

AUGUST 2000 Rs 60

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Seth Pherozeshah Ardeshir
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Parsiana

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Help us get..."

I was interested to read in your May issue the update on the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress: "Help us get the Congress to you." In all the press releases and articles I have read on the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, I have not come across any mention of the organization of the proposed world body of Zoroastrians.

Are the organizers afraid of some contentious issues being raised if the subject is discussed at the Congress? One has to find solutions to the controversial problems. Merely sweeping them under the carpet does not help.

The matter is under discussion ever since Rohinton Rivetna, then president of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America), presented a proposal to the Zoroastrians attending the 1993 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. A draft constitution was also then presented. Since then,

the matter has made substantial progress.

In January 2000, a meeting was held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Jamshed Guzder (see "A world body of federations," *Parsiana*, February 2000). India, North America and UK/Europe were represented. Iran could not be present but conveyed, via fax, the view that "the final statement of the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress — that the permanent headquarters must be established in Tehran" — be respected.

What is required is foresight and the vision and wisdom to look several decades ahead in the greatest interest of the global Zoroastrian community. I am sure it will satisfy all regions — including Iran — if it is agreed that the headquarters of the new world body of Zoroastrians — by whatever name registered — could be rotated every 10 to 15 years among all the concerned regions. A suitable clause may be inserted in the constitution.

It is also immaterial whether the new world body of Zoroastrians functions solely under the auspices of the Parsi Punchayet or under the joint auspices of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), FEZANA, the Iranian organization and the Parsi Punchayet though one appreciates the stand that the Parsi Punchayet is the oldest body with over 300 years of existence.

A golden opportunity would be lost if the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress meeting at Houston, Texas at the end of December 2000 does not discuss and pass an appropriate resolution which may greatly accelerate progress. Before that, perhaps one more meeting may be held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Guzder and differences with WZO and Iran sorted out. The leadership of the WZO is reputed for its adaptability and cooperative approach. Its constitution could be suitably amplified to accommodate dissenting points of views. The WZO has an excellent set-up which could be availed of. The administrative structure may be suitably improved upon. In my paper at the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress, broad outlines of an administrative structure of a world body had been given. This too can be substantially improved upon by discussions. After the Bombay meeting evolves an agreed formula, the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress may pass unani-

mously a suitable resolution giving an 'all-clear' for the formation of the new world body. I appreciate the difficulties ahead. I do not minimize them, but if this opportunity is not seized, several years may elapse before the new world body sees the light of day.

Capt HORMAZDIAR J. M. DESAI

"Is it a racial issue?"

I was happy to read your article "Is it a racial issue?" (*Zoroastrians Abroad*, *Parsiana*, May 2000) covering my earlier interview with Arnavaz S. Mama.

Though the article covers many issues and events that we discussed, and I understand that some degree of editing is a necessity, I would like to bring to your attention a possible oversight. I wish to clarify for the record that I did not acquire any degree in England, as my Masters degree in Mechanical Engineering was acquired in USA at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, as stated in your article. Perhaps there was a misunderstanding of my statement, as in the same context I had mentioned that my cousin, the late Marazban Patrawala, had proceeded for further studies to England after graduation in India.

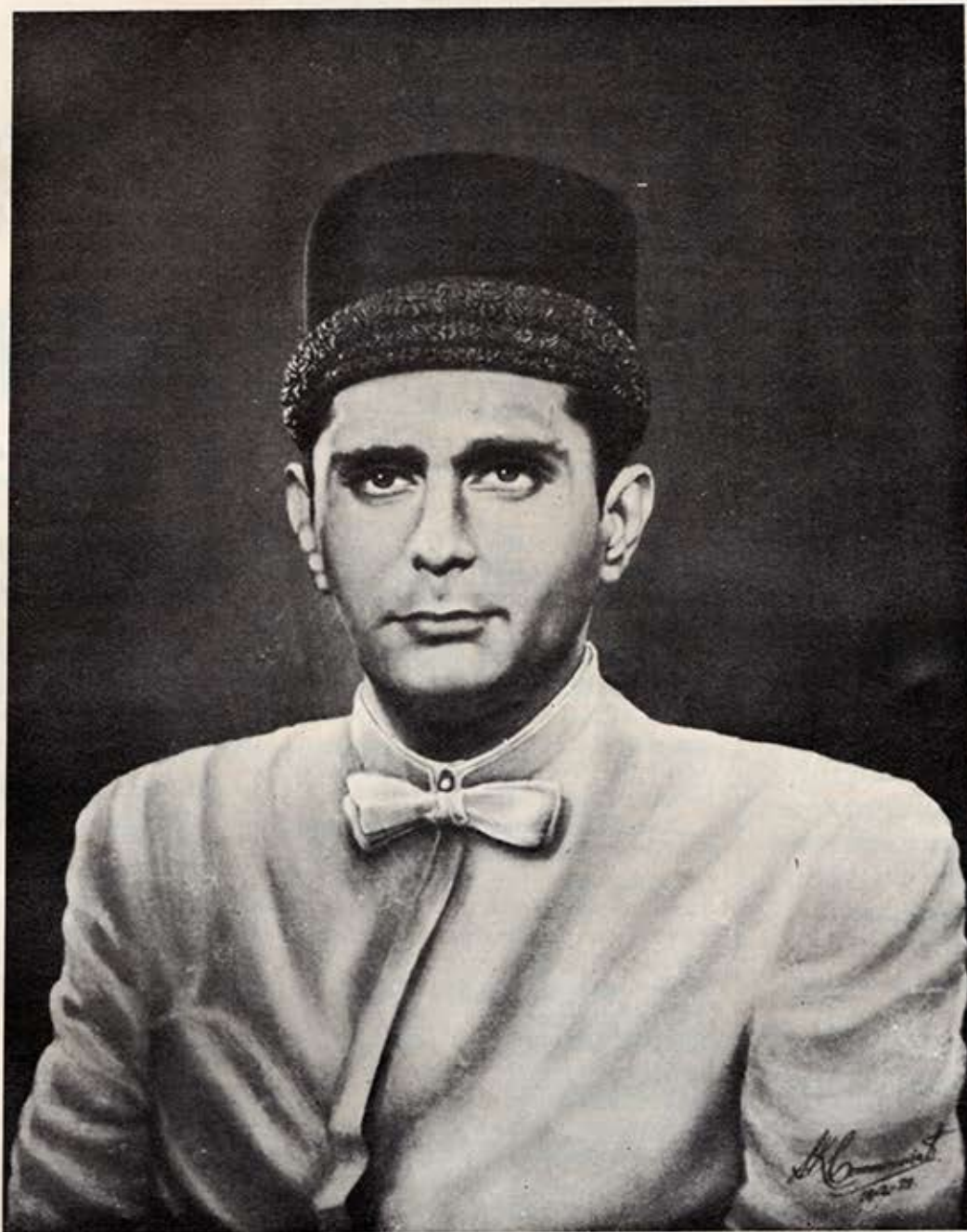
FIRDOSH MEHTA
Alberta, Canada

"Tussle for..."

Referring to your elaborate coverage of the recent Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee election ("Tussle for trusteeship," *Parsiana*, April 2000) permit me to clarify some points inasmuch as they pertain to me and my fortnightly magazine *Parsidom* and to point out some glaring omissions in them.

My criticisms of Zarir Bhatena in the context of his handling of affairs at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) have concentrated solely on the inadequacies of the institution which is the prized asset of the community and needs to be preserved and improved which will come about only through legitimate criticism and not by hiding or covering them up. I am surprised that the writer, Arnavaz Mama, who apparently is well-informed about *Parsidom* and its contents, selectively touched on some points and left out the others totally.

She did not mention, for instance, our criticism that a large Hospital with



In Memoriam
Mr Fali Meherji Variava
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nearly 300 beds does not have: a CT scan, which even small nursing homes and clinics in Bombay have at present; dialysis although liver ailments are common among Parsis; such a large Hospital also does not have an operational ambulance, resulting at times in tragedy. The Wadia family of the Dadar Parsi Colony had donated a well-equipped ambulance in 1993 which is still there but is not used for patients but for transporting materials only. In response to an inquiry from me, Bhathena had replied that this is because of problems with maintaining the ambulance equipment and errant drivers. There is only a consultant radiologist who reports for duty just a couple of times a week merely to sign prepared reports, necessitating the unqualified and inexperienced ward boys to take x-rays regularly. A large Hospital, PGH has no casualty ward.

At the Godrej Baug election meeting, Bhathena in his speech referred to the rival candidate, Silloo Kavarana, as a "young lady of 81." I strongly objected to the remark and bluntly asked him to look at his own lady supporters and tell how young they are!

At the Dadar Parsi Colony meeting,

Bhathena tried to evade a direct reply about UAF (Universal Adult Franchise) by wanting to know which trust in the world is run on UAF basis. He even mentioned the Bill Gates Foundation and said such a large Foundation is not run on UAF lines. I replied that there is no need to look elsewhere but in our own community: the Iran League in Bombay and the anjumans of Nargol, Navsari, Bharuch and Delhi all have elections on UAF basis only.

Mama also did not point out that, for two months before the election, *Jamé* had been carrying out a vilification campaign against *Parsidom*. But, in the end, I won. In the counting hall as the results were announced, I shouted, "This is the community's respect for seniority and a victory for *Parsidom*." Which it was, indeed.

Finally, their most damaging gaffe came just a few days before the election when *Jamé* reported that Kavarana advocated the construction of a crematorium at the Doongerwadi. The trustees quickly issued a joint denial, calling the story a "figment" of the "imagination." Bhathena himself disowned the story in a separate statement.

I fail to understand what purpose

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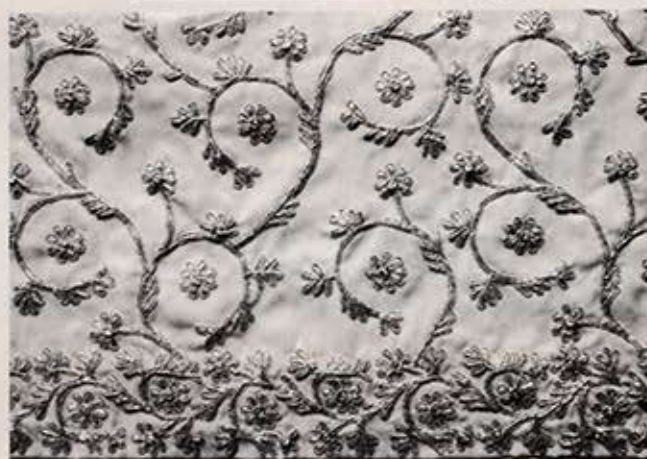
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Parsiana serves by giving such a one-sided and incomplete picture to its readers. I know that yours is an establishment magazine, which since its inception has given only goody-goody (*sojhi sojhi*) side of the community but little have you realized that it is such projection that is partly responsible for the present downside of the community. Please wake up and realize that there is a lot wrong with the community and its leaders. An ostrich-like attitude will not lead to an improvement in the rot. I started my magazine and am somehow keeping it going precisely to expose the wrongdoers, without favor or fear of consequences.

DARA KADVA
Editor, *Parsidom*

Homa Petit, president of the PGH, replies. *OThe PGH does not have a CT scan or dialysis unit although liver ailments are common among Parsis*

At the outset, a factual correction namely that dialysis is not used for "liver ailments" but for kidney diseases. Any decision to acquire high technology services of various nature like CT scan, dialysis unit, MRI, angio cardiography and other sophisticated diagnostic services must be based on rational logic

and not on gut feelings or emotional reasons. Several factors have to be considered like cost of acquisition and operation, recurrent cost of maintenance, cost of upgrades and replacement by newer versions of technology, and utilization of such high cost services in terms of volume of services produced.

It is a generally and universally accepted principle of planning that on an average a minimum daily volume of six to 10 paying procedures should be generated from these services for ensuring financial viability in view of the huge recurrent capital and operating costs and also to maintain and ensure a certain quality of service.

Another alternative would be to make contractual arrangements with other facilities for provision of such sophisticated diagnostic services. PGH has followed this approach and established contractual relationships with other facilities for ensuring the availability of quality service at reasonable costs as the management feels that it cannot justify "own facility" especially since large volumes of donor funds are involved. It is important to note that the cost of such services for charity care patients is borne by the Hospital.

A very relevant point which has also been missed is that CT scan is a "diagnostic tool" and has no value as a "prognostic tool" especially in patients with advanced neurological damage, etc where investigation with CT scan/MRI do not impact the outcome of such illness.

OPGH does not have an operational ambulance

The factual position has already been clarified to the donor's representative and briefly the position is as follows:

The services were suspended after a careful review of the working and functioning of the ambulance services. The idea of the review was not to cut down any department or service which was essential or basic to the running of the Hospital, and on a review of the working of the ambulance service it was noticed that the same was available only on working days between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. The service was not available when the ambulance driver was on leave and was being mainly used by inpatients already in the Hospital. The ambulance was used to take patients to diagnostic centers of other hospitals for special treatment or investigation and

Saal Mubarak



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would wait at these places and bring back the patients after the investigation and hence also during such period the ambulance would not be available to any other patients. A review of the service revealed that it did not even recover its operating costs and the number of patients/trips made in a month were such that a possible suspension of services would not have an impact on patients as it was not found to be something basic or essential. As mentioned above, it is obvious that the service was part-time and not a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year service. The Hospital authorities felt that the services of three other ambulance providers be negotiated and accordingly such services have been used for over a year and a close observation relating to the convenience of the patients was monitored and it was pleasantly surprised to find that the non-availability of the Hospital's ambulance did not result in any inconvenience to the patients and no adverse feedback from our patients was received.

The allegation that the ambulance is used for transporting material and not patients is also uncalled for. It was only on a particular occasion when there was an indefinite strike by transporters which

included the trucks, tempos and taxi operators that the ambulance was used to take delivery of certain essential materials to beat a deadline.

○There is only a consultant radiologist and inexperienced ward boys take x-ray This is a total travesty of truth. The Hospital has two very senior honorary radiologists working at the Hospital for the past several years. At least one of the radiologists attends the Hospital on all working days and in case his services are needed, any one of the radiologists is always available for emergencies. X-rays are taken by fully trained radiographers (who are at least diploma holders) as is the universal practice in all hospitals all over the world. The honorary radiologist carries out special procedures and reports on all x-ray procedures and films. This again is a universal practice at all hospitals all over the world and not only at PGH. No ward boys take x-ray films. As a matter of fact, the department has just one ward boy who helps in the housekeeping work of the department, moving patients, moving the mobile x-ray machine and delivering reports and films to the different wards.

○PGH has no casualty ward

The casualty wards are established based

upon the need and number of the casualty received and it has been the experience of the Hospital that the current workload does not justify the establishment of a full-time casualty ward. However, the Hospital has established an emergency room for immediate attention of patients coming outside normal working hours and one houseman is available in the emergency room for attending to patients who come for admission outside the normal working hours.

"Never touch any..."

I refer to Arnavaz S. Mama's interview with Zarir Bhathena ("Never touch any institution," *Parsiana*, April 2000) where Bhathena mentions:

"...Lilaowala went all out against Silloo Kavarana and Jamshed Guzder. I told her I don't agree. I believe if persons are absent their image should not be tarnished. They should be given a chance to defend themselves. But there was no moderator to stop her."

Let me clarify that the meeting at Lalbaug was specially called for election purposes. If a person stands for public office, his or her plus and minus points, achievements and failures, track

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record, etc come under public scrutiny and are bound to be brought up by various speakers at all meetings. Democracy implies freedom of speech as long as the facts are correct. Otherwise what is the purpose of holding an election meeting? What I have said happens in all the democratic countries of the world, including India and in all kinds of elections, from parliamentary to gram panchayat elections.

As far as my remarks about Kavarana and Guzder are concerned, I gave three concrete examples of how the two older trustees are manipulated because of their advanced age.

I had the guts to publicly say the truth. If we always keep on sweeping the dirt under the carpet, then why this farce of election meetings?

In spite of Bhathena's apparent disagreement with me on this particular point, I still think he was the most suitable candidate. RUBY LILAOWALA

"The legal innings..."

I read with interest Arnavaz Mama's piece on Rustam Gagrath ("The legal innings of the century," *Parsiana*, April 2000). In *The Statesman* of April 26, 2000, I had mentioned under "Salute to a legend":

"This week, the partners of Gagrath and Company, the highly reputed firm of solicitors, attorneys and notaries in Bombay, celebrated the 100th birthday of their illustrious founder, Rustam Ardeshir Gagrath..."

Many are the stories told about him; the one I know best is the way he discovered Nani Palkhivala's genius. When Nani published the first edition of his seminal work — *The Law and Practice*



Gagrath: genius
discovered

of Income Tax he inscribed a copy to Rustam Gagrath recalling that he was the first attorney to brief him. The story goes like this. Nani was a junior in the chambers of the then unquestioned leader of the Bombay Bar, Sir Jamshedji Kanga. Rustam Gagrath had sent Sir Jamshedji a case for opinion and it was a very complicated matter involving difficult questions of income tax and company law. The great man had given it to Nani to draft the opinion for him. In

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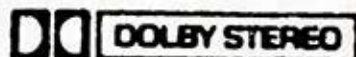
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an in-house discussion prior to the visit of the solicitors and clients, Sir Jamshedji had complimented Nani on the quality of his work saying it was very well done, and that he agreed with everything except two paragraphs, which after discussion with Nani, he personally changed.

"In due course, the conference with clients and Rustam Gagrut took place in the great man's chambers with Nani sitting alone at a distance, busy with something else. After what is reported to have been a long conference, Sir Jamshedji summoned Nani in his booming voice to the table. As Nani stood gaping, Sir Jamshedji told the startled group that the opinion which they thought was very well done and which had stood the test of the conference and which they said explained complicated matters with great lucidity was the work of 'this young man.' The part they found confusing and which was amended again during the conference 'was changed by me.'

"Here you have greatness in action. Sir Jamshedji's portrait is the first thing you see as you enter Nani Palkhivala's residence."

CUSHROW IRANI

Editor-in-Chief, *The Statesman*, Calcutta

"A burning need to..."

Once again my friend B. T. Dastur has raised the bogey of merger of agiaries which are not frequented by too many devotees ("A burning need to merge," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 2000). He had raised this suggestion way back in 1998 to which I had given a rejoinder. This time he cites lack of scriptural reference against merging of agiaries. He has also given the example of how the charity commissioner permitted a change in the objects clause of a Hindu trust whose objective was to feed 1,00,000 laddus to the brahmins.

One can't help but wonder as to the motive behind suggesting such a preposterous scheme of merging consecrated holy fires, worthy of worship. Of course, there will be no reference in any of our scriptures to such an unviable and untenable idea. The scriptures would not have expected this sad state of intellectual penury to which our so-called enlightened community has been reduced. Ours must be perhaps the only community where its own members are attempting to extinguish the flame of our religion either by creating controversy, e.g. lack of vultures at Doongerwadi or under the garb of alleged pro-

gressiveness/permissiveness. Witness every other sister community where people are still managing to secure huge funds to build temples, mosques, churches, etc.

I'd like to ask Dastur if he is contemplating we close down the Doongerwadi because less vultures/birds of prey are frequenting it? Will we? No! We are trying to increase the number of birds and create conditions whereby they can survive and thrive leading to strengthening of the dokhmenashini system of disposal of the dead.

Why can't we do the same with our agiaries i.e. create conditions whereby more and more devotees are inclined to visit our agiaries? Why can't some industrial house or family adopt a couple of agiaries and manage their upkeep and maintenance?

Assuming that Dastur's suggestion of merging the holy fires of our agiaries is implemented, what will become of the agiary building? Will it be put to alternate (read commercial) use?

KAYOMARZ PATEL

"Decades of distinctive..."

I refer to the article "Decades of distinctive dentistry" by Dr Dinshaw F. Boga

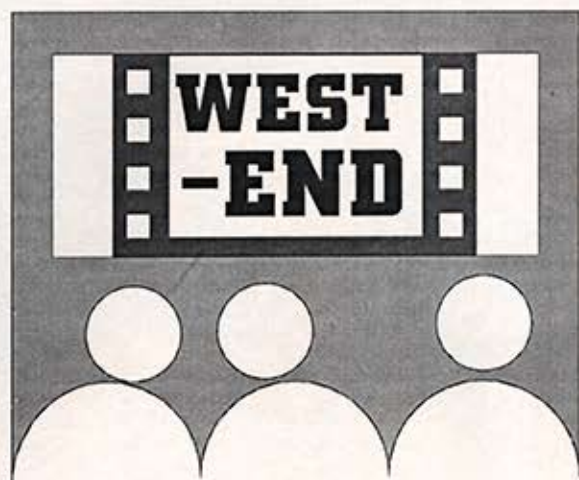
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(Parsiana, March 2000) giving interesting details of Parsi dentists in India.

I am surprised that Boga has not mentioned my father, Dr Dinshaw Maneckji Surveyor, who was one of the most eminent and respected dental surgeons in Bombay from 1912 till the day he expired in 1955.

After becoming a doctor, LM and S (Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery) from the Grant Medical College in Bombay in 1909, winning a medal in anatomy, as there were no dental colleges in India at the time, he went to London and qualified as a dental surgeon there. He started his dental practice in Bombay in 1912 and was very well known and reputed in the medical profession.

My father believed his profession to be a noble one, and he was particularly generous and kind to poor patients whom he often treated free.

About 80 years ago, a doctor friend of my father rushed his daughter, who had a tooth knocked out in an accident, and my father successfully refixed the tooth again, which was reported by the friend to one of the British medical journals which recorded it as the first replantation of a detached tooth by a dental



*Dr Dinshaw (right) and Ratanbai
Surveyor*

surgeon in Asia.

In his memory, the Zoroastrian Dentists' Organisation presents every year the Dr Dinshaw Maneckji Surveyor Memorial Merit Award, consisting of a trophy and certificate, to the Zoroastrian student standing first in the final BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) exam of

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the Bombay University.

RATAN DINSHAW SURVEYOR

Dr Dinshaw Boga replies

My apologies for this lapse, but in the literature referred to by me, I failed to find his name anywhere. Moreover, I had showed my draft to a couple of dentists senior to me, and they too did not correct me. It is not due to any malice or bias that I omitted his name.

Cleaning of roads before the fire was carried to the Jokhi Agiary

Photo: Kersi M. Pooniwala

"The consecrated convoy"

The congregation of nearly 5,000 Parsis at the time of the consecration of the atash adarian at Godrej Baug was a testimony to the deep and powerful faith that Parsis of today have, which, albeit, is displayed on rare occasions such as

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this. Much has been written on this event, both in the Parsi and secular Press as well as the electronic media ("The consecrated convoy," *Parsiana*, March 2000). Now, after the euphoria has ended and life goes on as normal in any Parsi baug, it is time to ask some questions on the whole incident.

Earlier we had raised the issue of non-Zoroastrian figures "guarding" the adarian precincts. This time we wish to dwell on the spiritual aspects of the transfer of the holy fire from Navsari to Bombay and the consecration of the Shapoorji Fakirji Jokhi Agiary. Before we commence, we would like to clarify that the object of this letter is not to defame or blame any persons, nor is it to shatter the faith of the thousands of Parsis who worshipped and do worship the adarian saheb. Our objective is to ensure that the dignity and sanctity of the holy fire is in no way compromised.

One of the first things that strike a casual visitor to the adarian is its proximity to the dokhmas at Doongerwadi. According to the *Vendidad*, any fire (we are not talking about a consecrated adarian fire) should be kept at a certain distance from any pollution. According to the *Rivayats*, even the sagdi kept at the Doongerwadi should be at a distance of 300 paces from the dokhma. Given these instructions, is it correct to have a consecrated atash adarian so near to the dokhmas?

Our second observation relates to the absence of a natural well in the Agiary precincts. While there is a well in the Agiary itself, is it a natural well? Our inquiries reveal that despite several attempts, water was not struck within the area. The current "well" is actually a receptacle fed through pipes from another well situated some distance away at Ambawadi. It is thus merely a subterfuge. A free flowing and natural well is an essential prerequisite for performing both the major liturgical ceremonies like the yasna and the vendidad, as well for the normal baj. Water that is pumped through pipes loses its essential element — the *fraado* (electro-magnetic forces) mentioned in the *Ava Nyaish*. Such water is of no use in major liturgical ceremonies. In effect, the yasnas and vendidads performed during the consecration process of the building are void.

We now come to the actual shifting of the holy fire from its seat at Navsari to Bombay. Several years ago, when another fire was sought to be brought for



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Each visit will be confined to a group of 50 persons. On day one, members should reach **Gholvad** by either Ahmedabad Passenger departing from Bandra Terminus at 13.00 hrs or the Shuttle train departing from Virar at 17.10 hrs. Stay will be at Petit Sanatorium, Bordi. Non-veg/veg. Parsi food will be served.

On day two, very early in the morning, members will be taken by a local hired vehicle to the foot of Bahrot hill from where the trek will commence. Trained guides will accompany the group. Return to the base camp at Bordi will be around lunch time. After lunch and some rest, the members could return by the Valsad-Virar Shuttle departing from Gholvad at 18.00 hrs.

All inclusive cost covering stay, meals and local transportation will be Rs 350 per head

Families/groups which would like to make independent trips on the dates of their convenience can do so separately. Their stay will then be arranged at **Tapovan Retreat, Bordi**. Jashan ceremony at the Caves could also be arranged. Such visits may further be tied up with an onward trip to Sanjan/Udwada and/or Navsari. Details will be worked out upon request.

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the Godrej Baug Agiary, preparations had been made to bring the same on foot from Bharuch after observing the correct tarikats of pavi. Indeed one of us was a volunteer on that trip which never materialized. It is therefore surprising that instead of doing so, the sacred fire was transported using a Sumo. This is a contravention of the accepted laws and precepts of the religion. By driving the fire in a car without the provision of pavi, the fire has come into common contact (ham-paivand) and has lost its exalted stature.

Coming to the final journey from Vachaghandhy Agiary to Godrej Baug, there are several procedural errors that we would like to point out. Firstly, we wonder as to the necessity of undertaking this final part on foot, when the entire journey was done by car. As per religious precepts, the movement of the fire must be done in total darkness, hence the night journey. However, it is surprising to note that the organizers undertook this journey not only in the presence of street lamps (which may have been unavoidable) but also just two days before the brightest moon in 133 years. Moreover, the entire exercise was done under the gaze of several cameras. An effort was made to draw pavis to segregate the fire. To our surprise this act, which needs to be done by qualified priests, was performed by lay volunteers from a Parsi colony. The effect of the whole exercise was reduced by washing the roads before the fire was moved. Water instinctively breaks all pavis and hence further nullified these efforts. If our intention was to have a grand procession, with full media coverage, we certainly succeeded. But if we wanted to correctly enthrone an adarian saheb, with full religious honors, the effort was an abject failure. We have also, unknowingly, set a wrong precedent for the future.

We understand that the times we live in are not conducive to the complete observance of all our religious tarikats. We also understand that several experts in their respective fields have guided this entire operation. We give full credit to the organizers for managing the logistics of the whole exercise in such a flawless fashion. But our concern is that in all this, the main issue has been sidelined. Instead of giving the first priority to maintaining the dignity and power of a righteously consecrated adarian saheb — which is paramount and sacrosanct — minds have been diverted to less important considerations.

We have survived this long as a community only by the precise and unwavering following of our scriptures and longstanding religious customs and traditions which are venerated in the *Avesta* as *dareghayao upayanayao*. In our opinion, the entire exercise of the shifting of the sacred fire and the consecration of the new adarian at Godrej Baug has not been in consonance with these traditions and hence we have deemed it our duty to bring the same to the notice of the community.

Ervad MARZBAN HATHIRAM, NAUZER K. BHARUCHA, PERCY R. BALSARA

"Mehr vs Khatami"

I had read the article "Mehr vs Khatami" in Farsi but reading it in *Parsiana* (Zoroastrians Abroad, March 2000) compels me to make a few observations.

When Iranian mullahs make declarations of universal friendship and brotherhood, it is advisable to take it with a pinch of salt.

President Khatami's assertion that "some of my best friends are Zoroastrians and still are" is not correct. Nodding acquaintances, perhaps, but best friends, no. Friends, by very defini-

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tion, spend at least some of their time together in common pursuits, social activities, important dates in the calendar. President Khatami could not eat in a Muslim restaurant with his Zoroastrian friend as his friend would not be served; could not go swimming together as his Zoroastrian friend would be deemed to have polluted the water; could not offer his friend any kind of position in government as the most important item in his curriculum vitae is missing — he is not a Muslim.

He makes capital of His Holiness Ali who accepted Zoroaster as a prophet and the *Avesta* as a holy book. He states that Muslims and Zoroastrians have cohabited peacefully throughout. History bears testimony to the tragedy that ensued when the Arabs invaded Iran: many sons of the soil took their own lives and yet many more fled to all points of the compass, to destinations unknown. And the few that stayed behind — a minority race in their own land — were allowed to do so on condition they paid *jazia* (a minority tax).

FAROKH FALAHATI

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"Sanctity of dokhmas"

For sometime now there has been a debate going on in some quarters of the community on the question of whether the system of dokhmenashini has outlived its utility and if it needs to be changed.

Jam-e-Jamshed recently conducted a poll within its readership posing the question "In view of the shortage of birds at Doongerwadi, do you think an alternate system for disposal of dead should be introduced?"

The segment of *Jam-e-Jamshed's* readership that responded to the poll have voted 63 percent in favor of change, 36 percent not in favor of change, and one percent undecided.

Be that as it may, as one who has always believed in and followed the principles of transparency in public activities, and also being involved in all facets of the various operations at Doongerwadi and its attendant issues, I would like to make my views known in the matter. I am aware that some in the community have classified me as a 'reformist' whilst others as an 'orthodox.' To all such individuals I would like to make it clear that I am neither a 'reformist,' nor an 'orthodox.' I rather perceive myself to be one who is pragmatic.

Having made this categorical com-

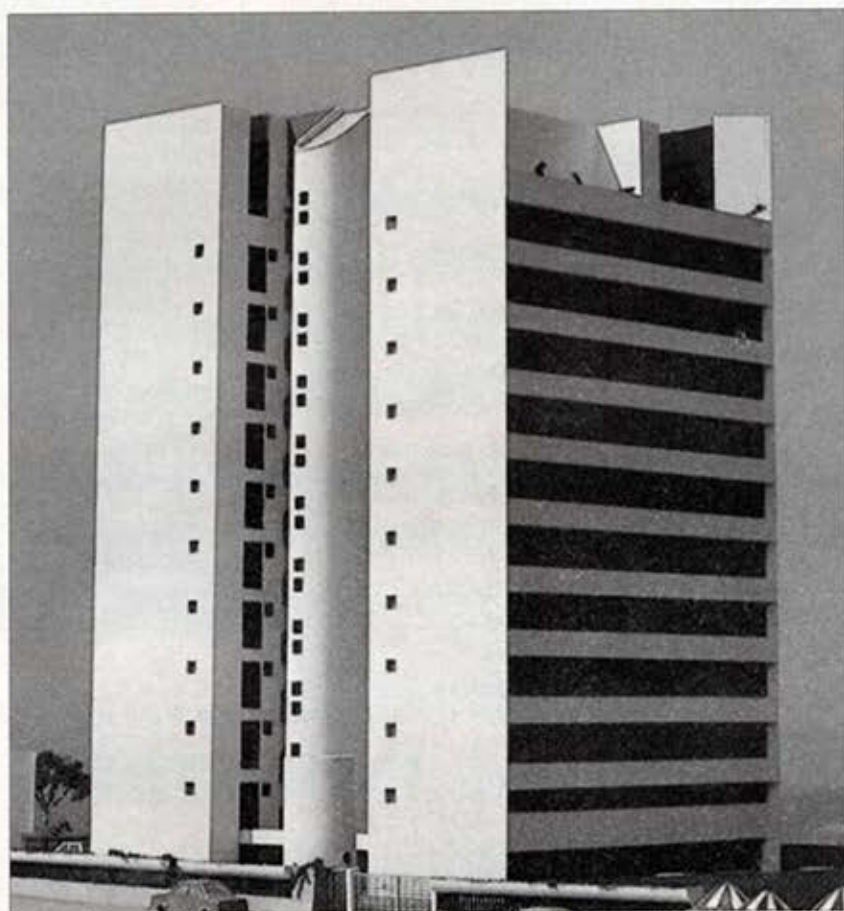
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ment I would also like to mention that as a community it is not only essential but also obligatory to preserve and protect our traditions, customs, heritage, doctrines, rites and rituals.

The system of dokhmenashini has been followed in Bombay for well over 300 years now. A gentleman named Mody Heerjeebhoy Vachaghandhee, on a part of his estate at Malabar Hill in the year 1669, constructed the first dokhma in Bombay. This is a historically recorded fact.

The dokhma came into existence even before the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) was formed. The forerunner of the present day BPP was established sometime between 1672 and 1675. If one were to peruse the general trust deed (of 1884) of the immovable property of the Punchayet, it becomes abundantly clear that the forerunner of the present day BPP was established primarily to manage "the Towers of Silence or building for the exposure of the dead bodies of Parsis."

Due to reasons beyond the scope and control of the BPP, such as urbanization of the area in the vicinity of Doongerwadi, natural depletion in the number of scavenger birds, and other such relevant



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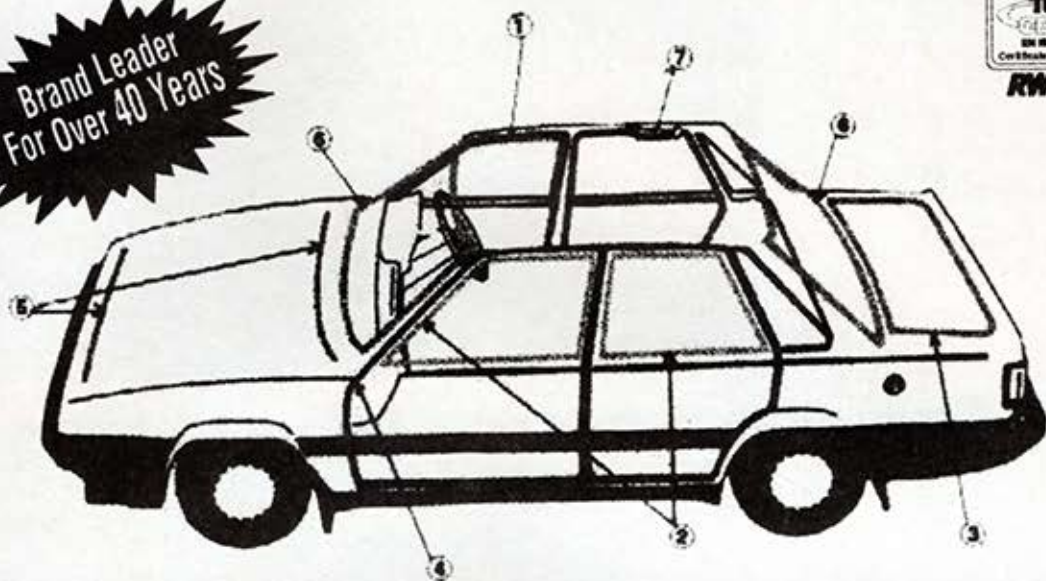
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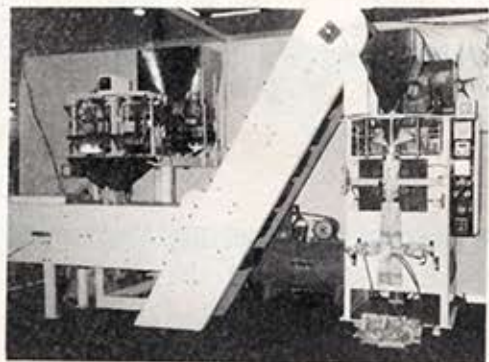
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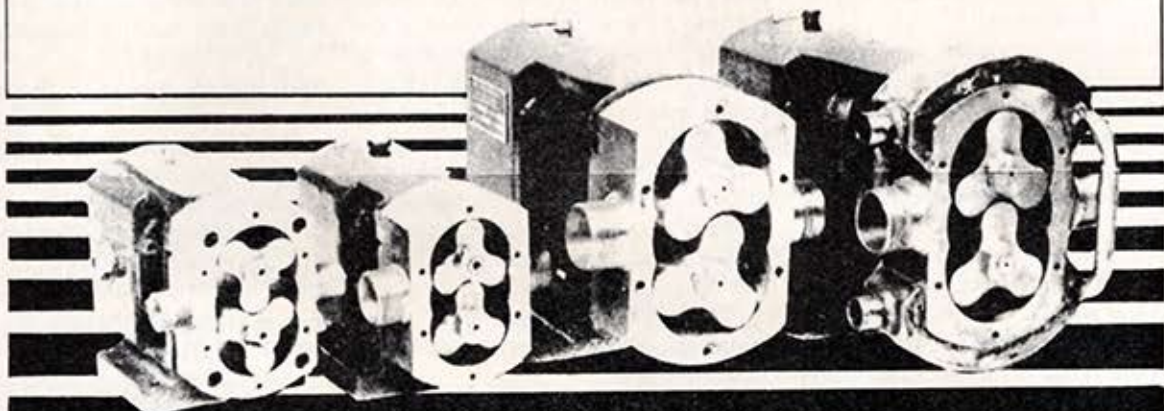
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factors, the system of dokhmenashini began to feel the strain necessitating corrective action to be undertaken by the BPP. After a review of the relevant factors, my colleagues and I on the board of BPP, decided just over two years ago that the system of dokhmenashini needed to be strengthened.

To the credit of the BPP board it must be recorded that all seven trustees are unanimous in their view that the system of dokhmenashini needs to be strengthened and not changed. We have gone about the matter in an organized manner by involving various professionals in different areas of expertise. Members of the clergy as well as religious scholars have also been consulted and are involved in these efforts.

All the four projects are pioneering in nature, but are being tried out with the main view of strengthening the system of dokhmenashini, as also with the intent to preserve and continue with our time tested and honored traditions and customs.

The results of these efforts will make themselves known in due course of time. What the results will be, one cannot speculate at this juncture, but what is important is that the effort and process

to strengthen the system is now under way.

If we ever have to even consider change, let it be first realized that we shall be striking at the very foundations on which the edifice of our community has been built. For after all, traditions and customs are an intrinsic part of the very soul of a community. In matters concerning preservation and continuity of traditions and customs, one should not and cannot consider change only for the sake of change.

DINSHAW K. TAMBOLY

On the heels of recent efforts by the BPP to "strengthen the existing venerated and time tested system of dokhmenashini" by wooing the depleted, if not almost extinct, vulture population at Doongerwadi at Bombay, Bangalore, Poona and other places, by introduction of unviable, uneconomical and impracticable method of "captive breeding of the vultures" ("Sanctity of dokhmas," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February 2000), come some more equally impractical suggestions.

The methods suggested are:
•Harnessing of solar energy to facilitate rapid dehydration.

•Air quality control by generating and pumping pure ozone inside the Towers.
•Environmental quality control by spraying a herbal composition which creates a specific strain of microbes that ensures rapid decomposition of the corpses in the Towers.

Let us examine each of the above proposals in light of the existing scientific knowledge.

•If harnessing of solar energy to facilitate rapid degeneration of corpses is to be introduced, then the solar rays must be focused on the body/bodies continuously for few hours. This effect can be achieved by the use of parabolic mirrors which are programmed to rotate automatically with the movement of the sun (actually the earth) to focus high intensity solar energy on the body/bodies. Such devices are costly to install and difficult to maintain and operate and will be of no use at all in Bombay during the heavy monsoon rains from June to September when sunlight is just not sufficient for this purpose. The other method of using the sunlight will be to cover the entire top of the dokhmas by plate glass as is done in solar heaters but this will not generate sufficient heat to burn the bodies and will only collect hot gases



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within the dokhmas which will harm the pallbearers when the door is opened to take in the corpse.

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Only in very small and controlled quantities like 10 parts per million, ozone is utilized for water purification and as a bleaching agent when produced in an electric discharge machine called an ozonizer. It can best be used in the dokhmas to reduce the foul smell emanating from decomposing bodies and that too in very diluted quantities. Use of pure ozone will endanger the lives of the entire Malabar Hill population.

•Scientifically and in the present state of knowledge, it is impossible that an inanimate thing like a herbal preparation can ever create an animate specific strain of microbe. Any strain of microbe can undergo a process of mutation which if developed may cause more rapid decomposition of the corpses but mother nature is already achieving this through anaerobic bacteria, 10 feet underground after burial without the ghastly sight and offensive smell that pervades in the

dokhmas.

The sum total of all that is stated above is that dokhmenashini is no longer possible under the existing circumstances of absence of vultures, proximity of human habitation, awareness for clean environment, stringent measures against all types of pollution, etc. In this context are we still going to insist and somehow "strengthen the existing venerated and time tested system of dokhmenashini?"

As stated by me in my earlier letters in *Parsiana*, burial at Doongerwadi of more than 1,000 bodies per year is expensive. The only logical solution is to erect a modern electric crematorium at Doongerwadi. The cry from some antagonists of crematoria on the grounds of pollution by fly ash is untenable with modern crematoria as, if that was so, this method of disposal of the dead would not be so increasingly and widely used by nations more concerned about pollution control than our own.

Religious rituals like human/animal sacrifice, Sati, etc have been repealed by law. We must not rely on the protection under the Constitution for the practice of religious rituals for the minority communities if the present conditions are

detrimental in the greater interest of the entire population. Can we not as an educated and enlightened community see the writing on the wall or are we awaiting the ignominy of facing a public interest litigation which could force us to move our dokhmas far away from proximity of human habitation, to an isolated hill, at considerable expense and inconvenience, just to perpetuate our very ancient but completely unworkable system of disposal of the dead in the present circumstances.

We hope that the trustees of the BPP will be more pragmatic and will not succumb to the unrealistic pressures and advice from bigoted orthodoxy.

Dr M. D. DISAWALLA
Bangalore

One needs to bear in mind that times have changed and old principles and ideology also change with the passage of time, to be replaced by new ones. It is a universally accepted fact that vultures are capable of devouring flesh in a matter of minutes, but that is the case in the wild forests of Africa and India, not in cities like Bombay where the vulture population has reduced drastically almost to

continued on page 57



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Events and Personalities

Baroda's new board

"On the whole the voting was very brisk, and unexpectedly there was a very huge turnout (76 percent cast their vote), by far the highest" since the first general elections were held by the Shri Parsi Panchayat of Vadodara in 1982, notes the editorial in the March issue of *Zend*, the quarterly newsletter of the Panchayat. Of the 10 candidates aspiring to be trustees, the highest votes were polled by Boman Cama, followed by Aspi Vajifdar, Jal Patel, Phiroze Patel, Avi Sabawala, Kersy Kavina and Dara Hakim who were elected to the board. The unsuccessful contestants were Khushroo Marawala, Persang Bavaadam and Neville Wadia. The two new members on the board for the next five-year term are Phiroze Patel and Sabawala who replaced retiring president Shavaksha Patel and Rusi Kasad who did not seek reelection.

"If the polling (on March 19, 2000) was brisk, the campaigning from door-to-door and by letter, as well as canvassing on the telephone was even more hectic..." states Pesi Muncherji in his editorial. He would have preferred the withdrawal of three candidates rather than "this kind of competition which in no way can be termed healthy in a small community like ours as it ultimately leads to mudslinging."

Retiring president Shavaksha Patel who had served the Panchayat in different capacities for a record 43 years was commended for doing "his utmost for the smooth working of the Panchayat whose funds multiplied due to his personal untiring efforts... Busy as he was,

he carried the burden of the office of president with dignity and earned the respect of all Panchayat members in his role as moderator. For him it was an arduous task to please each and everyone in the community in Baroda... (accompanied by) his ever-smiling and devoted wife Gul."

Taking over as the new president is Jal Patel who had formerly served the board as treasurer. Kavina will be the next honorary treasurer and Cama will take over as honorary secretary from

Kavina. Among the urgent matters which the new board will be expected to handle, according to Muncherji, are the amendment of the constitution, expediting the pending court cases, protecting the neglected properties of the Panchayat, involving the youth by issuing communication in both Gujarati and English, being prompt in correspondence... Trustees should expect both criticism and credit if they want cooperation, reminded Muncherji.

Jabalpur land locked

For 87 years this property has been in the "peaceful, continuous and uninterrupted possession" of The Parsi Anjuman, Jabalpur. For many decades they have been performing religious ceremonies and social functions at their Prayer Hall and Dharamshala which stand on the plot, admeasuring 86,159 sq ft, in Napier Town, one of the busiest areas in the city, noted a report in *The Hitvada* of April 3, 2000.

The managing committee of the Parsi Anjuman was therefore shocked to read a public notice a few days earlier an-

nouncing that one Ramesh Singh Thakur and Triveni Bai Anirudh Singh Thakur have entered into an agreement of sale of the Prayer Hall and Dharamshala complex valued at Rs 25 crore with Uday Prakash Mishra and I. M. Mishra who in turn entered into another agreement with Shiv Charan Dixit, added the news report.

The sale agreements are fraudulent and bogus, contended the managing committee members — president D. C. Bajan, vice president S. R. Daruwalla, honorary secretary K. N. Batliwalla, joint secretary K. N. P. J. Driver, treasurer K. K. Sutaria and members at large V. B. Patel and J. S. Mehta — in their meeting with municipal commissioner Ramesh Thete and collector Raj Kishore Swai.

"While the authorities have helped us without any hesitation, they have urged us to replace the barbed wire fencing of our boundary with a wall... The estimate for the construction of the wall is roughly Rs 2.5 lakhs," mentioned Bajan in a letter to *Parsiana*. Since the Anjuman only has funds to bear one-third of the costs, they have appealed for donations which may be sent to the Anjuman at Nerbudda Club Bungalow, Jabalpur 482001, Madhya Pradesh, Tel 320172.

The Parsi community was given this land in Jabalpur on lease for a period of 30 years in 1913. In 1916 they built the Prayer Hall and Dharamshala. The well on the premises was built in 1918 in memory of Dhunjishaw Cavasji Amroliwalla, as testified by a plaque there. On the expiry of the lease in 1943, it was renewed for a period of 50 years, and then in 1995 the lease was extended yet again, the historical background is related in *Hitvada*.

"Obviously, this property belongs to the Parsi minority community which



J. Patel (left) and S. Patel: respected as presidents

is...a registered public trust under the Madhya Pradesh Public Trusts Act," states the news report referring to the managing committee's plea "that in case these agreements are allowed to go through it will be a great loss to the community which has always been very peaceful (and has) not made any demands on the country. Our sentiments will be hurt and we will lose faith in the whole system..."

Presently Behroze K. Dossabhoj has been nominated member to the minorities cell in Jabalpur district, announced Bajan.

Where work is worship

While inaugurating the Prof R. D. Choksi Memorial Workshop chief guest R. M. Lala, director of the Sir Dorab Tata Trust, commended the management of the Patuck Technical High School and Junior College for offering improved facilities to the student fraternity. This two-storeyed mechanical workshop replaces the old and dilapidated barrack type structure which would get inundated with water during monsoon time, mentions a press release issued by Prof R. K. Mody, trustee-director of the Patuck Polytechnic Trust.

Lala was particularly appreciative of the multi-faceted role of the institution in meeting the need-based requirements of industry and helping organize short-term courses to rehabilitate the riot-affected under the Mohalla Committee Project financed by the Tata Trust. Impressed with the high morale and self-discipline of the student body, when addressing the gathering on January 22, 2000 he exhorted the present generation to uphold the lofty ideals, patriotism and philanthropy of their founder Rustomba Patuck, and founder trustee Rustum Choksi on whose shoulders fell the mantle of carrying forward Patuck's work.

Patuck could be regarded as the father of vocational education in India, Dinshah Malegamvala's tribute to the founders paid on the occasion of the institute's golden jubilee was recalled on the occasion. Hailing from a Parsi family in Bombay, Patuck who had lived in affluence for 33 years in Manchester, returned to India to lead the life of an ascetic, recalled Malegamvala. Convinced that only technical skills and vocational training could help the poor earn a living wage with self-respect he first collected a handful of young men



and taught them weaving whilst living with them in a hut in Kandivli. This experiment was supposed to be the precursor of the Patuck Technical High School which he founded creating a trust with a corpus of eight lakh rupees.

Both Patuck and Choksi, who had served the School for over two decades as chairman, were Gandhians wedded to khadi and lived simply without any ostentation, recalled Malegamvala. When Choksi joined Tatas in 1942 as a part-time director of the Dorab Tata Trust, he cycled every day from Wilson College (where he was the legendary professor of English, Latin and mathematics) to Bombay House where he would carry his own bicycle down to the basement. Both believed in the dignity of labor, the integrity of work. "Work is worship (the motto of the School)" was well exemplified in their lives. As managing trustee of the Dorab Tata Trust, Choksi's greatest contribution to the company and to Tatas was the establishment of The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, The Tata Memorial Hospital and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, stated Malegamvala. For more than 40 years he also steered the destiny of the Indian Institute of Science,



Top: At the inauguration of the Choksi Memorial Workshop (standing from left) Goiporia, A. Patuck, Alpaiwala, Mody, Lala, Colah and Kurup Below: Choksi

Bangalore, added Malegamvala. It was mainly because of Choksi's involvement that a combined grant of Rs 50,000 was made in 1983 from the Tata trusts towards developing the Patuck institute to the level of a junior technical college, wrote Malegamvala.

Dr R. B. M. Colah, chairman of the organizing board, expressed his gratitude to Sir Dorab Tata Trust for donating Rs 20 lakhs towards the Rs 37-lakh cost of new construction plus provision of additional equipment, accessories and services. The other Zoroastrian members on the organizing board in addition to Colah and Mody are K. R. Alpaiwala, Adil J. Patuck, J. J. Goiporia. The institution located at Vakola Bridge, Santa Cruz (East) is in its 68th year catering to nearly 1,850 students, and as mentioned by Mody, though managed by a minority community trust its doors are open to

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all. The inter-disciplinary staff body consists of 100 members of whom 86 are teachers of science, vocational and industrial training subjects working under the guidance of principal K. G. K. Kurup. Prominent builder S. K. Gala, patron-in-chief of the Trust has also been helpful in advancing the cause of this foundation. Being recognized as a role model in the branches of engineering, commerce and paramedical courses, the institute is the recipient of many state and all-India awards for excellence in value education, teacher training, curriculum development and interaction with industry. It also offers a variety of vocational courses with full placement facilities, reported Mody, and prides itself on its linkages with collaborating agencies like the Maharashtra chapter of the American Concrete Institute and the Yeshwantrao Chavan Memorial Open University.

President's praise

"The members of the White House Communications Agency wish to express our sincere appreciation for the outstanding manner in which you provided support to the President of the United States (Bill Clinton) during his visit to Bombay, March 24-25, 2000." This certificate of appreciation, a rare distinction, was conferred on Dr Behram Minocher Meher-Homji who is working with the Breach Candy Hospital and is medical examiner for the United Nations and other allied bodies.

"Your unique abilities, coupled with your superb attitude and professionalism, enabled our Agency to provide critical communications for the President and the White House staff," continued

the certificate. Meher-Homji is also attached to other consulates and several leading Indian companies, notes a press release.

Master honored

Dr Roshen Master, eminent Poona based psychiatrist and professor emeritus in psychology at the B. J. Medical College (BJMC) was presented the India International Friendship Society (IIFS) Bharat Gaurav Award and certificate of excellence by Dr Bhishma Narain Singh, former governor of Tamil Nadu, for outstanding services, achievements and contributions. The occasion was the Society's seminar on "Economic Growth and National Integration" at New Delhi on May 11, 2000, informs a press release.

Among the first batch to graduate from BJMC with psychiatry in 1952 — a new speciality in those days, as notes her bio data — she joined the BJMC and Sassoon General Hospital as an assistant honorary in 1956, retiring as professor of psychiatry in 1981. In the course of these years the department grew from an outpatient clinic twice a week to a 30-bed unit with a full teaching staff and library, recognized for diploma and doctorate (MD) in psychiatry. Her devoted



Singh (left) presenting award to Master as Apang Sanjoy looks on

service to the institution earned her the designation of professor emeritus.

The governor of Maharashtra's nominee on the Senate of the University of Poona, Master has been a consistent researcher with over 150 professional papers published in India and abroad. In 1999 the American Psychiatric Association — the largest body of mental health professionals in the world, as notes her husband Sorab in a letter to *Parsiana* — nominated her an international fellow of the Association. Former president of the Indian Psychiatric Society, the Indian Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the Poona Psychiatrists' Association, Master had been a founder fellow of the latter two.

Founding child guidance clinics all over Maharashtra, she was the mental health consultant of the State's Directorate of Social Welfare from 1962 to 1981, rehabilitating juveniles and women in conflict with the law, as well as training personnel of the Directorate.

Appalled at the neglect of the mentally retarded, Master pioneered the Kamayani Movement in Poona with the first such school and sheltered workshop outside Bombay. In the course of 45 years it has blossomed into a teachers' training college with university recognition, with 29 schools all over Maharashtra, notes her bio data.

