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Mah Daye-Bahman-Aspandarmad

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## ZARATHUSHTI INITIATION CEREMONIES NAVJOTE AND SEDREH PUSHI

*I am a Zarathushti worshipper of Mazda  
I pledge myself to professing the faith  
I pledge myself to the well-conceived thought  
I pledge myself to the well-spoken word  
I pledge myself to the well-performed deed  
I pledge myself to the Mazda-worshipping religion ...  
To Ahura Mazda I ascribe all Good.*

*[Yasna 12, 8-9]*

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# WHO IS TO BLAME?

It is heartening to see the enthusiasm that people show in carrying out FEZANA projects like the directory, census, religion education curriculum, FEZANA Web page, etc. It is exciting to see the vigor of our youth at sports events and in debating issues honestly and openly; and it is great to participate in conferences like the International Avesta Conference in Framingham, Massachusetts. But it dampens the spirit somewhat to find that many Zarathushtis still continue to argue about who is a true Zarathushti and who is not; worry about when we will become extinct; and refuse to go along with the majority. Sadly, this leads many Zarathushtis to simply shun contact with other Zarathushtis and avoid participation in activities.

Haven't you noticed? Its the dissenters and the worriers who have the loudest voice and refuse to shut up? Dissension makes the job of the volunteer Board members and Trustees very difficult. Worrying about the decline in the Zarathushti population leads to finger-pointing and fruitless arguments about who is to blame: the women for being over-educated, marrying late, and not bearing enough children; or the men for not enforcing religious practices in homes; or the children for marrying non-Zarathushtis?

Or should the mobeds be blamed for not wanting to be full-time priests and teachers without adequate compensation; the scholars for giving conflicting interpretations of the scriptures; or maybe the 18th and 19th century Navsari Dasturs for accepting some illegitimate children of Parsi fathers into the religion; or the Parsi Panchayet in Mumbai for not building enough subsidized housing? Does it make sense to blame the Zarathushtis in Iran, who have suffered so many hardships to keep the flame of our faith alive in a hostile land, for not wearing the sudreh-kushti day and night?

But think about it. If Zarathushtis stopped worrying, they will not volunteer to conduct Sunday classes; they will not feel so strongly about preserving their rituals, heritage and culture; and they will not work so hard to define, understand and plan their destiny.

So it is good that people do care and worry and argue. Good things do come out of it! The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario has established a Long-Term Planning Committee with a mandate to make recommendations for the future welfare of its membership. FEZANA has developed a Strategic Plan for the future well-being of the Zarathushti community in North America. And Zarathushtis of all age-groups are speaking out and explaining their religion to their friends, neighbors, and anyone else who cares to listen.

Even better – the ZSO Planning Committee recommendations are already being implemented and delegates at the FEZANA Annual General Meeting in Crestone, Colorado, have given an overwhelming mandate to President Dastoor to start implementing the Strategic Plan. Also at the FEZANA AGM, young Zarathushtis spoke out and got more respect, responsibility and funding to carry out their activities in sports, seminars and debates.

Zarathushtis of all ages and walks of life WANT to listen to new ideas, WANT to share their opinions, WANT to make a difference. So we should be glad that so many of us are worried enough to do something about it.

But blame? Its futile to blame anyone. When a finger is pointed at someone, three fingers are always pointed at ourselves. Its time to stop blaming and start looking forward to the future – toward a brighter future of our own making.

Now if only we were worried enough to start reaching into our pockets ...

*Rustom Kevala*  
*Chair, FEZANA Publications*

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JOURNAL

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## BACK TO THE BASICS

We are living in a time where history is being made every day and we are part of it. The events of the past few months bear testimony to that: celebrity deaths as well as deaths of millions of anonymous people caught in the cross-fire of religious and political conflicts, the rally of *Promise Keepers*, to lead America back to male Christian "responsible leadership" in the house, the spate of movies and articles which misidentify and vilify religions, cultures and people, with the movie *Wishmaster* being an example.

Now you will wonder what has all this got to do with the Zarathushti community in North America. You may argue that we are safe and cocooned in the warmth of our immediate community wherever we live. But are we really? We are a decimal percentage point of a religious-cultural minority, within an immigrant minority, in a land of two dominant cultures/religions, Christianity and Judaism.

At the present time we are not in any danger of being assimilated by external forces, by the slow return of patriarchal concepts in our social and political arenas, or by the revival of right wing fundamental religious ideologies. However, if we are not careful and vigilant, we will be in danger of dissipation, because of internal disruptive forces of individual apathy, of feelings of "laissez faire", feelings of "why bother", lack of commitment to internalize religious knowledge, lack of integration of all age groups, lack of community spirit of giving of oneself, by young and old alike, as well as by the creation of divisiveness of differing ideologies.

In every community there are some very dedicated people who give of their time, talent, knowledge and money, to help build and move the community forward and there is a

growing momentum to regroup our forces and move forwards. But this momentum needs to be nurtured with tender loving care, not by grandiose plans of mega projects and umbrella organizations but by going back to the basic building blocks of community living, giving and sharing.



To motivate and build a strong, cohesive community, we need to plan for our future and we need to make some strategic decisions of where we want to be in the next 50 years. Do we want to be happy and contented in our home, in our city, or do we want to be happy and contented as part of a larger family of a virtual 'Zarathushti Nation'. We want both, because in the final analysis, it is the will of the people that will build a nation. *But neither is going to happen without a concerted effort by each and every one of us.*

The 10-year Strategic Plan for firming our future in North America was approved at the 1997 FEZANA AGM in Crestone, Colorado. It calls for the development of materials to facilitate a Zarathushti way, for all aspects of our life, be it religious, social or cultural. It calls for creating an atmosphere where every Zarathushti is encouraged to develop

their potential for the greater good of the community, where a 1000 points of light will blaze into a bright beacon. It calls for the development of internal structures for administration, problem solving mechanisms for contentious issues, financial assistance by way of loans, bursaries, scholarships to students, young business entrepreneurs, as well as for the more economically challenged members of our community.

It calls for the development of religious and academic infrastructures like an agiary, and institutes of higher learning and research into "the Zarathushti" as a totality. It calls for the development of external structures which would entrench us in the North American political and multi-faith scene. But most importantly, it calls for the development of an atmosphere where no segment of the community is ostracized because of their accident of birth, for children are not responsible for the choice of their parents.

The formulation of the plan is the first step, the easy step. The implementation of the plan is the second and more difficult step. For this we need individuals with skills to take the strategies of the plan to its implementation stage. We need associations to adopt a piece of the plan as their short and long-term project.

This plan provides all of us with a sense of possibility, with a sense of being part of the building process, to be part of a process of realizing a dream, of being a catalyst in re-establishing a Zarathushti way of life, both religiously and socially, for our children and for our children's children, for to be a Zarathushti is not an accident of history or geography, but a way of life.

Dolly Dastoor  
President, FEZANA



## FEZANA UPDATE

# Stand Up and Be Counted! 1998 North American Directory and Demographic Survey

Data for the North American Directory and census was collected in 1995 and subsequently led to the directory of North American Zarathushtis published in 1996. In spite of our best efforts, in the 1996 edition, there are only 6455 entries in the directory. There are at least three times this number of Zarathushtis in North America.

After seeing the product and the benefits of its use, many Zarathushtis who were not listed in the directory either because they did not wish to be listed or their names were not submitted by their associations, approached us to publish a second edition in time for the 1998 Congress to be held in New York.

Noshir Langrana of ZAGNY has volunteered to co-ordinate this project once again. Each association as well as all small groups listed will be provided free of charge a user-friendly computer program in Windows 95 format, developed by Viraf Commisariat. This will enable each association or small group to send Langrana the data in electronic format. The association or small group will also be provided the current data for directory and census information of their association to update. If your association or small group is unable to use this Windows 95 format, please contact Noshir Langrana at your earliest possible convenience at (609) 275-9154.

We request that each association or small group identify members of their community as contact persons

Page 1

## 1998 North American Zarathushtrian Census and Directory Information

Please note that **ONLY** name, address, telephone, fax, email and profession will be included in the directory. If you do not wish to publish any of the above information, please circle no.

	Self	Spouse
[no] Last name:	_____	_____
[no] First name:	_____	_____
[no] Profession:	_____	_____
[no] Business phone:	_____	_____
[no] Business fax/email:	_____	_____
[no] Home address:	_____	
City:	_____	Province/State: _____
ZIP/Postal Code:	_____	Country: _____
[no] Home phone no.:	_____	Home fax.: _____
[no] Home email:	_____	
[no] Name of the Zarathushtrian association of which member:	_____	

Following information is confidential and **ONLY** be used for Census.

	Self	Spouse
Last name:	_____	_____
First name:	_____	_____
Country of Birth:	_____	_____
Sex (circle one):	M    F	M    F
Religion:	_____	_____
Year of Birth:	19 _____	19 _____

for this project to co-ordinate with Noshir Langrana. It is also suggested that where necessary students or retirees be hired to compile this information and their efforts be remunerated. If assistance is needed, FEZANA will help from monies collected from the sale of the directories.

For the demographic survey, it is critical and very important that we get information about age. This information will be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only. In the 1995 census survey, from the 6455 entries we received for the directory, less than 50% filled in the data for the age category. This is indeed very discouraging as it does not do justice to the effort and energy expended in this survey. We urge you to impress upon your members and fellow Zarathushtis to disclose their ages to the surveyor.

Please stand up and be counted now, since another census is not planned for 5-10 years. A census survey form is shown above. Please make copies as needed. The deadline for submission of new data to be included in the second edition of the North American Directory and the Census survey, is February 1, 1998.

Noshir Langrana  
North American Directory Project  
Census Committee:  
Anahita Sidhwa (Chair),  
Rashna Ghadialy and Minoo Patel.

## FEZANA Journal Cover Page Competition

As it completes 10 years of publication this Winter, the Journal is on solid grounds, thanks to the continued support and encouragement of our subscribers, advertisers and financial sponsors. In celebration of



**1998 North American Zarathushtrian Census and Directory Information**  
(continued)

*Please note that ONLY children's names will be printed in the directory.*

*If you do not wish the names included please circle no.*

**All other information is confidential.**

**CHILDREN**

**All over the age of 18, please complete a separate form**

[no]	First name: _____	[no]	First name: _____
	Country of Birth: _____		Country of Birth: _____
	Sex (circle one):      M      F		Sex:                      M      F
	Religion: _____		Religion: _____
	Year of birth:      19 _____		Year of birth:      19 _____
[no]	First name: _____	[no]	First name: _____
	Country of Birth: _____		Country of Birth: _____
	Sex (circle one):      M      F		Sex:                      M      F
	Religion: _____		Religion: _____
	Year of birth:      19 _____		Year of birth:      19 _____

**Please mail the form in an envelope to your Z association or to**  
**Noshir Langrana, 19 Brookfield Way, Robbinsville, NJ 088691**  
**Tel: (609) 275-9154**

**Thank you very much for your co-operation**

the tenth anniversary, a competition for "ideas for a new cover page for the Journal" was announced in the Winter 1996 issue. Entries were invited for a new design, including wording, for the front and back covers. The closing date was March 21, 1997.

Three entries were received, which were judged by Adel Engineer of Chicago, Illinois, Firoza Fitch of Bethesda, Maryland, and Rustom Kevala of Potomac, Maryland. Judgment criteria included visual appeal, correct interpretation of the purpose of FEZANA, and originality; while representing the hopes, aspirations, and vitality of North American Zarathushtis. The judges unanimously concluded that while all the entries represented a great deal of artistic talent and effort, none of them met the criteria sufficiently to warrant changing the design or wording of the current cover pages.

Accordingly, no prizes have been awarded. The original art work that was submitted has been returned. The Journal editorial board thanks the entrants for their efforts.

### **FEZANA President Visits Chicago**

In September, FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor visited Chicago and met members of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, to share with them the workings of FEZANA as well as her future vision. "Coming to Chicago is like coming to a place of pilgrimage," said Dastoor, "as Chicago was the birthplace of the Constitution of FEZANA."

Realizing the importance of good demographics of the community, FEZANA would be sending out another *census* form, and all Zarathushtis in North America are

urged to fill it out. Dastoor solicited ideas on themes, events, programs for the Zarathushti World Congress 2000 in Houston in December 2000. The upcoming *Avesta Conference* was mentioned as a continuation of regular such educational events.

Dastoor shared her vision for a 'Zarathushti Nation', "if we put our energies together and put our differences aside." A *Strategic Plan* was prepared by FEZANA, so that "we all work together in the same direction." Dolly mentioned the "*Paradise*" video by Shervin and Shahriar Shahriari. She expressed her interest in developing a *Central Education Fund* for assisting students for educational expenses.

Dastoor thanked the Chicago community for their many volunteers who help in bagging and mailing of the FEZANA Journal. ■

### **FEZANA President Visits Calgary and Edmonton**

In October, FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor visited Calgary, met with the small but dedicated community, and then flew to Edmonton, where the community ranges from 3 weeks to 92 years in age.

At both the chapters of the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta, she outlined the role and achievements of FEZANA and the Strategic Plan for the future. She again outlined her vision for a 'Zarathushti Nation'. ■

**FEZANA Committees and Officers are invited to send news and announcements for this new FEZANA Update section to Mahrukh Motafram [see back cover for address].**

*The waves of  
adversity  
Belong to the ocean of  
prosperity*

Meher Amalsad in "Bread for the Head"

FEZANA Journal readers are invited to submit news items of community interest, along with photos to Mahrukh Motafram [see back cover] for publication in FEZANA Journal. All Zarathushti associations are requested to also send their newsletters to Mahrukh.

## ZAMWI receives Afarganyu from Surat

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington has received a most precious and invaluable gift as a result of the tireless efforts of many Zarathushtis. The Association is now the proud owner of a full-size, century-old *afarganyu* (fire urn) that once contained the sacred fire of an agiary in Surat, India. It bears the following inscription:

"Zarthushti Dhunjibhai Bejanji  
Bharucha Kapadia"

The *afarganyu* was dedicated for use with special prayers recited by Ervad Behram Panthaki on September 21 in the prayer room of the ZAMWI Center in Vienna, Virginia [photo right].

The *afarganyu* was donated by the Surat Parsi Anjuman, after it was 'found' by Mrs. Tehmina Turel, mother of long-time Washington area resident Farida Mistry. Mr. Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Mumbai Parsi Panchayet, donated the entire cost of transportation. After arrival in New York, the *afarganyu* was cleared through customs by Ervad Panthaki, with the able assistance of Jehangir Guzder (Jamshed's son) and Adil Gowadia. Thanks to the services of DHL, the international courier service owned and operated by Mr. Guzder in India, the entire shipment was received completely



free of charge. The marble base was donated by Diana and (late) Darius Dadachanji of Pennsylvania.

### The Azargan festival

On November 23rd, the California Zoroastrian Center presented the national, cultural and religious festival of Azargan, at the Rustom Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in Westminster, California. The seminar was in Farsi with simultaneous remote broadcast in English.

Among the distinguished speakers at this full-day seminar were Dr. Pourandokht Islami (*The Female Izadan of Persia: Anahita*), Fariba

Pir-Gheybi (*Zarathushtra and His message for the 21st century*), Dr. Zartosh Azadi (*Persian Culture of Festivals and Ceremonies*), Arman Haghighi (*Various Unities in Persian Culture*), Dr. Anthony Shay (*The Silk Road*) and Dr. Sepehr Ganjei (*Freedom of Choice in the Good Religion*). Contact: Khosro Mehrfar (562) 402-2293.

### Time for Rejuvenation and Communion

Mazdayesnie Connection held the Seventh Spiritual Retreat with Ervad K. N. Dastoor, at the Mazdaznan Center in the picturesque California coastal town of Encinatas in July. In

the scenic setting, a balance was sought in the activities: talks, reflections, discussions, nature appreciation, opportunity to pray and socialize with music, laughter and good food, "so one may be renewed in body, mind and spirit, and come away with a clarity of vision and purpose."

### **Addition to ZAGNY Constitution**

A new category of Associate Membership was approved at a special AGM of ZAGNY in August. "All non-Zoroastrians who have demonstrated an interest in Zoroastrianism are eligible upon payment of the stipulated membership fee to become associate members." "An Associate Member shall not be eligible: (1) to vote at any ZAGNY elections and/or amendments to the ZAGNY Constitution and By-laws; and (2) to run for any elected ZAGNY position.

### **Pateti – Shenshahi New Year Celebrations**

Toronto Zarathushtis celebrated *Pateti*, the Shenshahi New Year 1367 Y.Z. on Friday August 22nd with an inspiring Jashan by 12 mobeds and a catered dinner. The community pre-

sented a shawl to Ervad Noshir Mirza in recognition of his service to the community and a plaque to Sam Vesuna for the unstinting service he had rendered to the community for years. President Moti Balsara presented the annual check of \$1,000 to the Ontario Chapter of the North American Mobeds Council in deep appreciation of the mobed's involvement with the community.

Houstonians celebrated with a *Humbandagi* on Friday, August 22. One of the traditions with the Houston Zarathushtis is to congregate with a *Humbandagi* on auspicious days. The Navroze dinner and dance function was held on Saturday, August 23. Another tradition they follow is to honor all their graduating students of that year at this function.

ZAGNY (New York) celebrated *Pateti* at a church hall in West Nyack, New York. The evening started with a *Humbandagi*, followed by the Annual General Meeting. A Parsi dinner, sweepstakes drawing and dancing lasted past midnight.

About 25 Atlanta Zarathushtis celebrated *Pateti* with a Chinese lunch on

on August 23, organized by Behnaz Dahmubed and Sherry Unwala.

Dallas area Zarathushtis celebrated with a dinner of Tandoori chicken, vindaloo, roganjosh, malai kofta, dal fry, biryani, gulab jamun and more, at Whiterock Lake.

Youth of the Zoroastrian Association of California (Los Angeles) staged a fund-raiser, with their *Pateti* function. About 400 people enjoyed the events – a flute recital, gymnastics, Bhangra dance, Arabian dance, Broadway songs, Opera, contemporary dance, and a Parsi natak. All profits are earmarked for youth activities.

### **ZAGNY Youth Camp**

The ZAGNY Youth Camp at Camp Lou Henry Hoover in Middleville, Sussex County, NJ. drew 38 youth from ZAGNY, Pittsburgh, Boston and Montreal. Activities included canoeing, funyaking, swimming, and a campfire.

### **Third Zarathushti Religion Camp in Chicago**

The Darbe Mehr in Chicago was bustling with activity for four days this July, as 35 youth, 9-18, gathered for ZAC's third annual camp. Religion education sessions by Kay-

*Right, a section of the audience at the retreat in the Mazdayesnie Center in the town of Encinitas, California.*



*Children of the Mazdayesnie Connection in California, performing the play Faridoon and Zohak. The children's book on this episode from the epic Shahnama by Silloo Mehta was reviewed in FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997.*







Youth camp participants, in their sharp purple T-shirts, at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago.

Below, Atlanta Zarathushtis at picnic.



### Atlanta Zarathushti Anjuman

Zarathushtis of Atlanta gathered for a picnic on the beach at Allatoona Landing in July. Everyone brought a dish and had a scrumptious lunch, which included the all-time favorite 'poro and rotli' and enjoyed a game of dog-and-the-bone, number limbo and dodgeball. Thanks to Behnaz and Jehangir Dahmubed for organizing a great picnic!

There are 53 Zarathushti in Atlanta and one very energetic, outdoors loving and single priest, Rustom Kanga. We get together on the third Sunday of every month at Yashfara and Farrok Mistrree's house, where we have a potluck lunch and a religious discussion in what Farrok calls a one room schoolhouse. We are in the process of forming an association and hope to get things up and running by March 21, 1998. [Submitted by Niloufer Mondal, Corresponding Secretary, Atlanta Zarathushti Anjuman.]

### Fifteenth Year of Muktad Observances in Toronto

Year after year the participation, enthusiasm and generosity of our community grow and multiply. This year the Dadgah room was painted. Our clean-up crew of 16 Zarathushtis prepared the Darbe Mehr with the usual sparkle and shine, after hours of hard work and sweat.

Mobed in charge Ervad Firdosh Bulsara, with nine other mobeds took turns with the prayers. Afringan and Farokshi prayers and three Satums

omarsh Mehta, covered conversational know-how on how to explain our religion to our friends, the scriptures, Gathas, Amesha Spentas, symbolism, freedom of choice, Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, and a narration of 6,000 years of history. The presentations were interspersed with small group discussions where the groups were named after the five *Gehs*. A discussion of the atrocities faced and sacrifices made by our forefathers in Iran and India, gave a perspective of our precious heritage. The kushti prayers and Sarosh Baj were discussed, and group prayers recited in unison, holding hands, led by our youth mobeds.

The program included a variety of fun activities spanning sports and games, a talent show, BBQ and an evening at Chicago's North Pier. To

top off the excitement, we experienced an extended power outage on the evening of the second day. Without lights or water, we made the best of the situation – the oil lamps in the prayer room were lit, the youth mobeds set up a Jashan demonstration, and we continued our discussion of the ceremony in the light and glow of the fire in the afargan. The camp ended with an emotional parting ceremony, graduation, awards, thanksgiving and a sumptuous lunch with the parents.

Most meals were provided by Dinaz Weber. Special thanks to the main organizer and coordinator, Zenobia Mehta, and to the four Youth Counselors – Rustom Bhathena, Zarine Damkevala, Shawn Mehta and Deena Patel. [From a report by Dinaz Weber].

performed through the day remembered nearly 300 dear departed ones. A humbandagi was held every evening during the five holy days.

Resident lady volunteers were on hand for washing, cleaning and making sure there was an ample supply of *puri*, *malido*, *batasa*, *bhakhra*, *dalni-pori*, *mithai*, *sev*, *ravo*, *dahi* and other dishes brought by community members. Many donors brought in *sukhad*, *lobban*, *tachho*, *kakras*, *diva* glasses, fruit, flowers, dry fruits, rice and other items. May Ahura Mazda and all our Asho Farohars continue to bless our community and help us keep the Fire burning into the next millennium and ever after.

[From report by Putli Mirza in the ZSO Newsletter, October 1997].

### Active Summer in Boston

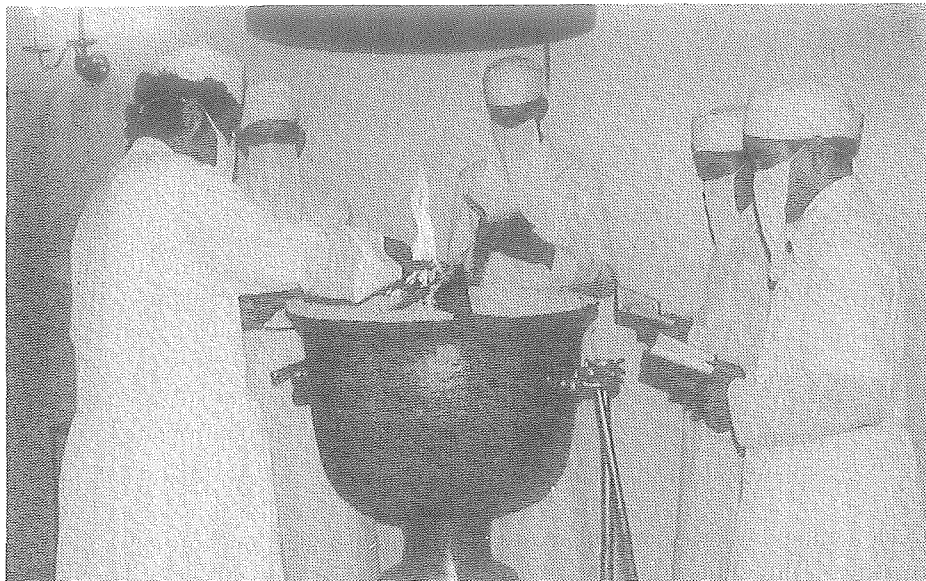
About 25 joined ZAGBA'S Biking Event on June 28th, along the Minuteman Trail from Bedford to Arlington. A delicious Parsi lunch was served to the hungry athletes by Navaz Katki and her parents who are visiting from India. On July 13th, ZAGBA hosted its 2nd annual tennis outing arranged by Percy and Suzannah Chinoy. ZAGBA members also enjoyed their picnic at Hopkinton State Park with games like dog-and-the-bone and *kho* and ethnic food items like *bhel*, *kaleji* and *moong dal* along with barbecued chicken, sandwiches and pasta.

### On National TV in Quebec

On October 6, the French National Network aired a 12-minute documentary in French on "Les Zoroastriennes" on their national program. The documentary was specially prepared with interviews with Dolly Dastoor and Ervad Dr. Zubin Panthaky, and footage of the March 21st Jashan ceremony and the line production of "Paradise".

### ZANT Building Fund

The ZANT (Dallas) Building Fund balance in September was \$18,035.96. Zarathushtis are invited to help ZANT achieve their annual goal of \$22,500.



### Muktad prayers in Chicago

Photos above, *afringan* and *satum* prayers were offered on each of the five Gatha days and *Muktad-no-Namaskar* was recited in front of the *Muktad* tables laden with vases of flowers in memory of dear departed souls, at the *Darbe Mehr* in Chicago last August. The Chicago community is especially proud of their five young *mobeds*, *Ervads Jimmy and Mazda Antia*, *Zarvan Karanjia*, and *Hoshi and Neville Vazifdar*, all recently initiated, who participated along with other Chicago area *mobeds* in the *Muktad* ceremonies. Delicious, home-cooked meals, prepared by various families were served daily after the prayers.

### Tornado Hits School

On October 23, a tornado hit the Sugarland, Texas area. Directly in its path was the Sugar Mill Montessori School, owned by Khurshid Challa. When it became dark and windy, the children were ushered into a room with no windows. The teachers shut the doors and the children were

asked to sit the way they had been taught during previous tornado drills. In the next instant the tornado hit the building. Two windows broke and the roof shingles were blown off, but by the grace of Ahura Mazda no one was hurt. The school was closed for cleanup and repair the next day.

# Any Options for Survival?

By Homi B. Minocher Homji  
Toronto, Canada

The Parsi Zarathushti community is well aware of its inevitable demographic disaster before the middle of the next century, but does not seem concerned about it enough to wake up and act to avert it. It prefers to look to its past glory and more recent achievements, as a dyke against the deluge. There is no attempt to mobilize public awareness or to form a think tank or to constitute a group of multi-disciplinary wise men to even deliberate upon the subject. The Iranian Zarathushti community is better placed in its demography and reproduction rate, but as they migrate towards cities or to the west and fall prey to 'modernization', they too may soon find their growth stunted.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) recently gave some thought to undertaking a Long Term Planning of activity, right into the beginning of the next century. Five projects selected by the Ontario community, in order of priority were:

- 1) Encourage Zarathushti youth (to participate) particularly by involving them in all activities of ZSO, including membership on the Executive and other working committees.
- 2) Support Zarathushti elderly by assisting home-bound elderly and the handicapped, with a network of voluntary care.
- 3) Enhance the Zarathushti faith and spiritual needs of the community, by providing religious education, and educating parents to maintain Zarathushti practices in the home.
- 4) Develop appropriate physical facilities for the community for hous-

ing of seniors and establishing a Zarathushti cemetery.

A copy of this report can be requested from ZSO, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, M2M 3S6, Canada. The objective is to get all Zarathushtis (Associations, Societies and Panchayets) around the world thinking about and deciding to implement the projects most suited to their long-term survival. This can only be viewed as a catalytic attempt to wake up to the dangers confronting us.

In this writer's view what needs to be done additionally, is to constitute a global 'Think Tank' of some multi-disciplinary wise men, to deliberate upon the options we have within this crunch, and then circulate their thoughts to all community associations around the world in order to seek their individual views and priorities.

Could the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans of India or the Mumbai Parsi Panchayet take a constructive and serious global lead in this matter and constitute such a Think Tank; and in these days of immediate email, also include some members from Iran, Pakistan, UK and North America? These will hopefully be the saviors of the community.

*Prima facie*, what are the options?

- 1) Do nothing, because we cannot agree on anything. That is our current tradition. "Ahura has helped us to survive 4000 years and will continue to do so." (Hope springs eternal in the human breast!)
- 2) Ask youth to marry early to Zarathushti spouse and produce more children. (Demographers and sociologists will consider such a behest ridiculous).
- 3) Go back to the Gathic age of Asho Zarathushtra and open up the

religion to all mankind. (How will the orthodox and traditionalists react?)

- 4) If all this seems 'so sudden' then do it by stages, e.g. acceptance of non-Zarathushti spouses and children of mixed marriages and widows and those who had a Zarathushti parentage two or three generations ago.
- 5) Acceptance selectively of known non-Zarathushtis who are prepared to fully and solely accept the Good Religion. (Shocking?)

In considering these or other options, one must initially keep aware that the only alternative is total numerical

disaster and final disappearance. Secondly, will the proposal thin out our so-called pure blue blood of royal descent and desecrate our genes? Human blood knows no such distinction and we have gone through a long period of Sassanian conversions and abundant non-Zarathushti

spouses. We are already carrying the

genes of 'dubra' converts within India, much as we would like to deny it. Thirdly, will that dilute our faith? What percentage of Parsis today continue to wear their sudreh-kushti and earnestly follow the Gathic or Vendidadian religiosity, behavior or purity – yet eagerly follow hopeful miracles or showers of wealth (and in some cases, the evil eye) as promised by other faiths. Fourthly, will our next generation outside of India/Pakistan even know or respect or follow our religious and behavioral practices or morality, particularly when non-Zarathushti spouses are outnumbering Zarathushti spouses and we hesitate to accept at par such spouses and their children?



Homji: constitute a 'Think Tank'

[Continued on page 41]



## Houston Interfaith Ministries

On October 19, the Zarathushti faith was recognized at the Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston at their Fifth Annual Houston Children's Sabbath Observance. Affirmations for the children were given by representatives of the various religious communities, and Yezdi Rustomji was invited to give the reading:

"Therefore, today we go forth strengthened by faith in God and by our unity with each other to create a nurturing, loving and compassionate world for our children. Let us join our hearts and hands to give hope for the future of our children ..."

Zarathushti children of Houston were represented by Nazreen Mehta. A display table was set up overflowing with literature, children's Sunday School work and religious articles.

## ZAMWI members sing at the National Cathedral

ZAMWI (Washington DC) members sang the *Ashem Vohu Song* (in Farsi) at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, on November 18, as part of the 18th Annual Interfaith Concert. The concert drew 2,000 people and was televised. After several years of efforts, Zarathushtis have been invited to participate for the first time this year. The Zarathushti contribution was organized by Fareshte Farahmand, Rashna Ghadi-aly, and ZAMWI president Kersi Shroff.

## Habitat for Humanity volunteer opportunity

Jasmine Patel of Baltimore, MD recently worked on a project through Habitat for Humanity, which builds new housing for low-income families. She is looking for volunteers to join her in the rewarding experience. Contact Jasmine at (410) 783-2671.

## Ayathrem Gahambar on PBS-TV

On Sunday, October 12, about 120 Public TV stations nationwide broadcast a brief (1 minute) segment on the

Zarathushti Ayathrem Gahambar, in the Religion and Ethics News Weekly program. In an interview taped at the ZAMWI Center in Virginia, Ervad Behram Panthaki, wearing a dagli, spoke about the Zarathushti religion in general and about Gahambar Ayathrem. Also shown were a picture of Zarathushtra and a Farohar.

## Montreal Interfaith Council

The Zarathushti community has been represented on the Montreal Interfaith Council, founded in 1989, by Khushroo Mirza, who also serves this year as its Secretary. Ervads Gev Karkaria and Jal Panthaky have often performed prayers at various public functions. The Council organizes religious discussions and presentations, visits to places of worship and makes representations to Government authorities on behalf of member communities.

## The Magi and Christianity

The three Magi of the Jesus birth story were Zarathushti priests, and the influence of the religion of the Magi on Judaism and Christianity is deep and pervasive. Zarathushti imagery is manifested in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament. On December 6, the public was invited to a seminar at St. Paul's Methodist Church, to hear two noted speakers: Dr. Khojeste Mistree, Resident Scholar of Zoroastrian Studies in Mumbai; and Prof. John Hinnells of Oxford.

## Dialogues in Spirituality

Kaemarz Dotiwala, a founding member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, and Dr. Ken R. Vincent, Chair of the Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology Department at Houston Community College, presented a talk and discussion on *The Influence of Zoroastrian Religion on the Western World*, at the C. G. Jung Educational Center of Houston on October 16.

# My Canadian Zarathushti Experience



*Hannah Shapero, a student of the Zarathushti religion visits the ZSO and the community in Toronto*

Last September, I journeyed up to Toronto to give a talk at the ZSO. One of the leaders of the Society, Ardeshir Dastur had invited me to speak on the Zoroastrian influence on Judaism and Christianity, which was something someone in my multi-religious situation might know about.

I set off for the North, driving through historic little towns in central Pennsylvania near the Susquehanna River, then up through western New York State. I entered Canada north of Buffalo not knowing what to expect.

Instead of the cliché's about Canada which Americans have learned (northwoods hicks in plaid shirts swilling beer and paddling canoes, in a dark, wet, freezing environment) I found acres of orchards under a crystalline blue sky, and, near Toronto, orderly neighborhoods of suburbs and businesses and parks. The metropolis was spread out along Lake Ontario, which is so large that I could not see the other shore.

Mr. Dastur and his wife Renate were my hosts. I found their house in a leafy neighborhood of lawns and gardens in Etobicoke, an urban neighborhood next to Toronto proper. The Dasturs are cultured, elegant people who have filled their home with art and beautiful things, including exquisite Oriental rugs. Mr. Dastur is also a fine cook, and when I first entered the house, the house was filled with the inviting, pungent aroma of Indian eggplant pickles, which he was preparing as gifts for his friends.

Saturday, escorted by Mr. Dastur and Yezdi Antia, one of the many priests serving the community there, we toured Toronto: James Garden (no desolate 'Great White North' here!); downtown Toronto with the futuristic CN tower, the Skydome and other modern buildings; and the Royal Ontario Museum where we viewed ancient Middle Eastern artifacts.

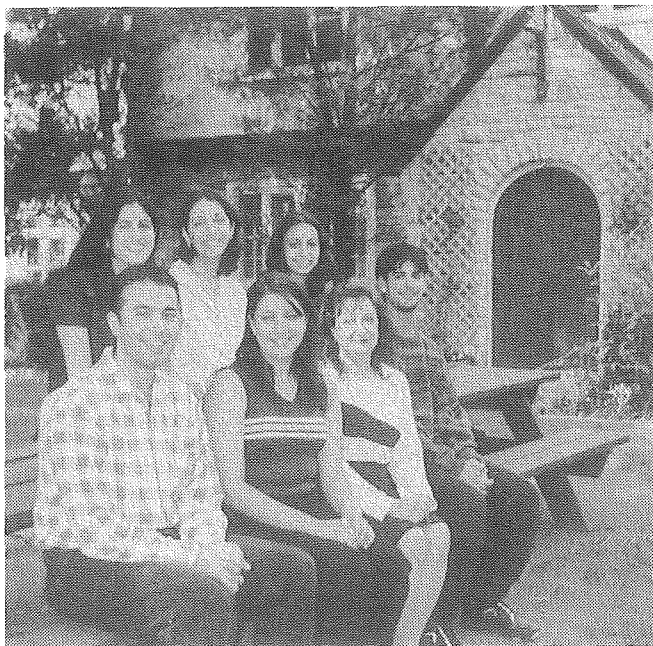
That evening, I went to the 25th anniversary banquet of the ZSO. There are more than 5,000 Zarathushtis in Ontario, which makes that region home to the largest Zarathushti community in North America. Almost 500

were at the banquet, which was held in a large Indian-run banquet hall. The attendees were almost equally divided between Iranians and Parsis. Soon I was trying to keep the names straight: Adi and Yezdi, and Moti, and Aspi, and Keki, and Homi, and Vispi, and many other names, both male and female, that ended in "i".

I had many good conversations with individuals at my table, such as the scholarly Keki Shroff, and the diplomatic scientist Farzad Ardeshtiri, who discussed with me the necessity for the proper proportion of fenugreek leaves in making the Persian stew dish, gormeh sabzi, which was one of the foods we enjoyed at the banquet.

Other tasty things were Indian sausage, potato patties, lamb curry, and Persian rice pilaf.

There was comedy entertainment, but I couldn't understand it because one skit was in Gujarati and the other was in Farsi. There were lots of testimonials and awards given out, and lots of speeches.



*The closing banquet for ZSO's Silver Jubilee year was presented by the ZSO Youth Sub-committee: (clockwise, Farrah Bhesania, Mantreh Atashband, Jasmine Dotiwalla, Farzad Mirza, Kamal Driver, Zenobia Panthakee, Pervez Mistry. Not in photo: Kevin Mancheree. The memorable event featured Parsi and Persian food, raffles, prizes, dancing and Farsi and Gujarati skits. Photo: courtesy Phiroz Dastoor.*

I was very nervous about my lecture next morning. As always, when I'm among Zarathushtis, I am fearful that I will say the wrong thing. I had lots of lecture material, though, so if I just stayed on my subject I would be all right. The lecture was in mid-afternoon at the Darbe Mehr, which is housed in a mansion that used to belong to a well-known Canadian novelist.

There were only a few people there at first, but by the time of my lecture about 50 or 60 people had arrived. After some arrangements with microphones and a tape-recorder, I was introduced and I gave my talk.

I spoke for exactly an hour, about the history of Zarathushtis and Jews together, and the many ideas and teachings which have passed from Zarathushtis to Jewish and Christian religion. I also spoke about those things which have been thought to be Zarathushti influence, but which I believe are independent beliefs in Judaism and Christianity. A formal question and answer session followed after a short tea break, when I tried the spicy meatballs and Bombay snack mix.

I was impressed by the intelligence and learning of the Toronto community. These are people who really care about preserving and developing their Zarathushti faith.

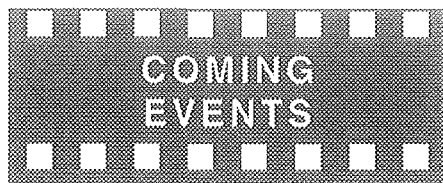
At the end, I opened my portfolio and showed the group some prints of my artworks, along with two original artworks, the first two of my abstract interpretations of the seven Zarathushti 'archangels', the Amesha Spentas. Afterwards I received a gift of flowers and a book from India – a reprint of *Outlines of Parsi History* by Dastur H. K. Mirza.

I was sad to leave Toronto. Mr. Dastur gave me a small jar of his powerful Indian pickles, and I gave my hosts one of my

art prints.

Sudden bursts of rain and then golden sunlight accompanied me as I drove back into the USA through western New York State. When I got home I opened the jar of Indian pickles and tasted them, and once again I felt the spicy fire of my Canadian Zoroastrian experience. ■

*Hannah M. G. Shapero learned to love the Zarathushti religion through her studies in ancient languages and cultures. She has studied the Zarathushti faith for more than ten years. Ms. Shapero lives in the Washington, DC area where she works as a commercial artist.*



## Upcoming Festivals

*Maidyoshem Gahambar (S)*  
Mah Tir-Khorshed Sun Nov 30

*Tir nu Parab (S)*  
Mah Tir - Tir Tue Dec 2

*Shab-e-Yalda (F)*  
Winter solstice Dec 21

*Zarathushtra's Death Anniversary (F)*  
Mah Daye-Khorshed Fri Dec 26

*Maidhyarem Gahambar (F)*  
Mah Daye - Meher Wed Dec 31

*Jashan e Sadeh (F)*  
Mah Bahman - Meher Fri Jan 30

*Porseh Hamegani (F) [see below]*  
Mah Aspandarmad-Hormazd Sat Feb 14

*Paitishahem Gahambar (S)*  
Mah Shehrevard - Ashtad Fri Feb 13

*Meher nu Parab (S)*  
Mah Meher - Meher Thu Mar 5

*Ayathrem Gahambar (S)*  
Mah Meher-Ashtad Sun Mar 15

*Fravardegan (F)*  
Five Gatha Days Mar 16-20

*Khordad Sal (S)*  
Mah Fravardin-Khordad Thu Mar 26

*Char-Shanbe-Soori (F) [see below]*  
Tuesday before NoRuz Tue Mar 17

*NoRuz (F) & Jamshedi Navroze (S)*  
Mah Fravardin-Hormazd Sat Mar 21

*Ava Ardisoor Parab (S)*  
Mah Avan-Avan Sun Mar 29

*Fravardegan (F)*  
Mah Fravardin-Fravardin Wed Apr 8

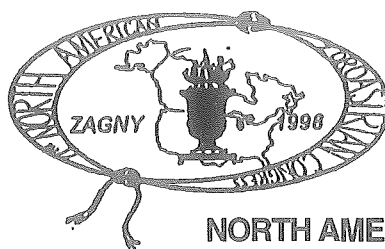
*Atash Nu Parab (S)*  
Mah Adar-Adar Mon Apr 27

*Maidyozarem Gahambar (F)*  
Mah Ardibehest-Khorshed Thu Apr 30

*Zarthusht-no-Diso (S)*  
Mah Daye-Khorshed Fri May 29

(F)=Fasli, (S)=Shenshai, (K)=Kadmi  
First of five Gahambar days are listed.

**Tir nu Parab** celebrates Teshtar Tir Yazata, which signifies the Star Sirius or the Dog star. The Tir Yasht is one of the oldest Avestan Yasht and the Yaza-



## NORTH AMERICAN CONGRESS NEW YORK, JULY 1998

ZAGNY extends a special invitation to the Eleventh North American Zoroastrian Congress. Mark your calendars, buy a raffle ticket, and send in your message or advertisement for the Congress Brochure.

