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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Seeking new directions"

I refer here to the comments made by B. T. Dastur, chief executive officer, Bombay Parsi Punchayet at the executive council meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held in Jamshedpur on December 2-3, 2000 ("Seeking new directions," *Parsiana*, January 2001).

Responding to critics who complain that students who go for studies abroad never return, Dastur said, "Wherever they go, they'll remain Parsis. Rather than get some inconsequential job here, let them stay there and contribute so that the next generation can be educated."

I would like to question Dastur whether all jobs here are inconsequential and whether all jobs in USA are consequential, and why the students should stay there and not make a contribution to India on their return. Does Dastur want all students to emigrate and accentuate the dwindling population of

Parsis in India? Probably he is not aware that 46 percent of the Parsis voting in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* opinion poll ("Pulse of the Parsis," January 7, 2001) have stated that the downslide of the Parsis in India is because our best brains have emigrated and 78 percent of the voters think it is obligatory for those going abroad for studies through community funds to return to India ("Pulse of the Parsis," January 28, 2001).

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"Zoros at the Olympics"

In the article "Zoros at the Olympics" (*Zoroastrians Abroad, Parsiana*, January 2001), there is a slight correction.

My congratulations to Beghzad and Freya Bana for their participation in the Olympics. However they are not the only Zoroastrians to have done so. My granddaughter Anita Behruz Sethna herself ran with the torch in the 1996 Olympics. She took part in the flag carrying ceremony at the start of the Games and played the clarinet with the Olympic Band at the closing ceremony.

MITHU N. SETHNA

"Taaraa moné saakar"

I read the Gujarati sayings "Taaraa moné saakar" (*Parsiana*, December 2000) with interest. I would like to point out two sayings which could be better interpreted as under:

- Ék chana ni bè faat
There are two sides to every story.
- Chor né potlé dhoor ni dhoor
Literally it would mean that a thief's loot will turn to dust. However this is more often used when a cheat or back-biter gets paid back in his own coin.

JAMZHEH R. UDVADIA
Lansing, USA

"Kisseh-Houston"

I have read Furhok K. Tangree's letter ("Kisseh-Houston," *Readers' Forum, Parsiana*, November 2000) where he says that Ali Jafarey should be allowed to speak at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in USA. As he is living in France, Tangree may have become a liberal thinker who does not mind the inclusion of Jafarey. Jafarey may have studied our scriptures as so many of the Indian, European, Iranian and other scholars have done and each of them has different perceptions, each of them has a

newer angle from where to see our Zarathushti religion. But only a person born of Zoroastrian parents, duly initiated into our religion, wearing the sudreh-kusti perpetually and practising our faith, has a natural God-given right to enter the precincts of an agiary or an atash behram and go near the consecrated fire to offer sandalwood and pray the Zarathushti prayers as a farmanbardar of God's laws as given to us by his messenger Prophet Zarathushtra. A non-Zarathushti person or a half-caste who desires to be a full-fledged Zarathushti by claiming his father or mother is a Zarathushti can never be called a Zarathushti or get initiated into that religion.

A Zarathushti who marries a non-Zarathushti knowingly or unknowingly breaks the foundation pillar, ceases to be a Zarathushti and becomes a riman. He cannot deceive himself or his religion of birth by still adhering to it openly or privately. Even if he wears the sudreh-kusti, it has no meaning as the unseen cord which joins his soul within with the pav mahal since his initiation has now been broken.

The navjote ceremony is a physical and esoteric ceremony. During the physical ceremony to initiate the child the kusti is tied with prayers by the din-dasturs. Esoterically Gosh Yazd and his hamkars enjoin the soul of that child to the unseen pav mahal. So if the child is of a non-Zarathushti (non burgis) soul, how can the esoteric ceremony take place? Such a soul can never ever be enjoined to the pav mahal. Only a meaningless physical ceremony takes place where the kusti is like a dead rope on the waist, without any purpose or power. Even if that child recites our prayers and does a physical kusti, his or her chanting of prayers will be quite useless as it cannot be registered in the realm of minoi through the pillar of pav mahal as there is no cord enjoining his/her soul to the pav mahal. A mixed marriage and its results create only rimni all throughout which is even more sinful than a woman in menses offering a piece of sandalwood to an atash padshah. It destroys the very purpose of this religion. The true religion catches cancer and very slowly dies and pseudo religionists make matters worse by bringing in their own whims and fancies in the guise of renaiss-



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Mr Fali Meherji Variava
Ex-Director

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sance to suit their needs and way of practising the true religion. Today what we are practising is not even a thousandth part of the real true religion which was practised in Iran during and after Zarathushtra's time.

At the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress Jafarey could speak his mind only as a researcher and scholar or an observer, but never as a person practising the Zarathushti religion, since his lineage is absolutely non-Zarathushti.

V. H. THANAWALLA
Poona

This is in response to the letter by Brig Noshir Grant of Poona ("Kisseh-Houston," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 2000). It is so unfortunate that some Zarathushtis themselves are praising and justifying the actions of Ali Akbar Jafarey (the prefix of 'Dr' is highly questionable).

Grant has enumerated various justifications to make his point. Let us analyze them step by step.

Firstly he states, "To begin with may I remind (Khojeste) Mistree that none of us was ever born a Zarathushti but was converted to the faith by Zoroaster from whatever religion we were then follow-

ing in Iran."

May I remind Grant that before the advent of Asho Zarathushtra, our ancestors were Mazdayasnis, the worshipers of Ahura Mazda. Before Zarathushtra the divine message was given to Shah Gayomard and Shah Jamsheed. However at the time of Asho Zarathushtra's birth the Mazdayasnis had started losing faith in Ahura Mazda and they had started worshipping false gods. So our Prophet rekindled the flames of faith in the hearts of the Mazdayasnis by spreading amongst them (only amongst the Mazdayasnis) the message of Ahura Mazda. Henceforth his followers were and are still known as Mazdayasni Zarathushtis. So in reality there was no conversion in ancient Iran.

He then adds, "our priests in general... are not learned enough in the real sense of the word, and have thus failed to impart the true meaning of our religion to members of their congregation."

It is not fair to generalize. Though there is a lot to be desired from some of our priests, not all belong to that category. There are many priests who perform their religious duties with utmost faith and as per the tarikats. The clergy is our backbone. It is because of them

that we have been able to preserve our customs and traditions.

Yes, it is lack of faith that drives some members of our community to non-Zoroastrian deities, but along with the clergy it is also the duty of parents to inculcate the true Zarathushti values in the minds of their children. Teach them to be true Mazdayasni Zarathushtis (worshipers of Ahura Mazda, his Amesha Spentas and Yazatas).

The third justification states, "In the days before the advent of the stethoscope and brain scans, a dog was brought in to ascertain whether the man was really dead. However to continue such a ritual now seems bizarre. Similarly, in the days before the advent of antiseptics like Listerine or Dettol, perhaps a bull's urine was used for the purpose. However, to continue this today seems repugnant."

It is sheer blasphemy to even compare the sacred nirang to the factory manufactured and chemically processed antiseptics like Listerine or Dettol. The sacred nirang is consecrated after yaozdathregar mobeds perform the nirangdin ceremony (pav mahal kriya). The nirang is not just an antiseptic to kill germs and bacteria; it is a spiritually

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purifying agent. Also, in our religion the dog holds a significant position. The dog is supposed to have a sixth sense to detect the presence of the 'druj' that causes decomposition of the corpse. The presence of the dog is said to keep the 'druj' away.

Religion is a divine revelation of Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra brought his divine message to the common people. Our Zarathushti deen shows us the way of Asha (Righteousness). Human beings are supposed to be Ahura Mazda's warriors on this earth against evil. We have to fight this battle not with weapons of war, but with righteousness and purity. Thus religion is a way in which humans serve Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Master. Even the thoughts that "religion is to serve man" and that "religious rules must be bent to serve needs of man," are preposterous and absurd.

Jafarey is not a Zarathushti and will never be one. Grant talks about knowledge of the true Zoroastrian faith. Do random alterations of our sacred Avestan manthras show knowledge of the true Zoroastrian faith? Jafarey could not be true to his own, divine religion of Islam, so how can he claim to be a true Zarathushti now?

In recent times many Zarathushtis have developed this bad habit of questioning all that is sacred and dear to us. I would like to remind them that it is only by preserving our sacred ancient tarikats that we Zarathushtis have managed to survive till today, and it is only because of this reason that we have been able to preserve our own distinct identity.

BURZIN V. ENGINEER

"Review the system"

I refer to Dr M. D. Disawalla's and Dr Homi Dhalla's letters in "Harness solar energy" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November 2000) throwing light on the problem of dokhmenashini.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees have received various views from the community to solve this problem.

Faced with differing options, it would be advisable for the BPP to have a separate special advisory committee, comprising experts in different fields — a select panel of doctors, biologists, dasturs, environmentalists, chemists, scientists and a co-ordinator. Such a 'Brain Trust Council' can discuss this problem unitedly to come to an effective decision.

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There is no doubt that members of the community will offer their dedicated services for this good cause. Such a united wise decision will resolve some reforms to continue our original system of Khurshed Nagirashni. NOSHIR DABOO
Ahmedabad

Acceptable alternatives

The recent concern shown by our Zoroastrian community regarding the time honored system of dokhmenashini is justified and yet is in no way something new or sudden. Over the years this concern has been highlighted from time to time with only words, followed by no action.

The anti dokhmenashini segment of our community wants us to believe that this time-honored system of disposal of dead bodies has failed us in these so-called modern times. The fact is that it is not the system that has failed us, it is we who have failed the system due to total neglect on the part of our trustees who are the custodians of these consecrated dokhmas and shameless apathy on the part of our community as a whole (including myself).

The greatest disservice if ever done to the Zoroastrian community in this respect is by those who negated the possible use of our Andheri dokhma by turning it into a construction project, building a housing colony for so-called poor Parsis. A vast majority of our community lives between Bandra and Borivli. The Andheri dokhma was of prime importance to serve this major part of our community and could have released the pressure on the only remaining alternative, the Doongerwadi in South Bombay. But then, it is alleged that to construct housing colonies for so-called poor Parsis on Doongerwadi lands is more profitable than to preserve consecrated dokhmas for the use of the dead.

There is no alternative or substitute for dokhmenashini. It is the birthright of every Parsi/Irani Zoroastrian, born of both Zoroastrian father and mother, to this system as it is an integral part of the Zoroastrian religion, its precepts and tenets. Those who wish to have a clearer understanding of dokhmenashini must read the booklet *Dokhmenashini and its sustainability* by Noshir H. Dadrawala.

While alternatives like herbal powder and microbial culture, solar panels and aviary are under consideration, with

continued on page 212

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In the Sangat spectrum

"We want to raise the profile of western classical music in India. With the influence of pop and rock, western classical music is getting marginalized," observes Mehroo Jeejeebhoy, trustee of the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation (MMMF) and chairperson of The Time and Talents Club Music and Arts Committee which have been jointly promoting Sangat, the annual festival of western classical music since 1996.

The Millennium Sangat in December 2000 offered a special bonanza with 29 overseas musicians, including world renowned violinist Gil Shaham, participating in the festival which included five concerts instead of the usual three, points out Jeejeebhoy. For Bombay's music aficionados, there were three con-

certs at the Tata Theatre and two at the Experimental Theatre from December 19-23, 2000; the performance in Poona was on December 27. There were two additional performances specially slated for the students of select schools from South Bombay, keeping in mind their limited attention span, which were very well received, mentions Jeejeebhoy. The post interval session on December 23 was devoted to Mozart's *Symphony in G*

Minor No 40 by the Sangat Festival Orchestra which accorded an opportunity for the local artistes to interact with overseas professionals, requiring rehearsals for nearly two weeks prior to the program, explains Jeejeebhoy.

This world-class music played free by professionals with Indian roots owes its inception to Jeejeebhoy and violinists Harvey and Ralph De Souza, who felt that Indian musicians in Europe,



From left (Top row): Jeejeebhoy, Pavri and Kanga (Middle row): Contractor, Posnock and Kanga explaining the harp to students (Last row): Mehli Mehta conducting the American Youth Symphony Orchestra and participants at the Millennium Sangat





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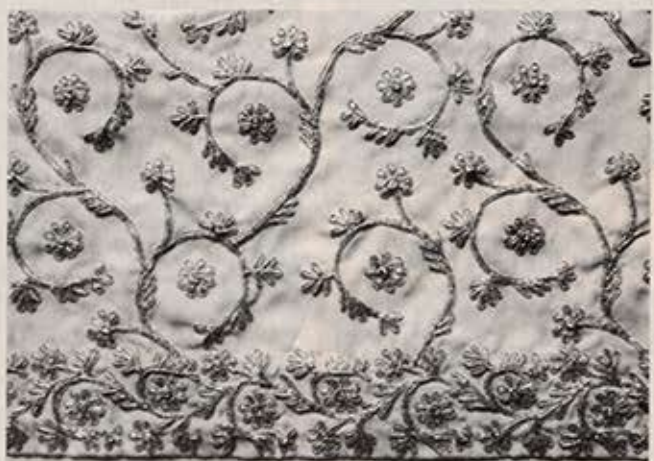
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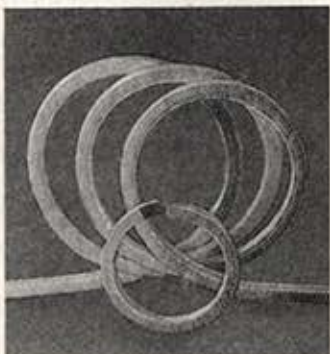
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grown in stature professionally, could combine their personal visits to their families with public pleasure by rendering concerts. The artistes now extend beyond the Bombay-rooted folk, who form the core, to their talented European friends and colleagues, notes a write-up by Gerson da Cunha in the Millennium Sangat brochure.

The 29 professionals from abroad at the Millennium Sangat included four Parsis: Ruth Contractor, Skaila Kanga, Fali Pavri and Dilshad Posnock. The souvenir carries a profile of each of the visiting musicians: While still a student, Contractor was principal oboe of the World Youth Orchestra and the Schleswig Holstein Orchestra. She has worked professionally in Germany and Great Britain as a soloist and chamber musician and is now a freelance musician in London having played, recorded, broadcast and toured with some of the leading orchestras in Europe including the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Philharmonia and several BBC Orchestras.

Kanga's interest in the harp began at the age of 17 and she started her career with the BBC Concert Orchestra and soon went on to freelance with many

regional and all the major London orchestras. Her solo career has included many performances of concertos and broadcasts in the sphere of records, films and television. At the Royal Academy of Music she has been senior professor of harp since 1988 and was recently elected to the board of governors. Also active in the pop world, she has appeared at the Meltdown and London Jazz Festivals.

Pianist Pavri who started his musical studies in Bombay proceeded to the Moscow Conservatoire on a seven-year government scholarship followed by a two-year postgraduate course at the Royal Academy of Music. After working as a resident artiste at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada in 1989, making his debut in London in 1990, he has been giving performances as a soloist in Russia, Canada, Norway, Estonia, Hongkong and England.

Posnock (née Billimoria) took up the flute at the age of 11 under the guidance of Ernavaz Bharucha. She completed her undergraduate studies with honors at the Royal College of Music, London and obtained a masters from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. She was principal flute of the Bombay Cham-

ber Orchestra, of all three Royal College of Music orchestras, the Carnegie Mellon Philharmonic and other orchestras in the Pittsburgh area. Presently an active freelance musician in Pittsburgh, she has joined the flute faculty of Carnegie Mellon University.

Launched in December 1996 at the time of the first Sangat, the MMMF was established to nurture Bombay's young talent in western classical music and to encourage aspiring musicians to pursue careers in this field, notes an introduction to the Foundation. It honors Mehli Mehta who, for more than 30 years, created and fostered an awareness of western classical music in Bombay. The Millennium Sangat brochure carries on its first page a photo of Mehta conducting the last concert of his musical career with the American Youth Symphony Orchestra which Jeejeebhoy informs us was in 2000. He had been their sole conductor for 33 seasons. Now 92 years old, his mental faculties are still as sharp as ever, but he has not returned to India in the last 30 years, mentions Jeejeebhoy. The initial corpus for the MMMF comes from funds generated from concerts in 1994 by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Mehta's son

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Zubin, states the brochure. In addition to Jeejeebhoy, Dr Rashmi Poddar, Zareen Bilimoria, Shyam Benegal, Iqbal Chagla and Mehli Mistri serve as the Foundation's trustees. Nani Palkhivala is their chairman, Zubin and Zarin Mehta are on the advisory council and Gool Mistri officiates as secretary.

The Time and Talents Club, which was founded in 1934 by a group of philanthropic women, presently has 200 members voluntarily helping the Club achieve its objectives of serving the underprivileged in the spheres of health, education and social welfare. Through its music and arts committee they have contributed substantially to the cultural life of Bombay by presenting a rich spectrum of talent from India and abroad, states the brochure. The Sangat Music Festivals have created a new benchmark in the city's cultural scene, they happily announce.

A sound start

"Both the initiated and the uninitiated turned up for what was billed as the Penaz Masani Nite — an evening of soulful ghazals organized by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), In-

dia, and its Youth Wing" on October 7, 2000, notes a write-up by the Youth Wing president Sarosh Bana. The proceeds from the memorable concert, Rs 2.6 lakhs, have been earmarked towards the WZO scheme for financial assistance to Parsi youngsters desiring a career and advanced training in e-commerce and information technology, adds Bana. The credit for organizing this program should go to WZO (India)'s resourceful joint secretary Dara Marfatia, ably assisted by Soonoo Andhyarujina, mentions the write-up.

"Those Zoroastrians who only a short time ago were struggling to make ends meet (are) now confidently progressing on the road towards prosperity," remarked WZO (India) president Dadi Engineer during his address, attributing this improvement to the WZO policy of not encouraging community members to become dependent on doles but in-



Masani at the memorable WZO fund-raising function

stead providing them support to help them get back on their feet. While the welfare activities in India initially centered around rural South Gujarat, after establishing the WZO Trust in 1991, followed by the WZO Trust for Women and Children, and the WZO Trust Funds, they have embraced the whole of India, extending substantial

support in diverse areas of human needs covering entrepreneurship, rural housing, farming and animal husbandry, upgradation of skills, education, medical support, etc, observed Engineer. And although the London headquartered WZO reaffirms its dedication towards the Zoroastrian cause, there are those within the community who revel in criticizing it, he regretted.

Masani, who gave this concert totally free of cost to help WZO promote its project, has reportedly 29 music albums to her credit since she embarked on her

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Students of Dadar's Athornan Boarding Madressa recite prayers with (from left) Lalkaka, Dinshaw, Villoo Subedar, Guzder, Farokh Subedar and Dastur looking on

musical career in 1981. While her forte is Urdu, she sings in 10 other languages as well and is known to have sung for over 50 Hindi films, writes Bana.

From the funds generated WZO is assisting three students doing courses with APTECH, and 18 with Vahista Computer Solutions, a venture started by Burzin Nanavati and Behram Aspi. Donations from well-wishers/trusts could help other students on the waiting list, states Bana.

Competent participation

Encourage your children to pray every morning and evening, urged chief guest Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, when addressing the parents of the children who had participated in different events organized by the Iran League. Nearly 350 participants of different age-groups competed in the rangoli, drawing, essay writing, elocution, *Shah Nameh* recitation, religious quiz, Parsi songs/monajats, western and Indian vocal and instrumental music at the Bai M. N. Gamadia Girls' High School, notes a press release.

Thirty trophies, cash prizes, honor certificates and religious books were distributed by Guzder and Villoo Subedar at the annual prize distribution function at Cama Baug on November 18, 2000, the press release gives the details. A new trophy introduced this year was for essay writing, donated from the estate of Goolmohore Pleader by her executors and trustees, Centbank Financial and Custodial Services Limited. Seven medals showing the portrait of Firdausi Toosi were donated by Cowasjee Dinshaw, vice president of Iran League, and the religious books were donated by Rustom J. Vakil and

Ervad Khushru Panthaky. As Silloo Shapoorjee announced the names of the prize winners, Rati Peer distributed 246 consolation prizes.

In his informative speech, guest of honor Farokh Subedar, vice president, finance, Tata Sons Limited, stressed on the Parsi qualities of philanthropy and honesty. Honorary treasurer Ervad Vispi Dastur summarized the activities of the League and vice president Cyrus Lalkaka proposed a vote of thanks. A contributory dinner served by Minoo Bharucha was preceded by the singing of *Chhaiyé hamé Zarathushti* and the national anthem.

Environmental education

"If teachers can influence students to love their environment, we will have a better world tomorrow. While it is difficult to alter the priorities of adults, educating our younger citizens is a sure way to ensure a return to ecological sanity," Dr Dilafruz Williams, professor of education at Portland State University, USA, impressed upon the nearly 200 teachers from 40 schools in and around Bombay, 30 non-governmental organizations and eager environmentalists who had participated in a workshop conducted by her in mid-December 2000, it was reported in the city's leading dailies. Her workshop on "Renewing cities through environmental education" was organized by Sanctuary and INTACH.

Being co-founder of the Environmental Middle School, one of the very few special focus schools in the States, Williams also shared her experiences of running this institution with its "holistic, integrated hands-on curriculum." It is essential that parents take their children to the wilderness for an overnight stay at least once a year, believes Williams. "It helps kids to stay connected to nature and creates a sense of awe and reverence for the outdoors. The phrase 'they ought to do something' will then someday change to 'we ought to do something,'" her statement was quoted in *The*



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Times of India of December 17, 2000.

Co-author of *Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture and Environment*, Williams has been the president and program chair of ecological education of the US National Education Association and continues to be involved in several projects providing direction and guidance in revitalizing neighborhoods in Portland,

looked upon as a model city for managing growth. Her 16-year-old son James' strong views on this subject were also quoted in *The Times*, "Sensitizing people should be easier here than in the West where environmental problems are hidden...Out here, you can't breathe, you see smog, it's overt. Once children start questioning what is happening, they will start influencing their parents to change their environmentally unfriendly habits."

Bombay born Dilafruz Moradian, who had studied at the J. J. School and



Dilafruz (right) with James Williams: advocating a healthier world

taught at the J. B. Petit High School for Girls, did her postgraduation from Harvard and her doctorate from Syracuse University. She was disturbed to know that environmental education in India was being treated as one more subject where children were memorizing facts, notes a write-up from Dahanu based social activist Katy Rustom.

A walk around the Doongerwadi precincts made Williams remark, "The grounds in and around the Doongerwadi should be considered sacred and must be treated with immense care." Distressed to see trash strewn among the vegetation, she advocated a plan whereby school children and neighborhood groups get together in partnership and organize a clean-up day, with a regular survey of the area every few weeks to ensure that the area remains free of trash. "What is left of the greenery and vegetation must be preserved and given immediate attention for revival of wildlife,"



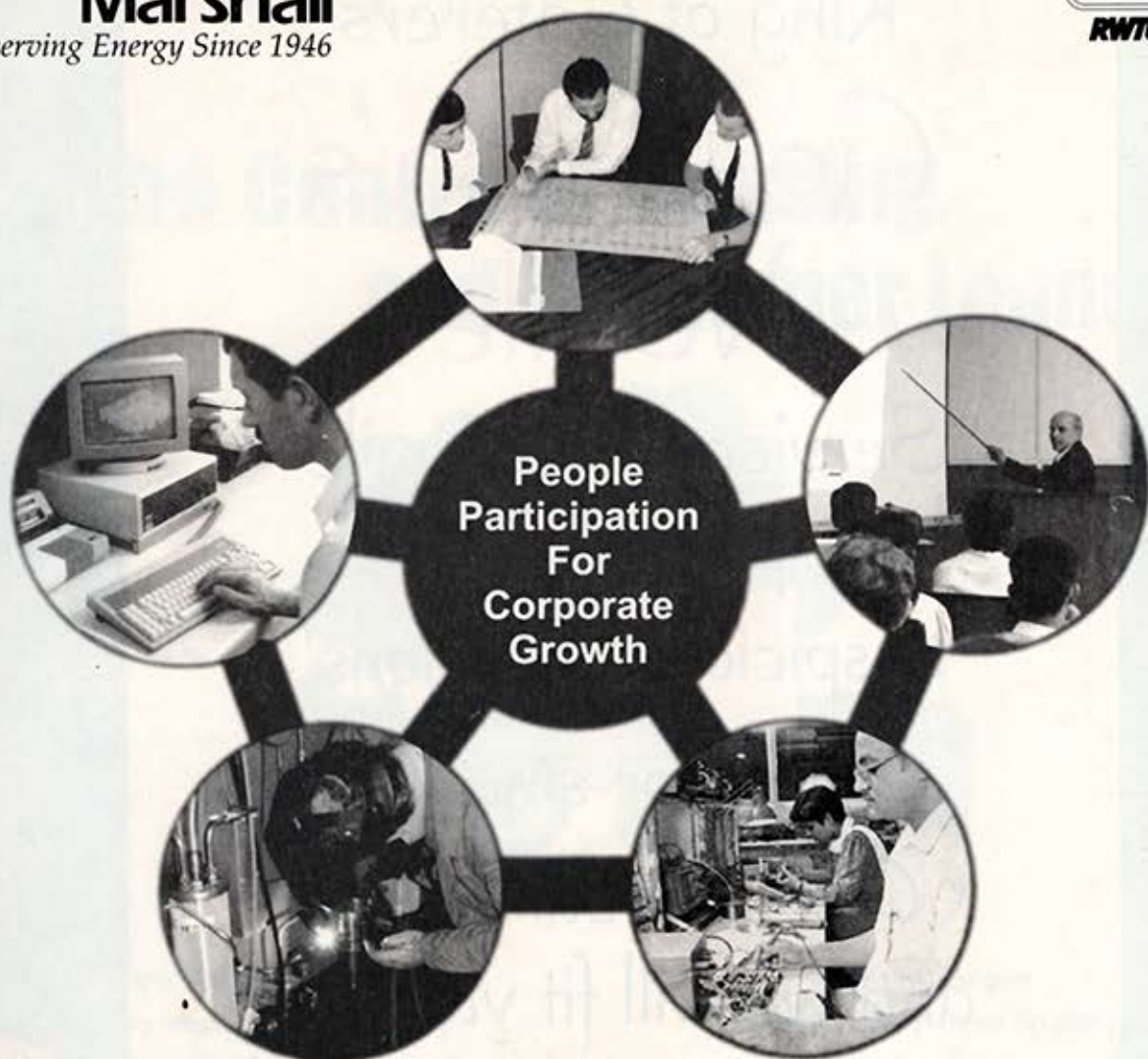
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she advocated. "Let the Zoroastrian community take the lead to create in Bombay a green space with rich vegetation that will become the model for other cities." Those interested in joining hands on this project can contact Rustom at Ness Baug, A/8, Nana Chowk, Bombay 400007, Tel: 3888962, e-mail: kathy@bom4.vsnl.net.in

The holy dip

The night temperature at Allahabad dipped to 5°C but with the first blush of dawn in the eastern sky, Nagpur's Naushad Bhagwagar and his friends joined the surge of humanity attending the Maha Kumbh in January 2001 at the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati to take a dip in the holy waters. Did he feel cleansed and rejuvenated? "Yes I did. Take a plunge in any body of ice cold water, early in the morning and you will feel the same," declared Bhagwagar. On a more serious note he mentioned that the water was surprisingly clean and clear even after thousands of people had bathed and washed in it. "It must have some special property to remain so welcoming," he believes. The waters of the Yamuna which are a dark blue-black

lose their color after joining the white and frothy Ganga.

People of all castes, color and status were among the 70 million people estimated to have gathered there though it was predominantly a gathering of rural India. "It was amusing to see groups from the same village, walking with their hands tied to each other so as not to get lost," remarked Bhagwagar. Far from being scary or intimidating there was a carnival atmosphere of gaiety. The city folks used to their comforts were housed in tents at the Kumbh Village, with a double bed, an attached European style toilet with running hot and cold water, a central dining hall and a business center where even e-mail contact was possible. "The cleanliness and the organization had to be seen to be believed," reported Bhagwagar. "Daily fogging kept the area insect and mosquito free. At night the illumination was so good, you could



Bhagwagar (left) at the Maha Kumbh
Photo: Ashok Katore

find a needle if you dropped it."

Every day, 108 fires were lit for a mahayagna and around each fire groups of holy men recited Vedic mantras. There are types and types of sadhus, noticed Bhagwagar. The naga sadhus with pierced bodies who move around naked, yogis sitting all day in the same posture, the blond, blue-eyed Swiss baba, the Utha haath baba who has held up his hand in blessing for the past 27 years and a midget baba... "By and large they are a powerful spiritual force. They claim to have renounced all desires and mate-

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rial things. They own nothing and they fear nothing. Therein lies their strength," observed Bhagwagar.

Some well-meaning people were surprised to hear of a good Parsi going to the Kumbh and even saw it as a betrayal of faith. "Visiting the Kumbh does not make you less of a Parsi. But certainly I have come back more appreciative of Hindu philosophy," he points out. A couple of months ago, he was in Jerusalem and visited the church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock, but "I did not come back a Christian or a Moslem," he continues. Considering that the next Maha Kumbh with the same planetary configurations will come only after 144 years, Bhagwagar said, "My great-grandson may go there, if only to retrace the footsteps of his revered ancestor!"

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

More murders

Within a fortnight of the murder of Dr Mani Jamshed Tata who was stabbed at her residence at Dadar on December 8, 2000, came the news of the triple murder of the elderly Avaris at their flat at Wadia House on Bombay's Hughes Road on December 22, 2000. Ninety-

three-year-old Banubai Avari, her son Rusi, 71, and daughter-in-law Roshan, 73 were found lying in pools of blood the next morning. Their maid Nanda Kamble, who had been employed following Dolly's discharge from the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital a few days earlier, was the first to notice something amiss when she came to work, according to a report in the *Mid-Day* of December 23, 2000. She promptly went to report to the police that the house had been ransacked by which time Rusi's brother Baji who lives at Fort, using a spare set of keys entered the house.

"Property dispute could not be the motive because the flat in which the trio were residing belonged to the (Bombay) Parsi Punchayet. After their death, the property was to be surrendered to the Punchayet," deputy commissioner of police, Jai Jeet Singh was quoted in the *Mid-Day*. He also noted that the culprits must have been known to the Avari family as the door was left open for them and although the flat was ransacked, "not much of the valuables are missing."

"Can you imagine this is crime prevention week and today in the morning my grandaunt, her son and her daughter-in-law were found murdered..." wrote

Behrooz Avari in his e-mail message beseeching, "I would be obliged if each one of you could please pray for their souls. Even a small prayer will do, but do pray."

Feeling more vulnerable than ever, more than 30 senior Parsi citizens from Colaba, Tardeo, Dadar and Andheri met the joint commissioner of police (crime) D. Sivanandhan at a meeting convened by Shiv Sena leader Pramod Navalkar at the Nana-Nani Park at Chowpatty on December 27, 2000. Offering to arrange meetings between the police and the residents of the Parsi housing colonies in Bombay, Sivanandhan was quoted in *The Times of India* of December 28, "The senior inspector of the area will take fingerprints of domestic workers, maintain a list of their names and addresses, check the building security and advise residents on security gadgets..." Realizing that it is virtually impossible for the police to provide security to every Parsi home, a volunteer corps of Parsi guards from different Parsi housing colonies in Bombay was deemed imperative to provide support and security to senior citizens. But as advocate Dara Marfatia pointed out, more than 50 percent of the Bombay Parsis who do

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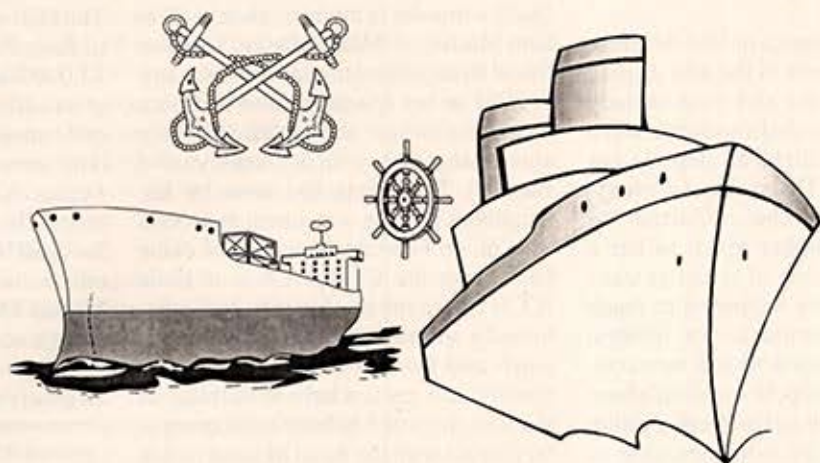
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not live in Parsi colonies are also prone to attacks from domestic workers and burglars. Former sheriff Nana Chudasama advised that every housing society should prepare a list of residents over 60 years of age and ensure their safety.

Within three weeks of this development came the news in the *Mid-Day* of January 16, 2001 that a 69-year-old lady was accosted by a chain snatcher when climbing up the flight of steps to her residence at the Dadar Parsi Colony. Summoning help, she contacted the mobile phone number given to her a year ago at a meeting of senior citizens and the police. She happened to reach the additional commissioner (central region) Javed Ahmed who in turn contacted the Matunga police station where a meeting of senior citizens and a group called the Eagle Brigade consisting of 100 volunteers in the Dadar-Matunga area was in progress. Within 15 minutes the police and the volunteers had reached her residence, according to the news report. Noted Ahmed, "I suggest that citizens, especially seniors, put up a deterrent like an access system to monitor people coming in and out of buildings. They can also contact non-governmental organizations who could send

volunteers. This multi-pronged approach can discourage criminals who could be keeping a watch out for the vulnerable."

Such faith and optimism though did not last long for within the next 20 days came the news of 80-year-old Jeroo Dalal's murder at her residence at Chateau Marine on Marine Drive. She was found strangled to death on February 5, 2001 in her spacious three-bedroom apartment (where she preferred to stay alone rather than with her son Cyrus at Bandra). Dalal was last seen by her neighbors and the watchman at around 11 p.m. on February 3, when she came back from the Cricket Club of India (CCI) where she is a life member, mentioned a write-up in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of February 6. Her murder was particularly disturbing as she was supposed to have been in regular contact with the Azad Maidan police station and "constantly in touch with our officers at the beat as well as the police station. We have with us every possible record which will be of great help in solving the case," deputy commissioner of police, Zone I, Ashok Kamte told the *Afternoon*. Known to have a massive turnover of maids, Dalal's last domestic, Nilima Mandal, had been dismissed from service just a week prior to the

murder. Whilst originally Mandal was the prime suspect, the police later gave her a clean chit but had yet to nab the real culprit.

SPOTLIGHT

The Hall of Freedom at the 'Ice Palace' in Jung Frau, at an altitude of 12,000-13,000 feet in Switzerland, has a plaque at its entrance listing the names of several eminent people who fought for freedom, notes a write-up in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*. Besides Winston Churchill, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Eleanor Roosevelt and others, listed at the end was the name of **Minoo Masani**, a fearless crusader of India's economic liberalization.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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Arnavaz S. Mama

As the glamor and razzmatazz of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (7WZC) recedes, its spirit of moderation, endorsement of basic Zoroastrian values and an overriding respect for human rights and dignity emerge as the bedrock of the "virtual Zoroastrian nation" as Congress executive board (EB) co-chair Dr Dolly Dastoor calls the globally dispersed community. Events immediately preceding the Congress were endorsed by most speakers at the Congress itself as the hitherto silent majority of moderates demanded courteous civil debate where all shades of argument and interpretation of the Zoroastrian faith had a right to be heard. In no uncertain terms they expressed their displeasure with cacophony from both ends of the spectrum.

Unlike the pinpointed direction to create a world body of Zoroastrians without further delay that emanated from the 6WZC at Tehran, the 7WZC made no resolutions. The North American organizers had hoped the negotiations of the past four years would yield tangible result and the congregation at Houston would witness the birth of an effective world body. Differences of perception however deferred this event. But the Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce acquired its first operating team of directors and a network of Zarathushti women was established.

The Sixth Congress' other direction — the creation of more educational material on the religion and its history — has been vigorously implemented especially in the western world by the youth, for the youth. A further seven publications were launched as a special feature of the Congress. The souvenir issue of the *FEZANA* (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) *Journal* recapitulated the past, focussing on events that changed the community's perception of itself. And

The Z Factor, Life's Driving Lessons by Shahriar Shahriari, a FEZANA publication, was distributed free with the Congress kit. A Book Fair, sponsored by the ZTFE (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe), showcased over 400 publications about Zoroastrians or by Zoroastrian authors. Also on sale was a video documentation of 35 young North American Zarathushtis' travel through Iran — *In the Footsteps of our Forefathers* by Tenaz Dubash — whose viewing drew record crowds.

Two days of sports and games prefaced the Congress whose two glittering social highlights were the distribution of the World Zarathushti Awards and the induction of 20 Zoroastrian women, past and present, into the Hall of Fame. A time capsule was ceremonially planted at the Houston Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center to commemorate the millennial gathering and the Unity Quilt, designed and crafted by Khurshid Bamboat of London to symbolize the coming together of Zoroastrians from all parts of the world, jubilantly unfurled. For the first time, 27 western music instrumentalists from Australia, Canada, India and the US played together as the World Zoroastrian Orchestra under conductors Farobag Cooper and Adil Mehta with piano soloist Sorab Wadia and soprano Dilshad Khambatta. That they got together for the first time only a couple of days before the concert added to the thrill. Additional orchestra members comprised professional musicians from the Houston Symphony and Houston Grand Opera.

Outstanding young Zoroastrians from Australia, India, Iran and Pakistan were jointly sponsored by the North American and Hongkong communities under the Zarathushti Field Student Project conceived and coordinated by Houston's Aban and Purvez Rustomji. The 21, selected by an international panel of

judges, attended the Congress free of cost and lived with Zoroastrian families in Houston. The top two winners of the Global Scholastic Competition coordinated by Zoroastrian Society of Ontario's (ZSO) Dr Jehan Bagli — Zubin Hiramanek of Sydney and Pashna Munshi of Bombay — earned high praise and US\$5,000 and US\$3,000 respectively for their essays on "A blueprint for a viable Zarathushti community of the future." The cash awards were donated by the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hongkong, Canton and Macao.

On display were 27 rare coins of Sassanian vintage with commentary by Dr Sam Kerr of Sydney as also a photo exhibition and film show by Feraydoon Demehri of Vancouver.

With the exception of a keynote address and a plenary session for the first two hours each day (December 28, 2000-January 1, 2001), a plethora of events in the many big and small public rooms of Houston's J. W. Marriott Hotel — as many as six to eight different talks/screenings held simultaneously — kept the over 2,200 registrants absorbed in the community's history and culture. The tight programming however left no leeway for overruns which affected the post-lunch sessions on the 29th and the 30th when the women's lunch and the awards luncheon took substantially longer than the one-and-a-half hours allocated to them. With the same spaces used for sessions and banquets, the pre-lunch sessions were also abbreviated to enable the Hotel staff to lay the tables for the meals.

The published program sustained substantial revision as several panelists including session chairs and speakers like Dr Pallan Ichaporia did not appear. Indian notables among them were Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, Ervad Parvez Bajan, Pheroza Godrej and Cyrus Merchant. Dr Mehroo Bengalee, Dr Shernaz Cama



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and Dr Jimmy Sidhva sent papers read out by others.

The company that manufactured the Marriott's elevators lost out on a major advertising copy: crammed to bursting like the Bombay suburban trains (one stood on tiptoe, bag held overhead) they coped with the Zoroastrian onslaught from basement to the 23rd level! The stray non-Zoroastrian guests seemed totally bemused by the mod and elegant English speakers milling around them who suddenly lapsed into Gujarati or Farsi. The catering department coped manfully, the cheerful waiters gingerly serving through a welter of legs and

bags as the audience concentrated on the events on stage. The Hotel's accounts department, however, seemed less savvy with some confusion about remittances received. Mercifully, by check-out time these had been sorted out!

The inaugural

Pichori-clad mobeds Ervad Rustamanian of Iran, Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji of India and 12-year-old Ervad Mehermash Bhadha of Karachi lit the divo signifying the inauguration of the Congress after the nine-member International Gatha Group had sung Yasna 30.2 wherein Prophet Zarathushtra urges his listeners to ponder on His message and individually decide whether or not to follow Him. Through the preceding months, during the Congress and as the topic of the FEZANA special event (see "Hearken with your ears..." p 112) resounded this Gathic verse. Master of ceremonies Kaemerz Dotiwala of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston

(ZAH) read the message from US President Bill Clinton welcoming Zoroastrians to America, a "beacon of religious freedom," to strategise on the challenges of the 21st century. The spirited singing of the US and Canadian national anthems by Sonia Behrana and the duo Bella Tata and Vista Pourbahrami respectively was followed by an audiovisual on the Mazdayasnan faith which pitted Ahura Mazda against Ahriman, as it recounted Zarathushti mythology through the Peshdadians and the Kayanians and through recorded history. Guest of honor Gordon Quan, city of Houston's council member at large, looked "with pride at the Zoroastrian community of Houston" and reiterated the Mayor's message proclaiming December 28, 2000 "The Zarathushti Odyssey Day."

The singing of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarathushti* by the choir group of Chicago had been programmed. While most Parsis stood around ignorant of the lyr-

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ics, most Iranians spontaneously joined in singing a Persian song which they considered the national anthem of Zoroastrian Iran (see "Iranian Zoranthem," p 74).

Dastoor, in her welcome speech, enunciated the aims of the Congress organizers:

"This Congress was built on a dream of recognizing, learning and celebrating our Zarathushti heritage through the millennia so that we could confidently go forth and continue our odyssey in the next millennium... of uniting the world community, of sensitizing Zarathushtis scattered across countries, to our culture and heritage, of bringing the young and the not so young together..."

"And to a great extent our dream has been realized. We have with us today Zarathushtis from Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Sweden, France, Iran, England and finally Zarathushtis from every part of Canada and the United States, all participating in the Congress. Our various projects are all truly global both in character and content. We have involved the world in bringing the world together."

She urged the gathering to reflect on "What legacies should we leave behind

and what legacies we need to take with us to the 21st century... Will we be able to mobilize ourselves into action to bring about real unity based on mutual respect and tolerance for our diversity of views? Will we be able to develop the art of dialog and civic debate to frame and further the issues of tomorrow instead of slinging mud at those who disagree with us? Will we take with us a vision of a civic Zarathushti society united around

"We have involved the world in bringing the world together"

our heritage and doctrine? Will we make enduring institutions out of a community of equals?"

Describing the 21st century as "a world very different from the world of our grandparents let alone the world of the Sassanians," Dastoor noted, "We are now all part of the 'rights revolution in a rich mosaic of cultures.' The rights revolution is the story of how previously excluded groups have obtained the right of equality, in basic fundamental human rights, women's rights, children's rights, language rights, minority rights. Will the rights revolution apply to religion?

With respect to doctrine and practice, how does one distinguish between the rights of an individual Zarathushti and the right of the Zarathushti community and its greater good? The rights revolution is a story of 'inclusion' of the vast panorama of cultures and languages of the people of the original Iranian lands."

"Inclusion" and "exclusion" had become the buzz words of the 7WZC as liberals successfully fought traditionalists to reinstate the original credo of the 7WZC organisers — to include all shades of the Zoroastrian spectrum at the Congress — which had been sidetracked by the vociferous orthodox lobby. Wary of the rationalist approach of the California based Zarathushtrian Assembly and its architect, scholar Ali Jafarey, the traditionalists advocate an "exclusive" policy.

"We will be raising questions to which there may not be any immediate answers, but at least we will have had the courage to talk about them at a public forum," continued Dastoor. "Even though it is the past that has brought us together today, it is our commitment to the future and to the challenges facing us in the next 25 years that will animate our discussions."

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ing Zoroastrian existence in North America and "for the trust they have shown in our ability and at our efforts to preserve the religion of Zarathushtra in our own unique way," she summoned the gathering to "work together, in the spirit of give and take to build a strategic plan for the future of the community, a strategic plan to form a virtual Zarathushti nation."

EB co-chair Homi Davier was introduced as the man who "inspired and glued Team Congress." "I knew I was good, but not that good," he quipped, as he congratulated the worldwide team of volunteers working long hours to organize and consolidate the many events presented under the Congress umbrella. "What lies in store for our future?" he asked. Amid "all the uncertainties" he identified "the richest asset of our community: our enormous diversity."

"Whatever your name, I as an individual welcome you with open arms," FEZANA president Framroze Patel told the assembled delegates. He extolled the "extraordinary effort" of ZAH in preparing for the Congress and of FEZANA architect and founder president Rohinton Rivetna and his wife Roshan in their long service to the North American community. He also recorded his "deep appreciation of members of the earlier program committee," a reference to the initial committee comprising Khorshed Jungalwala, Yezdi Rustomji, Kaemerz Dotiwala, Jehan Bagli, Adi Davar and Maneck Bhujwala. Fearing friction between two of the members, the EB had summarily dismissed the program committee and replaced it with a system of "tracks" based on certain themes e.g. Zarathushtra's vision, religious and educational, social and historical, youth, etc, each with its own chairperson. The change had led to unhappiness among North American intellectuals, particularly the liberals.

"Remember we are human beings first, Zarathushtis second," cautioned ZAH president Farrokh Firozgari and went on to reminisce how every hour of the Congress represents hours and days spent in preparation at the Center and at peoples' homes.

Zoroastrian member of the Iranian parliament Dr Khosrow Dabestani brought the message of Iranian president Mohammad Khatami who referred to Zoroastrianism as the "essence of divine religious monotheism and uplift of man." Considering Iran the "cradle of

Zarathushtra's religion (which has affected) other divine religions," Khatami spoke of the "divine, immortal heritage" of the minuscule community. Messages from the Governor-General of Canada and President of India had been published in the program souvenir of the Congress. Lack of simultaneous translation facilities and that only 85 from over 300 Iranian Zoroastrians wanting to attend the Congress got US visas was

"Remember we are human beings first, Zarathushtis second"

a source of complaint. "In future hold Congresses only where Iranian Zoroastrians are not discriminated against," urged an angry 6WZC president Dr Mahyar Ardeshtiri.

Senior trustee Minoo Shroff represented the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) in the absence of chairman Jamshed Guzder whom ill health precluded from attending. Shroff spoke about the BPP's activities, "an old venerable institution coeval with the East India Company... old but vibrant, a little slow but surefooted."

"The 7WZC is the same size as the community in Karachi but we are united, having the force of thousands," proclaimed Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal president Toxy Cowasjee who had been involved in the various activities of the Congress and had coordinated the Daughters of Mashyani event.

BPP senior executive Sheroo Master spoke of the time capsule buried in Sanjan on November 20, 2000 and the 14 youths sponsored by the BPP to attend the Congress.

Congress liaison and secretary of the Fourth and Fifth Congresses, Homai Modi expressed her "deep appreciation for all the silent organizers who have brought this Congress to fruition" and conveyed Guzder's suggestion that the 8WZC be held in India. Counterclaims to hold the Congress in Tehran and London respectively were lodged by Dabestani and ZTFE president Dorab Mistry.

Ken Williams, author of *The Magi: From Zarathushtra to the Three Wise Men* said he had "met Zarathushtra in the college library" adding, "He changed my life!" Referring to the Houston Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Cen-

ter as "the latest shining star in Houston," he described Zarathushti representatives on their Forum for International Understanding as a "visible force for good."

Member associations of FEZANA and representatives from Australia, New Zealand, France, Hongkong and Singapore greeted the Congress delegates. As president of the North American Mobed Council Ervad Jal Birdy suggested the community's "60-70 ordained mobeds... evolve spiritually themselves." He then wore his other hat as vice president of Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA), describing it as a "solitary voice in an otherwise liberal environment."

The mark of a man

Providing the keynote address on the first working day of the Congress, United Nations (UN) undersecretary general Jamsheed Marker ("tough, shrewd and cultivated," as Dastoor introduced him) commended the members of the EB — Dastoor, Davier, Ardeshtiri, Anoshiravani, Sarosh Manekshaw, Framroze Patel, Yasmin Pavri, Jamshed Mistry, Sarosh Collector and the Congress and FEZANA secretary Arnavaz Sethna and all those, particularly Aban and Purvez Rustomji, who "made it possible for the less affluent to be here."

Disclaiming scholarship or theological knowledge, Marker noted that he was addressing the gathering because he had had the "good fortune" to journey throughout the world and deal with all manner of people, encountering moral issues as well as problems of statecraft. Experience had taught him to "value my faith" and the community's shared attributes of honesty, hard work and independence. Referring to moments of crisis and difficulty, Marker said, "Nothing sustained me more than Zarathushtra's message in Yasna 30.9. I silently carried this prayer to palaces, the UN office and the jungles of Timor," emphasizing that it was "silent prayer — I did not pull out my sudreh and kusti!"

"Your presence is a testimony" to the success of the second diaspora, he said, encouraging the drive toward participation in the new global environment. "Some changes in lifestyles are necessary" to attain the opportunities that beckon, he argued, even as he urged Zarathushtis to hold fast to beliefs and values which are eternal. "With a faith

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as inspiring as Zoroastrianism we must bear responsibility for our conduct, (ensure that) we pass on the best we have inherited." To the youths he said, "You will have to blend Internet with Zoroastrianism (for) blind faith in technology is as disastrous as blind obscurantism." Quoting General Charles de Gaulle, Marker said, "History does not teach fatalism. People get the history they deserve."

Commenting on the need to set "a course for the future, free from cant and hypocrisy," Marker advised, "(It is) important to allow expression of all points of view and take them into consideration. None of us has a monopoly on wisdom. No one can know everything." He recommended "collective wisdom, earnestly exchanged."

It was proper that the 7WZC where men and women participated as equals had not made provision for women's issues or empowerment. The community's complete gender equality indicated a level of social sophistication that was "unusual even in the most advanced societies and government levels," observed Marker.

Nonetheless there is "much to be done. Sail the ship of our faith into new, un-

charted seas with confidence in the future. Heed not the blind eye nor the echoing ear... Bring to this debate the test of reason," advised Marker whose long innings as Pakistan's ambassador to various countries had culminated in his present job as a UN firefighter.

The brothers Mistree

Farrokh and Khojeste Mistree presented a touch of showmanship. Respectively posing as chela and guru they sought to

"The richest asset of our community is our enormous diversity"

bridge the "socio-theological past into the new millennium." Excerpts:

• "How do we generate right thought, word and deed?"

Recognize the physical and spiritual dimension of reality. When you emphasize only *Gathas* as philosophy, you are cutting yourself off from the spiritual reality of rituals.

• "Who is a Zarathushtrian?"

(I) suggest that we stop pussyfooting. There is no unity. Accept diversity, work

towards harmony. Develop the paradigm of *Gathas* only without breaking the old one. Let us not be intellectually dishonest. Let us not play political games. If we want to get rid of acrimony in the community then get knowledge — religious education not of a bigoted form but faithful to academic tradition. (Let us) not reinvent the wheel; develop it.

(Quoting the authority of the *Sikand-Gumanik Vigar* Khojeste said, 'I believe in dualism'.)

• "What is the alternate view to dualism? There is none available. Only the Zoroastrian religion can give a unique concept of evil.

• "Are all religions the same?"

To each person his religion is the best. I do not believe that God is one. I don't believe with Sai Baba that *sub ka malik ek hai*.

Classical Zoroastrianism deals with rituals, history and culture, a marriage between head and heart. Along with Judaism and Hinduism these classical religions have an ethnic requirement. Christianity, Islam and Buddhism belong to the romantic category. Anybody can embrace them.

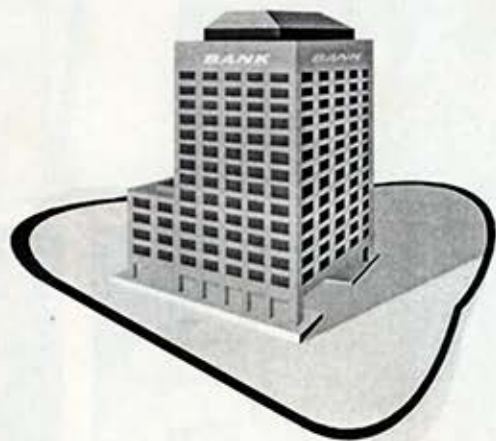
• "You appear to be advocating a split in the community. How do you justify it?"



