

FEZANA JOURNAL



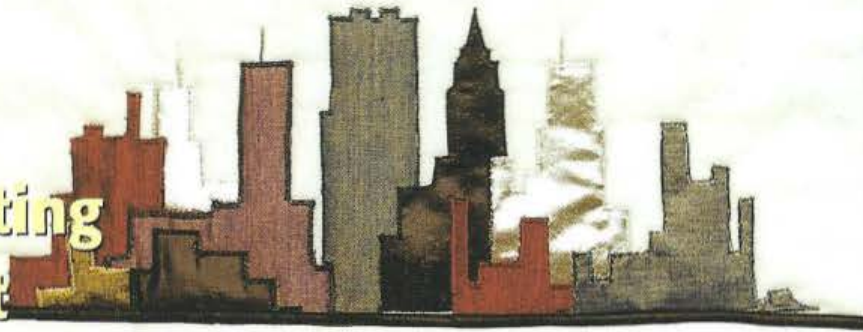
WINTER 2000, ZEMESTAN 1369 YZ

Mah Dae-Bahman-Aspandarmad 1369 YZ (Fasli)

Mah Amardad-Shehrevan-Meher 1370 YZ (Shenshai)

Mah Shehrevan-Meher-Avan 1370 YZ (Kadmi)

**Honoring
the Past,
Contemplating
the Present
and Building
for the Future**



ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION
OF HOUSTON

Special Millennium Commemorative Issue

**Also inside:
Visions and
Visionaries**

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations

FEZANA



of North America

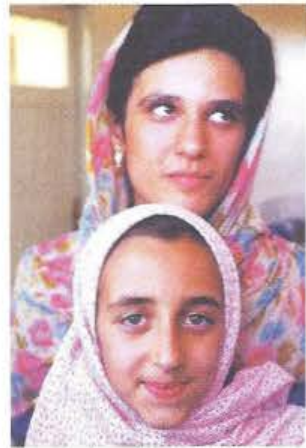
**Events that
Shaped the
Evolving
Zarathushti
Identity
Across the
Millennia**



Mayor Filly Maravala, Ilford, UK; Traditional Iranian welcome to Congress; Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress, Tehran, 1996.



Meeting at Bombay Parsi Punchayet; Zarathushti schoolgirl in Yazd, Iran; Dr. Shahrini at Cyrus monument in Sydney, Australia.



The Mistri's at Mistri Road, Singapore; At WCRP interfaith service in Auckland, New Zealand; Mother and daughter in Iran.

Dasturs Jamasp Asa & Kotwal with Mary Boyce, London; Mehr Jesia, Miss India 1986; Homai Modi (fourth) & community members



FEZANA Journal is most deeply grateful to our patrons (over \$500) and our sponsors (over \$100) for their most generous donation towards this special commemorative issue:

Our Patrons



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*"We must learn to live together as brothers
or perish together as fools."*

[Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speech at St. Louis, March 22, 1964]

Wishing Zarathushtis worldwide a peaceful millennium of acceptance, advancement, prosperity and charity.

Jim Engineer

Founder, Chief Executive Officer

e-rainmaker.com

High-tech public relations for the new economy.

*Wishing Zarathushtis
throughout the world*

*Peace &
Harmony*

in the

next millennium

Dr. Ervad Soli Dastur and Mrs. Jo Ann Dastur
University Park, Florida, USA

Some committed members of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston (ZAGBA) area aspire to build a Zarathushti Religious and Cultural Center in the Boston area. We hope to expand it in the future by adding a dharamshala, a home for the elderly of our entire community and an area for a Zarathushti cemetery. What better place could we ask for than the surrounding cultural and educational centers, prestigious and world famous medical facilities of Boston.

We will be happy to entertain any suggestions and accept any donations from generous Zarathushtis toward this ambitious endeavor.

Wishing all Zarathushtis a happy new year and good health in the new millennium.

Jerry Kheradi, MD
Chair, FEZANA Funds
and Finance Committee

Nasswan Dossabhoy
President, ZAGBA

Our community worldwide is known for its honesty, integrity and charities. May we learn to live together in unity and harmony. We have a wealth of learned scholars and enlightened scholar-priests within our community. May we learn to respect them, and support them financially so that we are not forced in the future to ask outsiders to lead and help us in our religious affairs.

Mehraban Zartoshty
San Diego, California

FEZANA Journal is most deeply grateful to our patrons (over \$500) and our sponsors (over \$100) for their most generous donation towards this special commemorative issue:

Our Sponsors

"To spread Love and Light to the children of the world."

**Anonymous
Mississauga, Ontario**

"This commemorative issue is the 'pièce de résistance' of FEZANA Journal, which itself has become a landmark in the annals of journalism, in general, and Zarathushti journalism in particular. The sweep of history in this issue, if we can learn from it, becomes a beacon to a glorious future for today's Zarathushtis all over the world."

Keki and Mehru Bhote, Glencoe, Illinois

"Best wishes for a successful Congress and continued success for FEZANA Journal"

Farhad and Hutoxi Contractor, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"May Ahura Mazda grant health, happiness, peace and unity to all Zarathushtis. Our appreciation to the committees and good wishes for a harmonious and successful Congress."

DhunMai and Phiroze Dalal, Los Angeles, California

"Your dedication is true art, and the art of creation does not end with the writer, it includes the reader. Celebrating with you ..."

Aban and Purvez Rustomji, Houston, Texas

"Just a spark of His divine love will make you burn eternally" - Our Guruji Sri Manek Mehta.

**Freyaz Shroff
North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina**

"The ZAC wishes all Zarathushtis a very happy new millennium and best wishes for a successful Congress. Our sincere appreciation to the FEZANA Journal team for their dedication and hard work."

Zoroastrian Association of California, Los Angeles, California

"With appreciation to FEZANA Journal for its outstanding commitment to disseminating information about the Zarathushti faith and culture."

The Zoroastrian Association of Houston, Houston, Texas

"The Zarathushti community of Quebec takes this opportunity to wish the Congress a roaring success."

Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, Montreal, Quebec

"We hope FEZANA Journal continues to keep up its high quality and its open-minded policy."

Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario

"Best wishes to FEZANA Journal and all Zarathushtis in the new millennium."

**Cowas and Perviz C. Patel
Importers of Australian Kraft Cheese (in the blue can)
San Dimas, California, (626) 967-0037**





A COLLECTOR'S EDITION

The Winter 2000 issue of the FEZANA Journal celebrates and commemorates the dawning of the New Millennium – 2001 and the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress sponsored by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH).

This collector's edition highlights the *Honoring the Past, Contemplating the Present and Building for the Future: Events that Shaped the Evolving Zarathushti Identity Across the Millennia*.

The coverage unfolds critical events of the past that have made a strong impact on the shaping of the Zarathushti identity, and the current developments in parent and diasporic regions of the world that are influenced by other creeds and cultures. The significant events presented in this issue have played a major role in the development of the Zarathushti religion, culture and ethnicity.

Today we need to ponder and learn from the heroism and sacrifices of the past. Our actions in the present should be the basis, not of an autocratic but a democratic society which respects the rights and beliefs of all Zarathushtis. The actions of our community and its leaders should be tempered with wisdom and a sense of responsibility to the future generations.

The hopes and visions of several Zarathushtis for the future of the world Zarathushti community are

included in this issue. Benjamin Disraeli in his innate wisdom said, "The youth of today are the trustees of posterity. Let their views be heard". At no other time in the history of civilization have the boundaries of communication become so close as they are today. We can all participate in strengthening the foundations of our Zarathushti community which our children will be proud to continue building upon in the next millennium.

The three guest editors for this Special Issue are past presidents of FEZANA, Rohinton R. Rivetna and Dolly P. Dastoor, and current president Framroze K. Patel. We thank Dolly for conceiving the idea for this issue, and working diligently on it. We recognize and thank them all for their dedication and vision for the community in North America.

Khorshed F. Jungalwala
Chair, FEZANA Publications

AT THE CROSSROADS!



When Parsis began settling in commercial centers like Surat and Bombay in the 16th century, 'Punchayets' made 'bundobusts' (arrangements) and adjudicated civil disputes. As the community prospered, wealthy business tycoons donated temples, public institutions, schools, and housing colonies. The average Zarathushti in turn gratefully bestowed high honors and great powers upon these rich donors. This is our legacy even today in India, Pakistan and Iran.

Starting in the late 1960s, Zarathushtis began to form Associations in North America, mostly for social contact. By 1986, there were over 20 such

Associations in the USA and Canada; and the need for communal facilities became apparent in light of the growing number of children of these Zarathushtis. These transplanted Zarathushtis, used to community institutions and facilities in the mother countries, approached wealthy members of the community for donations to build centers. They were fortunate that Arbab Rustam Guiv came forward with the needed help to build most of the Darbe-mehrs and centers that exist in North America today. But we still lack the infrastructure that is vital to the growth and well-being of a community. Meanwhile, 2nd and 3rd generation Zarathushtis are growing up with essentially no cohesive support network.

FEZANA was born in 1987 under these conditions. FEZANA's stated purposes include: coordination of Zoroastrian Associations in North America; study, promotion, perpetuation and teaching of the Zarathushti religion; representation of Zarathushti interests in national and international forums; and conduct of religious and charitable activities.

FEZANA has developed a Strategic Plan to meet the community's needs in the coming decades. The plan has identified the need for authoritative textbooks and study guides for teaching religion and public relations; need for trained scholars and leaders; and facilities and infrastructure. But after more than ten years of effort, very little has been accomplished from reliance on the spare time of FEZANA's voluntary committees and unpaid administrators. Our community is growing rapidly and our needs are growing with it. If we want to accomplish anything within a reasonable amount of time, we now need to start dipping into our pockets to pay for essential services, office staff and infrastructure. This will require a paradigm shift in our thinking.

We are at a crossroads! I know we have the means to do it. Do we have the will?

Rustom Kevala, Treasurer, FEZANA
Past Chair, FEZANA Publications



In this millennium issue, we present the monumental saga of the Zarathushti lands and peoples, from the advent of Asho Zarathushtra across the millennia to modern times. Showcased are 40 'events' or slices of history, that shaped our history and identity, our religion and culture. We travel through the vicissitudes of time: through the rise and fall of mighty Persian Empires; through Arab invasions and holocausts in Islamic Iran; through the ninth century diaspora to India and the golden age of the Parsis; through the twentieth century 'second diaspora' in the 'West' (UK, North America and Australia);

through the emergence of "neo-Zarathushti" identities in Central Asia; all the way to present-day phenomena that are now leading to a re-awakening, a resurgence, a "coming-together" of the dispersed populations in this age of the Internet. In the closing chapter we present visions for the year 2050 from a cross section of world leaders and most importantly, the youth, our torch-bearers of tomorrow.

As we explore this evolving face of the faith and its peoples, we see a colorful tapestry emerging. We see a spectrum of ideologies from the orthodox (or traditionalists) with beliefs and practices anchored firmly in tradition, to the reformists (or liberals) ready to adapt and change with the times and climes. There are those who believe one can only be born into the religion, and those who wish to accept all into the fold. And those to whom religion is a matter of faith and belief, and those who say Zarathushtra wished his followers to reason and question. There are followers of different ideologies – the mystic teachings of Ilm-e Khshnoom and the Pundolites, and followers of saints and 'babas'.

Our geographical dispersion adds yet another dimension to the tapestry. The Parsis from India bring a Hindu flavor and the Iranians, a Muslim flavor to the pot. The two branches are now coming together in the new world, developing their own identities within the mostly Christian milieu. And of late we are witnessing the emergence of those in Central Asia (notably Tajikistan) and Russia, wishing to revert back to their ancestral religion. Occasionally we hear accounts of the Kurds, claiming Zarathushti ancestry.

How does a religion, whose adherents number a scant 200,000 worldwide, cope with such geographical and ideological diversity? In past years, the religion was practiced happily, with belief, within the comfort of the family and local community, with no questions asked. In this age of mass communication, jet travel and the miracle of the World Wide Web, local boundaries are now expanding to encompass the globe, and one encounters Zarathushtis who do not believe, practice or look like oneself.

How can we expect these disparate peoples, all of whom are strong in their conviction that theirs is the only true path, to drop their beliefs and practices and acquiesce to a common, united, Zarathushti persona? Dare we hope that all these people will respect and accept or even acknowledge the other? Should we then let each develop and grow separately within their own virtual locality? Sadly, at this point in time, we do not have the luxury of numbers for this fragmentation to survive and flower. But hopefully, in time, we will.

Roshan Rivetna
Editor-in-Chief

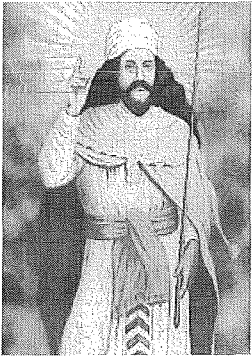
the zarathushti odyssey

honoring the past, contemplating the present, building for the future

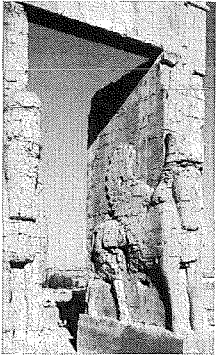
EVENTS THAT SHAPED THE EVOLVING ZARATHUSHTI IDENTITY AND HISTORY ACROSS THE MILLENNIA

Chapter 1: ADVENT OF ZARATHUSHTRA
 6000 BCE - 600 BCE
 Editor: Framroze K. Patel

Chapter 2: THE PERSIAN EMPIRES OF THE ACHAEMENIANS, PARTHIANS AND SASANIANS
 559 BCE - 651 CE
 Editor: Framroze K. Patel



Prophet Zarathushtra, not only gave a new religion to his own Iranian people, but left a legacy of beliefs and practices which were to influence the religious and philosophical precepts of other major world faiths.



For 1200 years, the religion of Zarathushtra was the state religion of three mighty Persian Empires, those of the Achaemenians founded by Cyrus the Great in 559 BCE and destroyed by Alexander the Accursed, the Parthians who saw the birth of Christ, and the Sasanians, who suffered a disastrous blow with the advent of Islam and the Arab conquest in 651 CE.

1 Prophet Zarathushtra's World
 By Khojeste Mistree
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2 Legacy of the Achaemenians (559 - 334 BCE)
 by Mehraban Khodavandi
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3 Alexander Burns Persepolis (330 BCE)
 by Natalie Vania Page 19

4 The Parthians and the Religion of Zarathushtra (250 BCE - 227 CE)
 by Pallan R. Ichaporia Page 22

5 Rejuvenation by the Sasanians (226 - 651 CE)
 by Hormazdyar K. Mirza Page 24

Under the Achaemenians, followers of Ahura Mazda numbered in the millions across the Empire.

After the destruction of the Achaemenian Empire by Alexander the Accursed, there was a low ebb during the ensuing Seleucid and Parthian Empires.

Kings and high priests of the Sasanian Empire rejuvenated the religion. Followers numbered in the millions.

Zarathushtra's first follower was his cousin Maidhyoimangha, and later the Kayanian King

Population Curve. Early population trends are drawn from Greek writings, e.g. Herodotus speaks of Xerxes' capture of Athens with a force of "1,700,000 men", and Darius III was said to have faced Alexander with an army of "1,040,000".

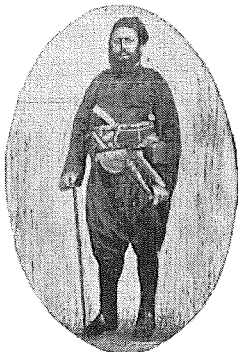
EVENTS THAT SHAPED THE EVOLVING ZARATHUSHTI

Chapter 3: SURVIVAL IN ISLAMIC IRAN AFTER THE ARAB CONQUEST AFTER 632 CE

Editor: Dolly Dastoor

Chapter 4: MIGRATION (THE FIRST DIASPORA) TO INDIA – THE PARSI IDENTITY AFTER 936 CE

Editor: Dolly Dastoor



The identity of Zarathushtis in Iran after the Arab conquest was tempered by waves of invaders who practiced massacres in the name of religion, causing systematic decimation of the religion of Zarathushtra. This chapter traces the struggle over 13 centuries in Islamic Iran.

- 6 Resilience of Zoroastrianism under the Arabs (636 - 1005)**
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- 7 The Dark Age of Zoroastrianism (1005 - 1736)**
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- 8 Zarathushti Influence in Muslim Iran**
by *Jamshid Varza* Page 33
- 9 Men who Made a Difference (in Iran from 1850 to 1950)**
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- 10 Arrival on Indian Soil**
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- 18 The Roxan Shah Episode**
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- 19 Impact of Khojeste Mistree and ZS**
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- 20 Global Challenges of Parsi Zarathushtis in the 21st Century**
by *Aspi D. Moddie.* Page 64

After centuries of suffering in Islamic Iran, population in Iran in 1903 [A.V.W.Jackson] was down to 11,000.

IDENTITY AND HISTORY ACROSS THE MILLENNIA

Chapter 5: MIGRATIONS AND 'WESTERN' DIASPORA IN UK, PAKISTAN, SOUTH AFRICA, AUSTRALIA AND FAR EAST

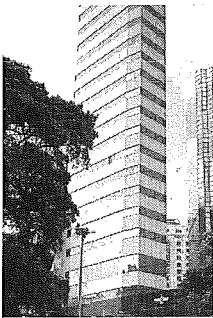
AFTER 1800s

Editor: Dolly Dastoor

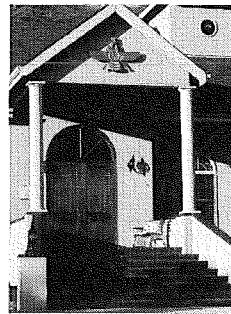
Chapter 6: MIGRATIONS AND THE 'WESTERN' DIASPORA IN CANADA AND USA

AFTER 1900s

Editor: Framroze K. Patel



At the dawn of the twentieth century, there were Zarathushtis in more countries than at any other time in history. The century saw yet more migration, to Australia, Britain, Canada and the US. With communities also in Singapore and the Gulf States, the religion of Zarathushtra can legitimately be called a world religion.



With the arrival of Zarathushtis in North America, they started building their community structures. Today there are 23 associations and over a dozen small groups, all federated under the banner of FEZANA, 8 darbe mehrs, two Mobeds Councils and numerous other organizations.

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- 26** The Parsis of Singapore
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- 29** A Tale of Two Rustams
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- 30** Financing the Future of FEZANA
by Rustom Kevala and Jerry Kheradi Page 91

The slight up-turn is due to the rise in the Iranian census figures in the 1990s [see next page]

Note: This population curve is *not* to scale, *not* based on any official data and should *not* be interpreted to show any serious trends - Ed.

EVENTS THAT SHAPED THE EVOLVING ZARATHUSHTI IDENTITY AND HISTORY ACROSS THE MILLENNIA

Chapter 7: EMERGENCE OF NEW IDENTITIES – IN CENTRAL ASIA, RUSSIA AND ‘ZARATHUSHTIS BY CHOICE’

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Turn of the Third Millennium
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by Burzin E. Atashband Page 93

33 Impact of the Zarathushtrian Assembly on the Zarathushti Psyche
by Jehan Bagli Page 97

In this chapter, we present the landscape as we cross into the third millennium. While our community is dispersing and new identities are emerging, we are building infrastructure to support and sustain our community and our religion. Zarathushtis are gaining stature in the eyes of the interfaith world, as they recognize the timeless contributions of Zarathushtra. Finally, we look at the world of the Internet, that is once again bringing global Zarathushtis together.

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by Shahriar Shahriari Page 107

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2050
Editor: Dolly Dastoor

In the closing chapter, a cross-section of youth and adult leaders share their vision of “what the global Zarathushti community will be like in 2050” Page 108

Population of Zarathushtis at the turn of the millennium

[Source: 7th World Zoroastrian Congress 2000 Program Book].

[1] Figures for Iran, which were around 30-40,000 in the 1960s, were reported to be 90,000 in the 1980s, 134,000 in the 1996 Iranian Government census, and are currently estimated to be 157,000.

[2] Based on 1991 Government of India census.

[3] Remaining figures are best estimates.

Iran [1]	157,000
India [2]	76,382
USA	18,000
UK	7,500
Canada	7,000
Europe	4,000
Pakistan	2,510
Australia	2,100
UAE	1,200
New Zealand	250
Hongkong	190
Singapore	150
South Africa	70
Myanma (Burma)	50
Malaysia	30
Seychelles	30
Japan	20
Bermuda	16
China	10
Venezuela	4
Total	276,512



Guest Editors

for this Commemorative Issue of FEZANA Journal

Rohinton M. Rivetna has devoted a lifetime building infrastructure to perpetuate the religion of Zarathushtra in North America. In 1976, he spearheaded the founding of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, and has served as trustee and president. In 1983, he mobilized the Chicago community into constructing the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, and served as its architect and general contractor. Rohinton was the prime architect of FEZANA and its Constitution and served as president for eight years. He is now working towards a strong, truly representative world body. Rohinton organized the First North American Business Conference and is developing the charter for a Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce. He served as founding vice president and trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, and is a founding member of the United Religions Initiative. His interfaith work has brought recognition and respect to the religion of Zarathushtra as one of the world's major religions. In 1990, he (with wife Roshan) was awarded FEZANA's "Outstanding Zoroastrian Award". Rohinton recently retired as Director of Environmental Engineering at American National Can Corp.

Dolly Dastoor was born in Mumbai, India, lived in Nigeria, West Africa, and since 1973, in Montreal, Canada. She is a clinical psychologist and assistant professor at McGill University in psychiatry, specializing in the assessment of Dementia. She is married with three grown-up children.

Dolly was president of the Alzheimer Society of Montreal, International chair, Status of Women, and is now Lt. Governor, District 2, Zonta International. She was president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec; associate editor, of *Gavashni*, the first North American publication; secretary and then president (1994-1998) of FEZANA, responsible for developing the first Strategic Plan for the North American community. Dolly is co-chair of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress. She received the Outstanding Zarathushti Award in 1994.

She has presented papers at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1993) and Cape Town (1999), the 4th World Zoroastrian Congress in India, 6th Congress in Tehran (1996) and at North American Congresses. Dolly initiated the concept of this commemorative issue.

Framroze K. Patel grew up in Surat Parsi Orphanage, Surat, India and obtained a Masters degree in Commerce from Gujarat University and passed parts I & II of the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants, London. He was elected Associate member of the Institute of Costs & Works Accountants (now Institute of Cost and Management Accountants) and licensed to practice as Management Accountant in the UK.

Framroze also has an MBA from St. John University, is a Certified Public Accountant and Certified Business Valuation Analyst. He is a member of the American Institute of Public Accountants and National Association of Business Valuation Analysts.

Framroze was a founder member of Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and president for a two year term (1980-82). He was a trustee for Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Temple at New Rochelle. He also served as founder director of FEZANA and as treasurer and vice president. He has been president of FEZANA since 1998. He has been involved in the affairs of FEZANA since its inception: 7 years as treasurer, 3 years as vice president and since July 1998, as president.

prophet zarathushtra's world

By Khojeste Mistree

For the first time in human history, man was shown a new path – a path leading towards the recognition of the mind, and thereby a better understanding of one's self.

Happiness Unto Him Through Whom Happiness (May Spread) To Others

[Ys.43.1]

These were the words uttered first by Spitaman Zarathushtra, the Prophet-priest of the world's oldest revealed religion – Zoroastrianism.

Early years. Zarathushtra lived in remote antiquity, some time around the dawn of the Iranian bronze age, in circa 1400 BCE. His place of birth is not known, but it is believed to be somewhere north or south-east of the Aral Sea in what was then part of ancient Iran – the land of Airyana Vaeja.

There are many legends which appertain to the birth, adulthood and death of Zarathushtra. His father was Pourushaspa of the Spitaman clan and his mother was Dughdova. It is said that the kingly glory (*khvarenah*) entered Pourushaspa after he and his wife had drunk the juice from the *hom* stalk mixed with milk and water, after the performance of the strength-giving *haoma* ceremony. Thereafter, the kingly glory, the guardian spirit (*fravashi*) and the physical body (*tanu.gaethya*) came together and united within Dughdova, the mother-to-be, to form the 'perfect child', under the guidance and the blessings

of the Bounteous Immortals. [Dinker, Book 7, chapter 2].

At birth, Zarathushtra is said to have laughed and not cried, for "... those who are made to cry have seen mortality as their end, and those who have laughed, have seen their own righteousness". [Zd 14.17]. The *karapans* (wicked priests) did their utmost to thwart his birth and grow-

“ ... Zarathushtra not only gave a new religion to his own Iranian people, but left a legacy of beliefs and practices which were to influence the religious and philosophical precepts and paradigms of the much larger non-Iranian ancient world. ”

ing up, as they knew that the advent of this child would usher in a new era of religious beliefs and practices. Thus they tried to kill the infant, but to no avail, as the blessings of the spiritual world protected Zarathushtra from the wiles of the evil ones. According to tradition, upon becoming fifteen years old, Zarathushtra asked his father for his rightful share of a girdle (*kushti*) which he tied around his waist, guided by *Vohu Manah*, the 'Good Mind' [Zd 20.1-3].

Whilst at one level these stories may be understood as legends, at another level of perception they embody important principles appertaining to life. Clearly, the birth and childhood

of Zarathushtra are important milestones in the religious history of the world, as they allude to the birth of a future prophet and portend towards the indestructibility and uniqueness of his revelation.

His birth and growth also reflect the principle of dualism, wherein the forces of Good appear to have triumphed over those of the wicked ones, as clearly Zarathushtra succeeded in his life's mission. This then, is the didactic message of these legends, which grew long after the Prophet's death.

It is believed that Zarathushtra was raised in a pastoralist tradition, as there are clear references to animals, such as cows, horses and camels in

his divine hymns, the *Gathas* composed in the Avestan language. There are five hymns comprising some hundred verses of enigmatic poetry which in fact, form the bedrock of the Prophet's teachings. His compilations are those of a genius who poetically wove together paradigms of the head and heart, of ethics and of metaphysics, all linked to the source of Wisdom, in the spiritual world.

He saw his God to be Ahura Mazda, the Wise One whom he recognized to be the Creator and the source of all that is Good and life-affirming in the world. He declared God to be all-

knowing [Ys.45.3/4], the mightiest [Ys.33.11], always anchored in Truth (Asha) and ever-present in endless light [Ys.43.4]. Zarathushtra's God was a just and perfect Being who was a friend of man [Ys.46.2] and responsible for the best of everything virtuous or good in the world [Ys.47.5]. Zarathushtra exhorted his followers to apprehend a cosmic dualism in which the evil spirit (Angra Mainyu) was always antithetical to the Good Spirit (Spenta Mainyu) in every possible way. Darkness was seen as the absence of light and not a part of it.

Search and enlightenment. As with the prophets of the other religions which were to follow, Zarathushtra had his period of training, his search, his doubts and finally his enlightenment. According to tradition, he was trained as a priest (zaotar) [Ys.33.6], in an earlier, unnamed religion of his times; after which he left home against his parents' wishes in search of Truth [Zd 20.7]. He wandered for ten years seeking to understand the purpose of life and the inequalities which he observed around him.

He questioned,

"Who is truthful or who is deceitful? Is this one evil or is that one, evil ...?" [Ys. 44.12]

"... How might I deliver deceit into the hands of Truth in order to destroy it in accord with the precepts of Thy teaching ...?" [Ys. 44.14]

He lamented and pleaded:

"To what land shall I flee ...?"

[Ys. 46.1]

He asked:

"... O Lord, offer the support which a friend should grant to a friend."

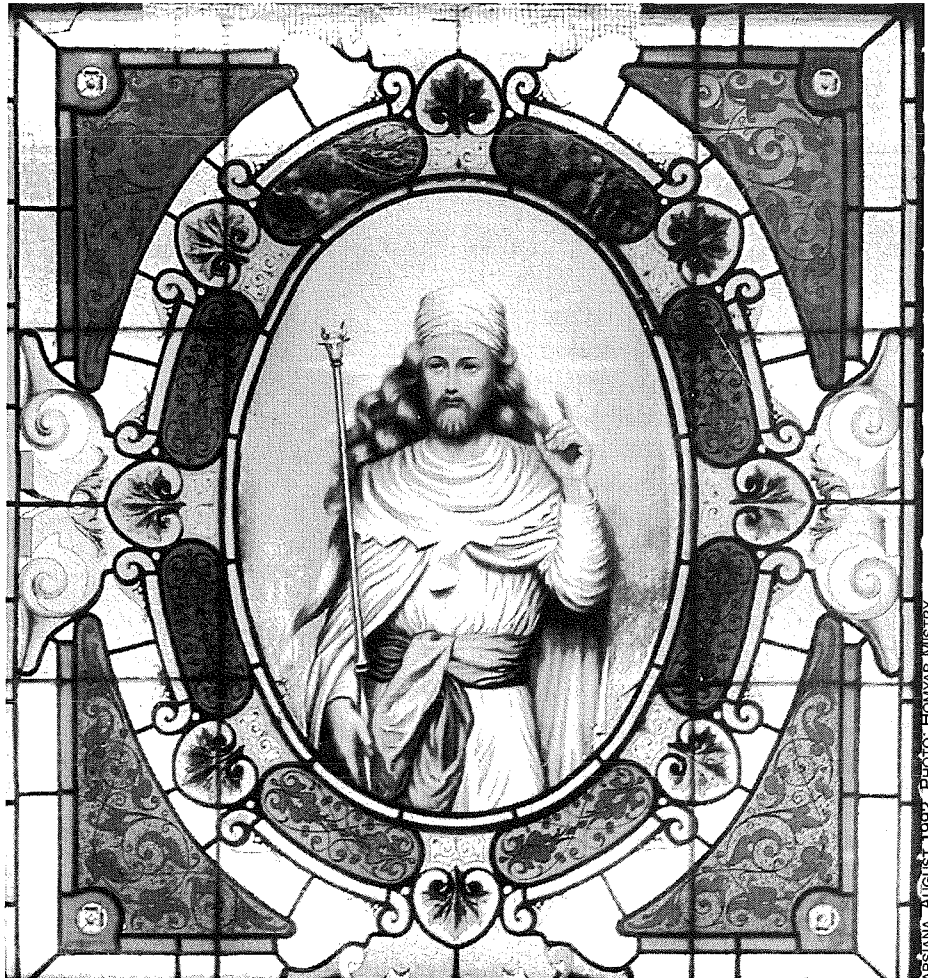
[Ys. 46.2].

It is in his thirtieth year that Zarathushtra is said to have received a series of revelations. He went to fetch water from the River Daitya for the strength-giving haoma ceremony [Zd 21.5], when Vohu Manah (the Good Mind) appeared before him, as a bright shining Being on the other side of the river bank. [Zd 21.8]. According to the later tradition, Zarah-

thushtra was taken to the celestial court of Ahura Mazda and His Bounteous Immortals (Amesha Spentas). There, in the court, the young Zarathushtra could not see his own shadow, on account of their brilliant lights. [Zd 21.13].

It is said that Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda, a number of questions whereupon Ahura Mazda spoke of the duality of existence.

in which man promoted and propitiated the supremacy of Ahura Mazda and rejected the wiles and deceit of the evil spirit and its legions [Ys.51.10]. Thus, the Iranians were given a reflective paradigm of choice and freewill, by Zarathushtra, with a hope that man would discern and choose right from wrong. The Prophet extolled,



Prophet Asho Zarathushtra, from stained glass window panel at the Tata agiary in Bandra, Mumbai.

"Yes, there are two fundamental spirits, twins, which are renowned to be in conflict ..."; "... they created life and death ..."; "Of these two spirits, the deceitful (spirit) chose to bring to realization, the worst things. (But) the very Bounteous Spirit ... chose the Truth"

[Ys. 30.3-5].

Zarathushtra, it would seem, was taught that through the contrasting natures of the twin spirits, man had to learn to recognize a cosmic dualism,

"Listen with your ears to the best things. Reflect with a clear mind – man by man for himself ... whereby a person with choice expresses one's preferences ..." [Ys. 30.2, 31.11]

In other words, one's choice was to be based upon the processes of listening and reflection.

First follower. These divine outpourings of some three thousand words of poetry inspired Zarathushtra to go back and teach his people to

COURTESY: PARSIANA, AUGUST 1992, PHOTO: HOMYAR MISTRY

follow the path of Truth (*Asha*). He struggled for twelve long years with nobody willing to accept his revelation, save his cousin, Maidhyoimangha, who was his only disciple [*Ys.51.10*]. Thereafter, through a strange happening, Zarathushtra was able to win over the confidence of Queen Hutaosa and King Vishtaspa. The king's favorite horse, fell ill and Zarathushtra the sage, was asked to come and cure the horse of its illness. He did so, it is said, through the use of *manthras* – inspired utterances [*Zd 23.5/7*].

Whether this, in fact, did or did not happen, is not the question, but the fact remains that somehow the teachings of Zarathushtra gained currency in King Vishtaspa's realm. Zarathushtra's message spread far and wide amongst the Iranian peoples. They were taught to promote the Truth and to fight against the Lie. The religion developed a robust optimism of promoting the good life amongst its followers.

Furthermore, it can be said from the Prophet's own utterances, that he was married and had a daughter by the name of Pouruchista [*Ys.53.3*]. In this celebrated verse, Zarathushtra promotes the institution of marriage when he declared,

"I tell these words to these girls who are being married and to you, ye bridegrooms ... Let each of you try to win the other with Truth, for this shall be of good gain for each." [*Ys.53.5*]

In the later tradition, it is said that Zarathushtra had three sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom, was Pouruchista [*In.Bd.32.5-6*]. Clearly, Zarathushtra was a visionary and a pragmatic thinker when he envisaged that the coming together of man and woman in matrimony, should be based upon the path of Truth and nothing else. Undoubtedly, Zarathushtra had ethical foresight of an extraordinary level.

His entire teachings reflect a cheerful optimism grounded in the fact that

rightful hard work always results in a reward, in both the physical and spiritual worlds. Moreover, Zarathushtra, in his hymns, postulated an after-life for the soul of man for it gained merit or retribution in heaven or hell, depending upon one's own thoughts, words and deeds in life. Zarathushtra's mission, in contemporary terms, can only be seen as a celebration wherein the emphasis, he declared



was upon Man to strive towards perfection and completeness in this world [*Ys.51.7*]. It is reasonable to assume from his sublime hymns, that he did not promote the ideas of renunciation, fasting, celibacy, and deprivation of any form whatsoever; in fact, his life was one based upon the utter fulfillment and triumph of man [*Ya.51.15*]. Hence, his thrust was for '*ushta*' – happiness both within oneself and of promoting harmony in the environment. Life, for him, was a true celebration with salvation being gained through making

the right choices and through the pursuit of knowing how to do this, correctly. This in turn, he believed, would bring about the making wonderful (*frasho.kereti*) or the final renovation of the world, when the forces of evil would be rendered ineffective [*Yt.19.89*]. Thus, in a sense, it is through his hymns, that one can begin to discover his approach and responses to life.

