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## COMMUNION WITH THE DIVINE THE ZARATHUSHTI PERSPECTIVE

Us moi uzareshva Ahura aramaiti tevishim dasva

Spenishta mainyu Mazda vanghuya zavo ada

Asha hazo emavat vohu manangha feseratum

*Rise within me O Lord, grant me vitality through Devotion*

*Through Holy Mentality, the good strength of retribution*

*Power through Moral Justice, and eternal bliss through Good Mind.*

*[Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna 33.12]*

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST, HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE

### A long but not a lonely journey

**A**t the Federation of the Zoroastrian Associations of North America it is time to reflect on the Zarathushti space that was created by FEZANA on this continent, and dream of how we will fill this space in the next millennium.

**Commitments.** When I took office in 1994, I had committed myself to maintaining the Zarathushti heritage while finding a niche in the new World for our over 3000-year old religion. I had committed myself to try and find that niche by projecting a positive image of the community both to our co-religionists and to other communities at large.

I had committed myself to focus the community on growth and development in all spheres of community life by developing products and infrastructures which would project, specially to the younger generation, the relevance of belonging to a community with a rich cultural and moral heritage, the relevance of belonging to a community which has contributed to the development and evolution of world religious thought and to which the major religions of the world owe a debt of gratitude.

I firmly believe that religion cannot be practiced in a vacuum. For the religion to flourish, it needs societal support and a trusting transparent climate where each individual can express his or her own creativity, for spiritual advancement. The opportunities for growth and development on this continent for all aspects of Zarathushti life are endless if we each light a lamp to create 1000 points of light.

I firmly believe that with renewed confidence in ourselves and in our



*Dastoor, center, at the home of Firdosh and Rashne Mehta, in Edmonton, Alberta, in October 1997. "It was a very moving experience," writes Dastoor, "to have so many generations come to hear me speak." The baby, Sanaea Mahava was only 5 days old, and the lady on the far left on the sofa, Hiramai Busha, was 92.*

future generations we can set ablaze these 1000 points of light to nurture and free the Zarathushti Spirit to soar and achieve great heights.

I had committed myself to enhance the feeling of connectedness between Zarathushtis, to increase the involvement of each individual in the welfare of the local community as well as in the welfare of the national and global community of Zarathushtis.

I had committed myself to widen the knowledge base of the religion. I had committed myself to make Zarathushtis understand that guardianship of the faith is not keeping new ideas away from people, but rather guardianship of the faith is maintaining the vitality of the religion by engagement with the world and coming in contact with modern ideas and issues. Differences of opinion and views will always be there and it is not unique to our community. The willingness to accept challenges to convention is revitalizing to the religion and it helps the

religion to regain the moral strength which it must wield. Challenge should not be looked upon as a heresy or unhealthy. On the other hand to create artificial divisions by labeling people as either/or, them and us, conservatives or liberals is unhealthy and should be discouraged.

I had committed myself to foster the idea of a Virtual Zarathushti Nation without boundaries and most importantly to create a climate of trust and transparency among Zarathushtis of all persuasions.

### **Have I fulfilled my commitments?**

With the help of my colleagues who include all the committee chairs and representatives of Member Associations, we have made substantial progress in FEZANA. I am particularly proud of some of our achievements, e.g. the structuring of the Strategic Plan for the community, the first of its kind in the world, our attempt to bring WZO and WCZF in a dialog mode, publishing, not once but twice, the Directory and Yellow

Pages of Zarathushtis of North America, gathering of the census data for North America, encouraging religious awareness and scholarship through conferences, seminars, research journals, web pages, library and research listings, and creating a

climate of vitality

where people wanted to express their creativity for the community through articles in

the FEZANA Journal, through production of videos, and writing of books.

My greatest satisfaction was taking FEZANA to Zarathushti across this continent, meeting people of all ages, from almost all the associations and small groups, and connecting with families in small towns and cities where there are no other Zarathushtis, hearing their hopes and their aspirations for their children and their concerns on how to maintain the Zarathushti way of life.

### What are my hopes for the future?

I hope we can now shift our focus from issues of survival and look at larger issues of raising the Zarathushti consciousness on how we as North American Zarathushtis can add value to the North American Society. I hope we will now make a paradigm shift to focus on consolidation, on larger issues of raising Zarathushti spirituality and Zarathushti religiosity, for each has its rightful place in our conscious schemata.

I hope the question of survival will be put to rest once and for all. I hope the constant fight for survival will be an activity of the past, because this fight amongst ourselves makes it impossible for the psyche to participate fully in the human experience, for survival requires the individual to

adopt defensive attitudes and to refuse openness to others.

I hope we will have confidence and maturity in ourselves and in our next generation, to recognize our differences and accept the way of two paths

the community seems to be walking into. To avoid finger-pointing and labeling, 'we' and 'they', 'traditional-

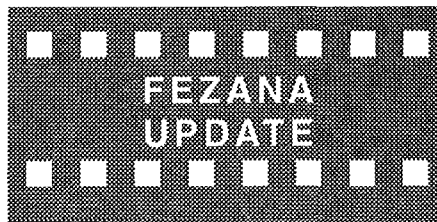
ists' and 'liberals', etc, I hope for the sake of harmony, where we can all march to many drummers, we will create a comfortable Zarathushti space to accommodate all of 'us' of all different persuasions, I hope we will truly believe in the fundamental premise that we all want the best for our religion, whichever path, whichever model, we choose to follow.

And I have a vision, a vision of a group of people moving forward in harmony as a Nation, destined to be a shining light in the family of nations, a group of people standing side by side to lead the way to *Frashokereti*. This vision may not be realized in my lifetime or yours, but each conscious step we take in consolidating our forces, and working globally will bring us closer to this vision.

I thank each and everyone of you for helping me every step of the way to fulfill my commitment to you and enriching my four-year journey which was long but never lonely. For the next two years, I pledge to work with Homi Davier and his team on making the World Zarathushti Congress 2000, a congress to remember. I wish the new administration great success and invite them to stand on my shoulders and aim even higher.

*Atha jamyat, yatha afrinami. Ushta te.*

*Dolly Dastoor*  
President, 1994 - 1998



## FEZANA Representatives to the United Nations

As an NGO (Non Governmental Organization) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN, FEZANA can designate persons to represent it at the United Nations. These persons will speak and act on behalf of FEZANA at meetings and consult with Secretariat and Government representatives at the UN. FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor has made the following designations for 1998:

To UN Headquarters, New York:

- Gev Nentin, New York
- Framroze Patel, New York
- Rohinton Rivetna, Illinois

To UN office in Geneva:

- Adi Davar, Virginia
- Furhok K. Tangree, France

To UN office in Vienna:

- Vera Mehta, Macedonia

The representatives will be issued passes to attend meetings at the UN offices, concerned with economic and social matters.

FEZANA gained consultative status with ECOSOC in 1997, following a long application process spearheaded by Rohinton Rivetna.

## North American Directory and Census

A Census Form was enclosed in the last (Spring 1998) issue of FEZANA Journal. Please note that the zip code on the return address was incorrect. If you have not already done so, please fill out the form and return to your local association or to Noshir Langrana. Additional forms may also be requested from: Noshir Langrana, 19 Brookfield Way Robbinsville, NJ 08691, Tel:(609) 275-9154.

## From the Secretary

**Getting involved.** A growing number of inquiries and suggestions are received about FEZANA via the Internet public mail and by personal mail. We welcome the interest and ideas sent by all Zarathushtis in these civic matters, for the strength of FEZANA lies in the involvement and participation of all Zarathushtis.

While FEZANA does not interfere with the inter networking of the Associations, and does not comment on religious or local issues, it is a forum at the national level, for discussing matters of common interest, and provides an infrastructure for joining hands to tackle bigger and broader projects at a national level.

FEZANA decisions and policies are made collectively by a majority vote of its 22 Member Associations; though in most decisions, a consensus is usually reached. Individuals should work with their Associations to be kept abreast of the agenda and issues at hand, and have their voices heard.

**Annual General Meeting.** Representatives of all Member Associations of FEZANA from the US and Canada, Chairpersons of FEZANA Committees, FEZANA Officers, individuals involved in special projects, and observers and well wishers gather once a year in a summit meeting to discuss the current and future of Zarathushtis in North America.

This year's AGM is scheduled just prior to the Eleventh North American Congress in New York on Wednesday July 1st and the morning of Thursday July 2, 1998. This will be followed by FEZANA-sponsored workshops on Thursday afternoon.

The AGM is open to all as observers, but voting is limited to official representatives of Member Associations. A detailed agenda is mailed to all Member Associations, with the expectation

that items of any significant import are discussed with their individual membership prior to the AGM.

The first half of the meeting is generally devoted to review of the work of the FEZANA Committees, while the second half is devoted to strategic planning, special projects and other subjects of importance to Member Associations.

**Elections.** The offices of President, Treasurer and Assistant Secretary are up for election this year. The following nominations were received from Member Associations.

### *For President:*

- (1) Firdosh Dara Mehta, Alberta
- (2) Framroze K. Patel, New Jersey

### *For Treasurer:*

- (1) Katayun Kapadia, New Jersey
- (2) Rustom Kevala, Maryland

### *For Assistant Secretary:*

- (1) Mahrukh Motafram, Wisconsin
- (2) Jamshed Gandhi, California

Katayun Kapadia has withdrawn in favor of Rustom Kevala. Jamshed Gandhi has withdrawn in favor of Mahrukh Motafram. Congratulations to Rustom for being elected Treasurer and Mahrukh for being re-elected Assistant Secretary of FEZANA for the 1998-2000 term.

Ballots for the office of the President have been sent to all Member Associations, along with the biodata of the two candidates. The voting deadline is June 15th.

### **Vacancy in office of Vice President.**

Nominations have been requested by June 15th, from Member Associations for the office of Vice President, for a one-year term, beginning July 1998. The list of candidates will be communicated shortly after June 15th to Member Associations. Voting for Vice President will take place at the AGM on the morning of July 1st. ■

*Mehran Sepehri*  
Secretary, FEZANA



*Please send announcements and news items for this section, along with photos to FEZANA Assistant Secretary Mahrukh Motafram (see back cover)*

## Celebrating Navruz

Atlanta Zarathushti families gathered at Yashfara and Farrokh Mistree's home on March 21st to celebrate Navruz. 70 people, including 23 children, from Georgia and neighboring states of Alabama, South Carolina and North Carolina, attended. Families from India and Wyoming also joined in the festivities.

A traditional Haft Seen table was set up by Behnaz Dahamobed. There were games, prizes and goody bags organized by Freny Jokhi. The food was organized by Sheri Unwala and Shahdokht Irani, decorations by the Avari family, music by Zareer Siganporia and the 'chalk' decorations by Tuli Sethna.

The community remembered Mrs. Meherbanu Dinyari who had passed away two weeks ago; she had been a stalwart in the Atlanta community. The function was a grand success with traditional foods and merriment.

*- Submitted by M.Chinoy*

The Navruz function in **Calgary** was held at a local Community Hall. The program began with a short prayer, followed by the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta's Calgary Chapter election meeting and dinner.

In **Chicago**, the subsidized fee of \$5 per person drew a crowd of about 200 persons to the Darbe Mehr on March 21st. A feast of Iranian cuisine catered by a local restaurateur





**ZSO honorees.** FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor was honored by the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), at their Navruz function, with a plaque that reads: "...in recognition and appreciation of her leadership, contributions, dedicated and very valuable services to the North American Zoroastrian Community ...". l. to r. Jamshed Jam (ZSO Ex Vice President, Phiroz Dastoor (ZSO President), Sabar Balsara, also honored for many years of service on the ZSO Executive Board and for serving as Newsletter editor for two decades, Dastoor, Moti Balsara (previous President), Mrs. Behboodi and Jehangir Behboodi, past Vice President and Trustee of the Guiv Foundation of Ontario, also honored by ZSO, and Dhanji Byromshaw.

was followed by youth performances by Negin Sharyari, Sharmeen Irani and Zubin Edulji. A *Haft Seen* table was displayed. Hootoxi Minocherhomjee was awarded the annual Community Service Award.

*Deed va Basdeed* (Navruz prayers) were offered by Mobed Keikhosrow Mobed at the Darbe Mehr on March 20, at the time of arrival of Spring, as well as 11 am on March 21st; all Zarathushtis were invited to come to the Darbe Mehr and greet each other, as is the tradition in Iran. Another Iranian tradition started this year in Chicago was the *Sizdeh bi Dar* (picnic) on the thirteenth day organized by Mahnaz Farhadieh and Mehrawar

Irani, again on the Darbe Mehr grounds.

In **Tampa**, Florida, a Jashan ceremony at Firdosh and Tehmi Dastoor's house, performed by Ervad Soli Dastoor was attended by Zarathushtis from Central Florida. A pot-luck feast was enjoyed by one and all after the ceremony, which had all the trimmings of a traditional Jamshedi Navroze.

The celebration in **Orlando**, Florida, held at Ormand Beach, was attended and organized by the **Central Florida Zarathushtis**. A *Haft Seen* table was set up with complete description of its contents and its meaning especially for the benefit of

our children who need to understand the traditional Zarathushti way of celebrating Navruz. Before lunch, we all held hands in prayer led by our children, thanking Ahura Mazda for a wonderful year and to bless each one of us in the coming year. Volley-ball and basket-ball followed as well as a heart warming discussion about joining FEZANA as an Association ended our festivities. [Submitted by Sarvar Irani]

A record turnout of over 450 community members and friends from all over Texas came to celebrate Navroze at their new **Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center in Houston**. Festivities started with a Humbandagi. The traditional Haft Seen table was laid out, and Mrs. Fereshteh Khatibi gave gifts to all the young children. A mixture of Western and Iranian music set many feet a-dancing and fun and frolic continued into the wee hours of the morning.

For the first time in Houston, prayer ceremonies were conducted for the five Gatha days prior to Navroze. At 5:30 am each morning the *Sofreh* table was prepared. Ervad Peshotan Unwalla, assisted by Perry Surkari recited the customary Kadmi prayers for the Asho Farohars.

The Navroze function in **New York** was celebrated jointly by the Zoroastrian Association of New York, ZAGNY (which was also celebrating its 25th anniversary on that day) and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association, IZA. The evening started with the Annual General Meeting of ZAGNY. ZAGNY President Gev Nentin and IZA President Shirin Kiamanesh both spoke of this first joint celebration with pride, and the hope that this was a "step into a new era of unity." Awards for Outstanding Service to ZAGNY were presented by Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani to Erach Munshi, Lovji Cama, Parvez Patel and Framroze Patel. Individuals who were responsible for the formation of ZAGNY 25 years ago, were recognized and invited to the stage for a cake-cutting ceremony.

## TRUE HEROISM ...

*Is remarkably sober, very undramatic.*

*It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost,  
But rather the urge to serve others at whatever price.*

- Arthur Ashe

## A world-class New Year's bash

In the multiethnic town of Chicago, a true city of neighborhoods, New Year's Day is celebrated several times a year. And one of the most festive is the Persian New Year Nooroz which coincides with the vernal equinox, which brought in one of Europe's hottest world-music acts Friday night March 20 to perform before a crowd of about 1,300 Iranian Americans, at the Chicago Hilton and Towers.



*Ishtar, lead singer of the multi-ethnic band Alabina, sings for a crowd of 1,300 celebrating the Persian New Year at the Chicago Hilton.*

The band was *Alabina*, a dynamic Paris-based ensemble with lead singer Ishtar making its Chicago debut, which is immensely popular in the Iranian Diaspora all over Europe, California and New York. The dance floor was full of elegantly dressed fans in long black gowns and tails boogying on with hands raised in the air and singing along to the numbers of *Alabina*. The ballroom was decorated with white hyacinths and colored candles, two of the essential features of the traditional Persian Haft Seen table.

*[Excerpted from column by Monica Eng, Chicago Tribune, March 23, 1998]*



## New Year "Resolution"

The highlight of the Navroze function celebrated by nearly 300 persons in the Los Angeles area was the "Resolution" by U.S. Senator, The Hon. John R. Lewis of the State of California. This Resolution was achieved largely through the efforts of Los Angeles resident Sam Billimoria and the support of US Congressman, The Hon. Ed Royce, who stated in a letter: "I am personally very familiar with the history of the Zoroastrian people. It is a remarkably rich and compelling saga spanning at least over three millennia, which has left an indelible mark of influence on the history of Western civilization. The thousands of Zoroastrian people who now call the United States their home have much to be proud of and thankful for."

### RESOLUTION ZOROASTRIAN NEW YEAR

*WHEREAS*, Members of the Zoroastrian community, both from Iran and India, have come to the United States and established roots in this country; and

*WHEREAS*, The Zoroastrian community now shares in the continuing renewal of American culture, and contributes to its further development and sustainment; and

*WHEREAS*, The Zoroastrian community is from an ancient culture of the Near East, one which had a considerable, though little recognized, influence on the development of Western culture and religious ideas, including concepts of theology and philosophy, especially during the height of the Persian Empire; and

*WHEREAS*, This influence, though originating some 2,500 years ago, is still existent in numerous institutions and belief systems held dear by Americans; and

*WHEREAS*, The Zoroastrian community will celebrate its New Year's tradition on Saturday, March 21, 1998; now, therefore, be it

*RESOLVED BY SENATOR JOHN R. LEWIS*, That he recognizes and commends the Zoroastrian community for its history of notable achievements and contributions to Western civilization, takes pleasure in commemorating the celebration of the Zoroastrian New Year on March 21, 1998, and extends to the Zoroastrian community the sincere best wishes of the California public.

*Sd. Honorable John R. Lewis  
33rd Senatorial District*

### Ladies Club in California

The Zoroastrian Association of California has started a Ladies Club which meets every two months to discuss topics of interest to women. In April, Family Therapist Tinaz Vevaina, gave a very interesting and informative talk on "Communication in Families". This was followed by a discussion on discipline for children and how to cope, a pot luck dinner and a demonstration by Chisti Dadachanji on how to make easy Gulab Jamuns.

*- Submitted by Dolly Malwa*

### Elections in South Florida

Perry Unwalla was nominated as the new President of the Zoroastrian Association of South Florida. Unwalla's election was no surprise to the local members as was shown by the numbers at the polls. There was a strong voter turnout and his election was nearly unanimous. Perry Unwalla is following in the family tradition succeeding his father Darab Unwalla who was the very respected and popular philanthropic and charismatic first President of this Association.

*- Submitted by Burjis Shroff*

*Top, Rohinton (left) and Roshan Rivetna (right) presenting Zubin Mehta with a shawl as ZAC President Dilshad Antia and Nancy Mehta look on.*

*Below, Mehta joins the ZAC Choir in a rousing rendition of the school song of St. Mary's High School, in Mumbai, which he had attended.*

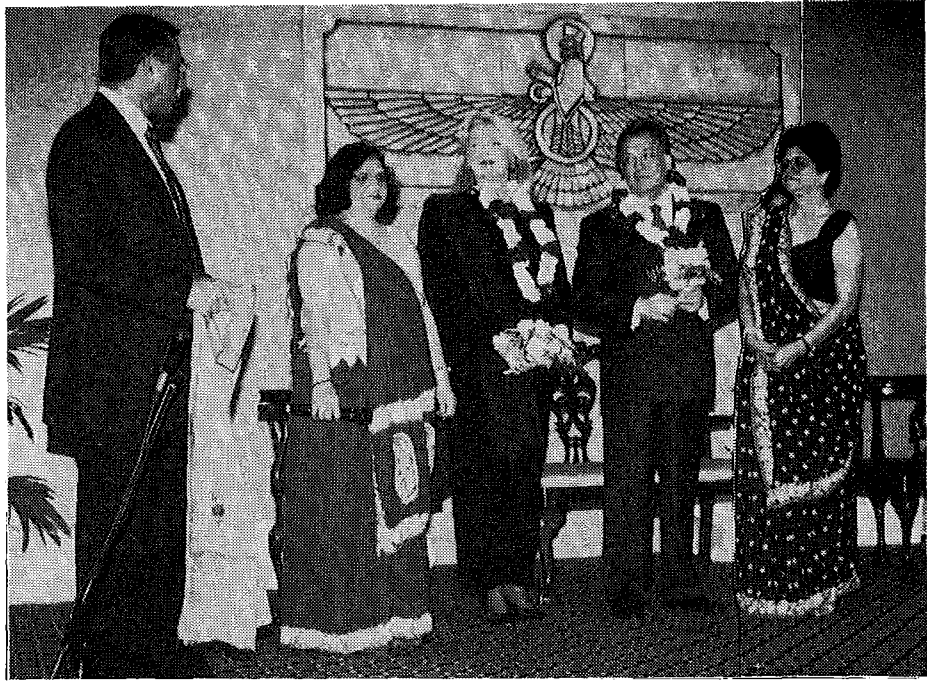
## An Evening with the Maestro

Members of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago and friends, turned out in large numbers to welcome Maestro Zubin Mehta (affectionately called "Apro Zubin"), his charming wife Nancy, and son, Merwan, at a gala reception at the Darbe Mehr in Hinsdale, on Sunday, March 1, 1998.

Mehta was in Chicago during February this year, to perform with the Chicago Symphony and the Lyric Opera, and was gracious enough to spend one of his only two free evenings, with the Zarathushti community of Chicago. And the community had been preparing for weeks – the hall looked beautiful with chalk, toran and white-clothed tables, laid with china and vases of lilies and roses; the aroma of pullav-dar wafted through the kitchen; and the ladies were dressed in their best garas and tanchois.

ZAC President Dilshad Antia welcomed Zubin and Nancy at the entrance to the Darbe Mehr with the *Achoo-Michoo* ceremony. After a quick tour of the Darbe Mehr and prayer hall, the program started with a Candlelight Ceremony where the youth lit candles at each table. ZAC priests then prayed Tandarosti; and the ZAC Choir sang Gujarati songs, modified specially for Zubin.

After welcoming words by Dilshad Antia, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna garlanded Zubin and Nancy, and presented Zubin with a shawl, as a token of honor from the community. Zubin and Nancy both had some very nice words to say appreciating the warmth and affection they receive from the community around the world.



Two hilarious Parsi skits followed, produced by Aban Daboo, especially for Zubin. Jennifer Bamboat performed a popular Indian dance, followed by "A Galaxy of Saris", a fashion show of Parsi saris, modeled by young ladies of ZAC, presented by Zenobia Tantra. As a surprise ending, the ZAC choir invited Zubin to join them in a rousing rendition of the school song of St. Mary's High School, in Bombay, which Zubin had attended. Diana Damkevala was Master of Ceremonies for the evening. Special thanks to Dinaz

Weber and Farida Shahryari for coordinating this successful fund-raiser. Zubin and Nancy both enjoyed the dinner, of patrel (brought specially from Bombay), pullav-dar, masala chicken, gravy cutlets, sev, dahi, Parsi custard, kulfi and penda, prepared by Dinaz and her team of helpers.

With a 5-year assignment coming up shortly with the Munich orchestra, it may be a long time before "Apro Zubin" visits Chicago again. But it was an evening that the Chicagoans will remember for years. ■

## **ZAGNY Survey**

64 responses were received to a survey sent out by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York to 325 households in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Responses indicate that:

- ◆ 55% visit the Darbe Mehr at least four times a year.
- ◆ Most valuable/enjoyable services/activities were, in order of preference: The directory, the newsletter, NoRuz/Pateti functions; Prayer room and Jashans; Youth camps; and children's religion classes.
- ◆ Overwhelming majority do not find the space at the Darbe Mehr adequate for NoRuz/Pateti functions, but are reluctant to hold functions elsewhere at a higher cost. Opinion is divided on the 'oiliness' of the food at these functions.
- ◆ Most are "somewhat satisfied" with the prayer room facilities.
- ◆ Over 75% of families with children have attended the religion classes, and believe the classes meet their expectations.
- ◆ Children of 50% of the families have attended ZAGNY's youth and children's camps, which were voted to be popular and enjoyable.
- ◆ Nataks and dinner cruises garnered the greatest interest and were voted among the top two activities for ZAGNY to undertake.
- ◆ The three most needed services are: a support system for the elderly, special programs for the youth, and establishment of an employment network.
- ◆ 50% were willing to help with the annual clean up and painting of the Darbe Mehr.
- ◆ 50% find the appearance and facilities of the Darbe Mehr adequate. An overwhelming majority would like to sell the premises and move to a larger place. And about 50% are willing to donate towards a new Darbe Mehr.

*[From ZAGNY Newsletter]*

## **SOUL transcends all**

In May and June this year, Meher Amalsad and Shahriar Shahriari have been presenting a series of seminars to businesses and various community organizations in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and the Silicon Valley, entitled "Success Out-of-Understanding Love" (SOUL).

They have also presented these seminars to three very diverse Zarathushti groups: the Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America in San Diego, the Zarathushtrian Assembly and the Mazdayasnie Connection of Los Angeles. It seems that SOUL transcends all ideological visions and divisions.

If you are interested in inviting Meher and Shahriar to present this inspiring seminar to your Association, you can either sponsor them to come and do this (free of charge); or seek a corporate sponsor who will invite the duo to present the seminar to their staff, and they will do it for the Association as well (with no costs incurred by you). Contact Meher (714) 895-3097 or Shahriar at: shahriar@zarathushtra.com.

## **Money embezzling charge**

According to an API story Susan McDougal, who is spending time behind bars for her role in the White-water scandal, is "being held in Los Angeles while awaiting a trial on charges that she embezzled money from symphony conductor Zubin Mehta and his wife."

*[From Washington Post, April 23, 1998]*

## **Interfaith Program in Houston**

On February 8th, the Zoroastrian Association of Houston hosted 60 members of the Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, representing various religions and the University of Houston, at the new Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center. After a meal, a brief overview of Iranian history and religion was given by Yezdi Rustomji and a demonstration of a Jashan was given by Ervads Shapur Pavri, Bomanshaw Sanjana and Maneck Sidhwa.

## **California Center Celebrates Festival of Ardibeheshtgan**

On May 3rd, the Youth Organizing Committee of California Zoroastrian Center (Niaz Kasravi, Arman Sassani and Bijan Timsari) celebrated the festival of Ardibeheshtgan. In an effort to educate people about the Good Religion, and the richness of Persian culture and its immense contribution to the world's civilization, this festival was conducted as a seminar, at the California Zoroastrian Center in Orange County, California.

Speakers at this one-day seminar included: Mehrnoush Shahzadi, Farshid Bakhtyari, Dr. Ali Jafarey, Fataneh Farid, Dr. Farhang Mehr, Alexander Bard, Dr. Touraj Daryaei, and Dr. Mehrdad Mahdad.

The language of the festival was Farsi, and all presentations except one, were in Farsi. Summaries were presented in English.

## **All Faiths Chapel in Southern California**

The \$5 million All Faiths Chapel of Chapman University, in Orange, California will have removable chairs instead of pews; there will be no icons or crucifixes; and storage areas will be available for each religious group so it can quickly decorate the chapel with distinctive things for worship.

Chapman's religious professor, Ronald Farmer has said that this layout will allow Buddhists to meditate on their cushions and Muslims to spread out their prayer rugs. According to school officials, by year's end, Chapman will support 13 faith-based groups, and plan to sponsor lectures, seminars and study groups.

Here is an opportunity for Zarathushtis to participate in the spirit of unity of all religions and harmony between religious communities. Zarathushtis from Southern California should take advantage of this opportunity and get involved.

*- By Maneck Bhujwala*

**برنامه نهمین سالگرد جشن کنکاش موبدان ایرانی :** این جشن در روز ۲۵ آوریل ۹۸ ، با شرکت موبدان ایرانی آقایان مهربان زردشتی، دکتر شهریار بانکی، کیخسرو خورشیدیان، بهرام شهرزادی، و فریبرز شهرزادی در مرکز زرتشتیان کالیفرنیا در وست مینستر برگزار شد. در برنامه سدره پوشی همگانی دنیا اهورایی، امید اهورایی، سام نمیری، کلانتری، سیما نمیری، کلانتری، پریا کلانتری، نیسا مهر خداوندی سدره پوش شدند.

**گاهنامه پیک مهر :** این نشریه ارزنده به همت فرزانه دکتر مهربان شهروندی از ونکوور منتشر می شود شامل خبرها و مقالات اجتماعی و دینی بالارش است. برای اطلاعات و اشتراک نشریه لطفا با ۷۵۵۰-۹۸۱-۱۰۴ تماس بگیرید.

**پیک کنکاش :** کنکاش موبدان ایرانی امریکای شمالی سازمانی است که بدون هیچگونه چشمداشتی در آموزش های 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 شهرزادی هر دو ماه منتشر می شود لطفا با ۴۷۳۷-۸۹۳-۷۱۴ تماس بگیرید.

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

**سالگرد سی سالگی انجمن بریتیش کلمبیا در ونکوور :** این انجمن که از قدیمی ترین سازمان های زرتشتی در آمریکای شمالی است سالگرد سی سال فعالیت خود را در ۱۷ می ۹۸ جشن گرفت.

**کانون فرهنگی زرتشتیان کانادا :** این کانون مدت چهار سال است که در ونکوور برای شناختن فرهنگ و آیین ایران و آداب و رسوم زرتشتیان فعالیت دارد. همچنین جلسه های شاهنامه خوانی با همکاری انجمن زرتشتیان و به همت آقایان رهنمون و دکتر پور کریمی هر جمعه شب در ونکوور تشکیل میشود.

**گشایش مرکز میراث فرهنگی هوستون :** در ایالت تکزاس به همت گروهی از زرتشتیان ایرانی و پارسی بخصوص با دهنش آقایان مهربان و جمشید زرتشتی مرکز و معبد زرتشتیان در هوستون ساخته و در ماه آوریل گذشته گشایش یافت.

**انتخابات اعضا هیأت 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 ایرانیان زرتشتی نیز پیش قدم شده، و خود و یا افراد شایسته و کاردان را معرفی و انتخاب نمایند.

**ویدیو پارادایس :** این نمایش جالب و آموزنده به کوشش جوانان شهریار و شروین شهرپاری تهیه شده است. برای تهیه ویدیو این نمایش تاریخی لطفا با شماره ۱۱۹۹-۷۸۴-۱۰۴ تماس بگیرید.

**سرمقاله :** زرتشتیان پارسی و ایرانی که به جبر زمانه، سد ها سال جدا زیستند اکنون در آمریکای شمالی توانسته اند که فعالیت های مشترک را شروع کرده و بانفاق در سازندگی آینده کوشش کنند.

انجمن سراسری آمریکایی شمالی فزانا در ده سال گذشته موقعیتی بوجود آورده است که همه زرتشتیان آمریکای شمالی بتوانند در پیشرفت آرمان های مشترک اجتماع در سازمان واحد و متشکل سهم شوند. پیروزی این سازمان به کمک و تعهد تک تک ما در اینجا بستگی دارد.

بایستی که ما اختلافات و نظرات شخصی را کنار بگذاریم و به پیشرفت هدف های سازمان مشترک خود کمک کنیم.

**فدازاسیون انجمن های زرتشتی آمریکای شمالی "فزان" :** این سازمان فدراسیون پوشی ۲۲ انجمن زرتشتی در امریکا و کانادا است که با تصویب قاطع کنکوه 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، برگزاری سمینار و کنکوه، و ارتباط با دیگر سازمان های زرتشتی سراسر جهان خواهد بود.

**هدف از این ستون :** به خواسته گروهی از زرتشتیان ایرانی، این صفحه ویژه نوشتار به زبان فارسی خواهد بود. لطفا خبر ها، پرسش ها و گفتار فارسی خود را برای چاپ و پاسخ به این صفحه بفرستید.

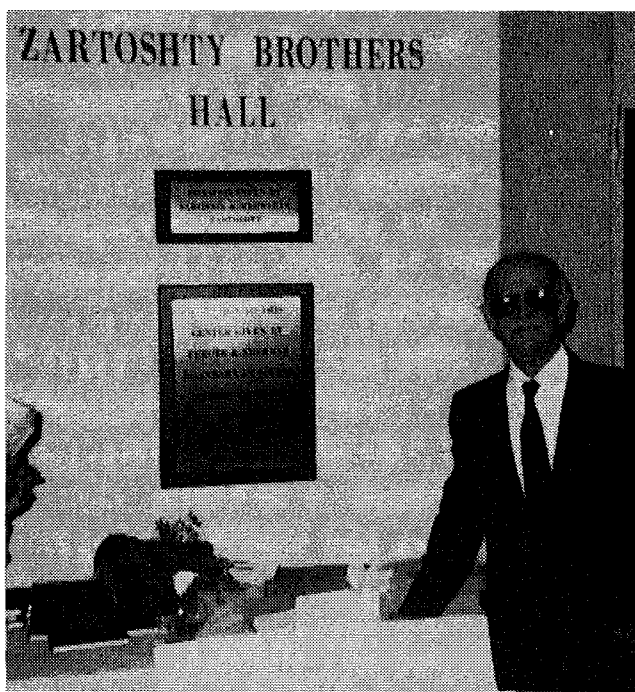


**By Aban Rustomji**  
Houston, Texas

**Z**arathushtis from Houston and many other places, gathered at the Houston *Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center* on April 10, 1998, to celebrate its inauguration. With heartfelt gratitude, with unrestrained praise, and to great applause, the Dreamers, the Planners, the Workers, the Donors, the Managers, the Builders, in fact, the whole community lauded themselves for what they had achieved. Their deeds were indeed worthy, and all gathered together for a weekend of rejoicing.

Six hundred invitations were mailed to Zarathushtis and Zarathushti associations world wide. Over 500 people attended the three-day celebration from around Texas, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ontario, Quebec, Tennessee and Virginia. Luminaries included Mehraban Zartoshty and his family from Vancouver, FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor, FEZANA Secretary Mehran Sepehri, and Atlanta's Farrokh Mistree and family (well-loved Sunday School teacher, previously of Houston). Many other friends of the community were in attendance, and all were entertained by the three days of celebration masterfully planned by the Celebration Committee, led by Kaemerz Dotiwalla and Katie Irani.

**Lighting the fire.** On Friday, April 10, 1998, a Jashan was performed. The symbolic fire lit seventeen years ago at the home of Hoshang and Arnavaz Sethna who housed Sunday School, was brought to the Center. After the ceremony, the fire was placed in the afarganyu that was brought all the way from Sukkur, Pakistan. The fire was lit by nearly two generations of Zarathushtis who have passed through the portals of the Zarathushti Sunday School, and there were 40 children accompanied by their parents who gathered around. Ervad Shapur Pavri of Houston said he never dreamed this day would



*Top, Ervads Kurush Sanjana, Pervez Gonda, Bomanshaw Sanjana, Shapur Pavri, Hormuzd Sanjana and Maneck Sidhwa, after the Jashan ceremony; middle, Mehraban Zartoshty; bottom, Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara; right, the Zarathushti Center building with tent set up for the inauguration.*





# Celebration in Houston

*The Dreamers, the Planners, the Workers, the Donors, the Managers, the Builders, the whole community gathers in Houston to celebrate the inauguration of the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center.*

come and professed that it was the mobeds duty and privilege to satisfy the spiritual needs of the community. Providentially, on the very morning of the Jashan, a 'ghanta' (bell) for the prayer room was received, air-shipped as a gift from J. N. Guzder, Trustee of Bombay Parsee Panchayet.

**Unveiling of plaques.** The prayers were followed by the unveiling of the donor plaques. At the entrance of the main hall there are several plaques listing names of the donors and contributors. Accompanied by their families, the major donors: Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara of Houston, Mehraban Zartoshty of Vancouver, and Drs. Katie and Dinshaw Irani of Houston unveiled their own plaques.

Three other plaques were unveiled: by Kersi Engineer for the Zarathushti Group, a real estate partnership of 41 families, that gifted the land to the community; Purvez Rustomji for all names of donors who had donated over the last 17 years; and Feroze Bhandara for his Mazda Construction which constructed the Center. Each recipient of a plaque offered a few words, which ranged from the humorous to the profound. Mehraban Zartoshty, accompanied by his family from Kansas and San Diego, stressed unity, family and pursuit of the wisdom of our beloved Prophet,

Asho Zarathushtra. Feroze and Shernaz Bhandara, invoking their beloved mother, the well-known philanthropist Tehmina Bhandara, asked the community to enjoy the use of the Center.

The evening concluded with a children's choir organized by Vahishta Kaikobad and Anita Wolfe and accompanied by Sorab Wadia. After an award ceremony where donors and members who made contributions to the Zarathushti community were honored, Zal Sethna and Lilian Bharucha entertained the guests with a skit. The evening ended with tributes being read from other associations and a beautiful poem, written by Magdalena Rustomji, was recited by Zeeba Kayani and Diana Engineer.

**Gala dinner.** On Saturday, the various cultures of the Zarathushtis were celebrated. A Gala dinner and show at the Grand Ballroom of the J. W. Marriot Galleria was arranged by Fereshteh Khatibi and Roshan Sethna in conjunction with the Celebration Committee. The theme "A Salute to our Persian Heritage" was reflected in the music, dancing and food. A bazaar with vendors selling their attractive wares added excitement to the evening.

After dinner the Zarathushti journey from Iran and India to Europe and North America was represented by the medium of different dances and music. The famous *Nay Nava Dance*

*Theatre*, flown in from Los Angeles, performed classical and modern ballet. Houston's Mrs. Ratna Kumar and her troupe charmed the audience with the classic dances from India, followed by Western style dance. Two Zarathushti performers, Sohrab Wadia on the piano, and Sonya Behrana with her operatic gifts, thrilled the community. The audience then danced the night away.

Additional delight was brought when the Mayor's representative, Ms. Helen Chang declared April 12, 1998, as Houston Zoroastrian Day.

**Three days of festivities.** The week-end-long festivities ended with a *mela* (fair) organized by Yasmin Medhora at the Center on Sunday. It was a casual, carefree day whose events included the sale of home made foods, books, plants and flowers, games for the kids, a cake walk, and face painting. The first ever held *gilli danda* tournament (a game from India) was held where Yezdi Rustomji was declared the champion.

The three-day celebrations, which would not have been possible without the relentless efforts of members of the Executive Committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, concluded with a prayer for the continued success of the Center. And while everyone was tantalized by Purvez Rustomji's promise of "Whenever there is a mandate from the community, the second phase of the Center would be built", they enjoyed each moment to the fullest. It was truly a weekend to remember.

*By Aban Rustomji  
Houston, Texas*

*[A souvenir of the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center is enclosed in this issue.]* ■

## Another moment of Pride

Iranian TV Network covered the Inaugural Celebrations of the *Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center*, Houston, and aired them in a one-hour program on several Cable Networks (Warner, TCI, Optal and Phonoscope) on Sunday, April 26th.