Master has been saluted by her peers in the Indian Psychiatric Society with four awards to date, including the prestigious D. L. N. Murthy Rao Oration Award for academic achievements and leadership. Society at large has recognized Master's social work, including such bodies as the National Association for Equal Opportunities to the Handicapped, the Lions Club of Pune and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of India.

With the IIFS award, this descendant of Avestan scholars Cawasji and Sorabji Kanga and of the legal legend Justice Jamshedji Kanga, joins the ranks of Mother Teresa, a former vice president of India, supreme court judges, celebrated industrialists and sportsmen, as notes Sorab. Arnavas S. Mama

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work" during the year 1999-2000, Ronny Jehangir Dick, president of the Jhansi Anjuman, was conferred the general manager's medal, a certificate of appreciation and a cash gift of Rs 750, this being the highest award to be bestowed on a mail driver. Dick is the last of the Zoroastrian mail drivers in the Central Railway who will be retiring from service after 40 years in April 2001, he writes.



Dick: distinction for driver

The third generation from his family to join the Railways, the Dicks have completed over 100 years in the Railways, according to a press release. During the course of his career Dick has been trained to drive steam, diesel and electro locomotives, notes his curriculum vitae. He has worked as the main driver for prestigious rail journeys like the G. M. Special, Chairman Railway Board Special, and earned commendation letters and rewards for safe driving and

fuel economy.

The professor's professor

His contribution to management in the year 1999 earned Dr Sorab Sadri the Best Teacher of Management Award from the Bombay Management Association. The awards ceremony, presided over by Bimal Jalan of the Reserve Bank of India, was held at the Crystal Room of the Taj Mahal Hotel on May 26, 2000, notes a press release.

With 10 years of experience in industry and 21 years in academics, Sadri is considered a leading authority on business ethics who is variously described as "the professor's professor," "someone who writes eloquently about the common man in so erudite a manner that the common man cannot comprehend," and "a rationalist social scientist in a management school." He is presently professor of human resources management and business ethics as well as head of the research wing at the N. L. Dalmia Institute of Management Studies and Research. He is also visiting professor of business ethics at the Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies and the Mumbai Education Trust, mentions the

press release. Earlier he had taught at the S. P. Jain Institute of Management, NITIE (National Institute for Training in Industrial Engineering), XLRI (Xavier Labour Relations Institute) and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) at Calicut and Indore.

Sadri has to his credit more than 80 papers in internationally refereed journals and five books. Most of his written work lies in the areas of political economy of development, social science methodology, industrial relations and business ethics.

Among the titles he has authored are *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases* and he is presently working on *Value Based HRM Interventions: a Business Policy Perspective*, plus a collection of papers titled *Leading Issues in Organizational Change* (co-edited with Dinyar Pestonjee of IIM, Ahmedabad). He is working towards setting up a Centre of



Sadri: erudite and eloquent

continued on page 200



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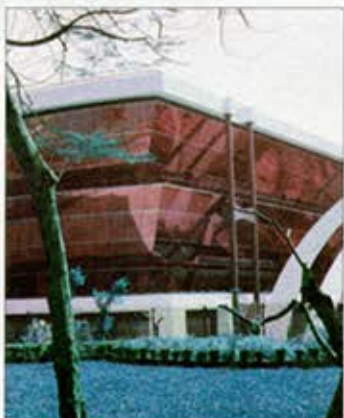
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The dynamics of change

Historian Jesse Palsetia discusses how social and political change in India affected the Parsis

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Nothing of what is happening today is new to those who know Parsi history," says Jesse Palsetia, author of a forthcoming book titled *Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*. The 400-page manuscript is a revised version of the dissertation that won Palsetia his doctorate from the University of Toronto's department of history in 1996. A research scholar and editor at Toronto's Centre for South Asian Studies, Palsetia was in Bombay earlier in the year consulting the Maharashtra state archives and other sources.

Concentrating on the history of the Parsis and that of Bombay and western India within his overall specialty of British imperialism in India, Palsetia says the Parsis have continuously faced two problems since their arrival here: the question of integration into the host society on the one hand and that of maintaining their own identity on the other. Within the limits set by these two conflicting parameters, the community has had to set its course. In practice, the communal situation for the Parsis has also been influenced by the historical changes within the host society. For example, the scene changed from the societal structures of Hindu rule to those of an overweening Moghul empire. Then again communal life needed to be navigated differently with the coming of the European settlers and the establishment of the British Raj. Each of these changes provided fresh challenges and opportunities. The Parsis integrated commercially and socially to avail of the prevailing opportunities while withstanding the challenge to their religious identity.

Palsetia believes that when the Parsis opted for strict endogamy (marriage only within the community), and non-con-

version, they were employing the practice of the rigid caste system of Hindu society amidst which they found themselves. "It was a historical imperative," he says which, in time, became embedded in the communal mind as a social ideology.

Growing affluence and the desire to enlarge their area of influence led to



Palsetia: Preserve documents of our past

Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

catholic philanthropy in terms of water wells, schools, colleges, hospitals. Increased education and social participation led to involvement in politics and the freedom struggle.

"We are not just an Iranian preservation on Indian soil. Ours is the creation of a unique multi-layered, Parsi-Indian identity. At its heart is the conservative religious identity. This religious identity remains the same while the social and cultural identity is changing," explains Palsetia. The priests were the original leaders since they served contemporary needs. They were replaced by the sethias, the mercantile elite, in British India. As members of the Panchayat they became "a unique element in the shaping of Parsi identity in the urban setting." The Panchayat dictated social rules: the place of women in society; abolishing polyandry and accepting the concept of divorce. It had the power to excommunicate. The early 19th century Panchayat demanded that "children of intermarried couples be brought to it for adjudication," recounts Palsetia, adding, "The community accepted the draconian measures of the Panchayat since at that time (they) were deemed necessary... Today we talk of rights. Nobody talked of rights in the early 19th century. (The Panchayat's) bandobast was not legislative law but the ethos of the community that understood its customs."

When the needs of the historical environment changed, the Panchayat was seen as no longer relevant. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy saw the British influence as a more secure element for maintaining Parsi institutions and the Panchayat was dumped in favor of western education and the British legal system, observes Palsetia.

The decline of the Panchayat unleashed a multitude of ideas which, over time, were formulated into laws of marriage, divorce and inheritance and women came to be recognized as property owners under the law. "Marriage law and the marriage ceremony are both symbols of created customs...a combination of Iranian and Indian customs under the British model."

With the concept of rights arising by end 19th, early 20th century, the question arose: Who constitutes a Parsi? The new mechanism of the law courts provided an opportunity and a challenge and in 1908 a working definition was provided by Justice Daver and Justice Beaman with the "BPP accepting the children of mixed marriages as an act of tolerance, not of acquiescence. It does not settle the debate since this was an extra community institution adjudicating on a community issue."

Palsetia's reading of history has led him to the belief that "compulsions, court battles, don't solve anything... The strength of the community in different historical settings is its creative adaptability. That (is what) goes beyond religious definitions to what binds us as a community, as a people... Creative adaptations can occur when there's a sense of consensus and goodwill in the community. Nothing prevents the priesthood, the laity and the leadership coming together to address different issues that need to be addressed... (Such adaptations) will never occur in law courts and extra community forums."

Bombay born, Canada raised Palsetia

made six trips to Bombay in the 1990s since the bulk of historical research material is here. The Maharashtra state archives are in a bad way, he reports, urging that as a community we need to preserve documents of our past. Other sources of Parsi history are the J. N. Petit Library, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet library and the Bombay University Library at Kalina. He recommends that the *Parsee Prakash* needs two persons to adequately translate it from Gujarati into English.

Son of the late Sam and Mehroo Palsetia, the historian's other research papers deal with Parsis and British royalty, Parsis and Mahatma Gandhi and an essay on the Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy family which he is currently reworking. Though not a regular attendee at ZSO (Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) activities, he keeps informed and has written a "small memoir on the Parsi community in Ontario." When not grappling with how and why we became what we are, Palsetia listens to good music — he used to play the oboe — and immerses himself in fiction, enjoying the writings of Bapsy Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry.

Quoting Marc Bloc, Palsetia says, "The object of history is to understand." Our community is in decline in absolute

terms — in education, numbers, resources... People survive because they want to survive. In that willingness is the definition of who they are... The strength of a community is its adaptability. Consensus is possible given good conscience and given respect for the history of the community. I don't believe in independent action because it will solve nothing. Rights can be adjudicated but peace comes with consensus."

When religions unite

Two international events in the closing months of 1999 are illustrative of the efforts that are being made in our increasingly divisive world to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, to stop the exploitation of the ecosystems, to end the barbarous antagonisms between peoples. The religions of the world, historically a fertile source of strife, are seeking to create a bridgehead of restitution, restoration and reconciliation on a global basis so that the technological and economic cohesion fostered by science may benefit humanity at large.

The seventh assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) was convened in Amman, Jor-

dan in November 1999 when various religious communities presented "models of peace and reconciliation in keeping with their sacred texts, teachings and warrants," writes Jehangir Sarosh of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe who has been representing Zoroastrians at interfaith conferences.

Acknowledging that "The rights embodied in the International Bill of Rights (the founding document of the United Nations Organization) with its inclusion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights can never be realized apart from the actualization of the common ethical concerns embodied in all religious traditions," the WCRP accepts that "True reconciliation requires the painful acknowledgement that both religious patterns and the actions of religiously motivated people have also caused conflict, suffering and pain," notes Sarosh.

Hence the emphasis is on affirming a common humanity, ensuring security and interdependence through fair systems of production and distribution and protecting all children from the ravages of war and exploitation in all forms, writes Sarosh. To enable such a scenario, the WCRP has committed itself to transmit the values and heritage of the

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Top from left (sitting): Roshan Rivetna, Dastoor, Roshan Dalal, Jungalwala and Bajan; (standing) Rusi Dalal, Rohinton Rivetna and Dhalla. Bottom: Same as above with addition of Shapurjee (extreme left)

various traditions to create "a shared culture of peace." The aim is to provide education that would instill "the skills of listening and hearing, of promoting tolerance and understanding, of healing, of reconciliation and of building a culture of peace," sowing the seeds of a common humanity where "the most righteous are the most honored," observes Sarosh.

Over 800 presentations, lectures, seminars and workshops marked the third Parliament of the World's Religions at Cape Town, South Africa in December 1999. Among the 6,000 who attended the event were 20 Zarathushtis from different parts of the world. Each day

started with over 20 parallel sessions of prayer and meditation. Bombay's Ervad Parvez Bajan and Dr Homi Dhalla and Chicago's Rohinton Rivetna conducted one session each, notes a press release.

Notable Zarathushti presentations included: Beliefs and concepts Zoroastrians share with other faiths and An explanation of the navjote initiation ceremony by Dastur (Dr) Kersey Antia; Ethical concepts of international living — the Zoroastrian viewpoint by Bajan; The seminal contribution of Zoroastrianism to the religions of the world and The resplendent vision of Zarathushtra as profiled in his *Gathas* — a world legacy by Keki R. Bhote; Gathic mysticism and interfaith harmony by Dhalla; Technology, information revolution and lifestyle adjustments in families by Dr Dolly Dastoor; Zoroastrianism's reciprocity with other world religions and civilizations by Khorshed F. Jungalwala; Zoroastrianism: Its imperative for interfaith work in the modern age with panelists

Rivetna, Antia, Bajan and Dhalla; and United Religions — A progress report and formulation of future direction by Rivetna. Other Zarathushti participants included Dilshad Antia, Mehroo Bhote and Roshan Rivetna from North America; Phiroshaw Camay and Soli Shapurjee of South Africa, Rusi and Roshan Dalal and Jehangir Sarosh of UK.

The Zarathushti gift to the world community on the occasion was to endeavor to teach Zarathushti youth worldwide the Global Ethic which had been developed at the second Parliament held in Chicago in 1993, notes Dhalla in his synopsis of the Parliament's proceedings.

One of the plenary sessions of the Parliament was addressed by independent South Africa's first president, Nelson Mandela, who noted, "Religion is one of the motivating forces of everything we do and will have a crucial role in inspiring humanity to meet the enormous challenges we face today." "Compassion, restraint, patience and responsibility" were the Dalai Lama's principles for ethical conduct, elucidated at the closing session.

Six Zoroastrians were among the 300 delegates comprising The Parliament Assembly which reviewed the draft of "A call to our guiding institutions, (religion, government, labor, industry, commerce, education, communications media, science and medicine, etc)" to reflect on and redefine their roles in addressing the critical issues of our times: disintegrating community, unrelenting demand for the earth's resources, aggravated injustice, divisions between rich and poor, and spiritual indirection.

A tribute to Toxy

The Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) had been preparing to honor their tireless president Toxy Cowasjee but the lady's allergy to public plaudits being well documented, the KZBM managing committee had to virtually smuggle it in!

The occasion was a fund raiser fashion show titled "Four Seasons" organized by Yezdi Haveliwala and the youth as part of the KZBM Contest for WZC 2000 on February 26, 2000. After the 600 strong audience had appreciated the clothes, the choreography, the music, the models, the poems composed to introduce each season, the sound, the lighting, etc. Cowasjee spoke about the forthcoming World Congress.



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*KZBM
joint
secretary
Sunnu
Golwala
felicitating
Cowasjee
while
Havelivala
applauds*

Presenting her a 'Tribute Box' and a bouquet, KZBM vice president Gool Talati addressed Cowasjee: "Our very dear Toxy, you have touched the life of a multitude of people over the years, and this is a small recognition of your immense service."

Acknowledging that the suddenness of the presentation and lack of prior notice may be inappropriate, Talati explained, "People close to Toxy repeatedly told us that she will not like it. Yet there was so much admiration and gratitude to express that we could not hold it all back. So here we are before you, a bit

clumsily perhaps!"

The fashion show occasion was selected for the presentation because "it is a rare day when Toxy is not involved with organizing of the function, so we could smuggle in the box and flowers!"

The tribute box, designed by Tannaz Minwalla, contained a selection of old photographs of projects Cowasjee headed and messages from overseas Zarathushti organizations, friends, KZBM committee members and the youths, informed Talati. "Normally tribute messages are read out publicly but Toxy would find that too embarrassing

and uncomfortable," she added. Nonetheless, some were quoted briefly.

Delineating Cowasjee's achievements Talati noted, "As the president of KZBM she has taken the Mandal to a great height and there is absolutely no one who has her ability and vision... (She) has served the entire Zarathushti community of Karachi, living here and overseas... has supported all individuals and associations who have approached her and has gone out of her way to make their projects a success." One tribute has described Cowasjee as the "ultimate world citizen since she believes the world is hers — her passion and her responsibility." The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 (WZC 2000) organizers have expressed their appreciation of her work and a Zarathushti scholar has upheld her "hard work and significant personal sacrifice" as an inspiration to youth.

The original intention was to present Cowasjee with a tribute album — a suggestion from author/journalist Farish-te Dinshaw — which later grew into a box, Talati noted.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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South African rand.....	5.80	6.20
Spanish peseta/per 100.....	23.55	
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Landing in trouble

The community in Surat is battling to thwart the government's land acquisition orders

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"We are very much disturbed by (the) sudden acquisition proceedings started by the Government of Gujarat, taking away nearly four-fifth of the land situated in and around (the) Umarwada Parsi Tower of Silence, the final resting place of the Zoroastrian community," wrote Dr Sam Bhacca, president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) in his letter dated June 4, 2000 to the chairman of the National Commission for Minorities seeking his help and intervention.

The community in Surat was alarmed when the *Gujarat Samachar* of May 21, 2000 carried an advertisement notifying that the collector, Surat, would be acquiring certain plots of land in Umarwada for the development of the Khetiwadi Upanna Bazar Samitee (Agriculture Produce Market Committee). A similar advertisement in the *Gujarat Mitra* and *Gujarat Darpan* of the same day referred to the acquisition of a part of Karanj property for the same purpose. Thus a total of 1,47,937 sq m of land were sought to be acquired.

"We have already filed our objections...before the special land acquisition officer — deputy collector, Choryasi Prant, Surat," mentions Bhacca in a letter to *Parsiana*. As a minority trust they claimed they were entitled to the protection of fundamental rights guaranteed to the minorities under the Constitution of India. And particularly since this land is used for religious purposes where Zoroastrians receive their last rites before they are laid to rest in the Towers of Silence, they noted, "This...is such a sacred place where human movement and other activities are restricted in the vicinity of about 300 feet all around, and for the land appurtenant to beyond this limit activities are permitted subject to a specific negative covenant that no high rise construction will be permitted even if the FSI (floorspace index) is available...and

if the land...is acquired for the purpose of expansion of the market yard, the public purpose for which the land is being used will be defeated..."

Declaring that all the survey numbers proposed to be acquired are owned by the SPP, a public charitable trust registered under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, they held that the purpose for which the lands are sought to be acquired is "not a public purpose but a private purpose inasmuch as the Market Committee is not a 'government'..."

They further contended that the Market Committee does not require the land for expansion of the market yard since it already owns and possesses more than sufficient vacant open land. They listed further available lands in the vicinity of the market yard: government wasteland or *gaucher* land (for grazing) which could suit the market's purpose. Besides the Market Committee had earlier negotiated in private for the purchase of some of these lands, they recalled.

As explained by Bhacca in his letter of June 14, 2000 to Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna, the Zoroastrian representative on the National Commission for Minorities, it was in 1992 that the Market Committee had entered into an agreement with the SPP to buy 42,044 sq yd (35,153 sq m) of land in Umarwada and 15,759 sq yd (13,176 sq m) in Karanj for which the charity commissioner's sanction had also been obtained. "Against this some of the Parsis preferred an appeal with the Gujarat Revenue Tribunal" for which a judgment is awaited, the hearings now over. The Market Committee which had to wait for eight years because of this appeal "tried to use this method of land acquisition," continued Bhacca. The Market Committee has already acquired nearly 1,30,000 sq yards (1,08,695 sq m) just opposite this site, constructing thereon the market, with shops, outhouses, etc and business ac-

tivities have already commenced there, writes Bhacca. "There (is) still lots of vacant land available with them for development if at all they really intend to develop the said market...In spite of that they are trying to acquire lands of our trust," complained Bhacca.

Acknowledging Sethna's "prompt action and valuable services," Bhacca referred to Sethna's conversation with a competent authority at the Sachivalaya in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Thereafter Bhacca with his co-trustee Noshir Dabhoiwala and honorary executive officer Sorab Katpitia called upon the collector of Surat who "heard us patiently and...assured us that she will consider the matter from all angles. However, as a precautionary measure we are following up the matter with our lawyer..."

While usually it is Ketty Arun Mehta who appears for the SPP in all property matters at the Gujarat High Court, with her being away on an overseas vacation, the documents were handed over to Prakash Jani to file preliminary objections as well as to file a writ petition if circumstances demand, reported Bhacca.

"This is not the first time that huge pieces of lands under the SPP have been acquired by the Municipal Corporation for roads, stores, godowns, etc," stated Dr Minoo Hiraji Parabia, Eruch B. Lakdawala and Noshir B. Daboo of the Jarthosti Dharma and Samaj Seva Samiti (JDSSS) who summoned a meeting at Surat's Entee Dhamshala on June 18, calling upon all elders and youngsters, males and females to attend the proceedings such that with one voice the community can express its disapproval, mentioned their handbill in Gujarati.

The following Sunday, nearly 1,000 Zoroastrians took to the streets with banners, placards and posters to decry

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the collector's acquisition order. Observing the tenets and traditions of their faith is dearer to them than life, was their message boldly printed in Gujarati. Starting at Nanpura, the rally proceeded through Rustompura, Sagrampura and ended at the office of the deputy collector Sangita Sinh, according to a report in *Parsidom*, July 15, 2000.

A joint statement in Gujarati was then issued by the SPP trustees, Bhacca, Dabhoiwala, Khushru Lashkari, Dhunjishah Dumasia, Jamshed Dotiwala, Homi Doodhwala, Shehroo Sopariwala and Hormazdiyar Patel. Through their handbill the trustees sought to inform the "Parsi community as to what we are doing to thwart the acquisition proceedings," while respecting the religious traditions and keeping the interests of the community in mind. This clarification was also carried in toto in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Bombay Samachar*.

The SPP then sent letters to the chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, the secretariat of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and other anjumans and punchayets in India apprising them of the developments in Surat and requesting them to lodge protests against the proposed acquisition proceedings. "The community is facing a serious situation. If immediate and strong protest is not lodged, in future the community assets will...(face) more such situations," warned Bhacca in his letter. "Such a matter may have to be faced by other Parsi charity trusts managing Towers of Silence (around) which there are open lands (so) punchayets and anjumans of various places and especially those of Gujarat should write to the Government of Gujarat about their complete disagreement of the proposed acquisition..."

The Federation and its constituent members agreed to join the SPP's protest against the proposed acquisition at the executive council meet convened in Madras on July 15, 2000. They advised the SPP to find a way of opting out of its earlier proposed sale, join forces with the JDSSS to present a united front and grow bawal on the available land in the interest of fire-temples in Surat and Bombay which are starved of kathi. As Sethna noted, in these days when minorities have been unhappy targets of violence in the country the "sanction of law is in our favor if we use the land for (the purpose for) which it is assigned."

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Protecting Parsi rights

According to Lt Gen Adi Sethna, member of the National Commission for Minorities, Indians outside Maharashtra and Gujarat barely know of the Parsis

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The major worry about demographic decline is the impact on income... Each year there are more people in the non-productive age groups," Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna, the Zoroastrian member of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), told the community members gathered together at the J. B. Vachha High School at Dadar Parsi Colony at the invitation of the trustees of The Mancherji E. Joshi Memorial Trust (MJMT) on June 17, 2000. Substantial interaction between audience and speaker marked the occasion.

Flipping his diagonally folded kerchief to emphasize his point, Sethna demonstrated the difference between the wide youth-based structure of national Indian society versus the inverted pyramid of the Zoroastrian community with its slender youth population expected to support the burgeoning aged strata. While deaths annually average 1,000 at Bombay's Doongerwadi alone, births in the whole of India would barely number 800, he noted.

"We cannot wish away our age," said Sethna, pointing to the substantial incidence of breast cancer, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's and other diseases.

"In (Bombay) they know Parsis. Elsewhere they don't," said Sethna, iterating the need for the community members to help the census staff document the information correctly in light of the 10 percent decennial drops over the latter part of the 20th century. Half the people of the 10,000-strong Dadar Parsi Colony have not been listed at the last census, complained noted social worker and MJMT trustee Mithoo Jesia. Is it because census personnel are inadequately briefed? she wondered. "Can associations give the census?" Jesia asked. A member of the audience suggested that Parsi numbers were not ad-

equately reflected in the final figures because the person taking the census tends to list Parsi Zoroastrians among "others." "Often the person taking the



Sethna (left) and Morris: "getting people together" Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

census does not know it (but) Parsis, as a subgroup, exists" in the census data files, assured Sethna, ascribing errors to "ignorance rather than malafides." He urged Zoroastrians of each locality to ensure through their associations, that they are counted and are available to be counted. He suggested that the community associations "use cable TV to announce which locality will be censused, on which day," while he asked the Census Commission to sensitize their team on minority recognition at the national and state levels.

Sethna fielded a number of questions and requests for reservation for Parsi students in general and professional colleges. "Too many people don't seem to be able to get through even the junior college level," commented Sethna, bemoaning the absence of Parsis in the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) and IFS (Indian Foreign Service). Only a few remain in the IPS (Indian Police Service) and the armed forces,

according to Sethna. He ascribed the drought to individual and family attitudes about which the Minorities Commission and the government can do nothing. "Overprotection of the male child has led to ruination. My grandfather began life as a postman (and eventually became a) constable. There was an urge to improve the quality of life for the family... During World War I Parsi doctors won military crosses... In World War II the proportion of Parsis (in the armed forces) was high... because parents realized that the way to push people up was to become officers... Education means effort for the child as well as parents. Two of my daughters are PhDs. My eldest grandson got into six medical colleges. But how hard they slogged!" stressed Sethna.

Sethna reminded the audience that Parsis had not asked for reservation and that the late Homi Taleyarkhan and other distinguished Parsis had shot down the community's demand for reservation. Noting that it was now up to the community to decide what form of reservation was required, he informed the gathering that he was pursuing the applicability of the 1991 Supreme Court judgement regarding New Delhi's St Stephen's College where the Court acknowledged that minority founded and managed institutions had the right to a 50 percent reservation. But, he asked, "Have we done enough to fill the available vacancies?" referring to two seats available in Karnataka which if left unavailed, will be lost for good. "The question is not only of reservation but of Parsi charity... Do our organizations help with grounding from eighth standard onward?" Are people willing to work with loans or "do we only want grants?" asked Sethna.

On the bright side he had heard that

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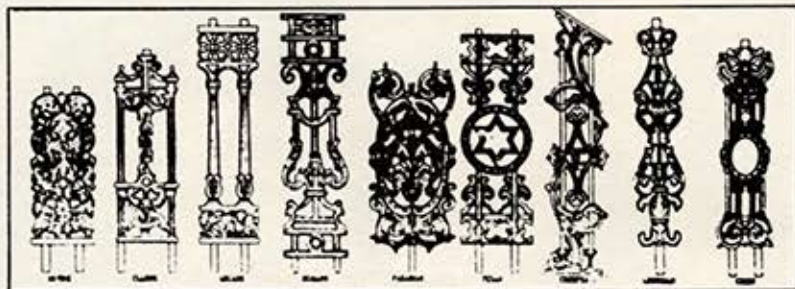
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a substantial number of community youths had opted for information technology, maintaining the community's penchant for entering new fields of education. Also on the anvil was the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP)'s venture capital scheme.

Jesia sought Sethna's reassurance in safeguarding the covenant providing exclusive right of residence to Parsis in the Colony. (The right to exclusive residence for the community in the Dadar Parsi Colony was upheld by the City Civil Court in 1980.) Unaware of this covenant until a few hours ago Sethna suggested that the municipality and the state government needed to be addressed before involving the NCM.

Noted solicitor and MJMT president Soli Morris recounted how the Colony founder Mancherji Edulji Joshi had begged Parsis earlier to purchase plots on this land when it was a jungle. "Only 70-75 plots are under the deed," he noted, adding that non-Parsis can own the plots but cannot reside there as per the covenant.

In his speech welcoming Sethna and the five BPP trustees — Jamshed Guzder, Dadi Engineer, Dinshaw Mehta, Rustom Tirandaz and Dinshaw Tamboly

continued on page 106

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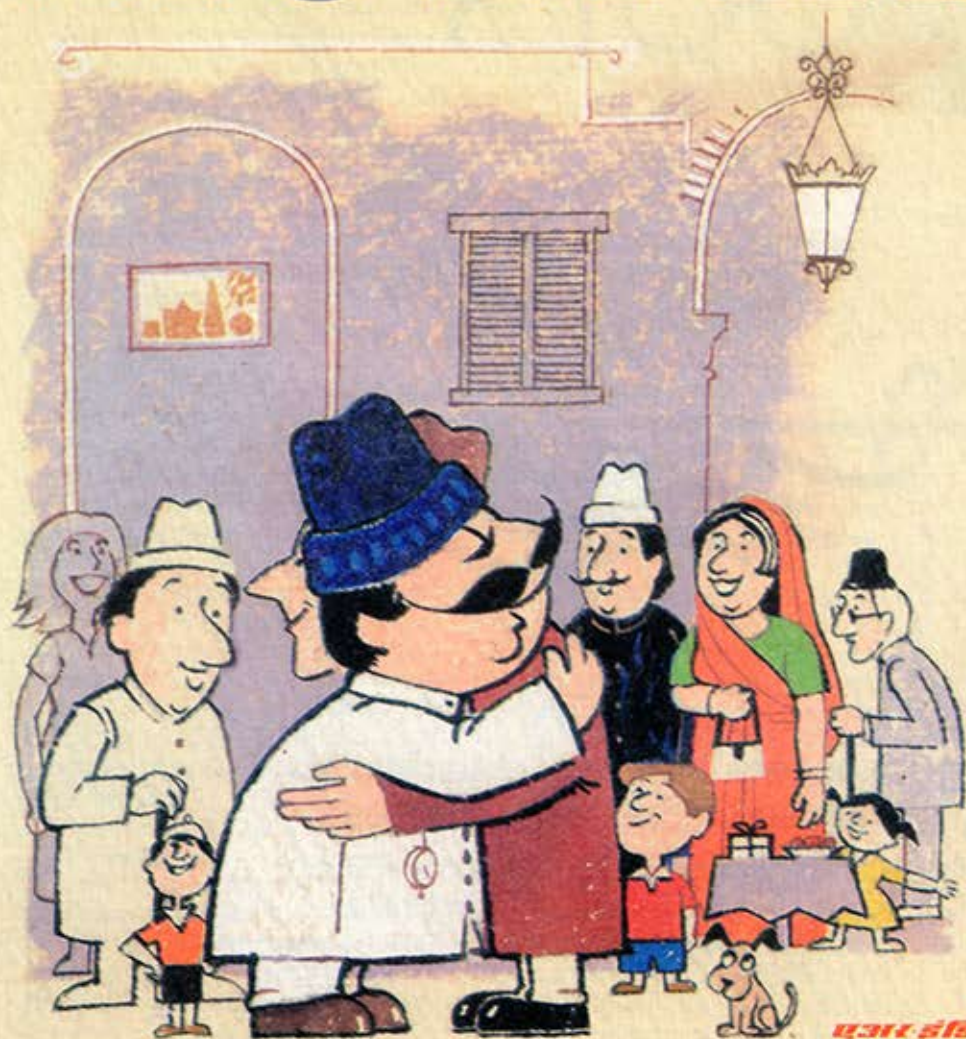


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READERS' FORUM

continued from page 30

a handful. Hence those few birds still existing are not enough to do the job in minutes — not even days! The undevoured bodies lying around decompose and rot producing an unbearable stench which is also against the tenets of the faith. Which then is the lesser evil?

There are a whole lot more valid reasons for changing the system but they are too ugly and revolting to write about in the media. Suffice it to say that an electric crematorium disposes the body quickly and hygienically with dignity and decorum, and lesser revulsion at the thought of a loved one's remains being so desecrated. Moreover, from the crematorium ashes can be collected in an urn to be retained or to be disposed of as per the wishes of the deceased or the family.

The crematorium is certainly the answer for replacing the orthodox system which was good and practical for the medieval ages. There does not seem to be a better method than the electric crematorium where the body is incinerated by heating elements (like from the sun) without flames of the fire held so sacred by the Zoroastrian faith.

Is it the contention of the orthodox that souls of Parsis dying abroad, who are either buried or turned into ashes in a crematorium, do not go to heaven but remain in purgatory? I believe that the choice should be left to the individual to exercise his/her right freely in a modern democratic society without the dogmatic approach of the orthodox few forcing their beliefs onto other members of the community at large. The right of every Zoroastrian, whether opting for the Towers of Silence or the crematorium, to have the prayers and rites performed for a funeral are inalienable and sacrosanct. Nobody has the right to overrule the last wishes of the deceased.

Establishing a crematorium at the Towers of Silence would solve the controversy once and for all.

BURJOR POONAWALA

Funds for Doongerwadi

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) through their announcements in the Press have informed all Zoroastrians that the Punchayet is incurring huge losses in maintaining the properties at Doongerwadi and in providing services to the relatives of the deceased. We consider it the duty of every Zoroastrian to contribute his mite — the maximum possible — towards this most worthy cause.

We in the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) are not only keenly aware of the problems being faced by the Punchayet in this regard, but also appreciate the multi-pronged measures being adopted by the Punchayet to renovate and beautify bunglis and gardens. We therefore took upon ourselves the task of doing our utmost to help the Punchayet to collect amounts for its "Doongerwadi Fund."

Since October 1999 all the baugs and colonies from Colaba to Jogeshwari have been covered. A dedicated band of about a dozen volunteers between the age of 10 and 72, went round all the baugs and colonies on Sunday mornings and collected over Rs 8.5 lakhs. Besides, they helped the BPP to collect a further sum of over Rs 1,15,000.

We realize that this amount, though large by itself, is nothing compared to the needs of the BPP. We wish to exhort all Zoroastrians that they should donate to this excellent cause on a regular basis. Whenever and whatever they wish to donate may be sent directly to our office at Union Press, 13,

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DADI B. ENGINEER

President, World Zoroastrian Organisation, India

Honor the heritage

Considering our microscopic numbers, our physical assets in India are fantastic by calculation. Our largest physical assets are our housing colonies, spread over India and in Karachi. There is a cruelty attached to their story! The archaic Rent Act has frozen the rents, across most parts of India, since 1948. All expenses are at current costs. The Cost of Living Index (CLI) is calculated on current economic indices. So also the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). The salaries are indexed to the CLI, but our largest single physical asset — our housing stock — stands in tatters! The combined deficit of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) in 1998/99 was Rs 1.26 crores for its housing estates, plus

another Rs 0.18 crore for its Doonger-wadi. Total = Rs 1.44 crores.

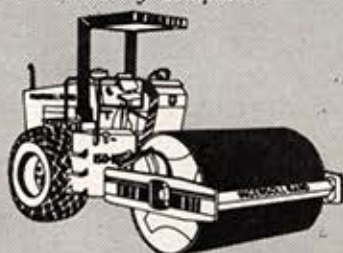
It is but natural that due to the sheer weight of numbers (though only 71,000) the largest concentration of housing stock happens to be in India. Of that, 60-70 percent is in Greater Bombay.

An impassioned plea was made to the tenants enjoying the said archaic protection (endlessly merciful to them, and endlessly merciless to all the landlords), that they should volunteer to enhance their rents — 2,500 individually addressed appeals were sent out. Only eight cared to reply. Two retired school teachers agreed to have their rentals enhanced reasonably. Two aged spinsters also agreed to oblige. The lone shining star was Phiroze Amroliwalla who sent in Rs 15,000 in response.

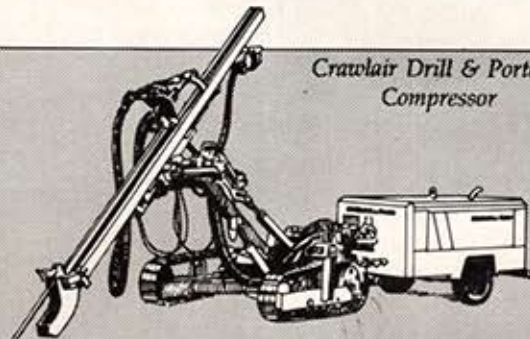
The BPP carried out a survey of the health and safety of the buildings more than 40 years old, and has planned to allocate some meaningful amounts towards the program of repairs on a cyclical basis i.e. on a continual basis till the assets stand erect.

Fellow Zoroastrian tenants do not seem to be bothered to retain our priceless physical heritage which they have enjoyed, for a song, for 52 years. There

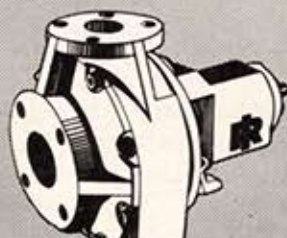
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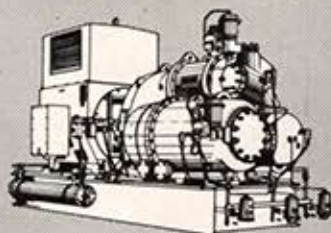
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are 5,000 plus flats in Greater Bombay owned by the BPP and other trusts. Tenants with Mercedes, Honda and BMW cars, children going to the poshest of schools and colleges, and the tenants being members of the swankiest clubs, are oblivious of this malady.

It is high time that those who ate out of the community's common pot, very freely, put something back into it, in equal measure. Else, those physical heritages will go the Harappan way: be ruined as a result of natural disaster.

I am told that the priceless Meherji Rana Library in Navsari, a treasure-trove of literature, customs, history and religion, is in a pathetic state (scholar and author Pilo Jungalwalla of Delhi has donated Rs 6,00,000 for the modernization of the Meherji Rana Library through the UNESCO assisted project coordinated by Dr Shernaz Cama — Editor). Also, the much smaller library at Tarapore is in danger of being infested by white ants. The respective anjumans and the trustees of these libraries have to do something immediately so that these heritages can be microfilmed and preserved for posterity. I am aware that the average life of a microfilm is 10-20 years, and the canisters

have to be preserved in air-cooled/air-conditioned storage space.

We lost our Kayan glory, and we lost our all at the battles of Nihavand and Qadisiya. We lost our Empire in 631 AD. But we retained our two assets intact — our probity (which is the first part of our religion) and our spirit of enterprise.

The community owes an immeasurable debt to the dasturs of yore. They carried the entire religious lore in their minds and started recording it, they say, two to three centuries (some say five) after landing in India. That heritage is, again, in danger! Many of us do not pray, on the ostensible plea that we do not comprehend what we pray. Avesta, Zend, Pazand and Pahlavi are Greek and Latin to us. If an informal survey is carried out, and the Parsis are honest to themselves, one in five does not pray. In the urban centers, may be one in five girls does not wear a sudreh and kusti. Despite the miraculous powers of our prayers, faith in our prayers is becoming fainter and fainter.

In the major metropolises, speaking in English alone is the fashion. Speaking in Gujarati is not fashionable and it is supposed to be a medium of yokels. We Parsis are not language fanatics, but we

must maintain our cultural heritage which is born out of Gujarat. Culturally, we are phase II of Gujarati Hindus and we should be proud of it. Men like Kavi Khabardar, Kabraji, P. J. Marzban and others have embellished the Gujarati language and literature. But very many of our youngsters refuse to speak in Gujarati. Some have told me, categorically, that our pledge to King Jai Rana, which we honored for over 13 centuries, is enough, and there should be no mandate to perpetuate that part of the pledge. I am glad that Dr Homi Dhallia is spearheading a movement to attract our children to read, write and speak Gujarati. I am told that even in Toronto such classes are run, with the crusading spirit of Putli Noshir Mirza and her team who keep not just the 'language torch' but also the 'culture torch' burning.

The Jews and Poles are classic examples. They have retained their roots in their language, despite the severest oppressions faced during World War II under the purges of Hitler and his war-machine. At no cost should we dilute, much less surrender and ignore, our priceless heritage. There will be a terrible price to pay for neglect.

BEHRAM T. DASTUR

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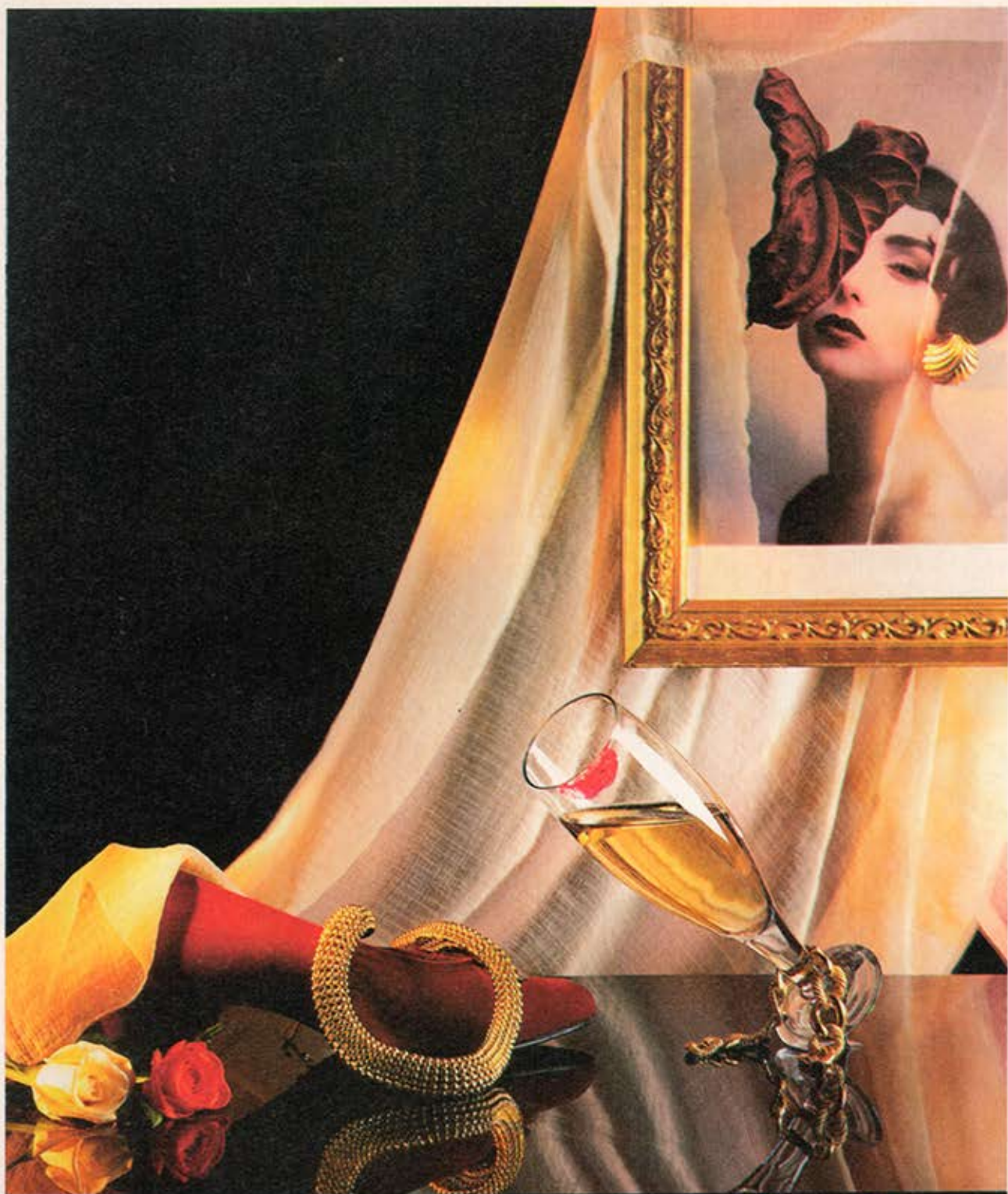


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Help train doctors

Our community has a rich tradition of having produced an outstanding cadre of doctors in every area of medicine. If this tradition is to continue, it is imperative that those of our youth who are interested in and qualify for medicine must be given the necessary support to offset the disadvantage that they face on account of the reservations policy pursued by the government.

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have decided to take a lead in this matter with a hope that other trusts will also follow suit and extend substantial financial support to Zoroastrian students who are interested in and qualify for the medical discipline. The trustees have earmarked a very substantial amount for this purpose and are capitalizing the same. The interest would be used to achieve the objective.

The scheme will operate in a very simple manner:

- Zoroastrian students who are interested and qualify for the medical discipline should send their applications for financial support to BPP for consideration.
- Depending upon the number of applications received, the funds available at the material time and other relevant data

taken into consideration, the BPP would consider extending financial support on an annual basis, for the duration of the course. Naturally, for the support to be renewed, it would be incumbent upon the beneficiaries to prove their fine academic performance.

• The support would be by way of an interest-free loan which the beneficiaries would repay to the BPP in instalments once they begin their medical practice and are settled in their careers. This would enable the recycling of funds, thereby allowing more of our youth to pursue a medical career.

• Applications seeking assistance may be forwarded to the Senior Executive (Welfare), BPP, 209, D.N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001, along with all relevant details.

Donors who are interested in supporting this worthwhile cause may send cheques and drafts, made payable to "Parsi Punchayet — Bombay" at the same address.

It is a universally known fact that a sound education is the most valuable gift that one can give to the youth. Investing in our youth is akin to investing in the future of our community.

S. D. MASTER

Sr Executive, Welfare, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

Electoral reforms

The scheme, for the election of the trustees, promoted by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, seems innocuous but it is hoodwinking gullible and trustful Parsis.

It will surprise many to know that of the estimated 45,000 adult Parsi residents of Bombay only 1,604 (3.5 per cent) are authorized to exercise their right at trusteeship elections. The total number of authorized voters 1,604 consists of all the 802, who have paid Rs 5,000/15,000 in the past, as donation to, the Punchayet, in order to purchase their right of voting and another equal number who have been elected from among 20,000 members enlisted on the General Register on payment of Rs 5. I have never come across anyone asking me to give money in order to obtain a voting right. Except the Bombay Punchayet all other punchayets operating in India and abroad follow the system of adult franchise.

The suggestion, by the Punchayet, that in order to infuse fresh blood/ideas, in the working of the Punchayet, no trustee should be allowed to remain in office for more than 21 years, is preposterous. If the Punchayet is genuine, they should restrict the term of office to three or maximum

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four years, and not more than two terms, that is six or maximum eight years, only when a person is found exceptionally efficient. The trustees, if they are really sincere, must learn to give up power and position and should not treat trusteeship as their *jagir* (property).

Trusteeship elections in the past were free, fair and held in a peaceful and dignified manner. The elections held recently, were different. It is shameful that dirty politics have crept in our community elections also.

It will be good for the community if a code of good behavior is evolved, limiting the ugly display of money and muscle power. At least let the elections appear dignified.

DALI J. GUNDEVIA

Matching marrow

My cousin, 40-year-old Arshis Pavri happily married to Persis, has been blessed with a young son Johan, seven years of age. Arshis and Persis, both spent their childhood at Dadar, Bombay and migrated to USA in 1988.

In 1998 Arshis was diagnosed to be suffering from CML (chronic myelogenous leukemia). Arshis has been undergoing treatment at various well-known institutions such as Johns Hop-

kins, Sloan Kettering, Hackensack University, all located in USA.

As is well known, CML is a very serious and life threatening blood disorder. The only curative therapy is an allogeneic bone marrow transplant. Arshis has been receiving chemotherapy for two and a half years, trying to keep the disease in remission.

Arshis has had his name registered with all national and international registries. A search is being conducted in these registries every week for donors with matching types but thus far the same is yet to meet with success. We hope to create global awareness and locate a bone marrow donor residing in any country.

A bone marrow transplant, as some of us know, is far easier said than done. To get a matching donor is an uphill task, but one has to be undertaken. For any prospective donor it is necessary to initially have only a blood test done. If the tested blood matches, the individual could be selected as a bone marrow donor. Arshis' parents and brother have already undergone the blood test but unfortunately the result has been negative.

Essentially, in a case such as that of

Arshis, the sequence should be, first for the blood of the family members to be tested, thereafter members of the same ethnic community, after which those of the same race and so on. The odds naturally keep on increasing as one moves on from one segment to another.

At this point of time, an earnest request is being made to all Zoroastrians within the age group of 18 and 60 who would be interested in helping Arshis to get an initial blood test done. Those who are agreeable may get in touch with Arshis' family at Bombay: Rohinton Pavri, brother, Arnie Aderianwalla, mother-in-law, 803/C, Laxmi Bhuvan or 607/D, Daulat Manzil, Dr B. Ambedkar Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014. Tel: #+91(22)4149514 Tel: #+91(22)4128875 E-mail: kcpavri@bom3.vsnl.net.in E-mail: adrianwalla@yahoo.com

Donations will also be welcome as the financial involvement in this project is considerable. Donations may be sent in the name of "The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust," Shanti, 5th Floor, 6, Banaji Street, Fort, Bombay 400001. Donations to the WZO Trust are exempt u/s 80G (5) of the Income Tax Act 1961.

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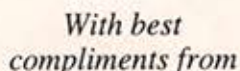
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Let's save our faith

Today 90 percent of our fellow Zoroastrians have forgotten how hard our ancestors had struggled to save the flame of this religion from extinguishing. It is due to this ignorance that today so many of our fellow Zarathushtis have begun to adopt new religions and faiths. It is not uncommon to see them worshipping idols and babas. Many have also discarded wearing their sudreh and kusti just because they feel that it's "old-fashioned!" But the question arises: Why is all this happening only in the Zoroastrian community? Have the Sikhs left wearing their turbans? Or have the Muslims forgotten to pray the namaz? Has anyone ever seen a Christian going to a mandir or a Hindu going to the church? No! Never! It is only in the Zoroastrian community that all this is happening and the root cause behind this is religious and communal ignorance.

It was due to this ignorance that we lost our dear Iran long ago and it was due to this same element that those groups of Zarathushtis which fled to China and Europe after the conquest of Persia just disappeared without any trace. I think that we Parsis are facing

the same problem that our forefathers faced a thousand years ago and if we do not take some action immediately, we are bound to repeat history once again.

We need to do our own little bit to help save our religion. Parents having infant children can start by taking their kids only to the fire-temples and to no other place of worship. Parents can read *Shah Nameh* stories to their children every night before going to bed. These stories will not only help the child learn more about his/her motherland Iran, but it will also help him/her to understand what is good and what is bad and how good always triumphs over evil. The *Shah Nameh* stories are also available in English. Besides all this, they can also teach their children simple everyday prayers from the *Khordeh Avesta* and can also make it compulsory for everyone in the family to wear their sudreh-kusti, day and night!

This kind of teaching will slowly but surely develop a kind of pride and affection amongst Zoroastrians for their Mazdayasni faith. And once this kind of bond is created, our children will take interest in our religion and help our community to survive. FARZAN B. MAZDA

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Mohammed Chhel

When we were young, we were told about the exploits of the magician Mohammed Chhel. Whether they were myths or facts one does not know.

As the story goes, one day Chhel was travelling in a train. A ticket examiner approached him and asked for his ticket. Chhel could not produce it. At the next station, Chhel was ordered to get down which he did.

In spite of great efforts by the engine driver, his assistant and the guard, the train would not start. The station master who had joined them was a bit puzzled and even afraid.

Then, some passenger pointed out that the man who was asked to get down at the station was a famous magician and unless he was taken back on the train, it would not move.

So, Chhel was requested by the railway staff and the passengers to resume his journey. As soon as Chhel entered the compartment and took his seat, the train started moving. To the amazement of the ticket examiner and the co-passengers, Chhel produced a bundle of railway tickets to different destinations.

Can any of your readers and especially Parsi magicians like 'Hayrat' tell us whether any authentic books have been written either in Gujarati (since he hailed from Gujarat) or in English or any other regional language, touching on the life and exploits of this legendary magician? **BHIKHAI M. ADENWALLA**

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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A dogged fight

In the early 19th century some daring Parsis in Bombay earned the wrath of the British rulers whilst trying to save dogs

Gopinath Bhaleker

It is recorded that in the 19th century the Parsi community exploded in a solitary incidence of violence on a trivial matter of dubious religious significance. Stray dogs were a great menace in the days of the East India Company, and the incident took place in June 1832.

Govind Narayan Madkholkar, a Maharashtrian chronicler who wrote in Marathi and Gujarati, describes the event in his book entitled *Mumbaiche Varnan*. Published in 1863, the volume contains authentic accounts of the city of Bombay and its peoples.

The dog menace, according to Madkholkar, had been in existence in the island city from the last decade of the 18th century. By the beginning of the 19th century, it assumed grave proportions. A wealthy Englishman died of a dog bite and in his will bequeathed his wealth to the company government with the proviso that the interest earned thereon should be utilized to kill stray dogs. According to Maclean in his book *Guide to Bombay-1875*, an English soldier named Smith died of a dog bite in 1818. In 1819, a legislation was passed to destroy stray dogs.

Initially the dog killers were paid half a rupee (eight annas) per dog, on the production of their carcasses which were buried thereafter. But after some time, the dogs killed were kept lying on the roads for two to three days before their final disposal. When in 1828 a new practice was introduced requiring the killer squads to produce the tails of the dogs killed, unscrupulous exterminators cut off the tails of live dogs and presented them to claim the money. As a result there was a sudden increase in

the population of tailless dogs!

This practice was ultimately abandoned for obvious reasons. Instead, stray dogs were captured and herded together on rented premises before their final



disposal in the high seas.

In a bid to earn money, the dog exterminators captured even the domesticated dogs. They entered houses, bungalows, verandahs and wadis to forcibly pick up the dogs, much to the annoyance of the residents and animal lovers. Members of some communities, especially the Baniyas and Bhatias, were dead against the killing but did nothing as they feared the government's wrath. But the members of the Parsi community were made of sterner stuff.

In 1830 Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Motichand Khemchand, Devidas Mohandas and other Parsi gentlemen and Brahmins presented a petition to the Company government praying that the dogs should not be killed in such an inhuman manner. Instead, it was proposed that the Company government could corner the stray dogs and release them in faraway places.

Just as Hindus observe the religious practice of offering crows *pindas* prepared from finely ground rice flour when performing rituals for their dead, the

Parsis offer specially prepared food to the dogs. And they were pained to witness the forcible capture and annihilation of their pets.

On June 6, 1832, the exterminators, accompanied by the police as usual, picked up dogs belonging to Parsis residing in the Fort area. Despite protests against the unlawful capture and demands for their release, the dog killers did not relent. Some altercations and manhandling ensued.

To express their resentment and anger against the wanton carnage, 100 to 150 members of the community came together and resolved to observe a *hartal* by closing down all provision stores and

establishments on the following day, June 7. It was decided to stop supplies of essential commodities, particularly food items, to the government personnel and the army stationed at Colaba.

