

# FEZANA JOURNAL



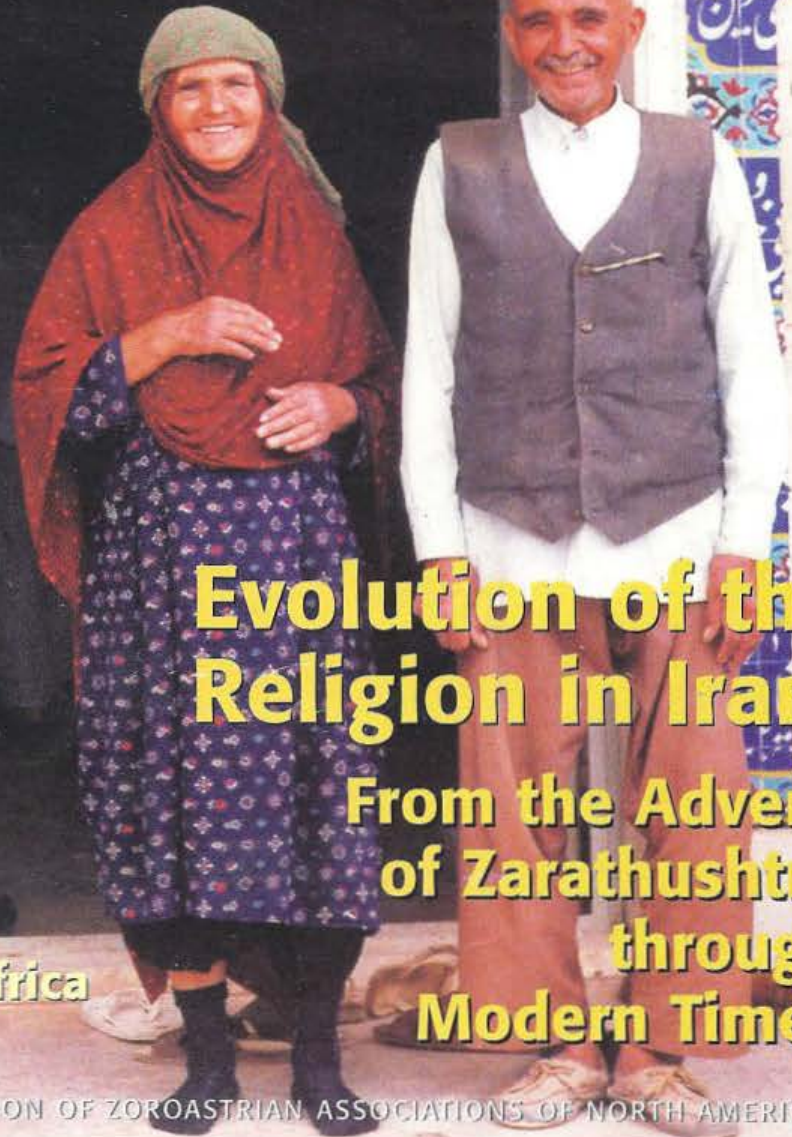
FALL 2000, PAIZ 1369 YZ

Mah Meher, Avan, Adar 1369 YZ (Fasli)

Mah Ardibehest, Khordad, Tir 1370 (Shenshai)

Mah Khordad, Tir, Amardad 1370 YZ (Kadmi)

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## Evolution of the Religion in Iran

From the Advent of Zarathushtra through Modern Times

Also inside:

FEZANA AGM 2000

Interlude in South Africa

Youth Tour of Iran

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

# FEZANA

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Associations of North America  
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ON THE COVER: Zarathushti couple –  
caretakers at the shrine of Pir-e Banou,  
near Yazd, Iran

COVER DESIGN: **Zenobia Rivetna**

ISSN 1068-2376

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# Zarathushti Religion in Iran

By Khorshed F. Jungalwala

From earliest times people have expressed their deepest convictions about the universe and mortal life in worship and symbol. The religions of the world provide a great record of human thought and sublime expression. Theologically as well as geographically, Iran stands as a bridge between the east and the west; a fact which has not only influenced her religion and ethos, but has also made Iran a watershed of world history. There is proven evidence that western Iran has had a reciprocal influence on Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome, and eastern Iran on India and China.

The vastness of the south Siberian Steppes encouraged the Iranians in pre-Zarathushtrian times to conceive their gods as cosmic divinities, apprehending a universal principle of what ought to be – ‘*asha*’ (variously translated as ‘truth’, ‘order’, ‘righteousness’). This principle governed everything from workings of nature to human laws and all human conduct during the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. It was guarded by beneficent divinities – the ‘*ahuras*’ (greatest of whom was Ahura Mazda) and several other divinities such as Varuna, Mithra, etc. Society, at the time was divided into two main groups, the priests and the warrior herdsmen. The wandering pastoralists had no temples and worshiped mainly in the open without altars or images. Cultivation of oral religious literature had begun, as indicated in Yasna Haptanghaiti and the Yasnas.

The advent of Zarathushtra coincided with the southward movement of the people of the Steppes by conquest and simple migration into areas that currently encompass East Iran. The religion spread towards West Iran where it was endorsed willingly by the Median monarchy and inhabitants by the seventh century BCE. The ‘*magis*’ were the priests of the Medes of western Iran, whereas the

‘*athravans*’ dominated in the eastern Iran. Old oral literature was revised in light of the teachings of Zarathushtra.

**Achaemenians and Parthians.** By 550 BCE, the religion of Zarathushtra was firmly established by the achaemenian king Cyrus the Great. The Achaemenian monarchs were known for their tolerance towards other religious creeds. The temple cult of fire was founded, by Artaxerxes II.



The Zarathushti calendar was created and Zurvanism started to gain prominence. Avestan texts were being composed and transmitted orally.

Between 334 –326 BCE, Iran experienced pillage and plunder at the hands of Alexander of Mesopotamia. Slaughter of the priests and the burning of the library at Persepolis led to loss of much Avestan literature. Our eternal gratitude is to the priests who committed the religious literature to memory, passing down the oral tradition through generations, and ultimately recording it in the written language during the Sasanian era.

Although the rulers were tolerant of other religions and allowed them to flourish, there was no state endorsement of pure Mazda worship during Parthian times (~250 BCE to 224 CE). Mithraism began to take hold and spread westward reaching the Roman Empire and beyond.

**Sasanians.** The Sasanian dynasty (226 – 651 CE) opened up a new and brilliant epoch in the history of ancient Iran, revitalizing the Mazdayasni Zarathushti religion and making it a state religion. The priests became politically powerful. The high priest Herbadan Herbad *Tansar* fixed the oral Avestan canon, and *Kirder* organized the Zarathushti priesthood and founded many fire temples.

High Priest *Aderbad Marespand*, who underwent the ordeal of pouring molten brass on his breast to establish the veracity of the Zarathushti faith, gave final shape to the collected writings on the religion which included 21 nasks of the Avesta in the newly invented Avestan alphabet. People who had converted to other proselytizing religions were encouraged to study the Avesta and Zand in order to re-attract them to the Zarathushti faith. Theological differences promoted the offshoot and growth of heresies such as Zurvanism, Manichaeism and Mazdakism.

**Arab conquest.** In 636 CE the Arab conquest began an era of slaughter and forced conversion to Islam. The ‘*Jizya*’ tax was imposed on non-Muslims and by 700 CE the use of Pahlavi was officially replaced by Arabic. Libraries were destroyed and Pahlavi works were translated into Arabic, the originals being eventually obliterated. By the tenth century, persecution of non-Muslims intensified, resulting in the migration of the founders of the Parsi community to the shores of western India.

**Muslim dynasties.** A succession of Muslim dynasties suppressed the zeal of the minority zarathushtis. By the thirteenth century, Zarathushtis withdrew to around the desert cities of Yazd and Kerman. *Neryosang Dhaval* made Sanskrit and Pazand versions of the Avesta and Pahlavi texts. There was further migration into India. From 1478, Irani priests began writing letters to Parsis in India with treaties of instructions known as the ‘*Rivayats*’. Incidents of forced conversion and ruthless annihilation

during the *Safavid* and *Afghan* rule were rampant.

The population of Zarathushtis in Iran at the turn of the eighteenth century was estimated to be one million. The *Qajar* period (1796 - 1925) continued the onslaught on Zarathushtis. In 1850, a mere seven thousand remained! The Parsis of India dispatched Manekji Limji Hataria to Iran in 1854. He persuaded the Qajar king to abolish the Jizya tax in 1882 and encouraged Zarathushtis to form anjumans. Enterprising Zarathushti families such as the Jamshedians and Jahanians ventured in businesses. By 1909 a constitutional monarchy was established and Zarathushtis were given a legitimate minority status and Parliamentary representation.

**The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)** brought further emancipation and advancement of Zarathushtis. Political leaders like Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh, Arbab Rustam Guiv, Dr. Esfandiar Yeganegi, Dr. Farhang Mehr and many others rose to prominence. Zarathushti schools were opened. Several generous Zarathushtis provided resources for the community's education and welfare. The community produced physicians, engineers, professionals, industrialists and army generals. Pestonji Marker of Bombay created the Marker Foundation for education and community advancement.

**The Islamic Republic of Iran** was created as a result of the overthrow of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979. Migration from Iran to other parts of the globe increased. In very recent years, there has been an indication of a modifying trend towards religious toleration in Iran and Zarathushtis ostensibly seem to be enjoying a level of respect and equality. However, significant migration out of Iran continues for other reasons that include economic issues, educational and professional opportunities.

One can hope and strive for a future that Zarathushtra envisioned for all Zarathushtis not only in Iran but in all parts of the world. ■

*From the President ...*

## Can we rise toward the truth?

**T**he community professing the Mazdayasni faith, as it was brought to us by Asho Zarathushtra, is expected to be dedicated to a life of living the truth, disclosed to us by the divinely given Good Mind directing us to Right Action. When the members of the community so act with conviction, the spirit of righteousness is said to flourish in us. When this spirit spreads across the community what is achieved is a form of ideal society, a harmoniously progressive state; some call it the Kingdom of Heaven.

Such, of course, is the ideal. In each and every religious tradition, however, reality falls short of the ideal. Look at the state we are in! Rampant disagreements, conflicts at many levels, widespread suspicion of the motives of those with whom one disagrees, and declarations of irreconcilability. Now, disagreements emerge in any free society, but they can be articulated and brought to some kind of resolution; at a minimum, acceptance of diversity, if not an agreement, with concession on all sides. Are we incapable of such resolutions?

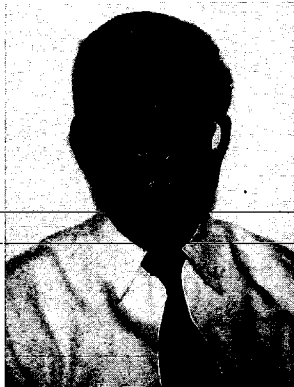
Consider what we are. A highly educated and rational (or so I pray to Ahura Mazda) community. Such a community surely has that capability of arriving peacefully, at rational resolutions. There is no reason preventing this, other than our psychologically bred rigidity and reluctance to recognize the possibility of an opposing viewpoint, let alone trying to understand it.

Our community is not in dire need of any kind. We do not face any common danger from our social environment in North America. Nor do we see our interests in jeopardy. Then why are we in this panic-like state of social conflict and personal vituperation? So often we identify our personal interests with the interests of the community. We make our personal beliefs the model to be followed by the community, viewing any opposition as breach of faith, or worse still, heresy.

*Is there a path away from this unpleasant state of affairs?* There most certainly is – the path of genuine faith. Let us make an effort to listen with attention to the voice of our prophet, and rise, spiritually and socially, to the promotion of the one and only interest worthy of our dedication – doing the Right for the sake of Right, being ready to express our thoughts as well as hear those of others, recognizing human fallibility in others as well as ourselves, being committed to understanding others and thereby spinning our hearts to the situations and needs which made them say and do the things they did.

Thus we keep anger, hatred and conspiracy from contaminating our communal discussions. Thus, purified by the gift of Spenta Armaiti, may we strive selflessly toward the promotion, not of our personal or group interests, but that of Truth, the Holy Asha. ■

*Framroze K. Patel*  
President, FEZANA



## Is your subscription due?

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**T**he 13th Annual General Meeting of FEZANA was held on May 27 and 28, 2000, at the Houston Heritage and Cultural Center (ZHCC), Houston, Texas. The Meeting commenced with a benediction by *Ervad Bomanshaw Sanjana*. After the welcome speech by *Ken Bhappu*, President of the Houston Association, the meeting was brought to order by FEZANA President Framroze Patel. Over 50 persons were present, including 14 delegates, about 15 committee members and a number of members of the governing board of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress.

#### FEZANA OFFICER'S REPORTS

*President Framroze Patel* welcomed everyone and thanked the Zoroastrian Association of Houston for hosting the meeting. He considered it an honor to serve the community as president for the past two years. Most of his time was devoted to bringing harmony to the community, integrating FEZANA into the world community, and in ensuring a successful World Zoroastrian Congress in North America.



Today, the world Zarathushti community looks toward North America and FEZANA to resolve many of the issues that our community is facing.

*Vice President Firdosh Mehta* said that during the ten months since his election as vice president, he has become better acquainted with many issues. He participated in the dialogue with WZO and in organizing

**Weighty issues, among them the upcoming Congress 2000 in Houston and formulation of the World Body are discussed and debated at the Annual General Meeting of FEZANA.**

## FEZANA AGM 2000



*Above, FEZANA Officers, l. to r, out-going assistant secretary Mahrukh Motafram, president Framroze K. Patel (re-elected for second term), vice president Firdosh Mehta, secretary Arnavaz Sethna and treasurer Rustom Kevala. Left, incoming assistant secretary, Diana Balsara of Houston, Texas.*

the Avesta Conference in Calgary. Besides taking on the Time Capsule project for WZC2000, he has been promoting the Congress wherever he has traveled. He closed with: "As FEZANA enters into the next millennium, I continue to commit myself to serving my community of Zarathushtis in all walks of life and from all corners of the world, and acquire the exhilarated joy that comes from completing tasks that bring happiness to my fellowmen."

*Treasurer Rustom Kevala*, presented the financial statement. He advised that in the past year FEZANA had received two major donations, one from Dr. and Mrs. Jerry Kheradi to

endow a Scholarship Fund in memory of his father, Mehraban Dorab Kheradi, and the other from Mrs. Yasmin Cumming to assist needy Zarathushtis and to start a Critical Assistance Fund in memory of her father, Hormazdiar Damkevala. FEZANA's assets more than doubled during 1999 to over \$208,000. FEZANA charities and program expenses also increased to over \$80,000 during this period. A summary of the financial statements for 1998 and 1999 appears overleaf.

*Secretary Arnavaz Sethna* requested each Member Association to include their list of voting members at the time of paying their membership



From left, Association delegates Bomi Patel (ZANC, California), Ness Lakdawalla (ZAQ, Quebec), Rashna Mehta (ZAA, Alberta), Khorshed Jungalwala (ZAGBA, Boston), Bella Tata (ZSBC, British Columbia), Dolly Malva (ZAC, California), Kobad Zarolia (ZSO, Toronto), Hutoxi Contractor (ZAPA, Pennsylvania), Gordafriid Aresh (TMZA, California), Shirin Tengra (ZANT, North-Texas), Mehran Khadivi (ZAMWI, Washington), Jamshed Mistry (Congress Committee Chair).

dues, as required by the FEZANA constitution. The number of individual members determines the number of qualifying votes that each association is entitled to: associations with 10-50 members get 1 vote, 51-150 members get 2 votes, 151-300 members get 3 votes, 301-500 members get 4 votes and over 500 members get 5 votes.

Outgoing *Assistant Secretary Mahrukh Motafram* reported that she has been with FEZANA for a long time and has seen it grow, but feels that it needs strong leadership to mature. She enjoyed collecting information for "Milestones" in FEZANA Journal – births, navjotes, weddings, deaths and honors, and will continue her work with the Journal. She recommended that time and money be invested in updating the FEZANA Web site. Mahrukh thanked executive officers for keeping her challenged and hoped and prayed that we all learn to co-exist in spite of our differences.

**Executive Officer Elections.** Three positions were up for election this year. For the position of president, there were two nominees: incumbent Framroze Patel and Farrokh Mistree.

Sealed ballots were requested from Member Associations and were opened the day before the meeting. Out of a total of 59 eligible votes, 58 votes were cast. The necessary number of votes to win the election was

Presidential candidate *Farrokh Mistree* thanked his nominating associations and hoped that he gets the opportunity to follow up on his proposals. Re-elected president *Framroze Patel* thanked everyone for the confidence placed in him. He committed to carry out his manifesto promise of keeping Members better informed about FEZANA activities.

**ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES**

Delegates of 14 associations reported on their activities during the past year.

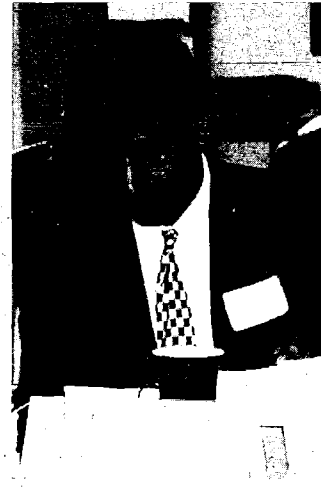
*Rashna Mehta, ZAA, Alberta*, said the single biggest event that Alberta hosted was the Avesta Conference, co-sponsored by the Zoroastrian Education and Research Society and FEZANA. They also celebrated gahambars and other social events. Fund raising for WZC2000 and other

Zarathushti charities are undertaken on a continuing basis.

*Khorshed Jungalwala, ZAGBA, Boston*, said their activities catered to the younger generation – they should get more involved in community related issues. Boston has had a lot of representation in interfaith activities.

30. Framroze Patel received 32.3 votes and Farrokh Mistree 25.7. Framroze was, therefore, declared reelected as president. For the position of treasurer, only one nomination was received. Rustom Kevala was re-elected unopposed. For the position of assistant secretary, only one nomination was received. Diana Balsara of Houston was elected unopposed.

FEZANA BALANCE SHEET		
1998 and 1999		
	1998	1999
<b>Assets:</b>		
Checking Account (Citibank)	\$17,893	\$29,357
Savings Account (Bank One)	13,287	21,699
Fixed Deposits (Bank One)	50,542	26,590
Investments (Merrill-Lynch, shares)	7,500	91,104
Imprest Accounts (ZYNA, ZSC)	6,729	35,596
Property & Equipment	2,388	3,717
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$98,339</b>	<b>\$208,073</b>
<b>Liabilities:</b>		
Operating Funds	\$71,181	\$71,606
Restricted Funds	18,042	97,145
Other	9,116	39,322
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$98,339</b>	<b>\$208,073</b>



**Bella Tata, ZSBC**, British Columbia, reported that they have formed new Sports and Grievance Committees; the latter, after the community underwent a devastating experience of dealing with family violence. This committee would lend support to survivors of tragic events.

**Dolly Malva, ZAC**, California, stated that they had been active in social and other cultural events and continue to lend support to the local community. They arranged for lectures mainly for the Youth. Dolly requested that the next AGM be held in California.

**Bomi Patel, ZANC**, Northern California, reported they have at least two events every month. Their membership has practically doubled in the last three years. Bomi emphasized that any material received by the Board from the FEZANA Executive is distributed and individual members kept well informed.

**Hosi Mehta, ZAC**, Chicago, reported that his association will host the North American Congress in 2002. Referring to WZC2000 issues, he earnestly requested everyone to exercise tolerance, patience and love for human rights.

**Roshan Sethna, ZAH**, Houston, welcomed everyone to the Center and stated that this was the hub of the community. Sunday School as well as various study groups, socioreligious events such as jashans and gahambars and various fundraisers are regularly held at the Center. Three rooms are being added in phase 2 – a library, office and school room.

**Kaikhosrov Irani, ZAGNY**, New York, reported that children's religious classes have been held for the past 22 years, and adult group discussions for the past 19. Young adults are taking keen interest in these discussions.

**Kobad Zarolia, ZSO**, Ontario, stated that they have used ZAH's example to motivate the growing Toronto community to build a new Center in Mississauga. They also concentrate on religious activities. They now have 30 subcommittees, taking care of many and varied activities.

**Hutoxi Contractor, ZAPA**, Pennsylvania, stated that their association is a small but cohesive group, gearing most of their efforts towards the youth.

**Gordafriid Aresh, TMZA**, California, said she would like to see words like "liberal" and "orthodox" wiped out from meetings. Though a small association, TMZA strives to give children pride in our religion. She recommended that youth take up projects like selling sudrehs and kushtis and send the money to India.

**Shirin Tengra, ZANT**, Texas, stated that their membership is steadily increasing. They have children/adult religious classes and take part in interfaith activities. They are presently raising funds for a Center.

**Ness Lakdawalla, ZAQ**, Quebec, stated that although ZAQ is small, it was the first in North America. They hosted a very successful Youth Congress last year. They fully support WZC2000 and will be sponsoring one Zarathushti Field Student.

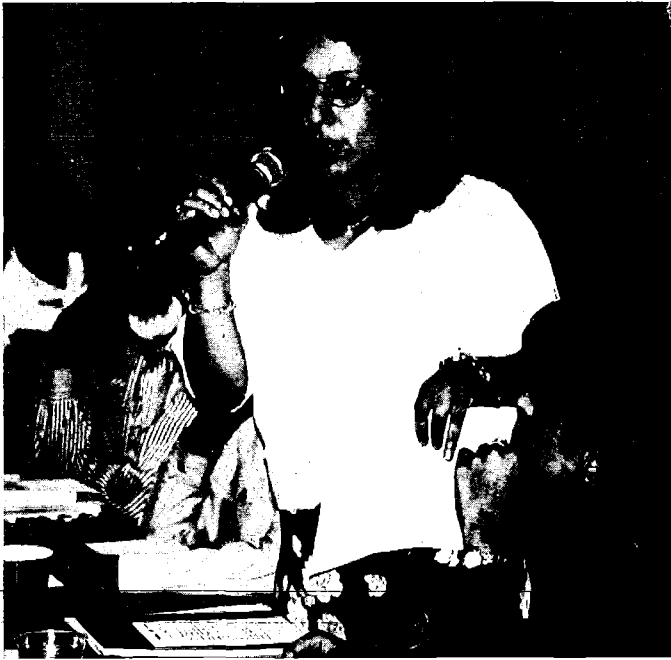
**Mehran Khadivi, ZAMWI**, Washington, DC, mentioned that all Zarathushti festivals are celebrated. They have fortnightly children's religious classes. Their membership has increased and there is a need for a new and bigger building, for which the permit process has started.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Census Committee.** Chair **Rashna Ghadialy** reported (read by Aban Rustomji) that the committee has tried to identify social themes from the study of which the Zarathushti community in North America could benefit. A draft questionnaire for planning a retirement community [see *A Tribute to the Roshans of our Community*, by Aban and Purvez Rustomji, *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 1999] was distributed at the AGM. After reviewing the response from the community, FEZANA may form an ad hoc committee for retirement planning.

**Congress Committee.** Chair **Jimmy Mistry** reported that the next North American Congress will be held in 2002 in Chicago. ZAC has already started working and planning for it. The WZC2000 program has been announced in the summer issue of *FEZANA Journal*. The hotel has been sold out and arrangements are being made with two other hotels for more accommodations. Planning for the 7th Zarathushti Games, also in Houston, is progressing well.

**Welfare Committee.** Chair **Kaemerz Dotiwalla** advised that the committee had disbursed \$4965.00 to needy and



deserving causes. He thanked everyone who had graciously donated.

**Religious Education.** *Lovji Cama* (read by Rustom Kevala) stated that the committee (along with others) reviewed “*Z Factor, Life’s Driving Lessons*” by Shahriar Shahriari [see page 97]. Copies will be distributed to all the associations for use in religious education classes for middle school and older age children. The committee plans to hold seminars or workshops for religious education teachers in different locations in North America. Contact Lovji Cama at [lovji\\_cama@merck.com](mailto:lovji_cama@merck.com).

**Funds and Finance.** The loss last year of *Dr. Keikhosrow Harvesf*, who had served as chair for many years, was recognized. New chair *Dr. Jerry Kheradi*, in a written report, stated that it was an honor for him to serve. His goal is to make each of the FEZANA Funds an endowment fund generating income to support the yearly budget with the principal to remain intact and continue to grow. Letters of appeals and offers to match donations during March and April have generated good response. The committee’s activities are reported in “Financial Corner” section of the Journal. FEZANA will run a raffle for a lap top computer at WZC2000 [see page 88].

**Publications Committee.** Chair *Khorshed Jungalwalla* reported that

the Journal and website are the two main projects. Though subscription prices had to be increased due to higher costs, the number of subscribers is increasing steadily. The Journal has adhered to the policy of letting all voices be heard and urged everyone to contribute articles and give new ideas. The Winter 2000 issue will be a special commemorative issue, edited by the present and past presidents of FEZANA. It will be sold at the Congress.

**Small Groups.** Chair *Mez Birdie’s* report was distributed earlier. From the report, it was noted that the majority of Small Groups are not interested in becoming Associations, and thereby joining FEZANA as Members; however, some contribute donations and promote FEZANA amongst their membership. In order to create interest, Mez recommends that FEZANA consider (1) giving them a more active role in its operations; (2) an alternate form of membership; and (3) establish an annual budget of \$200 for Small Groups operations.

**ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America).** The two new Co-Chairs, *Sherazade Mehta* and *Armaity Bamji* (the third, *Morvarid Behziz*, was not present) reported that in the past year they had two major events, the Youth Congress in Montreal and the Z-Cruise. For the

next youth congress, several locations were suggested; it was decided that they send out a general call to all associations. Chicago recommended making youth activities more affordable so that more youth can participate. At the AGM, the three new co-chairs were appointed by President Framroze Patel and ratified unanimously by the members present.

**External Affairs.** Chair *Rohinton Rivetna* urged participation in interfaith activities to gain recognition and understanding of our faith. He continues to be a trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (CPWR) which organized the third Parliament of the World’s Religions, in Cape Town, South Africa. About 15 Zarathushtis participated with presentations, workshops and ceremonies. Zarathushtis were among 12 major faiths show-cased on murals in the central hall of the Parliament venue. Rohinton provided input for the Zarathushti page of the annual NCCJ interfaith calendar.

Rohinton also participated in writing the Charter of the United Religions Initiative (URI) and will attend the charter-signing ceremony in Pittsburgh in June 2000. A high level delegation – Dastoor Firoze Kotwal from India, Dastoor Jehangir Oshidari from Iran and others will attend the UN Millennium Summit of Religious and





*From left, Kaemerz Dotiwala (Welfare), Armaity Bamji and Sherazade Mehta (ZYNA), Hoshi Mehta (ZAC, Chicago) at Hawaiiin Nite fundraiser, Purvez Rustomji (spearheading the Zarathushti Field Student program for WZC2000) and Dinshaw Joshi (Appeals coordinator and WZC2000 Awards committee), Dhunmai Dalal (facilitating the world body dialog), Rohinton Rivetna (spearheading formulation of world body) and Kaikhosrov Irani (ZAGNY and WZO).*

Spiritual Leaders at the UN headquarters in August. FEZANA is now recognized as a religious entity by the White House and receives notifications of world religious activity.

**Scholarship Fund.** Chair *Dolly Dastoor* advised that a report from the Ad Hoc Scholarship Fund Committee was distributed prior to the AGM. The fund balances as of December 31, are: Operating Fund (\$7,680), Endowment Fund (\$62,692) and Disbursement (\$2000) in January. The first two scholarships, of \$1000 each, were awarded to two students for the academic year 1999-2000. Terms of Reference for the Scholarship Fund were presented at the 1999 AGM. Comments received were incorporated in the final draft mailed with the report. After a reassurance that only the interest from the Endowment Fund will be utilized for disbursements, the Terms of Reference were unanimously approved.

Since the Ad Hoc Committee had completed its assignment it can now be disbanded. President Framroz Patel stated that as per FEZANA Constitution, he would now appoint a new Standing Committee chair and trustees for the Scholarship Fund.

Committee chairs for **History, Public Relations, Restoration of Pahlavi Manuscripts, Small Groups and Sports** were not present.

Their reports had been distributed prior to the AGM.

#### WORLD BODY

At the 1999 FEZANA AGM Rohinton Rivetna, Firdosh Mehta and Mehran Khadivi were mandated to continue the dialog with WZO and convene a meeting of the Regions. A detailed report on the Meeting in Mumbai in January and the subsequent modifications of the WZO Articles (April 2000 draft) were distributed to members prior to the AGM.

At the AGM, Rohinton Rivetna presented a paper on "Converging Towards Our One World Body". He pointed out areas of convergence with the Restructured WZO (all parties - WZO and the Regions - by and large accept the "Council of Federations" component of WZO); and gave a detailed critique of areas in the WZO charter, where work is still needed. He proposed the following immediate steps: (1) The Council of Federations defined within WZO start functioning immediately; and (2) Regional Representatives sit down at a common table with WZO and work on converging its charter towards a viable and robust structure. K. D. Irani made a presentation on behalf of WZO and urged FEZANA to accept the new charter. K. Jungalwala read a letter from WZO Presi-

dent Rumi Sethna encouraging FEZANA to join WZO. After all viewpoints were heard, the following motion was passed by a vote of 27 Yes and 14 No.

"The Members give the FEZANA Executive the directive to negotiate directly with WZO in accordance with Option C which states: 'Accept the April 2000 draft of the WZO Charter and proceed to join WZO's Council of Federations *after* further modifications, as required by FEZANA Member Associations and other world Regions, are incorporated into it.'"

Members further recommended that the meeting of the Regional Representatives be arranged by August and the new world body be organized before the Congress in December.

#### CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS

**Constitution Committee** chair *Firdosh Mehta* advised that a report-cum-request for ballots was distributed prior to the AGM. Discussion highlights are given below. Members approved separating the Operating Procedures from the Constitution into By Laws with a proviso that the draft document be sent to Member Associations six months prior to the next AGM. After discussion, the following addition of Section 4 to Article V - Government, was approved (24 Yes, 7 No, 14 abstentions):

"Each nominee for the office of any of the 5 officers of the Federation shall affirm in writing in the nomination papers that the nominee subscribes to the principles as stated in the preamble and shall be bound by the Constitution of the Federation."

Some rearranging in articles were unanimously approved. Also approved unanimously were items relating to: clarification of language for Quorum; Residence status of the nominees for election; and clarifying the language under Voting Schedule.

Recommendation of the new scale for Qualifying Votes and the corresponding Fee Schedule generated a lot of discussion. In the interest of time, Members were advised to send in their proposal to the Constitution Committee by August 31. Addition of an item regarding a paid Administrative Officer was also not discussed due to time constraints.

#### **NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL**

Framroze Patel advised Members that both the Moberd Councils – the North American Moberd Council (NAMC) as well as the Council of Iranian Moberds of North America (CIMNA) were invited to the AGM. On behalf of NAMC, Kobad Zarolia advised that NAMC had now defined a Zarathushti

as: "A person who believes and follows the teachings of Zarathushtra." It is recognized that Zoroastrianism is a Universal religion.

As regards the Census for Moberds, Kobad advised that there were over 100 Moberds in North America. As for Proxy Voting at NAMC, Kobad advised that no decision had been taken yet.

#### **CANADIAN CHAPTER**

Firdosh Mehta advised that the main purpose for forming a Canadian Chapter of FEZANA would be to enable Canadian donors to obtain tax benefits for donations to FEZANA, which at present is registered only in the US. The FEZANA Constitution does require FEZANA to have an office in Canada. Rustom Kevala stated that registration in Canada would also allow FEZANA to open a Canadian dollar account to accept Canadian checks without incurring currency transaction costs. This account can be used for Canadian expenses. Canadians will also be able to pay for their FEZANA Journal subscriptions in Canadian dollars instead of having to purchase US dollar money orders. Since some modifications may be forthcoming in the Canadian Laws, this matter was deferred.

#### **INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

Kobad Zarolia had submitted a resolution that it was inappropriate for individuals to bring their concerns directly to the FEZANA AGM, thus bypassing their associations. The President advised that past precedent has been that any speaker recognized by the Chair is allowed to speak. It was agreed that in future, a more structured agenda should be planned and a special time slot scheduled for individual speakers.

#### **YOUTH CONGRESSES**

It was suggested to ZYNA that once a youth congress is allotted to a specific association, the youth of that host association should be allowed to work on the congress. The ZYNA representatives Armaity Bamji and Sherazade Mehta advised that ZYNA wants all the youth to be involved. To a question regarding the age limit of "youth", the ZYNA representatives advised that for the congress the age range is 14 to 35 years and for cruises and other travels, the age range is 18 to 35.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Mediation Committee for World Body.** Khorshed Jungalwalla, ZAGBA, stated that even though the

*From left, Roshan Sethna (ZAH and WZC2000 Operations co-chair) and Homi Davier (WZC2000 co-chair), Dolly Dastoor (WZC2000 co-chair) and Firdosh Mehta (FEZANA VP and coordinator of Time Capsule project) with the time capsule, Sarosh Collector and Yasmin Ghadialy (holding the WZC2000 purse strings) and Aban Rustomji and Magdalena Rustomji (WZC2000 Public Relations).*



motion had been passed to give directive to the FEZANA Executive to negotiate directly with WZO, a mediation committee should be established and the FEZANA Executive should take its help in the negotiation process. If the committee were not successful by November, then the next step would be arbitration. Framroze stated that according to the Constitution, the President has the power to appoint ad hoc committees, and he will follow that procedure.

**Principle of inclusion at the WZC2000.** On behalf of Meher Amalsad, Farrokh Mistree gave a slide presentation on the "Principle of Inclusion" enshrined in the FEZANA Constitution as well as in the Operating Guidelines for the World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Houston in December 2000. Expression of all different viewpoints should be allowed at the Congress.

#### PARADISE AWARD

From the funds received through the sale of the video PARADISE, the PARADISE Award is offered by FEZANA to: "a creative and innovative individual or group that has contributed most in spreading the message of Asho Zarathushtra in North America in an artistic and educational way, thus speeding the creation of PARADISE." This is the first year that the award was offered. Two videotaped entries were

received: *The Circle of Four* by Mandana Edalati, Nooshin Kiani, Mehrbanoo Poulad-Noshirvan and Shervin Shahriari; and *The Dawn of Consciousness* by The Mazdayasnie Connection. Three independent judges – Dr. Daryoush Jahanian, Dr. Lovji Cama and Ms. Sherazade Mehta adjudged *The Circle of Four* to be the winner. ZSBC President Bella Tata accepted the award of \$500.00 on behalf of the winners.

*The Circle of Four* may be purchased by emailing circle\_of\_4@yahoo.ie. *The Dawn of Consciousness* is available from Mazdayasnie Connection, 9528 Walker St #5, Cypress, CA 90630, tel: 714-996-8765.

#### CRESTONE LAND GRANT

*Rustom Kevala* advised that environmental restrictions would require that almost 30 of the 35 acres of mountainous land offered by the Manitou Foundation in Colorado will need to be left essentially undisturbed, except for walking and hiking trails. The cleared areas will still be quite adequate for the construction of meeting and summer retreat facilities at a future time. The Foundation has also agreed to give FEZANA additional land in the city of Crestone, which can be used for building year-round facilities. Rustom is going ahead with the application. No financial commitment is required from FEZANA at this time. There are no taxes on the 35 acres in the mountain,

but there may be some costs for utilities on the town property.

#### WORLD CONGRESS 2000

The report for the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC2000) began with an audio-visual presentation by Public Relations chair *Aban Rustomji*, giving a dramatic update on events planned for the Congress. A folder containing separate reports from Committee Chairs including a program summary was distributed. Some highlights are given below.

**Awards:** *Dinshaw Joshi* reported that 79 nominations for the five awards categories and 42 entries for trophy design have been received from all over the world. The funds required for the awards have already been raised separately.

**Entertainment:** A full program is being planned for dinner events and special afternoon programs.

**Fund Raising:** Chair *Yasmin Ghadiali* said that follow-up letters are being mailed. There is still a large shortfall in funds needed for several programs such as the Zarathushti Field Student project, sports and conference services. Businesses should support the Congress through advertisements in the souvenir brochure. Co-chair Homi Davier requested all delegates to remind their members to donate for the Congress and for each association to bring in at least 5 advertisements.

Treasurer *Sarosh Collector* advised that considering the registration fee



is subsidized, the shortfall in budget is substantial. He thanked FEZANA for donating \$500 towards the Time Capsule Project and \$500 towards the documentary of the Iran Trip by Tenaz Dubash.

**International Arrangements.** *Rohinton Rivetna* advised that he has made contacts with the Religious Coordinator at the White House and the Iran Desk at the State Department to facilitate the visa process. The latter will send an announcement to all US consulates about the Congress. Lists of visa applicants are being prepared giving compelling reasons why each applicant would not stay back in the US. Efforts are being coordinated with Dr. Mahyar Ardeshiri (Iran), Toxy Cowasji (Pakistan) and Homai Mody and Sheroo Master (India).

**Operations** co-chairs *Roshan Sethna* and *Pervin Sagar* advised that the J.W. Marriott hotel has been sold out from December 22 through January 6. They are finalizing arrangements with two other hotels, Westin Galleria and West Loop Marriott.

**Program:** *Sarosh Manekshaw* explained the concept of the plenary and concurrent sessions. Each track has a plenary session on one day. Due to time constraints, no separate plenary has been scheduled for the Youth Track. However, each plenary session will have youth participation.

**Public Relations** chair *Aban Rustomji*, thanked her committee for all their efforts and particularly for help with the brochure and registration booklet. The monthly newsletter *Congress Calls* has been a success.

**Registration** co-chairs, *Rustom Engineer* and *Darioush Vafadari* advised that to date 700 registrations were received. [As of July 10, over 1700 persons have registered for the Congress].

**Sports** chair *Rustom Khosravian*, gave a slide presentation of the activities that will be taking place during the two days of the Zarathushti Games, December 26 and 27. As of that date, only 44 Sports registrations had been received, but it is expected that many from overseas are still waiting to register. The Games will begin with the lighting of the torch

and an Olympic style ceremony. There are five events – Volleyball, Basketball, Track and Field, Swimming and Table Tennis. Participants will be bussed from J.W. Marriott to the location. Rustom thanked Bijan Khosraviani and his colleagues of the FEZANA Sports committee (ZSC) for all the help they have given. FEZANA had pledged \$2500 towards the Games.

#### **WZC2000 SPECIAL PROJECTS**

**Time Capsule.** *Firdosh Mehta* advised that he has started receiving material. He will put in the Capsule as many artifacts, books and other Zarathushti material as he can. Whatever is left over will be donated to a Zarathushti anjuman library.

**Zarathushti Field Students.** *Purvez Rustomji* advised that the response was overwhelming. Four independent judges were appointed and a selection has been made. Applications from Iran are taking longer as essays were in Farsi and the applications had to be sent to Iran. As of date \$22,400 have been collected which, at the rate of \$2,000 per student is sufficient for only 11 students. He appealed to everyone to raise awareness among their associations to sponsor a student. Quebec pledged \$2,500.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

**Children.** There is no program for children under 13 years of age. The Committee is looking at arranging some activity for children between 5 and 13. The age range of youth is 13 to 29 years. It is recommended not to bring children under 5 to the Congress.

**Registration deadline.** Quebec proposed to extend the early bird registration deadline in view of the fact that they just learned about the alternate hotel accommodation arrange-

ments. The co-chairs took this suggestion under advisement.

#### **MOTION BY ZAMWI**

Framroze Patel advised that he had received a Request of Motion from ZAMWI president Mehran Khadivi. Dr. Mehran Sepehri of PZO read the motion on behalf of Mehran Khadivi, who was not present. It read: "I, Mehran Khadivi, President of ZAMWI, move to include Dr. Jafarey in the WZC2000 program as a speaker." Sd/- Mehran Khadivi 5/27/00.

This motion was seconded by Prof. K. D. Irani of ZAGNY. Once a motion is proposed and seconded, it is on the floor for discussion. A long and protracted discussion ensued, during which President Framroze Patel allowed all viewpoints to be heard. Finally, Ness Lakdawalla of Quebec proposed a motion to indefinitely postpone the ZAMWI motion. Kobad Zarolia of ZSO seconded this motion and it was carried by 29 Yes, 3 No and 5 abstentions.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

During the AGM, many individual members as well as non-members of FEZANA Member Associations were allowed to speak by the president, in order to give all concerned persons an opportunity to have their views heard.

The 13th FEZANA AGM concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair and the Parliamentarian, *Purvez Rustomji*. Framroze Patel thanked the host association, Zoroastrian Association of Houston for their excellent facilities and their gracious hospitality in arranging the various lunches, dinners and refreshments. He also thanked everyone present for their active participation. The meeting concluded with a benediction by Ervad Bomanshaw Sanjana. ■

**Visit the new and updated FEZANA website**

**<http://www.fezana.org>**

I am very pleased to announce that the FEZANA website has been revised and is now online. Our thanks to Dr. Rustom Kevala for his special efforts in bringing this about. The process of updating and incorporating changes and additions is ongoing. I invite comments and feedback for improvement pertaining to content, appearance and technical enhancements.

- Khorshed Jungalwala, tel: (978) 443-6858, email: [kayj@ziplink.net](mailto:kayj@ziplink.net)



**The Holy Days of Muktdad.** *The prayer room at the Arbab Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago is laden with silver vases full of flowers offered by community members in memory of their dear departed ones. This annual remembrance was celebrated by Zarathushtis at Darbe Mehrs and private homes throughout USA and Canada. Mobed Zarir Bhandara of Irvine, California opened his home for area residents and set up a Muktdad Table to facilitate offering of flowers. For ten days, from Shenshai Mah Spandarmad, Roz Ashtad (August 11) to Vahoishtoisht Gatha (August 20) and at midnight on the tenth day, he performed prayers and afringan jashan daily, followed by a communal humbandagi. The names of dear departed ones were recited and remembered.*

### **New York Darbe Mehr land search continues**

New York area Zarathushtis, working under the banner of "Zland, LLC" are still searching for a suitable land site for a new Darbe Mehr, of 3 acres or more for upto \$500,000 or an existing structure that has potential to accommodate 500 people with adequate parking, for a cost of upto \$2 million. A previous contract to acquire a parcel of land was canceled when it was determined that the land was partly in Federal wetlands.

### **Chicago Darbe Mehr expansion in progress**

Phase II of the Chicago Darbe Mehr expansion is well under way, with a 2,000 sq. foot extension to the Main Hall, which includes a 24 x 66 multi-purpose hall and expanded kitchen and washroom facilities. In Phase I, completed last year, Prayer Room facilities were upgraded and kushti rooms added. Volunteer services, provided by community members during all phases of planning, design and construction, have enabled this construction at an affordable cost.

## **NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI DIRECTORY - 3rd Edition**

The third edition of the Directory of Zarathushtis in North America is under preparation for distribution at the World Congress in Houston in December 2000. We would like to make this edition as accurate, complete and up-to-date as possible.

**We request all Zarathushtis in North America to fill in the "Directory Entry Form" and send it electronically or by mail before October 15, to:**

Dr. Noshir Langrana, 19 Brookfield Way, Robbinsville, NJ 08691  
Tel: 609-275-9154, Email: langrana@caip.rutgers.edu

**The "Directory Entry Form" is enclosed in this Journal and also available from the FEZANA Website at <http://www.fezana.org>**

The second edition was published by FEZANA in 1998. The directory includes 3,900 family entries (9,000 names and addresses), addresses of Zarathushti Centers and Darbe Mehrs and Yellow Pages of Zarathushti businesses. Copies of the Second Edition are still available for US\$2 each plus postage (\$1.75 postage in US and Canada).

**Please help us reach all North American Zarathushtis.** We are asking for your assistance in reaching those individuals/families with any change in their contact information and those individuals/families who are not included in the 1998 Directory. Please print and make copies of the form and distribute it to all Zarathushtis.

## Houston Center Phase II underway

The Houston community is completing Phase II of their Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center. It includes a beautiful covered atrium, a library and two offices. Full funds for Phase II were donated by Houstonians Shahnaz and Yazdi Sidhwa.

## ZANT amendment to entrance rule

Members of the Zoroastrian Association of North Texas have passed an amendment to the constitution of their future ZANT Center. At present Rule 4 reads:

“... Areas set aside for ritual procedures and prayers will be restricted to Zoroastrians ...”

The amendment reads:

“The entire community center, including areas set aside for prayers and ritual procedures, shall be open to all persons who show an interest in, and respect for the Zoroastrian religion, without exception, and regardless of initiation, sex or ethnicity.”