# Calendar of Festivals

June - December

Fasli (F), Shenshai (S) and Kadmi (K) dates for festivals from June through December, 1998, are listed below:

## Maidyarem Gahambar

*Mah Daye, Roj Meher - Behram* Wed Jun 4 - Sun Jun 7 (S)

## Homaji Baj

*Mah Daye, Roj Govad* Tue Jun 9 (S)

## Pir-e-Sabz Festival

*Mah Khordad, Roj Ashtad - Aneran* Sun Jun 14 - Thu Jun 18 (F)

## Maidyoshem Gahambar

*Mah Tir, Khorshed - Daepmeher* Mon Jun 29 - Fri Jul 3 (F)

## Jashan-e-Tirgan

*Mah Tir, Roj Tir* Wed Jul 1 (F)

## Fravardegan/Mukhtad/Hamaspathmaedayem Gahambar

*Gatha Ahunavad - Vahishtoisht* Sat Jul 18 - Wed Jul 22 (K)  
Mon Aug 17 - Fri Aug 21 (S)

## Pateti - NavRuz

*Mah Fravardin, Roj Hormazd* Thu Jul 23 (K)  
Sat Aug 22 (S)

## Khordad Sal

*Mah Fravardin, Roj Khordad* Tue Jul 28 (K)  
Thu Aug 27 (S)

## Fravardian Jashan

*Mah Fravardin, Roj Fravardin* Mon Aug 10 (K)  
Wed Sep 9 (S)

## Maidyozarem Gahambar

*Mah Ardibehesht, Roj Khorshed - Daepmeher*  
Tue Sep 1 - Sat Sep 5 (K)  
Thu Oct 1 - Mon Oct 5 (S)

## Paitishahem Gahambar

*Mah Sheherevar, Roj Ashtad - Aneran*  
Sat Sep 12 - Wed Sep 16 (F)

## Jashan-e-Mehergan

*Mah Meher, Roj Meher* Fri Oct 2 (F)

## Ayathrem Gahambar

*Mah Meher, Roj Ashtad - Aneran* Mon Oct 12 - Fri Oct 16 (F)

## Jashan-e-Abangan (Avan Ardivisur Parab)

*Mah Aban, Roj Aban* Mon Oct 26 (F)

## Maidyoshem Gahambar

*Mah Tir, Roj Khorshed - Daepmeher*  
Sat Oct 31 - Wed Nov 4 (K)  
Mon Nov 30 - Fri Dec 4 (S)

## Jashan-e-Adargan

*Mah Adar, Roj Adar* Tue Nov 24 (F)

## Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra

*Mah Daye, Roj Khorshed* Sat Dec 26 (F)

# COMING

EVENTS

## Z-Youth Retreat

Zarathushti youth 16 and up, are invited to the Z Youth Retreat, at Camp Misty Mount in the Catoctin National Park, MD, June 26-28. \$65. Organized by the ZAMWI Youth Club and the Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA), Z-Retreat will focus on mentoring and reaching the teens to show them how the religion of Zarathushtra plays a role in their daily lives and how they can actually *live* the religion. Contact Jasmine Patel at (410) 783-2671 or Orang Demehry at demehry@erols.com.

## FEZANA AGM

The 1998 FEZANA Annual General Meeting will be on Wednesday July 1, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and Thursday, July 2, 8 am to noon, at the Rye Town Hilton, in Rye Brook, NY, just prior to the Eleventh North American Congress. Notice has been sent to all Associations, Committees and Officers. Contact FEZANA Secretary, Mehran Sepehri at (415) 988-8875.

## Ivy F. Gandhi Young Zoroastrian Camp

Children between 6 and 18 are invited to the Ivy F. Gandhi Young Zoroastrian Camp, Tuesday July 7 to Saturday July 11, at Camp Hoover, on Swartswood Lake in New Jersey. There will be fun with games, campfires, activities, nature walks, sports and good fellowship. 4 and 5-year olds welcome if accompanied by a parent. There is space for 6-7 adults in the all-weather chalet. Contact ZAGNY Secretary Armaity Patel at (732) 855-7847.

## Camp Pardis ... Paradise in Toronto

Children 6-13 (and 5 year olds, if accompanied by a sibling) are invited to summer day-camp, *Camp Pardis* (Persian for Paradise) at the Mehraban

## **Eleventh North American Zoroastrian Congress**

Friday July 3 - Sunday July 5, 1998  
Rye Town Hilton, New York

### **"The Zoroastrian Commitment in the North American Context"**

ZAGNY, in cooperation with IZA is hosting the Congress. Interactive panel programs will discuss relevant issues facing the North American Zarathushti community. All panel members and moderators are from North America. Participants by the younger generation is substantial. All are invited to come and share their ideas about the future of the community.

*Thursday July 2, 2:00 - 5:00 pm:*

- Workshops (Rituals, Dispelling Myths, Business)

*Friday, July 3:*

- Grand Opening Ceremony
- Panels (Demography; Faith and Community; Beliefs, Devotion and Prayers)
- FEZANA Awards Luncheon
- Youth Social Night

*Saturday, July 4:*

- Panels (Personal Rituals; Social Structure; Intra/Inter faith marriages)
- Gala Banquet

*Sunday, July 5, 9:00 - noon*

- Panel (Community Enhancement)
- Closing Ceremony

From 1 - 4 pm, there will be an Open House at the Darbe Mehr.

**Registration:** \$175 (\$125 students) available from your Association or from Minu D. Dutia at (914) 623-7479.

**Advertisements:** Contact Teshtar Irani at (718) 592-3657.

**Hotel:** \$125 per night (4 persons). Call 1-800-hiltons.

**Co-Chairpersons:** Noshir Langrana (516) 462-0763 and Gev Nentin (609) 275-9154.

Guiv Darbe Mehr in Toronto. Youth 14-17 are also eligible for volunteer positions as Leaders in Training.

Activities, supervised by qualified Zarathushti young adults with child care experience, will include: team sports, swimming, special Zarathushti guests, cultural lunches and events, trips, BBQs, arts and much more.

According to organizer Armaity Homavazir: "We will create a supportive and responsive environment to promote self-esteem, strengthen community bonds, and empower the children to become responsible citizens ..." Out-of-town children are also invited; organizers will try to provide accommodation. There will be three 2-week sessions:

Session 1: July 6 - 17

Session 2: July 20 - 31

Session 3: August 4-14.

Cost is \$130 Cdn per session or \$330 for all three sessions. Call Armaity Homavazir at (905) 764-6667, email: armaity.homavazir@utoronto.ca.

### **Dasturji Kotwal's visit**

Dasturji Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal and Mrs. Kotwal have been invited by the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, for a lecture course on Zarathushti Rituals and Life of Asho Zarathushtra, every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from July 6 - August 9, at

the Darbe Mehr in Chicago. During his trip to the USA, Dasturji will also visit Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Tampa, Florida, and New York for the Congress. For information, contact Aspy Daboo at (630) 969-9189.

## **Second International Avesta Conference**

The Zoroastrian Education and Research Society (ZERS) announces The Second International Avesta Conference, in Calgary, Alberta, September 25-27, 1999. It will be co-sponsored by the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta.

Acceptances have already been received from the following invited scholars: Professors Dr. William Malandra, Gernot Windfuhr, Jamsheed Choksy, Martin Schwartz, Helmut Humbach, Richard Frye, James Russell and Dasturji Dr. Jamasp Asa. Others, from Germany, Israel, France, Italy, Russia, India and Japan have also been invited. Contact Dr. Pallan R. Ichaporia at (610) 589-5419, Khorshed Jungalwala at (978) 443-6858, or Sarosh Manekshaw at (281) 870-9317.

## **Holy Days of Muktdad**

Muktdad (in India) or Fravardegan (in Persian) is the Festival of all Souls - commemorated for the last ten days of the Zarathushti year, i.e. from Roj

**FEZANA JOURNAL** invites donors to sponsor coming issues of the Journal. Advertisements and messages from well-wishers are most welcome. Contact Jamshed Gandhi [see back cover].

### ***IN COMING ISSUES OF FEZANA JOURNAL ...***

#### ***Fall (September) 1998: Mobeds and Darbe Mehrs in North America***

Ervad Jal N. Birdy, President of North American Mobeds Council will be Guest Editor of this issue. Articles or letters for publication may be submitted to Ervad Birdy at 3371 Skyview Lane, Corona, CA 91720, tel: (909) 279-1529. Submission deadline is July 1.

#### ***Winter (December) 1998: Zarathushti Religious Scriptures: The Gathas, the Late Avesta and Pahlavi Literature***

Dr. Pallan Ichaporia will be Guest Editor of this issue. Articles or letters for publication may be submitted to Dr. Ichaporia at 253 South 4th Street, Womelsdorf, PA 19567; tel: (215) 589-5419. Submission deadline is October 1.

## SEVENTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS Houston, Texas

December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001

<http://www.fezana.org/WZC2000>



WZC 2000 is sponsored by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH), December 28, 2000 to January 1, 2001.

Our aim is to celebrate our 3000-year old history and to commemorate Zarathushti contributions to the evolution of world religious thought, and to the development of the world of fine arts, visual arts, music, dance, sports, cinematography, literature, business and science.

As we want WZC 2000 to be a true Zarathushti celebration to foster our coming together, we seek your moral and financial support and most importantly, your participation ... we invite input from the Zarathushti community on the following items:

- List of concerns the Zarathushti community around the world is facing today, and which will require serious, in-depth discussion as well as relevant strategies to deal with them. Please respond by August 15, 1998.
- Names of talented people in the fields of arts, science, literature, business, sports and music, whom we can contact to promote their gifted talents in the celebration of the Zarathushti Odyssey.
- To make WZC 2000 a truly participatory North American experience, we are requesting a voluntary contribution of \$1,000 from every Association, as seed money for the Congress. We thank the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec and the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia for their generous contribution.
- Our campaign slogan for WZC 2000 is "2 for 2000", where we request every Zarathushti around the world to contribute \$2 per year until the year 2000. Your contribution will be a testimony of your commitment to join us in our Zarathushti Odyssey - 2001. Please help us to achieve our goal of 2 for 2000 by sending your check, money order or bank draft to Sarosh Collector, Treasurer, WZC 2000, 3000 Richmond, Suite 270, Houston, Texas 77098, USA.

Please mark your calendars, and encourage as many people as possible in your community to attend this historic event to usher in the new millennium and a new age for Zarathushtis of the world.

**Homi M. Davier**

Congress Co-chair

6654 Southwest Freeway  
Houston, TX 77075, USA

Tel: (713) 339-2222, Fax: (713) 339-2223

email: [Davier5@aol.com](mailto:Davier5@aol.com)

**Dolly Dastoor**

Congress Co-chair

3765 Malo, Brossard  
Quebec, J4Y 1B4, Canada

Tel: (514) 656-2036, Fax: (514) 462-4638

email: [Dasdol@douglas.mcgill.ca](mailto:Dasdol@douglas.mcgill.ca)

Ashtad through Roj Aneran of Mah Spondarmad plus the five Gatha days.

It is believed that during this 10-day festival, the spirits of the departed (*farohars*) visit their near and dear ones in the physical world. During these days, the community gathers at the Darbe Mehr daily to offer prayer. Priests perform special rituals over cooked food, fruits and fresh flowers invoking the spirits of the departed, to seek their protection and blessings in this world.

In the last watch (*Ushahin Gah*) of the fifth Gatha day, at the dawn of Hormazd Roj, a special *dron* and *afiringan* ceremony is performed in honor of the farohars, as a gesture bidding the spirits a farewell from this world.

During Muktaad, the living must keep their homes extra clean and be in a state of heightened consciousness to experience the presence of the farohars. It is said that Muktaad prayers should be offered annually for at least one generation, that is for 16-30 years after death. At home, we should set a table with an oil lamp and a vase of flowers, and recite the *Satum no Kardo* daily while remembering our departed loved ones.

For these ten days, and on the midnight of Vahishtoisht Gatha last year, Mobed Zarir Bhandara of California, offered Afringan (Jashan) prayers followed by Humbandagi (group communal prayers). A Muktaad table was set up for families wishing to bring a vase of flowers in remembrance of their dear departed ones. As in past years, Mobed Bhandara continues to offer his services for Muktaad prayers for the departed. Contact Mobed Bhandara with names of the departed, at (714) 434-1936. ■

**Read**

[FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION SEE INSIDE BACK COVER]

# FEZANA JOURNAL

**Send a gift subscription to family and friends**

## Festival of Tirgan

Mah Tir, Roj Tir is a day dedicated to the archangel Tir Yazad. Ranked among the scriptures as one of the most powerful angels in the Kingdom of God, Tir Yazad presides over the stars and planets. It has been noted, and more significantly felt by the faithful that Tir Yazad holds the key to the fortunes of a person's life and destiny.

Iranian traditions of Tirgan center on the story of the hero **Arash the Archer**, who gave his life to throw an arrow which marked the ancient border between the warring lands of Iran and Turan.

During the reign of the Sassanian king, Firooz, there was draught and famine for seven years, and on this day, there was rain. Hence people celebrate this day by wetting each other (known as *aubrezaun*). Tishtrya is the star of Rain. Prayers related to Tirgan are the Khorshed and Meher Niayeshes.

**Chak-o Doolih.** Each person puts an item in a pot of water covered with a green cloth. Persian poems, with optimistic and encouraging themes are then read, such as those of the Iranian poet Hafez. After each poem is read, a young girl pulls out an item, and the poem is said to refer to the owner of the item. The water from the pot is poured on the audience and from then on the fun of pouring water and wetting each other begins.

**Teer-o Baud.** A wrist band of silk strands of 7 colors, signifying a rainbow, is worn at Tirgan, and taken off ten days later as a sign of the celebration, a sign of rain and the rainbow.

Last year, these traditions were celebrated for the first time, by the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia. Along with games, music and dancing they also had an archery competition in memory of Arash the Archer.

*Compiled by Roshan Rivetna from "The Archangel, Tir Yazad", by Cyrus Merchant, Times of India; and report of the Tirgan celebrations in Vancouver by Feraydoon-i Rostami Dehmehri.]*

## Aarash the Archer (Aarash-e Kamaangir)

*The story of Aarash the archer, who sacrificed his life for his people, is remembered during the Festival of Tirgan.*

**Bahman Noruziaan**  
**Nepean, Ontario**

It is in the middle of summer, hundreds of years ago; for sure, more than 2,500 years ago. The Iranian army, after a tough and bloody war, has been defeated, and the Turanian army has captured vast areas of Iranshahr. The victorious Turanians imposed a condition for peace on the Iranians: an Iranian archer should throw an arrow, and wherever it lands, would become the border between Iran and Turan. This was the only way to end a long war.

In the Iranian army there is a man named Aarash – Aarash the Archer. His will is to liberate his country and his people from the cruelty of the Turanian army. But he wonders how?

It is night. The dark blanket of night has covered everything. It is calm and quiet. Aarash is resting looking up at the sky, thinking about tomorrow, when someone among the Iranian heroes would be chosen for the extraordinary task. "I wish I could give my life for the freedom of my people," he thinks, "Oh God! Please save my land."

Just then, a star in the sky starts to come down towards him. It gets bigger and bigger, and all of a sudden, a brilliant lady appears before him.

"I am Spenta Aramaiti," she says.

"Spenta Aramaiti Ameshaspand? The guardian of peace, tranquility and kindness? The protector of earth? Are you really her? Is it not true that you get sad when cruelty and injustice govern the earth? So why do you let this happen? Why does Ahura Mazda not do anything?"

"You humans should do something," she replies, "You should stop injustice and cruelty and evil actions. Ahura Mazda has shown you the path. He is always ready to help the righteous

ones. And that is why I am here, Aarash. You have been chosen!"

"Chosen?" he wonders, "For what?"

"To bring freedom to Iranshahr," she says, "Are you willing to sacrifice your life for the freedom of your people?"

"Yes, yes I am," says Aarash.

"Well take this arrow," she says, "You will throw this tomorrow. Your soul will carry it, very, very far. The arrow will fly with the aid of your soul, and you will die"

Aarash wakes up. It was just a dream. But wait! What is this? There is an arrow near his head. Is this really true?

Next day, the people are gathered near the mountain, wondering who would throw the arrow. Aarash comes forward: "I am Aarash. I am ready to fulfill our enemy's condition. Look at me. I am fit and healthy. But as I throw this arrow, I will die. I will die to force these aggressors out of our sacred land, the land of eternal fire; the land of Ahura Mazda."

He climbs to the peak; he faces east where the sun rises. "Oh Spenta Aramaiti!", he says, "I always keep my word; I have never displeased Meher Yazad, the guardian of contracts and promises. I believe in righteousness." May my arrow fly as fast as Khorshed-e Orvandasp (the fast-going sun)," prays Aarash.

He then throws his arrow. The people see the arrow flying up high towards the east. The horsemen follow the path of the arrow and go to look for Aarash; but they find only his body. Aarash has gone to his eternal sleep.

Yes! Aarash sacrificed his life for his people, and sent his soul with the arrow. The arrow, traveling a long, long way, landed on the trunk of a walnut tree. And there, then, was the border of Iran and Turan. ■



## Vancouver Zarathushtis revive Pir-e-Sabz Festival

For the second year, Vancouver area Zarathushtis will celebrate the Pir-e-Sabz spiritual one-day festival in Vancouver on June 14th, 1998 (Mah Khordad, Roj Ashtad).

The 'caravan', laden with food, drinks and picnic stuff, will start from Taylor Way, British Properties and make its way to Shannoi Falls near Squamish, where a special place has been reserved for the group.

On arrival, the first group prayers will be performed at 10:00 am in the mountains. Other programs include: making *sirog*, quizzes on the religion and traditions, songs and dances, jokes and games, and of course **Choob-o Falak** for the new couples!

The story behind this popular Iranian 5-day pilgrimage revolves around Hyat Banoo, daughter of King Yazdegard, who is buried at Pir-e-Sabz [photo above] in that mountain outside Yazd, trying to run away from the pursuing Arabs.

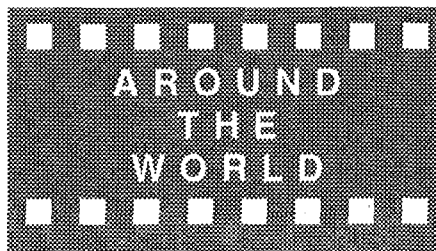
There is a spring at Pir-e-Sabz, from where water trickles down drop by

drop (*Chak Chak*), which is why some call the shrine *Chak Chakoo*. This patch of cool greenery at the top of the bare, desert mountain is clearly visible from afar. Sabz is 'green' in Farsi and Pir means 'saint'; so Pir-e-Sabz can be interpreted as 'The Green Saint'. The annual pilgrimage days are the last five days of the month of Khordad, from Roj Ashtad to Roj Aneran.

Feraydoon Demehri, who is coordinating the event this year, along with Rostam Kavooosi, under the sponsorship of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, writes:

"Now that we are away from Iran, let us go outside of our cities to a green hilly spot where possibly there are some springs or streams and have fun, pray together, doing the same things as our fellow Zarathushtis are doing in Iran on that same day.

"This could become a Zarathushti universal day of prayers, or Unity, or whatever nice term we may wish to call it."



## Central Asia Welcomes Spring

TASHKENT, MARCH 21 [REUTERS]

Patriotic banners flew, the sun shone and the streets of Tashkent filled with the smell of cooking on March 21st as former Soviet Uzbekistan celebrated the recently revived spring holiday of Navruz.

Across Central Asia, the 'New Days' festival – new year in the ancient Zoroastrian religion that preceded Islam along the old Silk Road – has been taken up by leaders anxious to establish a sense of nationhood in the ethnically complex young states left by the Soviet collapse.

For most people, the spring equinox is now a chance to celebrate in public what under communism was a family affair, marked at home by special dishes like the rice speciality, pilaf. Some see the emphasis on Navruz in the ex-Soviet states as an attempt by secular governments to offset an Islamic revival.

"We always marked the new year at home with a meal. But, sure, it's nice now that we have a national holiday," said one man, as he watched Uzbek tumblers performing stunts near Independence (formerly Lenin) Square, in Tashkent.

At a nearby mosque, worshippers headed home after afternoon prayers to celebrate Navruz with their families – but they stressed it was a secular event, unconnected to religion.

"For thousands of years, our forebears celebrated Navruz as a day of joy and happiness," President Islam Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan virtually unchallenged since becoming its Soviet Communist Party Chief in 1989, told dignitaries at a open-air concert. He said Navruz was a celebration of



of as a vehicle for our desire for the sense of spirituality, and does require occasional reshaping.

A sense of spirituality is a God given ability, to help adjust our mind to the physical and emotional needs; personally, with each other, and with ecological environment. Only the human mind is powerful enough to need the reign of spirituality, along with the aspect of conscience. Spiritual sense is calming and emotionally balancing. There is growing evidence that a spiritual calm can protect one from physical, intellectual and emotional disorder. Faith, prayer and meditation can release body chemicals that can balance the brain chemistry, giving a sense of peace and calm and promoting natural defenses, to do a better job of healing.

Spirituality is so essential for mental and physical health, that it is encouraged through communal religious rituals in all cultures. This also helps binding the social tapestry of the community on a physical level. However, ascetic activities, such as abdicating ones responsibilities in the real world, go to a remote mental corner, and think that one is living in piety, is an insult to the concept of spirituality and leads to false-piety. Properly applied spirituality is working and interacting in the world and assuming individual responsibilities.

In my work as a professional psychic counselor, I come across individuals who stay in dysfunctional lifestyles using God's will as a substitute for responsible action. Would Ahura Mazda have given us functionality, adaptability, and creativity if he meant us to live a life on lady luck! That would be a sad and frightful way to stumble through life. Spiritually integrated people know their limits, and have reflexive awareness. They grow by accumulating knowl-

edge, applying it, and do the right thing because that is the right response. This is reflexive spirituality.

Sometimes religious people in their intolerance, do not understand the freedom that spirituality can provide in ones personal life. In the dark ages, intelligence and spirituality were replaced by orthodoxy and fear. Orthodoxy is counterproductive to creativity, and adaptability. It leaves little room for compromise and divides people, even a small community. No one is entirely spiritual, however spirituality continues to grow within us, as long as you are



*Mohur Sidhwa does psychic and intuitive reading as a full time career [see ad on page 72].*

alive and growing, even when it is ignored. When one suppresses spiritual feelings they can reemerge in some other form of good behavioral traits, such as the feelings for humanity or charity.

Like creativity, spirituality requires the advanced intelligence of self awareness. There are many levels of awareness. They range from semi-conscious e.g. a startled reflex, to conscious e.g. deliberating a decision, to intuitive or psychic awareness. Intuitive sense is natural and is defined as the ability to arrive at a correct conclusion based on very little obvious data. It is a short cut in logic and can be considered at the opposite end of the mental spectrum from the primary emotions. Intuition can be trusted. However its interpretation

depends on mental and emotional background of the individual. Intuition seldom gives finer details, but more than makes good for that, by its swift insight in times of urgency. It is that 10% inspiration, that needs to be expanded upon by 90% perspiration.

An essential prerequisite for the enhancement of intuitive ability in an effective manner, is a well developed sense of spirituality. Intuitive sense in its weaker form is innate in all humans. It is open to growth like any other natural talent, is better developed in early childhood, and can be enhanced with practice. It is a flexible ability and manifests differently in different cultures. It is identified with a specific area (temporo-parietal) of the brain. Damage to this area is known to alter this ability. Ongoing studies of the near-death experiences and related fields can shed more light on this subject.

Throughout history and across cultures it is noted that psychic and intuitive abilities and their manifestations have remained in the realm of religion or the spiritual aspect of cultures. This is understandable as without such guidance it may be difficult to enhance or properly apply these gifts. ■

**MOHUR SIDHWA** obtained her B.A. and M.A. in Anthropology at the University of Arizona. Mohur believes intuition is a natural human trait, with some more adept at it than others, and is interested in precognition and paranormal from a cross-cultural and academic viewpoint. She does psychic and intuitive reading as a full time career, and has lectured on Paranormal Anthropology in the area of precognition at University of Arizona. Currently she is involved in areas of human consciousness, and intuition from an evolutionary perspective.

thought of before; and that is to pray for their well-being.

I recall an incident when I was sick. My sister had come over from India to help me. She asked me if her Christian friends can pray for me? I retorted with vanity: "No thanks, I can pray myself." Now I realize how wrong I was. At that time I was quite angry, and used to argue with my sister, not recognizing her kindness to come all the way from India. Now I know that such a behavior was only an outlet for my frustrations, caused by my being sorry for myself. I never realized I could work in a soup kitchen, clean up cancer patients, and give the homeless a hug. It is a very humbling experience. When they ask me: "God sent you to do this?" I cannot believe my ears, but I am overcome with a feeling of spiritual satisfaction. I shall be happy to help out anybody who is in need. I can be reached at (609) 895-1268. May Ahura Mazda bless you all.



**DAISY PRESSWALLA** has diverse experiences working with various organizations that help unfortunate people. She has worked with the handicapped, at Samaritan Home for battered ladies, Seton home for young girls (age 10-17), old People Homes at Luther Manor, Marion Manor, Westminster Canterbury, and Sevamp. She has also worked with cancer patients at Hospice Group, and Virginia Beach General Hospital. At Bayside Presbyterian Church, she has helped with baby sitting, soup kitchen, flower arrangement for church, and care for special handicapped. Furthermore, she disseminates her valuable experience by giving talks to social workers.

# Spirituality and Intuition

## Another Perspective

*Language, creativity, self-awareness and spirituality are unique hallmarks of being human. They are closely linked in that there are strong connections between the linguistic areas of the brain and intuitive awareness, the developed intelligent mind and a sense of spirituality.*

By Mohur Sidhwa  
Houston, Texas

The human sense of spirituality is ancient. Archeologists have even found a Neanderthal burial site (in Iraq) where there are obvious signs of spirituality and ritual. Language, creativity, self-awareness and spirituality are unique hallmarks of being human. They are closely linked in that there are strong connections

between the linguistic areas of the brain and intuitive awareness, the developed intelligent mind and a sense of spirituality. I am referring here

to spirituality as hardwired aspect of the brain with religion serving as a software, which is flexible and varies according to one's culture.

Spirituality and science both require intense abstract ability of detaching ourselves from our immediate experiences. Both require creativity, that is unique to the human mind, and which is considered the core, in our definition of being human. The powerful combination of these two generate a language, that allows us to think the questions, speculate the answers, and build on that knowledge. Spirituality and the intellectual need to know, is believed to be located in the recently discovered most pliable area (neo-cortex) of brain. Ongoing research in this area will

give us further insight into the intuitive and the spiritual within us. This is a controversial area of investigation, that is intimidating to most researchers.

Spirituality is not a concept or an event. It is an active state of being, and as much a part of our heritage as our emotional feelings. The gift of spiritual curiosity and its aspect of intuitive awareness prompted early naturalists to study Creation. The

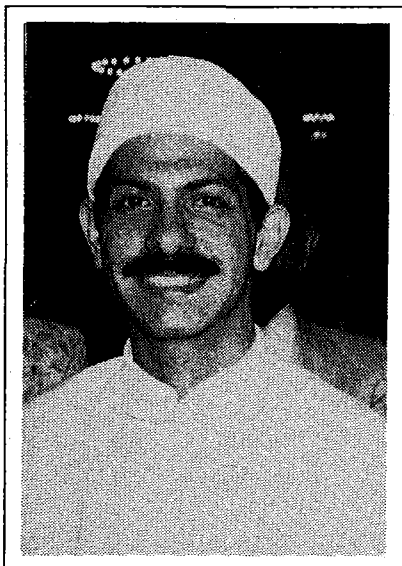
“Spirituality is so essential for mental and physical health, that it is encouraged through communal religious rituals in all cultures.”

evidence gained from this work forced changes in the prevailing views of Nature, such as the place of the earth in the universe or antiquity of human lin-

eage. These changes intimidated Orthodoxy in the West.

A religion that does not permit the growth and accumulation of knowledge damages intellectual spirituality. Those religions that can adapt to service the changing needs of their members on the physical, intellectual and emotional levels can thrive easily. Among Zarathushtis there are differences reflecting the culture to which they have adjusted. Those who emigrated to India, are different from those who stayed back in Iran, and certainly different from those who had to adjust to the rigors of maintaining their Faith under the former Soviet rule. Yet the spiritual element that sustained us did not shift. However, the religion can be thought

About three generations ago, as a result of the joint family system, religious instructions in doctrinal and practical aspects of the religion were passed on from one generation to the next by oral tradition. However now there is a crying need to make an earnest effort to systematically teach and learn the aspects of religion that are generally forgotten or neglected. Considering these matters futile and avoidable, can only aggravate the problem for future generations and religiosity may be lost forever by the time today's youth become grandparents. ■



**ERVAD DR. RAMIYAR KARANJIA** is a product of Athornan Madressa, Mumbai, from where he qualified as a full fledged priest. Ervad Karanjia completed his graduate and post-graduate studies with honors from Bombay University, and since 1995, he is the Principal of the above Madressa. He has attended the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, World Zoroastrian Congresses, and Youth Festivals, in India, England, USA and Canada. He has presented papers on topics Zarathushti religion, Iranian history, and Religious Education of Youth, and contributed articles in academic Journals. ■ ■ ■

# Spirituality through Misfortune

*"Nineteen years ago, I was very sick with cancer. Today, I feel my sickness has made me into a changed person"*

**By Daisy Presswalla**  
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

**A**bout nineteen years ago, I was very sick with cancer. I had undergone surgery, and various painful treatments. I was very upset, angry, and asked myself: "Why me?"

One day I decided: "That's it. I am not going to my doctor, I will take charge of my own body and be my own doctor." I started to look inward, to communicate with my Self. Things began to happen, the first thought was to stop feeling sorry for myself, let go of my anger, ego, listen to the inner voice, and take care of my body, mind, and soul. As our religion says, with good thoughts, good words and good deeds, I put myself in the hands of Ahura Mazda, and was ready anytime he called for me. I love material things but am not particularly fascinated by anything. I told my husband Faruk not to worry, to be in good spirits, carry on with his life, and let someone enjoy my material things when I go to meet the Maker. One has to leave this physical existence empty-handed just as one enters this life. Once free of fear and anger, it is easy to live the life, enjoying everything and desiring nothing.

I feel that my sickness made me into a changed person. I felt strong through the experience, watching carefully what I say or do, always thinking about other person's feeling. I started following a course of exercise, a diet devoid of chicken and fish (red meat was never a part of my food), lift weights, give massage, and pray four to five times a day. I also began to enjoy Nature with walks in the open, observing the sun, moon, stars and other creations around. As I began to feel strong, I started taking care of cancer and AIDS patients and I learned quite a lot from my sick

friends. People in these circumstances develop a common bond and freely converse about their experiences in life. I was always able to pick something good from these friends and warmly incorporate in my life. I soon found out, that life is just one long educational process where one continues to learn till the last day on this earth. Now I regularly pray, meditate, and fast. Particularly, I find fasting offers significant inner strength, power of will, and self discipline. At the same time, it also cleans and gives rest to one's inner organs.

I was taught that the *gireban* – the pocket in front of our *sudreh* – stores what good we have done in our life. Presently I work in a big soup kitchen in Trenton, where I help them with cooking and serving food for 500-800 people. Often people stop and ask me, why I come there every week and help them? To this, I have a standard reply: "**Because I care!**" The responses of the people are quite variable, some offer their blessings, while others are put out and express their helplessness to comprehend. I always serve these homeless persons, with the words of Dadarji (the Almighty Giver) on my lips, a smile on my face, and wish each one of them "enjoy your lunch". I also work in the nursing home, where I talk to old people, look after their frail body, play ball with them, and feed those who cannot help themselves. I go to church on Sundays, to baby sit, so that their parents can enjoy their prayers peacefully.

My narrow and erroneous view, of superiority of my religion over others was gradually laid to rest as I began to study other religious philosophies. This has broadened my horizon and changed my thinking. I have been requested to correspond with cancer patients in India, which I do on a regular basis. I have started doing something I never

# Religion in Everyday Life

*Religion is meant for the all round personal, moral, intellectual and spiritual development of an individual, with emphasis on the spiritual. However our hectic, modern life is such that the priority given by our religion for personal development has turned topsy-turvy and we hardly experience any need for spirituality in one's life. Intellectual and at the most moral excellence is the only parameter by which the success of a modern child, youth or man is judged.*



By Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia  
Mumbai, India

**M**ost modern day problems of the religion have arisen because of our attitude to make religion change to our needs, rather than attempting to change ourselves as per the requirements of religion. As if that were not enough, we blame religion for not being up to our expectations and creating problems for us, rather than accept our failings and inability at not being able to follow the teachings of the religion.

**Intellectual, mental and spiritual development.** The present trend of cut throat academic competition demands the greatest emphasis on the intellectual development ( which at times is cramming of facts), leaving little or no time at all for one's mental and spiritual development. The problem is further compounded when mental development is confused and considered synonymous with spiritual development, rather than former leading to the latter. That is the reason, why we have, in Zarathushti religion exercises like chanting of *Mathravani* prayers, which cater to the development of both- the mind and the spirit.

Mental development deals with the harnessing, controlling, channeling and stilling of one's mind and diverting it to perform beneficial works only. A mind which has achieved the above objectives can then be turned into *Vohu Manah*, and such a tuned mind can then be called *Vohu Manah*.

**Spiritual discipline for everyday life.** Spiritual development on the other hand is an abstract and esoteric task and has very few takers in the present world. In this era of demands for empirical proofs, and laboratory tests for everything, the faith in the well endorsed dictum "believing what we cannot see" has grossly deteriorated. Enhancing one's spirituality depends on the immaculate purity of one's astral body, and the religion of Zarathushtra enjoins exercises for that in our daily life. These are:

- The *Kushti* ritual, its performance at specified intervals and before and after specific acts. The ritual power of kushti is perpetuated by wearing *sudreh* and kushti at all times.

- To the best of one's ability, observing the rules of purity in one's daily life.

- Reciting daily obligatory prayers, and special *Baj* prayers before and after certain acts.

- Presence of Natural fire or oil lamp in the house, and holding all religious rituals and institutions with the respect they command. Needless to say that these spiritual exercises are futile without a solid moral and ethical lifestyle.

**The need for religiosity in life.** If one is intellectually inclined, one may not feel the need of mental and spiritual development at all. These individuals can justify their hang ups, by presenting excuses such as "God being in the heart and there being no need for the spiritual exercises for those good at heart etc. etc." It is

only much later in life that man realizes that there is more to life than intellectual development. When that void is felt, one starts taking in whatever is offered or comes in handy to fill the vacuum. Only those who are fortunate to find the right path, begin the process, to feel the inkling of existence, the majesty of the power beyond, which is paradoxically present within us and within our reach.

Religiosity has to be seen in the right perspective, and not as dogmatic instructions of "overzealous, puritanical and racist minds". All aspects of religion – intellectual, moral, ritual and spiritual have to be balanced, and made a part and parcel of the family life. This well balanced life enhancing formula should be instilled from early childhood.

Teens to mid-twenties is the most fragile period in a young life – a time when one is still immature, but feeling empowered to take on the world. Given the proper religious direction from early childhood, the youth will face the challenges of their life with the strength and succor that flows through their religion, and emerge a responsible human being. An open-hearted and un-biased attitude to religion will surely give rise to a new class of Zarathushtis – strong in body, mind, and spirit, and confident to take on the varied problems and temptations in their stride.

**What has gone wrong?** It is observed that in general, religious education is grossly neglected in many quarters. When people feel the need for religion in their later life, they improvise by random reading of a book, or attending a religious talk or seminar. This is fine. However, when these very individuals find any aspect of religion uncomfortable, they pronounce judgment on centuries-old religious customs, traditions, practices and scriptures instead of accepting their own shortcomings. This starts 'controversies' which are the very reason that puts a great many number of young and old off their religious fervor – and they throw away the baby with the bath water.

past. They have not depended on Zartoshti schools, hospitals, or subsidized-housing. They have set up their own religious centers and institutions. Rather than taking from, when they can, they give to these Zartoshti centers. This sets them as an entirely new category of Zartoshti.

The Zartoshti of today therefore does not feel that they need the spirituality offered through an outsider's words that are prayers, or blessing through ceremonies and rituals. The new world Zartoshti seems content on depending upon the society they are surrounded by, rather than their ethnic community.

However, there has been an irreversible change that has caused them to reflect upon the social, political, and economic changes that encourage reformation. This change has created the need for ordinary Zartoshtis to become better informed about their religion. Promoting the printing of religious literature in their native language has afforded them the means to become better informed. The change has also contributed to the rationalization of the world, the growth of modern science, and the fragmentation of the once dominant religious culture and has lead to the erosion of the Zartoshti religion as one has known it in the past.

### **So how do the Zartoshtis in North America find spiritual salvation?**

Presently the Zartoshti religion still starts out traditionally, in the Dar-e-Mehr, Fire-temple, the local Zartoshti association or through Zartoshti religious group scattered throughout North America. Parents, after attending any of the talks, seminars and religious services, take back some of the gained religious knowledge and train their offspring on the understanding they received there.

North American Zartoshtis, youth and teens follow Zartoshti religion today not as an intrinsic part of their life, but rather in spite of their daily business and worldly life. Religion ritually is a little time assigned to their daily life, after they have taken their

kids for karate lessons or soccer practice or after they have made them finish their homework and their chores. Religion has become something that the kids and youth perform after they have been bribed or dragged to religious classes and ceremonies. Religion has become an excuse to attend functions. Religion unfortunately has become a choice versus apparently more important things such as studies or social contact.

**Things may not seem as bad as they appear.** Many Zartoshti families however, have realized that religion can perpetuate spirituality. Therefore they now encourage religiosity through heartfelt prayers. They encourage their children and youth to attend recently introduced religious camps, classes. Revitalized annual functions are made more fun, more interesting, and now match or better the time spent in front of the television. Youth are beginning to appreciate the sentiments of the religion.

There seems to be a gradual resurgence in the attendance of classes, services and seminars. The religious organizations are scrambling to get their educational acts together, to fill the vacuum. The religious youth camps throughout North America, the Zartoshti youth congresses held world-wide, youth picnics, classes, and seminars are all starting to gel the youth – the adolescent of tomorrow – on the road to Zartoshti spirituality.

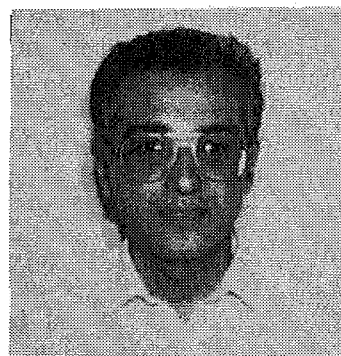
**Are all these efforts enough to restore spirituality?** The modern Zartoshti will have to build religious communities and institutions to draw the youth towards the religion. They will have to build a central focus and provide the framework to revitalize the religion as we know it. They will have to train and re-train the clergy and the laity. They will have to put in the efforts and the resources to bring back the institutional approach to the leadership in the Zartoshti religion, which can provide a spiritual medium for the religion to prevail.

Till then the Zartoshti religion will be as it is now, each one carrying the

cross of the religion, one at a time, responsible to kindle the spiritual spark in their life.

And yet when all hope is gone, there is always a miracle that occurs and changes the course of the religion. The Zartoshti religion has survived and prospered in the last 3800 years and it will survive and prosper in the next 3800 years. ■

**Aydun Baad Aydun Taraz Baad!**



### **MOBED FARIBORZ SOHRAB**

**SHAHZADI** is a District Sales Trainer for Key Pharmaceuticals (division of Schering Plough Pharmaceuticals). Mobed Shahzadi is actively involved in the Council of Iranian Mobeds (Kankash-e-Mobedan) since 1989. Through Kankash he is actively involved in organizing educational activities in the form of religious classes and camps for Zartoshti youth across North America. He is also developing correspondence courses and tapes of the religious texts.

