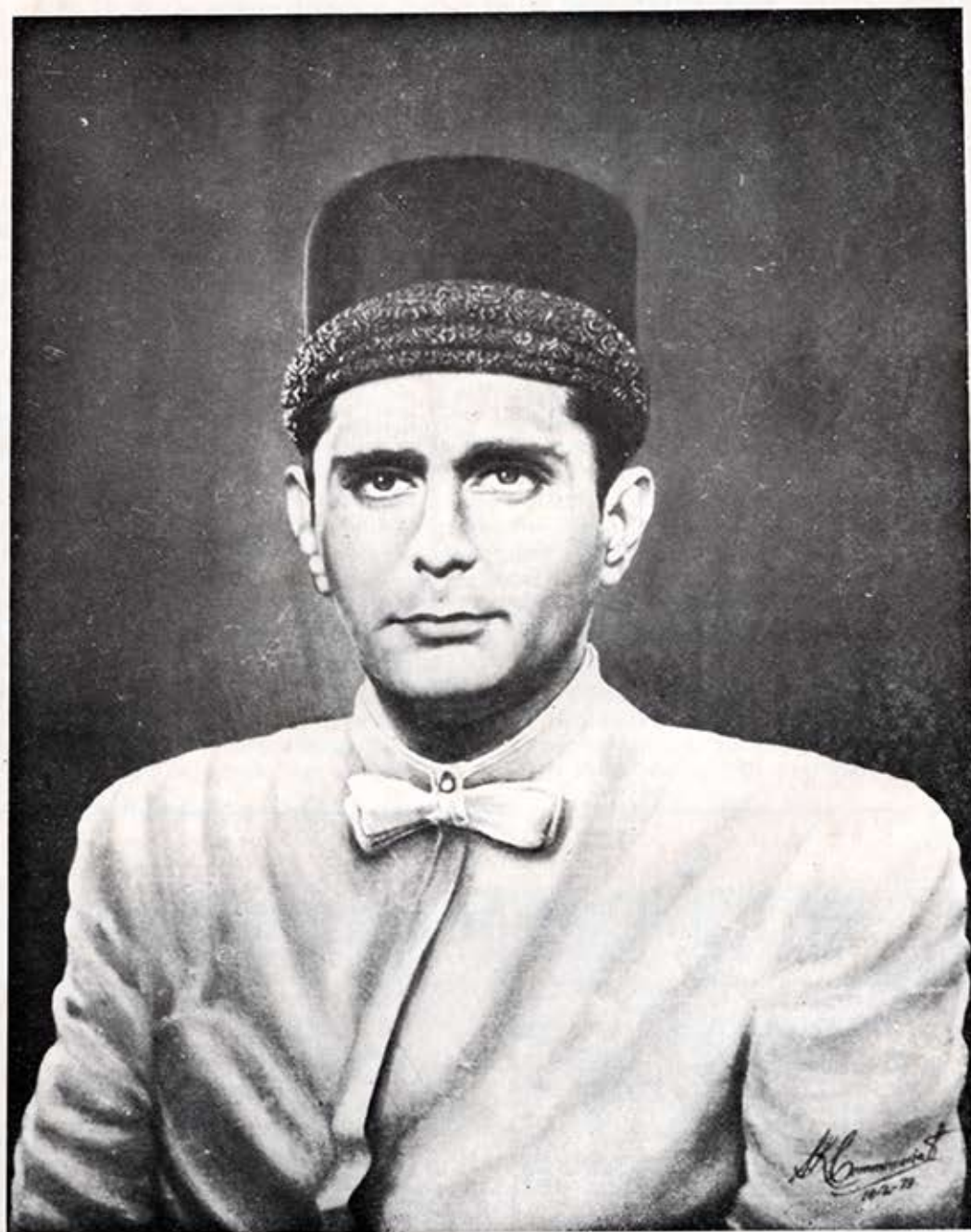
Once we accept the above situation, we can then work out alternative plans of disposal either by electric crematorium or burial. Whether we like it or not, we will be forced to do so very soon.

Let us have the serenity to accept the fact that dokhmas are out-of-date; the courage to change to an alternative means of disposal; and our ancient Zoroastrian wisdom to know the difference.

Brig N. B. GRANT

Poona

The Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) deserves hearty congratulations for taking intelligent and cohesive steps towards safeguarding our most scientific tradi-



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Aerial view of a Bombay dokhma (circa 1973)

tional system of dokhmenashini by commissioning the Parry-Jones report on captive breeding of vultures.

When one looks at any worthwhile endeavor from the periphery, it appears to be herculean. That should not dishearten the brave. It must also be remembered that the Parry-Jones report is the most important first step. We need to consult local experts to evaluate its practicality and not hesitate in modifying its recommendations to suit our circumstances, with the help of Parry-Jones, if need be. I am sure in other parts of the

world there are other experts on birds of prey who could also give us valuable inputs before BPP takes any decision.

Moreover, other avenues are not closed to us. However unheard of it may seem, one can even think of importing vultures from the USA, Africa or South America, wherever they might be plentiful. In Ervad (Dr) Minocher D. Karkhanavala's essay on

the science of dokhmenashini, it is mentioned that in the prairies of USA, the ranchers captured vultures live. The world is now a global village and if we look for resources, I'm sure they can be found. One may explore other thoughts like having a vulture farm, the same way as we have poultry farms. New ideas always look absurd and people find instant fault with them and refuse to believe them, just as they once refused to believe that the earth was round. There will always be prophets of doom who try to frighten us by saying that the project will cost too much, we will no longer get khandhias and nassessalars, environ-

mentalists will file public interest litigations, and such nonsense.

Let us understand that the BPP is a non-profit institution. If in one project there is a deficit, it is not like a "business loss." There are no shareholders waiting to receive dividends from the BPP and no bankers waiting in the wings to cut off credit. So, let commercialism stay out of community welfare and safeguarding of our religious traditions. And let no one forget that whenever the Parsi community has wanted to do something honest and positive, by the grace of Ahura Mazda, money has never been a problem.

The khandhia-nassessalar system only exists in Bombay and perhaps Poona. If we don't find khandhia-nassessalars any more, the kith and kin of the deceased will gladly do the job as is done everywhere else in India and abroad. Putting a loved one to eternal rest is an honor, not a shame. The community will cross that bridge when it comes to it.

As regards environmentalists, we welcome them to come and study in depth the system and philosophy of dokhmenashini. It has been repeatedly acknowledged, not by Parsis alone but



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by many western scholars who have studied it as well, that this is the most scientific and environment-friendly system of disposal of the dead that exists on earth. It would be advisable for those who throw the word "environment" about, to first understand dokhmenashini in terms of science and hygiene before rattling empty vessels.

KHURSHED N. PASTAKIA
Stamford, Connecticut, USA

By now most of the community members are aware and appreciate that there is a serious problem in respect of disposal of dead bodies through the age-old conventional method of dokhmenashini still in use in places like Bombay, Poona, Surat, Navsari, etc. The system, which served for centuries, now needs a re-look as the birds are getting extinct everywhere. Places which use the burial system apparently face little problem. The problem is real and cannot be wished away — in fact it will become more pronounced with the passage of time unless we find a practical and an acceptable solution rather soon. Places which use the burial system apparently face little problem.

I am submitting my views on the subject for the benefit of all the community as well as the 'think tank' members of the BPP. I am open to suggestions/discussions and modification of my views.

I have separated the problem in two parts: physical and religious. The physical part concerns the disposal of the dead body. The known methods are biological, thermal or chemical. Under biological, the dead body is eaten up by microorganisms when buried underground or eaten up by the vultures and other animals on hilltops. If a person dies on a ship, the body is thrown in the sea. The creatures in the sea presumably eat up the body.

Thermal destruction involves burning. One method is by direct contact, burning on open fire using wood, charcoal, etc. The second method (electric crematorium) uses electric furnace where no contact of the dead body with fire takes place. In this method, the walls of the furnace are heated (by the coils embedded in them), to a high temperature of about 700 degrees centigrade and then the body, kept on a steel trolley, is taken in. Through near-white heat radiating from the walls (like that of the sun), the hydrocarbons of the body catch fire and a self-igniting process takes off.

In about an hour's time only the bones and ashes are left. In my opinion, this is the most hygienic and quickest method. A personal visit to such an installation would be sufficient to convince anyone.

There may be some 'chemical' method also but I am not aware of its practical application.

Since our choice is limited, the BPP should consider installing an electric crematorium for those who want to use it. In other towns, since the usage of the crematorium would not be high to justify the expenditure, it is suggested that they use the municipal electric crematorium and/or, (if the land is not very expensive unlike in Bombay), create a burial ground as is the practice in Madras, Nagpur, Delhi and other places in India.

Having organized such alternate systems, the punchayets and the anjumans would have, to a large extent, fulfilled their obligations to the community members on this sensitive and burning issue. The members of the community may opt for whatever system they want. The experiments with breeding of birds can be continued side by side, if so desired.

One must certainly give due importance to the religious part which involves prayers and other death ceremonies but not so much to the method of disposal of the dead body, be it a dokhma route or a burial route. Views on rituals and ceremonies expressed by two scholars should interest *Parsiana* readers.

The first extract is from *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* by Dr Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi. This book, which may be treated as our *Bible* on rituals and ceremonies, has a full chapter on the death ceremonies. What is more interesting, however, are the author's own comments on page vi of the preface:

"The times are rapidly changing. The 'new' has been springing rapidly upon the 'old.' As often said, the heresy of today becomes the orthodoxy of tomorrow: the liberalism of this year, the conservatism of the next. The reader will find that many a ceremony, ritual and custom has been spoken of as having become obsolete or as being more honored in the breach than in the observance. Many more will be obsolete in the course of a few years. Customs are often as despotic as fashions, but they also change as fashions..."

The question the community members should ask themselves is, "Has not the time arrived for the change of fash-



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ion in the disposal of the dead bodies?"

The second extract is from *History of Zoroastrianism* by Dr Maneckji Nuservanji Dhalla (pp 510-511) as under:

"With sublime confidence Zarathustra foretold to the evil spirit that his religion will forever live and his followers will do battle with the forces of evil up to the end of the world. His noble faith has weathered the heaviest of storms and survived them; and the religion which stood these trials in the past will stand any trial in the future. Zoroastrianism will live by its eternal verities of the belief in the personality of Ormazd, an abiding faith in the triad of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, the inexorable law of righteousness, the reward of retribution in the life hereafter, the progress of the world towards perfection, and the ultimate triumph of the good over the evil through the coming of the kingdom of Ormazd with the cooperation of man.

"These are the truest and greatest realities of life. These are valid for all times. They constitute the lasting element of Zoroastrianism. In the midst of accretions that have gathered around it during the long period of its life, these immortal truths have remained substantially unchanged, and by them Zoroastrianism will live for all times. Dogmas and rituals are based upon the needs of the times and as such they are subject to the natural laws of growth and decay. They have their place in the spiritual development of man. They are the accompaniments of religion but not religion itself.

"Man may fall away from dogmas and rituals and yet he may remain religious. Righteousness rests on the individual's piety and not on a scrupulous observance of ceremonials or a practice of elaborate lustrations. Let the Parsi individually and his community collectively abide steadfast in the path of righteousness and they will be practicing true Zoroastrianism."

I trust the above guiding and inspiring passages will be useful to our community members in resolving the issue in an objective manner without building up unnecessary frenzies and tensions in the name of religion. I am sure our enlightened priests and high priests will also play a very positive role in this matter.

KERSEE K. KABRAJI

Poona

Depiction of a Dastur

When I was in Poona recently I came

across an invitation sent out by some Poona residents in 1998 to commemorate Dastur Hormazdiar Dastur's completion of 50 years as high priest of the Poona Parsis. A photograph of the Pope has been superimposed with Hormazdiar Dastur's face and the staff in the hand of the pontiff has been shown topped with a farohar. The invitation reads "An invitation to dine with the Pope."

I fail to see the humor in such a depiction. Have some of us lost our sense of self-respect and decency so completely that we try to portray a dastur in such an un-Zoroastrian manner?

K. R. SETHNA

Aldur, Karnataka

Clinton's entourage

It was good that both India and the US set aside their rigid postures that enabled President Clinton's visit to India to materialize.

Over a year back, *Parsiana* had brought out a special issue on the Parsi entrepreneurs in North America.

It is sad that in his large entourage of businessmen and media men, there wasn't a single Parsi. It is sad that neither from the traditional high-tech industries nor from the nascent ones was there a Parsi face included. Are our brains second-rate? I don't believe so. Or, are we publicity-shy? Maybe so.

The same holds good for the various business delegations which came from Britain; not a single Parsi in it, from British trade and industry.

It will interest Indian Parsis to get a feedback from the British and North American Parsis on this issue.

B. T. DASTUR

Access to Asians

I am an ardent reader of *Parsiana* and try to procure or borrow as many issues of the magazine as possible as they are not available on sale in Pakistan.

I feel there is a strong need to form an organization which represents the Zoroastrian community in Asia. The committee of this organization should comprise of one representative from each of the Asian countries. Through this organization the Zoroastrians in Asia can become a close-knit community solving problems faced by them. These could be resolved through the combined effort of the committee by having conferences or seminars once a year where all the problems faced by Zoroastrians in any particular country can be brought up. Zoro-

astrians in Asia should also get a chance to participate and offer their ideas to solve problems.

Events like sports can be arranged in any Asian country to enable participants to meet and help each other. There are many like myself who are very keen to attend conferences like those held in the UK and USA but the cost of the trip is very expensive. We can in fact have similar conferences in Asia which can promote talent.

I have visited Bombay twice so far and on both occasions I noticed that the Zoroastrians, even though living in one colony for years, do not know each other. Maybe they are aware of their existence but never mix. Here in Karachi we are a close-knit community having events like tambola evenings, fashion shows, picnics at nominal fees which people of our community can afford. These events are organized by committees like Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal whose president is Hutoxi Cowasjee who is always arranging functions to help some cause or another. Then there are other committees like the Zoroastrian Youth Association and the Pakistan Parsi Collegiate Association.

I hope that someone will take the initiative to start an Asian Zoroastrian Organization in the near future.

RASHNA HOMI KHAMBATA

Karachi, Pakistan

Parsees or Spars-ees

When about Parsees' decline I read
And about their dwindling seed —
Smugly I say "Good ole Jeroo and

Pesi —

We contributed to the clan — unlike
other Parsees!"

When I look at a single Bharucha,
Darvala or Anklesaria
I shudder and lapse into hysteria...
Oh Ahura Mazda, why don't they
marry?

If they did, we wouldn't be Spars-ee.
The Hindus reproduce by leaps and
abound.

Their women's tummies are always
round.

Muslims, Christians and Buddhists too
Are far too many — only we remain
few!

Who is the culprit? Who is to blame?
The Parsees who don't marry! Shame!
Instead of multiplying and increasing
the number

They remain single and singly

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slumber!
They garner degrees one by one
Instead of begetting a daughter or son
They choose success and run rat races
While the Parsee race, extinction
faces.
Even now it is not too late
If Parsees date, marry and procreate!

JEROO P. DINSHAW
Poona

Most of the museum

May I request you to regularly keep alive a discussion on the Parsi museum in Bombay which according to the curator Nivedita Mehta, who was interviewed by Doordarshan II, has been totally un-serviceable due to lack of funds and interest.

It's your duty to save the Parsis from their extirpation as the magazine is the mirror of your community whose identity you should keep alive. You should also



An artefact at Bombay's Alpaiwalla Museum

Photo: Rashid Bamanbehram

publish a discussion to gain acceptance of Parsi as the mother tongue of the Parsis.

GOPABANDHU LEMPA

Reader redressal

Many newspapers in USA carry a public mediator column. The mediator tries to settle minor complaints and grievances of the readers against a third party by using his column and position on the newspaper. Most of the complainants are those who do not want to go to court, and prefer to suffer a monetary loss rather than spend time and money on litigation.

Here are some examples of the type of disputes settled:

- The purchase of a car which proved to have a defective windshield wiper. The car dealer claimed the damage was done after the purchase. The mediator persuaded the dealer to replace the wiper free of charge, citing the advantage the dealer would gain by this goodwill gesture being mentioned in the columns of the newspaper. The dealer would have to weigh this advantage over the negative publicity he would face if the news column reported that the dealer had refused to make the correction.
- Similar inducements have helped solve other disputes such as, where a book

ordered from a catalog was delivered with several pages missing and no refund was forthcoming, even though it was returned postage paid to the bookseller.

Another kind of service performed by the mediator was locating a person. A woman wrote that her elder sister had been given up for adoption 25 years ago because the family was too poor at the time. She had found out the name of the adopting family but did not know where to look for them. The mediator wrote about this case in his column giving family details, asking anyone with possible information to respond to him. This resulted in uniting the two sisters.

The solving of these cases gives good publicity to the newspaper and *Parsiana* should consider appointing a mediator and including this column in the magazine.

JAMSHED R. UDWADIA
Michigan, USA

The Editor replies

Much as we would like to offer additional services, it's not possible with our limited resources. Whenever readers write to us with a specific complaint, we forward the letter to the concerned party if we think fit. But this is only in regard to community issues. Readers however are welcome to write to us if they feel we may be of assistance to them.

Pilgrimage to Bahrot

The Tapovan Vihar Cultural Trust at Bordi in association with the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation has embarked upon a project to rejuvenate the ancient caves atop Bahrot Hill. It was here that our holy Iranshah fire was preserved for 12 long years during the turmoil period at Sanjan between 1345-1357 AD.

Standing on the periphery of the dam reservoir at Aswali village near Bordi, you can view a hillock. That is Bahrot. Behind it is culture and history dating back to 1299 AD.

As per legend, in 1297 Gujarat was ruled by a Hindu king, Karan Vaghela, one of the descendants of King Jadav Rana. In that year the king of Delhi, Allaudin Khilji, sent his army under the command of Altaf Khan to conquer Gujarat.

King Karan in his hour of need asked for help from the Parsis. A brave Parsi commander named Ardeshir Babekan responded to the call. He created his own battalion of 1,400 soldiers and fought a brave battle, defeating the forces

of Altaf Khan. Unfortunately, the battle did not end there. Altaf Khan mustered a much larger army of 5,000 soldiers and made a renewed attack on Babekan. The sheer strength of numbers indicated that Babekan would not be able to win!

Babekan then went straight to the fire-temple and invoked Ahura Mazda's guidance and blessings. Legend goes that whilst praying, he fell into a trance and an angel told him that in the event of danger, the holy Iranshah fire, then in Sanjan, must be shifted to the nearby caves in the Bahrot hills. The angel also showed Babekan the way to the Bahrot caves.

Babekan at once reported the incident to Dastur Dinyar and to his brave son Shapur. He instructed Shapur that in the event of his defeat, all Zoroastrians at Sanjan, along with the holy fire, be shifted to Bahrot.

As destiny would have it, Babekan was defeated and killed. Shapur faithfully carried out his late father's wishes and the holy fire, with a large group of Zoroastrians, was shifted to Bahrot. The holy fire was then properly ensconced in one of the three caves and very carefully guarded. Attempts were made by the invaders to pursue the group into Bahrot but they were ably foiled by the valiant soldiers guarding the holy fire.

For 12 long years, the holy fire was kept in the caves, piously looked after and guarded by the devout band of Zoroastrians. A regular colony of Zoroastrians resided in tents and makeshift arrangements around the caves during this period. When peace again settled in Gujarat, the holy fire was first shifted from Bahrot to Vansda near Valsad and later in 1419 it was installed at Navsari.

