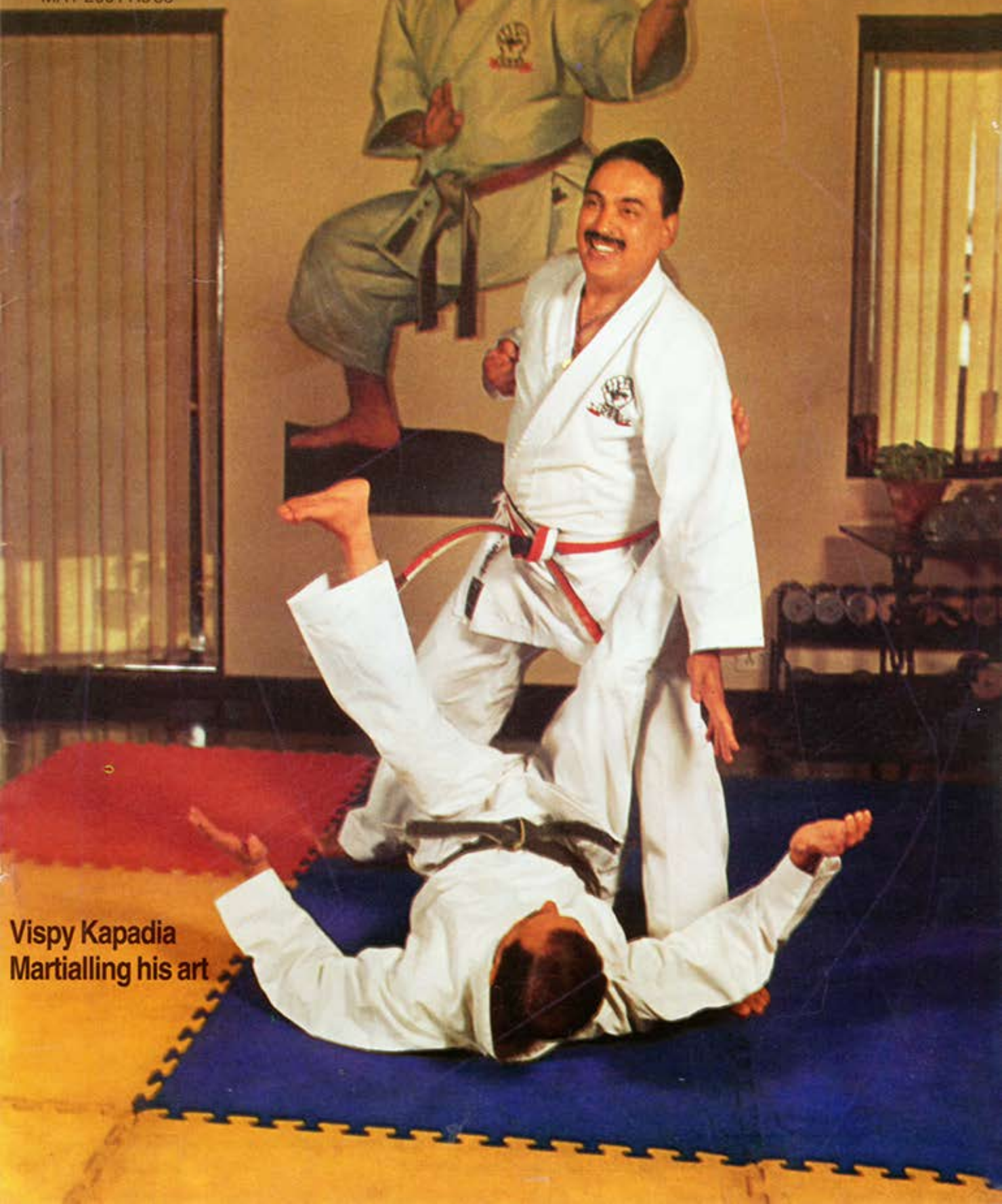


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Photography by Chetan Mistry

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Women of independence"

In the article "Women of independence" (*Parsiana*, February 2001) it is stated that "...in 1906 at a party given by Jamsetji Tata..." Please note that Jamsetji Tata died in 1904.

H. S. VAZIFDAR

Jamshedpur

Dr Nawaz Mody replies

The mistake is not in the date (1906) but in the name of the person. It was Dorabji Tata, not Jamsetji, who gave the party in London in that year. The error is regretted.

"Options at Doongerwadi"

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new/And God fulfils Himself in many ways/Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

What the great poet sang applies to the present situation. As per Prof A. R. Wadia and other scholars, it is doubted if dakhmas existed in Prophet Zoroaster's

time. History reveals that during ancient times "the original practice, so easy in a mountainous country like Iran was to expose the dead body on the top of some hill or mountain to be devoured by vultures or wild animals." While Wadia writes, "In the days of the Achemenians, the bodies of the dead, at least of the royal and noble classes, were put into the caves on the sides of mountains," we know that even today the grave of Cyrus the Great exists. Herodotus, the great historian, "refers to the custom of burial among Persians." "From all this it may be concluded that the Towers of Silence came into existence some time after the Achemenians, specially under the influence of the Magi or the priests of the Medes."

We are aware that this custom still continues in India where there are large numbers of Parsis but where there are a few Parsis and no dakhmas, burying is resorted to. Wadia reports, "Only recently in two important centers in Iran, Tehran and Kerman, the age old custom has been voluntarily given up in favor of burial!"

While admiring the patience of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to try and solve the situation of the realistic shortage of vultures and propose expensive experiments, one feels the fundamental factor is not honestly nor courageously faced by us all! The basic facts are that dakhmas are to be erected far from habitation, on top of hills and where birds and beasts of prey are available.

If we are prepared to spend crores on experimenting, to raise vultures, why not build a zoo with carnivorous beasts like wolves, dogs, foxes and even lions and leopards who would consume in seconds a human corpse? With the help of architects we could modify the inside of the dakhmas, and even connect up the dakhmas, whereby safety methods could be provided and the basic principle of the dakhma would be attained. But would any of us wish our dear departed to be devoured thus? No one! But then why not face the finest, cleanest, quickest, purest, noblest method? Most of us pray daily in our *Atash Nyaish* "Tava Atarsh puthra Ahurahe Mazda" a number of times, which means "O fire, the purifier of all things pertaining to Ahura Mazda."

Today we see scientists proclaiming from housetops how fire is the most

purifying of elements, how it is the one and only thing which cannot be defiled, how from its heat is radiated the love of hearth and how it kindles the fire of faith, its eternal flames pointing heavenward guiding us all towards that best light. Obviously there could not have been a more appropriate symbol of purity and progress.

Today let us forget and scrap the dakhmenashini system and have the courage, strength and wisdom to introduce the cleanest, quickest, purest, electric or nuclear crematoria.

We are consciously committing the greatest sin by defiling one of the ideal sites in Bombay where once, less than two-and-a-half centuries ago, there was no habitation around Malabar Hill, when there were plenty of birds of prey. Today the situation has completely changed. We are followers of Zarathushtra, the Prophet of purity, who emphasized more than anything the virtue of Ashoi, and who had the boldness and courage to face and defy kavis and karpans (princes and priests).

Let us end this with a quotation from Dastur Dhall's *Aek Atmakatha* (An Autobiography): "Dakhmenashini is not a system created by the Almighty — it is a manmade system. This system of disposing of the corpse has been rendered a sacred custom because of its 3,000 years. Yet, even the 3,000-year-old tradition of sanctity has not endowed it with immortality. With the change of times and circumstances its sway has come to an end. Dakhmenashini is merely a tradition! The demolition of a tradition is not the destruction of religion! Tradition is not religion. In understanding, digesting and acknowledging this fact lies the wisdom of all concerned."

BEHRAM S. H. J. RUSTOMJI

In the past few issues of *Parsiana*, particularly in the Readers' Forum column, it seems that there is nothing else to read but the 'options' we have at the Doongerwadi ("Options at Doongerwadi," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February 2001). To top it all, the controversy has now found its way on to pages 1 and 3 of *The Sunday Times*, Bombay edition of March 11, 2001. On page 1, 'an expert on religious matters' is believed to have said, "There is an entire philosophy of death... To remove one



In Memoriam
Mr Fali Meherji Variava
(Late) Director

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part and retain the rest is to make a mockery of ritual." Another learned personality has this to say: "More than just disposing of the dead, the dakhma helps the soul in its onward journey."

The conclusion I have come to is two-fold:

- The Parsis of Lucknow (and several other cities where the community resides) have made a "mockery of ritual."
- The souls of Parsis who lie resting in the Lucknow aramgah have not been "helped in their onward journey." These include our most revered Ervad Rustomji Sidhwa (who performed navjotes, weddings and paidasts for half a century) and my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and a large number of wonderful, honest and ever-helpful persons whom we knew, admired and respected over the last 60 years.

This washing of "dirty linen" through reputed newspapers has resulted in "liberal" statements being made by reporters to the effect that dakhmenashini is based on the belief that a dead body is a pollutant and consequently cremation and burial would defile the fire and earth! I am sure that members of our illustrious and enlightened community are aware of the likely repercussions

such statements may give rise to.

I have no opinion to express on the disposal of the dead as I am woefully unqualified to do so. My only plea is: let the noble souls of hundreds of Parsis who lie buried rest in peace.

Maj SOLI E. CANTEENWALA

"The venerable verdict"

As an old subscriber of your refreshing monthly, I am grateful, in particular, for your January 2001 issue of *Parsiana* for every page of enlightening matters. I am particularly indebted to Ervad (Dr) Jehan Bagli for his bold, clear and balanced expression on the burning issue of dakhmenashini ("The venerable verdict") and the alternative safest, cheapest, quickest and cleanest mode of disposal of 'decaying waste matter' by electric (not wood) cremation. I have attended funerals at two (out of five) crematoria in Bombay and am fully satisfied with the hassle-free procedures. I have been told by the keepers that there is no flame or "fire" involved in the cremation chamber since the energy of radiant heat (produced by red-hot electrical grids surrounding the dead body) is an effective means to produce high temperature within the chamber. Radi-

ant heat and convection currents of air reduce the body to ashes in one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours depending on the size of the body. I have seen that the chamber is kept ready and hot at the time of insertion of the sathri (on which the body is laid) so that the body at once bursts into flames, but no flame is employed upon the body to incinerate the whole thing into ashes promptly and with dignity. The ashes of those that are not individually collected are gathered and immersed into the sea once a week, hence symbolic of natural intermingling into their original elements (earth, water, air) and "in the dust he equal made," as the poet says in *Death The Leveller*.

Here are the contacts for the electric crematoria in Bombay: Chandan Wadi (Marine Lines) Tel: 2015977, Sion: 4071656, Worli: 4932517, Shivaji Park: 4464789, Kandivli: 8051382.

Dr M. N. SAHUKAR

Test your knowledge

I have belatedly taken a look at your quiz "Test your community knowledge," in the December 2000 calendar issue and believe that your reply to question 17 — first Parsi ambassador to the USA — is incorrect.



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As far as I know, the first Parsi ambassador to the USA was Jamshed Vesugar, formerly head of the India Supply Mission in USA (or was it UK?). All this goes back to the late '40s, so I do not now remember all the details.

My source: From 1942 to 1948 my father was the Government of India Trade Commissioner in South America, with his office in Buenos Aires. In August 1947 Vesugar came to Buenos Aires. I think as the head of a trade mission. Vesugar kept in touch with us over the years, and we were pleased to learn that he had been appointed ambassador to USA.

PHIROZE MODI

"Taaraa moné saakar"

I have read with interest and amusement the 45 Gujarati idioms, with their English translations, in "Taaraa moné saakar" (*Parsiana*, December 2000). These sayings are being used by us in our day-to-day lives.

I give below further 14 Gujarati idioms:

Soti vaghé chumchum, vidhya avé dhundhum.

When children are hit, they start learning faster.

Khali chano vaghé ghano.

Empty vessels make the most noise.

Aaav balaa, pakad galaa.

Passing on the blame to an innocent person.

Saathi buddhi naathi.

When one turns 60, one turns senile.

Vinash kale viparit buddhi.

When there is destruction nothing good comes to mind.

Moova nahiné bhootna bhoot.

Though one is not dead he is still a ghost.

Ulto chor kotwal né dandé.

Instead of the policeman nabbing the thief, there is a reversal of roles.

Gayaa Tavri, aaya ravri.

Went to Tavri and got left high and dry.

Sooli vaché sopari.

Caught in the crossfire.

Haathina daat bataawaanaa joodaa, ané chaavaana joodaa.

An elephant's teeth which are visible are not the same ones used for chewing.

Vavo tévoo lano, karo tévoo bharo.

As you sow, so shall you reap.

Pènaamaathi choolaamaa.

Jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Saai gayaa né saaini sharam lèta gayaa.

When a person is dead things are not as good as it used to be.

Miya maadaa né tangli uchhi.

Though he is sick he still has the energy to fight.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

Happily a navar

Our son Cyrus did his navar at the Jeejeebhoy Dadaboy Agiary at Colaba, Bombay. At the age of nine, he appears to be the youngest to have become a navar from Canada. My wife Katy and our children Zenobia and Farah are delighted to have a navar at home.

My son comes from a family of mobeds. His grandfather Noshir D. Panthakee (previously of Tata Steel) in Dhanbad, Bihar and his great-grandfather Darahshaw Panthakee of Jalna Agiary were navar martabs as were generations before them. I am pleased that we have maintained this tradition and my son is taking this newly bestowed responsibility of navarship very seriously. I am certain his services in this field will be invaluable to the community at large in North America for years to come. His navar was dedicated to the memory of his maternal grandmother Roshan Noshir Panthakee (née Babaycon) of Ahmedabad.

More and more of our young osta Zarathushtis should take on the responsibility of becoming and practicing as

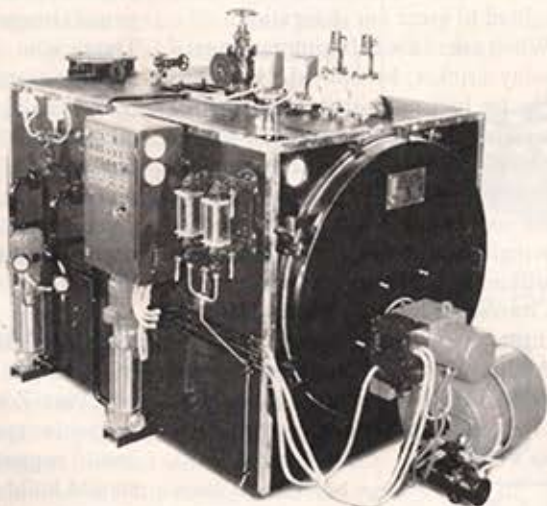
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navars. If we can do it from Canada, those in India should certainly have no problem.

DARA N. PANTHAKKEE
Toronto, Canada

Tryst with Don

During the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988, I fulfilled my life-long ambition to meet the greatest cricketer of all times Sir Donald George Bradman, when in the dual capacity as president of the Indo-Australian Society and Rotaract District chairman of Rotary International District 3140, I had the proud privilege to lead the 34-member goodwill delegation to Australia.

As is well-known, Bradman in later life shunned publicity and was virtually inapproachable. It was my good friend Gavan Bromilow, the then Australian consul general in Bombay who came to my rescue by providing me with Bradman's address and unlisted telephone number in Adelaide well in advance of our tour. I right away shot off a communication to him but as was to be expected there was no response.

However, I was quite persistent and the moment we landed in Adelaide, I rang up the great man's office. His secretary informed me that her boss was not there but he would contact me at the Ambassador Hotel, where we were staying, after an hour. And true to her word, exactly on the hour I got a ring. This was the most thrilling experience of my life and I immediately requested him for a suitable appointment either at his office or at his residence. His reply was in consonance with the humility and humanity of this noble gentleman: "Mr Dotivala, you and the members of your delegation are our honored guests and it will be my pleasure to meet you all at your hotel."

He came, he saw and he conquered our hearts! Swapped notes on cricket,



Cyrus Panthakee: new responsibility

gave autographs and posed for photographs. I had taken with me Bradman's last book, *Farewell to cricket*, and he gladly signed on his photograph on the flyleaf of the book which is today my most prized possession.

In the course of his discussions, Bradman mentioned that his only regret was that he had never had the opportunity to play cricket in India and therefore he was delighted to greet our delegation.

When asked about his impressions of one-day cricket, he opined that fortunately he had not participated in this version of the game as he felt that it would not have suited his temperament and technique.

As our hotel was located on a pedestrian mall, Bradman had to walk back to his office. At 80, he was ramrod straight and moved at a pace which would do credit to a person half his age.

At his office, we bid him a fond farewell, little knowing that it would be our first and last encounter with Australia's legend.

GODREJ N. DOTIVALA

President, Indo-Australian Society

Homes for seniors

In the following decades, the number of senior citizens will increase substantially. With the disintegration of the joint family system, most of the aged couples or individuals may be compelled to stay alone. In addition to old age, some may be immobile, with disabilities, infirm or bedridden. Not all may have old reliable servants. It is therefore imperative that the Parsi Punchayet, the concerned non-governmental organizations such as the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), the trustees and managements of baugs, colonies and similar complexes get together and take a major policy decision to meet this anticipated problem of colossal magnitude. In cities like Bombay

where there is an acute shortage of land it would be very difficult to locate new homes for senior citizens in the city areas.

It is, therefore, imperative that the maximum pos-

Bradman (center) flanked by Godrej and Havovi Dotivala

sible use be made of the land already available in the compounds of the existing Parsi hospitals, sanatoria, baugs, colonies, etc. Flats fall vacant. By mutual adjustments and transfers, some buildings may be got fully vacated. In such buildings, aged widows, senior citizens, those with mobility problems could be accommodated and looked after. Those who can afford to pay may be charged reasonable rates. The major advantage of such an approach would be the availability of social workers and volunteers to assist such homes. Senior citizens would have the benefit of congenial company and would feel at home. Those who are able among them can assist in some small way.

Where land is available in such colonies, homes for senior citizens may be constructed. The WZO has the requisite management expertise, dedicated volunteers and the ability to raise much needed funds which may be utilized to the utmost.

Capt H. J. M. DESAI

Build chawls

In looking at the circumstances that the poor Parsi Zoroastrians of Bombay living in various sanatoria are going through I would suggest that the Parsi Punchayet should build chawls for the Parsi Zoroastrians on the lines of the New Ava Baug at Navsari, rather than build buildings for the affluent who can afford residence elsewhere. It should be noted that the provisions of the trust are for the poor and needy rather than for the affluent. I hope that the Parsi Punchayet will do the needful and fulfill their obligations and use the land provided for poor Parsi Zoroastrians.

DORAB P. PATEL

Pray, time permitting

I once decided to go for a boat ride in a stream nearby. On asking my buddies to join me on the raft, one of them replied, "Sorry, but Sunday it cannot be! I have to attend church, you see. It is a compulsion, the only place that relaxes me!"

At his request I fixed it on Friday but, on hearing this, Ilyas, a Muslim buddy, begged me, "Please, Farzan, don't leave without me. I cannot make it on Friday for the mosque calls out to me."