## **Nourishment ...**

*[Continued from previous page]*

■ I feel the joy of having helped a human being in need, and am grateful to Mazda for the comfort and love in life with my family. At the same time I learn to bear any misfortune with temperance, remembering His blessings, avoiding the evil of envy and greed, while charting the course of life clinging to truth even in the face of hardship.

These are some of the ideas I have tried to follow to maintain my spirituality on this continent. ■

ing, on appropriate Roj-Mah days. After performing the important Padyab Kushti, I recited the daily prayers in the prayer-hall (*Setayeshe Gah*), and at the end I spent some time meditating over the glory of Ahura Mazda and my love for Asho Zarathushtra, gazing into the serene burning embers in the fire alter (*Kebla*). This ritual bestowed upon me immense inner peace and tranquillity to take on whatever difficulty I was to face. Although it was difficult to explain the rationale behind this innate tranquillity, I am happy my parents made me do this at an early age, I did it without questioning, and was able to reap the benefits in some mysterious way.

Unfortunately such facility is not available to us in the States, and we have to improvise the constant need to recharge our spiritual batteries. Some things that I have found beneficial in enhancing my spiritual needs are listed below:

- ◆ Setting aside some time every morning to light a *divo* (oil lamp) and saying my daily prayers while gazing into the flame. Without inhibition I ask for the Lord's blessings for good health and happiness for my loved ones and strength and courage for myself.

- ◆ Participating in the local Jashan and Gahambar rituals with community members, and listening to the chanting of Avestan Manthras even if I may not fully understand them. I find it sentimentally uplifting, to join in a *hum-bandagi* singing the praises of Ahura Mazda and Asho Zarathushtra.

- ◆ Perched on a hilltop at a place like Crestone, Colorado, in the fresh air, I observe the immense beauty of Nature, looking at the sun rise and set, or the moon and constellations drifting with absolute precision in the night sky, with swaying trees and twittering birds starting a day. I look and wonder, what Being fashioned the order of this panorama and for what purpose. I see a passing satellite in this vast vista, that puts into perspective the human intelligence relative to the Divine mind of the Maker.

[Continued on next page]

# Modernization:

## Zartoshti Religion and Religiosity Through the Eyes of a Modernized Mobed

*In the past, the Zartoshti religion emanated from the religious institutions or religious leaders and priests. In today's world Zartoshtis are less willing to serve religion as a vocation, and the burden of religion is turning to the individual.*

By Mobed Fariborz Sohrab Shahzadi  
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Modernization in the Zartoshti religion is knocking on the doors of the present day Zartoshti in many ways than one. It is forcing him/her to open their doors and change ways that he/she was used to practicing the religion. It is screaming to emerge from the confines of the religious institutions. It is clawing to come out of the paradigms of the rituals of the past. It is tearing out to establish a new identity of individual conscience, a new idea of religious responsibility, and a new way of living and following the Zartoshti religion.

In the past, the Zartoshti religion emanated from the religious institutions or the religious leaders of the courts and the kings of the Iranian dynasties, to the priests of the major Fire Temples of the world. The religious leaders were responsible for laying down the religious laws, religious ethics and rituals, that Zartoshti people followed. Rituals on birth, initiation, marriage, propitiation and death were dictated by the clergy and followed by the people. In the past, religious leaders directed the religion, expansion, and growth of it through the pulpit of the Fire Temples or the Centers they designated throughout the population where Zartoshtis lived.

The job of the clergy of the Middle Ages was to worship and glorify God by daily performing a set of ser-

vices which rotated around the Zartoshti calendar. Prayers and songs were chanted five times a day during the five Gahs and were imbibed by the laity. The average Zartoshti was expected to behave morally, to attend the Gahambars on the great feast days, and to finance the Mobeds and their centers. Too enthusiastic a religion has destroyed societies in the past. A perfect example is the decline of the Zartoshti empire and the present day decay of the religious institutions in Iran and India.

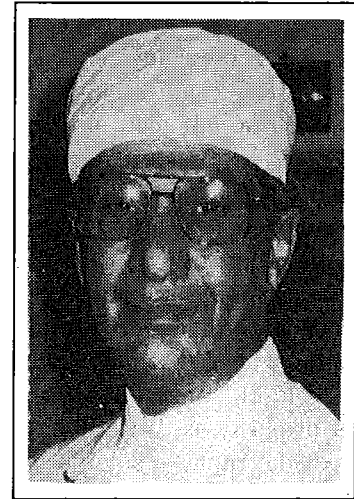
In today's world there has to be a balance between the religious demands on the family and the ability to sustain the family and jobs. Zartoshtis are less willing to serve religion as a vocation, and the burden of religion is turning to the individual. In modern times, the burden of bearing the consequences of one's actions has shifted on to the individuals. The contemporary Zartoshti living abroad is no longer living the communal life in the Zartoshti 'ghetto', no longer dependent on the financial support of Zartoshti charities for medical needs, early education, or loans for higher education.

The Zartoshti in the new world of North America is an independent identity. He or she is a self-built, educated individual, a self-sustained entity. These Zartoshtis have pulled themselves up in the new world through toil, hard work and in spite of the Zartoshti institutions of the





Left, Dar-e-Mehr in Ervad Birdy's home town of Nagpur.



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## Nourishment for the Soul

*Just as body and mind need nourishment for activity, spirituality is the nourishment for the soul. It is the yearning that humans feel towards the Maker, to please, to revere and to be awed. It is the feeling that rushes through you, when you realize that there is someone out there called Ahura Mazda, Who is immensely superior, Who has fashioned you, nourishes you, commands your devotion and respect, and with Whom you want to communicate.*

By Ervad Jal Birdy  
Corona, California

### SPIRITUALITY AND THEOLOGY

**S**pirituality is a matter more for the soul than for the mind. Human intelligence is the greatest gift that has made Man master over all other creations on this planet. However, there is a distinct barrier, in dimensions of length, breath, height and time, beyond which the human intelligence cannot fathom. It is not possible for the average human to break past this intelligence barrier. Beings like Asho Zarathushtra who have reached that highest level of consciousness, have been able to fully recognize the mysteries that exist beyond this intelligence barrier, by being in

communion with Ahura Mazda. We have an obligation to follow the principles laid down by the Prophet, to help us move a little closer to the Maker, until such time, that we ourselves have attained that highest level of consciousness.

Zarathushtra has shown us the way to salvation, by following the path of the Divine attributes – Amesha Spentas – of Ahura Mazda in our daily lives. A lucid description of this process, using the names of the first seven days of our calendar, representing these attributes, is as follows.

The Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer promises that Ahura Mazda (**Hormuzd**) gives the benefit of Good Mind (**Bahman** or **Vohu Manah**) to those who work selflessly for the upliftment of the less fortunate. This Good

Mind guides us to choose the path of Righteousness (**Ardibehesht** or **Asha Vahishta**) in all our thoughts. We gain Strength and Courage (**Shehrever** or **Khshthra Vairya**) through wisdom and righteousness, to fight evil and accomplish noble objectives. If we dedicate our life to this path with Devotion (**Spendarmad** or **Spenta Aramaiti**) we will finally reach Perfection (**Khordad** or **Haurvatat**) and be attuned with the Divine law of Nature. True happiness and immortality (**Amardad** or **Ameretat**) is assured through the achievement of perfection.

### NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

While in India, the greatest source for enhancing my spirituality was visiting the local Agiary in my hometown of Nagpur, early in the morn-

Traditionally these higher liturgies are classed as *Pav Mahal* (clean or pure Space) ceremonies and require the construction of special enclosures known as *Pavi*. These areas which are about six-and-a-half feet by eleven-and-a-half feet, are believed to demarcate a sacred space within which the two performing priests and every implement are kept clean, pure and consecrated. These demarcations are built into the floor of the temples as furrows during their construction [see Figure 2]. The rationale behind conserving this high order of purity, is that at the beginning of the ritual, a solemn invocation invites the participation of Ahura Mazda and his Bounteous attributes.

At the south end of this consecrated space is located a fire vase mounted on a stone pedestal. The pedestal is first thoroughly cleaned and is finally consecrated by the performing head priest with the recital of Ashem Vohu (a declaration affirming "Righteousness is good") while rinsing with water. A stone seat is kept at the north end of the pavi, on which the head priest seats with his back to the North. Traditionally Zarathushtrian sacred spaces avoid northern orientation for any kind of reverence, due to the legend and history of the early Avestan migration southward, to escape the drastic living conditions. Later syncretic Zarathushtrian tradition [Videvdat 7.2,5] has overstated this concept, by identifying North as a source of evil.

In front of the head priest is a table on which are laid out various implements and metal utensils for use during the service. These have a theological significance; they represent the earth, water, plant and animal creation in the physical world. These elements, coupled with the consecrated fire, and the human dimension provided by the priests, the sacred space depicts a microcosm of the archetypal reality that embodies the two opposing mentalities of Good and Evil which pervade the temporal existence. Through the

ritual acts of purification and consecration, the liturgy portrays in words and gestures, the responsibilities of humanity, to bring the Cosmic combat between the forces of Good and Evil, to a state of absolute purity and righteousness that prevails in the Divine Dominion – a resurrection of perfect existence consonant with the immutable cosmic Law of Asha known in Zarathushtrian theology as Frashokereti.

The dominant influence of the Younger Avestan era in reinforcing pre-Zarathushtrian concepts in the syncretic Zarathushtrian Faith is clearly noticeable in the introduction of the *Haoma* ritual in Yasna litany. The cult of Haoma, the sacred

plant of immortality, has its origin in the Vedic *Soma*, a plant highly revered by the early Aryan society. The climactic gesture of drinking of *parahom*, prepared during the *paragna* (pre-Yasna) service, at the recital of section (ha) 9-11 of the Yasna, exemplifies the changes gradually incorporated in the Gathic Zarathushtrian religion.

The sacred spaces in Zarathushtrian tradition, focus on the sacred creation, its preservation, and its ultimate redemption with the principle of Asha. The total eradication of the Evil Mentality is the marker of Frashokereti – the resurrection of Absolute Perfection, the Divine Dominion in the temporal world. ■

### ATASH NIAYESHĒ

*Grant me O Fire, purifying quintessence of Ahura Mazda,  
Dynamic happiness, maintenance and life,  
Complete happiness, maintenance and a full life,  
With zeal, wisdom and a facile tongue,  
For the consciousness of my soul,  
And above all, all understanding Divine wisdom,  
At all times increasing but not diminishing.  
Furthermore, heroism and vigor to overcome all obstacles.  
Grant me the capacity to be steady,  
And wakefulness for a third part of the day and night,  
As well as watchfulness and adroitness.  
Grant me innately wise, well balanced and skilful progeny,  
Who can protect me,  
Who can be capable of leadership  
Of ruling over countries and being powerful  
And relieve distress,  
And who may bring prosperity to me,  
To all homes, villages, provinces and countries,  
Imparting spiritual teachings to all countries.  
Grant me, O! Fire, purifying quintessence of Ahura Mazda,  
That which may be realized for me,  
To give me enlightenment now and hereafter for ever,  
For my existence replete with bliss  
As for the holy and for those full of luster,  
Which I may attain as excellent reward  
And renown for my soul's eternal spiritual  
happiness and contentment.*

[Translation from Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians Part II by  
Framroz Rustomjee. Submitted by Bahman Noruziaan, Ph.D.]

Tradition evolved to distinguish the fire temples, based on the process used to consecrate the fire it housed. In time, the *Fire of Verethraghna* (Ph. Varahram or Vahram; Persian Bahram), the fire associated with a pre-Zarathushtrian divinity of victory evolved as the most highly consecrated fire, and the temples, where it was enthroned, came to be recognized as Atash-e-Vahram (Per., Atash Bahram). For its consecration, fires were collected from sixteen different sources, including those from lightening (nature), crematoria, the households of various artisans, soldiers and priests. Elaborate rituals were formulated, to kindle and rekindle these fires with fragrant sandalwood, accompanied by the offerings of Higher liturgical prayers, symbolically transforming these smoldering embers to the *Holy and Sublime state of Ritual Purity* worthy of the expression of the Lord of Wisdom – Ahura Mazda. The Consecrated Fire is then enthroned, traditionally with the highest pomp and pageantry in the sacred space.

Similar consecration ceremonies have evolved for fires that adorn the lesser grade of sacred spaces of Atash-e-Aderan and Atash-e-Dadgah. Unfortunately, this aesthetic evolution greatly compromised the profound Gathic insight, into the identification of Truth and Righteousness, of physical and mental Purity – the very essence of Ahura Mazda – with Fire. *Zarathushtra's vision* of the Way of Life for humanity in this temporal world, symbolized in the Divine Fire of Ahura Mazda was significantly overshadowed.

## 'OUTER' AND 'INNER' LITURGIES JASHAN AND YASNA

**The Jashan.** The Gathic concept of veneration for creation also appears in a number of outer liturgies performed by Zarathushtis today. The one most frequently performed is the Jashan. The term has its origin in the

earlier times as cleanliness of water supply was uncertain, temples were equipped with wells to provide naturally filtered, unpolluted water for ritual purposes. The center of this sacred space is ordained with a fire vase in which dwells a Fire that is continuously fed with fragrant wood and incense radiating symbolically the force of Mazda Ahura.

The surrounding space is shared by the offerings that represent each of the elements of creation: luminaries, earth, water, plant, animal and human [see Figure 1]. Traditionally the worship requires a minimum of two priests, however in the event of a shortage one can suffice. The service involves the chanting of Afringan recitals that praise the glory and invoke the participation of the Lord of Wisdom. The recital culminates in a flower exchange ritual between the two priests. Symbolically this is the moment that constitutes a fusion of the Temporal with the Eternal, of the physical (*Getig*) with the spiritual (*Menog*) world.

**Yasna.** In addition to the outer liturgy of Afringan, in syncretic Zarathushtrian Faith several 'Inner' liturgical ceremonies have evolved. Among the

most widely performed is the ritual of *Yasna* or *Yazeshne* meaning 'worship'. The Yasna service of 72 chapters is a blend of the scriptures of Gatha, with those of the older Avesta, some of which are ascribed to pre-Zarathushtrian Divinity. The basic objective of the Yasna performance is the recognition of praise and majesty of Ahura Mazda and his Benevolent Attributes responsible for the sacred Creation.

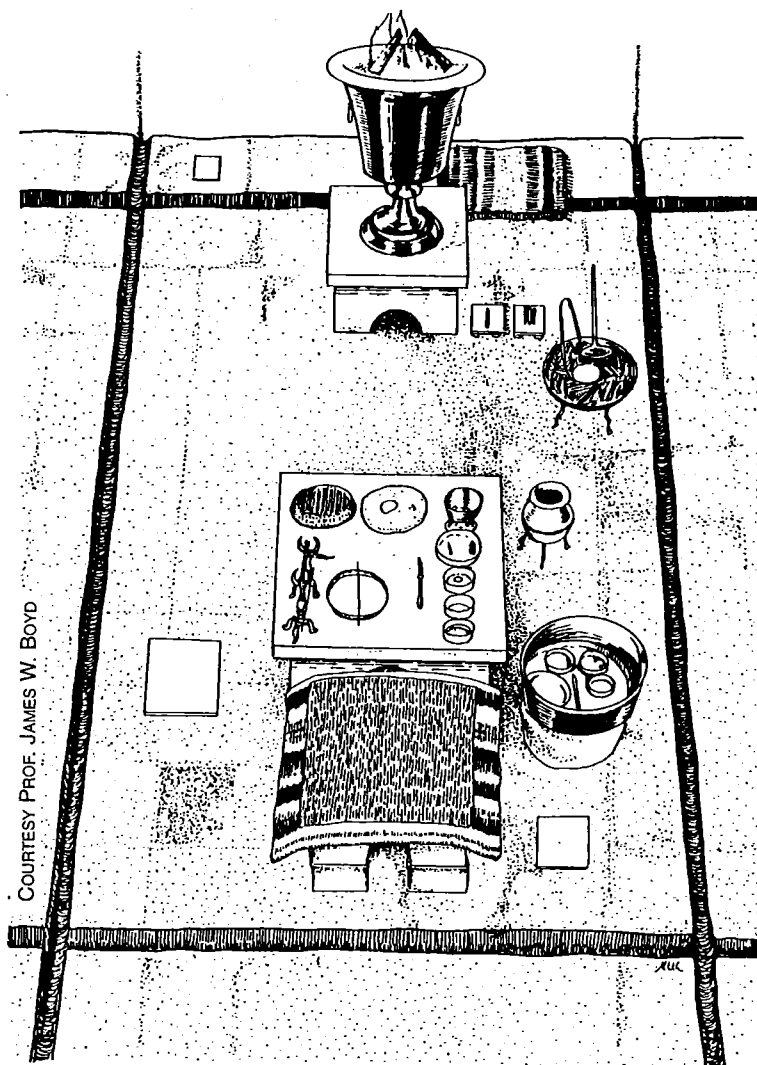


Figure 2. The Ritual Space (pavi) and its furnishings.

Avestan root 'Yasn' meaning to worship or to praise. Physically the sacred space for a Jashan may be created in a house of worship or a prayer hall or even in a private home.

The designated area is covered with a white sheet symbolizing the purity and cleanliness of the enclosure. All the utensils and implements used in this sacred space are thoroughly cleaned. As a point of interest, in

cept of the preservation of the Creation. At the very beginning of the Gathic scriptures, He asserts his commitments in no uncertain terms [Ys. 28.1]:

With hands outstretched high, I pray in the veneration to Mazda that I may perform all actions based on the wisdom of Good Mind in keeping with the Law of Righteousness and bring harmony to the Soul of the Universe.

Here the world and its environment is perceived as a Sacred Space. Humanity, as a steward of the Creation has an obligation and the responsibility to ensure its progress towards perfection. This principle is clearly echoed in the prayer [Ys. 30.9]:

And may we be among those who makes the Existence Brilliant .... you Lords of Wisdom, who bring happiness through Righteousness.

This fundamental notion of preservation of the Divine Creation coupled with the profound concept of Asha – the immutable law of Nature – has become the focal tenet of the subsequent evolution of the Sacred Spaces in the Zarathushti Faith.

#### FROM ELEMENTS OF NATURE TO OBJECTS OF VENERATION

With the advent of time the elements of Nature gained prominence in their reverence and veneration. Hymns were composed to pay homage to natural creations, such as the sun (*Khorshed*), the moon (*Mah-bokhtar*), water (*Aban*), and fire (*Atar*). Eventually, these natural elements became associated with specific Divinities, whose names were

incorporated into the Zarathushtrian Calendar as days and months of the year. Consequently the recital of these hymns became fixed on the day dedicated to the Divinity. For example, the ancient Cult of Anahita that pervaded the Middle Persian era, emerges as Aban – the divinity presiding over water – in the Zarathushti calendar. The coastal regions thus became the

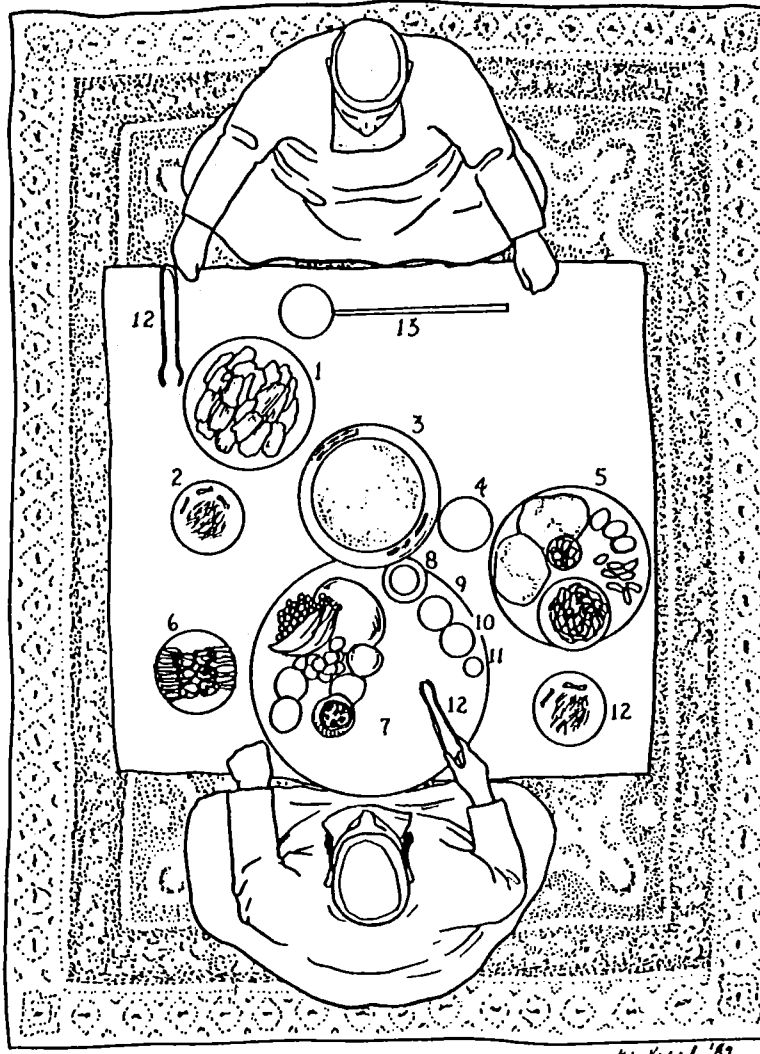
or Meher – divinities associated with sun and light – in communion offered during the daytime. In contrast, veneration to Mah – associated with the Moon – is part of the prayers offered after sunset.

#### FIRE AND ITS CONSECRATION IN TEMPLES

What made *Fire* so special to Zarathushtra? The prophet visualized within this element more than what meets the eye. He saw in it the Absolute Truth and Absolute Purity that is embodied in the fundamental concept of Asha. He thus presented *Fire* as an attribute and a physical corpus or *epiphany of Ahura Mazda*.

The archeological finds of the early nomadic and pastoralist Avestan society, have yielded no precise records of the edifices that housed sacred fires. As Cicero mentions, Zarathushtis considered it wrong, “to keep shut up within walls, Gods whose dwelling place was this whole world”. However by the fourth century BCE, almost a millennium after the era of Zarathushtra, in the mid-Achaemenian time, temple worship was overridden with veneration of icons of Anahita. That prompted a strong reaction among the faithful, who responded with the installation of consecrated Fire, and initiated the temple cult

of Fire. Since then, in the Zarathushtrian devotional life, new sacred spaces have emerged as places of worship in which the *Sanctum Sanctorum* is a consecrated Fire, the incarnation of Ahura Mazda.



COURTESY PROF. JAMES W. BOYD

Figure 1. The Afringan. 1. Sandalwood, 2. Frankincense, 3. Fire vase, 4. Oil lamp, 5. Tray with eggs, bread, coconut, dried fruit and halva, 6. Bowl with roses and tube-roses, 7. Tray with fresh fruit, 8. Water, 9. Sharbat, 10. Milk, 11. Wine, 12. Tongs, 13. Ladle.

Sacred Spaces on the day of Aban and especially when the day and the month are superposed in the computation of the annual calendar. Open spaces are rendered sacred sites, to pay homage to Khorshed and Mithra

nion with the Holiest Spirit by seeking the guidance and help of their own Fravashi (the 'guru' within). They each went into the 'cave' and 'mountain' within their own heart, with only Faith and Devotion as their offerings. Can we get rid of the darkness within our homes by lighting lamps outside? Similarly, if the light of Faith and Devotion is not lit within our own heart, will we get illumination from any outside source or guru? No. Spirituality is an inherent, evolutionary quality gained by perseverance on the steep climb towards Frashokereti.

Teachers are of two kinds: one who is *within* and the other who is a '*ratu*' (a pious teacher). In our scriptures, the teacher-disciple relationship is mentioned by words such as 'ahu and ratu'; 'Zarathushtra and Zarathushtratemo'. However, the disciple must first light his own lamp within, to signify his readiness/worthiness for a teacher. The teacher is there only as a Guide; it is the disciple who has to walk the path of his own ability and effort, being aware that Spirit gives only spiritual gifts and universal blessings, not gifts of kind.

It is important to remember that none of the prophets ever acquired their spiritual wisdom in a university. Faith and Devotion (surrender to His Will) are the essential keys to acquiring spirituality, which no university teaches. If universities could teach wisdom (spirituality), the world would be different! While knowledge is acquired and is the achievement of the mind, wisdom is the quality that evolves to be a possession of immortal, immaterial, and divine Soul.

Spirituality is not different from religiosity. Prophets who have had the highest spiritual experiences, were all very religious. In fact, they all had religious experiences during their communion with God (Spirit). They attuned themselves with the Supreme White Light and personally experienced Its Divine Working through the different colors of the

spectrum, and established their religions accordingly. Religion being a pathway to God, religiosity is spirituality. Spirituality is indeed the highest religious experience possible. It is the yearning of the Soul to merge with the Spirit of immortality. *Yasna Ameretatum*: spirituality/immortality is achieved only through prayers (mantra), ritual (yasna), and staot, which is religion.

Finally, we must note, that while it is necessary to cultivate the mind which is the essential link between the body (physical) and the soul (spiritual), it is important to remember that the mind is the means of acquiring, and not the source of, wisdom. In yoga, tranquillity of the mind must prevail, so that the soul can communicate with the spirit. Vohu Mano, the Archangel, as a proper noun, refers to Bahman Amesha-spand who is One (United) with Ahura Mazda. As an adjective, 'vohu mano' or the 'Good Mind' refers to a spiritually enlightened mind.

Only a spiritually enlightened mind and not the mundane intelligence can successfully overcome the fetters of the dual mentalities and pave the way for the soul to attune with the spirit. The term enlightened mind implies truly good, that has seen the Light of Wisdom, i.e. spirituality. If our sub-celestial mind could possess a glimmer of Vohu Mano, we would be immortal and thoroughly Spiritual! We would be Spirit! And, beyond discussing spirituality! ■

**PERVIN MISTRY** graduated with honors in philosophy and literature from Bombay university. Pervin has been an independent student of religion throughout her life. She has authored articles in the *Eclectic*, the *Theosophical Network*, the *Canadian Theosophist*, and *FEZANA Journal*, and presented papers at the *Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1993*, the *North American Zoroastrian Congress at Vancouver in 1992*, and the *World Symposium on Mythology in Los Angeles in 1987*. She is also an active participant at *Interfaith gatherings*.

# Sacred Spaces and Spiritual Expression

By Jehan Bagli  
Princeton, New Jersey

*Prophet Zarathushtra, in proclaiming his Message at the early dawn of civilization, some 3,500 years ago, unfolds a radically innovative concept of the preservation of Creation. The world and its environment is perceived as a 'Sacred Space'. Humanity, as steward of the Creation, has an obligation and the responsibility to ensure its progress towards perfection.*

Gathas, believed to be the prophetic words of Zarathushtra amply reveal the importance of the universe as a Sacred Creation. In Ys 29.1 we hear the Soul of the Universe lament to the Creator over the torment of the fury, rapine, hatred, greed and other vices it experiences, and pleads with Ahura Mazda for a Savior. Verse eight of the same hymn speaks of the revelation by Vohu Manah – the Good Mind – of Zarathushtra Spitama, as the one best suited to emancipate the Universe from its agony.

Prophet Zarathushtra in proclaiming his Message at the early dawn of civilization, some 3500 years ago, unfolds a radically innovative con-

# Spirituality or Religiosity



By Pervin Mistry  
Toronto, Ontario

The word spirituality is derived from the term 'spirit'. Spirit has no size, form or weight and therefore, it cannot be described physically. Ahura Mazda, and the Divine Fravashis and Yazatas are Divine spirits having no physical existence. Their spiritual essence is present in material manifestation but the spirit itself is beyond physical.

Like Spirit, the Soul is a purely immortal, non-material and divine principle in the heart of man. Consequently 'spirituality' is the experience, the direct communion between two divine entities, the Spirit and the Soul. Anyone who has had a spiritual experience knows that such an experience cannot be described with mere words, and that spiritual experiences are much more profound relative to the psychic ones.

Different religions have different ways (disciplines) to attain spirituality. To put us in communion with Ahura Mazda, the Divine Fravashis and Yazatas, Asho Zarathushtra has given us the sacred *manthra spenta* (holy words/efficacious sounds) which are rooted in 'Staot Yasna' (Old Avestan prayers, including the Gathas). 'Staot' means the Primordial Sound (vibrations) created by the First Ray of Light which burst forth at the beginning of Creation, and is diffused throughout Nature. Being at the very root of nature, staot brings into existence the space-time continuum. The utterance of manthras based on staot, transcend

the space-time continuum, in order to find the reciprocal resonance in the spiritual world of light. Being rooted in the natural laws of light and sound the holy manthra spenta is not subjected to the man-made rules of grammar and language. Therefore, it is improper and inappropriate to explain or understand such holy words through the medium of philology alone.

Communion between the Spirit, being of the nature of light, and the Soul, its counter-part is best achieved through the language of light and sound, which is staot. Ys 30.1 specifically states that efficacious manthra is best for spirituality, which will be attained by *Yasna* (union with the Divine), through "staotacha Ahurai" (Ahura Mazda's own Spiritual Language of staot). *Ardibehesht Yasht* asserts that the utterance of 'manthra' is best for purity of the soul in order to attain spirituality.

Spirituality is enhanced through prayers. During prayers, the soul becomes the receptacle of higher spiritual consciousness, and attunes itself in direct communion with the Divine through sound, motion, and devotional thought vibrations which constitute the Divine Light (waves of energy). Sound and light, both being the function of waves, the sounds of staot uttered physically are absorbed into the rays of Divine Light instantly. The meaning behind "ahunim vairim tanum paiti" ("the utterance of the Ahunavar prayer protects the body"), may be better understood through modern science which accepts the potency of sound as Energy.

Besides the holy manthra spenta, Asho Zarathushtra has also given us Fire through which spirituality is achieved. Fire is both spiritual as well as physical. Being spiritual, Fire (Asha Vahishta), is a Divinity. Fire is equated with Ahura Mazda's Own Inner Light and Life/Energy.

As energy, Fire transmutes the physical (matter) into the spiritual. It is the source of all Creation. No Zarathushti ritual is complete without the presence of Fire. In the Gathas [Ys.34.4] Asho Zarathushtra himself seeks a vision and a communion with Ahura Mazda, through Fire, which is worshiped as the 'Spirit Holiest'. Fire and staot are both Divine Energies which attune a Zarathushti to Ahura Mazda.

In all Zarathushti homes it is necessary to keep the 'divo' (oil lamp) and/or the hearth fire perpetually burning. When a Zarathushti prays staot in the presence of Fire, he/she communes with Ahura Mazda Himself as science now proves that every particle of light (photon) has intelligence, and Mazda is Wisdom. The divo and the hearth fire are the physical manifestations of the Divine Light which permeates through time and space. Ahura Mazda, being Spirit, resides in the spiritual world, while His Son, the Fire ("athro Ahurahe Mazdao puthra"), adorns the Earth, in order to propel the entire Creation towards Frashokereti.

**Can spirituality be taught?** The answer is No. The prophets are the Divine Messengers because they each experienced the sacred commu-



# SPIRITUALITY

## EXPERIENCE OF AN ARCHITECT

*The idea of spirituality and religiosity proved to be very crucial in my personal and professional life. I can better explain how religiosity and spirituality helped me by presenting my understanding of my religion and the spiritual connection.*

By Kamalrukh R. Katrak  
Chicago, Illinois

While growing up I was told that being a Mazdayasni, I could accept fire as a symbol of the light of life burning within myself. To understand that light within myself better, I could accept and use the religion of Zarathushtra as a guide and teacher. Although confusing at first, this idea of spirituality and religiosity proved to be very crucial in my personal and professional life. It has thus had a great deal to do with the development of my 'personality'. I can better explain how religiosity and spirituality helped me by presenting my understanding of my religion and the spiritual connection.

The religion of Zarathushtra as understood by me does not proclaim the existence of perfection. This is one of the reasons why it is easy to relate to. It asks one to have the courage and strength to do whatever one thinks is best. It requires the need to maintain loyalty towards one's ideas and show perseverance towards its fulfillment. It further carries on to explain that there are no acts of right or those of wrong, just those that best dictate individual reason. No matter in what way one tries to express oneself - one should try to do it with integrity and the intention of being able to justify one's action to oneself.

The acceptance of the spiritual through the symbolism presented by the fire goes along with the willingness to accept its brilliance and warmth, with its scorching and

destructive qualities. I have thus been able to understand my 'Spiritual Being' through the religion of Zarathushtra gaining experience, courage, authority and a good sense of reason. I also absolutely believe in the assertion made by Pruyser [1971] that psychologically, religion is an elaborate human 'rescue operation', a set of beliefs that comforts humans in times of emotional need.

I cannot make a distinction between spirituality and religiosity. However, I do know that a religious person is not necessarily a spiritual person whereas a spiritual person generally looks towards religion for explanation. It is also a known fact that Man will go to science for new concepts of space and for the means to ease and prolong his physical life, but in order to save himself from spiritual genocide and remain man, He will go to the mythopoeist for the eternal dialogue.

The myth is the image man creates, either in verbal or in visual form, in which he tries to explain or to invoke an answer for the unanswerable...

- Milton Horn (Sculptor).

Milton Horn had also once said:

The mythmakers' responsibility to the spiritual needs of the community is the heartbeat of the creative act.

This is exactly what the practice of Architecture means to me. It is a sharing and a shedding of love. To be able to create space and forms that embrace spiritually and physically, all those that come in contact with it and help provide a means for an answer for the unanswerable. Architecture much like the religion of Zarathushtra has no absolute. Like

religiosity, architecture, helps understand the point at which myths, poems and the arts intersect. Religiosity affects my work because in it I see the same principles that I find when looking at a great work of art: organization, creation of one form that can exist and transcend time. With that understanding I try to create an image that is not an image of one people, but of all people.

**On the nature of Spirituality.** It helps me to understand that the function of architecture is not to decorate but to integrate, not to entertain but to orientate one within the context of this universe. Architectural form thus created inhabits actual space in all its dimensions, and by its own inherent structural logic is able to impress upon imaginations a sense of reality. The feelings that are evoked through the spirituality as explained by the religion of Zarathushtra, is something that I have always wanted to communicate with others and make it more than an abstract idea. I do it best through the practice of Architecture. ■



**KAMALRUKH KATRAK**, a registered architect in the state of Illinois, and a dedicated Zarathushti, who developed a keen sense of religiosity for the Zarathushti religion, growing up in her impressionable years, across from an Atash Behram. She was involved with Adopt-a-Village program in India, Habitat for Humanity in U.S. and a docent with the Society of Architectural Historians in Chicago. She is a founding member of Panto-Ulema - an architectural/engineering firm based in Mumbai.

brings oneself to a state of awareness to experience it.

How can Zarathushtis develop their spiritual consciousness? The religious conviction that ultimately good will prevail over evil through the practice of Ashoi, recognition of Divine Justice, belief in the resurrected state, with the approaching of Frashokereti, and unshaken faith in the supreme force – Ahura Mazda, are but some of the avenues that can guide one to a spiritual awareness.

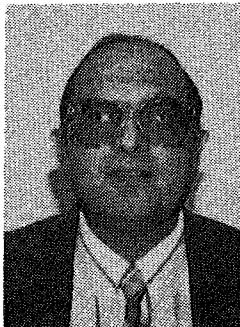
One must recognize that a spiritual experience, however significant, only affects profoundly the life of the person who perceives it. It is a humbling exercise, that raises one's consciousness from the physical world to the Reality beyond – to the Divine. Spirituality is an avenue of divine richness and not to material enrichment. In this materialistic milieu one should be cautious to discriminate between true devotion and subversion of a divine encounter.

A deep sense of religiosity instilled through serious commitment to Zarathushti rituals and ceremonies can be one way to foster a spiritual lifestyle. FEZANA through member Anjumans needs to develop the necessary infrastructure of institutions that could enlighten our future generation to pursue the path. Guided by tradition, these institutions must incorporate and adopt modality to reflect the ethical principles of the society we live in, without sacrificing the fundamental Zarathushtrian ideology.

In our recorded history, our forefathers faced with differing geographic locale have continuously fine-tuned their traditional heritage without compromising the basic Zarathushtrian teachings. These fine-tunings in our history may well be at the basis of the differences of opinion and practices that we experience today, that causes divisiveness and undermines our spiritual strength. Focusing on the higher planes of religious consciousness, I am certain that we will succeed to enhance our individual and collective spirituality,

and rise beyond the minor differences, to emerge as a community with strong religiosity, deserving of the inheritor of the first monotheistic revealed religion of the world. ■

**FIRDOSH MEHTA** is a mechanical engineer trained in India and USA, presently residing and working in Alberta, Canada. He was the founding member and President of the



Zoroastrian Association of Alberta, and its executive committee member for sixteen years. He represented the Alberta Anjuman as founding member of FEZANA, and co-chaired the Small Groups and Education committees since its inception. Presently he is co-chair of the Canadian Chapter Committee, and an active member of the board. He is also an active member of the Interfaith Council of Edmonton and a founding member of The Edmonton Interfaith Center for Education and Action.

## Rituals, Spirituality ...

[Continued from page 26]

Classes, and mobilized children from various areas, that led to immense interest among the parents. From these children, scholars and teachers of religion have evolved, public interest in Navjote rekindled, books for children and adults published, and people began to participate in religious lectures with enthusiasm. There is no reason why this experience cannot be repeated in North America. The love of Zarathushtra and his teachings is dormant in the heart of every Zarathushti, all it needs is a spark to rekindle the Fire. ■

**DR. DARYOUSH JAHANIAN** is a practicing obstetrician-gynecologist in the Kansas City area. A founder and president of the Fravahar Zoroastrian youth organization in Tehran, and has served on the boards of arts and religion organizations. He is the founding president of the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas and has also served as a trustee of the Rustam Guiv Foundation of New York.

### THE FIRE WE IGNORED

*We ask your forgiveness O! Lord Zarathushtra,  
For the manner we have disappointed you.  
You gave us your message – Good thoughts, words and deeds,  
But our limitations rather than our spirituality had an upper hand.*

*We have abused your prayer to our satisfaction,  
Richness in materialism is how we think,  
We use your name a million times in vain,  
With the hope some wealth may trickle in.*

*The words we speak are far from what you taught,  
This overflow from our disoriented memory.  
Without the filters of reasoning which we have lost,  
We fail to light the flame you cherished.  
We misinterpreted the deeds you mentioned,  
Feeding our egos instead of helping others.  
We are now left without you or your purpose,  
We do feel ashamed O! Lord to ask for your help again.*

Poem written by Daraius Panveliwalla  
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

Ethically he developed a progression for man's conduct in society, First the need to cultivate Vohu Mana – the good mind. Second, the reinforcement of Khshathra – courage and constructive power to a better society. Third, armed with these attributes of the divine spark, the enhancement of Armaity – love and service to humanity. Finally the goal of Haurvatat – attaining perfection as life's ultimate destiny.



