

# THE BPP REVIEW



The Bulletin of the BOMBAY PARSI PUNCHAYET. SUMMER 2008 (For Private Circulation Only).

also visit us at: [www.bppreview.com](http://www.bppreview.com)



**Chairman Minoo R. Shroff presenting  
PARSI ENTREPRENEUR PAR EXCELLENCE AWARD to  
Dr. Viloo Morawala - Patell**

## CONTENTS

Parsi Entrepreneur Par Excellence	3	Dennis Adjudged Tardeo Shree 2008	19
Public Notice	10	Jashan-e-Navroze	20
Yet Another HPY Unfolds	13	The Bangalore Parsis	26
Spirit of Interfaith	17	Power Lifting Contests.	27
Adenwalla Birth Anniversary	18		

## Editorial Board

*Trustees* : Minoo R. Shroff, Dinshaw R. Mehta, Dadi B. Engineer, Dinshaw K. Tamboly, Maneck Engineer, Burjor H. Antia.  
*Administration* : Mehli P. Colah, Pheroze D. Patel, Cawas S. Panthaki  
*Editor* : Godrej N. Dotivala



# PARSI ENTREPRENEUR PAR EXCELLENCE

**O**n 16th May 2008 the Bombay Parsi Panchayet had arranged a Reception at the C. K. Naidu Hall of the Cricket Club of India for Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell in recognition of her path breaking entrepreneurial skills as founder Chairperson and Managing Director of Avesthagen Limited.

In his opening remarks Mr. Godrej N. Dotivala, Public Relations Officer of the B.P.P. pointed out that over the years the Apex Body of the Parsis – the Bombay Parsi Panchayet – has had the proud privilege of holding a series of functions to honour eminent members of the Community in various walks of life.

“Amongst the distinguished galaxy of personages who have been felicitated in the past were :

J.R.D. Tata, Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan, Sohrab Godrej, Naval H. Tata, Zubin Mehta, H. M. Seervai, Nani A. Palkhivala, Dr. D. J. Jussawalla, Dr. Homi Sethna, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Air Marshal Aspi Engineer, Admiral Jal Cursetji, Mrs. Avabai Wadia, A.F.S. Taleyarkhan, Adi Marzban and Sir Jamshed J. Irani.



Recently we have honoured Soli Sorabjee, Chief Justice Sam Bharucha, Justice Sam Variava, Tehmtan Andharujina, Fali Nariman, Jamshed N. Guzder, Vada Dasturji Dr. Kaikhushroo M. JamaspAsa, Air Chief Marshal Fali Major and Lord Karan Bilimoria.

Today we salute an indomitable lady who is a dynamo of inexhaustible human energy. She has brought laurels to herself, her community and her country. It is none other than our honoured guest Dr. Villoo Morawala- Patell.



**Mr. Minoo R. Shroff delivering his Presidential Address. Looking on are H. E. Mr. Francois Pujolas, Consul General of France; Dr. Patell; Mr. Dadi Engineer, Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly and Mr. Mehli P. Colah**

Her original concept of having a public-private partnership did not materialize so this dynamic lady started off on her own from scratch.

Initially she intended to name it as Gengraine but the Registrar of Companies suggested that she prefix it with one of the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon. But the devout Zoroastrian that she was she decided to use the prefix Avestha and that is how Avastha Gengraine Technologies Private Limited came into being which was later abbreviated to Avesthagen Limited.

Its partners include global outfits in each segment of its research activity such as the French companies Biomerieux Limagrain and Danone. Indian firms like Cipla and Godrej too have collaborated with Avesthagen Limited in con-

tributing to the growth of the biotech industry. This has earned her the honorific title of Officier de L'Ordre National du Merite from the President of France, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy.

Dr. Patell is a key member of the Task Force and Vision Group for Biotechnology constituted by the Karnataka Government and was recently invited as a member of the Board of the Bill Clinton Global Health Initiative”.

