

Parsiānā

NOVEMBER 2001 Rs 35



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Where movement is a science

Parsiana

November 2001
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In search of unity

A letter by the respected High Priest Dr Kaikhusroo Minocher JamaspAsa that appeared in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* and *The Bombay Samachar* (both of October 21, 2001) spoke of "un-Zoroastrian practices which threatened the very existence and identity of the community" (see "Guide and guardian," Events and Personalities, page 16).

Some of these 'threats' predictably are performance of the navjote of children where only one parent is Zoroastrian and religious ceremonies for Parsis marrying non-Parsis. In addition JamaspAsa advocates that "all religious rules, regulations and traditions are adhered to in the performance of the solemn nava and maratab rituals" and that "solemn rituals like jashan and fereshta" should not "be performed in the presence of non-Zoroastrians..."

"The survival of (the) Zoroastrian religion and (the) Parsi community" is at stake, the scholar priest states. JamaspAsa's sentiments have been expressed by numerous speakers and writers over decades. But when a priest of his standing, learning and caliber sounds the rallying call, one has to give both weightage and thought to what is said. More so when in the penultimate paragraph of his missive he states, "I am now awaiting the formation of the Council of High Priests of India to tackle and solve these issues."

If the Parsi Zoroastrian community has banded together all these years it is no doubt largely due to the absence of religious diktat. While Christians, Muslims and Jews have numerous sects, branches, denominations, etc the Parsis are basically homogenous. Except for the distinction by birth between laity and clergy there is no other major formal division in the community. The three different calendars followed by Zoroastrians is more a matter of choice.

Sects or breakaway factors normally occur when one group or fac-

tion tries to roughshod another. The Christian church underwent such a schism with Martin Luther in the 16th century AC. Islam has the Sunnis and Shias amongst numerous other divisions. Jews are formally classified as orthodox or reformists.

Many years ago the late Prof Cyrus Pangborn of Rutgers University raised the question "Do the Parsis need a Pope?" in an informal discussion with *Parsiana*. He believed that while a hierarchical structure would lend for uniformity and order, it could stifle individual religious freedom. We may be better off the way we were, he opined with a smile.

Over the years one has given thought to what Pangborn and others like him have said on the subject. It is better to have a disunited clergy and warring behdins if in the final analysis we hold together. There is a degree of elasticity within which we function. No matter how much we disagree and no matter how disagreeable we may be, we're still one.

If JamaspAsa's views were taken to heart and if the Council of High Priests was formed with such an agenda, the community's tolerance could be tested to the limits. Instead of reconciliation, of working together, of forming a sheltering umbrella, we would have fatwas.

One provocation for writing the letter at this time, according to the High Priest, is that "panthakis and priests of a reputed old atash behram in (Bombay) have performed and aided such un-Zoroastrian acts. Some of them are purported to belong to the dedicated nine families serving the holy Iranshah for centuries."

Thus it is clear that the High Priest is not concerned about some maverick, reformist priests or reformist laity disregarding orthodox religious sentiments or dogmas. The very heart and soul of the priesthood is engaging in alleged "un-Zoroastrian acts."

Does this mean that the line between what is Zoroastrian and un-

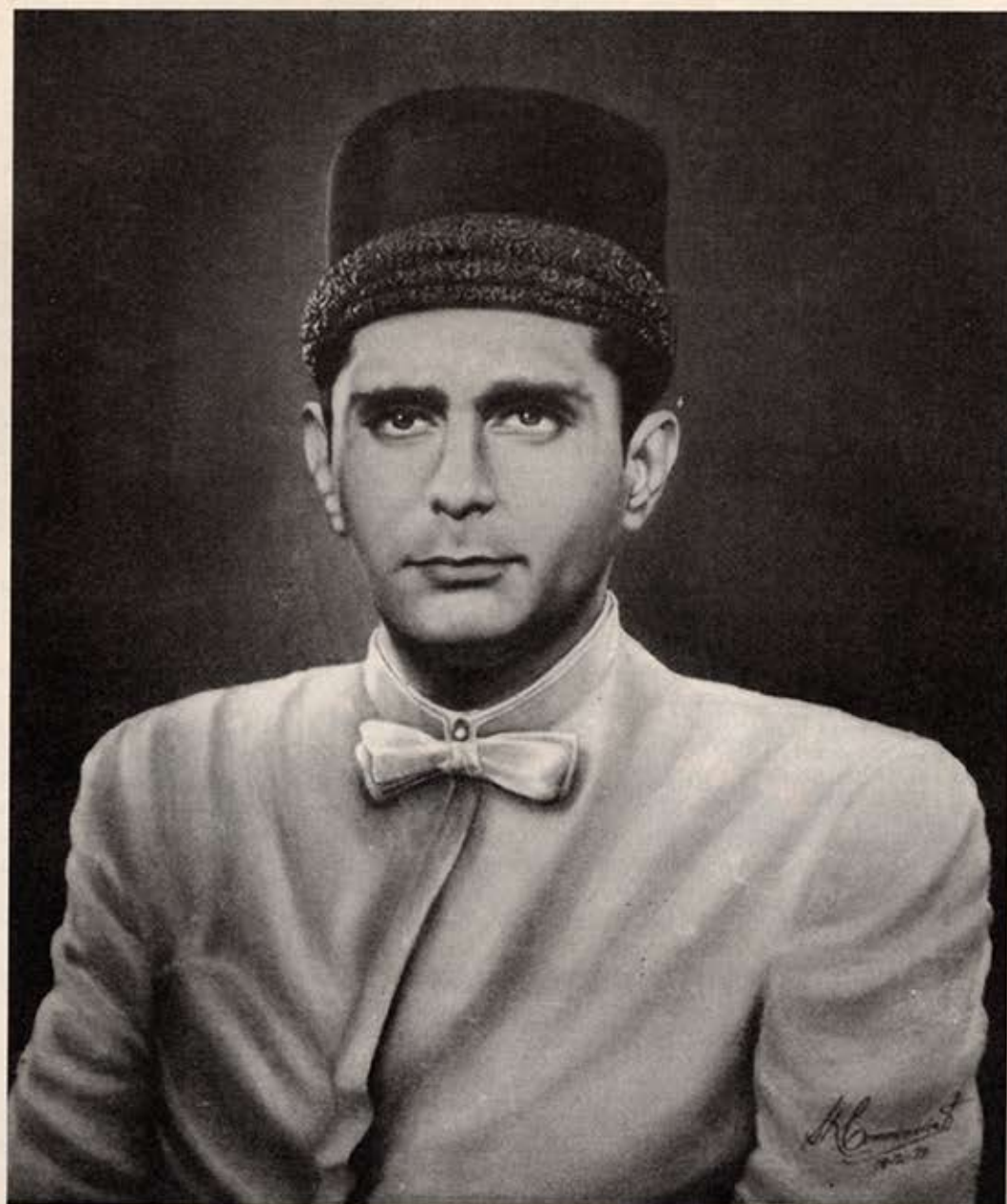
Zoroastrian is getting blurred? Should the community redefine the contours of what is acceptable and what is not? Or should it follow the High Priests' diktat and adhere to the traditional, orthodox concept of right and wrong?

With close to 30 percent of Zoroastrians in Bombay marrying out (and in all possibility a larger percent elsewhere), should the out-married and their offspring be unwelcome? Are we to follow the argument that numbers do not matter and it is only quality that counts? And is the community aware that 10 percent of marriages between Parsis end in divorce?

If the Parsis have the highest divorce rate in the country, it is both a sign of women's emancipation and changing family and social values. No one should be forced to remain in a bad marriage. But every effort should be made by the community to make marriages work, to provide counseling before marriage, to make the partners have realistic expectations, to inform them of the hard work, sacrifice and tolerance required for a lasting union and, all things failing, providing a graceful exit for both parties. And if children are involved, ensuring as secure a future as possible for them.

But these are not the concerns voiced from the orthodox platforms. While they talk about preserving the Zoroastrian way of life, there is seldom talk about setting right the ills of the community. Aside from attacking those who deviate from tradition, there is little to reinforce values, to guide people on how to live a life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. It is presumed that if a Parsi marries another Parsi, wears a sudreh-kusti and occasionally visits the fire-temple, he or she has met the criteria for quality and acceptance.

As Justice Beaman so rightly stated in his judgement of 1908 in *Petit vs Jejeebhoy*: "The defendants, expressing as we now know the or-



**In Memoriam
Mr Fali Meherji Variava
(Late) Director**

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thodox Parsi view, are prepared to overlook immorality, bastardy—anything but alienage. They are ready to admit any and every Irani Zoroastrian about whose antecedents they cannot possibly know anything. But they will not admit the purest, most blameless foreigner, of whose character and conduct they may have the completest assurance. They will admit all the illegitimate children of Parsi parents, begotten of prostitutes or kept-mistresses, but they will not admit the noblest, most exemplary foreigner. Why? Because a foreigner is outside the caste, and caste is an institution into which you must be born. Of the modern Parsi they say emphatically *nasatur non fit*. This is not religion, it has nothing to do with religion: it is essentially distinctly irreligious; but it is pure, unadulterated Oriental caste."

We bar others from our fire-temples, we refuse to let non-Parsis view the face of the dead after the *geh sarna* funerary prayers and now we state that even at jashans they are not welcome. Allowing for the fact that we arrived in India as a band of refugees in search of religious freedom and a better quality of life it ill behoves us to now treat our hosts as outcasts. No matter what defense the orthodox make for barring others from our rituals, there is a strong racial and casteist bias for this abhorrent practice.

Most religious ceremonies of the Hindus, Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists are open to others. Why is it that only the efficacy of the Zoroastrians' prayers are lessened by the presence of non-Zoroastrians? Cannot our religion withstand and overcome this supposed intrusion?

What is required is understanding, compassion, forgiveness. Our priests have to show the way. When a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, the church, rather than ostracize the person, tries to ensure that the non-Catholic spouse or at least the children of such a marriage are raised as Catholics. We choose to banish both the Zoroastrian and their offspring. When the Zoroastrian community first sprouted in North America, they often hired church premises to hold their meetings because churches were affordable. The Christians did

not say "you can't enter," "you'll pollute the place," "your vibrations will disturb the sanctity of the altar" and so on.

Church premises are used for myriad social purposes to benefit the young and the old, the poor and the needy, the sick and the healthy, regardless of race, color, caste or religion. Alcoholics Anonymous hold many of their meetings in churches because the church makes the premises available to them at very nominal rates. Rehabilitation of people is a priority for the church. In contrast, the signs outside agiaries state: Admissions restricted only to Parsi Zoroastrians.

One is not saying that agiaries admit all and sundry because we are not ready for that step. But surely we can welcome or at least permit the navjoted children of Parsi women married outside the community. The fire-temples in Delhi and Jamshedpur permit this. Even in Iran non-Zoroastrians are permitted admission to certain sections of the fire-temples.

The Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America took the following decision at their 12th annual meeting in Los Angeles: "Mobeds need not be of mobed descent. Any qualified person who passes the required tests may become a full mobed. Women may also become full mobeds, after passing required tests (*Humata* magazine, Fall 2001 issue)."

Are they wrong? Are they un-Zoroastrian? And if so who is to define what is Zoroastrianism and what is not? Yes, tradition and custom to a large extent determine what is acceptable. But traditions change as do our value systems. Most Parsis don't cover their heads today unless inside a fire-temple or attending religious ceremonies or reciting their prayers. They don't grow beards. And yet many of these bareheaded, clean-shaven Parsis claim to be orthodox. A century ago they would have been viewed as reformists and radicals, people to be spurned and demeaned.

JamaspAsa in his letter has not berated priests for performing the final rites for those who opt for cremation or burial or any form of disposal other than *dakhmenashini*. One reason no doubt is to lessen

the opposition to the present system due to the unhygienic condition prevailing at the Towers of Silence. Threatened with legal action and the possibility of funerary prayers being said on Doongerwadi grounds for those opting for alternate disposal, this condemnation of priests performing such ceremonies has been dropped. Say the orthodox, "Have your ceremonies, but not on our Doongerwadi lands." Necessity has dictated a pragmatic approach, a kind of live and let live attitude.

In the case of Neville Wadia, the late scion of the Wadia family that built so many housing colonies for Parsis, the majority of the high priests showed understanding and compassion. Since Wadia's father had converted to Christianity, the son's navjote was not performed. Wadia wanted to be able to enter a fire-temple and have his body consigned to the Towers of Silence if he so wished. That concern for a dying man's wish demonstrated that the priesthood can rise to the occasion, withstand the barbs of the more orthodox and offer the kind of leadership the community needs.

Perhaps if for other issues also the priests and the orthodoxy viewed necessity as pragmatically as they have viewed it here, then there is less chance of splitting a community that has held together for over 1,000 years.

By instructing priests to follow customs that run counter to all concepts of human rights and fundamental liberties, the present clerical leadership runs the danger of many of the laity and a section of the priesthood disregarding their wishes. While we may not require a pope, at the same time we do not want a vacuum of religious leadership either.

The search for alternative methods for disposal of the dead keeping religious precepts in mind showed the clergy working with the laity to find acceptable alternatives. If either party now feels they can disregard the other, we will cease to function as a religious community.

The laity have to consult the priests, and the priests have to respond with both their heads and their hearts. They have to show us the way, the middle path, the golden mean.



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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.

"No illusions about..."

This refers to the book review ("No illusions about myself," *Parsiana*, October 2001) by Arnavaz Mama. Since your reviewer was "left gasping" by what she calls "the cursory reference to the murderous attack on Naval," let me, in fairness to Sohrab, state the facts.

Abundant Living, Restless Striving was the latest in the quartet of books on Godrej. Naval's book, *Final Victory*, the third in the series, gives a full account of "the murderous attack" in its gory details. Sohrab felt, and I agreed with him, that it wouldn't be appropriate to repeat this in what was basically his (Sohrab's) biography. The book recounts how shocked and bewildered Sohrab was (the cancelling for the third time of his trip to Antarctica was the least of his worries) that this attack should have been made, in the name of the workers, against one to whom these workers had always been his "buddies." It is unfair,

on the reviewer's part, to complain therefore that "Sohrab had nothing to say" about this attack. The book emphasizes how Sohrab always bemoaned the cruelty of fate that brought death to his younger brothers Naval and Burjor and the deadly Alzheimer's disease to his younger sister Dosa, while he, the eldest, was alive. Your reviewer imputes a gross insensitivity to one of the most sensitive and gracious men I have had the privilege of knowing.

The reviewer also speaks of "some discrepancies." Read in the proper context, however, it is quite clear that Sohrab's mother was sick for two months, her illness took a serious turn in May 1920 when the doctor discovered she had the Asian Flu and she died on June 13, 1920. The reviewer should have found juicier nits to pick. In fact, talking about discrepancies, the reviewer herself begins by stating how Pirojsha's "mechanically inept eldest son" converted the family industry into "an internationally renowned behemoth of environmental concerns" and ends by expressing "sympathy" for Sohrab for having "to survive in the shadow of such outstanding men as Pirojsha and Naval!" In truth, rather than sympathy, Sohrab deserves credit for carving for himself, in spite of his natural inclinations, a distinguished niche in the Godrej industrial empire. BURJOR K. KARANJIA

Arnavaz Mama replies

There are two major points on which Karanjia has faulted my review. The first is that Sohrab Godrej's memoirs make no reference to the turmoil he may have undergone on his brother Naval being grievously wounded by an assassin. Karanjia explains that the subject was glossed over because it had been examined in detail in his earlier book *Final Victory*.

Unlike his first two books on the House of Godrej numbered volumes I and II, *Final Victory* is not titled as Vol III in the Godrej saga nor is Sohrab Godrej's memoirs titled Vol IV. A lay reader may therefore begin by reading Sohrab's book, without any foreknowledge of the others.

This reviewer had as much respect as any for Sohrab Godrej's multifarious concerns, his abstemious personal habits and his remarkable frankness as ex-

hibited in his memoirs.

As for the discrepancy in dates — a minor glitch, admittedly — pages 12 and 13 of the memoirs record: "When in May 1920 Mother fell sick, I thought it was some normal illness and she would soon recover. But time passed and she didn't and the doctor diagnosed the symptoms as those of Asian Flu... our family had planned to go to Mussoorie for the holidays... The family gathered... to consult the planchette... We had to reserve two to three compartments for the journey to Mussoorie... (where) Mother was admitted to Cottage Hospital... We were schooling at Mussoorie... Two months passed swiftly... Mother succumbed... 13 June 1920."

"Divorces rise..."

Your analysis of Parsi divorces ("Divorces rise to 10 percent," *Parsiana*, October 2001) deserves serious attention by the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court (PCMC). Both, the number and the percentage of divorces in 1994, 1999 and 2000 are disturbing!

The increase in the rate of divorces is a national phenomenon amongst the educated. Per se divorces are not bad in themselves. Some marriages do break down irretrievably and have to be annulled.

The PCMC should analyze and publish the five major causes leading to the rising incidence of divorces amongst Parsis so that those concerned can take some corrective measures towards reducing that incidence (divorces cannot be wished away).

Two apparent causes are:

- The breakdown of the joint family system, which some couples are not able to face effectively (there is a contrary view, also). The PCMC should analyze and publish how many marriages end up in divorces because of, or in spite of, a joint family system.

- "Marry in haste and repent at leisure." Some couples are believed to enter into matrimony before they are economically viable units. They do not realize "it is April when you woo and December when you wed."

The PCMC also needs to publish whether infidelity is one of the major causes of divorce (though I doubt for our community it is a major cause).



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It will be interesting for the community to know whether the PCMC has any data about the number of Parsis who want to divorce and marry non-Parsis.

The readers should be thankful to *Parsiana* for furnishing the statistics, to stimulate a serious thinking on this subject.

BEHRAM T. DASTUR

"Parsis on early..."

We thank Pheroze Nowrojee for writing "Parsis on early postcards" (*Parsiana*, October 2001) and to *Parsiana* for embellishing it with different visuals of postcards, including one on its cover.

I would request *Parsiana* readers to forward other outstanding early postcards depicting Parsis to *Parsiana* and also request the magazine to publish them.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

"Test your knowledge"

Further to Khorshed R. K. S. Ghandhi's letter regards Jamshed Vesugar's career ("Test your knowledge," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September 2001), my family too were great friends of the Vesugars (in Lahore when married to his first wife Pilloo), and then later when he married Estelle. He was not, as Ghandhi correctly points out, the first Indian Ambassador to the USA, but he was the first Indian Ambassador to Argentina and a great friend of the Perons (popular Argentinian political leaders including Juan Domingo, Maria Eva Duarte de and Isabel). He was at my wedding in Ithaca (1951) at the request of my parents to represent them. My husband and I talked at great length about his time there.

ROSHAN BHARUCHA CHRISTENSEN

Rochester, New York

"Index of advertisers"

The staff have done an excellent job in preparing the "Index of advertisers" in the August 2001 issue of *Parsiana*. But I believe the Index will have much greater utility if the goods or services provided by the advertisers are also indicated.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

The Editor replies

Much as we would like to oblige, categorization of advertisers is not always easy. Secondly due to constraints of space, time and human resources such an undertaking becomes difficult.

"Prepare for..."

Youth trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anju-

man, Adil Nargolwalla's statement ("Prepare for improvement," *Parsiana*, August 2001) that the beautiful stained glass panel for the Dr Nowshir Jungalwalla Memorial Room was "donated" by Katayun Saklat of Calcutta, needs clarification. Stained glass is very expensive to buy. Every chip is carefully preserved for another artistic creation. Moreover, Saklat has established a Fund for Poor Artists which constantly needs replenishment. She cannot afford to give her labor free.

PILOO JUNGALWALLA

New Delhi

Consecrated agiary

A communication to some Zarathushtis resident in mainland Europe, as distinct from those in the United Kingdom (UK), from administrator Rohinton Irani of the European Zarathushti Fire Temple Trust (EZFTT) demonstrates a weak grasp of reality. It seems to be the idea of populists holding out a begging bowl for establishing a "consecrated agiary in the UK." Few beyond the "inner circle" were cognisant of the establishment of the EZFTT claimed to have been conceived on January 11, 2000 and set up nine months later on Navroz of the same year. If this be the case, a constitution/memorandum and articles of association would have been drawn up, but the contents seem to be unknown at least to the Zarathushtis on mainland Europe.

The expressed intention to maintain a consecrated fire-temple is commendable in the light of the history and the global population trend of Zarathushtis. Its location is to be in London, UK. However, extending it to envelop mainland Europe indicates a measure of self-deception. The practicality/viability, among much else of such a scheme, warrants deeper study in historical perspective: Who would have the right to worship? Moreover, this contemplated project under the auspices of the EZFTT impresses as being in competition with the one that is already being engineered by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE).

In the circular made available, it is categorically stated that the EZFTT is a charity settlement, under a non-association structure. However, the inclusion of Rumi Sethna [chairman, World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO)] and Dinshaw Tamboly (chairman, WZO Trust Funds, India), etc. as administrators/trustees, despite their reported re-

sourcefulness and professional sangfroid, raises questions of appropriateness.