In those days, suppliers of mutton and other meats to the English community and the army were Muslims; the native Christians provided bakery items, and neither community was in favor of the *hartal*, though

the Parsis had appealed to people residing inside and outside the Fort area to support them. The wealthy and educated Parsis had no inkling of the *hartal*, and the rioters consisted mostly of water carriers, cooks and shopkeepers.

Thus on June 7, 1832 the bazaar and all establishments were closed. Suppliers of meat and mutton were assaulted and turned back. Meat was strewn in the gutters of the Fort area. Likewise, suppliers of bakery items were repulsed, their wares thrown on the roads. All supply to the English community and army in Colaba was cut off. Carriages of English residents going to their offices were not allowed to reach their destinations. Many offices in the Fort area were forcibly shut. Even the judges going to the courts were not spared. The carriage of the chief judge of the Bombay Supreme Court was stopped, and garbage and dead rodents thrown into it. Violent activities by the Parsis continued into the afternoon.

Jejeebhoy and other prominent Parsis were requested to intervene. These



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gentlemen tried to pacify the agitated rioters, but not all were in the mood to listen. The Company government began to panic. The magistrate ordered the town manager to arrange for the army to put down the riot. But it took considerable time for the town manager to respond.

Ultimately, the magistrate ordered the arrest of the rioters who were kept in police custody. The town manager summoned the army at about two or three in the afternoon as a standby, with instructions to shoot at sight if necessary. The rioters then came to their senses and started dispersing. Two or three fleeing rioters were killed in the firing, while some of them were arrested and sentenced to two to three years' prison terms.

For a few years, the Company government was wary about the Parsi community. But happily, there was no support for the rioters from the wealthy and educated Parsis. Thereafter, the Company government began to trust the community as before.

Interestingly, the above fracas was the only one of its kind in the history of the Parsi community in the island city of Bombay in the 19th century. The Parsis are basically known to be peaceful and non-violent.

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What are Zoroastrian priests doing on my Christmas card?

Ken R. Vincent

Artists usually picture the magi who honored Christ at his birth as wealthy Arabs or kings but they were Zoroastrian priests, says the author

Who were the magi and why were they present at the birth of Jesus? Like much information on historical Christianity, the answers have been known to scholars for over a century, but not to the general public. The magi were priests of the Zoroastrian religion, the only religion in the ancient world other than Judaism that worshipped one God. That alone might have deemed the magi worthy to be in the vanguard of gentiles to honor Jesus, but more specifically, their prophet had also predicted the coming of future 'saviors.'

It is often assumed that they add to the credibility of the story by their having been astrologers. More importantly, they too were looking for a savior. In the first century, their prophet Zoroaster was as widely known as the Buddha is today. Zoroaster was revered in the Roman West as a sage and in the East as a prophet. His theology influenced Judaism from the time of Cyrus the Great, who was a follower of the religion of the magi, through the first century. In fact, the closer one gets to the time of Jesus, the more strongly Zoroaster's message becomes blended into Judaism.

Protestants who do not read the Jewish Apocryphal works such as the *Book of Tobit* miss this growing influence. The Zoroastrian influence is even greater in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, including the *Manual of Discipline* and the *War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness*.

In a very real way, the religion of Zoroaster is the foundation of all West-

ern religion. Skeptical? About 1600-600 BC (like Abraham and Moses, the actual dates of his life are unknown), Zoroaster had a series of revelations

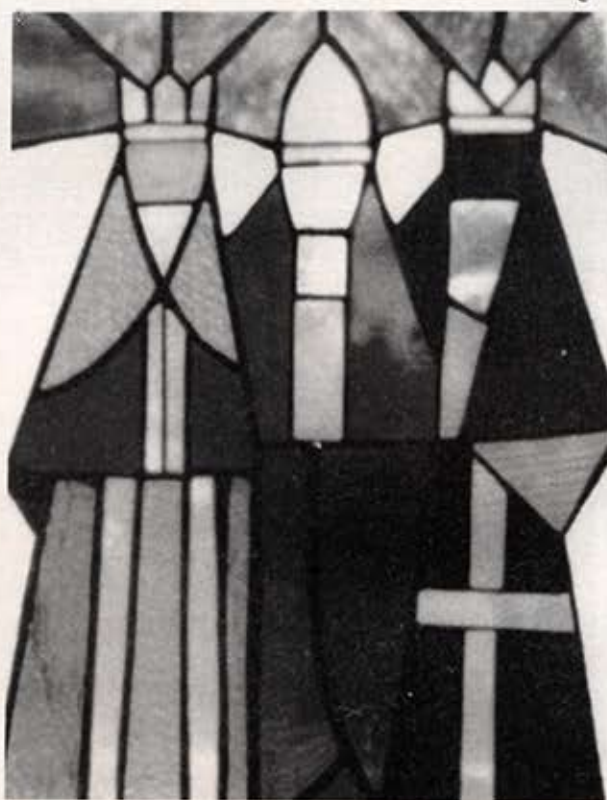
differences between the Abrahamic religions (Jewish, Christian and Moslem) and Zoroastrianism. One is that God is all good; evil comes from Satan, or, as

Zoroaster called him, the "Demon of the lie." While many of his followers, especially modern ones, see Zoroaster as a pure monotheist preaching moral dualism rather than cosmic dualism, Zoroastrianism for the most part has been seen as cosmic dualism (God versus Satan).

According to Zoroaster, God needs humanity and the rest of his creation to overcome evil. When this occurs, all humanity will be saved at the end of time. Then those humans who were more evil than good will have been purified in hell. Interestingly, the Universalist Christians also introduced this doctrine of universalist salvation.

The basic concepts and the imagery of Zoroaster's religion reveal a universal God who is the God of Light, this being the oldest non anthropomorphic (not possessing human characteristics) view of God. Accompanying God are the archangels and the angels. Before the Jews met the magi, their religion did not possess these elements. Granted, these ideas are more clearly associated with modern-day Christianity and Islam than they are with Rabbinic Judaism, but all the elements listed above were clearly present in the first century Jewish world of Jesus.

The God of the ancient Jews was a tribal God who was definitely anthropomorphic: God walked in the garden of



Artist Pam Vincent's depiction of the magi on stained glass

from God, whom he called Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord). See if these concepts sound familiar: God — Satan; good — evil; light — darkness; archangels and angels — archdemons and demons; death — judgment; heaven — hell; the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

The first person to preach these ideas wasn't a Jew, a Christian or a Moslem. The first was Zoroaster. There are two



Eden with Adam and Eve. In Judaism before the Babylonian captivity, God did all the punishing of humanity. After the Jews met the magi, Satan took over, as a fallen angel able to lead humanity astray because of free will.

Regarding the afterlife, Judaism is very vague until the Zoroastrian influence. *The Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes* both asked the question, "Why be good, if after death all wind up in the same place, Sheol?" Compare this to the post-Zoroastrian influence evident in the story in the *Gospel of Luke* of the rich man and Lazarus. In this story, Sheol is now divided into paradise and punishment, and the two are separated by a great chasm.

After the Zoroastrian Persians let the Jews go home from Babylon, a decree from Cyrus the Great was recorded verbatim in the *Book of Ezra*. Like Zoroaster's vision of God, the Jewish God not only became God of the Universe, but God also became a lot nicer. This is especially true of the account in the latter part of *Isaiah*, often called *Second Isaiah* because it appears to have been written by a different author. Some of the latter portions of *Isaiah* appear to

be paraphrases of the *Hymns of Zoroaster*.

Though the Persian empire came to an end with the conquest of Alexander the Great, the influence of the Zoroas-

Why are the magi depicted at Christmas looking like Arab sheiks from the cast of the Broadway musical *Kismet*?

trian religion did not. The religion remained dominant in the Middle East, especially after the Parthians took over the Middle East in 235 BC. The Parthian empire lasted until 224 AD and was followed by the Sassanian empire which embraced Zoroastrianism as its state religion. The Sassanian empire continued until the Moslem conquest.

While the Zoroastrian religion was not practised in the West, with the exception of the heresy Mithraism, Zoroas-

German interpretation of the magi on horseback

ter was nevertheless revered as a great teacher. It is said that in the library at Alexandria, over a million lines were attributed to Zoroaster. Actually, his only known authentic composition are hymns to God and is about as long as the *Gospel of Matthew*.

It is important to realize that at the time of Jesus, the borders of the Roman empire were located just outside Palestine in the Jordanian desert, where the Parthian empire began. It is likely that the magi were 'in the neighborhood' at the time of Jesus' birth.

The world of Jesus is a world of Zoroastrian ideas embedded in Judaism: the good mind versus the evil mind; angels of light versus angels of darkness; the idea that heaven is the reward if your good deeds outweigh your evil deeds; and that the angels are recording good and evil deeds.

The idea of evil as separate from God was real to Jesus. He was tempted by Satan, he cast out demons. Most importantly, Jesus talked about God being a good and loving God. The God of Jesus



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in a very real way was no longer the God of Abraham.

In the psychological terms of Kohlberg's moral development theory, the God of the ancient Hebrews in *Genesis* was a God of pre-conventional morality: humanity was not to ask why, but simply to obey God or be punished. The God of Moses was a God of conventional morality and conformity: these are the rules; obey them for your own good.

On the other hand, the God of Jesus, like Zoroaster's view, is post-conventional in its morality: God is universal goodness; one should speak and act from the heart. The God of Jesus is wholly good and is on our side for all time. We are to strive "to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect."

The worship of one God and the high moral level of the religion of the magi set them apart in the ancient world and made theirs a religion most similar to Judaism. Additionally, Zoroaster had predicted the coming of a savior. This places the Zoroastrian priests at the birth of Jesus. It also explains why priests from the Temple of Jupiter or from the Temple of Isis and Osiris, who were certainly in the region, are not included

in the story of those who came to honor Jesus, even though these other religions practised astrology and might have also 'followed a star.'

In the West it is forgotten that until the rise of Islam, Christianity was the second largest religion in the Middle

Early Christian art and stories sometimes have two, four, or even 12 magi

East, behind Zoroastrianism. If you wanted to make converts, to include the magi in the story of the birth of Jesus was a powerful entree into the Zoroastrian world. The second century *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy* was very direct: "And it came to pass when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a city in Judea, in the time of Herod the King, the wise men came from the East according to the prophecy of Zoroaster."

Christianity was occasionally persecuted by the Zoroastrian Sassanian kings until the Council of Nicea in the fourth

An early mosaic of the magi shown with the correct attire

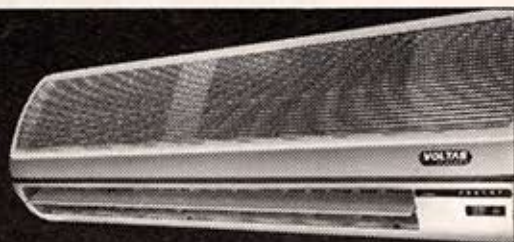
century. The persecution stopped when the Sassanians learned that the Christians in Persia were not Trinitarians, were considered heretics by the Orthodox Byzantines and, therefore, were not spies and sympathizers with the Byzantine enemy.

Today in the Middle East, there are still some Christians and Jews. There are even 12,000 Gnostic followers of John the Baptist in Iraq. Also, the Zoroastrians are still with us. There are 60,000 Zoroastrians in Iran, about 100,000 in India (where they fled to get away from the Muslims who had conquered Iran), and another 15,000 in North America. One thing that always puzzles modern Zoroastrians is why their priests, the magi (this is a Greek mispronunciation of the Persian word *mobed*, which means priest), are depicted at Christmas looking like Arab sheiks from the cast of the Broadway musical *Kismet*.

The development of the magi in the art of the West is a story in itself. For the first thousand years, the magi were pictured correctly in all-white Persian at

continued on page 198

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On 18th June 2000, to celebrate the 74th Baj Anniversary of **Late Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff** special function was held under the auspices of MAZDAYASNIE MONASTERIE in Bombay at the Bharda School Hall.

Despite heavy rain the function was well attended. Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master Moos President Zoroastrian College welcomed the distinguished Guests of Honour and the speakers. She spoke on the Life, Work, and Mission of Ustad Saheb; and the work of the Zoroastrian College, to prepare the people of this planet Earth for the advent of Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb.

She praised the work of **Prof. Sam Doctor**, Head of the Avesta and Scriptural Studies Department of the College; for his excellent scholarship and mastery of ancient languages including Avesta and Pazard; which he was teaching to the College students through this department as a Three years Diploma Certificate Course. Prof. Sam Doctor gave a scholarly discourse on the subject of the extant Pazard texts.

She further praised the work of **Prof. Dr. Meher L. Pavri** who was also lecturing in Zoroastrian Religious subjects at the College for past over 12 years. Despite his physical difficulties of being nearly blind, yet with the capable help of his devoted wife **Roshan**, who had typed and corrected and re-written his manuscript of his original Ph.D. Thesis on the important

topical subject of the teachings of the Vendidad, Gathas and Yashts, he had succeeded in completing his thesis and now presenting it for public benefit as a book.

His book is available at the Zoroastrian College Office above address by donation. Many other books are also available - request please list.

Dr. Viraf Dhalla, well-known for his original research work in Interfaith symbols of religions and on Buddhist stupas and teachings of Lord Buddha, gave a very interesting talk on the subject of the importance of the teachings of Asho Zarathushtra for the present day people. He is attached to the House of Tatas.

Dr. Sorab Arceiwalla and his gracious wife **Nergish** graced the occasion as Guests of Honour. Dr. Arceiwalla was consultant to the WHO and specialist in Water Purification Technology. He has spent several years in Turkey and other foreign postings. He gave a vivid short talk on the practical importance of Environment, Ecology in present times and the value of the teachings contained in the Vendidad and other Avestan texts.

The book was formally released by Dr. Sorab Arceiwalla. Goodwill Messages were read from **Dr. Behramshah D. Pithavala**, who wrote an excellent Foreword for this rare book.

THE WORK OF THE INTERFAITH PEACE STUDIES DEPARTMENT

This department of the Zoroastrian College functions worldwide, headed by the dynamic Fr. Albert Nambiarparambil cmi. Its main function is to enable persons from all countries of the world to come to India to study the living Faiths; and functions as a role model for the study of peaceful relations between people of all faiths. Parsis hold a world record of having no wars for past over one thousand years; and they live in peace and harmony with people of all communities and religions.

Through this department the College sponsors the organisation of international conferences in collaboration with other organisations. These include the WFIRC, WRPC amongst others. This year the MILLENNIUM INTERFAITH DIALOGUE CONFERENCE was held in January 2000 in Cochin. A delegation had attended to represent the college. Through this department the youth are encouraged to learn tolerance for all faiths. Ervad Yazadi Karanjia also represented the Zoroastrian College at this conference in Cochin headed by Justice Shamusuddin, retired Judge of Kerala High Court.

Through this department the College also attends the conferences organised by other societies in India and foreign countries to represent the Zoroastrian Faith. Since 1990 the St. Egidio community conferences held in Italy and Belgium at which heads of religions and heads of religious communities/denominations are invited. Zoroastrian College President usually attends these conferences and wherever possible she also takes a delegation. In 1992, in Khazakhstan the first world conference for Spiritualism was



Left to Right: Mrs Aloo and Prof. Sam Doctor; Dr. Viraf Dhalla; Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master Moos; Mrs Roshan and Prof. Dr. Meher L. Pavri; Mrs Nergish Arceiwalla at the Book Release Function with Dr. Sohrab Arceiwalla releasing the book on the extreme right.

Lower Photo: Left to Right: Kirghizia Rep of B.B.C, Dr Meher Master Moos, Past President Venkatraman of India, Dr L. M. Singhvi, Former Indian High Commissioner in London with Sadhujis at Rishikesh

held by the President of the country and Zoroastrian College delegation was invited to attend from India. Also at the World Avesta Conferences held in Tajikistan, the Zoroastrian College is invited to represent the Zoroastrian Faith from India. FROHAR FILMS Episode serial of 3 parts is on the Zoroastrian College work in Tajikistan, on 13/20/26 Aug on Gurjari Channel 12.30-1pm.

This year, the important Millennium HEADS OF RELIGIONS SUMMIT is being held in the UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY from 27th to 31st August; followed by the Heads of Nations, Presidents and Prime Ministers Summit on 6th - 8th September; to find ways and means of restoring PEACE to planet Earth. In the last year of the last Millennium 95 big

and small wars and breach of peace had taken place in several countries. 1800 Heads of Religions have been invited from all countries of the world. From India the largest delegation, of 300 holy persons of all faiths is attending. Mostly the Indian delegation comprises of Sadhujis and Swamjis of different Ashrams. His holiness, Dalai Lama represents the Buddhists. From Rishikesh, **Muniji Swami Chidanand Saraswati**, President Parmarth Niketan and **Swamiji Davananda Saraswati**, President of Sri Gangadhareshwar Trust are the main persons. The India Delegation is being headed by **Past President Venkatraman** and **Dr. L. M. Singhvi** and **Dr. B. K. Modi**, Chairman Mody Corporation with a special Air India Charter flight taking the group to the U.N. It

is hoped that India will lead the way for the countries of the world towards Peace in the new Millennium.

It is satisfying that the Zoroastrian community worldwide is also represented with **Mobed Oshidara of Iran**, **Ervad Godrej Sidhwa of Karachi**, and **Dasturji Jamaspasa**, **Dasturji Firoze Kotwal**, **Dasturji Nadershah Unwala** and **Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master Moos** being invited to represent the Zoroastrian community. Four of the invitees are connected with the work of the Zoroastrian College; which indicates the measure of the global recognition for the significance of the work of the college for preparing the people of the world for the advent of **SHAH BEHRAM VARAZAVAND SAHEB**.

The preparatory meeting for the U.N. Summit was held at Rishikesh in June. Of the Zoroastrian invitees only Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master Moos had attended this conference.

Review the system

Entering a dokhma becomes a traumatic experience for the volunteer corpse-bearers at Calcutta

Adi Babuji Rabadi

The Parsi community of Calcutta is facing a severe crisis due to various problems related to disposal of dead bodies. The problems faced have been clearly spelt out in my letters dated December 24, 1999 to our revered Dasturs (Drs) Firoze Kotwal and Kaikhusroo Jamasp-Asa. While on a visit to Bombay in January 2000, I took the opportunity to discuss the problems with Khojeste Mistree who, I was given to understand, was actively engaged in resolving and mitigating the problems due to the absence of vultures at the Bombay Doon-gewadi.

Featured here are copies of my letter and the response received by me from the two learned Dasturs as also from Mistree.

December 24, 1999

Manwant Dasturji Sahab

Subject: Dokhma of Calcutta city

I am a trustee of the D. B. Mehta Atash Adaran of Calcutta. I am writing this letter to seek your benign guidance and direction on a vital issue concerning the community of Calcutta.

Our traditional ancient system of dokhmenashini, for which, as a devout Zoroastrian, I have great respect, is beset with some serious problems for disposal of dead bodies of the Parsi inhabitants of Calcutta. The dokhma is situated in Beliaghata, a crowded area of the city. According to our old records, the dokhma was consecrated sometime between 1901 and 1910. There are two towers of silence, one of which has completely fallen out of use and is mainly utilized for disposing of the bones of bodies consigned in the other dokhma which is in regular use. On an average, about 12 to 15 bodies are placed in the dokhma in a calendar year.

I am placing below the following facts for your kind information which I hope will be helpful in providing your wise counsel on the issues raised by a

sizeable section of the Parsi community of Calcutta.

- There is a complete absence of vultures or any other birds of prey to consume the bodies which lie rotting in the dokhma for weeks and months. Rats, cockroaches and insects are the only ones who nibble at rotting bodies. Our noble Parsi volunteers, who offer their services as nassessalars whenever required, describe the scene inside the well as a ghastly site. The stench of the decaying bodies is unbearable and causes a great deal of trauma for the volunteers who enter it. It is reported that the bodies often slide over each other and it is a highly painful experience for the volunteers to see the bodies of their relatives and friends in this despicable state.

- The sun's rays can barely have access to the inside of the well and Khorshed Nagirashni therefore has no contribution in dissipation of the bodies. To add to this problem, small trees with thick trunks have been sprouting inside the well which only contribute to reduce the effect of the sun's rays. Further complications are created due to heavy showers during the monsoon and accumulation of rainwater. Attempts by our Parsi volunteers to cut the trees have not yielded the desired results.

- Every year, the dokhma trustees obtain from Bombay services of two trained nassessalars to clean the well, to remove the bones and remnant pieces of flesh, etc. The bigger pieces of bones are cut by a *chura* and then wrapped in mulmul and the bundles are consigned to the unused well or buried. These processes which have become a regular feature for cleaning the dokhma create revulsion in the minds of those who are aware of it. It is hardly necessary to state that the practices we are constrained to follow with blind faith appear to be totally contrary to all the practices enjoined in our ancient traditions for dokhmenashini. The most pathetic aspect of the breach

of our traditions is that no rites or ceremonies are performed after the cleaning process is completed. As far as my limited knowledge goes, an elaborate set of ceremonies have to be performed to reconsecrate the "cleaned" dokhma before it is used again. I do not by any means wish to apportion blame for this apparent breach of our ancient custom to anyone as we completely lack the infrastructure and facilities to reconsecrate the dokhma. With the limited number of our devoted mobed sahebs in Calcutta, performance of such elaborate rites is not a practical proposition.

- The area surrounding the Beliaghata grounds which was full of open spaces some years back is now infested with tall buildings in close vicinity. The residents of the higher floors in the buildings can have an unrestricted view of the dokhma well and this also militates against our religious traditions and customs. For obvious reasons, I do not wish to elaborate on the consequences on our community's reputation if some of the residents decide to take up the issue of "pollution of the atmosphere" with the concerned authorities in Calcutta.

In recent months, a sizeable section of the Zoroastrian community of Calcutta has become aware of the various drawbacks in continuing to follow dokhmenashini in its present state. The Parsis of Calcutta numbering about 900 are deeply committed to maintain our unique separate identity but at present they are distressed and confused on the vital issue of continuation of dokhmenashini. With great reluctance, I have also come to the conclusion that the system needs to be reviewed.

Having tried to place the various aspects of the system in what I believe to be the correct perspective, I am seeking in all humility and with great respect your esteemed guidance and advice on the following questions:

- In the background of the circumstances in which we are placed, would you agree to the proposal to close down the dokhma and allow the community to resort to burial?

- In case you do not agree with the proposal to close down the dokhma, would you give us any suggestions to make the system more compatible and acceptable in keeping with the changing ethos of our present-day culture?

- As another alternative, would it be per-



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missible to have a burial ground outside the boundary wall of the dokhma area for those Parsis who desire to exercise the option to bury the mortal remains of their relatives?

•Our respected mobed sahebs have clarified that they would not be able to perform the geh sarna, uthamna and chahrum ceremonies in case of those opting for burial. Would you advise them to reconsider their stand on this issue if all other customs and traditions are maintained for sachkar of the deceased (before) burial?

•Is disposal by electric crematorium an allowable practice as an alternative to dokhmenashini or burial?

•Will the performance of the four-day ceremonies be permissible in the case of those Parsis whose bodies are disposed of in the electric crematorium?

Besides your wise counsel on the above points, I would very much appreciate if you can enlighten us on any proposals which you may consider to be within the orbit of our religious practices and customs which would provide a practical solution to overcome the problems stated by me...

I may also mention for your kind information that I have completed my navar and maratab ceremonies in the

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early '40s in the strictest orthodox traditions at Navsari. I am originally a Bombay Parsi, having settled in Calcutta for the past 36 years. You will kindly also note that I am a member of the West Bengal Minorities Commission.

I have every confidence that your erudite response to the various points raised in my letter will go a long way in erasing the Calcutta community's doubts about the credibility and religious sanctity of our prevailing system and its modifications to suit our present-day needs.

With my grateful thanks and respectful regards, I remain,

Yours sincerely
Adi Bapuji Rabadi

March 31, 2000

Dear Mr Rabadi

I am in receipt of your letters regarding dokhmenashini and I have learnt from Khojeste Mistree that you had met him in this regard a couple of times. Khojeste is working on the project in Bombay for the proper functioning of the system, and so it is worthwhile to wait till it bears fruit. In the meantime, exposing the corpses to the cleansing rays of the sun (Khursheed Nigirishna) is the only alternative for their disposal as laid down

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by the Zoroastrian religion.
Thanking you
Yours sincerely
Firoze M. Kotwal

April 11, 2000

Dear Shethji Adi Rabadi

I am in receipt of your registered letter. As a prelate and custodian of the faith, it is my concern to uphold and strengthen the tenets, practices and rites of our religion. In my view, the natural dokhmenashini method of disposal is in consonance with our traditions and customs, and must be safeguarded at all costs.

The method of dokhmenashini comprises of the use of natural elements only, the decomposition of the corpses by natural scavengers, by exposing them to the direct rays of the sun at all times, and by effecting the cleaning with the natural wind within the expanse of the dokhma.

The entire process of disposal should be undertaken in accordance with the ceremonial injunctions laid down by the Zoroastrian faith. As a High Priest, it is my duty to safeguard the age-old precepts and practices of the faith and as such I cannot agree to burial and/or cremation. I cannot authorize the priests to perform the first four days' ceremony

if one opts for burial or cremation.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) is facing the same problems on a much larger scale and the situation is very grave. The Doongerwadi Committee is seized with this problem and among other plans they are experimenting with the 'generation of ozone gas method' and 'microbe technology.' May I request your good self to write to the Punchayet for further details?

Trust I have made myself clear. May Ahura Mazda guide you and your colleagues in all (your) deliberations.

Kindest regards and all best wishes
Yours sincerely
Kaikhushroo M. JamaspAsa

March 8, 2000

Dear Mr Rabadi

Thank you for your letter which was awaiting my return to the office.

As I mentioned to you when we met in Bombay, some experiments are being currently undertaken in Bombay with regards to seeking a method to enable an accelerated decomposition of the body. The initial results appear to be promising, though we shall only know for sure in another six weeks or so. In this method a chemical solution is applied which enables the body to decompose faster.

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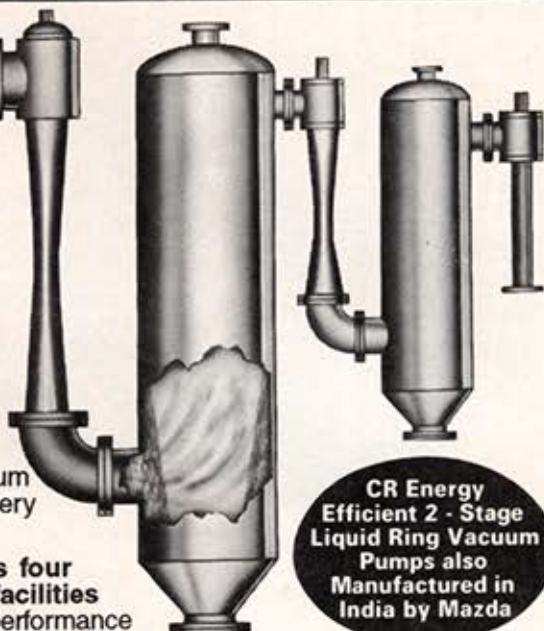
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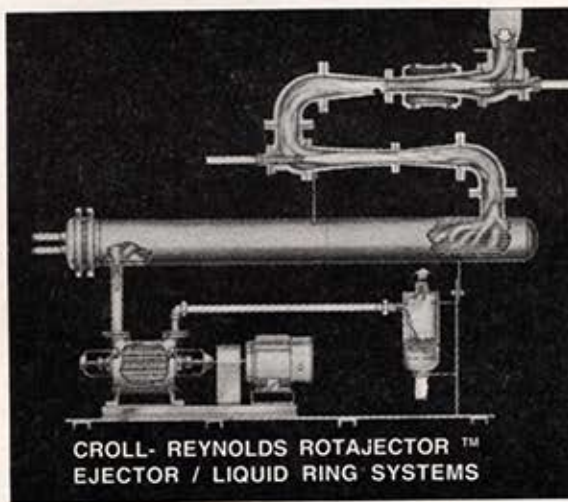
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The next experiment appertains to
odor which in Bombay, due to an aver-
age of three deaths a day, is quite acute.
Our experiment deals with the release of
ozone gas in the environs of the dokhma.
Again, the final results of this experi-
ment will be tabulated by June 30.

Finally, we have to think in terms of
building an aviary wherein vultures will
be bred in captivity. This is a long-term
solution which will take at least four
years to execute. The Punchayet are
doing a costing analysis for this project
currently.

In short, I will be in a better position
to guide you all, intelligently, in another
three months or so.

With kind regards
Yours sincerely
Khojeste Mistree

I must admit that I am greatly disap-
pointed with the contents of the replies
received, which do not help in any way
to overcome the severe problems we are
facing. The letters from the Dasturs re-
fer to Khorshed Nagirashni as an impor-
tant factor in dissipating the corpses
although I have clearly spelt out in my
letter the factor which prevents the ap-
continued on page 178

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Debate but work

Consistency in religious instruction and interpretation would help the community leave a lasting legacy for the coming generation, says the author

Ervad Zal Sethna

Iran and India were very close for centuries and shared common cultural and religious beliefs. Many Iranian kings had ruled parts of India, and trade and commerce existed between the two nations from the dawn of civilization. Thus India was the obvious choice of our forefathers after the conquest of Iran in 652 AD by the Arabs when forced conversion to Islam and persecution had made life intolerable. After the fall of the Persian Empire due to the persecution of Zoroastrians in Iran, continuous emigration was recorded, but only in India did the Parsa people survive. This was singularly due to our principle of segregation as far as our religion and race were concerned. On other matters our record of integration with the native population was excellent. Throughout the Hindu, Moghul, and British Raj in India, we were respected for the fairness, loyalty and sense of duty with which we merged with the changing destiny of India. Even today we stand as an example to many countries including India for our skill of integration with native cultures.

A great change in our thinking and our way of life came with our association with the British. The change brought great financial benefits but damaged our Zoroastrian way of life for ever.

Major changes came due to the urbanization of the community and shift from agriculture to profession and industry. Mobeds who depended on the farm produce donated by the anjuman for their daily sustenance had to now rely upon the meager ashodad and they received little fees for their work. Unimaginable poverty in the mobed community was the result. With poverty came the loss of mobeds' self-respect and dignity.

Over 25,000 Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians today have made their homes in

the West. Almost with vengeance we have taken the challenge of survival with the very culture that threatened our existence only 100 years ago. We are doing admirably well. I believe that the Parsis in the West stand a better chance of survival than in India, if they are prepared to follow in their fathers' footsteps in preserving what they can, and make changes wherever necessary without jeopardizing the Zoroastrian identity and racial integrity.

It appears that the Parsis in India are gradually being sucked into the mainstream of the sociological structure of the nation, obviously due to the influence of the environmental and cultural influence of the country for over 1,300 years. A great majority of the community has started believing in babas and other outside agencies to give them material benefits and spiritual comfort. Day by day they have accepted the attire, the habits, the food and the lifestyle of the people around them. It has become difficult to recognize many of us as Parsis from our appearances, attitudes and behavior, demonstrating the loss of racial identity.

Both in India and abroad remarkable efforts are being made by well wishing and good spirited Zoroastrians. Youth congresses, religious education, monetary help to mobeds and housing are all positive steps towards the fight for survival and will continue by the grace of Ahura Mazda, but more needs to be done.

The mobeds

Our community deserves to be proud of the way they have started to improve the conditions of mobeds in India. Abroad, most of our mobeds give honorary service or are compensated appropriately. Due to the acute shortage of mobeds in India, they are in the driving seat, espe-

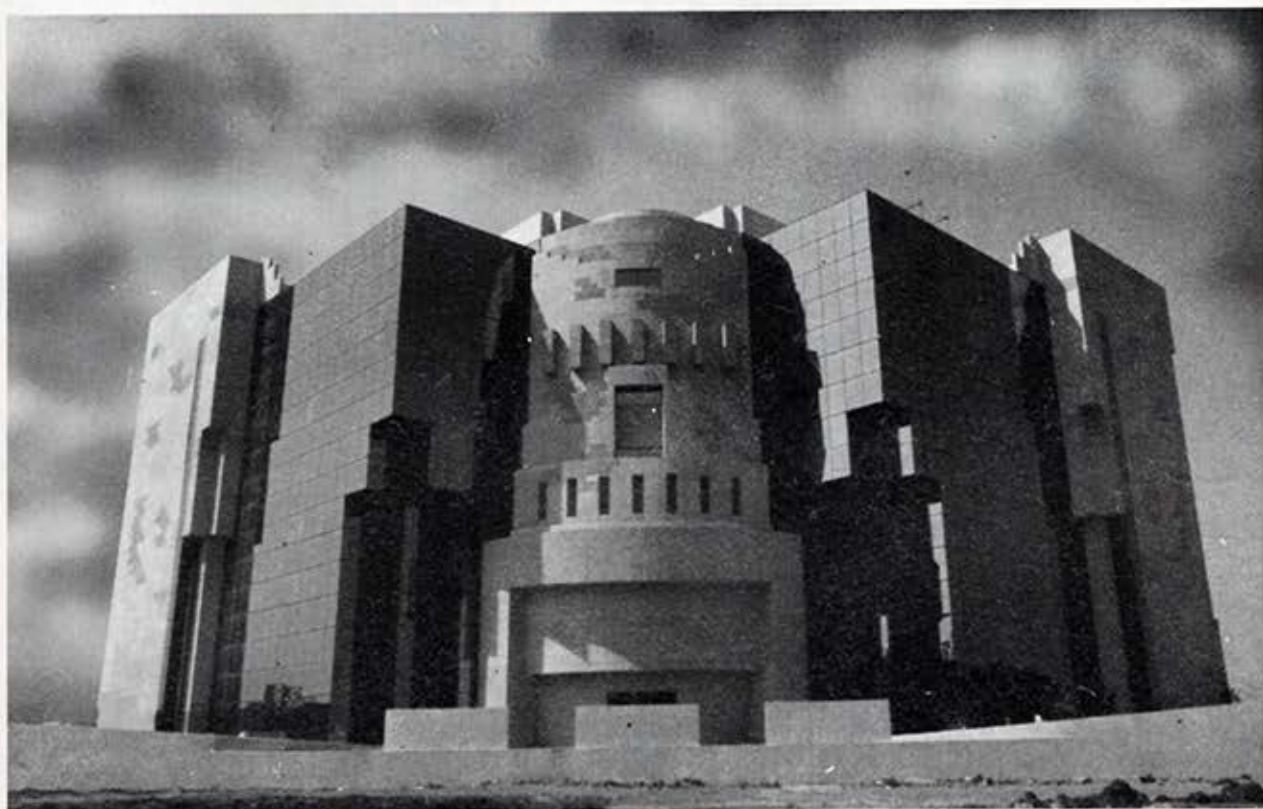
cially some panthakies of agiaries and atash behrams. This in some cases has resulted in extortion, poor service and substandard work. The discipline of a mobed requires him to lead a clean, simple, and contented life in the service of Ahura Mazda. If the mobeds start behaving in a ruthless and materialistic manner, then they will once again lose the respect and support of the community and may have to face poverty as before. The way forward is to strike a balance where the charges for the services are reasonable and affordable by the anjuman, and where necessary the mobeds are subsidized from mobed funds. The present panthaky system needs to be reviewed.

The whole system could be geared on a cooperative society basis where the panthaky or the manager is rewarded with a good salary, and the balance of income fairly distributed amongst the mobeds performing the ceremonies. It is very encouraging to see a gradual increase in the numbers of boys in both the madressas at Andheri and Dadar, which will produce full-time mobeds to serve the needs of the community. But we will face a crisis if something is not done urgently to train mobeds to perform pavmahal rituals like ijashni, vendidad and nirangdin. We need at least 16 pairs of yozdathregar mobeds well trained to keep this most ancient and sacred of Zoroastrian rituals on track, otherwise the ordination of mobeds, bareshnum, navjote and wedding ceremonies, sachkar and other rituals where nirang is required will be a thing of the past.

Religious education

Very great importance is placed on giving religious education to our youth, and rightly so. Unfortunately today they are exposed to conflicting and inconsistent

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views from various scholars, some with no religious background or knowledge of our faith.

The philological principles on which the former great linguists worked and translated the ancient languages like Avesta and Pahlavi are set aside, and all sorts of translations of our holy *Avesta*, some even obscene, are published with pathetic ignorance.

To stop this abuse we must follow the Avesta dictionary carefully prepared by Ervad Kavasji Kanga. His command of these ancient languages, his insight into the Zoroastrian faith (being a full-time mobed), and above all the unquestionable integrity and honesty applied throughout the translations of our scriptures by this pious priest leaves no doubt in my mind that his works alone be used for translation and reference purposes. This will not only bring much desired authority and consistency in the study of our scriptures, but will stop people who manipulate and twist the meanings of our holy scriptures to serve their own ends.

Conversions

The Zoroastrian faith does not promote conversion. Few and far are the references made by Greek and Roman histo-

rians accusing Zoroastrian kings of forceful conversions and they are groundless and without firm evidence. Ever since our final migration to India some 1,300 years ago the principle of segregation has been strictly observed.

Christ told Paul to spread his net on the seven seas and catch as many fishes as he can. That clearly did not include the fishes already caught or, in other words, people already following one of the universal faiths that came before Christianity. In religious terms there can be only one conversion: that of a non-believer into a believer.

The basic principles of theology in all the five universal faiths are the same, namely:

- Belief in one supreme creator
- Immortality of the human soul
- Life after death
- The concept of heaven and hell
- The day of judgment
- The resurrection

Hence no conversion truly takes place if one denounces his or her faith for another. It only amounts to a change of a badge with a different name.

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Zoroastrian families is how to deal with the issue of intermarriage. The real concern is not the intermarriage itself, where one has no control once Cupid has shot the arrow, but the offspring. With any intermarriage the religious and the racial identity of the child is undermined. In most cases the child is driven by the culture of the parent which is predominant where the child is born and brought up. Even though his/her navjote is performed, in almost all cases children from intermarriages marry non-Zoroastrians, and at that stage, what appeared to be a problem finds its own solution, because the need and the will to convert their children into the Zoroastrian faith is no more there. There is no justification for changes to be made to the constitutions of our Zoroastrian institutions to accommodate non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children, where the very purpose is defeated at the end of the day.

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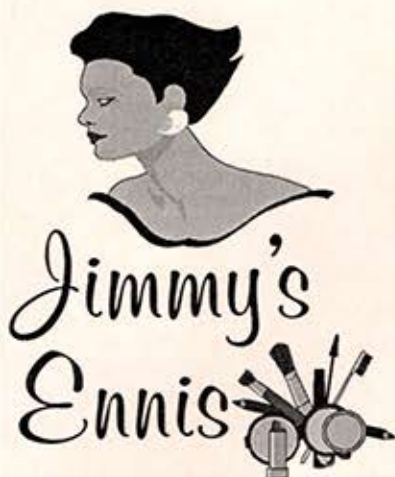
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will. Through nature to nature's God is the golden mean of Zoroastrian belief.

Ahura Mazda is not Almighty

Some scholars, Zoroastrians and others, have claimed that Ahura Mazda who is omnipresent and omniscient is not omnipotent. The reason, they say, is the existence of evil on this earth. They say that God with the help of mankind will defeat evil which, according to them, God is powerless to do, even though He is ever present and all knowing. Can this assumption be true? The existence of evil in God's creation is a dilemma which has baffled saints and sinners. To me the answers lie in the *Ahunavad Gatha*. Zarathushtra reveals that the two twin spirits Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu were there from the beginning of time and will remain till the end of time. Everywhere in our scriptures it is confirmed that Ahura Mazda is the sole creator of the universe and He rules with His absolute will and desire, that He is all powerful, ever present, and all knowing. This basic principle is accepted by the other four universal faiths i.e. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hence one may say that there is one supreme reality, who is the creator, the preserver and the terminator of the universe.

Angra Mainyu represents the force of destruction or the negative force which brings forth natural disasters, death, disease, pain, sorrow and decay. Natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, storms and forest fires, though destructive, rejuvenate the earth, clear dead and decaying vegetation and breathe new life in the rivers and the earth. Where there is mortal life, death is a necessity. Can one imagine the population of the animal kingdom and mankind without the cycle of life and death? Disease, pain and sorrows are mainly due to man's ignorance to abide by nature's laws. But without sorrow and joy, night and day, good and bad, lies and truth, summer and winter, love and hate, life and death, without these opposites our existence is not possible. Hence the negative forces are there because they are necessary to fulfil the destiny of the corporal world.

Then where is evil in the creation, is it in the sun, the stars, the skies, the earth, the waters, the trees or in the fire? Does it exist in the vegetable or the animal kingdoms? If you look around, you will not find evil in the elements of nature or

anywhere else in God's creation. I believe that evil only exists in the human mind and nowhere else. Ahriman, the evil mind, is our enemy which we fight and reject with all our might. In every prayer of Zoroastrianism we pray that we will always keep to good thoughts, good words and good deeds and will turn away from bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds so that evil will have no place and will be denied its existence. Evil is created by man, in his ignorance, arrogance and greed. Only men are the creators of evil and only they with wisdom and Ahura's grace will correct their actions to eradicate evil. Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so, says Shakespeare.

The future

Our youth are showing great qualities of leadership. With their entrepreneurial spirit they have started successful businesses. Our girls have performed exceptionally well in all the spheres of life. A global fund to assist our promising youngsters in trade, commerce, profession, sports, music and other productive activities should be established. Help them to prosper and bring back the greatness of our forebears.

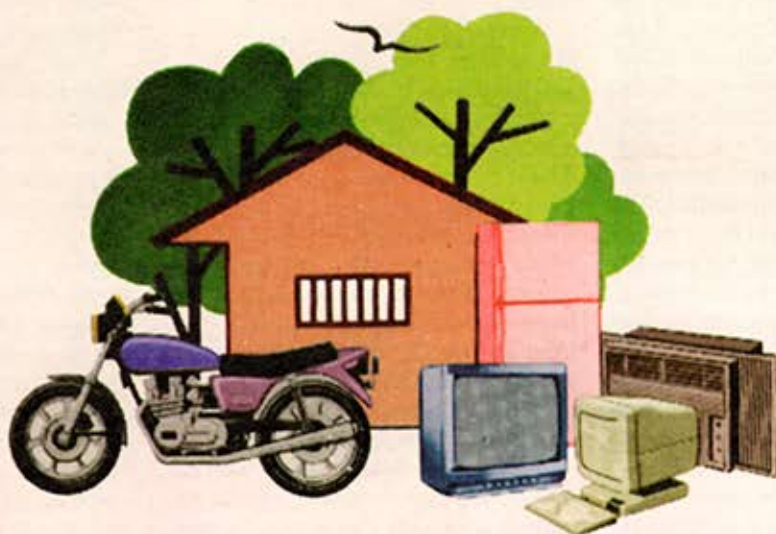
Age old arguments about intermarriage, conversion, rituals, and the debates between the orthodox and the reformists, give the Parsis an opportunity to communicate with their tribe with gusto, and they will continue to do so. The only drawback is that to some of us, especially our youngsters, it appears as *maramari* (feuds) creating disunity within the community. Healthy debates are the lifeblood of any intelligent and progressive community, but the time has come to move forward to do constructive work, so that our children and children's children can preserve the proud heritage of their glorious faith and the identity of the Parsa race in the future.



Past president of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), Ervad Zal Nariman Sethna has for 30 years served as an honorary priest in UK. An accountant by profession, he has led the ZTFE's finance sub-committee and mooted the inception of the association's library and New Premises Fund.

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Udvada's sea-saw

The ingress of the sea into Udvada is a recurring phenomenon and not a new occurrence, says the author

Dr Vispy M. Meher-Homji

Water as a theme cannot be dissociated from our sacred settlement, Udvada. Though the common belief is that the name of the town is derived from "Untwada" where grazed the camels of the Raja of Mandvi, the late Ervad Faramroz P. Mirza in his book *Ahewalé Iranshah* (now translated into English — *The History of Holy Fire — Iranshah*) has given a different interpretation: The derivation is from Sanskrit "udan" (meaning water) and "vas" (place), implying that the settlement was subject to periodic inundations, not unlike the situation today with invasion of seawater at the very high tides with the wells turning salty. Thanks to the generous donation from the London-based Jasavalas, former residents of Udvada, a scheme has been inaugurated to provide good quality running water to the settlement from the nearby lake.

It is a common practice to make an offering of coconut, sugar, rice, flowers to water bodies on *Ava roz*. This offering is by way of keeping water sources perennial, according to Vada Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal. As to the inclusion of coconut in the offering, another explanation is that the fruit came to us floating over the waves as a gift from the sea. On

special festive occasions like the Coconut Day in Maharashtra, this gift is returned to the sea.

Sea erosion

The boundary between land and sea seldom remains stationary and Udvada is no exception. For the past few years, the sea has been moving landwards into south Gujarat and places like Udvada in Valsad district have been severely affected by beach erosion. To control the advance of the sea, the late Padma Shri Homi Taleyarkhan launched the Save Udwada Trust in 1994 and subsequently worked out an agreement with the Government of Gujarat to construct suitable protective structures on the beach.

The Central Water and Power Research Station, Poona, was consulted to provide a suitable design for the wall. Under the leadership of Padma Shri Dr Zal S. Tarapore, former director of the Research Station, the design was worked out through a computer-controlled model. Keeping in mind the cost factor and efficacy of the structure, the Station worked out six detached walls in the shape of "rubble-mound structures."

Initially called "offshore breakwaters," the six structures were constructed

between 1998-99 by the engineers of Ambica Irrigation Division, Navsari. These structures extend from Pirojsha Pallonji Mistry High School in the south up to the J. J. Sanatorium in the north i.e. that part of the beach that is most vulnerable to sea erosion. During the severe storm of the 1999 monsoon, when tides were reported to be the highest in 50 years, the sea walls prevented damage to the properties on the sea front including the High School, the Damanwala Dispensary, the J. J. Sanatorium, the houses of mobeds and the fishermen's colony (mangelvad).

Under the agreement worked out by Taleyarkhan with the Government of Gujarat, the share of the Government in the cost of construction of the walls was 75 percent; the balance 25 percent is being raised by the Save Udwada Trust through donations. The total cost has come to about Rs 56 lakhs, covering a length of 600 meters (m) of the beach. Compare this cost with that of the repairs to the 600 m length of vertical wall on Bombay's Marine Drive: Rs 11 crores, according to a report in *The Indian Express*.

Besides providing protection to the properties, the breakwaters at Udvada also lead to beach building. Gradually, the breakwaters are getting covered by sand because the slope facing the land is getting buried under the sand at a rate faster than the seaward slope. A part of the breakwater opposite the High School, the first to be constructed (in January 1998), is already fully covered up by sand. A vertical wall like the one at the Marine Drive, besides being very expensive and requiring tetrapods, does not lead to beach nourishment like the breakwaters of Udvada. However, a drawback of the breakwaters is that they are flexible structures and need annual repair after the high monsoon tides. The Save Udwada Trust has therefore to raise funds for the annual repair to the walls.

Soil erosion

Besides sea erosion, Udvada beach also faces the problem of land erosion which is most active in the southern part of the beach — the area opposite the Paradise Hotel and the former Dubash bungalow,

Offshore breakwaters protecting the sea front at high tide



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Top row (left): School children with *Salvadora* saplings; carts which will ferry sand away from the beach

Below (from left): Patel, Rana, Temas Pandol and Dastur Kekobad Dastur celebrating the completion of the sea wall project; new building on Mirza Street that accommodates a memorial hall to mark the site where the sacred fire was housed in 1742

now a property of the Sir Ratan Tata Institute (RTI). The monsoon flood water from the fields and the overflow from the Kolak lake that once (about 50 years ago) used to find an outlet into the sea in the Sodphalia area (a suburb south of Udvada), now, under the pressure of monsoon storm water run-off, flows like a river eroding the sandy banks in the area of the Paradise Hotel. Actually, this flood water used to come further northwards towards the Damanwala Dispensary about four to five years ago and aggravate the problem of sea erosion. However, traditional knowledge came into play and solved a part of the problem: the fishermen and other villagers made an outlet for the water of inundation by breaking open the sand dunes (in the area between Udvada and Sodphalia). This has become an annual feature, providing much needed relief to the fishermen.

Now the Government wants to construct a dam in this area at a cost of about four lakh rupees, as per a report in the *Gujarat Samachar*.

Entry of creek water

Last but not the least important is the 'silent' problem of the entry of the Pariyali creek water into the town. Unlike the erosion problem wherein the damage is visible, the silent advance of the creek and the increasing salinity in its wake needs urgent attention. The

Pariyali creek, north of the Gymkhana, floods the low lying land that extends up to the backyard of the Iranshah and the Globe Hotel with brackish water at high tide. This lowland also gets inundated by rain water during the peak monsoon season. The increasing salinity in and around this lowland is a cause of great concern as the wells on its periphery are turning salty.

Though the creek is located at a distance of over a kilometer from the Iranshah, if steps are not taken now, the problem will assume serious proportions in the decades to come. A dam is being planned over the creek; the blueprint is awaited from the engineers. The cost of construction may be very high as the dam has to prevent the entry of seawater into the town while permitting the rainwater to flow out, as otherwise the low lying land would be in waist-deep water at the height of the monsoon.

Meanwhile, the Save Udwada Trust has launched a plantation program with a salt-tolerant mangrove species *Salvadora persica* (*pilu* in Gujarati) to counter the threat of increasing salinity. At the moment the plantations are raised more or less on an experimental basis with the saplings provided by the late Sohrab Godrej from his mangrove forest at Pirojshanagar (Vikhroli), and with the cooperation of the Social Forestry Department of Navsari. With funds be-

coming available with the Save Udwada Trust, the area under the mangrove plantation would be increased to a scale that would provide protection against strong tides, winds and even the extreme eventuality of a cyclone. Moreover, the seeds of *Salvadora* are of economic importance as they yield an oil used by the cosmetic industry. Therefore the success of the plantation in the long run would not only help in restoring environmental health in the vicinity of the Iranshah but would also bring some economic benefit to the rural poor. (Donations, by cheque in favor of "Save Udwada Trust" may be sent to B. H. Baldawala, co-chairman, 6/5 Spenta, B. G. Kher Marg, Bombay 400006).

The completed sea wall project of the Save Udwada Trust was dedicated to the people of Udvada on May 7, 2000. Central minister Kashiram Rana and the Government of Gujarat's minister for water resources Narottambhai Patel unveiled the plaque commemorating the event.

Dr Vispy M. Meher-Homji, joint honorary secretary of the Save Udwada Trust, retired as director of research at the French Institute of Scientific Research at Pondicherry. He was the founder and first dean of Pondicherry University's School of Ecology.



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PROTECTING PARSI RIGHTS

continued from page 54

— who shared the dais, Morris had enumerated the basic objectives of the NCM which evaluates the progress of the minorities in the union and the states and monitors the working of constitutional safeguards with special reference to minorities. The government is bound to put the recommendations of the NCM before Parliament, informed Morris.

"You are asking me to walk through a minefield!" laughed Sethna when a member of the audience sought his stand on intermarriage and the status of the non-Zoroastrian spouse and their children. Referring to the reported referendums held in Madras and Baroda, Sethna suggested that the community examine the issue in historical perspective, "understand the tenets of the faith: ours is a religion of choice."

An aggrieved Parsi from Devgad in Surat district spoke of his family's lone battle amid the surrounding hostile adivasis who reportedly burn and pillage and are ready to kill, alleging that the mamlatdar is privy to their game. Only the World Zoroastrian Organisation and its vice president Dinshaw Tamboly has supported them, he claimed. Sethna said he was partially

aware of the trouble though the NCM had not taken it up. "This is discrimination against minorities. It must be taken up by the Surat Parsi Panchayat with the Gujarat government," he opined advising Khushroo Devgadvala to get the Press on his side.

"The problems (come) not from the majority community but from other minorities," interjected a member of the audience. Countered Sethna, "Within our own community are we holding out a hand to each other or are we pointing a finger at each other? The Parsi community is considered a leadership community. Let us start getting people together."



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The Southern connection

The Zoroastrians of South Africa have maintained the customs and traditions of the community

Ruby P. Lilaowala

The Parsis of South Africa have been through high highs and low lows by way of racial prejudice, hostility, professional success, the struggle for independence and change of regime and yet have retained their individuality, traditions, family values and, above all, religious convictions. Today they number 75 individuals, but within the next 30 to 35 years, there may be less than 20 Parsis left there after the elders pass on and the youngsters emigrate to North America or the UK. There may well come a time when the local population will tell their children, "Once upon a time, there were some wonderful people here called the Parsis..."

In the second half of the 19th century, when travelling was done by steamers over high seas, Parsis emigrated from India to faraway places like the US, Canada, UK, Hong Kong, Singapore, East Africa, Zanzibar and of course, South Africa. Whereas in the West they are present today in sizeable numbers, the Parsis of East Africa and Zanzibar had to beat a retreat when the then British government gave independence to East African countries. As the prospects of living safely under the new regimes were not so bright, the Parsis of East Africa exercised their choice of emigrating to the UK as they held British passports.