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From left (1st row): Chicago choir, Bhadha accepting flame from Pavri. (2nd row) Dawn of Millennium jashan, Houston volunteers Freny Desai, Yasmin Medhora and Dilzi Mody. (3rd row) Araoz conducting prayers at start of first plenary. Dadachanji, Bhadha and Rustamian at inaugural prayer
(Photos: Noshir K. Medhora)

I am not advocating a split. Split is a bad word. Recognition of differences is not

a split if done amicably. I'm suggesting amicable divorce, not a split."

Living the vision

Unlike the earlier Congresses in Bombay when orthodox speakers held sway, at Houston the tables had turned. In the first plenary session, "May we not lose the vision," chaired by philosopher Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, popular mentor of the North American community, five of the six speakers made a powerful plea to

live according to Zarathushtra's light: "Shed his light as he enunciated it, not just for us Zoroastrians but for the whole world," maintained former president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago Keki Bhote.

Noting that the vagaries of history had led Zoroastrians into isolation for survival, Zareen Hakim asked, "We kept the flame alive. But why? To see it thrive and not just survive...It (is) time to reassess the world. Ethnicity cannot pre-

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serve our faith but acceptance will."

Identifying demography, bigotry, conflicts and controversy as "the enemy within," Australian Zoroastrian Association's (AZA) Dinyar Mistry noted, "If the Gathic vision is lost, everything is lost... Every minute a Zarathushti, consciously or unconsciously, professes to be a moral agent, professes the freedom to choose because it's the right thing to do and not for any other reason... If all of us are moral agents making right choices, at some time we will build a sufficient mass of good mind (and) break the tendency to controversy."

"We must not just spread the message but live it. The most vital part of the message is tolerance and respect. Zoroastrians are tolerant of others around them. We would have perished if we had been obnoxious... Are we as tolerant of one another's views?" asked Sidhva, castigating the viciousness and mudslinging in the community as "more suited to a barbaric society...Self-destructing aggression is tearing the community apart."

Comparing the mathematical precision of science as it propounds symmetry and quarks with Zarathushtra's vi-

sion of Asha as it extends to the "orderliness of social and interpersonal relationships... in terms of which the world will evolve to perfection," Irani noted, "Conflict is the conceptual reality. Our responsibility (as hamkars) is to remove it — think about it, speak about it, transform it."

A more conservative panel addressed "The Gathic Tradition of Zarathushtra" the following day. Branding himself a "mainstream Zoroastrian" Dorab Mistry accepted the "constant conflict between good and evil" where humans are "warriors for good." Noting that though there is always "the enquiring mind asking questions," Dorab Mistry contended, "If every generation thought it time to review the scriptures, nothing will be left of the original scriptures."

Arguing against the "Gathas only" concept of scholars, ZSO's Pervez Mistry noted that they were only one small part of the *Avesta*. He claimed that *Vendidad*, the only nask which has survived complete, has been "misunderstood." Because it is "written metaphorically" it enjoins "greater punishment for the murder of a dog than of a man.. The Vendidad is a ceremony... there are unseen effects of rituals... Just because the

effects are unseen it does not mean that they are imaginary... At the cutting edge of scientific principles is the concept of vibration (which is) integral to the universe.... We are being taught by academics even to recite religion to suit academic requirements!"

EB co-vice chair Sarosh Manekshaw concluded the session noting, "It is high time we centric Zarathushtis establish that we do not approve of extremes at either end."

In light of history

The keynote address on the third day was shared by Karachi's Farishta Dinshaw, Pennsylvania's Laila Contractor and Bombay's Ervad Marzban Hathiram. Iran's Sima Keshavarzi's Farsi paper was read out as she was denied a US visa.

"Certain aspects of history are not so memorable. Let us have the courage to acknowledge and learn from them," said Dinshaw. Referring to the many gods of Aryana Vaeja, worshipped by people frightened by floods and famines, Dinshaw noted, "Zarathushtra rejected the concept." Not only did Zarathushtra choose to focus on a single force, Ahura Mazda, "he chose to focus on the wis-

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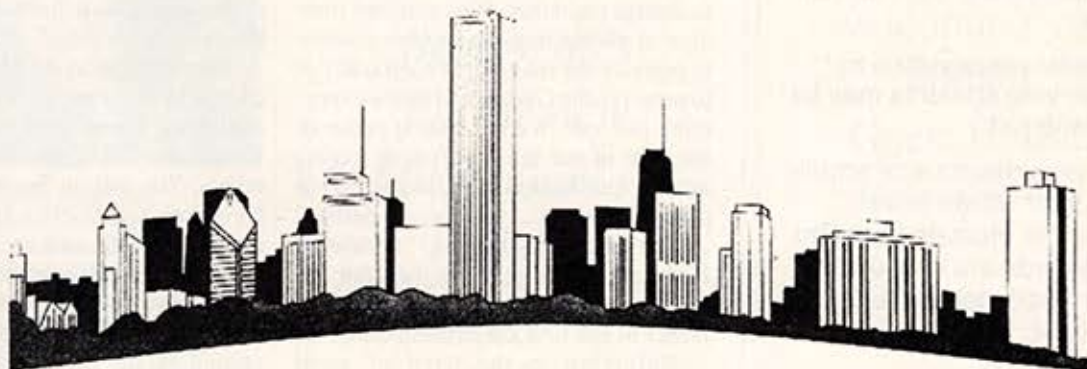
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dom, not the power, of Ahura Mazda... The only people who deserve respect according to Zarathushtra were those who were righteous." The Achemenians carried Zarathushtra's name over two continents but the sexual equality of Zarathushtra's time was lost as they segregated their women behind a veil and the pantheon of gods crept back. The Sassanians maintained a detailed system of purity and priestly injunctions and people who didn't agree were persecuted as were the Christians, recounted Dinshaw. "Navjote was held at 15 years in Zarathushtra's time. Now (the navjote) is so young, the question of choosing to be a Zarathushti is lost amid social concerns about the food served, etc," she observed.

Contractor spoke about Zoroastrian youths in the West who, mad with the divided community and the confusing answers they get, convert to other faiths. "Christian priests help every step of the way while Zarathushtis focus too much on school and getting into university or getting good jobs." She advocated the provision of funds for religious education: "Support of scholars is lacking despite our exceptional record of philanthropy."

Hathiram, perhaps the only demagog at the Congress, not only demanded that long-standing traditions and precepts be venerated as of yore, but mounted an attack on the Congress — and specifically Prof Kaikhosrov Irani who had received the Outstanding World Zarathushti Award — for "honoring individuals but not a priest who has served the community." He presented a new version of *Kisseh Sanjan*: "We ain't no refugees. We made a conscious decision to change residence. We exercised freedom of choice to go to another country to practice our religion. We left Iran not to preserve the *Gathas* and throw everything else out. We left Iran to preserve the core of the religion (which exists) not in intellectual excellence but in proper practice... in bunyad pasbani (preservation of our seed)!" thundered. Hathiram claiming to be the 28th descendant of Neriosang Dhawal, the wise leader of the first Zoroastrian diaspora.

Referring to the triad of good thoughts, words and deeds by which liberal Zoroastrians seek to live, Hathiram questioned, "Who defines good? Is good defined by petty considerations (or) convenience? That good changes from person to person. Good is defined by religion, by your prophet,

not by yourself. You have no idea what is good and bad for your soul. It is the beholden duty of ever Parsi Zarathushti to follow these tenets... 1.48 million ceremonies have been performed at the Iranshah. When we bow there we are connecting to the word, thought and deed of 1,300 years!"

Contrasting the first and second diasporas Hathiram said, "The first thing that the first group did was to ask for permission to build a fire-temple. The second group queued up for immigration," he sneered. (One wonders what would have happened to the Zoroastrian community if his illustrious forebear had used the same hectoring tone.)

Zarathushtra's challenge

Jehan Bagli began the first plenary session of the Zoroastrian community in the new millennium — "Zarathushtra's vision: The Individual making the difference" — with a prayer in memory of two outstanding Zoroastrians who died in 2000: retiring philanthropist Faridoon Zartoshty and Iranian high priest Rustom Shahzadi. Holding that the "God of Zarathushtra transcends the barriers of nationality for the unity of spirituality," Bagli quoted a Gathic verse "Help me God to guide the living, to teach all the living." To Zarathushtra "God is a friend, brother and father... Saoshyants are those who bring benefit to others... whose will is perfectly in consonance with that of Ahura Mazda... The familiar myth of three saoshyants emerged over 1,000 years after Zarathushtra... Zarathushtra dedicates his body, life blood, good mind and acts of righteousness to Ahura Mazda, thereby reciprocating the gifts he received from the creator... The challenge Zarathushtra presents to humanity is to be like him, be like his God," noted Bagli.

Equating a good Zarathushti to a good citizen by drawing on the examples of Dadabhai Naoroji, Jamshed Mehta, Keikhosrov Shahrokh, Villy Gandhi and others, Zoroastrian Society of Greater New York's (ZAGNY) Ayesha Ghadiali claimed Zarathushtis are more suited to community involvement and action. "We who follow Asha should take it as our duty to go in and transform" the world around us, she suggested.

Referring to differing interpretations of the religion, former Iranian deputy prime minister Prof Farhang Mehr noted, "Each of us wants to save the community. Each one thinks he is right. We try to implement what we believe in. But society needs teamwork, reconciling of dif-

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ferent views without compromising principles... (It is) proper to declare a truce, create understanding... If we all go our own way we waste time and energy fighting... Two Iranians plus two Parsis is equal to four Zarathushtris... Individuals can make a difference provided we live by the precepts laid down, with unity and through collective action. These seminars and congresses are very useful (because they) bring us together to understand other points of view."

Missing the comfort of an agiary as much for the Zoroastrian youth of Sydney as for herself, AZA vice president Dinaz Mistry acknowledged that many factors prevent the construction of consecrated fires in the western world. Moreover in Sydney assimilation in the mainstream is possible because it has happened to an earlier Zarathushti group, she said, pledging herself to the "well thought thought, the well thought word and well thought work." She sees the world as "poised to receive the environmentally friendly vision of Zarathushtra" and that the challenge to each Zarathushti is to understand that "the path of Asha is a process, not an event."

Summing up as session chair as well

as chair of Zarathushtra's Vision track, Mehrborzin Soroushian evoked two visions from the Zoroastrian past to serve as a guide to the future: "Zarathushtra prayed for all mankind, his message is for all humanity. He desired and called upon all of us to bring happiness to the soul of the earth. The second milestone came after the Sassanian empire made Zarathushtra's message an instrument of state which it was not meant to be. That is why we were at the receiving end when aggressors wanted to diminish us, destroy our libraries and taxed us as followers of Zarathushtra. They told us, if we want to preserve the religion, we must keep it to ourselves. Today's choice is, do we want to go according to the vision of Zarathushtra or limit ourselves to the subordination imposed on us by those who wanted to destroy us?"

Appreciating the "wonderful, graceful way the youths and (chairperson) Dina McIntyre handled the abbreviated session (in the rush to vacate the hall earmarked for the FEZANA event where Ali Jafarey and Kaikhushro N. Dastoor were to speak, Chicago's Mazda Antia, one of the youth speakers, voluntarily withdrew. It was a piquant situation as Antia was one

of those who had actively campaigned for Jafarey's right to speak and be heard), Soroushian commented, "The Congress showed how much we have accomplished in North America in such a short time." He noted that most Zoroastrians have come to North America in the last two decades and recalled that the first darbe mehr was established only 23 years ago in New York when philanthropist Arbab Rustam Guiv, in his inaugural speech had told the assembled congregation, "Be united. Be broadminded. Welcome newcomers who want to know and study Zoroastrianism. The Prophet did not stop anybody from following his principles. Try to make the Zoroastrian temple an international center."

Acknowledging those who made the Congress a success, Soroushian made a special mention of the "moral leadership" of Farshid Bakhtyari, president of the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) and of Astad Clubwala and Gev Nentin of ZAGNY who supported the IZA demand that FEZANA member associations vote on their respective resolutions to allow Jafarey to speak and that the original inclusive policy of the Con-

continued on page 204

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World winners

Five Zoroastrians were honored for their contribution to society

Arnavaz S. Mama

Two years of work culminated in the presentation of the World Zarathushti Community Awards 2000 on December 30, 2000. An innovation in the history of the World Zoroastrian Congresses, the six awardees, adjudged internationally outstanding by a panel of 49 judges, were presented specially designed trophies, themselves the object of a global competition.

That the names of the awardees had been announced months earlier did not detract from the solemnity and glitter of the ceremony conducted along with a special luncheon held in the Marriott's main exhibit salon and linked by telemedia for simultaneous view in the

ballroom as all the 2,200 delegates could not be accommodated in a single venue.

Adjudged Outstanding World Zarathushti, Kaikhosrov Dinshaw Irani, emeritus professor of philosophy at City College, New York where a former student has anonymously contributed \$2,000,000 to establish the K. D. Irani Chair of Philosophy, was introduced by Purvez Kolsawalla of Sydney. The award, sponsored by the house of Godrej, was presented to him by Nadir Godrej.

Irani's frequent visits to Sydney as guest lecturer at the university prompted Kolsawalla to proudly claim him and his wife Piroja as fellow Australians. Kolsawalla's assertion of Irani's most "endearing trait, his great humility and tolerance of every point of view," was fully endorsed by the appreciative audience.

Describing the honor as "unbelievable," Irani recalled how his parents had taught him to serve the community. "I had no idea (my efforts) would be appreciated by the community to this extent," noted the philosopher in his normal, self-disparaging style. "I express to all of you, the leaders of the Houston 2000 Congress and to you, my fellow religionists who have some regard for me, 'thank you very much.'"

Thanking the organizers "for giving me this immense personal pleasure to introduce Mehraban Zartoshty," Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Minoo Shroff described the frail philanthropist as the embodiment of Zoroastrian virtues and attributes before presenting him the World Zarathushti Award for Humanitarian Service and/or Philanthropy: "generosity unbounded, done without fanfare or publicity... old-world charm that made you feel you are sitting beside a noble person. In honoring him we honor ourselves."

An emotional Zartoshty, escorted to the stage by his niece Homayun Goshtaspour, daughter of his late brother Faridoon, considered himself "lucky to be present at this huge gathering of Zarathushtis from all over the world" and



Clockwise from top left: Awardees Mehta and J. Irani; Goshtaspour, Zartoshty, Pavri, Joshi and Shernaz Verahrami (Photo: Noshir Medhora); Irani receiving award from Godrej and MC, Trity Pourbahrami; Joshi, Jasavala and Zartoshty; the award and its designer Akhtar-khavari

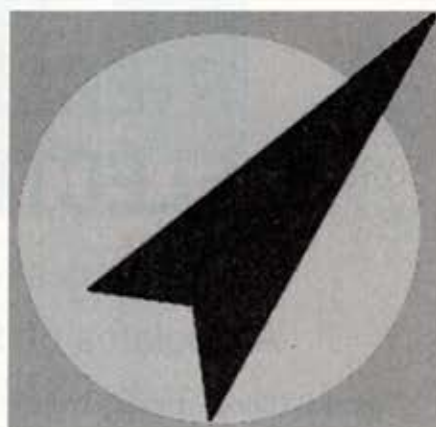


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hoped the "fantastic, unbelievable" assembly would proceed with peace and harmony for that would ensure progress. He thanked Awards Committee chair Dinshaw Joshi, "aged like myself, doing his duty," the judges and his "dear wife who encouraged me, cared for me and with the cooperation of my children helped me regain my health."

Accepting the award on behalf of his late brother and himself Zartoshty said, "I am sure his spirit is here with us ... My brother was named Shah Faridoon when he was born and he proved himself king of the family. He was a man with bright intelligence, strong will power and leadership, always ready to help the community. With hard work he brought the family business under one umbrella. He was not only my brother but advisor, leader, partner. He worked 16 to 18 hours a day with sincerity, honesty and unbreakable unity."

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and put aside a portion of your income for the less fortunate. Drop by drop, make an ocean. To get an award in one's lifetime is not easy, but to get a daily award is very easy... inner happiness is the real award, the real reward."

"The only hope of recognition for the Zarathushti community is the excellence of the people within the community and their renown in their fields of discipline," observed Zoroastrian Society of Ontario president Sam Vesuna as he proceeded to introduce Dr Jamshed J. Irani, managing director of India's Tata Steel, who won the World Zarathushti Award for Excellence in Business or Profession. A gold medallist throughout his life, metallurgist and manager par excellence of whose career Vesuna noted, "Excellence is perseverance... You can't reach (such levels) unless you are dedicated and love what you're doing."

Accepting the award on behalf of his father, Zubin Irani quipped, "My father gets the recognition and I have to speak in front of 2,000 people. Who's getting the raw end of the deal?" but acknowledged his father's "two big values which inspired me: honesty and hard work."

Congress co-chair Dolly Dastoor pre-



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sented the World Zarathushti Award for Excellence in the Performing Arts to renowned conductor Zubin Mehta. It was received by a member of the Mehta family in the absence of the maestro who was in Munich conducting the Bavarian Philharmonic Orchestra. Thanks to the marvels of telecommunication Zubin Mehta addressed the audience via the two screens put up at both venues, apologizing for his absence and conveying the regards of all his family. Bowing his head he registered his gratitude to the community.

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) president Dorab Mistry introduced Kerman Jasavala, winner of the World Zarathushti Youth Award for Outstanding Leadership, who received the trophy, sponsored by the Zartoshty brothers at the hands of Mehraban Zartoshty. An advanced information technologist, Jasavala was chairman for six years of London's Young Zoroastrian (YZ) Committee when his crowning achievement was the organization and successful conclusion of the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in London in 1997, as noted Mistry. "More honored" to receive the trophy from Zartoshty, Jasavala stated that he had

"not won it single-handedly" and thanked the YZ Committee and the ZTFE for having enabled him to achieve what he did. "It is time for the youth and the old to work together and work things out... Learn the art of tolerance and compromise to live together," he suggested to the audience.

The Award Trophy Design Competition winner Shahram Akhtar-khavari of Tehran was one of those who was denied a visa by the US government. A graduate of the art school of Tehran's Azad University, Akhtar-khavari's trophy design was selected from among 90 entries from 44 artists around the world by a panel of six judges. Ness Lakdawala of Quebec undertook the manufacture and transportation of the striking crystal trophies to Houston. Feroza Fitch of Maryland designed and produced the certificates that accompanied the trophies.

Joshi of Washington, who has constituted and administered the North American Zoroastrian Awards for the past 10 years, chaired the internationally constituted Awards Committee with Yasmin Pavri of Houston as vice chair. Noted Indian solicitor Burjor Antia, Iranian surgeon Dr Mahyar

Ardeshiri, Singapore's Rustom Ghadiali, Pakistan's Nergish Jamsaji, Australia's Kolsawalla, UK's Mistry and Canada's Vesuna were the regional representatives on the Committee along with the late Villy Gandhi of New Jersey. Though Gandhi succumbed to cancer in mid 2000 her work on the FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) Awards Committee for the 1996 and 1998 North American Zarathushti Community Awards was instrumental in establishing the awards categories, their definitions and evaluation criteria which were emulated for the World Zarathushti Community Awards — 2000, notes a special dedication in the awards ceremony brochure designed by Aban Rustomji.

The 79 nominations received had been evaluated strictly on the basis of the nomination data, as noted Joshi in his inaugural address. While Kolsawalla presented him a memento at the end of the ceremony on behalf of the awards committee, Pavri, in her vote of thanks, described Joshi as a "fantastic person to work with and a very easy person to work with — because he does all the work!"

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Daughters of Mashyani

Honoring great forbears and contemporaries,
Zarathusti women set goals for further bonding

Arnavaz S. Mama

The professionalism of the arrangements set the mood for the special lunch where 20 Zarathusti women, past and present, were inducted into the "Hall of Fame." One of the many legacy projects at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (7WZC) conceived by the fertile two-some Dolly Dastoor and Aban Rustomji, what set it apart was the meticulous detail of preparation and the panache with which it was presented by coordinator Toxy Cowasjee, president of the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal.

Each table was a visual delight with the yellow rose of Texas dominating the beautiful floral centerpiece arranged by Pakistan's Dilshad Irani. A small artpaperbook, *Daughters of Mashyani*, its cover depicting Mashyani, the mother figure of Zarathustrian mythology, her arms extended to embrace the world as designed by Pakistan's Tannaz Minwalla, reflected the stage backdrop on each table setting. A set of cards repeating the motif not only whetted the appetite for an elegantly restrained lunch menu coordinated by Arnaz Marker and Cowasjee but for the events to follow: the induction of honored persons, a fashion show "On Wings of Time," depicting Zarathusti dress as it evolved over time and the "Zarathusti Women at the Crossroads," a workshop in three modules coordinated and chaired by Shehernaz Joshi-Verahrami. A gift wrapped chocolate topped the package. Corsages for the awardees featured the 12-petaled stylized rosette of Achemenian ancestry.

The books, financed from World Zoroastrian Organisation funds by WZO-India managing trustee Dinshaw Tamboly were transported to Houston courtesy of Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Jamshed Guzder and Airfreight, the table accessories by courtesy of Karachi's Happy Minwalla and Cathay Pacific, all of whom Cowasjee acknowledged in her welcome address, not forgetting husband Cyrus' continued

good humor over the stressful months of preparation.

Mashyani, the first woman of Iranian legend, to whom were born six sets of twins — the primogenitors of mankind — "epitomizes all shades of womanhood — innocence and allure, tenacity and fragility, generosity and sentimentality. In legends, she is equal to her male counterpart Mashya with arms on their shoulders, joined to each other, and of the same shape and height. To pay homage to her, we decided to name the women's forum, Daughters of Mashyani," noted Cowasjee.

Karachi's Farishta Dinshaw compiled the brief histories of the 20 outstanding Zarathusti women chosen by three international women judges and Brossard, Canada's Dilshad Marolia's Foreword provided the sociological backdrop to their achievements:

- The late Motlibai Maneckjee Wadia rebuilt the Udvada Atash Behram, constructed the road linking the Udvada railway station to the Iranshah and deposited money with the government for its maintenance. The Bai Motlibai Obstetric Hospital on the J. J. Hospital complex in Bombay is one among her myriad charities, public and private.
- The late Jerbai N. Wadia pioneered the low-cost housing colonies, among them the resplendent Rustom Baug, where a large majority of Parsis reside in Bombay.
- The late Madame Bhikhaiji Rustam Cama, social worker and revolutionary who spurned wealth and social position to nurse plague victims and fight for Indian independence from her European exile, publicly unfurling the flag of independent India in 1907.
- The late Lady Hirabai Cowasjee Jehangir, the first woman to chair the BPP and fountainhead of such institutions as the Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Institute of Science and the Jehangir Art Gallery besides a number of schools.
- The late Lady Meherbai Dorabji Tata,

an indefatigable fundraiser for the benefit of the underprivileged.

•The late Manijeh Kermani Shahrokh, Bombay born, Shanghai reared, a violin virtuoso who became the first woman to participate in regular meetings of the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Tehran, started the Zoroastrian Women's Association in 1940 and diligently worked for women's uplift in a conservative society.

•Gool Khurshed Minwalla, pioneer of the Montessori movement in Pakistan, whose educational and social work has helped leprosy victims and criminals. Eighty-seven-year-old Minwalla was one of the few to be honored in person and received a standing ovation.

•Farangis Kaikhosrow Shahrokh worked to give a voice to the women of Iran, lobbied for the welfare of female prisoners, established the Iranian Handicraft Organisation and was founding president of the California Zoroastrian Center among a host of activities.

•Poona's Dr Banoo Jehangir Coyaji, a Ramon Magsaysay awardee for her lifetime dedication to reproductive health, childcare and family planning on whom the Poona and Bombay's SNDT Universities have conferred honorary D Litt degrees.

•The late Meher Jamshed Patel of Karachi, an extraordinary tennis champion turned social worker and spiritualist.

•Roda Homi Mistry, former member of India's Rajya Sabha (upper house of Parliament) from Hyderabad, who founded the School of Social Work recently renamed Roda Mistry College of Social Work and Research Centre by the state government.

•Parichehr Namdar Freydooni of Tehran, a leading contemporary artist whose unique painting 'Afringani' has captured the movement of the burning flame when viewed from different angles — a unique achievement. She has conceived logos, made maps and designed the out-



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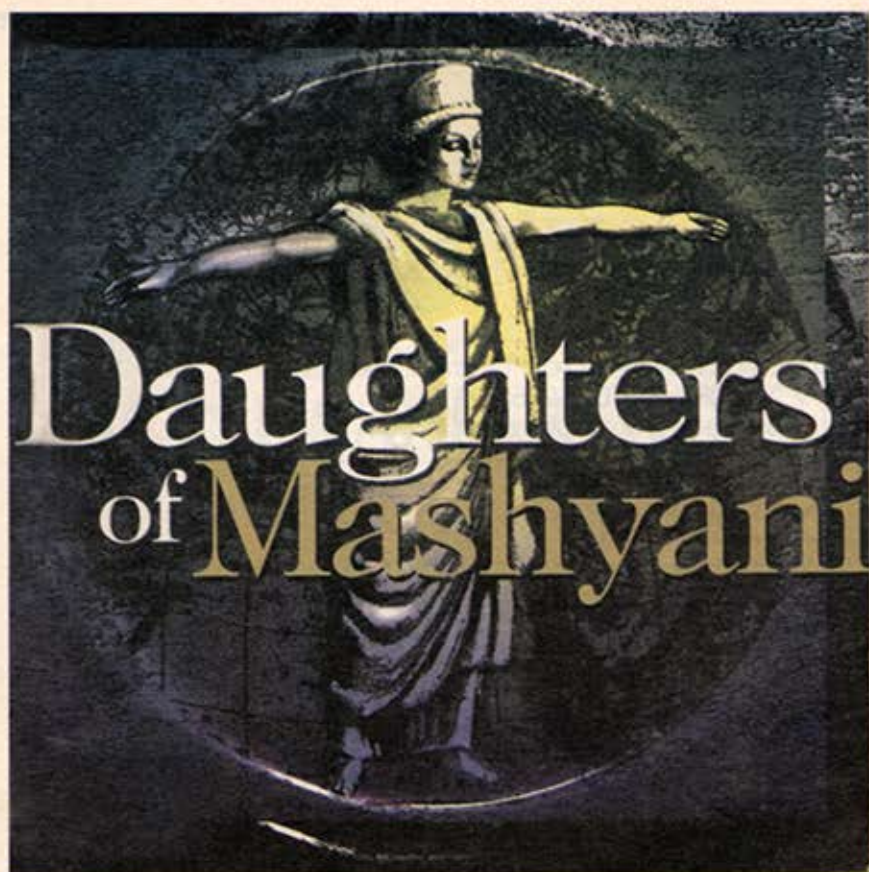
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Traditional fashions, Cowasjee (left) and Kaikobad



L to R (1st row): R. Patel, Joshi-Verahrami, Clubwalla; Gifford, Kapadia, B. Tata, D. Mistry; (2nd row): Marolia, M. Wadia, J. Wadia, Cama, Jehangir, M. Tata, M. Shahrokh; (3rd row): Minwalla, F. Shahrokh, Coyaji, M. Patel, R. Mistry, Freydooni, Bahrami; (4th row): A. Desai, Sidhwa, Rivetna, Hansotia, Dastoor, Master-Moos, Kiash





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fit Iranian Zarathushti mobeds wear for religious ceremonies.

•Tooran Shahriari Bahrami, the first Zarathushti woman to practise law in Iran in 1963, is a poet whose work has been regularly published. In 1999 she was officially recognized as one of 60 outstanding women of Iran.

•Dr Armaity Sapur Desai, former chairperson of India's University Grants Commission, is convener of its review committee for social work education in India and for the review of recruitment and selection procedures for India's civil services.

•Bapsi N. Sidhwa, first Zarathushti woman novelist to achieve international acclaim, whose novel *Ice-Candy Man* was scripted into the film *Earth*, earning critical acclaim as well as a place in then US president Bill Clinton's briefing kit before his visit to the Indian subcontinent in March 2000. Sidhwa recited a poem she had composed and dedicated it to the WZ Congress 2000 (see "They say," p 58).

•Roshan R. Rivetna, nuclear physicist, editor-in-chief of *FEZANA Journal* and former winner of the North American Outstanding Zoroastrian Award with her husband Rohinton, founder president of

FEZANA, for her involvement in establishing a unified infrastructure for the Zarathushti community in North America.

•Dr Mehroo D. Hansotia, renowned Indian obstetrician and gynecologist, for her pioneering work in the field of infer-

"There are approximately 5,000 Zoroastrian women in North America. How many have reached the position where their thoughts and ideas influence others?"

tility and assisted reproduction.

•Dr Dolly P. Dastoor, clinical psychologist, professor and researcher in gerontology and Alzheimer's Disease, founding secretary and second president of FEZANA, who is involved in promoting the status of women through Zonta

International.

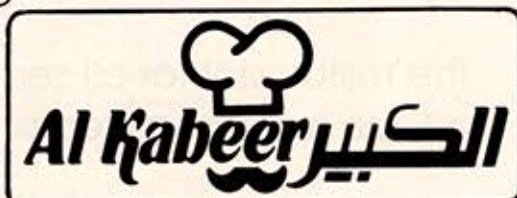
•Meher Master-Moos, lawyer and teacher who is founder president of the Mazdayasnie Monasterie and the Zoroastrian College, takes active part in propagating alternative medicine.

•Shireen Khushroo Kiash has represented India in basketball, hockey and cricket and has coached college and club teams and volunteers her time to teach basketball to the hearing-impaired.

Acknowledging the receipt of 78 nominations, Cowasjee notes in her Preface to the book, "I would like to put on record here that this is just the beginning. There are many more capable women whom we know of in our minds, but whose names were not nominated for reasons of modesty, disinterest and passivity." Many of the current inductees and the proud descendents of those past received the memento at the hands of Parichehr Farhang Mehr.

Over 30 models displayed period and contemporary outfits, sashaying down the ramp presenting the evolution of Zarathushti apparel. Coordinator Hovi Shroff shared the narration, which she had co-scripted with Dady Mistry, with Nina Deboo and Cyrus Mistry.

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The workshop, "Zarathushti Women at the Crossroads," which followed, was divided into three modules. Under the theme "Family and children," former vice chancellor of Bombay University Dr Mehroo Bengalee's paper was read in her absence by BPP senior executive Sheroo Master. Bengalee was critical of contemporary Zoroastrian homes which she termed "boarding houses," its inmates "independent of each other and sometimes in isolation... adolescents bypassed or left to their own resources... the mother neglecting the house on the pretext of supplementing the family income."

Australian Zoroastrian Association vice president Dinaz Mistry, a former Indian Administrative Service officer who is a human resource manager by education and training, concentrated on challenges Zarathushti women have had to face: biology and beliefs and practices tied up to ideas of pollution, menstruation being explained as "uncontrolled pollution" in the *Vendidad*, etc. "Women did not stand a chance. They came to believe it. They were always on the crossroads and under fire!"

She referred to the "secret women's business" she conducted in Sydney to create a data base on the problems afflicting the community where a large group is caught between the extremes of politics and religious polarization. "In Kanpur I went to the agiary as a child. The religiosity remains with me," said Mistry who finds a "dimensional shift" in her new environment. In the absence of agiaries in the western world and priests who can purvey the religion with understanding, the recourse open to Zarathushtis was to cultivate the good mind and with good thinking, to acquire the spirituality to commune with a personal god, she stated. The secret women's business targets women who are the "prime decision makers in social matters... to attempt to stop drifting... to plan collectively for the future."

Asserting that values are caught rather than taught, cultural management consultant Zareen Karani Araoz felt the need for Zarathushti mothers to "evolve with changing times in order to withstand the mainstream pressures" that do not support Zarathushti values. Children

will "preserve what they have enjoyed, not what is thrust down them," she observed. "(We say) a Zarathushti cannot tell a lie. Do our children have that faith? Children need to see total integrity in the home, that parents are truthful to each other, to the family and the community at large... What are we doing for the children to see that we go beyond self-interest?... The role of the mother is critical. If there is peace in the home, community, organization, it will be picked up by the children. I'm not sure we're there. We need to work on it, show that living by Zarathushti values is

fun, that it's productive... Rituals (can be seen as) transmitters of values (like) saying *Ashem* before food..."

The module dealing with "Community involvement and representation" began with UK politician and social worker Zerbano Gifford defining politics as "certain sorrow, uncertain joy." The two things that kept Gifford going were the desire to "stir up the zeal of other women" and to enlighten men. Gifford says, "evil comes in many forms" like child labor, lack of housing, lack of education. "When you have women as one-third of an elected body, things happen... (You are) fighting for the rights of other people."

Worldwide coordinator for internal audit of a pharmaceutical company, Paris based Katayun Kapadia had served in several positions on the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey board and as secretary of FEZANA. Kapadia believes that it takes a community to raise and nourish children, care for elders. Her message to Zarathushti women was to shed their apathy, become role models, spare one hour a week for community work to "make the world aware of the Zoroastrian religion, educate the masses on Zoroastrian values and beliefs, showcase the religion" through teamwork and an innovative, optimistic attitude.

Political affairs officer at the UN Liaison Office in Yugoslavia, Dr Vera Mehta spoke of women's empowerment vis-à-vis the pressure to bear more children. "Are men willing to take a cut in salary and work hours so that the family is not neglected and the wife can get professional satisfaction?" she asked. "Get into the mainstream," she advised.

They say

People with no land of their own
Are dust to the wind.
Are blown away.
We who have no land to claim
Are not blown away.
We are resilient.

They say
A people dispersed by conquest fall apart.
Scattered like rice
On loamy earth, we have sent down roots —
Have not fallen apart.

Like sturdy sapling transplants
We have stood fast on alien soil,
Coaxed hospitality from it.
Others have claimed us as their own—
We belong to humanity.

Like men who embrace a new faith
Become promoters of that faith,
We have cultivated the bits of earth
We have lit upon —
In Zoroaster's name

They say people felled by conquest
lose their will and incentive.
We are not dispirited.
Our spines are straight,
We are survivors.

Though we have lost pieces
of our past to antiquity,
Our poets and musicians,
Visionaries and philanthropists,
Are creating a new Zarathushti heritage.

Bapsi Sidhwa

"There are approximately 5,000 Zoroastrian women in North America. How many have reached the position where their thoughts and ideas influence others?" asked Bella Tata, currently executive assistance officer (Pacific region) in the Canadian federal government's department of industry. Acknowledging that those who instilled values and did community work in the past did not need to contribute to the economic scene, Tata asked, "Is it possible to be all things to all people and yet be a little more?... When you cease to dream you cease to live." She urged Zarathushti women to target positions at municipal, state and national levels in the next decade.

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In the module on "Health, elder care and demographics," pediatrician Nilufer Clubwalla spoke on the high incidence of breast/ovarian cancer in Parsi women. Researchers in the University of Washington at Seattle who have proved that the disease can be inherited, are now seeking the cooperation of the community as Parsi women are known to be two or three times more susceptible than other women in India. Dr Mary-Claire King who heads the project is currently trying to identify interested families with a maternal or paternal history of breast or ovarian cancer. To be eligible to participate in this study, there must be at least two living family members who have had breast and/or ovarian cancer, informed Clubwalla. Ksenia Peters, a member of King's research team, was present at the session to answer questions. A small sample of blood and some family and personal medical history is all that is required from those participating in the study. (Interested readers are welcome to contact Peters by phone 206-616-4293 or fax 206-616-4295 or on e-mail ksenia@u.washington.edu)

Soonamai Desai, experienced in a retirement facility, spoke of the problems of urbanization as they affect the elderly: issues of personal dignity, personal and economic security, loneliness on the one hand and independence and autonomy on the other. Referring to the decline in physical and mental health and attendant problems of dementia, Desai suggested that two days a week of community care for the elders' medical attention would give a respite to the caregivers — the "sandwich generation," caught between caring for parents and children. Retired 60-year-olds could provide the manpower she suggested, even as she urged those crossing the border from middle to old age to provide "medical directives (for the time) when you are unable to make decisions."

At a subsequent session Karani Araoz sought to establish the preliminary goals for a worldwide Zoroastrian Women's Network: to spread awareness of the community, gather information and data on its various activities, needs, problems; provide a worldwide forum for creating resources; energize and mobilize the passive half of the community; communicate with world bodies to spread Zarathushti influence; inspire and support the youth and provide mentoring;

empower women wherever they are to do the best they can; create support groups.

Tata called for young women to be leaders because "We here are 40+; how long will we continue?" Emphasizing the need to establish contacts, she urged Zoroastrian women to get into government at any level and not forget that character and generosity are part of our religion. She urged North American associations to supply their contact names and addresses to local hospitals because when an accident victim dies in hospital, they tend to perform Christian rites.

"Start with the American Peace Corps, get on the Press, work with voluntary and non-governmental sectors," added Mehta. "The world is ready to welcome you if you only reach out," she noted.

Gifford gave an example of how an earlier generation of Parsis had operated. "The Tatas funded the Fabian Society... the funds for Britain's Labor Party came from the Tatas," and underlined the need to project the community in such a way that the world identified Zoroastrians with generosity of spirit. She was delighted to learn, when she visited the local children's museum, that its director knew about Zoroastrians because Vahishta Kaikobad was recently honored as teacher of the year in Houston.

Clubwalla stressed the need to identify and address health related issues. "We have to know ourselves before we can heal ourselves."

Gordafid Aresh spoke of the need for a place where aging Zoroastrians can come and live. "As we grow older we need to be among our own," she noted.

Medical researcher Rubina Patel started her family tree to create some sense of belonging for her son. Now, with 8,101 names "it's a web! It shows how interconnected we all are." She has been able to trace 27 generations with the help of retired Brigadier Ervad Dinyar Panthaky because her's is a mobed family and Udvada maintained good records until 1960. She has information on the mobeds of Navsari and Iran but only the male lines are available. She says she is searching for their female counterparts!

Readers wishing to join the Zoroastrian Women's Network may go to the website ZWIN3.net or e-mail zwin3-subscribe@yahoo.com or go to yahoo.com and request to sign up for ZWIN3.



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EARTH

The poetic rise of enterprise

Rhyme and reason at the launch of the International Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce

Nadir Godrej

Entrepreneurs are everywhere
The mom and pops we know.
To start a business isn't rare,
But tough to make it grow.

The Parsi gents of yesteryear
Were known for enterprise.
They were brave, they had no fear
And they were very wise.

Just look at Mr Jejeebhoy
Who started off in rags.
He was a young and orphaned boy
But then he packed his bags.

In Bombay he began to trade
And soon took off for China.
And people knew he always paid,
His goods were best, none finer.

And thus it was his fortune made
He took to charity.
Then many Parsis entered trade.
There was then clarity

That Parsis led in enterprise
In each and every sphere.
When India began to industrialize
The Parsis had a seer.

J. N. Tata found some ore
And said he would make steel.
But on this claim few set much store
A Brit said he'd make a meal

Of every bar that was produced
By our presumptuous guy.
But the skeptic was the one reduced
To eating humble pie.

Some say the Parsis had their day
Because they were sidekicks,
They flourished in the British sway.
But later cuts and nicks

From rapier thrusts in tougher times

Of independent rule,
Where corruption and financial crimes
Discouraged the old school.

As others took to enterprise
In this much darker day,
Perhaps the Parsis were rather wise
Not to join the fray.

We all owe thanks to Lord Macaulay
For modern education,
He was the first to pave the way
Towards a knowledge nation.

The Parsis took to learning fast —
In all of the professions
Their contributions were deemed vast.
And oft we see successions

Of parent handing down to child,
In law and medicine,
And generations were beguiled
For they had no need to pin

Their hopes on any risky schemes
Where much could be to gain,
But where it also often seems
It could end up in pain.

While entrepreneurs must bet all
The Parsis were too content.
They did not want to risk a fall,
They had now lost the bent.

I am not saying there are none.
But yes, there's no excess.
Now it's a game for everyone,
While Parsis do it less.

While different lands have different views
Some favor enterprise.
In America they do find use
For those who fail and rise.

They know that those who've failed

are tough
And have the chance to learn.
To be just smart is not enough
Failure helps to earn

The experience that hard knocks
provide
And nothing else can teach.
If failure is made bonafide,
Any nation could then reach

America's level of enterprise,
Which of course is high,
Provided that it would be wise
Enough to also try

And have the laws that can provide
Good venture capital,
The nation's hopes won't be belied
If it could wrap it all

With taxes that are very low.
We would then see enterprise
Expand quite fast and quickly grow
To an enormous size.

The Internet is now at hand
And all can have a shot,
If only we can understand
What latest trend is hot.

Now Parsis are spread everywhere.
And they can choose their land.
If you the Diaspora dare
Then once again we'll stand

In the big league of enterprise
Renowned in every place.
I know we can attain the prize
If we just join the race.

The launch of the International Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce on December 29,

2000 at the J. W. Marriott's Grand Ballroom was chaired by Godrej Soaps managing director Nadir Godrej. The chamber is expected to focus on education, governmental relations, infrastructure plan-

ning, economic development, business and professional growth and leadership development. One of the Chamber's main assets will be its database providing information on topics ranging from job availability and business opportunities to a bank of historical data on who's who in Zarathushti business world-wide. Godrej's poetic induction for the Chamber added to the elan.



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DAME DR. PROF. MEHER MASTER-MOOS, ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE, PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE AND LECTURES TOUR DECEMBER 2000 - FEBRUARY 2001 (REPORT)

The 7th World Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. during the week of Christmas 2000 to New Year 2001 was the greatest gathering of the community in North America in the entire 20th Century - a Dhansakhia Congress sans Dhansakh. All kudos to the hard working and dedicated Congress organising team, headed by the able stewardship of Dr. Dolly Dastoor and Mr. Homi Davier, well supported by Aban Rustomjee, Sarosh Maneckshaw, Toxy Cowasjee, Mani Clubwalla, Dr. Yazdi and Ms. Shenaz Sidhwa, Mr. Gev Nentin, Mr. Framroze Patel, B.P.P. of Bombay, Iran Zoroastrian Anjuman and so many many other willing hands of helpers all over North America and the other countries who, overcoming an obstacle course, deftly steered the Congress ship into safe harbour. No easy task to control the over 2000 Zoroastrian men, women and children who thronged the Marriott and adjacent hotels in this great Zoroastrian get - together. The main accomplishment of the congress was exactly this - Get - together. People sat outside the lecture halls with smiling faces happily exchanging news, catching up on friends of 30 - 40 years ago while the speakers on the scheduled program many times spoke to audienceless halls. As the Congress program was distributed in many tracks covering several rooms, the speakers and audiences got divided and distributed and many times it was not possible to hear any particular speaker, as all schedules went haywire.

The Grand Opening Ceremony with the Parsi National Anthem - Chhaye Hame Zarhosti and Irani Zoroastrian National Song both being sung with great gusto concluded with almost the entire program being repeated in Persian to meet the demand of the Iranian Zoroastrians who were present in large numbers from all over North America, headed by Mobed Council Chief Philanthropist

Mehraban Zartoshty and Dr. Farhang Mehr, whose biography was released at the Congress.

Straight after the Opening Ceremony was the "BOOK RELEASE FUNCTION." The historical book published by Mazdayasnie Monasterie & edited by Ruby Lilaowala and Dame Meher Master Moos- ZOROASTRIANS WORLD WIDE AT THE MILLENNIUM was one of the main highlights of the book release program, presided over by Dr. Dolly Dastoor. Bapsy Sidhwa ex-Karachi well known authoress of the novel 'Crow Eaters'. Prof. John Hinnels book on Parsis Diaspa and Sooni Taraporewala's pictorial book about the Parsis were also amongst those released.

(Photos of the Book Release function showing Dr. Farhang Mehr, Prof. John Hinnels, Dame Meher Master Moos, Bapsy Sidhwa and Dr. Dolly Dastoor).

The Zoroastrian Millennium Book is an encyclopaedia covering ancient history, Life and Teachings of Asho Spitama Zarthusht, Histories of all the Atash Behrams, Agiaries and in India, Iran, Pakistan, North America and elsewhere. Chapters about Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb and the Zoroastrian College and biographies with photos of Zoroastrians worldwide including Russia, Tajikistan, Iran, U.K., U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Far East, Europe, Africa, Pakistan and India. This book is a family heirloom, to be handed down to children and grandchildren to keep the scattered community together worldwide. It is available from Zoroastrian College office in Bombay.

Malcolm Deboo of U.K beautifully displayed the Book Exhibition, and Mr Fereidooni the Iranian and other films.

The WZC focused on YOUTH - the future of the 21st Century with two days of Youth Sports events honouring the

achievers. Amongst the other youths, were the outstanding duo from Mumbai - Minoo Jokhi the Maths Wizard and Pearl Bhungara, the Magician, who daily entertained the crowds.

The Congress brought forth the best of talents in the community with musicians from all over North America forming the first ever Zoroastrian Orchestra - Maestro Zubin Mehta sent a special Video message for the occasion. And the community honoured those who had dedicated a life time of service for the upliftment of Zoroastrians Worldwide.

Amongst the 20 women honoured were Roshan Rivetna, Dr. Dolly Dastoor of North America, Dr. Roshan Master, Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master Moos, Dr. Armaity Desai and Ms. Roda Mistry - Rajya Sabha Member, Dr. Mehroo Hansotia of India, Ms. Tooran Bahrami, Pariche Freydooni, Farangi Shahrokh and Late Manijeh Shahrokh of Iran. The veteran Theosophist from Pakistan, Gool Minwalla, Bapsy Sidhwa and Late Meher Patel of Karachi and Shireen Kiash of Australia from amongst the over 80 equally deserving ladies nominated worldwide.

Amongst the gentlemen honoured were Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani, Ervad Mehraban Zarhosty, Zubin Mehta, Kerman Jasavala, Jamshed Irani and Shiaman Akhtar - Khosravi.

Kersey & Silloo Jussawalla, Rusi Dalal and others of U.K. offered to host the next World Zoroastrian Congress in U.K. to celebrate the opening of the new million pounds Zoroastrian House in London - a cinema hall being renovated thanks to the munificence of Mehraban Zarhosty. Roshan Rivetna produced the outstanding FEZANA Journal issue recording the achievements of the community. The mobeds were honoured with a special Jashan ceremony being performed at the newly constructed extension hall of the Darbe Mehr build-

ing by **Ervad Bahmansha Sanjana** one of the rare class of the Athornans capable of performing Nirang e Din ceremonies.

The 7th World Zoroastrian Congress left a glow of warm memories carried away by all those who attended it - the social intention was there and a spirit for survival was greatly in evidence; but as to whether the Mazdayasnie Zarathushtrian Daena will continue to survive in this new environment remains to be seen. When the day dawns that a Varasiji bull is consecrated at Texas, an Aderan sacred fire is consecrated in a holy Fire Temple building (not a social Darbe Mehr building where the Dadgah fire is lit and put out at daily convenience for the benefit of the people attending social functions) and a full time paid Panthaky - Athornan Saheb is appointed to service the spiritual needs of the community. That will be the day - shrouded in the mists of time ahead - when it may be said that Yes, the Zoroastrian faith will survive, and its followers the Zoroastrian people, in their new North American homeland.

AFTER THE CONGRESS - LECTURES IN U. S. A. AND CANADA

Dame Meher then proceeded to Dallas to give Zoroastrian religious lectures to the North Texas Zoroastrian Association, ably organised and hosted by **Shiavax & Shirin Tengra**, who was President of the N.T.Z.A.; and to Philadelphia where Mr. & Mrs. **Freny & Jamshed Ranji** and Dr & DR Mrs. **Toorkey**, past and present Presidents of ZAPNJ arranged hospitality and lectures for the New Jersey - Philadelphia Zoroastrian Community. A community get - together dinner function was organised in each place. In both places the community members were planning to construct their own halls/centers. The concluding Community lecture func-

tion was held in the Darbe Mehr at Toronto ably organized by Dr. **Jehan Bagli** and Mr **Sam Vesuna**, President of Ontario Z. Anjuman., with **Ervad Bomansha Kotwal** as presiding mobed. The heartening progress in Canada is to see a second generation of young athornans being inducted through the navar ceremony in Bombay, as recently were the sons of **Ervad Firdosh** and **Osti Chisty Balsara**, young ervads **Zaheer and Farhad**.

Dame Meher also visited and gave lectures and seminars through the Medicina Alternativa, and Inter Faith Depts.

Of the Zoroastrian College in New-York, at the United Nations; Arizona at the World University and in South America Ecuador for a week where ZC dept. is active. More about this in the continuation issue.

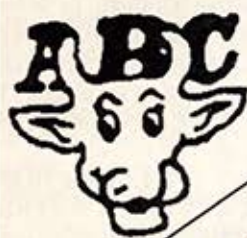
ON SUNDAY 25TH MARCH AT RUSSIAN CULTURAL CENTRE, PEDDER RD, THE India Book release function is being held from 10am to 1pm when Shahnameh films RUSTOM & SOHRAB Tajuik films will be shown. Free passes are available from Mazdayasnie Monasterie office 16th-20th March, tel 2660214 2-5pm only



(3) 3rd February 2001 at Toronto Darbe Meher with Dr Jehangir Medora vexillographer, Parsi flag designer

(4 and 5) 27th January 2001 at Philadelphia with Mrs Freny Ranji, Dr Toorkey Ervad Adi Unwalla and others





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Legacy entombed

Avesta publications, coins, Congress literature, religious implements are some of the items in the time capsule, buried at the Houston Zoroastrian Center

Arnavaz S. Mama

A fleet of cars zoomed away from the J. W. Marriott Hotel immediately after the ceremonial luncheon which witnessed the presentation of the World Zarathushti Awards. Reaching the sleek low-slung elegance of the Houston Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center, the venue for the burial of a time capsule, the

Alberta's Firdosh Mehta, vice president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans of North America (FEZANA) who had conceived the idea of the time capsule, gave a synopsis of the concept and the contents to the gathering as they downed tea, jalebi and bhajias served by the organizers. Searching for a container

ing silver miniatures of the *ijashni* ceremony alat including such details as pan, sopari and kharak. Also sealed in was the banner of the Second International Avesta Conference held in Alberta in 1999; pamphlets and flyers of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress; the platinum jubilee souvenir publication of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman; a historical account of the *Iranshah*; a complete package of information regarding institutions and outstanding persons of Pakistan sent by Toxy Cowasjee, president of the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal (KZBM); coins, postage stamps and mementoes commemorating individual Zarathushti achievements; Avesta publications of the BPP and FEZANA; information regarding youths and youth conferences; directories of the various associations; a commemorative volume of Mehli Mehta's performances published by the Time and Talents Club; Marzban Giara's book *Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples*; issues of *Parsiana* and *Zoroastrian Studies*' publication *Ushta*; two cookbooks — *Manna of the Angels* published by the KZBM and Bhicoo Manekshaw's *Traditional Food and Customs of the Parsis*; etc.

Admitting a North American bias because "much of the information came from here," Mehta assured the gathering that "Everyone was asked... Whatever was sent to us was included, except textiles," in answer to a query whether the Iranian community's contribution had been sought.

Paying tribute to Houston's Purvez Rustomji who "ended up doing most of the work," Mehta jested, "Aban (Purvez's wife) says he even talked about it in his sleep!"

Houston's residential professional priest Ervad Bomansha Sanjana led the humbandagi at the start of the proceedings and prayed the *Spendarmad setayashni* as the capsule was lowered into the earth. A suitably engraved granite slab sealed the cavity for the next 50 years. The capsule is meant to be exhumed in 2050.

In his welcome address Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) president Farrokh Firozgari thanked Sanjana and ZAH's 12 volunteer mobeds who do all ceremonies gratis and provided a brief historical background to the Cen-



Clockwise from top right: Houston Center; time capsule flanked by Mehta (left) and Sanjana (Photo: Noshir Mehdora); engraved sealing tile

visiting Zarathushtis witnessed a sturdy sealed metal cylinder readily located beside an appropriately hollowed spot in the Center's atrium.

that would "outlast its contents," Mehta said he came across three time capsule specialists, the actual producer being located with the help of Bomi Patel of California. Though Farrokh Mistree, then program committee co-chair had "told me to go ahead with the idea," Mehta said that he had to find independent funding for his scheme's US \$ 2,000 budget as per the directives that ruled all the heritage and other projects of the Congress, acknowledging donations that came in cash and kind.