According to the later Pahlavi tradition, Zarathushtra is said to have lived for seventy-seven years and forty days. He was murdered by a Turanian known as Bradres [*Zd 23.9*].

Impact on the religions of the world. Zarathushtra's contribution should not be seen in his own life and times, but in terms of the profound effect that his teachings appear to have had upon some of the other major faiths of the world.

The founder monarch of the Achaemenian empire, Cyrus the Great (549-530 BCE), is known to have liberated the Jews from Babylonian captivity and to have enabled them to return to Palestine, in order for them to rebuild their temple. Therefore, Cyrus, in the Book of Isaiah 45.5, is seen as the 'Lord's anointed', *Yahweh*, and hailed as a messiah.

It is during Achaemenian times (549-330 BCE), that the Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs of individual judgment, heaven and hell, the coming of the messiah, resurrection, final judgment, and the eventual renovation or salvation of the world, entered post-exilic Judaism, when they were assimilated into the tenets of the Jewish tradition.

Many centuries later, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is shown being tempted by the devil [*Matthew 4:1-11*], which, in Zoroastrianism, is the figure of Ahriman. Matthew refers to the separation of the 'sheep and the goats' suggesting a separation of good and evil in the spiritual world as indeed, found in the Zoroastrian

texts. Moreover, Matthew refers to the Magi who traveled to Bethlehem following the star as the auspicious omen [Matthew 2:1-12]. There are many other allusions between Zoroastrianism and Christianity which probably made Mary Boyce state:

"...It was out of a Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism, that Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian."

[Boyce M., *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London 1979, p. 99]

Some of the doctrines and practices of Zoroastrianism, even exerted an influence upon the Gnostic faiths and in the development of Shi'ia Islam.

Zoroastrian beliefs in Wisdom, the Good Mind, dualism, cosmogony and salvation beliefs had an impact upon the early Greek school of philosophers in the early sixth century BCE. Heraclitus of Ephesus taught that this world is energized by fire, exactly as is the Zoroastrian belief of the seventh creation, fire, permeating the other six creations and giving them life, by making these creations come alive [Gr. Bd., Chapter III, 7-8]. Heraclitus also postulated:

"... that God was Wisdom – 'a Wisdom that does and does not want to be called by the name of Zeus alone' ..."

[Boyce M., *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, Leiden 1982, pp.158-159].

A century and a half later, there was a profound renaissance in Greek thought. Plato had founded the 'Academy' in Athens in 387 BCE and had attracted star pupils such as Hermodorus and Aristotle, all of whom were greatly influenced by the paradigms and practices of the Zoroastrian Magi in Babylon [ibid pp.259-260]. Plato's dualistic metaphysics of the universe of perfect prototypes or ideas which he juxtaposed with the perceived imperfect

'shadows', may easily be linked to the Zoroastrian concept of Good and evil found both in the physical and spiritual worlds. In the words of Mary Boyce,

"The virtues in which Persian princes were thus to be instructed, of wisdom, justice, temperance and courage, are bound up with Zoroaster's own moral theology ... They are identical also with the virtues characterized by Plato as those 'of the soul'." [ibid p. 261]

There are many other Platonic ideas which resonate well with classical Zoroastrian beliefs. Not only was there a connection westwards with the Greeks, but Zoroastrianism also influenced the religions of the east, in circa fifth century BCE. According to Mary Boyce,

"It is held that the northern Buddhist belief in the Maitreya or future Buddha must owe something to Zoroastrian teaching about the Saoshyant".

[Boyce M., *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London 1979, p.84].

In short, the Iranian Prophet-priest, Zarathushtra, not only gave a new religion to his own Iranian people, but left a legacy of beliefs and practices which were to influence the religious and philosophical precepts and paradigms of the much larger non-Iranian ancient world.

"Hail Unto Him, For He Is Born Athravan Spitaman Zarathushtra."
[Yt.13.94]

This could not be a better salutation to the greatest Prophet-priest who walked this earth. ■

Khojeste P. Mistree [photo page 62] is the co-founder and managing trustee of **Zoroastrian Studies (ZS)**, a public charitable trust established to promote the dissemination of religious knowledge for those who seek it. He is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and has an Honours degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford. Khojeste is a noted speaker at local and international conferences. He has been interviewed in the print, on radio and on television, including the world services of the BBC.

Khojeste is an educator and teacher of the history and culture of the Zoroastrian religion and has taken a number of pilgrims to Iran in recent years. He is the author of **Zoroastrianism – an Ethnic Perspective** and co-author of *The Zarathushti Religion – a Basic Text* and has published several papers.

Recently, he has been invited by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to spearhead their projects of building an aviary for the breeding of vultures and for reforesting the environs of Doongerwadi in Mumbai.



TANDAROSTI (PAZEND)

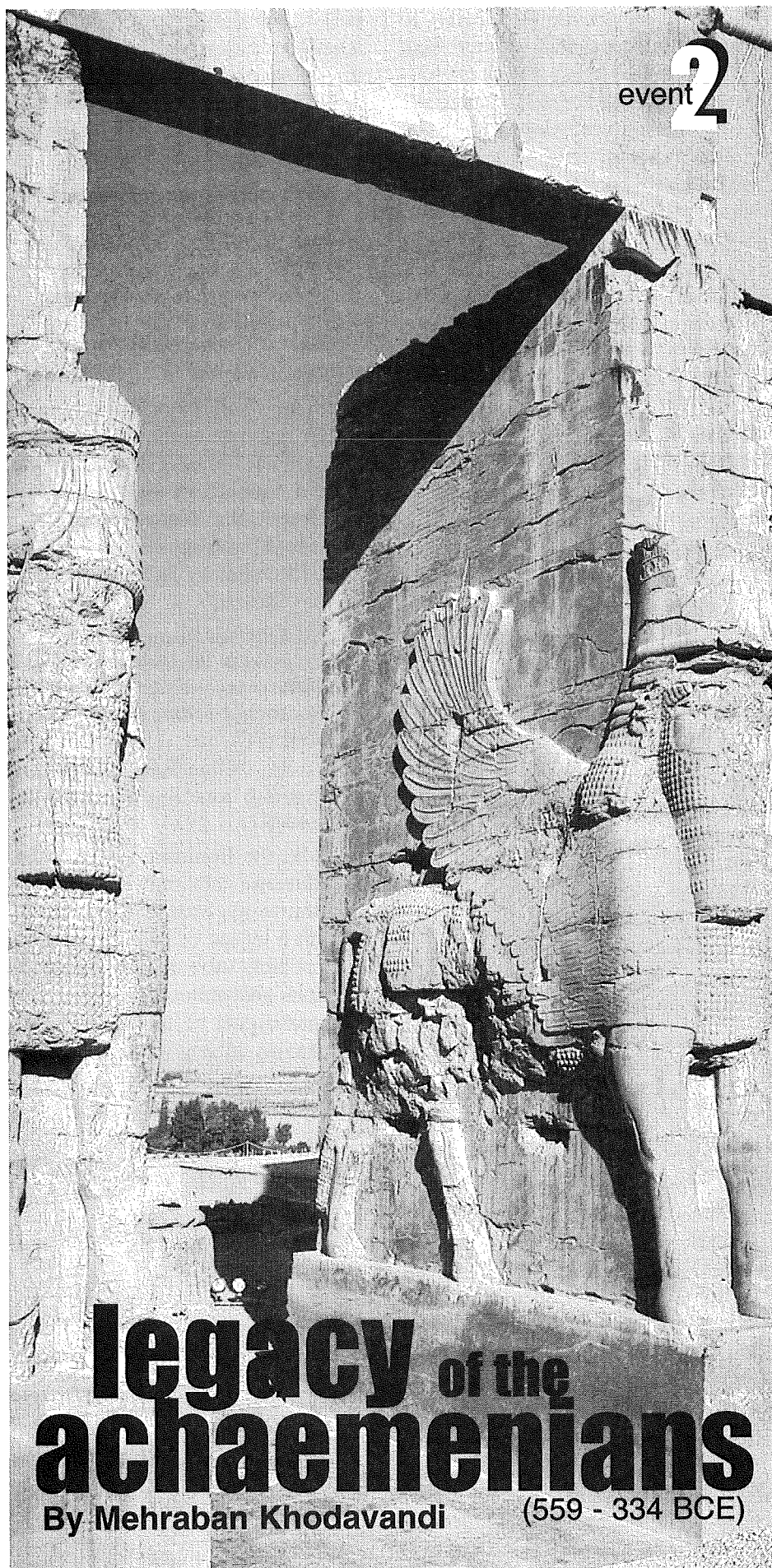
*May here be health, extensive prosperity,
May here be health, abundant prosperity,
May here be health, prosperity of progeny,
May here be health, joy and gladness,
May here be health, freedom from difficulty,
May here be health, long living of life!*

- From Khordeh Avesta

For 1200 years, the religion of Zarathushtra was the state religion of three mighty Persian Empires, those of the Achaemenians founded by Cyrus the Great in 559 BCE and destroyed by Alexander the Accursed, the Parthians who saw the birth of Christ, and the Sasanians, whose monarchs and high priests rejuvenated the religion. The religion suffered a disastrous blow with the advent of Islam and the Arab conquest in 651 CE.

Framroze Patel
Guest editor

Gateway of all Lands, guarded by two massive winged bulls with human heads, at Persepolis, seat of the Achaemenian Persian Empire.



event **2**

legacy of the achaemenians

By Mehraban Khodavandi (559 - 334 BCE)

PHOTO: ANCIENT PERSIA BY JOHN CURTIS

It is said that Airyana-vaejah (the land of Aryans) was the first of the good lands created by Ahura Mazda. The inhabitants of this land were the Indo-European speaking Aryans who had migrated south from central Asia into the Iranian plateau around 2000 BCE. The two most important groups of this Aryan family were the Medes and the Persians who established a number of small kingdoms ruled by warrior-kings in northern and southern Iran.

First Zarathushti world power.

In the mid-sixth century BCE, the Persians, under *Cyrus the Great* (559-530 BCE) defeated the last Median king and established the Achaemenian (from the House of Achaemenes or Hakhamanish – companion of wisdom) dynasty. In a remarkable series of campaigns, Cyrus conquered Assyria, Cilicia, Lydia and Babylon and extended his empire from the borders of India to the Mediterranean Sea, uniting all the peoples of the Middle East under one single political umbrella. Thus, the first Zarathushti world power and a major civilization was born under the reign of Cyrus, the “King of Kings.”

Cyrus the Great had a farsighted conception of his empire. Influenced by the tenets of the religion of Zarathustra, he established an ethical rule based on moral order deep rooted in tolerance and appreciation of the many cultures of his subjects. His compassionate policies created an empire whose political organization sheltered many different civilizations. People were allowed to retain their own customs, languages, laws and religious beliefs.

The well known *Cyrus’ Cylinder* (a replica of which is displayed at the United Nations Headquarters in New York) inscribed in the Babylonian language and known as the world’s first “Declaration of Human Rights,” depicts Cyrus as a benevolent conqueror who entered Babylon peace-

fully without struggle, did not allow anyone to terrorize the land, restored their temples, promoted the well-being of its citizens, and put an end to their misfortunes. He ended the seventy years of Babylonian exile of the Jews and allowed them to return to Judah to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. The Old Testament praises Cyrus as the Lord’s anointed and the shepherd of Yahweh who came to deliver the Jews from captivity. Seldom have conquerors received such

“ [Cyrus] ended the seventy years of Babylonian exile of the Jews and allowed them to return to Judah to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. The Old Testament praises Cyrus as the Lord’s Anointed and the shepherd of Yahweh ... ”

admiration and gratitude from their conquered. Cyrus was killed in battle securing the frontiers of eastern Iran from the pressure of nomadic tribes in 530 BCE. Cyrus’ son and successor, *Cambyses II*, came to power in 530 BCE. During his brief reign of seven years, he added Egypt to the empire’s dominions. His death in 522 BCE resulted in unrest and revolts in almost every province from Babylon to the Hindu Kush.

Contributions to world civilization. *Darius the Great* (522-486 B.C.E.) was the third Achaemenian king. His reign of prosperity restored peace and stability to the Persian empire. He conquered and ruled over an area on a scale that was without precedent. The imperial borders extended from Egypt in the west to southern Russia in the north and the valley of the Indus River in the east. As the vastness of this empire made it difficult for one person to rule effectively, it was divided into provinces (*satrapies*), each of which was administered by a governor (*satrap*). Effective rule demanded excellent communication. Thus, the *world’s first postal system* was established via a network of efficient high-

ways linking all parts of the empire from the coast of central Asia to western India. Darius established the Royal Road (1,677 miles from Susa, his principal capital, to Sardis) which was divided into 111 post stations, each equipped with swift horses and messengers to carry dispatches.

Darius the Great closely followed the enlightened views of his predecessors, Cyrus and Cambyses. Though the official religion of the land was the worship of Ahura Mazda, local faiths were allowed to continue undisturbed. Darius devoutly ascribed all his greatness and success to Ahuramazda (Ahuramazda, Ahura Mazda). In the Behistun inscription, Darius proclaims:

“On this account Ahuramazda brought me help ... because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a tyrant ... I have

ruled according to righteousness. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong.

“If you shall behold this inscription, or these sculptures, and shall not destroy them ... then may Ahuramazda be your friend ... Live long, and may Ahuramazda make fortunate whatsoever you do.”

Darius’ other contributions to world civilization include the introduction of a standard for weights and measures, a uniform system of coinage in gold and silver, an advanced imperial law code, a common calendar, and the construction of a 150-foot wide canal linking the Red Sea with the Nile. In 518 BCE, Darius began the construction of a new capital at Persepolis.

On a retaining wall in this magnificent palace complex, Darius inscribed a prayer for his subjects:

“May God protect this country from enemy, famine and lie.”

In 492 BCE, Darius gathered together a military force to conquer Athens, in retaliation for their previous aid to rebellion in the Persian controlled cities of Ionia in Asia Minor. His army landed on the plain of Marathon. When the Greeks learned of the Persian soldiers’ arrival, they sent a run-

ner, Philippides, to run the 26 miles from Marathon to Athens to warn the Athenians of the Persians' approach. (This distance is still known in athletic circles as the *Marathon Race*.) Darius the Great was defeated in this expedition and he died eight years later while preparing for another campaign against Greece.

Darius was buried at Naqsh-e Rostam. The inscription on his tomb reads, in part:

"A great God is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many.

"I am Darius the great king, king of kings, king of countries containing all kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenian, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan ...

"When Ahuramazda saw this earth in commotion, thereafter he bestowed it upon me, made me king ... If now you shall think 'How many are the countries which King Darius held?' Look at the sculptures that bear the throne, then shall you know, then shall it become known to you: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to you: a Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia.

"This which has been done, all that by the will of Ahuramazda I did. Ahuramazda bore me aid, until I did the work. May Ahuramazda protect me from harm, and my royal house, and this land. This I pray of Ahuramazda. This may Ahuramazda grant to me."

Xerxes (486-465 B.C.E.) was the next Achaemenian king and the eldest son of Darius the Great. He continued the policy of tolerant civilizing in the empire, while attempting two ill-fated expeditions into the far west – Greece. In both campaigns (at Salamis and Plataea), he fought to a standstill and was defeated.

Xerxes, like his father, attributed all his accomplishments to Ahura

Mazda and invoked Ahura Mazda's protection for himself and his kingdom. In the first text of his inscription found in the capital of his empire (Persepolis), he declares that

“ If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the State religion of the Empire of Cyrus, which was the worship of Mazda, might have been the religion of the whole civilized world - Max Muller ”

his empire was established by the grace of Ahura Mazda, and that the only country to rebel against his rule was one in which demons were worshiped:

"... and I made proclamation: The demons shall not be worshiped. Where previously the demons were worshiped, there I worshiped Ahuramazda at the proper time and in the proper manner. And there was other business that had been done ill. That I made good. That which I did, all I did by the favor of Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda bore me aid until I completed the work."

The next six Achaemenian kings, *Artaxerxes I* (465-425 BCE), *Xerxes II* (425-424 BCE – 45 days), *Darius II* (424-404 BCE), *Artaxerxes II* (404-359 BCE), *Artaxerxes III* (359-338 BCE), and *Arses* (338-336 BCE) fared less well. They were preoccupied with internal succession struggles, repeated rebellions within the empire, and threat by a united Greece. *Darius III* (336-330 BCE) was the last Achaemenian king, whose rule came to an end when Alexander of Macedonia conquered Persia and burned down the palaces and the libraries of Persepolis in 330 BCE.

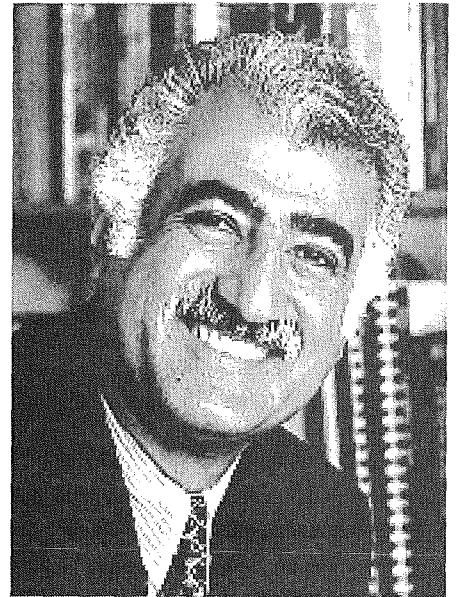
The ongoing warfare between the Greeks and the Persians led Max Muller to remark:

"If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the state religion of the empire of Cyrus, which was the worship of Mazda,

might have been the religion of the whole civilized world."

Were it not for the fickle turns of fortune, so it might have been.

Though the once mighty Persian empire was defeated, the religion of Zarathushtra survived to influence world religious thought and make vital contributions to other major faiths. ■



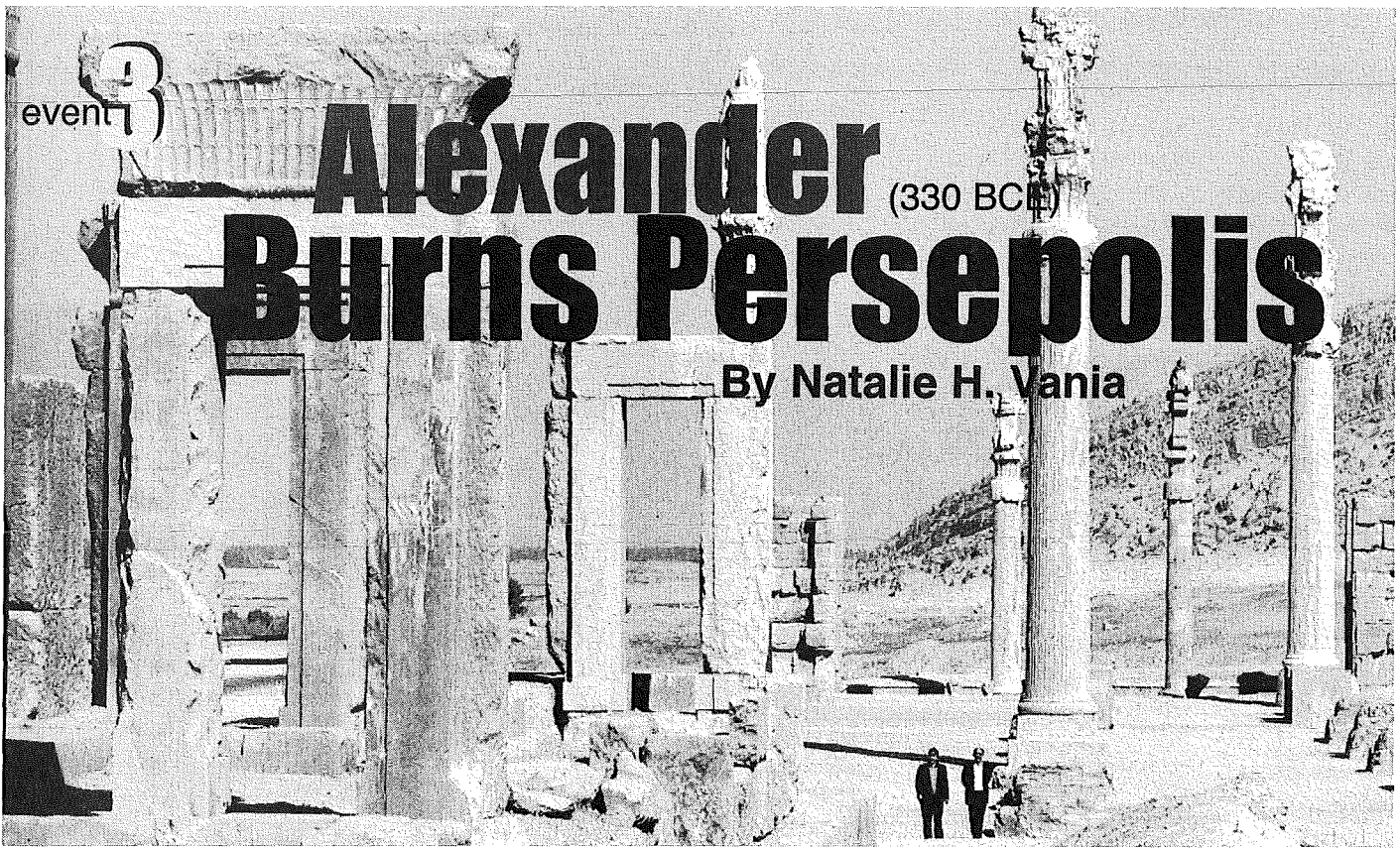
Mehraban Khodavandi is a professor of education and psychology and past dean of the Graduate School at Lakeland College in Wisconsin. Prof. Khodavandi received his doctorate in education and studies in behavioral disabilities from the University of Wisconsin. Since joining the Lakeland faculty in 1981, he has received numerous honors, including twice being named "Outstanding Professor of the Year" by his colleagues and students. In 1997, Prof. Khodavandi received Lakeland Alumni Association's "Outstanding Faculty" award, and the "Underkofler Excellence in Teaching" award from the Wisconsin Foundation of Independent Colleges. He is a highly sought-after speaker on Zarathushti religion and ancient Iranian culture and civilization.

event

Alexander (330 BCE) Burns Persepolis

By Natalie H. Vania

PHOTO: GITI CARD, TEHRAN, IRAN



View from Darius' Palace at Persepolis. Only 13 columns of the magnificent – “Hall of a 100 Columns” remain today.

On February 1, 330 BCE, the magnificent Persepolis, seat of the Persian Empire, famed throughout the whole civilized world as the “richest city under the sun” fell victim to insult and destruction by the Macedonian plunderer Alexander. How did this cataclysmic act of destruction, alter the course of history and religion, and shape the identity of the Zarathushti people?

Cataclysmic act of destruction. “It was the richest city under the sun and private houses had been furnished with every kind of wealth over the years. The Macedonians, under order of Alexander, raced into it, slaughtering all the men whom they met and plundering the residences ... the enormous palaces, famed throughout the whole civilized world, fell victim to insult and destruction ... the Macedonians gave themselves up to this orgy of plunder for a whole day and still could not satisfy their boundless greed for more.” [*Diodorus Siculus, VIII, xvii, 70, 1-4*]. “The Macedonian soldiers rent the royal robes ... they broke vases of priceless art with mattocks ... each one carried the broken limbs of statues as he had torn them off ...” [*Quintius Curtius, V, vi, 4-5*].

“Alexander held games in honor of his victories ... while the Macedonian army was feasting and drinking, a madness took possession of the minds of the intoxicated guests. One of the women present, Thais by name and Attic by origin, said that for Alexander it would be the finest of all his feats in Asia if he joined them in a triumphant procession, set fire to the palaces and permitted women’s hands in a minute to extinguish the famed accomplishments of the Persians ... Promptly many torches were gathered. Thais was the first, after the king, to hurl her blazing torch into the palace. As others did the same, immediately the entire palace area was consumed.” [*Diodorus Siculus, VIII, xvii, 72, 1-6*]. [*From Persepolis by Donald Wilber, 1989*]

“The magnificent palace complex at Persepolis was founded by Darius the Great [Darius I] around 518 BCE. Conceived to be the seat of government for the Achaemenian kings and a center for receptions and ceremonial festivities, the wealth of the Persian empire was evident in all aspects of its construction. ... [Persepolis’] majestic audience halls and residential palaces perished in flames when Alexander the Great conquered and looted Persepolis in 330 BCE [carrying] away its treasures on 20,000 mules and 5,000 camels.” [1].

Destruction at Persepolis and the end of the Achaemenian Empire (550-325 BCE) illustrate the fulsome, perplexing nature of the tragic side of the human condition. Although the empire-builders he conquered

PHOTO: PERSEPOLIS BY DONALD WILBUR

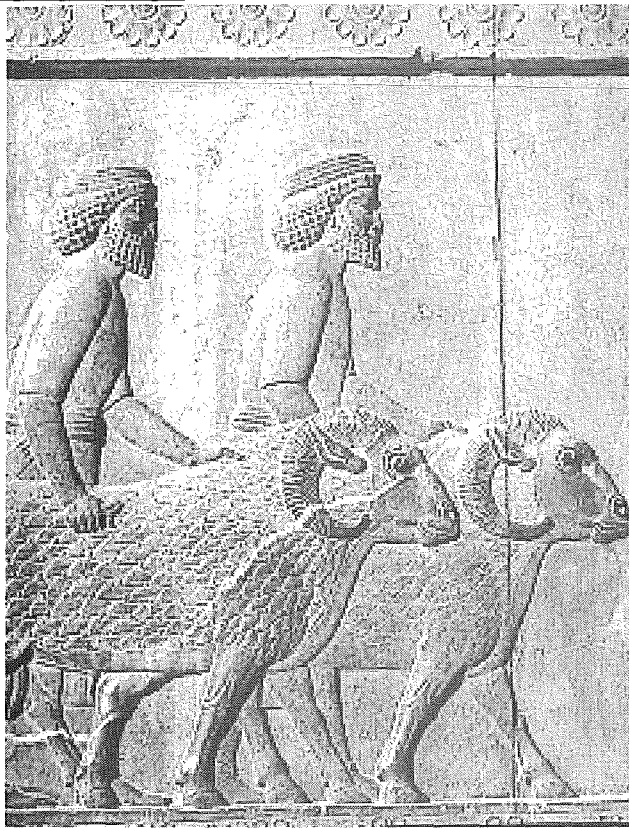
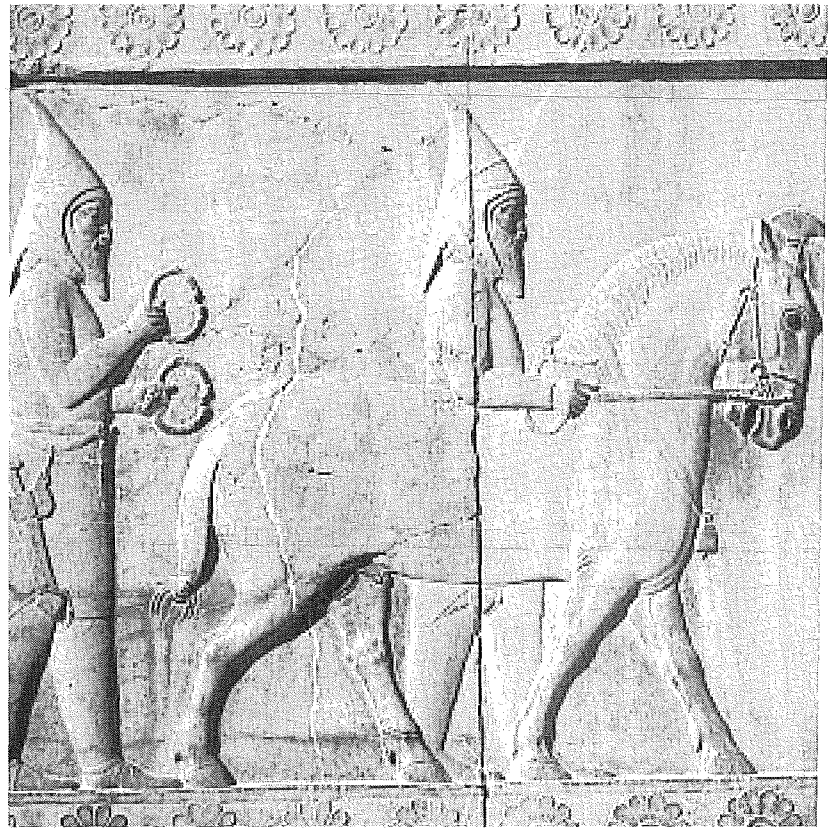


PHOTO: PERSEPOLIS BY DONALD WILBUR



granted him respect, Macedonia's Alexander bears distinct historical attribution for destruction. Ultimately, he delivers no vanquishing impact upon the Zarathushti people and peoples who today display and forward *frashokereti* in our own era of magnificent human achievement.

Persepolis: seat of the Achaemenian Empire. "The Persian Empire was remarkable; it stretched virtually over a continent, from Greece to Afghanistan, and from Egypt and Libya to western India. There was nothing like it before, and its size and durability were not repeated until the time of the Roman Empire ... The empire was remarkable for its ideology as well as its size. The Persians used a word '*vispazana*' to describe the immensity of the empire. It means 'all kinds of people' ..." [2].

The complex at Persepolis includes: the Apadana Audience Hall, Throne Hall, Xerxes 'Gateway of All Lands', palaces of Darius and Xerxes, residences for royal women, a Treasury, and a Council Hall. Describing just one of Persepolis' astonishing features:

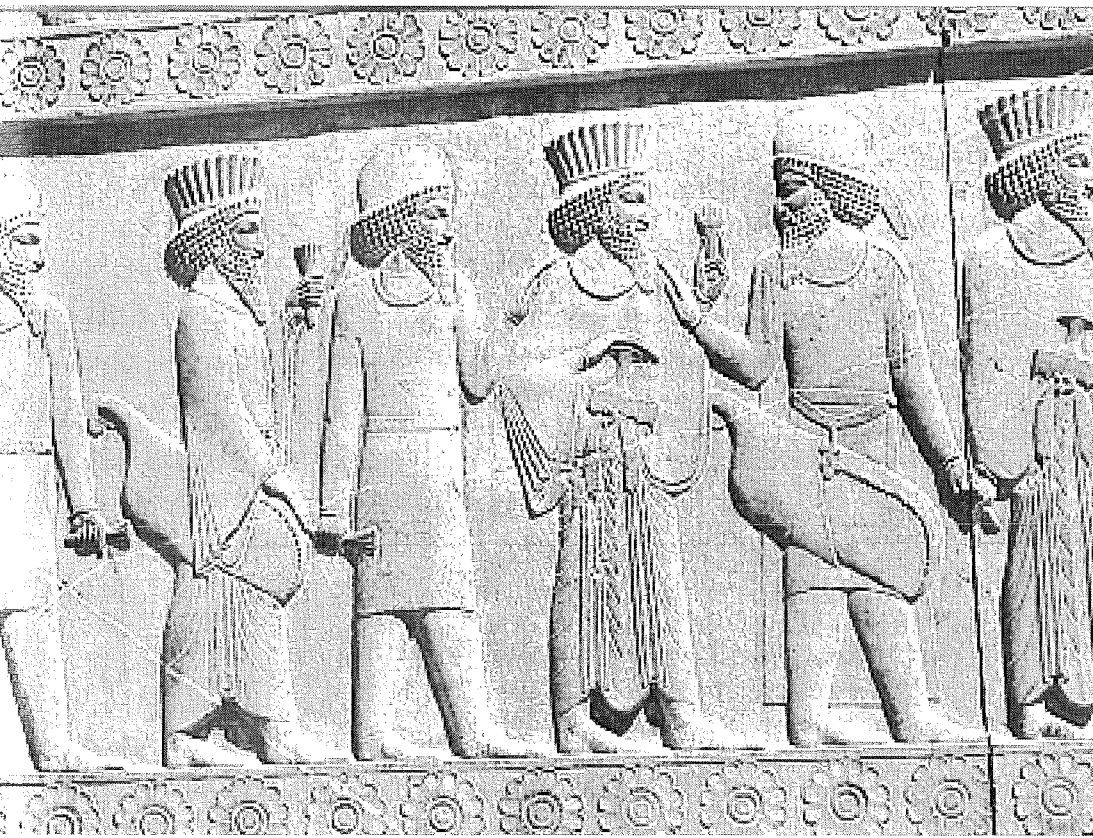
"By far the largest and most magnificent building is the Apadana, begun by Darius and finished by Xerxes,

that was used mainly for great receptions by the kings. Thirteen of its seventy-two columns still stand on the enormous platform to which two monumental stairways, on the north and on the east, give access. They are adorned with rows of beautifully executed reliefs showing scenes from the New Year's festival and processions of representatives of twenty-three subject nations of the Achaemenid Empire, with court notables and Persians and Medes, followed by soldiers and guards, their horses, and royal chariots. Delegates in their native attire, some completely Persian in style, carry gifts as token of their loyalty and as tribute to the king. These gifts include silver and gold vessels and vases, weapons, woven fabrics, jewelry, and animals from the delegates' own countries. ...[with] ... marked differences in the designs of garments, headdresses, hair styles, and beards that give each delegation its own distinctive character and make its origin unmistakable" [1].

Meaning and Significance. Persepolis' defeat is the cataclysmic act of destruction in the history and identity of the Zarathushti people. In history's

rough hands, a people suffers much and Zarathushtis do not have a small share in its vagaries. Amidst history's course, no destruction surpasses Alexander's wreckage. His youthful caprice entails travesty for:

● *Life.* In Alexander's conquest, Zarathushti youth place their bodies between Alexander and Asia in raw combat: "The Persian [Spithrobates] hoped that by his individual gallantry Asia might be relieved of its terrible menace, the renowned daring of Alexander, arrested by his own hands, and the glory of the Persians saved from disgrace ... the Persian drew his sword and drove at Alexander; but the king recovered his grip upon his lance in time to thrust at the man's face and drive the blow home. As the Persian fell, Rhosaces, his brother, brought his sword down on Alexander's head with such a fearsome blow that it split his helmet and inflicted a scalp wound. As Rhosaces aimed another blow, Cleitus ... dashed up on his horse and cut off the Persian's arm." [4]. Next, Spithrobates was felled. War is not an easy respecter of persons and the youth are first to bear its principal injustice, loss of life.



The monumental stairways at the Apadana Hall are adorned with reliefs depicting delegations of 23 subject nations of the Achaemenid Empire, bearing gifts for the monarch. From left: Sogdians bearing tribute of rams, Scythians with pointed hats, Medes (in round helmets) and Persian noblemen (in fluted headgear).