The situation was very different in South Africa. At one stage, there were nearly 175 Parsis in South Africa but today they are reduced to about 75 and almost half of these are over 70 years old. In fact, there are only 10 Parsi families in South Africa out of which six families live in Lenasia (a corruption of the term land-of-Asia) which lies just outside Johannesburg. They are almost one big happy family since they all live within two minutes' driving distance of each other. What is more, almost all youngsters seem to know our prayers, pray regularly, read and write Gujarati

and have great respect for their elders.

We had the honor and pleasure of visiting all these six families, thanks to the kindness and efforts of Sohrab and Mahrookh Shapurjee who took us from one house to another. Between visits, we had lunch at the Shapurjees' cosy residence and it was nice to see their four daughters helping in the kitchen, laying the table, even clearing it later, without allowing either granny or grandpa (Sohrab's parents) to lift a spoon. This is *kelavni* (training) at its best, which ensures that these beautiful ultra-modern girls will be happy in any family they marry into, in any part of the world.

We had reached Johannesburg almost at midnight and phoned Sohrab and Mahrookh the next day to announce our arrival. They came at once to our hotel (Holiday Inn-Garden Court) and we sat in the coffee shop, talking like old friends. Sohrab was born in South Africa whereas Mahrookh was a Bombay girl before she married and emigrated there 21 years ago. Sohrab is an anaesthetist while Mahrookh is an ophthalmic surgeon. In a light-hearted vein I asked them, "So Sohrab hits the patient on the head and then you operate on the eye... is that it?" to which Sohrab replied: "How did you know our secret?"

Their daughters Shahnaz, Zarin, Roxane and Yasmin go to private schools. They are interested in music and dance and take lessons in drama. Sohrab's parents Framroze and Khorshedbanu are both well over 80. Framroze, like Johnny Walker getting stronger day by day, is extremely active for his age and does a lot of social work at the nearby community center. The couple has put in over four decades of service in South Africa. Khorshedbanu was a schoolteacher. Today, she spends time in prayers, crochet work and reads her favorite Gujarati magazine *Akhand-Aanand*. From time to time she meets her old friends Sheramai Bodhanwala

and Alamai Tavadia.

Of the Bodhanwala family, Dinshaw Bodhanwala who went to South Africa in 1901 with his parents at the age of three, died some time ago. He had married in 1928 and had six children (four daughters and two sons). His wife expired in 1939. He married Sheramai in 1940 and this union bore one daughter and three sons. Like all Parsis of yore, Dinshaw had a large family of 10 children.

When Dinshaw and Sheramai were returning to India in 1942, their ship, the *Tilava*, was torpedoed on the high seas by a German submarine. They prayed as a family for the three days and three nights that they were in the water and were miraculously rescued. Sadly, they lost an infant son in this disaster.

At present Sheramai stays with her son Phiroze, his wife Farida and their sons Neville, Vaspan, Godrej and Navroze — aged between seven and 18. The other sons and daughters of the Bodhanwala family are now settled in various parts of the world.

Phiroze is a textile designer whereas Farida (née Dumasia) is a graduate of St Xavier's College, Bombay, and teaches maths and science at a prestigious school in Johannesburg. As Farida could not get a residential permit to stay in South Africa after marriage she, along with Phiroze and the boys lived in Brazil for 15 long years with the result that they are fluent in the Portuguese language. They returned to South Africa about eight years ago.

Khurshed Mancherjee and his wife Homai were a very devoted couple. Homai, who expired a few months after I met her, was very old and frail. Khurshed is the son of the late Dinshaw Bodhanwala mentioned earlier. They have two children in South Africa (a son and daughter), who are unmarried; and another daughter Dina who is married and settled in Lisbon. Dina showed us



Er,



um,



well,



mmmm,



maybe,



then again,



maybe not,



yes, but



naah,



not me,



um,



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Clockwise from top left: Lilaowala with the Shapurjees, Mancherjees, some members of the Bodhanwala and Shapurjee families; with her husband Phiroze and Dr Dara Randeria (wearing hat)

photographs of her four daughters. They all look like beauty queens. Two of them are married to Portuguese boys while the other two are single and working.

Alamai Tavadia, wife of the late Dara Tavadia (who functioned as an unofficial priest for the community) lives with her son Keki and his wife Laxmi. Alamai's daughter Shireen Jagosh lives in Nova Scotia, Halifax. Shireen had come from Canada to visit and spend some time with her mother. Alamai's other daughter, Jasmine Sohrab, is the manager of Gulf Air in London.

Minoo and Jeroo Aderjee are a very old and devoted couple. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that Minoo is the brother of our friend the late Burjor Nagona, who died some time ago in Poona. Burjor was in charge of the li-

brary at the Poona Club.

Freny Ginwala is the Speaker of the South African Parliament. In their freedom struggle against the white rule, Freny was in the forefront of several activities of the African National Congress. Freny's mother is over 90 years old and they stay in Cape Town. Freny's sister Khorshed was South Africa's envoy to Italy.

Just imagine! A community of only 75 Parsis in South Africa with the two Ginwala ladies contributing so much to its society! Originally, the Ginwala family owned cotton ginning and pressing factories in an adjoining Portuguese colony, but gradually they settled in South Africa.

(Constraints of time prevented us from meeting Phiroshaw Camay, well-known in political and trade union circles in the country.)

The late Nassarwan J. Randeria came to South Africa in 1895 to settle in Durban along with his brother Shapur. The Randerias founded the United Shipping Company, one of the leading clear-

ing and forwarding agents in South Africa. The company is now managed by Maneck Randeria and his three sons, Naval, Rustom and Boman. Maneck and his sons with the exception of one, have all married non-Parsis.

Maneck's brother Dara married Jer, a cancer research pathologist who died some time ago. Dara and Jer underwent an emotional trauma when Jer was initially denied a resident permit to join her husband in South Africa after marriage. Dara has recorded this injustice before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission now chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. They have one daughter, Perviz, who had met me when she was visiting Bombay. Dara is a noted ophthalmic surgeon who still treasures his Morris Minor car.

Rustom Jivanji was one of the earliest (some say the first) Parsi to arrive in South Africa in 1880. He soon became a successful merchant and true to our Parsi tradition, gave a lot in charity. He established the Bai Jerbai Rustomji Trust in

continued on page 176

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The pregnant figures?

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences survey of the community in Bombay focuses on demographic statistics and other data

Arnavaz S. Mama

The Parsi population may be headed for demographic doom, but other than that the community is reasonably comfortable in terms of income, housing quality and educational levels, especially as compared to the general population of the country. This picture emerges from *Parsis of Mumbai: A Socio-Demographic Profile* authored by Dr D. P. Singh and Dr V. Gowri on the basis of a survey undertaken by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) at the behest of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) in mid 1999.

Bombay, the largest center of Parsi habitation accounting for 70 percent of the community in India (as per the 1991 census), once enjoyed a birthrate of 25 per 1,000 — a level now being experienced by India's general population — between 1901 and 1925. Since then it has been declining. By the mid 1940s it had fallen to 16.5. From 1951 onward the report cites not the rate of birth and death but total figures so that five-yearly averages declined from 928 births in 1951-55 to 370 by 1994-1997. The corresponding average figures for community deaths rose from 864 in 1951-55 to about 1,022 between 1974 and 1988 before declining to 957 for the years 1994-1997. The difference between the numbers of births and deaths — indicating population growth or decline — has been changing from a positive 36 to a negative 587 over these years.

Against the background of this historical data the survey covered 6,596 households and a population of 20,423 persons living in the major baugs and colonies as well as other residences in 45 other areas of Greater Bombay and Thana (over 1,800 were not contactable or refused to cooperate). The report cov-

ers housing size, family numbers, age, income and expenditure, education and occupation, disease and disability, attitudes and perceptions of community members.

An average household of three persons (all India figure of 5.5) occupies 2.7 rooms. Two-thirds of these households report a monthly income ranging between Rs 5,000-20,000. While over 15 percent reported a monthly income below Rs 5,000, around 15 percent fell into income brackets above 20,000. While literacy is almost universal, about 38.7 percent are graduates and 11 percent have studied up to the master's degree level. With a ratio of 1,017 females per 1,000 males, "Parsi women enjoy Nature's law of (greater) longevity than men." The all-India statistic is 927 women to 1,000 men, according to the 1991 census, reflecting the adverse discrimination women face, especially in northern parts of the country, notes the report.

These very plus points however seem to harbor the seeds of the negative growth rate that has bedevilled the community.

Over 40 percent of Parsi men and 30 percent of Parsi women remain unmarried throughout their lives. Fifteen percent of the surveyed households are of single people. "The reason behind living alone even in old age may be because of a strong feeling of individualism with sound socioeconomic conditions," comment the authors. The average age of marriage (men 30.6 years, women 26.8) is said to be five to six years later than that of the Indian population. At the end of their childbearing period (45 years) Parsi women average 1.54 children — well below replacement level. Over 12 percent are child-

less (as compared to five percent of Indian women) and "the number of births show a consistent decline while the number of deaths recorded (is) three times higher than births," note the authors.

The low birthrate over time has resulted in a community age structure where the population up to the age of 15 comprises 10.4 percent (compared to 35 percent in the national population in the '91 census) while the 65 plus age-group constitutes 23.8 percent (compared to five percent for the national population).

"The trend in age composition shows that the proportion of young children is declining over time. The decline in the proportion of young children (despite its already) low level, gives the impression that probably the fertility level among the Parsis (had) reached below replacement level much earlier. The continuation of decline in the proportion of young children can also be partly explained as a secondary effect of smaller and smaller cohorts entering the reproductive ages and children born to such cohort of women will be smaller in size because of low fertility. The net effect of such a process is that the proportion of the children and also the proportion in early adult ages reduces and the proportions in the older adult ages and old ages increases."

The authors explain that three types of populations have been identified by demographers on the basis of which one can predict whether a given population will grow, decline or remain stationary. A progressive population has 40 percent of its members below the age of 15, 50 percent between 15 and 49 and 10 percent above 50. The relative figures for a stationary population are 26.5 percent, 50.5 percent and 23 percent whereas a regressive (declining) population has 20 percent, 50 percent and 30 percent



Singh: detailed profile

Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

Distribution of Parsi Population enumerated in States of India: 1981 and 1991

India/States		1991 Census			1981 Census		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
India	Total	76382	37736	38646	71630	35328	36302
	Urban	73195	35839	37356	68676	33766	34910
	Rural	3187	1897	1290	2954	1562	1392
Assam	Total	4	2	2	0	0	0
Bihar	Total	185	93	92	219	117	102
Goa	Total	47	25	22	28	13	15
Gujarat	Total	12924	6474	6450	11732	5729	6003
	Urban	10766	5320	5446	9595	4635	4960
	Rural	2158	1154	1004	2137	1094	1043
Haryana	Total	0	0	0	5	1	4
Himachal Pradesh	Total	37	36	1	11	8	3
Karnataka	Total	568	276	292	547	270	277
Kerala	Total	205	185	20	24	11	13
Madhya Pradesh	Total	92	45	47	255	125	130
Maharashtra	Total	60501	29539	30962	56866	28002	28864
	Urban	59945	29221	30724	56230	27654	28576
	Rural	556	318	238	636	348	288
Meghalaya/ Mizoram	Total	13	13	0	3	1	2
Orissa	Total	10	6	4	4	3	1
Punjab	Total	30	18	12	4	2	2
Rajasthan	Total	0	0	0	171	96	75
Sikkim	Total	15	9	6	40	24	16
Tamil Nadu	Total	153	95	58	207	114	93
Uttar Pradesh	Total	389	238	151	36	27	9
West Bengal	Total	512	312	200	511	288	223
Andaman & Nicobar	Total	3	1	2	0	0	0
Chandigarh	Total	9	6	3	3	1	2
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	Total	78	60	18	26	19	7
Daman & Diu	Total	123	66	57	114	62	52
Delhi	Total	41	18	23	372	187	185
Lakshadweep	Total	1	1	0	0	0	0
Pondicherry	Total	3	1	2	0	0	0

Sources: Census of India, 1981 and Census of India 1991

respectively. According to the survey the current figures for Parsis in Bombay are 10.4 percent, 42.2 percent, 47.4 percent respectively — a “much older” structure even than that under the “regressive” model and hence the community is declining through natural causes. “This type of age structure is generally found in the western countries which experienced similar trends in birth and death rates,” notes the report.

Over 34.4 percent of the Parsi population is occupied in service, 6.3 percent in business, 12.6 percent are students and 17 percent are housewives. Twenty-five percent live on pensions and savings.

Roughly 27 percent of the surveyed

population was reportedly suffering from such chronic diseases as hypertension, arthritis, diabetes, heart diseases and asthma with 95 percent of these patients being aged 40 and above. Blindness, deafness, physical impairment and mental retardation were also reported.

How do the Parsis see themselves? Seventy percent considered themselves very religious, nearly 29 percent assessed themselves as not very religious and one percent considered themselves not religious. Over 95 percent reportedly pray daily at home, while 15 percent also visit the fire-temples daily, 83 percent reporting occasional visits. Nearly 88 percent said they participate in almost every religious ceremony.

While 90 percent of the interviewees claimed to be aware that the community was dwindling, 45 percent ascribed it to conversion to other faiths (40 percent disagreed). Nearly 75 percent believed the reason to be emigration (13 percent disagreed). More than 80 percent claimed the decline in numbers was due to marriages outside the community (nine percent did not agree).

While 36 percent of the respondents viewed the position of the community as insecure vis-a-vis other communities in India, 34 percent felt there was no security problem and 28 percent felt that the Parsis were on the road to extinction.

The respondents cited four major reasons why Parsis prefer to remain single or delay marriage: responsibility towards old and sick family members; an aversion to the idea of living in a joint family coupled with an economic inability to set up a decent independent household; the lack of opportunity to find an appropriate match; low motivation to marry, given the social and family acceptance of non-marriage.

In the course of their survey the enumerators met with informants who seemed to resent the time required to answer the queries, some considering it an encroachment on their leisure. Some were more curious about the survey and the need for it. Some considered it an intrusion in their personal life. Over seven percent of the households were reluctant to give information on income, even though this was collected in broad ranges of Rs 5,000-10,000, 10,000-20,000, etc. Some single-member households were found locked even on repeated visits and in some cases the respondent was too old to comprehend the questions and answer coherently, note the authors.

From an all-India figure of 1,11,791 Parsis in 1951, the community declined over three decades to 71,630 in 1981. The 1991 census registered an increase by 4,752 to 76,382. With no details available to explain the increase, Singh told *Parsiana* that underenumeration can account for five-10 percent of the population figures. If that trend continues, there may be 80,000 Parsis in India by 2001 (with about 55-60,000 in Bombay), note the authors even though the parameters they enumerate are all negative.

Singh, who specialized in demographics from the International Institute of Population Studies, Bombay (Malini



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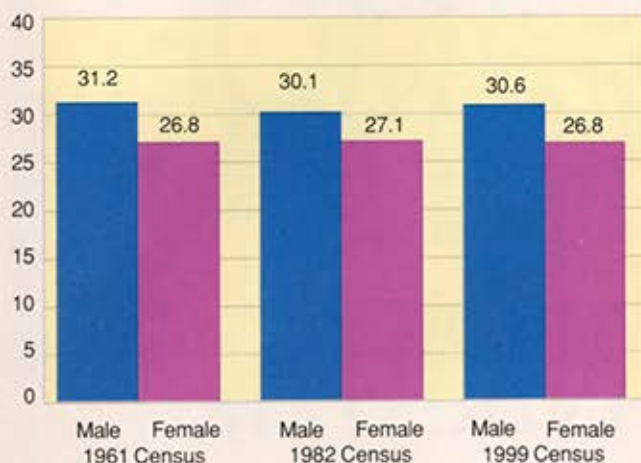


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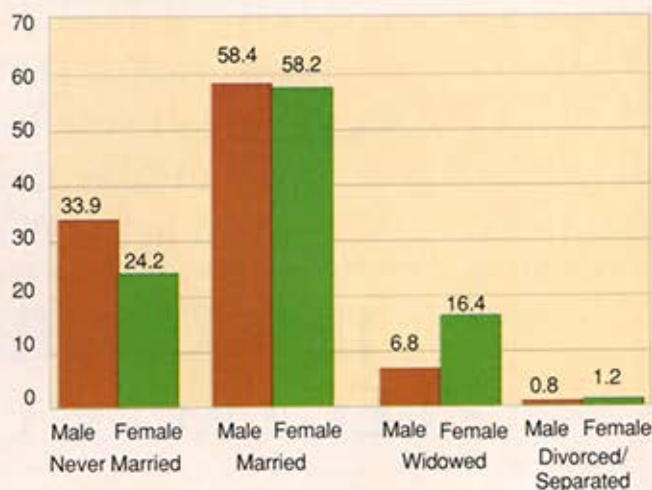
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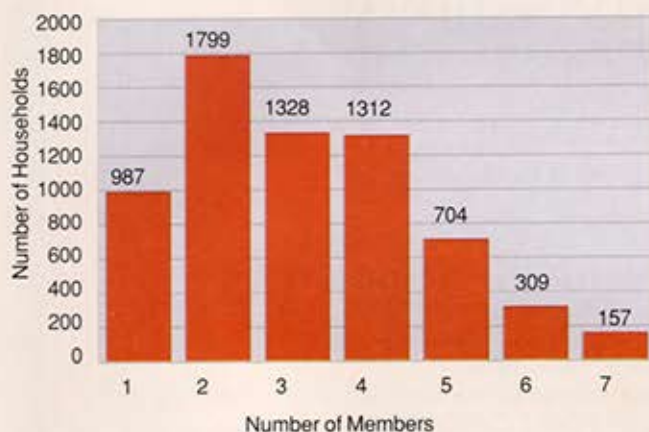
Singulate Mean Age at Marriage



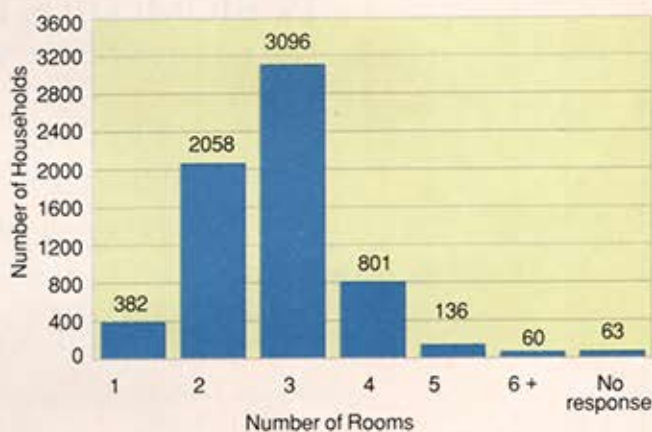
Distribution of Parsi Population by Marital Status



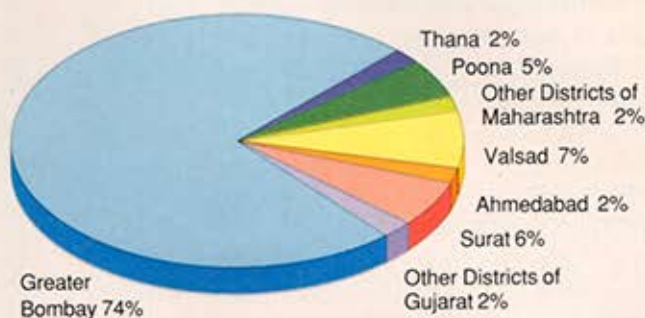
Distribution of Parsi Households by Number of Members



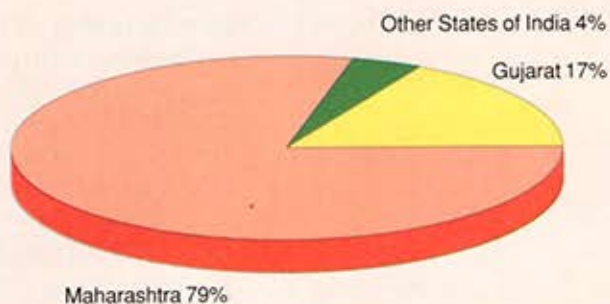
Distribution of Parsi Households by Number of Rooms



Parsi Population in Districts of Maharashtra and Gujarat



Parsi Population in States of India



As the census enumerators outside Bombay are not familiar with the Parsi community or its existence, the figures do not in several places correctly reflect the Parsi population in these areas.

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Parsi Population in Maharashtra State and its Districts, 1981 and 1991

Districts		1991 Census			1981 Census		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Maharashtra	Total	60501	29539	30962	56866	28002	28864
	Urban	59945	29221	30724	56230	27654	28576
	Rural	556	318	238	636	348	288
Greater Bombay	Total	53794	26131	27663	50053	24583	25470
Thana	Total	1568	816	752	1387	728	659
	Urban	1151	575	576	952	491	461
	Rural	417	241	176	435	237	198
Poona	Total	3733	1844	1889	3399	1665	1734
	Urban	3679	1817	1862	3392	1661	1731
	Rural	54	27	27	7	4	3
Nashik	Total	418	217	201	511	241	270
Raigarh	Total	76	44	32	93	54	39
Ratnagiri	Total	1	1	0	0	0	0
Dhule	Total	9	5	4	48	20	28
Jalgaon	Total	104	54	50	113	60	53
Ahmednagar	Total	61	35	26	120	65	55
Satara	Total	218	132	86	156	82	74
Sangli	Total	9	7	2	24	16	8
Solapur	Total	145	75	70	16	9	7
Kolhapur	Total	6	4	2	30	17	13
Aurangabad	Total	72	37	35	86	48	38
Jalna	Total	41	17	24	0	0	0
Parbhani	Total	21	11	10	16	9	7
Bid	Total	6	4	2	1	1	0
Nanded	Total	13	7	6	18	10	8
Akola/Buldana	Total	5	5	0	19	9	10
Amravati/Yavatmal	Total	26	11	15	16	5	11
Nagpur/Wardha	Total	164	78	86	756	378	378
Bhandara/Chandrapur	Total	6	2	4	4	2	2

Sources: Census of India, 1981 and Census of India, 1991

Karkal who authored the 1982 study of the Parsis was his teacher), felt the need for an ongoing demographic record for sustained analyses. Concerned about "the future of those who prefer to remain unmarried to look after aged parents," he suggested qualitative in-depth research on the resources and health problems of the aged. Case studies would enable the community's leaders to chart the process of change in views and attitudes, he believes.

"Very few people reported emigration figures," mentioned Singh. Those residing outside the baugs and colonies were also reluctant to provide details about their accommodation such as rent, area, toilet type, etc. Some people did not want to be involved if the BPP was concerned and, in some instances, information that had been given was torn up, he added. This despite the fact that the Punchayet itself deleted questions of attitude to-

wards marriage, fertility behavior and family planning measures which had been included in the draft questionnaire to enable a comparison with the Karkal report, he noted.

Thirty investigators and three to four research officers collected the data between April and mid August 1999. The data entry took two months and the analysis two more before the draft was ready in December, said Singh.

The report suggests early marriage, early reproduction and avoidance of contraception to enhance the community's numerical strength. It advocates that the BPP's scheme of financial support for the third child be extended to cover the second. The adoption of children from the financially weaker strata of the community would "help old persons living alone in baugs and colonies, brooding about their future and their past... (and) fight the problem of individualism faced by the community."

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An old flame's new

The Seth Pherozechah Ardeshir Patel Dar-e-meher enters the new millennium with a reconstructed elegant edifice

Hilla P. Guzder

It is not far from the madding crowds. Andheri station is just across the road, the heavy traffic of Ghodbunder Road (a strategic road link between Bombay and its suburbs) rolls noisily right outside the compound.

Yet, a short walk down a quiet driveway flanked by a landscaped garden

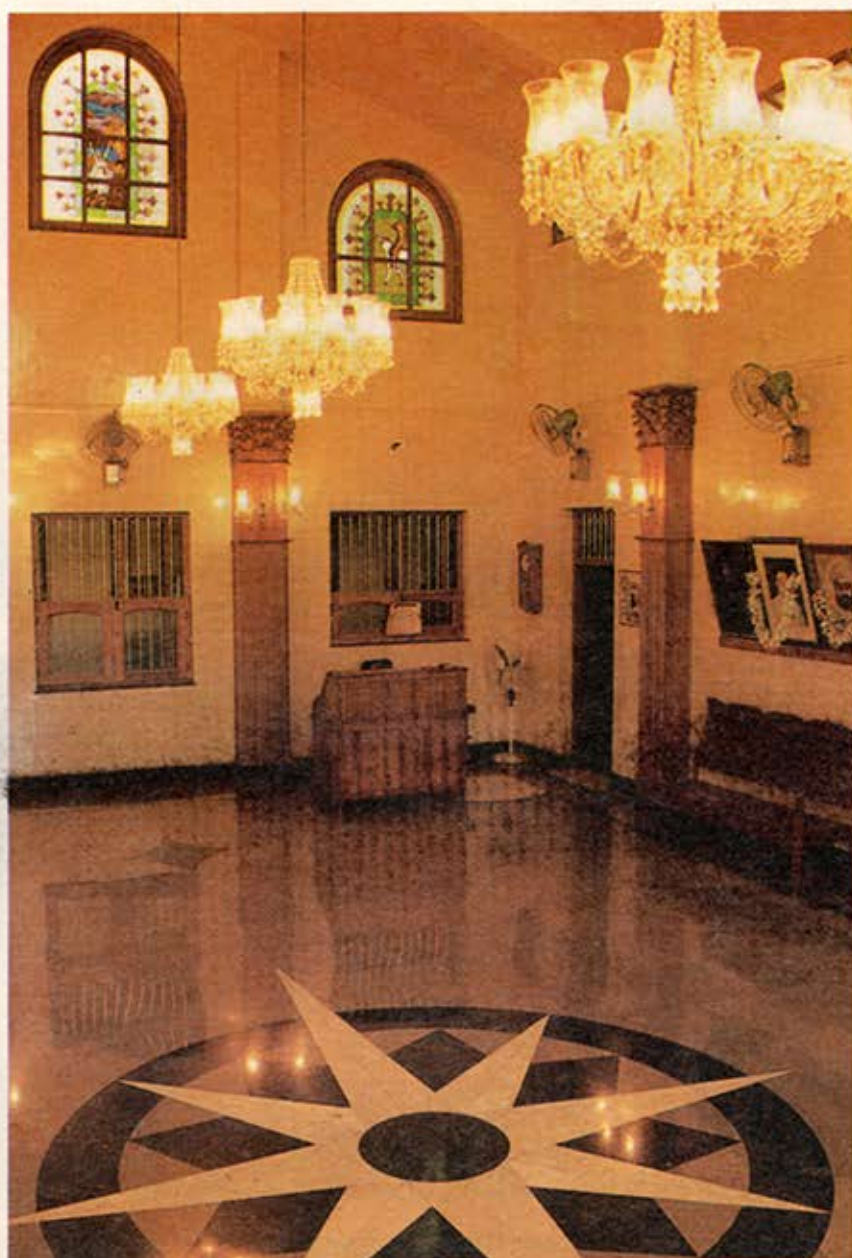
brings you to the elegantly curving steps of the newly reconstructed, tranquil Seth Pherozechah Ardeshir Patel Dar-e-meher. Five regal flames (flambeaux) at the top proclaim its sanctified status, exquisitely colored stained glass panels shine in the sunlight.

Originally consecrated on May 19,

1908 (*roz Adar, mah Adar, AY 1277*), the old structure had developed dangerous cracks in the walls and other structural imbalances due in some measure to the seepage of water from the agiary's well, states Adi M. Patel, chairman of the agiary trust. On April 26, 2000 (*roz Adar, mah Adar, AY 1369*), the atash



retreat



*Stained glass, chandeliers
and the sun pattern (above
and alongside); the facade
and its foliage; decorative
figures (above left) at the
entrance*

Photos: Homyar Mistry, Homz Prints



From top: Priests and trustees; Patel felicitating Kotwal; at the jashan

Photos: Hoshi Patel



was reenthroned after performing the required vendidad, ijashnis, etc.

At the evening jashan, High Priests (Drs) Firoze Kotwal and Hormazdyar Mirza were in attendance, with Ervads Aspandiar Dadachanji, Peshotan Mirza, Dinyar Vazifdar, Adil Bhesania and the agiary's panthaky Kersi Katila amongst the 15 priests. High above the platform where they sat, three arched windows with stained glass pictures of Zarathushtra, hands raised to the heavens, flanked by winged bulls, augmented the aura of a house of prayer. A crushing press of devotees packed the hall, despite the stifling summer heat.

Speaking in Gujarati, Kotwal commended the trustees of the agiary for the beautiful new edifice, stating that they had done the community a great service. The centenary of the agiary, just eight years away, should also be celebrated "majestically," he said. In a country of millions, he noted, the Zoroastrians have kept their identity due in large measure to our atash behrams and agiaries. Kotwal traced the history of Iran's sacred fires, their preservation through the Peshadian and Kayanian dynasties, etc and the subsequent destruction during various alien conquests. He emphasized that though the physical body of agiaries may have been vandalized, the *khore* (spiritual body) can never be destroyed. Our ancestors have preserved the Iranshah through trials and tribulations, he asserted, we have to follow in their footsteps and not become an enemy of the faith. "The Mazdayasni *din* will never be destroyed," he declared amidst cheers. Kotwal is also one of the agiary's trust-

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ces.

On the trust board, besides Patel and Kotwal are seniormost Dhunjisha Moos, a retired optometrist, advocate Hoshang Mirza and businessman Shaharouk Irani. Retired deputy commissioner of police Jal Contractor, who was a trustee and was present at the function in a wheelchair, passed away on May 19, 2000 after a protracted illness. "The trustees have undertaken a herculean task in rebuilding this wonderful and elegant edifice," declared master of ceremonies Meherangiz Siddikala. Flowers and mementos were presented to the agiary's architect, Jehanbux Billimoria, structural engineer Pheroze Ghadialli, contractor Kharshed Antia, Mehernosh Siddikala who made the stained glass, Armin Patel who landscaped the garden, the priests and the major donors. A board in the hall records the largest donation of five lakh rupees from Freny D. Irani in memory of Dinshaji Irani, followed by two and a quarter lakhs from Shahrugh J. Kathawalla, two lakhs from the Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund, a lakh and a half each from the Pallonji Shapoorji Charity Trust, from the Patel and Moos families and a host of others, including

the residents of the nearby Cama Park who chipped in with Rs 1,14,814.

"Your agiary is one of the finest I have seen in recent years," observed Malcolm Deboo of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), speaking in response to chairman Patel's open invitation to the house. Interest in the faith is growing not only in India but in the West as well, added Deboo.

"Send your children to the World Congress in Houston this December," thundered Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Rustom Tirandaz, also speaking from the house. "Open up their vistas and vision. You will find that Zoroastrians abroad, though modern in outlook, still maintain traditions with an electrical, not oil, flame, prayer books in English, etc." But let us not be swept away by modernization or broadmindedness and become victims of cosmopolitanism, he declared. Together we can "push at obstacles and pull at opportunities that come our way."

A plaque on the outside of the agiary states that it was built by Ardeshir Bhicajee Patel (grandfather of the present chairman) in memory of his son Pheroze-shah who died at a very young age. "We have tried to retain the style of the old

structure," explains architect Billimoria whose honorary services have included designing the Mhow, Vyara and Chikhli agiaries in the course of rebuilding/renovation. The plaque has an afargani and flame elegantly etched into it, with a brief history of the old agiary written into the flame, while the afargani holds details of the present. "The agiary has been made larger to serve the needs of the growing Parsi population of Andheri and other suburbs," enunciates Patel. Improvements include better ventilation and skylights, a collapsible stage (platform) in the hall which can be pulled out to its required length or folded away when not in use, explains Billimoria. "When we build a monument, we should look to easy maintenance, keep it as maintenance free as possible," he remarks.

The Persian figures on the facade were designed by Billimoria and were made not of stone but of fiber glass to reduce costs. Working as an architect in Iran for several years in the 1970s, Billimoria says he has carefully observed Persian art and architectural features and has sought to create an atmosphere where "one feels closer to the religion." A brilliant mosaic of the sun embellishes a verandah wall, the green and white flooring in the hall repeats the sun design, but in more muted colors. "The stained glass panels in the entrance I have designed to depict homa, the mythological bird who guides the soul, surrounded by the radiance of flowers. The stained glass windows in the hall, however, were entirely Mehernosh Siddikala's design," he adds candidly, with Siddikala executing all stained glass at his workshop in Mahim.

Right behind the Dar-e-mehar stands the Manecksha A. Patel Cooperative Housing Society with 56 ownership flats, constructed by the trustees in 1997 and named after the present chairman's father. In the same suburb, within the Salsette Parsis Association housing complex at Andheri (East) is the Seth Ardeshir Bhicajee Patel Dadgah which was opened on January 23, 2000.

"Manashni, gavashni, kunashni (good thoughts, good words, good deeds) is coming back into fashion," Tirandaz had stated at the jashan. "We will rise like the proverbial phoenix. The age of Zoroastrianism is coming again," he prophesied, to euphoric applause from the audience.

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The benefaction of the Banajis

The 291-year-old sacred fire of the Banaji Limji Agiary was reenthroned after major repairs to the structure

Hilla P. Guzder

When the Banaji Limji Agiary was consecrated 291 years ago, Bombay was no more than a sleepy archipelago of seven fishing islands, buffeted by sea wind and waves. Its nearest sacred neighbor, St Thomas' Cathedral, the oldest British church in the town, opened nine years later, the other landmarks in its environs — Flora Fountain, Victoria Terminus, the High Court, etc — were built well over a century later!

Well-known in Parsi parlance as *Kote* (Fort) *ni* agiary, the Banaji Limji Agiary houses the oldest consecrated fire in Bombay. Installed on June 25, 1709 (*roz* Adar, *mah* Adar, AY 1078), over five lakh bois have been performed through its almost three centuries, as per Hoshang Wania, one of the trustees of the Agiary's Yejeshne, Gahambar and Jashan Funds. The present building, however, is 155 years old, having been inaugurated on April 15, 1845 (*roz* Bahram, *mah* Meher, AY 1214) after the great Fort fire of 1803 had caused much damage to the Agiary, destroying many old records of the Banaji family as well, narrate authors Marzban Giara and Dr Viraf Dhalla in their slim book titled *A Brief History of Banaji Limji Agiary* published in April 2000 by the trustees to mark the completion of repairs/renovation this year to the Agiary structure. The *atash*, which had been moved to an adjacent small room inside the boundary wall, was reinstalled on April 26, 2000 after the mandatory *ijashnis*, *vendidat*, etc were performed. The *jashan* on the occasion was led, despite his delicate health, by Dastur Meherji Meherjirana of Navsari, who is also a trustee of the Yejeshne, Gahambar and Jashan Funds.

Trustee Adi Banajee, son of the Agiary's seniormost trustee Burjor, stated that it was around '94-'95 that the committee first thought of repairing the roof which was in need of urgent attention and set about collecting funds. It was, however, a very generous donation from businessman Dinshaw Mehta, one of the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) that spurred the Agiary trustees into "carrying out the repairs in toto." Lauding the "excellent honorary architectural services" of Porus Master, architect, of Porus Master and Associates, Banajee observed that the repairs spread over eight months tackled roof, walls, gumbaz and mobeds' quarters and breathed beautification into the Agiary interior with new Kota stone laid over its old, uneven floor, while elegant arches and black granite pillars with ornamental carving infused a touch of ancient Persia. A tapestry, designed by Master and stitched by Shernaz Katrak (who charged only for the cost of materials), forms a canopy in the adarian hall, depicting in abstract, graphic and numerological representations Ahura Mazda, Spenta Mainyu, Ameshaspands, fareshtas, etc. The motifs are derived from the sculptures and bas reliefs of the Achaemenian and Sassanian dynasties, according to Master.

Expressing joy at the renovations, Dadi Banaji who has been a trustee for 30 years and who is in indifferent health, stated at the inaugural function that it was his dearest wish to repair the Agiary in his lifetime. As mementos of appreciation were being presented to those associated with the Agiary and its repairs, a constant stream of devotees, many of them office-going Banaji Limji

"veterans," wove in and out to offer obeisance to the fire. "I have sat in the same chair, in the same corner of the hall and prayed almost daily for the past 73 years," said BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder. Addressing the audience in simple, conversational Gujarati, Guzder narrated how his mother had initiated him into the agiary-going habit when he was a young boy whiling away a lazy Saturday afternoon. The first week she herself took him in the car, he recounted, the next Saturday she instructed him to go by himself! And so the habit stuck. "Teach your children to pray right from childhood," advised Guzder. Ignore their initial protest at all this *fah-fah* (trouble) of praying, he counselled, and persist for a month or two till the "desire to pray" takes root.

Also speaking in Gujarati, Ervad Godrej Panthaki who has been associated with Banaji Limji Agiary for 39 years and has been the panthaky for the last 16 years, thanked the trustees, fellow priests and workers of the Agiary for their support. He said that "despite difficulties," traditions and customs in the performance of ceremonies would be maintained. The book lists Maneek Jijina (with the Agiary since 1947), Homi Dastur (Jamasp Asa), Kobad Gowadia, Rusi Kanga, Hoshang Jijina and Ashtad Rawji as the present full-time mobeds.

Earlier, Ervad Framroze B. Panthaki (1945-'83), Sorabji Gowadia ('45-'74), Nariman Panthaki ('45-'69) and many others had served the Agiary for long periods.

Wania pointed out that old records showed that Banaji Limji had carried out community work from the Agiary, as the Parsi Punchayet was still in a nascent stage. Though the trustees have received no official intimation of its heritage status, the government is said to have recognized it as a historical monument, according to a press clipping reproduced by the *Calcutta Gavashni* (June-July '89). Repairs had been carried out within the parameters of a heritage structure, stated Adi Banajee, expressing his thanks to Cyrus J. Guzder for his guidance in this behalf. The numerous donors — Mehta, Meherwanji D. M. Jeejeebhoy Trust (through Jamshed Guzder), Adi Jehangir, Jehangir H. C. Jehangir, Hoshang Bengali, Pallonji Shapoorji



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*Portrait of Ookerjee C. M. Banaji, the renovated hall
and outside view of the Banaji Limji Ajiary*

Photos: Percy Karkaria, Homz Prints

Stained glass at the entrance and jashan in progress

Photos: Hilla Guzder



Clockwise from left: Burjor Banajee (left) and Guzder; Dadi Banaji and Mehta; Master (left) with Guzder; Panthaki; Wania and Adi Banajee
Photos: Percy Karkaria, Homz Prints



Charity Trust, etc — were thanked for their magnanimity, as also the numerous anonymous donors who dropped their contributions into its repair fund box in the Agiary. (A substantial donation was received later from the Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund, according to Banajee.)

A *Brief History* states that the Agiary's founder, Banaji Limji was, according to the *Parsi Prakash*, Volume I, the son of Limji Rustomji Aspandiyarji Asaji, an *akabar* (leader) of the Parsi community in Surat. Fired by a spirit of adventure, Banaji left Bhagwa-Dandi (in Surat district) to seek his fortune in Bombay 310 years ago. After a brief stint with the East India Company, he opened a firm by the name of Banaji Limji, carrying on trade with such flourishing ports as Bharuch and Sanjan on the west coast, up to Madras and Burma (which he is said to have visited personally) in the east. Banaji soon rose to the status of Davar (dispenser of justice) and "the merchant prince" of Bombay as he was said to be known, acted as treasurer of the funds of the Parsi anjuman.

The booklet relates that after the Agiary was consecrated, Banaji Limji acquired the neighboring property by

purchasing it in the early 1700s from the East India Company at a public auction by paying "380 zirfin coins amounting to Rs 328-8-8." The area in those days was called "adarian wadi." Banaji Mansion, located opposite the Agiary, was donated later by Sir Dinshaw Petit, first baronet. At the end of Banaji Street lay Cowasji Patel Street where, it is said, resided at one time the Governor of Bombay in a mansion owned by Patel, the governor's means of transport being a *gaddi* (cart) drawn by two fine bullocks!

Banaji Limji died in 1734 at the age of 80, having lived just long enough to celebrate the Agiary's silver jubilee. His eldest son Behramji (1681-1753) ascended the seat of Davar, relinquishing it later in favor of his brother Maneckji because of his long voyages away from India. The firm prospered under Behramji, Maneckji and youngest brother Limji, with the purchase of new ships and increased trade. The book states that Behramji's fifth and youngest son Cowasji's sons consecrated the Cowasji Behramji Banaji (Kadmi) Atash Behram on Thakurdwar Road in 1845 in his memory.

During the tenure of Maneckji's grandson Dossabhai "the agiary almost became a madressa (seminary)," with Jamshedji Edulji Bahmanji Jamaspasa being the head of the Agiary, training several yozdathregars (full fledged priests) who were invited to consecrate agiaries and dokhmas outside Bombay.

After the catastrophe of 1803, the atash was temporarily shifted to the Bai Soonaji Hirji Jivanji Readymoney Fire-temple at Gowalia Tank. Funds were raised to rebuild the structure, with the Banaji, Davar and other well-known families contributing generously. Legend has it that the poorer sections of the community subscribed their mite by throwing into the foundation dozens of eggs and hundreds of mugs of toddy! Of the Rs 23,000 collected, there remained after construction a surplus of Rs 11,034 which was placed into the custody of the family patriarch Framji Kavajji Banaji who was an agriculturist, one of the founders of the *Bombay Times* (later *The Times of India*) and a director of the GIP (Greater Indian Peninsula) railway.

When Framji died in 1851, his widow Bachubai mooted the idea of a trust which was formed as late as 1901, states the book. The Yejeshne and Gahambar Trust Fund was endowed earlier in 1875. The fire was reportedly shifted once again to the Langrana Agiary in the Fort area to facilitate repairs. Electric lights and fans made their appearance as late as 1930. Ustad Behramshah Shroff, it is said, used the Agiary to give lectures on Ilm-e-Khshnoom.

Enterprising Banaji descendants also achieved great distinction in the industrial and civic life of Bengal. A historical sketch of the Calcutta community forwarded to *Par-siana* in 1988 by Phiroze Dustoor, then office manager

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of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Funds, names Dadabhai Banaji as the first Parsi to arrive in Calcutta over 200 years ago. "An outstanding scion, Rustomji Cowasji Banaji, founded Calcutta's first atash adaran in 1839," the article narrated (see "The pillar of our existence," *Parsiana*, March 1988). His firm, Rustomji Turner and Company, opened a branch in China and his numerous ships carried on a flourishing trade with that country. His son Maneckjee held the office of sheriff as well as municipal commissioner of Calcutta and was the Persian consul in that city for 20 years, recount Giara and Dhalla. (The trustees of the Banaji Limji Agiary are not connected in any way with the agiary in Calcutta and have no knowledge of the situation there, said Adi Banajee.)

Another Banaji scion, Sohrabji Pestonji Framji, reportedly donated over five-and-a-half lakh rupees to make



Renovated gumbaz

Photo: Percy Karkaria, Homz Prints

good the shortfall that arose towards the construction of the Framji Kavasji Institute, Hall and Native General Library at Dhobi Talao. The Banajis are linked by ties of blood and marriage to illustrious families such as the Cowasji Jehangirs, the Dadyseths and the Wadias of Wadiji Atas Bahram, notes *A Brief History*.

Of the present trustees, Burjor Banajee's association with the Agiary

dates back almost 50 years. He was for many years with *The Bombay Samachar*, as printer/publisher and "the right hand man of Munchershaw Cama," states Adi who is with the Central Bank of India as assistant manager. DAD (disciplinary action department) at the head office at Nariman Point. A provision in the trust deed states that only members of the Banaji family can become trustees. Dadi Banaji and his son

Jamshed are both architects, having recently shifted their firm Banaji and Associates from its long-time location at Alli Chambers in Fort to Andheri. Octogenarian Bachamai Rustomji Wadia is also a trustee.

Almost three centuries down in time, the Agiary retains its air of tranquility. The raucous shouts of the hawkers, the roar and rumble of traffic barely penetrate its high walls. The sound of silence is punctuated by the chirp of the birds, the bleating of goats and the ringing of the bells at the boi.

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The secret under his skin

Rudyard Kipling

The rhinoceros who dared to eat the Parsi's cake developed folds on its skin

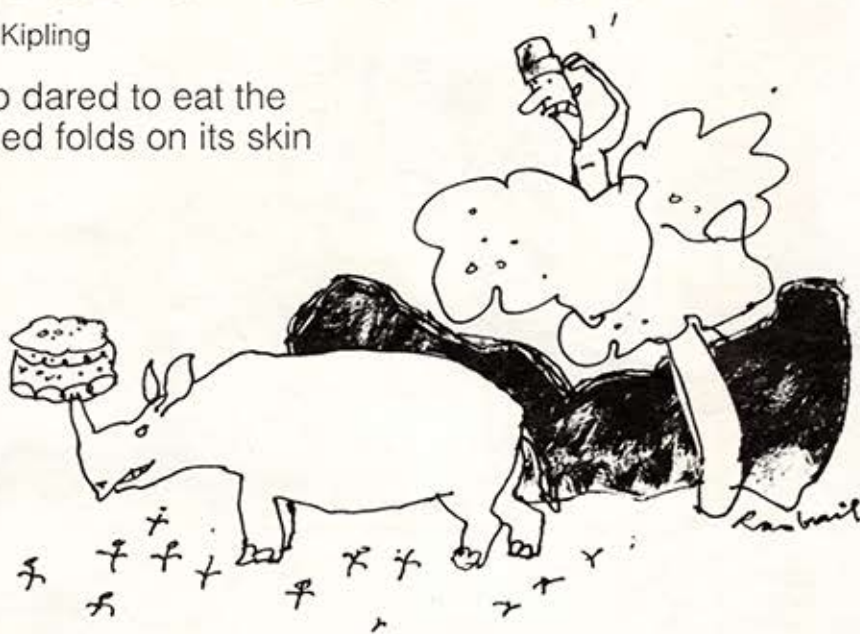
Once upon a time, on an uninhabited island on the shores of the Red Sea, there lived a Parsi from whose hat the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental splendor. And the Parsi lived by the Red Sea with nothing but his hat and his knife and a cooking stove of the kind that you must particularly never touch. And one day he took flour and water and currants and plums and sugar and things, and made himself one cake which was two feet across and three feet thick.

It was indeed a superior comestible (that's magic), and he put it on the stove because he was allowed to cook on that stove, and he baked it and he baked it till it was all done brown and smelt most sentimental. But just as he was going to eat it there came down to the beach from the altogether uninhabited interior one rhinoceros with a horn on his nose, two piggy eyes, and few manners.

In those days the rhinoceros' skin fitted him quite tight. There were no wrinkles in it anywhere. He looked exactly like a Noah's Ark rhinoceros, but of course much bigger. All the same, he had no manners then, and he has no manners now, and he never will have any manners. He said, 'How' and the Parsi left that cake and climbed to the top of a palm tree with nothing on but his hat, from which the rays of the sun were always reflected in more-than-oriental splendor. And the rhinoceros upset the oil stove with his nose, and the cake rolled on the sand, and he spiked that cake on the horn of his nose, and he ate it, and he went away, waving his tail, to the desolate and exclusively uninhabited interior which abuts on the island of Mazanderan, Socotra, and the promontories of the larger equinox.

Then the Parsi came down from his palm tree and put the stove on its legs and recited the following sloka, which, as you have not heard, I will now proceed to relate:

"Them that takes cakes
Which the Parsi man bakes
Makes dreadful mistakes."



And there was a great deal more in that than you would think.

Because, five weeks later, there was a heat wave in the Red Sea, and everybody took off all the clothes they had. The Parsi took off his hat; but the rhinoceros took off his skin and carried it over his shoulder as he came down to the beach to bathe. In those days it buttoned underneath with three buttons and looked like a waterproof. He said nothing whatever about the Parsi's cake, because he had eaten it all; and he never had any manners, then, since, or henceforward. He waddled straight into the water and blew bubbles through his nose, leaving his skin on the beach.

Presently the Parsi came by and found the skin, and he smiled one smile that ran all round his face two times. Then he danced three times round the skin and rubbed his hands. Then he went to his camp and filled his hat with cake crumbs, for the Parsi never ate anything but cake, and never swept out his camp. He took that skin, and he shook that skin, and he scrubbed that skin, and he rubbed that skin just as full of old, dry, stale, tickly cake crumbs and some burned currants as ever it could possibly hold. Then he climbed to the top of his palm tree and waited for the rhinoceros to come out of the water and put it on.

And the rhinoceros did. He buttoned it

up with the three buttons, and it tickled like cake crumbs in bed. Then he wanted to scratch, but that made it worse; and then he lay down on the sands and rolled and rolled and rolled, and every time he rolled the cake crumbs tickled him worse and worse and worse. Then he ran to the palm tree and rubbed and rubbed and rubbed himself against it.

He rubbed so much and so hard that he rubbed his skin into a great fold over his shoulders, and another fold underneath, where the buttons used to be (but he rubbed the buttons off), and he rubbed some more folds over his legs. And it spoiled his temper, but it didn't make the least difference to the cake crumbs. They were inside his skin and they tickled. So he went home, very angry indeed and horribly scratchy; and from that day to this every rhinoceros has great folds in his skin and a very bad temper, all on account of the cake crumbs inside.

But the Parsi came down from his palm tree, wearing his hat, from which the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental splendor, packed up his cooking stove, and went away in the direction of Orotavo, Amygdala, the upland meadows of Antananarivo, and the marshes of Sonapat.

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The recent renovations to the Bhikha Behram Well have given a new lease of life to the 275-year-old heritage structure

They all come to quench their thirst... for water, for comfort, for solitude, or for communion with the presiding deity of the waters. To them, the Bhikha Behram Well has been serving as an oasis in the commotion and frenzy of downtown Bombay. Now that the Well, the overhead pavilion and the diva enclosure have been artfully restored, it is not only the regular pilgrims but the passersby too who stop to take notice of this grade I heritage structure, the only Zoroastrian monument in Bombay to enjoy this distinction.

The trustees of the Bhikha Behram Well — senior trustee Sooni Jal Taraporevala as also the newly appointed trustees Burjor Hormasji Antia, Meher

Pheroze Dhanbhoora and Dr Viraf Jehangir Kapadia — were keen to get their precincts renovated so they thought it befitting to plan for the Well's 275th anniversary in March 2000. They approached Pallonji Mistry of Shapoorji Pallonji and Company (Private) Limited who consented to bear the entire cost of repairs. Sanction for renovations, which had to be in the nature of reversible intervention, was sought from the Heritage Committee and conservation architect Kirti Unwalla was entrusted the job.

Even before the repairs could be completed, a special function commencing with a jashan was held on Jamshedi Navroz when a silver salver was pre-

sented to Mistry to acknowledge his largesse. Also recalled at the function was the personal contribution of Sohrab Godrej, then chairman of the Godrej group of companies, who had made possible the beautification of the premises in 1995 with potted plants and hedges, and fresh saplings enhancing the erstwhile rustic ambience. The silver marked for him was received in absentia by Pheroza Godrej. A 24-page booklet on the Bhikha Behram Well was released at the hands of Dinshaw Tamboly, managing trustee of the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust and

Photos of the Well by Homyar Mistry, Homz Prints

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trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). Later in the day, a feast for 1,000 poor people was organized at the Dadyseth Atash Bahram, mention the trustees.

"Bhikha Behram Well occupies a unique position in the life of every Zoroastrian...Its water is said to have a healing effect. Every day thousands of people irrespective of their caste and creed drink the water from this Well either in their offices or in their houses," notes an introduction from the trustees in the booklet. Messages from some high priests and BPP trustees are included in this booklet with BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder acknowledging, "From my childhood I have a great attachment to our sacred *kuwa* and I have got great inspiration by praying before the holy Well." Articles on the significance of water and a short history of the Well by Ervad (Dr) Rooyintan Peer and Khojeste Mistree are the other highlights of the booklet.

"This is almost a wishing Well," believes Kapadia who comes here daily, elaborating on how the flow of devotees increases visibly during examination time. He knows of people who have fallen in love at this site and women, keen to bear a child, praying the *Ava Nyaish* for 40 consecutive days, later announcing glad tidings. Some orthodox Jains who require water for their religious ceremonies insist on carrying home water from this Well, he adds.

Dhanbhoora, whose visits to the Well have increased considerably since she took over as co-trustee conveys her surprise when an old lady told her that she

has been daily coming to this site for the last several years. Impressed with the faith of many such people, she feels the trustees' efforts to raise funds and work for the renovation of the Well seem justified.

Nearly 300 Zoroastrians must be frequenting this site during the course of a day, reports Kapadia saying he had once sat through the day to keep a count of the visitors. The attendance on *Avan mah*, *Avan roz* must be rising to 1,000, he estimates. With cartloads of water being supplied to offices and vendors in the Fort area, Kapadia guesses that nearly 3,000 non-Parsis must be daily availing of this free water provision.