It remained at Navsari for almost 300 years and for a short period was moved to Surat. Again it was brought back to Navsari. Finally in 1742 AD it was installed at Udvada.

In order that we can plead with the government to declare the site a heritage precinct and pilgrimage center for Zoroastrians, it is very essential for members of our community — young and old — to frequent the caves as often as they can. This alone will strengthen our case.

We are making all infrastructure arrangements at Bordi to assist fellow Zoroastrians who wish to visit the caves. We also urge all Zoroastrians living abroad to make it a point to visit the caves during their visit to India. They could easily combine it with their pil-

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Events and Personalities

Minorities' men

During his three-year tenure as member of the National Commission for Minorities, Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Meherji Sethna, president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and vice president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI), plans to travel extensively throughout India interacting with Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians who have been nationally declared as minorities. He succeeds the late Marazban Patrawala whose sudden demise on October 20, 1999 had created a vacancy on the Commission.

After serving the Army for 40 years, Sethna retired as vice chief of the Army Staff in 1983 during which time he had been decorated with the Ati Vishist Seva Medal, the Param Vishist Seva Medal and the Padma Bhushan. He was also conferred the Dadabhai Naoroji Award for National Integration, according to his curriculum vitae.

Seven members on the Commission are nominated by the central government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity from the minority communities (by convention, one member is also nominated from the majority community), noted a report on the constitution and powers of the Commission by Dr Saiesha K. Mistry, convener, Colaba, South Mumbai Development Council in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of April 16, 2000. The Commission is expected to review the progress of the minorities under the prevailing laws and to recommend safeguards to protect their rights. It is obligatory for the government to table the recommendations of the Commission before each House of Parliament or the state legislature and issue a memorandum on the action taken or proposed to be taken. When executing its functions, the Commission has all the powers of a civil court,

explains Mistry, in her article.

As chairman of the Muse and the Minorities, Sethna is involved with this non-governmental organization concerned with bringing the minorities into the mainstream of India's civil society. He is also on the core committee of the UNESCO assisted project for preserving the Parsi Zoroastrian culture and heritage and is a familiar figure at interfaith meets organized by the Temple of Understanding, the World Conference on Religious Freedom and the Vivekanand Centenary Conference, mentions



Sethna (left) and Rabadi

his bio data. Sethna is further involved in creating an awareness about the armed forces in India, is chairman of the India Australia Council, a public charitable trust set up by the ministry of external affairs, and is on the governing council of the Indian Spinal Injury Centre.

Those in need of assistance can contact Sethna at the National Commission for Minorities, Lok Nayak Bhavan, Khan Market, New Delhi 110003, Tel: (O) 4621177, (R) 5016734/5017148, Fax: 4693302.

While Sethna is based in Delhi, Adi Babuji Rabadi, residing in Calcutta, has after a three-year term as member of the West Bengal Minorities' Commission been elevated as vice chairperson, as per a communique dated January 14, 2000 issued by the special secretary to the Government of West Bengal. This nomination by the governor "has changed the

dimensions of his responsibility very substantially in the activities of the Minorities' Commission," writes Dinsha B. Surti, president of The Parsi Zoroastrian Association (PZA) in Calcutta. "This promotion granted to him augurs well for the minuscule Parsi community of Calcutta and reveals the extent of confidence the state government has developed for our role in espousing the cause of welfare of minorities," he adds.

Representing the "well-knit" Zoroastrian community in Calcutta, numbering around 900, in a telephonic interview with *Parsiana*, Rabadi refers to the issues where the Commission's intervention has been sought. Presently, Zoroastrians getting married in Calcutta are not governed by the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act as there is no registrar of marriages to notify such unions. This problem will soon however be redressed as the government is expected to appoint a registrar soon. As per the West Bengal Minorities' Commission Act, "the government is ordinarily bound to accept the recommendation of the minorities..." quotes Rabadi.

Another issue which is vexing the Zoroastrians in Calcutta is the Banaji Agiary where the lone trustee in charge has been unable to protect the sacred fire. The fire-temple has ceased to function as a religious precinct for many years and the premises have now been encroached upon by unsocial elements, reports Rabadi who is preparing a white paper to enable the authorities to take necessary action.

Earlier, Rabadi's responsibilities were confined to attending the Commission's meetings once a month although he invariably attended office at least twice a week on the request of the chairman, stated Rabadi in a letter to the secretary of the FPZAI. His new ap-

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pointment requires him to attend office two-three hours daily, attend various functions of the minority communities and undertake tours of various districts which have a concentration of minorities. "We have a grievances cell and I have to regularly participate in the hearings and prepare recommendations for forwarding to the state government, whenever necessary..."

From Darjeeling there was a complaint of a Buddhist monastery being destroyed. The churches in that district have also written to the Commission stating there is unwarranted interrogation from the Intelligence Bureau demanding information on the number of new converts each month.

These are but some of the many issues the Commission is expected to resolve. Recently Rabadi and his colleagues were required to spend a couple of days in the Burdwan district where the Muslims felt discriminated against, saying their Urdu colleges were not being recognized by the government and also that they were unable to avail of employment opportunities in the state.

In a lighter vein Rabadi jests, "Regarding the additional privileges or perks entailed to my assignment, all I have at present is a flashing red light on the top of my car which enables me to disregard certain traffic rules...! Other than this I only get a fee of Rs 150 for attending the Commission's meetings once a month and this helps to cover the cost of my homemade tea which I carry daily in a flask!"

Following his appointment as vice chairman, Rabadi has been named a member on the advisory committee of the University Grants Commission of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad College for education of scheduled tribes and backward classes and minorities.

Since his retirement as vice chairman and joint managing director of M. N. Dastur and Company Limited in 1995, Rabadi, a chartered accountant by training, has been serving as financial and management consultant to various reputed groups of industries. Former trustee for 14 years of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and

Charity Funds and erstwhile president of the Calcutta Parsee Club, Rabadi continues to serve as trustee of the Mehta Atash Adaran, the only fire-temple in the eastern region of India, mentions his bio data. Having been reelected as president of the PZA for the term starting 2000 (he had earlier held this post for the 1993-96 term), Rabadi says he is not in favor of office bearers holding on to their post ad infinitum. He has been appointed president for life of the Office Sports Federation, West Bengal, and has at different times served in different capacities on the Cricket Association of Bengal, Bengal Hockey Association and West Bengal Rifle Association. The Vijay Ratna Award, the Glory of India International Award and gold medal, the Shiromani Award, the Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award and the Indira Gandhi Priyadarshni Award are but some of the many accolades Rabadi has received.

Doyen of documentaries

"I was a madcap son of my father and am a madman even now. How do you think I could have survived otherwise for all these years making documentaries?" veteran filmmaker Homi D. Sethna jocularly enquired of his audience on being conferred the V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award by the chief minister of Maharashtra Vilasrao Deshmukh at a glittering ceremony at the sixth



Sethna: legendary filmmaker

Photo: John Abraham, The Sunday Observer

Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF 2000) for Documentary, Short and Animation Films in early February, according to a report in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of February 4, 2000.

He must have made nearly 50 films, the exact count Sethna himself does not know, on subjects ranging from village cleanliness to community develop-

ment, a famine in Bihar to the nuclear winter. Most of his efforts though focussed on the arts and crafts of India with which his late wife Nelly was substantially involved, it was recounted in an article in *IDPA Update* (the magazine of the Indian Documentary Producers' Association) February-March 2000. His two films, one depicting kalamkari exhibits and the other artistic metal ware, which were 'silent' films were considered re-

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markable coming from a man who confesses "talking is my worst strong point." His last film made five years ago was a documentary on Dr Vikram Sarabhai, mentions Sethna.

In the presence of information and broadcasting minister Arun Jaitley and other dignitaries, Sethna "blasted the bureaucrats at the Films Division, lashed out at Doordarshan for not providing enough funds to produce documentary films and 'not realizing their responsibility to the people,'" according to the *Afternoon* report. "When millions are spent on defence, can't a fraction be spent on public service films?" Sethna was quoted in the *Mid-Day* of February 4.

A law graduate, Sethna had joined the prestigious legal firm of Mulla and Mulla where his father was a senior partner. On the rationale that "I can't defend people with vested interests," Sethna opted out from law after just nine months and joined theater which had been a passion since his school days, notes the *IDPA* article. His first job was as stage manager, prompter and odd job man after which he joined the leftist Indian People's Theatre Association group and later the Army Films where he was initiated into the art of making films. More intensive training came during his years with Britain's Ealing and Pinewood Studios, Denham Laboratories, Kodak and Crown Films Unit.

The 79-year-old filmmaker has also made two documentaries depicting Zoroastrian history and philosophy. His *Gathas of Zarathustra*, says Sethna, taught him to respect the philosophy of "happiness unto him who gives happiness unto others."

Weaving wonders

"In a bid to keep this rapidly dying art of handloom weaving alive, I have persisted with it even after the sad demise of my mentor Nelly Sethna. I have also tried to adapt this exquisite art form to current trends without compromising on its authenticity..." declares Roshan Mullan in the invite to her exhibition of wall hangings on view at Bombay's Cymroza Art Gallery from February 23 to March 4, 2000.

The 24 exhibits in varying sizes and diverse hues bear the stamp of Mullan's dedication to this art. From conception to designing to visualization to execution, this is solely Mullan's effort. Only the dyeing is done outside, explains

Mullan who says she labors over each work for one or two months depending on the size of the hanging, using cotton, wool and rayon which comes from Panipat, Haryana. Depending on the effort, the prices fluctuate between Rs 20,000-30,000, she mentions.

"The technique of handloom weaving is one which is not fraught with the dangers of environmental pollution and keeps our Mother Earth a healthy and clean place to live in and at the same time pleases our senses by providing us with meticulously woven themes in various vibrant shades," the artist was quoted in the invite. "You could narrate an



Mullan: "meticulously woven themes"



entire story through a wall hanging using mythological characters," she explained to the *Mid-Day*, February 25-March 2, 2000.

Before joining hands with Sethna nearly 31 years ago, Mullan was working as a textile designer with Bombay Dyeing soon after she completed her graduation from the J. J. School of Art. Her earlier solo show was at the Jehangir Art Gallery in 1997. Happily preoccupied with her art, for Mullan, "weaving is therapeutic."

Elements of education

"In this small community of ours in Baroda, we have done a lot to promote the cause of education," notes the De-

cember issue of *Zend*, the house magazine of Shree Parsi Panchayat Vadodara. Opinions of three Baroda educationists find space in their guest column: Arnawaz Havewala, principal, Baroda High School; Neville Wadia, principal, New Sunrise School; and Roda D. Hakim, principal, Blossom Pre-School.

Education today has more width and less depth, commented Havewala who has been in the education profession for the last 35 years, 20 of these as the head of different educational institutions. She had started the Baroda High School with just 13 children in 1974. Today there are 800 students in the Alkapuri branch with nearly 40 teachers in the coeducational English medium institution managed by the Baroda Lions Club Education Trust. She was sorry that students in large classes fail to receive individual attention from teachers and are burdened with books, homework and tuitions.

Havewala was not in favor of free education though she was not averse to granting scholarships to economically backward children. More vocational education facilities should be provided, she believed.

"We are burdening the children... pressurizing them and psychologically we are hampering their mental growth," commented Wadia who heads a Gujarati-medium coeducation school started in 1976 with 15 students and gradually upgraded to standard VII. Concentration needs relaxation and therefore recreation is essential for every child, pointed out Wadia who would like the government to make education totally free.

Hakim's main aim is to gear the 120 tiny tots in the one-and-a-half-year to three-year age-group to step into pre-primary school with joy and without any hang-ups. The School started by her in 1986 has been named Blossom because she identifies kids with blooming flowers.

MA topper

A gold medal and five other prizes were won by Havovi Homi Wadia for ranking first at the Pune University's MA examination in English in 1999. She was conferred the honors at the 93rd convocation of the University on December 23, 1999, according to a press release. Presently she is pursuing her MPhil.

Born in Hyderabad, Wadia's primary education was at Secunderabad and despite the frequent change of schools

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For the first time in India

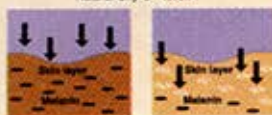
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"Is it a racial issue?"

Defining a Zoroastrian is a complex problem, notes FEZANA vice president Firdosh Mehta of Alberta

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Here at least you have *hun, bawa né Mangaldas* (I, my father and another). There, there is no Mangaldas!" laughs Firdosh Mehta, vice president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and the Edmonton based former president of the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta. He was explaining why the Alberta constitution permits membership to anyone who chooses to join. "All people, of all inkings, are welcome," he adds.

Anjuman formation pursues a different logic in Canada from the US model, being generally province-wide with different chapters in the various cities. Thus Alberta has two chapters — Calgary and Edmonton and the presidency flip-flops between them annually, Mehta's wife Rashna being the current incumbent. Though anyone "can stand for any position," the Alberta Association's objective is to promote knowledge of Zoroastrianism and support the rituals, especially navjotes. Most non-Zoroastrian members are spouses and university students and professors avail of their library of 500 books, notes Mehta.

"A lot of us are out of the logic that you have to be born a Parsi Zoroastrian, but we have very little say in such decisions which are taken at the mobed councils," says Mehta. Even the two mobed councils — The North American Mobed Council with its members comprising Parsis from India and Pakistan and their children, and the Council of Iranian Mobeds drawing its inspiration from Iran — differ in opinion, notes Mehta, which makes the problem of defining

who is a Zarathushti more complex. "Is it a racial issue?" he asks, adding, "I find it very difficult to think that Zarathustra was racist (though there are) reasons for maintaining norms, lifestyles, ethnicity..." Having been a "Sethnacharity recipient and availed of community infrastructure" there is a conflict in Mehta's mind born of the confrontation

with the very different thought processes of the Judeo-Christian system.

A prime organizer, locally, for the Second Avesta Conference held in Alberta in September 1999, Mehta says, "We want to move the faith beyond good

thoughts, good words, good deeds." Alberta had hosted 85 delegates, taking care of all the local logistics. Mainly organized by Dr Pallan Ichaporia of ZERS (Zoroastrian Education and Research Society) with the support of Khorshed Jungalwalla of Boston the conference had speakers from Russia, Japan and Italy. India was represented by Ervad Parvez Bajan and the late Marazban Patrawalla who was the keynote speaker. It was shortly thereafter that Patrawalla, Mehta's first cousin, passed away.

Zoroastrians in Alberta currently number 150 including children and non-members. The Association has 89 adult voting members (33 of whom belong to the Edmonton chapter), and lacking community infrastructure, operates from two or three homes, inform the Mehtas. It holds burial plots which are given free of charge when required, they note. Ervad Hosi Karanjia, a heavy duty mechanic who works as a supervisor, is their only qualified mobed.

A product of Bombay's Bharda New High School and K. C. College, Mehta graduated as a mechanical engineer from Sangli before acquiring his master's degree in England, following it up with two years at the Worcester Polytechnic in Massachusetts. He had applied for immigration to the US as well as Canada but "the Canadian papers came first." Since the past 14 years Mehta has been with the chemical processing equipment department of RNG Controls. Rashna was office manager for the government of Alberta's housing and public works department for 15 years though she doesn't work any more. Their only child Sherazade is based in Boston, teaching at the Boston Montessori Education School owned by Pheroza Madon, formerly of Bangalore.

"FEZANA's objective is work oriented," notes Mehta who chairs its planning and coordination committee and is a member of its Research and Preservation Committee, among others.

Author of the time capsule project to commemorate the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Houston this December, Mehta has appealed to world Zarathushtis to provide material of perennial interest to the community like coins, medallions, first day covers, stamps, the history of prime Zarathushti institutions, etc (see "The Houston beehive," *Zoroastrians Abroad, Parsiana*, March 2000). In a cryptic reference to the controversies surrounding who may (or may not) be invited to speak at the Congress, Mehta noted, "Where there's the right to speak, there's the right to listen!"

The Mehtas believe that "one way (for the community) to survive is to do a superfine job" at whatever you are engaged in. "Pick up the good stuff from others. Make them comfortable with interfaith... By the time our grandchildren come the world will be so different..."



Mehta with wife Rashna

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Homes to build dreams on

Arnavaz S. Mama



Dara Panthakee's Ahura Homes constructs luxury homes in the Toronto area

A merchant banker who fell in love with the building industry while inspecting properties and arranging funding for builders, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) vice president Dara Panthakee started his own Ahura Homes in 1992, notes *Builder/Architect* magazine in its August 1999 issue, containing a special feature on the company subtitled "Building Quality Homes in Fine Communities." Ahura Homes is in the business of constructing single family custom built luxury homes in the Toronto area. Dedicated to consumer service and satisfaction, the article by Elizabeth Francis notes that Panthakee lives close to most of his job sites, visiting them eight to 10

times a day. His ready availability to his clients persists long after they move into their home. "In fact, he visits and inspects his homes a year after his clients have moved in, as part of his commitment to customer satisfaction," writes Francis.

Panthakee's custom built homes are designed to make optimum use of space and natural light. Hence "oversized skylights (feature) in most of his foyers, kitchens and bathrooms... Lavish bathrooms are adorned with granite coun-

Panthakee outside one of his luxury homes (top) and an exquisite interior (alongside) Photos: Daniel Dutka Photography

tertops, marble floors and marble walls. Ahura Homes also feature the exquisite staircases and spacious kitchens found in multi-million dollar luxury custom built homes," states Francis.

Panthakee's vision of the finished home is what motivates him. Curb appeal with the use of brick, stone, stucco or a combination creates exteriors which appeal to neighbors as well as homeowners and are an attraction for future clients.

With each project a team effort from design to completion, Panthakee is said to be very particular about the people with whom he subcontracts. So he takes the time to find people he is comfortable working with. He also believes that in a custom built home each room should be unique. This involves not only a play of color and finishes but constructional details like cornices, moldings, etched glass, etc.

"In my business I am ably assisted by my wife Katy (who advises on interior details like tile selection, color coordination and the like) and my children Zenobia, Farah and Cyrus. Without their assistance and support over the years, I would be unable to be successful, especially when I had absolutely no prior experience in the field," acknowledges Panthakee in a letter to *Parsiana*.

Initially a resident of Dhanbad, Bihar where his father Ervad Noshir Panthakee worked for the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Panthakee schooled in Bangalore's Bishop Cotton Boys' School and graduated in commerce from Baroda's MS University where Katy was a fellow student, followed by two years of Business Management at the Xavier Labour Rela





At son's navjote (l to r): Dara, Katy, Farah, Cyrus, Zenobia and Pervez

tions Institute. For eight years until he migrated in 1980, Panthakee worked with ICICI in Bombay. His banking experience in Canada included work with the Federal Business Development Bank, Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank of Canada in various senior positions. He has also worked on contract as consultant for Ernst and Young and General Electric, informs his bio data. Before Katy joined him in the business she worked in the travel division of American Express.

"It was an uphill task to learn and manage a business as I had no prior knowledge and experience in the construction of homes... I studied the various aspects of the business from books at the library and finally took the bold step forward. It has been challenging at times, but with the guidance of our good Lord Ahura Mazda and my wife and children we persevered and became successful," writes Panthakee.

