

FEZANA JOURNAL

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BAHAR 1367 YZ

Mah Fravardin-Ardibehest-Khordad 1367 YZ (Fasli)

Mah Avan-Adar-Daye 1367 YZ (Shenshai)

Mah Adar-Daye-Bahman 1367 YZ (Kadmi)

THE GATHAS OF ZARATHUSHTRA IN HISTORY, RELIGION AND LIFE

*Now will I speak; Give ear and mind as well,
All ye, who come from near and far to learn,
Remember well these clear Truths, I teach;
Never again shall evil teachers seek
Life to destroy, nor offer unto dupes
With specious words the pleasant paths of wrong.*

[Yasna 45.1, translation by Taraporewala]

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LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

My term as President of FEZANA will be over in July 1998. I would have completed two terms of two years, four years in all. It has been a very rewarding experience. And though many may not agree with term limitations for officers, I personally think it is very healthy to have new infusion of ideas and energy. By the time you read this issue of the Journal, the call for nominations for the President of FEZANA will be out and you, through your association will need to make the choice of whom you want, to lead the community into the next millennium. But before you vote for a leader you need to reflect and decide on what you want for the community. What direction you want the future to take. Perhaps the article Mehran Sepehri has written entitled "Leapfrogging into the Next Millennium" may help clarify some of the issues involved in leadership.

FEZANA was established 10 years ago as an umbrella organization and as Mehran says it was "a huge umbrella to cover everyone and a strong one at that to shield against the storms" of the last decade. It was conceived as "a central point of contact and clearinghouse to pursue the common denominator of Zarathushti associations; the main focus was on fundamental tasks and urgent needs of the times."

The leadership of the 20th century has helped achieve its objectives. But in the 21st century, the focus moves from "survival" to "revival". The focus now moves "beyond mere existence" to empowerment and establishment. And in keeping with this "FEZANA now needs to redefine its vision and priorities, to break new grounds and bring in new levels of excitement." The Federation now needs to be more directional creating "new milestones and new foundations overlooking the rainbow of

ideas." It needs leadership to deal with social issues confronting the community and find creative solutions based on Zarathushti principles.

We need a leader who will help the community to grow and prosper and establish permanent roots on this continent.



But why do I say FEZANA must "run forward with greater and far reaching programs"? Because the 21st century belongs to the next generation. Quoting Mehran: "Youth congresses and youth events sell out months in advance, while ordinary functions organized by the associations are not popular. Why is it that youth are not interested in conventional gatherings, but show tremendous interest in certain issues and new ideas. How come a one-day walk-a-thon in Northern California generates thousands of dollars when our other critical funds are drying out?"

We need a leader who will harness this energy to the benefit of the community. Status quo is no longer appealing to the needs and intellects of the new Zarathushti generation on this continent.

As the new millennium unfolds, and as the next Zarathushti generation takes over, a new leadership needs to

be found to embrace the new generation where status quo is unacceptable, and going back is unthinkable; where the dreams of yesterday will become the realities of tomorrow. FEZANA has to move beyond the "paperwork and status quo" to find lasting solutions to the realities of the 21st century. Let us find that leader with a vision, a mission and enthusiasm, to motivate the community to move forwards towards a goal.

And once we have found that person we must give our support. I have been most fortunate in having the cooperation, advice and assistance from some very able, dedicated, sincere and intellectually honest Zarathushtis who value the community and its potential. Some have contributed with ideas, others with task completion and infrastructure establishments. Let me end with a quote from Henry Ford:

"Coming together is a beginning,
Keeping together is progress,
Working together is success."

And success is what we all want for FEZANA. The 21st century belongs to the Zarathushtis of North America.

Dolly Dastoor
President, FEZANA

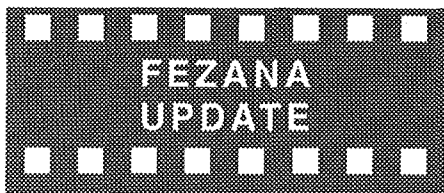
FEZANA JOURNAL

wishes readers

a

Happy & Prosperous

Navruz



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

From the Secretary: Renewing the Thousand Points of Light

Per the FEZANA Constitution, the Secretary holds and maintains all books and records of the Federation, and keeps a permanent record of all correspondence, all Federation and Committee minutes, policy statements, reports and other pertinent data.

This column is dedicated to publicizing FEZANA's internal decisions and news of importance to the general audience, providing perspectives on current and ongoing programs, and responding to frequently asked questions. Please send your FEZANA-related inquiries to the Secretary for response in this column.

Last year was a year of sustained progress, reflection and continued involvement for FEZANA and Zarathushtis of North America. Many significant events in 1997 brought us closer and stronger as a whole. Adults and youth participated in community affairs in record numbers, and the Zarathushti name was further recognized by our host communities in North America.

The newly born Zoroastrian Association of the Rocky Mountains became the 22nd Member of FEZANA. The communities of Atlanta, Florida and North Arizona took steps to organize formally. Continued progress was achieved at the Colorado AGM in July 1997; the 1998 Congress in New York and the Year 2000 World Congress in Houston are well under way.

Tremendous work has been accomplished by the various committees of

FEZANA. The renewed Sports Committee and the Youth Committee (ZYNA) took huge steps forward. FEZANA Journal, a symbol of Zarathushti excellence, continued celebrating the history and success of North American Zarathushtis, while at the same time bringing us glimpses of our heritage and traditions.

The discussion on the proposed World Council of Zoroastrian Federations and the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) became an opportunity for soul-searching and reflection. Associations took it very seriously and responded with an extra-ordinary 100% return vote and some excellent direction towards the formation of a single, unified, world body.

Many Associations had unique and highly educational events in 1997. I had the pleasure of attending events in Vancouver, Toronto, Southern California, Boston, Northern California, Chicago, Washington, DC, and others. That made me feel "proud to be a Zarathushti."

The work of the Iranian Mobeds' Council and the North American Mobeds' Council, the Avesta Conference in Boston, the Zarathushti Business Conference in Las Vegas, the ZSO 25th Anniversary celebrations in Toronto, the Azargan Festival in Los Angeles, a 'walkathon' for the Darbe Mehr in Northern California, numerous seminars in Vancouver, Houston, and other cities, youth programs, and much more, were all signs of community growth and dedication.

The video "Paradise", creation of Zarathushti youth, brought a sense of pride. Many other projects renewed the sense of Zarathushti 'Thousand Points of Light'. Last but not the least, Pallan Ichaporia brought all of us a Christmas present, with his offer of \$250,000 towards a consecrated Atash Adaran – a giant step forward to re-establish our traditions and community bonds.

*Mehran Sepehri
FEZANA Secretary*

Towards a Truly Representative Apex World Body

The following is a letter written by FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor to FEZANA Member Associations, Small Groups and Committees.

I have received the votes back from each of the 22 associations of the Federation to the motion proposed at the AGM, August 1997, in Crestone, that "FEZANA join the World Council of Zarathushti Federations as a founding member and that all relevant documentation be sent to member associations and the vote be returned by mail ballot by December 1, 1997."

The vote. We have a total of 54 eligible votes. The simple majority needed to pass the motion was 50% plus 1, i.e. 28 votes. The votes received were:

20.71 votes for the motion
28.14 votes against the motion
5.14 votes abstained

The motion is defeated.

The direction. This issue has generated a lot of awareness and discussion within the community and the voting was taken very seriously. There has been a 100% response from all the associations and I thank you for it.

Almost all the Associations have felt that the current structure of WZO is not adequate for a world body as it is not properly representative and the proposed amendments do not go far enough. The prevailing sentiment from each of the Associations was in favor of only **one truly representative apex world body** which would be capable of representing the Zarathushti community on issues requiring political, humanitarian or doctrinal intervention.

It was felt that a world body must be more inclusive, and have representation from the Mobeds' Councils, as

well as from the Institutes of Learning all over the world. It was the wish of all, that the proponents of both WCZF and WZO should dialog and come up with a viable solution within a specific time frame, which would be satisfactory to all.

Given this sentiment of our Associations in North America, and the sentiment prevailing in other parts of the world as well, I would strongly urge the leadership of WZO as well as of the still to be formed WCZF, to show vision, flexibility and foresightedness by taking this opportunity to dialog with each other, to find a viable organizational solution, which would result in the community getting **one fully representative World Body** which would speak for all — individuals, associations and federations.

I also strongly urge the leadership of WZO to correct the perception, right or wrong, which is generally prevalent, of an "entrenched management" as mentioned by several Associations. I trust that the leadership of WZO will interpret this vote as a measure of goodwill of the North American community, to transform WZO into a truly representative world body encompassing the basic principles of WCZF, namely that the several associations that now exist should have proper representation in the global affairs of the community in one world body.

I hope that the dialog initiated towards that end by Adi Davar with Rohinton Rivetna in August 1997 and since pursued by them in November 1997 can lead to the proponents of WZO and WCZF to realize this community objective. I would like to offer my services to both, in achieving this objective.

I thank Rohinton Rivetna for all his hard work and perseverance in promoting and sensitizing the community to the concept of a hierarchical representation through a World Council of Zarathushti Federations.

Followup on World Body

At the AGM of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, held in January 1998 in Indore, India, the issue of forming a World Council of Zoroastrian Federations was discussed. In a prepared statement read out by Rohinton Rivetna, it was mentioned that in the interest of harmony and unity within the community, and in light of the vote in FEZANA, not to join the council as a founding member, but rather to strengthen the existing world body to ensure meaningful and harmonious participation by both individuals and federations in the global affairs of the community, a dialog had been initiated between Rohinton Rivetna and Rumi Sethna, President, WZO, by two elders from North America.

Members of the Indian Federation supported this initiative and encouraged the proponents of both views to continue this dialog in a constructive manner moving towards finding a solution at restructuring. There would be full consultation with interested individuals on both sides. Once a viable model of a reformed world structure through the proposed restructuring of WZO was developed, it would be presented to members of the Indian Federation and to FEZANA for comments.

It is encouraging to note that the FEZANA vote has acted as a catalyst to change the approach to problem-solving; from a debate to a dialog mode. With a positive attitude and political goodwill and vision, I am sure that an operative formula will be found which will benefit and serve the global Zarathushti community for years to come. The global community will be watching the developments anxiously in the next few months.

- Dolly Dastoor

[Also see "From debate to Dialog" in *Around the World*, in this issue].

New Board of California Zoroastrian Association

The Zoroastrian Association of California has elected a new Board:

Dolly Malva – *President*
Zubin Heeramanek – *Vice President*
Havi Lilaowala – *Program chair*
Shirin Tehrani – *Treasurer*
Zubin Khambatta – *Secretary*
Gordafriid Aresh – *Secretary*
Michelle Camay – *Youth Director*

All correspondence may be addressed to Dolly Malva, 9509 Casanes Avenue, Downey, CA 90240, Tel: (562) 861-3209.

Call for nominations for FEZANA officers

A letter has been sent to all FEZANA Member Associations to nominate candidates for election for the offices of President, Treasurer and Assistant Secretary for a two-year term beginning July 1998. As the term for the current president and treasurer expire in July, though it will be hard to fill their shoes, it is critical to nominate and elect new leaders to move FEZANA forward into the 21st century.

FEZANA Vice President, Framroze Patel has submitted his resignation. Therefore we will also elect a Vice-President for a one-year term in FEZANA AGM in July 1998.

Please contact your Association to participate in this search for new FEZANA officers, and urge deserving and competent leaders in your community to run for any of the four available FEZANA offices.

Mehran Sepehri
FEZANA Secretary

Demography of North American Zarathushtis

[Look for Census Form enclosed in this issue of FEZANA Journal]

A Census Form is enclosed in this issue of the Journal. This will be the last attempt to collect demographic information for the next decade. We very sincerely hope that our community members will cooperate and give us the data we need, particularly the year of birth. This information will be kept confidential and will only be used for statistical purposes.

Next FEZANA AGM will be on July 1 and 2, in Ryebrook, New York [see p.10]

گپ فارسی

آری باتفاق جهان میتوان گرفت

با همکاری دکترمهران سپهری دبیر فزانا

شادباش نوروزی : فرارسیدن ایام بهار، جشن باستانی نوروز و زایش اشو زرتشت را صمیمانه بهمه همکیشان و ایرانیان تبریک می گوئیم. بهارتان پر گل، نوروزتان پیروز، و هر روزتان نوروز باد.

هدف از این ستون : به خواسته گروهی از زرتشتیان ایرانی، از این شماره، این ستون ویژه نوشتار به زبان فارسی خواهد بود. لطفا خبرها، پرسشها و گفتار خود را برای چاپ و پاسخ به این ستون بفرستید.

جواب به نامه ها : فرزانه خداداد لهراسب از ونکوور خواستار توجه بیشتر به فرهنگ ایرانی شد. پیشنهادات و انتقادات رسیده در هیات اجرایی فزانا بررسی خواهد شد.

ویدیو پارادایس : این نمایش جالب و آموزنده به کوشش جوانان شهریار و شروین شهریاری تهیه شده است. برای تهیه ویدیو این نمایش تاریخی لطفا با شماره ۶۱۹۹-۶۸۴-۶۰۴ تماس بگیرید.

فداراسیون انجمن های زرتشتی آمریکای شمالی "فزانا" : این سازمان فداراسیون پوششی ۲۲ انجمن زرتشتی در امریکا و کانادا است که با تصویب قاطع کنگره زرتشتیان در سال ۱۹۸۶ تشکیل شد و شروع به کار کرد. اهداف مهم فزانا شامل هماهنگی فعالیت های انجمن های زرتشتیان در امریکای شمالی، پیشبرد اهداف جامعه و دین زرتشتی، و برگزاری سمینار و کنگره خواهد بود.

انتخابات اعضا هیات مجریه فزانا : در چند ماه آینده رئیس، معاون، و خزانه دار فزانا به رای اکثریت انجمن های عضو انتخاب خواهند شد. لازم است که در این موقعیت مهم ایرانیان زرتشتی نیز پیش قدم شده، و خود و یا افراد شایسته و کاردان را معرفی و انتخاب نمایند، چون که سازمان فزانا متعلق به همه زرتشتیان امریکای شمالی است.

گاهنامه پیک مهر : این نشریه ارزنده به همت فرزانه دکتر مهران شهریاری از ونکوور منتشر می شود شامل خبرها و مقالات اجتماعی و دینی با ارزش است. برای اطلاعات و اشتراک لطفا با شماره ۷۵۵۰-۹۸۶-۶۰۴ تماس بگیرید.

پیک کنکاش : کنکاش موبدان ایرانی امریکای شمالی سازمانی است که بدون هیچگونه چشمداشتی در آموزشهای والای اشوزرتشت کوشا است. لطفا با موبد گرامی فریبرز جمشیدی ۲۷۳۵-۳۴۸-۷۱۴ تماس بگیرید.

ماهنامه مرکز زرتشتیان کالیفرنیا : این نشریه به سردبیری موبد بهرام شهزادی هر دو ماه منتشر می شود لطفا با ۴۷۳۷-۸۹۳-۷۱۴ تماس بگیرید.

کتاب های فارسی : مربوط به فرهنگ زرتشتی به قلم استاد جمشید پیشدادی. تلفن ۸۲۲۹-۳۵۸-۴۰۸، انتشار یافت.

We anticipate that we will be successful in collecting extensive demographic data for our community. In anticipation of this, we have planned the first session at the Eleventh North American Congress to be on Demography, where we intend to present the following: current demographics and projections; age profile of the community; profile of professions; geographic distribution; number of Zarathushtis born in North America; and percentages of marriages with both or one Zarathushti spouse.

It is very important that we unite and collect information that is timely and relevant. Our success depends on

your cooperation. **Please fill out and return the Census Form enclosed in this issue of the Journal.**

For information contact: Noshir Langrana (609) 275-9154 or Anahita Sidhwa (972) 462-1553.

1998 North American Directory Project

Preparations are under way for the publication of *Zoroastrians in North America Directory and Yellow Pages*, 2nd Edition. It will be available at the Eleventh North American Congress, to be hosted by ZAGNY, July 2, 1998. We need cooperation from everyone on this project to

make it successful. This second edition will be similar to the first in format. Local associations will collect the data. We are sending a Windows 95 diskette to all associations, requesting them to enter their listings and send the diskette back to us by March 31st. We will integrate the data and publish the directory.

This effort was successful two years ago, and we had 6455 names in the directory. We are hoping that this time we will get even more enthusiastic cooperation, and the directory will include over 10,000 names.

Noshir Langrana
FEZANA Directory Project

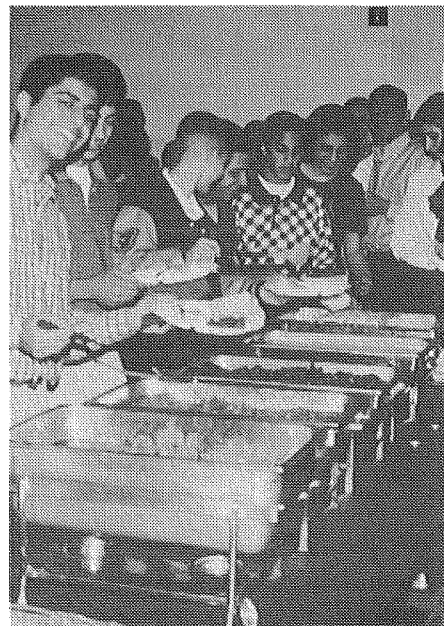
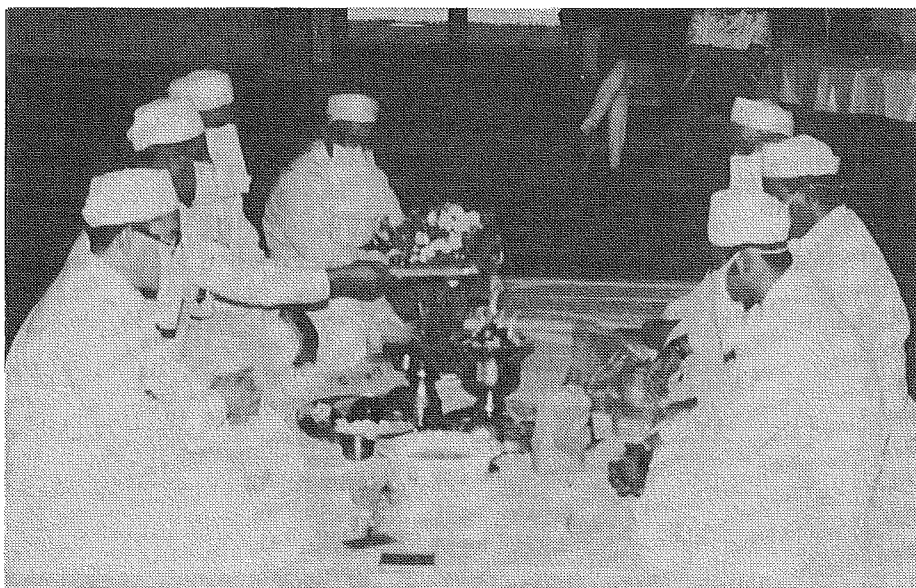
A Gathering of Houston Zarathushtis

When Katy Patel woke up on December 21, 1997, she knew her promise to herself to make *torans* (flower garlands) would be fulfilled that day. Just as she and her husband Piloos threaded 300 multi-color giant carnations for the building's various doors, other volunteers joined in decorating: some arranged center pieces of gold fish and flowers while others put chalk outside the doorways.

The torans, chalk and goldfish soon welcomed 240 Houstonian Zarathushtis. Young and old had gathered. As people entered, they greeted each other and looked around with a wonder and freshness that had long been missed. Why such a celebration of life on the winter solstice? Why were families greeting and congratulating each other?

On December 21, 1997, the *Zarathushti Culture and Heritage Center* opened in Houston, Texas. Although an official opening is yet to come (on April 10th – invitations are being sent to all the Associations), a Jashan was held in December. This religious ceremony was more than a success; it was luminous. Perhaps it was the gorgeous torans. Perhaps it was the flowers and fish table decorations. Perhaps it was Kaemarz Dotiwala's and Katy Irani's meticulous planning. Or perhaps it was that the Jashan started on time!

Led by Bomanshah Sanjana, mobeds Shapur Pavri, Maneck Sidhwa, Farrokh Desai, Bomi Zarolia, Kurush Sanjana and Burjor Desai performed the Jashan, inviting all to attend and enjoy the festivities. Afterwards, the guests enjoyed Kerry Lashkari's dhan dar, kid-boti, murghi and rava. The delicious food was consumed as



With extraordinary work and infinite patience, a dream is built.

Above, Jashan ceremony commemorating the completion of construction of Houston's Zarathushti Culture and Heritage Center. Below, from left, young Houstonians enjoying the dhan dar; Katy Patel and Freny Sanjana decorating the doorways with chalk.

quickly as congratulations were extended. No single person was awarded all the compliments; rather, families congratulated each other as contributors.

The Center, which was first conceived in 1981, was finally constructed. And the gathering at the Jashan reminded everyone that with extraordinary work and infinite patience,

dreams can be built. There is no better evidence of this maxim than the Center itself which took 16 years to complete.

Were so many years of late night meetings and early morning arguments worth it? Let's just say that prayers never sounded sweeter.

*Aban Rustomji,
Houston, Texas*

Parsi and Irani mobeds together celebrate Mehrgan in Southern California

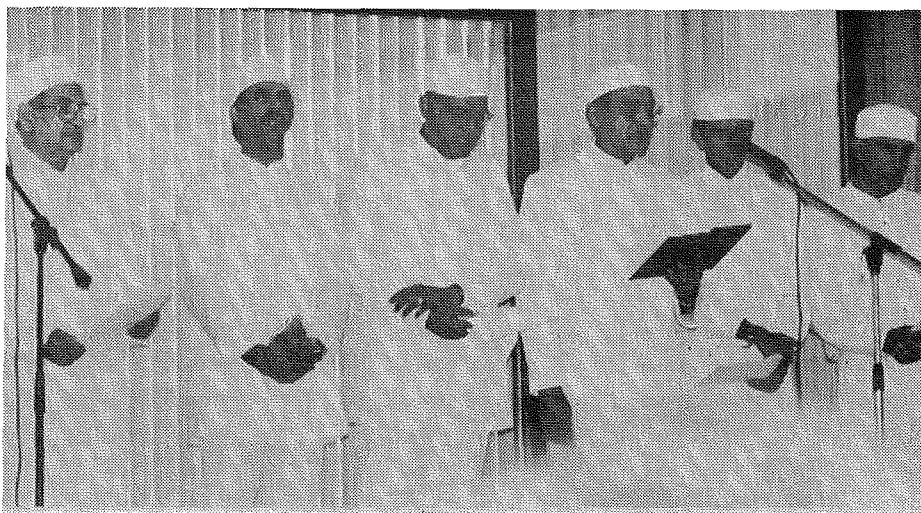
On Sunday, October 5th, Mehrgan was celebrated at the California Zoroastrian Center in Westminster. The celebration started with a prayer (Meher Niyaeshe) recited by Irani and Parsi mobeds [photo right] together for the first time in Southern California. Mobeds Bahram Shahzadi, Fari-borz Shahzadi along with eleven para and to-be para mobeds prayed jointly with Mobed Dr. Khushru Unwalla and Mobed Zarir Bhandara. This joint prayer was concluded with a speech by Mobed Bhandara. A talent show and variety entertainment program followed, including dances, plays, skits and poems recited by the Farsi Class students welcoming Autumn and giving the message of love, friendship and happiness.

The history of Mehrgan was read by Mobed Shahzadi. A karate demonstration was followed by a Lion King dance which was performed by the junior Zarathushtis (under 5). A nostalgic evening, filled with fun and frolic, ended on a very high festive spirit with a rendition of 'daklama' – I am Iranian by Gilda Kosravi. Decorations, sound and lights were provided by Sosan Yeganegi.

"Z Cruise 97" – a popular ZYNA event

The Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA) officially completed their first event for 1997: **Z Cruise 97** [see photo right]. In addition to having an extraordinary and unique experience, the youth attending left with a strong feeling of cohesiveness and unity.

Z Cruise commenced with a nice night of dancing and fun in Miami's incredible South Beach. The next three days were on board Carnival Cruises, with one sunny day in Nassau, Bahamas. The cruise included lots of dancing, singing, games and festivities. Three workshops and a recognition affair were held on board. The workshops were: "Goal



for Z-Cruise 97" by Arman Teherani and Anahita Parsi; "101 Ways to Renew the World" by Jasmine Patel; and "Self-confidence and the Young Zoroastrian" by Rostam Namdari.

The workshops were well-attended and thought-provoking, and served to promote inquiry and reflection among the youth.

The final three days were spent in Boca Raton, Florida with the very gracious Miami Zoroastrians Group. Perry Unwalla, youth leader in South Florida, set up the attendees with

host families and gave all of the youth a wonderful time in South Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, and Boca Raton. Special thanks to Darab and Nellie Unwalla for the most magnificent New Year's Party they held for the cruise participants and the South Florida Zarathushtis. The cruise was both a learning and an exciting experience. The Z Cruise was hopefully a step in the direction of a stronger, more cohesive bond, and a higher level of unity among the youth.

- Arianne Teherani

Deep Freeze in Canada. Several Zarathushti families, including FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor, were forced out of their homes for days due to power outages and lack of heat or electricity and at times, telephones, caused by fierce ice storms in the Canadian Maritimes, eastern Ontario and Quebec, in January. Transportation was hindered due to cars freezing up and ice on the roads. It is heartening to note that all the affected families were offered hospitality at the homes of other Zarathushtis.

ZAMWI Kids' Club **A recipe for success**

The growing popularity of Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington's Kids' Club seems to be due to enthusiastic planning and ingenuity of Brig. Behram Panthaki and his band of coordinators. They decided to correlate American holidays, festivals and traditions with Zarathushti counterparts. When Halloween and All Saints came around in October, the kids learned about our *Farvardegan*. In November, during the American Thanksgiving, they learned about the ancient yet familiar Zarathushti custom, the *Jashan*.

Later in the year, the kids learned more about our seasonal thanksgiving festivals, the *Gahambars*. In December, at the Winter Solstice, they enjoyed games and stories of *Yalda*. At Christmas they learned about the *birth of Asho Zarathushtra*. Along with the advent of the New Year in January, the three Zarathushti calendars and their historical evolution were introduced.

In preparation for *Jashan-e-Sadeh* in February, they learned of King

Hooshang's discovery of fire and its significance in Firdowsi's *Shah Nama*. In March, the kids learned about the Spring celebration, *Navruz*, started by King Jamsheed, its place in the calendar (New Year's Day) and its significance as a *Gahambar*, they also learned of the importance of the five *Gatha days* and the ten *Mukhtad days* preceding the celebration.

Incorporated into the kids' class meetings are lessons of universal Zarathushti traits, such as prayer, respect, honesty, integrity, discipline and individual and community service.

New York Darbe Mehr celebrates 20th anniversary

The Mayor of the city of New Rochelle graced the 20th anniversary celebration of the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr near New York, in December 1997, which was well attended by members of both New York area associations, ZAGNY and IZA.

After a *Jashan*, ZAGNY President Gev Nentin welcomed guests. Erach Munshi, Shirin Kiamanesh, Prof. K.

D. Irani and Dr. Lovji Cama gave brief accounts of the inception of the Darbe Mehr and acknowledged the generosity of the donors Arbab Rustom and Morvarid Guiv.

Awards were given to graduates of the religious classes, and the efforts of Dean Dr. Lovji Cama and all the teachers were amply recognized. Fitting tribute was paid to late Ivy Gandhi for her commitment to the religious classes.

Fundraising for Dallas area Zarathushti Center

The Dallas-based Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (ZANT) is making steady progress towards its goal of having a Zarathushti Center in North Texas by December 2000.

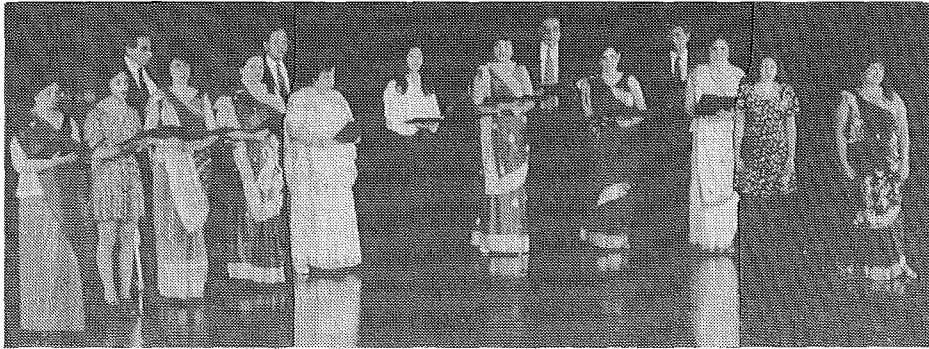
With numerous fund-raising activities, including a food stall at the Carrollton Country Fair, a dhansakh Picnic in the Park, and a Coupon-Passbooks sale, the ZANT Building Committee has surpassed its 1997 fund-raising goal of \$22,500, and is appealing to every family to contribute \$40 per month, to reach its target of \$35,000 by Navruz 1998. ■

The Sanjan Story – a Legend to Live By

Whether you're a skeptic, whether you're a believer
In legends and myths, stories and a miracle
As Zarathushtis, we know the story of the bowl of milk and sugar
That gave us asylum in Sanjan, India, a thousand years ago!
This is a crowded world, like Jadi Rana's full bowl of milk
It would have been easy to turn back the band of newcomers
But Naryosang Dhaval dropped some sugar in the bowl
And we tried hard to live in peace and harmony like milk and sugar.
We landed in Sanjan and grew and prospered
Pak Iranshah was installed as Ahura Mazda's beacon.
May we always remember the legend of the bowl of milk and sugar
As we grow and prosper in our new homeland of North America.

- Message to FEZANA Journal readers from a well-wisher

INTERFAITH CONNECTIONS



The Chicago Zarathushti Choir sang two devotional songs in Gujarati ("Mubarak, Mubarak, Mubarak" and "Khodavind Khavind") at the "Sounds of Harmony" inter-religious concert featuring music of the spiritual and religious communities of Chicago, sponsored by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions at Medinah Temple on November 9th. The \$25 a ticket program featured singer Arlo Guthrie, along with music and dancing from other faith communities – Native American, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist, Jain, Hindu and Christian. Since its formation, just this year, the choir has sung at a number of interfaith programs, and at navjotes and weddings.

NCC wrestles with religious pluralism

The National Council of Churches, representing 34 Christian denominations with 50 million churchgoers, met in November to discuss, among other issues, a program to educate Christians about other religions in America. The story [Washington Post, November 15, 1997] reports: "As a first step, the NCC polled assembly delegates on what they see at issue in promoting relations with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and Zoroastrians...". The Council would like a policy in two years. The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI) has written to the Council offering input regarding the Zarathushti religion.

Zarathushti holidays in Washington Post

Two Zarathushti holidays, Yalda (on December 20) and Zarathushtra's Death Anniversary (on December 26th) were among religious holidays in December described in an article in the Religion Section of *The Washington Post* [December 6, 1997].

The article carries a picture of the Fravashi, with the following text:

"ZOROASTRIANISM. This ancient Persian religion has influenced many traditions, including Christianity and Judaism, particularly with its monotheism and its belief that the world is a battlefield for the forces of Light and Darkness. In the final days, Good will vanquish Evil and the world will be purified by a bath of molten metal. God, or Ahura Mazda, will resurrect the dead and establish a kingdom on Earth. The dominant religion in Persia until the Muslim takeover 1,300 years ago, Zoroastrianism today claims more than 100,000 adherents. The name is the Greek for Zarathushtra, the religion's founding prophet, whose disputed lifetime is placed by modern scholars in the 6th century BCE."

Edmonton Hospital Staff learns about the Zarathushti religion

The Royal Alexandra Hospital of Edmonton, Alberta, invited Firdosh Mehta to speak to their staff on Zarathushti doctrines, beliefs, history and explanation of ceremonies, and to educate the staff about the care and health requirements as practiced in the Zarathushti faith.

Below, Behram Deboo, President of the Zoroastrian Society of Washington State read passages from the Zarathushti scriptures at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Washington. His wife, Manijeh, in a traditional Iranian costume, recited a Persian monajat.



Firdosh Mehta also made a presentation on the importance of "Light" at the Edmonton Interfaith Center on December 2.

Interfaith learning and worship series

Yezdi Rustomji presented a lecture on the Religion of Zarathushtra at the series of Interfaith Learning and Worship Experiences organized by the Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, on February 8th. This series aims at creating understanding and knowledge of all faiths. A short Jashan demonstration was given by Ervads Shapur Pavri, Bomanshaw Sanjana and Kurush Sanjana, followed by a question and answer session.

COMING EVENTS

Upcoming Festivals

<i>Meher nu Parab</i>	Tue Feb 3(K)
Mah Meher - Meher	Thu Mar 5(S)
<i>Ayathrem Gahambar</i>	Fri Feb 13(K)
Mah Meher-Ashtad	Sun Mar 15(S)
<i>Farvardegan (Panj-i-Meh)</i>	
Five Gatha days	Mar 16-20(F)
<i>Char-Shanbe-Soori</i>	Tue Mar 17(F)
Tuesday before NoRuz	
<i>NoRuz (F) & Jamshedi Navroze (S,K)</i>	
Mah Fravardin-Hormazd	Sat Mar 21
<i>Khordad Sal</i>	Thu Mar 26(F)
Mah Fravardin-Khordad	
<i>Ava Ardisoor Parab</i>	Fri Feb 27(K)
Mah Avan-Avan	Sun Mar 29(S)
<i>Farvardegan</i>	Wed Apr 8(F)
Mah Fravardin-Fravardin	
<i>Atash Nu Parab</i>	Sat Mar 28(K)
Mah Adar-Adar	Mon Apr 27(S)
<i>Maidyozarem Gahambar (F)</i>	
Mah Ardibehest-Khorshed	Thu Apr 30
<i>Maidyarem Gahambar</i>	Mon May 4(K)
Mah Daye-Meher	Wed Jun 3(S)
<i>Maidyoshem Gahambar</i>	
Mah Tir-Khorshed	Mon Jun 29(F)
<i>Jashne Tirgan</i>	
Mah Tir-Tir	Wed Jul 1(F)

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

1998 FEZANA AGM

The 1998 FEZANA Annual General meeting will be held on Wednesday July 1st, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and Thursday July 2nd, 8 am to noon, at the Rye Town Hilton, in Rye Brook, NY, just prior to the Eleventh North American Zoroastrian Congress. There will be a dinner social at the Darbe Mehr in New Rochelle on July 1st at 7:00 pm. Notice of the AGM, with the agenda, will be sent to all FEZANA Associations, Committees and Officers. Guests are welcome to attend as observers.

WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS 2000

Houston, Texas

December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001

The first contribution, of \$1000, from the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, starts the fund-raising for Congress 2000

The Executive Committee of the Seventh World Zarathushti Congress in the year 2000, co-chaired by Dolly Dastoor and Homi Davier met in Houston on January 10th, and made good progress towards preparing a timeline and plans of action for this millennium event. The theme of Congress 2000 will be:

2001 – A Zarathushti Odyssey

The organizing committee in Houston has been meeting regularly to plan the local arrangements for Congress 2000. The venue has been selected to be the **J. C. Marriott Hotel** in the Galleria area of Houston. The price has been locked in until the year 2000.

Congress 2000 will lead the World Zarathushti community into the new millennium and into the New World, as the first world congress in North America, will be the place to celebrate our Zarathushti talents – in the fields of arts, science, sport, literature and music.

Please join us in the planning of Congress 2000. Participate and share your ideas. To volunteer, please call Congress 2000 Co-chairs: Dolly Dastoor (514) 656-2036 or Homi Davier (713) 339-2222.

IN COMING ISSUES OF FEZANA JOURNAL ...

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, email: ajehan@aol.com.

Submission deadline is April 1, to Jehan Bagli.

Fall (September) 1998:

Mobeds and Darbe Mehrs of North America

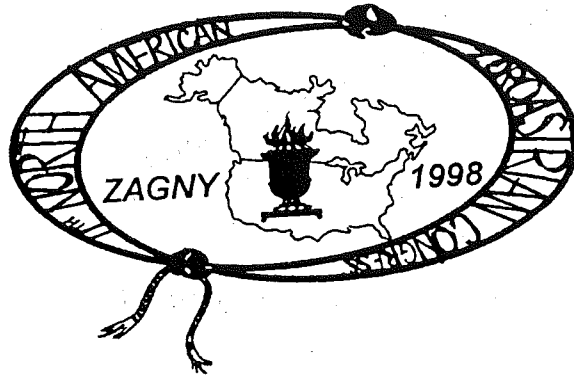
Submission deadline is July 1.

Celebrating Atash nu Parab

Adar mah and *Adar roz* is celebrated by Parsis as *Atash nu Parab* or *Adar Yazad nu Parab*, in honor of Adar Yazad, who presides over the sacred fire. It falls on the ninth day of the ninth month of the Zarathushti calendar.

Houses are cleaned and given a fresh coat of paint, especially the kitchen, where the 'house fire' is kept. A small garland of fresh flowers adorns

the picture of an afarganyu (fire vase) on the wall. Sandalwood is offered and the family prays *Atash Niyaeshe* by the fire. Zarathushtis also visit the Iranshah Fire Temple in Udvada, and offer prayers, as an annual pilgrimage, or go to their local agiaries or Atash Behrams. Even in North America, many Associations organize Jashans at the Darbe Mehr.



A SPECIAL INVITATION FROM ZAGNY TO ATTEND
THE ELEVENTH NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS

Rye Town Hilton, Rye Brook, New York

“The Zoroastrian Commitment in the North American Context”

Thursday, July 2 Workshops

Friday, July 3 Opening Ceremony

Demography - Dr. N. A. Langrana

Faith and Community - Prof. K. D. Irani

Awards Luncheon

Beliefs, Devotion and Prayers - Dr. J. Bagli

Youth Night

Saturday, July 4 Personal Rituals in a Meaningful Context - Mr. F. K. Patel

Social Structure in the Zoroastrian Community - Dr. F. Mehr

Intra and Interfaith Marriages - Dr. L. Cama

Banquet Dinner

Sunday, July 5 Community Enhancement and Preservation - Mrs. K. Jungalwalla

Closing Ceremony

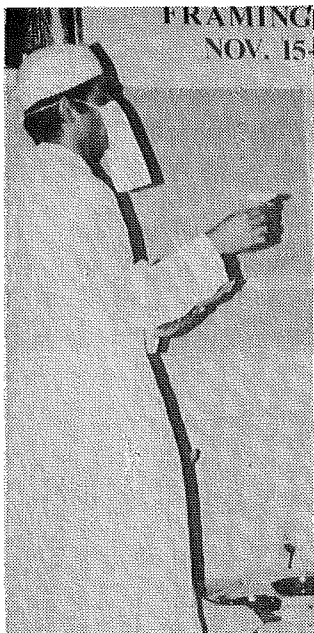
Open House at the Darbe Mehr

Registration: Before April 30 – \$140 \$100 for full-time students
 After April 30 – \$175 \$125 for full-time students
 Contact Minu D. Dutia at (914) 623-7479

Advertisements: \$50 (business card) – \$1500 (cover)
 Contact Teshtar Irani (718) 592-3657

Hosted by: Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY)

Co-chairs: Gev Nentin Noshir Langrana
 (516) 462-0763 (609) 275-9154



The First International Avesta Conference

By Hannah M. G. Shapero
Washington, D.C.

Below, Conference sponsors and organizers: Sarosh Manekshaw, Director, ZERS; Parastu Dubash, co-chair, ZAGBA Conference Host Committee; Khorshed Jungalwala, Director, ZERS and chair, ZAGBA Conference Host Committee; Dolly Dastoor, FEZANA President; and Dr. Pallan Ichaporia, Chairman, ZERS.



The First International Avesta Conference was held November 15-17, 1997, on a chilly, snowy November weekend in Framingham, Massachusetts, near Boston. Despite the heavy snow storms across the Eastern half of the US on Friday, most participants were able to make their way to the Conference. The scene was the fanciful Sheraton Tara Hotel, which was designed with imitation Tudor half-timbers, 'Gothic' brickwork, and castle-like turrets and crenelations – an amusing pastiche of English medieval architecture, housing a conference on ancient Persia.