A careful and objective evaluation of the frequency/intensity of usage of Satayesh Gah at the current premises (Zoroastrian House, 88 Compayne Gardens, London) should remain the top priority of members of the ZTFE. Out of a total membership of about 1,400 of the ZTFE, only 352 are said to have responded to the "Feed-back Questionnaire" sent out to members. An analysis of the received responses as percentage of the total ZTFE membership reveals:

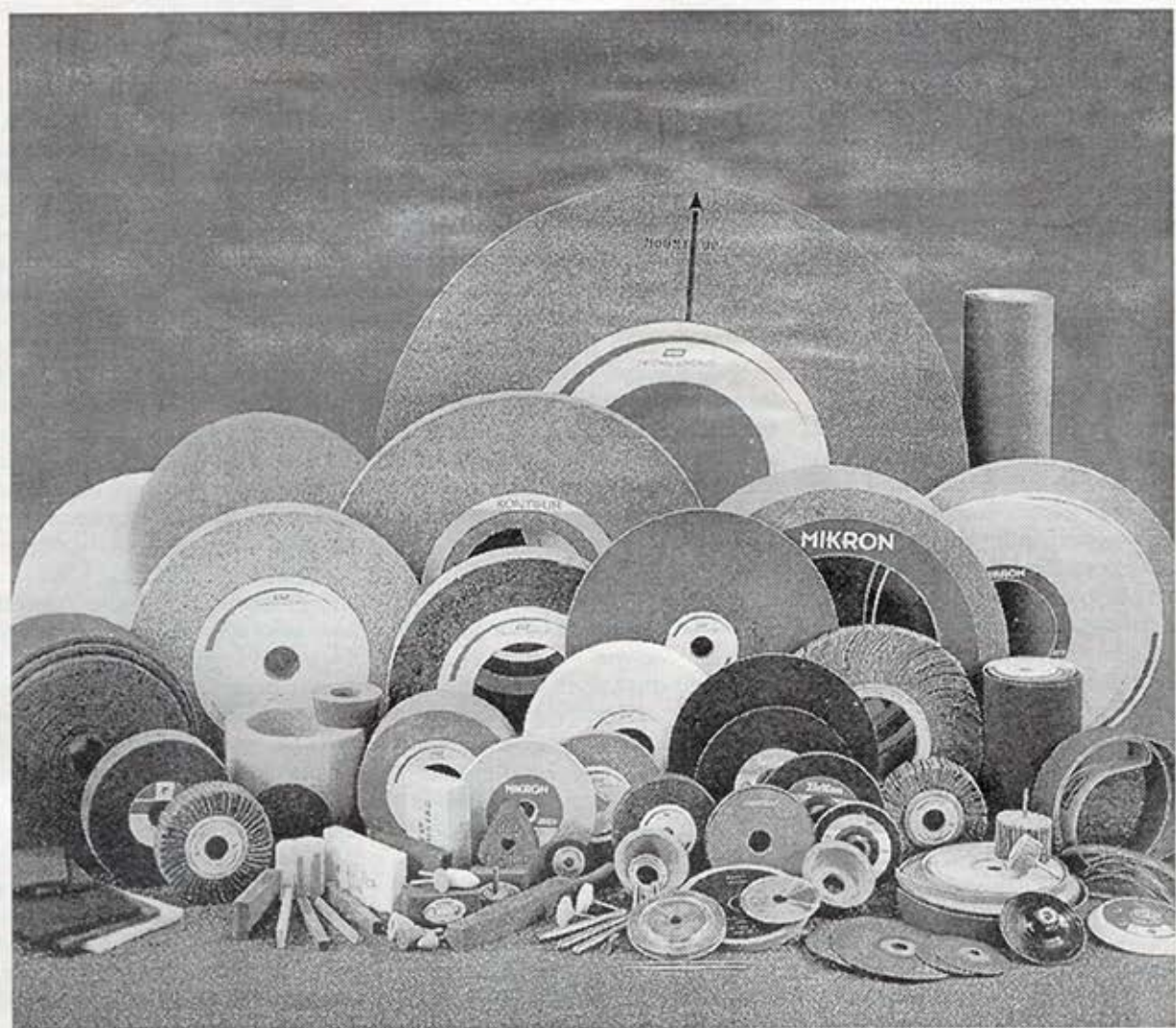
- 204 respondents i.e. 14.6 percent expressed preference for a place of worship.
- 25 respondents i.e. two percent expressed top priority for a bungli (chapel of rest).
- 172 respondents i.e. 12.25 percent expressed tepid preference for an atash dadgah with a permanent fire.
- 134 respondents i.e. 9.5 percent expressed top priority for a fully consecrated agiary.
- 204 respondents i.e. 14.6 percent expressed a desire for Zoroastrian priests on a full-time basis.

Just about four i.e. only 0.3 percent of the total membership were respondents from the London area, who would probably be more prone to use the Zoroastrian House (ZH) premises. As revealed by this analysis, a substantially large proportion of the respondents/members live outside metropolitan London. Hence, it could follow as a natural corollary that their use of the ZH facilities would be very limited/exceedingly intermittent considering traffic impediments encountered in travelling to ZH.

An objective evaluation of the current ZH premises and the frequency of its usage reveals that its use should remain the top priority of the ZTFE members:

- After a lapse of a number of years, the managing committee of ZTFE saw wisdom to try and obtain a consensus of the Zoroastrians concerned. Could this indicate the leadership's lack of what might be called intelligent conviction?
- Only during Navroz, Pateti, New Year's Eve and perhaps Christmas Eve has the attendance tended to be marginally in excess of available capacity.
- In the existing premises the Satayesh Gah has witnessed a number of devotees (by no means over-capacity) primarily during Navroz and Pateti only. For the rest of the year it has been known to be

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virtually empty and on limited occasions only a handful of visitors have been in evidence, all comfortably located in the accommodation presently available. However, if it be considered essential to enlarge this to comply with the wishes made known for an atash dadgah/permanent place of worship the adjacent room could be easily annexed at comparatively lower cost.

•For the celebration of special events with the requisite/customary frivolities, probably for very limited occasions in the year, one of several large municipal halls with parking facilities can be hired/reserved in the London area at very affordable prices, with the exercise of sufficient forethought, and the appropriate costs recouped from the sale of tickets, etc.

The important/main issue of provision for a place of worship can be easily incorporated in the existing premises for a substantially smaller outlay. The main requirement of the day is to project a true and real image of Zoroastrians/Zoroastrianism rather than succumb to the temptation to take refuge in the more attenuated world of symbols and concepts. The extensive savings in the available funds could be readily directed to meet the paramount needs of the hour which, as a minimum, envelop:

•Succor and meaningful help to many needy Zoroastrians and the community at large if only the grandiose aspects of the scheme are abandoned in the interest of realism and humble sanity.

•Educate some members of the current managing committee to conduct meetings free of uncalled-for bellicosity on points that have no relevance whatsoever to the memorandum and articles of association.

•Incorporate an appropriate training program to bring home to the pertinent members of the current managing committee that by hitting out rather than reasoning at meetings, a once respected community could run the risk of drowning in the fetid waters of rancor.

•Infuse leadership in the ZTFE that will go beyond paying lip service to sustainable development of the Zoroastrian community of the UK (Europe being beyond its reach and capability) and act courageously to implement what they pledge at annual general meetings. Counselling in behavioral therapy and eschewing ideological polemics would not go amiss.

FURHOK K. TANGREE
La Roche-sur-Foron, France

"Unite to show might"

There appears a poem written by Noshir Daboo ("Unite to show might," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September 2001), which I greatly applaud as it dwells on unity, peace and harmony in our minuscule community. It is on a subject which is very close to my heart and mind because of the dissension and discord that seems at times to be so rampant amongst our community associations and institutions.

Controversies and differences of opinion there have to be in any progressive group of people which could be so often resolved with calmness, consideration and courtesy rather than bad temper, ill feeling or malice. The following poem "A prayer for today" was especially written by me under my pseudonym PLON (Poet Laureat of Norbury) to be read out before commencement of a meeting on an argumentative matter at one of our associations here in London. If it is instrumental in bringing about peace and harmony in our community anytime, anywhere as it did here, it shall have served its purpose.

God's greatest gift to man is the
faculty to think
Which makes the ship of life to either
float or sink;
Different people think in many
various ways
Two schools of thought are not the
same always.
To have an opinion is man's inherent
right,
To respect that opinion is a wise
person's might.
Today we meet to consider a very
crucial matter
What's food for the former could be
poison for the latter.
So let's treat each point with
consideration and calmness
With good sense and discipline like a
trained horse in harness.
Although we tread on different paths
our main goal is the same
So let's get together and act well in
good heaven's name;
If on the way the road gets tough and
we stumble
Please God bless us all to be united
and humble.
You know, Lord, our quest is mainly
to raise money
But above all give us unity, peace and

harmony.

So guide us to get cautiously to our
journey's end
With love and compassion — not like
a foe but a friend;
And let's get down on our knees and
pray everyone
To get there with love in our hearts
and malice to none.

SOLI MASTER
London, UK

"Options at Doongerwadi"

Many Parsis seem to believe that there are absolutely no vultures left in India or at the Doongerwadi in Bombay. This is incorrect. Time and again, one sees at least a few of them. Quite recently, I personally saw a few vultures preening themselves on a huge tree opposite Spenta apartments.

Agreed vultures play an important catalytic role. However, it is the sun which plays the primary role. This primary source of energy and purification, with the grace of Ahura Mazda, has not failed. In addition, a system of sprinkling herbal powders on the corpses has now been introduced. The solar concentrators that have been introduced are also quite effective. The concentrators are an innovative contraption of ordinary mirrors, arranged in a geometric pattern to intensify the rays of the sun. It does not involve burning.

There appears to be a belief among some Parsis that all corpses are ultimately buried within the Doongerwadi complex. This is incorrect. Even a hundred years ago and more, when reportedly there were more than a hundred vultures at Doongerwadi, the contents of the bhandar (central well of the dakhma) had to be periodically emptied of bones and other dried remains.

Even today, the dried remains which are swept into the bhandar from the pavis (consecrated stone slabs) are taken out after about a year and buried in pits which are lined with stone and layers of salt and lime. In *Vendidad*, Fargard VIII, 33(107), Zarathushtra questions, "O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Shall the man be clean who has touched a corpse that has been dried up and dead for more than a year?"

34(108) Ahura Mazda answered: "He shall. The dry mingles not with the dry" (*"Vendidad," Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 4, translated by James Darmesteter, pg 103).



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Introduction V (pg XCV) of the afore-said book states, "Wet matter is a better conductor of uncleanness than dry matter, and corpses cease to defile after a year."

It is amusing to find reformist Parsis of the 21st century say that they believe in the system of dakhmenashini and would like to follow it, provided there are vultures. Interestingly, some decades ago when there were plenty of vultures, there were still reformist Parsis who wanted a crematorium. A quarter of a century ago, the late S. R. Vakil had raised an alarm of "stench," "bodies piling up" and more importantly, "health hazard." To date, there is not a single proven or documented case of an epidemic at Malabar Hill.

Strange as this may seem, the scientific/medical reality defies conventional logic. According to a press release of the World Health Organization (WHO), "The health hazard associated with dead bodies is negligible (Press Release WHO/42, August 20, 1999, "WHO warns against health misconceptions in the wake of Turkish earthquake")."

WHO (Dept of Emergency and Humanitarian Action) in its Technical Briefing Note (Geneva, August 18, 1999) states, "A relationship between cadavers and epidemics has never been scientifically demonstrated or reported."

It is argued, "Fire is a great purifier and nothing ever can pollute fire." This is incorrect. Fire simply transforms polluting matter from one state to another. Try offering fragrant wood or frankincense to fire and see how it lifts your spirit and soothes your body and mind. Now think, for a moment, what would happen if, to this same fire, rubber, dead putrefying matter was offered. The fact is the output depends on the input. Certain inputs to the fire help cleanse and fumigate; others pollute and cause harm.

Many Parsis also seem to think that there is no fire used in an electric crematorium. Nothing could be further from the truth. Electricity is itself a form of fire. But, more than that, the process in an electric crematorium involves raising the temperature inside the furnace to more than 700°C — a point at which the hydrocarbons of the body catch fire or self-ignite.

Also, contrary to popular belief, the electric crematorium is not such a hygienic system. All over the world, especially in advanced countries, people are

concerned about the environmental pollution caused by electric crematoriums. Scrubbers and high chimneys may, only to a very limited extent, reduce, but not eliminate stench and fly ash. Ask those who live around Chandanwadi in Bombay and Vaikunth in Poona how they are forced to shut their windows each time the crematorium is turned on and a layer of soot forms over water buckets and linen put out to dry. Residents of these areas also complain of chronic respiratory problems, headaches and nausea.

Where a dakhma does not exist, burial may be condoned under force of circumstances. However, where a dakhma does exist, where is the need for burial or cremation? It is argued, "The four days' ceremonies are performed for those who die in places where dakhmas do not exist." Yes, indeed, they are performed because if the person dies in a place where the facility of a dakhma does not exist, one cannot hold the person responsible. However, when a person knowingly and willfully chooses to be cremated or buried where a dakhma exists, it tantamounts to intentional disregard of the religious injunction despite the full knowledge and availability of the dakhma facility.

NOSHIR H. DADRAWALA

Salute to Satarawala

Padma Bhushan Major Kershasp Tehmurasp Satarawala, IAS (Retd) popularly known as "Aapro Kersi" has passed on to the radiant realms beyond. He was a great soldier and a "son of the soil." An ideal instrument and a perennial fountain of wisdom, from Satarawala one sought inspiration and guidance. "The gentle colossus" who never hurt anybody's feelings, was always smiling, ever loving and forever forgiving. He was always humming a soulful sweet song even when the whole world would go wrong!

That firm handshake, his courage of conviction and the sterling qualities of leadership of both the head and the heart had endeared him to all. A considerate and concerned "citizen of the world" he rose to become a man universal leading a life eternal! AADIL JEANGIRJI PATEL

Poona

The homely hospital

The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) is an institution that personifies the word "charity" in its true spirit! This

is one hospital, of the Parsis, by the Parsis, for the Parsis.

I do not think there is a single Parsi in Bombay who has himself/herself or for his/her relative not used the services of this Hospital, sometime or other in his/her lifetime.

The Hospital boasts a grand and imposing palatial structure, standing in the heart of the city in one of Bombay's sea facing prime locations, surrounded by sprawling gardens with benches, huge parking space, nurses' and doctors' quarters, an outpatient department, providing free or subsidized consultations and medication to the needy and the underprivileged, a social security department, a convenient chemist shop and a cafeteria run by the famous Ratan Tata Institute.

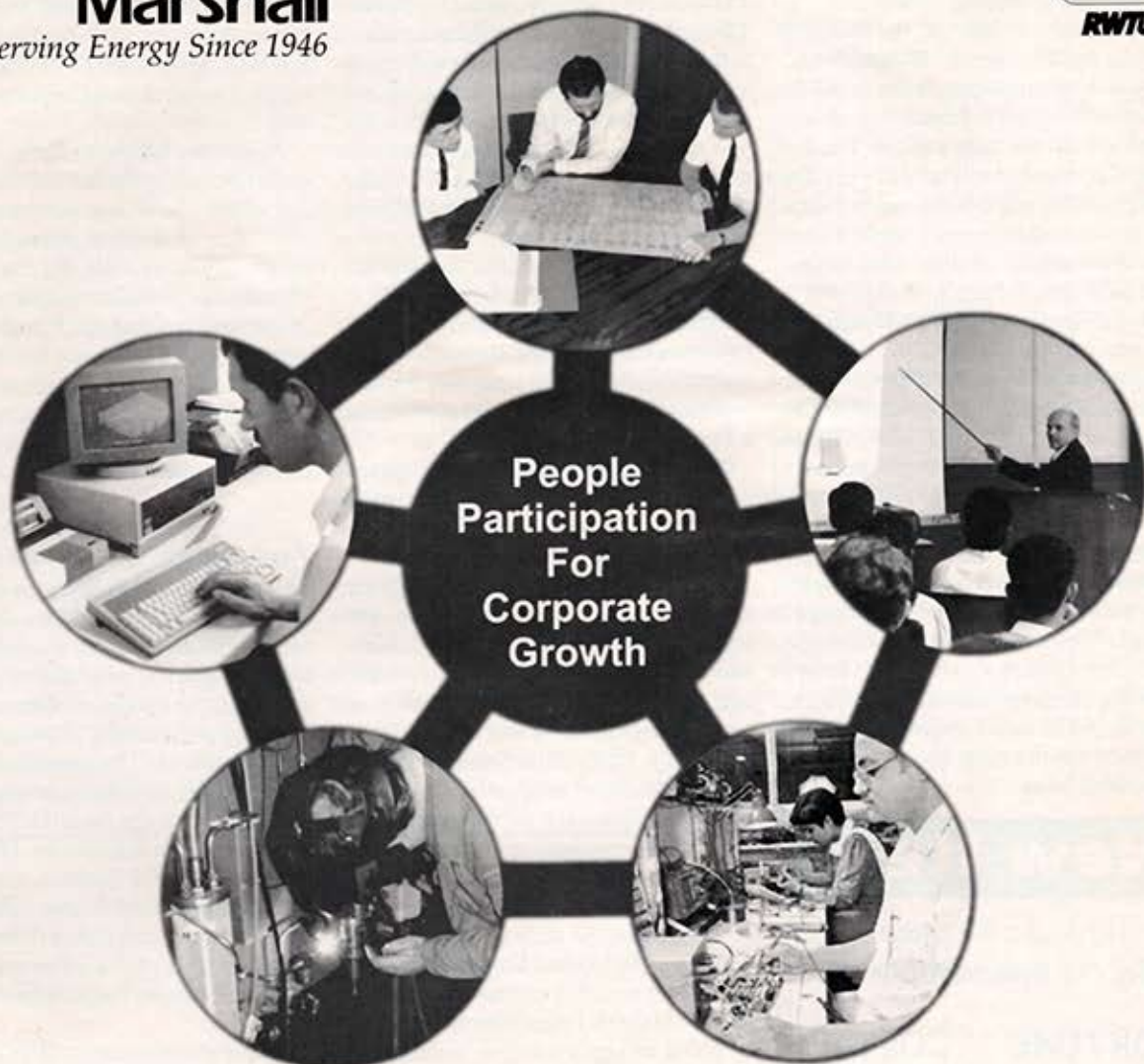
The Hospital caters to all strata of Parsis and Iranis from the poorest, to the middle class, to the affluent. The bed/room charges vary from free to subsidized to reasonable! It is not surprising that the only bed where the patient really pays fully for one's self is the nursing home section. All other beds and rooms are run with help from the Parsi charities, trusts and donations.

The food served to all the patients, therapeutic or otherwise, is of excellent standard, nutritional, tasty and appetizing, prepared by a team of professional, caring and thoughtful dietitians.

The patients are treated, cured and brought back to health by an endless panel of very eminent and experienced honorary Parsi doctors, physicians and surgeons. Many of these dedicated doctors have spent a lifetime in healing the sick and the old, selflessly, day in and day out with clockwork precision! Often one can tell the time of the day by the arrival of the doctor by your bed! The Zoroastrian community holds doctors in high esteem and respect.

For day-to-day follow-up and care, the Hospital can boast of a team of efficient interns and housemen, although in my opinion, this is one category that is very short staffed. A blessing to the patients are the highly experienced and competent matrons, leading a team of hard working and congenial nursing staff.

Talking of nurses and doctors, I will never forget the times in the 1960s when my father, the late Nadirshaw Jehangir Sanjana, a gold medallist wrestler, who due to repeated and multiple heart attacks was a frequent patient of the Hospital under the very able care of the then young and dynamic Dr Farokh E. Udawadia.



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One thing that got my dad angry, and yet laugh the next morning, was when the nurses used to wake him up from his sleep to give him his sleeping tablets!

For over three decades, the Hospital was run by the late Dr Homi Mehta, medical superintendent, who used to visit each and every patient on his wheelchair looking after their welfare. The ex-RMO (resident medical officer) Dr Marazban Nalladaru also rendered yeoman service to this Hospital and has now been replaced by medical superintendent, Dr Bejan P. Shroff.

One unique feature of this Hospital is that one can be admitted in an emergency without paying the deposit! In the same way, patients may be discharged without settling their final bills. This is the kind of trust enjoyed by the patients and relatives.

This letter would be incomplete if I failed to mention the host of Gujarati speaking ward boys and ayahs, with their repeated "sahebjee" in anticipation of a tip. Let me not leave out the ever ready liftmen who are always more than eager to take up all visitors, even singly in those huge lifts, with a salute 24 hours a day, visiting time or no visiting time!

That reminds me of one of the many benefits this Hospital has to offer. The visiting time, although officially only 4.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m., is very flexible. The geriatric wards are a great blessing to the old and the feeble... For some, it is a pleasure to be admitted for a minor sickness or checkup at the PGH. Besides you may meet more acquaintances and friends during your stay at the Hospital than if you were at home. The PGH is a home away from home!

NOSHIR NADIRSHAW SANJANA

Jenafrin in jeopardy

One-year-old Jenafrin Bavaadam was born with a congenital heart disease, and had to undergo close heart surgery within a month of her birth in 2000.

The expenses for this surgery, approximating Rs 70,000, were possible thanks to the support the family received from some trusts.

Sadly, the medical condition of little Jenafrin caused strain between her parents who have since separated. Jenafrin's mother Binaifer now looks after her. Benaifer comes from a family of extremely modest means.

In July 2001, little Jenafrin had to undergo another surgical procedure, a 'balloon pulmonary valvuloplasty' for which the expenses amounted to Rs 45,000 provided by Binaifer's friends and well wishers.

Jenafrin is now advised an open heart surgery at the Madras Mission Hospital, the cost of which is estimated at around Rs 2,00,000. It is imperative that Jenafrin be given an opportunity to undergo the surgery and thereby have a chance to lead a healthy and happy life.

Since the cost is way beyond the means of Jenafrin's mother Binaifer, The WZO Trust for Women and Children recommends that this appeal be supported. Donations are requested by cheques/drafts made out in the name of: The WZO Trust for Women and Children, Shanti, 5th Floor, 6, Banaji Street, Fort, Bombay 400001.

Donations to the WZO Trust for Women and Children are exempt u/s 80G (5) of Income Tax Act 1961.

DINSHAW TAMBOLY

Managing Trustee

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Quality conscious

When our forefathers landed on the shores of India we were *moothee bhur tolo* i.e. few. But we had innate worth. In due course this clan flourished in India

due to its religious fervor, industrious and pioneering spirit.