## Exhibition of Persian Art

In conjunction with the Third Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies, an exhibition of contemporary Persian Art was held at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, MD in May. Proceeds from the sale of art work will benefit Encyclopedia Iranica. Visit their website at [www.iranica.com](http://www.iranica.com).

## Religious Retreat

California based Mazdayasnie Connection organized the Tenth Zoroastrian Religious Retreat on “The Amesha Spentas” conducted by Ervad K. N. Dastoor, at Waterways, near Ottawa, Ontario, in July. Contact Silloo Mehta at (714) 995-8765.

## Pir-e Sabz in Vancouver

Close to 200 people gathered on a sunny day at Shannon Falls, BC on June 18 to commemorate the annual Pir-e Sabz pilgrimage of Iran. The program included mainly prayers, traditional songs, dance and games. *Aash* and *Sirog* were sold and all proceeds were for needy persons at Pir-e Sabz in Iran. Contact Feraydoon Demehri at [feridem@attcanada.ca](mailto:feridem@attcanada.ca).

## United Religions Summit in Pittsburgh

“If the religions of the world ever stop killing each other, it could be because of what happened today in Pittsburgh.” These words, broadcast by a San Francisco radio station on June 26, announced the birth of the United Religions Initiative. On that day, 55 years after the signing of the UN charter, 300 people in religious and cultural dress from 39 spiritual traditions from 44 countries gathered at the Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburgh to sign the URI charter, which begins:

“We, people of diverse religious, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world hereby

*establish the United Religions Initiative to promote enduring, daily inter-faith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence, and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.”*

Rohinton Rivetna, a founding member of URI was a signatory to the charter.

## Firdowsi at Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Institution in Wash-



ington is showcasing one of the classics of world literature - the Persian epic *Shah Nameh* or *Book of Kings*. The poem, finished in 1010, is nearly

60,000 verses long, and tells the history of the Iranian people from the creation of the world until the Muslim conquest in the seventh century. Firdowsi, according to the curator of the show, can be likened to “Shakespeare in England or Homer in Greece”. [From BBC news website].

## Dasturji Kotwal on Lecture-Research Tour

High Priest Dasturji Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal of Mumbai, is on a lecture-cum-research tour of Europe and America from June 22 to October 15. In the US, he will attend the UN Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders and visit Indiana University to update Dr.



## Summer Youth Camps

Left, children at the summer youth camp organized by the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago at the Darbe Mehr in July. A Religious Camp was also organized by the *Kankash-e Mobedan* in San Jose, California, at the *Rustam Guiv Dar-e Mehr*, August 17-20 for Zarathushti youth 11 years and up. The annual *Ivy F. Gandhi Young Zoroastrian Camp* was held in August at Camp Hoover, in northwestern New Jersey.

J.J. Modi's book, *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsis*, in collaboration with Prof. Jamsheed Choksy. On his way back to Mumbai, he will deliver lectures in the Ancient Indian and the Iran Trust founded by Prof. Sir Harold Bailey in Cambridge and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He will also visit Paris to talk to the Zoroastrian Association and Copenhagen to deliver an address at Carsten University.

For over three decades, Dasturji Kotwal has made a scientific study of the classical texts of the *Herbedestan* (Book of Advanced Priestly Studies) and *Nerangestan* (Book of Ritual Directions) transcribing and translating them into English, with notes, introduction and glossary of Avestan and Pahlavi words. In this gigantic undertaking, Dasturji Kotwal is collaborating with renowned scholar of Iranian languages and a noted philologist - Dr. Philip Kreyenbroek, of University of Gottingen, Germany.

They published Volume I of *Herbedestan* in 1992 and Volume II of the *Nerangestan* in Paris under the *Acta Iranica* series. Dasturji hopes to complete Volume III while in Chicago, and the last and fourth volume within a couple of years.

Please note his *new address* in Mumbai: Cusrow Baug, B-22, Shahid Bhagatsingh Road, Colaba, Mumbai 400001, tel: 202 1879 or 204 0075, [fmkotwal@hotmail.com](mailto:fmkotwal@hotmail.com). ■

## COMING ISSUES OF FEZANA JOURNAL

**Winter 2000: Honoring the Past, Contemplating the Present and Building for the Future.** Guest Editors: FEZANA Presidents Rohinton Rivetna, Dolly Dastoor and Framroze K. Patel

**Summer 2001: Highlights of World Congress 2000**

**Fall 2001: Zarathushtra's Vision and the Issue of our Times.** Guest Editor: Dina McIntyre

## COMING EVENTS

# Calendar of Festivals

### Fravardian Jashan

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin* Wed Aug 9 (K)  
Fri Sep 8 (S)

### Maidyozarem Gahambar

*Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed - Daepmeher*  
Thu Aug 31 - Mon Sep 4 (K)  
Sat Sep 30 - Wed Oct 4 (S)

### Paitishahem Gahambar

*Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad - Aneran*  
Tue Sep 12 - Sat Sep 16 (F)

### Jashne-Mehergan

*Mah Meher, Roz Meher* Mon Oct 2 (F)

### Ayathrem Gahambar

*Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad - Aneran*  
Thu Oct 12 - Mon Oct 16 (F)

### Jashne-Avangan (Avan Ardivisur Parab)

*Mah Avan, Roz Avan* Thu Oct 26 (F)

### Maidyoshem Gahambar

*Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed - Daepmeher*  
Mon Oct 30 - Fri Nov 3 (K)  
Wed Nov 29 - Sun Dec 3 (S)

### Jashne-Adargan

*Mah Adar, Roz Adar* Fri Nov 24 (F)

### Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra

*Mah Daye, Roz Khorshed* Tue Dec 26 (F)

### Maidhyarem Gahambar

*Mah Dae, Roz Meher - Bahram* Sun Dec 31 - Thu Jan 4 (F)

### Jashan-e-Daegan

*Mah Dae, Roz Daepdin* Sun Jan 7 (F)

### Jashan-e-Bahmangan

*Mah Bahman, Roz Bahman* Tue Jan 16 (F)

### Paitishahem Gahambar

*Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad - Aneran*  
Sat Jan 13 - Wed Jan 17 (K)  
Mon Feb 12 - Fri Feb 16 (S)

### Jashan-e-Sadeh

*Mah Bahman, Roz Meher* Tue Jan 30 (F)

### Ayathrem Gahambar

*Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad - Aneran*  
Mon Feb 12 - Fri Feb 16 (K)  
Wed Mar 14 - Sun Mar 18 (K)

(F)=Fasli, (K)=Kadmi, (S)=Shenshai

**Next North American Congress** will be hosted by Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, in Chicago in 2001. Watch for further details.

**Next Youth Congress** is not yet confirmed.



# WZC-2000 ATTENDEES WELCOME TO HOUSTON

DON'T MISS THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY  
TO VISIT PROPERTIES IN HOUSTON!

*Planning to retire or move to Houston?*

We are the fastest growing Zarathushti commu-  
nity in the U.S.A.

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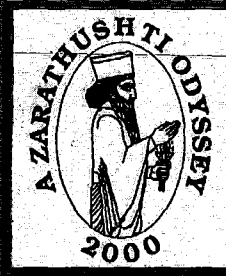
Cell: (832) 423-6973 ● Pager: (281) 287-8040

Home: (281) 568-9423 ● Email: [RonJAga@aol.com](mailto:RonJAga@aol.com)

The Michael Group

10303 N W Freeway, Ste. 101, Houston TX 77092





# WZC2000 CONGRESS CALLS

## SEVENTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS

Houston, Texas, December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001

## SEVENTH ZARATHUSHTI GAMES

Houston, Texas, December 26-27, 2000

For registration and information, visit [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) and [www.zah.org](http://www.zah.org)

WZC2000 Secretariat: Arnavaz Sethna, [ahsethna@yahoo.com](mailto:ahsethna@yahoo.com),

(281) 499-1832, Fax: (281)499-2697

**WZC2000 will be the largest gathering ever of Zarathushtis on this continent! For the first time, a Zarathushti world congress will be held outside our mother countries of Iran and India. North American Zarathushtis look forward to welcoming co-religionists from around the world, and are working to make this an 'event to remember' for all.**

**"The Meeting Point"**. These days people end their emails with "I'll see you at the Congress." But, with 2000 people there, *where and how will we find each other?* One way will be to meet at "The Meeting Point". It will be set up, along with a bulletin board for messages, in the vicinity of the Registration area.

**"Birds of a Feather."** An idea, floated by Toxy Cowasjee of Pakistan, is to have a pre-congress dinner, on December 27, for all Pakistani delegates (watch for further details). If other special interest groups, such as alumni of St. Xavier's College or VJTI, or groups from Iran, or Australia, or singles or ... are interested in getting together, please coordinate through your area representative [see next page]. Your activity will be announced in the Program Book if received by Oct 1.

**Traditional dress night.** December 28 is Zarathushti Heritage Night and all are asked to *wear traditional dress* – daglis, pagrees, kors, garas and traditional Iranian dress to this festive evening. The World Zarathushti Orchestra will perform then.

**A variety entertainment** program will be presented every day (except the 30th) from 2 to 5 pm, featuring Zarathushti talent – musicians, dancers, singers, a young magician, a 'human calculator' and much more.

**Hall of Fame.** Inductees to the Hall of Fame for Women (Daughters of Mashyani) will be announced at the Wings of Time luncheon on December 29th. Men and women are invited to this spectacular show.

**Chamber of Commerce.** Business persons, professionals, entrepreneurs and most importantly, the youth and 'would be' entrepreneurs, are invited to the launching of the Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, at the Business Luncheon on December 29th.

**Booths, stalls and wares.** Booths will be available for three days (December 28-30) for \$500 or \$200 for each day. Contact Ken Bhappu at (281) 859-6248, email: [kbhappu@yahoo.com](mailto:kbhappu@yahoo.com).

**Special projects.** For contacts and information about the Film and Video Festival, Book launchings, Book Fair, Photo Exhibit and Time Capsule, see FEZANA Journal, Spring 2000 or the WZC2000 website.

**Zarathushti Games.** Young and old are invited to participate and meet fellow Zarathushtis at the Seventh Zarathushti Games on December 26 and 27. Contact Rustom Khosravian at [rkhosravian@simsci.com](mailto:rkhosravian@simsci.com).

**Visas.** Contact your country's representative [see next page] for the latest update on visas. Special arrangements are being negotiated through contacts established at the White House and State Department and a visit with the US Consul in Istanbul.

**Registration.** All registrants will receive a confirmation letter. Bring it to the Registration desk, main floor of JW Marriot hotel – open on December 27, from 1:00 to 8 pm (possibly later), and again on December 28, from 8:00 a.m. onwards. Register early – a badge will be required to attend all events.



# WZC2000 CONGRESS CALLS

**Arrival and Departure:** Plan your arrival to allow sufficient time to register and be there in time for the Opening Ceremonies at 9:00 am on the 28th. On the last day, there will be a Grand Jashan at 11 am. Closing Ceremonies will end at 2:30 pm.

**Children.** It is not recommended to bring children under 5 to the Congress. We are looking into child care for children 5 to 13, but it may be off-site, and the Congress will not be liable for any unfortunate accidents.

**Medical Insurance.** All delegates are strongly advised to have adequate medical insurance to cover all unfortunate eventualities during their stay in the USA.

**Airports.** The two Houston airports, Bush International and Hobby, are both 40 minutes away from the JW Marriott Hotel, the venue of the Congress. Taxi fare for 4 passengers should be \$38.00 and Shuttle Coach fare is \$17.00 for each passenger.

**Shuttle Bus.** A complimentary shuttle bus will run at frequent intervals between the two Marriott hotels.

**What to wear.** Plan to dress in layers. Temperatures in Houston will range between a high of 65°F and a low of 42°F. For the evening affairs bring your glitzy outfits. And don't forget to bring traditional dress for Heritage Night on the 28th.

**Discover Houston.** Plan to explore the multi-faceted jewel that is Houston. The Historic District, Cultural Center, Uptown Market Place, and NASA are all part of our Bayou City's treasures. Information will be available at your hotel desk.

**Savvy Shopping.** The Congress venue is in the heart of the Galleria, the best-known shopping destination in Houston, with more than 330 retail stores and restaurants located under one roof.

#### **And, lest we forget ...**

● Please bring your old (but usable) *eyeglasses* to the Congress. Collect as many as you can from family and friends and bring them to Houston. They will be donated to agencies in India and Kenya.

● A blood test station will be set up for *bone marrow donor* matching. Please come prepared to give a small sample – you may help save a life.

● A noted geneticist, researching the high incidence of *breast cancer* among Parsi women, will be on hand. Come prepared to provide data and a blood sample for

this research. Contact Niloufer Clubwala (914) 294-2304. [Also see page 90].

**Zarathushti Field Student (ZFS) winners** have been announced. They will attend the Congress as guests of WZC2000. **From Iran:** Kambiz Mondegari - Tehran, Kaweh Behizadeh - Kerman, Shadmehr Demehri - Tehran, Sima Bina - Shiraz, Paymaneh Soroush Poor - Tehran, Fereshti Shagoshtasbi - Isfahan, Mehrnoosh Mehrabani - Tehran, Delalram Meherrostami - Yazd. **From India:** Farah Minoo Bala, Farah Sarosh Bharucha, Kaizad Rustom Deboo, Khushnooma Yazdi Italia, Dinaz Rusi Karkari, Ferzeen Jahanbux Lakdawalla, Ashdeen Lilaowala, Yazdin Jimmy Mistry, Meher Jimmy Mody, Faraidoon Nozer, Bakhtavar Kersi Pastakia, Binaifer Sarosh Patel, Benafsha Rohinton Shahlori, Benazir Purvez Tehrani, Tushna Vazifdar. **From Pakistan:** Narius Jehangir Shekdar, Spitman Roeinton Shroff, Kaizad Minoo Giara. From Australia: Farhad Naval Billimoria, Faraz Demehri.

... **and funding.** 80% of the amount needed for the ZFS project has been donated and pledged. Associations and individuals are urged to sponsor one student.

**WZC2000 needs your financial support.** Contact Yasmin Ghadialy at (516) 378-4516, ghad@aol.com.

● Participate generously in the "Ashaanam" program. We urge every family to donate \$200 for WZC2000.

● Advertise in the Program Book. Deadline October 1.

**A Big Thank You to Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao** for their continuing benevolence and generosity. They have sponsored 2 NFS students and donated two prizes (of \$5000 and \$3,000) for the Scholastic Competition.

#### **Country representatives.**

Iran: Dr. Mahyar Ardeshiri, tel: 98 21 635 905, firoozeh\_ar@yahoo.com

India: Homai N. Modi, tel: 91 22 287 6593 sk.master@alstom.sprintrpg

Pakistan: Toxy Cowasjee, tel: 92 21 586 7088 toxy@cyber.net.pk

U.K.: Dorab Mistry, tel: 0207 328 6018 godrej@globalnet.co.uk

Europe: Katayun Kapadia, Paris, 33 1 34 51 04 60 katayun@aol.com

Australasia: Sam Kerr, NSW, tel: 61 2 9398 4335 simica@ozemail.com.au ■

# Our Journey to Ancestral Iran

By Rashna Ghadialy (with Hooman Bastani, Sarosh Khambatta, Mehernosh Sodawatervala, Perry Unwalla and Aysha Ghadialy)



PHOTO: CYRUS RIVETNA

*A group of thirty-four mostly young and some young at heart, Zarathushtis [see photo above, at Persepolis] visited Iran this Spring. We were made acutely aware that we were in an Islamic country governed by orthodox elements. Our behavior was expected to be modest, reserved and humble. Women would have to abide by the rigid dress code of 'hejab' in all public places – and lo and behold we did.*

*Our journey initiated in the capital city of **Tehran**. We proceeded to Fars in the south, the center of the Persian Empire when it was ruled by the Achaemenian and Sasanian Dynasties to visit **Persepolis, Pasargarde and Naqsh-e Rustom**. Our fellow traveler, **Hooman Bustani** (of Nashua, New Hampshire) eloquently describes the stylistic ruins of the once glorious capitals of what was considered the First Great Empire on Earth:*

**H**ad one not seen pictures of Parsa (Persepolis) before, it would be an adventure in discovery. Even so, nothing can substitute

for this experience, a location that haunts the mind forever after. The Parsa carvings have striking grace and beauty. The giant men and beasts could easily have been imposing, yet they all have a mysteriously alluring elegance. Contrast this to nearby Sasanid reliefs, where all the characters are visually quite disturbing.

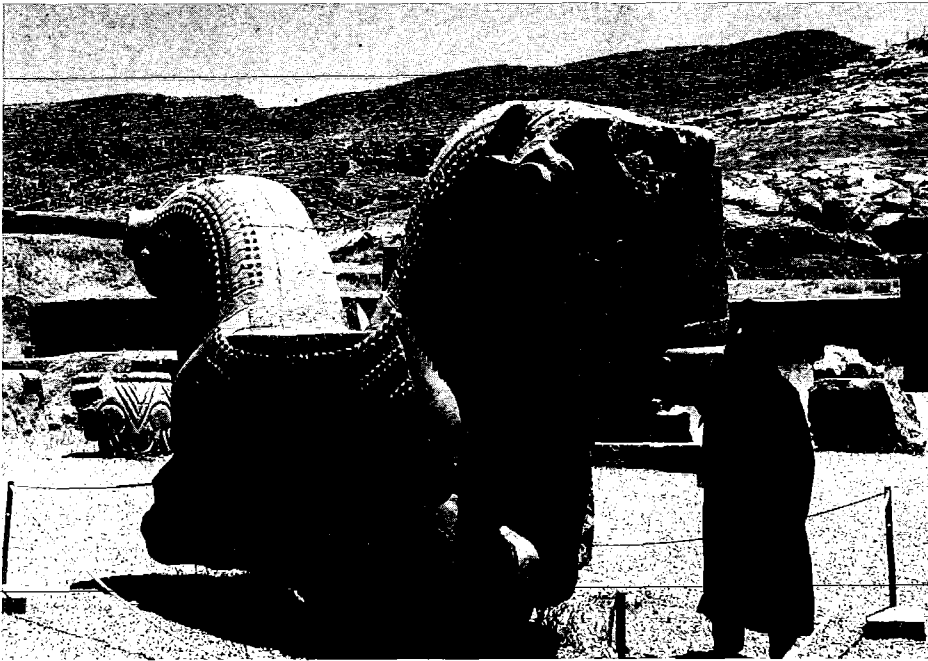
Most reliefs, along walls and stairways, show ceremonial proceedings – people from the various lands ruled by Darius and Xerxes, bringing gifts. Others depict daily life, such as a bearer with towel and perfume, in the baths area. A king slaying a lion or bull may have celebrated the hunt. The most impressive reliefs and sculptures were symbolic, to repel evil, or showing man battling nature, or good fighting evil. In one of these [photo next page] a man battles a beast with a bull's head, eagle's wings, and a scorpion's tail. This active engagement of evil, if only symbolic, contrasts with today's visiting of shrines, praying, and tying ribbons on trees so wishes will be granted. These images seemingly

suggest that God seeks humanity's help, not vice-versa.

The reliefs at Parsa portray mainly secular, not religious, scenes, although there are a few *fravahars*. There is an equal prominence of mythical beings from other cultures. There were no temples at Parsa, while the tomb areas each had an as yet unidentified building. If they were temples, then they were built and used very differently from those of today.

The Fravahars were always on a medium to small scale, with little relief, the ones at the tombs being almost invisible. This suggests a hierarchy of relief according to "spirituality". The greatest relief is necessarily that of the inanimate architecture, followed by beasts, humans, fravahars and finally, Ahura Mazda, depicted as (or implied by) a flat surface, or perhaps equivalently, not depicted at all.

Cyrus's tomb is striking in many ways. Influenced by Egypt's pyramids, it has steps on four sides, tapering to a simple sloped-roof hut [photo next page]. It is the only fully



*Clockwise, Doorway at Persepolis depicting man/king battling evil; Ushtavaity Davar beside a bull capital at Persepolis. These massive stone capitals adorned the tops of each column in the Apadana (Hall of a 100 Columns); Zarathushti schoolgirls in Yazd.*

intact building, no doubt due to stable construction, and the respect that Alexander and other leaders had for Cyrus. It bespeaks both greatness and modesty, especially considering the designers' familiarity with the great pyramids. It makes one wonder who Cyrus was, how he matured, what his values, beliefs, dreams, strengths and weaknesses were. Sadly, there are no documents to enlighten us, merely inscriptions:

*"I am Cyrus the King,  
an Achaemenid."*

Still, the carvings reveal that his was an all embracing empire, accepting and nourishing diversity, not seeking a single truth or ideal for all. Cyrus was ahead of his time, and would be so even today.

*We then turned to the eastern province of Kerman to visit the remains of Arg-e Bam. The latter is an ancient city from the times of the Parthian Dynasty (250 BCE - 227 CE) and had been inhabited for 2000 continuous years till 1850. The history of Persia is imprinted here. The transition from Zarathushti to Muslim dynasties, including foreign invasions by Afghans and Mongols, are well reflected in the architectural structures in the city of Bam.*

*Our next destination was the central province of Yazd, land of plentiful*

*legendary Zarathushti villages, Pirs (holy shrines) of the various daughters of the last Zarathushti Sasanian King Yazdegard III, decades (if not centuries) old atash gahs (fire temples), Cypress trees and dokhmas (towers of silence). Yazd appeared as a fairyland dotted with clay hut villages in the midst of a desert and barren hills. The Zarathushti women in Yazd were dressed colorfully in sharp contrast to the militant black chador worn by the Muslim women. In this fairyland, we spent a night in heaven under the stars on the hilltop of Pir-e Sabz. Zubin Khambatta (of Orland Park, Illinois) writes about our visit to the atash kadeh:*

**I** learned that Yazd is one of the oldest cities in the world, with a population of around 830,000. At 7:15 we arrive at a remote clay village. The Atash Bahram is here. I'm inside a room with a divo in the center. Directly in front of me is a closed, aged wooden door, with a huge steel padlock. The caretaker arrives with his bunch of keys and opens the door and I hear a hollow "Whoosh!" I can see and smell the smoke but all is dark inside. The caretaker gently moves the ashes aside, revealing a reddish, almost pulsating, glow – the glow of our oldest fire. It is a humble, silent fire



without any flame – only a warm, radiant glow. Many of us donate some money to the “keeper of the flame”. He prepared little bags of ash for us to take home.

This is the village of **Zainabad**. The oldest fire of the Zarathushti faith is here. Later, on the bus, I learned that the fire is at least 1500 years old. It was started around 400 CE from a flame that “jumped” from tree to tree until it was captured by a dastoor. There is no dastoor for the Zainabad fire temple now, only a caretaker to keep the fire burning continuously.

*Our last destination was the scenic city of Isfahan. Mehernosh Sodawaterwala (of Houston, Texas) shares with us his good fortune of celebrating his birthday here:*

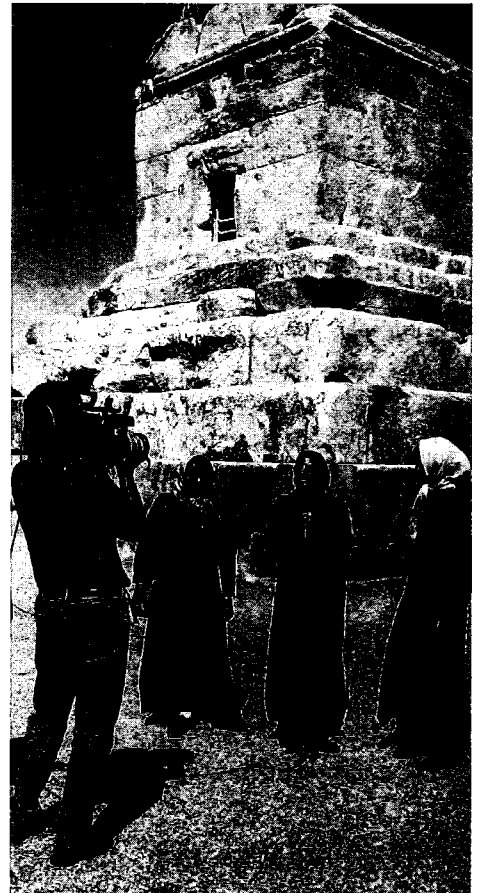
**I**sfahan is by far the prettiest city we saw in Iran and gives credibility to the 16th century phrase “Esfahan, Nisf-e-Jahan” (half the world). An evening at the local bazaar was what most of us wanted. Our hotel was on the banks of the Zayande River and the room that I shared with Eric (I wish it was with someone prettier) overlooked the *Si O Se Pol* (Bridge of 33 arches) a pedestrian bridge with *chaikhanas* (teahouses) underneath. After dinner we headed to one of them. This was the time for

the people in our group to try the ‘hookah’ (a tobacco pipe with a long flexible tube, set over a tall jar of water), a common source of entertainment in the country. That is how I brought in my birthday.

The next day yet another visit to the agiary, a Tandarosti prayer rendered by the local priest, four different Happy Birthday recitals and a beautiful card with some touching comments, made my special day complete and one I shall never forget.

*We finally returned to Tehran through Khomeini’s hometown of Qum which produces the most delicious and well-known sweet – Sohan Halwa. On our last day of the tour, we visited the Alburz Mountains near Tehran to view Mount Demavand. Perry Unwalla (of St. Augustine, Florida) shares the miracle of our prayers on this ancient mountain in our ancestral land:*

**A**mong the sites we visited, one of my favorite was **Mt. Demavand**. We started at the base and walked up through the beautiful, lush green hillsides. All along the base were beautiful wild bright red poppy flowers. Unfortunately, on this day, the mountain peak was obscured by cloud cover. One of the guys in the group and I decided to take a steeper path up the mountain hoping to get a better view of Demavand. Though our hike was steeper,



*Clockwise, Shanaya Deboo at the Parthian (250 BCE) city of Arg-e Bam; at the tomb of Cyrus the Great (d. 530 BCE), filming the documentary “In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers” produced by Tenaz Dubash (left). The film will premiere at the World Congress in December.*

the view was incredible. It was majestic, with small snow lines at the top even in the month of June.

We watched the others about 500 feet below us. We watched them form a circle and pray two *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* and one *Ashem Vohu*. We did the same. To our amazement, at that precise moment, the clouds at the top parted and you could clearly see the entire mountain. For maybe 60 seconds the entire mountainside was clear of clouds. And then they returned. It was amazing how it happened right after our prayers and only for a glimpse.

*Throughout our tour I wondered what our Parsi and later Iranian ancestors must have endured during their forced migration from their homes in Iran, to Gujarat.*

*Looking back, was it the right decision to leave?*

*In conclusion, Aysha Ghadi-ali (of New York) shares her feelings on visiting our ancestral land:*

Iran is absolutely a mystical experience for any Zarathushti since it tells a story of a people who have lived so long, suffered so much, accomplished great feats, and are now looking for new means of survival under an Islamic Republic.

The Zarathushti heritage sites are not protected in Iran, and many Zarathushtis face discrimination in their daily lives. This is the modern day Zarathushti Din in Iran.



*Tour members sponsored and participated in the Sedreh Pushi ceremony of two children in Hassanabad, near Yazd, performed by two mobeds from Yazd. The third mobed, on the right, is Perry Unwalla.*

While its glorious history inspired all of us, I found our trip to be a hollow experience without recognition of the present state. One tour guide greeted us with: "Welcome home, this is your home."

It seemed such a foreign concept that an American-born and raised daughter of Parsis, wearing the scarf and covering of an Islamic Republic, would ever

feel at home in this land. However, many of us were struck by how peaceful we felt at the holy Zarathushti sites of this very different country.

It became clear to me how special and sacred these sites are to explain and understand the history of our people.

In the end, I have arrived at the conclusion that India was the home of my parents, the United States will forever be my home, but Iran is what we share. All Zarathushtis share Iran, and I pray that one day I can experience it again with my family. ■

*[Photos by Cyrus Rivetna.]*



**Rashna Ghadi-ali** is a survey methodologist for the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and an active Board Member of Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC).

## **"By Way of Zarathushtra 2000" - tour of Zarathushti archeological sites in Russia**

Pavel Globa and the Permskaya Avestiyskaya School of Astrology [see page 25] arrange tours of "4000 years of history of our ancestors to ancient Aryan places in Ariyana Vaeja, the Belaya mountain where Zarathushtra was born." A recent tour in July was along "the golden ring of the Aryans" starting from the city of Perm, via the Mountain of Zarathushtra, Belogorskiy Svyatonikolaevskiy Monastery (Russian Afon), Kungurskaya Ice Cave, Bashkortostan, Slatoust, Miass, the Lake of Turgoyak, the Lake of Vera, Ilimenskiy mineralogical museum, Arkaim ("Vara of Yima" or City of Jamshid, excavated in the Urals a few years ago, dating from 5000 to 2000 BCE), Chelyabinsk, Polevskoy and Ekaterinburg. See website at perm-asha.chat.ru or email Perm-asha@mail.ru.



## Thousand years of separation

By Cyrus Rivetna  
Hinsdale, Illinois

**A** few weeks ago, I attended a navjote at our Chicago Darbe Mehr. The mother and father were typical Parsis and it was in every way a typical Darbe Mehr navjote, however, on that day a funny thing happened to me.

During the ceremony while the little boy was taking a sip of apple juice which was apparently purifying his soul, I had a flashback. Suddenly I was back in Hassanabad. Hassanabad is a tiny, old village with dirt roads and adobe houses. It's near Yazd in Iran and Zarathushtis have lived there for the past hundreds if not thousands of years. In Hassanabad, our tour group (of mostly North American) Zarathushti youth, had the opportunity to participate in an Iranian sedreh pushi (navjote) ceremony of a young boy and girl. So, my body was in the cool air-conditioning of our Chicago Darbe Mehr, but my mind was sweating in a hot Iranian village, that by American standards would be classified as "the middle of nowhere."

The 34 of us were joined by about 60 of the local Hassanabad Zarathushtis in the all-day celebration. I remember having an odd combination of feelings that day. I was uncomfortable, but at the same time felt very safe. Uncomfortable because everything was so foreign. The language, food, music, dancing, and even our physical characteristics were different. The only thing recognizable was the ceremony itself, and even that, although similar in meaning, had differences in content.

I suppose 1000 years of separation, along with Parsis mixing with the Indian culture and Iranian Zarathushtis living amongst the Muslim

culture, had generated two different cultures, each with their own traditions. I realized that my connection to these foreign people, and the reason I felt so safe in an unfamiliar environment, was our common religion. Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo, good thoughts, good words, good deeds ... and all that stuff.

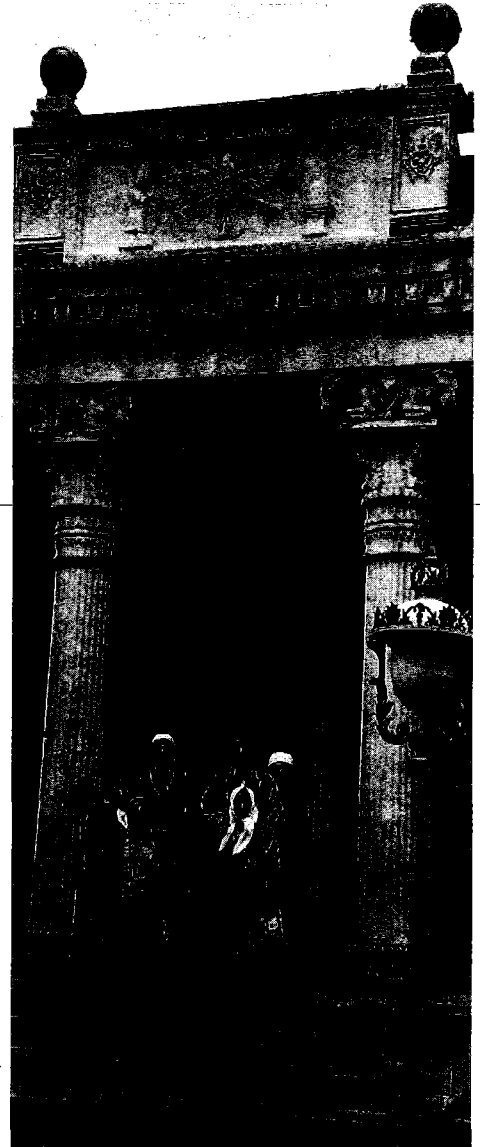
For a moment then, my mind flashed back to my cousin's navjote in Mumbai's Colaba Agiary – a glitzy affair, with lights, flowers, a loud band and guests in fine saris laden with jewelry, who arrived after the ceremony was over and left immediately following the big dinner.

The chatter of my fellow Zarathushtis snapped my mind back to Chicago just as the dastoorji was tying the kushti around the waist of the new initiate.

I was glad to be back in the comfort of Chicago, wearing my uncomfortable suit. Dinner that evening was a combination of Parsi and Chinese food for the adults and pizza for the kids. After dinner, we danced to the loud DJ music (except for the few young women who thought it would be fun to wear a sari for the evening, and found it difficult to dance).

On my way home that evening I was thinking about the different cultures of our religion. Maybe one reason why we have survived for so long is our ability to adapt to our environs. When our ancestors migrated from Iran to India, they obviously changed and adapted to their new surroundings. After a thousand years of separation, Iranian and Parsi Zarathushtis are now coming together in America, in yet another, new environment – an interesting situation, indeed. ■

## AROUND THE WORLD



### Mazdayasnie Connection tour to Iran

Silloo Mehta of California-based Mazdayasnie Connection led a group [shown above on the steps of the Bhi-cajee Behram Dadgah in Tehran] on a pilgrimage-cum-historical tour of Iran. Group member Pesi Shroff writes: Moving through the passage of history in the ancient land of our ancestors was so moving and uplifting for all of us ... there is a strange spiritual energy in Iran which keeps you going and wanting to see and visit more and more ..."

The next Mazdayasnie Connection tour to Iran will be November 3-25, 2000. Contact Silloo Mehta at (714) 995-8765. [See ad page 37]

## It was Magic ... In the land of the Magi

I went to Iran a pilgrim, I came back delirious with joy and enchanted by my experiences there. To those contemplating a trip to our ancestral land, I can only say that the dictionary doesn't have enough words to describe this experience.

At the Achaemenian monuments, with Khojeste's reading of Darius' inscriptions, your spirit soared with joyous pride. The constant refrain, "By the grace of Ahura Mazda ...", the common proclamation, "I am Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan lineage", the humility and pride! Of such stuff were our ancestors made. Before fires that predate Iranshah by over a millennium and a half, I prayed as I have never prayed before, I sobbed as I have never sobbed before. "Dear God, let my people realize this, our rich heritage and the blessings bestowed upon us by our birth, within this fold."

And I asked, "Why dear God, why? Why did we lose it all?" History has the answers for my mind, but my soul still begs. "Why? Why? Why?"

- By Shirin J. Mistry

[From an account of a tour of Iran with Khojeste Mistry. The full article is available from [naushadmistry@hotmail.com](mailto:naushadmistry@hotmail.com)]

## WZO Honors 14 Zarathushtis 20th anniversary celebrations

**A**s part of its 20th anniversary celebrations, WZO honored 14 Zarathushtis from around the world for their "signal and sterling contributions in his/her own unique way, quietly and without fanfare, to the community and WZO." Awards were presented at a Grand Ball at the St. James' Palace Hotel in London on May 13 by Chief Guest and scholar Prof. Stanley Insler of Yale University, to the following:

**From India:** Dadi Engineer, for chairing and guiding WZO-India. Dinshaw Tamboly, for obtaining funding and successfully implementing WZO's welfare activities in India. Jehan Daruwalla, for his pioneering efforts in journalism in India, and support for WZO's work. The Late Davar Kavasji Modi, for implementing WZO's welfare work in the villages of Mandvi and Mangrol. Piroj Panthaky and Farrokh Kasad, for services to the Gujarat Farmer's upliftment project.

**From USA:** Farhang Mehr, for giving community impetus to the ultimate creation of WZO as its world body, his deep scholarship and maintenance of community unity.

**Adi Davar,** for pioneering institutional reforms in WZO's structure/

management and sustained efforts for community solidarity. **Keki Bhote,** for munificently contributing to the community's various social amelioration needs and creating a WZO trust fund to help meet such needs in the USA.

**From Canada:** (Late) Mehraban Farhangi and Goli Farhangi, for endowing the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund dedicated solely to funding all WZO's multi-faceted activities.

**From UK:** Shirinbanoo Kutar, for chairing WZO for the first 10 years. Shahpur Captain, for institutionalising a strong and well-managed WZO and laying a sound financial basis for its worldwide operations. Noshirwan Cowasjee, for conceiving and single-handedly raising resources for WZO's Medical Benevolent Fund.

Earlier, in May, in the first of the series of celebratory events planned by WZO to mark its 20th anniversary, Professor Stanley Insler delivered the "20th Anniversary Lectures" to an enraptured capacity audience. Sessions were chaired by Professor Kaikhosrov Irani and Dina McIntyre of USA, and Shahin Bekhradnia and Farrokh Vajifdar of UK. ■

### Getting ready for Houston

Dr. Mahyar Ardeshiri, Dastoor Jehangir Oshidari and Firoozeh Ardeshiri (3 in center) meet Youth Iran Tour members at the Tehran Anjuman premises, where a special office and staff have been set up to process applications from Iranian delegates to the World Congress in Houston. Over 325 have registered and awaiting visas.







Above, Russian Zarathushti delegates at the St. Petersburg Congress, from left, Globa Pavlovich (chair), Chistyakov Mikhail, junior dean of the community, Ms. Sokolona Nikolavna, editor of the Zarathushti journal "Mithra", Burzin Atashband (with glasses) and other members of the Russian Zarathushti community. Below, Chistyakov Mikhail investing a new initiate with a sudreh and kushti, home made of three colors – yellow, blue and red. [Photos: B. Atashband].

## Zarathushtis in Russia hold first Congress

By Burzin Atashband  
Moscow, Russia

The First Zoroastrian Congress of CIS countries (Commonwealth of Independent States, formally USSR) was held in St. Petersburg on May 28. About 100 delegates of Avesta school of Astrology came from Moscow, Minsk, Kiev, Paskov, Novgorod, Zaporozhye, Poltava and Perm. The guests of honor, from India, were Er. Burzin and Renaz Atashband and Mrs. Ruby Irani, who were the first practicing Zarathushtis the Russians had met.

The Congress opened with Avesta prayers recited by Chistyakov Mikhail. A candle was lit and pictures of Asho Farohar, Tir Yazad and an astrological chart were displayed. It aims to bring together all the CIS Zoroastrian Groups, to make others aware of the religion and to spread the knowledge of Zarathushtra in this new millennium.

All the lectures were delivered in Russian language. Opening speaker and chair **Globa Pavel Pavlovich** (*Zervansim – innermost doctrine of Zoroastrianism*) spoke on the concept of eternal time, i.e. Zervan is the ultimate truth, which is full of knowledge and was incorporated by Zarathushtra into the holy Avesta. He believes that the Zarathushti religion

started in Russia in the Ural Mountains, and will again be revived into its full glory. **Chistyakov Mikhail** (*Zoroastrianism in Russia*) said that to be a Zoroastrian who wears the divine sudreh and kushti, is to be a soldier and fight evil. Activity to spread Zoroastrianism started in St. Petersburg in 1994. He is authorized by Pavlovich to perform initiations.



**Lushnikov Oleg** of Perm (*Ancient Aryan Places in the Urals*) distributed white stones "from the Var of Jamshid and the birthplace of Zarathushtra" in the Urals. He conducts tours of these ancient sites [see page 22].

**Burzin Atashband**, spoke on the Salient Features of Zoroastrianism.

The delegates discussed their commitment to form a strong group of believers. They require funds, books, sudreh-kushtis, afargan and are anxious to contact other Zarathushtis. [Mr. Atashband is at burzin@caravan.ru]



*Left, Durban Zarathushtis gather for a talk by Rohinton Rivetna and a jashan by Dr. Kersey Antia, at the beautiful home of Maneck [center] and Suzanne [in white scarf] Randeria. Above, at the Randeria family's United Shipping business office: l. to r. brothers Adi, Maneck (Mac) and Dara Randeria, and son Naval [standing center]. When founded by grandfather Randeria in 1931, United Shipping was the first Indian-owned clearing and forwarding agency in the country. The family now brings modern, efficient practices into the business, while maintaining their deep-seated traditions and loyalties of the past.*

# Interlude in South Africa

**A profile of the small Zarathushti communities in Gauteng Province (Johannesburg), Kwa-zulu Natal (Durban) and Cape Province (Capetown)**

**By Roshan Rivetna**

*Following the Parliament of World's Religions in Capetown, in December 1999 [FEZANA Journal, Spring 2000] Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna and Dastoor Kersey Antia and Dilshad visited the Zarathushti communities in Durban and Johannesburg, with the view to establishing contact with Zarathushtis in that far-flung corner, and bring them into the fold of the world-wide Zarathushti community. Dr. Dhalla and Ervad Parvez Bajan of Mumbai, also visited Johannesburg, where the latter performed a jashan.*

**D**windled down now to less than 80 individuals (about 36 in Durban, 36 in Johannesburg and 4 in Capetown) from a high of 250 in the 1920s, the Zarathushti community in South Africa nevertheless still produces its stars.

**On the political scene.** Worthy of note, of course, is **Dr. Frene Ginwala** [photo next page], Honorable Speaker in the new democratically elected National Assembly in South Africa and the first woman Speaker ever in the South African Parliament. The 68-year-old, silver-haired Ginwala, who has scrapped the tradi-

tional wig and formal robes of her office in favor of the sari, manages and presides over the Parliament, with a fair and firm hand.

Long time on the political scene, she is well-respected and a by-word among the local people of South Africa. During the week we were in Capetown, Ginwala's photo and interviews were featured several times, in the Cape Town newspapers. Even the taxi-driver asked if we knew "Frene Ginwala, the Indian lady in a sari at Parliament House".

A strong political activist in the African liberation movement, Ginwala

was in exile for 3 decades, in Tanganyika in the 1960s, in Mozambique and later in England, helping Nelson Mandela shape the African National Congress. She returned to South Africa when Mandela was released from jail, in 1990, as part of the ANC delegation for talks at Kempton Park, Johannesburg, with the Apartheid government. This eventually led, in 1994, to the election of Nelson Mandela as President and Ginwala as Speaker in South Africa's first democratically elected Parliament.

No less illustrious, is Frene's sister, **Dr. Khorshed Ginwala**, who was appointed democratic South Africa's first ambassador to Italy in 1994. Prior to the appointment, Khorshed served as medical superintendent of a large hospital in Durban and headed the Durban Child Welfare Society. Khorshed's son, **Zaver Rustomjee** is Director-General of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Also prominent on the scene in South Africa is **Phiroshaw Camay**,



[below] founder and director of the Co-operative for Research and Education in Johannesburg. An activist, adult educator, facilitator, trade

union negotiator and mediator, he has worked vigorously to strengthen the new democracy. In the 1980s he fought vigorously against apartheid, for which he was imprisoned twice. As Chair of the Johannesburg Peace Committee, Phiroshaw dealt with severe inter-party rivalry and community violence, often at the risk of his life. In 1994, he was appointed to

the Independent Electoral Commission that orchestrated South Africa's first democratic elections. Today, the strengthening of South Africa's civil society continues to be his major pre-occupation.

**About Apartheid.** South Africa today still bears the scars of 'apartheid' (the Afrikaner word for 'apart' - segregation of facilities and rights). Apartheid was introduced in Johannesburg in 1948 when residents were separated by color and creed. All blacks and 'colored' (of mixed race) were moved to "townships" to live in poverty in crudely built shanties. The Indian population lives mostly in modest homes in the area known as Lenasia, on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

A monument in the township of Soweto tells the story of the fight for freedom in the face of prejudice, racism, repression and humiliation; of racial riots from the 1960s to 1980s, notably the Sharpesville Massacre in which 69 African stu-

dents, were gunned down by the white police. In Soweto is the house of Nelson Mandela, who was jailed by the white National Party from 1964-1990, for leading the struggle against apartheid. In Soweto also is the house of black Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, now in Atlanta, USA. Winnie Mandela still lives in Soweto, in a brick house with a high security fence all around. We happened to meet her as she, along with her 3 bodyguards, stepped out from her car on the streets of Soweto.

In the Apartheid regime, some affluent Parsees were offered the "white" classification, but most preferred to remain "Indian", and suffered the ignominies such as living in segregated housing, not being allowed to eat in restaurants, travel restrictions (special passes were required to travel even between Johannesburg and Durban) and ban on immigration of brides.