- *Dismantling cultural and social institutions.*

- *Achaemenian-led (Zarathushtrian-favorable) statehood.*

- *Obscuring the contribution of Zarathushtra and Persian antiquity for philosophy and the thrust of thought over two thousand plus years of Western (and Eastern) development. Whitehead's outrageous claim that "All Philosophy is but a footnote to the Greeks" is not much tempered in a multi-cultural era. The entire history of Western development credits the Greek but obscures the Persian Zoroastrian contribution. This occurs to the extent that principal professors in leading institutions of higher education, charged with responsibility for conveying the record of human thought, have no knowledge of the person, life, and thought of Zarathushtra or its profound impact even into the modern age.*

- *The nature of war itself, as a social institution is impacted in the collision between Alexander and Persia and made more horrific. "Warfare before the early 5th century BCE was restricted mainly to border skirmishes between neighboring Greek*

states. The objective was usually limited ... complete annihilation of their populations was usually avoided. The actual campaigning was ... broken off at the mutual convenience of the two opposing sides ... By the fourth century BCE warfare was well on its way to becoming the internationalized institution (of total war) that Alexander and his followers are generally thought to have perfected." [3]. Alexander's path ends in dissolution, not by resolution of prosecution for just cause, and without his turning from conquest and exploit to settled governance [4].

- *Severe wrong upon the universal heritage of mankind in annihilation of material culture in the burning of Persepolis. Given the standing of Zarathushtra's thought and prophetic vision, original items of material culture, and their import, burnt and plundered at Persepolis, belong not to this Zoroastrian party or that. They belong instead to the entirety of mankind, just as any great contribution to the human record belongs to each of us and not only to the groups who by tradition hold a particular contribution most dear.*

Grant that material from antiquity gains value by its record of distant time. Then, Fahrenheit 451 at Persepolis is severest ravaging. On the score of antiquity, it is perhaps worse than would have been an affirmative to the destruction of the Louvre, upon Hitler's demanding query "Is Paris burning?"; instead of, as it happened, brave risk of life by indirection.

The greater the tragedy in human affairs, the greater its disproportionate and perplexing nature. As with all human beings, Alexander was a mixed compendium of virtues and vices, not simply a mad destructive agent [4].

Plutarch records that Alexander grieved at the death of Darius' wife and insured her full funeral rites (kinder to a deathly enemy than some to our own). He was moved after a battle at the alarm of women over Darius to send lavish reassurance. Darius dies offering his right hand for Alexander. His brother Exathres becomes Alexander's friend. Alexander covers Darius' body with his own cloak and allows the burial of his great enemy, versus mythic Creon who drives his daughter to deathly state-conflict for rescuing her brother's corpse from mutilation.

Alexander takes up the dress, language, and mores of the Persians and finds brides among them. Humane accord with what history has wrought for Zarathushtis, must include character's complexity in assessing the man and must wrestle as well with strains of what Achaemenian bounty and empire imply.

Should travails of Zarathushtis today depend upon 'modern' history? No wisdom would we show in maintaining or offering active vehemence in our spirit against the ancient holocaust. Rather, we might deepen our very humanity. Zarathushtis have the record as their pride and inspiration – the worst had been done to our people, as is done to all of humanity's people in the course of history's blind caprice.

Today we own a contemporary glory no less fiercely brilliant than the glory of Persepolis, for we have the new Zarathushti youth: a *frashokereti* in a time which itself is perhaps a shining acme of humanity's potential. ■

- [1] Oriental Institute web at www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/IRAN/PAAI/PAAI_Persepolis.html.
- [2] www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/GALLERY/PERSIAN/New_Persian_Gallery.html.
- [3] www.museum.upenn.edu/Greek_World/Daily_life/Warefare.html.
- [4] Plutarch (79 CE), *Alexander*, tr. John Dryden, wwwac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Renault/fire.plutarch.html.

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event 4

The 500-year Parthian rule (250 BCE - 227 CE) witnessed a spectrum of religious beliefs: Greek cults and influences and the Roman cult of Mithras in the west; Judaism and various ancient Babylonian cults in Mesopotamia; the religion of Zarathushtra on the Iranian plateau in the heart of the Parthian domain; and Buddhism and various Hindu cults to the east. It was in the midst of the Parthian period that Jesus was born and the young Christianity emerged with missionary zeal.

(250 BCE - 227 CE)

the parthians and the religion of zarathushtra

By Pallan R. Ichaporia

The Parthians (250 BCE - 227 CE) inherited the decadent Seleucid Empire that ruled in Iran for 80 years in the wake of Alexander's plunders.

Governance. The rise to power of the Parthians, who derived their support from a few noble families of Parni, was a triumph of the northern Iranians over those of the south. The feudal system of the Parthian Kingdom was based on seven great families, of which the Parthians were one. This was a survival of Achaemenian tradition. The Parthian crown did not necessarily pass from father to son. The will of the aristocracy carried considerable weight and was expressed through the voice of the 'Council of seven great families' which limited the royal prerogative. There also existed another council, that of the sages and priests (Magi). This 'Council of Magi' stood close to the throne and acted as a consultative body.

This feudal system was not introduced by the Parthians, they inherited it from the Achaemenians and

bequeathed it to the Sasanians and it persisted, in a modified form in Islamic Iran. Throughout Parthian history, the nobility made and unmade kings, sometimes by constitutional means, and sometimes with foreign support, usually that of Rome. This was the greatest weakness of the Parthian Empire and was self evident when any prince who attempted to strengthen his position was deposed for his 'atrocities'.

Religion. Iranian society under the Parthians retained its ancient cultural and religious traditions. Although we may safely say that the main religion followed by the masses was the religion of Zarathushtra and it played the preponderant role, we cannot neglect the possibility of the Parthians, who sprang from the Iranian nomads coming from the peripheral regions of Iran, bringing in primitive cults.

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various ancient Babylonian cults in Mesopotamia; the religion of Zarathushtra on the Iranian plateau in the heart of the Parthian domain; and Buddhism and various Hindu cults to the east.

Parthia and the Romans. Unfortunately relationship with Rome was more often than not, hostile. Just as the Achaemenians had stood against Greek domination, the Parthians prevented the Romans from dominating the countries of Asia. Territorial disputes, over Armenia and the land between the Tigris and Euphrates resulted in long-drawn out battles, and Eastern Romans and Parthians were still fighting for Armenia in the sixth century CE.

From c.100 - 400 CE, the Roman **Cult of Mithras** flourished and several hundred Mithraic temple sites have been unearthed – in England, across Europe as far east as Israel and Syria and in North Africa. “It has been said that Mithraism was so strong that if the Roman Empire, and after it the western world, had not become Christian, it would have become Mithraic. This is a gross exaggeration, but undoubtedly it was a powerful cult ...” [Hinnells, *Persian Mythology*].

Rise of Christianity. It was during the reign of King Phraates V, that Jesus was born and the young Christianity emerged with missionary zeal. We can safely surmise that in all probability the starting point of Christianization was to the east of the Euphrates. The general state of Christianity under Parthian rule was one of tolerance because of religious indifference until the Christians became a missionary church which prompted Vologeses I to effect a vigorous revival of the Zoroastrian religion.

Zoroastrianism in Parthia. Although the Parthians were tolerant of other religions, and the Jews lived peaceably with Zoroastrian Parthians, with the rise of Christianity and active conversions from Zoroastrianism, the Parthians strengthened the Zoroastrian priesthood and with the

massive gathering of the scattered Zoroastrian texts by Vologeses I, the task of codifying them gathered momentum. [*dinkerd, Madan 412, 5-10*]. It is now doubtful whether the Vendidad was composed during Parthian rule as was once assumed.



Parthian coin of King Vologeses I (51-80 CE). [Mistree, *An Ethnic Perspective*].

From the time of Vologeses I, the Parthian rulers were completely Zoroastrianized, in the sense that Greek cultural influence became weak and rulers did not style themselves as ‘Philhellenes’. The prominent Zoroastrian tradition of not polluting water, a sacred element, was witnessed in the refusal of Tiridates of Armenia, brother of Vologeses I to go by sea to Rome and receive his crown from the hands of Nero, for fear of polluting water and disrespecting Ardvi Sura Anahita, the yazata who symbolizes this element. Herodotus has confirmed this incident.

Recent excavations at Parthian Nisa has shown the names of Zoroastrian months and other names such as *hwrmzdyk* (Ohrmazdik) and *dynmzdk* (Dinmazdak) indicate Zoroastrian origin. [*Colledge, The Parthians*]. Other names from the Nisa Ostraca are also very Zoroastrian such as *Sroshdat, Tirdat* and *Vohuman*.

The Parthian Stations of Isidore of Charax, although fragmentary is one

of the very few records of the overland trade routes in the period of struggle between Parthia and Rome. This Greek text mentions in chapter 11 “... and the city of Asaac, in which Arsaces was first proclaimed king; an everlasting fire is guarded there” [*translated by Schoff and B. Head*]. Arsaces was proclaimed king in 248 BCE and the practice of consecrating a *Vaharam* Fire at the crowning of Zoroastrian kings continued through the Sasanian period.

It will not be out of context to examine the syncretism of Greek and Iranian deities present in the dedication of the statues which still guard the colossal tomb of king Antiochus I of Commagene (69-34 BCE) . The chief statue represents Zeus-Oromasdes (or Ohr-mazd, a Parthian-Pahlavi name of Ahura Mazda); the second, Apollo-Mithra-Helios-Hermes; and the third, Artagnes (or Verethragna)-Heracles-Ares as clearly evident in the carved bilingual rock inscriptions under each statue. This custom continued in the Sasanian period.

Zoroastrian practices such as reverence of holy fire and exposure of the dead are attested to in Parthian times and its continuity is seen in the Sasanian period and among present day

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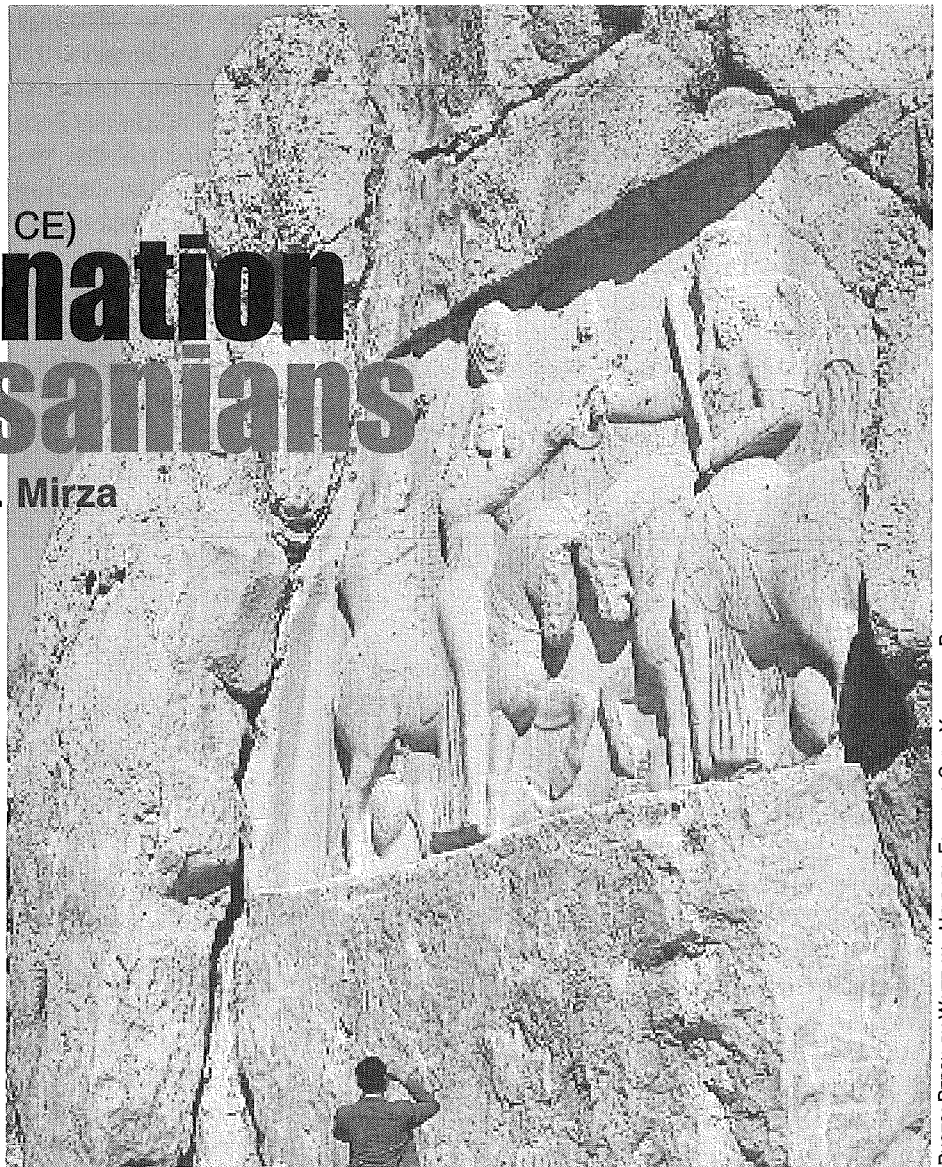
(226 - 651 CE)

rejuvenation by the Sasanians

By Hormazdyar K. Mirza

[Contd. from previous page]. Zoroastrians of India and Pakistan. In the west and in Iran the practice of exposure of the dead has been given up but reverence of fire is still practiced. One can safely say that culture, traditions and practices of the Sasanians were Parthian in origin, but it was the Sasanian Empire and Sasanian kings who declared the religion of Zarathushtra their state religion and made it great and took it to zenith of its power with all its pomp, pageantry and glory.

Remnants of Parthian Literature. Mary Boyce has proposed a large minstrel oral literature of Parthians [*"The Parthian Gosan and Iranian Minstrel Tradition"* JRAS, 1957]. The Iranian national epic preserved in the *Shah Nameh* of Firdowsi is of eastern Iranian origin and has Parthian heroes such as King Gotarzes but the epic is more concerned with the struggles of the kings of the east and wars between Iran and Turan. Some details of Parthian society have survived in the later Pahlavi literature like *Draxt i Asurig* (Babylonian Tree) and *Yadgar i Zariran* (Memorial of Zarir) which show clearly the heritage from Parthian times, reflected in the *Shah Nameh*. ■



Cliffside relief at Naqsh-e Rostam, near Persepolis, showing investiture of Sasanian monarch Ardashir I, founder of the Sasanian dynasty.

Sasanian monarchs and high priests restored the lost scriptures and made the religion of Zarathushtra the state religion of the Sasanian Empire.

The founding of the Sasanian dynasty marked the beginning of Zarathushti revival after neglect and foreign influences due to circumstances. Avesta texts, particularly the Yashts, provide important glimpses into the history of the Peshdadian and Kayanian dynasties; but the Avesta terminates with the reign of Kayanian King Vishtasp and goes no further. There must have been a long time gap between the end of the Kayanians and the rise of the Medi-

ans, and the scene of activities also shifted from Central Asia and eastern Iran to western Iran. The Medians and Achaemenians were entirely forgotten in Iranian tradition, and regarding the Arsacids (or Parthians) only a faintly lingering memory remained.

After Alexander's conquest, the Seleucids (Alexander's commanders) ruled over Iran for about 75 years. They tried to Hellenize Iran by exerting Greek religious, literary and

cultural influences. It appears that these influences receded in the first century, and signs of revival began to appear during the reign of Vologeses I (51-77 CE) as can be gleaned from the scanty literary and numismatic evidences [H. K. Mirza, *Outlines of Parsi History*, pp. 119-21]. Although the Parthians were influenced by the Greeks, the province of Pars, under Parthian rule, resisted foreign influence, and remained Zarathushti in outlook and practice as it appears from numismatic evidence. At that time Buddhism was rising in eastern Iran, and various religious sects, particularly Zurvanism and later Manichaeism, arose and heresy and skepticism prevailed in Iran.

Revival. Zarathushti revival of significant import, commenced with the rise of the Sasanians. *Ardashir I* (226-241 CE), the founder, *Shapur I* (241-272), *Shapur II* (309-379) and *Cosroes (Khosrow) I* (531-579) among the monarchs, and *Tansar*, *Kirder*, *Adurbad Maraspand*, *Adurbad Zarthosht*, *Arda Viraf*, *Mehernaresht* and *Vehshapur* among ministers and priests, are known to have been the leaders responsible for Zarathushti revival. The Avesta was collected and preserved by Tansar

under Ardashir I, heresies and aggressive religious sects were suppressed by Kirder under Shapur I, Avesta texts were translated into Pahlavi with commentaries by Adurbad Maraspand under Shapur II, new Avesta script was invented, new edition of 21 Avesta Nasks, written in the newly invented Avesta script, was prepared and published by Vehshapur under Cosroes I. Pazand *afri*s and other Pazand prayers were composed during Sasanian times.

Main Sources.

Sasanian inscriptions, coin-legends and archaeological monuments and Pahlavi books, composed or compiled in the 9th century, are important sources. These writings are likely to have been based on Sasanian sources which might have been extant then. Further, there are Arabic writings by Iranian Moslem writers of the 10th and 11th centuries.

Avesta in Sasanian Times.

Written religious prayer books before Sasanian times have been mentioned by Greek writers; but it is not known in what script they were written. Avesta manuscripts indicate that at one time Avesta was written in a cursive script in which vowels were not expressed, perhaps a script resembling the Pahlavi script of Sasanian inscriptions. There are

instances in the extant Avesta manuscripts to prove this assumption. It appears that when Avesta was translated into Pahlavi, it (Avesta) was written in such a script. The

present Avesta script was

invented in the 6th century,

and Avesta was

written in Avesta

script and published

at that time by

Vehshapur

under Cosroes

I. There were

21 Avesta books

called nasks

during Sasanian

times.

Beliefs and practices.

All the prayers we

recite, and all the

ceremonies we per-

form now, were formu-

lated and arranged in Sasanian

times; however, they are based on

the original Avesta texts. Pazand

pieces have been prefixed and suf-

fixed to ancient Avesta texts,

The Sasanians recognized *Ohrmazd*

as almighty God of all creations,

spiritual and material, and supreme

ruler of all. He created Amesha

Spentas and Yazatas, 'Holy Immor-

tals' and 'Worshipful Beings', and

they are always active and working

in spiritual and material worlds,

according to divine laws fixed by the

all-powerful Ohrmazd.

Zarathushti teachings of two opposing

forces working in Nature, however,

were misunderstood. Ohrmazd was

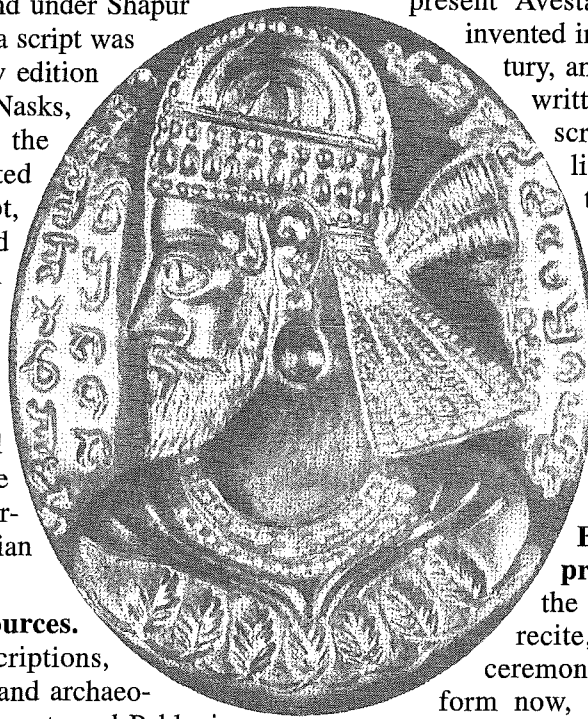
identified with Spenta, and Ohrmazd

and Ahriman were depicted as rivals.

However, supremacy of Ohrmazd was

never in doubt, and the final triumph

of Ohrmazd and the utter destruction



Left, Mountainside rock relief at Naqsh-e Rajab, of Kirder, who held the powerful office of the national high priest. Above, Sasanian seal of a high priest c. 5th century CE [Mistree, Ethnic Perspective].

PHOTO: ZAEHNER, DAWN & TWILIGHT OF ZOROASTRIANISM

of Ahriman have been repeatedly emphasized. They believed in *ravan* the soul and *fravashi*, the immortal spark of God in man.

Zarathushti teachings of good, virtuous, diligent, philanthropic life have been repeatedly advocated.

Original Zarathushti ideas of *heaven and hell* are abstract. According to the Avesta, heaven is the blissful condition of the soul in the spiritual world on account of good deeds done in the material world, and hell is the miserable condition of the soul in the spiritual world on account of bad deeds done in the material world. In Sasanian times, heaven and hell were popularly understood as two places, one full of comfort, happiness and luxury, and the other full of punishment, torture and misery. However, the original principle of *divine justice*, good for good and bad for bad, was not forgotten, as is evident in Pahlavi writings. As in the Avesta [*Yashts* 21, 22, 23] according to Sasanian belief, the soul of man is immortal. There is spiritual life of the soul after death.

The Avestan belief in '*frashokereti*' (renovation) was strongly entrenched. More popular was the idea of '*ristaxez*' (rising of the dead), which is also found, although rarely, in the Avesta [*Yt.* 19.23]. Renovation, perfection, is the final aim of the creations of the world. The world is slowly and gradually progressing towards this aim. Every right human effort is a contribution to the progress towards this aim. It will be brought about by human effort and the divine grace of God.

In the Avesta, the sacred shirt or *sudreh* is known as *vastra*, and the sacred belt or *kushti*, as *aiwyaongha*, described as a "star-studded belt, spiritually made (which is) the Mazdayasni religion."

Religion is inseparably connected with *family life*. The general principles of Sasanian family life were similar to those of a joint family system. Sasanian society was a patriarchal society, tracing lineage from the father. A family was under the

guardianship of a male elder member, known as the *sardar* (chief), but even under male guardianship, a woman could hold and manage property, lead a prayer, and act as a senior member of the family.

Marriages among Zarathushtis were strongly advocated and were practiced, although there are instances of mixed marriages, particularly among royal families. Such mixed marriages were vehemently denounced.

Dinkerd [Bk. VI] composed in the 9th century, gives a good account of counsels of the "ancient law givers", with a clear reference to the sages of Sasanian times. Counsels begin with one of the uppermost topics of discussion in human life, namely the human mind and the working of two opposite forces therein. It appears that in this theme the Gathic principle of ethical dualism is expounded. In the Gathas, two opposing forces are *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu*, while in the *Dinkerd*, they are *Yazdan* and *Drujan*. Four things are very good: charity, truthfulness, bravery and learning.

Reverence to Fire originated during the reign of the Peshdadian king Hoshang – it is revered as a shining emblem of God since remote ages. The Avesta [*Ys.* 62] describes fire as a domestic fire and also as a Yazata, representative in this world of Ahura Mazda, bestowing welfare upon man and punishing the guilty.

Ceremonial changes. Several ceremonial changes were introduced in Sasanian times, including: the ceremony of 'fat offering' which was later introduced in India and practiced upto the early 20th century; when *barsom* twigs, one of the ceremonial implements mentioned in the Avesta were not available, Sasanians introduced metallic wires; Sasanians used only metallic mortars, instead of stone and metal, in the *hoama* ceremony; a metallic sieve was used instead of a 'sieve of hairs' for straining the *hoama* juice; and stone slabs were used instead of pits for purificatory ablutions.

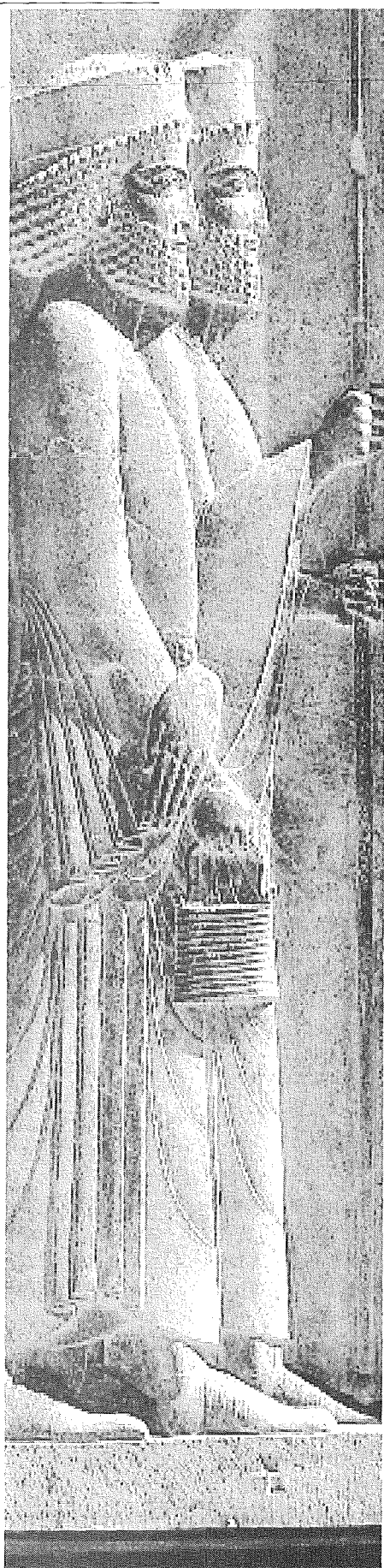
In summing up we observe that even in religious matters, changes due to

circumstances have become inevitable. Generally, it is believed that all ceremonies, customs and practices have come down to us in original form from the Avesta and teachings of the prophet. This is not the case. Whether we like it or not, changes have taken place in all ages, but that has not shattered our faith. Changes will continue to take place. Faith is shattered by misdeeds and false show in the name of religion.

Religion is a matter of faith, and faith cannot be engendered by force or coercion, not by harsh words, hatred and enmity. May the Zarathushti faith in God and the religion, faith in character, goodness and duty remain supreme through all time. ■



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Persepolis, Achaemenian guards,
6th century BCE.

The identity of Zarathushtis in Iran after the Arab conquest was tempered by the waves of invaders who practiced massacres in the name of religion causing systematic decimation of the religion of Zarathushtra. All the sacred texts were once again destroyed in 820 CE by the Governor of Khorasan. By the 13th and 14th centuries Zarathushstis withdrew to the inhospitable desert cities of Yazd and Kerman and remained there for several centuries with minimal contact with the outside world viewing themselves inherently of Iran. Some left for India and others to distant parts of the world. Those who remained were denigrated with pejorative terms as ‘*gabr*’ and the strongest of bigotries were perpetuated against them as noted by western writers [Napier Malcolm 1905].

From the early 18th century till the early 20th century even though the Zarathushtis lived beleaguered lives as a despised minority, denigrated as ‘fire-worshippers’ (*atash parast*) they had iron in their souls and they maintained their religious and national identity by keeping alive the collective memories of their imperial past.

They maintained their reputation as honest, diligent, peace-loving people, and once again rose to positions of power under Pahlavi rule claiming back their Zarathushti credentials and taking their rightful place in the development of Iranian society. This gave lie to the perception of Zarathushtis as a backward and illiterate minority stuck in a superstitious, religious groove. Iranian Zarathushstis drew their strength and confidence from their allegiance to the land of their birth.

“The close co-operation between the more affluent Indian Zarathushtis and their depressed Iranian brethren is a remarkable chapter in the immensely long history of the Zarathushtis, where a faithfulness to the memory of their collective ancestry had been kept alive and the striving for a better life for those less fortunate than themselves had continued till it was achieved. Hataria’s endeavors in Iran mark the high-water mark in Parsi-Iranian relations.” [Rashna Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians*, 1994].

This chapter will trace the struggle of the Zarathushtis from the depths of despair to their regaining of strength over a period of 13 centuries. *Dolly Dastoor, Guest editor*

The Arab conquest of the Sasanian Empire began gradually in 636 CE, and fundamentally altered the course of the Zarathushti Din.

For over two millennia before that conquest (1200 years under Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian Empires and 1200 preceding them), the religion of Zarathushtra was the preponderant faith of diverse nationalities in countries stretching from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean, and from the borders of Libya and Greece to north-east China. Its influence slowly shrank over four centuries of Arab rule, whose disintegration began in 1005 CE. Yet, it regerminated in new lands in Asia and Europe, to which Zarathushtis had exoded in Arab times. It still lives in some of them. But passed-over by history, it never regained preeminence as a dominant world faith.

Arab Conquest. Poverty and fervor for their new Islamic religion together impelled Arab tribes, under the First Caliphs (636- 660 CE), to overrun rich lands [Note: this article uses their modern names] bordering their desert: Byzantine-Roman Syria, the adjacent Sasanian countries of Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, and the capital of that Empire, Ctesiphon, near Baghdad. By 652 CE when King Yazdegard III was killed in Merv (in Turkemenistan), the Arabs had taken Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Khorasan, Kurdistan, Fars, Yazd, Kerman and Afghanistan from Sasanian vassal kings and satraps.

By 675 CE, the successor Ummayyad caliphs (661-750 CE) took Siestan, Turkemenistan, Uzbekistan, Khirgistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Oman. Arab conquest thus took 40 years.

Under the First and Ummayyad caliphates. After bloodshed and looting from the invasion ended, the First caliphs decreed that their objective, in the spirit of Surah 9.29 of the Koran, was to subjugate “unbelievers” under Islam’s might, and humble, not convert them. All the subjugated “People of the Book” (Jews, Christians and Zarathushtis), all called the *dhimmi*s,

event 6

resilience of zoroastrianism under the arabs

By Adi Davar (636-1005 CE)

Over four centuries of Arab rule, from 636 to 1005 the influence of Zoroastrianism, once the preponderant faith of the Persian Empires, slowly shrank as subjects converted to Islam under intense social, economic and political pressures. As the religion dwindled in Sasanian countries, it began emerging in new Asian and European ones to which it diasporaed.

were therefore to be left to their religions and customs, so long as they were also humbled through payment of tributes and the Sasanian land and poll tax (renamed ‘*jizya*’) to finance the caliphates.

Arab governors signed treaties with the Sasanian feudal nobility and elite leaving them their lands and privileges, provided they paid annual tributes and collected *jizya* from dhimmies in their domain while inflicting severe personal indignities to humiliate them. Nevertheless, most Zarathushtis remained impervious to humiliations and rejected Islam.

Forced conversions, executions, and destruction or turning of fire temples into mosques, occurred. But these appear to be outcomes of over-zealous Arab governors (e.g., Qutaiba in Bokhara) and not the policy of either caliphate. Good relations generally prevailed between governors and representatives of the dhimmies. So long as dhimmies paid the *jizya* and respected laws emphasizing their inferior status, the First caliphs largely left them to themselves. Focussed on conquering African and European lands, so did the Ummayyads, except in Umar II’s reign (717-720 CE).

To comfort Zarathushtis that by embracing Islam they were not abandoning their faith, Zarathushti converts, many of whom became proselytizing mullahs, invented tales of the influence of Zoroastrianism on Islam and highlighted seemingly common features between them, like heaven and hell, day of final judgment, recital of prayers five times daily and rejection of image worship. Such deceptions, and the caliphates’ let-live policies, persuaded Zarathushtis to even join the converts in bringing the Abbasids to power after the Ummayyads escalated the payments of tributes and *jizya* to finance their wars.

Under the Abbasids (750-1005 CE). The Abbasids threw doors of advancement open to converts, gave them key positions, revived Sasanian traditions and splendor of their courts and laid foundations of Iranian-Islamic culture. In the hope of gaining new converts and realizing that familiar rituals meant more to the Zarathushtis of their times than dogma, the converts – themselves once raised in the Sasanian traditions of religiosity and rituals – adapted some of them, e.g., festivals of Mehergan and Sadeh, celebration of Nouruz as the New Year, reverence for the light, Saoshyant-like ‘expected’

hidden *imam*, veneration of pirs in place of yazads, into Shia-Islam. The Abbasids began persecuting Muslim sectarians, not the dhimmies.

Many succumbed to such deceptions and blandishments, while a resistant core retreated to rural regions. But increased urbanism and withering of the unique Persian system of irrigation, eventually shattered their fragile agricultural livelihood. Despite their inexorable downward spiral, and the lack of fully trained priests, they devotedly practiced the rituals of the faith, and kept doors open to any choosing to follow it - although none did in the circumstances. Conversions accelerated, as worldly advantages accompanying them appeared magnified particularly when dynasties of Zarathushti converts (Barmecides, Tahirids, Saffarids, Samanids and Buyids) began ruling Sasanian countries in the name of the Abbasids after 803 CE..

The diminishing Zarathushti priesthood valiantly struggled to preserve the religion. Particularly in Caliph al-Ma'mun's reign (813-833 CE), it committed its knowledge - colored as it was by Judaistic, Christian and Greek influences and Zurvanist precepts - suffusing Sasanian Zoroastrianism in important Pahlavi writings which are now familiar to western scholars and Zarathushtis. It also copiously and carefully copied existing religious lore, purity codes and a summary of the Sasanian-Avesta. But it was a losing battle.

As Professor Richard Bulliet of Columbia University concludes: from less than 10% in the first 120 years after the beginning of the Arab invasion, and 20% by 790 CE (40th year of Abbasid rule), conversions surged to 80% between 791-864 CE when dynasties of Zarathushti converts ruled in Abbasid name. As such dynasties continued till 1005 CE, and social ostracism and political pressure to convert mounted, the multi-ethnic subjects in all Sasanian countries embraced Islam, except for Zarathushti pockets in rural areas.

However, as the Zarathushti din dwindled in Sasanian countries, it began living in new Asian and European ones to which it diasporaed.

Six diasporas during Arab years. They took place from different Sasanian countries, at different times:

● **To Ch'ang-an (modern Xian) in China, from 650-early 800 CE:** Two diasporas headed for Ch'ang-an (modern Xian), capital of the Tang empire in northeast China. Around 650 CE, remnants of Phiruz's

“ From less than 10% in the first 120 years after the Arab invasion ... conversions surged to 80% between 791-864 CE ... as social ostracism and political pressure to convert mounted, the multi-ethnic subjects in all Sasanian countries embraced Islam, except for Zarathushti pockets in rural areas. ”

(Yazdegar III's son) defeated a small army and with his court, settled there. They established a government-in-exile, which their descendants maintained for over a century. History records that they grew sizably, prospered, pursued their faith, introduced monetary coinage in the empire, ran its trade, and were skilled in administration, art and literature. It is possible that this group having few Zarathushti women, grew by intermarrying natives and raising their children as Zarathushtis, in the tradition of their forefathers.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall by the early 800s, and aware of the success of Phiruz's group, separate bands of heterogeneous Zarathushtis - probably from Seistan, Uzbekistan, Khirgistan and Tajikistan with their direct access to the Silk Road - staged a second diaspora towards Ch'ang-an.