Today we all are naturally worried regarding our low birthrate and increasing deaths in our community. We worry that once again we will be only considered as a small clan and not as a community.

We worry for the quantity, but what about decreasing Parsi Zarathushti qualities, cultural heritage, industrious abilities, sense of solidarity, pioneering spirit, religious fervor, negligence to preserve our sensible old tenets, blood purity and sincerity to enhance our Parsipanu? Are we conscious?

If we look thus the picture of the community is more serious and hazy. We must worry more for the quality. Jewels are always rare! NOSHIR DABOO

Ahmedabad

Zoroaster, a revealer

To not want Zoroastrianism to spread among the seven keshvars is a violation of what I think the Prophet wanted so many centuries ago and what did happen. Certainly all those various peoples conquered by Persia and officially "Zoroastrianized" were "converts"! The idea that one is born into a religion is rather peculiar to me. I personally consider myself a Zoroastrian though rather an eclectic one. I follow the Fasli calendar, for instance, and wonder why anyone would follow calendars so out of seasonal correlation (but of course India doesn't really have four seasons like Iran; exile causes forgetfulness and distortions)!

There are other issues: Was Zoroaster part of a prophetic succession or the founder/revealer of a new religion? I feel he may have "used" older Aryan (Vedic) knowledge but he was definitely a propounder of a new religion (after his dialog with Ahura Mazda) as revolutionary as Buddhism. But perhaps putting Zoroaster into a prophetic succession was a way of "accommodating" the vast Hindu majority in India?

Also, I am unaware of yashts for some *roz/mah* jashans — has anyone ever tried to write (or recreate) these? Do some yashts need rewriting? An example would be the *Fravardin Yasht* which perhaps needs some names deleted and more modern ones added such as the Tatas for instance.

I have heard that some Parsis do not believe in Ahriman et al. This is interesting considering evidence of demonic activity has been documented by re-

continued on page 51

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Events and Personalities

Guide and guardian

"As a prelate, it is my sacred and bounden duty to guard the community in matters religious and guide those misguided souls who have strayed from the path of Asha," wrote Dastur Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa in a letter addressed to the editors of *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Bombay Samachar* of October 21, 2001.

JamaspAsa sought to inform the community, "In the past several rules were framed and resolutions passed by eminent dasturji sahebs and scholars to safeguard the community against un-Zoroastrian practices which threatened the existence and identity of the community. Time is once again ripe to remind my beloved community members of some of these essential practices."

Appealing to the trustees of all fire-temples, he advised them "to take steps and ensure that panthakis and priests of the sacred places of worship under their jurisdiction neither perform and participate nor encourage in any way un-Zoroastrian practices like:

- performance of navjotes of children whose either parent... is a non-Zoroastrian
- performance of ceremonies by so-called priests who have married non-Zoroastrians.
- All religious rules, regulations and traditions are adhered in the performance of the solemn navar and maratab rituals. Permission should be granted for performance of navar or maratab ritual in the premises of the agiaries/atash behrams only after ascertaining that the candidate has the minimum required ecclesiastical qualifications.



JamaspAsa:
"bounden duty"

• Priests who flout these rules should not be allowed to practice in the sacred premises under your care...

"Of late it has come to our notice that panthakis and priests of a reputed old atash behram in (Bombay) have performed and aided such un-Zoroastrian acts," decried JamaspAsa. "Some of them are purported to belong to the dedicated 'nine families' serving the holy Iranshah for centuries... which the Udvada Athornan Anjuman should kindly note."

The majority in the community who are wont to performing the ashirwad ceremony after sunset in keeping with their forefathers' promise to Jodi Rana as narrated in the *Qissa-i-Sanjan* episode may be surprised for JamaspAsa recommends: "Navjotes and ashirwad ceremonies should be performed during the morning hours, preferably in an atash behram, agiary or at one's residence." He was also not in favor of priests performing "solemn rituals like jashan and fasheta in the presence of non-Zoroastrians."

"Only by observing the above time-tested practices can we strengthen and ensure the survival of our religion and community. This is the responsibility of each and every right-thinking member of the Zoroastrian community," urged the Dastur while awaiting the "formation of the Council of High Priests of India to tackle and solve these issues."

AIMZ meet

A letter from the Jeejeebhoy Dadabhai Charity Fund (JDCF) permitting the use of the Colaba Agiary baug for a reception after the marriage of a Zoroastrian woman to a non-Zoroastrian spouse was a source of joy to the gathering. The conditions stipulated by the JDCF include a mandatory jashan by the girl's family, noted Meher Amersey, president of the Association of Inter-Married

Zoroastrians (AIMZ).

She pegged the total membership of the Association at 242. She was addressing the body's ninth annual general meeting on October 5, 2001.

The Association was also grateful to philanthropist and Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Jamshed Guzder who arranged for the AIMZ to receive a donation of Rs 50,000 from the Merwanjee D. H. Jeejeebhoy Trust which may be the first of four instalments. Larry Grant's and AIMZ joint honorary secretary Ave Mehta's efforts at launching the AIMZ website were also appreciated.

The Association mourned the loss of two stalwarts — Soonu Godrej, wife of the late Naoroji Godrej who with his father created Pirojshanagar, the Godrej township at Vikhroli, and documentary filmmaker Homi Sethna who sympathized with the AIMZ cause and enthusiastically participated in its discussions — by standing a minute in silent remembrance.

The AIMZ managing committee — comprising president Amersey, vice president Smita Crishna, honorary secretary Vera Mahajan, honorary treasurer Khursheed Narang, joint secretary Mehta, honorary editor of *Avedan*, the AIMZ newsletter, Meher Rafeat and committee members Kavas Petigara, Darius Shroff and Berjis Desai — continues for another term in the absence of fresh nominations. Burzy Maneksha and Company has been reelected to audit the organization's finances.

AIMZ member, historian and vice president of the Asiatic Society of Bombay Mani Kamerkar, informed the gathering about a project to restore the Bahrot Caves which she said were "sinking and cracking." The Indian Council of Historical Research has given a grant and the Archeological Society of India had been approached for permission and



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From left (top row): Amërsey, Crishna, Mahajan and Narang; (second row): Mehta, Rafaat and Kamerkar Photos: Arnavaz S. Mama

have "promised to collaborate," noted Kamerkar. Also on the cards was an excavation of some mounds in Sanjan which may be the foundations of an agiary or dakhma, depending on whether the exercise yields any old implements. Dr Homi Dhalla, president of the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation and Homi Mehta who conducts tourist trips to Bahrot, have registered an interest in the project which may need funds from the community: "About four lakh rupees for preliminary excavations; then for the protection of the excavated sites. Much of our history is conjecture," added Kamerkar, emphasizing the need for objective evidence of the community's life in Sanjan and after. Arnavaz S. Mama

If you opt for cremation

Noting that "the DDD-AG (Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group) has been inundated with queries as to the modalities to be followed if and when a death occurs and the family wishes to opt for cremation," *Aavedan*, the newsletter of the Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians provides some guidelines in its August 2001 issue:

- For Zoroastrian prayers Mobed Framroze Mirza (tel 3636524, mobile 98214-21593) and Mobed Khushroo Madan (tel 3698207) are ready to conduct four-day ceremonies either at one's residence, at the crematorium or at any hall you desire.
- For a hearse contact Manjrekar Ambulances (tel 3869215). Their charges are Rs 450 in south Bombay. Hearses may also be available at funeral parlors.
- Contact the clerk at the Death Registration Karkun (DRK) — for the cremation center you opt for: Chandanwadi

(2015977); Heinz Road, Worli (4932517); Shivaji Park (4452089); Sion (4071656).

• At the DRK you will be required to fill up and sign the Death Report Form No 4. This along with your doctor's death certificate is sent by the crematorium's staff to the medical health officer of the ward for registration and issue of a municipal death certificate.

• The DRK officer issues the permission to consign the body to the electric crematorium on payment of the relevant charges: Rs 250 for adults and Rs 175 for children below 12 years. A. S. M.

ZS' new sound track

"Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) believes religion should unfold in a fun way through music and dance," declared founder Khojeste Mistree at the release of their new audio cassette/compact disc, *Gao Khushina Geet* on September 28, 2001 at the hands of chief guest Shiamak Davar. The celebration of the event is "in good Parsi style with free snacks for all instead of a talk on religion," reinforced Mistree who perceived a Zoroastrian's responsibility is "to bring enjoyment, fun and laughter in the world... What we are teaching children is something which will help them through life..."

Fresh from the success of his *Yes* shows, Davar's surprise presence that evening at the C. M. C. Hall at The Alexandra Girls' English Institution electrified the audience. "He's a Parsi, a Zoroastrian and the most lively pop icon for our youngsters," introduced Mistree. The children of four schools — Alexandra, Girton, Panday and Byramjee Jeejeebhoy — who had been

directed by ZS stalwart Shehnaz Munshi to enact a select few of the total 18 songs on the track wanted the finale *Mara Mamma ni chhe phulwari* to be dedicated to Davar. Although the introductory *Sakhi suraj bhale ugiya re* started on a sober note, the navjote and wedding tableaux to complement their corresponding songs enlivened the atmosphere. The Parsi fondness for toddy and drinks was also conveyed at the right moments.

"I'm very God loving; not God fearing," announced Davar, referring to his spiritual inclinations and pride in his Parsi nose although admitting that his "Gujarati is *jaraa akhaaraa* (something which can be overlooked)." On a more serious note, he added, "We can heal people through music and dance."

The ZS gave credit to Munshi for "her singular perseverance, commitment and dedication in bringing to realization the entire project and for coordinating it from start to finish." Having readied the children within six practice sessions (with the cooperation of their principals) to enact the songs for the occasion, Mistree noted, "She's a workaholic."

As with their earlier cassettes, *I am proud to be a Zoroastrian* and *Khushali na Geet ne Garba*, the new cassette comes with a compact booklet wherein are provided the English transliterations and translations of all the songs. Notes Munshi in the booklet, "As far as possible the original melody and words have been retained; however some variations in the songs have been made where necessary to make the music and lyrics vibrant in order to suit contemporary tastes. Zubin Balaporia's skilful handling of the melodies, his arrangement of music and his creative expertise has given these old songs from our culture a new and lively touch."

The cassette jacket names Munshi for selecting and editing songs, Balaporia for arranging, performing and producing all the songs, Kaizad Bhabha for engineering and mixing 16 songs, Farhad Wadia's Powerstation Studio for recording and mixing of songs, additional tabla player Yusuf Ghulamohammed and Kersy Mistry for his melody skills. Although Freny Dalal-Paghdwala's name was missing on the cassette jacket, the booklet thanked the "directress for singing and voice production technique and the members of the Crystal Choral for lending their voices to the songs." The ZS acknowledged "her cooperation dur-



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At the launch of Gao Khushina Geet: *Mis-tree* (left) and *Davar* with some of the singers and students

ing the entire project and for allowing us the use of her house during rehearsals." Her contribution was listed second, after Munshi's.

While the invite to the function read, "Some of the songs will be enacted by our children with live presentation by members of the Crystal Choral and other ZS well-wishers," in reality the singers appeared to be standing before the audience with their 'live' voices drowned by the cassette recording played over the loudspeaker. That each of the 56 children on stage that day was given his/her complimentary copy of the audio cassette before the singers were presented theirs seemed to humble their efforts!

Priced at Rs 120 for the audio cassette and Rs 350 for the CD, *Gao Khushina Geet* which "has been produced as part of Zoroastrian Studies' commitment to preserve both ancient and contemporary Zoroastrian customs and traditions" will be available from the ZS office at K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Building, Ground floor, 136,



Mumbai Samachar Marg, Bombay 400023, Tel: 2831511, e-mail: zstudies@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Bajan earns gold

After a lapse of nine years emerged a candidate to qualify for the Parekh Gold Medal awarded by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) to a student who passes the Bombay University's MA examination in Avesta-Pahlavi and other ancient Iranian languages with distinction. Ervad Darayus Parvez Bajan, a product of the Sir J. J. Zarhoshti Madressa run by the BPP, passed the examination in June 2000 with distinction and was presented the medal on August 7, 2001 by the BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder in the presence of all the other trustees and senior executives of the Panchayet, mentions a press release. The last recipient of this

Medal was his father Parvez who was conferred the distinction in 1992.

The faculty of Avesta-Pahlavi was first introduced at the MA level in the Bombay University in 1888 due to the efforts of renowned scholars K. R. Cama and Dr (Sir) Jivanji Modi, mentions the release. To perpetuate the memory of philanthropist Cursetjee Furdoonji Parakh, Behramji Manekji Wadia instituted an endowment through which a gold medal is given to an outstanding student at the MA examination in Avesta-Pahlavi. Over a century, very few students have won this coveted medal. As stated Sapur F. Desai, erstwhile joint secretary of the BPP in the preface to the *Sir J. J. Zarhoshti Madressa Centenary Volume*, "During the last 50 years, the trend towards liberal education has yielded place to predilection for scientific and technological education suiting the age and the time. The study of archaic and dead languages like Avesta and Pahlavi stands, therefore, relegated to a secondary place. This will tend to lower the quantum of scholarship in the community..."

It is to 26-year-old Bajan's credit that his thirst for religious knowledge led him to seriously pursue Avesta-Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian languages at the MA level after he had graduated in commerce and completed his professional



Guzder presenting the Parekh Gold Medal (below) to Ervad Darayus Bajan (center)

Photos: Homyar Mistry, Hornz Prints





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training in chartered accountancy, cost accountancy and company secretary's examinations. At the final examination of the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants of India he secured the 25th rank. After working in different departments of Price Waterhouse as an executive he is currently assistant manager — finance with Standard Chartered Bank.

An alumnus of the Dadar Athornan Boarding Madressa, Bajan's early priestly training and academic education was under the guidance of Ervad Rustomji Panthaki and Ervad Burjorji Panthaki. His navar and maratab initiation was done at the Wadi Dar-e-Meher in Navsari and his practice in the performance of higher liturgical ceremonies was honed at the Anjuman Atash Behram. Besides participating in six nirangdin ceremonies he was also involved in the gumbaj consecration ceremonies at the Mevawalla Dar-e-mehar, Byculla which his family has been managing since 1851, at the Shapoorji Jokhi Agiary in Godrej Baug and the Sethna Agiary at Tardeo, according to the press release.

Sociable social worker

"One has to make time for everything in life," 73-year-old Perin Dittia of Hyderabad was quoted in the *Deccan Chronicle* of September 14, 2001. She continues to serve on the board of the Guild of Service Sevasamajam Balika Nilayam and Baby Adoption Centre and is also active with Vidyarajana Kindergarten School run in the Secretariat premises by the Indian Administrative Wives' Association for children of employees working in the Secretariat and surrounding offices.



Dittia: record fund raiser

Dittia has been affiliated with the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) Hyderabad as advisory committee member and board member at different times and was also the chairperson of its YWCA morning group. Invited to serve on different fund-raising committees she is invariably the highest fund raiser using her contacts with the Banjara Hills Kitty Group from where she gets most of her funds. "Though all my friends have been very cooperative, fund-raising continues to be a nasty job where one has to go through not-so-pleasant

experiences. Over a period of time one gets to know whom to ask when the need arises," Dittia told the *Deccan Chronicle*. All this while she was sales executive of Ind Travels, now known as Carlson and Wagonlite Travels.

Born and brought up in South Africa, her marriage to Bazun, an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer familiarized her with the interior districts of Andhra Pradesh. "The various experiences one goes through help build one's character. That is when he or she can feel the pain of others and empathize with them," believes Dittia who has worked as Guides Commissioner in Secunderabad, for the Indian Red Cross Society, the Deccan Seva Sadan, the Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad.

Participating in cleanliness drives in rural pockets, working in Aanganwadis and family planning centers did not however deter Dittia from socializing, organizing midnight picnics and horse-cart picnics in the 1950s! A versatile cook who has won prizes in different cooking competitions and also contributed to recipe books, a socially conscious and sociable Dittia says, "Partying is a must as it makes life more interesting and exciting." She believes, "adaptability makes life easy for you and the people around."

"The tingling strings"

India's Parsi community has always been attracted to western classical music, so it was no surprise that the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), The Stop-Gaps Cultural Academy and the Tata Group fielded two Parsi pianists on October 12, 2001 at the NCPA's Little Theatre. The two debutantes presented a selection that ranged from Mozart to Rachmaninov to the delighted audience of lounge suited invitees largely representing the many Tata enterprises as well as the professions.

The two ladies — Dilnaz Gilder and Khursheed Khurody — have been students of Bombay's well-known piano teacher, Shanti Seldon. A professional concert pianist whose recitals and broadcasts are well-known to the older generation of Bombayites, Seldon sat quietly in a corner of the third row watching her pupils perform. Both girls had completed all grade examinations of the Associated Board of The Royal Schools of Music, London, before joining Seldon. Both of them have interacted during the Sangat festival of music held in Bombay



Gilder (left) and Khurody: promising pianists Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

under the auspices of the NCPA, the Mehli Mehta Music Foundation and the Time and Talents Club, as per their bio data. And their performance in The Little Theatre was described as "very promising" by erstwhile music critic Prof Sheryar Ookerjee in the course of a conversation with *Parsiana*.

Gilder, who presented selections from Mozart, Brahms, Schubert and Debussy is a commerce graduate who works 12-hour days in the office of the group's chairman Ratan Tata. The "quiet, controlled Dilnaz," as Stop-Gaps chairman and music director Alfred D'Souza introduced her to the audience, is the daughter of the late Dr Jal Gilder and his wife Jer. She was introduced to the piano as a five-year-old in Calcutta. When the family moved to Bombay, Dilnaz attended boarding school in Panchgani. Since her return to Bombay, she has pursued advanced music with Seldon. She also finds time for yoga, reiki and baking, as per the press release.

Khurody, who played selections from Mozart, Brahms, Schumann, Chopin, Rachmaninov and Schubert, schooled in the UK before proceeding for undergraduate studies to California followed by a stint at Harvard. The exuberant Khursheed, daughter of Nawshir Khurody of Voltas and the late Roshan, is currently a full-time student with Seldon. Her array of extracurricular activities have included work in music and dance with Vietnamese refugees, winning a state of California award, presidency of the South Asia Forum at Harvard besides being a devoted ballet student, as notes the press release. In the late 1980s Khursheed had banded young enthusiasts into a singing group to entertain poor Zoroastrian patients in the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital and the J. J. Hospital's Parsee Ward. Her other interests include the fine arts, literature,

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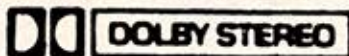
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Parsi fare in Delhi

The wide view of Le Belvedere, the rooftop nightclub and restaurant at Delhi's Le Meridien hotel, complemented the diversity of the menu. The elegance matched the exclusiveness of the community. "The somewhat stiffly elegant ambience go well with the idea of a Parsi food festival," noted a write-up in *The Pioneer*, reporting on the 10-day extravaganza when chef Rattan Elavia who has "a buzzing catering business in Bombay" was specially flown in to provide the authentic fare at the Parsi food festival from July 20-30, 2001.

Adding to the Parsi ambience were the special invitees jurist Fali Nariman and his family. The unique blending of the sweet with the spicy that constitutes Parsi cuisine titillated the palates of the invitees who could sample the *kolmi na kebabs*, *chutney na kebabs*, *tarapori patia*, *patra ni machhi*, *jerdaloo sali ma murghi*, *dhansak* or the vegetarian *bhaji dana nu stew*, *titori*, *Surti papadi nu undhiyu*, *ravo* or *doodh pawa* among other delicacies.

A self taught foodie, as he mingled among the patrons in his Parsi attire, Elavia hoped this food fest would bring back the flavors of authentic Parsi food to the land of chicken and tandoor. Earlier in the year Elavia had helped the Bengalis in Calcutta taste authentic Parsi cuisine on the invitation of Sonargaon at the Taj Bengal.

Signal service for Bradman

"This celebration has seen such an outpouring of goodwill in Australian life," remarked the Archbishop of Adelaide, Ian George at a specially convened memorial service in honor of the legendary cricketer Sir Donald Bradman at St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide on March 25, 2001. Referring to the service which "was watched by probably the largest television audience for such an event in history" the archbishop noted, "I believe they estimated the Indian audience at over 250 million people."

In the course of his address, the archbishop quoted at length a letter he had received from Russi Canteenwala of Lucknow: "Over the miles I will be there in spirit at the prayer service for the



Elavia (in pugree) talking to Harjeet Singh, chairperson of Le Meridien

dear departed...Like me millions of people in India mourn the loss of a father figure in cricket. Such a great gentleman sportsman will never pass this way again...God could have made a better berry than a strawberry, but he did not. He could have put it into his own mind to create a better cricketer than Sir Don, but he did not."

According to the archbishop, "Such a letter reminds us of the joy of our common humanity and the way certain lives and certain sports transcend differences of race, creed, color or socioeconomic status." Past and present prime ministers, Australian captains and international cricket identities as also members of Bradman's family and people representing different facets of Australian society attended the service which lasted for nearly two hours and was televised live for audiences in Australia, New Zealand, India and Pakistan, stated a news report in the Lucknow edition of *The Times of India* of March 30.

SPOTLIGHT

Scoring 68 percent in the first year LLB



Patel:
University
topper

examination, **Binaifer Sarosh Patel** of Ahmedabad stood first in the Gujarat University in May 2001, according to a press release. Twenty-three-year-old Patel simultaneously cleared the CA intermediate examination in May 2001. In May '99 she had topped the University at the BCom examination.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

A eulogy to sweat equity

The dedication of the Chicago Darbe Mehr's new wing to Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna marks the second diaspora's recognition of its voluntary workers

Arnavaz S. Mama

"It is very humbling, and we will have to rededicate ourselves now to live up to this singular honor," write Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna in their letter of thanks to the board and community of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC). The two-page message, reproduced in the ZAC newsletter (October 2001), was the Rivetnas' acknowledgement of the community's decision to dedicate the new wing of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr to them "without even breathing a word to us for so many months."