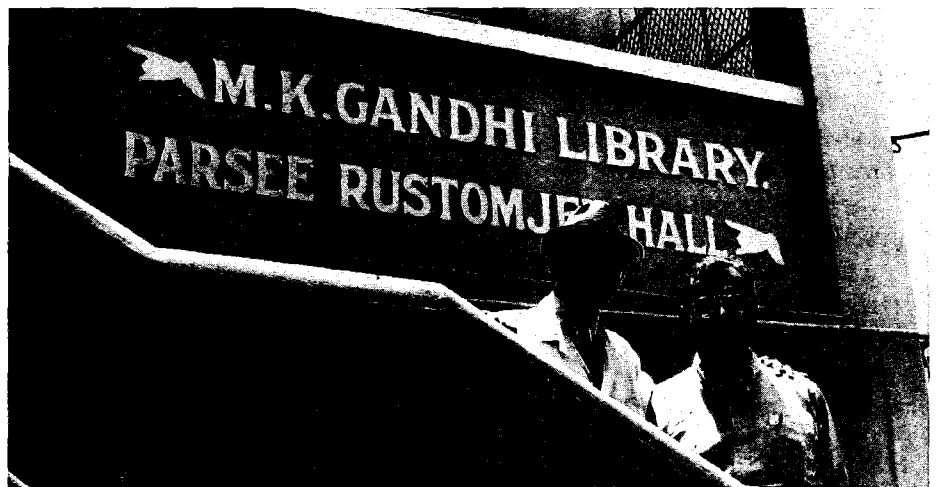
In the new democracy, now, the picture is still not very rosy. Corruption is rampant at all levels and the spread of HIV/AIDS is reaching alarming proportions.

Strangely, and to their credit, through the political turmoil in South Africa



Speaker Frene Ginwala

*Below, ophthalmic surgeon Dr. Dara Randeria (who still maintains his practice in a nearby building) with Rohinton Rivetna at the library in Queen Street, built by the "Parsee Rustomji" Trust. In the days of cruel racism, the Gandhi Library - Parsee Rustomjee Hall, the first library for blacks, was the only storehouse of knowledge in Durban for aspiring black students and professionals. Several schools were also built by the Trust.*



over the last century and more, the Zarathushti families have chosen to remain in South Africa (unlike the communities in East Africa and Mozambique).

**Visit to Durban and Johannesburg.** Most of the 35 or so Zarathushtis living in Durban came over to the Holiday Inn for dinner and to a jashan the following day by Dastoor Kersey Antia at the home of Maneck Randeria. The *Randerias*, the *Rustomjee's*, *Adajianias* – all are in business or professionals and settled here for generations. The death last year of 87-year-old Heroze Manchershaw Wadia, their only priest, in a traffic accident in Durban, was a great loss to the community.

In Johannesburg, again, almost all of the 35 or so Zarathushtis gathered for dinner at a restaurant. The long-time established families there include the *Shapurjees*, *Camays*, *Bodhanwallas*, *Nogamas (Adarjis)* and *Tavadias*. It was good to see over a third of the gathering to be of the younger generation, discussing with great interest, the future of the community.

A major concern was the dwindling numbers, due in large measure to

'out-marriages' and emigration (mostly to UK and USA). The earlier generations of Parsi men traveled back to India to seek out brides, even in the face of the Apartheid government's ban on the entry of Indian brides into South Africa. It was only after years of petitioning and tireless efforts, that Dr. Dara Randeria was able to pioneer the entry of his bride, Jer, from Mumbai, in 1964, along with 30 other Indian brides. His precedent was followed in the 1970s by Phiroze Bodhanwalla and Soli Shapurji, who brought their brides from India.

The long-time families, solidly entrenched in their businesses and professions, continue to enrich the South African scene. Now with advances in communications and ease of travel making the world smaller and smaller, the South African Zarathushtis and especially the younger generation, are looking forward enthusiastically to a promising future as valuable members of the world Zarathushti community. ■



*In 1942, newly-married Sherah Bodhanwalla [shown at right at the 1999 gathering in Johannesburg] was on board the 800-passenger liner Tilava, with her husband Dinshawji, traveling from Bombay to Johannesburg, when the ship was torpedoed by the Germans. The couple survived on floating debris in shark-infested waters near the Seychelles, until they were rescued up by a cruiser 2 1/2 days later. Keki Tavadia [right], then a child, and his father Dara, and the ship's Parsi doctor, Dr. Daruwalla, were also among the 120 survivors. Their five-year-old son, Jimmy, lost his life.*



*The Parsi pioneers that ventured to the southern tip of the then Dark Continent of Africa in about 1870, were paltry in numbers compared to their Indian compatriots (both indentured as well as paying passengers) from South India and Gujarat. In 1920 the Parsis in South Africa numbered about 250; unfortunately, they are now down to about 75 (36 in Gauteng Province, 36 in Kwa-Zulu Natal and 3 in Cape Province. Here we present the saga of those Parsi pioneers.*

## Zarathushti

By Sohrab Framrose Shapurjee  
Johannesburg, South Africa

**R**estrictive and discriminatory laws passed by Britain (1820 - 1910), the Union of South Africa government, and the infamous Nationalist Government (1948-1994) were the chief causes for the Zarathushti community not thriving to its fullest potential. Many families chose emigration to escape these dehumanizing laws. Some went into exile to carry out the struggle against Apartheid, and others stayed behind to carry on the struggle for justice and equality. Victory was achieved in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected as our first democratically elected President of the Republic of South Africa.

Although miniscule in numbers, these Parsi pioneers and their descendants have played a very valuable and significant role in the commercial, socio-economic, health and



*The Zarathushti community of Durban (Randeria, Ginwala and Naval/Adajania families) gathers in 1937 at the Royal Picture Palace theater, to welcome 3 Parsi cyclists [far right] on a tour around the world. Next to Maneck Randeria (far left in blazer) are Nergish, Khorshed and Frene Ginwala.*

## Pioneers of Transvaal, South Africa

political arenas in the developmental history of South Africa in the short span of 120 years. They have produced doctors, eye specialists, cancer research expert, trade unionist, accountants, dentist, attorneys, business entrepreneurs, post master, interpreters, pharmacist, economist, computer engineers, radiographers, medical technologist, chemical engineer, fashion designer and more.

To add further Zarathushti luster on South African soil, we had, in the new democratically elected ANC government, the appointment of Ms. Frene Ginwala as the first female speaker of Parliament; Zaver Rustomjee, great grandson of "Parsi Rustomjee" appointed as Deputy Director of the Department of Trade and Commerce; and Frene's sister Khorshed Ginwala, appointed as South Africa's ambassador to Italy.

**Early pioneers, 1870s.** The first indentured, Indian laborers arrived in

Durban in 1860 aboard the "S.S. Truro" from Calcutta. It is believed that the first Zarathushti (a paid up passenger) was **Rustomjee Jivanjee Ghorkhodu** (1861-1924), a resident of the village of Adajan near Surat. At the tender age of 13 years, he landed in Durban in 1874, to work for a prominent muslim businessman Dada Abdoola who owned four sailing vessels. Through dint of hard work, honesty and with the Zarathushti principles of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds, "**Parsi Rustomjee**" as he was affectionately called, rose to become an astute businessman, philosopher, philanthropist and political activist for the downtrodden Indians and Africans of South Africa. With his sons Sorabjee (1895-1960) and Jalbhai, he helped shape the destiny of India and South Africa.

In December 1896, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and his family

returned from India on one of Dada Abdoola's ships. He was the young lawyer that the Transvaal and Durban Indians had hired to fight the discriminatory laws of the British Government. On disembarking the ship, Gandhi was besieged by a mob of white colonial agitators. The timely intervention by Parsi Rustomjee allowed Gandhi to escape with his life. This incident strengthened the bonds of friendship between Gandhi and Rustomjee.

All his life, Rustomjee worked tirelessly to gain justice and equality. After his sad demise in 1924, the best tribute paid to him was by an Indian Bhavani Dayal, who said: "Parsi Rustomjee was an uncle to all South Africans."

The first Zarathushti to settle in Transvaal province is believed to be one **Dorabji Dhanjibhai Talati** (1840-1912). He is reputed to have



Left, Nariman Naval Adajania [left] staff sergeant in the South African army with 2 Indian officers served with the Allied forces in World War II. He saw action in Libya and Egypt in the desert war against Rommel, "the Desert Fox." Right, Sohrabjee Rustomjee, son of "Parsee Rustomjee", brought the ashes of Gandhiji from India by ship in 1948, as crowds gathered at each port of call along the South African coast, to pay their respects to "Bapuji". Earlier, Rustomjee and his family had just met Gandhiji in Delhi and were on the train coming back, when they heard of the assassination. They took a taxi back to Delhi and a few months later, arranged for a part of Gandhiji's ashes to be brought to South Africa, in recognition of the prominent role he had played in South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

settled and opened a tavern and hotel in the beautiful district of Waterval Boven, near Pretoria. Talati was an enterprising man, well respected by the British and Boers. He is believed to have been very friendly with President Paul Kruger, of the Boer (Afrikaner) Republic in the Transvaal, who often stayed at Talati's hotel.

Talati is reputed to have saved the life of President Kruger in an incident with the British troops. In recognition for his valor, Kruger is said to have given the Parsi community a piece of vacant land to use as a cemetery. This *Parsi cemetery* is in Braamfontein in Johannesburg. It was in an exclusive white area and is sandwiched between the Jewish and Christian cemeteries. Talati was buried there in 1903.

**Sohrabji Shapurjee Adajania** (1880-1924) from Adajan village near Surat, a brilliant advocate, was called by the Parsis of South Africa to help them fight the discriminatory Immigration Act of 1905, that prevented Indians from entering the Transvaal without a valid permit. A fiery orator, Shapurjee decided to defy these laws, and marched himself, from Durban to the Transvaal border. He was arrested, but the British did not prosecute him for they knew he was an astute lawyer.

Along with Gandhiji, Shapurjee launched many satyagraha marches in defiance of other restrictive and inhuman laws and courted arrest and jail many times in his short-lived career.

Three Parsis, Mr. V. Dorabji, P. Dorabji and P. Dhunjibhai, arrived in

1900. They made a writ petition to gain white status for themselves and other Zarathushtis. They went to court in Johannesburg in 1906, arguing their case on the basis of them being pure Aryans, and that the locals and Britishers had always accepted them as being white. The court turned their case down. They subsequently appealed and went to London to plead with the British Foreign Secretary.

**Second Wave of Settlers, 1890s-1920.** In 1900, *Rustomji Nekoo* was called by the Parsis to act as interpreter in the courts in Germiston City, Transvaal province.

In 1899, *Mancherji Cursetji Bodhanwalla* (1870-1940) and his bride Navajbai came as paying passengers and disembarked at Lourenco Marques Port (Maputo). They proceeded

to trek inland and arrived in Johannesburg. He rose to become a prominent businessman. Two sons, Dinshaji and Cursetji and two sisters were born in Johannesburg.

**Dinshaji Bodhanwalla** (1906-1992) worked initially for 5 pounds a month and then followed in his father's footsteps and opened a mine concession store. He married Sheramai in 1942 [see photo and story of shipwreck on page 28] and raised 7 children, who are active members of the Johannesburg community. **Cursetji Bodhanwalla** was born in Johannesburg in 1914 and married Homai in 1938. He too, was a prosperous and well-respected businessman in Johannesburg. Son Hoshang is an accountant in Canada and daughter Dina a nurse in Portugal. Son Marzban (an accountant) and daughter Khorshed (a teacher), like many of their generation, are victims of the Apartheid system, remaining single due to the Act of 1945 prohibiting entry of Indian brides and bridegrooms into South Africa.

Between 1891 and 1910, a group of Parsis arrived from the village of Tavdi near Navsari, the first being **Jivanji Tavadia**. Their descendants are all highly respected professionals in Johannesburg. Some now live in UK and Canada. Grandson **Dinshaw Tavadia** was the first South African Indian doctor to graduate from the University of Witwatersrand in the late 1940s.

**Navroji Hormusji Tavadia** arrived with his bride **Heerabai** in 1910 and opened a concession store business at the Robinson deep mines. Called away suddenly to visit his ailing mother in India, he called his nephew Shapurjee to come and look after his business during his absence.

In 1904, **Manchershaw Rutanjee Wadia**, a book-keeper, came from Porbunder, and raised a large family of whom a daughter, Sheila still lives in Johannesburg, others are in Mumbai or London, and son Phiroze (Philip) was the official priest of the Durban Parsis for many years.

**Nasurwanji Hormuzji Kharas** came from Navsari in about 1906. He and his wife, Tehmina, had two sons.

**Nadirshaw Cama** came with Dosibai in 1912 and rose to become the first Indian Postmaster in Transvaal. He raised a large family. Grandson Perozeshaw Camay is a prominent education and labor consultant in South Africa. Another grandson Nadir Camay is a dentist in the USA.

In 1914, from Navsari, came **Navroji Hormuji Nogama**. His brother **Nuserwanji Hormuji Nogama** joined him in 1915. Their children went into business like their fathers, or took up accounting and teaching.

**Shapurjee Cawasjee Patel**, (1886-1986), son of Cawasjee Jogina (Patel of Tavdi) was an engineer under the Bombay Boiler and Inspection Act of 1891. He heeded the call of his

mamaji and with the blessings of his parents, embarked on the voyage to South Africa. He traveled for 45 days by boat to reach Lorenquo Marques (Maputo) in January 1917. He stayed there for a while with his relatives, the noted **Ginwala family**. The Ginwalas owned an oil mill in Maputo and were held in very high esteem by the Portuguese authorities.

Shapurjee got special permission from the British Consul in Maputo to act as the official priest of the then fledgling Zarathushti community of Johannesburg and was granted leave to run his mamaji's shop. He proceeded inland to Johannesburg, a journey that took him six weeks to accomplish, by various forms of transport. Arriving in Johannesburg in April 1917, he ran his mamaji's business with honesty, integrity and hard work.

Being an engineer by profession, Shapurjee longed for the day he could open his own engineering works. He soon ran afoul of the obnoxious race laws of the country, when he attempted to take in a white business partner. The authorities in Johannesburg viewed this as a violation of the terms of his admission into the Transvaal, and started proceedings to send him back to India. In desperation, Shapurjee went to Cape Town and met the Minister of the Interior to explain his position, who eventually granted him a special document to allow him residence in the Transvaal.

*Left, In 1935, aviators Noshir Dalal [left] and Pochkhanawalla [right], flew in a 2-seater puss-moth airplane from Bombay via Egypt, when their plane crashed in Tanganika. They made their way to South Africa, where the Parsi community raised funds to buy them a replacement plane to fly back to Bombay. Right, the Rustomjees lived in style in their family home, "May Castle" in Durban.*



Shapurjee opened the Persian Silk Bazaar and Buy-Buy Bazaar wholesale and retail outlets. He was also a philosopher, poet and a very pious Zarathushti. With the advent of the Nationalistic government and their Apartheid laws, he chose to emigrate to India in 1953. At the age of 98, he was brought back to South Africa and lived with his grandson Sohrab, until he passed away at the ripe old age of 100. He is buried in the Parsi cemetery. Shapurjee and his wife Ratanbai raised a large family. Some descendants now live in the UK, but many, including this author, still perpetuate the Shapurjee family name, in Johannesburg.

**Post 1920.** After 1920 there was hardly any immigration to South Africa by the Parsis. With the Apartheid laws it became even more difficult for a young Zarathushti man or woman to get married. This tragically resulted in quite a few Zarathushtis remaining bachelors and spinsters. Others married out of the faith. A few stalwarts bade their time and petitioned various ministers to relax the ban against the entry of brides from India. Eye specialist **Dr. Dara Randeria** was granted special permission to bring his wife Dr. Jer Randeria, a cancer researcher from Mumbai's Tata Hospital, in 1968.

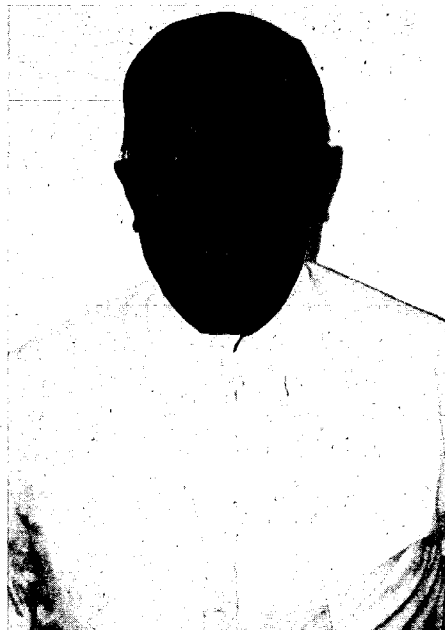
Our fathers and grandfathers have mentioned a few more names of Parsis who visited South Africa and then left, e.g. Sohrabji Rustomji Bodhanwalla, Mr. Fozdar, Rutunshaw Banga, Kavasjee Pallonji Bodhanwalla.

The Parsis have, through their beliefs in the good Mazdayasni religion, survived the difficult and hostile years in South Africa. It is paradoxical that the first world religion, revealed to mankind by Zarathushtra, that influenced other major world religions, may possibly face extinction in South Africa. But the knowledge that Zarathushtis have managed to

keep alive their religion for 13 centuries gives me confidence and optimism that they will somehow survive in the new millennium, by faithfully following Good Thoughts, Good Words and doing Good Deeds, as preached by Prophet Zarathushtra and ordained by the one and only Wise God Ahura Mazda. ■

*[The author regrets if some important facts are inadvertently omitted from this account. Due to paucity of records, it has been difficult to get an accurate and complete record or to verify the facts stated here.]*

*Photos courtesy of Mr. Nariman Naval of Durban.*



**Sohrab Framrose Shapurjee**, grandson of Shapurjee Cawasjee Patel, an early Parsi pioneer in South Africa, is an anaesthetist, and head of the Department of Anaesthesia at Natalspruit Hospital in Johannesburg. In 1979, he became the 2nd Zarathushti to be allowed by the government to bring his bride, Mahrookh Jal Awari, into the country, that too only after a 2-year stay in independent Transkei. Sohrab and Mahrookh, an ophthalmologist, have 4 daughters, Shanaz (an exponent of Bharat Natyam), Zarin, Roxan and Yasmin.

### Parsee Firsts in South Africa

- ❑ "Parsee Rustomji", first Parsi to set foot on Durban soil (in 1874), philanthropist and political activist. Close friend of Gandhiji.
- ❑ Behramji Talati, first pioneer in Transvaal, in 1875. Established hotel in Waterval Boven. Close friend of President Paul Krueger.
- ❑ Rustomjee Nekoo, 1900, first Indian interpreter in the Germiston Courts of Transvaal province.
- ❑ Sohrabji Adajania, first Parsi advocate to fight in court, the unjust Immigration Act of 1905.
- ❑ Nadirshaw Cama, the first Indian Postmaster of Johannesburg.
- ❑ Shapurjee Cawasjee Patel, 1918, first engineer and official (Behdin) priest in Transvaal.❑
- ❑ Dr. Freney Maneckshaw of Cape Town, 1934, first Indian woman to qualify as a medical doctor from England (LRCP, MRCP, DTM).
- ❑ Dr. Dinshaw P. Tavadia, first Indian doctor to graduate from University of Witwatersrand.
- ❑ Dr. Dara Randeria, first Parsi ophthalmologist, and pioneered entry of Indian brides in 1964.
- ❑ Dr. Jer Randeria, first Parsi cancer researcher.
- ❑ Dr. Khorshed Ginwala, first Indian woman hospital superintendent; and ambassador to Italy, 1994.
- ❑ Frene Ginwala, first Speaker in the new democratic Parliament.
- ❑ Phiroshaw Camay, first Indian Secretary General of the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions.
- ❑ Sohrab Shapurjee, first Parsi Head of Department of Anaesthesia.
- ❑ Zaver Rustomjee, first Parsi Deputy Director, Department of Trade and Commerce.
- ❑ Mahrookh Shapurjee, first Indian female ophthalmologist.
- ❑ Shanaz Shapurjee, first Parsi to have Bharata Natayam Arange-tram, Institute of Indian Arts and Culture, 1999.

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PHOTO: PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY, BY JOHN HINNELLS



# EVOLUTION OF THE RELIGION IN IRAN

## From the advent of Zarathushtra through the mid twentieth century

From the advent of the Prophet (between 1700 and 1300 BCE) in the Kayanian period, the religion of Zarathushtra has evolved through the vicissitudes of time and history. For over a thousand years from 559 BCE to 651 CE, it flourished under three mighty Persian Empires, those of the Achaemenians (who ascribed all to “Ahura Mazda”), the Parthians (when it faced the rise of Christianity) and the Sasanians, who declared the religion of Zarathushtra as the State religion and rejuvenated its scriptures and practices. The religion suffered a setback with the Arab conquest in 651 CE and subsequent Islamization of the Iranian lands. Through centuries of oppression and religious persecution under the Islamic dynasties (notably the Safavids and Qajars) its adherents that once numbered in the millions, were reduced in Iran in the mid nineteenth century to a mere 8,000. This issue of the Journal, along with the companion Summer 2000 issue (which focuses on the history of Iran prior to the Arab conquest) form a concise record of the saga of the religion of Zarathushtra and the socio-political history of Iran.

# A Place in World History - Part 2

A timeline of the Iranian lands, peoples and empires in the context of historical world events from the fall of the Arab conquest of the Sasanian Empire in 641 CE through modern times. Earlier history – from the mythological Peshdadian dynasty, the ancient Kayanian dynasty, and the rise and fall of the mighty Persian Empires of the Achaemenians, Parthians and Sasanians was covered in Part I [*FEZANA Journal, Summer 2000*].

By Roshan Rivetna

## WORLD HISTORY

570-632. **Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam** is born in Mecca. His teachings are recorded in the Koran.

These are the “*Middle Ages*” in Europe. The Roman Empire continues to prosper as the *Christian Byzantine Empire* until 1453.

c.600. *Harsha’s* Empire rules in North India. The *Pallavas* and *Chalukyas* battle in South India.

618. *Tang Dynasty* begins in China, with its capital at the magnificent metropolis of Chang An. Tang court adopts Buddhism.

640. Egypt is conquered by Islamic leader *Caliph Omar*. Arabs, carry the Muslim faith across northern Africa. Conflict with the Christian *Nubians*.

650. *Teotihuacan* in Mexico thrives as an important trade center.

700. Polynesians settle in *Easter Island*, and build huge stone monuments.

700. The *Pueblo Indian* culture flourishes in Arizona.

758-814. *Charlemagne* is crowned king by Pope Leo III in France.

## IRANIAN HISTORY

### ARAB CONQUEST OF THE SASANIAN EMPIRE

The last Sasanian emperor **Yazdegard III** (632-651) ascended the throne when the Sasanian Empire was embroiled in intrigue, fraud and internal conflict. The Arabs, meanwhile, united under the banner of Islam, dreamed of world conquest. Muslim penetration began under the first caliph, Abu Bakr with the capitulation of the city of *Hira* in 633. The Sasanians suffered a disastrous blow at the *Battle of Qadisiyya* in 636; the Arabs captured the capital of *Ctesiphon* in 637 and gathered fabulous booty of gold, jewelry and carpets; books from the famous library at Ctesiphon were “thrown into the Euphrates” [3]. The fate of the mighty Sasanian Empire was finally sealed at the fierce *Battle of Nihavand* in 641, and the sovereignty of Iran passed into the hands of the Islamic caliphs. For ten years, Yazdegard fled from province to province until the Arabs had him murdered in 651.

632-661. **Four orthodox Islamic caliphs**. Iran was still predominantly Zoroastrian.

641-651. For about 150 years, the descendants of the Sasanian aristocracy (*‘spahbads’*) continued to rule small kingdoms in the mountainous regions of Eastern Iran – Mazandaran, Gilan, Tabaristan and Khorasan.

After the Arab conquest, with its slaughter, enslavement, looting and destruction, the Arabs offered non-believers, *‘dhimmis’*, three choices: death, Islam or the payment of tribute. A heavy tax, *‘jizya’*, was imposed on non-believers.

### THE UMMAYYAD DYNASTY (661 - 750)

661-750. **The Ummayyads** made their capital at Damascus. This was a period of Arab imperialism. One by one, fire temples were destroyed and turned into mosques. The Middle Persian language and the Pahlavi script were abandoned for Arabic and the Arabic script. *Salman al-Farisi*, abandoned the religion of Zarathushtra for Christianity, and eventually attached himself to Mohammed and became a member of his household. The Shi’ite movement grows steadily. The tyrannical rule of the Ummayyads ended in revolt, bloodshed and massacre and the Islamic empire passed to the Abbasids [1]. By the order of the Arab Yazid ebn-e Mohlab, 400,000 Persians were massacred and hanged in Mazandaran [3].

633 - 661  
ARAB CONQUEST

661 - 750  
UMMAYYAD DYNASTY

790-950. Explorers, *The Vikings* from Scandinavia, built coastal settlements in France, Britain, Iceland, Greenland and North America.

871-899. *Alfred the Great* unifies England.

Navigator and explorer, *Viking Leif Erikson* (970-1020) claims to be the first European to discover and settle in North America.

c.986. *Eric the Red*, Viking explorer, sets up a colony in Greenland.



GENGHIS KHAN

1066. *William the Conqueror* defeats Harold of England at the *Battle of Hastings*.

1096. Christian rulers from Europe go on the first *Crusades* to retake Palestine from the Seljuk Turks.

c. 1150. *Notre Dame* built in Paris.

1209. *St. Francis of Assisi* founds the Franciscan religious order.

1215. King John of England signed the *Magna Carta*, granting rights and liberties to his countrymen, and placing sovereigns within the rule of law.

c. 1200. *Kutub Minar* stone monument is built in Delhi, India.

1215. King John of England signs the *Magna Carta*, assuring rights, liberty and the rule of law.

### THE ABBASID DYNASTY (750-1258)

750-1258. **The Abbasids** (capital in Baghdad) revived the magnificence of the Sasanian court. Islam now took firm root on Iranian soil and the spread of Islam was actively promoted, proving deadly to the Zarathushtis. The persecution of non-believers continues.

800s. Zoroastrians still formed a substantial minority, mostly in the province of Fars, where they preserved their religious books, fire temples and customs. Zarathushti leaders were recognized as *Hudinan Peshobay* ('Leader of those of the Good Religion'). Zarathushtis were known (contemptuously) as '*gabar*' (infidel). *Pahlavi and Pazend texts* were composed or re-edited, including *Namakiha of Manushchir*, *Dadistan i Denik*, *Vichitakiha of Zatspram*, *Bundahishn*, *Dinkerd*, *Shkand-Gumanik Vizar*, *Artay Viraz Namak* and others [1].

Among local Iranian dynasties, all vigorously Muslim were the **Saffarids** (869-903) in Kerman and the **Samanids** of Khorasan (874-999). The sacred fire of *Adar Gushnasp* was still tended in its hill-top sanctuary in the northwest. 20 out of 21 books of the *Sasanian Avesta* including the *Vendidad*, presumably kept in the library at Pars, survived "fierce fighting" with Arabs in the royal city of Istakhr, when "40,000 Persians were slaughtered or hanged" [3] and the city laid waste.

936. **The Parsis**. A band of Zarathushtis, originally from the town of Sanjan in Khorasan, despaired of finding justice, made their way south to the port of Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, where eventually they secured some ships to take them overseas. The migrants with their *Dastur Neriosang Dhaval*, spent nineteen years on the island of *Div* before making their final landfall on the coast of Gujarat in 936. Their descendants, the Parsis, still keep their faith alive in India.

c900 - c1050. The Shi'ite **Buyid Dynasty** dominates most of Iran. The Zarathushtis enjoyed a last brief period of relative tranquility, but there was never any real security for them, and fighting between the Muslims and Magians erupted often.

957. Four learned Zarathushti priests transcribed the *Khwaday Namag* from Pahlavi to Arabic script.

975-1010. Firdowsi composed the immortal epic, *Shah Nameh*, chronicling events of ancient Persian history.

1037-1157. **Turkish invasion**. The **Seljuk Turks** swept into Khorasan from Central Asia, exterminating every local dynasty. Once established, they embraced Islam with fervor. Many Zarathushtis presumably died in the wars of conquest, or were forcibly converted during those harsh times [1]. By order of Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, many Zarathushtis of greater Khorasan were massacred [3].

1157-1220. The **Khwarazmshah** dynasty.

750 - 1258  
A B B A S I D D Y N A S T Y

Mongol **Genghis Khan** (1162-1227) conquers much of Asia and Eastern Europe [see page 35].

1252. **Spanish Inquisition** begins.

1259. Turk Muslims, retreating from the Mongols, establish the **Ottoman Empire**. It remained a formidable force from Iraq to Morocco to Vienna until World War I, when it became the nation of Turkey.

1271. Venetian traveler **Marco Polo** (b. 1250) travels to China.

c. 1380. **Ming Dynasty** is established in China.

c. 1450. **Joan of Arc**, a French military leader is burnt at the stake.

1492. Italian explorer, **Christopher Columbus**, while looking for a westward route to India, discovers America. His ships were the *Nina*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*.

c. 1500. **Vasco de Gama** sails to India.

c. 1500. **Leonardo da Vinci** paints *The Last Supper*.

c. 1520. Babar invades India and establishes **Moghul Empire**.

c.1600. **Shakespeare** writes "Hamlet."

c.1620. Pilgrims arrive in America on the *Mayflower*.

c.1640. Manchu Dynasty in China.

c.1650. **Taj Mahal** is built in Agra, by Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan.

c.1675. **Sir Isaac Newton** discovers Law of Gravitation.

1747. **Nadir Shah** invaded India, defeated the Moghul army and sacked Delhi.

c.1750. **James Watt** discovers the steam engine.

1775-1783. **American Revolutionary War** for American independence from Britain. **George Washington** commanded the American forces.

1776. **American Declaration of Independence** establishing the United States as a nation, independent from Great Britain.

1220 - 1400s  
MONGOL INVASIONS

MONGOL INVASIONS

1220. Mongol **Ghengis Khan** invaded Iran and attacked Khorasan and Azerbaijan.

1258. **Mongol invasion**. Hordes of Mongols rolled relentlessly over all of Iran, with slaughter of Muslims, Zarathushtis, Jews and Christians. The last great collections of the holy books, including every copy of the Sasanian Avesta were destroyed and the remaining fire temples, demolished. Zarathushtis grouped themselves mostly in the cities of **Yazd** and **Kerman** in poverty and protective obscurity [1].

1370-1384. The Tartar, **Timur Leng** conquered northern and north-eastern Iran, with untold destruction and massacre.

Early 1400s. Despite repeated mass slaughters, between 3 to 5 million Iranians remained Zarathushti [3].

1499 - 1722  
SAFAVID DYNASTY

SAFAVID DYNASTY (1499-1722)

1499-1722. The Shi'ite **Safavid Dynasty** used remorseless pressure to bring all Muslims of Iran to their branch of the faith; life under Safavid rule was hard for Zarathushtis. By order of **Shah Ismail**, founder of the dynasty, Sunni Muslims and Zarathushtis were slaughtered, when they did not convert to Shiism [3]. In 1608, **Shah Abbas** (1587-1628) had "a very great number of Gaur" (gabars) brought from Yazd and Kerman to work as laborers in Isfahan [1]. They lived in abject poverty outside the city in the ghetto town of **Gabrabad**. The priests of Yazd and Kerman wrote **Rivayets** to their Parsi brethren, giving instructions on their ancient rituals. They spoke sorrowfully of their sufferings. Zarathushtis spoke a local dialect called **Dari**.

1517. Iran is convulsed by the rise of the **Ottoman Turks**.

Early 1700s. Despite massacres, the Zarathushti population of Iran is estimated to be one million. The most horrendous massacre took place by the last Safavid king, Sultan Hussein (1694-1722). Zarathushtis in Isfahan and nearby towns were slaughtered or coerced into conversion; Gabrabad was wiped out; French missionaries estimate 80,000 were massacred [3].

1719 - 1796  
AFGHAN INVASIONS  
AFSHAR & ZAND DYNASTIES

AFGHAN INVASIONS. AFSHAR-ZAND DYNASTIES (1719-1796)

1719. **Afghan invasion**. The Afghans marched through Seistan to Kerman. The Zarathushti quarter, Gabr-Mahalle, was outside the city walls, and its inhabitants - men, women and children - were almost all slaughtered.

1736-1796 **Afshar and Zand Dynasties**. **Nadir Shah** of a Turkish tribe, who claimed descent from Timur Leng, became Shah. He was a cruel and covetous ruler, and Iran became a ravaged land. Zarathushti population of Khorasan and Seistan were massacred under his order [3].

1750-1796. **Karim Khan Zand**, granted some tax relief to the Zarathushtis still struggling under the crushing jizya tax. In 1773 **Mulla Kaus** of Surat, visited Iran, met a general assembly of Zarathushtis in Yazd and wrote the *Ithoter* (78) **Rivayet**, which included answers to 78 questions, last of the Rivayets.

1812-1815. *War of 1812* between USA and the British.

1861-1865. *Civil War* between the north and the south in the USA.

c. 1800-1900. *Industrial Revolution* resulting from mechanization of production.

1903. *Orville and Wilbur Wright* build the first airplane.

### Mazdayasnie Connection

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### THE QAJAR DYNASTY (1796-1925)

1796-1925, **The Qajar Dynasty** ruled from their capital, Tehran. The fortunes of the Zarathushtis sink to their lowest ebb. The Zarathushtis (mostly in Yazd and Kerman) were mis-handled, killed and robbed, and their books burnt [1].

Population of Zarathushtis declined as massacre and conversion continued under the Qajars. Harrassment and persecution were the norm, and inhumane methods were used to convert them. Travel was forbidden but many risked their lives, traveled through hostile desert on donkeys or even on foot, journeyed to India. In 1796, a Kermani and his beautiful daughter, **Golestan**, escaped to Bombay. Golestan married a Bombay merchant, Framji Panday. The family aided other Irani fugitives.

1804-1813. **Russia-Iran war**. With the Golestan Treaty, Iran surrendered to Russia most of its territory in the Caucasus, to the north of its present borders, giving Russia the exclusive right to maintain warships in the Caspian sea.

1814. **Anglo-Iranian treaty**.

1821. Iran and the **Ottoman Turks** at war, again. A Peace Treaty was signed in 1823.

1826. Second **war between Iran and Russia**. Peace Treaty was signed in 1828. Iran surrendered territory west of the Caspian Sea and north of the border with the Soviet Union.

1854. "The Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia" was founded by Parsis in Bombay. They sent **Maneckji Limji Hataria** as their emissary to Iran. He found the number of Zarathushtis had declined to only 6658 in Yazd, 450 in Kerman, 50 in Tehran and a few in Shiraz. The number of Parsis then was 110,544 in Bombay, 20,000 in Surat, and 15,000 scattered around India [1]. Maneckji helped the Iranian Zarathushtis to rebuild fire temples and dokhmas, and established schools. Anjumans were established in Yazd and Kerman. His crowning success was the abolition of the dreaded jizya tax, in 1882.

Many inequities still remained, but from this point, Zarathushtis of Iran began their ascent to success, through commerce, helped by their talents and industry, and by their reputation for scrupulous honesty.

1871. The **great famine** and drought in Iran.

1898. The **Tehran Anjuman** was founded and ten years later an Adaran fire was established.

1903. Number of Zarathushtis in Iran is ~ 11,000 [4].

1906. Widespread demonstrations by the public and the shoot-to-kill policy by the soldiers. The revolution to establish constitutional monarchy takes place in 1909. Merchant-banker **Jamshid Jamshidian**, led the constitutional reform movement which led to the establishment of the **Iranian Parliament**, the **Majlis**, and signing of the **Iranian Constitution**. He was among the first members to be elected. After 1,000 years, a Zarathushtrian voice was once again heard in the councils of Iran. In 1909, **Keikhosrow Shahrokh**, a devoted and tireless public servant, was elected Zarathushti representative on the Majlis, and re-elected for 13 succeeding sessions.

1796 - 1925  
QAJAR DYNASTY

1914-1918. *World War I* between the Central Powers and the Allies.

c. 1925. *Albert Einstein* discovers Theory of Relativity.

1939-1945. *World War II* between the Axis Powers and the Allies, beginning with the invasion of Poland by the Germans.

1947. *Independence of India* from the British. Partition of India and Pakistan.

c. 1950-1953. *Korean War*. US involvement in war between North and South Korea.

c. 1965-1975. *Viet Nam War*. US involvement in war between North and South Vietnam.

1969. American astronaut *Neil Armstrong* lands on the moon.

#### [QAJAR DYNASTY, CONTD].

A period of riots, assassinations and mass killings follows, between the nationalists, the *Mojahedin* (the military guard of the Majlis) and the *Russians* and the *British*, both vying for Iranian territory. Iran declares neutrality in *World War I*.

#### THE PAHLAVI DYNASTY (1925-1979)

1925. *The Pahlavi Dynasty*. The Majlis deposed the last Qajar, and enthroned *Reza Shah Pahlavi*. Awakening of interest in the ancestral Iranian traditions and faith. Iran adopted the solar *Khorshidi calendar*, with 12 months named from the Avesta, with the New Year on March 21. *Ibrahim Pur-Davoud*, a Muslim patriot, makes Persian translation of Avesta.

1937. Tehrani Zarathushtis establish an *aramgah* (cemetery) and abandon the hillside *dokhma* built by Hateria. The dokhma in Kerman continued in use in Yazd and Kerman until 1960s.

1940s. *World War II*. Iran declares neutrality. It is occupied by British and Russian troops.

1944. Reza Shah abdicates in favor of son *Mohammed Reza*.

1979. *Revolution in Iran*, overthrow of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi and creation of the *Islamic Republic of Iran*. ■

1925 - 1979  
PAHLAVI DYNASTY

## D e s i d e r a t a

- Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.
- As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.
- Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.
- Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.
- If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
- Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.
- Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing future of time.
- Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery, but let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.
- Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is perennial as the grass.
- Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
- Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
- Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.
- Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be, and, whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham and drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world.
- Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

*Desiderata* was written in 1927 by Max Ehrmann. It is a perennial favorite, circulated widely in the 1960s. Someone who subsequently printed it, asserted that it was found in Old St. Paul's Church in Baltimore, dated 1692.



PROPHET ZARATHUSHTRA

**Pre-Zarathushtrian background.** Studying the Mazdayasni religion entails more than gathering information regarding beliefs and practices of the communities on the Indian sub-continent as well as Iran. To understand the essence of the faith, we have to know the original prophetic vision and its unusually tortuous history, to relate the contemporary avowed beliefs to the prophetic vision. Translations and summaries of texts, liturgical, explanatory or otherwise, by themselves, gives us no understanding, unless we can specify the historical period, conditions of composition and the purpose of composition.

We begin, as indeed anyone must, with Zarathushtra. The period of his life can be placed essentially between 1700 and 1300 BCE. He was a member of one of the ancient Indo-Iranian tribes, one of perhaps thirty or forty, living in that region of Northern Asia, extending from the sea of Aral in the east to present-day Armenia in the west, in a wide belt north and south of the Caspian Sea. They spoke the Indo-Iranian languages. Zarathush-

tra's language was a very ancient form of the Avestan language. The groups that used this language were the so-called 'Avestan people'.

The religious belief of these people was typically Indo-European, that is, a polytheism of nature divinities, social divinities, e.g. divinity protecting contracts, and divinities of tribal protection. Worship took the form of hymns recounting the mythology of the divinities, and lavishing incredible praise upon them. Two slightly different pictures of this religious system can be clearly discerned in the Homeric hymns of Greek literature and the hymns of the Rig Veda. Such was the socio-religious environment in which Zarathushtra lived, and of which he was well aware as he was himself a priest. He calls himself a 'Zaotar' - an Invoker. He was probably one of those poet-priests who composed hymns extemporaneously before religious gatherings.

The characteristics of that faith was a vague belief in supernatural entities having power over events in this world, and over persons and destinies, as well as the destinies of

tribes. Hence religion became a scheme of requesting divinities for favors of all sorts. One came to accept one's religion by reason of one's birth into a tribe, thus committed to the tribal faith. One prayed and sacrificed, individually for personal favors, or collectively for the communal good. Other than the performance of prayer and sacrifice, what one believed was not considered particularly relevant.

**Transformation in Zarathushtra's message.** It was this entire mode of religiosity that Zarathushtra rejected. He explicitly rejected the so-called 'heroic' tribal wars and cattle-raids. There are some today who present his teachings as essentially the old tribal faith with some reforms he introduced. This blatant absurdity is promoted to covertly maintain the tribal character of present-day Zoroastrianism (the Zarathushti Din).

This was one of the earlier transformations he introduced: he asks those who hear him to listen with a clear mind and choose to accept or not accept the way of life he presents for our consideration. This is *individual choice*, not a tribal decision. He

# The Mazdayasni Faith

## The first millennium

By Kaikhosrov D. Irani  
New York, New York

does not formulate any new rituals. The only ritual mentioned is the offering of veneration to Ahura Mazda, who makes us His associates in the struggle to renovate the world. The offering to humanity of a great Cosmic Vision directed toward moral upliftment expressed in the extraordinary poetic power of the Gathas is a conception of religious life entirely novel to human history at that time. Such was the transforming vision of this great promoter of civilization through truth.

**The Gathic vision.** The teachings of Zarathushtra appear in verses or 'songs', i.e. hymns, called in Avestan, 'Gatha'. They constitute 17 groups, recognized by a grateful following, and later incorporated as

17 chapters of the liturgy of the *Yasna*. These are deeply inspiring poetic compositions. They are not teaching presentations, but inspirational verses evoking reflection. However, the essential message can be extracted from them. It is thus:

Ahura Mazda conceived a creation to evolve to perfection. The one ultimate ideal where everything is in a state of perfect harmony is the Truth, which all things teach, is also the right state, it is called 'Asha.' The actual world we are in, though a representation of Asha, is flawed, since in the world of physical and social reality, we have two vectors, one tending to promote Asha, hence good, called 'Spenta', the other tending to frustrate Asha, hence evil, called 'Angra.'

The duality and *opposition of good and evil* is exemplified in the Gathas many times. What we have here is a radically moral vision of the universe, and that is what we are asked to believe or adopt. And if your experience and spiritual insight makes you internally assent to it, you have *the belief of the faith*.

According to Zarathushtra, a religious vision must of necessity offer a *way of life*. The one he presents is for us to grasp the truth, Asha, with

our God-given 'Vohu Mana' (Good Mind), apply it to the situation we face, and thus discern what we ought to do; and inspired by the spirit of rightmindedness, 'Spenta Armaiti', act to bring about a realization toward the ideal, Asha.

Consider what happened after the reception of Zarathushtra's message in ancient Iran. A substantial part of the court of Vishtaspa and the elite of that part of Iran accepted the faith.

“ The offering to humanity of a great Cosmic Vision directed toward moral upliftment, expressed in the extraordinary poetic power of the Gathas is a conception of religious life entirely novel to human history at that time. ”

Some part, but not all, of the rest of the population did so too. However, the earlier tradition Zarathushtra intended to displace, nonetheless, continued to flourish side by side.

**Post Gathic religious activity.** For the next few centuries after Zarathushtra, several liturgical works emerged. As we saw, the 17 chapters were incorporated into the *Yasna*, but the *Yasna* as we know it emerged with gradual additions over centuries, finally having 72 chapters.

The first addition to the Gathas was a set of seven rather short pieces, called *Haptanhaiti* (7 ha's). They are in almost-Gathic language and must have been composed immediately after the Prophet. It has varied content, the first chapter is markedly different from the rest. This chapter (chapter 35 of the *Yasna*) is a remembrance and veneration of the path of life formulated by Zarathushtra, epitomized in our tradition as *Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshhta*. This verse may be recognized by persons who recall the recitations in the jashans of the "Humatanam, Hukhtanam, Huvareshhtanam ..." formula. This is where this three-term injunction first appears in our scriptures. The other chapters go beyond the pure ethical

message of Zarathushtra and call for veneration of the fire, as in Gathas, but also of water and the cow. It is here that the revered concept of 'fravashi' is first introduced, but never defined.

From linguistic evidence we know that the 17 chapters of the Gathas and the 7 chapters of the *Haptanhaiti* constituted the first unwritten "text". To this, some other sections were soon added, in a language close to, but not identical with, Gathic. Those sections, incorporated in the later full *Yasna*, are the *Fshusho Manthra*, regarding cattle and the good animal creation, and the *Fravareti*, the declaration of faith, the latter part of which is essentially our *Jasa me Avanghahe Mazda* prayer.