### RAFFLE

\$10 raffle tickets are available for first and second prizes of business class tickets to India from New York or Chicago on Air India.

### ADVERTISEMENTS IN SOUVENIR BROCHURE

The Congress will be attended by about 500 people. To commemorate this memorable occasion, we will publish a program/brochure that will reach an audience of 1000. You are invited to submit your business and goodwill advertisements in the Brochure. It will be an excellent vehicle to market your services and products to the community. We appeal to your generosity and thank you for your support.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TEL NO: (Work) ( ) (Home) ( )

### ADVERTISEMENT SPECIFICATIONS

The Costs for the Advertisements are as follows:

• Back Page	\$4,000	• Inside Front Cover	\$2,000
• Inside Back Cover	\$1,500 (sold)	• Full Page	\$500
• Half Page	\$250	• Quarter Page	\$150
• Business Card	\$50		

Circle the appropriate size for the AD, write in the Amount.

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

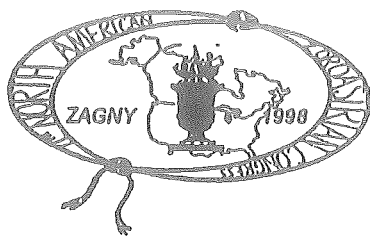
Please send your CAMERA READY art work with this form.

Please make the Check Payable To: ZAGNY, Congress 1998. Mail the check and form to:  
Mrs. Teshtar Irani, 105/10 62nd Road, Apt 4S, Forest Hills, New York 11375.

ta's special domain is 'rainfall'. Therefore Tir Yazata is the 'hamkar' or assistant of Khordad Amesha Spenta.

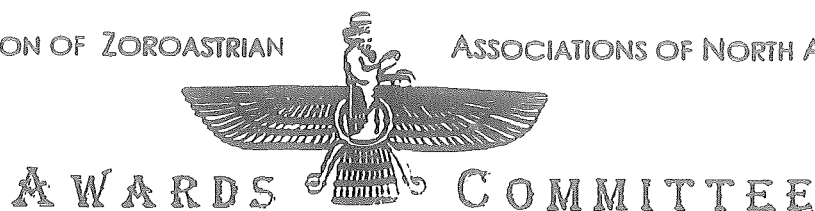
**Porseh Hamegani** is a day of general mourning when Iranian Zarathushtris remember their illustrious forefathers who suffered for their faith. They visit the Anjuman hall and offer condolences with recitation of Avesta by the mobeds.

**Char-Shanbe-Soori** is a pre-NoRuz festival dating back to Zoroastrian Iran, and is still celebrated by many Iranians. It is held on the last Tuesday evening of the year, before NoRuz. A bonfire is made, and everybody jumps over the fire. Music, feasting and dancing follow. The idea is to welcome the New Year a few days in advance.



## A SPECIAL INVITATION TO ATTEND THE 11TH NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS

- FROM :** The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York.
- WHERE:** At the Rye Town Hilton with resort amenities and conveniently located in beautiful Westchester County, a suburb of New York City.
- WHEN:** Held during the week-end of July 4th, 1998. A great opportunity to visit the Big Apple, explore the sights and dynamism of New York City.
- THEME:** **THE ZOROASTRIAN COMMITMENT  
IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT**
- SESSIONS:** Demographics; Faith and Community; Rituals; Intra and Inter Faith Marriages; Belief and Devotion; Social Structures; Community Enhancements and Preservation.
- FORUM:** Engaging and lively discussions among panelists and delegates on matters significant to the North American Zoroastrian Community should culminate in actionable recommendations for implementation by our North American community.
- WHY ATTEND:** Gain new information; Participate in solutions generation; Have fun with fellow Zoroastrians, GET INVOLVED, make a difference in your community.
- SOCIAL  
ACTIVITIES:** Social Banquet with Entertainment; FEZANA Awards Luncheon; Youth Night; Sightseeing; Shopping and Entertainment around NYC. The Resort Hotel has superb recreational facilities.
- COSTS:** Early registration discounts for the Congress and special discount room rate for the duration of the Congress at the Rye Hilton. Room rate is applicable for up to four persons in the same room.
- YOUR HELP:**
1. Mark your calendars for the Congress.
  2. Request reservation form and agenda from ZAGNY.
  3. Donate towards this Congress. Buy \$10 raffle tickets for first and second prizes of business class tickets to India from New York or Chicago via Air India.
  4. Encourage others to attend.
- REGISTRATION:** Registration / Program packages will be mailed out in early 1998.
- |                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Early Registration.....   | \$140.00 |
| Late Registration.....    | \$175.00 |
| Student Registration..... | \$100.00 |
- INFORMATION:** Please contact one of the co-chairs for information:
- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Gev Nentin        | Noshir Langrana   |
| (H) 516-462-0763  | (H) 609-275-9154  |
| (O) 212-270-4413  | (O) 732-445-3618  |
| FAX: 212-661-8396 | FAX: 732-445-3124 |



## ZARATHUSHTI COMMUNITY AWARDS - 1998

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Zarathushti Community Awards for 1998 in the following five categories will be presented to outstanding North American Zarathushtis at the Eleventh North American Zoroastrian Congress to be held in New York in July 1998:

**Category A: Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award:**

To recognize a Zarathushti who has made outstanding contributions in furthering the cause of Zarathushti religion and/or the Zarathushti Community in North America, in cultural, educational and/or religious arenas.

**Category B: Excellence in Business or Profession Award**

*(Sponsored by Jamshed and Shirin Guzder of Mumbai, India)*

To recognize a Zarathushti who has reached the pinnacle of prominence in his/her profession and/or business and whose achievements have been recognized both nationally and internationally.

**Category C: Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Service Award**

*(Sponsored by Roda Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver, B.C., Canada)*

To recognize a Zarathushti who has made significant contributions in advancing social and humanitarian causes in general and for the Zarathushti community in particular, and whose achievements have been acknowledged not only locally but also nationally and/or internationally.

**Category D: Outstanding Young Zarathushti Award**

To recognize a young Zarathushti, 35 years or younger as of December 31, 1997, who is neither a full-time nor part-time student, whose performance in his/her profession has been outstanding and is considered a rising star in that profession and who has made substantial contributions locally or nationally in Zarathushti community affairs.

**Category E: Outstanding Zarathushti Student Award**

*(Sponsored by Faridoon and Mehraban Zartoshty of Vancouver, B.C. Canada)*

To recognize a full-time student who has achieved excellence in scholastic studies as well as eminence in extra-curricular activities which are academically co-curricular and/or specific to the Zarathushti community.

The Awards Committee invites nomination of deserving Zarathushtis for consideration for an Zarathushti Community Award in the above categories. Nominations may be made by individuals, groups or Associations. Nominations must be submitted in the prescribed Nominaion Form. The rules governing the awards, the criteria that will be applied in evaluating the nominees in each category and the Nomination Form are available from FEZANA Member Associations or from: Dinshaw F. D. Joshi, Chair, FEZANA Awards Committee; 4515 Willard Avenue, Apt. S.1609; Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815-3619, U.S.A. E-mail: dfjoshi@erols.com

The closing date for receipt of nominations by the Awards Committee is **December 31, 1997**

## Z-Cruise 97

ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) announces Z-Cruise 97, "The Caribbean Caper", a 4-day cruise between Miami and Caribbean ports, December 26 - 30, 1997. This unique 'youth congress' will feature

talks and workshops during the day and fun social activities at night. Cost is \$700. Contact Mehrnosh Mody, ZYNA, 46 Spiers Road, Newton, MA 02159, or email: mmody@opal.tufts.edu, Tel: (617) 928-0953.

## WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS 2000

December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001

**M**ark your calendars for the Seventh World Zarathushti Congress in Houston, Texas. Co-chairs Dolly Dastoor and Homi Davier will lead the World Zarathushti community into the new millennium and into the New World, as the first world congress in North America, CONGRESS 2000 will be the place to celebrate our Zarathushti talents – in the fields of arts, science, sport, literature and music. The scope of this conference will be grand: Homi Davier is resolved to see that at least 2000 Zarathushtis attend this Congress and Dolly Dastoor is exploring the possibility of a film festival, art exhibits, and sports events.

The coordinating for the Congress begins on January 10, 1998, in Houston, when the Executive team will meet to develop a timeline and a plan of action. Meanwhile Homi Davier has been meeting with the organizing Committee in Houston the first Wednesday of each month. The enthusiastic committee members are confirming hotel arrangements, designing a logo, and developing a theme for Congress 2000.

Please join us in the planning of Congress 2000. Participate and share your ideas. To volunteer, please call:

Dolly Dastoor, Co-chair	(514) 656-2036
Homi Davier, Co-chair	(713) 339-2222
Sarosh Manekshaw, Vice-chair	(283) 870-9317
Farrokh Mistree, Vice-chair	(404) 325-3300
Rustom Kevala, Fundraising Chair	(301) 765-0792
Rohinton Rivetna, International Affairs	(630) 325-5383

## IN COMING ISSUES OF FEZANA JOURNAL ...

Spring (March) 1998:

**The Gathas of Zarathushtra in History & Religion**

Yezdi Rustomji will be the Guest Editor of this issue. Readers interested in submitting articles or letters for publication, please contact Rustomji at 944 Highland, Houston, TX 77009, tel: (713) 864-5145.

Submission deadline is January 1, to Yezdi Rustomji.

Summer (June) 1998:

**Zarathushti Spirituality**

Jehan Bagli will be the Guest Editor of this issue. Readers interested in submitting articles or letters on what constitutes spirituality and how it relates to the religion of Zarathushtra, please contact Jehan Bagli at 61 Sayre Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540, tel: (609) 520-0674.

Submission deadline is April 1, to Jehan Bagli.

# An Outrage on our God, our Prophet and our Religion

*Zarathushtis are incensed and outraged at the central role of "the God Ahura Mazda" and the use of Zoroastrianism in the story-line of "Wishmaster" a B-rated, horror film dealing with evil and sorcery.*

"Blasphemy", "Sue them", "Demand an apology", "withdraw the film" and other calls of outrage were a reaction to the release of the film Wishmaster on the big screen in theaters in the USA and Canada this past September.

The film starts in a sorcerer's room with some familiar Eastern items such as a 'golabas' (rose-water sprinkler) and other items from western magical origins. A magician comes and makes a potion of powders mixed with blood, and from that makes a jewel. The scene suddenly shifts to "Persia 1127 AD" – there are gory scenes of people dying horribly, and thence to the king's palace with a backdrop of reliefs of Persepolis.

The film jumps to modern-day San Francisco where a crated "statue of the pre-Islamic God, Ahura Mazda" is being shipped to a museum. The



statue breaks, and the gem containing the evil 'djin' is stolen. After some more bizarre and gory plots, the scene shifts to the museum to "A room of lost gods ...". The antique dealer points to a place set for the missing statue with a plaque which reads, very clearly, "Ahura Mazda".

The dialogue continues that this god was a "pre-Islamic monotheistic deity" that was good, but it had a shadow that was evil. This evil lived between two creations, the underworld and the earth. Using this as a crutch, the producer portrays the jewel in the statue as the embodiment of evil that caused havoc of the grossest kind.

Finally, perhaps the most disturbing blow was in the credits, where Zoroaster, played by Ari Barak, is listed first, implying that the first character that appeared in the movie, the sorcerer, was the Prophet himself!

**Letter to the film distributors from FEZANA President.** Excerpts from Dolly Dastoor's letter to the President and CEO of US and Canadian distributors of the film, follows:

"In the movie Wishmaster which your company distributes, there are a number of direct references to Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster, and to Ahura Mazda, the One Supreme God, the Creator of the World, according to the Zarathushti religion.

"This movie is clearly a horror movie that primarily deals with evil and destructive forces of a supernatural being named "Djin" (part of the Islamic mythology, and not of Zoroastrian origin). It is also apparent that the movie has had little regard for historical facts, and has freely mixed various world myths and cultures, in a rather inappropriate and inaccurate way.

We, the Zoroastrian people, find this movie distasteful, insulting and extremely offensive. This movie treats Ahura Mazda, our prophet Zoroaster and our beliefs in a desecrating and blasphemous way. Furthermore, in the eyes of our

neighbors in North America, it turns us into a Satanic cult, with serious social consequences for the people of our community.

"Perhaps if your script writer had done some background research about the religion, it would have been apparent that the Zoroastrian religion is the oldest revealed religion propounded by the prophet Zoroaster, about 1800 BCE in Iran, which made huge innovations in religious thought, extolling the worship of one God Ahura Mazda. This religion was the state religion of three mighty Persian Empires, for over a 1000 years, namely the House of Achaemenians, Parthians and the Sassanians. Zoroaster's name was familiar to Plato and Aristotle.

"Jews and Christians who appear to have absorbed much of Zoroastrian doctrine, identified him with various Old Testament figures: Nimrod, Balaam, Baruch, Ezekiel. Cyrus the Great (Korosh in the Old Testament) has been heralded as their Messiah, for releasing the Jews from Babylonian captivity ...

"... Zoroastrianism is a living religion, with over 3,000 years of continuous history, which has influenced the evolution of world religious thought significantly. However, the movie has equated the religion with a cult! Not only has it twisted our beliefs and doctrines with witchcraft and presented them as Satanism, it has created a statue of our God Ahura Mazda, and has made our prophet Zoroaster into the high priest of that Satanic cult.

"What this movie has done is far worse than desecrating Jewish graves and synagogues by painting swastikas on them.

"... At this time, we appeal to your sense of decency and moral judgment, and ask you to immediately withdraw this movie from all theaters in North America, and refrain from distributing it in any other country. We would also request you not to promote the sale of videos of this insensitive movie. We will be satis-

fied if you simply do the above, and send a letter of apology to our community ..."

**Letter to the distributors from theater-owner, Alayar Dabestani:**

"I am the owner/operator of 15 theaters throughout the US and Canada, and due to the fact that the above-mentioned film is so filled with incorrect "facts" I will not be playing it at any of them. A list of my theaters is attached.

"I am not here to censor your film and I definitely believe in the right to freedom of speech; however, such exercises in the rights of freedom should be based on actual facts.

"As we are all aware, people are often guided, or misguided in this case, by what they read in the papers and see on television or the big screen. It is often what people see that determines how they feel about certain people.

"The Zoroastrian religion is not that well-known outside our community. It is somewhat of a mystery to most. Having your film, up on a big screen, filled with all sorts of information on our religion will solve the 'mystery' for most people. The problem is, your information is wrong.

"When people walk out of the movie theater after seeing your film, they are going to have a completely distorted view of the religion. Based on what they have seen, a prejudice will be born. The damage done by the unresearched facts displayed throughout this film will be far-reaching. Some may be irreparable.

**Follow up.** FEZANA is seeking legal opinion in regard to any actions that can be taken. Readers may write to protest the showing of the film, to the distributors: Robert Straight, CEO, Everest Entertainment, 150 York Street, Suite 1100, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3S5; and to Roger Burlage, CEO, Live Theatrical Distribution, 15400 Sherman Way, Suite 500, P.O.Box 10124, Van Nuys, CA 91406. ■

- By Roshan Rivetna



## Sesquicentennial in Secunderabad

650 Zarathushtis, dressed in traditional 'garas' and 'daglis' assembled for a Jashan ceremony at the Seth Viccajiseth Pestonji Meherji Parsi Fire Temple in Secunderabad, India, on August 6, to celebrate the agiary's 150th anniversary. The Jashan was performed by nine venerable priests, led by Dastur Dr. Kaikhushroo M. Jamasp Asa, head priest of the Mumbai Anjuman Atash Behram. Replicas of the 'Pestonshai Sicca' (coin) were distributed to commemorate the occasion.

## Lukonin Seminar at the British Museum

The Vladimir G. Lukonin Memorial Seminar was held on July 14th at the British Museum in London. This is a biannual event, open to interested members of the public.

The theme of the one-day seminar was "*Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sassanian Periods.*" Dr. John Curtis, a specialist in the archaeology and history of Mesopotamia and Iran, began the proceedings by outlining the possible influences of Hellenism in Mesopotamia and Iran, mentioning in particular sites such as Seleucia, Nimrud, Nineveh and the Mossul area in Northern Iraq; and Susa, Ray and Hamadan in Iran.

Prof. Richard Frye traced the probable ancestry of the Parthians to the Parni, nomadic invaders of the province of Parthava (present-day Khorrasan), claiming that evidence of such nomadic ancestry may be found in such aspects of their life as

the famous "*Parthian shot.*" Their empire endured from around 247 BCE until 224 AC. Moving on to the Sassanians, Frye maintains that they developed Zoroastrianism as a "state church", and set down the Zoroastrian scriptures in writing partly in response to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire in the early 4th century.

Dr. Vesta Curtis spoke on "Parthian Culture and Costume", gleaned information from Parthian coins, tablets, statues, rock reliefs and drawings. Dr. Georgina Herrmann of University College, London, gave a presentation on the rock reliefs of Sassanian Iran. She demonstrated that each Sassanian monarch can be determined by his or her distinctive crown. Dr. Prudence Harper, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, spoke on "Sassanian Silverware", Dr. St. John Simpson of the British Museum, speaking on "Sassanian

Arts and Crafts" mentioned that few rural sites have been excavated, and only a part of the capital city, Ctesiphon.

The closing speaker, Prof. Guitty Azarpay of the University of California at Berkeley maintained that the conceptual framework of Sassanian art reflects the Zoroastrian world view. For instance the symbolism of Fire; the concept of both material and spiritual victory found on the rock reliefs (the cosmic dimension given to historical reality); the depiction of the king as paragon of Zoroastrian virtues, such as justice; and the quintessential Zoroastrian concept of the world as good and filled with the "best things" (Av. vahishta), as shown in the use of gold and silver, the depiction of the best animal (the bull) and the swiftest animal (the horse). Many such decorative motifs in Sassanian art are visual metaphors reflecting the dominant Zoroastrian cosmology and mythology. ■

*Excerpted from an article on the Internet by Jenny Rose of California.*



**“Sorabji na Lafra” in New Zealand.** About 150 people enjoyed the antics of Sorabji (played by Darius Mistry), Soonamai (Bilkish Vizifdar), and Lilabai (Mahrukh Irani), in a hilarious Parsi Gujarati play [see photo left] directed by Godrej Engineer, at the Navroze function on August 22, in Auckland.

On the more serious side, the Zarathushtrian Association of New Zealand has now embarked on the ‘Aramgah Project’. “Life is factual,” writes Kersi Daruwalla in the ZANZ Gazette, “One day everyone has to go. In my view we must plan to work towards the creation of an Aramgah or Resting Place for our own deceased Zarathushti loved ones ... the creation of an Aramgah in Auckland will provide a common place for Zarathushtis to visit and pray. For those who want their remains to stay in New Zealand after death, I feel it is a good idea to have a place of our own.”

ZANZ is now on the Internet; all are invited to visit their website at <http://www.zanz.org.nz>.

**Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal** has issued their annual report in an attractive, glossy volume, illustrated with local children’s drawings of their activities [see example at left by 16-year-old Saira Vatcha depicting Hutoxy Cowasjee, ‘captain of the ship’ with her all-women committee].

Special projects last year focussed on: development of the youth; participation in Pakistan’s 50 years of creation; community demographics; and building of KZBM’s image. The Welfare Subcommittee provided monthly assistance, Navroze gifts, food grains, assistance to nassesalers, clothing and linens, assistance towards navjote, gahambars and other outings for beneficiaries, totalling Rs. 771,053. The Rehabilitation Subcommittee offered remunerative opportunities for Zarathushti ladies, mostly in sewing and cooking projects. The Medical Subcommittee assisted 38 persons on a regular basis and expended Rs. 332,576. The Education Subcommittee provided assistance for school education, courses, and scholarships/loans for higher education to the extent of over Rs. 434,000. The Child Welfare Subcommittee provided educational help and entertainment to 94 children for Rs. 78,801.

For a community of 2567 persons (as tallied in their 1997 census), the Pakistani Zarathushtis, under the leadership of Hutoxi Cowasjee and her amazing group of committed women, have undertaken charity and welfare projects to benefit the Zarathushti community around the world, well beyond their fair share.

The ex-Karachi-ites in North America (and according to Cowasjee, “there are more ex-Karachi-ites in North America than remain in Karachi”) can well be proud of the stock they come from.





As has been the trend at each succeeding Zarathushti Congress, this latest one in London last July, topped them all.

For the breadth of program topics offered (from "History of Zoroastrianism" by Rashna Writer to "Stra-

trian Youth Congress, from July 4th to 11th at the Sheraton Skyline Hotel in London. And also to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe under whose aegis the Congress was held.

The logistics of getting over 400 youth housed, fed and transported,

participate in this congress due to visa restrictions and other problems".

When the accommodations at the Sheraton reached capacity limits, the Londoners opened up their homes (and their hearts) to the visitors.

## Carrying Zarathushti Faith and Identity into the Thoughts on the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress.

tegy for Survival in the 21st Century" by Ramiyar Karanjia.); for the innovative mix of activities offered (lectures, workshops, panel debates, question time, quiz, sketches and soapbox, interspersed with Humbandagi, Jashan, Gatha recital and demonstrations of ceremonies such as the Ijashne by Dasturji Kotwal and a Zarathushti wedding by Ervad Rustom Bhedwar); for all the social events (ice-breakers, talent show, the Grand Ball and more); for the extended "after-Congress" program of day-time sight-seeing around London and evening dinners and discussions at Zoroastrian House...

For all this and much more, a hearty "Shabash" to Congress Chairperson Kerman Jasavala and the YZ Committee of London youth who put together the Second World Zoroas-

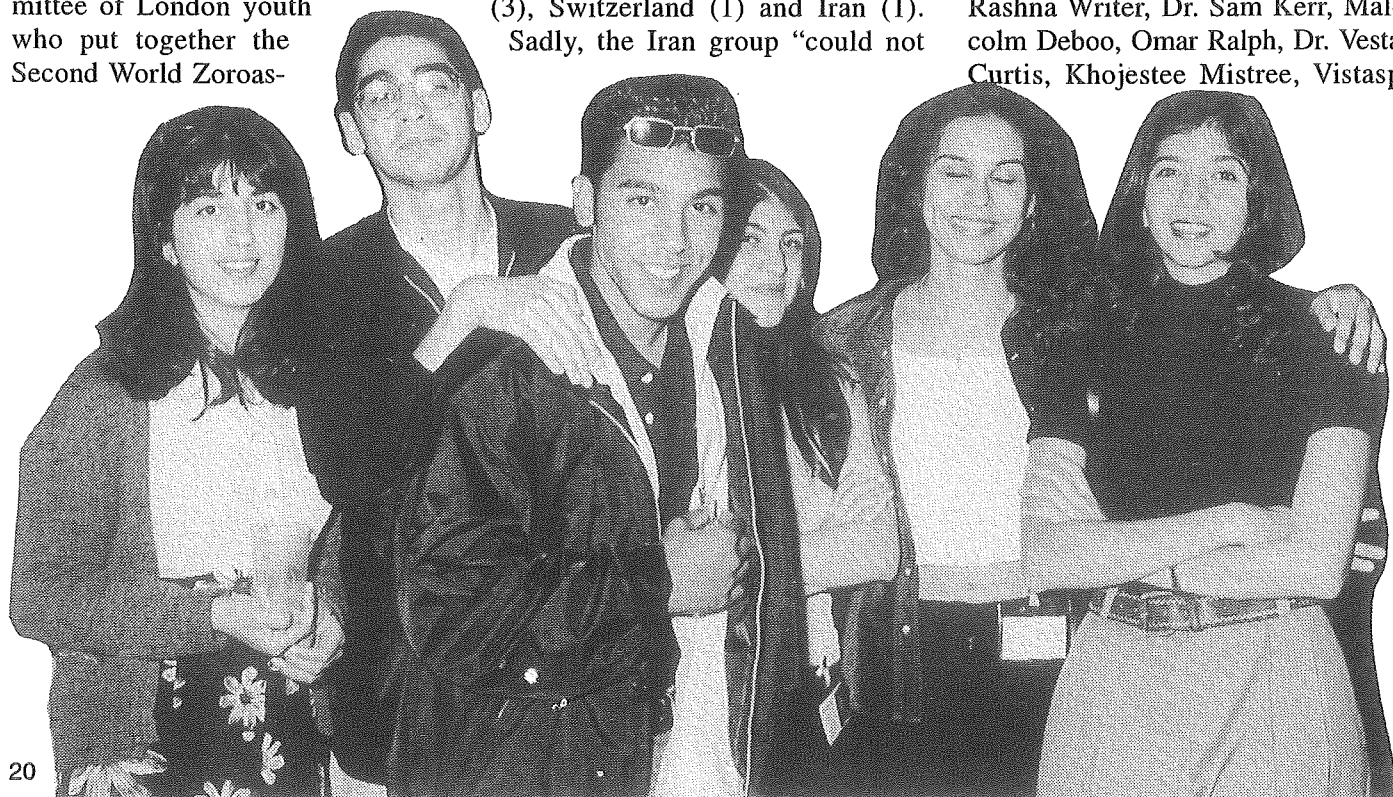
was I'm sure in itself a major achievement. The project had an overall turnover of £110,000, and is the biggest project undertaken by the Youth in the UK to date. According to Jasavala, they used 1800 meters of fax paper, made 800 phone calls, exchanged 700 emails, typed 1000 entries into the World YZ directory database and filled 15 files with correspondence; and 4800 meals were served!

The largest contingent of Zarathushti youth from outside the UK (which had 130) was from India - 112. The USA and Canada deputed 83 and 49 delegates respectively. The rest were from Australia (14), France (2), Germany (2), Hong-Kong (1), Ireland (1), Pakistan (3), Spain (2), Sweden (3), Switzerland (1) and Iran (1).

Sadly, the Iran group "could not

The marathon (eight-day) event started on Friday evening, July 4th, with proper pomp and ceremony: lighting of the inaugural Divo by Ervad Farhad Sethna, and Humbandagi, Doa Tandarosti and Gatha recital by Dasturji's Dr. Jamasp Asa and Dr. Firoze Kotwal. After welcomes by Jasavala and ZTFE President Rusi Dalal, Guest of Honor Mr. Faron Sutaria, a highly successful Estate Agent in the UK (his company sold over £180 million worth of property in London last year) gave the youth a strong message to "empower yourself so that you can empower the community."

Saturday's program included "YZ World Updates" from the youth of each country; presentations by Dr. Rashna Writer, Dr. Sam Kerr, Malcolm Deboo, Omar Ralph, Dr. Vesta Curtis, Khojestee Mistree, Vistasp



the Ijashne Ceremony by Dasturji Kotwal. The evening was topped off with the Grand Ball.

Speakers on Sunday were Yazdegard Irani, Noshir Anklesaria, Shiraz Sethna, Lyla Mehta, Trity Pourbahrami, Tina Mehta, Zubin Sethna,

## Next Millennium London, July 1997

Farhad Sethna, Sharon Madon, Jenny Rose, Peter Clark, Khojestee Mistrree, Marzban Cooper, Natasha Dalal, Bapsy Dastur and Mehran Sepehri. Dasturjis Jamasp Asa, Kotwal and Ervads Ramiyar Karanjia and Rooyintan Peer formed the Priests Panel. The YZ Talent Show followed dinner that night.

The Monday program included talks by Rashna Ghadialy, Anahita Parsi, Vera and Farokh Parekh, Niloofur Cooper, Ervad Dr. Peer, Rashna Writer, Jehangir Sarosh, Lyla Mehta and others.

Monday night, the Congress moved its venue to Zoroastrian House. For the next three days, visitors toured London and vicinity during the day, and gathered at Zoroastrian House for the evening meal, talks and fun.

There was a big 70's disco party on the last night, and Zoroastrian House



was alive with over 300 YZs in their platforms and 'funky' clothes. The dancing went on until 1 am, but the last people did not leave until 5:30 am. Such was the feeling of togetherness and brotherhood.

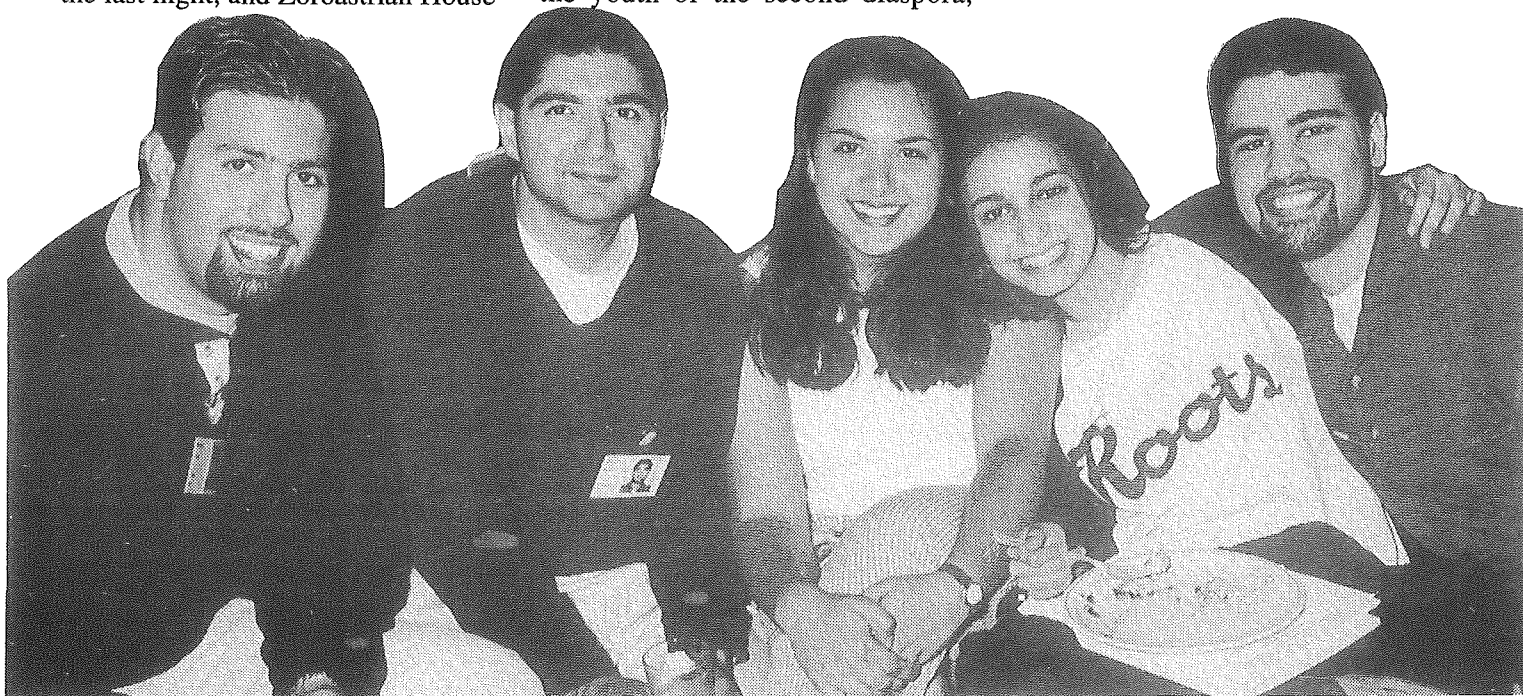
*Nobody wanted to leave!*

That was the best outcome of this congress. The "coming together" of the youth of the second diaspora,

spread thin across the globe. And as Jasavala put it: "feeling comfortable with the group, letting our kushti's hang out and not caring." ■

- By Roshan Rivetna

*Photo above, Congress chairperson Kerman Jasavala at "opening night". Below, faces of foreign and local delegates at the 8-day London event.*



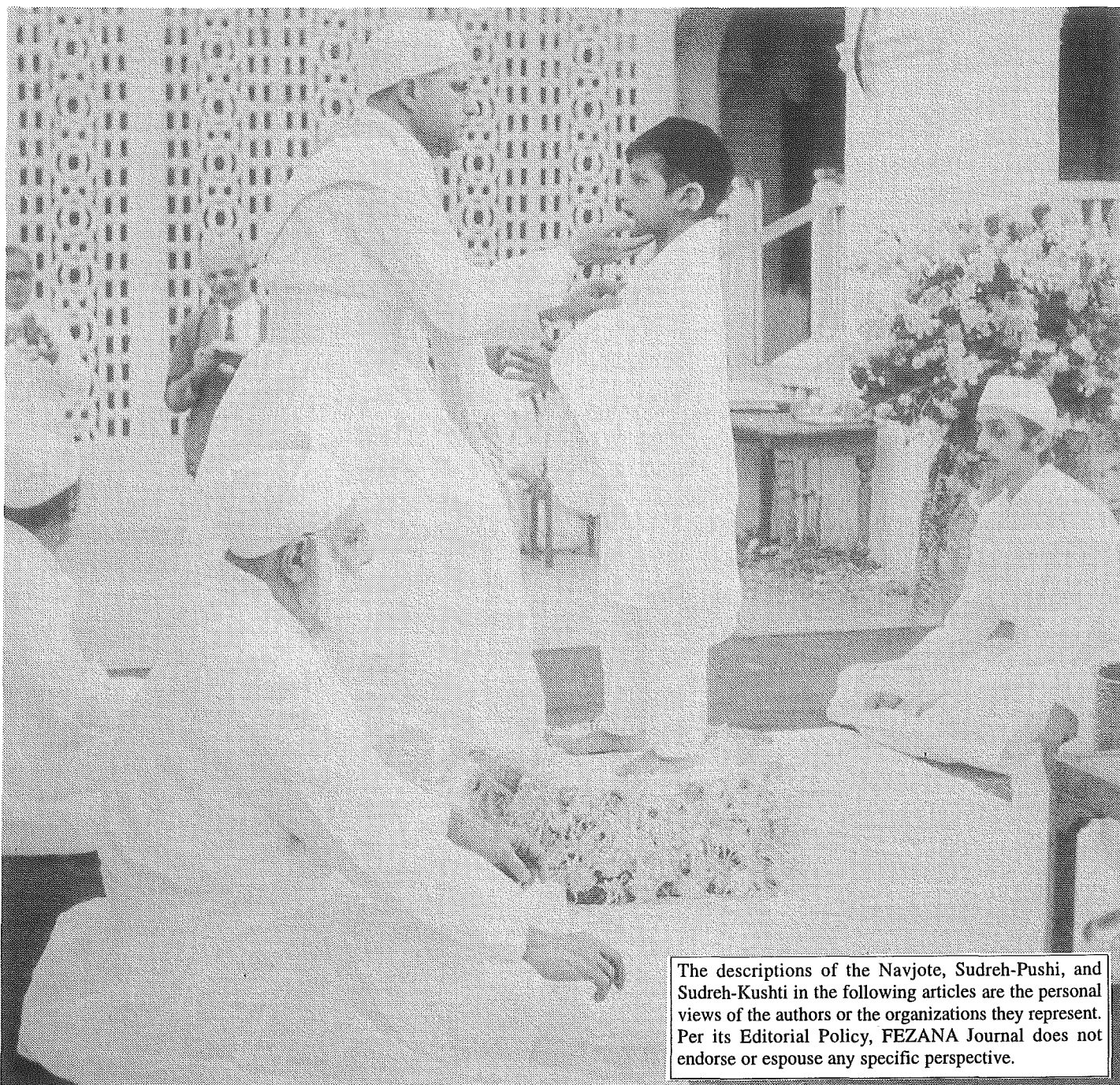


# The Navjote Ceremony

## A Zarathushti Initiation

*Investment of a Zarathushti child with the sacred sudreh and kushti, performed according to Parsi rites and customs*

*By Ervad Dr. Kersey H. Antia  
Orland Park, Illinois*



The descriptions of the Navjote, Sudreh-Pushi, and Sudreh-Kushti in the following articles are the personal views of the authors or the organizations they represent. Per its Editorial Policy, FEZANA Journal does not endorse or espouse any specific perspective.







Left, Navjote ceremony in India.

Above, Ervad Kersey Antia officiating at navjote ceremony in Chicago.

## THE CEREMONY

**Patet – Repentance.** The officiating priest starts the ceremony with a recitation of the *Patet* (repentance) from the Avestan *Paitita*, or 'turning back' (from sins). The other priests join him when he says "Aukhé Awakhsh", which may mean "O Ahura! forgive me (in thy mercy)!" Not too long ago all initiates memorized the entire Patet prayer and recited it along with the priests, which makes sense because repentance by the initiate of all past bad thoughts, words and deeds is a prerequisite for ensuring spiritual awakening and commitment. Nowadays, the initiate is at least encouraged to recite the Ashem and Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayers while the priests recite the *Patet* for him or her. Those Zarathushtris present in the audience too could do well to do the same.

**Din No Kalmo – Declaration of Faith.** After the *Patet*, the initiate and the officiating priest rise and

stand facing each other, the initiate holding the sudreh sleeves in his hands and the priest holding the initiate's hands and the sudreh at all times, signifying his tutelage or authority. They both then recite *Din No Kalmo* – the Declaration of Faith in the Zarathushti Religion [see page 33], the priest henceforth leading all the prayers, and the initiate following, in a loud and audible voice.

**Investment with the Sudreh.** Both recite one *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, and the priest puts the sudreh on the initiate while saying "*shyaothnanam*" ('working hard' for Mazda's creations'), symbolically suggesting that the initiate henceforth takes it upon him/herself to work diligently to realize the divinity within one's own self and without, so as to ultimately bring about *Frashokereti* – the final renovation/resurrection by his or her virtuous actions.

**Hormuzd Khodae – Girdling of the kushti.** The priest then positions

himself behind the initiate, both facing the audience. The priest holds the kushti's midpoint in his left hand (the mid-point suggesting an equal balance between the two worlds in our life). With his right thumb and index finger he holds up the kushti, about a foot from the left hand, letting the rest hang down without touching the floor.

The priest first invokes Ahura Mazda, the Highest of the High, in verses similar to the initial verses of *Hormuzd Yasht*. Both then pray *Hormuzd Khodae* and make two interconnected, equal circles with the kushti, while saying the words "Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni" (thoughts, words and deeds) and circle the kushti fully around the initiate's waist, after invoking God by saying "Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao" and knotting it in front, thus completing the second circle, while saying "*Shyaothnanam*"; and then complete the third circle, by tying

two knots in the back while reciting one *Ashem Vohu*. The three encirclements around the waist represent Manashni, Gavashni and Kunashni.

The reason for holding as well as wearing the kushti at the mid-point of our mortal frame also seems quite apparent. Just as the two equal circles are made in the kushti right after referring to the mortal body and the immortal soul (*tanee o ravanee*) as well as to the material world and the celestial, spiritual world (*geti mino aanee*), one must strike a careful balance in one's sojourn on this earth between our material aspirations and spiritual attainments in all our thoughts, words and deeds, so that our material existence comes to fulfil the needs of the spirit.

**The Symbolism of the Kushti.** The exact symbolism behind tying the four knots is now lost to antiquity as it was not laid down firmly in any of our scriptures, but was only transmitted orally, thus giving free rein to varying interpretations.

From Anquetil du Perron who learned all he could about the Zarathushti religion from a Parsi priest in Surat in 1760, if not from earlier Pahlavi texts, down to our times, we find numerous interpretations for the four knots. One explanation is that the first knot signifies that there is only one God, the second signifies that the Good Religion is the word of God, the third confirms Zarathushtra as the Prophet of God and the fourth demands allegiance to him and God for ever.

Perhaps the reason our scriptures do not explain the meaning of these knots is their meaning is too obvious to need any explanation if one knows the language. As we observed at the very outset, our religion is the religion of symbols, which reaches its highest pinnacle in the symbolism of the sudreh and kushti.

Tying the first knot obviously indicates that the new initiate will try very hard to control bad thoughts, words and deeds. He or she subjugates and ties them down, as it were, just as Shah Faridoon tied down the evil Zohak. Tying the second knot

represents his attempt at "making his mind an invincible fortress" "in his battle against the temptations he faces every day and every hour" by tying and strengthening his resolve to follow good thoughts, words and deeds, as observed by a great scholar, B. T. Anklesaria, in perhaps the best book on this subject [*Nirang-e-Padyaab, Bombay, in Gujarati, 169 pp, 1939*].

He further observes: "The reason for tying knots in the back while praying Ashem Vohu is also quite obvious. Zoroastrians are enjoined to observe Asha all their life and for that reason the beginning and ending of every prayer is accomplished by the sacred formula of Ashem. We recite five Ashem Vohus at different times while tying the kushti as well as while untying it" (which is an old forgotten custom worth renewing). Thus the last two knots may signify our resolve to begin and end our life with Asha.

**The Culmination – Jasa me Avanghahe Mazda.** The initiation is culminated with the initiate reciting *Jasa Me Avanghahe Mazda*, and lovingly but unequivocally declaring his unswerving faith in the Good Religion. Both then again sit down. The priest marks the initiate's forehead with a red 'tili' (a Hindu practice signifying good luck), and gives him or her a coconut, betel leaves, areca nuts (sopari), grains of rice, rock sugar crystals and a garland and bouquet of flowers.

**Tandarosti – Invocation of Blessings.** The ceremony is essentially over at this point, making the newest initiate the latest addition to the world's most ancient revealed religion, an occasion worthy of celebration. The priests recite the *Tandarosti* prayer with the officiating priest, while showering the initiate with grains of rice, rose petals, coconut flakes and pomegranate seeds, all symbolizing plenty, prosperity and progeny, and resembling the benevolent forces of Spenta in this world and beyond.