- Benjamin Franklin

Zarathushtrian

**Spirituality**  
*and*  
**Religiosity**  
in the North American Context

It is not an easy task for our generation that has migrated to North America from various parts of the world to comprehend this conceptual nature of spirituality, and even a

Gazing at the stars on a cool summer night, and being awe struck at the immenseness of our Universe, or fathoming the beauty and color of the deep sea, or experiencing the romantic encounter of watching the sunset holding hands with one's beloved; each one of these can be a spiritual experience for different individuals. In contrast, being diagnosed with a terminal health condition, resorting to faith in prayers, and being declared free of that ailment ranks highly as a mystical spiritual event. It is clear that spirituality is a sentiment that varies with the experience and the individual. It is something that one encounters from within and



**KEKI R. BHOTE** is the President of Keki R. Bhote Associates, a company specializing in Quality and Productivity improvement. A long time student of Zarathushtrian Theology and history, Keki has been a pioneer in furthering Zarathushtrian Faith in North America. He was a founder and trustee of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, and founding president of Zoroastrian Association of America. Keki has lectured widely at 3rd WZCongress, World Parliament of Religions, YMCA College, and over 100 church groups/clubs on the subject of Zarathushtrian and comparative religion. He is on the Board of Directors of WZO and Vice President, Center for Ancient Iranian Studies.

### YOUR OUTLOOK

Many years ago, an American shoe manufacturer sent two reps out to different parts of the Australian outback to see if they could drum up some business among the aborigines. Shortly, the company received telegrams from both agents.

The first one said: "No business here – natives don't wear shoes."

The second one said: "Great opportunity here – natives don't wear shoes."

*From Manashni, Houston  
contributed by Zarir Sethna*

# SPIRITUALITY

## and Zarathushtis of North America

*Examining the two dimensions of spirituality: a cosmological and quasi-mystical spirituality; and an ethical spirituality.*



By Keki R. Bhote  
Chicago, Illinois

**Spirituality, Gnosticism and Mysticism.** There is a close linkage between spirituality, gnosticism, and mysticism in the sense that all three represent freedom from materialism and worldliness – baggage that weigh down the average person from seeking spiritual truths. All three of these disciplines are a marked departure from religiosity, which has a pompous connotation of excessive piety.

Spiritualism can be considered the first stage in man's quest for the divine. Gnosticism goes further – beyond the blind faith prescribed by some of the world's prophets. Mysticism is the ultimate spiritual experience that seeks union with the divine through deep meditation or semi-conscious contemplation beyond perception or intellectualism. It is for the very few deeply contemplative persons – ascetic for the most part – to delve into gnosticism or mysticism. But all mankind can hope to reach for spirituality even while living in the sea of materialism that surrounds our daily lives.

This article examines the two dimensions of spirituality: (1) a cosmological and quasi-mystical spirituality; and (2) an ethical spirituality.

**Cosmological Spirituality and Ethical Spirituality.** Cosmological spirituality is a personal discipline for which there is no dogma or prescribed road map. Each person, through study, through discourse with the leaders of religion and philosophy,

through prayers or meditation, arrives at one's own understanding of the meaning of life and of the Infinite. This enables one to gradually jettison the baser human needs and instincts, as described by Meslow in his famous hierarchy of needs and leading to self actualization. Eventual enlightenment is the renunciation of worldly ties and personal vision of God.

Ethical spirituality is a course or attribute that involves an interaction with others, wherein one participates fully in the arena of life, but is ethical in thoughts words and deeds and is a model of rectitude and service to fellow man, especially the downtrodden.

**Zarathushtra's Spirituality.** The message of prophet Zarathushtra was both cosmological as well as ethical. Cosmologically he went beyond spirituality, beyond gnosticism to pure mysticism. He was probably the world's first mystic. His intense contemplation and deep study led him to a vision of God as a creator and architect of the universe. He postulated that a gleam of God's attribute radiates in every human being, and that *man's mission in life was to move the world towards perfection.* He formulated the simple but profound Law of Asha which governs both the physical world of matter and the human world of spirit. Good and evil, and a symbolic heaven and hell, are respectively the adherence to and deviation from that Path of Asha. Further in the famous quote from the Gathas he enjoined his followers to pursue their own vision of the cosmic spirituality.

on a thin wire; a loose connection can end it all. With no control over it, we often find comfort in a prayer to the almighty, asking for support. Here religion and our faith in God is our pillar of strength. This is also true in the event of a personal tragedy.

Human shortcomings such as vices of greed, anger, revenge, envy, ego etc. must be refined. The goal of religions in general and the Zarathushtrian faith in particular is to refine vices and transform mankind to the path of virtues, as Zarathushtra says, "like a molten metal".

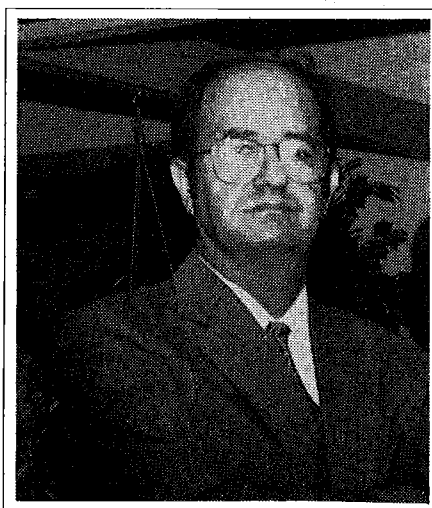
**Means to attain religiosity.** As the need for religion is justified for modern society, it is imperative to explore how one can attain religiosity. Individuals can evolve adherence to a religion through various routes. (1) Rituals and prayers; (2) Observance of religious services, ceremonies, and holidays; (3) Love for their prophet; (4) History of their religion; and (5) Teachings of the prophet. Most people adhere to their religion through the first three routes.

#### PERPETUATION OF THE ZARATHUSHTRIAN RELIGION.

**Ceremonies.** Unlike some other religious traditions, we are fortunate to have at our disposal all the five routes accessible to us and we have to make use of them. Our children should be taught the importance of prayers and their meanings. Navjote (*Sedreh Pushi*) and wedding ceremonies are important occasions that can leave lasting impressions of the religion. The age for a Navjote in Iran is 3-4 years older than in India, so as to give a child a good knowledge of religion before the auspicious ceremony. It is the responsibility of the parents to recognize that Navjote is the beginning and not the end of religious understanding, and the educational process must continue. Other observances such as the Prophet's birthday and passing, and rituals for Fravardegan, are the occasions that can instill a feeling of Zarathushtrian sentiment, that can leave profound impact on the memory.

**History.** Historically we should emphasize the study of early and

recent events of our history, after the invasion of the Arabs. It is important to impress upon the youth, the events such as, at the turn of the 18th century, more than 80,000 Iranian Zarathushtis sacrificed their lives and others fled the blood bath, to live in misery, to preserve their religious heritage, so that we can practice the religion with pride today. Zarathushtis in Iran paid heavy religious taxes (*Jizya*) to perpetuate their faith. The name of Maneckji Limji Houshang Hataria who dedicated his life to save the Zarathushtrian community of Iran from total extinction, and who said, "I found the Zoroastrians to be exhaust-



Dr. Daryoush Jahanian

ed and trampled; no one in this world can be more miserable than them", is memorialized in the names of our sons. Similar historical accounts of Parsi leaders should be kept alive in the minds of our youth.

**Zarathushtra's Teachings:** We are fortunate in having the words of the prophet embedded in the Gathas, which provides a direct route of communion in our religion. In our religious teachings we must emphasize the Gathas, that were preserved by generations of clergies through their sacrifices. The Gathas reflect not only the genuine views of Zarathushtra about God, good and evil, human rights and liberty, but also, draw for us a true image, and set his deeds as example. Here we find a spiritual man who is fair, just, reasonable, who has faith in his mission – the search for truth and knowledge –

who does not rest until his mission is accomplished, but does not force his views upon anyone.

Determined to eliminate social injustice of powerful rulers and priests, and to establish justice in the new society, he calls 'Khshtira Vairya' – the Chosen Dominion – he invokes people to decide with the bright mind, after knowing the result of the right or wrong choice. He declares that the reward of this government will be peace and serenity, and vehemently forbids violence saying: "withhold fury, do not resort to acts of violence and cruelty." Despite setbacks, he does not compromise with the wrongful, and with unshaken faith, longs only for God's love [Ys. 46.2] and not power and material gain.

We should also impart knowledge of the younger Avesta, which, at times deviates and even contradicts; but is largely influenced by the prophet's teachings. The deviations in Yasna Haptanhaiti are less marked than in the Vendidad, however once youth comprehend the Gathas, they can transcend the departures, and appreciate even more the truth in Gathic thoughts. Most religions are subject to distortion after the life of the founder, for different reasons; however, this has happened to Zarathushtra's message, at times beyond recognition. The reason for this is that his teachings were beyond the scope of time so much, that some of the contemporary writings are damaging.

**Conclusion.** Religious education should start at an early age when children are able to learn and absorb fast. Books for children should be written by scholars, for various age groups. In time, we should establish an Education Fund that will permit the evolution of future scholars from today's children.

In Iran, thirty five years ago, our children were enrolled in non-Zarathushti schools, were growing up without knowledge of their faith, values, tradition and Navjote was left in oblivion. It was the Zoroastrian Youth Organization (*Fravahar*) that established the Friday Religious

[Continued on page 29]

the remembrance of Zarathushtrian Holy liturgies, can clear the thoughts, keep the mind from excessive immersion into the material, keep alive the consciousness of the Divine within and without in the viable world, and open the doors to the path of enlightenment.. That, is the beginning of the fulfillment of *Vohu Manah*, the realization of the *Path of Asha*, the recognition of the *Spiritual within the Microcosm of life*, leading to *Khshthra Vairya* – Divine Dominion on this earth. ■

# ZARATHUSHTRIAN RITUALS, SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOSITY

## How to perpetuate these to our next generation

*In today's world of technology, sometimes a question is heard regarding the role of religion in a modern society and why there should be a religion. Particularly by observing the bloodshed in various parts of the world in the name of religion, these voices are even louder and even say: "Wouldn't we be better off without religion?"*

**By Daryoush Jahanian  
Kansas City, Kansas**

First, we should find out why from the beginning man has been associated with religion and where does the root of religion reside? To analyze this issue better, we must remember that humans in all parts of the world no matter where they live, whether in the world of technology or in a primitive tribal state, have common spiritual aspects. All children beginning the third year of life love to listen to animal stories, and many people have developed their own mythology. By the same token all humans have adopted a religion and to evaluate their national psychology, it is imperative to study their religious tenets. Love of children for animal tales and that of humans for religion are common patterns that originate in the brain. For this reason man is called a 'religious creature'.

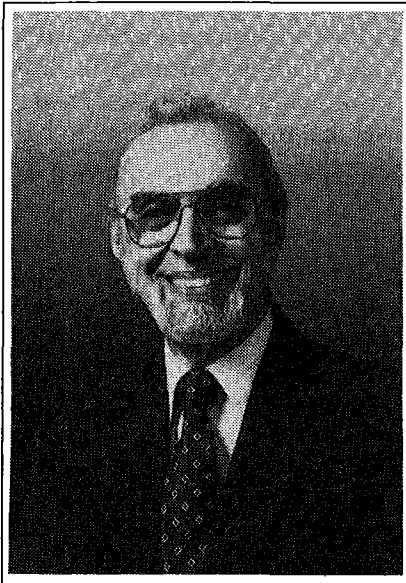
One may ask, how does the brain react, if from the beginning children

are brought up without any religion. This in fact was practiced in the former Soviet Union where all the religions were suppressed for three generations. Subconsciously the vacuum was filled with an 'ideology' which in fact is a materialistic religion. The words 'ideology of a philosopher' were applied in order to shun the phrase 'religion of a prophet'. Nevertheless, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and declaration of cultural freedom, a genuine interest in the religious roots has resurfaced.

**Need for religion.** How can the need for religion be transmitted to the younger generation in modern society? Perhaps, the place of religion is best recognized by the fact that the human is an imperfect creature both mentally and physically. Physically we all decline with time, and often we try to postpone the ultimate by the artificial, such as medical assistance. Traveling in a plane, our life hangs

*Jehan Bagli is Guest Editor of this special issue of FEZANA Journal on "Spirituality and Religiosity in the Religion of Zarathushtra."*

*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.*



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## THE RELIGIOUS AND THE DIVINE

When our ancestors landed on the shores of India in 936 C.E., they had but one single and major objective and that was to “*preserve the spirituality of the faith of Zarathushtra*”. They went through insurmountable tribulations and thousands sacrificed their lives, to keep from desecration, the consecrated Alat and maintain aglow the Sacred Fire that they are believed to have transported from Khorasan. During these years of turmoil the consecrated Fire journeyed through Sanjan to Bahrot to Navsari to Bulsar and finally to Udvada. This voyage through villages of India, by that Consecrated Fire, marks a period of over *eight hundred years* before it found the present throne in 1742, in Udvada, where it is today.

In Iran a similar state of affair prevailed in 11th to 13th centuries when, with the insurgence of Turks and Mongols in Azerbaijan and Seistan the Sacred Fire Temples were razed to the ground and tens of thousands of Zarathushtis slaughtered.

Rarely do we, who live in the 20th century milieu of North America, realize that our ancestors were people with high order of spirituality. They believed that life is but a glimmer of an eternal glow of wisdom beyond the physical. Traditionally they prayed and meditated in front of their consecrated Hearth Fire, as did Asho Zarathushtra [Ys 33.12-14], to commune with that Reality beyond – their personal God Ahura Mazda. They sanctified Mazda, to say grace to, and ask guidance from, so that they may *feel* his presence in this physical world around them. *They lived with and died for Zarathushti Religiosity* so that we in today's world can practice freely the first monotheistic faith.

The surge of Zarathushtis to this continent was primarily motivated for

‘material betterment’. Religion, although in conscious view, was clearly overshadowed by the overt pressures of the new social fabric. The community having successfully integrated into this new milieu, the dormant sentiment for the recognition of the spiritual has surfaced over the past decade. The primal challenge is to spark Religiosity in the mind of the

moment, when the human mind is totally divorced from the diversions of the material, and worldly thoughts, words and actions. It is in a state of *Spenta Aramaiti* - Rightmindedness, Holy Tranquillity.

The human mind in its physical state cannot fully comprehend God or the associated religiosity. Bestial notions of food, shelter, comfort, and pleasure continuous-

ly tend to overpower the mental capacity. These carnal instincts are basic parts of physical life, and years of fascina-

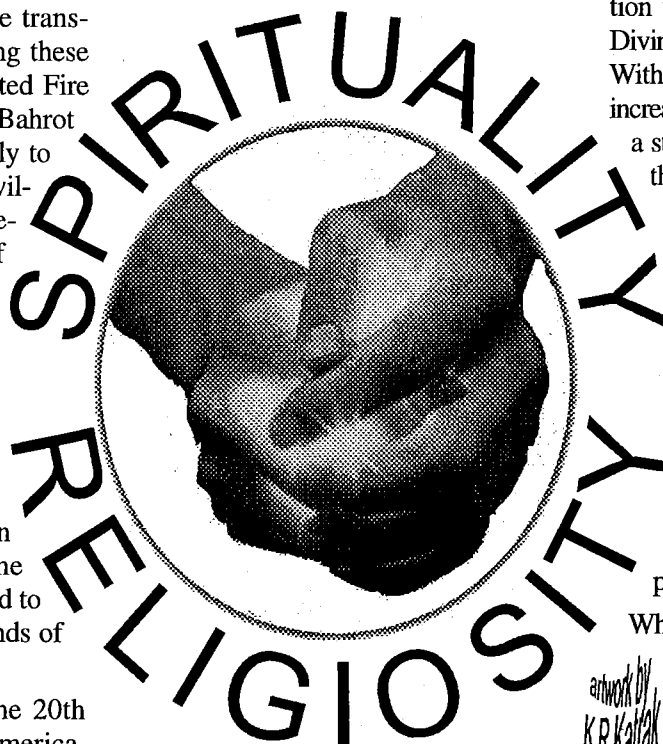
tion with worldly charms entombs the Divine Spirit within beyond recognition. With the passage of time, it becomes increasingly difficult for the mind to attain a state of purity devoid of the physical thoughts to realize the immanent Divinity. It takes a very special effort to free the mental activities off the physical. This state of mental purity is often accomplished through isolated meditation, in a mystic state of spirituality. While the knowledge develops the corporeal facet of mind, the spiritual wisdom is only attainable to a mind free of earthly chaos, where Holy tranquility – *Spenta Aramaiti* - can prevail.

Why one should commune with God is a question that can only find an answer if one believes in God. And the belief in God can only evolve through persuasive efforts

of daily communion with the Reality beyond, through a spiritual discipline. With strength of will, patience and determination one can penetrate this paradigm to ignite the spark of religiosity through focusing the mind on a single entity. Zarathushtra identifies this entity for us, in the Gathas [Ys 34.4]; our ancestors realized it as a means of communion, that is the *epiphany of Mazda – the Fire*. The flame of an oil lamp or of a candle in a consecrated corner, commands the respect of the spirit of the Mazda just as much, as that, incarnate in the consecrated fire of Atash Behram or in the fiery sun up above.

A devotion for a short period, in front of a consecrated flame, dedicated to

# ZARATHUSHTI



artwork by  
K.R. Kulkarni

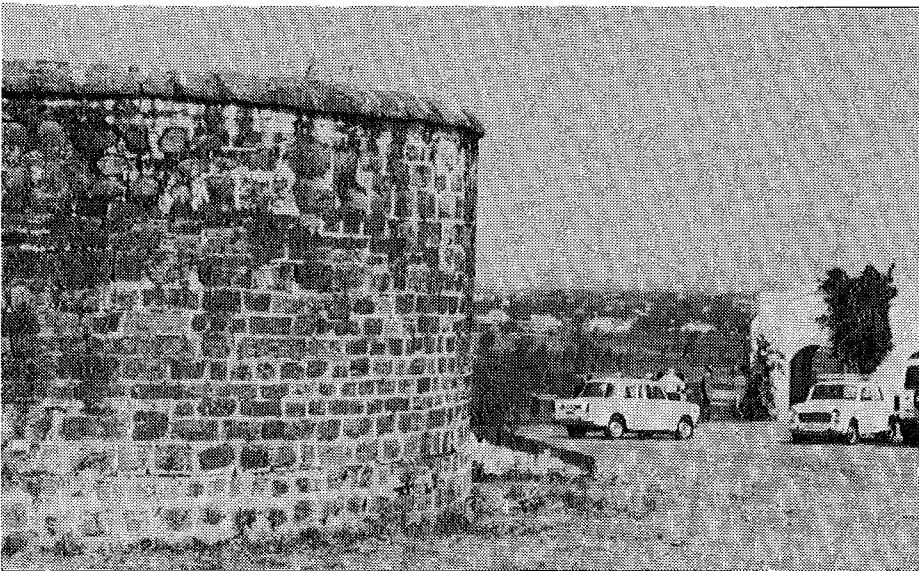
By Jehan Bagli, Guest Editor

next generation. The sentiment for a religion is the belief in the existence of God. It is not something that can be explained in material terms of dollars and cents. It must evolve through observances and through cultivated intuition.

As will become apparent from the articles in this issue, spirituality is a notion that is innate in humans, and comes to light through various channels in life. A personal tragedy, a natural disaster, an event beyond comprehension of a mortal mind or sheer tranquillity and awe for nature, can trigger the feeling of religiosity. The instant that triggers that sentiment of Spirituality is the



*Top, Members of the Mhow anjuman at the Mhow Agiary. Below, the Mhow dokhma, originally built in 1840, is still functioning.*



tain Dhunjishaw Marker, President of the Mhow Anjuman, spoke of the 1,000 Parsis who lived there in the early 1900s, which number dwindled to 650 in the 1940s, and is barely 100 now. Only about 20 are under 50 years of age.

"We have trust funds, and we have properties," he said, "and we are advertising for young couples to come and settle here." Titles to many of the beautiful bungalows and lands, given to the Parsis under the Governor's order in the mid 1800s, are in dispute, and in danger of lapsing to the military because of disuse. In 1818, when the British established

their headquarters in Mhow, a few pioneer Parsi families – the Appoos, Dotiwalas, Masalawalas and Golwalas, came to the town and are still there. The Parsi population gradually increased, they prospered, and were respected by all for their honesty, sincerely and integrity.

In the early 1800s, under the leadership of Dasturji Hormasji Jamaspji Jamaspasa, they built an Agiary. During repairs in 1995, the 155-year-old structure collapsed, and has now been completely re-built through the largess of many Zarathushti trusts and individual benefactors and the efforts of the Mhow community.

In 1840, a Tower of Silence was consecrated on a hillock, about 7 kms from town, which is still functioning.

Through the years, numerous institutions were built in Mhow by the Parsis, including Dotiwala Hall, the Dorabji Pestonji Charitable Dispensary (in 1875), a small English school (in 1866), two Khan Bahadur Edulji Pestonji schools (in 1886), Khan Bahadur Khory Girls School (in 1887), Parsi Dharamshala, the Bai Pirojbai A. Dadabhoy Public Library (in 1936) and others. In 1928, E. C. Cowasji built a Power House and supplied electricity to the whole of Mhow, which until then had been using kerosene oil lamps.

Through the generosity of the Khan Bahadur Byramshaw K. Illava Public Charity Trust, started by the philanthropic Illava family, large donations have been made to the hospital in Indore. The Late Miss Homai Illava was a past-President of the Mhow Anjuman, and served the Anjuman for 18 years. The name of Rustomji Cowasji Jall, MLA from Mhow, is connected to the Mhow Town Hall, Village Schools, Jall Auditorium of Indore, R. C. Jall Law College in Mhow, and an R. C. Jall Public Charity Trust.

The delegates were treated to a delicious curry and rice lunch at the large pavilion on the Agiary grounds, and a chance to talk with the members of the Mhow anjuman.

"What makes the community tick," said Dr. Masani, a respected elder of the community, "Is our adaptability – with Hindus and Muslims."

"In India we are at a cross-roads," he said, "We have to decide whether we should preserve the (Parsi) caste or whether we should preserve the religion (of Zarathushtra)."

The core issues, after all, are not that different. ■

a world body for Zarathushtis [see "From Debate to Dialog", FEZANA Journal, Spring 1998].

For the foreign delegates who attended the meeting, including FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, and Dinshaw and Goolcher Joshi from North America, and Rusi and Roshan Dalal from the UK, it was a truly enlightening and inspiring experience. The wonderful hospitality accorded to them – from the sumptuous meals prepared by the ladies of the Indore Anjuman, to the hotel, and travel arrangements, is deeply appreciated. For all this and much more, a big thanks is due to the hard-working leaders of FPZAI, especially Mr. Keki Gandhi, and the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman.

## Zarathushtis of Indore

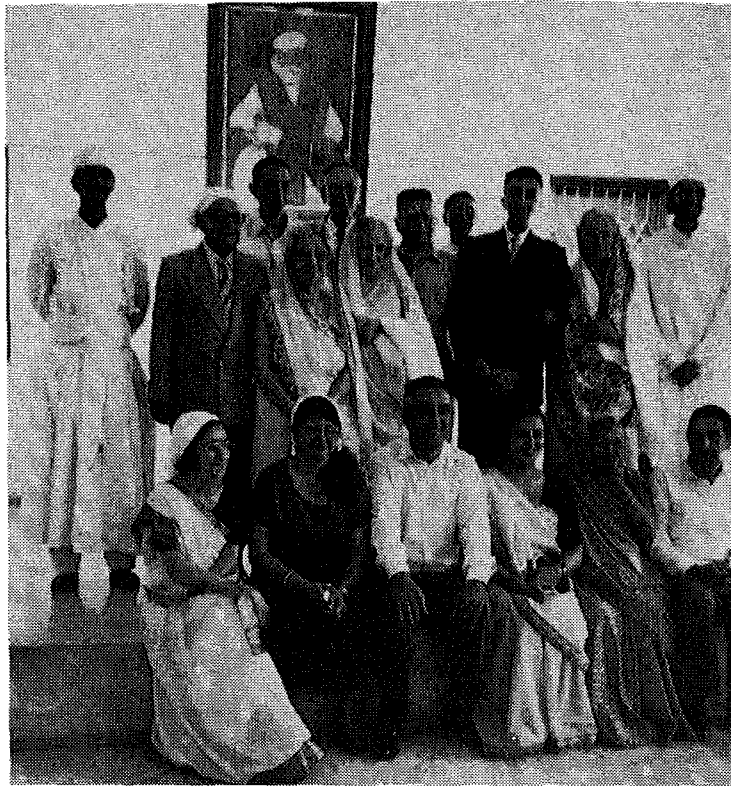
In 1873, Cowasjee Edebam became the first Parsi to settle in Indore, followed by other Parsis, who settled in the area that is now known as Parsi Mohalla. In 1879, a businessman, Hormusji Maneckjee Bhamgara built an Atash Dadgah, where it still stands today. Since 1882, three generations of the Rao family have officiated as priests at the Indore Dadgah. The agiary building was completely renovated in 1920 by Seth Pallonji Edulji Plumber, in the name of his son Dorabsha. In 1972, the old building was rebuilt at a cost of Rs. 64,000.

In 1878, Dr. Dasturji Hoshangjee Jamaspasana, Head Priest of Malwa and Deccan performed the consecration ceremonies of a dokhma, built from generous donations, including a sum of Rs. 3,000 in memory of Dinshawji Nanabhai Masalawala. A rest house was built by Dinshaw Shapurji. The heirs of Seth Framji Rane had a Sagdi built and sanctified in 1897.

Over the years, numerous Indore residents have held titles with the local

Holkar State government, including Khan Bahadur Manchershah Ragina, of Delhi Darbar, in 1911; Magistrate Khan Bahadur Gohal; Multezam Bahadur Ardeshir Marfatia, Multezam Bahadur B. Antia, and Multezam Bahadur Dorabjee Lawangir.

In 1920, an entrepreneur, Godrej M. Edulbheeram settled in Indore and started an automobile business, and soon Noshirwan & Co. (named after his son) became a local byword. Mr. Edulbheeram served as President of the Indore Anjuman from 1949 to his death in 1965. His son, Noshirwan, continued as President until 1987. The Godrej family built two Halls, Cawas Hall and Gool Hall in Parsi Mohalla.



*Ervad Rumi Panthaky, present Head Priest of Mhow, with members of the Mhow Zarathushti community. Portrait is of Dasturji Khurshedji Jamshedji Jamasp Asa.*

Parsi doctors, physicians and surgeons dominated the field for over 40 years. Dr. Sagoo, Dr. G. Anklesaria, Dr. Dundas, Dr. Motabai Thanewala, Dr. Sohrab Cama, Dr. J. N. Pohawala and Dr. Jungalwala were all highly respected in their fields of medicine.

The Anklesaria family established the largest bicycle showroom in Indore, which is now run by the third

generation. The Irani brothers survived competition from multi-nationals, to make a name in manufacturing soft-drinks. They also own an ice factory and fruit juice shop.

Homi Daji became member of Parliament, and practices as an advocate. Among other legal luminaries was Mr. R. C. Jall, chairman and director of almost every local textile mill, and a Member of the Legislative Assembly from Mhow; Advocate Meherjee Thanawala; district court judge Tehmurasp Marfatia; and prominent advocate Jal Patel.

The Ragina family started the Indore Cecil Hotel and ice cream factory and cinema hall called Milkyway.

The Empress Hotel was owned by the Jawrewalas, and the Sarosh family owned the Rest House. Recently, the Thanewala family built one of the topmost hotels in Indore, Hotel President and Restaurant Landmark along with travel agencies.

In 1973, Bomi Heerjee, current President of the Indore Anjuman, came as Commissioner and later became Secretary to the Government of India and Advisor to the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. The Unwalla family, the Camas, the Ilavias (Dinu Ilavia was President of the Anjuman for some time), Minoo Engineer, Cyrus Master, Jalnawalla Satarawalla and Dara Irani are some others who have made notable contributions to the community. [From an

article by Zarine Cama]

## Zarathushtis of Mhow

The day after the FPZAI meeting, some delegates enjoyed the hospitality of the Zarathushtis of Mhow, a military station about 25 Km from Indore.

Sipping shandy on the verandah of his spacious bungalow, Group Cap-

hardly any Parsis here. We are not a dying community, but fading away slowly. We pray that something may change and Parsis may come again to Saronda. I have nothing to report.”

While the refrain of diminishing numbers in the smaller anjumans was most depressing, some of the larger Anjumans spoke on a very upbeat note of the activities and achievements of their members. Notable among them was the Tata Iron and Steel (TISCO) community of Jamshedpur, which spoke with great pride of their Managing Director Dr. Jamshed Irani, who was recently awarded a Knighthood of the British Empire [see *Events and Honors*, this issue].

Another upbeat moment was the visit of the delightful year-old triplets, and their parents, Thrity and Adil Dossabhoy of Indore. Three years ago, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, under the leadership of Mr. Jamshed Guzder, instituted a scheme to ‘adopt’ and financially underwrite all the expenses of the third child born to a couple, until the age of 18. In the case of the Dossabhoy triplets, since it was not conclusive which of the three was ‘the third child’, the BPP is supporting all three!

Another big difference that was evident was that here the Parsi community is a well-recognized and highly-respected segment of the population, with strong government,

political and business/industry ties. The fledgling community in North America can rarely garner the involvement of high-ranking government officials at its meetings.

FPZAI President Jamshed Guzder, Secretary Keki Gandhi, Bomi Heerjee, President of the hosting Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman, and others at the helm of FPZAI, deserve to be applauded for achieving such recognition for the community. Congratulatory letters were received from the President and Vice-President of India, the Prime-Minister and other high-ranking ministers. And the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, H. E. Mohammed Quereshi was Guest of Honor at the second day’s proceedings. The meeting received good coverage in the local press and on TV. Starting in the wee hours of the morning, scores of people were up early getting the hall ready for the arrival of His Excellency the Governor. The entire street was swept ‘clean, hosed down, and decorated with chalk designs all the way to the front door of the hall, which was laden with fresh flower torans. Ladies were dressed in their best ‘garas’. Dozens of uniformed CID officials, and also a couple of sniffing dogs, scoured the premises. A red-velvet and gold ‘throne’ arrived in a pick-up truck. And the Governor’s personal 6-piece band took it’s position at the back of the hall, ready to

play *Jana Gana Mana*, when the Governor arrived.

He paid glowing tributes to the contributions made by the Parsis, remembering the great roles played by Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozeshah Mehta and Madame Bhikaiji Cama, in the struggle for India’s freedom, and men like JRD Tata and Homi Bhabha in making the nation an industrial and technological power. “They have contributed much to the society and not taken anything. While other children are born with two mouths and one hand, Parsi children are born with two hands and one mouth” he said. “What is truly remarkable, is the quiet and unobtrusive manner in which the Parsis have gone about achieving such excellence.”

Mr. Marzban Patrawalla, elected last year to the National Commission for Minorities reported that Zoroastrians were among five religious minorities recognized in India. Others among the mainstream Hindus, were Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs. The afternoon of the second day was devoted to a discussion on evolving

*Left, FPZAI President J. N. Guzder with Governor of Madhya Pradesh, H. E. Mohammed Quereshi. Right, Thrity and Adil Dossabhoy and a friend (center), with the “Dossabhoy triplets”.*





*Clockwise, FPZAI Secretary Keki Gandhi, Indore Anjuman President Bomi Heerjee, Minorities Commission Representative Marzban Patrawalla and North Zone VP Lt. Gen. (Retd) A. M. Sethna.*

# Indian Anjumans Meet in Indore

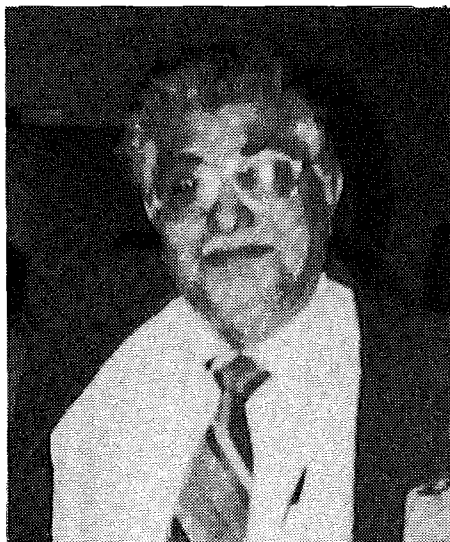
*A visit to an FPZAI meeting and to the Zarathushti communities in Indore and Mhow*

By Roshan Rivetna

Having attended every FEZANA AGM since its inception ten years ago, I went to the two-day Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) in Indore, in January this year, with some curiosity and a great deal of interest.

In many respects I found it to be very similar. Delegates from the comprising Anjumans (there are about 70 in India) had convened to give reports from their Anjumans, and to discuss matters relating to the Parsi community in India. And there were added agenda items of current interest, such as evolution towards a representative apex world Zoroastrian body.

Here, like in FEZANA, both official delegates and observers participated, and at times, voices were raised, mostly from a few of the vociferous delegates; though here I thought I did observe a tad more melodrama.



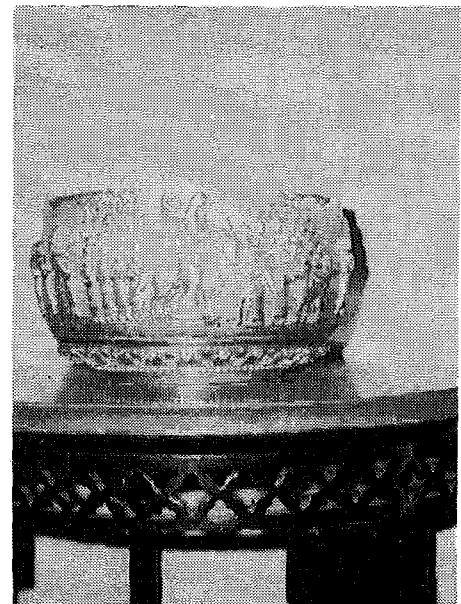
While many of the discussion topics were similar (such as reports from its very active youth organization, FOZYA, religious education programs, planning of seminars and congresses), a difference was very evident. While topics at FEZANA meetings usually veer towards growth of the community and building Darbe Mehrs and strategic plans for the future, here many of the Anjuman reports, sadly, focussed on social issues. The smaller communities, such as the 9 families in Bhopal, or Borivli or Palghar or the 26 families in Jhansi, spoke of the dilapidated condition of their agiaries and aramgahs. Many spoke of the difficulty of managing their trust funds, and the need for welfare.

Some, such as the 85 Zarathushtis in Jabalpur, cannot find a full-time

priest, even though they are offering Rs. 5000 per month plus housing. (In North America, on the other hand, while priests would probably be available, none of the Associations have taken the initiative to raise funds to support a full-time, salaried priest.)

Very rarely did the meeting veer towards the topic of 'housing', so ubiquitous in reports from Mumbai. Rather, many Anjumans lamented that the young were leaving, and no one was left to take care of their communal properties. The "Defunct Anjuman Report" talked of matters of litigation regarding 200-year-old properties that are now in disuse.

In a most moving report, the delegate from the village of Saronda near Sanjan, lamented: "There used to be 110 Parsi bungalows. Now there are



From left, Curator of the museum Nivedita Mehta; Persian figure; specially commissioned silver bowl with scenes from Takht-i-Darius.

momentos of the 'Grand Old Man' Dadabhai Naoroji – his reading glasses, his prayer book and his pens with which he wrote his powerful speeches, a scroll and a citation presented by the Calcutta Parsi community to Dadabhai; a beautiful silver salver presented in 1913 to Dr. Sorab Nariman in recognition of his free medical services during the plague epidemic at the Fever Hospital in Bombay; a specially commissioned silver bowl with scenes from Takht-i-Darius; and a family tree of the Sethna family starting from Dastur Neriosang Dhaval.

Scenes of Mumbai in the early part of the 20th century from the post card collection of Mr. Alpaiwalla arouse nostalgic memories – an aerial view of the Dadar Parsi colony, Dhobi Talao when there really was a *talao* (tank); and nothing in the picture of a wide open and clean Muhammad Ali Road could foretell the condition of the road today.

A glimpse into the old Parsi settlements is given by the beautiful, old carved gateway of the Palia Desai Wad in Navsari, with the insertion of the Dastur Wad photograph and its wicket gate. As members of the extended family lived on the same street (or wad) it acquired names like Bamji Wad, Dastur Wad, etc.

According to curator Mrs. Nivedita Mehta, the museum has a very large

collection of other artifacts including clothing (hand-embroidered Chinese *gara* saris, embroidered sari borders, embroidered *jabblas* (children's dresses), books and documents, all generously donated by members of the community over the years. These also get displayed regularly. Lately a conscious effort is being made to preserve the old traditions of the community, not only by way of antiquities, but also by collecting old Parsi garba music, devotional songs sung at social and festive occasions, Gujarati poetry and theater.

Under the skilful direction of Mrs. Mehta, the museum is fulfilling the vision of Mr. Alpaiwalla of preserving the heritage of the Parsi community of India. But the museum could fulfill its mandate better if more publicity was given to it in within the community. There are some days when there is not a single visitor at all, and when there are visitors there are more from other communities than from Parsis.

The Parsi community owes a great debt to Mr. Framji Dadabhoy Alpaiwalla, a humble man with a vision, who spent all his wealth, time and efforts towards preservation and understanding of the Parsi heritage. ■

*Photographs by Dolly Dastoor and Cyrus Rivetna with special permission from Jamshed Guzder, Chairman of Bombay Parsi Punchayet.*

Persepolis. There is also a plaster cast of the inscription of Artaxerxes III (Persepolis, 5th century BCE) depicting the genealogy of the Achaemenians. Other excavated items on display from Persepolis are an iron nail, iron arrow-head, iron clamps from Yazd, the remains of a dokhma, excavated by Dr. Unwalla in 1956. The display of the dokhma shows household items in it which has left people to speculate that there must have been an epidemic of some sort which made people want to dispose off all the belongings of the infected person.

After the coming of the Zarathushtis to the west coast of India, there is little known history or artifacts of the Parsis for the next 1100 years, until the British period when the Parsis came into prominence.

Other highlights of the museum include: a land grant sealed by the personal seal of Mughul emperor Jehangir, given in 1618 AC to Mulla Hoshang and Mulla Jamasp, ancestors of 'Dadabhai Naoroji; personal



# A Glimpse of Parsi Heritage

A visit to the Framji Dadabhai Alpaiwalla Museum in Mumbai

By Dolly Dastoor  
Montreal, Quebec

**T**ucked away in the Khareghat Colony on Hughes Road, Mumbai, is a little known community museum on Parsis, depicting their rich heritage from their roots in ancient Iran to their immigration and eventual settlement in India. The museum was originally opened in 1954, but on November 7th 1981, it was reorganized and named after Framji Dadabhai Alpaiwalla, who originally conceived the idea.