September 3, 2001 which marked the 18th anniversary of the inaugural of the Chicago Darbe Mehr, saw the formal inauguration of its new wing. The Chicago community led by Rohinton Rivetna, former president of ZAC and founder president of FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America), had built the original Darbe

Mehr. And it was again Rivetna aided by his son Cyrus, who led the team working on its extension.

The day began with a grand jashan led by Chicago head priest Dr Kersey Antia. "As soon as the jashan was completed, the guests were requested to be seated in the main hall," writes Aban Daboo in the ZAC newsletter. "Roshan and Rohinton were requested to cut the red ribbon to formally open the new wing. (Up to this moment they were not aware of what was to follow.) Following the opening the Rivetnas were requested to unveil a plaque which read: 'This wing is dedicated to Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna in sincere appreciation of their services to Chicago Zoroastrian community ZAC September 3, 2001.'

"To say the Rivetnas were totally dumbfounded and very pleasantly surprised is putting it mildly. The audience

gave a standing ovation and it was a very emotional and touching moment for all the Rivetnas and the guests."

The speeches that followed — by ZAC president Hosi Mehta, Dilshad Antia, chairperson of the Expansion Committee and ZAC vice president Arnavaz Elavia — recalled the Rivetnas' long association of 35 years with the ZAC community and the family's hard work in completing the expansion project. FEZANA president Framroze Patel, who had come to Chicago especially for the event, presented a shawl to the garlanded Rohinton on behalf of ZAC. Roshan, editor-in-chief of the *FEZANA Journal* was equally garlanded and presented an Italian gold-trimmed vase with a congratulatory message etched upon it. The couple cut a huge chocolate cake which said 'Congratulations Rohinton and Roshan.' "Due to all the ZAC summer activities, muktad



Left to right (top) At the presentation ceremony: Patel, Roshan, Aspy Daboo of the building committee, Rohinton, D. Antia and Elavia; the new wing of the Darbe Mehr (Below) Cutting the ribbon; H. Mehta, Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna and Patel

prayers and dinner events, Navroz function, one wedding and two navjotes, planning for this event was put on the back burner," notes Daboo.

Eulogizing the input of Rohinton Rivetna in the building of the Chicago Darbe Mehr as also in the creation of FEZANA and the drafting of its constitution, Patel said, "The first generation of dar-e-mehers, including this one, saw the light of the day, as a result of magnanimous donations of Arbab Rustom and Morvarid Guiv Foundation and equally large-hearted donation of Zartoshty Brothers, late Faridoon and Mehraban. The Guivs and the Zartoshty Brothers, the righteous Zarathushtis, did their part; however, in every location, there were 'nar ashos,' the righteous individuals, who worked tirelessly, night and day, to supplement the financial contributions.

"They provided 'sweat equity,' by raising funds, drawing up the architectural plans, obtaining the zoning variances, supervising construction, providing legal and financial services, so on and so forth. The contribution in 'sweat equity' was equally important in the realization of our dreams. And it is this unseen contribution of so many righteous Zarathushtis that needs to be recognized...

"In the 'Dibach' section of afringan, we recognize the contribution of righteous people, kings and warriors. You will recall that today the ervads remember Gaiomard Nar Asho, Shiavax Nar Asho, and Agre Ras Nar Asho. It is time that we recognize the Nar Asho of this community for the last 30 years. On behalf of this eminent congregation and 22 other associations I want to recognize the paramount contributions, moral leadership and the selfless service of our Nar Asho Rohinton Rivetna...

"Rohinton, the FEZANA constitution, which was drafted under your penmanship, does not make a FEZANA president a Sassanian king. Rohinton, as you have earned the love and respect of the Chicago community, I declare you 'Nar Asho.'"

The Rivetnas' letter, originating from "the surprise factor and emotion of Inauguration Day" noted their thrill at seeing "the sons of the very mobeds that had performed the grand jashan of our Darbe Mehr 18 years ago, now sit with their fathers at the jashan for this new wing." Expressing their gratitude to the Almighty for "our second generation of

mobeds," the Rivetnas extoll the contribution of the priests and the laity in the success of the ZAC Darbe Mehr and community: "Building a building as you know is easy when compared to the endurance and resilience it takes to fill it with love and devotion. The building, otherwise is a mere hollow shell. Over the years, there are many who have given selflessly to breathe life into this building and to make it a thriving, focal point for our community." They recall the tireless work of past and present boards and presidents, especially Kayomars Mehta's service to the cause of religious education as also that of all the Sunday school teachers; of Keikhosrow and Parvin Mobed's hard work "to keep the Iranian traditions alive and for being the glue that holds the communities together."

Looking ahead, the Rivetnas note, "It is our earnest desire that in this building every act will be an act of worship in the name of Ahura Mazda — Kshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao — and our community attain the highest spiritual level that a community can aspire to... During the early days, as a fledgling community, trying to form our infrastructure and our Darbe Mehr, we lived by the motto of cooperation not competition, as Minoo Press often reminds us. As a more mature community now, with our infrastructure in place, and as a member of the worldwide Zarathushti community, espousing a variety of ideologies, ethnicities and shades of Zoroastrianism, the perpetuation of our community now rests on our ability to live and work together harmoniously, with respect for all."

In this context the ZAC celebration of Jashan-e-Mehergan as Zoroastrian Unity Day at the Darbe Mehr with Iranian food, music and entertainment is significant. It is also interesting to note that a part of the funds (\$ 1,700) for the extension came from contributions for lunch and dinner following the Gatha prayers during the muktad, as notes the ZAC's September 2001 newsletter. The community has been supporting Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal's "monumental work of 35 years on the *Nirangistan* and *Herbadistan*, shortly to be published in Paris (as per the ZAC's August newsletter), through the coordination and leadership of Zenobia and Zubin Tantra.

But that does not bar new approaches. Hosi Mehta's "message from the president" column is often full of thought-

provoking ideas. "We are so good at catching people doing things wrong, telling them about it and trying to put them in their place, in the process hurting them and ruining our relationships. Let us be different this coming year. Let us go out of our way and catch people doing things right and let us go a step further and make sure to tell them about it and don't just stop there, really rub it in. Let us see how it affects our relationships," he challenges in the September newsletter.

In the August issue, the column dealt with disposal of the dead. "Being in this country we are faced with a choice... What to do with our body when life no longer occupies it. We have the choice of burial, cremation, organ and or body donation." Emphasizing that he was voicing his personal view, Mehta wrote, "Knowing what I know about our religion, philosophy and principles, our belief in spreading goodness, love, life, sharing and charity... when life has left my body, my choice would be to donate the body so that the skin could be used to help burn victims, bones and muscles, etc could help accident victims, organs could be transplanted where needed or studied so in the future someone's life could be extended or saved. In this day and age of awareness and advancement we have the opportunity to improve others' and our lives not only when we are alive but even after we are gone. We should be thankful to Ahura Mazda for the opportunity to live through and experience a time like this."

Preoccupations in NY

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) has set up its Critical Assistance Fund to coordinate Zoroastrian donations for the families of the World Trade Center victims, and the families of firefighters, police officers and officials who lost their lives while saving the lives of others. The ZAGNY newsletter encouraged the community to donate blood and service. A special fund raiser luncheon was organized at the new ZAGNY Darbe Mehr at Pomona, New York with the help of former president Erach Munshi, and Mehru and Lovji Cama on October 21, 2001.

Viraf Commissariat is the current chairperson of the Darbe Meher Zoroastrian Trust (DMZT) with Noshir Baria as secretary and Yasmin Ghadiali as treasurer. The other trustees are Cyrus

continued on page 40

Reaching for the Sky



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Cel(l)ebriety stat

Her pioneering work in the field of infertility and the subsequent breakthroughs in stem cell resesarch have established Dr Firuza Parikh as an authority on reproductive assistance

A fountain of fertility and a champion of conception Dr Firuza Parikh has been repeatedly in the news in the last decade: credited with South-East Asia's first micromanipulation baby in 1994; first laser-hatching pregnancy in 1995; delivering in 1999 the 1,000th baby since she set up the first IVF (in vitro fertilization) center in a private hospital (Bombay's Jaslok Hospital and Research Center)... Recently she was on the front page of major dailies as the nascent Reliance Life Sciences (RLS) Private Limited of which she is founder director had, within eight months of its incorporation, been rated by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) as third in a list of top 10 institutes for stem cell research in the world (a stem cell is a cell derived from select adult tissues, embryo or fetus and has the ability to divide for indefinite periods in culture or to result in specialized cells).

Overwhelmed with this recognition, Parikh recalls her surprise when on her return home from a short vacation with the family she was subjected to incessant telephone calls from the US media: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Newsweek*, *Time*. At the first opportunity the family logged on to the NIH website to confirm the glad tidings. Among the international institutes to have complied with President George Bush's criteria for obtaining embryonic stem cells (see "Consequential cells," pg 30) were featured Bombay's RLS which has been able to identify seven stem cell lines (the highest number identified, 19, was by a Swedish institute) and the Bangalore based National Centre for Biological Sciences (three lines). "We are very self-sufficient," declares Parikh. The promise of financial funding does not excite her as much as prospective

"academic collaboration."

Giving credit to her team of 50 "disciplined, knowledgeable" fellow researchers, Parikh refers to "the intellectual freedom given to each member. We are very people oriented. It is people who ultimately matter. The ability to interact, collaborate," is important, she reiterates. Occupying 20,000 sq ft of space on two floors at Bombay's Hukisondas Hospital for their stem cell study, Parikh recalls a conversation she had with Mukesh Ambani, vice chairman of the Reliance Group, and his wife Neeta in 2000. During the course of the discussion when she broached the subject of the infinite potentialities of stem cell research, Mukesh asked her when she would like to initiate such work in Bombay. Parikh responded with "Tomorrow," making Mukesh persist, "Why not today?" a frank, effervescent Parikh lays bare the genesis of RLS' successful foray into stem cell research.

Director of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics at the Jaslok Hospital and Research Center who also enjoys the distinc-

tion of being appointed the third and the youngest director of Jaslok, on any working day Parikh's waiting room is filled to capacity with couples of all denominations, crossing boundaries of race, caste or color. Within a year of its inception the Center began receiving patients from 35 countries as also different states of India, mentions a handout. Dr Bekir, director of The Bourne Hallam Center in Cambridge (where the world's first IVF baby was born) was so impressed with the functioning of the Center when visiting it within months of its inception that she had noted, "This Center has started with a completely fresh approach; they are doing things today which we are planning to do in future."

Do her new responsibilities at RLS require her to forsake her commitments at Jaslok? Prompt comes the reply, "No, no. That's my (first) baby." With more than 1,400 babies born using the IVF expertise of the Center, Parikh finds it "very fulfilling, very satisfying" when couples return with the baby to introduce



it to its 'first home.' She can recollect which patient had come for what treatment even after a passage of several years and then beaming a smile adds, "Don't I have a good memory for one who is 45?" To Parikh, her "patients come first, then my research. I see stem cells as an extension of my infertility work." Currently a new development at the Center is the pre-implantation genetic diagnosing where a single cell is obtained from the embryo to determine its genetic health before implanting it in the uterus.

In the mornings she is invariably at Jaslok, in the early afternoon at her infertility clinic at Harkisondas and later in the afternoon she is involved with her research work at RLS. "Evening time is very important for us as a family and that is something I'm not willing to give up on," confesses Parikh. With responsibilities shared, on certain days husband Rajesh who is a neuropsychiatrist at the Jaslok Hospital returns home early, and on other days it is Firuza's duty to take charge of their three children, Swapneil, 13, Manish, 11 and Nikita, nine, who are studying at the Bombay International School. By compartmentalizing her life, she does not permit stress to build up. "If you enjoy what you are doing, work does not become a chore," she maintains.

When she needs to fall back on her



Firuza and Rajesh Parikh with children (from left) Manish, Nikita and Swapneil; Below and bottom left: M. F. Hussain presenting a painting to Firuza after she delivered her 1,000th baby since setting up an IVF center; Bottom right: India's first micromanipulation baby with Firuza



inner resources, she makes a trip to a fire-temple. A visit to the Iranshah is a must every year for Parikh who with her "spiritual bent of mind" feels the need to regularly wear the sudreh-kusti. While she is inside the atash behram, Rajesh who is a Gujarati Jain and the children who have not been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion wait for her in the car outside. She says matter-of-factly, "We have to respect the religion." The prayer room at their residence accords a pride of place to all prophets and saints, teaching the children to value all faiths.

"The teachings of Zoroastrianism are the simplest," observes Parikh. "As our community growth rates are coming down, it is important to integrate those who want to understand the religion. Children (of intercommunity marriages) should be able to exercise the freedom to understand and accept Zoroastrianism. The religion should be opened to those

who feel strongly about it," she urges. Recommending a return to the earlier scenario when Zoroastrianism welcomed any faithful to its fold, she advocates, "Rather than be cloistered (with a fixation on) maintaining the ethnic identity, we should spread."

The system of dakhmenashini she sees as a "very important contribution of our religion" but with the present "urbanization, environmental pollution and infection in bird population" Parikh feels it can continue only on another site, a little away from Bombay. In the absence of vultures she would prefer cremation though for her the choice would also be governed by her need to have the family with her at the last rites.

To the "educated, career oriented Zoroastrians who opt for late marriages and consciously defer childbearing" Parikh always counsels, "Don't keep it for too late. We must have larger fa-



milies." She realizes though that they also need encouragement and support from parents, in-laws and other assistance in the form of housing. "Of course there are fertility problems as one grows older," asserts Parikh, expressing her happiness that "Parsis do come for assisted reproduction. They are well informed, well researched, open to suggestions, very compliant, making time to come..."

Certain diseases like diabetes, breast cancer and Parkinson's which Parsis are prone to may find an early cure when stem cell research is able to identify definite strands and direct their application accordingly. A stem cell can be obtained from different sources: among adults it could be available from the blood, bone marrow, connective tissue or cornea; in case of a fetus, the umbilical cord after the birth of a baby; from embryos when donated by couples who have fertilized eggs in excess of what they need. They have India's first umbilical cord stem cell repository with a capacity to store 3,500 samples. Later this will be scaled up to store 10,000 samples. These would be important for treating aplastic anemia, thalassemia and sickle cell anemia.

Any new science must examine all moral and ethical issues connected with research, reasons Parikh. Awaiting guidelines to be formulated by the National Bioethics Committee, which functions under the Union government's department of biotechnology, Parikh expects them to be encouraging. "It is good for us as scientists to explain the implications to the layman," notes Parikh for whom talking "to the media is also very important. It propagates science, conveys where India is in the field of science, recognizes us as important researchers in the field with scientists abroad also wanting to come back and work here."

Both Firuza and Rajesh opted to return to India after their study abroad. While Rajesh was on a fellowship at the Johns Hopkins University before he was invited by Jaslok, Firuza did her postdoctorate research in reproductive medicine for four years at the Yale University School of Medicine before she joined Jaslok. Presently she is visiting professor in obstetrics and gynecology at Yale. Born to Sheru and Minocher Sherdiwalla, Firuza who schooled at The Alexandra Girls' English Institution and graduated in medicine from the K. E. M. Hospital and the Seth G. S.

Medical College, is the first doctor in her family while Rajesh hails from a family of 28 doctors, reveals Firuza. Being family friends, their marital union was happily accepted by both sets of parents. Firuza laughingly informs us, "I've made him also half Parsi now. He reads every issue of *Parsiana* from cover to cover though I may not..."

The family loves to trek whether it is in the nearby Sahyadris or the ranges in Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim. Any kind of music is a welcome break for Firuza whose only complaint is that she is missing out on reading something which is non-medical. With over 50 scientific publications and several book chapters to her credit, advances in medicine keep her preoccupied at all times. "One of the reasons I fall asleep in two seconds (of lying on the bed) is because I'm satisfied with what work I've done on any given day. I have no regrets...I believe whatever good you do in this life you are sure to get rewarded..."

Consequential cells

Described as cells with an identity crisis, stem cells are undifferentiated entities found in the embryo, fetus or adult tissues. With an ability to grow into any of

continued on page 56



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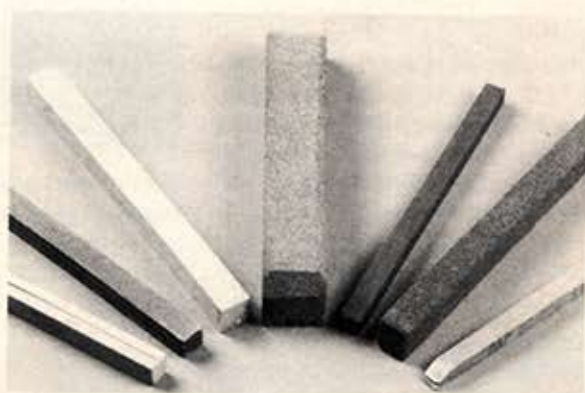
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The lady and the lab

"We aim to change the face of agriculture with new smart plants and genes and build up a strong intellectual property rights (IPR) portfolio," says Viloo Morawala Patell, founder and chief executive officer of Avestha Gengraine Technologies Private Limited (Avesthagen), a premier Indian biotechnology and bioinformatics (the development and application of computational tools for expanding biological, medical and health data) company. Venturing early into the science-fiction-turned-science-fact arena of genomics (investigations into the structure and functions of genes) and proteomics (the analysis of protein structure and function and the discovery of new proteins), Avesthagen's initial focus is on plant genomics, mainly rice. "Ours is a start-up company, founded one-and-a-half years ago and is still in its growth phase. It is IPR driven — my aim is to bridge the chasm between academia and industry," says the scientist who, while dwelling in the realm of research, calls herself a "people person, who likes interesting people."

Avesthagen's state of the art laboratories cover 5,700 sq ft on the ninth floor of Discoverer, International Technology Park, Whitefield, Bangalore, which is, according to an e-mail from the company, a "super clean, well managed, hassle-free work environment, with uninterrupted power, water and support services of international quality, providing a perfect backdrop for a contract research company." "As a woman entrepreneur I am extremely happy here in Bangalore. It has so many good aca-

demic institutions. It is also an egalitarian society, people have great respect for intellectual property. The government too is pro innovation," says the Navsari-born, Secunderabad-educated researcher who has made Bangalore her business base.

A team of 25 PhD and MSc scientists form the foundation of a strong in-house R & D (research and development) platform and carry out contract services in marker aided selection for the seed industry, gene isolation, transfer and sub-cloning, high throughput sequencing, DNA, EST and BAC library construction, etc. Avesthagen has entered into a global alliance with Genetic ID, a world leader in GMO (genetically modified organisms) testing. "The company's core mission is to improve productivity in agriculture, developing agrotechnologies that lead to value addition in food and pharma products," states their e-mail.

"I realized early on that the world out there (internationally) in this field is completely different. The pace too is very different. Through our international board of directors, management committee and scientific advisory committee, we deal with some of the top players in the field," says Morawala Patell. The company's website is www.avesthagen.com

Bangalore's Khushroo Rustomjee was an early investor in Avestha Gengraine which raised its first round equity funding from ICICI Ventures, Global Trust Bank and Tata Industries which has picked up a five percent stake in the company. Avesthagen is strongly supported by CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) and the Government of Karnataka, state company sources.

With chemistry capturing her fancy from her school days at St Anne's in Secunderabad, Morawala

Patell did her graduation from St Francis College in the same city and her masters in medical biochemistry from Bombay's Sophia College. Doctorate and post doctoral studies were at the University of Louis Pasteur in France and the University of Ghent in Belgium. She has several patents filed to her credit.

With daughters Farah (20) and Sanaya (18) doing their undergraduation in environmental science and microbiology respectively at St Joseph's College in Bangalore and husband Zarir running fitness centers under the name of Silhouette Aerobics in Hyderabad, the couple maintain two homes, says Viloo. Zarir was earlier into marketing with Smithkline Beecham, she narrates, and he is also a talented jazz pianist who loves to play and create music. Work and much travelling leave Viloo little time for socializing within the community, a trip to the fire-temple or to the Parsi Club being occasionally squeezed in, says the lady who holds "progressive views" regarding the community.

"I am totally dedicated to Avesthagen," she asserts. "We have to build for two to three years before we can hope to see financial returns. But I do have a capacity for connecting different disciplines and in the field of biotechnology and bioinformatics the potential is humungous."

Promoting entrepreneurs

"Opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavor have increased dramatically in the last few years... Over the last 50 years however, the educated youth have opted for white-collar jobs and, in the process, sacrificed that spirit of enterprise and adventure" that characterized Parsi merchant princes of yore, states the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) brochure elaborating on the formation of two entities which aim to reignite the entrepreneurial spark.

The Centre for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship (CPE), a non profit company with a zero-tax liability chaired by BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder, seeks to promote self-employment rather than just employment, by financial, administrative and managerial support to budding businessmen. CPE would be funded by patron members (Rs 25 lakhs each) and associate members (five lakh rupees each), says BPP chief executive Behram Dastur, adding that work is



Morawala Patell (above and alongside, center) with daughters Farah (far left) and Sanaya

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going to put in place the nitty-gritties of the scheme.

The Zoroastrian Investment Corporation Private Ltd (ZICPL) has an authorized capital of five crore rupees, of which the BPP and other investors have committed an initial investment of two crore rupees and hope to raise the additional three crores by way of share subscription by December 2001, according to the BPP's printed brochure delineating the two schemes. "The entity has been formed," says ZICPL chairman and well-known businessman Khushroo P. Byramjee. "We are in the process of collecting the corpus and we have as of now pegged the minimum for equity subscription in ZICPL at a lakh of rupees." ZICPL will subscribe to shares in promising new Zoroastrian ventures, act as underwriters, offer consultancy and allied services, etc, states their publicity pamphlet.