## COMMENTARY

Asho Zarathushtra was the first prophet to lead mankind away from believing in magic spells, shamanism, idolatry and polytheism, by emphasizing free will and the importance of making a wise choice – *fravarané* ('I actively choose') working for God. More than any modern-day psychologist, he realized the powers of the mind and incorporated them so intricately in his teachings as also in the symbolism of the sudreh and kushti, that they, for ever, have served us as the mental fortress against temptations facing us eternally.

Thus in these spiritual vestments, the *Getig* and *Minog* merge into one, psychologically conditioning Zarathushtis to conceive their earthly life as a life of the spirit and their earthly frame as a vehicle for attaining spirituality in this world which was actually conceived by Mazda in the spiritual world.

None other than Asho Zarathushtra himself could have brought about such an inspiring innovation in the ancient Indo-Iranian tradition of Janoi and true to his egalitarian and universal teachings, offered it to all men and all women irrespective of their class or status.

Moreover, his emphasis on the proper exercise of free will in order to willingly align ourselves with the *spenta* (spiritually augmentative) forces as against *angra* (evil, retarding) forces so as to usher in *Frashokereti* with our true actions, as well as numerous Gathic verses in the kushti prayer, clearly reveal the hand of Asho Zarathushtra himself in the making of this beautiful ceremony.

As an ever-ready soldier for God, a Zarathushti is expected to live and die with the sudreh and kushti on, except during bathing, thus making the body an instrument of God, forever a living temple *Facile Princeps* for him or her, in which the *Getig* and the *Minog* worlds as well as *Tan* (body) and *Ravan* (soul) merge into one, rendering us special instruments and agents of God on this earth, which Zarathushtra says we truly are.

Maybe this explains why, per Mary Boyce, there were no fire temples in Iran until the times of the Achae-menians, who perhaps adopted the idea of building formal structures of worship from their contact with other nations.

One is supposed to tie and untie the kushti every time one goes to answer nature's call, a custom that was observed religiously until a generation or two ago. Such a practice cannot but condition one to seeing himself and his body, as something more than a physical entity, and keeping oneself ready to serve God, as his soldier, at all times.

Nay, one cannot even be laid to final rest without having the sudreh kushti on. Indeed it is considered a sin to be without them while alive, which is tantamount to "walking around naked" [*Shayast ta Shayast*, 4.8]. *Dadestane Dini* [39.20] declares one is smart for wearing them because one is "reminded of the Creator ... the temptation to sin becomes difficult" *Yasna* 60.11 perhaps best represents the ideal of sudreh kushti:

"Because our minds are full of joy with these (religious observances), (our) souls attain the best (and) (our) bodies (become) full of heavenly glory; may they (our souls), (therefore) reach, O Mazda, from the disclosure (at Chinvat Bridge) unto Ahura's own realm, the best existence (paradise)."

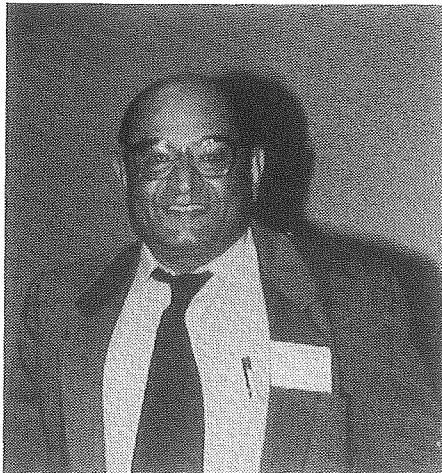
Death is thus seen here as a progression into a "heavenly (best) existence" rather than as an Ahrimanic concoction as interpreted (or misinterpreted) by later Pahlavi writers, if we only embody in life, the high ideals of Sudreh Kuishti worn on our body.

When this tradition is willingly and zealously observed not for centuries, but for millennia, the psychological conditioning it creates by establishing the physical body as an instrument of the spiritual forces is infinitely greater than any Pavlovian spell we know of.

Since Asho Zarathushtra does not promise an easy way out for our salvation, he may have, in his infinite wisdom, devised the sudreh kushti as

an eternal reminder for us to remain on God's side at all times and ultimately bring about the Kingdom of God on earth after realizing God within us.

The introduction of the *Patet* in the navjote ceremony is a much later development, written in Pazand (Pahlavi written in the Avestan



script), just a couple of centuries before the loss of the Sassanian Empire, as an obvious response to the spread of Christianity in Iran. If we take into consideration the fact that the navjote used to be an act of free choice based on one's full understanding of his/her religion and full comprehension of what it entails and means, we can understand why only adults over 15 were allowed to qualify for it in Iran.

Since the *Patet* is written in Pahlavi, which was the only language the Sassanians generally knew, the adult initiate must have been fully aware of its meaning. However, the Parsi laity and priests as a rule were not so aware of its content and so saw no problem in requiring the child initiate to recite the adults' *Patet*, after limiting the age of initiation to pre-teen years as a consequence of Hinduized thinking. However, when the Parsis began to study their ancient languages, they saw the incongruity of a young child reciting the *Patet*, meant mostly for adults.

Some Dasturs such as Dr. Dhalla pointed out this anomaly, but when other priests refused to change their age-old custom, he compromised by saying the *Patet* in a very soft voice with them.

It is only this tenacity and steadfastness of our priests, even when shabbily remunerated for their services, that have been mainly responsible for our being able to preserve our entire religious heritage at a time when there were no printing presses and books.

I hope the reader will make allowance for this fact before hurrying to pass any judgment. Actually, it is to the credit of Sassanian priests that they composed not only the *Patet*, but also wedding and other navjote prayers in Pahlavi, even allowing them to be recited aloud and not in soft intonation (*baj*) as is the strict custom, so everyone can understand them. Thus, *Hormuzd Khodae* is often considered to be the loose Pahlavi translation of *Kem na Mazda*, and *Din no Kalmo* and *Tandarosti* are also in Pahlavi. Even today Iranian Zarathushtis are able to follow most of them, but the same cannot be said of the Parsis.

Asho Zarathushtra was perhaps not unaware of such an eventuality. What powerful, suggestive message he and his successors neatly and intricately wove into the symbolism of the sudreh kushti could aid and assist our spiritual sojourn on this earth more than any printed books and translations ever could, if we could only don them as a spiritual dimension of our physical entity.

*Aedun Baad!* (May it be so!) ■

*Ervad Dr. Kersey H. Antia is the high priest of the Zarathushti community in the Chicago area since 1977. A fully-ordained priest from the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute in Mumbai, since 1950, Dr. Antia studied religion and Avesta-Pahlavi under Dastoorji Dabu and other learned priests and was the recipient of several prizes and scholarships. Dr. Antia has lectured widely since he was 17, and is the author of numerous papers and articles on the religion. Dr. Antia is a licensed clinical and management psychologist in full-time private practice in Illinois; he is also affiliated with several hospitals.*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** Photos from "Zoroastrianism and the Parsis" and "Man's Religious Quest-Spanning East and West" both by John R. Hinnells.



# DAILY PRAYERS OF THE ZARATHUSHTIS

By Ervad Dr. Kersey H. Antia

*Every Zarathusti recites the Kushti prayer as an act of devotion and allegiance to Ahura Mazda, and as affirmation of a pledge to help Him eradicate evil out of this world. What we say in our daily prayers must be confirmed by our actions in our daily lives. While the prayers must be memorized and recited in their original Avesta or Pahlavi language, an understanding of the meaning and the import of these prayers allows us to translate these beautiful teachings into our daily lives.*

*“The highest ideals of Zoroastrian prayers are dedication, devotion, self-giving, and self-improvement. Through our prayers we do not bargain with God Almighty for some reward or earthly benefit. Prayer is the yearning of the soul and the motion of the inner hidden fire of love directed towards Ahura Mazda. It is the moisture which tends to refresh the parched ground of a barren heart. Like incense, prayer spreads its fragrance all around. It must be offered with living faith. Prayer is a direct communion of man with Ahura Mazda to feel His immediate presence and thus be charged with His divine energy, to discover one’s own true self. In prayer, what is primarily needed is concentration of the mind, contemplation on the indwelling Holy Spirit and an overflowing spontaneous devotion towards the ever-living and all-wise Lord Ahura Mazda.”*

*- Framroz Rustonjee, Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians, Colombo, 1959*

## THREE CARDINAL PRAYERS

These three cardinal prayers are to be recited at any time, and are also often included within many other prayers. They are powerful *manthras*, thought-provoking prayers, formulated by Asho Zarathushtra on the basis of direct inspiration from Ahura Mazda. They represent the essence of our religion in a nutshell and provide divine guidance during times of need or inspire us to the right choice during a crisis of conscience.

### ASHEM VOHU

Ashem Vohu Vahishtem asti  
Ushta asti, ushta ahmai  
Hyat ashai vahishtai ashem.

**ASHEM VOHU – THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHT-EOUSNESS.** Asha (cosmic Truth; righteousness) is good – it is best. It is happiness. Happiness (accrues) to him/her who is righteous for the sake of utmost righteousness (and not for any rewards).

### YATHA AHU VAIRYO (AHUNAVAR)

Yatha Ahu Vairyo atha ratush, ashat chit  
hacha. Vangheush dazda manangho  
shyaothnanam angheush Mazdai,  
Khshathremcha Ahurai a yim dregubyo  
dadat vastarem.

**YATHA AHU VAIRYO OR AHUNAVAR – CHOOSING THE LORD IN LIFE.** Just as God is to be chosen on account of His Asha, so is the prophet (or His representative on this earth). The gift of Vohu Manah (Good Mind) (is decreed) for those working very hard (shyaothnanam) for the Lord. The Kingdom of God (is assured) to him/her who establishes himself/herself as the protector of the downtrodden.

### YENGHE HATAM

Yenghe hatam aat yasna paiti vangho  
Mazdao Ahuro vaetha ashat hacha,  
yaongham-cha tascha taoscha yazmaide.

**YENGHE HATAM – ALL YE ADORABLE ASHAVANS.** Ahura Mazda is fully cognizant (aware) of all those persons among the living who better (surpass) others in acts of worship on account of their Asha. We revere all such (persons), both men as well as women.

# THE KUSHTI PRAYERS

*Recite the kushti prayers at least first thing in the morning after taking a bath, and last thing at night. Wash hands and face before starting the prayers. During the day, pray facing the sun and at night, facing a light.*

*[These prayers are generally used by Shenshai Zarathushtis. Kadmis follow slightly different prayers]*

*Start the kushti prayers by bowing the head respectfully as you say:*

**Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao!**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

*Untie the kushti after reciting Kem Na Mazda. Hold the center of the kushti in the thumb of the left hand, the right hand holding the ends up, making sure it does not touch the floor.*

**KEM NA MAZDA**

**Kemna Mazda! Mavaite payum dadat,  
Hyat ma dregvao didareshata aenanghe  
anyem Thwahmat Athrascha Manang-  
hascha yayao shyaothnaish ashem  
thraoshta. Ahura! Tam moi dastvam  
daenyai fravaocha.**

**Ke verehtrem-ja Thwa poi sengha yoi henti  
chithra moi dam ahumbish ratum chizhdi,  
at hoi vohu seraosho jantu manangha,  
Mazda ahmai yahmai vashi kahmai-chit.**

Pleased be the Lord (through this prayer of mine)!

**KEM NA MAZDA. MAZDA ALONE IS MY SAVIOR.**  
Who will, O! Wise One, lend me protection if the wicked one threatens to hurt me. (Who) other than Your Fire (God's eternal, cosmic energy) and Your (Good) Mind? (It is) through the actions of these two that, O Lord, the truth (righteousness) thrives. Do reveal unto me that (beautiful) knowledge of this religion.

Of those who exist, who is the victor who protects the world with Your teachings? (Zarathushtra, of course). Reveal unto me a world-healing prophet so that obedience (to God) comes to him through Good Mind as well as to whomsoever You, O Wise One, wish!

Protect us from those that do us harm, O! All-wise Lord and Spenta Armaiti (the beneficent holy mentality). Perish thou, evil wickedness. Perish thou, the source of evil. Perish thou O! progeny of evil. Perish thou, product of evil. Utterly perish O! wickedness! Vanish O! wickedness. Utterly disappear O! wickedness. Utterly disappear and perish in the North. Do not destroy the living creation of Asha.

We praise the Lord Ahura Mazda with humility and worshipful prayer.

**HORMAZD KHODAE. HORMAZD IS THE LORD,  
MAY AHRIMAN BE OVERCOME.** (This prayer is a loose Pahlavi translation of Kem Na Mazda.)

Hormazd (is) the Lord. May Ahriman (the evil mind or the evil tendencies within us) be kept under control; may it be kept far back; may it be defeated and totally overcome.

**Pata-no tbishyantat pairi Mazdaoscha  
Armaitishcha spentascha. Nase daevo-  
druksch, nase daevo-chithre, nase daevo-  
frakarshite, nase daevo-fradaite, apa  
druksch nase, apa druksch dvara, apa  
druksch vinase, apakhedhre apa-nasyehe,  
ma merenchainish gaethao astavaitish  
ashahe.**

**Nemascha ya Armaitish izacha.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

**HORMAZD KHODAE**

**Hormazd Khodae, ahreman awadashan  
dur avazdashtar; 'zad shekasteh bad.**

**Ahreman, devan, darujan, jadian, dar-  
vandan, kikan, karafan, sastaran, gune-**



hgaran, ashmogan, darvandan, dush-  
mana frian, zad shekasteh bad! Dush-  
padashahan awadashan bad;  
dushmanan stoh bad; dushmanan  
awadashan bad.

**Hormazd Khodae, az hama gunah patet  
pashemanum, az harvastin**

*Whip the kushti with the right hand from right front  
to left back, three times at the next three words, to  
keep away all evil.*

**dushmata, duzokhta, duzvarshta,  
mem pa get manid, oim goft, oim kard,  
oem just, oem bun bud ested. Azan gunah**

*Make two equal loops in the kushti, one in each  
hand.*

**manashni, gavashni, kunashni  
tani ravani, geti minoani, okhe awaksh  
pasheman, pa se gavashni pa patet hom.**

*Bow respectfully, touching the kushti to the forehead*

**Kshsnaothra ahurahe mazdao!**

**Taroidite, anghrahe mainyeush. Haithya  
varshtam hyat vasna ferashotemem.**

**Staomi ashem.**

*Circle the kushti once around the waist, and bring  
the ends to the front.*

**Ashem Vohu – 1.**

*At the word shyaothnanam tie the first knot, in front,  
with the right hand.*

**Yatha Ahu Vairyo – 1.**

*At the word shyaothnanam tie the second knot, in  
front, with the left hand.*

**Yatha Ahu Vairyo – 1.**

*Take the two ends to the back, and tie a double knot  
with the ends of the kushti.*

**Ashem Vohu – 1.**

May the wicked mind, wicked spirits, wicked peo-  
ple, those practicing (black) magic, wicked ones,  
those willfully blind (*kiks*), those willfully deaf  
(*karaps*), tyrants, criminals, heretics, impious ones,  
enemies, witches – all be smitten and defeated!  
May the wicked rulers cease to exist! May the evil  
enemies be counfounded! May the evil enemies be  
non-existent!

O Lord Hormazd! I repent and turn away from all  
sins: bad thoughts I have thought, bad words I have  
spoken, bad deeds I have committed in this world  
and which have occurred through me, and which  
have been initiated by me.

From all these sins above, relating to thought, to  
word, and to deed, pertaining to (my own) body,  
pertaining to (my own) soul, pertaining to this  
world, pertaining to the world beyond – I repent  
three times, and turn away from them forthright.

Pleased be the Lord Mazda (by this prayer of mine)!

Afflictions unto Angra Mainyu (the evil spirit).

Righteous actions (promote) Frashokereti the most,  
as is God's desire.

I adore Asha.

**BAJ (PRAYER)  
FOR GRACE BEFORE MEALS**

**Ba name Yazad, bakhshayandeh  
bakhshayashgar meherban!**

**Hormazd Khodae itha at yazmaide.**

**Ahurem Mazdam, ye gamcha ashem-  
cha dat apascha dat urvaraoscha  
vanguish, raochaoscha dat bumimcha,  
vispacha vohu. Ashem Vohu - 1.**

In the name of the Lord Ahura Mazda (who is so) the  
bestower of all good things, the forgiver of sins, and  
loving. Here we revere Ahura Mazda who created the  
animals and grains, who created the waters and vege-  
tation, who created lights (of the sky), and the earth  
and all (other) good things. Ashem Vohu - 1.

### **JASA ME AVANGHAHE MAZDA**

**Jasa me avanghahe Mazda!**

**Jasa me avanghahe Mazda!**

**Jasa me avanghahe Mazda!**

**Mazdayasni ahmi Mazdayasno**

**Zarathushtrish.**

**Fravarane astutascha fravaretascha.**

**Astuye humatem mano**

**Astuye hukhtem vacho**

**Astuye hvarshtem shyaothnem.**

**Astuye daenam vanghuhim mazdayasnim, fraspayaokhedhram, nidhasnaithishem, khaetvadatham ashaonim, ya haintinamcha, bushyeintinamcha, mazishtacha, vahishtacha, sraeshtacha, ya Ahuirish, Zarathushtrish.**

**Ahurai Mazdai vispa vohu chinahmi, aeshi asti daenayao Mazdayasnoish astu-istish.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

*The short kushti prayers end here. This may be followed by Sarosh Baj prayers.*

### **SAROSH BAJ**

*Bow reverently.*

**Khshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao!**

**Ashem Vohu – 1.**

**Pa name yazdan Hormazd Khodae awazuni, gorje khoreh awazayad. Sraosh asho, tagi, tan-fareman, shekaftzin, zin-awazar, salare damane Ahura Mazda berasad.**

**Az hama gunah patet pashemanum, az harvastin dushmata, duzukhta, dushu-varshita, mem pa get manid, oem goft, oem kard, oem jast, oem bun bud ested, azan gunah manashni, gavashni, kunashni, tani ravani, geti minoani, okhe avakhsh pasheman pa se gavashni pa patet hom.**

**Yatha Ahu Vairyo – 5.**

**Ashem Vohu – 3.**

### **JASA ME AVANGHAHE MAZDA – DECLARATION OF FAITH.**

**O Mazda! Come to my help!**

**O Mazda! Come to my help!**

**O Mazda! Come to my help!**

**I am a Mazda worshipper; a Mazda-worshipping follower of Zarathushtra, an ardent devotee and very willing believer.**

**I praise the well-conceived thought**

**I praise the well-spoken word**

**I praise the well-done deed.**

**I praise the excellent religion of Mazda-worship, which is quarrel-removing, not believing in weapons, self-dedicating (and) holy, which, of those religions that are, and of those that shall be (hereafter), is the greatest, and the best, and the most beautiful – (which is the religion of) Ahura revealed by Zarathushtra.**

**I attribute to Ahura Mazda all goodness (in this world). Such is my adoration of (my) Mazda-worshipping, (monotheistic) religion.**

### **SAROSH BAJ (PRAYER TO SRAOSH - LISTEN- ING AND FOLLOWING GOD'S COMMITMENT**

**Pleased be the Lord Mazda (by this prayer of mine)!**

**In the name of Lord Hormazd, the self-created and munificent. May His splendor and glory increase! May Sraosh the holy, strong, embodiment of the holy manthra, possessor of efficacious (spiritual) weapons, possessor of victorious (spiritual) weapons, and chieftain over the creations of Hormazd, come to my help!**

**I turn away and repent from all sins. All bad thoughts I have conceived, bad words I have spoken, bad deeds I have committed (and) which have been caused by me, and whose origin lies in me – from all these sins pertaining to thought, word and deed, relating to my body, my soul, in this material world, and in the spiritual world – of these I repent thrice, I turn away from them forthright.**

Fravarane Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish  
vidaevo Ahura-tkaesho (gah according to  
the time of day: havan, rapithwan, uzi-  
ran, aiwisruthrem, ushahin) Sraoshahe  
ashyehe, takhmahe, tanu manthrahe,  
darshi-draosh, ahuiyehe, khshnaothra  
yasnaicha, vahmaicha, khshnaothraicha  
frasastayecha, yatha ahu vairyo zaota  
frame mrute, atha rathush ashat chit  
hacha fra ashava  
vidhvao mraoto.

Sraoshem, Ashim, huraodhem, verethra-  
janem, fradat-gaethem ashavanem asha-  
he ratum yazamaide Ahunem vairim  
tanum paiti, Ahunem vairim tanum paiti.

Yatha Ahu Vairyo - 1.

Kemna Mazda (recite Kemna Mazda once).

Yatha Ahu Vairyo - 2.

Yasnemacha vahmemcha aojascha  
zavarecha afrinami, sraoshahe, ashyehe,  
takhmahe, tanu manthrahe, darshi-  
draosh, ahuiyehe.

Ashem Vohu - 1.

*The following four prayers, Ahmai Raeshcha, Haz-  
anghrem, Jasa me Avanghahe Mazda and Kerfeh  
Mozd are recited after Sarosh Baj and also after  
Niyaeshes and Yashts.*

#### AHMAI RAESHCHA

Ahmai raeshcha, khvarenascha, ahmai  
tanvo dravatatem, ahmai tanvo vazdvare,  
ahmai tanvo verethrem, ahmai ishtim  
pourush-khvathram, ahmai asnam chit  
frazantim, ahmai daregham daregho-  
jitim, ahmai vahistem-ahum ashaonam  
raochanghem, vispo khvathrem.

Atha jamyat, yatha afrinami.

Ashem Vohu - 1.

#### HAZANGHREM

Hazanghrem baeshazanam, baevare bae-  
shazanam. (Repeat three times).

Ashem Vohu - 1.

I forthrightly choose the Mazdayasni (monotheist)  
Zarathushti religion (which is) opposed to daevas (false  
gods) and follows the Law of Ahura (recite *Gah here*) for  
the worship, veneration, propitiation and glorification,  
with formula for invoking (*khshnuman*) Sraosha the holy,  
powerful, embodiment of the holy word (*manthra*), pos-  
sessor of powerful (spiritual) weapons and following (the  
Law of) Ahura. Let the Zaotar (officiating priest) declare  
to me: "Just as we choose (to worship) God, so do we  
(choose) to venerate the Prophet on account of his holi-  
ness," declares the righteous and learned Rathwi (assis-  
tant priest).

We praise Sraosha the Holy, well-shaped, the victorious,  
bringing prosperity to the world, the Righteous one, the  
Lord of Righteousness. Ahunavar protects the body.

I celebrate and worship the glory and strenght of Sraosh  
Yazata, the holy, strong, the embodiment of the holy  
word, possessed of powerful (spiritual) weapons.

#### AHMAI RAESHCHA (INVOKING BLESSINGS)

(May God grant) splendor and glory unto him/her (as  
well as) soundness of body, physical happiness, wealth,  
abundance and progeny blessed with innate wisdom.  
(Grant) unto him a long, continuous life (and) the best  
existence (in heaven) of the righteous, bright (and) full of  
happiness.

May it be so as I wish. (May my blessings be fulfilled!)

#### HAZANGHREM (BLESSINGS OF GOOD HEALTH)

(Grant) a thousand times health (unto you), ten thousand  
times health (unto you)!

### **JASA ME AVANGHAHE MAZDA**

**Jasa me avanghahe mazda! (Three times)**

**Amahe hutashtahe huraodhahe  
verethraghnahe, ahuradhatahe,  
vanaintyaoscha uparatato ramano khvas-  
trahe, vayaosh uparo-kairyehe taradhato  
anyaish daman, aetat te vayo yat te asti  
spentomainyaom thwashahe khvadhata-  
he, zrvanahe akaranahe, zrvanahe  
daregho-khvadhatahe.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

### **KERFEH MOZD**

**Kerfeh mozd gunah guzareshnera  
kunam, ashahi ravan dusharamra ham  
kerfeh hama vehane haft-keshvar zamin,  
zamin-pahana, rud-drana, khorshid-bala,  
bunde had berasad. Asho bed derzi!**

**Atha jamyat yatha afrinami!**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

### **CHAR DISA NO NAMASKAR**

*(To be prayed after Doa Nam Setayashne and at  
other appropriate times)*

**Az hama gunah patet pashemanum.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

**Nemo aongham asanghamcha,  
shoithranamcha, gayaoitinamcha  
maethananamcha, avo-khvarenanamcha,  
apamcha, zemamcha, urvaranamcha,  
angaoscha zemo, avanghecha ashno vata-  
hecha ashaono stram, maongho huro  
anaghranam raochangham khvad-  
hatanam, vispanamcha spentahe-  
mainyeush damanam, ashaonam  
ashaoninamcha ashahe rathwam.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

**Recite: Ahmai raeshcha;**

**Hazanghrem;**

**Jasa me Avange Mazda; and**

**Kerfeh Mozd.**

### **JASA ME AVANGHAHE MAZDA**

**(COME TO MY AID, O MAZDA).**

**Come to my help, O Mazda! (Three times).**

**Help me secure the blessings of Ama (Yazata) (who is)  
well-built and well-designed, (and of) God-created  
Behram (Yazata), (and of) Vanant (Yazata) who confers  
the best success (on us), (and of) Ram (Yazata) who  
makes food taste better, (and of) the efficient Vayu  
(wind) who is created higher (by God) than any of His  
other creations. O! Vayu! That function of thine which  
pertains to Spenta Mainyu (may come to my help). The  
firmament that follows the laws of nature (as well as)  
Limitless (Eternal) Time and long but limited Time (may  
also come to my help)!**

### **KERFEH MOZD (REDEMPTION FROM SINS BY A LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS).**

**For redemption from my sins, I (promise) to carry out  
meritorious deeds, and for the sake of the love of the  
soul, may complete righteousness reach all the doers of  
good deeds and all the faithful (residing) on the seven  
regions of the earth, as wide as the earth, as long as the  
river, and as high as the sun. May the righteous enjoy  
long life!**

**May it be so as I wish!**

### **HOMAGE IN FOUR DIRECTIONS TO ALL OF CREATION**

**I turn away and sincerely repent of all my sins.**

**Homage unto (all) these places, the cities, pasture-lands,  
dwellings, the storage of drinking water, (other) waters,  
the lands, unto the trees, this earth and yonder sky,  
unto the holy wind, the stars, the moon, the sun, unto  
the boundless natural lights, unto all the creations of**

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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acknowledged : M. F. Kanga, Khordeh Avesta, translit-  
erated and translated into English from the Gujarati  
original Khordeh Avesta Ba Mayeni by K.E.Kanga,  
Mumbai, 1995.*

#### **FUTURE ARTICLES**

*Other prayers such as Patet Pashemani (which is  
recited at the Navjote), Farajyat prayers, Yashts,  
Niyaeshes and other prayers for special occasions,  
will be covered in future issues of FEZANA Journal.*



## *DIN-NO-KALMO*

**Ba name Yazade, bakhshayandeh  
bakhshayashgare meherban!**

**Razishtayao chistayao, Mazda-dhatayao  
ashaonyao, Daenayao vanghuyao  
Mazdayasnoish.**

**Din beh rast va dorost, ke khodae bar  
khalk ferastadeh, in hast, ke Zarthosht  
avordeh hast; din dine Zarthosht, dine  
Ahura Mazda daddeh Zarthosht Spitaman  
Ashaone.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

## **DOA-TANDAROSTI**

*To be recited at any time. Every navjote and wedding ceremony concludes with this prayer.*

**Ba name Yazade, bakhshayandeh  
bakhshayashgare meherban!**

**Tan darosti derzivashni avayad.**

**Khoreh anghad ashadidar.**

**Yazdane minoan, Yazdane getian,  
haft Ameshaspandan myazd roshan  
hame beresad.**

**In doayan bad, in khoahan bad, hame  
andar kasanra Zarathushti din shah bad.**

**Aedun bad. Ya bari, Khoda! Khodavan-  
di alamra, hame anjumanra**

*(recite names of persons for whom the prayer is specially offered)*

**ba farsandan hazar sal der bedar, shad  
bedar, tandorost bedar, aedun bedar, bar  
sare arzanian. Salhae besyar va karna-  
hae bishumar, baki va payandeh dar.**

**Hazaran hazar afrin bad, sal khojasteh  
bad, roz farrokh bad, mah mubarak bad,  
chand sal, chand roz, chand mah, besyar  
sal arzanidar yazashne, va niyaeshne, va  
radi va zor barashne, ashahidar avare  
hama karo kerfeha.**

**Tan darosti bad, neki bad, khub bad,  
aedun bad, aedun tarazbad!**

**Pa yazdan va Ameshaspandan kame bad!  
Ashem Vohu - 1.**

Spenta Mainyu, the lords of holiness, all righteous men and all righteous women.

## *DIN NO KALMO - DECLARATION OF FAITH.*

In the name of the Lord (who is so) benevolent, forgiving and loving!

The most truthful knowledge created by Mazda is the holy, good Mazdayasni religion.

The good, true and perfect religion, which God has sent for the people of this world, is the one that Zarathushtra has brought. (That) religion (is) Zarathushtra's religion (and) the religion of Ahura Mazda given to Zarathushtra Spitaman.

## *DOA-TANDAROSTI - A PRAYER FOR HEALTH OF THE BODY*

In the name of the Lord (who is so) benevolent, forgiving and loving!

To lead a long life (may God bless you with) health. May the glory be always associated with righteousness everlasting. May the yazatas of Mino (this world) and Geti (spiritual world) and the seven Ameshaspands all come to this notable offering.

May this prayer and wish be fulfilled. May the religion of Zarathushtra bring joy unto all mortals. May it be so. O God! Lord of the whole universe, please grant unto the entire anjuman and unto

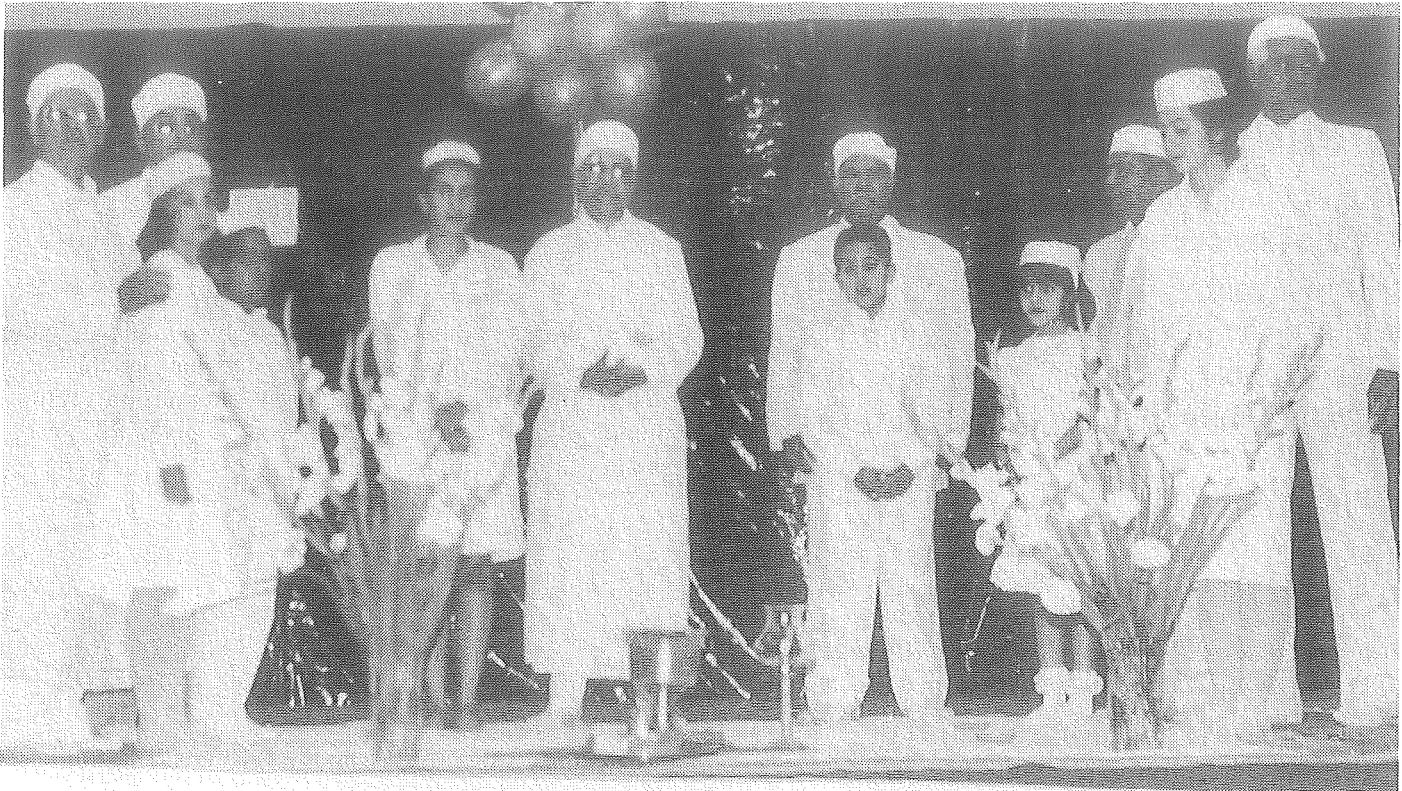
(names of persons)

and their future progeny, longest of long life, happiness and physical well being lasting for a thousand years. May it be so. May you protect the leadership of the worthy ruler for his sake, for many years and for many ages.

May there be thousands and thousands of benedictions. May the year be auspicious, the day victorious and the month full of good luck. For several years, for several days, for several months, for many years, (may they be able to perform) the functions of yasna rituals, niyaeshe prayers, and may acts of charity be appropriately performed. May all acts of goodness be for the furtherance of righteousness.

Health be unto them, goodness be unto them, excellence be unto them! May it be so. May it be exactly so!

May God and the Ameshaspands (succeed) in their plans. ■



*Sedreh-Pushi ceremony of five youths performed by Mobeds of the Kankash-e-Mobedan, the Council of Iranian Mobeds, at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in Westminster, California. The tradition of holding group Sedreh-Pushi ceremonies is as prevalent in North America as it is in Iran.*

# The Sedreh-Pushi Ceremony

## A Zarathushti Initiation

*Investment of a child with the sacred sedreh and koshti, performed according to Iranian Zarathushti rites and customs*

*By Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi  
Mission Viejo, California*

### **SROUSH VAJ** Prayer of my conscience

**Bé nâmé, Ourmazdé, bakh shâ yandéyé,  
bakh shâ yesh garé, mehrabân.**

In the name of Ahura Mazda our god,  
who is forgiving and kind.

**Khshna otra, Ahu rahé, Mazdâo.**

**Ashém Vohu - 3.**

May Ahura Mazda, our creator be praised.

**Fra va râné, Mazda yas nu,  
Zara tush trish, vida évu,  
Ahura, tkaé shu.**

I believe in the worship of Mazda, the Almighty God, as  
taught by Asho Zartosht. The religion which is against devil  
worship and is a religion leading towards Ahura – the God.

*[From dawn to noon]*

**Hâvan ié, asha oné asha hé, ratvé;  
Yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; khshna otrâ  
écha, fra sasta ya écha;**

*The Sedreh-Pushi Ceremony is the occasion when a Zarathushti is 'ritually' initiated into the Zarathushti fold. This ceremony is a very ancient custom and is still practiced by the members of the Zarathushti faith, throughout the world.*

*To start the ceremony, the youth to be initiated takes a shower (a sign of external purification). Then a Mobed (priest) brings the youth to a clean place and makes him/her wear the Sedreh. The Mobed then prays the Sroush Vaj (prayer of the conscience) along with the youth, advising him/her to be righteous, honest and truthful.*

*The Koshti is tied around the youth (with the help of the Mobed) during the Avastayé Koshti' (tying koshti) prayers. This gives the youth the freedom to elect the Zarathushti religion as his/her religion of choice.*

*The ceremony continues with the youth reciting the Peymané Deen (pledge of allegiance to the Zarathushti religion) three times in front of an audience.*

*The initiation ends with the Mobed praying the Tan-Dorosti (blessings) prayer for the youth and his/her family.*

*The prayers used in the Sedreh-Pushi ceremony are shown in this article.*

**Sâvang ié, visyâ écha, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ 'cha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Havan, the pure and righteous leader of the morning, is hereby praised, honored and glorified.**

*[From noon to 3 p.m.]*

**Rapith vanâé, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Frâ dat, fshavé, zan tumâ écha; asha oné, asha hé, ratvé, yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ écha fra sasta ya écha.**

*[From 3 p.m. to dusk]*

**Ozeyé ri nâé, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Frâ dat, virâé, da khyu mâ écha, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

*[From dusk to midnight]*

**Aévi sru tré mâé, aé bi giâé; asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Frâ dat, vispâm, hu jiya-étiyé, Zara tush tru, témâ écha, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

*[From midnight to dawn]*

**Oushahi nâé, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Béré jyâé, nmâ niyâ écha, asha oné, asha hé, ratvé; yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

*[Continue Sroush Vaj prayers]*

**Srou shahé, ashi yahé, takh mahé, tanu, Mân trâ hé, dar shé, dra ush, Ahu ér yahé; Khshna otra, yasnâ écha, vahmâ écha; Khshna otrâ écha, fra sasta ya écha.**

**Sroush the pure, with powerful body, armed with 'mantra', the holy Avesta words, as his armor and created by God, is hereby praised, honored and glorified.**

**Yathâ, Ahu, Vaéryu, zauta, frâmé, mruté. Atâ ratush, ashât chit, hachâ, fra, asha va, vidh vâo, mra otu.**

O, Zaota, the priest or person reciting the main parts of the Yasna, the Avesta text, tell me how strong is Ahu, master of the world? Is He a strong and religious leader?

**Ahuném, vaérim, tanum, paéti.**  
(Three times).

Then the Holy and Wise Man replied: "Ahunavar is strong and will guard the body."

**Yathâ Ahu Vaéryu - 1.**

Kem, Nâ, Mazdâ, mava été,  
pâyum, dadât, hyât, mâ, dreg  
vâo, didaré shatâ, aé, nang hé.  
An yém, tvah mât, ât raschâ,  
ma nang haschâ, ya yâo, shyao  
tana ésh, ashém, thra osh tâ,  
Ahurâ.

Tâm, mué, dâ nest vâm, dae  
nyâé, frâ vao châ. Ke, vére  
tram, jâ tvâ, pué, senghâ, yué  
henti.

Chitrâ, myué, dâm, ahum bish,  
ratum, chizh di, at, huyé, vohu,  
Srou shu, jantu, manang hâ,  
Mazdâ, ahmâe, yahmâe, vashi,  
kahmâ échit.

Pâta, nu, dabi shyan tat, paéri, Mazdâ os  
cha, Ar maé tish cha, Spen tas cha.

Nassé, daévo, druksh;  
Nassé, daévo, chitra;  
Nassé, daévo, fra karsh té;  
Nassé, daévo, fra dâé té.

Apa, druksh, nassé;  
Apa, druksh, dwâra;  
Apa, druksh, vi nassé;  
Apa, khéz ré, apa, nassié,  
mâ meren, ché nish, gaé tâo, ast vaéy  
tish, ashahé.

O Mazda, who have you appointed as my protector except  
Your own Fire and your Good Mind when evil will fight me  
with violence? O Ahura, help me to protect the truth. Give  
me Good Thoughts.

**Némaschâ, yâ, Armaétish, ijhâchIa.**  
(Three times).

I salute the holy devotion and request prosperity.

**Yathâ Ahu Vaéryu - 2.**

**Yas ném cha, vah mém cha, aujas cha,  
zavaré cha; Afri nâmé, Srou shahé, ashi  
yahé, takh mahé, tanu, Mân trâ hé,  
darshi, droush, Ahu ér yahé.**

**Ashem Vohu - 1.**

(Untie your koshti here)



*Mobed Shahzadi performing  
Sedreh-Pushi in California*

**Ahmâi, raésh cha, kharé nas  
cha,  
ahmâé, tanvu, drva tâtém,  
ahmâé, tanvu, vazd varé,  
ahmâé tanvu, vére trém,  
ahmâé ishtim, pou rush, khâth  
rém, ahmâé, âs nâm, chit, fra  
zain tim,  
ahmâé, dré ghâm, dré ghu  
jitim,  
ahmâé, vahish tém, ahum,  
ashao nâm, rao chang hém,  
vispu khat rém.**

May the person who prays to Ahura enjoy  
God's glory, good health, endurance of body,  
wealth, children, a long life, and enjoy  
paradise.

**Ashém Vohu - 1.**

**Hazang rém, baé sha zanâm, baé varé,  
baé sha zanâm. (Three times).**

May we enjoy good health a thousand times.

**Ashém Vohu - 1.**

**Jassa, mé, avanghé, Mazdâ! (Three times).**

O Ahura Mazda, come to my help!

**Amahé, hutâsh tahé, hurao dahé, veré  
tragh nahé, Ahura dhatahé, vanain  
tiao-scha, upa ra tâtu, tvâ shahé, khadhâ  
tahé, zarvanahé, akaranahé, zarvanahé,  
daré ghu, khadhâ tahé.**

May all creations of Ahura Mazda be praised.

**Ashém Vohu - 1.**

**Zadené, nasosh, zedâré, div o drouj,  
pâkiyé tan, ashué ravâné khish  
(three times).**

May the devil be destroyed so that cleanliness of the body  
and purity of the soul be achieved.

**Ashém Vohu - 1.**



## AVESTAYE KOSHTI

Prayers for tying koshti

Bé nâmé, Ourmazdé, bakh shâ yandéyé,  
bakh shâ yesh garé, mehrabân.

Humato, Hukhto, Hvaresht.

Man ésh nio, gav ésh nio, kun ésh nio,  
tanio, ravânio, gityo, méinu; Ajeshé, hama  
guna vanahi, avakhsho, pashi mâno fé  
patet hém.