The planning, operation and management of the conference was done by an expert team of Zarathushtis, all comprising the Zoroastrian Education and Research Society (ZERS). This team included Boston residents Khorshed and Firoze Jungalwala, Houston resident Sarosh Manekshaw, and ZERS Chairman and Chairman of the Avesta Conference, Dr. Pallan Ichaporia. The hosting and local organization was done by a dedicated team of Zarathushtis from the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston (ZAGBA).

As a longterm convention-goer, I know how difficult it is to organize any convention. It is even more difficult for an international conference of more than five countries and over twenty-five speakers. Dr. Ichaporia's and Khorshed Jungalwala's organizing experience and management skills were most effective in assembling an impressive constellation of the best Zarathushti scholars from around the world.

The conference began on Saturday morning with a Jashan, a celebratory ceremony featuring four chanting priests in white vestments, and a real fire. The prayers established an atmosphere of peace and blessing for the subsequent series of lectures.

Both reformist and traditional viewpoints were represented; throughout the conference, there was a refreshing lack of anger and bitterness. There was certainly controversy and some heated discussion, but no intemperate behavior.

I will recount each presentation, for each man (there were no women speakers, though there were women 'session chairs' giving introductions) had something interesting to say relevant to the progress of Zarathushti knowledge and culture.

The first speaker on Saturday was **Keki Bhote**, of Glencoe, Illinois, who gave a panoramic history of the Zarathushti religion and Persian history. He called the religion of Zarathushtra "the most rational religion in the world." He described the rise of the religion to its most glorifying and pristine heights, and then its devolution and retrogression through different historic eras.

The next speaker was the renowned German philologist **Helmut Humbach**, who spoke about Neryosang Dhaval, one of the first priests to serve the Zarathushti Parsi pilgrims in India. Neryosang translated the Avesta into Sanskrit, and Humbach demonstrated the relationship between Avestan and Sanskrit. This great figure of Parsi history, along with his cousin, was the progenitor of

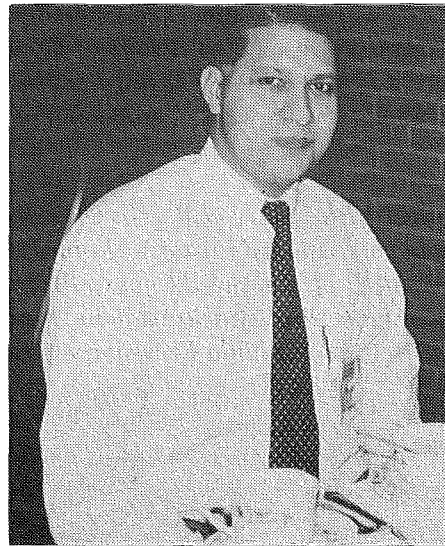
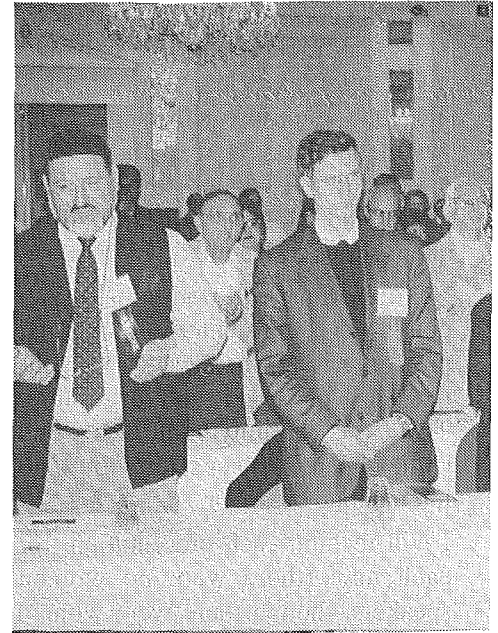
all Zarathushti Parsi priests, in a procession of thirty generations.

After Dr. Humbach came **Dr. Ichaporia**, who has collaborated with him in a fine modern translation of the *Gathas* and is now working with the German scholar on a new translation of the *Zamyad Yasht*, a long epic prayer about Persian sacred history, geography and the glorious Light of God. Dr. Ichaporia chose to speak about this Avestan text. His talk was a passionate advocacy of the religious heritage of the later, post-Gathic Zarathushti traditions and scriptures.

Dr. Ichaporia then introduced the next speaker, **Dastoor Dr. Firoze Kotwal**, High Priest of the Wadiaji Atash Behram in Mumbai, with a special presentation. Using a slide projector to show the progression of

Speakers at the conference. Front: Ervad Jal Birdy, Ervad Burzin Unwalla, Prof. William Malandra, Prof. Carlo Cereti, Dr. Jehan Bagli, Prof. Helmut Humbach, Dastoorji Firoze M. Kotwal, Dr. Pallan Ichaporia (Conference chair), Prof. Farhang Mehr, Prof. John Hinnells. Back, Prof. Jamsheed Choksy, Prof. Gernot Windfuhr, Prof. Martin Schwartz, Prof. Ivan Steblin-Kamensky, Sarosh Manekshaw, Prof. Mario Vitalone, Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi, Mobed Keikhosrow Khorshidian, Keki Bhote, Khojeste Mistree, Prof. Phillip Kreyenbroek, Ervad Kobad Zarolia.





Top row, ZAGBA Host Committee: Albert Bailey, Dilnavaz Shroff, Zeno-bia Rivetna, Edul Batliwala, Khorshed Jungalwala, Parastu Dubash, Firoze Jungalwala, Farrokh Engineer; section of audience, front row: Khojeste Mistree, Phillip Kreyenbroek, Keki Bhote, Jehan and Freny Bagli; Conference chairs Jungalwala (left) and Ichaporia (right) with Dastoorji Dr. Firoze Kotwal and banquet keynote speaker Ambassador Jamsheed Marker and wife Arnaz.

From left, clockwise: Helmut Humbach, Jamsheed Choksy, Carlo Cereti and John Hinnells.

generations, Dr. Ichaporia traced the thirty steps of descent that led from Neryosang Dhaval directly to Dr. Kotwal. Thus he showed the remarkable thousand-year continuity of Zarathushti priestly tradition whose living representative was speaking here and now.

Dr. Kotwal is a visually striking figure, tall and stately, with a long white beard, dressed all in white; he stood out against the flock of somberly clad academic speakers. Dr. Kotwal spoke about the *Satum* ritual, which is done in honor of the dead in the context of a feast for the living. This ancient Avestan ritual uses the fragrance of a freshly cooked meal as a



spiritual offering to the spirits of the departed – it is an example of how the physical and the spiritual are inextricably linked in the Zarathushti religion.

Jamsheed Choksy, a Parsi scholar, and Professor at Indiana University, spoke next, about ritual. He is collaborating with Dr. Kotwal on an accurate recording of all Zarathushti rituals as they are practiced today. His talk was on the delineation of sacred ritual space through the drawing of patterns of boundaries on the ground.

The next speaker, **Carlo Cereti**, is a Professor of Religious Literature at the Instituto Italiano in Rome. His presentation was on the Zarathushti concept of a sacred timeline. His research showed that there were many different views, in antiquity, as to just how many years this sacred schedule would cover – several ages of 7,000 to 12,000 years could go by before the predicted End of Time.

Martin Schwartz of Berkeley, a scholar whose linguistic work I remember fondly from the Gatha Conference in California in 1994, continued his original and intriguing explorations of the authorship of the Gathas and the Indo-Iranian linguistic and social background of the Zarathushti hymns. Dr. Schwartz' presentation was rather technical but to a

student of Indo-European languages it was fascinating.

The theme changed from linguistic to cosmic with the presentation of **Ger-not Windfuhr**, a German who teaches at the University of Michigan. Dr. Windfuhr spoke of his investigation into a mysterious cosmic light mentioned in the Avestan hymn to Mithra, who has been thought of as the divine spirit of the Sun. He posited that the Light of Mithra, which was identified neither as sun nor moon, which appeared especially at the equinoxes, was the Zodiacal Light, a misty nocturnal celestial phenomenon caused by the reflection of the sun's rays onto space dust. This would have been much more visible in the dark skies of ancient Iran, and would have inspired a mythological as well as mystical interpretation. For me, Dr. Windfuhr's presentation was one of the most interesting of the day.

The Saturday session concluded with a talk by **John Hinnells**, Professor at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, a genial, humorous man, and an expert in modern Zarathushti history, especially in Britain. Hinnells presented the story of the life and work of one of the few Zarathushtis ever to become a member of the English Parliament, Muncherjee Bhowmagree. This

politician has been bitterly criticized by modern Parsis for his supposedly pro-colonialist views, but Hinnells showed that Bhowmagree was a much more complex man who recognized the need for Indian independence and did much to further the Zarathushti religion in the diaspora of Britain.

First on the schedule on Sunday morning was **William Malandra**, from the University of Minnesota, whose talk was on the possibility of finding material from lost Avestan texts in the elaborations of Middle Persian translations. Were these elaborations preserving ancient theology, or were they pious innovations? Malandra left the question open.

The first of the two Russian speakers, **Dr. Ivan Steblin-Kamensky** of St. Petersburg, was next. The presence of Russian Iranists was exciting, since it was something that could not have occurred even just a few years ago. He gave a talk on Russian study and translation of the Avesta, and its influence on Russian literary culture. This was fascinating to me, as I had never heard any of this material before. There was also talk of the so-called 'hidden' Zarathushtis supposedly living in the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; the conclusion was that these people were not actually

Zarathushtis, though their ancestors had been. What seemed to be happening was that there was a nationalistic movement toward the Zarathushti religion as the faith of the pre-Islamic ancestors – a movement which the Russian translations of the Avesta and Russian scholarship facilitated.

From Central Asia we returned to the realm of Zarathushti theology with the presentation of **Sarosh Manekshaw**, of Houston, who toured through the difficulties of dualistic doctrine, using texts from the Gathas. For Manekshaw, the 'classic' doctrine of cosmic dualism was the one which was most likely to be the original teaching of the Prophet Zarathushtra. Manekshaw attempted to disprove the 'modernist' interpretation of dualism as exclusively psychological and internal to the human mind. We would return to dualism, good and evil, a bit later.

The highlight of the whole day, for me, was the video presentation by Harvard's **James Russell** on the mountaintop monument of Nemrud Dag, in an area known to the ancients as Commagene, in south-eastern Turkey. On this site, in the first century BCE, a half-Persian, half-Greek king named Antiochus raised a monument to himself and his gods, who were also a mixture of Persian and Greek. In the video, which was shot on location, Russell took a small group of scholars, and us viewers, on a tour of this fantastic ruin. He showed us the fallen but still impressive statues of the hybrid gods: Zeus-Oromasdes, Mithra-Apollo, Hercules-Verethragna. Here were perhaps signs of the origins of the later Roman cult of Mithras the bull-slayer. This site, as Russell explained, was not only physically difficult to reach, but is in the middle of a war zone, so this video would

have to be our only way of viewing the great monument.

From Antiochus' mountaintop, we returned again to Zarathushti theology with the presentation of **Khojeste Mistree**. Mistree is a stalwart traditionalist who, like Sarosh Manekshaw, supports a 'classic' rather than 'modern' view of the religion. Mistree's talk was on the question of whether the Avestan word 'mainyu' means 'spirit', or a self-acting, separate entity, or 'mentality', as the modernists would have it, which exists only in the human mind and ethical choice. Mistree was one of the better orators of the group, and his enthusiastic rhetoric in favor of the 'spirit' definition engendered debate with Dr. Farhang Mehr, who argued for 'mentality' and an ethical interpretation of dualism.

We had been on the mountaintop and among theologians, and now, at the end of the Sunday session, it was the turn of the Zarathushti priests, the



living inheritors of the traditions studied by the scholars. Five white-clad Mobeds joined in the discussion, with the High Priest **Dastoor Kotwal** sitting with them, more or less, silently. The speakers were **Mobeds Kaikhosrow Khorshidian**, High Priest at the San Jose Dar-e-Mehr, **Fariborz Shahzadi** of the Council of Iranian Mobeds (who gave the heartening news that a textbook on the Zarathushti din was being prepared for publication next year); and **Ervads Jal Birdy**, currently President of the North American Mobeds' Council, **Kobad Zarolia**, former President, and **Burzin Unwalla**. Each priest spoke on one aspect of Zarathushti religious life: rituals, the wedding, death and funeral observances, and religious education.

An evening banquet, serenaded by Zarathushti singers, featured a keynote address by the distinguished Parsi diplomat **Ambassador Jamsheed Marker**.

First on the list on Monday was Professor **Mario Vitalone**, of the University of Naples, Italy, who, in an information-packed talk gave an account of Zarathushti literature after the era of the Pahlavi texts of the 10th century C.E. Especially interesting was his description of the *Jamaspi*, a Zarathushti text considered by many to be divinatory and prophetic both by Zarathushtis and Muslims, even today.

The progressive and erudite Zarathushti priest, **Dr. Jehan Bagli**, spoke next on one of my favorite texts, the lovely liturgy of the *Seven Chapters* or *Haptan Haiti*. This is considered to be almost as old as the Gathas. The Seven Chapters show the early Zarathushti reverence for the elements of Nature as well as the moral order of the Universe. It is devotional and symbolic, rather than moralizing and dualistic like the Gathas. For me, this ancient text even now has great potential as a

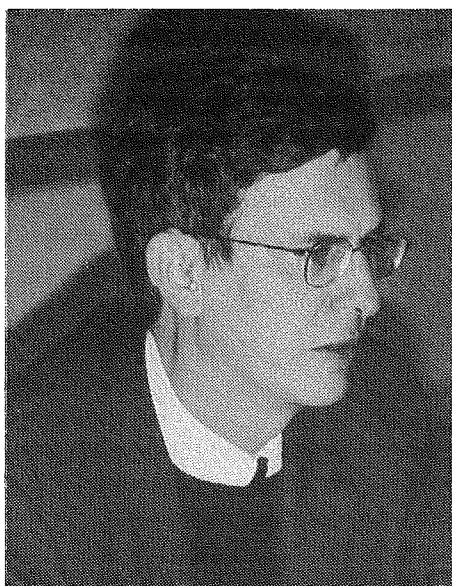
liturgical resource for a renewed Zarathushti ethic.

The other Russian presenter came next, **Dr. Mikhail Bogolyubov**, also from St. Petersburg. His talk was highly technical in nature, involving an alternative translation of a verse in the Gathas which describes the fall of the legendary King Yima. The many different possible translations of this one verse show just how difficult it is to translate the Gathas.

One of the most eminent Iranists in America, **Professor Richard Frye** from Harvard, then described the many views of Zarathushtra that have been held by scholars from antiquity to the present; Zarathushtra continues to be a figure with many possible interpretations. After his talk, Prof. Frye turned directly to the Zarathushti audience and openly advised them not only to endow a chair for Zarathushti studies at a university in Bombay, but to welcome sincere converts and accept intermar-



From left, Prof. Gernot Windfuhr, Prof Ivan Steblin-Kamensky, Prof. Mikhail Bogolyubov, Prof. James Russell, Mobed Keikhosrow Khorshidian, Prof. William Malandra, Dastoor Firoze M Kotwal, Prof. Richard Frye.



riages with non-Zarathushtis. This advice, while given honestly and from a position of great learning, did not please some of the traditionalist Zarathushtis in the audience.

Dr. Farhang Mehr, Emeritus Professor, Boston University, followed with a presentation, which originated in his own personal experience in Iran. He and his wife Pari (who accompanied him in the talk) had found that the Persian dialect spoken by the Zarathushtis of Yazd and Kerman, which is called the Dari dialect, was almost identical to the dialect spoken by the Jews of those remote Iranian cities. And yet the Jews elsewhere in Iran spoke quite a different dialect. This linguistic and social mystery intrigued the Mehrs, and they have begun cataloguing the similarities.

Dr. Phillip Kreyenbroek, a Nederlander by birth, now on the faculty of the University of Gottingen, Germany, then made a fitting conclusion to the conference. His talk dealt with the living reality of the Zarathushti religion, as it is practiced in Parsi

India, rather than the study of ancient texts and the historical traditions of the religion. Kreyenbroek, with the help of a talented Parsi interviewer, has been compiling testimonies by Parsis about how they view and practice their faith. He has found many differences between the Zarathushti religion of the scholars and that of the practicing Parsis. This important work, which will be published next year, will give both Zarathushtis and scholars of the religion valuable information about how the religion will fare in the future.

After more than twenty-five presentations, we were all quite tired, but exhilarated to be present for so much learning. I said goodbye to my Zarathushti friends, both old and new, and returned home through the melting snow, treasuring my book full of notes. I am honored to have been present at such a meeting, and hope that I can now carry on some of that learning to other people, who still know hardly anything about the oldest monotheistic religion and its teachings. ■

Photos: clockwise from left, Professor Martin Schwartz; Professor Farhang Mehr; Dr. Phillip Kreyenbroek; Mobeds' Forum: Mobeds Keikhosrow Khorshidian, Fariborz Shahzadi, Dastoorji Kotwal, Ervads Kobad Zarolia, Burzin Unwalla and Jal Birdy, with session chair Farrokh Mistree; Professor Mario Vitalone; and Hannah M. G. Shapero.

From debate to dialog

Proponents of a representative, apex, world body and the WZO continue their dialog at the Indian Federation meeting in Indore

"A new age of cooperation and harmony is dawning," said Rohinton Rivetna at the meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) in Indore, January 31 to February 1, 1998, "One important lesson we have learned is that in matters concerning our community affairs, debate is not productive. Debate is necessarily an adversarial approach, and polarizes the community; we must, instead, engender dialog and seek to harmonize."

Reporting on recent developments in regards to the formation of a truly representative, apex, world body, he said: "In the last few weeks, the *debate is turning to dialog*; we are approaching an understanding, and all parties are now working together towards a win-win solution."

Rivetna reported on initiatives taken by Adi Davar since September 1997 and in Boston in November 1997, that were responsible for a meeting in January 1998 in Washington D.C. between himself and WZO President Rumi Sethna, with mediation provided by Dr. Farhang Mehr and Mr. Davar, to work together to formulate an organizational re-structuring of WZO to make it a fully representative, apex, world body. This dialog has been very productive.

In the approach being pursued, the vision and objectives of the proposed 'Council of Federations' (WCZF) represented by Federations and Associations, would be preserved on the one side; and a 'Council of Individuals' representing WZO's major constituency of individual members, will continue alongside, with the two coming together as the International Board of WZO.

This merger of the WCZF and WZO holds great promise for our community, and ought to be heralded as the harbinger of goodwill, harmony and unprecedented cooperation within

our community to propel us into the 21st century.

Dady Engineer, speaking on behalf of WZO at the Indore meeting, as well as other WZO-India delegates at the meeting – Dinshaw Tamboli and Dady Mistry, were in general agreement with this approach.

Jamshed Guzdar, FPZAI President gave an historical background and re-iterated his support for the world body to be built upon federations and associations and not upon individual membership. Gen. Adi Sethna, FPZAI Vice President, and Keki Gandhi, Secretary, also supported the concept of a Council of Federations.

In summary, there was general acceptance that (a) Federations and Associations joining WZO would form a new 'Council of Federations'; and (b) the new Council of Federations would be incorporated within the organizational structure of WZO, which would, of course, necessitate considerable restructure of WZO.

The general direction of the meeting was that the core team of Rivetna and Rumi Sethna continue the discussions and proceed to prepare the reformulation of WZO Constitution, in close consultation with their colleagues in FPZAI and WZO. A team approach was strongly advocated to that reformulation. Some voices from the Baroda and Poona delegates were heard that the consultative process of soliciting input from members at every step must be ensured. They were assured that FPZAI officials would be closely involved at every step.

"I have said it a million times, and I shall say it again," said Rivetna, "If and when we Zarathushtis worldwide realize the potential of our collective human and material resources, not only will we transform our own community, but we will also make an impact on human affairs globally." ■



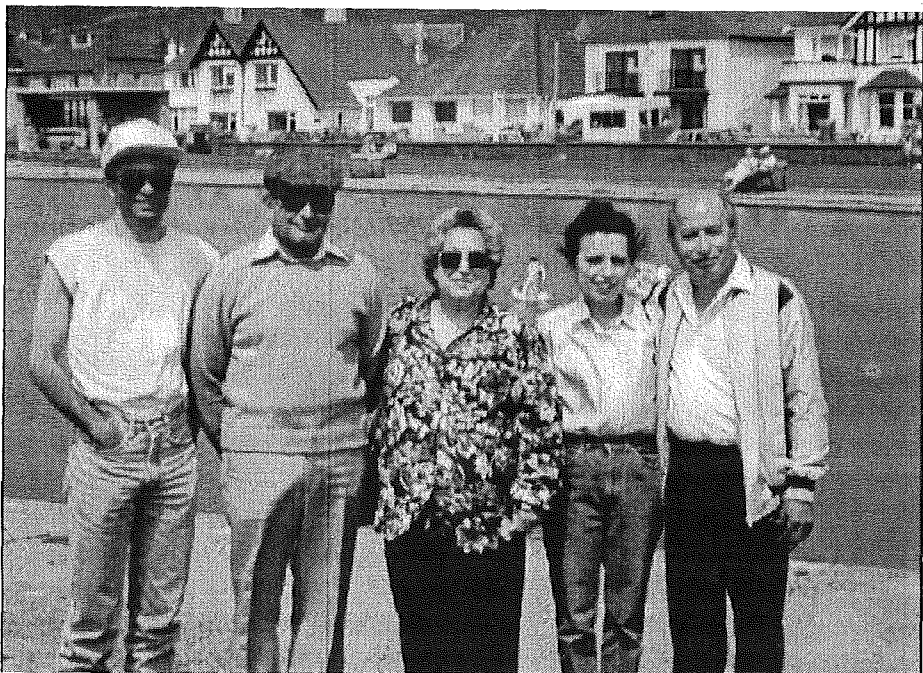
Hannah M. G. Shapero is a familiar figure at Zarathushti conferences and seminars. She has been a student of the Zarathushti religion for over ten years. Ms. Shapero lives in the Washington, D.C. area where she works as a commercial artist.



*Don't live in the past –
It is history.*

*Don't live in the future –
It is a mystery.*

*Live in the present –
Because it is a gift
That's why it's called the present!*



A Pretty bunch of people, quite chatty too Zarathushti community in Manchester, UK, commemorates tenth anniversary

"A pretty bunch of people, quite chatty too. You can hear them a mile away," says Mrs. Dumplington, a neighbor at the Community Center where the Manchester (UK) Zarathushtis gather, according to a News Update in their Tenth Anniversary Souvenir Brochure,

"There are a few men in particular, and they are always carrying in these big silver pots. The women seem to enjoy each other's company; they're always catching up on gossip and exchanging news. These Zoroastrians certainly know how to enjoy themselves ..."

The souvenir, chock-full of interesting articles, reminiscences, poems, photos, a bit of Zarathushti history, profiles of the local Manchester com-

munity, and other miscellaneous tidbits of information, commemorates the tenth anniversary of the "North West Zoroastrian Community" [see photo above, of some community members in Manchester].

"We may be very small in numbers (only about 70-80) but we do try to keep up the community spirit", writes Annu Khambatta, whose husband, Shahriar is with Ingersoll Rand, in Manchester. In the last ten years, the community has had ten births, 4 marriages and 3 navjotes; and fourteen departed family members are remembered.

Maneck Meher Mehta chairs the NWZC Executive Committee. The souvenir was edited by NWZC secretary, Burjor Avari.

Mega-series on Shahnama on Indian TV. A 104-episode mega TV serial based on the internationally renowned epic "Shahnama" by the legendary poet Firdowsi has been approved for transmission on *Doodarshan*, the Indian national television station. A team of experienced directors will handle this mega-serial. A search is on for actors to portray the roles of Firdowsi and Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, aged 25-30 years old, with a good voice and knowledge of spoken Urdu. Mail three full-size color photographs and biodata to Himalaya Television, 108/A Bombay A/C Market, Tardeo Road, Mumbai 400 034.

Mistry is Worshipful Master in New Zealand Lodge

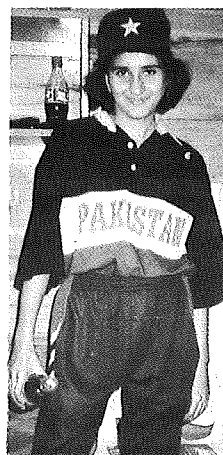
Yazdi Mistry, President of the Zoroastrian Association of New Zealand was installed as the 120th Worshipful Master of Eden Lodge. This makes him the first Zarathushti to be elected to that post. With his encouragement, several area Zarathushtis have become Free Masons and joined Eden Lodge.

NSW Scrabble champion.

Ruby Kotwall of New South Wales became the 1997 NSW Scrabble Champion. Among 20 groups who vied for top honors, three players, all women, reached the finals. Ruby won the Open Championship for Advanced Players, and was awarded a shield trophy and a \$200 prize.

On women's cricket team

Meher Minwalla has been selected



to play in the Pakistan Women's Cricket Team which will compete for the World Cup. Very possibly, she could be the first Zarathushti to be chosen for any national women's cricket team representing their country.

Sailing around the world

Thrity Vakil of Wimbledon, UK, is one of a dozen young people who have been sailing around the world for the last two and a half years. She has travelled on the 82-foot, three-masted Chinese junk built in California specifically to carry out research expeditions such as this one. This expedition is sponsored by the Planetary Coral Reef Foundation. Thrity is in London for a few months for rest and raising funds to continue. ■

Celebrating Navruz

season of hope and joy

Navruz – the ancient Iranian festival that heralds the advent of spring – signifies nature as draped in a festive garb, when new life and joy prevail on earth after a cold and dreary winter.

Each year, the sun enters the Zodiac sign of Aries around March 21. On this day, which marks the vernal equinox, the sun shines directly over the equator, resulting in days and nights of equal length. **Navruz** ('new day') is thus looked upon as a day of universal dawn, of new hopes and renewed resolutions. The Parsis call it **Jamshedi Navruz**.

Zarathushtis and Iranians celebrate this festival to welcome spring. In Iran, the day is an important national holiday; the entire nation grinds to a halt ten days before the festival.

The customs and traditions observed by the Zarathushtis and Iranians in celebrating Navruz are similar. In India, the Parsis greet each other with "Navruz Mubarak" and visit the fire temples. In Iran, families lay out a table with seven items that all begin with the letter 'S'. These include *sib* (apple), *sabzi* (vegetables), *sir* (garlic), *serkeh* (vinegar), *sumac* (powder), *senjed* (olives) and *sikka* (coins).

The legend begins about 2,000 years before the birth of the Prophet Zarathushtra, when Jamshed of the Peshdadian dynasty was anointed king. The day of his anointment was called Navruz. In the ancient Zarathushti scriptures, Ahura Mazda (the Supreme Creator) reveals to Zarathushtra that Jamshed was the first to learn the principles of the Mazdayasni religion from Him. The custom of wearing the sudreh and kushti – regarded by practicing Zarathushtis as not only a symbol of their religion, but also as a tool for their spiritual advancement – was introduced by Jamshed after he had communed with the angel Sroasha.

According to the Kisseh-i-Sanjan, which is believed to be a record of the dialog between the leader of the Parsis and the Hindu King Jadi Rana, the act of wearing a kushti is akin to a ritual ablution by a Hindu in the holy Ganga; the sudreh is to be worn as a divine shield.

According to Firdowsi's Shah nama, Jamshed discovered the art of extracting gold, silver and precious stones during his 700-year rule. 'Noshdaru' or wine, which was used to cure many diseases, was also introduced during his reign, as was the art of navigation.

For the first 300 years of his rule, peace prevailed in Jamshed's kingdom. Death was unknown; sorrow, anxiety and pain were unheard of. But Firdowsi reveals that this state of bliss did not last long. Pride entered Jamshed's soul, leading ultimately to his downfall.

Greek historians have also thrown light on the Navruz celebrations conducted by Persian kings Darius and Xerxes of the Achaemenid dynasty (550 BC to 330 BC). Each year on March 21, these kings visited the ceremonial capital of Takht-e-Jamshed or Persepolis.

Following a ritual and ceremonies, the representatives of 23 satrapes which were then under Persian rule, would arrive at Persepolis to pay tributes to the king. The remnants of the rock carvings depicting Navruz celebrations at Persepolis, bear mute testimony to the time when this festival was important, not only for the Persians but for all humankind, as a day of spiritual rejuvenation. ■

[Extracted from article by Nauzer Bharucha, *Times of India, Mumbai*].

EVEN THIS SHALL PASS AWAY

Once in Persia reigned a king
Who, upon his signet ring
'Graved a maxim true and wise
Which, if held before the eyes,
Gave him counsel at a glance
Fit for every change and chance;
Solemn words, and these were they:
EVEN THIS SHALL PASS AWAY.

Trains of camels, through the sand,
Brought him gems from Samarkand;
Fleets of galleys, through the seas,
Brought him pearls to match with these;
But he counted not his gain –
Treasures of the mine or main.
"What is wealth," the king would say,
"Even this shall pass away."

'Midst the revels of his court
At the zenith of the sport
When the palms of all his guests
Burned with clapping at his jests;
He amid his figs and wine
Cried: "O! loving friends of mine
Pleasure comes but not to stay –
Even this shall pass away."

Fighting on a furious field
Once a javelin pierced his shield.
Soldiers, with a loud lament
Bore him bleeding to his tent.
Groaning from a tortured side:
"Pain is hard to bear," he cried,
But with patience day by day
Even this shall pass away.

Towering in the public square
Twenty cubits in the air
Rose his statue, carved in stone.
Then the king, disguised, unknown,
Stood before his sculptured name
Musing meekly: "What is fame?
Fame is but a slow decay –
Even this shall pass away."

Struck with palsy sere and old
Waiting at the gates of gold
Said he, with his dying breath:
"Life is done, but what is death!"
Then in answer to the king
Fell a sunbeam on his ring
Showing by a heav'nly ray:
EVEN THIS SHALL PASS AWAY.

- Poem by Theodore Tilton, submitted
by Jamshed R. Udhwadia

THE GATHAS

In history, religion and life

By Yezdi Rustomji, Guest Editor



EDITORIAL

One of the fundamental points about religious humility is that you do not know about the ultimate judgement. It is beyond your judgment. If you equate God's judgment with your judgment, you have a poor religion. - Reinhold Niebuhr

Some readers will find the authors' views on the Gathas in History, Religion and Life to be quite varied and dynamic; and others will find them provocative. Some readers will have known that such variability in religious consciousness has historically existed in the Zarathushti community, and accepted that even Zarathushtis will think, speak and act differently – for they are conditioned by their life experiences differently. Yet some will insist that their view prevail. As such, they keep many 'non-conforming' Zarathushtis from conference participation; and groups from membership in Zarathushti organizations.

Whereas the interpretation of the religion of Zarathushtra historically has ranged from cabalist to liberal, no individual or group ought to be all Zarathushtis' communal and religious gatekeeper. But gatekeeping is occurring, and has been destructive of communality among Zarathushtis.

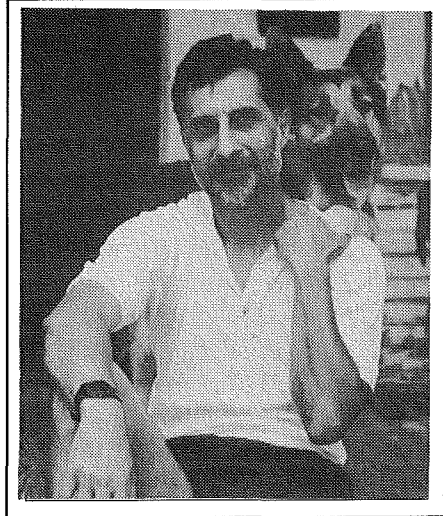
And so, "Of the Things Which the Initiate Should Remember ..."

Lay Zarathushtis, and Zarathushti priests and teachers, must attain GRACE: It is grace attained only through allowing that human beings are thoughtful; that they must determine for themselves, how they shall be religious.

Zarathushtra possessed such grace. He allowed that His followers were thoughtful. He wanted that we "Hear with (our) ears that which is the sovereign good" and that we, "With a clear mind look upon the two sides, for, between each, man must choose for himself," always being "Watchful beforehand that the great test may be accomplished in our favor."

Also, all Zarathushtis – lay, priest and teacher – should be informed in religious matters debated in the various intellectual domains. As such, all Zarathushtis are manifestly urged by the Gathas to traverse an immense spectrum of religious and profane phenomena, and to continue deepening their understanding of spiritual life and earthly matters.

A maturing awareness of the inter-relatedness of sacred ideals and secular ideas would then, most likely, obviate the necessity for Zarathushtis to say who is more worthy in the eyes of Ahura Mazda.



Yezdi Rustomji and Magdalena have lived in Houston since 1965. Their son Aaron lives in Austin – and ET has gone for a 'long walk.' While a Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA), Yezdi developed a comprehensive treatment and education program for distressed youth and families, funded by National Institute of Mental Health. He later developed and administered three such programs for twenty years. He now lectures in sociology at the University of Houston. The Rustomji's have been involved in all activities of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston since its inception. With Magdalena, Aaron, ET and others, Yezdi established and led the Zarathushti youth group in various activities over many years. Yezdi also speaks at various Zarathushti conferences. Yezdi has climbed in the Himalayas, Kenya and Tanzania. In Texas he canoes, kayaks, bicycles, rock climbs, and has developed and participated in triathlons.

Yezdi Rustomji is Guest Editor of this special issue of FEZANA Journal on "The Gathas, in History, Religion and Life."

All the articles presented here are the personal views of the authors. Per its Editorial Policy, FEZANA Journal does not endorse or espouse any specific perspective.

INTRODUCTION

So far, however, we have scarcely begun in earnest. We have merely felt that initial trepidation experienced when the firm ground of prejudice begins to slip away beneath our feet.

- John L. Austin

In calling for submissions to this special issue of FEZANA Journal looking at "The Gathas in History, Religion and Life", I wanted most that *prayerful Zarathushtis* speak about their Gathic understanding as it affects their *spiritual outlook* and *secular ways*.

I also wanted those who study and teach the Good Religion – the 'authorities' – to find out from such stories, how prayerful Zarathushtis do get through life. For their life does go on today as did the lives of their ancestors through millennia. I wanted them to accept the fact that prayerful Zarathushtis have never had to put devoutness on hold, awaiting a veritable interpretation of Zarathushti religious texts at conference, so they would then know how to approach Ahura Mazda 'efficaciously.'

And students and teachers of the religion of Zarathushtra having also been invited, have expressed their thoughts on the Gathas. Readers will find, as with the prayerful Zarathushtis' views, their considered opinions range from calling for a 'supreme imaginative' requirement, to a requirement of 'intellectual rigor.' in the interpretation of the Gathas in the context of history, religion and life.

So, for the hard work of the authors a heartfelt appreciation is acknowledged on behalf of the community of readers and staff of FEZANA Journal. I thank Roshan Rivetna, Editor-in-Chief, and Rustom Kevala, Publications Chairman for expertise so generously dispensed and patience shown this Guest Editor. And I am most grateful to Magdalena Rustomji who is always so graciously helpful to me in all of my work. ■

The Gathas of Zarathushtra

The Gathas are the hymns composed by Zarathushtra, the Prophet or the founder of the religion of ancient Iran, who lived around 1300 BCE. In extent the Gathas constitute a small book containing about 6000 words, in about 1300 lines set in 238 verses which are collected in 17 chapters, each called a Haiti or in the more usual later term, Ha.

By Kaikhoshrov D. Irani
New York, New York

The verses of the Gathas are composed in the metrical forms of ancient Indo-Iranian religious poetry. It is in a very condensed style of versification, in which standard grammatical construction is more absent than present. The 17 Ha's of the Gathas were, some time later, incorporated into a long prayer, or liturgy, recited at a ceremony. The *Yasna* recitation has 72 chapters. The Ha's are identified by their numbering as chapters of the *Yasna*. There are five major sections of the 17 Ha's of the Gathas listed here:

1. *Ahunavaiti*, consisting of Ha's 28-34 of the *Yasna*, containing 100 verses.
2. *Ushtavaiti*, consisting of Ha's 43-46 of the *Yasna*, containing 66 verses.
3. *Spenta Mainyu*, consisting of Ha's 47-50 of the *Yasna*, containing 41 verses.
4. *Vohu Khshathra*, consisting of Ha 51 of the *Yasna*, containing 22 verses.
5. *Vahishto Ishti*, consisting of Ha 53 of the *Yasna*, containing 9 verses.

The language of the Gathas is one belonging to the old Indo-Iranian group which was part of the Eastern families of the Indo-European languages. This language is called Gathic, and because it is incorporated into the *Yasna* scripture which is part of the *Avesta*, it is also called Old Avestan. Much of our grasp of the Gathic language, both in vocabulary and grammar comes from its close affinity with the early form of Vedic Sanskrit.

THE CONTENT OF THE GATHAS

The verses of the Gathas are addressed to the Divinity, *Ahura Mazda*, and also to the public that has come to hear the Prophet. Specific aspects of his theology appear in every Ha, but we do not have a systematic presentation of the doctrine in any one location. Zarathushtra expounds aspects of his teachings in many different places in the Gathas. In others, he exhorts his audience to live a life as Ahura Mazda has directed. From these frequent passages we can reconstruct the theology with reasonable accuracy. Then there are some verses devotional in character, addressed to Ahura Mazda, to the divine essences of Truth, the Good-Mind, and the Spirit of Piety and Benevolence. There are also verses which refer to episodes and crises in the mission of the Prophet. But the theology is interwoven in every Ha.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE GATHAS.

It is important, as a preliminary consideration, to note that the type of religion preached by Zarathushtra is what may be called reflective religion. It is a fusion of a "View of the World" and a "Way of Life" offered to the prospective believer, to be adopted upon due reflection as worthy of acceptance. A believer is one who chooses to encounter the world as the religious view declares it to be, and importantly, commits himself or herself to the Way of Life presented therein.

View of the World. What then is the religious view of Zarathushtra in the Gathas? Zarathushtra conceives of the world we live in as a theater of conflict between two diametrically opposed moral spirits (*mainyus*).

They stand for mental attitudes in the psychological domain, and also opposing moral vectors in all of creation. They are the Spirit of Goodness (*Spenta Mainyu*), and the Spirit of Evil (*Angre Mainyu*, not so named in the Gathas, but in the later literature). Their characters are defined in relation to the pivotal concept of Zarathushtra's theology, Asha, usually translated as Truth. Truth in this context means the Ultimate Truth, that is, the Ideal form of existence of the world as envisioned by Ahura Mazda. The form the world would have had but for the Spirit of Evil, and hence the form the world ought to have. Acting in accordance with Truth is the right thing to do, hence Asha is also translated as Righteousness. Indeed, since Zarathushtra's theology is always projected with a moral dimension, Asha always carries the joint meaning of Truth and Righteousness.

Thus we comprehend the world as an intrinsically good, divine creation, contaminated by evil, but capable of being perfected by the actions of humans by reason of their capacity of moral choice. Human action can promote good and reject evil leading to its ultimate banishment from the world, though it may continue to exist as a conceptual possibility.

From this follows the **Way of Life** in Zarathushtra's theology. According to it, each human being possesses, perhaps cultivated to different degrees, the quality of the Good-Mind, *Vohu-Manah*, in itself a divine creation. The Good-Mind enables us to grasp Asha, the Ideal Truth; it also enables us to see any aspect of the world and recognize it for what it is, i.e., the way and the extent to which it is flawed.

This form of moral awareness is what is termed Good-Thought. From this Good-Thought one is inspired to do the right thing, to right the wrong, and perfect the state of imperfection. When the appropriate course of action is formulated and articulated it is called Good-Word.

The inspiration that leads to action is *Spenta Armaity*, translated in the religious context as Piety or Devotion, and in the moral context as Benevolence or Right-Mindedness. This spirit is another aspect of Divinity, it inclines us to move from right conceptions to right actions. We thereby, with courage and confidence put our well-thought-out and well-formulated intentions into actions. This is called Good-Deed. Here we can crystallize the oft-repeated trilogy of Zoroastrianism, *Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds*.