Finally I fixed it on Thursday and suddenly Sanjay, a Hindu colleague told me, "I am very sorry to say, but I have kept Sai Baba's fast on Thursday and I've also to go to the mandir that day. If I don't do all this, my conscience will





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make me feel that I am drifting away
from our traditional Brahmin ways."

Later that same day Sanjay asked me,
"Farzan, tell me, when do you Zoroastrians
meet in the agiary? Is it a Monday or
a Wednesday" and I very softly told
him, "Sanju, I'm very sorry to say, it's
no day. You see, we have no teacher to
unite our community. I go to the fire-
temple when time permits me and pray
to Ahura Mazda, the Lord of faith, hap-
piness and destiny."

That same night a thought came to
my mind, as to why do we Parsis never
get along so well any time? If other
communities can do it, then why can't
we, truly the oldest people the world has
ever seen?

It is not so very hard I must confess.
All it needs is understanding, love and a
little bit of sense! Together we can make
a difference.

FARZAN B. MAZDA

Dahanu

Marriage signals

Girls, born as Zoroastrians, practising
Zoroastrianism in every way but mar-
ried to non-Zoroastrians, are treated as
outcastes and are castigated by the com-
munity. Their babies are conceived and
blossom within the wombs of Zoroas-
trian mothers. The children, in such
cases, cannot but be 50 percent Zoroas-
trians.

On the other hand even if the boys are
married to non-Zoroastrians, they are
allowed to enjoy full privileges and ben-
efits offered by the Zoroastrian institu-
tions. Their children are allowed entry to
the places of worship and are permitted
to have their navjotes performed and
become Zoroastrians. They are not shab-
bily treated or castigated by the commu-
nity. Why this disparity?

No matter where you are, what you
are or to whom you are married, the
religious sentiments once imbibed in
you stick to you forever in most cases.
Babies are nursed, fed and grow up
under the watchful eyes of their mothers
who command profound influence over
them and play a very important role in
molding their lives. In view of this, it is
natural that in cases of mixed marriages,
children of Zoroastrian mothers have
proved to be better Zoroastrians than
those of Zoroastrian fathers and non-
Zoroastrian mothers.

In Bombay, the problem of mixed
marriages is not as acute as elsewhere as
luckily there are Parsi colonies. This
helps boys and girls to meet one another

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and settle down. There are girls who despise colony boys and have dreams of residing at Malabar Hill or in western countries. If they succeed, well and good. Otherwise they remain spinsters, or marry boys of other communities.

In Delhi, Bangalore and other cities, the problem is acute. Families being scattered and separated by distance, the youngsters do not get an opportunity to meet and know one another. They come more in contact with members of other communities. The parents are known to be always anxious to find Zoroastrian

partners. When they fail, instead of seeing the children suffer and feel miserable, they take the undesirable but logical step and agree to mixed marriages. Besides Delhi, there are other anjumans also which have taken the pragmatic, farsighted and correct decision of treating our boys and girls equally, irrespective of whether they have married within or outside the community. Even if they have married out they are encouraged to join the anjuman committees, their talents are used; they are our assets and pillars of strength. On the other hand, the Bangalore and some other anjumans do not allow our girls married outside the community to enter the place of worship. They are insulted, humiliated, treated shabbily. By doing so, we are the losers and not the girls. Those who make others unhappy/miserable in the name of religion are the enemies of the community.

Besides the problem of mixed marriages, the community is faced with other problems also. We have a large number of bachelors, spinsters and divorcees. It is important that our youngsters are given adequate knowledge about pre and post-marital problems. There is need to en-

sure physical and emotional compatibility. Our punchayets should set up truly effective and up-to-date marriage counseling bureaux with full infrastructure to perform all medical tests for a happy married life and for bringing into this world healthy and alert children. It may be made compulsory for all youngsters to pass through the bureau with their fiances before marriage.

DALI J. GUNDEVIA

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Extinction alarms?

It was with amusement that I heard that we Parsis are on the way to extinction. The present conditions in India have made it inconvenient to have a large family. In Canada and USA where we Parsis migrated in large numbers (now about 25,000) we do marry and have three or four children. Therefore a few restraints in Bombay would not extinguish a race.

The real reason is the frightening explosion of population in India which makes life unbearably hard just to survive. China is another country bursting at its seams with an over-abundance of population but it is beginning to control it by insisting on one child per family. This is a sensible thing to do and it doesn't mean that they are going to be extinct. You go to any large department store here and the place is full of items made in China, Korea, etc and hardly any from India. China has an export trade of \$ 25 billion.

While playing about with a few demographic statistics we should not overlook the quality of life and our contribution towards the industrialization of India. Shipbuilding in Bombay (1660-1860) was a cent percent Parsi effort with Parsi carpenters and Parsi laborers. This was the only shipyard in Asia and one amongst 10 in the world for 200 years. The ships were made of teakwood which gave them a life of 100 years as compared to the oak wood which lasted 30. Also commendable have been our contributions to the engineering and steel industries. We have also built hospitals, schools, colleges and other social institutions in India.

An unchecked explosion of population does not mean progress. Don't you think it's about time we do less of demographic gabbling and take proper action to industrialize as otherwise India will be the one heading for extinction? What

continued on page 44



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Events and Personalities

Wife can stay

The Bombay High Court ruling that a housing society cannot prevent a member's wife from residing with him even if she does not belong to the same community as her husband must have brought relief to certain Zoroastrian males with non-Zoroastrian spouses. The issue came up before Justice Hemant Gokhale when the Zoroastrian Radhi Society at Jogeshwari contended that it is a religious charitable trust formed in the interest of Parsi Zoroastrians and hence Sampada, the non-Parsi spouse of Cyrus Nariman Jogina, cannot reside there, according to a report of the hearing carried in *The Indian Express MumbaiNewslines* of March 2, 2001.

The Society claimed that Cyrus' father, the late Nariman Jogina who was allotted a flat, agreed that his sons will not marry outside the community and following his death, his widow and son also pledged similarly. Representing the Society, senior counsel E. P. Bharucha noted that under Article 26 of the Constitution of India, a religious society or trust is empowered with the fun-

damental right to manage its own affairs including the right to use the trust's properties or income for the religious purposes and objects indicated by the founder, according to *The Indian Express*.

While Bharucha maintained that Cyrus had breached the agreement by marrying a non-Parsi girl, Jogina's counsel Mukesh Vashi countered that a clause in the agreement stating that a non-Parsi will not be allowed to stay in the flat belonging to the Society is contrary to the form of agreement prescribed under the Maharashtra Ownership Flats Act 1963. He added that such a clause also militates against the provisions of the Maharashtra Co-operative Societies Act, states the news report.

The judge held that prima facie such

a clause is contrary to the Maharashtra Ownership Flats Act and Maharashtra Co-operative Societies Act and declared that since Cyrus had already married Sampada at an interlocutory stage she cannot be prevented from residing with her husband in the flat, reported the *MumbaiNewslines*.

Usable Thana dakhma

The dakhma managed by the Thana Zoroastrian Charity Fund is once again "in a usable condition," notes a press release. Since the last body consigned there was in June 1992, to make the dakhma reoperational the trustees decided to have it cleaned.

A team of 14 volunteers led by Cyrus Siganporia of Nowroz Baug worked for two consecutive days, March 10 and 11, 2001, and adhering to all the rituals cleaned the place and cleared it of weeds and trees, mentions the write-up forwarded by H. S. Talati, managing trustee of the Thana Agiary Fund. "Although the boundary of the Tower of Silence is surrounded by factories, the inner well is in a secluded place surrounded by many tall trees," note the trustees. The write-up does not mention the sighting

Volunteers who made possible the cleaning of the Thana dakhma



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Observing the necessary rituals, volunteers undertake to clear the wanton weeds and vegetation at the Thana dakhma

of any vultures.

Acknowledging the honorary service of Siganporia and his team, the trustees were also appreciative of the cooperation extended by caterers Ketayun and Bomi Khambatta who provided the food and catered to the volunteers' needs and requirements.

The dakhma in Thana has reportedly been in existence since the 18th century

Marker's maritime aid

"We moored two survey ships here, *INS Nirdeshak* and *INS Jumna*, and converted them into hospital ships where we treated the quake injured in the makeshift wards as well as the air-conditioned operation theater," Commodore Aspi Marker gave a gist of the relief operations conducted by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard to Sarosh Bana, deputy editor of *Business India* who had visited the ravaged areas within two days of the devastating earthquake on January 26, 2001. As senior naval officer in charge of Gujarat, Marker had temporarily shifted base from Porbander in Saurashtra to Kandla in Kutch to coordinate the overall relief efforts from this largest of India's 12 major ports which had reportedly ground to a halt following the disaster. His area of operation impinged upon 13 strategic points along Gujarat's 1,290 km coastline stretching from Valsad in the south to Jakhau near the Gujarat-Pakistan border, reported Bana.

Conducting several reconnaissance sorties by the naval Chetak helicopters over the affected region to assess the situation, Marker had to handle the enormous task of providing relief and medical aid, evacuating the injured and the maimed, and ferrying vital equipment like ambulances and tents as most of the land-based hospitals had collapsed, with their medical staff operating from tents pitched outside in the dust. The naval and coast guard ships regularly ferried

food, tents, medicines and even Swaraj Mazdas, Tata Sumos and ambulances from Bombay with naval personnel and paramedics visiting the affected villages to locate the injured. Some 300 tonnes of dry food had been shipped in the first five days, Marker told Bana.

As the distance from Kandla to Bombay is too vast for a helicopter to traverse, the patients were sent by the naval and coast guard ships to the naval hospital *INS Asvini* at Navy Nagar in Bombay. It takes about 31 hours by sea between Bombay and Kandla at a speed of 12-15 knots, Cdr Abhijeet Choudhary, the commanding officer of *INS Nirdeshak* conveyed to Bana. The more serious cases were admitted to private hospitals in the city. While Bana was at *INS Nirdeshak* there came a truckload of 12 patients with various fractures. At around the same time steamed in the *INS Himgiri* with its supplies of stores. "These provisions are the contribution from our servicemen and officers from their rations," the ship's commanding officer Cdr Ganesh Kataria told Bana. Not only did these men serve the quake affected cooked food carried by trucks to the villages, they also prepared 22 kg ration kits comprising satchets of drinking water, rice, dal, sugar, tea, flour, condiments and milk powder, all packed within a plastic bucket for each of the survivors, Bana was impressed with the dedication of the naval team.

"During my present tenure, I am seeking to bring our Navy closer to the general public," stated Marker who has done his MSc in defence studies. Monthly feeding programs for 500 schoolchildren at his naval base and a maritime history museum in Porbander were among the projects he was preoccupied with, reported Bana.

Habits for the heart

"Bigger the waistline, shorter the life line," stated leading cardiologist Dr Sharukh Golwalla in his talk on "Parsis: their heart problems and problems of the heart" organized by the Youth Wing of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) India at Bombay's Sethna Agiary Hall, according to a report submitted by the president of the Youth Wing, Sarosh Bana. "Heart problems are not inevi-



Golwalla: with due respect to heart

table as one's individual lifestyle can spell the difference between a healthful existence and a precarious one," impressed Golwalla, adding, "We all have it in us to be mindful of our diet, the need for exercises and regular habits that will go a long way in preventing ailments of the heart." The cardiologist also emphasized the benefits of vegetarianism to the red meat eating and dhansak loving Parsis.

Stress, obesity, tobacco and alcohol consumption were identified as the factors contributing to heart disease. He cautioned that the Type A personalities (highly strung, aggressive, hostile, short-tempered) were more susceptible to cardiac problems, reported Bana.

The talk was followed by a felicitation function for four Parsis who have consistently supported the WZO Youth Wing. Silver plaques were presented to maritime freight entrepreneur Adi Mehta who has lent his barge on two occasions free of cost for the Youth Wing's popular Barge and Barbeque Bashes which have helped garner many new members; architect Zarir Sethna for making and supervising architectural plans for various projects in Udvada without charging his fees; veteran thespian Yazdi Karanjia who stages fun-filled plays every Parsi New Year on a voluntary basis; and actor, model and photographer Boman Irani who has made a pictorial documentation of Udvada's heritage precincts.

Felicitations were also accorded to swimmer Zeba Wadia and athlete Feroza Engineer and Mehrnosh Bamboat who excelled at the World Zarathushti Games coinciding with the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston. Golwalla's hints and pointers already digested by then, the repast laid out by Neville Godiwalla was well enjoyed by the diners.

Best Ness Girl

At the annual day of Poona's Ness Wadia College of Commerce on February 2, 2001, Meenaish Marazban Dalal, then in her final year of graduation studies, was presented the certificate of honor and the rolling trophy for the Best Ness Girl, mentions a press release. At the Second Year BCom examination con-

continued on page 50

(From left) Bana, Marker and Choudhary: relief for all



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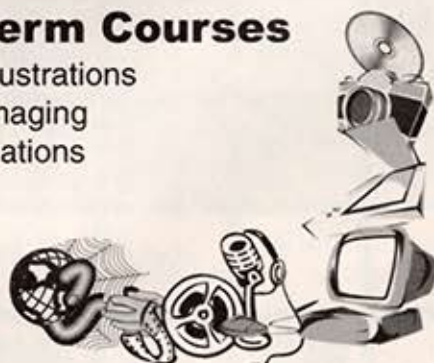
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Unity quilts

"Piecing a quilt is piecing history. Long may it continue!" Khurshid Bamboat's words summed up the emotions that resounded at the J. W. Marriott Hotel as Zoroastrian communities from around the world not only congregated at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress but witnessed the unfurling of two quilts harmonizing the logos of 76 Zoroastrian associations.

Acknowledging the encouragement of her sister Toxy Cowasjee, president of the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal, who convinced her to take on the immense task as a legacy for future generations, Bamboat noted, "It was due to her and dad that I undertook the project." She dedicated her work to the three women who had inculcated her sense of values: her mother Villi Cowasjee, her aunt Mogri Cowasjee and her late friend Sue Bhatena.

The brainchild of Congress co-chair Dr Dolly Dastoor, the quilt project was launched in December 1998 "as a testimony of the Zarathushti presence in all parts of the world, at the turn of the

second millennium." The official invitation from the Congress further noted, "No group will be considered too small to be included; and if you do not have a designated logo you may send us the name of your association to be embroidered on the Unity Quilt."

An established embroiderer and quilter of England, Bamboat freely volunteered her knowledge and talent though a nominal charge of £ 10 was levied per logo to cover the costs of material, thread, wadding, paper, photographs, photocopying, frame and transportation to Houston, as noted Nerina Rustomji in her report on the Quilt.

The associations had been requested to provide a clear photocopy of the logo of their name, preferably in color, and the year the association was established. Once these were in hand, Bamboat said she standardized them to one size. Working with appliqué fabric on a background of American muslin, she has edged each logo with a blue border.

Though the two quilts — it was impossible to incorporate all 76 logos into one — remain on display at Houston's

Zarathushti Cultural and Heritage Center, they are expected to grace future international meets of the community in all parts of the world.

ZAGNY at Pomona

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York's (ZAGNY) new property at Pomona comprises four acres with three buildings. The community center which

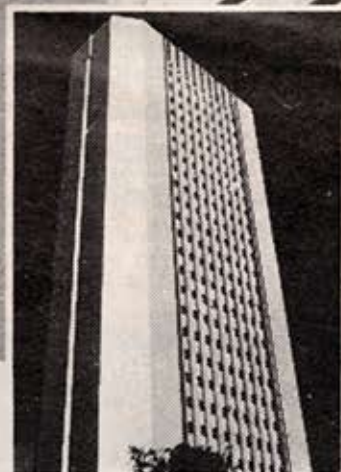


can accommodate 400 in its auditorium is completely circular with a semicircle of four large rooms which can look in, long-time Sunday school teacher and Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr trustee Lovji Cama informed *Parsiana* in the course of a visit in March. The former Jewish community property includes a youth center with accommodation for a caretaker and the rabbi's house.

The Zarathushtis of New York state



Reaching for the Sky



Two landmarks in Bombay – the Commerce Centre of the World Trade Centre Complex and the new Reserve Bank Building.

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have outgrown their old dar-e-mehr at New Rochelle which could hold 150 people. The new accommodation's "greatest advantage is that we can use it with just a coat of paint. (It is) already classified as a church. Ideally we would have built to our design but one can't have everything," smiles Cama.

The main criticism of the new property is that it is "a little less accessible than New Rochelle," concedes Cama. Located 30 miles north of George Washington bridge, Long Island residents will need to cross two bridges to reach it.

ZAGNY had been looking for new accommodation for some time and had set up a limited partnership called Z-land to provide the seed money to buy the property. One had to contribute US \$10,000 or \$20,000 to be a member and 10 or 11 families participated to accumulate \$2,10,000, notes Cama. An earlier find proved unsuitable when a study revealed that two-thirds of the area was wetland on which one cannot build.

Initially the Jews did not wish to sell to non-Jews but when they didn't succeed, they turned to ZAGNY which had registered its interest in the property. After a few stop-go signals, the property was acquired at a total cost of \$1.2 million, said Cama. The Z-land collection of \$2,10,000 was augmented by ZAGNY's own kitty of about \$800,000 after 80 percent of the membership agreed to sell the old and buy the new property. A feverish fund-raising drive toted up the rest by the closing date of January 17, 2001. But then the Jews couldn't close the deal and had to have a general body meeting of their own. They got their community to agree in early March and the closing of the deal was slated for later in the month, according to Cama.

ZAGNY is undecided about the rabbi's house on the property. Currently the whole property is tax exempt because it belongs to a religious organization. If the house is rented to a Zoroastrian, ZAGNY would be required to pay tax. If it sells the house, it stands to lose half an acre, Cama explains the dilemma.

Currently Gev Nentin is president and Sheroo Kanga is secretary of ZAGNY. The dar-e-mehr is shared by ZAGNY and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association with five Parsi trustees to one Iranian based on the relative strengths of the two bodies. Taxes, utility arrangements, etc are also shared on the same ratio.

Amity between the two associations

over the past several years marks the gradual maturity of the Zoroastrian community in North America where initially the Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians had upheld their parochial cultures to the detriment of their religious identity.

Cama and his wife Mehroo, a market researcher for NFO Research, have a son, Kaizad, who is into his second year at Stanford University. Himself a senior researcher with the pharmaceutical major Merck, Cama is currently trying to update the *Good Life Book on Scouting*. He also wants to put all his notes and accessories on Zoroastrianism for children into a "teaching packet." His long-time involvement in the field of religious education for Zoroastrian youth continues with 40 to 50 students coming together once a month. Unhappily, the adult response is poor. Hence Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, who conducts the class for grown-ups, is thinking of stopping it, says Cama.

Surmounting the odds

On the rolls of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), a nuclear weapons laboratory near San Francisco managed by the University of California initially for the US Atomic Commission and currently for the National Nuclear Security Administration within the federal department of energy, is a young Zoroastrian woman from Bombay. Vira Ardeshtir Confectioner works as a software test engineer/developer, entrusted with highly secret and classified governmental work that requires her to travel frequently within and without the US on special assignments, informs her uncle Adi Confectioner.

Vira began life totally hearing impaired and consequently mute. To date there is no change on the physiological level. The laboratory just makes sure her interpreter goes along with her to enable her to conduct specialized meetings and

seminars, adds Hiloo Mehta, daughter of experienced and dedicated social worker Rutty Pavri.