Az har jastao, goftao, kardao, manidao,  
shanidao, farmuda; Ajeshé, hama guna  
vanahi, avâksho, pashi mâno, fé patet hém.

With good thoughts, good words and good deeds. By body and  
soul in the physical and spiritual world, I repent for the sins  
which have been committed by me. I am honestly sorry.

*(Crack the koshti three times with this prayer)*

Shekasté ahrim bâd! *(Three times).*

May evil be destroyed.

Shekastao zadé bâd, gonâh méinuyé dor-  
vand; Avâ hamâ, divâno, drou jâno, jadu  
yâné ga jasté, takétâr duzakh, negunao,  
negun sâr, marg bén.

Heech kêré shân, bé kamé nabût.

Har kêro kerfé, ashuié ké bûd, bé kâmé  
Ourmazdo, Khodâo Amshâ spandâné  
Piruzgar. Hasto budesh, békam bâd, deené  
pâké Ourmazd.

May all evil be destroyed. May all good performed, be in  
accord with the wish of Ahura Mazda. May the religion of  
Ahura Mazda spread through Asho Zartosht, always live.

*(Touch koshti to forehead)*

Maso, vaho, Piruzgar bâd, Dâdâr Our-  
mazdê; Râyû mando, kharu mandé, has  
vesp âgâh.

Khshna otra, Ahurahé, Mazdâo, tarué  
daété, an grahé, méineosh, héitiâ varsh  
tâm; Hyât, vasnâ, fra shiu temém,  
Staomi, Ashém.

The pleasing of Ahura Mazda and the disgrace of evil, is in  
accord with the will of virtuous people.

Ashém Vohu - 1.

Khshnâ otra, Ahurahé, Mazdâo.

Ashém Vohu - 1.

*(Tie the first front knot with the first Yatha and the  
second knot with the second Yatha prayer.)*

Yathâ Ahu Vaéryu - 2.

*(Tie the back knots here)*

Ashém Vohu - 1.

Mazda yasnu, ahmi,  
Mazda yasnu, Zara tush tresh;

I am a worshipper of Mazda as declared by Zarathushtra.

Fra varâné, âstui taschâ, fra varé taschâ;

Astuyé, huma tém, manu;

Astuyé, hukh tém, vachu;

Astuyé, hu varsh tém, sheyo taném.

Astuyé, daénâm vanghoim, Mâzda yasnim;

Fras pâyo, khed râm, nidha snai tishâm,  
khét vadatâm, ashao nim; Yâ, hâeti nâm  
châ, bush yain tinâm châ; mazishtâchâ,  
vahishtâ châ, srahish tâ châ, yâ, Ahué rish,  
Zara tush trésh.

Ahurâé, Mazdâé, vispâ, vohu, chinah mi.

Aéshâ, asti, daé niyav, vang hoyav, Mazda  
yas nuish, âstu étish.

I believe and praise the good religion of Mazda as taught by  
Zarathushtra. The religion seeks peace.

Jassa, mé, avanghé, Mazdâ!

*(Three times).*

Amahé, hutâsh tahé, hurao dahé, veré  
tragh nahé, Ahura dhatahé, vanaén  
tiaoshcha, upa ratâtu, tvâ shahé, kha dhâ  
tahé, zarvan ahé, aka rah nahé, zarvan  
ahé, daré ghu kha dhâ tahé.

*(This is a repeated prayer. See earlier translation.)*

Ashém Vohu - 1.

Hamâ zur beem, hamâ zuré, hamâ ashu  
beem, hamâ zuré vish, kérfa beem, hum  
kér fayé, kérfa kêrân beem, dur az vanâho,  
vanah kêrân beem, hum kerfé, basta kosh  
tiano, nikâno, vahâné, haft keshvar zamin,  
beem. Béсарé, gozaré, chinvad, polé  
bozorg, sabako, khorramo, shâdo, âsân  
mân, vé dvârni, vâ Dâdâr Ourmazd.



# The Navjote

## An esoteric view

*The Why, How, What, Where and When of the Navjote Ceremony from the Ilm-e-Khshnoom Perspective*

By Silloo Mehta  
Cypress, California

*When we are planting the seeds of faith in the innocent soil of the child, preparing him or her for an incessant fight with the evil forces within and without, carrying out our spiritual duty to connect the child to Lord Zarathushtra for life, isn't it necessary to know the Why, How, What, Where and When of Navjote – the initiation ceremony which is witness by our family and friends on earth; and in the divine world, the entire 'Yazidic Mandal' is ready to shower their blessings, if it is performed according to the rites. So let us get to the root of the explanation.*

### THREE ASPECTS OF RELIGION

Every religion, including ours, has three aspects: scientific (knowledge-based), practical and devotional. The Hindus call it *Gnyan*, *Karma* and *Bhakti*. The navjote and the sudreh kushti should be looked at from these three perspectives.

(a) **Knowledge: the Scientific Aspect.** Embodied in the teachings in religion is some mystical truth about the origin and workings of nature. This kind of knowledge cannot be arrived at by intellectual methods like logic, speculation or philosophy. Only religion, which is a science from the other side of our intellectual barrier, a science from the realms of divinity, where the universe of our experiences, is an infinitesimal part, can enlighten us, and answer questions like: "Who am

I?" "Where did I come from and Where will I go?" "What is the purpose of my existence?" and "What is the significance of the navjote and the sudreh-kushti?"

The Zarathushti religion teaches us that every human being has the flame of Ahura Mazda burning within. Our soul ('ruvaan') was once immersed in Ahura Mazda but somewhere in the remote past, found itself separated from Him due to some 'evil' which had clung to it. Ahura Mazda then asked the *ruvaan* to embark on a long journey in His creation and provided a casing, a body, when it came to earth, to house the soul.

The human individual therefore has two elements within him: good and evil. All religions are sent by God through prophets to guide the respective souls and teach them to convert that evil into good.

We have a tendency to be tempted to incline towards evil. At the same time we have inherent strength and energy to swim against the evil current and give resistance. The proportion varies from individual to individual. Mankind is divided into groups on the basis of their spiritual composition. Hence we have different religions with one goal, but varied prescriptions or spiritual disciplines ('*tarikats*'). For Zarathushtis the wearing of the sudreh-kushti is one such *tarikats* – not just as a symbol, but as a special apparel that helps us to gradually transmute evil into good.

(b) **The Practical Aspect.** In this aspect, there is a command, a pre-

cept, a practical guideline for our actions in day-to-day life.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant said that Moral Law is in the heart of man and that itself is the proof for the existence of God. Ahura Mazda has provided a mechanism within us, which, if awakened and utilized, can train us to swim against our inherent inclination towards evil. That mechanism is housed in our non-physical body.

A part of this mechanism consists of 16 centers of spiritual energy (called '*chakras*') which are located in the non-physical body ('*kaherp*'). For instance, the first chakra is located at the top of the head, and the 16th chakra at the bottom of the feet. Spiritual energies of different intensities and textures are zooming in the centers. These energies can be invoked, awakened and made to come out and spread all over in the living cells of the physical body. This process activates our mind to resist our inherent inclination to evil and to be 'good'; that is to adopt those human qualities and virtues which would result in the gradual conversion of evil into good.

The navjote ceremony ('*kriya*') and sudreh-kushti equipment are meant to invoke and awaken the energies of these centers. The material, the shape, the size, the form, the constitution of the sudreh as a garment and the kushti as a thick thread, are ordained and geared for the invocation of spiritual energy within.

There is another truth taught in Zarathushti science, which is relevant to our subject. "As in the macrocosm, so in the microcosm". Just as there are three parts within us, viz. the physical body, the non-physical body, and the *ruvaan*, there are three worlds outside us in Ahura Mazda's unimaginably vast creation. They are: (a) the divine world ('*hasti*'), (ii) the non-physical or ultra-physical world ('*nisti*') and (iii) the physical world ('*geti*').

As there is a constant conflict of the two elements, the good and the evil,

in our own internal, personal world, so also there are good and evil forces constantly whirling in the physical and large parts of the non-physical world, outside us.

The messengers of God teach humans the methods, procedures and behavior to invoke the spiritual energies within, so that the good forces from outside can actively help to control, conquer and convert evil. One of the divine messengers is Lord Zarathushtra. He brought the Zarathushti religion ('daena' or 'din').

**Zarathushti Power Station and the Navjote Kriya.** Zarathushtrian Science ('Z-Science') teaches that one of the divine missions of Lord Zarathushtra was to energize the good forces of creation in the non-physical worlds. He was equipped with the Divine Light of Ahura Mazda. It was his function to bring down the beams of Divine Light in the non-physical and physical worlds where the evil in man and the hostile evil forces are rampant.

He established a Divine power station (*Z-power station*) in certain regions of the non-physical world. The Z-power-station is the religion, the *daena*, of Zarathushtra.

Religion is not merely a scriptural writing, or a way of life, or the moral code, or the spiritual disciplines and exercises. It is all that, of course, but predominantly, it is a living, vibrating power station, a divine force, a concentrated beam of Ahura Mazda's Light, a transmitter of divine energies, a God designated store house of divinity, which can *work* on humans and awaken spiritual energies within them.

For a Zarathushti, navjote is a '*kriya*', a kinetic which connects and attunes him or her with Lord Zarathushtra's power station so that he or she may throughout life continuously receive and absorb his divine currents, energies and blessings. The receiving points are the '*chakras*'. The sudreh and kushti are devised in such a way that they become the

material media for the light to enter into the chakras.

(c) **The Devotional Aspect.** Something inexplicable simmering within us, a current of love for the Divine, an inherent craving, a heart-throb, a tear, a song addressed to Him, our relationship with Him – that is Devotion. Every teaching, practice or prayer in religion, vibrates with love

“ The manthras (prayers) pronounced by the child and the mobed, generate vibrations within and around the child forming a kind of ethereal cover, protecting the child from the forces of pollution . ”

and devotion. That of the sudreh-kushti is a fine example.

### THE NAVJOTE CEREMONY

Navjote is primarily and manifestly a '*kriya*', meaning motion, movement, action, intended to generate certain non-physical and divine fields and forces which produce certain effects in nature.

Navjote connects a Zoroastrian child to the Divine power station of Zarathushtra and sets into motion certain spiritual forces and energies within the personality of the child.

**Place and time.** For such a *kriya* to be efficacious, the place and time are very important. After all, the child is brought to the door of Zarathushtra's divine palace to receive and absorb blessings which will infuse into the child, the energy and the strength to resist and contest the evil within, to follow His way and march nearer to Him.

The tenets of our religion prescribe that the navjote must be performed in a Fire Temple (Atash Behram or Agiary) in the early morning, preferably during the 'Hoshbam' hours. The sacred fire in the Fire Temple is the direct recipient of the currents from the Z-Power-Station and has a divine field spreading all over the place. If the child is within that field, he or she can absorb the Z-currents easily.

Early morning is the time when the Atash Padshah receives the maximum Z-currents. At dawn, the channels of Divine Light are scattered around and when Ahura Mazda's '*Yazatas*', the living spectra of His Divinity form an assembly and the dark forces of evil are waning. *Hoshbam*, *Usha*, or *Amrit-vela* have been proclaimed to be the 'best time' in many religions.

**The Nahan.** The *kriya* starts with a '*nahan*', a procedure for purification of the child's interior 'soil', so that it is ready to receive the Z-currents. The apparatus required for the *nahan* come from the four kingdoms of

God's creation. The sacred bull's urine ('*nirang*') on which the marathon ceremony of *Nirangdan* is performed, comes from the animal kingdom. The *nirang* is a potent liquid with a spiritual charm. The child is made to sip it very slightly to absorb its inner energy, so that his 'charged battery' enables his personality to open up and receive the Z-currents. This process is catalyzed and augmented by sipping the juice of the pomegranate leaves (vegetable kingdom) that the child is made to chew. The mineral kingdom is represented by a small metal bowl in which the *nirang* is poured. A mobed representing the human kingdom, officiates at the *nahan*.

The prayers ('*manthras*') pronounced by the child and the mobed, generate vibrations within and around the child forming an ethereal cover, protecting the child from the forces of pollution.

A physical bath is then given to the child, long trousers are worn, a shawl is placed around the shoulders, a cap covers the head, and socks and slippers cover the feet.

**The Investiture.** The child is brought in a walking procession to a carpet and sits on a low seat ('*patlo*'). The mobeds sit on the carpet around the child. A fire burns in a fire-urn on one side on the carpet. It becomes



the deputy of the holy Atash Padshah of the agiary; and is the receiving point on the circuit bringing down the Z-currents. It is Ahura Mazda's light in physical form connecting the place to the Z-power station.

According to the tenets of the religion, the mobed and the child, are both required to first recite the Patet Pashemani prayer. Today, only the mobeds recite it.

The chief mobed and the child then rise, both facing east. The mobed invests the child with the sudreh, reciting certain manthras. The first of these is *Din no Kalmo*, an expression of profound faith in the daena of Zarathushtra – a powerhouse of truth (*rajistiyao*) and divine wisdom (*chistiyao*); it is the light beam of goodness, the divine work (*yasna*) of Mazda, the religion of truth and perfection, a divine gift of Ahura Mazda bestowed on us by Zarathushtra. The child is now fine tuned with the Z-power station. The currents start streaming down. The energy centers of the child open up to receive them.

The investiture of the sudreh now begins. The next recital is from the preamble of Ahura Mazda Yasht. It connects the whole atmosphere to the divine plane. The central words are Ahurahey Mazdao raevato khareng-hato – “May Ahura Mazda's Divine Light and blessings stream down here. May this place be attuned to His wavelength.”

The tying of the kushti now begins. The child holds the finger of the mobed as they recite *Ahura Mazda Khodai*. While saying the words “manashni, gavashni, kunashni”, the kushti is gathered in three loops. At “haithyavarashtam hyat vasna” the kushti is engirdled round the child's waist and brought forward. With two *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayers, two knots

are tied in front. With an *Ashem Vohu* prayer, the ends of the kushti are taken to the back, and tied with two knots in the back. The prayer *Jasme Avanghahe Mazda* is recited.

The child is now seated and the mobed recites the manthras of Tandarosti, showering the child with grains of rice, coconut flakes, pomegranate drops and flower petals.

The *kriya* is over. The child is engirdled in the divine blessings of Zarathushtra. His divine flame will now inspire her or him to tread God's path of the good, throughout life, and to march nearer and nearer to Him.

#### SOURCE MATERIAL

*Ervad K. N. Dastoor, “The Divine Science of Navjote and Sudreh-Kushti”, 1993, published by the Mazdeyasnie Connection, \$5.*

*Teacher, author and lecturer, Silloo Mehta founded the Los Angeles-based Mazdeyasnie Connection in 1982, committed to practicing and teaching the Ilm-e-Khshnoom view of the religion of Zarathushtra. Its activities include religious instruction classes, lectures, children's plays and fund-raiser functions. Publications include the Mazdeyasnie Connection Newsletter, K. N. Dastoor's book [see above], a book “Faridoon Conquers Zohak” [reviewed in FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997] and an audio-visual “The Dawn of Consciousness”. They also have a large library of audio-cassettes of lectures on religious topics. Prior to coming to the US in 1980, and starting 4 pre-schools called “Stepping Stones” in California, Mehta ran a pre-school, “Shahpanah” for about 80 children (mostly Americans) in Tehran. Contact Silloo Mehta at The Mazdeyasnie Connection, 9528 Walker Street, #5, Cypress, CA 90630, Tel: (714) 995-8765.*

## Survival ...

[Continued from page 10]

We are already in the process of gradually evolving into a different culture, influenced by the Judeo-Christian culture and education process abroad, and by the Hindu and Muslim culture by contact at home. So that if we do survive as a community past the middle of the next century, it will be in a form considerably different from the traditional or the present.

Thanks to the tele-communication miracle, the world is shrinking in space and time. There is little room for survival of smaller ethnic faiths in their pure form. It will soon become a universal soup, governed by wealth, power and politics and like Noah's fabled flood, will submerge our different beliefs into one cauldron. What comes out of it may not be quite recognizable. The challenge is to find out if, and how, we can survive such calamity and keep afloat. That is where our group of Wise Men should put on their thinking caps.

There do exist some assemblies/associations/Mazdayasni groups who have wisely held a far-sighted view of such tragedy and are busy converting many ethnics into the Zarathushti faith at a level of purity we ourselves are failing to achieve or take for granted. All praise to such pioneers, seers and saviors.

But if we exercise the ostrich mentality of burying our heads in the sand and condemning them as a danger to our ethnic insulation, we will irreversibly damage our own existence. If we know any better and viable alternatives then let us proclaim them in the press and face the community with such options. Else get under the caps of the Wise Men. ■

The descriptions of the Navjote, Sudreh-Pushi, and Sudreh-Kushti in the articles in this issue are the personal views of the authors or the organizations or perspectives they represent. Per its Editorial Policy, FEZANA Journal does not endorse or espouse any specific perspective.

**FEZANA JOURNAL**  
wishes readers a happy, healthy and  
prosperous New Year 1998.

An 'alat' of the Zarathushti religion

# Sudreh and Kushti

By Pervin Mistry  
Mississauga, Ontario

**S**udreh ('sud' - good, beneficent) and 'rah' - path) is a guide to the Right path which attunes a Zarathushti with the divine Yazatas and with Ahura Mazda. The Avestan name for sudreh is 'stehrpae-sanghem' (heavenly garment). Ahura Mazda is depicted as being clothed with the radiant firmament and star-studded belt [*Ys* 30-5]:

"The Most Beneficent Spirit, who wears the heavenly firmament ..."

and [*Fravardin Yasht*, 2-3]:

"the sky ... which Ahura Mazda wears as a star-decked garment."

"... When the archangels came meeting Zaratusht they likewise wore the sacred thread-girdle on the waist; and the distinctive characteristics (farq) amidst the laws of the sacred being is the wearing of the sacred thread-girdle."

It was Sraosha Yazata who divinely inspired the Peshdad King Jamshed to wear sudreh-kushti to commune with Ahura Mazda, and to ward off the evils of body, mind and soul. Asho Zarathushtra continued this divine commandment of wearing sudreh-kushti and stressed their importance in the evolution of the soul on the path of Asha.

**Significance of the number nine.** In creating the material universe, Ahura Mazda as 'vafush' the weaver [*Ys*. 29.6] first created 'hasti' or the permanent heaven, then 'nisti' or the semi-transient world, and finally our world, 'geti' which is transient. The 'hasti realm consists of nine layers:

the realms of the 7 planets, the realm of fixed stars and the abode of Ahura Mazda in boundless light. The constitution of man is similarly divided into 9 components. According to the analogy "as above, so below", Yasna 55-1 lists these 9 components of man as (1) Fravashi, (2) Baod, (3) Urwan (three immortal bodies that correspond to the hasti realm); (4) Keherp, (5) Tewishi, (6) Ushtan (these form a link between the mortal and immortal parts of man and correspond to the nisti realm); (7) Azbedish, (8) Gaetha and (9) Tanu (these three are mortal and disintegrate with the death of the physical man. They correspond to the geti realm).

The 9 seams of the sudreh have a very spiritual bearing. The number 9 reminds the wearer that he/she is a very integral part and an offspring of the very divine universe which works through the 9 corresponding parts into which an individual is divided.

## THE SUDREH

**The making of a sudreh.** The sudreh is made of white cotton only. It must be made from one strip of cloth; must have 9 and only 9 seams; and must be in length upto the wearer's knee.

White cotton works most effectively to keep the effects of 'druj' (evil) in check, by refracting some of the harmful rays of sunlight. Cotton, a natural fiber, retains the divine vibrations of the manthras which form a

*Navjote' (nav-new, jote-zaothra or a designated participant) is the most sacred and significant event in the life of a Zarathushti. During the ritual of navjote, a child born of both Mazdayasni Zarathushti parents, receives the sacred sudreh-kushti garments, which are the most fundamental 'alats' of the religion. After navjote, through the sudreh-kushti, the Zarathushti child is united in righteousness with other Zarathushtis, and is able to consciously get connected with Asho Zarathushtra, the Yazatas and Ahura Mazda.*

protective shield around the body. The color white is for purity. It is the emblem of our religion [*Meher Yasht*, .31]:

"white color is the sign of the Mazdayasni religion."

The sudreh must be *made from one continuous strip of cloth*, reminding the wearer that everything which exists is interdependent, and is created by Him. It represents the universal brotherhood that exists in nature:

"... (the shirt) is needful to be perfectly pure white and single, which one fold is because Vohuman also is thus the one creature who was first, and afterwards from him the garment which is innermost and concealed is called in revelation."

The sudreh *must have 9 and only 9 seams*. If torn and patched, the sudreh loses its efficacy. Extra seams hinder the occult property of '9' from performing its beneficial work of spiritually progressing the soul. The 9 seams are the girdeau, the gereban, 2 seams at the sleeves, 2 side seams, 2 triangular 'tirisi' at the hem, and 1 straight tiri.

The girdeau at the nape of the neck reminds the wearer to perform good deeds. It is placed in a position close to the center of spiritual energy located in the throat, and acts as a constant reminder to utter kind words and to speak the truth.

The gereban is a tiny pocket, near the heart, the main center of spiritual energy, where we store our good deeds. Our conscience, the voice of Sraosha,

resides in the soul/heart. Gereban is the keeper of the conscience. Dadistan-i Dinik [p. 125] declares the heart to be the "fountain-source of purity."

*The two sleeve seams* remind us that the two forces Angra Mainyu (darkness) and Spenta Mainyu (light) are coeval. It is the duty of every Zarathushti to convert Angra Mainyu to Spenta Mainyu, ignorance to wisdom, by choosing the path of Ashoi in every action and decision, and word uttered. The left sleeve symbolizes the left hand path of darkness, and the right sleeve, the right hand path of divine illumination.

*The two side seams* remind the wearer that the spiritual and corporeal worlds are united into one whole. Hasti and nisti are interlinked within us and also outside of us.

*The two triangular tiris* remind the wearer of the trinity of good thoughts, words and deeds, and the three stages of creation which created the hasti, nisti and geti realms.

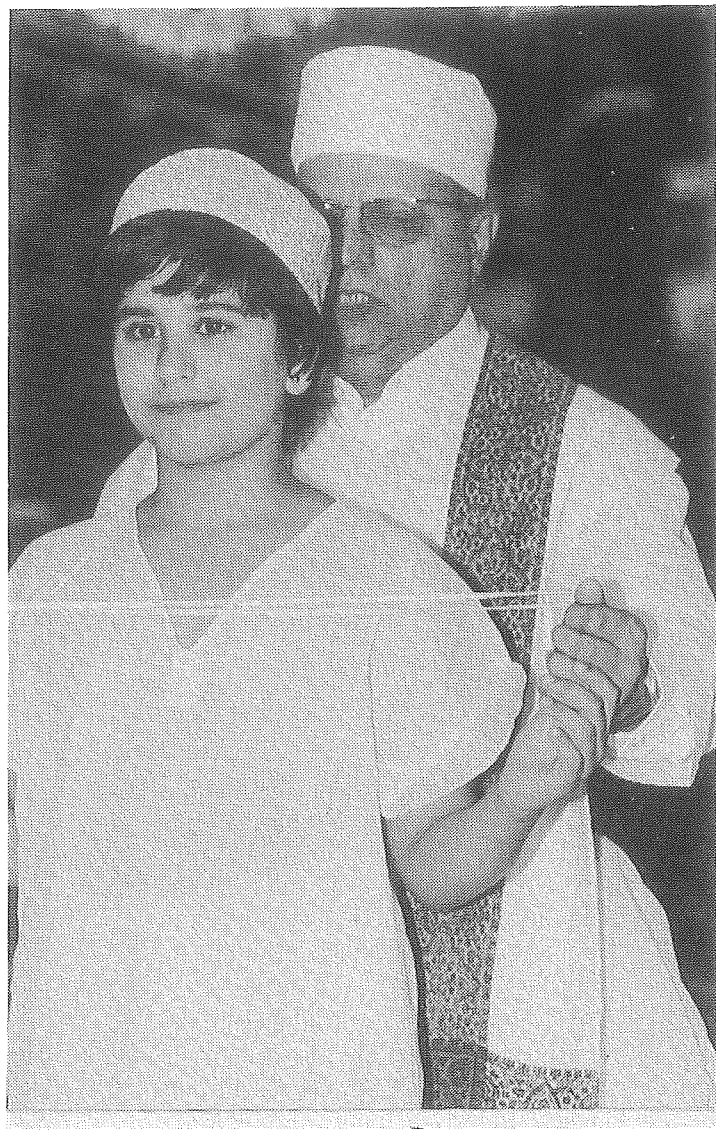
*The one straight tiri* (on the right side for women, and the left side for men) reminds the wearer that Ahura Mazda is One although he has created different religions, species and more.

The sudreh should be upto the knees in length.

Even at death, a knot is tied to the knees. This is so because the center of spiritual energy situated near the knees is vital to the progress and release of the soul during and after life.

The circumference of the sudreh represents fullness, the complete whole or eternity (*zurvane akarne*). The wearer is reminded that this life on earth is but a brief stop in the soul's

journey through eternity. We are eternal pilgrims partaking of His immortality through our Urvan, Baod and Fravashi. We shall attain immortality by progressing on the Path of Asha through Perfection.



*Child being invested with the sudreh and kushti by Dastoor Jamasp Asa, at a navjote ceremony in Mumbai.*

### THE KUSHTI

The Avestan word for kushti is 'aiwyaonghana' (spiritual belt), [Hom Yasht, .26]:

"O Hom! ... Mazda brought for Thee, the sacred, star-adorned girdle, made by the spirits (Yazatas) of the good Mazdayasni religion. Since then, girded with this, Thou hast made Thy abode on the tops of the mountains ...".

This establishes the divine origin of the kushti, together with the sudreh. They are the representation of the spiritual garment and belt worn by the Divine Beings. They protect us and attune us with Ahura Mazda, His Divine Host and Asho Zarathushtra.

The navel or the waist is the equator or median in man, which divides and protects spiritual inspiration from lesser instincts. Man's highest instincts, wisdom and conscience reside in his upper reaches, while the baser emotions reside below the navel:

"And from the heart, which is the place of thought and dwelling of life, on the upper side are the eye, ear, tongue, and brain, which are the dwellings of sight, hearing, speech, understanding and intellect; and on its lower side is the abode of a father's generativeness."

The kushti reminds Zarathushtis to concentrate the spiritual energies on the upper hemisphere. It is to be worn on top of the sudreh, wound round the waist three times.

**The making of a kushti.** The kushti is made from white wool (not cotton or any other thread) taken from a lamb to remind us to be as gentle and self-sacrificing.

The kushti is woven by Zarathushti men or women, preferably of the priestly class, while reciting continuously, the holy manthras of Yatha, Ashem and Yenghe Hatam. The wool retains the vibrations of the manthras which guide us to righteousness.

The weaving begins with 144 threads, twisted together to make 72 strands. It is passed round the loom 72 times, divided into 6 strands, each of 12 threads. After consecration by a priest, the kushti is finished by

hand. It is turned inside out, and 3 tassels of 24 threads each are formed at each end.

**Significance of the numbers.** *The number 144* represents Immortality –  $1+4+4=9$ . The 72 ( $7+2=9$ ) strands stand for the 72 'has' of the Ijeshne. Hormuzd Yasht declares 72 names of Ahura Mazda to be talismanic. 72 is also connected to the heavenly astronomical cycles – it takes the sun 72 years to pass one degree. An average man in good health has a pulse rate of 72 per minute. The soul also requires 72 hours to resurrect itself in the spiritual world after the death of its corporeal body.

*The 6 strands* represent the 6 gahambars which are connected to the stages of creation. The 24 threads symbolize the 24 kardas of the Vispered. 12 denotes the 12 houses of the Zodiac. It is said that he who ties the kushti, establishes a connection with the 12 Yazatas that preside over these 12 divine zodiacal mansions.

*The 4 knots* remind us of the 4 directions and the 4 elements to be kept pure – fire, air, water and earth. They also stand for the 4 attestations: (1) Ahura Mazda is the creator of all, (2) the good Mazdayasni Zarathushti religion is the revealed word of Ahura Mazda, (3) Asho Zarathushtra is His prophet, and (4) to consciously practice good thoughts, words and deeds.

*The 3 tassels* at each end and the 3 circles around the waist remind us of the 3 fundamental tenets: Humata, Hukhta and Huvareshhta; the 3 important cycles (zurvane akarne, zurvane daregho khadate and thwashe khadate); the creations (minoi, hasti and nisti); the three stages of the Ahunavar Plan

The hollow space inside the kushti which symbolizes the earth and the sky, reminds us to accumulate good deeds since the two worlds are inter-

connected. Our actions here have reactions in the spiritual world.

These explanations are written for the unbelievers who do not consider

ing them "outer symbols" and "unnecessary"!

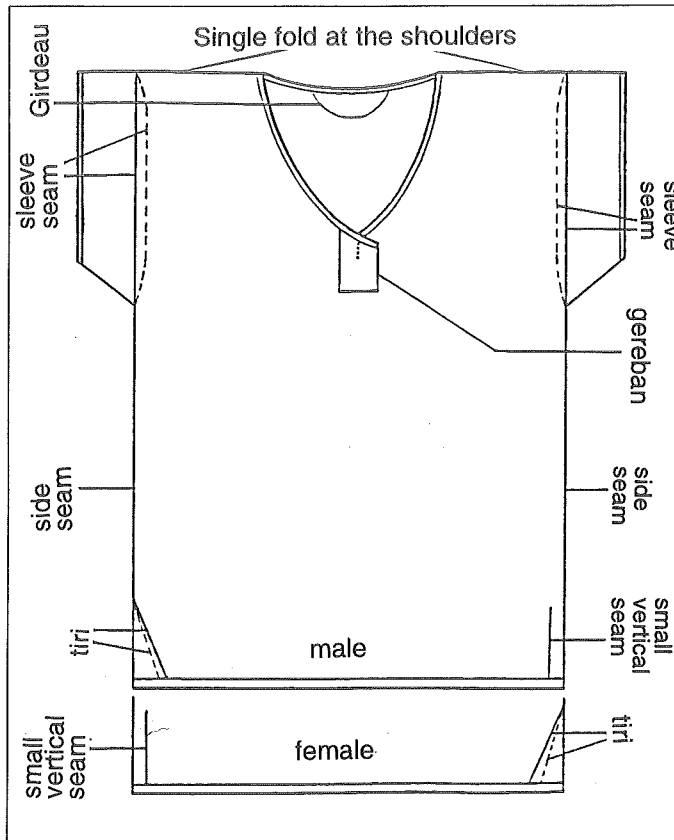
"And in former days, if any one should have become completely fifteen years of age, and should not have worn the sacred thread-girdle, they would have done for him by stoning, as bread and water are forbidden for him."

Such was their dedication to religion! They prescribed the necessity of wearing sudreh-kushti throughout the lifetime and even unto death:

"... when thou riseth up from the bed-clothes, it is necessary to tie the sacred thread-girdle again at the same place, and it is not desirable to put forth a step without the girdle."

"At night when they lie down, the shirt and girdle are to be worn, for they are more protecting for the body, and good for the soul".

Please let us honor and safeguard our spiritual inheritance – sudreh kushti. They are every Zarathushtis identity and link with Ahura Mazda, Asho Zarathushtra and the community, as they are essential to any prayers, rituals and 'hama zor'. ■



the sudreh-kushti to be mandatory alat in order to progress on the Path of Asha. For the believers, this explanation is not necessary. Faith, devotion and obedience are their boon, together with the spiritual benefit they receive.

It is important to note that sudreh-kushti are not merely a 'garment' or 'shirt' and 'belt'. They are designed in a specific way, and are worn by Mazdayasni Zarathushtis, after the performance of navjote, before age 15.

References and quotations from the Pahlavi texts (7 AD to 9 AD) establish that even during the worst days the Zarathushtis faced, they honored navjote and sudreh-kushti, and preferred to seal their fate in blood rather than discard their spiritual alat.

Is it not an irony that today, when we enjoy religious freedom, we are desecrating the very alat our ancestors died for? While our ancestors referred to sudreh kushti as an alat and a spiritual garment, we are call-

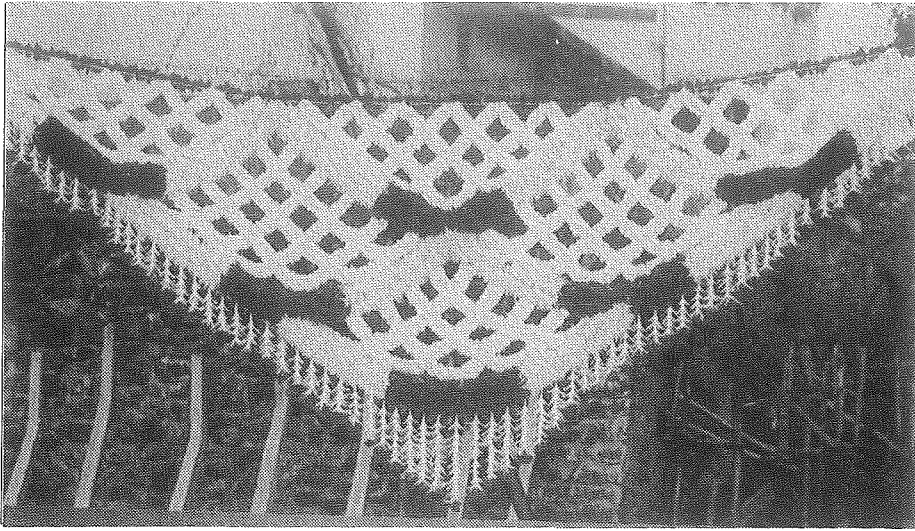
References and quotations are from Pahlavi texts (700 AD - 900 AD).

West, E. W., *Sacred Books of the East*, v. 5 (1987), v. 18 (1994), v. 24 (1987), v. 37 (1988), ed. F. Max Muller, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.

**Pervin J. Mistry** is a very committed Zarathushti and follower of Ilm-e-Khshnoom. She has been a student of religion throughout her life. She has contributed articles in: *The Eclectic*, *the Theosophical Network*, *The Canadian Theosophist*, *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *FEZANA Journal*, and presented papers at Zarathushti and inter-faith congresses and conferences. Her biggest concern is the survival of the Zarathushti religion – its rituals, traditions and scriptures in the 21st century, and considers assimilation into the host culture a threat to the community's survival.

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Navjote photo is gratefully acknowledged from Rohena Elavia.

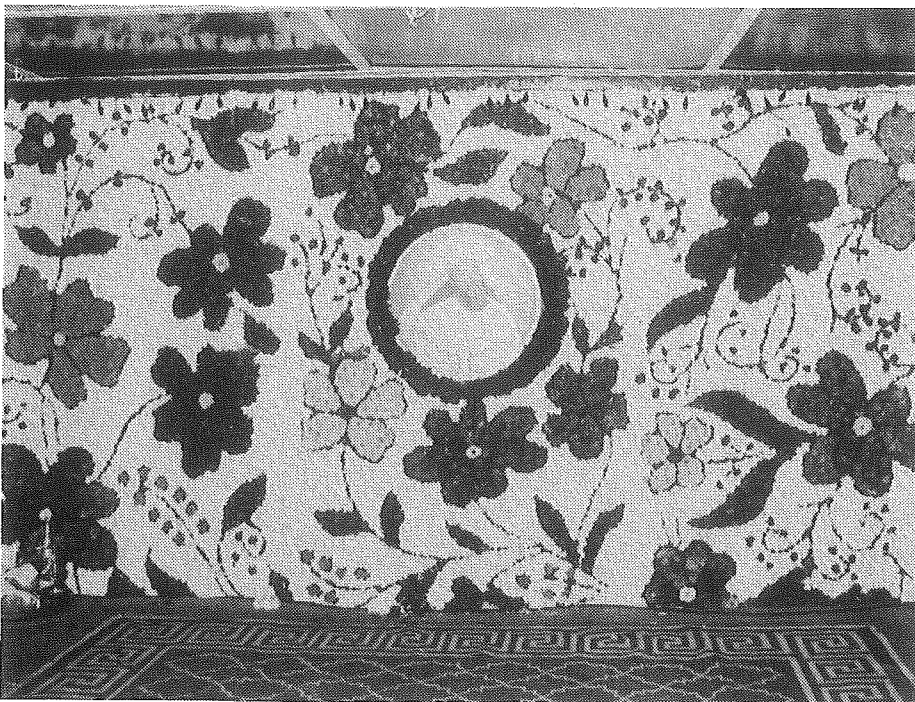




# A NAVJOTE PLANNER

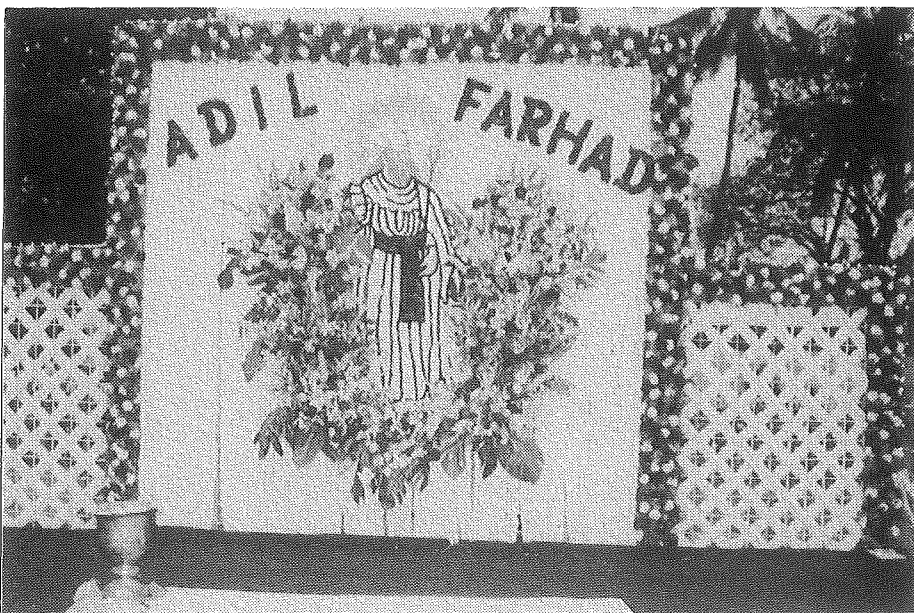
Guide to planning  
a child's navjote  
in North America

by  
Roshan Rivetna



*A navjote in the family calls for elaborate planning months ahead of the great day. In the West, where the guidance of elder family members may not be readily available, preparing for a navjote can be daunting.*

*This article is a simple step-by-step guide to Parsi navjote customs that might help young families growing up in the West, to maintain traditions as we knew them in the mother countries.*



The navjote ceremony is a milestone event in the life of every Zarathushti child as well as the parents. While a navjote can quite well be a very simple and beautiful, purely religious ceremony, more often than not, it is, like a wedding, celebrated with great eclat, with elaborate floral decorations, twinkling lights, a band, and feasting for a guest list in the hundreds. For a navjote, when a child is formally initiated into the Zarathushti faith, and invested with the sacred sudreh and kushti, is a time of rejoicing for all.

While the essence of the navjote is essentially the same in both the mother countries of India and Iran, each has its own unique flavor of the attendant customs and traditions. This article is based on Parsi customs and traditions as they are followed in India. Planning for the navjote begins months ahead.

**Age for the navjote.** Traditionally, Parsi navjotes are done when the child is 7, 9 or 11 years old.

#### THINGS TO DO A YEAR AHEAD

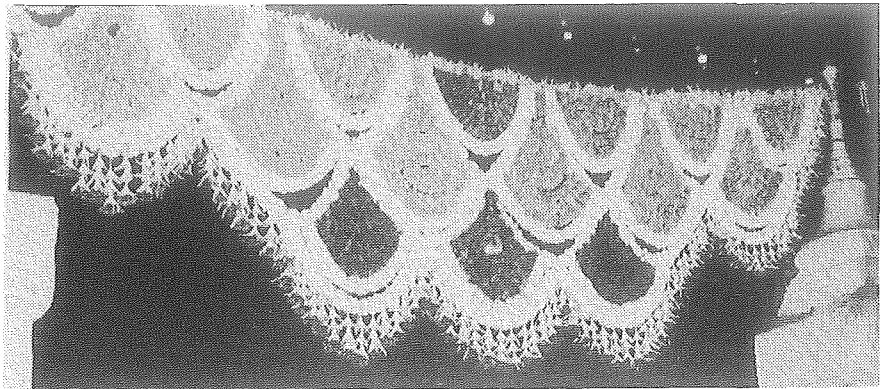
- **Teach the prayers.** Minimally, the child must memorize the daily kushti prayers [page 27] and understand their meanings. Teach the child what navjote means and what his responsibilities are on that day, as well as thenceforth, as he lives his life as a good Zarathushti.

Take the child to religious instruction classes at the Darbe Mehr; or make arrangements with a local mobed; and, most important, teach the child at home. A number of good books on religious instruction for navjote-age children are available [see Sources].

- **Select mobeds.** Select one officiating mobed to perform the navjote, and additional mobed(s) to grace the stage.

- **Select a date and time.** While certain days of the Zarathushti calendar are considered more auspicious (e.g. Hormuz roz) than others, any day is suitable for a navjote. The ceremony must, however, be performed before sunset.