The consequence of actions according to this way of life is that being in accord with Asha, it brings the world toward perfection in any way and to whatever extent it may be. In the social world we bring about a change toward a worthy social order. And as the social order is transformed to an ideal form we achieve the ideal dominion in which the right-minded person is happy and contented. This ideal social state is referred to by the Gathic term *Khshathra Vairya*, another divine aspect.

The individual who lives in accordance with this way of life reaches a state of well-being, a state of psychic and spiritual integrity which one might plausibly characterize as perfection in this earthly state. This state is referred to by the Gathic term *Haurvatat*.

A person who has lived such a life comes, upon death, to a state of immortal bliss, known by the Gathic term *Ameretat*.

Life after death in the Gathas is viewed as a state, the character of which is a consequence of the moral quality of one's life. The notion of the final judgment upon the person is expressed dramatically in the crossing of the Bridge of the Separator (*chinvad peretu*), where the virtuous cross to the Abode of Songs, the heavenly abode, and exist in a state of Best Consciousness. The wicked fall away into the House of Falsehood, existing in a state of Worst Consciousness, detached from Truth.

The focus of Gathic teaching is one of a world afflicted with suffering, inequity, and imperfection, the goal being to transform it and bring it to perfection, that is, in consonance with Truth, by the comprehending power of the Good-Mind. Such a perfecting world would progressively bring satisfaction to all the good creation. And it would inaugurate the desired kingdom, *Khshathra Vairya*, where the ideal society would manifest peaceful social existence in which all interests would be harmonized and balanced in a just order, for that is an implication of Asha. This achievement depends on enlightened human thinking and right-minded human resolve. These are the religious goals according to the Gathas, and bringing them about is the commandment of Ahura Mazda.

THE NON-THEOLOGICAL CONTENT OF THE GATHAS

The Gathas are religious hymns. Among them are some addressed to Ahura Mazda, expressing the Prophet's veneration for the Holiness of the Divinity, who is Father of the Good-Mind, the Truth, and the Spirit of Benevolence. There are other verses where the Prophet requests for himself and his disciples these very gifts which would enable them to lead holy lives.

There are other verses which are quasi-biographical. They are all related, in one way or another, with Zarathushtra's mission to announce to humanity the teachings of Ahura Mazda to direct us to act in the Great Cause, viz., to promote the Truth (Asha), perfecting the world and thereby perfecting ourselves. When he announces the message of Ahura Mazda, he is repudiated in his homeland, abandoned by his kinsmen.

There are verses which express this repudiation and the resulting doubts regarding the success of his mission. He asks for assurance from Ahura Mazda, and significantly, sees the self-validating power of Truth through the translucence of the Good-Mind. There are times when

the Prophet is rejected by the powerful, and at times his teachings are attacked. He asks not only for his effort's confirmation from Ahura Mazda, but also the repudiation of his opponents and oppressors as purveyors of evil.

Since the various Ha's of the Gathas were composed at different periods in the life of the Prophet, we obtain from them, reflections of his aspirations and anxieties about the effectiveness of his mission. He never doubted its validity or its ultimate vindication. We find that in the later part of his life he feels assured of success as a tone of contentment and assurance pervades the later compositions. But even there, as in the last Ha 3 where he officiates at the wedding of his youngest daughter, he enunciates parts of the doctrine; he could not be any other than the untiring preacher of the religion of Mazda.

NOTES ON GATHIC TERMS AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Since many of the theological concepts appear from time to time in their Gathic terms in the translations of the verses, they are listed here together with other Gathic concepts with their meanings, in their proper groupings:

Ahura Mazda meaning the Wise Lord, is the Divinity of Gathic theology. He is the Creator and the Source of Goodness.

The two opposed Spirits, Principles or Mentalities being:

- i. **Spenta Mainyu**, meaning the bountiful or progressive spirit. In the ethical dualism, it is the Good Spirit.
- ii. **Angre Mainyu** is the spirit of destruction or opposition. In the doctrine of ethical dualism it is the Evil Spirit. Although the concept is used, this term itself does not appear in the Gathas. It was employed a little later in the Avestan literature.

The **Amesha Spentas**, (again, the term is not used in the Gathas, but appears very early in the history of

the religion) means the bountiful immortals. They are six abstract concepts, essences as some would say, in terms of which the theology is constructed. They are aspects of Ahura Mazda, through which He is known. Ahura Mazda establishes their independent existence in the ideal realm of being. Sometimes they are personalized and venerated as such in the Gathas. Sometimes Ahura Mazda is characterized as their father. Some of these essences we can incorporate in our own lives, e.g. the Good-Mind, and Piety or Benevolence. Others are to be viewed as ideals which may be actualized in concrete existence by the actions of right-thinking humans. Here we should note that the distinction between an ideal realm of existence and a physical realm of existence is made in the Gathas.

The six Amesha Spentas are the following:

i) **Asha Vahishta**: The Highest (Best) Truth, also the highest form of Righteousness. This Truth describes how the world ought to be in its ideal form. Consequently the intention to actualize it is Righteous Intention, and action according to it the highest form of Righteousness.

ii) **Vohu-Mana**: The Good-Mind. The mental capacity to comprehend Asha, to understand the nature of our actual world, and recognize the resulting disparity between the ideal and the real. It is thus the instrument of moral cognition.

iii) **Spenta Armaity**: The Holy Attitude. Theologically, it is the attitude of Piety toward the Source of Being and the Ultimate Truth; ethically, it is the attitude of Benevolence, a concern for the Good. It may be characterized as Right-Mindedness.

iv) **Khshathra-Vairya**: The Ideal Dominion. It is the ideal social (and political) structure of the human world. In human terms, we may call it the ideal society. In theological terms, it is the Kingdom of Heaven.

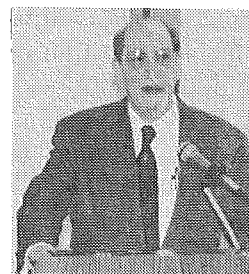
v) **Haurvatat**: The state of complete well-being, physical and spiritual

integrity. In its full form it is a state of perfection on earth.

vi) **Ameretat**: The state of Immortal Bliss.

Furthermore, some will include with the above, also, **Sraosha**: The concept of Hearing, i.e. receiving a divine message; however, since what is heard is a communication from the Divinity, the concept also implies acceptance or obedience.

There are three non-theological terms which appear in several of the Gathic verses, they are **Kavi**, **Karpan**, and **Usig**. They are all used in a pejorative sense. In Gathic vocabulary, Kavi meant a chief of a tribe, or a prince, a ruler and military chief of the socio-political organization among the Indo-Iranians. Karpan meant a mumbling priest, a priest whose function was to utter sacred words, usually not comprehensible to the laity, which were supposed to have magical effects in promoting the interest of the rulers. Usig was probably the ritual performing priest who prepared and executed the sacrifice and offerings. These were activities of the cults prevalent in Zarathushtra's time, cults which he repudiated and displaced with the religion of Ahura Mazda. ■



Professor Kaikhosrov D. Irani is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York, where he

is Professor and Chairman of the Department as well as Director of Program for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, and a Director of the Academy of the Humanities and Sciences. His work has been in the areas of Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Religion, and Ancient Thought. He has lectured widely in India, UK and North America.

Gathas

the Godly Guide to Good Goal

In their ancestral language, thousands of years old, the Gathas told him that he was a free person, and that he had good understanding and above all, a discerning mind; to listen to the best among spoken words and then ponder upon them, to decide his way of life. The Gathas proposed, with nobility, that through the teachings of Zarathushtra, he might get the spiritual and intellectual awakening he was searching for.

By Ali A. Jafarey
Buena Park, California

THE SEARCHING JOURNEY

Imagine a boy of thirteen reading an encyclopedia, *Children's Book of Knowledge*, from the beginning to the end – pages one to 3,000 plus. The book speaks in simple words on subjects from A to Z – air, anatomy, art, astronomy, astrology, biology, democracy, earth, earthquakes, education, electricity, evolution, geography, gravity, health, history, hygiene, liberty, machine, mankind, matter, mind, music, mythology, peace, religion, science, technology, time, vegetation, war, water, zoology and many more subjects and sub-subjects.

Then imagine him comparing this kind of enlightenment to what he is being taught from the 'religious' point of view. He is facing a dilemma. Should he believe in what he has read or what he is being told? Should he have blind faith that there is, above in heaven, an all-powerful, all-wise God with a rebel angel going free and wild playing havoc with the creation? Should he accept without any question the story of creation – the rising and setting of the sun and the moon on a wide and flat ground called the earth? Should he accept out of total obedience the day-to-day commandments of what to do and what not to do? Should he believe in predestination and yet accept reward and punishment for acts predestined

for him? His boyish questions earn him growing rebuke from religious leaders and some elders. They tell him not to believe in science. What should be his reaction? He was frustrated enough to turn atheist and many may have done so, but he does not.

He still firmly believes in God but does not know where to turn. He goes from door to door – alphabetically from those of Ahmadiya, Bahaism, Buddhism, Christianity (Catholic, Church of England and Presbyterian), Hinduism (Arya Samaj, Brahm Samaj, and Sanathan Dharma), Judaism (from South Indian Jews) and Sikhism. He even re-examines Islam (Shiite, Sufism, Sunni, Wahabi). He observes, more or less, the same situation. Stories of creation, predestination, carrot and stick for believing and not believing, hell and heaven, plus more mythology, gods and goddesses, karma, reincarnation, caste, race, total resignation, meditation for inactivity, and killing of 'desire'.

But, for that time, of all these institutions, he would prefer his Boy Scouting. He had joined Scouting as a Cub at the age of nine. It was not a religion, but a useful and joyful way of life, of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

DEFENDING THE OTHER'S RELIGION

The 26th Karachi Sea Scouts Troop, first of its kind in the Indian subcontinent, was established in 1937. It drew its members from various high schools of the city of Karachi, now in

Pakistan. The original core consisted of twelve specially chosen Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and Sikh Boy Scouts. This young boy was one of them. The troop was led by two British and one Indian officer. It had a beautiful harmonious brotherhood. They used to meet at a then vacant point on China Creek, inside Karachi harbor, for swimming and boating, and at another point further out on West Wharf, for sailing.

By the end of the year, the troop's number had swelled to sixteen. Although of heterogeneous cultures, all soon became very friendly. However, there happened to be a zealous missionary among the newcomers. He would argue with others on religious matters, even with the Hindus of other denominations. And on one fine summer morning, well before the class began, he took the Parsis by surprise by picking at the Zarathushti religion. When the young boy realized that the Parsis were not prepared to defend themselves, he, prompted by his Iranian zeal, went forward. He hardly knew anything about Good Conscience, the good religion of Zarathushtra, except what he had heard from his parents about Ancient Iran and its religion, and that in the past all his ancestors were Zarathushtis.

His mother used to recite a few pieces from the *Shahnama* of Firdowsi and then relate the stories in simple prose. Incidentally, in those days the boy's hometown Kerman, Iran, was the second city with the largest pocket of Iranian Zarathushtis, and both his parents had Zarathushti friends. His father used to frequent a famous Dorabji's business office in Bazaar-e Vakil in Kerman and talk with the Parsis there.

ENCOUNTERING THE GATHAS

It seems that the boy put up a good defense, especially in favor of reverence to fire, because, later, his Parsi friends had said that they had appreciated it. On the following Sunday, Eruch P. Bulsara, one of the Parsis, gave him a copy of the Gathas as a

token of his appreciation. It had the text in *Devanagari* script, and was translated by the late Jotindramohan Chatterji in Sanskrit, English and Gujarati. He was simply fascinated, rather captivated by the sublime songs. He wanted to learn the language.

Eruch introduced the young boy to the late Dr. Maneck B. Pithawalla, the then Principle of B.V.S. Parsi High School. He taught the young boy Avesta, Pahlavi and fundamentals of the religion, and then gladly encouraged him to hold an Avesta-Pahlavi class at the school with a dozen Parsi boys and girls of his own age.

Eruch also introduced him to Dasturji Dr. Maneckji N. Dhalla, the enlightened and broadminded sage and scholar, for further studies. The entire period taken by Dr. Pithawalla and Dasturji Dhalla to educate the boy exceeded six years. Dr. Pithawalla, who had only one child, daughter Freni, treated the boy as if he were his son. Dasturji Dhalla was kind enough to ask him to attend his Saturday sessions with the Parsi youth at his residence. Meanwhile another Parsi Sea Scout, Virasp Mehta introduced him to his father. The father, the late Mr. Pherozechah Mehta, was a Founding-Member of the Gathas Discussion Group constituted of a number of elder Parsis. The boy was the only young person admitted to the Group. That brought him closer to the Gathas. He also corresponded with the late K. E. Punegar who mailed him his translation of the Gathas. Twelve years later, he met in Tehran another sage, the late Dastur Dr. Framroz A. Bode, co-author with Miss Piloo Nanavutty (Mrs. Jungalwalla) of *Songs of Zarathushtra*, [London, 1952].

The three-month interaction allowed the young boy to comprehend the Gathas better. It also gave him an idea, an idea he transformed later into his Gathas Classes in Tehran and still later, in Los Angeles. The class in Tehran had 278 male and female students ranging from 16 to 81 years of age. The boy feels heavily indebted

to Eruch and his two teachers, the founders of the Gathas Discussion Group, Mr. Punegar, Pherozechah, and Dasturji Bode for their guidance in the Gathas. Another person to whom he is indebted is the late Dr. Eruch J.S. Taraporewala, the august author of *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, published in Bombay in 1951.

A PROMISE

Dasturji affectionately advised the young boy on the very first day he faced him, more or less, in these words: "When you think you have learned enough of the Avesta language, do not start with translating the Gathas first. They are **The Guide**. A wrong interpretation would mislead the people. Engage yourself first with other parts of the Avesta. Wait for five years before you embark on translating the Gathas." The boy, now a young man, made Dasturji the promise.

Although the Gathas became his only thought-provoking guide for the next sixty years, he had never forgotten his promise to the sage. He published his Gatha translation in Persian, in Tehran in 1981 – over forty years later than the day his teacher had proposed.

AN AMAZING REVELATION

What moved the young boy most then, and what made him cry loudly, were Zarathushtra's words which proclaimed to him:

"Sraota geushaish vahishta
avaenata suca manangha
avarena vicithahya
narem narem xcaxyai tanuye
para maze yangho
ahmai ne sazdyai baodanto paiti."

*Hear the best with your ears
and ponder with a bright mind.
Then each man and woman,
for his or her self,
select either of the two [good and evil].
Awaken to this Doctrine of ours
before the Great Event of Choice ushers in.*

- Gathas: Song 3 - stanza 2

Here the young man found that in these words, he was being told in his own ancestral language, thousands of years old, that he was a Free Being, and that he had the capability of

Good Understanding, and above all, a Discerning Mind to be able to listen to the best among spoken words, to ponder upon them, and to decide his way of life. The Gathas also proposed to him, with nobility, that through the teachings of Zarathushtra, he would get the spiritual and intellectual awakening for which he was searching. This mighty *manthra* still moves him to tears of joyful freedom of following the principal pathfinder, Zarathushtra.

THE GATHIC ENLIGHTENMENT

The young boy was indeed awakened. The Gathas had the answers to all his questions. From A to Z, from 'air' to 'zoology' and more. But among the Gathas, Zarathushtra's 'concise' encyclopedia, the boy triumphantly discovered the eternal principles for his continuous evolution toward perfection in life on earth, and also in the beyond. The Gathas were firmly based on Zarathushtra's *manthra*:

Humatem Mano,
Hukhtem Vacho,
Hvarshtem Shyaothanem.

*Well-thought Thoughts,
Well-spoken Words, and
Well-done Endeavors*

Now, finally, the young boy had discovered an infinite source of inspiration and spirituality among Zarathushtra's concepts about the Cosmos. He discovered:

Mazda Ahura: the Super-intellect Being who is the Creator of the Universe and the fashioner of our good earth. Mazda who is the most progressive (*spenishta*, *spenotema*) who has, through the Progressive Mentality (*spenta mainyu*), constituted the Primal Principles of Existence (*datao angheush pouruyo*) that beautifully blend to continuously create, maintain and promote the Divine Cosmos.

Asha: Universal Law of Precision, the principle based on doing the right thing at the right time, in the right order, at the right place, and with the right means to obtain the right result.

Vohu Manah: the Godly Good Mind that thinks right, to do the right thing.

Khratu: Intellect behind Good Mind.

Chisti: Comprehension through Good Mind.

Tushnamaiti: Meditation in silence to concentrate on the desired subject.

Baodha: Awakening to realize Truth.

Varana: Freedom to choose one's choice of religion, certainty, convincing belief.

Sraosha: Communion with Mazda, for guidance.

Vohu Khshathra Vairya бага айби-байришта: The Best Dividend of the Chosen Good 'Democratic' government that is achieved by following the Primal Principles.

Spenta Armaiti: Progressive Serenity enjoyed in good life.

Maz Maga: World Fellowship formed by men and women enjoying complete equality.

Vastrya-fshuyant: Prosperous habitation in which *drigu*, the rightful suffering oppression, are fully rehabilitated.

Ushta: Radiant Happiness that one enjoys when he/she gives it to every other being without discrimination.

Ferasha: Continuous Renovation of life to make ever-fresh and ever-modern.

Haurvatat: Progress towards Wholeness to achieve perfection.

Ameretat: Immortality that, in turn, makes one eternal.

Thwavavant: Becoming Godlike, humanity's final goal.

ZARATHUSHTRA'S PRISTINE GATHAS

For the young boy, forever now, the Gathas solved the very complicated problem of Good and Evil. He discovered that there were two opposite ways of thinking (*mainyu*) in one's own mind, only to be translated into words and deeds. One was 'better' (*vahya*) or 'more progressive' (*spenya*) and the other was 'bad' (*aka*) or 'retarding' (*angra*). One,

through the universal law of precision, promoted the living world and the other, the imprecise, demoted it.

The boy understood that any action that promoted human society and the environment was good. Any action that harmed and degraded it was evil. He learned that human society was divided into two types of people: possessors of precision (*asha+van*) and possessors of harmful lie (*druj+vant, dregvant*). A precise person was righteous (*ashavan*) and a fallacious person was a harmful liar (*dregvant*). Both were responsible for their thoughts, words and deeds. One would enjoy radiant happiness. The other suffered the consequences. One reached wholeness and immortality sooner. The other lingered longer to reach the same.

The young boy was now convinced that outside human society, the universe was a good creation. It was governed by the Divine Wisdom of Creation, Maintenance and Progress. It was Cosmos that knew no chaos.

Having accepted the Gathas as his guide, the young boy found no problems or contradictions in the Cosmic Order. Evolution was explained as the process of 'wholeness and immortality' *haurvatat* and *amere-tat*). Floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and other so-called 'acts of God' or 'mischiefs of the Devil' were natural phenomena governed by the universal law of precision. The boy realized that wisdom, knowledge, discretion, precaution and experience, when applied to technology could save humanity from all dangers inherent in these natural changes in the good earth's cyclic life. Nature was not in humans' way. Only unwise and reckless humans would go and get caught in nature's way.

The more the young boy read about the progress of science in every sphere, the more he cherished the Gathas. He found that day-to-day discoveries of the progressive science posed no danger or contradictions and made him believe more and more in the guiding wisdom of the Gathas, even for the sciences.

The Gathas, to the boy, then, became ever more encouraging, enlightening, and invigorating mentally and spiritually. He found the Gathas free and clean of mythology, miracles, magic, spells, superstitions, authoritarian rules and regulations, ritualism, fearful prophecies of doom and bribing promises of salvation.

The Gathas guided the young boy, later the young man, now the old man, to labor as one of the many 'thought-provokers' (*manthran*) to bring the Good Religion of Zarathushtra to the world.

The Gathas guided the boy to enjoy radiant happiness in every living being without having to practice any kind of discrimination (*ushta ahmai yahmai kahmaichit*), and to promote progress of the living world – the good earth. He saw that they guided humans to guide other humans to progress, wholeness and immortality because the religion of Good Conscience was for all, and the young boy felt that they should have to reach all.

The Gathas guided the young boy, the young man, and now the old man, to labor as one of the many 'thought-provokers' (*manthran*) to bring the Good Religion of Zarathushtra to the world.

OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

That boy, Ali Jafarey, is now seventy-seven years old. And from the time of my Zarathushti intellectual and religious enlightenment, I have all along been living a life of learning and teaching the Gathas, the Divine Message of Righteous Zarathushtra. As much as I have been awakened by Zarathushtra, I feel continuously guided by His Gathas. And so I will always declare:

Mazda, Wise God,
with a bow and uplifted arms, I pray.

First, I ask for support through progressive mentality.

Then I pray that I may perform all my actions,

based as they are on the wisdom of good mind,
precisely according to the laws of righteousness

so that I please You and the soul of
the Living World."

- The Gathas: Song 1.1

And I continue to pray, heartfully,
that Humanity would always:

Hear the best with your ears
and ponder with a bright mind.
Then each man and woman,
for his or her self,
select either of the two [good and evil].
Awaken to this Doctrine of ours
before the Great Event of Choice ushers in.

The Gathas, my guide, my homage
to you – *nemo ve gathao ashaonish!*



Dr. Ali Jafarey was born in Kerman, Iran. He received his schooling up to the University level in Karachi. He has a doctorate in Persian Language and Literature, and has self-studied thirteen living and ancient languages, and also studied linguistics, anthropology, Indo-Iranian literature, history, geography and research methods. In Saudi Arabia, he worked as a translator/anthropologist in the Arabian Research Division of Aramco. In Iran he owned a multi-lingual translation bureau. He was also in the Ministry of Culture and Art as Head of Cultural Relations with Afro-Asian countries in Iran.

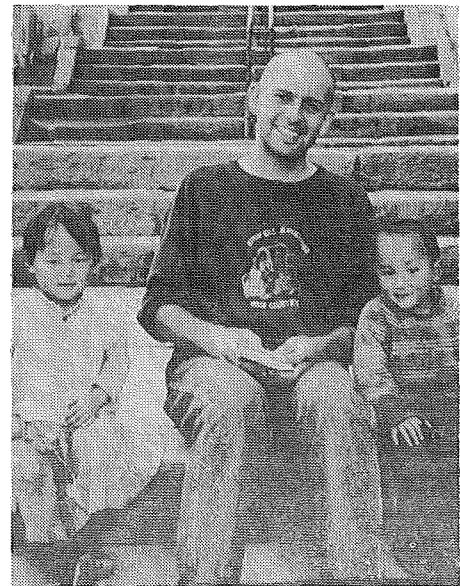
Dr. Jafarey was the Founding Director of Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies and Chairman and Professor of Persian in Islamabad. He also served as Director General of the Iranian Center for Anthropology and as Advisor to the Minister of Culture and Art in Tehran until 1980. In 1990, Dr. Jafarey, with others, at the invitation of Mrs. Farangis Shahrokh, founded the California Zoroastrian Center. In 1991, Dr. Jafarey, with seven other co-founders, established the Zarathushtrian Assembly in Los Angeles.

GOOD & EVIL

By
Shahriar Shahriari

*In the spirit of prophetic light
I saw the vision of an eternal fight
Soldiers of good fighting those of lie
For their cause, each would gladly die.*

*I sang Zarathushtra's Divine Songs
Meditated upon my rights and wrongs
An inspiring insightful spark
Imprinted its revealing mark
In my vision, my sense awoke
Zarathushtra to me thus spoke:
"You must choose in duality
To create your reality
Forces of both evil and good
Exist within, just as they should.
If you dig deep, you'll surely find
The Devil resides only in your mind
And it's up to you to pick and choose
Which embrace, which refuse.
Against the Devil, you need not fight
It's sufficient to choose the right.
Choose light and good without fear
Darkness and Devil disappear."*



Shahriari with local children on a recent trip to Nepal.

Shahriar Shahriari is a Human Imagination Consultant, author and seminar leader. Founder of Transformations Unlimited, focussing on creativity and spirituality and their role in the corporate world. He is the author of *1 + 1 = 3*, a handbook on creativity and *Thus Spake the Real Zarathushtra*, a book on Zarathushtra's spiritual philosophy. His latest service to the Zarathushti community was the co-creation of the video *PARADISE*.

*'If God were dead, the moon would give no light,
The stars grow dim, the flow'rs of earth would fade.
If God were dead, the day would turn to night,
All life upon death's altar would be laid!*

*If God were dead, the sun would never rise,
No autumn leaves of gold, no rippling streams.
If God were dead, no spring, no cloudless skies,
No song birds, no wonderland of dreams!*

*If God were dead, the grave would hold its own,
No answered prayer, no righteous path to tread,
No joy of heart, no pain or grief unknown,
No hope of heav'nly bliss – if God were dead!*

*But no! God is not dead! He lives today
In all His wondrous works of life and art;
God is not dead! His counsel points the way
I know His voice – He speaks within my heart!*

- By Dan H. Rees, *Informal Religious Meetings*

The Universality of His Thoughts

a philosophical overview

Since the Prophet's era, times have changed. Our languages, our attitudes, our mannerisms and, in some instances, our way of life have altered, but the basic theme of his thoughts remains, as alive and relevant, as when it was articulated.

By Sam Kerr
Sydney, Australia

Zarathushtra, in his earthly ordinariness, was a man of extraordinary qualities worthy of a superior man, an intellectual giant, who was able to see what others, during his lifetime, could not. The nomads, then, were faced with a dilemma whether to settle down into an orderly society or to continue the old ways of living, free of the shackles of responsibility to family, home and village settlements. Zarathushtra's sentiments, not only centered around the choice between these two ways of life, but also on the problems that arose in the settled state. He showed the proper way of overcoming them. He addressed humanity so directly and pointedly that his thoughts have continued to influence the minds of intellectuals and philosophers alike for more than three and a half millennia.

Our *gyati* - first life (which is on earth), he explained, is perception and awareness, with an ability to feel through all our senses while enjoying life to its fullest as *ushtavants*. His thoughts projected a spiritual consciousness, which constantly attempted to attain, with entire sincerity but not without frustration, a state of near-perfectness of our earthly attributes as *ashavans*.

Zarathushtra explained that when Ahura Mazda created human beings he bestowed his Divine (*Mino* or Cosmic) attributes on the ordinary Human (*Geti* or Earthly) Body and Mind as follows: -

● The Cosmic *Spenta Mainyu* - His Divine Spirit as the Earthly human Spirit *Chisti*.

● The Cosmic *Vohu Mano* - His Good Mind as the Earthly Goodness/Rationality - *Khratu*.

● The Cosmic *Asha Vahishta* - His Highest Order as the Earthly Human Right-mindedness.

● The Cosmic *Khshathra Vairya* - His Ideal Dominion as the Earthly Human Harmonious Society.

● The Cosmic *Haurvatat* - His Divine Completeness of Integrity as our Earthly human Well Being.

● The Cosmic *Ameretat* - Eternal Bliss promised at the end of time to all Earthly mortals

Zarathushtra taught that the power of Chisti - this very personal earthly human Spirit (Ahura Mazda's attribute of Spenta Mainyu), through its own spontaneity, translates into human intention, the motivating, driving force of all human conduct in real life. (The impulses arise from the sub-cortical centers of the human brain). He pointed out that a threat, while instructing, indicates poor intention while persuasion points towards good intention. Indeed, he named his youngest daughter, Pouro-chista. (one abounding in the human Spirit)

Further, he preached, that Rational Thought/Intellect- Khratu (Ahura Mazda's attribute of the Good Mind - Vohu Mano) is his special gift to humans (amongst all other living creatures on earth), so that we may remain his collaborators against all that is evil and irrational. (Rational thought arises from the cortex of the human brain that is superior to the brain of all in the animal kingdom).

In Gatha Ahunavaiti [Yasna 32.4] we note that the combination of the Good Mind of the Creator and the

rational thought of humans are, together, able to move more effectively on the path of the Ashavan.

"By distancing themselves from the Good Mind and from rational thinking (bestowed on them by Ahura Mazda) they have moved away from the path of the Ashavan."

The human brain needs to be cultivated gradually through desires, ideas, interaction, communicable skills and the effects of the environmental surroundings over a long period of time. The accumulated intellect and experience compounds into, what is known as the Illumined Mind, which confers on us powers that move towards perfecting our nature. This end point of complete perfectness, alas, is not reached in our mortal lifespan on earth. Still, as each generation looks at the advances gained through the previous generations, the grounds gained by the triumphs of goodness over all evil and irrational obstacles appear quite obvious.

The role of Zarathushtra's thoughts was always to support Persuasive Evolution of his followers with no attempt at the conditioning of their minds or enforcing precepts, commandments or injunctions. It is, indeed:

1. Persuasive Evolution and
2. Progressive Adjustment that, inevitably, lead to
3. Staged Reformation.

Let us examine how this occurs.

1. EVOLUTION

Evolution is distinctly different from revolution. Since, in our beliefs, there is no threat of excommunication or of danger to life through violence, there is no need for intimidation or of revolutionary activities. Besides, revolution is merely an over-reaction without much understanding, leading to illusions, self-indulgences and groupism. Each group develops a set of ideals to compete with the other. The two create new patterns of thought, against which a subgroup then needs to revolt, in turn. Groupism, for self-righteous reasons,

is ultimately harmful both to the initiators and to the followers, because it promotes anti-individualism, affiliation and blind allegiance. Further, it leads to dilution, distress, separation, waywardness and destruction. The smaller the community the more telling is the dilution. We are, certainly, not in the millions. We are only a few thousand left on good earth, widely scattered in small pockets throughout the world. What, then, is the answer?

Firstly, avoid anger leading to strife. In Gatha Ahunavaiti, [Yasna 48.7] the prophet advises:

"Keep furious anger afar. Keep yourself free of strife and determined to remain under the influence of the Good Mind."

Secondly, attain a state of tranquility and self awareness and apply it in real life. In Gatha Ahunavaiti, [Yasna 30.2] Zarathushtra advises:

"Listen attentively the best, (with your ears), the highest Truth and contemplate in your illumined mind. You will, then, be able to decide on the better path, each to your own selves."

Thirdly, make your activities meaningful experiences. Zarathushtra used the words *Shyaothna* and *Hushyaothna* to indicate meaningful experiences (not just mundane motion of action) which are a blend of all our 5 senses involving accuracy of judgment, promptness of decision making, sharpness of self-control, agility, endurance and fairness. In Gatha Vohu Khshathra, [Yasna 51.1] Zarathushtra states:

"Gainful experience alone, O' Mazda is the highest achievement."

Fourthly, involve yourself in the *Spenta* Function of life. *Spenta Armaiti*, Ahura Mazda's holy attribute of Rightmindedness is a form of spiritual correctness of thinking, which will guide your mind to promote amicable speech in good taste and aim at higher achievements. In Gatha Vohu Khshathra [Yasna 51.21] Zarathushtra talked of the right-minded "who are indeed holy." Why? Because:

"... their Spirit (*Chisti*), direction, meaningful experiences, and their Inner Selves (*Daena*) guide them along the path of the Ashavans."

Finally, expel any doubts you may have by questioning and reasoning. In Gatha Ahunavaiti [Yasna 30.9] Zarathushtra states:

"May mind and heart be one with thee, when thy Spirit is confused and in doubt."

The role of Education in Evolution: Everyone needs a *Ratu* because, although the human Spirit is present in everyone, it lies in a dormant state waiting to be awakened. We all need advice. To my mind nobody is self-made. The so-called self-made person was once a student too. It was the keenness and motivation to listen that made the person more successful. In Gatha Ahunavaiti [Yasna 31.2] Zarathushtra called himself a ratu:

"To ye, sent by Ahura, I come as a ratu that I may instruct both groups to follow, in life, the path of the Ashavan."

Which were the two groups? The first group was comprised of his followers, the Mazdayasnis, who trusted him implicitly. The other group was comprised of people who had grave doubts, but arrived of their own free will to listen to his sermons. The third group was made up of the *Karapans*, the *Kavis* and the *Usigs* who would not bother to listen to him.

What, may we ask is education? It is the sum total of information (of facts) and counseling, which should, by the proper gaining of knowledge, awaken ones capacity to become self-aware.

What, then, is knowledge? Is it truth? Not entirely. If it were to entail only truth we would never be able to attain knowledge. The criteria, for what is known to be true, are very strict. Knowledge gained in a particular time frame and place can turn out to be quite different in another. Knowledge is merely justified true belief of the time. Truths are only the sign of the times. These, of

course, do not include Divine Revelations, which are Eternal Truths.

What is counseling? It is, indeed, an integral part of the Ratuship. He is the best Ratu who awakens the dormant Spirit in his pupil by encouraging a sense of discrimination, inquiry, doubt and even disbelief, and thus, sparks the Inner Fire (*Mainyu Athra* of Yasna 31.3). The imagination of the pupil is so fired that the dormant human Spirit is kindled. The human Intellect then takes over, to make the pupil dedicated to a worthy cause. Since the path for the right cultivation of the Insight/Self Knowledge is then clear, a joyous feeling of understanding (freedom of thought and expression) is bound to follow without the fear of intimidation or unreasonable emphasis on any one single aspect of life.

In Gatha Ahunavaiti [Yasna 34.14] Zarathushtra talked of the very purpose of education:

"They best serve humanity who seek integration of thy Divine Spirit with Earthly Intellect."

Intellect acquired through learning however, can never lead to the whole, that is, to near-perfectness on earth. The pupil therefore, needs further guidance from his Ratu. In Gatha Ushtavaiti, [Yasna 43.2], Zarathushtra preached that *Spenta Mainyu*, the Divine Spirit and *Vohu Manah*, the wisdom of the Good Mind offer support of the highest order:

"to the student seeking progressive enlightenment during his long life."

2. PROGRESSIVE ADJUSTMENT

The word 'change' somehow triggers off an alarming reaction as soon as it is uttered. We tend to become defensive and even resentful. Yet, change on earth is all-pervasive. We begin to alter physically and physiologically the moment we are born. We are obliged to alter our physique, our attitudes, our thoughts, our interactions with those around us and with our surroundings. The world is in a constant state of flux. Mary Boyce describes the 'end of time' as the 'cessation of

all change' on earth. At the end of time, Zarathushtra preached, *Jyati* - first life (which is on earth) changes into a refreshed State of '*Frasha*'-kar to enter a second (essentially static) life, which is eternal.

This is where my phrase "Cyclicity of Being until the end of time on Earth" comes. Everything in the universe seems to be turning round and round until it runs out of steam, so to say. Imagine a bicycle moving forward with each turn of the pedal and the wheels. Let us call this cyclical forward movement of a bicycle by a more acceptable term - "Progressive Adjustment". Religious thought too, is subject to a cyclical law of growth and decay, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, sometimes from a thinking of a bygone era to a somewhat different thinking of a new age. Zarathushtra said that a "change for the better or worse" is positive, whereas absence of change, that is staying as is, only leads to stagnation. To my mind, he seemed to be saying: "since all life is change but growth and stagnation are optional, please choose wisely." In Gatha Spenta Mainyu, [*Yasna* 48.4] he addressed humanity quite pointedly:

"He who makes his thinking better, Mazda, or worse, verily promotes his inner Self through gainful experience, amicable speech, free will and free choice to guide his own intellect and lead him to his destiny."

3. STAGED REFORMATION

It is not possible to enforce uniformity or legislate in religious beliefs. Those in power, who have tried to impose legislation and to implement it by force, have realized this, does not work. Ideals and blueprints aimed at a utopia can never bring about a radical change of heart without first fostering an integration of the human spirit with the human intellect. The new thinking of reformists always appears suspicious and distrustful because the old traditional thinking has taken deep root in the mind and therefore, appears safe. Human history has shown that those who lack the motivation to adjust and

progress through mutual respect, have ultimately managed to reform through one of two methods: (1) By co-operation enforced through fear, or (2) By interference from outsiders (conquest, subjugation, imposition).

Did not Zarathushtra himself experience strong opposition when he first tried to preach his reforms? He succeeded because he aimed at a harmonious blend of the body, spirit, mind and soul: (1) There was no hidden agenda, threat or intimidation in his mind; (2) The basis of his teachings was that a virtuous, moral and righteous life is the common goal; (3) He appealed to the Spirit of the inquiring mind and only of those willing to listen.

The ancient Indo-Iranian society of Zarathushtra's time, composed of land owners and those who looked after livestock and tilled the land, had a slow pace of life in a land based economy. In modern times, however, with the incredibly fast pace of life a dilemma arises. How do we fuse our spiritual Consciousness (individual expectation) which, in each one of us is an intensely personal feeling, with the fast pace, which is a collective experience?

Let us consider Zarathushtra's ethical concept of the law of cause and effect. In Gatha Vohu Khshathra [*Yasna* 51.8] he seemed to be saying "to thine ownself be true":

"Evil fate awaits those who are untrue to themselves while blissfulness is for those who remain true."

It is the will of the '*Chistivant*' and the '*Khratuvant*' that, ultimately, helps to overrun the imperfections of life through a constant, ongoing process of creative Evolution. Humans are the fighters, chosen to spearhead this evolution through the recognition of a strong ethical policy to preserve and enjoy the goodness of the seven creations, as Ashavans.

There are no simple answers to all the problems. History has shown that the reformation of each age, during our long march southward from the Primal Homeland and, later, during

our long Exilic Period, has always come from within. After all, if we had not introduced reform, when we reached each cross road, we would not have gathered here today, adopting western dress and mannerism, without our traditional head-dress and we would not be speaking in an adopted language and relish an adopted cuisine.

We can hope to continue to apply, as individual Ashavans, the principles of Asha of the Highest Order in our modern-day living, without necessarily introducing radical and revolutionary impositions. We can, individually, promote amicable speech in good taste and aim for the highest achievements through meaningful experiences. Let no one underestimate the tenacity of the Zarathushti spirit. I am positive we will continue to remain determined in maintaining our culture and progress, with entire sincerity and grit, in spite of our small numbers in a relentlessly expanding world population.

"And, may we (all, all of us) be among those who will bring about the transfiguration of this existence." ■

- Gatha Ahunavaiti, *Yasna* 30.9

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A sense of Gathic life

By Yezdi M. Rustomji
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RELIGION FOR WHAT?

To say that it is the belief in the dogmas of religion which is the cause of the believer's intending to behave as he does is to put the cart before the horse; it is the intention to behave which constitutes what is known as religious conviction.

- R. B. Braithwaite

During the period of my early years in school I had asked the question, "religion for what?" It was a significant query. For grade one onward through high school, I was educated in Roman Catholic schools; and their religion was being taught me formally. Yet, as it turned out, the Zarathushti religious education I was receiving at home, must have sufficiently satisfied my curiosity. For then, I accepted the well-established Parsi view that Zarathushtra's religion was about:

Thinking Good Thoughts,
Speaking Good Words,
Performing Good Deeds.

It was simple enough a theological formulation so that I, a young idealist cherished it, if not understood the ramifications. I was to find out much later that it was not, quite, Zarathushtra's theology. But the community also had 'the list' of Parsis – the philanthropists, industrialists, patriots, dastooors, intellectuals, who, I was told, having lived by these three virtues were, therefore, greater men. Yet, most importantly, I was struck by a declaration of Parsis I looked up to, that living by these Three Virtues

made one the 'reasonable person'. And I internalized this 'religio-social view, and, I was transmuted into a 'reasonable man'.

So, for a period in my life, I was being 'reasonable'; even though I had not been finding much reasonability in either, individuals, groups, and in the world. Therefore, I felt that reasonability had to be cultivated. And, of course, I was convinced reasonability could be achieved universally, by thinking good thoughts, saying good words, and performing good deeds.

For a long while in my life, in discussions of social problems, my argument would be: "when one becomes the reasonable person in accordance with the three virtues, problems would not occur." Indeed, I felt, it was all that the religion of Zarathushtra proclaimed – REASONABILITY; and to that end, prayers were to be recited, rituals to be performed, and pieties had to be proffered. As such, perhaps, there had been something of reasonability about me, for I did have many more friends.

CREATING REASONABLE PEOPLE

I take the position that all world views are the result of conspiracies.

- Peter L. Berger

During my university years, to promote reasonability, I founded "The World Council of the University of Houston." I also established and organized three annual World Issues Conferences, the continuing theme being, "Age of Revolutionary Change; Developing the International Man."