The story of her long haul up the ladder of science and technology might never have begun had she not attracted Pavri's attention. Recognizing the potential of the challenged child, Pavri had her enrolled in Dr DeSa's St Stephen School for the Deaf and soon after her Secondary School Certificate examination arranged for higher studies at the Gallaudet University in Washington DC, an institution of world renown in the training of the hearing impaired, writes Adi Confectioner.

Completing her BA in mathematics, Vira acquired an MS in mathematics education from the Western Maryland University with full scholarship, going on to the University of Maryland and the California State University for further advances in computer science and attracted the attention of LLNL enrollers.

Working there with world class colleagues in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom, Vira pursues her bent for computer science at technology's cutting edge along with her colleague-husband Dr Chuz Okuda, a Japanese who shares her affliction and a mutual passion for their three large furry dogs.

Iran's heritage reexamined

"We are on a path to discover the thoughts and beliefs of a people before they were influenced by governmental religion (and) politics and further guided and molded by the pressure of being a defeated minority," notes the editorial of the first issue of *Iran Zamin* (Vol I, No 1, October 2000). The bilingual publication (English and Farsi) of The Ancient Iranian Cultural and Religious Research and Development Center (AICRRDC) assures the reader, "Our research and our findings are in no way aimed at

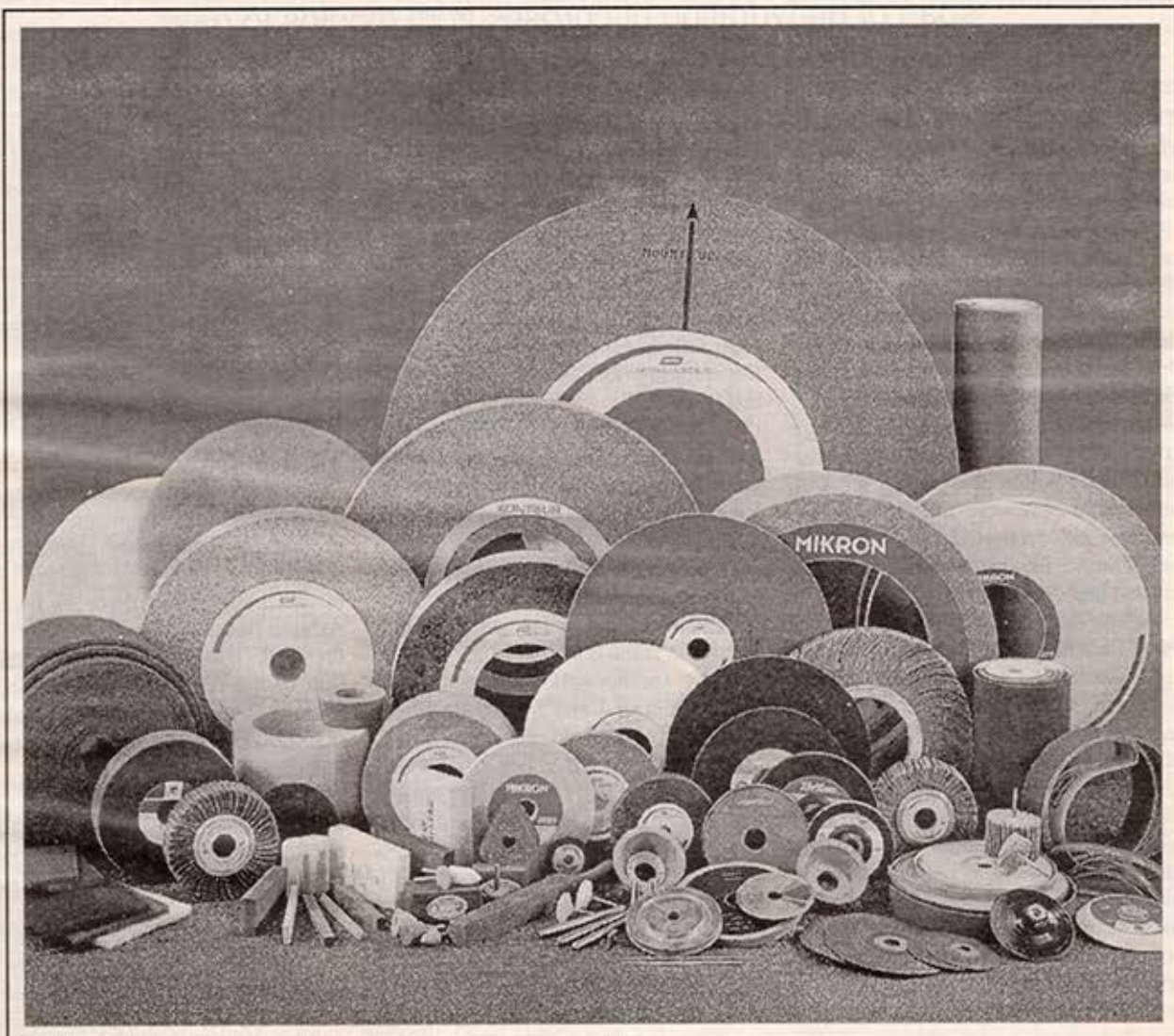
continued on page 48



Confectioner (above) and at the LLNL campus



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A ray of sunshine

Solar concentrators at Doongerwadi have reduced the time span of dehydration of corpses from months to days

Arnavaz S. Mama

The protracted Doongerwadi controversy seems to be fast forwarding to an unexpectedly quick and happy denouement.

Announcing the success of the solar panel scheme Dr Homi Dhalla noted in his press release that a male body of average build placed in the Sethna dakhma under the solar focus dehydrated in two days and was reduced to a skeleton by the end of the fifth day. What is more, during the first two days crows and kites were observed pecking at the body which proved that fears of unbearable heat were unfounded. The nasasalars also reported that the ambient temperature in the dakhma remained normal and comfortable.

While the visibly relieved Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees showed accolades on Dhalla and Ronnie Sabawalla at the jashan and gahambar meet at the Albless Baug on May 13, 2001, philanthropist Ervad Naryman Dubash spontaneously donated five lakh rupees to the BPP toward the cost of more solar concentrators to cover the other two dakhmas, as per Dhalla's announcement. Dhalla has been fielding the flak in the process of educating the community on the virtues of the solar concentrators (see "A doctrinal cross-fire," *Parsiana*, January 2001) while the Baroda based Sabawalla has been honing his technical skills over many months of experimentation and field trials over animal carcasses there to adapt the concentrators to perform the required job without burning or charring the dead body.

The palpable relief of the BPP was justified in the context of the eight Vada Dasturs' combined meet on April 21. The Dasturs had not only refused to countenance the Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group's (DDD-AG) demand for the performance of the funerary ceremonies at Doongerwadi of those who opt for cremation or burial as being totally violative of Zoroastrian

theology but demanded that the BPP hold a samast anjuman meet before taking any further decisions on the issue. As the DDD-AG had threatened the Punchayet with court action in the alternative, the BPP's caught-between-the-devil-and-the-deep-syndrome was lightened in the belief that the success of the solar reflectors might soften the stand of the agitating doctors and lawyers from the DDD-AG.

In the event the planned thanksgiving and recognition of the band of 27 volunteers led by Cyrus Siganporia who have helped the installation of the air purification project over the Anjuman dakhma proceeded perhaps more joyously than expected.

Another fallout of the dakhmenashini imbroglio is the donation of 23 acres of land by architect-philanthropist Bomi Sachinwalla of Valiv for the establishment of a parallel complex two hours' drive out of central Bombay. In the video dated April 9, 2001 played at Dadar's Seth Rustamji Nasserwanji Rustomframa Agiary on May 12, 2001, the wooded area in the heart of Vasai district's hilly core was shown populated by birds and beasts of prey including vultures. Lawyer and Khshnoomist public speaker Ervad Kaikhushro Dastoor emphasized that the visualized project was not meant as a rival or critique of the Malabar Hill complex but as a reserve facility that would help to reduce the pressure upon it.

The prelates speak

In an expression of unity organized by the TZML (Traditional Zarathustris Mailing List) six high priests took the stage at Bombay's Framji Cowasji Hall: Dr Kaikhushro JamaspAsa and Dr Firoze Kotwal of Bombay, Kaikobad Dastur of Udvada, Noshirwan Dastur of Surat, Hormazdiar Dastur of Poona and Nardirshah Unvalla of Bangalore. Unable to attend for reasons of age or health, Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza of Udvada and Meherji Meherjirana of Navsari

were represented by his son *naib dastur* (heir) Dr Peshotan Mirza and by JamaspAsa respectively. Other *naibs* sharing the stage were Udvada's Khushru Dastur and Surat's Cyrus Dastur. Also on stage were Ervads Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, Dr Rooyintan Peer, Parvez Bajan, Aspandiar Dadachanji and Naryosang Turel.

The evening's moderator, columnist Noshir Dadrawala took the 800 plus Zarathushtis packing the auditorium and balconies through a gist of the events leading up to the meet. Emphasizing that the gathering comprised "all schools of thought, whosoever abides by the seven pillars of Zoroastrianism," Dadrawala enumerated these as belief in Asha or righteousness/truth, veneration for atash, Bundeasbani or the restriction of the religion to the children of Parsi couples, the sanctity of rituals and manthravani (Avestan prayers), sudreh-kusti and dakhmenashini.

Dadrawala faulted the discourtesy of the DDD-AG for its unsigned letter to the high priests asking for their views. He also noted, "(They say) the *Gathas* have no rituals... Why then the insistence on the four-day ceremonies?"

Condoning the BPP's worry that DDD may take it to court if their demands are not met, Dadrawala asked, "Are these demands dignified?" And urged the DDD to "respect the dignity of the living tradition."

JamaspAsa challenged the DDD perspective: "If the system had totally collapsed, the entire population around Doongerwadi would have to move out because of the unbearable stench which would arise due to the bodies piling up in the dakhmas. This is clearly not the case as those working in close proximity to the dakhmas will attest... If it was a health hazard then the nasasalars, priests, laborers, gardeners who all work and stay in the environs of Doongerwadi and the mourners should contract known identifiable diseases emanating from the



At Framji Cowasji Hall (L to R, 1st row): JamaspAsa; Dadrawala with high priests on the dais. (2nd row): Kotwal, Unvalla, N. Dastur, K. Dastur and H. Dastur. Alongside: P. Mirza and a section of the audience

Photos: Hornyar Mistry, Homz Prints

dakhmas. Thus far, no cases have been observed or documented by our people and so where is there a question of a health hazard? In fact, to understand this line of thinking, we priests are not scientists, but we certainly are intelligent human beings who have basic common-sense to observe that the health hazard scare is a false one."

Claiming that "there is nothing like an authentic system of dakhmenashini," JamaspAsa noted, "We realize that we have to move with the times, but not at the expense of forsaking the doctrine and our time-tested rituals and ceremonies. Thus our permission for the use of herbal powder to be sprinkled and poured in a solution of water on the corpse under proper supervision by at least three persons, or ozone gas being introduced into the dakhmas, through a duct, without touching the dakhma walls, is innovative and yet true to the principle of dakhmenashini. When the population of vultures is restored, there will be no need to use the above stated innovations. Thus at no stage do the corpse



bearers touch or 'fondle' the corpses as has been wrongly alleged by an ex-trustee of the BPP. It is unfortunate that people like him are misinforming and writing erroneous things in the media.

"It is important that we should think of the deceased's soul and not the body. True dignity is giving the right prayers and ceremonies to the soul of our near and dear ones and not attacking a system which is theologically injunctioned and right just because some people have decided to oppose the system, for the sake of change.

"Do the Muslims, anywhere in the world, in general burn their near and dear ones, or likewise do the Hindus bury their near and dear ones or do both these communities try and preserve their ancient rites of passage?

"Why are we Parsi Zoroastrians so keen to change a system for physical consolation at the expense of traumatizing the soul?

"The DDD-AG lobby should clearly realize we, as prelates, cannot give them religious sanction for what is deemed to be a grave sin."

Emphasizing the role of the prelates "to guide both the practicing clergy and the laity, as to what is right and proper, from a doctrinal point of view... to bring back to the fold errant priests who have sought to break ranks with the majority of the clergy on an issue where these persons have no knowledge about the religion," JamaspAsa declared, "In our view, such persons who are devoid of faith and/or learning are not priests wor-

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Kapadia's karate kingdom

Martialling his art over 26 years, Vispy Kapadia has trained thousands of karateists — from four-year-olds to seasoned policemen

Hilla P. Guzder

Lean, lanky and wearing India colors, he was badminton ace Prakash Padukone's doubles partner in the early 1970s, playing against Indonesian legend and world champion Rudy Hartono in a couple of internationals. Ere that, he had lifted coveted inter-school and inter-college badminton trophies and was a state and national level player, taking part in tournaments all over the country. "Initially I took to karate to improve my fitness for badminton," smiles karate king Vispy B. Kapadia.

"Karate is a recipe of balance, power, speed, timing, technique, breathing — all very well coordinated and synchronized. It is a misconception that karate is only kicking and punching," patiently explains the man whose soft speech and persuasive demeanor belie his strapping six-foot 95 kg frame. Sinew and strategy are very much a part of karate, but this art is to be viewed on three planes — physical, mental and spiritual, says the teacher who does yoga and meditation every day in addition to workouts to keep himself trim. "I used to be short-tempered earlier," he laughs. "I am like a rubber band now — people can stretch my patience without it snapping."

Kapadia is a seventh dan (degree) black belt — the only one in Asia outside of Japan, he informs us. He also holds the title of Kyoshi which denotes a very high grade of karate. "Very few people in world Gojukai have been so honored," he remarks, having earned the title of Shihan (teacher of teachers) as early as 1980. "Above Kyoshi stands the Japanese grand master, Hanshi Goshi

Yamaguchi himself, at the top of the iceberg," he elaborates. Yamaguchi heads the Zen Nippon Karate-do Organisation and the International Karate-do Gojukai Association (IKGA). Kapadia's academy — The All India Gojukai Karate-do where he is principal and director — is affiliated to the IKGA which is a "massive school" with branches all over the globe. As chief coordinator for Asia, including the Middle East, Kapadia's dynamism and frequent travels serve to strengthen the level of karate in different places.

"'Karate-do' means 'the way of the empty hand' ('kara' - empty, 'te' - hand, 'do' - way)," says the teacher who has in the course of his career broken 600 blocks of ice with a blow of his empty hand,

atop shelves, Japanese artifacts and motifs abound, a huge blow-up of his mentor (Yamaguchi) takes pride of place on a wall. Conspicuous also are numerous portraits of Zarathushtra; in a secluded corner stands a small afarganiu, afore which he prays every day. His dojo (school or training center) is situated in an adjoining building, with wall-to-wall mirrors on two sides and equipment up to international standards. Attached to it is a gymnasium and fitness center with regular coaches, which is used throughout the day by non-karate members as well, with special timings for ladies.

The cream of his students attend his HQ (headquarters) class at this dojo, making their moves under the eagle eyes of his instructors, among the seniormost of whom are Gev Karai, Kairus Dadachandji, Adil Pavri, Premal Joshi, Neville Nariman, Prakash Wagh and lady instructors Kashmira Shah and Keuri Patel and others. "I am very strict with my instructors. If they are sick or need monetary help, I go to any lengths to be compassionate but I do not compromise on discipline," declares Kapadia who shoulders all expenses for sending his teachers abroad for periodic training or for tournaments. "Shihan (Kapadia)



Kapadia: the power of the empty hand

has been my family, father, mentor, my everything," says Nariman, now 30 and working with HDFC (Housing Development Finance Corporation), who has been with the academy since he was three-and-a-half. Adds Patel: "When I was 10, my mother told me I could learn karate, but only for three months. That

including an occasion where he broke 10 ice blocks of 150 kg each in 12 seconds!

Kapadia martial his art from his large and plush office at Tardeo with its aura of the orient — glistening trophies sit



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Top row (from left) Kapadia and prized possessions (Photo: Chetan Mistry); training police; massed karatekas (Photo: Hilla Guzder); the family (front row) Vahishta and Sanaya with Shiraz, Behram, Vispy and Fareena (inset). Karate weaponry and sparring with Pavri (Photos: Chetan Mistry)



was 18 years ago — the three months have still not come to an end. This is not a job for me, it is enjoyment from Monday to Sunday!"

Demonstrating their degree of devotion to this ancient art of self-defense are his students, some of whom attend class every day even during the summer vacation in the expectation of being selected for competition. "I will be taking a large group of 75-80 students (aged four-21) and 10-15 instructors (with doctor and cook in tow, many parents joining in as well!) to a world tournament in Perth, Australia in November. "Ours will be one of the largest contingents and I can assure you no one takes us lightly," smiles the full-time professional who has taken his students so far to competitions over 30 times, from Australia, to London to Sao Paulo in Brazil! "Overall, the children are disciplined and respectful," he remarks as young karatekas bow to him as they pass by or before and after they engage in conversation with their Sensei (teacher). He regrets, however, that Zoroastrian students are reducing in numbers, while karate is very popular among the Gujaratis. He adds that in case of personal tragedy like the loss of a parent or monetary difficulties

he goes out of his way to assist deserving candidates. "Vispy is excellent as a teacher, he has very good rapport with the children," remarks parent Freddie B. Nadirshaw whose son Hector obtained his black belt two years ago.

Joining Sensei Pervez Mistry's karate classes in 1969, Kapadia's sporting skills soon saw him winging his way to Japan for his black belt examination, taking what was in India in 1974 virtually a leap in the dark! "My father Bahadur was a salaried man and could scarce afford the expenses for the trip," he narrates. Bahadur's employers in Airfreight — Jamshed and Cyrus Guzder — generous donors like Neville Wadia and many others helped out, his own family raised resources by selling some of mother Baimai's jewelry. "I have made my way from humble beginnings," asserts Kapadia.

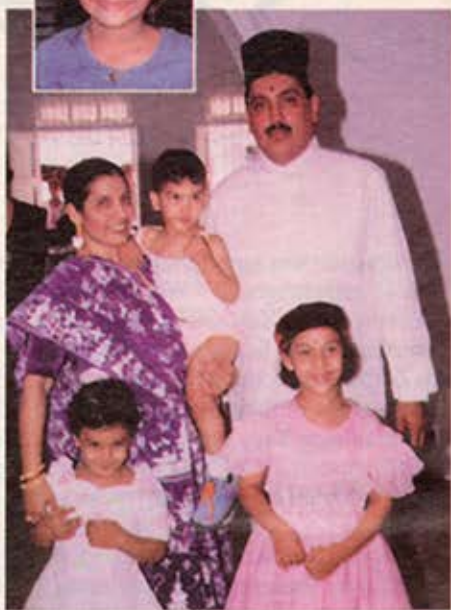
On his return to Bombay with the black belt at the age of 21, Kapadia commenced classes with a few students in the Rustom Baug prayer hall. "As numbers increased, we moved to the pavilion, then to premises outside the Baug," explains the Rustom Baug resident. In 1975, Bruce Lee's picture *Enter the Dragon* was released and "suddenly

from 50-70 students we had 5,000!" he laughs.