- **Book the hall.** It is preferable to perform the navjote in the hall of a Darbe Mehr. It can also be performed at home or in a hotel or banquet hall. Check that there are no



“ A navjote, when a child is formally initiated into the Zarathushti faith, and invested with the sacred sudreh and kushti, is a time of rejoicing for all. ”



Previous page, elaborate fresh flower decorations adorn the doorways and the Navjote stage. Above, great pains are taken to make welcoming 'chalk' designs on the floor. Below, ladies preparing to sing traditional festive songs [see Sources] for a ceremony at the Darbe Mehr in Chicago.



smoke alarms that might go off due to the afargan (fire-urn).

● **Clothes for the Navjote Day.**

*Sudreh and Kushti:* Preferably, the navjote sudreh should be hand-stitched (not machine-stitched) by a family member.

*Ijar* (loose white pants): preferably handmade with embroidered borders.

*Shawl:* a large red or white Kashmiri design shawl is commonly used. It can be borrowed from someone, or ordered from Bombay (from Kashmiri handicrafts stores).

*Topi* (cap): For a boy, it is usually a maroon velvet cap. For a girl, it is usually white, silver or gold brocade or lace.

*Sapat* (slippers): black or maroon velvet slippers are worn by both boys and girls.

*Dagli:* after the ceremony, the boy can wear a traditional white dagli coat, with a white long-sleeved shirt and white dress pants. He will also need new dress shoes and white socks.

*Dress:* after the ceremony, the girl can wear a pretty white or pastel dress, with all new underwear and new shoes. The best time to buy the girl's navjote dress is around Easter, or during the spring and summer. Fall or winter dresses in dark colors or heavy materials are not appropriate for a navjote.

*Jewelry:* the family will also present the child with jewelry - gold cuff-links, buttons, coins, watch or ring for a boy and any gold or real gemstone jewelry for a girl.

The sudreh, kushti, topi and sapat are available from The Zoroastrian Shop [see Sources]. Custom-stitched sudrehs, pants and dagli can be made here [see Sources] or ordered from the Parsi shops on Princess Street near Parsi Dairy Farm in Bombay.

*A close elder relative (mother or grandmother) welcomes the Navjote boys, dressed in white trousers (ijars) and shawls, to the stage with the Achoo-michoo ceremony.*

● **Invitations.** Select pretty invitations from any "wedding invitation" print shop. A small paragraph [see below] describing the navjote may be inserted in the invitation.

"Navjote ("new devotee") is the initiation of a child into the Zarathushti religion. Amy will be invested with the sacred sudreh (a white cotton garment) and a kushti (a girdle of pure lamb's wool) will be wrapped three times round her waist reminding her of the triad of "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds" which form the cornerstone of the religion. Ervads ..... and ..... will officiate at the ceremony."

A short explanation of the ceremony handed out at the navjote will be a welcome gesture to non-Zarathushti guests. A sample handout is shown on the next page.

● **Music.** Book a band or DJ to play popular music after the navjote. In addition women can sing traditional navjote songs, as the child is brought in procession to the stage for the navjote [photo p.46]. An excellent audio-cassette of traditional songs, in Gujarati, is available [see Sources].

● **Plan hall decorations and flowers.** The decorations can be simple or elaborate, limited only by the family's budget. Use your creative imagination to plan for the following:

*Lights.* Twinkling strings of Christmas lights give a festive air. Buy them during the Christmas sales.

*Chalk.* For the 'chalk' designs, order 'chalk-na-dabba' (stencil tins) and chalk powder (or use baby powder or white lime powder available in garden shops). The 'chalk' shops at Grant Road bazaar, Mumbai, will also make custom designs with the child's name.

*Stage decorations.* *Torans* (garlands), a backdrop, trellis, arch, flower baskets, floor vases, draped posts, balloons or other creative decorations.

*Patlo.* You will have to borrow or make a *patlo*, a low flat stool on the stage for the child to sit on.

*Torans* for the main door and other doors at the navjote hall and at home. Silk flower garlands interspersed with real flowers look pretty.

*Potted palms.* Buy them before-hand at sales.

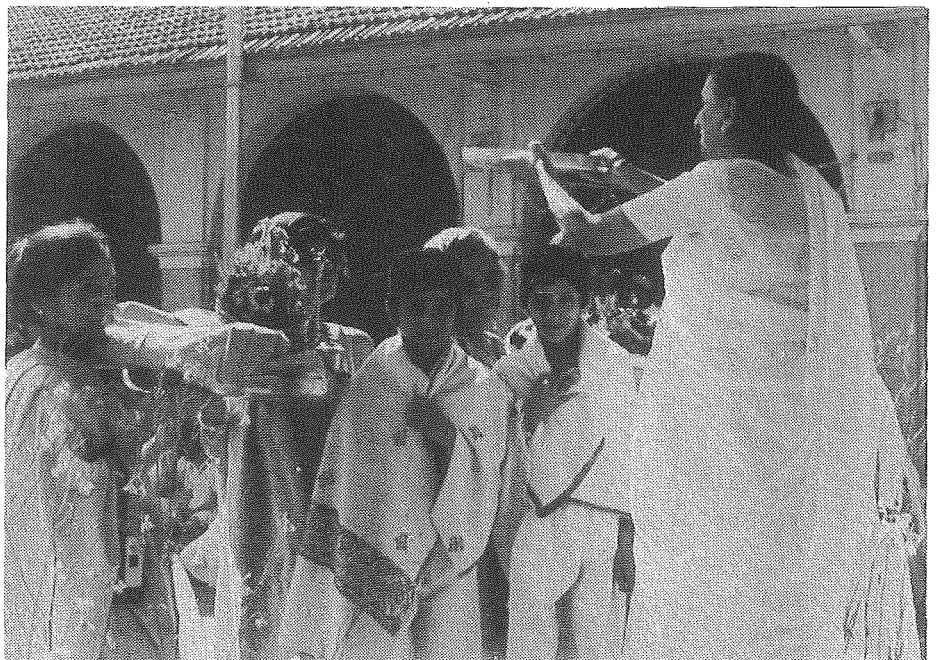
*Car decorations.* Use flowers, festoons or balloons.

*Fancy garland and bouquet* for the child.

*Garland for the sés* [see page 50].

*A garland, bouquet, or single rose,* for each officiating mobed.

*Centerpieces* and flower arrangements for dinner tables, buffet table, and elsewhere.



## THE NAVJOTE CEREMONY

The Navjote ('nav' = new, 'jote' = devotee) Ceremony is the initiation of a Zarathushti child into the religion. While deeply religious in significance, for the child is now united in righteousness with Zarathushtra and Ahura Mazda, and henceforth pledges to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra and be responsible for his own actions, the Navjote is a happy and joyous occasion, celebrated with éclat in the presence of family and friends, with music and feasting.

### SUDREH AND KUSHTI

During the Navjote, Amy will be invested with the sacred white garment, the sudreh, and a lamb's wool girdle, the kushti. Once so invested, it will be her duty to wear these sacred garments next to her skin for life, to steadfastly follow the teachings of Zarathushtra, and to reaffirm his faith with the kushti ritual and prayers every day.

### PRE-NAVJOTE RITUALS

Amy first takes a ritual bath and sips a sacramental drink, with the recitation of prayers by the family priest, to cleanse her in body and soul. Clothed in new, white trousers, a ceremonial shawl covering the torso, and head covered with a cap, she is led to the stage by the officiating priest and women family members carrying the silver sés tray laden with a new set of clothes and flower garlands, rose-water, coins, sugar crystals, nuts, a coconut, fresh betel leaves, and a handful of rice, each a natural symbol of goodness and prosperity. Ladies singing traditional, happy Navjote songs lead the Navjote party. Guests are encouraged to join in.

### THE ACHOO-MICHOO WELCOME

Amy is welcomed to the stage by her mother, with the Achoo-michoo ceremony. An egg, nuts, rice, a coconut, and a bowl of water are each circled seven times over the heads of the arriving party, and discarded on the floor, symbolically warding off any evil. A handful of rice is then showered on them for good luck. Amy is then seated on the carpeted floor, with the priests seated around her. The silver sés tray is placed nearby, along with an oil lamp (a divo), and a silver fire-urn burning fragrant sandalwood, frankincense and myrrh. The four-part ceremony then begins, recited in the ancient Avesta and Pazend languages.

### PATET – PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

The officiating priest places the sudreh in Amy's hand and recites the Patet or prayer of atonement for past bad thoughts, words and deeds, a prerequisite for ensuring spiritual awakening and commitment.

## DIN NO KALMO – DECLARATION OF FAITH

The priest and Amy then rise, and together recite the Din no Kalmo – the Declaration of Faith in the noble religion of Zarathushtra.

## HORMAZD KHODAE – THE INVESTMENT

The priest invests Amy with the sudreh while both recite the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer. The priest then performs the kushti ritual with the child while reciting the Hormazd Khodae prayer which starts by vehemently denouncing all evil and all bad thoughts, words and deeds. The kushti is tied three times around Amy's waist, a constant reminder of the three-fold pledge of Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshtha (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds) on which the whole moral structure of the religion rests. For one's salvation, one has to look to one's own purity of thought, word and deed. The knots in the kushti are made at the word "shyaothnanam" (or "working hard") suggesting that the initiate henceforth is responsible for working diligently to realize the divinity within her own self and without, and partner with God to ultimately bring about Frashokereti – the final resurrection, with her virtuous actions.

## JASA ME AVANGHE MAZDA - ARTICLES OF FAITH

The initiation culminates with Amy declaring her unswerving faith and choice in the Good Religion:

"I pledge myself to professing the faith  
I pledge myself to the well-conceived thought  
I pledge myself to the well-spoken word  
I pledge myself to the well-performed deed ...  
To Ahura Mazda I ascribe all Good."

– Yasna 12.8-9

## DOA TANDAROSTI – THE BENEDICTION

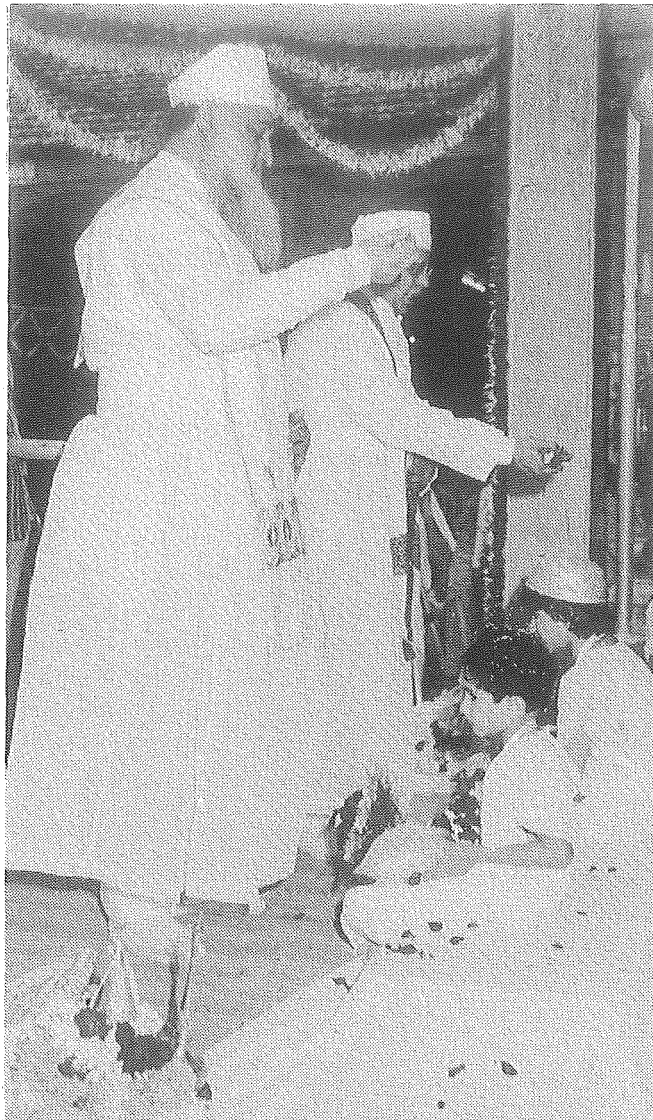
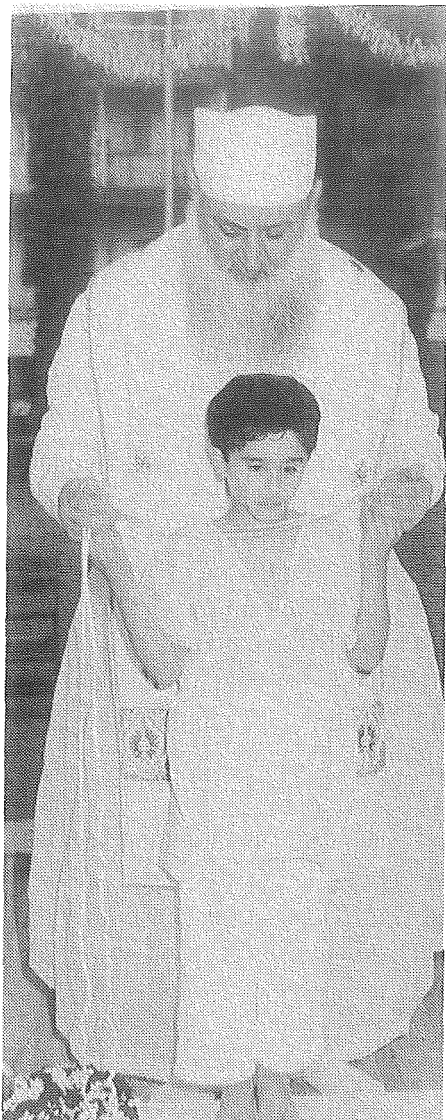
The initiation now over, the priest recites the Tandarosti (benediction) while showering her with rose petals, pomegranate seeds and rice, all symbols of good luck, prosperity and plenty.

"May Ahura Mazda bestow upon you thousands of blessings. May He bestow long life, joy and good health upon you, and upon the whole community. May you live long to perform righteous deeds. May health, virtue and goodness be your share ... May all your good wishes be fulfilled like those of the immortal angels ... Amen!"

## RECEPTION

Amy is now dressed in her new Navjote Dress, friends and family come up to offer good wishes, and the dining, dancing and festivities begin.





Far left, Dastoorji Kotwal, performing the navjote ceremony of a young boy in Mumbai.

Left, the two 'navjote children' sitting on the 'patla' being showered with rice and rose petals by the priests during the Tandarosti blessings that conclude the navjote ceremony.

You may wish to give arriving guests (men only) a *boutonniere* or a single rose or carnation.

*Rose petals* for the Tandarosti tray.

*Flower petals* for the basket "ball" that is opened with a pull chord to shower petals on the child after the ceremony. Make the ball with two cane bowl-shaped baskets, hinged at one point, filled with petals, with a string attached to both halves. Hang it from the stage ceiling.

Indian florists in some large cities, may be able to supply flower decorations at a reasonable cost. Or you may wish to buy flowers wholesale, and "do-it-yourself" with family and friends. In the Chicago area, an excellent source for wholesale flowers is: *Phillips Flowerpak, Westmont, IL, tel: (630) 719-5129*.

● **Rentals.** You may have to arrange for rentals of tables, chairs, china, flatware, glasses, tablecloths, napkins and other items.

● **Catering.** A traditional navjote banquet may include:

*Rotli* (flat bread), *saria* (fried wafers), *wafers* (crisp potato chips).

*Lagan-nu-achar* (dried fruit pickle).

*Fish:* *tareli machi* (fried), *patra ni machi* (chutneyed in plantain leaves) or *machi no sas* (in Parsi sauce). Catfish is a good substitute for the fresh pomfrets used in India.

*Chicken:* *sali ma murghi* (with potato straws), *moghlay murghi* (in spicy red gravy), or *murghi na farcha* (fried with spicy coating).

*Meat:* *kid gos* (tender baby lamb in a white sauce), *sali-boti* (with apricots and potato straws), or *gravy na cutlets* (cutlets in tomato gravy)

*Vegetable:* *Estew* (sweet and spicy Parsi vegetable stew).

*Eggs:* *Kada kothmir per eeda* (eggs cooked till just set, on fried onions, tomatoes and fresh coriander).

*Pullav rice* (with spicy meat, fragrant with saffron) and *dal*.

*Parsi custard, murambo* (melon preserves) and *kulfi* (mango or pistachio icecream) are served for dessert.

While the festive aura and traditions of a Parsi banquet, with its jocular servers in white, dishing out lavish quantities of delicious foods, from huge 3-foot wide platters onto plantain-leaf plates, as they make their

way down the long banquet tables, cannot quite be replicated in the West, there are Parsi caterers in some cities, and most have Indian restaurants that will sometimes follow Parsi recipes. Some excellent books on Parsi banquet recipes are available [see Sources].

● **Mithai gifts.** You may wish to send a gift of *mithai* (sweets) to close relatives and friends, and those who cannot be at the navjote [see Sources].

### THE DAY BEFORE

● Prepare the **Nahan** tray with items for the nahan (ritual bath): a small silver glass or goblet for the consecrated *nirang* or pomegranate juice; a *phoolyu* (small silver bowl) with a little milk and rose petals; new *towel*, new *underwear*, *ijar* (pants), *topi* (cap), *sapat* (slippers) and *shawl*. This will be taken to the place of the nahan.

*Below, silver sés tray, with the golabas, pigani, pado, and other items; gifts of mithai (badam-ni-machhi); and the Achoo-michoo tray, ready with all the necessary items for welcoming the navjote party to the stage.*

*Next page, the 'navjote boy' dressed in a traditional white dagli and white pants, and the 'navjote girl' in a pretty pastel dress, posing for a family photo after the ceremony.*

● Prepare the silver *sés* tray with the following items. Most items are available at a local Indian grocery, or order from The Zoroastrian Shop [see Sources] or from India.

*Conical silver pado*, filled with sugar sweets, festooned with a small garland of flowers.

*Silver golabas* (or *golab-dani*) filled with rose water.

*Silver pigani*, filled with red kunkun powder paste, for making the *tili* (red mark on the forehead).

A whole *coconut*, adorned with a large *tili* for good luck.

A *pan* (betel leaf), a *sopari* (betel nut), a *kharak* (dried date), a whole *almond* with shell, a piece of whole *turmeric*, a small bowl of sweet yogurt, a few pieces of *sakar* (large sugar crystals), and a handful of *rice*. A silver coin, to be later placed in the 'divo'.

*Cash envelopes* for presentation to the officiating mobeds.

The child's *garland* and *bouquet*.

● **New clothes tray.** A large silver tray with the navjote *sudreh*, *kushti* and the new *clothes*, *shoes*, and *jewelry*, to be worn after the ceremony; and for a girl initiate, a *new sari* that she will wear in future when she wears a sari for the first time. This accompanies the *sés* tray.

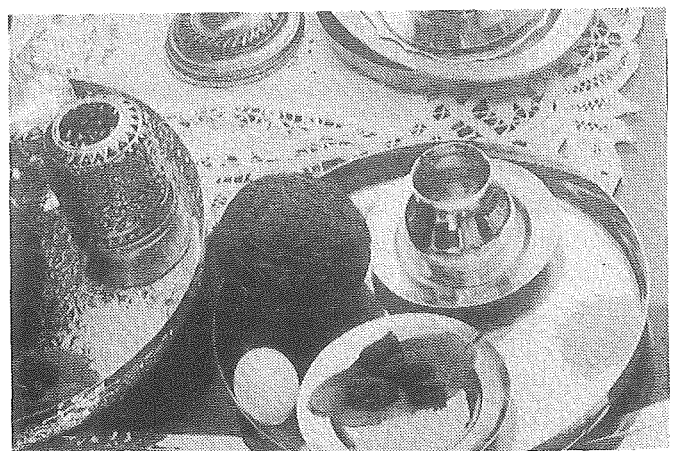
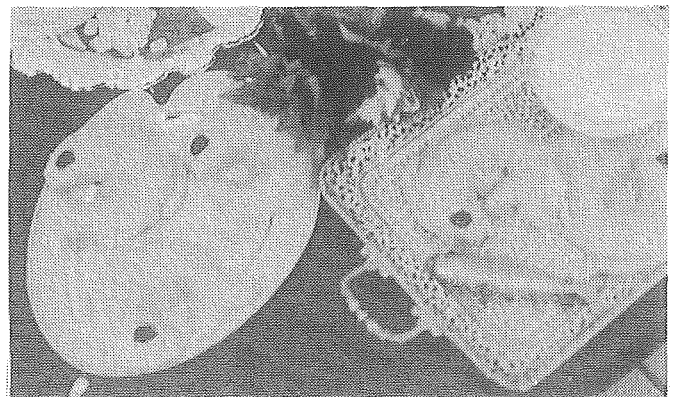
● **Boutonniere Tray.** Arrange the boutonnières or single carnations or roses on a silver tray. Place a *gulab-dani* filled with rose-water on the tray.

● A **divo** (oil lamp) for the stage, and a divo for the home.

● Prepare an **Achoo-michoo** tray, for welcoming the child to the stage, with the following items:

1 egg,

A whole coconut with a *tili*.



A small silver plate with 1 *pan*, 1 *sopari*, 1 *kharak* and a handful of rice.

A small *karasia* (glass) of water.

- **Receiving tray.** An empty silver thali (tray) for receiving the Achoo-michoo items.

- **An afarganyu tray,** with an *afarganyu* (fire-vase), *sukhar* (sandalwood) *lobban* (frankincense) and *cheepio-chamach* (silver utensils for the afargan). This will be placed on the stage.

- A silver Tandarosti tray, filled with rose petals, a handful of rice, a few pomegranate seeds and a few flakes of dried coconut. This will be placed on the stage for use during the Tandarosti (benedictions).

- The *patlo* and a white sheet for the stage.

- A bag for the gifts and cash gift packets.

**AT THE HALL,** you will need to allow a full day for the following items. Line up family and friends to help.

- Set up tables and chairs. Set the tables with tablecloths, china, etc. Set the buffet tables and bar tables.

- Decorate the hall as planned.

- Set up the stage. Place the *patlo* on the carpeted stage floor and spread a white sheet over it. Place a small table with a lace cloth at one side for the *sés* and other trays. Decorate the stage as planned. Hang the basket ball of flower petals by a string, over the *patlo*.

- Make the flower arrangements, garlands, bouquets and torans.

- Decorate the front entrance and other doorways with chalk designs.

### THE DAY OF THE NAVJOTE

- Wake up early.

- Play happy music through the house.

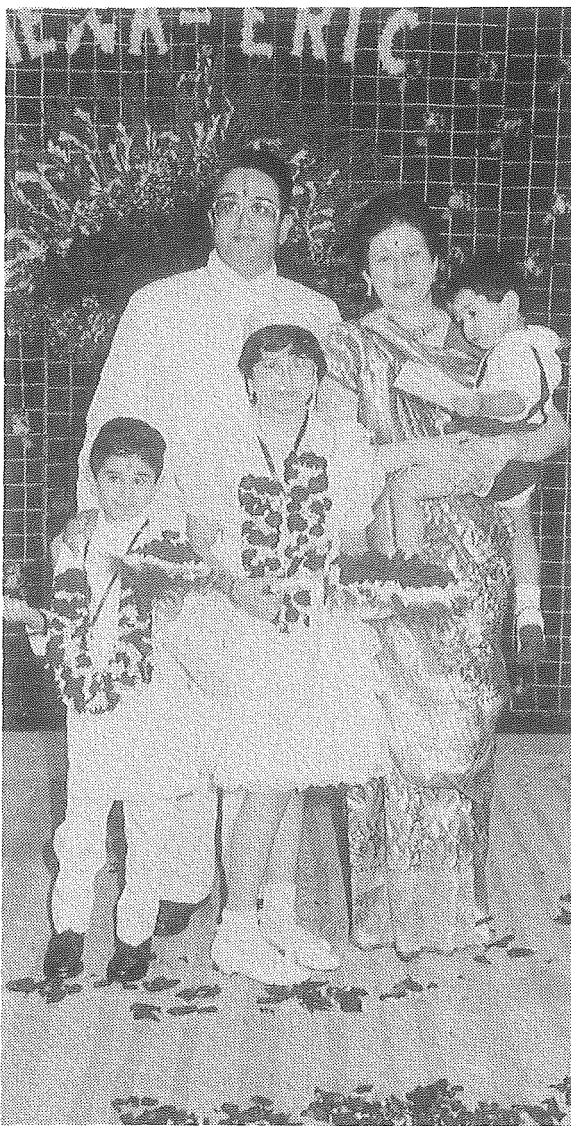
- Hang flower *torans* at the doors.

- Decorate the front entrance and other doorways with chalk designs.

- Decorate the car with flowers or balloons.

- Light a *divo* (usually in the kitchen).

- Have a breakfast of *sev* (sautéed vermicelli) and *dahi* (yogurt) or *ravo* (cream of wheat) and *mithai* (sweets).



- Drive to the hall with all the laden silver trays.

- Remember to enter any area or steps always with the right foot first, for good luck!

- Place the *Achoo-michoo* tray and the receiving tray by the stage steps; the *Afarganyu* tray on the stage floor by the mobeds, along with a lighted

*divo*; the Tandarosti tray on the stage table.

- **Greeting guests.** Close relatives will stand by the entrance to greet arriving guests. Two or three young ladies will stand at the door with the tray of boutonnières, and hand one to each male guest, after sprinkling with rose-water.

Two or three young men may be assigned as ushers, to show guests to their seats.

- **The nahan.** Meanwhile, the child accompanied by the mother and other close female relatives will go for the nahan. The mobed will lead the child in the nahan prayers and will then offer the child a sip of the consecrated drink. The child will then go for a bath, accompanied by his or her mother. Before the bath, the mother will sprinkle the milk and rose petals on the child.

The child is now dressed in the *ijar*, *topi*, and *sapat* and has the shawl over the shoulders.

- **Festive Gujarati Songs.** 7-9 ladies start singing the festive gujarati songs, along with the tape [see Sources] standing by the stage or leading the procession. Guests are encouraged to join in.

- **The procession.** The mother or grandmother first walks to the stage steps, ready to welcome the child.

The mobeds follow next and take their places on the stage.

The officiating mobed then accompanies the child to the stage steps, followed close behind by women family members carrying the *sés* and the tray of new clothes.

- **Achoo-michoo ceremony.** At the stage steps, the grandmother welcomes the child with the *Achoo-michoo*. She circles the egg seven times over the heads of the party, and breaks it into the receiving tray to their right. The same is repeated with *pan*, *sopari*, *kharak* and rice together; and again with the coconut.





After the navjote, guests are treated to a sumptuous feast of Parsi foods, served on banana leaves.

An attempt is made to break the coconut into the receiving tray if possible. Finally, pour a little water into a small silver plate, add a few grains of rice, and after circling it seven times, pour a little water, first on their right, and then on their left side. A handful of rice is then showered on the group.

(These items, along with the bouquets, coconuts, and other fresh items from the *sés* are returned to nature by strewing them in the back yard, or throwing them in the ocean.)

The child and mobed now enter the stage, stepping in with their right foot first, of course, and the ladies take their seats among the guests.

● **The initiation.** The child sits on the patlo and the initiation begins [see page 22].

● **After the ceremony.** After the *Tandarosti* benedictions are done, the mobed makes a *tili* on the child's forehead, and presents the child with garland, bouquet and coconut from the *sés* tray.

An elder family member presents cash packets and a bouquet or single rose to each mobed.

Women family members come to the stage and help dress the child in the new clothes and jewelry.

Close family members stay on the stage while guests come up one by one to congratulate the child and give

their gift packets. There is a lot of hugging and kissing all round.

Music, dinner and dancing follow, where the whole assembly joins in. And a good time is had by all. ■

### GLOSSARY

Achar Pickles

Achoo-michoo  
Welcome ritual

Badam-ni-machi  
Marzipan fish

chalk Designs made on the floor with white and colored chalk powder in a tin stencil

dagli White Parsi coat

divo Oil lamp

golabas (or golab-dani) Silver vase for rose-water, in the *sés* tray

ijar Trousers with embroidered borders

kharak Dried date

kunkun Red powder paste for 'tili'

kushti Ritual girdle of lambs wool

lobban Frankincense / myrrh

mithai Sweets, candies

nahan Ritual, purificatory bath

pado Silver cone-shaped item in the *sés* tray, for sweets

paan Fresh leaf from betel tree

patlo Low flat wooden stool

pigani Silver goblet for kunkun

ravo Pudding of milk and cream of wheat

sapat Slippers of velvet or leather

sés Silver ceremonial tray with ritual items, central to Parsi celebrations of birthdays, navjotes, weddings and other happy occasions.

sev Sautéed sweet vermicelli

sopari Betel nut

sudreh White ritual garment

tili Red dot on forehead for good luck

topi Cap

toran Flower garland for door ways

### SOURCES

The following are gratefully acknowledged for providing source material for this compilation on navjote traditions and customs, and are highly recommended as reference material.

**Books on navjote and other Parsi customs and ceremonies**

*THE RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMS OF THE PARSEES*  
By Ervad Shams ul Ulama Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, hardcover, 500 pp, reprint 1986, Rs. 45 plus shipping. Published by Society for Promotion of Zoroastrian Religious Knowledge, Noble Chambers 'B', 4th floor, Parsee Bazaar Street, Fort, Bombay 400 001.



An exhaustive and authoritative volume by the illustrious priest and scholar, on ceremonies and customs of birth, navjote, wedding and funerals, as well as other inner and outer liturgical services.

**PARSI WEDDING, NAVJOTE & OTHER TRADITIONS**

By Roshan Bharucha, soft-cover, 40 pp. 1996, \$8, available from Mrs. Bharucha, 179 Wentworth Lane, Rosemont, PA 19010.

A concise and easy-to-follow compilation of customs and traditions, both oral and written, pertaining to the navjote, engagement and wedding ceremonies, written especially for Zarathushtis settled in the West.

**PARSI FOOD AND CUSTOMS**

By Bhicoo J. Manekshaw, softcover, 430 pp., 1996.

A veritable treasure-house of Parsi recipes, along with excellent descriptions of traditional Parsi customs, rituals and ceremonies.

**PARSI CUSTOMS FOR THE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION OF MARRIAGE**

By Perin Naval Hormusji, 50 pp, in Gujarati, Rs. 10 plus shipping. Published by the FKS Foundation, 808 Boman Lodge, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, Bombay 400 014.

A detailed planning guide for weddings, navjotes and other Parsi ceremonies.

**Zarathushti Supplies**

**THE ZOROASTRIAN SHOP**

Mrs. Khursheed Bapasola, 7 Fox Hollow Road, Voorhees, New Jersey 08043, Tel: (609) 768-8351.

An excellent source for Zoroastrian supplies, including ready-made sudrehs, kushtis, topis, sapats, prayer books, sukhad, lobban, navjote prayer books, children's religious instruction books, silver ses, divo and more.

**DARBE MEHRS** in the major cities may also be a source of sukhad, lobban, sudrehs and kushtis.

**MRS. COOMI BHATENA**, 220 Oak Street, #2517, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5A 2E1 tel: (416) 863-

6615 makes custom-made sudrehs, daglis and other tailored items.

**MRS. DHUNMAI DASTUR**, 1800 Kensington Drive, Apt. B1, Waukesha, WI 53188, tel: (414) 574-7791 makes custom-made sudrehs and other tailored items.

**Parsi mithai and achars**

**BADAM-NI-MACHI.** Roshan Rivetna, 5750 South Jackson Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521, tel: (630) 325-5383, makes traditional Parsi badam-na-penda (\$10 per pound) and badam-ni-machi (\$6 each).

**HILLA'S CATERING.** Hilla Munshi, 7827 Botany Street, Downey, CA 90240, Tel: (310) 927-7714, caters for functions and takes mail orders for Parsi foods.

**KAISER FOODS USA.** Kairasp Rusi Lashkari, 11909 Beechnut, Houston 77072, tel: (713) 561-0500, makes suterfeni, kopra-pak, badam-pak, aghani-na-ladva, batasa and more.

**MEHROO GODIWALLA**, 18495 Gate Post Road, Brookfield, WI 53045, tel: (414) 797-9221, makes vasanoo, badam-pak, fruitcake, dar-ni-pori and more.

**JASAVALA & SONS**, 1365 Midway Boulevard, Unit 44, Mississauga, ONT L5T 2J5, tel: (905) 670-5278, sell badam-pak, dar-ni-pori, vasanu, and other Parsi foods, from their shop in Toronto. They will ship.

**Religious education and prayer books/cassettes for the navjote child**

**KHORDEH AVESTA**

Recited by Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary, compiled by Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi, distributed by the Kankash-e-Mobedan, Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America, P.O. Box 22911, San Diego, CA 92192, tel: (714) 348-2735.

Set of three audio cassettes of Kushti prayers, Gahs, Niayeshes and Yashts, with recitations in Avesta and translations in Farsi and English. The Kankash has also produced numerous other books and tapes for children's religious education.

**DARBE MEHRS** in the major cities can provide audio-tapes of daily prayers for the navjote child.

**CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MATERIALS**, compiled by Roshan Rivetna, *FEZANA Journal*, February 1993.

This compilation showcases educational books, audio cassettes and other materials commonly used in religious education classes in USA and Canada.

**MY SIMPLE BOOK OF ZOROASTRIANISM**, by Lorraine Moos, 1996, 65 pp, color, \$10. Available from Lorraine Moos (330) 665-1196.

An attractive, glossy volume, with full-color pictures, the book covers the life of Zarathushtra, his teachings, and an excellent compilation of daily prayers with translations.

**IT'S NAVJOTE TIME**

**SONGS AND PRAYERS**

By Zoroastrian Studies, 136 Mumbai Samachar Marg, Mumbai 400 023.

Audio cassette with commentary on the navjote, prayers with meanings, and songs for children.

**NAVZOTE MASTER**

By Meher Dadabhoy Amalsad 15842 Villanova Circle, Westminster, California, 92683.

Set of two audio-cassettes of selected Avesta prayers with meanings.

**Navjote and Wedding songs**

**KHUSHALI NA GEET NE GARBA**

By Zoroastrian Studies (with Shehnaz Munshi), 136 Mumbai Samachar Marg, Mumbai 400 023.

Excellent collection of Gujarati songs for festive occasions. Comes with a booklet of words and translations in English. Most suitable for playing or singing-along at navjotes and weddings.

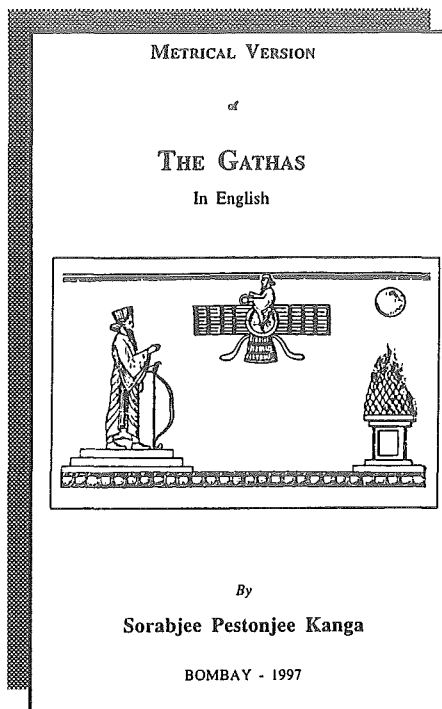
**PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Navjote photos are gratefully acknowledged from: Rohena and Eric Elavia, Adil and Farhad Minocherhomjee, Cyrus and Jamshed Rivetna and Farzin Shahryary.

# METRICAL VERSION OF THE GATHAS (In English)

By Sorabjee Pestonjee Kanga  
120 pp, Bombay, first published 1934,  
reprinted 1997 by Cusrow Nariman  
Minocherhomji, C-43 Cusrow Baug,  
Colaba Causeway, Mumbai 400 039.  
For free distribution only.

**A**mong the myriad books on the Gathas which have been published in recent years, this book is truly unique. Written in English as poems, each verse is based on the poetic Gujarati translations of the Gathas by Kavasji Kanga. The author admits in the preface on using the gist of a stanza to freely mould it in poetry and also omitting some of the stanzas altogether. Thus the reader should use caution in interpreting this work as the 'original' message of our prophet Zarathushtra, because it cannot be regarded as a literal translation of the Gathas.



The book opens with an insightful Introduction to the Study of the Gathas by Dinshaw J. Irani, a prominent Gathic scholar and author of a Gatha translation.

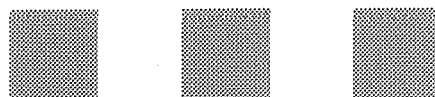
The poetic style of the verses which follow are a reminiscence of some nineteenth century British poets which are familiar to many a Parsi. The flow and pace is ideal for reading aloud in a study group or in a social gathering.

The verses could well be used as hymns and chanted by participants at a prayer meeting. The following gives a flavor of the style and didactics that the reader can anticipate:

O God, for help I turn to none but Thee  
Thou art my sole protector and my guide  
For my obedience Thou defendest me  
To stick to perfect truth I've always tried  
And falsehood's evil bait I have defied  
Continue Thy support to me and mine  
We rest secure on Thee, in Thee confide.  
With joy we bow to Thy commands divine  
We faithfully serve to win Thy grace benign.

Yasna 50.1

- Review by Rashna Ghadialy



## THE JOURNAL OF THE RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Volume II, 1996

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND NORTH AMERICAN GATHA CONFERENCE HOUSTON, TEXAS 1996

Edited by:  
Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw  
and  
Pallan R. Ichaporia



FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN  
ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND NORTH AMERICAN GATHA CONFERENCE

*Edited by Sarosh Manekshaw  
and Pallan R. Ichaporia*

*Published by FEZANA as the Journal of the Research and Historical Preservation Committee, Volume II, 1996, 300 pp, \$15 (US), \$20 (Cd). ISBN 1-883345-02-2.*

*Order from: S. Manekshaw, 11415  
Overbrook Lane, Houston, TX  
77077, tel: (281) 870-9317.*

This second issue of the Research Journal is at once a joy and a wonder. A joy to behold the scholarship represented by the topics presented here, and a wonder to experience the vastness and richness of the Gathas, their various facets and their divine intellects.

The Journal is a collection of papers presented at the Second North American Gatha Conference, in Houston, in August 1996. Compact, yet comprehensive, this volume presents the reader with a feast of topics from the scholarly to the pragmatic.

If there is a forum to enhance scholarship of individuals in North America on matters Zarathushti, then this is it. When budding novices are juxtaposed alongside stalwarts, one learns quickly by the sheer weight of the master's presence.

The Psychology of the Gathas is explored by Ardeshir Anoshiravani who observes that the Freudian models of human psyche are to a certain extent consistent with the psychology of the Gathas. The idea of 'operant conditioning' – the positive value of righteous thoughts, words and actions was expressed in the Gathas long before it was promoted

by B. F. Skinner, founder of modern behaviorism. The often confusing aspects of Dualism and the twin mentalities are very eloquently clarified by Jehan Bagli. He explains ethical conduct, the common source of the twin mentalities, the terms 'gaemcha' and 'ajyatimcha', 'life' and 'after-life', and then gives the probably transformations that the concept has undergone.

Keki Bhote's paper gives a succinct presentation of the principles of Zoroastrianism as highlighted in the Gathas, followed by a review of the enormous influence of the Gathic vision on the cradle of civilization – Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, India and China, how Gathic ideas found their way into Judaism and Christianity. This makes an excellent reference for a college paper. James Boyd and Ron Williams delve into the value of rituals which although not directly related to the study of the Gathas, has a profound impact on their understanding. They defend ritual as a profoundly ethical deed, as something which significantly contributes to the practitioner's moral growth.

Dolly Dastoor's "Gathas: Do they Unite or Divide Us?" discusses the eternal juxtaposition of orthodox and liberal views. She develops three steps in the syncretization of the religious texts and discusses Farrokh Mistree's case for two models of development for the community. She closes with a plea to set up a task force "to study the various ceremonies, rituals and practices against the backdrop of the Gathas and collectively agree on their relevance and applicability in changing times." Kaemarz Dotiwala looks to the Law of Asha as the key to enlightened leadership, and visualizes its impact on religion and politics, justice, church and state, and leadership.

The title of Richard Frye's presentation "Zoroaster and the Horse" belies the uncanny insights he provides into the era and the homeland of Zarathushtra and the Gathas. This

paper is essential pre-reading for a study of the Gathas. Helmut Humbach's talk on Jamsheed is as one would expect a masterful treatise on Yima as the first human being in whom good and evil, life and death, came into conflict.

The vision of Zarathushtra as an innovator and reformer, by Pallan Ichaporia asks the question whether Zarathushtra's vision will continue to influence religious thought in the next millennium, and answers with a definite "Yes". A classic rendition of Zarathushtra's teachings, Gathic Rituals and the Vision of Zarathushtra is all presented in a wonderfully interesting manner – a perfect compendium to the understanding of the Gathas. Prof. K. D. Irani's Gathic Vision comes to the reader in his usual lucid style: the fusion of a View of the World and a Way of Life. Prof. Irani examines the two forms of religious vision: pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment, by contrasting them in two areas – the content of religious vision, i.e. its theology, and the mode of its acceptance. A very insightful discussion, indeed.

Khorshed Jungalwala presents a methodology for the study of the Gathas as developed by the Gatha Group in Boston. Their approach is to study diverse translations and interpretations and reach a consensus on the group's interpretation. The Boston group has provided the lead in presenting an innovative Gatha study format that we can all benefit from. Jean Kellens "The Written Period of Transmission of the Avesta" discusses the problem of transmission; the long trail back from the copyists to the authors and composers as far back as 1200 BC. A very scholarly treatise, accurately documented.