This must have constituted the core of kushti recitation of those times. The total collection was probably called the original *Stot Yasn*. This collection was undoubtedly the essential religious content and recitation of the Zarathushtrian community about 1000 BCE. Whether additional rituals were in existence, we do not know. However, if there were functioning priests, as is most likely, rituals must have been performed. In addition to the veneration of fire, a Gathic practice, veneration of water as well as the cow, with appropriate offerings is conceivable.

These modes of worship were created as religion needs ritual practice and communal recitation (even if recited by priests alone) with appropriate offerings. Zarathushtra's purely enlightened religion, where the primary offerings to Ahura Mazda are our store of *Humata, Hukhta* and *Huvareshhta*, which is also how we shall be judged to enter, hopefully, the state of "Best Mental Existence", may not have seemed adequate, as so it seems, to some even in this day and age.

Such was the situation of the *Mazdayasni* community around 1000



BCE. These, however, were times of great social change. Varying consolidation of tribes were common, either peacefully or violently. Major innovations in technology, such as metal-working led to changes in agriculture and warfare. Also the general use of the horse through saddle and stirrup changed transportation, agriculture and warfare. At this time, the Mazdayasni faith spread rapidly.

**The Mazdayasni expansion and emergence of new forms of worship.**

Over and above the established practices, many practices of the earlier tradition were revived and some imported by the new believers, as part of the population could not then, as now too, rise to the intellectual level of the enlightened message of the Prophet.

By this time, there was a **Zoroastrian priesthood**, not fully organized, as far as we know. They probably made systematic attempts to rehabilitate the earlier pre-Zarathushtra divinities within the Mazdayasni tradition, without excessive bloody sacrifices, incorporating the revival of old stylized hymns which came to be called the '*Yashts*'. Some of these hymns recapitulated elements of archaic history, and some using history, memorialized and venerated departed spirits, which was extended to all the departed good. The quasi-divinities, called 'Yazatas', were Zoroastrianized by engaging them in the advancement of the good in its struggle with evil.

The two great innovations of this period, immediately after 1000 BCE – the **vereneration of the Yazatas in the Yashts**, and the establishment of the **Cult of Haoma** – already existing on the fringes of Mazdayasni practice, now became firmly established.

The gradual emergence of these new forms of worship in the tradition of the religion of Zarathushtra is, of course, surprising, but the reasons can be found in two significant factors: the historical one was the need to find common elements among the

different Iranian tribes and that was the set of these ancient divinities who were now venerated and Zoroastrianized. The other factor was the psychological one, that is to have some celestial power, somewhat mythologized, hence sufficiently personalized, before whom one can bow and

“ The two great innovations of this period, immediately after 1000 BCE – the veneration of the Yazatas in the Yashts and the establishment of the cult of Haoma – already existing on the fringes of Mazdayasni practice, now became firmly established. ”

importune for boons. The need to worship and request could not be satisfied by the Gathic Ahura Mazda, the non-mythologized divinity who established the moral order of creation, before whom requests for comfort, gain or victory were pointless since He provided only the wherewithal for promoting Asha.

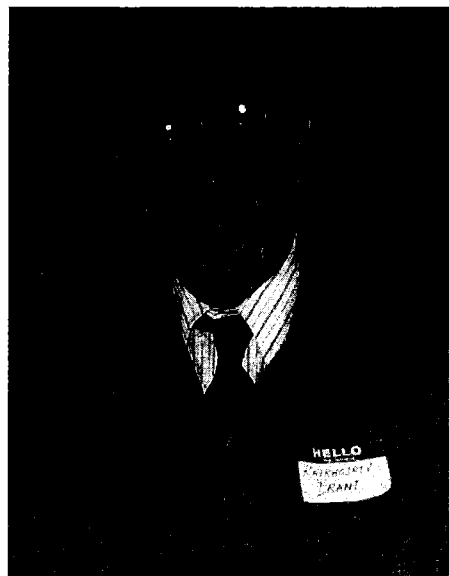
The Yashts, of which we have twenty-one, with some odd additions, venerate each of the twenty-one Yazatas. They were put together, piece-meal by the clergy in a later form of the Avestan language, and became part of public prayers on specific occasions. As the Iranians, at this time came in contact with other Indo-European groups, they recognized their hymns as analogues of the Yashts. These were compared, additions were made to them, they were re-edited and emerged in final form between 1100 and 600 BCE, i.e. the beginning of the Iranian political power in Fars, southwestern Iran, by an essentially East Iranian poetic clergy.

The other major non-Gathic innovation was the **Haoma ritual**. Actually it is extremely ancient and was prevalent before the Indian and Iranian tribes separated, hence perhaps prior to 3000 BCE. The Haoma cult was the ritual extraction of the juice of the Haoma plant, the imbibing of which connected one with the supernatural world.

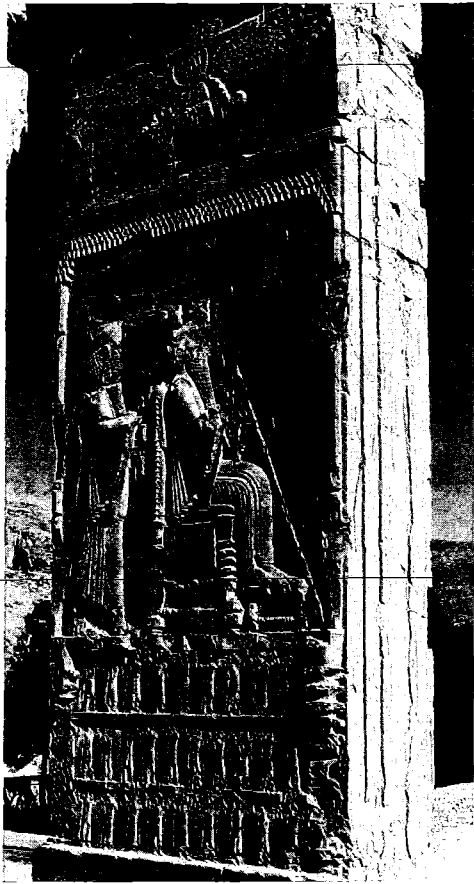
Around 1200 or 1100 BCE, this cult was incorporated in the ritual practices of the Mazdayasnis. The liturgy must have been the Stot Yasna, with the addition of the Haoma Yasht, containing the mythology of Haoma. This was available in Achaemenian times and was in practice at Persepolis, very likely with more additions. This liturgy became the **Yasna ceremony**. With further addition, the Yasna reached 72 chapters, which is what we have today recited as the **Ijeshne ceremony**.

The preservation of the Gathas is due to the high sanctity of Yasna and the

requirement of its memorization by priests even though the Gathic language was no longer understood. The Yasna with the Gathas as well as the Yashts are part of our living heritage. They must be understood through the religio-social circumstances that evoked them. It is thus that they must be assessed in our religious lives. The invariant core of our faith is the way of life Zarathushtra gave to us and which has inspired us for over these 3000 years. If it ever fails to live in the hearts and minds of the so-called believers, nothing else will matter. ■



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Portal at the Achaemenian royal palace at Persepolis c. 500 BCE. The winged figure, the Fravahar (or Farohar or Fravashi) represents the "Royal Glory" hovering above the king, seated on his throne. Three tiers of the king's subjects are shown below.

By Ali A. Jafarey  
Buena Park, California

The Achaemenians ruled over the empire built by Cyrus the Great and expanded later by others, for 228 years, from 559 to 331 BCE. Their ancestors had ruled over Parsa (Persia) for over 140 years. The Median rule north of Persia was established earlier. The Medians had their professional priests – *Magu* (*Magus/Magi*).

There have been a number of arguments professing that the Achaemenians were not Zoroastrians (Zarathushtis) and that they, like their Iranian Median kin, followed a school of Indo-Iranian beliefs and practices. Their inscriptions and bas-reliefs do not ever mention Zarathushtra, they do not call themselves

# Achaemenians, Zoroastrians in Transition

With the passage of time and increasing contacts with Iranians of the Later Avestan background, Achaemenians turn from Gathic beliefs and practices more and more towards an evolving form of the institutionalized Zoroastrianism that had its culmination during the Sasanian period.

*This article is an abridged version of the essay "Hakhamaneshian Zartoshti Budand Va Bas – Achaemenians Were Zoroastrians and Nothing Else" in Persian, published in "Rahavard", Los Angeles, in Spring 1998. It discussed archaeological and lingual aspects as well as the Avestan, Babylonian, Biblical, Egyptian, Greek, Pahlavi, Parthian and other sources to ascertain that the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians and over time transitioned from the Gathic doctrine towards institutionalized Zoroastrianism of the Later Avesta. This digest covers only the Achaemenian bas-reliefs and inscriptions. Full bibliography and references are in the original version.*

Mazdayasni, they worshiped gods of other nations, and other such points.

Records by the Achaemenians are few, and their contents, generally in multiple languages, are mostly political. Brief mention of the divine favor and other relevant subjects do not describe the religion professed by these tolerant and benevolent rulers of a first-time multinational empire. Reports by the Greeks and Hebrews are statements and narrations by third persons, some relying on further third-person reports.

A look through history presents similar examples. Many Christian and Muslim royal monuments, from the earliest to modern times, have shown that brief political records by benev-

olent rulers of multinational empires have hardly touched upon religious matters. The above-mentioned arguments are, therefore, not strong enough to declare Achaemenians to be non-Zoroastrians. Perhaps the very scanty evidence we have may prove the case otherwise. Let us go through them.

**Achaemenian names.** The earliest evidence comes from the very name of their House – *Hakha-manish* (companion of wisdom) and their personal names. Here are some Median and Persian names mentioned in the bas-reliefs and gold tablets: Artakhshathra (or Artaxerxes, right rule), Aryaramna (Aryan peace, great grandfather of Darius),

Aspachana (horse lover), Athrina (possessing fire ?), Bagabigna (God-granted ?), Bardya or Smerdis, (exalted), Darya-vahu or Darius (holder of good), Fravarti (religious choice, conviction), Kambujya or Cambyses (desire-enjoying), Khshayarsha or Xerxes (royal rectitude), Uvakhshatra (good rule) and Vish-taspa (or Hystaspes, active horse).

While old names depicting pastoral society – Aspachana, Aryaramna, and Vishtaspa – are retained, the majority of the names reveal their closeness to the *Fravardin Yasht* ( stanzas 87-128 and 139-142). Here 261 men and women – *Pourutkaesha* and *Nabanazdishta*, the foremost converts to the Good Religion and their children who served to spread the divine message of Zarathushtra – are revered by name. The names show the revolutionary change introduced by Zarathushtra. All those names, inspired by the natural environment of the pastoral days – names after animals, plants and daily living – were retained by the Achaemenians. Names showing attachment to pre-Zarathushtrian Indo-Iranian deities, *Mithra* and *Tishtrya*, are not found. “Meaningful” names that reflect the divine message make up the majority in both the Fravardin Yasht and Achaemenian lists.

**Fire altars.** The next evidence is seen in the Achaemenian ruins. Pasargadae, the capital of Cyrus the Great, served as religious center for the coronation of Achaemenian kings in spite of the fact that Persepolis and other later centers became politically of greater importance. It was a vast park of gardens and buildings, surrounded by a thick wall, a feature which gave it the name ‘*paridaisa*’ or ‘*pairidaeza*’, the origin of the term ‘paradise’ (Persian: ‘Pardis’, Arabic: ‘*ferdows*’).

The sacred precinct of Pasargadae has two limestone plinths, one 7 feet high and 8 feet square and the other

almost 7 feet high and 9 feet square. They were twin *fire altars*. Fragments of stone fire vases have been found both in Pasargadae and elsewhere. Bas-reliefs by Darius the Great and his successors as well as other contemporary monuments show the use of the plinth. Fire blazes forth on the altar and the per-



*Kabeh-i Zardusht near the tombs of the Achaemenians kings at Naqsh-e Rustom.* PHOTO C. RIVETINA.

sons stand before it with hands raised up in prayer. This is exactly how we see Zarathushtra praying in the Gathas – facing a blazing fire with hands raised in prayers. The *Haptanghaiti* tells us that the praying congregation stood around the altar. This is the Gathic way of praying.

**Towers.** There are two towers. One, 43 feet high, in Pasargadae, now called Zendan-e Suleiman (Prison of Solomon), and the other, 36 feet high, *Kabeh-i Zartosht* (*Cube of Zarathushtra*) [see photo] at Naqsh-e Rustom. Although opinions differ,

the most likely possibility of their function is as repositories of royal archives. Perhaps the copy of the original Avestan collection, reported by the Denkard, was one of those.

**Winged Figure.** The much-debated winged figure, popularly known as *FaroHar, Fravahar* or *Fravashi* [photo previous page] is now generally accepted to represent the ‘Royal Glory’ hovering over the king. It does not have a religious significance, but shows that the Achaemenians believed that they were protected by a divine glory. That reminds us of ‘*Airyānem Khvareno*’ (Aryan Glory) and ‘*Kavaem Khvareno*’ (Kayanian Glory) of the Avesta, particularly the *Zamyad Yasht*, a late post-Gathic composition.

**Non-Gathic Haoma cult.** About 300 mortars, pestles and plates of green stone have been found in the Persepolis treasury, dating from the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes I (479-435 BCE). Some of them bear Aramaic inscriptions. Although not used but stored, they remind one of the non-Gathic *Haoma cult*. Some of the names, like *Data-Mithra*, point to pre-Zarathushtrian divinity names. Their presence shows the increasing penetration of the Later Avestan rituals.

**Inscriptions.** Lastly we come to the inscriptions on the bas-reliefs and tablets from Pasargadae, Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rustom, Hamadan and Susa, all in south western Iran. The oldest is the famous *Cyrus Cylinder* in the Babylonian language. It depicts Cyrus the Great as a very benevolent conqueror who enters a city without bloodshed, frees and rehabilitates his captives, restores temples and pays respect to the gods of the subject nations. The inscription, meant for Babylonians, is strengthened by *Isaiah* [44.28-45.1-7] in which we see that although Cyrus did not know the Hebrew God, he was to deliver them from captivity.

The inscriptions from Darius the Great to Artaxerxes II call God by the name of ‘*Auramazda*’ (*Ahura*

**Mazda**). Xerxes' inscription shows that they knew that the term was made of two components – Ahura and Mazda. Ahura Mazda is a “great God” in fact, the “greatest of Gods” because there are other Gods also. Ahura Mazda is the God who “created this earth, that sky, mankind, and happiness for mankind”. He granted Darius wisdom and activity. Prayers for protection are asked from Ahura Mazda and in a few instances also from “the Gods of the house”.

Artaxerxes II is the first to mention **Anahita** and **Mithra**, two of the Later Avestan *Yazatas*, in his inscriptions along with Ahura Mazda and ask for their protection. In fact, in one inscription, he asks Mithra alone for protection.

The word used for ‘god’ is ‘*baga*’ meaning ‘dispenser’ and not ‘ahura’ or ‘yazata’. While used frequently for god in Sanskrit, it is rarely used in the Avesta. Zarathushtra uses it once and that too to express his denunciation of Yima (King Jamshid) who is “reported to have called himself the *baga* of our world. There are three more instances of *baga* – one for Ahura Mazda, another for Mithra as the “wisest” of them, and another for the moon. The word clearly means dispenser of certain favors and not ‘god’ or ‘deity’ as some interpret it.

Against Ahura Mazda, we have the ‘*daeva*’ inscription of Xerxes. He says there was one place out of the 32 countries in his empire

“...where previously false gods were worshiped. Afterwards, by the will of Ahura Mazda, I destroyed the *daevdana* (sanctuary of demons), and I made proclamation that the demons shall not be worshiped. Where previously demons were worshiped, there I worshiped Ahura Mazda through righteousness with reverence.”

Darius calls Ahura Mazda ‘*friend*’, recalling the Gathic concept of considering Ahura Mazda a friend.

Many **Gathic terms** are used by the Achaemenians from Darius to Artaxerxes II, e.g. *Ahura Mazda* (Lord Wise), *arta* (Gathic *asha* - righteousness), *artavan* (Gathic *ashavan* -

righteous), *drauga* (Gathic *druj* - lie, wrong), *draujana* (Gathic *dregvant* - liar, wrongful), *vashna* (Gathic *vasna* - divine wish), *frash* (Gathic *feresha* - fresh, new, renovated).

Note the **absence of Angra Mainyu** or any adversary of Ahura Mazda. Darius and his successors owe their renovating and progressive development to Ahura Mazda. The root *yad* (Avestan *yaz*) has been used for veneration and worship. This also gives the words *ayadana* for the place of veneration and *thriyadi*, the month of fire veneration (November-December) and *Bagayadi*, the month of God worship (September-October).

**Achaemenian Calendar.** The names of the months used by Darius remind one of the Gathic *gahambar* and the Vedic calendar festivals, all named after seasonal activities. They are far from the later Avestan calendar in which days and months are named after yazatas – a later innovation.

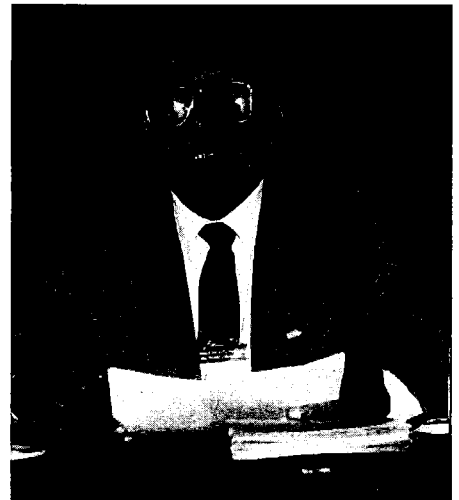
**Summary.** A considerate look at the entire picture portrayed by Achaemenian inscriptions shows us that:

- Ahura Mazda is the Creator of the universe.
- There are other minor gods – alien and akin.
- There are fire plinths for open congregational worship.
- One prays standing before a blazing fire altar, with raised hands.
- Gathic dualism of social ‘right and wrong’ as against the Later Avestan cosmic dualism of Ahura Mazda and Spenta Mainyu versus Angra Mainyu.
- The emperor treats his subjects, who belong to different races and creeds, equally and kindly.
- Mortars and pestles of the *Haoma* cult, presented by persons with the names of Later Avestan deities, are stored in the Royal Treasury at the time of the later Achaemenian kings Xerxes and Artaxerxes I.
- The emperor is an impartial judge who rewards the rightful and punishes the wrongful.
- Two Later Avestan deities, Anahita and Mithra, are mentioned

during the closing years of the Achaemenian era.

● Absence of the Later Avestan calendar, elaborate rituals and yazatas.

The picture that emerges indicates that the earlier Achaemenians were more Gathic in their beliefs and practices than their successors, and that with the passage of time and increasing contacts and mingling with Iranians of the Later Avestan background, they turn more and more to an evolving form of the institutionalized Zoroastrianism that had its culmination during the Sassanian period. The gradual clouding of the pristine purity of the divine doctrine of the Gathas by pre- and post-Gathic beliefs and practices began during the melting period of the Achaemenians. ■



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# Religion of the Achaemenians

One of the most vexing problems in Zarathushti studies is regarding the religion of the rulers and the ruled in Achaemenian times. While it is generally accepted that the religion was the Zarathushti Din in one form or another, the problem is compounded by the knowledge that the beliefs of the rulers were different from those of the common people.

**Religion of the kings.** Although not much material is available to ascertain the religious beliefs of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenian Empire, his actions were very much in keeping with the spirit of the Zarathushti religion. He was just towards his subjects, humane towards his opponents and tolerant of their religious beliefs. He made no attempt to impose his own religious beliefs over conquered opponents of other faiths, most notably the Jews. His kindness and magnanimity towards the Jews is legendary and needs no repetition.

The Achaemenian royal families, during and before the times of Cyrus, used names closely connected with prophet Zarathushtra, which indirectly shows their leaning towards the Zarathushti religion. *Arsames*, the cousin of Cyrus the Great, named one of his sons *Hystaspes*, the Old Persian (O.P.) form of the Avestan (Av.) *Vish-taspa*, the patron king of Prophet Zarathushtra. The name of one of Cyrus' daughters, as recorded by Greek historians, was *Atossa*, a Greek rendering of Av. *Hutaosa*, the queen of Kavi Vishtaspa.

Darius the Great was a ruler who unabashedly proclaimed himself to be a worshipper of Ahura Mazda. The *fravarane* prayer describes the Zarathushti religion in four terms: '*mazdayasno*' (worshipper of Mazda), '*zarathushtrish*' (follower of Zarathushtra), '*vidaevo*' (opposed to the daevas) and '*ahura-tkaesho*' (following the creed of Ahura). If we try to qualify the religion of the Achaeme-



PHOTO: CYRUS RIVETNA

*Bas relief of the Achaemenian King of Kings, Darius I, before the fire altar, over which floats the winged figure, the whole illuminated by the sun, at the rock-hewn, cliffside astodans (tombs) at Naqsh-e-Rustam. This tableau had such significance that it is repeated on all four tombs (of Darius I, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I and Darius II) at Naqsh-e-Rustam and on three more at Persepolis.*

**“A great God is Ahura Mazda, who created this earth, who created the sky and the seas, who created Man, who created happiness for Man ... I am an enemy of those who tell the lie. I am King of Kings, an Achaemenian, son of Parsa ...”** - Inscription on the tomb of Darius I (521-485

BCE) at Naqsh-e Rustam, in Old Persian, Elamite and Cuneiform.

nian kings on the basis of this definition, we clearly find from Darius' inscriptions that he was *mazdayasno* and *ahura-tkaesho*. From the inscriptions of Xerxes, which came to light in the 1930s, we can further be certain that he followed the teaching of '*vidaeva*' by destroying the '*daivadana*' (sanctuaries of the Daevas).

The description of Ahura Mazda we get from Darius' inscriptions in no way contradicts prophet Zarathushtra's conception of Ahura Mazda, and in that aspect one can say that Darius adhered to Zarathushtra's views. In the inscriptions, however, unlike in the Avesta, the name Ahura Mazda is spelt as one word.

Like Prophet Zarathushtra, Darius regarded Ahura Mazda as the greatest of Gods and accepted Him as the creator of heaven and earth. He also admitted the existence of other divine beings (ahura) but considered Ahura Mazda as "the greatest" and the only one mentioned by name. Like Zarathushtra, Darius too accepted Him as a friend. For Darius, Ahura Mazda is the bestower of wisdom, virtue and the ability to control oneself by the mind. Darius attributes all his success to Ahura Mazda and that is the reason why the phrase "By the grace of Ahuramazda" frequently occurs in his inscriptions.

Darius was almost as tolerant as his predecessor Cyrus in religious matters. Not only did he allow his non-Iranian subjects to worship their own ancestral Gods, he also made them generous grants from his treasury towards this end. His magnanimous help is evident in Egypt at Memphis and Heliopolis. Almost all of Darius' descendants too maintained this policy of tolerance and largesse.

**Religion and politics.** It is generally believed that the Achaemenians, like all other rulers, used religion to consolidate their kingdom and authenticate their claim to the throne as divinely appointed rulers. This was true especially in the case of Darius, since some of the Persians supported him, and some were against him. He very shrewdly combined religious exhortations with advise to rebels, when he admonished, "Do not leave the straight path, and do not rebel. The revolt of Gaumata the Magian, more than being political, can be considered religious in nature, a revolt of the magi (clergy) against the rulers.

**Other divine beings.** The worship and invocation of Mithra and Anahita was predominant in later Achaemenian times, although these divine beings, especially Mithra, were fairly well-known in earlier times too. Artaxerxes II invokes Anahita and Mithra by name apart from and along

with Ahura Mazda. Thereafter his successors and later Iranian empires continued to invoke this triad. Moreover, Artaxerxes III once invokes the protection of Mithra alone. Verethraghna, the Yazata of victory and Tishtrya, who brings rains, were also accorded popular devotion.

**Fire worship.** Herodotus attests that fire was treated with great veneration and had a prominent place in the devotional lives of the Achaemenians. Fire was always set upon a raised altar-like stand to depict its exalted position. Public worship of fire was prevalent from the beginning of the Achaemenian times, which is evident from the two massive stone plinths

“ Perhaps the three most enduring symbols which have come down to us from Achaemenian times, are those of the winged bull, the winged disk, with or without the human figure, and fire, burning in an altar-like holder. ”

and fragments of 'fire-holders' uncovered besides the ruins of Cyrus' palace at Pasargadae. In the impressive reliefs outside the sepulchres of Darius and other kings at Naqsh-e Rostam, the king is seen, with his right hand raised, as if in prayer, before a fire burning brightly on a raised stand.

The Greek historian Quintus Curtius states that during the times of Darius III, the last of the Achaemenian kings, embers from 'the fire which the Persians called sacred and eternal' were carried as a palladium in front of the army, before it marched out to battle. This practice is reminiscent of the present day custom of carrying 'loban' (fire embers with incense) in the house, in a small fire-vase, in devout Parsi households.

**Reverence of nature.** Herodotus attests to the Achaemenian's reverence to nature, a typical practice of the Zarathushti religion. Among the main objects of their worship, Herodotus

identifies the sun, moon, earth, fire, water and winds. While mentioning the religious incidents during the Greek war, he mentions veneration of a noble tree and offering libations of water, among other practices.

Achaemenian sculptures show that the people of those times took scrupulous care for the purity of creations. Like Zarathushti today, Achaemenians venerated objects of nature, most prominently, the sun and the moon. Whereas on the doorway above the sepulchre of Cyrus is the carving of the sun, the right hand corner of the carving over the sepulchre of Darius depicts a full moon with a crescent moon within it.

**Feasts and Festivals.** The Festival of Nouruz was celebrated with great pomp and splendor in Achaemenian times. In fact, it is widely held that the procession of people represented on the staircase of the palace at Persepolis represents the annual custom of people from the various

*Satrap*s coming to offer their gifts to the King on the Nouruz day. The annual festival of Tirgan and Mehrgan were other great Achaemenian festivals. The former was celebrated as a rain festival in which the divinity Tishtrya was invoked in services and prayers. In the later festival, the prominent divinity Mithra (Mehr) was invoked.

**Calendar.** In early Achaemenian times, a simple calendar was used, wherein months were named after festivals or pastoral activities, and days of the month were numbered from one to thirty. Around 441 BCE, during the reign of Artaxerxes II the calendar of the Persian Empire was revised. In the new calendar, the names of the days and months were dedicated to several leading deities of the Zarathushti religion. The month was divided into four almost equal parts, each part beginning with the name of the Creator.

**Enduring images.** Perhaps the three most enduring symbols, which have

come down to us from Achaemenian times, are those of the winged bull, the winged disk with or without the human figure and fire burning in an altar-like holder. Whereas the winged bulls, among other prominent places, guard the *apadana* (ceremonial hall) at Persepolis, the winged disk mostly accompanies royal personages in many of the rock reliefs, including the ones at Bisutun. Though initially the winged disk was widely considered to represent Ahura Mazda Himself, later on it was identified as the 'khvarenah' (Divine Glory) of that person.

#### Difficulties in researching this area.

Though Herodotus is our chief source of information regarding the religion of the Achaemenians we cannot blindly rely on him. For one, there are several omissions and divergences in the account of Herodotus when compared with other available archaeological material. Moreover, glaring mistakes in Herodotus' account as well, like using the name of Zeus, instead of Ahura Mazda, as the chief God of the Achaemenians and considering Mithra as a foreign deity, make one cautious about accepting his testimony in toto. ■



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# The Sasanian Empire

## Period of rejuvenation

The 425-year rule of the Sasanians, from 226 to 651 CE, witnessed a rejuvenation of the faith with the creation of a powerful high priesthood and restoration of the scriptures.

By **Boman Sidhwa**  
Mumbai, India

**F**ounder of the Sasanian Empire, **Ardeshir Papakan** (224-249 CE) established the Mazdayasni religion as the State religion of the Sasanians. His inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam (as do the inscriptions of the Achaemenian kings before him) proclaims that he is a "worshipper of Mazda". Ardeshir was himself initiated in the Magian rites, but it was his Herbadan Herbad (or Mobedan Mobed) **Tansar**, who helped him in reviving the Zarathushti religion.

**Shapur I** (241-270 CE), son of Ardeshir continued this rejuvenation of the religion. He assembled all the writings on a variety of topics from religion to medicine and astronomy, from across the land and from India and Greece and had them placed in the library of Ganj-i Shapigan.

Shapur's high priest, **Kirder**, helped in the revival of the religion. The inscription on the Kaba-i Zardusht, at Naqsh-e Rostam, proclaims that he was in the service of the religion of Mazda worship. He goes on to say that the orthodox religion was re-established "in the land reached by the horses and men of the King of Kings" implying all the territories conquered by the Iranian monarchs ... "He honored the Mazdayasni religion and chastised the heretics. Many fires in honor of Varham (Bahram Yazad) were established. All those who were

demon worshippers gave it up for they thought it fit to worship God ..."

It was in the reign of Vahram II (276-293) that Kirder was elevated to the powerful position of 'Magapat' and Chief Judge over the whole empire.

Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity during the rule of **Shapur II the Great** (309-379) and a period of aggressive Christian proselytization ensued. Shapur II convened a congress of religious scholars and ordered the collection of all the scattered religious literature.

It was Shapur II's high priest **Adurbad Marespand** who was instrumental in consolidating the assembled religious literature. He composed some prayers in the Pazand language. He is believed to have passed the Zarathushti 'Test of Truth' by undergoing the ordeal of pouring molten brass over his chest without being scalded. This feat can only be accomplished by the soul whose heart is clear and whose footsteps are in accordance with the principles of Asha.

After a period of several monarchs in succession, the religion revived again during the reign of **Khosrow (Chosroes) I** (539-579) also known as **Noshirwan**. The study of Avesta and Zand was encouraged. Irreligious lies and heresies were suppressed and the religion of Mazda worship, as achieved through good thoughts, good words and good deeds, was accentuated.

*This celebrated rock relief at Taq-e Bustan has been variously interpreted. Some scholars interpret it as the investiture of Ardashir II (center) by Ohrmazd (right), both standing on a vanquished enemy, possibly Ahriman. This anthropomorphic representation of Ohrmazd, depicted as a man, is rejected by many scholars who infer the figure to be, instead, that of a High Priest or of Shapur, since nowhere in the Gathas or Younger Avesta is God (Ohrmazd) ever conceived in any physical form. The figure on the left, with a crown of sun's rays, holding barsom twigs, has become the familiar portrait of the Prophet, commonly seen in Zarathushti homes and fire temples. This figure, however, is interpreted by scholars to be that of Mithra, assuming the priestly role.*

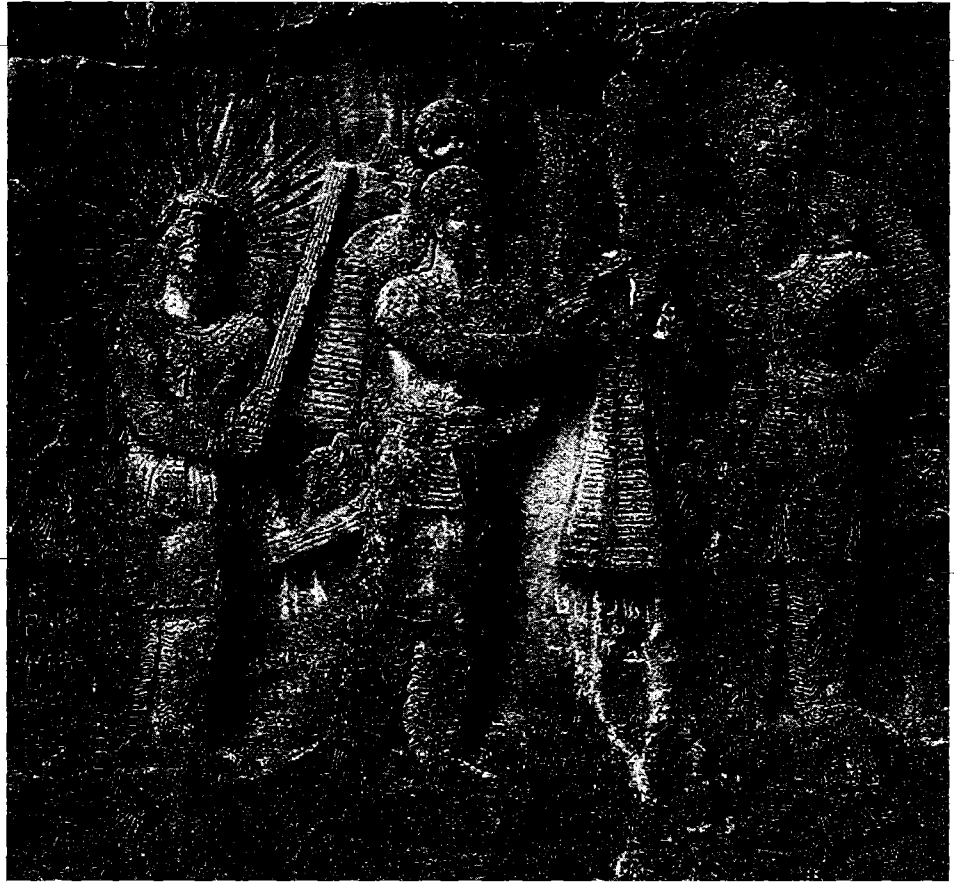


PHOTO COURTESY "PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY" BY JOHN HINNELS

**The priesthood.** Mazda worship being the state religion, priests occupied a supreme position in Sasanian Iran. The Magians, who had full spiritual insight, gave expositions on the doctrine concerning both the spiritual and material worlds. In the administration of their country, the Sasanians gave due importance to the doctrine of the religion of Mazda worship. Other religions were not deemed to be in agreement for the conduct of matters related to government and the sovereignty of Iran and it was Magians who declared that the Avesta and Zand should be studied.

Magis were held in high regard and their advice was sought on public matters. According to the Greek Agathias, "the Persians considered nothing lawful and just unless approved by a Magus." ■



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### **Sasanians and the Cross of Jesus Christ**

Sasanian emperor Khushrow II Parviz (or Cosroes II) led the last and the greatest of the wars with the Romans. Between 607 and 615 CE, the Persians reduced the fortresses of Roman Mesopotamia. Syria, Tarsus and Armenia were overrun in 613. Khushrow's general Shahr-baraz seized Damascus and advanced on Palestine. They took Jerusalem in 614. After a siege, the city was captured and as a booty the *True Cross* on which Jesus Christ was crucified was taken to the Persian capital at Ctesiphon and gifted to Khushrow's Christian wife, Shirin. In 615, Chalcedon fell, and the Persian army was now at the gates of Constantinople, capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. By 619, Egypt and Lydia were conquered. After centuries of conflict, the boundaries of the Persian Empire were restored almost to the extent under the Achaemenians.

Meanwhile, Roman Emperor Heraclius spent a decade preparing a counter-attack, which began with a seaborne invasion of Asia Minor in 622. Four years of bloody battles in Armenia and Azerbaijan followed and the Roman armies marched into Mesopotamia and threatened Ctesiphon. The wars proved to be disastrous for the Persians. There was tragic chaos among the royal family and noblemen, leading to Khushrow's murder in 628.

His son, Sheroy, who took the name of Kobad II, ascended the throne and concluded a treaty with the Romans. The True Cross was returned to the Romans in 628. Emperor Heraclius took it back to Jerusalem and replaced it with much pomp and ceremony. Orthodox Christians have a holiday every year, called "The Elevation of the Cross" to celebrate the cross' return.

*[The above account was extracted mostly from the web site of Charles Kimball, cllkimball@juno.com, at <http://members.vavo.com/Berosus2>. Most of his information about the Cross came from an old history book, "The Outline of History" by H. G. Wells.]*



# Mazdakism and Manichaeism

## Heresies of the Sasanian era

By Nauzer Mistry  
Mississauga, Ontario

**A**rdeshir, founder of the Sasanian Empire (in 226 CE) along with some of the great Sasanian monarchs that followed – his son, Shapur I, Shapur II and Khusrow I (or Noshirwan) – had been wholly successful in restoring the Zarathushti faith as the religion of Iran and in establishing a functioning and powerful theocracy.

However, the last two centuries of Sasanian rule saw an increase in discord from the general populace of Iran. For the masses, the true spirit of Zarathushtra's teachings was being eroded due to ineptitude, corruption, lethargy and general malaise on the part of the nobility (which included many priests, aristocrats, warriors, scholars and even kings).

From the middle of the fifth century onwards, the Sasanian monarchy represented the last embers of a dying cause. The successors of Khusrow I (531-579) or Noshiravan, were not able to satisfactorily continue the Sasanian reign that was founded on a powerful theocracy. There was chaos in the royal family after the death of Khusrow II (in 628). The princes instigated and actively supported by their mothers of foreign faith played havoc in religious and in state affairs. Beneath the façade of splendor and power lurked the germs of endemic decay.

During the four centuries of this dynasty's rule (226-651CE) the Zarathushti faith was the official state religion. However, historians acknowledge the existence of several

'heretical sects' which were often suppressed. In spite of this seeming victory of the Zarathushti orthodoxy, numerous 'heresies' were formulated and two of them directly affected the religious climate that resulted in the breakdown of the solidarity achieved in Sasanian times through uniformity of belief. One such heresy was promulgated by *Mani* at the beginning of the Sasanian era and another was preached by *Mazdak* almost at the end of Sasanian rule.

**The faith of Mani.** It is perhaps of significance that the initial announcement of the Faith of Mani was made on the day that Shapur I (son of Ardeshir) was crowned at Ctesiphon on March 20, 242 Sasanian. In Mani's own lifetime and in the country of its origin, this new faith was combated and execrated as violently by the orthodox of the Zarathushti religion as by orthodox Christianity, when it spread westward into the imperial domains of Rome. Mani, born around 216, was a Persian by birth and may have been raised as a Zarathushti.

Mani's endeavor was to create a synthesis of the Orient and Occident through a combined faith based on existing religions. Manichaeism is definitely a synthesis with acknowledged indebtedness to the teachings of Zarathushtra, Buddha and Jesus. Mani used the Zarathushti doctrine of the struggle between Good and Evil, Buddhist lessons for the conduct of life, and the Christian ideal of life. Mani also supplemented his teachings by incorporating certain Hindu doctrines. There is also an admixture of the Gnostic, Neo-Platonic doctrines.

Manichaeism was initially well received with King Shapur I becoming a friend and protector. However, as time progressed, opposition from the Zarathushti priesthood grew and ultimately Shapur I banished Mani from Iran. For many years thereupon, Mani wandered throughout Central Asia and as far eastwards as China. During his travels, Mani gave final form to his teachings which were then committed to writing. Manichaeism had considerable popularity amongst the Chinese until the seventeenth century.

After the death of Shapur I, Mani returned to Iran but soon thereafter, Behram I (273-276) demonstrated his displeasure with Mani by having him executed. The followers of Mani were persecuted and Manichaeism was banned throughout the entire Iranian Empire. Manichaeism is now, for all intents and purposes, a "dead" religion but it did exist in parts of Central Asia and China for some time.

**The Mazdakite movement,** towards the end of the Sasanian Empire may be an indicator of the germs of decay that had begun to grow from within the Empire. It was a pointer at the inevitable downfall the Sasanians were approaching. Both, Manichaeism and Mazdakism, were fiercely and ruthlessly attacked in Iran with the appearance that the authority of the theocratic state was vindicated. However, the triumph over Mazdakism was short-lived.

Zarathushti, Christian, and Islamic writers have poured unbounded vituperation against both Mani and Mazdak and these writings form our only sources of information regarding Mazdakism. The establishment of Sasanian rule resulted in the Zarathushti clergy acquiring powers second only to those possessed by the king himself. Naturally, the landed aristocracy of Iran also received a generous amount of political power and emoluments. Of course, it was never the intention of either Ardeshir or Shapur I that the Zarathushti clergy or the aristocracy should become the oppressors of the masses and both

kings understood the necessity of dispensing justice to even the most impoverished of their subjects.

Throughout the Sasanian dynasty the spread of Christianity was a constant and ever increasing threat for the newly revived Zarathushti faith. The Christian Roman Empire was steadily expanding and becoming increasingly aggressive. Armenia, which held a strategic position between the Roman and Iranian empires, was itself torn by the religious strife between its own indigenous Zarathushtis and Christians. With both Iran and Rome being theocratic, the affairs in Armenia kindled the flames of war. In war, the landholders were the decisive factor for ensuring Iranian victory. Consequently, the power of the clergy and the aristocracy grew at the expense of the masses. Ardeshir and Shapur I had done all they could to ensure fairness for all Iranians but after the reigns of these two kings, a succession of weaker men ruled the empire providing vested interests to work their will into the affairs of the State.

In the late fifth century, contemporary writers have commented that conditions in Iran were similar to those existing in France on the eve of revolution. Iranian society began to show signs of stress with the rapid adoption and popularity of Mazdak's communistic teachings.

Mazdak began his work in 488 CE and within the course of a few months his followers could be counted in the hundreds of thousands. Mazdakism penetrated all levels of society and even King Kobad I openly declared his sympathies with the new preaching. However, the Zarathushti clergy and aristocrats would not tolerate this challenge to their authority and forced King Kobad to leave his throne for a few years (499-501).

Mazdak may be considered to be the first Bolshevik in history. He not only preached communism with respect to worldly possessions but also advocated the sharing of women amongst an equal number of men.

Mazdak's movement was not merely social but also religious. Mazdak was moved by the idea that devastating diseases required desperate remedies. He taught the value of self-restraint and renunciation of all worldly pleasures. Indeed, he asserted that the desire for pleasure and possessions constituted the universal cause of all hatred, diseases and strife. However, there is very little knowledge of what Mazdak actually taught.

Upon King Kobad's restoration to the throne in 501, royal support for Mazdakism was withdrawn and Kobad's son, Noshirwan, purged Iran of Mazdakism. The last of Iran's 'strong' kings, Noshirwan recognized the danger of Mazdakism to both the State and religion. He firmly suppressed Mazdakism and concurrently dispensed justice to the masses and with equal fervor reigned in the oppressors of the masses. Consequently, not only did he remove the effects of Mazdakism, but tried to destroy the causes of its inception.

Mazdak was murdered and many of his adherents met a similar fate during the systematic suppression of their faith. Although mortally wounded, Mazdakism continued for several centuries as 'heretical sects' recorded by Islamic caliphs in Baghdad. These sects seem to have been inspired by the teachings of Mazdak and cite him as their authority, but of significance is that many of these sects have coupled the name of Mazdak with that of Zarathushtra although the Mazdakite movement and the teachings of Zarathushtra have little in common. ■

*The quotations and references are from A.V.W. Jackson's "Researches in Manichaeism" (Columbia University, 1932) and from the same author's "Zoroastrian Studies" (Columbia University, 1928).*

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## The Much- Misunder- stood Sasanians

By Adi F. Doctor  
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**A**lthough nearly 1400 years have elapsed since the fall of the last Zarathushti Empire, controversies unnecessarily abound regarding at least two points: (1) the causes for the downfall of the Sasanians and (2) the extent of their knowledge of the religion.

**Causes for downfall.** Some prominent Western and Zarathushti scholars have squarely laid the blame for the collapse of the mighty Sasanian Empire on the tyranny of the priests. According to them, the manner in which the Zarathushti religion was practiced, and the manner in which the hegemony of the priests was perpetrated, resulted in a majority of the Iranians rebelling against the religion and the State. They welcomed someone who would give them relief. They claim it is, therefore, not correct to state that the Arab hordes ravaged Iran, and "offered Iranians a choice of either the Koran or the sword."

These observations are not only far removed from the truth, but add insult to the grievous injury suffered by our ancestors. In this article, attempt is made to refute these baseless allegations.

(a) Non-Zarathushti scholars have a different story to tell. Agha Pour-e Daoud says: "In the Arabic and Persian books which have come down to us and which happen to mention the ancient faith of Iran, you will find nothing but imaginary, biased and impassioned statements. In historical works Persian authors expressed joy and rendered thanks to the Almighty

for the fact that the hostile Arab hordes overran Iran, pillaged land of our forefathers and took the ladies of our Royal House of Sasan into captivity and bought and sold them as slaves in the market place of Medina ...”

Prof. Gold Ziffer says: “... Islam had established itself in ancient Persia and had carried to the worshippers of Zarathushtra with the aid of the sword, the faith of the Prophet of Mecca and Medina.”

(b) It is a well-acknowledged fact that Omar Khalif flouted the commandment of Mohammed not to harrass Iran or its religion. So, it is absurd to suggest that the Arabs did not persecute the Zarathushtis of Iran.

(c) If the Iranians were tired of their rulers and priests, why is it that almost all their religious customs and practices were continued for centuries even after their forced conversions to Islam?