Skill-oriented, non-polluting small scale industries, light manufacturing, software development, garment production, trade and service activities, etc are suitable enterprises for financial assistance. Venture capital funding is not intended to be a largesse, but a loan facility on slightly softer terms, according to the BPP which hopes to mobilize

support for the schemes from philanthropic businessmen and charitable trusts not just in India but from overseas as well.

Mega merger

Hoshang N. Sinor, presently the managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of ICICI Bank, is to be the new joint managing director subsequent to the proposed merger of ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) with ICICI Bank. A merger between parent and offspring, the merged entity, to be called ICICI Bank, would be (after the State Bank of India) the second largest commercial bank in India, with total assets of about Rs 95,000 crore (proforma at September 30, 2001), according to a news release from ICICI Bank. It would leverage the 396 existing branches/extension counters of ICICI Bank, 140 existing retail finance offices and centers of ICICI (which operates as a diversified financial services provider — a virtual "universal bank") and a vast



Sinor: strong synergies

talent pool of 8,275 employees.

The reconstituted board of directors is to be headed by N. Vaghul as non-executive chairman, K. V. Kamath as MD and CEO and Sinor (see "India: center for opportunities," *Parsiana*, February 2000) and Lalita Gupte as joint MDs.

Reported to be one of the biggest mergers in the Indian financial sector, the process of integration is expected to be smooth due to strong synergies between the two entities. The appointed date of merger is March 31, 2002 or the date from which the Reserve Bank of India's approval becomes effective. The shareholders of the two companies and the High Courts of Bombay and Gujarat have also to approve the merger.

Under Sinor's stewardship, ICICI Bank has grown in the last few years to be the leading, technology-driven private sector bank, with assets of Rs 20,809 crore (as on September 30, 2001) and over four million customer accounts. It has India's largest ATM (automated teller machine) network, with a total of 601 ATMs all over India. It was also the first to introduce Internet banking in India. Customers in 37 cities can also access account information over the telephone.

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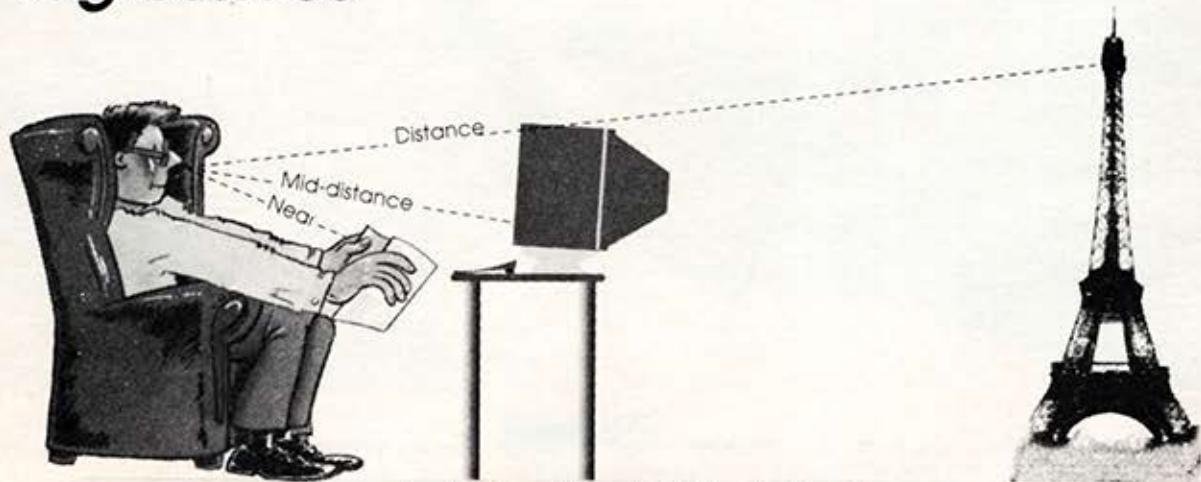
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on of gloom, the Bank posted a robust net profit of Rs 131.40 crore for the half year ended September 30, 2001, just a little under double of last year's corresponding figure, according to its audited financial results for the half year.

The scheme of amalgamation will see a share exchange ratio of one equity share of ICICI Bank for every two equity shares of ICICI. ADS (American Depository Share) holders of ICICI would be issued five ADS of ICICI Bank in exchange of four ADS of ICICI. The lakhs of bond holders of ICICI Safety Bonds will not be affected by the merger and will continue to be bond holders of the merged entity on the same terms and conditions, ICICI Bank's executive director Chanda Kochhar told the media.

In global company

With his appointment as Group general manager, Zarir Cama, chief executive officer of the Hongkong and Shanghai



Cama: up the corporate ladder

Banking Corporation (HSBC) joins a select number of 27 Group managers worldwide in HSBC Holdings plc. Country head for the HSBC Group in India from October 1999, (see "Integrating with the rest of the world," *Parsiana*, February 2000), Cama is also

chairman of HSBC Securities and Capital Markets India Private Limited and of HSBC Electronic Data Processing India Private Limited, the Group's processing company, according to the Bank's press release.

A committed conservationist, Cama spearheads HSBC's sponsorship of heritage restoration with support to organizations like the Horniman Circle Association, the Kala Ghoda Association, the David Sassoon Library and the Elphinstone College restoration program.

Tradition in tourism

Jehangir Katgara, director, Travel Corporation (India) Private Limited (TCI) is the new president of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI). Elected at the golden jubilee convention of the TAAI in Bombay in September 2001, Katgara travels, half a century on in time, in the footsteps of his late father Nariman Katgara, who was the founder and first president of the TAAI, states a press release from TCI.



Katgara: hands-on person

of TAAI, I aim to make this organization a truly representative body of the industry." Jehangir has been actively involved in the travel and tourism business for over 25 years and has served on the TAAI managing committee and has been chairman since last year of the Tour Operators Council.

Market flutter

"No thawing, no cleaning, ready to use" is "Real Good Chicken" from Godrej Agrovet Limited which is expected to flutter into stores in western India shortly. Scientifically packed through a hand-free process, instantly chilled at 2°C and supplied to the customer on the same day itself, Real Good Chicken was launched in south India in 1999, states a communiqué from Godrej Agrovet which is one of the market leaders in animal feed.

"I am not one for lengthy speeches and resolutions which are not kept," the new incumbent told the convention. "I am very much a hands-on person and with the support of all the regions and chapters

The instant chilling retains the bird's tenderness and juiciness and keeps intact essential vitamins and protein value, say company sources, and gives wing to the housewife's time as well as no defrosting or cleaning is required. Priced at Rs 70 a kilo in the south, Real Good Chicken offers the entire range of full chicken, legs, breast, boneless, etc.

With Godrej Agrovet being the sole franchisee in India of Cobb-Avian, a



Godrej's processed poultry

subsidiary of Tyson Foods, USA (the largest producer of chicken in the world), the broilers used come from grandparent generation roosters imported from Cobb-Avian, according to company sources who also note that the whole process does not cause any trauma to the birds, which are said to be absolutely disease free.

A part of the Godrej Group, the company plans to extend operations to reach an all India market.

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Yes and no

Noted jurist Rafique A. Dada's opinion on the contentious issue of funerary rites being performed at Doongerwadi has both sides claiming victory

The vexing issue of whether to permit the use of the Doongerwadi property and bunglis for the funerary prayers of those Zoroastrians opting for burial or cremation in preference to being consigned to the Towers of Silence continues to elude the Bombay community's decision-makers.

An opinion sought by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) on the issue from noted jurist Rafique A. Dada resulted in both the DDD-AG (The Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group) and the Save Doongerwadi Action Committee (SDAC) claiming victory. Dada's answer while concurring with the DDD's request for the use of the property stipulates that the religious rites be performed in "accordance with the Zoroastrian religion."

The jurist further states that it is "not for (him) to determine as to whether the Zoroastrian religion permits the system of cremation or burial (where dakhmenashini is available). This question therefore should be decided by the Querists (BPP)."

Thus the Punchayet is once more placed in the position of having to decide on whether the funerary rites can be performed at Doongerwadi for those opting for cremation or burial.

In February the BPP had decided to permit the use of the bunglis for those persons opting for alternative modes to dakhmenashini for disposal of the dead but due to a public outcry from the orthodox groups, withheld the implementation of the decision. Till now the decision to use the bunglis for prayers for such persons has been kept in abeyance. (One alternative being considered by the BPP is to permit a newly constructed bungli to be used by those opting for alternative methods of disposal after the *geh sarna*. Thus the body would not be brought to Doongerwadi nor would the *paidust* be performed there. The subsequent prayers such as the

uthamna and the *sarosh* may be performed at the bungli. A new bungli would be constructed at Ambawadi on the Doongerwadi grounds.)

Extracts from Dada's opinion are published here:

"Certain members of the Parsi Zoroastrian community who have formed themselves into a group called The Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group (had urged the) Querists that the system of disposal of the dead by exposure to the elements of nature (which system is popularly known as dakhmenashini) is no longer feasible or practicable because of the lack of vultures at Doongerwadi. The DDD-AG members had requested the Querists to implement an alternate method for the disposal of the dead...

"The DDD-AG's contention is that they are Parsi Zoroastrians and they are entitled to the use of the Doongerwadi property for the purpose of religious rites or ceremonies. They also contend that if the conventional method of disposal of the dead cannot be implemented due to the lack of vultures at Doongerwadi, the members of the DDD-AG and other members of the community who opt for an alternate system of disposal of the dead (like cremation or burial) are entitled to the use of the bunglis built at Doongerwadi for the purpose of performing obsequial ceremonies...

"The opponents of the DDD-AG have formed themselves into a group called The Save Doongerwadi Action Committee. The SDAC has submitted that the Doongerwadi land cannot be used in the manner envisaged by the DDD-AG because on a reading of the relevant provisions of the trust deed it appears that the words 'as a place for exposure of the dead and for performance of the religious rites and ceremonies' have to be read conjunctively. The SDAC also contends that no ceremony can be conducted at Doongerwadi if the disposal of

the body of the deceased takes place in a manner other than the conventional method of dakhmenashini. According to the view expressed by the SDAC the two objects of the trust referred to above should be read together, (namely) that the religious rites and ceremonies can only be performed at Doongerwadi in relation to the disposal of the dead through the system of exposure of the dead by dakhmenashini...

"The Querists state that if use of the bunglis under the trust deed is permitted for the purpose of religious ceremonies without reference to the method of disposal of the dead, then it would be possible to demarcate a separate area at Doongerwadi for a prayer hall for the use of the members of the DDD-AG.

"My opinion is sought on the following queries:

- Whether on a perusal of the aforesaid trust deeds and taking into consideration all applicable legal provisions it was in order for the Querists to have taken the decision to permit the use of the bunglis by the DDD-AG for the purpose of prayers?

- Whether in the alternate to the proposal ... above, it would be in order for the Querists to permit the followers of the DDD-AG to construct a separate prayer hall at Doongerwadi...?

"In my opinion, considering the various portions of the trust deed referred to above it is not permissible to restrict the phrase 'for the purpose of religious rites and ceremonies' as performance of religious rites and ceremonies connected with or relating to the exposure of the dead. It, however, must be emphasized that the phrase 'exposure of the dead' must be understood as exposure of the dead by the system of dakhmenashini. The reference to the various Towers of Silence constructed from time to time as also the various buildings known as *sagdis* clearly shows that the phrase 'exposure of the dead' used in the trust deed was the exposure of the dead by the system of dakhmenashini.

"However, it must be noted that (the) land can also be used for the purposes of religious rites and ceremonies. This phrase has been used in various portions of the trust deed... At page nine of the trust deed the reference is to the 'performance of other religious rites and ceremonies.' This clearly indicates that this

is a distinct object and cannot be read as religious rites or ceremonies relating only to the exposure of the dead by the system of dakhmenashini.

"It is however necessary to bear in mind that the performance of religious rites or ceremonies must be religious rites and ceremonies of the Zoroastrian religion. The whole object of the trust deed is to make a dedication for the benefit of persons professing the Zoroastrian religion and to enable them not only to use the trust lands for the exposure of the dead but also for performance of Zoroastrian religious rites and ceremonies. It necessarily follows that no rite or ceremony can be performed on the land which is not in consonance with or antithetical to the Zoroastrian faith. A strong objection has been raised by the members of the SDAC that cremation or burial (where dakhmenashini is available) is not permissible in the Zoroastrian religion and that no religious rites or ceremonies can be performed with reference to a method of disposal of the dead by cremation or burial. The members of the DDD-AG have strongly contested this position. As counsel, I am primarily concerned with the interpretation of the various trust deeds given to

me, which I have done. While I have given a reference to and considered the various material which has been pro-

The BPP is considering the use of Ambawadi by those opting for alternative methods of disposal after the geh sarna

vided to me, in my view, it is not for counsel to determine as to whether the Zoroastrian religion permits the system of cremation or burial (where dakhmenashini is available). This question should therefore be decided by the Querists after considering the material and the submissions which may be placed before them by the DDD-AG on the one hand and the SDAC on the other.

"As stated above, it has been proposed by the DDD-AG that after the first day's obsequial ceremony is performed at Doongerwadi, the body of the deceased Zoroastrian would be taken from

Doongerwadi in a private hearse and arrangements would be made at a place outside Doongerwadi for the cremation (or burial as the case may be) of the dead body. At the conferences held with me, it has been strongly urged on behalf of the SDAC that even the above method would not be permissible under the Zoroastrian religion. If this is so and if the Zoroastrian faith does not permit such an act, then the Querists cannot give the bunglis or a separate prayer hall for the aforesaid purpose at Doongerwadi.

"Accordingly, I would answer the questions posed to me as follows:

- The decision of the Querists to permit the use of the bunglis according to the request made by the DDD-AG would be in order if the followers of the DDD-AG require the bunglis for performing religious rites and ceremonies in accordance with the Zoroastrian religion.

- It would be open to the Querists to permit the followers of the DDD-AG to construct a separate prayer hall at Doongerwadi after taking such permissions from the statutory authorities as may be necessary, provided that such a prayer hall is used for religious rites and ceremonies in accordance with the Zoroastrian religion."

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**Farah
&
Tanya**

ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

continued from page 26

Cama, Noshir Langrana and Kiomars Sorooshyari.

For the first time in its history the DMZT trustees were faced with the prospect of electing the chairperson. The contenders, Commissariat and Langrana, had the trustees equally divided. Having no provision in their bylaws to deal with such an eventuality the trustees requested, through Sorooshyari, that one of them step down to avoid a lengthy and cumbersome process, which Langrana graciously did. A review and modification of the bylaws to avoid a similar deadlock in the future is now on the cards, notes the newsletter.

The trustees have agreed that the DMZT premises would be available free of charge for all ZAGNY and IZA (Iranian Zoroastrian Association) activities as well as for functions sponsored for Zoroastrian charities, informs the newsletter. For prayer ceremonies for deceased persons a minimum donation of \$ 100 per day is required. For other functions IZA and ZAGNY members can avail of the facility for a charge of \$ 400 per day. Non-members would attract a charge of \$ 500 for the day.

Volunteering with ZWIN

The Zoroastrian Women's International Network (ZWIN) is working on a three to four-week project in January 2002 that will enable western Zoroastrian youths (18-25 years) to come to India on an educational program which combines elements of service to fellow Zoroastrians, informs the ZAGNY newsletter. According to ZWIN coordinator Zareen Karani Araoz, the youths will visit heritage sites in Gujarat and elsewhere while socializing with their peer group in India.

While the airfare and visa is the responsibility of the volunteer from the West, home stay and hospitality will be provided by host families in India. Among those working on the project in India are Dinshaw Tamboly, Silloo Kavarana, Sarosh Bana and Zubin Mistry.

It has been suggested that the first 10-12 days would be spent in Bombay getting a feel of the community. The visit to Gujarat would include the Sanjan Stumbh, the Bahrot caves and atash behrams in Udvada, Navsari and Surat. A few Gujarat villages would also be on the itinerary to provide a firsthand knowledge of the rural Zoroastrian setting.

Thereafter the group would return to Bombay to shop, sightsee, compare notes and unwind before emplaning for the return trip.

Interested youths may contact Araoz (zareen@managingcultures.com) or Farhad Billimoria (billimor@alphalink.com.au).

WZC 2000 on tape

The videotapes of the World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 — a set of five — are available at a cost of US \$ 50, notes a message from FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) president Framroze Patel. The order form is available on the FEZANA website (FEZANA.org).

The tapes cover the opening and closing ceremonies; entertainment, dinners and sports; sessions on December 29, 30 and 31.

FEZANA finances

Despite 2000 not being a very good year for investments, FEZANA's total assets are nearing the \$ 350,000 mark. Its operating funds which support the *FEZANA Journal*, youth activities, sports, etc have grown from \$ 81,000 in 1999 to over \$ 131,000 in the first half of 2001. The scholarship fund has reached its goal of \$ 100,000 and the welfare fund is reportedly healthy. Support for religious education has also been good, writes Patel.

As against the expected revenue of about \$ 195,000 (revenue receipts for the first half of 2001 are over \$ 110,000) FEZANA's 2001 annual general meeting in Westminster, California approved a budgeted expenditure of \$ 95,000. The welfare fund disbursed over \$ 5,000 in assistance to Indian charities including repair to Gujarat's Rajkumar College damaged by the earthquake.

BVS Millennial Shield

The irrepressible Behram Rustomji, formerly of Karachi now resident with his daughter in Bombay, continues to be among *Parsiana's* most avid readers and friends. As is his wont, he shares happy news of Karachi Zoroastrians with us. In a recent missive Rustomji informs us that the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala (BVS) Parsi High School of Karachi was adjudged the best private boys' school in the city during 2000, winning a special Millennial Shield. The 1859 founded institution is reckoned among the oldest schools in Karachi.

Rustomji writes that his information is based on a letter from BVS principal

Dinoo Minoo Mistry, née Soparivala. Mistry has completed 52 years of active association with the School, 29 of them as principal. Tracing her genealogy Rustomji notes that her great grandfather Shapurji Hormusji Soparivala was the School's founder. Her grandfather was Jamshedji Shapurji Soparivala and her father was Pestonjee Jamshedji Soparivala. They and their wives "must rightly feel happy and proud of this wonderful lady who in spite of insurmountable physical (ailments) has been most bravely not only doing her duty but achieving laurels not only for the School but for our Parsi community," notes Rustomji.

Ookerjee at City College

Retired professor of philosophy Dr Sheryar Ookerjee of Bombay was the second lecturer to be invited by the City College of New York as the K. D. Irani distinguished visiting professor. His four-month term covered the spring semester of 2001.

Ookerjee's lectures on political philosophy covered intellectual giants from Plato to contemporary philosophers like Rawls and Dworkin. The topics he covered included liberalism, Marxism, democracy, fascism, secularism, law, free-



Ookerjee: distinguished professor

Plato and Idealism.

Having interacted with 17 American undergraduates (six who opted for political philosophy plus 11 who discussed Idealism), a disappointed Ookerjee says he has returned to Bombay "with a much better opinion of our own students." Despite the fact that language was not a barrier, he "did not find the students so alert." They took down what he said but "presented no challenge," unlike his earlier experience at UK's Cardiff University where "the students had just pounced on me!" Ookerjee attributed the Americans' lack of grounding to the vast panorama of undergraduate courses on offer in the US. "Much of what I had prepared couldn't be used," he noted.

A visiting professor is normally well

dom, equality, justice and punishment. The basic approach was an examination of various ideologies against the backdrop of democracy's possibility for human development and dignity, as notes a press release. At another level Ookerjee conducted seminars on

paid though the City College does not reimburse the travel expenses. For Ookerjee however the experience was marred by a visa problem that got sorted out only at the end of his stay. He said that Professor Emeritus Kaikhosrov Irani, in whose honor the chair was endowed by a former student, was a great source of help and comfort to him during his New York sojourn.

Near death experiences?

Dr Ken Vincent, author of *The Magi: From Zoroaster to the three wise men*, is seeking Zoroastrians who have lived through a near death experience (ie died medically but were resuscitated), notes the ZAC October newsletter.

A professor of psychology at Houston Community College, Vincent has been researching near death experiences and had published a book in 1994 — *Visions of God* — describing the experiences of Christians, Jews, agnostics, atheists and one Hindu. He is particularly interested in including the experience of Zoroastrians in this study.

Vincent may be contacted by e-mail (vincent_prof@yahoo.com) or phone (713) 668-8305.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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The Nagpur incident

The utterances of a Bombay priest in Nagpur terming the children of intercommunity marriages as "bastards" has triggered a furore in the community there

The speaker answered the question relating to children of intercommunity marriages and sat down. He paused and rose again terming such offspring as "bastards." This remark appalled many in the audience. Among those seated at the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana function on October 9, 2001 was the daughter of Dr Sanjiv and Khushnoor Chugh who was to receive an award for being the Best Cadet in the NCC (National Cadet Corps) and for standing first at an inter-school elocution competition. The Chughs wrote to the Gymkhana office bearers expressing their outrage and sorrow at the slur cast on their daughter and other children of intermarried couples. As a result of Ervad Marzban Hathiram's utterances, several members of the Nagpur Zoroastrian community responded, condemning the Bombay priest's allegation. The president of the Gymkhana, Shiraz J. Gimi, and the president of the Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman, Edul F. Bhagwagar, wrote to the Chughs apologizing for Hathiram's utterances and the Gymkhana passed a resolution denouncing the priest's utterances. The Chugh family has medically assisted Zoroastrians in Nagpur, notes Gimi, and are benefactors of the community.