The water from this Well is potable, insists Kapadia, saying he has been consuming it daily for years. The cleanliness of the Well water has been possible thanks to the largesse of Homi Dalal of National Chemist who supplies free potassium permanganate and bleaching powder to cleanse the water every week, and Hoshang Bengali of Homa Engineering Works who undertakes the cleaning of the entire Well once or twice a year, free of charge. The water is fully drained out, the Well cleaned, and within two or three hours

the flow is back to its original level, says Kapadia. While Maneck Engineer, vice president (construction) of Godrej and Boyce has been requested to take a sample of the Well water to get it tested at their laboratory, the feasibility of installing a filter plant is also being worked out.

Three years ago when the Rotary Club of Mumbai Sunrise had financed the construction of a public toilet cum utility service center in the vicinity, the trustees had sought legal intervention and the case went up to the Supreme Court which granted a stay on the use of the toilet. Thereafter the complex had remained shut. But recently with major road repair work in the Hutatma Chowk area, it was found that the toilet doors were open so the Trust had to send notices to the municipal commissioner, law officer and ward officer after which the complex was sealed once again, mentions Kapadia. Fortunately for the Bhikha Behram Well Trust, Antia, a senior partner in the legal firm of Mulla and Mulla is one of the trustees.

The threat from the hawkers in the area who five years ago surrounded the structure from all sides had prompted the Trust to erect a boundary wall.

Every time the municipal van came, the hawkers would come rushing into the Well precincts with their wares, recalls Kapadia. The euphoria following the recent demolition drive to evict unauthorized hawkers in the area was short-lived as the vendors have already started coming back. "Unfortunately, the hawkers are better organized than the Parsi community," declares Kapadia who has been involved in the day-to-

day affairs of this Trust for the last over 10 years, assisting then active trustee, the late Bejonji Engineer (father of BPP trustee Dadi Engineer).

According to Kapadia, the Bhikha Behram Well Trust was formed in 1955 after Engineer and Dadabhai Panday succeeded in preventing the Well from being sealed by the Bombay Municipal Corporation which had issued directives for the closure of all private wells in the city in the interest of better sanitary conditions. Since Engineer successfully fought the case without charging a single paisa, he was inducted as a co-trustee by Panday who was a de-



Top (from left): Tamboly, Antia, Taraporevala, Kapadia and P. Godrej Below: Pallonji Mistry (left) receiving memento from Antia

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Divas being lit at the refurbished enclosure on the occasion of the Well's 275th anniversary celebrations



scendant of the founder's family.

The founder Bhikhaji Behramji Panday, a wealthy trader, had this Well built in 1725 alongside a windmill which stood at the site of the present Western Railway headquarters, notes a report readied by Unwalla based on a Gujarati article which had appeared under "Mumbai Yadon no Varghodo" in *Jam-e-Jam-shed*. Travelers from near and far came in bullock carts to the mill to grind their corn, rice, bajri, etc to flour, resting in the meantime under the shade of laburnum, gulmohur, jamun and mango trees that surrounded the area.

The seawater reached right up to the windmill with black stone boulders lined up along the beach. To provide water to the weary travelers this Well was sunk with a special water trough for the bullocks. Bhikhaji deviated from the family business of small supplies trade with the East India Company and opened a provisions cum imported liquor shop in the English Bazaar at Meadows Street, notes the article.

While there is no uncertainty that this Well was dug by Bhikhaji there are contradictory reports as to the circumstances surrounding his life and how

the family acquired Panday for its surname. It is not therefore clear whether it was Bhikhaji or his grandfather Kharshedji Poncha who, while walking down from Bharuch to Bombay, was caught in an encounter with the Marathas at the Fort of Parner in Gujarat and detained at fortress Pandeghad (whence the family derived their surname). Considered to be a Muslim he was waylaid by the Marathas but when he showed them the sudreh and kusti on his body he was released by his captors and permitted to proceed on his journey.

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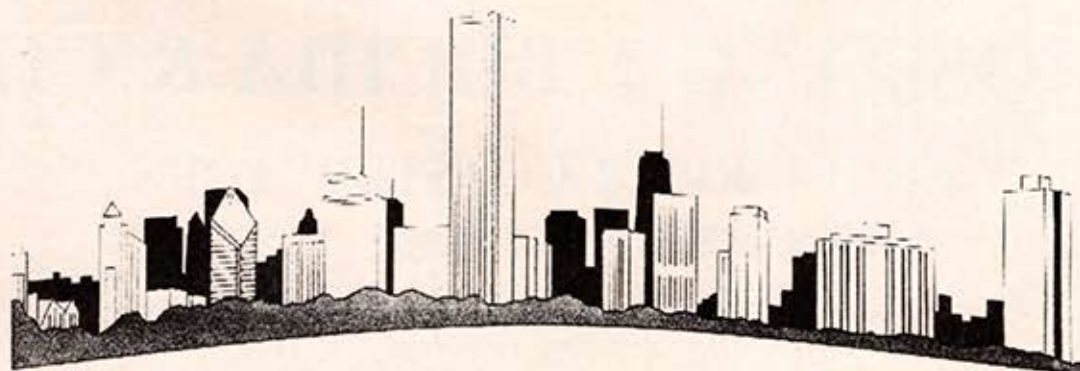
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Over the years the founder's successors have endeavored to maintain the Well as an object of charity. "We are not here to make profit," claims Kapadia explaining how even Pervez Dumasia who has been given the contract to manage the diva section has been told that he can price lamps at higher rates but there must be some available at two rupees each. "*Gariboné wasté jaga rēhvi joie* (this place should be open for the poor too)."

The Bhikha Behram Well has inspired faith among some of the third and fourth generation regular devotees ever since it was made known that when the other wells in the area (since sealed) were able to supply only brackish water due to the proximity of the sea, this Well has been blessed with a perennial source of sweet water. The Zoroastrian philosophy of 'the more you give, the more you get,' has been adopted by this Well too.

Well enclosed

"A modest and beautiful pavilion over the well structure," according to a report readied by Unwalla, was constructed around 1954. Originally there

was a semi-open enclosure on the northern face for lighting oil lamps. The pavilion design and supervision was undertaken by the late architect Jamshed Aga of Shapoorji N. Chandabhoj and

Despite the proximity of the sea, this Well has been blessed with a perennial source of sweet water

Company, she was given to understand, with Shapoorji Pallonji serving as the builders. The cement concrete roofing over the diva enclosure, the cubicles for performing kusti, plus additional foliage to supplement the greenery were the subsequent developments made possible by the donation from S. Godrej, notes Kapadia.

"Keeping in mind the history, architectural style and social relevance of the structure," Unwalla submitted a brief of the planned renovations to the Heritage Committee which sanctioned all

her proposals, she relates. Thus a 4,000 litre tank where water can be accessed through taps was provided for on the outer periphery of the wall on the west. The original 'jali' where garlands are hung was substituted with one of glass reinforced concrete (GRC) to match the color and style of the pavilion. Its position was further shifted from the south to the west side.

The stained glass work, where cracked, was restored by Pervin Mistry who had also worked on the panels at the Bombay University. New leading, where required, was also used to strengthen the delicate stained glass which was reset in GRC specially brought down from Ahmedabad, discarding the original timber and reinforced cement concrete panels. A stained glass frame of Zarathushtra is a new addition at the enclosure for the divas. The flooring around the well has been changed too. But the pavilion which includes stone columns and friezes only required cleaning with water and detergent. The renovation project, its total cost working out to a little over 10 lakh rupees, was expected to be completed by end July 2000.

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Legal lessons

His years at the Bar helped the author gain insights into the litigious nature of the Parsi community

Fali Nariman

"Parsi Law" is the personal law of the Parsis just as there is a personal law of the Hindus (Hindu Law), of the Muslims (Muslim Law), and of the Christians (Christian Law). Is there in India a personal law — sometimes called the law of a person's religion which can govern only one particular section of people? Strangely, despite all that is said in our secular Constitution of India, the answer is: Yes.

Any part of personal law can of course be modified or abrogated by statute i.e. by parliament or by state legislatures. Before our Constitution came into force on January 28, 1950, there were a large number of laws — relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and the like — governing different classes of people living in India — Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims (also to some extent Parsis). Under the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution of India it was declared that all laws in force which infringed the equality clause or which discriminated against women, or which discriminated against any class only on the ground of religion, were void. Yet in 1952 a strong Bench of the High Court of Bombay held that the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution did not apply to personal laws because they were not "laws in force."

Only laws made by legislative bodies and applicable generally could be described as "laws in force," said the Bombay High Court, not personal laws.

The Court based its decision principally on the fact that our Constitution recognized and tolerated the existence of personal laws applicable to a section of

citizens. That article said that the state shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India: not now but in the future, and that the future had not yet arrived. After 50 years and much dissension the future has still not arrived and consequently the anomaly of personal laws remain.

However, a slightly different approach was taken in reference to customs (not personal laws): the case concerned Parsis. In 1971 one Kekobad Sidhwa gifted a plot of land at Udvada near the main Atash Behram to one Minochar Pandole and the collector of Valsad granted permission to Pandole to build an agiary sometime in 1974. This was challenged by the Udvada Anjuman and the High Priest. They relied on a custom recognized in an award given by

Dadabhai Naoroji in July 1883, in disputes arising out of the jurisdiction of different panthaks in Gujarat. The award had been affirmed by the former High Court of Baroda and had the force of law. The contention was that the Pandoles could not proceed to construct an adarian within the limits of the Sanjan panthak where the main Atash Behram of the Parsis was situated without the express permission of the High Priest or the Anjuman of Udvada.

The Pandoles in response pleaded that even if this was a custom sanctified by time it violated their fundamental right under Article 26 of the Constitution since all persons (which would include all Parsis too) had a fundamental right to establish and maintain religious institutions (which would include agiaries). The right was subject only to public order, morality and health, not anybody's permission. The constitutional issue was decided in favor of the Pandoles and against the High Priest at Udvada by a Division Bench of the High Court of Gujarat in 1980 and an appeal was carried by the Udvada Anjuman to the Supreme Court. I recall that it was a Bench presided over by the late Justice Fazal Ali who was hearing this matter, and although I had no connection with this case, he called me to the Court one

day when it was being heard and said that he had the highest regard and respect for the Parsi community and that this was a matter which must be settled. I passed on the message to Parsi counsel appearing on both sides (one of them my first junior in Bombay, Bomi Zaiwalla, now a senior advocate) and with some goodwill the matter ultimately was settled, the constitutional question being bypassed. Consent terms were taken that in order to maintain peace and harmony in the community, the Pandoles formally applied for permission of the High Priest or the Anjuman in Udvada and it was recorded in the consent terms that such permission was duly granted by the Anjuman to Pandole to construct an adarian near the main atash behram.

The constitutional position



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therefore is: "Pre-1950 customs and usages which conflict with fundamental rights granted by the Constitution were no longer recognized after January 28, 1950 but personal laws of different sections of the community which existed before the Constitution came into force did not become void even if they were in conflict with any provision in the Fundamental Rights chapter."

Some personal laws of the Parsis had been incorporated into statute law: One of them was about marriage and divorce (which I will come to later). The other was a set of provisions in the Indian Succession Act, 1925 (Section 50-56) prescribing special rules for intestate succession for Parsis. When a Parsi died without leaving a will, his wife and daughter only inherited one half of the share of his sons. In fact both in the horizontal and vertical lines of descent the male took double the share of each female.

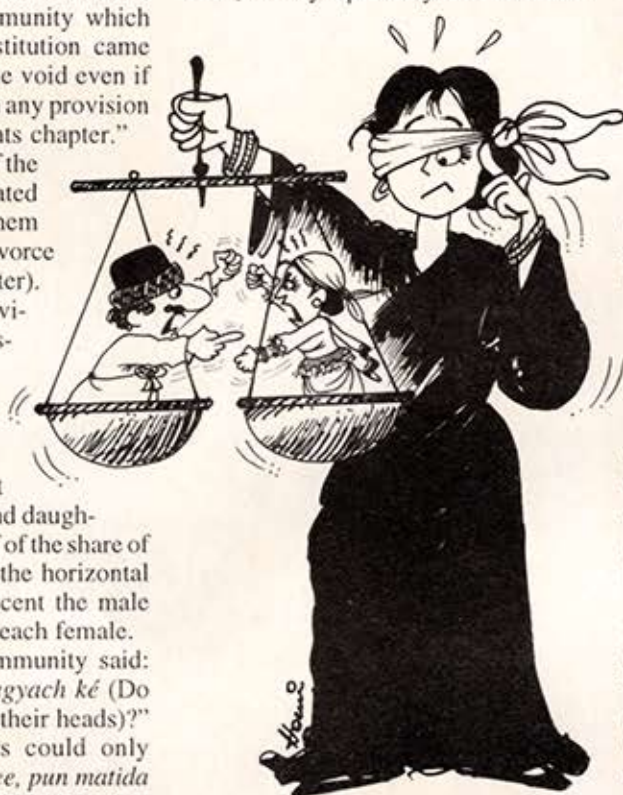
The ladies in the community said: "*Soo matida né singra ugyach ké* (Do the males have horns on their heads?)" And the male members could only weakly say: "*Hajee, hajee, pun matida na singra sarkaré kari nakhya* (Yes, but these horns were removed by the government!)" And how this was done!

Some associations had written to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to equalize treatment of sons and daughters in relation to Parsi succession, but she always set her face (I think rightly) against any alteration in the personal law of sections of people until there was unanimity amongst them. Unanimity only came in the late '80s and the Prime Minister was duly informed, and the law was altered (the request of almost all sections of the community) and from December 9, 1991 each male and female standing in the same degree took an equal share of inheritance.

The *matida na singra* had been successfully pulled out, without a squeak from the community's male members!

The effect of Parsi law on Parsi society was considerable in the early years of our sojourn in India, but not after British India got established. Over the years since waves of Zoroastrians arrived in India we were invariably a law-abiding group. The strange thing however was that we were so without having any system of law for nearly nine centu-

ries! We really could not boast of any personal law: i.e. the law of our religion from Persia. In course of time we adopted the Hindu system of governing (the caste): i.e. by a punchayet — or assem-



bly of elders of the community.

The first real Punchayet was the one in Bombay. It was a court of justice and had the power to excommunicate from the 'caste' any one who did not obey its decisions! Its authority was based neither on any statute nor even on personal law but on social sanction. In 1778, the Punchayet petitioned Governor Hornby of Bombay for legal authority to inflict punishment on offenders by "beating with the shoe." Surprising request. More surprising still was that it was granted! Errant Parsis were in fact beaten with shoes for misdemeanors. [This was perhaps the origin of the phrase — "*khasra parsay* (You will be beaten with shoes)!"]

Ten years later the Government of Bombay constituted an influential body of 12 men as a Punchayet. They wielded great authority, but alas, only whilst its members lived. By the end of the 18th century panchayati raj (of the Parsis) came to an end, putting finis to Parsi rule in India.

Attempts at revival were made in the middle of the last century for a formal mandate to be conferred on the Parsi Punchayet. A petition was made to the

viceroy-in council. The council consulted the judges at Bombay, but they refused the request for setting up a punchayet for Parsis as a parallel court. Parsi personal law, such as it was, suffered its first setback.

The absence of a suitable code of laws governing social relations amongst Parsis led to the rule of thumb adopted by judges in India that Parsis in Bombay city were to be governed by the Common Law of England. Parsis outside Bombay in the districts (or the *mofussil*) were to be governed by custom and usage — and in its absence by what the judge thought the law should be: under that delightfully vague English phrase "justice, equity and good conscience."

But even this did not meet all situations. In 1853, one Pirojbai filed a petition against her husband Ardasher in the Supreme Court of Bombay for restitution of conjugal rights: her husband had left her and she wanted him back.

The case is a standing example for Parsi wives: never ask a court to give you back your husband if he leaves you. There was no law in 1853 under which restitution of conjugal rights could be obtained by Parsis except perhaps under the ecclesiastical law of England. The question argued before the Supreme Court of Bombay in Pirojbai's case was whether the Court could exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction (which in England was limited to Christians) where the parties were Parsis professing the Zoroastrian religion. The chief justice of Bombay was a brave fellow: his name should be remembered: he was Sir William Yardley, probably the first progenitor of the modern activist judge of today. He looked into decisions for over a half century where the Court had permitted non-Europeans and non-Christians to exercise this right of restitution of conjugal rights, and he issued a decree. His colleague disagreed with the chief justice but under the then law the opinion of the senior judge in a Bench of two judges always prevailed.

So on the basis of the opinion of the chief justice, the Supreme Court of Bombay, applying the ecclesiastical law of England, decreed that Ardasher should take back Pirojbai to his home and treat her with "marital affection and conjugal kindness." But easier said than done.

Dear Ardasher had already taken another Parsi woman into his home with whom he had gone through (at that time



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lawfully) a form of marriage. Rather than face the highly explosive situation of an altercation between two headstrong Parsi wives, Ardasher chose the less hazardous, but far more expensive course. He appealed to the judicial committee of the Privy Council — the court of last resort for litigation in British India. And he won. Unfortunately for Pirojbai, their Lordships of the Privy Council set aside the decree of the Supreme Court of Bombay and disregarding all precedent held that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction exercised by that Court under the charter could only be applied to Christians, not to Parsis.

This celebrated, but unfortunate, incident underscored the need for a distinct set of laws for Parsis, especially in personal matters like succession, marriage and divorce.

As a result of the efforts of what was then known as the Parsi Law Association, a commission was set up under the chairmanship of a High Court judge, Sir Joseph Arnold (the High Court of Bombay had not been established by that time). The commission recommended a code of laws for the Parsis. It was on the basis of this commission's recommendations that the Parsi Intestate Succession Act and the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act was passed in 1865. It was my leader Sir Jamsetjee Kanga who used to tell us that up to 1865 it was "customary" for a Parsi gentleman of substance in Bombay to have more than one wife, and several mistresses, and hordes of children by them! This illicit proliferation of the community was to cease after September 1, 1865 with the advent of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act. When news got around that the viceroy's council was considering an enactment compelling monogamy for Parsis (this was in or about June or July 1865) there was a rush to legitimize 'alliances' and 'families,' and, as Kanga used to say, it was a field day for the mobeds who were in great demand, proficiently performing hasty ceremonies (at high fees!) right up to the midnight of August 31, 1865 a day, in case you don't know it, now reckoned in the Parsi calendar as doomsday for the Parsi male!

The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1865 was replaced in 1936. There were separate provisions made for grounds for declaration of nullity of Parsi marriages and for their dissolution and for divorce. The provisions for divorce were limited and it was only in 1988 on the unanimous representation of the Parsi community that Parliament enacted an amendment to the 1936 Act enabling divorce to be granted by mutual consent.

One particular provision of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 is unique. It has no counterpart in the personal law of any other community. It is section 52 which makes the Parsi personal law of marriage and divorce "transportable." It says that a Parsi who has contracted a marriage under the Act, even though such Parsi may change his or her religion or domicile, so long as his/her wife or husband is alive and so long as such Parsi is lawfully not divorced from the wife or husband or such marriage has not lawfully been declared null and void or dissolved under a decree of the Parsi Matrimonial Court under the Act, "shall remain bound by the provisions of the Act." This is one aspect of our personal law which is in a sense truly transnational: the Parsi married under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act carries this personal law of marriage, divorce, alimony and maintenance with him wherever he goes.

But the particular provision of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936, that is etched in my memory is section 36 which provides for a suit for restitution of conjugal rights.

*There's
something so
real in the
taste of life.*



Where a wife has deserted or without lawful cause ceased to cohabit with her husband, the husband may sue for restitution of his conjugal rights (likewise the wife).

That case (*Hirabai v. Dhunjibhai*) was argued for the defendant husband by the great Pherozeshah Mehta, a fine, imposing advocate, every bit as imposing as his statue at Bori Bunder outside the office of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. He was also a brilliant cross-examiner and a trifle pompous: since even though his chambers were just opposite the High Court and he could walk across to Court, he would not. He came in his two-horse carriage like a king. However in this case the judge held that the question as to whether there was justification for a decree for restitution of conjugal rights was within the exclusive domain of the delegates. The system of delegates is the last vestige of the jury system in India. The delegates at the time were made of stern stuff: they were not swayed by the persuasive advocacy of the great Mehta and they returned a verdict in favor of the wife viz. that there was good cause why she should not resume cohabitation with her husband.

All questions of fact in proceedings brought under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act 1936 are to be determined by what is called the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court established at various places where there are clusters of Parsis like in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Delhi. A High Court judge has to try the cases aided by five delegates (before 1988 it used to be seven): testimony to our rapidly diminishing members. The delegates were always the most important people in the community and what is more, they always knew how important they were! I recall my dear father-in-law (of whom I was very fond) who was one of the delegates in the Bombay Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court. In my early days at the Bar I would see him proudly entering the sessions of the Parsi Matrimonial Court, and he was simply delighted to be a part of the solemn paraphernalia of Parsi justice.

One incident has remained etched in my memory as a very young junior. It was a proceeding in the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court in Bombay before Justice Coyaji. It was my first brush with 'justice' — what was brought home to me quite poignantly very early in my career was the extreme vagueness of the term. Jus-

tice is a concept which is by definition elusive. It is not the product of the intellect but of the spirit. It represents an aspiration, a yearning for what is fine and good and noble. I think the nearest anyone got to a definition was a very famous English Judge, Lord Denning who died at 100 plus last year. He said that justice is no more than what right-thinking members of the community believe to be fair: That is where the trouble starts. Because which member of a community will refuse to acknowledge that he is right thinking? Everybody believes that he is right thinking. In fact, when I first joined the bar in Bombay 49 years ago, I, and others like me, used to sit around in courts to follow what was going on. It is very difficult at the beginning of one's career to follow anything at all in any court: there is a lot of legal mumbo-jumbo unfamiliar to the lay person and even to young lawyers. Some of us young lawyers when we had no work elsewhere, used to sit in the Matrimonial Court where no great depth of legal knowledge was required to follow its proceedings. And it was spicy and interesting as well! I remember seeing a Parsi husband who was suing his Parsi wife for restitution of conjugal rights. At that time I was not married and I thought

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that it takes all sorts of queer characters to make a world. Well, the wife in this case had cross-petitioned and asked the court for a divorce on grounds of the husband's mental cruelty.

The judge summed up very strongly in favor of the wife, that she should get a divorce. The delegates spurned the summing up. They were more impressed with the eloquence of the advocate for the husband, who, incidentally, was a lady and they brought in their verdict which was that the woman should not get her divorce. The husband, they said, was entitled to his decree for restitution of conjugal rights and the woman was sent back into the arms of a person she regarded as a beast. There was literally much loud crying and wailing in court. The judge grew red in the face and fumed (silently, of course), the woman howled and pleaded. Nothing could be done. The final judges of fact (the delegates) had spoken. The right-minded members of the community thought they had dispensed justice. Very pleased with themselves they were. Very pleased too was the husband, who with the help of his mother, physically dragged the helpless woman out of Court and took her to their home.

The very next session was about three or four months later and this woman came back, her nose bandaged, with another petition for divorce on the ground (this time) of actual physical cruelty. Because it appears that the husband had been so pleased with his success that having taken his reluctant wife back to the house he celebrated his success by strapping her to a chair, and with the aid of his mother and a very large knife, literally cut off a small tip off her nose. You can almost hear the whoop of joy: "*Nak kapi nakhvu, moi noo* (let's humiliate her by cutting off her nose)!"

The judge who tried the matter was the same judge as in the previous session. He was almost gleeful when he heard the sordid story; he ignored the bandaged nose of the poor woman plaintiff and he turned to the delegates and said (not in words but in looks), "See, I told you so." Of course, the lady got her divorce this time.

Here then we had two sets of "right-minded" people — jury and judge — arriving at contradictory conclusions, both acting in the name of justice.

Ever since this incident I confess that I do not look too harshly on complaints about injustice, whether in the High

Court or in the Supreme Court. Generally justice is a matter of perception on which opinions can genuinely differ.

The High Court of Bombay said in a case concerning two Parsis where common law operated unjustly in the given case, that the judges could remedy the injustice of the situation. The case was an action for defamation between two Parsi families.

The facts are typical and true to Parsi form. One Hirabai Mistry, her husband Jehangir and one Jamshedji were residing in a flat in Bombay. One Dinshah Edulji Karkaria resided in a neighboring flat. And as Parsis are wont, they quarreled one day in June 1921. Karkaria lodged a complaint in the Presidency Magistrate's Court in Bombay against Hirabai and Jehangir and the person living with them, on charges of the offence of assault and insult. Hirabai it appears was quite a virago and had physically assaulted her neighbor Karkaria. The magistrate advised the parties to settle their differences and with a view to help in the settlement asked them to state their grievances. That was the biggest mistake he made because Karkaria used the occasion to slander Hirabai. Pointing to Jamshedji who lived in the

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same flat as Hirabai and Jehangir, he said: "*To ah bai no rakhelo che ane te hoo poorvar kari apeesh* [He (i.e. Jamshedji) is a paramor of this woman (i.e. Hirabai) and I will prove it]."

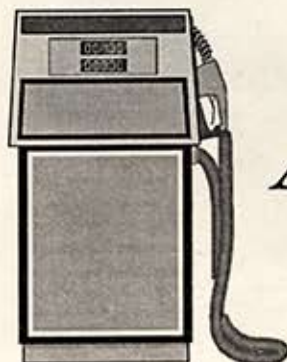
Hirabai promptly filed a criminal complaint against Karkaria who failed to prove the truth of his statement in court, and was found guilty of criminal defamation and was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs 50. Then the triumphant Hirabai filed a suit to recover Rs 10,000 as damages for defamation against Karkaria. (Parsis in Bombay at this period were the most litigious community till Bombay lawyers jacked up their fees!) Well Karkaria when served with the summons in the suit promptly went to the best lawyer in Bombay, Sir Jamshedji Kanga, who was then advocate-general. Kanga who knew his law better than any other lawyer of his time said "that under the common law of England which was applicable to Parsis the words though defamatory and slanderous were not actionable (as the plaintiff was a woman) without proof of special damage and since special damage was not suffered by Hirabai nor did she say so the suit was not maintainable." Kanga's advice proved right — but only in the first

court. An English judge, Justice Crump, dismissed Hirabai's suit as not maintainable but the redoubtable Hirabai litigious as ever went in appeal. P.B. Vachha appeared for Hirabai. Vachha is remembered affectionately in Bombay not so much for his advocacy as for his eloquent and delightful history of the High Court of Bombay published in its centenary year (1962). Vachha pleaded before the Bench of two judges who heard the appeal that adultery is a crime in India but not in England and that the English common law had to be therefore adapted to suit Indian circumstances. A division Bench of two English judges, chief justice Sir Amberson Marten and Justice Kemp, accepted his submission and overruled the single judge. They said that even judges in England had already opined that the common law rule of no suit for slander by a woman except where special damage was suffered was "barbarous," and so they would not apply this rule to India. The Division Bench decreed Hirabai's suit as maintainable even though no special damage had been pleaded. The slander was a particularly bad one (they said) since it imputed unchastity to the plaintiff with regard to a relation of her husband who

was staying in the same house and thus caused pain and anguish to Hirabai. The Court awarded her a sum of Rs 1,000 as damages which in the year 1926 was a really princely sum.

A little aside on defamation in which a Parsi solicitor and a Parsi journalist were involved and which I know something about since I was at the Bar when the suit for defamation was heard. There was in the '50s a Parsi journalist called Homi Daji. In his columns in the weekly Parsi newspaper *Kaiser-I-Hind* he would lampoon and slander all and sundry. All the lampoons and slanders are long forgotten. But not the one which concerned Fardunji, a prominent Bombay solicitor in a very old and distinguished firm of solicitors in Bombay. Daji once wrote a column maligning this prominent Parsi. One day Fardunji rushed into our chamber carrying an article by Daji and angrily showed it to Murzban Mistry (who, next to Sir Jamshedji was the seniormost in our chamber). Murzban read it and went blue in the face: because Daji had alleged in this article that Fardunji (who was a bachelor) used to sleep with his maid-servant in his flat. The woman was also named. "Shocking, shocking," said Murzban. "You must immediately file a

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suit for defamation."

So some of the juniors in the chamber quickly prepared a plaint for this dear old solicitor and the suit was filed in record time. When such a suit about such a scandalous defamation is filed there is generally an offer of a printed apology by the defendant and a payment of costs thrown away by the plaintiff, and everyone goes home happy.

But not Daji. He was what you call a nut. And a color fiend also. If he wore a green suit, he also wore a green shirt, green socks, green tie and even green shoes, and on the jacket of his coat he had his name sewn on (!): such a person could never be expected to apologize. And regrettably for Fardunji the suit had to go on because Daji pleaded justification and public interest (should a prominent solicitor having confidences of clients have sexual relations with his maid servant?); That was the subject of the next article of Daji in the next issue of the weekly after the suit was filed!

The battle lines were drawn and the case had to go on before a judge who was recently elevated from the Bar and who knew Daji and the solicitor. The judge threatened, then implored, then pleaded, with Daji to settle but Daji said

he "wanted justice" and the case dragged on for a full month. The court was a crowded one every single day and those who had never read the article came to know or at least suspect that a Parsi solicitor had illicit relations with his maid servant. In the witness box Daji improved on his story and said that Fardunji had illicit relations also with another maid servant whom he then proceeded also to name. And the whole unedifying spectacle dragged on and on — until it ended in sheer exasperation after six full weeks of hearing in court. The suit was finally withdrawn with a makeshift halfhearted apology, which was not even published.

This case has always been an object lesson for me. Defamation suits are a luxury and a dangerous luxury at that: they are too often filed in a hurry, and repented only at leisure: and then it is too late.

To the query as to what effect Parsi law had on Parsi society in the years since the Constitution has been in place i.e. the last 50 years, the answer is very little. With one important caveat. There is one area in which we really needed a personal law, viz. in the sphere of adoption. In a fast dwindling community and

with an extremely low birthrate, this has been assuming greater and greater importance.

There did prevail amongst Parsis at one time a custom of taking a *palak* (adopted) son. In the report of the commission appointed to draft the Bill of Parsi Intestate Succession in the year 1865, a suggestion had been made to make a provision to the effect "that nothing (herein contained) shall prevent the adoption by any Parsi of a *palak* in his lifetime nor the appointment after his death of a *dharam putra* for the performance of his funeral ceremonies" but this was not finally incorporated in the Bill. And the custom soon became extinct, especially after a decision of the Bombay High Court in 1929 — *Kersaji v. Kaikhushru* where it was observed that although in Baroda state a custom prevailed amongst Parsis of taking a *palak* son, such a custom could not be recognized in British India in respect of succession to immovable property in British India.

We Parsis have not had a general law of adoption in India despite repeated representations only for one reason that Muslims by religion abhor adoption as it is prohibited by the *Koran*. For more



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than 100 years the Mohammedan law i.e. the Mohammedan personal law does not recognize adoption as a mode of filiation.

I recall that when I was with the government in the early '70s as one of its law officers I was summoned to give evidence before a committee of Parliament on the provisions of the Adoption of Children Bill, 1972. I was closely questioned by many of the Muslim members of that parliamentary committee and although they listened very attentively to my exposition of the law as proposed to be enacted and my statement that it was only enabling, and did not compel any community or section of a community to adopt, a cross section of the Muslims in Parliament at the time strongly opposed the Bill, and it was dropped. It has never been revived.

It was said of Lord Salisbury (who succeeded Disraeli as Prime Minister) that it was his firm belief that only uncontroversial legislation should be brought before Parliament. If it was controversial, England was not ready for it. This became known in later years as the Salisbury Rule. We in India in the matter of adoption are inhibited by this Salisbury Rule and unfortunately Parsis have no

custom of adoption, much less personal law of adoption to fall back on.

I have written and spoken elsewhere about the dead hand of the Parsi law — if it can be called law — with regard to conversion. You will all recall that in the celebrated judgment regarding Sooni Tata (1909), Sir Dinshaw Davar had held that the Zoroastrian religion not only permitted but enjoined the conversion of a person born in another religion and of non-Zoroastrian parents. But relying on ancient usage, and also the resolution passed by the Parsis in Bombay at a public meeting (in 1905) expressing strong disapproval of any conversions in "present times" and resolving "henceforth" not to admit even the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers, he held that this well established usage must override the tenets of the religion "as are shown to have fallen into desuetude and conflict with ancient usage prevailing in the community."

Both this case and Bella's case decided by the Privy Council (in 1925) were concerned with properties of trusts made by Parsis in which non-Parsis could not participate. Much as some people would like to see a battle in court revived, I would not. It will split the com-

munity in India which is already greatly diminished. I think we must wait for a meaningful consensus. It will all come in time. It will not be in my lifetime but hopefully it will be in the lifetime of some of you. After all, customs are not eternal and ancient customs in a modern society are fast changing. Parsis settled in Canada and the United States have shown the way quietly, unobtrusively. Children of parents (one of whom is a non-Parsi) have been freely admitted into the religion, and have fervently professed and practiced it.

We have to be patient. The watchword then is to remember and act like Lord Salisbury.

I said earlier that till Bombay lawyers jacked up their fees Parsis were a most litigious lot — there is ample testimony in the old law reports: and I conclude with a story of Sir Dinsha Mulla — the greatest, absolutely the greatest, jurist India ever produced. It is thanks to him that the personal law of the Hindus and of the Muslims has been put in almost codified form in his great textbooks on the subject.

Did you know that he nearly never joined the Bar? He took literature in college and wrote passable poetry. But

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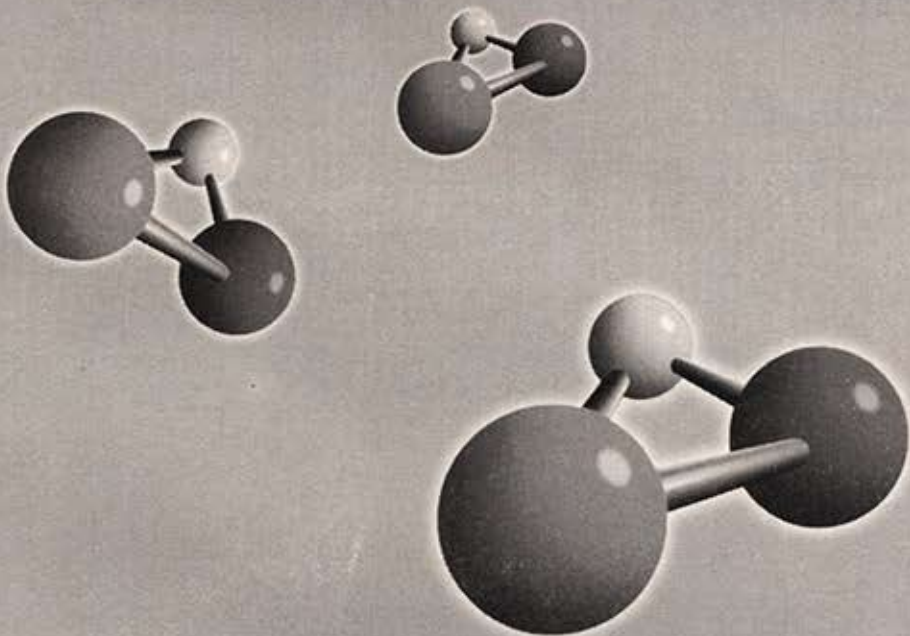


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he thought a great deal about his poems. So he wrote a letter enclosing his best poems to the poet laureate of England of the time, Lord Alfred Tennyson, mentioning his dilemma as to whether he should continue to write poetry or take to the law. Lord Tennyson wrote back in his own fine hand: "Dear Mr. Mulla, I thank you for your letter. I have read the poems you so kindly sent. I would advise you to take to the law. Yours Tennyson."

Well, Sir Dinsha was way before my time but his junior Reggie Mathalone, a dear friend and senior colleague of mine who is also no more, related all this to me as well as the following story.

There was a Parsi solicitor in Bombay who will remain nameless who always advised his clients to litigate. He took a client — also a Parsi with the racial propensity of the Parsis of his time to go to court at the drop of a hat (*Court na darwaja khula che* was frequently heard in society in those days). This Parsi client was taken by his Parsi solicitor to Sir Dinsha Mulla for advice, in what looked like a totally hopeless case. The great man listened to the facts and he was quite an irritable person and kept shaking his head "No, no, no — no case." Then the solicitor unraveled the

facts a little differently — again a negative response from Mulla: "No, no, no, there is no chance for your suit to succeed." At last after some more attempts, Mulla realized that the solicitor was hell-bent on filing a suit: so he put his head on one side, and asked the solicitor: "Tell me, is your client a sporting chap?" And the client who was listening all the while to all this conversation (rather gloomily) suddenly cheered up and said, "Yes, Sir, I am a sporting chap." "Then fire away," said Mulla. So they fired away and filed the suit which in due course was dismissed with costs and "the sporting chap" was lighter by Rs 10,000 — a large sum of money in those days! The moral of the story then is avoid litigation at all costs: if you cannot and you must go to court then be sure to engage a competent lawyer and don't complain that he is an expensive one: at the end of the day an incompetent lawyer will cost you more: in terms of anguish.

Noted jurist Fali S. Nariman, former additional solicitor general of India, is a senior advocate of the Supreme Court. The government conferred on him the Padma Bhushan in 1991 and recently nominated him member to the Rajya Sabha.

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Rallying for relief and reforms

At the end of the last century Dr Kaikhosru Bahadurji battled discrimination against Indian doctors in government service

Dr Mridula Ramanna

By the last decade of the 19th century, few Indians had qualified for the Indian Medical Service (IMS). In Bombay presidency, most graduates of the Grant Medical College began their careers in government service but soon moved to more lucrative private practice when they found that they did not progress beyond the ranks of sub assistant surgeons which were poorly paid positions.

Twenty-one alumni of the College had joined the IMS by 1885 where they faced British racial discrimination. Surgeon general Hunter in a confidential note in 1879 noted that officers "shrank" from seeking the advice of Indian doctors, while the wives of Europeans declined to be treated by them. The opening of more positions to Indians in the medical and sanitary departments of the government and reform in the civil medical service were the issues raised in the 1890s by Dr Kaikhosru Nasserwanji Bahadurji, a Bombay doctor.

The 1893 session of the Indian National Congress unanimously accepted Bahadurji's proposals which were also endorsed by the Grant College Medical Society, the Bombay Presidency Association (BPA) and most of the local Press. The outcome of a public meeting organized under the aegis of the Association was a memorandum to the secretary of state, Lord Hamilton in 1896. The cause received the support of the Indian medical fraternity in Calcutta and Madras. Funds were raised to aid the movement and Bahadurji went to England in 1896 as the representative of Indian doctors, to present their case before the Welby Commission which inquired into civil and military expendi-

ture. He also presented his views to the British Medical Association (BMA) and the East India Association.

The outcome of this representation was Hamilton's expressed opinion that expenditure on the IMS had to be curtailed, but investigations were carried out only in 1907. Lord Morley was able to halt expansion of the service and reform continued to be merely discussed. These discussions weakened the attraction of the IMS to potential recruits in Britain and the service Indianized from 1915 onwards.



Bahadurji: active involvement in reforms

Photo courtesy: *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860-1960*

Bahadurji was born into a poor Parsi family at Umra near Surat in 1860. After his primary education there, he moved to Bombay for his matriculation from St Xavier's School. He passed the first examination in Arts of the Bombay University and was awarded the Gilchrist scholarship in 1882 for higher studies in London. He passed the MB examination with distinction from University College, London, and the Gilchrist trustees offered him funding for research. He first worked at the Pasteur Institute and then in Berlin under Professors Koch and Virchow. On his return to London he took both the BS and MD degrees. He had the distinction of being the first MD from western India.

Back in India he was appointed professor of clinical medicine and pharmacology at the Grant Medical College and honorary physician at the Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital where a fever ward with eight patients was allotted to his care. This was to enable him to make a special study of Bombay fevers, so called because the medical authorities could not fathom the etiology or treatment of the fevers that frequently struck

the population of the city.

In 1891 Bahadurji represented Indian mill owners at the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography and read a paper on "Factory labor in the Indian spinning and weaving mills." He pointed out that the proposed legislation to regulate factory working hours and restrict the employment of women and children were at the behest of manufacturers in Manchester and Lancashire and prejudicial to the interest of Indian cotton manufacturers. The enervating climate and "intermittent nature" of the Indian worker required three times more employees in Indian factories than in English factories. Further, this proposal would deny women the protection, comfort and means of livelihood the mills afforded them, and "turn them out to starve on the open barren fields."

One great fact lost sight of, Bahadurji asserted, was that Indian mill hands did not work all their lives in mills. They belonged to the agricultural class and worked in mills to make money to improve their homes, as proved by the government report on Ratnagiri. Nor did they show any marked deterioration in health, as stated in the report of the medical committee, Factory Commission, 1884. In his own experience at J.J. Hospital, which all classes of labor had access to, he had not treated a single mill hand in the previous three years. Identical laws could only be applied in identical cases and the conditions in India and England were not identical.

Bahadurji's views were countered by Holt Hallett who argued that protective legislation was refused to the great bulk of the working class, that workshops and factories were in a disgraceful condition and that women and children labored for 23 hours. Hallett even alleged that Bahadurji was a paid agent of the mill owners, but had to subsequently withdraw this remark and apologize. The new Factory Act did come into



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effect the following year, but this effort of Bahadurji was a forerunner of his active involvement in reform.

At the J. J. Hospital independent-minded Bahadurji soon developed serious differences with the senior medical officer, Wellington Gray, and resigned in 1893. He set up private practice, which grew to be extensive.

It was at the ninth session of the Indian National Congress (INC) held at Lahore in 1893 that Bahadurji first proposed medical reform. He held that it concerned the wider questions "of efficiency and economy, of the rights and privileges of the sons of the country, of higher education, of the advancement of medical and sanitary sciences, which advancements have come to be recognized as a means of the civilization and material progress of a country." He showed that while arts colleges and engineering schools had



Parsi Fever Hospital (building on the left with arches) at the Muncherji Khareghat Colony

Photo courtesy: Bombay Parsi Punchayet

trained revenue officers, high court judges, counsels and registrars, officers in the public works department and executive engineers, medical colleges had opened up positions no higher than that of the assistant surgeon, on a salary of Rs 100 to Rs 200 per month (pm). He

attributed this "dwarfed growth" to lack of opportunities and the "slave trade" carried on by the department of the surgeon general by refusing "emancipation" to medical graduates. The Public Service Commission had not even thought of the medical services as a public service.

At the 11th session of the INC held at Poona, Bahadurji again proposed a resolution on medical reform which was seconded by M.

Tilak, Drs Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatavadekar and Nil Rattan Sircar. It noted that its views regarding the urgency and suggested lines of reforms in the civil and military medical service had been endorsed in "influential medical and military circles." These views were that there should be only one Military Medical Service with two branches, one for the European army and another for native troops; and the Civil Medical Service should be consti-



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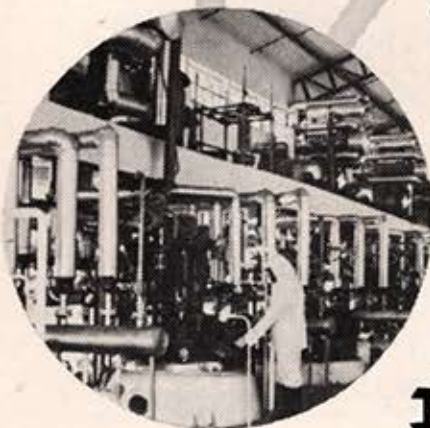
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tuted as an independent service recruited from India. Further, the status and claims of civil assistant surgeons and hospital assistants required an open inquiry with a view to redressing their grievances.

In his address, Bahadurji reiterated that the proposals had been made not in a spirit of opposition but out of friendliness and regard for good government. He pointed out the unjust differences of pay between the non-Christian civil hospital assistant who received Rs 16 to Rs 60 pm and his Christian counterpart whose pay rose to Rs 750 pm. The government had specially created the uncovenanted medical service for the encouragement of non-military medical men, but this service had become a "dead letter." He cited the opinion of the *Army and Navy Gazette* that the state of the medical service was "utterly indefensible from a military standpoint." He called for support both in England and in India.

On April 15, 1896, a public meeting was convened by the BPA with Pherozeshah Mehta as chairman, D. E. Wacha, N. G. Chandavarkar and A. M. Dharamsi as secretaries. Mehta in his introductory remarks pointed out that the subject affected vital interests of the

public at large. The principal medical colleges were staffed by professors who could be spared by the army, not by specialists.

While outlining his proposals Bahadurji contended a complete separation of civil and military services was urgently required. And the time had come to introduce an improvement in the position of assistant surgeons. He recalled that Sir Erskine Perry, president of the Board of Education, who had presided over the first prize distribution of Grant Medical College, had pointed out that the College was not created for "governmental or executive wants" but for promoting the happiness of the people of India by the diffusion of knowledge and the cultivation of western science and the art of medicine.

Bahadurji also referred to the fact that in 1868 the government had been compelled to accept the demand of the Army Medical Service (AMS) that expert and professorial appointments would be open to all. Yet the monopoly of all higher appointments by the IMS had been "allowed to creep in." He also alluded to what Earnest Hart, editor of the *British Medical Journal* had observed when he visited India in 1895:

that medical officers, elevated to high positions due to military rules, were unfit to be trusted with the health of the vast population of India.

Bahadurji showed up the anomalies in the pay scales of medical officers. Since military men in civil appointments received salaries according to their military ranks, they were more expensive to government than their counterparts in other colleges. He also cited the opinions of the governments of Madras and Bengal and the surgeon general with the War Office, who had declared themselves against the retention of the semi-military character of the civil medical service and the semi-civil character of the IMS. Lord Wolseley, commander-in-chief of the British army, had recommended a fusion of the two military services in 1886. Together with the establishment of station hospitals for native troops, this proposal would mean a saving of 22 lakh rupees in the military department alone.

These proposals of Bahadurji were supported by Drs Atmaram Pandurang and M. G. Deshmukh. A committee, comprising of Mehta, N. V. Gokhale, F. M. Kanga, Drs S. W. Kane and Bhatavadekar, Dharamsi and Wacha, was

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authorised to draft a memorandum. Dharamsi noted that the public was as much interested in the question of medical reform as the medical professions; and S. H. Hodiwalla remarked that the salary paid to the subordinate medical service personnel was the same as the pay advertised for a cook in *The Times of India*.

Subsequently, the Medical Reform in India Committee was set up with Pandurang as president; J. C. Lisboa and Cowasji Hormusji as vice presidents; Bhatavadekar, N. H. Choksy and Khoja Abdulla as secretaries; and A. P. Cama and Deshmukh as treasurers. The members included Thomas Blaney, Bahadurji and other Bombay doctors and representatives from Ahmedabad, Kolhapur, Broach and Poona. The Indian Medical Reform Fund collected Rs 9,358; the largest contribution was of Rs 1,000 given by Sir Dinshaw Petit. The other donors were mainly doctors, including two women doctors, Ms Turkhud and Ms Treasurywala, a couple of hospital assistants, a few princely states and members of the public.

The memorandum was sent to the secretary of state, dated July 24, 1896, under the signatures of Mehta, Wacha,

Chandavarkar and Dharamsi. The basis of the medical reform scheme was laid down as follows: the opening of higher grade appointments in the medical relief, sanitary and educational departments to proven merit and ability, instead of reserving them for members of a particular service; and the amalgamation of the two military services — the AMS and the IMS.

Surgeon general Henry Cook reacted with hostility to the memorandum. The meeting, he declared, was not only irregularly convened, but represented a "diminutive section" of the community and there were many "misleading statements." He maintained that there had not been enough qualified local doctors to replace the IMS, and the number of successful native candidates had become "insignificant" despite "cheap education." He concluded: "If natives had the caliber they would long ago have shown it by passing into the service, by taking prizes at Netley and by talent and original research." As for Hart's critical remarks, Cook contended that they were based on a three-month visit.

He maintained that there had been a fall in the army death rate, success in dealing with epidemic diseases in

Hardwar and at other large fairs, where problems were of a character that would never occur in any European country. He held that the door was already open for the promotion of indigenous talent through competitive examinations which Indians did not avail of. He concluded that they belonged largely to "unwarlike" races and that "few Asiatics could be successful as sanitary officers, ignorant as they are of conditions of things in civilized western countries."

A similar prejudiced response was that of the principal of the Lahore Medical College: "It would be a great hardship inflicted on all European government servants... if men were to be forced on them and their families as medical attendants whose education, religion and ideas on the family tie are so entirely contrary to their own. No similar compulsory invasion of native homes by Europeans would be tolerated by the government and on these two grounds alone and making every allowance for liberal ideas, the time had not yet arrived for the creation of a native civil medical service."

On the other hand, the Indian Press supported Bahadurji. The *Gujarati, Native Opinion* and *The Bombay Samachar*

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held that he deserved credit for his efforts. *The Indian Spectator* pointed out that it was through the poorly paid hakims, vaidas and assistant surgeons that the masses had become acquainted with the superiority and efficacy of western medicine, and on their exertions depended the health of the majority of the people. While the *Mahratta* commended Bahadurji for bringing the question of medical reform within the range of practical politics, the *Gujarati* referred to the observation of Wolseley that "vested interests and prejudice" stood in the way of reform. The existing medical administration was ruinously costly, fatal to the development of indigenous talent and detrimental to the cause of scientific progress, besides being a standing illustration of Dadabhai Naoroji's observation that India had made England the richest and greatest country in the world, while England had done the greatest possible material injury to India.

The antipathy between Indian and European medical professionals is apparent in the controversy between the *Indian Medical and Surgical Review*, Bombay and *The Indian Medical Record*, Calcutta. The latter, which had

endorsed Bahadurji's initiative and visit to Calcutta in 1895, changed its stance in 1896. It was the voice of The Medical Association, representing European and Eurasian interests, and at their insistence an Anglo-Indian representative had been included on the committee.

The *Record* claimed that Bahadurji carried a brief only for a "microscopic minority" of medical men and there was a very strong feeling in the country that the time had not arrived for such "hasty action." It further maintained that two confidential notes had been received, condemning the "tactics" of the Bahadurji movement.

To the monopolists' argument that the government had the right to choose its own officers, Bahadurji countered that colleges and hospitals were not beyond the concern of the taxpayer.

A second resolution was passed at a public meeting in Calcutta, proposing that civil assistant surgeons be placed on the same footing as members of the Provincial Civil Service in its executive and judicial branches. Supporting the resolution, Surendranath Banerjee asserted that medical reform was part of the larger question of wider employ-

ment. "We cannot afford to stand by as unconcerned spectators while the doctors are fighting *their* battle and *our* battle." Describing the IMS as pioneers of western medical science in India, he noted that times had changed and a government not recognizing the signs and not able to adapt its policy to the newly developing environment was "wanting in elementary wisdom."

Banerjee particularly drew attention to the shabby treatment of the assistant surgeon, who after five years of training began on a monthly salary of Rs 50 and "vegetated," while a high court judge received Rs 3,700 per month.

Petitions had been presented to the Government of India about the grievances of the assistant surgeon, without result. There was now hope of success. Paying tribute to Bahadurji, Banerjee said that Bahadurji had not only made the cause his own, "incurring many sacrifices," but had brought the issue within the range of practical politics. As in Bombay, committees were set up to draft a memorandum and to raise funds.

A meeting of private medical practitioners held in Madras also expressed support to Bahadurji. Under the leadership of Drs V. Vardapah Naidu, E.

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Masilamanay Pillai, James Harris and R. Walker, a medical reform organization and fund were established.

Bahadurji left for England soon after, to appear before the Welby Commission. He sailed on the P&O's *S.S. Australia*. A contemporary account records that he was seen off by a number of his colleagues and friends and was overwhelmed by floral tributes.

On his arrival in England, Bahadurji first addressed the East India Association on "The medical needs of India." He showed how the existing system of medical administration was subversive of the declared policy and aims of the government. Lord Reay (Governor of Bombay, 1885-1890) who presided, while agreeing that there could be no subject as important, drew attention to the need for women doctors and more hospitals for women.

Bahadurji also put forth his views at the annual meeting of the BMA held at Carlisle. He moved a resolution that the Civil Medical Service being exclusively reserved for the IMS, was wrong in principle. According to the special correspondent of the *Bombay Gazette*, Bahadurji's speech was well received.

However, Dr. N. C. McNamara, ex-IMS and an authority on cholera, contended that while the government was anxious to encourage the appointment of Indians, there were questions that they could not "understand," involving pension, pay and "sanitary arrangements of various kinds."

Another retired official, Sir Joseph Ewart maintained that part of the truth had been stated by Bahadurji, as the proposals of Sir Hugh Rose and Wolseley for a civil medical service had been rejected by the government, for reasons best known to it. And a Scottish graduate could not see why he should be disqualified for a civil appointment in India, simply because he was not an armyman.

No decision could be arrived at, and Bahadurji was asked to withdraw the motion, it being resolved to refer the matter to the Indian branches of the BMA.