Those were heady moments for this 'reasonable man'. It had seemed that reasonability could take hold, for those who believed so and came to speak of reasonability were: Arthur Schlesinger – Special Assistant to President Kennedy, Presidential Historian, Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at CUNY; Chief Simeon Olaosebikan Adebo – UN Under Secretary General; Eugene McCarthy – US Senator, Presidential Candidate; Herbert Marcuse – Professor of Philosophy, UCLA; Seymour Martin Lipset – Executive Committee Member of Center for International Affairs, Professor of Government and Sociology at Harvard; also Frank Kelley – Vice President, Center for the Democratic Institutions, Speech writer for President Harry S. Truman; Thomas Halstead – Carnegie Arms Control Study Group; Victor M. Lessiovski – Personal Assistant to the UN Secretary General; and Angela Davis – Professor of Philosophy, Black Liberation Activist and Communist; Thomas Garret Harding – Ecologist, Professor of Biology at UC-Santa Barbara; and John Potter Milton – Deputy Director of the Conservation Foundation, and many other prominent thinkers.

Students, foreign and American, and faculty from around the US, Canada and Mexico came to the conferences. Even the US State Department sent 'observers'; worried, perhaps, that in the uncertain times of the 'sixties' reasonability would take hold, and become a greater threat than the 'flower power' movement. My notion, though, had been that listening to, and dialoguing with these reasonable thinkers, a collegiate generation could learn yet, to recognize unreasonability quite abounding in the world, and they would strive to make reasonability common currency among humanity.

OF THE REASONABLE ONES

Reasonable men have always the tendency to believe that humanity is just like them, in which point they are not reasonable, life itself undertakes to disillusion them.

- Andre Maurois

The 'sixties' decade had not been one of reasonability for many, and the decade of the 'seventies' was to be more 'irrational.' It was in the early seventies then, that I researched and wrote a paper on the Religion of Zarathushtra. Reading in the Gathas then became a period of amazing revelations for me. One singular Gathic thought: "*May Good Rulers, Not Bad Ones, Rule Us!*" jarred me right out of my notion that I as a Zarathushti, could have been 'reasonable.' For in the Gathas, I found that nothing was attributed to 'reasonability' or to 'good' thoughts, words or deeds that would have had the world moving toward Frashokereti. To my shock, I found in the Gathas that the Kavis, the Karpans, the Usigs, the Princes – those who ought to have been reasonable ones – thought Zarathushtra was being unreasonable. He was perceived to be the 'troublemaker'. In fact, I found in the Gathas, it was *always* the 'reasonable' ones who had found Zarathushtra to be an unreasonable one; and so Zarathushtra had to protest always:

"I who have striven for the awakening
of the soul united with the Good Mind
And who knows the rewards of the
Wise Lord for our deeds
While I can and may, I will teach the
seeking of righteousness."

From my interpretation of the social-philosophical aspect of the Gathic message, I realized why, in the 'radical' sixties – Students, Blacks, Chicanos, Women, Farm Workers, Environmentalists, and the Anti-Nuclear, Anti-War, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties advocates had seemed entirely unreasonable to the authorities also.

Whereas, I saw that those social movements were rooted in the Gathic principle – "*May good rulers, not bad ones, rule us!*" I realized that my view of 'reasonability' had been an uneducated, if not an unholy notion; as was explained in the Gathas:

"These things (would have been clear)
to the man of insight; he who through
the Good Mind knows Righteousness
as the Dominion ..."

I understood then that I had not known of the Gathic IMPERATIVE. I simply had not known what it really meant to be committed to moving the world toward Frashokereti according to Zarathushtra's view of a life to be lived in Humata, Hukhta, Huvershta. I had to admit to myself that being the reasonable man may have been but an excuse not to be found involved with the 'unreasonable' ones in the 'streets'. I had made my 'polite escape' presiding at conferences. But in contrast to my pursuit of reasonability at conferences, Zarathushtra had been in the 'streets' challenging any and all oppressors, avowing:

"... Neither our thoughts, nor our
teachings, Neither our intelligence
nor our beliefs, Neither our words, nor
our deeds, Neither ourselves, nor our
souls, ever (shall) agree."

In my youth I had asked, "religion for what?" It became obvious to me then, that my youthful question was thus properly answered. And the answer was that Zarathushtra's Religion would not have me being 'reasonable' toward evil, or being 'prudential' in addressing the matters of wrong doings in society. This, I learned, what religion was for. I learned that this was the Religion of the Gathas inasmuch as Zarathushtra declared:

"His shall be the best part who as an
initiate proclaims my true precepts of
Integrity, of Righteousness and
Immortality..."

TO BE A GATHIC BEING

*After analyzing the thoughts
of theologians, sociologists,
philosophers and historians,
(one) sees secularization as a
'cover up' in which old concepts
are given new words.
Instead of speaking about
God, modern man speaks of
the Dialectic or Unconscious;
instead of speaking about the
City of God vs. the City of
Man, modern man speaks of
the proletariat vs. the bourgeoisie;
instead of speaking
about sin, modern man speaks
of neuroses and psychoses.*

- Harry J. Asmus

From the Gathas I found that Zarathushtra's Religious Story was about how I must think religiously, what I must say religiously, and how I ought to act religiously, to get me through life properly as well as to move the world along toward Frashokereti.

Therefore, Zarathushtra analyzed social matters that were acutely problematic, but which opportunists readily accepted. He criticized those who thought themselves virtuous, but were bad rulers. And He acted purposely, to rectify the worst of societal matters.

Similarly, the socially conscious, in the 'radical sixties' had found much that was abhorrent in their society. We have found out now that through the decades of the sixties, seventies, and the eighties; among other questionable behaviors of world leaders, the 'best and the brightest' of the Kennedy, and subsequent administrations, knew that the war in Southeast Asia was a 'mistake', but continued, yet, to prosecute it, destroying more than four million lives. And of such matters Zarathushtra had lamented to Ahura Mazda:

"The Soul of Creation (has) cried unto
God in grief ...Wrath and Rapine,
Insolence, Aggression and Violence
sit upon me in my affliction ..."

Further alluding to dissoluteness about in His land, Zarathushtra declared that it was:

"The evil ruler by his commands
destroys the doctrines of the will of life;
He prevents the acquiring of the Good
Mind, its sacred possession;
In these words of my spirit, I cry unto
you, O Lord and the Right."

Yet, in regards to the Gathic worldview, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin has said that, besides Zarathushtra's undeniably spiritual message, the "eminently practical and earthbound aspect of Zarathushtra's program is not always recognized".

For, in many instances it was from His secular experiences, that Zarathushtra proposed His program for the making of Frashokereti. For example, He found that the pastoralists were the best ones for a 'settled existence', and the nomad to be a

The possible metaphor of Yatha Ahu Vairyo in the Gathas

All religious scriptures are endowed with prophetic words (manthras) that carry with them varying orders of spiritual values. In the religion of Zarathushtra there is no manthra that has greater sacred merit associated with it, than the words of Yatha Ahu Vairyo or Ahuna Vairya.

By Jehan Bagli
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The words of the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* or *Ahuna Vairya* are elaborated in the early recordings of Bagha Nask, which speaks of the title of the liturgy, as derived from the name of the creator, Ahura Mazda [1]. The prayer is believed to embody the complete philosophy of the Religion, and was "produced on the appeal of Vohu Manah... so that the poor are helped" [2]. We are told [3] that these were the words, that Wise One uttered before the creation of the universe.

The mysticism of this liturgy is entrenched in the belief that these *Manthra Spenta* (Holy words), when chanted several times, can replace other prayers depending on how many times they are recited. An extreme case is noted in the ritual of its recital 120,500 times for the peace and tranquillity of a departed soul during the first year. Extraordinary profundity of the grammatical gymnastics cannot deliver the inherent spiritual reverence vested in the words of Ahuna-Vairya. The spiritual communion must reveal itself only to the devotee through the deepest feelings of religion.

If these are the Holy words of Ahura Mazda, are they elaborated upon by the prophet in the Gathas? Does the poet-prophet tell us anything about them? A cursory look of his poetic hymns reveals that the name of the first Gatha, *Ahunavaiti*, appears to suggest a clear connection. The words *Ahunavaiti*, *Ahuna-Vairya*, *Ahuna-Vairim* all imply "Choice of the Lord". *Ahu* implies Wise Lord –

Ahura Mazda. *Vairim* and *Vairya* are derived from avestan word *Var* meaning to choose. Thus the first Gatha which consists of seven *Ha's* or chapters [Ys 28-34] is about choosing the Lord, just as much as, the liturgy of Yatha Ahu Vairyo. A closer look at the second chapter [Ys 29] discloses a further similarity between these two liturgies.

The style of poetry in this song takes the form of a drama, unique in the Gathas. Few Gathic teachers have recognized the importance of the metaphor implicit in this Yasna. Irach Taraporewala [4], Lawrence Mills [5], Jatindra Mohan Chatterji [6] and Geldner [7], recognizing the importance of this yasna, have actually changed the order and put Yasna 29 before Yasna 28. They consider this yasna, in the words of Taraporewala, "a sort of 'prologue in Heaven' describing the preparations made there for the advent of Zarathushtra upon Earth".

The hymn is a prelude to the teachings of Ahura Mazda by Zarathushtra, just as Ahuna Vairya manthra is a prelude [3] to the sacred creation of Mazda. The theme of the appointment or choice of the Righteous spiritual savior is the subject that is prominently displayed in both Yasnas 29 and Yatha Ahu Vairyo.

This yasna appears to depict in a dramatic way, the suffering that prevails in the Universe; focus then turns to Righteousness (*Asha*) as the only way to salvation. The sequel then moves to the appointment through Good Mind, of Spitama Zarathushtra as a Righteous leader, and a Divine protector, to spread the word of Vohu Manah and Asha, to restore

order in the Universe. The underlying Gathic message is essentially identical with the meaning of the liturgy of Ahuna Vairya.

Thus the significant aspects in this play, in Ys 29 are a suffering Universe and the theological triad of Mazda Ahura, Righteousness and Good Mind. These are the same significant features that are prominently displayed in the manthra of Yatha Ahu Vairyo. We note in this text words *dregubyo* (the ones oppressed) *Ahu* and *Mazda* (the Creator), *Ashat* (Righteousness) and *Vangheush Manangaha* (Good mind or Good thinking). The liturgy of Yatha Ahu Vairyo with its interpretation is given below:

Yatha Ahu Vairyo
atha ratush, ashata chit hacha

Both Ahu (Lord) and Ratu (judge or protector) are chosen in conformity with righteousness.

Vangheush dazda manangho
Shyothnanam angheush Mazdai
Actions generated through Good Mind promote a life dedicated to the Wise One

Khshthremcha Ahurai a yim
dregubyo dadat vastarem

The chosen one, through Power of the Lord, protects and rehabilitates the oppressed.

If now, we look through the play described in Yasna 29 and compare the implications in the acts, with the above interpretation of this Holy Manthra, we begin to see a clear analogy emerging between these two liturgies.

Yasna 29.1: In this verse, the soul of the Universe laments to Ahura Mazda about its oppressed state, through anger (*aeshemo*), fury (*hazas*), outrage (*remo*), aggression (*deres*), and rapine (*tevis*), and pleads for the appointment of a Divine savior to restore order.

The message: Evil prevails in the world. There is an acute need to protect the honest and innocents to restore the Divine order of Asha (line 3 of Ahuna Vairya).

Yasna 29.2,3,4: The next three verses depict a dialogue between the Cre-

ator and Righteousness. We notice Mazda asking Righteousness [Ys 29.2]:

"Who do you know in this world who is powerful enough, who can offer protection to the world from violence of the deceitful?"

Righteousness replies [Ys 29.3]:

"There is none among the noble mortals who understands how to resist the evil. If there was a strong one present he would have called upon me and I would have responded to the call."

Righteousness at this point turns to Mazda and continues [Ys 29.4]:

"He (Mazda) is the all-knowing Creator who knows what the evil Gods and their followers have done and will do. Wise Lord is the best judge, so let it be; whatever he decrees."

The Message: Mazda is the Creator and preserver of Righteousness. In choosing the Savior. He exercises judicious discretion through Truth (line 1 Ahuna Vairya). Only a Truthful leader (line 1 Ahuna Vairya) can restore the Divine Immutable Order of Asha. No human on earth has chosen the True path. They can be Righteous through communion with the spirit of Asha. Verse four emphasizes the supreme authority of Mazda, saying His will must prevail.

Yasna 29.5,6,7: These hymns describes a prayer by the soul of the Universe and spirit of Righteousness to the Wise Lord, reminding [Ys 29.5]:

"Let no harm come to the honest and pure at heart at the hand of the evil ones."

The Wise Lord affirms that Righteousness knows no noble master (Ahu) or spiritual leader (Ratush) who is Truthful and worthy of the appointment [Ys 29.6]. Wise One with his attribute of Truth prepares for the propagation of his Holy words, that can protect His creation in the Universe. He now approaches the Good Mind asking [Ys 29.7]:

"Who can deliver the message of Truth to the mortals on the earth?"

The Message: After much deliberation with Truth, the Wise Lord pre-

pares his message with Good Mind (line 2 Ahuna Vairya) and confers through Good Thinking, over, who can disseminate the Message to humanity.

Yasna 29.8: The wise lord continues the deliberation with Good Mind and announces:

"There is but one person who has earnestly listened to our commandments, and that is Zarathushtra Spitaman. He is the only one, who can disseminate the message of Wisdom and Righteousness, if he is granted the gift to herald the proclamation of Ahura Mazda."

The Message: Here we see the announcement by the Lord of Righteousness, of a leader or savior. The person who is judged Righteous, (line 1 of Ahuna Vairya) and is recognized to perform actions with Good-mind, (line 2 Ahuna Vairya) is the one chosen as a protector of the world.

Yasna 29.9,10,11: The last three verses display the reaction of the soul of the Universe to this choice. The Universe expresses discomfort [Ys 29.9] at the choice saying:

"Do I have to be content with a feeble human to protect me? I sought for a powerful ruler. Will there ever be a strong one who can help me?"

As a reconciliation [Ys 29.10] the soul prays to Mazda, to grant the spiritual strength of Good Mind and direct Zarathushtra and his followers to the path of Asha, so that peace and goodwill may spread on earth. With these words, the appointment of the prophet by Mazda is accepted in the Universe. The last verse [Ys 29.11] is a continued prayer for the Good Mind and Righteousness to prevail, so that the Divine rule of Wisdom can predominate in the Universe.

The Message: Here we have the verbalization of the desire to spread the Divine dominion (*Khshthremcha*) in the physical world through Good Thinking and Honest Actions (line 2 of Ahuna Vairya).

There is some difference of opinion among the scholarly community as to who utters verses 10 and 11. Some

consider them as prayer by Asho Zarathushtra while others consider them as continuation of the invocation by the Soul of the Universe. Ignoring the artistic articulation of the dramatics, it is intriguing that the poet-prophet appears to deliver in a unique fashion, the crucial message of Manthra Spenta through oral transmission, to a preliterate society of his time. Deciphering of the dramatic mysticism of Yasna 29 yields a distillate that is in spirit superimposable with the Manthra Spenta of Ahuna Vairya. ■

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- [1] Dinkard Book IX, Sanjana ed., XVIII, Pg 43.
- [2] Dinkard Sanjana ibid, Pg 44.
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- [5] Jatindra M. Chatterji, The Hymns of Athravan Zarathushtra, pg 13.
- [6] Sacred Books of the East, vol. 31, pg 3.
- [7] See footnote pg 13, ref. 5.

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A Sky full of Stars

Why do I like the Gathas? The reasons are as numerous as the sky is full of stars. But the bottom line is: I like them because, as a woman of the 20th (and perhaps the 21st) century, living on this planet, in this small galaxy, they are relevant to my life. They engage both my mind and my heart.

By Dina McIntyre
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Yezdi Rustomji made a request: "Write an article on the Gathas" he said. "But not a scholarly article. Just tell us why you like the Gathas so much." When a good friend asks (especially when he is the Editor), one can but comply. Why do I like the Gathas? The reasons are as numerous as the sky is full of stars. Deciding which reasons to include here has been difficult. Here are a few. There are many others.

Having been raised in a culture where girls were not valued for using their minds, I am enchanted by a prophet who not only allows women to think for themselves, but requires it of us.

I love the freedom from dogma. How often have I heard people wailing at Zoroastrian conferences: "We don't know what to think, we have no central authority to tell us what to do." Count your blessings! Central authorities often are wrong, (but seldom in doubt, hence their aura of infallibility). They make mistakes, as Galileo discovered to his sorrow. In making our life choices, we are lucky indeed that Zarathushtra does not believe in central authority but instead suggests that we each should decide things for ourselves, after reflecting with a clear mind.

One of the things that early attracted me to Zarathushtra's thinking was that it presents a view of reality that makes sense to me. I like the fact that he considers both the material and the spiritual aspects of life as necessary to God's purpose, rejecting

neither. He considers both as two parts of the same whole, each capable of bringing about goodness, depending on how we choose to use them.

The material world is so large a part of our 'reality'. It does not make sense to me that God, on the one hand, would create this beautiful world (whether through evolution or otherwise), and all the delightful and enjoyable things in it, and give us the capacity to enjoy it, but at the same time insist that we reject it. That's almost schizophrenic. Zarathushtra's vision opens a different understanding of God. I am touched by the generosity, (and the playful paradox) of a Deity who gives us material tools to achieve spiritual growth, and who crafts these material tools in such a way that the process of achieving spirituality includes moments of pleasure and joy.

I love Zarathushtra's passion for the truth. He says [Ys 28.4]:

"... as long as I shall be able and be strong, so long shall I look in quest of truth."

I don't care much for the idea of gurus. I rather suspect people who claim to know it all. Zarathushtra, endearingly, admits that he does not have all the answers. He has something more valuable – an inquiring mind, and a kind heart. He says [Ys 28.5]:

"Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire both good thinking and the way to the Lord? ..."

Which brings us to an interesting question: What is "the way to the Lord?" Here again, Zarathushtra's answer is astonishing in its simplic-

ty and depth (rather like a Sherlock Holmes puzzle – once he explains it, it sounds so simple). To Zarathushtra, the way to God, and the characteristics with which he defines divinity (the means and the end) are one and the same – truth, what's right, good thinking, benevolence, a loving spirit.

These are what make for divinity. These are what we worship [Ys 33.7]:

"Come hither to me, ye best ones ... Thou, Wise One, together with truth and good thinking ... Let bright gifts and reverence (for all of you) be manifest amid us."

These are also the way to God. These are how we worship [Ys 50.4]:

"... I shall always worship all of you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking and with their rule ..."

The tools we use to worship in this way, are the everyday events of our lives. Whether you are writing a contract, building a house, teaching children, marketing a product, or visiting with your neighbor while gardening – if you act with good thinking, with benevolence, with truth, if you do what's right, you are performing an act of worship. You are on "the way to the Lord."

When I first comprehended this teaching, it was like a super-nova. It blew my mind. I started experimenting with it in small ways. I have not yet perfected the technique (far from it!). But I love this form of worship. It gives interest and meaning to the way I live my life. Small, unimportant acts no longer are unimportant. Each represents a challenge, and the act that brings these values to life, a touch of divinity. In the later literature, good thinking (*Vohu Manah*) and the other attributes of God are described as angels. And both the Gathas and the later literature suggest that so also are those who bring these values to life with their thoughts, words and actions (perfected parts of the Whole?). Presumably those who do it all the time are full time angels. I guess that makes those of us who do it some of the time, part

time angels. I love looking for and recognizing these part time angels. It makes my heart happy when I find them.

The farmers in Pennsylvania who on hearing that cattle in the south were starving because of severe flooding, piled into their trucks with loads of their own hay, and drove down south to help those southern farmers save those starving cows – part time angels.

The grandmother who reads in her newspaper that a local school is looking for ‘grandmother’ volunteers to read to and cuddle neglected children. She volunteers for the job – a part time angel.

The executive who (before the American Disabilities Act is enacted into law) reviews the file of an alcoholic employee and opts for re-hab and a leave of absence instead of dismissal – a part time angel.

You doubtless are a part of this brotherhood of part-time angels yourself. You just didn't know it. That's another thing I love about Zarathushtra – he helps us to see things in new, heartwarming, mind-delighting ways.

The Gathas suggest that something of God lives in each one of us, that we all are part of the same Whole. If this idea is true (and I am inclined to think it is) then it requires some interesting conclusions. It means that although a given individual may perfect himself or herself, we cannot reach ultimate perfection, unless everyone does. It makes us see the concept of *haurvatat*, completeness, wholeness, in a new light. It makes us appreciate that the purpose of life is not just to look out for ourselves, but also to help each other. When my neighbor is diminished, I am diminished. If I don't make it, you don't make it.

It is an interesting paradox that in searching for God, Zarathushtra discovers the brotherhood of man (or all the living). The Gathas are full of neat paradoxes which reconcile themselves beautifully. I call this one the

paradox of the community and the individual. We all are part of the same Whole (one large community), yet the perfecting of that whole depends on individual choices (the individual), which individual choices include helping ourselves and each other (the individual and the community).

As with all of Zarathushtra's teachings, when I first became aware of this idea that we are all part of the same Whole, I tried to see how it applied to the reality of my life. Not easily. My profession contains some great human beings, and some real sleazebags. If some of my opposing counsel had something of God in them, I sure couldn't see it. They hid it so well.

But this teaching made me appreciate that while we can hate what a person does, if we are all part of the same whole, we cannot hate the person without, in effect hating God, and ourselves. We cannot reject any person without in effect rejecting God and ourselves. A difficult lesson, and one which I have not yet mastered. But I'm working on it.

I have often wondered how some Zarathushtis reconcile this belief in the in-dwelling God, with the view that religious ceremonies are rendered spiritually worthless by the presence of non-Zarathushtis. Zarathushtis account for less than 100,000 in the population of this entire planet (setting aside for a moment, the Vulcans and the Klingons). It seems incredible to me that an intelligent (and loving) God would regard the entire population of this planet, except for 100,000 Zarathushtis as a source of spiritual pollution. If that were so, why did He make non-Zarathushtis? Why does He live in them? Another schizophrenic aberration? Would such a God be worthy of worship?

Which brings us to a very significant contribution of Zarathushtra. He lived in an age when people worshiped and believed in many gods, many of whom were fierce and cruel. Zarathushtra viewed this pantheon of

fierce and cruel local gods and (using his individual good thinking) came to the conclusion that they were not worthy of worship. That only a God who is good, loving, truthful, intelligent, is worthy of worship and is worthy of being God. (That is why these attributes are treated as divine in the Gathas; they are what confer divinity). Imagine the courage that it took. Today, some of us are afraid to speak out against small cultural actions and practices that we know to be wrong. Zarathushtra not only spoke out against a whole pantheon of fierce and cruel deities, he demoted them from godhood. By God! That took guts. And a real commitment to truth. (And you wonder why I love the Gathas!).

Zarathushtra's idea of God is an intelligence of pure goodness. I really like that. We have come to believe that goodness is impotent, much less powerful than evil. Zarathushtra believed otherwise, and once again I am inclined to agree with him. He also believed that good would ultimately triumph over evil. How, you might ask, could he be so sure of that, given the freedom to choose (to say nothing of the state of the world in his day and ours).

And how do we reconcile the idea of a God of pure goodness with the idea that we reap what we sow – the good and the bad. Can a God of pure goodness make bad things happen to people who act badly? Isn't that an oxymoron? Well, Zarathushtra had a rather neat solution to these questions. I do not know if his solution is just the fruit of a brilliant mind, or if it is really true, but I like it. It does not provide all the answers (or perhaps I just have not yet discovered them in the Gathas), but it makes more sense than anything else I have heard. It has to do with the nature of Asha.

Asha means, literally, ‘what fits’, hence, the truth, what's right. What fits includes benevolence and goodness. But what fits also includes that perfect justice which sets in motion the law of consequences – that we

reap what we sow. It is interesting that when, under the law of asha, the evil we do comes back to us, it is not by way of punishment, but by way of enlightenment. So when we make wrong choices, between the law of consequences (which expands our understanding), and the goodness of others who help us (which breaks destructive patterns), we become aware or enlightened, and choose not to make such wrong choices again – not out of fear of ‘hell’ or punishment, but because its the right thing to do (as the Ashem Vohu prayer tells us).

If, as Zarathushtra suggests, evil is the product of wrongful choices, then, when we stop choosing it, we deprive it of substance. When, because of the law of consequences, and the help of other good souls, everyone becomes aware or enlightened enough to want to stop choosing evil, it is defeated.

Let me close with one of my favorite aspects of the teachings of Zarathushtra. It is his idea of the relationship between God and man. To Zarathushtra, it is not that of a master to a servant, or even a father to a child. It is that of a friend to a friend. Or a beloved to a beloved. (Which is consistent with the idea that we are part of the same whole). I like the idea that God is my beloved friend.

And if He is my friend, and if He lives in you, can I be anything less than a friend to you?

And when we all understand this, will the world be renewed?

With the help of Asha and each other (and a sky full of stars), *atha jamyat yatha afrinami.* ■



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Dina became interested in Zarathushti theology in the early 1980s, and has studied the Gathas since then. During 1989-90, she was the Editor of a 12-lesson course on the Gathas: “An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra”, which she distributed worldwide. Excerpts appear on the website of Shahriar Shahriari at www.zarathushtra.com. Dina has spoken on the Gathas at North American Congresses, to Zoroastrian Associations and Youth Groups, at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in India, and at Gatha conferences held in London, California and Houston.

A Historical Context of the Gathas

By
Roshan Rivetna

Over the ages, the sacred literature of the Zarathushtis has suffered heavy losses with the vicissitudes of time. Of the total corpus of Avestan literature, which at one time was believed to be a couple of million verses, developed over millennia, only about 100,000 words of Avestan text now remain.

The Gathas, the most ancient of the extant Avesta, and believed to be the words of the Prophet himself, are a small (6000 words) but fundamental part of the Zarathushti religious tradition.

Acknowledgement: Text excerpted from Martin Haug's *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis*, 427 pp, New Delhi, 1878, reprinted 1978.

THE GREATEST WEALTH

*The greatest wealth consists in being charitable
And the greatest happiness in having tranquility of mind,
Experience is the most beautiful adornment,
And the best comrade is one that hath no desire.*

- Tibetan doctrine

6000 - 300 BCE

Two million verses. Greek philosopher Pliny reports on the authority of Hermippos, the philosopher of Smyrna (300 BCE), who made very laborious investigations of Zarathushti religious texts, that Zarathushtra composed over two million verses. This and other such reports by Plutarch, Diogenes (quoting Aristotle) and later historians, afford us sufficient reason to believe that the number and extent of religious literature ascribed to Zarathushtra was considerable.

558 BCE - 331 BCE
Achaemenian Dynasty

21 Nasks. Persian cuneiform inscriptions inform us that the Achaemenian kings believed in Ahura Mazda, and that their language was closely allied to that of the Avesta; in fact, the period of their rule appears to have been the Augustan age of Zarathushti literature, when it was completed and arranged in **twenty-one books called Nasks**. Each Nask was indexed by one of the twenty-one words composing the sacred *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* formula, and represented the whole religious and scientific literature current throughout the ancient Persian Empire; for they treated not only religious topics, but also medicine, astronomy, agriculture, botany and philosophy. This extensive ancient literature, was, in all probability, completed in 400 BCE, and it seems to be certain that at least a thousand years must have elapsed before a sacred literature so varied and extensive could have grown up out of the seeds sown by the great founder Spitama Zarathushtra.

330 BCE
Alexander's conquest of Persia

Texts destroyed. The loss of most of these writings, is ascribed to the ravages following the conquest of the Persians by Alexander of Macedonia. In a drunken frolic, Alexander, at the instigation of the Athenian courtesan Thais, and in revenge for the destruction of Greek temples by Xerxes, burnt the citadel and palace of the Achaemenian kings at Persepolis. With this act of barbarous folly the sacred books were burnt with the archives. From the *Dinkard*, we know that at the time of Alexander's ravages, there were only two complete sets of the sacred books. One of these, deposited in the royal archives at Persepolis, was burnt by Alexander. The other, deposited in another treasury, was later plundered by the Greeks.

330 BCE - 224 CE
Seleucid and Parthian rule

Period of foreign rule and domestic anarchy. Attempts were made by Vologoses I in the first century CE to gather the scattered Avesta.

224 CE - 651 CE
Sassanian Dynasty

Resurrection of canon of Zarathushti texts. Under Ardeshir Papakan, founder of the Sassanian Dynasty, Dastoor Tonsar collected scattered copies and fragments of texts, and restored a canon of Avestan scriptures. During the reign of Shahpur II (309 - 379 CE) Adarbad Mahrspand compiled the Khordeh Avesta, a collection of Avestan and Pahlavi prayers. Commentaries were added.

651 CE
Arab conquest of Persia

Further loss of Avestan and Pahlavi literature was suffered from the ravages and persecutions following the Arab conquest of Persia.

6th century to present day

A corpus of Pahlavi writings developed (6th to 9th centuries CE). About 100,000 words of remaining Avestan texts, including 6,000 words of the Gathas, exist today.

The Gathas in the context of the entire

AVESTAN TE (Developed over thousands

The **Yasna** comprises 72 chapters (Has). 17 of these chapters (which comprise the Older Yasna) are in an ancient Gathic dialect and are termed the Older Yasna. The rest of the Yasna is in the Avestan language and is the Younger Yasna.

Visperad ('chiefs') is a collection of prayers of 23 chapters that is a ceremonial offering of a consecrated meal to the chiefs (ratu) of the spiritual (minog) and terrestrial (getig) worlds.

Vendidad, which is the code of the religious, civil and criminal laws of the ancient Iranians, consists of 22 chapters or fargards. It is the only Nask (#19) that was preserved intact, and represents the work of priests over several centuries.

Older Yasna The Five Gathas

Gatha Ahunavaiti (Ys 28-34) is divided into seven chapters that comprise 101 verses. It is a collection of hymns and verses, composed to transmit to posterity what was believed to be the true and genuine sayings of the Prophet. One of the most important sections of the Gathic literature is presented here. It is a speech delivered by Zarathushtra, standing before the sacred fire, to a meeting of his countrymen. He induces them to forsake the worship of the various gods, to bow only before Ahura Mazda, and to separate themselves entirely from the idolators. This he believes to be the source of happiness in this and the other life.

Gatha Ushtavaiti (Ys 43-46) presents the followers of the prophet with a true image of the mission, activity and teachings of their great master. In the first section, his mission, by order of Ahura Mazda, is announced; in the second, he receives instructions from the Supreme Being about the highest matters of human speculation; in the third, he appears as a prophet before a large assemblage to propound to them his new doctrines; and in the last section, we find different verses referring to the fate of the prophet, the congregation, and his most eminent friends and supporters. This Gatha is the most important portion of the Avesta for giving an accurate knowledge of Zarathushtra's teaching and activity.

Gatha Spenta-Mainyu (Ys 47-50), **Gatha Vohu-Khshathrem** (Ys 51); **Gatha Vahishtoisti** (Ys 53). These three Gathas, which are much smaller, are generally collections of detached verses, pronounced on different occasions by Zarathushtra or his disciples.

Yasna Haptanhaiti (Ys 35-41), though written in the Gathic dialect, is to be distinguished from the Gathas. Its contents are simple prayers, in prose, offered the Ahura Mazda, the Amesha spentas and the Fravashis.

Younger Yasna

The early chapters of the Yasna, Ys 1-27 contain the preliminary prayers to the Yazeshne ceremony; prayers for consecration of the Haoma juice; and Zend commentaries on the most sacred prayers of the Zarathushtis: *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Ashem Vohu*, and *Yenghe Hatam*; and the *Haoma Yasht*.

The final chapters of the Yasna, Ys 52, 54-72, contain the powerful Gathic manthra, *A Airyemo Ishyo*; the *Stot Yasna*; *Sarosh Yasht*; another powerful manthra, *Fshusho Manthra*; *Atash Niyaeshe*; and *Ardisur Niyaeshe*.

corpus of Zarathushti sacred literature

YASHTS

(of years)

Yashts ('worship') are prayers devoted to the praise and worship of one of the Yazatas. There are 20 Yashts: Hormuzd, Haptan, Ardibehesht, Khordad, Avan, Khorshed, Mohor, Tir, Gosh, Meher, Sarosh Hadokht, Rashne, Fravardin, Behram, Ram, Din, Ashisvagh, Ashtad, Zamyad and Vanant, and fragments of the 21st, Bahman Yasht.

Other miscellaneous fragments of the Avestan literature include: **Nirangistan** and **Herpetestan**, which are instructions for appropriate performance and behavior of priests.

PAHLAVI TEXTS

(6th-9th C. CE)

Khordeh Avesta is the book of daily prayers of the Zarathushtis. It includes the kushti payers; five Nyaeshes in honor of the five creations: Khorshed, Meher, Mahbokhtar, Avan and Atash; Afringans, prayers invoking the spirits of departed ones and angels; the five gahs, devoted to the angels presiding over the five watches of the day and night; the sirozah, a calendar enumerating the names and attributes of the thirty spiritual beings that preside over the thirty days of the Zarathushti month; and other miscellaneous setayeshes, bajs, nirangs, and patets.

Pahlavi writings of the middle Persian era include: the Bundahishn, the Dinkard, Dadestan-e-Dini, Shikand-gumani Vijar, Shahyast la Shayast, Arda Viraf Nameh, Zadsparam and numerous other works. These texts were written by priests and sages in the Pahlavi language, between the 6th and 9th centuries CE.

The Metrical Structure of the Gathas

The Gathas, five in number, are comparatively small collections of metrical compositions, containing short prayers, songs and hymns, which generally express philosophical and abstract thoughts about metaphysical subjects. The name 'Gatha' means 'song' (especially a stanza which contains allusions to historical facts, as preserved in the mouths of the ancient bards) from the root *gai*, 'to sing'. That they were sung is not to be doubted, as we learn from Greek reports and from their metrical compositions. It is believed Zarathushtra learned them from the choir of archangels, who sang them to his mental ears, when in a state of ecstasy, his mind was raised to heaven.

The meters used in the Gathas are of the same nature as those found in Vedic hymns. No rhyme is observed, only the syllables are counted. The five Gathas each exhibit a different metre.

In the first Gatha, each verse consists of three lines, of sixteen syllables each.

In the second Gatha, there are five lines in each stanza, of eleven syllables each.

In the third Gatha, there are four lines of eleven syllables each.

In the fourth Gatha, each stanza comprises three verses, or six 'padas', of seven syllables each.

In the fifth Gatha, various meters are used.

The five Gathas are expressly designated as the 'Gathas of Zarathushtra' to distinguish them from other Gathas or hymns, as for instance those devoted to the praise of Homa (Ys. 10). That they really contain the sayings and teachings of the great founder of the religion, Spitama Zarathushtra himself, cannot be doubted.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE GATHAS

Imagine Ahura as a source of Divine Light emanating Rays or Channels which were generated in Him. These Divine Channels of Light commonly known as Yazatic Channels have a collective name: *Ahuraonghaho* [Gatha 31.4 and 30.9]. They are worshiped as conscious Divine Beings who have been assigned certain spiritual functions and each one of them is associated with some creation or object of our experience in our life on earth, (e.g. water, fire, earth, etc.).

Ahuraonghaho consists [see figure] of Ameshaspands, Yazatas, Daey, Minos, Farrokh and Zarathushtra-Gatha. Zarathushtra-Gatha is further divided into 5 sub-channels – the five Gathas. Throughout Yazeshne, the Gathas are venerated as Yazatas, rays of Divine Light pouring from Ahura, conscious entities in charge of Man's journey on the Path of Asha, through different Religions (*Daenao*). Yazeshne Ha 55 is fully devoted to the Gathas, stating that they lift the human consciousness to the divine height *Harethra-Vaitishcha*, alchemize evil in man into good, *Pathra-vaitishcha* and provide spiritual food and garments leading the entire creation towards the Path of Perfection.

MAINYUSH KHERETHAOSCHA.

Ha 55 also states that the composition of Gatha is based upon the Laws of *Staota Yasna*, which is the First Primary Vibrations of the Creation:

Staota yasna yazamaide ya data
angheush pauru-ye-hya

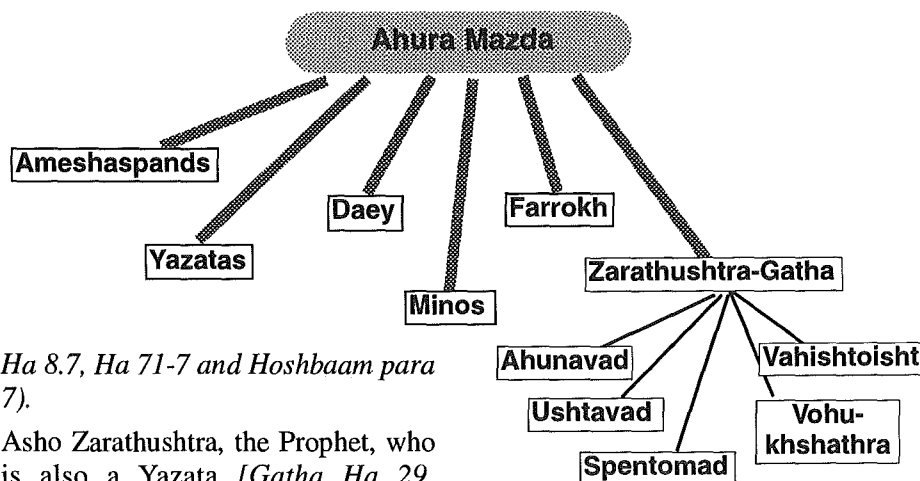
*we attune ourselves with Staota Yasna,
which are the first Laws of Creation.*

The word Zarathushtra has two connotations: one is Zarathushtra-Gatha and the other is Prophet Zarathushtra, who emanates from Zarathushtra-Gatha and adopts a human form: *Hakshya Azam-chit Yo Zarathushtra* – *Ahurish Zarathushtrish* [Yazeshne

Some glints on the Gathas

An Ilm-e-Khshnoom perspective

Divine Channels of Light commonly known as Yazatic Channels have a collective name: Ahuraonghaho, which consists of Ameshaspands, Yazatas, Daey, Minas, Farrokh and Zarathushtra-Gatha. The latter is further divided into five sub-channels – the five Gathas.



Ha 8.7, Ha 71-7 and Hoshbaam para 7).

Asho Zarathushtra, the Prophet, who is also a Yazata [Gatha Ha 29, *Dinkard, Farvardin, Tir, Ashi, Khor-dad, Gosh, Din and Jamyad Yashts* say so] has established a Divine Power Station in the non-physical world (*Nisti*). Here, Ahura's Light is focused and stored; then sent down to earth as blessings. The technical name for this Power Station is *Gaas*. The *Gaas* was Zarathushtra's main seat. He took up a human form whenever he had to descend on earth. His body was not composed of ordinary matter like that of an evolving soul. It was unique. It was like condensation of Yazatic Light in the shape of a human, made up of extremely subtle matter - a transition between The Divine Light and ultra-physical atoms.

Thus we distinguish between Zarathushtra-Gatha which denotes an Eternal Immortal Power, and Prophet Zarathushtra, an emissary of that Yazata, who appears on earth in human form once every 81,000 year cycle (*Zarvane Daregho Khadat*).

THE KHSHTNOOMAN

One more point to illustrate why we consider the Gathas as Yazatic Channels is that like Yazatas, they have their own '*Khshnooman*'.

A *Khshnooman* is a special mantra of invocation that occurs in every *Niyaeshe* and *Yasht*. It is in praise of and depicting the function of a particular Yazata with whom we are attuning. Each Yazata has a special *Khshnooman* which comes in a set pattern in a *Niyaeshe* or *Yasht*; in a common passage starting with *Fravarane Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish*. The word *Yazamaide* stands for attunement - to be one with - and we can aspire to attune with only a Divine Being - one who is a conscious entity.