Parsiana carries the text of a letter from Nagpur resident Rhoda M. Patel addressed to *Parsiana*, the Chughs' letter addressed to the Gymkhana office bearers, the letter sent by Anjuman president Bhagwagar to the Chughs, the letter sent by the Gymkhana president Gimi and honorary secretary Mehroo K. Watchmaker to Hathiram, the resolution passed by the Gymkhana, a letter addressed to the Chughs by Gymkhana president Gimi and Hathiram's rejoinder written at *Parsiana*'s request.

Letter dated October 18, 2001 addressed to Parsiana by Patel

The Chugh family in Nagpur is traumatized. Through their self-explanatory

letter addressed to the president and secretary of the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana they would like your readers in India and all over the world to be aware of facts as they happen in the 21st century.

Letter dated October 11, 2001 addressed to the president and secretary of the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana by the Chughs. In the first place, we would like to express our thanks to the managing committee of the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana for their decision to honor the achievements of our daughter for being the Best Cadet in NCC and also for standing first at the Inter-School Elocution Competition at a function held on October 9 as a part of the Dar-e-Meher anniversary celebrations at the Billimoria Brothers' Parsi Dharamshala.

Although she has been honored by the Prime Minister himself and various other social and cultural organizations, yet it was a special occasion for her to be recognized by an organization to which she fondly but mistakenly felt she belonged. Please note that we are talking about the Gymkhana and not the Anjuman.

Though we had prior engagements for the evening, we decided to leave her at the function to be brought home by her uncle. This we did because it was a good thought on the part of the Gymkhana and we could not dishonor the school teachers who conveyed the invitation on behalf of the Gymkhana.

Imagine the child's state of mind when she hears the guest speaker of the evening not only denouncing mixed marriages, whether they be of a Parsi boy with a non-Parsi girl or a Parsi girl with a non-Parsi boy, but publicly saying in clear terms that children of all such marriages are bastards. This was in response to a question from the audience. There she was, sitting with her friends, in excited anticipation of receiving her prize — and then all of a sudden, this religious bigot uses street

language to describe children of mixed marriages. We are sure people present recall the incident and the words which were mouthed by none other than Ervad Marzban Hathiram of Jogeshwari, Bombay.

In an instant, she felt her world shattering around her. In that instant, she was rudely jerked from the innocence and happiness of childhood into the ugly adult world of anger, violence, hatred, deceit and suspicion. Behind every smiling face, encouraging pat and warm handshake she will now wonder if there lurks a dark and malevolent intent. And, who has brought about this change? Supposedly a man of God, a religious preacher, a theologian whose assignment is to spread love, peace and amity among mankind.

He claims to be quoting from the scriptures. We wonder if any religious scriptures from any religion of the world contain words and descriptions such as the ones he used. No religious scripture in the world preaches hatred and violence — and if this is not verbal violence and hatred, what is?

The tragedy is that all of us look up to and respect these violent perpetrators of religious bigotry. With their totally incorrect, warped and biased interpretation of the so-called scriptures, they play upon the insecurities and ignorance of the masses to incite them. Are they religious scholars or sacrilegious bandits?

What amazes us is that even after he used the offensive word, not one adult from the well-educated and enlightened audience immediately got up to object — and many of these had children and grandchildren who were referred to as bastards.

We do appreciate that later in the evening almost everybody objected strongly and let the Dasturji (sic) know, in no uncertain terms, that he was not welcome to air his views in that fashion. We also understand that what he said was not directed individually at our daughter, but unfortunately she was there

and at an age when she has just begun to understand these things.

We know it will take us a long time to help heal the emotional wounds inflicted upon our daughter's tender psyche and we only hope and pray that no permanent scars remain.

In view of the fact that every time she sees the memento she received on that fateful day, it will bring back all the unpleasant memories associated with it, we feel it only right to return the memento to the organizers. This we are doing more with sorrow and regret and a deep sense of hurt, than in anger and resentment. We hope you will understand our feelings and accept the same.

Letter dated October 12, 2001 addressed to the Chughis by Anjuman president Bhagwagar

The copy of your letter of October 11, 2001 addressed to the president/secretary, Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana was read by me. I felt sad. I will not hide from the fact and say that this was a Nagpur Gymkhana function and not the Nagpur Parsi Anjuman function, as that, I feel, will be very wrong. The salgirah functions are very popular and are looked forward to by all the Parsis of Nagpur.

What transpired by the use of one single word that day, not only hurt you and your dear daughter but also hurt many, many other people, parents and grandparents. No religion, as you rightly say, preaches hatred and violence or to hurt other people. Like all other religions, our religion also preaches love, understanding and brotherhood.

Your objection that no one stood up when this offensive word was used, may be because it came very suddenly and caught us unawares. Also, experience has shown that it is better at the heat of the moment to show constraint, otherwise the situation may turn volatile. But after the function, it was made more than clear to the speaker what the audience — as one single unit — thought of this remark. He left Nagpur in the next six hours, instead of the next day, as he was supposed to. And let me tell you that he was very sorry for what he said and apologized profusely. But the deed was done.

This is not the first time that religious lectures have taken this turn and this will not be the last time. People of my generation and people of your generation have gone through it. Your daughter and her generation will also

go through it. She like us has to win it slowly with love and understanding. For this is not confined to our religion and our town, but to all religions throughout the world.

I understand how you feel. I understand how your daughter must be feeling. I hope I take a little bit of sorrow from her when I say we are all very sorry. She, I know, is not a member of our Anjuman, but the Anjuman is with her this hour.

Your letter will be circulated to all the members of the managing committee of the Anjuman

Letter dated October 15, 2001 addressed to Hathiram by Gymkhana office bearers Gimi and Watchmaker

This letter is in reference to the question/answer session during the agiary function on October 9, 2001.

In the 106-year history of our agiary, we have had many guest speakers, some of whom were very good, some were 'so-so,' while others were mediocre, but they were all cordial and respectful. We have had ultra orthodox as well as moderates who put across their views with maturity and understanding and we in Nagpur, like good hosts, have always given them all a

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patient hearing, asking questions and seeking knowledge. I suppose the odds were stacked against us, when for the first time we were exposed to a type of rabid bigotry, which we had never experienced before, by your answer to a particular question during the evening.

We, the executive committee members of the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana at a specially convened meeting on Saturday, October 13, 2001, unanimously passed a resolution strongly condemning your utterances made in connection with children of mixed marriages, as "bastards." By this single obnoxious utterance you have tarnished the fair name of Parsis and all the good the community stands for. To let you know the extent of harm your remark has done in our small community at Nagpur, we are enclosing a copy of a letter received by us from one of the parents of a child traumatized by your use of the word "bastard." We echo the sentiments conveyed in the letter.

No amount of regret from your side would appease our sentiments and soothe our feelings. However if you are genuinely regretful, you should send an unconditional written apology.

Copy of the resolution passed at our

above referred meeting is enclosed.

The Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana resolution unanimously passed on October 13, 2001

Resolved that the executive committee of the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana strongly condemns the use of the word "bastard" by Marzban Hathiram when referring to children of mixed marriages amongst Parsis, while responding to a question raised at the 106th agiary salgirah celebration at Nagpur on October 9, 2001. The executive committee further expressed its anguish and shame due to the manner in which Marzban Hathiram described legitimate children born out of legal marriages and puts on record its feelings of disgust towards such thoughts and language used by a religious scholar.

Letter dated October 22, 2001 addressed to the Chughis by Gymkhana president Gimi

No words can express how sorry we were, when by a single utterance the so-called religious scholar has made us all hang our heads in shame.

I sincerely hope you will find it in you to forgive us for this incident. We were as much taken aback as you were

and in no way subscribe to the views expressed that day.

The Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana, as you know, has been trying its best over the last few years to dispel this type of view and to a great extent we have been successful in our endeavor. It takes just one bigot to undo years of good work.

I am enclosing a copy of the letter and resolution sent by the Gymkhana to Marzban Hathiram for your information.

Response dated November 2, 2001 sent by Hathiram to Parsiana

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Khushnoor's daughter for her brilliant academic performance and wish she scales even higher heights in the future. I can understand the agony that Khushnoor's daughter went through when she was told that she was not born out of a legitimate union. I fully sympathize with her and offer her my deepest apologies for the trauma she must have gone through. Yet this is the unfortunate reality that must be faced by the children of alleged marriages between Parsi-Zoroastrians and non-Parsi Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian religious law is very strict in this regard. It does not recognize any marriage that is not a



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marriage between two consenting Parsi Zoroastrians, descended from Parsi Zoroastrian parents from both sides, joined together for life through a series of ceremonies, including the Varadhpatar baj, the nahn and culminating in the ashirwad ceremony. The so-called civil or registered marriages may hold good in a court of law in India and elsewhere, but



Hathiaram:
"remained faithful"

have no validity as per Zoroastrian doctrinal law. Consequently, the children of such alleged marriages have no religious legitimacy. Much anger has been expressed over the use of the word "bastard." But the meaning has been taken in the wrong context. For example the word "gay" ordinarily means happy or merry. Yet today it has a distinctively negative connotation as it is used to refer to homosexuals. Similarly, the dictionary clearly defines the word "bastard" as: "a person born of unmarried parents." In fact the very derivation of the word has religious connotations. "Bastard" is derived from the Germanic 'bast' — signifying marriage and Old French 'ard' signifying an alleged marriage arising from a pagan tradition not sanctioned by the church. Hence a child may be considered legitimate as per civil law, but is considered illegitimate by the church — that is, by the Zoroastrian religion. It is in this context that I used the word that evening. There was no derogatory sense implied in that utterance, although today the same word may be used as an expletive. If people felt it was that way, then I offer my apologies, but I am very clear that I used it in the technical sense and for which I have full scriptural, doctrinal, philological and exegetical references and support, and I completely stand by what I have said.

There are various references in the Avesta scriptures as well as later Pahlavi literature that in exceedingly clear terms prohibit the marriage of Parsi Zoroastrians with non-Parsi Zoroastrians. The Vendidad states that the greatest grief is caused to Ahura Mazda by the mingling of the seed of a Parsi Zoroastrian with that of a non-Parsi Zoroastrian (Vendidad, Pargard 18, paras 61-65). The effects and results of such illegitimate unions are strongly censured and described as harming the entire creation, taking backwards

the onward march to Frashokereti. Similarly the Patet Pashemani prayer lists the sins of *avarun marzashni* — the act of illegitimate sexual union and *gunahe ravan* — the grievous spiritual hurt caused to the soul by intercommunity marriage. The very foundation of our unique spiritual, religious and ethnic identity is based on the concept and practice of *tokham-pasban* — the preservation of the seed. The Dinkard says this very clearly: "Hence in accordance with what wisdom we have received from the Creator, we give birth only to children fit for receiving spiritual rewards, and for this only reason we are the preservers of the seed, and keep the procreative power in the naturally sound condition, and continue the origin of species pure, and our thoughts supremely great (Dinkard Book VI quoted from Zoroastrianism Ancient and Modern by Ervad Phiroze Masani, pg 102)."

Keeping these strict edicts in mind, our forefathers religiously avoided the abhorrent practice of intercommunity marriage, and that is one of the main reasons for our existence in India over 1,300 years. We are the descendants of those 2,000 brave men, women and children who left all that they had for a single purpose — to preserve, pro-

tect and perpetuate their unique identity and glorious religion. Yet today we have forgotten the original purpose of our forefathers leaving Iran and coming to India. We feel so strongly about 'loving my husband/wife' that we have forgotten what it means to love the religion, to follow its simple but essential practices, to sacrifice all for the love of God. We have sacrificed our religion at the altars of material wealth and creature comforts. We are financially well off, but spiritually bankrupt. Khushnoor is one of a growing band of Parsi Zoroastrians who consider it okay to disobey the basic commandments of their religion and then have the gumption to demand the legitimization of their misdeeds. Their feelings of hurt and outrage are misplaced. It is we who are hurt by their acts of sacrilege. As a priest, I consider it my bounden duty to make people like Khushnoor aware of the enormity of the mistakes they have committed. In doing so, if I hurt their feelings, then I apologize. But my conscience is very clear — I have remained faithful to the commandments of my religion, they have not.

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Disawalla's dismissal

For refusing to accept dakhmenashini as the only mode of disposing the Parsi dead, Dr M. D. Disawalla's membership was terminated by The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"Continuation of your membership in The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman (BPZA) is wholly hurtful to the religious feelings of the members of the BPZA and the trustees and is wholly detrimental to the interests of the BPZA," declared the letter dated July 27, 2001 addressed to 77-year-old life member Dr M. D. Disawalla by the Anjuman secretary Phiroze Bhada. The same letter conveyed the unanimous resolution passed by the trustees that "Disawalla be and is hereby removed from the membership of the BPZA with immediate effect..."



Disawalla: unwelcome critic

The first person in the history of the Anjuman to have "this indignity thrust" on him, a distressed Disawalla wrote to *Parsiana*, "I was recently a victim of this unholy fatwa when my membership of BPZA of 45 years and life membership since 1985 was terminated by the trustees...(quoting) a quaint Rule 4.1 from the Rules and Regulations of the BPZA...which makes it mandatory for all members of BPZA to believe only in dakhmenashini as a mode of final disposal of dead Parsis."

"The sine qua non for becoming and continuing as a member of the Anjuman is that the member shall conscientiously believe in the Tower of Silence as the only mode of disposing of the Parsi dead..." read the show cause notice dated June 18, 2001 issued to Disawalla as to why his membership should not be terminated. Noting "with great distress and agony the views expressed by you with regard to the disposal of the Parsi dead," the notice mentions, "In your letter to the Editor, *The Times of India*, Bangalore edition, published on May 9, 2001

and other publications (see page 48, "'Spurred' to clarify,...) you have categorically expressed views which are wholly contrary to and which in fact negate the very foundation of the faith of all the members of the Anjuman in the matter of the disposal of the Parsi dead."

"To debate and express one's views within the community is one thing, but to go public on such matters which concern only the Parsis and their religious customs and practices is improper, as besides attracting adverse publicity it merely serves to highlight differences within the community..." stated the "important circular" dated August 30 which was included on the BPZA website www.bpza.org to explain the "circumstances leading to the removal of Disawalla's name from the membership of the BPZA." The circular also summarized Disawalla's response to their show cause letter wherein he maintained his stand on the dakhmenashini issue and insisted that "his views in print were in fact mere reactions to erroneous reporting in the Press..."

On his request a meeting was held with the trustees on July 21 where he was heard uninterruptedly for about 45 minutes. His plea to permit two independent observers at the meeting as also to tape-record the proceedings was however rejected. The BPZA president Kali Cawasji then asked him to confirm whether he accepted "dakhmenashini as the only mode of disposal of the Parsi dead as prescribed by our Zoroastrian religion and as expressly stipulated in our Rules and Regulations and trust deed. Unfortunately his answer was an emphatic 'No'... Disawalla stated that Rule 4.1...had its purpose in the past but was not relevant now. In the light of the landmark decision of all the vada dasturji sahebs of the community who with one voice stood up for and courageously

defended the long-standing religious custom and tradition of dakhmenashini even as it exists today, it is clear that Disawalla's conclusions to the contrary cannot have merit and is not likely to prevail against the collective wisdom of our vada dasturji sahebs," declared the circular.

Since Disawalla felt that he was being singled out and victimized, "the trustees would like to clarify that to the best of their knowledge none of the members of our Anjuman have expressed such views in any private or public forum. However, if Disawalla's observations regarding the other members prove to be right, be assured that the trustees will unhesitatingly take the necessary steps in accordance with our Rules and Regulations and the provisions of the trust deed," added the circular. "The trustees have proceeded on the basis that the trust deed which clearly reflects the wishes and desires of the founders and which clearly lays down the terms and rules of membership is sacrosanct which no person or persons can violate in letter or spirit its intended objectives. The trustees have proceeded by the universal principle that no one is above the law and the precepts, and customs and practices of our religion," concluded the circular.

Publicizing this issue on the website was according to Disawalla "an attempt to lower my standing in the community and to silence me into submission for my active role in exposing the way the affairs of the BPZA are being conducted." In his rejoinder circular dated September 15, to all the members explaining "in detail the frailties and wrongdoings by the trustees," Disawalla writes, "I am qualified enough being in the medical profession for more than 60 years (he was chief medical officer of Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation

for 21 years before he settled in Bangalore where for 12 years he was medical superintendent of the P. D. Hinduja, Sindhi Hospital and thereafter for seven years as medical director of the Bhagvan Mahaveer Jain Hospital) and having witnessed innumerable postmortems and seeing the condition of dead bodies in the mortuaries 48 hours after death to comment on the condition of these bodies in high state of putrefaction, decay and emanating foul odor. Let us be realistic in admitting that this is what happens exactly in our dakhmas where in the absence of quick consumption of the dead bodies due to absence of vultures the corpses remain in high state of decomposition giving out foul smell and polluting the environment."

While the trustees seem to imply that Rule 4.1 was included by the founding fathers, Disawalla states that this rule was "introduced in 1940 much after the formation of BPZA in 1922. This step was taken in anticipation of certain defeat and defeat it was when BPZA made futile attempts to close down the aramgah after the consecration of the dakhma on March 23, 1940. The BPZA tried to circumvent the order of the Mysore Government dated January 10, 1939 which specified that their permission to construct the dakhma was subject to full retention and use of aramgah by those Zoroastrians who wish to consign their dead by burial. The BPZA went to court on four occasions on appeals and lost every time with costs till finally the learned judge of the Mysore High Court... gave a landmark judgment on August 19, 1947 that any Zoroastrian is free to select (the) mode of disposal of dead by burial, even when the dakhma is in existence. This order from the High Court of Mysore makes implementation of Rule 4.1 null and void and inoperative in law."

Disawalla further adds, "I became a member way back in 1954/55 when I was not a resident of Bangalore and I have not signed or (been) made aware of acceptance of this Rule when my membership was accepted. Subsequently on my retirement in Bangalore in 1974 I became a member of the Bangalore Gathic Zoroastrian Anjuman (BGZA) whose members prefer burial/cremation to dakhmenashini. Although this fact of my membership of BGZA was known to the trustees of BPZA I was persuaded to become and I did become a life member of BPZA on August 10, 1985. Sud-

denly... the trustees have found me unsuitable to continue as a member of the BPZA... You will wonder why this treatment was exclusively meted out to me alone. The answer is obvious and clear. I have been an uncompromising critic for the way the Anjuman's affairs are being handled, in several matters also by uncalled for interference from the clergy."

In end 1999 Disawalla had felt obliged

Article IV- Membership

(Produced verbatim from The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations as amended and translated on April 13, 1978)

4.1: Membership of the Anjuman shall be restricted to any Parsee Zoroastrian Lady or Gentleman of the age of eighteen (18) years and above and believing in and acting upon the religious usages, tenets and customs passed from time to time by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, and those who respect the customs of the Zoroastrian religion and one who believes only in the custom of consigning the Zoroastrian dead bodies to the Tower of Silence for final disposal. The resolutions of the Bombay Parsee Panchayat passed on April 16, 1905 and which are attached herewith, regarding Non Parsees who profess to be Zoroastrians. Such Zoroastrians will not have the privilege of entering the Fire Temple or the Tower of Silence and they will not be entitled to any help from the Anjuman Funds. Those Parsees who have forsaken the Zoroastrian Religion or those who have adopted any other religion are also not entitled to the beneficial use of these sacred institutions and the Anjuman Funds.

to send a copy of the Government Gazette notification to Cawasji which required all hospitals to handle biomedical waste by either deep burial or incineration. Subsequent to his dismissal order from the Anjuman he sent them another letter dated August 27, 2001 intimating them that the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has ordered closure of Vani Vilas, Victoria and K.I.M.S. Hospitals for not complying with the earlier government order regarding disposal of biomedical waste. He further cautioned, "Our system of dakhmenas-

hini as it exists today is not different from any untreated biomedical waste when due to complete absence of vultures the corpses are allowed to rot, decompose and putrefy in an open environment in the dakhma which is now situated within the Bangalore Corporation limits and closely surrounded by human habitation... May I suggest that you take necessary opinion and advice from environmentalists, scientists, medical professionals, etc rather than religious heads so that the community members may not have to face in future (any) situation that may cause them 'great distress and agony.'"

Some members of the community in Bangalore voiced their views to the trustees in support of Disawalla when the dismissal was being considered and after it was finalized. Crediting him for "offering his voluntary service to all those in need, both medically and spiritually, to the community," Soli R. Sethna, chairman of the Sethna Group wrote, "to treat him with such little respect leading to an expulsion order on such a frivolous matter smacks of vindictiveness and devoid of reason." Some 12 signatories requisitioned "for a resolution to be put to vote on this issue at the general body meeting... on September 22, 2001. We would like Disawalla to be given a chance to speak in his defence, then to debate the issue and put to vote a resolution with secret ballot that Disawalla is unconditionally reinstated as a member of the BPZA." Neither was the requisitioned resolution permitted nor was Disawalla allowed to be present at the meeting.

His close friend Diana Bharucha mentioned, "Disawalla has never ever influenced or prejudiced anybody against the dakhmenashini system. He has in fact even helped people who believe (in) and taken them to the dakhma including his own mother-in-law. He has constantly been donating to the Anjuman even for the dakhma road fund recently... Is it right that a religious person with such a high standing in society, with love for the community, concerned about the Anjuman matters for 45 years, one who is always there at every jashan, paidust, uthamna, who has gone out of his way to help every Parsi in his personal capacity as a doctor is suddenly issued a show cause notice, caveat, and expelled from the Anjuman because of some rule passed more than half a century ago? Since this is the first time such

a decision has been taken, the general body opinion should have been considered...Are we living in some sort of banana republic?"