The British Press discussed Bahadurji's proposals. While the *Lancet* published his letter, it held that the issue raised many practical and administrative considerations which could not be included within "the terms of any abstract resolution."

The *Medical Press Circular* held

that the scheme was reasonable; the *Daily Chronicle* "expressed its sympathy;" and the *Pall Mall Gazette* was most impressed by the economy that would be effected if the reforms were implemented. Sir W. W. Hunter writing in *The Times* was confident that Bahadurji would get a fair hearing, though the *Manchester Guardian* cautioned that it was an uphill task and the English might be indifferent.

The IMS lobby in England including his *bête noire*, Gray, saw to it that Bahadurji's letter was not published by the *British Medical Journal*. But the *Review* published the letter in which Bahadurji showed that Gray had reversed his stand since 1868 when he had supported change.

The Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure was appointed in May 1895, under the chairmanship of Lord Reginald Welby, to inquire into the administration and management of civil and military expenditure. Naoroji was the only Indian member on the Commission. He had moved a resolution in the first session of the INC, asking for such an inquiry. Wolseley, who preceded Bahadurji as a "witness," showed that the amalgamation of the Indian and

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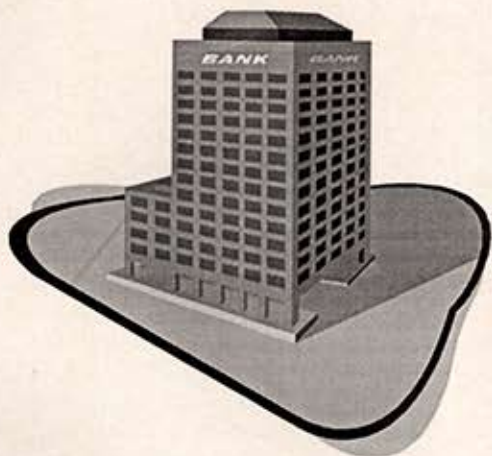
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AMS would bring a saving.

Bahadurji referred to the similar views of Lord Strathnairn and Wolseley and Sir William Muir, director general, AMS and the Government of India, which in 1877 had qualified the double administration as inefficient and extravagant. He made a strong case for recruits to the civil department being drawn from the "general profession." He contended that Indian graduates would fill the ordinary posts, but post-graduates of English universities could be "imported" for senior appointments.

The *British Medical Journal* declared that the civil medical service could never be handed over to Indian graduates, under British rule, and advised them to set up practice among the "teeming millions" without trying to "grasp" government appointments "so ably filled by Europeans." Among the other Indian witnesses examined by the Commission, Wach represented the BPA, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the Deccan Sabha, Banerjee, Bengal, and G. Subramania Aiyar, Madras.

Naoroji, William Wedderburn and Caine were all in disagreement with the report submitted by the Commission. They not only maintained that the scope of the inquiry had been limited, but also

held that reasonable consideration had not been given to the evidence submitted by Indians.

On Bahadurji's return to Bombay, he was made president of the Bombay Medical Union, Bombay Medical and Physical Society and appointed to the chair of the Syndicate in Medicine of the University of Bombay. He was soon fully involved in combating the plague epidemic and worked day and night at the Parsi Fever Hospital, established by the Parsi Punchayet. He raised funds for the maintenance of the Hospital which continued its operations even after the other institutions established during the epidemic had ceased to function.

Bahadurji died prematurely in 1898. At a meeting of the municipal corporation to mourn him, Mehta recalled the many services that he had rendered the city and the medical profession. He paid tribute to Bahadurji's brilliant and promising career while Ibrahim Rahimtulla, chairman of the standing committee, described his death as a national loss.

The question of reform was raised repeatedly in the following decades. In 1909, the BMU sent a memorandum to the secretary of state under the chairmanship of Bhatavadekar, calling for

improvements and protesting against "the acknowledged anomalies and abuses of the existing monopoly of the IMS" which had "not only created grave dissatisfaction but had also affected the cause of science and public revenue." The *British Medical Journal* commented that genuine grievances were mixed up with demands that were "unreasonable and impracticable."

The issue was again raised in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911 through a resolution by N. Subba Rao and seconded by Gokhale, but the monopoly continued. The IMS Re-organization Committee of 1919 had only one Indian member, Sir T. B. Nariman, also a Bombay doctor.

It was with the Montague Chelmsford Reforms that some steps were taken towards the realization of Bahadurji's scheme. Medical service was made a transferred subject under the 1919 Act and the number of Indians in the IMS gradually increased in the inter war period.

Edited version of a paper by Dr Mridula Ramanna published in the *Journal of the University of Mumbai (Arts Number)* 54 (1997). Dr Ramanna is the head of the department of history at the SIES College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Bombay.

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THE SOUTHERN CONNECTION
continued from page 110

memory of his late wife which was open to persons of all creeds. He also founded the Rustomji Library.

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During the days when Gandhiji was in South Africa, he was attacked by an angry mob. Gandhiji would have died then had not Jivanji intervened and saved young Mohandas' life. Because of this incident, the two became lifelong friends. Today, in South Africa, people (even the locals) remember Jivanji as the "Parsi Rustomji" who saved Gandhiji's life. He died in 1924.

The Parsis of South Africa touched me with their warmth and conquered me with their love. I lingered over each parting, unable to express the profound emotions that moved me as I hugged the ladies and shook hands with the gentlemen. My South African adventure is over but I pray that the turning wheel of time will take me back to this lovely place.

*"Whom shalt Thou send, O Mazda, to protect
Us all, when Untruth threatens us with hate,
Other than Thine own Fire and Thy Love?"*

*When both these are roused within our hearts,
Asa shall be fulfilled, O Ahura; —
May my Soul realize this Sacred Truth."*

Translation by I. J. Taraporewala of Yasna 46.7
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REVIEW THE SYSTEM *continued from page 92*

plication of Khorshed Nagirashni from contributing in any way towards quick dissipation of the corpses. The reply emphasizes that our traditions and customs, which are undertaken "in accordance with the ceremonial injunctions laid down by the Zoroastrian faith," have to be preserved at all costs. It is also mentioned that some experiments are being tried out to quickly decompose the corpses through "microbe technology." To minimize the stench of rotting bodies, generation of ozone gas in the environs of the dokhma area is being tried out. The idea of starting an aviary for breeding vultures as proposed by one Jemina Parry-Jones is also being given serious consideration!

With great respect and in all humility may I request the learned Dasturs to enlighten us regarding any of our religious injunctions, customs or traditions which approve of the use of microbe technology as a part of permitted sanctions for quick dissipation of corpses! The proposal for setting up a breeding farm for vultures seems to be totally impracticable as very ably pointed out by Dr M. D. Disawalla in a letter ("Sanctity of dokhmas," Readers' Forum,

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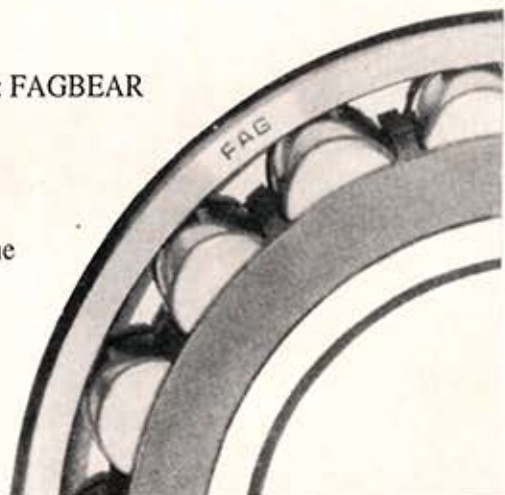
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Parsiana, February 2000). In the same issue, R. S. Gae, a distinguished jurist, has pointed out the possibilities of a public interest litigation being filed for pollution of atmosphere in the crowded surroundings of Doongerwadi. God forbid, if this happens, it will be a highly embarrassing issue for the community and difficult to defend.

I humbly submit that while we all true Zoroastrians greatly cherish the desire to preserve our ancient culture, traditions and customs, such customs and traditions are not inviolate for all times to come. Where circumstances so demand we should keep an open mind and do some introspection to modify them to suit the changing ethos and environment of modern existence.

The line between basic religious tenets, and customs and traditions, which have evolved over the years according to past circumstances, should be clearly demarcated. While our sacred religious tenets of *humata, hukhta, hvarashta* will always endure the ravages of time to remain as eternal truths, traditions and customs are not sacrosanct and should not be treated as religious tenets.

Fire is the greatest gift of Ahura Mazda to humanity. No substance on

earth can ever pollute the holy fire. Fire only purifies and destroys the elements which cause putrefaction and pollution of the earth and its atmosphere and environment. To quote a simple illustration, the recent tragic devastation caused in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan due to acute water scarcity have resulted in the deaths of thousands of human beings and animals by thirst and starvation. The only logical way to minimize the damage caused by atmospheric pollution of rotting carcasses is to destroy and consume the same by fire. How else can we prevent the countrywide spread of a deadly epidemic?

A review of the dokhmenashini system seems to be the only salvation for the survival of our community with dignity and honor. We have to consider alternative methods — burial or electric cremation — with an open mind. The respected trustees of the BPP and revered Dasturs should treat this problem on a war footing before it becomes too late.

I am fully aware that my views are likely to be criticized and even vehemently opposed by a section of our community who believe in preservation of the orthodox religious beliefs of our forefathers. I myself hail from a very

orthodox family and I have no hesitation in offering them my respectful apologies if my proposal hurts their sentiments. I would always support the desire to maintain our separate religious identity and I am proud of our unique ancient heritage.

I pray to Ahura Mazda to guide our minuscule community on the righteous path and to evolve a consensus through open debates and discussions to arrive at a mutually acceptable alternative to the dokhmenashini system which in ancient time was perhaps the most logical and acceptable method for disposal of dead bodies.

Adi B. Rabadi is currently vice chairperson of the West Bengal Minorities' Commission. While he has retired as trustee of the Calcutta



Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Funds, he continues to serve as trustee of the Mehta Atash Adaran and was elected president of The Parsi

Zoroastrian Association in Calcutta. A chartered accountant by profession he was former vice chairman and joint managing director of M. N. Dastur and Company Limited.

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BLOOD on the web

The Poachas of Nagpur launch a website listing voluntary blood donors in various Indian cities

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

Khushroo Poacha and his wife Fermin had a dream. Of doing something different. Of making a difference in the lives of their fellow human beings. While their intent was firm, the shape it would take was vague, till a casual incident made the nebulous dream take the form of a lifesaving website in cyberspace.

Recently married, the couple was in the process of doing up their home in Nagpur. In this connection, they went a couple of times to the Iron Butterfly, a furniture shop owned by Feroz Shapurji and Romi Sudry.

To their dismay they never could meet either partner. When on the third or fourth attempt they met Shapurji, he was very upset and preoccupied. A worker of his was in hospital and needed a rare blood group. In spite of running from pillar to post and willing to pay any price, Shapurji was unable to get the blood. And time was running out. "Even as the distraught Feroz spoke of his problem, an idea was forming in my mind," said Khushroo. "I knew this is what I could do. What I had to do. Create a website for blood donors!"

And so it came about that www.indianblooddonors.com was launched on March 5, 2000. Said Khushroo, "This is the only site of its type in India, possibly in the world, where at the click of a mouse you can locate the exact blood group you need, at the nearest and most convenient location, from a willing and voluntary donor."

The website is well designed and easy to navigate under six major heads: 'Search' is the most useful utility on the site. Through it, one can search for blood donors, doctors, hospitals and blood banks.

'Vital Statistics' gives you an instant update on the number of donors of the required blood group who can donate blood on a given date, at a given time, in your city and your particular locality. This is of special importance in large cities. If a person has

recently donated blood, a sticker to that effect will appear below his name and he will not be tapped for the next four months. In two months since its inception, 300 blood donors from 18 cities had already registered their names on the site and more are being added every day.

'Jobs and Careers' is a job search offering a wide variety of opportunities in the medical world.

'Doctor I Need Help' has a panel of eminent specialists who have registered voluntarily and will answer specific queries. The number of doctors on the panel is still small but the site is relatively new.

'Medipages' gives the home page of doctors, hospitals, pharmacists and medical companies.

'Faq' gives answers to frequently asked questions related to the functions of this site.

"Don't for a moment think setting up the site was easy," said Khushroo. "Fi-

nance was the first and biggest problem. To buy the computers, design the website, book a domain name, get a host, pay for server time, all added up to more than we could pay for on our own. We spent sleepless nights as the figure of the loan amount from the bank kept increasing."

Khushroo and Fermin are disillusioned about the help given by the Parsi community. "Both locally and at all India Zoroastrian conferences there is much rhetoric about helping emerging Parsi entrepreneurs. But it remains just that. A stage show," opined the angry young man.

Determined to help other Parsis if he ever had the chance to do so, Khushroo entrusted the designing of the website to young Cyrus Major, over other more experienced professionals. Anyone who visits the site will agree that Major has done a good job.

Neither Khushroo nor Fermin was born with a silver mouse in their hands. Khushroo was 16 years old and studying in standard XII when his father died. Determined to help support his mother and younger brother, he took on a job as an input-output clerk in a data processing firm because he was told all he needed to know was elementary typing. His first salary was a princely Rs 325.

A self-taught computer nerd, Khushroo is today computer supervisor in the Central Railway. Fermin, who was working in the Bank of India at Ahmedabad before she got married, now works in the administrative department of the J. N. Tata School in Nagpur. Both do a hard day's job before they put in another three to four hours of work on the newly launched website, which requires constant updating, administering, answering mail and sorting of problems.

When e-commerce is the buzz word, the Poachas have launched their website entirely as a social service to help people in distress. People have already approached them for purchasing the site but they don't want to make it a commercial venture.

"Our reward lies in the feeling of having made a difference between life and death," says the soft-spoken Fermin. Khushroo recounted a touching incident that happened some time ago. He had gone to meet Dr Nirmal Jaiswal, a critical care consultant, in connection with advice for the website. The doctor



Khushroo and Fermin Poacha

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asked him to wait a few minutes, saying there were some people who wanted to meet him. The nurse ushered in the grateful family of a man who needed eight units of blood for an emergency operation. The blood had been procured in record time through www.indianblooddonors.com, thus helping save a life.

With deepest gratitude, the patient's wife touched Khushroo's feet and thanked him for the yeoman service he had rendered. "*Béta, yahi zindagi mé tumhara bank balance hai. Séva kar ké ashirwad pana, ussé bada dhan koi nahi* (No reward in life is greater than the gratitude of your fellowmen for service rendered)." Khushroo was humbled and touched by the gesture.

The Poachas are happy that the site has caught the eye of so many people in such a short time. They registered 20,000 hits in the very first month of the launch. The site has been mentioned in *India Today*, *The Week*, *Mid-Day*, *Blitz* and the local *Hitavada*. More donors, doctors and cities are registering themselves on the site every day.

Not content with what they have achieved, the Poachas are constantly thinking of ideas to update and add

value to the website. They hope to soon include a 'Financial Helpline' for needy patients. The appeals will be posted on the site by the doctors themselves, with a photograph and medical history of the patient and an account number where the donation can be sent directly. This way they hope to make it as transparent and tamper proof as possible.

What the site needs now is money to keep it going. This could be in the form of a sponsor, they said, or advertisements on the site to make it fund generating.

While Khushroo decries the lack of encouragement and appreciation from within the community, he admits that the best thing in life happened to him at the Fifth All India Zoroastrian Youth Conference, held in Nagpur in 1991. That was when Cupid aimed his arrows at Khushroo and Fermin! "Actually, I only met her on the very last day of the conference," recalls Khushroo. "That night there was a dinner and dance for all the delegates and Khushroo asked me to dance with him," Fermin adds with a blush.

The couple has tremendous appreciation for Khushroo's mother Katy. A strong, independent and intelligent per-

son herself, she has always encouraged them to fight against all odds to achieve their goals.

The Poachas appeal to all able Parsis to register themselves as blood donors. They would also like Parsi doctors the world over to give of their time and expertise by joining the panel on the website. Let us all be on the willing and giving end of this noble venture, they assert. Who knows, some day it might help save your life or that of someone close to you.

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Damri (far left)
and Contractor
Below: Cooper

Mellow memories

In the 'Year of the Aged,' a roving photo exhibition seeks to highlight the dignity and the plight of the elderly in India

Roxanne Kavarana

Old age? Few welcome it. Unfortunately, whether we like it or not, whether we want it or not, it arrives on our doorstep. And each one of us has to deal with it in our own way.

Brothers Samar and Vijay Jodha's travelling photo exhibition, *Aging in India*, which recently passed through Bombay, shows how people cope with old age in different ways. As the Jodhas so beautifully put it in their brochure, "Each story represents one or more facets of aging. Some of the subjects are more productive and well-known today than (at) any time (of) their long careers; others are doing something quite extraordinary, often against great odds and usually away from the limelight, while some represent a larger, significant issue related to aging. Together, more than a comprehensive survey, they form a picture of the way we are or will be."

The exhibit is a must-see (the photo-

graphs can be viewed on the Internet at www.socialcommunication.org) for the young and old, especially in a country of 75 million senior citizens. And more so for the Parsi community which is rapidly being associated with geriatrics. The black-and-white pictures, appro-



priately captioned by Vijay in the subject's own words, attempt to go beyond what is already known — the less-than-happy state of our senior citizens. Subjective, intense and emotional, Samar's photographs provide much food for thought to the viewer, particularly when India is observing 2000 as the 'Year of the Aged.'

Vijay spells out the aim of their monumental work: "Social issues like aging remain in the domain of specialists. The general public has no clue about it. All that the latter does is go and buy cards made by some NGO (non-governmental organization) or the other. There's nothing wrong in raising funds in this manner. However, buying a card doesn't sensitize you to the issue; that remains a mystery. Through this exhibit, we're not only taking the issue to the people in a very accessible form, we also want to build a body of research on the elderly."

Once a person was identified, the brothers went across and met him/her. They interviewed him in the next meeting. Some pictures were shot the third and fourth time. Finally, some photos were shown to the subject and if he/she didn't approve, more were shot. "We're very concerned about getting the person involved — and if he wants to be presented in a certain way, we make sure of that. It's important that people are portrayed with dignity. If a person didn't want to be photographed with his walking stick, then we didn't," points out Vijay, a graduate of the Tisch Film School, New York. "The golden rule is to never walk in the first time with a camera," adds Samar.

Of course, many people refused to be

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photographed. "We respect that too. We talked. The target is never the exhibition, the output is not the end result. You respect their space and thoughts. Basically, it's about developing a relationship with each of them. And then, what are they getting out of it? A photo print? Big deal! We realize this venture wouldn't have been possible without their help and we're always going to be grateful to all those wonderful people who made this possible," says Samar.

There's celebrated writer Khushwant Singh, going strong at 86, who "reads and writes from almost 4.30 in the morning till whiskey time at 7 in the evening because, as he irreverently says, '...no one has invented a condom for the pen yet.'" There's another noted writer, Amrita Pritam, whose picture is captioned thus: "Somebody once asked an old woman, 'What is old age?' and she replied, 'The years are like sugar in your cup of tea. The last sip is the sweetest.'" There's the indefatigable advertising and theater guru, Alyque Padamsee, who, at 70, says he's getting younger every day. There's Anthony Parakal, who despite having had about 5,000 letters printed in newspapers in 45 years, refuses to let go of his addiction. There's journalist

Behram 'Busybee' Contractor, standing at the entrance to Afternoon House: "Unfortunately most of my colleagues are dead. I pick up my old phone book and start cancelling names that are gone. Others have retired. If you see them, they are not interested in life. They don't even read the papers." Musician Phiroze Darsi has been captured in one frame too.

A majority of the subjects are not celebrities, thankfully. Away from the arc lights are plenty of obscure, unknown faces — slogging away when they should have been taken care of by their children, or reaching new heights in the twilight of their lives. From the God-fearing widow in Brindavan who, in the fashion of Mirabai, says she's wedded to Thakurji, to the 100-year-old ex-soldier in Haryana who, after losing four wives, has stopped marrying because "it's time to prepare for my departure from this world," to retired wing commander Ashis Ray who has been running one marathon after the other, to stenographer K. L. Viswanathan who has helped raise Rs 15 lakhs for 150 patients in the decade since he retired...

There's also our very own Homi Cooper, an 80-year-old khandhia who
continued on page 236



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The pianist poised at the grand piano awaits the British examiner's signal to begin. On one side of the stage at Bombay's Homi Bhabha Auditorium are young ballet students at the *barre* (bar), hair pulled back in neat buns, bodies in balance, gossamer skirts falling in soft swirls to feet shod in soft pink ballet shoes. As the velvet notes waft through the darkened auditorium the students begin their routine — the *pliés* (bends), *tendus* (stretches), *sautés* (jumps) and *pirouettes* (turns) of classical ballet, the liveness of free movement, the heel-clicking vibrancy of European character (folk) dancing.

Examination over, it is for them a long, breathless walk down the aisle and out into the lobby where a babble of young voices narrate to their teachers, Tushna and Khushcheher (Khushoo) Dallas, the joys and woes of performance.

"Behind the ethereal beauty of ballet lies a deceptive strength. One has to

have power to produce gentleness," says Tushna, a pioneer of ballet training in India who founded her School of Classical Ballet and Western Dances 34 years ago with just four pupils — Feroza and Kate Engineer and Sherene and Asha Coorlawalla. In her three decades, hundreds of students have passed through the hands of the teacher who, as a five-year-old, had announced to her mother Roshni after watching a performance of *Icecapades*, an ice ballet, in the USA that this was what she was going to do! "But, dear, there is no ice in India," explained Roshni. If not ballet on ice, then ballet it will be, declared the determined Tushna.

Well-known stage and theater personalities like Shiamak Davar, Dodo Bhujwala, Karla Singh, Soni Razdan, Sanjana Kapoor, Sooni Taraporevala, Ayesha Dharker, Vikram Kapadia, Parizad Zorabian and others have at some point in their lives at-

tended Tushna's classes, imbibing not just the techniques of dance but also the discipline, punctuality and character building she believes are very much a part of her classes. "I like to develop self-awareness through ballet," says the lady whose petite frame belies her strength and steely determination, who chose as her role model Audrey Hepburn (many, many years before Miss World Yukta Mookhey did!) — the girl who lived her childhood in the shadow of

World War II, dancing in her slippers behind locked doors in secret concerts in aid of the underground movement, in dresses made from old curtains. "More than a dancer, Hepburn was a good human being," she remarks.

With both Tushna and Khushoo registered with the Royal Academy of Dancing (RAD) and the Imperial Society of



Dancing with Dallas

Hilla P. Guzder

Founder of The School of Classical Ballet and Western Dances Tushna Dallas and her daughter Khushcheher have laid firm foundations for ballet training in India

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Promoting ballet
in India means
working against
tremendous odds



Previous page: Tushna (left) and
Khushcheher Dallas

Photo: Hilla Guzder

1, 2, 4, 7 Students of the School
3 Royal Academy of Dancing
representative Susan Danby
(fifth from right) with teachers
and performers

5 Khushcheher's Latin look

6 With mother Tushna (right)

Photos 5 and 6: Hilla Guzder

Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), London, they are qualified to teach several disciplines of dance besides ballet — Latin American dances like the cha-cha, samba, rumba, jive and paso doble; ball-room dances such as the waltz, tango, foxtrot and quickstep; modern theater

dance, national (European folk) dance and natural movement. Regular classes are held four days of the week at Blavatsky Lodge at French Bridge and occasionally at Girton High School and Spark Fitness Centre at Tardeo. Children join at around the age of five at the

primary level and are selected after an audition. "Parents have this vision of their daughters as beautiful swans in lovely tutus and *pointe* (point) shoes. We have to dash their hopes by telling them that children start their ballet training barefeet!" laughs Khushoo, fresh

faceted and pretty, long tresses secure in a neat bun.

Many years of systematic training, in accordance with prescribed syllabi, see senior students move on to doing *pointe* work at around the age of 12-13 years after their technical ability and placing of the whole body has been strengthened. "A two-minute dance requires hours and hours of practice. Ballet is a flow of imagery, a perfect combination of dance, music, drama, décor. Correct turnout (from the hips) and placing is the foundation — an untrained body is like an untuned piano!" declares Tushna. Many students do drop out along the way but most, she says, enjoy their ballet so intensely they willingly put in the extra hours of grind required for examinations. For the last 20 years, pupils have been sent up for RAD ballet and recently for modern and jazz exams of the ISTD as well. "It is mainly thanks to Air India's promotion of the arts that we are able to fly down examiners from London. They come to Bombay, judge the students and fly straight back," she notes. (The RAD is, according to their brochure, "the world's most important ballet teacher," with over 1,60,000 stu-

which is so essential for ballet, particularly at the higher level. If advanced allegro work is done on a hard floor, it tends to jar the back and invites shin splints. We urgently need premises of our own where we can lay a sprung floor or an imported cushioned floor treated for ballet." For the first time in January 1999, students were sent up in Bombay for what is known as the "majors," (girls used to go to London earlier) moving beyond children's grades into what may be termed a build-up for professional dancers. No other school or center in India, says Tushna, has achieved this.

"When I was a student, ballet was for most of us a hobby which made us happy," says Feroza Mody (née Engineer). "Now, because of the exams, students have reached a level where they can do something with it, take it forward even onto the international scene. It has not been easy to promote this art in India. Tushna has had to work against great odds." Remarks parent Nayantara Hidayatullah, "The School is a wonderful institution. It has given its students poise, self-confidence and an inner peace. For most of them dance is

the biggest expression of their emotions. The School could, however, do so much more if it had premises, a studio of its own."

Difficulties have included making new ballet *barres* when required (an expensive proposition) and finding a capable pianist willing to

play for classes throughout the year. "RAD regulations make it imperative to have live accompaniment for exams," observes Khushoo. "Jean Coelho, our pianist for the exams for the last few years, has been doing a wonderful job — she is caring and sensitive to the variations required by different children," commends Tushna. "Examination fees and other expenses for outfits, shoes, etc do impose a financial burden on some parents. I must say, however, that I have a most loyal and dedicated set of parents!" she adds. "We are desperately in need of funding to promote the art. It seems such a shame that, after 30 years, when we have arrived at the level of giving major exams in India itself, it might all have to come to a standstill due to lack of funds."

The benefits of ballet to the children are enormous, opines Tushna. Dance teaches them correct posture, coordination, self-discipline and consideration for others, amongst other attributes. Narrates parent Roshan Merchant, "My daughter Tanya, now 12, was born with what is called 'retroversion of the right hip joint.' Doctors told us she would require physiotherapy. I put her into the ballet class about five years ago and when we took her to the doctor again last year we were told she has been 90 percent cured! She has secured honors in every exam she has given so far." Seniors most student Anahita Hilloowalla, now 24 and a qualified architect who works with Talati and Panthaky Associated Private Limited remarks, "I have been with the School from the age of four and a half. Though it is difficult to find time, I would like to continue ballet



dents from Bahrain to Bermuda and Australia to Argentina being taught the Academy's syllabus and examined at each level by their large travelling body of examiners. The ISTD, "the world's leading dance examinations board," examines upwards of 2,50,00 people in different dance disciplines each year, states their brochure.) Says Tushna, "Examiners have been very happy with the high standard of our School." The children's grades exams in January 2000 saw all 48 students obtain over 65 percent, 18 of them securing over 85 percent!

"Promoting ballet in India means working against tremendous odds," laments Tushna. "Children have to cope with the crushing burden of studies, we have no premises of our own and hence no facilities like a sprung wooden floor

Tushna (third from left) with graduating classmates and teachers and (above) at a social gathering with prima ballerina Dame Margot Fonteyn



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*Feroze and Tushna; (l to r)
Khushcheher, Feroze, Mahzevar,
Tushna and Roshni*

for as long as I can. It is an absolute pleasure to dance."

Though Parsi students may have been in the majority in the earlier years, students today come from all communities and range in age from five to 24. Boys have been few and far between. The popular perception that ballet is 'pretty pretty,' though not true, makes them drop out, asserts Khushoo. Ballet is often a passport for getting into theater, observes her mother. Over the past year, once a week classes for adults in Latin American dance have been held. Several senior students after their training with the School have joined universities in USA, taking up dance as one of their subjects. "The grounding I received was so good that I have after coming here learnt tap dance, Spanish flamenco, riverdance and Afro-Caribbean jazz as well," comments Behnaz Khusrookhan, currently doing her graduation with dance as her 'minor' subject in Denison University in Ohio. Stephen Long of the London Festival Ballet Company and Jonathan Hollander of the Battery Dance Company of USA have given workshops for the students in Bombay. Representatives of the Toronto Dance Theatre took a video of the School's show back with them to Canada in 1998. "You've done an amazing job of building an appreciation and understanding of ballet in India. I admire your tenacity and commitment, and very obvious suc-

cess," wrote Jini Stolk, the Company's general manager.

In June 2000, Khushoo organized a workshop in which Fred Darsow, dancer/choreographer from New York, taught students (other students joined in too) the intricacies and joys of Spanish flamenco as well as modern dance. "These students are very smart, very quick to pick up new material, though flamenco is a style they have not done before. Their enthusiasm, discipline and intelligence stand out," Darsow told *Parsiana*.

A Fellow of the ISTD and an Associate of the RAD, Tushna obtained her diploma with a distinction in teaching from the London College of Dance and Drama. "My happiest years were at the College," she reminisces. The legendary Rudolf Nureyev visited the College and sat in at a modern dance class, prima ballerina Beryl Grey, all of six feet tall, used tiny Tushna as the body to choreograph a dance for the Beryl Grey Award. Late one night at College, Tushna relates, the girls heard an unusual noise from downstairs. As most of them were in their nightwear and it was expressly forbidden to go down unless properly dressed, Tushna was sent down to investigate as she was the only one who had not changed. "I opened the creaky wooden door of one of the studios and found myself face to face with a very handsomely dressed man. 'May I help you,' I asked politely, and he turned and ran straight out into the back garden and out of sight! He was probably as astonished to see a slip of a girl standing before him as I was to see a burglar! Our College was housed in a lovely old build-

ing with a dome and a beautiful mosaic ceiling and he must have thought it was an art museum with rare treasures, rather than a residential college for students of dance!"

In 1962, fired by her enthusiasm to bring ballet back to India she joined her old school, Presentation Convent in Kodaikanal, teaching ballet, modern dance, ballroom and national dances, as well as gym and physical training. With fees at five rupees a month and over 100 pupils for different

disciplines, she earned the princely sum of Rs 900 per month, which was more than the salary of many a senior teacher in the '60s! "During my student days at Presentation Convent, my love of dance was nurtured by a nun who was very strong on choreography. She used to teach dance dressed in her habit!"

Moving to Bombay, Tushna commenced teaching at Palm Beach School, fulfilling her dream of opening her own school in 1966/67. Classes were held at the Cathedral Infant School at Malabar Hill and continued at that venue for 25 years!

Khushoo, who is an Associate and Licentiate of the RAD, attended her first international summer school for a week in London when she was 11 years old. She was selected from 400 students for a scholarship class, winning scholarships for the next two summer schools consecutively, while she was still a student at the Cathedral and John Connon School in Bombay. On the basis of her performance at the summer schools she was offered a place at the RAD teachers training college and was, at 17, the youngest in her batch. Besides dancing, students are taught anatomy, the history of dance, labanotation (the written language or script of dance), etc. "The three years just flew by and, snow or sleet, I did not miss a single class," she remembers. Her technically firm grounding at the hands of her mother ensured her fitness throughout the course.

In her second year, students were told to choreograph and present a dance, making their own costumes within a limited budget. "I choreographed Ravi Shankar's raga Adana. Wearing a red ghagra choli with mirror work, soft ballet shoes and using dandiya sticks and a dupatta as a prop (scarf), I fused the stylized hands of Indian dance with the

technique of ballet. It was very well received," relates the 26-year-old smilingly.

On another occasion, students were sent out in fancy tutus to the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden to sell brochures for an RAD fund-raising event. "Prince Andrew was the guest of honor and during the interval he smiled at us and we were all so excited!" remembers Khushoo. One day the Queen, who is the patron of the RAD, came to the College to inaugurate a new annexe. "We were lined up on both sides as a kind of guard of honor. 'Do not speak until spoken to, remember to curtsy,' etc were the admonitions we received before she arrived. But she didn't talk to us at all and just walked on. We were so disappointed!" she laughs.

Coming back to India in 1993, Khushoo joined the School, teaching students from primary to advanced level. Both she and her mother have given lecture demonstrations over the years to popularize ballet as an art form. "Though I am a classically oriented dancer, I love learning new dance styles. The salsa, for example, is great fun. In Latin American dance, it is easy to let go and just enjoy

yourself. Younger students do love the freedom of modern dance and jazz," she maintains.

The School has also given numerous charity shows, with Concern India, Balkan-ji-Bari, Lions Club, Time and Talents Club, etc being among the beneficiaries. In February and March 2000, selected students led by Khushoo performed at the Indus Charity Ball, at the Carnival of Song and Dance at the Tata Theatre and the Jamshedi Navroz celebrations of the Mancherji Edulji Joshi Memorial Trust at the Dadar Parsi Gymkhana.

"Parsis have done a lot for the development of the arts and culture and I am very proud to be a Parsi," remarks Khushoo who visits the agiary on birthdays and special occasions. "I respect my religion. I like the peace and inner tranquility of an agiary," opines Tushna. She philosophizes that the law of cause and effect is a natural law — the free will operated in this life will be your irrevocable destiny in the next. As a community we want the Parsis to survive, state mother and daughter in unison.

With two out of her four-member

family fully engrossed in ballet, Tushna commends husband Feroze, a Master of Science in industrial engineering from USA who recently retired after 28 years with TELCO (Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company), for being supportive. "He has never stopped me from doing my work. He is a calm person and temperamentally good for me as I do tend to lose my temper sometimes," she smiles. Younger daughter Maazi (Mahzeevar) prefers sports like badminton and basketball to ballet. An animal lover and founder of Animal Friends, Maazi visits the Sakerbai Petit veterinary hospital at Parel regularly, taking sick or wounded animals there and paying for their treatment. "My mum is just terrific. She gives too much and is too nice. Though strong on discipline for her students, her bark is far worse than her bite!" she remarks.

"Jigsaw puzzles are my passion," says Tushna. "You can look at a jigsaw in two ways — just a lot of pieces with jagged edges being put into empty holes, or you can fit each piece lovingly to make a beautiful picture. Life is but a jigsaw puzzle. How we put each piece together is entirely up to us."

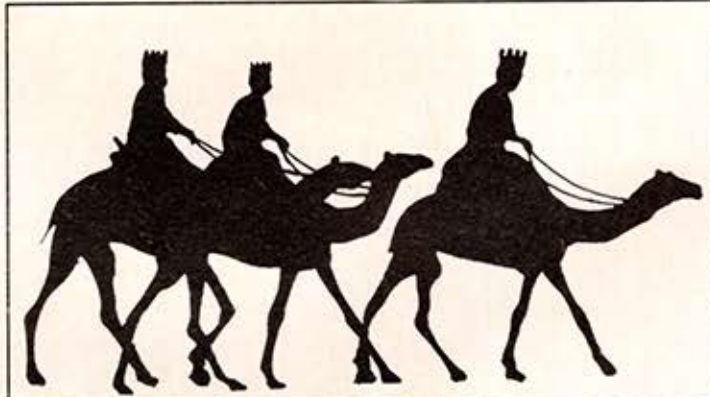
WHAT ARE ZOROASTRIAN...

continued from page 80

tire. It is said that a Persian army once spared a Byzantine church because of a fresco of the magi on it. During the Middle Ages, the magi were portrayed — like all ancient people — in the dress of the period. Today artists take all manner of liberties with the magi, but usually picture them as wealthy Arabs.

How did they come to be the Three Kings? Early Christian art and stories sometimes have two, four, or even 12 magi. The third century theologian Origen states that there were three wise men, probably because of the three gifts identified in the *New Testament* story.

Another early church father, Tertullian, refers to the magi as "almost kings." By the sixth century, the Armenian *Gospel of the Infancy* provides names for the three magi, i.e. Melchior, who reigned over the Persians; Balthazar, who reigned over the Indians; and Gaspar, who reigned over the Arabians. This is more understandable when one considers that before Columbus,



Europeans thought that Africa, India and China were all part of the 'Indies.'

As the legend grew, the magi came to represent the three races of humanity as well as the three stages of life: youth, middle age and old age. The mother of Constantine searched for and discovered many Christian relics, including the purported bones of the magi which, after several moves, now reside in the Cathedral of Cologne.

Now you know how the magi got to be kings. What are Zoroastrian priests doing on your Christmas card? They belong there for more than one reason. Our religion in the West in com-

posed of layers of influence. Obviously the most influential person in the present world is Jesus. He is first in Christianity, second in status in Islam, and is known throughout the world. But behind Jesus is the religion of the magi and the revelation of

their prophet Zoroaster.

Ken R. Vincent is chair of the department of psychology, sociology and anthropology at Houston Community College (Northwest College), and an adjunct assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine. He has published two books on personality assessment and is the author of *Visions of God from the Near Death Experience* (Larson Publications). His new book is titled *The MAGI: From Zoroaster to the "Three Wise Men."*



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EVENTS & PERSONALITIES

continued from page 38

Business Ethics in Bombay.

After his early education at Jamshedpur's Loyola School and the Jamshedpur Cooperative College, Sadri completed his postgraduation in industrial relations and business management from XLRI, Jamshedpur. He then obtained a Bachelors degree in law from Ranchi University after which

he went to UK on a J. N. Tata scholarship, obtaining a MSc in economics with specialization in business policy from the London School

of Economics and Political Science. For six years he was on a UNESCO program undertaking academic and research work at Nigerian universities. He returned to London to complete his doctorate, initially teaching for three years in Oxford and later joining the University of East Asia before he chose to return to India, according to a detailed write-up from Spearhead Public Relations.



Active awareness

Within a year of their inception the Zarathushti Awareness Group of Ahmedabad (ZAGA) was able to touch the lives of nearly 100 children in the six to 16 age group, notes a press release. Besides attending the regular monthly classes where they pray and sing and learn the different aspects of the religion, they also participated in a 'know thyself' workshop, a leadership camp, a motivation camp, a lecture demonstration on public speaking, a trip to Udvada, a picnic, visit to the museum, Sanskar Kendra, quiz, the annual entertainment program, a week long drawing and painting workshop at the famous Amdavad ni Gufa...

An exhibition of the children's drawings, paintings and monoliths which got news coverage in the Press and Doordarshan, Ahmedabad Kendra was a rewarding experience for the youngsters as was also the drawing competition when select prize winning entries were printed on greeting cards and sold in different regions.

Started by Meher Rashid Medora, managing trustee of the Ushta-Te Foundation, and co-trustee Shirin Navroze



Top: At a ZAGA function (from left): Medora, Kersi Shethna, Persis and Areez Khambatta, Noshir and Gool Daboo and Dr Ratan Marshall; (center and below) children encouraged to perform on stage and give vent to their artistic

Kanga, ZAGA's avowed objects for the children were "to preserve our Zarathushti culture and spread the basic awareness, develop their personality and give them the required training in being better Zarathushtis and excellent Indians; also to provide a sense of belonging and togetherness — Parsipanu," mentions their literature. Functioning under the banner of the Ushta-Te Foundation, ZAGA felt the need to groom the youth and serve as a support group realizing that joint families are fast disappearing and the parents are busy with their respective jobs.

Assisting Medora and Kanga in their

duties are Katy Daruwalla, Roshan Rao, Nina Muncherji and Farokh Kavina for the senior group, and Dilshad Sooi, Perin Unwalla, Daisy Doctor, Kerman Antia, Hutoxi Karkaria and Perwin Watchmaker for the junior group.

Medora was particularly grateful to the Ahmedabad Parsee Panchayat for giving the Anklesaria Hall free of charge at all times, to Perin Lalkaka for offering her school Thumbelina's premises, whenever required, to patron member Noshir Daboo for his guidance and encouragement in religious matters, to Hafez Dalal for looking after the financial and trust matters. The others on the

RELATIONSHIP

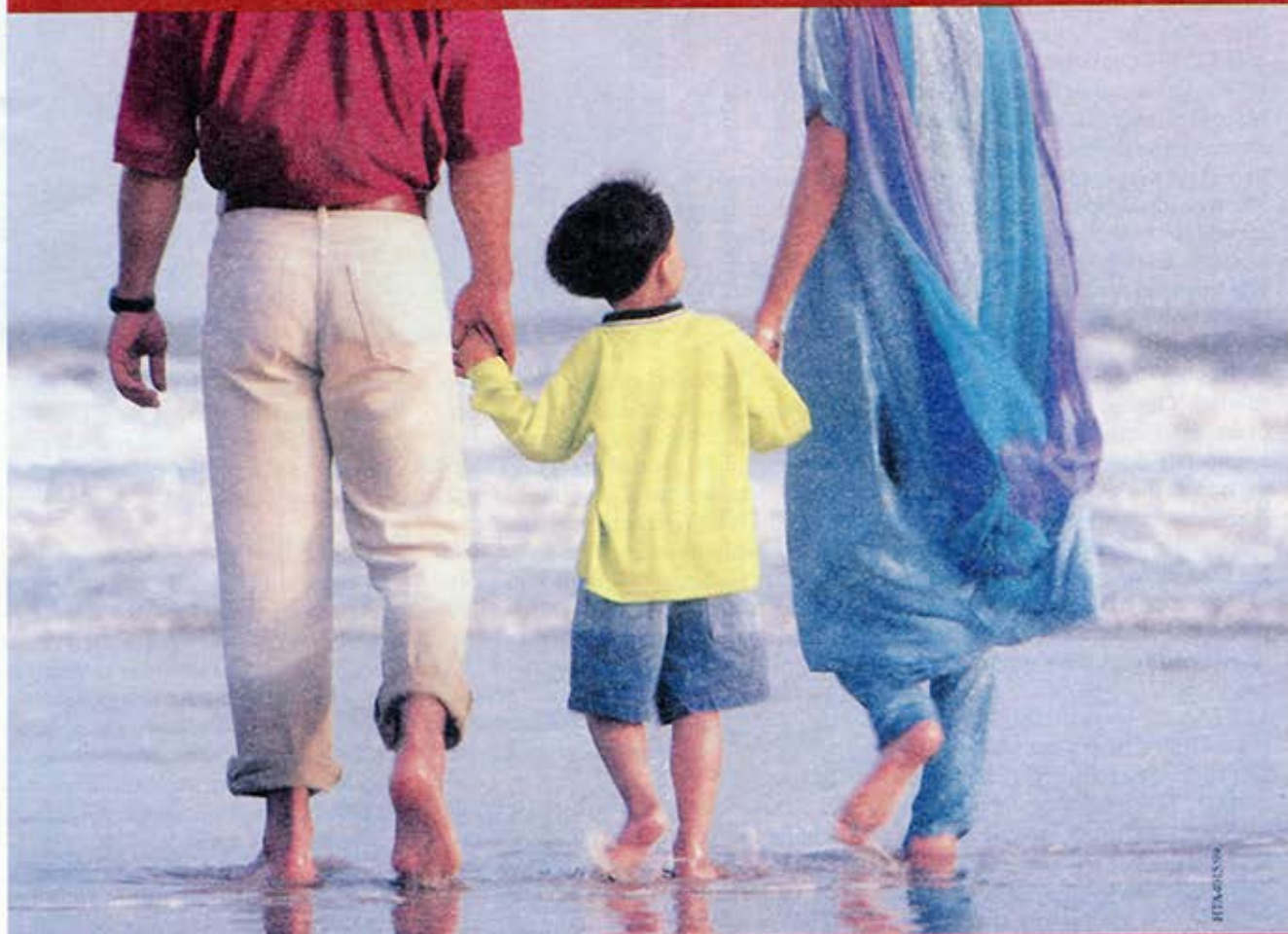
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trust board of the Foundation are Minni Patel, Dhun Anklesaria, Perin Engineer, Roshan Babycon and Persis Khambatta. The Foundation which only recently obtained the Income Tax exemption certificate under section 80G(5) has been concentrating on its welfare programs, affiliating itself with other organizations helping the blind, women's activities and social work. Ultimately all these varied activities "become a meeting point for the Parsis of Ahmedabad, the young and the old...which augurs well for the community in the new millennium," notes their report.

Leaders of Lions

Unanimously nominated as the president of the newly formed Lioness District 323 E-2 consisting of various clubs of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Marook Gandevia was presented two awards at the Lioness Multiple Convention in Aurangabad on April 28, 2000. She was adjudged the best communicator and the best chairperson for student welfare, according to a family source. Her slogan as the Lioness District president is "Live and let live," mentions her sister Pervize Gandevia of Ajmer.

Having joined Lionism in 1989, Marook Gandevia "is an outstanding example of dedicated selfless service," commends her sibling. She has won awards at the club, region and district level, and recently on April 8, 2000 was recognized with an international award for leadership.

Ajmer born Marook Gandevia, who runs her own screen and block printing unit named Sarosh Enterprises, has completed her BSc (Home Science), BED and MA in English literature as she passed through the portals of Sophia College, Ajmer and Nirmala Niketan, Bombay. "With her acumen, zeal and hard work," she has secured a string of diplomas in commercial art, textile designing, interior decoration, food craft, Ikebana and journalism. She was formerly the head of the department of textile designing at Sophia College, mentions the sister.

When installing Lion Gulnar Hosi Karanjia as president of the Lions Club of Cuffe Parade in Bombay on June 30, 2000 a new milestone was reached in the 26-year history of the Club. She is only the second lady to be appointed head of this Club comprising 100 members drawn from the elite of a cosmopolitan society, notes a press release.



Top row (from left): Gandevia, Savinder Singh Rekhi and Karanjia
Below: Ashok Mehta presenting gavel to Yasmin Dotivala as husband Jamshed looks on



The Club has adopted the Geeta Nagar Primary Education School where nearly 200 slum children are offered free elementary education along with a nutritional diet, uniforms and books, mentions the release, adding that the Club is also closely associated with the Tata Electric Companies Limited in maintaining the prestigious five-and-a-half-acre Colaba Woods and Sports Complex. Offering help to hospitals, providing medical aid to the destitute, striving to prevent blindness are the other areas where the Club has been rendering useful service.

Assisting Karanjia in discharging the Club's responsibilities during the year 2000-2001 will be vice presidents Jaloo Behramram and Jimmy Mobedji, secretary Roshan Datar, joint secretary Khurshid Buhariwalla, treasurer Prakash Bambardekar and joint treasurer Perin Palia.

In Surat, Lioness Yasmin Jamshed Dotivala was installed president of Lioness District 323F which includes 40 clubs from Vapi to Kheda, Dahod and Godhra, on July 9, 2000, states a press release. Described as an ambassador of Lionism, Dotivala with her team was exhorted to implement projects for social welfare which would enhance the

image of Lionism amongst the public. She comes from the reputed Dotivala family established as bakers and confectioners in Surat for over two centuries and six generations.

SPOTLIGHT

The highest award from the Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Surgeons (SAGES) was conferred on **Dr. Tehemton E. Udwardia** at their annual conference in Atlanta, USA, according to a news report. The reputed Bombay surgeon was conferred the Dr. Karl Storz SAGES Millennium Award for his contribution to laparoscopic and minimal access surgery.

Doyen **Jamshed J. Bhabha's** contribution to art and culture was recognized with a Desikottama (doctor of literature — honoris causa) by the Visva-Bharati University, notes a write-up in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of May 24, 2000. The chancellor of the University and former Prime Minister of India, I. K. Gujral mentioned that they had come to Bombay to honor Bhabha since he had been unable to attend the University's awards function held earlier.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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Fancy these flavors

Dr Katy Dalal

An assortment of recipes from *Delicious Encounters* to satiate all taste buds



Clockwise from top left: Steamed pomfret with black bean sauce Human style, Pahari murghi and Golden pepper pulao



In her second cookery book, *Delicious Encounters—Innovative Recipes, Parsi, Indian, Western*, Dr Katy Dalal has selected international dishes which would appeal to the Indian reader. And realizing that visitors can drop in at any hour, she has over 250 recipes for breakfast, brunch, lunch, tea time snacks and dinner. Carried here with her permission are seven select recipes.

VEGETABLE HAKKA NOODLES

Preparation time: 12 mins

Cooking time: 18 mins
(serves 4-6)

Egg noodles or plain noodles (200 g)
Yellow carrots (25 g — cut julienne)
Green french beans (25 g — cut julienne)
Green cabbage (25 g — cut julienne)
Capsicum (1 — cut julienne)
Spring onions (4 — cut julienne)
Garlic (8 large cloves — cut julienne)
Ginger (2" piece — cut julienne)
Green chillies (6 — cut julienne)
Bean sprouts (½ cup)
Black pepper powder (½ tsp)

Aji-no-moto (1 tsp)
Red chillies (3 — broken into three pieces each)
Soya bean sauce (2 tbsp — optional)
Oil or chilli oil
Salt
Boil the noodles in salted water and when soft, drain and set aside.

Take a Chinese wok and put three tablespoons of oil in it. Place on high heat and add the green chillies, ginger and garlic and stir for two minutes. Add the carrots, french beans, cabbage, cap

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sicum and spring onions and lower heat and stir fry for five more minutes. Set aside.

Put three tablespoons oil or chilli oil in the wok and place on high heat. Add the broken red chillies to the oil, the bean sprouts, black pepper powder, soya sauce and aji-no-moto. Stir fry for two minutes and add the noodles. Stir fry for five minutes. When well blended, add all the stir fried vegetable mixture, cook for three more minutes mixing well with the noodles. Taste for salt and serve hot.

MUSHROOM AND TOMATO STUFFED OMELETTES

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 25 mins

(serves 6-8)

For the omelette

Eggs (8)

Pepper powder (1/4 tsp)

Salt

Butter

For the stuffing

Fresh mushrooms (150-200 g)

Onion (1 large)

Parsley (2 tbsp — chopped)

Garlic (2 tbsp — chopped)

Thyme (1 tbsp)

Butter

Salt

Wash and slice the mushrooms and slice the onion finely. Cook them along with the garlic till soft in two-three tablespoons of butter. Taste for salt. Add a dash of tabasco. When the onion is soft, add the parsley and thyme and remove the vessel from the fire.

Beat two eggs at a time in your mixie along with a pinch of pepper powder and salt.

Pour the beaten eggs in a greased non-stick frying pan. Spoon the stuffing onto the eggs and fold the omelette into half. Shake the pan for two minutes and if possible overturn the omelette. Serve hot.

APPLE BRULÉE

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 25-30 mins

(serves 5)

Cream (400 g)

Apples (4 tart ones — skinned, cored and sliced)

Castor sugar (200 g)

Egg yolks (5)

Brown sugar (40-50 g)

Vanilla essence (1 tsp)

Extra castor sugar (70 g)

Place the extra sugar and apple slices along with two cups of water in a sauce-

pan. Bring to a boil. Cool. Drain the apples and divide them between five ramekins.

Place the cream on a low flame and heat it. Do not allow to boil. Cool. Beat the egg yolks and castor sugar with a whisk and mix into the cold cream. Add the vanilla essence. Stir and pour into the ramekins.

Pre-heat oven to 350°F or 180°C. Bake the ramekins till the custard turns golden brown. Remove from the oven.

Place the oven shelf a little higher and increase the heat to 400°F. Spread a layer of brown sugar on top of the custards and heat for four or five minutes till the sugar has melted. Remove from the oven and cool. Cover. Chill overnight before serving.

STRAWBERRY BRULÉE

Cut 15 large strawberries into half. Place in a saucepan with 70 g castor sugar and half cup water. Bring to a boil. Cool and drain. Divide the strawberries amongst the ramekins and proceed as earlier for Apple brulée.

LARGE POMFRET STEAMED AND LIGHTLY FRIED IN BLACK BEAN SAUCE HUNAN STYLE

Preparation/cooking time and serving depends entirely on the size of the pomfret

Pomfret (1 — large)

Black bean sauce (2 cups)

Ginger (fresh 2" piece — cut into very thin strips)

Garlic (15 large flakes — finely chopped)

Soya bean sauce (2 tbsp)

Spring onions (4 small including 2" of the green portion-cut into thin diagonal strips)

Green chillies (6 deseeded — cut into thin strips)

Parsley (8 clusters)

1 sour lime (juice)

Sesame oil

Salt (to taste)

Wash the pomfret and clean the surface with a knife and scrape off all the tiny scales. Cut below the mouth and remove the stomach entrails. Leave the fins and tail on. Wash three times, salt and rub with the lime juice and keep in a cool place.

Take a steamer basket if you have one and steam the pomfret or lightly boil it, covered, in a large flat thali.

Take a big flat iron tava or griddle. Pour one cup of sesame oil on it and place on a hot flame. Add the ginger, garlic, chillies and spring onions in this

order. Place the pomfret on top of these vegetables, sprinkle with soya bean sauce, cover, lower flame and allow to cook for seven to 10 minutes. Then turn over and cook the other side.

Heat the black bean sauce. If you like, add half an onion finely chopped and allow to cook till soft.