Zenobia, their only Bombay born child, works for the Royal Bank of Canada. Married to Pervez Mistry, also from Toronto, their first child, a son, Kerfegar, was born on May 7, 2000. The bilingual Farah, fluent in English and French, will be soon into her final year at school. She volunteers as a teacher's assistant at the Zoroastrian religious classes run by the ZSO. Nine-year-old Cyrus is in grade three, attends Gujarati school on Saturdays and will hopefully learn his Avestan prayers for his navar ceremony this December from a Gujarati text, writes Panthakee whose

grandfather Ervad Darabshaw Panthakee, had been the priest at the Jalna Agiary in the early 1900s.

A subsidiary in Houston called Cyrus Management and Construction Inc. is currently on hold as too much is happening in Canada, writes Panthakee. But he has a conviction he wants to share with the youth of the community: "If one has a dream, pursue it and soon with His blessings it will become a reality."

Iran's Zarathushti MP

Elections for the sixth Majlis of Iran (parliament) on February 18, 2000 saw 12 Zarathushtis competing for the job of representing the community. Dr Khosro Debestani, a dental surgeon, won the vote for the next four-year term replacing engineer Parviz Ravani, informs a fax message to *Parsiana* from Mehraban Kushesh of Tehran. The tenure of the current Majlis will end in June 2000.

Three medical men and an engineer were among the four leading the field. These included Dr Rustam Goharizedha, currently president of the Tehran Anjuman, Dr Mehraban Mehr and engineer Aflatoon Ziyafat who had been elected to the Majlis earlier. Both Mehr and

continued on page 60



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Indore opens its doors

A comfortable new dharamshala welcomes Zarathushti travellers in Indore

Arnavaz S. Mama

"This dharamshala is dedicated to the youth for all time to come," declared Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman president and retired civil servant Bomi Heerjee as knee-high toddler Vaspan Darabsha Kapadia, son of Indore's resident mobed, was led through the paces of unveiling the plaque commemorating the new nine-bed dharamshala that has replaced a decrepit charity block in the Anjuman complex at Chawani. After an open-air jashan Heerjee welcomed Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed Guzder, the chief guest that balmy evening of November 19, 1999, and BPP trustee Dinshaw Tamboly, the evening's designated president, who is also the managing trustee of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) Trust Funds.

The dharamshala project had top priority on Heerjee's agenda following the success of the Federation meet hosted by the small Anjuman with éclat in January 1998. As the industrial and financial capital of Madhya Pradesh, Indore attracts business executives, salesmen and other Zoroastrian travellers who were hard put to find convenient accommodation in this city of two million people, noted Heerjee. Lodging in the new four-room dharamshala, furnished with contemporary furniture and fittings including attached bath and western toilet, geyser and shower, is available at a modest cost of Rs 40 per head per day. Meals, available on order at Rs 64 per lunch/dinner, breakfast at Rs 25, will be supplied by the dharamshala manager Thrity Dossabhoy, enabling the mother of Indore's celebrated triplets to augment their family income.

Despite skeptics and critics, Heerjee said the Anjuman put its best foot forward, earning the financial support of

business houses, trusts, organizations and individual donors, "even persons we didn't know!" Not only was it a "labor of love" for the Anjuman's managing committee — which also com-

boly has given the Indore Anjuman. Whenever I don't see light at the end of the tunnel I turn to him and he always in his cheerful way, says 'Go ahead and do it.'" As a mark of appreciation the Indore

Anjuman offered honorary life membership to Guzder, Tamboly and their wives which was as graciously accepted.

Appreciative of what Heerjee's team had achieved in this short span Guzder said he prayed for divine protection for the structure and "tranquility to those who visit it." Recalling his mother's injunction that God gives to those who help others, Guzder hoped "my children and grandchildren go the same way as Bomi Heerjee

and his colleagues who have the hand of God on them."

Despite the "infinite needs and finite funds" Tamboly noted that there are "some philanthropists who always rise to the occasion." Disclaiming his own part ("I wrote only a couple of letters") Tamboly ascribed the result to "the WZO's good offices to raise funds for worthwhile causes" and urged that the community "remain not only united but in harmony with each other."

Concluding the short session of speeches, Unwalla ascribed the success of the project to Heerjee: "The dharamshala was Bomi Heerjee's brain child. (It was) due to his efforts that we have been able to collect enough funds. Any team is as good as its captain and we couldn't have found a better captain!"

Guzder and Tamboly were presented mementoes by Bharucha and Satarawalla respectively after which the assembled gathering surveyed the amenities of the dharamshala, made their obeisance at the dar-e-meher, renewed acquaintances of '98 and enjoyed the dinner laid out for them.



Heerjee, Guzder, Tamboly and Unwalla, after the inaugural jashan

prises vice president Dara Unwalla, secretary Gev Thanevala, joint secretary Jasmine Bharucha, treasurer Khushru Jalnawalla and members at large Minoo Engineer, Col Cyrus Master (retd), Gulu Satarawalla, Phiroz Madan and Jehangir Daruwalla — but also for Alkar Khemkar and Associates, the husband and wife team of architect-engineers who completed the "entire job without charging us anything!" Unfortunately they were unable to attend the function, being away on assignment. A measure of the respect enjoyed by the community in Indore was also evident when Shirin Heerjee later told *Parsiana* how suppliers of linen, crockery, etc voluntarily charged substantially below their normal retail price when they learnt that the items were required to furnish a dharamshala.

Grateful for the help provided by the Indian Zoroastrian community, Heerjee was particular to note, "I can't find words to acknowledge the help Dinshaw Tam-



Clockwise from top: The new dharamshala block; Guzder, snipping the ceremonial ribbon, flanked by Unwalla, Heerjee and Tamboly; drapes and comfortable modern furniture in the rooms; Heerjee with plaque commemorating donors; Thrity and Adil Dossabhoy with their triplets Photos: Arnavaz S. Manna



"Help us get the Congress to you"

The Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress will cater to the most heterogenous get-together of Zoroastrians ever

Arnavaz S. Mama

"How are we going to curtail attendance to 2,000 individuals?" wondered Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress co-chair Homi Davier as 600 delegates have already booked 257 rooms at Houston's J. W. Marriott Hotel. Addressing an initiatory meeting called by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) on April 1, 2000 at the Red Cross Society's Homi Taleyarkhan Hall, Davier noted that 250 seats had been reserved for participants from India and Pakistan.

With 260 volunteers worldwide working towards the success of the five-day Congress (December 28 to January 1, 2001) Davier noted that they had begun with an "open door policy — if you want to work for the Congress, come join the team." Also, the aim is to invite 50 percent participation from the rest of the world. "We can proudly say we have done that."

To encourage new ideas according to the guidelines formulated for the Congress, 50 percent of the speakers will be new persons, says Davier although no names have been published so far. Also, according to their resolution, every session will be balanced with views from all sides of the liberal/orthodox divide to let the common man decide on the issues, he noted.

In the interests of maximum socializing between North Americans and Zarathushtris from other parts of the world, each table will seat equal numbers of both groups. One hundred and twenty Houstonians wearing a button saying "Can I help you" will aid the visiting Zarathushtris find their bearings at the Congress.

The volunteers work at their own time and cost, says Davier. Referring to the fiscal discipline enforced by Congress treasurer Sarosh Collector, Davier explained that every project suggested for the Congress had to provide its own

funding before it could be integrated into the program.

The total budget for the Congress, initially pegged at \$ 600,000, has since been reduced by half, noted Davier. Nevertheless \$ 150,000 will subsidize



Davier: "the program will be mind-boggling"

the registration fees of \$151 per individual, inclusive of two lunches and one dinner, if the formalities are completed by June 1. Thereafter the charge will be \$ 201. Only if space permits will those opting to register after December 20 find a berth — at \$ 251. The Congress organizers are committed to refunding the registration charge where visas are denied. But "we are not paying airfare, registration charge or hotel fees for anyone," declared Davier, adding that even those who wish to make presentations at the Congress have been told to get there on their own.

A ladies lunch featuring the induction of outstanding Zoroastrian women of the 20th century in the Hall of Fame and a display of the evolution of Zarathushti apparel will cost \$ 25 extra. A simultaneous business lunch to launch the Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce is priced at \$ 35. Following the lead of US President Bill Clinton to bring the two countries together, Davier says a foursome comprising Rohinton Rivetna, Kobad Zarolia, Collector and himself "sat for three whole days to create its bylaws." The gala dinner on December 31 "to celebrate our Zarathushti Odyssey into the new millennium" will cost an additional \$ 75, a theme dinner to celebrate the Zarathushti heritage on December 28, \$ 40.

It is hoped that Zoroastrian communities all over the world will hold jashans to coin-

cide with the inaugural jashan at Houston to be conducted by North American and visiting mobeds. The ceremonial burial of a time capsule at the Houston Community Center will be preceded by a similar event to be held on Sanjan Day in India in November which will be videotaped for the Congress. For both occasions the organizers are seeking material of perennial relevance to the community such as medallions, coins, posters of significance, stamps, first day covers, the history of the establishment of Zoroastrian schools, industries and other organizations which could be of interest to succeeding generations. These should reach the Congress representatives in India, Homai Modi and Sheroo Master at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and the BPP office respectively, by mid September whether they are meant for interment at Sanjan or Houston.

"I can proudly say the program will be mind-boggling," declares Davier, adding, "40 sessions have been put aside for last minute presentations." Dr Homi Dhalla, managing trustee of the Bombay based World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation, has "taken over the cultural section of the Congress" and four 45-minute slots have been blocked for his suggestions, stated Davier. With deaths outnumbering births, the all important question of community survival will get prime exposure. The idea is to "have a dialog, not brush it aside," create an international think tank even though nothing brilliant may come out of it, noted Dhalla at the meet. With parallel tracks running each day, youths (up to 29 years) will be holding their own discussions — "no adult talking to them" as per Davier.

Other programs include poetry reading, kusti weaving — prob-

Cost estimates

(excluding hotel charges at Houston)
Return airfare to Houston: Rs 40,000
Boat cruise to Bahamas: Rs 20,000
Vusa tour: Rs 30,000
To travel agent: \$1,150
Early bird registration: \$151
Optional events with meals: \$150 (approximately)

ably a video demonstration, a presentation of Avestan calligraphy and a rendition of Gathic stanzas set to western classical music by Meher Jentzen and Dhalla. The preservation of Zoroastrian culture in the new millennium will focus the discussion. The preservation of cultural and historical sites, notably the Bahrot caves, will be spot lit by slides. In this context Modi referred to Queen Mary School principal Rati Wadia's remarkable collection of slides on the Zarathushti heritage of Iran. Welcoming the suggestion that Wadia make a presentation at the Congress, Davier was willing to devote a page to her in the Congress brochure to "tell the world this is the talent you have in India."

Responding to the concern voiced from the floor by Ervad Yezdi Panthaki, president of the Godrej Baug Residents' Association, Davier noted that each North-American Congress was followed by a couple of marriages and anticipated a proportionate fallout from the Congress. Some years ago his young daughter had been overheard blithely telling her friends that her father will "import"

Zoroastrian boys for them to marry, recalled Davier with a laugh. "Will a girl from the US be willing to marry a boy from India?" queried BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder. Though Davier admitted that cultural differences exist, he was hopeful that cross talk between Zarathushti kids of various national origins will help them learn to coexist.

"Will a girl from the US be willing to marry a boy from India?"

BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz referred to the dual opportunity to participate in the Zoroastrian meet and to experience 21st century living in the "most advanced country in the world." If 100 Indian Zoroastrians between the ages of 20 and 40 can participate there, it "will lead to the transformation of our society," he noted.

"People seem to think it is in the hands of the Panchayet to send people free," noted Guzder ruefully. Davier suggested that each baug or colony could sponsor a youth. Also, if 50 affluent Zoroastrians could contribute one lakh rupees each, 100 youths could be sent, but so far only one person — Guzder — had contributed, noted Davier.

One way for Indians to participate without actually attending the Congress is to make a video presentation with several speakers participating. Another is to get the Congress to India via Zee TV or Doordarshan on non prime time slots and enable the community here to be a part of the Congress. If large corporations could sponsor it with advertisements, the idea could work, feels Davier who suggested that even non-Zoroastrian companies might be interested in advertising. "It's the team which makes it. Let's form one in India and help us get the Congress to you."



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Fired by faith

The book may have a cosmopolitan ethos but it celebrates the specialness of Zoroastrianism

Shernaaz Engineer

Forever the Faith by Cyrus H. Merchant. Published in 1999 by Minerva Press, A-1/304, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029. Pp: 136. Price: Rs 200.

Life-affirming books are one of life's biggest pleasures. And treasures. You seldom tire of revisiting their warm cocoon, ferreting out favorite passages that leave indelible imprints, and re-reading parts that continue to open your mind and soul in many comforting ways.

Cyrus H. Merchant's *Forever the Faith* is one such gem. Every thinking, feeling, seeking Zoroastrian should keep it by their bedside and skinny-dip into it on a long, dark night of the soul. You don't have to wait for the blues to come a-visiting before you begin reading the book, though. It will buoy even the happiest of hearts with its sunny saga of faith. And for those in any doubt about the efficacy of the perfect divine plan in their lives, this book shows the direction.

It is a loving litany to all that is spiritual and sublime, and while its ethos is cosmopolitan and all-encompassing, it celebrates the supremacy and specialness of the Zoroastrian faith to which the author belongs (or which belongs to him, as he appropriates it with an affection and zeal seldom seen these days).

The book is dedicated to Ahura Mazda... "For Papa, my big daddy in heaven, and for Zarathushtra, big daddy's son who cradled me and whispered to me that I too, could be His father's son." From here on, it is an absorbing and intensely personal, perceptive and honest journey towards finding his faith: "Faith wrote this little book. Joy wrote it. Gratitude wrote it. Love wrote it. Not me. Me, I set out to write it, set out to do

something beautiful for God, then it came to me that there is nothing we can give Him, it is all, all His, all from Him."

The only thing we can give him, the author offers, is a life well lived. "The real life is the one lived for God. What a life that is!"

However, that is easier said than done. As anyone who has been on the quest for righteous living will concur, living the good life (as in good thoughts, good words, good deeds), is a rather tall challenge. Its apparent easiness is beguiling. Sticking to the straight road requires sterling determination and stringent discipline. And it pays to get pointers from people who have given the subject intense thought.

According to Merchant, prayer forms the crux and cornerstone of spiritual growth. It is, hence, imperative to establish a oneness with The One: "Close your eyes and mind and let you and your spirit go in search of him, go the distance. It is worth it... Pursue only him, renovate your life, yourself, call and command the Architect to take over."

So the first step on this road begins with prayer. The significance of *hoshbam* (the inner dawn) is artfully elucidated in an entire chapter. To start the day with prayer is to fortify oneself against the upsets of everyday living, and it also prepares one for comprehending the larger purpose of one's life.

This further consolidates the process of finding oneself. Most people lose themselves along life's journey, when the very purpose of this lifetime is quite the contrary. The author asserts: "Find your 'me.' You are a mother, sister, daughter, son, father, later. You can be all of this and much better if you are first yourself. It is imperative to be in communion with the person you are, to know

your weaknesses, your strengths, your reason, your road, your aims, your dreams." This, however, does not support selfishness. Inner truths, once arrived at, facilitate further growth.

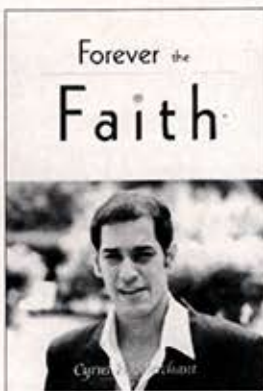
There is a beautiful chapter in the book called 'Count your Blessings, not Burdens,' that exhorts individuals to stop languishing and to really inhale and truly comprehend the limitless, absolutely limitless possibilities of prayer and God and this breathing, beautiful thing called life."

But lest the reader imagines that there are only litanies in praise of the good life in this book, it will be prudent to ponder over the lamentations as well. *Forever the Faith* is written in an incisive yet informal, essay format, and some of the essays (chapters) deal with the author's personal disillusionment with much of what passes for fashionable in our times: fame, fortune and infidelity. The last, he has the strongest words for: "Infidelity is a very grave problem, it has implications too far reaching. Unfortunately, the whole thing has been legitimized by society with a warped sense of thinking, and glorified by an irresponsible media."

He also questions the very premise on which people get married. "Marriage is beautiful and almost necessary but it depends on your temperament and your goals in life and a lot else. It is wonderful if it enhances your life and leads towards the ultimate fulfillment; but if it is being entered into only to oblige a social necessity or because of the fear of being alone, then marriage is going to be more a cage than a springboard to happiness."

His views on fortune, on the other hand, are unusual and not entirely in sync with his otherwise spartan spiritualism, but he explains why: "Prosperity is the sack overturned by benevolent angels, there is no need to be a hermit and renounce pleasure and all things beautiful, they are God's gifts. Renounce them only if they make you weak or sever your religious ties or harden you or desensitize you to the real world. And should this happen, then too don't attribute these glorious gifts to evil, the fault lies not in their existence, but in yours."

As one continues to flip the pages, one is filled with wonder at the wisdom



of observations on life's myriad facets, made by a heart that has hurt in order to get healed. Nowhere is this more acutely evident than in the essay on death. "I think one of the first things we need to be exposed to as young adults on the threshold of life is death. Only because while we are being taught about death, we are inadvertently being told how to live," he writes. This is followed by a very personal testimony to pain in the aftermath of a loved one's demise, and the realization that "death, after a life well lived in the truest sense of the word, liberates... death is not disaster, living a life poorly is."

Two spectacular chapters really form the spine of the book: 'Little Letters from Loving Angels' and 'God Rules, OK,' both of which underscore the author's unwavering affiliation with (and affection for) the many manifestations of divinity. But it is really 'Zoroastrianism: Forever This Faith,' that declares his innermost soul-stirrings for the religion he was born into: "Sorry on behalf of those blessed to be Zoroastrians by birth but

who take no account of the boon... Sorry, Zarathushtra, for people constantly talking about the religion dying. Their vision has died, they know little but speak too much... Sorry, Zarathushtra, for the wolves in sheep's clothing, those men in power who in their enthusiasm to be custodians of the religion are willing to put on the block the genetic seed, willing to axe century-old prescriptions

"Be all of this and much better if you are first yourself. It is imperative to be in commune with the person you are"

of preservation... They fear that the religion you gave is dying because the numbers are dwindling, they are begging for intermarriages, lobbying for them, flouting your laws: the faithless who seek comfort in numbers. They are blinded alternately by their importance and ignorance, they can't comprehend that what you gave us is throbbing with enough vitality to last through another century, if its essence is not violated."

The writing is lucid, the subject is so close to the author's heart that it sears the reader with its honesty and intensity. Surely a book to cherish.