PREAMBLE

We have said that Asho Zarathushtra received, through the Zarathushtra-Gatha, the highest inspiration (revelation) from Ahura Mazda. This divine inspiration in Avesta is known as *Yaan*. Thus the very first passage or the Preamble goes:

"Yaanim mano, yaanim vacho, Yaanim shyothnem, Ashono Zarathushtrahey, Fera Ameshaspenta Gathao geurvain Nemo ve Gathao Ashaonish"

"Inspired from the highest, (so worthy of absorbing as to be rewarded by them) are the thought, word and deed of holy Zarathushtra.

The Amesha Spentas hold forth the Gathas for the progress of the world. Homage be to you Gathas!"

It means that the Thought (the consciousness), the Word (the manthra) and the Deed (divine mission) of Asho Zarathushtra are the recipients (or the results of) *yaan*.

Dr. Chiniwalla points out that *yaan* is a technical word which means: highest inspiration arising out of Zarathushtra's attunement with Ahura and therefore, it also denotes the fruits of such inspiration viz - the gift, the blessings and the award of Ahura, which were showered upon Him for the spiritual upliftment of the Creation including the humans of the earth.

The message is: the Thought, Word, and Deed of Zarathushtra which were of the highest kind of inspiration, flow from the Gatha and are culminated in the Gatha. The Amesha Spentas with their devotional hearts and conscience, accepted Zarathushtra as their *Ahu* and *Ratu*, the viceroy of the world. They advocated and held forth the Gathas to the world and advised man to adopt them and follow the message.

Thus the Gathas are not merely part of our holy scriptures; they are revelations coming from Ahura Mazda, through Asho Zarathushtra for humans – five Divine Channels, talismanic forces, corresponding to and for the evolution of the five paths – the five major religions of the world.

THE MYSTICAL FOUNDATION OF THE GATHAS

The following are only a few of the remarks our learned scholars have honestly made regarding the deciphering of the Gathas:

"... to render a translation of the Gathas is the severest task in Aryan Philology." - Bartholomae

"The vocabulary of the Gatha contains many *hapex legomena* and rare words whose meaning cannot be established by a methodical procedure." - Schmidt

"... we are faced with the realization that much of our knowledge of these poems is highly doubtful." - Insler

This difficulty and confusion arises in other Avesta scriptures too. Why is it so? In Spentomad Gatha Ha 50.6 '*mahya raazeng*' Zarathushtra tells us that the Avesta Manthra are mystic words and in Ha 48.3 '*guzra senghongo*' (hidden words).

There is a mistaken belief that Avesta is a spoken language. It is not; it is '*Manthravani*' which is a special arrangement of syllables to cause certain vibrations and colors, which in turn are able to produce certain results in the reciter, around him and in Nature. These manthras cannot be deciphered merely through the rules of philology, etymology or grammar. They are not any historical accounts but Holy Scriptures - and Holy Scriptures are sacred words of God transmuted in the language which can be spoken. Every word in it is divine and has a mystical message for us.

Luckily we have evidence from the Pahlavi writings stating that they contain cogent references to the sacred scriptures of the religion, as coming down from the time of Zarathushtra. Mary Boyce writes: "Pahlavi books provide invaluable keys for interpreting the magnificent obscurities of the Gathas themselves." But Pahlavi too is very difficult to decipher. It has only 12 primary letters and most of them are polyphonous (sounded in more than one way).

So to understand the true and deep Truths of Nature one needs to have the knowledge of the esoteric or the mystical. To translate the Gathas along with their *tavil* (inner exposition) a special key is required – the knowledge of *Staota Yasna* (the Law of Vibration) which only Prophets, *Raenidars*, Saints, Sages and Holy Abeds possess. In the absence of all these, who could we turn to if we seek the Truth?

At toi anghen Saoshyanto dakyunam
Yoi Khshnoom vohu manangha
hachaonte,
Shyothanaish asha thwahya Mazda
Senghahya,
Toi zi data hamaestaro aeshemahya,

- Spenta Mainyu Gatha Ha 48.12

"Those are the Saoshyants or spiritual benefactors of the provinces, who O Mazda with the practice of thy teachings propagate the Khshnoom by means of Ashoi and Good Mind. Verily they are destined to be the opponents of the Druj-i-Aesham, the origin of all Drujs."

Atcha hoi schantu manangha
ukhdaish shyotha naishcha
Khshnoom Mazdao vahmai a fraoret
Yasnascha
Kavacha Vishtaspo Zarathushtrish
Spitam Ferashaoshtascha
Daongho erezush patho yam daenam
Ahura saoshyanto dadat.

- Vahista Ishti Gatha Ha 53. 2

"Then Kae Vishtaspa and Frashoshtra of Spitama Zarathushtra will teach for the sake of propitiation of Mazda, the paths of righteousness which Ahura has vouchsafed as the Law of the Saoshyants, unto him who has faith in Khshnoom or Divine Revelation and in Yasna or processes of attunement by means of Staota or vibration – colors by virtue of his thought-power, word-power and deed-power."

Khshnoom which is the knowledge of the Zarathushti religion – in its pristine purity lost through the ravages of time but preserved by the Abed Sahebs of Demavand, is still available to us if we have the time and perseverance to dig deep into its treasures, and courage to go wherever Truth leads us. When you stroll in the mystical garden of the Gathas which have infinite dimensions, through the path of *Khshnoom*, not only will the mystery be revealed to you but you will drink at the font of profound joy and ecstasy.

Khshnoom explains that a Holy Scripture has levels of meanings, that some words like *cow* or *gava* (cow), *hoshbam* (dawn), *asp* (horse), *ushtra* (camel), *nmaona* (house), *chakhra* (wheel) cannot be taken literally. Hence 'water' can refer to the waters existing beyond the ambit of human experience and may be referring to certain mystical energies and forces operating in God's creation or within the human personality.

GATHIC AND NON-GATHIC

The *Yatha Ahu Vairyō* prayer is the fundamental keynote to the entire edifice of our scriptures of twenty one Nasks, each of which corresponds to the twenty one words of

Yatha. All the Nasks except one, are lost, but fortunately we have the summary of the contents of most of the Nasks in Dinkard, in Pahlavi language. The Gathas form an essential part of *Satud Nask*, which also includes half of the Avesta text. Hence there is nothing like the 'later Avesta' – their source is common. The difference between Gathic and non-Gathic like the Yashts, is like that of poetry and prose – only in dialectical peculiarities. The non-Gathic writings do not contain anything contrary to the Gathas, but develop and unfold in a beautiful way, the Ideas and Ideals, the Teaching and Truths embodied in the Gathas. The Gathas contain small points condensing tremendous amounts of energy; the non-Gathic scriptures unfold, each such condensed point into a flood of energy thus elaborating upon and elevating the Gathas. Thus all Avesta writings have to be looked upon with great reverence; to be understood correctly and to be recited faithfully.

SEQUENTIAL ORDER OF THE GATHAS

The five Gathas have an evolutionary sequence, a ladder of spiritual advancement of man, beginning with Ahunavad and ending in Vahishtoish. The key stanza in each Gatha lays down its quintessence and defines the central theme.

The *Ahunavad Gatha* prescribes the first step towards the final aim of man, the duties and commands man has to observe: Ahu's vairyā, Ahu's word or command. This Gatha talks about why Creation came into existence, how duality set in, how emancipated souls liberated others, how mankind, vegetable and mineral kingdoms will eventually evolve, how an unpius soul becomes an *ashavan*, how when *Geush Urvan* (the Soul of the Earth) is burdened, Zarathushtra's soul comes to the rescue, how evil is transmuted into good. The final aim of *Farshogard* is the main note which is repeated at the end of each of the seven Has.

The second step or the *Ushtavad Gatha* is the assurance of *Ushta* – eternal bliss or joy. The final aim or Farshogard will be fulfilled in spite of everything. Even though evil is rampant in every atom of the universe, it will be drawn out, renovated, turned into good by the laws of Divine Justice – ultimately Duality will turn into Unity. This is a matter of rejoicing and forms a bedrock for optimism sparkling throughout Zarathushtrian philosophy. It teaches us to be in a joyful state of mind always, no matter what befalls. Even with thousands of disappointments and worries, to keep the lamp of *Ushta* burning with the oil of ever-increasing desire to bring about Farshogard.

With such a joyful assurance, man hopefully marches through life and progresses. Hence the *Spentomad Gatha* (*spenta* means progress) outlines the ways of such a progress, the operating force being that of *ushta* which is brought about by *Spenamino*. It is hoped and wished that such progress be spread in this world. It is also wished that the Saoshyants arrive and spread Khshnoom the priceless treasure (knowledge) in this world. Khshnoom is the gift of the Saviors which is sent down from time to time to revamp the religion.

Vohukshathra Gatha revolves around Khshathra – Divine Authoritative power arising out of progress. Zarathushtra's disciples like Jamasp, Maidyomah, Frashastra and the maghavs have been vested with such a power and we are asked to shun the Wrong and adopt the Right in order to emulate these great men of authority.

Vahishtoish Gatha, popularly known as Zarathushtra's Gatha is the topmost rung of the ladder.

"Vahishta ishtish sraavi Zarathusht
rahe Spitamhya"

Vahishta means the best, *ishtish*, coveted (desired) wealth. Zarathushtra's wealth (spiritual knowledge) became known and spread far and wide. Zarathushtra's wish was fulfilled and his mission accomplished.

He set people on the path of Farshogard (*erejupatho*) by establishing the Zarathushti Daena. Hence the essence of Zarathushti Daena is given in this Gatha.

To achieve *khaetwodath* – the true union of the counterpart soul (soul mates) the institution of marriage is not only important but necessary, and so it tells us how Pouruchisti and Jamasp's forms in the '*Pavmahel*' guide the good men and women toward *khaetwodath* – the Grand Union – becoming a Whole by imbibing scattered soul particles from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms and then merging with the opposite sex.

Thus goes the sequence: (1) Farshogard which is the final aim (2) is assured and we are asked to rejoice; (3) for that we have to progress (4) and receive Divine Authority like Zarathushtra's disciples (5) following the Path prescribed by Asho Zarathushtra in the Zarathushti Din.

Ahunavad Gatha in Geh Sarna. The effects of reciting this Gatha in the Geh Sarna ceremony are described below.

The last thoughts of the *ruvan* and his worldly desires/attachments form a sort of a shell which keeps him attracted towards this earth and retards his onward progress. These manthras gradually shatter this shell and enable him to progress onward.

The manthras also destroy the evil magnetism which sets in the *aipi* (immediate surrounding) of the deceased.

The recitation checks the *druj-e-nasu* which arises out of *rigor mortis* in and around the body.

The mantra helps the trapped non-physical parts: *kehrp*, *tevishi*, *ushtan* from the onslaught of Ahriman.

At this point, the *ruvan* is in '*neem-hosh*' – only barely conscious. The Manthras help awaken its consciousness so it can ably fight the *druj* and change it to *gav*.

The recitation of the *Geh Sarna* prayer – the vibrations caused have a

To us Zarathushtis then, the Gathas are sacred '*shaktis*', channels of Ahura's Light, Divine conscious Beings to be invoked by recitations with great reverence, to be loved and cherished. The different aspects of this mighty scripture are like many facets of the vast, complex crystal of Truth. Dear Zarathushtis, do not smash the crystal, look and see it *glint*. Let us realize that the Holy Scriptures are from the Realm of the Imponderables. To take mysterious spiritual ideas and dissect them by arguments and conjectures, is like taking a flower and pulling it to bits. Instead, let us all be united and get on with our worship and devotion and they will reward us with a sense of melting in our hearts, enhancing our lives!

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. Publications include the Mazdeyasnie Connection Newsletter, an audio-visual "The Dawn of Consciousness" and several other tapes and books on the religion.

AN IRISH TOAST

*May the roof above us never fall in,
And may we friends gathered below
Never fall out.* - Jonathan Katz

- Jonathan Katz

God's Expression of Love for Man

Making Man a Central Concern of the Gathas

Gathas weave theology in such a harmonious way that God, Godliness, man's spirituality, this world, after-life and even the end of the world, all become part of a unified theory. The afterlife thus rests on what we do in this life. This world is as sacred as the other world and once we are here, we have to devote all our energies to improve what we can, in our own humble way as our spiritual fulfillment and mission on earth. This makes man very important in the Gathic theology.

By Kersey H. Antia
Orland park, Illinois

MAN AND WOMAN AS GOD'S COLLABORATORS ON THIS EARTH

I learned all the Gathas by rote by the time I was ten. But I hardly knew their meaning or importance till much later. I vividly remember though, Dasturji Dhalla explaining to us in the Religion class, at the M. F. Cama Atharvan Institute, the coming of Asho Zarathustra on this earth as per Yasna 29 when I was about that age. Perhaps, my first acquaintance with the meaning of any one Gathic verse came about the same time when I heard Dr. Gilder, the then Prohibition Minister and a personal physician of Gandhiji, quoting Yasna 34.15 while presiding over Dasturji Dhalla's lecture in C. J. Hall in Bombay. I looked up its translation and I liked it so much, that it has been in my prayers ever since:

“O Mazda! Reveal me the best words and actions – those that are of the essence of *Vohu Manah* (good mind) and *Asha* (Cosmic Law of Order and Righteousness) so that they form the just basis for my devotional hymns (for you).”

As this verse comes at the very end of the Ahunavaiti Gatha [*Yasna* 28 - 34] one comes to realize in this verse the essence of this Gatha:

“O Ahura! With thy Divine Sovereignty (Khshathra) Thou shalt certainly bring

about Frashokereti (Renovation of the World) to fulfill our ardent striving (for the same)."

Much later in life I realized the beautiful significance of Yasna 34.1:

"By whatever deed, by whatever speech, by whatever prayer, O Mazda! Thou didst attain for thyself (Thy Divine Attributes of) *Ameretat* (Immortality), *Asha*, *Khshathra* and *Haurvatat* (Perfection), (kindly) enable us to render these very attributes to Thee, O Ahura, in the fullest measure (so we become like Thee and help Thee bring about Frashokereti as best as we can)."

St. Augustine echoed this same idea millennia later when he talked about humans being molded in God's image and their heart not resting till they rest in Him.

The Gathic emphasis in the role of (WO)/MAN as God's collaborator (*Hamkar*) on this earth, just as the Amesha Spentas are Mazda's Hamkar, has never ceased to impress me, especially as it comes down to us from pre-historic days. God loves us so much, He wanted us to be perfect and divine like Him and instead of preferring to take it easy, He took the pains of creating this world through His Holy Spirit (*Spenta Mainyu*) and bestowed absolute Free Will on us from the very beginning of creation [*Ys 32.11*];

“...so that a person can make his choice according to his/her own desire”

Even when in later Sassanian times the cosmic dualism tended to cede

the ethical dualism of the Gathas, the doctrine of Free Will was never compromised and mankind was encouraged to be good by making the right choice. Therefore, our religion was called the Good Religion (*Veh Din*).

It could also be called the Religion of Right Choice. The Gathic word for Religion is *Daena*, meaning conscience and good conscience could only be developed by making right choice. Today, more than ever before in the history of mankind, making the right choice in life has become so very important in view of the multitude of temptations facing us that did not even exist just a generation or two ago. And no religious literature in the world, to my knowledge so consistently and vehemently preaches the importance of making the right choice in life as the Gathas, without ever compromising the principle of Free Will.

The Gathas therefore are even more relevant to our times than ever before. The importance of making the right choice is also the cornerstone of modern-day psychology which is having an ever-increasing influence on our psyche.

ROLE OF MAN IN THE GATHIC THEOLOGY

But the relevance of Gathas to our times increases even more, if one tries to contemplate about the need for a spiritual philosophy that will address the needs of our technological age, of unprecedented material progress, scientific innovations, medical breakthroughs, etc, which has the potential in the right hands and minds to usher us into Frashokereti [*Ys 30.9*]:

"Therefore, let us be those who will bring about Frashokereti."

But until we emulate God and godliness in every way, we cannot bring forth Frashokereti, which literally means making everything fresh – as fresh as when God first made this earth of his own image in the spiritu-

al world. This world is therefore as sacred as the other world, and once we are here, we have to devote all our attention and energy to help anyone and to improve anything we can in our own humble way, as our spiritual fulfillment and mission on this earth. Even raising (good) children to further the work of God is a must, and the Gathas therefore rightly conclude with nuptial advise. *This makes man very important in the Gathic theology.*

“... a loving, beneficent God who has granted Free Will to man to choose to be Godly and Godlike without His coercion and bring about Frashokereti at the end of time by making the right choice in every endeavor.”

Throughout the ages man has sought out religion to find out about the other world. Even though what the Gathas say about afterlife has been the basis of Judeo-Christian beliefs such as heaven and hell, purgatory, damnation, apocalypse and resurrection, the Gathas weave theology in such a harmonious way that God, Godliness, man's spirituality, this world, after-life and even the end of the world, all become part of a unified theory. The afterlife thus rests on what we do in this life.

This understanding is often lost on scholars who, for various reasons, tend to deny the influence of Zarathushti doctrines on the Judeo-Christian traditions. They may, for instance, admit certain eschatological (afterlife) influences but deny the influence of monotheistic ideas on the post-exilic Jewish beliefs, even though Zarathushtra treats them all as parts of one unified theology in which everything stands in relation to all other things.

Thus, nothing is possible without a loving, beneficent God who has granted Free Will to man to choose to be Godly and Godlike without His coercion and bring about Frashok-

ereti as the end of time by right choice in every endeavor, etc. Unfortunately, even the distinguished scholars often miss this point.

A UNIFIED IDEOLOGY

The Gathic eschatology is not conceivable without the other – Gathic teachings about Mazda's Free Will, etc. As Mazda tends to everything in the universe, man too has to emulate

Him by taking care of everything in the cosmos and therefore, the Gathas include the whole universe, even the sun, moon, stars and the planets [*Yasna 44: 3 & 5*], in its unified system of thinking – all for the love of man, thus emphasizing the importance of ecology and environment. What the later Avesta says about all the seven Amesha

Spentas working entirely in unison as one entity is also true of the entire Gathic theology – it works as one coherent, uniquely inter-related, unified ideology, leaving nothing out for the benefit of man.

I have stated elsewhere it was not the Greeks, but the Gathas, that have laid the basis of modernity by emphasizing the dignity of man, free will, and essential unity of everything in the cosmos. And what I have read lends further support to it albeit indirectly. Rev. R. H. Charles observes in *The Revelation of St. John* [Vol. I, page c1 xxxvi]:

"Apocalyptic and not Greek philosophy was the first to grasp the great idea that all history, albeit human, cosmological and spiritual, is a unity – a unity following naturally as a corollary of the unity of God. And yet, serious New Testament scholars of the present day have stated that apocalyptic has only to deal with the last things."

Even though he refers to the apocalyptic literature of much later times, what he says is even more true of the Gathas as the Greeks came into contact with the Persians long before they came to know much about the Jewish apocalyptic literature.

And at the center of this beautiful unity depicted in the Gathic philosophy is Man/Woman.

To me, the Gathas are a living proof of the love God bears for us and our welfare - here and hereafter. It is a God that so loves us that He won't ever act arbitrarily or dictatorially. In His infinite justice and fair-play He governs Himself by the same rules he govern us with: good for good, bad for bad. We never have to worry he will mete out any punishment (*ang-hahat*) to us if we did not do anything wrong to deserve it. It is a far cry from the arbitrary God we find, for example, in the Book of Job. How can He be arbitrary or punitive if He is a friend (*frija*) to us; likewise, a really religious person is a companion, brother or father to Ahura Mazda [*Yasna* 45.11]. No other proof of his love and concern for us is needed. Even the later Pahlavi scriptures bear clear testimony to God's love for us.

A LOVING GOD

It is in the fitness of things therefore, that the Gathas (apart from the Wedding Chapter) end with the praise and love for virtuous men and women [*Yasna* 51.22], this prayer later becoming the third most important Zarathushti prayer. Man, thus is the main concern of the Gathas and he indeed represents God in the world in the later literature.

Man could look nowhere else but to this world to attain his salvation and the Gathas lovingly show him how to. God created this world through His Holy Spirit in His own image so we can enjoy it and learn to make it as good and fresh as He does by making right choices, thereby living in eternal joy and comfort with Him sans misery, sans death, sans diseases, sans everything bad. How can such a loving Mazda condemn us to the original sin on birth or regard the wholesome pleasures of the world as sinful or *maya* (illusion)!

If there is any unhappiness or punishment in this world, it is brought on by us by our own wrong choices - the Gathas, however, are silent about natural calamities which later on were thought to have been brought on by *Ahriman* (Evil Spirit).

The best blessing conferred on us by Mazda, however, is not the absence of Original Sin and the like, but the fusion of the material and the spiritual; so that whatever kind and clime and time of the world we find ourselves born in, we have to accept it as unfolding of God's love for us for our spiritual upliftment by following his Gathic guidance. We do not have to wander in search of Gurus in the East to find the truth as it is right within us, exactly where we find ourselves in life. And we cannot bring about our individual salvation without working for and assuring our collective *Nirvana* - anything else would be selfish; *Ushtavaiti* Gatha [*Ys*43.1] opens with:

"Happiness to those who bring happiness to others"

The merging of the spiritual and the material into one identity is so very evident in all our ceremonies and perhaps utmost in the investment of

“ By granting us Free Will, God has shown He loves us enough to part with His own Sovereignty to confer upon us an opportunity to learn to exercise our choices wisely and depend on us for the fate of the world until we unite with Him. This is benevolent mentality (*Spenta Mainyu*) par excellence. ”

Sudreh-Kushti which makes our bodies and minds perpetually allies of God - even His Holy Spirit is clothed with sky [*Yasna* 30.5]. Of course, if we have to be Godlike, we have to be active like God [*Yasna* 34.1, etc.]. So be prepared for a life of Godly action - *Shyaothna*, *Karma*.

If the foregoing informal observations are not enough to convince us of God's love for us, (and they really are not), the most noteworthy evidence for it is in the most bewildering, but inescapable fact, most often overlooked, that by granting us Free Will, God has shown He loves us enough to part with His own Sovereignty to confer upon us an opportunity to learn to exercise our choices wisely and depend on us for the fate of the world until we unite with Him. This is benevolent mentality (*Spenta Mainyu*) par excellence.

Later on, this divine quality and magnificence of Mazda was misinterpreted in medieval times as the omnipotence of Mazda being temporarily limited by *Ahriman*, but the real *Ahriman* (Evil Spirit) is our own evil mentality retarding the work of God, and He loves us too much to see us continue being evil. His omnipotence is in no way limited. Like a loving father, He wants his children to be as good as He is, and is willing to wait till we learn to do so, for his omnipotence over Nature and all other creatures in this world, as well as the entire universe beyond, remain uncompromised in the Gathas.

As Christianity too to some extent, unlike Judaism, shares the Gathic concept of Free Will and monotheism; Christian scholars often represent the same view. Thus, to quote Rev. Dr. Charles again, "His omnipotence is ethically and not metaphysically conceived. It is not unconditioned force. That He possesses such absolute power is an axiom of the Christian faith, but He will not use it, since such use of it would compel the recognition of His sovereignty, not win it; would enslave man, not make him free. Hence, the recognition of his sovereignty advances *pari passu* with the advance of Christ's Kingdom on earth." [*Op. Cit*, p.cx]. Substitute it with Zarathushtra's *Vohu*

Khshathra, "God's good Dominion (Kingdom) which must be actively chosen by us." [Yasna 51.1], and each fresh advance is followed by thanksgiving in heaven [op.cit; p. Cx]. Compare it also with Ys 51.1:

"Choosing God's Dominion assures his future (in heaven) as good, as an adorable person (because) he attains heaven (which is Behest – the best) through his righteous actions. This very idea shall I (Zarathustra) now bring to fulfillment for us."

Compare it also with Ys 51.18 and 51.21. But Ys 51.21 leaves no doubt that: "Ahura Mazda Himself has established this (and) I shall implore Him for this good fortune" thus leaving us in no doubt about His omnipotence and His willingness to compromise it for the love of us humans. ■

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religion and Avesta-Pahlavi under Das-toorji Dabu and other learned priests. Dr. Antia has lectured widely and is the author of numerous papers and articles on religion. Dr. Antia is a licensed clinical and management psychologist in full-time private practice in Illinois.

*LOVING means to love the unlovable, or it is no virtue at all;
FORGIVING means to pardon the unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all;*

FAITH means believing the unbelievable, or it is no virtue at all;

And to hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all.

- G. K. Chesterton

The Religion of Zarathushtra is not Monotheism

The question as to whether the religion of Zarathushtra is a monotheistic religion or a dualistic religion has been repeatedly discussed. I would like to maintain that it is neither, and that it is not monotheistic in the true and exact sense of the term.

**By Soonoo Engineer
Vancouver, British Columbia**

The three great western religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam, known as the Abrahamic religions as they trace their source to the Old Testament – are the monotheistic religions of the world. In order to understand whether the Zarathushti religion as expounded in The Gathas is monotheistic, I would like to contrast the way in which the Old Testament addresses the nature of Yahweh and Man, with the manner in which the Gathas talk about Mazda and humankind.

It is not the prefix 'mono' that I dispute. It is the term 'theism'. Theism is the belief in an all powerful personal God – a God who is involved in the world and its events – a God responsive to human needs who rewards the faithful who obey His commandments but punishes those who stray from the path – a God who demands total faith and obedience: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

THE NATURE OF GOD IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Judaism. Let me briefly sum up the Book of Genesis so that we may understand the nature of Yahweh. In the first book, Yahweh the Supreme Being created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. Even if one understands this metaphorically as representing ages, two things can be logically deduced: namely, that the universe is a material creation separate from its creator, and that it was created by the will of Yahweh at a specific time. Having creat-

ed a perfect world, He creates Adam and Eve and places them in the Garden of Eden with one injunction, not to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. They break His commandment and are banished from this virtual paradise. In Genesis 4, Cain slays his brother Abel; Yahweh condemns Cain and his progeny to a life of suffering. Humankind continues to err and sin, until finally Yaweh in all His wrath decides to destroy the human race. However, he spots one upright man, Noah, and commands him to build an ark, so that he and his family can survive the flood.

In Genesis 8 and 9 Yahweh decides never again to destroy the human race, but within ten generations he destroys Sodom and Gomorra. Thereafter, Yahweh abandons most of humanity and seals his covenant with the tribe of Abraham. The descendants of Abraham become his 'chosen people' and He becomes their God and the God of Israel.

It is later in the Old Testament that the concepts of love and mercy appear. It was the prophets who transformed that harsh austere faith into a religion of mercy, who showed most clearly that Jehovah (Yahweh) was not only an angry but a loving God.

Christianity. With Christianity God becomes even more personal, for Christ is looked upon as the Son of God, of virgin birth, who was sent to Earth to redeem mankind of its sins. Christ taught a beautiful and sublime gospel of mercy, forgiveness, peace and love, but for many Christians his teachings are often overshadowed by the sterner teachings and laws of the Old Testament.

Islam, which traces its racial lineage to Ishmael, son of Abraham by Hagar, accepts the teachings of both Judaism and Christianity, looking upon Christ as a prophet. It asserts that Mohammed is the last prophet and the Koran, the Holy Book, was dictated to Mohammed by Allah Himself, so its laws and prescriptions on practically all aspects of life have to be adhered to rigidly.

Theistic religions. In brief, theistic religions are religions of law, leaving little room for free thought or freedom of choice, and often at odds with scientific knowledge and development, if contradictory to the Holy Book. Not spiritual experience, but implicit belief in the faith, ethical conduct, observance of law and acceptance of dogma are emphasized. Besides the love of God, fear of God and punishment play a major role in molding the psyche of the followers. In Christianity human beings are referred to not only as Children of God, but as sinners who can only be saved by the grace of God. Islam means submission to Allah, and its followers often refer to themselves as slaves of God who must readily accept whatever fate Allah wills them. However, in each of these faiths, there is a very small percentage that has broken away from the rigidity and dogmas, and chosen to follow a mystical path.

NATURE OF GOD

IN THE ZARATHUSHTI RELIGION

How very different is our concept of our Mazda. Ahura Mazda is conceived of in the abstract as a Divine Intelligence and Power, both transcendental and imminent, permeating the universe. Ahura Mazda is not separate from his creation; his Divine Spark animates all life.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra expresses his longing to be one with Ahura Mazda [Ys 28.1]:

"With uplifted hands and deep humility, I beseech, O Mazda. the abiding Joy of Thy Holy Spirit."

And [Ys 43.9]:

"Then did I realize Thee, as the Most Holy One, O Mazda Ahura, when Vohu Manah (Love, Divine Intelligence) encircled me completely."

How does one convey a mystical, cosmic experience in words and concepts of everyday language and worldly consciousness? Zarathushtra does it in a unique way by creating the Amesha Spentas. The Amesha Spentas though personified in the Gathas are actually attributes of Ahura Mazda.

"Zarathushtra here in my abode dwelleth *Vohu Manah* (Good and Loving Mind), *Asha Vahishta* (Righteousness, the Eternal Cosmic Laws), *Khshathra Vairya* (Power, Energy), *Spenta Armaiti* (Devotion, Piety, Serenity). *Haurvatat* (Wholesomeness, Perfection) and *Ameretat* (Immortality)" - Ahura Mazda Yasht.

What is this abode? It is Ahura Mazda's own being – all-consuming, infinite and eternal.

By virtue of the Divine Spark within ourselves (*Fravashis*) we are able to cultivate and realize these attributes and so come close to Ahura Mazda.

Thy Divine Fire we yearn to see.
He blazes, Mightily through Truth
He is Thy strength, our Goal and
Hope is He
He lights the Faithful clearly through Life.

In the Gathas, Asha is pre-eminently emphasized and glorified [Ys 31.19]:

"Who so listens and realizes Asha becomes the soul-healing Lord of Wisdom - O Ahura."

As essentially spiritual beings, we are asked to transcend our weaknesses and failings, rise above self destructive attitudes of greed, egotism, selfishness and arrogance, to scrupulously examine ourselves and to allow our lives to be guided by Humata, Hukhta and Huvaresha – Good Thoughts, Good words, Good Deeds.

Asha also comprises the great natural laws such as the law of gravity, electromagnetism and so forth, and metaphysical laws which operate in the universe. The Gathas expound on three of these.

The first, the **Law of Polarity**. The first created were the Spirits twain as co-workers they reveal themselves:

Yet in each thought, word and deed these two

As Twin Co-workers they reveal themselves.

Yet in each thought, word and deed these two

Are n'er agreed; One's Good, the other, Bad.

There can be no goodness without evil, no success without failure; there is constant struggle between the two [Ys 30.3]:

"And of these Two, the Wise do choose aright.

The Unwise choose not thus - and go astray."

The second is the **Law of Cause and Effect** [Ys 43.5]:

All thoughts and words and deeds of men shall bear

Fruit as laid down in Thine Eternal Law. Evil to evil, blessings good to good.

Thy wisdom thus ordains till the end of time.

Finally, there is the **Law of Interdependence** or Inter-connectedness. We live not for ourselves but for others. No one can be happy or holy in isolation. Zarathushtra urges us to work for the betterment of others [Ahuna Vairya]:

"To serve with zeal his brothers meek."

And he tells his disciples to spread his teachings and to strive for collective salvation.

Lastly it holds out hope of perfection and immortality. The culmination of Man's evolving consciousness leading to spiritual enlightenment is possible here on earth. By transformation of our ordinary consciousness to a higher level we can experience infinity, eternity and immortality – Ahura Mazda.

Mankind holds an elevated position in the religion of Zarathushtra. Endowed with the Good Mind, a Conscience, Man is given Freedom of choice and asked to exercise his free will with awareness and responsibility, for ultimately it is he who is the maker of his fate, here in this life and hereafter. Mere belief and practice of rituals is not enough. It is a righteous life coupled with actions that counts. Finally, Zarathushtra calls upon Man to rise to his highest

self, actualize his ideals and vision, and be a co-creator with Ahura Mazda in bringing about the 'renovation' of the world. What a sublime concept of the human race.

The Gathas are philosophical and contemplative writings. They contain no edicts nor dogmas; there is nothing in them that defies reason. The best approach to them is not through recitation of the prayers or even intellectual study of the text, but through deep contemplation of their profound concepts and through meditation.

They are utterly different in spirit and content from the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran. To classify Zoroastrianism along with Judaism, Christianity and Islam as a monotheistic religion is confusing and misleading. In my opinion Zoroastrians need to rethink this issue. ■



Soonoo Engineer was born in Mumbai and raised and educated in Pune. Prior to emigrating to Canada in 1958 she taught at St. Mary's Training College for Teachers in Pune, and at the Loretto College in Calcutta. She resumed her teaching career and taught English and History at Vancouver Community College for many years. She is very involved in the Peace and Disarmament Movement and in Interfaith organizations. Religion and Philosophy have been her major interest and lately she has been teaching "Essence of Eastern Religions and Culture" to adults.



The Gathas in Meditation

Once a man follows his own promptings, the air becomes his only support and ultimately the ether. Both air and ether symbolize the Unmanifest that this man follows in the silence of his soul. In return this Unmanifest draws him to Itself by stripping him of all his illusions. This stripping gives rise to the illusion of pain, which you, like all else, feel painful.

**By Fali Engineer
Houston, Texas**

I was born into a Zarathushti Parsi family 65 years ago, in a small town of then undivided India. After receiving school and college education in South India, our family migrated to Pakistan in 1950 and I worked there for 37 years. I now live in Houston, Texas.

The ethical concepts of the Zarathushti religion were automatically ingrained in us as our parents uniformly lived out its main aphorism of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. However, at age 30 a deeper urge gripped me to go beyond this verbalization, as I sensed that the 'good' should lead to 'better' and finally, 'the best.' If man is made in the image of God, his ultimate destiny should be to comprehend Him at all levels of his being. This explains why only 'the best' will fully satisfy our appetite for unalloyed fulfillment. But where was this to be found? And how?

My hectic search paid off after 17 years, when I learned Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM) and the Science of Creative Intelligence in 1974 from an American teacher, who came to Pakistan to introduce the technique. I say 'paid off' because both the 'where' and the 'how' were now answered.

The intellectual postulate that the kingdom of heaven was within us was converted into a personal reality. Not because I was better or cleverer than the next person, but simply because the TM technique allows everyone to naturally and effortlessly

experience peace and wholeness within themselves irrespective of their creed, sex, age or beliefs.

Surely, the highest aim of any religion is fulfilled when the aspirant interacts with its truth at the level of his own Being. I found that TM did this for me and would do it for anyone else. Because TM opened for me the door to unlimited growth, I felt compelled to pass on its promise to anyone who would listen to its message. So I became a teacher of TM in early 1975, and have been giving out its practical procedures ever since.

However, one nagging question had to be answered. Did meditation have a place in the religion of Zarathushtra and would TM fit the bill? I kept my eyes open and came across these passages in our Gatha Ahunavaiti:

May all that is best befall the wise man, the seer who shall reveal me the true and holy word, the Manthra which relates to Self-Realization, Immortality and the Divine Law. So shall the might and majesty of Ahura Mazda grow within him through the Good Mind.

The universal (highest) mind which is the first to comprehend that (Manthra) which shines in the glory of Truth and which upholds Righteousness is the root of all Duty. Give me that mentality Ahura Mazda which is always the same.

- [Ys 31.6,7, T. R. Sethna]

If, as said before, the ultimate destiny of man is to comprehend Him at all levels of his being, then this comprehension requires the unfoldment of the hidden potential of the divine seed embedded in the consciousness of man. This unfoldment is a process of evolution involving interaction of the less evolved with the more

where. It is cosmic in extent and cosmic in value at every point. It is also called the Unified Field by physicists, because from it arise all the different forces of Nature which promote growth and activity through the laws of nature. Life then is a play

“ The intellectual postulate that the kingdom of heaven was within us, was converted into a personal reality. ”

and display of the Good Mind which contains the Intelligence of God or Ahura Mazda (which is always the same) as mentioned in Yasna 31.7 of the Gatha Ahunavaiti.

The Good Mind ‘upholds righteousness’ by always promoting growth, progress and a tendency to make all things, more so man, evolve towards itself. When the Mind of man is imbued with the Good Mind, then automatically his consciousness is in step with the functioning of Nature and such a man ‘upholds righteousness’ most fully and effectively. This stage is called cosmic consciousness. It is the take-off point towards God-consciousness where intense love for all of creation begins to predominate. The final level is Unity consciousness, where the Good Mind functioning in all things is clearly manifest.

Thus Yasna 31.6-7, of the Gatha Ahunavaiti clearly establish the pivotal role of meditation in the life of all aspiring Zarathushtis. Its practice gives direct experience of the Good Mind without which we will continue to violate the laws of nature and suffer thereby. Meditation via the Manthra unfolds the hidden potential in each of us, so that we better serve the purpose of our existence and the precepts of our religion. Here religion is considered as a quest of the unknown and this unknown is the under-utilized hidden potential locked up in us.

Zarathushtis practiced meditation in sufficient numbers to enjoy the support of Nature. When these numbers declined, so did our glory diminish and we were ultimately vanquished. Verses of Yasna 31.6-7 of the Gatha Ahunavaiti can again give new life to our community, because the means of experiencing and implementing its deep esoteric truths is now available through Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation.

People are unreasonable, illogical and self centered.

If you do Good, people will accuse you
of selfish ulterior motives.

If you are successful you win false
Friends and true enemies.

The good you do today will be
Forgotten tomorrow.

Honesty, and frankness make
You vulnerable.

People favor underdogs, but follow
Only Top Dogs.

What you spent years building
May be destroyed overnight.

People really need help but may attack
If you help them.

Give the world the best you have
And you'll get kicked in the teeth.

**Give the world
the best you've got, anyway.**

My association with The Gathas of Zarathushtra

The Gathas indicate that there are both elements of reason and spiritual emotion experienced by our Holy Prophet. We human beings are endowed with both faculties, and therefore we should use both to get the optimum result in our decisions.

By Maneck N. Bhujwala
San Jose, California

I did not know the meaning of the Gatha words, until I purchased a book by the late Ervad Kavasji Kanga (which had a word to word Gujarati translation together with the Avesta prayers) from the Parsi Panchayet office in Bombay, India, sometime around 1980.

Several basic principles of Prophet Zarathushtra's teachings were directly or indirectly transmitted to me by my parents, teachers, priests, friends, etc., when I was growing up in India. They taught us to be truthful, clean, thoughtful about our duty to others, kind, charitable, religious (saying our prayers, going to the temple, wearing sudreh, kushti), contented, fight for justice, faithful to family and friends, hard working, and loving.

From repeated reading of the words of wisdom composed by our Holy Prophet, as well as the meanings of our other prayers in the Khordeh Avesta, and the various commentaries on the Gathas by various Zarathushti and other scholars, priests, etc., I have begun to have some understanding of the deep thinking and spiritual vision contained in them. Although I do not make any claim to being a righteous person, recitation of prayers with some understanding of the meanings, helps to remind me to keep on the path of righteousness.

Although there are many (23 formal) different interpretations of Gathas, it does not bother me, because I believe that it broadens our perspective and allows us to appreciate and

explore more than one line of thought that our Holy Prophet may have had in mind.

Recently, I have also had the opportunity to listen to Ervad Kaikhushru Dastoor, who explains the mystical (hidden) meanings of the Gatha manthras, as documented by Dr. Framroze Chiniwalla, a disciple of Behramshah Shroff, founder of the Ilm-e-Khshnoom group. Some of these interpretations provide yet another fascinating dimension to the Gathas and appear to offer answers to some of the unresolved questions.

Our community's exposure to western culture during British rule of India, had both positive and negative impact on us. On the one hand, we benefited economically and socially, and also learned more about our religion through the research of western scholars complemented by our Parsi scholars. But, our modernization has also led to increase in materialistic attitudes and a cooling of the fire of faith and devotion for our Holy Prophet, our sacred fire, our centuries old rituals and traditions that our ancestors preserved at great sacrifice to themselves.

Whereas, in earlier times our priesthood faithfully observed their religious duties, today even the priestly class seems to have lost its attachment to their role in preserving the traditional practice of religious ceremonies. Many of our temples do not have full-time priests in attendance, Yasna ceremonies that include recitation of the Gathas, once performed daily, are rarely performed, if at all,

and priestly families do not even visit our temples regularly.

Learning the meanings of the Gathas and other prayers has benefited me in restoring my pride in our religion, as I can now explain to people of other faiths something about our Holy Prophet's original teachings that have also found their way in other later religions. Even more important, I can teach my own family and adults and youth of our community about the meanings of our prayers.