"Normally in any society, association or anjuman a member is removed from the roll of membership for only gross violation of normal norms of conduct, viz moral turpitude, criminal offence, etc and not as is done in my case...It appears that to the trustees of BPZA a good Zoroastrian is a dead Zoroastrian who has opted for dakhmenashini and not the one who when alive follows the teachings of our Zarathushtra," writes Disawalla, declaring "I cannot let this indignity thrust on me go unchallenged..."

'Spurred' to clarify

In response to an article in *The Times of India* of March 10, 2001 titled "Matter of life and death: Parsi community divided over Tower of Silence issue" Disawalla, as a member of the Bangalore Gathic Zoroastrian Anjuman

(BGZA) was "spurred" to convey some facts regarding the Tower of Silence in Bangalore vide his letter to the Editor of May 9, 2001 which greatly incensed the orthodox faction in the city: "The first

Parsi who died in Bangalore was in 1892 and was buried in the present Parsi burial ground (aramgah) situated near the Vyalikaval police station. Since then more than 150 Parsis have been buried here. The Tower of Silence was consecrated in March 1940

at Hebbal. A controversy ensued between the orthodox section which wanted only the dakhma and the reformist section which formed the BGZA and continued to opt for burial/cremation.

"The controversy occurred when the orthodox section demanded the closure of the aramgah. After prolonged litigation, Judge Dewan Bahadur P. Venkatram Rao on August 19, 1947 decreed in the High Court of Bangalore that the aramgah and dakhma can coexist. Even today about 45 Parsi families are members of the (BGZA).

"Rule 4.1 makes it mandatory for all members of BPZA to believe only in dakhmenashini as a mode of final disposal"

"The Tower of Silence when built was in an isolated place. The situation now is entirely different. In keeping with the worldwide depletion of vultures, there are no vultures near Hebbal to consume the dead bodies of Parsis kept in the dakhma and the unconsumed corpses are allowed to decompose and putrefy, causing great hazard to the environment.

"The recent government notification which will require treatment and disposal by (incineration) or deep burial poses significant problems when corpses are allowed to putrefy and decay openly in the Tower of Silence.

"In Bangalore, Parsis who opt for burial/cremation are considered as infidels and denied the essential four days' religious ceremonies after death by the local salaried priests of the Anjuman..."

Last year Disawalla had taken it upon himself to correct some misrepresentations that appeared in "The fierce flame" in the *Deccan Herald* of April 8, 2000 based on an interview with Dastur Nadirshah Unvalla of Bangalore. In his response of May 29, 2000 Disawalla clarified: "Sanjan is not the Mecca of the Parsi Zoroastrians but our holy place is Udvada where our holy fire Iranshah is enshrined...There is no classification of Parsis as 'True Parsis' and 'Half Parsis'...A Zoroastrian need not necessarily be a Parsi..."

"As regards the Towers of Silence, it is not correct that 'the dead bodies are hung in the dakhma but they are laid to rest on the floor of the dakhma. Dakhmenashini is not the only accepted method by the Parsi Zoroastrians...It is not true that the dead body is picked clean by vultures, dried in the heat of the sun and the bones denuded of the skeleton (?) then eventually crumble to form a fine powder of phosphorus and calcium.' There are no vultures in the vicinity of the dakhma at Bangalore's Bellary Road in keeping with the shortage of carrion birds all over due to several ecological reasons... the bones are the least biodegradable parts of any animal.

"Centuries ago, the Towers of Silence were erected on hilltops away from human habitation and the present situation of having a Tower of Silence in the center or near the vicinity of cities could be considered an anachronism being unhygienic, unscientific and unenvironmental friendly and is neither a 'swift nor natural' way of disposal of the dead."

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Legacies of learning

The Contribution of Parsis to Education in Bombay City (1820-1920) by Zenobia E. Shroff. Published in 2001 by Himalaya Publishing House, "Ramdoot," Dr Bhalarao Marg, Girgaum, Bombay 400004. Pp: x+241. Price: Rs 450.

They were the princes of philanthropy. Their farsighted vision and enlightened charity set up institutions for the promotion of learning, in a society and at a time when even education for boys was not among people's priorities, and female education was considered a "dispensable luxury,"



Teacher-researcher Shroff extending at most

to being able to write out a list of clothes for the *dhobi* or to understand daily bazaar expenses not exceeding five rupees!

Covering the canvas of Parsis' contribution to the cause of education and social change over a period of 100 years is Zenobia E. Shroff in her book *The Contribution of Parsis to Education in Bombay City (1820-1920)*. "Their (Parsis') remarkable role in the political and economic spheres has been studied in depth by several scholars. However, their equally valuable contribution to education and social change has been generally neglected. This book is an attempt to fill the lacuna," writes Shroff in her preface and acknowledgements. A reader in history at Bombay's Elphinstone College, Shroff (whose married name is Dumasia) has been a teacher for the past 25 years and the book is based on her doctoral dissertation which she researched and wrote between 1984-1987. "I love doing research on Parsi history. But many of our Parsi institutions, including schools, are not at all careful about maintenance of old records," Shroff told *Parsiana*. "What worries me is that 50 years later scholars will find no systematic records to research. All the material for my thesis

came from the University Library, not from the Parsi institutions themselves."

Tapping a wealth of primary and secondary sources, with a bibliography that extends over 23 pages, Shroff enlightens us on the establishment of well-known institutions — the earliest boys' and girls' schools and madressas set up through the munificence of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Sir Dinshaw Petit and a host of others; institutions of higher learning like the Elphinstone College and the University of Bombay which were the beneficiaries of large endowments from Sir Cowasjee Jehanghier Readymoney; scholarships and school book funds; hospitals like the Sir J. J. Hospital and the Grant Medical College, the Veterinary College and the Bai Sakarbai Dinshaw Petit Hospital for Animals, the Pestonji Hormusji Cama Hospital for Women and Children, the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, the Sir J. J. School of Art, the J. N. Petit Library, the Framjee Cowasjee Institute, the patho-bacteriological laboratory later known as the Haffkine Institute, and a long line of path-breaking institutions which even today, in the new millennium, are bulwarks in the educational life of Bombay. And all this despite the fact that Parsis were, even in those days, numerically a very small proportion of the population.

Shroff takes us through education in colonial India and the arrival of its corollary — position, power and creation of wealth. The community underwent extensive Anglicization — there was a conscious copying of English manners and customs; Parsi homes incorporated European furnishing, pianos, crystal chandeliers; most of the men adopted Western wear while the ladies, though continuing to wear saris, adopted Western dress as well. The Englishman's love for sport, particularly cricket, filtered through; Parsis formed societies for the performance of English plays. The study of Latin was introduced by Bombay University, says Shroff, especially for its Parsi students "because their sympathies are generally European

rather than Oriental."

Strangely enough, despite the general trend at Europeanization in the community, Parsis were initiators of social change not only within their own community but in other communities as well! As early as 1855, Parsis were circulating articles such as "Remarriage of Hindu Widows." Two of the most prominent and successful Parsi reformers of Hindu society were Sorabjee Shapoorji Bengallee and Behramji M. Malabari. A great reformer and educationist, Bengallee was himself a man of moderate means who often gave monetary assistance to the cause of widow remarriage and for pioneering female education through the formation of the Parsi Girls' School Association. Bengallee wrote for several vernacular newspapers and started two Gujarati periodicals — the *Jagat Mitra* and *Jagat Premi* in 1850-51. He also helped to publish and edit *Stri Bodh* (1857), a Parsi journal meant exclusively for the instruction of women. But it was chiefly the *Rast Goftar*, founded by Dadabhai Naoroji, that opened for him avenues for social reform. Bengallee's role in initiating progressive factory legislation cannot be underestimated, notes Shroff. As early as 1878, when he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, Bengallee had submitted to the governor the draft of a factory law. When the ensuing Bill was bitterly opposed by the employer lobby, Bengallee shifted his agitation to England where he succeeded in mobilizing public opinion through the Press and members of parliament. The first Indian Factory Act of 1881 would not have come into force without Bengallee's initiative and the second Indian Factory Act of 1892 would not have taken the shape it did were it not for Bengallee, states Shroff.

Ever since his boyhood in Surat, Malabari had witnessed the heart-rending consequences of child marriage and the prevention of widow remarriage. At the cost of being denounced as an "outsider" and "meddler" who knew nothing of the Hindu *shastras*, Malabari con-



Far left: Sir Cowasjee Jehanghrie Hall of the Bombay University, Sakarbai Petit veterinary hospital
Below left: Elphinstone College, Parel



tinued his crusade through public meetings, through his newspaper *The Indian Spectator* and his travels throughout the country, mobilizing the sympathy of the Press and public in Britain as well!

Departing from the tradition of ancient Persia, the Parsis in India too had allowed child marriages. Bigamy, in the sense of a man taking on a second wife in the lifetime of the first in certain cases with the permission of the Panchayet, was also common. As awareness grew with the spread of education, both these practices were ended by the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865. The managing committee of the newly formed Parsi Law Association set to work on the code of inheritance as well, culminating in the passage of The Parsi Succession Act, 1865. Both these Acts, with some modifications, are still valid today, notes Shroff.

The development of the native Press in western India was also almost exclusively dominated by the Parsis, she states, with Bhimjee Parikh setting up a printing press as early as the 1670s. A century later, in 1777, another Parsi, Rustomjee Kesharpathi started a printing press in Bombay at which the first English newspaper, the *Bombay Courier* was printed. Fardoonji Marzban started the *Gujarati Chhapkhano* in 1812, and published the *Mumbaina Samachar* (*Bombay Samachar*) in 1822 — the first Gujarati newspaper, with Pestonji Maneckji Motivala publishing the *Jam-e-Jamshed* in 1831 and Framji Cowasji Mehta the *Kaiser-i-Hind* in 1882. Parsi entrepreneurs had been important shareholders in English newspapers too — Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in the *Bombay Courier* and Framjee Cowasjee in the *Bombay Times* in the first half of the 19th century. A late



Above: first Parsi founder of a public library Mulla Firoz bin Mulla Kaus; Manockjee Cursetjee (far left) and Sorabjee Shapoorji Bengallee

entrant, which however wielded enormous influence over public affairs, was the *Bombay Chronicle* launched in 1913 by Pherozeshah Mehta and his friends.

Shroff researches in depth the formation and growth of individual institutions such as the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institution (SJJPI), which ran a network of girls' and boys' schools in Bombay and throughout Gujarat, the Byramjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Charitable (BJPC) Institution, the Jamsetjee Nasserwanjee Petit Parsi Orphanage, the Fort and Proprietary High School, the New High School, etc, bringing to light facts hitherto not commonly known. We learn that the boys' school of the SJJPI was an "important feeder"

of Bombay University, sending up candidates for matriculation as early as 1864, that the Petit Parsi Orphanage provided from the beginning technical skills such as carpentry, cane-weaving, tailoring and printing to enable orphans secure immediate employment, that the BJPC Institution started commerce classes in 1900 when commercial education was in its infancy in India, that the New High School founded by Jalbhai Dorabji Bharda and Kaikobad Behramji Marzban in 1891 had by the turn of the century almost 1,800 students, making it, according to Lord Lamington, then governor of Bombay, the largest (private, other than missionary) school "in the Indian Empire, possibly in the Brit-

ish Empire... a model institution."

The first Parsi girl known to have attended school, narrates Shroff, was young Dosebai Cowasjee Jessawalla in 1842, who had to pass daily through the British area of the city to reach Ms Ward's school, provoking outraged comments in orthodox Parsi journals like the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and the *Chabook*. To avoid scandal, eminent personalities like Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and Framjee Cowasjee Banajee had their daughters educated in the privacy of their own homes. Among the pioneers of female education were Dadabhai Naoroji and the Students' Literary and Scientific Society and K. R. Cama, without whose encouragement and monetary support early Parsi schools, imparting education mainly in the vernacular to Parsi students, would not have survived.

Manockjee Cursetjee, who in 1863 was the first to start a school (The Alexandra Native Girls' English Institution now known as The Alexandra Girls' English Institution) in his own home to give a secular, English education to girls of all communities, was assailed as an iconoclast, arousing the ire of friends and foes! Up to 1886, almost all its girls were Parsis, in 1900

out of 145 students, there were only 15 Hindu girls and nine Muslims! Yet it was deemed to be, by the educational inspector, among the front rank of native girls' schools in the presidency, the first in western India to be managed by private enterprise, without any government assistance, and the first among native girls' schools in the presidency to send up girls for matriculation.

Whereas all the girls' schools hitherto were founded by men, to Bachooabai Ardesir Moos (1853-1946) goes the distinction of being the first Parsi lady to set up a school—the Girton High School at Tardeo. The Young Ladies High School, the Bai Ruttonbai F. D. Panday Girls' High School, the Bai B. S. Bengallee Girls' High School, the Bai Maneckbai N. Gamadia Girls High School, the Bai Avabai F. Petit Girls' High School, the J. B. Petit High School for Girls and the J. B. Vachha High School for Parsi Girls are the other institutions whose genesis and growth Shroff traces.

Dedicated to Dr Homai J. Shroff, eminent educator who was principal of Elphinstone College from 1980-85, *The Contribution of Parsis to Education in Bombay City* is a substantive, no frills

The muktad hall cum library was in good condition with five to six muktad tables neatly arranged.

On my second visit recently what I pleasantly saw was a complete transformation on the adarian side although much work is still to be done I believe. The trust is in need of donations.

DINSHAW NETERWALLA

Dogged relief

"Happiness depends on what you give, not on what you get!" is what I came to learn from a dear person working in The Welfare of Stray Dogs (WSD), Bombay.

A few days ago, my uncle requested me to bring him a stray puppy for a pet. He said that he was tired of spending large sums of money on pedigree pups which are also very vulnerable to diseases and problems. On calling up WSD, a very sweet voice answered the phone. She asked me to drop in at the WSD center at Mahalaxmi on a Saturday morning.

When I reached the center after a three-hour journey from my home in Dahanu, I found Daisy Sidhva medicating an unfortunate little mongrel which was hurt in the left ear.

As Daisy took me around the kennel, I found all sorts of dogs, from the

book, recording for posterity the significant role of a community, summarized pithily by Justice M. G. Ranade in a speech in 1899: "At times, I am almost tempted to feel misgivings as to what the condition of western India might have been but for the influence which the Parsis have exercised among us, not only in this city which is their chief home, but outside in Poona, Surat, Ahmedabad, Nagar, Mhow, Karachi, Aden, Zanzibar and other places. In our great national car, hoary with the weight of ages and immovable in numbers... The car would never have moved an inch but for the inspiring contact with the English, and the elevating example of the Parsis. They pioneer the way..."

"Parsis and the Development of Education in Bombay City" had been published earlier (1991) as a chapter in Anirudha Gupta's *Minorities on India's West Coast: History and Society* (Kalinga Publications, Delhi). Dr Nawaz Mody's *Parsis in Western India, Volume One* had incorporated "Jejeebhoy Dadabhai and the Industrialization of Bombay" by Shroff who hopes to publish two more of her research articles in Mody's forthcoming Volume Two.

HILLA P. GUZDER

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 14
searchers, exorcists, etc.

Related to this is the possibility of a Ahriman-created false saoshyant (in Christian terms, the "anti-Christ"). To resist any such enemy, I hope that Zoroastrians, along with Sufi Muslims, some Christians and Sephardic Jews, also Sikhs can form a "monotheistic front." But of course this would take some time and an ability to be farseeing and refusal to be deceived...

REV DAVID BROCK
Portland, USA

Fasli Kadeh transformed

Just a few days before Jamshedi Navroz this year we visited the Fasli fire-temple near Churchgate. It is most fortunate that this fire-temple has a large compound. As I was about to open the entrance doors, all of a sudden an assistant informed us that we should use the side entrance which was narrow and dark. We were wondering why we were not allowed to enter from the front gate. The dingy place where we did our kusti was full of dust. The hall where we pray before the fire was badly lit and the walls in urgent need of paint. The windows were closed making it difficult to breathe.

Doberman pinscher, to the Pomeranian to the street-smart mongrel, all waiting to be taken home!

However, since my uncle wanted only a puppy, and since there were no pups available at that time, Daisy generously decided to help me find a good pet. In fact she spent much of her valuable time by accompanying me to the Fort area, in order to place a pup in my arms! She placed a very sweet looking white pariah pup in my arms which I christened "Tom."

Today Tom has found a wonderful and a happy home amidst mother nature's cradle in a lush green farm in Dahanu.

It was then that I wondered "Why buy a pup, when you can adopt one? After all, they need you and you need them! In fact, by giving them a home, we are giving life to a living creature." Zoroastrianism asks us to bring happiness on to this earth, and by giving man's best friend, the dog, a happy home, we are spreading happiness.

Hence, think of the simple but great happiness you all may give to a poor dog, who cries out to you, "Please, take me home!"

FARZAN B. MAZDA

Dahanu

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

MILESTONES

Sixty-five Zoroastrians were consigned to the Bombay Towers of Silence in September 2001 whereas there were 14 babies born. From among the 22 patients who succumbed to heart disease, 12 were over 80 years of age. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (18), cancer (seven), general debility and old age (four) and septicemia (three). Gastro-intestinal bleeding, cellulitis (inflammation of connective tissue), liver disease, brain disease, hemiparesis (a slight paralysis or weakness of one half of the face or body), ascites (free fluid in the peritoneal cavity), kidney failure, head injury, diabetes, jaundice and myasthenia gravis (a disorder characterized by marked fatigability of voluntary muscles) were the isolated cases registered for the month of September. The age range fluctuated between 36 and 96 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for September, in Bombay, was 78 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled

from information supplied by various newsletters and anjumans in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjumans do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by two hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to *Homai and Firdos General* on May 10, 2001
A boy to *Hufrish and Marzban Variava*; May 21
A boy, *Neil*, to *Hemali and Pervaz Mehta*; July 2
A boy, *Danesh*, to *Bakhtavar and Hoshang Karai*, brother to *Rashna*; September 4
A boy to *Binaifer and Keki Jaorewala*; September 6
A girl to *Coomi and Cyrus Pardiwalla*; September 9
A girl to *Hufrish and Homyar Bulsara*; September 10
A boy to *Kamal and Meherji Tantra*; September 14
A girl to *Reshma and Pervaz Mehta*; September 15
A girl to *Tanaz and Delzad Vapiwala*; September 20
A boy to *Farzeen and Shamax Damania*; September 21
A girl to *Anaita and Hemanth Hegde*; September 21
A boy to *Roshni and Keki Bapuna*; September 22
A boy to *Villoo and Khusru Mistry*; September 23
A girl to *Yasmin and Berges Kalapesi*; September 24

A boy to *Roxan and Homyar Mistry*; September 24
A girl, *Jerusha*, to *Khushnuma and Khushroo Patel*; September 26

MARRIED

Freny Jimmy Billimoria and Soli Burjorji Balsara; September 10

DIED

Hiraji Dhunjishaw Dhanidada (85), residing at Readymoney Bldg, Kappawalla Agiary, Tardco, 400034; September 1
Minoo Jehangirji Patel (86), 62, Iris, Cuffe Parade, 400005; September 1
Dina Shapurji Avari (80), 19/133, Petit Widows' Chawl, Mody St, 400001; September 2
Dosso Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy (88), 106, Southville, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; September 2
Hillamai Dossabhoj Kelawalla (89), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 2
Shera Savak Tata (92), Jenkin

Hse, Henry Rd, Colaba, 400039; September 2
Katy Burjorji Kharadi (94), A/20, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; September 3
Phirozeshaw Kaikhushroo Mistry (73), C/o Dhunjishaw J. Karma, R/3, Jamasji Toddywalla Bldg, Lower Parel, 400013; September 3
Aloo Dinshaji Patel (67), Wipatta Hse, Bomanji Lane, Fort, 400001; September 3
Dinshaw Sorabjee Sadri (83), 1-A-34, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; September 4
Sorab Ardeshir Patel (88), C/14, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; August 6
Tehmi Jamshed Patel (78), D/2, Central Bank Co-op Hsg Soc, Dadabhai Cross Rd no 3, Irla, Vile Parle (W), 400056; September 6
Rattanshaw Shapurji Bharucha (89), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 7
Mani Jamshedji Patel (50), Room no 26, 46, Mary Lane, Sudani Rd, Worli, 400018; September 7
Tehmi Burjorji Dubash (78), Golf Links, 6/7, Union Park, Pali Hill, Khar, 400052; September 8
Dhun Eruch Tavaria (83), Gool Mans, Store Lane, Fort, 400001; September 8
Rati Naval Burjorjee (87), 32, Sainara, 17, Cuffe Parade, 400005; September 9
Keki Framroz Karkaria (81), Terrace of Shiraz, 127, Tardeo Rd, 400034; September 9
Bapaji Khurshedji Billimoria (72), Pallanji Hse, 35, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, 400004; September 10
Berjor Sorabji Ginwalla (93), 27, Jumbo, 1st Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 10
Boman Hiraji Kapadia (83), B, Sarita, Bhabha Rd, Off Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 10
Tehmina Shavak Mehta (80), 14, Girdhar Nivas, Colaba Causeway, 400005; September 10
Villie Phiroze Patel (52), 2/4, Meherhomes Co-op Hsg Soc, Opp Jogeshwari Rly Stn, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; September 10

Dara Gustadji Sethna (93), 4/25, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; September 10
Ardaeviraf Dhunjishaw Wadia (76), 191, Bhabha Hse, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; September 10
Phiroze Shiavax Shroff (83), 72, Hormuz Mans, Warden Rd, 400026; September 11
Behram Temulji Unwalla (82), 15/9, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; September 11
Dosamai Manecksha Mobedji (92), Dinsha Bldg, 613, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 12
Farida Gev Pastakia (55), 4, Petit Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; September 12
Jer Shapurji Bhajina (86), Glass Bglw, Tukaram Javji Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; September 13
Sheroo Noshir Variava (68), 40, Jame Jamshed Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 13
Hoshang Jalejar Bhagwagar (59), Opp Agiary, Agiary St, Bilimora, Dist Navsari, 396321; September 14
Meherban Khodaram Khosravi (75), 201, Clifton Bldg, Prof Almeda Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; September 14
Aloo Jamshedji Surti (88), Hormaz Mans, Bai Motibai St, Tardeo Rd, 400007; September 14
Homi Nawroji Wadia (89), K-2/12, Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; September 14
Peshotan Rustom Eranee (67), 1/B, Monolith, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; September 15
Nergish Ratanshaw Zaiwalla (89), Mubarak Manzil, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 15
Gool Phiroze Bharucha (82), A-5, Sterling Apts, 38, Peddar Rd, 400026; September 17
Nari Edulji Billimoria (78), D-510, Milton Apts, Juhu Tara Rd, Santacruz (W), 400049; September 17
Dossu Maneckshaw Kapadia (64), 146-B, Patel Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; September 17
Mehro Rusy Karbhari (77), C-41, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,

400039; September 17
Nergish Aderji Bharucha (73),
 11, Baleena, Chedanagar,
 Chembur, 400089;
 September 18
Burjorji Jamshedji Katrak
 (82), Desai Bldg, 668,
 Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031;
 September 18
Alamai Hormasji Bhagwagar
 (86), 1-B/9, Malegaonwalla
 Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim,
 400016; September 19
Rati Nawroji Doongaji (82),
 Mackawee Mans, 7,
 Gunbow St, Fort, 400001;
 September 19
Mehroo Maneckshaw
Nanadaru (79), 10, Mody
 Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo,
 400007; September 21
Bhikhoo Hormusji Patel (85),
 6, Jehangir Mans, 1st Marine
 St, 400020; September 21
Dadi Nessorwanji Daruwalla
 (65), A/302, Varsha Apts, 52,
 Anand Ngr, Vasai (W),
 401202; September 22
Pestonji Ardeshir Thunthi (88),
 Arya Bldg, P. Demelo Rd,
 Fort, 400001; September 22
Eruch Nariman Patel (66), 66,
 Amin Villa, Malcolm Baug,
 Jogeshwari (W), 400102;

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	2001*	This issue	2001*	This issue	2001*
BIRTHS						
Boys	9	67	1	5	1	24
Girls	8	77	—	6	1	17
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	1	166	—	13	1	7
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	18	—	—	—	1
Females married out	—	14	—	1	—	1
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	35	323	7	50	11	35
Females	30	346	2	33	5	19
CREMATED						
Males	—	8	—	—	—	—
Females	—	9	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 2001 (January 2001-November 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.