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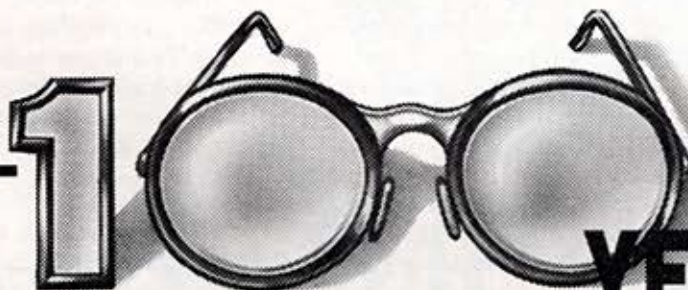
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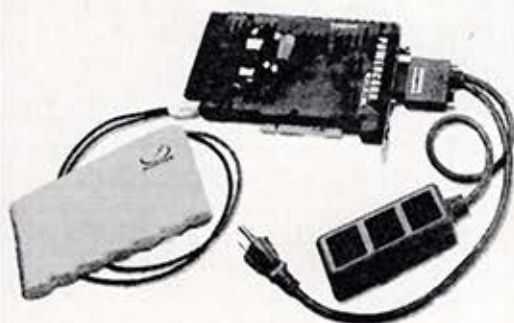


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Faith without fetters

The Zoroastrian Kurds in Germany
revere Prophet Zarathushtra and his teaching

Aban Bana

On my trip to Germany in the summer of 1999, I visited some friends in the town of Bielefeld. They are genuinely interested in the Zoroastrian faith and introduced me to a group of people I had merely heard of before — the Zoroastrian Kurds.

The Kurds are a people without a nation. They have their own culture, traditions and language (derived from the Indo-European group of languages), and they live as ethnic minorities in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Trans-Caucasia and Turkey. Most of them are Muslims, but there is a small group among them that calls itself the Yezides (Yazides, Izedis). This group worships Ahura Mazda as the supreme creator, and Prophet Zarathushtra is considered to be the divine messenger.

The Kurdish people have always had to confront hostility in the countries where they live due to the politics of assimilation, whereby the host countries discourage them to follow their Kurdish lifestyle. However, the Muslim Kurds share the same faith with their host countries, whereas the Yezides are a minority even on the basis of religion. The result was that many of them decided to leave their host countries and settle down in western Europe, especially in Germany, which adopts the humanitarian policy of welcoming asylum-

seekers who are persecuted in their own country. Thus it happened that a group of Zoroastrian Kurds fled to Germany and settled in various cities there, including Bielefeld.

The Yezides or Zoroastrian Kurds have formed an organization called Mala Yazdanie (Ezdiya) and they have their own community hall in Brandenburger Street 42 in Bielefeld where they have their meetings and cultural and religious functions. I was invited to visit them in their community hall where I met seven of their office bearers. We spoke to each other in German because the other languages they know are Turkish and Kurdish. They speak no English.

As we sat talking over sweetened black tea, I looked at the pictures on the walls — Prophet Zarathushtra, an afargan with a fire burning, the sun, ancient fire-temples from the Middle East, the green, red and yellow flag of the Yezides, Mount Demavand and a big Fravashi. These pictures left no doubt that the people here were full of reverence for the good religion of Zarathushtra. I was very keen to know more about the Yezides: how they worshipped

Ahura Mazda, did they know our prayers, what about our other ceremonies?

In the course of the day I learnt much of inter-

est about these wonderful people who were keen on sharing their experiences with those who could understand the gravity of their situation and the uniqueness of their background. I was told that Yezides from other countries had visited India in the past and had contacts with Zoroastrians in Bombay, but so far none from Bielefeld has had this opportunity. They hoped to visit India in the not too distant future and to know more about our religion, its theory and practice. Some of them have been to Iran and have visited the Zoroastrian strongholds in Tehran, Yazd and Kerman. They have remained in contact with the Zardushtis there, exchanging news and views. Similarly, they would like to contact Zoroastrians in India and make us aware of their situation.

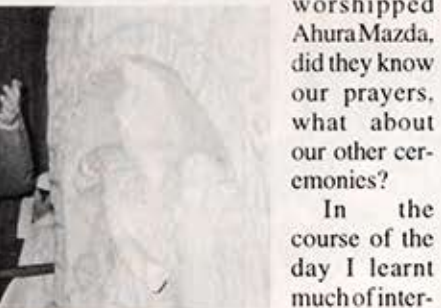
The history of the Yezides is full of sorrow, persecution, discrimination and genocide. For centuries they've had wars waged against them by various countries. It goes without saying that their places of worship, the original fire-temples, as well as their religious books were destroyed. They were not allowed to practise their religion and many were forcibly converted to Islam. Yet some stalwarts were determined to carry on practising the Zoroastrian faith, albeit in hiding and secrecy. For this reason the religion was not taught, nor read in the traditional manner, but celebrated by the Yezides in the presence of a priest they call Pir.

It was at these celebrations that the people of all ages came together, entire families, and learnt about their religious traditions, their heritage, about who they were. They venerated the sun and the holy fire, celebrated the festivals, tried to keep the good religion alive as best as they could, but always in secrecy. For this reason, although the Yezides know a lot about the actual celebrations, they

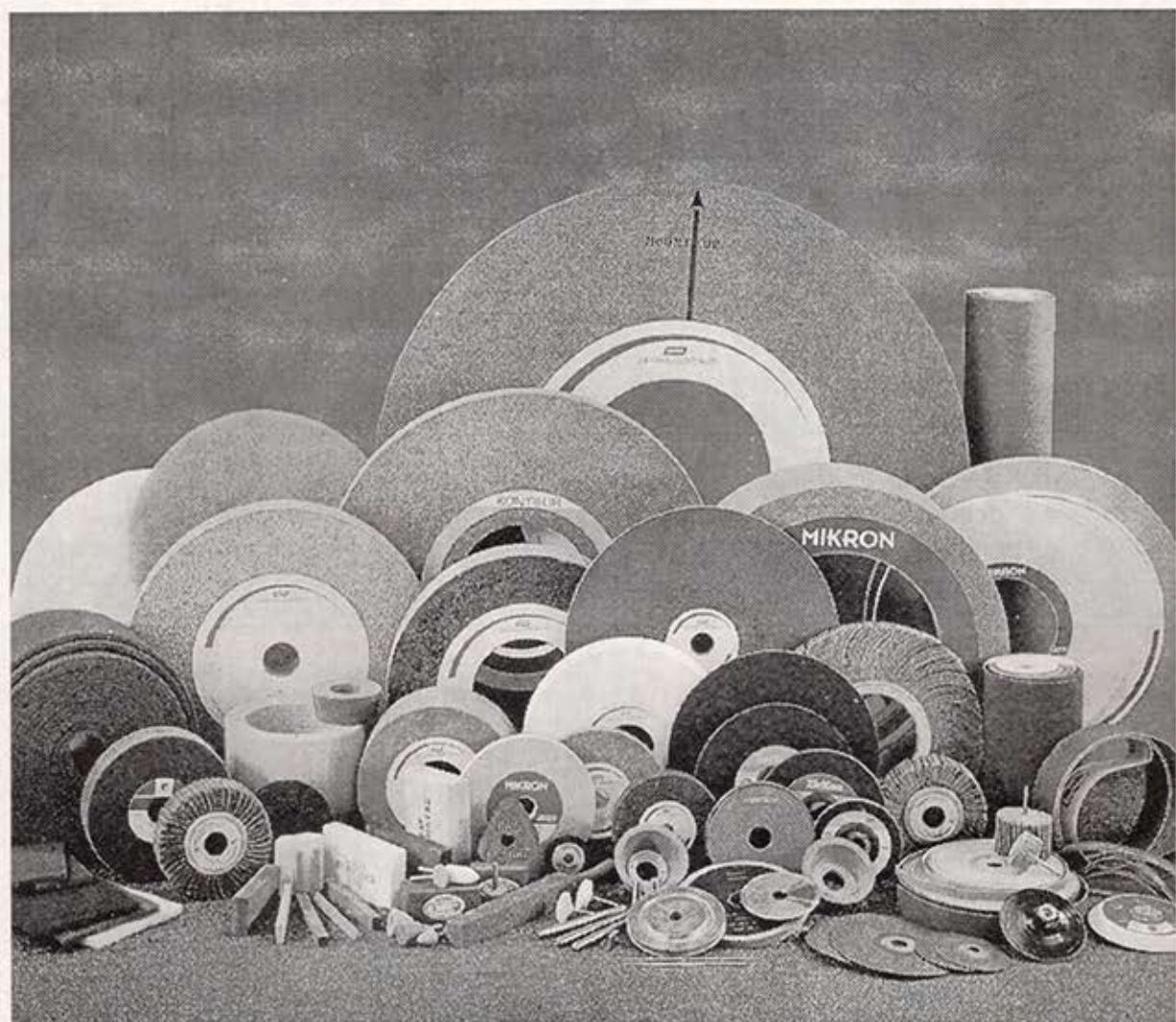
do not have the traditional prayers in Avesta, nor do they have the rituals, the rites. They do not wear the sudreh-kusti, there is no navjote done, but they are very eager to learn as much as possible from those who are in the know. They are also aware that it is not an easy task because they are not Zoroastrians in the traditional sense. For instance, our fire-temples would



Gropp explaining a Mithra relief at the Museum; Zoroastrian Kurds with the author (seated center) in Bielefeld and Gropp (center) flanked by Bana (right) and a colleague



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be out-of-bounds for them, as also the dokhmas.

Our friends in Bielefeld requested me to make this known to the Zoroastrians in Bombay and elsewhere, the fact that there are people of Kurdish origin living in the traditions of the Zoroastrian religion which they wish to continue now that they are living in western Europe where there is freedom of belief and conviction, where there are human rights. They have requested me to announce this in various Parsi publications so that those Zoroastrians who are interested in knowing more about the Yezides may get in touch with me.

A week after this meeting with the members of Mala Yazdanie, I had the opportunity to visit the Iran Museum in Hamburg. This most fascinating Museum is the brainchild of Dr Gerd Gropp of the University of Hamburg and it showcases the history, religion and culture of pre-Islamic Iran. When I went there with my German friends, we were greeted by Dr Gerd Gropp and a group of Yezides from Bielefeld, some of whom I knew from my last visit.

Dr Gropp gave us a guided tour of the entire Museum, explaining everything

in great detail with much wit and enthusiasm. It is evident that he loves and reveres our religion deeply and is astonishingly knowledgeable about its history and principles. Only such a person would have the credentials to start a museum on ancient Iran, the only one of its kind in the West. Many of the artefacts and photographs are donated by Indian Parsis, many come from Iran. The most amazing part of the Museum is the reconstruction of the sanctum sanctorum of a Parsi agiary, complete with the model of a priest.

This Museum is really worth a detour and I wish to take this opportunity to publicly and personally thank Dr Gerd Gropp for his immense achievement, a milestone in modern Zoroastrian history. Some time ago, Dr Gropp was in Bombay and he gave an illustrated talk on his Iran Museum in Hamburg at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute.

Dear readers, please contact me (5, Proctor Road, Grant Road, Bombay 400007, Tel: 3863799) if you wish to be of help to our sisters and brothers from Kurdistan. It would be great if individuals and organizations could conduct a dialogue with the Yezides.

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Jer Bulsara could be bypassed as just another sweet old Parsi lady, except for a tiny detail that sets her apart: she is Freddie Mercury's mother. And what's more, like every proud mother, the little lady is gaga about her son.

Bulsara and her daughter Kashmira Cooke were in Bombay late last year to inaugurate a photographic exhibition on Freddie Mercury at the swanky music store, Planet M. The travelling exhibition which displayed a range of photographs — from Farok, the small boy in Parsi cap and garland to Freddie the Queen in leotards and kimono — was organized by the British Council Division, with the aim of spreading AIDS awareness. Called *The Freddie Mercury Photographic Exhibition*, it was held in aid of the Mercury Phoenix Trust. The Trust has so far raised four million pounds which have been donated to charities around the world to fight AIDS — the disease which Freddie died of almost 10 years ago.

The 94 pictures on view in Bombay from October 18-28, 1999 had the previous year been exhibited at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall, according to a press release. Some of the photographs, gleaned from private and public collections, had never before been seen in public. To spread the anti-AIDS message a number of events and guest

performances were planned during those 11 days to impress upon the youth the gravity of this disease.

In this case, however, Freddie's mum was the crowd puller, not the AIDS awareness message. Everyone was waiting to see the lady from Nottingham. A bunch of Press persons, photographers and British Council officials crowded the lobby of the Taj Mahal Hotel. The question uppermost in everyone's mind was: would she resemble Freddie?

Out stepped a very Parsi lady, tiny, in

a dark floral dress and pearl brooch, black patent leather shoes, stylishly cut grey hair, handbag and wearing — believe it or not — a Freddie Mercury smile! And if that was not enough of a bonanza, there was Kashmira or Kash Cooke, his sister, whom one could best describe by using a wonderful line from *The Sunday Times* of London. It said that Kashmira looked like 'Freddie in a wig.'

Kashmira, smiling and poised, played the role of guide and pilot, always at her mum's elbow, steering her through intrusive photographers and googly questions from the Press. But we soon discovered that the petite old lady has a mind of her own, especially when it came to her photographs being taken. She admonished a photographer, "Don't take me from that angle, it's my worst side, take me like this." She added petulantly to her daughter, "Why does the Press always print photographs in which you look your worst?"

Once the photographers were banished, Bulsara relaxed and we asked her the same old hackneyed questions that she had answered a million times already, but



The Queen and mother

A travelling photo exhibition presented the Queen in pictures and Freddie Mercury's mother in person

Simone Bannerjee



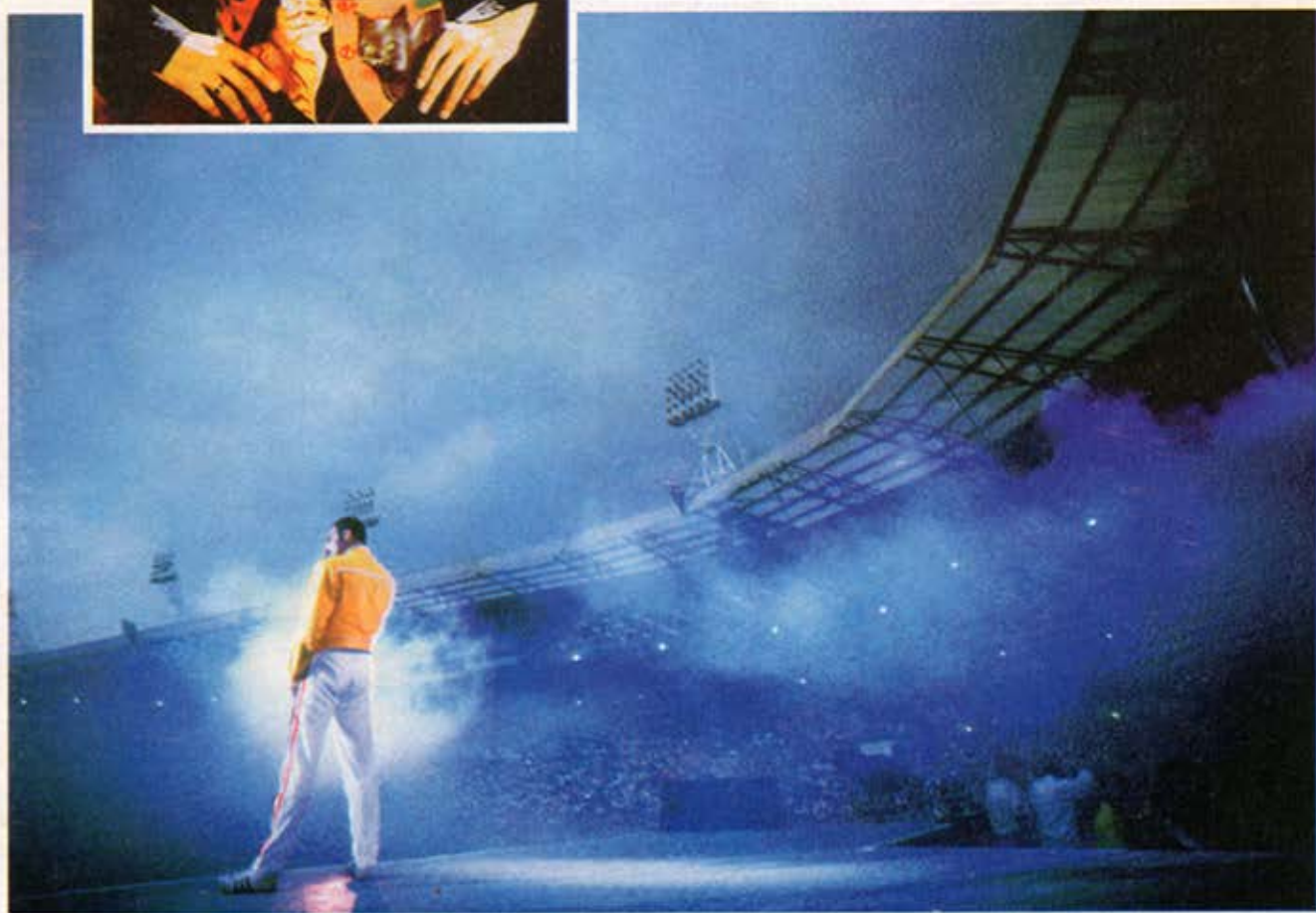
she didn't show any signs of boredom — naturally, because they brought back the "fondest memories of my boy Farok." Farok who used to sing so well even as a child (believe it or not, Lata Mangeshkar numbers); Farok in boarding school in Panchgani — always hungry; Farok and his pals who'd come home and practise

the drums and guitar. "The noise was deafening and I'd tell them, 'What is this music? Get on with your studies. Look at your cousins — one is a lawyer, one an accountant.' And Farok would reply, 'I'm not that clever, mum.'" (Later on in life, when he was a star wooed by the world, Freddie said laconically, "If I didn't do

this well, I just wouldn't have anything to do... I can't cook, and I'd be a terrible housewife.")

Born in Zanzibar, Freddie or Farok Bulsara as he was then called, spent his

The infant Farok Bulsara grows up to be the sensational Freddie Mercury



Do you have a G6PD enzyme deficiency?

The G6PD enzyme deficiency, common among the Parsis, makes them highly susceptible to certain drugs.* The deficiency may cause jaundice in the newborn and severe hemolytic crisis (destruction of red blood cells) in adults. Ask your family doctor to arrange for a blood test to detect whether you have G6PD enzyme deficiency. If you happen to be a G6PD-D patient, it is essential that you carry your card at all times so that in any emergency you would receive appropriate treatment.

*Analgesics: Anetanilid, Acetylsalicylic acid, Aspirin, Acetophenetidin (Phenacetin), Antipyrine, Pyridone.

Sulfonamides and Sulfones: Sulfanilamide, Sulfapyridine, N2 Acetylsulfanilamide, Sulfacetamide, Sulfisoxazole (Gantisin), Thiazolsuldone, Salicylazosulfapyridine (Azulfadine), Sulfoxone, Sulfamethoxypyridine (Kynex).

Antimalarials: Primaquine, Pamaquine, Pentaquine, Quinacrine (Atabrine).

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Published in the public interest by *Parsiana*

boyhood in Bombay's Dadar Parsi Colony, as the son of Bomi and Jer Bulsara. He was a bucktoothed, skinny and pleasant chap, talented at the piano. At St Peter's, his "English-type" school at Panchgani, Parsi tradition took the first of a series of blows when Farok became Freddie and the name stuck. When the Queen incarnated, Bulsara was dropped and Mercury was affixed to Freddie. And the world got its first glimpse of the band's exoticism which was to become its trademark.

Bulsara remembers the day Freddie came home to tell his mum, dad and Kash that he was changing his name to Freddie Mercury because Farok Bulsara just didn't suit his flamboyant image on stage. She told him, "As long as you still love and respect us, that's all we want."