As chronicled by traveler-historians al-Biruni and Masudi, descendants of both groups must have spread out and multiplied since they built fire temples to pursue their faith and rituals in Honan, Kai-feng and Loyang, besides

Ch'ang-an. Texts like "Yao-Kuan", written around 1100 CE, mention the faith's practice in the region. But references to it, and all foreign religions, disappear from Chinese records after the last Tang emperor quelled a major Nestorian Christian uprising and the successor Sung dynasty (960-1279 CE) squelched smaller ones in its earlier years. By then, the Zarathushti din had lived in China for over four centuries, while it withered under the Arabs in Sasanian countries.

● **To Russia, Rumania-Hungary and Germany from late 800-early 900 CE:** Heterogeneous Zarathushtis from other Sasanian countries staged three subsequent diasporas. The first, from North Ossetia (in Georgia) and Azerbaijan, headed northwards into Russia in the late 800s. The second, around the end of the 800s, was from Turkey. Following the known land route through Thrace and Bulgaria towards the Balkans, it settled in Rumania and Hungary. This group splintered and diasporaed northwards in the early 900s to settle in south-eastern Germany. Through these diasporas, the religion of Zarathushtra lived in Europe for varying periods up to six centuries beyond the Arab era.

● **To India, after 906 CE:** A small group from Zanzan in Turkemenistan, reached Hormuz (south Iran), diasporaed a year later to the Island of Diu (western India), lived there for 19 years, and sailed to south Gujarat in 936 CE. Receiving permanent refuge in a coastal settlement, named Sanjan in memory of the group's hometown, it attracted Zarathushti refugees who had fled to other parts of India. Having brought only the Visperad and Khordeh Avesta (for ritual worship and private prayer), priests were dispatched to Zanzan. Returning with the implements and ashes from its fire temple (alat), they consecrated a holy fire, now housed in Udvada. Their descendants exoded over several centuries to Africa, south Asia and the West, where pockets of Zoroastrianism still endure.

Imprint of Arab years on the faith and its followers. Disintegration of the religion of Zarathushtra was neither rapid, nor a result of a swift Arab 'holocaust', as some believe. The process took nearly 400 years, or ten generations, through a combination of factors including humiliations, persuasion, economic pressures, deceptions, social ostracism, economic carrots and self-interest. As the Zarathushti din withered in Sasanian lands, it distilled a hard core of people so committed to it, that they

“ “ As the Zarathushti din withered in Sasanian lands, it distilled a hard core of people so committed to it, that they resisted privations, ostracism and economic blandishments, or tried to root in new soils. ” ”

resisted privations, ostracism and economic blandishments, or tried to root it in new soils. This tough fibre of total devotion to it and resiliency for overcoming all odds, permeates the Zarathushti character.

The legacy of Sasanian Zoroastrianism was not one of Zarathushtra's philosophical concepts. It was that of: the lore of Peshdadian and other kings, the dualized concepts of Hormazd and Ahriman, reliance on Amsha Spentas and Yazads, religiosity of strictly observed daily rites, and periodic priestly rituals. Whether one considers this as religion or religiosity, that is what they and their priests believed, practiced, preserved and wrote about with singular devotion. Concurrently, they persevered with the practice of their Sasanian forefathers of leaving the door of the religion of Zarathushtra open to any choosing to embrace it.

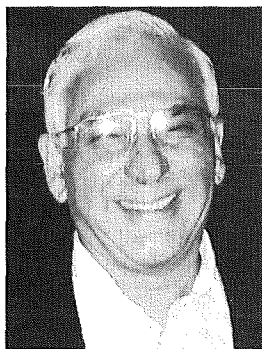
These practices and convictions left indelible future imprints, inside and outside Sasanian countries. Those who stayed on in them, endured unimaginable suffering for centuries

after the Arab years as they struggled to keep such practices and convictions alive. Those who sought to root them elsewhere, showed courage by venturing into alien lands, flexibility in reshaping their lives in them, resiliency in adapting to their societies, and pragmatism by contributing to them. The qualities of those who stayed on and those who diasporaed, became innate to Zarathushtis living in tiny pockets in today's world. ■

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Harvard University. He held senior executive positions in the Tata Group of Industries in India and in the World Bank, including director of its East Asia and Pacific Regions. He has served as a founder-president of ZAMWI, a member of many FEZANA committees and a trustee on the International Board of WZO. He has spoken and authored many articles on the faith, its history and its contemporary issues. He has indefatigably stressed the themes of universality in Zarathushtra's teachings, youth participation in shaping community decisions and generating solidarity among Zarathushtis. Married to Pervin, he has three daughters Binaifer, Rashne, and Tamina.

The seven and a half centuries between the end of Arab rule and the end of Safavid rule (1005-1736 CE) reduced the religion of Zarathushtra to a minuscule core of adherents. Those living in Sasanian countries - from Iraq and Iran in the west to Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the east [Note: modern names of countries are used in this article] - met death and devastation unmatched in Zoroastrian history. Those who had diasporaed to others, faced tribulations during most of these centuries. Soon after when they began to prosper, they lost their religious identity, except in India.

As their numbers and influence were now insignificant, historians ignored Zarathushtis who themselves left no accounts, until an historical poem (*Qissah-i-Sanjan*) was written nearly 7 centuries (936 CE) after the arrival of the diaspora to India. Little can be gleaned about Zarathushti lives from their religious manuscripts, or from the recorded exchanges (the *Rivayats*) between Iranian and Indian co-religionists over three centuries. Hence, cautious deductions from peripheral sources can alone be drawn about them in this period.

ZARATHUSHTIS IN SASANIAN COUNTRIES (1005-1295)

By the last century of the Arab Abbasid caliphate, most Zarathushtis had burrowed into inaccessible regions of Iran, particularly of Fars, Kerman, Yazd, Khorasan and Seistan, to pursue agriculture. But that did not save them from slaughter during successive invasions over 750 years which swept across Sasanian countries from east and north Asia.

In 1005 the *Ghaznavids* sounded the death-knell of Arab suzerainty, by conquering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Khorasan from the Samanids (Abbasid vassal kings). The *Seljuk Turks* (1055-1220) erased them and later, expelled the Abbasids up to Syria. Massive migration of nomadic Turkic tribes accompanying the Seljuks, turned most cultivated lands into pastures which further devastated the meager agriculture-based livelihood of Zarathushtis.

The seven and a half centuries between the end of Arab rule and the end of Safavid rule (1005 - 1736) reduced the religion of Zarathushtra to a miniscule core of adherents, meeting death and devastation unmatched in Zarathushti history.

event / the dark age of zoroastrianism

By Adi Davar (1005-1736)

As they swept across Central Asia to Europe, in their determination to crush the Seljuks (1220) the *Shamanist Mongols* under *Genghis Khan* indiscriminately massacred Jews, Christians, Zarathushtis and even Muslims and destroyed their books and temples. It must have been in this time period that the last copy of the Sasanian-Avesta in Samarkand (in Uzbekistan) was destroyed as was every major fire temple including Adur Karkoy in Seistan which had survived the Arab Era. Mongols pastoralized more cultivated lands, reducing Zarathushtis to penury.

After a fresh invasion up to Iraq, Hulagu (Genghis Khan's grandson) ultimately founded the Buddhist Il-Khan dynasty in 1255, which was tolerant of all religions. This dynasty lasted until 1335, when other Muslim *Mongol tribes* under *Timur Leng*, penetrated up to Azerbaijan, and established the *Timurid* dynasty (1370-1501) in Samarkand. It disintegrated amidst internal strifes, giving way to the *Safavids* (1501-1736). While Iranian-Islamic culture bloomed under the Timurids and Safavids, Zarathushtis were virtually exterminated from Fars, and suffered greatly everywhere else.

Islam's proselytizing zeal imbibed all dynasties, before and after the Il-Khans. Massacre from invasions was therefore followed by executions and forced conversions. Together, they decimated Zarathushtis. The Il-Khans offered a brief respite, until

Ghazan Khan also embraced Islam in 1295.

Window of Tolerance (1255-1335).

In this narrow window, of religious tolerance (1255-1335) the Zarathushti Mobedan-Mobed moved to Turkabad in mountainous Yazd, near the revered Pars-Banu shrine. The exalted fires of *Adur Farnbag* from Fars and *Adur Anahid* from Istakhr were merged and unobtrusively installed in nearby Sharifabad, in a mud-brick house. That camouflage was later adopted for all fire temples. Zarathushtis in Yazd, Kerman, Seistan and Khorasan regarded these villages as their ecclesiastical centers even till today.

In this and subsequent centuries, priests only preserved liturgical texts most frequently used for religious services, by copying and translating them into Pahlavi. That included some *Yasnas* and the *Vendidad*, the priestly purification code which was recited as a venerated prayer by this time. But there is little evidence of intellectual scholarship reminiscent even of the early Abbasid era.

Gradual Transformation of Zarathushti Doctrine. More than in the preceding 450 years under the Arabs, the rituals and rites of the Zarathushti din came to mean more than its doctrine, to the shriveling Zarathushti ranks. They observed their festivals like Nouruz, Mehrgan and Sadeh without fear of attracting Muslim persecution, since the Shias also now celebrated them. But to pre-

clude attention and persecutions, many practices and rites were pragmatically adapted. For instance, they wore sudreh-kushti on special occasions only, simplified the sudreh-pushhi ceremony, brought the marriage ceremony in line with simpler Shia practice, conducted simplified liturgical prayers in privacy, gradually abandoned veneration of yazads and the post-Sasanian practice of using dokhmas for the dead.

In the Safavid years, (1501-1736) they invented Dari to ensure safer verbal communication. But they still left the doors of the religion open to any choosing to practice it. And thus, they nursed their faith's survival through these traumatic 750 years; even though executions and forcible conversions had decimated them to minuscule numbers when Safavid rule ended.

ZARATHUSHTIS IN EUROPE

Slender peripheral evidence suggests that the diasporas to Europe in the 800s, kept the religion alive for varying periods up to six centuries beyond the Arab era.

Zarathushtis who exoded to Russia and the Balkans, probably found some ethnic affinity with the Scythian-Turkic-Iranian tribes which had settled centuries ago in the former, and moved after 900 CE to the Balkans as the Magyars. This must have facilitated their task of keeping their faith alive for 150 years (till 989) until Orthodox Russian Christianity became Russia's state religion when Prince Vladimir of Kiev adopted it. King Stephen did the same in Hungary around 1000. Neither imposed it on their subjects.

Such salutary developments must have helped the descendants of both diasporas to practice the religion and grow in numbers, including through intermarriage with natives, while enduring great hardships and eking miserable livings.

The pattern continued for another 250 years (1237-1480), while the Mongols – who showed tolerance towards Christianity and other faiths – ruled Russia and the Balkans. Zarathushtis probably lost their religious identity, only after the violent con-

flicts between Russian Orthodox Patriarch Nikon, conservative priest Avvakum and Czar Alexis, shook Russia (1650-60). More might become known, when results of Soviet archeological work relating to their settlements in Russia, are made available to the world.

One can surmise that Zarathushtis in the Balkans met a similar fate, in the wake of increased Church domination and major political turmoil in the 16th century. Zoroastrianism's survival and growth in Hungary is suggested by the existence of rich Zarathushti texts and the surprising interest of its scholars in the faith, to this day.

A small band, a splinter of the original Balkan group, had settled in southeast Germany. Its descendants must have similarly increased in numbers, practiced the Zarathushti din for over five centuries against all odds, and eventually prospered. But they were also religiously assimilated, when Germany was engulfed in the 16th century by Lutheranism. Evidence of their presence emerged, when a prosperous old castle-residence was blown-up during World War I. Distinctive Zarathushti artifacts found in its ruins, included Zarathushtra's picture, utensils for homa ceremonies and implements for tending ceremonial fires. Carbon-dated to early 16th century, they lie in the museums in Leipzig and Dresden.

ZARATHUSHTIS IN INDIA

As in Europe, the diaspora which settled in Sanjan in 936, took nearly three centuries to gain a foothold. These settlers, and those who soon joined them from other parts of India, became known as the '*Parsis*'.

While little is written about their plight, their lives were apparently harsh. Being farmers in their homeland, they toiled as agricultural laborers. They probably also grew, including through intermarriages and raising their progeny as Zarathushtis, just as descendants of the diasporas to China and Europe did, by following the tradition of their Sasanian forebears. They continued to venerate the

deified Amesha Spentas and yazads, unlike their Iranian-co-religionists in these centuries. Laity and priests – who only had the '*sade*' Avesta (*Visperad*, *Khordeh Avesta*, and *Vendidad*) in these first 3 centuries – said their prayers and performed rites before their hearth fires. Religious knowledge was transmitted orally over the next six generations, on the basis of those texts. To minister to the laity's ritual needs, priests formed hereditary '*panthaks*' in small Gujar-

“ Those were dark and brutalizing centuries for Zarathushtis in Sasanian countries, and those who diasporaed from them.

But they tempered the Zarathushti character and burnished its many qualities ... ”

ati towns where Zarathushtis went in search of living. Pragmatically, the Gujarati language and dress were adopted and some rites, e.g. wedding ceremonies, adapted to the Hindu milieu in which they lived.

It was in the subsequent three centuries, that Parsis gained socio-economic foothold as small farmers, sellers of liquor, minor traders and members of petty professions. Only after 1200, did Neryosang Dhaval and other priests begin producing their masterly Pahlavi into Sanskrit translations of the Khordeh Avesta, Vendidad and post-Sasanian texts like *Ardah-Viraf-Nameh*, *Menod-i-Khrad*, *Shkand-Gumanig-Vijar*, brought to India by Iranian emigrants. Such works testify to careful pursuit of religious studies by this time. But being translations, not original compositions, they give little glimpse of religious beliefs of the diaspora's descendants.

These centuries coincided with the domination of India by external Muslim rulers. For the first time, the kingdoms in Gujarat – whose domain included Sanjan and neighboring regions now also inhabited by Zarathushtis – were invaded by the Sultanate in Delhi in 1297. Much Parsi blood, besides Hindu, was shed in this and subsequent invasions. Muslim

governors and local sultans ruled Gujarat thereafter. Religious intolerance began. Jizya was imposed, as a means of forcing conversions. Zarathushtis resisted, and many died. Sanjan's consecrated fire had to be hidden in the Bahrot Hills, and housed years later in Navsari village.

Muslim *Mogul* emperors began ruling India after 1526, from Delhi. And the proselytizing environment continued, except in Akbar's long reign when he abolished jizya and granted freedom of worship to all. Many Zarathushtis, along with Hindus, also died during the Mogul governors' frequent raids of Gujarat. The Portuguese appeared on the scene around this time. Now, Zarathushtis had to confront their proselytizing zeal for Christianity, along with that of the Moguls for Islam.

Contrary to popular Parsi belief, prosperity only dawned on them some 600 years, or 12 generations, after the diaspora settled in Sanjan. It did so, once they established trade with UK and Europe after the emissary of Queen Elizabeth I invited the Mogul Emperor Jehangir in early 16th century to open trade relations. Trading with China, Africa and south Asian countries followed. Parsis also began serving in English factories, established after 1661 in places like Surat.

Prosperity awakened their need for authentic information on religious matters. That led to an exchange, recorded as the '*Rivayats*', between the Parsis and Dasturs in Turkabad from 1478-1766. Amidst the chaos of their lives, the Iranian dasturs had honed their scholarship of Zoroastrian texts, particularly of post-Sasanian years, which Parsi priests did not even have.

Their superior knowledge cast enormous light on the faith's liturgy. The exchange shows deep Iranian and Parsi concern, not about the philosophical teachings of the religion, but its rites and rituals which they had come to regard as religion – even more so than they did in Arab times.

The one exception was the Iranian dasturs' responses to questions about the initiation of servants and slaves: their unambiguous advice was, that it was a Zarathushti responsibility to give information about the faith to 'juddins' and welcome them into the faith, if they chose it. But Parsi leaders and priests ignored it, in their concern to insulate the community from proselytization which reached its zenith under one of the last Mogul emperors, Aurangzeb (1658-1707). Most questions and responses in the Rivayats, however, focused on arcane details of Zarathushti liturgy, purification rites and rituals, e.g., Nirangdin and death ceremonies, or even whether the Avesta could be written with ink prepared by non-Zarathushtis.

IMPRINT OF THE DARK AGE ON THE RELIGION AND ITS FOLLOWERS

When the Safavids lost power in Iran (1736), British domination of India had begun. It provided an environment for the Parsis to prosper, and perpetuate the religion of Zarathushtra. Those in Iran had to endure another two harrowing centuries, to preserve it. Their co-religionists in Europe had meanwhile been religiously assimilated.

These were dark and brutalizing centuries for Zarathushtis in Sasanian countries, and those who diasporaed from them. But they tempered the Zarathushti character, and burnished its many qualities: resilience to bend and not break; fortitude to face adversities, with abiding faith in Ahura Mazda; will to fight oppression; standing-up for what one believes to be right; fierce independence of thought; and conviction that they will win in the end.

They also forged pragmatism. It was manifested time and again, in adapting Zarathushti social customs as well as religious rituals and personal rites, to ensure the faith's survival in unfavorable and alien environments.

Over these centuries, Zarathushtis went a step beyond asserting the concretized dualistic precepts of the Sasanian era over the abstract philosophical core of Zarathushtra's message. [Continued on page 35].

Despite extreme hardships and suffering, our Zarathushti forefathers had immense impact on the life of Iran as a Muslim nation and on events that shaped their history.

event 8 zarathushti influence in muslim iran

By Jamshid Varza

When I chose this subject to research and write an article I had underestimated the scope of the project. It is fair to say this subject could easily fill a large book. At every point of my research I found out how immense the presence of our Zarathushti forefathers had been throughout the life of Iran as a Muslim nation.

History of the Zarathushti din after the conquest of Iran by the Arabs is one of decline, as Mary Boyce wrote [*Zoroastrianism, its Antiquity and Constant Vigor*]: "It all started with a military defeat in Qadisiyya and later in Nihavand where Zarathushtis lost as a major world power. This was later followed by centuries of economic decline and forced conversions." The final blow was the loss of knowledge and information about our own heritage. Professor Jamsheed Choksy [*Conflict and Cooperation*] delivers a compelling detailed history of the decline of Zarathushtis from a powerful majority to an oppressed minority in their own fatherland.

Despite extreme hardships our Zarathushti forefathers had immense

influence on events which shaped their own history. Their beliefs and thoughts shaped ideologies and philosophies; their deeds placed them at places where they influenced the turn of major historical events. I shall write several important cases where I could positively identify the people and events.

Zarathushti influence on the Shah Nameh. We must first discuss the masterpiece of Persian epic poetry *Shah Nameh* composed by Firdowsi [left] during the 10th century. This work was originally started by Daqiqi, the young Zarathushti poet who was murdered by his own servant. Firdowsi included in his own *Shah Nameh*, the two thousand couplets composed by Daqiqi. The majority of *Shah Nameh's* contents are mythology and literature of ancient Persians;



the contents coincide with sections of the Yashts in Avesta. Professor Shahpur Shahbazi [*Firdowsi: A Critical Biography*] refers to the *Shah Nameh* of Abu Mansuri, a predecessor of Firdowsi. Abu Mansur, a patriotic Iranian from Tus (in Khorasan) claimed descent from the ancient House of

Godarz; he was a Shi'ite Muslim who chose many Zarathushti scholar-mobeds identified as Maak, son of Khorasan, Yazdandad son of Shapur, Mahoy Khorshed son of Bahram, Shadan son of Borzin to compose the Mansuri Shah Nameh.

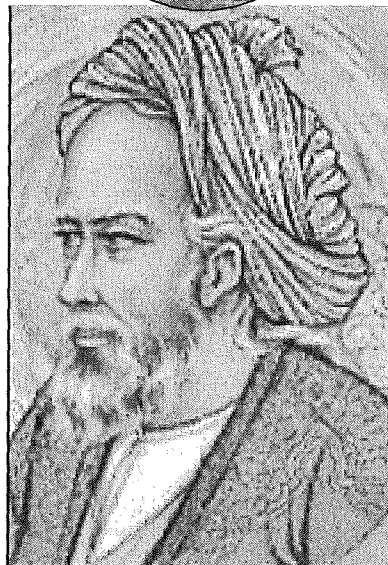
Zarathushtis work under Muslim cover.

French philosopher Henry Corbin, wrote [*The Voyage and The Messenger: Iran and Philosophy*]: The notion of Iranian Zarathushtis giving up their ideology at the point of a sword is a simple-minded one; it took over three centuries for Iranian cities to accept their new religion. During the first three centuries of Islam many Iranian Zarathushtis worked under the cover of a Muslim name. Ibn Moqaf'a, the scholar who translated many Pahlavi texts to Arabic was known to be Khordad-beh, a Zarathushti; so was Ibn Maskuyeh, the Iranian historian. A Zarathushti father who converted to Islam at his deathbed raised Mansur Ibn Hallaj, the founding father of Sufism, as a Zarathushti.

The profound influence of Zarathushti ideology can be seen in Suhrewardi's philosophical works, specially the Ishraqi School of philosophy. Suhrewardi's execution as a Muslim heretic leaves room for speculation on his belief, but one cannot deny his deep familiarity with Zarathushti ideologies.

Influence on Persian literature. Works of famous Persian poets like

Jalal ul'din Rumi, Hafiz, Farid ul'din Attar, Hatef Ispahani and others show indirect influences from Zarathushti ideology and literature. It is a general belief that Ibn Sina (Avicenna) trained Omar Khayyam, the famous poet, mathematician and philosopher.



Top, Maneckji Limji Hateria, c. 1880; below, Omar Khayyam.

Looking at the differences in the birth and death years of Ibn Sina (d. 1037) and Khayyam (b. 1048) it is apparent that this is incorrect. It was however Bahmanyar Marzban, a Zarathushti, and a student of Ibn Sina who educated Omar Khayyam. His influence can be seen in Khayyam's *Nouruz*

Nameh, a beautiful early Persian text describing the Zarathushti Nouruz ceremony in full detail. There are numerous other cases of Zarathushti influence on Persian literary masterpieces.

Influence on Iranian commerce. The Zarathushti population of Iran was estimated to be 40% of the total population at the beginning of the Safavid dynasty (1499-1722). With the rise of the Safavids, the fortunes of Zarathushtis in their heartland

declined. Massacres of Zarathushtis ordered by the last Safavid king, Sultan Hussein (1694-1722) led to the decline of the Zarathushti communities to a point of desperation. The great deeds of Maneckji Hateria with support from Parsi charities from Bombay, freed Iranian Zarathushtis from the dreaded *jizya* tax (the infidel tax) in 1882, and helped the community regain its social strength.

In the early 1900s, a generation of Iranian Zarathushtis who received their education in India returned home to Yazd and Kerman to help their co-religionists educate themselves and learn professional skills. This small community had an unusually high number of successful people.

Historical records from the central Iranian bank show that two trading houses built by Zarathushtis were successful to a point where each had a volume of export even higher than

“ Their (our Zarathushti forefathers') thoughts and beliefs shaped ideologies and philosophies; their deeds placed them where they influenced the turn of major historical events. ”

the central bank. These trading houses were the *Jamshidian* trading house, built by Arbab Jamshid and the *Jahanian* trading house built by the Jahanian brothers. Jahanian brothers even attempted to build the first bank before Iran had a central bank. In 1906 Zarathushtis gave financial aid and arms to help the Iranian constitutional movement succeed. *Fereidun Khosro*, the representative of Jahanian trading house in Tehran was known to deliver arms to constitutionalists. He was later murdered by the order of the king and the eldest brother in the Jahanian family was shot and killed, but the constitutional movement succeeded.

Zarathushti influence on the Pahlavi dynasty. Zarathushtis had a lot to do with the rise of *Reza Shah* and the *Pahlavi dynasty* (in 1925). *Ardeshirji Reporter* who came to Iran as a representative to oversee the Parsi charities in Yazd later resided in Tehran. According to his memoirs he used every opportunity to help Iranian politicians make independent decisions. In a gathering in Tehran at the home of *Arbab Jamshid* he was introduced to a young Iranian army officer

– Reza Khan. This friendship lasted for many years even through the years when Reza Khan was promoted to Sardar Sepah (minister of defense) and ascended to the throne. Ardeshirjee had a profound influence on shaping of Reza Shah's vision of modern Iran.

During the 1929 coup when Reza Shah overthrew the last Qajar king, the crown jewels of Iran were entrusted to a Zarathushti merchant - **Bahram Shah Jahan**, the youngest of the Jahanian brothers. Another influential Zarathushti during the reign of Reza Shah was **Arbab Keikhosrow** who had significant influence on political decisions made by Reza Shah.

Even after Reza Shah Pahlavi, Zarathushtis continued to exert influence in the social, political and economic life of Iran. ■

Jamshid Varza was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. Jamshid and his wife Mitra live with their two children, Roxanna and Cyrus in Palo Alto, California. Jamshid's recipe for improving the Zarathushti community involves three steps: Education, Education and more Education. He is founder of www.Vohuman.Org, a Zoroastrian educational institution.

Dark Ages ...

[Continued from page 33]. To them, the religion now instead meant the devout practice of its rites and rituals.

Despite their suffering, Iranians continued to believe, and still do, that doors must be kept open to any who chooses the Zarathushti din. Their dasturs even so advised the Parsis in the Rivayats. But the protective walls built in the 17th century to preserve the Parsis from being absorbed by the prevailing Muslim-Hindu frenzy, has since led many of them to believe that one has to be born to two Zarathushti parents to practice the religion of Zarathushtra. The seeds of this difference in belief, were thus sown between the co-religionists and it continues even today. ■

[References and biodata on page 30]

event

(1850-1950)

men who made a difference

By Farhang Mehr



MANECKJI LIMJI HATERIA (1813-1890) AND HIS PERSIAN WIFE

PHOTO: DR. FARHANG MEHR

Since the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century, Zarathushtis of Iran have suffered both direct and indirect genocide that may conveniently be labeled "genocide in disguise". In this paper, we are concerned only with the men who in hundred years (1850-1950), made a difference in the removal of suffering however partial and in the improvement of living conditions of Zarathushtis in Iran.

MANECKJI LIMJI HATERIA (1813-1890)

In 1796 an Iranian Zarathushti fled to India with his three daughters after being persecuted by Muslims. Fifty years later one of his grand daughters married Sir Dinshaw Petit, who persuaded him to take some actions to improve the lot of his coreligionists in Iran. In 1853, he founded the *Society for the Amelioration of the condition of Zoroastrians in Persia*; and created a Persian Zoroastrian Fund. The first delegate sent by the Society to Iran, in 1854 was *Maneckji Limji Hateria* [photo previous page] He served in Iran for forty years. In the early seventeenth century his ancestors had moved from Iran to India and engaged in trade. Manekji entered government service and had a reputation for devotion to his faith, meticulous honesty and great sense of responsibility.

Abolition of jizya. After traveling to Shiraz, Kerman and Yazd and investigating the living conditions of Zarathushtis, he reported their miseries and predicaments to the Society. In prioritizing the difficulties, he mentioned the *jizya* tax as the most evil and its abolition as the first imperative. With the help of Sir Henry Rawlinson, English ambassador to Iran, Manekji secured an audience with Nasser al-din Shah and managed to reduce the amount of *jizya* by 11%, although it was levied differently in Yazd and Kerman.

In the course of Nasser al-Din Shah's visit to Buckingham palace, London, in 1873, five prominent Parsis including Dadabhoy Naoroji met with the Shah and intervened in favor of Iranian Zarathushtis. The Shah promised to assist them, but did not take any action on his return to Iran. With perseverance of Manekji, and Sir Dinshaw's pressure through the Indian viceroy and English ambassador in Tehran, Nasser al-Din Shah finally issued the Royal Firman [on right] decreeing the abolition of *jizya* in 1882.

Thanks to Manekji Hateria, *jizya* was subsequently abolished for Zarathushtis as well as for Christians and Jews. However other humiliating treatments continued. Many occupations were forbidden to Zarathushtis, they had to wear the distinguishing badge, dismount the donkey if a Mussulman passed by, were publicly flogged if they wore white socks or trousers, and those charged with minor offenses had to stand on one

Translation of the Royal Firman decreeing the abolition of the jizya tax, in 1882:

"... amongst these are the Zarathushtis of Yazd and Kerman, who are descended from the ancient and noble race of Persia, and it is now our desire to make their peace and well-being more complete than before. That is why by this Royal Firman, we ordain and command that the taxes and imposts of the Crown, levied previously on our Musulman subjects of Yazd and Kerman, may be recovered in the same way from the Zarathushtis who reside there. In this manner the impost, which exacts from this community the sum of eight hundred and forty-five tomans, is abolished. And in commencement of this propitious year of the Horse, we make an abatement of this sum and free the Zarathushtis from it forever. We therefore order and command our Maustaufis and officers of the debt of the Royal Exchequer to remove it from the revenues which have been paid in by Yazd and Kerman. Moreover, in the tribute of the tithes and imposts on water and land, and for all trade duties, the Zarathushtis must be treated in the same manner as our other subjects."

leg before a mullah until they had paid considerable fines. Manekji tirelessly used his influence with governors in Yazd and Kerman until they had banned these restrictions.

Social reforms. Manekji was also instrumental in establishing schools, a new dokhma, a dar-e mehr, organizing group marriages between poor Zarathushti boys and girls and succeeded in getting Zarathushtis to give up animal sacrifices, hookah smoking and divorce. He was an educator, a philanthropist and a writer. He passed away in Tehran in February 1890.

ARBAB JAMSHID JAMSHIDIAN (1851-1933)

In the early twentieth century, *Arbab Jamshid Bahman Jamshidian* [photo next page, top] was the most prominent Zarathushti in Iran. Born in Yazd around 1860, he left for Borujerd in the province of Lorestan at the age of 11, and engaged in trade. With sufficient capital and experience, he moved to Tehran in 1880 and started an import-export business which flourished with branches in major cities and ports. He was one of the first Iranian merchants who used double entry accountancy.

He was the first modern banker in Iran, honest, trustworthy having good managerial skills. Inspired by his religious precepts, he was a righteous person who even Muslims treated with the highest respect. Even Nasser al-din Shah recognized him as such, and awarded him the honored title of *Rais al-Tojar*. He thereafter had easy access to the Shah, and used that privilege to remove many Zarathushti hardships and miseries.

Arbab Jamshid was probably able to influence the Persian Government more than the Parsis from Bombay. As no governor could stay in Yazd or Kerman, without his support, the complaints of Zarathushtis were always heeded.

His Benevolence. Arbab Jamshid's wealth was enormous. He owned extensive lands, with 4550 employees under him, and helped many Zarathushti businessmen, and entrepreneurs to advance. *Arbab Khaikhosrow Shahrokh*, who succeeded him as the leader of the community and member of Majlis, worked in his firm as a clerk and later as head clerk; and my father, *Mehraban Mehr* was an accountant in his firm. He was a paragon of generosity. Every week on a certain day, four to five hundred needy people stood in a row in his house and he personally gave them *bakhshesh*. Indeed Arbab Jamshid

was *Hatam-e Tai* of Iran. Jamshid Jam School in Tehran, a dokhma in Cham (near Yazd) and tracts of land were some of his other donations to the community.

Seat in the Majlis. Perhaps Arbab Jamshid's most lasting service was to secure a seat in the Majlis (Parliament) for the Zarathushti community, and consequently, for other religious minorities. In 1906 the revolution triumphed and the Constitution was ratified. In recognition of sacrifices of Zarathushtis, and Armenians, one seat was allocated to each of the three recognized religious minorities – Zarathushtis, Armenians and Jews.

However during the elections the hard line mullahs argued that religious minorities could not elect one of their own, but could only appoint a Muslim cleric to represent them. Armenians and Jews agreed and appointed Ayatollah Tabatabai. But Arbab Jamshid asked for a day of grace, saying that he had no authority to decide on the matter and had to consult his colleagues in Tehran Zarathushti Anjuman. Outside the Majlis Arbab Jamshid used his influence and contacts to change the political atmosphere.

The next day, Ayatollah Behbahani made the following statement in the Majlis: "Zarathushtis have an inherent right to the air, land and water of Iran; they are prudent and patriotic. Their co-religionists (the Parsis) abroad are highly educated and have a seat in the British Parliament. Zarathushtis of Iran should be allowed to have a representative of their own in Majlis." With the approval of the Majlis, a seat for Zarathushti community as well as for the Jews and the Christians was assured. Arbab Jamshid died in 1933 at the age of eighty-two.

ARDESHIR EDALJI REPORTER (1865-1933)

Ardeshir Edalji Reporter, known as *Ardeshirji* [photo right, below] a dignified, learned and dedicated Zarathushti, was the third representative of *The Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of Zoroastrians in Persia*, succeeding *Kaikhosru Tirandaz Khoorsand* [photo left, below] who died in 1893.

Ardeshirji served some forty years in Iran and married an Irani Zarathushti lady.

Establishment of Anjumans. His predecessor, Kaikhosrowji, had helped to found the first Zoroastrian Anjuman in Iran, at Yazd in 1892 at the request of Khodabeksh Bahram Rais, a leader of the Yazd Community. This was followed by anjumans in Kerman and Tehran. The anjuman was called '*Nasseri*', probably after obtaining the approval of Nasser aldin Shah. Ardeshirji regularly participated in meetings and guided them on how to make collective decisions democratically and effectively and keep records.

Establishment of schools. Ardeshirji believed that without improvement in the status of women in Iran and without education the future of Iran was doomed. With his encouragement and guidance the first *Women's Society* in Iran was formed. He also initiated efforts to raise funds for a foundation of a girls high school and a few years later, Anoushiravan Dadgar Girls' High School was founded. Keeping a low profile, Ardeshirji used his influence with the government to improve the lot of the Zarathushti community and took every opportunity to elevate religious education of Zarathushtis and to

enlighten Muslims about the religion, history and culture of ancient Iran.

Constitutional changes and quest for democracy. Ardeshirji was a liberal, and eager to help Iran progress. Although a British subject, he was an Irani Zarathushti at heart. His commission to Iran coincided with the uprising in Iran against royal despotism, cleric dogmatism and foreign imperialism. People asked for a constitutional monarchy and democracy. Ardeshirji helped this cause, even joining *Anjuman Azadikhahan Iran*, formed by twenty-seven prominent constitutionalists.

Ardeshirji was a leading political expert on the Middle East, a political officer in the British Embassy in Tehran and a professor at the School of Political Science in Tehran, as well as a representative and correspondent of the London Times for Iran. He was a linguist. Besides English, Persian, and Gujarati he spoke Arabic, Turkish, French and German and knew the Kurdish and Lori dialects. During the siege of 14,000 pro-constitutional Iranians in the British Embassy in Qolhak (a summer



resort), Ardeshirji was the liaison between the Iranians and the British government and instrumental in introducing Reza Khan to the British government as the most competent and patriotic military officer in Iran.

His valuable services included encouraging Pirnia to write his monumental four-volume book on Ancient

Iranian History, Dinshah Irani to write on the Zarathushti din, and its translation into Persian by Abdolhossein Spenta and making financial arrangements for Pour Davood to go to India and write his pioneering books on Avesta in Persian.