Widowed twice with no children, fairly early in life, Mr. Alpaiwalla's main aim in life was to set up "The Parsi Historical Research Institute and Museum". For many years he tried to interest the Parsi Punchayet to acquire and administer a Parsi Museum. Finally, the Khareghat Memorial building with the Ranji wing for the museum was planned and the foundation stone laid in 1951. Mr. Alpaiwalla died in 1952, bequeathing his entire collection of Chinese porcelain, European glassware, iconographic materials, paint-

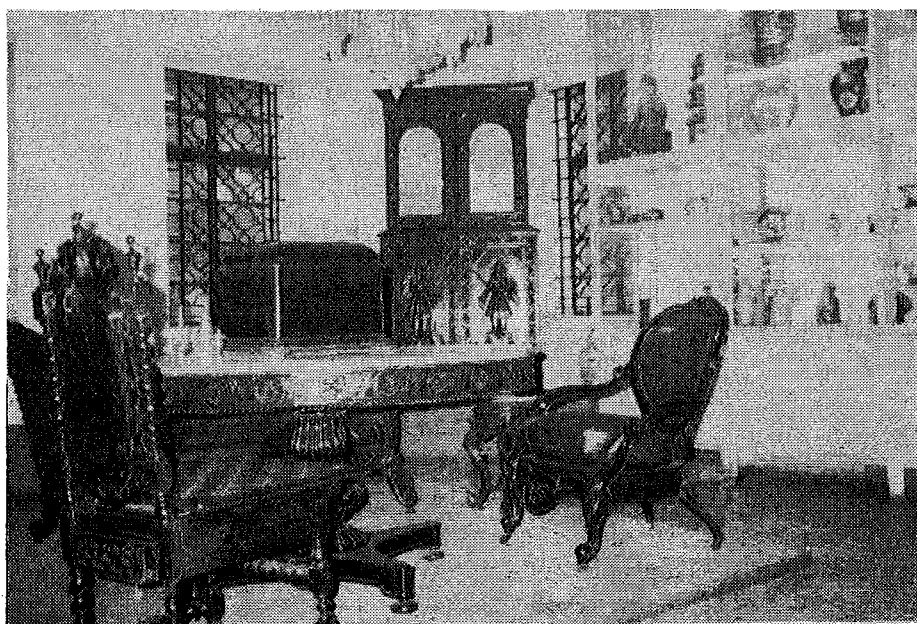
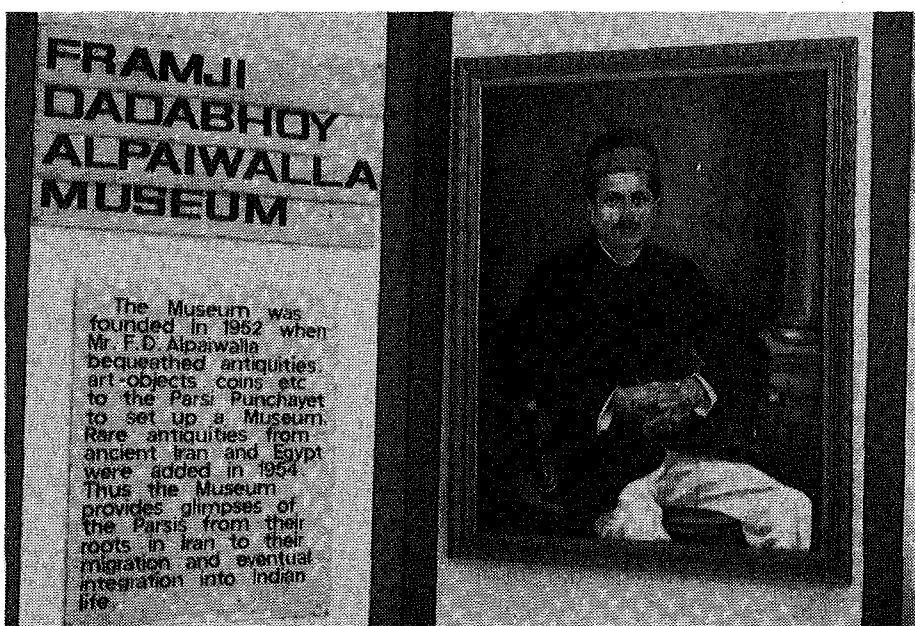
ings, coins, stamps, legal and fiscal documents, old post cards – all to the Parsi Punchayet. Renowned scholar Dr. Jamshed Unwalla, Ph.D (Heidelberg University) set up the museum which is at present managed by the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet.

The museum also acquired the Susa collection of Dr. Jamshed Unwalla, who in addition to being an Avestan scholar, also held a diploma in archaeology from the Louvre, in France,

and had spent over 10 years with a French archaeological team excavating in Susa and other parts of Iran. He donated his Susa exploration collection and the Sassanian coins to the Parsi Punchayet for the museum.

The museum display starts with ancient artifacts dating to 4,000 BC, terra-cotta figurines of the mother-goddesses and the banjo players, terra-cotta sarcophagus, astodans and other excavated artifacts from the Achaemenian palaces of Susa and

*Top, portrait of the benefactor. Bottom, re-creation of a Parsi sitting room complete with carved furniture, chandeliers, an unusually crafted wooden cupboard with portraits of Zarathushtra, and a carved chair which doubled as a commode!*





*Ervad Darius N. Sethna*  
*Mumbai, India*

Reading the article on the movie "Wishmaster" [*"An Outrage on our God, our Prophet and our Religion"*, FEZANA Journal, Winter 1997], I feel if I was still living in Hamilton, Ontario as I did in the 1970s, I would have personally expressed my outrage at Everest Entertainment in Toronto.

I have also informed the ZTFE, London and some committee members of WZO, London. I hope they too will protest from this side of the Atlantic.

[No acknowledgement or response was ever received to our letters. However, we are told that the film was in the theaters for only a very short time before it died a natural death - Ed.] ■

*Some people complain  
that roses have thorns;  
I am thankful that  
thorns have roses.*

Recently I watched a BBC TV series called "Living Islam" on public TV station KQED (from San Francisco). The series was very interesting and informative about the history of Islam: how it is practiced in countries like Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, etc.; what are its conflicts (e.g. between fundamentalists and liberals); what are its constraints in embracing technological progress, trade and the influence of western culture.

In describing the Arab conquest of Iran, Ahmed mentions that Iran was a sophisticated society with its own monotheistic Zoroastrian religion, but the collapse of Iran's culture and religion was total.

And yet, today, even though Iran is majority Muslim, it has retained its Persian language, and even Muslims follow the ancient Zoroastrian calendar that has names of our God Ahura Mazda's attributes/spiritual creations/angels, to identify each day of the month and each month of the year.

If your readers watch reruns of this program, I suggest we protest to KQED and BBC and have them broadcast corrections for the false bits and pieces of information about our religion/history/culture that were included in an otherwise informative series.

In a commentary entitled "Societal values may be stalling India's recovery" [*Chicago Tribune*, August 12, 1997] author William Pfaff comments on India's "profound and continuing economic ills."

Pfaff then goes on to make a case for “religious values” shaping India’s economic position, thus:

69

# A Race Nearly Finished

The remarkable Parsis helped build modern India, but their old-fashioned ways now might doom them

BY MASEEH RAHMAN BOMBAY

**W**ITH HIS BROAD FOREHEAD, AQUILINE nose and flowing silver beard, Dastur Firoze Kotwal looks like central casting's version of the wise man from the East. Except that Kotwal is really and truly one of the planet's last surviving Magi, the high priests of the ancient, fire-venerating Zoroastrian religion that was once the predominant faith in a large swath of the civilized world stretching from Kabul to Jerusalem.

Today only about 125,000 people still follow the faith first propagated by the prophet Zarathustra (or Zoroaster) in Central Asia some time between 1500 and 600 B.C., and the largest concentration is in Bombay where Kotwal resides. They are known as the Parsis—the people from Pars, or ancient Persia—the land they fled during the Middle Ages to preserve their religion amid the spread of Islam. But the Parsis are once again faced with the threat of extinction; this time, ironically, it is Zoroastrian high priests such as Kotwal who are partly responsible for the community's fall toward oblivion.

What's dooming the Parsis is a tragic combination of factors: a low birthrate among its generally well-off members, a rising death rate as the community rapidly ages and—most critically—an injunction against accepting converts to the faith. At the current pace, this prosperous and highly accomplished group (members include conductor Zubin Mehta, novelist Rohinton Mistry and the late rock star Freddie Mercury) will disappear some time in the next century. But Kotwal and his like are unbending in their belief that Zoroastrianism prohibits conversions from the outside. He insists his duty is to ensure the religion and Parsi "race" are preserved. "It's not a game of numbers," he says. "It's quality, not quantity that matters. What we've been doing we've been doing for millennia."

The amazing rise of the Parsis from peaceable agriculturists and artisans to key

builders of modern India helps buttress the belief within the community that they are a chosen people. After the exodus from Persia (now Iran), the fortunes of the community changed a second time with the rise of British power on the subcontinent. The Parsis, less suspicious and hostile toward the new arrivals from the West, became arbiters and agents for the colonizers. They embraced modern education and amassed fortunes in commerce and industry. They went on to make contributions in a variety of fields, from politics, law and nuclear physics to cinema and sport, while their



**SAY A LITTLE PRAYER:** India's Parsis cling to ritual, like this confirmation ceremony. But a ban on conversions is thinning the community's ranks

philanthropy helped build Bombay. Today, India's biggest industrial empire, the Tata group, is headed by a Parsi, as is Godrej, the country's largest privately owned conglomerate. The late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's father also came from the community. The zeal with which the Parsis still pursue certain trades is best exemplified by their unique surnames—a community directory lists not only Printer and Purveyor, but also Readymoney, Screwwalla and even SodawaterBottleOpenerwalla.

The exceptional success of the small but insular community, however, has carried the seeds of its own destruction. The most Westernized of all of India's ethnic groups, the Parsis tend to be well-educated and middle-class. They generally prefer to marry late and, like modern couples everywhere, typically have just one or

two children, or none at all. The prohibition against religious conversion compels most Parsis to choose partners from within the group, and generations of in-breeding have contributed to genetic-related disorders. Religious tradition also blocks Parsi parents from adopting non-Zoroastrian children. The result: a steadily aging and shrinking population. The Bombay journal *Parsiana* keeps track of births and deaths among the Parsis—last year it recorded around 1,000 deaths in Bombay, and only about 500 births among the city's Parsi population of roughly 55,000. "Even in the rural areas the population is dwindling," says the journal's editor, Jehangir Patel. "One day we will inevitably disappear as an ethnic community."

Despite such omens, the Magi cling to their beliefs. "It's a kind of collective death wish—the decisions of the orthodox leadership go against the long-term survival of the Parsis," says Ava Khullar, who has written extensively on the demographic death trap. Indeed, many experts feel the Magi's strict interpretations are not in keeping with the tenets of the faith. "The religion does not prohibit conversions," says K.D. Irani, a U.S.-based scholar. "But many Parsis in India view the community as if it's yet another exclusive caste to which you can belong only by virtue of your birth." Religious conversions now are being done only in North America, mostly on the initiative of migrants from Iran's small, surviving Zoroastrian community. In India, the high priests—adopting a practice more typical of the Hindu upper

castes—do not permit non-Zoroastrians to enter their fire-temples, or even the stone towers where the Parsi dead are still consumed, as in ancient times, by vultures.

To help save the Parsis, a secular council of community leaders in Bombay, the Parsi Panchayat, created a novel scheme that subsidizes Parsi parents who want to bring up a third child. "A desperate situation called for a desperate remedy," says Panchayat chairman Jamsheed Guzder. He says 40 Panchayat-sponsored babies have been born in the last five years, including a set of triplets. But the plan isn't likely to stem the slide. Once members of a mature community opt for late marriages and fewer children, says demographer Malini Karkal, "it's almost impossible to reverse the trend." Odds are against the Parsis ever getting a savior named BabyBoomwalla. ■



# Financing your small business start-up

*Raising capital is the most basic of all business activities, and you will, as a small entrepreneur, find out that it may not be easy. However, if you plan effectively, raising money for your small business may not be a very painful experience.*

**By Framroze Patel**  
Woodbridge, New Jersey

Because of the limited space, let us discuss the popular Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans.

## **What you should know about the SBA program:**

- As a general rule, your business is within SBA size limits if it employs less than 100 employees and has revenue of less than \$5 million.
- You don't have to be declined by a lender to qualify for an SBA program.

● Interest rate cannot exceed the NY prime rate. Exception: loans under \$50,000.

● Borrower capital contribution must be one-fifth or one-third of the cost of the project.

● Credit decision on a well prepared loan application is generally taken within 15 days.

**The SBA Loan Guarantee Program: the 7(A). How it works.** Your application is reviewed by the lending institution who decides if it merits a loan on its own or if it requires additional support in the form of a SBA guarantee. The lender then requests SBA backing.

In guaranteeing the loan, SBA assures the lender that if the borrower does not repay the loan, the government will reimburse the lending institution. There are no balloon payments, prepayment penalties, application fees or points permitted with 7(a) loans. You can use the funds for: capital expenditure and expansion of facility, augment working capital, finance accounts receivable, or refinance existing debt.

**Collateral:** You must pledge sufficient assets to adequately secure the loan. Personal guarantees are required.

**Eligibility:** Business must be profitable and meet the size standards described above.

**Documentation:** Common requirements are: purpose of the loan, history of business, financial statements for three years, details of existing debts, amount of investment by owners, personal financial statements.

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**Low Documentation Loan (Low Doc).** LowDoc is one of SBA's most popular programs. It offers a simple, one-page SBA application form and rapid turnaround on approvals for loans up to \$100,000. SBA guarantees up to 80% of the loan amount. Business start-ups are eligible.

**FA\$TRAK.** This type of loan makes funds available to businesses seeking loans up to \$100,000 without requiring the lender to use the SBA process.

**Business plans: a must.** Approval of your loan request depends on how well you present yourself, your business and your financial needs to the lender. The best way to improve your chances of obtaining a loan is to prepare a well written business plan. At a minimum, it must include:

*General Information.* Purpose of the loan, the amount required and how the funds will be used.

*Business Profile.* History and nature of the business. Ownership structure, number of employees.

*Management Profile.*

*Market Information.* Product and Markets, competition and a profile of the customers.

*Financial Information.* Balance sheet, income statement for past three years, projected financial statements, personal financial statements, and details of collateral you would be willing to pledge.

**Review process at SBA.** SBA is primarily concerned about your ability to pay. They will look at your business' credit history. The lender will review particularly:

- The amount of your own money that you have invested in business. It is not likely that the lender will finance 100% of the business.

- Whether you have a sound record of credit-worthiness. ■

*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>.*

## Sudrehs and Kushtis Available

Sudrehs made to order. Kushtis are also available. Contact Khershed Cooper at (703) 503-7241 or email: [khershed@aol.com](mailto:khershed@aol.com)

## Tours and Travel offered in Europe

A Zarathushti professor, fluent in Italian has started a new travel business in Italy. He will provide services for all your travel needs in Italy and Europe. He offers specialized itineraries in Art, Archeology, Gastronomy, and others. If you are planning a visit to Italy or other places in Europe, contact:

### Italia Esoterica

Via Unita d'Italia 42,  
00063 Campagnano di Roma, Italy  
Tel: (396) 662-0314  
Fax: (396) 9015-4436  
Email: [illit@lcnet.it](mailto:illit@lcnet.it)

## Bay area Business Referral Group

Ader Gandi has started a Zarathushti Business Referral Group in the San Francisco Bay area. There are no age

# Overcome all your tailoring problems

**Contact:**  
**Mrs. Coomi Bhatena**

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- 35 years experience in ladies dressmaking. Alterations expert (jacket lining, let-in, let-out, zippers, hems and more ...). Curtains, pillowcases made-to-order. Wedding and Navjote outfits (daglis, sadras, blouses ...).
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- Torans made to order.
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## Marrow Transplant Donors Needed

Arshish Pavri is fighting life threatening leukemia and needs a marrow transplant urgently.

The best chance to find a matched donor is from the immediate ethnic group or from the broader South Asian/Indian community. It takes just a simple blood test to see if you match Arshish or some other blood cancer patient.

On the National Registry there are only 15,000 South Asians; but efforts are under way to increase the numbers and right now we have funding for it.

To find out how you can help, please call Navaz Tarapore at SAMAR at (718) 592-0821 or Yasmin Ghadi-ali at (516) 378-4516.

## Platelet Donors Needed

The family of Noshir Mama of Houston area thanks the Houston Zarathushti community for their support and for blood platelet donations. Noshir still requires platelet donation three times a day. Anyone can donate, except if you have had hepatitis at any time in your lifetime. If you can help, please call Rustom Kanga at (281) 491-0944.

or vocational restrictions. Whether you are employed or self-employed or not employed, or even a student, everyone is welcome to this informal group. The general focus will be on business, however, social relationships will also be encouraged. The idea is to develop and promote each others business. Interested persons may call Ader Gandi at (415) 923-1670, email: AGandi@aol.com.

### **Beaded Torans for Sale**

*Torans* (garlands) made with artificial colored pearl-like beads in a variety of styles and lengths are available from Dilshad Irani of Brampton, Ontario, tel: (905) 450-0563.

### **Farohar Pendants**

Farohar pendants with chains are available for \$7 each from Dinoo Pavri of Ontario, tel: (416) 492-8114.

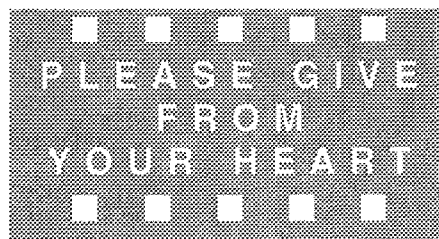
### **A Win-Win Opportunity**

Rusi Gandhi, an associate with Re/Max in New Jersey, recently returned from India, where he is working with delegates from France, Austria, Denmark, Malaysia, Indonesia and Ukraine to help improve the housing development potential and over-all real estate scenario in India.

Gandhi's offer still stands to donate 10% of his fees from any real estate closing (anywhere in the world) to FEZANA or a local Zarathushti association of your choice. For all your Real Estate needs, call Rusi Gandhi at 1-800-573-RUSI. ■

### **Zarathushti Business Conference**

is planned for Fall 1998, by Jamshed Gandhi (CA), Adil Irani (TX) and Cawas Patel (CA). Watch for details on [www.zbnet.com](http://www.zbnet.com). Contact Rohinton Rivetna (630) 325-5383.



*All donations will be deeply appreciated. For tax exemption eligibility please refer to FEZANA Journal [Winter 1994, p.60-61]. Checks, payable to "FEZANA", may be sent to the address in the appeal, or to Dinshaw Joshi, FEZANA Welfare Committee, 4515 Willard Avenue, #1609-S Chevy Chase, MD 20815, Tel: (301) 654-6250.*

### **Student Aid**

Appeals have been received from a number of students for financial aid to help towards the high cost of college. One student writes:

"I was recently accepted into the California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts) School of Theater. Cal Arts is an incredible arts institute started through the vision of Walt Disney. Every year, the School of Theater accepts only 20 people from the entire country. I have the good fortune of being one of those twenty. I am worried, however, about being

**PLEASE... Support Zarathushti businesses and entrepreneurs**

## ***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.

SPACE FOR THIS MESSAGE DONATED BY A WELL-WISHER

able to afford the very expensive tuition... \$26,000 per year for tuition, room and board. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me, and that is why I am applying for financial aid."

Please send your checks made out to FEZANA, and marked "Student Aid" to the FEZANA Welfare Committee [see address above].

### Acknowledgements

FEZANA gratefully acknowledges donations received this quarter through March 1998. Donations may be made for the fund categories: Welfare, Religious Education, Student Aid, Youth, FEZANA Journal, General, or for a specific appeal.

For Welfare Fund: Firdaus Dastoor, FL (\$121); Nergish Karanjia and Nergish Unwalla, NJ (\$20).

Dinaz Irani, PA (\$50) in memory of beloved husband Keki Khodadad Irani.

Received by Welfare Committee for Various Appeals: Maneck Bhujwala, CA (\$100); Rohinton & Pervin Ogra, IL (\$33); Behram Shroff, VA (\$101 + 101);

For FEZANA Journal: Homi Amroli, BC (\$10); Noshir & Khursheed Bapasola, NJ (\$150); Behram Bharucha, NJ (\$10); Lovji Cama, NJ (\$70); Khorsheed Chothia, MD (\$10); Xerxes Colah, IL (\$25); Sheroo Daruwalla, IL (\$30); Ardeshtir Dashtaki, FL (\$20); Adi Davar,

VA (\$10); Adi Dutia, AL (\$30); Freddy Engineer, CO (\$10); Rohinton Engineer, IL (\$30); Homi Gilan, BC (\$10); Rustom Homavazir, ONT (\$21); Behram Irani, TX (\$20); Jehangir Irani, TX (\$21); Peshotan Irani, CA (\$30); Mehrnaz Jamzadeh, WA (\$23); Dinshaw Joshi, MD (\$20); Firoze Jungalwalla, MA (\$21); Cowsie Malva, CA (\$15); Dina McIntyre, PA (\$50); Rummy Mohta, VA (\$25); Fred Morris, NJ (\$15); Sam Morris, PA (\$100); Faridon Namdarian, TX (\$10); Dinyar Panthakee, TX (\$20); Viraf Parekh, Hong Kong (\$25); Minoo Pithawalla, NJ (\$31); Rusi Press, NJ (\$15); Dan Rogers, OR (\$15); Khurshid Rudina, MN (\$21); Mehernosh Sodawaterwalla, CA (\$20); Hoshang Subawalla, PA (\$10); Diniar Sukhia, NJ (\$11); Furhok K. Tangree, Scotland (\$15); Zubin Taraporewalla, CA (\$10); Adi Unwalla, NJ (\$21); Dick Vazir, FL (\$51); Gooloo Wunderlich, VA (\$100); Borzoo Yazdani, MA (\$10); Zoroastrian Association of North Texas, TX (\$25); Zoroastrian Association of Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia (\$15).

### A tribute to Alice

I recently read an article about a lady named Alice Garg, who received an award from the President of India, for her social service work for children and women of the most backward villages of Rajasthan.

### An Appeal

This letter is on behalf of a friend in Canada who has ovarian cancer and is struggling to survive for as long as she can, especially for the sake of her two young children, a son, 7 years old, and a daughter, 3. Her husband teaches in a high school. Our friend's name is Thrity Patel and she is 33 years old. Doctors have given her a poor prognosis for life, and Thrity may have about a year or so left. Thrity is determined to fight her cancer and is trying all kinds of alternative medicines, besides being treated by her doctors at the hospital in Ontario.

Her medicines cost hundreds of dollars. Canadian health insurance does not cover prescription medicines. Since Thrity's family income is very modest and she's been fighting this cancer for over a year now, her family has gone deep in debt.

We are appealing to all our friends and acquaintances on behalf of Thrity to help her in any way you can. Checks made out to FEZANA, marked "Thrity Patel" may be sent to FEZANA Welfare Committee [see previous page] for forwarding to Thrity. Thank you very much.

Bakhtavar and Fred Desai  
Yasmin and Cyrus Karkaria

Alice was the daughter of a Zarthushti, Khan Bahadur Rustomji, honorary magistrate of Nasirabad, near Ajmer, who died when Alice was 4. Her uncles grabbed most of her father's estate, and her mother, a Catholic woman, raised her two girls alone, selling her jewelry to make ends meet. Before she was 19, Alice married a boy from a different community and both she and her husband were disowned by their families. She worked as a teacher in St. Paul's convent, and her husband worked as a teacher.

Feeling deep concern for the plight of poor children in the area, she moved to a job in a government-aided school, and what she saw there in 1966, changed her life – women and children in terrible conditions, with no education, rampant untouchability, and extreme poverty. She decided to do something about it.

On Children's Day in 1972, she took Rs. 4,800 from her Provident Fund, went back to work in the *Purani Basti* slums. Soon after, she registered a society, *Bal Rashmi* ("first rays of a new dawn") for poor, homeless kids, in her three-room rented house, where she still lives.

Gradually, Alice got some funding, and through many hardships, kept the project alive. She became active in the cause of slum dwellers, petitioning government authorities on their behalf, and helping them with legal aid. She started a health care project with USAID funds. Through the years, her organization has improved the lives of over 3,000 children and their families in 300 villages, and taught them to live with pride and self-respect.

Alice's work is now, finally, recognized – by the government and by the thousands of children and their families. And now, finally, her own family has accepted Alice and her husband into the community.

Alice, we too salute you! ■

By Maneck Bhujwala  
San Jose, California.

# ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ **MATRIMONIALS** ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

FEZANA maintains a matrimonial file and will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. FEZANA does not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Please send your information, preferably in writing, to Roshan Rivetna (see back cover ).

**Male, Engineering Consultant, 62**, self-employed, financially independent, resident in Germany over 30 years, open to relocation; seeks well-settle partner. Call (in Germany) 0049-211-628518. [M98-7]

**Male, hotelier, 35**, fair, 6 feet tall, B. Sc., L.L.B., M.C.A., well-settled in hotel and restaurant business in Indore, India. Call (in Indore) (731) 527618. [M98-8]

**Niece, 31, B.Com, petite**, good-natured, works in Mumbai, seeks educated, simple, life partner. Call aunt in Toronto at (905) 886-2885. [F98-9]

**Male, 34, M.S. in Chemistry**, presently working in well known Testing Laboratory in Richmond, VA. Interested in reading, traveling and sports. Call (804) 968-4435. [M98-10]

**Male, working in bank, 30, B.Com**, studied hotel management in Switzerland. Call (604) 231-5815. [M98-11]

**Female, vivacious and pretty, 26**, specialized in foreign languages, studied in Japan, working as executive asst in Mumbai, wishes to meet highly educated, broadminded, well-settled male. Willing to relocate. Call (in Mumbai) +91-22-415 0842. [F98-12]

**Female, 27, B.Com** and computer-proficient, Account Manager for private firm in Mumbai. Looking for well-settled, Parsi gentleman with family values. Call brother (in VA) at (804) 639-6977. [F98-13]

**Male, B. Com., 32**, Chartered Accountant, in Government service in Canada. Call sister (in VA) at (703) 878-3640. [M98-14]

**Attractive, open minded, fun loving woman, 42**, B.Com Hons, LLB, Chartered Accountant, Senior Executive in Mumbai; enjoys outdoors, world traveling, movies, music and more. Interested in meeting gentleman with loving, caring, humorous, adventurous personality. Willing to relocate. Call friend in US at (201) 868-3909. [F98-15]

**Male, B. E. (Mech), 26**, Design Engineer with Chemical Works in Baroda, India; enjoys reading, movies and music. Call (in Baroda) +91-265- 33 8398. [M98-16]

**Female, B.A., 32**, brought up in the US, Residence Hall Director at UCLA. (714) 963-2798. [F98-17]

Alliance invited for **professionally qualified, good looking boy, 26**, 5' 10", post-graduate in medicine, qualified to study, work and practice medicine in USA; from tall, professionally qualified, girls from respectable family in USA/Canada. [M98-18]

**Male, 28, well-built, 6'**, US citizen, co-director for Indian movies in US, Interested in slim, tall, home-loving girl. Call (732) 549-3772. [M98-19]

**Male, good-looking, 28, Computer Programmer, 6' 2"**, B.S. (Computer Science), good job with reputable company in California. Enjoys computers, traveling. Looking for tall girl with long hair and caring nature. Call (562) 462-1571. [M98-20]

**Male, Civil Engineer, 32, 5' 8"**, well educated, working in Connecticut, enjoys in music, movies, traveling. Call (203) 469-2721. [M98-21]

easy, but to continue throughout life with love, you have to work hard.

When you love your partner/soul-mate, you nurture, fulfill and cherish her/him emotionally, sexually and in other respects, e.g. financially, doing things she/he likes, etc.

You work at the relationship to make it beautiful with love. You communicate your needs and resolve your problems by talking about them openly and honestly.

Self sacrifice is to do things for your loved one at the expense of your own needs. That is true love as you give from your heart.

Dependency is not love. If your partner leaves for some reason and you feel like not living and cannot cope, this is because of dependency on your partner; this is not love.

Love is when you and your partner can live without each other but choose to live together to make each other happy – nurture, cherish and fulfill each other.

I believe everyone wants to be loved. But it is important that we must make ourselves 'lovable', and we must prepare to be loved. ■

Aspi Maneckjee  
Nepean, Ontario

## ■ PERSONALS ■

**Mr. Cyrus Milanian**, originally from Tehran and now residing in Pompano Beach, Florida, is interested in meeting other Zarathushtis and perhaps in starting an association. Please contact him at (954) 943-0292.

Will **Mr. Erach Billimoria**, who called my office in Mumbai on May 4, 1998, please call me again (+91-22-283 2920) or my brother Minocheher (+91-22-415 0842).

- Ardeshir B. Damania

**Zarathushti couple** is interested in adopting a Zarathushti child. Would like to hear from others who might have experience or information in this regard. Call Shirin at (602) 5189. ■

## **What is Love?**

Love to me is many splendid things. Love is work, discipline, commitment, self-sacrifice. It is not a feeling of dependency. Falling in love is

*Please send announcements of births, navjotes, sedreh-pushis, navar-martab, engagements, weddings, anniversaries, deaths and other major events, with a photo, and full name and address of sender, to Mahrukh Motafram.*

### Births

**Salice Kale Amrolia**, a girl, to Michael Kale and Armin Amrolia.

**Zain Bamji**, a boy, to Cyrus and Cathy Bamji of Silver Spring, MD; brother for Jahan; grandson to Ester and Roshan Bamji of Chevy Chase, MD, on January 16.

**Natasha Dalal**, a girl, to Jasmin and Adil Dalal of Kalamazoo, Michigan, on February 23.

**Nikiel Dhanani**, a boy, to Shafique and Behin Dhanani, in White Rock, B.C., on December 2.

**Jessica Lynn Devine**, a girl, to Benaifer and John Devine, sister to Sarah Nicole, in Maryland, on April 2.

**Karina Irani**, a girl, to Farhad and Nina Irani, sister to Cyrus and Darius, on October 15.

**Nicole Shireen Kanga**, a girl, to Mary Jane and Persius Kanga, of Ontario, sister to Natalie Jasmine and grandchild to Armaity and Dinshaw.

**Cyrus Merchant**, a boy, to Nawaz and Hoshi Merchant of New York area, on January 8.

**Farrah Mistry**, a girl, to Darius and Edwina Mistry of Auckland, New Zealand, on March 6.

**Darius Matthew Patel**, a boy, to Susan and Farhad Patel of Minneapolis, grandson to Drs. Khushroo and Roda Patel of Chicago area, on February 22.

**Zane Todywala**, a boy, to Lyla and Sam Todywala, in Miami, FL, on September 10.

### Navjotes/Sedreh-Pushi

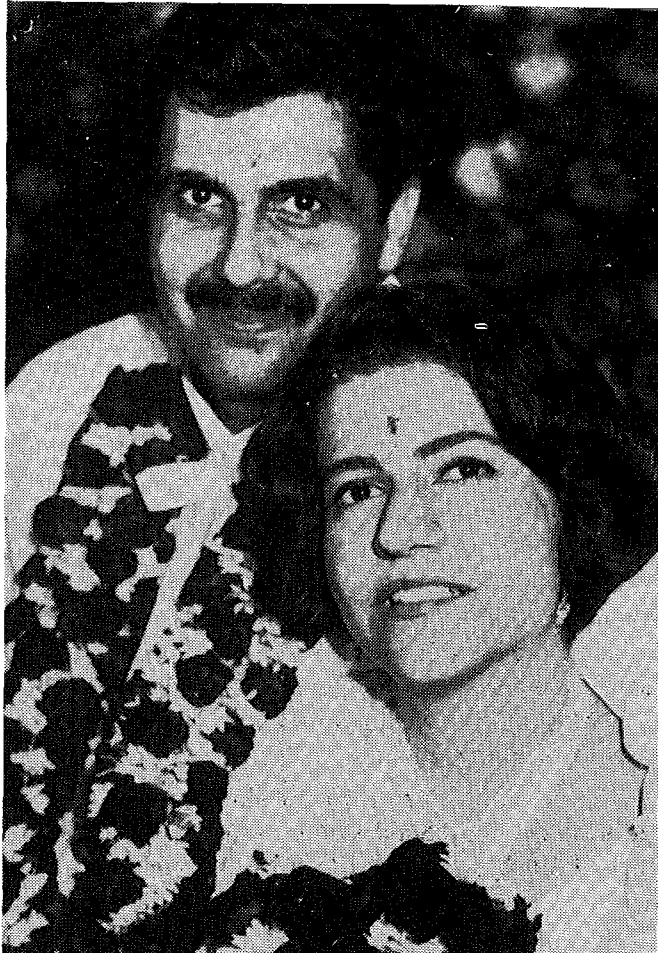
**Sharmin Appoo**, daughter of Katayun and Rattan Appoo on August 9.

**Kaimorz Bhada**, son of Gulshan and Khushroo Bhada, on August 24.

**Burzin and Jehan Contractor**, sons of Dhun and Sarosh Contractor, of Ontario, on December 21, in Mumbai.

## A Good News Story

*Gulnar Surveyor, daughter of Nargis and Aspi Surveyor of Mumbai, was married to Shahrukh Irani, son of Freny and Late Ardeshir Irani of Jamshedpur, on December 26, 1997, at the Colaba Agiary in Mumbai. Gulnar writes about her internet romance below.*



I have been a member of the Zarathushti 'alias' list (at zoroastrians@least.eng.sun.com) on the internet for some years. This alias has served different purposes for its different members, but for me personally, it changed my life!

In 1995, when I was a Ph.D. graduate student in Houston, I was involved in a debate on the alias over the "ideal guy". A few wrote personal messages to me, either endorsing or negating my opinions. I received one such message from Shahrukh Irani, who was then a faculty member at the University of Minnesota.

I found myself responding to this letter, and we soon felt compelled to write to each other almost daily. We moved into a variety of topics and soon an interest started to develop. After about 3 months, we started chatting on the phone, and this was soon followed by a few meetings. In September 1996, his job (Assistant Professor of Industrial Engineering at Ohio State University) brought him to Columbus, Ohio, and having just graduated myself, I moved to Columbus, so we could be in the same city. Soon after, we got engaged and on December 26, 1997, we were married, at the Colaba Agiary in Mumbai. So, to Mehrdad Khosraviani, who administers the alias, A VERY BIG THANK YOU!

*Gulnar Surveyor  
Columbus, Ohio*

*Congratulations to **Rayomand Viraf Panthaky**, son of Farida and Viraf Panthaky of Maryland, grandson of Katy and Late Behram Patel, Goolbai and Late Jamshedji Panthaky and great grandson of Goolbai and Late Firoz Pilcher, on becoming a Navar on January 9, 1998, under the guidance of Dastoorji Aspan-diar Dadachanjee at Wadia Vatcha Agiary in Mumbai.*

**Darayus Toorkey**, son of Cyrus and Behnaz Toorkey of Cherry Hill, NJ on January 3, in Mumbai.

**Roxanne Unwalla**, daughter of Farah and Khushroo Unwalla on December 20, at the California Zoroastrian Center, in Westminster.

#### Weddings

**Keshvar Vakharia**, daughter of Adi and Arnavaz of New Orleans to **Kali Buhariwalla** of Dallas, TX, on February 21, in Mumbai.

**Cyrus Driver**, son of Homi and Banoo Driver to **Cheryl More**, on December 20, in Vancouver B.C.

**Azita Rateshtari**, daughter of Dolly and Rashid Rateshtari of Gaithersburg, Maryland to **Rustom Kaovasia**, son of Sarvar and Behram Rustom Kaovasia of Mumbai, in Mumbai, on February 23. The couple plans to live in Maryland.

**Zenobia Pardiwala**, daughter of Perin and Soli Pardiwala of Toronto, to **Harry Silliphant**, on November 22.

#### Recovering

**Rashni Mehta**, 17, daughter of Kay-omarsh and Nergish Mehta of Palos Hills, Illinois, is making miraculous recovery after being in a coma for about a month, following a motorcycle accident in which she suffered severe head injuries and brother **Farhad** suffered minor injuries. She is now undergoing rehab, showing remarkable progress daily.

The concern, care and love expressed by friends and community members has been a source of great solace and



comfort for the Mehta family. They are deeply grateful for all the phone calls, hospital visits and prayers – at Rashni's bedside, at the Darbe Mehr, at prayer vigils all over North America, and on the Zarathushti internet.

#### Deaths

**Arbab Rostam Anoosheh**, husband of Banoo Anoosheh (Aidun), father of Khashayar and Mandana, in Los Gatos, California, on May 17. Porseh ceremony was held at San Jose's Dar-e-Mehr.

**Khurshed Bahardurji**, husband of Bhiku Bahardurji, father of Noshir and Yezdi, in Mumbai.

**Dolly Bhaya**, mother of Naval and Dhun of Toronto, in Mumbai on March 6.

**Burjor Sohrabji Billimoria**, father of Rashna (Firdosh) Mehta, grandfather of Sherezade, in Edmonton, on March 20. The funeral service was held at a funeral home, with Geh Sarnu and subsequent cremation. Ervad Jal Panthaky, who came in from Ontario and Ervad Hosee Karanjia performed the prayer ceremonies.

**Dr. Burjor Colah**, husband of Mrs. Sarah Colah, father of Roshan Motiwala of Los Angeles area, on November 20, in Los Angeles.



**Mehroo Minoo Engineer**, 76, mother of Rohinton (or Rumi) (Beverly) Engineer of Chicago, and Tehmtan (Benaifer) Engineer of Mumbai; grandmother of Kashmira, Rustom, Monaz, Piran, in Mumbai, on April 23.

**Nadirshah B. Engineer**, father of Mike (Katy) Engineer of Chicago area, grandfather of Eric, in Mumbai, on March 23.

**Rostam Ghaibi**, 74, husband of Farangiz, father of Puran, Paridokht, Parimah and Farhang, in San Diego, on March 1. Mr. Ghaibi was a Trustee of the Rustom and Morvarid Guiv Foundation.

**Rustom Irani**, husband of Banoo Irani of Chicago, father of Zal and Jennifer, brother of Farhad (Oovi) Irani of Wilmington, Delaware, in Chicago, on February 17.

**Rutty Karanjia**, mother of Jeroo (Hosie) Mancherjee, grandmother of Zubin and Kevin, in Toronto, on February 24.

**Piroja Rustom Khursigara**, mother of Khurshid, Meher, Farida and Farhad of Ontario, on November 20.

**Firozeh Nameranian**, daughter of Tirandaz and Daulat Nameranian, mother of Darayush, Manijeh Tehmasb Mandgaryan (of Toronto), Gover, Farshid and Eruch, in Tehran on March 10.

**Rutty Tehmurasp Karanjia**, 78, mother of Perviz of New York, Jeroo (Hosie) Mancherjee of Toronto and Percy (Veera) Karanjia of New Jersey; grandmother of Zubin, Kevin, Vahbiz and Feroze, in Toronto, on February 23.

**Khodarahm Kiani**, 67, husband of Houry, father of Nooshin and Shirin, in North Vancouver on January 12.

**Eruch Cawasji Mehta**, husband of Mehroo, father of Firdaus (Mahruk) of New Jersey, Rohinton (Monica) of New Jersey, Ardaviraf (Shernaz) of Ahmedabad and Burjor (Beth) of Virginia; uncle of Kayomarz (Nargish) and Hosi (Kim) of Chicago; on April 21, in Ahmedabad. Mr. Mehta succumbed to a brutal attack by a home invader. His wife, Mehroo is recovering.

**Nargish Panthaky**, mother of Roda (Khushroo) Patel of New York area, in Mumbai.

**Dhunjisha Ardeshtir Patell**, 88, husband of Mithoo, uncle of Roshan (Rohinton) Rivetna of Chicago area, in Mumbai, on April 25.