So when reporters sprang the standard question: was Freddie Mercury ashamed of his roots and did he hide his past, both mother and sister rushed to his defence. Said Kashmira, "People thought he was ashamed of his origins. It's not true. It's just that no one asked him about his origins, so he never spoke of it. (When former *Parsiana* correspondent Shirin Patel had requested an interview with Mercury around 20 years ago, his office had declined the offer — Editor) For Freddie, the past did not matter, it was always the present that was all-important. It was not as if he had forsaken his country."

His mum related a funny little anecdote. Once when on a flight, the air hostess bent down and asked her, "Excuse me, ma'am, but are you Ms Mercury?" The old lady looked up into the ardent face of yet another Queen fan and said with perfect poise and a smile, "Freddie Mercury was my boy, but I am Ms Jer Bulsara." The mum is obviously Freddie's biggest fan: she knows all the Queen trivia by heart. She can tell you which year *Killer*

Queen was composed, the words of *I Want To Break Free*, how no one was willing to touch *Bohemian Rhapsody* initially because of its length (eight-and-a-half minutes), why *Barcelona* was such a hit and why her favorite song is *Somebody To Love*. "I attended almost every concert," she says happily.

Kashmira chips in, "One of the best memories is of Freddie on stage singing *Radio Ga Ga*. He was up there all alone, singing with such passion that the crowds went delirious swaying to the beat — imagine that, just one man controlling thousands of people. It was a wonderful sight."

And when Freddie needed a break from his drag-on-stage routine, there was always home and his nephew and niece Sam and Natalie. There is a picture of Freddie awkwardly balancing his one-year-old nephew on his lap. And though he would definitely have been more comfortable fondling a guitar, he did the Uncle Farok bit with great enthusiasm.

"How popular is Queen in India?" asks Kashmira. "Do people still listen to Freddie?" When she is told that almost every disco

shudders to the strains of *We Will Rock You*, that Cafe Mondegar on Colaba Causeway plays *Bohemian Rhapsody* at least twice a day, that *I Want To Break Free* is the anthem for most pimply adolescents and that *We Are The Champions* is a standard victory song, her face lights up.

More important than anything for mother and sister is the fact that the Freddie fan-following is still strong and growing. "Make sure you write a good article for his fans," says his mum. "Do a good job." With that kind of order, coming from Ms Mercury herself, one is certainly *Under Pressure*. "He was a very loving son," she adds. "He was also different from what he was on stage."

On the wall at the exhibition is Freddie's Kensington home. Fertile graffiti from fans paying him tribute spring up all the time. Some of the messages are very moving: "Freddie you're the greatest" or simply, "We love you." We do too.



Little Farok Bulsara decked in flowers and topi



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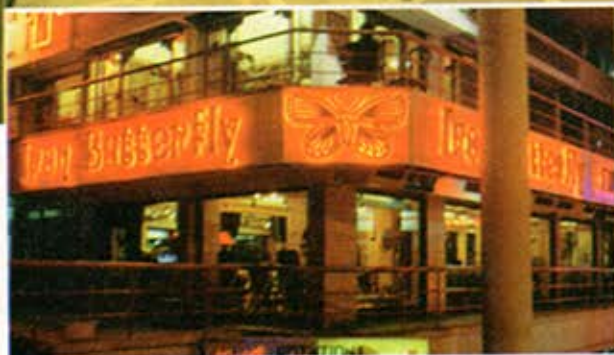
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From farming to furniture
Feroz Shapurji has made a success
of his varied enterprises

Flying high – the Iron Butterfly

"The Iron Butterfly was a Rock group in our college days that we were crazy about," says Feroz Shapurji to explain his choice of name for his latest and most successful venture. They make exclusively designed furniture and sell it through a well-appointed outlet called the Iron Butterfly. "The name seemed to convey exactly what

I wanted to project: iron combined with elegance," adds Shapurji, a man of many talents, who at 48 is a successful businessman, a reputed restaurateur, a gentleman farmer and a disillusioned lawyer.

The furniture displayed at the Iron Butterfly is a fusion of wrought iron, wood and cane. "I go into the details

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

of every design — the material to be used, its strength, feasibility and beauty, before turning over the job to my workmen. Even then, it has my personal supervision all the way," said

Clockwise from top left: View of the showroom; the workshop and outside facade of the Iron Butterfly

Shapurji.

His attention to detail was evident in the way he ordered coffee for me during the course of our interview. He asked me how strong I would like it, did I take sugar, and would I prefer milk or cream!

Shapurji's forte is the recreation of the old, elegant furniture reminiscent of genteel Parsi homes of yesteryear. Cabinets with a sunburst design, Queen Anne consoles, grandfather clocks (for which he imports the movements from Keinger, Germany) and roll-top desks

that look so genuinely antique they could have come from some Dadabhoy or Jejee-bhoy home, can be bought at the Iron Butterfly. The only thing that betrays the age of the furniture are the handles that shine with the brassiness of youth.

While the Iron Butterfly opened only last year, Shapurji's involvement with designing and making furniture started 12 years ago with a seed capital of Rs 35,000. It began as a personal hobby, extended to friends who wanted well-designed pieces and snowballed into a lucrative business, he recalls. Today, his 24,000 sq ft furniture workshop and 3,000 sq ft metal fabrication unit are a hive of activity. Stacks of timber are weathered and seasoned outdoors. Carpenters, cane-weavers and polishers work at pieces in various stages of completion. All the carpenters work on a percentage basis, while the metal fabricators and upholstery people work on a piece rate.

Is labor a problem with competitors luring away the good carpenters? "I never face that situation," he said simply, "because I look after my workers as I would my own family. I sit and talk with them, eat with them, respect their opinion and value their judgement on professional matters. They work on contract, so though I don't have to, I give them free housing, clothing and full medical ben-

efits. Cataract operations, appendix, even neurosurgery at a cost of Rs 60,000 have been borne by me, when necessary, for my workers. I consider it my social obligation."

Shapurji's interest in carpentry dates back to his early years. His father Rustamji had resigned from the army to look after their ancestral lands and farms in Murtizapur district. Since there were no good schools in Murtizapur, young Feroz was sent to stay and study in Hyderabad with his maternal grandmother, Goolbanu Jalnawalla, a matron in the Railway Hospital.

Learning Telegu was compulsory in schools in Andhra Pradesh for everyone except the wards of central government employees with transferable jobs. They could opt for manual training instead. And so it came about that Shapurji learnt carpentry, woodcarving, welding, sketching and painting, instead of the tongue twisting Telegu.

Grandmother Goolbanu seems to have been the inspiration and motivational force of Shapurji's life. "I grew up under her stern but affectionate care. She always encouraged me to dare and do," he said. "I admired the way she single-handedly brought up her own three children, looked after me and held her railway job with pride and distinction. Most Parsi women of her time were mere *mamaijis* (grannies) or *memsahibs*."

Even at 90 years of age Goolbanu was an impressive figure, with a strength of character that showed through the weathered face. She still takes an active

interest in her grandson's work and was the chief guest at the inauguration of the Iron Butterfly.

Shapurji is surrounded by other supportive women. His mother Aban takes care of the entire accounts and inventory and supervises the upholstery section; his wife Nilufer who oversees the 2,000 sq ft showroom and teenaged daughters Ayesha and Dina. Ayesha, the older of the two, is on her way to becoming a snooker champion like her dad. In his salad days, Shapurji held Central India's No 1 position in snooker for 11 consecutive years, we are informed.

His working partner in the furniture business is Romi Sudry who is mainly in charge of designing and supervising the metal fabrication section.

Sudry was working with Widia India Limited, a German company making carbide tools, before he came to Nagpur in 1987. He started his own metal fabrication unit. He didn't have the money but had the idea and expertise to make a collapsible, portable lighting tower used by the railways, airports, coal mines, etc. He went into partnership with a prominent marwari of Nagpur to give shape to his idea. When the prototype was made the marwari took the design and ditched his partner, he relates. Three years of hard work and all of Sudry's savings went down with the tower. Then, Shapurji, whom he had met casually, gave him some job work. The friendship and trust between them grew, resulting in the partnership. "Whatever I am today is because of Feroz," acknowledges Sudry. "His financial and moral support and his faith in me when I was down and out, is something I will always remember with deep gratitude." Sudry and his wife Anu have a son Kaizad.

Making furniture is just one facet of Shapurji. He is a successful farmer, a profession chosen by very few Parsis today. Within 30 km of Nagpur, he has three farms covering a total of 75 acres where he grows oranges, cotton, wheat and vegetables on a commercially profitable basis. Earlier, he was even propagating seeds that were sold to Mahabeej, a government agency. The labor force at the farms is mostly descended from the farmers that

continued on page 44



Friends and partners Sudry (left) and Shapurji



The Shapurji family (L to R): Dina, Nilufer, Feroz and Ayesha

The masters in her hand

Art galleries and individual collectors are increasingly turning to Kayan Marshall to restore their valued paintings

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"The safest place for a painting is on the wall," declares Kayan Marshall who must have restored nearly a hundred paintings of well established masters and unknown entities during the short span of five years she has set up studio in Bombay. "You will be surprised but people store paintings under cupboards and under beds," she continues.

At her studio at Tardeo are works of different artists, in varying sizes, in disparate conditions of neglect sent to her by art galleries like The Classic Source, Pundole Art Gallery, Gallery Chemould, Galleria, the reputed auction house, Christie's, individuals like Rustom Jejeebhoy from the baronet's family who have their own collection and those aspiring collectors who pick up select works from Bombay's Chor Bazar recognizing their inherent value.

On her return from Italy in 1995 where she had studied art restoration for a year at Lorenzo de Medici, Marshall realized that though there is "a lot of art in Bombay and people with a lot of money," there is a dearth of professionals in restoration work. Not surprisingly, at any given point of time, there are at least half a dozen paintings that simultaneously call for her attention.

She is assigned works where the frame or the stretcher may be infested with termites, or the canvas or the lining may be moth-eaten, or the paint may have peeled off, or the art piece may have acquired a tear as in a recent case when a S. H. Raza creation was pierced with a child's dart. "It is really like a doctor diagnosing a patient with no straightforward formula for an ailment," states Marshall who has learnt to constantly improvise. "The only way to learn is by doing more...greater exposure," she adds.

The worst damage is done to a paint-

ing when it is restored by people with little knowledge of the subject, using the wrong technique and ingredients like the



Marshall: constantly improvising

all-purpose adhesive Fevicol which is then so difficult to remove, she laments. She is not even in favor of giving it back to the original artist, assuming he or she is alive, who may just paint over the damaged area and return it to the buyer. "An artist's job is to create a painting," she believes. And just as she wouldn't be able to create a painting, she doesn't expect an artist to restore one.

The idea of hiring an assistant who could help her out with her responsibilities has also been vetoed by 30-year-old Marshall fearing that a novice could multiply her chores! "I'd rather do it slower but just do it myself," she says. Marshall does though look forward to the annual assistance and guidance she receives from Laslo Seres, a Hungarian restorer, who on his frequent trips to India makes time to keep her updated with the latest technology and developments in the restoration field in Europe. "There is a need to keep yourself informed of the products in use like the introduction of new adhesives and linings which make your life easier and are also less detrimental to the paintings," states Marshall referring to the conference she attended in Chicago

last year which provided her an opportunity to interact with restorers from different corners.

"I get all my varnishes and glues from abroad," says Marshall who loves to travel. The chemicals used for cleaning are Indian — acetone, turpentine, etc, she adds, sitting on a stool facing a rack of neatly lined up bottles and tins of different ingredients which fill up nearly half the wall. Almost standing in queue against another wall are a pile of canvases, some ready to be discharged, some undergoing treatment... Depending on the extent of damage she would need to spend time cleaning, applying a coat of varnish, changing the frame/stretcher/lining fabric where necessary, using a filler, experimenting with shades to find the perfect match for the original and finally painting the affected area.

In yet another room at her studio, there is a Raja Ravi Varma painting, nearly 4'x3' in size spread across a table to enable her watchful eye to smoothen the creases and cracks. A stack of frames of different dimensions are piled there too. "I am now into the framing business as well," mentions Marshall as some customers so overwhelmed with the transition in the painting just want to carry it home, ready to be hung up.

The cost of restoration would depend on the size of the painting, the extent of damage, the cost of the materials required to be used, the time factor and of course, the value of the painting, she relates. While in most cases patrons would justify the money spent on restoration, expecting it to last for another 50 years at least, there have been a few instances when Marshall was told that the cost of restoration had exceeded the purchase price!

"Portraits seem to be in fashion these days," observes Marshall, her merry eyes and vivacious smile exuding warmth and



Before and after: Paintings restored by Marshall



expressing concern for the paintings entrusted to her. Humidity is not good for oil paintings and nor is fluctuation in temperatures due to air-conditioning, she reveals. Direct sunlight should be avoided too. To prevent fungus growth, light dusting is advisable, recommends Marshall who is now engaged by companies like Larsen and Toubro and McDowell to maintain their art collections after she was able to restore some of their valuable pieces.

"I only do oil paintings," clarifies Marshall, and those which are too big to be brought to her studio are restored at the site. She refers to the portrait of Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 7'x4' which she and Seres were required to get ready in time for the J. J. sesquicentennial celebrations in 1999. For 14 days they labored in one room at the J. J. School preferring to keep the fan switched off in the interest of the painting. Even if a canvas cannot be restored to its original condition, it can always be improved upon or stabilized, she believes.

A couple of small portraits of Parsis at her studio, almost in tatters, wait to see better days too. They had been left there by a friend who picked them up from Chor Bazar. "You find incredible things at Chor Bazar," says Marshall who also likes to frequent the bylanes in the hope of finding a curio. "Parsis look after their things better than others," Marshall is convinced. "You know how it is with their cars," she elaborates. "They have a lot of beautiful old works in their residences. If they can afford to, they like to keep them well. If they can't afford to, they sell them off."

In the course of her involvement with "Portrait of a Community," a project ini-

tiated by Khorshed Gandhi of Gallery Chemould to preserve the valuable pieces of art getting lost in old Parsi homesteads and institutions in Bombay and coastal Gujarat, Marshall had opportunities to visit most of the agiaries in Bombay and locate the paintings worth preserving. "There were so many paintings obscured with years of dust," some under dirty glass frames, she recalls. "They were really lovely, reflecting the history of our community," she adds.

The number of agiaries she was able to visit thanks to this project were more than the number of agiaries she had visited during the rest of her life, Kayan candidly conveys her mother Maki's observation. She has no objections to intercommunity marriages and is comfortable with the dokhmenashini mode of disposal of the dead saying, "I expect I will go the same way when I die. There is a science to it which makes sense." An attempt to probe further into her views on the community and details of her family meets with "I am sure there are more interesting things to read about in *Parsiana*."

Presently her life seems to revolve around art — an interest cultivated in

her by her father Shiamak from the time she was a young girl studying at Queen Mary School — visiting art shows, making the rounds of art galleries, investing in paintings. The money that she makes from restoration goes into acquiring new works even though she may have no space to hang them up, she reveals. "It's like a passion, a disease," she acknowledges. Swimming and keeping in shape through aerobics are her other pastimes.

After her graduation in ancient Indian culture and history from Bombay's St Xavier's College, Marshall was for two years at the Lawrence University in USA doing her majors in art history. When she proceeded to Italy to study restoration, she was initially only willing to give it a four-month trial. But once she was into it, she became so immersed in the subject that she wanted to make it her career.

"I never knew what I wanted to do for the longest time," says Marshall who had no idea what the canvas of life would offer her but in a very short time has been able to alter the life and character of many a canvas.

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

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FLYING HIGH — THE IRON...

continued from page 39

worked his grandfather Jivanji's fields in Murtizapur! Shapurji spends two days of the week at his farms. He has an intimate knowledge of seeds, seasons and sowing techniques.

Farming and food have a natural connection. Shapurji also happens to be a gourmet cook. "I can eat a dish once and re-create it 90 percent," says Shapurji. "It is just a matter of figuring out what goes into it." Before furniture became a full time profession, he ran a popular fast food joint called Taste Buds. It sold chocolates, ice-cream, desserts, burgers, pizzas and the like. Chocolates were his speciality. They were so good, his Swiss customers took them back to Switzerland, he adds.

Furniture, farming and food are not all that go into the making of Shapurji. He is very fond of music, all the way from classical to pop. He sells the latest CDs and cassettes at Music Room, another of his commercial ventures. Motorbikes and cars are also a passion. So far, he has not turned this interest into a business proposition. But who knows?

His brief foray into the legal profession is Shapurji's one regret. "My father was very keen that I become a lawyer, so I studied law." For a short time he was a junior under V. R. Manohar, former advocate general of Maharashtra. He then went into private practice but did not pursue it for long.

"The profession does not appeal to me on moral grounds," said Shapurji. "I fought a case for a company in good faith, believing the facts they told me. I later found that the management had misrepresented facts and falsified statements, to frame labor. I cannot be a party to such duplicity. I decided then never to practice again."

Shapurji shies away from questions like 'philosophy of life' and 'formula for success.' "I believe in being totally involved in whatever I do and helping others to the extent I can," he says. "I don't always wear my sudreh-kusti and I rarely go to the agiary. But yes, I converse with God every morning, thanking Him for all He has given me. Never asking for anything more. If I come across an old, unhappy or infirm person, I pray to God to give him peace of mind, if He can give him nothing else."

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Power driving women

Dressed in white with anti-pollution messages splashed across their T-shirts, their little Maruti 800 covered with posters proclaiming a clean environment and gas masks over their faces reinforcing the idea, an all-Parsi ladies team won the maximum amount of trophies (including one for the best decorated car) at the Maruti Women's Power Drive, a women's car rally held on



Top (l to r): Winning quartet Zarin and Spenta Havewalla, Ruhangiz and Delnaz Kabir and promoting eco-friendliness (above)

February 20, 2000. At the wheel was 20-year-old Ruhangiz Kabir, with her mother's friend Zarin Havewalla as navigator, with Ruhangiz's 13-year-old sister Delnaz and Zarin's 10-year-old daughter Spenta as young assistants, according to a press release from Shrikant Karani of Sportscraft which organized the event.

"This is more of a navigational rally than a speed rally," explains Zarin. The 80 km route saw 95 cars flagged off from the National Sports Club of India at Worli in the morning, traverse the lesser known, mean streets of south and central Bombay, then head for the Thana road which is generally used by trucks. "We were given what is known as a tulip chart," elaborates Zarin. "The names of roads are not marked, only distances are given with indications as to where one

has to turn left or right. We have also to strictly follow the speed chart, as arriving seconds early or late incurs penalty points." Only 15 cars managed to complete the course within the specified parameters and arrive at the Golden Swan Country Club, Yeoor, Thana. "where the teams were treated to a lovely lunch," narrates Zarin. The rally was sponsored by Maruti Udyog Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Limited

and others, with only different models of Maruti vehicles allowed to participate.

With 0.32 penalty points, the Kabirs and Havewallas won third place. They also secured the distinction of standing second among the all-ladies teams. While the driver has to be a woman, the rally permits men as navigators, recounts Zarin. "It felt fantastic coming third,"

says Ruhangiz. "I was not nervous at all as we had joined the rally in a spirit of fun. We had participated last year too but were not able to complete the course." "It was a navigational challenge. Most of the cars kept getting lost, but it was great fun," laughs 48-year-old Shirin Divecha who claimed the prize for the 'oldest' lady driver to finish the rally. Final year BCom student Ruhangiz, with just two years' driving experience under her belt, pocketed the

prize for the youngest woman driver to complete the course. "I felt great as I did not go last year," states sibling Delnaz. Pipes Spenta: "I knew we would get prizes. I always bring luck to my friends!"