"I was ready to accept any article for inclusion if it was of Zarathushti origin or interest," noted Mehta, thanking the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) for send-

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ter: How donations from Mehraban Zartoshty and the Bhandara family enabled them to initially erect a hall, kitchen and rest rooms on four acres of the land

"I was ready to
accept any article
for inclusion if it was
of Zarathushti origin
or interest"

given by a group of philanthropic families from Austin and Dallas. The second phase, including the atrium and adjoining rooms for Sunday school and a library, were financed by Yezdi and Shernaz Sidhwa, noted Firozgari. The car park was readied just in time for this event by the local community pooling their resources. Firozgari bade the visiting Zarathoshtis to return and help their Houstonian coreligionists' project to fence in 10 acres of land with the aim of establishing a residential society.

"*Himmat thi nahi apai tau dhasti thi aapjo, pun aapjo* (If you cannot give fearlessly, give fearfully, but give)," bantered Mehta.



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The Zarathushti spirit on track

For two days the young and the young at heart participated in the World Zarathushti Games at Houston

Darius Khosravian

They came from every corner of the globe. Over 400 Zarathushti sports enthusiasts flocked to Houston, Texas and its unexpected low temperatures. Greetings and laughter filled the room as relatives and friends met each other on December 25, 2000 at the J. W. Marriott hotel where they collected their registration package. There was frustration as well for athletes who had not registered properly. The glut of Zarathushtis was more than the prestigious five-star hotel's heating system could manage.

With stoic indifference to the cold and frustration the young and old followers of the faith piled on the buses at 7 a.m. on December 26 and headed for Klein School, the setting of the Seventh World Zarathushti Games. There was an assembly of people as well as an assembly of emotions. The arrogant and the humble were there with hearts burning with nationalism holding aloft the flag of their nation to the sound of its national anthem in front of family and friends. Adding to this scene, the Houston cheerleaders entertained and rallied the crowd. The Olympic torch followed, carried proudly by Houstonian Justin Mody who circled the gym so that all

would be inspired by its glow. The torch was then passed to Ervad Bomansha Sanjana to light the 'diva' and recite a short benediction. The US and Canadian national anthems followed, sung proudly and with gusto by Sonia Behrana and Vista Pourbahrami respectively. The Westbury School Brigade dancers dazzled the crowd with their show. A few short welcome speeches were then presented by the sports co-chairs Rustom Khosravian of Houston and Artemis Javanshir of California (Bijan Khosraviani spoke in her absence), and also by the Congress co-chairs Dolly Dastoor and Homi Davier. To enhance the Olympic spirit and to everyone's surprise, a celebrity speaker was introduced to the

crowd. He was Houstonian Steven Lopez, tae kwon do gold medallist at the Sydney Olympics. Lopez shared his Olympic experience to encourage the athletes even further. Then the Games began.

Over land, water, and air Zarathushtis used wit and muscle to conquer competition. In the swimming events, Houstonian Tanya Noble stole gold in the 25 yard (yd) freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke, dominating the under 13 boys and girls. The 14-20 year old males' bracket presented an exciting rivalry between Pakistani Narius Shekdar and Californian Bahram Parineh. Both came up even with two golds and two silver medals in the 50 yd freestyle, back-

stroke, breaststroke and 4 x 25 yd individual medley events. Indian swimming sensation Zeba Wadia gained much wealth as she earned four gold medals in 50 yd freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and 4 x 25 yd individual medley. Though the 20 years and above events were commanded by men with Farshad Bakhtyari of Massachusetts winning the gold in 50 yd freestyle and Xerxes Commissariat of Texas winning the gold in 50 yd breaststroke, an elated victory came when Houstonian

Anita Wolfe let the gold rest on a more feminine neck as she won the 50 yd backstroke by more than three seconds from her closest male rival. The women in the natatorium screamed in elation and appreciation of the champ. Another exhilarating race

was the 4 x 50 yd multinational freestyle relay except that two teams were striving for a silver medal. The gold was comfortably won by Commissariat, Shekdar, Farzain Malbari and Karmin Guzder. The race for the silver was



Top: Mody, Jal Sethna and Sanjana at opening prayers; Ervad Asphandiar Dadachanji in the table tennis tournament and the awards stage



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gruelingly close but Bakhtyari, Bahman Yazdani, Ramesh Izedian and Wistasb Kushesh must have had longer fingers as they won silver by four milliseconds.

Track and field events tested the tolerance of the participants in close to freezing temperature of 34° Fahrenheit. Mitra Mehta of Texas took gold in the 100 meters (m) in the girls under 13 age bracket and Vandad Pourbahrami of British Columbia, Canada for the corresponding boys' event. In both the adult 100 m and 400 m dash, India's Mehnoosh Bamboat and Feroza Engineer emerged winners in the men and women's categories. Michigan's Yazad Lala won the men's 1,500 m final while Zeenia Challa of Texas won gold for the women's 1,500 m. In the 4 x 100 m men's relay the team "Wings" consisting of Justin Mody, Berzin Bhandara, Neville Sorab and Lala claimed gold. The women's 4 x 100 m relay was won by the "Speed Racers" consisting of Challa and the three Behramsha sisters, Zarin, Kashmira and Jasmine. The shot-put men's final produced gold medallist Zubin Irani of California while the women's resulted in India's Engineer being the winner. In the discus throw,

Houstonian Mody stole the gold by beating the closest competition by five meters. New Yorker Vista Kushesh received gold in the women's discus throw.

As the basketball referees were lenient on the fouls, the games proved to be both intense and rough. But team "Good Fellas" from Boston disregarded this as they won the gold medal with

Track and field events tested the tolerance of the participants in close to freezing temperature

players Cyrus Commissariat, Arjang Kasravi, Shahram Khosraviani, Shahnam Khosraviani, Farshad Bakhtyari, Sam Bastani, Hooman Shad and Arman Teherani. The junior basketball event had the "Misfits" as the champions. This team consisted of Kaiwan Dadachanji, Faridun Dadachanji, Shirelle Noble, Tanya Noble, Malcolm Irani, Ryan Namiri and Roxanne Mody.

Volleyball drew the largest, and

sometimes the loudest, crowds. More Houstonians became richer as the home team awkwardly named the "Rubber Duckies" took gold medals, thanks to Zarin Behramsha, Faredun Bhader, Shaki Commissariat, Khodi Irani, Erik Kelawala, Jal Sethna, Veera Sidhwa, Mehnoosh Sodawaterwala and Darius Wania. To get these medals the Houston team had to face Texas rivals ZANT from Dallas, winning two games out of three.

And last but not the least table tennis had its moment in the spotlight. Men's singles champion Farzaan Pudumjee of India and women's singles champion Villi Bhappu of Houston proved the finesse needed to excel in the sport. Percy Behramsha and Behramjee Ghadiyally won the men's doubles while Bhappu and Rustom Challa won the mixed doubles showing viewers the concentration needed to stay organized in this fast-paced game.

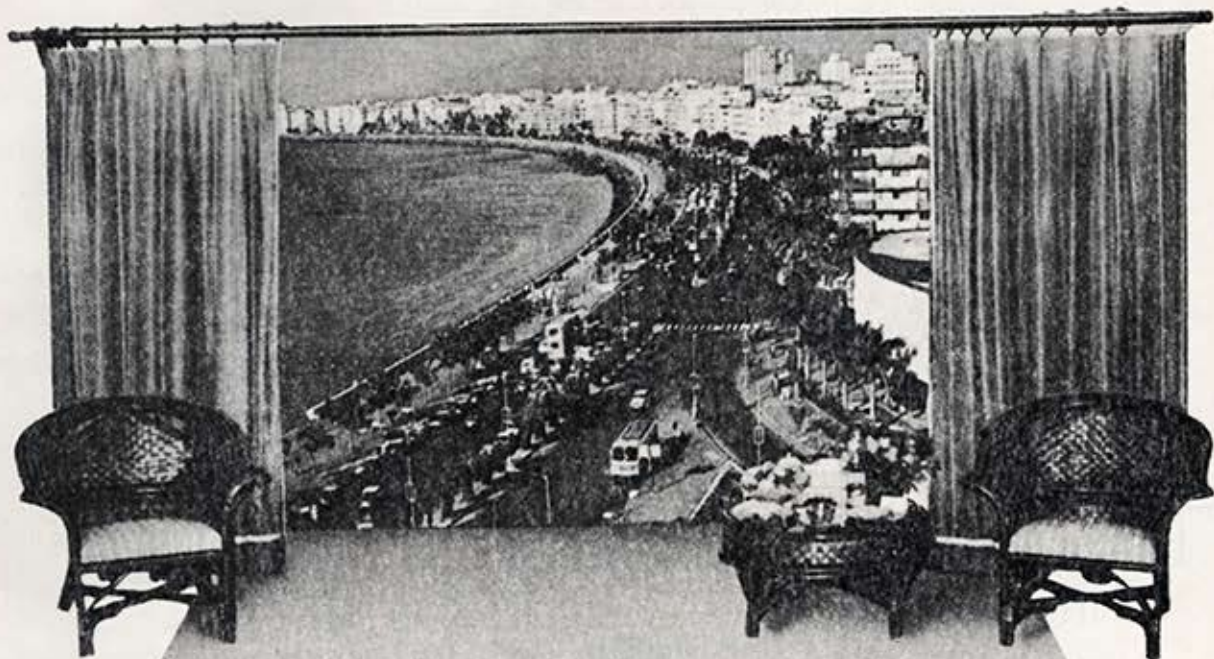
With 57 in the kitty, 19 of them gold, the US dominated the medal standings. India and Canada earned a total of 13 medals each. However, India dominated the swimming and track and field events bagging 10 golds out of a total of their

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**Farah
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Tanya**

13, a remarkable feat. Pakistan won four medals and UK picked up one silver.

The masterminds behind this great sport tournament, the Houston Zarathushti Sports Committee, had their work cut out for them once they accepted the task. They sacrificed time and worked hard so that the games would be superior to all such community events and for that the Zoroastrian athletes around the world are forever grateful.

The Seventh World Zarathushti Games came to an end on December 27, 2000. On December 30, Zoroastrian cheerleaders introduced the award ceremony with a dance number that they had been rehearsing for many days and were rewarded with a standing ovation. Athletes young and matured were called up to shake the hands of the major sports donors. Tradewinds' Ken Bhappu, Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America president Framroze Patel and Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman president Tahamtan Aresh while mothers and fathers burst with pride as they watched their son or daughter receive their medal and stand on the gold, silver or bronze podium. Confidence in the athletes was at an all-time high and photographic flashes lit the room. As the lights dimmed so did the flame. The last organized sports event of the century had truly served its purpose, uniting Zarathushtis from around the world.

Swimming

Boys and girls under 13

25 yd Freestyle: 1. Tanya Noble; 2. Lauren Wolfe; 3. Kaiwan Dahmubed.

25 yd Backstroke: 1. Tanya Noble; 2. Farrahnaz Bulsara; 3. Lauren Wolfe.

25 yd Breaststroke: 1. Tanya Noble; 2. Lauren Wolfe; 3. Farrahnaz Bulsara.

14 to 20-year-old females

50 yd Freestyle: 1. Zeba Wadia; 2. Shireen Irani; 3. Karmin Guzder.

50 yd Backstroke: 1. Zeba Wadia; 2. Shireen Irani; 3. Deena Guzder.

50 yd Breaststroke: 1. Zeba Wadia; 2. Shireen Irani; 3. Deena Guzder.

4 x 25 yd Individual Medley: 1. Zeba Wadia; 2. Shireen Irani; 3. Karmin Guzder.

14 to 20-year-old males

50 yd Freestyle: 1. Bahram Parineh; 2. Narius Shekdar; 3. Arya Iranpour.

50 yd Backstroke: 1. Narius Shekdar; 2. Bahram Parineh; 3. Cyrus Dadachanji.

50 yd Breaststroke: 1. Bahram Parineh;

2. Narius Shekdar; 3. Arya Iranpour.
4 x 25 yd Individual Medley: 1. Narius Shekdar; 2. Bahram Parineh; 3. Arya Iranpour.

20 years plus male and female

50 yd Freestyle: 1. Farshad Bakhtyari; 2. Farzain Malbari; 3. Xerxes Commisariat.

50 yd Backstroke: Anita Wolfe; 2. Farzain Malbari; 3. Ramesch Izedian.

50 yd Breaststroke: 1. Xerxes Commisariat; 2. Farzain Malbari; 3. Anita Wolfe.

Track and field events

Girls under 13

100 m final: 1. Mitra Mehta; 2. Naomi Bhappu.

Boys under 13

100 m: 1. Vandad Pourbahrami; 2. Sam Vesuna; 3. Kaiwan Dadachanji.

Women

100 m: 1. Feroza Engineer; 2. Ava Lala; 3. Shirelle Noble.

Men

100 m: 1. Mehrnosh Bamboat; 2. Neville Sorab; 3. Zubin Irani.

Women

400 Meters Final: 1. Feroza Engineer; 2. Ava Lala; 3. Shirelle Noble.

Men

400 m: Mehrnosh Bamboat; 2. Yazad Lala; 3. Zubin Irani.

Women

1,500 m: 1. Zeenia Challa.

Men

1,500 m: 1. Yazad Lala; 2. Ardeshir Dabestani; 3. Kershaw Patel.

Women

Shot-put: 1. Feroza Engineer; 2. Kainaz Mistry.

Men

Shot-put: 1. Zubin Irani; 2. Rohinton Noble; 3. Justin Mody.

Women

Discus throw: 1. Vista Kushesh; 2. Kazvean Peddar; 3. Kainaz Mistry.

Men

Discus throw: 1. Justin Mody; 2. Houshang Jangi; 3. Zubin Irani.

Table tennis

Men's singles: 1. Farzaan Pudumjee; 2. Sohrab Fracis; 3. Malcolm Variava.

Women's singles: 1. Villi Bhappu; 2. Chisti Dadachanji; 3. Delnavaz Mistry.

Men's doubles: 1. Percy Behramsha and Behramjee Ghadially; 2. Malcolm Variava and Yazdin Mistry.

Mixed doubles: 1. Villi Bhappu and Rustom Challa; 2. Yazdin Mistry and Delnavaz Mistry; 3. Sohrab Fracis and Afreed Mistry.

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The sound of music

The first ever Zoroastrian orchestra performed at the opening night of the Congress

Cyrus Mehta

The idea of a World Zoroastrian Orchestra came into being over two years ago when a group of young Zarathushti musicians performed admirably under Pirooz Cooper at the North American Zoroastrian Congress in Rye, New York.

Several months later, this writer, a lawyer and amateur violinist, initiated a search for musicians all over the Zoroastrian world. Pirooz, an oboist, and her brother Farobag Cooper, conductor of the Chicago Philharmonia, helped in this effort. Later Adil Mehta, another conductor, also pitched in.

After countless hours, hundreds of e-mails and many telephone conversations, the idea bore fruit on the evening of December 28, 2000, the opening night of the Congress. The orchestra featured the work of Bombay-based Parsi composer Meher Madon-Jansen. Soprano Dilshad Khambatta liltily sang *Jashmé* from Madon-Jansen's larger oratorio *Ahura*. Aply accompanied by flutist Ayesha Dastur and string orchestra, Khambatta enthralled the audience with a beautiful melody based on words from the *Avesta*.

Pianist Sorab Wadia then passion-

ately performed the First Movement of Sergi Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. The orchestra, under Farobag's inspirational leadership, complemented Wadia in this daringly romantic work.

The orchestra also sparkled with well-known works — Johann Strauss' *Blue Danube* waltz, Otto Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and highlights from Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. Adil Mehta competently conducted the last two works, which also brought out the virtuosity of concertmaster, Jamshed Turel. Young trumpeter Firdosh Khambatta played the solos in the *Chanson du Toreador* of *Carmen* with great flourish and aplomb. The surprise of the evening was a delightful rendition of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarathoshti*, specially arranged for symphony orchestra by Farobag Cooper.

About 23 Zoroastrian musicians from the US, Canada, Australia and India collaborated with an equal number of musicians from the Houston Symphony, Houston Grand Opera and other local orchestras. This novel experiment enabled Zoroastrian musicians to rehearse, learn and perform with some of the finest professionals in the country. The Zoroastrian musicians, many of whom major in music performance, played all

the solos.

The experience of playing in the first ever Zoroastrian orchestra can best be summed up in the words of Firdosh Khambatta: "I've always felt that music and the arts were short-sided in the Zoroastrian community, except for Zubin Mehta. I must say that the best part of playing in the Orchestra was simply listening to the principal horn player of the Houston Symphony. He was beyond amazing — never scratching a single note and playing every passage with the utmost precision and clarity. He truly was an inspiration for me..."

It is hoped that there will be many more such endeavors to encourage and showcase the talents of Zoroastrians who have chosen music as a vocation.

Iranian Zoranthem

Dawn lights arrive
Rooster cry
Through the king's palace
Hear the beats blast

As the morning mist
Washed the rose trace
Risen up the youths
Wash up the face

Sing Ashem Vohu
Say Yatha Ahu
Say Yatha Ahu
Sing Ashem Vohu

Rise mobeda, lighten up fire
Burn the darkness, by the entire
Count as alive, endear the faith
Turn not the face, God's given grace

Sing Ashem Vohu...

Turn not the face
Off the gold place
Pay the whole regard
Wise words reward

Tell truth at all
Sing it all again
Search for Truth
Say Truth again

Sing Ashem Vohu...

English rendition by Dr Khosro Mehrfar of the
Farsi lyrics of the late Prof Pour-e-Davoud

Cooper conducting the World Zoroastrian Orchestra Photo: Noshir Medhora



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Well booked

The largest collection of books by and about Zoroastrians was on display at the Congress

Arnavaz S. Mama

Posters from London's celebrated Millennium Dome, where Zoroastrianism had been displayed as one of the nine major religions of the UK, lined the walls of the J. W. Marriott Hotel's Austin Room. Rows of tables and shelves displayed a multitude of publications by and about Zoroastrians — the largest collection of such books in any one place — conveyed from London by the crateful. Sponsored by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) which rightfully prides itself on its library, the comprehensive array of over 400 books had been compiled by ZTFE librarian and co-secretary Malcolm Deboo. Special editions on display jostled with new publications and journals which were

available for cash sale against British pounds or US dollars only. Direct orders to publishers had also been provided for.

Thronged of people crammed the corridor outside for the ceremonial opening of the International Book Fair and Exhibition by one of the most respected men in the Zoroastrian world — the diminutive Mehraban Zartoshty whose personal simplicity belied the magnificence of his contribution to the community in all parts of the world, as acknowledged Congress executive board member Sarosh Manekshaw. As ZTFE president Dorab Mistry informed the gathering, the London community had acquired large new premises at Harrow thanks to

the financial support of the Zartoshty family. Zartoshty had been very ill earlier in the year, hence his presence at the Congress was greeted with undisguised joy by the community.

An emotional Zartoshty acknowledged the ovation by thanking God who at his "advanced age and health" permitted him to attend this "fantastic gathering."

Excusing himself for his soft delivery — "unfortunately, I am not a speaker" — Zartoshty gave a brief history of the ZTFE and how it was founded 139 years ago by six members of the community from India as also the involvement of scholar K. R. Cama, then in London to represent his family business. Noting how he had personally lost out on the reading habit because "70 years ago students were not allowed to read anything except school textbooks," he advised young parents to try and encourage their children to read.

An exultant Deboo, who with his co-secretary Porus Jilla had spent over 24 consecutive hours arranging the display,



From left:
Manekshaw;
Paridokht and
Mehraban
Zartoshty, Dolly
Dastoor, Rustomji,
Mistry and Deboo
Below: Posters and
publications on
display



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told the gathering that the ZTFE library would never have reached its present sophistication had it not been for Zartoshty generosity.

The ZTFE library is a tale of hidden treasure resurrected from the basement some years ago. Among the finds was the Gujarati handwritten original constitution dating to 1861 and the correspon-

More than 12 translations of the *Gathas* were on display/sale

dence of founder Muncherjee Cama, Dadabhai Naoroji and others. One of the ZTFE's founding clauses was to purchase, publish or assist in the publication of Zoroastrian literature with the object of advancing the study and dissemination of information regarding the Zoroastrian faith, noted Deboo in his preface to the compiled list of books for the Fair. Accordingly Cama sponsored the English translation of Prof Spiegel's German rendition, *Avesta: the sacred book of the Parsees* in three volumes. "This book is the first available English translation of the *Avesta*, translated by Arthur Henry Bleek and it predates Geldner," noted Deboo quoting renowned Zoroastrian scholar J. J. Modi as his source of information. Another book with whose publication the ZTFE was connected was Dastur Maneck Dhalla's original edition of *History of Zoroastrianism*. More recently the ZTFE assisted the publication of Dr Rashna Writer's *Contemporary Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation* and sponsored *Bhownagregree: Britain's First Conservative Asian MP* by Prof John Hinnells and Omar Ralph. According to Deboo the "ZTFE raised the lion's share to assist Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal in completing his work on the *Herbadistan* and *Nirangistan*."

More than 12 translations of the *Gathas* were on display/sale as well as books on history illustrated by military historians, said Deboo at the inaugural function as he thanked Purvez, Aban and Nerina Rustomji of Houston at whose place the books had been stored as they arrived for the show. "Their house became a warehouse," noted Deboo apologetically but Aban, a professional librarian, exclaimed, "I can't tell you how excited I am to see so many Zoroastrian books!"

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New books at the Congress

Seven titles were introduced at the first ever Zoroastrian book launch

Tamina Davar

She is a Parsi from Houston and one of South Asian literature's most highly-recognized writers in English. It was only fitting that Bapsi Sidhwa — internationally acclaimed author and Houston's most famous Zoroastrian — hosted the first-ever Zoroastrian book launch.

The launch, like the international Zoroastrian book fair inaugurated just an hour earlier, was one of the official legacy projects of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress. Conceived and organized by Congress cochair Dr Dolly Dastoor, the legacy project specially commissioned two works for the book launch as a tribute to two key North American Zoroastrian scholars, Dr Farhang Mehr and Prof Kaikhosrov Irani. As Dastoor and her team learned of other books being published, they saw the potential to celebrate Zoroastrian books as a genre — and expanded the launch to include seven titles.

"You are our torchbearers," Sidhwa said to each author. Presiding over the event, she wove commentary, wit and respect for her fellow authors as she introduced the seven newly-published books. They ranged from Iranian to Parsi in focus; from photos to religious texts; from arts to academia; and from university press to self-published. Several of the authors present also spoke.

The first commissioned book, *Triumph Over Discrimination: the Life Story of Farhang Mehr* by Boston Globe editor Lylah M. Alphonse, is a lively biography, chronicling the struggle and strength of Mehr's life. Iran's former deputy prime minister who escaped during the Islamic revolution, a professor emeritus of Boston University, he remains a scholar, author and activist for Iran's religious equality. Mehr, who was present, spoke passionately about fighting against religious discrimination. The book was sponsored by Hilda and Rumi Sethna through the World Zoroastrian Organisation.

The second commissioned book was

The Philosophy of Zarathushtra and the Mazdayasni Tradition by noted scholar and lecturer Kaikhosrov Irani, professor emeritus of New York's City College which recently established a chair of philosophy in his name. His new work takes a wide look at the religious philosophy in many facets, as well as stabilities and shifts in Zoroastrian historical traditions.

One book garnered immediate attention, and quickly sold out at the book fair. *Parsis: the Zoroastrians of India — A Photographic Journey* is a handsome

coffee-table photo book by acclaimed screenwriter Sooni Taraporevala (who scripted Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, *Salaam Bombay*, as well as *Such a Long Journey*, and *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar*). Weaving color and black and white photos with her ethnographic personal and historical essays, the work shows Indian Parsi life in all its diversity. Taraporevala's former teacher, Rati Wadia, spoke on her behalf, stressing that the book is a first-ever visual portrait of the community. A 20-year labor of love, it is currently being praised by the media.

"That which binds you together is more important than what divides you," asserted veteran scholar John Hinnells, who recently published *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies: A Collection of Essays*. The book features an array of social histories of Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrian communities in India, UK and North America. Hinnells, professor at Britain's University of Derby, stressed the importance of writing on Zoroastrians as "living communities" — whether one is an insider or an outsider. Indeed, his essays address crucial issues affecting our communities today, including how ethnicity, national origin, religion and multi-generational identity of Zoroastrians play out in the diaspora.

Dame Meher Master-Moos, president of Zoroastrian College and Mazdayasnie Monasterie, brought a hot-off-the-press copy of her and noted columnist Ruby Lilaowala's *Zoroastrians Worldwide at the Millennium*. Thanking Dastoor for encouragement, she showed the large-size, colorful chronology of Zoroastrian history and individual achievements worldwide — including a complete list of fire-temples around the world. Several of the launched books were still in-progress. They include *Concordance of the Gathas* by Dr Pallan Ichaporia and Helmut Humbach of Heidelberg University — an English translation, the Pahlavi Gatha translation, and a Sanskrit translation; as well as *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Reli-*



Authors at the Congress (clockwise from top left) Irani, Mehr, Sidhwa, Lilaowala, Master-Moos, Taraporevala and Hinnells



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gion, and Culture, a two-volume art and cultural history work by Pheroza J. Godrej, long-time Bombay arts writer and founder of Cymroza Art Gallery, and researcher/writer associated with Zoroastrian Studies Firoza Punthakey-Mistree.

Sidhwa, who was later honored into the Congress "Daughters of Mashyani" Hall of Fame, attends conferences and launches galore — and was deeply touched to preside over an event honoring creativity amongst her own. She recently saw her novel *Cracking India* become Deepa Mehta's powerful film *Earth*. Set amidst the religious bloodshed of India's 1947 Partition, as seen through the eyes of a Parsi girl, *Earth* was India's entry for the Academy Awards. The book and film were included in then US President Clinton's South Asia 2000 trip briefing kit. Along with Canada's highly recognized author Rohinton Mistry, Sidhwa is a huge presence in literature — and, like Mistry, writes consistently on Parsi culture and identity.

Despite public perception fuelled by

the Parsis themselves — that Zoroastrianism and its adherents are "dying out" — the book launch and fair validated our presence as a pluralistic but strong community. More significantly, the events reflected that we are producers of writers and creative artists who are proud of their identity — and feel compelled to record and explore it for the community and the world.

Tamina Davar is a New York-based publicist, performance artist and former contributing editor for *A. Magazine: Inside Asian America*.



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That's entertainment!

From rendering *Choli ke pichhey* to a Persian bazaar, the Congress entertainment fare had a global twist

Arnavaz S. Mama

In contrast to earlier World Zoroastrian Congresses where entertainment remained on the fringe, the 7WZC wove it into the tapestry of offerings. Moreover, it was entertainment with a global twist — Iranian and Indian and several shades of American adding to the resonance of

European classical music.

After a two-hour lunch break that followed the inaugural, the same area was the scene of variety entertainment presented by Zoroastrians from around the world, beginning with the Chicago Zarathusti Choir (CZC) singing *Houston chalo* (Let's go to Houston). The CZC is said to be a regular feature in

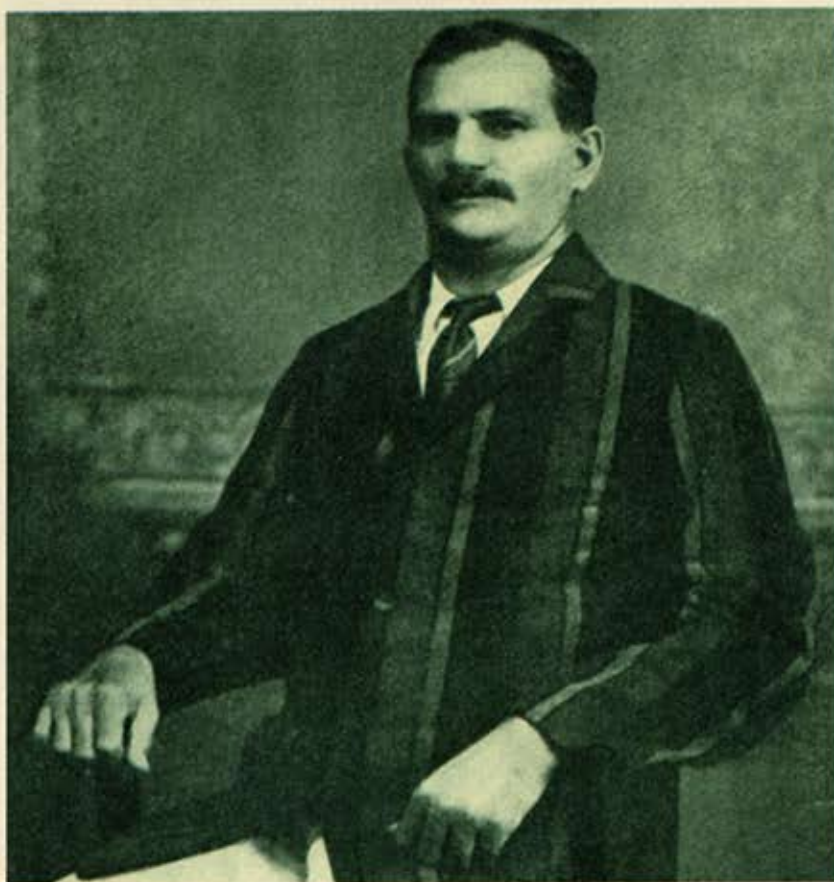
Chicago where, among others, they sing Gujarati songs composed and conducted by Aban Daboo.

Young Jamshed Meherhomji of Karachi played selections from J. S. Bach and Frédéric Chopin while the host anjuman's children provided a Texan dance and Naznin Rao of Ahmedabad presented a Kathak performance.

Minoo Jokhi of Bombay electrified the audience with his dexterity with fig-

Clockwise from top left: Sindhi dancers (Photo: Noshir Medhora); Mexican appeal; Cyrus Mehta (inset) and Cooper with the World Zoroastrian Orchestra; ZAGNY dancers

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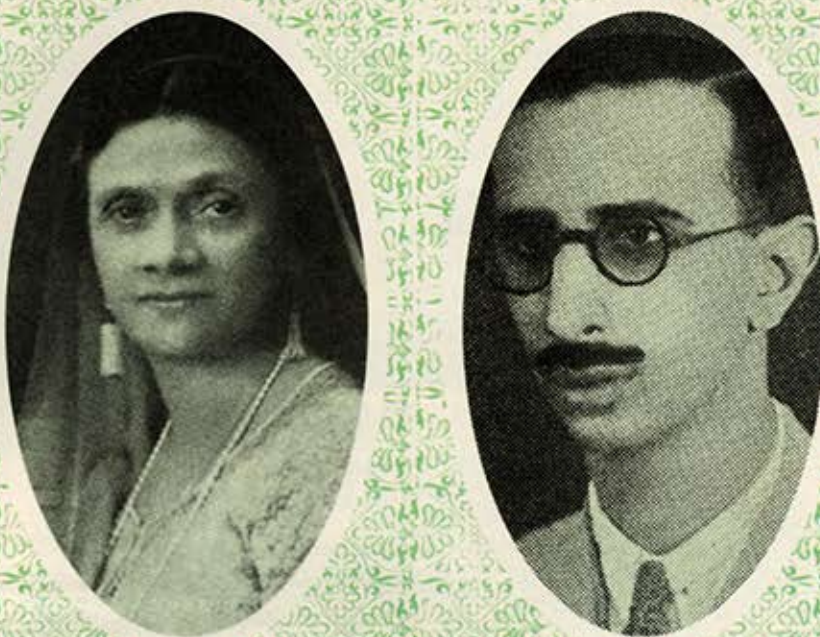
Left to right

(1st row): Houston's Modern Dance Group; Minoor Jokhi (Photos: Noshir K. Medhora)

(2nd row): Come all ye to learn the Texan two step!; Meherhomji at piano and inset

(3rd row): Adi Tamboly (Photo: Noshir Medhora); Setna evoking Sohrab and Rustam; palanquins and pirouettes in a Persian market

continued on page 206



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To America, with love

A project to financially assist 21 youths to attend the Congress materialized thanks to the efforts of the Rustomjis

Arnavaz S. Mama

For 21 bright young sparks varying in age between 15 and 23, the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (7WZC) was proof that brethren across the seas were ready to extend a hand of opportunity if you had the ability, the will to prove it and a yen for community involvement.

Sponsored under the Zarathushti Field Students (ZFS) project, their air transportation to Houston, Congress registration and banquetting charges (an estimated US \$ 1,500 per person) were financed through donations. Host families in Houston not only opened their homes and welcomed the students to their tables during the 25-day sojourn (December 20, 2000 to January 15, 2001) but provided entertainment with sightseeing, shopping trips and other outings.

It was Houston's Purvez and Aban Rustomji who conceived the idea of providing an opportunity to Zarathushti youths to learn through travel and exposure to a different culture as a legacy of the 7WZC. Having benefitted from such an experience early in their lives thanks to scholarships, the Rustomjis say, "It instilled in us a sense of responsibility to our immediate surroundings and also (helped) make an impact on issues we have a passion for."

The winners were finally selected by the ZFS committee from among 155 applicants of the prescribed age group on the basis of financial need, academic achievement, community involvement and a 250-word essay on "Why I want to attend WZC 2000." The sponsors made each winner a stake-holder by keeping him/her responsible for obtaining a US visa, local transportation in the country of origin and personal expenses.

The original plan envisaged a total of 30 youths with 15 to 20 being chosen

from India, five to 10 from Iran, three to five from Pakistan and three to five from other countries. Also on the cards was a week's stay in New York in conjunction with the Zoroastrian community of Greater New York though eventually this was eliminated due to shortage of

somewhat longer to evaluate.

The 13 winners from India were Bombay choreographer Ashdeen Lilaowala who is studying textile design; Poona's Ervad Faridoon Pundole, a computer engineer in the making who participated in the closing jashan; Madras'

Benazir Tehrani, a first year BCom student who is director of her college's Rotary Club; Bular's Khushnooma Italia, currently doing her first year BSc in Bombay; Farah Bala studying for BA in Bombay's St Xavier's College and involved with theater, music and debating; Rotaract member and commerce graduate Yazdin Mistry of

Bombay studying to be a chartered accountant; active scout Kaizad Deboo studying economics in Bombay; Bom-

bay's Dilnaz Karkaria, a junior college commerce student; MCom student and NCC (National Cadet Corps) member Bakhtaver Pastakia of Bombay; Jamshedpur's Tushna Vazifdar, active in school and community affairs, fond of dramatics and writing for newspapers; first year students Farzeen Lakdawalla of Bombay and Meher Mody of Poona; and Ahmedabad's Binafir Patel, poet and fashion model who submitted the ZFS essay in verse.

Pakistan's three winners were Spiltaman Shroff and Narius Shekdar, both from Karachi, the latter a sportsman who participated in the Zarathushti Games; and high schooler Kaizad Giara of Quetta, the youngest of the 21, with a penchant for dancing and music.

Third year engineering student, cadet and debater Farhad Billimoria and first year engineering student, pianist



Some ZFS members and friends (left to right, standing) Patel, Yasmin Medhora, Meher Rustomji, Zara Canteenwalla, Vazifdar, Tehrani, Nazneen Khosravi (sitting) Italia, Mistry, Giara, Lilaowala, Lakdawalla, Behroze Daruwalla, Mody and Deboo (Photo: Noshir Medhora). Right: Aban and Purvez Rustomji



funds and the number of students reduced to 28. However five from Iran were denied US visas and two from India were also unable to attend.

The application forms were distributed in December 1999 and collected in March 2000 by the designated area representatives: India's Mani Clubwalla, Iran's Dr Mahyar Ardeshiri, Pakistan's Toxy Cowasjee and Australia's Dr Sam Kerr. The selections were scheduled for June 2000 and the names of winning candidates for India, Pakistan and Australia announced. Since all the Iranian applications came in Farsi, they took

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(Picture taken June 2000.)



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and sportsperson Faraz Demehri came from Australia.

Kerman's Kaweh Behzadeh who is interested in starting a world youth forum, Tehran's Paymaneh Saroushpour who works for a Zarathushti magazine and high schooler Sima Bina from Shiraz were the winners from Iran who were able to come.

Though the Rustomjis had been thinking about this project for a long time, it fell into place at a ridiculously inappropriate time and place: After a massive accident, while the attending doctors expressed doubts that he would ever walk again, a delirious Purvez told his wife he wanted to sponsor 1,000 students! "He is always the dreamer and I am the realist so we went back and forth and we decided that we should raise money for 30," notes Aban.

"Six months later we were working towards it with Purvez in the wheelchair, in a cast, in a contraption that looked like he was ready to go into space. But, never did we once feel we

had to give up on the project or my regular public relations work. We had a clear goal and this goal helped to keep us from self-pity and defeat," adds Aban who co-chaired the Congress public relations committee with FEZANA Journal's editor-in-chief Roshan Rivetna.

The Rustomjis say they are urging FEZANA to make the ZFS a part of the biennial North American Congresses: "This will help share our bountiful resources with those who need it the most and where it will give Zarathushti youth a big uplift." They also intend

to remain in touch with "all 21 of these bright young potential leaders of our community."

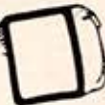
In a way the ZFS is an answer to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's comments at meetings of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India that those who've benefitted from educational grants are not responding to their pleas to beef up the educational funds.

The winners were finally selected by the ZFS committee from among 155 applicants

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Team Congress

Much to *Parsiana's* regret, the profusion and diversity of the Congress program left scant time and energy to meet the many people behind the event. There was much to be appreciated in Homi Davier's tautology: "Team Congress was a team!"

Under the Executive Board (EB) which included Congress cochair Dolly Dastoor and Homi Davier; Congress covice chairs Ardeshir Anoshiravani and Sarosh Manekshaw; FEZANA President Framroze Patel; ZAH Representative Yasmin Pavri; FEZANA Congress chair Jamshed Mistry; and treasurer Sarosh Collector functioned a multifarious steering committee (SC). The SC's awards subcommittee was chaired by Dinshaw Joshi with Yasmin Pavri as vice chair; the entertainment subcommittee was cochaired by Gordafid Aresh and Fereshteh Khatibi; fund raising co-chairs Yasmin Ghadiali and Yazdi Sidhwa; international relations Rohinton Rivetna and Darioush Vafadari; medical chair Katie Irani; operations cochair Pervin Sagar and Roshan Sethna; program coordinators Ardeshir Anoshiravani and Sarosh Manekshaw with the religious track led by Pallan Ichaporia, social and historical by Kaemerz Dotiwala; youth by Arash Anoshiravani, Mazda Antia, Eric Engineer, Shanaya Godiwalla, Armaiti Homavazir, Aaron Rustom and Zarathushtra's vision by

EB members (left to right) Manekshaw, Mistry, Collector, Sethna, Pavri, Dastoor, Patel and Davier

Photo: Noshir Medhora



Mehrborzin Soroushian; public relations cochaired by Roshan Rivetna and Aban Rustomji; registration and hospitality cochaired by Rustom Engineer and Darioush Vafadari; and sports by co-chairs Rustom Khosravani and Artemis Javanshir. Arnavaz Sethna was secretary to the Congress and Cyrus Mehta its general counsel. The international representatives were Mahyar Ardeshtari (Iran); Toxy Cowasjee (Pakistan/Middle East); Katayun Kapadia (Europe); Sam Kerr (Australia/New Zealand/Hong Kong/Singapore); Dorab Mistry (U.K.); Homai Modi and Sheroo Master (India).

Under this formidable lead functioned innumerable volunteers who gave their time and energy to organize, to help visitors and ensure that the complicated arrangements did not end in bedlam!!

Parsiana managed to interview a few of the key people behind the Congress' success.

Arnavaz Sethna

"Call it our labor pains," laughed Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress (7WZC) and FEZANA secretary Arnavaz Sethna in response to *Parsiana's* query regarding the added workload created by the long controversy that prefaced the Congress. "Once the baby was delivered I was happy! There were differences of opinion but Team Congress was a team," she affirmed.

Always in the thick of the fray, where most individuals would be pulling their hair out, Sethna continued to smile serenely. "When it came to FEZANA, I was FEZANA secretary, when it came to Congress, I went by the guidelines of

the Congress," she says, seemingly unmindful of the occasions when the two organizations pursued trajectories in conflict even though FEZANA was the official sponsor of the Congress. Perhaps her professional paralegal experience helped.

"We talked about 2,000 people coming... had nightmares about how we'd control them due to the perceived differences," Sethna admitted. The fears seemed to have been largely the result of the Parsis' expectation of conflict at the Congress. "I enjoy what I'm doing, every minute of it," reassures Sethna who had taken on the responsibility of coor-



Hoshang and Arnavaz Sethna: in the thick of the fray

dinating the entertainment at the Congress over and above her other functions. Work on the multimedia presentations kept them on their toes, sometimes till 3 a.m., during the three months of putting it together, she noted.

Born into the Bharda family of Bombay's famous school, Sethna had her education in Karachi's Mama Parsi Girls' High School where Madras' Mani Clubwalla (then Mehta) was her "hero." To Behram Rustomji, translator of Dastur Manek Dhalla's autobiography, and the School's Mani Contractor go her thanks for her early involvement in social service activities on which she was able to build after migrating to the US 22 years ago.

Married to businessman Hoshang Sethna, son of Avestan scholar T. R. Sethna, the couple's umbilical cord still binds them to their beloved Karachi community with annual visits. And it was the Sethnas who provided young mobed Mehernosh Bhadha with the comfort and reassurance of home.

Dolly Dastoor and Yasmin Pavri

At the end of the day EB cochair Dr Dolly Dastoor and Houston liaison and

EB member Yasmin Pavri met with Parsiana for a brief, off-the-cuff assessment of the highs and lows of organizing the Congress.

Getting to know a lot of new people from all over America, functioning as an information corridor, getting the diasporic community together was a gratifying experience to both of them. Dastoor was particularly happy to have been able to put Niloufer Clubwala in touch with Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami regarding the cancer project concerning Zarathushti women; Soonamai Desai, who is working in the field of elder care, with Dinshaw Tamboly who manages the World Zoroastrian Organisation's home for the elderly in Navsari and Armaity May, a biology major at Berkeley who came for the orchestra, to talk about vegetarianism. Another good thing that came about was the initiative towards Zarathushti Women Worldwide — the formation of a group of professional women.

Referring to Khojeste Mistree's "endorsement of diversity," Dastoor wondered, "Where do we go from here?" adding, "There should be a permanent body to maintain continuity. It's the world body's job to hold congresses," said Dastoor who was disappointed that the world body did not come through.

"I didn't expect that I wouldn't get to see the Congress!" exclaimed Pavri, who had been too busy organizing the various sessions to be able to attend them. She was happy however that the feedback was very positive. "Afraid that the



Dastoor (left) and Pavri: a retrospective look at the Congress

logistics would fall apart," she noted that the Hotel catering department "did do a good job...and we had very few people complain about the crowds."

"People felt that a little less choice would have been better (but we) gave more people a chance to talk. Therefore there was no question of resolutions. There were no rapporteurs and nothing to report!" noted Dastoor.

One regret was that there was scant emphasis on health issues, particularly infertility. But the overriding regret was their mishandling of the original program committee which had been sum-

marily dismissed, leading to much dismay among North American liberal minded intellectuals. "It blew up in our faces," admitted Dastoor, explaining how when they felt that certain members of the original committee wouldn't work together, they opted for the track system of programing and "we did not talk to them. We took a highhanded attitude. It was wrong of us," noted Dastoor apologetically.

Khorshed Jungalwala and Yezdi Rustomji felt particularly upset because they believed that FEZANA had appointed them. Though the other members of the original committee accepted other roles vis-à-vis the Congress, these two did not. "For a long time no one wanted to talk about programing," except for Kaemerz Dotiwala and Dr Pallan Ichaporia, recalled Dastoor.

"It was a chicken and egg thing," added Pavri reflectively. "No one wanted to join and kept saying it won't be a balanced program. But how could there be balance without them joining?" Eventually what was conceived as the future track became the youth track taken on by ZYNA (Zarathushti Youth of North America). "Rumors spread around. E-mail is wonderful but also dangerous," noted Pavri, adding a corollary typical

continued on page 142

Tanaz R. Godiwalla

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'People of the book'

Though there were several prominent Iranian Zoroastrians that *Parsiana* would have liked to introduce to its readers, the time available to do so was circumscribed by the multifaceted Congress program; hence the following three brief sketches:

Khosrow Dabestani

The Zoroastrian member of the Iranian Majlis (parliament) Dr Khosrow Dabestani is a dentist originally hailing from Shari-fabad who completed his education at the University of Tehran.

His long involvement with the community in Tehran has taught him that it is important to "teach young Zoroastrians about their religion from childhood, especially the *Gathas*."

But it is not enough for them to know the scriptures and witness the ceremonies. They need to be up-front with the general population, he notes. The community must encourage higher studies in all spheres while obeying the laws of the land where they live, he asserts.

Dabestani feels demographics is a major preoccupation for the community. While India records diminishing numbers of Zoroastrians, in Iran the figures keep rising from the 90,000 quoted in the mid 1980s to 1,30,000 and then 1,37,000. His personal estimate is 70,000 Zoroastrians in Iran.

Having conveyed the greeting from Iranian premier Mohammad Khatami as well as the speaker of the Majlis, Dabestani told *Parsiana* that Khatami has instituted a panel to review laws and abolish those that discriminate against the minorities in terms of blood money and inheritance. (Traditionally, in Iran even an accidental death of a Muslim caused by a non-Muslim calls forth a death penalty. In reverse circumstances the minority family is reimbursed in cash. Also, any member of a Zoroastrian family who converts to Islam becomes the sole inheritor of the family's wealth.)

According to Dabestani the Sixth

World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) in Tehran led to significant benefits for the community. The official visits with Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the country's religious head and then President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani led to high publicity and new respect for the community among the people. "Khamenei said we are monotheistic, that we are recorded as 'people of the book' in Iran. It gave us identity. We were recognized as the original people of Iran," asserts Dabestani.

Married to Gool, the Dabestanis have five children: Ardeshtir, a dentist like his father, is settled in the US; daughter Atoosa, married, with one daughter, practices dentistry in Iran; Rustom, Kurush and Armin are studying in Iran.

Khosrow, the eldest of three brothers, is involved with Zoroastrian affairs in Tehran, helping with defraying of 150-200 scholarships to university students every semester. Hindered by his limited facility with English, he was helped by brother Alyar's interpretations. A long-time denizen of North America, Alyar owns cinemas across the continent featuring Indian and Iranian movies. Their brother Farhad lives in Iran.

Mehrborzin Soroushian

San Diego based Mehrborzin Soroushian, chair of the Zarathushtra's Vision track, became involved in the proceedings of the 7WZC at the urging of FEZANA vice president and executive



Soroushian: accommodating diversity

board co-vice chair Ardeshtir Anoushiravani and his wife Shida. Choosing participants on the "basis of competence," Soroushian says he tried to accommodate geographical and doctrinal diversity and choose "topics of life value."

A telecom specialist, Soroushian came to the US in 1974 to complete his PhD at the University of California in Los Angeles and stayed on. Scholastic and religious in-

terests led him to Prof Kaikhosrov Irani's ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) classes which further honed the desire to know and understand his Zarathushti past. He is actively involved with the website www.vohuman.com which is dedicated to the Zarathushti heritage, featuring history and religion as well as highlighting Zarathushti achievements.

Married to Mehraban Zartoshty's daughter Mehrbanoo, the Soroushians have two sons: Vishtasp, 18, studying at Berkeley and Viraf, 16, who is in high school.

Expectedly, the Congress was an intense experience, says Soroushian, cherishing the opportunity it afforded people to hear different points of view, to open up minds.

Khosro Mehrfar

"I believe this is the millennium of Zarathushtra since it is the millennium of humanity," says Khosro Mehrfar who sees Zarathushtra's vision as deeply rooted in humanity. "We are moving towards one global family of rational and ethical belief based on the ever fresh message of Zarathushtra," he asserts confidently.

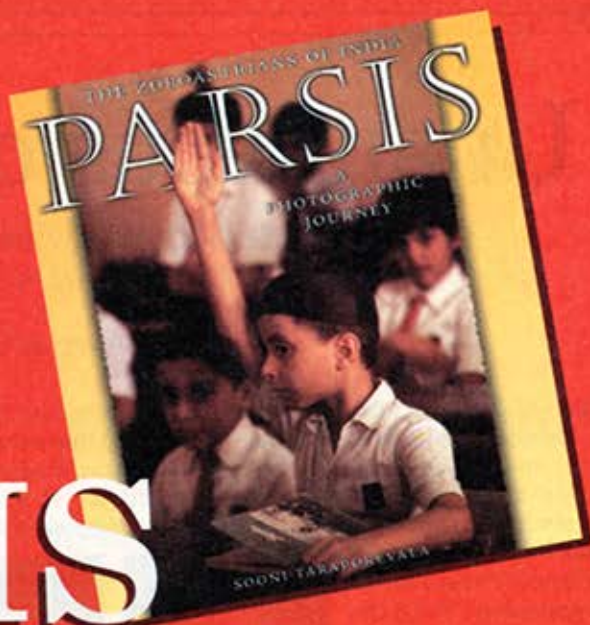
Mehrfar: slaking youthful thirst for knowledge

Iranian born Mehrfar migrated to

the US 22 years ago. With a doctorate in engineering from the University of Ohio he lives with his wife Roya, daughter Roxana (13) and son Cyrus (10) in Los Angeles, pursuing his professional career in telemedia. The family speaks Farsi, Dari and English. Mehrfar proved an able English-Farsi/Farsi-English interpreter in several sessions of the Congress.

Active in the community over the past eight years, Mehrfar is passionate about his faith. "There is no hierarchy in Zarathushtra's vision," he says. "We have to start from our own family. Father and mother must pass on the knowledge of the Zarathushti religion: live it, talk about it, (inculcate) its basic principles. The young are thirsty to know. We must know how to teach them..."

Arnavaz S. Mama



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Unanimous or unilateral?

The ideological divide may further impede the formation of a truly world body of Zarathushtis

Arnavaz S. Mama

Many hours of debate over four sessions — two preceding and two during the Congress — merely resulted on December 31, 2000 in the formation of a four-member steering committee of regional representatives to liaise with the London based World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and handle its counter proposals to form a representative world Zoroastrian body. "It was agreed that if the WZO did not submit concrete proposals for reform within three months, the regions would take the first step towards formation of a Body of Bodies. The FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) vice president (Firdosh Mehta) who attended this meeting did not agree with us but promised to convey this message to his colleagues," was an informal summation by ZTFE (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe) president Dorab Mistry who chaired some of the sessions. The WZO was not officially represented at any of these meets.

The steering committee, to be chaired by Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) senior trustee Minoo Shroff, includes facilitator Rohinton Rivetna, Mistry and Noshir Sachinwalla, president of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales. It is pertinent to note that while the concept of a world body of federations had initially begun with North America's FEZANA and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) seeking a common umbrella, there is no official FEZANA representative on this steering committee.

The year 2000 saw three drafts of the WZO constitution wooing FEZANA away from the resolution of January 2000 taken after a three-day meet in Bombay. On that occasion FEZANA president Framroze Patel had joined Mistry, Sachinwalla and five BPP trustees in a declaration to form a world council of

federations/regions based in India with the proviso that it merge with the WZO after the latter's constitution was suitably amended (see "A world body of federations," *Parsiana*, February 2000). As

viduals and anjumans. Secondly, it sought to know the number of WZO's individual members, which was promised on many occasions, but has failed to arrive even after 15 years. At that level it remained a constitutional and managerial problem.

The ZTFE's antagonism to the WZO began in 1986 when an orthodox minded group edged the older liberals out of the ZTFE management committee. With both organizations sharing the same turf and many common members, this ideological divide was compounded by the ZTFE sympathisers' view that the WZO management used the system of proxy voting to remain in office.

Another grouse is that WZO chapters compete with local anjumans so that there are two separate functions for Navroz, Pateti, etc and duplication of prayers for departed community stalwarts.

Apart from these long-term irritants agitating the FPZAI and the ZTFE, the common ground between them is the religious orthodoxy of some of the more vocal spirits from both.

North American Zoroastrians on the other hand have a stronger liberal base which is consonant with the liberalism of the WZO. Moreover, they are untouched by any history of strife with that body and prominent North American individuals and associations are happy to be a part of it. When FEZANA sought to break the deadlock in negotiations with the WZO after the Bombay resolution of January 2000, it enlisted Prof Kaikosrov Irani, doyen of liberal Zoroastrians around the world and member of the managing committee of the WZO, to effect constitutional amendments that would enable the formation of a truly world body under the WZO banner. The subsequent drafts of April, October and December were aimed at addressing the faults as pointed out by the critics.

Iran has been consistently amenable



Clockwise from top left: Irani, Rivetna, Patel, Tirandaz and Dorab Mistry

Patel noted at the first meeting of the regions chaired by Mistry on December 27, 2000, "I am responsible to my 23 associations... I got chewed up for what I did in January."