In his Welcome Address Mr. Minoo R. Shroff, Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet observed: Dr. Patell whom we are honouring this evening has excellent academic credentials. She was awarded Ph.D. in Plant molecular biology from University of Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, France, and did a Post-doctoral tenure from University of Ghent, Belgium. She has also

received several grants from famous institutions such as The Rockefeller Foundation. Topping it all is the highest ranking Award – The National Order of Merit – conferred on her by the President of the French Republic. The citation reads:

“This Award acknowledges your great merits as a prominent figure in the scientific field and in the entrepreneurship of your country, as the creator of Avesthagen, a major company in India in the area of biotechnologies. It is also a tribute to your cooperation with French scientists, your numerous and fruitful partnerships with major French industrial firms, and to the affection you have on many occasions expressed for our country”.

Dr. Patell is a first generation entrepreneur. She is the combination of Scientist and Businesswoman with great flair in development and research in Life Sciences. After seven years of her promoting Avesthagen, it has emerged as India's leading Life Sciences Company which has an integrated approach to innovation leading to convergence of food, pharma and population genetics. Avesthagen has world class state-of-the-art laboratory facilities in Bangalore employing over 600 highly skilled personnel. It has been able to rope-in as partners ten global companies in each of the fields it is engaged in.

Currently there is a raging debate globally on whether women have been able to pierce the glass ceiling of male domination in the top echelons of the corporate world. It is a fact that even today women account

for far less than 10% of top management positions in the developed countries, the percentage being as low as 3% in India. However, there are some exceptional achievers amongst Indian women, the most outstanding being Indra Nooyie, the CEO of PepsiCo. In India we have Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairperson and CEO of Biocon Ltd., Miss Homai Daruwalla, Chairperson and MD of Central Bank of India, Naina Lal Kidwai, the CEO in India of HSBC, the second largest bank in the world.

Mrs. Anu Aga, Chairperson and Mrs. Meher Padamsey, MD of Thermax Ltd. Mrs. Shikha Sharma, MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, the largest private sector insurance company.

However, in recent years I can think of only two exceptional Parsi entrepreneurs who have made their mark not only in India but globally – Lord Karan Bilimoria, Chairman of Cobra Beer Ltd., whom we honoured last year and Dr. Mrs. Villoo Patell. Villoo's case is even more admirable as she started from scratch without any Godfather and has been able to attract such prestigious groups like Tatas, Godrej, ICICI and others as equity investors. I believe Avesthagen is making a large IPO later this year and will be listed.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet has played an active role in supporting the nascent – World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce in India which was established here in 2003. The object of the Chamber is to motivate young Zoroastrians to become self-reliant and plunge into business and industry, develop networking with their peers to avail of



**The two Villoos - Dr. Villoo Patell and Mrs. Villoo Shroff**

the immense opportunities which India offers today. Recently the Chamber organized a residential programme for 28 new and existing entrepreneurs at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute at Ahmedabad, which was very successful. The DNA' write up states "Parsi Youth think big – look up to Tata'. Dr. Villoo Patell is an inspiring role-model for budding entrepreneurs and I am sure all of us would love to share her experiences.

After his illuminating discourse Mr. Shroff bestowed the BPP's prestigious PARSI ENTREPRENEUR PAR EXCELLENCE AWARD upon Dr. Morawala-Patell. An exclusive golden garland was presented to Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell by Mrs. Viloo Shroff. And Mrs. Havovi G. Dotivala then garlanded His Excellency Mr. Francois Pujolas, Consul General of France.

Later, Mrs. Zarine Commissariat Corporate Secretary of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce International Board gave a bouquet of flowers to the distinguished dignitary.

The French Consul General in his succinct speech remarked: I am happy to have been invited to the reception organized by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet to honour Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell.

Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell was recently awarded by the French Government with the "Ordre National du Merite" for the exceptional achievements she had made, as a woman, as a scientist, and as a business leader. Her contribution to France is expressed in the list of her prominent industrial partners which are leading French companies (Biomerieux, Danone,



**A sheaf of flowers for Dr. Morawala - Patell from Mrs. Zarine Commissariat on behalf of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce**



**His Excellency Mr. Francois Pujolas, Consul General of the French Republic in Mumbai**

Limagrain). Her links with France are not recent, they go back to the time when she was a student and researcher in the Louis Pasteur University at Strasbourg.

Beyond study and research, Dr. Morawala-Patell embodies values that make her very close to the French spirit, of her attachment to tradition and to her Parsi community: combining tradition and modernity for the sake of humanity.

“Bringing science to life”, Avesthagen’s motto, is a nice way of repeating Francois Rabelais’ famous quote “Science sans conscience n’est que ruine de l’ame.”

Eventually came the event which all were awaiting with bated breath – the Response from Dr. Viloo Morawala-Patell: “The start of my journey began years ago when I was a little girl. I always knew I had

to do a lot for our country. The motivation for my work has not been so much with the agenda to create wealth as a start of success but more to build a long lasting solid institution that would in its wake bring much wealth and happiness to our teeming millions.

Perhaps no ingredient is more important to business success than innovation. Innovation is no longer regarded as the exclusive preserve of R & D but rather as the best approach for managing the risk of today’s uncertain business environment. Innovation must become part of the core competency of every segment of the organization and its net work of business partners.

Avesthagen fosters just this kind of questioning, collaborative, partner-embracing organizational culture in which innovation thrives. We are competent at bringing ‘new realities’ into existence. Our Systems Biology approach to Biotechnology is one such ‘new reality’. Instead of starting with a molecule that might be therapeutic and hoping to find a disease target, a systems biology approach starts with a target or a disease phenotype and then logically develops a therapeutic. We believe that rapid progress through our integrated systems biology programmes will be instrumental in leading us towards our goal of preventive, personalized medicine in the years ahead.

Today India is being touted as one of the key countries that will help drive the global adoption and acceptance of biotech crops in the future. Avesthagen is poised to lead this charge through its inno-



**The Chief Guest addressing the distinguished gathering. Others in the picture are Mr. Godrej N. Dotivala and the French Consul General H. E. Mrs. Francois Pujolas**

vative 'Seed for Food' and 'Food for Medicine' programmes thereby providing a multifaceted hedge against hunger, sickness and environmental degradation.

Avesthagen has grown from an R & D-based start-up to a well managed global company. Today it has a steady revenue stream, a robust portfolio of technologies, services and products as well as sophisticated collaborations with some of the most respected global business houses.

Biotechnology and companies like Avesthagen will play a major role in the advent of the new future. It is the Economic possibility of our time. Whether in dealing with global poverty, environmental changes, food, fuel shortages, the recombinant technologies that Avesthagen has attempted to put

together offer us hope. The discovery of this technology was a clairvoyant discovery by man to tackle the needs and essentials of the troubled, human overgrown world of today clutching precipitously to survival.

Solicitor Mr. Dadi B. Engineer, Senior Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet while proposing a hearty Vote of Thanks observed: Avesthagen's work to uncover the genetic secrets of the Parsi community is well underway. 2,500 blood samples have already been collected and by year end 15,000 more will be gathered from Parsis in Mumbai. This is a large systems biology project with the aim of understanding why Parsis live 20 years longer on an average than other Indians and to map this longevity gene. It will also go a long way to research how the level



of in-breed-  
ing amongst  
Parsis has  
made them  
more sus-  
ceptible to  
diseases  
such as  
arthritis,  
breast can-  
cer and car-  
diovascular  
problems.  
Mr.  
Engineer  
concluded  
by recall-  
ing Lord

Alfred Tennyson's memorable  
words: "To strive, to seek, to  
find and not to yield" which aptly  
summarises the life and work of  
Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell.



**A composite view of the audience**

The function was very well covered  
on the Doordarshan network and  
the national media.



**A family group of the Morawalas. Seen in the front row from r. to l. are Dr. Patell; her parents Dara and Daulat and sister Baktawar**