(d) Lastly, for more than a hundred years, how did the small Zarathushti kingdoms rule over the eastern part of Iran – Khorasan, Tabaristan, etc., with their religion and canons in tact, even after the Arab conquest?

The truth, therefore, is that every true Zarathushti of those days did his utmost to save his religion. Many Iranians even preferred to perish rather than accept another religion. It is indeed shameful on the part of some modern Zarathushtis to aver that their Sasanian ancestors were happy to give up their culture and religion.

Besides the atrocities and torture they suffered after the Arab conquest, another major reason for the downfall of the Sasanians was the Mazdakis – those Iranians who were converts to Christianity, and inter-faith marriages contracted by the Zarathushtis, particularly after the reign of Khusrow I (Noshirwan-e-Adil).

**Extent of their knowledge of the religion.** It is preposterous for anyone to even remotely suggest that modern Zarathushtis understand the Avesta, and particularly the Gathas, better than their Sasanian predecessors!

First of all, the Sasanians were closer by a staggering 1500 years to our Holy Prophet. Obviously then, they

had far better recourse, not only to the various written scriptures and texts, which were re-arranged and re-grouped by various highly spiritually advanced dasturs and mobeds (like Tansar, Kirder and Adurbad Marespand) but also to the oral traditions that had come down to them from the previous Zarathushti Empires.

Even after Alexander’s conquest of Iran and the destruction of our libraries, many fragmentary texts had come down to the Sasanians. Among others, Parthian Emperor Vologeses I (51-78 CE) had ordered a thorough search for the Zarathushti scriptures, scattered after the ravages of Alexander. Today, we do not possess even a fraction of what the Sasanians had.

Secondly, the study of Iranian philology has made us so arrogant that we believe that since we are able to analyze every Avestan and Pahlavi word 'scientifically' (sic), we have the best means of deciphering our ancient texts. This is nothing but a grandiose delusion.

One simple poser to such people is: Where is the extant grammar for either Avesta or Pahlavi? Avesta is deciphered purely by using and applying Sanskrit grammar and Pahlavi by the use of Arabic grammar. One cannot deny that in some respects, philology does help in coming closer to the original meaning, but certainly not in most matters. Is it any wonder then that during just

the last hundred years; a short prayer like the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* has had literally dozens of differing translations?

Finally, it remains to be shown that the Sasanians, who ruled for over 400 years had not only a cornucopia of knowledge that had come down since the days of our Prophet, but also a ‘*saoshyant*’, a ‘*raenidar*’, who re-drafted and re-composed our scriptures, based on the original 21 ‘*nasks*’ of our Prophet. That was Raenidar, Renovator or Savior, Dasturan Dastur, Adurbad Marespand. Before him there have been many such Raenidars. They have the divine authority to re-structure the religious texts, based on the original 21 nasks composed by the immediate disciples of the Prophet. Only they have access to these very sacred encyclopaedic texts. They take only whatever is absolutely necessary for the times which will follow them.

Thus, our last Savior, Adurbad Marespand, re-composed the scriptures, knowing well the kind of Zarathushti souls who will make use of them in different climes and times. Indeed, the priests and the holy ‘*Magavs*’ in the Sasanian times were far ahead of us in interpreting and understanding the Zarathushti religion. ■

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### DO IT ANYWAY

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;

***Forgive them anyway.***

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

***Be kind anyway.***

If you are successful, you will win some false friends & true enemies;

***Succeed anyway.***

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

***Be honest and frank anyway.***

When you spend years building, someone could destroy it overnight;

***Build anyway.***

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

***Be happy anyway.***

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

***Do good anyway.***

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;

***It was never between you and them anyway.***

*Written by Mother Theresa*





**Years of conquest.** Arabs did have contact with Iranians, even before the advent of Islam, through trade, warfare and travel along the border between Arabia and Iraq, but constant and extensive interaction began only after Arab troops entered the Sasanian Empire in the 630s.

The Muslim's penetration of Iraq began under the first caliph, Abu Bakr with the capitulation of the city of *Hira* in 633. The Muslim troops then confronted the Sasanian army at *Qadisiyya*, where again, though outnumbered, the invaders were victorious. Realizing their vulnerability, Iranian landlords along the west bank of the Tigris sent emissaries seeking peace. The Arabs enjoined them to accept Islam or else pay tribute. The Iranians chose to buy protection, paying both a poll tax, *jizya*, and a land tax, *kharaj*, to the Arab conquerors.

The struggle for control of the capital at *Ctesiphon* consisted of sundry skirmishes and a siege. Famine, sickness and death gripped the city in 637. Yazdegard III, last of the Sasa-

nian king of kings, moved eastward to the town of Hulwan. The Arabs then attacked the city and gave the besieged Iranians three choices: "If you espouse our faith, Islam, you will have the same rights and responsibilities as us. If you spurn Islam, then you will have to pay us tribute. If you reject that option too, meet us in combat and God will choose between you and us." The besieged Iranians replied, "We reject the first and last choices. However, we agree to the second one."

The Muslim armies then advanced northeastward to *Jalula* (Galul). In 638, the Iranian contingent was defeated and "their women were taken as concubines to bear children for Muslim masters." Yazdegard III fled further eastward onto the Iranian plateau. The Arabs ventured into *Khuzistan*, at *Shustar* (Tustar), negotiated an accord, involving tribute payments and advanced on *Susa* and major settlements in this region. Arab tribes moved into the areas on the heels of the soldiers, entrenching

the Muslims' dominance there. Seeing little chance of success, the region's Zoroastrians gradually halted their efforts to win liberation. Subjugation of the people of *Azerbaijan* to the northwest began with raids. When the Sasanian troops could not hold off the advances of the Arab forces, they agreed to pay annual taxes to the Muslims. In return they received personal liberty, retention of their customs, and protection of their fire temples – especially the one at Takht-i Suleiman where a sacred fire called Adur Gushnasp burned.

Muslim military advances continued in the heartland of Iran, onto the plateau, destroying towns and displacing the urban population. "[The Arabs] burn and loot the dwellings ..." says one record.

A major battle took place at *Nihavand* (southwest of Hamadan) in 642. "... the two armies fought a mighty battle with their weapons, raising a great clamor such as never

had been heard before.” Despite heavy losses, the Muslims were eventually victorious, a victory that proved decisive, since “the Iranians never again amassed an army of that size.” *Qum* was taken by the Muslim forces in 644, and thereafter, units from Basra secured control of *Isfahan* and *Ray*.

The Arabs’ first incursion into *Fars*, a traditional bastion of Zoroastrianism, was a foray across the Persian Gulf in 635, and subsequent attacks some years later. Resistance was stiff, and it took a decade to capture the whole province. Events at *Istakhr*, the provincial capital were violent – much of the city was demolished, in 650, and noble families massacred. Muslims took Zoroastrian women as concubines and children as slaves. Arabs invaded the province of Kirman, around the mid-seventh century.

The Arabs entered the *Caspian districts* of *Daylam* (Gilan), *Tabaristan* (Mazandaran) and *Gurgan*, also strongholds of Zoroastrianism, around 643. Here, as was the pattern everywhere, the Ispahbad (chief of the province) “made peace [by paying] a certain tribute on condition [the Muslims] would not attack.” When widespread rebellion broke out in Tabaristan, the Muslim general, “put them all to death to a man”. Reconciliation between the Arab conquerors and their Iranian subjects here did not take place for many decades, and Islam had difficulty taking hold in these three provinces.

The Muslim military attacked *Seistan* in the east, in 651. In one incident, the provincial leader recounted a macabre scene – of the Arab leader sitting on a dais formed from dead bodies. Being Zoroastrians, they refused to approach the platform because they believed it was ritually unclean, and they negotiated from a distance.

Arab incursions into the eastern province of *Khorasan* began around 651. After a series of brief conflicts, the oases cities of old Merv (where

Yazdegard III was murdered by a miller in 651) and Herat fell to the Muslims. Here, as elsewhere, the accords provided security only for the males; the women were handed over to the Muslims as concubines. Advances were also made towards *Balkh*, a regional center for both Zoroastrians and Buddhists.

The Muslims had, by now, forged a vast political domain. Once the Sasanian Empire – from the twin rivers of Iraq to the frontier of Khorasan – had been annexed, the Arab rulers triumphantly declared their authority by inscribing *Bism Allah* (In the name of God) on the obverse rim of Sasanian currency bearing images of Iranian kings and Zoroastrian fire altars.

Arab encroachment on *Central Asia* began between 652-673 as raids for plunder. In 674, the Muslims moved

“ Arab rulers triumphantly declared their authority by inscribing Bism Allah (“In the name of God”) on the obverse rim of Sasanian currency bearing images of Iranian kings and Zoroastrian fire altars. ”

to subdue *Transoxania*. Baykand on the *Silk Road*, was sacked, the homes of those resisting Muslim authority razed, and Iranian men and women enslaved. The Arabs then periodically assailed *Bukhara*, whose population was 50% Zoroastrian, until 676, when its Sogdian queen, agreed to pay tribute. That same year *Samarkand* and *Termez* were attacked, but the Sogdians, many of whom were Zoroastrians, repelled the intruders with help from Turkish tribes. These cities eventually surrendered. The Muslims then confiscated the religious trusts and fire temples.

**After the Fall.** The Muslim capture of Iranshahr and Transoxania, took place over nine decades of intensive military assaults. At the end of this period, the Muslims ruled, at least superficially, the entire region. Now a series of interactions – some friendly, others hostile – began between the Muslims

who formed a politically elite class and the Zoroastrians who represented the majority of the politically subaltern (subordinate) populace.

The Muslim authorities ensured the collaboration of urbanized subaltern populations by continuing the Sasanian system of communal self-government. In this way, the magi began to obtain from the Muslim bureaucrats confirmation of their authority over other Zoroastrians. Cooperation between Zoroastrian clerics and the Umayyad and Abbasid (750 – c. 945 and nominally up to 1258) regimes maintained religious tranquility in Iraq. Muslim and Zoroastrian intellectuals interacted at symposiums, debating religious and secular topics.

The initial segregation of immigrants and natives at the new Arab settlements did not last long. As populations burgeoned, the Muslim garrisons eventually extended to and merged with the older suburbs where the Iranians lived, and again the Muslims and Zoroastrians intermingled.

As Arab Muslims began moving from Arabia and Iraq began moving to *Khuzistan* in the west, the opposition quickly dissipated, in part because both groups chose to work together. The Zoroastrians in Khuzistan traded, cultivated and lived alongside large Jewish and Christian populations, so the addition of Muslims to the social tapestry was more easily accepted in this province than, for example, in Fars where there was less diversity.

In *Azerbaijan*, the influx of Arab tribes continued under the Abbasids, slowly changing the area’s communal composition from a Zoroastrian and Christian conglomerate into an Islamic one. All the communities found common cause in opposing the *Turks* who roamed the medieval Islamic world’s frontiers, although in the long run, the arrival of Turkish nomads could not be halted. Magian customs and etiquette declined further with the Turkification of the

northwest, whereas Islamic customs were strengthened when these tribal people became Muslims.

In *Seistan*, records show that Muslims slowly ventured forth from cities into the countryside to take up residence among the native Zoroastrians. As with previous immigrants (Indians and Turks), intercommunal goodwill developed through trade and religious syncretism. This period of peaceful co-existence in Seistan under the Umayyads and early Abbasids eased the absorption of Arab settlers into the local population. When the Seljuk Turks attacked

Seistan in 1043 and 1052, the Muslims and Zoroastrians united unsuccessfully in battle to ward them off.

*Ray* was transformed into an Islamic metropolitan center in the late eighth century, when various Arab and Muslim tribes were esconsed there. Factional strife led to a large-scale abandonment of the city by Muslims and Zoroastrians alike. Ray became a center of the Twelver *Shi'ites*, who periodically staged bloody uprisings against their fellow Muslims. The final blow came with the *Mongol* destruction of the city in 1220.

At *Qum*, the cooperation among the two communities proved to be short lived. In 733, bitter disputes broke out over the Muslims' encroachment on Zoroastrian-owned lands, waterways and damage to dams. Some Zoroastrians insulted and stoned Muslims while the latter were at prayer and asked them to leave the city. In retaliation, the Muslims attacked and killed Zoroastrian civic leaders, and eventually gained absolute authority. By the early ninth century, Zoroastrians began to move away from Ray.

Zoroastrians initially had charge of day-to-day affairs at *Isfahan*. Gradually, however, as waves of Arab settlement took place, by 767, the Muslim position was strengthened. Bitter conflicts broke out in the tenth century, the city's leading magus was executed,

and other upper-class Zoroastrians were stripped of social authority.

Farther to the south, in *Fars*, the pattern of intermittent violence did not abate, being exacerbated by constant demographic change, as one Arab tribe often replaced another. Throughout Fars, substantial disjunction and conflict, and little cooperation, persisted on parochial levels across intercommunal lines. At new *Shiraz*, interfaith violence was a regular phenomenon in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Medieval chronicles describing the spread of Muslim dominance across

““ The motivations for conversion were a mixture of belief and expediency, ultimately propelled by a quest for benefit – be it spiritual or material, personal or collective. ””

the Iranian plateau tell us that many Zoroastrians left Fars and Kerman, rather than coexist with the newcomers. Those who stayed, moved to small villages such as *Sharifabad* and *Turkabad* outside *Yazd*. Many who remained behind in *Kerman* resettled in the mountains, where they observed Iranian customs and magian beliefs for a long time. All of them continued paying tribute to the Muslims, but otherwise they were left alone.

In the early centuries of Muslim rule in *Khorasan*, economic cooperation between Arab and Iranian (often Sogdian) merchants saw an increase in overland trade involving textiles, furs, ceramics, ivory and other luxury goods from the east to the west. But the peace did not last long; by 860, intermittent conflicts across communal neighborhoods produced extensive carnage, alluded to in a metaphorical comment that “it rained only blood.” The Zoroastrians who had not joined the new political elite, faced a struggle for the survival of their society, traditions and faith. They began clustering together for self-preservation. At *Nishapur*, for example, by the twelfth century, they

had withdrawn into a quarter named after their prophet Zarathushtra.

The pattern of violence and subsequent negotiations was repeated in the *Caspian* region. The Ispahbad Khurshid, who according to Muslim sources, wished to “wrest the empire from the Arabs and restore it to the kings of Iran”, gained control of *Tabaristan*, and “cast aside his allegiance to Islam, put the Zoroastrian sacred girdle back on ... and mistreated local Muslims.” He is said to have imprisoned Muslims, “keeping them fettered until they died of starvation.”, while permitting Zoroastrians

to appropriate the property of those Iranians who dared to adopt Islam. In the mid ninth century, he oversaw the destruction of the few mosques still standing in Tabaristan. Eventually, however, the Arabs defeated the Ispahbad's

army, and sent the prince as a captive to the Muslim ruler, who had him executed in 839. The Caspian Zoroastrians were thereafter punished by tripling the amount of tribute owed to the Muslim authorities.

Even when the era of major Zoroastrian conflicts with the Muslims came to an end in this region, peaceful coexistence did not bring about intercommunal integration for several decades, as parochial Zoroastrians still sought to resist, through nonviolent means, attempts to transform their Iranian society into an Islamic one.

Even while the Zoroastrians of the Caspian littoral were battling the cultural changes, parts of this region fell under the control of Iranian and Turkish dynasties – the Samanids (892-1005), Seljuks (1037-1157) and Khwarazmshahs (1157-1220) – before being devastated by the Mongol incursions. Those regimes played important roles in breaking down barriers dividing Zoroastrians and Muslims.

East of the Oxus at *Samarkand* and *Bukhara* in *Transoxania*, the Zoroastrians refusal to coexist or cooperate with their Muslim conquerors, created a climate of distrust.

Religious riots constantly broke out, but the Muslims triumphed more often than not, especially as the latter group declined in number. For several centuries in this region, coexistence was rare; cooperation was fleeting; and conflict remained the principal form of intercommunal contact.

**Overall Trends of Conversion.** Iranians converted to Islam in three phases: military, urban and rural. The military phase spanned the years of conquest, but only a few Zoroastrians converted at that time. Nonetheless, the specific motives for all subsequent conversions were already at work. Covering a variety of social classes, conversion both then and later was prompted by reasons as disparate as emancipation, fortune, faith and despondence.

The second phase of conversion pertained to the city residents. When the Abbasids attained power in 750, about 8 percent of Iran's city dwellers were Muslim. By the middle of the ninth century, this figure had risen to 50 percent. At the end of the tenth century, only 20% of urban residents were still not Muslims. Patterns of conversion varied across three broad regions: (a) Cities in Iraq, Azerbaijan, Khuzistan and Seistan became settings for fairly peaceful and usually voluntary adoption of Islam; (b) Conversely, cities in Transoxania became an arena for extremes, alternating with eras of missionary zeal and fiscal concerns; (c) Subalterns in the cities of Jihl, Fars, Kerman and Khorasan experienced yet another pattern of confessional change – the periodic preaching and occasional compulsion to induce acceptance of Islam.

The final phase was the conversion of rural Zoroastrians and the establishment of Muslim settlements throughout Iranshahr and Transoxania. From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, increasing numbers of people living in the countryside adopted Islamic tenets. Conversion continued, as in previous centuries, to be based on individual or group choice,

rather than on large-scale events. The Caspian littoral proved to be a region where constant strife, lack of cooperation, and frequent heterodoxy accompanied confessional transition. In village settings, as earlier during the periods of warfare and urban transformation, the motivations for conversion were a mixture of belief and expediency, ultimately propelled by a quest for benefit – be it spiritual or material, personal or collective.

The lack of rigid institutional framework for entering the Muslim community made winning converts easier. A simple declaration of faith, or *shahada* – “There is no deity but God, [and] Mohammed is the messenger of God” – sufficed.

A mid tenth century Zoroastrian treatise provides information on attempts to discourage apostasy. Any Zoroastrian who adopted Islam was considered a sinner whose soul would be barred from heaven and regarded as legally dead. All of his property went to those family members who remained loyal Zoroastrians, nor could he inherit any assets from his Zoroastrian relatives. It was, however, not always possible for Zoroastrians to enforce their ordinances.

Besides the threat of force, Muslim authorities countered magian law with the decree that anyone accepting Islam would be given all the possession of his family. Faced with the loss of both adherents and resources, the Zoroastrians permitted the apostate to return to the worship of Ahura Mazda at any time. He would have to recite the *fravarane*, undergo a purification ritual, and then retie a sacred girdle (*kushti*).

Those who abandoned Islam and reverted to their former beliefs were regarded as apostates under Islamic law, and were either forced to adopt Islam again or were put to death.

The large numbers of Iranian Zoroastrians who held tenaciously to their beliefs for many centuries contradict the conclusion that the faith died out rapidly because it was discredited

politically or ecclesiastically. Nor did Zoroastrian institutions collapse as swiftly as often surmised, despite their losing their old power base. And not every Iranian abandoned Zoroastrianism, for small pockets of people held on to their indigenous religion (especially in Fars and Kerman) and others relocated to India. ■

[Excerpted by Roshan Rivetna from “Conflict and Cooperation, Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society, by Jamsheed K. Choksy, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997. See review by Dr. Kersey Antia in FEZANA Journal, Summer 1998]



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*The heights by great men  
Reached and kept,  
Were not attained  
By sudden flight;  
But they while their  
Companions slept,  
Were toiling upwards  
In the night.*

- Sir Walter Scott



By Daryoush Jahanian, MD  
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**T**he history of Zoroastrians (Zarathushtis) in Iran after the Arab conquest can be summarized in three words – oppression, misery and massacre. The Arabs invaded Persia not only for its reputed wealth, but to bring new converts into the faith and to impose Islam as the new State religion. They were religious zealots who believed that “in a religious war if one kills or is killed, his place in heaven is secured.” To impose the new religion, the old culture and creed had to be destroyed.

**Centers of culture targeted.** First they targeted the libraries, universities and scholars. Only a few examples reflect the enormity of the calamity that befell upon Persia in 630 CE.

When the Arab commander Saad ebn-e Abi Vaghas faced the famous library of Ctesiphon, he wrote to Omar asking what should be done about the books? Omar wrote back: “If the books contradict the Koran, they are blasphemous, and on the other hand if they are in agreement with the Koran, then they are not needed, as for us only the Koran is sufficient.” Thus the library was destroyed and the books – products of generations of Persian scientists and scholars, were thrown into the Euphrates.

By the order of another Arab ruler, Gotaibeh ebn-e Moslem in Khwarezmia, those who were literate, along with all the historians, writers and mobeds were massacred and their books burned in fire. After one generation, the people were illiterate. Other libraries in Ray and Khorasan received the same treatment and the famous international University of Gondishapour was later destroyed along with its library. Only a few books survived, because they were translated into Arabic by the Persian scholars.

**Inhumane acts.** To conquer Persia and force Islam, the Arab invaders resorted to inhumane acts including massacre, enslavement of men, women and children and imposition

# Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran

**The saga of Zoroastrian suffering in Islamic Iran from the days of the Arab conquest, through the oppression, humiliation and massacres during the Safavid and Qajar dynasties, to relative freedom in the later Pahlavi era.**

of heavy taxes, ‘*jizya*’, on those who did not convert. By the order of Yazid ebn-e Mohlab in Gurgan, so many Persians were decapitated that their blood mixed with water would energize the millstone to produce a day’s meal for him, as he had vowed. He also massacred and hanged 400,000 Persians in Mazandaran and imposed the heavy *jizya* tax on the survivors who did not convert.

After the battle of Alis, the Arab commander Khalid ebn-e Valid ordered all the prisoners of war to be decapitated “so that a creek of blood flows”. When the city of Istakhr (in the south) put up a stiff resistance against the Arab invaders, 40,000 of the residents were slaughtered or hanged. The Arabs colonized, exploited and despised the population. In this context they called the Persians, ‘*ajam*’ (mute). One of the Omayyat Caliphs was quoted: “Milk the Persians and once their milk dries, suck their blood.”

Despite all these actions that were committed in the name of religion, one could not find even 1,000 men in the Arab army who knew even one sentence from the Koran.

**Voices of protest.** The first voice of protest came from Firooz, a Persian artisan and prisoner of war who assassinated Omar, in retaliation for having been enslaved by an Arab.

Subsequently, there were other uprisings against the Arab occupation, all to be suppressed brutally, including Abu Moslem of Khorasan, the ‘white clads’, the ‘red clads’ (lead by Babak), Maziyar, Ostazsis, Afshin and others.

Finally, the Arabs were driven out of Iran by an ordinary man from the Seistan named Yaghoub (Jacob) Leisse Saffari, who forced the occupiers to the Tigris river where the stream was turned toward his army, many of whom died and he himself developed pneumonia. At his death bed he received the Caliph’s emissary who presented him jewels and offered him the governorship of several provinces. Yaghoub responded: “Tell your ruler, I have lived all my life on bread and onion. If I survive, only the sword will rule between the two of us”.

The two centuries of Arab rule of Iran have been compared to a nightmare: “A dark night of silence that was only interrupted by the hoot of owls, moans of widows and orphans and the harsh sound of thunder.” [A. H. Zarrinkoob, “*Two Centuries Silence*”, in *Persian*, p. 85].

**Independence.** With the independence of Iran however, the suffering of Zoroastrians was not over. Many Iranians by this time had been Arabized and picked up Arabic names. The new Moslems were no less hos-

tile to their old religion than the Arabs. Now, Arabic was considered a scientific language, the knowledge of which would place an individual in a higher class among the scholars. A ruler of Khorasan, Abdollah ebn-e Tahir, would not acknowledge any language but Arabic. He banned publications in Persian and by his order all the Zoroastrians were forced to bring their religious books to be thrown into the fire. Those who refused were slain.

**Poets and scholars.** During the Islamic period, many poets and scholars attempted to revive Persian culture and history and reintroduce the national identity to the nation. Zoroastrian poets, *Daghigi* and *Zartosht Bahram Pazhdoh* and the Persian poets as Firdowsi, Hafiz and Khayyam are to be mentioned here.

*Firdowsi*, by versifying the *Khodai-namak* as his epic *Shah Nameh* – Persian poetry almost devoid of Arabic words, truly revived the Persian language.

*Hafiz*, a beloved mystical poet always refreshes the love of the Zoroastrian faith in his poetry by calling himself a follower of the old magi. *Khayyam*, a poet, scientist, astronomer, mathematician and a true intellectual, abhorred the Muslim clergy and their blind adherents.

**Suffering under the Seljuks and Safavids.** Despite these intellectual efforts, the suffering of Zoroastrians continued. When a group of fanatic Muslims destroyed the wall of a mosque and blamed it on the Zoroastrians, by order of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, many Zoroastrians of greater Khorasan were massacred. The Parsis are known to have originated from Khorasan.

Despite repeated mass slaughters, in the early 1400s, between 3 to 5 million Iranians remained Zoroastrian. The Caspian province of Mazandaran, at this time, not only preserved the old religion, but was ruled by a Zoroastrian dynasty – Paduspanian, who remained in power until 1006 Hijri. The Safavids, by entice-

ment and the use of violence, converted the majority of Iranians into *Shiism*. By the order of Shah Ismail, the founder of the dynasty, many *Sunni Muslims* were slaughtered but in the turmoil many Zoroastrians were included.

During the rule of Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1628) a strong, unified Iranian army was at war against the Ottomans. Meanwhile, he dispatched troops to Mazandaran with the task of Islamizing the province, and by the use of force and violence the mission was accomplished.

By his order many Zoroastrians were deported to a ghetto town near Isfahan named *Gabrabad*, where they lived in abject poverty. Due to the extent of their indigence, the Zoroastrian community was the only one who could

“ Despite repeated mass slaughters, at the turn of the fifteenth century, 3 to 5 million Iranians still remained Zoroastrian ... and at the turn of the eighteenth century, the number was 1 million. ”

not afford to present a gift for the coronation of King Suleiman III.

Despite that, the population of the Zoroastrians of Iran in the early 1700s was estimated to be one million. The most horrendous massacre of the Zoroastrian population took place by order of the last Safavid king, Shah Sultan Hussein (1694-1722). The Zoroastrian population of Isfahan and nearby towns and villages at this time has been estimated to be several hundred thousand. Nearly all were slaughtered or coerced into conversion.

Reports of Christian priests reflect the magnitude of the genocide that took place three hundred years ago in central Iran. The entire population of Gabrabad was wiped out. Bodies of Zoroastrians thrown in the central river, Zayandeh Rood, has been witnessed and reported by the French mission. By their estimate, a total of

80,000 Zoroastrians were massacred. The towns of Nain and Anar (between Isfahan and Yazd) converted to Islam. The local language of the people there remains Dari, the same dialect that is spoken exclusively by the Zoroastrians of Iran. The customs and traditions of Abiyaneh (a town near Kashan) remain Zoroastrian. It is believed that the Zoroastrians of Khoramshah, a suburb of Yazd are the descendants of the survivors of that infamous blood bath.

**The Afghan invasion.** The Safavids were overthrown by Afghan rebellion under the leadership of Mahmoud. On arrival in Kerman, in 1719, the Afghans first massacred the Zoroastrians of Gavashir. Despite that, in retaliation for the carnage done by the Safavids, two years later, the Zoroastrians of Kerman formed a brigade led by a Zoroastrian, Nassrollah, and supported the Afghans.

**Afshar and Zand Dynasties (1736-1796).** The Afghans were eventually defeated by a strong military leader named **Nadir Shah Afshar** in 1747

who defeated the Ottomans and invaded India. 12,000 Zoroastrians served in the army of Nadir Shah. But the victories of Nadir and resurgence of a strong Iran did not change the fate of the Zoroastrian population and their agony went on. Upon return from India, Nadir Shah had become insane and after a failed assassination attempt that wounded his arm, he became suspicious of his own son who was blinded at his order. When Nader learnt that his suspicions were unfounded, he resorted to mass murder. None of the Zoroastrian soldiers of his army survived. In this blood bath, most of the Zoroastrian population of Khorasan and Seistan were massacred. A few survivors traveled on foot through the central desert to Yazd and Kerman. Today only a few Zoroastrian families of Iran trace their lineage to Khorasan.

The Afshar dynasty was short-lived; in 1750, **Karim Khan Zand**, a kind-

hearted man, took over and established the city of Shiraz as his capital.

**The Qajar Era (1796-1925).** In 1796, the Zands were challenged by Agha Mohammed Khan Qajar and retreated to Kerman. For several months, the city was under siege by the Qajar army.

A Zoroastrian astrologer *Mulla Gushtasp*, son of Bahman, through astrological signs, predicted that on Friday, 29th day of the first Rabie, 1209 Hijri, the city would fall to the Qajar army. The Zand ordered Gushtasp to be jailed and if his prediction did not come true, to be killed. As he had forecast, on the predicted date, due to treason by one of the Zand's commanders, the gates were opened and the city fell to the Qajars. Agha Mohammed was so incensed by the strong resistance put by the people of Kerman, that he ordered 20,000 of the residents to be blinded. But because of Gushtasp's forecast, the Zoroastrians were spared. Mulla Gushtasp is the great grandfather of the late Keikhosrow Shahrokh.

Besides this one favorable incident, the Zoroastrians, during the Qajar dynasty remained in agony and their population continued to decline. The community was regarded to be outcast, untouchable and impure. Various inhumane methods were used to convert them to Islam. According to one law if any child of a family converted, he was entitled to all the family inheritance. This was a materialistic incentive to proselytize the minorities. According to Edward Browne, the walls of Zoroastrian houses had to be lower than that of the Muslims. If a Zoroastrian was riding a donkey, upon facing a Muslim, he would have to dismount, until the Muslim had passed. During rainy days, Zoroastrians were not allowed to appear in public, for fear the water that had run down their bodies would contaminate the Muslims. Zoroastrian food was considered impure and many public places refused to serve them.

Harassment and persecution were almost the norm of daily life.

Zoroastrian girls were kidnapped, forcefully converted and married and brought to town with celebrations.

On top of all this misery, Zoroastrians had to pay the heavy religious *jizya* tax. Under the crushing financial burden, some had to convert and others declared themselves Moslems, picked up Islamic names, but in secret continued Zoroastrian practices. The latter group today are called *Jadid* (new).

Count de Gobineau, French Ambassador to Iran in the 1850s, spoke sor-

“ Only 7,000 of them are left and only a miracle may save them from extinction ... these are the descendants of the people who one day ruled the world. ”

rowfully of the plight of Zoroastrians during the Qajar era. “Only 7000 of them are left and only a miracle may save them from extinction,” he says, “These are the descendants of the people who one day ruled the world.” Massacre of Zoroastrians continued during the Qajar rule. The last one took place in Turkabad (Yazd). Some Zoroastrian families are known to be the descendants of the few survivors and the Zoroastrian surnames of Turki, Turk and Turkian are the best witness to that lineage.

Due to the extent of oppression, agony and destitution, many Zoroastrians ventured to India. They had to risk their lives by passing through hostile desert on donkeys or even on foot. Some who could afford it, made the journey on board ships. In India, they were recognized by their *sudreh* and *kushti* and were sheltered by their Parsi brethren. In the new environment, they proved their talents in business and science and prospered.

Hearing of their woeful plight in Iran, the Parsis dispatched emissaries to help their co-religionists in Iran, notably *Maneckji Limji Hataria* in 1854. He devoted many years building and repairing religious and educational institutions, including a

boarding school in Tehran. In 1882, through prolonged negotiations, he was able to persuade the Qajar king to abolish the burden of the *jizya* tax. With his encouragement, Zoroastrians formed associations named after the then king – Nasser-i Anjumans. I would like to quote noted Bombay ophthalmologist the late Dr. Adarbad Irani: “Words fall short of expression, but we should devote our love and warm tears to our Parsi brothers who at the most critical time came to our rescue.” The cherished memory of Maneckji will remain forever in the hearts of Zoroastrians of Iran.

We name our sons Limji and Maneckji and Maneckjian is chosen as the last name.

**Relative freedom.** Now, after centuries of suffering, Zoroastrians began to enjoy the breeze of relative freedom, and in spite of limited opportunities, they expressed their talents and abilities.

One businessman, *Jamshid Jamshidian*, known as Arbab Jamshid founded a trade center in the capital city of Tehran. He was well respected for his honesty and success even by the Qajar King (Mozaffareddin Shah). The notes of Jamshidian center generally were regarded and accepted as bank notes.

Another Zoroastrian family, *Jahanian*, established a business center in Yazd. They expanded their business and even opened a branch office in New York. The notes of the Jahanian Center were also accepted as bank notes by the public. The five brothers were planning to found the first Iranian National Bank. But the assassination of one of the brothers, Parviz, forced them to abandon the plan. The Iranian public generally held the British responsible for the assassination, believing that they did not want the Iranians to establish and own banks. Due to the unstable national economy, the two business centers at the end went bankrupt.

**Constitutional monarchy.** The revolution to establish constitutional monarchy took place in 1909. The

Qajar king, Mohammed Ali Shah was ousted and his young son, Ahmad Mirza was installed king by the revolutionaries. The Zoroastrians were active in this revolution and one of them, Fereidoun Fereidounian was martyred. The new constitution officially recognized Zoroastrians as a minority entitled to one Parliamentary deputy.

The first elected deputy was Jamshidian, who after one term, voluntarily withdrew and the next deputy, a young energetic politician named Keikhosrow Shahrokh was elected who was trusted and respected by the Muslims as well as Zoroastrians. Shahrokh many times reminded the people: "Although I have been elected by the Zoroastrians, in Parliament I am a representative of the whole nation." A powerful deputy, Modarres said, of him: "If I can name one true Muslim, that will be Arbab Keikhosrow."

Because of his honesty, during a famine he was appointed director of the central silo. In this capacity he encouraged all the landowners to sell their crops at a reasonable price to the silo. When Ahmad Shah asked for an unreasonably high price, Shahrokh, reminded the king: "Your majesty, do you recall what you said when you took the oath at the inauguration of Parliament?"

That you would always think and act for the welfare and prosperity of the nation?"

**Prosperity in the Pahlavi era.** Shahrokh was instrumental in the ascendance of Reza Shah to the Persian throne. Reza Shah a true nationalist, picked up '*Pahlavi*' as the dynasty name and emphasized Persian nationalism. Pre-Islamic history – Peshdadian, Kayanian and Sasanian – was taught in the schools and Iranians were given a new sense of identity and a fresh direction.

Persian vocabulary was refined by replacing many Arabic words with pure Persian vocables. Schools, roads, the national railroad, factories and universities were built. The first

chair of Avestan studies was established in the University of Tehran, under the directorship of the late *Professor Pour Davoud* who reintroduced the Avesta to the Iranians. After him one of his students, the late *Dr. Bahram Fravashi* chaired the section. When Professor Pour Davoud passed away, a Tehran newspaper wrote: "The service of the professor to the nation is no less than that of Yaghoub Lisse who defeated and forced the Arabs out of Iran."

Shahrokh remained a trusted confidante of Reza Shah. When the building of the Iranian Parliament was consumed by a fire, Reza Shah looking for an honest and trusted man to carry out the enormous project of reconstruction, appointed Shahrokh for this task. At the inauguration of the new building, Reza Shah was so impressed that he said: "Arbab Keikhosrow", although Arbab is redundant (he did not like titles), "Keikhosrow, let me tell you that the destruction was well worth this construction".

After Shahrokh, *Arbab Rustam Guiv* was elected to the Parliament and

“ It was truly a miracle that Zoroastrianism as a religion, and Zoroastrians as a community, survived the harsh treatment of history. ”

later to the Iranian Senate. His generosity has enlightened many Zoroastrian communities around the world. The next deputy was economist Dr. Esfandiyar Yeganegi, founder of an irrigation company who was respected by the whole nation for his generosity and charitable works.

When a Parsi delegation met with Reza Shah and expressed their appreciation for all the achievements, he replied: "all that you have said is correct, all that I have done is for my country, but you tell me what can you do for your original homeland?" Parsis at this time contributed and founded two high schools (Anoushiravan Dadgar for girls and Firooz-Bahram for boys). These schools

have graduated many Iranian scholars, professionals, leaders and statesmen who all have cherished memories of their student days in these Zoroastrian schools. Parsis also contributed to founding schools in the Zoroastrian villages of Yazd. The late *Peshotan Marker* is to be mentioned. He founded Marker (known as Markar) Foundation that includes boarding schools. These schools were managed and directed by the late *Soroush Lohrasp* who recently passed away. The number of other non-Zoroastrian students in the Zoroastrian schools surpass far beyond the Zoroastrians.

Meanwhile, the community valued education so much that the illiteracy rate among Zoroastrians is today almost zero percent (the national illiteracy rate approaches fifty percent). The rate of Zoroastrians with a university degree is the highest in the nation.

They have founded schools, hospitals, industries, business centers and charitable organizations. The first modern city in Iran, in a Tehran suburb, was founded by Zoroastrians.

The community has produced physicians, army generals, engineers, professors, professionals and industrialists. They have held important govern-

mental positions up to the rank of acting finance minister and deputy prime minister. Two mobeds educated at Cama Athornan in Bombay, have assumed an effective role in the religious leadership and education of the community.

Zoroastrians are well recognized as the genuine Persians and respected for their reputation of scrupulous honesty. In 1971 a young Parsi in Iran told me his experience during a job search. He had applied for several jobs and the Presidents of the companies had informed him that they had other applicants, but because he was a Zoroastrian, they would consider him first. Dr. Rustam Sarfeh had written about another episode. In

Reviews by Ardeshir B. Damania  
Davis, California

## A YEAR AMONG THE PERSIANS

By Edward G. Browne, Adam &  
Charles Black, London, 1893.

Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926) traveled to Iran during 1887-1888. He took a steamer to Turkey, hired a servant and some horses and started on a year-long journey into Iran. Upon his return to Cambridge, England, to take up the post of Professor of Persian, he began work on a book about his experiences in Iran. The book is very well written and holds the interest of the reader till the very end. The language may seem rather dated to many readers today, but one must not forget that it was written more than a century ago. I have retained the same spellings in order to convey the pronunciations and dialect used in those bygone years. Among other things, his book particularly mentions about the harsh treatment and difficult life Zoroastrians in Iran had to undergo due to religious persecution.

**Ill-treatment and insult.** Zoroastrians in Iran in those days were referred by the derogatory term 'Guebre' (or Gabar). Browne wrote, "The headquarters of Zoroastrianism in Persia were at Yezd and Kirmán, in and about which cities there may be in all some 7000-8000 adherents of the old creed. In other towns they are met with but sparingly, and are not distinguished by the dull yellow dress and loosely-wound yellow turban which they are compelled to wear in the two cities above mentioned."

Browne traveled to Yezd and observed: "First, then, of the Zoroastrians. Of these there are said to be from 7000 to 8000 in Yezd and its dependencies, nearly all of them being engaged either in mercantile business or agriculture. From what I saw of them, both at Yezd and Kirmán, I formed a very high idea of their

1953, when Tehran was under curfew, he was on his way to visiting a patient when he was stopped by a gendarme. As he did not have his I.D. with him, he was taken to a military station. The officer in charge asked his name and then allowed him to go free, escorted by his soldiers. When Dr. Sarfeh asked: "Don't you want me to bring my ID," he replied: "It is not needed. Your name indicates that you are a Zoroastrian and we trust and respect you."

**Iran today.** During the recent revolution of 1979, many scholars of the Zoroastrian religion suffered physical, psychological and financial punishment. Some were arrested, jailed and beaten. Others lost their jobs and even suffered the loss of a dear one, yet they have persevered. Among others, Dr. B. Fravashi, Dr. A. Jafarey, Dr. H. Razi, Dr. Tafazzoli and Dr. H. Vahidi are to be named as examples. We must dedicate our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to these men, whose devotion has brought us closer to understanding the message of Zarathushtra.

Today many Iranians in search of their national identity and original roots are looking into Zoroastrianism. Although currently in Iran, many discriminatory laws are practiced and Zoroastrians, along with other minorities, are not employed by the new government, nevertheless they enjoy the public trust and respect. The people regard them as the original Iranians who morally and historically represent their ancestors.

In spite of all the hardships and indignities suffered by their ancestors, Zoroastrians will always feel patriotic towards Iran. In fact, even after a thousand years of living in India, the Parsis still look to Iran as their homeland.

In studying the history of Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran, one may conclude that it was truly a miracle that Zoroastrianism as a religion, and Zoroastrians as a community, survived the harsh treatment of history. As the late Dr. A. F. Bode once said: "So many religions and nations have become part of ancient history. There must be a reason why Zoroastrianism has survived." ■



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*With malice towards none, with charity for all,  
With firmness in the right,  
As God give us to see the right,  
Let us strive on to finish the work we are in.*

- Abraham Lincoln



*Towards the turn of the last century a few Western scholars, concerned enough about the fate of the Zoroastrians and their ancient religion, traveled to Iran to record what they saw and heard first-hand. Among these scholarly adventurers were two whose travelogues are well documented: Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926) and Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862-1937). Browne was a professor in Persian at Cambridge University, and Jackson was a professor of Indo-Iranian languages at Columbia University. They recorded in some detail first hand accounts of the plight and untold hardship due to religious persecution, suffered by the less than 8,000 Zoroastrians remaining in Iran. Their books, which make very interesting reading even hundred years later, are reviewed below.*

*Left, a Gabar family.*

# Battling all Odds

## Two western authors witness the suffering of Zoroastrians in Iran a hundred years ago.

honesty, integrity, and industry. Though less liable to molestation now than in former times, they often meet with ill-treatment and insult at the hands of the more fanatical Mohammedans, by whom they are regarded as pagans, not equal even to Christians, Jews, and other people of the book. Thus they are compelled to wear the dull yellow raiment already alluded to as a distinguishing badge; they are not permitted to wear socks, or to wind their turbans tightly and neatly, or to ride a horse; and if, when riding even a donkey, they should chance to meet a Musulmán, they must dismount while he passes, and that without regard to his age or rank."

The Zoroastrians had become accustomed to these unjust rules, however

humiliating they were, as minor vexations. But when there was a change of leadership or when a corrupt or fanatical Governor held office, the Zoroastrians suffered worst. At those times the 'lúts' (goons) would take over. During one such period, when King Muhammad Shah died (5 October 1848) and the next king Shah Násiru'd-Dín took over, many Zoroastrians were robbed, beaten, and threatened, unless they would renounce their ancient faith and embrace Islám and several hundreds, who would not do so, were actually put to death. Browne reports finding at least one old Zoroastrian still living at Yezd who, on that occasion, had been threatened, beaten and finally shot with a pistol merely for

standing firm and refusing to renounce the faith of his forefathers.

**The courage of Námddár.** On another occasion, Browne describes how a fanatic, who had disguised himself as a Zoroastrian, killed another Musulmán. The Musulmán once again threatened to sack the Zoroastrian quarter in Yezd and massacre the inmates, unless the alleged murderer was surrendered to the authorities. The person who was alleged to have committed the crime according to the fanatics was named as one Námddár, a relative of the chief-priest (Dástúr-í-Dástúrán) of the Zoroastrians. Námddár, innocent as he was, surrendered himself to the authorities and was prepared to die rather than endanger the whole

Zoroastrian community which would have suffered greatly had the threat posed by the fanatics been carried out. "I will go before the Governor" he said, "for it is better that I should lose my life than that our whole community should be endangered." However, at the last moment the real murderer was found out and executed, and Nám-dár was vindicated.

**Ferocious intolerance.** Ardashír Mihrbán, the Yezd merchant banker who cashed Browne's promissory note, told Browne that in 1874 his own brother Rashíd was killed by a mob of fanatics, led by one Rujub Ali, as Rashíd was walking through the bazaar in Yezd. The murderer was traced to the seaport of Bushire after strong representations were made to the Shah, but he was never brought to justice. A tablet has been put up in Rashíd's honor on the wall of the fire-temple at Yezd.

Under the enlightened administration of Prince `Imádu'd-Dawla, Browne reports, the Zoroastrians enjoyed comparative peace and security, but even he was not able to check always the ferocious intolerance of bigots and the savage brutality of the lútís. Browne witnessed the following: "While I was in Yezd a Zoroastrian was bastionadoed [beaten repeatedly with blows] for accidentally touching with his garment some fruit exposed for sale in the bazaar, and thereby, in the eyes of the Musulmán's, rendering it unclean and unfit for consumption by true believers."