The divergence in the way they see the WZO between North America on the one hand and India and UK on the other may be attributed to two factors: differences of perception and ideology. India's dialog with the WZO precedes the formation of FEZANA. It goes back to the time when the ZTFE and the WZO functioned under the same roof and had many common members on their managing committee.

The FPZAI debates of the 1980s on the question of joining the WZO at the latter's invitation revolved around two key issues. Firstly, FPZAI consistently disagreed with the WZO's constitution which gave the same weightage to indi-



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to the WZO as the world body except for its desire that its headquarters be located in Tehran.

The WZO draft constitution now proposes a bicameral system under which functions a Council of Federations comprising proportional representatives from the various regions of the Zoroastrian world. This council of federations, with its own office bearers, would address its assigned list of topics independently of the Council of Individuals that comprises the WZO's existing membership, both of individuals and associations. The WZO's system of proxy voting is confined to the council of individuals.

Thus, the two councils work according to different sets of rules but combine to form an International Board of Directors (IB) where any of the 16 + 16 members are free to raise issues outside their immediate jurisdiction. A London-based secretariat is meant to provide executive support.

However, at the annual general meeting (AGM) where the quorum is 300 (100 for adjourned meetings), or special general meeting where the quorum is 500, and special resolutions or constitutional amendments can be passed, proxy votes are available to all.

Meeting of the regions

At the two sessions on the eve of the Congress attended by *Parsiana*, the first of the regions chaired by Mistry and the second of the FEZANA member associations chaired by Patel, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna presented the issues that remained to be faced on the long, arduous task of creating a world body.

Emphasizing the need to avoid unilateral action and to appreciate that the "WZO has undergone a most remarkable transformation," Rivetna traced the path from "divergence to convergence" and urged everyone to seek consensus rather than voting.

"Our one world body must be non-partisan and should be built upon geographical, not ideological lines," maintained Rivetna, advocating a moratorium on any attempt to define "Who is a Zarathushti." This will evolve over time, with usage." Otherwise Rivetna foresaw a schism along orthodox-liberal lines in the world community with neither side having the mandate to serve as a world body. The current draft restricts individual membership to persons born into and professed into the Zarathushti faith; non-Zarathushti spouses married to Zarathushtis; children of the above; asso-

ciations who wish to participate in the responsibilities entrusted to the individuals' council.

Of the 60+ amendments suggested to the October draft at a meeting in London in November 2000, about a third remain to be ironed out as per Rivetna's summary and WZO president Rustam Dubash's comments. Many of these are explained by WZO as requirements of the UK Companies Act including the desired change of proxy voting to voting by mail as is the procedure at FEZANA. Rivetna's note states, "The suggestion is to replace voting by proxy, with voting by mail or e-mail. Proxy votes lay us open to manipulation by a few and/or possible takeover by one or another special interest group." Counters Dubash: "UK's Companies Act does not recognize votes 'by mail.' Proxy voting is indeed voting by mail. A member having a proxy form votes for or against a particular resolution or can appoint someone at the meeting or the meeting's chairman as his proxy. When a member has so voted, the proxy holder cannot vote in any different way..."

"It should be noted that all arrangements spelled out in this article relating to the individuals' council were based on worldwide consultations with many present individual members. Hence, their rationale must be understood and respected by the London meeting even if it does not share it..."

More contentious still are the articles dealing with the general meetings of the WZO. At the London meet it was suggested that any special resolution to be passed at a general meeting (article 59) be first approved by 75 percent of the total votes at a special meeting of the council which is affected by it but the WZO refused to accept it as being undemocratic. Here too proxies are allowed for the members of the individuals' council.

The clauses governing general meetings are finally ruled under clause 71 which notes, "Every individual member qualified to vote either personally or by proxy shall be entitled to one vote. Each federation qualified to vote either personally or by proxy or by mail shall be entitled to one vote per 500 of population in their region, subject to a maximum of 100 votes for any region. However, whether the voting is for determination of a quorum for any meeting of the WZO or for decision on any substantive matter, the votes of the federation members shall at all times be equal to that of the indi-

vidual members, in order that each of them has a 50 percent share of the total votes."

At the London meeting the ZTFE members and Rivetna protested: "This gives disproportionately high weightage to individual members. If substantive items such as special resolutions and constitutional amendments are to be retained within the purview of WZO meetings, this voting structure will need to be revisited to make it more equitable. And again, proxies should not be allowed." Rivetna comments, "The role of WZO's general and special meetings is redundant with the two Councils and the International Board (IB). Over and above the two Councils and the IB, this is yet a fourth forum where voting takes place — on substantive issues (such as constitutional amendments and special resolutions)."

The WZO's response is that "The interpretation made of this article by the London meeting is simply incorrect, because there is maximum of 100 votes for any region and further there is to be an equality of votes between federation members and individual members on all substantive or procedural matters."

"What is being feared, is fear itself. That precludes the correct understanding of this article which seeks to equate the voice of each council in the affairs of this democratic world body."

At the meeting of the regions which began with an invocation by Pakistan representative Ervad Godrej Sidhwa, everyone initially echoed Mistry's hope that there will be "no winners and no losers." FEZANA vice president Mehta represented the organization and hoped for "some degree of convergence." He was later joined by Patel. Farrokh Mistry of Atlanta was the rapporteur. Russy Ghadially of Singapore spoke of the need to reassure the younger generation that there is "no conflict in the Zoroastrian community." BPP's Rustom Tirandaz said he spoke on behalf of his chairman Jamshed Guzder, his colleagues on the board of trustees and on behalf of the 70,000 to 75,000 Parsi/Irani community of India. "One body will be the savior of Zoroastrians in distress," he noted, a hope also expressed by Dhunmai Dalal of California.

Noting that proxies were a "peculiarly English institution used by joint stock companies," Mistry suggested that the world body "give up its corporate structure and be a charitable trust like the BPP or FEZANA." Referring to the concept

of weighted voting in the council of federations along with one vote per member in the council of individuals he noted that it was "technically possible" that a few individual proxy votes from Udvada can wipe out FEZANA's and Europe's combined votes. "Let us get a structure that is transparent and democratic and workable," he urged. Drawing an analogy with the European Union where "every nation has a veto — policy decisions can only be made unanimously," he asked the gathered regions to declare that "we'll all act with unanimity, not unilaterally."

It became apparent that many of those present had not studied the draft constitution and kept asserting that "the council of individuals is totally separate from the council of federations." The power vested in the IB and the general meetings had eluded them until focussed on by Rivetna.

The meeting had begun with about 15 people around the table. Eventually the J. W. Marriott Hotel's Travis Room was quite full as interested persons, especially members of FEZANA member associations, joined the group.

"We have studied the working of the WZO in a reasonable manner over 15 years... It would be a flight of fancy to expect Dorab (Mistry) or Rohinton

(Rivetna) to be head of the WZO. They (the existing management) have made themselves permanent... The Zoroastrian community of the world has survived because of our bigotry," Tirandaz warned to the subject. "The orthodox have given the charities but they are distributed by liberals (who) bludgeon the receivers into subservience." Turning to Rivetna he added, "You are talking of compromise. Are they talking of compromise? The world body will need to be a body of bodies only — not a mix."

He was supported by Kobad Zarolia, former president of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO). "We request the BPP to take the lead and with ZTFE form a body of associations. Forget the WZO." He challenged Dhunmai Dalal: "Do you have a say in the WZO? Why are we pandering to two people?"

Dhunmai Dalal agreed that there should be "no individuals in the world body...only regions." She then recalled the history of the Iranian revolution and the money entrusted to the WZO by large donors to help fleeing Zoroastrian Iranians. It is now mainly used to help Parsi farmers in Gujarat and to renovate agiaries and dharamshalas, she asserted. "I am not speaking for anyone. We can't as a

small community have two world bodies. We don't know what the demographics will be... Keep the council of individuals in one section... I really believed that the council of federations was totally separate."

"(The late Mehraban) Faranghi's money is used only for WZO's work. It is kept for its own purposes because the trusteeship is controlled. It is used for the propagation of the WZO, not for charity. It is not reflected in the accounts of the WZO," former ZTFE president Russey Dalal contradicted Dhunmai Dalal. He was referring to the £150,000 in the Zarathustrian Trust Funds donated by Faranghi. Mistry suggested a time limit of 10 years to phase out the council of individuals.

Mehta expressed his disappointment that despite an invitation from FEZANA, the WZO people "haven't come, especially if they're willing and wanting to be one world body." He supported Rivetna on the question of defining a Zarathushti, "hoping that regions will have the autonomy to decide," as is the case in FEZANA. He acknowledged that the International Board of 16 + 16 would be a problem as article 33 declares that all matters will be decided by a simple ma-

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majority. Mehta however ruled out any unilateral action by the FEZANA executive board. "We need the FEZANA members' mandate," he declared.

"As of now the FEZANA associations have asked to join after clearing out the problems," Dhunmai Dalal reminded him.

"FEZANA is talking to the WZO. Rohinton Rivetna has recognized that significant progress has been made," asserted Framroze Patel who had joined the table by then. "Give me five points. I will go back and forth with the WZO. Only, the next light should be green," he added, rebuking those who believed he had "cut a sweetheart deal with the WZO."

"Why are you negotiating directly with the WZO?... Why is FEZANA moving unilaterally when the regions are here?" challenged Mistry.

"Don't talk dissent, talk positive," shot back Patel. "There is significant progress. We are close to resolution. FEZANA will do whatever it can to help Rohinton Rivetna," noted Patel adding a discordant note addressed to Mistry, "Maybe, you may not walk with us."

"If FEZANA and Iran join and the rest of the world doesn't, there'll be two world bodies. ZTFE can be the mediator rather than FEZANA," suggested Rivetna

in an attempt to douse the incipient fire. "There is urgent need of healing. We must send a message of harmony. We all should be united and working together. The general body meetings: That's where the rub is, where difficulties arise," he added.

According to Dhunmai Dalal the problem lay with the IB and the WZO's corporate status. Farrokh Mistree defended the IB and the general body meetings as mechanisms for bringing the two boards together for the purpose of having one world body. "Otherwise they would be separate bodies," he noted.

The arguments went to and fro. "At least there is trust. Take the opportunity to continue," suggested Patel. Tirandaz countered that by citing the example of the BPP board's two WZO members who chose to appeal to the community for funds for Bombay's Doongerwadi under the WZO banner rather than the BPP's. Mistry referred to the WZO's trust funds, "one in UK and three in India (whose trustees are) trustees for life."

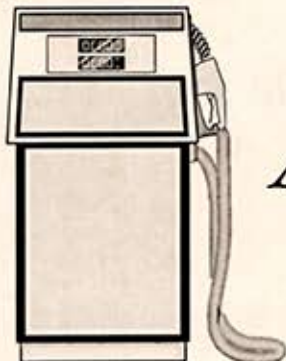
Since time was running out and the arguments were straying, Roshan Rivetna came forward to highlight the major outstanding issues. "Since the WZO is not willing to concede on the 50-50 (equal votes of the two councils), make the IB

innocuous. Make it a coordinating and administrative body," she advocated. She saw "a lot of inequities" in the voting at the general meetings where "any issue could be brought to the floor." She also referred to the "overlapping objectives" of the two councils which can be voted on by proxy.

Brushing aside the Rivetnas' secular concerns, Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) founder Khojeste Mistree declared, "The most important issue the WZO should address should be 'Who is a Zarathushti' instead of sweeping it under the carpet. Initiate a process (e.g. by registering navjotes). 'Profess' means any one can say in front of two people (that he's a Zarathushti). If we are not clear in our own mind, if we don't know who is a Zarathushti... 50,000 from anywhere in the world can say they're Zarathushtis... It is imperative that we understand who a Zarathushti is. We want something solid for the next 100 years, for the next 1,000 years... India has already defined it, so also UK. Why shy away from nomenclature that has helped the community all this while?"

While Roshan Rivetna spoke of the anjumans as a "filtering mechanism" Farrokh Mistree spoke of harmony and filtering mechanism as one model and

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the BPP/ZTFE definitions as an alternate one. "We are looking at two competing models. Decide which is the right model... Despite what Framroze Patel says, there's no trust. We operate on the basis of decide, then find the facts to support (the decision)."

ZSO president Sam Vesuna carried the argument back into the secular field. He suggested that the hurdle of proxies could be overcome by having specific proxies, not open ones. Mistry was of the opinion that a resolution can be carried or thrown out; "You can't have a change in the resolution" without a special notice.

Even as some were trying to sort out the proxies problem, Tirandaz declared that he had no loyalty other than to the BPP. He wanted to "ensure the supremacy of the BPP in carrying out the traditions of Zoroastrianism" and believed that the Bombay declaration had intimidated the WZO. "In the UNO there is no place for individuals (even though it) decides on matters concerning individuals. (The world body) has to be a body of bodies only. WZO can be a member like the ZTFE... The ZTFE and India combine within themselves 90 percent of the community. People are not willing to sit at the table with you. Why are we playing second fiddle to machinations? Sixty per-

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cent of Zoroastrians are in Bombay. The Iranshah is in Udvada. The government of India is agreeable to us. We can get any permission we want." Reaching a crescendo, Tirandaz asked, "Why do we need a world body?" Citing the case of an Iranian family of five related to his wife who had been granted asylum in Canada, Tirandaz said, "I had to pledge my passport with the police." He accused the WZO of "Selling future generations to glorify present leaders... The haves and have-nots of the community have become polarized."

When Tirandaz had finished, BPP trustee and WZO vice president (UK) Dinshaw Tamboly, who was present but had not participated in the discussions, put in his disclaimer: "Whatever Rustom has said are his personal views. They should not be ascribed to the BPP."

Patel responded icily to Tirandaz: "I am not going to raise my voice. As far as FEZANA is concerned, we have worked on the model of two bodies — the council of individuals and the council of regions. That is the model we are currently accepting. I will request Rohinton Rivetna and Kaikhosrov Irani to continue their efforts until finally done."

Protested ZTFE co-secretary Porus Jilla: "We went through all the points and every answer (from the WZO) was 'no'!"

Refusing to take a "negative attitude," Patel responded, "Maybe there were 36 points on which they said 'yes'!"

Acknowledging that "we'd never come up with such a model if we were to start from scratch," Rivetna sought "cognizance of what exists." He sought provision for a review in three or five years if the marriage with the WZO does not work. "Time is running out. Fifteen years are lost. If we are together we can do things... My plea is, be united."

Mehta, who had earlier registered his disappointment that the WZO did not attend now further commented, "two members of the BPP are present but not representing," referring to Minoo Shroff and Tamboly. Undaunted, Tirandaz declared, "I'm representing five trustees!"

Vesuna urged the assembled representatives to "accept reality and go forward. If any safeguards or clarity is required, we should get it. But if there is mistrust, the best legal document won't work." Addressing Tirandaz he said, "We shouldn't be speaking in parochial terms. You are 70,000 in India today. We are 18,000 in America today. But the figures will change..."

Khojeste Mistree recalled that the work

done by ZS in helping 160 Iranian families resettle in US and Canada had been acknowledged by the North American community 10 years ago. "The credit was taken by WZO. Even in the cases Tirandaz spoke of, the paper work was done by my wife!"

Mistry felt the meeting should disseminate "two clearcut signals" — its disappointment that WZO didn't attend despite the invitation and that all regions of the world should abstain from any "sweetheart or business deal" with the WZO. "Don't allow divide and rule; work, discuss together," he urged.

"He's trying with a smile on his face to trap me!" declared Patel refusing to give any assurance without a mandate from his 23 member associations.

Rivetna enumerated five courses of action:

- accept the WZO charter as on December 27, 2000
- set a six-month time limit for convergence after the major issues are resolved
- start functioning informally as a real world body
- same as above but also register whether in UK, India or Iran
- throw out the WZO and start a separate body.

Deferring any decision until a proposed meet in Bombay in June to coincide with the meeting of the FPZAI, the regions decided to act in unison in whatever decision is made in regard to the world body, declared Mistry.

FEZANA meet

Many of the presentations and most of the arguments were repeated at the FEZANA meeting that followed (there was only a shuffling of people, from the rear to the main table). Irani presented a perspective for FEZANA, adding, "No constitutional document is perfect. (But there are) possibilities to amend after the council of federations is established. My judgement is that the WZO constitution is ready for FEZANA to join." Acknowledging that there are "people with deep personal objections," he added, "(It would be) all to the good to take the initial step and start and take it from there. With a spirit of goodwill the constitution can work, adjustments can be made. Where there is no goodwill, there is no constitution that can work."

Though Rivetna agreed with Irani that the WZO had accepted many changes, he sought to postpone unilateral action by FEZANA, noting "there is work (yet) to be done. To join today would be prema-

ture... We haven't been able to get WZO to sit across the table... All it takes to resolve issues is two days when people dialog across the table." Projecting Dorab Mistry as "the key," Rivetna suggested that FEZANA "ask him to take the initiative and work things out. FEZANA must be the catalyst to bring everyone together."

Quebec businessman Ness Lakdawala noted, "It's not true that they (WZO) haven't come to the table. They've done so many times. Why they haven't come today is different," and asked pointblank: "What are we worried about? Embezzlement? Fraud?" At the earlier meet, Lakdawala had suggested, "If you want to resolve this, change the players."

ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) president Gev Nentin admitted that he was "disturbed by the meeting of the (regions). Some people seem mentally very far away," but believed that FEZANA should be "bold enough to go forward... be the catalyst."

Farrokh Mistree's attempt to define the "pluses and minuses" of two world bodies raised strong objections from Dhunmai Dalal and FEZANA treasurer Rustom Kevala.

Remarking on the voting time required by various associations, Patel felt that no decision could be foreseen before March 2001.

"Suppose FEZANA votes to join, do we go in unilaterally?" questioned Nentin. Patel replied that that decision too would need to be taken by the associations.

Former vice premier of Iran and respected Zarathushti intellectual in North America, Prof Farhang Mehr had his say: "The dialog can't go on forever. Now try to end it. This is ridiculous! Secondly, we shouldn't be hostage to any federation anywhere in the world. We must make our own decision. We would like to have consensus. There must be respect for others but there must be respect for FEZANA too as an independent body."

Vesuna agreed that there was "definitely a feeling of distrust." He suggested the addition of "new players to the team," which he perceived as "bogged down."

"I don't think there'll be a perfect constitution," noted Farshid Bakhtyari of the Iranian Zoroastrian Association, adding, "Every few years there will be changes. The younger generation will make its own changes. If it doesn't work we can walk out. But if we don't join, we'll never know!"

Eventually Rivetna concluded, "Let FEZANA be the catalyst as Sam (Vesuna)



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suggested. Go as delegates, and have Dorab (Mistry) and India also." He advocated that the grand summit be held before the scheduled June 2 meet of the FPZAI.

According to a subsequent e-mail from Patel, he has informed FEZANA member associations in February of a proposed visit by WZO representatives for a face to face meet with FEZANA. The visit being tentatively scheduled for April 21/22, 2001 in New York or Boston, all member associations have been requested to submit their "recommended changes and comments" on the WZO draft constitution to FEZANA secretary Arnavaz Sethna by March 31, 2001. Patel adds that Rohinton Rivetna has requested a meeting of the regions by end March in Bombay to discuss additional changes to the latest draft. "I believe that by now ample opportunity has been given for the regional effort to reconcile their individual issues with the WZO and come up with a united single body... If some regions still hold out, it is their decision." Patel's missive concludes with his emphatic recommendation that FEZANA should "join WZO, now. That is the right thing to do."

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"Hearken with your ears..."

The hall was filled with to capacity for the much publicized 'debate' between Ali Jafarey and Kaikhushro Dastoor

Arnavaz S. Mama

Promptly at 6.15 p.m. the doors of Exhibit Salon A of the J. W. Marriott Hotel were closed. The hall was said to be over full, constituting a fire hazard. In the lobby outside strolled uniformed police guards and members of the conservative faction who had expressed an intention to scuttle the FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) sponsored special session on December 30, 2000 where two speakers debarred from the Congress were invited to give their respective interpretations of Yasna 30.2. Its volunteers distributed handbills defaming one of the speakers, Ali Jafarey, co-founder of the Los Angeles based Zarathushtrian Assembly.

The announcement of the FEZANA session quoted Dinshaw J. Irani's interpretation of Yasna 30.2: "Hearken with your ears to these best counsels, Reflect upon them with illumined judgment

Let each choose his creed, with that freedom of choice each must have at great events, Oh ye, be awake to these my announcements."

In contrast to the scene outside and the controversy of the past many months (see "The right to be heard," *Parsiana*, November 2000), Jafarey and his orthodox counterpart, Khshnoomist Ervad Kaikhushro Dastoor, sat together, amiably conversing with a host of others like Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Prof Farhang Mehr, Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli, Adi Davar and Dinyar Mistry.

"Anything I'm about to do has been sanctioned by both speakers in complete harmony. If such harmony were practiced by us it would be wonderful!" noted session chair and FEZANA vice president Firdosh Mehta as he informed the gathering that an attempt was underway to set up a TV screen in another area

of the Hotel because there were "quite a few people outside." However, the necessary cooperation did not come and no such facility materialized to the chagrin of those denied access.

A graduate in chemistry and physics who later opted for a career in law,



Dastoor (left) and Jafarey: ready to field questions

Dastoor's yen for mysticism took an early start on reading a chapter of Dr Framroz Chiniwalla's *Nikeez* — a metaphysical treatise, informs the handout published by FEZANA for the event. "Modern science is his first love. Nuclear physics in its philosophical aspects is his favorite subject for the past 50 years," it adds.

"I bring the blessings of Iranshah. The fire (has been) spreading its blessing for over 1,000 years," began Dastoor adding that he had opted to speak first with the agreement of his co-speaker. Excerpts:

"Religion is not the subject of argument or debate or ego blast where one loses or one wins. It is a quest for truth... a science in that sense... Truth is God and God is love and therefore in any religious discussion there can be no place for hatred... In matters of religion if love plays an important part then there is no scope for clashes... My viewpoint on Yasna 30.2 is entirely different from that of my learned friend..."

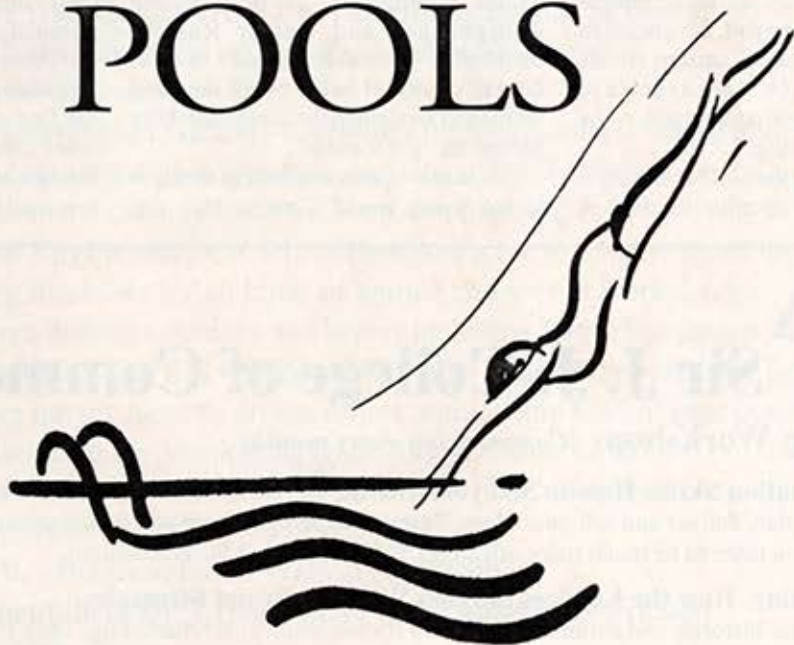
Paraphrasing the liberal approach, Dastoor said, "You can work out the truth by applying your non-saintly mind on such facts as are within your experience. This has been extended to change of faith as a corollary. This interpretation is inconsonant with two things: modern science and the spiritual writing of centuries... My theme is that the non-saintly mind arriving at truth is inconsonant with these spiritual writings..."

"On April 26, 1686 Isaac Newton wrote his paper on the laws of motion and gravitation... In 100 years the hypothesis of God was being rejected. (However) at the beginning of the 20th century physicists Max Planck (produced the equation) $E=hf$ and Albert Einstein (offered) $E=mc^2$. These two equations are still at loggerheads. Each works, but not together. I am saying this to emphasize that modern science has failed to arrive at the truth despite commendable methodology. Today the concept is that common sense has failed.

(Quoting Prof Paul Davis' book *Mind of God*, Dastoor said) "We are barred from the ultimate explanation through logical explanation... perhaps through mysticism (we may succeed)... Mysticism (because) the intellect has a limit. (Dastoor then quoted verses from Islam and the *Gita*. Reverting to the *Gathas* he noted) Yasna 33.4 says, 'Let my ego be vanquished through my worship of Ahura Mazda' (But) the mind requires to be expanded by different procedures and tarikats... In whichever religion you are born, you continue since your mind is not capable of comparison. The religion of birth must be continued with profound respect..."

"Yasna 30.2 is not talking of ordinary ears but something heard when the energy centers are developed. Due to western studies the mystical side has not been developed. (We can) understand

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our own religion in a better way through the principles of other religions... Develop the ears to hear the sound of Srosh and Ahunavar... The saint is a 'seer,' one who sees with an enlightened mind... i.e. with supranatural consciousness... This current interpretation is based on outdated science."

Jafarey began with a brief address in Farsi followed by a recital of certain Gathic stanzas. The rest of his address continued in English, interspersed by Gujarati when he quoted from the translation of the *Gathas* by Kavasji Kanga. Excerpts:

"The *Gathas* are coherent, cohesive, concise and precise — a divine doctrine by the master thought provoker and poet Zarathushtra... In five meters, 17 songs and 251 interrelated stanzas they discuss in clear words a unique monotheism, the principles of existence, good and evil, freedom of choice, progressive life, renovation of the world, happiness in a peaceful environment, advancing to godlike goals (through) certain rituals and a simple life. (They are a) guide to Daena Vanghui, good conscience — the best religion for living...

"Understanding the *Gathas* is easy if one has the whole doctrine in view. A

single stanza (30.2) must be looked at in the context of the entire *Gathas*... Freedom of choice (comes from) the root *var* meaning to choose, to select, to prefer, to like. *Var* occurs 44 times in the *Gathas* and eight times in the non-Gathic part of the *Avesta* even though it is 12 times the size of the *Gathas*... It is freedom of choice as seen by the Avestan people and passed on to us.

**"Anything I'm about
to do has been
sanctioned by both
speakers in complete
harmony"**

(Jafarey went on to quote original translations of Yasna 30.2 by Kanga, Dinshaw Irani, Irach Taraporewala, Erach Khabardar, Dastur Firoze Azargoshasp and Dastur Rustom Shahzadi.) "The stanza speaks of freedom of choice of belief by all men and women to awaken to the divine teaching before the 'great event'...

"A leader is one who offers strength to the living world. Zarathushtra was

granted sweetness of tongue to carry out his mission. In Yasna 31.3 Zarathushtra wants guidance to help all the living to choose the right religion.

('What Thou hast through the Inner Fire disclosed,

The bliss through Asa promised to us all,
The law divine for the discerning soul;

—
All that to us, O Mazda, clear explain,
In words of inspiration from Thy mouth,
To help us to convert all living men.'
(Free English rendering of Yasna 31.3 by Taraporewala)

"The growth of righteousness and serenity... shall convert many. Shahzadi's subtitles speak of freedom of choice. [Jafarey also alluded to the *Vendidad* 15.2 and 12.21 which answer the questions:

"How many are the sins that men commit and that, being committed and not confessed, nor atoned for, make their committer a peshotanu (the worst criminal)?

"Ahura Mazda answered: 'There are five such sins, O holy Zarathushtra! It is the first of these sins that men commit when a man teaches one of the faithful a foreign, wrong creed, a foreign, wrong law, and he does so with a full knowl-



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edge and conscience of the sin: this is a sin that makes him a peshotanu." (*Vendidad* 15.1, 2).

"If a stranger dies who does not profess the true faith, or the true law, what part of the creation of the good spirit does he directly defile (in dying)? What part does he indirectly defile?"

"Ahura Mazda answered: 'No more than a frog does whose venom is dried up, and that has been dead more than a year. Whilst alive, indeed, O Spitama Zarathushtra! That wicked, two-legged ruffian, that ungodly Ashemaogha, directly defiles the creatures of the good spirit, and indirectly defiles them.'" (*Vendidad* 12.21, 22, *Sacred Books of the East*, translation by James Darmesteter).]

"Other religions were known by the appellation 'alien'... The *Gathas* are a divine religion for mankind, a thought provoking message presented with a sweet tongue... peacefully... not confined to any nationality. The greatest, best, sublimest (for one who) has made the choice after study of other religions, with a bright mind."

There was time for only a few questions from the floor. Most querists chose to address one or the other speaker.

•Why did my ancestors migrate to India? They should have remained with the new religion chosen for them.

Dastoor: Religion is not confined only to the *Gathas*. To preserve and protect spiritual elements we came to India.

•How can we make the Gathic message spread throughout the world?

Jafarey: I answer from the *Haptanghaiti* (*Haptan Yasht*): We should learn the divine message first, practise it, then teach it. Translate the *Gathas* into all languages of the world. We have already done it in Italian, Spanish and German.

•Yasna 30.2 exhorts us to choose between good and evil. Is it good or evil to look at *Gathas* alone and discard the rest of the scriptures?

Dastoor: Gathic thought and Gathic mantras both form an important part of Zarathushti din. The *Gathas'* truths are elaborated in non-Gathic literature. It is a philological distinction. In 1930 Behramgore Anklesaria established that there is no distinction between Gathic and non-Gathic. Therefore discarding non-Gathic literature is not correct. In the jashan ceremony we are not reciting the *Gathas* but developing Gathic thoughts. *Patet Pashemani* (speaks of)

the secret of life and death. Pazand prayers are beautiful. It is blasphemous to say that Zarathushti din is confined only to the *Gathas*.

•We had heard that there were no other religions before Zarathushtra. So how do you say *Gathas* talk of other religions?

Jafarey: Religion did not begin with Zarathushtra. We had other religions like Mithraism, paganism, devayasma and others. We know that the Good Religion does not convert anyone. It is that person who converts himself or herself.

•You say science has proved that human intellect has limitation. Does that stop us from making a choice? And if our choice regarding accepting another religion depends on birth, what happens to the children of atheists?

Dastoor: Atheist is a state of mind of a man born in the religion of his prophet. Different religions depend on different wavelengths of each person and therefore his own religion is best for him.

•Message of 30.2 (speaks of the) choice between good and evil. How is this message incorporated in the *Vendidad*?

Dastoor: There are such passages which I can't recite.

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•If people listen to the best truth why can't they arrive at correct answers?

Dastoor: To choose the best you have to know good and better. It is not adequate to (justify a) change of faith. If I speak about noble and sublime Islam, half of those here would want to convert to Islam.

At the start of the proceedings Mehr had congratulated the FEZANA president Framroze Patel, vice president Mehta and all those responsible for organizing this forum and hoped that it would set a trend not only for world congresses but for all association meets. "Zarathushtra taught freedom of thought, liberality, tolerance. He said, 'Listen to me and then make your choice. If you don't want what I say, don't accept it.' We must be free to speak our mind, be brave (with) courage of conviction. Good thought means (there should be) no evil mind... not hate but love people. It means not to manipulate, not to publish false allegations. Zoroastrianism is dialog, speech in civil society, in friendly manner... It is a bad deed if I know of some harm to come but do nothing; a good deed if I correct the situation. Zoroastrianism is proved by deed, by

action... Respect the scholars who speak on the subject... Different interpretations of the Yasna are allowed since its figurative words give rise to different interpretations." At Mehta's request Mehr concluded in Farsi before joining the Iranian choir in singing the Yasna 30.2.

Mehta thanked all those who donated for the FEZANA event which required separate funding. Presenting books on Texas to the two speakers he remarked, "We have been encouraged by many not to think and not to hear in the past few months!"

The trustees, staff and sponsored delegates from India honored the Bombay Parsi Punchayet dictat to boycott the session. However, North American Mobed Council president Ervad Jal Birdy, who spearheaded the campaign against it, attended and addressed pointed questions to Dastoor.

At least a part of the restive audience, gathered together well before time, seemed game for more than theological knowledge. As the noise level rose, before the session officially began, former World Bank executive Adi Davar spoke to them about understanding and living according to

Zarathushtra's vision. "Zarathushtra has gifted his support system to all human beings. It is absolutely righteous choice for them to pay homage in the way Zarathushtra taught. It includes people of other faiths and it surely includes non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children... It was not until the practice of the faith 200 years ago that I have found implicit or explicit suggestions that Zarathushtra taught only for a limited number of people. Neither did he want Zarathushti women to be cast out for marrying men of other faiths. I can't find anywhere that anyone can't follow Ahura Mazda's divine attributes.

"I realize that not all of you will share this view. My only purpose is to put another input in your scale of decision making."

"FEZANA members had empowered us to organize this event... (It) was made possible by the cooperation and help of the executive committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston," acknowledged Patel, adding, "I have followed the cardinal advice of my Prophet and followed my vohu mano. It may not be the same as someone else's vohu mano."

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Minoo Bhandara

The writer is a Zoroastrian Parsi from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, who had the pleasure and the honor to attend the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress. I wish to commend the organizers for a well-organized conference, certainly the largest in our four millennia. The range of talks on Zoroastrian liturgy, culture, history and the development of Parsi Zoroastrianism in the Indian subcontinent were soul-searching in its wide ranging context.

Somewhere into the Congress proceedings I was informed that there had been considerable acrimony on whether or not a Zoroastrian scholar, Dr Ali Jafarey, be invited to address the Congress. I also learnt that there were deep divisions between the "purists" of the faith on the one hand and the liberals or progressives on the other. Apparently the former did not want Jafarey to be invited to address the Congress on the presumptive grounds that he, as an alleged Muslim, was likely to be biased in his interpretation of the faith. I thought this attitude towards a scholar to be unfair, keeping in mind that some of the greatest Gathic scholars in the last two centuries have been non-Zoroastrians. The unconscious element in this mindset appears to color all Muslims with the acrid paint of the thousand-year-old conquest of Persia by the Arabs. Is this not being churlish? Does any Englishman for example hold a grudge against the Vikings or Romans for the conquest of Britain? Even the depredations visited on England by the Germans in World War II have been almost forgotten and forgiven.

In the event a compromise was reached and a debate was organized, not under the auspices of the Congress but by FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America). The debate was a huge success. It was attended by a greater number of delegates than any other meeting of the Congress. The "purist" point of view was represented by Ervad K. N. Dastoor and the

focus of the debate was on Yasna 30.2. I was very impressed with the moderation, scholarship and humanism of both speakers. My earlier impression that Jafarey had been treated unfairly by the Congress organizers was confirmed at this debate. What was particularly jarring and un-Zoroastrian was the circulation of a scurrilous pamphlet moments before the proceedings, attacking the personal integrity of Jafarey.

For some reason that was not clear to me then (or now), I wondered as to why the debate on Yasna 30.2 which offers a 'choice' between two paths triggered on the question of free will versus determinism. This theme recurred in several speeches delivered at the Congress. This particular debate has its origin in Hegelian metaphysics and later was transmuted by Karl Marx who made it the granite foundation for the materialistic view of history. Marxism espouses the view that man is not 'free' to determine his material and cultural life; this is predetermined by the inexorable forces that nest in human history. This torrent of water must flow as it must flow in channels predetermined and any effort by man to alter the flow will only lead to social contradictions and chaos. Therefore the rational person is one who has the insight to determine the contours of a predetermined landscape and with this knowledge gives social forces a helping hand. Marx ordained that the proletarians (working classes) were the vanguard or the engine of social propulsion in the 20th century. This informed the ideological basis of the Soviet police state and also influenced the Aryan racist theories of Hitler. This digression which is not germane to our context is offered to show that 'determinism' is the stock-in-trade of every budding dictator.

Listening to some of the learned papers at the Congress I was shaken out of my somnambulism by the remarks of certain speakers. I took a notebook in hand and recorded some of the verbatim remarks and append them below. The

interesting twist to this lemon is that the Islamic fundamentalists of the present day too have adopted much of the language and thoughts of the communists now that communism is no longer a force in world politics. What is surprising is that the denial of free will is now churned out in the same high pitch by our budding Zoroastrian enthusiasts who trumpet it in the language of the Hegelian/Marxist/Islamic fundamentalists. The remarks given below are not torn out of context and are fairly representative of a trend.

"Common sense has failed"

"Intellect has a limit"

"The intellect cannot find out the truth"

"The mind is not capable of understanding the truth"

"We are not capable of listening to the music of Ahura Mazda"

"Ordinary ears cannot understand. Develop your ears to a higher level of consciousness to understand the truth."

The bottom line of all these feigned pieties is unfailingly clear: You need a Marxist high priest, a Soviet commissar, a fundamentalist mullah and now a Zoroastrian zealot to assist the uninitiated climb the high mountain of truth.

I came home wondering what relevance the debate on free will and determinism had to Yasna 30.2. So I read the Yasna again and my bewilderment only increased. I see no real connection between the teachings of this Yasna which calls for 'choice' between two divergent paths, good and evil, to the debate on free will. There is no complexity in this verse.

Yasna 30.2 in the Dr Irach Tarapore version is given below along with Tarapore's free English rendering: "Listen with (your) ears to the highest (truths)/consider (them) with-(your)-mind illumined/before-deciding between-the-two-paths,-/man-by-man (each) for-his-own self;-/before (this) great ushering-in/wake-ye each-one [indeed] (and) spread this (message)." Free English rendering: "Hear with your ears the highest truths I preach,/And with

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illuminated minds weigh them with care, Before you choose which of two paths to tread, -/Deciding man by man, each one for each-;/Before the great New Age is ushered in/Wake up, alert to spread Ahura's word."

We leave it to the reader to decide the intent of this gatha. As in most world religions it is not that the religion must come to terms with modern times but that the religion needs to be saved from those who believe in it literally, as if it were a manual for the repair of a refrigerator. Our "literal" mechanics love to pick at random words and sentences and work them to death. Like all faiths we too have our conservatives and progressives battling out on the torso of the 21st century. The issues that most concern Zoroastrians today relate to marriages outside the faith, disposal of the dead, the continuance of ritual inherited by the Parsis from Hindu customs and finally, but not the least, the claims of those who wish to adopt the Zoroastrian faith irrespective of race and creed, out of belief in its divine mission.

An outstanding claim in this regard is from the people who presently live in the old Zoroastrian lands which till recently formed part of the Soviet empire.

Are we to shut our doors to them? And continue to live in the tunnel mentality of Parsicentric Zoroastrianism? Or recognize the fact that the Zoroastrian center of gravity has irrevocably moved to the West and in particular to North America. The intellectual, social and physical capital in the new world already surpasses that which we have left behind in the old world of the subcontinent and Iran.

The writer is no Zoroastrian scholar to pronounce on any of the issues that face the community today. To construct an ecclesiastical order as that which prevails in Catholicism or Shiite Islam is neither necessary nor in keeping with the Gathic spirit. The proposal here is to bring about a Zoroastrian Supreme Council through the joint aegis of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and FEZANA to pronounce on individual human rights issues and review certain practices.

It is proposed that Zoroastrian communities in respective parts of the world elect, on the basis of consensus, such non political personages of unimpeachable probity, character and experience both secular and non-secular whose decisions need not be binding on the community but carry the moral weight of

considered Zoroastrian opinion. This Council should also be the supreme arbiter in the differences between WZO, FEZANA and other regional organizations and help evolve a unified body which is democratic in character and addresses the concerns, yearnings and prayers of most Zoroastrians to usher in a new flowering of the religion in the 21st century.

The construct of a neutral high-minded Supreme Council will elevate the Zoroastrian debate to a dignified high ground from its present noisy platform. The formation of such a Council may seem a tall order for a community that likes to bicker on every nut and bolt. But remember the downside is likely to be a split in the Zoroastrian church between Parsicentric Zoroastrian beliefs and those who wish to open the doors of the faith to a revived destiny.

Pakistan's former federal minister for minority affairs, Minoo Bhandara



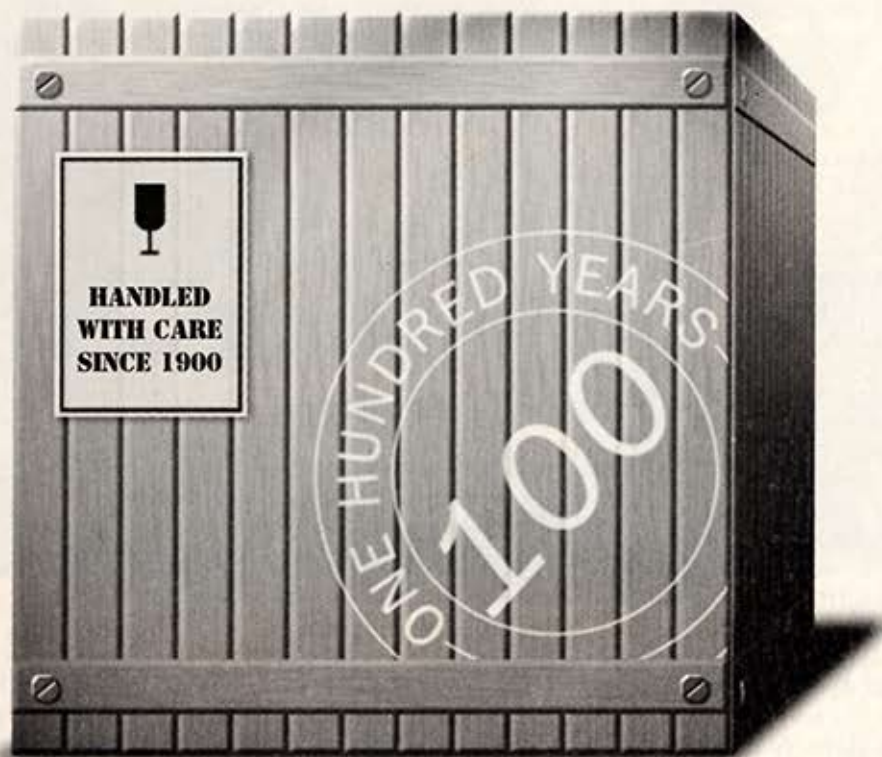
is managing director of the Rawalpindi-based Murree Brewery. A sought after commentator on social and political affairs, Bhandara writes frequently for Dawn

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The designing of dakhmas

Equality and simplicity are the distinguishing features of a Zoroastrian dakhma

Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal

Zoroastrianism teaches its adherents to wage a constant battle against the forces of evil that strive to destroy the good creation of Ahura Mazda. It exhorts them to preserve and protect the inanimate creations, viz. earth, water and fire, from being defiled and polluted through contact with dead matter (Avestan *nastu*). According to Zoroastrian doctrine, the most contaminated object on earth is the dead human body, and the sooner it is disposed of, with due ceremonial prescription, the better it is for the health of the living. Hence dead bodies are exposed to the cleansing rays of the sun (Pahlavi *Khurshed Nigeshn* "beholding by the sun") and are devoured by vultures who act as nature's most efficient scavengers.

In the *Vendidad* (Ch 6.44) a question is asked of Ahura Mazda by Zarathushtra: "Where shall we carry and lay the bodies of dead persons?" Ahura Mazda replies: "O holy Zarathushtra! on the highest places from where the corpse-eating dogs and corpse-eating birds may sooner perceive them." To the question as to where the bones are to be deposited after the dead body has been stripped of its flesh by the corpse-eating dogs and birds, Ahura Mazda replies (*Vendidad* 6.50) thus: "For them an ossuary should be made beyond the reach of dog, fox and wolf, wherein rain water may not fall from the upper part thereof." *Vendidad* 6.51 further enjoins that a man of means may build ossuaries of stones, plaster or thick cloth, whereas the poor may lay the skeleton upon the earth, its natural bed, exposed to the rays of the sun. The Parsi dakhmas are the product of gradual improvements depending on various factors like climate and social conditions, and they fulfil admirably the ancient commandment to

expose dead bodies as decreed in the *Vendidad*.

The terms 'dakhma' and 'Tower of Silence'

In the *Vendidad* the Avestan word *daxma* (Pahlavi *daxmag*) occurs in the sense of 'tomb.' However, for the Zoroastrians

noon and was taken the same day to the *daghah*."

In the English language there is no appropriate word which conveys fully the sense of the present-day Zoroastrian usage of dakhma. The English expressions "sepulchre, roofless tower, round tomb, burial tower, grave tower, Parsi cemetery" were all used (prior to 1832 when) the widely current term "tower of silence" was coined by Robert Murphy, an Oriental translator in the service of the Bombay Government. Despite its constant use, the term does not really indicate the function of this unique building for the swift disposal of dead bodies through natural agencies.



Dakhma: product of gradual improvement

of Iran and India the term dakhma means only an appointed place of exposure. A more appropriate term used in the Persian *Rivayats* and in old documents and inscriptions of the Parsis is *dadgah* (Avestan *daitio-gatu*) which means a "lawful place," in this case one ceremonially built and kept for dead bodies to be devoured by nature's purifiers.

The old anjomani dakhma in Bombay built in 1779 AC by contributions from the whole community has the Gujarati phrase *dadgah yané dakhmu* "dadgah, i.e. dakhma" inscribed on it. Noshirwan R. Tata built a dakhma in Navsari in 1878. The whole story of its establishment was told by Ervad D. K. Dordi in a booklet titled *Dadgah-e Noshirwan* (Noshirwan's Dadgah). Again, the leader of the Navsari Anjoman, Ervad Khurshedji Tehmulji Desai, wrote of his father's death that "he passed away at

The makings of a dakhma
A desolate, hilly place, far from human habitation, should be selected for the erection of a dakhma. The site should be made level after it is cleared of shrubs and weeds, and cleansed with cattle urine (*gomez*) and pure well water. A well to be used for the performance of religious ceremonies should be dug 300 paces away from the site in order that the water may be used for ceremonial purposes even after the dakhma has been put into use with the placing of the first dead body. Only the waters of a spring, stream, well and river are considered lawful for religious purposes, and a good flow of running water should be available for constructing a dakhma...

(Once), a priest of Navsari incorrectly informed Maneckji Navroji Seth, a wealthy, philanthropic Parsi of Bombay, that the stagnant water of a pond was being used in the construction of the dakhma which he was having erected in Navsari. Maneckji ordered the work to be stopped at once and the

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complaint was investigated. It was then found that water from the Purna river nearby was being used, and so he ordered the work to be continued, and the dakhma was completed in 1747. It was the first scientifically constructed dakhma to be built, and an exact replica of it was constructed in Bombay in 1756 through the good office of the same Maneckji. Maneckji's dakhma of Navsari thus established a pattern for almost all later Parsi structures built in India.

From the area thus cleared and purified, a spot is selected for erecting the dakhma. A space called the *pawi* is demarcated by means of furrows or channels, and is encircled by curtains. Within it two priests who have undergone the *barashnom* (the nine-day purificatory ritual) first perform the *dron* service called by the Parsis the *khub-i panj tay* (by Iranis *yasht-i barsam*), which qualifies them to perform other essential liturgies during that day.

After this foundation service they consecrate nine *dron* ceremonies within the *pawi*, dedicated as follows: the first to Srosh Yazad who protects the souls of the deceased during the first three days after death; the second to Ohrmazd the Creator; the next six to the six great Amesha Spentas, from Bahman to Amurdad; and the last and ninth to Arda Fravash, the holy spirits of the departed.

There is no uniform prescription as to the number of *dron* services to be performed at this stage. It seems probable that only one *dron* service in honor of Srosh Yazad was performed in ancient times, and that an elaboration of ceremonies has set in gradually through priestly zeal to perform additional ceremonies as an act of merit. All the *dron* services are performed either in the name of the person who bears the cost of erecting the dakhma or in the name of the *hama anjoman* (the whole congregation of the faithful) if the dakhma is built by general contributions from members of the community.

After the performance of *dron* ceremonies, one of the priests holds a spade (Gujarati *kodali*) in his hand and takes the *baj* of Srosh, to strengthen the ritual act that follows. He then digs a portion of the area on which the dakhma is to be erected while reciting 21 times, the *Yatha*

ahu vairyō. He then leaves the *baj* of Srosh, and this concludes "the ritual of digging with spade" (Gujarati *kodali marvani kriya*). Afterwards, laborers are called in to dig out the earth to a depth of 11 feet for the purpose of laying the foundation of the dakhma. This ends the first of the three parts of the whole process.

Preparations for the foundation-laying ceremony

The foundation-laying ceremony of the dakhma is called in Gujarati *tano purvani*

nails indicated by the letter Y and 20 by the letter R). Each of these nails has its upper part slightly curved.

- Two hundred and fifty-six small nails for four drains connected with the four corners of the central well, altogether weighing 20 kg. Each side of each drain has 32 straight nails driven in a row (indicated as V1, V2, V3 and V4).

- Four nails of the same size as (the 256 above), each of which is to be driven in at the mouth of (each) of the four drains (indicated as A1, A2, A3 and A4).

All nails together make a total of 301.

The nails are cleansed with gravel, washed with cattle urine and pure water, then dried, and finally consecrated with a *dron* service in honor of Srosh Yazad.

The ground for the surrounding wall of the dakhma, for its central well, and for the four drains is then dug out for the nail and thread ceremony to be performed on an appointed day. Two priests with the *barashnom* are in charge of the nails, thread, hammer and metallic tray to be used in the foundation-laying ceremony. In the morning, they both perform in the central well the *khub-i panj tay* in honor of the divinity of the day together with his co-workers (*hamkars*),

put on white robes belted with a sash, and take the *baj* of Srosh while making *paywand* (a ritual connection made by holding a cord or sash between them). They then say together in an undertone the formula of *dasturi* (the formula which enables priests to accomplish any great religious work by invoking the authority of the divine powers, the Prophet Zoroaster, Adarbad Mahrspand who was the organizer of the religion, and the local living high priest) as follows:

"Ba dasturi-e dadar Ohrmazd, ba dasturi-e ameshaspandan, ba dasturi-e Srosh asho, ba dasturi-e Zartosht spitaman, ba dasturi-e Adarbad Mahrspandan, ba dasturi-e dastur-e in zaman (e.g. Dastur Firoze) bashad. [Be it so with the religious authority of the Creator Ohrmazd, the bountiful immortals, holy Srosh, Zarathushtra Spitama, Adarbad Mahrspand, and the dastur of the time (e.g. Dastur Firoze).]"

The two priests then begin to strike nails in the excavated ground of the dakhma with the recital of one *Yatha*

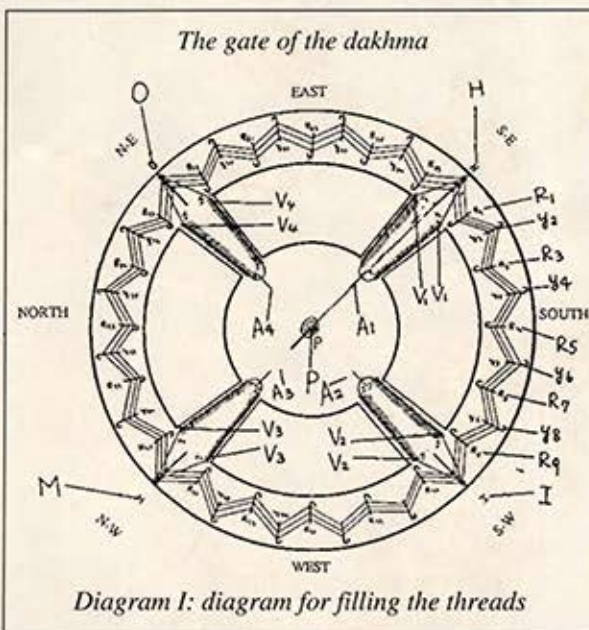


Diagram I: diagram for filling the threads

kriya "the ceremony of filling (with clay) the woven threads," in which 101 cotton threads are intertwined into a cord which has to be thrice the length of the circumference of the dakhma, and also to be taken crosswise through it, culminating in its interment after the completion of the ceremony. The cord is washed thrice with pure water, dried and then consecrated by one of the priests with a *dron* service in honor of Srosh Yazad. Three hundred and one nails of different sizes and weights are required as follows:

- One big nail (P in diagram I) weighing about 20 kg for driving into the navel or middle of the central well of the dakhma.
- Four nails (H, I, M and O) weighing 10 kg each, for the four corners of the dakhma, viz. the south-east, south-west, north-east and north-west. Each of these nails has three holes bored in its upper part, one vertical at the top and the other two, below it, horizontal.