The above is also motivated by Ahunavad Gatha [Ys 33.2]:

"He who gives advice to others for their good, strengthens his faith in Ahura Mazda and makes Him happy."

And, Ushtavad Gatha [Ys 43.3]:

"The person who can show the right and beneficial paths for the material and spiritual worlds – where Ahura Mazda is to be found, attains the highest goodness...."

Ahunavad Gatha [Ys 28.4] says:

"By understanding the benefits of acting according to Ahura Mazda's will, I will take my soul towards Heaven. As long as I have strength, I will teach others to desire and strive for truth (Righteousness)."

This passage leads me to try to understand Ahura Mazda's will with an open mind (from Gathas, other prayers, observing pious people, etc.), and it also supports my inclination to speak up and push others to speak up for the truth, even when it may not be politically correct or progressive sounding.

The Gathas teach me to listen and try to understand our Holy Prophet's teachings independent from the views of leading academics of our times. Although respectful of their research and efforts, I believe in using my own, developing Good Mind, instead of relying solely on the expertise of modern scholars. Gatha Ahunavad [Ys 30.2] says:

"Listen to my best advice with your ears, and think about it with your enlightened mind. Before the big events, each one must have the faith of his choice...."

A Zarathushti study group

Dedicated to study of the Gathas

With consistent and diligent practical application of the Gathas to their daily lives, the Zarathushti Study Group in Houston has been able to collectively bring meaning to the beautiful words of the Prophet, giving meaning, spirituality and purpose to their lives. This article shares the experiences of this study group.

By Magdalena Rustomji
Houston, Texas

The Zarathushti Study Group in Houston, Texas provides a forum for members of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston to come together to read and study the GATHAS, Zarathushti history and other religious matters. It is primarily dedicated to the study and practical application of the Gathas. The group evolved after being moved by a lecture given in 1993 by Nerina Rustomji after she attended the first Gatha Seminar in London. The experience motivated us to meet as a group and to study religious issues, and the Gathas, in particular. Dr. Meherwan Boyce and Zarine graciously hosted the group for several years, and afterwards the group met at various members' homes.

What we have learned in the last four years of monthly meetings is that the study of the Gathas is a life long activity which promises the reward of offering a philosophy of life. With consistent and diligent practical application of the Gathas to our daily life, we are able to collectively bring meaning to the text, even though we have differing insights, depending on our personal experience and background.

With a basis in historical and symbolic analysis, we are able to manage different translations and benefit from different interpretations. Our Gathic education has been a rich, fluid process, not only because we all have different outlooks and temperaments, but because the format of our group has been based on the 'shared inquiry'

method. In this article I will present a schema of this method to suggest one way to build a study group and to share what we have learned.

THE PARTICIPANTS

In the 'shared inquiry' method no one person in the group is an expert. We all question and learn in the method exemplified by Zarathushtra in the Gathas, that of analytical and critical thinking, questioning and examining. We have three quite young, faithful members who ask some of the very great questions and who often bring insight and practicality to our discussions. The group has a wide range in background, profession and interests as well, and thereby brings different perspectives and dimensions to the study and discussions.

Participation varies, but the core group is about 15 members. Yezdi M. Rustomji and Sarosh Manekshaw, two avid students of the Gathas, are our very enthusiastic group leaders. We also are very fortunate to have Ervad Bomanshaw Sanjana who joined us in the past two years and who enlightens us with insightful, religious perspectives and also helps us in reading in the Avestan language. However, we are all equal members in interjecting comments and responding to passages in the scriptural readings.

PHILOSOPHY

There is no pressure to complete a passage in a certain timeframe. We sometimes spend the entire discussion on one verse. At times, the dis-

cussion turns toward a related issue in the community, or toward the applicability of the yasna in our daily life. Studying the scriptures of Zarathushtra, we have learned, will be a lifelong process. The Gathas will speak to us individually as well as collectively. The Gathas will speak to our needs, to our questions, to our present condition. We agree to disagree but we do so in a respectful and healthy manner, and our friendship grows stronger for this.

PROCESS MODEL

A selected passage is given ahead of time for all members to read. When we meet, we always begin and end with a collective prayer. The passage is then read orally in the Avestan (this is a feature which we have all enjoyed) and then in English, usually from the Sethna translation. We also have available translations from: Bode and Nanavutty, Duchesne-Guillemin, Insler, Jafarey, Moulton and Taraporewala. After the reading, we reflect and then we discuss:

What is perplexing? What is not clear? What is important to a person? What is delightful? What surprises us? The beauty of the poetry. What touches our spirit? That which has meaning in practical application in daily life. And we discuss differences in our understanding.

HOW WE LEARN

We have learned a great deal in the four years of our studies. The first year, it was agreed that we needed a basic overview of the history, and we selected Mary Boyce's *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, reading a chapter per month for our discussions. The second year, we began the actual reading and discussion of the Gathas. We use the Sethna translation as our basic point of reference but refer to the others when we face a challenging passage. We are finding that some members prefer a more literal translation, others a more symbolic, and yet others a more poetic. We have, at this point completed Gatha Ahunavaiti and are about to finish Gatha Ushtavaiti.



The Houston Gatha Study Group. Back, l. to r., Purvez Rustomji, Soli Irani, Shaheen Kayani, Sarosh Manekshaw. Middle, Behroz Daruwalla, Yezdi Rustomji, Aban Rustomji, Bomanshaw Sanjana, Zeeba Kayani, Diana Engineer. Front, Magdalena Rustomji, Nerina Rustomji. Not in picture: Fali Engineer, Afrin Kayani, Anita Wolf, Jehangir and Avan Shroff, Noshir and Yasmin Medhora, Shara Godiwala, Hoshang and Arnavaz Sethna, Fereshteh, Artimis, Parmis, Nikan Khatibi, Pervez Surkari and Feroze Irani.

The Group is now beginning its fifth year of collaborative studies. Every December, we celebrate the anniversary of the formation of the group with a special meal and lecture. In the past we have had lectures by Nerina Rustomji, Aaron Rustomji and Lyla Bharucha. This year, Sarosh Manekshaw shared the paper he presented at the Avesta conference in Boston.

We are also learning to question deeply and with critical thinking, and not to accept easy, or superficial explanations. One member, Diana Engineer astutely notes: "The study of the Gathas, besides surely enlightening me on the religion of Zarathushtra, has helped me to better understand both the humanity and the greatness of the Prophet. The study has also shown me how one statement may have various translations and each translation may have several interpretations. As a result, the reader must constantly search for the truth, yet can never be sure if he or she has found it."

In the midst of such diversity, we have found that the Gathas do guide us. Zeeba Kayani, for example, says, "... the Gathas have changed my view on many points of my life. Every choice I make in life, I can see two different views – the Right and the Wrong, and hopefully, I make the right choice. I see many different meanings from different authors and scholars, and I can choose the translation that best fits me."

We have gained much from our younger members, such as Diana, Afrin and Zeeba, who bring a fresh, yet scrutinizing outlook to the Gathas. For most of the group, the religion meant rituals and celebration, as comments Purvez Rustomji; "The study of the GATHAS has been the starting point of understanding the religion. Living with the religion, going to an agiary, gahambar or jashan, which most of us have done for the better part of our lives doesn't even come close to the preaching of Zarathushtra. We knew

that the religion was good, but how, why and when answers are given when we study the Gathas. The meaning of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds has changed for the better after studying the Gathas."

CONCLUSION

We would like to encourage every Zarathushti association to begin and/or to continue a Gatha study group, for be assured that the experience will be a blessing. Soli Irani expresses his outlook on this experience: "Since I have very limited knowledge of the Zarathushti religion, my main reason for joining the Gatha Study group was to learn the meaning behind the Gatha verses. In the short time that I have been with the study group, I have thoroughly enjoyed listening to the various interpretations. It would be wonderful if we could understand every word of the Gathas. At least now, when I recited the Gathas, I have a better understanding of some of the verses, which is very satisfying. It has been very enlightening for me to listen to the discussions concerning the questions that Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda. The exchange of ideas and the various interpretations of the philosophy and basic principles of the Zoroastrian religion that have resulted from the study group, are very beneficial."

Members continue to express a wish to bring the Gathas to our daily life, to our opening prayers, to our closing prayers. We find passages in the text that we can use as benedictions, in our teaching with our children and many other relevant ways.

So, coming together to collectively study and discuss the Gathas of Zarathushtra has been a good journey for our Houston Study Group. The Gathas can be enlightening for persons of various cultural, philosophical, ideological outlooks. The presence of our chairpersons has given form to the group. They continue to research, to study, to read, to ponder the Gathas, yet their views

are from two different perspectives, two different countries, and two different experiences. This is further testimony to the open forum which invites each person to examine the text in a safe environment, to think out loud and reflect quietly within.

We are also indebted to the Executive Committee of ZAH for their continued support.

In summary, some of the basic concepts which we have learned that will continue to help us in our studies and in our readings of the Gathas and which we would like to share with others who may want to begin a Gatha group are:

- Study of the Gathas is lifelong.
- We need to explore symbolism for best understanding.
- We will have differing insights/meaning.
- Need to understand history/time of Zarathushtra
- Study of the Gathas can be for youth.
- Philosophy of Life is contained in the Gathas.
- Study must be accompanied by consistent and diligent practical application to our daily lives.
- Collectively, we bring greater meaning to the text.
- There is no one correct or only translation or interpretation.
- The Gathas embody the 'Zarathushti Way of Life'.

The best part, as expressed by Diana Engineer already, is that Zarathushtra has become a human person with whom we can identify. We have more real images of him carrying on a dialogue with Ahura Mazda in what is commonly known as a 'Socratic' style, only we now recognize it as Zarathushtra's very own style of critical thinking and questioning to come to an understanding of how Ahura Mazda wants us to live our life, and how we are to answer the important questions of our life.

[Continued on page 63]

The Gathas

the path to Ahura Mazda and the way of life

The Gathas reveal the spiritual and transcendental nature of the being as much as they also demonstrate the best way of life.

By Farhang Mehr
Boston, Massachusetts

The Gathas constitute the core of Zarathushti religion; they manifest the paragon of righteousness and morality as much as they recognize humanity's right to freedom of choice. Within the domains of Vohu Mana, Asha, Armaity, and Khshathra the Gathas in their meaning are consistent throughout reflecting liberality and tolerance.

The Gathas do not embody incredible stories about the Creation, Adam and Eve, the disobediences of Satan, and his final exclusion from heaven. The Gathas do not offer a chauvinistic view of male supremacy by suggesting that woman was fashioned out of man's left rib. They do not ascribe to God words and deeds that would undermine His omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

According to the Gathas, Ahura Mazda is exclusively good, munificent and just. Ahura Mazda, we learn, does not create evil to mislead people, does not retaliate, and does not avenge. The Gathas show the path to Truth, to Light, and to Ahura Mazda a way to a reunion with the Source. Through Perfection (Haurvatat), man can reach Immortality (Ameratat) – the abode of the essences of Vohu Manah, Happiness, and Asha – and thus reunion with Ahura Mazda.

The Gathas offer credible explanation of creation and its objective, without indulging in scientifically

arguable accounts. It is the only religious work that convincingly explains the question of theodicy. Such explanations are found in the theory of *Menog-Gaetha*, representing the two interconnected worlds; the triadic operation of Spenta Mainyu, Vohu Manah and Asha in realization and setting the aim of creation; and the concept of moral dualism relating at one end to the principle of freedom of choice and at the other to the law of consequences – thus depicting a holistic vista of Ahura Mazda's wisdom, benevolence and justice.

Man's life is not predetermined for everyone receives his or her just desserts. Reward and punishment, pleasure and suffering, Mizdem are the fruits of man's action. These are the consequences, which, according to the Law of Asha, accrue to, or flow from one's acts. Asha is the eternal law set by Ahura Mazda to regulate the evolution of creation. Ahura Mazda stands beyond the everyday operations in the universe. There is no predestined fate. One's acts have predestined consequences, for it is one's thought, word and deed that determine one's life course and future.

In the Gathas one finds that Ahura Mazda designed the Universe in his good mind (*Vahishta Manah*); shaped it in his conscience (*Daena /Din*); created it through his constructive power (*Khshathra*); capped it with love and peace (*Armaity*);

manifested it through his benevolent spirit (*Spenta Mainyu*) and set the universe into motion in accordance with Truth and the eternal law of Asha. Furthermore, we find that Ahura Mazda created man as his co worker to collaborate with him in moving the world towards perfection, light, and immortality; and, in order to enable man to distinguish good from bad, He gave man a mind (*Manah*), a conscience (*Daena*), discernment (*Baoda*), Vitality (*Ahu*) and a guardian spirit (*Fravashi*).

The Gathas give the recipe for the best life, for they show that whoever lives in accord with the Law of Asha will enjoy eternal happiness (*Ushta*) in this world (*Gaetha*), and will join the abode of song and happiness (*Garo Damena*)

in the afterlife. The Gathas call one to an active and constructive life, to be pursued with reason and sensitivity, liberality and tolerance, spiritual militancy (against Druj) and physical restraint, observance of human rights, and protection of nature and environment, and call for love of, and service to others. And in the Gathas it is clearly explained that Truthfulness and Righteousness are the main components of a Good Life.

The Gathas are divine teachings in sweet hymns (*Manthra*); their goal is the removal of injustice, inequity, exploitation, oppression, superstition and ignorance. The Gathas are rational, practical, and universal. Holy Reason is a constant thread running throughout the Gathas. The maxims of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds, corroborate their comprehensiveness and practicality. The message of the Gathas, therefore, is for all Humanity. The truth of the Gathas exemplifies the fullness of perfection, the luminousness of divine wisdom, and the felicitousness of the faith of truth, with consequential blessing of goodness. With the concept of dual-

ism, the Zarathushti religion presents a rational solution for evil.

There is consensus among scholars of Zarathushtrian studies that the Gathas are the oldest Zarathushtrian text, revealed to, and composed by the Prophet Zarathushtra. However, some of the doctrines of the Gathas are elaborated in the Yasna by Zarathushtra's disciples, and some doctrines combined with pre-

“ “ Man's life is not predetermined, for everybody receives his or her just desserts. Reward and punishment, pleasure and suffering, are the fruits of man's actions ... there is no predestined fate. One's acts have predestined consequences, for it is one's thought, deed and word that determines one's life course and future. ” ”

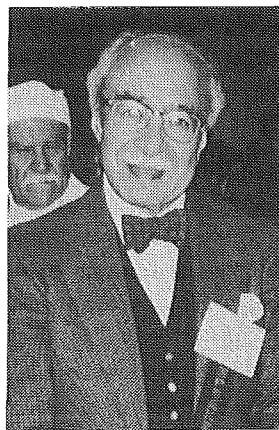
Zarathushti religious beliefs have entered the Yashts. Some have been mythologized in subsequent religious literature; and parts of existing knowledge of that time together with certain religious doctrines. They have been bundled up in certain books; and it is, therefore, absolutely essential, to distinguish authentic doctrines from extraneous materials. To the extent these accretions interpret, or elaborate upon the Gathic doctrines, these religious writings should be acceptable; yet any part in these and other writings that runs against Gathic principles, in letter or spirit, should be discarded as false.

The Gathas provide the litmus test for such determination. However, I submit that those who adhere to the slogan "Gathas to the exclusion of all other religious books," as much err as those who indiscriminately accept all religious books as sacrosanct. The Gathas are the Holy Scripture that must be revered and accepted in their entirety for eternity. They should be taught to all Zarathushti boys and girls, allowing them to reflect on each word and

stanza, in their quest for discovery of truth. With our present knowledge about the Gathas, preparation of a 'standard' translation of the Gathas into a living language will be premature. It would hinder further investigation and research on the Holy Book. The formation of several classes in North America for the study of the Gathas by the Zoroastrians is a welcome event that should be encouraged by FEZANA.

May the day come when the full mystery of the Gathas is unraveled, and humankind will have a complete understanding of their wisdom and truth. The Gathas show us the best way of life, and the true path to reunion with Ahura Mazda. ■

Dr. Farhang Mehr is Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Boston University. He received a Doctorate of Law from the University of London and has taught at Tehran and National Universities and at the Military Academy in Tehran. He was President of the



University of Shiraz for eight years. He served in Iran under the Shah as Vice Prime Minister and acting Finance Minister, and represented Iran

on OPEC's Board of Governors for five years. He served as President of the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Tehran for 12 years and was a Founding Member of the Ancient Iranian Culture Society. He has lectured and published on subjects related to law, political economy, and the religion of Zarathushtra.

ON COMMON GROUND

WORLD RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

A Multimedia CD-ROM

Produced by Diana L. Eck, Pluralism Project, Harvard

CD-ROM for Windows and Macintosh, ISBN 0-231-11108-8, 1997, \$155;

Specially priced multipacks: 5 CDs for \$275; 10 CDs for \$350.

Order from Columbia University Press, Order Department, 136 South Broadway, Irvington, NY 10533, Tel: (800) 944-8648.

The religion of Zarathushtra is prominently featured, along with 14 other religions in this landmark CD-ROM on religions in America.



Over the past thirty years, America's population mix has changed radically; and nowhere has immigration had more impact than in the religious institutions. Today, there are mosques, temples and gurudwaras alongside the churches in almost every community in the US.

On Common Ground is a landmark, multimedia attempt at understanding America's many religious traditions. With a masterful blending of text, video, graphics and music, it takes the viewer on a journey through America's new religious landscape, providing insights into the history, beliefs and current practices within the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Jewish, Shinto, Sikh, Tao, Zarathushti, Afro-Caribbean, Pagan and Native Peoples' faiths in the U.S. It contains over 2,000 pages of text, hundreds of

photographs, and many movie and audio files.

On Common Ground focuses primarily on the practice of the diverse religions in America today, with comprehensive directories of houses of worship with maps in 18 US cities, and unique portraits, in text and photography, of over 400 such centers. Further it provides vivid introductions to each faith, with a historical overview, timelines, and discussions on its religious practices and doctrine. A comprehensive thematic index, glossary, bibliography and a US directory, all make excellent reference materials.

This CD-ROM has certainly brought our religion to the common man, and to schools and colleges in America. The Zarathushti religion is featured prominently in every segment.

"As one enters the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, a vivid tale about an ancient faith in the modern world

unfolds ..." begins the segment on *A Visit to a Darbe Mehr* which features the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago.

Clicking on buttons, arrows, icons and pull-down menus, viewers can also navigate their way through segments on the Zarathushti Associations and Darbe Mehrs in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Jose, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Washington DC, and also the then-yet-to-be-built Center in Houston. Short histories and a few photos, mostly of the Darbe Mehrs and some religious ceremonies, such as Jashans and a Navjote ceremony, are shown.

While this author did notice a couple of inadvertent slippages in the text (e.g. the reference to the kitchen at the Chicago Darbe Mehr being used for preparing "strong smelling foods used as part of the death remembrance ceremony") it is by and large a factual and fair portrayal.

On Common Ground grew out of the work of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. The Director, Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard, is a long-time friend of the Zarathushti community, having made initial contact at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago in 1993.

Rohinton Rivetna worked with Elinor Pierce, Pluralism Project Manager, to coordinate the Zarathushti input for the CD-ROM, drawing upon materials solicited from FEZANA Member Associations. Several landmark issues of *FEZANA Journal* (e.g. the issue on *Coming to North America*, and the issue on the *Darbe Mehrs of North America*) were used as source materials.

FEZANA Journal readers are urged to promote this CD-ROM in their local library and in their child's school or college. As a roadmap to America's many religions, it forms a welcome addition to any library. ■

By Roshan Rivetna

AVESTA

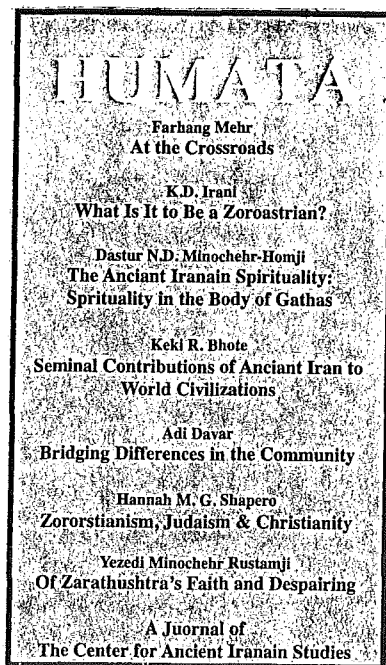
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MODERN ART A collection of 80 Paintings by Massoud Arabshahi

222 pp, 14X18.5in., 80 color plates,
hardcover, 1978, \$595. published by
Niavaran Cultural Center, Tehran.
Mazda Publishers, PO Box 2603,
Costa Mesa, CA 92626,
Tel: (714) 751-5252



This magnificent book may be considered one of the major publications on paintings of a modern Iranian artist. Massoud Arabshahi has chosen Avestan motifs as the background for his work. Reproduced here in brilliant color and superb quality are 80 original paintings by the artist.

To make this volume fully comprehensive and to further the readers' appreciation and enjoyment of its art, the publisher, Niavaran Cultural Center, has with the help of a group of scholars, reproduced parts of the Gathas of Avesta in four major languages – Pahlavi, Persian, English and French. Translations of the Gathas are by S. Insler, Darmsteter, and Duchesne-Guillemin. ■



Dr. Farhang Mehr and Professor K. D. Irani are editors of the first (Fall 1997) issue of Humata, a quarterly journal published by the newly formed Boston-based, Center for Ancient Iranian Studies. This issue features articles by Farhang Mehr, K. D. Irani, the late Dastur N. D. Minochehr-Homji, Keki R. Bhote, Adi Davar, Hannah M. G. Shapero and Yezdi Minochehr Rustamji.

A New Journal is Born

Lack of knowledge in the West, about Iran's rich cultural heritage is a tragedy. The legacy of Zarathushtra and the ancient Iranians who shaped the civilized world during at least thirteen centuries, is virtually unknown to many westerners and even Zarathushtis. *The Center for Ancient Iranian Studies* has been established to remedy this educational shortfall.

The Center is a non-profit and tax-exempt establishment. It is devoted to both dissemination of knowledge about the history and culture of ancient Iran, and a discussion of the current problems of the Zarathushti community worldwide. It has an extensive program to launch with the support of Zarathushtis and Iranians who are proud of their ancient heritage.

The first item on the Center's agenda is the publication of two journals.

One, *Humata* ('Good Thought'), with simple and easy to understand articles in Persian and English, is intended primarily for the populace. The quarterly *Humata*, edited by Dr. Farhang Mehr of Boston, and Professor K. D. Irani of New York, will provide a spectrum of objective information and solutions with foresight, for the vital religious, cultural and social issues of the Zarathushti community. The other journal will have scholarly articles for academics and specialized readers.

We appeal to Zarathushtis and enthusiasts of the ancient Iranian culture, for financial and moral support. Please contact the Center with subscription requests and other queries.

*The Center for
Ancient Iranian Studies
1597 Center Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02161.*

Exhibition of rare books in Toronto

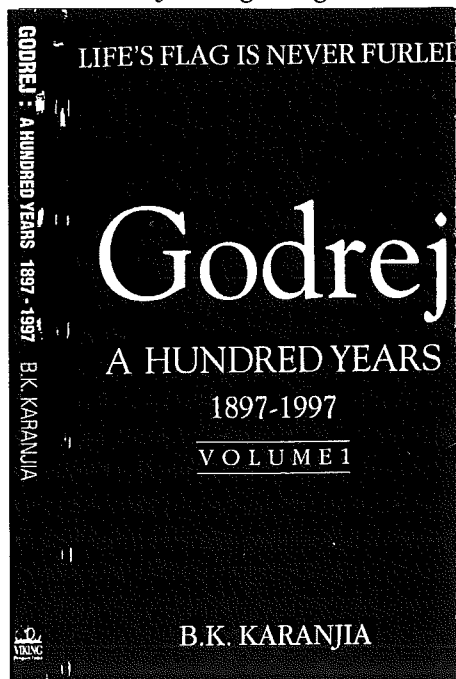
An exhibition of rare books and illustrations titled "Experiencing India: European Impressions and Descriptions, 1498-1898" curated by Professor Willard Oxtoby will be on display January 19 - March 21, at the University of Toronto's Robart Library. The exhibition comprises old maps, flora and fauna, illustrations of ceremonies and customs of India's religious traditions, Anglo-Indian poetry and fiction, including a certain amount of Zarathushti materials.

GODREJ: A HUNDRED YEARS 1897-1997, VOLUME I

by B. K. Karanjia

264 pp, hardcover, 1997, Rs. 295.

Published by Viking: Penguin Books.



For anyone who has ever lived in India the name "Godrej" is a household word. All Indians have used Godrej products at one time or another – be they locks, safe deposit boxes, steel furniture, typewriters, refrigerators, soaps, toiletries, kitchen ingredients and more ... the list is endless. The Godrej 'Storwel', the sturdy steel cupboard almost every family owns or aspires to own, is a highly coveted wedding gift among Parsis in India!

When and how did this Godrej saga begin? The author, Burjor Karanjia provides the answer while taking us on a fascinating journey through the first hundred years of the Godrej enterprise. Karanjia has impeccable credentials, both personal and professional, for undertaking this task. His father was a friend of Pirojsha Godrej, a stalwart of the Godrej family, and he himself developed a close rapport with Pirojsha's son Sohrab, present chairman of the Godrej companies, when they worked together in

1955 to publish a Times of India special supplement documenting the family's struggles and achievements. Karanjia was rewarded for his contribution with the position of Publicity Manager at Godrej. He gained valuable insights from his insider's vantage point, and puts them to good use in this book. Much to the displeasure and disappointment of both Pirojsha and Sohrab, Karanjia left Godrej after six years to become editor of *Filmfare*, a *Times of India* publication.

The name 'Godrej' is derived from 'Guderz', a tribe in Iran, and has through the years, become a symbol of quality and reliability in India.

It all started in 1897, when Ardeshir Godrej, founder of the Godrej dynasty, gave up his law practice and turned to lockmaking. Why? Because he felt that in order to be a successful lawyer he would have to compromise his integrity; something he would never do under any circumstances. Karanjia portrays a vivid picture of Ardeshir's early struggles in the face of adversity, and of his ultimate triumph in being acknowledged as the best in the business.

Ardeshir's brother Pirojsha subsequently consolidated his vision through the establishment of the vast industrial and residential complex at Vikhroli, named after him, as Pirojshanagar. Sohrab, Burjor and Naval, the three sons of Pirojsha, constitute the second Godrej generation. Sohrab focused on international expansion; Burjor developed the process of manufacturing soap from vegetable oils; and Naval pioneered the growth of the Indian machine tool industry. Both generations were humanists and made huge contributions in the areas of education, health care, family planning and environmental engineering.

The volume under review covers only the first two Godrej generations; the third and fourth generations are featured in a second, forthcoming volume. Karanjia uses the Indian independence movement as a background for his narration of the early

years, and makes a strong case for breaking the British political and economic stronghold over the oppressed and exploited people of India.

The book is lucid, interesting, informative, and inspiring. One learns more than just the Godrej story. One also learns the early history of the growth of Mumbai and the process of soap manufacturing.

Ultimately, the book is Karanjia's tribute to the Godrej family and especially to Pirojsha whom he revered. It is also an authentic chronicle for posterity. Scores of interviews with family members, friends, employees and business associates constitute the foundation of this book. Karanjia certainly deserves to be commended for his extensive and painstaking research.

By Viraf Kanga
Bolingbrook, Illinois

Strategies to Combat Stress

The symptoms are sudden and devastating: racing heartbeat, choking, difficulty breathing, dizziness, chills or chestpains and a paralyzing terror that you're about to die.

According to Chicago area psychologist, Dastoor Dr. Kersey H. Antia, these are the classic symptoms of a 'panic attack'. These attacks are often connected with stressful major life transitions such as getting married, graduation or the first child.

Antia treats this disorder with analytical counseling, relaxation exercises and medication. He has developed his own, unique, relaxation technique, which is helpful not only for panic disorders, but also for any kind of stress, even for a normal person who wants to learn strategies to combat stress and improve his performance.

The tapes can be ordered from Dr. Antia, 8318 West 138th Place, Orland Park, Illinois 60462, tel: (708) 460-6585, for a donation to the Navar Fund (for those who cannot afford the expenses of a 30-day Navar ceremony).

Books on the Zarathushti Religion

The following recent books are available from Mr. Marzban Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667 Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014, India

[1] *The Parsis, Vol III*, contains the remaining 5 chapters of Mme. Delphine Menant's book translated into English by Tony Mango. Vols I and II are also available. (Rs. 800).

[2] *Vision of Zarathushtra* by Prof. Firoze C. Davar, translated by B. I. Taraporewalla. (US\$20).

[3] *Parsi Food and Customs* by Bhikhoo Manekshaw. This sold out in 1996, reprinted in Feb 1997, and is being reprinted again as a Penguin publication. (Rs. 250).

[4] *Gatha-Ba-Maeni* by K. E. Kanga, English translation (Approx. US\$10).

[5] *Mysticism among the Jews, Mohammedans and Zoroastrians – a Comparative Study* by R. R. Motafram. (Rs. 150).

[6] *Zoroastrian Religious Year – Dini Sal* by Behram D. Pithawalla.

[7] *Setayeshes of Adarbad Marespand*, in English. (US\$1).

[8] *The Parsis and Their Religion* by R. C. Chothia. (US\$2).

[9] *Our Zoroastrian Religion* by Ervad Fardunji Rabadi. (US\$2).

Tina Mehta's The Zarathushtrian Saga

The Zarathushtrian Saga, [see review in *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 1997] the 1995 novel by Tina Mehta is a compelling narrative of over 700 pages which tells a tale and at the same time serves as a document on the Parsis with detailed recapitulation of myths, allegories and references from their historical past.

The attractive volume, wrapped in purple and gold silk is available in North America for US\$12 (plus shipping) from Roshan Rivetna, 5750 South Jackson Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521, Tel: (630) 325-5383.

Study group ...

[Continued from page 58]

May Ahura Mazda continue to enlighten us through the words of Asho Zarathushtra in his beautiful poetry and words that will give meaning, spirituality and purpose to our life. ■

Through deed I do,
Also through words I speak,
Through meditation deep within myself,
I bring mankind Eternal Life and Truth,
Strength through Perfection,
Mazda, do I bring;
United may we be in Them and Thee,
Ahura, ardent in our sacrifice.

- Yasna 34.1, Taraporewala



Magdalena Rustomji was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico and immigrated with her family to Texas where she has lived most of her life. She received her BA from Trinity University in San Antonio and her MS in Counseling from the University of Houston at Clear Lake. Her professional growth has been with mentors at the Jung Center in Houston. Magdalena has conducted workshops and seminars in English and Spanish for state and national conferences in her areas of special interest which include: Dream Study, Symbolic Profile, Family Roles, Journal Work and Sand Tray Therapy. Her focus has been the immigrant adolescent and the family. Magdalena was sponsor for the youth group in Houston for many years. Her great interest now is the Zarathushti Study Group and the study of Zarathushtra and His message.

1998 JANUARY			
Year: 1367 v. Z. (Shenshahi) Mah: AMARAD-SHEHEREVAR			
T 1	TIR	F 16	ZAMIYAD
F 2	GOSH	S 17	MARESPAND
S 3	DAEPMEHER	S 18	ANERAN
S 4	MEHER	M 19	HORMAZD
M 5	SAROSH	T 20	BAHMAN
T 6	RASHNA	W 21	ARDIBEHEST
W 7	FARVARDIN	T 22	SHEHEREVAR
T 8	BEHRAM	F 23	ASEANDARMAD
F 9	RAM	S 24	KHORDAD
S 10	GOVAD	S 25	AMARDAD
S 11	DAEPDIN	M 26	DAEPADAR
M 12	DIN	T 27	ADAR
T 13	ASHISHWANGH	W 28	AVA
W 14	ASHTAD	T 29	KHORSHED
T 15	ASMAN	F 30	MOHOR
		S 31	TIR

1998 WALL CALENDAR with Shenshahi Roj & Mah in English (8-1/2" x 14" - 12 Sheets)

This beautiful spiral bound calendar printed in 2 colors is specially published for our younger generation who cannot read Gujarati yet are eager to keep our Parsi Zoroastrian tradition alive. With this calendar they will easily, in a glance, keep track of the Roj & Mah (as they read English Day & Dates daily).

Its bold, captivating design is by Phil Avari and 12 very interesting facts provided by Silloo Mehta of the Mazdayasnie Connection gives one food for thought. It is our aspiration, that through this medium, all Zoroastrians would like to learn more about our great Faith passed on to us by our forefathers.

This calendar is directly available from graphic artist Phil Avari or Silloo Mehta. It is very reasonably priced at \$ 5.00 U.S. per calendar (including postages) anywhere within U.S.A. & Canada, or \$ 7.00 U.S. per calendar (including postages) anywhere outside of U.S.A.

We hope all charitable minded Zoroastrians will support this project which has no profit motives. To receive your copy, please call: PHIL AVARI (714) 562-9182 (California Day Time)

or Silloo Mehta (714) 995-8765 or write, **making your donations payable to: "PHIL AVARI GRAPHIC DESIGNS"**, 7618 HERSHEY DRIVE, BUENA PARK, CA 90620-1516, USA.

Due to high production and shipping costs, this calendar is printed in limited quantity. So please order early or support us with your sponsorship donation in larger amounts, to enable this calendar to reach every place where a Zoroastrian lives, in the Western world. Thank You.

1998 Multifaith Calendar

The 1998 Canadian Multifaith Calendar, produced by Canada's Faith Network, Vision TV, features images representing the instruments of sacred sound and music from ancient and modern cultures around the world.

The calendar provides accurate dates and information for each of 13 major faiths, including the Zarathushti faith, and is an essential source of information.

Cost: US\$10 (+\$2 shipping) or CDN \$14 (+\$3 shipping). Make check payable to Zoroastrian Association of Alberta. Order from Firdosh Mehta, 10444 - 18 Avenue, NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Tel: (403) 438-4371.



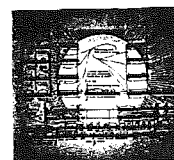
January



February



March



April



May



June



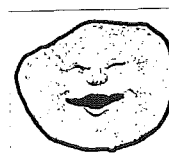
July



August



September



October

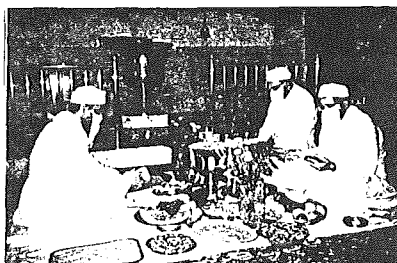


November



December

1998 NCCJ Interfaith Calendar showcases 13 major faiths, including the Zarathushti religion. Cost: US\$7 per copy. 100% of the receipts will be donated to FEZANA. Make check to FEZANA. Order from Rohinton Rivetna, 5750 South Jackson Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521, Tel: (630) 325-5383.



Jashan Ceremony - The intense reverence for the natural elements (air, earth, fire, and water) are symbolized by the items displayed in Zoroastrian ceremonies in the presence of a firelight lamp. Light in all its manifestations symbolizes righteousness (Asha) sustained by an enlightened mind - the highest of all attributes of the one God Ahura Mazda, the creator, that man can possess. An eternal flame is scrupulously tended in all Zoroastrian temples and forms the focus for Zoroastrian prayers and ceremonies.

ZOROASTRIANISM

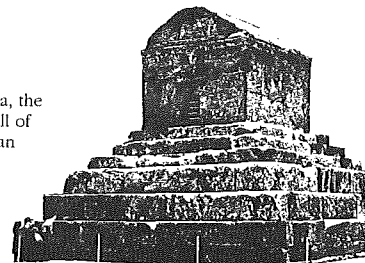
Prophet Zarathushtra, or Zoroaster, preached the religion on the steppes of Asia, the ancient Persia, around 1800 B.C.E. The faith flourished through the rise and fall of many civilizations. Zoroastrianism became the state religion of the Great Persian Empire, founded by Cyrus the Great in 558 B.C.E.

With the advent of Islam and the conquest of Persia by the Arabs large numbers of devout followers left Persia and landed on the western shores of India where they were given refuge by the native Hindu ruler. Their descendants the Parsees, concentrated in and around Bombay, have kept the faith alive in India.

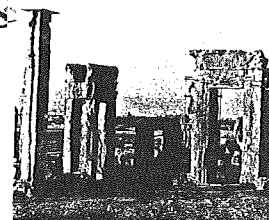
In an age of idol worship and polytheism, Zarathushtra preached the first monotheistic religion of the one supreme God, Ahura Mazda ("Wise Lord"). The principles upon which Zoroastrianism stands are simple. It is a monotheistic religion with stress upon conscious choice to choose the righteous path (or Asha). Although the pursuit of Asha offers comforting prospects for the afterlife, the main tenets of the religion stress the here and now. Zoroastrianism is a pragmatic teaching concerned with man's improvement in the quality of life on earth. Zoroastrians are taught that Asha is practiced by maintaining moral purity of thought, word and deed hence the triad: Humata - good thoughts, Hukta - good words and Huvelasha - good deeds, which form the cornerstone of the religion. The message of Zarathushtra is contained in the ancient texts written in Avestan, of which the five Gathas are believed to be the words of Zarathushtra himself.

The loftiest ideal for man is to be god-like like Ahura Mazda. With the cultivation of the good mind (Vohu Manah) and by following the path of righteousness (Asha) and with devotion (Armaiti) man can eradicate all evil and can hope to attain the twin rewards of perfection (Haurvatat) and immortality (Ameretat) thereby attaining ultimate communion with Ahura Mazda. It is humankind's mission to bring about on this earth Zarathushtra's vision of Frashokereti: the kingdom of truth and good thinking.

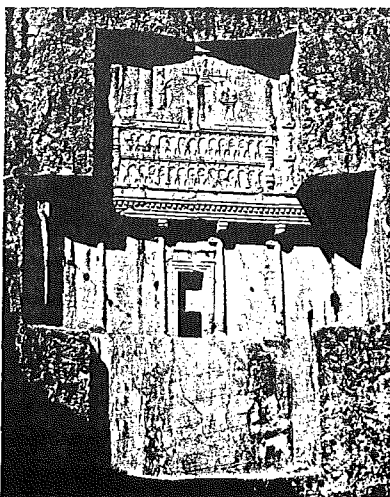
The total population of Zoroastrians in the world today numbers only about 200,000, major concentrations being in India and Iran. There are about 14,000 Zoroastrians in United States. Approximately 500 live in Metropolitan Chicago.



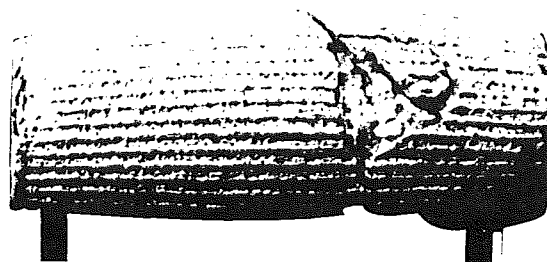
Tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae
Alexander is ascribed to have not allowed plunder of this tomb and instead ordered his men to restore the tomb and its treasures and put his personal seal on it with an inscription engraved on the door.



The Ruins of Persepolis
The seat of the Persian Empire, Persepolis was destroyed during the conquest of Persia by Alexander in 331 B.C.E.



The "Edict of Cyrus"
Inscribed on a cylinder is an ancient declaration of human rights made by Cyrus the Great (circa 557-529 B.C.E.) after he conquered Babylon and released the Jews from Assyrian captivity. The Zoroastrian tolerance for others is reposed in this heritage. Courtesy of the United Nations.



YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING

THE MOUTHPIECE OF A GENERATION...

*"Wise One,
where are those sincere ones who,
through their possession of good thinking
make even immoral decrees
and painful legacies disappear?... " (Y34.7)*

Insider translation...

I am often amazed at the honesty and relative simplicity that comes through in the many passages of the Gathas. I attended Catholic school for four years and much time was spent trying to unravel the intricate details within the Bible; and many times much of what we were learning was ambiguous and open to interpretation.

However, in looking at the Gathas, I am constantly amazed at how much wisdom is right there in language that is neither above or below the average person.