**Franock Ratansha Udvadia**, 95, wife of late Ratansha Rustomji, mother of Mehroo Mathai of Mumbai and Jamshed (late Freny) Udvadia of

Lansing, Michigan; grandmother of Ava of North Carolina and Oufreez Argenta of Pennsylvania, in Mumbai, on April 27.

**Hoshang Sethna**, 75, husband of Goolu, brother of Feroze Sethna of Vancouver, in Karachi, on February 4.

**Mehrbanoo Zartoshty**, wife of Feroz Zartoshti, mother of Paridokht, Homayoon, Iran and Farangis Zartoshty, in Tehran, on January 29.

### Goolbanu Sukhia

(February 24, 1900 - July 25, 1997)

About twenty-five years ago I met Goolbanu at Furrokh and Naju Dastur's house where thirty to forty Zarathushtis used to gather regularly during Navroze and Pateti times. Prior to that, thirty years ago we used to meet in cafeterias or at the apartment of the late Dasturji Framroze Bode with his charming 'activist' wife, Homai, serving as hostess.

Our numbers grew from a dozen or so to about two dozen when Furrokh and Naju invited us to make their spacious place a center of our functions. Since I had taken the initiative originally to start the group with help from my wife, Goolbanu usually singled me out for conversation and some discussion or suggestion. She freely expressed her concerns to me about the survival of our Zarathustrian religion and the continuous decline of the Parsi population world wide.

"Do you think we will survive?" she would ask me. It seemed to please her that I always gave her an upbeat assessment of our community.

During one of our meetings she gifted me with a scholarly book: *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra* by Jatindra Mohan Chatterji (a Bengali scholar) published in 1967 by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta. It is an unusual book that translates the five Gathas line by line with surprising references to Upanishads and Vedas as they relate to the Gathas by comparing the similarities between Avesta and Sanskrit languages.

Inscribed inside the first page is a verse she had composed:

"Dadar Ahura Mazda's athas  
Are saviors of our soul that survives  
Maha Ratu Zarathushtra's Gathas  
Give Light, Love, and Liberty to our  
Lives.

"To Keki Gandhi, with all good wishes"

- Goolbanu Sukhia

Many members of our initially small group received greeting cards and notes from her during Navroze and Pateti celebrations. I'd like to share one of these notes which I received over twenty-three years ago:

Navroze Mubarak  
21st March 1974

Dear Keki, Rose Marie, Shireen and Jimmy,

Years may come and years may go,  
But Zoroastrian zeal marches on with  
Glorious Glow.

The Flame of Glory, feared fading away  
Returns to its pristine pure, precious  
past forever to stay.

Health and Happiness,  
many a Navroze abound,  
In our woe-begone world, Peace,  
Prosperity, and Goodwill be found.

Wishing you all the best from,

Goolbanu Sukhia

Thank you, dear Goolbanu. We are all the richer for having known you and being the recipient of your care and concern about our community's welfare. May your soul rest in everlasting peace in Ahura Mazda's eternal universe. ■

By Keki B. Gandhi  
California

## "America is better for his being here"

"It is like the stillness of a man standing at the center of a hurricane. Everything is whirling around him, but at the center, he is silent." That is how a probationer described the Transcendental Meditation (TM®) program, directed by **FARROKH ANKLESARIA**, and pioneered in the criminal justice system of the City of St. Louis.

Anklesaria, a Barrister-at-Law, has spent a lifetime in the field of law, justice and rehabilitation on four continents — Asia, Africa, South America and now North America. He has personally instructed over 4,000 people in the TM program, and supervised the instruction of over 30,000 inmates in large-scale demonstrations projects. In Senegal, Africa, where Anklesaria worked previously, three entire prisons were eventually emptied and closed through his efforts in criminal rehabilitation.

Now Anklesaria, International Director of Rehabilitation Programs at Maharishi University of Management, has tirelessly devoted himself to traveling around the US, meeting

with business, government and correction leaders, to introduce them to his method of successfully rehabilitating addicts and offenders, and gainfully reintegrating them back into

productive, social life. He has successfully introduced this program into the correctional system of the State of Missouri. During 1997, the State planned to "sentence" about 300 defendants to TM.

Judge Limbaugh of the Supreme Court of Missouri endorsed Anklesaria's programs and said: "Because of Mr. Anklesaria's efforts, criminal and juvenile justice systems throughout

the country will be significantly improved. America will hopefully be better for his being here."

In February 1996, the US government granted Anklesaria a special and distinguished Permanent Resident status, as an "outstanding individual whose work is in the national interest."

*Below, group meditation in California's maximum security facility, Folsom Prison. Incredibly, even once-warring gang members, all sat in the same room, doing their TM.*



*Anklesaria giving inaugural address at opening of the "Enlightened Sentencing Project" in St. Louis.*



**ARZANG AZARBEHI**, son of Shahnaz and Khodayar Azarbehi of Ontario, a grade 7 student at the Marion Hilliard Public School, made a presentation on the religion of Zarathushtra to grade 12 history students of Lester B. Pearson Sr. Public School. Arzang spoke about our prophet, Asho Zarathushtra, our religious beliefs, the Navjote Ceremony, the Sudreh Kushti and their significance in our lives.

A Certificate of Merit was awarded to **DR. PHIROZ DASTOOR** of Toronto by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Council of the Blind, for his "special contribution to the well-being of blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind Canadians."

**HERB DHALIWAL**, originally from India, has been appointed to post of Revenue Minister in the Canadian Federal Cabinet. This is a first in Canada's history.

**DR. ADEL D. IRANI**, son of Drs. Katie and Dinshaw Irani, husband of Natasha (daughter of Dolly and Phiroz Dastoor), announces his new practice in Houston, specializing in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery.

The M.J. Patel Award was presented to **NATALIE SOHRAB IRANI**, a student at the Mama Parsi Girl's Secondary School, Karachi, for an essay on "I am a good Zarathushti because ..." The contest was held by the *Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund* and was initially funded by Mrs. Patel's husband, Jamshed. Mrs. Patel is the mother of Rubina Patel, who carries on her mother's heritage of involvement with the youth of our community by organizing youth classes at the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington.

Congratulations to **ROXANNE JAGOSH** for participating in the Canada Summer games held in Brandon, Manitoba, in August 1997, representing Nova Scotia in Field Hockey. Roxanne is also on the University Field Hockey Team at St. Mary's University, where she is a 2nd year student.

*Dr. Irani is Managing Director of Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), the largest private sector steel and engineering company in India. Since the launch of the Indo-British Partnership in January 1993 as a means of revitalizing the business relationship between India and Britain, Dr. Irani has been its Indian co-Chairperson. That the campaign is proving so successful is very largely due to Dr. Irani's leadership.*

*Born in Nagpur in 1936, Dr. Irani has a Ph.D. in Metallurgy from Sheffield University, UK. Married to Daisy (née Siganporia), the Iranis have three children: Zubin, currently studying at MIT; Nilufer, working on her MBA; and Tannaz, in college in Mumbai.*

**ANAITA KANGA**, daughter of Dogdo and Minoo of Ontario, was selected to represent Sheridan College, Mississauga at the International Students' Education Fair, in Singapore, Taipei and Malaysia in March.

**DR. RUBY MALWA** of New York area was elected Vice President and President-elect of the New York Chapter II of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Congratulations to **MOBEDYAR JAMSHID MISTRY** who was inducted into the National Honors Society. Jamshid is a junior at Gaithersburg High School in Maryland, and plans to become a physician.

**DAME PROF. MEHER MASTER-MOOS**, President, Zoroastrian Col-

lege, India, was conferred the title of Knighthood, Grand Star of Natural Medicine in the Royal Order of Natural Medicine, on April 3, at the Church of Mary Magdalene, Brighton, England.

**FRAMROZE PATEL** of New Jersey was awarded status as a Diplomat of the American Board of Forensic Accounting. ACFE recognizes experience and education in forensic examinations with training in accounting. Information obtained from such highly skilled experts is often used in criminal cases and court testimony, with implications of local and national significance.

“Rustamjipuram” – a housing complex, was formally inaugurated in Bhopal, India, by **PADMA VIB-**

**HUSHAN KHUSHROO F. RUSTAMJI**, retired Chief of India's Border Police Force, after whom the complex is named. Rustamji and his wife Naju, will be returning to Toronto this summer.

**DR. NOSHIR SHROFF** and **DR. CYRUS SHROFF** have been appointed Honorary Ophthalmic Surgeons to the President of India. They are the third generation of Ophthalmic surgeons, having followed the footsteps of their father Dr. Minoo Shroff and their grandfather Dr. Sohrab Shroff.

**SOLI J. SORABJEE** of Mumbai, is the newly-appointed Attorney-General of India, thereby making him the highest ranking legal officer of the country. Sorabjee has already suggested some "urgent" constitutional amendments to the BJP-led coalition government of India and said he would attempt to inculcate the spirit of service among members of his profession "who have forgotten that the legal profession is a service-oriented one and not a commercial one."

**ZUBIN SURKARI** of Toronto attracted newspaper, TV and radio coverage in Brisbane, Australia. A Bulletin of the Queensland Cricket Club reads: "...17-year-old cricketer from Toronto made rather a large splash when he was called upon to act as '13th' man for the Australia 'A' team playing against South Africa ..." Surkari was at the game, largely to watch, but found himself in (cricket) whites and on the field playing for Australia after their opening bowler was injured. Young Zubin soon became the darling of the crowd. What a thrill it was for him to play with and against seasoned Test Match cricket stars.

*Those who fight evil in  
Thought, Word and Deed,  
O Ahura Mazda,  
Out of love for Thee,  
Accomplish Thy purpose.*

**1**  
- Yasna 33.2

## Canada greets Australia

Scouter Maneck Sattha of 100th Toronto, First Zoroastrian Scout Group, greeting Governor General and Chief Scout of Australia, His Excellency The Honorable Sir William Deane, AC, KBE, at the 18th Australian Jamboree, January 2-10, in Brisbane, Australia. Sattha was one of only two Canadian participants, representing Canada.

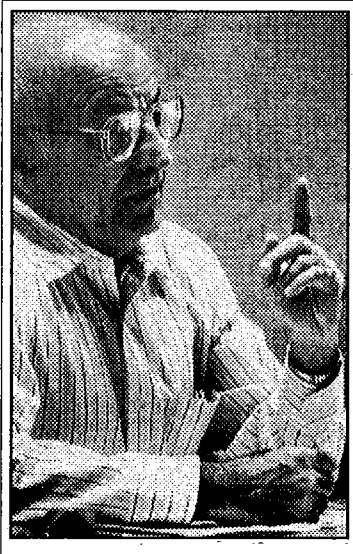
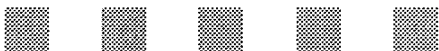


PHOTO COURTESY TIMES OF INDIA

Noted Jurist and one-time Indian Ambassador to the US, **NANI PALKHIVALA** of Mumbai, was awarded one of the most prestigious titles – *Padma Vibhushan*, by the President of India, on the occasion of India's Republic Day on January 26.



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## We Goofed!

FEZANA Journal regrets the following errors:

- The caption of the photo [Winter 1997, p. 73] should read: "Parvez and Aban Commissariat originally distributed Poonjiagi's chutneys and other products, but presently they import some items from India and manufacture some items in the USA under their own Bombay Brand label, mainstreaming to the American consumer."

- The records of some cash subscriptions/renewals received for FEZANA Journal at the Avesta Conference in Boston in September 1997, have been misplaced. If you paid cash, and your records have not been updated, please let us know.

- In the birth announcement of Rashna Soonawalla [Spring 1998, p. 83], the name of the proud father, Yezdi was inadvertently omitted. Congratulations to the whole family: Anahita and Yezdi Soonawalla, of Rochester Hills, MI, grandmother Dilnavaz Lord and uncle Shahrukh.

- The zip code on the return address on the Census Form inserted in the Spring 98 issue, was incorrect. It should be 08691.

## Some Parsi 'Firsts'

- The Suez Canal was first conceived by Darius about 2,500 years ago.
- The first Indian to set foot in China was a Parsi – Hirjee Ready-money in 1756, for trade.
- The first Indian to build a dockyard in India was Lowji Wadia in 1750.
- The first textile industry set up in India was by a Parsi – Dadabhai Nowsherwanji.
- The distinction of introducing gas light in India goes to a Parsi – Ardeshir Cursetji Wadia.
- The first Indian to own an automobile was a Parsi – Jamshedji Tata.
- The first Indian to conceive an iron and steel plant (at Jamshedpur) was a Parsi – Jamshedji Tata.
- The first Indian to become a Field Marshall is a Parsi – General Sam Manekshaw.
- The first Indian to unfurl the Indian National flag in a foreign land was a Parsi – the daring lady, Madam Bhikaiji Cama, against the wishes of the British rulers.
- Among the Indians, the Parsis were the first to play cricket with the England team, and they even visited England and played matches there with the English team.

[From *Parsis, a Dynamic Community* by Naval B. Vakeel, Secunderabad, in the *Jame Jamshed*.] ■

*As the branches of a tree  
return their sap to the  
root, from whence it arose;  
as a river poureth its  
streams to the sea, whence  
its spring was supplied; so  
the heart of a grateful man  
delighteth in returning a  
benefit received.*

# FEZANA

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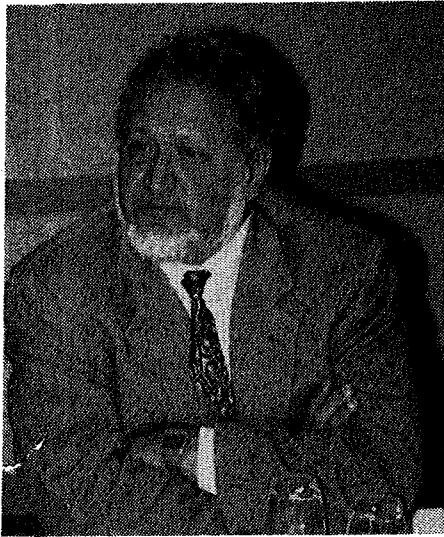
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**FEZANA JOURNAL** encourages its readers to submit relevant information, news and views for publication. Articles in the Journal are intended for the general reader, and should not be highly technical in content. All unsolicited submissions should be limited to 600 words. Articles or letters that attempt to conduct ongoing public dialogue with other letter-writers, revile any religious doctrines or practices, or attack or slander individuals will be rejected. All submissions must have the author's name and address. Anonymous letters will not be published. The editors reserve the right to accept or reject articles, letters, announcements and advertisements, hold them for future use, and edit them for clarity or to meet space constraints. The editors further reserve the right to publish any materials sent to them, with due acknowledgment, unless specifically requested otherwise. The official language of FEZANA, and that of the Journal is English.



By Farrokh Mistree  
Atlanta, Georgia

I will start with a few rather familiar stanzas from our scriptures (translations by Insler):

Listen with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind — man by man for himself — upon the two choices of decision, being aware to declare yourselves to Him before the great retribution.

- Yasna 30.2

Yes there are two fundamental spirits, twins which are renowned to be in conflict. In thought and in word, in action they are two: the good and the bad. And between these two, the beneficent have correctly chosen, not the maleficent.

- Yasna 30.3

I shall try to gratify Him for us with good thinking. Him who left to our will (to choose between) the virtuous and the unvirtuous. ....

- Yasna 45.9

Clearly Zarathushtra in his hymns asks his followers to listen to what is said, but there is a qualification of sorts. He said listen to the "best things" not "everything". After listening, one must think or reflect upon the best things one has heard.

The Gathic teachings are prescriptive in nature. Nowhere does Zarathushtra categorically say *not* to do something bad ... but the dice are loaded against the choice insofar as one is expected to choose rightly as the *unwise chose not*. This means that choice itself is in a sense limited; it

# Spirituality, My Soul and Me

*In North America we are learning how to enhance our rational mind. How do I nurture the other two aspects of my religious being, namely, the psychological and spiritual?*

is more geared towards choosing that which is good versus that which is evil. In other words, there is no concept of absolute. There is no sense of absolute truth, absolute happiness, etc. Humans are always going to be relative to the absolute by virtue of the fact that the *individuality* of a person is never going to be lost. Hence, Zarathushtra's teachings are always going to be subjective to the point of view or the perception of the believer. Therefore although Zarathushtra has given his followers the right to choose, the choice must involve both the use of the Good Mind and the right starting premise. Let me put it another way. Choice is always anchored in a premise. The choice must be based on the right knowledge that is processed through the Good Mind and implemented on the basis of truth.

**What is a ramification of this observation?** If one argues and says that Zarathushtra has given a person the right to choose freely then one needs to examine whether the choice is between good and evil or a choice for everything under the sun. OK so let me think aloud: choice and free will have to be understood within the realm of theology, namely, that which lies between the world of the good spirit (*Spenta Mainyu*) and the evil spirit (*Angra Mainyu*). Choice in this instance does not give me a license to choose freely without any responsibility. Another way to look at it is: *given that I am a responsible person I have been given the choice to choose freely in a certain clearly defined domain*. How do I qualify responsible? I will come back to that

a little later when I tell you what I believe.

**Spirituality and my soul.** Now onto the issue of spirituality that is the subject of this article. I will say that our religion recognizes the difference between the spirit (*fravashi*) and the soul (*urvan*). I am therefore going to think aloud about my soul. I am going to try something difficult here; difficult for two reasons: one because of the limited space I have and two because of the complexity of thinking.

As many of you know I like writing children's stories so I am going to use this medium to make my point. In the tribe of *Vandras* (monkeys) there are two religions: one is called the Brown religion and the other is called the Green religion. The followers of the Green religion are called Green Monkeys and those who follow the Brown religion are called Brown Monkeys. One day Mama Monkey who is green decides to convert to the religion of Papa Monkey who is Brown. Now it is known that in the Brown religion the soul is judged for all a person's thoughts, words and deeds; this is true for those monkeys who are good and those monkeys who are bad. Now, in the Green religion there is no concept of individual judgment. People of the Green religion believe in a preordained system as charted out by the Green Monkey God who is beyond question or scrutiny.

Now if Mama Monkey converts to the Brown religion how is her soul to be judged? What happens to the spirituality of Mama Monkey's soul?

Will there be a judgment for this soul? How will this soul be judged – according to the Green religion or the Brown religion or both? Hmmmm ... I really don't know. Does anyone have an answer? In the context of our Gathas does Papa Monkey really have the freedom to choose another religion? Hmmmmmm... Does anyone have an answer?

Enough of story telling: Likewise if a Hindu who believes in reincarnation (where the soul is judged and recycles itself) then what happens to the soul who, for example, has been for many lifetimes, a Hindu for the first say 25 years of his life and then chooses to become a Zoroastrian as a result of marrying a Zoroastrian. What happens to the spirituality of Mama Monkey's soul? Will there be a judgment for this soul? How will this soul be judged?

This leads to two questions that I urge you to think about:

● Is the concept of spirituality different in different religions? What are the ramifications of this question for us North American Zoroastrians if the answer is yes, and what are the ramifications if the answer is no?

● Can/should one distinguish between the spirituality of a North American Zarathushti, an Iranian Zarathushti, a Pakistani Zarathushti, an Indian Zarathushti, an Australian Zarathushti, an Asian Zarathushti, an European Zarathushti, etc.? What are the ramifications of this question to us North American Zoroastrians if the answer is yes, and what are the ramifications if the answer is no?

#### What do I believe?

(1) Zoroastrian spirituality is not dependent on where one lives.

(2) The starting premise is important. For example, is Zarathushtra a poet-philosopher or a prophet? Is the Zarathushti religion a universal philosophy or a religion revealed to an ethnic group in ancient Iran? The answer will depend on the starting premise.

(3) Reflection is important. We need to embark on a process of active learning that involves a significant amount of reflection; things are not cut and dried as some would like to make them out to be.

(4) Tools to experience the religion are important. I need to give my children the tools to experience the religion; rational, psychological and spiritual. In North America we are learning how to enhance our rational mind. How do I nurture the other two aspects of my religious being, namely, the psychological and spiritual? One way is through rituals. Are these rituals universal or can they be different for different regions of the world? Will different rituals lead to different experiences and different spiritualities?

(6) Defining scope of freedom to choose is important: Does our freedom to choose (mentioned in the Gathas) apply to everything under the sun? Or is it limited to discerning between the twin spirits? Clearly the role of knowledge is very important. Hence in my opinion, to act responsibly one needs to first acquire knowledge that is anchored in the right premise, then reflect and then act – if one is to grow as a Zarathushti. ■

**FARROKH MISTREE** has served (as secretary, treasurer and Vice-President) on the committee of Australian Zoroastrian Association (Sydney 1974-79) and was also the founding Chairman of the Zoroastrian Building Fund of that organization. He has also served as secretary (1988-90) on the Building Fund Committee of Zoroastrian Association of Houston, and as Program coordinator for the 7th North American Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston. He has been a teacher of 'Sunday School' for Zarathushti children since 1974. A Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology, Farokh lives in Atlanta, with his mother Nergesh, wife Yashfara, and two sons Dinsha and Behram.

**N**eed to be spiritual. First let us try and understand the words *religion* and *spirituality* clearly, so as to differentiate between *form* and *spirit* in our lives. If we take religion as a structure of organizations, belief systems, rituals, tenets, procedures and spirituality as the one Energy that pulls towards God, the Oneness of all force for life, light, and love which manifests in an individual, we will be able to appreciate the role of form as a **vehicle of the spirit** in our life.

You and I have a soul; our origin is in the spiritual realms and so is our

## SPIRITUALITY

By Silloo Mehta  
Cypress, California

goal and destiny after perfection. Therefore the path to be traversed, has to be spiritual too. Yasna 55 states that each of us has nine constituents of which only three are physical, the rest are ultra physical and spiritual. So we are all essentially spiritual beings. As a part of our journey we sojourn in this world for a brief period of time for the spiritual education, experience and development of the soul. Our physical body serves as an instrument to achieve this goal. So our existence in spirit is more important, but we tend to forget that and give priority to worldly affairs. We who are essentially 'spirit and being', assuming a body and descending to a denser plane – earth – may get entranced, involved and absorbed in material objects, forgetting our two prime contacts – Religiosity and Spirituality which connect us to our destination, and may abandon them. Some of us may disregard everything else and pride ourselves on practicing "Good thoughts, Good words, Good deeds" only. But is spiritual progress possible without religion?

**History of Soul.** It is not. Why not? To answer that question we shall have to go back to the Begin-

ning of all Beginnings. When our souls were created, they chose to rebel against God, rejected to be in oneness with him and moved away from Him, because a patch of Darkness (Ignorance) was found in the light of the Soul. From such pride rebellion and ego, comes the origin of Evil. This *dravao* (deficiency) continues to exist today in each one of us. The soul then at one point realized its folly. It resolved to submit itself to the will of Ahura, to alchemise its evil element and then unite with Him. And so, each unit of the soul started its journey, passing

Royal road on which we can journey and be sure we will get there. What is that path?

Aevo pathao yo shahe vispe anyesham apantam.

*There is only one path, that of Ashoi – all other paths are non-paths.*

Asha is the continuous unbroken thread that runs through the entire gamut of Zarathushti lore – one of the most lustrous jewels in the Zarathushti Crown. It is the *summum bonum* of the Zarathushti Din.

All natural universal laws and phenomena operate under the all-embracing aegis of Asha. Even the

spiritual institutions like Sudreh-Kushti, Atash Behram, Manthravani, Rituals, and Dokhmenashini.

● *Sudreh-Kushti* the golden weapons are not symbols, but specially structured *alat* that is divinely charged, to receive currents from Lord Zarathushtra's Power Station in certain non-physical regions. They bestow spiritual benefits to the wearer in one's progress and protect against evil forces, within and without.

● *Atash-Kadehs* – the fire that Zarathushtis worship is also divine fire, which lies in its innermost depth as a result of consecration. Fire is the

## AND RELIGIOSITY IN THE ZARATHUSHTI FAITH

through many stations and stages, dissolving evil bit by bit. Those who could not be perfected came down to earth, locked in a physical body along with that powerful entity – Ego, concerned with their own survival interests, and welfare – the fountain-source of selfishness. In this process, the soul becomes a prisoner of the body, the jailer being the ego, and remains so, until such a time when material needs are satiated and the ego is no longer satisfied and asks: "To what end is all this leading me?" and then the desire to turn its course and take to spirituality arises: "Yahmi spenta thwa mainyu Urvaese jaso" [*Khorshed and Mehr Niyaeshe*]. When the ignorant world takes a turn for the better and towards You, You will come and greet us with your Divine Helpers.

Let no aspirant think that treading the Spiritual path is easy; on the contrary it is difficult and at times very painful, because its fundamental activity is the wearing away of the ego. It asks from its followers, the first place in their lives – indeed may ask all that they have.

**Spiritual path of a Zarathushti.** Since we are human and bound to err again and again, our prophet Asho Zarathushtra has chalked out the

two Mainyus, or spirits of Creation – Spenta and Angra Mainyu – Spiritual Beings, though diametrically opposed as contrasting poles, come together [*hem Mainyu jasetem, Ys. 30.4*] as twin workers and work towards the same spiritual goal.

The three foundation stones of the Zarathushti Din viz. "Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshtha", the essential origins of Daen-i-Mazdayasnie, imply the sublime thought-force, the most immaculate truthfulness of the tongue and sole use of manthra, and all holy laws of *Tarikats* along with *yasna* or rituals. Thus "Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshtha" are the creative thought, word and deed of *yazatas* or of men having reached the highest stage.

Vispa Humata, Vispa Hukhta, Vispa Huvareshtha, Vahisitem Anghuim Ashaet.

All these will lead to the best existence. An interesting point to note is that the order is reverse in practical life. First comes Good Deeds, and not Good thoughts. By doing Good Deeds I shall reach the stage of Humata – my thoughts will have attained the highest purity. What needs to be done then as the first step?

**Spiritual Institutions.** Have unconditional Faith in and live in the beautiful palace built by Zarathushtra, supported by the pillars of powerful

Source, that permeates the entire Creation. It is like a dutiful son (*puthra*) instrumental in fulfilling Ahura's will.

● *Manthravani* is like a Golden coin, the two faces are *Manthra* and *Mithra*. Manthra is the special arrangement of sounds meant to cause vibrations which result in form and color. Mithra is the thought-force woven into it, making it a deterrent against forces of evil.

● *Rituals.* The word *Yasna* literally signifies attunement to the angelic forces. All the rituals and liturgies are spirito-scientific processes based on understanding of the subtle laws of Nature, and produce practical results in the unseen world. If one understands the fundamental principles on which rituals are based, one can be convinced that our prophet has preached the efficacy of these indispensable elements for helping the progress of the soul, which establishes continuity between the ethereal spiritual worlds and the life of man.

● *Dokhmenashini.* Our Dokhmas are highly Talismanic centers from where the Zarathushti soul takes its first step commencing its onward march towards *Garothman*. Our method of disposal is so perfect, that it not only helps the soul to reach the

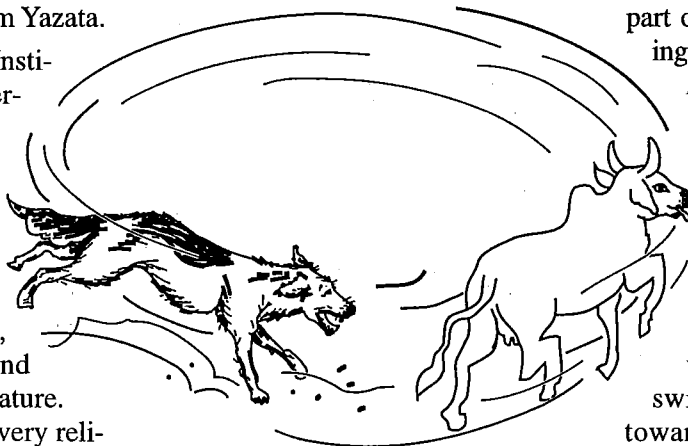
portals of *Chinvat* on the fourth day, but also helps breaking its ties with the physical and giving up its *anasars* (elements) to Daham Yazata.

These miraculous Spiritual Institutions, each having an inherent spiritual strength of its own with strong moral codes, are talismanic tools which will enable us to keep to the Spiritual Path. By merely studying the doctrines or the translations, our hopelessly limited mind cannot grasp the Truth of Nature. There is a mystical side to every religion. The Zarathushti Din has its own esoteric line known in the Gathas as *Kshnoom* [Ys 53.2, 48.12]. The deep and profound spiritual significance, the whys, whats and hows of Avesta are revealed only to those who drink deep at the fount of this knowledge.

**Why Religion?** There is a term in *Sarosh Yasht Hadokht* [Karda 1-7] "Pasoocha Ahooravangho" meaning "shepherd dog" that protects the cattle. The devotee here invokes Sarosh yazata to protect him, as the dog protects the cattle. Avesta abounds in allegory and metonymy. *Gav* signifies qualities like goodness, benevolence, selflessness, long suffering etc. and not cow in the normal sense. *Kshnoom* explains that there is a 'cow' and a 'wolf' in each of us, in different proportion at different times [see Figure 1]. They both whirl in an unceasing circle to overtake each other. The wolf chases the cow seeking to devour her; the cow tries to pacify the infuriated wolf, with her selfless service and good faith.

This is a conflict that goes on in all of us. Generally it is easier to fall prey to the wolf. The dictates of our religion help us resist the wolf and keep our limited senses on the right track. Hence the need for religion. One of the explanations for the dog is that we are asked to create a 'dog' in us, to protect the 'cow' and drive away the 'wolf'. Without Divine help we cannot achieve this, so in *Sarosh*

*Yasht Hadokht* we ask for Sarosh Yazata's help.



*Kshnoom explains that there is a 'cow' and a 'wolf' in each of us, in different proportions at different times. They whirl in an unceasing circle to overtake each other. This is a conflict that goes on in all of us.*

**Who is a spiritual Zarathushti?** Thus religion and spirituality are inseparable, and Holy teachings find their expression in all the exigencies of daily life. For Zarathushti's life is religion, and each breath is Daena. Religion expands our limited consciousness through spirituality and reveals the art of living.

To conclude: a spiritually oriented Zarathushti is not necessarily one who meditates regularly, is a total vegetarian, believes in spiritual healing, prays all through the day even at the cost of his urgent duties, will not tolerate any breach of religious laws, or belongs to any modern New-age group.

A Zarathushti on the spiritual path is one who has a holistic approach to everything and understands the Law of Karma (cause and effect); observes the prescribed *tarikats* to the best of his ability without making any show but resigns to His will if his sense of duty prevents him from observing; realizes the weakness of his flesh and guards against temptations; never points a "holier than thou" finger at others; realizes and is aware at every step of life, that each thought, word, and deed is recorded

in Nature and brings a result; interweaves Religion as his first priority in his daily life; accepts misfortunes as part of his growth without complaining "az anai khorshand hom" (*Patet Pashemani*); is ecology conscious; and respects other religions as equal partners in the machinery of the Cosmos.

The Mazdayasnie Zarathushti Din teaches us not only to nourish the cow and banish the wolf, but to convert the wolf into a cow and swim against the strong currents towards our destined goal. This is almost impossible, but one should always keep the goal in view, with the hope that one day we shall all get there!

Mun ano avayad shudan  
Mun ano avayad shudan  
Mun ano avayad shudan  
*I have to get there  
I have to get there  
I have to get there.*

**SILLOO MEHTA** is a graduate of Bombay University, and trained as Pre-school Director in California. She has owned and operated five Pre-schools (4 in California). Silloo is the publisher of *The Mazdayasnie Connection* since 1982. She conducts religious classes for adults every week, and children get together (prayers and social) every month since 1990. She is the author of two books on Zarathushti studies, and raises funds to help religious institutions in India.

Through the  
Best righteousness  
Through the  
Highest Righteousness  
May we perceive Thee,  
May we come near Thee,  
May we be in  
Perfect harmony with Thee.

[Ys. 60.12]

# Zarathushtra Ethical Philosopher Or Spiritual Leader?

*While a philosopher may reach the peak of the rational world of reason by opposing the irrational, a prophet becomes a sign post in the non-rational world of Spirit.*

By **Shahriar Shahriari**  
Vancouver, British Columbia

**T**here is one major difference between a philosopher and a prophet. Most philosophers are rational beings who base their philosophy of life on reason. In contrast the prophets may or may not be rational or reasonable, however, invariably prophets and spiritual leaders are creatures of extreme.

Generally philosophers base their philosophy of life on ethical values. Consequently they preach the path of reasonableness, balance, and moderation. Through their rational thinking, they consider the correct path to be, not an extreme but somewhere in the middle of that behavioral spectrum. While this approach is very pragmatic, particularly with regards to social behavior and communal living, it has nothing to do with spirituality.

On the other hand, invariably all prophets have selected a spiritual path, which is none other than the path of extreme. For example, Christ chose the path of Love to an extent that he beseeched us to love our enemies. Moses was another extremist who considered God's Laws to be the Supreme guidelines of life, epitomized by Ten Commandments, and other rules as outlined in the Torah. Prophet Mohammed was yet another extremist whose entire philosophy was based on submission to the Will of God, and in an extreme way preached the path of Submission. Even in the case of Prince Sid-

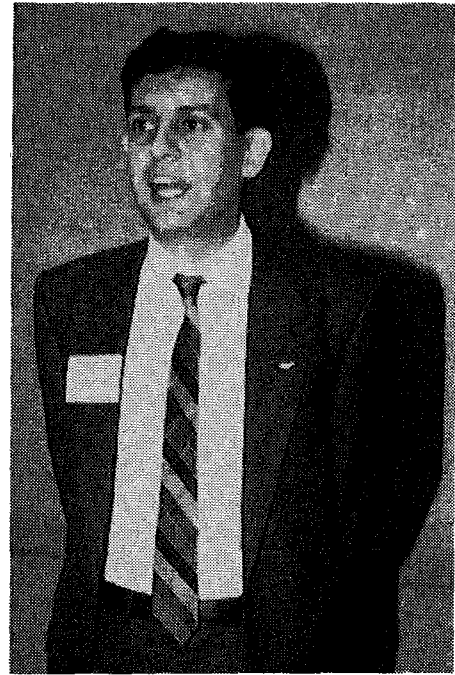
dharta, when he discovered the 'Middle Path', he preached that we should accept all extremes of life, preferring neither the harsh nor the gentle. To tread the middle path, for Siddhartha meant to be completely detached from the passions of life, be they pleasurable or sorrowful.

Was Zarathushtra a philosopher who preached moral and ethical values or was he a prophet who also preached an extreme adherence to a path? Through close study of Zarathushtra's philosophy, it becomes abundantly apparent that Zarathushtra preached adherence to the path of Asha. The Ashem Vohu prayer clearly states that we should:

Do the right thing because  
it is the right thing to do,  
and all else shall follow.

The path of Asha, otherwise referred to as truth, righteousness, or by any other name, is also an extreme path. Zarathushtra preached that adherence to this path is of utmost importance in this life, and will have eternal consequences in the hereafter.

The question now becomes: Is the path of Asha simply a path of moral and ethical behavior? Is moderation and balance in life a part of this path? Should we resist all evil, all untruth, all injustice? Or are there any cases in which some evil, untruth, or injustice may be tolerated? Are there any cases where a white lie may be justified? Is it okay to kill? What if we are faced with a mass murderer?



**SHAHRIAR SHAHRIARI**, born in Iran, educated in England and Canada, now lives in Vancouver. Shahriar is a Human Imagination Consultant, and the founder of Transformations Unlimited. He has authored two books, and recently has been exploring poetry. His most recent project for the Zarathushti community has been the much talked about the *PARADISE live presentations and PARADISE Video*. Visit his Zarathushti web site at: [www.promotionalguide.com/z](http://www.promotionalguide.com/z).

What if we have the opportunity to kill Hitler? If killing is wrong, then should we not kill at all? Not even Hitler?

These are obviously moral and philosophical questions that are asked by every generation. The timelessness of such questions goes back to the root question: whether the end justifies the means?

A philosopher's answer to such questions would naturally lead to the reasonable conclusion that to follow a path of moderation, there may be occasions which will require us to bend such ethical and moral laws. A prophet however, may respond to such questions by saying that survival in life is not the paramount.



According to a prophet, if a truth is truth, it is always truth, regardless of time or circumstances. Therefore if an evil is evil, it is always evil. And killing is always wrong, whether the object of murder is an innocent child, or one as notorious as Hitler.

The predominant feature that a prophet possesses, which a philosopher lacks, is the element of faith. Faith is something which transcends reasonableness, rationality, and even emotions. Faith is neither a thought nor a feeling; yet it includes thoughts and embraces feelings. Faith is a level of knowing which transcends logic, and paradoxically co-exists with a level of not-knowing.

“ Spirituality is a level of consciousness that transcends rationality. While a philosopher may reach the peak of the rational world of reason by opposing the irrational, a prophet becomes a sign post in the non-rational world of Spirit. ”

there are no exceptions to this rule. Any evil is evil, any lie is a lie, any injustice is an injustice; and each and every one of them will cause us to deviate from our desired path.

Zarathushtra said that there is but one path and that is the path of Asha. What he meant by this dictum was that there are many paths which lead to untruth, but there is only one path which leads to truth and righteousness. Just like there is only one direction that is the true North, while there are infinite directions which are not. While our Good Mind is our compass, possessing the weapon of spiritual faith is similar to believing in magnetism. At any given time, we may not be heading exactly towards the true North, but at least we can

It is because of this extreme position of Zarathushtra, that one can put him in the category of a spiritual leader, rather than a mere ethical philosopher. In our daily lives, we can emulate philosophers and try to behave in socially acceptable ways. Alternatively, we can try to be the best we can be, by emulating prophets and spiritual leaders such as Zarathushtra, even if it

Given the social infrastructure of the West, and the materialistic and rationalistic indoctrination that we are subjected to it is not surprising that the Western mind desperately craves for spirituality. While the typical North American tries to quench his or her spiritual thirst through fascination with Eastern or aboriginal ritualism, we have the opportunity to go to the spiritual core of our religion. Rituals may act as tools or a sub-text to reach this spiritual core, but can never replace it.

As Zarathushtis in the West we have the opportunity, nay, the obligation, to transcend ritualistic formulism of the East as well as the dogmatic rationalism of the West. Only then will we be able to emulate Zarathushtra himself, as our true spiritual leader and not as our ethical philosopher and guide. ■

*LIFE is like riding a bicycle: the only way to keep your balance is to move forward!*

FEZANA JOURNAL - SUMMER 1998

# Some points to ponder ...

1. Does the Zarathushti Din in North America possess innate strength?
2. How do Zarathushtis perceive spirituality?
3. How can one foster awareness of spirituality as a part of Zarathushti life?
4. What are the means that Zarathushtis can employ to minister spirituality to youth in North America?
5. What is the role of rituals, particularly Fire, in the evolution of a spiritual lifestyle?

These questions were raised by Jehan Bagli, Guest Editor of this issue of FEZANA Journal, on the Zarathushti 'alias' on the internet. Some responses are shown below. Readers are invited to send in their perspectives for future publication in the Readers' Forum section of the Journal.



## Maneck Bhujwala responds:

[1] Webster defines "innate" as "Of...thought or experience". Adults being away from religious institutions in India, are more conscious about religious identity. There is greater interest in learning about religion, meaning of prayers, and teaching that, to the children. This indicates significant thinking, brainstorming and planning to promote religiosity.