Ardeshirji was a mentor of many political leaders of Iran who praised him as an “encyclopedia of current politics of Iran” [*Hossein Ala*], “A man without whose help and wise guidance, the constitutional revolution would not have achieved its goals” [*Taqizadeh*], “A man motivated to use all his influence and potentialities to help Iran”, [*Hakim al-Mulk*]. British Ambassadors and political officers in Iran and India held similar opinions about him: “Ardeshirji had an unrivaled knowledge about Iran, and I used to listen to him as a teacher” [*Sir Reader Boulard*], “Ardeshirji knew Iran, inch by inch and appreciated Iranian psychology in depth; he was anxious to see a revival of their spirit and improvement of their lives” [*Sir Clarmont Skrine*]. Ardeshirji Edalji Reporter died in Tehran in 1933.

Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh (1874-1939)

Arbab Kaikhosrow Shahrokh [photo right] outstanding Iranian Zarathushti, was pivotal to many reforms that took place in Iran in the first thirty years of the 20th century. He was a leader who put the name of the Zarathushti community back on the map of Iran.

Establishments of schools. Born in Kerman in June 1874, Kaikhosrow Shahrokh moved to Tehran at the age of 12, studied in the American school for two years and then left for India. He continued his studies there with the help of Sir Dinshaw Petit, whose wife was a distant relative of his. Returning to Iran at the age of 19, he was appointed principal of the Zarathushti School in Kerman by the Amelioration Society, in which capacity he served for eleven years. During those years he helped set up

several elementary schools in various Zarathushti villages and a big national school in Kerman. He moved to Tehran in 1904 as a clerk, and then head clerk, in Arbab Jamshid’s commercial establishment.

At the community level he gave impetus to the Jamshid Jam School and persuaded Arbab Jamshid to donate its adjacent ground for expansion. He believed firmly in the importance of education for the future of the community. He started a girls’ school in a three-room house donated by Ardeshir Kaikhosrow Zareh. In 1913, he solicited donations from Bahramji Bikaji a benevolent Parsi gentleman on a visit to Iran for building an *adarian* (fire temple) in Tehran, on land belonging to the Zarathushti Anjuman.

In turn, Bahramji solicited donations from the Dubash sisters, for a girls’ school to be built in the name of their late brother, Iraj, on anjuman land adjacent to the adarian. The building of the adarian and Iraj school were both completed in 1919.

In 1931, *Bahram Bikhaji* visited Iran for a second time. He intended to build a school in Afghanistan in memory of his son Firooz, who had died during World War I. Arbab Kaikhosrow persuaded him to build that school in Tehran instead, on Anjuman land. He agreed. Thus Firooz Bahram high school for boys came into being. Finally there was a need for a modern school for girls. With valuable cooperation of Ardeshirji, Dinshaw Irani and Col. Mehrwan Irani, Lady Ratanbai Tata (originally from Navsari) donated funds in memory of her father, Anoushiravan. The Firooz

Bahram and Anoushiravan-e Dadgar high schools are both so prestigious academically that Reza Shah preferred to send his younger son and daughter to study in these schools.

Arbab as a National figure. After one term in the Majlis, Arbab Jamshid refused to stand for the reelection in 1907. He recommended Arbab Kaikhsrow to be the Zarathushti representative. The latter was elected and held that position until 1939 - the time of his death. In 1907, Kaikhosrov was elected to the Tehran Zarathushti Anjuman and two years later became its president – a position he held for thirty-one years

Arbab Kaikhosrow was a national figure, trusted and respected by Iranians of every creed as well as by foreigners

who had known him in their political or advisory capacities in Iran. He was charismatic, wise and endowed with exemplary integrity, critical appraisal and tact. Arbab Kaikhosrow was innovative and showed great managerial ability at national and communal levels. Ayatollah Modares, a highly regarded Mojta-hed and a liberal visionary deputy



Keikhosrow Shahrokh [photo: *Shahrokh and Writer, Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh*]

in Majlis, once said in its plenary session: “If there is one Mussulman in Majlis, he is Arbab Kaikhosrow”.

The most drastic and revolutionary measure engineered by Arbab Kaikhosrow was the replacement of the *dokhma* by a cemetery. His arguments in favor of this measure were: (a) that there was a lack of reliable evidence in religious literature for dakhma as the only method of disposing of a corpse; (b) that the existence of the tombs of Cyrus the

Great, Darius and others showed that dead bodies could be buried; and (c) that the expansion of Tehran city and the disappearance of vultures had made the government anxious about issues of hygiene and pollution. Hence, in 1935 he purchased a large piece of land, Ghasr-e Firouzeh, in north Tehran for the project. The community was divided on the matter. Finally through persuasion and clout, Arbab Kaikhosrow prevailed. Cemeteries were created in Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan. In Yazd and Kerman, dokhmas remained along with newly built cemeteries.

The enactment of a law in 1928 that religious minorities should be governed by their religious codes in matter of personal law, namely marriage, divorce, inheritance, will and child adoption was another achievement of Arbab Kaikhosrow.

To write about all of Arbab Kaikhosrow's achievements, at the national level, would need a space far beyond the space allocated for this article. I confine myself to recording some of them. In Majlis in addition to being a deputy, he was head of the Audit Department, the Parliamentary Press, the Library and supervised all Administrative Departments. In 1908 Arbab Kaikhosrow was invited to fix the telephone company which was in disarray, which he did successfully managing to streamline its operation into an automatic system. He was made its managing director for several years. In 1914 he was asked to help in celebrating the coronation of Ahmad Shah, and again in 1924 for the coronation of Reza Shah.

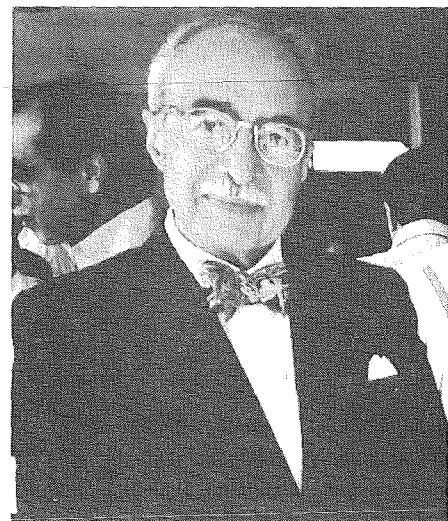
In the famine of 1917-18, Arbab Kaikhosrow was authorized by the prime minister to supervise the operation for the purchase, storage and distribution of grain. In 1926 he supervised the millennium anniversary, and the construction of the Firdowsi Mausoleum. He concluded Iran's first barter agreement with Sweden, represented Iran in taking delivery of the "Across the Country Railway System" built by a Swedish company.

Months before it was rejected in the Majlis, Arbab Kaikhosrow was the first person to protest the humiliating Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919 which would have made Iran a de-facto colony, and in 1921 was the first to protest in the Majlis, the shift of the royal treasury and pressured for its return. Arbab Kaikhosrow died (or was murdered) in 1939. ■

[Photos from M. M. Murzban, *The Parsis in India, 1917, unless specified otherwise*].

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Farhang Mehr has degrees in law and economics from Tehran University, LLM from London University Ph.D. from Southampton University, and a LLD (honoris causa) from University of Pennsylvania. He served as governor for Iran in OPEC, held ministerial positions deputy/acting Minister of Finance and deputy Prime Minister in the old regime. He has a long academic career, including Chancellor of Pahlavi (Shiraz) University. Currently, he is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at Boston University. Prof. Mehr served 16 years in Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman, 12 years as president. He is a life member of WZO, ZAGBA, ZA and several other Zoroastrian associations. He has authored 10 books and over a hundred articles, and given numerous TV and radio interviews.

Walking Together

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100 yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish, to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy, who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said: "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: what matters in life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others, even if it means slowing down and changing our course. *We need to change our hearts.*

- Submitted by Rusi Sorabji

1300 years of living in India, first as religious refugees settled in Gujarat, permitted to practice their religion and retain their religious-ethnic distinctiveness, and then as a socio-political minority in British and post-independent India, the Parsi Zarathushtis of India have developed into a distinct branch of the Zarathushti family.

Starting from the historical promise to Jadiv Rana in 936 CE to their involvement in the independence movement, many events took place, both at the religious and communal levels that have gradually molded the Parsi persona from a purely religious identity to a socio-ethnic one. Faithful to their promise, throughout the second millennium, even under changed circumstances, Zarathushtis have maintained their religious exclusivity and ethnic distinctiveness which together with their voluntary acceptance of British education and secular value systems resulting in outstanding achievements and contributions in India, has reinforced their self-perception of elitism even under changing socio-political structures.

With the passing of political power in post-independent India, from the educated elite to the general populace, the Parsis began to lose their economic and socio-political influence, and their identity as a 'people'. They had never identified themselves with the Indians except for a few intellectual giants like Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Jamsheji Tata, etc. they had practiced selective assimilation creating the impression that Parsis are from India but not of India.

With the advent of western scholars in the 18th century, and their challenge to the faith, the ineffectiveness of the priesthood to defend it, tensions resulting from westernization and social mobilizations, the disparity between the 'orthodox', the 'progressives', the rise of off-shoots of Ilm-e-Khshnoon, Pundolites, the diminishing role of religion in their daily lives, together with the rise in the practice of following the popular divinities of the times, Sai Baba, Meher Baba, etc, the religious identity of the Parsis began to be reshaped by the break-up of their communal identity.

This chapter will trace the development of the Parsi identity through the arrival at the shores of India, the rise of industrial, educational and political giants, the advent of western scholars, the birth of religious off-shoots, events which have shaken the religious and social fabric of the community, to the seeds of neo-zoroastrianism planted through dissemination of religious education. The question which remains to be answered in the third millennium, is whether the Parsi identity, tempered by the socio-political fabric of India, will begin to blend with the emerging global Zarathushti identity or will it remain apart, in spite of its diminishing numbers, and try to dominate the world scene, holding on to the promise to Jadiv Rana, a millennium ago.

Dolly Dastoor, Guest editor

Environmental forces influence all life forms, especially humans with highly developed social and emotional attributes. After the fall of the Sasanian empire, Zarathushtis who stayed in Iran, were influenced by Arab, Turk, Mongol, and Afghan cultures, while those who migrated to Hindustan, were impacted by Hindus and Muslims over the course of centuries.

However, circumstances and motivations of Zarathushti migration to India, their intrinsic character, compatible culture of Hindus, and non-equal association with the British, all played a part in limiting outside influences and preserving their ethno-religious identity through the last millennium.

Migration to India. After the fall of the Sasanians (weakened after Khusro II, by internal strife between princes, instigated by their foreign mothers) and 300-year resistance to Arabs, one group of Zarathushtis journeyed from Khorasan to the port of Hormuz, and from there sailed to the island of Diu. After 19 years there, they ultimately settled on the west coast of India in the land of Hindu Silhara king, Vajjad-deva, known as *Jadiv Rana*, around 936 CE. Jadiv Rana made 5 conditions for accepting the Parsis:

- (1) The leader of the Parsis should explain their customs – which ones are open and which are concealed.
- (2) Parsis must adopt the language of the realm of Hind.
- (3) Parsi women should dress like the local ladies.
- (4) Parsis must not carry their weapons anywhere.
- (5) Weddings must be performed after sunset.

The High Priest of the Parsis accepted the conditions, saying [*Kisseh Sanjan 164*]: "Hame Hindustan ra yar bashim" (We shall be friends of all India). This promise was not limited to Jadiv Rana, but to all of India. Parsis have always kept their promise.

Impact on ethno-religious identity. The main motivation for migration

Name in 1415, **Dinidas Bahman** translated Pahlavi-Pazand Ashirvad into Sanskrit in 1415, **Aka Adhyaru** composed sixteen Sanskrit shlokas on religious tenets of Parsis, **Bahman Kekobad** composed *Kisseh Sanjan* in 1600, and **Mobed Rustam Peshotan Hamajyar** of Surat wrote Gujarati poetry, *Virafnameh* (1651), *Zartoshtnameh* (1675), and *Syavashnameh* (1680).

As time passed and new generations of Zarathushtis were born and raised in their adopted land, the community's psyche changed from that of a refugee full of caution, worry and apprehension, to that of confidence and curiosity to try new professions and ventures.

In accepting the protection of the Hindu kings, the Parsis did acquire a certain degree of Indianization, but despite long residence in India a total assimilation has never taken place. However the outward manifestations to the promises given to the Jadiv Rana are still in evidence today.

Contact with British in India. Lack of dogma and superstitious beliefs, the observance of cleanliness, literacy, and willingness to learn western science, technology and the English language, led the Parsis to develop trusted relations with the British all of which gave them a privileged position.

Parsis achieved their zenith financially and used their wealth to build religious facilities and sponsor religious ceremonies by priests who were well-compensated. They sent emissaries to Iran to help alleviate the suffering of their co-religionists, building schools, temples and other facilities, and successfully petitioning removal of the *jizya* tax. They wore western dress, took English last names, and learned English music and arts.

Honesty and work ethic made Parsis trusted advisors to local rulers, Mus-

lims and Hindus, as well as to the Dutch, French and British. They served as administrators, revenue officers, judicial officers, brokers, and agents. Their openness to western education helped them to become leaders in banking, law, ship-building, medicine, watch-making, engineering and all areas of industry.

My great-grandfather, **Pestonji Bhujwala** was assistant to the Maharaja of Kutch, and built a Daremeher and Dharamsala in Bhuj, and my maternal great-grandfather, **Hirjibhai Wadia**



Iranshah Atash Bahram, originally established by Dastur Nersiosang Dhaval on arrival in Sanjan, was moved after 600 years to Navsari, and thence, in 1742, was installed at its present location in Udvarda. [Photo: Marzban Giara, Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples.]

served the Maharaja of Porbandar and established businesses there.

Western technology and proficiency in Gujarati, made Parsis the pioneers in Gujarati printing and journalism. In 1812, **Fardunji Marzbanji** established the first Gujarati printing press and **Pestonji Motivala** started Jame Jamshed Press in 1829. Parsis pioneered Gujarati drama, starting with ancient Iranian epics, such as, Rustom and Sohrab in

1853, later staged Urdu and Hindi dramas, in India and abroad. Parsis also played key roles in the struggle for independence of India. They helped establish the Indian National Congress, with leaders like **Dadabhy Naoroji**, **Mancherjee Bhowmagaree**, **Shapurjee Saklatvala**, and **Madame Cama**. They protested injustice perpetrated by the British and fought for reforms in India.

One of the negative aspects of British influence was the inferiority complex developed by some Parsis towards their religion and rituals, and lowering of their work ethic. They looked at rituals as old-fashioned, and not knowing the meanings of prayers, they left it to the priests. From the 1800s some Parsis have opposed western influence in the guise of modernity and liberalism, acceptance of intermarriages, and attempts to categorize some scriptures and rituals as pagan. They are organized and play a key role in preserving traditions. There is also an organized liberal section led by intermarried Parsis.

Wealthy Parsis retained their virtue of charity and donated generously to the needy of all communities, including subsidized housing. Shortage of affordable housing in Bombay, adds to resistance to religious conversion and intermarriages in modern India, from the concern that poor people of other communities might convert and

intermarry to take advantage of subsidized housing and charities.

Migration, motivated by economic opportunities rather than religious persecution, is depleting Zarathushti populations of India and Iran, but they continue the traditions which hold a strong attachment in their consciousness and psyche. The community has established temples and associations in western [continued on page 45]

event **10**

arrival on indian soil (936 CE)

By Maneck Nawroji Bhujwala

Exploring the impact and significance of the arrival of the diaspora in India, and how this momentous event shaped Zarathushti history, psyche and identity.

was to preserve the religion. Zarathushtis built a settlement, known as Sanjan (named after a town in the district of Khwaf in Khorasan) which included a temple with consecrated fire, and started working as farmers, weavers, traders, carpenters, artisans, and warriors.

One of the characteristics of Zarathushti migrants was their willingness to be practical and adapt to needed changes that did not impact their religion. Realizing the advantage of knowing the local language (Gujarati) for communication, local dress (sari) for general acceptance in local assemblies, and even adopting local names (usually last names to indicate professions) the Parsis readily adapted. This can also be seen in their associations with Muslim and British rulers and officials, with names like Mirza, Khan, Boyce, Cooper, Engineer etc.

Gradually, the laity forgot the Persian language, although almost half of Parsi Gujarati words are Persian. Some Gujarati words are also used in religious terminology, such as 'uthamana' (to leave).

Some believe that Parsis promised not to convert Hindus, and that is the reason for restricting entry to temples. However, in *Kisseh Sanjan [195-201]*, we read that Parsis requested the king for land to build their temple and to keep non-Parsis out of that area in order that sacred ceremonies for consecrating the temple fire could be effectively done. Non-conversion is therefore more likely a common belief of their Aryan ancestors.

Adopting the Hindu caste system, Parsis may have restricted marriages within their community. But this may be another normal practice in Iran, e.g. the inscription of Darius the Great: "I am a Parsa, son of a Parsa ... I am a Arya, son of a Arya ..." showing pride in his race and province. The custom of dowry paid by the bride's parents is however influenced by Hindus, because in old Iran it was the bride-

groom who gave gifts to the bride before marriage.

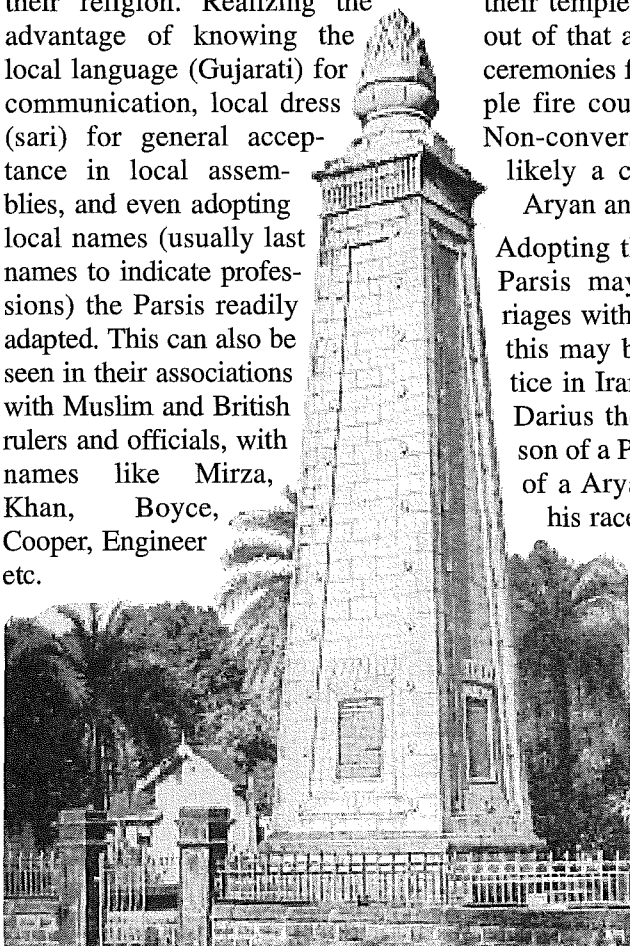
Some aspects of engagement and wedding ceremonies are attributed to Hindus, such as the use of red pigment and coconuts. But others such as throwing of rice are ancient Iranian customs. In the *Shah Nameh*, Firdowsi mentions this custom when describing the wedding of Iranian king Zal ("akik va zabarjad bar afshandan"). The religious part of the marriage ceremony was preserved intact, except for some passages of benedictions (*ashirwad*) repeated in Sanskrit, for the understanding of Hindu kings and courtiers.

The fact that earliest groups of Zarathushtis came to India with priests, and their temple called Iranshah [photo next page] was established soon after arrival, indicates the key role played by priests in continuing the religious ceremonies and customs. When Parsis spread to other areas of Gujarat, the priests followed and established panthaks in Sanjan (Sanjanas), Navsari (Bhagarias), Surat (Godavras), Bharuch (Bharuchas) and Cambay (Khambattas). This helped in preservation of religious tradition through the millennium.

Hindu hospitality enabled visitors from Iran to enrich and encourage local Parsi writers. *Mardan-farrokh*, author of *Shkand-gumanik Vichar*, came to India in the early 10th century, *Mobed Rustam Meherawan* came after 1269, and his great grand-nephew, *Mobed Meherwan Kai-khushro* came in 1321.

Although Parsi history in the early centuries after arrival in India is almost blank, important notes and references have been preserved in numerous manuscripts written by Parsi priests. Further, commemorative tablets found on walls of religious places from ruined structures also provide important information.

Local Parsis, like *Mobed Neryosang Dhaval*, transcribed into Pazand and translated into Sanskrit, Avesta-Pahlavi texts around 1166, *Rana Kamdin* wrote in Gujarati, *ArdaViraf*



The Sanjan Memorial Column, erected in 1920 to commemorate the historic landing in 936 CE.



role and influence of bombay parisi punchayet (Estd. 1681)

By Framroze K. Patel

The institution of the punchayet has played a very significant and positive role in the life of Parsi Zarathushtis growing up in India, taking care of our own “from the cradle to the grave.”

If you were a Parsi growing up in India, you are well aware of the influence of the punchayet and are familiar with the phrase “the Parsi Punchayet takes care of the community from cradle to grave”. In a literal sense this is not an exaggeration. The institution of punchayet is unique to Indian society. The word punchayet means “a group of five”. A bellwether Indian village consisting of various castes, classes, and faiths, introduced a unique system for resolving problems arising between citizens at the village level. The villagers elected five (*panch*) elders to adjudicate disputes and dispense justice in religious matters. These five elders also functioned as a City Council and took over administrative responsibilities.

Origin Of Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Among more than one hundred Parsi punchayets, two institutions stand out as premier institutions affecting the life of over eighty-percent of the Zarathushti population of India: Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP). The BPP is one of the oldest functioning trusts. It traces its origin back to the second half of 17th century. According to Sapur F.

Desai [*History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, 1977*]: “The birth of the BPP can be placed any where between 1672 and 1675”, making this august body therefore even older (by over a hundred years) than the United States of America.

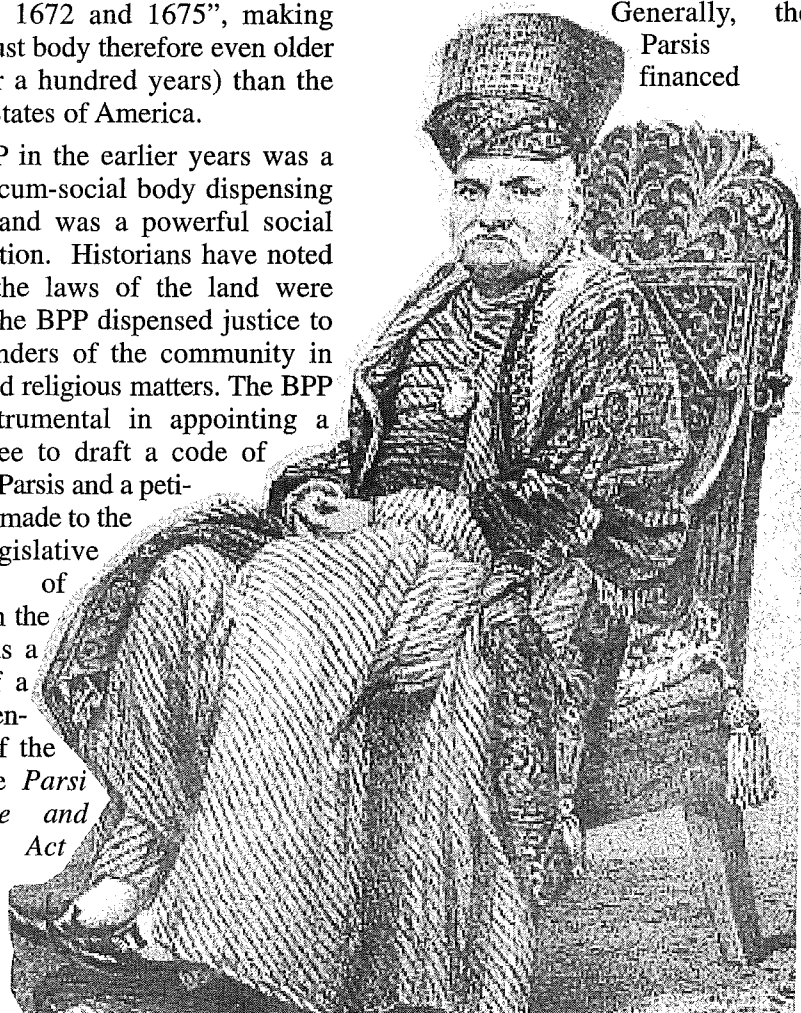
The BPP in the earlier years was a judicial-cum-social body dispensing justice, and was a powerful social organization. Historians have noted that if the laws of the land were absent, the BPP dispensed justice to the offenders of the community in social and religious matters. The BPP was instrumental in appointing a committee to draft a code of laws for Parsis and a petition was made to the then Legislative Council of India. In the 1860s, as a result of a recommendation of the BPP, the *Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act*

and *The Parsi Succession Acts* were enacted.

Until the 1820s, eighteen persons, of whom six were of the priestly class and the laity, managed the affairs of the BPP. The first trustees were appointed during the 1820s, and one of the trustees was Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, the first Baronet [*see photo below, from “History of the BPP by Sapur Desai*]. The maxim of all punchayets, is to “serve the community.”

Trust funds. The main function of Parsi Punchayets is to maintain and manage various trust funds and properties established for religious and charitable purposes, to ameliorate the condition of poor Parsis in general and to do such other acts as might be conducive to the well being of the Parsis. For example, at one time the SPP was responsible for managing high schools, boys’ and girls’ orphanages, a technical high school, a hospital, an infirmary, a senior citizen home, fire-temples, and *Doongerwadi*.

Generally, the Parsis financed





Trustees and secretaries at a Board Meeting of the BPP. Current BPP chair Jamshed Guzder is second from right.

[Photo: History of BPP by S. Desai]

charities through two types of trusts. One was managed by private family trusts, such as Petits, Wadias and Tatas. Wealthy families financed the trusts and family members managed the affairs of these trusts. The other type consists of individual donors entrusting the funds and its management to respective punchayets.

All private trusts and punchayets in India are closely scrutinized by the state's Charity Commissioners. The reporting of each trust fund is far more rigid and elaborate than in the USA. Changes in the original trust deed require permission of the highest judiciary state court. In most cases, the trust deed does not permit the use of the original amount donated, viz the corpus. That is the primary reason you have heard why the punchayet cannot do something even though they have so much money available. The point is that if the original donor in 1890 established a trust fund to educate children of the priestly class for higher education, say in liberal arts, that fund cannot entertain an application for Business or Law school.

The bellwether Parsi Punchayets managed multiple funds, such as:

Education, Housing, *Baj* (to perform prayers on death anniversaries), *Kathi* (to keep the fire burning in fire temples at all times) *Vidhva Chawl* (to provide a safety net for widows by providing residence at a very inexpensive rent), *Anaj* (Food Assistance), Critical Assistance, Medical Dispensary, Doongerwadi, etc. Most of the punchayets were responsible for maintenance of Doongarwadis and its related functions, including providing financial assistance on a monthly basis to professional pallbearers.

Cradle To Grave: a sort of socialism: Let us see what role the Parsi Punchayet played in the daily life of a typical Parsi family in Bombay, Surat or Ahmedabad. A child is born, probably in a hospital run and financed by a Parsi charity. After a few days, the child gets medical assistance at a Parsi hospital. The child is seven years old when his or her navjote ceremony is performed in a hall maintained by a Parsi charity fund. The family is not well off financially, hence the child attends a secondary school financed and maintained by the Punchayet. Let us further assume

that the child is from a priestly class, so he is sent to the *Madressa*, a school that imparts religious and liberal arts education. The child is ready for higher education. He or she gets a loan scholarship from the various trust funds to pursue higher education both in India and abroad. If he is lucky, he might get a free scholarship where he is not obligated to repay the principal amount.

Now the scholar returns from abroad and is ready to settle down. He gets a beautiful Zarathushti partner and gets married at a Parsi *baug*. The "foreign-returned" hero who has a higher degree in medicine then joins the Bombay Parsi General Hospital staff and tries to pay back to the community that was so generous to him. His wife has an advanced degree in education, so she works at a Parsi financed high school.

The parents of this couple are now getting old and need medical care, so they obviously go the hospital managed by a Parsi charity. The uncle is quite old and unable to take care of himself, so he is sent to the Infirmary where he passes his declining years praying five times a day. The grandmother, who became a widow at an early age, wants to maintain her independence and stays at the Widows' Chawl, maintained, of course, by a Parsi charity, and gets monthly financial assistance from the Anaj Fund. The grandfather is very religious and expressed the desire that he not be cremated, and that a four-day ceremony be performed. Where else would he receive a proper Zarathushti last rites ceremony, except at Doongerwadi?

Unique system. This system is unique to us Parsis – the community taking care of its fellow religionists without any government support! During the framing of the Indian Constitution in early 1950s, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to recognize the Parsi community as a minority. To the credit of our community leaders, they politely

declined the suggestion. Why? Because we Parsis knew how to care for our community on our terms. The institution of the Panchayet has played a very significant and positive role in our lives. ■

[Framroze K. Patel's photo and bio-data are on page 11].

Diaspora in India ...

[Continued from page 40] countries and bravely marches on with different views on preserving the faith and identity.

Zarthushtis can use their common loyalty to Prophet Zarathushtra, and their excellent networking, to get religious education, and work out solutions that balance the need to adapt with preservation of traditional identity in the new millenium. ■

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

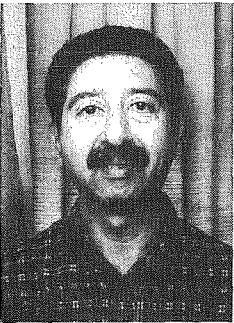
[1] Dasturji H. Mirza, *Outlines of Parsi History*.

[2] Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*.

Maneck Bhujwala has an MS (EE) from the University of New Mex-

ico and an MBA from San Jose State University. He is currently a software manager, married to Mahrukh and has a daughter, Shehnaz. In 1974, Maneck

co-founded the Zoroastrian Association of California (in Los Angeles) and in 1980, the Zarthushti Anjuman of Northern California, receiving a pledge from Arbab Rustom Guiv for seed money for a Daremeher in San Jose, and served on the executive committees. He teaches religious classes at the Daremeher and at schools and colleges, and is on the board of Campus Ministries at Stanford. Maneck was trained by NAMC to become a mobed-yar and performs basic ritual ceremonies for the community.



event **12** Education is a major factor in developing the ethno-religious identity of the Zarathushti of the future.

cheerful yesterdays confident tomorrows

By Nadir Ardeshir Jivanji Modi

Honoring our past is a matter of foundational importance.

There is nothing that solidifies and strengthens a community like thinking on its past – whether that past is recorded in its religious and cultural books or embodied in its customs, institutions and monuments. We must, study our past wisely, if we want to guide our future wisely for as T.S. Eliot has told us: “Time Past and Time Present are contained in Time Future.”

To deal better with the present and prepare better for the future, we need to educate ourselves, we need to study, evaluate and honor our past – including our past greats.

DR. SIR JIVANJI MODI (1854 - 1933)

These past greats include my grandfather Shums-UI-Ulma Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi.

In his intense activities, international approach and combination of the priestly and the pragmatic, Jivanji was essentially a 21st century man, who was born in the 19th century and died in the 20th century. He was born in a world of British supremacy and died on the threshold of a world in the grips of American supremacy.

Jivanji followed the family profession and became a practicing mobed. Unlike most mobeds he could not confine himself to prayers and rituals. He “took all knowledge to be his province”. He embarked on a life of continual scholarship, authorship and public speaking, par-

ticularly in the fields of Zarathushti religious knowledge and education.

Faith and knowledge in shaping identity. Jivanji knew the truth of Shakespeare’s words in Hamlet:

**My words fly up,
My thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts
Never to heaven go”.**

Jivanji realized that on faith alone religion runs a one-legged race. Faith and knowledge combined make it a two-legged race.

Zarthushtis today need a synthesis of **faith** and **knowledge**. Jivanji foresaw and catered to this need. Till today, his *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsis* is a recognized classic on the subject – which Dasturji Firoze Kotwal and Prof. Dr. Jamsheed Choksy are revising and updating.

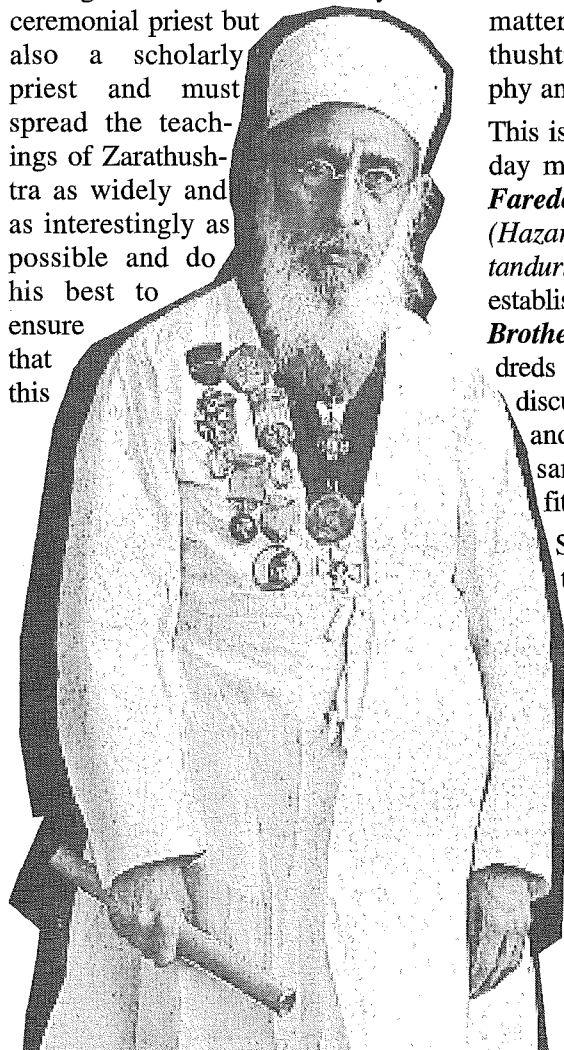
Jivanji was a harbinger of the future. In the days when practicing Parsi priests hardly went for any Western education he became one of the first students of the Elphinstone College, Bombay University – which later conferred on him the Honorary Degrees of Ph.D and LLD.

In his *Moral Extracts from Zoroastrian Books* (which Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia is currently enlarging) Jivanji included sections on **toil** (industry) and **tranquility** (self-control) side by side. Here again Jivanji set the pattern which 21st century Zarathushtis would do well to follow: *continuous toil amidst continuous tranquility*.