Dastur Firoze Kotwal begins his presentation on "Ritual Aspects of the Gathas and their Continuity in the Later Tradition" with an invocation from Ys. 30.1, which reflects ritual insight and brings to the fore the fact that Gathas are intrinsic to the ritual

dimension of the faith. Dastur Kotwal links references in the Gathas to show that praise and worship are quintessential to the faith and the performance of rituals. He further develops the role and importance of the Yazata Sraosh, as reflected in the ritual aspects of the after-life doctrine and indicates how various Gathic verses have been used within a ritual framework. He ends with an exhortation to North Americans: "if Zoroastrianism is to flourish in North America, then it is the next millennium of ritual observances which will sustain the faith."

William Malandra focuses on the generally accepted dogma that the Gathas are archaic and some of the problems the dogma brings with it in terms of historical placement of the Gathas and the author. He examines the dialectology, the prosody and the theology of the Gathas, and concludes that the Gathas, despite their obscurity, say things with great lucidity, which have become the abiding basis for a world religion, and will sustain the religion well into the future. "The Talisman" by Dina McIntyre is a very detailed and well-researched study of the Ahuna Vairya, giving the reader a description of three of her own interpretations.

In "The Grandeur of the Gathas", Ervad Rooyintan Peshotan Peer postulates that it is incorrect to categorize present Avestan scriptures into Zarathushtrian (by Zarathushtra) and non-Zarathushtrian sections. The Gathas are an integral part of the entire Avesta scriptures and have a distinct role of their own. The second part of the presentation is a beautifully concise treatment of Divine aspects and concepts in the Gathas. Rohinton Rivetna's presentation, interspersed with charts and diagrams, developed ways in which the vision of the Gathas and Zarathushtra's vision of Frashokereti, of bringing about the renovation, could be projected into our modern-day thinking and circumstance, both internally (within our community)

and externally. James Russell provides some insights into the location of Airyanam Vaejah, the homeland of Zarathushtra. A mention of Zoroastrian religious terms in Turkish and Mongol Siberian religions was quite startling to me. With a masterful pen, Russell gives the reader real-life pictures of Zarathushtra's life and homeland re-visited.

Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi gives a chapter by chapter capsulization of the Ahunavaiti Gatha. He points out how the simple but very precise teachings contained therein help man decide between good and evil and give him a choice to seek communication and redemption from God. Prods O. Skjoervo acknowledges a feeling of frustration at how the Gathas have been treated in the 20th century. Western scholars, rather than adopting an objective, scientific methodology, have made themselves champions of a religion and its prophet. They are doing the job of Zoroastrian theologians, who in turn, have made themselves pseudo-scholars by invoking Western scholarship to support their theology. He proceeds to examine the literary merit of the Gathas, and their place within the greater Indo-European tradition.

Gernot Windfuhr examines the "Logic of the Holy Immortals in Zoroastrianism" The Amesha Spentas, are traditionally correlated with the seven material creations. He shows Zarathushtra as a powerful archaic philosopher, for whom Mazda and the Holy Immortals are very rational, but also very personal divine beings and powers. Kobad Zarolia presents a survey of lay persons in Toronto. The responses confirmed the thirst for knowledge and understanding of the Gathas. A most valuable suggestion was to produce a book of all the Gathas so that it becomes a prized possession of every Zarathushti. He made a plea to the scholars to "stop putting your energies towards translating the Gathas, and start putting it toward putting the Gathas within the reach of North



**Video Premiere of "PARADISE".** Above, Poulad Poulad, Shahriar, Alayar Dabestani, Shervin and Rostam Poulad at the brisk sale of videos following the premiere showing of the video PARADISE, at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Vancouver, on September 7. PARADISE, the renowned creation of Shahriar and Shervin Shahriari of Vancouver, was first presented at the Tenth North American Zoroastrian Congress in San Francisco in 1996, and subsequently in cities in Canada, USA and Pakistan. Numerous Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti media and individuals have praised PARADISE.

This educational experience which has been hailed as an audio-visual feast, depicts the message of Asho Zarathushtra and the triumph of Cyrus the Great in creating the glorious Persian Empire. This message of hope is now brought to your living room. The video has been sponsored by FEZANA with the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) 11 other Associations and several benevolent Zarathushtis.

The video is available from your local Association at \$15 US (payable to FEZANA) or \$20 Cdn (payable to ZSBC). For information contact Shahriar at (604) 684-6199. And do visit PARADISE website at:

<http://www.promotionalguide.com/tu>.

American Zarathushtis, by promoting their spiritual and philosophical values.

An event of the magnitude of the Gatha Conference does not just happen. It takes the commitment of a devoted few, and the support and assistance of many. A debt of gratitude is owed to Conference Chair Pallan Ichaporia and Co-chairs Sarosh Manekshaw and Kaemarz Dotiwala. It is very fortunate that this exceptional event is now memorialized in this keepsake volume.

- Review by Rohinton M. Rivetna



### Gathas Online

"The Gathas of Zarathushtra" translated by Mobed Firouz Azargoshasb is now available online at:

<http://www/promotionalguide.com/z>

Next to be placed on the Internet will be the much acclaimed series: *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, edited by Dina G. McIntyre, first published in 1989. Contact Shahriar Shahriari at <http://www.promotionalguide>.



# Avesta Scriptures on Disk

**E**rvad Kavasji Kanga and Dr. F. S. Chiniwala translated our scriptures into Gujarati. Unfortunately, many Zarathushtrians, especially the younger generation, and those residing in the West, are unable to read that language.

To further compound the issue, there are many translations of the Gathas, and they differ considerably in their meaning and often the intent. This is explained by the fact that Avesta, the language of our scriptures is not a spoken language, and its grammar is imperfectly known. Like in all scriptures, there are two schools of teaching religious knowledge. One for the masses and the other, being esoteric, for the adept who had been formally initiated into our religion. Thus common words like 'aspa' and 'ushtra' which directly translated mean 'horse' and 'camel', have an esoteric explanation of 'speedy energy' and 'extreme knowledge'.

It would be nice if there was one commonly accepted authenticated translation of our scriptures, but that seems to be nearly impossible to achieve due to lack of mutual acceptance among our scholars. Maybe the Grand Scriptures of Zarathushtra need more than one facet of understanding the deep philosophical ritual and scientific meaning hidden in them. Let us begin with the Gathas. There is a school of thought that this is the only true Zarathushtrian scripture given by Prophet Zarathushtra, and all other scriptures were written at a later date and were a distortion of the original message of Zarathushtra. I do NOT subscribe to this theory. To me, all our scriptural texts, in Gathic Avesta, younger Avesta and Pazand are equally important.

**The compilation.** Thus I resolved to collect as many of the translations of our scriptures as possible from English and Gujarati translations and present them in a combined encyclopedic format. The compilation is not

inclusive, because I am not able to translate from Farsi, French, Russian, Italian and German.

My compilation comprises of:

- Avesta Prayers transliterated into English.
- Various translations in alphabetical order.
- Comments by scholars about certain words and phrases, with occasional personal opinions.
- Occasional personal opinions from me.
- Esoteric explanation based on several scholarly writings of Dr. F. S. Chiniwala giving the *Ilm e Khshnoom* interpretation of our scriptures. These texts, written in Persianized Gujarati are difficult to comprehend, yet they are essential to understand the deep, meaningful concepts in our scriptures, which translated on philological basis, appear often childish, meaningless or not relevant. But if the esoteric meaning is explained, then the true and rich beauty of our scriptures shines through.

**IBM Diskettes Available.** The scriptures are currently available on IBM computer diskettes of 3.5 HD format, using Microsoft Word, Version 6.0.

- *Gathas.* Over 1,000 pages of transliteration of the Avesta prayer, 19 translations, comprehensive notes and esoteric explanations (*Ilm-e-Khshnoom*). These are the basic king pins of our religious philosophy, ethics and way to salvation. (4 diskettes, US \$15).
- *Yasna.* Over 1,000 pages of transliteration of the Avesta prayer, translations, comprehensive notes and esoteric explanation. Yasna is the detailed prayer dealing with a very deep and meaningful ceremony which lasts for several hours. (Six diskettes, US \$25).
- *Vendidad.* Over 1,000 pages of transliteration of the Avesta prayer,

translations, comprehensive notes and esoteric explanation. The most maligned of our scriptures – I suggest that people read it in full light of modern knowledge of ecology and see how much sense this ancient scripture makes. (5 diskettes, US\$20).

- *Yashts.* Over 1,500 pages of transliteration of Avesta prayers, translations, comprehensive notes and esoteric explanation. The Yashts are truly historical in the sense that they give us an understanding of what Iranian history was before the advent of Asho Zarathushtra. Although they deal with various Yazatas, they give us a good idea of historical personages, later mentioned in the Shahnama and geographical places. (5 diskettes, US \$20).

- The author's *Ph.D. thesis* on Haoma Yazata with extensive comparison with Vedic Soma and the Greco-Egyptian god Toth. Attached as an extra is a detailed set of notes of Avestan terms of over 157 pages as explained by Dr. Chiniwala with *Ilm e Khshnoom* explanations. (2 diskettes, US\$20).

- *Avesta Dictionary.* 2 diskettes of Avesta –English, and 1 diskette of English–Avesta. Produced in Lotus 1-2-3 and Excel. (US\$15).

**An appeal.** It is my wish that these 23 diskettes be placed on a CD-ROM, and made available to all major Universities as well as to Zarathushtis. This would also allow me to use graphics and sound. The technology is available in Australia, but I need the finance to achieve this goal. The cost of preparing the CD-ROM is US\$5000 to \$7000. An appeal is hereby made to philanthropic Zarathushtis to bring this goal to fruition.

Alternatively the diskettes could be placed on the Internet, with easy access by all. As I am not familiar with Internet languages like Java or HTML, it would need a young, energetic Zarathushti to do some hard work to place it on the Internet. The

diskettes remain the intellectual property of the author, but the work may be freely copied and used for study purposes, with due acknowledgement.

**Ordering Information.** The whole set is available for US\$100, including packing and air-mail postage. Please send US or Sterling currency (bank notes) only, by Registered Post. Please do not send private checks, International MO's or bank drafts.

Dr. Purviz Dinyar Kolsawalla  
16 Tenison Avenue, Cambridge Park  
NSW 2747, Australia  
Tel: 047-30-1113

### Source for Zarathushti Books

Zarathushti religious and history books and audio cassettes can be ordered from Marzban Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667 Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014, tel: 416-6204.

New audio cassettes available from him include:

● Zoroastrian Folk Songs (Persian), a set of 2 cassettes (Rs. 150 plus shipping).

● Audio cassettes of Zoroastrian Prayers, songs and religious discourses in English and Gujarati.

### New Iranian Magazine

M. Ziafat of Iran has created a magazine, *Vahuman*, that covers the culture of Zarathushtis and ancient Iran. He plans to make this a bilingual (Farsi and English) monthly magazine. To subscribe, contact: M. Ziafat, "gisha" Postal Box 449, Tehran 14475, Iran.

### Directory of Zarathushtis in Pakistan

An updated Directory of Zarathushtis in Pakistan is now available, and can be ordered for Rs. 150 (plus shipping) from Hutoxy Cowasjee, Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal, Sohrab Katrak Park Parsi Colony, Karachi 74400, Pakistan.

## NAOROJI: THE FIRST ASIAN M.P.

By Omar Ralph  
(Hansib, 1997)

In writing this book so conscientiously, Omar Ralph has revived the memory of Dadabhai Naoroji, India's "Grand Old Man", once the mentor of Gokhale and Gandhi, since fallen in total oblivion, both in India and in Britain. One does not know whether its publication in 1997, the year of independent India's 50th anniversary, was by accident or design. That the book should appear now is a timely reminder to an unhistorical people of one of them, who a century and more ago, initiated that process of change from imperialism to independence; beginning with his demands for an honorable place for Indians in India's administration, then to Swaraj and Home Rule. Unfortunately, the historical memory of Indians at this time of celebration and introspection in 1997 does not go back beyond Nehru and Gandhi. Even the Congress party, the relic of the Indian National Congress 1885 to 1968, has forgotten Dadabhai Naoroji. The eyes of the Congress President and his friends are fixed fiendishly on the next opportunity for power; most unlike Dadabhai.

If, at first sight, this book seems to have been written from the English end of the telescope, with the title Naoroji (so many of them), and not Dadabhai (only one in public recollection); and with emphasis on "the first Asian MP" in Britain; it seems justified in so far as Dadabhai worked longer and harder there than here. The Grand Old Man of India was strangely a sojourner to India for most of his working life of 60 years. In today's language, he could almost be described as an NRI; earlier in trade, later in politics.

Ralph's book is more a political biography. References to his private life are incidental and in passing. Unlike Gandhi, Dadabhai's personal life has not come under close examination, beyond his roots. Neither Gandhi, nor

Dadabhai had a normal married life. Gandhi found his psycho-analyst in Eric Erikson, Dadabhai has yet to find his. Saints and heroes don't walk on clouds. They tread in mine fields, as have Mother Teresa and Diana recently.

Both in England and in India, Dadabhai's life seemed a public one. To that extent, there is a gap in his biography. But it would be too much to expect Ralph to be Erikson. Incidentally, both in India and in England, Dadabhai was indefatigable in forming and joining associations of all kinds, a trait which de Tocqueville found in Americans in the same century. Was Dadabhai all external man? Probably not. Though we don't know the internal.

The book has been meticulously researched. If only printer and publisher were as meticulous. Printing errors are irritatingly frequent. Ralph's style is workmanlike; perhaps a bit too close to a mass of details. One misses a wider canvas of Naoroji's times in both countries and the world then. And one would like to see clearer contours and colors in a long life in two contrasting and similar societies.

Works on Gandhi have produced two great films, Attenborough's *Gandhi*, and Shyam Benegal's *The Making of the Mahatma*. A film maker on Naoroji would have to exercise a lot of imagination to make him rise above blue books, statistics, and election campaigns. Surendranath Banerji, Ralph relates, once said: Dadabhai was "buried in blue books", solid bureaucratic beef. Ralph has assiduously documented Naoroji's political life, with seven appendices on population data, administration, Hansard debates on India, petitions on India, membership of Parliamentary committees, functions attended by Dadabhai, etc.

It should be a good source material for future historians. The author, like his subject, shares meticulous dedication to the task. In a quote from Narayan Chandavarkar, Dadabhai was "the prophet's religion personified". Ralph conveys he turned down a knighthood, probably the first offered to an Indian.

In the light of India's pre-occupation with poverty, famine, and development in the past century, the author might have packed more punch if Dadabhai's Economic Drain theory of imperial India, and the thrust of his 700 page "Indian Poverty and un-British Rule" could have received a cogent chapter, the relevant references to succeeding history, in what is largely a chronological account. That would also have been more deserving of Dadabhai Naoroji as a one-man Planning Commission and Auditor-General of his time, working from a small room in a far country, and with no public funds.

“ This one man of humble, poor origins, achieved so much in his time against an imperial power, with nothing more than strength of character. ”

His two major themes over a century ago, that India's economic problems lay in a lack of purchasing power (caused by the "bleeding drain" of resources), not a food shortage; and in the government's policy of draining resources from the people for the exchequer to meet imperial ambitions, (read budget deficits and capital flight post 1970), have the same fundamental relevance in independent India. The chapter on "Dying to figure it out" called for an economist. After all, this was Dadabhai's most unique claim to fame, not a back-bench seat in the House of Commons, despite its PR value.

It is worth comparing the almost religious ('vohumanic') devotion of Dadabhai to the cause of Indian poverty in imperial India, with Indira Gandhi's populist and hollow "garibi hatao". The chapter on "A bribe, a bribe, my kingdom for a bribe" of his days with Madhavrao Gaekwad of Baroda rings even louder and more extensively in the scam-ridden state socialism of independent India.

Two nagging questions remain in Dadabhai's public life, not confronted in this book. First, why did he choose to function politically in England far more than in India? Perhaps he saw the root of power in the British Parliament, and in an authoritative Royal Commission on Indian affairs; and because of his deep faith in the sense of justice and fairness of the British people in their home society, than in imperial India.

This led to the second question. Why did he have such lasting faith in English "character, conscience, and sense of duty" in a game like politics; despite decades of frustrations and a deteriorating, violent British-Indian relationship?

Perhaps the answers lie in two places. First, Naoroji was not a true politician. He was a moral crusader who chose the crustacean bed of politics, and he knew nothing of Gandhi's political use of symbolism; and he was the first, pioneering student of Indian economics. The second reason lay with his being "the Prophet's religion personified", a relentless pursuer of righteousness in every cause. He trod that mine-field heroically and with dignity.

Yet, this one man of humble, poor origins, achieved so much in his time against an imperial power, with nothing more than strength of character. He became the father of the idea of Indianization of the Indian administration; the father of India's study and efforts to alleviate its core problem, poverty; and the father of 'Swaraj'. This triple fatherhood by a lone, distant crusader was no mean achievement in his time. Omar Ralph wants to convey this. His book is an opportunity for us to re-educate ourselves on this forgotten "Grand Old Man of India". And for that we should be thankful for his pains in writing this book, and dedicating it appropriately to his Parsi mother, who would have been proud of son and book. ■

-Review by Aspy D. Moddie



## THE DEATH OF AHRIMAN: CULTURE, IDENTITY AND THEOLOGICAL CHANGE AMONG THE PARSIS OF INDIA

By Susan Maneck

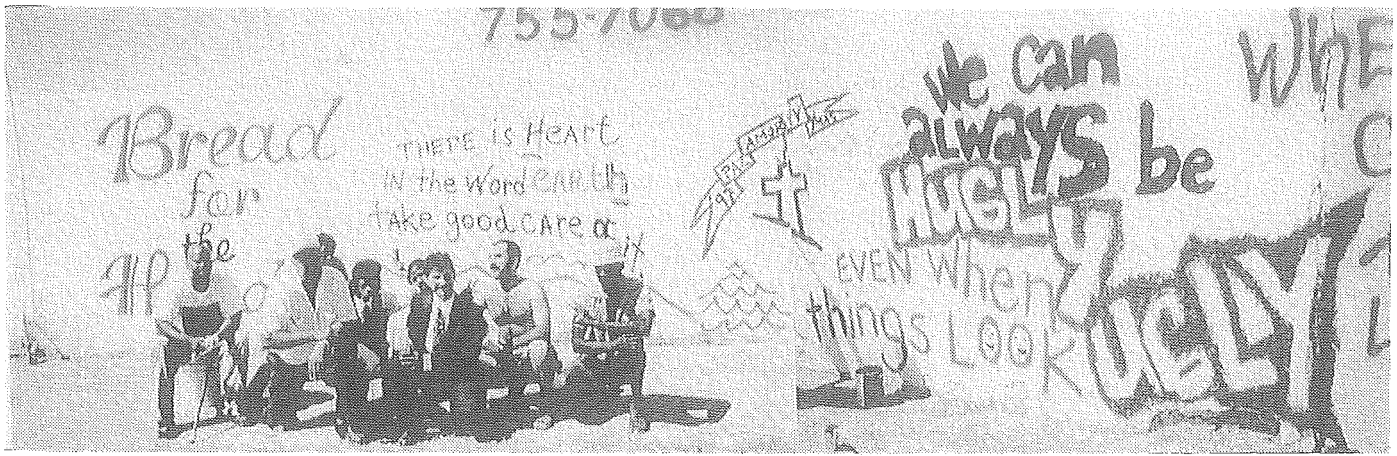
Published by K. R. Cama Oriental  
Institute, 136 Bombay Samachar  
Marg, Mumbai, 400 023  
450 pages, 1997

Susan Maneck's dissertation examines the history of the Parsi community from their arrival in India until the middle of the nineteenth century, giving special emphasis to the impact that other religious and social systems existing in India had on the formation of Parsi identity and also to the continuing influence of communication with co-religionists remaining in Iran.

This study argues that Indian Zarathushtis, in attempting to formulate their identity in terms of the religious communities which surrounded them, have completely transformed those things that have generally been regarded as their religion's distinguishing features. The impact of modernity continued the transformation already in process.

Hindus primarily affected Parsi practices and social systems. Like Hindu castes, Parsis refused to interdine or intermarry with those outside their community and prohibited the conversion of outsiders. But caste never defined the Parsis' choice of vocation as it did those of other Indians. This versatility allowed Parsis to involve themselves in all phases of production and distribution and gave them an edge over other merchant groups.

The impact of Islam was felt primarily in the area of theology. Parsis utilized Islamic terminologies and came to share Muslim monotheistic presuppositions. Zarathushtis downplayed their veneration of the elements and even came to regard Ahriman, once seen as the malignant twin to God himself, as a lesser being



wholly dependent on God's sovereignty. Periods of economic prosperity created conflicts in which laymen sought to undermine priestly authority by appealing to Zarathushti priests residing in Iran. When Iranian Zarathushtis proved unable to mediate these disputes any longer, the community began to turn towards other outsiders as final authorities, at first Islamic, and later European ones.

The Zarathushtis' confrontation with Christianity, which coincided with the introduction of the printing press, brought further changes in Parsi beliefs. Parsis embraced Enlightened thought, utilizing it to defend themselves against missionary attacks. Although rejecting Christian theology, they eventually adopted the methodologies of higher criticism by which Europeans studied the religion of Zarathushtra and largely accepted their findings.

*Susan Stiles Maneck has an A.B. in religious studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz and an M.A. in Oriental Studies from the University of Arizona. Her Ph.D., also from the University of Arizona is in Asian History. She has published two other articles on topics to the Zarathushti religion:*

[1] "The Presbyterians and the Parsis", *Fides et Historia*, Vol XXI, No. 2, June 1989, p. 51-60.

[2] "Early Zoroastrian Conversions to the Baha'i Faith in Yazd, Iran", Juan Cole ed. *From Iran East and West*, Los Angeles: Kalimat

## From Tragic to Magic of Graffiti

On August 6th, for the first time in the history of Los Angeles, the community of South Central Los Angeles undertook an experiment with Meher D. Amalsad, motivational speaker and seminar leader, and author of *Bread for the Head* [reviewed in *FEZANA Journal*, Fall 1997] to transform graffiti from a tragic weapon of destruction to a magic tool for transformation.

The event was supported by the Los Angeles Police Department, students, ex-gang members, business owners, media and the local community.

Meher's work has been endorsed by numerous world psychological masters including a blessing from the office of Mother Teresa. Recently, his work has inspired the hearts of gang members in South Central Los Angeles, who have bought his books and are making a

commitment to handle violence with love, after reading his messages of non-violence, such as:

"Silence has more power than violence"

or

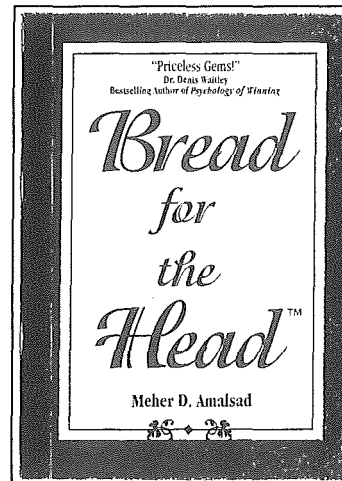
"Hugs have more power than Drugs or Slugs"

They, along with the community are

receptive toward creating transformations through affirmations as displayed on the walls. These inspirational quotes are from his book *Bread for the Head*.

Meher was the featured speaker at the historical event "Hands Around Our Community" on August 9th, in the Green Meadows Park, Los Angeles, where the

LAPD, former gang members and members of the community held hands, and Meher touched their hearts with his inspirational message of creating "Unity within Diversity in Humanity".



### Gems from Meher Amalsad's "Bread for the Head":

"Your words can make people stars or leave them with scars."

"Working right is more important than working smart or working hard"

"In life you either kiss an opportunity or miss an opportunity."

"Life becomes worth living when it's geared towards giving."



## READERS' FORUM

Letters (under 600 words) are invited from readers. All submissions must satisfy the Journal's Editorial Policy [see back page].

### A Satisfying Experience

In September I was invited by Palma High School (a Catholic school) in Salinas, California, to teach 3 classes on the Zarathushti religion, as part of their World Religions Class. The students were very interested in our religion, and I felt it a very satisfying experience to be able to give them first-hand information and a Zarathushti perspective on what they were learning in class, using as reference, *Great Religions of the World*, by Sister Coretta Pastva.

Chapter 8 of the book, titled *Zoroastrianism: Choosing the God of Goodness and Light*, is very well written and all in all a fairly accurate and complimentary overview of our religion. So I would like to share with you some passages from this chapter. It starts with:

"Although Zoroaster may have been the first great religious prophet, very likely you have never heard of him. Yet your images of heaven, hell, satan, and even God are largely shaped by his genius. Indeed, Zoroaster's concept of a single deity came to replace completely the many Gods of the ancient Western cultures. Although only a small sect of his followers survive today, Zoroaster influenced much of the world through the later religions – including Christianity – that adopted his ideas."

It then gives passages from the Gathas:

"Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared their nature, the better and the evil ..."

indicating the Original Choice and the introduction of the concept of freedom of choice in such ancient times and its importance in the Zarathushti religion, together with the consequences of the choice:

"In Zoroastrianism, however, freedom of choice and the consequences of that freedom are bound together more tightly than most of us today would even care to imagine ..."

In the section on Human Freedom and Destiny, the author starts with:

"Besides the teachings of monotheism, Zoroaster provided a new slant on one of humanity's most profound and most perplexing questions: why is there evil? Instead of attributing evil to God, he taught that it exists because freedom must include the possibility of making wrong choices. Zoroaster described human beings as being much like the twin spirits ..."

"Zoroaster went on to define humanity in noble and dignified terms. He taught that people were needed to play a part in the struggle against evil: every time a person was tempted and yet chose good, evil was weakened. Ultimately, when the spirit of evil was sufficiently weakened in this way, it would be defeated and destroyed."

"We can now see why freedom of choice became a crucial element in the Zoroastrian world view. An individual's moral choice determined the outcome of the cosmic battle, as well as one's own fate in the after life ..."

Another section is on *The Parsis*, and how they "conscientiously work to relieve the misery of all", "are outstanding for their personal integrity" and "strive to be deliverers through kindness to the poor, hospitality to strangers, and efforts to achieve peace and goodwill ..." The final section starts with:

"As we have seen, Zoroastrianism belongs in this course on its own merits – as a religion of genius ... another reason for including it is because of the influence Zoroastrianism has had on the next three religions we are about to study: Judaism, Islam and Christianity."

But the author may imply that our concept of God does not allow for His attribute of Mercifulness, in the following statement:

"Therefore no forgiving grace or blessing can release us from the consequences of sin. At death, a person's good deeds and bad deeds are weighed in a divine balance, and the tip of the scales decides whether one goes to heaven or hell ... Mercy does not enter into this final judgement."

I clarified to the students that Ahura Mazda's creations are subject to the Law of Righteousness, which requires moral accountability, therefore giving us the good and bad consequences of our choices, that are not subject to the whims of God. However, Ahura Mazda is merciful in many ways – having provided us with a conscience, a prophet who taught us the Good Religion, and the promise of ultimate Renewal, and redemption of all souls, even those who chose evil and suffered the consequences for a period of time in hell. There is no eternal damnation.

Another discrepancy was related to the statement:

"According to tradition, Zoroaster was born into the warrior class, and as a young man he had three wives ..."

I pointed out that this statement was not correct, and that according to our beliefs, Zarathushtra had one wife, Havovi.

Maneck Bhujwala  
San Jose, California

### Need Volunteers for Help with Religion Class

I teach a college-level World Religion class and am looking for volunteers who would be willing to correspond (preferably by email) with students on a weekly basis for four months. It should involve about 15 minutes a week.

A little background on myself might help you better understand why I like to have my students learn more about the Zarathushti religion. During my teenage years (early 1960s) my family lived in Iran where I first became acquainted with the Zarathushti religion. My interest has grown steadily as I have learned more about it and I am especially intrigued with the obvious influence that Zarathushti theology has had on the development of the other major western religious movements: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In 1994 I had the opportunity to spend the summer in Pakistan as part of the Fulbright program, and spent a

day with a young Mobed at the Karachi Fire Temple, and then had a brief audience with Dastur Kotwal.

I approach the teaching of the Zarathushti religion to my students with great respect and appreciation, and expect them to correspond with those they contact with the same.

*Dr. Kent Farnsworth  
Crowder College  
Neosho, Missouri  
email: kfarnswo@mail.crowder.cc.mo.us*

### **Student and Supporter of Zoroastrianism**

I have been in contact with Zarathushtis in the US for about two years ... Enclosed is an outline of Evolutionalist Spiritualism which describes a large scale (in time and in scope of ideas) system of evolutionary spiritualism of which Zoroastrianism is a central part.

The quote on the cover of the Summer 97 *FEZANA Journal* is timely in this respect, for it refers to the "upward march" which is the Cosmic Order's dynamic; this dynamic is evolution to Godly consciousness.

I am a student and supporter of Zoroastrianism, and wish you continued success and prosperity.

*Robert E. Williams  
Ft. Collins, Colorado*

*[The chart (not reproduced here) showed Zoroastrianism, along with Vedism and Odinism as the three main branches of Traditional Evolutionism]*

### **Directory of Health Care Professionals**

The Summer 97 issue on Zarathushti Professionals in North America made good reading. Congratulations to all who took time and effort to submit profiles and to FEZANA for publishing the same.

Being a physician, my interest lies in the field of health care, and maybe it is now time to make an even greater effort and publish a separate and detailed directory of health-care professionals – physicians categorized by their specialties – and other allied

health care personnel encompassing all Zarathushtis, both members and non-members.

I believe such a directory would prove very useful to the community both here and abroad. From my end, I offer my services to make this a reality.

*Persis K. Shroff, M.D.  
10204 Ellerbe Road  
Shreveport, LA 71106.*

### **On Recent Issues ...**

The last issue of *FEZANA Journal* (on the Date and Place of Zarathushtra) just came in the mail ... All the articles are well researched, well prepared and well presented.

A job well done!

*Jamshid Varza  
Palo Alto, California*

... The articles are excellent, congratulations to you all. In your article about Hong Kong, you mentioned Viraf Parekh – we used to live in the same hostel in Poona many years ago. Also, someone who went to college with me in Poona remembered associating with me when I was the Secretary of the Poona Inter-Collegiate Zoroastrian Association. Her maiden name was Khorshed Wadia. She is now married and settled in Boston as Mrs. Jungalwalla.

Indirectly or directly, your Journal is responsible for bringing many friends and family together.

*Adi Maneckshaw  
Waldorf, Maryland*

... Also, I am going to read this issue twice, because information on the life and times of Zarathushtra is very limited. This issue covers the tip of the iceberg, thanks to your efforts, and I wish we can continue in that direction ...

*Aban Daruwalla  
Riverside, California*

I read Aban Daruwalla's article about financial aid, and found it very helpful and practical.

*Feroza Daroowalla  
Seattle, Washington*

### **Psychological column in the Journal?**

I was led to write this letter after realizing that there is an urgent need in our Zarathushti community for appropriate help and guidance from psychologists who are familiar with both North American as well as Zarathushti cultures. Migration from a very ancient culture steeped in deeply-rooted ancient customs and beliefs such as India or Iran, to the New World is bound to create assimilation and acculturation problems leading to cultural clashes.

Very often, immigrants are not able to adapt themselves optimally to the North American culture and stay on the margin of the dominant society. At times some members of the family adopt the American way of life and world view more readily than others, leading to friction within the family.

It is most painful to see the children of the immigrants caught between their parents' culture at home, and a completely different culture outside. This is a disaster-in-waiting if not handled adroitly. As Zarathushti immigrants are highly educated and very resilient by nature, many of them are able to negotiate their way safely, but a few fall between the cracks, as it were, and need professional help.

Often, they are referred to a psychologist who is utterly unfamiliar with Zarathushti culture, leading to mistaken analysis and inappropriate advice. Often, the remedy proves worse than the disease. When the psychologist misinterprets certain cultural or social practices, such as observations during menstrual periods in orthodox families, as child abuse, oppression or molestation and reports the parents to the authorities.

The stress and strain of the North American way of life in itself creates many psychological problems such as depression, stress, anxiety attacks, sleeping disturbance, paranoid ideation, alienation, psychosomatic problems, isolation, and split personality.

Working on a one-on-one basis with clients for nearly three decades, I have come to realize that each case is unique. So, instead of writing general articles, the needs of readers could be better served by advising them to forward any questions that might be puzzling or troubling them, and reading the response in my column in the Journal. For the sake of confidentiality, no names or even initials could be cited.

I am confident such a column will prove very meaningful to your readers and will only enhance the usefulness and prestige of the Journal. Please send your questions in strict confidence to: Dr. Kersey H. Antia, 17730B South Oak Park Avenue, Tinley Park, IL 60477.

Kersey H. Antia, Ph.D.  
Orland Park, Illinois

*[FEZANA Journal will be happy to entertain this new column, maybe called: "What's On Your Mind?", with responses to your social, religious or psychological problems by Dr. Antia. - Ed].*

### **1984 discovery of Zarathushti Fire Temple**

This letter is written to give your readers further information about the Zoroastrian Temple that was discovered in 1984 by (former) Soviet archeologists.

During excavations in Central Asia, several fire temples of the earlier Aryan faith have been unearthed belonging to the third to fifth millennium BCE.

The discovery of a temple in Jarshutan in southern Uzbekistan, may help in shedding some light on the time of Zarathushtra.

In 1984, this temple was unearthed by Asarov and his associates, who estimated that it belonged to the second millennium BCE (around 1500 BCE) and all scholars agreed that this place has been a Zoroastrian temple for a duration of five hundred years. It measured 60 meters long and 44 meters wide. The entrance gate had architectural decorations.

During religious days, fire was kindled in three afargans. There were twelve rooms for rituals and worship. In one of the rooms, instruments for the purpose of melting metals were identified.

One of the rooms, with three entrances was used as a burial place. The Soviet archeologists believe that this is the oldest Zoroastrian temple to be unearthed to this day, and it gives very strong evidence that Zoroastrianism in general did not construct temples.

The discovery of instruments for the purpose of melting metals is also of interest, because the Gathas belong to an era when metallurgy had been recognized, as the term 'metal' interpreted as 'molten metal' is cited in Ys. 30.7.

*[Excerpted from "The Oldest Fire Temples in Arya-Shahr" by Yousefshah Yakhoubshah, Tajikistan Academy of Science. Submitted to FEZANA Journal by Dr. Daryoush Jahanian, Kansas City, Kansas].*

### **History Repeats Itself**

Iran was conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century and the majority of the people were converted to Islam. However, some kept their faith in spite of oppression and persecution and those who managed to escape by land or sea, landed in India and they later became known as the Parsis. They had left all their belongings behind except for their talents and skills and those who were not able to escape lost everything, taken from them forcefully or through high taxation. So both groups started from scratch, one in a friendly country, and the other in a very hostile one.

The Persians in the new homeland (Parsis) initially spoke Persian, followed the same Persian calendar and of course the same religious rituals. Their children however, spoke the local language and ate the local foods as do our own children here in North America. Do you think the future generations will speak Persian or Gujarati?

For centuries, these two groups did not have any communication, but Parsis had learned that their fellow Zarathushtis were being persecuted and requested the British government to intervene. The British sent Maneckji Limji, a Parsi gentleman, to investigate and also to address the issue of the harsh treatment of Zarathushtis in Iran.

This mission was very successful. Several Parsi philanthropists built schools, clinics, boarding houses for school-age orphan children and hospitals for Zarathushtis. It also opened the door for a new group of Zarathushtis to emigrate to India, known there as Iranis.

These Zarathushtis did not have any skills nor were they educated, since they were forbidden to attend the Moslem schools or learn any skills. They could only farm or were hired for hard labor. Arriving in India, they started working in low-skilled jobs mainly in restaurants and bakeries. They would save some of their money and either send it to their families in Iran or make a trip to Iran to visit them. Some opened their own businesses and prospered in a free and civilized society. However, these new arrivals did not enjoy the same social status as the Parsis. The two groups did not freely mix with each other, even though the newer generation was educated, spoke Gujarati, and enjoyed the same hot Indian foods. There were also very few intermarriages between them.

Once again, due to recent political events in Iran, many Zarathushtis left the country, leaving behind almost all their belongings, with the exception of a few who already had some assets elsewhere, and immigrated to North America.

Unlike the previous exodus, however, most of these Zarathushtis were highly educated; they were doctors, engineers, accountants and professors. They were the product of a freedom enjoyed during the Pahlavi Dynasty. However, due partly to a lack of fluency in the English lan-

guage, they could not get proper jobs, even with their high education and skills. Many are still struggling to find a niche in their new country.

In recent years, Parsis from India and Pakistan have also migrated to North America. Due to the generosity of Arbab Rustam and Mehraban Guiv, may they rest in peace, several Darbe Mehrahs have been built in major cities in North America, to bring all Zarathushtris together. Initially, there was a lot of enthusiasm in attending social, religious activities and the Congresses. However, it appears that now there is less enthusiasm in attending them, for a variety of reasons.

There are also some elements amongst us who try to break us apart. They object to everything they can think of whether it is the food, the music, the language or the customs. These differences can be resolved through dialog and interaction. We should have more congresses and more youth camps in different cities, so more people can attend.

As parents, we should also encourage our children to socialize with each other more freely than our predecessors in India and Pakistan did. We need to be open-minded and listen to our youth's point of view. After all, they are the torch bearer's of our Zarathushti faith and heritage.

For, "United we stand, divided we fall."

Rustam J. Mehdiabadi  
Lubbock, Texas

### God is Omnipotent not Impotent

This is in reply to Ervad Darius Sethna's article *God is Omnipotent, not Impotent*, in the Fall 97 issue of the Journal.

Ahura Mazda means 'Lord of Wisdom'. God, I feel is mighty and not almighty, as stated by Ervad Sethna. If He was almighty there would not be any evil in this world, but only good. Man's work is to do good, and with Good Thoughts, Good Words

and Good Deeds, destroy the world of Ahriman which/who is evil.

That is the way the Dualism principle works, in order for all of us to attain Frashokereti – the "making wonderful". This is the reason why we are in this world of Creation.

There will be many who will disagree with me on the point of God not being Almighty. I have come to believe this after much reading and research. I have seen this to be a point of controversy in our religion classes, and at lectures given by well-known speakers such as Kotwal and Mistree. I would like to know where in our scriptures is it mentioned that God is Almighty.

Another point I wish to make is that Ervad Sethna has written "For only He has created everything, including Angre mainyu (the evil mind) ..." I would like to see more research and evidence on this also. I am sending this for publication in the Journal, so others may also throw some light on the above.

Cowsie Malva  
Redlands, California

### The Avestan Fellowship



I am enclosing our newsletter, about the Avestan Fellowship. The Avestan Fellowship was established in the Spring of

1994, after I was much influenced by a reading of Dr. B. S. Surti's booklet *Thus Spake Zarathushtra* [published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, ISBN 81-7120-203-9, 109 pp.] and the approach summarized in his introduction.

I did some further research into the religion and was impressed with its merit, history, antiquity, influence, and intelligent underpinning reasoning. Another interest of mine concerns certain aspects of the Theosophical School of Thought, and I felt these could be blended, and

encouraged, through what is called the Avestan Fellowship.

I should also note here that I enjoy studying, and experiencing many religions; and I find so many universal and similar aspects of 'truth' within them. I do encourage others to be open to the many diverse ways in which the Divine Spirit has come unto us.

Kevin Salerno  
P.O. Box 23733  
Oakland Park, Florida 33307

### Acknowledgment from Iran

Thank you for your letter of condolence to His Eminence Ayatallah-al-Uzma Khamene'i on the occasion of the tragic earthquake of Khorassan.

May Allah, the Almighty, grant you and all your friends and families every success and felicity.

Wassalamy Alaykum  
M. A. Taskhiri  
Head of International Relations.

[Letter received by FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor in response to her letter of condolence in regard to the earthquake in Iran.]

### The Fire of Ahura

Steadily burns  
In the heart of  
The devotee who  
Sincerely churns  
His thoughts, words  
And deeds  
To become the  
Ashes of Light  
With which he adorns  
His forehead white.  
The fulfillment he gets  
Is of the Beyond,  
His birth is justified  
In this life alone!  
That one flower  
Called Ego  
Offer it at His feet,  
When He takes over  
Your Traverse becomes  
Sweet!

- By Freny Behmanshah



## An addendum – the Ruttonjees of Hongkong

Congratulations on the Fall 97 issue of FEZANA Journal. The articles in this issue were of special interest to me, especially the one entitled *The Good Life in Hongkong*. This is just a footnote that I thought might be of interest to your readers. A direct descendant of the original Ruttonjee family (my mother-in-law) presently resides with her husband and sons in South Florida. Her name is Dr. Parrin Ruttonjee Shroff and she is the daughter of Hormusjee Ruttonjee, who was one of the pioneer Parsis in Hongkong dating back to the late 1800s.

Parrin Shroff was born in 1909 in Hongkong and was in the first group of lady doctors who graduated from the University of Hongkong. As there has been no mention of Hormusjee Ruttonjee in the article, I thought I would bring light to the fact that he was originally from Bulsar, India, and lived all of his adult life in Hongkong, where he raised his family. He was also the father of Jehangir Ruttonjee (who was mentioned in your article). They were both well known and much respected philanthropists whose legacies still live on to this day.

*Havovi Burjis Shroff*  
Boca Raton, Florida

### On the Date of Zarathushtra

Regarding the date of Asho Zarathushtra [FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997], two thoughts come to mind.

1) If Asho Zarathushtra did not exist prior to the ancient Greeks, how did they know his name and arrive at the date as being 6000 years prior to Plato, or 5000 years prior to Troy?