**Zoroastrian lady molested.** On another occasion, Browne says, the wife of a Zoroastrian of modest means, a woman of singular beauty, was washing clothes at a stream near the town of Yezd, when she was noticed with admiration by two Musulmán's who were passing by. One of them clasped her and tried to kiss her but she resisted and cried for help, whereupon her molesters threw her into the stream and ran away. The

next day the Zoroastrians complained to the Governor, and the two cowardly scoundrels were arrested and brought before him. The Zoroastrians held great hopes that justice will be done. But as the case opened in court, an old Zoroastrian who was the only eye-witness (for a woman's testimony was not considered in court in those days) was so threatened with dire consequences, and at the same



*A Gabar merchant.*

[FROM "PERSIA PAST AND PRESENT" BY A. V. W. JACKSON, 1906].

time promised a reward, by the fanatics and a prosperous Mohammedan businessman, respectively, that he changed his story. The old witness' affidavit in court said that he only heard the woman's cry for help and then saw her in the water, thereby implying that the cry for help was due to falling in the stream rather than due to any molestation. Hence justice was denied once again and the Zoroastrians left the court disappointed.

**Unjust civil code.** And yet another unjust and evil practice reported by

Browne in Yezd, and presumably existed all over Iran, was the following: "When a Zoroastrian renounces his faith and embraces Islám, it is considered by the Musulmán's that he has a right to all the property and money of his ungenerate [unconverted] kinsmen. A case of this sort had arisen, and the renegade [former Zoroastrian] had taken a sum of ninety túmán's [nearly £28] from his relatives. The latter appealed to the Prince `Imádu'd-Dawla, who insisted on its restoration, to the mortification of the pervert and his new friends and the delight of the Zoroastrians."

There were many other incidents, including abduction and forcible conversions of Zoroastrian youth. Only the limit of space requires that I leave them out. The reader may do well to obtain this book from a library and read for himself.

**Return to England.** Browne left Tehran on 27 September and reached London on 10 October 1888. A full year and seven days had passed since he first set foot on oriental soil at Trebizonde, Turkey. A few days after his return to England he took up the post of Professor of Persian at Cambridge and held it till his death in 1926. On the last page of his book he wrote "Thus ended a journey to which, though fraught with fatigues and discomforts, and not wholly free from occasional vexations, I look back with almost unmixed satisfaction. For such fatigues and discomforts I was amply compensated by an enlarged knowledge and experience, and a rich store of pleasant memories which would have been cheaply purchased even at a higher price. For without toil and fatigue can nothing be accomplished, even as an Arab poet has said:

**And he who hopes to scale the heights without enduring pain,  
And toil and strife, but wastes his life in idle quest and vain."**

## PERSIA, PAST AND PRESENT

By A. V. W. Jackson, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1906.

**N**ow I shall report about the writings of University of Columbia Professor Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862-1937). This book includes very interesting pictures photographed by the author himself. Jackson too began his journey to Iran by steamer out of New York. At that time Jackson, a professor of Indo-Iranian languages, had just published a book—[Jackson, A.V.W. 1899. *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, Columbia University Press, New York] and was eager to remedy his lack of first-hand knowledge of the land where Zarathustra was born, lived and had made his first convert. He was also very interested to meet the Zoroastrians still living in Iran, learn how they manage despite religious persecution and to actually enter a fire-temple.

Jackson wrote about his visit to Isfahan in the year 1903 thus: "I found that, although there were some six of them [Zoroastrians] doing business in the bazaar, only three resided regularly in Isfahan; the rest were Gabars from Yezd. I have designated them as Gabars after the native fashion, but this term is derogatory, being equivalent to 'unbelievers', and is never employed by the Zoroastrians themselves. They designate themselves as Zardustíán, 'Zoroastrians', and sometimes as Bah-Dínán, 'those of the Good Religion' or Fársís, i.e., 'from Fars' or 'Pars' of the old province of Persia Proper. As for the name 'Fire-Worshipper [Atash-Parast]', the Zoroastrians in Persia as well as in India object to that title."

[Note: Jackson had visited Bombay to learn more about the Zoroastrian faith before he left for Iran. It was there that he met young *Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla* (1875-1956)

who later went to Columbia University to study under Jackson. *Dasturji Dhalla* took over, on his return from USA, the post of high priest of the Parsis in Pakistan.]

"As regards their dress, the Zoroastrians have always been obliged to adopt a style that would distinguish them from the Mohammedans, and it is only within the last ten years that they could wear any color except yellow, gray or brown, and the wearing of white stockings, spectacles or rings was long interdicted. The use of spectacles and eye-glasses, and the privi-

““ They [Zoroastrians] are compelled to wear the dull yellow raiment as a distinguishing badge; they are not permitted to wear socks, or to wind their turbans tightly and neatly, or to ride a horse; and if, when riding even a donkey, should they chance to meet a Musulmán, they must dismount while he passes. ””

lege of carrying an umbrella, have been allowed only within the same decade, and even now the Gabars are not permitted to ride in the streets or to make use of the public baths." One cannot imagine how humiliating these compulsions and insults must be to the Zoroastrians.

**Religious books destroyed.** When Jackson asked the Zoroastrians at Yezd to be shown their religious books, they told him that all remaining important religious books and manuscripts had been sent to Bombay for safekeeping. They ascribed much of the loss of their sacred books to the persecution following the Islamic conquests. Jackson writes:

"About a century and a half after the Arab conquests, or more accurately in the year 820 CE, there was a Mohammedan governor of Khorasan, named Tahir, who was the founder of the Taharid dynasty and was called Zúl-Yamínein [The ambi-dextrous]. He was a bigoted tyrant, and his fanaticism against the Zoroastrians and their scriptures knew no bounds.

A Musulman, who was originally descended from a Zoroastrian family, made an attempt to reform him [Tahir] and laid before him a copy of the book of good counsel, *Andarz-i Buzurg-Mihr*, named after the precepts given by Buzurg-Mihr, the prime minister of King Anushirvan [Noshirwan] The Just (531-579 CE).

"He asked the governor's permission to translate it into Arabic for his royal master's edification. Tahir exclaimed 'Do books of the Magians still exist?' On receiving an affirmative answer, he issued an edict that every Zoroastrian should bring him a man or maund [about 14 pounds or 6 kgs] of Zoroastrian books, in order that all these books might be burned, and he concluded his mandate with the order that any one who disobeyed should be put to death. As my informant added, it may well be imagined how many Zoroastrians thus lost their

lives, and what number of valuable works were lost to the world through this catastrophe", notes Jackson (in 1906). And yet they did not give up their ancient faith!

**Early attempts to improve the lot of the Zoroastrians.** "The Zoroastrians who dwell within the city [of Yezd] are largely occupied in trading. This privilege was not accorded to them until about fifty years ago, and they are even now subject to certain restrictions and exactions to which no Mohammedan would be liable. They are not allowed, for instance, to sell food in the bazaars, inasmuch as that would be an abomination in the eyes of the Moslems, who regard them as unbelievers and therefore unclean. Until 1882 they were oppressed by the *jazía* tax, a poll tax imposed upon them as non-believers, and this gave an opportunity for grinding them down by extortionate assessments and trading-tolls. The *jazía* was finally repealed by Shah Nasr ud-Din, who issued a *firman* [royal decree] to that effect September 27, 1882."



The Parsis of Bombay worked through the Society for the Amelioration of the Zoroastrians in Iran, which they had founded with an endowed fund in 1854, sending at the same time a representative, M. H. L. Hátaría to Iran to look after the interests of their co-religionists. Up to the time of the Shah's *firman*, a Zoroastrian was not allowed to build an upper story on his house, or, in fact, erect a dwelling whose height exceeded the up-stretched arm of a Musulman when standing on the ground. Within a year after the *firman* was issued a Zoroastrian, Rostam Dinyar had to flee for his life because he had ventured to go beyond the traditional limits and add an upper room to his humble abode in a village near Yezd. However, his flight did not mean that the matter was closed. The enraged fanatics killed an innocent Zoroastrian, Tirandaz, instead.

Jackson left Yezd on 13 May 1903 for Tehran, where he did extensive research on the ancient city of Rei (or Ray or Ragha), a suburb of Tehran. At Rei stands the ruins of the most ancient *dokhma* constructed according to all the requirements of the Vendidad canon, i.e., that it should be on a hill, far from human habitation, but accessible to corpse-eating birds and animals. As the *dokhma*, mentions Jackson, had no door since it was feared that Mohammedan fanatics may desecrate its sanctity, the body was lifted by means of ladders, ropes and chains and lowered gently inside. [Note: When this reviewer visited the town of Ardakan, Iran in 1992 he was told that the use of the *dokmas*, earlier discouraged, was completely banned after the Iranian revolution. Today the *dokmas* at Ardakan (near Yezd) have been desecrated and graffiti painted all over their walls. Inside the central well refuse and some human bones remain.]

Jackson's meeting with Ardeshir Edulji Reporter, the Amelioration Society's second agent [Note: In 1905 Kaikhushrow Khan Saheb took over as the third and perhaps the last agent of the Amelioration Society in Iran] in Iran is described in his book:

"Because of my interests and because of the associations of Zoroaster's name with Rei, the suburb of Teheran, I was anxious to meet the Zoroastrians, and was happy that among the first visits that I received was one from the secretary of the Zoroastrian Amelioration Society, Ardeshir Edulji Reporter, agent in Teheran for the Parsis of Bombay. This gentleman, whose brother I had previously known [in Bombay], gave me excellent opportunities for becoming acquainted with the circumstances of his co-religionists at the capital, and he added material to my stock of information concerning the Zoroastrians throughout Iran. His statistics show that the number of Zoroastrians is increasing slightly and not declining". The total number of Zoroastrians in Iran in 1903 were about 11,000, as follows:

Yezd and nearby villages	8,000 and 8,500
Kerman	2,400
Teheran	324
Kashan	45
Shiraz	42
Kum (Qum)	8
Isfahan	6
Sultanabad	4

Jackson later continued his journey from Tehran into Central Asia. But that is the subject of another book. Both Browne and Jackson went to Iran because they had heard or read about the most difficult times the Zoroastrians in Iran had to endure. Both wanted to know first-hand about the true status of the Zoroastrians and both describe this aspect eloquently in their books. Perhaps they feared that the Zoroastrians and their religion were being wiped out, leaving them bereft of any first-hand knowledge of the culture and the religion.

The language in Jackson's book does not seem dated as in Browne's writings and together with illustrations of black and white pictures it makes very interesting reading. I would recommend both books to anyone searching for his or her Zoroastrian roots and reasons as to why a coura-

geous band of Zoroastrian stalwarts with their families left their *madur vutun* (mother country) to look for a new home in India. I specially urge the Zoroastrian youth to read these books for only then they will know of the great sacrifices made by our forefathers to save our religion and culture. Only then they will know of the pain the youth inflict upon their elders when they leave the Zoroastrian fold and marry outside the community. The Zoroastrians of Iran who stuck to their principles and the teachings of Zarathustra could have very easily converted to Islam and saved themselves a great amount of hardship, injustice and suffering. But they did not! Can we, their descendants and present torch-bearers, aspire to do anything less? ■



**Dr Ardeshir Behramji Damania** is a Geneticist at the University of California, Davis. He was associated with several projects sponsored by the United Nations and the World Bank dealing with crop improvement in developing countries. His last international project before coming to the U.S. was in Syria where he studied Persian and Zoroastrian histories. His current research interests include conservation of biodiversity and the use of biotechnology for crop improvement. He has published over 90 scientific papers and books and is the senior editor of a publication "The Origins of Agriculture and Crop Domestication". He is also a contributing editor to the journal *Diversity*, in Bethesda, Maryland.

Excerpted by Roshan Rivetna from "The Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh" edited and translated by Shahrokh Shahrokh and Rashna Writer, Edwin Mellon Press, 1994.

Shahrokh Shahrokh is the grandson of Keikhosrow Shahrokh and co-editor Rashna Writer is a Research Fellow at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.

# At the Turn of the Twentieth Century

A glimpse of the time and events that shaped the turbulent history of Iran at the turn of the twentieth century, as recorded in the memoirs of arguably the most outstanding Iranian Zoroastrian of that era - Keikhosrow Shahrokh.

## THUMBNAIL HISTORY OF IRAN (1850-1950)

Keikhosrow Shahrokh (1874-1940) arguably the most outstanding Iranian Zoroastrian of the late 19th/early 20th century, was an active participant in some of the most dramatic events in that period of Iran's turbulent history. In addition to being a staunch Iranian patriot, the Arbab was to remain, throughout his life, a deeply committed Zoroastrian, and was indeed, in the vanguard of social reforms which he appears, virtually single-handedly to have championed on behalf of his beleaguered community.

He was born in the reign of Nasser Ed-Din Shah and spent the first fifty years of his life under Qajar rule.

**Last days of Qajar rule.** The reign of Nasser Ed-Din Shah (1848-1896) coincided with the shrinking of Iran's borders as a result of British and Russian expansionist policies and the evolution of Iranian national consciousness. While the Shah had a certain interest in reform, the very system of Qajar government, and the Shah's capriciousness, meant that the opportunities afforded the country in the half-century of relative peace were not fully realized. The outer trappings of reform therefore, could not conceal the negative features of Qajar rule, such as oppression of the people and abuse of power and privileges by the elite.

Later Qajar rulers were powerless to confront the powerful vested inter-

ests which opposed their reforms, and to reduce the factionalism of the bureaucracy whose primary interest was personal gain. Furthermore, the rivalry of Russia and Britain, which the Qajars were powerless to stamp out, and which in fact, they participated in for personal profit, was in the final analysis to have a divisive and debilitating impact on Iran. Iran escaped colonial status by resisting Western political and economic imperialism during the Qajar dynasty by playing Russia against Britain.

In the 19th century, the *ulema* were in the vanguard of the *Constitutional Movement* and sought to remove the monarchy which had now mortgaged Iran to foreign financiers. The Qajar monarchs granted major concessions of Iranian territory, natural and economic resources, and eventually, control of central elements of national sovereignty to the rival colonial powers of Britain and Russia. Thus, while nominally independent, Iran was, under the Qajars, an eastern outpost of Russian and British imperialism.

It was however, the infamous tobacco concession of 1890, and the oil concessions of 1901, which were to precipitate the *Constitutional Revolution*. Iranians were outraged by the squandering of the nation's resources by the Qajar shahs who had played into the hands of the rivalry between Britain and Russia. The Constitutional movement that resulted was to receive support from the vast majority of Iranians, spear-

headed by the clerics, merchants and intellectuals.

The Shah was compelled to accede to the demands of the people, and the *Majlis* drafted a Constitution which was ratified by the Shah in 1906. In spite of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911, Iran's decline as an independent State was hastened in the last twenty-five years of Qajar rule (1900-1925). Glaring military weaknesses meant that at the start of the *First World War*, in 1914, Iran proclaimed its neutrality, but even before that there were detachments of Russian and Turkish troops present on its territory. When war was declared, all four powers fighting on the eastern front - Russia, Turkey, Germany and Britain - could intervene with impunity, both politically and militarily.

**Rise of the Pahlavi dynasty.** After the War, Britain attempted to control events in the country by giving tacit support to Reza Khan and his Cossack brigades, which then marched into Tehran in 1921 and arrested the government. The new Shah disregarded the Constitution and dominated the political process, building a highly centralized government, in the 1920s and 1930s, linking himself with Iranian nationalism while defying Western hegemony in the region.

Reza Shah kept order in Iran for sixteen years. With the outbreak of *World War II* in 1939, Iran declared its neutrality. However, Iranian oil was far too important to the Allied

cause, and British and Russian troops jointly occupied the country in 1941. Reza Shah abdicated, and his son, **Mohammed Reza Pahlavi** ascended the throne in the same year.

With the outstanding exception of Keikhosrow Shahrokh, the small, impoverished Zoroastrian community of Iran were non-participants in these momentous events.

**Condition of Zoroastrians in Iran**, in Yazd and Kerman in particular, were so bad that they were not even allowed to wear decent clothes. They were forbidden to wear overcoats or the kind of robe worn by the Muslims and even in winter, they wore special footwear made of cotton. Zoroastrian men had to cover their heads with a dark, cream turban, a special cumbersome headgear, meant to cause discomfort.

They were not allowed to ride a horse, a donkey or a mule, and there was no other means of transport. On rainy days they had to be careful not to approach or come into physical contact with a Muslim, or they would be beaten to death. Zoroastrians were often attacked and beaten by Muslims in the streets. At the bazaar, they were not allowed to touch any food or fruits. In Yazd, the men would normally carry a large shawl. When visiting a Muslim's home, they would place it under their feet to prevent the Muslim's carpet from being polluted.

Zoroastrians were chastised as 'fire-worshippers' (*atash-parast*) and as being unclean (*najes*) by the very fact of being born Zoroastrian. The persecution of Zoroastrians, therefore, seemingly grounded in theological precepts, was to institutionalize their marginality until the advent of the Pahlavi dynasty, when the rule of law was extended to include the Zoroastrians of Iran.

**Social reforms.** Hearing of the severe hardships suffered by the community, the Parsis of India raised funds and formed the *Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Zoroastrians in Persia*. The first and most outstanding emissary the Society sent to Persia (in 1854) was

*Maneckji Limji Hataria*. Maneckji brought the plight of the Zoroastrians to the attention of the wealthy Parsi backers of the Society, the British and the Qajar kings. He undertook the repair of atash bahrams and adarians, built new dokhmas, emphasized the importance of education by establishing schools for Zoroastrian children. Maneckji's greatest service was his role in the removal of the hated jizya tax. It took 23 years of difficult negotiations to achieve this, in 1882.

Keikhosrowji Khan-Saheb, the Society's next emissary, was the founder of the *Yazd, Kerman and Tehran anjumans*. Ardeshir Edulji Reporter succeeded him as representative of the Amelioration Society. He served for twenty-eight years, also helping the freedom fighters during the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, until his death in 1933.



*Keikhosrow Shahrokh* [photo above] played a central role in the upliftment of the Zoroastrian community. At the turn of the twentieth century, Keikhosrow spent 11 years in Kerman setting up schools. Of the condition of the one village school in the Zoroastrian quarters in Kerman, he writes: "It consisted of a single room built with mud-brick and unplastered walls. There was no carpet or chairs, not even a decent toilet." He thereafter established three girls' schools, three boys' schools.

“ Zoroastrians were often attacked and beaten by Muslims in the streets ... In Yazd, the men would normally carry a large shawl. When visiting a Muslim's home, they would place it under their feet to prevent the Muslim's carpet from being polluted. ”

He personally supervised all the schools and served as Principal, in addition to teaching. He was also involved in building of the Zoroastrian national school (now the Iran-shahr School) in Kerman.

Keikhosrow moved to Tehran, and was determined to establish proper schools in the capital. He recalls: "One night when I was playing backgammon with the Arbab [Jamshid Jamshidian] I decided to make a bet with him ... If I won he would have to donate the building [of the Anjuman headquarters which belonged to Jamshidian]; and if I lost, I would never again broach the subject of the school with him. Fortunately I won, and the following day Arbab transferred the Deeds to the school [Jamshid-e Djam]."

Subsequently Keikhosrow was instrumental in securing donations and establishing: a girls' school in 1918, donated by Shirin, wife of Ardeshir Khosrow Zare; an adaran and girls' school donated by the Dubash family of Bombay in 1913, with further donations from Iran and the Bombay Parsi Panchayet; the Firooz Bahram high school in 1932, donated by Bahram Bikaji; the Anoshiravan Dadgar school with a donation from Lady Ratanbai Tata. These four Zoroastrian schools in Tehran were originally meant exclusively for Zoroastrians. In the 1940s three quarters of the students were Muslims.

Around 1907, Keikhosrow re-established the Kerman and Tehran anjumans which had ceased functioning

and served as secretary and president for his lifetime.

An important step was taken by Keikhosrow when he ventured to change the traditional clothes of Zoroastrian school students replacing them with a uniform. Later he was instrumental in making changes to the dress code required of adult Zoroastrians. These innovations were opposed by the community, who feared repercussions from the Muslims.

In those days, there was no punishment for killing a Zoroastrian. In one incident a servant of the governor of Kerman killed a Zoroastrian, Dinyar Mehraban, with the motive of robbery. Keikhosrow recalls: "I was in Tehran at the time and sent a cable to the governor, Sardar Zafar, who then had his servant executed." This was the first time punishment was meted out for killing a Zoroastrian. In numerous other instances, it was through Keikhosrow's efforts and his respected position among the Muslim elite, that he was able to secure justice and punishment for wrongful acts committed against Zoroastrians.

Keikhosrow was responsible for removing the restriction on Zoroastrians riding on horseback. He writes about this incident: "One day in 1923, I unexpectedly received a personal letter from the British Embassy in Tehran. It contained grievances from a British subject, a Parsi, Mr. Pestonji, principal of the school in Yazd, who had been pulled off his donkey and had been badly beaten." This gentleman's work entailed visiting the Zoroastrian schools in the various villages around Yazd, and being an old man, needed to ride on his donkey. "Upon receipt of this letter," writes Keikhosrow, "I asked for an audience with His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was Minister of War at the time. He listened to me, and sent a cable to the commander of the army

in Yazd. His instructions were that Zoroastrians, thenceforth, be permitted to ride on horses and donkeys, and whoever opposed them should be severely punished." This is how the restriction on riding on horseback for the Zoroastrians was brought to an end.

**The Majlis.** *Arbab Jamshid Jamshidian* was the Zoroastrian representative in the First Session of the Majlis, in 1906. Not surprisingly, the First Majlis (and those that followed) were not very democratic. The peasants and tribes went unrepresented, despite constituting 80% of the population, and the 'minorities' (Jews, Armenians, Zoroastrians) could nominate just one representative to Parliament, but were not in fact accorded the right to vote. The king, judges and cabinet ministers

“ “ The Majlis was not very democratic ... Minorities (Jews, Armenians, Zoroastrians) could nominate just one representative to Parliament, but were not in fact accorded the right to vote. The king, judges and cabinet ministers are restricted to those of the [Islamic] Ja'fari Shi'a faith. ” ”

are restricted to those of the [Islamic] Ja'fari Shi'a faith.

There were important issues being debated and urgently resolved by the Majlis in its formative years. Notably, the part of the Constitution dealing with the definition of an Iranian subject, was being drafted. It stated that "the Muslims are equal under the law".

"As soon as I read of this development in the newspaper," writes Keikhosrow Shahrokh, "I protested in the strongest possible terms ... I gathered together a few Zoroastrians and we went to see the Speaker of the Majlis, as well as other deputies. I wrote and distributed a 'bill' and made a number of speeches on the premises of the Majlis itself ... all this activity resulted in the amend-

ment of the original draft to read: 'All Iranian subjects are equal in the eyes of the law.'

Keikhosrow was elected Zoroastrian representative in the Second Majlis, and was re-elected for 13 succeeding sessions. "One should not imagine that it was an easy task to serve as a deputy," wrote Keikhosrow, "Besides the expectations, realistic or otherwise, there existed jealousy, discord and enmity ..." To continue to maintain a good relationship with all concerned, to represent a weak community in a powerful ruling population, especially at a time when lawlessness, change in the monarchy, world war and religious fanaticism prevailed, was a great challenge.

**Introduction of Zoroastrian calendar.** In 1925, Keikhosrow Shahrokh was instrumental in influencing Reza Shah Pahlavi to introduce Zoroastrian names of months in the Iranian calendar. Today this solar '*Khorshidi*' (Shamsi) calendar is operational in Iran in conjunction with the Islamic lunar calendar (*Hejri Ghamari*). Both commence from 15 July 622 CE, the date of Prophet Mohammed's

migration (Hejrat) from Mecca to Medina. The Zoroastrian *Yazdegardi* calendar, commences 10 years later, in 631 CE, when the last Sasanian king Yazdegard III ascended the throne. Both *Khorshidi* and *Yazdegardi* calendars have the same Zoroastrian month names, and start the New Year on March 20/21.

**Conclusion.** A significant part of Keikhosrow Shahrokh's work for, and on behalf of, the Zoroastrian community as educationist, member of the Tehran Anjuman and as the Zoroastrian representative in the Majlis, was to see the introduction of some of the most fundamental and revolutionary social reforms. This helped overturn centuries of prejudice and repression under which the community had labored. ■

**T**he mountain shrines consisted essentially of sacred rocks in high and lonely places, and in going up to them each year the Yazdis appeared to be maintaining an age-old observance which existed long before the establishment of sacred fires.

The original shrine buildings were very modest. Pilgrims slept either in rough shelters nearby, or on the open mountainside, among their tethered donkeys. Later, pious individuals, or villages acting collectively, built pavilions where pilgrims could stay, sheltered from heat and cold, and these now cluster around the shrines.

They again are unostentatious, and in no way isolate pilgrims from the immensity of the mountains, and the sense of awe which this induces.

The first of the annual pilgrimages, beginning seventeen days after Nou-ruz, was to *Pir-e Herisht*, closest to Sharifabad. During the centuries of oppression, the mountain shrines were left in solitude between times of *hajj* (pilgrimage), for there were only sacred rocks there and nothing that could be stolen or harmed. As new shrine buildings were erected, it became usual to appoint a caretaker to live there all year round, keeping a lamp lit in the sanctuary by night, and caring for the buildings.

*Pir-e Banou*, (Shrine of the Lady of Pars) perhaps the greatest of the Yazdi Pirs was in the mountains at the north-western end of the plain, and its *hajj* comes in early July. The journey from Sharifabad to Pir-e Banou used to take over 24 hours on the old donkey-track. The custom was for the main body of pilgrims led by their priests, to set off together from Sharifabad, about three hours before dawn, and arrive at the shrine just before dawn on the following day, having spent the midday heat resting in the shade of wild almond and fig trees on the hillsides.

In the past, it was prudent to travel thus in large groups, to reduce the danger of molestation; and pilgrimages were in general a great means of

# The Mountain Shrines of Yazd

The great 'Pirs' (shrines) in the mountains around Yazd, have a dominant place in the hearts of Iranian Zoroastrians. Visiting them was an undertaking of spiritual significance, as well as one of incidental pleasure.



fostering solidarity among the Zoroastrians, with news exchanged, marriages arranged, and friendships kept in good repair.

The ways were made safe under the Pahlavi dynasty, and modern pilgrims board lorries or buses, that somehow manage to clatter and lurch their way up to the shrine. A flat table altar had been set over the rock. Pilgrims could still touch the rock and lay their offerings directly on it, if they wished. Every pilgrim brings some

offering, to a mountain Pir, as to a village shrine; some had plucked sprays of white almond-blossom, together with cypress twigs. Men and women alike, then said the kushti prayers. "The evening meal was a merry one," writes the author, "with wine and drinking of toasts and singing."

The most popular pilgrimage of all had come to be *Pir-e Sabz*, a dramatically beautiful sanctuary on the north-eastern side of the plain. It's *hajj* was in June. Here the sacred

rock is high up on the steep face of a great lime-stone mountain, beside a pool of water, fed by a spring that flows, seemingly miraculously, out of the bare cliff above. The course of the trickling water is green with maidenhair fern. Legend has it that a daughter of Yazdegard, called Hayat Banu (Lady of Life) was taken alive into the rock, as she was being chased by the Arabs.

At the shrine, the pilgrims occupied their own pavilions, and to these they would invite one another in turn in the cool of early evening. Guests were received at a cloth laden with fruits and nuts, wine was offered, and toasts were drunk to benefactors, living and dead. As the party grew livelier, men sang in turns, or played instruments, or told stories. The evening wore on with dancing and mime. Supper was eaten about midnight, and most went to their beds at one or two in the morning.

Unlike the gathering at Banu-Pars, this was a mixed, indeed a cosmopolitan throng, with Zoroastrians from Kerman, Tehran, Abadan and other Iranian cities, and even one or two Parsis, mingling with local pilgrims. Six priests had come to the shrine that year from Yazd, and they occupied their own pavilion, just above the Sharifabad one. They took no part in the convivial side of the pilgrimage, but ate their meals separately and in silence, and rose long before dawn to recite Avesta, the steady murmur of their prayers drifting down the mountainside to us through the sound of falling water.

As the roosters began to crow, many of the laity rose and contributed their prayers also, standing on the terraces and facing the brightening sky in the east. By day, the priests sat for hours on the low terrace outside the shrine, where pilgrims sought them out to recite Avestan for them. Often they wanted special prayers against sickness or misfortune, and while these were being said, priest and sufferer would make *paivand* with a kushti.

Apart from the usual rites of pilgrimage, there were two bridal parties there that year, and they distributed sherbet and sweets, and exchanged presents between the families, these being carried head-high from one pavilion to the other in happy procession, with music and cheering.

There was also a *sedreh pushi* ceremony for a girl of about ten from the village of Khorramshah. This took place on a terrace beneath the branches of an ancient willow, with nothing beyond but blue sky and the peaks of distant mountains. The girl, like the priest, was all in white.

The simple ceremony attracted the lively interest of a number of Tehranis, some of whom did not wear the kushti,

“ It was perhaps at the mountain shrines that one was made most sharply aware of the ancientness of the religion of Zarathushtra, and the closeness of the links between its worship and the physical world. ”

and had never seen an investiture. Others, who did, sometimes wore the sacred cord in modified style. Thus one woman had hers slung from one shoulder, over her dress. The local Zoroastrians seemed courteously tolerant of all such variations of practice, the only matters on which they insisted being that shoes be left at the door of the sanctuary, and heads be covered; and in 1963, a Yazdi established a benefaction whereby a constant supply of clean white kerchiefs was kept in the porch of the Pir, to be used by the bare-headed.

In times of donkey-travel, the Sharifabadis had to journey two days to make their pilgrimage to the southernmost shrines. One of these, *Nareke*, is a tiny domed sanctuary at the foot of Mount Nareke, which rises as an almost sheer cliff above slopes of fallen rock. The *hajj* of Nareke is in mid August, the last of the annual pilgrimages.

The devotional atmosphere was well created on the first evening, when the

shrine was full of the sonorous murmur of Avestan, uttered by priests and laity, men and women. A gleaming *afargan* holding fire was set on the pillar-altar, and sent out the odor of incense, while reflecting the light of many candles around the altar's rim. In one part of the room a *mobed* was reciting *tandarosti* for two women. He was seated in traditional manner, cross-legged, upon the floor, rather than on the tiled bench that ran around the walls. On those walls, were (as was customary) not only bright mirrors, but also photographs of notable Zoroastrians of earlier generations, who seemed to gaze down benevolently on their faithful successors.

*Seti Pir* is the only one of the Great Pirs which is down in the plains, east of Yazd. It's *hajj* coincides with the first day of the *hajj* of Pir Sabz. It is said that this shrine marks the place where Yazdegard's queen, the mother of Banou-Pars and Hayat-Banu, herself fleeing from the Arabs, sank exhausted and was taken alive into the mountain side.

The *hajj* of *Narestan* was in June, soon after that of Pir-e Sabz. The shrine buildings enclosed the trunks of three myrtles, whose branches were adorned with strips of cloth, tied around them by devotees.

**Traditional Zoroastrianism and urban reformists.** It was perhaps at the mountain shrines that one was made most sharply aware of the ancientness of the religion of Zarathushtra, and the closeness of the links between its worship and the physical world, Ohrmazd being venerated here with archaic rites in the temple of his own creation.

The gulf was also demonstrated between traditional Zoroastrianism and the religion which the urban reformists were striving to evolve. Some of the young people who came from Tehran were deeply serious in their attachment to their ancestral faith, but they shrank from the sacri-

fices, the singing and dancing in the shrines, and the general robustness of the old and to them alien ways.

They were in search, not only of a devotional experience, but also of some philosophy and found little sustenance in the traditional beliefs and usages; and these, it was plain, could not survive unmodified much longer, even in the rural communities, where modernizing influences were pressing in ever more urgently.

The Sharifabadis and their neighbors on the Yazdi plain have been the staunchest upholders of the ways of their forefathers, despite both oppression and persuasion; and through their steadfastness they have preserved much of the ancient practices and beliefs of their venerable faith. ■



# Lest We Forget

By Dinaz Kutar Rogers

## Do you remember any stories or sayings?

“Lest We Forget” is hosted by Dinaz Kutar Rogers, a high-school biology teacher and published writer. Readers are invited to contribute their stories, lore, legends and memories related to our faith, community, Iran, India, that we grew up with as young children. Jot down those sayings your mother used to say, and send them in, with your version of the meanings, to Dinaz at 1240 Takena SW, Albany, Oregon 97321, tel: (541) 967-1911, email: drogers@proaxis.com.

## Keep Snapping that Rope

By Feroze Motafram  
Brookfield, Wisconsin

It was with mixed emotions of excitement and apprehension that I arrived at Marquette University to study for my Master's in Electrical Engineering. The journey from India had been long, and the unavailability of a promised room at the local YMCA did not help relieve my jet lag and sheer exhaustion. However, the helpful folks at the Y not only managed to find a room for me at one of the university dorms down the road, but also carried my bags for me. I was grateful to have found a comfortable room and bed.

Next morning I went through the totally foreign ritual of class registrations and was surprised to emerge from this process with courses that were actually relevant to my academic field. Later in the afternoon, I returned to my room to freshen up and start apartment hunting.

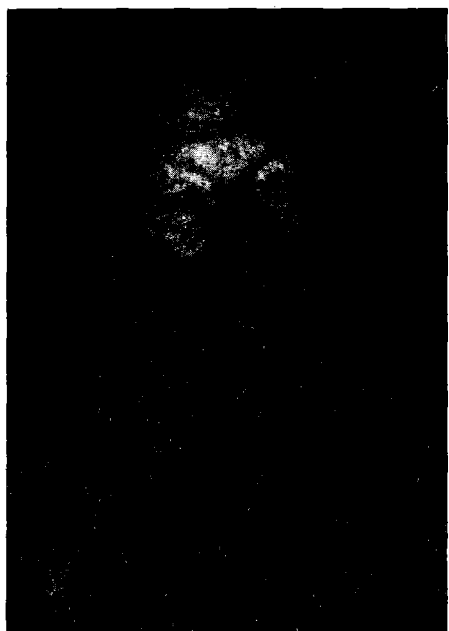
Imagine my shock and surprise upon opening the door to be greeted by the biggest man I had ever seen, dressed in nothing but white briefs, a sharp contrast with his ebony skin. Wendell Phillips, a basketball player, stood at

an impressive height of 6' 8" – a giant, but as gentle a one as you would ever meet.

Needless to say, for the first few minutes, neither of us could figure out a word the other was saying. When we eventually realized that each of us was speaking English, albeit with different accents, I managed to discover that it was Wendell's room that had become my temporary shelter. He was most gracious about the situation and offered me his hospitality as long as I needed it.

I felt that I had a lot to be grateful for, and that night, before turning in I donned my topi and started performing my kushti prayers. Wendell sat on the bed, leaned forward, chin in hand and watched me with utter fascination, especially as I snapped my kushti three times during the ritual. Upon the completion of my kushti, he asked me what it was all about. I mumbled something about thanking the Lord for a good day.

Still suffering from jet lag, I spent the next day in a daze, but I distinctly remember going to bed by 9 pm. At



*Excerpted by Roshan Rivetna from Chapter 10 of “A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism” by Mary Boyce, Oxford University Press, 1977. The help of Rusi Dalal of UK, in obtaining the source materials, is gratefully acknowledged. This book is the fruits of a year (1963-1964) spent by Mary Boyce in the village of Sharifabad near Yazd, where she lived with Zarathushti families and took part in domestic and communal observances. Only the chapter on the ‘Pirs’ is excerpted here.*

about 10 o'clock I found myself being shaken gently but persistently by my roommate. "Feroze," he said, "Wake up! You didn't pray to the Lord today!" Believe me, I had neither the gumption nor the desire to argue with him, so I got out of bed and did my kushti under his approving gaze. Thanks to Wendell, in the last twenty years, I have never skipped this ritual.

A couple of days later, I found an apartment and Wendell was amazed at my dual feat of finding an apartment and adjusting to my classes and study schedule. Without any hesitation, he attributed this to my regular ritual of prayers.

"Man," he said, "Whatever you are doing is pretty effective. You keep on snapping that rope, you hear? And, while you are about it, snap it a couple of times for me too!"

Occasionally, I would run into Wendell on campus, and he would ask me if I was still "snapping that rope". I would assure him that I was, whereupon he'd make approving sounds and continue on his way.

I lost touch with him after I graduated, but I will never forget him. ■

**Feroze Motafram**, *Plant Manager for Eaton Corporation, came to the US in 1977 and graduated with a Master's in Electrical Engineering from Marquette University. He lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with his wife Mahrukh and two children, Freya 13 and Jamsheed, 7.*

## In Appreciation

[Contd. from column 3]

*"Lord, we are able. Our spirits are Thine. Remold them, make us, like Thee, divine. Thy guiding radiance above us shall be A beacon to God, to love and loyalty."*

- Harry S. Mason & Earl Marlatt

[1] John B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, 6th ed., Macmillan, 1980.

[2] *From Persia to Iran, an Historical Journey*. Photographs by Inge Morath, text by Edouard Sablier, Viking Press, 1960.

# In Appreciation

By Dinaz Kutar Rogers

In the conclusive battles of Qadisiyya (636 CE) and Nihavand (641 CE) Zarathushti Iran was overwhelmed and defeated by the invading armies of Islamic-Arabia and Islam was imposed on the Iranian population. By persecution and persuasion, most were converted but there were brave and stubborn pockets of resistors who refused to capitulate their banner of the 'sun' to that of the 'crescent moon and star'. For those acts of defiance, Zarathushtis' lands and other worldly possessions were mercilessly seized and according to the Koranic edict, allotted to those who had embraced Islam. Their defiance to this newly-imposed religion on their fellow Zarathushtis, earned this distinct breed of resistors the derogatory epithet - 'gabars'.

Once a community of proud land-owners and living in comfort, they were now materially ruined but not in spirit, for they knew that their only crime was their faithful adherence to their Zarathushti Din.

To offset the stigma of the term gabar, they called themselves 'bahdinan' (*behdins*), people of the Good Religion, but fear of persecution over the years, discouraged them from saying it openly. Carefully and mindfully they kept to themselves and their demeanor was unobtrusive, restrained and quiet and their clothing coarse and yellow.

They performed in meticulous detail, and adhered faithfully, to all the ancient rituals of their faith, in their nondescript, unassuming and unostentatious fire temples. In order to practice the rituals and observations of their belief, much like the European Jewry who had led segregated lives in the ghettos before the war, these bahdinans lived isolated from the main population, in remote villages of their own, dispossessed and living in abject poverty.

For centuries, these faithful souls were caught in a frightful cycle of religious persecution which made them secretive and surreptitious, that led to suspicion and hatred and further oppression and mistreatment.

After being looked down upon and held in utter contempt for centuries by the Muslims for hanging on to "silly and ancient superstitions and useless rituals", their lot in recent years is changing for the better under a more tolerant government. This has been further helped by the fact that the population of Iran in general has begun to realize their true national heritage, culture and history that has spanned over 5,000 years. However, after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the jury is still out as to how the next chapter of the People of the Good Religion of Iran, the legitimate heirs of Ariyana, will be written.

For over the last 1,300 years, these loyal, long-suffering bahdinans of Iran have endured unspeakable atrocities for their faith and loyalty, yet through it all have kept the fires of the faith burning in a land called Ariyana where once Ahura Mazda ruled supreme and the Zarathushti Din was the State religion of at least three mighty Persian Empires - the Achaemenians, Parthians and Sasanians.

So, lest we forget, let us salute our admirable and remarkable pioneers of *madur vutun* (mother country) Iran. Uncompromising and unflinching, they suffered in silence and poverty in the cause of Ahura Mazda and Asho Zarathushtra, and have, over the centuries, kept the fires of the Good Religion ablaze, making it possible for all of us today to be a living testimony to their unrelenting courage and perseverance.

*"Are ye able" said the Master*

*"To be crucified with me?"*

*"Yea" the sturdy dreamers answered*

*"To the death we follow Thee."*

Refrain:

[Continued on column 1, this page]



## Three interpretations

In the last issue, Parvin Damania asked if anyone knew the meaning or usage of “**Varadhvaroo khay, ne sariya no shokh pal-e**”. We received three different interpretations.

*Mr. & Mrs. Furdoon Doctor*, who are visiting their son in California, said it means: “Eat the varadhvaroo, and give some excuse when offered the sariya,” or “enjoy the offering of something as rich, expensive and luxurious as the varadhvaroo, and make an excuse when offered something of much humbler origin as the sariya.” They interpret “shokh” as “excuse”.

*Rohinton Rivetna* thinks it means: “Eat the rich, fancy, varadhvaroo (full of ghee and nuts) and make a pretense of eating the humble sariya.” He interprets “shokh pal-é” as “being in mourning”.

*Sam Kerr* wrote that it means “Eat a varadhvaroo and savor the taste of the sariya to follow.” He interprets “shokh” as “savor”. This dates back to the times when weddings were celebrated with family and friends for 4 days. Guests indulged in a rich assortment of breakfasts, lunches and dinners, not to mention the snacks in between of *kaleji*, *bhajia*, *samosa* and *patrel*, and *taari* (fermented palm-fruit juice).

Day 1, the day of *adarni* and *madavsaro*, was called the ‘lagan nu murat’. The ceremonial frying of varadhvaran and sariya commences early in the morning. The varadhvaran dough, mixed with taari, is prepared the previous night and allowed to ferment and rise. To this are added nuts, sugar and flavorings, and the flat cakes fried in rich ghee in huge woks. The sariya dough, is rolled into thin pancakes and fried in oil till crispy. On Day 2, ceremonial *khoomchas* (trays) of 5 or 7 varadhvaran and sariya are taken by the ladies of the bride’s party to the groom’s house. They reciprocate with a tray of 5 or 7 dar-ni-poris. On Day 3, the ceremonial prayer of *Varadh-pattar-ni-baj* is recited invoking blessings on the couple. Day 4 is the day of the wedding. ■

## My mother used to say ...

“The old forget. The young don’t know.” - Japanese proverb

### “Nachvu nahi to angnu vaku”

*(The dancer) not wanting to dance says the portico is crooked. Making a false excuse to avoid doing something.*

### “Jehvo desh tehvo vesh”

*As is the nation, so are its customs. When in another country, adjust to the local customs. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*

### “Kumro vans vanko vul-é”

*A tender bamboo shoot bends easily. It is easier to teach a child of tender age.*

### “Nahi mama na kehn mama”

*An adopted uncle is better than no uncle at all. Something is better than nothing. Many Parsis say “kana mama” (i.e. one-eyed uncle) but that is a typical Parsi corruption.*

### “Sukh ma sao sathi, dookh ma koi nahi”

*Many will be with you in your days of happiness-plenty, but nobody will in your days of sorrow-suffering.*

### “Rarto chanawalo nahi purvur-é”

*A crying chick-pea seller cannot be tolerated. A person who whines and complains is not welcome.*

### “Ujjar gam ma erandiyo pradhan”

*In a desolate village, the castor oil plant is king. In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed is king.*

### “Teep-e teep-e sarovar bhuray-é”

*Drop by drop, the lake becomes full. Small steps lead to great achievements.*

### “Be bilari muray-é to vandro kumay-é”

*When two cats fight (over a piece of bread), the monkey wins. When next of kin quarrel, the outsider gets the advantage.*

### “Godhao lud-é to jad pud-é”

*When bulls fight, trees get uprooted. She is so naive that she will listen to and believe anything she is told; and will also reveal everything to others.*

### “E-to kach-cha kan ni chhé”

*She has unripe ears. She believes anything she hears.*

### “Be hath vugur tali na pud-é”

*It takes two hands to clap. It takes two to make a quarrel; the fault cannot be all on one side.*

### “Gadhero goda ni vat soo samji suk-é”

*How can a donkey understand the problems of a horse. No one can fully understand another’s intimate problems.*

### “Ey to chalia ni mafak vat kar-e chhé”

*He talks like the man who drives the horse carriage. He is not very intelligent.*

### “Char mul-é chotla to bar bhang-é ota”

*When four plaits (braids) get together, twelve porticos are broken. When four ladies meet to gossip, twelve homes are broken. Women gossip.*

### “Jehr thi nahi mur-é tehn-é mudh thi marvo”

*If poison doesn’t kill him, use honey. If you cannot win a person with force, try cajoling with sweet words.*

*[Submitted by Sam Kerr, a surgeon in Sydney, who also holds teaching and research appointments at the Hospitals of the University of NSW. He is also an author and lecturer on the Zarathushti religion. With comments on these sayings, please contact him at simica@ozemail.com.au].* ■

# READERS'

This column is a forum to present information and opinions. Letters (under 600 words) may be submitted to the Editor. The Journal reserves the right to edit all materials for clarity and space.

## Parsi food and customs

Congratulations, the Summer 2000 issue on History of Ancient Iran, is the best produced so far. It is really brilliant and quite superb. I can imagine how much hard work goes into producing each issue ...