On change. In communal and religious matters Jivanji believed with

Edmund Burke that “when it is not necessary to change, it is not necessary to change”. He equally believed that where change is necessitated it would be foolish not to move with the times. Like King Canute, he knew the futility of commanding time or tide to go back. In his *Dante Papers* where Jivanji deals with the *Ardaviraf Nameh*, Jivanji tells us in effect that the wise must realize that on one hand there can be no progress without change and on the other that all change is not progress. We of the 21st century need the same wise balance and can hardly ask for a better guideline to follow.

Education and the evolving identity of mobeds. Jivanji knew that in the interests of the Zarathushti community, a good priest must be a good missionary and a visionary. He knew that a good mobed must not only be a ceremonial priest but also a scholarly priest and must spread the teachings of Zarathushtra as widely and as interestingly as possible and do his best to ensure that this



knowledge takes root in the minds and hearts of Zarathushtis and blossoms in their thoughts, words and actions wherever they may be.

“ ... “when it is not necessary to change, it is not necessary to change”. He equally believed that where change is necessitated it would be foolish not to move with the times ... the wise must realize that on one hand there can be no progress without change and on the other that all change is not progress. ”

Over a century ago, Sir Jivanji realized that in the world of the future the Zarathushti priest would need to concentrate not only on prayers, ceremonies and ‘*tarikats*’ (customs and traditions) but would also need to focus on educating the public in all matters connected with the Zarathushti religion, its ethics, philosophy and history.

This is precisely what those modern-day munificent princes of charity – *Faredoon* and *Mehraban Zartoshty* (*Hazar Saal der bedar, shaad bedar-tandurust bedar*) did five years ago by establishing in Bombay, the *Zartoshty Brothers Fund*, through which hundreds of religious talks, seminars and discussion groups have been held in and around Bombay and thousands of Zarathushtis have benefited.

Sir Jivanji knew and stressed that to educate the public the priests must first educate themselves. The knowledge which Sir Jivanji accumulated, his own scholarship, the hundreds of talks he gave in India and abroad and the books and articles which poured out of his pen, impressed, enthused and affected both the *athor-*

nans (priests) and the *behdins* (laity). The *athornans*’ morale was increased by a leader of his calibre. He made them realize that they were the officers of the community in religious and spiritual matters and believed as Napoleon said, “There are no bad soldiers, there are only bad officers”. In his time every aspiring scholar and priest dreamed of walking in his footsteps. The laity profited by Sir Jivanji’s wise advice and guidance in matters individual and communal as exemplified in the building of the Khareghat Colony, of the

Sanjan *Sthambh* [photo page 41] and of a number of institutions where extant marble slabs bear testimony to his involvement.

Future directions for the identity of the community. Coming to the boundary between the present and the future, adapting the words of Charles Dickens we ask ourselves: For our community is this the best of times or the worst of times? Is this an age of wisdom or an age of foolishness? Is this an epoch of belief or an epoch of incredulity? Is this an age of light or an age of darkness? Is this the spring of Hope or is this the winter of Despair? The answers my friends, as the old song goes are “blowing in the wind”. For working out these answers we need to remember that:

- A community remains a community by communing with each other on matters of communal concerns—the oftener, the friendlier, and the deeper, the better for the community and the individuals concerned;

- The foundations of our community are its religion and culture. The deeper we lay these foundations in our personal lives, the higher and stronger the superstructure we will be able to raise on them; and last but not least;

Synthesizing faith and knowledge: Dr. Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Legion d’Honneur (1854 - 1933). [Photo: History of BPP - Sapur Desai]

● Whatever we are doing, we Zarathushtis must (diamond-like) always make up in quality what we lack in quantity.

The Zarathushti community which has fared so well in the age of British supremacy is now faced with the challenge of doing even better in the age of American supremacy. We must not only prosper as individuals but also as a community.

Wise communal leaders try to foresee what time is thus bringing about and try both to protect and shape the community's institutions, traditions, values and practices at the grassroots communal levels all over the world, to cope with the changes that are silently but assuredly taking place and will continue to take place. The unwise are those who bring nothing constructive to the process. The unwise greatly endanger the future of our community by leaving important questions to be fought out between people who ignorantly clamor for change on the one hand and people who are in ignorant opposition to change on the other.

We, who claim Cyrus and Darius amongst our predecessors can also build for the future, if not in awe-inspiring stone monuments, in monuments of our individual lives and of our communal life, as beneficially, as wisely and as graciously as Cyrus and Darius had done in their time on earth.

Atha Jamyat yatha Afrinami – May it happen as we pray. ■

Dr Nadir Ardeshir Modi is a *navar* and *martab* from Navsari, and an advocate of the Supreme Court of India, specializing in Civil and Criminal law. He is the author of several legal and literary publications, professor of English Literature, of Mercantile Law and in the post-graduate Law faculty. He is chairman of several *agiary* trust Funds, and the Zartoshty Brothers (Canada) Fund Committee for regional lectures of Zoroastrian religion and culture. He is the trustee of the Athornan Mandal which manages the Dadar Madressa for young Zarathushti *mobeds*.

event **13**

stalwards of parsī industry

By Noshir H. Dadrawala

Parsi pioneers of industry have left a legacy of values – of honesty, enterprise, sharing, concern, development and progress. These, more than material wealth, are the real contributions of our illustrious ancestors.

The spirit of enterprise. ‘Corporate social responsibility’ was a concept pioneered by Parsi industrialists and widely practiced long before ‘management gurus’ sanctified it and placed it on a pedestal. Today, it is widely recognized that industry is not only a vital element of technological progress, but more importantly, it is a component of social change – a fact the Parsi pioneers of industry were quick to grasp.

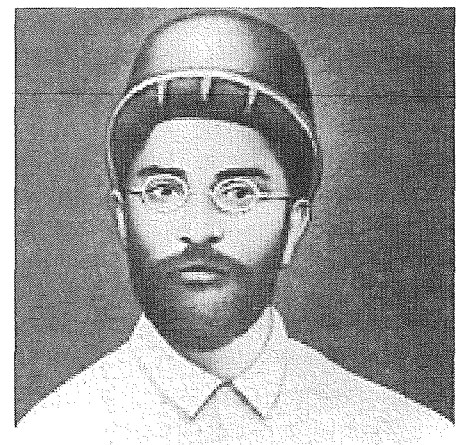
The driving force behind a Parsi's spirit of enterprise, not to forget charity that follows close behind, is his religious ethos. From a religious point of view, Parsis consider poverty, suffering, disease and want, as an affliction of evil and to remove them is not only a religious duty and part of Parsi culture; depriving evil of sustenance is an act of spiritual merit. If Christ asked his followers to love their neighbors, Zarathustra asked his followers to attain happiness by making others happy [Ys. 43.1].

Many religious traditions, directly or indirectly, have looked down upon wealth and its acquisition. Orthodox

Christians believe “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven”. Hindus consider wealth as ‘*maya*’ (illusion) which leads to bondage. Parsis, on the other hand, consider wealth to be fundamentally positive, provided it is acquired through righteous means and used for righteous purposes.

The contribution of Parsi industrial houses to the development of the community and country is too vast and varied for justice in a short treatise. The Pahlavi *Dinkerd* recommends cultivation of five virtues which are of religious merit: (1) truthfulness, (2) charity, (3) skill, (4) endeavor, (5) giving encouragement to others in good deeds. These virtues were fully embodied in the life of industrialists like Jamsetji Tata, Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy, Pirojshah Godrej and others. The Wadias have built schools, colleges and hos-





Left, Responsible for translating Jamsetji Tata's vision into reality, son Dorab Tata with wife Meherbai (right) and nephew Ratan D. Tata (JRD Tata's father) with his wife Sooni. Above, Patriarch of the Godrej empire, Ardeshir Godrej (1868-1936).

pitals, the Petits have built hospitals, sanatoriums and dharamshalas. Whenever and wherever wealth has been generated by Parsis, its judicious use for the weal of humanity has followed close behind.

HOUSE OF TATAS

Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata and his successors firmly believed that one way to take the injustice out of riches is to dedicate riches to the service of the people. The patriarch of the Tata family, Jamsetji, lived in an age when philanthropy was its own reward and tax rebate for charitable donations was unknown. The entire possession of Sir Dorabji Tata valued at Rs. 1 crore was placed in a trust bearing his name. It included the 245 carat Jubilee Diamond, twice as large as the Koh-i-noor.

A diamond in a bank vault is just a diamond. Sold, and its proceeds intelligently harnessed, it can enrich the lives of thousands. The wealth garnered by the visionaries of the House of Tatas established for India, the institution that built the first

atomic reactor in Asia, the first cancer hospital in India, the first Center for the Performing Arts and the Institute for Fundamental Research.

At a time when most charities in India were communal in nature, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (1918) and the Sir Dorab Tata Trust (1932) established a precedent of being secular and universal in their generosity for building the educational, social and scientific infrastructure of India.

Among the galaxies of personalities featured in *100 Great Modern Lives* [Ed. John Canning, Souvenir Press, London] only two Indians are featured – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jamsetji Tata. The chapter on Jamsetji Tata concludes with the paragraph: "Probably no other family has ever contributed as much in the way of wise guidance, industrial development and advancing philanthropy to any country as the Tatas have to India, both before and since Independence."

The House of Tatas have also been responsible for creating a new indus-

trial culture in India. Jamsetji believed that industry was meant to serve man. He thought and cared for his workers, giving them filtered water, sanitary hutments, cheap food grains, medical facilities, provident fund and accident insurance. Even today, Tata Steel looks after nearly 300 villages in the vicinity of Jamshedpur and the far-flung mines of Tata Steel.

The House of Tatas introduced many welfare acts (8-hour workday in 1913, free medical aid in 1915, profit sharing bonus, 1934) which were later enforced as law by the government – as the Factories Act in 1948 and Profit Sharing Bonus in 1965.

SIR JAMSETJI JEJEEBHOY

Jamsetji Tata was, no doubt, a visionary and the father of building a modern industrial India. However, the Prince of Philanthropists is, without doubt, the merchant prince, **Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy** – the first Indian knight and baronet [photo page 43]. The extent of his philanthropy is vast and varied. His contribution to public

works and charities between 1822 - 1859 aggregated Rs. 24,59,736. It is interesting to note that out of this staggering sum (for that period of time), less than 50 per cent went for his own community.

Acts of benevolence were as natural to Jamsetjee as breathing. Besides feeding the poor, clothing the needy, sinking wells for the thirsty, he built bridges and causeways to save human lives, dharamshalas and shelters for the homeless, shelters for the infirm and forsaken animals and the first hospital for civilians in Bombay – an institution where, even today, the poor and needy are treated totally free or at very nominal rates.

Jamsetjee believed that true philanthropy should be aimed at making its recipients self-reliant and self-respecting and capable of earning their way through life by doing an honest day's work. He built and endowed fire temples, but he also built 'temples of learning' – schools, madrasahs and schools of art (even today, the Sir JJ School of Art is the biggest school of its kind in the East).

HOUSE OF GODREJ

From the Tatas and Jejeebhoy's, let us move over to the House of Godrej – a household name in a literal sense in India. In India, you turn the keys of the door to your house and it is likely to be a Godrej night latch. You open the fridge to grab some food and it is likely to be Godrej. You open the steel cupboard to get your clothes or open your safe to get some money and it is likely to be Godrej.

The House of Godrej which has completed more than a hundred years in industry espouses the vision and the concept of the trusteeship of wealth.

The initiation of philanthropy by its founder **Ardeshir Godrej** was strengthened by his brother, **Pirojsha**, who made it a corporate principle for the Godrej group. He anticipated labor legislations by providing housing, schooling (epitomized today in the Godrej *udayachal* schools) medi-

cal aid and paid leave to workers. Environmental and social concerns were equally vital to his vision and to the vision of his sons, among whom, the youngest, Naval, set up the Foundation for Medical Research and other pioneering institutions.

The Pirojsha Godrej Foundation established in 1972 utilizes 32% of its profits for promoting the objects of the trust which include medical relief, educational aid to deserving students, relief in case of disasters, apart from

“ Jamsetji Tata and his successors firmly believed that one way to take the injustice out of riches is to dedicate riches to the service of the people ... he believed that true philanthropy should be aimed at making its recipients self-reliant and self-respecting ... ”

promoting culture and the fine arts, libraries, schools and blood banks. The Godrej Baug, Red Cross Disaster Centre at Vikhroli and P. Godrej Memorial Wing at Breach Candy Hospital are born of this Foundation.

LEGACY OF THE INDUSTRIAL STALWARTS

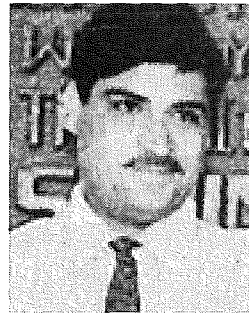
There are important lessons to be drawn from the history of India's industrial revolution pioneered by Parsis. The value system they laid down is a beacon of light for generations to come. Our sagacious ancestors wisely believed that wealth and its acquisition is positive and good, provided it is acquired by righteous means and used for good purposes. They also believed in the trusteeship of wealth – and how injustice could be taken out of wealth if used creatively and for the good of humanity. Fair and ethical business practices also happen to be the hallmark of Parsi business houses.

The wealth created by Parsi industrialists have given the community a certain head start. It has also given the community a firm social and economic infrastructure – schools, hospi-

tals, trusts for education and medical aid, housing – you name it. The lasting value is our tradition for achieving excellence, in whatever we do. Also our inherent quality of honesty, loyalty, tolerance, adaptability, sense of humor and sense of justice. These are qualities which spurred our ancestors to great heights and these are the values which we have inherited and which we need to sustain.

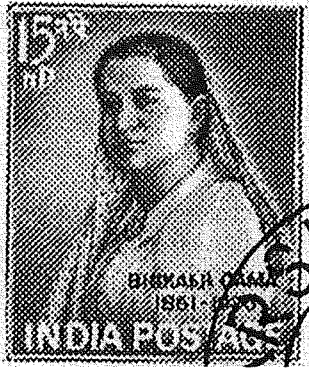
There is much to be proud of and even more to be grateful for. Most important of all, these pioneers of industry have left a legacy of values - values of honesty, enterprise, sharing, concern, development and progress. These, more than material wealth, are the real contribution of Parsi industrialists in shaping our psyche as how we see ourselves and how we like others to see us. We have by osmosis imbibed the virtues as reflected by the achievements of our illustrious ancestors. ■

Noshir H. Dadrawala, an International Fellow of the Center for the Study of Philanthropy, is executive secretary of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy. He is on the boards of several charitable organi-



zations, is a founder-member of the Indian Centre for Philanthropy (New Delhi) and a member of the executive committee of The

Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium. Author of a number of books on the management of charities, he edits *Philanthropy*, the journal of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy, has been a columnist of *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* for the last 20 years, and is editor of *Deen Parast* and the *WZO* magazine, *Hamazor*. Mr. Dadrawalla has presented research papers and talks at conferences all over India and abroad.



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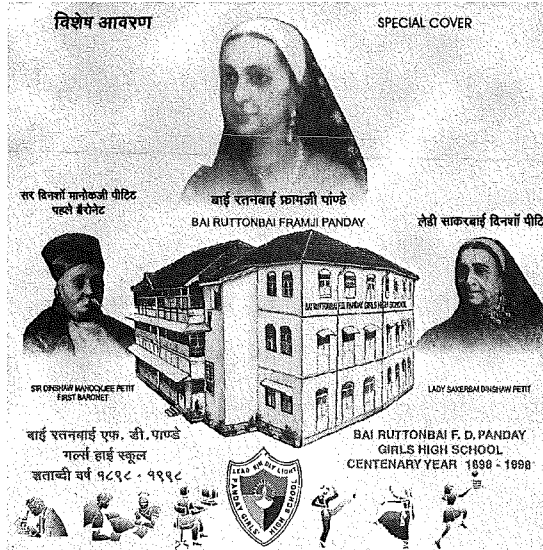
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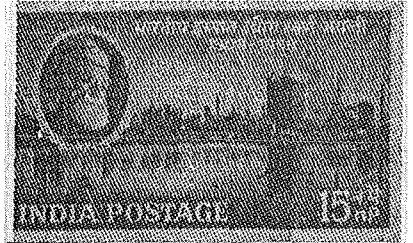
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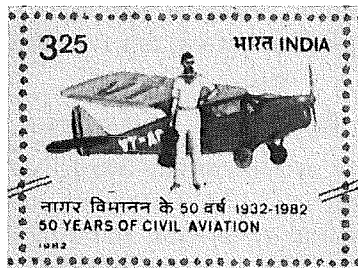
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Parsis Honored on Indian (and one British) Stamps

event **14**

Zarathushtis the world over should be rightfully proud of the number of Parsis honored on stamps for their contributions in all fields – industry, science and the arts.

(1) **Madame Bhikaiji Cama** (1861-1936), first woman crusader for India's freedom; pleaded justice at the Hague Tribunal and in 1907, unfurled a flag that was to become, 40 years later, India's national flag. (2) and (11) **Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji** (1825-1917), "Grand Old Man of India", first Asian in British Parliament, championed India's cause for a half century. (3) **Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy** (1783-1859), philanthropist, first Indian knight and baronet; built a trading empire with China. (4) **Jamsetjee N. Tata** (1839-1904), philanthropist, patriarch of the House of Tatas, hallmark of Indian industry. (5) **J. N. Tata** with city of Jamshedpur, named after him. (6) **Sir Pherozeshah Mehta** (1845-1915), patriot, "Lion of Bombay", first Indian mayor of Bombay. (7) **Freddie Mercury** (née Farokh Balsara), rock superstar [*stamp is part of British Millennium Series*]. (8) **Ardeshir Godrej** (1868-1936) and **Pirojsha Godrej** (1882-1972) founders of the Godrej industrial empire. (9) **Ardeseer Cursetjee Wadia** (1808-1887) introduced steam engines and brought gas light to Bombay. (10) **Dr. D. N. Wadia** (1883-1969). (12) and (14) **J. R. D. Tata**, of the illustrious House of Tatas, father of civil aviation in India. (13) Special Cover to commemorate centenary of **Bai Ruttonbai F. D. Panday Girls High School**, founded by **Sir Dinshaw Manockjee Petit**, first baronet, and **Lady Sakerbai Dinshaw Petit**, in 1898. (15) **Homi Bhabha** (1909-1966), scientist, engineer and artist; architect of India's atomic energy program.

[Compiled by Roshan Rivetna. Sources: Mr. Prakash Mody of Ontario, Parsiana and FEZANA Journal Winter 1996].

parsis and the indian national congress

By Framroze K. Patel

Contribution of Parsis (Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Dinshaw Wacha) to the Indian National Congress in the early years of the independence movement.

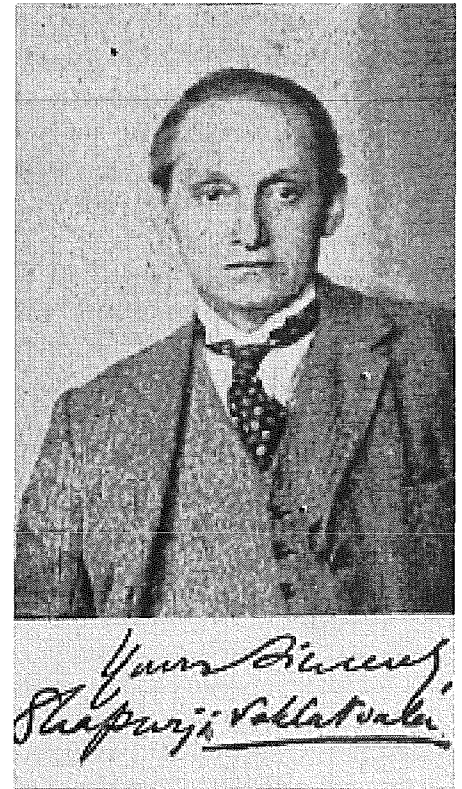
Prominent role in the INC. The Indian National Congress (INC) popularly known as Congress, a broadly based political party of India, was founded in 1885. It dominated the Indian movement for independence from Great Britain and formed most of India's government after independence was achieved in August 1947. The first Congress met in December 1885. The first president of the Congress was **Dadabhai Naoroji**. Seventy-three delegates from across India came together to discuss their vision of India's future. They were the new educated Indian middle class, united in believing that ideals of democracy and equality Britain taught had not been practiced in India because the British put their own interest first.

Delegates realized that the first order of business was liberalizing and reforming British rule in India. "Not one single genuine voice is there in British Parliament to tell at least what the native view is on any question," Dadabhai told Congress. During the second session of INC held in Calcutta, his presidential address was remarkable for its tone of moderation and restraint. He asked the delegates, "What is it for which we are now

met? Is this Congress a nursery for sedition and rebellion against British Government (cries of 'No! No!'). Or is it another stone in the foundation of stability of Government? (Cries of 'Yes! Yes!'). Let us speak out like men and proclaim that we are loyal to the backbone."

The Congress was criticized for failure to promote social reform. Dadabhai met this criticism by stating, "We are met together as a political body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations, not discuss social reforms. There are Hindus ... Muslims and Christians of various denominations, Parsis, Sikhs, men indeed, of each and all of these classes, which constitute in aggregate the people of India. How can this gathering of all classes discuss the social reforms needed by each individual class? Only the members of that class can effectively deal with the reforms therein needed. A national Congress must confine itself to question in which the entire nation has a direct participation, and must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class Congresses."

Elected to British Parliament. Dadabhai was elected Member of Parliament in 1892. The only other



PHOTOS: PARSIS LUSTRE ON INDIAN SOIL BY H. D. DARUKHANAWALA

Above, The three Indian members of the British Parliament were all Parsis: Liberal Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Conservative Sir Mancherjee Bhowndree, KCIE (1851-1933) and Communist Shapurji Saklatvala (1874-1936).

Facing page, pioneers in the freedom struggle, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915), Madam Bhikaiji Cama (born 1861) and Sir Dinshaw Wacha (1844-1936).

Indian MPs were also Parsis – Mancherjee Bhowndree and Shapurji Saklatvala [see above]. Dadabhai became one of the strongest voices to be heard in Britain on behalf of India. Dadabhai published pamphlets and spoke at public meetings on the unacceptable effects of British rule in India. He remained unselfish in the tireless work he did on behalf of his countrymen, and was deeply loved in return, becoming the most important political figure in the ‘moderate’ phase of the INC.

During the British Raj, the civil services were not open to Indians. INC and Dadabhai, particularly after he was elected as an MP, emphasized that Indians should be allowed to appear for the Civil Service examination, both in India and England, and the same standards of tests of qualification, pay and pension allowances should be applicable to all candidates, British or Indian. Alas, Dad-

abhai’s wish did not materialize in his lifetime.

At an annual meeting of INC at Lahore, Reception Committee of the INC referred in eulogistic terms to Dadabhai’s study and mastery of Indian politics and his advocacy of the cause of India: “*The greatest gift the Parsis have bestowed on India is your own good self.*” In reply Dadabhai said that his first and most earnest advice to them was that they should be loyal to the British Crown. After exhorting them to rise above sectarian feelings, he said: “... I am a Hindu, a Muslim, a Parsi, but *above all an Indian.* My greatest happiness has been this, that all Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis have expressed their joy at my return to India ... India has a great future before it. I bless India. I bless you.”

Dadabhai was known as the Grand Old Man of India. I am tempted to quote what Mahatma Gandhi wrote

in a letter of introduction to Dadabhai when he met Dadabhai in London in 1888: “... kindly direct and guide me and make necessary suggestions which shall be received as from a father to his child”. How prophetic, the Bapu (as Gandhiji was known with reverence) the future father of the nation called Dadabhai his ‘dada’ (father).

Post ‘elite’ independence movement. The period from inception to 1915 was called ‘elite’. It was a non-mass movement, and the leaders took a moderate position. They were happy to work with the British Raj. Things changed during 1915 when INC’s extremist Home Rule wing took over. The leaders of this group were Tilak and Annie Besant. In the 1920s and ‘30s, the Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, promoted non-cooperation movements to protest the perceived feebleness of the constitutional reforms of 1919 and



PHOTO: PARSIANA, 1989

Britain's manner of carrying them out.

Another wing of the organization, which believed in working within the party system, contested elections in 1923 and 1937 as the 'Swaraj' (Home Rule) party, with particular success in latter years. When World War II began the INC declared that India would not support the war efforts until granted complete independence. In 1942 the organization sponsored mass civil disobedience to support the demand that the British 'Quit India'. In 1947 an independence bill became law, and in January 1959, India became a republic.

Other Parsis who led INC. Besides Dadabhai the INC was dominated in the 'elite' years by *Sir Dinshaw Wacha* and *Sir Phirozeshah Mehta*, popularly known as Sir PM. Sir Dinshaw was the founder Secretary of INC for a long time and had written many books on Indian economics. Sir PM was the president of INC after Dadabhai's tenure. Deeply committed to education, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Bom-

bay University in 1915 and founded the daily *Bombay Chronicle*. Above all, he is known as the father of the Bombay Municipal Corporation,



which he founded and nurtured for 50 years.

Sir Dinshaw Wacha was a director of the Central Bank and the Scindia Steam Navigation Company for 30 years. He played an active part in

Indian politics as a member of the Liberal Party. *Vir Nariman* dominated the INC in Bombay during the late 1930s. He might well have become the first Chief Minister of Bombay presidency, and the first Parsi to hold such a high position in post-independence India. However, due to internal politics B. G. Kher was the choice of the party. In the post independence India *Cooverji Bhabha* was the choice of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as Commerce Minister. *Rustom Sidhwa*, formerly of Karachi, was the Railway Minister in Nehru's government. During the early fifties *Sir Homi Mody* was the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in post independent India.

Not to be forgotten was India's first woman crusader for independence, *Madame Bhikaiji Cama*. She went to London, and toured in Europe and in the USA, advocating India's independence from the British. ■

[Framroze K. Patel's photo and bio-data are on page 11].

western scholars their impact on Zarathushti identity

Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa

The full development of oriental studies in Europe maybe said to date from the seventeenth century, from which time progress has been steady and continuous. Over the centuries this has had varying degrees of impact on the shaping of the Zarathushti identity.

Thomas Hyde and Judeo-Christian interpretations (1636-1703).

Professorships were established in Cambridge and at Oxford, and *Thomas Hyde's* famous Latin work *History of the Religions of Ancient Persians, Parthians and Medes* was brought out in 1760 CE. Hyde used a small treatise by Henry Lord, *The Religion of the Parsees* (1630) based on information gathered by the author from the Parsi priests of Surat. He relied on Greek and Roman sources for any information on the ancient religion of the Iranians, and added to those the accounts of Arabic writers and European travelers.

Hyde's work firmly established the Judeo-Christian interpretation of the religion of Zarathushti which held sway for almost three-quarters of a century to be finally rudely shaken by the discovery of the actual doctrine and practice of the living faith.

Anquetil du Perron and the maintenance of erroneous notions (1731-1805). In the eighteenth century, a Frenchman, *Anquetil du Perron*, traveled to India and spent three years in Surat where a priest Darab Kumana, taught him all about the Zarathushti religion and also presented him with several manuscripts. On his return home, Anquetil published in 1771, his epoch-making work *Le Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre, traduit en Francais sur l'original Zend* in 3 volumes. This was

the work that shocked the European scholars, for it seemed to destroy their preconceived ideas of what a great prophet should have taught.

The manuscripts brought back by Anquetil were studied in relation to Sanskrit, a language which was already well known. The first foundations for the study of Comparative Philology in Europe were laid by Sir William Jones in 1786. This method of study showed Anquetil's version

“ E. W. West's mammoth task of translating all the extant Pahlavi works is indeed a landmark achievement and he can be credited to have made the Pahlavi works accessible to the English-speaking laity. ”

of what Darab Kumana had taught him to be imperfect. Thus European scholars were able to maintain preconceived and erroneous notions about the Zarathushti religion. Du Perron was followed by others [1].

John Wilson's attempt to prove Zarathushti religion barbaric (1804-1875). On February 14, 1829, *John Wilson* a Scottish missionary, arrived in Bombay and found the Parsis to be hard-working, fairly wealthy and honest people with considerable influence in society. He therefore considered them to be worthy of conversion to Christianity. Wilson had studied the faulty transla-

tion of Anquetil du Perron's *Zend Avesta* and went systematically attacking its content in an effort to prove to the Parsis that theirs was a primitive and almost barbaric faith.

Parsi's rally round their religion – K. R. Cama (1831-1909). Wilson's attack on the Zarathushti religion turned out to the advantage of the Parsis. Hurt by Wilson's allegations, the Parsis were inspired into taking an active part in the affairs of their religion. They realized their own ignorance of their scriptures and set about remedying things. They advocated a need for religious education and better educated priests to guide them in religious affairs. With this aim in mind the Mullan Firoz Madressa was founded in 1854 for the instructions of young priests.

In 1859 a layman *Khurshedji Rustomji Cama*, set the foundation of studying Zarathushti scriptures with a blend of traditional and modern scholarship. He met leading authorities on the religion in particular the German Professor *Friedrich Spiegel*. From him, Cama learned the scientific approach to studying Avesta and Pahlavi. He then returned to Bombay where he built up a small but dedicated study group of people who in turn became scholars in their own right, translating and publishing Zarathushti texts.

Martin Haug's attempts to isolate the Gathas (1827-1876). It was the

German philologist, Martin Haug, who first isolated the Gathas from the rest of the Avesta and proclaimed them to be the original words of the prophet, and their language to be a different dialect of the original. In keeping with this discovery, Haug translated the Gathas with a view of proving that Zarathushtra preached a strict monotheism. This theory was happily received by the Parsis for it rid them of the problems of having to defend their scriptures in the face of Wilson's insidious attacks. Now only the Gathas were to be considered the true words of Zarathushtra and all the rest could be rejected as later additions or corruptions.

Fortunately the orthodox Parsis refused to accept their religion and the traditions of their forefathers as false. But the damage had been done and this view of Haug hardened into academic dogma over the years. It was only much later that the importance of the Pahlavi literature in the understanding of the Zarathushti religion was realized.

E. W. West and Pahlavi translations in English (1824-1895). One of the first translators of Pahlavi literature into English was E. W. West, chief engineer of the Indian Railways in the nineteenth century. He took up the study of Pahlavi and made trans-

lations of all the important works in that language. While he too, was influenced by Haug's theories to a certain degree, he advocated that the Pahlavi books were key to the proper

“ The religion of Zarathushtra is now accepted as the single most influential religion in the shaping of the ethics and beliefs of all the major religions that originated in western Asia ... Although today Zarathushtis are a miniscule minority, their prophet's teachings form a part of the immortal heritage of the world's religions. ”

understanding of the religion. West's mammoth task of translating all the extant Pahlavi works is indeed a landmark achievement and he can be credited to having made Pahlavi works accessible to the English speaking laity.

Conclusion. Iranian studies have continued into the twenty-first century and have become established as a branch of religious studies not only in the traditional centers of Iran and India but in several countries of Europe and the USA. Scholars of the Zarathushti religion are shedding their pre-conceived notions and the dogmatic theories of the nineteenth century. The Zarathushti religion is now accepted as the single most

influential religion in the shaping of the ethics and beliefs of all the major religions that originated in West Asia. The study of comparative religions has shown the tremendous impact that the religion of Zarathushtra exerted on Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Although today Zarathushtis are a minuscule minority, their prophet's teaching form a part of the immortal heritage of the world's religions.

Iranian studies continue to flourish in Europe and America and some of the western scholars [2] have contributed and continue to do research in the ancient languages. ■



Dasturji Dr. Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa, MA, PhD, was born in Bombay on March 11, 1934. He has been the high priest of the Anjuman Atashbahram in Mumbai since 1956. He was the honorary professor in Avesta Pahlavi at St. Xavier's College and Sir JJZ Madressa from 1960-1988 and principal from 1988-1999. In 1968 and 1974 he was the visiting professor at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, West Germany; in 1974 visiting professor at the Asia Institute, Shiraz, Iran; and in 1970-71 the Alexander von Humboldt scholar. Dasturji is author of many articles and books on Zarathushtrian studies and has been a speaker at many conferences in the same field.

[1] Du Perron was followed by Franz Bopp, Eugene Burnouf, John Wilson, Friederich Max Muller, Rudolf Roth, Otto Bohtlingk, F. Spiegel, G. F. Grotefend and Sir Henry Rawlinson. Some more eminent scholars of the West in Iranian studies were: M. Haug, E. W. West, Ferdinand Justi, Baron C. de Harlez, James Darmesteter, Karl Geldner, W. Geiger, Lawrence Hills, F. C. Andreas, A. V. W. Jackson, Christian Bartholomae and E.G. Brown.

[2] Scholars include J. P. Asmussen, H. W. Bailey, P. E. Beskow, A. D. H. Bivar, M. Boyce, M. J. Dresden, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, R. E. Emmerick, R. N. Frye, Dr. Ilya Gershevitch, P. Gignoux, G. Gnoli, G. Gropp, J. R. Hinneles, W. Hinz,

the late Karl Hoffman, H. Humbach, S. Insler, J. Kellens, O. Klima, G. Klingenschmitt, G. Lazard, W. Lentz, D. N. Mackenzie, M. Mayrhofer, G. Morgenstierne, Frau Dr. Johanna Narten, J. Neusner, A. Pagliaro, B. Schlerath, H. P. Schmidt, M. Schwartz, N. Sims-Williams, D. Stronach, W. Sundermann, P. Thieme, G. Widengren, S. Wikander, G.L. Windfuhr, R. C. Zaehner, Carlo Cereti, Prof. Dr. Jamsheed K. Choksy, Frau Dr. Almut Hintze, Dr. Allan Williams, Dr. Michael Stausberg, Prof. James W. Boyd, Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani, Prof. Ehsan Yarshater, Prof. Shaul Shaked, Dr. Eric Phalippou, Dr. Farrokh J. Vajifdar, Prof. Phillip G. Kreyenbroek, Prof. C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Dr. W.G. Oxtoby, Dr. Mario Vitolane.

ilm-e khshnoom ^(Founded 1908)

and impact on the Zarathushti psyche

By Faribourz Nariman

Behramshah Shroff (1858-1927) founded the Ilm-e Khushnoom school in 1908, which expounds the esoteric view of the religion, as he learned it from the Zarathushti sages residing in Mt. Demavand.

Origin of Ilm-e Khshnoom – Behramshah Shroff (1858-1927).

The Ilm-e khshnoom school owes its origin to *Behramshah Shroff*. A simple man, who had studied only up to the fourth standard and used to stammer, Behramshah left his home in Surat and went eventually to Peshawar where his uncle was a shopkeeper. Thence, this young man of 18 years was drawn by the *sahib dilans* (Zarathushti sages residing in Mt. Demavand). The sahibs revitalized the teenager both in body and mind. Young Behramshah who was given lessons in various sciences (including astrology, geomancy and physiognomy) and in the Zarathushti religious lore, remained with the sahibs for about three years in a place called Firdaus. From here he emerged as a young master, well versed in the esoteric side of different religions.