2) The date given in *Bundahishn* as 300 years before the conquest of Alexander is taken literally by some students who conclude that "300 years before Alexander" establishes the traditional date of Asho Zarathushtra as approximately 630 BCE.

However, according to astronomy, a year can be counted as a 'solar' year ('kar sal' of 360 earth years), a



A recent family photograph: seated from left, Dr. Nari Shroff, Kevyn Shroff, Dr. Parrin Shroff. Standing from left, Dr. Burjis Shroff, Havovi Shroff, Dustyn Shroff, Homi Shroff.

'lunar' year ('far sal' of 27 earth years) or a 'sidereal' year ('nimoor sal' of 360 earth days). *Bundahishn*, being an esoteric book, the 'year' is not specified. If we count 300 years as the 'lunar' years,  $300 \times 27 = 8,100$  years, BCE. This number comes closer to the Greek calculation.

Besides, even 8,000 is quite a 'modern' era in view of the fact that humans have existed since hundreds of millions of years and historically, civilizations have existed much prior to 8,000 BCE.

The date of Zarathushtra must coincide with the chronology of the Kyani Dynasty. Is there a historical record of the Kyanis, or did they exist prior to history being recorded? 8,000 BCE is not an improbable 'antiquity' for Asho Zarathushtra.

*Pervin Mistry*  
Mississauga, Ontario

## We Goofed!

● FEZANA Journal regrets an error in the Summer 1997 issue [page 61]. The Music Director in Dallas, Texas is Maestro Andrew Litton. Conductor Zane Dalal has been his acting assistant and cover conductor for selected concerts.

● The photo caption on page 10 of the Fall 1997 issue should read Sarosh Manekshaw and not Sarosh Collector.

● The quote in the review of Ketayun Gould's *Women in Zoroastrianism* [Summer 1996, p 65] should read: The Bombay Parsi Panchayet, she notes, decrees that "only three of its seven trustees at any given time can be women — not a very positive venue to decide issues of concern to Parsi women."

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# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING

THE MOUTHPIECE OF A GENERATION...

## THE RITES OF PASSAGE

*"From the birth-canal, to the playground, and beyond..."*

by: AARON RUSTOM

As children on the playground, we all became keenly aware of something at a very early age. There are certain rules or rites of passage that we must all go through in order to co-exist with our fellow peers. The brutality of finding one's place as a child can become painfully clear, when surrounded by playmates, who are ready to exact series after series of tests, on a newcomer who is all to anxious and yet somewhat angst ridden, to become one of the flock.

Initiation into the masses begins when we take our first breath. Through the miracle of birth, we are literally thrust into a cold sterile world; only to fall into the hands of a stranger who feels the need to be the first one to spank this "new pledge" into the fraternal organization of the human kind.

Throughout our lives we are constantly initiated and inaugurated, inducted, drafted, so on and so on. The practice of indoctrinating people in societies is via the practice of initiation. We are all at one point or another being introduced to institutions, organizations, and social settings that will give us "carte blanche" within those structures, only if we pass their tests, also known as "rites of passage".

Some of the biggest fraternal organizations in the world belong to the institution of "religion", and with religion, comes initiation. Christians have the Baptism and Commencement, the Jews have the Barmitzvah, and we Zarthustis have our

Navjote or Sudreh-Pushi ceremonies.

The initiation into religion often signifies the adolescent's shedding of the natural and parental rites of passage and links the young adult with the community at large. The passage into the religious community signals the acceptance of ideas and a belief system by the youngster; and with that responsibility, the community in return agrees to accept that new member as one of their own. A contract between the inductee and the communal organization is established and the task of raising the young adult is spread amongst the flock. The child is liberated and bound all at once.

The Navjote or Sudreh-Pushi is significant in many respects as it pertains to our youth. With these ceremonies, the child is no longer a representation of what the parents want them to be. The child is now invited to participate and accept the Zarthusti religion as a whole. The ideology and guidance of the parent is now mixed with that of the community. The spirituality and social consciousness of the Zoroastrian lineage is passed on to the child and the parent's hold on the offspring is somewhat lessened.

During this period, the parent might often find themselves at the mercy of their son or daughter, who has now proclaimed sovereignty, with their new-found status as a follower of Ahura Mazda. The child will most likely look to practice free-choice and individuality at the expense of their parents' wishes.

Quick witted youngsters will say, "It is with Zarathustra's will that I elect to choose my path, my friends and my choice of music!"

And to those children the parent and the community must simply reply, "Yes, but choose wisely!"

For thousands of years the rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood have come in many forms.

In our Western / North American culture our passing comes quickly, our childhood is but a fleeting moment. By the time we reach puberty, we have crossed many thresholds into the world we know as home.

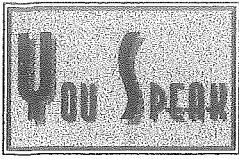
Traditionally for Parsis, the Navjote ceremony is done around the age of seven. From what I understand, the Sudreh-Pushi ritual is often performed at an older age. The conviction and devotion the new member feels may well be determined by the participant's age.

The importance of the initiation process is probably not fully comprehended by children at the age of seven.

As Zarthustis, we must remember that any child growing up on North American soil will most likely undergo a series of initiations from a Judeo-Christian standpoint.

If such practices amongst our people are to continue, it is imperative that we make the transition from childhood to adulthood a continuous learning process and not just a single rite of passage through the act of ritual. The constant effort to educate the youth must remain at the fore-front of our thought.

The rites of passage start with our parents, flourish in the school yards, but are tantamount to life and death in the fast paced society of North America. Let us initiate life through Asha, the Zarthusti way!



*For my loving mother Roshan Who was sometimes my teacher, sometimes my friend and always a source of guidance and support.*

*For my loving mother Roshan who will always be my inspiration and my angel. May she rest in peace. Is there anything as precious as a mother's unconditional love? Perhaps the watchful eye and love of a guardian angel. Perhaps the loyalty, concern and love of a dear aunt.*

### "DEAR MOMMY" 17th September, 1996

"Happy birthday mommy!" I exclaimed as I burst into her room. She looked up at me, and smiled. It was her 49th birthday. Little did we know then that it would be the last birthday that she would celebrate with us. She tried to get up from the bed, but she couldn't. She looked up and smiled, bravely, but I saw through the smile this time. The pain was in her eyes, and so was the fear. She was one of the most independent people I've ever known, and for the first time ever, reached out her hand for help. I knew it wasn't easy for her. I helped her with her shower and into the car. Unfortunately, we had to go to the hospital for a nuclear bone scan.

Mom was beautiful, brave and fearless. She didn't fear the cancer as much as she feared our reaction to the news. She didn't fear the pain as much as she feared losing her independence. Through the entire ordeal, she never stopped loving and caring for the people around her..she never stopped giving and everyday, had the brightest smile planted on her face. She didn't complain about her pain; mom's strength in itself was an inspiration to all around her. The pain of this horrible disease is difficult to imagine. Even if you can imagine feeling a hot knife searing through your body continuously, in one particular area, you have only felt a tenth of the pain of the victim. Mom quickly became the heroine of the block. People came to her for advice, people came to her for support, and when they were feeling down. She always knew what to do to make things better for everyone. She looked after the neighbor who lost her father unexpectedly, she consoled the neighbor who lost her job, she even baby-sat the neighbor's kids. She taught people to love life through example. I remember right before Christmas last year, she invited people over to celebrate the holiday season.

At the clinic, she was a source of inspiration to everyone. She'd talk to other patients while waiting for her chemotherapy appointment and advise them about the tests they needed to keep doing and diet tips that helped her cope with chemotherapy and the pain. The doctor at the clinic once complimented her on her attitude and her strength. She promptly responded with a smile " you think so? Well, my mother would have astounded you. I've only inherited a fraction of it from her".

Mom finally decided to stop chemotherapy in January. The only reason she was taking chemotherapy was to reduce the amount of pain. It wasn't curative. In February, things took quite a dramatic turn. Last Valentine's day, mom was rushed over to emergency because she had an epileptic seizure. I'll never forget pulling the curtain and visiting her in the emergency room that day. She was a mere shadow of her former self. Her face was drained from the tests and the pain.

The next day, she started taking pain medication and considerably improved. After three days, we moved her to a nursing home. It's still really hard to talk about the details of every day, but the last day was perhaps the most important. At that point, she had stopped eating and had very little water. She was completely withdrawn from the world. However, Sunday morning, the 23rd of February, mom got up by herself and walked to the wheelchair. The nurses just stood back and watched, frozen with shock. We went out to the garden, and she looked completely at peace with herself. She laid her head on me and we looked around together at the world, for the last time. It was one of the most beautiful days. I crawled into bed with her that night, and told her it was okay for her to leave us because I could look after things at home. I told her I'd always love her and remember the things she taught me. She hugged me really tight, almost desperately, trying to hold on, and she kept on saying that she didn't want to leave me. I swallowed my tears, smiled and said she was being silly. I also pointed out to her that she'd probably have a bigger and better party up in heaven for her fiftieth birthday. At long last, she smiled. Shortly thereafter, she fell into a deep sleep, with the smile still on her face and the next morning, her soul started on its journey toward heaven. I climbed into bed one last time, to hold her. The tears that I held back for so long poured down my face. I was glad that she was out of pain, I was sad that I'd never be able to hug her again. I kept her ring with me..it's one of my most prized possessions.

I journaled to "Dear mommy" the days after she left. I know she will still guide me, only more silently than before. She will always be an inspiration to those that have known her well. Whenever things get a little tough, I look out at flowers blooming in a garden, and I remember the day she and I spent together in the garden. I feel that peace with her, that love with her..I feel completely connected..and that keeps me going. When people compliment me on the way I handle things, I smile and promptly respond, "You think so? Well, my mother would have astounded you....."

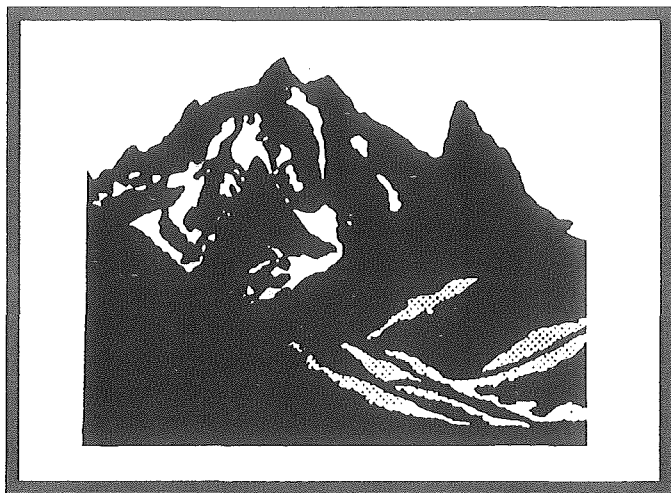
On her fiftieth birthday, I took some time to look up at the sky and smile and think about her. I bet she had a really good time with her parents and family. One day, she'll tell me all about it herself. She will always be the most important person in the world to me.

*Humata Hukhta Huvarashta.  
by: Tanaz Billimoria*

# Ashes Over Batian "...a story of oppression and triumph." (...continued from FEZANA Journal / Summer '97)



by: Aaron Rustom



*Mount Kenya*

It was the beginning of July when Arach returned home to Nairobi. Mombassa was behind him now and he only cared about his impending adventure. As fast as he could, Arach unpacked and ran to Jayant's house.

As soon as Jayant opened the door Arach bombarded him with questions. "Did you do everything I asked you to? What about the equipment and the maps?"

"Hold on a damn minute!" Jayant protested. "Calm down and listen to me. 'I was able to find out where we can go for help. There is a climbing club that meets at the airport once a month. They are the Mountain Club of Kenya and they have equipment and maps and all the information we will need. They meet at the end of the week."

"Good, then we will go there and get help for the trip." Arach confirmed.

This trip was to be the greatest thrill that Arach could conceive of up to this point. He had gathered a group of five friends who were all part of his Explorer group. In years passed, Arach would plan adventures for them all to go on. But this...well this was to be a challenge to all of the boys, even Arach who possessed the most experience. They were all going to attempt Mt. Kenya.

The day had come for the Mountain Club of Kenya to meet. As Arach and Jayant walked in they felt an awkwardness they had felt before, a sort of displacement. As they looked around the smoke filled room they heard un-discernable chatter.

Arach walked up to a gentleman whom he

recognized. It was Major Carrington, Henry's father.

"Excuse me sir. Whom might we speak with in order that we may get some help and advice on an expedition we were planning?"

The major stared at Arach and appeared to know him. "Aren't you the Commissariat boy?"

"Yes sir I am." Arach replied.

"You attend school with my boy Henry. Do you know him?"

Arach's palms began to sweat and he felt his throat tightening up. "Yes sir, I do know him."

The major smugly quipped, "Yes, of course you do."

"Well if it's help your wanting, you will have to talk to that man over there. By the way is that your friend standing over there in the corner?"

"Yes sir, he is with me." Arach was beginning to worry at this point.

"A little advice my boy - you might be better off next time by not bringing someone who sticks out so much, if you know what I mean." Major Carrington was never one to confront his own prejudices but rather relayed them through others.

Arach walked over to Jayant.

"What was he saying when he was looking my way?" Jayant was defensive but this time rightfully so.

Arach did not want to have any trouble that night. "He just wanted to know if you were the one who won the school match last Spring."

"Carrington said we needed to talk to that old fellow with the pipe." Arach began to walk over to a fat man wearing a bush coat. The man dressed like an outdoorsman but most likely he just looked the part. His boots were nice and polished, devoid of any signs of wear and tear.

"When we get there I'll do the talking."

Arach was always better in matters of diplomacy.

"Pardon me sir. My name is Arach Commissariat and I am leading an expedition of some boys to Mt. Kenya with the intentions of summing point Batian."

"You my boy? You want to climb Mt. Kenya?" The fat man was most surely shocked but more than that he seemed offended.

"That's right sir. We were hoping to rent some equipment, get some maps and advice, and if possible we would like to use the club's huts on the way up to the summit."

The man and his wiry friend looked at each other

*continued...*



and began to laugh.

"Surely sir, I assure you we are quite serious and able. We all have gone to Mt. Kilimanjaro and did quite well."

"Young man." The fat man's voice became quite sober. "Kilimanjaro is nothing more than a difficult hike. Kenya is a technical climb."

Arach felt that their conversation was beginning to go bad. He had not realized that it was over before it started.

"I appreciate your concern, but we have all had experience with technical climbing. We want a challenge and the experience that comes with it. Once again I beg you, please help us."

The fat man motioned Arach to come closer and leaned over to whisper something in his ear. "My young foolish boy...let me let you in on a little secret. Climbing my son, well climbing is a white man's sport and it should be left to white men. So I suggest you and your little wogger friend should forget this silly idea about Mt. Kenya and stick to things that you can do. You ruined India for us all and I'll be damned if you're going to take East Africa away from us too!"

Grabbing Jayant by the arm Arach cautiously advised him, "Jayant, I think it's time for us to leave." And with that, the two boys left behind the Mountain Club of Kenya and a part of their young souls.

One year to the date later: Cyrus Irani sat down to read his morning paper. On the front page of the Nairobi Examiner was a picture of Arach with four other boys, with the caption: "Five young Indian boys attempt to climb Mt. Kenya." ...see more on page five.

Immediately Cyrus turned to page five and began to read. "Last week, five young Indian school boys made an attempt on Mt. Kenya. The boys did so without the help of anyone but themselves. For one year, the young men stored up supplies and equipment. With sixty pound packs and a cysel rope, they made their way to the base of Mt. Kenya. Unfortunately due to bad weather and some inexperience on the part of the younger lads, the effort to summit the highest point, Batian ended in failure. Raj Patel, one of the younger inexperienced boys, fell through a crevasse on the glacier and severely hurt his ankle.

Another boy got lost in a white out and huddled in a cave for five hours before being found. The two hurt boys told the last three that they should go on and attempt the summit.

Jayant Singh who contacted the paper about the climb said, 'I wanted to go on after we found the other two boys. I know Arach and myself could have made it. But Arach thought it best if we come down off the mountain and get the others some help.'

All of the boys agree that it was the experience and cool-headedness of Arach Commissariat that pulled them through the ordeal. When asked if they felt they failed to accomplish their task, Arach Commissariat had this to say.

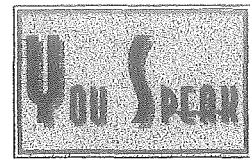
'Reaching the top of the summit, in this case Batian, does not mean standing on top for me. It merely means I was here to try. My friends are what counted most. As far as I'm concerned, we triumphed over adversity and without the help of certain individuals who thought we weren't suited to the task.'

Cyrus Irani for the next few weeks regaled his friends at the sports club with tales of his grandson's heroics. The pride he felt for young Arach was more than he could describe.

And for the next month, people were writing in to the paper. Some were condoning the boys adventure and chastising the Mountain Club of Kenya for not helping. Then there were those that condemned the boys for ever attempting such a stupid feat. Most of those letters of disapproval were from members of the Mountain Club.

In the end, Arach went on to the Himalayan Mountain School and trained under the watchful eye of Tenzing Norgay. Tenzing once told Arach, "We may not summit all of the points we want in our lives my friend, in fact we may not even attempt the ones that frighten us most. To be a man is to dream as a boy. I am old but will some day have my soul set free among these mountains, and it will be my children who take me there. Some day my friend, you will have your ashes over Batian."

There in the Himalayas, Arach found himself a boy among men and stood on the top of the world as he had done, so many times before.



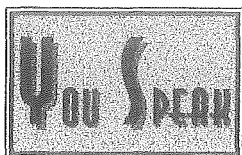
## VOICES OF THE NEW GENERATION

**Read what a new generation of North American young adults voiced to adult leaders, for the first time on this continent, as its perception of "Issues Facing Contemporary Zoroastrians"**

**These voices were heard at the interactive seminar in May of 1996, pioneered by ZAMWI, and supported by the World Zoroastrian Organization and FEZANA.**

**Limited copies are available for free distribution in North America. Those wishing a copy, should phone or e-mail Aaron Rustom. Any donations to help defray costs will be welcome.**

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## IN THE NEXT ISSUE... "A READER'S SUGGESTION GOES INTO EFFECT..."

AFTER THE LAST ISSUE, WE HERE AT YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING RECEIVED SOME FEEDBACK FROM YOU THE READER. IT WAS HEARTENING TO SEE THAT THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE ACTIVELY PURSUING AN INTEREST IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

ONE SUGGESTION MADE WILL ACTUALLY MAKE IT INTO THE NEXT ISSUE, IF IT IS ACTED UPON BY YOU THE READER.

IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT A SECTION BE DEVOTED TO THE CURRENT EVENTS AND GOINGS-ON WITHIN THE RESPECTIVE YOUTH GROUPS OF EACH COMMUNITY.

WE ARE ALL AWARE THAT EACH AND EVERY ASSOCIATION HAS ITS OWN PERSONALITY AND SHINES IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. THEREFORE IT IS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE NORTH AMERICAN ZARTHUSTI COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE TO EXPERIENCE AND KNOW WHAT THEIR FELLOW PEERS ARE DOING.

THIS SECTION WILL BE DEVOTED STRICTLY TO REPORTS ON SPECIFIC YOUTH EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE OR THOSE THAT ARE GOING TO TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A CONSTANT CHECK ON THE PULSE OF OUR YOUTH, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR THE LEADERS AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS AROUND THE CONTINENT TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE YOUTH EDITORS OF THE JOURNAL.

FROM TIME TO TIME IT WILL BE THE PRIVILEGE AND TASK OF THE EDITORS HERE AT YS TO ACTIVELY PURSUE STORIES AROUND THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA THAT ARE OF INTEREST TO THE YOUTH.

ALL SUGGESTIONS ARE WELCOME AT ANYTIME. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT OUR DEADLINES ARE CRUCIAL AND MUST BE MET WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME. THEREFORE, ANY IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND REPORTS BY THE DIFFERENT YOUTH GROUPS SHOULD BE SENT PROMPTLY.

IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY OR YOUTH GROUP, PLEASE DIRECT ALL SUGGESTIONS TO ONE OF THE YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING EDITORS. THE PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES CAN BE FOUND WITHIN THE YS SECTION OF THE FEZANA JOURNAL.

THANKS AHEAD OF TIME FOR ANY INPUT YOU HAVE. THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE TOO...IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO SPEAK!!!

*"If one is to do good one must do it in the minute particulars. General good is the plea of the hypocrite, the flatterer and the scoundrel."*

*-William Blake*

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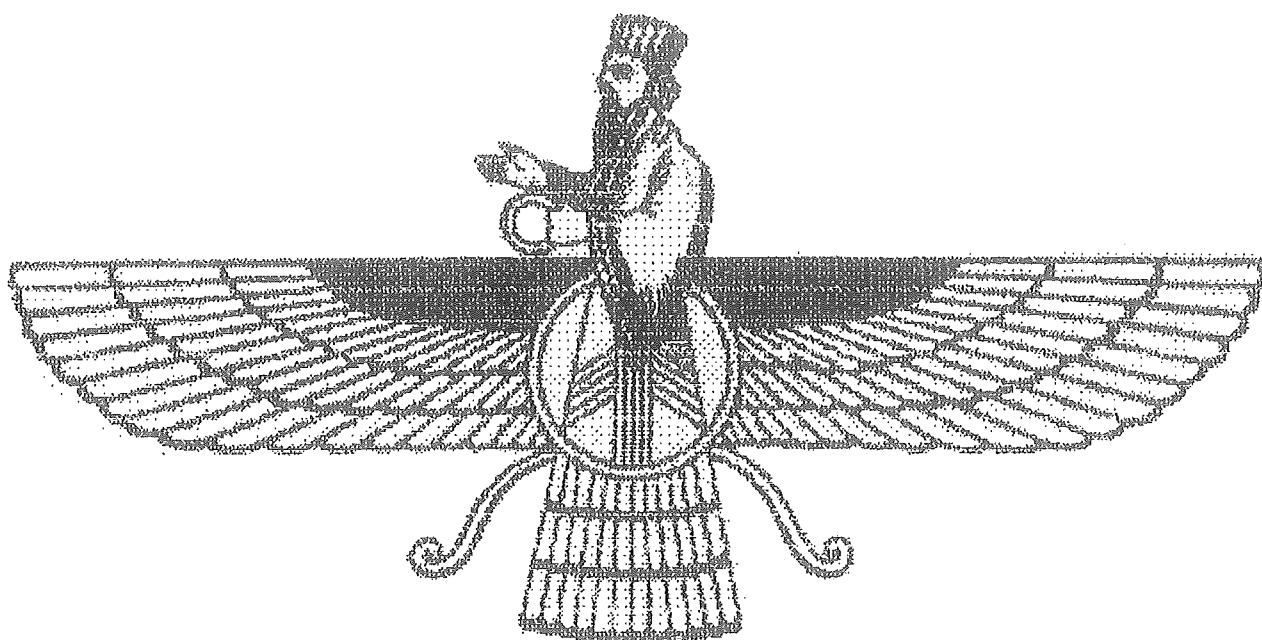
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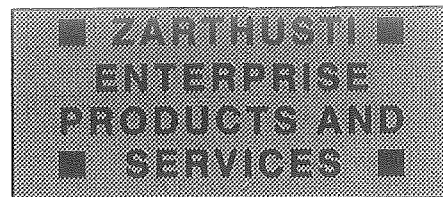
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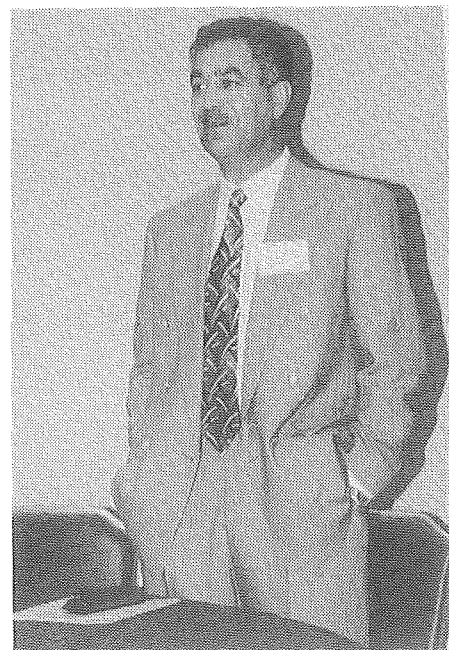
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Mehrdad Banki, Freddy Engineer, Richard Khosravi

*One weekend in November, about eighty Zarathushti business persons and entrepreneurs gathered in Las Vegas for the first Zarathushti Business Conference in North America to learn from their collective past and share their dreams of the future.*



# A gathering of dreamers



By Roshan Rivetna

While some, like keynote speaker Ambassador Jams-heed Marker were at the zenith of a long and distinguished life's career, many were taking the first fledgling steps towards their dreams. Like Adil Irani, for example, who quit his well-paying job and partnered with a friend to start a computer consultancy business, just four months ago.

Many, like Purvez Rustomji who owns an industrial coatings plant, had walked the long, hard path alone and came to give and share their experiences. "I've got the time to give, I've got the money to give, I've got the energy to give," he said, "I've come to this conference not to get anything, but to give." Many took the opportunity to showcase their wares and services – from retail foods to motivational speaking.

Tehemtan Anklesaria and his wife Nina, who make diesel generators and motor cycles in India, came to look for business opportunities in the West. And Rustom (an ENT surgeon) and Roshan Mehdiabadi came from Lubbock, Texas for they

believe that "traditionally all Zarathushtis are entrepreneurs."

Most who came to the Zarthushti Business Conference and Expo 97 in Las Vegas from October 30 - November 1, came there to share — their knowledge, their experiences and their inspiration; and to learn and draw strength and support from fellow Zarathushtis.

And, through the Conference one heard stories of Zarthushtis helping Zarthushtis. When entrepreneur Homi Davier was "dead broke" in 1983, it was only with the encouragement and confidence of good friends (and a lot of guts) that he was able to build up his *Capricorn Travels*, and become part owner of *Baltic International Airlines*. "I could not have succeeded," recalled Davier, "if my friend Kaemarz Dotiwalla did not travel 30 miles to buy a \$100 airline ticket from me." Dotiwalla, in the petro-chemical recycling business, had himself ridden a fickle economy's waves and whims.

And there was Freddy Engineer, part owner, with Mehrdad and Nooshin Banki in a software firm MINC Inc. [see advertisement in this issue]. Freddy expressed a debt of gratitude

“Sowing the seeds to once again make Zarathushti business a hallmark of industry, and to earn our reputation here, as we did in India and Iran, for honesty, industry, goodness and charity.”

to supporters in Mumbai who believed in him and gave him the opportunity financially, to come to the United States. They now felt it was their turn to pay back in a small way – MINC Inc. pledged \$1000 to set up a Zarathushti Business Network to help other Zarathushti entrepreneurs.

The Conference, appropriately located at the glitzy MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas (for were not all the entrepreneurs there, gamblers after





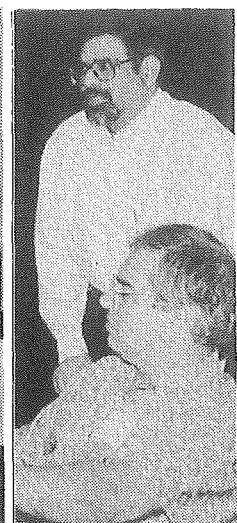
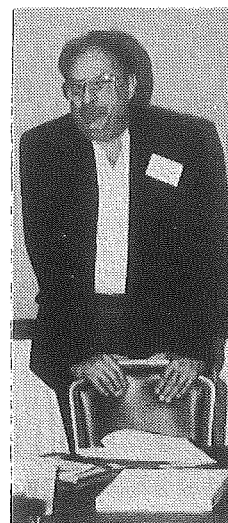
*A long-time dream of a Zarathushti business network, conceived several North American Zoroastrian Congresses ago, at the Houston Congress in 1992, was brought a step closer to fruition by Rohinton Rivetna (above) and Farshid Salamati, Chair of the FEZANA Business Committee (far left) organizers of the Zarathushti Business Conference and Expo 97, the first ever, on this continent. Homi Davier (above left) of Capricorn Travels provided inspiration and encouragement and invaluable assistance with travel and hotel arrangements; and Sarosh Collector (above right) FEZANA treasurer, provided legal and accounting expertise in setting up the infrastructure. Right, Starting from their garage 27 years ago, Purvez (an architect) and Aban Commissariat, distribute Poonjiaji's chutneys and other products under the Bombay Brand label, mainstreaming to the American consumer.*

all?) opened on Friday afternoon with a welcome by **Farshid Salamati**, Chair of the FEZANA Business Committee. Salamati's goal for this first Zoroastrian Business Network Conference was to "prepare a tool for a further networking system for the benefit of our community." In his Opening Remarks, **Rohinton Rivetna** spoke of sowing the seeds to once again "make Zarathushti business a hallmark of industry," and "to earn our reputation here, as we did in India and Iran, for honesty, industry, goodness and charity."

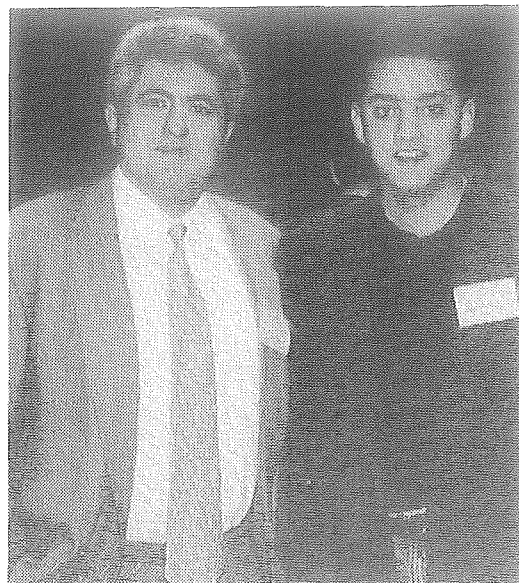
The participants were next inspired by a tape-recorded message from prominent businessman **Jamshed Guzder**, Chair of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

and the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, and CEO of DHL, Air Freight and other business ventures. He related a short history of how the Parsis, from the time they landed in India, were able to establish business relationships bringing about prosperity to the community.

In the first session, *Zarathushti Business – Past, Present and Future*, Rivetna and Salamati conducted an open discussion to identify needs, and establish goals and objectives for a permanent support infrastructure (a network or chamber of commerce or other structure) for Zarathushti business. Sarosh Collector reviewed the "Limited Liability Corporation" structure that has been currently set up to support this activity.



*Left, Daboo, in educational publishing sales. Right, Engineer turned jeweler Rumi Engineer: "Its all accidental"; and Hoshi Mehta in auto repair: "In the end, you have to go with your guts".*



In the session on *Starting New Business Ventures*, **Framroze Patel** spoke on *Business Valuation and Start Up Business*. His motivation for serving the community was to repay in some small measure the debt of gratitude he owes to the Surat Parsi Orphanage of which he is a product. **Hosi Mehta** speaking on *Youth and Business* suggested that Youth Congresses have a "Business Session". Speaking on *Is Franchising the Way to Go?* **Aspy Daboo** said that owning one's own business was the epitome of the American Dream. In *What it Takes to Start a Successful Small Business*, **Rashid Mehin** [photo right] outlined the stages of a small business: Survival, Stability, Success and finally Significance, when you share your wealth and your knowledge with your community. In his talk on *The Role of Fear*, **Jimmy Kumana**, said business offers a way to wealth, while employment offers only comfort.



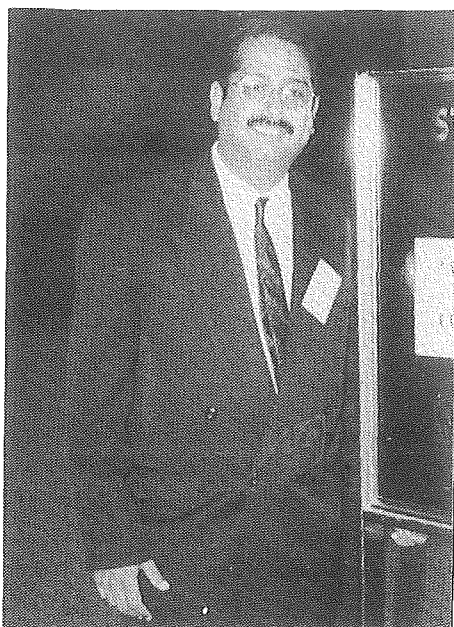
The keynote address at the Gala Banquet was delivered by **His Excellency Ambassador Jamsheed K. A. Marker**, presently Personal Representative of the Secretary General, United Nations, for East Timor, with the rank of Under Secretary General.

During his distinguished diplomatic career, he has also served as Ambassador of Pakistan to the US, France, Ireland, Germany, Japan and other countries.

"We are in the midst of a second diaspora," said Marker, "the first one was when we went from Iran to India." He spoke of Zarathushtis in North America as pioneers, who would have "the responsibility as we go into the next millennium, of maintaining a religion, culture, beliefs and values that go back 3,000 years." He felt that assimilation for Zarathushtis in USA and Canada is easier, for we have the same ideals on which these countries are founded: belief in God, in freedom, public service, generosity and philanthropy.

The second day opened with 'Human Imagination Consultant' **Shahriar Shahriari** relating, in his own inimitable and enthralling manner, the *Story of Money*. "Money has value only when it flows," said Shahriari, "It gives life to our ideas, to create better things, to renovate and rejuvenate, as Zarathushtra teaches us.

Three accountants led the morning session on *Insights into Doing Business in North America*: **Jamshed Gandhi** spoke of *Business Entity For-*





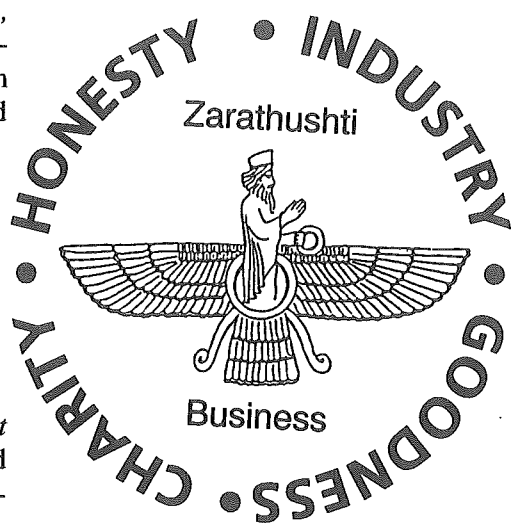


Clockwise from left, Adil Irani of Meta Technologies, Dallas; Hilla Munshi, who has set up a catering business in Los Angeles, with the encouragement of friends and the Zoroastrian Association; Ambassador Jamsheed Marker and wife Arnaz at the banquet with Phiroze and Dhunmai Dalal; Mehrdad Banki and Freddy Engineer of MINC Inc., pioneers in Electronic Design Automation are inviting more Zarthushtis to join their company; Cowas and Perviz Patel and Maneck and Pervin Chichgar of Los Angeles import canned Kraft cheese from Australia, fruit juices from the Phillipines, and other fine foods. Pervin left her accounting job because she "did not want to work for anyone anymore" and started her mail order food business; and Jimmy Kumana has a consulting business.

mation to Maximize Tax Benefits, outlining partnerships, limited partnerships, corporation, S corporation and LLCs. Sarosh Collector talked about *US Tax Implications of Investments in Foreign Business* and gave a *Business/Personal Taxation Overview*. Two things are certain in life – death and taxes, and **Tehemtán Arjani** in his talk on *Estate Planning* covered both.

In a talk entitled *Middle Market Asset Based Financing*, **Edul Davar** talked of creative ways of financing a business. Through a leveraged buy-out, with just \$200,000 of liquid equity, Davar was able to raise the \$10 million purchase price of ACuPowder International, a company with sales of \$35-40M and 80 employees.

Another treat lay in wait during the Southwestern Buffet Lunch, as motivational speaker **Mehr Amalsad** energized the audience with his pre-



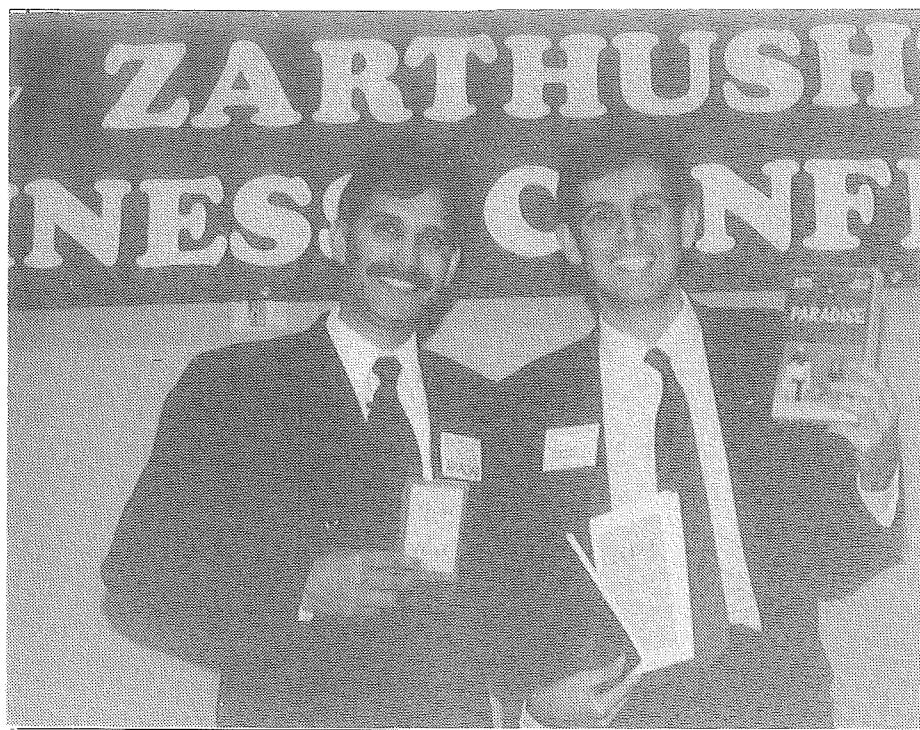
Conference logos designed  
by Zenobia Rivetna

sentation of *Ushta and Asha in the World of Business*. "If we want to create magical relationships," said Amalsad, "we must learn to separate the being from the doing. There are no bad people, only good people who do bad things; that is why we are

called human beings and not human doings."

In his talk on *Multinationals Doing Business in India*, **Dara Rivetna** spoke of his experiences setting up a can manufacturing plant for American National Can in India, and of the burgeoning growth and opportunities in that country. **Adil Irani** spoke on *Emerging Technologies*. With expertise in "SAP" (which three letters he believes today rank in importance next only to the three letter "CEO") Adil feels there is a tremendous market out there in the information systems and technology area, and he is determined to "get a piece of the pie".

Others in this burgeoning computer consultancy market were **Aspy Tara-porewalla** (originally from the village of Dahanu, in India, where his family has been in the horticulture business for three generations) who

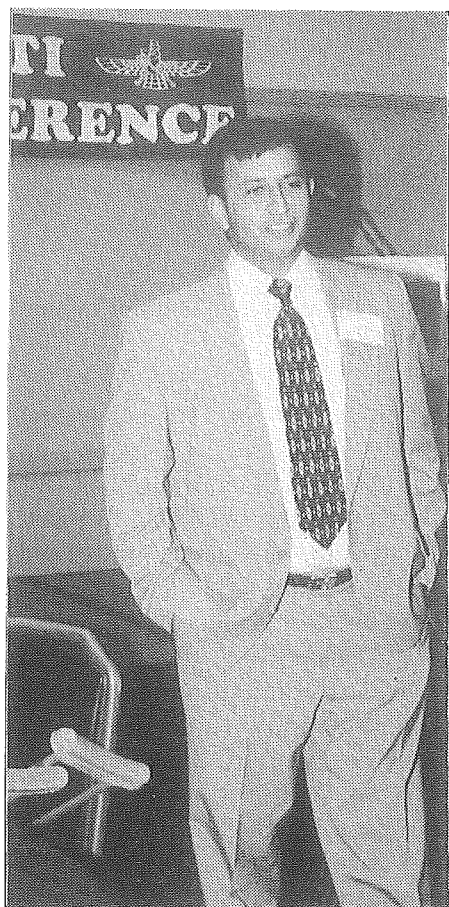


has started his software services company CompuZone Inc., in Atlanta. And veteran Phiroze Dalal who is part owner with Farrokh Das-toor of the Management Applications Programming, a service bureau started in 1964 that employs over 200 people.

Seasoned businessman Alayar Dabestani, film distributor and owner of dozens of theaters across USA and Canada, spoke on *Working with Partners*. His advice: "Avoid them. If a partner was a good idea, God would have had one too." Homée Shroff, Vice-President of Mountain States R&D International (MSRDI) in Tucson, spoke about *Innovations in Small Business Infrastructure*, focussing on social aspects and human behaviors in today's fast-paced, technocratic society. "Success must not only be economic, but humanistic as well," said Shroff, "otherwise, no matter how great, in God's eyes it will always remain incomplete."

Several Zarathushtis spoke in the Open Session on *Business Helping Business*. Cowas Patel is looking for someone to manufacture or purchase his patent of a noise suppressor for plant boilers. Roshan Bhappu, President of MSRDI, spoke about opportunities in the mining business overseas. Since strategic minerals are not available in North America, most of his business is in 37 countries, abroad. In the business for 27 years, Bhappu said it was not "all cream and honey, but our Zarathushti background, upbringing, our values and our character, help us perpetuate the entrepreneurial spirit of our forefathers."