- Thirty-six nails of uniform size and weight, altogether weighing 20 kg, for the four curves of the circumference (16

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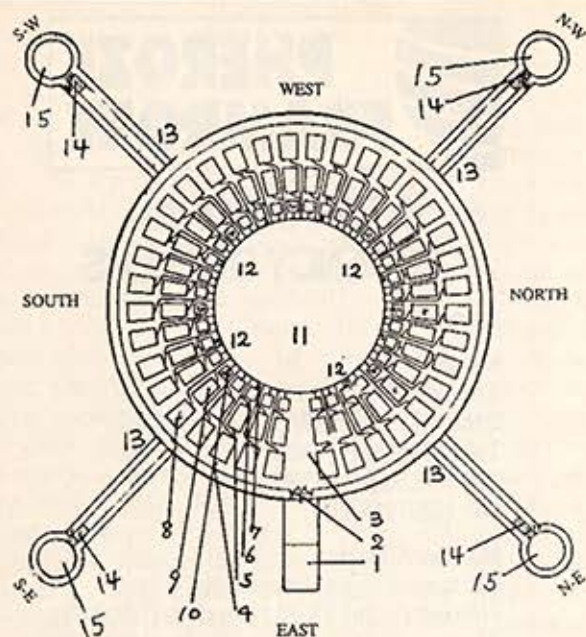


Diagram II: Sight of the inner pawis

1. Entrance stairs or slope
2. Iron or stone gate
3. Stairs within the dakhma
- 4-7. Surrounding stairs to reach the respective pawis
8. The pawis for males
9. The pawis for females
10. The pawis for children



Diagram II (a): Exterior of the dakhma

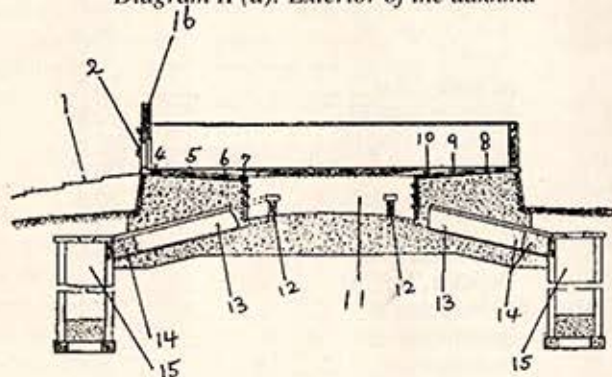


Diagram II (b): Interior of the dakhma

11. Central well
12. Stone drains
13. Underground tunnel
14. Place for filtering matter
15. Underground pits connected with the drain and filter
16. Circular outside wall of the dakhma

ahu vairyo at each nailing, in the following order:

- The big nail (P) is fixed in the middle of the central well of the dakhma (called *bhandar* "store" in Gujarati, *srada* in Persian). Its upper part should be kept two palms breadth (about six inches) above the ground.

- The four nails with holes in them (H, I, M and O) are driven in, one after the other, at the ends of the drains in the four corners, from the south-east to south-west, north-west and north-east. The upper parts of the nails are left a little above the ground.

- The thirty-six nails, slightly curved at the top (R and Y), for the four quarters of the circumference, are driven in from the south-east drain (from R1 to R36). Each of the four quarters between the drains thus has nine nails driven in along the curve of what is to be the dakhma wall, in such a manner that the first nail curves inward towards the central well, the next nail curves outward, alternately.

- Sixty-four nails are driven in in two rows of 32 along the sides of each of the

four drains, beginning with the south-east (V1, V2, V3 and V4), and making a total of 256 nails.

- The last four nails (A1, A2, A3 and A4) are struck at the mouths of the four drains, beginning in the south-east.

The two priests recite one *Yatha ahu vairyo* while striking each of the nails, saying in all 301 *Yatha ahu vairyos*. After finishing the ceremony of nailing, the priests commence the one of passing the consecrated cord through and around the nails. One priest holds the metallic tray with the cord in it and the other stands before the three-eyed nail H (south-east) and threads the cord through the lower of the two horizontal holes, and makes a reef knot at its end to hold it there. He then weaves the cord through the nine curved nails along the southern quarter, threads it through the lowest hole of the nail I (south-west), and so on until he returns to the nail H (south-east). A second round, now threading the cord through the middle hole of the nails, H, I, M and O is completed

in the same manner. In the third and final round, the cord is passed through the topmost vertical hole of the nail H. The priest then weaves it through the 32 straight nails along the southerly side of the drain from H, makes a loop round the nail A1 at the drain's mouth, and weaves the cord back again through the 32 nails on its easterly side. He then threads it through the same vertical hole of the nail H and repeats the same process when he reaches the other nails, viz. I, M and O and their drains, until he finally returns to the nail H. He then makes a loop round the nail H, leads the cord to the largest nail, P, in the central well, and fastens it with a reef knot while reciting two *Yatha ahu vairyos*. Any length of cord that has been left unused is wound round this nail. The priests, keeping intact the *paywand*, leave the *baj* of Srosh in a separate *pawi* outside the perimeter of the dakhma. The second part of the process of constructing a dakhma terminates with the completion of this cer-

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emony of tying the cord.

Construction of the dakhma

On completion of the foundation-laying ceremony, laborers and masons are brought in to construct the dakhma. The dakhma may be made of bricks, mortar or stones as resources dictate. Solid stones are better than the two former materials, since they are less porous and more durable, but the Parsis in India have built dakhmas from all three materials.

A dakhma faces east, the direction of the rising sun, which enables the soul to move upwards to heaven, and its entrance is made of stone or iron. Its wall is high, with an elevated entrance to be reached by means of stone stairs. The wall is pierced by a hole at a height of 10 to 12 feet to allow light to enter from the fire or lamp burning in a small building (with an aperture) some 300 paces from the dakhma (called *sagdi* in Gujarati, *atash-suz* in Persian).

In the interior of the dakhma there are three concentric circles of *pawis* or compartments: one for the bodies of men (along) the outer surrounding wall, another for those of women in the middle, and the third for those of children encircling the central well. (The well) occu-

pies one-third of the inner area of the dakhma and serves as an ossuary for the sun-cleansed bones. The *pawis* are so constructed that there is space between them for the corpse-bearers to walk on, and a channel to allow polluting matter to trickle down directly into the central well without passing through any adjacent *pawi*. A stone lattice is made at the opening of each of the four drains to filter impure liquids which pass through these underground tunnels to a layer of sand and charcoal. The secretion thus filtered passes on downwards to four underground pits outside the dakhma.

There has been a gradual evolution in the construction of dakhmas in India. In the beginning a modest brick structure of a round wall was made on raised ground whose middle surface served as a central well. There were no *pawis* inside the old dakhmas and no door. The bier was lifted over the wall, from ladders, and there were steps on the dakhma's inner side leading down to the surface for placing the dead. Even after what became the standard pattern of the dakhma, with three concentric *pawis*, was established in Navsari in 1747, two dakhmas were constructed slightly differently. One, the largest of its kind, was

erected at Kankrakhadi in Surat in 1771 by Mancherji Sheth, with 476 *pawis* in four concentric circles; and the other was built in 1884 with 35 *pawis* in two rows. The additional row in the former was meant to accommodate the bodies of members of the Kadmi section of Parsis, who lay out the dead cross-legged, whereas the latter was built for the exclusive use of the Bhagaria priests of Navsari and their clientele who lived in small numbers in Surat. Twenty-five big *pawis* for adult males and females and 10 small ones for children suffice to serve this small group. The brick dakhma of Broach built in about 1255 and the one of red stones built in Navsari by Minocheher Bahman (died 1584) provide good specimens of the old type of dakhmas. The stone dakhma built in Bombay in about 1672 by Hirji Vatcha Mody has neither *pawis* nor central well. The old dakhmas in and around Yazd and Kerman in Iran show the same simplicity in their construction.

Consecration of the dakhma

After the construction work of the dakhma is completed, the two priests with *barashnom* make preparations for its consecration which constitutes the

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third and final phase of the whole process. All parts of the dakhma are thoroughly cleansed with *gomez* and running water and covered temporarily with white sheets for the consecration. *Pawis* are drawn in the central well for the performance of high liturgies, and also around the exterior of the dakhma to exclude any connection (*paywand*) with outside visitors. All requisites for the performance of rituals are brought into the central well, and three *yasna* services in honor of Srosh Yazad are celebrated in the morning on three consecutive days. Three vendidad services are also performed in honor of Srosh during the three nights. All ceremonies are solemnized with the *khub* of Mino Nawar, called the larger *khub*, and when the priests partake of meals outside the dakhma they do so only after consecrating a *dron* service in honor of Srosh Yazad. On the fourth day, they perform a *yasna* in honor of Ohrmazd and celebrate a *dron* service in honor of Ohrmazd, Spandarmad, Srosh and Arda Frawash. An *aftrinagan* is then performed in honor of Ohrmazd, Spandarmad, Arda Frawash, Dahman and Srosh outside the dakhma, and the congregation of faithfuls who have gathered there participate in it. All ceremonies are performed in the name of the person, or of the hama anjoman, as the case may be, who bears the cost of the dakhma. All those present at the aftrinagan ceremony go inside the dakhma to see it and to throw coins and valuables into the central well as an act of merit. It is customary that these are given to the high priest who directs and superintends the entire proceedings of the construction of the dakhma, and he generally donates the amount thus collected to its maintenance fund.

The new dakhma is kept closed until a devout, pious Zoroastrian or a nameless infant (Pahlavi *wahman*) passes away. (Since both are sinless, their dead bodies are the first to be consigned to the dakhma.) With the placement of the first corpse in the dakhma, the whole structure becomes impure (*reman*), and no one but the corpse bearer (*nasasalar*) is allowed to enter it or approach it closely. When the dakhma is repaired by co-religionists, *gomez* is used in place of water for mixing sand, cement, etc since it is forbidden to pollute water by bringing it in direct contact with a place filled with impurities.

Equality stressed in the dakhmas

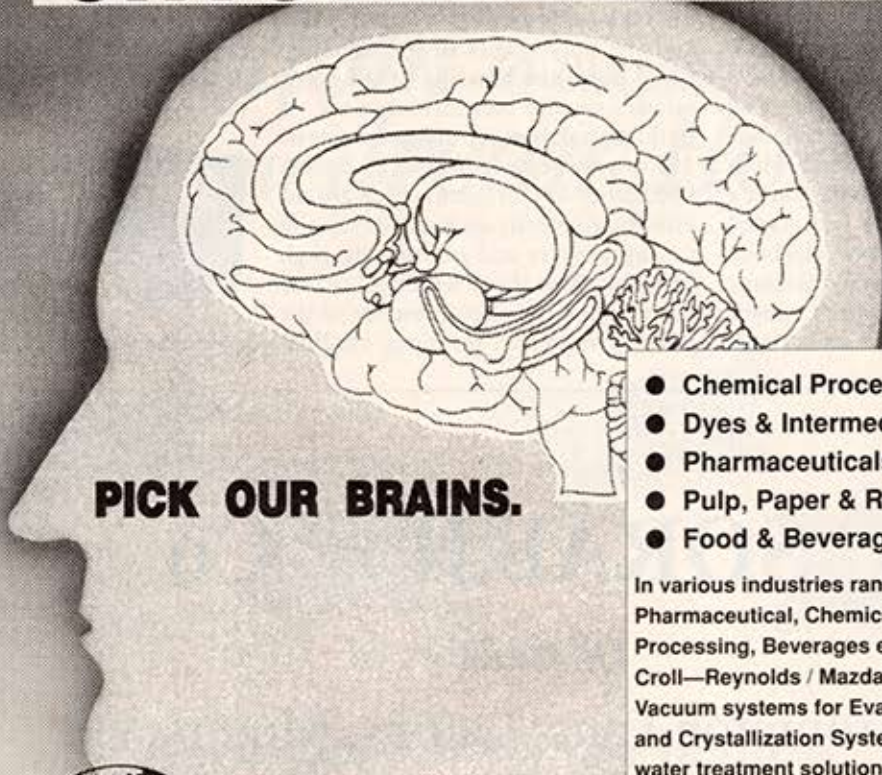
Equality is the main feature of the Zoroastrian system of the disposal of dead bodies, and the dakhmas are exclusively dedicated to the use of the Parsi community. There are two examples, however, in the history of the Parsis in India of dakhmas being erected for the private use of an individual or family. In 1786 M. J. Readymoney had a small dakhma built for himself on his estate in Bombay. It has two *pawis* and a small central well. Before its completion Readymoney died. His body was kept in the vicinity on a stone platform, covered and under an iron bier. It was placed in the new dakhma when this was completed after one month. There is iron-netted covering over the dakhma. The legend goes that when Readymoney was returning from China, his Armenian broker, who happened to be an astrologer, advised him to build an individual dakhma for himself. The broker further warned him that if any other body was placed in his private dakhma, his lineage would perish. It is said that after Readymoney's death the body of a newly born infant of his family was placed in this dakhma. The body, so the story goes, was seen lying on the ground outside the dakhma the next day, and was placed again within it. The same night his heir had a dream in which

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Readymoney asked him to abandon this (effort). Later, two bodies of his family members were placed in the dakhma, and thereafter Readymoney's lineage died out, as was prognosticated by his Armenian broker.

The other example is furnished by D. N. Dadyseth, a wealthy Parsi, who had a dakhma erected for himself and his family at Malabar Hill in Bombay in 1798. He died in 1799 and was placed in his own dakhma which was larger than the one by Readymoney, with 57 *pawis* and a central well.

Such individual dakhmas are not in conformity with the spirit of Zoroastrianism since they vitiate the principles of equality and simplicity. To preserve a dead body for a month or so is a loathsome practice which is tantamount to committing the sin of "burying/concealing dead matter" called *nasay-niganih* by the learned dasturs of Sassanian times. A similar case of laying up the dead body of a Parsi occurred in 1663. The philanthropic Nanabhai Punjiiji Modi of Surat died before the completion of a public dakhma which he had started building with his own money. His body was placed nearby in the old dakhma and covered temporarily with stones, and was then shifted to the new one on

its completion after two months. No other Parsi has ventured to build a private dakhma since 1798.

Symbolic references

For devout Parsis, a dakhma is not simply a structure of stones, bricks and lime, but is a religious institution which helps Ohrmazd by combating impurity produced by Ahriman, and aids the natural creations by the containment of pollution. After the corpse has been devoured by vultures in the minimum of time and with maximum speed, the bones are exposed to the cleansing rays of the sun (Avestan *hvare. daresya*), to be removed ultimately to the central well and reduced there to powder.

The *dron* services performed in honor of the seven Amesha Spentas including Ohrmazd, the yazad Srosh and the holy spirits of the departed bring down the blessing of the spirit powers on the meritorious work of building a dakhma. The cord made of 101 threads represents the 101 honorific names of Ohrmazd which are recited by Zoroastrians every day while saying prayers and performing high liturgies. The three windings of the cord around the circumference of the dakhma represent the three cardinal

virtues of Zoroastrianism, viz practising good thoughts, words and deeds (Avestan *humata, hukhta, hvarshta*). The 301 nails, driven into the ground with the recitation of *Yatha ahuvairyo*, serve as an absorbent of impurities, and the sacred cotton cord, wound three times around the nails, acts as a "boundary line" (Avestan *karsha*), containing all impurities at that level. The striking in of 301 nails is a reminder of the sacred covenant entered into by the performing priests on behalf of the community with Spandarmad, the Amesha Spenta in charge of the earth, for using the ground of the dakhma for a period of at least 301 years. In sum, a Zoroastrian dakhma serves as a spiritual powerhouse erected by the priests with the help of rituals (Pahlavi *nirang*) and holy utterances (Pahlavi *mansar*) to prevent impurities from penetrating into the ground.



Edited text from a contribution "The Parsi dakhma: its history and consecration" submitted to *Res Orientales VII* in 1995 by Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal, at that time the high priest of Bombay's H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram.

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Addressing the aviary

A report from the three Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees who visited the National Centre for Birds of Prey in the UK

Minoo R. Shroff, Dinshaw R. Mehta, Dinshaw K. Tamboly

Given here are our observations and gist of discussions with Jemima Parry-Jones (JPJ) pursuant to our visit to the National Centre for Birds of Prey at Gloucestershire on December 23, 2000.

The Centre is impressive with around 350 species of birds. The pens at the Centre are designed particularly for breeding and the UK climate. They are timber barn type structures, with the open front covered in wire. A sloping roof made from a substance called 'eternit,' which is a substitute for asbestos, provides shelter to the birds from the natural elements — rain, wind, cold and sun. The suggested aviary structure for Doongerwadi is fairly simple — poles over which netting is fixed, with perches and a natural ambience created for the birds.

JPJ mentioned that to meet our requirements we would need to locate various different assured sources from where 50 juvenile vultures, approximately eight weeks old, could be procured per annum for four years, i.e. a total of 200 juvenile vultures.

JPJ recommended that the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) should seek the help of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Rishad Naoroji to locate the nests. JPJ suggested a dry run as soon as possible as the vultures nest from October to March. This would give us an idea of the feasibility of the project for 2002.

Juvenile vultures take at least eight weeks to take wing and are required to be nurtured very carefully during this period. They need to be fed on chopped goat or sheep meat after which they would be ready for scavenging on human flesh. They need not be fed daily beyond three months on this animal

meat. However they will need a change of diet on a regular basis. The life of vultures is generally 40 years and the mating period is 15-20 years from five to 20/25 years of age.

Only after the feasibility study is com-

would come to India, visit the site and advise and assist bird catchers on the manner of 'collecting and transporting' the juvenile vultures. She would do the first transportations herself to see how the vultures coped and once expertise has been achieved, she would leave the matter to our personnel.

Once the juvenile vultures have been transported to Bombay they would be put inside an aviary that would cover one dokhma and a chotra. They will need to have a physical checkup and be visibly marked for identification purposes.

For approximately six weeks these juvenile vultures would be fed by keeping food (preferably rib cages and chopped meat) on trays. The trays would be progressively shifted, to a ramp on the chotra and then inside.

Once the young vultures are flying well and settled — within 14 to 16 weeks — food would not be placed on trays. This would motivate the hungry birds to fly into the dokhmas to feed.

JPJ mentioned we would need to employ a veterinary doctor to be on call (initially full-time and later on part-time) and three to five helpers to look after the vultures. The veterinary doctor and three of the helpers should be deputed to JPJ's Centre for an eight-week training course. Another Centre has also offered to help. JPJ stated that she would not charge for the training, and BPP would have to bear the reasonably modest boarding and lodging expenses, in addition to the traveling and miscellaneous costs. JPJ's veterinarian will be approached to see if he can help as well. It is essential that individuals deputed by us have a good command of the English language. It may also be better to choose younger



From left: Mehta, Shroff and Tamboly

plete will the aviary need to be built. Plans must be checked and passed by JPJ. Once the aviary is built the perching, bathing areas and shade areas will be designed and positioned on site by JPJ.

The aviary need not be enclosed at the top by a roof as done in UK (purely for protection against the cold weather). Only netting is required; double layer shade netting made largely of plastic material is recommended. It would require poles 25-30 ft above the height of the dokhma wall covering a span of 300-500 ft. It should be so constructed that the entrance to the dokhma is not obstructed in any way. The net could also serve as a screen and we may not require the proposed huge metal screen which we intend to put up. The structure will be much lighter than originally envisaged and the total capital would be within the budget set aside for construction of the aviary.

However the tree nests of the white-backed vultures would first need to be located. After that, JPJ or her colleague



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people with a genuine interest in birds and wildlife.

Regarding the costs, JPJ mentioned that once the aviary was built and the birds were in, the costs would be fairly minimal — staffing, food and vitamins for the birds and occasional veterinary treatment.

The cost would be considerably lower than that estimated by the BNHS which JPJ did not consider to be particularly accurate. The first aviary required for the first four years while the young birds mature should not cost more than Rs 60 lakhs. The cost for the second (breeding) aviary would be additional.

The recurring costs have to be worked out. The professional fees of JPJ would be in addition to these costs, but these would decrease as our experience increases.

...

Raise a corpus

I would like to share my final views and conclusions about the proposed aviary project.

Having seen the actual aviary at Newent, Gloucestershire, the cost of constructing the aviary is indeed likely to be less than originally envisaged.

The BPP has already taken a decision to earmark one crore rupees as one-time capital expenditure for construction of the aviary and Rs 25 lakhs per annum as

"The BPP has already taken a decision to earmark one crore rupees as one-time capital expenditure for construction of the aviary"

recurring expenditure. Notwithstanding the above, I feel the financial outlay is still expected to be substantial and will need to be raised from the community.

The expenses for building another aviary for breeding later on have also to be taken into consideration.

We need to bear in mind that the annual fiscal deficit at Doongerwadi is already Rs 25 lakhs per annum and increasing. There would be a sharp in-

crease in the fiscal deficit to offset which it will be essential for community members to extend their support.

We first need to ensure that 50 juvenile vultures can be procured annually for four years i.e. 200 juvenile vultures. A dry run should be undertaken as soon as possible and only after the feasibility study is complete, should the aviary be built. The plans for the aviary have to be checked and approved by her.

It is also essential that the viral infection that has been plaguing the vultures since 1996 should be taken into consideration before the project is launched.

As I have mentioned earlier, it is my perception that the requirement of funds will be substantially more than the amount earmarked by BPP. I therefore feel it is imperative to raise a substantial amount as corpus from the community, as in the event of the project not being successful, we would not be wasting BPP resources, nor leaving a major fiscal liability for our successor trustees. Those contributing towards the project will be doing so fully aware of all the accompanying nuances.

Dinshaw K. Tamboly

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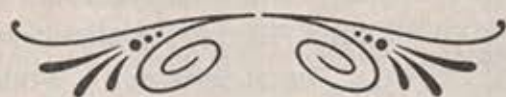
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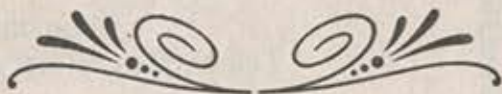
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Valuing vultures

A conservationist who loves birds,
Jemima Parry-Jones runs UK's National
Centre for Birds of Prey

Arnavaz S. Mama

It was nearly 1 p.m. and the temperature outdoors hovered between 3°-5°C. Fog muted the colors of the beautiful English countryside as it sped past at 90-100 miles per hour over the two-and-a-half-hour drive from London. In knee length dress and galoshes, bareheaded Jemima Parry-Jones had been raking the pens of some of the more difficult denizens among the 350 inhabitants of various species at her National Centre for Birds of Prey at Newent, Gloucestershire, when we arrived.

The three Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees, Minoo



Shroff, Dinshaw Mehta and Dinshaw Tamboly, together with their wives and Parsiana had been graciously driven the long distance by Rumi Sethna, president of the World Zoroastrian Organisation and his wife Hilda in the comfort of two BMWs. The trustees had undertaken the trip to see for themselves how a breeding aviary functioned before voting for or against the proposition to install such a facility at Doongerwadi.

With no opinions except that whatever is undertaken "should be good for the vultures," Parry-Jones, an international authority on birds of prey, shared with the visitors some of her firsthand knowledge about the creatures whose disappearance is a source of anguish for the Parsi Zoroastrians of India.

Only some of the habits of the nine species of vultures are known. According

to Parry-Jones the American condor eats a pound of flesh a day but if it hasn't eaten for four or five days it will eat four to five pounds altogether when it gets the chance. Unlike the other species, she said that the palmnut vulture also eats nuts.

Questions regarding the health of the birds who consume diseased/drugged bodies led Parry-Jones to note that the birds' layer of fat absorbs any poison that it may have ingested. When it loses weight, the poison will affect it, she



Clockwise: Parry-Jones; an angle of the Centre; an inquisitive vulture

Photos: Arnavaz S. Mama

added. "Over the years the vultures have fed and flown away... We are in an area we don't know... But they do eat diseased animals in the wild... even those who've had anthrax... and it didn't kill them." Corpses of cattle treated with antibiotics in the US were also consumed by vultures, she remarked.

The visiting BPP trustees asked her if it was safe to wait for a cure to the virus presently afflicting the birds before proceeding with the aviary project and whether the virus strikes birds in the wild more than those in captivity. Parry-Jones assured them, "If the parents are sick, they're not breeding. (There are) very few juvenile birds around. If you get juvenile birds it means that their parents were healthy." Noting that a virus normally hits birds who are six to

nine weeks old, Parry-Jones recalled how she had lost 11 small falcons to a virus some time ago. "The more they move around, the safer (they are)," she added.

One peculiarity of the vultures she described was their tendency to vomit if they are frightened after a really big meal. "Only a vulture or a labrador will eat vulture vomit," she noted.

There seems no way of telling the sex of the bird. "If it lays an egg it's a female but you can't guarantee if it doesn't that it's a male. It could be a career woman!" chuckled Parry-Jones.

The Indian vulture breeds once a year, the season spanning the months from October to March. The incubation period is 45 days and the fledglings remain in the nest for about three months, informed Parry-Jones adding that the "period of post fledgling dependency is unknown."

These birds lay a single egg per season, noted Parry-Jones. To check if the egg is fertile, one needs to watch in the first year if the bird hatches it. If it does, the ornithologist suggests that "in the next year, if the first egg is removed the bird will be tricked into laying another," which would be a way of increasing the population.

Though all "lifestock get sick occasionally," the vultures are quite strong, according to Parry-Jones. She suggests the erection of a netted dome eight to 10 feet higher than the dokhma with a diameter of over 300 feet supported by telegraph poles of metal or concrete. "The bigger, the better," she says. Under this canopy, with the dokhma at one end — double netted to obscure vision from the apartments fringing Doongerwadi — could be constructed four or five sheltered areas, six feet square with a height of 20 feet, with roofing of a cheap modern equivalent of asbestos, called eternit, for protection from sun and rain. These could also include live trees. Also required within the aviary would be a few pits, the size of dining tables in length and width and about a foot deep, filled with water for the birds to bathe. "The water would need to be swept out every few days and filled afresh," instructed Parry-Jones.

"The babies don't become tame, but

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they become habituated. The staff will get used to them and the vultures will get used to people," says Parry-Jones. "If the same people clean the aviary, rake the ground every day, they'll not mind." Vulture droppings are normally dry, and could be gathered into a compost heap for the garden, says Parry-Jones, assuring the trustees, "vultures don't destroy plants."

Parry-Jones' suggested plan of action is to ascertain the availability of fledglings with the help of Rishad Naoroji of Godrej and the Bombay Natural History Society (about 50 per year, for four years is the goal) and make a dry run to establish the time it would take to transport them from their original nests to the Doongerwadi aviary where nests would be provided at ground level.

The first three months would be the period of highest maintenance, says Parry-Jones. At that stage the chicks are very timid. They will need to be fed on chopped goat or sheep meat. "They will learn that this tray has food" and follow it as it is moved around to the ramp of the chotra and inside it, assures the expert. "Once they start to fly around, there should be no food in the chotra for the next four days... They are inquisitive birds. Eventually they will land on the wall of the dokhma..." On days when there are no funerals, the birds would need to be fed on animal meat. "On odd days they must get a change in diet," asserts Parry-Jones, adding that this experiment is new to her too: "I'm guessing because I haven't done this either!"

Parry-Jones is ready to train two or three persons free of charge for two months, though the Punchayet would need to arrange for their living cost of approximately £ 30 per day. "Choose English speakers... with a natural affinity to animals," she advises. "I'm not a genius. Nobody knows everything. You have to have interest... If you have any Parsi vets send them for about a month's training with our vet."

Having kept birds for 30 years Parry-Jones says she knows that "if you have enough birds and enough choice, it's perfectly easy to breed them," adding, "You may be able to breed enough to repopulate other parts of India. But it'll be eight-10 years before you're ready to release them," she cautions, suggesting that that time frame be worked into the BPP's application for permissions.

TEAM CONGRESS

continued from page 94

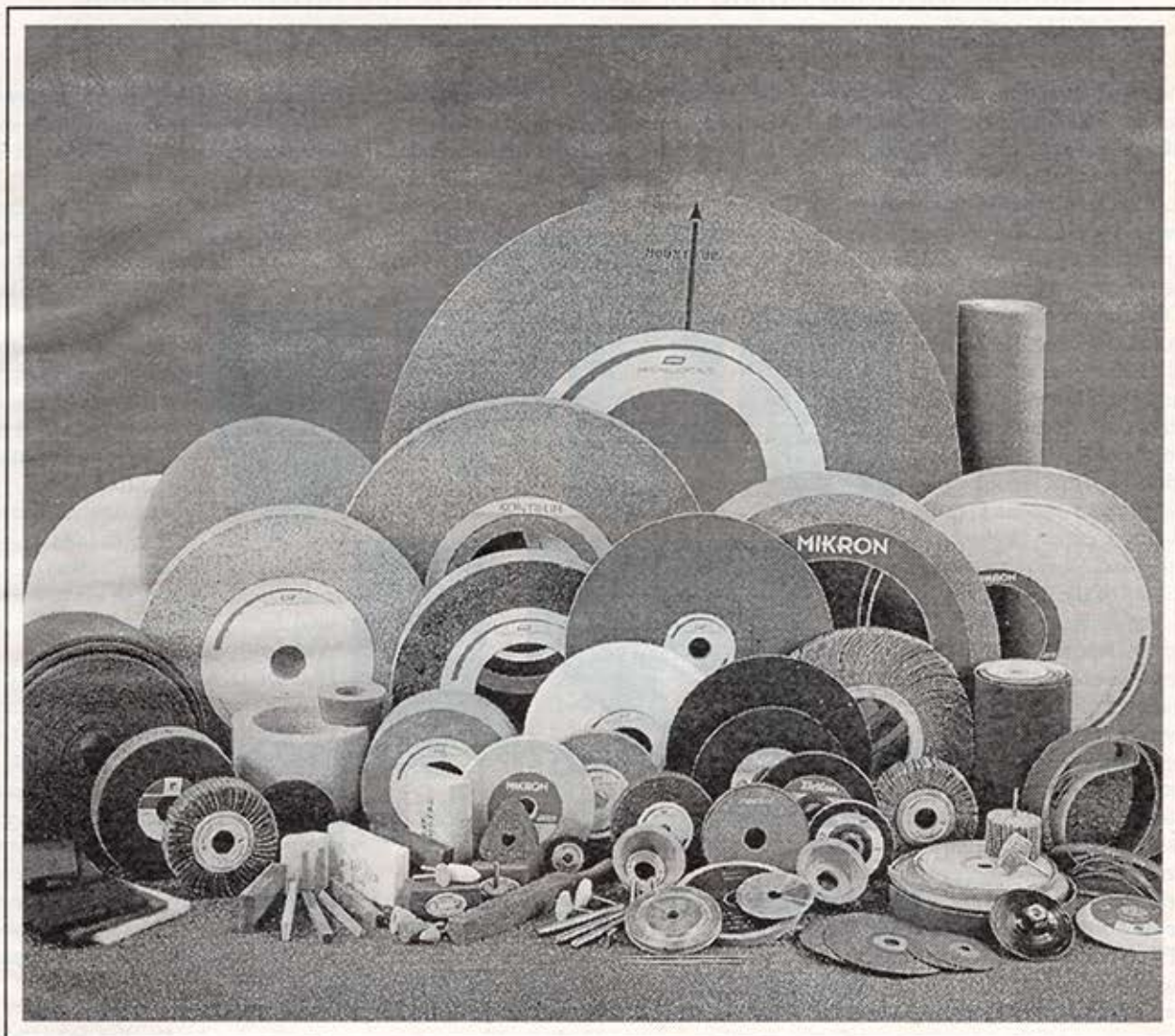
of the community: "The majority of people in each association were not really bothered!"

"No one came for the North American Mobed Council meeting," remarked Dastoor. "Mobeds from around the world should meet and discuss. They should get together and come up with something concrete," she noted, adding, "(There's) lots to be done on the communal front. We tried to form panels from different countries so that different issues could be discussed." What she considered the biggest success was in getting people together, especially the professionals. "It made people proud that it was as good as anything in the mainstream."

Summing up the Congress in retrospect Dastoor noted, "The organization of the program should have been the sole responsibility of FEZANA and the local arrangements, the responsibility of the hosting anjuman of Houston. For unless there is a complete separation of jurisdiction and trust, operating with co-chairs can be very difficult."

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Doongerwadi decision on hold

The Punchayet's decision to permit the use of the bunglis for those opting for cremation or burial provokes protest

Arnavaz S. Mama

The implementation of a decision by six trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) to permit the use of the bunglis at Doongerwadi for the funerary rites of those opting for burial or cremation has been put on hold following protests by various orthodox groups. The trustees had announced their decision for the use of the bunglis following representation from a group called Disposal of the Dead with Dignity Action Group (DDD-AG) led by eminent professionals like Drs Farokh Udwadia, Rusi Soonawalla, lawyers like Jangoo Gagrati, Khattu Cooper, Tehmtan Andhyarujina and other outstanding men and women of the community.

The awareness of dead bodies lying undisposed in the dokhmas for long laps of time because of the disappearance of the vultures from Doongerwadi has led some otherwise fervent Zarathushtis to think in terms of opting for alternative methods of disposal. The DDD-AG's other demands were to allow Zoroastrian priests to perform for them the necessary ceremonies, and to work toward establishing a crematorium at Doongerwadi. While the BPP trustees, with the exception of Rustom Tirandaz, agreed to the first of these requests, the organizing of mobeds to say the requisite prayers was left to the concerned families and the request for setting up a crematorium was totally rejected.

Thereafter the announcement of the BPP's decision to permit use of the bunglis in the Parsi Press on February 18, 2001 united various subgroups of orthodox Zoroastrians into collective objection. Thus, the Dadar Jashan Trust held a protest meet at the Patkar Hall on February 23, 2001 where dissenting trustee Tirandaz was given a rousing ovation. It was said to have been originally planned as a protest against the BPP's proposed aviary project. However there was no response from the

BPP to its resolution demanding that the Punchayet revoke its earlier decision.

Rumors of a morcha masterminded by Khshnoomist speaker Adi Doctor, president of the Dadar Jashan Trust, on March 6, 2001 prompted the Punchayet to seek police protection. Questioned in writing by the police, Doctor had offi-

They said they had 5,000 signatures of Zarathushtis in support of their stand (the signatories were asked whether they were in favor of cremation or not), including the panthakies of all the Bombay agiaries. The eight high priests of the community have already noted joint protest in a letter published in the Parsi Press.

The SDAC's main arguments were that:

- the trustees had taken a decision regarding religious practice without consulting the clergy;
- the trustees had permitted

the use of bunglis and prayers when a body was due for cremation — a defilement of the fire energy venerated by Zoroastrians — which was doctrinally taboo;

•the DDD-AG has the resources to build its own bungli in the vicinity of the Worli crematorium which, it was alleged, the DDD has renovated;

•DDD-AG members like Udwadia and Gagrati would be emulated by the great majority of the community so that it was possible to visualize a scenario where all bunglis were appropriated by those opting for alternate modes of disposal and none was available for those seeking dokhmenashini;

•The World Health Organisation's report notes that dead bodies do not lead to epidemics.

After more than three long hours of argument and counterargument between the BPP board and the members of the SDAC including dissenting trustee Tirandaz and a further half-hour of consultation among the six board members and the BPP's senior executive officers, BPP trustee Dadi Engineer announced on behalf of the BPP board (Tirandaz excepted) that the BPP trustees will invite the DDD-AG representatives to a joint meeting with representatives of the SDAC and the BPP's board of trustees. Until then the BPP will withhold the implementation of its earlier decision to



Clockwise from top left: Guzder, Shroff, Kavarana, Mehta, Tirandaz, Tamboly and Engineer

cially disassociated himself from the protest meet at the BPP office. Undeterred, protesters gathered under the banner of the Save Doongerwadi Action Committee (SDAC) convened by chartered accountant Hoshang Wania.

While there was said to be a turnout of about 65 persons in its support, about 25 to 30 persons were allowed up to the BPP office on the third floor of the Sir J. J. Parsee Benevolent Institution building. After a strategy-planning session in the graciously vacated office of BPP's chief executive officer Behram Dastur, the group tramped behind its appointed spokesmen — Bangalore high priest Nadirshah Unvalla, solicitor Minoo Siodia, columnist Noshir Dadrawala, Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) founder Khojeste Mistree, Dadar Athornan Madressa principal Ramiyar Karanjia and Wania — to confront the trustees.

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allow the use of bunglis at Doongerwadi for the funerary rites of those who opt for cremation or burial.

Edited text of the letter of the seven BPP trustees dated February 14, 2001

The various issues connected with Doongerwadi have over the last two and a half years been the subject of discussion, debate, and in some instances considerable disagreement between various individuals and scholars of our religion holding well-meaning but divergent views.

At the meeting of the samast anjuman called by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) on December 15, 2000, the views of a representative cross section who attended were patiently heard. Prior to the meeting and even thereafter, various individuals and religious groups have been in constant contact with the trustees, propounding their own views and theories.

The trustees have all along informed those with whom they have interfaced, as also at the meeting that they, as the legal custodians of the funds and properties of the Parsi Punchayet, would take an ultimate decision in the matter, after taking into consideration all relevant

factors, and inform the community at large about the same.

The trustees, having heard all individuals and groups very patiently and with understanding, respect and appreciation of all points of view, are of the opinion that each and every one is a committed and dedicated Zoroastrian who has his/her own theory on the issues in question. But in view of complete lack of vultures all agree that a need for exploring other options has become imperative.

Having seriously considered all issues, doctrinal as well as legal, the trustees have taken the following decisions about which they would like to inform the community:

It has been decided that the system of sprinkling herbal/chemical composition over the dead bodies would continue.

The air-freshening plant is nearly ready for operation and will commence in the near future. Initially this will be used at one dokhma, and thereafter, if it proves to be effective and convenient, the trustees may favorably consider connecting the other dokhmas.

It has been decided by the trustees to proceed with the project to raise vultures in captivity. This will naturally be

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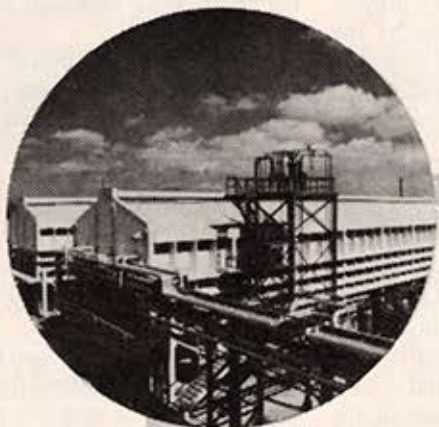
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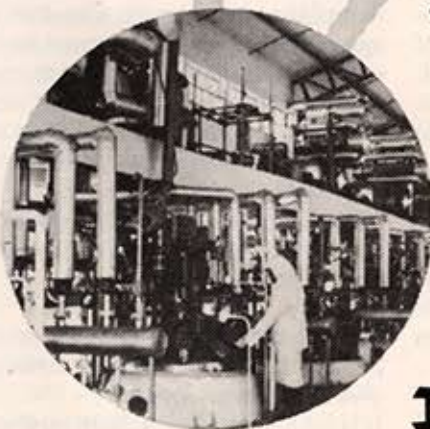
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subject to locating the nests, taking the juvenile vultures from the wild after obtaining prior permissions from the concerned authorities. Should it not be possible to procure the juvenile vultures or obtain the necessary permissions, this option may have to be reconsidered. The cost factors of this project have been carefully considered by the trustees and will be reviewed constantly.

An order has been placed for one solar panel which is expected by mid-March after which it will be installed and trials conducted on animal carcasses. Should the trials be successful, one dokhma will be fitted with the required number of solar panel units and the system introduced. Should the trials not yield satisfactory results this option may have to be reviewed.

The trustees are of the view that with the intended implementation of the aviary project and the use of the solar panels, they would have adhered to the doctrinal concepts of dokhmenashini and Khorshed Nagirashni and honored their commitment to uphold, strengthen and maintain the time-honored system of dokhmenashini.

A group of prominent Zoroastrians, comprising persons from the legal, medical and other fields have formed a body called "Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group." Members of the Group have been having a dialog with the trustees for some time now and they have expressed distress that due to absence of vultures, the bodies of the dead are only exposed to the elements and hence lie there undisposed. They have therefore been advocating the need for setting up a crematorium on Doongerwadi land. This suggestion was not found acceptable to the trustees. The Group further highlighted their anguish at not being allowed at least the use of the bunglis at Doongerwadi for the performance of the four-day obsequies of their departed family members (for those who opt for a cremation or other alternative mode of disposal of their dear departed). The lawyers on the said committee have opined that there is no bar to permitting at least the use of the bunglis to any Zoroastrian for performance of the four-day ceremonies of the departed who wish to avail of the alternative system of disposal.

It would be in order to briefly explain here the legal position. As was explained at the samast anjuman meeting, the Doongerwadi property is held by the trustees of the BPP under several trust

deeds. The crucial words in some of the relevant trust deeds are to the effect that the trustees shall use the property as "a place for exposure of the dead and for the performance of other religious rites and ceremonies." From the foregoing, it will be seen that the trustees are enjoined, under the relevant trust deeds, to use the property for exposure of the dead (to natural elements). This is being done by adhering to the system of dokhmenashini. It will also be seen that the relevant trust deeds refer to "the performance of other religious rites and ceremonies." In view of this, the trustees are of the opinion that permitting the use of the bunglis for the four-day prayers and the removal of the body by the relatives (or near ones) of the deceased to a place other than Doongerwadi would be in keeping with the provisions of the relevant trust deeds.

The trustees are informed that the above is the viewpoint of a fairly large representative segment of the community (including those who are ardent followers and practitioners of the Zoroastrian faith). The trustees being appreciative of the concerns expressed to them as also the legal position stated above, have decided to allow the use of the bunglis at Doongerwadi for the performance of the four-day obsequies of those who opt for modes of disposal other than the traditional system of dokhmenashini. It may be clarified that those who opt for an alternative mode of disposal will also have to arrange for the priests to perform the geh sarna and other funeral ceremonies. The Punchayet will in no way be responsible or involved in the same. It may be clarified that after the funeral ceremony (geh sarna) is performed, the relatives of the deceased who opt for this system would be free to take the body of the deceased away from Doongerwadi and have it cremated or buried elsewhere. The four-day ceremonies would be performed at Doongerwadi in such cases, if the relatives of the deceased so desire. It is further clarified that the proposal for the construction of a crematorium has been rejected and it is made clear that the trustees are not in favor of construction of a crematorium at Doongerwadi.

The trustees are at pains to emphasize

•that no pressures have been brought to bear on them in arriving at the last mentioned decision and that their decision is based on a consideration of the feelings and views of a fair cross section of the

community,

•that the above decision does not imply that there is any proposal to construct a crematorium or a burial ground at Doongerwadi and

•that the above decision to permit use of the bunglis would not in any manner hamper or affect the method of disposal of the dead by the system of dokhmenashini.

The trustees realize that some individuals and groups may have strong feelings concerning the decisions taken, but the trustees urge them to please consider the issue in its complete perspective and act with rationality and as members of an educated and enlightened community.

It is the fervent request of the trustees that all individuals and groups may realize that in taking the above decisions, the trustees have acted in a practical and pragmatic manner, having appreciated all the opinions expressed, and that the decisions taken are in the overall interests of all sections of the community, keeping in mind doctrinal as well as legal aspects.

The trustees appeal to all members of the community to extend their full support in laying to rest this contentious issue of our times. It is further requested the smooth implementation of the decisions taken be allowed to be undertaken without rancor. The latter course of action will only precipitate matters and may result in a situation from which there will emerge only losers and no winners and the outcome of which may harm the larger interests of the community.

The above are the unanimous decisions of all the trustees, save and except that of Rustom Tirandaz who does not agree with the decision to permit the use of the bunglis to those who wish to opt for the system of cremation or other alternative system of disposal of the dead. His separate note of dissent is enclosed.

J. N. Guzder, M. R. Shroff, S. K. Kavarana, D. R. Mehta, D. B. Engineer, R. S. Tirandaz and D. K. Tamboly

Edited text of Rustom Tirandaz' note of dissent dated February 14, 2001 addressed to his co-trustees

It is with a very heavy heart, and with great reluctance, that I pen the following lines and hope that wisdom will dawn on us and we will stand steadfast in the larger interest of the faith and not buckle over in the matter of revising our tenets



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and principles of Zoroastrianism.

I therefore wish to record for the sake of posterity, for what my individual say is worth, my protest and strong dissent in the matter of bringing about changes at the Doongerwadi, which are likely to destroy the basic foundations of our Zoroastrian traditions and belief structures.

Therefore, I wish to retract and dissociate myself from whatever decisions that were taken by us on February 10, 2001 under the intimidation by a handful of very successful and prosperous and well placed people in public life who stridently have sought to eclipse the age-old practice of having the last rites of only those Zoroastrians whose relatives opt for the dokhmenashini system of the disposal of the dead on the Doongerwadi precincts.

It is my considered opinion that those whose relatives opt for cremation or burial in an area serviced by dokhmenashini are not true Zoroastrians and therefore if they seek an alternate form of disposal of their dead, they may do so elsewhere. This is not to say that I seek to give them a certificate to that effect, but only to respectfully point out what has been doctrinally told to us by generations of scholars and high priests.

This reformist group's total disregard of my proposal to consult the vast majority of the orthodox in our community has fallen on deaf ears and their threat of moving the court under some interpretation of the trust deed has in one stroke demolished the trustees' affidavit on oath of upholding the traditions and practice of dokhmenashini that we had executed some time last year to rightly support the orthodoxy and the high priests.

It is sad for me to have witnessed the successful and wealthy peoples' representatives wax eloquently on the one hand that the trustees of today are doing their job and therefore they would not move the charity commissioner for their removal for dereliction of duty, as insinuated by them. In the same breath they have threatened the trustees that although the Doongerwadi lands are the property of the community and that they could never be acquisitioned under any of the laws of the land, there was still a possibility that the government may do so if it were convinced that the system having failed, was posing a major health hazard with a likelihood of an epidemic being started in the heart of the city.



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Nothing could ever be a greater travesty of truth than this preposterous contention. For over a couple of centuries, there has never been any disease known to mankind that has emanated from sun drying dead bodies in the Towers of Silence either at Bombay or anywhere else in the world. As a matter of fact there is no airborne disease known to man which emanates from a drying corpse. Albeit the process of decay may throw up a foul odor, to neutralize which we have sought to set up the air purifier system, and the three other projects, which are on stream at the precincts of the Doongerwadi at this present point in time.

Further, I would like the doomsday soothsayers to realize that the Kumbh Mela in North India is a thousand-fold more hazardous situation with hundreds of dead bodies floating on the waters of the river Ganges and yet the government refrains from acting in any manner against the wishes and sentiments of the vast majority of the Hindus.

I would also like to point out that the Bohra community produced a reformer who dragged his cause to the court of law only to be told by the court that he could start his own denomination, if he so desired; however he should refrain from upsetting the appellation of the majority of community members.

It is my considered opinion that these reformists who want to take the bodies out of the Doongerwadi complex either for burial or cremation are out to change the present system of consigning the dead bodies to the Towers of Silence once the final prayers are completed. They are seeking to do so in an anti Zoroastrian way. Why don't these people take it upon themselves and set up their own system elsewhere, without trampling upon the hopes, aspirations, desires and the belief structures of the nameless, faceless, silent toiling majority, whose only salvation is God and religion.

I would also like to remind you that in matters of religion, we have always sought and respectfully obeyed the advice and the directive of the high priests, scholars and the educated clergy. Moreover, we have on record their letter asking us to desist from what in fact we as the trustees are planning to allow. For your information, our venerable high priests also turned down a similar plea from the trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat as well.

Surely their opinion must be taken

into account on such an important issue which will affect the future ritual life of the community. It is also absurd that the aforesaid letter of the educated and qualified clergy has not been responded to by us, the trustees, for over two months but we are now willing to bend over backwards to appease those within the community with position and power within less than a week of their extending us the threat.

Let us not forget that wherever the Parsi/Irani Zoroastrians settled down in India, even before they constructed their places of worship, they set up their dokhmas. Let not the ethos of the whole community be put on the altar of a handful of moneybags whose desire has always been at least for the past half a century, to reform their community members to leave this so-called barbaric system, so to speak, and read the writing on the wall and modernize and fall in line with their thinking.

Moreover the samast anjuman meeting held in December 2000 overwhelmingly showed us that a total majority of those present supported the system of dokhmenashini, with not even one member of the audience seeking to bring in a change for either cremation or burial. Isn't it an appropriate time to call another samast anjuman meeting and ask the community at large, both orthodox and reformists, to express their views on this important issue?

If, very strongly is how they feel, then let them take their belief structures and peddle them elsewhere. Let them not state and contend that the trust deed of the 55-acre cemetery land also enjoins a Parsi/Irani Zoroastrian to have a wedding or a jashan on the premises. This absurd argument which had carried favor with us all when we collectively acquiesced, is to my mind self-defeating and cannot stand the scrutiny of any court or even a sane human being.

I cannot imagine any sensible person giving in to such a threat in any other community, but then Parsis will be Parsis and we have done so.

Now better late than never, I call upon you to dissociate my name from the records of the meeting and record my voice of dissent. Any unilateral agreement or decision arrived at without consulting the larger body of the community will make us out to be the Trojan horses of the community on the threshold of the 21st century.

Let dokhmenashini continue to prevail in its pristine form and let us pass on

to our descendants what we have inherited from our ancestors.

Letter from Kavarana and Mehta dated February 22, 2001

As a lot of controversy has been generated by the recent Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) trustees' decision allowing prayers at Doongerwadi for those cremated outside, we, the undersigned two trustees, Silloo Kavarana and Dinshaw Mehta, in response to various queries, would like to clarify our position as follows:

As all are aware, vultures at Doongerwadi, which play a vital role in the disposal of our dead, are almost non-existent at present. This naturally translates itself into a serious problem with all its attendant consequences.

Despite the situation, we do believe that the present method of disposing the dead is indeed the best method and has to be preserved at any cost. This has led to the proposal of establishing an aviary for the captive breeding of vultures as also a proposal to install solar powered reflectors to hasten the drying process.

The trustees find themselves in the unenviable position of being caught in a crossfire between supporters of dokhmenashini and the bitter opponents of the present system and supporters of installing a crematorium, and they are now joined by opponents of the aviary proposal and opponents of the solar reflector proposal (surprisingly the last two are both being opposed by the orthodox sections of the community), who have also entered the fray.

In view of the opposition from the orthodox section of the community represented by the Dadar Jashan Trust and Adi Doctor and his group as also the Traditional Zarathustris Mailing List (TZML as they call themselves) to the setting up of an aviary to bring back the vultures at Doongerwadi, very little option was left with the trustees and a practical decision had to be taken in the matter. The Disposal of the Dead with Dignity (DDD) — Action Group's proposal for setting up a crematorium on the Doongerwadi lands was rejected by the trustees in spite of their threat to go to court on the issue and it was suggested to them with a heavy heart that instead of having a crematorium, we would be willing to allow the use of the bunglis for prayers of those cremated outside, which also they claimed as their right under the trust deed of the BPP.

It may be clarified here that this deci-



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sion was unanimously taken by the trustees including Rustom Tirandaz on February 6, 2001 in a meeting with Rustom Gae of Delhi and the DDD group. This was reiterated on February 10, 2001 unanimously by all the trustees including Tirandaz, in a meeting with the lawyers and doctors and others of the DDD group. However on February 13, 2001 when the letter informing the community of our decision was being drafted, Tirandaz suddenly thrust his dissenting note on the trustees. We found it surprising to go back on a unanimous decision already taken and conveyed to the other side, especially when the decision was in the larger interest of the community.

While reiterating that we do believe, at a personal level, that the present system can survive only if the vultures are brought back, little purpose is served in denying prayers for the soul of the departed whose relatives may prefer cremating them elsewhere. The trust deed does not specifically prohibit the use of bunglis for such prayers and religious ceremonies. The Punchayet counsel who was consulted on this issue also advised us that there was no bar to it in the trust deed and it was in the interest of the community to allow it in order to avoid

public controversy in a court of law.