After his return to India the young master toured different parts of the country, met and discussed with religionists of different faiths. At about 35, Behramshah married and settled down in Surat, leading a very quiet life till he was nearly 50. In other words, for about 29 years after he left Firdaus, hardly anybody knew about his extraordinary religious knowledge. In 1908 at the instance of Manchershah Kaikobad of Surat and Kaikhusr Choksi of Bombay, Behramshah started visiting Bombay to expound the religious lore as imparted to him by the sahibs. The word *Ilm-e Khshnoom* was used to allude to this lore. The first part of this is Arabic and the second part Avestan [1]. The followers of Behramshah came to be known as Khshnoomists.

In 1910 the Ilm-e Khshnoom Institute was established in Bombay and Behramshah would give lectures and participate in doctrinal discussions. Leading lights in the community like Khurshedji Cama, Jehangir Vimadalal, Khodabux Pune-gar and Sohrab Balsara came in contact with this simple man from Surat of whom they had not heard earlier. According to a number of accounts of such meetings, these luminaries were amazed by Behramshah's flawless oratory and his lucid exposition, which left his listeners spellbound. Among his disciples Behramshah was known as *Ustad* and master [2].

Behramshah led a simple, unostentatious life, instilling in his disciples the quality of reverence for orthodox priests. He stressed the pivotal part played by religious institutions like the Holy Fire and the Tower of Silence and would fervently implore fellow Zarathushtis to do everything possible to protect them. He inculcated the importance of *ratufriti* (timely prayer) and expounded the significance of *tarikats*, rites and religious observances. However, he would emphasize that his own knowledge was extremely limited.

Impact of the school from 1910 to 1970. Before discussing the influence of the school on the Zoroastrian psyche, it would be opportune to glance over the socio-religious landscape during the period in which the Ustad expounded various aspects of Zarathushti doctrine, ritual, customs and history. Between 1907 and 1927 a small but very resourceful group of highly west-

ernized Parsis had come out in favor of conversion, crematorium, intermarriages, expunction of all or most of the rituals etc. thereby confusing the laymen. Some rationalists, theosophists and advocates of emancipation of women added to the confusion. It was a stupendous task to uphold orthodoxy while overpowering the newspeak. But with lecturing and occasionally writing, the Ustad could achieve a lot. His expositions and admonitions were appreciated by a sizeable number of Zarathushtis. His emphasis on rules of purity, rituals and community values endeared him to athravans and behdins alike. Even scholars, who were by no means orthodox developed respect for him.

In general the impact was such that the Khshnoomists started leading a devotional life, and what is more, they urged those within their circle to do the same. Behramshah also tutored a small group of lawyers, medical practitioners and scholars. Of course some among the group rebelled during the Ustad's lifetime and after his demise, but others carried on the task with diligence and sincerity. Among those who carried on the work were the *Chiniwala* brothers, the *Masani* brothers and *Dosabhai Desai* of Navsari, popularly called Master Sahib.

During the last years of Ustad's life and soon after his death, the socio-religious landscape revealed new challenges: in the late 1920s and early 1930s it was Dhalla-ism; in the late 1930s and early 1940s it was Bodism and in the late 1940s till the 1960s it was Dabism [3] which turned out to

be the most dangerous of all 'isms' faced by the community after the Mazdakite heresy during Sasanian times. The three 'isms' were kept at bay with the help of lecture programs and Khshnoomic literature. Simultaneously orthodox scholars used to throw missiles from their repertoire at these 'isms'. In 1947 Jehangir Chiniwala launched a weekly named *Parsi Avaz*, which soon gained recognition among the orthodox. A number of Khshnoomists would contribute articles and letters to this weekly.

Even scholars of international repute like *Bamanji Dhabar*, *Jamshed Unvala*, *Hormazdiyar Mirza* and *Jehangir Sanjana*, though they did not agree with the Khnoomists on certain issues, contributed articles from their powerful pen to the *Parsi Avaz*. The heterodox relied on the *Kaiser-I-Hind* and the *Mumbai Samachar* to disseminate their anti-traditional views. Meanwhile, one after another the Khshnoomic stalwarts died, till only Chiniwala and Desai were left to deal with the storm clouds of schismatic tendencies within the Khshnoomists.

Impact from 1970 onwards. In 1970 the *Pundolites* a schismatic group, appeared on the scene. They claimed to have all the answers to the problems facing the community, which the high priests and scholars had been unable to solve. Without the backing of scholarship, leaders of the group speak and write as if they are fully qualified to opine on any religious matter and criticize the works of scholar-priests and scholars.

Frequently they come out with amazing *fatwas*; the following two may serve as typical examples: (a) To translate the Avesta or to have it translated, and to read such a translation or to have it read, creates atheism; and (b) Wherever there is a *Badshah* (in the sense of an Atash Bahram fire), there must be a *vizier* (the *aderan* fire) [4].

This movement was adequately dealt with in the columns of the *Parsi Avaz*. When the lion of the Khshnoomic school Jehangir Chiniwala died in 1973, some tried to latch on

“ Behramshah remained with the sahib dilans (Zarathushti sages residing in Mt. Demavand) for about three years ... whence he emerged as a young master well versed in the esoteric side of different religions. ”

to the famed weekly by projecting somebody as the deceased's spiritual successor, but Chiniwala's heirs did not accept this claim, and in 1974 wisely allowed the weekly to pass into history. The movement was now without a publishing organ. The school's lecture programs and publications diminished, yet with the blessings of Dosabhai Desai some youth began the publication of the *Dini Avaz*. For a few years this monthly remained low-keyed.

In the early 1980s, thanks to the bounty of B. K. Boman-Behram, a tabloid, the *Parsee Voice* was launched. Some felt that with two

mouth pieces they could coerce one and all to come around to their dictates. They attacked scholar priests and scholars. Well-recognized scholars like Mary Boyce, John Hinnells, Alan Williams, and James Russell were all tarred with the same brush. They would play off one scholar priest against another.

Going totally against the Ustad's admonitions, some Khshnoomists filed writ petitions and appeals against some Parsi organizations, including the Bombay Parsi Panchayet. Petitions and appeals filed with fanfare were summarily dismissed, one after another. The overbearing tabloid folded up within no time. Now the only activity this group carries on is to organize lectures on the anniversary of some well-known persons. Another gamble was taken in the early 1990s with the launching of *Parsi Pukar*. The main aim of this monthly news magazine seems to be to pass off the dogma of reincarnation as a Zarathushti idea [5].

To sum up, it may be said that during the first 60 years of its existence, the school gained recognition mainly because its knowledgeable and dedicated leaders had succeeded in bringing many indifferent and wayward souls to the Zarathushti way of life; and also because they could counter, to a considerable extent, the fallout from the incantations of Dhalla, Bode and Dabu.

From the 1970s, however, the situation started changing. The present-

[1] As in Ys. 48.12; 53.2.

[2] Behramshah Shroff Memorial Volume (in Gujarati), Bombay 1930, ed. Phiroze Masani. See particularly the tributes paid by the Chiniwala brothers, Framarz Kutar, Jehangir Vimadalal, Khodabux Punegar, Sohrab Balsara and Maneckji Bhatena.

[3] Dastur M. N. Dhalla, the originator of the first of the three 'isms', was an advocate of crematorium and of eradication of rites and rituals. The second 'ism' stemmed from Dastur F. A. Bode, who acquired notoriety for performing *juddin* navjotes. Both these high priests

openly advocated their anti-traditional approach. The case of Dastur K. S. Dabu, however, from whom stemmed the third 'ism' was entirely different. This counter-traditional high priest was an avowed theosophist and reincarnationist, who made willful alterations in rituals and innovated ceremonies – all the while claiming support of traditional orthodoxy. This 'ism' proved to be the most dangerous for the community.

[4] For an excellent expose of the *Pundolites* see H.K. Mirza, "*Pundol Chalval: Zarthoshti dharmane name bhayankar thagai*" (in Gujarati), Bombay 1980.

[5] Reincarnation as a Zarathushti idea is one of the caprices of theosophists. As a rule the Khshnoomists, like the orthodox scholars do not take kindly to theosophism, but in this case they have meekly succumbed to the grafting of an alien dogma on the religion of Zarathustra. This shortcoming on the part of some Khshnoomists of yesteryears was pointed out by scholars of international repute, but even today, those who project themselves as leaders of the school have remained hidebound.

day leaders lack the eloquence and persuasive argument of upright, scholarly leaders of yesteryear. Besides today there are at least five cables of school vying with each other to 'capture the market', as they say. The helm of the school's affairs is in the hands of leaders who make unwanted mysticizing of clear cut religious injunctions, garnished with Arabic words and phrases in Zarathushti garb. Further, they go by interpretations of scriptural passages already shown to be untenable. Due to all this the school has fallen in to disrepute. This is not to say that devout Khshnoomists have ceased to exist. The state of affairs points the accusing finger at the uninspired leadership and the overweening pride of the present leaders. ■

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Cuneiform inscriptions under Dasturji Mirza and Ervad Jamshed Unwalla before taking his M.A. He has been working in the field of Iranian studies for over

40 years during which he has been a delegate to a number of congresses and seminars while chairing some of the sessions. He has collaborated with Prof. Gerd Gropp on the project of Iran Museum, Hamburg. Ahamahopadhyaya (Hon. Causa) was conferred on him by the Maithili University. His name has been included in the 9th edition of the International Directory of Distinguished Leadership published by the American Biographical Institute.

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the Pundol Group

and Minocher Nusserwanji Pundol

(Founded 1970s)

By Cyrus R. R. Cooper

The Pundol Group is dedicated to the teaching of the true knowledge of the Zarathushti religion as imparted by the Pak Magav Sahebs of Koh-e-Demavand.

Minocher Nusserwanji Pundol (1908-1975) was born in India, on the September 23, 1908. Prior to his divine contact with Pak Saroshavarez Murzban Saheb, 15 years before his death in 1975, Minocher had displayed no spiritual powers or taught religious and astrological knowledge. After this contact, his abilities shone through as he explained even the most profound concepts in a simple manner that could be understood by one and all. When Zarathushtis took his advice and followed his teachings their lives changed immeasurably. Of these the most have been experienced through constant daily recital of our ancient and very powerful mantra of *Kshnaothra Ahurahe Mazdao* (Glory be thine O Dadar Ahuramazda).

Basic aims of the Pundol movement are to:

- Revive the faith of Zarathushtis in Dadar Ahuramazda and explain the true status of Asho Zarathushtra Saheb and our consecrated Atash.
- Encourage all Zarathushtis, and especially the youth, to come before our greatest Atash of Pak Iranshah Atash Bahram as often as possible.
- Wean Zarathushtis back from following other faiths, marrying non-Zarathushtis, smoking, etc.
- Discourage belief in false translations made by scholars and academics of our holy Avesta Manthra.

- Uphold the custom of *dokhmenashini* and discourage Zarathushtis from cremation or burial.

- Consecrate an Atash Aderan near Pak Iranshah Atash Bahram Saheb in Udvada.

Until the advent of Minocher Saheb, no one could explain the true significance of religious ceremonies like *bui*; state who is and who is not a Zarathushti; why non-Zarathushtis should not attend our religious ceremonies or come before our consecrated Atash; the effect of wearing *sudreh-kushti*, recital of Avesta Manthra, *dokhmenashini*, etc.

Spiritual rejuvenation and impact on laity. With the blessings of Dadar Ahuramazda, Minocher Saheb succeeded in creating a spiritual rejuvenation amongst the Parsis of India, and especially the youth, that now reaches out to all parts of the world.

Minocher Pundol began his religious endeavors with a handful of followers who by the time of his demise numbered several thousands. From within their ranks volunteers have been chosen to go throughout India and the world (at their own expense) promoting the original teachings and practices of our religion.

Even thereafter under the leadership of the highly respected Udvada Mobed Behramshah Bharda, who consecrated our Pundol Atash Aderan in 1976, The Pundol Group

the roxan shah episode

By Arnavaz Mama

Following the unfortunate demise of the 26-year old intermarried Parsi girl in Mumbai in the early 1990s, the orthodox-liberal seesaw continues as we enter the 21st century.

For more than a year a decade ago, the name Roxan Darshan Shah reverberated in the Parsi press. The 26-year old intermarried Parsi Zoroastrian girl (née Nazir) had perished in a highway accident. The tragedy was compounded when the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) refused to accept her body for consignment at Doongerwadi and produced the opinion of Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, based on the *Vendidad*, in justification of their stand. Kotwal opined that an intercommunity marriage contracted under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) of 1954 was “next to adultery” and labeled the progeny of such a union “illegitimate.” The BPP further contended that she had undergone Hindu marriage rites after the civil ceremony.

Conflicting Legal and Religious Positions. Angry protests from lib-

continued to grow ever larger. During the early 1990s Godrej Minocher Pundol Saheb took charge as spiritual leader of the Pundol Group. To this day there continues to exist misguided Zarathushtis with belief in false accounts of scholars and academics who by implying that they understand and translate our holy Avesta Manthra, in reality actually denigrate the true status of Dadar Ahuramazda, Asho Zarathushtra Spitama and our sublime Zarathushti religion.

In living memory no Zarathushti has done as much as Minocher Saheb to rejuvenate our sublime Zarathushti religion. There is no such thing as Pundol religion but with the blessings of Dadar Ahuramazda in this world today, only the Pundol Group is dedicated to the teaching of the true knowledge of our Zarathushti religion as imparted to us by the Pak Magav Sahebs of Koh-e-Demavand.

Activities and achievements of the Pundol group include:

- Continue the work begun by Minocher Saheb and maintain the Pundol Aderan in Udvada.
- Offer sandalwood to 8 Atash Bahrams and 3 Aderans every day.
- Encourage trips to eight Atash Bahrams, organize trips to Bahrot and Vansda where Pak Iranshah resided at times in its history, and to the Port of Div where Zarathushtis first arrived in India.
- Distribute free sudrehs and kushtis to deserving Parsis.
- When the dokhmas of Surat and Mumbai were under attack, the Pundol Group fought back and overcame the challenge.
- Efforts to remove the photos of *Saibaba* and other such persons from

Parsi calendars and places of worship.

- Perform the *baj* ceremony of Ustad Saheb Behramshah N Shroff,
- Perform jashan ceremony with machi, navjotes of deserving Zarathushti children, organize lecture and dinner on the *baj* of late Sir D. Bomanji – savior of the Parsi community, and our four Atash Bahrams of Mumbai.
- Perform similar religious ceremonies in memory of beloved Minocher Nusserwanji Pundol Saheb.
- Encourage performance of Nirang Din ceremonies in our Agaries and Atash Bahrams.

Finally, but most importantly, only the Pundol Group has the vision, faith and courage to prepare all Zarathushtis for the arrival in the near future of our 100th Rainidar Saheb Shah-ra-Shah Shah Behram Varjavand in India. He has already taken birth in India and now awaits orders from Ahura Mazda to make his official appearance in the near future. *Kshnaoatra Ahurahe Mazdao!* ■

Cyrus R R Cooper was born in London and grew up strongly influenced by western culture, traditions and customs with an almost complete absence of knowledge about the Zarathushti religion. All this changed irrevocably when he came across religious knowledge in a book entitled *Kshnaoatra Ahurahe Mazdao*. He began to wear *sudreh kushti* once again and practice Zarathushti ‘*tarikati*’. Cyrus has lectured in England, India (in 1996) and a number of North American cities (in 1998 and 1999). He also lectured (in 2000) in Australia, where a profound change was created towards our beliefs and practices.



“A thousand people cannot convince one by words to the extent that one person can convince a thousand by action.”

- Dinkerd 6-15

eral members of the community were buttressed by the opinion of legal luminaries like Dinsha Madon and Bakhtawar Lentin, retired judges of the Supreme Court and the Bombay High Court respectively, solicitors Rustam Gagrath, Shiavax Vakil and Rusi Sethna, among others. They challenged Kotwal's assertion that in a conflict between the legal position and the religious view, the latter prevailed. Simultaneously 32 intermarried Zarathushti women jointly petitioned the BPP for their right to *dokhmenashini* in the event of their death and demanded that their children be permitted to witness the same on parity with the children of intermarried Zarathushti men.

Faced with the barrage of conflicting and vociferous viewpoints, the BPP trustees sought the opinion of former Chief Justice of India Y. V. Chandrachud who declared, "In Indian society it is a common phenomenon that a man and woman belonging to different religions go through yet another ceremony of marriage, generally in conformity with the husband's religion, in order to satisfy the sentiments of the elders in the husband's family ... Ms. Roxan Nazir could not be said to have renounced the Zarathushti faith by reason of her marriage to Mr Darshan Shah under the Hindu Marriage Act, whether that marriage is valid or invalid."

This did not fit the bill. So the punchayet reportedly briefed Chandrachud further. His second draft stated, "The very fact that (a Parsi female) went through a form of marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act would raise a reasonable prima facie inference that she renounced the Zarathushti religion while so marrying ... It is then no answer to say that she married under the Hindu Marriage Act because she wanted to appease or assuage the sentiments of her Hindu husband or the elders in his family ..."

Public meetings were convened by the orthodox lobby in support of Kot-

wal's assertion and the BPP's action. Nonetheless two scholar High Priests, Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza and Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, acknowledged, "We have no right to challenge or arbitrarily defy (the law) in the name of religious practices."

Discriminatory Concessions. Nearly nine months after the episode,

“ ... When five of the seven Indian High Priests approved of the navjote of the late Neville Wadia (followed by that of his son Nusli) in 1994 – an overt conversion welcomed by the liberal lobby – it was because they had been singed by the fire of liberal, rational articulation that had been fanned by the faux pas of priest and punchayet on the demise of Roxan Shah. ”

the BPP resolved by a majority of five to two that Zarathushti women married to men of other communities under the SMA may, on their death, avail of a specific earmarked dokhma at Doongerwadi provided that the husband or next of kin signs an affidavit to say the deceased continued to follow the Zarathushti faith and that the family assumes the responsibility for arranging the necessary ceremonies.

Both camps attacked the BPP's concession. The liberals were riled by the sexist corollary implicit in the resolution, discriminating against intermarried Zarathushti women while similarly situated Zarathushti men remained unaffected: neither were they to be confined to a specially "earmarked dokhma" nor was an affidavit required. The orthodox meet at the Birla Sabhagarh on May 30, 1991 passed a resolution condemning the BPP trustees and demanding the revocation of their resolution of April 29, 1991, which was labeled "a stab in the back of the Parsi community." Moreover the trustees were chastised for having "ignored the spiritual guidance"

proffered by "all the seven revered Vada Dasturji Sahebs of today."

The BPP held its ground. The changed perspective was evidenced in senior trustee and well-known solicitor Eruch Desai's note for his colleagues, a 34-page thesis that examined the issue of intermarriage between Zarathushtis and other communities in historical perspective. The lawyer, who had been elected to the BPP board, initially, by the orthodox lobby, noted, "Changed circumstances and a different air require a different approach." Referring to Parsi women married outside the fold he asked, "Would our decision to ostracize them reverse the trend of inter-communal marriages?" adding, "I have no doubt that it will not."

Desai pointed out that "the high priests and the scholars quote no direct authority of any religious scripture to the effect that on an intercommunal marriage, a Parsi renounces the faith." According to the judgement of Justices Daver and Beaman in 1909 "the Zoroastrian religion does not only permit but even enjoins conversion and it was only after the advent to India that a custom has been built up not to convert," noted Desai, adding, "If therefore the religion permits non-Parsis or non-Zoroastrians into the faith, it is difficult to say that the same religion enjoins that on a marriage to a non-Parsi the person concerned would renounce the faith."

"When a couple (Parsi girl with alien husband) undergoes a marriage under the SMA, there is nothing to show that either of the two is renouncing his or her allegiance to a particular faith. If she, born a Parsi, duly admitted to the Zoroastrian fold by the navjote rite, continues to remain a Zoroastrian, then she is a Parsi Zoroastrian. The founders of all charities had in view as beneficiaries, such a person," Desai quoted the 1960 opinion of the late Dastur

Khurshed Dabu, high priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram.

Moreover, Desai documented a hard-earned right established by intermarried Zarathushti ladies when he wrote, "In my view, by passage of time and consequential establishment of custom and usage, we have accepted the position that, unlike the view held by the high priests of our community, a male or female married outside the community did not renounce his or her Zoroastrian faith. In fact, in a similar way, we have not denied such males and females entry into our Doongerwadi lands and even in the bunglis where the four-day ceremonies are being performed. Even if we decide, in accordance with the views of the High Priests who hold that there is no distinction in this behalf between a male and female, we will have to go the whole hog with this decision and such a decision would set at naught the law of the land established as per the aforesaid case of Petit vs Jeejeebhoy in terms of which Parsi men who marry outside the community are not debarred of this facility.

"It will be difficult for us to sustain the decision if we restrict it only to the ladies of the community. Apart from the fact that it will also be impossible for us to implement the same, particularly so far as their right to enter the bunglis is concerned, we cannot take a decision that during their lifetime they will be free to have such access, but after their demise we will not allow their dead bodies such access either in the bunglis or in the tower of silence."

Is there an evolution of thought?

With this emphasis and reliance on the legal position, deceased intermarried ladies have been quietly consigned at Doongerwadi. Though reluctant to take on the strident orthodox lobby head on, the liberal minded trustees of the BPP have encouraged the Association of Inter-married Zoroastrians born of the strife that followed the Roxan Shah episode. Indeed, that almost every

BPP trusteeship election thereafter has been won by the more rational contender (though none has been specifically fought on the issue of the rights of intermarried Zarathushtis or their progeny) is an indicator of the mood of the electorate.

It may be hazarded that when five of the seven Indian Zarathushti High Priests approved of the navjote of the late Neville Wadia (followed by that of his son Nusli) in 1994 – an overt conversion welcomed by the liberal lobby – it was because they had been singed by the fire of liberal, rational articulation that had been fanned by the faux pas of priest and punchayet on the demise of Roxan Shah.

Conclusion. It has not, however, been a one-directional approach. Even after initiating the Wadias the High Priests have refused to perform the navjote of the children of even Zarathushti men married to women of other faiths. Perceived either as lack of intellectual integrity, fear of community disapproval or lifetime conditioning that rational thought cannot dislodge, their stand has perplexed and alienated those seeking a measure of consistency among religious leaders.

On the other hand religious education in Bombay has remained the purview of the dogmatic who advocate the supremacy of ritual, equate customs and traditions with dogma and emphasize ethnicity. There is no concerted attempt to teach Zarathushti children the virtues of compassion, tolerance and openness, which the Prophet sought to inculcate, and the orthodox-liberal seesaw continues as we enter the 21st century. ■

Arnavaz Mama is managing editor of *Parsiana*. An arts graduate from the University of Bombay, she had earlier worked as assistant editor and associate editor of *Onlooker* magazine and as associate editor of *World Trade*, an annual publication belonging to the *Onlooker* stable.

event 19

impact of khojeste mistree and ZS

By Philip Kreyenbroek

With his 'neo-traditional' understanding of the Zarathushti religion and his articulate and compelling way of presenting it, Khojeste Mistree (co-founder of Zoroastrian Studies) meets a deeply felt need in the global Zarathushti community to rediscover the doctrinal foundations of the faith and their relevance in today's world.

When Khojeste Mistree returned to India after a long stay in England, where he worked as an accountant and later studied the Zarathushti religion at Oxford, he was soon "treated like a pop-star" [1]. Having just finished his studies, he gave some talks on the religion in Bombay which met with spectacular success, drawing large and enthusiastic crowds. It was clear that Khojeste's knowledge and understanding of the religion, combined with his articulate and lucid way of presenting it, met a deeply felt need in the community.



Khojeste speaking at the Avesta Conference in Boston in 1997.

To Khojeste, who believes that some things in life are “stage-managed by Mazda”, this “pop-star phase” did not seem to have much to do with him personally. He knew that the energy generated by these developments had to be directed into more enduring and constructive channels. The main area Khojeste and the group of dedicated Zarathushtis who gathered around him focused on was religious education. Khojeste became a co-founder of *Zoroastrian Studies (ZS)*, an organization whose aim is “to encourage, promote and support an awareness of the Zoroastrian tradition and Iranian culture through the right use of scholarship and teaching methods” [2].

Members of ZS teach the religion of Zarathushtra in schools. The group holds regular meetings which combine elements of worship with intellectual discussions, and lectures and meetings of a more general nature are often organized. Moreover, Khojeste regularly visits Zarathushti communities all over the world to lecture about the faith. In 1985 Khojeste played a key role in founding the Athravan Educational Trust (AET) which seeks to improve working priests’ awareness of Zarathushti teaching and doctrine.

Through these activities Khojeste has become one of the leading exponents of a way of understanding the Zarathushti religion that might be called *Neo-Traditionalism*, adhering to traditional religious values and practices, and stressing the importance of spirituality in combination with a sound and coherent understanding of the doctrinal background of the faith.

Personal background. Khojeste Mistree’s personal history ensures that both the spiritual and intellectual aspects of religion are important to him. He was born in India in the late 1940s and grew up in Pune. Like many Parsi children he had only a minimum of formal religious education, but he was fascinated by the paranormal. At the age of eight or nine he discovered his own gift for water-divining. These interests eventually took him to Britain, where he was invited to speak at a Congress of the British Association of Dowisers. Khojeste, an Indian teenager with very little money, accepted.

During this trip he discovered that, “The spiritual world, whatever it is, not only existed, but actually worked for me!” Against all odds, financial support materialized whenever he needed it, and he had a strong sense that he had to stay in England.

Khojeste’s mother allowed him to stay in Britain on condition that he continued his education. Again the fates were helpful, and the young Indian dowser soon found himself studying accountancy and working as an articled clerk in a London firm. At the same time, Khojeste continued to pursue his interests in less mundane things. London in the 1960s was an ideal place for this. The city attracted spiritual seekers, and Khojeste soon entered this world. Thus his original preoccupation with the paranormal broadened into a general interest in matters of the spirit.

Questions were asked, of course, about Khojeste’s own religion. He found that his personal experience of the Zarathushti religion did not help him find answers. The books on the religion that were available at the time often proved equally unhelpful, but Khojeste continued his search. After he had qualified as a chartered accountant, his spiritual advisers suggested that, instead of embarking upon an affluent career as an accountant, he should go back to the classroom and study the religion of Zarathushtra at University. Understandably Khojeste hesitated, but a number of events convinced him that this was indeed what he was meant to do.

Khojeste began his studies at Oxford under Professor R. C. Zaehner. Later, when Prof. Zaehner unexpectedly died, Professor Mary Boyce offered to supervise his work. This association proved very fruitful. Professor Boyce, with her profound respect for the Zarathushti tradition and her knowledge of modern Zarathushti religious life, was an ideal teacher for a Parsi student who needed to learn an abstract, analytical approach to the study of his religion without losing sight of the reality behind the abstractions.

Khojeste’s deep preoccupation with spirituality ensured that his academic understanding of the teachings of Zarathushtra did not override the sense of fundamental mystery which lies at the heart of most people’s religious lives. The understanding of the

religion he offered to the community therefore had an unusual depth and scope.

Neo-traditionalism and its Impact on the community. One of the main reasons why Khojeste's coherent and well-formulated ideas about the religion of Zarathushtra found such a warm welcome, is to be sought in the community's sense of uncertainty about religious matters.

Many religions have an unbroken chain of trained theologians, who

“ Khojeste's great contribution is that he promotes the development of a type of Zarathusti religiosity which combines traditional and spiritual elements with a clear, intellectually coherent understanding of Zarathushti doctrine. ”

have a profound understanding of the teachings of their faith and are able to interpret these in the light of contemporary needs and conditions. This ensures that the doctrinal foundations of the religion continue to be understood, and that the faithful continue to see their relevance. In the Zarathushti religion, theologians of this type existed in pre-Islamic times and well into the Islamic era. After the 9th century, however, Zarathushti priests focused mainly on preserving ancient knowledge, rather than interpreting its teachings in the light of new conditions. For a long time this made little difference to most believers: priests were perfectly able to direct them in matters of ritual and observance, and personal piety and spirituality can flourish without the aid of up-to-date doctrine.

For the Parsis things changed when British culture became a dominant factor in India, roughly in the 19th century CE. At that time most Parsis had come to understand 'religion' as something that mainly involved doing certain things, such as praying, taking part in observances, and having rituals performed. The newly

dominant culture brought in a very different view of what religion was about, stressing the importance of religious teaching and rational belief.

The Parsi community was deeply affected by this new understanding of religion, and began to look for answers to the questions it raised. In other words, the need was felt to rediscover the doctrinal foundations of the Zarathushti faith, which for a long time had not been explicitly formulated. In the absence of an authoritative theological tradition, and given the complexity of the Zarathushti scriptures, this was a tremendously difficult thing to do. Some Parsis rejected all aspects that could not be understood by means of reason; others sought esoteric explanations, while a third group continued to practice their religion in the traditional way.

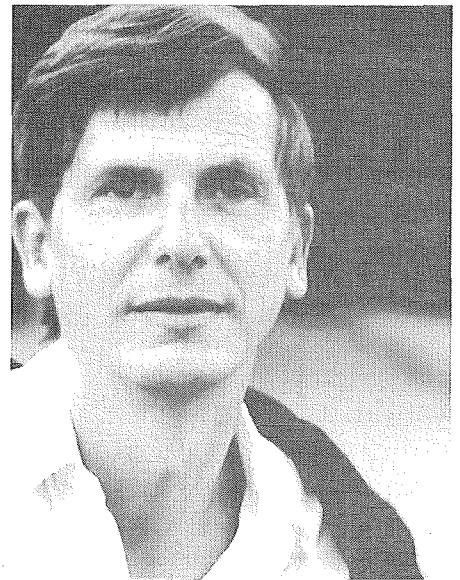
In the course of time many Zarathustis came to feel torn between different interpretations of their religion, unable to choose between an intellectually coherent understanding of the religion that ignored the emotional side, and a traditionalism that was no longer in harmony with their intellectual understanding. When Khojeste began lecturing, therefore, there were many Parsis who were looking for the type of religious life which combined traditional and spiritual elements with a clear understanding of Zarathushti teaching. Khojeste's great contribution is that he promoted the development of such a type of Zarathushti religiosity. 'Religion' and 'culture' cannot be entirely separated, since different cultures may lead their members to ask different questions of the same religious tradition. A Zarathushti who is deeply influenced by Indian culture is therefore likely to have another understanding of religion than one whose views of the world were formed in Iran or the USA.

Given the resulting complexity of the modern Zarathushti community, and

the absence of an established theological tradition, it seems unlikely that any one movement could unite all Zarathustis. The most that can be hoped for is that an understanding of the Zarathushti faith is presented which is coherent and explicit, is based on the fundamental teachings, and answers the needs of a significant section of the community. And that Khojeste Mistree has undoubtedly achieved. ■

[1] Based on an interview Khojeste Mistree had with Shehnaz N. Munshi and the present writer in February 1996. The interview will appear in *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about their Religion* [P. G. Kreyenbroek in collaboration with S. N. Munshi, London, Curzon, 2000].

[2] K.P. Mistree, *Zoroastrianism: an Ethnic Perspective*, Bombay 1982.



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event 20

global challenges

of Parsi Zarathushtis in the 21st century

By Aspi D. Moddie

The most fundamental challenge of the community post-2000 lies in a contemporary 'frashokereti', or a renewal of the spirit to meet the techno-business-educational challenge of the 21st century. How can we be once again in the vanguard of culture, science, entrepreneurship and knowledge in the next century, as our Parsi pioneers were between 1750 and 1950 in India?

Identity in a cocoon. The central lesson of the future, post 2000, lies in the past. It lies in the regeneration of the Parsi Zarathushti in the Indian sub-continent coming alive in the last two centuries viz. between 1750-1950 after 800 years of dormancy, as well as in the historical lesson of the Jews rising from centuries of persecution. I submit, the most fundamental challenge of the community post 2000 lies in a contemporary 'frasho-kereti', or a renewal of the spirit to meet the techno-business-educational challenge of the 21st century. In that context of the renewal of the spirit, let me first pose two basic questions.

First, why for 800 years, between Nihavand and Navsari (places symbolic of the end of the Sassanian empire and the Indian settlement), were the Parsis a dormant forgotten community, writing not a page of history in India, and making no impact on Indian Society? Second, how in just 200 years, between its isolated discovery by Anquetil du Perron in the 18th century, and its rediscovery by the German sociologist, Kulke in the 1970s, we are left wondering how such a microscopic minority of less than 100,000 could make such a profound and versatile impact in so many fields at the highest levels of Indian society in a nation, then of 200 to 300 million?

I suggest the answers to the first question lie basically in two historical facts. First, the Parsis during those dormant 800 years, were a people of small farmers, small traders, and small artisans with poor resources. Second, that poor simple existence was not based on advanced knowledge, intellectual attainments, and contacts with a stimulating socio-economic world outside; which only came after 1750 CE. The community was in a closed, stagnant island of its own. The only reaching out was in the

“... we are left wondering how such a microscopic community of less than 100,000 could make such a profound and versatile impact in so many fields at the highest levels of Indian society in a nation, then of 200 to 300 million?”

'rivayats' to old Iran, to seek their lights from its source. The mind of its priests and leaders was essentially local and limited. Identity was maintained in a small cocoon.

Emergence of an ethno-business identity. The answer to the second question came with the shattering of that cocoon and the new catalytic contact with western commercial powers – the Portuguese, the Dutch, and especially the English. It was a time of new opportunities. The Parsis

were suddenly carried forward by the rising tide of western civilization, trade and technology. The opportunity was external; the spark was internal, due to a Zoroastrian affirmative culture of honest work, a good life, with no social inhibition of caste or crossing the 'kalapani'.

It was the end of an earlier globalizing era between Columbus and Cook, opening up new oceans, new shores, new global interchanges long before the internet. It is amazing how, emerging from Gujarat villages, the *Wadias* went straight into the most advanced transportation technology, sailing ships for commerce and war, building dockyards in Surat and Bombay. They were the first to introduce steam engines in their ships and gas lights in Bombay. A Wadia became an FRS at that early time. It was amazing that Hirji Jivanji sailed to China to

open up two centuries of a flourishing China trade as early as 1756. The *Jeejeebhoy*s had a commercial fleet. They were followed by the *Davars*, the *Petits*, the *Readymonneys*, the *Tatas* and the *Godrejs* in diverse fields of trade and industry. Early in the 20th century, Jamshedji Tata struck out at the core industries of iron, steel and hydro-electricity with the early vision of an Indian Institute of Sciences in Bangalore, when India knew little or no science. JRD Tata

continued the tradition of institutions of advanced intellect in sociology, fundamental research, and educational scholarships, apart from pioneering India into the aviation age.

The Parsi mind reached new heights in law, medicine, banking, metallurgy, literature, apart from the visionary lead of people like *Dadabhai Naoroji* and *Phirozshah Mehta* in India's governance, nationhood and eradication of poverty. Parsi women were the most educated in Asia between 1850 and 1950. It is strange that these two centuries of revival were spanned by two Parsi members of the Royal Society; *Wadia* in the then advanced technology of ship-building and *Bhabha* in the new nuclear science.