From small starts 25 years ago, Kapadia's instructors fan out today to 55 centers in Bombay and its suburbs alone, including schools like Cathedral and John Connon, Maneckji Cooper, Girton, Panday, etc where karate is taught as part of the curriculum, and in other schools as an optional subject at very reasonable fees. "Karate is suitable for all children," declares Kapadia. "We are not planning to make them good fighters. We aim to inculcate a form of discipline, good control over mind and body, a basic knowledge of self-defense so that even a young girl can retaliate if attacked in these times of violence, and run for safety. At this stage of training, there is hardly any chance of injury. Fighting comes much later — we then give the student protective headgear, gloves, etc. They are trained to avoid mishap," he specifies.

Kapadia also has dojos (akin to franchises) under his supervision in eight states in India — from Kulu-Manali in the north, to Pondicherry and Madras in the south.

A unique and special achievement, spread over almost a 20-year period, has



been his training of the police in armed and unarmed combat. Since 1982, Kapadia's is the only official academy, states their handout, which trains all wings of the Maharashtra police force, including the reserve and railway police, CID (criminal investigation department) personnel and commandos, as well as all-India police like the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), BSF (Border Security Force), etc. "For a policeman, training often means a difference between life and death. There is no margin for trial and error," maintains Kapadia.

"Nobody else has contributed to the

department of police the way Vispy Kapadia has," Arvind Inamdar, retired director general of police, Maharashtra who has known Kapadia for 19 years, told *Parsiana* in a brief tête-à-tête. "He has given free training, he has taken them abroad, he has provided them with (karate) uniforms and equipment at his own cost, without expecting anything else in return." The academy has trained almost 10,000 policemen, estimates Inamdar. Guards of other organizations like the BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre), BEST (Bombay Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking), etc have also benefited from the academy's

expertise, informs Kapadia. In 1986, the Maha-rashtra government honored him with the Shiv Chhatrapati Award, the first in the field of karate.

Over the past 14 years, the academy's summer and winter training camps at the Sardar Dastur Schools in Poona have been attended by 1,000-1,500 students at a time, from ages four to 21! "We will soon be having the academy's 50th camp at Poona," informs Vispy's wife Shiraz, herself a black belt and instructor.

"Never underestimate your opponent even if he is half your size. They move in like

pellets, not bullets!" instructor Nariman told the engrossed students as *Parsiana* sat in on a training session in Poona and watched the feints, lunges, swivels and kicks — touché, you score or you distract your opponent! "There is no elevator process in karate, one has to slog it out," observes Kapadia. Injuries can sometimes be an occupational hazard. Karatekas practice the katas (preplanned movements of defense and attack in a dance-like sequence), kumite (free fighting or sparring) and shiai (sport or controlled fighting where the punches are pulled back) on shock proof mats imported

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Salute to the seniors

The World Zoroastrian Organisation acclaims the achievements of well-known senior citizens

Hilla P. Guzder

The function was appropriately entitled "WZO remembers..." "We are today honoring senior Zoroastrians who have contributed significantly to the image of the Zoroastrian community. Some are in the evenings of their lives, some in the late evenings. They are our living legends," announced WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) India president Dadi Engineer who is also an eminent solicitor and trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Presenting 36 individuals with lifetime achievement awards (four were posthumous awards), Engineer told the vast audience thronging the Cusrow Baug green on February 25, 2001 that the list was not exhaustive — the WZO was open to further suggestions of names and would be happy to repeat the function in the future.

Presenting the winners with a plaque and flowers was the WZO chairman and guest of honor Rumi Sethna who was on an official week-long visit to Bombay from London with his wife Hilda. Flanking him on the dais were WZO India vice president Dinshaw Tamboly, zonal vice presidents Roda Mistry and Dadi Mistry and WZO India joint secretary and Youth Wing president Sarosh Bana.

In his introductory remarks Engineer lauded the Sethnas for their long-time commitment to the WZO and for being in the forefront of fund-raising — giving the Organisation their "time, money and the use of their beautiful home in the UK." Sethna, an accountant by profession, has come up the WZO management ladder — committee member, to honorary treasurer, honorary secretary, honorary president to the "pinnacle post of chairman," narrated Engineer.

"This is the first time I am addressing an audience of this size," smiled Sethna as his gaze skimmed the expanse of chairs and the sweep of the surrounding buildings dotted with curious onlookers. "The hitherto largest gathering was of about 600 people in Karachi." Sethna

traced the history of the 20-year-old WZO as a sociopolitical world body, recalling that its focus in the first few years was in dealing with international bodies and governments to grant asylum to Zoroastrians fleeing the Islamic revolution in Iran. After 1985, the emphasis shifted to social amelioration, education and the strengthening of religious infrastructure. "Over the last four years, significant efforts are being made to restructure the WZO," he asserted.

Sethna thanked Engineer for promoting the WZO so well in India. "A country's tapestry is woven in many different threads and the WZO cannot be effective unless it resembles the country's tapestry," he noted. The felicitations were kicked off with the presentations of scrolls of honor to those awardees who had been unable to attend the WZO's 20th anniversary celebrations in London on May 13 last year. Of the 13 awardees, Tamboly was the only one who attended, out of the six from India. The other five (now being presented the scrolls) were Engineer, "free, frank and fearless" journalist Jehan Daruwalla (received in absentia), the late Davar Cawasji Mody who had coordinated so effectively the work of rehabilitation of poor Zoroastrian farmers in Surat district, WZO joint managing trustee and retired deputy conservator of forests Firoze Panthaky, and Farokh Cassad, trustee of the WZO trust who is an agricultural expert — two very fine gentlemen, it was stated, who have regularly visited the Zoroastrian farmers and guided them wholeheartedly.

The marathon presentation to the 36 senior citizens saw Engineer introducing each awardee with his characteristic wit, punctuated with words of wisdom, keeping the audience in good humor throughout.

At the top of the list stood diminutive, 87-year-old Jehangir Nicholson, short in stature but not in achievement — an active sheriff of Bombay in 1987-

1988, registered accountant with a family business, Breul and Company, in cotton, keen motor car rallyist, connoisseur and collector of contemporary modern art, photographer, philanthropist and "charming ladies' man with a bewitching smile," described Engineer, "who even now keeps pace with his numerous activities."

At 84, Capt Hormazdiar J. M. Desai, retired Indian Administrative Service officer, former joint secretary, finance, government of Maharashtra, was founder secretary of the National Association for the Blind and an indefatigable worker at the national and international level for the cause of the blind and the disabled who was awarded the Padmashri in recognition of his services. As trustee of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Desai has made a significant contribution to that fine institution, noted Engineer. Nicholson and Desai received their awards in the category of public life and social service.

The field of sports encompassed 11 winners. Allrounder and former cricket captain, Padmashri Polly Umrigar, popularly known as Polly kaka, is "one of the greatest cricketers this country and community has produced," related Engineer. After a fine career on the playing field, Umrigar has been team manager, executive secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, and the chairman of the All India Selection Committee, among other accomplishments.

Left-handed opening batsman Nari Contractor was the first Indian captain to win a series against England in an official test. His 33-test promising career was cruelly truncated by a Griffith bouncer in 1962 which hit him on the head with near fatal consequences, followed by a long and valiant recovery. Contractor was conferred the Padmashri in 1962.

Batsman Hoshie Amroliwalla who played for Tata Sports Club on the prestigious Times Shield tournament for 23

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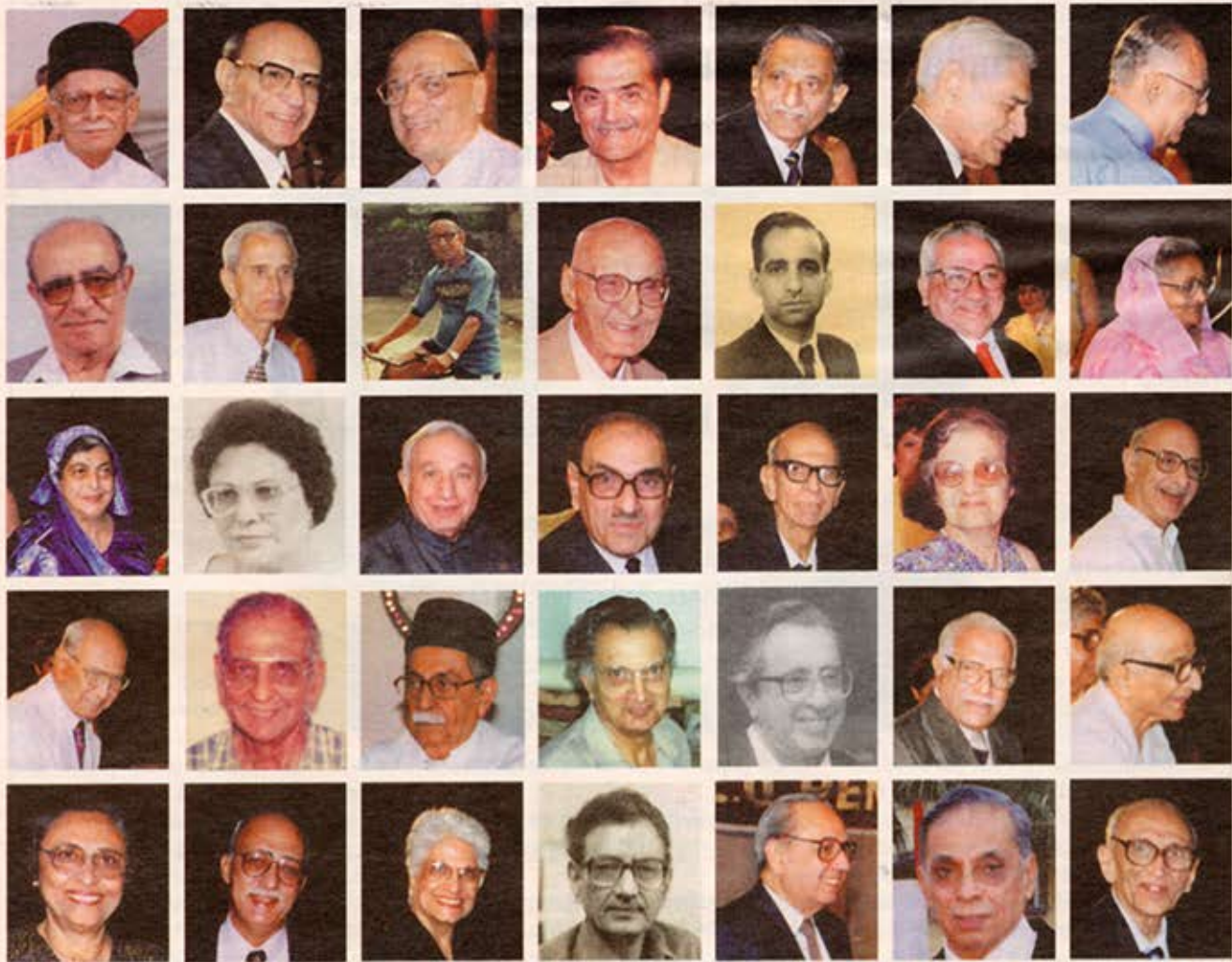


Awardees all (from left): Nicholson, Hormazdiar Desai, Umrigar, Contractor, Amroliwalla, Cooper, Mehli Irani, Behram Irani, Bharucha, Adi Have-walla, Bob Damri, Malcolm Malcolm, Panthaki, Peer, Aibara, Driver, Bejon Desai, Mulla, Dorab Mehta, Thrity Mistry, Katrak, Phiroze Damri, Gandhi, Marshall, Dinshaw Mehta, Lentin, Sarkari, Nariman, Dolly and Bomi Dotiwala, Moti Irani, Jal Mehta, Sidhva, Gamadia and Ellis

All photos of the function and awardees present taken by Sarosh Daruwalla, Mazda Audio and Video Labs



Above: (from left) Gamadia, Soonu Andhyarujina, Roda Mistry, Bhungara, Tamboly, Engineer, Seth-na, Dadi Mistry and Bana; an ambience of green



years and represented Bombay 35 times in the Ranji Trophy, "should have played for India," opined Engineer.

Seventy-eight-year-old Russi Cooper, a stylish bat, played for the Parsis in the Pentagulars and for Bombay in the Ranji Trophy. His sporting skills covered table tennis as well.

With 57 years of competitive cricket, left-hand batsman and wicketkeeper Mehli Irani was a "great hitter" and even as a boy in school broke windows with his blows at the ball! Captain of the Bombay Gymkhana team on its tour of Australia, Irani played in the Kanga League for over 50 years, ever since the tournament began in 1948, and in the Ranji Trophy, retiring from cricket at the early age of 67!

Turning his arm over for Bombay in the Ranji Trophy, Behram Irani, popularly known as Barma, played also for his employers, the Tatas. "Barma is in hospital and we pray for his speedy recovery," Engineer informed the audience.

Making his mark in the pool, Adi Bharucha represented India in swimming and waterpolo at the Helsinki Olympics and was a waterpolo referee in the 1982 Asian Games. Swimming for Bombay and later Maharashtra state, Bharucha has also officiated at numerous aquatic meets, stated Engineer. (He mentioned also that collegian Zeba Wadia, who recently won laurels in swimming at the World Zarathushti Games in Houston, has been conferred the Shiv Chhatrapati Award at the very young age of 17.)

"That magnificent man on his two-wheeled machine," cyclist Adi Havewalla, was conferred the award posthumously. "When we wrote to him about the award he was alive, but he passed away on January 31, 2001," related Engineer. Havewalla represented India at the London Olympics and at world cycling championships. Pedalling his way around Bombay till the age of 83, Havewalla was Bombay's oldest Olympian. Carrying on from where his father left off, mentioned Engineer, Adi's son Rustom has also won 12 state and three national track cycling titles.

In 1948 Bob Damri asked his British boss in Martin and Harris for leave to take part in the Olympic trials for long distance cycling. The boss said no, Damri took part anyway and was promptly dismissed from the job! Though he was selected, Damri could not garner enough

funds for the trip and missed the London Olympics, but won many other trophies in cycling. Ice skating took his fancy at the tender age of 66 in Dubai where he was working! At 70, he ice skated for 12 hours non-stop in support of "Sports Aid for Africa!" An amazingly versatile sportsman, Damri completed the full distance of 10 km road running when he was 70 years old. Living life king-size, he traveled the seven seas aboard a passenger liner as a drummer. Playing the drums and percussion with leading bands like Goody Seervai and Chic Chocolate, Damri wielded the drumsticks with dexterity till the age of 82!

He took part in the World Track and Road Cycling Championships pre-World War II — in 1938! The late Malcolm B. Malcolm uncrowned the reigning Empire Games champion E. V. Mills in the same year in the 15-mile race in Bombay, winning the 15-mile race 16 consecutive times! Malcolm, who passed away in 1982 at the age of 69, founded India's first cycling club, named The Malcolm Cycling Club and introduced many new races into India, and was five times India's national champion. His son Bapoo, said Engineer, is also an outstanding cyclist and a writer and commentator on sports.

Viraf E. Panthaki has been coach of the Indian team at the world power lifting championships and trained the Indian weightlifting team for the world championship in Japan last year. Under his leadership, Union Bank (where he works) has won the inter-bank power lifting championship 11 times. Panthaki also officiates as a referee for weightlifting and body building competitions and has won the Shiv Chhatrapati Award. Parsis of the past — Prof Tehmuras Sarkari, Prof Tehmuras Daruwalla, Dinshah Mistry, Dinshah Mehta and Bahadur Gamadia — distinguished themselves in body building and weightlifting. For today's youth, the discotheque has replaced the gym — a sad sign of the times, lamented Engineer.

The WZO had some years ago suitably honored the late Jal Pardiwalla for his multi faceted achievements in the athletic arena, said Engineer. Naval Pithavala has coached innumerable Parsi boys and girls in athletics, carrying on Pardiwalla's good work in molding many an Adille Sumariwalla.

Honoring the "embodiments of small service which is great service" in the

field of religion, the WZO honored Rati Peshotan Peer and Nergish Nadarsha Aibara for their good work in teaching children the navjote prayers and for religious discourses, "carrying on from where their husbands left off."

In the educational arena, the late Roshen Driver's "pioneering enterprise" in rebuilding the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution as its principal for 28 years into a thriving, cosmopolitan coeducational institution, with a junior and senior college as well, was acknowledged. Driver passed away in 1999.

Bejon Desai, educationist, writer, scholar, was principal of Boys' Town Public School, Nasik for 32 long years. Desai has won several awards and authored numerous publications, informed Engineer while honoring the 78-year-old educationist.

Former principal of the Bharda New High School and Junior College for 40 years, 76-year-old Adi Mulla is presently director of the School, chairman of the Lady Engineer School and is connected with several other institutions. Mulla was the founder of the Road Safety Patrol, the first in the world, said Engineer, which had at its peak 60,000 school students trained by the police to help in controlling vehicular traffic.

He took the first tentative steps in play writing at age 14 and wrote 200 plays for stage, radio and TV. Performing his plays in India and outside, Dorab Mehta's almost 500 charity shows have raised lakhs of rupees for the cause of cancer, tuberculosis, the blind, etc. His popular column in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* titled "Jamas ni Jilloo" completed 50 years on February 18, 2001.

Under the penname Kamal, Thrity Mistry has been writing a popular column called "Mahila Jagat" in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* for the past 15 years. She has authored a half-English, half-Gujarati book, *Harmony in Life*. Her "straight from the heart" writing encompasses episodes from her own and other people's lives. Mehta and Mistry received their awards in the sphere of journalism.

Kirtankar Parvez Katrak has been performing kirtans in Hindi and Gujarati for more than 25 years "without charging a single paisa." At the end of a performance, he collects voluntary donations, handing over the amount to various charities. The 77-year-old musician has given 1,000 performances in India and abroad.

The "Parsi Larry Adler," 87-year-old Phiroze Damri, learnt to play the mouth organ on his own. He worked as a representative of the well-known German firm Hohner which manufactured mouth organs and was a director of the Hohner Harmonica Club. Proficient in the violin as well, Phiroze, who is the brother of Bob Damri, was a pioneer in popularizing the mouth organ among schoolchildren in Bombay. His 100-scout band played on All India Radio and the 100 Parsi girls and boys band performed at the National Sports Club of India under his tutelage.

"There is perhaps no person in our community today who is as knowledgeable on art as 82-year-old Kekoo Gandhi," commended Engineer. Critic, collector and owner of Gallery Chemould, Cambridge-educated Gandhi was one of the moving spirits behind the establishment of the Jehangir Art Gallery. Deeply interested in contemporary Indian art, Gandhi was the Government of India representative who took the first major exhibition of contemporary art of independent India to London in 1965. A project on hand is the restoration of the Zoroastrian community's heritage of old paintings.

The doyen of Gujarati literature, nonagenarian Dr Ratan Marshall of Surat, was the first Parsi and the first student from Gujarat to get a PhD in Gujarati literature from Bombay University. Embellishing his education at the age of 70, he studied law along with his son and obtained an LLB degree! Social service has been his forte, his involvement with the Surat Parsi Panchayat dating back to 1935! At 91, Marshall still holds the position of special officer of the Panchayat. Marshall was conferred the award in absentia in the field of literature.