Car control

The Autocross involves speed and skill as drivers negotiate two laps on a dirt track at the Vallabhai Patel Stadium, wide in places, narrow in others, with sharp turns and a fast straight finish, describes Neville Poonawalla, who had emerged as the winner last year. This year it was veteran rallyist Farad Bhathena who stole the thunder at the Maruti Autocross 2000, Mumbai, held on April 9, winning the Maruti Esteem modified class with a timing of 2 minutes (min) 14.43 seconds (sec) to emerge "the fastest driver of the day." A mere seven hundredths of a second behind was five-time champion Sam Katgara who had missed last year's Autocross as



The heat and dust of the Autocross

Photo courtesy: Sportscraft

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he was out of town.

Katgara had earlier in the day recorded the best timing of 2 min 10.72 sec in the Maruti Esteem unmodified class, but a 'touch' he incurred proved costly with a penalty of 30 sec added to his timing (the demarcation of the course with string barriers, tyres, etc is intended to ensure that drivers 'cleanly' complete the circuit). Poonawalla emerged the winner in this class with a timing of 2 min 15.28 sec, with Farokh Commissariat a close second. In the Maruti Zen General category, it was an all-Parsi sweep with Bhathena, Poonawalla and Katgara standing first, second and third respectively, according to a press release from Sportsraft, the event organizers. The rally was sponsored by Maruti Udyog Limited and co-sponsored by Indian Oil, J. K. Tyres and others.

"Autocross is one of the safer forms of motor sport," explains Katgara. "You are unlikely to meet with a mishap unless you do something really stupid." A rallyist with over 10 years' experience behind him, Katgara has participated, he says, in around 40 rallies, "winning quite a few." In the long and arduous Himalayan rally, he narrates, Katgara with Poonawalla as navigator ("we are the best of friends") were leading their class when they saw a colleague in his car precariously hanging over a precipice. As cars whizzed by, none stopped to help the dazed driver. Giving up their lead position, Katgara and Poonawalla stopped to pull out the driver as the car toppled into the ravine, and were honored with a special 'sportsman trophy,' recalls Katgara. "We enjoy the sport, win or lose is part of the game," he remarks.

At the Autocross, Katgara and Poonawalla shared the same car. "This rally does not involve much expense," informs Poonawalla. "The car just needs to be road worthy, tuned up and checked before the race." With 124 entries, competition is keen with several seasoned drivers participating, both ladies and gents. There is also a novice class, according to Sportsraft. Motorcyclist Zubin Patel, winner of many a Motocross, participated in the Autocross



Mistry (right): versatile in track and field

for the first time, winning this year's prize for the best dressed male participant.

According to *The Indian Express* of May 4, 2000, Bhathena has since been appointed president of the Motorsports Association of India Rally Commission. Bhathena was not available for comment.

Putting a long shot

Versatility is the name of her game. She sprints, jumps high and long, puts a shot and picks up medals along the way. Kainaz Yazdi Mistry heaved the shot-put in the girls under 12 category at the Bombay City District Amateur Athletic Association (BCDAAA) championships in December '99 to a distance of 8.55 meters (m), creating a new record for the meet and for Maharashtra state as well. "I enjoy all the events I take part in but am strongest at shot-put. I was very excited as I bettered my own record of 7.92 m set last year," enthuses Mistry. The BCDAAA meet also saw her secure silver in high jump and relay, and bronze in the long jump and 300 m run and walk away with the Murphy Trophy for the best female athlete of the meet, according to her bio data.

At the Maharashtra state sub-junior athletic championship at Poona in February 2000, Mistry won silver medals in

high jump and shot-put and a gold in the 4x100 m relay for girls under 12. "For the shot-put, Kainaz was a little unlucky as generally the girl with the best record gets to throw last, whereas by error she was made to throw first, which proved a disadvantage," narrates her mother Beroze. "Kainaz practices putting the shot with a good gliding action from a concrete patch but in Poona there was no concrete patch. Her feet were ploughing into the mud, restricting her action."

Beroze is however rather proud, she says, that it was another Zoroastrian Irani girl from Dahanu who won the event. Even at state level meets athletes are not well looked after, she bemoans. Girls are lodged in just one big hall, with

no beds and no mattresses either. One is supposed to lug one's own bedding, she says, with the result that many choose to spend from their pockets to ensure better living facilities.

Practicing at Priyadarshini Park (PDP) close to her Godrej Baug residence, Kainaz hopes to take part in the pentathlon soon. Former national athletics champion Adille Sumariwalla has been very supportive of Kainaz and other Parsi athletes, commends Beroze. "The synthetic track at PDP is a good track but unfortunately it is not well maintained. It is peeling off in places," she complains.

Most meets are held at the University Stadium at Marine Lines but school children are denied practice facilities there, asserts Beroze, the ground being reserved exclusively for college-going sportspersons! "That is unfair as there is no other good grass track for them to practice on this side of town. One cannot expect these children to go all the way to Kandivli (where practice facilities are available). After all, it is the school-going athlete who will mature into a college-going one, so why are they being deprived of facilities at a time they need them most?" queries the mother. Kainaz trains at the PDP three to five times a week, with different coaches for different events. The monsoon months pose added problems as the exercise room which used to be available for stretching exercises has been given out

for commercial use, she says.

"In the beginning, I used to go to the PDP just to keep fit but a coach there took interest in my progress as he thought I was really good," recounts the young athlete. A seventh standard student (from June) at Queen Mary School, Kainaz also enjoys swimming, cycling, badminton, table tennis and throwball in school and in her colony. The sports training has made her more disciplined, she has learnt to make best use of her time and that has proved an advantage in studies too, believes Beroze.

At the All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet in March 2000, Kainaz grabbed the gold, states her resumé, in the long jump, 100 m run and two relays, with a silver and a bronze to boot, winning the individual championship in her age group as well as the Canon Sports and Gifts Trophy for the best girl athlete of the meet.

Cycling collegian

"Cycling is a 'clean' sport," says 21-year-old Chirag Behram Bulsara, a final year BCom student at Bombay's Burhani College of Commerce and Arts. "Not only does it bring out your external (physical) power but one has to use one's brains while on the bike as one can rarely cycle to a pre-plan," he believes. It is also a very expensive hobby, he laughs, with racing cycles costing anywhere between Rs 50,000 to five lakhs for the best imported ones.

A member of the Sprinters Cycling Club (which charges no fees) situated at Gilder Lane in central Bombay, Bulsara acknowledges with gratitude the role of Sam E. Daruwalla "who has greatly encouraged me as has my coach Kersi Italia who has trained me free of cost." Participating in the inter-collegiate cycling competition (state level, 1999-2000), Bulsara secured an overall second rank, having won silver in all the events he rode in, according to his bio data. "Individual pursuit (4,000 m) is my favorite event," he relates. "At a time there are just two riders on the track, riding opposite to each other. It is basically a timing event and is great fun." Another interesting race, says Bulsara, is 'devil take the hind most' in which there is always one less participant than the number of laps, so that the

last person at the end of each round has compulsorily to drop out of the race! On the two earlier occasions ('97-'98 and '98-'99) Bulsara has participated in inter-collegiate state level cycling, he has won gold, silver and bronze medals, maintaining an overall second place, states his resumé.

Bulsara has also represented Bombay University at the All India Inter-Univers-



Bulsara: easy rider

sity cycling competitions held at Ludhiana and Patiala. "On one occasion, due to a mistake made by Bombay University in the entry form, I could not ride in the 4,000 m individual pursuit, which is my strong event. I had to take part in the 100 km road race instead. But I am basically a track rider," informs Bulsara. At the 75 km Suman Cycle Race from Bombay to Khopoli, Bulsara was sprinting ahead with a bunch of lead cyclists towards the Panvel time post when he found himself 'squeezed' right into a parked truck! "I lost my senses for a while and damaged the ligaments of my shoulder, but fortunately no greater harm befell me," he laughs.

Though cycling meets are held at the Vallabhai Patel Stadium at Worli, the track there is not available for practice, nor is it well maintained, remarks Bulsara. The young Nowroz Baug resident has therefore to hone his skills on Bombay's Marine Drive/Nariman Point area, covering 30-35 km to develop stamina. Bulsara makes particular mention that it has been Burhani College principal Q. A. Saeed (now retired) who has "helped me a long way." Bulsara has won the 'best sportsman of the year' award from Burhani College three times

in a row and has represented Bombay city at the state track team selection at Poona on March 19, 2000, as per his bio data.

Among Bulsara's other interests is drawing designs for modifying cycles to suit particular needs. "Kids often want something different, so we introduce short frames or mag (plastic) wheels," he says. Old watches and clocks, coins and pens also captivate his interest, as does writing poetry in Hindi.

Shane's swimming surge

Recently returned from participating in the Fifth World Short Course Championship at Athens in Greece is tall, well-built Shane Pedder, three times (Indian) national champion and record holder in the 50 meters (m) butterfly. Shane had been selected on the basis of his national timing, says his father Gaiomurd, but the swimmer was informed of his selection so late that there was hardly any time for Shane and his coach Sandeep Divgikar to put in intensive preparation.

Attended by a galaxy of international swimming sensations, the Championship in Greece produced an incredible 15 new world records and was the last of the many warm-up events leading to the Sydney Olympics in September, according to *The Sportstar* of April 8, 2000. Swimming in three events (the 50 m freestyle, butterfly and backstroke), Shane observes that he clocked good personal timings, which were however "way off" the international mark. "I don't think it's impossible, though, for Indians to come up to world standards. What is basically required is plenty of hard work," he remarks. Shane was, he believes, the only swimmer from India at the meet.

At the senior nationals in Trivandrum in '97 Shane had set a new meet record of 26.44 seconds in the 50 m butterfly, a mark that still stands. He successfully defended his title in the same event at the nationals in '98 and '99 as well, as per his bio data.

It was at a 'learn to swim' camp organized by the Otters Club of Bandra that seven-year-old Shane's talent was spotted by discerning coach Divgikar who has nurtured him since then, relates

continued on page 60

Growing up before the *Gathas*

Arnavaz S. Mama

Discovering Ashavan by Farishta Murzban Dinshaw. Published in 2000 by the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal, Sohrab Katrak Parsi Colony, Off M. A. Jinnah Road, Karachi 74400, Pakistan. Pp: 90. Price: US \$ 12.

In a beautiful, rugged land peopled by sturdy pastoralists the lame were misfits. A child born misshapen was considered the progeny of evil. The orphan subsisted in the shadows.

Young Ashavan, with all the cards stacked against him and a spirit that quickened at the call of a life in torment, found himself outcaste when he impulsively fought a hulking bully to save the life of a pregnant bitch — and failed.

The dog died and Ashavan was turned out of the settlement with the corpse in his arms. His torments of loneliness and the rebirth of hope as he finds a friend in the youthful Zarathushtra seesaw through the vicissitudes of societal superstitions and unjust accusations until he acquires the moral courage to stand up for what he perceives as true.

Farishta Dinshaw has fleshed out the evolution of Zoroastrian beliefs and customs into a tale with which the young and the old can identify. With substantial research and a vivid imagination she has sought to depict the kind of boy (Zarathushtra) who matured into the author of the *Gathas*.

Discovering Ashavan's 11 chapters are enlivened by Homi Meherhomji's illustrative sketches. Despite the soft cover, the 90-page, two-color art paper publication is a delight to hold and have. Dinshaw's language, though simple and direct in the interest of the child reader is nonetheless replete with evocative turns of phrase: "The rumors turned out to be true. There was not enough wheat in the granaries to feed the villagers when the snows cloaked the colors in white. The flakes fell early that year covering the countryside in a shroud of mourning. As the winter winds continued to howl and

blow their frosty breath, men, women and children tightened their belts, and spoke less and less. A malingering silence hung over the settlement." "His breath came out in frosty puffs." "He sat down in the midst of the women wrapped up in plans."

Dinshaw has woven Zarathushtra's mental conflicts into the story. When Ashavan is accused of sorcery, Zarathushtra's father Pourushaspa says, "It seems to me a deliberate attempt to vilify you. Unfortunately, with the famine the men and women of the settlement are not in their best minds. I must speak to the priests before these shallow stories reach them. They will guide the people."

"Zarathushtra cried in despair to his father. "How can the gods and priests who have given the world hatred, wrath and woe be good guides?"

"Pourushaspa replied patiently, "These are the mores of our community and we must abide by them." He turned to Ashavan, and put his hand on his shoulder. "Do not worry, Ashavan. The

truth will be vindicated."

"Truth according to whom?" asked Zarathushtra bitterly. "The false judges? Or their false gods?"

And again, there is psychological insight as Ashavan, absorbed in self-pity, is unable to distinguish kindness and friendship. "You, Ashavan, use your lameness to blind yourself. And I do not need to offer you pity, you have much of your own!" a young girl ticks him off.

The Author's Note at the end of the book explains the background further, including the social, religious and legal codes then in force. A glossary of Avestan terms and names, the names of outstanding rulers and a short bibliography could entice readers into pursuing the subject in greater depth.

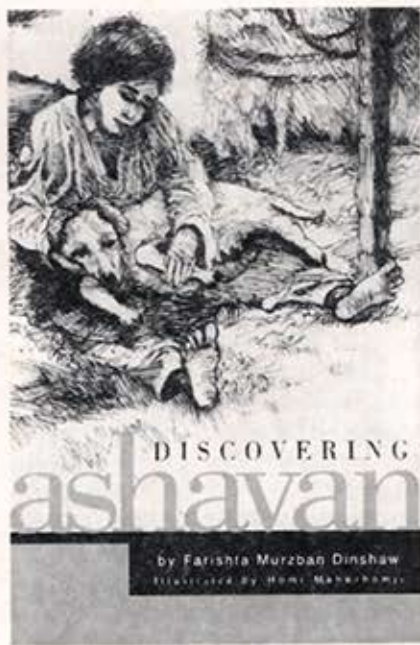
At every Zoroastrian meet there has been a call for religious literature appropriate for the young. Dinshaw, an award winning writer for children and the initial editor of *Funline*, Pakistan's first English language magazine for children, has not only provided an insight into the life and times of our hoary past but in the 90 pages of *Discovering Ashavan*, she has done so in a style and imagery that brings history alive. And she has lived up to the finest Zoroastrian tenets of charity by gifting her creation to the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) so that the sale proceeds may initially finance the organization's efforts to send deserving young Zarathushtrians to the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in December. Thereafter it will serve to augment the KZBM's educational fund, informs the Mandal's president Toxy Cowasjee.

The book was officially launched on April 22, 2000 by Ameena Saiyid, managing director of the Oxford University Press and 216 copies sold on the spot, as per Cowasjee's letter to *Parsiana*.

Parsiana readers, anxious to support Dinshaw's generosity, can acquire this multilayered tale from Cowasjee at 2A Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530, Pakistan (Fax: 92-21-5861005; e-mail: toxy@cyber.net.pk).



Dinshaw: brings history alive



READERS' FORUM

continued from page 10
grimage to Udvada.

Our Trust has undertaken to organize package trips. The easiest and safe way to Bahrot caves is from the village of Aswali. Bordi has a lush green seashore with a very safe sandy beach. The infrastructure is fairly well-developed and yet there is rural charm. It is easily accessible by road/rail from Bombay and other cities of Gujarat. The railway station is Gholvad on the Western Railway network.

The caves are located at a height of approximately 1,600 ft above sea level. The trek uphill is through forest and the climb takes a good two hours. It is essential to go with trained guides.

The first option, at a cost of Rs 300 or 400 depending on the type of accommodation preferred, involves a weekend trip of one night plus one day, reaching Bordi on Saturday evening. On Sunday morning leave by 5.30 a.m. for Aswali, commence the trek by 6 a.m., reach Bahrot caves by 8.30 a.m. Have breakfast and perform a jashan if convenient. We encourage groups to bring their own mobeds to perform the jashan. All accessories for the jashan could be made

available upon request.

After rest and enjoyment of the flora, fauna and the splendid scenic beauty, commence the downward trek by 11 a.m. reaching Bordi by 1.30 p.m. Have lunch, rest and return by the evening train. Travel by a chartered bus or Sumo is also practical.

In the second option, at a cost of Rs 350 or Rs 450 you can reach Bordi on Saturday morning, spending the whole day relaxing there. The rest of the program is as per the first option.

One can also convert this trip into an overnight camp at the caves which could be a thrilling experience. You leave Bordi in the evening at 4 p.m., start the uphill trek at 4.30 p.m., reach the caves by 7 p.m., have a campfire and dinner. Sleep in the open or carry your own folding tent. Return the next day as outlined in the first option.

One can also combine a trip to Udvada. Proceed to Udvada on Saturday morning. Reach Bordi by Saturday evening. The rest of the program can remain as per the first option.

For details please contact Sir J. J. College of Commerce, 14, Nanabhoy Lane, Hutama Chowk, Bombay 400001. Tel: 2871058. After office hours Tel:

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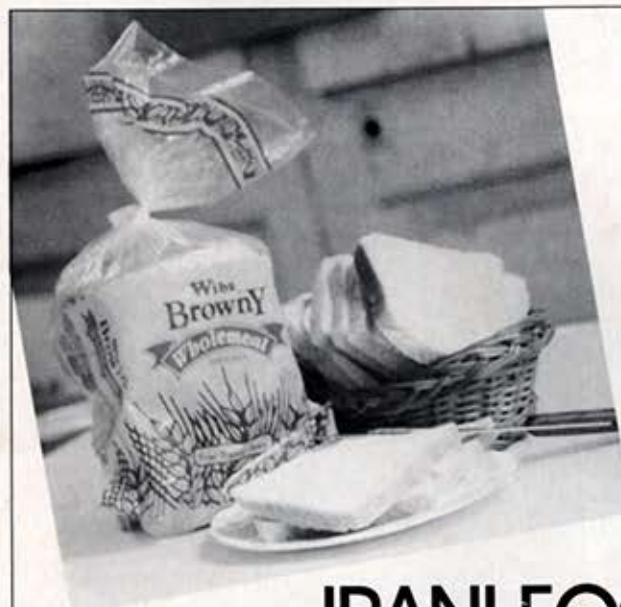
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health and medical topics explained in terms which the layperson can understand. No medical jargon is used. We have an internet connection with two special medical packages so that we can provide information on the latest medical research from all over the world. Dr Hufish Suraliwal, who is the medical information manager of HELP, regularly trains doctors and consumers get the latest medical information and resources from the internet. This facility is available from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. only (Monday-Saturday).

HELP has become a prototype of the modern digital library. Our library catalog is computerized and is now available on the internet at <http://www.healthlibrary.com> so that readers can browse through our catalog from home! We have many full-text health books and magazines in our Reading Room on the Web so that people can read them free! This allows us to extend our outreach services by providing consumer health information to internet users from all over the world!

We are a public library — everyone is welcome! Entry to HELP is free. We are open Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For those unable to come personally to the library, we also answer questions by post or e-mail. This is an innovative service called MISS-HELP (Medical Information Search Services from HELP) which allows us to provide medical information to users from all over the world. For this you need to write to or call medical information manager, HELP, Om Chambers, 5th Floor, Kemps Corner, Bombay 400036. Tel: 3683334/3681014, e-mail: drhufish@hotmail.com

At present, all our materials are in English, and we plan to translate our educational materials into regional languages in the future.