As a youth growing up, I know that although I learned much about our Zarthusti heritage, the Gathas did not begin to play a large role in my life until later on. I don't feel that the Gathas were stressed quite as much as they are now to the youth.

As interest has grown in our community to learn about the hymns of Zarathustra, so has the realm of understanding. More and more I am finding different interpretations of the Gathas. Now, while this may be quite distressing to the scholars and academicians alike; none the less it will be better for us "lay folk" in the long run. At the risk of offending the philologists and linguists who have studied the Gathas, the different versions I have seen do not differ too much.

What has been of significance to me however, is to note those slight distinctions that make each interpretation unique. To see where the scholars differ helps me to look deeper at the meaning of the specific passage. Ultimately, the decision as to what the each Yasna is saying to me and how I interpret it means the most.

This is a religion of free thought, yet let us not confuse that with free-will. We do have a duty to ourselves and our fellow human beings to carry out the "good thoughts" with as much passion and strength as possible!

The Gathas are a spiritual guide to our life here on Earth. Much like Having Zarathustra as your advisor on any

given topic, the Gathas serve you and in turn you must serve as a warrior for Asha and righteousness; not because you have to, but because you want to!

This is one of the only religions that I know of, where suffering is not expected of you, where action not in-action makes a difference, a religion that allows expression of the individual and champions the cause of the community at large!

This passage I have chosen speaks directly to our Zarthusti youth.. "...where are those sincere ones..."

You are the "sincere ones", with passion and zeal. The youth of today are the ones that will expunge the pain and immorality in today's society.

The Gathas are the "how to" guide for living life; pick it up, read it, live it!

by: Aaron Rustom

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Z CRUISE

It all started on a Thursday night late in December... About thirty five Zarthustis arrived in Miami, Florida. After everyone had arrived and checked into the hotel, we proceeded down to South Beach, arguably Miami's most popular strip; home of the Versace mansion and a hangout for the "who's who" of Miami. We had dinner there and got to know each other a little bit and reacquaint ourselves with those we already knew.

Friday, December 26th: The remaining stragglers have arrived and we are ready to begin the cruise. Lunch was eaten on the Lido Deck - affectionately nicknamed the "Libido Deck" - of Carnival Cruise Line M.S. Ecstasy under the beautiful sunny skies of Miami. People spend the afternoon in small groups lounging around on the ship. Most of it is spent outdoors. The ship finally pulls out of port and we are on our way. Dinner is had in the Wind Star dining room - where a five course meal was served. Food has been mentioned twice for good reason - there was a lot of eating done on the trip, as food was available twenty four hours. After dinner some of us proceeded up to the Crystal Palace Casino. Here Zarthustis tried their hand at the slots, roulette, and blackjack. It is rumored that people could be heard muttering Yatha Ahu Vairyo's and Ashem Vohu's under their breath. A night later the blackjack table played host to Zarthustis as well as having a cheering crew watching us. Others proceeded to explore the ship and then headed over to Stripes, the dance club. It was singles night and everyone was having a good time dancing. Then they had a singles contest. Zarthusti participation was strong and we took away one of the awards. The rest of the night was spent there dancing. Many of us headed over to the Pizzeria where Burgez got friendly with the Indian staff, and hung out there till early morning.

Saturday, December 27th: We docked at Nassau, Bahamas. After breakfast, there was a brief workshop where formal introductions were made and issues were discussed.

The workshop was primarily run by Anahita Parsi, Arman Teherani, Jasmine Patel, and Rostam Namdari. We then made our way to Paradise Island.

Some took their time and walked to Paradise Island, exploring the land as they did so while others took a taxi. The beach was beautiful. The water was refreshing and the sand was wonderful. Some just relaxed and caught some rays on the beach. Others passed the time snorkeling and observing the local coral and marine life, which was quite the experience. Some just could not resist the temptation to watch the football playoffs and did so under the comfort of a hotel located right on the beach. As the sun started to go down, people headed back towards

the ship and did some shopping before getting back on board. Having cleaned up, we put on our best Dhaglis and Saris (Psych!!!) and headed to a formal dinner on the ship. Everyone looked quite dazzling! At dinner we found out that the Zarthustis had won another award; this time in a game of Newlyweds of which the two Zarthustis who participated were not! The two winners were aptly named Dr. Love and Ms. Love.

The rest of the night was spent in a local club called the Zoo. Some of us decided 2:30 AM was too early to call it a night. We hung out on the ship for a while and tried to get a couple of sleeping beauties to "Come on (Persons Name), let's go party." However, it was to no avail. So, instead we headed off to another club, the Drop Off, where we danced and observed some, let's just say "interesting people". We made it back on board with half an hour to spare (7:00 AM) before the ship sailed.

The next morning / afternoon we woke up to the rocking motion of the ship. This had some of us feeling quite queasy, but we survived albeit a few of us might have been a few pounds lighter.

The day was spent lounging around watching football, participating in contests, or simply relaxing. The Zarthustis cleaned up in the hairy chest contest as we took 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place. After dinner, time was spent lounging around in the piano bar where we sat around and sung popular tunes. One of our very own, Dinyar Vania, played for us. Most of us spent the rest of the night dancing at Stripes. We even convinced the DJ to play a Persian song for us at the end of the night. It was a lot of fun and even the non-Zarthustis joined in.

As always, we went over to the Pizzeria and hung out, once the club closed down. Here, stories were told, some people sang, and others played "guess the person's astrological sign" game.

The party poopers, those who wanted to go to bed, were made to sing a song before being allowed to leave. Some of us stayed up right through the night.

Morning arrived with the Z-crew looking rather ragged and bleary-eyed. We waited around with others from the ship like a bunch of sheep until we were finally able to disembark. Once we picked up our bags, we were ready for phase two, Miami.

We split up into cars and headed off to the Unwalla residence. Here people sat out by the water, or stayed inside and crashed wherever they could find space. Food arrived and woke us up and the partying began.

We were then whisked off to our host families. Having cleaned up, we headed out to watch the new Bond movie. Some of us declined and perused the stores until the movie was finished. Then it was over to "TGIF", where we had the back room to ourselves and did a spe-

cial number for a birthday boy in our party.

It was about 1:30 AM when we finally rolled out of there. Some went home to get some much needed sleep, while others decided the night was still young and we headed to "Perry's Pleasure Palace" for a party. Those who decided to sleep missed out because the party was "a-rockin". There are rumors of table dancing, people doing push-ups and working out to a Cindy Crawford video. (Don't ask!!!) Phrases to come out of that party: "Whose my daddy?" and "Can you feel the Zoroastrian love in the house tonight?"

For me, and I believe I can safely say for others who were at the party, it was "THE PARTY" of the trip. Once again, we didn't roll (the operative word being 'roll') into bed or the real estate (floor) of "Perry's Pleasure Palace" till the wee hours of the morning.

The next day, people did things in their own groups. (i.e. with those you were staying with) Most people headed to the beach to play in the water, catch some rays and some sleep.

In the evening, once again we headed down to South Beach and had dinner at Gloria Estefan's restaurant, where as a special favor to Perry, she sang a song for us. After dinner, it was off to a club for some Latin dancing. Some of us decided to take a stroll along the promenade

instead, and met with the others a couple of hours later. Now it's 2:00 AM, and people start heading home. However, not having had enough, I decide to go to another club. So we gather a bunch of people and head out to "Liquid" - one of the hottest clubs in Miami. After taking a few wrong turns the bunch (about fifteen) of us show up at Liquid only to find it closed. Never fear, there's another club down the road; so off we go. After a bit of dancing, the "Z people" are falling like flies and are sitting down on the couches, too tired to move. So, home sweet home it is.

People rise late the next morning and it's off to Ft. Lauderdale. There's some rumor that somebody actually laid out in his shorts on the front lawn of his host's home to catch some sun while the rest of the people were sleeping! These weird Zoroastrians!

In Ft. Lauderdale, the order of the day/afternoon was to relax on the beach and

play in the water. A few hours later, it was back home to get dressed for the New Year's party.

There was much dancing, singing, and last minute bonding going on that night. We brought in the New Year surrounded by old and new friends. At 1:00 AM, a special song was done in honor of the organizers and they were each given a gift as a thank you from all the Z-cruisers. At 2:30 AM, the music had to be moved indoors and the dancing subsided after that. A bunch of us sat around and sung tunes as someone played the guitar. I felt like I was at a camp, only it was indoors. As morning arrived, people started to leave for the airport. Farewells were said, big hugs given, and promises made to meet again.

It was truly, in the words of Bill and Ted, "Excellent, party on dude!". A great time was had by all...from New York to LA, Vancouver to Chicago and Montreal as well.

And of course, let's not forget those Florida boys! Upon returning home, we all suffered from withdrawal. There was a lot of bonding going on and new friendships were made and old ones strengthened. A special "thank you" goes out to the organizers of the cruise: Mehernosh Mody and Arianne Teherani. (Who also in my opinion, takes home the good sport award.)

As well, an extra special thank you to Perry, "truly the hostess with the mostess" Unwalla, who was instrumental and really came through for us. As well, thank you for to Mr. and Mrs. Unwalla for being such gracious hosts and for an excellent New Year's party.

Things to remember from the trip: (Sung to the tune of the Barbie song) "Come on Perry/Aryan let's go party." "Bring it Donna bring it." Bhangra - "Hai hai; balee, balee" "Can you feel the Zoroastrian love tonight?" (heard at Perry's party); "ZYNA's in the house!"

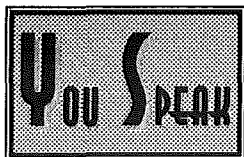
Looking forward to the next trip - if you want to get an idea of what an excellent adventure it was, ignore this article and talk to a few people who went. I could not have possibly had more fun!

by: Rustom "the boat wasn't rockin, so I came a knockin" Appoo

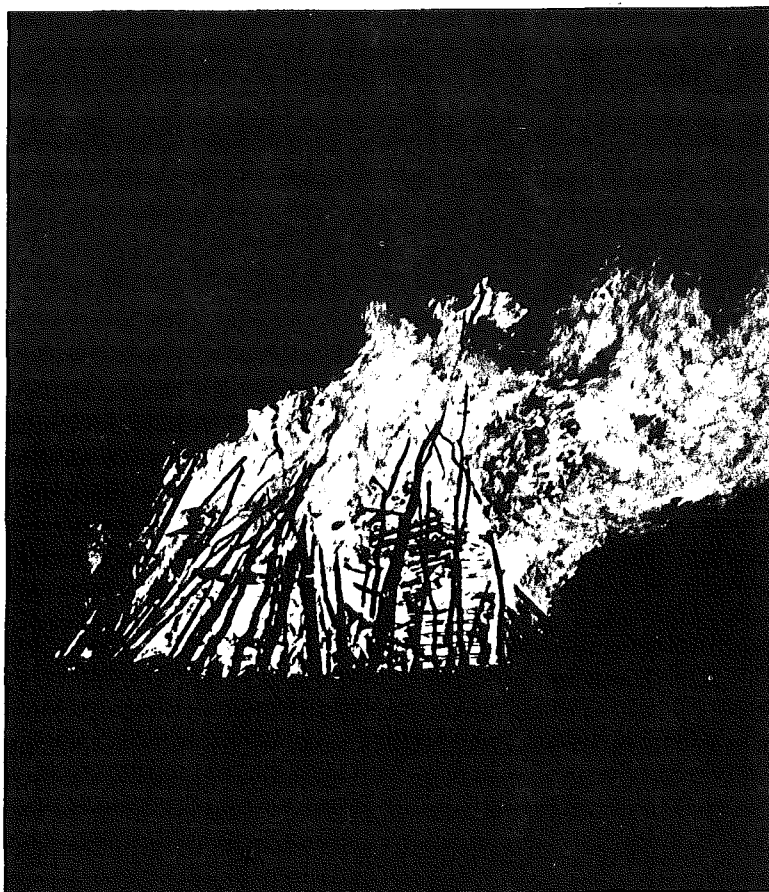


"For Zarathustra, it is we who will perfect social existence, because through our wisdom and benevolence we shall make the right choice, without any externally imposed prescriptions or injunctions; and in that process finally eliminate evil; for when evil is not chosen by free-willing individuals through their own rational choice, then evil loses its influence, it is destroyed."

Dr. K.D. Irani



J S A A S D H E A H N -E "THE FESTIVAL OF FIRE"



THE BONFIRE, FROM THE FIRST JASHAN-E SADEH FESTIVAL HELD IN HOUSTON IN 1995.

On January 31, 1998, the Houston Zarthusti community celebrated its Third Annual celebration of Jashan-E Sadeh. The celebration was especially eventful, as it was held for the first time since the opening of the Zoroastrian Cultural and Heritage Center.

For thousands of years, this "festival of fire" has been celebrated by our Persian ancestors. Simply, it dates back to our agrarian society, when the Spring was upon us and winter was on its way out. A huge festival and bonn-fire were to culminate in "breaking" the back of winter.

Sadeh is to be celebrated one hundred days after the beginning of the "great winter". The "great winter" starts anywhere between October 21st and 23rd, hence the January 31st date.

The name, "Jashan-E Sadeh", loosely translated means, "the festival of one hundred". Most of us growing up recognized the word "jashan" to mean a celebration or thanksgiving of sorts. "Sadeh" is a derivative of the Persian word "sad", which means one hundred.

Clearly, our method of checking Winter's stamina is much more rational and scientific than the "hill-billy's" "ground-hog theory"!

I was lucky enough to attend the first celebration held in Houston in 1995. It was hovering around thirty degrees.

Everyone there froze their "arses" (*Braveheart* dialogue...) off! It seemed as though winter had won that day...That is until the bonfire was actually lit.

W h a t impressed me most was the sense of community I felt, as Iranians and Parsis mingled so well. But beyond that, was the sense of peace that fell over me as I watched the great symbol of our community (fire) steal the darkness and cold away.

Through collaboration and togetherness, this festival symbolizes the commitment we have to our culture and to each other. It provides us with a reminder of our ancestral heritage; when pulling together for the betterment of the community was paramount to the individual successes we strive for in today's society.

Jashan-E Sadeh represents our best efforts at creating an atmosphere of a "spiritual village". In our fast-paced lives, it takes a reminder every now and then to help us focus on the importance of community as Zarthustis.

Ushering out Winter and welcoming Spring, serves to remind us that with death comes life and out of darkness there can be light.

by: Aaron Rustom...



Dear Club Z'ers and Members of the Z Alias!!

I'd like to announce that the Zoroastrian Youth Club of ZAMWI (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington) and ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) are co-sponsoring a Z Retreat in the beautiful Catoctin Mountains at Camp Misty Mount in Maryland!

All you Z-Cruisers, remember what a wonderful time you had!? Well, it's now it's time to get together with old friends, meet new friends and enjoy the beauty of nature while you explore your soul!!! Come join us!!!

Place: Camp Misty Mount in the Catoctin National Park (Maryland)

Dates: June 26 - 28, 1998 (two nights, 3 days)

Cost: \$65 per person - includes meals (3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners) and lodging.

Who Can Attend: Z's who are 16 and up!

****Note:** The cabins are very rustic with cots (you provide your own sheets, pillows, etc) and nothing more!**

Bathrooms are clean but communal, as are showers. There is a swimming pool there as well. We're really in nature here...it's beautiful but not the Ritz!

We have a very large kitchen and a dining facility where we can actually cook and eat and we have fridges and stuff...so no need to worry about food or the dining area!

The Catoctin National Park is beautiful and there are ample trails, streams, mountains, untouched forests, etc. It will be a beautiful place for a retreat, discussions, roasting marshmallows and hotdogs, making smores, singing by the campfire, etc.

What to Bring:

Pillows

Blankets (it may cold in the mountains at night - even in June!)

Sleeping Bag (even though we have cots, bring one if you want)

Mosquito/Bug repellent

Flashlight

Bottled water

Fishing gear (if you want to fish)

Extra socks

Hiking Boots

A backpack

A guitar -if you can sing and play or let me know and you can use mine

It's on a first come, first serve basis so get in touch with us ASAP if you'd like to attend!

Jasmine Patel jpatel@hsr.jhsph.edu
Orang Demehry demehry@erols.com

Ushta-Te!
Jasmine :)

LOOKING BACK

"As one of the few surviving members of an old family of Parsis of Bombay, I am taking the privilege of submitting a few pages of our family history from a small book written by a cousin, Yezdezard D. B. Gundevia in 1985, who passed away a year later. He was a grandson of our common grandfather, Kaikhushro Navroji Kabraji who lived from 1843 to 1904.

"I am not sending this just because he was my grandfather, but because he was one of the first Parsi journalists, and a contemporary of Dadabhai Naoroji during that illustrious era in Parsi history. I am now 90 years old and have not got much more life left. So I wish this history to be passed on to you and other younger members of our community. I think the present generation would benefit from reading this early history of Parsi journalism in India."

*Gordafid (Gerty) Pocha
Livermore, California*

Kabraji the journalist and author.

Bavaji started his career as a sub-editor at the *Jame Jamshed* newspaper at the age of 17, on forty rupees a month. When Dadabhai Naoroji went to England to become a member of the House of Commons, he handed over the editorship of the *Rasht Gof-tar*, a social reform magazine, to Kaikhushro, for, said Naoroji, "I can find no one better to run this reformist weekly." Bavaji earned a magnificent salary of fifty rupees per month for this editorship. Bavaji was also persuaded to take over the editorship of a monthly journal, *Stree Bodhi*, which worked for the amelioration of women.

During his lifetime, Bavaji wrote some twenty novels, here confining himself more or less to social evils in the Parsi community. One of them, *Dukhiary Bachoo* ('Unhappy



Kaikhushro N. Kabraji (1843 - 1904), in white daglo, with mother Mehrbanu, in center, and nine of his 13 children: standing from left, Zal and Jehangir (father of Gordafid Pocha, author of this article); and seated, Jerbanu, Tehmina, Goolbanu, Shiavax, Sherbanu and Peroja, their youngest daughter. Kaikhushro's wife Cooverbai Penty, whom he had married when she was twelve, died at 38, in 1887, when Peroja was five years old.

Remembering Bavaji

90-year-old Gordafid (Gerty) Kabraji Pocha who immigrated to the USA in 1952, recalls her family history in Bombay and the story of her grandfather (bavaji) Kaikhushro Navroji Kabraji, noted writer, journalist, musician, playwright, social reformer, a contemporary of Dadabhai Naoroji and for long years a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. This narrative is mostly excerpted from "The Kabrajis", a booklet by Kaikhushro's grandson, Yezdezard D. B. Gundevia.

Bachoo') was written on the lines of Mrs. Henry Wood's popular novel, *East Lynne*. The tale which was serialized in his magazine *Stree Bodhi*, created such an unprecedented interest among the readers, that Kaikhushro was inundated with congratulatory letters, and the subject of the narrative was a topic of discussion in every household.

He was also a brilliant playwright. Among his dramas, some were themes taken from Sanskrit literature and others brilliantly depicted important events in Zarathushti history in Iran.

Musical talents. Gujarati music was another of Bavaji's hobbies. Friends would bring him their poems and Kaikhushro would readily set these to music; many of these became popular songs. As late as 1944, forty years after Kaikhushro's death,

Gandhiji is said to have requested Kaikhushro's granddaughter Jer Kabraji, a teacher at Batha School in Panchgani, to have her schoolchildren sing one of his songs *Bole Tena Bor Vechay* (those who shout loud will sell their wares). This fitted Gandhi's political philosophy – you would get nowhere, unless you agitate.

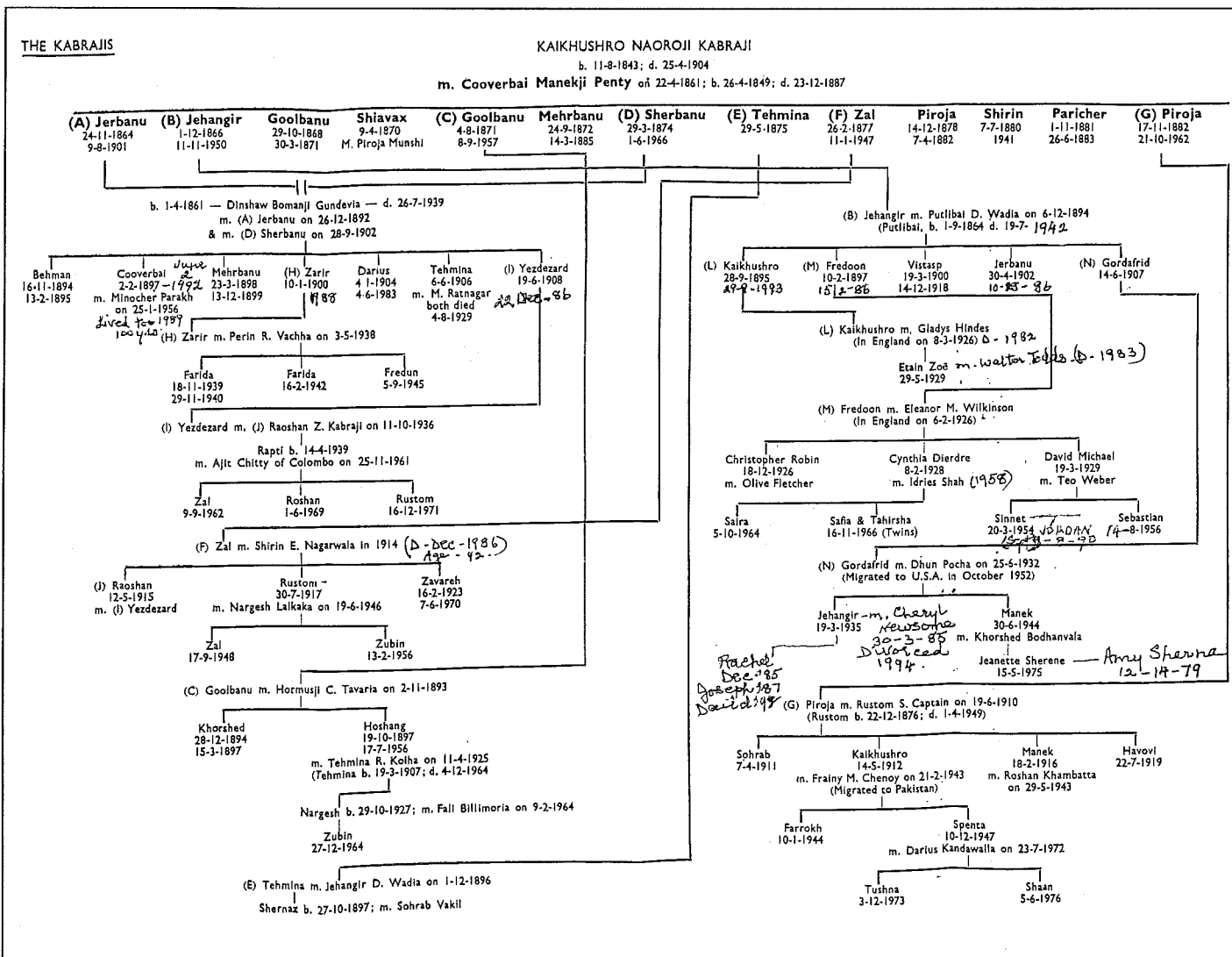
It was a magnificent record for a man to write many thousand pages of books, run two periodicals and compose over fifty songs in classical ragas, all with no typewriters or secretaries. All his work was done by candle-light and the yellow glow of kerosene lamps.

Bavaji's *magnum opus* in music was the epic of the two great Zarathushti warriors, *Rustom and Sohrab*, put together in some 57 songs, in classi-

cal *ragas* of Gujarati music. The first performance of the *Rustom-Sohrab* songs in Bombay was in 1882, with some of Kaikhushro's children prominent on the stage together with professional singers and musicians.

The Kabraji girls frequently appeared in public concerts. Parsi girls performing in public raised a storm of protest among the orthodox section of the community. On one occasion, when his daughter Jerbanu was being driven in their hired victoria (horse carriage) through Dhobi Talao, a group of Parsis turned up and pelted them with shoes and slippers. Such incidents, however, left the zealot Kabrajis always undaunted.

Politics and social reform. In politics Kaikhushro was a staunch one-tract loyalist. Loyalty to the British



Clockwise, Cooverbai, Kabraji's wife, with son, Zal, c. 1878; Jehangir Kaikhushro Kabraji, in 1944; his wife Putlibai (nee Wadia), in 1922, parents of Gordafrid Pocha, author of this article; Kaikhushro with one of his daughters.

Crown and the British Administration in India was the policy of both the magazines he edited and everything he wrote, including his speeches in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, of which he was an elected member for fourteen years.

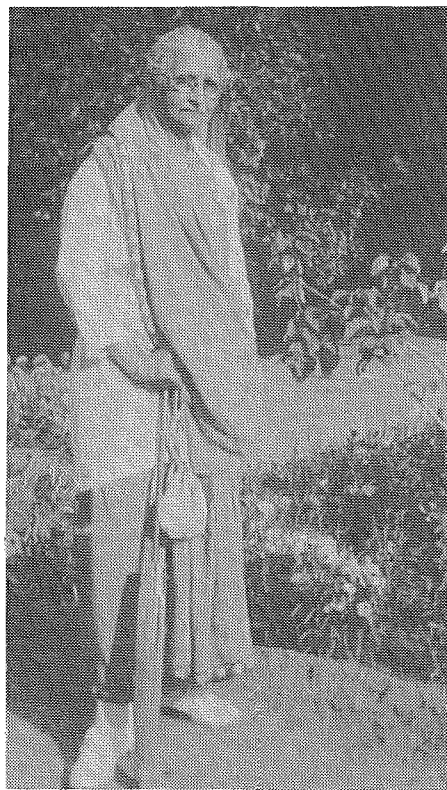
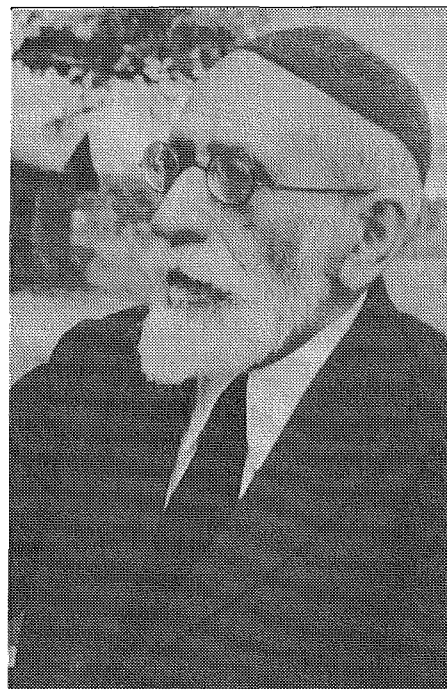
Exemplifying his loyalties to the British Crown, was his excellent translation of the British National Anthem into Gujarati. When Edward VII came to India as the Prince of Wales, upon his disembarkation in the port of Bombay, with gun salutes and a military guard of honor, he was greeted with a grand chorus of Indian girls singing the National Anthem in Gujarati. Prominent in the chorus were the Kabraji girls singing their father's translation, to the accompaniment of a military brass band.

A great man passes on. On Bavaji's demise, on April 25th, 1904, Indian newspapers and magazines, and even the *London Times*, paid rich tributes to this illustrious gentleman. The *Times of India* of April 26, 1904, wrote:

"By the death of Mr. Kaikhushro N. Kabraji, which took place yesterday morning at his residence at Chowpaty, from the effects of nervous exhaustion, Indian journalism has lost one of its most noted and devoted followers..."

"To describe Mr. Kabraji's connection with the *Rasht Gofar* for well nigh forty years is to write the political, social, religious and economic history of the Parsis during that period. There was not a political, religious or social question affecting the Parsis, or for that matter, the whole of the native community, which he did not treat with ability and foresight..."

"As a reformer he had to fight many a battle with the orthodox, and had to



cross swords with most of his contemporaries, who opposed his reforms. There was not a more ardent advocate of female education in Bombay than Mr. Kabraji ... Ever since Dadabhai Naoroji went to England to secure a seat in Parliament, and the deaths of Messrs. Bengalee and Naoroji Furdoonji some years ago, the mantle of social reform fell on Mr. Kabraji ...

"He was a Justice of the Peace and a Fellow of the Bombay University. By his death India has lost one of its most prominent journalists, and Bombay a conscientious and useful citizen." ■

Compiled by Roshan Rivetna, from letters, photos and excerpts from "The Kabraji's" by Yezdezard D. B. Gundevia, sent to Dolly Dastoor by Gordafrid Pocha.

Kabraji Family in the USA



90-year-old Gordafriid (Gerty) with son Maneck (Mike) Pocha, and distant cousin Soonamai Rustomji Desai, whose great grandmother was Tehmina Kabraji of the Karachi branch of the Kabraji family, celebrating a child's birthday in Santa Rosa, California. Soonamai is the sister of author Roshni Rustomji-Kerns of Half Moon Bay, California.

As interesting as the story of Kaikhushro Kabraji, related in the previous article, is the story of his granddaughter Gordafriid (Gerty) Kabraji Pocha and her family, now settled in California.

On October 10, 1952, Gordafriid (Gerty) Kabraji Pocha and her husband Dhun Pocha sailed from Ballard Pier, Bombay, with their two sons, Jehangir, 17, and Maneck, 8, to live the rest of their lives in the United States of America.

"It was the unhappiest day of my life," recalls Gerty, "I wept, as through my tears, I could no longer see the shoreline of my homeland. My husband consoled me by saying 'You can go back whenever you wish'. But since that day, in 1952, I have never been back to India, even for a visit."

Arriving in New York, the family boarded a Greyhound bus headed for San Francisco. They decided to live in California because of its milder climate. Dhun started making applications and soon found a job as a draftsman in one of the first calculating machine companies, Friedan's, in San Leandro.

Their elder son Jehangir, who had already finished school in Poona (India), started applying to colleges; but unable to afford the high fees, volunteered for military service first. After four years of service during the Korean War, he went to college helped by the GI Bill and became a computer programmer. Jehangir, now 62, and divorced, lives in Denver, Colorado. He has three daughters Rachel, 12, Joseph, 10 and David, 5.

Maneck, the younger son, became an Electrical Engineer (Ph.D.) and has been working at the Lawrence Laboratory in Livermore, for the last 22 years. He is married to Khorshed Bodhanwalla, whose father was a Director at TISCO, in Jamshedpur, India. They have two daughters, Jeanette Sherene, 22, a pre-med at the University of California in San Diego, and Amy Sherna, 18, a senior in high school. ■

READERS' FORUM

Letters (under 600 words) are invited from readers. All submissions must satisfy the Journal's Editorial Policy [see back page].

You cannot be lonely if you are a Zarathushti

You cannot really be lonely if you are a Zarathushti, and yet, humanly speaking, loneliness – or the fear of it – is common among all people. It is not that the Atash Behram/Dadgar or such provides a fellowship of believers who cultivate a sort of warm, caring environment in which the individual is too closely integrated for loneliness to occur. That is an idealized model of our place of worship, which has few actual examples.

In the real world the human composition of the Zarathushtis's place of worship makes it liable to exactly the same failings as all institutions: there are jealousies and malice in the same proportion as there are aspirations to love and understanding.

Such a view of the Zarathushti's place of worship anyway – as essentially a social community – is far from its purpose. As such, its first function is to convey the truth of Zarathushtra's teaching to each culture and generation, and to preserve the integrity of his truth from ignorance and corruption. Zarathushtis are therefore, as the Avesta says: "ambassadors of Zarathushtra"; their vocation is to connect the people of the world with the celestial society, the unseen world of the everlasting purposes of our Lord.

You cannot be lonely if you are a Zarathushti because, while still in time, you are integrated with that wider body, the greater part of which is not in the world at all. The end of human life is not the pursuit of happiness, as so many seem to imagine, but the discovery of the individual's place in that greater company, invisible to our eyes yet real and present.

If we work at it, and make that work the center of our use of time, then at death we shall already have fashioned that spiritual body which is ready to resume our spiritual natures beyond the dokhma (place for seeing off the physically dead). This is simply not, by definition, a lonely task. It is in some large measure dependent upon the support of unseen hosts, and is accomplished with the supportive prayers of the entire body of believers. There is, of course, a literal sense in which we are alone. When all the companionship we seek to foster in life has fallen away, we stand in the presence of eternity by ourselves. Zarathushtra reminded us that, if need be, even families must be abandoned for the sake of his Kingdom, and as a matter of fact they are anyway – through the separation of death, the ultimate lonely experience.

And yet death is universal, unavoidable, and rather beautiful. Imagine a life which was eternal but earth-bound. Imagine ourselves trapped for all time with the incomplete natures we have at present and with our existing personalities. Is that really to be desired?

The beauty of transience is that the education we receive in spirituality here, is fulfilled simultaneously with the dissolution of our earthly forms. The sense of loneliness should be converted into a sense of anticipation of personal completion. But nothing will happen unless we use our lives to follow Zarathushtra.

Unless we build the spiritual temple of our bodies now, there will be nothing of ourselves in the celestial kingdom that beckons.

Furhok K. Tangree
La Roche-sur-Foron, France

On the movie – Wishmaker

I read with great interest the comments on the film *Wishmaker* [*FEZANA Journal*, Winter 1997]. Being an attorney, I have spent the last two hours searching *Lexis* for a legal basis to obtain an injunction. There are no blasphemy laws in New

York. I would be surprised if it is an offense anywhere in the USA. Such a law would violate the First Amendment of the US Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and expression.

In the 1950s, New York had a law which authorized the denial of a license upon a censor's conclusion that the film was 'sacrilegious'. This law was struck down by the US Supreme Court in a case known as *Burstyn v. Wilson*, 343 US495. The film in that case was *Miracle*, which parodied the immaculate conception. The Supreme Court opined that the term 'sacrilegious' was too overbroad and would violate the 'freedom of expression' clause.

I agree with those who say that there is no need for unnecessary hype. Numerous films have portrayed Christianity in a negative manner. Furthermore, this also gives us an opportunity to examine the nature of evil in our religion. There are so many contradictory views that it would be hard to launch a blistering attack on the filmmaker. The following extract has been reported:

Girt: What exactly is Ahura Mazda?

Art Dealer: It's the monotheistic deity of Zoroastrian origin.

Girt: So was he the God of Good, then?

Art Dealer: Certainly. Interesting though, legends have it that the opposing force, if you will, was actually his own shadow. So, in a way, he himself was the source of evil.

Some Zarathushtis do believe that evil is the negation of light. By moving further away from light (or into its shadow), one enters into the realm of darkness or evil. Others propound, as in other religions, that God is the source of both good and evil, while another school of thought is of the opinion that evil lies in the human mind. I am not trying to defend the film in any way, but am just demonstrating how hard it would be to portray things said in this film as 'sacrilegious' or 'blasphemous'.

Like Christians have done in the past on numerous occasions, we too must

protest the way the religion of Zarathushtra has been depicted in the film. It would be one thing if the religion was depicted seriously, albeit erroneously or unflatteringly. Here the blokes who made the film have tapped into the Zarathushti religion to enhance its exotic appeal.

The more we make people aware of who we are, the less insensitive they will be to our feelings.

Cyrus Mehta, Attorney at Law
New York, New York

A similar thing happened earlier in 1997 when the TV program *Highlander*, which has a small but fanatic following, featured a garbled version of the Zarathushti 'Saoshyant' legend as well as a pseudo-Zarathushti demonology. I received many questions from *Highlander* fans as to whether any of the Zarathushti references in the program were real.

Pop culture providers do look for 'exotic' religious color to make their material more interesting. They cannot use Mormonism, because millions of angry Mormons would complain. They cannot use Buddhism, because it is too hard to explain, though some current movies are about Buddhism – see an early October 1997 issue of *Time* magazine for "Trendy Buddhism."

Pop culture often uses Judaism – including fantasies about the mystical Kabbalah, the Golem (mythical 'robot' animated from a clay image), etc., and sometimes, if it isn't done right or respectfully, they get into trouble with Jews. Catholic Christianity is often travestied in pop culture, especially in regard to priests and nuns. Catholics take hits that would cause a smaller religion to run screaming to lawyers.

Zarathushti 'exoticism' in pop culture (TV, fiction, comic books, etc) is often used with the assumption that the Zarathushti religion is dead and no one still believes or practices it. Therefore when live Zarathushtis complain, it is a big surprise.

Now what would you do if you found an accurate portrayal of the Zarathushti religion in pop culture? I think it would be a real cultural milestone if a practicing Zarathushti were shown on a (drama or comedy) TV program – a sign that Zarathushtis are now openly part of the culture they have joined as immigrants.

*Hanna M. G. Shapero
Falls Church, Virginia*

...The first thing to remember is that we should be proactive and systematic in our approach, and not be reactive, otherwise we will simply end up fighting one fire after another. I think this, and other such incidents are signposts that tell us there is a desperate need to educate the North American public about our religion. If they knew about us, many of the problems that are coming up, would not.

I am asking all of us to unite, and decide on a proactive campaign of educating the public. Determine what resources we need, and then do it.

Perhaps, if there is one legacy we need to leave behind at the end of the twentieth century, it is that it was us, who put Zarathushtra on the map in the West, not Nietzsche ...

*Shahriar Shahriari
Vancouver, British Columbia*

... I am saying 'till blue in the face that we need to educate North Americans and the world about Zarathushtis. Provide the real facts and meanings, before the religion is misrepresented by movies like *Wishmaster*. There are many who respond with the familiar: "We have to educate ourselves first." True enough. But perhaps our youth would take more interest and pride in their religious heritage if there was greater understanding of it from the larger community.

I've seen my own children come home from school puffing their chest out with pride, that a teacher or other student recognized them for being a Parsi or a Zoroastrian. They were astonished that someone recognized

a Fravashi pendant hanging from a necklace as a Zarathushti symbol, and questioned them about their religion. Even other school children may have seen a TV program on Zarathushtis.

Recognition of the identity of our children by their peers makes a world of difference in our children's pride and self-confidence, growing up in the West.

*Jehaangir Bulsara
Ottawa, Canada*

Bring them out of their cosy shells

We have five hours to go before entering 1998 in Sydney. I thought I might quickly enter the last (and perhaps the most serious) thought of the year, which has troubled me in the past during my stay and work on three continents, and travel among Zarathushtis on two others, including the US.

Your *FEZANA Journal*, you might feel delighted to know, caters for a very wide spectrum of readers, and not just 'lay' persons. Zarathushtis throughout the world are very intelligent people – only they hate to admit it. During small talk they make it worse by remaining defensive, and even become self-effacing for many reasons. To begin with, most of us (I think) do not remember which Roz or Mah the day of conversation is.

Only a wide readership of Zarathushti journals like yours, which go beyond the accepted traditional facts and known stories, will begin to bring them out of their cosy shell. And it is doing just that.

The article I submitted to *FEZANA Journal*, which you claimed to be 'academic' and 'scholarly', was not so. I delivered it to young minds at the Second World Youth Congress. It was meant to make the youth wonder. I found, to my surprise, that when verses from the Avesta and Gathas are quoted, Zarathushtis begin to sit up and take notice. Keep up the good work.

*Sam Kerr
Sydney, Australia*

Move the soul, rather than the mind

I have read the Fall 1997 issue of *FEZANA Journal* and wish to make a couple of comments. First, the seven separate articles about Zarathushtra's date, place, time and domain tossed and challenged my child-like beliefs. I wondered whether such widely varying views on basic matters are common in other religions too?

Second, I think religion should stir the soul rather than the mind. If we talk of religion at a mental level, supported by research, it becomes merely a subject of study like any other. But, when we talk about the concepts of our religion such as Vohu Manah ('immaculate mind and wisdom'); Amesha Spentas (attributes of Ahura Mazda after which mankind can pattern their lives); Behman (divine intelligence); Spenta Armaiti (devotion and sincerity); Spenta Mainyu (the dual forces and our choices); the reward of Haurvatat (perfection); Behesht, Dizakh, Hamestang (purgatory); and Saosh-yant (redemption), we dwell on the actual preachings of Zarathushtra.

Isn't that the actual religion? The Prayer Corner of your journal does that in a small measure. It will be nice to see more contributors to your journal approach religion to move the soul rather than the mind.