"Advocates, solicitors, judges — Parsis have traditionally fared well at the bar and on the bench. Justice Dinshaw Mehta and the late Justice Bakhtavar Lentin have been among the finest judges of the Bombay High Court," opined Engineer. "Gentleman judge" Mehta, now retired, distinguished himself with his modesty, humility and quiet demeanor on the bench. He was a special public prosecutor in the Sessions Court, a judge of the Bombay City Civil Court, and judge of the Bombay High Court for 12 years. After retirement, Mehta has practised as senior counsel for opinions and arbitrations.

The late Justice Lentin tried several matters which became cause célèbres — the stay on the demolishments of hutments ordered by the Maharashtra government, the cement scandal case which resulted in the resignation of chief minister A. R. Antulay, and the J. J. Hospital drug related deaths case which aroused unprecedented public interest. Lentin was a "just judge" who delivered judgments fearlessly and independently, notwithstanding threats to his life, said Engineer.

For actor Dadi Sarkari the world has been a stage for 55 of his 78 years! A Parsi Gujarati actor who has worked with well-known playwrights/directors Adi Marzban, Jehangir Wadia, Pheroze Antia, Burjor Patel as well as the Indian National Theatre, Sarkari had earlier been gifted a sum of Rs 25,000 by the WZO on the completion of his half century on stage. Sarkari's cameo roles have found a place in films and television as well.

A veteran of the Parsi Gujarati stage, 86-year-old Nader Nariman acted in Adi Marzban's plays for a number of years along with his late wife Hilla. A part of the Parsi Medical Amateurs Association's dramatic activities for 15 years, Nader Nariman was also an active member of Youths' Own Union.

The husband-wife team of Bomi and Dolly Dotiwala are prominent personalities in Parsi Gujarati theater. Of their 40-year dramatic career, a large part was with Adi Marzban, in the last few years they have acted in Bharat Dabholkar's revues like *Bottoms Up*. Familiar faces in television advertisements as well, Bomi also plays the drums for dance sequences in Hindi films and has his own band!

She was married to well-known playwright Pheroze Antia. After his early demise, she played leading roles in Adi Marzban productions. Moti Pheroze Antia Irani has acted in innumerable charity shows and in over 100 plays on All India Radio. She is a "wonderful actress," stated Engineer.

The noble art of healing saw four awardees. Padmabhushan Dr Jal Mehta has been connected with leprosy work in Poona for 30 years. A pioneering reconstructive and plastic surgeon, Mehta has developed and managed the Kondhwa Lepers Home in Poona, now called the Dr Bendorawalla Leprosy Hospital which has over 400 indoor patients and is one of the leading leprosy

institutions in India. The 75-year-old surgeon received the award in absentia.

Dr Jimmy Sidhva, radiologist, was the first Indian to write a textbook on C. T. Scanning. He has been the honorary radiologist at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital for over 45 years, possibly the longest tenure of any honorary in the Hospital, stated Engineer. A driving force behind the Parsi Medical Amateurs who have raised almost Rs 70 lakhs for charity, three generations of doctors in the Sidhva family have tickled audiences' ribcages — father Nadirshaw, Jimmy and his son Sohrab, also a radiologist. Jimmy Sidhva's interest in religion spurred him into publishing the *Gathas* — a translation of the *Gathas* into English verse. Jimmy also presented a paper at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston which was read out in his absence.

An athlete and body builder in his young days, honorary physician at the Parsee General, Masina and other hospitals, Dr Dinyar Gamadia has been president of the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League for the past 20 years. Gamadia has contributed his histrionic talents for the cause of charity as part of the Parsi Medical Amateurs.

His practice spans 64 years. Not only does 87-year-old Dr Noshir Ellis treat poor patients free of cost, asserted Engineer, he helps them along the way with free medicine and money for nourishment. A full-fledged doctor at the young age of 22, Ellis' extensive practice sees him ministering to patients till the wee hours of the morning!

Speaking on behalf of the awardees, Sidhva thanked the organizers for the honor done to senior achievers: "For me it is still mid afternoon. I am a young man of 71, not 72 as Dadi said, and don't you forget it!" Nicholson complimented the WZO for "creating a function of this size and nature. There is too much conflict in the community. Let us strongly eschew conflict... and help to achieve," he exhorted.

Earlier, Engineer appealed to Zoroastrians to join the WZO and stressed on the Organisation's "ridiculously low fees" — Rs 1,500 for life membership, annual membership of Rs 100 or Rs 250 for three years, while students below 25 become members free. He also appealed to individuals desiring to "throw away" their old beds, mattresses, pillows, tables, chairs, linen, cutlery, fans, etc to donate

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them to the Ervad Ratansha Katila Stop-over Lodging Place for needy pilgrims in Udvada (which was subsequently inaugurated on April 18, 2001).

WZO vice president of the central zone Roda Mistry, recently inducted into the women's Hall of Fame at the Houston World Congress, and WZO north zone vice president Dadi Mistry ("the man who brought WZO to India," said Engineer) were also presented tokens of appreciation and briefly addressed the gathering. Bana in his vote of thanks commended WZO joint secretary Dara Marfatia, joint treasurer Rusi Bhungara, joint treasurer of WZO India and its Youth Wing Mehernosh Dumasia and a host of others for organizing a nostalgic evening to honor the "heritage of the Parsis."

A RAY OF SUNSHINE

continued from page 25

thy to perform the rites and ceremonies for the well-being of the soul of the deceased. These priests are a disgrace to the fraternity of mobeds and therefore the Athornan Mandal has resolved to declare such unfit to perform any Zoroastrian ceremonies and rituals, as such persons have indulged in un-Zoroastrian religious activities, bringing shame and dishonor for the sake of earning more money. How many of such persons, as I cannot in all fairness call them priests, would perform such ceremonies if no monies were paid to them by our misguided laity?"

Some of JamaspAsa's points had been heard earlier viz, that a doctor does not kill a patient but tries to make him recover; the citing of the death of 2,000 Parsis in the plague of 1896 who were all consigned to the dakhmas without any resulting epidemic. (According to the prevailing conditions in Bombay then, the Doongerwadi was located very far from the populated areas of the city which was one of the cardinal reasons for its establishment and success at Malabar Hill.)

The normally reticent prelate's forceful delivery had the orthodox community on its feet, in an ovation of delight and reassurance.

JamaspAsa was followed by Kotwal who spoke in Gujarati and enjoined that only nasasalars have the right to enter the dakhmas as they have been enjoined to contain the *naso* or putrefaction. He urged the community to break their promise to the dead to cremate the body,

rather than incur what the religion believes is heavy punishment for a deadly sin. According to the dastur, birds were essential for speedy disposal of the dead.

He told the DDD that by going against tradition they were creating "kankas (discord) in the community" and suggested that they go their way: "You have the influence and the money. Get a flat for the ceremonies... maintain a few priests for the purpose." He cited an example from ancient history when those who rebelled against participating in the gahambar ceremony were excommunicated.

The only other high priest to speak, Unvalla was sanguine about the obedience of the Bangalore community as the trustees there not only seek his advice but implement it.

Mirza, a chemist by training, spoke of the various substances into which the human body fragments — gases, ashes, etc — when it burns. Also he maintained that the filters and scrubbers used in crematoria to minimize air pollution are eventually discarded and ultimately dumped in land or water, defiling these elements. Therefore he argued that cremation was "tantamount to defamation of the Zoroastrian religion." He urged

the community in general and the DDD in particular "not to abandon the system of dakhmenashini."

Creating a reserve dakhma?

At the Rustomframna meet the focus was on the functions and consecration ceremonies of a dakhma. Kaikhushro Dastoor noted that the system's three components — the vultures, the rays of the sun and the consecration ceremonies — all work together to make dakhmenashini a special institution where the deceased is taken care of physically and spiritually... Beginning with the choice of land at a substantial height above sea level, far from civilization where fauna thrive in their natural environment, the land is left for cattle to graze for six months followed by the holding of 13 baj ceremonies and a jashan before digging the land to the chanting of 21 *Yathas* to seek the acceptance of the souls of the dead by the spiritual powers, etc. Coming to the construction stage the Khshnoomist priest noted, "The depth of the bhandar is a factor of the height and circumference of the dakhma." From the bhandar four gutters lead away the powdered remains of the bones when the dakhma operates

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under idyllic conditions, i.e. enough vultures to quickly strip the body to the bone and direct sunlight to dry the bones to crumbly brittleness.

Wishing the BPP trustees all success in their efforts to revive the system at Malabar Hill, Dastoor emphasized that a dakhma at Valiv near Vasai would serve as a reserve facility that could reduce the pressure in the metropolis by absorbing the deceased of the surrounding suburbs. "(We have) no rivalry with the BPP," he assured his listeners.

An emotional Sachinwalla spoke of his middle class background, how his studies had been financed by community trusts, how he was now seeking to repay his debt. Referring to the jungle bordered by cattle farms, Sachinwalla said that the scavenger birds survive on the corpses of abandoned male calves. He envisaged a project comprising two dakhmas and a chotra plus bunglis, a sagdi, quarters for priests and nasasalars and an administrative enclosure as he felt sure that the area will remain untouched by urbanization for another 150 years. He made two requests to the community: funds for the construction and positive thoughts to speed the project along.

Rusi Jassawalla, trustee of the Rustomframa Agiary who presided over the function, informed the gathering that work on the creation of kucha roads was already proceeding with the available funds.

Honoring volunteers

The invitations in the name of BPP trustee Silloo Kavarana, CER (Committee for Economic Revival) stalwart Zal Contractor "and friends" speaking of jashan, awards and gahambar had the community flummoxed. At the end of the jashan by nearly 112 mobeds, BPP trustee Dinshaw Mehta was seen distributing the envelopes to the priests. Since Mehta is standing for reelection in June at the conclusion of his first seven-year term, "People asked whether the function was for the election," BPP trustee Dadi Engineer addressed the audience. "But Silloo and Zal are always ready to organize functions," he hummed, gave the Greek definition of an idiot as a man who does not vote, then endorsed Mehta's candidature with the words, "I've seen Dinshaw's work for six years. The community owes a debt of gratitude to (him)."

There was more to the function as it proceeded — as the BPP took the occa-

sion to publicly applaud the 27 members of the community who volunteered to clean the Anjuman dakhma according to the guidelines provided by the high priests and install the air purification system under the technical guidance of Mehernosh Behramkamdin. The plant, installed like a garland over the dakhma without touching it as per the injunctions of the high priests, has helped to absorb the odor of decaying bodies that has been plaguing the locality and the residents of Spenta and Godrej Baug in particular.

The volunteers who worked for eight days from 7.30 in the morning to 6.30 in the evening between December 24, 2000 and January 29, 2001 were duly acknowledged by the trustees with a souvenir and a rose. The 27 community activists led by Cyrus Jal Siganporia are Mehernosh Behramkamdin, Kersi Mistry, Hosheder Tampal, Jimmy Siganporia, Jimmy Mistry, Nozer Sutaria, Shirzad Bhathena, Rohinton Wadia, Kerman Mogrelia, Zubin Mistry, Zubin Jasoomani, Urmez Ghadially, Kersi Bavan, Zubin Mehta, Sarosh Irani, Shahrukh Irani, Rustom Irani, Ardeshir Khushrowshahi, Kurush Bastani, Dinyar Ichchaporla, Rumi Marawalla, Homiyar Doctor, Kersi Bhesania, Sharukh Govadia, Jimmy Bhathena and Nariman Mogrelia.

"We were grappling with the situation going out of hand but the dark days are indeed over," noted BPP trustee Dinshaw Tamboly in relief as he acknowledged the effort of the volunteers who have also pledged to help out as nasasalars if the need arises.

While crediting Dhalla for his efforts and experiments that have now yielded results, Engineer noted that the aviary project will also be pursued.

In an elaborate vote of thanks BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz alluded to the doctrinal requirements that dogged the air purification project and complimented Behramkamdin on his tenacity. "In the final analysis the solar concentrators are working," conceded Tirandaz adding that permissions from various government agencies were being pursued for the aviary project. Tirandaz's speech was followed by a delicious repast catered by Tanaz Godiwalla to which all mobeds and the Doongerwadi staff and their families were invited to participate.

"We feel we are chosen..."

Siganporia detailed the rituals the vol-

unteers need to follow before and after the cleaning of a dakhma. After a bath, kusti and *Sarosh Baj*, the volunteers don the full white nasasalar uniform from head to toe. Working in pairs with a four-meter long paivand joining them, the first pair takes three rounds of the dakhma with a dog in tow. Thereafter the same pair knocks at the door of the dakhma. The knock has two aspects, notes Siganporia: At the physical level it cleans away any insects, spiders, lizards etc; at the esoteric level it's a way of "seeking permission from the asho farohars of the dead." The first pair with the dog then walks around the inner periphery, chanting "*Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao*" followed by the rest of the volunteers in pairs.

The men work for seven to eight hours continuously without having even a sip of water or urinating during that time. There is no urge for elimination or intake, says Siganporia, adding that the work is normally undertaken in the winter season.

When a dakhma is slated for cleaning it is put out of commission for the preceding month, says Siganporia. A pit is dug and ready close by before they begin to empty the bones from the bhandar on a white stretcher made of sheets. The pit is prepared with a layer of taro, followed by layers of lime and salt. Over these the bones are spread in a layer approximately two feet deep before the taro, lime and salt layers are repeated. This layering process continues until the bones are all emptied there and sealed with a final layer of lime, salt and mud.

After the bhandar is emptied the whole dakhma is cleaned with a *butara* (heavy broom) and washed with water. "Only after the water dries is taro sprinkled on the whole dakhma including the pavis and the bhandar," clarifies Siganporia.

Talk among the men — who can be behdins or ostas, never athornans — is restricted to a minimum and largely consists of sign language, says Siganporia. In turn the men chant the *Ahunavar* aloud.

At the end of the day the men strip off all their apparel, keeping it for the following day and take a simple nahn with *darum nu patru* (pomegranate leaf) and nirang, donning the same clothes again the next morning. At the end of the job every single item of wear or use in the dakhma is consigned to another pit. Completely stripped, the men are required to



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spread taro all over themselves followed by sand or mud to suck it out and wait for 10-15 minutes in the sun. After the bath an entirely new set of clothes is worn, followed by a second nahn. Three more nahns are taken every third day and the volunteers may not go to any fire-temple for 15 days after the job is over "because the aura around us is disturbed," explains Siganporia.

Siganporia and five friends from Nowroz Baug started cleaning agiaries in the 1980s, beginning with their Lal-baug agiary. He displays a weld in his left knee, acquired by a fall while cleaning the ceiling of the Iranshah, that hospitalized him for three-and-a-half months. A daily agiary goer, Siganporia would be requested by the panthakies of the vari-

ous agiaries and atash behrams to help with the cleaning prior to a salgirah or muktad or New Year.

Then one day in 1997 "Farokh Govadia approached me that the Nargol dakhma needed cleaning," recalls Siganporia. Taking the guidance of Ervad Eruchshah Karkaria of Navsari, they took on the job. The following year they undertook to clean the Navsari dakhma and were enthused by the appreciation accorded them by Dinshaw Tamboly. In 1999 and 2000, they helped clean out the Poona dakhmas. After the ozone project was completed at Malabar Hill, they undertook to clean the Thana dakhma that has been out of commission for 10 years. Now it is ready for the community's use again and Siganporia hopes it will be pressed into service by the local Zarathushtis so that the pressure on Doongerwadi would reduce.

A former toolroom technician who retired from Larsen and Toubro's Powai

works, Siganporia is now the BPP consultant at Doongerwadi. His wife Zarine works for Pest Control India while their only child Parvez is a consultant in systems and computer technology at Dallas, Texas after acquiring his MS in computer science from the University of Houston at Clear Lake.

With 13 pairs of volunteers now banded together, Siganporia is keen to ensure that the work continues. The opportunity to serve is its own reward. In his words, "We feel we are chosen... we get a different satisfaction, more energy..."

At Albless Baug (L to R, 1st row): Khushrooh Byramji, Kavarana and H. Mirza; Contractor felicitating Siganporia; mobeds participating in the jashan. (2nd row): Behram Dastur, Contractor, Tamboly, Minoo Shroff, Engineer, Mehta, Tirandaz and the volunteers with Behramkamdin

Photos: C. C. Gundevia

At the Rustomframna Agiary (L to R, above): Sachinwalla; Nasha, Roda and Rusi Jassawalla, Sachinwalla and Dastoor; the audience Photos: Adi Suder



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Dealing with dilemmas

Stressing on the issues of life and survival, the author observes that the loss of biodiversity has contributed to the decline of the Parsis

Aspi Moddie

Judging by the media reflection of its leaders and its vocal elements, Parsi Zoroastrians appear to be in a dilemma over the issues of life and survival as well as the disposal of the dead. On the surface the basic issues appear to be:

- the century-old controversy of inter-marriage and the admission of its children into the fold;
- the century and a half's division between the orthodox and the reformers;
- the current hot issue of the future of dakhmenashini as an acceptable mode for the disposal of the dead.

Behind the surface are vital issues of demographic decline since 1931, a weakening of biodiversity in that decline, and conflicts of ritual orthodoxy and rational adaptation to a changing world. All these surface in *Parsiana* (January 2001) as "Doctrinal crossfire" at the samast anjuman meet and as "Seeking new directions" at the Jamshedpur meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. To an amused outsider, an endangered and confused species (Parsi Zoroastrians, not Irani ones, apparently) appears in passionate pursuit of a near extinct species of bird, not for life's survival processes but for the rituals of death!

While claiming no expertise in demography, the genetics of biodiversity, the biology of vultures or Zoroastrian ritual, I offer a few hypotheses for the deeper rational consideration of the orthodox and the reformist. The fundamental question is: How will this declining community survive with its basic Zoroastrian values in the flood of growing humanity (now over six billion) in the multicultural, diasporic world of the 21st century? Personally, I am clear about only one thing: the need for closer merging and intermarriage of Parsis and Zoroastrian Iranis, which has failed to receive the same attention as fertility clinics and subsidies of more than two-

children families by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). There will be larger complementary strength in that Parsi-Irani merger, despite differences in history and social environments. The rest I offer as hypotheses for further study and debate, hopefully in a rational, constructive light without the dysfunctional tribal strife so typical of us.

The Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (5WZC) in Bombay in 1990 highlighted the decline of the Parsis in India from 109,000 in 1931 to 76,000 in 1991 together with evidence of

- modernization, education and use of contraceptives with fewer children in recent generations;
- late marriages — after 27 years;
- a significant ratio of unmarried males and females, reducing the normal reproduction rate. In the decade ending 1981, Parsi population in India declined steeply by 26 percent, and in the following decade by 19.5 percent as a result of natural decline and migration. On the other hand, the first Iran census of 1986 threw up a surprising figure of 91,000 as against earlier guesstimates of Iranian Zoroastrians between 20,000 and 40,000. Whatever the exact figures, Iranian Zoroastrians now seem to be significantly matched with Parsis, and with fewer conflicting inhibitions. Together the two arms of the Zoroastrian world could form a larger genetic pool, if common marriages were promoted more purposefully. It could be far more effective for future survival in a larger biodiversity pool than earlier BPP measures.