[2] One way, is to perceive an increased importance of moral and ethical, as opposed to materialistic values in our thinking. Another is through increased devotion to Ahura Mazda and the Divinities by regular recitation of prayers, meditation etc. to achieve peace and spiritual experience.

[3] A way to make the connection how spirituality is a part of Zarathushti lifestyle, is to reference to our youth, the Gathic and other scriptures where spirit and spirituality discussed. For example the discussion by His Holiness Prophet Zarathushtra of the two spirits that have existed from the beginning of time...and how the good and wise follow the directions of the good spirit etc.. Another case in point, is the Ahunavar prayer, which speaks of the blessing of the Good Mind by doing everything according to the

Will of Ahura Mazda - to follow Righteousness, and to help the needy. They should try and recite this prayer in a quiet contemplation, free from the diversion of the material thoughts, and learn to feel the experience of such peaceful communion. Our youth should be directed to the experience of the feelings, when, one donates money or food for the homeless and poor, shares happiness with the helpless. These are the sentiments, that can advance religiosity, bring us a sense of peace, and closer to Ahura Mazda.

[4] Starting with religious education at an early age, by parents and through religious classes. Parents practicing regular prayers, and observing religious customs at home. Above all, adults need to teach by example. If we speak of religion and ethics, and not exemplify by practice, youth can lose faith in the religion. Religious camps for similar age groups, observance of religious festivals, awareness of the ancestral history of success in life through truthfulness, integrity, compassion, and justice are other ways to minister Spirituality.

[5] Rituals are practices, that remind us of Ahura Mazda and teachings of Holy Zarathushtra, our spiritual self and its values, and de-emphasize our worldly concerns. In our daily rat race, we tend to forget our religious

teachings. A daily ritual prayer (once or twice) helps to curb this materialistic tendency. A weekly or monthly ritual reminds us of our support network, gives self-esteem to us and our children to find that there are others who share our wonderful Faith. Fire that best represents Ahura Mazda in the material world, is worthy of its high place in the performance of our prayers and ceremonies.

## An anonymous response...

The Zoroastrian religion and culture have gathered, in 3000 years, a rich heritage of myth, symbolism, ritual, literature, philosophy, and faith, and Zarathushtis need *all* of it. Zarathushtra and his inheritors traveled a real path towards a real God. God, Ahura Mazda, is a real being, the Creator or Fashioner of the Universe, and a being in which one can be in relationship. This Divine Being revealed the primal wisdom to Zarathushtra. The Gathas are filled with the language of illumination, both intellectual and mystical [Ys 43]. It is this path to divine enlightenment to which every observant Zarathushti is invited.

The Yasna and even the purity rituals should be enacted on American soil, with their full symbolic meanings explained to Zoroastrian youths and others interested. One idea would be to talk about 'purity' not just as physical cleanliness but as *environmental* cleanliness and *spiritual* dedication. Zoroastrians should stress work on environmental issues, it should become a part of the religion: an ecological imperative.

Zarathushtis should institute something like a 'nine-day retreat' which would harken back to the '*baresh-nom*' used by priests to attain ritual purity, for work in the fire temples and to perform inner liturgies. There would be rituals of cleansing and purity, but this would mostly be an educational retreat, where some devoted young Zarathushtis would spend nine days apart from their ordinary lives, learning as much about the

religion as they could, and learning to pray and teach the religion.

The mystical side of Zoroastrianism should be promoted through lectures and writing. This would eventually develop a kind of master-disciple relationship which would teach the kind of personal approach to God which Zarathushtra practiced: prayer, meditation, study, right action, and awareness of God in the natural world.

Finally, new translations of the Gathas and the other scriptures, should be made into English, with good grammar and poetic feeling, and prepared into an easily available editions. This would not necessarily be a "standard" translation of the Avesta, but one that would be *accessible* in any bookstore and that's what counts.

In summary, my vision for the future of the Zarathushti Din: a more personal treatment of learning and relationship to Ahura Mazda: a revival of mysticism; re-statement and symbolic understanding of rituals; and popular editions of the scriptures. These are some ideas I have, which might save the religion of Zarathushtra from becoming a misunderstood historical relic.



## COUNT YOUR GARDEN

*Count your garden*

*By the flowers,*

*Not by the leaves that fall.*

*Count your days*

*By golden hours,*

*Don't remember clouds at all.*

*Count your nights by stars,*

*Not shadows.*

*Count your years with smiles,*

*Not tears.*

*Count your blessings*

*Not your troubles.*

*Count your age by your friends,*

*Not years.*

- Author unknown

# Spirituality and Other Traditions

## Exploring the views on religiosity of other early traditions

By Jehan Bagli  
Princeton, New Jersey

Righteousness and Wisdom are commended, unbeliever and idolators are denounced, and..... God overtakes the worshippers of false gods and the wicked generally...

Rewards in a future life for the Good, and punishment for the wicked ...  
Immortality of the soul ...

No, these are not words from Zarathushtrian scriptures. This is what is said in *Wisdom*, a book accepted by Roman Catholics as a part of the canon of the *Old Testament*. Despite the fact that there are specific reasons why one finds commonalities among Judaic, Hindu and Zarathushtrian traditions, it must be realized that often common patterns of human thought in metaphysical aspects, could emerge independently. The *Book of Wisdom*, composed about a century before Christ either by King Solomon or by a Jew of Alexandria, contains apostolic pronouncements similar to those found in the Gathic scriptures by Zarathushtra.

In this respect it is of interest to explore the views of religiosity of the other early traditions. One of the most complex term *Ch'i* pervades throughout the Chinese philosophy and religion of the early era. The Taoist philosopher Chuang-tzu in the 4th century BCE wrote: "When the Great Earth exhales breath, it is called wind." By this time *Ch'i* was identified with 'breath'. During the classical age of Chinese Philosophy (481-221 BCE) the concept of 'breath' merged with the 'Vital Spirit' – a life force of all creatures. It is of interest to note that Avestan literature [*Ys 55.1*] as well as middle Persian

Pahlavi works *Bundahishn* [Ch. 3.13] refers to one of the constituents of the human body as 'vital life force' known in Avesta as *Ushtana*, (or Ph. *Jan*). *Bundahishn* tell us that after death this vital life force combines with the wind, *Vayu*, a divinity that is identified as *Govad* (Farsi, *Bad*).

With the passage of time *Ch'i* was expounded upon as the 'flow of energy' within the body. Traditional Chinese art of acupuncture evolved as a means to control the flow of *Ch'i*. For the mind to have perfect control over the body *Ch'i* must be ideally regulated. East Asian martial arts therefore have a strong spiritual component to achieve absolute physical mastery of the body.

In the Neo-Confucian revival of Sung era, *Ch'i* acquired a radically new meaning. This was the era responsible for the formative concept of '*T'ai-chi*' the 'Great Ultimate' signifying the origin and basis of Heaven and Earth and of all Beings. Chou Hsi (1130-1200 AC) who evolved Neo-Confucian metaphysics, insisted that truth of the Great Ultimate must be personally realized through moral self-cultivation. Truth is not knowledge about some external reality, but a personal knowledge rooted in self-awareness in the ethico-religious sense, thus defining human spirituality of the Innate Self in terms of that notion.

In the folk tradition the mysterious creativity of *Ta'i Chi* is implied in the spiritual and physical exercise known as *Ta'i-chi chuan* practiced to this day. This slow, firm and rhythmic exercise disciplines the body and purifies the mind through coordinated movements and regulated breathing. It is a

The practice of the yogic art of attainment of spirituality, is the ability to reduce to absolute tranquility the mental function, which is largely under the influence of external worldly influences. To begin with, it is crucial to focus one's thought process on a single entity, thus restraining the organ of thinking. This restraint is then coupled with strict discipline of bodily attitudes, such as posture, rhythm of respiration, emancipation of sensory activity from domination of worldly forces. The perfection of this technique of "suppression of psychomental state" requires prolonged effort of coordinating physiological practices and spiritual exercises. This puts the thinking mechanics in complete consonance with the Inner Self, a convergence of the individual self (soul) with the ultimate self. In Zarathushtrian terms, it is the recognition of the *Fravahar* (Divinity) within. The final result of this endeavor is attainment of a state of mind that can recognize the 'absolute knowledge' – the state of Wisdom or Enlightenment – recognized in Zarathushtrian theology as the *Mazda*, and known in the Yogic doctrines as *Samadhi*. a stage of revelation of the Supreme Self of intuitive perception. ■

"The idea of light signaling the arrival of an extraordinary grandson also occurs in the birth story of

“Astrology and divination during medieval times relied heavily on the specific types and shapes of objects supposedly manifest. Thus, although it is conceivable that each religion independently generated the identical symbols and assigned them the same significance, it is more likely that they were assimilated when the Arabs encountered the Iranians, thereby binding Muslim hagiography to Zoroastrian legends.”



THE BEST THINGS  
IN LIFE ARE FREE.

When we count  
Our many blessings,  
It isn't hard to see  
That life's most valued treasures  
Are the treasures that are free.  
For it isn't what we own or buy  
That signifies our wealth,  
It's the special gifts  
That have no price:  
Our family, friends and health.

- Author unknown

# Seven Reasons Why

**1. By unwavering mathematical law we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering Intelligence:** There are so many exacting conditions necessary for life on the earth that they could not probably exist in proper relationship by chance. For example, sun, the source of life has a surface temperature of 10,000 degree Fahrenheit. Our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire" warms us just enough and not too much . One half of the radiation of sun and we would freeze; half as much more and we would roast. The slant of our earth tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons. If the earth had not been so tilted, vapors from the oceans would move north and south piling up for us continents of ice. These are just two of a host of other examples why there is *not a chance in a billion that life on our planet is an accident.*

**2. The resourcefulness of life to accomplish its purpose is a manifestation of an all-pervading Intelligence:** What life itself is no man has fathomed. It has neither weight, nor dimension, but it does have force; a growing root will crack a rock. Life has conquered water, land and air, mastering the elements, compelling them to dissolve, and reform their combination. Behold an almost invisible drop of protoplasm, capable of motion, drawing energy from the sun. This single cell, holds within the germ of life, and has the power to distribute this life to every thing. The powers of this droplet are greater than our plant, animal and human kingdoms, for all life came from it. Nature did not create life; fire -blistering rocks and saltless sea could not meet the necessary requirement. *Who then, has put it here?*

**3. Animal wisdom speaks irresistibly of a good Creator who induced instincts into otherwise helpless creatures:** The young salmon spends years at sea, then comes back to his own river, and travels up the very side of the river into which flows the tributary where he was born. What brings him back so precisely? If you transfer him to another tributary he will know at once that he is off his course and he will fight his way down and back to the main stream, and then turn up against the current to finish his destiny accurately. *Where does the directing impulse originate?*

**4. Man has something more than animal instinct – the power of reason:** No other animal has ever left a record of its ability to count ten or even understand the meaning of ten. Where instinct is like a single note of flute, beautiful but limited, human brain contains all the notes of all the instruments in the orchestra. Thanks to human reason we can contemplate the possibility that we are what we are only because we have received *a spark of Universal Intelligence*.



# Scientists Believe in God

**5. Provision for all living is revealed in such phenomenon as the wonders of genes:** So tiny are these genes that, if all of them responsible for all the living people in the world could be put in one place, there would be less than a thimbleful. Yet these genes inhabit every living cell and are the key to all human, animal, and vegetable characteristics. A thimble is a small place to hold all the individual characteristics of almost six billion human beings. That the ultramicroscopic gene can absolutely rule all life on earth is an example of profound cunning and provision that could emanate only from a *Creative Intelligence; no other hypothesis will serve.*

**6. By the economy of nature we are forced to realize that only infinite Wisdom could have foreseen and prepared with such astute husbandry:** Many years ago a species of cactus was planted in Australia as a protective fence. Having no insect enemies in Australia, the cactus grew prodigiously to cover an area as large as England, crowding inhabitants out of town and destroying their farms. Seeking a defense, entomologists scoured the world. They turned up an insect which lived exclusively on cactus and would eat nothing else. So animal soon conquered vegetable, and today the cactus pest has retreated. Such checks and balances have been universally provided. Why have not fast breeding insects dominated the earth? Because their anatomy does not permit their growth beyond a small size. Imagine meeting a hornet as big as a lion! *If this physical check had not been provided, man could not exist.*

**7. The fact that man can conceive the idea of God is in itself a unique proof:** The conception of God rises from a divine faculty of man, unshared with the rest of our world – the faculty we call imagination. The vista that this power opens up is unbounded; indeed as man's perfected imagination becomes a Spiritual Reality. He may discern in all the evidence of design and purpose that heaven is wherever and whatever; that *God is everywhere and in everything but nowhere so close as in our heart.* It is scientifically as well as imaginatively true; *The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.*

Abstracted from Reader's Digest, October 1960

## FROM A PARENT TO A CHILD

*Dearest child of mine  
When you wonder  
The meaning of life and love  
Know that I am with you.  
Close your eyes and feel me kissing you  
In the gentle breeze across your cheek.*

*When you begin to doubt  
That you shall ever see me again  
Quiet your mind and hear me.  
I am in the whisper of the heavens  
Speaking of your love.*

*When you lose your identity  
When you question who you are  
And where you are going  
Open your heart and see me.  
I am in the twinkle in the stars  
Smiling down upon you,  
Lighting the path for your journey.*

*When you awaken each morning  
Not remembering your dreams  
But feeling content and serene  
Know that I was with you  
Filling your nights  
With thoughts of me.*

*When you linger in the remnant pain  
Wholeness seeming so unfamiliar  
Think of me  
Know that I am with you  
Touching you through  
Shared tears of a gentle friend  
Easing the pain.*

*As the sunrise illuminates  
the desert sky,  
In that breathtaking brilliance  
Awaken your spirit.  
Think of our time together,  
All too brief,  
But ever brilliant.*

*When you were certain of us  
Being together a lifetime,  
Know that God created  
Those moments in time  
Just for us.*

*I am with you always.*

Poem from a deceased parent to a child, or from Ahura Mazda to all his children. Submitted by Jasmine Patel.



# CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

## ZOROASTRIAN SUBALTERNS AND MUSLIM ELITES IN MEDIEVAL IRANIAN SOCIETY

By Jamsheed K. Choksy

Columbia University Press, New York, 207 pp., 1997

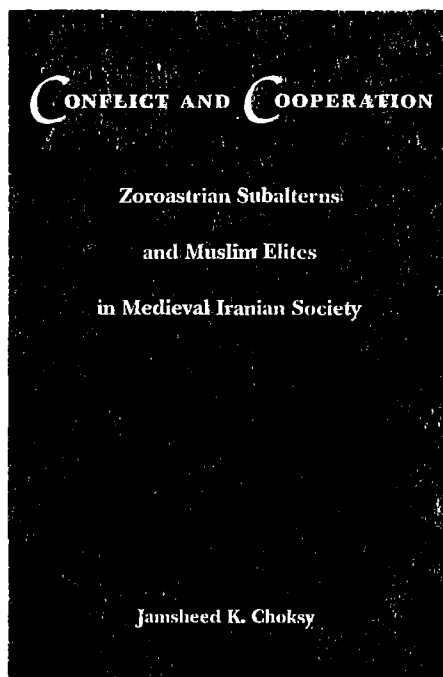
Review by Dr. Kersey H. Antia  
Orland Park, Illinois

**C**ONFLICT AND COOPERATION is a well-researched and informative book on how Iran was conquered and converted by the Arabs. I do not know of any other book that covers this topic so succinctly and yet so very thoroughly, leaving out no available evidence. Unfortunately, however, most of the evidence comes from Arab writers who are biased against Zarathushtis.

The book is studded with facts and references, which is its main strength, making it one of the best reference works on the subject, though at times, it becomes rather tedious for non-scholars. Nevertheless, it is as enthralling to a persistent lay reader as to a scholar.

This young, Harvard-educated scholar, originally from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the only full-time, Behdin Zarathushti professor of Iranian studies outside of India, that I know of, has devoted his career to Zarathushti studies, and is a shining model for our young generation. He has researched a subject every Zarathushti is interested in, in a very dispassionate way, befitting a true scholar. He describes various reasons for the fall of the Sassanians – incessant wars with the Byzantine Empire, transforming a clan-based army into an indemnified one, termination of the vassal kingdom of Hira which acted as a buffer between Iran and Arabia, weak leadership, excessive taxation, and social discontent.

Arabs first invaded Hira in 633 AC, and later, nearby towns and the Sassanians were able to drive them away once, but did not take them seriously,



On a second attack, the Sassanians were defeated, at Quadisia, after a standoff for four months. The Arabs then proceeded to capture Iraq and Iran. Yazdehshad III, the last Sassanian king went to eastern Iran, hoping the Arabs would eventually go away. But one after another, Sassanian citadels fell to the Arabs, who gave them three choices: to accept Islam, pay poll-tax, or fight it out.

The Iranians, as a rule, preferred to make peace by paying poll-tax, but reneged on it or even turned on the Arab garrisons in their city after the Arab army left, until it returned and reconquered them. In Samarkand, the Iranians reneged on their forced conversions to Islam three times until the Arabs settled enough Muslims to ensure that the Zarathushtis did not again apostatize. Even then, they rebelled twice later on.

The Iranians engaged the Arabs in large numbers in 642 AC at Nihavand

near Hamadan and fought bravely, but lost to the Arabs who then found it easy to capture the rest of Iran. However, the area near the Caspian Sea held on for another century or so.

At first the Arabs were a tiny minority in Iran and lived by themselves as they were afraid of reprisals by the Iranians. Initially, converts in the rural areas were few and they had to move in with the Arabs in cities for their own safety. But the situation reversed in a century or so, as the Arabs induced Iranians to convert by exempting them from the poll-tax, offering them government jobs and equal status with the Arabs.

Shia and Sufi preachers went from place to place and converted many rural Iranians by their missionary zeal. In 750 AC, the Arab population in Iran was only 8%, but it went up to 50% in 850 and 80% in 990. Zarathushti priests began to depict their sense of despair in their religious writings and felt that the satanic times predicted in their eschatological literature had already arrived, and hoped desperately for the Saoshyant to deliver them from the evil.

They also tried hard to be accepted as "People of the Book", as were the Jews and Christians, by trying to prove that they had their own scriptures too, but the author shows that Zarathushtis were not treated as "People of the Book" but a shade lower. His treatment of the legendary Salman-Al Farsi is very factual. His extensive research shows little veracity for various claims that Zarathushtis were regarded as "People of the Book" by the Prophet Mohammed.

The reader will be hard-pressed to find a single typological, grammatical or factual error in this work. The author does not hesitate to disagree with such stalwarts as Boyce or Frye if facts warrant it, but his style is not as lucid as theirs and he has little to add of his own except for meticulously proving his thesis, perhaps owing to his youth. And yet, one can hardly wait for another book that he says he is working on – on the religion of Zarathushtra.

The author often takes issue with those, especially Boyce, who maintain that conversions to Islam were achieved mainly by force, and asserts that exemption from poll-tax, equal status with Muslims, job opportunities, etc., also played their part in alluring Iranians to convert. But is not all this social coercion, at least by today's standards if not by any religious standards? That should imply that the book title should be *Conflict and Coercion*. Only the Zarathushtis, who bore the brunt of cruelty and oppression for centuries in the name of religion, could testify that there was only coercion and coerced cooperation they underwent, once the conflict with the Arabs was over. No academic treatise, however, brilliant, can prove otherwise. Boyce lived with the Iranians and knows it first-hand. The Zarathushtis had to cooperate with their Muslim masters in order to survive, but all they got in return was no respite at all from the Arabs.

Many scholars, following Darmesteter, have maintained that Arabs did not transform Iran so much as Iran transformed Arabs, and led to Shi'ism, thus retaining its inner essence. One looks in vain for such philosophical attestations in this book, except for one terse admission: the converts "then modified both Islam and its behavioral norms" [p. 141].

The author has done a magnificent job of proving his main thesis, a job far better than many Western scholars have done, and yet without making the reader ever suspect partiality on his part as a Zarathushti: "This investigation of social transformations is thus a study of how and why Zoroastrians developed into a subordinate, subjugated, or inferior class, that is, a subaltern community, experiencing crisis, displacement, and marginalization not only during that time but also later" [p. 11] ... Cooperation however, came only from those who had converted to Islam and "their defiance ceased" [p. 143], but it was quite another matter for those who did not, and as such the title of the book may not be acceptable to them. We will not be sur-

prised, therefore, if the Irani Zarathushtis take issue with him. "The history of Zoroastrians in Iran after the conquests of Arabs," asserts Dr. Jahanian, in a paper he read at the North American Congress in San Francisco, "can be summarized in three words: oppression, misery and massacre." Parsi scholars too, for example, J. J. Modi, and others agree. Prof. William Jackson also maintains that the Irani Zoroastrians "... stubbornly refused to give up his belief, and consequently sealed his faith with his blood." [The Zoroastrians of Yazd, p. 354]; the migration of Parsis to India will ever bear testimony to this sad fact.

And yet, that does not detract a bit from the usefulness of this excellent work, which every Zarathushti household should possess, as a factual record of their history. ■

[The full report by Dr. Antia is available from FEZANA Journal.]

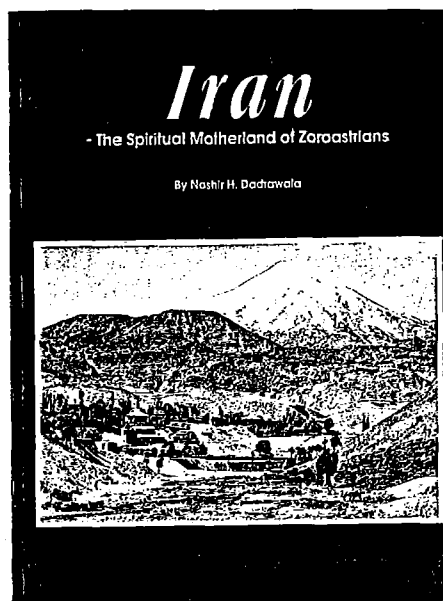
### **Denkard Book 6 available on the Internet**

The complete text of Dastur Peshotan Sanjana's translation of *Denkard* Book 6 has been placed on line by Joseph Peterson, at:

<http://www.avesta.org>

Book 6 is a collection of gnomic sayings (Andarz) – an ancient Zoroastrian "Bread for the Head". The *Denkard* is a ninth-century encyclopedia on the religion of Zarathushtra, with extensive quotes from materials thousands of years older, including (otherwise) lost Avestan texts. Per Dastur Sanjana it is "entirely based upon the Pahlavi translation of such Avesta works as the *Daena-kara* ... The Avestic origin of the *Denkard* is not difficult to prove" [Vol x, viii].

Its chief author, Adarbad-i Emetan, was the high priest of Persia. It is the single most valuable source of information on the Zarathushti din aside from the Avesta itself. For further information about this and other texts on line, contact Joseph Peterson at [jpeterston@polaristel.net](mailto:jpeterston@polaristel.net).



## **IRAN THE SPIRITUAL MOTHERLAND OF ZOROASTRIANS**

**By Noshir H. Dadrawala**

Published by Jam-e-Jamshed,  
7, Kumbhta Street, Fort, Mumbai  
400038. 102 pp. with glossy full  
color photographs, 1997.

**Review by Adel Engineer**  
Naperville, Illinois

**A**s Special Correspondent for the Jam-e-Jamshed newspaper, Noshir Dadrawala visited Iran twice during 1995 to document the rich history and culture of Iran, and experience the living tradition in the villages near Yazd.

This book, lavishly illustrated in full color (with 68 color photographs) is written in two parts, which were serialized in the *Jam-e* weekly in Summer 1995 and Winter 1996. Part 1 is *Diary of a Zoroastrian Pilgrim in Iran*; and Part 2 is *The Pilgrim's Return to Iran*.

The book creates a great awareness among Zarathushtis about the glory and spirituality of ancient Iran. After reading this "moving account of a Zoroastrian pilgrim's search of his spiritual and cultural roots" (as is

proclaimed on the cover page) one cherishes a desire to make a holy pilgrimage to Iran at least once in a lifetime. As the political climate improves between Iran and the West, I feel certain that in the near future, opportunities for guided religious tours from the West to Iran will become available. Zarathushtis will then visit Iran and return rejuvenated by Iran's beauty, historical richness and spiritual energy.

This book can well be referred to as "Every Pilgrim's Guide to Iran." ■

## **GUIDE TO ZOROASTRIAN HISTORICAL PLACES IN IRAN**

**By Asfandiar Sohrab Gotla**

B-9 Anand Vihar, St. Martin's Cross Road, Bandra, Mumbai 400-050, Tel: 645-2247.

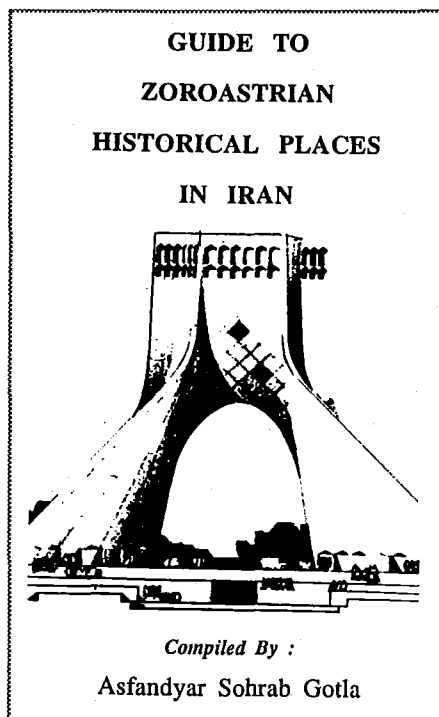
115 pp. soft cover pocket guide, 1997.

Available for \$5 from Dr. Phiroz Dastoor, Tel: 94160 242-7433.

**Review by Adel Engineer  
Naperville, Illinois**

In this handy guide, Mr. Gotla provides a bird's-eye view of different places of cultural, historical and spiritual interest to Zarathushtis worldwide. With the recent resurgence of interest in our roots, this travel guide is likely to be indispensable to anyone traveling to Iran for the first time, not knowing Farsi. The book has a Foreword by Noshir Dadrawala, a journalist and writer on Iran.

The author has done a very good job of acquainting tourists from India



and other countries with Iranian customs and way of life. Included are such topics as what to eat, where to travel, what not to carry, what to buy, sightseeing in Iran, and useful Farsi phrases, to name a few. Tehran, Hamadan and many more places of interest are described for tourists. One chapter is devoted to the Pirs.

On the last page, Mr. Gotla promotes his own tour to Iran for tourists from India. For most tourists, a conducted tour is the best way to see Iran and there are several from Mumbai. To quote Dadrawala: "... no Zoroastrian's understanding and perspective of his or her religion, history and culture is complete without personally experiencing the visual and ethereal delights of Iran."

For the tourist to Iran, this small book is a handy reference worth carrying. ■

## **Booklets from Sahitya Mandal**

**By Pervin Mistry  
Mississauga, Ontario**

The "Zarthushti Din Sahitya Mandal" was established in Mumbai to disseminate religious knowledge through a series of booklets. The following three can be ordered for \$3US each (plus postage) from the Mandal, c/o C. M. Patel, 31 Gautam Nivas, 3rd floor, Seven Bungalows, Versova, Andheri West, Mumbai 400 053.

### **THE SIX SETAYESHES OF RAINIDAR ADARBAD MARASPAND**

**By Hutoksh**

Soft cover, 47 pp, 1996.

The word *Setayeshe* comes from the Pahlavi *Satudan* (to praise), which in turn is derived from the Avestan *Staot* (vibes, resonance created through the energies of sound and light). In short, *setayem* means prayer/attunement with the Divine Energies and Cosmic Forces through manthric chants.

*Rainidar* is the title bestowed upon the Dasturan Dastur for proving his spiritual achievements and status as a Saoshyant. It was he who compiled the entire extant Avesta, including the Yashts, Niyaishes, Yasna and Gathas, from scattered fragments which survived Alexander's plunder of Persia.

It is significant to note, as mentioned in the Foreword, that Pazend is interwoven within the very fabric of the Avesta, and is used in several sections of every Niyaishe and Yasht. Kudos to the author for bringing to light the Pazend Setayeshes which are often swept under, mistakenly, by some.

### **COMBAT BETWEEN TEHEMTON AND ROOYINTAN; RUSTOM THE INVINCIBLE; ASFANDIAR, ANOINTED BY THE PROPHET**

**By Katy Sahiar and Curset Patel**

Soft cover, 37 pp, 1996.

The narrative is based on the *Shah Nameh* of Firdowsi. The story deals with the ill-fated battle between two

## **Pre-sale of**

## **6th World Zoroastrian Congress Proceedings "ETERNAL LAND"**

Cost \$50 US, available from 6th World Zoroastrian Congress Office, No. 8 Zartoshtian St, Mirza Koochak Khan St, Jomhori Ave, Tehran 11316, Iran, tel: (0098)-21-677740, fax: (0098)-21-6458127.

legendary heroes: Rustom, who was invincible and Asfandiar, the son of King Gushtasp, who was equally undefeatable. Asho Zarathushtra had made Asfandiar's body impervious ('rooyintan') to any weapons. Rustom, on the other hand, was called 'Tehemton' because he was granted unparalleled strength among mortals.

Both Rustom and Asfandiar had pledged to fight on the side of righteousness alone. If they were both fighting for righteousness, why did the battle begin? With two such spiritually gifted heroes, which one would win? The answers, with spiritual explanations, are both convincing and enlightening and make very absorbing reading. The book is hard to put aside, and can be re-read with added interest.

#### **AGIARY, ATASH BAHRAM KEM JASHO?**

*By Cursetji M. Patel*

*Soft cover, 36 pp, 1996, in Gujarati.*

The booklet explains and lays down the obligatory ablution and disciplines to be followed within the sacred precincts of an Agiary or Atash Behram. The author also briefly touches upon the elaborate procedures for consecrating and enthroning a holy fire which then becomes a spiritual entity – Ahura Mazda's own Son. The knowledge of these elaborate purification and consecration procedures inspire faith and devotion in the minds of those who mistakenly take for granted the holy fire, the Divine representation of Ahura Mazda, to be just a physical fire, lighted with a matchstick as one does a camp-fire!

Though the book is in Gujarati, the author gives an abbreviated version in English of the necessary tips and 'do-s and don'ts' to be followed in the presence of the Divine, Spiritual Energy of Ahura Mazda.

For those who have not had the privilege of being brought up in an environment where regular visits to an Agiary or Atash Behram were possible, this booklet is specially welcome. ■

## **RELIGION AND HISTORY OF THE PARSEES**

*By Meherbano Kekobad Marker*

*Printed in Pakistan at Rosette. Designed by Creative Unit (Pvt.) Ltd.*

*Hardcover, 170 pp, 1997.*

*Available for \$20 from Aban Rustomji, Houston, Texas, Tel: (713) 462-0391.*

*All proceeds will be donated to the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO).*

**Review by Rashna Ghadialy  
Chicago, Illinois**

Often books written about culture, social customs and rituals owe their origin to the oral tradition of learning which is passed from generation to generation within families. Thus it comes as no surprise that one of Pakistan's stalwart Parsi women, Meheramai Marker, as she is fondly known among friends and acquaintances, was asked to document her knowledge of religion by her grandchildren.

The book has a Foreword by her son, Jamsheed K. Marker, who was, from 1990 to 1995, the ambassador and personal representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York, and now resides with his wife Arnaz, in Florida.

The author has made an attempt to translate a Gujarati book *Zorthosti Dharem Gyan*, by Framroz Fardoonji Hirjibehdin, printed in 1929 with reference to other sources and a sprinkling of the author's own views, experiences, reflections, and family contributions towards the Zarathushti community at large.

The Zarathushti identity, beliefs and culture presented in this book are based on what was practiced by Par-

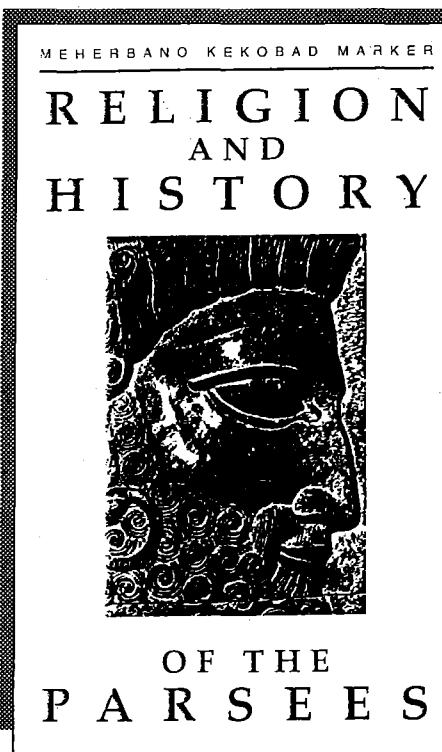
sis in the Indian subcontinent in the early and middle part of the 20th century. The book is divided into twelve chapters which broadly cover religious beliefs, scriptures, Iranian and

Parsi history, ceremonies and literature. Although the text is easy to read, the organization of the chapters does not necessarily follow any particular order, which, at times, creates confusion for the reader.

Some of the author's generalization about Parsi customs are not quite correct. For example, according to the author the *Ara Antar* ceremony which precedes a Parsi wedding cere-

mony, "is now abolished" [p. 157]. This is not completely true. Indeed this ceremony has not been performed during the Parsi marriage ceremony in Pakistan for the last fifty years. However, during many Indian Parsi marriage ceremonies in India, Europe and North America, *Ara Antar* is incorporated to this day.

The author tries to enlighten the reader on purity laws as they were practiced by women of Meheramai's generation and her predecessors. It is heartening to note that a young female's education had high priority in many Parsi families of her time, and thus the adjustment of the obser-



vance of the purity laws occurred. The author's thoughtful argument towards observing purity laws is weakened by a sweeping statement [p. 59]: "In France, women working in the perfume industry are asked to abstain from working when they are in their menses." The source for this statement is not mentioned and is misleading. Proper research and citation of the French and European Union Labor Laws can only validate such a statement as fact, which the author owes the reader to strengthen her argument.

The genuine contribution of the book to Zarathushti literature lies in the few paragraphs scattered over the chapters, which personalize social and religious experiences covering a span of nearly a hundred years of Meheramai's life, and that of her family members.

In leading the Zarathushti faith into the twenty-first century, the readers of the present generation including the reviewer, are challenged with the preservation of our centuries-old rituals and beliefs which we consider pertinent, and abandonment of those which we consider outdated. Religion and History of the Parsees can be considered an initial step in identifying those rituals and beliefs which enrich our religious tradition. ■

### List of Persian Zarathushti Names

A list of Persian-Zarathushti names based on Jamshid Soroushian's *Farhang-e Behdinan*, Tehran, 1956, has been posted on the Internet by Joseph Peterson, at:

<http://www.avesta.org/znames.htm>

This URL also has Avestan, Old Persian and Parsi names.

*The time to be happy is NOW*  
*The place to be happy is HERE*  
*The way to be happy is to*  
**MAKE OTHERS HAPPY**

## THE AVESTA: MAJOR PORTIONS FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF THE MAGI

By Rev. Ernestine G. Busch

Published by Ernestine G. Busch, El Paso, Texas  
 440 pp, ISBN 0-9614750-0-5, 1985, \$30 for set of both books.

## AVESTAN SYMBOLS AND CONCEPTS. UNDERSTANDING FROM THE HOLY BOOK OF THE MAGI

By Rev. Ernestine G. Busch

Published by Ernestine G. Busch, Springfield, Illinois  
 ISBN 0-9614750-1-3, 146 pp, 1985, \$30 for set of both books.

Review by Michael Stausberg  
 Uppsala, Sweden

Recently, I happened to purchase these two volumes from Iranbooks in Bethesda, Maryland. One motive for taking the risk of drawing a blank, was the rather reasonable price for the set (\$30). The books are a typical private production; the manuscript is in typescript and the covers are rather primitive, albeit quite nice. I did not expect the books to be a scholarly work – and in fact, they are not.

Being notoriously interested in how Westerners made use of Zarathushtra and 'his' religion, however, I got curious. My curiosity, I frankly admit, was not so much stimulated by the subtitle of the books – the words *Magi* or *Magian* are even used by serious scholars (e.g. Zaehner, Choksy) to designate Zarathushtrians – as by the author's title ('Rev.').

Would Rev. Busch offer me a piece of traditional apologetics and enrich my dossier of Christian polemics against Zarathushtra's religion in the style of Wilson and Mitchell? I was pleasantly disappointed. Even if Rev. Busch puts forward outspoken religious (Christian) points of view, these are obviously not meant to attack the Zarathushtis and their religion.

Dr. Michael Simmons from the Center for Zoroastrian Research in Bloomington, Indiana, recalls Rev. Busch "as an older woman who did

not belong to any mainstream religious group. She seemed rational and sincere and did not seem to have ties to European theosophical groups interested in the religion of Zarathushtra." According to the back cover of the books, Rev. Busch is "an ordained minister of the Universal Harmony Foundation of Seminole, Florida."

The thicker book of the two basically contains most of the Avestan texts. The translation is based on or copies of the English version of Darmesteter as given in the famous *Sacred Books of the East*. The texts are arranged in three sections.

Part I contains a paraphrase of the Gathas. Part II basically has all the Yashts and some texts, such as the Ahuna Vairya, the so-called Hadokht Nask and the Afrin-e-Paygambar Zartosht, which oddly enough, are numbered as Yasht ('Yasht 21-23' respectively). Moreover, this part has a paraphrase of the Ashem Vohu, the Yenghe Hatam and the Airianem Ishyo. Part III is a translation of the Vendidad. Every text is accompanied by some sort of a brief introduction. The introduction to Part III, for example, tries to vindicate the Vendidad: "If their religious rules and regulations seem strange to us, know that our religious rules and regulations would seem just as strange to them ... Let us not judge. Every reli-

gion must try to serve the many diverse needs of its own. ... Each Holy Book serves the needs of some portion of mankind. Each should be respected within that context" [pp. 278-280].

In spite of the respect Rev. Busch tries to create for the Vendidad, she opines that the speculative core of the Avesta is contained in the Gatha and in Ys. 30 in particular. "Yasna 30 sets forth the basic doctrine upon which rests the teachings of the Avesta: that the wisest and best thoughts lead to the wisest and best words and actions; that evil and unwise thoughts lead to evil and unwise words and actions; that the battle between good and evil, or wisdom and unwisdom, begins with our minds; that we gain when we choose good and wisdom, we lose when we choose evil and unwisdom; ... that whether we enter into or remain outside of the Best Mental State, heaven depends upon the spirit directing our own free wills, the Good Spirit or the evil spirit, as we choose" [p. 9].

Although Rev. Busch makes use of a translation that was provided by Western philologists, she distances herself from the 'Orientalistic' approach when she states on the first page: "Able Oriental linguists could translate the words of the Avesta, but they were not trained in the language of symbols, so the true meaning of the Avesta remained a mystery." This is because, according to the Rev. the "Avesta is a book of symbols" comparable to the Revelation of St. John.