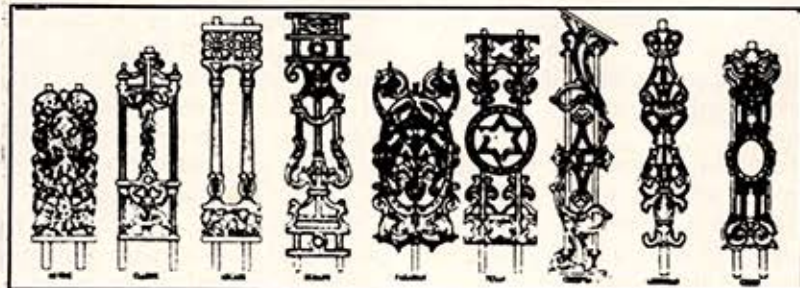
It has been made clear to the DDD group that the high priests are not in favor of such a practice and in view of the constantly changing stance of the high priests as experienced by us on the twin issues of aviary and solar panels, we informed them that it would be their responsibility to arrange for the priests to perform the prayers and religious ceremonies at the Doongerwadi complex. If the priests who are supposed to uphold our religious rites and ceremonies are willing to perform the religious prayers then who are we to object? It was felt that the priests would uphold their religious duties. In any case, even today, it is common practice for most agiaries to conduct prayers for those who have been cremated, and therefore the decision of the trustees to allow such prayers to be conducted in the bungli is not at all a departure from tradition or anything radical as is sought to be made out by a section of the community. By permitting such prayers in the bungli, the same rules of not allowing non-Parsis to enter the bungli at any time will be observed strictly. Of course, it is a matter of free will whether the priests do or do not wish to perform such ceremonies.

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nies at the bungli and there is no element of compulsion in this regard and ultimately it will be the priests who will decide whether religious rites of those cremated outside can be done at the bunglis.

We may add here that both of us have categorically informed our family members and secured their undertaking that we be consigned to the dokhma, whether the vultures have returned or not. But that is our personal decision and we feel it is not fair to impose our views on those who opt for an alternate method in view of the absence of vultures.

We do expect that the community will appreciate the difficult position in which the trustees find themselves when they are making a sincere effort not to hurt the feelings of any section of the community nor to make any radical departure from tradition.

Lastly at times like these, it is prudent not to air these controversies in public, in the larger interest of the community.

Letter from Shroff, Engineer and Tamboly dated March 5, 2001.

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), after taking into account all considerations, took the following decisions on February 6, 2001:

- To allow the use of bunglis to those who opt for methods of disposal other than the traditional system of dokhmenashini.

- The trustees would have no objection, should any priests perform the obsequies from the bunglis at Doongerwadi of those opting for an alternate method of disposal.

These decisions have, as expected, caused anxiety amongst those favoring the continuity of the traditional method of dokhmenashini.

We have been personally inundated with telephone calls and e-mails from members of the community, some of whom have expressed solidarity with the decisions taken by the trustees (initially unanimously but later on by a majority of 6:1 with colleague Rustom Tirandaz dissenting), whilst some have been dissatisfied by this decision.

Before providing our personal perspective, it is essential for us to mention by way of a preamble, that as trustees, we have to think with our heads and feel with our hearts, and take decisions based on virtual realities. Whilst we do consider the sensitivities of any issue that we deliberate, discuss and debate, we cannot take decisions based on emo-

tions and sentiments. We have taken the decisions in all sincerity and after due deliberation.

Our (trustees') serious involvement with the issue in question began during May 1998 when we received repeated complaints about the inconvenience caused to families residing in the vicinity of Doongerwadi. It was ascertained that the existing system of dokhmenashini was indeed not functioning satisfactorily and was in need of strengthening. We were all naturally very concerned and decided it was necessary to take suitable action in the matter.

With a view to combat the issue, we invited many individuals — prelates, priests, scholars, members of our Doongerwadi committee, etc — to a meeting where the facts were laid before them, and their involvement requested in suggesting solutions to strengthen our traditional system that was not functioning effectively.

It was as a result of this meeting and several subsequent ones that various options such as the aviary project, herbal/chemical composition application project, the air freshening project and the solar panel project are presently being pursued by individuals who conceived of these 'system strengthening methods.'

The trustees do not claim to have any knowledge about our religious doctrines, on account of which we sought guidance in these matters from those in the know.

Regrettably, the religious scholars and priests familiar with the doctrines began to differ on the subject and chose to counter and confront rather than co-operate with one another. Even the prelates differed with one another in their views.

It is a fact, rather an unfortunate one, that what started out as a genuine desire to strengthen our traditional system, degenerated into a game of politics and intrigue, a game in which there can be only losers, no winners.

With religious scholars and priests differing with one another, high priests being indecisive and prone to vacillate, the issue aired in the media and highlighted continuously, prompted individuals who are concerned about the system not working satisfactorily to seek an alternate form of disposal.

We live in a democratic society, governed by laws that bestow on everyone — individuals and institutions — cer-

tain rights, duties and obligations. Irrespective of religious denominations, individual preferences and beliefs, customs and long practice, all of us have to submit to the laws of the land.

These like-minded individuals have now formed a group to exercise a privilege that is theirs; a fact confirmed by legal opinion.

The thrust of this group is that they are in no way seeking any change of the present system. They maintain that those who desire to pursue the existing system are free to follow the same.

The specific concern of this group is that those who are its members are also Zoroastrians, vested with a right, that allows them the freedom to choose their mode of disposal, and the community infrastructure, that is available for all Zoroastrians, cannot be denied to them.

As trustees, our colleagues and we are the custodians of the assets that we hold, and it is our duty to ensure that they are preserved and not diluted.

After much deliberation, a perusal of our trust deeds and advice from the legal fraternity, we (trustees) arrived at the conclusion that it was indeed under law, obligatory for us to allow the use of bunglis to those who wished to have the prayers performed at Doongerwadi and thereafter remove the body to a place other than Doongerwadi for cremation or any other mode of disposal.

The decision by the trustees was taken, fully aware that a section of the community would be dissatisfied. It should however be known that the trustees took the decision not only in due deference of the law, but also to save the existing system, sustain and strengthen it.

It is a known fact that trustees have not abandoned any of the projects to strengthen the system.

We would emphasize that our colleagues and we took the decision without any pressure having been brought to bear, but only after taking all the ground realities into consideration, and we stand by the decision that we have taken.

Some individuals have expressed indignation that the high priests were not consulted before the decisions were taken. Having experienced time and again in the past (how) our prelates tend to shift positions, can anyone in all honesty blame the trustees for not consulting them? In addition, the provisions of law have to be given due weight as explained above.

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"The audiences will return"

Hilla P. Guzder

Chitra cinema owner Dara Mehta is confident that cinema and television can coexist



Ensnared in his window seat overlooking a tableau of rooftops, punctuated with the occasional high-rise, Dara P. Mehta says: "For cinema owners the wheel is now turning favorably. We have a chance to coexist with television. If you provide a good cinema hall with creature comforts at affordable rates, audiences will come back. We at Chitra are aiming at repeat audiences, people

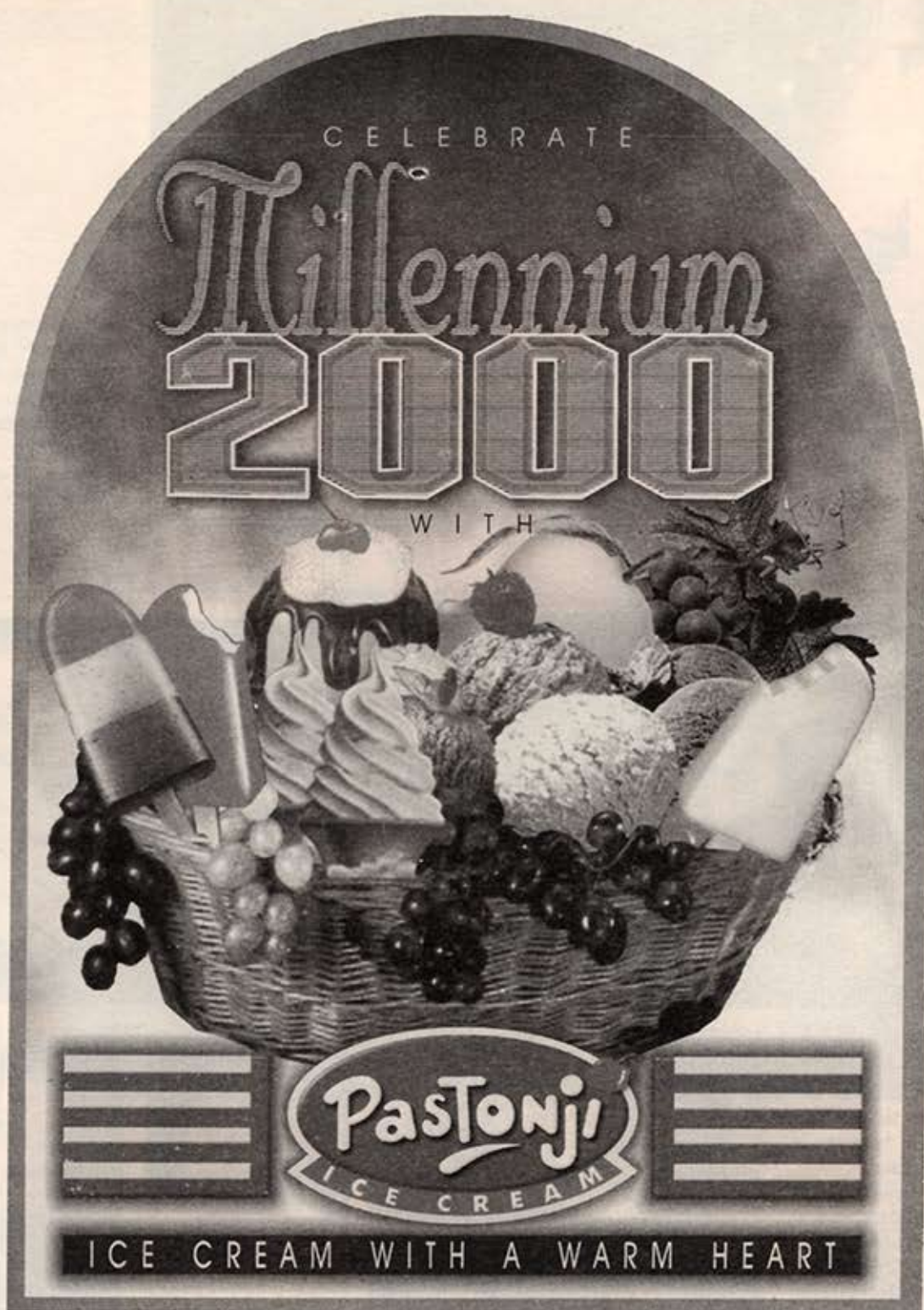
who come again and again to view films in an ambience of luxury." Mehta, the proprietor of Chitra, runs The P. D. Mehta Group of Theatres which owns or controls 17 cinema houses across Gujarat and Maharashtra in places as far apart as Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bulsar, Chikhli and Khergam to Sholapur and Nasik. The group is named after Dara's father, Phiroze Dorabji Mehta, who is, says his

son, still loved and revered in industry circles even 19 years after his death in 1982.

Chitra, strategically situated on the busy Dr Ambedkar Road at Dadar and built in 1940 by Dara's grandfather Dorabji, has been transformed for the first time in its 60-year history. Fully air-conditioned with plush seats which have cup holders for soft drinks and popcorn, a state of the art Dolby digital surround EX sound system and the latest projection system, the cinema is comparable to theaters in the US or Europe, notes Mehta. "We have imported the new Zenon lamp house and Platter systems from the US which provide big screen clarity. There is steady light even at the corners of the screen, no dark patches or flicker either." The 635-seat Chitra has also introduced a special 'executive class' at the lower (stalls) level with bigger seats priced at an affordable Rs 50, the stalls cost Rs 35. Balcony tickets are priced at Rs 60 and all rates are lower for matinee shows.

Mehta records his appreciation of the role played by his architect and interior designer Udayan Bhatt, civil engineer Aspi Machliwala, acoustic and technical consultant Jal Mistry and others involved with the cinema's renovation. Moral and psychological support has been continuously forthcoming from his mother Tehmi and younger sister Cooma, asserts Dara, as also from his uncles Dr Minoo and the late Manek Daver and their wives Dina and Dilly. "Though we have had to take a loan for the refurbishment which will take quite a long time to repay, we had to upgrade the cinema or survival would have become difficult," he contends.

With its office situated in a building housing the offices of distributors and exhibitors in central Bombay, the Group has a 26-year history of dealing with top Hollywood production companies like Warner Brothers, Paramount, Columbia, 20th Century Fox, etc. Chitra screens a mix of English and Hindi films. Recent successful runs have included blood and bullet blockbusters like *Mission Impossible II*, *Gladiator*, social dramas like *Erin Brockovich* and the popular *Mohabbatein*. "We have to fight with the government on the issue of entertainment tax," smiles Mehta, "If we fight 10 times we get heard once!" The govern-



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Chitra's new look (alongside and below) and three generations of the Mehta family (from left): Cooverbai and Dorabji, Phiroze and Dara



ment also permits theater owners to include a one rupee service charge in the price of the tickets, an amount Mehta believes is totally inadequate.

Does the recent turmoil in the film industry regarding the alleged links of stars and financiers with notorious elements affect cinema owners? we ask. Not really, replies Mehta, "as we are not involved in any way with production or distribution. We generally book films made by big banner companies which are relatively safe." He bemoans the fact however that Bollywood (the Bombay Hindi film industry) has not been able to effectively curb the bane of video piracy. "The video piracy laws of Hollywood are



quite strict. There can be no release of the video version for six months. This is a good period — it saves the industry. In the case of Hindi films, a weak movie suffers greatly as the cat is out of the bag, so to speak. If a movie is good, the video serves as a trailer!"

The cinema's founder Dorabji Mehta, a redoubtable character, had served in

the Indian Expeditionary Force overseas in the First World War for which he was awarded three medals, notes a brief history of the Group. Dorabji stepped into the scene of motion picture exhibition in 1930, building Chitra 10 years later. After his demise in 1954, his son Phiroze consolidated and expanded the

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Deepika Belapurkar

The 'CHINESE' COUSINS



"Young couples are shifting to the suburbs; double income families prefer eating out than cooking after a hard day's work," says Cyrus Chinoy, joint owner of Wok N Roll which made a foray into the restaurant business in Bombay in October 2000. The success of Golden Dragon, the Chinese eatery in Surat started 10 years ago by Chinoy and his partner Merzy Patel, emboldened them to launch their second venture.

Wok N Roll at Juhu is a different kind of culinary adventure. Its forte is a melange of authentic haute cuisine — Chinese and Thai and interesting adaptations that embrace the likes of okra, paneer and potatoes that suit the Indian palate. Chinoy candidly confesses that the choice of cuisine is dictated by a desire to be a "master of one" rather than "being nowhere with five different things."

Wok N Roll's light green facade lures

you into a refreshingly contemporary decor, a subtle farrago of blue and green and muted shades of yellow and brown that cast a relaxing glow. According to designer Zenobia Moonim, the decor exudes a good feeling. The swell of the thick wooden beam on the ceiling, the wave pattern of the Bisazza fiberglass squares on the walls and the blue glass bricks bordering the bar front gives the guest a feeling of being afloat.

In spite of its circuitous location this 90-cover eatery is running to 50-70 per cent capacity at night, frequented mostly by the business community, say the owners. The liquor license which is "expected any moment now" will, they believe, elevate figures. In fact it is fast becoming a popular joint for price conscious people, kept that way to attract "all classes of clients." Combine that with Hongkong chef Rocky Chang's

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Interior and exterior of
Wok N Roll Photos: Chetan Mistry
1 and 2: Feroza and Cyrus Chinoy
3 and 4: Tanaaz and Merzy Patel

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“Do you want to be a spoke in a huge giant wheel or do you want to be a wheel, irrespective of its size?” enquires Maneck Davar who over the years as a journalist has contributed to the momentum of varied publications. “I’ll go hungry, which I have, rather than work in a large organization which would completely stifle me and make me unhappy,” he says.

Under the banner of Spenta Multimedia, which he started as a proprietary firm in 1995, he publishes *Jetwings*, the monthly magazine of Jet Airways, *Jetkids*, Jet Airways’ in-flight magazine for children, *More to you from Orange*, the bi-monthly magazine of Hutchison Max Telecom Limited, *Cruise Control*, a quarterly newsletter from Tata Safari, and *Essence*, the quarterly in-house newsletter of the Essar Group. Beginning February 1, 2001 he launched a company called Ellipse to offer designing and consultancy services by establishing identities, communications strategies and brochures for corporate houses. A printing press in Bombay is next on his cards, reveals the enterprising publisher.

After handling editorial and publishing responsibilities with diverse publications like *The Daily* newspaper, Gentleman group of magazines, *Lex et Juris*, the law periodical, he started Spenta Multimedia “with the intention of making money,” he says with a straight face. “Very seriously, it was with the intention of running it as a business.” As a journalist, he views “a magazine or a newspaper as a product. It is not something holy. Credibility though is one of the important ingredients in a business,” Davar has learnt “having worked in crusading newspapers and magazines with definite corporate focus.”

Realizing that “to launch anything on the newsstand would involve capital” which he lacked, Davar identified “areas of niche publishing where no circulation base was required but which would generate revenue from selling advertising and marketing space...In a market where 40 percent of the sale price is distribution cost, it made sense not to create a circulation base.” Circulated to over 5,50,000 passengers every month, *Jetwings* is considered one of the most



Jet set Davar

Parinaz M. Gandhi

From investigative journalism to publishing an airline magazine, Maneck Davar has scaled the heights



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profitable in-flight magazines in Asia, ranking behind only Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines, notes the Spenta company profile. As for their other publications, here too Spenta is responsible for the conceptualization, editorial, design, marketing, production and distribution.

Referring to his tie-up with Jet Airways since 1995, Davar commented, "The relationship has been very good for us and I hope the airline is quite satisfied with whatever we have contributed. Jet Airways has some great standards and our magazine has benefited because of that." With almost every issue running into around 200 pages of art paper, all of it in color, we see top brands advertising in this medium. "No matter how sophisticated a publication, if Jet Airways had not its high-profile customers, *Jetwings* would not have flourished," states Davar. Whilst originally the printing was done in Singapore, having learnt from their "hiccups," the printing job is now undertaken from five different locations in Bombay. For Orange, their nearly 60-page house magazine is printed in Faridabad, he adds.

With the main office of Spenta Multimedia at Bombay's Dr E. Moses Road and branches at Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore and Madras, Davar has around 40 employees working for him. "In this day and age, I employ professionals," maintains Davar. "If I want to do charity, I do charity, but not as jobs to undeserving Parsis. That would be the greatest disservice to the community and to yourself," he believes.

"As far as journalism is concerned, there is no greater high than working for a daily newspaper"

Those who have worked with Davar give him credit for handling major crises with a cool head, being generous, sensitive to peoples' needs and receptive to new ideas, exploding only after considerable provocation and never harboring malice. Admits Davar who is in his early 40s, "I will always be up-front. I have never severed my links with any-

body (lest) at social functions I can say hello to one and not to another." His years as a journalist have taught him the different styles of functioning of publications like *The Onlooker*, *India Today*, *The Sunday Review*, *Business India*, *The Daily Gentleman*, *The Statesman*, *The Indian Express*, all under different editors, giving him the necessary confidence and independence to venture out on his own.

"Professionally people can teach you writing or editing," says Davar but some of the other qualities valued in a publisher he has picked up from R. K. Karanjia, his erstwhile boss at *The Daily*. Karanjia who is ailing now was "very informal, took great care of his staff, generous even in bad times, could talk to anybody and everybody, didn't take himself too seriously, could apologize when he erred," appreciates Davar. When he joined Karanjia as the assistant editor of *Blitz* in 1979, he was but 20 and had not even completed his graduation. Although he had studied for his BA at Bombay's Elphinstone College, he earned his degree several years later. Prior to that Davar had never worked full-time on a publication but with his

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political leanings was active with the Youth for Janata Group and had enjoyed covering the by-elections which Indira Gandhi contested from Chikmagalur, the second largest constituency in India. Since his school days at Dunne's Institute, he was "political," he points out.

His relationship with Karanjia which was stormy in the initial phase settled into an easygoing, respectful camaraderie after the first month when Davar indicated that he would prefer to leave his job rather than have someone constantly look over his shoulder. After six months he left *Bombay Blitz*, the supplement of *Blitz*, to work with Minhaz Merchant of *Gentleman* magazine. When Karanjia invited him to assume the post of the city editor on the daily tabloid that he was introducing, Davar rejoined the *Blitz* group on the rationale, "As far as journalism is concerned, there is no greater high than working for a daily. Some of the best times I have had were with *The Daily*, where there were no traditions behind us, where there were no barriers." Since their masthead accommodated a bulldog with a slogan "We are on your side," Davar recalls occasions when people from the streets would walk in expecting *The Daily* to

solve their problems. Davar then used to write one tabloid page a day on city subjects, would happily file public interest litigations on subjects like the poor state of the roads, and organize concerts at the Bandstand to remind citizens of the days of yore. He continued with *The Daily* until financial compulsions forced Karanjia to sell the paper.

The legal experience gained over the years inspired him to start the monthly *Lex et Juris* with his close friend, lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani. Since both their first names started with the initial 'M' their company was called Emmenem. "I am not a lawyer," candidly declares Davar although he had earlier harbored aspirations to become one for the simple reason that he could then be his own boss! The magazine which they ran for five years was able to popularize law so that even an informed layman would be comfortable with the subject, he notes, adding that they had subscriptions from Harvard, and the National Law School students in India used to consider it their popular reference guide. Commercial non-viability forced them to discontinue this magazine.

His investigative journalism had pro-

pelled Davar in the limelight soon thereafter. Around 1989 the Bombay police had unearthed a plot to murder industrialist Nusli Wadia involving the arrest of some key businessmen having ties with the Ambani family. When the case was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation whose chief Mohan Katre was alleged to have commercial links with the Ambanis of the Reliance group, Davar assumed a pseudonym, went undercover, taped phone conversations and succeeded in effecting a purchase transaction of a raw material used in the manufacture of detergents with Katre's son to establish that the man was a distributor for the Ambanis. Davar's story was carried across all editions of *The Indian Express*.

"Most major scoops reported in the Press have been made possible by some disgruntled third party spoon-feeding the journalist. This was the first instance when someone actually took the trouble to do legwork," impresses Davar. "Unashamedly, it required courage, ingenuity to walk into the office of a guy when I had no idea what he was like. It has in a way set a benchmark. I would have liked a debate to come through (on the ethics of the ap-

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"THE AUDIENCES WILL RETURN"

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business, building up a chain of cinemas over the next 27 years. His untimely demise in 1982 after a sudden heart attack catapulted his 25-year-old son Dara into the 'hot seat.' Describes Dara, "We faced difficult times for the first two to three years. Fortunately, my mother held on very well after Daddy's demise. She encouraged me, got things going. My sister is made that way too, she doesn't get ruffled easily."

The popularity of color TV and video in the 1980s, coincidental with the Asian Games in Delhi, brought in unexpected rivals. "It was hard going, we felt the pinch for almost seven years," he notes.

After his matriculation from St Xavier's Boys' Academy and his BCom from H. R. College of Commerce and Economics, Dara's ambition was to proceed to the UK for further studies in chartered accountancy. "I had secured tentative admission into Oxford University and my articleship for four years had also been fixed with a firm called Pannell Fitzpatrick and Company." Unfortunately, his father decided that four years was too long a time and that he needed his son in the business. "Initially I did kick up a hue and cry, but I

was young and so you can't blame me!" Dara smiles disarmingly, adding that as a youth he used to enjoy watching his father, "helpful, jovial and instantly lovable," arguing with people, getting things

The P. D. Mehta Group of Theatres owns or controls 17 cinema houses across Gujarat and Maharashtra

done dynamically. "I have no regrets now," he adds, fully and happily involved with the business of bringing moments of recreation into mundane lives.

Entertainment at home includes playing the guitar ("I keep up with a tutor") and listening to Western music — pop, rock and melodies of the '60s and '70s, but "oh no, certainly not film music!" Having represented Government Law College in inter-collegiate cricket and table tennis during his LLB years, sports has now taken a back seat, he laughs. Dara points out proudly that Tehmi and Cooma, both of whom are beauticians with several diplomas from London and

the US, have been running a beauty parlor called Femme Chic at Churchgate for several years and Cooma also assists in accounts.

Foreseeing a good future for the Parsi community, Dara asserts, "Parsis are inherently honest and hardworking and that will pay under any circumstances. We are not obsessive or compulsive moneymakers." On current controversies raging within the community Mehta offered little comment, not being well-versed, he says, on such matters. "For me, daily prayer consists in good thoughts, words and deeds. I try to live my life with stability and gratitude for whatever state I am in. I could have expanded the business three times over, but I am happy and self-contented."

The cinemas are well-patronized, he declares, the managers of the out-of-Bombay ones keep in constant touch and he tours the areas regularly. "We have survived the TV and video boom and cable piracy and come out of it. Probably due to the high rates of admission and other factors, films do not celebrate silver jubilee runs as much as they used to earlier. They are technically sound, with good presentation, but films of today lack the soul," says the man who stays behind the scenes!



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The message was universal

Quoting from scriptures, the author argues that Zoroastrianism was meant for all people

Cyrus P. Mehta

In the '20s and '30s of the 20th century, it was a common belief within the Parsi community that "a Parsi is a Zoroastrian and a Zoroastrian is a Parsi." At that time most Parsi boys and girls attended Parsi schools. The community lived in large numbers in towns like Bombay, Surat, Navsari, Karachi and a few others.

Time has marched on since those days. The Parsi community now lives in smaller scattered groups in USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and other countries. It is anxious to preserve its traditional way of life and the communal-cum-religious identity.

With the passage of time, interfaith marriages have increased within the community. So far no concrete proposals have been considered as to how the non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children can be partially or fully integrated within the communal fold.

One of the main reasons why this difficulty has arisen is due to the fact that a large section of the community has not understood or is unwilling to accept the basic fact that prophets address their messages to the whole of mankind and not necessarily to a group of people or a community. Once this fact is understood and accepted the community will be in a much better position to accept certain socioreligious changes within the communal structure.

As to how this can be brought about is a matter for consideration by local and larger Zoroastrian bodies in different parts of the world. It may be that no single course of action will be possible because of cultural and political circumstances prevailing in different countries.

The purpose of this article is mainly to present the scriptural evidence on the subject matter under consideration for the benefit of the Parsi community. Here is a list of passages from the *Gathas* and other Zoroastrian scriptures and prayers, together with comments by scholars of Zoroastrianism.

"What Thou hast through the inner
fire disclosed
The bliss through Asha promised to
us all,
The Law Divine for the discerning
soul; —

All that to us, Mazda clear explain,
In words of inspiration from Thy mouth,
To help us to convert all living men.
[Dr I. J. S. Taraporewala's translation of
Gatha Ahunavaiti 4.3 (Yasna 31.3)]."

Commenting on the above verse, Prof A. V. Jackson wrote, "Zoroaster's religion was active and vigorous, seeking and gaining converts, as we see from many passages in the *Gathas* (*A Hymn of Zarathushtra* — Yasna 31, pg 27)." On the same verse, Prof Lawrence Mills wrote: "And he (Zarathushtra) declares that this is the doctrine which should be proclaimed for the conversion of mankind. Here we observe that Zarathushtrian Mazda-worship was aggressive and missionary in its spirit, and in a proselytizing sense by no means indifferent to the final destiny of the gentile world (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XXXI, The Zend Avesta, Part III, pg 37)."

"Now will I speak; give ear and mind as well, All ye who come from near and far to learn, remember well these clear truths, I teach — never again shall evil teachers seek life to destroy, nor offer unto dupes with specious words the pleasant paths of wrong [Taraporewala's translation of *Gatha Ushtavaiti* 3.1 (Yasna 45.1)]."

Here Zarathushtra clearly gives out his message to Iranians and to those who may have come from distant lands. Commenting on this verse, Prof Wilhelm Geiger wrote, "The conclusion that Ahura Mazda himself sent Zarathushtra into this world for the purpose of announcing the new doctrine to mankind, and that God stands always by his side as his adviser or guide comes out prominently in the *Gathas*. The Prophet directly expresses it in Yasna 45.5 when

he says that God communicated to him the word which is the best for man (*Zarathushtra in the Gathas*, Dastur Darab P. Sanjana's translation, pg 21)." "And I will teach what was revealed to me

In words of the most holy — best
to hear;
Those who obey them truly in
their hearts,
To these shall come perfect immortal
life;
And Vohu Man shall lead them on
to deeds
Of love; and thus may reach
Ahura's light
(Taraporewala's translation of Yasna 45.5)."

In detailing the life of prophet Zarathushtra, the late Dr M. N. Dhalla writes in *History of Zoroastrianism*, pg 17: "He was burning with zeal to embark upon his great mission. He was the chosen of Mazda, who speaks with sublime satisfaction that Zarathushtra alone among mankind had heard his divine commands and having heard them was now going to make them heard among all mankind... He tells Mazda that he will lead mankind on the path of righteousness and sing untiringly his praise all around as long as his life is blessed with power and strength. He speaks of his faith in terms of universal religion."

"I who am Zarathushtra will make the heads of the houses, the villages, province and country to follow and think about this world religion, thinking in conformity with, speaking in conformity with and acting in conformity with this religion as revealed to Zarathushtra by Ahura Mazda (T. R. Sethna's English translation of Yasna Ha 8.7 vide his book *Yasna*, pp 33-34, sourced from Ervad K. E. Kanga's *Khordeh Avesta Ba Maini*, pg 25)."

"We revere the flowing waters, we revere the flight of birds, we revere the return of priests who go to remote coun-



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tries to promote righteousness. We revere all the eternal holy laws (Sethna's translation of Haptan *Yasht* (karda 8.6) in *Yashts*, pp 21 and 23)."

"Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda, 'O the all-knowing Ahura Mazda, should I guide righteous men, should I guide righteous women, should I guide irreligious men, worshippers of evil and sinners that spoil the land, the flowing waters and spoil the increase of corn and other things of value in general created by Ahura Mazda? Then spoke Ahura Mazda 'You should guide, O righteous Zarathushtra [Sethna's English translation of *Vendidad* (fargard 19.26) vide his book *Vendidad*, pg 144 sourced from Kanga's *Vendidad* in Gujarati, 3rd edition, pg 312].'"

From all the foregoing passages, it is clear that it was Zarathushtra's intention that his message was not only for Iran but also for other countries. This intention was understood and carried out by his followers, during the Avestan period (from about 800 BC to about 200 AD) and the major part of the Pahlavi period (from the third to the ninth century).

According to the *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume XXIV, Pahlavi Texts, Part III, pg 171) in a book called *Shikand*

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Gumanik Vijar written during the Pahlavi period, it is mentioned that after King Vishtasp (also known as Gushtasp) accepted the faith of Zarathushtra, he ordered his sons Aspandiar, Zarfar (Zarir) and other royal sons to spread the message as far as Arum in the west and Hindustan in the east.

Commenting on this information, Jackson wrote in *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Iran*, pg 85: "The claim to Indian converts is quite persistent in the later writings, which is not so strange, when we consider the Indo-Iranian kinship and the fact that the Parsis found in India an asylum."

As mentioned in *The Shah Nameh of Firdausi* by James Atkinson (pg 263), the *Shah Nameh* by the famous Persian poet Firdausi Tusi also mentions that King Gushtasp sent his son Isfandiar to foreign countries for the purpose of diffusing the new religion so that the whole world might be enlightened.

"Good fortune to us that Spitama Zarathushtra, an athra van is born, to move with us, praising and calling for assistance with high mentality spread by Zarathushtra. Henceforth this good Mazdayasnian religion will go over towards all the regions which are seven

(Sethna's translation of the Avestan period, Farvardin Yasht (karda XXIV — 94 in *Yashts*, pg 231)."

"May the knowledge, extent and fame of the commandments of the excellent Mazda-worshipping religion ever increase over the world, over all its seven regions. So may it be (Taraporewala's translation of the Pahlavi period *Nyaish* prayers in *Zarthosti Daily Prayers*)!"

Early in the 20th century scholars like Sanjana, Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Ervad Sheriar Dadabhai Bharucha, K. R. Cama and Tehmuras Dinshaji Anklesaria had opined that if a person seriously wishes to become a Zoroastrian then there is no bar in our religion; their conclusions were not based on blind beliefs but on the study and authority of Zoroastrian scriptures.

At the end of the 20th century, the majority of the community is blissfully unaware of the true teachings of their own Prophet and choose to cling to several socioreligious customs which are incompatible with the teachings of Zarathushtra.

To debar or object to the presence of non-Zoroastrians in our religious ceremonies, just on the ground that they are non-Zoroastrians, is a classic example

of praying one thing and doing diametrically opposite to it as can be seen by the following paragraphs:

"May the brilliance of the excellent Mazdayasnian religion be widespread over the seven regions: May this be specially fulfilled!

"May the citizens of ... be more and more blessed with complete success; may their souls be glorified with the highest gratification and their brilliance be auspiciously increased! May it be so (D. S. Framroze's translation of *Urvano-Kardo* in *Mazda-Yasna — Some Daily Prayers from Zend Avesta*)!"

Noble words indeed, but in reality nothing is being done to spread the message and those for whom blessings are invoked are debarred from receiving them in person.

Since some within the community oppose the attendance of non-Zoroastrians at muktads and Fravardigan jashans let us consider the philosophy of 'fravashis' or 'farohars' which is based on the *Fravardin Yasht*. Briefly stated, 'fravashi' means divine essence of God in everything within the creation, including human beings, and its purpose is to push forward all creations in the goal of evolution. In order that we may better understand the nature of work done by the farohars, *Fravardin Yasht* tells us that there are three groups of farohars.

The first group consists of farohars in all creations of Ahura Mazda. The second group includes the farohars that work on the spiritual plane and come to our aid when invoked. The third group constitutes the farohars of Asho that approach the domain of the living during 10 days of muktad or Fravardigan, irrespective of their being invoked or not, to pour down their benedictions upon the "power of righteousness that pervades the earth."

There are several passages in the *Fravardin Yasht* dealing with all the three groups but only the third group is dealt with here, since it is related to the subject matter under consideration.

During the course of the ceremonies our mobeds invoke farohars of righteous persons of all countries irrespective of caste, color or creed. A few countries are actually mentioned by name — the countries that were known to our ancestors and where the Zoroastrian religion prevailed. In these countries to the east of the Caspian Sea brave tribes are once supposed to have lived. Given below are the relevant passages

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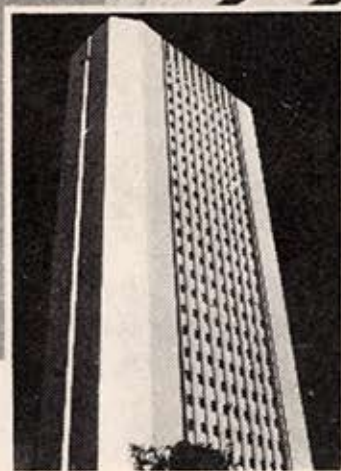
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as translated by Sethna in *Yashts*, pg 259:

"We revere the fravashis of righteous persons of Aryan countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Aryan countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men and women of Turanian countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Sairim (Syrian) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Sairim (Syrian) countries [karda XXXI (143)].

"We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Saini (China) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of Saini (China) countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous men of Dahi countries [karda XXXI (144)].

"We revere the fravashis of righteous men of all countries. We revere the fravashis of righteous women of all countries. We revere all the fravashis of the righteous, good, powerful, beneficent fravashis: those from Gayomard to the Saoshyant [karda XXXI (145)]."

So, in theory, these religious ceremonies can be open to one and all, but for a start we should immediately cease opposition to non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children who attend our ceremonies
continued on page 248

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A survivor's story

His parents' death from cancer didn't deter the author from overcoming the illness when it struck him 14 years ago

Noshir H. Dadrawala

Every year, the second Saturday of the month of February is celebrated as "Cancer Survivors' Day." It is a day to celebrate life, a day for offering hope to those who are ailing and most important of all, a day for quiet reflection among those who have been blessed with a second lease of life.

This year on February 10 at a function organized by V Care, a voluntary cancer support group, I was among those who received the "Victor's Award" at the hands of the governor of Maharashtra, Dr P. C. Alexander, at the verdant Horniman Circle Garden at Fort, Bombay.

The certificate read: "Presented to Noshir H. Dadrawala on Cancer Survivors' Day for being a source of inspiration and hope to cancer victims through his immense courage, resilience and strength in his own victory over cancer."

An inspiring citation, I thought to myself. Have I been worthy of it? The thought took me back to 14 years ago when I was just 26 years old and discovered that I had cancer. For a young married man, father of a three-year-old son, the news was devastating. What was worse, it was barely a couple of months since I had changed my job.

Cancer was not an unknown ailment to me. I had observed its devastating grip over both my parents who ultimately succumbed to the "Big C," barely a few months apart from each other. At that time I was just 18 years old and studying in college. I had no siblings or immediate family to fall back on for emotional or any other support.

In 1987, I was struck with what is known as "mixed germ seminoma." It started with a seemingly harmless and non-painful swelling in the groin. The general practitioners' diagnosis varied. I however had a gut feeling that something more serious was developing. The surgeon at the B. D. Petit Parsee General

Hospital recommended surgery to arrive at a proper diagnosis. And sure enough, it was indeed the Big C. The doctor suggested more surgery at which point I decided to get a second opinion at the Tata Memorial Hospital. Dr Praful



Alexander (left) felicitating Dadrawala

Desai opined that further surgery could be avoided and instead six to 12 cycles of chemotherapy be administered. The remedy seemed worse than the malady. Nausea, vomiting, rashes, low energy levels, loss of hair... it seemed like the end of the world. But there was one thought uppermost in my mind: I had to fight and fight to survive.

Chemotherapy went on for about half a year and during the stage of remission when treatment was suspended, I decided that I had to work toward building up my strength and resistance. I changed my diet to include more fiber. I almost turned vegetarian for two years. I also tried various alternative systems, Tibetan medicine, homeopathy, wheat grass, raw vegetables, grape cure... The hope was to purge the body of all toxins, build immunity and kick cancer out of the system. Prayers and exercise also played an important role.

From 1988 till date, I appear to have

put cancer behind me. It is like a bad chapter in my life which temporarily caused havoc but also helped me emerge stronger, confident, more caring and sensitive. I was granted a fresh lease of life which had to be used responsibly. Having survived, I am keen to add quality and intensity to my life.

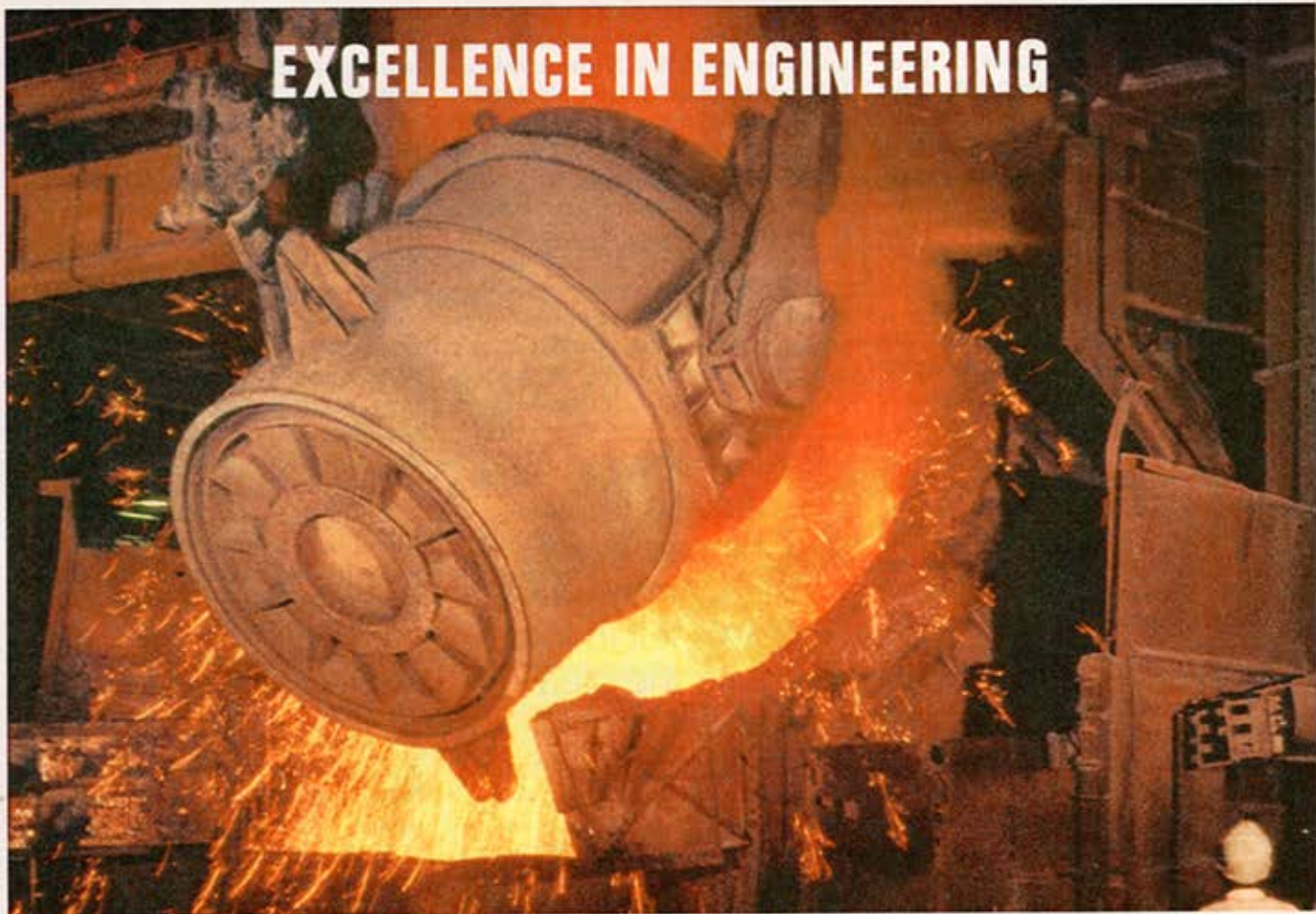
Today I work almost six days a week, often putting in 10 hours a day at work. I travel extensively, both in India and abroad. My energy levels today are higher than ever before. I lead a far more active and productive life than I did before being struck with cancer. My life is more disciplined and most important of all I have a changed perspective. I realize that life is short and there is much to do.

In the last 10 years I have authored four resource books which have been published by the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy (CAP). I have also authored a travelog on Iran and a book on Zoroastrian saints. I edit two journals and write for various publications. Through the CAP I assist several voluntary organizations in their dealings with the charity commissioner, the income tax authorities and the home ministry. It is a story of the triumph of the human spirit over physical challenges.

I am grateful to God for giving me a new lease of life. However, among family and friends, I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife for her courage and patience during that difficult time, to my chairman, Russi Lala and to my directors, particularly, R. R. Chari and Darius M. Forbes for their faith and confidence in me, to Dr Farokh Master for his healing touch, to Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees Silloo Kavarana and Dinshaw Tamboly for their assistance, and many others who stood by me, encouraged me and prayed for me.

I firmly believe that it is not important how long one lives but how intensely one lives.

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THE 'CHINESE' COUSINS

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18-20 years' of experience and Chinoy expects it to become a landmark in two years' time given its corner location.

"Before preparing our menu, we have tasted the offerings of other restaurants," remarks Patel. Right now they are in an enviable position whence they can identify a Schezwan sauce sans its celery. For the Surat locals who relish spicy food the sprinkling of condiments is generous and for Bombayites the resulting spread is subtler. It might be a good idea to try out the Cantonese at Wok N Roll; it is genuine and therefore naturally bland.

"Experience the creation of your own dish with freshly prepared stir-fried vegetables of your choice and let our chef do the rest. Work up your appetite and let the magic of the wok roll onto your plates," says the bill-of-fare. So we tried an inspiring composition that scored both on quantity and taste. In a stir-fried vegetarian wok (Rs 140) you have a choice of fresh broccoli, baby corn, bell peppers, carrots, oriental greens, bean sprouts, mushrooms. We teamed it up with tender sliced chicken (Rs 65) and burnt chili sauce that provided the aromatic flavor. Our repast included haka noodles (Rs 90) that we found sweet but refreshingly low on oil. We dunked all this with loads of Chinese tea replenished at the mere nod of a head.

Cousins turned partners, 41-year-old Chinoy and 39-year-old Patel believe in an active work ethos. Theirs is a business partnership many would eat their hearts out for. According to ebullient Chinoy the strength of their "excellent partnership" can be attributed to "shared trust and confidence." He adds, "We are willing to give in at every stage for the betterment of the business." Patel is in total agreement and believes this compatibility arises from their desires not to meddle but handle responsibilities independently.

It all began in 1990 when a food culture was gaining ground. Dining one evening at a family run Chinese eatery, the Chinoy fell in love with the idea of becoming restaurateurs. The Patels apparently had similar aspirations, "We were looking to do something different." And with "very few" restaurants in Surat at that time, it seemed a good moment to venture into this business. Thus together with their wives' (Feroza Chinoy and Tanaaz Patel) unflappable

support they began Golden Dragon in Surat. Currently, Cyrus handles the day-to-day running of Wok N Roll and Merzy looks after Golden Dragon. Merzy travels to Bombay once every 15 days to check out Wok N Roll.

With the brain of an engineer and the heart of a restaurateur, Cyrus manages to stay on top of things at the restaurant. "Nobody can cheat me as I use my engineering background to understand the logistics of business," he smiles disarmingly. After studying at St Xavier's in Surat, he completed his engineering from M. S. University, Baroda in 1982.

Dining one evening at a family run Chinese eatery, the Chinoy and Patels fell in love with the idea of becoming restaurateurs

At that time his father Phiroze was the chief executive at Baroda Rayon and young Cyrus joined the same company but stayed with them for a mere six months. He left to pursue a course in German at Max Mueller Bhavan, Poona, for six months, a prerequisite for working in Germany. A "desire to go abroad" took him to Saurer Allma, a textile machinery-making factory at Kempten in Bavaria, where he received "hands-on training." Early 1984 saw him take off nomadic-style again, this time for America. Had he completed his masters at San Jose State University in California he would have received his degree but unfortunately, when home on study leave in end '85, he had to stay back in Surat to be near his critically ill father.

When his father died Cyrus gave up his wanderlust, rejoined Baroda Rayon and completed a long stint, by his standards of course, of four-and-a-half years. Although the family business — Westcoast Petrochemicals which included a chemical unit and ice plant at Surat — did not suffer, he could not sustain it for long. Sometime in 1987 Cyrus started texturizing of yarn at Daman and continued thus for seven long years. In his words, "I have come up the hard way..."

Cyrus identified his true vocation after traipsing the world, whilst Merzy

figured it out at Surat itself. The Boys' Town Public School at Nasik gave him initial grounding; thereafter he graduated with commerce from K. P. College in 1985. In 1981 whilst still studying he joined the family business, farming, at Sayan in Surat. But the death of his father Noshir in 1986 brought him to the helm of business affairs. Thereafter, Merzy has with élan balanced the dual roles of agriculturist and restaurateur.

The hospitality line has thrown up exciting moments, feels Cyrus, like meeting new people and seeing them relish a meal. But with their noses to the grind until the wee hours of the morning it leaves them little time for recreation. In the beginning they did not take a single holiday for five years. Cyrus and Merzy unanimously claim that only their wives' understanding and support gives them the liberty to work odd hours. Cyrus' family includes two daughters Rukshana, 16, Delna, 13, and son Darius aged nine. Rukshana, currently studying in Delhi, is keen to join the hotel line. For the owners even pursuing hobbies is impractical today. Merzy, an ex-basketball player, has to rest content with fond memories of the game.

Besides the odd Parsi gathering once or twice a year, there is very little interface with the community for both of them. Belonging basically to a "service community," Cyrus has high regard for Parsi women, they are "cultured, educated and think for themselves."

Both of them pray every day, a force of habit born from years of practice. Every Behram *roz* sees Merzy pay his respects at the Iranshah. Cyrus' past ritual of visiting the Banaji Atash Behram at Charni Road religiously every Monday has now turned to occasional visits like on Navroz.

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Comfortable as he feels serving Chinese cuisine which sells well, Cyrus adds, "I don't think I would ever start a Parsi eatery. But, yes, definitely another Oriental one, and with the same partner and nobody else."

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Zoroastrianism Indianized - 2

The reformers and the religion

The reformers' movement in the 19th and 20th century helped preserve Parsi identity, states the author

Dr Mani Kamerkar

In a two-part article Dr Mani Kamerkar contours the intellectual profile of the Parsis in India. The first part depicted the regression of a diasporic community into ignorance of the true teachings of its religion, the acceptance of some of the beliefs of the host community and the confusion of social customs with religious dogma. After nearly a millennium of pervasive assimilation, the Zoroastrians were

jogged into the need for theological understanding of their own faith when Christian missionaries succeeded in luring some Parsi youths into discarding their Parsi customs and beliefs for want of intellectual justification.

In this second part Kamerkar focuses on the response of the new Parsi intellectual elite trained in liberal educational principles like K. R. Cama and his students who learnt and applied western philological breakthroughs in the understanding of the *Gathas*, the *Avesta* and other scriptures. The new knowledge revealed the original doctrines shorn of the encrustation of alien ideologies. But die-hard orthodox members of the community were hard to convince and controversies then born continue to simmer under the veneer of Parsi modernity.

...

In a series of writings by prominent Zoroastrian scholars, answers were sought to be given to Dr John Wilson and such writers gathered round a Gujarati magazine begun in 1842, the *Rahnuma-e-Zarathosti*. D. H. Bengali wrote the *Rasti-e-Mazda Yasnai*, Ervad

Dosabhai S. Munshi wrote the *Talim-e-Zaratosht*, Dastur Eruch Sanjana brought out the *Majazat-e-Zartosht* and many such others brought forth the best schol-

God. The aim was to restore the grandeur of the Mazdayasnan religion which had faded and had ceased to be a living force in the spiritual life of the Parsis.

The Mazdayasnan were also concerned with prayers being recited in Avesta without any understanding both by the priests and laymen. To make matters worse, Avesta was being mispronounced. They desired to generally educate the priests and laymen and give

correct versions of the Avesta prayers. Dadabhai Naoroji was of the opinion that the priests were ignorant, uneducated, quite unfit for the pulpit and had much injurious influence over the community, specially over the women!

Expensive and useless rituals for the dead stemmed from wrongly understood Zoroastrian theology. Wasteful expenditure was incurred by distributing sweets and dried fruits to all present at funeral ceremonies. Money was paid to hire mourners to cry on such occasions. None of these customs had any religious sanction in the sacred books.

Here also scholars were induced to go to the sources and find out the truth. Cama and others put the correct version before the Parsi community in an attempt to reduce unwanted ceremonial rites. Intercessory rites were performed in the belief that the 'soul' of the dead came down to earth every year during the annual muktad days. In the Zoroastrian theology it is the farohar (guardian spirit) of each soul which comes down to dwell amongst the relatives of the dead souls for 10 days. No amount of prayers can change the status of the soul



(From left) Cama, Naoroji and Dhalla: searching for the truth

arship in the community.

From these revelations emerged a society for religious reform — the Rahanumae Mazdayasnan Sabha — founded on August 24, 1851 by 40 persons assembled at a meeting called by Naoroji Fardoonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, K. R. Cama, K. Kabraji, Darashah Chichgar and several other liberal youths of Bombay. This Sabha was the Parsi response to the 19th century Indian renaissance as much as a continuation of the change that had been introduced by Dastur Jamasp in the 18th century. The Mazdayasnan Sabha sought to rid the community of the weaknesses, malpractices and abuses which had crept into it through the ages, just as the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and others were doing with respect to Hinduism.

The Sabha mainly focused attention on the removal of alien customs which had come into Zoroastrianism along with beliefs in the Brahmins and Pirs as intermediaries between the individual and

who is treated in accordance with the life he had led whilst in this world. The Mazdayasnans advocated the stopping of all but the most essential rituals.

The Mazdayasnan Sabha sought the removal of such abuses by educating the people, particularly the priests. They embarked on a program of giving public lectures, organizing the writing of essays on these various defects and publishing them in prominent journals such as the *Rast-Gofar* to jog public opinion. The Sabha also circulated a petition to the community, calling upon it to take part in all these reforms. More madressas (schools) for the training of priests were opened by some philanthropists. The Mulla Firoze Madressa was founded in 1854, in 1863 the Sir Jamshedjee Jejeebhoy Zarthosti Madressa was established, followed by the N. R. Tata Madressa in Navsari in 1932 and the M.