*Sunnu Golwalla
Karachi, Pakistan*

On recent issues

...*FEZANA Journal* has indeed earned its rightful place in the Zarathushti community, and is always anxiously awaited ...

*Mr. Virasp Mehta
14 Katrak Parsi Colony
Karachi 74400, Pakistan*

[Deeply dedicated to the Zarathushti cause, Mr. Mehta himself publishes an excellent little magazine under the aegis of "Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund" and distributes it free to the Zarathushti community. Readers are invited to contact Mr. Mehta to get a copy or to offer a donation to support this dedi-

cated enterprise. The editors would like to gratefully acknowledge Mr. Mehta's publication as being the source of numerous inspiring quotations and short articles, reprinted off and on, in FEZANA Journal. - Ed]

... Just wanted to thank you for the Summer 1997 issue of FEZANA Journal on Zarathushti professionals. This was an excellent piece and I have heard many good things from friends and relatives here and abroad about this issue. Hopefully there will be more to follow of this type, as it is important to hear and learn about fellow Zarathushtis.

Anahita Printer
Mississauga, Ontario

... I stayed up until midnight to read the Journal [Winter 1997]. It was so interesting. Thanks so much for this wonderful Christmas gift.

Mehran Sepehri
Mountain View, California

My congratulations to you on bringing out an excellent and very informative issue [Winter 1997] on the navjote ceremony.

This issue will be of great help to parents planning the Navjote of their child in this part of the world, especially when Parsi children know very little Gujarati.

With a similar goal of trying to keep our traditions alive, I have published a 1998 Zarathushti calendar. I would appreciate if you would let other Zarathushtis know about this calendar [see this issue, page xxx for ordering information].

Firoze (Phil) Avari
Buena Park, California

... Please accept my congratulations for publishing such a nice issue of FEZANA Journal [Fall 1997] on the date and place of Zarathushtra. I am thankful to you for publishing my article in this important issue.

Narayan R. Joshi
Beaumont, Texas

Genetics or Religion?

I find it incredible, and frankly frightening, that some Zarathushtis actually sit and ponder whether we are 'pure' and 'Aryan' et. al. I understand that people need to have a sense of history and roots. Issues of DNA and genetics are alright as long as they remain in the academic periphery of how we choose to define ourselves as a people today. Instead, to me, these opinions smack of racism.

Why are we so desperate to prove to ourselves (for no one else really cares) that we are 'Aryan', implying that we are superior to other (in this case Indian) races. These ideas reek of the desire NOT to be equated with 'Indians'. How sad!

Sometimes we forget that when our own civilization was too weak to defend itself, it was India that gave us shelter and a home. It was in India that we flourished; and in India that we still do.

As a Parsi, I would rather feel proud of my people based on what they accomplished, and not by the make-up of their DNA. As a Parsi, I am proud to be an Indian and always aware of the generosity of the Gujaratis for giving us a home. As a Zarathushti, I find it insulting to hear that only the 'original Aryans' can be good Zarathushtis. If this is so, it means our religion is weak. And that Zarathushtis owe their accomplishments to their genetics rather than their religion.

Instead, I offer that it is our religion that makes us who we are. The thoughts it expresses, the path it shows to life. It is the religion from which we imbibe our values, ethics and sense of duty that make us worthy citizens. Accordingly, I believe that anyone can be a good Zarathushti. Anyone who takes the religion into his heart can make a good life and take his place amongst us. Then he will be a truer Zarathushti than many of 'us' who were merely born into the faith, but do not really follow it.

I also do not agree with those who say that the Parsis, although they have been in India for many generations, have pretty much kept a closed society. How naive that sounds, and insulting. The Parsis I know did anything but keep a closed society. They have spoken Indian languages, worn Indian clothes, eaten Indian food, protected Indian kings, fought India's enemies, run India's governments, developed India's science, married India's beautiful women and earned India's affection and respect. Parsis have always embraced cultures as diverse as the European, Japanese, Chinese, and in today's world, American.

If you ask me, the reason the Parsis have accomplished so much is not due to our "pure Aryan blood". Instead, I think in moving to India and embracing it, we created an incredible fusion. It is the result of this fusion, this combining great cultures, that the resultant culture and people are so unique and special.

This is one more reason we must bless India and one more reason we must look outward and forward, not inward and backwards.

Jehangir Pocha
San Jose, California

Anti-proselytizing Pact

Kudos to the inter-faith religious leaders who will sign the "anti-proselytization pact" [FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997, p. 10] in the year 2000.

We Zarathushtis should be honored that the world is ready to accept today, what our forefathers practiced since the beginning of recorded history (and prior to that as well).

Cyrus did not convert the Jews when he conquered Babylon. He liberated them from religious oppression and granted them religious freedom to follow their own, by rebuilding their Temple from his own treasury.

We should be in the forefront of world thought, that we have always respected the other prophets and religions as being the different prismatic emanations of the same White Light.

What a pity that some Zarathushti individuals and organizations, in the name of religion, perpetuate anti-Zarathushti doctrine of proselytization, and revert the spiritual clock back by converting others in order to accommodate their own self-interest.

*Pervin Mistry
Mississauga, Ontario*

Coming to the new world the new Zarathushti family

Coming to the new world in search of a better life and ambitious dreams, the immigrants to the west are groping to find their way around. Almost all of them are confused, and to a certain extent disappointed of their long journey, when they realize that their dreams are shattered. Not only has this journey been long in the number of miles traveled, but it has also covered a lot of changes from the old world civilization to the new world challenges.

The difference is between the old world's morality based society and the new world's legality based society. The new immigrant is confused. He has come from a tight-lipped society, to a new world especially the US which is notably loquacious.

Now what has all this got to do with the new Zarathushti family? Probably something that a social engineer can decipher. All of us have come from very different and diverse backgrounds. Has it really occurred to us that we should talk about our differences? Of course not!

We would rather fake and behave as if nothing is wrong with our new family. We are just scared of talking about differences. Maybe, coming from a tight-lipped culture, we are not supposed to air our dirty laundry in public. But folks, we must confront the subtleties of our family, and find out what is going on underneath the harmonious surface. If our new family could start the communication process amongst ourselves, I believe that we can overcome this new immigrant mentality, and we could truly be settling down in the new world.

Communities grow, when every member feels they are a part of the same social structure. Members of the community share the same moral, social, historical and religious values, and have common interests. Under such a definition, can we truly consider ourselves members of the same community? Probably we can; and this is simply because we do share the same religion.

So, let us all behave like one large community and help each other out. Next time a new Zarathushti immigrant arrives in the west, let the community be ready to greet and meet the new immigrant's expectations, so that the person settles down soon.

But personally, I do not believe that our communities of the West are capable or have any desire to help. The only function that our community performs (and that also, poorly) is to organize gatherings for

Navroze, where the new immigrant family is expected to participate at a cost of \$20 per person, or be isolated from the community.

Further the organizers of these functions take community money that could be spent in developing our community small businesses, to outside hotels. This is where the organizers are lacking vision and leadership. This business of approximately \$4,000 (\$20 per person for 200 people) could very well be given to a small Zarathushti business.

But of course, it is more easily said than done. Our community cannot get involved in helping ourselves.

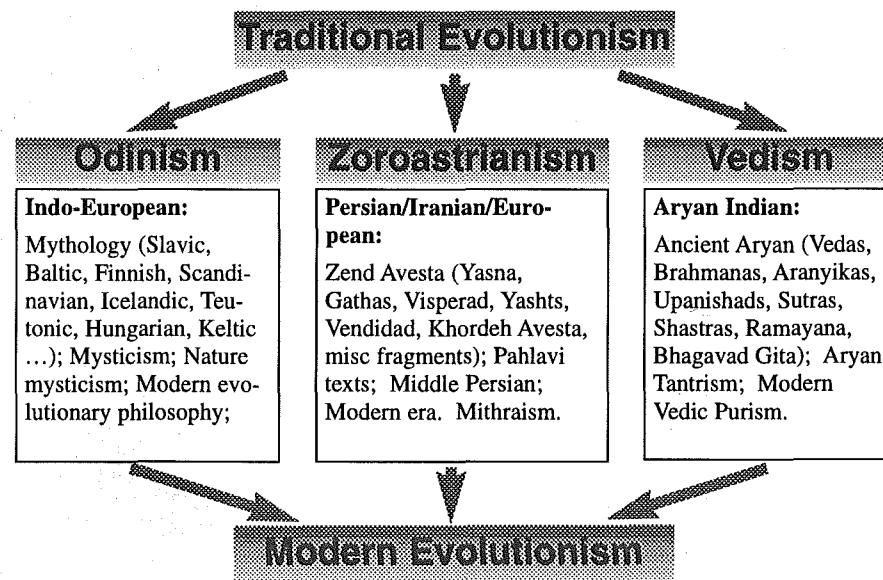
Besides, this is too small a project. We can only talk about big projects.

*Behram B. Atashband
Austin, Texas*

Evolutionalist Spiritualism

I have been in contact with Zarathushtis in the US for about two years, and have been a reader of FEZANA Journal since then. Enclosed is a poster of 'Evolutionalist Spiritualism' which I have prepared and distributed. It describes a large-scale (in time and in scope of ideas) system of evolutionary spiritualism of which the religion of Zarathushtra is a central part, along with Odinism and Vedism (see chart below). The quote on the cover of the Summer 1997 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.

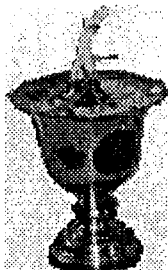
*Robert E. Williams
Fort Collins, Colorado*



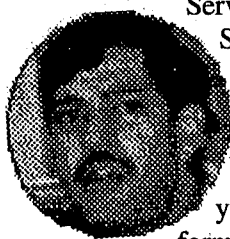
High Tech Tandarosti

Ervad Kerman Katrak of Thornhill, Ontario, offers "Zoroastrian Priestly Services" on the Internet, at his web-site, with the catchy URL:

<http://www.followme.com/kerman/index.htm>



Zoroastrian Priestly Services



After a flashing banner: "Welcome to Ervad Kerman's Zoroastrian Priestly Services at the Zoroastrian Site", surfers are introduced to Ervad Kerman, a "fully ordained Zoroastrian priest". He offers: "If you would like to perform any kind of Zoroastrian religious services for your loved ones, Ervad Kerman Katrak would gladly take care of all of them." One can then click on the "service" of one's choice to get further information.

For those uninitiated in the ways of The Web, he also gives his postal address: 101 Pinewood Drive, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5P6, Canada, Tel: (905) 707-7359.

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Future Economic Success of the Zarathushti Community

By Behram Atashband
Austin, Texas

The information age revolution that is going on in the world today will open up tremendous opportunities and challenges for all nations. If these opportunities are not seized by the communities, they can easily fall into oblivion. Challenges of the new age are enormous, for which all individuals and communities must be ready.

Old ways of conducting the affairs of the community will be challenged and permanently altered. Cyberspace communities will be developed, which will have their own wants, desires, aspirations and dreams.

During the last three decades, migration of people to developed nations accelerated, and millions of people have been displaced from their original homeland. These economic and in-pursuit-of-a-better-life migration has created a group of very high mobility workers. This high mobility is only food for the large corporations. However, it is not suitable for individuals to develop roots, society and eventually, culture.

We, Zarathushtis, have several hundreds of years of history and culture, and we are proud of our heritage. We must, however, be vigilant in protecting this culture.

So what should we do? We must refuse to be a 'gypsy' and float around from city to city in search of a job. We must develop resilience, and with community help "we must put up the tent". This will develop our Zarathushti society and eventually our new homeland culture.

Of course, one might argue that this will happen anyway. True. However, can we not expedite the situation? This can be done, if we continuously argue in favor of our community venturing out and developing small businesses. Any small business will do better in the long run, than jumping from job to job.

The future economic success of our Zarathushti community lies in having an abundance of Zarathushti businesses. Zarathushtis, through small businesses, will be able to meet the challenges of the new information age revolution; and will be able to

maintain the heritage, culture and age-old traditions. We must not under-estimate the power of small business in developing our communi-

“ Our community goal should be to pull as many Zarathushtis as possible into the world of small business. ”

ties. Just as an example, look at the Aga Khani's, who have developed and grown their communities through economic and business routes.

Small business develops trust and faith in God. It develops sharing and caring of community resources; and in the process, develops communities. It provides a stable franchise for the community to depend on. Business people are good people. Our Zarathushti community has been lucky to have such great souls amongst us. We have been blessed indeed.

But we must continue to encourage and provide assistance to people to develop small businesses. Our community goal should be to pull as many Zarathushtis as possible into the small business world.

A *National Geographic*, [October 1997] article on Pakistan stated that after the British Colonialists won the

Sind war in 1839, they brought a group of Parsis and Christians to settle in Karachi and develop businesses. Well, by 1959, the Parsis had established the BVS Parsi High School. That was just the beginning of many glorious years of prosperity and successes that continue to this day in Karachi.

Now, in the absence of our British Saheb's benevolence, can we Zarathushtis become vigilant and get involved in helping and developing Zarathushti small businesses?

I think we can, and we will. ■



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Making Sense of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 was passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of US Congress and signed by President Clinton on August 5, 1997. The word 'Relief' in the title may be a misnomer. There are 824 code changes and about 300 new provisions. Pundits, tax professionals and the press all agree that simplification was not a part of the agenda this time. I will use the art of précis-writing to summarize important provisions affecting individuals. There is some good news.

By Framroze Patel
Woodbridge, New Jersey

Tax rates and tax bracket limits:

- Rates have remained the same.
- Limits of tax brackets have increased, e.g. for married filing jointly at 28% bracket, 1997 limits are: \$42,351-\$102,300. 1996 limits were: \$41,201-\$99,600.

Capital Gain:

- Lower capital gains; maximum long-term rate reduced to 20% from 28% for gains taxed in all but the 15% bracket, in which case the rate is lowered to 10%.
- Holding period for which an investment must be held in order to qualify has been extended from over 12 months to over 18 months.
- No change in short-term capital gain. Any capital on assets held for less than

12 months are taxed at ordinary income-tax rates of up to 39.6%.

Sale of personal residence.

- For personal residence sold after May 6, 1997 the new law allows taxpayers to exclude up to \$250,000 of gain. (\$500,000 for married filing jointly). One time exclusion of \$125,000 by taxpayers older than 55 is replaced by this change.

Savings for college and credits for higher education:

- "Hope Scholarship Credits" can be claimed for qualified tuition and related expenses paid for your, your spouse's, or each dependent's first 2 years of post-secondary or college education. The credit of \$1,500 is phased out when modified Adjusted Gross income exceeds \$40,000 (\$80,000 filing jointly).

- For post-secondary education expenses not eligible for Hope Credit, a Lifetime Learning Credit of \$1,000 (in 1998) is available for qualified tuition and related expenses. Lifetime Credit is limited to \$1,000 per year regardless of number of students, but is available for unlimited number of years.

Charitable contribution:

- If planning to donate an investment that has declined in value, consider selling the investment first and giving proceeds to a recognized charity. **You benefit in two ways: (1) You can claim deduction for capital loss; and (2) deduction for cash contribution.**

- If you have appreciated publicly traded stock that you intend to contribute to a private foundation, do so before July 1, 1998. After July 1, special rules allowing a fair market deduction will no longer be in effect.

Home office:

- To qualify for the deduction, the area of the home used for office must be used regularly and exclusively (1) as the principal place of business; and (2) as a place to meet or deal with clients or customers in normal course of business.

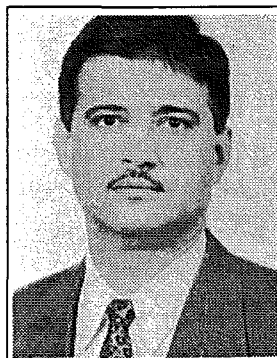
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IRAs (really good news!)

● ROTH IRAs (new kid on the block!)

- For post-1997 tax years, the Act creates a new type of IRA where the contributions are non-deductible and distributions are tax-free.

- Individuals younger than 59 1/2 who have held a ROTH IRA for at least 5 years can make tax-free withdrawals to pay for a first home (up to \$10,000)

- To qualify for federal tax exemption, distribution must occur: (1) after 59 1/2; and (2) the account has been held for at least five years.

- Total annual contributions to all types of IRAs, deductible, non-deductible and Roth, is less than \$2,000 as before.

- Qualified distributions are NOT subject to the 10% additional tax penalty.

- Regular IRAs can be rolled over to ROTH IRA if: (1) adjusted gross income is less than \$100,000; or (2) tax payer does not file married filing single.

- There is no requirement that withdrawal begins at 70 1/2.

● Education IRAs:

- Individuals with income below certain limits may make contributions of up to \$500 per year for an eligible child.

- Total contribution of \$500 can be made for each child under 18.

- Contributions are not tax-deductible, but earnings accumulate on a tax-deferred basis.

- Distributions will be tax free if used to pay the child's qualified higher education expenses (tuition, fees, books, equipment and basic room and board).

- Money can be rolled over from the Education IRA of one child to that of another child in the same family.

- The \$500 allowance contribution begins to be phased for modified Adjusted Gross Income of \$95,000 (\$150,000 on a joint return). Once the threshold of \$110,000 (\$160,000 on a joint return) is reached, contributions are not permitted for the year.

Gift Tax Returns:

● For gifts made after August 2, 1997, gift tax returns no longer need to be filed for charitable gifts in excess of \$10,000,

provided the entire value of the transferred property qualifies for the gift tax charitable deduction.

Estate planning:

● Beginning in 1998, only estates worth over \$625,000 will be subject to federal estate tax. The withholding will gradually increase, reaching \$1 million in the year 2006.

● Business owners who want to keep the business in the family may qualify to pass on as much as \$1.3 million tax free, as long as the business constitutes more than half their estate.

TIP: Have your will written in a language that will automatically adjust to new tax limits. Instead of specifying a \$600,000 bequest, for example, cite the maximum "estate-tax exclusion amount". ■

Framroze Patel, CPA, MBA, CVA, has an accounting practice at 9 South Circle, Woodbridge, NJ. Tel: (732) 634-8585; fax: (732) 636-5957; email: fkp1@idt.net, or visit his Home Page at: <http://idt.net/~fkp1>.



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Donation checks, payable to "FEZANA", may be sent to the address in the appeal, or to Dinshaw Joshi, FEZANA Welfare Committee, 4515 Willard Avenue, #1609-S Chevy Chase, MD 20815, Tel: (301) 654-6250. For tax exemption eligibility please refer to FEZANA Journal [Winter 1994, p.60.]

Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan and Research Center

A major project of the Sir Pherozeshah Mehta 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations Committee is the construction of the "Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan and Research Center" to house the University of Mumbai's Department of Civics and Politics, as a fitting tribute to this great citizen who rendered a lifetime of service to the university, the city and the nation.

The Governor of Maharashtra, Dr. P. C. Alexander is the Chief Patron of the Committee, with Padmashri



Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan as Vice-Chairman. Among other distinguished citizens of Mumbai on this Committee are Nawaz Mody, Baji Antia, J. N. Guzder, Homai Modi and Nani Palkhiwalla. The project, for which the foundation was laid in March 1997, is estimated to cost Rs. 6 crores.

Donations checks for this noble cause, payable to FEZANA, may be mailed to FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].

Thanks from Navaz Mehta

Nawaz Mehta's problem of malignant melanoma was finally tackled when doctors at the Johns Hopkins University Hospital resected the tumor and the Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital fabricated a facial prosthesis, restoring her speech. In a letter of thanks, Mehta writes:

"I sincerely thank members of my community for all the kindness and help they have so readily extended during my stay in America. Without them, I would have gotten homesick and left for India ..."

Mehta sends her heartfelt thanks to: Dr. Zaver Bhujwalla for arrangements for treatment at Johns Hopkins; Guloo Austin of Canada, and ZAMWI President Kersi Shroff for unstinting help and generous hospitality; Framroze and Armaity Patel, and Rusi and Peroja Press for their hospitality in New York, and a host of others "for unstinting help and the most generous of hospitality."

"A major portion of my stay was with the Ghadiali family," writes Mehta, "Dr. Yasmin Ghadiali and Jamshed, were not only excellent hosts, but also helped introduce me to doctors ... their matchless grace and goodness is not for pen to write or paper to record."

"Their hospitality and concern showed me an incredible side of people," says Mehta, who feels the love and care of the Zarathushtis in America "provided a different kind of prescription - one beyond the realm of medical science."

Funds Needed for Bordi Fire Temple

Trustees of the Bordi Fire Temple have appealed to Zarathushtis around the world for donations to maintain the Bordi Fire Temple near the village of Golvad, 150 km North of Mumbai. They have thus far managed to maintain the 80-year-old Adarian Saheb with the limited resources of the local Zarathushti population of 300. The buildings are now in urgent need of extensive repairs, estimated to cost Rs. 20 lakhs. Please make your donation checks to FEZANA, marked "Bordi Adaran" and mail to FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].

Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Center in Navsari

The WZO Trust Funds announced a public Jashan on January 6th, to mark the opening of the new Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Center in Navsari. A 20,000 sq. ft. facility, the 4-storey Center provides comfortable living facilities at extremely moderate rates for 28 seniors. Dinshaw Tamboly, Chairman of the WZO Trust Funds writes: "The Center has become a reality entirely due to the generosity, benevolence, magnanimity and foresight of the trustees of the Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund ... who have elevated ... philanthropy to loftier heights."

HELP WANTED

High school or college-bound youth to help with production of FEZANA Journal and the FEZANA web-site.

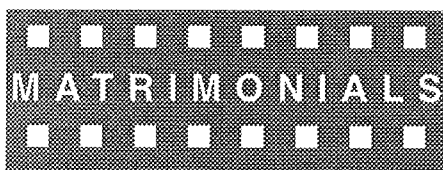
Note that this will count as valuable journalistic work experience, special religious studies and community help, which will aid the student in securing college admission and future scholarships.

Charitable Donations Received by FEZANA

During 1997, the FEZANA Welfare Committee received donations in response to appeals published in the FEZANA Journal for the following worthwhile causes (listed in descending order of magnitude). FEZANA is deeply grateful to the generosity of the donors.

- FEZANA Welfare Fund
- Medical treatment: Nawaz Mehta
- Medical treatment: Imroze Ardeshir
- Udwada Dispensary
- Hearse for Doongarwadi
- FEZANA Student Fund
- Ahmednagar Agiary
- Boyce Dhana Patel Agiary
- Saronda Agiary
- Reviving Mobedi
- B. D. Petit Parsi General Hospital
- Medical treatment: Sanam Rabadi
- Zoroastrian College
- Gram Seva Trust

Donations will be most gratefully accepted for any of the following FEZANA fund categories: Welfare, Religious Education, Student Aid, Youth, FEZANA Journal, General, or for a specific appeal.



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).

Outgoing female, 30, raised and educated in the US, holding master's degree and well-settled university job. Correspondence invited from well-settled males age 30-35. Call Mobed Zazu Bhandara at (714) 434-1936. [M98-1]

Homeloving female, 26, currently doing postgraduate studies and hav-

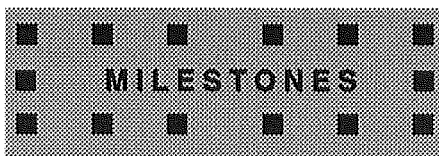
ing a secure job; US citizen. Correspondence invited from well-settled males age 27-32. Call Mobed Zazu Bhandara at (714) 434-1936. [M98-2]

Young man, 27, well-settled, in computers. Call uncle at (770) 451-6452. [M98-3]

British-born female, 24, slim, 5' 3", fair complexion, good sense of humor, fun-loving, financially independent, loves traveling, sports. Willing to settle in US or Canada. Correspondence invited from males 26-30. [F98-4]

Looking for suitable match for **sister in India, 31**, 5' 2", B.Com. Enjoys music, reading, cooking, outdoors. Call (609) 259-6256. [F98-5]

Beautiful lady, 28, MBA, professional, looking for educated, outgoing, caring gentleman, non-smoker. Call (732) 873-0921. [F98-6]



FEZANA maintains records of births, navjotes, sudreh-pushis, 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

Arshya, a girl, to Vida and Ardeshir Bakhtiani, on July 28.

Connie Sarah, a girl, to Kersi and Cathy Mae Bhiwandiwalla of Northern Virginia, on December 23.

Zurwan, a boy, to Khushru and Pearl Chothia of Toronto, on September 18.

Amy and Ashtad, twins, to Farrokh and Shirin Engineer of Acton, MA, on September 19. Brother Darius, 6 1/2, is also very pleased.

Kaivan, a boy, to Vistasph and Perviz Gowadia, on July 4.

Nicku, a girl, to Shirin and Fereydoon Keshavarz, grandchild to Katayoon Verahrami of Gaithersburg, MD. Fereydoon's parents,

presently in Iran, will be arriving shortly to meet Nicku.

Sanaea, a girl, to Kashmira and Gev Mahava, in Edmonton, AB, on October 21, sister to Abad and Rayomand.

Naadir, a boy, to Ouvie and Behramji Mehta, brother to Mitra, cousin to Arman, on November 14.

Ahneesh, a son to Jayant and Sher-naz Mohanty of Dallas area, on March 5; a brother to Shayan.

Arshaam, a boy, to Jehangir and Roya Mojgani, in North Vancouver, BC, on August 25.

Anahita, a girl, to Raiomand and Azita (Yeganegi) Parsi-Feraidoonian, in Vancouver, BC, on September 5.

Dara, a boy, to Mandana and Bahram Shahriari, on November 10. Grandparents include Parvin and Monedgar Dehghanian and Iran-dokht and Khodarahm Shahryary.

Rashna, a girl, to Anahita Soonawalla, in Rochester Hills, MI; first grandchild to Dilnavaz Lord. Uncle Shahrukh is a member of ZAMWI's Board of Directors.

Connor Ryan, a boy, to Farida and Richard Tinker of Suwanee, Georgia, brother to Scott, grandson to Roshan Patel of Chicago, on January 19.

Navjote, Sudreh Pushi

Shahram and Kombeez Atashband, of Dallas area, in February.

Ian and Natalie Cambata, son and daughter of Carole and Shahrookh Cambata, in Chicago, IL, on November 23.

Arshia Farhangi, daughter of Nilgoon Farhangi, in Vancouver, BC, on October 26.

Raein Jamshidi, son of Jamshid and Poursan Jamshidi, in Burnaby, BC, on October 25.

Rayomand Patel, son of Firoze and Thrity Patel of Toronto, at the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, on December 28.

Sanaeya Pestonji, daughter of Khusroo and Mahazarine Pestonji, in Vancouver BC, on September 21.

Carmen Press, daughter of Bakhtawar and Cyrus Press of Chicago area, in Mumbai, on December 19.

Weddings

Adil Bhatena, son of Aspy and Thirity Bhatena of Richmond, BC, to **Jasmine Bharucha**, daughter of Percy and Phiroza Bharucha of Mumbai, in Mumbai, on February 2. Wedding reception was in Richmond on November 1.

Burzin Degamwala of Chicago area, and **Firuza Sopariwalla**, in Mumbai, on December 21.

Farshad Hormozdyan and **Spen-ta Dinshaw**, in Falls Church, VA, on January 31.

Shahrukh Irani and **Gulnar Surveyor**, of Houston area, in Mumbai, on December 26.

Sohrab Italia and **Arzin Daruwalla**, of Houston area, in Mumbai on December 22.

Jamshid Kavoosi of California, son of Golbanoo Kavoosi, to **Farzaneh Salles**, daughter of Rostam and Homa Salles of Tehran, in North Vancouver, on November 8.

Kaiwan Kerawalla with **Samara Kerawalla**, of Houston area, in Mumbai, on December 26.

Shahriar Mobed, son of Keikhosrow and Parvin Mobed of Westmont, IL, to **Laura Marshall**, in Chicago area, on November 15.

Silver Anniversary

Kayomars and **Nergish Mehta**, of Palos Hills, Illinois, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on November 28, with a gala get together planned by their children Roxana, Zenobia, Farhad and Rashni, at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago.

Deaths

Dinamai Cooverji Engineer, mother of Noshir (Havovi) Engineer, in Toronto, on January 12.

Naju Italia, 71, wife of Adi, sister of Coomy Canteenwalla and Homi Italia of Vancouver, BC, in Mumbai, on October 3.

Rashid Irani, 65, husband of Margaret, father of Yasmin and Parween, in Vancouver, on October 10.

Keki Khodadad Irani, husband of Dinaz, son-in-law of Coomi Bhatena of Toronto, brother of Godrej Irani of Washington, DC and Jal Irani of Mumbai, on December 18. Keki was a long-time resident of Pittsburgh area, and had recently retired from P.S.I. Inc. where he worked as Senior Metallurgical Engineer.

Cirous Kianpour, husband of Farangees, brother-in-law of Shapour Khadivi of ZAMWI, in Kerman.

Hilla Jamshed Khory, mother of Sheriar and Farouk, sister of Perin Mathur, in Calgary, on September 28. Internment was at the Mountain View Cemetery in the area reserved by the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta. Mobed Nozer Kotwal came from Toronto, Canada, to conduct the funeral ceremony.

Jini Kooka, 75, mother of Rashna Charania, Nerges, Yezdi, Farrokh and Meher, in Victoria, BC, on October 3.

Ardeshir Langrana, father of Noshir (Dinaz) Langrana of New Jersey, in Mumbai, in late 1997.

Dadi Minocherhomji, renowned surgeon at the Tata Memorial Cancer Research Hospital in Mumbai, father of Shirin Thakore of Houston area, on November 10, in Mumbai.

Goolbanu Eruchshaw Mirza, mother of Khushru (Minnie) Mirza of Montreal, and Freddy (Kety) Mirza of Toronto, in Montreal, on December 16.

Prochee Nariman, 59, wife of Phiroze, mother of Aashdin and Zubin, sister of Noshir Fitter of Vancouver, BC, in Aurangabad, India, on October 11.

Keki Patel, 80, husband of Shera, father of Kary Dastoor of Vancouver, BC, in Mumbai, on October 3.

Kaikhushru Randeria, father of Nilofer Firdausi Desai of Dallas, TX area, in Mumbai, in December.

Khorshidbanoo Rashid, mother of Hormozdyar Varahramyan, in Edmonton, AB, on September 18. Mobed Hosee Karanjia performed last rites.

Minoo Sanjana, husband of Jeroo, father of Roda and Rusty, of Houston area, on October 29.

Iraj Shahryary, brother of General Khodarahm Shahryary, in Atlanta, GA

Khodabaksh Tirandaz Sharyari, husband of Nergish, father of Houshmand (of Chicago), Parvaneh (of Iran) and Farzana (of Mumbai), in Mumbai, on December 20.

Dorothy Jean Stilborn, 74, mother of Jane (Kershaw) Nanavaty, grandmother of Joshua and Jillian, in Richmond, BC, on November 8.

Obituary

Captain Freddie Nariman Rao, 43, was killed in a horrific road crash, near Hamilton, New Zealand, on January 16, while traveling with his family by car from New Plymouth to Auckland for the weekend. His son, Furzan suffered multiple injuries but thanks to Ahura Mazda, stabilized within a week; his wife Bakhtavar and daughter Vizina are recovering well from their injuries. Freddie is the son of Ervad Nariman and Roshan Rao of Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, near Mumbai.

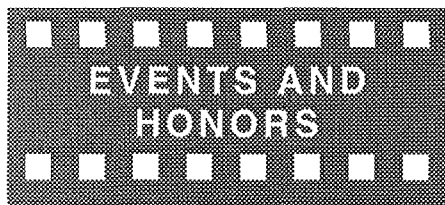
A fine person and a committed Zarathushti, Freddie believed and practiced the virtues of our religion; and with a permanent smile on his face, was always the most willing to extend any kind of help to anyone. Freddie was a driving force of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zarathushtrian Anjuman of New Zealand (TMZANZ) and a strong supporter of the Sunday prayer classes. Freddie worked hard for the community to come together and uphold time-tested traditions, unaltered and unadulterated.

Freddie's passing in these most exceptional circumstances, leaves the rather recently settled Zarathushti community in New Zealand, in shock and grief.

On Saturday, January 24th, tributes and tears flowed at the funeral, as the community congregated silently, to pay our respects to a fine gentleman, a loyal son, a protective brother, a loving husband, a caring father, a committed friend, and a truly noble Zarathushti. Dear Freddie, you will never be forgotten.

In these hard times, with our small community so vulnerably spread worldwide, may Ahura Mazda bless us with the wisdom to recognize leaders such as Freddie, and benefit from their virtues while they are still alive amidst us.

Ervad Jamsheed B. Sidhwa
President, TMZANZ



Dastoor Dr. Kersey Antia was invited by People to People International to join a delegation of religious leaders to Russia and the Czech Republic in March, 1998.

The FAA-supported research work of **Huban A. Gowadia**, a mechanical engineering graduate student at Gas Dynamics Laboratory at Penn State University in developing explosives



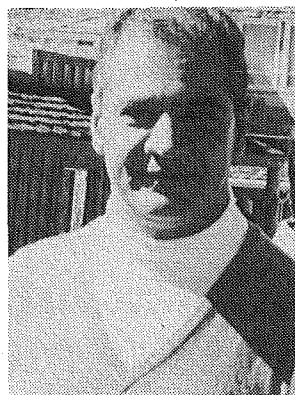
detection devices, was featured with a photo [above] in C&EN [September 29]. Gowadia is developing 'portals' (like the ones used at airport security checks) to detect the presence of traces of explosives on skin and clothing. The FAA calls her "simple and elegant" approach "really quite novel and imaginative."

Homai McDowell is assistant Dean and Director, Undergraduate Programs of the Business School at the University of Maryland, in College Park. Homai oversees one of the top 20 undergraduate business programs in the USA, according to *US News and World Report*,

The Fraternity Ahuramazdyan Ontario presented a Citation of Excellence to **Homi B. Minocher Homji**, "social scientist and scholar of Zoroastrianism in recognition of the glory that he has brought to the Zoroastrian community and to the United Nations."

Rushna Patel, daughter of Baji and Perviz Patel of Schaumburg, IL, was awarded a Sheriff's Youth Service Medal of Honor, at a ceremony on December 2, for completing over 100 hours of volunteer work for physically challenged children and seniors.

Manu Mobedshahi was presented the Rose Award by San Jose Mayor Suzan Hammer, as "a member of the San Jose community at large, who has made outstanding effort to promote tourism and attract visitors to San Jose." The award, instituted in



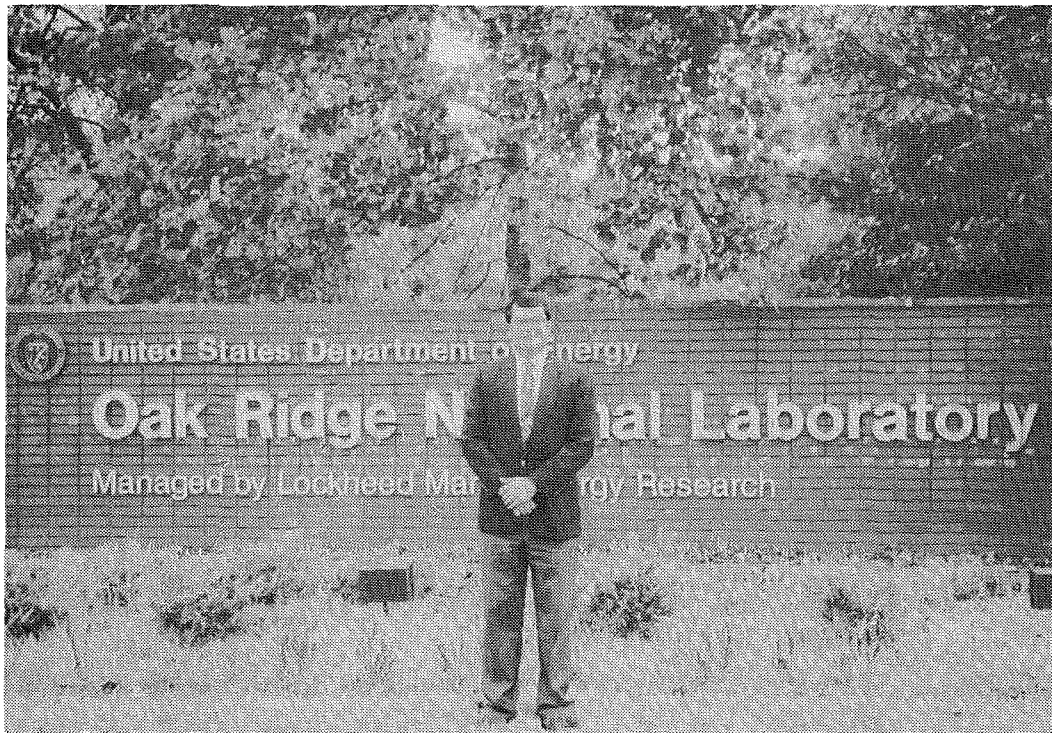
1987, recognizes individuals and organizations who consistently offer outstanding service and hospitality to visitors

to San Jose. Two major awards were given in November 1997. The second award was given to Intel Corporation for helping to shine spotlight on San Jose. Intel 'chipped' in \$14 million to bring a display from the Smithsonian to San Jose, for two months.

Roshan Rivetna was among the team of software engineers awarded a Lucent Technologies Employee Excellence Achievement Award in September 1997, for delivering telephone switching system operator services software to NTT (Japan) on time, and with the highest quality.

Meher Amalsad, [photo right] professional speaker and author of "Bread for the Head", was invited by the Los Angeles Police Department to be the featured speaker at the "Hands Around Our Community" event, on August 9, at the Avalon Gardens Housing Development. He led members of the community, the police department and former gang members in an inspirational presentation on bringing love, light and goodness into their lives.





Last year, Rusi Taleyarkhan led a team of scientists at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in finding solutions to a key safety issue involving explosions in worldwide metals industries. This major discovery has significant potential for commercialization, and Taleyarkhan invites readers to communicate with him to explore possibilities.

Taleyarkhan leads Oak Ridge scientists in key discovery

A team of researchers at the US Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, led by Rusi Taleyarkhan, have devised an environmentally friendly method for preventing steam explosions, a leading cause of deaths and serious injuries among workers in the metal-casting industry worldwide.

This key safety issue has been around for over a 100 years, ever since industry started casting metals. In just the past 15 years, several hundred explosions during casting operations have caused injuries, fatalities and extensive property damage.

"When molten aluminum first comes into contact with water, a protective steam film forms. Then some sort of trigger causes the steam film to become unstable and collapse," says Taleyarkhan, in an ORNL press release, "As a result, the molten aluminum mass can break into literally millions of hot particles, causing water they come in contact with, to flash to high pressure steam."

The researchers developed a unique experimental facility to simulate

these phenomena. They have discovered that air injected into the protective steam film "absorbs external shocks, like airbags" and eliminates the forces for triggering an explosion. This new gas injection technique will be demonstrated later this decade in field demonstrations by ORNL and the Aluminum Association, under a cooperative research and development agreement.

Taleyarkhan has been at ORNL since 1988, where he is Program Manager responsible for directing and conducting research related to nuclear systems, materials sciences, non-lethal warfare systems development, safety of metals industries and novel propulsion mechanisms.

Recipient of over 20 patents and invention awards, Taleyarkhan has authored over 100 scientific publications and serves as editor for the Nuclear Safety Journal.

Taleyarkhan came to the US in the late seventies and obtained an MS/Ph.D. in Nuclear-Mechanical Engineering, along with an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Insti-

tute by 1982. He lives in Knoxville, Tennessee with his wife Navaz and daughters Pervin (11), Manaz (10) and Meher (4). While in Pittsburgh in the late 1980s, Rusi and Navaz served as Vice-President and Secretary of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania. ■

WE GOOFED!

FEZANA Journal regrets the following errors in the Winter 1997 issue:

- The names of FEZANA VP, Framroze Patel's wife (Armaity) and daughter (Arnavaz) were exchanged. Of course, Framroze and Armaity have been happily married for many years; and Arnavaz is engaged to Farhad Madon.

- The correct web address for Shahriar Shahriari's "The Gathas of Zarathushtra" translated by Mobed Azargoshasb is:

www.zarathushtra.com.

Shahriar can be reached at:

shahriar@zarathushtra.com

FEZANA

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