Our goals are:

- To provide access to a reliable and up-to-date collection of consumer health materials so that people can become better informed about their own health.
- To encourage a healthy doctor-patient relationship since the best patient is a well informed one!
- To provide resources which doctors can adapt to their own practice, to use for educating their patients.
- To be a useful resource for writers and journalists, and thus improve the quality and accuracy of reporting for medical topics in the lay Press.

•To act as a stimulus for patients with a particular disease to get together and form self-help support groups, to help each other cope with their disease.

•To prevent health fraud and quackery by educating the consumer about health and illness.

•Ultimately, we hope that well informed patients will demand the best treatment available internationally and that this will act as an incentive for doctors to update their skills, and for hospitals to improve their facilities.

In order to help doctors to "prescribe information," HELP has started a Please Prescribe Information campaign. We have printed Information Prescription pads which are being widely distributed and are freely available to doctors on request. We believe that the easiest way for doctors to educate their patients today is to write a Prescription for Information! It is important that the doctor then discuss the results of this information search with the patient so that the doctor can guide the patient as to which information is relevant to his particular problem. This can help the doctor and patient to become partners in making medical decisions.

Dr HUFISH SURALIWALA

Truth from insight

How concerned man seems to impart religious knowledge, to give truth. To give truth one has perforce to gain truth. Truth gained from inner insight, not from hearsay, is everlasting truth.

Truth requires no crutches, no clichés. And yet man is confounded. He says, so and so has said this, or so and so has written that. Why cannot man instead study deeply what baffles him and then sit and cogitate on it, asking for divine grace to rend the subject crystal clear?

Instead, man egoistically boasts that he is Newcastle and he needs no coal. Newcastle, he realizes not, may have rich deposits of all the coal in the kingdom and yet not have a ray of light. Coal is coal till it is lit, till the spark is applied.

May the coals of Newcastle be burning and bright and crackling with dynamism. May the coals of Newcastle be ignited into smoldering, leaping flames encircling your soul and raising it to heights hitherto unknown and uplifting you in That Presence... NOSHIR B. MANA

Karachi, Pakistan

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

LINKS

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

Nozer Master

Meherbai Wadia Building, 2nd Floor, Room No 7, Wadia Street, Tardeo, Bombay 400034.

Age: 21 years

Sex: Male, unmarried

Interests and hobbies: Music, collecting coins, travelling, making friends and meeting different people.

Rustom Amaria

312-3700 Kaneff Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario L5A 4B8, Canada. E-mail: rustom_amariah@hotmail.com Age: 38 years

Sex: Male, married

Interests and hobbies: Psychotherapist who enjoys writing, arts and crafts, movies, photography, travelling and getting in touch with interesting people around the world, fond of researching/speaking/writing more about issues concerning our community at large.

Behrouz Ebrahimilame

E-mail: behrouz_lame@yahoo.com Age: 30 years. Sex: Male

Interests and hobbies: Computer software engineer.

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

ADDENDUM

The *Parsiana* April cover featuring legal luminary Rustom A. Gagrut was composed by Comart Lithographers from a photograph of Gagrut and a painting of the photo by artist Nina Gimi.



THERE'S A

I should know it! Even after years, my Storwel looks stunning. I'm sure they use

LOT MORE

superior steel, which is specially protected against rust. And what superb

TO A GODREJ

construction! No gaps for pests. Adjustable shelves - so I can create the storage space I need. And a Godrej lock, so I needn't

STORWEL

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

THAN JUST

models and colours, I'm sure to find one right for me. And so will you!

GOOD LOOKS

Godrej
STORWEL®

GOOD LOOKS OUTSIDE. GREAT VALUE INSIDE.



EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 16

necessitated because of her father's job transfers, she was a popular student,



Wadia: excels in academics

mentions the write-up. She graduated with a first class in English literature from St Xavier's College, Bombay taking an active part in organizing the programs of the Social Service League and Mal-

har, the inter-collegiate festival hosted by them.

Beware, if G6PD-D

For those suffering from G6PD (Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase) deficiency syndrome, "it is not just some medicines which are to be avoided, but even food items such as rajma, soya and legumes," notes a communication from Nader M. Patel, managing director, Aakaar Fluxes Private Limited, Goa.

G6PD deficiency is the most common human enzyme deficiency syndrome affecting an estimated 400 million people around the world, according to an accompanying press release authored by Ramez Ethnasios. This deficiency is also known as favism since those suffering from it are allergic to fava (broad beans) known as lobhiya or rajma or jheam in India and Pakistan and Ba-ghe-Leh in Farsi.

Certain medications like aspirin are absolutely taboo for G6PD deficient patients (see "Do you have a G6PD

enzyme deficiency?" pp 36), also most anti-malarial drugs, but fortunately such "individuals are resistant to malarial infection," states the information leaflet.

Hemolytic anemia and prolonged neonatal jaundice are the two major problems associated with G6PD deficiency. Hemolytic anemia is the decreased ability of red blood cells to transport oxygen throughout the body with the hemolytic crisis characterized by fatigue, an out of breath sensation and dark colored urine. Neonatal jaundice, a yellowing of the mucous membranes and other body tissues at birth can, if persistent, result in severe neurological complications, explains the write-up.

G6PD deficiency is an inherited condition which has no cure. The chances of inheriting it are 50 percent if the father is G6PD deficient and the mother is a carrier. The chances of a male child inheriting the complication are also 50 percent when the mother is a carrier, even though the father may be unaffected. A girl born to such parents would have a 50 percent chance of being a carrier. A girl child is certain to be a carrier if the father is G6PD deficient even if the mother is not affected. The offspring of such parents though will not be deficient, the details are provided in the literature.

The eyes reveal

"The iris (of the eye) is connected to every part of the body by the nervous system. This results in the different regions of the iris reflecting the condition of every tissue, organ, limb and part of the body," notes an article "Look into my eyes," in *The Sunday Review of The*

On the occasion of its 10th foundation day on March 11, 2000, the Parvez Katrak Foundation honored five members of the community for their long-standing devotion to the medical field (from left): honorary bone-setters Adi Mogrelia and Jamshed Pithavala; Sheru Palia who organizes free medical check-ups; chief guest Dr Sam Bhacca, president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat; donor Parvez Katrak; Khurshid Popat and Banoo Bharucha who were on the nursing fraternity of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital for over 50 years. Photo: C. C. Gandevia



Times of India of December 5, 1999. Based on an interview with Bombay iridologist Dr Hoshang Daruwalla, the write-up mentions how the left iris reflects the left side of the body, and the right iris, the right side, with the top of the iris corresponding to the head region and the bottom, the legs.

"Iridology is a science which informs us about the eruption of any disease in the near future, through the iris of the eye," explained Daruwalla. "Illness is detected from a few months before to just a few days depending on the disease," he added. Believed to be a non-intrusive diagnosis, iridology can help to gauge the recovery too. And if the physical symptoms have their roots in any emotional or psychological stress connected to the nervous system, that too can be detected, he was confident. The right time to study the eye though is in the morning using a simple hand lens to see from the side angle, he advocated.

Iridology is known to have existed in India since the days of the *Vedas*. In the West, this science caught on after a 11-year-old boy in Hungary, Ignatz Von Peczely, discovered in 1837 a connection between the iris of an owl and his injured leg. Thereafter he made a study of irises of many wounded soldiers and published a book.

SPOTLIGHT

Within a span of two months **Dr Sohrab J. Mehta** who runs a totally free clinic in Allahabad was conferred five awards, mentions Capt Homi Dandiwalla, president of The Allahabad Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman. At the Integrated Medicine for New Millennium conference held in Delhi in November 1999 Mehta was awarded the "Best article presentation medal" and the global



Mehta: awards of appreciation

World Association of Integrated Medicine honored him for his "outstanding services, achievements and contributions" and granted him a Fellowship of their Association. In the month of January he was conferred the Award of Appreciation and the Millennium Award by the Zoroastrian College, adds the write-up.



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* Delhi Tel: 011-3316299 * Mumbai Tel: 022-8240000

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 37 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 28 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 24 and 42 years, averaging at 30 years.

As compared to seven Zoroastrian babies born in March 2000 there were 74 individuals who were consigned to the Towers of Silence. Twenty patients succumbed to heart disease, of whom seven were 80 years and above. Cancer took a toll of nine victims whereas six Zoroastrians fell prey to pneumonia and lung disease. The other killers were brain disease (five), old age/general debility and diabetes (four each), septicemia (three) and anemia, hypertension, bronchitis and bronchiectasis (dila-

tion of the bronchial tubes following infection) (two each). There were 15 isolated cases registered for the month. They were: jaundice, kidney failure, asphyxial death due to hanging, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, abdominal abscess, asthma, arthritis, malnutrition, burns, falciparum malaria, emphysema (gaseous distention of the tissues), tuberculosis, respiratory disease, liver disease and fistula. The age range fluctuated between 30 and 97 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for March, in Bombay, was 76 years.

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

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

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

BANGALORE

BORN

A boy, Anosh, to Shelly and Jimmy Subawalla on November 22, 1999

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy, Farzan, to Tanaz and Percy Mahuvawalla; February 3, 2000
A girl to Zarin and Vistas Dumasia; March 2
A girl to Behroze and Hoshang Engineer; March 5
A boy to Pervin and Yezdi Driver; March 6
A girl to Parizad and Darius Gandhi; March 7
A girl to Daisy and Hormuzd Bharucha; March 22
A girl to Ennaz and Viraf Irani; March 24
A boy to Shernaz and Yazdi Bardoliwalla; March 25

MARRIED

Dilnaaz Minoo Karadia and Zubeen Firoze Sidhwa; December 18, 1999
Ruby Rushi Elavia of Surat and Themton Minoo Anklesaria; February 28, 2000
Ashish Sorab Gazder and Nauzer Sam Billimoria; March 3
Khushnum Sam Khambata and Eric Kausie Ichhaporia; March 5

Dilnavaz Behram Kotwal and Hoshang Eruch Subawalla; March 9
Zareena Furdoon Mehta and Rohinton Soli Screwvala; March 17
Hufri Phiroze Meherji and Ruzbeh Noshir Mistry; March 18
Zarindokht Behram Hormuzdiary and Aflatoon Faramroze Irani; March 19
Persis Jimmy Driver and Jehangir Behram Khambatta; March 20
Frenaz Bahadur Sanjana and Roozbeh Nowroze Mamlatdar; March 21

DIED

Perin Pesi Kerawalla (72), residing at D/20, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 2
Zenobia Dara Tarapore (69), 102/C, S. P. Mistry Bldg, Dr Shirodkar Rd, Parel, 400012; March 2
Bomi Munchershaw Gandevia (72), 650, Karani Bldg, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 3
Kaisar Noshir Irani (72), 15, Girdhar Nivas, Colaba, 400005; March 3
Rustomji Darabshaw Shroff (97), Sugra Manzil, B. E. S. T. Marg, Electric Hse, 400001; March 3

Sorab Nowroji Billimoria (77), 306, Cumballa Crest, 42, Peddar Rd, 400026; March 4
Roshan Spitman Panthaki (66), Dasturwadi, 84, J. Naigaum Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 4
Homai Bomi Shroff (70), Firdaus, 185, Lamington Rd, 400007; March 4
Framroz Sorabji Irani (78), D/4/55, S. B. Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; March 5
Dina Cawasji Pardiwalla (80), Room no 22, 189, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; March 5
Perin Framroze Asli (82), 9/10/A, Gool Mhl, N. Bharucha Marg, 400007; March 6
Vispi Hoshang Bagwadia (30), 7/3, Vimal Villa, Chandrabala Est, 30th Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; March 6
Jalamai Jehangirji Challa (87), Shree Pushpanjali Co-op Hsg Soc, J. P. Rd, Seven Bglws, Versova, Andheri (W), 400061; March 6
Eruch Phirozeshaw Bharucha (79), D/9, Captain Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; March 7
Nergish Feroze Ichhaporia (68), N/2-1, Sunder Ngr, S. V. Rd, Malad (W), 400064; March 7
Homi Sorab Irani (78), C-39/40, Bhiwandiwalla Ter,

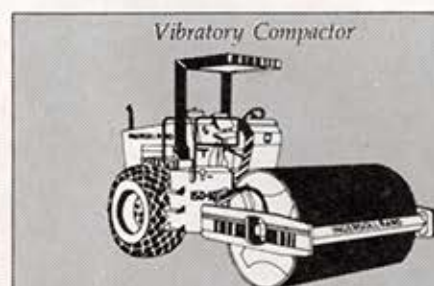
Dhobitalao, 400002; March 7
Roda Cursetji Bhagulia (81), 1/A, Naples Sobani Rd, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 8
Boman Meherjibhoy Cooper (75), Maker Towers, J/66, Somani Rd, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 8
Nargesh Jal Dajee (84), 26, N. S. Patkar Marg, 400007; March 8
Cawasji Pallonji Guzder (87), A/13, Godrej Baug, Off Napean Sea Rd, 400026; March 8
Kersasp Nusserwanji Hathiram (89), N. Tata Bldg, Tata Clny, Bandra (W), 400050; March 8
Sheru Dara Tarapurwala (57), Perin Villa, Ramwadi, Dahanu Rd, Dist Thana, 401602; March 8
Tehmina Ardeshir Desai (82), E/14, Nowroz Baug, Dr S. S. Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012; March 9
Silloo Kersi Karkaria (62), 88, Ardeshir Dady St, Khetwadi, 400004; March 9
Aloo Nariman Pavri (79), West Breeze, V. Patel Rd, Santacruz (W), 400054; March 9
Ardeshir Faredoon Namirian (62), 6-4/A, New Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; March 9
Roshan Russi Nasirabadwalla (76), C/42, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 9
Minoo Keki Sethana (58), 665, Band View, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 9
Viloo Tehamton Gamadia (75), 26, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 10
Jerbai Navroji Mistry (80), C/301, Apeksha, Sai Ngr, Vasai (W), 401202; March 10
Behroze Minoo Engineer (54), Jehangir Mans, Next to Metro Cinema, Dhobitalao, 400020; March 11
Jehanbux Shapurji Khambata (88), 671, Boyce Bldg, Rd no 13, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 11
Mani Darabsha Khambatta (82), B-5/44, Vijay Nagari, Waghbill Naka, Godhbunder Rd, Kasarvadavli (W), Thana, 400601; March 11
Tehmurs Darabshaw Sinor

(59), 5, Windsor Chmbs,
Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001;
March 12
Minoo Ardeshir Daruwalla
(75), F/2, Captain Clny,
Tardeo Rd, 400034; March 13
Jehangir Kaikhushroo Vakil
(70), 11/A, Florida Apts, 33,
Mt Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050;
March 13
Siloo Rustomjee
Pochkhanawala (82), A,
Khalakdina Ter, A. K. Marg,
400036; March 14
Jala Manchershah Baxter (85),
604/D, Khurshed Hse, Lady
Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; March 15
Aspandiar Gustad Irani
(Dashti) (83), 501-502, Shri
Ganesh, 99/103, Matarpakadi
Rd, Mazgaon, 400010;
March 16
Homi Ardeshir Soonawalla
(83), 408/B, Vindhyaachal, 22,
Mt Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050;
March 16
Dina Ardeshir Udwadia (84),
191, Rewa Apts, B. Desai Rd,
400026; March 16
Jer Khurshed Dastur (75), 12,
Ferna, Behind Telephone
Bhavan, Colaba, 400005;
March 17

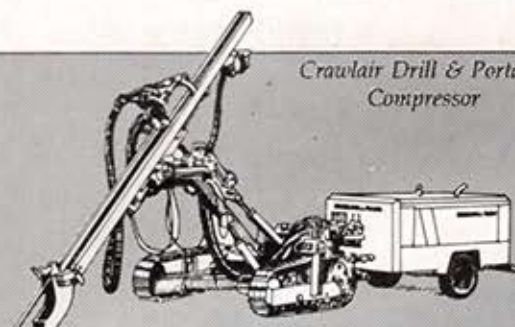
Banoo Marazban Irani (76),
Kapadia Mans, 205, Bazargate
St, Fort, 400001; March 17
Behramshaw Rustomji Mehta
(93), Maneck Bldg, 112,
Lamington Rd, 400008;
March 17
Gool Navroji Bilimoria (82),
1, Avabai Petit Block,
Balaram St, Grant Rd,
400007; March 18
Zarin Homi Kabir (55), 5,
Widows' Chawl, Thakurdwar,
400002; March 18
Homi Minocher Masani (78),
Fern Hse, 13, B. E. S. T.
Marg, Electric Hse, 400001;
March 18
Darabshaw Cawasji Pitha-
walla (95), 6, Gamadia Clny,
Tardeo, 400007; March 18
Perin Behramshah Kodia (58),
Talukdar Bldg, Marzban Clny,
Dr Nair Rd, 400011; March 19
Minocher Ardeshir Patell (84),
13/D, Crystal, 36, Altamount
Rd, 400026; March 19
Nargish Manek Avasia (78),
C/10, Contractor Baug, Mori
Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 20
Tehmina Nadirshaw Balsara
(85), B. Bhiwandiwalla Ter,
618, Girgaum Rd, 400002;
March 20

Piroja Framroze Mithuji (91),
F/3, Kripa Ngr, S. V. Rd. Irla,
Vile Parle (W), 400056;
March 20
Phiroze (Pesi) Naoraji Mistry
(85), M/22, Cusrow Baug, S.
B. Rd, 400039; March 21
Piroja Piroshah Pithawalla
(85), H/25, Cusrow Baug, S.
B. Rd, 400039; March 21
Coomi Ardeshir Patel (77),
44/A, Batliwalla Villa, Sleater
Rd, 400007; March 22
Freny Ardeshir Daruwalla
(69), 6/6, Tata Clny, Sir Ratan
Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034;
March 23
Kolamai Pesi Dubash (83),
4/47, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel
Tank Rd, 400033; March 24
Katty Soli Irani (73), 3/9, Patel
Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo,
400007; March 24
Fali Pirosha Mistri (88),
Edena, 97, Queens Rd,
400020; March 24
Freny Dadabhoj Bharucha
(70), 2/B-22, Tata Mills Co-op
Hsg Soc Ltd, Elphinstone Rd,
Parel, 400012; March 25
Sheroo Jehangir Balsara (73),
781, Readymoney Blocks,
Mancherji Joshi Rd, Parsi
Clny, Dadar, 400014;

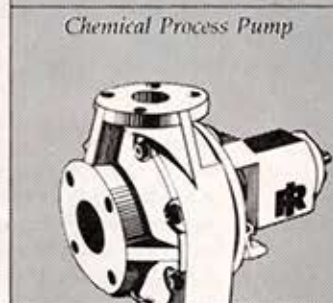
March 27
Behram Bomanji Gandhi (80),
B/2, Ginwalla Bldg, Captain
Clny, Tardeo, 400034;
March 27
Firoz Bhikaji Damania (79),
Ali Manzil, N. Petit St, Grant
Rd, 400007; March 28
Nargish Kaikhushroo
Gadiwalla (Bharucha) (78), 1,
Readymoney Bldg, Tata Clny,
Tardeo, 400034; March 28
Dosa Dara Mistry (81), F. S.
Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes
Rd, 400007; March 28
Dhun Homi Sethna (75), B/1,
Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath St,
Tardeo, 400034; March 28
Khorshed Jalejar Taraporvala
(90), 793/D, Family Hse, Jame
Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; March 28
Dhunjishaw Burjorji
Daruwalla (68), 5, Narielvala
Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim,
400016; March 29
Khorshedbanu Byramji Velati
(97), 4, C. M. Banaji Bldg,
Forjett St Cross Lane, 400036;
March 29
Roshan Dady Patel (72), 11,
Hilton Apts, 35/A, Hill Rd,
Bandra (W), 400050;
March 30