Kabraji (left) and Fardoonji

F. Cama Athornan Institute in 1927. It also brought out a catechism to be taught to Parsi children in their schools and thus filled the lacunae which had so far existed.

Cama published 11 pamphlets in Gujarati between 1866 and 1869 advocating the reforms of the Mazdayasnans in which he, by careful analysis of the Avesta, Pahlavi and other works brought out the true fundamentals of the faith. He and the group of scholars known as the 'Iranists' worked closely with the new seminaries. They were able, by scientific, philological research, to disprove the accusations of Wilson and other Christian missionaries. Their efforts at this time were supported by western scholars, particularly Dr Martin Haug, a German scholar then in Poona as a visiting professor. These scholars maintained the essential spiritual and monotheistic aspects of Zoroastrianism and were able to answer their detractors.

M. F. Cama Athornan Institute: filling a lacunae

The reformers were met by staunch opposition from the orthodox majority which included vested interests of the Punchayet and some section of the newly emerging capitalist class. In 1855 the orthodox section under Dastur Jamasp Mansukh founded the *Rahe Rastnumae Zarthostrian*. He also founded the Society for Furtherance of Faith in Zoroastrianism. Inveective, abuse and innuendo marked their attack against the quiet, disciplined scholarship of the reformist group.

The latter roused intellectual curiosity, whilst the former played upon the sentiments of the public. Mansukh himself bitterly arraigned the reformists whom he dubbed "Protestants and imitators of the Christian Protestant movement." His volunteers tried to disrupt the meetings of the Rahanumae Sabha which were always well organized. The two orthodox societies lost public support and closed down after Mansukh's death at the end of the 19th century.

The arguments went on and the community as a whole was not able to accept all the changes proposed. The Punchayet at times sided with the reformers and at others with the conservatives. Towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century it became more orthodox and unbending.

The orthodox got unexpected support from the newly introduced theoso-

phy movement in the second half of the 19th century. A number of Parsi intellectuals were attracted to this movement and sincerely thought it was adding to the understanding of Zoroastrianism and

unwittingly gave support to the orthodox and obscurantist elements in the community. They spoke in occult and mystical terms of the *Gathas* and *Avesta* texts, claiming they had double meanings and were clothed in allegory. According to them Zoroaster spoke in occult language for the exalted and in simple terms for the common man. To the satisfaction of the conservatives they supported all

manner of ritual and ceremonies, claiming them as essential. The theosophists were looked upon, says Dastur M. N. Dhalla, as the "guardians, inheritors and sustainers of ceremonies, which to the orthodox was the soul and substance of religion." The theosophists, however, quite contrary to Parsi orthodoxy, claimed that Zarathushtra taught reincarnation and vegetarianism. They stated that these precepts were to be found in Zoroastrian scriptures. These ideas were obviously the result of the Hindu and Buddhist roots of the teachings of theosophy. The reformers and scholars of Zoroastrianism saw in this an attempt to put a 'vener of Hinduism' over the Zoroastrian faith.

Towards the end of the 19th century Dhalla entered the fray against the the-



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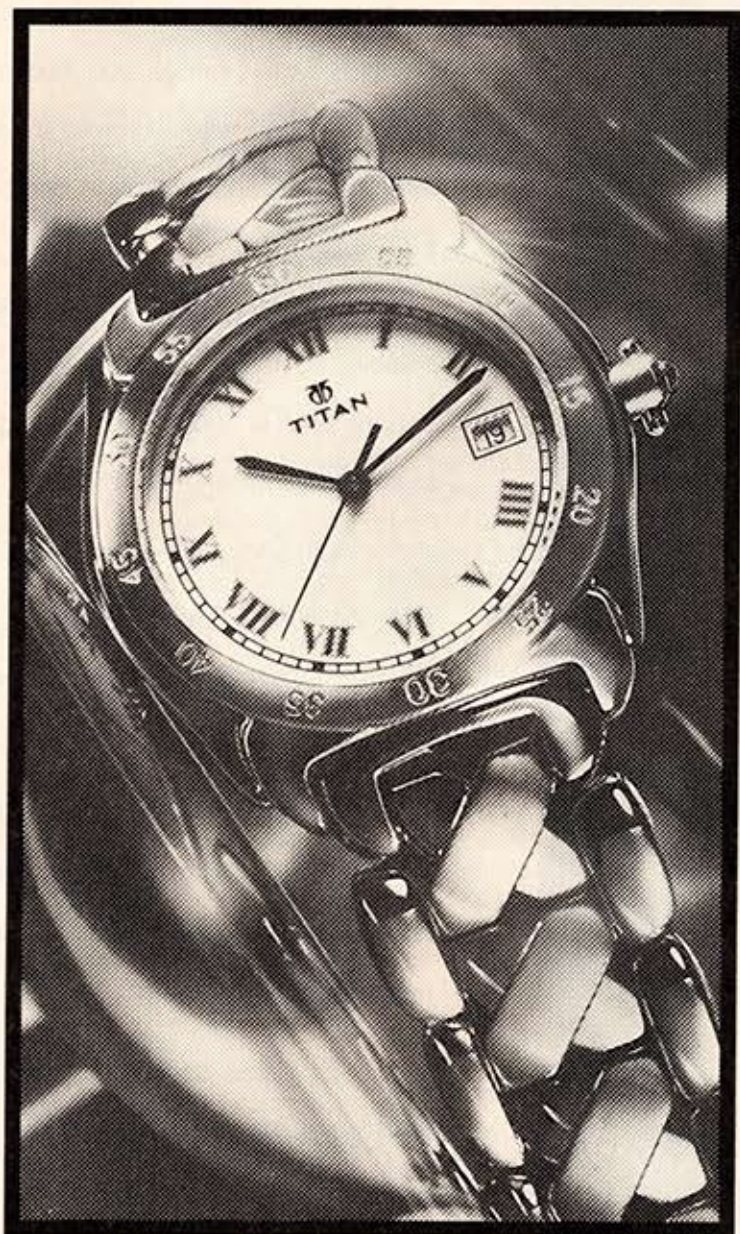
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osophists, and later the orthodox, starting a series of debates and discussions. Dastur Darab Sanjana and Dastur Kaikhushru Jamsaji, along with Dhalla, gave scholarly expositions based on their reading of the *Gathas* and *Avesta* texts and traditions, and refuted all such claims of the theosophists. In answer, Dhalla was referred to as the 'white turbaned butcher' in the theosophist magazine *Chirag*. Dhalla was joined by the Mazdayasnan group in opposing the theosophists.

In the beginning of the 20th century, another controversy which is still festering came up before the community over the conversion of two non-Parsi women, one Rajput, the other French (Soonie Ratan Tata), the wives of two Parsis. These conversions were vehemently opposed by the majority of the community. On the other hand, the conversion of non-Parsis — juddins as they were

called — had been generally going on up to the 18th century. As Dhalla says, the Parsis were advised as per the *Revayets* by their Zoroastrian brethren



Wilson's conversions galvanized the community into action

in Iran to give full Zoroastrian rights to these converted persons. In fact the Parsis were reminded that all mankind would be brought under the religion of Mazda by future prophets. It appears that during the earlier centuries Parsis had been 'buying' low caste people as 'domestic slaves' and converting them to Zoroastrianism. As time went on, and as the community prospered and amassed vast community funds (Punchayet funds) they

began to fear the swamping of the community by what they now called 'undesirables.' This was really a social and economic, rather than a religious problem. As the Parsis rose in the hierarchy of Indian social life, their racial pride and consciousness of past glory was

resurrected, perhaps an indirect result of the probing into the past by the reformist movement of the 19th century.

The movement against conversion centered around the main cities of Gujarat and particularly Bombay. The Parsi Punchayet of Bombay took the lead and after heated discussions, meetings and writings, held a general meeting on February 2, 1905 and by an overwhelming majority passed a resolution that Zoroastrian religious and other facilities, such as the use of dokhmas, etc, could be given only to "those who are Parsis by birth and at the same time Zoroastrian by religion." A later resolution added "the children of Parsi fathers and alien mothers." This viewpoint was further strengthened by the judgment of Justice Dinshaw Davar delivered in 1908 in which he categorically stated that Parsi Punchayet funds and services were available only to members of the Parsi community according to the terms of the donors' bequests and that the community consists of "Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants and who are born of both Zoroastrian parents and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, the Irani Parsis who

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profess the Zoroastrian religion who came to India, and the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion."

This position exists even today. It is a sad commentary on a community which prides itself on equal status for its women with men, that economic and racial considerations have even superseded religious tenets as preached in the *Avesta* prayers. Contrary to the liberal and humanistic approach of the reformers, this decision of the community was a retrogressive step, and a factor in the diminishing number and importance of the community today. The fight for this equality of admission to children of Parsi mothers and alien fathers, apart from the question of general conversion, still goes on.

The Mazdayasnan Sabha had found new support when Dhalla, on his return from Columbia University, organized a Zoroastrian Conference in 1910. It became an important catalyst for change in the community. Also aimed at restoring the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine glory and to weed out outside influences in its beliefs, creeds, rituals, ceremonies and dogmas, its work was in direct con-

tinuation of what the Mazdayasnan Sabha had been doing for nearly 50 years.

Unfortunately the Conference, through various stratagems, fell into the hands of the orthodox. Not to be outdone, the progressives led by Dhalla and P. A. Wadia established the Iranian Association in 1911. They carried on the crusade of the Mazdayasnan and paid particular attention to thwart the unjustified claims of the Parsi orthodox.

What was the net result of this nearly 80 years of struggle to revitalize the community? Wisely, the community never split into groups, however bitter the controversies, nor were there any serious attempts at excommunication as such moves would have destroyed the community.

As a result of reformist activity the Parsi identity has been preserved. At the same time, the nearly century long struggle for reform had definitely created some change and a more educated, sophisticated priestly class has emerged. The Parsi community is consciously trying to educate itself about its ancient religion and keeping its banner flying. The purity of the religion has to a great extent been restored by an understand-

ing of the original teachings and the theosophist element fended off. Avesta prayers and ceremonies are still an integral part of the religion, as it is believed they have their own beneficial results. Prayers are still considered as benefactor mantras, as in many other Indian sects. Rituals have been simplified and on the whole used sparingly. Only those essential rites, from the point of view of the religion, are now insisted on and their cost specified by the fire-temples and the punchayets. Also, much help is given to the poor of the community.

Although the controversies about the religion have led some Parsis to become agnostic, they remain within the community which has, to an extent, emerged from its ignorance and continues to lead the liberal, progressive elements of Indian society.

A historian interested in Parsi history, Dr Mani



Kamerkar is vice president of The Asiatic Society of Bombay. She was former director, College Development Council, of the S. N. D. T. Women's University in Bombay. She has also served as principal of the Nanavati College.



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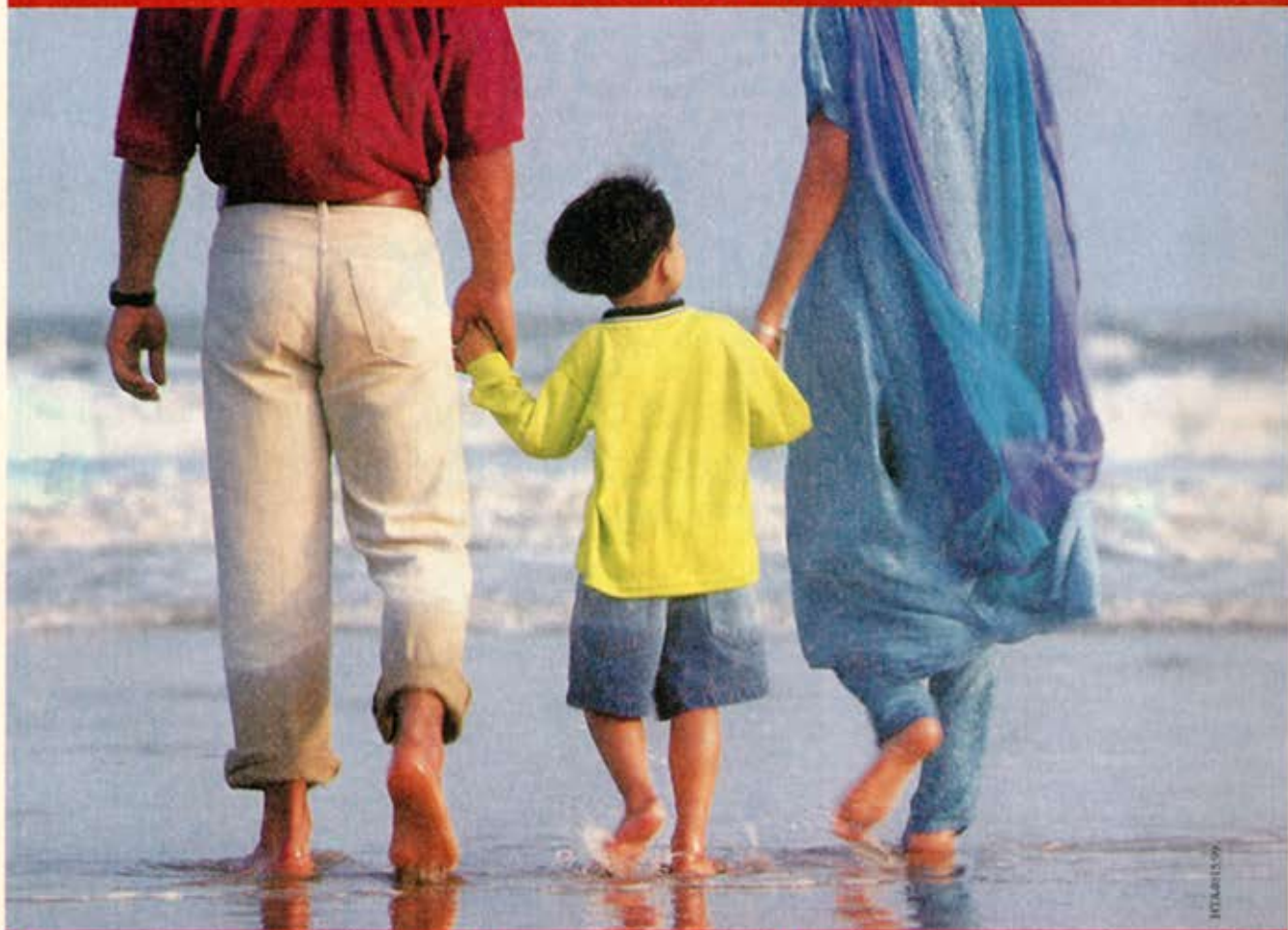
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Though the monetary returns may be low, 87 percent of the priests' wives state they are happy with the respect accorded to the family

Parinaz M. Gandhi

The respect accorded to a priest's family is a cause for happiness, say 87 percent of the priests' wives who responded to a questionnaire prepared by *Parsiana* to gauge the spouses' views on life in a priestly family. And yes, 79 percent of those to whom the question was applicable said they would encourage their sons to take up priesthood as a profession. Among those who had daughters, 73 percent said they would like them to marry a priest with one respondent noting, "It's a pity that the girls of today are not prepared to marry a priest. This is a very noble profession where the priest's family will be able to face any difficulties in life."

While much is written and researched on the Zoroastrian priests, the role of the priest's family has not been as closely examined. To create more awareness of the priest's family, especially the wife, *Parsiana* compiled a questionnaire which was distributed by post and through priestly contacts to the wives of nearly 100 full-time practising priests in India in the second half of 2000. We received 23 responses from priests' wives, 74 percent of whom, based in Bombay, opted to reveal their identity. Among the respondents 70 percent described themselves as moderate, 17 percent as orthodox and nine percent as liberal. When percentages were calculated for each answer, in some cases the total exceeded 100 when more than one option was ticked. And when some respondents chose not to reply to a particular question, the total fell short of 100.

On controversial issues it emerged that 96 percent were not in favor of conversion (the remaining four percent refrained from giving an answer), 91 percent would not like the navjotes per-

formed for children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers (there was not a single affirmative answer). Sixty-one percent would prefer that even children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers are not initiated into the faith. With respect to ashirwad prayers, 92 percent felt they should be denied to women who have married out of the community and 83 percent said no for even men who have married out. The attitude was a little lenient for after-death prayers with 74 percent recommending that it should be refused to women who have married out, and 52 percent maintaining that men married out should not be accorded this facility. Despite the declining vulture population, 74 percent wanted to continue with dokhmenashini, 13 percent advocated cremation and nine percent burial.

The monetary returns from priesthood are not sufficient to run a household today, opined 70 percent of the priests' wives and although 78 percent said they were happy with the panthaky system, voices of dissatisfaction were heard from respondents: "The priests are exploited by the panthakies. They are underpaid, overburdened, overstressed beyond their capacity. As a result they are discouraged, frustrated and lack the interest. Please someone has to look into their problems soon." "There should be a written agreement/appointment enlisting terms and

conditions between a mobed and a panthaky as is the case between a panthaky and trustees of an agiary. In case of grievances of a mobed or a panthaky, an independent grievance cell should conduct free and fair trial and mete out justice," noted another respondent.

There was cent percent agreement among the respondents that the decline in the number of priests can be solved. When asked how this could be done, 100 percent felt it could be achieved by giving them greater monetary returns, 91 percent advocated housing facilities, and 65 percent each said by giving them higher educational opportunities and according them greater respect. And although 96 percent said they lived in community housing like baus, trust buildings, etc, one respondent lamented that "due to lack of housing facilities, priests cannot even think of having children." Other social security measures like medical assistance, provident fund, gratuity, leave with pay and other perquisites as enjoyed by "an average bank job" were also recommended. Old age assistance to retired priests is also necessary, opined one wife. All the respondents said that they do not receive financial aid from any trust or organization.

"The pressures of learning all the Avesta prayers by heart (should be removed) and instead the meaning/message conveyed should be known," urged another wife.

Among the respondents, 17 percent had three children, 39 percent had two, 26 percent had one child, and 17 percent had no children. As a family, 91 per-

cent said they go out on vacations, 74 percent said they dine out at restaurants, 70 percent go for movies and 35 percent to plays. Fifty-seven percent stated that their family owned a vehicle, 18 percent of whom specified that it was a scooter.

Thirty-nine percent of the respondents had a full-time job and nine per-



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cent had a part-time job. Sixty-five percent had domestic help and 82 percent in turn helped the husband with his priestly chores. Cooking of malido, papri and daraan was known to 39 percent, 22 percent and 26 percent respectively. Seventeen percent knew how to weave a kusti, and 26 percent each knew how to stitch a sudreh and thread a bead toran. Whilst 83 percent of the wives knew how to read and write Gujarati, among the children, only 61 percent were familiar with the written language. The salwar-kameez was the most popular dress code among 52 percent of the priests' wives.

Ninety-one percent of the respondents said they were Shahenshahis and nine percent considered themselves Faslis. While all the respondents recited their kusti prayers daily, the frequency differed: for 26 percent it was after every visit to the toilet, for 17 percent, thrice a day, 26 percent said twice a day and 30 percent said once a day. Thirty percent did also say that they recited other farajyat (obligatory) prayers from the *Khordeh Avesta* daily. The family prays together, said 61 percent of the respondents; 22 percent prayed jointly

*"Whoso unto the Righteous acteth just, —
Whether as 'Self-Reliant' he be known,
Whether 'Co-worker' named, or 'Friend' addressed, —*

*And whoso fosters zealously all Life,
He doth assure himself a place within
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(Yasna 33.3 translation by I. J. Taraporewala)



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at home and 43 percent at agiaries.

Daily visits to the fire-temple are a must for 35 percent of the respondents; 22 percent put in weekly visits, 17 percent, fortnightly, four percent monthly, and 17 percent less than once a month. Visits to the Iranshah are undertaken by 96 percent of the respondents, with 57 percent frequenting Udvada more than once a year. Oil-based divas are a daily feature in 87 percent of the homes and although 74 percent admitted that agarbattis have replaced loban, 43 percent said that they have daily loban at their house.

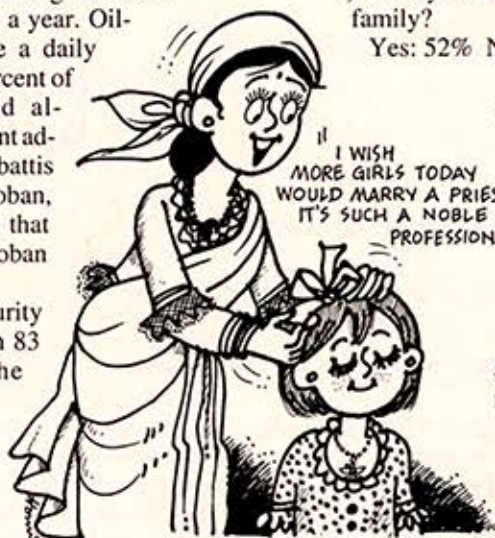
A code of purity is maintained in 83 percent of the homes with 57 percent of the respondents not cooking during menses, 96 percent washing their hair at the end of the menses, 96 percent undergoing nahn after childbirth and 91 percent observing 40 days' seclusion after delivery. There are no dietary restrictions because of priesthood, observed 91 percent of the respondents, with 87 percent saying they eat Parsi food at home, 26 percent, mixed, 13 percent Indian and 13 percent western.

The basic symbolism of the sudreh-kusti was known to 70 percent of the respondents, and around 50 percent were familiar with yashts/nirangs for healing, warding off evil, protection of the family, protection during childbirth. While legends of Parsi history, stories from the *Shah Nameh* and family stories/legends were familiar to close to 50 percent of the respondents, comic stories like *Mamai-ni-musafri* were unknown to 78 percent. Almost an equal percentage did not sing monjats, garbas or khyals.

Religious inclinations and family circumstances were the most commonly cited reasons for the respondents' husbands to become full-time priests. Although 52 percent of the respondents were born in an athornan family, 70 percent said that they did not cover their heads at home or when they went out. On the subject of whether the number of agiaries should be reduced by shifting the fires, the house was almost evenly

divided, with 43 percent in favor and 48 percent against. But when they were asked whether women should be allowed to become priests, 91 percent said "No."

The *Parsiana* questionnaire and the responses from the priests' wives are published here.



1) Were you born in an athornan family?

Yes: 52% No: 43%

2) Was your father a practising priest?

Yes: 22% No: 78%

3) Was yours an arranged marriage: 60% a love marriage: 43%

4) Do you define

yourself as
orthodox: 17% liberal: 9%
moderate: 70%

5) Are you happy with the respect accorded to a priest's family by the community?

Yes: 87% No: 13%

6) What prompted your husband to become a full-time priest?

Parental pressure: 4%
Religious inclinations: 57%
Family circumstances: 52%
Other: 9%

7) Does your husband do bois at agiaries?

Yes: 57% No: 43%

8) Are you happy with the panthaky system?

Yes: 78% No: 17%

9) Are there any dietary restrictions because of priesthood?

Yes: 9% No: 91%

10) What type of food is eaten in your home?

Parsi: 87% Indian: 13%
Western: 13% Mixed: 26%

11) Do you have to maintain a code of

purity at home?
Yes: 83% No: 17%

12) Can you cook
malido: Yes: 39% No: 61%
papri: Yes: 22% No: 78%
daraan: Yes: 26% No: 74%

13) Do you know how to weave a kusti?

Yes: 17% No: 83%

14) Can you stitch a sudreh?
Yes: 26% No: 74%

15) Can you make a bead toran?
Yes: 26% No: 74%

16) Do you read and write Gujarati?
Yes: 83% No: 17%

17) Do your children read and write Gujarati?
Yes: 61% No: 39%

18) Do you assist your husband in his priestly chores/work?
Yes: 39% No: 21%
Occasionally: 43%

19) Do you cover your head at home: Yes: 30% No: 70%
when you go out: Yes: 30% No: 70%

20) How many children do you have?
None: 17% One: 26% Two: 39%
Three: 17% Four: —
More than four: —

21) Do you have a full-time job: Yes: 39% No: 61%
a part-time job: Yes: 9% No: 91%

22) Do you have any domestic help (servant, etc)?
Yes: 65% No: 35%

23) Does your family receive financial aid from any trusts or organizations?
Yes: — No: 100%

24) Do you live in community housing (baug, trust building, etc)?
Yes: 96% No: 4%

25) Do you have roots, relatives, family house in Gujarat/small town/village?
Yes: 57% No: 43%

26) Are you a member of your local

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anjuman?
Yes: 9% No: 87%

27) Are you a member of any other
Zoroastrian body?
Yes: 17% No: 78%
If yes, please specify name:
WZO

28) Would you want your daughter to
marry a priest?
Yes: 73% No: 27%

29) Would you encourage your sons
to take up the priesthood?
Yes: 79% No: 21%

30) Are the monetary returns from
priesthood sufficient to run a house-
hold today?
Yes: 26% No: 70%

31) What kind of clothes are you
usually dressed in?
Sari: 39% Western: 43%
Salwar-kameez: 52%

32) When wearing a sari do you drape
it in
the Parsi style: 48%
any other style: 4% both: 48%

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33) As a family do you go to movies Yes: 70% No: 30%
plays Yes: 35% No: 61%
restaurants Yes: 74% No: 26%

34) Do you go on vacations?
Yes: 91% No: 9%
If yes, how often?
Twice a year: 26%
once a year: 35%
Once in two years: 26%

35) Does your family/husband/son own a car/bike/scooter
Yes: 57% (scooter: 18%) No: 43%

36) Are you
Kadmi: — Fasli: 9% Shahenshahi: 91%

37) Do you recite the kusti prayers daily?
Yes: 100% No: —
If yes, how often?
Once a day: 30% Twice a day: 26%
Thrice a day: 17%
After every visit to the toilet: 26%

38) Which prayers do you recite daily?
Kusti: 91% Others (specify):
Farajyat: 30%

39) Do you regularly visit a fire-temple?
Daily: 35% Weekly: 22%
Fortnightly: 17% Monthly: 4%
Less than once a month: 17%

40) Do you visit the Iranshah atash behram in Udvada?
Yes: 96% No: —
How often?
More than once a year: 57%
Less than once a year: 30%

41) Do you light a divo?
Daily: 87% On special occasions: 13% Never: —
If yes, is it oil based: 87%
electric: 8%

42) Is there daily loban in the house?
Yes: 43% No: 43%

43) Do you light agarbattis instead of loban?
Yes: 74% No: 21%

44) Do you say the
Jamva ni baj: Yes: 9% No: 87%
Vasidi kusti: Yes: 26% No: 57%

45) Do you or did you observe the following:
Not cooking during menses
Yes: 57% No: 43%
Washing hair after menses ends
Yes: 96% No: —
40 days' seclusion after childbirth
Yes: 91% No: 4%
Nahn after childbirth
Yes: 96% No: —

46) Would you be able to explain the basic symbolism of the sudreh and kusti?
Yes: 70% No: 30%

47) Do you know any garbas/songs associated with navjote?
Yes: 17% No: 83%

48) Do you sing
monajats: Yes: 22% No: 74%
garbas: Yes: 13% No: 83%
khyal: Yes: 18% No: 78%

49) Do you recite/know any special yashts/nirangs for healing (physical and mental):
Yes: 57% No: 35%
warding off evil: Yes: 43% No: 43%
protection of family:
Yes: 43% No: 43%
protection during childbirth:
Yes: 43% No: 43%

50) Do you recite Gujarati stories at home?
Yes: 43% No: 57%

51) Do you know legends of Parsi history:
Yes: 52% No: 48%
stories from the *Shah Nameh*:
Yes: 52% No: 48%
family stories/legends:
Yes: 48% No: 48%
comic stories like Mamai-ni-musafri, etc:
Yes: 18% No: 78%

52) Does your family pray together
Yes: 61% No: 39%
At home: 22% At agiary: 43%

53) Do you attend samast bandagis at your local place of worship?
Yes: 31% No: 65%

54) Do you keep any pets
Yes: 32% No: 78%
If yes, indicate: Dog: 17% Parrot: 4%

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Cat: 4% Any other: rabbit, goat,
tortoise, fish

55) Should women be allowed to
become priests?

Yes: 9% No: 91%

56) Should the number of agiaries be
reduced by shifting the fires?

Yes: 43% No: 48%

57) Do you think the decline in the
number of priests can be solved?

Yes: 100% No: —

If yes, then by:

greater monetary returns: 100%

greater respect to priests: 65%

housing facilities: 91%

higher educational opportunities: 65%

others (specify): social security

benefits like provident fund, gratuity,

medical and travel assistance, by not

insisting on memorization of prayers.

58) Would you encourage your
husband to move out of Bombay to
serve agiaries in far-flung areas?

Yes: 35% No: 61%

59) Should navjotes be performed for

children of

Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers:

Yes: 35% No: 61%

Non-Parsi fathers and Parsi mothers:

Yes: 0% No: 91%

60) Should there be after-death
prayers for

men who have married out of the

community: Yes: 39% No: 52%

women who have married out of the

community: Yes: 17% No: 74%

61) Should there be ashirwad prayers
for

men who have married out of the

community: Yes: 12% No: 83%

women who have married out

of the community:

Yes: 4% No: 92%

62) In the light of the declining
vulture population how should the
dead be disposed?

Dokhmenashini: 74%

Burial: 9%

Cremation: 13%

63) Are you in favor of conversion?

Yes: 0% No: 96%

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HIGH NOON AT HOUSTON

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gress be enforced. "They proved we are moderate people, not extremist, not racist... The net result was not only to allow one person to speak but (to establish) that we can only proceed by respecting each other's diversity without bigotry, with respect for human dignity," noted Soroushian.

Valedictory

The closing ceremonies began with a mega jashan. Observed Shapur Pavri, Houston's longest enduring voluntary priest, ere he passed the burning flame into the small but sure hands of Bhadha: "I envy Mehernosh and his youth, envy the fact that all the girls adore him! He's the kind of kid I'd like for a grandson."

Switching tracks from the individual to the community, Pavri made an impassioned plea for greater respect for the priesthood: "I believe with every fiber of my being, as the priesthood goes, so goes the community. If you disrespect the priesthood our community will wither and die."

"For 1,300 years, with no king or country, the community held together. The priesthood is the glue that holds the

community together...

"When I look at Mehernosh, I'm confident that the religion and the community will endure for another 1,300 years."

The flame will glow at the North American Zoroastrian Congress at Chicago in 2002 and thereafter come to the next World Congress, informed EB member Jimmy Mistry.

Member of the Government of India's National Commission for Minorities, Lt Gen Adi Sethna complimented ZAH, the Congress organizers and FEZANA on behalf of all the delegates for creating a completely new version of the World Zoroastrian Congress. Referring to the "very moving, bonding jashan," he urged them to "make ceremonies like this visible, audible and understandable." Fascinated by the "many young people (who) had come to find out why some of us were still riding our hobbyhorses," Sethna welcomed the openness and informality while admitting that he found the extensive menu "hard on the guts, intellectually!" The sustained organization and the "opening up of minds" were the Congress' major achievements, said Sethna, as also the high attendance of professional people. Promising to put

across at the anjuman level what he'd seen and learnt at Houston, Sethna advised the Parsis in the gathering to be proud of the Parsi Zoroastrian culture but not remain stuck at singing *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarathushti*. Emphasizing the need to learn more about our origins, Sethna passed on two little appetizers: Some of the beautiful jewelry the Parsis own comes from Iran if it has a little leopard mark on it, he told the audience, and the ultimate Parsi symbol, the 'Surti biscot' is an import from Holland!

"We came to discover new things: learn from people who know more; teach those who know less," Davier reckoned the achievements of the five-day meet, adding, "The Congress went off reasonably well." "Very well!" corrected the audience with resounding applause which continued as Davier happily introduced Team Congress, the army of dedicated Zoroastrians who made it all possible.

"We learnt about the religion through the sessions and culture through the legacy projects. We celebrated all the events put together by diverse ideological groups... Let this be the first day of a new rejuvenated Zarathushti nation," concluded Dolly Dastoor.



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THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!
continued from page 86

ures, living up to his billing as a "human calculator." A short skit, *Tea with Shroff*, written by Karachi's Farishta Dinshaw lightheartedly examined controversial Zarathushti topics in the guise of a TV chat show.

The pièce de résistance however was the dramatized recitation of Mathew Arnold's poem *Sohrab and Rustam* by UK's Renu Setna. Holding the bare stage single-handed, Setna drew the skirmishing father and son to life, capturing in Arnold's heroic words the anger and anguish, suspicion and sorrow chasing each other in the minds of the protagonists as they faced one another in mortal combat, each ignorant of the other's true identity.

Another two-hour session of entertainment was scheduled in a smaller area the following day. Beginning with a song by Vancouver's Vista Pourbahrami and Meherhomji's piano recital, the program also included a magic show by Bombay's Pearl Bhungara and a session of fun with numbers with Jokhi. *Choli ke pichhey pichhey* by the ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) dancers, an Iranian dance by members of the California Zoroastrian Center, Rao's Kathak performance and Mexican and



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Yankee Doodle dances by the ZAH (Zoroastrian Association of Houston) kids were the other items on the menu.

The long winter nights at the Congress featured different types of entertainment. The first night (December 28) with its emphasis on Zarathushti heritage began with a performance by the World Zoroastrian Orchestra. Amid the internationally famous melodies of Johann Strauss (*The Blue Danube*), Otto Nicolai (*Overture to the Merry Wives of Windsor*), Sergei Rachmaninoff (*Piano Concerto No 2 in C minor*) and Georges Bizet (highlights from *Carmen*), soprano Dilshad Khambatta and flautist Ayesha Dastur rendered *Jashme*, an aria comprising the fourth movement from Meher Madon-Jansen's oratorio *Ahura*. The orchestra was conducted in turn by Farobag Cooper and Adil Mehta.

After the appreciative audience had had an hour to dine, the ZAH presented a colorful rendition of *In a Persian Market* where vendors, soothsayers, jugglers and dancers vied for audience attention with princes and beggars, aristocrats and slaves frequenting the bazaar. The 27 performers and three narrators were directed/choreographed by Vehishta Kaikobad and Anita Wolfe.

Other offerings by ZAH were a tableau, a modern dance choreographed by Lillian Bharucha, a jazz dance and the finale. Sonia Behrana rendered an aria accompanied by Sorab Wadia on the piano.

The California Zoroastrian Association staged two Iranian dances while 12 ZAGNY ladies pirouetted to the beat of the garba. An 11-member troupe from Karachi presented a Sindhi dance coordinated by Yazdi Haveliwala.

At the Texan night that followed (December 29), community members and dance professionals presented country-western, Mexican, Afro-Peruvian flamenco and swing dances. Country two-step, line dance, waltz and salsa were the other offerings as also a professional classical Spanish guitar rendition.

The sports awards were followed by a disco night on December 30 and the last night of the millennium featured a gala New Year's Eve ball where, apart from the door prizes that went to the lucky winners, there were donated items like a carpet, a painting and air tickets which were auctioned, netting the organizers much needed income to defray the costs of the Congress.



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JET SET DAVAR

continued from page 169

proach). If I had to do it again, I don't see why not," he continues.

Such investigative stories kept Davar absorbed for a while until he learnt that Sterling Newspapers, the publishers of *Gentleman*, was up for sale. For the subsequent four to five years Davar took over as the editor and publisher of the *Gentleman* group of magazines and opted out when a split in the Express group meant that Sterling Newspapers would have new owners. Even before Davar launched Spenta Multimedia, with his brother Minoo he had started Spenta Publishers Private Limited, accepting printing and publishing work. *Motoring*, the periodical of the Western India Automobile Association, was yet another magazine which they had published in the early 1990s.

Community publications do not interest Davar substantially although he admits that there was a time when he was considering taking over the management of *Jam-e-Jamshed* which was then a daily and clubbing it with *The Daily* if he could find a partner willing to invest the money. But keeping in mind the age range which community publications have to appeal to, their bilingual

nature and the limited talent available to run these periodicals, he appreciates that "it's a very challenging job requiring considerable commitment."

"Throughout my life I have never had any insecurities about money. Largely because I've been single with no pressures of family," states Davar. Is he contemplating marriage? "Of course, I have nothing against marriage," he asserts but does not give a time commitment. The reports on the community dwindling make him retort, "Who's bothered about numbers? The most important thing is the spirit. Why can't we live in the 21st century? If you have lived your life by the simple tenets of your faith, why do you need all this dogma, all this 'superiority' nonsense? If you allow me as a man to bring up my children as Zoroastrians why not let the same principles apply to women especially when you say Zarathushtra was one of the greatest emancipators?..."

"I have rarely met a finer human being than Roxan Shah. (Since she was married to a non-Parsi, following her death in a car accident she was refused funeral rites at Bombay's Doongerwadi.) The controversy following her death was so needless. If good people want to be a part of you, why should you turn

your backs on them? If in his lifetime a person has lived a life whereby the community is not ashamed of him, why should the community turn its back on him when he wishes his dead body be discarded in a particular way?" Impressed with the "dignity of the quiet funeral rites at Doongerwadi," Davar adds, "If it creates problems for people around us, we certainly have to re-look at (the system)..." Known to be very protective of his mother Rati and brother Minoo, (his father Eruch having died when he was only 11 years old), Davar respectfully adds, "After death, what is important is the sensibilities of people around you. I would go by their feelings...The community needs to face issues of far greater importance where the living are concerned rather than worry what happens after death..."

"*Majani bank ni nokri chhè* (the security of a bank job)' is, I think, the biggest problem the community faces. I see degeneration all around me; no goals in life, no drive, no ambition...I'd encourage every single Parsi to be an entrepreneur — not join Tatas, nor banks. No matter how small, be your own boss," he counsels, "I've always enjoyed what I'm doing because I have not really had to answer to anybody."



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READERS' FORUM
continued from page 8

profound reluctance I wish to present an alternative only for those who in their wisdom are condemning the time-honored practice of dokhmenashini — an alternative that I have observed during my travels to Sicily.

The island of Sicily (Italy) was occupied by the ancient Persians for its most strategic position in the Mediterranean, both for trade and for war. Darius I is greatly revered by the Sicilians as 'Dario' who made an unforgettable mark on the culture of Sicily. Although Sicilians belong to the Roman Catholic faith they do not use the system of burial or cremation for the disposal of their dead. They strongly believe in our ancient Persian fundamentals that no element of nature should be polluted. Hence, they use the ancient Persian system of 'astondant' where the Persians used to enclose the bone remains of a body into hard stone mountains, after dokhmenashini, as evident at Nukshe-Rustum.

The method adopted in Sicily is very simple, cost effective and practical. The body is enclosed in a 'zinc coffin' and sealed. After a proper Catholic death ceremony this sealed coffin is placed

inside the enclosure in a concrete wall — almost like our safe deposit vaults. The enclosure is then closed with concrete, a memorial marble slab placed with the details of the one consigned, usually with a photograph. A small shelf is provided to put candles and flowers in memory of the departed.

When all three of the alternatives which are currently under consideration by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet are at best at an experimental stage with clear indication of failure in its practical achievements, this system practiced for generations by the Sicilians is time proven, and meets all the environmental requirements of non pollution according to our doctrines, but fails when it comes to Khorshed Nagirashni — disintegration of the body through solar energy.

For those with no knowledge of dokhmenashini who are concerned about their "loved ones lying uneaten and decaying for months in a dokhma" and would prefer to see their loved ones neatly packed and disposed of without any gruesome sight or stench, perhaps this Sicilian method may prove more in compliance with the Zoroastrian doctrines than any other alternative so far

suggested.

Those seeking alternative methods must remember that they have no right to change or alter the existence of consecrated place of worship such as our dokhmas, which are earmarked according to the wishes of the original donors. They must find their own funds and procure land to suit their own needs. What has happened to the dokhma in Andheri should never be allowed to happen again. Ervad DARIUS N. SETHNA

The proposed aviary at the Towers of Silence is, apart from being a non-starter, an open scam, playing on the religious beliefs of a confused sect asking them to be philanthropic towards upholding the cause of an impractical, irretrievable dokhmenashini system. Rationale says that philanthropy should be for the living, not the deceased.

It needs to be queried why the priestly class should be forbidden to perform last rites for those who, under known conditions at the Doongerwadi, perform opt for cremation of their corpses. Before the accumulating bodies become a threatening health hazard and a serious bone of contention with non-Parsis in the vicinity, there is an urgent need for

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action on a war-footing. Much is at stake and much needs to be done.

Where is the cause for misplaced apprehension that the Maharashtra Government and the Municipal Corporation may not grant permission for the erection of a latest state of the art crematorium on Malabar Hill when others stand at lower levels in the city? The lease on Doongerwadi grounds mentions "...for last rites" as observed by a past Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman. Nowhere has the mode of disposal been said to be specified. The rigidly orthodox may have the choice of the prevalent system alongside. Further, the same esoteric/religious ceremonies used before constructing the centuries old dokhmas can be redone to consecrate the site earmarked for a scientifically constructed crematorium that draws out the physical remains in ash form in less than an hour and with minimal environmental pollution or sacrilege of accepted tenets of the 5,000-year-old Zoroastrian faith.

Instead of inviting Jemima Parry-Jones and seeking her advice on breeding perishing vultures in captivity, our so-called akabars in the BPP apex body should have had the farsighted wisdom

to approach Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for altruistic license under the prevailing circumstances.

Fortunately for the hopeful/pragmatic Parsis, there are two eminent brethren, attorney general Soli Sorabjee and Rajya Sabha MP Fali Nariman, who can represent the community's case for mandatory permission (in case of obstacles) to build an optional crematorium in keeping with our fundamental/religious rights.

For their immense and invaluable contribution in all fields of Indian life, any ruling government or head of state would think twice before refusing Parsis their legal rights to additionally construct a crematorium as an optional mode of disposal of their dead, within the parameters of the trust deed. All this rumor-mongering about losing our vast estates to the authorities, in the event of an alternative mode of disposal to dokhmenashini, is a convenient shield for protagonists of the aviary project at the expense of the religiously gullible among the progressively forward-thinking Parsi community.

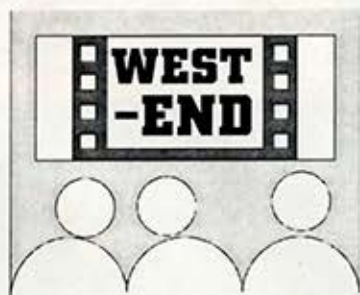
MICKIE N. SORABJEE

Bold stand on disposal

While commending the trustees of the

Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) for their bold stand, the members of the Disposal of the Dead with Dignity-Action Group (DDD-AG) emphatically state that they have emerged stronger in their convictions and would leave no stone unturned, in the true Zoroastrian spirit, to ensure their basic God-given ancestral right to all the prayers/ceremonies — irrespective of the choice exercised by them to dispose their dead bodies in a particular way. DDD-AG further note that the issue here is not of religion but simply a matter of respecting the wishes of each and every Zoroastrian. The vigilant members of the community having established factual data (legal and religious) swung into action to save the future deceased brethren and their families from further indignities while simultaneously strengthening the hands of the BPP trustees.

Life revolves around change. It permeates everything we are and do. The absence of change is worse than inaction — it is atrophy. Right from the beginning, DDD-AG have made it explicitly clear that they are in no way concerned about changing the present undisposible system of disposing the dead. Their specific concern is solely



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that they as Zoroastrians are as much a part of Zoroastrianism as some of their orthodox brethren. They wish to make it clear that they have absolutely no intention of adopting any anti-Zoroastrian stand but that in view of the appalling circumstances, they simply wish to adopt a quick, hygienic, alternate system of disposal as it should be and as so vehemently expressed to the trustees by our eminent Dr Farokh Udwardia who has spontaneously come forward to lend support to DDD-AG.

The members of the DDD-AG are strongly opposed to the tactics of those few Zoroastrians who are known to be playing to the galleries in their frantic bid to gain favor with our revered priests and the public. Their openly denouncing the six highly committed trustees/intellectuals speaks nothing short of stooping to unethical means in times of crisis and reeks of distastefulness. The BPP trustees are the custodians of the community and their bold, commendable stand to act honorably with foresight, vision and above all, with a sound basic sense of 'righteousness' to do what they had to do deserves the highest respect and admiration. Their welcome decision, taken after careful deliberations, will go down in the annals of the history of the Zoroastrian community as they have acted without any rancor or hyped-up fanaticism.

The trustees have the fullest support of the DDD-AG and of a large number of community members who refrain from making tall, fabricated claims and resorting to demeaning accusations. They have spontaneously come forward from all segments of the community and not just from the prominent/influential sector as was erroneously alleged by the orchestrated opposition group. The DDD-AG has been flooded not only with enquiries but strong requests to work with urgency in seeking an alternate solution. We have had persons even in their 60s, 70s and 80s from various baugs/colonies expressing their sense of relief at the passing of the two resolutions by the trustees and urging us to expedite the matter as they had long been alarmed/worried about the disturbing happenings at Doongerwadi.

The DDD-AG further reiterates that neither they nor the trustees would give in to the pressure tactics of any groups whatsoever and in so doing, those concerned would be exposed to legal prosecutions. As our Supreme Court Justice Sam Bharucha clearly stated, the time

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has indeed come for change, in the larger interest of the whole community. Let us band together with our illustrious trustees, who are the torchbearers of the community, to take the necessary giant leap forward in the right direction.

GOOL A. BUGWADIA

Jt Hon Secretary

Disposal of the Dead with Dignity-Action Group

"A doctrinal crossfire"

These are my impressions after attending the samast anjuman meeting convened by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet on the question of dokhmenashini.

What I saw and heard was most unfortunate. The issue has been politicized and there is a split in the community. A strong orthodox lobby has been created with the vested interest of building an aviary. It was shameful and disgusting to watch the American style, non-Gujarati speaking members of the brigade shouting in favor of an aviary.

The learned solicitor trustee of the Punchayet narrated in detail the events. He told us the truth, but only the half-truth, and concealed the other vital half-truth as to how the corpses are disposed of in the absence of vultures. In the absence of vultures, the Punchayet is in

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A black and white photograph showing Mahatma Gandhi and several other men walking away from the camera on a dirt path. Gandhi is in the center, wearing his characteristic white dhoti and shawl, and holding a walking stick. The men are dressed in traditional Indian attire. The background is dark and textured.

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no position to destroy the corpses. They are dehydrating the corpses and avoiding the stench. How dehydrated bodies are destroyed is not known.

The first mistake of the Panchayet was to invite Jemima Parry-Jones. However renowned she may be, it is to be remembered that she is a non-Zoroastrian and a non-Indian. Seeing the dokhmas and the method of disposal of the dead must have shocked her, but she knows there is money, she has a 'bakra' and a middleman to help her. Don't blame her, blame the Panchayet.

Priests and scholars could have been requested to give their opinions, but it was a mistake to involve them in decision making. For a solution, qualified and experienced technocrats should have been consulted. Priests/scholars are like the medical diagnostic clinic. We do not ask them to treat patients.

There are only two methods known to destroy corpses. One is burial and the other cremation. Only the Zoroastrians get their dead destroyed by vultures, where there are dokhmas, otherwise they also resort to burial or cremation. It is high time we realize that the course open to us for disposing the dead is cremation, either electric or solar. There is no

other go, unless a new acceptable method is discovered by a miracle. Are we waiting for a miracle to happen?

DALI J. GUNDEVIA

"Pint-sized Parsi icon"

A devout Zoroastrian, a true Zarathushti, a noble soul, a man with a mission and an indomitable spirit, Phiroze Framroze Gutta, former chairman and managing director of Central Bank of India and Union Bank of India, died peacefully on January 5, 2001 at the Hinduja Hospital. As per his wishes, his body was brought home to his residence at Dadar for the last funeral rites. However, the esteemed priests of our community deemed it wise to deny prayers to this illustrious man, a man who had led a pious life as per the basic tenets of the Zoroastrian religion. At this juncture, I wondered and reflected on what was aptly cited by Phiroze Amroliwala in an article "Educate the community" in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* of November 12, 2000: "Religious ceremonies are for the souls and not for the body of the departed." Then how can the individual's choice of disposal of one's mortal remains be the deciding factor in the recitation of prayers?

As I wished to pay my last respects to the deceased and offer condolences to the bereaved family specifically on behalf of my father, I attended the cremation ceremony held at the Worli crematorium on January 6, 2001. The essence of the entire proceedings revolved around simplicity and austerity. This visionary of 75 years was dressed simply in our traditional pure white garb. Some of the mourners had offered flowers while some others, sandalwood. The crowd of well over 100 Parsis (interspersed with a few non-Parsis), men and women traditionally dressed, sat reverently, while many of us standing filled the hallway. It appeared that their presence was not only to show respect, but more so to express acknowledgement for what this man stood for — a strong unflinching sense of duty, justice and fair play.

As described in *The Times of India* obituary section of January 6, this "pint-sized Parsi icon" was the harbinger of the bygone value system, a champion of the needy and a meticulous practitioner of the art of perfection."

What struck me most was that the entire congregation, at the request of one of the relatives (presumably an

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athornan) wholeheartedly and vehemently participated in the humbandagi prayers. The voices in unison magnified the power of our simple *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayers and resounded the depth of affection and sincerity of feelings of all those present. Indeed, it was evident that all had assembled together not only to honor this great man who had touched many lives, but more specifically to endorse and express solidarity for the one who had upheld the courage of his convictions even in death.

I was filled with a sense of awe and admiration and felt doubly proud of this departing fellow Zoroastrian, a man to whom we were bidding a stirring farewell prior to his last journey.

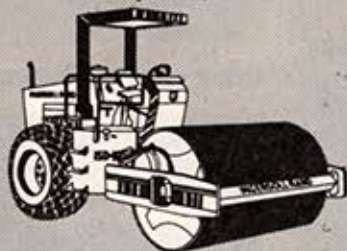
On my return home from this moving and thought-provoking experience, I was more than convinced that even a small group of people can turn the tide, forge ahead and perhaps change the course of history in the right direction. May the good lord Ahura Mazda in all his wisdom pave the right way for us Zoroastrian mortals to follow!

GOOL BUGWADIA

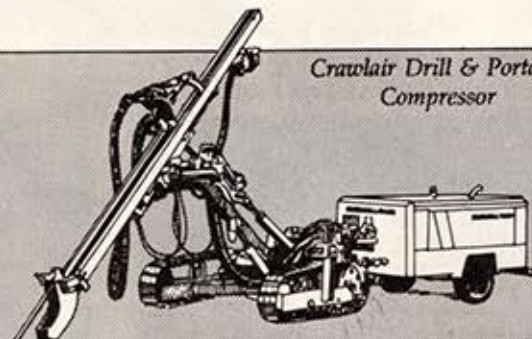
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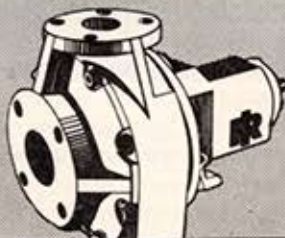
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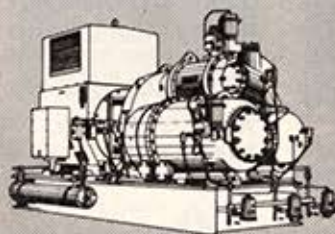
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Dr Jamshed Jiji Irani is the grandson of Bomas' fourth son Dhunjibhoy. Prof Kaikhosrov Dinsha Irani is the grandson of Bomas' second son Jeejeebhoy.

May I take this opportunity to request anyone having any relevant information about the descendants of Bomas to contact or write to the undersigned at 512, R. P. Masani Road, Matunga, Bombay 400019.

SOONU JAMSHED IRANI

Selective discussions

The Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress held at Houston, Texas from December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001, discussed everything under the sun, except the two most vital matters which are plaguing the community today, viz, the dokhma controversy and the depletion of our numbers. Some such extraneous matters discussed were Gathic period history and the Zarathushti story.

When I had queried this with the executive board of the Congress, I was told that such "mundane" matters like the dokhma and our declining numbers do not affect their part of the world, i.e. North America, and as such each individual anjuman and country should dwell on such issues. My response to this was, in that case they should have called it the North American Zoroastrian Congress and not the World Zoroastrian Congress if they were not going to discuss problems which affect more than 75 percent of the community staying outside North America.

I was finally told that the Houston Congress was essentially a vehicle for folks to get together and exchange ideas, enjoy seeing old friends and of course afford an opportunity for matrimonial alliances. As far as solving any of the burning problems of the community, the Congress achieved nothing, and we are back to square one.

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Poona

Ahmedabad raises funds

By the grace of Ahura Mazda, there is no structural damage to most of our religious, commercial or residential properties, but all these would certainly need immediate repairs. This would mean an additional financial load on the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat, running into a few lakh rupees. The rehabilitation of one "displaced" family has been well taken care of.