Take a large platter. Pour half the black bean sauce on the dish, place the pomfret on top, sprinkle with all the vegetables and oil left on the griddle and pour the remaining hot black bean sauce over the pomfret. Fry the parsley clusters and place them around the pomfret. Decorate the dish with flowers made out of spring onions and carrots and serve hot.

BLACK BEAN SAUCE HUNAN STYLE

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 25 mins

(serves 10)

Dark rajma beans (200 g)

Brown sugar (3 tbsp)

Nanking soya sauce (3 tbsp)

Garlic (6 large cloves — crushed)

Cornflour (2 tbsp)

Brown sugarcane vinegar (1 1/2 tbsp)

Sesame oil (100 g)

Salt

Cook the beans in salted water in a pressure cooker till absolutely soft. Drain. Crush the beans and mix in the sugar, soya sauce, garlic and vinegar. Mix the cornflour in 3/4 cup of water and add to the beans.

Heat the oil in a saucepan and fry the bean mixture for three minutes or so. Remove from the fire. Cool and refrigerate. The sauce will keep for four days at least. Dilute as and when you need it.

GOLDEN PEPPER PULAO

Preparation time: 25 mins

Cooking time: 1 1/4 or 1 hr 15 mins

(serves 5-6)

For the rice

Basmati rice (500 g)

Saffron (1 g)

Onions (2 — cut long and deep fried)

Cinnamon (2 — 1" pieces)

Pepper corns (10)

Cloves (6)

Elaichis or brown cardamom (4 large)

Star anise (4)

Bay leaves (4)

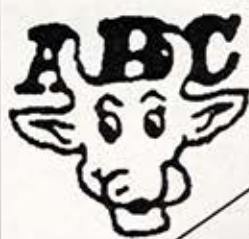
Salt

Ghee or oil for the fried onions

For the peppers

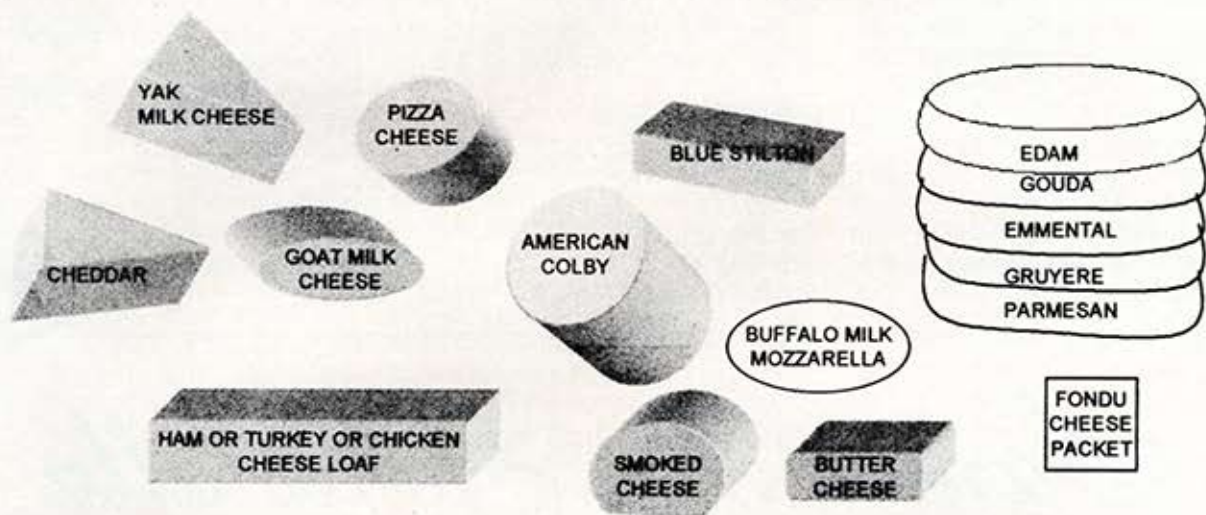
Golden peppers (8)

Prawns (1 kg — shelled and deveined)



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Coriander (1 — small bunch — washed and finely chopped)

Oil

Salt

Grind in sugarcane vinegar

Red Kashmiri chillies (14-16)

Garlic (2 large cloves)

Cumin (2½ tsp)

Black mustard seeds (½ tsp)

Black pepper corns (6)

Prepare a broad mouthed heavy bottomed vessel by scrubbing it well. Keep aside.

Place a cup of oil in a dekchi over medium flame. When hot, add the ground masala and stir till it is red and almost cooked. Salt the prawns after washing them twice and add them to the masala. Reduce the heat to very low, cover the vessel and allow the prawns to cook in their own juice for 10 minutes. Cover the vessel with a shallow platter with a layer of water on it. Replenish the water from time to time till the prawns are tender and soft. Mix in the chopped coriander and cool. Taste for salt.

Wash all the peppers and with a sharp, pointed knife, cut a circle around the stalks and remove them intact. With your finger or a fine teaspoon remove the seeds in each pepper. Tap each

lightly so any remaining seeds fall out. Take a small teaspoon and fill all the peppers well with the prawn mixture and then cover with their stalks.

Wash the rice and place it in the prepared pan. Add salt, all the whole spices and the saffron after heating it lightly. Lastly add the fried onions along with three tablespoons of the ghee or oil it was fried in. Add water to cook the rice, then lower the peppers and arrange them close to each other so they stay upright. Place the dekchi on medium heat. Sprinkle more salt over the rice if necessary as the peppers will be absorbing it. Lower the flame to its lowest point and allow the rice to cook for 40 minutes till all the water is absorbed and the peppers are soft. If the rice remains hard add more water. It should be soft and not dry.

Serve this pulao with cucumber or banana raita or a Parsi dhansakh dal.

PAHARI MURGHI

Preparation time: 45 mins

Cooking time: 1 hr

(serves 15)

For the chicken

Saffron (2 g)

Chicken (4 whole — cut into 8 pieces

each)

Onions (5 large)

Tomatoes (8 large)

Bay leaves (4)

Ginger-garlic paste (1 tbsp)

Boiled eggs (8)

Capsicums (4 large)

Salt

Oil

Grind together with half a cup of water

Coconut (1 — grated)

Kashmiri chillies (16)

Badi sonf or fennel seeds (1 tbsp)

Black peppercorns (½ tsp)

Cinnamon powder (½ tsp)

Mace powder (½ tsp)

Shahjeera powder (1 tsp)

For the kababs

Ginger-garlic paste (½ tbsp)

Minced meat (500 g)

Garam masala (1 tsp)

Onion (1 large — finely chopped)

Fresh coriander (1 tbsp)

Green chillies (1 tsp — chopped)

Eggs (2)

Bread crumbs (2 cups)

Bread (10 slices)

Salt

Oil

Heat the saffron and steep it in one cup hot water.

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Wash the chicken pieces, apply salt, the ginger-garlic paste and set aside.

Chop the onions and tomatoes finely and grind the masala till fine and soft.

Take a very large, wide-mouthed vessel and fry the onions and bay leaves in one cup of oil. When the onion is golden brown add the ground masala and fry till red. Add the tomatoes and when soft, put in the chicken pieces and allow to cook, stirring all the time on a slow fire for 15 minutes. Add three cups of water and allow to cook till soft.

Meanwhile, make the kababs. Mix mince, onions, coriander, green chillies, ginger-garlic paste and the garam masala with salt to taste. Make the mixture into a ball and make a hole in it. Beat the eggs well and pour them into the hole and mix the mixture vigorously. Soak the bread slices in water and drain the water out with both your hands. Add to the mixture and knead well into it. Then wet both your hands and make tiny little cocktail kababs. Roll in the breadcrumbs and deep fry in hot oil till brown.

Once the chicken is cooked soft, add the saffron water to the gravy and simmer over a very low flame till the gravy is thick. Add the kababs, shake the vessel, cover and remove from the flame. Serve the chicken on a flat dish and decorate with the kababs, boiled eggs and capsicum rings lightly fried in oil.

Serve with rotis or soft bread.

DARAIUS' CHICKEN DELIGHT

Preparation time: 40 mins

(serves 8)

Pineapple rings (1 can)

Chicken breasts (4 — boiled and sliced)

Cheese sauce (2 cups)

White wine (½ cup)

Mayonnaise (1 cup)

Pickled green peppercorns (1 tbsp)

Eggs (6 boiled — halved)

Stuffed olives (sliced)

Little bunches of black and green grapes

Iceberg lettuce

Assemble pineapple rings on a small silver salver or flat dish. Place the sliced chicken on top and pour some mayonnaise sauce over the chicken. Arrange the boiled eggs neatly around the pineapple slices.

Beat the wine into the cheese sauce. Add the pickled peppercorns and gently pour over the mayonnaise sauce. Arrange the iceberg lettuce, olives and bunches of grapes in an attractive way around the pineapple and egg. Chill and serve.

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Mixed marriage, mixed bag

Dr Nilufer E. Bharucha

Mixed Marriage and other Parsi stories by Meher Pestonji. Published in 1999 by HarperCollins Publishers, India Private Limited, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002. Pp: 180. Price: Rs 150.

Parsi literature is today a well established genre with writers of stature such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Dina Mehta, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy, Boman Desai and Firdaus Kanga. The common feature of this literature is the focus on the Parsi race and the Zoroastrian religion. This ethno-religious focus entails the detailing of the main tenets of the ancient Zoroastrian religion, the flight from Persia, the granting of refuge in India, the attainment of elite status during the British Raj, the subsequent alienation from the post colonial Indian ethos and the move to the West by many Indian Parsis. These texts thus record the double — and often triple — diaspora of the Parsis, the first being the ancient one from Iran, the second from the colonial space and finally the post colonial one to the West. All these diasporas have led to complex and apparently contradictory feelings of identification and alienation from both the old as well as new homelands.

At this point it would be appropriate to mention that Parsis were writing in English and in Gujarati much before Sidhwa's novel *The Crow Eaters* appeared in 1978. Behramji Malabari wrote poetry, travelogues and was a practising journalist in English and Gujarati in the 19th century. Cornelia Sorabji's short stories and autobiographies were published in the early years

of the last century. After her came the Karakas, then Burjor Karanjia's forays into creative writing and the poetry of Keki Daruwala and Gieve Patel — all in English. None of this writing had a particular focus on Parsipanu. So though they were Parsis they were not practitioners of Parsi literature, in the strictest sense of the term.

It is only at the end of the 20th century that Parsis began to write in a manner that asserts their difference from the Indian mainstream. The 1980s and 1990s have seen the Parsi writers making a last grandstand. Mistry has called this a 'bearing witness' literature that documents the Parsis' glorious past, their much reduced and confused present status in India/the West and their uncertain future.

Such writing has often resulted in the members of this community taking exception to the manner in which they have been portrayed. When Sidhwa's *Crow Eaters* was reprinted in India (the first edition appeared in Lahore, Pakistan) in the early '80s, there was a considerable hue and cry among the Parsis who felt they had been presented in a mocking, unflattering manner, thereby feeding into the stereotype of the 'mad Bawaji'. Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* had its own detractors. In fact, he had preempted such criticism by making the father of the narrator of one of his stories, 'Swimming Lessons,' say: "There should have been something positive about the Parsis, there was so much to be proud of the great Tatas. Sir Dinshaw

Petit... or Dadabhai Naoroji...he should have found some way to bring some of these wonderful facts into his stories, what would people reading these stories think, those who do not know the Parsis — that the whole community was full of cranky, bigoted people..."

The point however is that this was

the glorious past of the Parsis and has been documented in sufficient detail by sociologists and historians. What the current crop of Parsi writers are doing is focussing on the present — with all its problems. For an endangered community, whose nearly zero birthrate and high death rate points in the direction of eventual annihilation, it is apt to take these facts into account and face them squarely, rather than dwell in a comforting past. When these writers focus on these apparently 'unflattering' details of being a Parsi today, they are not trying to run Parsis down but affirm their Parsi roots — understand what it means to be a Parsi. Understand that being a Parsi is not just about the Tatas and the Wadias or Naorojis, but that it is about roots from which there is no escape, only understanding. As Meher Pestonji has said in the poem that prefaces her collection of stories:

Once I said it with pride
I don't wear a sūdā
Or kusti
I don't read or write
Gujarati
Just about speak it
I'm only accidentally born
A Parsi....
It took years to discover
You can't escape roots
In search of
An identity.

In the final analysis this makes Parsi literature today an 'identitarian literature' in which the Parsis are in search of their own roots which will in turn lead them to a better understanding of their present and enable them to cope with the not very optimistic reality of their passage into the future.

The opening story of Pestonji's collection best illustrates how Parsis will have to adjust to changed realities and come to terms with post colonial India. The narrator of this story 'Mixed Marriage' is the *parjaat vahu* (non-Parsi daughter-in-law) offering an outsider's view on the community. Such a view could provide distance and objectivity. The story revolves around how Savita



Pestonji: Finely tuned narratives

*mixed
marriage*
— other parsi stories



Meher Pestonji

adjusts to her Parsi surroundings and how in turn her Parsi parents-in-law make their own adjustments to their Hindu daughter-in-law. The image of Cyrus as the supportive husband who backs up his wife in almost all her decisions — including the giving of a non-Parsi name to their daughter — is a very positive one of the end-of-the-millennium Parsi man.

However, there is a fly in the ointment in the shape of Makku masi. This lady embodies all that's the worst among contemporary Parsis, a monumental snobbishness, a looking down upon other communities and a dogmatic adherence to the rules of Zoroastrianism, rather than its liberal spirit. This is one of Pestonji's better stories in which the message, let Parsis open up to the Indian world, is there but is subordinated to the actual narrative, which in turn exhibits definite literary merits.

This is not the case with the story 'Riot.' Here the tone is overtly didactic and almost journalistic. The writer becomes a reporter of events rather than an interpreter. Literature can also instruct but by providing insights rather than by giving direct messages. As the Absurdist dramatist Ionesco had said: "I'm not a postman, I don't give messages." 'Riot' focusses on the Bombay riots in 1992-93, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and has Hindu, Muslim and Parsi characters. The central character is a Parsi woman, Rashna, who is a professional social worker who runs a women's center in the Dharavi slums with Tahira, a Muslim woman. During the riots Tahira is in need of being rescued from Hindu mobs which might attack her home. Rashna tries in vain to mobilize her Parsi friends to go and get her Muslim friend out of danger, but meets with only indifference or hostility. Finally, it's a Hindu man who rescues Tahira. This gives Pestonji the temptation to pontificate and offer advice to Parsis on how they should behave in such situations. This intrusion is the one which actually proves to be detrimental to the ultimate impact of the story which in itself is very powerful.

'Transience' is a story in which Pestonji has avoided the temptation of sermonizing and is I think the best and most sensitive story in the collection. It is about human relations and the vulnerability of old age. Najamai, the old woman in the story, is dependent on her

servant Rosie, a trusted old retainer, who after Najamai's husband's death, and her own fall, has become increasingly arrogant. There is also Najamai's young granddaughter, Armaity, who was going to get married to Xerxes. Najamai begins crocheting a lace sari for her wedding. The lace sari becomes a leitmotif in the story and runs like a thread through it. It provides the backdrop against which Najamai battles Rosie's dictatorial behavior and her own weakness. The sari becomes a poignant symbol of loss and death when Xerxes dies in a motorcycle accident. It is also the sari that brings the two women, Najamai and Rosie, together.

Pestonji's first collection is thus a mixed bag of finely tuned narratives and jarringly didactic ones. However, it is a collection that is worth reading and also one that makes the reader look forward to more mature, sensitive and less instructive offerings from Pestonji in future.

BOOK NOTES

A useful companion

"A visit to Iran, at least once in a lifetime of every Parsi is a must, not only for its wonderful climate, but for the appreciation of its past glory and fame," notes the introduction to the second edition of *Guide to Zarthoshtrian Historical Places in Iran* compiled by Aspandiyar Sohrab Gotla. The first edition of this book was published in 1997 but was exhausted within a few months, states the author in his preface. "Hence there was a great need for the second and revised edition, updating the previous data wherever necessary," he adds.

As opines Adi Doctor in the second edition, "With so many tours to Iran round the year, many Zoroastrians feel that there should be a handy guide for them to read before they embark on their journey. Thanks to Gotla, the void is now filled with this handy, pocket-guide on Iran. If you carry this only-one-of-its-kind book, you won't have to panic if you find yourself without a human guide in even the remotest part of Iran. Surely an indispensable 'friend' which no Zoro-

astrian tourist to Iran should be without."

In addition to 'Travel Information and Tips to Iran,' which includes nuggets on accommodation, currency, custom clearance, dress code, useful Farsi phrases, listing of important events, a brief historical listing and the like, the 142-page booklet makes special mention of areas like Tehran, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Esfahan, Shiraz, Yazd... There is a separate section devoted to the famous seven Pirs or shrines in Iran.

Readers would also be interested to learn of the prevailing food habits in Iran. Tea is generally served everywhere, without milk...Iranians are very fond of cucumber and have it at any time of the day. Also there is always a bowl full of seasonal fruits and a tray of dry fruits and nuts ready to be offered to visitors...

Those interested in obtaining a copy of the book can contact the author at B-9, Anand Vihar, St Martin's Cross Road, Bandra (W), Bombay 400050, Tel: 6452247.

Faith in forecasts?

"Peace and joy between India and Pakistan around 2001...India becomes a superpower around January 2008-January 2011...China will be as big a superpower as India and around 2004 the two Asian giants will be very close...The USSR will again be one around 2011...the influence of the USA will be considerably less on and after July 2005...Germany comes into her own around 2008. So very surprisingly does Japan...All the African countries have

tremendous poise and power and God's plenty from 2002, and even more so from 2010," predicts the "millennium man" Bejan Daruwalla in *The Millennium Yearbook*. For those living Down Under, there is only suspense though they can take hope from his general statement that "the 21st century will be the best in the history of mankind."

Computer buffs may be interested to learn that as per Daruwalla's predictions, from March 11, 2003 "computers will be humanized e.g. if you go to a computer for an astrological reading, the computer will



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actually listen to you, even laugh and weep with you, besides giving you solid guidance based on planetary placings and configurations...By April 5, 2011...it could mean computers reproducing themselves, a new technique may be there to actually show the soul as it leaves or enters a body — thus setting the seal on the vexed question of our immortality."

For India in particular, Daruwalla holds, "I see the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) as the party of the 21st century though it obviously suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue, violent communalism, narrow vision..." The 21st century is not for Sonia Gandhi and J. Jayalalitha, believes the master astrologer who admits: "Astrology is certainly not hundred percent accurate and things may not happen on the exact date and month stated/predicted. Give a margin please, of three months, either way. Also please understand that I could go wrong. I am not infallible." The two-page introduction to the author in the book describes him as "Asia's most widely read astrologer... Bejan is an outstanding performer! The beauty is that he loves to laugh at himself, never at others!" In his own words, "Doubt my intelligence,

but not my integrity."

With his common grouping of disasters—earthquakes, floods, fires, storms, typhoons, air crashes, shipwrecks, assassinations—one does not know how seriously to be wary of the "possible"

dates for India:

"January 21 to February 22, March 24 to May 23 (really critical), July 23 to September 17 (also tough and rough), October 21 to November 23, 2000."

"It's all there—the good, the bad and the ugly. Take it with a pinch of salt...That way it's really wonderful because there are no real disappointments and the delights are doubled," says Daruwalla in his section on 'How to make the most of your forecast' in *The Millennium Yearbook*.

This *Millennium Yearbook* contains yearly, monthly and detailed week-by-week forecasts according to the lunar calendar, dwelling on the personality traits, love life, marriage, business/career, friendship, family, children, travel,



Mehta: against women abuse

as mentions a blurb on the back cover. The book hopes to "smash all existing records in sales, just as Daruwalla has broken all records in astrological predictions...We are printing 1,00,000 copies; a record breaking number! Yes, we have blind faith in our readers!" notes the 465-page paperback priced at Rs 140 and published by Hind Pocket Books (P) Limited, 18-19, Dilshad Garden, G. T. Road, Delhi 110095.

Mind-blowing, *Body Blows*

In December 1999 a volume of plays was released by Seagull Books at a function held at Rotary Sadan, Calcutta. On the occasion Kamla Bhasin, veteran activist for women's rights, presented songs from the women's movement; and the first copy of *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival*, a compilation of three plays by three well-known playwrights, was presented to her by the eminent writer, Mahasweta Devi.

The book has an introductory essay by C. S. Lakshmi, the noted Tamil writer familiar to her readers as Ambai. In her short but meaningful introduction Ambai talks of the battering women receive (the abuse can be physical, men-

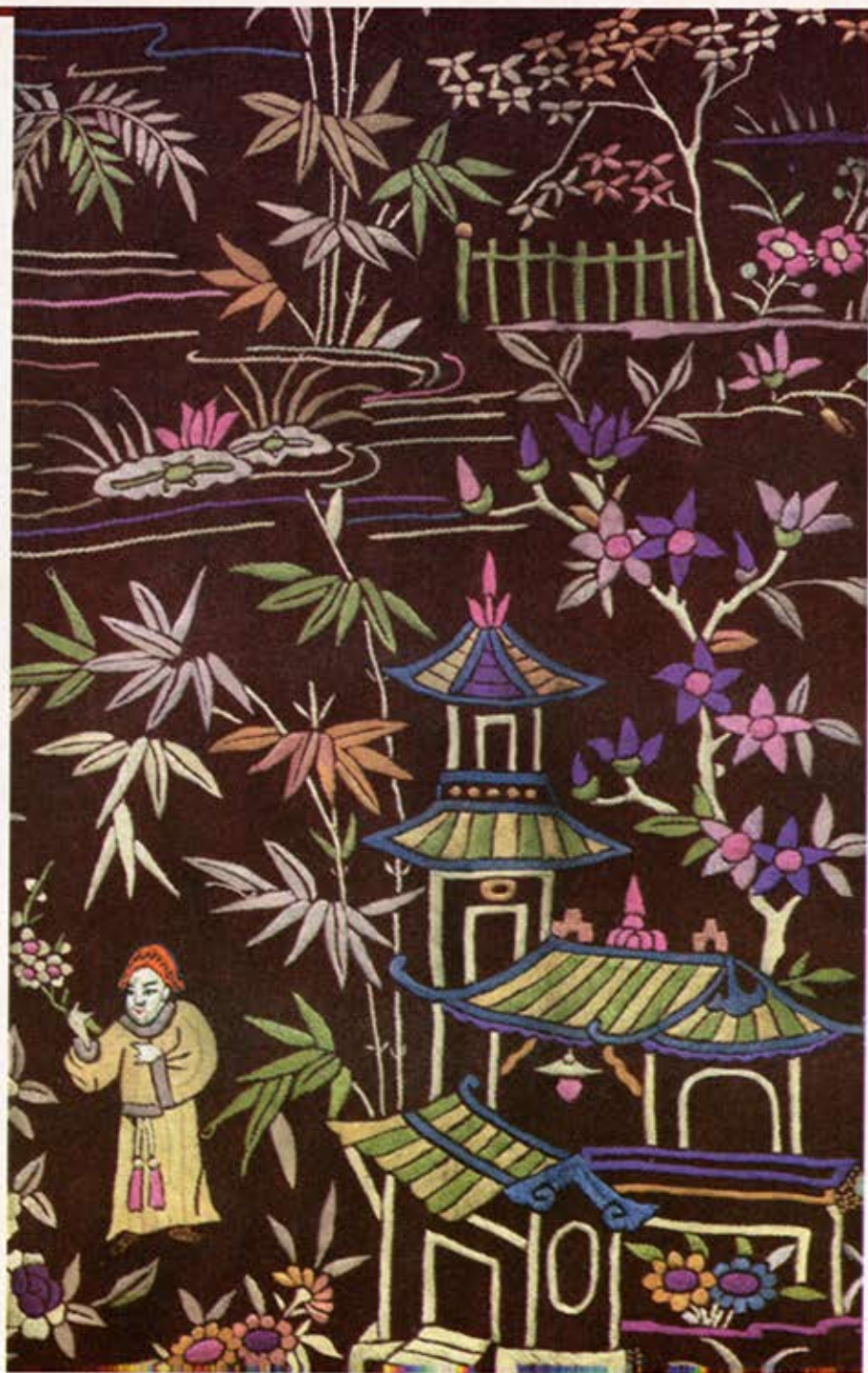
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tal or insidious) in a patriarchal society, and insightfully explores the images of violence against women that are mirrored in our epics, songs and poems, in our myths and folklore. Fed on these, the girl child grows up accepting these 'body blows' as a way of life for herself.

Yet things are changing. Women are challenging the cultural fabric which sanctions their victimhood and the three plays in this 155-page volume (published by Seagull Books Private Limited, 26 Circus Avenue, Calcutta 700017; price: Rs 250) are part of the ongoing effort to protest against the abuse and the acquiescence.

In Manjula Padmanabhan's play, *Lights Out*, the daily mystery of heart-rending screams from a woman in obvious pain destroys the fabric of domesticity of a middle-class couple. The rape takes place off stage and can be watched by the protagonists by merely pushing back the window curtains of

their living room. The women are anguished witnesses, the men fascinated and morbidly curious. But no one does anything. They just stand and watch the woman being brutalized in the neighboring compound.

Getting Away With Murder, Dina Mehta's play, was on the shortlist of seven specially commended plays out of 902 entries submitted for the BBC World Playwriting Competition, 1989. It is about three women who sustain their friendship through 'body blows' like child-

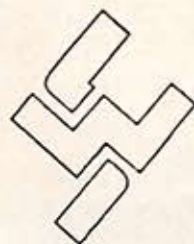
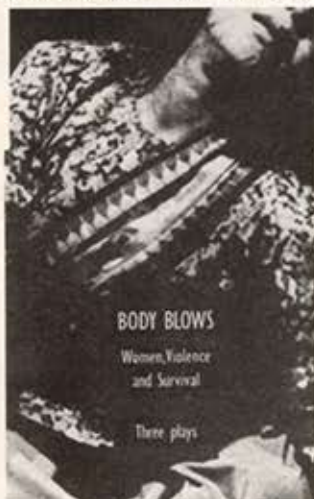
hood rape, infidelity and the shame of being "that joke of nature — a barren woman."

The third play, *Mangalam*, by Poile Sengupta is set in a Tamil middle-class Brahmin home. The mother, Mangalam, a victim of rape, is now dead and Dorai, her husband, had apparently mistreated her, yet his suffering over the fact that he was conned into marrying a pregnant

woman is genuine. Other relationships within the family are probed too. In Act II the events of the first act (complete in itself) become part of a play witnessed by a 'modern' audience that criticizes Mangalam's story and the language and action of the play as contrived and false. Yet their own lives mirror similar disappointments and betrayals and by this clever scripting Sengupta shows how abuse and violence can span generations.

Mehta's play, sandwiched between Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* and Sengupta's *Mangalam*, is in many ways different from the pair that brackets it. In *Getting Away With Murder* Mehta, too, highlights the servitude and the abuse women are heir to, but she also applauds their inherent strengths. "We can be goddesses if we want it enough," says Sonali. And even when cast as victims, the women are made to accept some responsibility for their disempowerment. "It is in our minds, Malika, that we are underlings," says Raziya. Despite the odds, no woman need remain passive under persecution — at least not the educated one — Mehta is saying. And not all men are

continued on page 256



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MILESTONES

This issue of *Parsiana* presents Milestones data for the two months of June and July 2000. A few names from the May death list as well as some of the outstation data that was held out from the June-July issue due to constraints of space are also reproduced herein.

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 20 and 48 years, the arithmetic mean—the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides—being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 24 and 56 years, averaging at 31 years.

As compared to 26 babies born in the two months in Bombay there were 163 Zoroastrians who breathed their last. Heart disease felled 53 victims

of whom 29 were in the 80+ age group. Pneumonia and lung disease took a toll of 17 patients whereas 14 succumbed to brain disease and 12 to general debility and old age. Cancer claimed 11 lives, septicemia, 10 and hypertension, eight. Three Zoroastrians each fell prey to asthma, kidney failure, malaria, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and shock and two each to haematemesis (vomiting of blood), head injury and liver disease. There were 15 isolated cases registered for June and July, they being: splenomegaly (enlargement of the spleen), hepatic encephalopathy, quadriplegia (paralysis of all four limbs), AIDS, diarrhoea, hypothyroid, Alzheimer's disease, intestinal perforation, malnutrition, marasmus (wasting away of the body without

apparent cause), kyphoscoliosis (lateral curve of the spinal cord), anemia, peritonitis (inflammation of the serous membranes that line the abdominal cavities), ulcer and pyrexia (elevation of the body temperature above normal). A stillborn baby was also lost to the community. The age range fluctuated between 40 and 97 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for the two months, in Bombay, was 77 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjumans 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 anjumans do not furnish the par-

ticulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by two 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.

AHMEDABAD

MARRIED

Benaisha Tamboli of Navsari, daughter of Freny and late Jal, and *Piruz Khambatta*, son of Persis and Areez on July 21, 2000

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy, *Noshir*, to *Nila* and *Zarir Langrana*; April 21
A girl to *Diana* and *Kaizad Vestuna*; June 1
A girl to *Ruxana* and *Fredy Hansotia*; June 3
A girl to *Minaz* and *Jimmy Maneckshaw*; June 5
A girl to *Anahita* and *Cyrus Ghaswala*; June 6
A boy to *Dimple* and *Zarkis Gotla*; June 8
A girl to *Behroze* and *Homiyar Banker*; June 10
A girl to *Anahita* and *Phiroze Havaladar*; June 10
A girl to *Ashwini* and *Ashutosh Mahajan*; June 15
A girl to *Rozana* and *Nozer Raimalwala*; June 17
A girl to *Meher* and *Farhad Hozdar*; June 19
A boy to *Renuka* and *Pravin Deokar*; June 21
A boy to *Maneck* and *Yazdi Pundole*; June 27
A boy to *Monaz* and *Neville Dariwala*; July 1
A boy to *Nazreen* and *Percy Vakharia*; July 3
A girl, *Parena*, to *Binaifer* and

Karl Sahukar; July 8

A boy, *Rehan*, to *Ruzbeh* and *Daraius Mehta*, brother to *Farhan*; July 10

A girl to *Zenovie* and *Jimmy Vazifdar*; July 17

A girl to *Tanaz* and *Freddy Sopariwalla*; July 19

A girl to *Pervin* and *Khursheed Choksy*; July 22

A boy to *Meherzin* and *Cyrus Turel*; July 24

A boy, *Adarvan*, to *Bakhtawar* and *Percis Satha*; July 25

Twins (boys) to *Shehnaz* and *Rustom Billimoria*; July 26

A girl, *Benaz*, to *Bakhtavar* and *Viraf Kapradewala*; July 27

A girl to *Parizad* and *Jamshed Patravala*; July 30

A boy to *Zarfshan* and *Hosheder Amaria*; July 31

MARRIED

Delna Jahangir Contractor and *Burgese Rohinton Pithawalla*; May 19

Delshad Sarosh Dastoor and *Khushro Kerfegar Antia*; May 21

Farnaaz Marzban Pavri of Poona and *Zubin Jal Dotivala* of Amravati; May 28

Parizad Pallonji Patel and *Cyrus Nasharwanji Patel* of Kudiana, Dist Surat; June 4

Delna Malcolm Bodhanwalla of Balasore, Orissa and *Adil Noshir Davar*; June 6

Katy Dosabhoy Shroff and

Pervez Maneckshaw

Movewalla; June 11

Dilkhush Adil Dubash and *Harvesp Noshir Engineer*; July 14

DIED

Najoo Hirjibhai Bhesania (65), 12, Sakerbai Petit Block,

Tardeo, 400008; May 29

Soli Nadarsha Karbhari (74), 8/1, Lady Ratan Tata Bldg,

Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 29

Jimmy (Jami) Sorabji

Bharucha (86), M/56, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Road, 400039; May 30

Jer Dossabhoy Daboo (82), Avan-Abad, 6, Walton Rd,

Off S. B. Singh Rd, 400039; May 30

Sheroo Boman Mistry (73), 2, Dr Engineer Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; May 30

Sheheriar Dinshawji Panthaki (77), 738, Shirin Villa, Rd no 5, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 30

Sam Jehangir Poonjiaji (Patel) (71), 25, Om Sai Prasad Co-op Hsg Soc, V. S. Marg, Virar (E), Dist Thana, 401303; May 31

Savak Hormusji Writer (86), C/10, Om Kailash Ganga, Pl No 1052, Devidayal Ngr,

Mulund (W), 400080; May 31

Gool Nadershah Goiporia (97), 17/24, UTI Officers Qtrs, Bandra (W), 400050; June 1

Freny Eruchshaw Katrak (73), 568, Pushpavati Bldg, Chira Bazar, 400002; June 2

Fali Erachshaw Paymaster (70), 212, 1st Main, 5th Cross, Domlur Layout, Bangalore, 560071; June 2

Feroze Cowas Mehta (80), 4/35, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parcel Tank Rd, 400033; June 2

Dhunmai Jehangirji Sukhadia (94), 127/2, Bora Bazar, Fort, 400001; June 2

Savak Jamshedji Banker (78), F-4, Sangam Bhavan, Colaba, 400005; June 3

Jehangir Ardeshir EdulBehram (74), 646, Gai Bldg, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 3

Nergiz Darashaw Kapadia (80), F-10, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; June 3

Minoo Dhunjisha Chothia (76), Ganesh Bhavan, 149, Cumballa Hill, 400036; June 4

Fali Dadabhoy Laskari (90), 6, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; June 4

Nargesh Nani Palkhiwalla (82), Commonweath, 181, Backbay Reel, 400020; June 4

Gool Homi Variava (74), 12, La Citadelle, 99, M. Karve Rd, 400020; June 4

Fali Maneckji Battiwalla (70), Soonawalla Bldg, 12th Cross Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; June 5

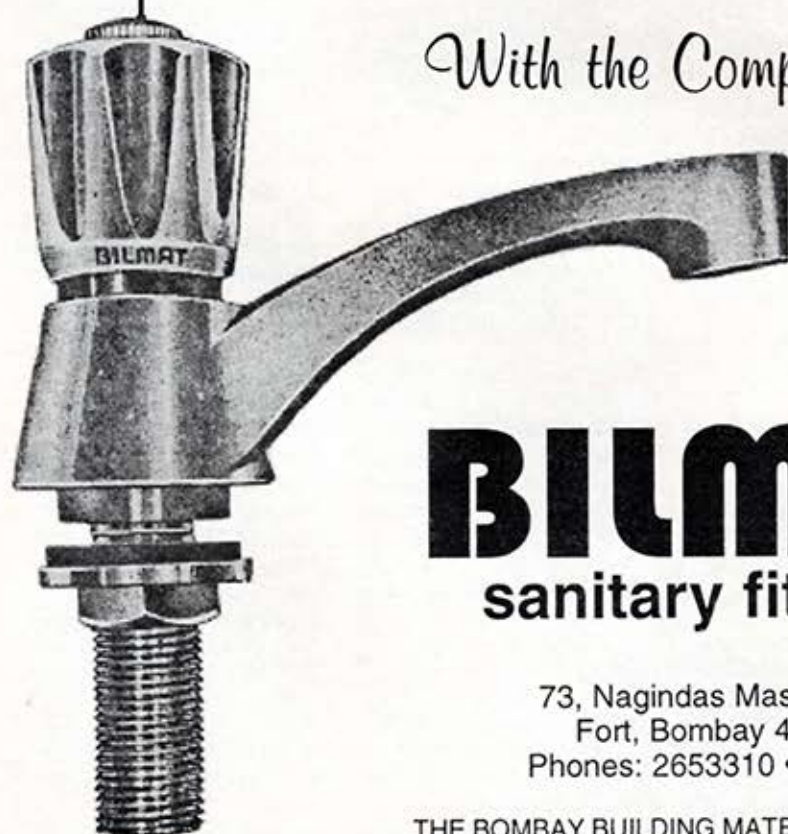
Jamshed Sheriar Elavia (85), 54, Gopal Mans, Turner Rd,

Bandra (W), 400050; June 5
Bomi Homi Patel (53), 24/10,
 Jaidev Bldg, Dhobitalao,
 400002; June 5
Silla Noshir Tavakkuli (71),
 C-157, RBI Staff Qtrs,
 Maratha Mandir Marg,
 400008; June 5
Tehmuras Navroji Dastur
 (83), 658, Khorshedabad,
 Firdausi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
 400014; June 6
Aloo Savak Pastakia (86), 156,
 Satnam Apts, Cuffe Parade,
 400005; June 6
Noshir Sorabji Mewawalla
 (81), 666, Orient Hse, Lady
 Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; June 6
Polly Minoo Shroff (46),
 D1-73, S. B. Bharucha Bldg,
 S. V. Rd, Andheri (W),
 400058; June 6
Adar Kaikhushroo Irani (56),
 4, Nita Bldg, 227, Dr A. B. Rd,
 Worli, 400025; June 7
Boman Faredoon Irani
 (Khodamoradi) (80), Park Hse,
 81, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba,
 400005; June 7
Firoze Nariman Morena (72),
 C-14, Vatchha Bldg, Captain
 Clny, Tardeo, 400034; June 7

Nergish Hirji Parekh (74), 32,
 Jamsaji Apts, Sleater Rd,
 400007; June 7
Mani Hoshang Soonawalla
 (72), B, Jamshed Mans, Tardeo
 Rd, 400007; June 7
Veera Behramsha Bharucha
 (65), Siddqie Mans, 180,
 Lamington Rd, 400007; June 8
Khurshed Jehangirji
Dhanbhora (95), 797, Jesia
 Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi
 Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 8
Gev Maneksha Dubash (65),
 A/15, Mistry Bldg, Dr
 Shirodkar Rd, Parel, 400012;
 June 8
Pestonji Navroji Dubash (83),
 B-604, Raj Tilak, Raheja
 Complex, Yari Rd, Versova,
 Andheri (W), 400061; June 8
Xerxes Noshirwan Mody (62),
 A, New Sitaram Bldg, Princess
 St, 400002; June 8
Soona Keki Rana (82), Zainab
 Manzil, Opp Cama Bldg, R.
 Rammohan Roy Rd, 400004;
 June 8
Nergish Framroz Unwalla
 (85), 696-B, Firdausi Rd, Parsi
 Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 8
Shirin Navroji Daver (84),
 44-A, Batliwalla Villa, Sleater

Rd, 400007; June 9
Feroze Hiraji Engineer (82),
 723, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd,
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 June 9
Najoo Jamshedji Forbes (82),
 Jer Manzil, Oliver Rd, Colaba,
 400039; June 9
Maneck Ardesheer Gyara (81),
 Cresset Villa, 76, Dr Nair Rd,
 400008; June 9
Dosabhai Ardesheer Mistry
 (80), Dr Sethna Bldg,
 Chikalwadi, 400007; June 9
Dhun Burjor Desai (65), F,
 Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Girgaum
 Rd, 400002; June 10
Mehra Erachshah Mistry (83),
 F-9, Cusrow Bldg, S. B. Rd,
 400039; June 10
Minoo Phiroshaw Anklesaria
 (75), G-8, Everard Co-op Hsg
 Soc Ltd, Eastern Express
 Highway, Sion, 400022;
 June 11
Dinshaw Hormusji Baria (91),
 J/6, Dalal Est, Bhadkamkar
 Marg, 400008; June 11
Bakhtawar Jehangir
Daruwalla (69), 27/28, Hill
 Niketan, Mount Mary Rd,
 Bandra (W), 400050; June 11
Mani Kaikhasroo Hodivalla

(85), A-2, Yusuf Mans,
 Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;
 June 11
Gool Phiroz Mullan (91), 5,
 Tamarisa, 273-B, Carter Rd,
 Bandra (W), 400050; June 11
Dhun Soli Cooper (71), G/2,
 Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034;
 June 12
Cali Nadirshaw Daruwalla
 (82), Dr Engineer Hse,
 Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034;
 June 12
Mehroo Homi Daruwalla (78),
 89, Banoo Villa, Malcolm
 Bldg, Jogeshwari (W),
 400102; June 12
Amy Darabsha Jangalwala
 (78), 677, Katrak Rd, Wadala,
 400031; June 12
Adi Kaikhasroo Jaorawalla
 (81), 17/C-25, Rustom Bldg,
 Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;
 June 12
Sheroo Dara Karkaria (74),
 B-5, Rustom Bldg, Victoria
 Rd, Byculla, 400027; June 12
Hirjee Minocher Sethna (76),
 G-7, Anjuman Bldg, Parsi
 Agiary Compd, Parsi Galli,
 Doodhnaka, Kalyan, 421301;
 June 12
Shirinbai Jehangirji Choksi



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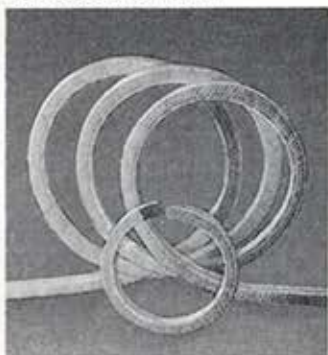
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Bhadkamkar Marg, 400008;
June 13
Homi Minocher Jassawalla
(46), 4/2, Petit Marg, Balaram
St, Grant Rd, 400007; June 13
Jehanbux Dorabji Kotwal (85),
Ishwar Mans, New Charni Rd,
400004; June 13
Nariman Nadirsha Bilimoria
(72), 2/B, Rajgir Court, Above
Vysya Bank, Dadar, 400014;
June 14
Rustom Khodabux Irani (80),
6, Dagainawalla Mans, Opp
Mahim Rly Stn, 400016;
June 14
Pilloo Manchersha Nallaseth
(73), 1/6, Ness Baug Annexe,
Nana Chowk, 400007; June 14
Amy Hoshang Bacha (59),
Readymoney Bldg, Tardeo,
400034; June 16
Noshirwan Dorabji Bhabha
(80), 3, Fakri Manzil, Shankar
Seth Rd, Bhaji Galli, 400007;
June 17
Jini Nariman Guzdar (75), 11,
Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny,
Tardeo, 400007; June 17
Jeejee Hormusji Kavarana
(56), 505, Ram Darshan Hsg
Soc, Opp Navjivan P. O.

400008; June 17
Jamshed Phirojshaw Marfatia
(62), Malegamwalla Bldg no 2,
M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016;
June 17
Freny Pirojsha Billimoria (77),
443, Ajay Nivas (Maru Sadan),
Chira Bazar, 400002; June 18
Khorshed Keki Daruwalla
(57), 79, Mount Kailash, S. F.
S. Apts, New Delhi, 110006;
June 18
Sorab Ardeshtir Aibara (94),
41, Sangita, 27/28, Arthur
Bunder Rd, Colaba, 400005;
June 20
Jaloo Phiroz Cooper (84),
764/F, Sarosh Court, Tilak Rd,
Dadar, 400014; June 20
Coomi Nariman Pardiwalla
(69), C/o A. Shirin Mans, 228,
Tardeo Rd, 400007; June 20
Freny Jal Sanjana (93), 44/A,
Batliwalla Villa, Sleater Rd,
400007; June 20
Maky Keki Vania (70), 25,
Godrej Bldg, Contractor Baug,
Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016;
June 20
Eruch Hormusji Patel (64),
3/11, Old Khareghat Clny,
Hughes Rd, 400007; June 22
Aloo Adi Sarkari (86), 7, Old

Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd,
400007; June 22
Keki Shavaksha Dotiwala (71),
20/7, Yusuf Manzil, 12th Lane,
Khetwadi, 400004; June 23
Nariman Ratanji Mehta (95),
6, Dhunbad, Sleater Rd,
400007; June 23
Baman Camaji Cama (94),
J/14, Cama Park, Cama Rd,
Andheri (W), 400058; June 24
Jal Sorabji Driver (78), 23/24,
Hormuzd Baug Bldg,
Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034;
June 24
Soona Kaikhushru Irani (92),
Karai Est, 248, Javji Dadaji
Rd, 400007; June 24
Homai Jamshed Irani (72),
Swati, A/4/36, Akash Ganga,
Rabodi 2, Thana, 401601;
June 25
Adi Dhanjishaw Gandhi (80),
9, Mody Hse, Padamji Rd,
Near Dreamland Cinema,
400004; June 26
Hormaz Tirandas Kermani
(82), 12/B, Engineer Bldg, F.
Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007;
June 27
Furrokh Minoo Talathi (50),
Commonwealth, Madam Cama
Rd, 400021; June 27

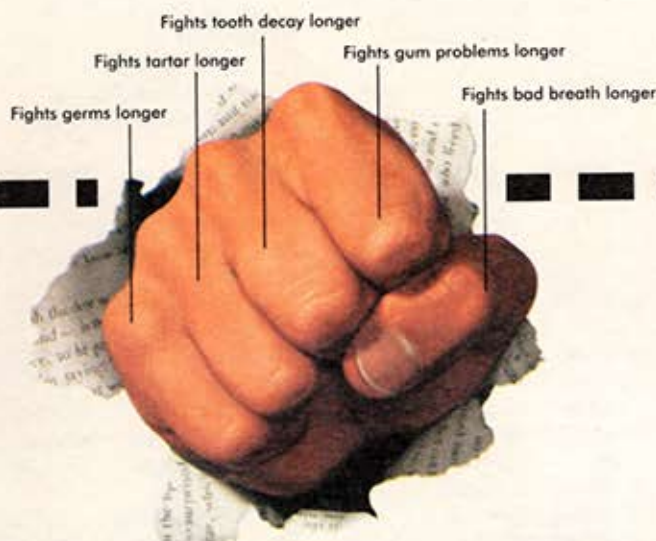
Lovji Jamasap Vania (58), J-3,
Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; June 27
Keki Jamshedji Chothia (79),
635, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; June 28
Bapai Keki Movdawala (81),
12-A, Deepak, Worli Hill Rd,
Worli, 400018; June 29
Banubai Nadarsha Bhathena
(86), 12, Todiwalla Bldg,
Sunmill Rd, Lower Parel,
400013; June 30
Banoo Sorab Dalal (93),
Wadia Bldg, Princess St,
400002; July 1
Jer Bejonji Pavri (86), 7,
Swastik Court, 132, M. Karve
Rd, 400020; July 2
Nilofer Behram Balsara (45),
C/25, Contractor Baug, Mori
Rd, Mahim, 400016; July 3
Freny Jehangir Holmes (86),
Moti Mahal, Next to CCI,
Churchgate, 400020; July 3
Shirinbai Shapurji Deboo (95),
26/5, Khareghat Clny, Hughes
Rd, 400007; July 4
Nadar Dinshaw Mehta (87),
13/3, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg
Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel,
400012; July 4
Darab Kashrao Pooniwala



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(68), C-10/16, LIC Clny, Borivli (W), 400103; July 4
Jehangir Behramji Sattha (74), B/3, Benit Bldg, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400058; July 4
Jer Sapal Balaporia (85), Soonawala Bldg, 12th Cross Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; July 5
Shirin Bomansha Bhavnagri (85), 721, Batliwalla Bldg, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 5
Phiroze Merwanji Guard (86), 23/M-3, Cama Park, Cama Lane, Andheri (W), 400058; July 5
Homai Pestonji Panthaky (94), 605, Karim Manzil, Opp Wadiaji Atash Behram, J. S. S. Rd, 400002; July 5
Khurshed Maneksha Cooper (70), Retreat Bglw, 64, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; July 6
Bapoo Ratanshaw Maloo (86), 38, Station Ter, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 6
Jal Adergi Vajifdar (78), Sheri House, Cowasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; July 6
Keki Hormazji Irani (83), 13,

Cama Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; July 7
Morwariz Rustom Mondegar (92), A/6, Shakti Sadan, Lamington Rd, 400007; July 7
Freny Ruttonshaw Dharwar (64), Yusuf Manzil, Cassinath St, Tardeo, 400034; July 8
Coomi Naval Merchant (75), 784/A, C. J. Block 3, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 8
Darabsha Nusservanji Moolla (91), 502, Vatcha Gandhi Bldg, Vatcha Gandhi Rd, Gamdevi, 400007; July 8
Rustom Burjor Aibara (79), Rockdale, 16, L. D. Ruparel Marg, 400006; July 9
Dinoo Rusi Daruwalla (73), Lalkaka Hse, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 9
Tehmuras Manchershaw Madan (78), 7/309, Zaveri Bldg, Raja Rammohan Roy Rd, 400004; July 9
Kurush Shapurji Chinoy (49), 76/4, West View, Jain Soc, Sion (W), 400022; July 10
Sheroo Burjorji Ghaswalla (70), N. M. Petit Widows' Chawl, Modi St, Fort, 400001; July 10

Homai Rustom Irani (86), 34/A-3, Khan Block, New Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; July 10
Cawasji Dosabhoy Katki (83), A/28, Vijay Kunj, Vakola Masjid, Santacruz (E), 400054; July 10
Sheroo Mehrwanjee Oomrigar (83), 33/5, Prabhakar Kunte Co-op Hsg Soc, (Saurabh) Adarsh Ngr, Oshiwara, 400103; July 10
Nariman Navroji Patel (74), 275/S, Albless Bldg, Chikalwadi, Grant Rd, 400007; July 10
Tehmuras Savak Contractor (76), Cozy Corner, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; July 11
Fareedoon Behram Kaifer (57), Dev Chhaya, Irani Rd, Dahanu Rd, 401602; July 11
Freny Pirojsha Mistry (84), Olympus Apts, M. Chotani Rd, Mahim, 400016; July 11
Sam Kaishroo Sahukar (70), 36/203, Chhaya, Swami Samarth Ngr, Andheri (W), 400053; July 11
Baby of Zenobia Noshir Sanjana (stillborn), G/9,

Munshiff Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; July 11
Shiavax Rustom Sanjana (81), 56, Shangrilla, Colaba, 400005; July 11
Khurshed Bhikaji Jijina (89), 3, Lily Court, 1st Pasta Lane, Colaba, 400005; July 12
Dhun Darabsha Mewawalla (84), Chhtriwalla Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; July 12
Bomi Homi Modi (75), B/3, Silver Oaks Est, Off B. Desai Rd, 400026; July 12
Freni Burjor Karanjawala (70), 794, Family Hse, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 14
Alloo Darasha Kavina (88), A/64, Vikas Finlay Towers, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; July 14
Neville Rusi Darbhari (40), B/201, Serene Jeejeebhoy Bldg, Babhola Chulner Rd, Vasai Rd (W), 401202; July 15
Pulla Munchersha Engineer (80), 12, Kennaway Hse, 63/A, Proctor Rd, 400004; July 15
Banoo Jal Siganporia (78), Jijibhai Bldg, 5/11, Khan Est, Mahim, 400016; July 15
Hilla Homiyar Dastoor (80),

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C/o T. Mogul, Next to Banaji Fire-temple, Fort, 400001; July 16
Burjor Jamshedji Jussawalla (82), Gamadia Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; July 17
Gool Gustasp Karkaria (80), B/5, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; July 17
Ratan Rustomji Siganporia (78), A-401, Ahura Divecha Complex, Edalji Rd, Thana, 400601; July 17
Gool Jehangir Chothia (82), 1, Sai-Ashish, Dr Peter Dias Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 20
Minocher Jivanji Bhagwagar (75), 7, Dubash Block, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; July 21
Minocher Byramji Cooper (85), 33, Balaram Bldg, Balaram St, 400007; July 21
Tehmina Hoshi Elavia (53), F/21, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; July 21
Aloo Hormasjee Mistry (82), 110/43/C, Manish Ngr, J. P. Rd, Andheri (W), 400053; July 21

Khodabux Mahiyar Irani (68), Meher Mans, Jamshedji Petit Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; July 22
Aloo Erach Mehta (75), Commonwealth, Madam Cama Rd, 400020; July 22
Gulestan Spitman Parekh (85), Anchorage, Vatcha Gandhi Rd, Gamdevi, 400007; July 22
Khorshed Dinshawji Siganporia (81), Q/1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; July 22
Firoz Kharshedji Driver (56), 10, Dr Daji Bldg, Mahim, 400016; July 23
Burjorji Khursedji Patel (84), Todywalla Bldg, Dr G. D. Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; July 23
Daly Naoroji Adagara (85), Union Bldg, 54, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 24
Jer Jehangir Dhondy (80), Sea-shells, Darabshaw Lane, Off Napean Sea Rd, 400026; July 24
Tehmina Minu Hilloo (72), 7/19, Panthaki Clny, Andheri (E), 400069; July 24

Mehroo Sam Marker (80), 202, Triveni Hse, 13th Back Rd, Khetwadi, 400004; July 24
Kaikhushru Ratanshaw Dubash (82), 12, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 25
Gool Merwanji Sunavala (78), A/4, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; July 25
Maneck Ratanshaw Shroff (65), 4/382-B, Pawvalla Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; July 26
Dhunjishaw Ratansha Bharucha (80), 8/A, Parekh Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, Bhadkamkar Marg, 400008; July 27
Perin Manecksha Elavia (74), 630, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 27
Perin Ratansha Hansotia (73), 1/2, Malegaonwalla Bldg, M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; July 27
Rustom Ardeshir Navder (89), 3/15, Jamasp Tata Block, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 27
Perin Ratanshaw Chamarbagwala (93), Parel