Simultaneously there has been a thinning of population niches and reproduction opportunities with the spread of the community in post-1931 India into more fragmented parts with smaller genetic pools. In addition, since 1970, 20 percent of its most reproduceable numbers below the age of 45 has migrated abroad. Before 1931, over 90 percent Parsis

lived in the Bombay-Poona-Ahmedabad triangle which facilitated easier marriage contacts and reproduction. By 1991, that figure was down to about 60 percent of the global Parsi population. This has led to the simultaneous genetic phenomenon of many more "discontinuous islands" of biodiversity all over the world apart from increasing mixed marriages beyond the smaller Parsi pools, and the ritual school's strident disapproval of the inclusion of the children of Parsi females who marry out.

A recent study at Princeton University, *Genetics and the extinction of species* (editors Laura F. Landweber and Andrew P. Dobson, 1999), has led to three significant conclusions. First, the loss of biodiversity due to compartmentalized groups inbreeding in "discontinuous islands" leading to endangered species, making them more vulnerable to extinction. Second, safety lies not just in total numbers, but in sufficiently large numbers in sizable clusters for reproduction. For example, 100 tigers in 10 clusters of 10 each will be far more vulnerable than two clusters of 50 each. It has been well known that when populations decline below a certain minimum level, genetic breeding declines, leading to the extinction of many species. The third conclusion is that the narrower and more specialized or inbred the species, the more susceptible it becomes to extinction.

Of the total world Zoroastrian population given in the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress publication at Houston, the two major pools of Iran at 157,000 (unbelievably up from 91,000 in 1986 or 72 percent in 14 years!), and India at 76,382 are spread in about 20 odd cities of which only two each are sizable. The US/Canada pool of 25,000 could be spread over 15 cities, and the UK/Europe pool of 11,500 could similarly be spread in about 10 cities. The

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small Australian pool of only 2,100 may be in about six cities. The rest are mere drops in 12 countries. With the possible exception of Bombay, Poona, Tehran, Toronto, London and Sydney, themselves limited biodiversity pools, the rest are too small to offer biologic prospects of growth. Almost the entire community is in low, far-flung biodiversity pools, and a sizable minority — maybe a third — are already married out.

Something of this loss of biodiversity, which affects birds, animals and humans, appears to have contributed to the steep decline of the Parsis, beyond modernization factors, in the "discontinuous islands" phenomenon of recent times. Could we then be hitting those minimum biological levels in far-flung, small communities, beyond which there is inevitable population decline and extinction? If the 5WZC's recommendation of deeper demographic studies had been implemented through an inter-regional council in the 1990s, we might have known more of this subject in the last decade. A negative but influential minority, not of the orthodox as far as I know, prevented this positive development. Instead, they got caught up in the egos and power politics of world Zoroastrian bodies. The flag seemed more important than the seed.

So, the issue of the community's healthy survival appears to have fallen between three stools. First and foremost, those for whom community politics is more important than the scientific approach to its basic problems. Second, the ritually pure Brahmins among us, who claim "quality is more important than quantity," forgetting the quality of majestic declining tigers. The third group, including eminent figures like Justice Sam Bharucha, with a pathetic belief in past history and a "gut feeling" that if we have survived for 1,000 years after the flight from Iran, "we shall survive for many centuries yet" — despite the demographic facts of the 20th century. Bharucha knows that "gut feeling" is hardly admissible evidence in a court of law, or in the rational scientific world. It cannot match centuries of global genetic research in this wondrous age of the genome. Let not good, reasonable, responsible men desert the truths (Asha) of modern science, which, may I add, should not be the remote concern of scientists alone. We all have a "vohumanic" duty to understand its findings and

its implications, as a part of the "spentaic" life we seek in the confusions of our time.

So where does all this lead in terms of minimizing the negative conflicts, and maximizing the area of reasoned debate and decisions? The guidance of Zarathushtra's teaching in the *Gathas*, especially in Yasna 30.2 and the message of "frasho-kereti" (Mary Boyce's "healing renewal") need each one of us to develop vohumanic faculties and take decisions to overcome the problems of change, survival, growth and happiness. May I suggest the following:

- A reminder of Jamsetji Tata's remarkable foresight in establishing the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore as early as 1911 — the seedbed of later science and technology in the cyber age — should make all Parsis proud and breed a consequential respect for modern science in the pursuit of the truths of "Asha."

- Far greater thought and resources for our children and grandchildren's education and competitiveness in a globalizing world, rather than the disposal of the likes of me heading for death anytime from tomorrow!

- A scientific study of the causes of demographic realities and decline with the application of scientific biodiversity factors in the diminishing clusters thesis, both in India/Iran and elsewhere by Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian specialists.

- The promotion of larger clusters with improved living prospects and greater reproductive ones among Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians everywhere by smoothening out possible barriers of language and disparate social environments. Let us remember the basic biological finding that survival of both 'quality' and 'quantity' are in reproducible numbers and in sizable clusters of any species. Even the quality and quantity of majestic tigers has fast deteriorated in diminishing habitat clusters, not to speak of the less majestic species of dhansak-eaters!

- Big-minded, *Gatha*-led thinking on the open acceptance of the children of mixed marriages, subject to the consent of the parents, and the desire of the child, who also has his/her rights, even as a minor.

May I also put in a plea for more humane concern for those in their last years, some in the throes of fatal diseases like cancer or Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. These and others facing death in cruel loneliness are increasingly put into hospitals, where medicine

may prolong life, but fails to make pre-death days acceptable with love and peace in their souls. Surely these pre-death humane concerns are no less ethical and vohumanic than the post-death ritual concern for corpses. Yet no one speaks or shows concern for these, not the trustees, nor priests, nor ardent arguers.

A management consultant, Aspi Moddie is a former IAS officer who early in his career



opted for the private sector. His voice was evident at the 4th and 5th World Zoroastrian Congresses. His book, *Zarathushtra's "Frasho-Kereti," "Renewal in Our Time"* was published in 1996.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 12

we need is another *Indira Gandhi*. Without her there would not have been a Bangladesh or peace in Punjab. She saw to it that if water is supplied to Rajasthan the province would bloom like another California. One must remember that a citizen of an independent country is also its soldier and must not give in to terrorists.

JEHANGIR MEDORA
Scarborough, Canada

A prince of peace

Amongst us is born a prince
His name Zarathushtra Spitama
He tirelessly roamed to spread the word
Humata Hukta Huvarshta

"Hear with your ears
And ponder with a good mind"
From the path of Asha never veer
Open your mind and never fear

Everyone is equal before the law
Be one Zoroastrian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh
Ours is a universal religion
There is no need or place for prejudice

Cause one wears a sudreh and kusti
Does not one Zoroastrian make
Unless in druj one wants to bake

Let's open up our minds and hearts
Let's heal the wounds and play our part
Wake up folks! We have a future to chart
To guide our youngsters on the right path.

FARIDA BAMJI

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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KAPADIA'S KARATE KINGDOM

continued from page 29

from Japan. Students progress from a white belt to yellow, orange, green, blue, brown and black. "The dropout rate is very high as many do not want to tax their bodies," explains Vispy. "Only two out of 10 may reach junior Sho Dan (first degree black belt) level, only one may continue as a senior black belt. It is then that you begin to realize that there is still so much about karate that you don't know!" His institute has trained, according to their handout, almost 300 junior black belts, including the youngest — Binay Shah — who at seven years, three months has been recorded in the *Limca Book of Records* as the youngest black belt in India. "We had a Parsi lady, a Queen Mary School teacher, who started with us after 60! She had always been into fitness and progressed up to senior brown belt level when an impending cataract operation put an end to her enthusiasm," remembers Shiraz.

Not for the faint-hearted, obtaining a black belt takes a minimum of five years and packs many a punch — 35-40 waterless rounds of Priyadarshini Park's athletic track, military crawls, bunny hops, duck walks, etc. The examination consisting of katas, free sparring, multiple attacks, shiai, etc, puts to the test grit and nerves as well as skill. "Vispy is a hard taskmaster when it comes to handing out black belts," smiles Shiraz.

Only senior karatekas train with weapons like the bo (staff), sai (akin to a trishul), knife and sword. Vispy himself honed his skills in his earlier years under Hanshi Gogen Yamaguchi (the present grand master's father who was known as the "living god of karate"). Having been to the land of the rising sun over 40 times, he has now stopped counting!

In December 1999, to celebrate Vispy's 25 years as a teacher, the academy organized an international camp in Poona with 1,000 participants. At a felicitation function at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar in the same month, Hanshi Goshi Yamaguchi presented Vispy with a ceremonial sword — a rare honor. An elaborate program saw the breaking of tiles, boards, bricks, including one where a policeman leaped over 10 people

crouched in a row and demolished a tile with a flying kick!

A highlight of the academy's history was the hosting of the Second Asia Pacific Gojukai Tournament at Balewadi (Sports City) in Poona in 1996 which was inaugurated by then chief minister Manohar Joshi, with participation from countries as far apart as Iran, Japan, Philippines and



The young badminton ace and (below) with Gogen Yamaguchi (left)



Australia. "We had an elaborate opening ceremony with over 22,000 students participating and an 'Olympic torch,'" reminisces Vispy, who terms karate, after cricket, the second most popular sport in India. "There are seven karate schools in this stretch of Tardeo Road alone," he remarks.

Drawing comparisons between the student of 25 years ago and today, Kapadia comments that boys of the 1970s were "sporty and willing to be pushed to maximum limits. Today you push a little more and they leave." Numbers are much larger now, but not all karate schools are prospering, he observes. Kapadia's own perception towards karate has matured and mellowed. "In the early years I used to view it as physical prowess, a form of fighting. Now I see it as an art I can use for the betterment of people," says the karateist who is an alumnus of Antonio de Souza High School and Somani College, who loves soft music ("no MTV

please") and who neither smokes nor drinks. "I even made my father give up smoking."

Besides his yen for karate, Kapadia's two other passions are, he says, his religion and his community. "I derive my strength from the atash. The Iranshah has helped me and religion has given me peace with myself and with my art." A regular devotee at fire-temples, the family visits the Iranshah once a month. Taking shape at Udvada is a dharamshala he is setting up in memory of his father. "Pilgrims will be able to stay there totally free — we will provide lodging, no board, but will give facilities for warming food, etc." Kapadia sponsors gahambars and proposes under the auspices of ZOSTA (Zoroastrian Student-Teacher Association) to organize and finance trips every year for 100 Zoroastrian children and teachers to the Iranshah.

The major problem facing the community today is the question of dakhmenashini, he asserts. "My child (his first-born, five-and-a-half-year-old Faraena who died suddenly in 1998) was consigned to the dakhma and the dakhma is very close to my heart. I would not like to discuss this in public," he says, shadows of sadness clouding his visage. "The impact of losing a child is tremendous. It was the worst day of my life. But I still feel very close to her."

Shiraz and Vispy have three other children — six-year-old Sanaya who is already into karate, Vahishta (four) and Behram (two-and-a-half). "My wife is very religious. She prays two to three hours every day," relates Vispy. Towards his parents he feels an "attitude of gratitude" for their sacrifice and support which propelled him forward in his career. Bahadur passed away in 1996, Baimai resides with the family. Younger brother Hoshang, also a black belt, is settled in the US with his family and has also been supportive, acknowledges Vispy.

Commending "silent social workers," Kapadia bemoans "the crab mentality" of some members of the community who seek to pull down anyone who is doing well. "We have been washing so much dirty linen in public, people are laughing at us," he moans. "As a community we are slipping because we are not united."

A believer in living life king-size, Kapadia asserts: "I have always been focused in what I want. Throughout my life people have helped me and I feel I have to give back a thousand times more."

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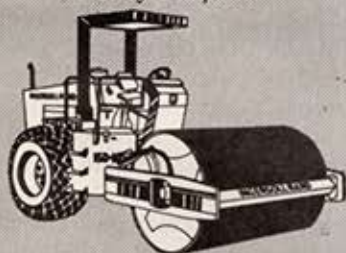
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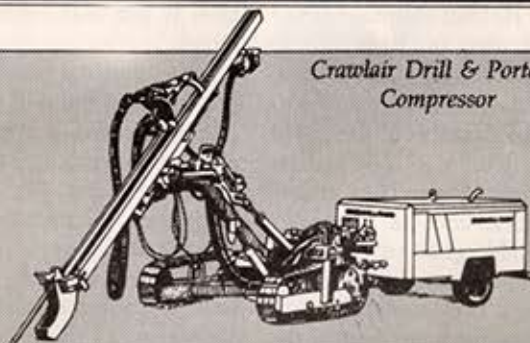
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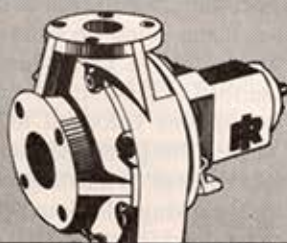
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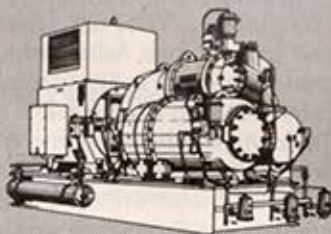
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ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

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interfering in the system, practice and belief of the present day Zoroastrian community. We respect their right to continue in the footsteps of their immediate ancestors. We also respect their efforts to evolve."

The Vancouver-based AICRRDC, whose founder members include Goli Farhangi, Manucher Farhangi, Dr Iradj Pourkarimi, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Rostam Shahbandari, Parviz Yeganegi and Mehraban J. Zartoshty was established on February 21, 2000. It aims to promote research on the original Zarathushtrian culture of ancient Iran before it fell prey to the influence of other cultures and religions, notes a message from the Center.

Accordingly, the two themes of the first edition of *Iran Zamin* as stated in Rahnmoon's editorial: "While the Egyptians built Pyramids for life after death, the Iranians joined the Mediterranean to the Red Sea via the Nile. What was the reason for such (a) different outlook to life and death? (and) The meaning of Mazda and Ahura in the *Gathas*." Editorial contributors to this first issue include Dr Khanak Eshghi Sanati, Prof Dr Helmut Humbach, Prof Dr M. N. Bogolyubov and Rahnmoon.

Rahnmoon ascribes the benevolence of the early Achaemenian emperors to their devotion to Zarathushti ideas. He writes, "The early Iranians followed the teachings of Zarathushtra. They understood the universe and the forces involved. They made good rules (khash atra vairya) and progressed without going against nature. They used the knowledge not for personal gains but for the mutual benefit of mankind. Herodotus says: 'The actual worshipper is not permitted to pray for any personal or private blessings, but only for the king and the general good of the community, of which he is himself a part'..."

"Especially after the Greeks conquered the Persian Empire in 330 BCE, paganism progressed with the help of the newfound knowledge; they had found answers to some of the mysteries. Some of the knowledge that was beyond their cognizance, they either called it magic or changed them. Like Ferdows or Paradise, which was on earth, was moved beyond the skies and reserved for the dead.

"In the following millenniums, the paganizing of the acquired knowledge continued steadily and a thick curtain

was woven, which covers our thinking and our way of life and hides the truth from us. Its effect has been so strong that even today progress and science is looked upon by religion as an evil and interference in the work of God.

"What has remained of the ancient knowledge is translated today by scholars with reference to these ancient pagan religions or in the light of later religions, thereby misinterpreting the greatest of all men — Zarathushtra."

On the second theme Rahnmoon argues against the concept that "the word Ahura and Mazda in whatever syntax represents the name of the one and only God Ahura Mazda." He maintains, "Zarathushtra in his *Gathas* talks of Mazda as Wisdom, and Ahura as Creation/Creator, Mazda Ahura — the wisdom in creation and Ahura Mazda the Creator of Wisdom — God."

Observing that "Vohu means good, Ahri means bad and mana means mind. So Vohu-mana is the good mind and not a bountiful immortal. Ahri-mana is the bad mind and not the devil," he notes, "Personification was Greek; the ancient Persian culture and religion had no place for deities and angels" and quotes Herodotus who says, 'The Persian religion is not anthropomorphic like the Greek.'

"Zarathushtra says it is you and your thoughts not the will of Ahura Mazda that brings evil or good. Ahura Mazda created the wisdom in creation, which is taking its course. The suns, the moons, the planets, the stars, the galaxies are all moving ahead, some are disintegrating while others are being born. The "black hole," "wormhole" all have a role in this great creation, there is no manager managing the daily affairs, changing the course, punishing and rewarding..."

"He says, use your Vohu-mana, your good mind, get to the truth, Asha Vahista, understand the wisdom in creation and go hand in hand with it, not against it. Your aim in life should be to strive for perfection in your work, vocation and existence. That is what will make your life worth living on this planet; we can either create a heaven or a hell right here on this earth. Zarathushtra's heaven and hell are right here on this planet."

The English section of *Iran Zamin* is available on their website www.ancientiran.com

The mischievous mummy

It was a suspense thriller on the lines of a Hollywood movie: the emergence of a

corpse, supposedly 2,600 years old, with a number of claimants. The gilded lady confounded the experts: was she Iranian or Egyptian? The Iranian media even claimed it was an Achaemenian prince, according to the Karachi daily *Dawn* (October 30, 2000) which first reported on the find in its issue of October 27, 2000. Clippings of its coverage were forwarded to *Parsiana* by long-term subscriber Noshir Mana of Karachi.

The mummy lay in a wooden sarcophagus 196 cm long and 56 cm deep, which bore "an engraving of Ahura Mazda (probably the Asho Farohar), the supreme Zoroastrian deity; along with other details in Makhi cuneiform, a language script prevalent in ancient Persia, (in) about 600 BC," Sarfaraz Ahmed conveyed the details according to the Karachi-based National Museum of Pakistan (NMP) in the front page *Dawn* report. With a golden crown on her head, a gold plate with a cuneiform inscription over her chest, the find confounded the Pakistani experts who initially viewed it. As Prof Emeritus Ahmed Hasan Dani of Quaid-i-Azam University noted, "All the features of the mummy princess suggested an ancient Egyptian origin. But the inscriptions on the sarcophagus were not Egyptian."

This cultural melange led to various theories: Perhaps she was an Egyptian princess married to a Persian prince during the reign of Cyrus I (640-590 BC) who had been embalmed according to the customs and rites of her country of origin, hazarded Dani. NMP curator Dr Asma Ibrahim suggested two possible sources of the mummy: from tombs located around Hamadan, Iran or Kharan in present-day Balochistan where rogue fortune hunters are said to be vandalizing ancient temples and burial mounds. According to the script on the gold plate her name could be Khor-ul-Gayan or Tundul Gayan. On November 9, *Dawn* ascribed to Ibrahim the view that these inscriptions belonged to the time of Xerxes. The plate inscription was translated to read: "I the daughter of Xerxes, the great king, I Ruduuna (Rudumna) ... she claims to have the blessings of Ahura Mazda and his protection."