To our relief, no casualty has been reported among Parsis in Anjar, Bhachau or any other part of Saurashtra. The news has been gathered through their relatives in Surat and elsewhere.

Under the circumstances, the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat has resolved to seek and collect donations and disburse the same not only to our humdins, but also to the other affected human beings who have suffered the wrath of this natural catastrophe.

We would therefore appreciate any financial help, big or small, from all well-meaning persons, with the assurance that each donation will be acknowledged with a pucca receipt, which would also entitle the donor to claim exemption under section 80G of the Income Tax Act. Donations may be sent to the undersigned at Parsi Agiary, Bukhara Mohalla, Khamasa

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Ervad NAVROZE B. KANGA

Jt Hon Secretary, Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat

Relocation relief

The Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman, Mhow notes with regret the devastation that has taken place in Bhuj, Ahmedabad and other places in Gujarat in the aftermath of the recent earthquake.

We would like our Zoroastrian brethren to know that we have some accommodation available in Mhow for those who have been affected, and who may want to relocate, either temporarily or permanently. For those who wish to come on a short-term basis, we can offer housing free of cost for a limited period, and for those who wish to move permanently, the rent charged will be in keeping with our current rates, which are very reasonable.

ZAL COWASJI

Hon Secretary, Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman

Mhow

Celebrations clouded

The platinum jubilee (1926-2001) of Bangalore's Bai Dhunmai and Cawasji Dadabhai Dar-e-Meher was celebrated on January 20, 2001 with due pomp, dignity and religious fervor. The agiary was completely renovated and the holy

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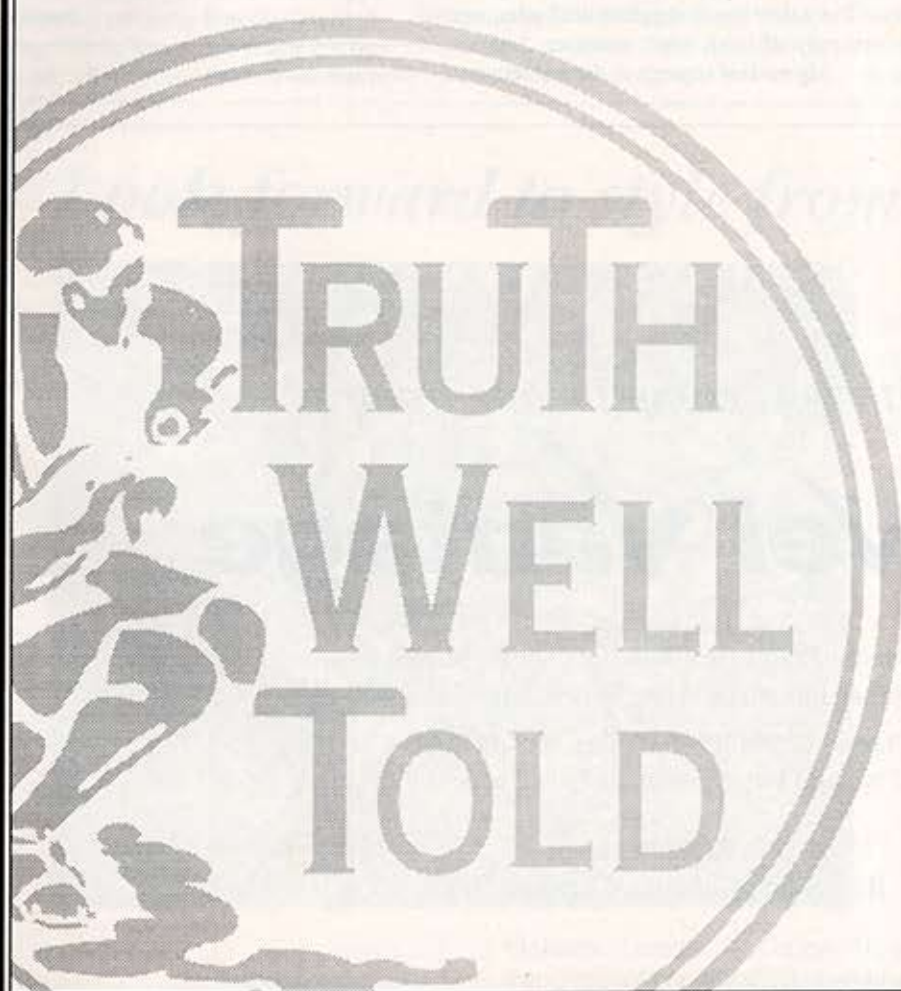
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fire was reinstalled on January 18, 2001 at 10.00 p.m. from its temporary abode within the compound, after due rituals essential for the relocation.

The main religious function was on January 20, when a jashan was performed by three dasturs and 15 other mobeds in the newly renovated main hall of the agiary which was packed to capacity by Bangalore Zoroastrians and other invited guests who graced this occasion in their traditional Parsi attire. Thus, the Bangalore agiary kept its reputation as one of the best managed and maintained agiaries in India. The credit for this honor undoubtedly goes to the Unwalla family members who have served as panthakies since the inception of the agiary in 1926 and to other expanthakies, Ervads Jamshed Chinoy and Homiar Nasirabadwala.

The justifiable pride I felt in being a Bangalore Zoroastrian attending the jashan ceremony for such an auspicious occasion was short-lived and turned to anguish and dismay, if not utter disgust, when a few days later I came across an article "A Summary of Events" on the website www.bpza.org of the Bangalore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (BPZA) which will be read by Zoroastrians and others

throughout the world. Amongst the several dignitaries and scholars invited by the BPZA to address the congregation was the well-known legal luminary Rusi Gae—a retired law secretary, Government of India and an accepted authority on legal matters—who spoke on issues like adoption, interfaith marriages, children of mixed marriage, etc. His discourse was rudely interrupted by some self-styled "youth leaders" who objected to the learned views of Gae, causing commotion in the gathering and forcing Gae to cut short his speech. The youth leaders seemed to have forgotten that Gae was an honorable invitee of the BPZA and had every right to express his views. Bangalore Zoroastrians are known for their intellect, tolerance, courtesy and hospitality and I hang my head in shame for the reprehensible behavior shown to Gae who is way above us all in his knowledge and acumen concerning legal matters.

True to the Parsi tradition and propensity for rich food, emphasis during the celebrations was laid on providing rich food, two free lunches and dinners. A well-known caterer from Bombay was flown down to Bangalore with adequate supply of fresh white pomfret.

My earlier appeals to the trustees not

to fritter away donations received on the platinum jubilee ostensibly for the repair and renovation of the agiary and the priest's quarters, and to convert as much as possible of the amount saved to create a corpus exclusively for future maintenance of our agiary and also to create funds to assist less fortunate Bangalore Zoroastrians with medical treatment and education were kept on the back burner.

The two days of celebrations demonstrated the successful efforts by a young Zoroastrian architect Darius Billimoria who completed a complex project in record time. It also brought out the religious fervor of the local Zoroastrians, our weakness for rich and excessive food and full exhibition of mutual back thumping.

We will now have to wait, Ahura Mazda willing, for another 25 years to again celebrate in grand style the centenary of our agiary during which time I fervently hope that this humble letter of mine will guide our younger generation to understand the essential priorities befitting that occasion and not convert it into a profligacy.

Dr M. D. DISAWALLA

Bangalore

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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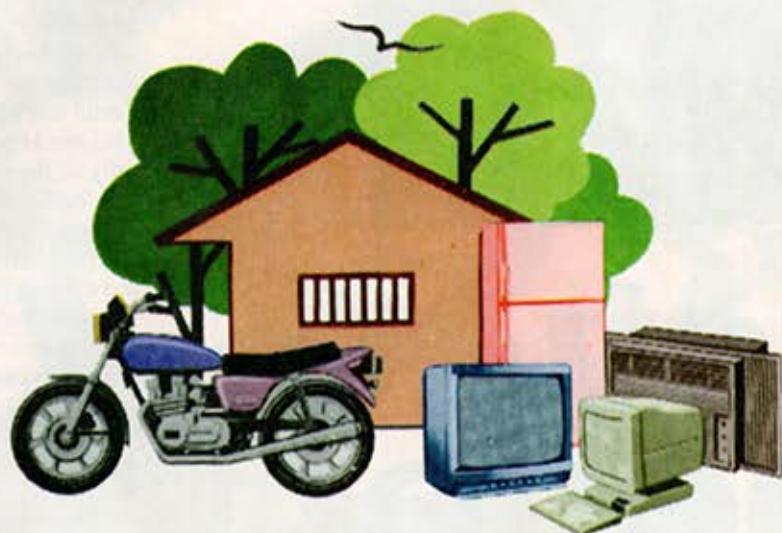
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Picture perfect

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Said to be the father of Indian photography Jehangir Unwalla believed every picture must convey the inner feelings of the photo-artist

As a young collegian he had always dreamt of owning his studio. But he was almost 60 years old before Jehangir Nowroji Unwalla (JNU) could realize his cherished ambition. Much before that he had established himself as the "father of Indian photography," having taken the initiative to form the Camera Pictorialists of Bombay and been recognized as the founder of the Indian Academy of Photography and the founder-president of the Photographic Society of India.

"While computers and digital cameras are threatening to bring about revolutionary changes in the very concept of photographic imaging, what will be the

future of pictorial photography only time can tell. However it may be stated that if there was one individual who was the very embodiment of goodness and grace, who at the same time was the undisputed master of both the art and the technique of photography it was JNU," acknowledged T. Kasi Nath, president of the India International Photographic Council (IIPC) which celebrated the birth centenary of the late Unwalla in 1996. To mark the occasion an exhibition of his creative photographs was organized in New Delhi under the joint auspices of the IIPC and the Lalit Kala Akademi to give "the contemporary photographers some idea of the pictorial excellence

attained by Unwalla."

Among the classics on display at the exhibition was *Malevolent Eye* which O. P. Sharma, honorary general secretary of the IIPC, described as "a perfect, high-key, still life picture of extreme beauty, charm and quality par excellence." There is a story behind this table-top picture of two showpieces — an eagle perched on a rock gazing at a fish below — which Sharma relates in the souvenir brought out on the occasion: At an all-India exhibition organized by the Punjab Photographic Society in 1962, Sharma and a co-judge T. F. Geti had mutually agreed beforehand that they would not give any award to Unwalla who was known to participate in practically all the exhibitions. Their rationale was: he has won so many awards, he is beyond these now. The judging as usual was by silent voting system and continued through the day. The award winners were selected by unanimous vote of the three judges and to their utter disbelief Unwalla's entry had made it to the top of the list once again. "None of us knew that this picture was made by Unwalla, as it was not seen earlier..." wrote Sharma.

"Now what material difference is there between an exhibition picture and any other photograph that you happen to take?" Unwalla had written in his article "How I make my exhibition pictures." Responding to his own query he added, "The only suggestive difference to me is the selection of the subject matter of the picture, and this is a matter of personal likes and dislikes. In every print, technique must be as near as possible perfect. All my work is done in a room 15x10 feet, luckily with three windows on one side of it, and I use daylight in combination with electric 'flood' and 'spot' to modify the shadows and cut down the exposure as much as possible. The screens on the windows are adjusted to admit as much light as will not ruin the effects of the 'spot.' I like to inspect and study pictures of all types but the urge for photography in me is mainly that of portraits and figure studies...As a change from portraiture I do still life work, particularly table-top, which gives me endless enjoyment..."

Known to have done exhibition work

Above: self portrait of Unwalla

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Above: Eldest sister Jerbanoo Unwalla (left), niece Shireen and nephew Pashang Ghasvala served as Jehangir Unwalla's subjects. Alongside: His prize winning entry, *A Matter of Time*



since the age of 23, in 1935 *The American Annual of Photography* had listed him fourth amongst the most prolific photographers of the world, noted R. J. Chinwalla in his article, "The art of J. N. Unwalla," in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1960 which was reproduced in the souvenir. "His record of acceptances spread out over the last 40 years, through 800 international photographic exhibitions is fantastic: 2,750 prints, 133 color transparencies, with the singular credit of having won over 700 premier international awards," continued Chinwalla. "He is as adept in handling 16 mm amateur movies as a still camera; seven of his efforts in this field have won for him 14 awards in USA, France, England and India." One of his first 8 mm color films entitled *One Dinar More* had won the President of India's gold medal for

the best all-round amateur color film, reveals Unwalla's nephew Pashang Ghasvala.

Chinwalla then referred to one challenging assignment given to Unwalla when he was asked to produce a great picture without moving out of a stipulated 6x3-foot area, with an additional teaser that the camera could only be pointed towards the ground. Setting his creativity to work, Unwalla pulled a branch of a tree to cast a correct shadow, positioned two withered leaves strategically, and titled the poetic picture *A Matter of Time*, reflecting "a masterly

study of light and shade and texture" which went on to win several awards, stated Chinwalla.

Unwalla also enjoyed the distinction of being the only Indian who was an exclusive member of the prestigious London Salon and also honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) of Great Britain, the Institute of Cinematography, London, the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and the Royal Society of Arts. He was also

elected honorary overseas representative of the RPS and the PSA in India. On the occasion of Unwalla's centenary, "every possible effort was made at getting hold of the original photographs for putting up an exhibition, but most of them appear to have vanished," regretted Kasi Nath who lauded Sharma's vision "to prepare copy negatives of many of JNU's photographs from various sources" to make possible the exhibition. Unwalla's granddaughter Anahita Desai, who financed the exhibition and entrusted the photographs remaining with her to the IIPC, willingly liaised for

the prints when *Parsiana* needed them. The Indian Post and Telegraph Department paid their tribute by bringing out a special first-day-cover in Unwalla's memory on October 24, 1996.

"As a youth cutting out the center art pages of *The Amateur Photographer* and collecting them was my hobby. This practice was given up in favor of preserving the complete copy since 1919 when I started photography," wrote Unwalla in *The Amateur Photographer*, London, of 1934. Starting out on a friend's hand camera, the encouraging feedback he received spurred him to buy a tropical Sanderson field model, whole-plate size, with a Dallmeyer Stigmatic f/6.

His father Nowroji had a business in precious stones which was ruined overnight when a fire broke out in his office. The shock of this devastation caused his sudden demise in 1918, leaving young Jehangir who had studied at the Bharda New High School with no other option but to support his widowed mother, brother and sister. For the next 35 years he worked as a sub-broker with stock brokers, R. P. Shroff and Sons. His wife Mani Adarji Choksi was a talented painter and their union bore one son, Jal, the family background is related in the brochure. His elder sister Jerbanoo was also an accomplished artist.

The magnanimity of Jehangoo K. Seervai, a generous patron of arts who donated a small but well equipped studio to Unwalla in 1955, helped to keep the doyen focused on the advancement of photography and the upliftment of its standard in India for the next eight years until his demise in 1963. "His studio soon became a center of pilgrimage for one and all, to derive inspiration and imbibe knowledge in the art of photography," mentions the souvenir. He was one of the most sought after lecturers and writers on photography subjects, a respected judge on technical matters as well as on aesthetics. "He lectured and gave demonstrations unfailingly on each Friday's crowded evenings. In the afternoon one could find him at the Continental Photo Stores on Bombay's Dadabhai Naoroji Road which remained a beehive of all camerists for a long time," recalled his juniors, K. G. Maheshwari and Dilhar Bhachech. It



was at Continental, owned by his closest friend Nagindas Nallawalla, that Unwalla stored many of his prize winning photos and awards which were all destroyed in a fire, mentions Ghasvala.

Whilst photography was his greatest love, he

was an equally talented artist, an accomplished actor and an able violinist who remained a simple, unassuming individual. His large collection of 78 rpm records used to draw other western music aficionados like Mehli and Dr Fredy Mehta, Rustom and Behram Marzban to his residence, reminisces Ghasvala.

Declared K. L. Chaudhuri of the Photographic Association of Bengal, "He had the greatest regard for human feelings and the varying moods of nature in all its splendor. Also he had the rare acumen to introduce in his 'pictures' an element of undefinable mystery."

"The aim of the photo-artist is to transmit his own emotions and ideas about his subject to those that view it. Be it a portrait, a figure study, a landscape or even a still life picture, it must have the stamp of that artist's feelings," Unwalla was convinced. "If you have had no opportunity to see the original

bound was *Bess at Bay*, a picture of a black cat with snarl, all in low-key. This was followed by *Jumma Khan*, *Type of North*, *Bombay Fireman*, *Rev Genesis* and above all *Shiva and Parvati*. All were pictures of impeccable quality and all those who saw them were highly inspired," reminisced P. N. Mehra who served on the advisory board of the IIPC. Their first meeting in 1947 was firmly imprinted on Mehra's memory. Dressed in spotless white with a black cap, he was the prototype of "a typical Parsi. He looked so fresh and was extremely soft-spoken," noted Mehra who learnt from his senior that he always made three 12x15-inch prints because on the first print the various controls of dodging were not perfect.

As Unwalla had once revealed, "Practically every print needs manipulation, and I shade the parts I wish to hold back or expose others which require mass toning down. The selection of the make and variety of printing paper depends on the subject to be printed. Although I am keen on preserving true photographic quality till the very last, a certain amount of retouching is necessary on the negatives in particular types of portraiture...I start by rubbing the print softly with pumice powder as it takes the water color finishing very well without showing the finished parts much; a final gentle

powdering again, and a rubbing off with soft cloth prevents the handwork being noticeable on the finished print...

"Occasional humor and fun derived from photography — even a bit nonsensical at times — will help to cheer you up and forget the burdens of life to some extent," believed Unwalla who was substantially preoccupied with

commercial and advertising photography, at a time when photography was not a particularly lucrative profession. However, he would not miss out on any opportunity to take pictures of prominent personalities. In the centenary souvenir Homi Kharas revealed how when Sam Tata of Shanghai (whose mastery of portraiture was respected all over Britain and America) wanted a portrait of himself, "he could think of no one but the guru of international fame, Unwalla... Always ready to share his skill with

continued on page 248



Unwalla's niece Shireen Jijina (center) at the inauguration of the centenary exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi

works of the great artists, at least study their reproductions and digest them," he persisted. "Man is an imitative creature. It is by imitation far more than by precept that we learn everything; and what we learn thus we acquire not only more effectually but more pleasantly."

"The first photograph of Unwalla which I saw and which left me spell-

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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 45 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 24 and 69 years, averaging at 31 years.

The first month of the new millennium witnessed a surfeit of births, 27, as versus in December 2000 where there were only 13 (five carried in the February 2001 issue and eight names published herewith) as per the data *Parsiana* receives from two hospitals in south Bombay. January 2001 saw 87 Zoroastrians consigned to the Towers of Silence. Thirty-one patients (17 in the 80+ age group) succumbed to heart disease whereas 16 died due to pneumonia and lung related diseases. Cancer took a toll of eight lives, septicemia, seven and kidney failure and old age/

general debility, four each. Three victims each fell prey to diabetes and diseases of the liver and intestines. Hypertension and respiratory disease felled two Zoroastrians each. The isolated cases listed for the month of January were: Parkinson's disease, AIDS, pancreatitis, cerebral malaria, osteoarthritis and Sturge-Weber syndrome (a genetically determined congenital disease of any organ or tissue derived from the external germ layer of the embryo). The oldest and youngest to breathe their last were both males: a 101-year-old and a 24-day-old. A 30-year-old was also lost to the community. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for January, in Bombay, was 75 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 particulars; 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.

Parviz Noshir Patel and Godrej Rustom Dastoor Meherjirana; January 6
Khushnaz Sarosh Wadia and Ashdin Porus Turner; January 6
Ferzin Porus Turner and Danesh Rustom Vazifdar; January 6
Shernaz Keki Asavaid and Rayomand Viraf Bagwalla; January 7
Renata Rusi Pavri and Darius Sammy Desai; January 7
Jennifer Rohinton Bhatena and Viraf Dali Mohta of USA; January 7
Pervin Dinshaw Mowdawalla and Cyrus Aspi Patel; January 7
Michelle Phiroze Vazifdar and Yohan Zavaray Poonawalla of Poona; January 7
Kamal Kersi Anklesaria and Zubin Dara Dumasia; January 8
Kayan Shiamak Marshall and Jamshed Naval Pandole; January 8
Frian Percy Wadia and Burzin Rumi Mehta of New Zealand; January 11
Diana Minoo Anklesaria and Homyar Minoo Sanjana; January 11
Farzana Rustom Chothia and Vistasp Minoo Balliwala; January 12
Dilshad Rustom Patel and Viraf Farrokh Chichgar; January 12
Dilshaad Sarosh Buhariwala and Burgess Heroize Choksey; January 12
Freny Cowasjee Dinshaw and Adi Hirji Jehangir; January 12
Shireen Jimmy Khan and Zubin Rustom Davar; January 14
Jennifer Keki Karanjia and Ruzbeh Bomi Davar; January 15
Niloofer Dossu Khambatta and Behram Jehangir Marzbani; January 15
Vahbeez Parvez Bachana and Erach Sarosh Songadwala; January 15
Behnaz Rohinton Vevaina and Jimmy Sorab Suratia; January 15
Rashna Pesi Elavia and Fahrad Noshir Mistry; January 16
Monaz Dadu Patel of Navsari and Percy Jamshed Tangri;

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MARRIED

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BORN

A girl to Kerafrid and Adil Damania; December 3
A girl, Zara, to Kerban and Mahernosh Humranwala, sister to Aliza; December 6
A girl to Shiraz and Vispi Daruwala; December 8
A girl, Kayan, to Katayun and Mahiyar Dastoor, sister to Vahishta; December 12
A boy, Kayan, to Shernaz and Zubin Patel; December 12
A girl to Navaz and Rohinton Paghdwala; December 13
A boy to Ferzana and Sarosh Daruwala; December 27
A boy, Jerom, to Rukhsana and Hoshi Edulji; December 27
A boy, Darius, to Shiraz and Tehmaas Gorimaar; January 1, 2001
A boy to Percis and Vispi Driver; January 2
A girl to Faryal and Homi Katgara; January 3
A girl, Zarah, to Natasha and Honoze Nekoo; January 3
A girl, Aariana, to Gulmohur and Farrokh Tarapore;

January 3

A girl to Farida and Noshir Dalal; January 4
A boy, Behzad, to Monaz and Porus Soonawalla, brother to Benafsha; January 6
A girl to Monaz and Farzad Antia; January 7
A girl to Rukhsana and Kerman Mehta; January 7
A boy, Karl, to Benaifer and Feroze Mehta; January 8
A girl to Anahita and Darayus Colabewala; January 9
A boy to Ferzana and Khushru Kumana; January 9
A girl to Arzan and Rustom Dhanbhoora; January 12
A boy to Navaz and Neville Bharucha; January 15
A boy to Vahbiz and Harihara Iyer; January 17
A boy to Sanam and Kaizad Wadia; January 17
A girl to Jamine and Cusrow Damania; January 18
A girl to Daisy and Burzeen Driver; January 18
A girl to Minal and Khushrau Jilla; January 18
A girl, Avan, to Binaifer and Yezdi Diventri; January 21
A boy to Khushnaz and Hormuz Gotla; January 22
A girl to Dilara and Sorab Canteenwalla; January 24
A boy to Zinobia and Maneck Mody; January 24

A boy to Tehnaz and

Mehernosh Patel; January 24
A girl, Jenevive, to Pervin and Sharukh Irani, sister to Kyra; January 25
A girl to Shehnaz and Daraius Sanjana; January 27
A girl to Rashna and Jamshed Paymaster; January 28

MARRIED

Zerophie Ronnie Mistry and Hoshang Firoze Deboo; January 1
Anita Burjor Doodhmal and Cyrus Firoz Irani; January 1
Thrity Kekobad Doctor of Navsari and Rooyintan Peshotan Peer; January 1
Thrity Fali Desai and Eric Firoze Mistry; January 2
Pearl Freddy Engineer and Ardaviraf Pirojshaw Motiwala; January 3
Farzin Homi Kasad and Ardeshtir Minoucher Adel; January 4
Benaz Rumi Palsetia and Kersi Rusi Mistry; January 4
Tanaz Dinshaw Patel and Delzad Faredoon Vapiwalla; January 5
Urviz Pervaz Hodiwalla and Hoshedar Dara Balaporia; January 6
Bakhtavar Ardeshtir Mistry and Burzin Naval Engineer; January 6

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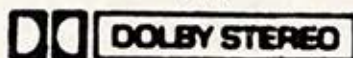
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January 16
Khushamin Rohinton Meherjee
 and *Hormuzd Rustom Chothia*;
 January 18
Ruby Sam Mehta and *Percy*
Viraf Dalal; January 18
Anahita Adi Minbattiwalla and
Toranj Jal Daver; January 20
Farzana Aspi Chinigar and
Porus Phiroze Jussawalla;
 January 21
Faranak Noshir Elavia and
Viraf Keki Gandhi; January 22
Tanaz Sam Kotwal and *Viraf*
Noshir Wadia; January 22
Persis Zubin Batliwala and
Zubin Nozer Limbuvalla;
 January 23
Diana Zarir Patel of Baroda
 and *Delzan Neville Wadia* of
 Baroda; January 23
Kashmira Sam Kalwachwalla
 and *Ruzbeh Kersas Jaore-*
walla; January 25
Shiraz Dady Rana and *Danesh*
Rohinton Taraporewalla of
 Tarapore; January 25
Pervin Nariman Kadwa and
Homyar Cavas Mogul;
 January 26
Navaz Parvez Bajan and
Hormuz Asphandiar
Dadachanji; January 27
Keshmira Jimmy Bharucha

and *Cyrus Adi Patel*;
 January 27
Benaz Khushroo Keravala
 and *Vispi Pervez Bulsara*;
 January 28
Sharmin Rusi Bilimoria and
Hoshedar Phiroze
Poonawalla; January 28
Mehercheher Shiavax Chaina
 and *Vicaji Phirojeshaw Popat*;
 January 28
Rukshana Jal Batliwala and
Fredy Firoz Daruwalla;
 January 29
Shiraz Kawas Patel and *Percy*
Rusi Fitter; January 29
Havovi Kershi Dadinatha and
Neville Faramroze Velati;
 January 29
Shirin Hormusji Wadia
 and *Navroze Adi Lalkaka*;
 January 30

DIED

Phiroze Maneckshaw
Batliwala (81), residing at
 A/18, Rustom Baug, Victoria
 Rd, Byculla, 400027;
 December 31, 2000
Minoo Kaikhashru Dubash
 (78), V, Dalal Est, Lamington
 Rd, 400008; December 31
Manchershah Shavakshah
Baxter (95), 604/D, Khurshed

Hse, Lady Jehangir Rd,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 January 1, 2001
Daulat Behramji Bhesania
 (87), 679, Kudiane Bldg,
 Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031;
 January 1
Nergish Eruchshaw Billimoria
 (73), E/15, Nowroz Baug,
 Lalbaug, 400012; January 1
Mani Shapoorji Tata (79),
 B/104, Vaspan Ahura Co-op
 Hsg Soc, Dr S. S. Rao Rd,
 400012; January 1
Nergish Behram Mehta (86),
 4/7, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel
 Tank Rd, 400033; January 2
Gaimai Cooverji Kavarana
 (76), R/15, Nowroz Baug,
 Lalbaug, 400012; January 3
Mota Dinshaw Udwadia (98),
 67/H, Mirador, B. Desai Rd,
 400026; January 3
Jehangir Dinshaw Balsara
 (49), 9, New Khoja Chawl,
 Opp Dalal Est, Bombay
 Central, 400008; January 4
Homi Jehangirjee Jehangir
 (70), 12, Jeevan Vihar Soc,
 Opp Navyug College, Rander
 Rd, Surat, 395009; January 4
Adi Maneckji Kerawalla (80),
 204, Dadabhoy Jijibhoy Bldg,
 Nr St Peter's School, Vasai

(W), 401201; January 4
Mani Sorabji Bagli (80),
 Soona Bldg, Zoroastrian
 Blocks, Chikalwadi, Tardeo,
 400007; January 5
Nariman Ardeshir Katpitia
 (101), 1-A/32, Tata Mills
 Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone
 Rd, Parel, 400012; January 5
Lily Ratan Amra (64), 6-A,
 Kaka Bldg, Gilder Lane,
 400008; January 6
Alloo Phiroze Balsara (82),
 12/3, Rustom Baug, Victoria
 Rd, Byculla, 400027;
 January 6
Mani Cawasji Bamji (85),
 Avasia Hse, 8 Darabsha Lane,
 Napean Sea Rd, 400026;
 January 6
Mehroo Minocher Kavarana
 (88), Southlands, 177, Upper
 Colaba, 400005; January 6
Gool Keki Watcha (88), 15,
 Tata Bldg, Dhunbaiwadi,
 Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W),
 400056; January 6
Hoshang Hormuz Bulsara (24
 days), 4A/10, New Dubash
 Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo,
 400007; January 7
Rutton Dhunjisa Daruwalla
 (87), 12, School Bldg, Cusrow
 Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039;

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Nariman Faramroz Wankadia (70), 41, Piroja Mans, Opp Grant Rd Stn, Grant Rd, 400007; January 7
Gaiv Nariman Karbhari (56), A, Godrej Baug, Off Napean Sea Rd, 400006; January 8
Jaloo Dhunjishaw Patel (68), D-22/2, Malegamwala Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; January 8
Khorshed Ratansha Palkhiwala (86), Sanjana Bldg, Forjett Hill Rd, 400036; January 9
Siloo Neville Palsetia (43), D1-23, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; January 9
Rustom Jehangir Ranikhetvala (87), 14, P. B. Mody Bldg, Parel Village, G. B. Ambedkar Rd, 400012; January 9
Kaikhushroo Pestonji Sethna (78), Engineer Hse, 85, Tardeo Rd, 400034; January 9
Farokh Faramroze Karai (55), 1/A-3, Blue Arch Co-op Hsg Soc, Four Bglws, Andheri (W), 400053; January 10
Homi Nusserwanji Mistry (87), D-9, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;

January 10
Dossan Savak Screwvalla (84), Manek Mans, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; January 10
Homi Dhunjisha Bharucha (52), B/12-A Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; January 11
Piroja Bomanshaw Billimoria (83), F-11, Mistry Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; January 11
Tehmurasp Bamanshaw Fulwadiwala (74), 1/26, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; January 12
Jehangirshaw Meherjibhai Palshetia (99), 4, Caesar Villa, Veera Desai Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; January 12
Dhunjishaw Framroze Mistry (69), J-54, Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; January 13
Aloo Nariman Mody (76), 10-A/24, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; January 13
Jasi Jehangirji Shroff (77), Sunshine, 156, M. Karve Rd, 400020; January 13
Behram Jamshedji Petigara (68), N-38, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; January 14
Rustomji Sorabji Chivalwala (78), 1B/3, Tata Mills Co-op

Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; January 15
Freny Eddi Darukhanawalla (71), C/618, Bhivandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; January 15
Farhad Rustom Irani (Bahmani) (75), C-2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; January 15
Sheroo Kaikhushru Nallaseth (80), 42, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; January 16
Perin Kaikhushroo (Keki) Shroff (69), C/o Roshan Hemnani, 106/4, Off Main Rd, Whitefield, Bangalore, 560002; January 16
Phiroze Rustomji Vesawalla (90), 479, Jehangir Mans, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 16
Maneckshaw Nusserwanji Antia (83), 3/16, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; January 17
Bapsi Darabsha Mistry (75), 2, C. M. Banaji Bldg, Forjett St, 400036; January 17
Nusli Sorabji Patel (92), Perviz Mans, Cumballa Hill Rd, 400036; January 17
Coomi Tehmtan Bharucha

(71), 33, Laxmi Ratan Bldg, K. H. Kataria Marg, Mahim, 400016; January 18
Homai Behram Dandiwalla (83), E/103, Sai Roshan, Kasturba Rd No 4, Borivli (E), 400066; January 18
Framroze Phirozesha Daroowala (91), 12, Kalpataru, S. V. P. Rd, Borivli (W), 400103; January 18
Dolly Maneck Dastoor (70), 501, Bhagwati, 68, Yari Rd, Versova, 400061; January 18
Dinshaw Temulji Elavia (78), 32-C/14, Mulla Manzil, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; January 18
Khorshed Minoo Mistry (86), Hendre Mans, 8, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 18
Khurshed Nariman Patel (55), D-2/12, Balsara Bldg, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; January 18
Phiroze Rustomji Ichhaporia (85), Sleater Hse no 1, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 19
Gustad Behramji Irani (60), Lotus, 303, Ambadi Rd, E B(2), Vasai (W), 401201; January 19
Tehmi Dady Patel (78),

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Stanburj, Azad Rd, Juhu,
400049; January 19
Amy Erach Nadirshah (99),
Modi Mans, Mereweather Rd,
Colaba, 400039; January 20
Aspi Sorab Saklat (65), 4,
Poonam Ngr, Andheri (E),
400093; January 20
Khorshed Boman Mistry (43),
Petit Block no 1, Jamshedji
Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007;
January 21
Minoo Dosabhai Sutaria (55),
4/9, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
400034; January 21
Godrej Dorabji Tavaria (80),
1-A/10, New Khareghat
Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007;
January 21
Siloo Burjor Gandhi (80), K,
Dalal Est, Lamington Rd,
400008; January 22
Mehroo Yazdi Kotwal (72),
Panday Sanatorium, Wode-
house Rd, 400005; January 22
Freny Dadiba Mistry (70), 4/2,
Panthaky Baug, Andheri Kurla
Rd, Andheri (E), 400069;
January 23
Freny Jal Shavaksha (92), 127,
Kemps Corner, 400026;
January 23
Hilla Minocher Engineer (75),
A-4, Keval Mhl, Marine Drive,

400020; January 24
Keki Rustomji Batliwala (80),
A/5, Ketan Apts, Katrak Rd,

Wadala, 400031; January 25
Adi Maneckshaw Bhola (68),
401, Seth Minocher Shroff

Bldg, Raghunath Ngr,
Wagle Est, Thana, 400601;
January

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	2000*	2001 ^o	This issue	2000*	2001 ^o	This issue	2000*	2001 ^o
BIRTHS									
Boys	14	87	11	1	15	—	—	15	—
Girls	21	84	16	1	11	—	—	14	—
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	53	127	53	2	11	1	—	19	—
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	—	20	—	—	2	—	—	2	—
Females married out	—	19	—	1	2	—	—	1	—
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	45	463	43	5	78	4	—	48	—
Females	44	461	44	3	57	3	—	36	—
CREMATED									
Males	—	5	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Females	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 2000 (January 2000-March 2001 issues)

^oRunning totals for 2001 (January 2001-March 2001 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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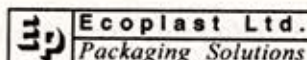
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Dinshaw Merwanji Subedar (84), B/37, Glamour, 21, Arthur Bunder Rd, 400005; January 25
Aloo Cyrus Jamshedji (82), 804-C, Rati Lodge, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 26
Banoo Burjorji Captain (96), D-4, Palm Spring, 157, Cuffe Parade, 400005; January 27
Khorshed Jehangirji Madon (84), 3/39, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; January 27
Bomi Gustad Turel (30), R-13, Godrej Baug, Napean Sea Rd, 400026; January 27
Noshir Bhikaji Andhyarujina (60), D-2, Sunita, Peddar Rd, 400026; January 28
Jal Maneckshaw Godrej (76), C, Harganga Mhl, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, 400014; January 28
Goola Nusserwanji Irani (84), C/10, 280, Princess St, 400002; January 28
Minoo Savaksha Bandorawalla (74), D-7, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; January 29
Eruch Jehangirji Engineer (85), 11, Gohil Hse, Khetwadi

9th Lane, 400004; January 29
Dinbai Jehanbux Chanduwadia (73), 152, Aderbad, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 30
Jamshed Pestonji Damaniya (50), 108, New Sukshanti Apts, Tisgaon Naka, Kalyan (E), 421301; January 30
Alamai Ardeshir Ichhaporia (85), 384, Kapadia Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; January 30
Keki Rustomji Mulla (95), 10, Gulab, Carter Rd, Bandra, 400050; January 30
Freny Burjorji Pagdiwalla (74), 275/M, Damania Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; January 30
Khorshed Cawasji Dolly (83), 12, Sakerbai Petit Bldg, Murzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; January 31
Katy Tehmuras Ganjia (68), Dubash Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; January 31
Keki Jehangirji Malaowala (93), L/9, S. B. Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; January 31
Bachmai Pallonji Sadri (78), 12/3, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; January 31

CALCUTTA
 BORN
 A girl to *Gulshan and Behram Bulsara*; December 28, 2000
 MARRIED
Meher Battiwalla and Debashish Das Gupta; December 25
Khushmand Daruwala of Bombay and *Nari Buchia*; January 5, 2001
 DIED
Feroze Dinshaw Bilimoria, husband of Shelly and father of Ratan, Meher F. Khambatta and Pesi; December 11, 2000
Rati Shawak Kotwal, sister of Dina, late Dossabhai and Minoo Jila; January 8, 2001
POONA
 BORN
 A boy, *Varzaan*, to *Dilshad and Bomi Rana*; August 22, 2000
SECUNDERABAD
 DIED
Cyrus Shyavux Patel (47), brother of Meher Behram Mody, Aspi and Behram; January 24, 2001

SURAT
 DIED
Rohinton (Fakir) Framji Ambapardiwalla (47), Village Ambapardi, Tal Mandvi, Dist Surat; January 3
Hormushaw Maneckshaw Italia (85), Mota Mohallo, Rustompura, 395002; January 10
Kolamai Rustomji Variava (90), Parsiwad, Village Olpad, Dist Surat, 394540; January 11
Shirinbai Nusserwanji Dastoor (94), 9, Sanaskruti Co-op Soc, Anand Mhl Rd, Adajan Rd; January 22
Jal Fredoon Lafa (89), Ardeshir Kotwal Rd, Nanpura, 395001; January 24

CORRECTION

A boy, *Rustom*, was born to *Siminda and Firdosh Bhesania* on November 21, 2000. The date of birth was mistakenly printed as August 7 in *Parsiana*, February 2001. The error is regretted.

Compiled by Bakhtavar R. Battiwalla

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Pardivala's athletic arena

Hilla P. Guzder

As physical education instructor, athletics coach, chronicler, sports administrator and official, Jal Dinshaji Pardivala stayed the course for over 50 long years. The "grand old man of Indian athletics" as he was known died on December 17, 2000 in Bombay at the age of 89 following pneumonia during the course of the 107th inter-school athletic championship being held at the University Stadium, Marine Lines. As the curtain came down on the championship, hundreds of athletes, teachers, officials and spectators observed two minutes' silence in memory of the mentor of aspiring athletes who was president for a number of years of the Mumbai School Sports Association (MSSA) which organizes this annual event. Fittingly enough, noted Pradeep Vijayakar in *The Times of India* of December 19, Viraf Doomasia whom Pardivala had trained in the decathlon 40 years ago was the coach of the winning girls' team, St Agnes' High School of Byculla which included Karishma Birdy, adjudged the best, and fastest, girl athlete of the meet.

"It was during Pardivala's presidency of the MSSA (earlier called the Bombay School Sports Association) that he along with M. Y. Siddiqui obtained from the Government of Maharashtra a 14,000 square meter (m) plot of land at Azad Maidan in 1968 on a 30-year lease," narrates Alex Vaz, MSSA president since 1993 who has worked with Pardivala for several years. Now known as the Castrol School Sports Centre, it is used by a lakh of students every year for 20 different sports and encompasses a large football field, basketball, volleyball and throwball courts, tennis courts and academy and a 200 m athletics track, states Vaz. Several Parsi-established schools hold their annual athletic meets here as hiring the University Stadium is much more expensive, he says, mentioning also that it was Sir Dorabji Tata's foresight and initiative that brought into being the MSSA in the late 1890s, making it at age 108 the oldest school sports association in the world!

"Pardivala was a member of the

S.N.D.T. Women's University Board of Sports and a sports advisor for over a decade. His services in the field of sports at S.N.D.T. whether it was the setting up of a sports ground or the planning of a sports program were indeed a success,"



Pardivala with great grandchildren Zian (left) and Nushad

wrote Linda Dennis, assistant director, S.N.D.T. Women's University department of physical education in a condolence letter to Pardivala's daughter Mithoo Jesia, well-known social worker. "My father lived, breathed, ate, drank athletics. It was his life," states Jesia.

Pardivala's "yeoman services rendered in establishing and keeping going the All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet will ever be remembered," noted Nariman Mehta, president of The Nowroze Baug Play Centre. "Pardivala, Jalbhai or Jalpapa as he was affectionately known... was a friend, philosopher and guide to the (Dadar Parsee Colony) Gymkhana over the last five decades and more, especially during the formative years," recalled A. R. Kavarana, president of the Gymkhana.

Known to be an authority on the finer nuances of athletics, Pardivala's first book, *Athletics*, was published way back

in 1947 and cost all of five rupees, four annas! It was aimed at three types of readers — the active athletes, sports organizers and the general public. *Manual of Athletic Competitions* (Track and field) followed in 1955. Pardivala was by that time a member of the Rules and Records Committee, Scoring Table Commission, International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) and the Association of Track and Field Statisticians. The book provided a mine of information — all the rules for men and women's international track and field competitions, the general rules for the Olympic Games, comparative charts, graphs and sketches plus answers to the various knotty problems and delicate situations time-keepers, judges and other officials face on the field during the conduct of competitions — all this for the princely price of two rupees!

Four years later, *Indian Athletics* (1920-1959) flowed from Pardivala's pen, chock-a-block with facts and figures carefully compiled — from detailed results of individual athletes' achievements with timings in the national and Asian games, to the performances of Indian athletes in the Olympics, starting from 1920! "The official results of the Games of the Second Olympiad — Paris, 1900 — show that one G. N. Pritchard represented India in these Games and secured a second place in 200 m. How he represented India is not known," wrote Pardivala. His comprehensive record book covered a gamut of events and was illustrated with pictures of Indian champions in action, including legendary runner Milkha Singh. Price of this wealth of data — three rupees, or six shillings six pence or one dollar, post free!

"Ours is a tragicomic country... we will move heaven and hell to depute some strutting official with shady antecedents as the treasurer on a foreign tour, but will not budge a bit when a man of Jal Pardivala's dedication and knowledge is kept away from the Olympics at Mexico," wrote Arvind Lavakare in a two-page profile of Pardivala in

The Illustrated Weekly of India, March 2, 1969. In 1952, Pardivala became the first Asian to serve on the Rules and Records Committee of the IAAF and remained for 16 years thereafter an elected member of that committee — the only Indian on it.

Bringing out updated editions of his books from time to time, Pardivala's path breaking efforts included his *Statistics and Synopsis of the Best Indian Track and Field Performances* — an annual compilation which he published for 10 years between 1957-1967 till he realized that "his single-handed endeavor was too severe a drain on his personal resources," added Lavakare.

Beginning his academic life at the J. N. Petit Orphanage at Lalbaug, Pardivala's love for athletics led him to once run the 200 m in 23 seconds, besides winning medals for the 100 yd sprint and 440 yd hurdles at the All India Athletics tournament in 1930 and 1931. A stint at Springfield College in Massachusetts, USA earned him a certificate in physical education. Further qualifications from the Amateur Athletic Union of America, the Loughborough Training College in Leicestershire, England and the German Sports University, Cologne enhanced his specialized education, stated the *Illustrated Weekly* article. Marriage to Khorshed Billimoria was solemnized in 1938 and daughter Mithoo arrived three years later.

In 1958, Otto Mayer, the chancellor of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) presented the Chancellor's Gold Pin to Pardivala in recognition of his promotion of the Olympic movement, stated *Sportsweek* in a write-up on March 23, 1969. Two years later, the government of Finland chose him as the only Indian ever to be decorated with the Sports Cross for the part he played during the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki; in 1962 the IAAF awarded him the Veteran Pin for great service to sport. In 1969, Arnold Hanson, director of the United States Information Service in Bombay presented Pardivala the Helms Trophy from the Helms Athletic Foun-

dation which recognizes internationally achievements in "wholesome sports," noted *Sportsweek*.

At Sarajevo, Yugoslavia while the 1984 winter Olympics were being held, IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch sent Pardivala a cable of congratulations for the conferment of the Olympic Order, a bronze medal, by the IOC in recognition of his contribution to the cause of the Olympics, noted a write-up in *Parsiana*, March 1984.

The following year Pardivala was honored by the Maharashtra government with the Chhatrapati Award and in early 2000 Vilasrao Deshmukh, Maharashtra chief minister, gave him the Official of the Millennium Award at the start of the Poona international marathon, conveys a tribute to Pardivala from Capt Hormazdiar Desai who was his classmate in school. Pardivala had served as honorary secretary of the Maharashtra State Amateur Athletic Association and the Maharashtra State Olympic Association, and as joint honorary secretary of the Amateur Athletic Federation of India for a number of years.

Desai relates that Pardivala assisted greatly in setting up the first ever NAB (National Association for the Blind) — All India Sports Council for the Blind. He was its founder vice president and remained so till the end. Pardivala evolved simple norms to enable the blind, deaf and dumb, orthopaedically handicapped, and mentally challenged to en-

joy healthy rivalry in competition. He was always present at all meets of the disabled and guided both officials and participants, avers Desai. For over 40 years, Pardivala was physical training instructor to a number of schools and institutions including the Zoroastrian Physical Culture League, the training ship *Dufferin* and the David Sassoon Industrial School where he served as a boxing instructor for some 39 years, drawing a salary

at the time of his retirement, discloses Desai, of Rs 65 per month!

"He was an outstanding personality and was honest, humane and a true gentleman," summed up well-known

consulting physician Dr Kekobad Mody, writing about the man who had spent a lifetime conditioning the minds and limbs of many a lass and lad.

Pardivala is survived by his daughter Mithoo Jimi Jesia.

Alpaiwalla's Accountancy

Died: Kaikhushroo (Kaiki) Rustom Alpaiwalla, 73, chartered accountant, retired senior partner of A. F. Ferguson and Company, trustee of several charitable organizations and director of companies on November 6, 2000 in Indianapolis, USA following arteriosclerosis.



"Totally professional in his approach, Kaiki Alpaiwalla had a special ability to tackle difficult problems taking into account others' sensitivity, without losing the opposite party's goodwill," states Ashok Mahindra, partner in A. F. Ferguson and Company, reputed chartered accountants of Bombay.

"Kaiki was the easiest person to work with. If you entrusted him with a task you could depend on him to carry it through willingly," opines Ramesh Khanna, retired partner of A. F. Ferguson whose working association with Alpaiwalla spanned a period of 40 years. "He was soft-spoken with the staff, very loyal to his colleagues and to the firm, and honest to the core." Alpaiwalla passed away suddenly while on a visit to the US to meet his son Feroz and daughter Hira and their families.

Relates friend and fellow chartered accountant Noshir M. Lam: "We used to live in nearby buildings at Grant Road. We both went to Sydenham College and often used to travel together, sitting side by side in College as well. Even after he became a senior partner in Ferguson, he was very modest and simple and went out of his way to give a helping hand. When my 800-page book *Comprehensive Handbook for NRIs* was being written, Kaiki proffered his comments and suggestions and even took me to leading advocate Dinesh Vyas' office and requested him to write the foreword. Vyas quipped, 'If it's an order from Alpaiwalla how can I refuse!'"

"There was no flashiness about Kaiki, no showing off, expensive suits or ex-



Testing time for the tug-of-war
Photo: Rustom A. Havewalla



The Alpaiwalla family (from left): Feroz, Hira, Kaiki and Zarin

pensive cars did not interest him," says Zarin, his wife of 46 years. "He was a workaholic, taxation was his specialization. Very patient and cool, he would not lose his temper easily. He became a vegetarian very early in life, did not smoke or drink."

Alpaiwalla served as a trustee of the Masina Hospital for over three decades "with enthusiasm and expertise," noted a condolence letter from the chairman of the Hospital, Dr R. B. M. Colah. Wrote Prof R. K. Mody, trustee-director of the Patuck Polytechnic Trust: "As trustee and active member of the organizing board... (Alpaiwalla) had been a tower of strength to... the Patuck Technical High School and Junior College (during) a crucial phase of its... development... A devout and caring family man, a good samaritan, gentlest of gentle souls... would be difficult to come across."

Chairman of the Muncherjee Nowrojee Banajee and Cursetjee Muncherjee Banajee Charity Trusts from 1978 till the time of his death, Alpaiwalla's "deep study, learning and experience sat lightly upon him and in spite of being under pressure of work whilst performing his arduous duties as the chairman, he was ever cheerful and ready to help," noted the condolence resolution.

"Kaiki's sudden death was for me a shocking blow," declares Vispi Dastur, chartered accountant and president of the Bombay Parsee Association and the Empire of India Philatelic Society. "Though he was my senior in age, I worked closely with him as the auditor of the Banajee Trusts. He also had a love for stamps and had a good collection of the East India Company and

Queen Victoria era stamps," observes philatelist Dastur. He was a coin collector, chess and crossword enthusiast as well, conveys Zarin.

Born on November 5, 1927 to Tehmina and Rustom Alpaiwalla in Surat, Kaiki came from a line of lawyers. His father was a bar-at-law, his grandfather

Merwanji a leading solicitor of Bombay, while his great-grandfather Kaikhusroo Davar was a district sub judge of Thana, says Zarin. After his matriculation from Bombay's New Era School, Kaiki completed his BCom from Sydenham College and proceeded to England. He obtained a BCom degree of the London University in 1949 from the City of London College, she relates. He passed the final examination of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales in 1950, was enrolled into the profession and became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India the following year. Joining A. F. Ferguson and Company as an assistant in 1951, he became a partner five years later and a partner in A. F. Ferguson Associates in 1976, being elevated to senior partnership in 1989 and retiring in 1991.

A member of the Company Law Panel and Taxation Advisory Committee of the Delhi Chamber of Commerce from 1967-72 Alpaiwalla's corporate contribution was as director/alternate director in companies like Tata Unisys Limited, National Peroxide Limited, Ion Exchange (India) Limited, etc. He was also on the local advisory board of the Barclays Bank, plc.

Never one to turn away the needy, Parsi or otherwise, says Zarin, Alpaiwalla was active with NAB (National Association for the Blind) work and was also a trustee of the Cheshire Homes, Innominate Parsi Charities, Ardameher Charity Trust and the Bai Soonabai Hirji Agiari Trust. The Framji Dadabhoy Alpaiwalla Museum collection, originally a family entity, was handed over to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet some years ago.

Alpaiwalla is survived by his wife Zarin, son Feroz and daughter Hira Toos Daruvala.

H. P. G.

PICTURE PERFECT

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budding amateurs, Unwalla showed me how to build up lighting...A week later Unwalla showed me the portrait he had made of Sam and what a beauty it was. Unwalla's greatness lay in teaching others the art of photography."

"It is by comparison and competition that we progress," Unwalla had counselled, "You will attain success, if only you will persist and work for beauty rather than praise."

THE MESSAGE WAS UNIVERSAL

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nies out of respect and reverence and wish to be associated with the Zoroastrian community. This single step will go a long way to restore harmony within the community, whether it be in UK or elsewhere.

In conclusion, who can deny that in prayers and rituals what matters most is heart and devotion and not just outward forms of worship. It is no fault of non-Zoroastrians who were not born of Zoroastrian parents.

All human beings are created by one God and we all worship the same God. The aim of all prophets has been to establish a kind of Brotherhood of Mankind under the 'Fatherhood of God.' Zarathushtra wanted to establish a 'Brotherhood of Magavans' and extend it to all who accepted his faith. ('Maga' means message and 'Magavan' is one who has taken to heart Zarathushtra's message.)

Edited from an article first published in Informal Religious Meetings, Bulletin, (No 6, 18-8-1996/16-9-1996), Karachi, Pakistan.

DOONGERWADI DECISION ON...

continued from page 156

Those outraged by the decision taken may kindly realize that by acceding to a legitimate request, the trustees have in actual fact acted decisively to preserve our traditional system of dokhmenashini. The system can and will come under threat, should any aggrieved Zoroastrian, deprived of his rights as enshrined in the constitution of our nation, decide to pursue the matter legally.

We urge all individuals who hold divergent views on this issue to think and ponder with rationality and a cool mind. In other words, our fervent plea to all sections of our community is — let sense prevail.



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thicker, tastier.
But my kids

like to call it,
mmmore!”



One sip and - mmm - the new Rasna is a
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flavours to choose from. As many as 32 mouth-
watering glasses with each pack...and an exciting
gift inside for your kids! Make sure you bring home
this extraordinary refreshment.

Richer
Thicker
Tastier



SMART
NEW
PACK