This 'symbolist' approach is developed further in the slimmer volume of the two. Due to its symbolic character, Rev. Busch opines that the Avesta can be useful "to any person, at any time, in any place" [p. xii]. The only (hermeneutic) problem remains how to 'read' the symbols, how to decipher their external meaning? Rev. Busch's solution is rather simple, nay, simple-minded: "In reading symbols one uses word sub-

stitution, that is, the identity of the symbolic forms is substituted in context for the name or word expressing the symbolic representation" [p. xii]. The book, however, is no symbolic 'retranslating' of the Avestan texts. (Note: Gershevitch's translation of the Avestan hymn to Mithra is as 'symbolic' as Rev. Busch would have desired; see Gershevitch's translation of Yt. 10,134, compared with Busch's at p. xii). The ten chapters of Rev. Busch's *Avestan Symbols and Concepts* deal with ten 'symbols' or groups of symbols. Being a Rev-

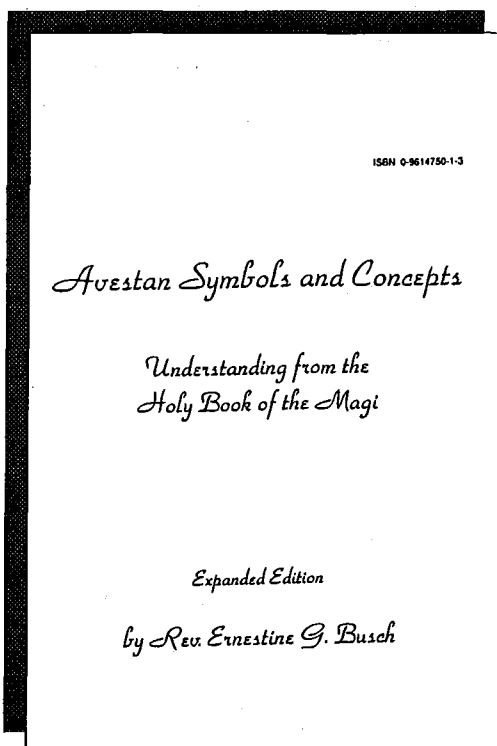
dient to God; both wanted to be exactly like God; both were tempted; both offered their life; both set a good example for others to follow [pp. 2-7].

In the fifth chapter, Rev. Busch once again tackles the 'symbol' of Zarathushtra, he this time, being "A Type of Us", "in that he demonstrates an ideal standard for individual thought, word and action" [p. 55]. Other chapters try to 'read' the Amesha Spenta, Avestan serpent symbolism (what a Christian topic!), the "Celestial Immortals" (i.e. the Yazatas), "Excellent Immortals", "Creations and Counter-Creations", "Other Avestan Imagery" (e.g. Khvarenah, the Chinvat Bridge), "The Evil Ones" and "Conversations with Ahura".

The last paragraph of the book seems worth quoting: "The whole purpose of the Avesta was to teach individuals to become cooperators and co-creators with the Supreme Being ...; to teach individuals to have a respectful familiarity with the Divine Influences; to identify the qualities which make up the whole of the best principles out of which a good life might be constructed; and to present the universal laws in a way that would show how they could be applied. The Avesta can fulfill this purpose in the world today."

These books are not intended to be scholarly in the historical and philological sense of the word. Thus it would be meaningless to scrutinize them from a scholarly point of view; their shortcomings in that respect will be evident to any undergraduate student. However, the books tackle a problem that many Zarathushtis will face in North America: How to understand the Avesta in a non-ritual environment (without fully consecrated temples, etc) and a "new world" in order to create a meaningful religious identity?

Rev. Busch's answer might not be satisfying – the problem she raises, however, can hardly be denied. It



erend, she starts with "Avestan Types of Christ," identifying two such types, namely Zarathushtra and the Saoshyant.

Rev. Busch believes to have made out the following parallelism between Jesus and Zarathushtra ('proved' by certain seemingly parallel verses from the Gospels, the Gatha and the Yasht): both accepted God's will as their own; both were appointed by God; both had their detractors; both taught the desire of God's righteousness within; both taught that God blesses the unjust as well as the just; and that one should return good for evil; both were obe-



can be solved neither by the symbolist 'understandings' of a Christian Reverend nor by the philological approach of Western scholars. ■

**Dr. Michael Stausberg** is a research fellow at the University of Uppsala, (Sweden) in the faculty of Theology, Department of History of Religions. In his research he has mainly dealt with Western ideas on Zarathushtra, the Avesta, Zarathushti iconography, and Muslim and Christian polemics against the religion of Zarathushtra. He is currently completing a comprehensive study on Zarathushtrian history, of over 500 pages, in German.

### Zarathushti Studies at Uppsala University

Besides Dr. Stausberg, there are a few other scholars at Uppsala University doing interesting work related to the Zarathushti religion. They include **Prof. Dr. Anders Hultgerd**, an internationally renowned expert, dealing mainly with Pahlavi texts and topics such as apocalypticism, eschatology, cosmogony and Zarathushti influences on Judaism and Christianity. Prof. Anders gave the first Dastur Kutar Memorial Lecture at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, in April, 1998. At the Faculty of Humanities, there is a Department for Iranian Studies headed by **Prof. Dr. Bo Utas**, a specialist on Iranian linguistics. Additional information is available at the Department's website at:

<http://www.relhst.uu.se/indo/MS.html>

#### Wanted: Book Reviewers

You are invited to (a) submit reviews of books related to the Zarathushti religion and communities for publication in FEZANA Journal, or (b) submit your name if you are available to do a book review. Contact Roshan Rivetna at (630) 979-1347.

Editorial Policy (back cover) will apply to all submissions.

# THE DEATH OF AHRIMAN

## CULTURE, IDENTITY AND THEOLOGICAL CHANGE AMONG THE PARSIS OF INDIA

by Susan Stiles Maneck

Published by K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 272 pp. softcover, 1997.

**A critique by Dr. Kersey H. Antia**  
Orland Park, Illinois

The author is a Baha'i who has also written about conversions of Zarathushtis and other minorities to Baha'ism in Iran. Originally she wanted to study the relations between Parsis and Iranis in the last half of the 19th century. But "the sources (she) required either had not been properly preserved or proved unavailable in other ways" and she "needed a clear picture of what had preceded it" which is rather surprising in view of the detailed exchanges between Maneckji Hataria, Pandeyes and Parsi sethias just a century ago.

**Hindu/Muslim influence.** However, these problems regarding sources should become even more acute when she decides to demonstrate that Hindu and Muslim milieu in which the Parsis lived for centuries "have *completely* (all emphases are mine) transformed their religion's distinguishing features" and "modernity continued" this process. "Hinduism", she says, "primarily affected Parsi practices and social systems," like castes. However, she compromises her thesis: "But caste never defined the Parsis' choice of vocation as it did those of other Indians," an assertion she makes repeatedly. Moreover, her thesis that "like Hindu castes, Parsis refused to inter-dine or intermarry with those outside their community and prohibited the conversion of outsiders" begs the question whether the caste system left them no other option. Moreover, in Iran itself, Zarathushtis did not inter-dine or intermarry with outsiders, which is common knowledge and is well documented in various Pahlavi books and Rivayats. [See also *Conflict and Cooperation* by Jamsheed K. Choksy]. There goes her claim for Hindu influence, which was mostly confined to external matters only.

Her claim that "The impact of Islam was felt primarily in the area of theology" cannot stand scholarly scrutiny. Harder yet to swallow is: "Periods of economic prosperity created conflicts in which laymen sought to undermine priestly authority by appealing to (Iranian) priests," and when they failed in this task, Parsis "began to turn towards other outsiders as final authorities, at first Islamic, and later European." "Eventually (Parsis) adopted the methodologies of higher criticism by which Europeans studied the Zarathushti religion and accepted their findings," which is rather misleading as even though Parsis gratefully learned the Avestan grammar and scientific methodologies from Europeans, they rejected the Christian scholars' tendency to portray the religion of Zarathushtra merely as a forerunner of Christianity from Darmesteter's to our own times, Rev. Moulton and Haug being outstanding but not the only examples. Recently even Helmut Humbach was forced to revise his Gathic translations that were found untenable by Parsi scholars. I. J. S. Taraporewala's rejection of his own teacher, Spiegel's Gathic interpretations is another notable example.

**Theology.** Maneck claims: "Theology has *never* been the pre-eminent concern of Zoroastrians, who historically have placed more emphasis on practice than on doctrine" [p. 2]. This is an utter insult to Prophet Zarathushtra who was the first to present mankind with a very sublime and sophisticated theology in the Gathas which nothing but a revelation by God could have produced. Moreover, his theology itself uniquely endorses action and practice of religion in everyday life.

The knowledge of Zarathushti theology was so pervasive in Achaemenian

times that even the Greeks were able to know and represent it well in their writings and people in far-off Palestine and Asia Minor were even able to adopt many, if not most, of Zarathushtrian eschatology. Sassanian priests knew their theology well enough to argue with Christian fathers as is borne out in Pahlavi literature and the post-Sassanians too, had to know their theology very well to argue with their Muslim masters, which too is evident from the Pahlavi texts. Even the early European travellers were able to know what the Zarathushti theology was then.

One has to understand the very unique nature of Zarathushti practices as Zarathushti theology is so intricately woven into Zarathushti practices that they often become, as it were, two sides of the same coin. Sudreh-Kushti is only one such example. Thus, as long as a Parsi wore Sudreh Kushti, which everyone invariably did in the past, they well knew its basic theological underpinnings and implications, which have not been hard to follow.

Maneck's argument that "there has been less continuity in Parsi beliefs than has hitherto been assumed" runs counter to the various findings of Mary Boyce who has spent a lifetime studying Zarathushtis. The truth may perhaps be in the middle. If Parsism "is a matter of identity rather than of belief or practice" [p. 8], as she asserts, then how did the Parsis put into practice various Zarathushti ideals and come to be admired for them even when they were totally unaware of the European research and methodology? A suppressed, subaltern or subplanted ancient people of course may not find it easy to give top priority to the luxury of indulging in theological discussions, but if it survives over a millennia, it is self-evident that it surely has somehow managed to keep its beliefs alive and succeeded in securing the allegiance of its adherents, which is hard for a

foreigner to judge, primarily from written evidence which she admits is often hard to find; and even so, use it selectively to prove her biases.

**Parsis leave Iran for commerce.** Moreover, her assertions that Parsis migrated to India for commercial purposes and "economic factors could still have predominated" and

**The Death of Ahriman:  
Culture, Identity and Theological  
Change Among The Parsis of India**

by

**Susan Stiles Maneck**

**K. R. Cama Oriental Institute  
Bombay  
1997**

because they settled in Hormuz they must be merchants [p. 16] fail to take into account the fact that the Parsis' ancestors hailed from Kuhistan where they fiercely fought the Arabs for a hundred years even after the rest of Iran was subjugated by the Arabs, who spared no cruel means to suppress them. If commercial gain was what they were seeking, they would have found it more profitable to convert to Islam than risk their lives in such large numbers by venturing out to sea in those days. Nor does any available evidence suggest that all of them were merchants and many of them settled near villages that were not known for any trade.

Maneck thinks, what was a god to the Hindus was a demon to others, which is untrue and rather simplistic – only the words are switched around but both often have the same deities like

Mitra, Agni, Nasatya, Apam Napat, Vayu, Hwar, Varuna and many more.

**Criticism of the Parsi priesthood.**

She maintains that the initial perceptions of Iranian priests about Parsi priests "depended upon information provided by Parsi laymen" [p. 36]. However, this is utterly impossible, as it was only the priests who did all the writing in those days, including even the correspondence between one Parsi and another. She also maintains that the first Rivayat (referring to questions sent by Parsi priests and laymen to Iranian priests for their learned opinion and guidance in religious and ritual matters and replies received from them) did not come from priests but from a layman, Changa Asa, simply because the Iranians address him before addressing the priests, which is mainly due to the enormous esteem in which Navsari priests held him for helping them out in their hour of need, and has nothing to do whatsoever, with priestly power. As a matter of fact, priests and laity always joined forces in times of crises and as she herself admits "Later Rivayats typically address the priesthood first" [p. 35].

Her assertion that "The Iranian priests appeared to have been quite shocked by the general ignorance of the Parsi priests" [p. 36] is an overkill and she admits in the same sentence that the high priests knew the religion well. What the Iranians perhaps were shocked by is the different perhaps more liberal practices adopted by Parsis because of their different milieu and not by "the deficiencies in (their) learning" [p. 36]. Moreover, few know that the Parsis' ancestors in Kuhistan were rather notorious for being self-willed and not submitting to the dictates of even the Sassanian prelates. There are thus utmost hazards in interpreting history without knowing all its antecedents.

"When priests became the predominant economic force within the Parsi community, correspondence between the priesthood of Iran and India themselves became more the rule"

[p. 37], she says. No such rule really existed, because priests never could become a predominant economic force in view of the limitations inherent in their profession, and earning power, though a priest could leave priesthood and engage in trade, like Rustom Maneck did, and get prosperous. But that does not make the entire priesthood predominant economically any more than priests like the Tatas and Godrej in our times make the entire priesthood predominant economically.

And to imply that a pious, pro-Mobed layman like Changa Asa would have less goodwill for the priests than Rustom Maneck is to misinterpret or rewrite Parsi history. Such was Asa's benevolence to the priests and such was his allegiance to them that the priests regarded him as one of their own, even better. She adds to such misinterpretations too: "(Dastur) Kotwal possesses a Harvard education and is generally regarded as a moderate" [p. 46], whereas Dastur Mirza, who, unlike Kotwal, advocated post-funerary prayers for J.R.D. Tata, a Navjotee and a son of an Ervad, as conservative.

**Zurvanism.** Although she admits: "Less is known about non-Muslim Iranians who embraced Ishraqi beliefs," which she nevertheless claims "underpinned the emperor (Akbar's) cult of Din Ilahi," [p. 57-58], she claims "the Parsi success at the court would have been, as the *Mahyar Nameh* suggests, directly related to the Parsis' ability to utilize the terminology of the Ishraqiyan," which is hard to understand as the Parsis were too far away from Delhi and too busy eking out a living to be even aware of it.

To add to this confusion, she relies on *Dabistan*, a text of dubious validity which has little to do with the religion of Zarathushtra. She herself quotes Denkart as opposing Zurvanism. And yet she writes: *If the Dabistan correctly represented the teachings presented by the Parsis in Akbar's court, it would seem that the Dastur's accepted the teachings associated with Zurvanism*" [p. 59].

This is all based on 'if' and 'would'. Just because Zurvan (time) is mentioned in some Zarathushti texts, she feels Zurvanism found its way into the religion of Zarathushtra, which is hard to understand as Zurvan is not mentioned there in any Zurvanite terms. Moreover, Richard Frye has long ago upheld that Zurvanism was never a dominant Zarathushti belief.

**Islamic influence.** More startling is Maneck's assertion: "Islam, by the time of the composition of the Qissayi Sanjan, had affected the very heart of Zoroastrian beliefs" [p. 61]. She reaches this conclusion even after conceding that some "terms might only indicate an adoption of Islamic style, not necessarily the content of Islamic theology." She sees Islamic influence in the statement of the English priest who accompanied Sir Thomas Roe that Parsis were enjoined not to believe in any other religion; this can be deduced from many an Avestan statement and Rivayat rather than from Islamic influences. Even though she cannot determine who wrote Dabistan, she does not hesitate to rely on it for drawing unwarranted conclusions.

In a similar vein, she observes: "Most Parsis ... remained largely ignorant of Ishraqi philosophy or of the quasi-Zoroastrian texts and cults that were associated with it. Nonetheless, Gujarati Parsis (as if there were non-Gujarati Parsis too!) honored those who were able to converse within these circles. Court patronage legitimized local leadership within the eyes of the Parsi community" [p. 69]. How can Parsis honor anyone if they are ignorant about what they are really honoring?

The author's interpretation of Ashem Vohu as a prayer "invoking the aid of Asha Vahishta, the angel of righteousness" [p. 80] betrays here ignorance about this most basic Zarathushti prayer. She also misinterprets a Zarathushti's reference to 'kibla' (a consecrated fire) as 'kaaba' in Mecca, misrepresenting it as another Islamic influence.

Maneck relies significantly on the Pahlavi book *Dasatir* that a Surti priest

brought with him from Iran but "had since (seventeenth century) disappeared" [p. 145], not explaining how could a popular work on which her thesis relies possibly disappear and still continue to influence Parsi theology.

**Kadmis.** Equally unqualified is her portrayal of "the Kadmi sect as a lay challenge to the religious oligarchy of the Parsi priests" [p. 149]. She bases this judgement on a questionable assumption that money for printing controversial literature on the calendar issue "*could only* have been generated from the merchant classes. Unlike the situation in Surat, Bombay merchants were not predominantly of priestly lineage" [p. 149], which is not true at all, as the Seth family had by then settled in Bombay along with many Ervads such as Tata, Dadabhai Naoroji, Godrej and other Ervads and Athornanzadehs, not Behdins, who were the first to prosper by opting for English education.

There was not a single Athornan merchant left in Surat when the controversy appeared in the press. Yes, there were three baronets in Bombay, but each baronet respected the priesthood and established their own fire-temples and religious trusts for priestly performances. They still firmly depended on priestly intervention for their safe passage to heaven and would have simply regarded it as sheer blasphemy to distrust priests.

Moreover, just because the laymen were the first to establish Kadmi fire temples [p. 149], there is no reason to set them against the priests, as without them no fire-temples, nor any ecclesiastical Kadmi observances were ever possible. Besides, only the laymen built almost all the fire-temples. What she refers to as "the tensions that had existed prior to this between the priesthood and the rising merchant class" [p. 149], is hardly supported by history. Rather, the rise of the merchant class alone led to the proliferation of religious institutions on a scale unknown before, and thus promoted the priestly profession.

Since the whole Kadmi matter arose only as a result of an Irani priest, Jamsheed Velayati visiting priests in

1736 in Surat and telling them about the Irani calendar for the first time ever, the Kadmis naturally could only depend on Irani priests for guidance before they changed over to the Kadmi system in 1745, which in no way suggests a distrust of local priests who only knew the older Shenshai system and knew nothing about the Kadmi customs.

Unfortunately, the whole book is replete with such logic masquerading as facts. At best, she sees whatever she wants to see in the Parsi phenomena even though they often run counter to facts, and even to common sense. Such twisting of facts often becomes so obvious and constant that even an objective reader is compelled to wonder about the motive of the author, especially as it has never been stated in the text.

One also muses whether by so dexterously and persistently heralding "the Death of Ahriman", the author who on her own admission in the text, has no previous or genuine interest in the Zarathushti religion, except in the conversion of Zarathushtis to Bahai'ism, is subtly and subliminally sounding the death knell of the Zarathushti religion, by deftly but ever so gently, affably and suavely stripping it of its core beliefs and features. She uses sophistry, sub-

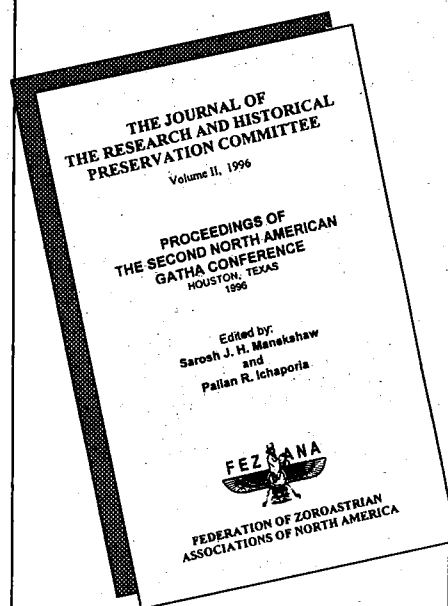
terfuge, over-large claims, pseudo-logic skillfully treaded on 'ifs', 'buts', 'woulds', 'coulds', 'if-then', 'may bes' and the like, subjective selection and biased evidence, and preconceived notions, if not designs, artfully, graciously and befriendingly passed off as objective evidence based on empirical research, to the gullible Parsi reader, even while inventing history and masquerading fiction as fact.

I deeply regret being forced out by limitation of space, to expose further the fallacies of Maneck's logic and the tendentious nature of her conclusions. But this review has impressed on me, the need to write in greater details, time and funding permitting, about how this book could mislead our youth and make them easy targets for conversion to other faiths, sans a sound theology, sans a healthy respect for priesthood (which by the way Baha'is have completely done away with), sans anything that they can call their own, except an ethnic identity, sans adherence at least to their basic traditional practices, rituals and beliefs in good and evil, and sans a basic knowledge and understanding of their own religion.

Beware of Greeks (or Baha'is) bearing gifts. ■

[The full text of this paper is available from FEZANA Journal.]

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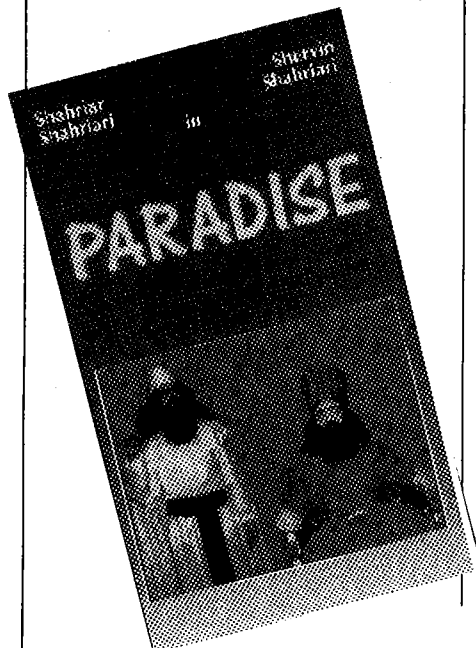
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## JAMVA CHALOJI

### PARSI DELICACIES FOR ALL OCCASIONS

**By Katy Dalal**

ISBN 81-87111-06-02, 132 pp, soft-cover, 1997

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In a concise and extremely well-packaged volume, illustrated with a number of full-color plates of mouth-watering Parsi dishes, author

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style eggs), gos-no-pullao (meat pul-lao), lagan-nu-custard (wedding custard) and keri-nu-ice cream (mango ice cream).



In this volume, the author shares a wealth of authentic recipes handed down in her family from generation to generation, such as "Bapaiji ni dhan-shak-ni-dar" and "Soonamai-ni-malai-ma-kolmi", as well as some new varieties created by her.

Besides her culinary skills, Katy Dalal, has a dis-

tinguished academic career, with a Ph.D. in Archeology from Pune University. She now runs a popular catering business in Mumbai.

Jamva Chaloji is a very welcome addition to any kitchen, and makes a good gift for a bride, or family and friends.

- By Roshan Rivetna

### Call for Papers

The Journal of the Zoroastrian Education and Research Society takes great pleasure in announcing the launching of the Summer edition of its Journal. Topics covered will be the Gathas, Young Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian Zoroastrian Literature, Rituals and Socio-cultural Traditions.

Papers, no more than 6000 words, are invited on any of the above subjects. Papers will be peer-reviewed by the International Board of Editors and approved papers will be published.

Forward papers to: Editor in Chief, ZERS Journal, 253 Adam's Drive, Womelsdorf, PA 19567; or to The Publisher, ZERS Journal, 11415 Overbrook Lane, Houston, TX 77077.



## PERSONAL PROFILE

# Veteran educator, Dr. Avan G. Billimoria is named Chicago State University's interim President

*Top, Chicago State University President Dr. Avan Billimoria (center) with Gwendolyn Brooks, Illinois poet laureate and Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize winner for Literature.*

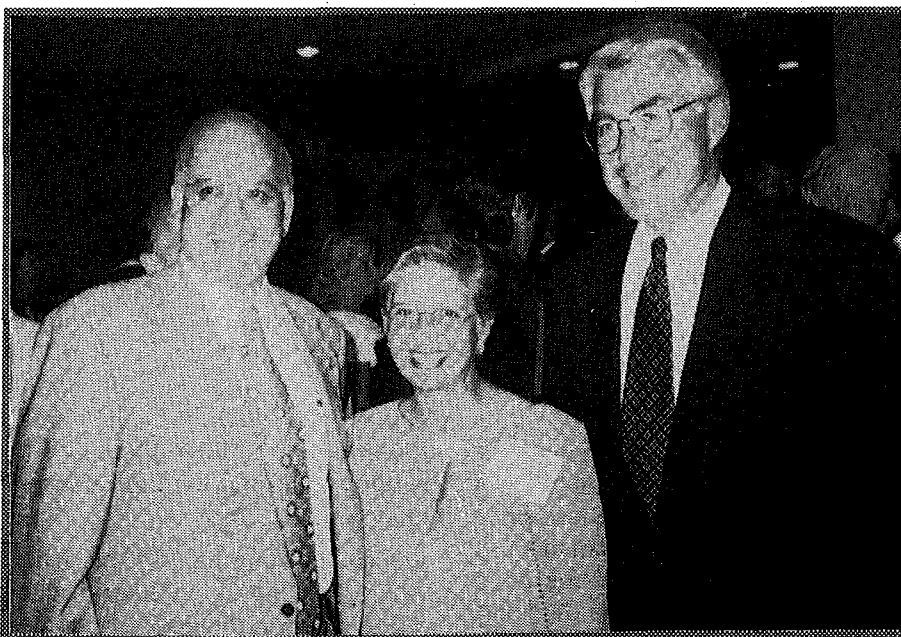
*Below, Billimoria with husband Godrej Billimoria and Governor of Illinois Jim Edgar, at a CSU Award Dinner in September 1997.*

By Roshan Rivetna

Long-time resident of Chicago area, Dr. Avan G. Billimoria was recently appointed interim president of Chicago State University for a one-year term. Billimoria, who was CSU's provost and vice president for Academic Affairs until the appointment, has university experience spanning 35 years.

A licensed clinical psychologist and certified guidance counselor, Billimoria joined CSU in 1968 as assistant professor of psychology soon after arrival in Chicago from Mumbai, with her husband, Godrej. Tenured as a faculty member in 1972, she was promoted to associate professor in 1973 and full professor in 1979. Her specialized interests include teaching statistics, physiological psychology, child abuse prevention and parenting and conducting research in child abuse prevention and sports psychology.

Avan's impressive performance earned her the position of Chairperson of the Psychology Department in 1990, in which position she provided leadership for 15 full-time faculty and 575 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Billimoria was appointed associate Provost and associate Vice President in 1994.



Billimoria, neé Avan Panthaky, is originally from Dadar Parsi Colony, Bombay, and gained her educational foundation at J. B. Vachha School. She has an M.A. from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and a Ph.D. in psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Godrej is a C.P.A. and has his own firm, G. N. Billimoria, Ltd. They

have a daughter Jasmeen, a school teacher, who lives in Des Moines, IA, with her husband Marc Wilson.

Avan and Godrej are both active supporters of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, and in fact, hosted one of the first meetings of the Association at their home, in Kenilworth, Illinois, in the early 1970s. ■

# READERS' FORUM

This column is a forum to present information and opinions. Letters (under 600 words) may be submitted to the Editors (see back cover). The Journal reserves the right to edit all materials for clarity and space.

## On recent issues ...

I was very happy to see the story of my family entitled "Remembering Bavaji" [FEZANA Journal, Spring 1998] and I thank you very much for so kindly including it in the Journal. It gives me much pleasure to see a part of this old story for the new generation of Parsis to read.

Thank you very much. To me it is more valuable than monetary wealth!

Gordafried (Gerty) Pocha  
Livermore, California

Once again, congratulations on a job well done. The Spring issue is outstanding – a real tribute to your and guest editor Yezdi Rustomji's efforts. And what a way to start the New Year!

Dina G. McIntyre  
Glenshaw, Pennsylvania

Enclosed is a check towards the Journal. It is always a treat to read it. You do such a quality job ... Our community is blessed with such talented, dedicated and selfless people like you ...

Noshir and Khursheed Bapasola  
Voorhees, New Jersey

Just finished reading the Spring 1998 issue, and enjoyed it very much. Is it now time to increase the number of issues to six per year (bi-monthly), or even monthly? Some of the news items seem very old by the time they appear. Of course, the issues may then be smaller, but more current. The subscription rate could be revised upwards, if necessary. I'm sure there are many technical and other issues involved, but these could be addressed.

The magazine Humata has come out with a high subscription rate. Could it not have become a part of FEZANA Journal? Just a thought!

Maneck Darooowalla  
New Hyde Park, New York

[At this time, due to constraints of resources, both financial and human, there are no plans to make FEZANA Journal more frequent than quarterly. However, plans are under way to boost the FEZANA Journal Web page at: <http://www.fezana.org> and keep it up to date with current news items. - Ed.]

Let me congratulate you on another excellent issue of the Journal [Spring 1998]. I am sure all Zarathushtis who cared to read the articles are now better informed about the Gathas and their meanings.

Dinshaw Joshi  
Chevy Chase, Maryland

## On Zarathushtra's birthplace

I found the Fall 1997 issue, on Zarathushtra's place and date of birth, most interesting and would like to comment on the article by K. Jungalwala. The Journal is getting better and better every time.

On this subject it is worthwhile reading two books written by Columbia University Professor A. Valentine Williams Jackson. Jackson personally traveled to Iran in 1903 to do research on the birth place and the environment in which Zarathushtra preached His religion.

In fact, Jackson located the district and the exact village where Zarathushtra is thought to have made his first convert, his own cousin, Medio-Mah. This village, Khor Khorah, is located south of Lake Uramiah and between the towns of Miandoab and Marageh. It can be reached over land from Tabriz.

Readers interested in doing more reading on this subject are well advised to refer to Jackson's books:

● Jackson, A.V.W., *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1899.

● Jackson, A.V.M., *Persia Past and Present. A Book of Travel and Research*, McMillan, New York, 1906.

Ardeshir Damania  
Mumbai, India

## BVS Parsi High School is much older

I spotted an error in the article by Behram Atashband ["Future Economic Success of the Zarathushthi Community", FEZANA Journal, Spring 1998]. The BVS Parsi Boys High School in Karachi was founded in the 1800s and definitely NOT in 1959, as it says.

Rashna Ghadialy  
Chicago, Illinois

[Author Behram Atashband confirmed that "there was a mistake. The actual date that I am aware of is 1859."]

## From Russia with Love

Thank you very much for sending us the Spring 1998 issue of FEZANA Journal. As we now are only taking our first steps in the International Zoroastrian family and do not know much about our co-religionists, it was very interesting for us to read about the life of Zoroastrians in North America.

We will send you our newsletter *Mithra* with a summary in English in the near future.

Michael Chistiakov  
Junior Dean of St. Petersburg  
Zoroastrian Community  
St. Petersburg, Russia

Many thanks for the FEZANA Journal [Spring 1998] you have kindly sent to me. I was happily surprised, as I found my photo among the participants of the First International Avesta Conference in Boston.

Mikhail N. Bogolyubov  
St. Petersburg State University  
Russia

## From Germany with Love

Many thanks for sending your beautiful Journal FEZANA to our library. We are very glad about this generous

gift. All the Zarathushtis living in Hamburg and young students of our University regularly read the Journals now.

I would like to give you a short history of our *Iran Museum*. After our first temporary exhibition of the Iran Museum in 1993, we had difficulties in getting a permanent domicile. Finally in autumn of 1995 the University of Hamburg provided a building for us free of charge. With a group of untiring students we got the building repaired and made usable. Since Summer 1996, the new exhibition of the Museum and the library are open for public use. In future we hope to organize a group of ladies and student volunteers to serve as doorman and librarian and make the Museum more accessible; up to now we are able to give access only after special arrangements.

Iran Museum joined efforts with the German-Iranian Society of Northern Germany in 1996, and every first Thursday of the month we have a public program including a presentation on subjects of Iranian culture. This evening is always well-frequented by Iranian and German friends, and discussions sometimes go up to midnight and later.

The following issues of FEZANA Journal are missing from our collection, that goes back to 1992. It would be wonderful if you could send us the missing ones. Thank you very much.

Dr. Gerd Gropp  
Iran Museum  
University of Hamburg  
Hamburg, Germany

### **Zartoshtis please! Not Zarathushtis, Zoroastrians or Zoros**

Due to the antiquity of our religion and the destruction of our books and literature by invaders like Alexander of Macedonia in 330 BCE and the Arabs in 640 AC, much of our history and culture is lost forever. There is, therefore, no uniform agreement among historians, on the date and

birth place of our prophet Ashu Zartosht, or even on his name.

Some writers spell the name to suit their pronunciation. For example, most European writers spell it the most common way – *Zoroaster* or *Zarathushtra*, calling his followers *Zoroastrians* or *Zarathushtrians*. Many Indians and FEZANA Journal have modified it to *Zarthust* and *Zarthustis*, or even *Zartost* and *Zartostis*. And the Iranians write *Zartosht* or *Zardosht* and *Zartoshtis* or *Zardoshtis*. Lately, I have even seen the word '*Zoros*' used on the internet and in *Manashni* magazine.

At least on one issue, everyone is in agreement – that our prophet Ashu Zartosht was born in ancient Iran. It therefore follows that the correct spelling and pronunciation should be the Persian one. That is '*Ashu Zartosht*' and '*Zartoshtis*'.

To justify my point, you see, there is no 's' or 'u' sound in the correct word – Zartosht. Now, if you break up the way FEZANA writes – Zarthus-t and Zarthus-tis, somehow it does not sound right and does not carry the spiritual and divine connotation. And let us save Zoroaster and Zoroastrian for the Western writers.

I think it is prudent to ask our Parsi and Iranian mobeds to address this also, among many other issues and challenges facing us. If we do not agree on how we should address ourselves now, I am afraid some day someone may start writing Jarthust and Jarthustis – which would then be really alien.

I am not trying to be cute or critical, nor conceited, and hope I have not offended any one. It is just a matter of observation and concern.

And lastly, I am proud to be Zartoshti!

R. J. Mehdiabadi, M.D.  
Lubbock, Texas

[Following the recommendation of the FEZANA Annual General Meeting in Crestone, Colorado, in August 1997, FEZANA Journal uses the following standard spellings, unless indicated otherwise by the author: *Zarathushtra* (for the name of the prophet); *Zarathushti* (for the name of the religion); and *Zarathushti* (for the followers). - Ed.]

### **Need for a World Body**

In my book, *Contemporary Zoroastrians: An Unstructured Nation* (1994), I argued that one of the underlying problems of the contemporary Zarathushti world was that it "operates as a fractured entity with a minimal degree of unity." I came to my conclusions following fairly extensive fieldwork in India, Pakistan, the UK, USA and Canada, as well as among a representative group of young Iranian Zarathushti refugees who had fled Iran following the 1979 revolution.

Accordingly, I have followed with great interest the discussions on the proposed *World Council of Zarathushti Federations* (WCZF) and the aspirations of the existent *World Zoroastrian Organization* (WZO) to represent the global community. In a communication from FEZANA President Dolly Dastoor, I gether that FEZANA rejected the motion to join the proposed World Council as a founding member.

Indeed, the protracted and often times acrimonious discussions on whether the Zarathushtis "need" a world body; what precisely is this body for; the mechanics of how it would be run, where it would be located; and the many nuances of the political undercurrents, has not surprised me.

In my experience, having interviewed a scientific cross-section of Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis, some 536 thus far, I have found that our people quite simply do not under-

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stand what a world body is for. Zarathushtis have so long lived as a religious minority, that while they bemoan their inconsequential status, they fail to grasp intellectually what needs to be done.

The WZO was established, I am sure, with the best of intentions. However, there was a fundamental constitutional flaw: equal individual and association membership, which even its "restructured organization" chart proposed in Winter 1997, fails to rectify.

The World Council of Zoroastrian Federations, in its attempt at creating a world body comprised of Zarathushti regional federations and associations had at least, come to grips with a core requirement of community government.

Zarathushtis will always, given the vagaries of our history, have to be content to be citizens of Iran, India, Pakistan, the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, etc. Zarathushtis living in these countries are accustomed to participating in their national democratic processes. The development and nurturing of a democratic tendency within our communal body politic cannot logically be deemed to be excessively far-fetched.

While we have always shown a remarkable degree of attachment and loyalty to our respective countries, there are specific Zarathushtrian issues which, in a changing world, might conceivably cross national borders. Such issues would need to be addressed by a Zarathushti world body: communicating with a national government or world organization as the case may be. The WZO remains to prove itself in this regard, arguably, because it does not have the requisite mandate.

One illustration might suffice: in 1989 I was approached by the legal team preparing to go to court on behalf of a young Zarathushti who had requested refugee status in the UK. In the absence of a body with the remit to negotiate with the UK Home Office on his behalf, the youth was

threatened with return to Iran. The young person's solicitor had requested my testimony, in light of my research into the subject, of the condition of the Zarathushtis in Iran in the 1980s. In court, I was cross-examined by an expert representing Her Majesty's Home Office. The judgement handed down stated that the youth was given leave to "remain indefinitely" in the UK as a result of my testimony. The solicitor was quite categorical in his belief that the judgement could have gone the other way, in the absence of such testimony.

The point is that we need to have a body with the mandate and authority which can speak to Zarathushti issues: economic, political, legal, cultural, religious, when national and trans-national questions arise, as they inevitably will. Sadly, we Zarathushtis ourselves have failed to grasp our own changing needs as a result of our changed circumstances.

The need for contemporary Zarathushtis to create governing structures is fairly self-evident. Its continuing absence explains our fragmented community which operates in an ad hoc manner on even the most significant issues. This cannot bode well for our future.

*Dr. Rashna Writer  
Chesham, Bucks., UK*

### **God is Omnipotent – not Impotent**

When the actual base and belief of the very first religion on this earth, thousands of years before any other, is blatantly misrepresented [*see letter by Cowsie Malva of California, in FEZANA Journal, Winter 1997*], it is time for those of us who have lived and practiced the religion for thousands of years, knowing full well their glorious Aryan history and the intricacies of their own time-tested faith, to speak up.

Mr. Malva states: "God I feel is mighty and not almighty ..." May I ask our learned friend, that "after much reading and research" has he

come across a single word in the scriptures or doctrines of *any* religion in which it indicates that Ahriman has created something – anything at all, either in this universe or in the cosmos? And when he finds, as he will, that only God (Ahura Mazda) created everything and Evil (Ahriman) nothing, would he not then accept that God is almighty?

If there are two equal opponents (Gods), then according to Mr. Malva's theory, our religion is not a monotheistic religion, as we have always believed. Also, if there are two equal opponents as presumed by our learned friend, and that Ahura Mazda is "not almighty (omnipotent)" then the ultimate triumph of Good over Evil, as guaranteed by all religions, could become very doubtful, and render the fundamental beliefs of all known religions meaningless.

Is the author suggesting that the Mazdayasni Zarathushti religion believe in two Gods – Ahura Mazda and Ahriman? Does he believe, then, that our religion is polytheistic? Because, if God is mighty and not almighty, then should we also not pray to the devil Ahriman? Even the Hindu religion which believes in many Gods, accepts Brahma as the most supreme and only creator.

When Zarathushtis pray the very first words of their daily Kushti prayers they say:

Kemna Mazda,  
Mavaite Payum dadat

*O Mazda, who other than  
Thee shall grant protection?*

Surely what is there to further "read and research"?

Regrettably, some who claim to be scholars of our religion, may have done their "readings and research" with non-practicing non-Zarathushti scholars and have therefore developed this totally non-Zarathushti and even anti-Zarathushti thinking.

I feel that to believe anything other than what our illustrious forefathers believed, from time immemorial, would imply that they were all