While the scientists planned DNA, CT Scan and carbon dating tests, Iran threatened to move UNESCO to reclaim its ancient past. Simultaneously a division bench of the Balochistan High Court admitted a constitutional petition filed by journalist Dr Abdul Samad Chishti Mujahid claiming that the people of

Balochistan had been illegally deprived of their cultural, historic and valuable heritage by the action of the Karachi police. He prayed that the archeological find be restored to Balochistan. Pakistan's province of Balochistan shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani authorities had recovered the mummy from the house of Sardar Wali Mohammad Reeki in Quetta when they investigated allegations about Karachi resident Ali Akbar possessing a video of a mummy he was trying to sell. Reeki told the police the mummy had been found by Sharif Shah Bakhi, supposedly an Iranian national, who had chanced upon it after an earthquake in a nearby town. Hoping to sell the discovery at Pakistani Rs 600 million (US \$ 11 million) and share the booty, they were believed to have received an offer of Rs 60 million (US \$ 1.1 million) from an anonymous foreign buyer. While Reeki and Akbar are cooling their heels in the lockup, charged with violating Pakistan's Antiquity Act, Bakhi's whereabouts are unknown.

The tale of the mysterious mummy was provided a clinching chapter by Kristin M. Romey and Mark Rose, assistant managing editor and managing editor respectively of *Archaeology*, the magazine of the Archaeological Institute of America, in its January/February 2001 issue.

After recounting the aforementioned events leading to the discovery of the mummy and the speculations of the experts, the duo wrote about their interaction with Oscar White Muscarella of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and author of *The Lie Became Great: The Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures*. Exchanging information they learnt that Muscarella had received four photographs of the same mummy last March from a New Jersey resident on behalf of an unidentified dealer in Pakistan. An accompanying letter had explained that it had been brought from Iran to Pakistan by Zoroastrian families many years ago. The letter writer claimed that the mummy was the daughter of king Xerxes, referring to a one-page attached translation of the breastplate inscription. Muscarella contacted the translator — a cuneiform expert from a major American university — to learn that the translator's complete analysis had been withheld by the New Jersey representative.

Note Romey and Rose, "The inscription does indeed contain the line 'I am the daughter of the great king Xerxes,' as well as a sizeable chunk lifted straight from a famous inscription of the king Darius (522-486 BC) at Behistun in western Iran. The Behistun inscription, which records the king's accomplishments, dates to 520-519 BC, substantially later than the 600 BC date proposed for the mummy. The second page of analysis listed several problems with the mummy's inscription that led the scholar to believe that its author wrote in a manner inconsistent with Old Persian. The inscription, he concluded, was likely a modern falsification, probably dating 'from no earlier than the 1930s.'

"Convinced that the scholar's 20th century date was incorrect, the dealer's representative apparently sent a small piece of the wooden coffin to a carbon dating laboratory. The results indicated it was approximately 250 years old 'which cannot be called modern,' sniffed the representative in a follow-up letter to the cuneiform expert."

The authors state that *Archaeology* has submitted Muscarella's documentation to the federal authorities, who have forwarded it to Interpol.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 18

ducted in April 2000, Dalal had secured 80 percent marks earning the first rank in her College.



Dalal: stands on her merits

A brilliant student throughout her academic career, St Mary's, Poona had declared her the Best Student — Junior School for the year 1989-90. Dalal had obtained 94 percent in her ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) examination, earning a gold medal from the Zoroastrian Student Teacher Association for being the highest ranker among the Zoroastrian students at the SSC (Secondary School Certificate)/ICSE examinations in March 1996, notes her bio data. At the HSC examination in March 1998 she featured in the merit list yet again.

Dalal was a member of the winning team when she represented Poona at a National Leadership Seminar in Nainital in 1998, notes a summary of her major achievements.

A model evolution

As the Cornetto man in the Cornetto ice cream advertisement, or The Complete Man in the Raymond advertisement on television; the Parsi member of parliament in the teleserial *Swaraj*, dancing



Farida (left) and Rusi Mistry

with actress Juhi Chawla in the song *I am the best* for the film *Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani*, Rusi Mistry's may be a familiar face now. But before he came into prominence, there were almost 50 advertising films where he was just one among the many in the crowd scenes, slogging it out in the rain or sunshine, notes Mistry.

He had to put in a lot of hard work before his potential was realized, points out 49-year-old Mistry, especially since he made a start in this industry only five

years ago. With an accountancy background, he was working as a financial consultant in Dubai but when his Parsi partner cheated him, he was financially ruined and had to start afresh, says Mistry. Seeing an advertisement in the *Mid-Day*, he decided to try his luck as a model and got his first break in the Suzuki motorbike advertisement where he was just a passerby.

"Acting is either inborn in you or is absent," believes Mistry whose professional training only involved a vacation course in acting he had done at the FilmLaya Studio when he had come down to Bombay from Dubai on one of his holidays. "But professional training does help you to open up, to face the camera lights," adds the 5'10", fair complexioned Mistry who has now taken it up as a full-time career. Every week he has to give three-four auditions for different roles, some of which come his way, some don't. The most expensive aspect of this profession is maintaining a portfolio of photographs, reveals Mistry whose wife Farida, better known as Pinky, also appears in advertisements of Lakmé, Rexona, ANZ Grindlays Bank, Onida Candy TV and many more.

Among the advertising films for which Rusi has modelled are Britannia Tiger biscuits, Titan watches, BLS Paan Masala...In the print medium he has appeared for Birla Cement, Cipla, Jadoo Internet, Channel V, Fulford India...The teleserials in which he appears or has appeared are *Kundli* on Metro9, *Kaun* on DD2, *Saher* and *Saaya*. Farida has played roles in teleserials like *Rishtey*, *Swaraj*, *Naqaab*. Kundan Shah's *Kasam se*, Karan Johar's *Kabhi khushi kabhi gam* are some of the Hindi films where both Rusi and Farida put in guest appearances, according to their bio datas.

Days of the strays

"It was an animal show with a difference. Unlike others shows, there were no smartly dressed owners running their fingers through some Labrador's velvet coat with a look of superiority on their faces. Neither were owners strutting around with Alsations..." noted a write-up in the *Sunday Mid-Day* of January 29, 2001. The 100 odd animals at the show for mixed



Five active members of the community were presented engraved medals and roses by the Parvez Kattrak Foundation on March 11, 2001. Seen at the function (from left): Marzban Giara, Bomi Sachinwalla, chief guest Kumi Daroo-wala, Kattrak, Minoo Jokhi, Cyrus Dastoor and Coover Gandevia

breed cats and dogs at the Parel animal hospital grounds "were not great lookers. They all just looked loved," added the news report by Lajwanti D'Souza.

There was Kayra, a sleek white dog with an incessantly wagging tail, who although blind was picked up from the road and taken to the home of Thrity and Dinyar Gazder about three-and-a-half years ago. Skipoki, a small black pariah had been picked up from the Grant Road railway station by Dr Nazneen Antia. Shweta, a dog struck with paralysis, was found at Hanging Garden by Shireen Vakil, reported the news item.

"The aim of the show was to prove that dogs and cats don't have to be classic pedigreed ones to...become great pets. A little bit of love, concern and care is all it takes to make a stray dog or cat a family member," mentioned the write-up. Animals were also put up for adoption at the show.

That stray dogs also make good guards has been the experience of the Narimans, the owners of Parsi Dairy Farm. Dinku who positions himself outside the sweetmeat shop keeps the ruffians and beggars at bay while he is privileged to enjoy a diet of paneer and milk, mentioned yet another story in the *Mid-Day* of October 3, 2000. Daisy Sidhwa of Regal Theatre took charge of the last two female puppies from a litter of six found at the Colaba police station. Today they have grown into big, healthy bitches and are known by the same name, Shonu. Both are reportedly friendly and love hiding behind picture boards and the booking windows at the Theatre.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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Parsi-o-e Suratman Vahaveli Dan Ganga (Acts of Charity by Parsis in Surat) by Dr Ratan Marshall. Published in 1999 by Surat Parsi Panchayat, Rustomji Mancherji Kooka Parsi Panchayat Building, Dr Jamshedji Laskari Road, Shahpore, Surat 395003. Pp: 108. Price: Not mentioned.

Dr Ratan Marshall is a pucca Surti. He has lived and worked in Surat all his life.



Pucca Surti
Marshall

He knows the Parsis there intimately, thanks to his sincere work for the community as a member of the Surat Parsi Panchayat. The book under review is a result of his praiseworthy Panchayat work. He has also written on Ardesar

Kotwal and Nusservanji Vakil.

In this book Marshall has described the contribution of about 14 individuals who spent their earnings on charitable causes for the good of the people in general, and for the Parsi community of Surat in particular. For example, Sir Cowasji Jehangir was the philanthropist who gave Rs 35,000 for the construction of the (old) Civil Hospital in Surat for the welfare of the people. The Hospital contained a special ward for eye patients, perhaps the first of its kind.

Sorabjee Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy donated Rs 35,225 for a high school in Surat (1863-64).

Education and health were the principal objects of charity. As early as 1931, Pirojshah Jehangirshah Talyarkhan had given loans of Rs 10,500 at five percent interest for an x-ray machine for the benefit of Surat and the nearby districts. After a few years, when one more diagnostic x-ray machine was required, Jamshedji Naoroji Kapadia donated in 1953 a sum of Rs 25,000 in the name of his brother Rustomji Naoroji Kapadia.

The well-known clock tower in Surat was constructed by Khan Bahadur Burjorji Mehervanji Fresur as early as 1871. Many other such philanthropic institutions owe their existence to the charity of the Parsis of Surat and Bombay. Even after a century, the institutes serve the Surtis of today.

This small book is worth preserving in one's personal library as a useful document. One hopes that another intelligent son of Surat decides to record extensively the works of charitable Parsis of Surat of the 20th century.

HORMAZDYAR S. DALAL

Saintly souls

Sant Suvas (Fragrance of the Saints) by Bapsy Engineer. Published in 2000 by Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, 134, Princess Street, Bombay 400002. Pp: 108. Price: Rs 75.

India is a land of saints. They are found in all parts of the country: God's good men and women, large-hearted, courageous and pious, who desire intensely to find God in the midst of their worldly surroundings. For this search, they initially need a guru's guidance and 37 such aspirants have been covered in this second collection of short stories by Bapsy Engineer. Her first book, *Parag*, was published in 1998.

The very first story is about a saintly soul Pesuji, who lived in Bharuch. When the daughter of a Nawab in Gujarat began behaving in a mentally imbalanced fashion, the Nawab sent for hakims and vairs, who failed to cure the princess. At last one of the courtiers suggested the name of a saintly Parsi in Bharuch, Pesuji.

The Nawab immediately summoned him to his Court. Since he was a cruel bigot, and did not enjoy the confidence of his people, Pesuji first went to the fire-temple, said his prayers, armed himself with a clean bottle and left for the palace.

As the girl was brought before him, he began reciting five *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*s. With this and other simple religious performances he cured the princess of her mental imbalance, at which the Nawab and his Begum were extremely happy. But the courtiers, jealous of Pesuji's success, were not. One of them implied that the cure was not the result of Pesuji's piety but of *jadu* (magic), an insult Pesuji was not prepared to take lightly. He placed the bottle in his hand on the floor and told the courtier to lift it. The fellow failed and became the laughing stock of his fellow courtiers.

Pesuji then lifted it with his two small fingers. The Nawab was amazed and promised all kinds of rewards, but Pesuji

politely rejected them and left the palace. The divine power he had achieved was thousand times superior to the worldly gifts offered by the Nawab. He did not need them. This is but one instance of the superior powers achieved by Pesuji. Though a layman, he was respectfully known among the Parsi community of Bharuch as Dastur Pesuji.

Several other such saintly persons have been included by Engineer in this collection. We have Sant Kabir, Tulsidas, Sant Namdeo, Sant Eknath and several others. There are Jaideo and Swami Haridas, Rabia and Sant Hasan, Rambhakta Fakir Shah Jallaludin Vasali, Vithoba and others including Parsi saints. Azar Kaiwan, Dasturji Kookadar, Dasturji Meherji Rana, and one or two more Zarathushti saints were not only learned, but also Khoda Parast.

Each saintly person, described by Engineer in her excellent poetic-prose, appears before us full of life. There is the dancing girl, Ganika Kajari, who decided to leave the worldly life in search of her 'Hari,' and dedicated her heart and soul to Lord Sadashiv. While Kajari learnt of the divine way of life from Guru Swami Nirmaldasji, Sant Hasan learnt the lesson of his life from Rabia, a saintly woman, as told in the story, "Rabia and Sant Hasan."

Another story which appealed to this reviewer deeply is "Rambhakta Fakir Shah Jallaludin Vasali." On seeing an attractive portrait of Rama, Vasali became a Ram bhakta and dedicated his life to Lord Rama under the influence of the Hindu Pundit Tekchand. A sufi became a staunch devotee of

Ram and sang songs in his praise rapturously for the rest of his life. Together the two devotees, one a Hindu and the other a Muslim, lived in praise of Rama till the end of their days.

In *Sant Suvas* Engineer has created amazing word pictures of the world of gurus, saints and chelas, which existed about 400 years ago. The fragrance of these divine souls lives on in the reader's mind.

H. S. D.



Engineer: writing
in simple prose

Soup for the soul

Saras Vato (Pleasant Stories) Muthi Unchero Manav by Bapsy Engineer. Published in 2000 by Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, 134, Princess Street, Bombay 400002. Pp: 161. Price: Rs 111.

Here is one more inspiring collection of short stories in Gujarati, published in October 2000 by Bapsy Engineer.

People who have mastered the art of living in this transient world are referred to in the Gujarati language as "muthi unchero manav." They are the ones who observe the higher values of life on this planet — and this collection bears testimony to these heroic souls.

Take for instance the story of Dr Paul Mansfield who was a brilliant student. Every one who knew him said he would make a first class surgeon. But Mansfield, ignoring all highly remunerative offers, left for an unknown mining village, opened a clinic there and was the only doctor to serve the poor miners for 40 years till he died.

The miners did not have a penny to give him for his services. On the contrary, they had to borrow from him whenever in need. Mansfield helped them always. He helped miners' women to give birth in their small, narrow huts; removed their tonsils; and even performed bone surgery and stitched up their wounds. When required, he arranged to dispatch the patient to a hospital 50 miles away from the village.

The sole supporter of the old miners of the village and of terminally ill patients, Mansfield was like an angel for those who awaited their final exit from earth. To serve his Creator was the sole mission of his life. But the time arrived when an influenza epidemic swept the whole hilly area and Mansfield, treating patients at every hour of the day and night, was himself snapped up by the disease and died. A little before his mission ended, he wrote in his diary, "Everything is paid, no dues are pending."

Carry Andrew was the wife of a missionary in the story "Carrynun apurva apnabal." Her husband was visiting mission centers in China when one summer morning she heard men chatting in hushed voices under a window of her bungalow. Shocked, she learnt that they were planning to eliminate her and her family at midnight. She first did not know how to save herself and her two children in the absence of her husband. So she prayed: "My God in heaven,

please save us from this calamity and give me strength to face the murderers."

That evening, Carry decided to face the impending danger with faith. She arranged the visitors' room decently to receive the killers. At midnight she again heard some voices near her house: whereupon she went to the door, opened it and very politely invited the brutes into her home. She requested them to be comfortable. Tea and cake were served. The dangerous men were stunned. They enjoyed every bit of Carry's hospitality, went round the room, even played with her children. At last, the leader decided it was time to quit the house. God had heard Carry's prayer. He had imbued her with an admirable presence of mind and strong will power.

The life of Christine Carr, from the story "Navjivanna panthe," was one of misery. At birth she was mentally handicapped. She had attended school as a young girl but not one teacher had wanted to teach her. As a result, Christine had to give up her education nor could she take up hairdressing as her profession, as she very much wanted to.

At the tender age of 18 she married; became a mother at 20. She felt she should do something worthwhile for herself. But what? She had five children by the time she was 43.

One July morning Christine was sitting over a coffee cup in a cafe, pondering her future, when the miracle happened. She thought she saw a shadow fall in her coffee cup and looked up. And there was Ms Crust who had taught her son Mark at the Dyslexic Institute.

Christine picked up courage and asked Crust if she could teach her, old as she was. "I would love to teach you," said Crust. From that day, doors of knowledge flew open for her and her self-determination did the rest. Her life changed totally.

Today, she is visiting Wordsworth's house and standing before the portrait of William Blake. Blake is her favorite poet now. She is alive to his magic because on a July morning she had decided to pursue her thirst for knowledge at an age when most people sink into apathy.

Each of the stories in *Saras Vato* written by

Engineer is significant in its own unique way. We also meet a host of loveable characters who are ruled by their conscience and have the strength to fight back the vicissitudes of life. Careful research has gone into the selection of all the 72 tales. Written in simple prose, they will live in the reader's mind for a long time and awaken his sleeping soul.

H. S. D.

Microbiology dissected

Handbook of Microbiological Methods and Media by F. D. Bharucha and A. I. Mehta. Published in 2000, the book is available from Bharucha at 3, Unique Apartments, V. P. Varde Marg, Bandra (W), Bombay 400050, tel: 6426828. Pp: 388. Price: Rs 300.

For students of medical microbiology and those interested in the subject, the *Handbook of Microbiological Methods and Media* authored by Dr Faridun D. Bharucha and Ashok I. Mehta would serve as a suitable reference work. Unable to recommend a suitable text to their students, the lacuna in this field prompted the authors to compile this *Handbook*, states the preface.

Divided into three parts, General Laboratory Procedures, Different Branches of Microbiology and Practical Microbiology, emphasis in this book "has been laid on rapid and automated methods in microbiology, sterilization, inoculation, incubation, disinfection, preservation and contamination," mention the editors who have compiled this work.

Those perusing the 388-page publication are forewarned of the necessity of

maintaining utmost neatness and cleanliness for the 11 Laboratory Rules end with "Do not turn the pages of a book after moistening the finger with saliva!"

As bacteriologist and former head of all post-graduate courses in microbiology at Bombay's Haffkine Institute from 1945-77, 82-year-old Bharucha is a respected figure in his field of spe-



Bacteriologist
Bharucha

HANDBOOK OF MICROBIOLOGICAL METHODS AND MEDIA



F. D. BHARUCHA
A. I. MEHTA



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

cialization. He had obtained the coveted French government scholarship to carry out research at the world renowned Pasteur Institute, Paris and was awarded the Doctor of Science degree from the University of Sorbonne, Paris, writing his thesis on penicillium in French, notes an introduction to the author. His career has been likened to the Russian scientist Dr W. M. Haffkine in that both of them obtained their bachelor degree from their motherland, carried out research at the Pasteur Institute, obtained the doctorate degree and worked at the Haffkine Institute on plague, cholera and typhoid vaccines. He is reportedly the first microbiologist to work at the Indian Dairy Research Institute, Bangalore and the first bacteriologist at the penicillin plant at Alembic Chemical Works, Baroda. The Bombay University had appointed him chief examiner for their Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology examination.

Bharucha's co-author Mehta had too worked at the Haffkine Institute before he joined Hindustan Ciba Geigy Limited as chief analyst in the quality control department. Founder editor of *Pharma Times*, he edited this publication for almost 20 years.

The vulnerability of the patient in an operation theater can be understood with the authors' statement: "The life of a patient under surgery depends upon the sterility of the operation theater..." That food, flies and fingers can cause contamination is well known, but when we read that "microbial contamination can occur from air, dust, breath, water, skin, hair, clothing, working surfaces," we realize why an individual is so susceptible to ailments.