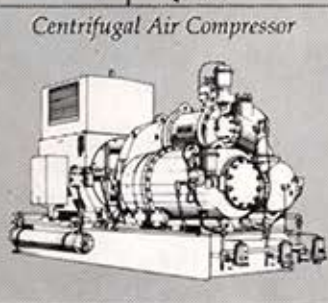
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Firoze Rattonshaw Bhabha (70), J/18, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 31
Katy Khody Irani (68), 37/A/4, New Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 31
Perin Nariman Kotwal (78), RH-1, H-37, Sector 7, Vashi, New Bombay, 400703; March 31

CALCUTTA

DIED
Jer Dalal, wife of Dossabhoy and mother of Zenobia and Gulistan; March 9
Baji Manekji Mirza, brother of Dawlat Divecha and Boman; March 14
Nergish Rustom Pestonji, mother of Franak and Gavher; March 19
Meherbanu Jal Modi, mother of Phiroze, Dinyar and late Khorshed Lilley; March 28

DELHI

MARRIED
Urvashi Peshotan Jalna-walla of Aurangabad and **Rohinton Jamshed Sidhwa**; October 7, 1999

NAVSARI

MARRIED
Dinaz Sarosh Dangore and **Nevil Jamshed Kolah**; February 2, 2000

SECUNDERABAD

DIED
Sonia Minoo Pestonji, sister of Khoti S. Chenai, Pes and Keki; March 29

SURAT

DIED
Gustadji Hormusji Doctor (*Siganporia*) (75), Parsiwad, Siganpor; March 13
Seriyar Pirojshaw Cooper (72), Sarosh Yazad Apt, Bhavnagri St, 395003; March 15
Homi Rustomji Sanjana (60), Ugamno Mohallo, Machhlipith, 395003; March 22
Pillamai Dinshawji Patel (80), Athuger St, Nanpura, 395001; March 24
Mehroo Noshir Dhabhoiwala (69), Meher Bglw, Somnath Mahadev Soc, Opp Old Umra Jakat Naka, 395003; March 27
Dhanjishaw Jehangirji Rowwala (80), Parsiwad, Rander; March 27

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o
BIRTHS									
Boys	3	77	16	1	13	—	3	30	4
Girls	5	94	11	—	8	—	4	37	4
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	10	261	53	2	18	2	1	15	1
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	—	28	—	—	2	2	—	6	—
Females married out	—	20	—	—	—	1	—	6	—
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	29	455	112	7	91	13	8	57	13
Females	45	477	115	7	71	18	3	43	10
CREMATED									
Males	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Females	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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

^oRunning totals for 2000 (January 2000-May 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.

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

^oRunning totals for 2000 (January 2000-May 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.

Shavak Tehmuras Cooper (75), Near Old Post Office, Sayedpura, 395003; March 28
Bomi Pirojshaw Sethna (82), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; March 28
Minimai Meherjibhai Engineer (88), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; March 30

AUSTRALIA Queensland

BORN
A girl, **Kareena**, to **Simone** and **Neville Lakdawala** in Brisbane; November 26, 1999

CANADA Alberta

BORN
A boy, **Mark Tyler**, to **Catherine** and **Jehangir Dariawalla** in Calgary; March 15, 2000

Ontario

BORN
A girl, **Natasha**, to **Farahnaz** and **Darius Patel**, sister to Alina; March 6
A girl, **Ava**, to **Armen** and **Kaiwan Suntok**; March 6
A boy, **Darius**, to **Dinaz** and **Khushroo Dadiburjor**; March 10
A boy, **Cyrus**, to **Aspi** and

Maharukh Kootar; March 15

DIED
Dowlet Minocher Vesuna, mother of late Cyrus, Sam and Rumi in Toronto; February 21
Irandozki Ziatabari (*Bahnani*), wife of Khodaram and mother of Mahin, Mahnaz and Khodadad; February 24
Bahadur Deboo, husband of Pilloo and father of Zenobia; February 25

IRAN

DIED
Rostam Shahzadi (88), husband of Doulat and father of Mehrangiz, Fariborz, Sorab and late Daryoosh in Tehran; March 13

UK

Hertfordshire

DIED
Roshan Cawas Sethna (72), 202, Chambersbury Lane, Hemel, Hempstead, HP3 8BH; February 12

London

DIED
Rustom Cawas Irani (82), 15, Penn Hse, Lisson Green Est, NW8; February 3
Ardeshtir Kavasji Boman-

Behram (90), 27, Oval Rd, Regent's Park, NW1 7EA; February 11
Khurshed J. Nadodwalla (82), 25, Skelton Rd, Forest Gate, E7; March 6
Keikhosrow Vikaji Wankadia (75), 18, The Grove, Golders Green, N11 9SH; March 16

Surrey

DIED
Jimmy D. Billimoria (79), 60, Blakes Avenue, New Malden, KT3 6RF; January 21

USA

DIED
Jahangir Javidan, father of Kaykhosrow; December 10, 1999

Illinois

MARRIED
Meher Dubash, daughter of Khorshed and late Jamshed and **Rohinton Pithawalla**, son of Homai and Behram in Chicago; March 21, 2000

Texas

BORN
A girl, **Freyana**, to **Anaheita** and **Arshish Kapadia** in Austin; March 25

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

The meticulous magistrate

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Jal Hormusji Ardesir Vakil, 81, former additional chief presidency magistrate at the Criminal Court of Mumbai and trustee of several community institutions on December 3, 1999 in Bombay following cardiac arrest.

A person "more sincere and more meticulous" would be difficult to find, commented Cowasjee N. Dinshaw as he presided over the condolence meeting convened on January 24, 2000 at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute by the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha where Vakil was past president and the Parsi Girls' School Association of which he was trustee. Vakil could be relied upon to do a "thorough job of whatever he undertook," added Dinshaw referring to his scholastic accomplishments and his varied interests in the fields of music and medicine.

Describing Vakil as a "man of many parts and above all a gentleman in his behavior," Sohrab Godrej, chairman of the Godrej group of companies recalled their association over the years at the Indo-Iranian Society. If something was going wrong he would not tolerate it, at the same time he left well enough alone, added Godrej.

During the 22 years he was at the Bench starting as presidency magistrate in 1954 and retiring as acting chief presidency magistrate in 1976 he was held in high esteem by the members of the Bar, according to his life profile. His portrait adorns Court No 3 from which he retired, a rare honor bestowed on him, notes a press release. For 10 years prior to his elevation to the Bench he was a member of the Bar, practising in the High Court, the City Civil Court and in the courts of the presidency magistrates.

The citation conferred on him then by the president of the Bombay Metropolitan Magistrates' Bar Association stated: "You will be remembered by future generations for your memorable contribution to the judicial services as an impartial, fearless and frank administrator of justice. You have always main-

tained the highest dignity and the best decorum in your court. You heard the maximum from the Bar and spoke the minimum from the Bench... You had established the renowned and reputed tradition and practice of going through all the case papers, charge sheets and applications meticulously and minutely before passing orders because you firmly

believed and followed the maxim, 'Justice hurried is justice buried.'"

Solicitor Salehbbhai Sabir referred to Vakil's "competent mind" and initiative to abolish a practice of more than 100 years by refusing to adhere to archaic procedures regarding sale of property when objections were invited by the beating of a drum on the roads.

After his retirement from law, Vakil reportedly turned down many lucrative offers and devoted his energies to community causes and various charities. He was on the managing committee of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital for many years. Trustee and secretary of the Maneckjee Naorojee Sett Charities, the M. N. Sett Polytechnic, the Jalbhoy A. Sett Charities, the Muncherjee Sett (Sethna) Agiary at Tardeo, he was known for his zeal in providing to the needy and his penchant for detail, personally scrutinizing every applicant, as commented Khodadad Cama of the Sett Charities. "Till the last Jal spent his time serving the poor, the community and the two schools. He is remembered by all for his honesty," commented his wife Sheroo in a letter to *Parsiana*.

He was trustee of the Parsi Girls' School Association (which manages the Gamadia Girls' High School and the Bai B. S. Bengallee Girls' High School) for over 23 years and as vouched Zenobia Daroga, principal of the Bengallee School, "he had a mind that probed into every matter." Being "devoted and conscientious, he hardly missed any meeting" and would in fact be present 15 minutes early.

According to social worker Rati Peer, Vakil's timely aid must have benefitted innumerable deserving Parsi students

who were able to establish themselves in life. At various competitions he would encourage the participants with his free distribution of books. He had "intense feelings for humanity, for the Parsi community and the Zoroastrian religion," noted Vispi Dastur of the Bombay Parsi Association.

When *Parsiana* changed hands in 1973 and the publisher appeared before Vakil in the magistrate's court to file the declaration for change of ownership, Vakil pointed out the declaration should have been filed prior to publishing the first edition under the changed ownership which had not been done. He however not only condoned the omission but handed over to the editor his *Parsiana* subscription cheque.

Born in an illustrious family of lawyers in Bombay, Vakil matriculated from Bharda New High School and graduated from St Xavier's College. He passed his LLB examination from the Government Law College, securing the Merwanji Alpaiwalla Prize. His reputation as a speaker and debator was established since his college days when he won many inter-collegiate and all-India competitions. Subsequently he completed his masters in law, qualified as an advocate and read in the chambers of Sir Nusserwanji Engineer, the then advocate general of Bombay, and counsel Pheroz (P. P.) Khambatta, now 93 years old, who still recalls Vakil's "upright character and honesty."

Known to have played the violin with maestros like Mehli Mehta and Zubin Mehta, Vakil who was an associate of the Trinity College of London in music and licentiate of the Trinity College of London in elocution, was the founder of the Amateur Classical Ensemble which he led for over 28 years entertaining the public with free concerts and promoting youngsters. He had also served as guest conductor of the Dadar Music Ensemble and the chamber orchestra of the Poona Music Society.

During his early days Vakil had made time to study homeopathy and biochemic medicine from the All India Institute of Comparative Medicine. He was posthumously conferred the Millennium Award of the Zoroastrian College at the World Congress on Medicina Alternativa in January 2000.

The good samaritan in survived by his wife Sheroo and son Rustom.



Vakil: "a man of many parts"

Serving the faith

Arnavaz S. Mama

Died: Mobed Rustam Shahzadi, 88, chairman of the Council of Mobeds of Tehran, on March 14, 2000 in Tehran.

When Shahzadi succumbed to a long illness the Zoroastrian community in Iran lost a priest and scholar who was also respected by the other communities. His 12 books included training in the Zarathushti faith, translations of the *Avesta* and *Gathas*, the marriage ceremony and a Pahlavi-Pazand-Dari-Farsi dictionary, informs Mehraban Kushesh of Tehran.

Adept at comparative religions, Shahzadi could read and explain the *Koran*, had studied Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism and was familiar with Sanskrit literature. He was a member of the first expert assembly instituted in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 to compile a new constitution for the country, writes Kushesh.

Shahzadi had been secretary of the First World Zoroastrian Congress in Iran in 1960 and thereafter attended the Congresses in Bombay.

Indeed, Bombay was a familiar outpost as he had spent nearly seven years pursuing Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazand and higher religious education at the Cama Athornan Institute where he, along with the late Mobed Firoz Azergoshahb were sent to study by the Yazd Kankash-e-Mobedan, notes Kushesh. After two years' compulsory military service on his return to Iran in 1935, Shahzadi graduated from the Tehran University Law College.

A regular on the Zoroastrian lecture circuit, Shahzadi often toured Iran's cities and villages, educating and guiding his flock. His indepth knowledge of ancient Iranian history was a source of inspiration to his community.

Shahzadi's abiding faith in Zarathushti's message made him more cog-

nizant of the needs of the people. When the usual confusion of race and religion was voiced from the floor at a World Zoroastrian Organisation sponsored meet on the eve of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (5WZC) in Bombay in 1990, Shahzadi had voiced his dissent: "Zarathushtra didn't bring his followers from heaven. (He found them) among Persian and Turanian people... We cannot close the door to others. We don't propagate. We write books which others can buy. If they ask questions, we answer. In India and Iran it is not good to accept. But in other countries, we must accept."

The son of Mobed Dinyar and Baanou Soultan, Shahzadi's early career was spent as a teacher of Avesta, English, history and geography at the Marker School for girls and boys in Yazd. In 1946 the Tehran Anjuman invited him to minister to the community in the capital and with his wife Doulat and their four children, Shahzadi shifted to Tehran where he continued to officiate until now. Among the many community assignments he undertook was that of manager of the Late Ardeshtir Yagonagi's Library.

Of the Shahzadi children, his daughter Mehrangiz graduated in literature; son Fariborz, an agriculture graduate, is a leading member of the North American Council of Iranian Mobeds; Sorab became a brain surgeon. Shahzadi had been predeceased by his third son Daryoosh who was killed in a bomb explosion in Tehran in 1981.

Conscious that many social practices of the Zarathushtian community have become outmoded in terms of 20th century concepts, Shahzadi had noted at the 5WZC, "Time moves on but we do not. We don't realize when it is time for change and when we do, it is usually too late."

freestyle and backstroke events. It was as a 10-year-old that he took part in his first sub-junior national aquatic championship in 1988 at Gauhati in Assam, standing third in the 50 m butterfly.

The sub-junior nationals at Bangalore and Calcutta in the next two years

ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

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Ziyafat are former presidents of the Tehran Anjuman, writes Kushesh.

Most of the other eight Zarathushti contestants were young and well educated but lacked experience, notes Kushesh.

saw him win a rich, mixed bag of gold, silver and bronze medals, but it was at the Goa nationals in 1991 that he swam in six individual races, blowing the opposition off in all! With two relay golds as well, Shane pocketed an eight gold bonanza!

Swimming in the junior nationals between '92-'95, Shane has won 34 medals of all hues, according to his bio data. At a clutch of age group competitions at Maharashtra state level, Shane has been the under seven, nine, 11, 13 and 15 champion on his points tally. He has represented India in the junior Asian Games in Japan and Singapore, relates Gaomurd.

"My family has been extremely supportive," notes Shane. Mother Priscilla and Gaomurd, who is the managing director of Pedder and Pedder Tiles Limited, have encouraged their son and their daughter Natalie, who is also a national record holder in the 100 m butterfly. Shane, who graduated from the H. R. College of Commerce and Economics and works currently at the executive level in Pedder Tiles, hopes to join an MBA course soon. "I may not participate much now in local swimming meets," he says, but he would like to continue to participate in the nationals and other major events.

SPOTLIGHT

Rehan Poncha, 13-year-old Karnataka swimmer, won the bronze in the 400 m individual medley for men at the 54th National Aquatic Championships in Bombay in December 1999. Competing with seasoned swimmers like Kailash Nath and T. A. Sujith (who stood first and second respectively), Rehan is one of the youngest male swimmers to win a medal at senior national level, according to a write-up forwarded by his father Jehangir.



SPORTS

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Gaomurd. Now 22, 6'3" tall, Shane believes his strength as a competitive swimmer lies in his height and build and in his "good strokes," which have won him numerous medals in butterfly,

Compiled by Hilla P. Guzder



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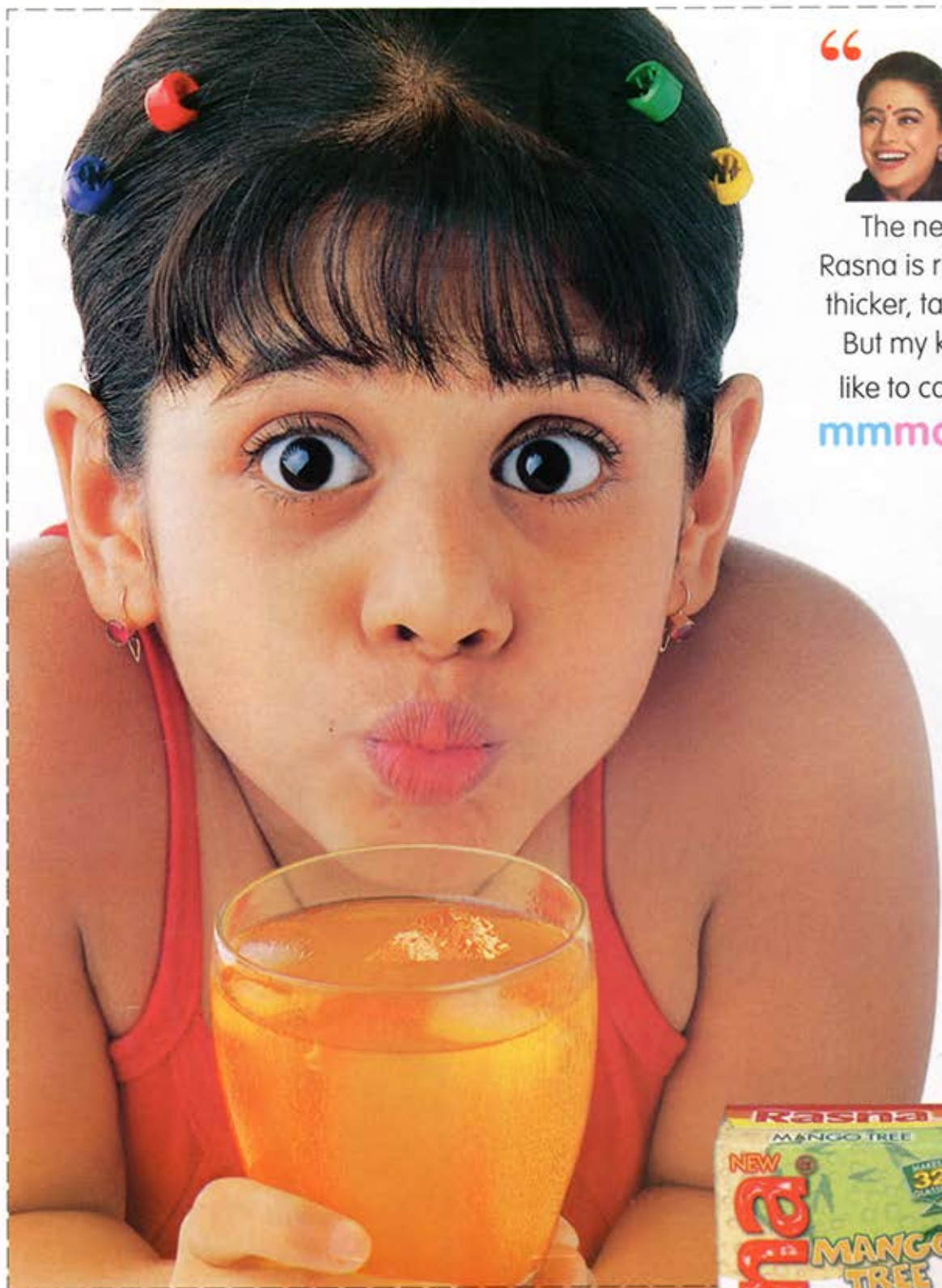
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