I heard there is going to be a Book Fair and Exhibition at the World Congress in Houston. I would like to send copies of my book on Parsi food and customs, now in its second edition, *The Essential Parsi Cookbook*. It covers our customs for events such as birth, navjote, wedding, etc, along with recipes for Parsi dishes. I'm sure it will be very helpful to Parsis around the world.

Bhicoo Manekshaw  
Mumbai, India

[Readers interested in Bhicoo Manekshaw's cookbook may contact her daughter Sherna Wadia at [sherna@ndf.vsnl.net.in](mailto:sherna@ndf.vsnl.net.in)]

## Zarathushti scholarship

While in Chicago visiting relatives I came across a copy of FEZANA Journal [Winter 1998, on *Gathas*] which I read and thoroughly enjoyed from cover to cover. I was impressed with the scholarly articles of Drs. Ichaporia, Humbach, Malandra, Choksy and others. I have been researching our religion and doing a comparative study with the Abrahamic faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam and have many unanswered questions in my mind. Congratulations to your team for providing this service to our community.

Feroze and Yasmin Khambatta  
Dubai, UAE.

## Headed for history books?

I read your magazine with great interest and have enjoyed doing so for quite a while. Most articles show a concern for our dwindling numbers and how to address the problem.

What we need is a strategic plan. The leaders of our community should be open enough to begin such a dialog on creating a vision for our survival and prosperity.

The narrow-minded views perpetuated by our priests deter such a discussion and will ultimately cost the world the loss of a great religion. In the NAMC meeting [FEZANA Journal, Summer 2000] it seems that they unanimously issued a statement that "a Zarathushti is a person who believes and follows the teachings of Zarathushtra." Then they turn around and say, "NAMC as a body is not in favor of conversion." If a person believes and follows the teachings of Zarathushtra, and you are ready to call such a person Zarathushti, does it matter if he or she was born in the Zarathushti religion or not? Why not allow the person the privilege of praying in front of the fire, and eventually bestow upon her or him the sudreh and kushti?

No one is proposing that anyone off the street be converted and allowed to enter the fire temple. A good starting point will be non-Zarathushti spouses. NAMC should be open-minded and declare their support for it. They will be remembered as the ones who arrested the decline of the Zarathushtis and saved the religion.

Someone has said it well, "If we do not change course soon enough, we will arrive where we are headed." Only drastic action now will save us from becoming a chapter in the history books.

Merwan Mehta  
Rolla, Missouri

## Darius Meets Alexander

Thank you again for another lovely FEZANA [Summer 2000]. I was intrigued by the story *Darius III Meets Alexander*. I am senior editor

of "The Origins of Agriculture and Crop Domestication" published last year. In this book is a chapter which includes an account of messages between Darius III and Alexander before the epic battle at Issus in 333 BCE. The plain of Issus is now located close to the national highway between Iskenderun and Adana in modern Turkey. I visited this picturesque spot in 1992 when I was based in Aleppo, Syria.

In 333 the armies of Darius III and Alexander faced each other, at a distance, at the above spot. They had both camped there for weeks, waiting to see what the other would do. Since Alexander did not send any greetings or gifts to Darius in the traditional manner before battle, the latter was offended. Darius sent a messenger to chide Alexander about his impertinence since Darius considered himself senior of the two. Alexander, equally angry, replied that Darius had enough treasure already and should not ask for gifts.

Whereupon Darius, furious by now, sent Alexander a polo stick with a ball and a bowl full of sesame seed saying in his message that since Alexander behaved like a child he should have the playthings of a child. Darius also mentioned that the sesame seed represented the countless soldiers in the great Persian army that Darius proposed to send against Alexander.

Alexander however, saw the gifts as omens of victory. To him the polo ball represented the world (i.e., Darius's possessions) which Alexander would draw toward himself with the stick as in the game of polo. Alexander threw the sesame seeds on the ground and a flock of birds pecked and devoured each and every one of them in no time. Alexander told Darius's messenger that it would be thus that his soldiers would wipe out the army of Darius. Alexander then sent Darius a bowl of mustard seed as a symbol of his own soldiers.

Of course, as we all know now, Darius lost the battle and fled from the

battlefield. Darius was slain in a subsequent battle at Gaugemala and Alexander ordered that the body of the Persian monarch be brought to Persepolis and interred in the yet incomplete tomb built by Darius at his own orders. The tomb can still be seen behind the ruins of the palace at Persepolis. Thus ended the great Achaemenian dynasty.

A miniature painting in the *Iskandar-nama* (book of Alexander) depicts the above scene. It graphically portrays this incident with a flock of hoppers, parrots, starlings, crows and pigeons pecking at the seeds, watched by Alexander. The polo stick, ball and the bowl with the remaining seeds can be seen nearby; Darius' messenger and his horse can be seen in the foreground. The *Iskandar-nama* formed part of a series of books of kings collectively called the *Sharafnama* and were completed around 1010 CE. They were authored by the 12th century Persian poet Jamal al-Din Nizami Ganjavi, who lived in Turkey (at that time Turkey was part of the Persian Empire).

Dr. Ardeshir B. Damania  
University of California, Davis

### **New Year on March 21**

I have absolutely no objection to Dr. Joshi's opinion [*FEZANA Journal, Spring 2000*] that March 21 is an appropriate New Year day. However, the reasons he gives for his opinion (that it is the day of the Vernal Equinox) are questionable.

At the vernal equinox, the sun appears to be moving across the equator from the southern celestial hemisphere to the northern celestial hemisphere. This marks the beginning of spring. Because the number of days in the year is not a whole number (365.24219 days, and not 365.25 days as mentioned by Dr. Joshi), the sun does not arrive at the vernal equinox at the same date every year. In point of fact, the date of the equinox occurred as late as 1 pm CST on March 21, 1903, and will occur as early as 8 am on March 19, 2096.

An additional factor, which muddies up the "scientific" basis for the

choice of any date, is the difference between Greenwich Mean Time and local time.

I emphasize, however, that there is nothing wrong in arbitrarily selecting any fixed date (such as March 21, for instance) as the New Year. I am quite happy with the choice of March 21, and celebrate the New Year on this date myself.

Sorab K. Gandhi  
Escondido, California

### **Persian kings**

Our Zarathushti Persian kings always preferred death, rather than surrender to the enemy. Throughout our history (540 BCE to 641 CE), there is not a single instance of our Persian kings ever surrendering to the enemy. Whenever defeat faced our army, the king preferred to suffer the same fate as his fighting men. He asked his guard to thrust a dagger in his stomach and thus he died like his fighting men. We read in the history books of kings like Darius, Mithradates and Khushrow, who were all killed by their guards. This was always a matter of honor with valiant fighting men everywhere.

Fellow Zarathushtis, be proud of our ancestral royalty.

Jehangir Medora  
Scarborough, Ontario

### **From Russia, with interest**

We are very interested in Mazdaism. In the past year we came across your magazine, *FEZANA Journal* for 1996. In it there was a First Lesson on Avesta language. We want to study Avesta further. Do you have more lessons? Can any of your readers help us?

Seraphim  
Moscow, Russia

[Readers who may be able to offer help to "Seraphim", please contact him at [srtib@glasnet.ru](mailto:srtib@glasnet.ru)]

### **... and from Tajikistan**

During a visit to Bombay in 1996, at the invitation of Dr. Meher Master Moos, I familiarized myself with the traditions and branches of Zarathushti

ancestry. I am very interested in this religion. Well-educated persons in our country know that Zarathushtra is an integral part of our history and culture. The Zarathushti religion is our religion in pre-Islamic period.

Many national folk traditions are related with the "fountain-fire" symbol. In the past civil war period in Tajikistan, people lost hope because of pseudo-Islam, when people killed each other. During this period, was aroused an interest in Zarathushtra.

I have established a charitable association and named it "Avesto" in honor of the Great Book, where people can get information about Zarathushtra. We have 72 members and do charitable work for disabled children, orphans, raped women, etc. At Avesto we try to explain to people that Zarathushtra is an integral part of our past that is still current. The cultural legacy of Firdowsi, Hafiz, Sherazi is very valuable to us. The present territory of Tajikistan was once a part of Iran.

Dr. Firuza Abduuloeva  
President, Avesto  
Tajikistan  
email: [chairman@avesto.td.silk.org](mailto:chairman@avesto.td.silk.org)

[From letter received by Dr. Dolly Dastoor, Chair, WZC2000]

### **Gift of life**

*Ushta ahmai, yahmai*  
*Ushta kahmai chit*

### **Happiness to him**

**Who gives happiness to others.**

[Ys 43.1]

I know of no greater happiness than a gift to make life possible and livable. What gift can make this happen other than the gift of a part of myself, a part of my body (*tanu*) that housed my soul (*urvan*) when needed, but is of no use when my soul advances to the *minoi* world of Ahura Mazda. My best option per Zarathushti custom used to be to feed hungry animals (vultures). Where a dokhma does not exist the options are cremation and burial – the former utilizes energy, a much needed resource; the latter pollutes the earth – Ahura Mazda's creation.

Now that science and technology have made it possible for me to share my organs (kidney, heart, lungs, liver, etc) and tissues (cornea, cartilage, skin etc) with fellow human beings, to help them to live or to live better, what can prevent me from doing just that?

I know I have the blessings of Ahura Mazda and Zarathushtra. Do I have the blessings of the followers of Zarathushtra? I mean the mobeds, the dastoor, my friends and relatives. Does any Zarathushti have any objection, or any religious directives to do otherwise? The *Gahsarna*, *Sarosh*, *Uthamna* and all rituals to help my soul advance in its journey, and bring peace, comfort and closure to my relatives and friends, are available and possible in timely fashion, just as they occur as the body is being consumed part by part by vultures or gas or electricity.

I want to go one step further – after the living organs and tissues are removed (with reverence and respect) for the benefit of other living human beings and *Gahsarna* is done, I want to dedicate my remaining body to science – the very same science and its students who have made the journey so far possible, to study and advance even further.

May I now invite my fellow Zarathushtis and others to join me in this journey towards Haurvatat-Ameretat (Perfection-Immortality).

*Mehroo M. Patel, MD  
Westchester, Illinois*

*[Dr. Patel is convinced that donation of the corpse does not interfere with Zarathushti last rites and has taken actions towards this donation herself and instructed her family accordingly. Readers so inclined may reach her personally at (708) 409-9361.]*

### **World Congress agenda**

The published agenda of the World Congress focuses only on history, rituals, religious education and abstract matters like “vision”. I can see such an agenda for religious study classes or schools like Cama Oriental Institute, but should not form the only agenda of a congress.

I remember reading a news report of the agenda for the Eucharistic Congress held in India ten years ago, wherein, amongst theological subjects, the main agenda consisted of topics that were agitating the Christian world such as abortion, family planning, contraceptives, women priests, the gay culture etc. Likewise, at the Islamic Jamiat Convention held in India soon after the Shabanoo case, some of the items discussed were Muslim divorce and inheritance laws, and status of women.

The only exception appears to be our Zarathushti congress, where no down to earth day to day problems are ever discussed. Even the Mission of the Houston Congress is “to learn about our religion, heritage and culture” and “to celebrate our Zarathushti Odyssey [whatever that means] into the next millennium”, and to “pass the torch to the next generation.”

I realize it is rather late in the day to do anything about it for the coming Congress. I also realize that our community does not impart the kind of continuous religious education to its members like other religions do; hence the necessity of including some of it in our congress sessions. Notwithstanding this, you may wish to reconsider a reorientation of the objectives and agenda of such congresses in future.

One of the items that may be put on the agenda of the next congress may be, why in spite of several congresses and federation meetings, members of our community are still going in droves to temples of other faiths – Sai Baba of Shirdi, Meher Baba of Nagar, Khwajapir Dargah of Ajmer, or the Mt. Mary Church at Mumbai.

*Brig. N. B. Grant  
Elmhurst, Illinois*

### **Sacrifice**

Pride is a great inventor of religion. We set up ourselves and our needs and then select religious beliefs which cater for them. We seek a prophet of Ahura Mazda who will flatter our self-esteem; who will grant our wish to find meaning and purpose in life, who

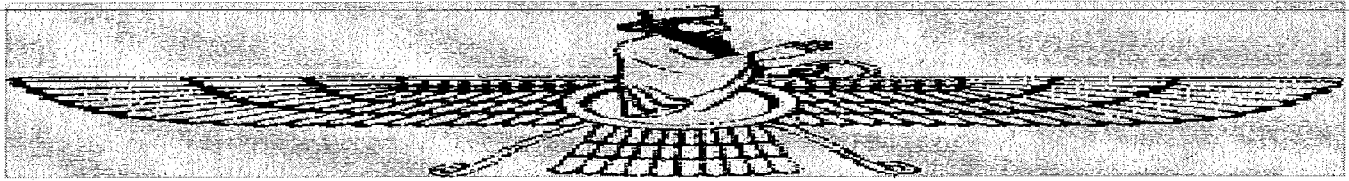
will preside over a personal universe of ordered and uninterrupted happiness; whose ways are our ways; whose provisions meet our wants; whose laws we can easily obey without personal cost. Today's Zarathushti religion hopes to achieve a sense of beauty and spiritual repose. Human life envisaged by today's Zarathushtis is all goodness and truth and human virtue.

It is astonishing that after millennia of human development the men and women of today, with all their knowledge of the material workings of the planet, and their intellectual resources, should reveal themselves to be so juvenile in their understanding of what authentic Zarathushti religion is all about. They do seem to think it is a phenomenon of the emotions, a matter of beautiful experience – rather like bourgeois appreciation of art.

True Zarathushti religion is about sacrifice and personal pain, discipline and offering, the disgusting yet spiritually cleansing service of the unclean and rejected. It is about the things we do not want to do, and it derives from beliefs that are not pleasant to have to believe. The religion of Zarathushtra is very far from the therapy religion of modern society: there we are confronted not with conventional beauty and serene experience.

This is not the easy vision of the moralists and their human panaceas. It is the world we are called by Zarathushtra to serve face-to-face. The greatest service Zarathushtis can offer to others is not the short-term palliation of material applications but the knowledge of salvation. This is religion with real demands, for it goes against our self-regarding instincts and causes us pain. The gate is narrow and the way is hard. Those who try to discern the way need the help of Zarathushtra himself, and it is the profundity of his teaching which, in the act of acceptance, is converted into joy.

*Furhok K. Tangree  
La Roche-sur-Furon, France* ■



# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING



“THE STAFF OF YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING IS ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ISSUES.

WE LOOK TO THE YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY TO SUPPLY US WITH THEIR THOUGHTS ON OUR RELIGION AND COMMUNITY. ALL TOO OFTEN WE FORSAKE OUR RIGHT TO BE HEARD. TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LET OTHERS KNOW WHAT IT IS ON YOUR MIND. USE THIS JOURNAL AS A TOOL FOR ACTION. WRITE TO US... WE’RE WAITING TO HEAR FROM Y’ALL!”

## “Youth Talk”

By: Nikan Khatibi

In every issue of the FEZANA Journal, in the Youthfully Speaking section, a question will be asked to the Zarathushti youth. The question will concern topics and issues in our community. This week’s question is.....

A speaker once said : "How can you deny the words of Zarathushtra to others? Who are you to decide who deserves it and who does not?" With this in mind, do you think that we should accept non-born Zarathushtis who are truly knowledgeable about our religion and practice the teachings in their everyday lives?

*As a youth, I feel that conversion is a big issue. There are tons of arguments going on right now, over conversion. Why can we not accept others who love and know our religion? Let me tell you, there are tons of non-Zarathushtis that I know who are more knowledgeable about our religion then some Zarathushtis. So, if they love, understand and would like to join our religion, I say why not, wouldn't you?*

*Farin Engineer  
Kent, Texas*

Conversion? A very controversial question which our religion has not addressed. Why? All my school friends would love for me to be part of their religion. They invite me to their barbeques, lunches, dances, programs, etc; basically they are open! It seems to me as if we are closed. It seems like we hate others, or do not trust others. What makes someone who loves to do good for others and follows the path of righteousness different from us!! Truly this section of our religion is taken wrongly by so many of us.

Rustam Mondehari  
New York, New York

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Please feel free to submit articles, pictures, comments, or questions to any one of the co-editors.



**The question itself is very presumptuous. When person X asks '..... should we accept person Y who was not born into a Zarathushti family?', one presumes X has the right to accept or deny religion to his fellow human being Y. Where does X acquire this right ? As a person thinks, so is he. How can anyone stop another from thinking in a Zarathushti manner, or speaking and acting in a Zarathushti manner ? Person Y can make the choice of leading a Zarathushti life entirely on his/her own and does not need permission from X or a crowd of Xs. Those who claim that person Y cannot be accepted into the Zarathushti fold, because one of wise parents was not a Zarathushti, must think themselves greater than Zarathushtra himself, who preached the religion to whomever would listen to him, without asking them who their parents were.**

**Jamshed R. Udvardia  
Lansing, Michigan**

I believe conversion is a big question to ask. I don't really think that we should decide if it is okay or not to accept others. To many Zarathushtis think conversion is okay and to many think that it is not okay. Some questions in our religion should not be answered in my opinion and should be left for the future to decide. To be completely honest with you, I am kind of afraid to answer the question, because I know that I will lose some friends if I answer the wrong way. Well, let us see how we, the youth, will decide the answer to this question.

Zubin Cooper  
Ottawa, Canada

ACCORDING TO ME THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION REGARDING ACCEPTING NON PARSEES INTO THE RELIGION, IS A DEFINITE YES. THIS IS BECAUSE WE PARESES FIRST OF ALL DO NOT KNOW A LOT OF OUR OWN RELIGION, STILL BRAG ABOUT BEING A ZARATHUSHTI. THEREFORE, IF A NON PARSEE KNOWS THE DEPTH OF OUR RELIGION HE OR SHE SHOULD BE MORE THEN WELCOME INTO THE RELIGION AND BY DOING SO WE COULD PROBABLY LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT OUR TEACHINGS. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT OUR RELIGION AND COMMUNITY WILL GROW INSTEAD OF DIMINISHING. PLUS I FEEL THAT THE WRONG BELIEF WE HAVE THAT ALL PARSEES ARE ALL GOOD AND HONEST SOULS WOULD DIMINISH AND THIS I SAY BECAUSE OF VERY STRONG PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.

GOODAFRID WADIA  
TORONTO, CANADA

## ~Did You Know~

*-Did you know that the former Shah of Iran had a gold Faravahar on his sword.*

*-Did you know that Xerxes Sidhwa of Houston, Texas has left for Morocco to work in the Peace Corp. for two years.*



# *A Tribute to Future Generations...*

*By: Nikam Khatibi*

*As the turn of the millennium approaches, one may wonder what will happen to this great religion. Yet we, my friends, must not worry about the future of this great religion. As you will see, the future of the religion of Zarathushtra has been blessed with caring and intelligent youth.*



*The picture above shows a gathering of Houston youth at the Zarathushti Wedding of Arish Rustomji and Meher Patel. As a note, Arish Rustomji was one of the original members of the Houston Youth Group, and we here at Fezana, would like to wish Arish and Meher the best of luck in their future endeavors. Currently, the Houston Youth are preparing to give you the time of your life at the upcoming congress in December. The Youth are working hard to find wonderful youth speakers and gather up good entertainment for the event. By the way, have you sent in your registration for the Congress? The picture on the right shows the Vancouver Gatha Group. The picture was taken at the Pire-Sabz performance where the group sang a few pieces from the Gatha's, to soothing music played by other youth in the group. The Vancouver group is known for their great outdoor events, especially after their successful Ski Trip last winter.*



*I wish they all could be California girls!! Take a look at the wonderful faces of these Zarathushti girls in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles group loves to hang out together and discuss issues and activities regarding the religion. Coming up, there will be a one day religious seminar at the center dedicated to the youth, so questions that the youth may have can be answered. Then in September, there will be a 3-day camping trip up north to see which youth can handle the outdoors the best. Luckily, the youth were able to get a good deal at the Beverly Hills Hotel!!*



*Last but not least, take a look at our future scholars. These dedicated youth, a majority from North America, recently took a pilgrimage to Iran. Visiting 5 cities in only 14 days, every second for them was a dream come true. I had the opportunity to speak with many of the them, and none of them had regrets. It had seemed to me as if each one of them came back with a better understanding and stronger sense of pride about the religion. So, to finish off this tribute to future generations, all I can say is that we have a bright future, full of intelligent and passionate youth who want to see this religion succeed.*



# Never Can Say Goodbye

By: Nenshad Bardoliwalla



It is with great sadness that I dedicate this column to the memory of Mrs. Villy Gandhi, who died on July 15, 2000 at the age of 53. Her tremendous fortitude and steadfast resolve to never veer from the truth made her someone I admired greatly. She was never particularly concerned with whether or not someone was interested in her opinion if she believed in the merit of what she had to say. She also didn't hesitate to address unpleasant topics if she believed that they had to be discussed. There was once a time when I took her surface obstinacy to be arrogance and even enjoyed the occasional snicker at her expense. But as I begin to appreciate and desire some of her many unique qualities, which would undoubtedly enrich my own personality, I find myself clinging to find one other person who was courageous enough to dare to speak what she did without any desire to enhance her own status. She simply spoke what she truly believed because she didn't see any alternative. That's such a rarity today.

As a teacher of religion and a stalwart of community pride, Mrs. Gandhi was a commanding presence, and one who could never be forgotten. Those of us who remain will remember her fondly and wonder where, if anywhere, she may be now. The youth of our community have had to face few deaths of someone who has had such a direct impact on our own lives. This, in turn, has begun to make me wonder what the youth of our community think of death and how they make sense of its conceptualization in our religion.

While many philosophers would argue that the unfathomable nature of death makes it impossible for any living person to come to terms with fully, it is a sensible and necessary event in the life cycle. When it is delivered swiftly upon those who are aged and have lived a life fulfilled, it can bring an incredible sense of relief to those left behind as the natural end to the good life. And yet, inevitably, one must face the irrefutable truth that death often does not befall those whose time has come, but rather those who were in the prime of their lives and with much left to fulfill. The very existence of such seemingly unjust deaths in a world that is believed by many to be governed by a merciful and benevolent creator begs further investigation. How is it possible to acknowledge the former while confidently believing the latter?

The religion of Zarathushtra teaches us that our good thoughts, good words, and good deeds lead us along the path of Asha and help to bring about the wondrous renewal of the world, Frasho Kereti. As agents of our own free will, Zarathushtis believe that all people have the power to choose to enact good or bad deeds. Yet, in my mind, the question that our religion, or every other religion for that matter, fails to answer satisfactorily is, how is it that one who acts in accord with the tenets of the religion with all the faith that she can possibly muster have their life end in such a horrible manner as a premature, violent, and/or sudden death? How can we believe in the power of a supreme creator if he/she cannot prevent the deliverance of unquestionably good men and women to the doors of an early death? We'll delve into a deeper exploration of these issues in our next installment.





# Letters to the Editors



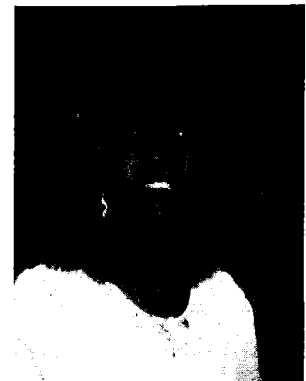
*From: Nazneen Engineer; Dubai, Saudi Arabia*

*(In reference to the previous issue's question about whether or not marrying outside is okay)*

*Our forefathers left Iran to protect our religion...to save it from the persecuting Arabs. Now that we are free of that persecution, is it fair to throw away all that our forefathers suffered for. There must be a reason for them to go through all that they did go through...their love and belief and commitment in the religion kept them alive in those troubled times. Where has that feeling of love and dedication and belief in the religion gone? I seriously cannot understand how intermarriages can even be an issue here. Our Prophet said that it couldn't be done...that's it then, isn't it? People say that they fall in love, how about falling in love with your own religion first? Everything will fall in place later. Zoroastrianism is such an amazing religion...how can anyone leave it behind when they marry outside the faith? Most people are religiously illiterate. All the problems we face today are due to religious ignorance. People need to gain knowledge to truly understand the beauty of Zarathushtra's teachings. Learn and you will see the light of Mazda. If you think that you may not find a Zarathushti in a world where wherever we go we are a minority, you are wrong. Have faith...that is the key phrase. If you truly want to marry a Zarathushti, and if you feel, like me, that this religion is too important to just discard, then you will find what you are looking for. You've got to go out there and make an effort to meet other Zarathushtis. Be optimistic, always have faith and remember...you are a Zarathushti. We have come so far...*

*From: Afsaneh M. Irani; Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania*

*I am 19 years of age, and I was born with cerebral palsy. I came to the United States in 1984. While I was growing up I had to work harder than the other students in my class. After school each day instead of hanging out with my friends, I was going to physical therapy or staying after school and getting help with my homework. As I entered my senior year, I remembered everything that I went through. My friends and my parents stood by my side and encouraged me to conquer my goals in life. As I graduated from high school in 1999 at Cumberland Valley, I realized that I came so far in my life, and for this I owe my thanks to my parents for standing by me through everything I did. My parents worked day and night trying to pay off my education and doctor bills. They deserve all the credit for what I am now. Without my parents' love and support I wouldn't be here today. I just want to say I love you Mom and Dad for bringing me into this world. I am currently attending Harrisburg Area Community College. I am majoring in Computer Information Systems. I hope this article of mine proves you that nothing is impossible in this world if you keep trying to achieve your goals and keep your mind to it! There is a saying, "GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES"...and that's true!*



**WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE**

**The Washington Post Magazine**, March 12, 2000, carried an excellent article by Jacki Lyden of National Public Radio, about her travels to Yazd: *“Pearl of the Desert, Searching the Silk Road City of Yazd for ‘the True Iranians’ and Their Ancient, Modern Faith.”* “In spite of Islam’s dominance, Zoroastrianism runs deep in Iran. Even today, the country operates on the Zoroastrian, not the Western, calendar. And the cherished national holiday called Nowruz, celebrated on the first day of spring, is entirely Zoroastrian.” Moved by the abandoned villages (fifty years ago, there were 77 families in Zainabad; now only 12 aging souls remain), she asks her guide, “What will happen when the old people are gone?” He replies: “We are not worried. There are so many people who are really Zoroastrian in their hearts without even knowing it ... we will not vanish from these lands.”

**Sacramento News Review**, December 2, 1999. In a *“A Different Picture of Iran”* May d’Marie writes: “I went to Iran to try to determine whether or not the people were really the evil terrorists they have been made out to be ...

“I found a deeply cultured people who would like to live in peace without the interference of other countries. Many in this Shiite Muslim country still practice the tenets of their ancient Zoroastrian religion, which commands one to think good thoughts, speak good words and do good actions ...

**Unity Magazine**, October 1998. Ordained Unity minister James Gaither writes: “Here is the story of a man who was a model of persistence and patience. The evil one tried to destroy him ... He taught that at the end of time there would be a resurrection and final judgment ... his religion had a worldwide and lasting influence. His name was Zoroaster. ■

*[Excerpted from “Why do Bad Things Happen to Good People”, by Rustom C. Chothia, Jame Jamshed, Mumbai, submitted by Aspi Maneckjee.]*

**A** physically defective child is born to an innocent, good couple. A person suddenly discovers he has cancer and has only a few months to live. A young woman loses her husband in a car crash. A man puts his life savings into a building where the builder absconds. A bus loaded with pilgrims plunges into the river, killing all. Thousands of innocent, good people die of malnutrition in African countries. The list goes on ...

Since ages, people have asked the question: *“Why do bad things happen to good people?”*

Hindus, who believe in reincarnation and rebirth, have a simple answer. They blame it on ‘*karma*’ of the past life. A Jewish rabbi has written a book claiming that God is not powerful enough to overcome the evil in this world. Philosophers over the ages have pondered over this problem. The answer has eluded them all.

**Zarathushtra’s answer.** Our prophet Asho Zarathushtra, however, not only knew the answer, but also gave it to us thousands of years ago. In the Gathas he teaches us that (1) Evil does not come from God; (2) Evil will remain on this earth for a limited time, after which it will be totally destroyed; and (3) Man has been created by God as His helper to fight evil.

Ahura Mazda, in His wisdom, knew the existence of the evil one and has fixed a timeframe for his total destruction. In God’s calendar, this timeframe is 9000 ‘years’. In the first 3000 years, goodness will prevail over evil. In the next 3000, evil will be stronger, and in the final 3000 evil will be totally defeated. God has

created man as His helper in the war against evil. God has equipped man with reasoning and a free will.

According to our Book of Creation, Bundahishn, the evil one has vowed to tempt man towards himself and away from God. According to the Gathas, God has sent his prophet Zarathushtra to teach man how to conduct his life and fight evil. It is a pity, however, that many do not listen to the Prophet and succumb to the temptations of the evil one.

**Fighting evil.** God’s creations are all good; the evil one attacks man during his life. It is often the evil one responsible for a child born defective – over-age or ill-health of parents, incorrect food, drinking or blood mismatch. After birth, the evil one plants nine evils into every human – selfishness, envy, greed, lust, vanity, wrath, grudge, hatred and deceit. It is the duty of every parent to teach their children how to fight these demons within us and get them under control.

Man’s duty does not end there. He now has to go out and fight external evils – ignorance, poverty, disease, accident, untimely death, flood, famine, earthquake and any man-made disaster or catastrophe. Man has to ask God for help in avoiding such evils. Attacks from the evil one cannot be totally avoided, because we are all soldiers in the army of God, and should expect to get hurt.

In our kushti prayers, we who are endowed with free will, pray to God for help in fighting all types of evil:

*ahriman, devan, darujan, jadian, darvandan, kikan, karafan, sas-taran, gunegaran, ashmogan, darvandan, dushmana, frian, zad shekasteh bad!*

In conclusion, a person who leads a righteous life, dedicated to God’s service of fighting evil, who humbles himself and asks for God’s protection, leads a happy life. ■

■ ZARATHUSHTI ■  
**ENTERPRISE  
 PRODUCTS AND  
 SERVICES** ■

**NEW BUSINESSES**

*FEZANA Journal will be happy to announce any new business/enterprise in this column. Please send your announcement to the Editor.*

**Antique Parsi furniture**

*Dara Rivetna and Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago and Farrokh Toddywalla of Mumbai announce their new business venture Art & Antiques Decor. The first consignment has just arrived in Chicago: old-world Victorian carved wooden furniture, chests, cupboards, teapoys, rocking chairs, easy-chairs, book cases, beds, collectibles, brass/copper/pottery, nautical antiques and more. Catalog-\$7 (refundable upon order). Call (630) 325-5383 or email drivetna@aol.com.*

**Internet start-up**

Early-stage Internet startup with excellent potential of becoming a major E-commerce company is searching for a CTO, architects, managers and engineers. Please email inquiries, expressions of interest or resumes to Natalie Vania, Director, at nvania@malch.com.



**Traditional embroidery**

“REVIVAL” specializes in exclusive Zarathushti embroidery in ethnic designs – traditional garas, zari borders, evening bags and more, hand embroidered by master craftsmen. Contact Rayomand Working-boxwalla, 6 PC Shroff Building, Gamadia Colony, Tardeo, Mumbai 400 007, tel: 496 6679.

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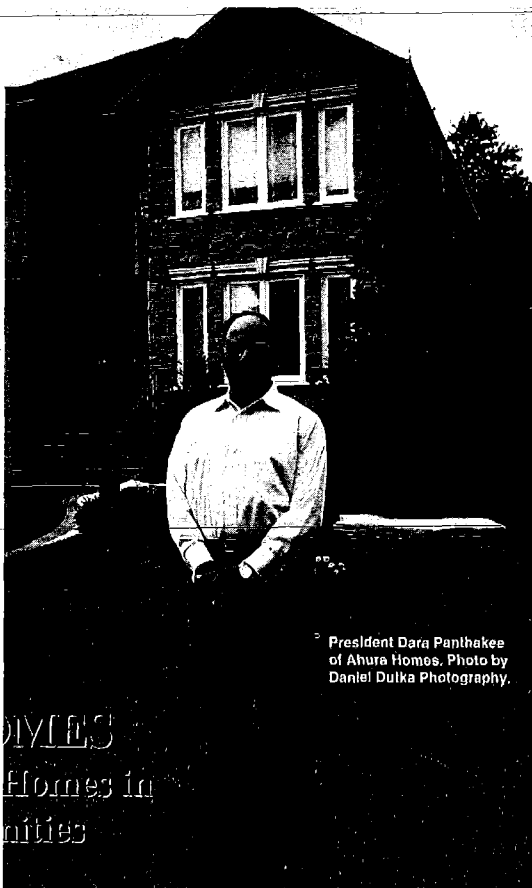
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## Business Profile



President Dara Panthakee of Ahura Homes. Photo by Daniel Dulka Photography.

### **"Ahura Homes" builds quality homes**

Ever since he came to Canada, in 1980 (from Mumbai) *Dara Panthakee* had dreamed of having his own business. He was introduced to the building industry while working in banking, inspecting properties and arranging for funding for builders. Finally, in 1992 Ahura Homes was born. Dara builds quality custom homes in fine communities in the Toronto area. He has a passion for customer service and satisfaction and visits his construction sites 8-10 times a day, even going back for an inspection a year after his clients have moved in.

In 1999 *Builder/Architect* magazine carried a full-length feature on Ahura Homes [photo left] and wrote: "Ahura Homes feature the exquisite staircases and spacious kitchens found in multi-million dollar luxury custom-built homes. Lavish bathrooms are adorned with granite countertops, marble floors and marble walls. A variety of cornice and architectural moldings are found throughout an Ahura home, along with etched glass and countless other details ... Builder/Architect salutes Ahura Homes for their dedication to quality and customer satisfaction ..."

Dara's wife Katy and 3 children, Zenobia, Farah and Cyrus, help in the business. "Without their assistance and support" says Dara, "I could not have made it, especially when I had absolutely no prior experience in the field." Ahura Homes has recently expanded to include a wholly owned subsidiary in Houston, TX, operating under the name Cyrus Management and Construction, Inc. The objective of this new company is the management of construction projects and construction of new projects. Ahura Homes can be reached at (416) 221-9552, [dara-panthakee@hotmail.com](mailto:dara-panthakee@hotmail.com), or at their web site at [www.geocities.com/ahurahomes/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/ahurahomes/index.html).

## **Keyannejad-Kapadia Zoroastrian Scholarship Fund**

**The Triangle Fraternity Education Foundation is pleased to announce the creation of the Keyannejad-Kapadia Zoroastrian Scholarship Fund (endowed by Mr. Homi Kapadia and his sister Mrs. Mahrokh Keyannejad). The scholarships generated by this fund may be used for undergraduate or graduate study in an accredited university in the USA.**

To qualify for an award, the applicant must be a member of Triangle Fraternity, have at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average (out of 4.0) and be enrolled in an engineering curriculum. Additionally, priority will be given to candidates who are:

- Enrolled at Michigan State University
- Not citizens or Permanent Residents (Green Card) of the USA
- Of the Zoroastrian religion

Triangle Fraternity was founded at the University of Illinois in 1907 and is recognized as the social fraternity for students majoring in engineering, architecture or the sciences. Triangle Fraternity is:

Serious About Scholarship ● Sets and Demonstrates High Standards ● Celebrates Achievement

For information about the scholarships and the application process, please contact:

**Triangle Fraternity National Headquarters, 120 S. Center Street, Plainfield, IN 46168**

**Tel: (317) 837-9641 ● fax: (317) 837-9642 ● [www.Triangle.org](http://www.Triangle.org)**

# FINANCIAL



**Dr. Jerry M. Kheradi**  
dynamic chair of the FEZANA Funds and Finance Committee has significantly increased the pace of funds coming to FEZANA.

## MATCHING FUNDS OFFER CONTINUES

I am very pleased to announce that the campaign for the matching funds contributions for Nouruz was a success. The dollar amount received by our treasurer for the five FEZANA funds has totaled \$5654 and as promised, this will be matched by me and \$5654 will be deposited into the Scholarship Fund.

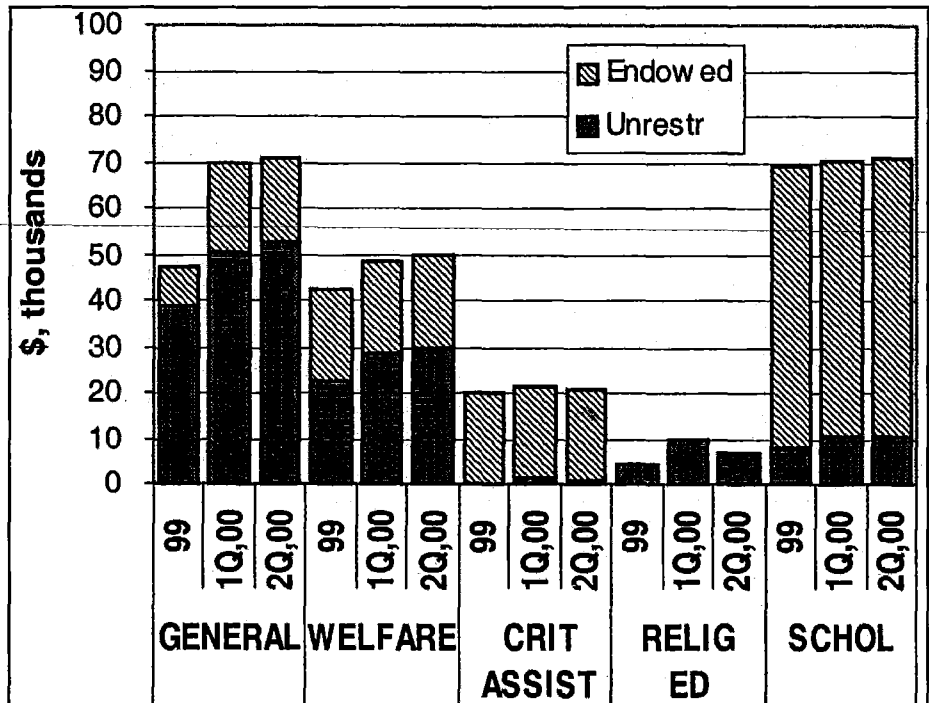
The same offer is now being extended once more:

**I will personally make matching contributions of up to \$25,000 to the Scholarship Fund for any donations made to any FEZANA funds, during the months of September, October, November and December 2000.**

Sincerely yours,  
Jerry M. Kheradi, MD,  
Chair,  
FEZANA Funds and Finance

Dear Friends,

**Progress:** With the World Zoroastrian Congress being only four months from now, FEZANA has taken a back seat with regard to new funding to encourage our fellow Zarathushtis to help the worthy cause and donate to WZC2000. This is the first time the Congress is being held in North America and we should all try our best to make it a real success. Below, however, are the new balances for the FEZANA funds (endowed and unrestricted) as of June 30, 2000.



**Funds received this quarter:** See Acknowledgments (page 89).

**Endowment funds:** Donations of \$25,000 and above can be listed under a family name, an individual name or anonymously. We currently have only two endowment funds – we hope more individuals will consider doing the same.

**Our goal** remains the same and that is to build each of the FEZANA funds to \$75,000 - \$100,000 by December 2001, with the hope that the income generated will support the individual fund needs and the principal will remain and grow. Our plan is to make a renewed effort starting in the new millennium.

**Tax-deductible donations:** All donations to FEZANA are tax-deductible for US federal tax purposes. Canadian taxpayers may send donations to FEZANA through their local societies. FEZANA has a security account with Merrill Lynch and in order to obtain a better tax deduction, we advise you to donate long term appreciated securities from your brokerage account to FEZANA's Merrill Lynch brokerage account #732-07784. For information, please contact me.

Thank you and God bless you,

**Jerry M. Kheradi, MD, Chair, Funds & Finance Committee**

Tel: (401) 353-2343, email: jkheradi@cs.com, Fax: (401) 353-3728

Rustom Kevala, PhD, Treasurer, FEZANA.

Committee: Bina Behboodi, Jamshed Gandhi, Yasmin Ghadialy, Celeste Kheradi.

## USE YOUR CREDIT CARD TO MAKE DONATIONS TO FEZANA

Go to: <http://www.helping.org> and search for "FEZANA". For more information, contact FEZANA Treasurer Rustom Kevala at (301) 765-0792.



## LIFE INSURANCE TRUSTS

**D**epending on your estate planning objectives and personal circumstances, you may also want to consider a life insurance trust.

**Irrevocable Life Insurance Trusts (ILITs)** may be advisable if your estate includes illiquid assets such as real estate, works of art, a closely held business or other assets that are not readily salable to pay estate taxes. By establishing an irrevocable life insurance trust, which purchases an insurance policy on your life, the insurance proceeds will be paid into the trust at your death. The trustee can use the money to purchase assets from your estate, which provides a source of liquidity to pay estate taxes and other settlement costs. By purchasing life insurance to pay estate taxes, you can maximize the amount you leave to your heirs.

Life insurance offers other benefits:

- The death benefit is income-tax free. It also may be estate-tax free, provided policy ownership is properly structured.
- Life insurance policies are designed to pay a death benefit that is more than the amount of your premium. You can think of it as funding your estate.

**How much can you save in estate taxes?** It depends of course, on the size of your estate. Here's an example: Suppose you have accumulated a \$2 million taxable estate when you die

in 2006. Of that amount, \$500,000 is a term life insurance. You don't have a life insurance trust. After taking the unified credit, available to every estate, into account, the estate tax on your estate will be \$435,000. (The unified credit excludes a certain amount of assets from estate and/or gift tax. The exclusion amount rises in steps from \$600,000 in 1997 to \$1 million in 2006 and later.) If you use a life insurance trust to remove the life insurance from your estate, your taxable estate will be reduced to \$1.5 million. After your full unified credit is applied, your estate tax will be \$210,000. The trust has, in effect, saved your family \$225,000.

Should you have a life insurance trust? The answer to that question depends on your personal situation – the size and complexity of your estate, your beneficiaries' financial experience (or inexperience), the ages of your children and so on.

These are just a few examples. If you are charitably inclined, proper planning of your assets and estate can accomplish your goal of paying less in taxes and at the same time helping FEZANA.

*[To find out more about how these strategies can benefit you, contact: Karen Diamond, VP, Sr. Financial Consultant, Merrill Lynch at (888) 383-1694; or Jerry M. Kheradi, MD, Chair, FEZANA Funds & Finance, at (401) 353-2343.]*

## Complimentary Subscriptions to FEZANA JOURNAL

FEZANA JOURNAL donates one year's subscription to each North American Zarathushti who has his/her navjote/sedreh-pushih performed and to each couple announcing their wedding in the Journal. This is an effort to introduce young initiates and couples to the Journal and to FEZANA and hopefully develop a life-long bond. Your donations to "The Journal Subscription Fund" to help support this initiative will be deeply appreciated. To redeem this offer or to make a donation, please contact FEZANA treasurer Rustom Kevala at (301) 765-0792, email: rustom@aol.com.

## Guidelines for Canadian Donors

FEZANA has received new guidelines from Revenue Canada regarding donations to charities outside Canada. It appears that donations to US organizations like FEZANA will not receive any special treatment unless the Canadian donor has offsetting income in US dollars. FEZANA is exploring the establishment of a Canadian bank account to ease the transaction fees being charged by US banks for checks written on Canadian banks. Meanwhile, Canadian donors are requested to continue to send checks or money orders to FEZANA in US\$ currency only. Donors are also encouraged to check with their local associations or accountants whenever making large donations to US charities for which income tax deductions are desired. For further information contact Rustom Kevala at (301) 765-0792.

## EXTRA! EXTRA!

## FEZANA RAFFLE

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For tickets contact Celeste Kheradi  
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jkheradi@cs.com

**Special bonus for FEZANA Journal readers:** If you renew your existing Journal subscription for 3 years or subscribe for a *new* one year FEZANA Journal, you will receive a *free raffle ticket*.



## Acknowledgments

FEZANA gratefully acknowledges donations received this quarter through June 30.