In the 20 pages devoted to "Dairy Microbiology" the student is told: "Several outbreaks of food poisoning, par-

ticularly in India have been traced to poisoning by dairy products due to bacterial contamination. Most of the food poisoning cases occur during the hot summer due to excessively high temperature and paucity of water." The much relished ice cream too should be eaten with caution in summer for as the authors write: "Bacteriological examination has revealed gross bacterial contamination in ordinary ice cream. Since decomposition of ice cream does not reveal itself quickly, stale milk (of little value) for dairy products is made use of by the ice cream merchants... Wrong conclusions need not be drawn when finding numerous bacteria in ice cream for most of the organisms may be the harmless lactic acid bacteria which are usually present in milk, cream and butter. Importance is attached to the finding of *E. coli* in ice cream as it is an excretal microbe, indicating faecal contamination... In the past many outbreaks of food poisoning were attributed to ice cream."

The chapter "Landmarks in medical microbiology" sums up the path breaking work of Anton van Leeuwenhoek, considered the 'father of microscopy,' Louis Pasteur, the 'father of microbiology and preventive medicine,' Lord Lister, 'the father of antiseptic surgery and asepsis,' Robert Koch, the 'father of modern bacteriology,' Dr Jonas Salk and Dr Albert Sabin who produced the vaccine against polio, Edward Jenner who discovered the small pox virus and Haffkine who developed a vaccine against cholera and plague.

In the publication of this manual, the authors acknowledge the generosity of Sir Dorabji J. Tata Trust, the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation and the Prof J. V. Bhat Memorial Committee.

PARINAZ M. GANDHI

Attacking microorganisms

Among the important lessons in this book that can be gleaned by a lay reader are the explanations of some commonly heard terms. A disinfectant is an agent which kills pathogenic microorganisms e.g. viruses, bacteria, yeasts and fungi. It is restricted to products commonly used to disinfect inanimate objects. A germicide is an agent which kills both pathogenic and non-pathogenic microorganisms and can be used on either animate or inanimate matter. Disinfection is the destruction of all organisms except spores and can refer to the action

of disinfectants as well as antiseptics. An antiseptic is a substance which destroys or inhibits the growth of microorganisms, thereby preventing sepsis. It is limited to products employed on living tissues.

While a bacteriostat is an agent that prevents the multiplication of bacteria, a bactericide is an agent that kills both pathogenic and non-pathogenic bacteria. Similarly a fungistat is an agent that prevents the multiplication of fungi while a fungicide is an agent that kills fungi. A viricide is an agent that kills viruses.

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 20 and 68 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 29 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 26 and 70 years, averaging at 33 years.

As versus 18 births in Bombay in April there were 62 deaths. Twenty-six Zoroastrians succumbed to heart disease of whom 14 were in the 80+ age group. Lung related diseases claimed 13 lives, cancer, nine and old age and general debility, three. Two patients each fell prey to brain disease and diabetes. The eight isolated cases mentioned were hyperpyrexia (body temperature above 105°F), hypertension, pyrexia (elevation of the body temperature above normal), bedsores, hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body), carbon monoxide narcosis (unconsciousness produced by a drug), kidney failure and a decomposed body. The age range fluctuated between 39 and 96 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for April, in Bombay, was 75 years.

BANGALORE

DIED

Rustom Behramji Damania (62), husband of Deenaz and father of Tarana and Delara on March 25, 2001

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy to *Tanya* and *Arvind Dubash*, brother to Aryaan; April 1
A girl to *Meenaz* and *Neville Mistry*; April 1
A girl to *Benaifer* and *Yezdi Khareghat*; April 2
A boy to *Binaifer* and *Hoshang Nazir*; April 5
A boy to *Nina* and *Kayomurz Taraporewala*; April 6
A girl to *Khushnuma* and *Sharukh Bhathena*; April 7
A boy to *Nancy* and *Parvez Daruwala*; April 7
A boy to *Percis* and *Nadir Elavia*; April 12
A girl to *Farida* and *Darayush Phirozmand*; April 12
A boy to *Velvin* and *Yezdi Billimoria*; April 14
A girl to *Khushmin* and *Sharookh Daruwala*; April 18

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.

A girl to *Parizad* and *Farzad Mithaiwalla*; April 20

A girl, *Atishya*, to *Anaita* and *Roomi Madon*, sister to *Avan*; April 23

A girl to *Lata* and *Vispi Patel*; April 26

A girl to *Gulshan* and *Khushroo Vandriwala*; April 27

A boy to *Mahnaz* and *Behram Zandbaf*; April 27

A boy to *Kashmira* and *Mehernosh Nazir*; April 28

A girl to *Farhana* and *Jimmy Shroff*; April 30

MARRIED

Jasmine Percy Elavia and *Farrokh Jimmy Masani*; March 17

Meher Rohinton Chinoy and *Rustom Sam Jesia*; April 1

Mazarin Farrokh Vakil and *Viraf Keki Tavadia*; April 2

Farzana Cyrus Bhadha of *Udvada* and *Furokh Kaikhusroo Merchant*; April 3

Kate Kersi Kotwal and *Burzin Noshir Bhadha*; April 7

Shehnaz Godrej Anklesaria and *Malcum Jamshed Anklesaria*; April 8

Moti Jalbhai Khambatta of *Poona* and *Baman Shapur Irani*; April 8

Firuz Boman Pithavala and *Mehernosh Naval Vadiwala*; April 8

Tannaz Rusi Chacha and *Sharukh Hoshang Shroff*; April 12

Dilbur Noshir Desai and *Cyrus Kersi Langrana*; April 14

Mazreen Behramsaw Daruwala and *Behzad Hoshi Sanga*; April 14

Khurshid Parvez Irani and *Khurshed Dhanjishaw Baldawala*; April 15

Zareen Tehmurasp Khambatta and *Tirandaz Faramroze Billimoria*; April 15

Monaz Nariman Mistry of *Thana* and *Burjiz Tehmtan Irani*; April 15

Benaifer Padam Cooper and *Behram Edul Postwala*; April 15

Roxanne Homi Kavarana and *Darius Edi Vakharia*; April 16

Navaz Zal Tarapore of *Poona* and *Zubin Navroze Taraporewala*; April 17

Dilnaz Nozar Sahiar and *Hormazd Kersi Irani*; April 21

Meherangiz Tehmuraspa Bhathena and *Adil Dhunjishaw Billimoria*; April 22

Binaifer Sam Parekh and *Hormazd Jal Dolasa* of *Thana*; April 22

Mahzabin Kersi Bharucha of *Baroda* and *Hoshedar Tehmtan Mody*; April 24

Aban Adil Patel of *Poona* and *Khushru Cavas Bacha* of *Thana*; April 26

Sherma Keki Tachakra and *Zubin Keki Khapoliwala*; April 27

Kainaz Khodaram Irani and *Rayomand Rohinton Irani*; April 28

Huffrish Parvez Boyce and *Burgese Viraf Parekh*; April 28

Villo Kavas Vesuna and *Edul Jehangirji Masani*; April 29

DIED

Ratty Khurshedji Adrianwalla (89), residing at 3, Patel

Palace, 580, Jame Jamshed Rd, Matunga, 400019;

January 23, 2001 (cremated)

Rusi Meherwanji Mehta (69), 203, Dholakia Apts, Mahakali

Caves Rd, Andheri (E), 400093; March 31

Armaity Jehangir Cama (93), 18/B1, Woodlands, 67, Peddar

Rd, 400026; April 1

Nusserwanji Muncherjee Cama (80), Cosy Corner, 29/A, Doongersey Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006;

April 1 (cremated)

Bhikhamai Hormusji Elavia (90), B/5, Kerawala Bldg, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 1

Gover Sheriar Jamshed (80), 7, Salma Manzil, Oliver St, Colaba, 400005; April 1

Pestonji Byramji Javat (81), F. S. Parukh Dharamshala, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 1

Dinshaw (Dicky) Minocher Spencer (76), Laburnum Hse, Laburnum Rd, 400007; April 1

Khorshed Behram Baliwalla (52), 14, 2nd Marine St, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 3

Nariman Kekobad Mobedjina (80), 681/B, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 3

Nariman Ardeshtir Pardiwala (80), Bharucha Bldg, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008;

April 3

Goolbai Sorabji Chothia (85), 658, Khorshed Abad, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 4

Fardoon Framji Mistry (80), B-11/5, Nalanda, Apna-Ghar Soc, Andheri (W), 400053;

April 4

Nariman Erachshah Cooper (87), 3-12, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; April 6

Jal Cawasji Jithra (81), Unique Soc, Chotani Cross Lane, Mahim, 400016; April 6

Coomi Piroshaw Malao (78), 2/11, Wadia Bldg, Opp Hindmata Cinema, Dadar, 400014; April 6

Jamshed Khurshed Pagdiwalla (88), 34/A, Boyce Bglw, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 6

Maneckshaw (Maneck) Pirojsha Pardiwala (94), 797, Jesia Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;

April 6

Dali Nasarwanji Cooper (75), Wadia Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008;

April 7

Hilla Rustomji Hiralaher (92), A, Wadia Chawl, 7, Chandanwadi, 400002; April 8

Behram Contractor (70), Land's End Garden, Doongersey Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; April 9 (cremated)

Perin Fakirji Lakdawalla (70), 4/45, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parcel Tank Rd, 400033; April 9

Perin Jamshed Vazifdar (88), 17, Beach View, 93, Warden Rd, 400026; April 9

Shirin Eruchsha Bharucha (79), 11/8, Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; April 10

Mino Noshirwan Daruwalla (55), 16/1, Petit Sanatorium, Kemp's Corner, 400036; April 10

Dhunjishah Maneckji Mistry (88), 13/3, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; April 10

Hosang Jal Shroff (70), Banaji Hse, Contractor Bldg, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 10

Hormusji (Homi) Jalejar Writer (79), 6, Hormazd Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; April 10

Jerbai Firoze Screwalla (95), Mehra Mans, Forjett St, 400036; April 11

Shorab Jamshed Shroff (54), Quest-End, 47, Cuffe Parade, 400005; April 11

Khushru Navroji Vakil (86), The Reward, Tardeo Rd, 400007; April 12

Jamshed Jahangir Wadia (49), 5, Contractor Bldg, Avabai Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; April 12

Jerbanoo Behramji Zaiwalla (80), 12, Fakhri Manzil, Grant Rd, 400007; April 12

Jer Tehmuras Chithiwala (80), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 15

Nader Behram Damri (65), 749, Mithoo Villa, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 15

Soona Jamshed Sethna (85), 646, Gai Bldg, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 15

Nergish Behram Baldawalla (39), 189/6, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; April 16

Bacha Bejon Workingboxwala (83), P/4, Palm Springs, Cuffe Parade, 400005; April 16

Banubai Sorabji Shroff (95), C/o M. Mistry, Coover Mans, New Gamdevi, 400007; April 17

Shirin Bomanshaw Baam (88), 794, Family Hse, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 18

Noshir Pestonji Batliwala (81), D/9, Mehela Patel Agiary St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 18

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	2001*	This issue	2001*	This issue	2001*
BIRTHS						
Boys	8	29	—	1	—	2
Girls	10	39	—	1	—	3
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	26	139	—	4	—	—
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females married out	—	—	—	—	—	—
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	36	151	2	17	—	5
Females	27	146	4	15	—	3
CREMATED						
Males	2	2	—	—	—	—
Females	2	2	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 2001 (January 2001-May 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.

Jamshed Hiraji Engineer (74), B/21, Cusrow Bldg, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 19

Tehmina Ratanshaw Engineer (83), 1, Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; April 19

Maneck Jehangir Mogrelia (70), E/8, Nowroz Bldg, Lalbaug, 400012; April 19

Burjor Sohrabji Sutaria (77), 10, Wadia Blocks, Malcolm Bldg, S. V. Rd, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; April 19

Ketty Kaikhushroo Bajan (70), Jer Bldg, Khetwadi 6th Lane, 400004; April 20

Perin Minocher Daruwala (76), 2/4, Lady Ratan Tata Bldg, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra 400050; April 20

Erach Rustomji Motafram (79), 12/A, Ratan-Abad, Tukaram Javji Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; April 21

Burjor Hiraji Hiranmanek (81), Rati-khush, 32, P. J. Nehru Rd, Vakola Pipeline, Santa-cruz (E), 400055; April 22

Rustomji Framroze Pavri (87), H/15, S. B. Bharucha Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 22

Coomi Faramroze Antia (83), 598/B, Wadia Bldg, Girgaum Rd, 400002; April 23

Soonu Naval Godrej (78), 40/D, Ridge Rd, 400006;

April 23 (cremated)

Perin Nariman Khambata (74), 22/A, Wellington Ter, Wellington St, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 24

Firoz Nussarwanji Billimoria (56), 663, Shroff Pandey Bldg, Sohrab Palamkote Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 25

Homi Dinshaw Antalia (76), 2/25, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parcel Tank Rd, 400033; April 26

Dara Jehangir Bharucha (74), R. K. Mans, 215, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; April 26

Daulat Dadiba Cooper (72), 6/A, Readymoney Block, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 26

Gaver Nowseer Dinshaw (72), 401/A, Satyam-I, Raheja Complex, Malad (E), 400097; April 26

Phiroze Ardeshr Ghadoiwala (79), B. Jeshtharam Bldg, B. A. Rd, Dadar, 400014; April 26

Boman Faramji Balsara (77), N/8, S. B. Bharucha Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 27

Jemi Naoroji Jasawala (96), Roxana, 109, M. Karve Rd, 400020; April 27

Adi Dadabhoy Modi (70), H/17, Nowroz Bldg, Lalbaug, 400012; April 28

Khorshed Shapur Bhavnagari

(90), 46, Rajat Apts, Mt Pleasant Rd, 400006; April 29

Darab Dhunjibhoy Chichgur (88), 758, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 29

Phiroze Vicaji Panthaki (52), Suleman Manzil, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; April 29

Merwan Rustomji Irani (72), D, Petit Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 30

Zenobia Jehangir Patel (67), Hill Crest, 31/F, Peddar Rd, 400026; April 30

CALCUTTA

DIED

Nurges Munchers Shah Patel, sister of Mehru Choksey, Silloo Pathivala and late Rati Jeejeebhoy; February 24

Dara Dhunjishaw Olpadwala, husband of Gool and father of Gaver Thapliyal; March 13

SURAT

DIED

Mehroo Pestonji Turel (65), Turelwadi, Sayedpura, 395003; April 3

Jalamai Darabsha Bhagat (81), Dipa Soc, Rander Rd, 395001; April 4

Piroja Behramsha Daruwala (82), Aganowad, Sayedpura, 395003; April 4

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

For the first time in India

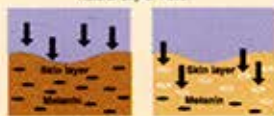
A soap that makes you fairer

New Godrej FairGlow



New Godrej FairGlow Soap contains Natural Oxy-G, a ~~with~~ **Natural Oxy-G** unique bio-extract that makes you fairer, naturally. Natural Oxy-G reduces the dark melanin without changing your skin's natural balance. It also removes blemishes to give you a clear and smooth skin.

Natural Oxy-G Action



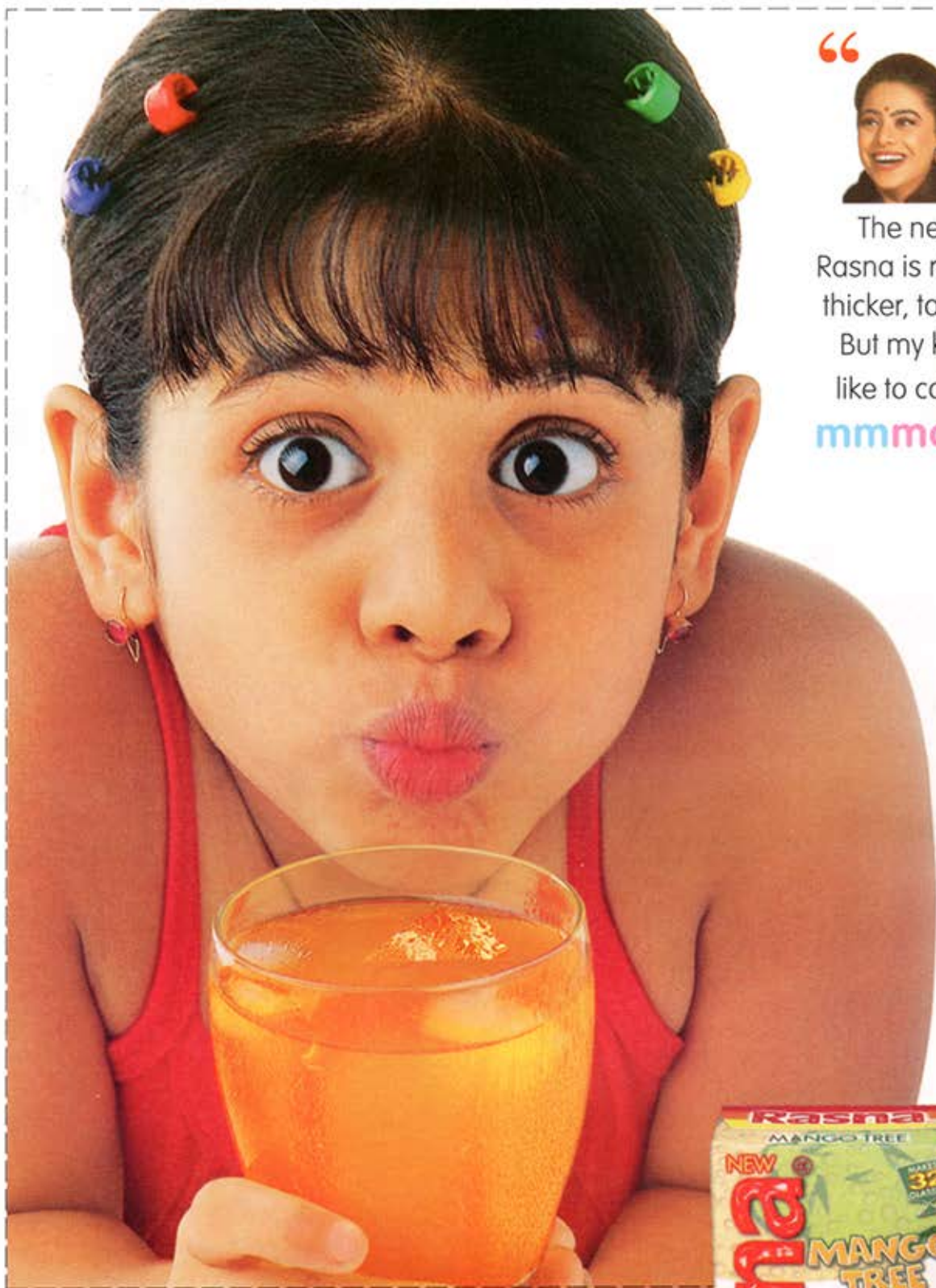
What's more, Godrej FairGlow gives you an all over fair and glowing complexion through your daily bath. New Godrej FairGlow provides fairness for your entire family. Try it and see the difference.

“



The new
Rasna is richer,
thicker, tastier.
But my kids

like to call it,
mmmore!”



One sip and - mmm - the new Rasna is deliciously different! A smart new pack. 13 tongue-tingling 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