Hse, Dr E. Borges Rd, Parel, 400012; July 28
Nergish Homi Engineer (90), 13-14/1, Dhunbaiwadi, Vile Parle (W), 400056; July 28
Jal Byramji Karanjia (86), Sunnyville, St Cyril Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 28
Sherbanoo Cooverji Wadia (74), 106/B, Krishna Nivas, Mahavir Hosp, M. B. Est, Virar (W), Dist Thana, 401303; July 28
Tehmi Hormusji Bharucha (88), 8/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; July 29
Dina Hormusji Chowna (76), 42, Akash Ganga, New Link Rd, Oshiwara, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; July 29
Pestonji Jhangirji Dalton (90), 6, Vasudeva Bldg, 16th Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 29
Naja Sorabji Pochee (93), 5/B, Sanjana Apts, Carter Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 29
Sorabji Dinshaw Daroovala (80), 103, Zarina Co-op Hsg Soc, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W),



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Enjoyable Parsi Cooking	Jeroo Mehta	150.00
The Essential Parsi Cook Book (7 chapters on Parsi Customs plus Parsi recipes)	Bhicoo Manekshaw	250.00

Audiocassettes (Rs 100 each) cassette time varies between 60 to 90 minutes: Zoroastrian Daily Prayers, Devotional Songs, Lecture cassettes of Dasturji Dabu, Ervad Dr M. D. Karkhanavala, Dastur N. D. Minocherhomji in English and Gujarati

For the finest literature on Zoroastrianism, Parsi History, research services contact Marzban J. Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai, Pin 400014 INDIA Tel. 91-022-4166204. E-mail: giara@vsnl.com

400050; July 30
Gool Dhanjishaw Karaka (95),
2, Nadirsha Dinshaw Bldg,
Babulnath Rd, 400007; July 30

CALCUTTA

BORN

A boy, *Raizan*, to *Khursheed*
and *Jamshed Vatacha*;
April 14

DIED

Adi Jamshed Gazder, husband
of *Homa* and brother of *Pesi*
and *Rohi*; April 14

Dadabhoy Framroz Buchia,
husband of *Mehru* and father
of *Dinyar*; May 18

Keki Gardin of *Jamshedpur*,
husband of *Manijeh* and father
of *Homyar*; May 23

Behram Dossabhai Jila, father
of *Nilofer* and brother of
Homi, *Zarine Gimi* and
Khorshed Davar; June 18

Kersi Jehangir Sagar, brother
of *Homai N. Mukadam*, *Minoo*
and *Keki*; June 21

POONA

BORN

A boy, *Behram*, to *Navaz* and
Sarosh Palkhiwala; April 7

SECUNDERABAD

BORN

A boy, *Taronish*, to *Havovi*
and *Hormazd Kotwal*, brother
to *Tehnaz*; May 17

MARRIED

Shahnaz Kersasp Modi and
Kaizain M. Malegamwala;
June 25

DIED

Jamshed (Jimmy) Dhanjishaw
Kalyaniwala (72), brother of
Pesi, *Minoo*, *Dadi*, *Perin*,
Tehmi and late *Rashid*;
June 29

Soonamai Minocher Katrak
(79), mother of *Rohinton* and
Maimoona; July 7

Mithoo Wadia (80), sister of
late *Homi*; July 8

Boman Behram Madon (91),
father of *Behram*, *Minoo*,
Maneck and *Persis*; July 10

SURAT

DIED

Gul Jamsheji Gati (62),
Khatibi Wad, *Machhlipith*,
395003; April 3

Ardeskar Rustanji Todiwala
(58), *Khalaswad*, Near *Parsi*

Agiary, *Lal Bazar*, *Bharuch*,
392001; April 4

Freni Perveshbhai Ranjina
(*Siganporia*) (61), *Parsiwad*,
Siganporia; April 6

Goolan Dhanjishaw Patvi
(70), *Kavina St*, *Kadiya Wad*,
Sayedpura, 395003; April 8

Jalibhai Burjorji Commisariat
(78), *Nariman Home* and
Infirmary, *Shahpore*, 395003;
April 10

Hillamai Dosabhai Mogal
(74), *Pundole Charity Blocks*,
Siganporia; April 12

Nadarsha Dhanjishah Patel
(80), *Suvali*, *Taluka Choryasi*,
Dist Surat; May 1

Perinbanoo Kawashaw
Kapadia (76), 7/2967,
Parsiwad, *Sayedpura*, 395003;
May 10

Jemi Burjorji Siganporia (52),
Parsiwad, *Siganporia*; May 13

Burjorji Shapurji Cooper (78),
Village Suvali, *Dist Surat*;
May 17

Eruchshaw Nusservanji Mistry
(65), *Sorabkhan Block*, *Vakil*
St, *Shahpore*, 395003; May 23

Jalejer Maneckji Siganporia
(91), *Parsiwad*, *Siganporia*;
May 23

Khorshed Soli Laher (74),
Nariman Home and *Infirmary*,
Shahpore, 395003; May 24

Dinamay Barjorji Munshi (71),
Post Dundari, *Taluka Mangrol*,
Dist Surat; May 25

Nawazben Hormasuji Antia
(62), *Antia Apt*, *Choki*
Moholo, *Nanpura*, 395001;
May 29

Gulbai Savaksha Bava-adam
(88), *Nariman Home* and
Infirmary, *Shahpore*, 395003;
May 29

Kaikhushroo Ratanji
Chiniwala (82), *Takhtashilla*
Apt, *Vanki Bordi*, 395003;
June 2

Ratamai Dorabji Antia (93),
Nariman Home and *Infirmary*,
Shahpore, 395003; June 5

Darabshaw Jehangirji
Hilloowala (72), *Dehla St*,
Rustompura, 395003; June 6

Jimi Jijibhoy Shroff (62),
Nariman Home and *Infirmary*,
Shahpore, 395003; June 26

Kawasji Dosabhai Bhesania
(81), *Sager Apt*, *Faram St*,
Rustompura, 395002; June 29

Noshirwan Rustomji
Vimadalal (88), *Nariman*
Home and *Infirmary*,

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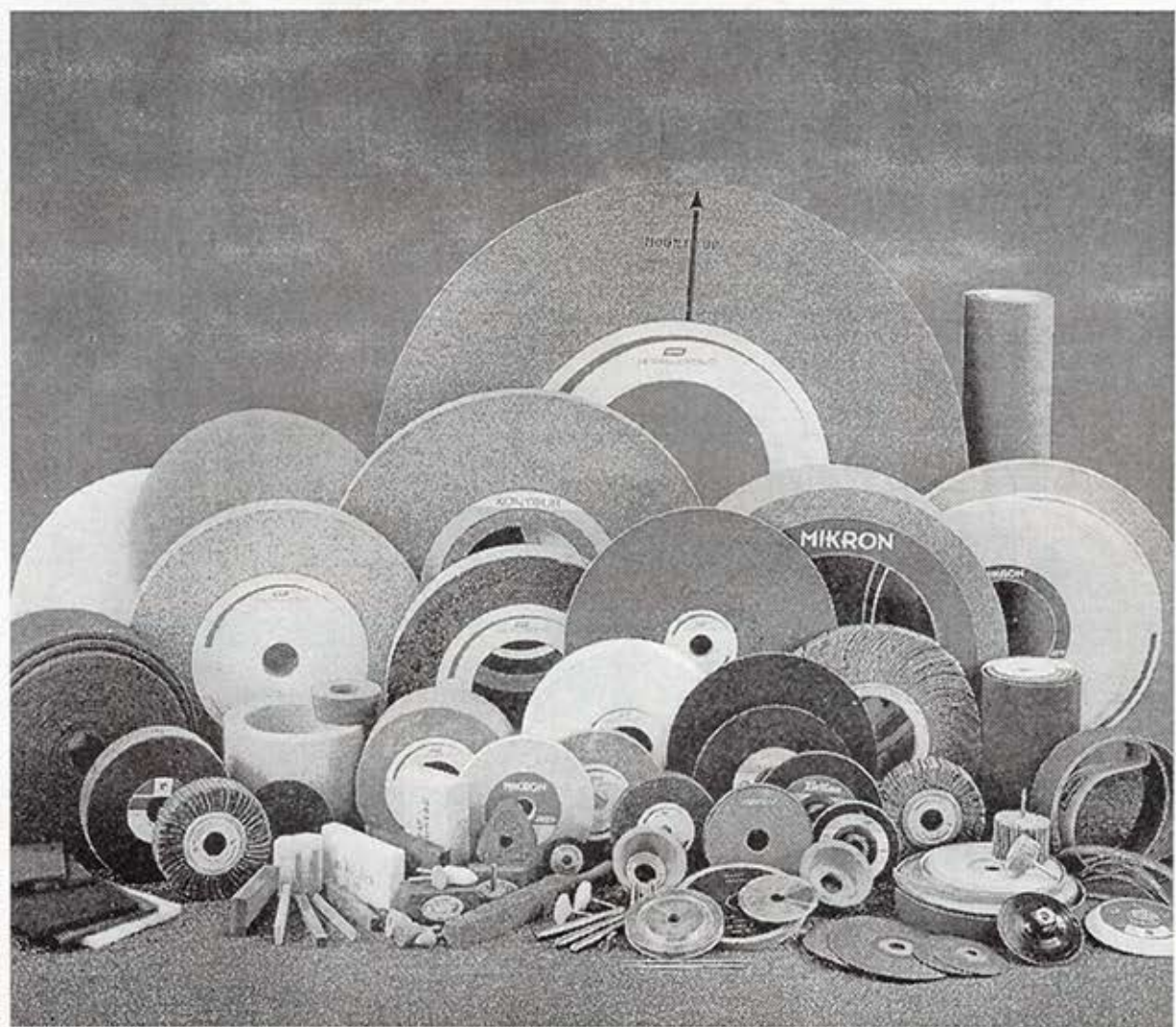
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AUSTRALIA

DIED

Aspandiar K. Noble (79), father of Rohinton in Perth; February 13

New South Wales

MARRIED

Havovi Bonshai and *Steven Yezdabadi* in Sydney; April 13
Sharon Madon and *Sheriar Pestonjee* in Sydney; April 22

CANADA

British Columbia

BORN

A girl, *Shawna*, to *Atousa* and *Peyman Naderi* in North Vancouver; April 6

MARRIED

Zarrin Bharucha, daughter of *Banoo* and *Rusi*, and *Zarir Dadinatha* of New Westminster, son of *Villy* and *Minoo* in Coquitlam; April 29
Lily Gupta and *Bobak Goshtasbi* in Calgary; May 20

DIED

Homi Amrolia (90), husband of

Gool and father of *Dinyar* in Vancouver; May 26

Ontario

BORN

A boy, *Kerfehgar*, to *Zenobia* and *Pervez Mistry* in Toronto; May 7
A girl, *Roxana*, to *Mitra* and *Bahram Jam*; May 19
A girl, *Rhea*, to *Xenobia* and *Rumi Jasavala*; May 23
A boy, *Jahan*, to *Riah* and *Shahroukh Sidhwa*; June 6
A girl, *Sepanta*, to *Mahbanoo* and *Farzad Behboodi*; June 9
A boy, *Yazad*, to *Armin* and *Nauzer Mistry*; June 15

MARRIED

Zenobia Marker, daughter of *Nergish* and *Sarosh*, and *Mehrbad Dastur*, son of *Aban* and *Dinshaw*; July 8
Gulshan Bhesania, daughter of *Sanober* and *Kersi*, and *Rushad Amaria*, son of *Sheraz* and *Adi*; July 21

DIED

Furdoon Nardirshaw Wadia (79), husband of *Aloo* and

father of *Binaifer* and *Kanizehn* in Toronto; January 11
Merwan Suntok, husband of *Sharon* and father of *Stephen* and *David*; April 15
Abolkasim Mohajer, father of *Shanaz Irani* in Toronto; June 13

IRAN

DIED

Hoshang Mirza, father of *Nazneen* in Shiraz; May 19

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED

Homi N. Patel (70); January 27
Dadabhoi K. Limki (78); February 14
Minocher M. Sidhwa (87); February 15
Vera Rusi Khory (68); March 11
Franey Billimoria (82); March 13
Huma Eruch Bulsara (58); March 22
Roshan Lovji Wadia (76); March 22
Farokh Hormasji Irani (79);

March 23

Meherwan Behram Irani (89); March 25
Alamai Dhanjishaw Kheswalla (93); March 26
Homi Tehmurasp Karadia (63); April 15
Khorshed Rustom Ferozepurwalla (75); April 17

UK

DIED

Allamai Rustomji Kapadia (85), mother of *Phiroze*, *Minoo*, *Behram* and *Roshan A. Mistry*; April 12
Banoo Dara Mashall (85), mother of *Sam* and *Noshir*; May 12
Daisy Vazifdar (77), wife of *Jehangir* and mother of *Phiroze* and *Zarin*; June 8
Edul Jehangir Sanjana (82); June 12
Purnmaya Guzder-Saihan (59), wife of *Eric* and mother of *Zubin* and *Cyrus*; July 4

Bedfordshire

DIED

Kekhasaru C. Vandriwala (71), 28, Spencer Rd, Bedford, MK40 2AZ; April 6



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USA

Arizona

DIED

Kourosh Mahabadi, brother of Bozarjomehr; February 16

California

MARRIED

Parvaneh Sales and Jamshid Shoghli of North Vancouver in Los Angeles; March 4

DIED

Jijoo Framroze Motivala (73), husband of Roshan and father of Sarosh and Farida Nosh Bahadurji in Los Angeles; February 20

Illinois

MARRIED

Vabeez Bachana, daughter of Behroze and Parvez of Bombay, India, and *Erach Songadwalla* of Moline, Illinois, son of Behroze and Sarosh in Chicago; May 7

Maryland

BORN

A girl, *Stephanie Anne*, to *Benaifer and John Devine*, sister to Sarah and Jessica in Olney; June 16

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o	This issue	1999*	2000 ^o
BIRTHS									
Boys	12	77	40	3	13	4	7	30	11
Girls	15	94	36	—	8	2	6	37	10
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	7	261	79	2	18	6	11	16	11
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	—	28	—	—	2	2	1	6	1
Females married out	—	20	—	—	—	1	—	6	—
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	82	455	265	19	91	34	16	57	29
Females	83	477	269	12	71	35	13	43	23
CREMATED									
Males	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Females	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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

^oRunning totals for 2000 (January 2000-August 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.

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Michigan

BORN

A boy, *Karl*, to *Havovi* and *Erich Tavadia*; April 23
A boy, *Zarvan*, to *Roxane* and *Coover Chinoy*, brother to *Xerxes* in Detroit; May 28

New Jersey

DIED

Villy Gandhi, wife of *Homi* and mother of *Hanoz* and *Navroz*; July 15

Oklahoma

BORN

A girl, *Christy*, to *Debbie* and *Kersi Bharucha*, brother to *Nicholas*; April 18

Pennsylvania

BORN

A girl, *Freyja*, to *Shireen* and *Hormuzshaw Wania*; February 24

DIED

Goolcher Jehangir Morris, mother of *Rohinton* and *Mahrukh* in Philadelphia; July 17

Rhode Island

MARRIED

Mitra Nadjmi, daughter of *Manijeh* and *Borzoo*, and *Rashnavad Rashidi*; May 27

Texas

MARRIED

Mitra Mehta, daughter of *Ouvnere* and *Behramji* and *Arman Avasia* in Houston; December 26, 1999
Sheraz Polad, daughter of *Goolu* and *Sam*, and *Cyrus Bogha*, son of late *Homai* and *Jehangir* in Houston; June 11, 2000

Meher Patel of *Dubai* and *Aresh Rustomji* in Houston; July 28

DIED

Khorshed Jalejar Sidhwa, mother of *Yazdi* in Houston; June 17

Virginia

BORN

A boy, *Jehan*, to *Jasmine* and *Zubin Dastoor*; May 15

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

MATRIMONIAL

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MELLOW MEMORIES

continued from page 188

points out the discrimination he faces within the community for doing the kind of work he does. "Women pull their *pallus* close in a reflex action when they pass me. Even men don't like my sight," he told this reporter at his home in Mody Colony, Poona. He rues that non-Parsis appreciate and honor him more than fellow Parsis, adding, "Parsis think being a *khandhia* is an easy job; it's not, believe me."

What began as voluntary work to tide over the shortage of pallbearers in Poona soon became full-time. He began by getting Rs 15 per month — "which felt like Rs 500 then." Today, the Rs 1,100 he gets for the noble task is not enough to make two ends meet for him and his young son. His wife used to supplement the family income by providing *bhonas* (tiffins). After her death, Cooper continues to do the same but on a far smaller scale. "What to do? Every family which relocates to Poona from Bombay gets into catering."

Was the experience of working with senior citizens uplifting or depressing



Samar (left) and Vijay Jodha

for the brothers? "We felt pretty good at the end of each day although the aging scenario in India is depressing in many ways. But there are some good things happening too. Old age is all about the human spirit — the way people are not willing to give up, whatever the odds. We also found the old to be far more open, generous and perhaps less conservative in many ways than the young. It was a real eye opener," smiles Vijay.

Parsis in focus

"It was a very conscious decision to cover

the Parsis. Being a small, dwindling community (like the Jews), we realized that certain cultural traditions and processes will soon pass into history. We wanted to preserve that in our own small way through our photographs. As it is, all the people covered here will not be with us in the next 20-30 years. We actually wanted to do a separate project on the Parsis but without resources and access, we can't. What we have on display here is a small part of that endeavor.

"It is easy to notice the changes coming about in a small community like yours. A whole cultural lifestyle and ways are disappearing, customs are not being followed and the young are leaving for foreign shores. It's still a very prosperous community but we also know that there's a lot of poverty. That's interesting. The Parsis have played a tremendous role in Indian society... that's also an interesting thing worth working on. No one's quite done this, so that's the inspiration that can drive one towards it. Someone has to put all these things together." — Samar and Vijay Jodha.



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Sobrab Godrej

A man of many causes

Arnavaz S. Mama

The little old man in the crumpled cotton suit voiced his concern. The subject could have been environmental degradation, the status of women and children in a runaway population, the erosion of heritage structures, the rampant corruption eating into India's body politic, the scientific management of industry and its obligations to society, international relations, Indo-Iranian history and culture, contemporary art...

Like cartoonist Laxman's beloved 'common man,' he watched the unfolding scenario with pain and bewilderment. Unlike Laxman's character, however, bachelor Sobrab Godrej, 87, belonged to the ranks of India's super rich though he frowned on the fripperies of the glitterati. His usage of wealth was to endow the Indian Red Cross Society with six acres of land at Vikhroli worth Rs 30 crore to establish its Disaster Relief Center, to found the Pirojsha Godrej

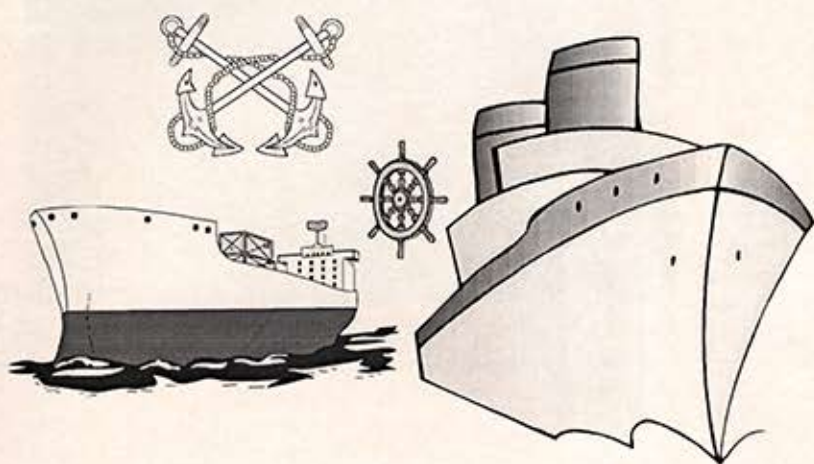
National Conservation Centre at Delhi which is the headquarters of WWF - India (World Wide Fund for Nature), to maintain the mangroves at Vikhroli — where 128 species of birds were sighted — at an estimated annual cost of seven lakh rupees on security alone.

"For me, personally, his departure means the loss of an intimate and long-standing friend who was a wonderful human being whose head and heart functioned in fine balance," wrote K. R. Narayanan, President of India. "He was someone I had respected, someone for whom I had high affection and regard," said Maharashtra governor Dr P. C. Alexander. Referring to an earlier stint as secretary to the Prime Minister, Alexander had once revealed that Godrej was one of only two persons he knew who could access Indira Gandhi without an appointment. Clearly, the silver-haired man, leaning on his aluminium

walking stick as he made his unobtrusive entries into public meetings, had known what it was to walk with princes.

Several condolence meetings were held in Bombay as well as in Delhi to mourn Godrej's demise. After a short, hectic official visit to Paris where it was feared that he had caught a chill, and a bumpy flight to London, he arrived physically depleted but mentally charged, to see the new Godrej office and visit the Millennium Dome. A one-and-a-half hour traffic jam increased his discomfort and Godrej was hospitalized on May 17, where he breathed his last on May 20, 2000. The uthamna and other ceremonies were over by the time his body arrived in Bombay and spent the morning at Pirojshanagar where the Godrej workers queued up to salute their

Taking pride in an orchid bloom on the terrace garden at Godrej Bhavan



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departed chairman. (Thanks to the embalmer's art or to his own evolved soul, Godrej reposed in the freshness of sleep rather than the pallor of death.) He had been critical of undue holidays. The Godrej employees worked a normal working day.

"Sohrabji Godrej was by any standards an exceptional human being... The WWF and the Project Tiger saw him passionately involved. The question of India's population increase and the challenge of sustainable development engaged his attention no less. SP did not see life in compartments," wrote Narayanan in a letter to Delhi Parsi Anjuman president Lt Gen (Retd) Adi Sethna.

Distinguishing Godrej's concern from that of other activists Alexander noted, "His concern for wildlife, trees, clean cities, etc was not peripheral or marginal. He was totally involved... When he took up a cause (it was) not merely love of the cause but an abundant sense of anguish." Speaking for the



Sharing a lighter moment with President K. R. Narayanan

generation to which they both belonged, Alexander recalled at the condolence meet sponsored by the Indian Red Cross Society at the Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan Hall, "We had seen imperial domination, the struggle for freedom — how Gandhi came like a whirlwind — the thrill of freedom, the excitement. He along with people of that generation

expected that freedom would bring all that (they) dreamt of. They didn't believe that freedom would become a passport for self-aggrandizement, for greed and corruption. He and people like him, with their sensitive mind, became anguished." Referring to the successive governments' failure to control the exploding population and the resulting degradation of the environment, Alexander said Godrej "saw the blunder we were committing, the tragedy that was likely to follow. It moved him to be a crusader..."

The resolution passed at the public meeting convened by the sheriff of Bombay Dr Augustine Pinto on June 3 — Godrej's 88th birth anniversary — recalled the two campaigns initiated by Godrej when he became sheriff in 1983: one against the ill-effects of tree-cutting (sarvajanik Holi) and the other against noise pollution (sarvajanik Divali).

The resolution of the Indian Council of World Affairs, Bombay branch, recorded Godrej's association with the



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body as secretary since its inception in 1948 with Sir Homi Mody as chairman until he took over as chairman from G. L. Mehta, continuing till his demise. The resolution of the Indian Merchants' Chamber called him an industrialist with a human face. The resolution of the Indian Red Cross Society — which he had served for nearly 30 years, finally as its vice chairman — spoke of its crusade for female education and concern that half a century after Independence, only 34 percent of India's female population was literate.

US consul general David Good said he "knew him only as a man of many causes" and referred to Nana Chudasama's popular banner at Marine Drive which declared SP, as he was generally known, "Super Patriot Godrej." K. C. Mahindra, the head of the House of Mahindras, spoke of "his easy ability to acquire knowledge." He perceived Godrej as "never in a hurry. (He had) time for anyone who wanted to meet him." Describing him as "eclectic in the true sense of the word," Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed Guzder referred to Godrej's offer to support the BPP scheme to augment community numbers despite being com-

mitted to the cause of arresting India's population growth.

Gandhian Dr Usha Mehta referred to him as a "father figure to hundreds of orphans (and) godfather to foreign students." Recalling the first generation Godrej connection with Gandhi, Mehta remarked that S. P. Godrej had enhanced it and declared that June 5, considered World Environment Day, would be observed as Godrej Day at Mani Bhavan. Chudasama announced that Giants International had instituted the S. P. Godrej Award for Family Planning and suggested the creation of an International House "if government plays ball," or an S. P. Godrej Garden.

At the BPP meet at Godrej Baug, Ervad Yezdi Panthaki, then president of the Godrej Baug Residents' Association, suggested that the unnamed road leading off Napean Sea Road to Godrej Baug be called S. P. Godrej Road with the bust of his brother Naoroji installed at the entrance to the Baug he had envisioned and helped create.

Noting how the Godrej philosophy absorbed the concept of social responsibility long before it became a corporate byword, Avabai Wadia, president emeritus of the Family Planning Association

of India spoke of the family planning center set up by Godrej at Vikhroli in 1957 where 7,000-10,000 workers observe the small family norm (their Udayachal School accepts only the first three children of a Godrej worker) because the rubric of social responsibility — good housing, nutrition, education — was established there.

To Phiroze Lam, vice president (corporate) of Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited, S. P. was "just not a boss but a friend (who was) in search of the impossible dream."

Former police commissioner Julio Rebeiro recalled the unhappy circumstances in 1970 when he first met Godrej: The company faced labor problems which led to the murder of a police inspector and a police constable in the Godrej complex. Rebeiro noted that Godrej's attitude toward militant labor leader Datta Samant was not one of anger or rancor — only of hurt. "He couldn't understand why the laborers revolted despite the way they were looked after. (Later) when he was sheriff and I was police commissioner, he introduced me to trees, came to my office and planted trees in my compound!"

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"We have lost a very rare species of the Royal Mumbai Tiger," remarked WWF India's secretary general Eustace D'Souza. In the post since the past 20 years, D'Souza spoke of "stormy trustee meetings where one trustee kept his cool and got every point he wanted put through by gentle persuasion... The little giant... had been to the Arctic and the Antarctic and visited every game sanctuary in the country. At the age of 83 he wanted to visit Leh to see how we human beings had ravaged the Himalayas." (Godrej's niece Smita Crishna informs that he didn't speak to their cousin Rishad Naoroji for a long time because Rishad reported the plan to Godrej's doctor who put a stop to it!) Though he laughed at the small stub of a pencil Godrej was wont to carry, D'Souza noted, "The spartan attitude to life was never reflected in his attitude to any organization involved with good work."

A man who was loathe to cancel appointments, he never avoided the task of paying respect to the dead no matter what engagement he was required to break, noted Godrej chronicler Burjor Karanjia. Former University Grants Commission chairperson Dr Armaity Desai emphasized Godrej's keenness to

know and learn in every situation. "He went to the people, didn't expect them to come to him." She commented on his "unique method of protest" — the bands

"The spartan attitude to life was never reflected in his attitude to any organization involved with good work"

on his sleeve: black to mark the many distressing events and situations in the country; white when there was occasion to rejoice. Solicitor and BPP trustee Dadi Engineer recalled the agitated tone in which he explained them: "I am bereaved. You are bereaved. We all are bereaved. Look at the state of affairs in this country!"

At the various meetings convened by the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), the consulate general of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Red Cross Society and others, Mehra Shroff, honorary secretary of the Iran-India Cultural Society said that every Iranologist visiting Bombay was

invited to Godrej Bhavan. Iran's consul general Mehdi Honardoost referred to Godrej as his best friend in India. Red Cross chairman Kersi Gherda and Harish Jagtiani, president of the Rotary Club of Bombay spoke of Godrej's 48-year-old membership of the Club with 100 per cent attendance. "He refrained from joining Rotary earlier because he believed that Russia had been excluded from the ambit of the Club without justification. He joined up when he learned that Russia had demanded the shifting of the Rotary headquarters from New York to Moscow as a prelude to its joining," noted Jagtiani.

Commenting on Godrej's ability to organize, Red Cross honorary secretary Homai Modi spoke of her consternation on the eve of the formal inauguration of the Red Cross' Disaster Relief Centre by Alexander. Witness to a day of chaos, a crestfallen Modi rang up Godrej that night to register that absolutely nothing was ready for the following day. To her amazement, by the time Alexander arrived everything was ready and in place!

"Godrej and we are neighbors," said Akbarally's Fakhruddin Khorakiwala, referring to the Godrej showroom abutting the department store at Veer Nariman Road. Both organizations cel-

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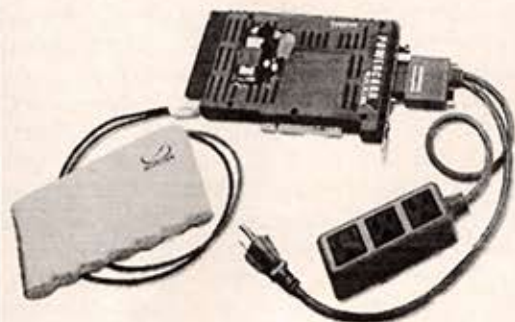
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ebredated their centenary in 1997. Godrej is "one industrial house in India that not only propagates but practises fair business practices," he added.

Free of "any trappings of power," the self-effacing Godrej's advice during a Bombay Management Association election had been "Dikra, controversy *ma naa uterto* (avoid controversy)," recalled Raymonds vice president and BPP senior trustee Minoo Shroff.

Though brother Burjor's elder son Adi Godrej says he was out of the family ambit at an early age, in the course of his 37 professional years at Godrej he could not but be impressed by his uncle's overriding interest in "all issues that led to the building of a civil society in India... He spent an enormous amount of time in pursuing various causes and building institutions."

Godrej's nephew Jamshyd Godrejsucceeded him as president of WWF - India. They grew "very close in the last few years after my father (Naoroji) passed away." Prior to that the main interaction was between the brothers. "His concerns were about the tiger and the environment and how I could help him at the WWF when he was president," says Jamshyd,

adding, "The tiger was the symbol of what was happening because it was preyed upon and poached upon. If you saved the tiger you (also) saved his forest cover and the entire eco system and all the other endangered species."

With his nephew Nadir Godrej (Burjor's younger son) the bond was their common interest in the French language. He would often spend evenings with Nadir's family, talking to the children about nature and wildlife, watching animal-based programs with them. Speaking about his uncle's penchant for travel, Nadir narrated how he would look for the Rotary Club and Alliance Française wherever he went. On one occasion, a disappointed Godrej had reported to the French consul general that there was no Alliance Française in Ulan Bator, capital of Mongolia, recalled Nadir. So strong was his commitment to Rotary that he had once attended a meet directly from the hospital, the intravenous line still in his vein, Nadir's wife Rati carrying the bottle of fluid behind him!

"I knew Soli uncle before I became part of his family," says Jamshyd's wife Pheroza. Their mutual interest in WWF, BNHS (Bombay Natural History Soci-

ety), FOT (Friends of Trees), the Heritage Society and INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), BEAG (Bombay Environmental Action Group) and the Museum Society made for tremendous bonding. "We felt we were there for him, but he was more there for us," acknowledges Pheroza recalling how he would inculcate the gentler virtues in the children. He once had a pair of Zanzibar parrots and was very upset when the last one died while he was on his way to Delhi. He also had Persian cats but after they died he didn't keep any more. "He was very close to the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). He built the electric crematorium there in memory of Naoroji." He wanted to build a bigger one because the present one is not large enough for horses, etc, noted Pheroza.

"*Bhannar, gannar nahi uta* (He was not given to saying a lot of prayers) but he would attend all ceremonies." Respecting everybody's ideas he never liked conflict. "*Kai elaj lavsu; rasto sodhvo parsé* (there must be a remedy, we must find a way)," Pheroza recalls his desire to always bring harmony. "He lived in harmony. To live in harmony today you have to be a saint," notes Pheroza.

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"He always wanted to be in the diplomatic service. Grandfather (Pirojsha) forced him to study science," says Smita. Though "eccentric in his own way," his genuineness got through to people and they respected him, adds Smita referring to the spate of condolence letters and the mass that a Christian piano teacher held for him.

Smita's husband Vijay Crishna recalls how Godrej became more involved with industry after Naoroji's passing in 1990. "He took it as the responsibility of the elder in the family to look after the businesses," says Crishna. Travelling, talking to branch people, giving pointers on the importance of public life, he made it his personal responsibility to be briefed by the secretary of the company. He took special interest in seeing whether the companies were being a responsible part of the community, contributing to the growth of employees outside the company, continues Crishna. To be ready for the directors' meet every Thursday, Godrej would spend Wednesday night at Vikhroli. "Over these 10 years it came to mean a lot to the employees. He became a touchstone, the conscience of the group. (It would) come round to how one should comport oneself over social

issues. It rubbed off a lot on officers down the line. He was not just a friendly uncle up there. He represented what we stand for..."

It was part of Rumi Majoo's duty as Godrej's personal assistant of 15 years to keep track of the social engagements, music, theater in Bombay, as well as programs of BBC and old movies showing on television. Accompanying Godrej on his trips abroad in the past year, Majoo relates how Godrej would personally check on his assistant's comfort on the plane and in the hotel. Though a hard taskmaster he was ever ready to acknowledge his own mistakes and apologize. His driver was instructed to dole out a packet of biscuits and a small cake of soap from a steady stock in the car to beggars who accosted him.

Unshaven employees roused Godrej's ire, noted K. R. Krishnaswamy, his secretary since 1963. He felt that it did not project a good image for a company that manufactured toiletries. Also, he expected people to be clear in their minds about what they wanted to discuss with him. To remind them to do so was a board outside the door with the single word 'Think.'

He never liked to use the word 'hate,'

though 'dislike' was permissible, says Krishnaswamy. Being president of the English Speaking Union of the Commonwealth he was particular that people write well and would teach good English to all his staff members. Putting in an appearance at various functions, Godrej would return to his office to work into the night. Wherever he travelled, he made it a point to meet people, understand their culture, tradition and way of life. As an example of the extent to which he cared for his staff Krishnaswamy recalled the time he was laid up by severe back pain. Godrej not only arranged a consultation with Dr Jussavala but sent an ambulance to fetch his secretary from home and was himself present at the hospital to receive him.

In his tribute in *The Times of India*, *Sanctuary* editor and animal activist Bittu Sahgal writes about Godrej's agitated phone calls: "I had learned to look forward to these phone calls from Sohrabji because they helped renew my faith in such simple human qualities as purpose, humility and caring. And, as anyone who knew him will readily agree, he had all those traits in good measure."

Godrej is survived by his sister Dosa K. Naoroji.

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The Lentin legend

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"We shall at all times, remember him as one who brought glory, admiration and respect to the legal fraternity in general, and the judiciary in particular," noted chief justice B. P. Singh as he led the full Bombay High Court (BHC) reference (as a condolence meet is known in legal parlance) to retired fellow judge Bakhtavar B. Lentin, 72, who succumbed to disabling nervous disorders on April 22, 2000.

"He conducted the court in his own way and nobody could interfere in any manner and everybody had to speak to the point and argue the matter and gather his brief," added president of the Bombay Bar Association, M. G. Sanghavi, referring to Lentin's "commanding presence" which contributed to "a different atmosphere" in his court.

"Lentin had the sixth sense to know what was the real ailment of (the) aggrieved party," noted V. A. Gangal, president of the Advocates' Association of Western India, simultaneously representing the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa. "He lived most of his life in front of the sea — in Chateau Marine at Marine Drive — and had a large heart like an ocean: High tides reserved for sufferers, downtrodden and aggrieved persons; low ebbs meant for the profligate bodies, despotic officers, perpetrators of crime, looters and squeezers," continued Gangal, adding, "The amount of publicity which he got never distracted him from his work... He had a knack to find out where the equity in the matter lay and had courage and (the) desire to twist and stretch the law to tailor justice."

Maharashtra advocate general Gulam Vahanvati remembered Lentin's last day in office, July 25, 1989, after 24 years on the bench: "Bombay experienced a near cyclone with torrential rains. Commu-

nication was disrupted. Trains did not work. The courts did not sit. Yet Lentin came to his chamber that day." Recalling how Lentin "delighted in projecting



Lentin: "great sense of humor"

a stern image," Vahanvati noted, "His low voice and great sense of humor delivered with a serious expression could daunt even a seasoned senior who did not know him." Vahanvati described Lentin's courtesy to the counsel while arguments proceeded, though he invariably cut the flimsy ones to pieces in the course of his judgments "which were brilliantly written. Counsel who lost had the satisfaction that their arguments

were rejected in excellent prose." Lentin did not like dictating his judgements but preferred to handwrite them because he was so particular, Lina Martias quoted Justice A. Jahagirdar in *Mid-Day*.

Born and educated in Bombay — a product of St Mary's School, St Xavier's School, St Xavier's College and Government Law College — except for the time spent at London's Middle Temple whence he was called to the Bar, Lentin joined the chambers of renowned criminal lawyer K. A. Somjee on his return and was enrolled as an advocate in 1950 practising in civil and criminal matters in the BHC, recounts his bio data.

Appointed judge of the Bombay City Civil and Sessions Court (CCSC) in 1965, its principal judge in 1972, Lentin was appointed judge of the BHC in 1973 and later took administrative charge of the CCSC and was member of various committees for selection and promotion of judges to and in the subordinate judiciary.

It was in the 1980s however that Lentin first acquired his legendary status in the eyes of the common man. In his desire to beautify Bombay, chief minister A. R. Antulay had decided to forcibly remove slum dwellers on Tulsi Pipe Road, Dadar and Kamaraj Nagar,

Vile Parle. A fleet of State Transport buses had been organized to deport them from the city. As senior advocate M. A. Rane recounts the event in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* (ADC), Kannada speakers were to be dropped at Belgaum, Tamilians at Solapur and Hindi speakers at Jalgaon. "The information of the operation was collected by Prafulla Bidwai, the then reporter of *The Times of India* during night and communicated the same night to some of us advocates who were active members of the Bombay branch of the People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL)," writes Rane. While the lawyers drafted a writ petition and moved it before Lentin who was the judge assigned for such work on July 21, 1981 — a very wet monsoon day — the authorities had razed the shanty towns while the menfolk were at work, and packed off the women and children in the waiting buses.

"Even though the operation had started early morning, the kindhearted judge looked at the downpour outside the High Court and observed 'Why do they evict the poor people in this wretched weather?' and granted us interim stay and directed the government and the Bombay Municipal Corporation to bring back the people from where they were dropped and to rehabilitate them in their tarpaulin huts or humble sheds after reconstructing them pending the hearing of the petition. He personally visited the sites along with the lawyers," writes Rane. Though Lentin often went on site visits to satisfy himself, it is not something that too many judges do, counsel Navroze Seervai told *Parsiana*.

The writ petition was ultimately called for by the Supreme Court and decided along with another petition filed there by journalist Olga Tellis, informs Rane. The landmark judgement established that the right to life included the right to shelter and to livelihood.

He had a "great abhorrence for things political. He felt political issues were not for the court," says Seervai. Nevertheless he ruled over cases which led to the resignation of cabinet ministers. It was senior counsel Ashok Desai, appearing for MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) Mrinal Gore and others in the cement scandal case against Antulay who in the course of the final hearing "convinced him to overcome

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his abhorrence" for political issues. (Antulay had floated a couple of trusts in the name of Indira Gandhi and in those days of cement quotas only those builders and promoters who donated to the trusts to the chief minister's satisfaction received adequate quantities of cement for their project.)

Demonstrating the "nexus" between donations made and cement quotas received, Lentin's meticulous judgement, handwritten in Mahabaleshwar, held Antulay guilty of exploiting his position and led to his resignation.

The case demonstrated Lentin's unbending integrity and moral courage. It also demonstrated his human qualities. As Seervai recounted the event, the long-drawn trial had stretched beyond Xmas Eve. One more day was required before it could be wrapped up by the lawyers. His court officer was a Christian who graciously agreed to continue with the trial on Xmas day. Lentin made it a point to publicly appreciate this gesture with the judge



Minoo and Banoo Dastur with Jahaan, Dhun and Bomi on Jamshed's marriage to Sifra

and participating lawyers formally registering their thanks in the court.

Many are the stories of his capacity to care for those around him. A. S. Bhatt, president of the Bombay Incorporated Law Society related an incident of a court

peon with an incessant cough whom Lentin took for treatment and was diagnosed as suffering from TB. "Lentin admitted him in hospital, paid for his entire treatment and looked after him as if he was a family member," said Bhatt.

Lentin's nurturing qualities enfolded family and court staff as well as junior lawyers on the threshold of their careers. "In his court the junior lawyer was treated with utmost kindness and received maximum encouragement," said Vahanvati, adding, "He would start by refusing an adjournment. He would then tell the junior to go on with the matter. 'Don't worry,' he would say. 'I will help you.'

He always did."

Senior counsel Rohit Kapadia speaks of the onset of a stroke in 1973 while Lentin's court was in session. Very junior in the legal field at that point, he had nonetheless finished arguing before his senior counsel Suresh Parekh arrived. By then the opposing lawyer was arguing and Kapadia requested Parekh to

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answer the judge's queries as he felt steadily worse and passed out with his head on the table. Not totally unconscious ("I was in a daze — 75 percent out") Kapadia recalls Lentin doffing his gown, shooing everyone away and supervising operations as he was stretched out on the long counsel's table, jacket loosened, shoes off, then rushing to get eau de cologne from his chamber and rubbing it on his head and feet. Kapadia was driven directly to Bombay Hospital by some of his friends. "I was too junior. I hardly knew him. But he came with Justice Kania to see me. I was quite touched," Kapadia told *Parsiana*.

Lentin became a household word when he was deputed to investigate 14 deaths at J. J. Hospital in January and February 1986 caused by the administration of an adulterated drug. Lentin submitted his report on November 30, 1987. "For 301 days Lentin... who headed the one-man commission, and his staff, sifted through the evidence,

piece by piece, stringently cross-examined a host of witnesses, dug into numerous files, and came up with facts that, reported daily and faithfully in the Press, electrified the country as no case in recent memory has done," noted Sherna Gandhi in a 12-page cover story in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (February 7, 1988).

"Political clout cut no ice with the presiding judge... it was heartening to see one inquiry that was entirely open, scrupulously fair and uncompromisingly intolerant of any attempts at subterfuge on the part of those asked to depose before it. This, more than anything else, was responsible for the packed courtroom, and for making the daily Press report everyone's favorite breakfast-time reading. Everyone, that is, except those whom the commission exposed and who tried everything from anonymous telephone calls, bomb threats and attacks on the integrity of the presiding judge, to denigrate the commission," further wrote Gandhi.



Freni Jhabvala: first female public notary

Gandhy's article was born of the mounting public apprehension that the report would never be published. "So keen was the public desire to be privy to the report that a spate of writs were filed in the Bombay High Court praying that the State Government be directed to table the report in the Assembly and make it public," wrote Maneck Davar in *Lex et Juris* (April 1988). The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 30, leading to the resignation of health minister Bhai Sawant.

A week later the motion for breach of privilege tabled by MLA Keshavrao Dhondge casting aspersions on Lentin and the conduct of the commission came up for discussion in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly. At the specially requisitioned meeting of the Bombay Bar Association presided over by the venerable constitutional authority H. M. Seervai, the lawyers unanimously passed a resolution appreciating Lentin's splendid effort and proffering whatever legal aid was necessary in case the Assembly moved for breach of privilege, recorded Davar.

Lentin himself declared, "This is an experience I would not like to undergo again... There has been a great deal of tension, a great deal of harassment. I do

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not exactly relish the idea of receiving stupid and abusive phone calls — 13 or 14 in a row in the span of 15-20 minutes at two o'clock in the morning."

Unlike most government appointed commissions of inquiry, the J. J. probe was open because "it touches everyone," Lentin told Gandhi. "Therefore it was but right that the common man who takes drugs and who has indirectly paid for this inquiry, was entitled to know that it would be conducted impartially and irrespective of prominent people who would be giving evidence."

"The openness was also necessary because secrecy breeds suspicion and suspicion breeds contempt and in an inquiry of this sort no State secrets or defence-of-the-realm or relations with foreign powers were concerned. Or any other delicate matter concerning the integrity or solidarity of our country." With characteristic impartiality he added, "In fairness to the government, I must say that at no time was there any pressure on me or any indication that it should not be a public inquiry."

Lentin never made it to the Supreme Court. "They felt he would not toe their line," noted his wife Dhun. After much stalling when the chief justice of India finally offered it, Lentin turned it down. "He would have liked to go but not to toe their line," as noted Dhun.

"There is a rule whereby retired judges who wish to practice as advocates are required to file an affidavit stating that during their period of judgeship they have not done anything wrong. Though other judges have filed such affidavits, Lentin refused to do so as he felt it would be demeaning to the dignity of the judiciary," noted Mahabaleshwar Morje, chairman of the enrollment committee of the Bar Council of Maharashtra, in a letter published in *The Indian Express* (April 27, 2000).

"He would have been of immense use to the country in many ways after his retirement; I always thought he was ideal ambassador material," wrote Dom Moraes in *ADC* (May 15, 2000).

India's attorney general Soli Sorabjee, who was Lentin's professional neighbor during their days as juniors in the early 1950s, remembered him as warmhearted, amiable and "a gentleman to the core. Envy, the besetting sin of some eminent lawyers, did not consume him." (*The Times of India*)

Lentin seemed to have inherited legal genes. His mother Freni was India's

second lady solicitor, the first in active practice and the first lady public notary. His father, Noshirwan Jhabvala's guidebooks on various aspects of the law have mentored generations of students. But the couple parted during Bomi's (as he was known to family and friends) early childhood and he grew up with his maternal grandparents, eventually adopting their name while he was studying in England, informed Dhun.

"Very caring, very thoughtful... his life revolved round the family," remarked Dhun. Abject poverty disturbed him deeply and he went out of his way to help those who turned to him even though not all such experiences were positive, she noted, adding, "His idea of religion was to help a lame horse over the stile." Unlike some fellow judges he refused police security offered to him, continuing with his evening walks on Marine Drive even at the height of his controversial cases. "Used to be really scared," admitted Dhun.

In the old days he played the Hawaiian guitar and was fond of Indian classical music. During their honeymoon in London Dhun remembers him singing a lot of ragas. Framed landscapes on living room walls attest to his penchant for oil painting. Somerset Maugham, Irving Wallace, detective stories and real life spy stories of World War II delighted him, informed his devoted son Jamshed.

After retirement Lentin confined himself to holding conferences, giving opinions and acting as arbitrator. (Kapadia recalls Lentin's desire that issues be settled amicably: He would often tell the opposing counsel, "put your heads together," while he strolled off for a few minutes for a puff on his ubiquitous pipe!) Amongst the various positions he held was that of chairman of the Films Certification Appellate Tribunal for several years. The public viewing of the controversial movie *Bandit Queen* (and the telecast of some of the more explosive episodes of the TV serial *Tamas*) attested to his liberal views on artistic freedom, noted Sorabjee. As chairman of the BHC's committee of enquiry on the scam involving overmarking of answer papers in company law at the Bombay University's LLB examinations in 1996, his report led to the overhaul of the system and a new stringency to produce better qualified law graduates.

In 1969/70 he had been appointed president of the Town Planning Scheme for Greater Bombay. For five years in the

1990s, until he resigned due to failing health, Lentin was chairman of the local advisory board of the Banque Nationale de Paris with the approval of the Reserve Bank of India. In 1995-96 he was chairman of the reforms committee appointed by the central ministry of health and family planning regarding the quality, procurement pricing, etc of drugs and equipment. 1996-98 saw him as the Finance Ministry's director on the board of the Life Insurance Corporation of India.

In his post retirement years several awards came his way, largely a measure of the esteem and gratitude of his fellow citizens. One of these, a presentation of the World Zoroastrian Organisation on its 10th anniversary celebration at Raj Bhavan was presented by then Governor of Maharashtra C. Subramaniam. So overwhelming was the public ovation that for several minutes the com-père could not read the citation ("The WZO Roll of Honor," *Parsiana*, July 1991!)

As senior lawyer Adhik Shirodkar told *ADC*, "The only fitting homage one can pay to such a fine judge is to inculcate the great integrity which Lentin displayed. Despite all the corruption and manipulation around us, the ability to stand up for the truth and fearlessly pursue it is something which everyone in this profession needs to learn."

Lentin is survived by his wife Dhun, daughter Banoo Dastur and son Jamshed.

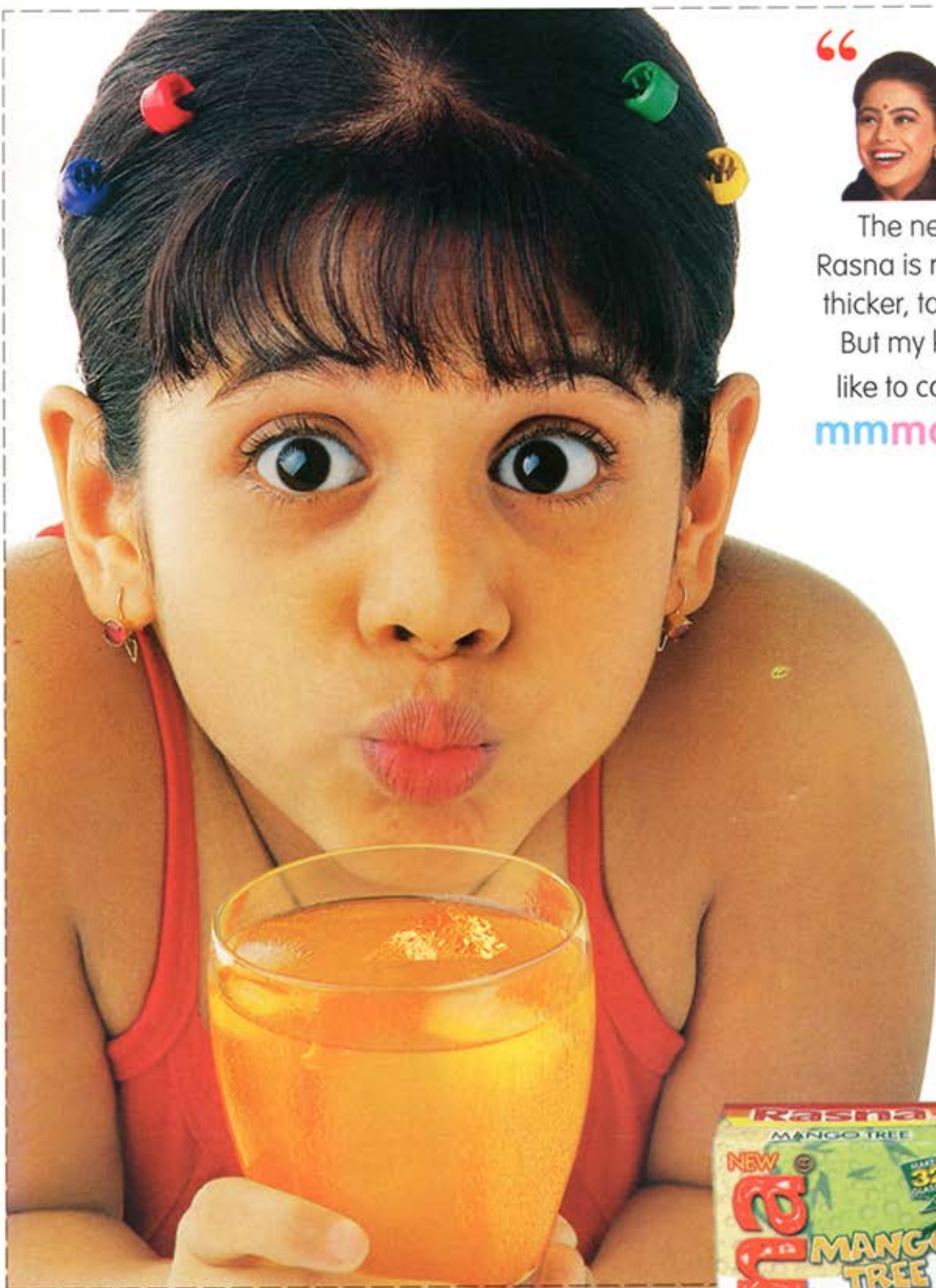
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cast by her as villains. When Sonali plots the 'accident' of her molester, her brother silently abets her. When she relives the traumatic betrayal by her uncle, her husband Anil sustains her through his love and compassion. Thus the 'feminist' viewpoint here encompasses a broader perspective in which men and women together fight patriarchal aggression.

An award-winning playwright, some of Mehta's other plays are *The Myth Makers*, *Tiger, Tiger*, *Brides Are Not For Burning*, *A Sister Like You...* Besides writing for the theater, Mehta has published a novel, *And Some Take A Lover* and two collections of short stories, *The Other Woman* and *Other Stories* and the recent one entitled *Miss Menon Did Not Believe In Magic*. She has a new novel up her sleeve.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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