**Congress, Iran documentary.** Manou Mobedshahi, CA (\$500).

**Critical Assistance Fund.** Nozer Behramsha, TX (\$30); Cyrus Bulsara, TX (\$100); Dr Farhad Cama, PA (\$31); Homiyar Choksi, VA (\$10); Aban Commissariat, CA (\$100); Sarosh Collector, TX (\$101); Behram & Manjeh Deboo, WA (\$19); Homi & Nergish Davier, TX (\$100); Diana Dinshaw, CT (\$50); Kaemerz & Havovi Dotiwala, TX (\$100); Aryeneesh Dotiwala, TX (11); Meher N Dastur, CA (\$150); Farrokh & Dr Shirin Engineer, MD (\$20); Khodadad & Parinaz Irani, TX (\$100); Feroze Irani, TX (\$10); Sorab Irani, TX (\$25); Tirandaz & Nilufer Kasnavia, TX (\$100); Dinyar Lahewala (\$20); Percy and Jasmin Katrak, TX (\$25); Noshir Medhora, TX (\$51); Behramji Mehta, TX (\$15); Villie & Homi Minocher Homji, ONT (\$50); Rohinton & Perin Ogra, IL (\$11+11+11); Behram & Zenobia Panthaki, VA (\$23); Ron & Roshan Patel, CA (\$25); Dara & Dinsoo Rivetna, IL (\$11); Jal & Shermeen Sethna, TX (\$25); Zarir & Roshan Sethna, TX (\$51); Yazdi & Shahnaz Sidhwa, TX (\$100); Kaizad & Tenaz Sunavala, TX (\$25); Mr & Mrs Rohinton Tarapore, LA (\$100); Dr & Mrs Soli Tavararia, PA (\$60); Darius Wania, TX (\$100); Zoroastrian Association of Houston (\$500); 21 Zarathushtis from Houston, TX (\$156); Mehraban Zartoshty, BC (\$200).

**General Fund:** Navaz D. Anklesaria, NJ (\$101); Phil F Cooper, CA (\$60); Farrokh & Dr Shirin Engineer, MD (\$20); Soonoo Engineer, BC (\$15); Burzoe & Nancy Ghandhi, WI (\$501); Minoo S & Ruby Italia, TX: (\$10); Soonoo A Jokhi, WA (\$15); Kamalrukh R. Katrak, IL (\$22); Hoshang Khambatta, CA (\$25); Ayesha Khory, AB (\$21); Rustom & Yasmin Kevala, MD (\$30); Noshir & Rhoda Lakdawalla, CA (\$22); Cowsie & Jeroo Malva, CA (\$11); Dr Nilufer Medora, CA (\$31); Mehli & Tehmina Mehta, CA (\$25); Manou Mobedshahi, CA (\$60); Yasmin A Patel, VA (\$85); Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, CA (\$10); J.R. Sethna, IL (\$10); Behram Shroff, VA (\$50); Zareer Siganporia, GA (\$11).

**Journal.** Anonymous, IL (\$470); Anonymous, IL (\$235); Rohinton Aga,

## PLEASE GIVE FROM YOUR HEART

*Donation checks, payable to "FEZANA", may be sent to the address in the appeal, or to Dinshaw Joshi, FEZANA Welfare Committee, 4515 Willard Avenue, #1609-S Chevy Chase, MD 20815, Tel: (301) 654-6250. For tax exemption eligibility see FEZANA Journal [Summer 2000, p. 71 and Fall 2000, p.88]*

### Navsari Atash Behram

The *Atash Behram in Navsari*, which perhaps ranks next to only the Iranshah in Udvada, was consecrated 235 years ago, in 1765. Today it is in dire need of mobeds and finances. There is an acute shortage of high caliber mobeds. The present financial status is barely enough to maintain the three mobeds who devotedly serve to their best capacity. A corpus of 45-50 lakhs would suffice for the next 10-15 years. Please send your donation checks to FEZANA [see above].

### Surat agiary needs funds

The ancient agiary in Chawkee Street, Nanpura, in *Surat* is in urgent need of repairs to the building structure. Trustees are appealing to large-hearted Zarathushtis world wide for funds. Please send your donation checks to FEZANA [see above].

### Deolali-Nasik anjuman

Trustees of the Deolali-Nasik Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman, which manages the *Ratanbai J. Chinoy Agiary at Deolali* are appealing for funds to repair and paint the agiary (estimated

TX (\$200); Coomi Bhatena, ON (\$48); Keki Bhote, IL (\$300); Mr & Mrs Neville Arjani, IL (\$210); Soli & JoAnn Dastur, FL (\$501); Phiroz & Dhunmai Dalal, CA (\$100); Rukhshana Daruwalla, Marlin Travel (\$70); Shapoor Mehrabani, BC (\$80.00); Noshir & Rhoda Lakdawalla, CA (\$22); Mathew Mazdyasni, CA (\$35); Khushroo & Roda Patel, IL (\$110.00); Mahrukh Sagar Japan, (\$10); Shahriar Shahriari, CA (\$300); Zaver Shroff, CA (\$30); Triangle Fraternity (\$300); Dick Vazir, FL (\$51); Mehroo J. Wadia, AB (\$16); Mehraban Zartoshty, BC (\$400).

**Journal Overseas Gift Subscriptions.** Dinaz Rogers, OR (\$101).

**Religious Education Fund.** A.D. Dutia (\$50); Maneck R. Dastoor (\$40); Firdaus Dotiwala, NY (\$13); Toni & Swati Elavia (\$50); Farrokh & Dr Shirin Engineer, MD (\$20); Parvez & Farida

[Continued on next page]

cost Rs. 5 lakhs) and for day to day expenses. Monthly expenses are Rs. 25,000 (\$575) of which Rs. 15,000 are realized from fixed deposits, leaving a shortfall of Rs. 10,000 (\$225) per month. Please send your donations to FEZANA [see above].

### Sodawaterwala agiary

The agiary at Marine Lines, Sodawaterwala ni agiary, is in urgent need of funds. Any humble offering will be gratefully accepted. Please send your donations to FEZANA [see above].

### Iranshah in Udvada

Udvada, the abode of our sacred Pak Iranshah, has been facing the problem of erosion by sea-water. Thanks to the efforts of late Padmashri Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan, who spear-headed the "Save Udvada" project, a sea wall has been constructed. However, the area facing the back yard of the atash bahram continues to be flooded by creek water. Mangrove plantings have helped to arrest the erosion. Funds are needed to maintain the plantations and the sea wall. Please send your donations to FEZANA [see above].

### Commemorative Issue of FEZANA Journal.

The Winter 2000 issue of FEZANA Journal on the theme "Events that Shaped the Evolving Zarathushti Identity Across the Millennia" will commemorate the dawning of the new millennium 2001 and the Seventh World Congress in Houston. We invite you to help us bring forth this very important collector's item. The target amount is \$6,000.

Benefactor: Over \$1,000

Patron: \$500 - \$999

Sponsor: \$100 - \$499

All donors will be suitably acknowledged in the Journal. Note: There will not be any regular advertisements in this special issue. Contact K. Jungalwala at (978) 443-6858.

## Appeal to participate in Breast Cancer Research

The incidence of breast cancer in Parsi women is 2-3 times higher than normal. Researchers at the University of Washington in Seattle (headed by Dr. King, who first proved that breast cancer can be inherited) are interested in working with the Parsi community to identify the genetic etiology of hereditary breast cancer.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and confidential. Families with a maternal or paternal history of 2 or more cases of breast or ovarian cancer, and where there are at least 2 living family members who have had cancer, are eligible to participate. A small sample of blood and medical history information is all that is required from participants.

We are extremely fortunate to have a highly respected geneticist of the calibre of Dr. King take such a personal interest in our community.

To offer your help, please call Ksenia Peters in Dr. King's lab, at (206) 616-4293, ksenia@u.washington.edu. For more information, please contact Niloufer Clubwala, (914) 294-2304, kaikac@frontiernet.net.

## Bone Marrow Drive

Concerned Zarathushtis and others are looking for a bone marrow match for Arshis Pavri, 40, of New Jersey – happily married and blessed with a 7-year old child – Arshis was diagnosed with CML Leukemia in 1998 and has been receiving chemotherapy to keep the disease in remission. Potential donors were screened at the Congress in New York in 1998, but no matches were found. A drive is being planned at the World Congress in Houston on December 31. Interested persons who would like to help with this project, please call Yasmin Ghadialy at (516) 378-4516, email: ghad@aol.com.

## ■ MATRIMONIALS ■

*FEZANA will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; we do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna.*

**Male, good looking, 31, 5' 7"**, working in International Airlines, interested in slim, fair, pretty, home-loving and caring woman. Call Rohinton at (714) 751-4322, howesworks@aol.com. [M00-11]

**Parsi Zoroastrian man, 31**, working as Sr. Product Engineer in California, looking for soul mate. Contact friend Kobad Zarolia at 416-745-4622. [M00-12]

**Young man, 26**, from Byculla, Mumbai. Contact percypestonji@hotmail.com. [M00-13]

**Tall, slim, fair, attractive girl, 27**, brought up with Zarathushti values, fond of reading, traveling, music and writing, seeks alliance with tall, educated, well-settled boy. Call sister (248) 661-5845. [F00-14]

**Accountant, 31, 6' 2"**, B. Com, enjoys reading and classical music. Call (718) 884-2486. [M00-15]

**Goodlooking female, 35**, divorced, 15-yr-old son, settled in California. Enjoys sports, music, travel, romance, loves to cook. katyirani858@aol.com. [F00-16]

Parents of smart, attractive and loving **26-year-old US-born girl** invite correspondence from educated, professional males/parents, well-settled in USA/Canada. Email sunshine70674@aol.com. [F00-17]

## ■ MILESTONES ■

### Births

**Ashish Chakraborty**, a boy, to Tanaz and Debasish Chakraborty, of Houston.

**Zarvan Chinoy**, a boy, to Roxanne and Coover Chinoy, brother to Xerxes, in Farmington Hills, MI, on May 28.

**Shirine Dalal**, a girl, to Armita and Hormuz Dalal, granddaughter to Dhunmai and Feroze Dalal of California.

**Jehan Dastoor**, a boy, to Zubin and Jasmine Dastoor, grandson to Phiroz Dastoor of Toronto and Dolly Dastoor of Montreal, and Katy Cooper of Mumbai and (late) Fali Cooper; great grandson to Shirin Dastoor, in Virginia, on May 15.

**Jamshed Davar**, a boy, to Urmez and Rovena Davar, grandson to Kamal and Virasp Davar, on May 12.

**Stephanie Anne Devine**, a girl, to Benaifer and John Devine, sister to Sarah and Jessica, granddaughter to Nargis and Shahrugh Kermani and Helen and Jack Devine, on June 16.

**Roxana Jam**, a girl, to Bahram and Mitra Jam, granddaughter to Jamshid and Panin Jam and Dinyar and Katayoon Hakhamaneshi, on May 19. [ZSO].

**Rhea Jasavala**, a girl, to Rumi and Xenobia Jasavala, on May 23 [ZSO].

**Kerfegar Pervez Mistry**, a boy, to Pervez and Zenobia Mistry, grandson to Jamshed and Pervin Mistry, in Mississauga, Ontario, on May 7.

## Acknowledgements ... [Continued from previous page]

Guzdar, MD (\$51); Yezdi Guzdar, CA (\$30); Arnaz Maneckshana, NJ (\$25); Kavas & Kashmira Mistry, TX (\$30); Farhad Namdaran, WA (\$25); Shahriar Shahriari, CA (\$265); Behram Shroff, VA (\$50); Kersi Shroff, VA (\$10); Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (\$120); Cash donations at AGM (\$105).

**Scholarship Fund.** Sarosh & Veera Bharucha, ONT (\$49); Farrokh & Dr.

Shirin Engineer, MD (\$20); Dolly Engineer, CA (\$25); Sorab K. Mody, DC (\$50); Behram Shroff, VA (\$50).

**Welfare Fund.** Hoshang & Betsy Unvala, CA (\$25); Soli Bamji, ONT (\$50); Adil Feroz, Warner Robins, GA (\$25); Poras & Pearl Balsara (\$75); Farrokh & Dr. Shirin Engineer, MD (\$20); Dr. Diana Bilimoria, OH (\$60); Feroze & Anahita Sidhwa, TX (\$1001). ■



Left, Shireen Rudina at her navjote in Mumbai. Right Arish Rustomji and Meher Patel's wedding in Houston.

**Yazad Nauzer Mistry**, a boy, to Nauzer and Armin Mistry, grandson to Jamshed and Pervin Mistry and Arnavaz Sachinwala, in Mississauga, Ontario, on June 15.

**Sepenta**, a girl, to Mahbanoo and Farzad, grandchild to Khosravi and Behboodi families, on June 9 [ZSO].

### Navjote, Sedreh Pushi

**Sonya Anklesaria**, daughter of Bomanshaw and Dosi Anklesaria, at Hotel Beach Luxury in Karachi, Pakistan, on March 23 [ZSO].

**Freny Dastoor**, daughter of Aspi and Lily Dastur, in India, in December [ZAPA].

**Kashmira Engineer**, daughter of Beverly and Rohinton (Rumi) Engineer, of Berwyn, Illinois, at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago, on May 27.

**Taronish Irani**, daughter of Firdous and Dilshad Irani, in Pune, India, on April 9.

**Hoofrish and Farzin Mahawa**, daughters of Viraf and Irene Mahawa, in Ottawa, Ontario, on May 21.

**Shireen Rudina**, daughter of Solee and Villoo Rudina, of Southlake, TX, in Mumbai on June 11 [see photo].

**Kevin Setna**, in Houston, on July 15.

### Weddings

**Jehangir Appoo**, son of Jamshed and Maki Appoo of Quebec, to **Betty Marchant**, daughter of Dara and Freny Marchant of London, UK, in Mumbai, on April 7.

**Cyrus Boga**, son of Jehangir and (late) Homai Boga of Pakistan, to **Shernaz Polad**, daughter of Sam and Goolu Polad, on June 11 [ZAH].

**Bobak Goshtasbi** of Calgary, to **Lily Gupta**, in Calgary, on May 20.

**Jimmy D. Kumana**, of Houston, son of Dorab and Bindu Kumana of Mumbai, father of Rayomand, Zubin and Vivian, to **Delshad Karanjia**, daughter of Burjor and Aban Karanjia of Mumbai. Delshad was formerly chief sub-editor at the Sunday Times of London.

**Rashnavad Rashidi**, son of Homaoun and Mr. Rashidi to **Mitra Nadjmi**, daughter of Manijeh and Borzoo Nadjmi, in Rhode Island, on May 27.

**Arish Rustomji**, son of Aban and Purvez Rustomji of Houston, to **Meher Patel**, daughter of Nergish and Russi Patel of Dubai, sister of Roshan (Zarir) Sethna of Houston, in Houston, on July 8.

### Anniversaries

**Mehelli and Zenobia Behrana** of Houston, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on June 17.

**Farrokh and Hutu Billimoria** of Chicago area, celebrated their silver wedding anniversary at the Viceroy of India, in July.

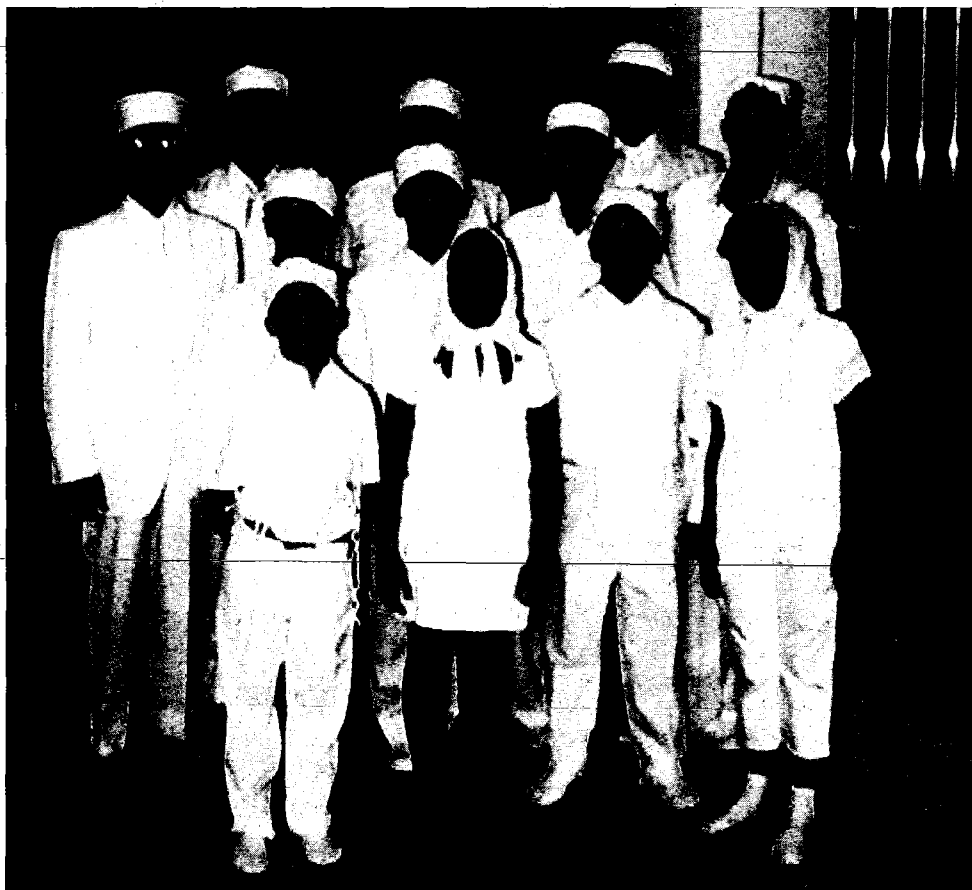
### Deaths

**Homi Amrolia**, 90, father of Dinyar (Persis) Amrolia of Calgary, grandfather of Ferzhin and Roxanne, in Vancouver, on May 26.

**Navaz Hormusji Antia**, sister of Kersey (Dilshad) Antia of Chicago and Noshir, Burjor (Roshan), Neriosang (Shernaz) and Hoshang (Aban) of Mumbai; aunt of Jimmy, Anahita and Mazda Antia of Chicago, in Surat, India, on May 29.

**Savak Jamshedji Banker**, husband of Mani Banker, father of Cyrus, father-in-law of Persis, grandfather of Alisha Banker of Toronto, in Mumbai, on June 3.

**Goolbai Savaksha Bavaadam**, mother of Pesi (Dolly) Bavaadam of ZAGNY, grandmother of Armin and Hutoxi.



## **Sedreh Pushi in San Jose.**

*Saturday July 15th was truly a most beautiful day at the Dar-e-Mehr in San Jose, California. Sedreh Pushi (navjote) ceremony was performed for eight children: Shahin Ahoorai, Arain Banki, Bahram Banki, Arain Behzeez, Nadia Kadkhdayan, Ojan Mobedshahi, Zubin Mobedshahi and Behan Salamati. Four mobeds – Mehraban Zartoshty, Keikhosro Khorshidian, Shahriar Banki and Hormoziar Khorshidian – performed the most beautiful group ceremony while over 550 guests attended.*

**Tehmina Bilimoria**, wife of Rustomji Bilimoria, mother of Yazdi and Nergish (Kayomarsh) Mehta of Chicago area; sister of Fardoonji & Minoo Mogal (Mumbai), Ratansha & Soli Mogul (Karachi), Keikobad Mogal (Udvada), Mani (Minu) Bhada, Katy (Keki) Pavri and Goola Mogal (Mumbai); grandmother to Roxanna, Zenobia, Farhad and Rashni Mehta; cousins Bomi Zarolia of Houston and Kobad Zarolia of Toronto, in Palos Hills, Illinois, on May 29.

**Keshvar Bolandi**, mother of Stephanie Brown, in San Francisco, on June 30. Porseh (memorial) was held at the San Jose Dar-e Mehr.

**Feroze Cama**, senior most member of ZAGNY, husband of Piloo, father of Rohinton, Noshir and Framroze, uncle of Lovji Cama.

**Parin Dalal**, mother of Homi, Dinyar, Sarosh, Gool Balasundaram and Vira Sanjana.

**Villy Gandhi**, 53, wife of Homi, mother of Hanoz and Navroz, daughter of Nergish and Pesi Mehta of Pune,

sister of Roda, Nina and Daraius, sister-in-law of Rusi Gandhi of New Jersey, Firoze (Pravina) Gandhi of California and Mani (Murli) Rao of Chicago, in New Jersey on July 15, just one month after a diagnosis of Liposarcoma, a rare form of cancer for which there is no cure. Villy was a past co-Chair of the FEZANA Education Committee [see obituary].

**Baji Ghadiali**, 76, husband of Mar-ian, father of Linda, Sandra, Brenda and Stephen, in Victoria, BC. One of the very early Zarathushtis to settle in Canada, Baji came in 1948 after graduating with an engineering degree from Poona, India.

**Alu Noshir Karani**, 89, wife of (Late) Major General Noshir D. P. Karani, of Poona, mother of Dr. Philly Noshir Karani and Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz of Boston, grandmother of Darius, Farokh and Anahita, on December 2 [see obituary].

**Shera Kolah**, mother of Roshan Motivala of California, grandmother of Farida Bahadurji and Sarosh;

great-grandmother of Anahita and Roxanne, on June 9.

**Mary Mama**, mother of Phiroza (Satish) Modi, in Mumbai.

**Tehmina Masani**, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother of Zenobia and Rusi Dadyburjor, Ayesha and Kaizad Dadyburjor and Nitash and Ratan Vakil, in Surat, India.

**Abolkasim Mohajeer**, father of Shanaz Irani, in Toronto, on June 13.

**Noshir Mewawala**, brother of Perin Naval Sanjana, uncle of Sanobar Patel and Lily Homi Billimoria, all of Toronto, in Mumbai, India on June 5.

**Merwan Santok**, husband of Sharon, father of Stephen (Danna) and David, brother of Dara, Hoshang and Mani, on April 15. [ZSO].

**Khorshed Jalejar Sidhwa**, mother of Yazdi Sidhwa of Houston, and Feroze (Anahita) Sidhwa of Dallas, in Karachi, on June 16. ■



## Villy Homi Gandhi (1947 - 2000)

EDUCATOR PAR EXCELLENCE AND ROLE MODEL FOR THE COMMUNITY



From an early age, Villy Gandhi (born March 24, 1947) had a love for teaching that she went on to share throughout her life. At 21, after completing her masters, she accepted a post first as a lecturer in English Literature at Sydenham College, Bombay, and then at Lala Lajpat Rai College in 1971. She married Homi in 1971 and in 1979 emigrated with their two sons to Nigeria, and, in 1981, to the US. Over this period of time there was a brief hiatus in her teaching career, but that was soon to change.

After moving to the US, Villy went back to teaching. As certifications from India were not valid in the US, she attended night classes while substitute teaching at local schools during the day. In 1989, she accepted a position as Library Media Specialist for the Lakeside Middle School in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. Here, over the course of the next 11 years, she led her school and the district to embrace a strong vision for the role of a media center. Her vision was "To seamlessly integrate the resources of the school media center and allied informational skills, into the instructional program of the school – providing leadership and establishing partnerships across the community." She was passionate about her cause and championed this vision beyond her district and across the entire state of New Jersey.

Over the course of her professional career she was frequently invited to speak at conferences and had just completed her term as President of the Educational Media Association of New Jersey. In 1995 she was awarded the *Enthusiastic Librarian Award* and recognized for *Excellence in Teaching*. Most recently, this June, she was selected as *Media Specialist of the Year* for the State of New Jersey.

Villy was an active teacher within the Zarathushti community as well. For almost a decade she taught intermediate level Sunday school religious classes at the Darbe Mehr in New York. She was also a strong proponent of the Good Life Program in North America and coordinated its administration. She had been invited as a speaker at a number of North American congresses to discuss education within our community. Villy Gandhi was a role model for her colleagues, her students, her children and the community at-large. She will be missed.

- Hanoz Gandhi

Villy Gandhi was a dear childhood friend – we were together in the Zoroastrian Association of Delhi in the 1960s. Even then, Villy was one of the prettiest and kindest young people – loved by all, and a caring friend. She always had a warm smile and a sparkle in her eyes. An active member also of the Zarathushti community in New Jersey, Villy cared about our religion and our community in a sincere way and lived its values, being a role model to those around her. Villy's kindness and gentleness remained with her and radiated through her right till the end. May her soul rest in peace.

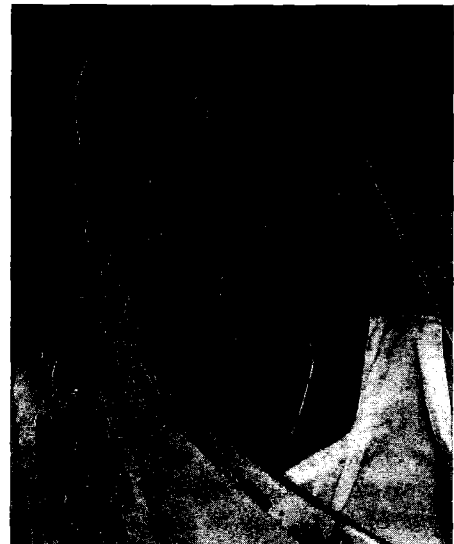
- Zareen Karani Araoz

## Mrs. Alu Noshir Karani

A REMARKABLE LIFE

On December 2, Alu Noshir Karani, wife of (Late) Major General Noshir D. P. Karani, a grand old lady of Poona, and a very special Zarathushti soul, passed away, leaving an irreplaceable void. General Karani was previously Commandant of the Armed Forces Medical College and Director of Medical Research for the Indian Armed Forces, and a Trustee of the Karani Agiary in Khushru Baug.

Our community has a lot to learn from the deeply Zarathushti way that Alu Karani lived her entire life, besides being specially remembered for her warm manners, kind words, her sweet and charming smile and twinkling eyes, always. She opened their home to gather Zarathushtis and bring them together with family hospitality and caring. She also helped orphans and facilitated a War Widows Home in Poona, where she helped women transform the lives of their children in extraordinary ways.



While her husband commanded hospitals all over India, she tended to the welfare of the sick and wounded, and helped patients be creative and gain faith in their own healing. She even inspired the paraplegic at the Artificial Limb Center with new goals and a desire to live and be productive.

Her own artistic ability was astounding. She had embroidered 25 gorgeous sari borders from the age of 12 to 25 years. Then, this beautifully

groomed woman, even up to the age of 89, embroidered cross-stitched sarees, including garas, and exquisite pictures and purses, that she exported even to Gallerie LaFayette in Paris. Her coveted hand-written recipes of international cooking have been compiled and are available by emailing zareen@compuserve.com or calling (781) 721-7546.

Most of all, Alu Noshir Karani was a totally dedicated and selfless wife, mother and grandmother, who set an example of deep love, courage, amazing self-discipline and implicit faith in the goodness and guidance of "Dadarjee". She leaves behind, with fond remembrances, two children, Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz and Dr. Philly Noshir Karani, and grandchildren, Darius, Farokh and Anahita. May her loving spirit be with us forever, and her blessed soul rest in peace.

**Memorial Service** will be held in Boston on October 29th. All are welcome. [Submitted by her daughter, Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz]

### Sorabji P. Godrej

#### DOYEN OF INDIAN INDUSTRY

Sohrab P. Godrej, chairman of the Godrej group of companies in India, expired on May 20, following a brief illness. The Indian industrialist who had a wide range of interests, including environmental conservation, population control, social welfare and the arts, was a few days short of his 88th birthday.

"SPG" was never married, though one could say that he was married to his work and his varied interests. In spite of belonging to a wealthy family, he was given to careful use of money and was thrifty in his personal as well as his business affairs. He frequently quoted Mahatma Gandhi, his favorite being: "Each one of us must be the change we wish to see in the world".

Sohrabji died with his boots on – he had gone to Paris for a meeting of ACTIM (Agency for Technical, Industrial and Economic Co-operation) when the Grim Reaper overtook him. May his soul rest in peace. ■

- Jamshed R. Udvadia

## EVENTS & HONORS

### A Tribute to Villy Gandhi Promoting the "Good Life"



Top, "Good Life" medal recipients in Central Florida. Standing, l. to r., Jasmine Irani, Percy Canteenwalla, Sarvar Irani (instructor), Daryush Mehta, Farokh Irani. Seated, Natasha Irani, Parendi Mehta, Nazneen Mehta, Freya Birdie and Tanaz Irani. Left, Percy Canteenwalla and Natasha Irani at the Salvation Army collection box.

[Barely 6 weeks before her untimely passing (see Obituary) Villy Gandhi wrote to FEZANA Journal: "Please include the achievements of these children in your next issue. As you can see, it has taken long, dedicated hours for each one to earn the Good Life Medal ..." Villy Gandhi was among the group of New York Zarathushtis behind the "Good Life" religious medal for Scouts. FEZANA Journal is proud to present this latest batch of Villy's Good Life medalists - a living tribute to the dedication of this remarkable woman - Ed]

Villy's 'children', all from Orlando, FL, were supervised by Sarvar Irani.

**Jasmine Irani** is in the National Honor Society and Drama Club and plays the piano.

**Freya Birdie**, is in the Dance Team, Drama Club and Future Business Leaders of America Club. She was awarded the Duke University certificate for mathematics.

**Tanaz Irani**, is a member of the Varsity Swim Team and enjoys playing the piano and reading. [contd ...]

[... contd.] **Percy Canteenwalla** senior Boy Scout patrol leader, is working for the Eagle rank. He is in the school band and was awarded Duke University certificate for mathematics.

**Natasha Irani**, was awarded the Presidents Education Award. She is in drama and plays tennis and volleyball and is a patrol leader.

**Nazneen Mehta** plays alto saxophone, volunteers at the local hospital; she has competed at National History Day.

**Parendi Mehta** plays flute and was Spelling Bee champion for two years. She writes poems and excelled in History Fair Competition.

**Daryush Mehta** is drum major, clarinetist, plays saxophone and is a three-time All-State Band Clarinetist. A member of the National Honor Society, he enjoys music, volunteering and the Religion of Good Life.

**Farokh Irani** is patrol leader working for his Eagle rank. He was awarded Duke University certificates for mathematics and verbal. He plays trombone. He is in the Future Business Leaders of America club, Spanish Club and Mu Alpha Theta Club.

FEZANA Journal salutes the work of Willy Gandhi, and the scores of children who have achieved the Good Life Scout emblem. ■

**Farhad Bahrassa**, 18, son of Feraydoon Bahrassa, M.D. and Persis Shroff,



M.D., was recognized by Boston University as a University Scholar and will attend its seven-year Accelerated Medical Program.

In high school, Farhad's science research project won the Eastman Kodak Photographic Award and the Excellence in Application of Biotechnology Award. Farhad was a National Merit Finalist, Student Government Representative, Mu Alpha Theta Pres-

ident, and Student Council Intramural Athletics Committee Head.

**Danish Z. Bhandara**, 7, daughter of Zarir and Tenaaz Bhandara of California, sister of Zerkxis, was presented the "Gifted and Talented" award at the El Camino Real school in Irvine. Her teacher said: "She is a VIP of our class, a very special person too, she cooperates with her teachers and everybody else in the class ... she is good at games and quiet in class ..."

**Roshan Bharucha** of Quetta [see *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 99, p. 56] was among three ministers inducted into the Baluchistan cabinet in July. The Governor administered the oath to the ministers at the Governor's house. [*Dawn*, July 19, 2000].

**Rushad Dordi**, son of Kersi and Sarna Dordi of East Amherst, NY, received an award from Johns Hopkins University mathematics and verbal talent search. He was placed with distinction for scoring a high SAT1 score, as a seventh grader. He also attends the gifted children's program at State University of New York.

**Jeroo Jamaji** of Brossard, Quebec, Canada, stood third in the World Championships in *Savat* (French Kick Boxing), held in Paris in June.

**Zarin Mehta**, 61, director of Chicago's Ravinia Music Festival since 1990, has been named executive director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Zarin, brother of Zubin Mehta, will assume the five-year post in September. "In Zarin Mehta we have the perfect choice to run our organization," said the orchestra's chairman of the board, "His reputation in the industry is impeccable, and we feel very fortunate that he will be joining us." From 1981 to 1990, Mehta was managing director of the Montreal Symphony, for which the Canadian government named him a Member of the Order of Canada.

**Hoshi Printer** was appointed Chief Financial Officer and Executive VP at BestOffer.com, a website for used car sales. He was formerly chief financial officer and Senior VP at Autobytel.com [*Internet World*]. ■

## LOOKING BACK

### A real hero - Keshvar-e Rostam-e Demehri

By Daryoush Mehrshahi  
Sheffield, UK

**D**uring autumn 1977 I visited Ali Abad village about 30 km northwest of Yazd. Surrounded by sand dunes with a *ghanat* system (underground water channels) that was hardly working, only a small community of farmers remained in the village. One of them was Keshvar Rostam Demehri.

She was over 60 years old and although she had spent most of her life in Bombay and Tehran, she enjoyed living and farming in the land of her childhood. The first time I visited her in Tehran was in their food shop, in Karim Khan Street during her temporary stay in Tehran. We arranged a time for a meeting in Ali Abad and she promised to help me collect information about the village.

A few months later when I arrived in Ali Abad I was welcomed by no one else but a few black and white dogs. I walked down the small sandy streets and asked a passer-by for directions to Keshvar's house.

I was on the way when I saw her coming down the path with a heavy load of pomegranate sticks on her back. I said "Roozh Goonyakah" (Hello) and asked if she needed help. Of course she said no.

As we walked together she talked about the poor condition of the *ghanat* and the decreasing groundwater in Ali Abad. At home after a glass of lemon juice with sugar, she brought some delicious pomegranates and we start talking about the village.

She told me that after living for 50 years in the cities she wanted to do

something for her birthplace. She lived alone in her large home, as her husband and sons stayed behind in Tehran, busy with their business.

I asked her whether she needed any help that day from me. She held my hand and looked at it. Her hand was much bigger and stronger than mine with harder skin. She said: "Daryoush, look at my hand, it is accustomed to shovel and pick, stones and clod, sticks and thorns, but your hands know only pen and ink, paper and books. It is not ready for a tough job." So I sat and just talked with her and collected my data.

After a year or two I heard Keshvar-e Rostam dug a well, installed a water-pump and brought water to the village and later on a few others followed her. Keshvar was also very consistent in her daily prayers and practiced our Zarathushti traditions well.

For some of our new generation, growing up in the west, heroes are perhaps more like Superman, Flash Gordon (in my childhood) or Robo-Cop or ...

For me Keshvar-e Rostam – a typical Zarathushti woman, was more than a hero. She is still my hero and model. Not only because she worked hard on the farm, but because she brought life and hope to her small community in Ali Abad.

*Amorzideh Bad Keshvar-e Rostam-e Demehri.*

**Epilogue.** A few years later, the noble efforts of Keshvar-e Rostam came to a sudden end through an unfortunate event.

When she installed the water pump at her well, she had also learned to do some simple mechanical checks in the motor room. One morning, the

water pump stopped working. The farmers thought Keshvar would fix it, but when it failed to restart, they feared something was wrong.

One of them went to the motor room, and what he saw was beyond belief. Keshvar lay strangled by the fan belt of the pump. Her long scarf was entangled inside the motor, and she met a tragic death. But, many years after Keshvar, the pump and the well are still working.

I am sure those farmers of Ali Abad will never forget the efforts of this lone Zarathushti woman to bring hope, meaning and faith into their lives. ■

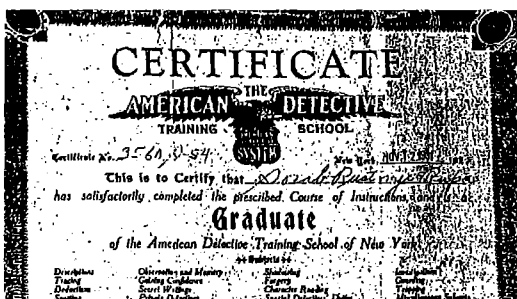
**Daryoush Mehrshahi** is post-graduate student in geography at Sheffield University, UK. He can be contacted at [d.mehrshahi@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:d.mehrshahi@sheffield.ac.uk)



## Enterprising seaman Sorabji Rupa

At the age of 18, Sorabji R. Rupa left St. Xavier College in his second year and joined the P&O Shipping Co. It was during the First World War. He joined as a purser, continued his studies, and rose to become a Captain in Turner Morrison Shipping Co. (which was later called Mogul Line). Sorabji liked the sea life and he worked at sea for thirty-seven years. During that time he traveled the world over, many times.

Sorabji was later the Superintendent of all the shipping docks in Bombay. During World War II, there was a big explosion in Bombay's Alexandra docks, that shook the city and killed many. Sorabji was working there at the time, and was hit by a splinter in the leg.

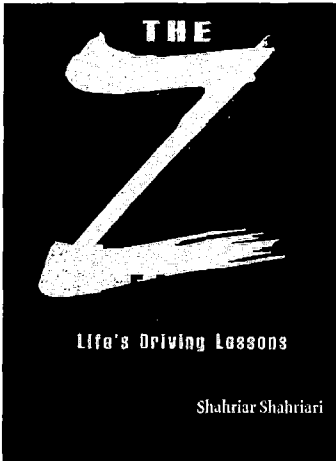


Sorabji first visited the USA in 1920. On a return visit, in 1931, he attended the "American Detective Training School of New York" [see certificate at left, dated November 12, 1931] and studied sub-

jects such as Observation, Shadowing, Forgery, Character Reading, Guarding and Trapping. He had also given an examination and received a certificate from London's Scotland Yard.

A tall (6' 4") and handsome man, with a zest for life, Sorabji was a Worshipful Master of the Scottish Rite Masonic Lodge [see photo]. He was a loving father to Dina Unwalla, Perin Keravala, Rhoda Rupa, Dara Rupa, late Dinshaw Rupa, late Gool Bhesania, late Pervez Rupa and Dhun Nariman Dastur of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ■





## THE Z FACTOR LIFE'S DRIVING LESSONS

By *Shahriar Shahriari*

Single copy, \$15 (incl. postage).  
Available from Lovji Cama, Chair, FEZANA  
Religious Education Committee, 58 Leroy Street,  
Tenafly, NJ 07670, [lovji\\_cama@merck.com](mailto:lovji_cama@merck.com)

*The Z Factor, Life's Driving Lessons* is the story of a young man who lives an ordinary life, in an ordinary setting, with dreams and aspirations that everyone can relate to. It approaches the timeless message of Zarathushtra as seeds, and plants

them in the mind of the young man. The story then follows a short period in his life, as he goes through various stages of nurturing and growth, until the seeds reach full fruition. *Z Factor* guides the reader to relate to Zarathushtra's philosophical teachings by weaving each teaching into a driving lesson.

FEZANA recommends *Z Factor* as a teaching aid for religious education. If used in a classroom setting, it is estimated that about 10 hours of discussion would be required to cover the book. All the associations in North America are encouraged to order the book for use in their religious education classes. ■

### Sacred Books of the East - Edited by Max Muller

Three of 50 volumes of Sacred Books of the East are on Zend Avesta – Vol.4: *The Vendidad* by J. Darmesteter; Vol.23: *The Sirozahs, Yashts* and *Nyaeshes* by J. Darmesteter; Vol.31: *Yasna, Visperad, Afringan, Gahs* by L. H. Mills; *Pahlavi Texts* are in Vols 5, 18, 24, 37, 47. Vol. 50 is an index. The 3 Avesta volumes are available for \$58 from publisher Pradeep Mittal at [lpp@nde.vsnl.net.in](mailto:lpp@nde.vsnl.net.in) or see [www.lppindia.com](http://www.lppindia.com) in the religion section.

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## GIVE ME A BOMBAY MERCHANT ANYTIME!

### Life of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Bt.

By *B. K. Karanjia*

Mumbai, 1998, 84 pp, Rs. 95.

Review by Aban Aspy Daboo  
Warrenville, Illinois

**T**he story of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy by noted Mumbai journalist B. K. Karanjia is about

another time and another place. It is about benevolence, it is about charity, about guts and glory, about love for fellow men, about charity, about kindness – but above all it is about *heart*. The heart to go out into the world and make a fortune unheard of during that time, the heart to give magnanimously for the sheer joy of giving, to recognize the plight of the poor, to share his good fortune, the heart to leave behind a legacy unmatched in the annals of Parsi history.

The book is not a detailed biography from birth to death; rather, it presents anecdotes exhibiting Sir J.J.'s great

passion for integrity, perseverance, and enterprise. Sir J. J. was a pioneer and a visionary. His thinking was far ahead of his time. He recognized the importance of women in society.

Education for women had always been close to his heart and he overruled the trustees who were hesitant in establishing a school for girls because of the prevalent prejudices. In 1850 Jamsetjee established two schools for girls!

Today when corporate philanthropy is a buzz word and when we hear about the million dollar foundations established by Gates, Ford and Turner, the reader is in awe of this great Zarathushti philanthropist who two hundred years ago was passionate about sharing his wealth. There were no PR motives, no tax shelters and definitely no media to glorify his name. The motive was pure and simple – help the less fortunate members of the community, and to give back to the city where he prospered. Jamsetjee believed that true philanthropy should

be aimed at making its recipients self-reliant and self-respecting. The two major causes closest to his heart were education and religion, to train and equip people for life – to help them help themselves.

“In order to predict the future you have to create it.” After reading this book there is no doubt that Sir J.J. created not only his own future but also the future of the community.

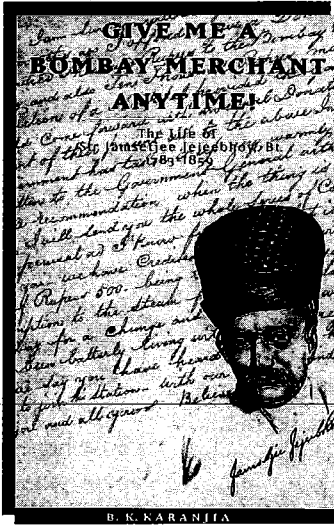
The author calls Sir J.J. a “Renaissance man” and rightly so. The J.J. School of Art and Architecture, the J. J. Hospital, the Poona bund and waterworks, newspapers,

schools, the animal humane society, dharamshalas, agiaries, dokhmas – are all testimony to his vision and philanthropy.

The list of Sir J.J.'s public charities at the end of the book is an eye-opener and highlights the vast scope of his charitable giving.

This book is very easy reading and I do believe that every Zarathushti household should purchase a copy and

let their children read it. Anecdotes and stories of an era gone by will keep young readers captivated. The glossary is also a “must read”. It includes short histories about the East India Company (who came as traders and established an empire) and the Parsi Panchayat, custodian of community trusts and properties. I would highly recommend that every living, breathing young Zoroastrian should read these 84 pages illustrating the life and times of one of the greatest Zarathushtis of the last millennium. ■



**We Goofed!**

● The navjote announcement of Mitra Mehta and Arman Avasia, of Houston, was accidentally placed under “Weddings”. Our apologies.

● A reader wrote: “I was uncomfortable that the recent issue of FEZANA Journal featured a write-up on the Zarathushtian Assembly with a picture of people having their “navjote” performed. A navjote is an incorrect characterization of what took place. The 4 individuals put the sudreh and kushti on themselves in front of an assembly. This cannot be called a navjote. A correction is in order in a future issue of FEZANA Journal.” ■

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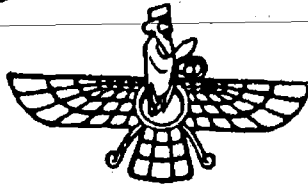
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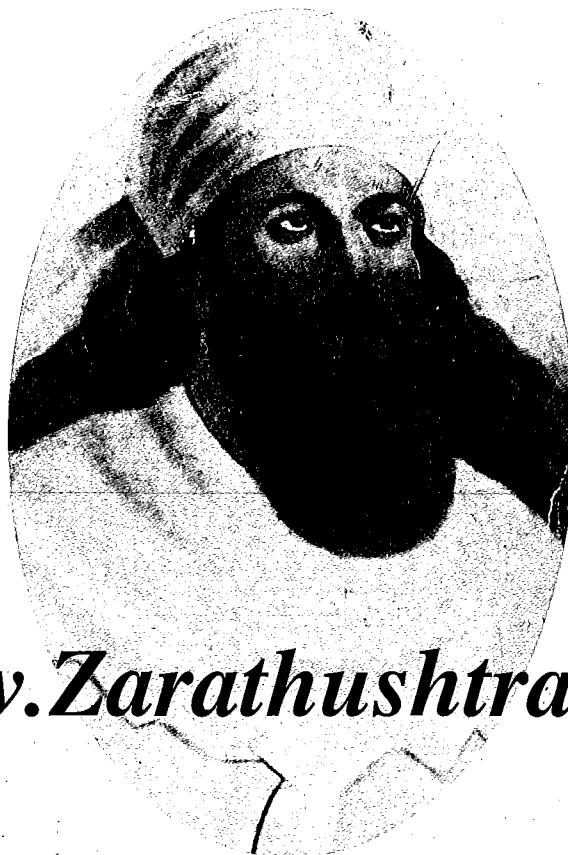
**FEZANA JOURNAL** is the official publication of the  
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