Realtor Rusi Gandhi of RE/MAX re-iterated his offer to donate 10% of his commission from any real-estate sale to a Zoroastrian Association. He has already donated many hundreds to ZAGNY and others. For your real estate needs in US, Canada and 52 other countries, call Gandhi at (800) 575-6005. Farshid Khosravi, CEO and Management Consultant with



Top, author and speaker Meher Amalsad with his latest book of inspirational sayings, *Bread for the Head*; and Human Imagination Consultant Shahriar Shariar with his books *Thus Spake the Real Zarathushtra* and *1+1=3*, and popular video *PARADISE*. Below left, Jehaangir Bulsara worked on hands and knees to follow his dream of starting a business; he now owns a thriving roofing enterprise in Ontario. Right, Mehraban Mehr, left his engineering job with Boeing to do custom construction in Seattle.

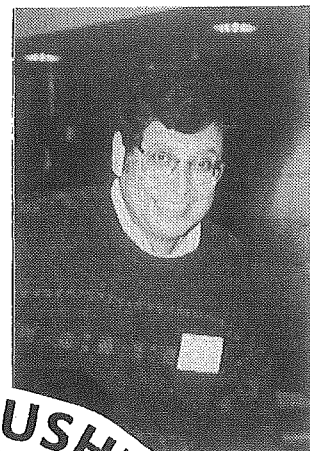
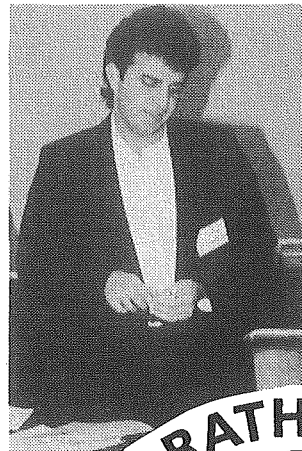
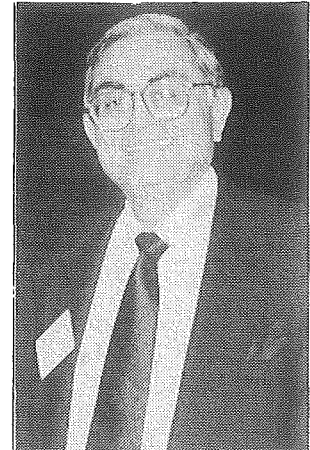
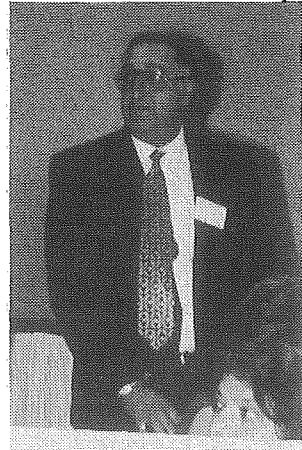
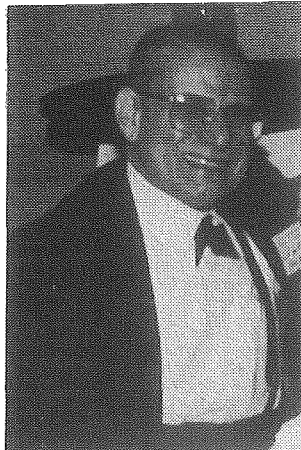
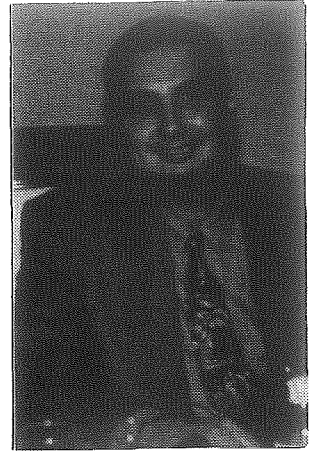
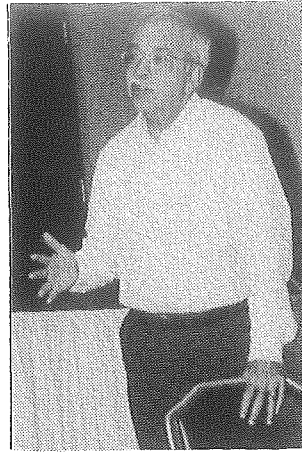
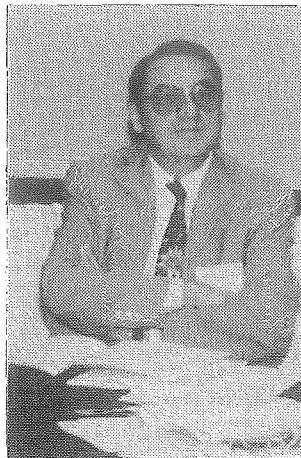


Great Star Cement Corporation, spoke of his experiences setting up a \$300M project building a cement, sand and gravel and concrete plant near Las Vegas.

Rivetna and Salamati led the final session – *Walk the Talk*. Major actions taken included: (a) Shahriar Shahriari offered to set up a Zoroastrian Business Web site and directory on the Internet. Funds were raised to get it started [see next page]; (b) Adil Irani will help produce a Business Directory; (c) a list of mentors was generated and will be placed on ZBNet; (d) Rohinton Rivetna would head a committee to draft the vision, objectives, and structure of a permanent business organization. Jamsheed Marker would help with drafting the Preamble. Roshan Bhappu will provide input on forming a 'Foundation'. (e) In the interim, Farshid Salamati's address will be used: 8301 Edgewater Drive, #103, Oakland, CA 94621, Tel: (510) 632-0104, Fax: (510) 632-0474; (f) Phiroze Dalal would design an application form for requesting Venture Capital; (g) Freddie Patel will head the committee to plan the next business conference, possibly with the Congress in New York in July 1998.

All in all, it was a successful conference. Everyone left with a feeling of pride in being a Zarathushti, and happy in the knowledge that they were not alone. Everyone left energized and inspired, ready to take on the challenges.

The odds were certainly better than at the gaming tables in Las Vegas! ■



From top, left to right: Dara Rivetna (can manufacturing), Tehemtan Arjani (accounting), Homée Shroff (environmental/industrial), Roshan Bhappu (mining), Tahamtan Aresh (real estate), Rusi Gandhi (realtor), Edul Daver (manufacturing), Aspy Taraporewalla (software consultancy) and Jamsheed Gandhi (accounting).



**ALL ZARATHUSHTI  
BUSINESSES AND  
PROFESSIONALS  
INVITED TO REGISTER AT  
NEW ZARATHUSHTI  
BUSINESS WEB SITE**

At the Zarathushti Business Conference in Las Vegas, full support and the necessary funds were received to start a Zarathushti Business web site on the Internet.

All Zarathushti businesses, professionals and entrepreneurs are invited to visit the site at:

[www.zbnet.com](http://www.zbnet.com)

Follow the instructions to add your names and businesses to the directory. The information will be available online to all who have access to the web. The database so developed will also be used to generate a Business Directory in hardcopy format.

Contact: Shahriar Shahriari  
(604) 684-6199,  
email: [sshahria@direct.ca](mailto:sshahria@direct.ca)

**Parsi Actor Wanted**

Producers of the Canadian-funded film of the book *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry of Toronto, were looking for a young Parsi male actor between 18-20 for a leading part in the film. Auditioning was in November in UK, and filming is in Mumbai, India. For further information contact Bomi at +44 181 893 2573, email: [casting@vossnet.co.uk](mailto:casting@vossnet.co.uk).

**Farohar pendants and pins**

The ZSO has some Farohar jewelry items on sale: Pendants with chain are \$7; and Farohar pins are \$5. To order, please call Dinoo Pavri at (416) 492-8114.

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YOUR YOUR  
HEART

All donations will be deeply appreciated. For tax exemption eligibility please refer to *FEZANA Journal* [Winter 1994, p.60-61]. 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.

**Mancherji Joshi Memorial  
Educational Fund**

The goal of the trustees is to grant Educational Aid to needy and deserving Zarathushtis. Last year the fund disbursed Educational Aid amounting to over Rs. 5 lakhs, to 518 students. Over 300 students were from poor families in Navsari and Surat. Grants were also given to over 30

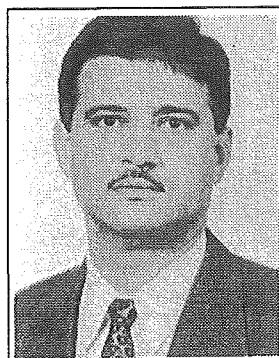
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students for undergraduate and graduate studies in India and in the USA. Trustee Jal Khan of Dadar has appealed for donations from Zarathushtis in North America. Send checks, payable to FEZANA, marked Joshi Fund, to the FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].

### Student Aid

Requests have been received for aid from several students, including a young man attending a Flying School in Texas, who is in urgent need of \$4000. Send checks, payable to FEZANA, marked Student Aid, to the FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].

### Fali Chothia Trust

The Maryland-based Fali Chothia Charitable Trust annually grants a number of scholarships to deserving Zarathushti students. The 1997 scholarships were awarded to four deserving students: Mazda Antia, Behrouz Farsi, Ava Billimoria and Shazeen Rabadi.

Trust President Dr. Soli Choksi writes: "Most of us are familiar with the invaluable nature of trust funds ... Many of us were probably assisted by these funds in pursuing our own educational quests ... through this Trust we are striving, and, I think succeeding in building an infrastructure for our children and future generations of the North American community. ...

"Our hope is that all Zarathushtis across North America will recognize the importance of such a fund, and contribute to it generously." Checks, payable to ZAMWI, marked "Fali Chothia Fund" may be mailed to the Trust at 10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda, MD 20814, tel: (301) 564-3726.

### Bone Marrow Foundation

FEZANA is pleased to inform all those who donated towards the medical treatment of Imroze Ardeshtir, that she has been given an "all clear" by doctors at Hammersmith Hospital in London, and that the engrafting

of her sister, Farah's bone marrow was totally successful. She has now returned to Mumbai.

Her parents have decided to establish, with the assistance of the Anthony Nolan Trust and the Fanconi Anemia Research Foundation of USA, a "F&I Bone Marrow Foundation" in Mumbai to create bone marrow awareness and a donor list to help find suitable bone marrow donors as needed."

### Acknowledgements

FEZANA gratefully acknowledges donations received this quarter through October 30. Donations may be made for the fund categories: Welfare, Religious Education, Student Aid, Youth, FEZANA Journal, General, or for a specific appeal.

For Welfare Fund: Cyrus Austin, AZ (\$300); Nergish Karanjia and Nergish Unwalla, NJ (\$20).

Received by Welfare Committee for Various Appeals: Behram & Farieda Irani, Texas (\$75+75+50+150); Noshir



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For Student Fund: Thritree Baxter, NY (\$200); Soozan Baxter, NY (\$200).

For FEZANA Journal: Hoshang Baria, NJ (\$21); Phiroz N. Dastoor, ONT (\$50); Kashmira Dastur, BC (\$10); Jimmy Dholoo, MD (\$20); DuPage Cancer Center, GA (\$407 + \$233 + 186 + 279); Firoze Gandhi, CA (\$11); Behli Hansotia, TX (\$10); Dr. Shahrukh T. Iranpur, FL (\$20); Minoo Italia, TX (\$10); Perwin Kadwa, CA (\$31); Yazdi Mistry, New Zealand (\$18); Tehmi Mukadam, AU (\$25); Rohinton Noble, \$20); Aspy E. Patel, NJ (\$20) Roda Pavri, John Sabanovich, CA (\$25); Mohur Sidhwa, TX (\$150); A. Vakharia, LA (\$50); Pesi & Aban Vazifdar, IL (\$101); Dick Vazir, FL (\$10).



FEZANA Journal most gratefully acknowledges donations totalling \$861, in memory of **Behram Barhamand** from his family, friends and neighbors in Naperville, Illinois; and from co-workers of Dr. Fariborze and Barbara Barhamand and Dilnavaz Kekoo Irani, at Hematology Oncology Consultants.

### Iranian Family in Need

Mother of an Iranian family in the US, has been struck with Multiple Sclerosis and is paralyzed from the waist down. She is not eligible for Federal and State assistance for 6-12 months. Friends have made arrangements for a care-taker at \$1000 per month. They are looking for 40 generous persons to pay \$25 per month for 6 months. Contact Mehr Foundation (Arezo Project), 5856 College Avenue, Box # 220, Oakland, CA, tel: (888) 340-0300.

### Bardoli Zarthosti Anjuman needs funds urgently to rebuild dharamshala

Due to extensive structural damage, the Zarthosti Anjuman of Bardoli, near Surat, has been asked to demolish its old dharamshala, the lifeblood of the local Parsi community, where meetings, navjotes and other ceremonies were held, and where needy Parsis, many living in poverty in miserable conditions, were provided shelter.

There is a shortfall of Rs. 630,000 in the funds needed to rebuild the dharamshala. This is an urgent appeal to all Zarathushtis to donate generously. When members of our own community live in such a demeaning state it reflects upon all of us. Please send checks payable to FEZANA, marked "Bardoli Anjuman" to FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].



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## MATRIMONIALS

FEZANA maintains a matrimonial file and will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. FEZANA does not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Please send your information, preferably in writing, to Roshan Rivetna (see back cover).

**Male, B.Com, 33**, computer degree, working in Mumbai, good-natured, religious. Enjoys cricket. Call brother at (305) 271-1525. [M97-37]

**Male, Internet consultant, 41** (but looks 30), 5' 8", divorced, attractive, physically fit, interested in reading, hiking, exercise and music. Call (732) 297-3806. [M97-38]

**Female, 28**, MBA, practicing accountant. [F97-39]

**Slim, beautiful, female, 38**, never married, graduate, 5'4", looking for handsome, well-settled male. Call friend at (714) 653-0660. [F97-40]

**Female, 40**, medical lab technologist, in Canada, looking for fun-loving, educated, outgoing gentleman. Willing to settle in US/Canada/UK. Call (416) 225-6283. [F97-41]

**Female, 40, 5'2"**, Child Psychologist, B.A., catering, confectionery and psychology. Working in Mumbai; willing to settle in USA or Canada. Call (519) 979-3742. [F97-42]

**Slim female, 40**, Ph.D, microbiology, working in Cancer Research. Enjoys reading, music, cooking, very sociable, good sense of humor. Call (215) 342-6109. [F97-43]

**Female, 43, 5'**, B.S. Chemistry, MBA, CPA, working in public accounting firm near San Francisco. Enjoys reading, movies. Call (510) 886-4191. [F97-44]

**Female, 25, teacher**, born in USA; outgoing personality, attractive and petite. Interested in music, traveling and sports, especially football. Call (407) 298-4474. [F97-45]

**Gentleman, 41, 6'**, working in bank in Ahmedabad. Good sense of humor, outgoing, very loving, likes entertainment, movies. Call (908) 549-3772. [F97-46]

**Male, 26**, graduate of Indian Air Force Academy. Currently in US for training. Call relative at (602) 786-3960. [M97-47]

**Female, 26**, professional in New York City, fun-loving, sensitive, very caring, financially independent and emotionally stable. [M97-48]

## Longest Marriage on Record lasts 86 years

The following note appeared in The Independent newspaper of the United Kingdom on August 20, 1997:

"The longest marriage on record lasted 86 years until 1940 between Sir Temulji Bhicaji Nariman and Lady Nariman of Bombay, India. They were married at the age of five."

[From ZSO Newsletter]

## MILESTONES

FEZANA maintains records of births, navjotes, sudreh-pushhi, weddings, deaths and other major events such as graduations, navar and martab ceremonies. Please send full information with photos to Dr. Rustom Kevala (see back cover for address).

### Births

**Autusha Behroozi**, a girl to Sagar and Kamran, sister to Auresh and Armand, of Dallas, on May 5.

**Jonathan Creamer**, to Lilly and Terry, brother to Crystal, and grandson to Bahadur and Soonie Patell, and Bud and Marion Creamer, all of Ontario.

**Shirin Homiar**, a girl, to Maneck and Jamshed, grand-daughter to Piroja Homiar, of Toronto area, on May 12.

**Rayomand Irani**, a boy to Mr. and Mrs. Kaizad Irani of Champaign, IL, on May 1.

**Kyle Mehernosh Jensen**, a boy to Vanessa and David of Houston, on August 24. The proud grandparents are Mehelli and Zenobia Behrana.

**Marina Daraius Mehta**, a girl, to Daraius and Natasha Mehta, in San Ramon, CA, on October 2.

**Mahzarin Mistry**, a girl, first child to Sharnaz and Sohrab, of Dallas, on December 30.

**Manijeh Rustomji**, a girl to Dilnawaz and Kaizad of Dallas, sister to Cyrus, on January 24.

**Julia Claire Schaefer**, a girl, to Binaifer, daughter of Farokh and Ruby Umrigar of Ontario, and Gilbert Schaefer, on August 9.

**Cyrus**, a boy to Kerman and Dilzaar, born on May 1, 1997.

**Keya Varia**, a girl, to Shernaz and Hiten of Dallas, sister to Shan, on September 18.

**Bijan Kaarlo Varjavand**, a boy to Bahram and Leena Varjavand of Los Angeles, on October 10.

### Navjote, Sudreh Pushhi

**Dinshaw Bharucha**, son of Guloo and Yazdi of Toronto area, on July 26.

**Tara and Annahita Irani**, daughters of Homi and Yasmin, in Potomac, MD on October 25. Ervads Behram Panthaki and Noshir Hormazdiyar officiated.

**Joshua Ethan Gave Nanavaty**, son of Kershaw and Jane, in Vancouver, on July 5.

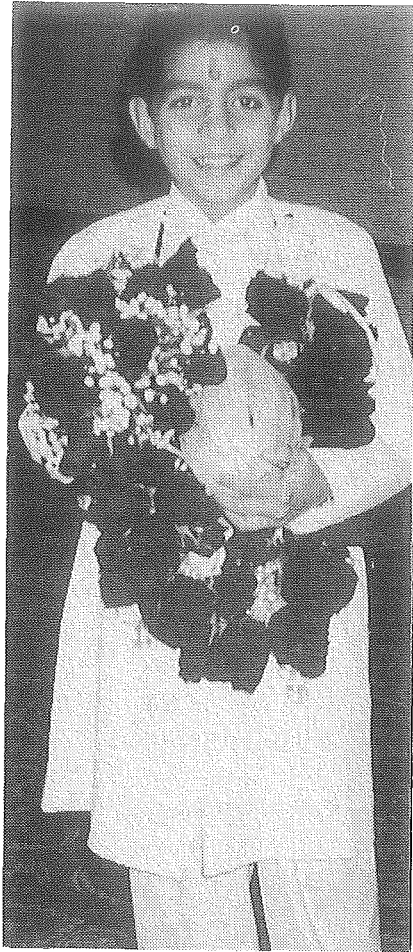
**Cyrus and Darius Khambatta**, sons of Yezdi of BC, in Mumbai, on December 26.

### Navar Martab Ceremony

**Mazda Antia**, son of Ervad Kersey and Dilshad Antia of Chicago area, became a Martab in Mumbai.

### Graduations

**Navaz Cooper** took a sabbatical from teaching in India and came to Boston in August 1996. She graduated in May 1997, having finished her 2 year course in 8 months, with a Summa Cum Laude in Administration, Planning and Social Policy. She



*Far left, Dustyn Shroff, son of Burjis and Hovi Shroff, at his Navjote ceremony on July 5th, in Boca Raton, Florida.*

*Left, ZAMWI initiates its first Mobedyar: Jamshid Mistry was initiated as a mobed-yar by Ervad Behram Panthaki at a ceremony at the ZAMWI Center in Vienna, Virginia, on October 26th. Jamshid has been studying under Ervad Panthaki for the past year. Jamshid is the son of Tehmtan and Farida Mistry of Gaithersburg, Maryland, and grandson of the late Ervad Jehangirji Turel who was a renowned and well-loved priest in Surat and Mumbai.*

plans to return to India to her family and home to resume teaching.

**Jamshed Dubash** completed a 2 year High Tech MBA from North-eastern University in August 1997.

**Hanoz Gandhi** received his Masters in Electrical Engineering from MIT.

**Tushna Kandawala** completed her MBA from Boston University while working full time for Arthur Anderson.

**Farah Khambatta** of Houston completed all four parts, and is a C.P.A.

**Cyrus Master** received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from MIT on June 6, 1997. He plans to finish one year Master's degree at MIT and then continue on to his Ph.D at Stanford University.

**Nergis Minoo Mavelvala**, daughter of Minoo and Meher Mavalvala of Richmond, BC, received her Ph.D. and has begun a post-doctoral fellowship with the LIGO (Laser Interferometric Gravitational-wave Observatory) project at Caltech, in Pasadena, CA.

**Edul Nakra** received a dual degree MBA/MS-MIS from Boston University of Management on September 25, 1997.

**Jamshed Palsetia**, received an MS in Computer Engineering from Northwestern University on June 14, 1997.

**Adil Rustomji** graduated from Yale with an MBA.

#### Engagements

**Parisa Khosravi**, Director for Coverage of International News at CNN in Atlanta, daughter of Ardeshir and Parvin Khosravi of Arlington Heights, Illinois, has announced her engagement to **Gudarz Bozorg Chami**, also of Atlanta.

**Azita Rateshtari**, daughter of Dolly and Rashid of Maryland, and **Rustom Kaovasia**, son of Behram and Sarvar of Mumbai, are planning their wedding on February 23rd in Mumbai.

**Hoshang Samya**, son of Mehraban and Simindokht of Tehran, and **Azita Kaovasia**, daughter of Rohengiz and

**Fariborz**, of Mumbai, have announced their engagement. They are planning a February wedding.

**Farhad Madon**, son of Nari and Armaity Madon of Mumbai, nephew of the Rudina family of Minneapolis, and **Armaity Patel**, daughter of Framroze (FEZANA Vice-president) and Arnavaz Patel of New Jersey, are planning a June wedding in Mumbai.

#### Weddings

**Cyrus Billimoria**, son of Dhun and Franey Billimoria of Mumbai, to **Vera Pfirsching**, of Kelowna, in Richmond, BC on August 16.

**Shahroukh Sidhwa**, son of Bejan and Dinoo Sidhwa to **Riah Wadia**, daughter of Nani and Roshen Wadia, of Toronto area, on August 3.

**Natasha Choksi**, daughter of Soli and Pearl of Olney, Maryland, and **Richard Koerner** of New Jersey had a Fall wedding. The couple will reside in the Garden State, where the bride plans to attend law school.

## Deaths

**Behram Barhamand** (Nasrabadi), 78, husband of Banoo, father of Homi (Shahnaz) of Houston, Fari-borze (Barbara) of Naperville, Illinois and Dilnavaz (Kekoo) Irani of Naperville, Illinois, in Mumbai, on October 7.

**Jamshed Commissariat**, father of Kashmin Govadia of Chicago area, in Ahmedabad, on October 1.

**Noshir Desai**, father of Sammy Desai of Toronto and Cyrus Desai of Washington, DC, in Bombay on June 19.

**Phiroze Shapurji Engineer**, 69, husband of Perin; father of Kelly (Diana) Engineer and Prochy Engineer of California and Dinaz (Ken) Weber of Chicago area; brother of Dhun (Katy), Rusi and Pervez Engineer, Roshan (Eruch) Guard and Shiela (Vishvas) More, all of California, in Union City, near San Francisco, on October 8, of heart failure.

**Louis Heller**, Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Classics at the City College of New York, in

New York, in August. A friend of ZAGNY, Heller had participated in its conferences, speaking on early and late Avestan languages, and on dating of the Gathas and Vedic Sanskrit.

**Koroush Jamshidi**, 36, in California, on October 21. [see *Obituary*].

**Khorshed Pestonji Javat**, mother of Zarin Peshwan Patel in India on July 9.

**Nariman Jehangir Katgara**, husband of Coomi, brother of Adi, Dolly Eruch Kavarana and Frene Hoshang Nanavati of Oakville, Ontario, in Bombay on July 7.

**Morvarid Irani**, mother of Iran-dokht Kianipour of Chicago area, grandmother of Farida (Hooshmand)

Shahryary and Farokh Kianipour, in Mumbai on September 24.

**Darabshah Nusserwanji Langdana**, father of Burjor and Noshir, grandfather of Zarin Strasler, Ronnie, Eric, Meher and Natasha, of Toronto area, in Bombay on July 1.

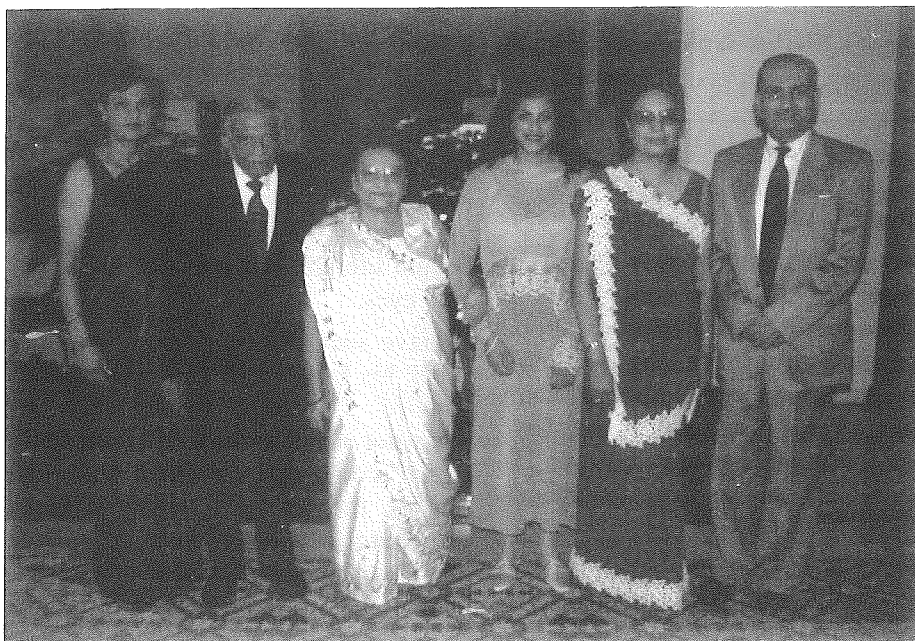
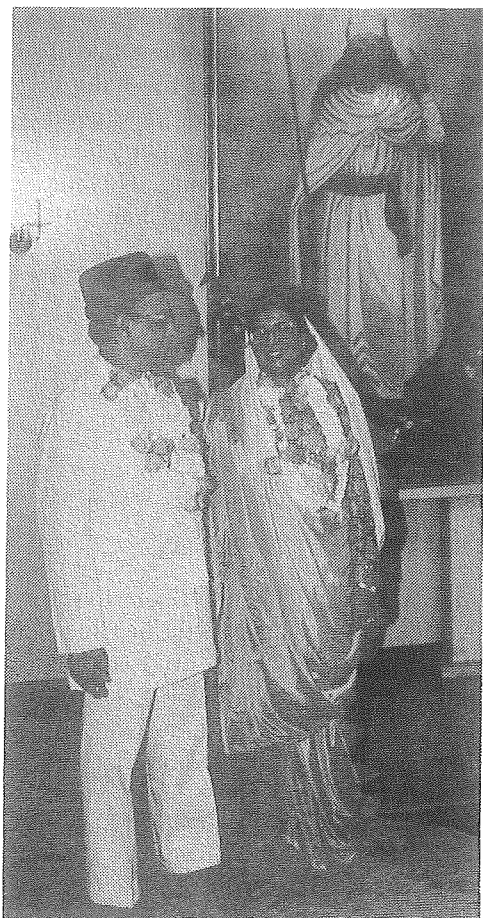
**Khanom Mahin Mazdeyasni**, mother of Babak and Mandana Saroushi of Dallas, in Iran.

**Homai Pastakia**, 73, a Founder Member of ZAMWI, and retiree from the World Bank in Washington, sister of Daulat Phil Dastur of Toronto, Mani Ratan Patel, Arnavaz Rustom Mistry, and Jehangir (Jeroo) Pastakia, in Mumbai, on October 14, after a long and brave fight with cancer.

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*Below left, Rustom Kevala* of Potomac, Maryland and *Yasmin Naterwalla* of Dubai, were married at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Hinsdale, Illinois, on September 28. *Ervads Kersey Antia* and *Neville Karanjia* officiated.

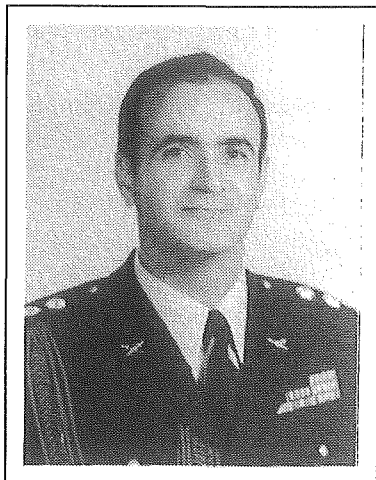
*Below, Diamond Anniversary: Gool and Homi Amrolia* celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, at Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver, BC, on September 7. From left, daughter-in-law Persis, Homi, Gool, grand-daughter Roxanne, daughter Sheroo and son Dr. Dinyar. A 25-year resident of Vancouver, Homi started as Secretary of the Zoroastrian Association of Nairobi, Kenya and was also Hon. Treasurer to the Social Service League of Nairobi, who operated the Dinshaw Byramjee free dispensary for the poor. He was awarded the M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire) in 1965 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for his services in the Kenya Judicial Department. Behind all his and his children's achievements and successes was his life's partner, Goola, a homemaker, wife and mother "without whose courage, love, tolerance, compassion, flexibility and help in so many difficult facets of life these achievements would not have been possible."





Minoo Kaikhushroo Sethna, husband of Silloo Sethna, father of Perviz Sethna and grandfather of Jimmy Sethna, on July 12, in Houston, after a brief illness.

Colonel Iraj Shahryary, 67, husband of Nahid, father of Abtin and Ramin of Atlanta; brother of Kho-



darahm (Irاندokht) of Sterling, Virginia and Parvin of Atlanta, and brother-in-law of Houshang Farhadi, in Atlanta, on October 23. Services were held in Atlanta on October 25 and Tysons Corner, Virginia, on November 2.

Naval Sidhwa, beloved husband of Pervize, dear father of Farroukh and Rashne, loving grandfather of Cyrus and Jennifer Sidhwa and Jasmine and Cyrus Baetz, passed away in Los Angeles on February 11.

Mehrbanoos Soheil (Yeganagi), 82 years, mother of Pari Yeganagi (Vancouver), Parviz Soheil and Homa Zartoshty, in Tehran, on May 11.

## Obituary

### Kourosh Jamshidi

(Dec 15, 1960 - October 21, 1997)

Koroush Jamshidi was born in Tehran to Behman and Jamshid Jamshidi and graduated from Firooz Bahram Zoroastrian High School. An active member of Fravahar Youth Club, he was also a valuable volleyball, soccer and basketball player. He was widely known for his righteous and positive attitude.

Two years after high school, he sought asylum in Pakistan, then traveled to Italy and thence to join the

rest of his family in Australia, where he lived for 10 years. He was an active member of Sydney's Zarathushti Anjuman.

Koroush came to Northern California three years ago with a dream to start his own business and start a new life there. He was instrumental in organizing Zarathushti celebrations and youth socials and was elected Vice President for the second time of the Persian Zoroastrian Organization.

He passed away on October 21, from a heart attack. The San Jose Dar-e-Mehr was packed for the Porseh ceremony on October 25th, with Iranis, Parsis, Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis. As one Zarathushti observed:

"I've lived in Northern California since 1979, and can't ever remember seeing so many of us in one place; all sharing and feeling the same loss. Koroush always wanted the community to come together and he got his wish. It is just very sad that it took the death of a youth, a fine individual, to pull the community together." May his soul rest in peace.

- By Bijan Khosraviani

### Dastoorji Ratanshah Katila Iranshah Atashbehram, Udvada

For the thousands of pilgrims to Iranshah, in Udvada, Dastoorji Ratanshah was an icon. He sat there on his large, polished 'hichka' (chair) on the 'otlo' (outer balcony) of the Atash Behram, his pink cheeks and long white beard toning down the power of his noble gaze. A gaze that could pierce through one talking to him, and combined with the words of wisdom that flowed from his lips, was nearly transfixing. At times you could literally see a flame flicker in his eyes.

I have seen pilgrims clamoring to seek his knowledge and solace, and advice. On rare occasions when he was not at his usual hichka, if a pilgrim would call out for him, from inside the house, a giant African Cockatoo, who actually spoke Gujarati, would often answer: "Dastoorji ghere nathi" ("Dastoorji is not

home") and then laugh aloud at his own prank.

Today, that shoulder upon which generations leaned, is no more. For on September 13, five masked bandits entered his home, ransacked and burgled the house, stabbed and tied up the man-servant, and brutally stabbed and strangled the venerable Dastoorji to death. The ghastly deed was done around midnight.

Dastoorji was about 80 years of age, a bachelor, survived by a sister, Jer. A nephew Ervad Khurshed Sheriarjina is a well-known solicitor. He did not actively serve at Iranshah, though he was from one of the nine families, who were ordained the hereditary right to serve Iranshah, enter the inner sanctum and conduct the 'Boi' ceremony. He was involved in the sandalwood trade.

A well-read person, Dastoorji did a 'round-the-world' tour in the 1960s. One of the places he spoke about was his visit to Dresden University, where he talked of a life-size photo of Asho Zarathushtra, with a caption that read something like: "The Greatest Scientist ever on Earth."

A religious stalwart, a cornerstone of faith, and one who had the natural ability to instill the spark of religion in the most unbelieving person, in Dastoorji's tragic passing, Udvada and the holy fire at Iranshah will never be the same. May his ravan progress in peace.

- By Ervad Jamsheed B. Sidhwa

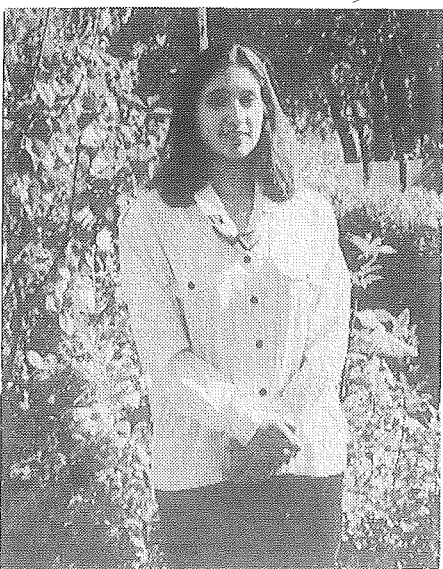
## EVENTS AND HONORS

**MAZDA ANTIA**, son of Ervad Kersey and Dilshad Antia of Chicago, recently returned after a five-month trip around the world. During his stay in India, he underwent the Martab training, which qualifies him for performing the 'inner ceremonies' of the Zarathushti religion.





Professor **NESS B. SHROFF**, [photo left] on the faculty of the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Purdue University, was awarded the "Career Award" to conduct fundamental research in high-speed ATM and Wireless networks. The award was given for his research on communication networks for the 21st century. Career Awards are made only to the very outstanding young faculty, nationwide, and replace previously established National Science Foundation awards including the Presidential Young Investigator Award. The \$210,000 award will be used to facilitate Dr. Shroff's research in creating efficient and cost-effective high-speed communication networks, to support applications for users from all walks of life, from children learning about the Web to scientists working on challenging problems requiring multiple supercomputers. An interesting aspect of this research is to free people from the shackles of geography – enable people to remotely see and communicate with each other as if they were in the same room. [Cont'd next page]



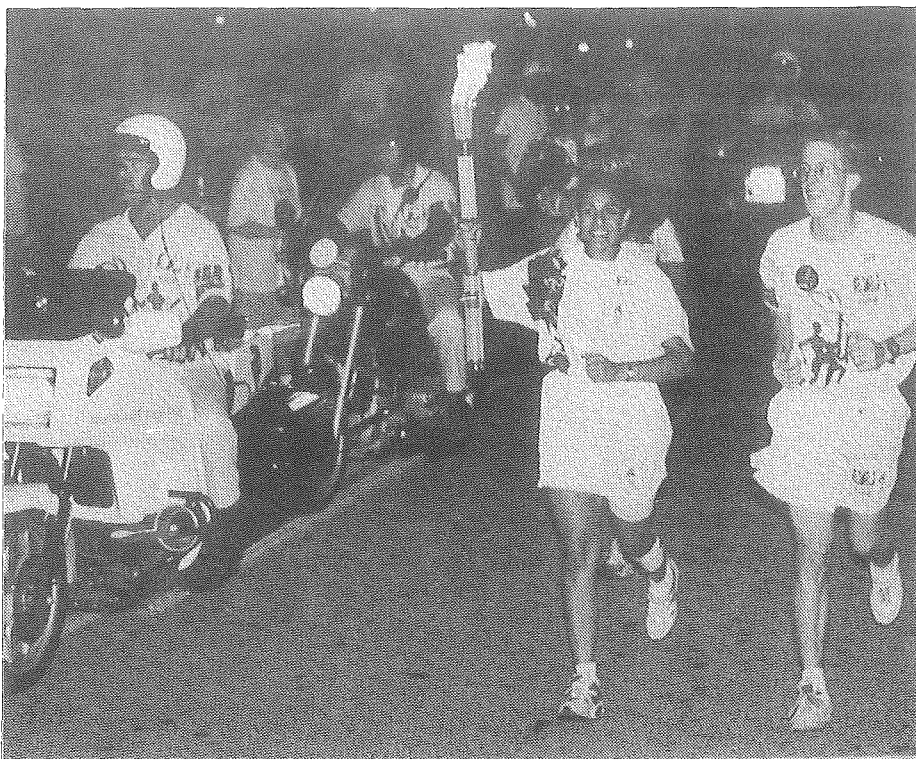
**ANITA SETHNA**, daughter of Dr. Beheruz (President of State University of West Georgia) and Madhavi Sethna, was selected to carry the 1996 Olympic torch [photo below] on its journey to the Olympic Stadium in Atlanta. Anita also played in the Olympic Band, which performed for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies at the 1996 Olympics.

Among the slew of honors bagged by the all-rounder Sethna who has consistently been scoring at the top in academics, in arts and music, in athletics and in beauty and talent shows, was the school's highest honor — the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Cup for the Best Overall Student. She was also voted by her class as the most talented academically, the most talented musically, the most likely to succeed, and most outstanding student. For the second year, Anita played in the All-State Honor Band, and has been rated among the top ten clarinetists in the State of Georgia.

Anita was selected as Miss Carrolton High School. She further advanced to the State level and won the Top Seven Award in the State-wide Georgia Junior Miss Competition. She is currently a President's Scholar at Georgia Tech, where she continues to hold the torch high, in college as she did in high school.

Representing Girl Guides of Canada, **FARIAL KERSI DESAI**, [photo above] of Quebec attended "Alpine Adventure '97" at Our Chalet in Switzerland in July. A Junior leader, in Guiding for 10 years, 17-year-old Farial was one of 13 girls chosen across Canada based on Guiding, academic and extra-curricular activities. Our Chalet in Abelboden, is one of the four World Centers owned by the World Association of Girl Guides.

**ZENOBIA MEHTA**, daughter of Kayomارش and Nergish Mehta of Chicago area, was recognized by the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago for her involvement in youth and children's programs, and for conducting the annual ZAC youth camps.



Ness came to the US in 1984, at the age of 17, and has an M.S.E. from the University of Pennsylvania, and an M. Phil. and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Columbia University. In 1994, he joined the faculty of the School of Besides the Career Award in 1996, Shroff has also received numerous research and equipment grants from the National Science Foundation, AT&T, Hewlett Packard, and the Purdue Research Foundation. His current research interests are in high speed broadband networks, wireless communication networks, and video coding. Ness is married to Jasmine, an Occupational Therapist. He is the son of Rati and Bomi Shroff of Mumbai, and father of Sanaya, 2 1/2, and Zarius, 5 months.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario presented a shawl to **ERVAD NOSHIR MIRZA** at the Shenshahi New Year celebrations on August 23, in recognition of his service to the community. President Moti Balsara presented an award (plaque) to **SAM VESUNA** for his "unstinting service to the community for many years."

**ZUBIN SURKARI** of Toronto was on the under-19 Canadian Team that traveled to Bermuda in July to compete in the 12th International Youth Tournament qualifier for the 1998 Junior World Cup to be played in South Africa.

## Our Scouts in Space

Scoutmaster Maneck F. Sattha's persistent letters to the authorities, finally paid off when NASA authorities at the Johnson Space Center in Houston accepted a photograph of the 100th Toronto Scout Group [see photo below] for flight aboard the US Space



Shuttle Atlantis, launched on March 22, 1996 from Kennedy Space Center. The photograph, which traveled 3.9 million miles in space was returned to the Toronto-based Zarathushti scout group, along with a certificate of authenticity and other mementos.



NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY  
STS-76

Presented To

**The First Zoroastrian Scout Group**

This Scout Photograph was flown aboard the United States Space Shuttle ATLANTIS, STS-76, March 22-31, 1996.

Launching from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, ATLANTIS completed 144 orbits, traveling 3.9 million nautical miles before landing on Runway 22 at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

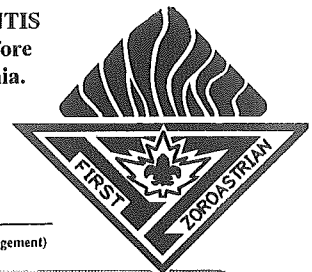


Signed and Sealed at the  
Johnson Space Center  
Houston, TX

May 2, 1996

*Susan H. Garman*

Susan H. Garman, Associate Director (Management)



# FEZANA

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