September 23
Nariman Hormusji Patel (74),
 5, Dubash Bldg, Kashinath St,

Tardeo, 400034; September 24
Nargish Rustom Irani (77),
 15-A, United Chmbs, Grant

Rd (E), 400007; September 25
Khorshed Navroji
Buhariwalla (87), Manju Mhl,

Tanaz R. Godiwalla

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MATRIMONIAL

Indian doctor, Parsi, 57 years, American citizen, well-settled in San Diego, California, bright, good looking and successful, with three daughters (independently settled) seeks matrimonial correspondence from Indian females with or without children. be good looking, well-educated with good values and a sense of humor. Must be anxious and willing to settle abroad.

Please reply only if interested and qualified. Doctor visits Bombay in end December.

Reply with photo to:

The Advertiser
Parsiana, Matrimonial (Nov/16-2001)*
 GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001

*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

35, Pali Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 26
Thehmina Jehangir Irani (79), 135/B, Sindhi Soc, Chembur, 400071; September 26
Hoshang Tehmurasp Mody (79), D-610, Milton Apts, Juhu Tara Rd, Santacruz (W), 400049; September 26
Faridoon Boman Najmi (79), 30/B, Laxman Apts, Azad Lane, Andheri (W), 400058; September 26
Nariman Cawasji Panthaky (96), Dubash Bldg Annexe, 627, A. B. Homavazir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 27
Kersasp Rustomji Sirvala (64), Kavarana Bldg, Dadar Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 27
Farzaan Kali Wadia (36), 38, Meher Khush, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; September 27
Dinshaw Rustomji Siganporia (71), B/15, Blossam Co-op Hsg Soc, N. Datta Marg, Andheri (W), 400053; September 28
Allo Jal Kapadia (88), Dadachanji Bldg, Marzban Clny, Dr Nair Rd, 400008; September 29

Pheroz Pochaji Khambatta (94), 21, Casa Grande, Little Gibbs Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; September 29
Sorab Edulji Parehwalla (86), C-24, Meherzin, 109/A, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; September 29
Keki Dorabji Sidhwa (65), C/o P. J. Dastur, Soonaiji Mans, Gowalia Tank Rd, 400036; September 29
Rustom Framroze Zaiwala (83), Ahunavar, 617, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 29

NAVSARI

DIED
Jalejar H. Dhabhar, husband of Dinamai and father of Roshan, Ruby, Phiroza, Farrokh and Jamshed; September 23

POONA

BORN
 A boy, Zehan, to Pearl and Sohrab Jokhi; September 4

DIED
Kershasp Tehmurasp Satarawala (85), husband of Frainy and father of Phiroza Vijay Singh, Anita Amir Samaan and Ferida Avnish

Chopra; August 20

SECUNDERABAD

DIED
Faramji Dadabhai Saigara (84); August 20

SURAT

DIED
Hillamay Dinshawji Ichaporia (88), Sherdiwala Block, Shahpore, 395003; September 2
Lavjibhai Jahangirji Pajniagar (80), Lakda Mans, Vanki Bordi, 359003; September 3
Jamasaji Jehangirji Auwa (Gadiwala) (72), Parsiwad, Sayedpura, 395003; September 5
Roshan Khusharu Bharucha (67), Toral Apts, Kalapeshi Mahollo, Nanpura, 395001; September 6
Jehanbux Hormusshaw Italiya (53), Oskar Apts, 704, Citylight Rd, 395003; September 10
Nadarshaw Pirojsha Bhathena (85), Opp Parsi Agiary, Pader St, Village Bhatia, Dist Surat, 394510; September 25

...

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

DIED
Cecilia Khursigara, wife of Rusi and mother of Gail-Ann, Julian and Cheryl-Ann; September 11
Burzin Kotwal, husband of Ruby; September 13

GERMANY

DIED
Khodaram Moriabadi (64), Sandforter Weg 99, 59379 Selm; May 16

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED
Mitha Sorab Mehta; August 2

SOUTH AFRICA

Durban

DIED
Phiroze Shapurjee Randeria (82); August 11

UK

Cheshire

DIED
Cyrus N. Jokhi (52), 48, Bank Rd, Stalybridge, SK15 3LB; July 2

London

DIED

Homi Rustomji Pithawala (77), 79B, Redcliffe Gardens, SW10 9JJ; May 9
Tehmina N. Irani (87), 9, Pennard Rd, W12 8DW; July 2
Burjor Rustom Batliwalla (69), 101, Edith Rd, W14 0TJ; July 5
Sorab H. Rustomjee (73), 273, Winchester Rd, Highams Park, E4; July 22
Rustomji Burjorji Avari (88), 67, Tudor Rd, Edmonton, N9 8PA; July 29

Manchester

DIED

Jamshed Merwanji Antia (73), 1, Parklands, 5, Charlton Drive, Sale, Cheshire, M33 2BJ; August 26

Middlesex

BORN

A girl, Ava, to Arnava and Minoo Udwadia in Hayes; February 28

MARRIED

Zenobia Writer of Heston, daughter of Shenaz and Percy, and *Rubin Italia* of Pinner, son of Arnava and Dosu; August 26

DIED

Rusi Fakirji Deboo (85), 65, Thurlby Rd, Wembley, HA0 4RS; August 1
Jal Rustomji Mody (65), 58, Bedford Rd, Stanwell, TW197LT; August 2
Binaifer Paul Marsden (39), 10, Briar Close, Hampton; September 7

USA

Colorado

BORN

A boy, Jehan, to Brandy and *Phiroze Sethna*, brother to Yasmin in Denver; August 8

New York

DIED

Firoza Marker (50), daughter of Arnava and Jamsheed and sister of Nilofer; September 4

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

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

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

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

Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Bombay 400001.

A doyen of distilleries

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Dinshaw Faramroze Bapuna, 84, chairman emeritus of central India's Bapuna Group of Companies and erstwhile president of the Nagpur and Kampthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman, on July 31, 2001 in Nagpur following cardiac arrest.

Past president of the Madhya Pradesh Distillers' Association and also of the Maha Vidarbha Chamber of Commerce, Bapuna was "a great source of inspiration to industry leaders who regularly sought his advice on business matters," notes a press release. The liquor baron has been given credit for laying "the foundation of the Bapuna Group, one of central India's most prominent and respected names in business and industry... by sheer hard work, dint of his natural abilities and business acumen." The Group which boasted an annual turnover of Rs 300 crores, as reported in *Parsiana* (see "In high spirits," December 1996), also claims to have the largest single-point distillery in India with interests as varied as distillation of alcohol and manufacture of IMFL (Indian made foreign liquor), finance, and a soon to be commissioned brewery.

Although the patriarch continued to retain an interest in the business, in later years he preferred to hand over the reins to his three sons Aspi, Abad and Adil, and apply his energies to social and philanthropic causes. While his socially conscious companies are involved in the protection of the environment and beautification of public places, especially in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, Bapuna was personally a supporter of the Indian Red Cross. Donating to innumerable causes, small and big, it was reported that when anybody in need knocked at his door, he/she never came away empty-handed.

For 23 years he served as president of the Nagpur Anjuman during which time the corpus of the Anjuman rose from Rs 16 lakhs to over Rs 60 lakhs and the immovable property from eight to 46 lakhs. On behalf of the Anjuman and

the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana a special felicitation was organized for Bapuna on March 21, 2001 shortly before he stepped down as president when he was presented a citation scroll, a shawl and a silver salver. As noted the Gymkhana



Bapuna: business acumen

president Shiraz Gimi, "His family is a major donor to social organizations, charitable institutions and sports bodies. Under his able leadership Nagpur's Bai Hirabai N. M. Mulla Dar-e-Meher was renovated during its centenary year making it one of the most beautiful agiaries in the world. His support to the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana for conducting the Parsi Pentangular Cricket Tournament (an inter-city annual cricket event in which teams from five cities compete) and many other sporting events like bridge, snooker, tennis and the Ranji Trophy Selection Tournament has been a source of inspiration to the youth."

The eldest in a family of six brothers and sisters in Nargol, Bapuna had been sent to the Surat Parsi Orphanage for his early education, the *Parsiana* story had referred to his roots and early beginnings. Higher education was out of the question as he had to support the family, his father being a subsistence farmer with a small trade in liquor and toddy. He first went to work in the Bombay Municipality's Water Works Department where he drew a salary of Rs 35 per month, supplementing his income by giving tuitions in mathematics. When opportunity beckoned in Nagpur, he shifted base to join Byramji Doongaji and Sons as manager on a salary of Rs 40 per month. He was later made a partner in this firm and by 1971 he had saved sufficiently to invest Rs 50 lakhs to set up Vidarbha Distilleries. His forays into mining and cinema houses were not a financial success.

Bapuna's interest in theater though had brought his wife Banu (who predeceased him 11 years ago) and him together when they were both cast in the lead roles in one of Jehangir Wadia's plays. A renowned boxer and body builder in his youth, Bapuna's other interests were gardening, astrology and homeopathy. A qualified and respected homeopath, he used to dispense free medicines to patients who had faith in his diagnosis and treatment.

The sporting businessman is survived by his sons Aspi, Abad and Adil, daughters Aban Adi Magra and Pervin Burjor Avari, brother Hoshang and sisters Nergish and Polly.

Parsidom's penmanship

Died: Dara Nusserwanji Kadva, 61, editor of the fortnightly "independent magazine" *Parsidom*, on July 20, 2001 in Bombay following complications arising from his diabetic condition.

"The Parsi community is sitting on an information inferno...waiting to be blown up soon," believed Kadva who launched the bilingual *Parsidom* in February 1997. "While laudably covering religious matters, social events, commercial and entrepreneurial developments...the present Parsi Press has looked the other way in matters relating to the neglect of trust funds/lands, rampant financial manipulations in housing and real estate matters... and such other issues which are crying out for attention," conveyed Kadva in an interview with *Parsiana* (see "The Pen of *Parsidom*," April 1997) impressing on the need for an independent publication like his to tackle subjects which require "boldness, forthrightness and a no-holds-barred approach."

While *Parsidom* was reaching out to 750 households, libraries, anjumans, trusts in India as also overseas, following his demise "we have not been able to bring out a single issue for the simple reason that his was a one-man mission," explains his son-in-law Vispi Patel who used to assist in accounting matters. "He

was not interested in show or gloss; only ensuring that Parsis do not get led astray by the so-called leaders and that the trust property does not get depleted," added Patel.

Formerly a columnist with the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, once he had launched his own publication he frequently vented his ire on the policies and coverage of the weekly. "He wanted the news fraternity to be awake. He made *Jamé* competitive," according to Patel.

At the time of the trusteeship elections in 2000 he announced his candidature although *Parsidom* unequivocally expressed its preference for sitting trustee



Kadva: no-holds-barred approach

Silloo Kavarana against *Jamé*'s slant in support of rival Zarir Bhathena. That Kavarana was reelected, Kadva saw as a victory for *Parsidom* although members of the community were by then disenchanted with his style of functioning. His critics also used to maintain that his carps could be silenced with financial overtures.

"Always craving to be a journalist," Kadva got his yearned-for opening when Firoz Khadiwala from Bombay was looking out for a person to help him start *Kuwait Times*, discloses Kadva's elder brother Nariman. Until then Dara's writings had been restricted to the Gujarati publications and the *Free Press Journal*. Prior to that he had worked as a salesman for S. Dorabjee and Company and Ahmed Albughli and Company, as a typist for Tata Oil Mills Company. Short of resources then, he would walk to his workplace to save two annas on the bus fare and would survive on one flask of tea for the whole day, recalls Nariman with whom he was residing in Ahmedabad. Born in Navsari, Dara's school education was at the Cowasjee Jehangir Madressa there.

Altogether he must have spent 25-30 years in the Gulf region. With the *Kuwait Times* he was the news editor, circulation manager, proofreader for several years until he left it to join its competitor, *Daily News* and then returned to his original post, Nariman reports on his brother's professional moves. After a brief spell in India, his next opening

was as Abu Dhabi bureau chief of *Khaleej Times* until plagued by diabetes and arthritis he opted to settle in India. His sizable collection of newspapers from the Gulf region are, as stipulated in his will, to be handed over to an upcoming journalist, mentions the brother.

"Publishing is a costly business," Kadva had maintained in the inaugural issue of *Parsidom*. His ambitious project of starting *Parsidom* as a weekly soon petered down to three issues a month and later became a fortnightly although the number of pages gradually increased from eight to 24. As he had told *Parsiana*, whilst individuals "showed admiration and sympathy and gave donations, the real expectation from the trusts, industrial houses and companies did not materialize" forcing him to introduce subscriptions and advertisements. He continued to remain hopeful though "that we shall be able to make our presence felt and make our contribution for the larger welfare of Parsis."

Kadva is survived by his wife Mharukh, daughter Kaneejeh Patel, sons Kayomars and Kersi, brothers Nariman, Gustad, Khushroo, and sister Veera Patel.

P. M. G.

Film distributor Randeria

Died: Phiroze Shapurjee Randeria (82), pioneer Indian film distributor in Durban on August 11, 2001.

The depleting Zoroastrian community of South Africa lost a stalwart in Randeria. An amateur movie camera buff who entertained family and friends with the product of a hand-driven 8 mm projector (that later graduated to 16 mm) as a school-boy, Phiroze became a professional in his early 20s, writes Dr Dara Randeria in a letter to *Parsiana*.

In the early 1950s Phiroze pioneered the distribution of Indian films in South Africa, making several trips to India to meet Bollywood producers, directors, stars like Shivaji Ganesan and outstanding singers like Mohammed Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar and others.

During the 1960s which marked the "sanction period of the apartheid era," Phiroze obtained Indian films via Singapore, Dubai and London, notes Dara. The circuitous route ensured that "the intense craving of cinema goers" in South Africa and the neighboring countries was satisfied, writes Dara.

Arnavaz S. Mama

CEL(L)EBRITY STATUS

continued from page 30

the 220 types of cells found in the human body, a stem cell may either divide for indefinite periods in culture to create more stem cells or give rise to specialized cells. When a group of cells start showing the same characteristics, a cell line emerges to enable the scientists to work on the "characterization" stage or the "passaging" stage. After characterization, they proceed with the differentiation process hoping to ultimately differentiate them into nerve cells (for treating patients with brain disorders), heart muscle cells (for cardiac problems), beta islet pancreatic cells (for diabetics).

Stem cell research is expected to change the way medicine is practiced today and many disorders once considered incurable should benefit from stem cell research. Besides using stem cells for organ replenishment and tissue regeneration, one of the advantages could be the ability to undertake toxicology studies on stem cells instead of animals to determine the side effects of a drug, Parikh conveyed the significance of this revolutionary research.

Do you have a G6PD enzyme deficiency?

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

*Analgesics: Anelidil, Acetylsalicylic acid, Aspirin, Acetophenetidin (Phenacetin), Antipyrine, Pyramidone.

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

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

Nonsulfonamide antibacterial agents: Furazolidone, Nitrofurantoin (Furadantin), Chloramphenicol, Para-aminosalicylic acid.

Miscellaneous: Naphthalene, Vitamin K (Water soluble analogues), Prodenicid, Trinitrotoluene, Methylene blue, Dimercaprol (BAL), Phenylhydrazine, Quinine and Quinidine; Sulpha containing compounds including Septran, DDS and Daraprim; Nitrofurantoin, Nalidixic acid including all derivatives of this group, Antistine, Diphenylhydramine, Pronestyl, Nitrites, Large doses of Chloroquine, Chloromycetin, Vit. C & K.

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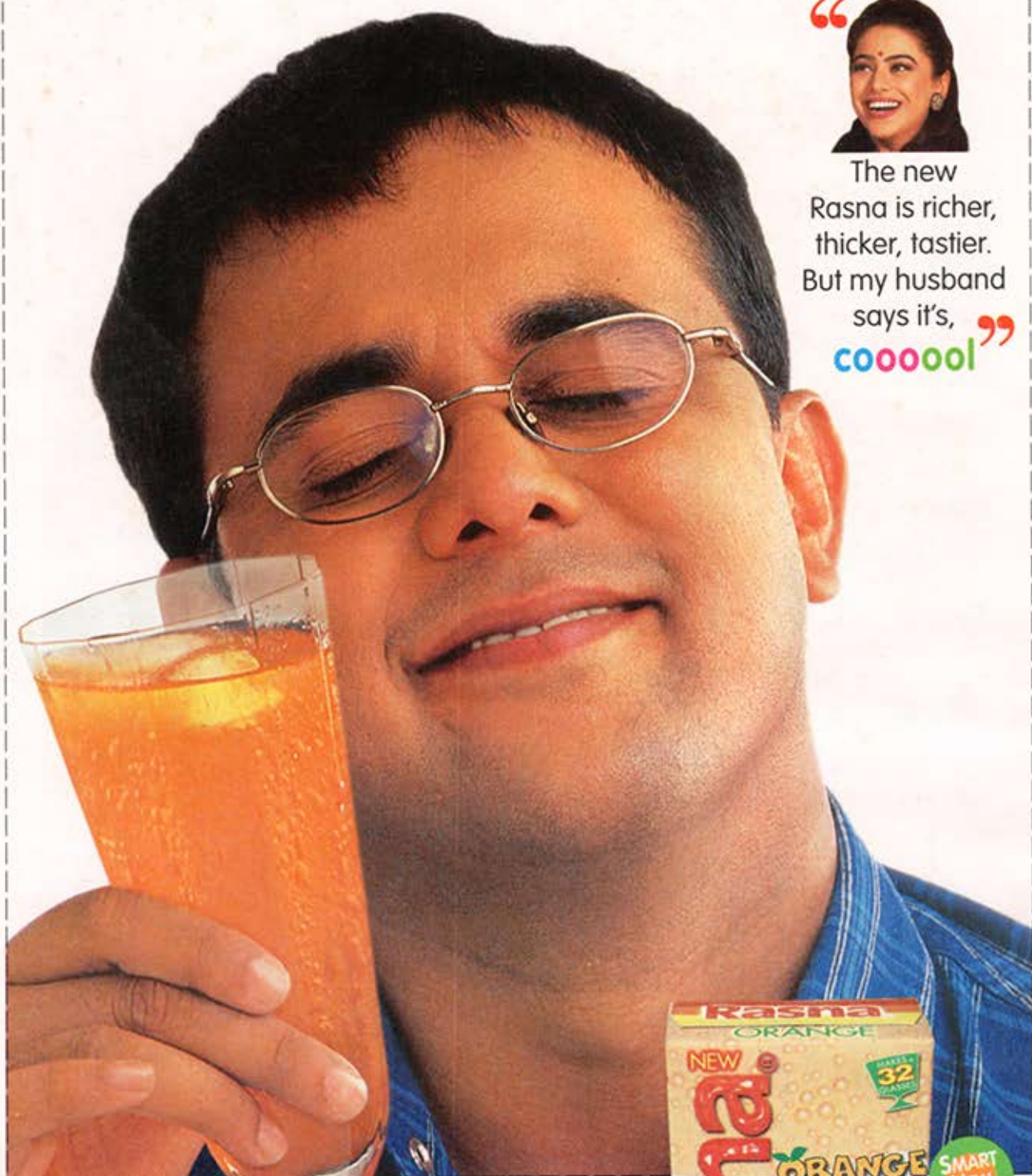
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