In short, here was a frashokeretic spark on the tide of a new global civilization based on the technologies of steam and electricity, on new sciences and art, into a wider world of technology, commerce, banking, education and even military affairs post-World War II. Are we relapsing into a new cocoon, a comfortable business and a highly subsidized flat in a Parsi *baug* in Bombay?

The Jewish experience. Meanwhile there is the far more outstanding example of the Jewish minorities in many lands in the same recent centuries. With their strong intellectual and business traditions they have become world leaders in many walks of life from science to statecraft; epitomized by the Rothchilds in banking, Einstein in science, Trotsky, Chiam Wiesman and Golda Meir in statecraft and many others. In all their history, even through persecution, the Jews moved into centers of gravity of knowledge, commerce and power, earlier into the Greek world, later into the Arab and Ottoman worlds and from there into Europe and America. They moved from the ghettos into that wider advanced world. Today Zionism is a world force to be reckoned with.

Can an ethno-religious identity survive in the age of globalization? So

where and how should the Zarathushti community, Parsi and Irani, be moving beyond 2000 to the new centers of gravity of knowledge, entrepreneurship and recognition.

Today there is the new world opening up around genes, atoms, digitals, alloy materials, super computers, space technologies, all around integrated technologies for global communications in business, banking, finance, entertainment and military applications of all of these. Advanced medical technologies are battling all the killer diseases with the new science of bio-technology. There is a globalization of science and technologies with expanding entrepreneurial companies collaborating and expanding in billions and trillions of dollars. Global competitiveness is determining the size of the commerce. Building large and international institutions is a challenging managerial art of rare abilities. Globalization is also making for fusions in music and the arts in the dawn of global cultures. Religion is becoming an interfaith spiritual experience.

And let us remember, the most backward societies are those that suffer from old atavisms and fundamentalisms, where dialogue gives way to demonizing, where knowledge gives way to violence, and when they cannot cope with the post-modern world, frustration and antagonism prevail. Witness the extreme cases of Taliban in Afghanistan and in Sudan. There are more. Do we have the seeds of this among us?

What can the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress do to initiate the kind of frashokereti choices of the spirit beyond 2000 in these new worlds, which the pioneers of the Parsi community made between 1750 and 1950? How can we be once again in the vanguard of culture, science entrepreneurship, and knowledge in the next century? Especially when one does not hear of Parsis in either Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai or Silicon Valley? Where are the Bhabhas in major institutes of science and

technology? Why are flagship companies which were once lead by the Parsi community in India (e.g. TISCO, TELCO and ACC) being far surpassed in the critical market capitalization, by new Indian and international companies in information technologies, pharmaceuticals and other consumer goods?

Are we as a community relapsing into mediocrity, comfort and apathy? The early pioneers in ship-building, the China trade, from steel to hydroelectricity, to aviation, were all products of their own large minds. How do we get the community to be in the vanguard again, and emulate our ancestors? How do we produce men and women who will once again be on the cutting edge? That to my mind is the fundamental question.

Before anything else there is need for the community to put their highest potential young minds into seed-bed institutions of the highest standards in India and abroad. The Indian IIT's have produced in the software/ computer world, a business, estimated to expand to \$87 billion employing 2.5 million people by 2008. Will our Parsi men and women be there to run with the opportunities created?

Can we find a new Silk Road of fiber-optics to Samarkand of the 21st century? ■

Aspi D. Moddie served in the Second World War, and became an IAS officer in 1945. Between 1966-76 he was a board member of



Unilever, India, and from 1978-91 he was senior consultant to the Agency for Technical Co-operation, on development projects,

Frankfurt. Aspi was the executive member of the 5th World Zoroastrian Congress, in Mumbai, in 1990.

Since the early 20th century, Parsis of India have found their way to the shores of other countries, and in the early 1980s the Iranian Zarathushtis also began to arrive in North America, Europe and England. These two waves of migration were for very different reasons. For a second time in their collective history the Parsis migrated, leaving India, voluntarily, to better their financial, economic, educational and professional status, confident in their adaptability skills. The Iranians left for the first time, grieving for the loss of their ancestral lands, being compelled to leave a fundamentalist Islamic Iran to escape the aftermath and political fallout from the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The Parsi migrants to the western diaspora are not a monolithic community. In the late 1900s they had already chosen to emigrate to the shores of northwestern India (now Pakistan), East and South Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, Australia and British Isles, and their group persona had been tempered by the social and political fabric of their countries of residence. The Iranians on the other hand, came from one country bearing the same fierce allegiance to their country of origin. While the reasons for the migration may have differed, and even though some migrants still dream of returning to India and Iran to retire, there is a growing reality that this dream will remain only a dream, not shared by the second generation of Zarathushtis of the diaspora.

Both these waves of migration offer an unique opportunity in the quest of a common Zarathushti identity along the continuum of Zarathushti history. While both sections of the community have adapted to their new countries with enthusiasm, they struggle for the development of a homogenous Zarathushti identity. The conflicts over their loyalty to their Zarathushti social traditions and values as practiced in their mother countries, their struggle over the interpretation of the practice of the religion according to the original message of Zarathushtra as mentioned in the Gathas or other subsequent texts, are all responsible for the creation of strains in intra-communal relations. Added to this difficulty is the perception of the host community to identify Zarathushtis as either Indians or Iranians.

This chapter will deal with diasporic communities of Pakistan, South Africa, Australia, and their attempts to come together in United States, Canada, England and Australia. The question we pose ourselves, is whether after 1300 years of separation, this disparate community of Zarathushtis will ever come together, to develop common religious, social and educational infrastructures to form a virtual Zarathushti Nation and develop a Zarathushti identity.

Dolly Dastoor, Guest editor

Migration is a feature of the religion of Zarathushtra throughout its history. In Achaemenid times magi and merchants as well as soldiers traveled west to the Mediterranean and east into India. In Parthian and Sasanian times similar migration took place, spreading even to China. The Parsis in India are, of course, historically an overseas Zoroastrian community.

The nineteenth century was an era of considerable overseas migration and success with people like Hirji Jivanji Readymoney in China in 1756, the Cowasji family in Aden, Dadabhoy Naoroji and the two Cama brothers opening the first Indian firm in Britain in 1855. Zanzibar and East Africa in 1870 was the next continent of expansion. P. S. Saklatvala and N. Heeramaneck were millionaires in America at the turn of the century. And yet books on the religion commonly undervalue the importance of the overseas communities.

INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE.

How has this global dispersion impacted the religion and religious identity of those who have migrated? Are there identifiable factors that encourage change or continuity? Are there different trajectories of settlement in different countries? As I have studied Zarathushtis in eleven countries, what has struck me are the differences between communities. In the mid-1980s *Hong Kong* was mainly a business community, but now with an educated younger generation it is largely a professional community of doctors, lawyers and accountants. Because of the geographically small size of Hong Kong it is a closely-knit community able to meet each week for food, drink, cards and laughter in their own building, supported religiously by a full time priest.

The Zarathushti population in *Britain*, because of its longer history has a bigger age spread, is well educated, mostly in the Arts. Although there are small associations around the country most live in or around London, within traveling distance of a one day visit to

migration and its impact on zarathushtis in the diaspora

By John R. Hinnells

At the dawn of the twentieth century, there were Zarathushtis in more countries than at any other time in history. The century saw yet more migration, with Iranian Zarathushtis joining communities in Australia, Britain, Canada and the US. With communities also in Singapore and the Gulf States, the religion of Zarathushtra can legitimately be called a world religion.

Zoroastrian House. Britain has a greater diversity of 'original' nations, most being of Indian ancestry. Zarathushtis from Iran, Pakistan and East Africa are in larger proportion than in other western countries.

The USA population is different - typically younger, with a much higher level of education, especially in science. In Chicago and New York 92% had degrees compared with 60% in Britain, and nearly 50% had higher degrees compared with 24% in Britain. In all the centers in the States scientists outnumbered Arts graduates by 3:2. Also in the US over 50% had achieved executive levels of employment compared with under 30% in Britain.

The figures for Zarathushtis in Britain are higher than figures for the native British or for other Asian communities but the American figures are yet higher. These figures are higher for Asians in America in general, but none as high as the Zarathushti figures. This remarkable level of education with a large number of doctors and allied health professionals, is true of Iranian Zarathushtis and Parsis. In the US there is a variety of nationalities, but most are predominantly of Indian ancestry. The exceptions are California with a high proportion of Iranians, and Houston which has a bigger proportion of Karachi Parsis than other centers. Chicago, New York and Boston have a significantly higher proportion of

students than most associations. So although there are some general trends among American Zarathushtis - a young, highly educated science orientated population - there are significant differences between the associations. So there is no one uniform expression of the religion of Zarathushtra on the continent. Quite apart from the obvious differences between orthodox and reform, Iranian and Parsi trends, there are also different demographic patterns.

What of *Canada*, a bigger country than the US, where the population is mostly to be found in a relatively narrow belt. Canadians in general are keen to establish that they do not simply follow the US and that would be true of the Zarathushtis. The biggest western association, London apart, is in Toronto. Although there are Iranians and Pakistani Parsis, and a few from East Africa, Toronto is mainly a community with Indian roots. Vancouver on the other hand has approximately a 50-50 Iranian-Parsi population. This is reflected not only in the festivals and their celebration, but also in the bilingual newsletter. In terms of education and ages, Canadian Zoroastrians are very highly educated - more so than Britain, with 70% going to university, but a smaller proportion than in USA. In career terms they are midway between Britain and USA with a little over 30% in executive class employment. Like Britain, Canada has more Arts than Science graduates.

Australia is different again with a population of approximately the same education level as Britain. In the 1980s relatively few had gone there for education, most had gone for work and as families. The two larger associations in Sydney and Melbourne, grew in the 1980s, hence Zarathushtis there have not lived down South for long and their emotional and language ties are closer to the old country than in America. Gujarati, for example is used more commonly there than in most of America, with *nataks* still attracting big audiences. Because they are newer settlements, there are fewer individuals who have the financial resources to fund the visits of leading teachers and priests. It is only in the last few years that outside lecturers have been invited.

Contrary to Hong Kong, Australia shares with Canada and the US the problem of huge distances not only between centers, but also across widely dispersed cities. Such geographical practicalities have a considerable impact on the nature of associations and forming identities.

AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

What are the consequences of these different national origins and diverse demographic profiles? I carried out a global survey in the 1980s. It was distributed through associations in Karachi, Hong Kong, Australia, Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, Karachi (where it was a small pilot

study), Kenya and the US. There were 1,822 responses. From them I identified ten key factors which have affected Zarathushtis as they have settled in different countries.

The criteria by which I judged respondents 'traditionalism' was by their frequency of prayer, the language of prayer, wearing sudreh/ kushti, lighting a divo and observing gahambars. Obviously some of these are more appropriate to Parsis, some more to Iranian Zarathushtis. I also took into account expressions of belief in Ahura Mazda, life after death, prayers for the dead and views on funerals.

(1) *Where people come from* affects how they settle in a new country. People who have migrated from Mumbai tend to be less traditional than people migrating from Gujarat or Karachi for reasons which I will discuss below. The most traditional are Parsis who migrated from East Africa in the 1960s. The Iranian Zarathushtis are traditional in certain different ways, notably in the preservation of language and diet, but also the festivals. The Zoroastrians born in the West are in very broad terms less traditional [but see #9 below].

It is not only which country people have migrated from that matters, it is also where in the country they have come from. People from a rural background, whether that is in India, Pakistan or Iran, tend to be more traditional than people from the great metropolises of Mumbai, Karachi and Tehran. Urban life seems to provide a bridge to life in the west, and if people are prepared for the west, they resist assimilation to it less than those brought up in a totally different rural environment.

(2) There are *different patterns of assimilation in different decades*. Those who migrated in the 1960s tended to be the innovative pioneers, the highly educated westernized professionals. Further, they were entering almost a Zarathushti void – no

centers or associations, whereas people who migrated in later years were following an established route and were able to benefit from the infrastructures developed by the pioneers. The resources and networks were there to resist assimilation.

(3) Settlement is affected by the *perception that people have of the new country*. If it is seen as alien,

“ For some Zarathushtis both Iranians and Parsis the future is a question of preserving ethnicity, for others it is a preservation of faith and philosophy. Whichever way Zarathushtis look at it, the overseas communities will have a considerable influence on the shape of the Zarathushti identity and practice of the religion. ”

hostile or threatening, then people are likely to resist assimilation. For example, Parsis in Muslim Pakistan and East Africa preserved the community boundaries strictly. In contrast Parsis have seen Hindu India and Britain as less hostile and have therefore been more open to influence. This raises an interesting question with regard to Canada and the US. My survey suggests that more Zarathushtis in Canada were willing to identify themselves as Canadians than US Zarathushtis were willing to say they were Americans. The American melting pot has been seen as more of a cultural threat than Canadian multiculturalism.

(4) *Who people migrate with*, affects how they assimilate – students travelling alone tend to assimilate more quickly than do members of extended families.

(5) If someone migrates after completing their schooling, especially if that included *religious education*, they tend to assimilate less quickly. The strong religious education, developed by Dastur Dhalla and his successors is one factor why the later migrant Parsis of Karachi showed greater tradi-

tionalism, the other factor may be the pressures to maintain boundaries arising from the Muslim environment.

(6) *The reason why people migrate* matters. People who migrated for their own self-perceived benefit, for example for education or career purposes, do not resent the new country as do those who have been forced to migrate because of persecution, for example the Iranian Zoroastrians who – more than Parsis – want to preserve their language and culture as a bridge to the old country.

(7) *People's education* has an impact. Zarathushtis with a post-graduate education in science tend to preserve their secular ethnicity – language, music, food, more than their religion, whereas those who have pursued postgraduate study in the Arts are more

likely to preserve their religious beliefs. Those who have advanced higher up the professional ladder, for example executives, tend to assimilate more than blue-collar workers.

(8) Even though no significant differences were found in religious beliefs between *men and women*, women tended to attend religious functions more often than men. They had stricter views on community boundaries, purity laws, intermarriage and on who can enter a prayer room.

(9) *Life cycle* affects their preservation of tradition. Young people tend to move away from religious tradition when they leave home, but return to it when they marry and have children. Generally in the main stream community young people tend to pray less, but in the survey 50% of Zarathushti youth said they prayed.

(10) In most places I surveyed from Sydney to Houston, London to Hong Kong, there are more religious functions in the 1990s than there were in the 1960s partly because there are *more centers*, and partly because of *more Zarathushtis*. This is contrary to the generally held opinion of the

1960s and 70s that migrants would assimilate and merge into the wider society.

External factors inevitably affect patterns of settlement and formation of identity. Events at the Golden Temple affected Sikhs in the diaspora, and so have events in the old country affected Zarathushtis in the diaspora, the most obvious being the revolution in Iran,

THE FUTURE

For some Zarathushtis, both Iranians and Parsis, the future is a question of preserving ethnicity, for others it is a preservation of faith and philosophy.

Whichever way Zarathushtis look at it, the overseas communities will have a considerable influence on the shape of the Zarathushti identity and the practice of the religion. In religious studies there has often been a tendency to think of the 'real', the authentic form of any religion being in the 'old' country. But religions change and grow. Just as Christianity is practiced differently in England, Italy, Africa, India or Latin America, so it is inevitable that Zarathushti religious practices will be different in different countries influenced by the culture of the place where it is practiced.

With globalization, networking, at congresses, by Internet, by travel and conventional publications, associations around the world interact more than they did in the early part of the Zarathushti history. What is done in the diaspora is read and is affecting what is done in the 'old country'. There are ways by which one can detect the pattern of religious thought in India and the diaspora going along diverging paths e.g. in India there is an ever growing love for the miraculous, the mystical or occult, whereas in the West there is a growing emphasis on reasoned, almost Protestant like, attitudes to prayer and worship. But there is no simple divide, for there are Khshnoomists in the West and rationalists in Mumbai; just as there are both mystics and philosophers in Iran.

Diversity may be a problem in a religion with such small numbers and people have suggested that what Zarathushtis need is a Pope who will lead them in a united body. But given the Zarathushti love of debate, to write euphemistically, one must say "God help such a pope!"

Diversity not uniformity seems the most likely path with an ever-increasing interaction between the ethnicities, cultures and religious traditions encompassed within the Zarathushti world. But in that world, as in the nineteenth century so in the twenty first, the role of the overseas Zarathushtis will be of great importance, even if not always fully appreciated by the authorities in the old country, or by the historians. ■

Details on the history of migration and the survey can be found in:

[1] J. R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, Oxford, 1996.

[2] J. R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies: selected works of J. R. Hinnells*, Ashgate, 2000, chs 16-18. (Chapter 17 gives details of, and statistics from, the survey.)

[3] J. R. Hinnells, *The Global Zoroastrian Diaspora*, Oxford, 2001.

John R. Hinnells is a research professor at University of Derby, England,



and a visiting professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. He was the professor of Comparative Religion in the University of London and the founding head of the department for the Study of Religions, at SOAS 1993-1998. In 1986, he was the Ratanbai Katrak Lecturer for the Oriental Institute, Oxford, delivering 7 public lectures. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the Zarathushti religion and has a special interest in the Parsis.

event **22**

Zarathushti impact & influence in Britain

By Rusi K. Dalal

Zarathushtis, mostly Parsis from India, have enjoyed the hospitality of the shores of the British Isles for nearly 300 years. Within the last generation, emphasis has swung towards the revival of old Zarathushti virtues and identity.

Pre-Independence era. Zarathushtis, mostly Parsis from India, have enjoyed the hospitality of the shores of the British Isles for nearly three hundred years. The early settlers relished their standing within the local communities and began to exert their influence in society.

Recorded arrival of the first Zarathushti, a Naoroji Rustomji Maneckji Seth, was in 1723. He successfully represented his grievances against the East India Company and won his case. Zarathushtis established an Anjuman in London in 1861. The freedom movement for India was spearheaded by Zarathushtis with British Parliamentary seats being won by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1892, followed by Mancherjee Bhowmjee in 1895 and Saklatwalla in 1992 – all

being Zarathushtis. This feat could not have been achieved without the friendly accord of British political parties and support from the wholly indigenous voting population.

The hereditary Peerages bestowed on three Zarathushti families bear the hallmark of Zarathushti power and influence in the UK. The strong representations successfully led by Bhowndree as Zoroastrian Association's President to the Shah of Iran in the early 1900s for greater social freedom for Zarathushtis in Iran is well documented.

A memorial in Regents Park, London, of Parsi gratitude to the British, donated by Cowasjee Jehangirji Readymoney, still bears testament of a small but influential Zarathushti community of that era in Britain.

Post independence era. More Zarathushtis found abode within the UK, beginning with emigration from India and Pakistan in the 1950s. Then came the Zarathushti colonials mainly from East Africa in the 1960s. The exodus of Iranian Zarathushtis followed in the late 1970s and 80s. The number of Zarathushtis swelled to some estimated 5,000 to 7,000, with the main aim of consolidating an economic foothold against all odds. The role of Zarathushtis no doubt transformed from that of traders, merchants and business houses of the earlier era, to that of being professionals and service providers today.

“... Such has been the majestic rise of standing and esteem with the progress of Zarathushtis within the fabric of society in this part of the Western world in recent times.”

Present trend. Over a period of the last generation or so, the emphasis has been swung towards the revival of the old Zarathushti virtues and identity. This enthusiasm has been spear-headed by the educational program

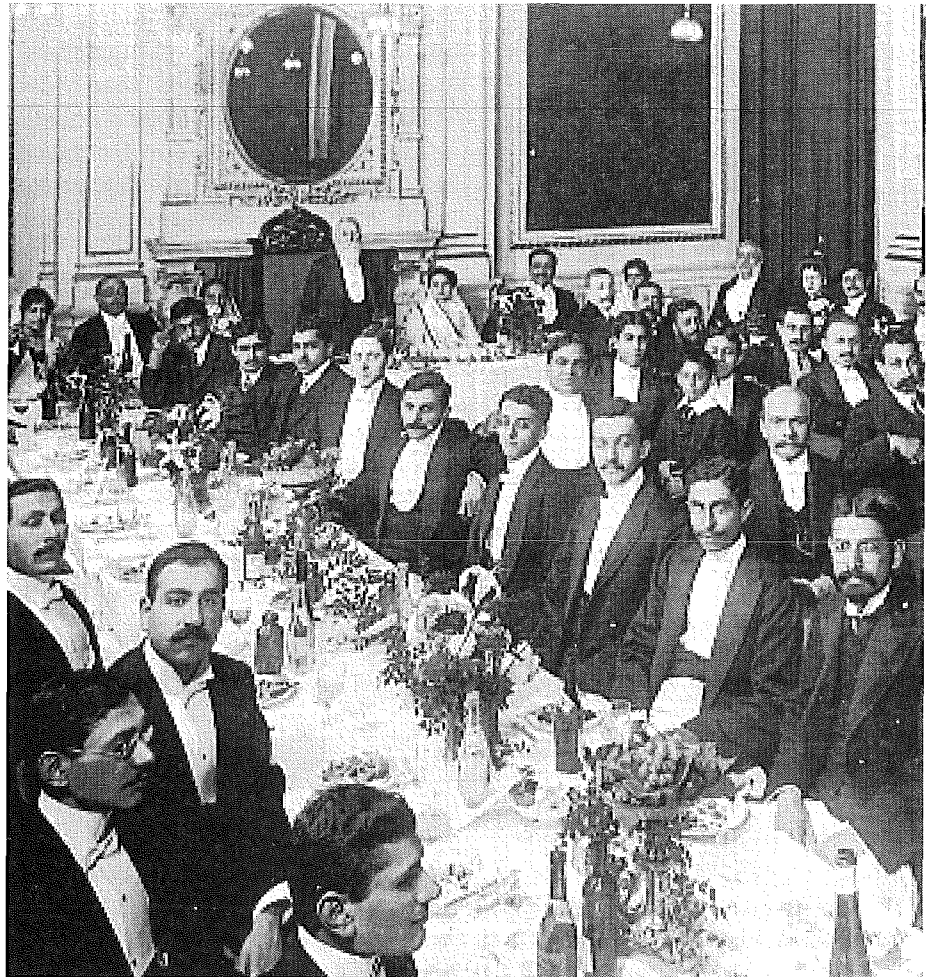


PHOTO: PARLIAMENTARY CENTENARY SOUVENIR, ZTFE.

nationally promoted by the Zoroastrian association (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe - ZTFE) with great vigor over the last decade and a half. This program included, first, teaching and familiarizing ourselves to be Zarathushtis and second, informing and letting others know who Zarathushtis are, and what we can contribute to society as Zarathushtis.

The process began with social and cultural classes for school-goers to cultivate their confidence to identify themselves as Zarathushtis. Educational talks on the religion began for the benefit of the community. Inter-faith activities and other national dialogues involving Zarathushtis increased with commensurate recognition for the religion and its followers. Most recently ZTFE have inaugurated a new and much larger Zoroastrian Center in London with definite plans for establishing an Atash Dadgah with a permanently burning consecrated Fire. Such has been the majestic rise of

standing and esteem with the progress of Zarathushtis within the fabric of society in this part of the Western world in recent times.

Impact of migration. Zarathushtis have always dwelt upon their past glory which first, reflects the Sasanian imperial days. Our later and possibly the recent glory reflects the extension of Zarathushti influence to Mumbai over the last two centuries or so. Both these areas of influences were localized to Iran and to Mumbai. The immigration we have undergone during the short period of the later half of the last century of this millennium, has been a differing impact that needs to be examined for its future implications.

Recent migration of Zarathushtis has been global on a massive scale. It is now understood that there are Zarathushtis in almost every know major city of the world. There are examples of a single or a couple of Zarathushtis



Far left, Pateti banquet at the Criterion restaurant in London, September 14, 1906, with Dadabhai Naoroji in the chair. Above left, ZTFE have announced the purchase of a disused cinema building at Rayness Lane, North London, to be adapted as the new Zoroastrian Center. The total cost is estimated to be £1.5 million. The main hall will have a capacity of 1000 people, and also house an Atash Dadgah with a permanently burning fire. An inaugural jashan was performed on September 22, 2000. Right, the existing Zoroastrian House in London.

in some places. This implies that we have spread out far too thinly to be able to sustain our identity. Adding up all the numbers, the migration has severely dented the fabric of Zarathushti society in our original strongholds of Iran and India. It is therefore prudent that the migrant communities, particularly in the West must look back and sustain the foothold of the communities which they left behind, on a much larger scale.

It is inevitable that migrant communities will absorb the mental attitudes, economic and to a certain extent, religious influences of their new abodes. Soon, after an initial interlude for adjustment, the migrant communities in various areas must establish an exchange of dialogues seeking similarity of a Zarathushti way of life between communities and be able to divert assistance where needed. In that way, we can foster a unity of purpose for Zarathushtis world-wide.

Unification of world Zarathushtis – a vital identity. Wherever Zarathushtis have set up their roots, they have generally bonded together by

establishing an anjuman, an institution, organization or a center with the aim of cohering their similarities. Some individuals may not have chosen to become a part of it, but that is where their choice must end thus allowing the establishment to play its representative role. These establishments can federate within their own geographical framework, facilitating a pyramidal structure for a global unit.

Such a structure must encompass a unified social, cultural, economic, political and most importantly, a religious base with power to deliver a unity of purpose for the unification of world Zarathushtis. Let us be righteous for the sake of righteousness. Let us look at our good side. Let individuals stand alongside to form a square and support a pyramidal structure, for only then the participation from the apex downwards can be evenly shared to the base, and the load sustained – as in a Sadhu's back resting on a bed of nails. Of course we have our own chapters on the dark side that were only temporary triumphs of evil, but to portray them

to gain a point or two of argument, would be the worst kind of anachronistic inaccuracy. ■

Rusi K. Dalal was born in Zanzibar, has a civil engineering degree from Sangli and post-graduate diplomas from London.



With the revolution in Zanzibar in 1964, Rusi and wife Roshan stayed in London, where he established his Civil and Structural Engineering firm, with projects worldwide. Deeply involved with Zarathushti affairs, Rusi was elected to the ZTFE Board in 1984, served as president for 4 years, and represented Zarathushtis at national, governmental and interfaith levels. He has been a candidate for local government elections, and is currently a member of the Civic Forum, Greater London Assembly.

Zarathushtis in Pakistan, settled in waves. In the 16th century, a Zarathushti settlement existed in Sindh, which had been a part of the Achaemenian Empire. Then again, somewhere between 1830 and 1840, our ancestors left placid hamlets of Gujarat and trudged their way towards sand dunes of Sindh, some for trading, while many more for a better livelihood. They had the spirit of adventure, courage to bear hardships, to hold their heads high in adversity and steadily work for prosperity for the common good of their brethren, wherever they chose to settle.

Under Islamic rule. In 1947 when ominous signs of a political divide of India were afloat, a Zarathushti community of about 5,000 flourished in Sindh with all their infrastructure of anjumans, charitable trusts, schools, hospitals, centers of social, culture and sports, fire temples and towers of silence. Sindh, and in particular the cosmopolitan city of Karachi, was witness to an exodus of Hindus who, feeling insecure in the newly born country, crossed over to India. But not the Zarathushtis, their roots held them firmly secure, and whatever the conditions that might have been for them after August 14, 1947, they followed the advice of their forefathers to be faithful to the new country and identify their own interest with those of the country where their lot happened to be cast.

Zarathushti habitat under Islamic rule was not the first instance in the history of our microscopic community. Prior to the advent of the British in India, our forefathers lived in Gujarat which was part of the Moghul empire for a few centuries, ruled by Muslim nawabs. The community then managed to survive while retaining its individuality. And courageous ones found their way to the court of the Moghuls. Thus, we who chose to stay in Pakistan, fully aware that we would be cut off from the mainstream of the community across the border, took a leaf from the past, and pinned our hopes for a better future in the

event 23 zarathushti presence in pakistan

By Virasp Mehta

In the aftermath of the Hindu-Muslim divide of 1947, the 5000 Zarathushtis of Sindh chose to stay in Pakistan, along with their infrastructure of anjumans, trusts, schools, temples and towers of silence. They have since earned recognition for benevolence, service, love and charity.

new Islamic country. The lapse of fifty-three years has neither hampered the community's development nor thwarted its existence.

We felt the void of those whom we knew for decades, but we also realized that in this void lay the openings of commerce and opportunities for

“ We are a practical people capable of reaching great material and even ethical heights, but one problem our community must strive to overcome is our declining numerical strength ”

jobs. These were seized, and gradually over the years, the community by and large, enjoyed unprecedented affluence. From a lower middle class community we have become a rich community of upper-middle class.

Ethnic identity. Culturally, we try to be a little different from the mainstream Muslim community by wearing traditional dress (*daglo feta*) and women by wearing saris on occasions, but overall we draw more from the west than the east. The only visible change appears with younger women who prefer to wear the Muslim *shalwar-khamis*.

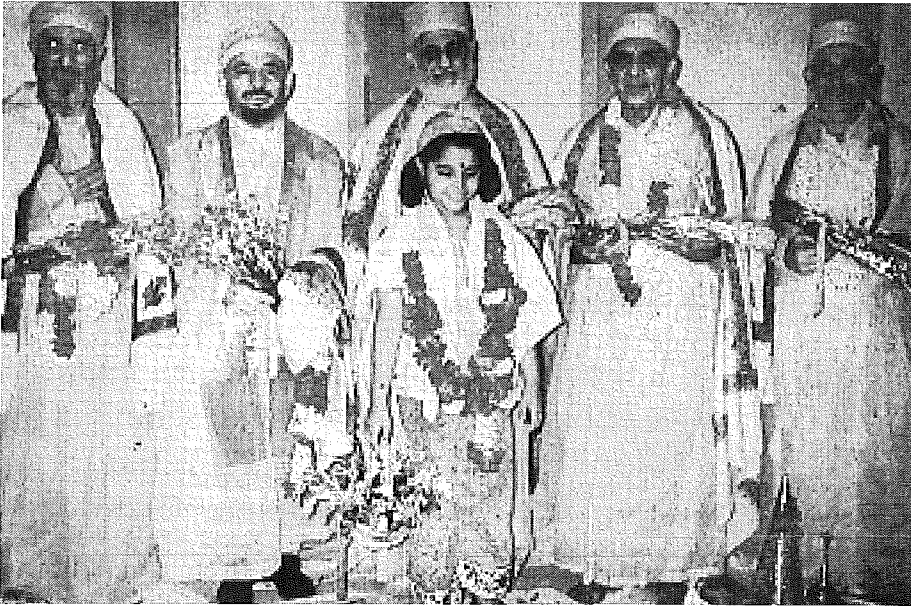
The door steps of our homes still have *chalk-toran*, a custom adopted from the Hindus. The community as a whole has not adopted Muslim

customs, however, minor influences have crept in e.g. the custom of '*mehendi*' in a few homes along with the customary '*adarni*' ceremony. Many Parsi youth tend to converse in Urdu, probably influenced by their Muslim class-mates, and many of the younger generation utter Urdu phrases such as "*Inshallah*" ("if God has willed").

It cannot be denied that we are anglicized to a degree. The main factor is our language. We took over Gujarati as our language when the pilgrim fathers landed in India. We even produced writers and

poets who expressed in 'shudh' (pure) Gujarati, but over the years we have destroyed it beyond recognition. Our children learn Urdu in school, but even after half a century the national language hasn't made inroads into Zarathushti homes and we mostly communicate in English and Parsi Gujarati. Most of our religious literature, written in Gujarati in the early 20th century, would otherwise be lost to us. Our 91-year-old *Parsi Sansar and Loke Sevak*, traditionally a Gujarati paper has had to add a few pages in English for its dwindling readership; and should the proprietors of this weekly decide to pull down the shutters, that would be the end of Gujarati in Zarathushti homes.

Our schools which were exclusively for Zarathushti children, had to open



The centenary of the Bai Avabai Cooper Agiary in Lahore, Pakistan, was celebrated with a jashan, talks, feasting and the navjote of Laisha Cooper.

its doors for children of other communities, and non-Zarathushti children far outnumber Zarathushtis (100 to 5) due to our dwindling numbers. Fortunately the schools are still managed by Zarathushtis, and the Principals and some members of the teaching staff are Zarathushtis. The standard of education is fairly high and there is generally a demand by non-Zarathushtis to seek admission in our schools, and this has augmented funding.

Our hospitals still cater to Zarathushtis only. The maternity hospital has ceased to function, but the General Hospital with its infirmary is a blessing to the ailing of the community and to the aged. With increasing numbers of aged in our community, the present facility will not suffice, and the community will have to seriously consider more homes for the aged.

Socially, we are more active than ever before, institutionally as well as individually. A community of little over 2000 has about a dozen institutions/clubs to cater for social, cultural, educational and sports needs. The monthly *What's On* published by Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal is a testimony to this fact.

Religious identity. When it comes to religion, we do not raise the slogan of "religion in danger" but accept the fact that there still could be a religion of Asho Zarathushtra preached devoid of some traditional rituals.

For example, the performance of daily *Ijeshne* in the Atash Aderan, 'varasia' and *Nirangdin* ceremonies, *sagdeed* at *geh-sarna*, have all ceased many years ago. Of late non Zarathushtis are allowed to pay their last respects to the dead.

In spite of living in an Islamic country, we have moved with the times, and have successfully solved our problems without seeking material aid from Zarathushtis living in other countries. We may not have added to the growth of the city like our pioneering elders, but have earned recognition from the ruling community for benevolence, service, love and charity, which are embodiments of the Zarathushti life. We are hospitable and try to discharge all actions in line of duty as one big family.

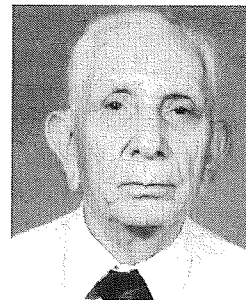
Great leaders. We are blessed because we had the good fortune to have great leaders. Notably among them was *Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla* whose humility and scholarship exercised a wholesome influence on the religious thinking of the community for 47 long years from 1909 to 1956 while he held the Dasturship of Karachi Parsis. He was a true leader who shouldered his responsibility like a faithful disciple of Zarathushtra. He believed and practiced that the duty of a dastur was not the blind guardianship of ancient creeds and customs merely on the strength that

old is gold; nor did he pamper popular sentiments. Despite his vision, as a true reformer he did not believe in introducing reforms for self-aggrandisement, or just for the sake of doing something new. He held before him Zarathushtra's example of tolerance and perseverance. Honor never elated him nor insults dejected him. He bore no grudge nor harbored hostility against those who criticized him. He forgave his enemies by praying, "May God be good to foe as well as friend." Such was our Dasturji, the likes of him may not be born again in the community.

The other luminary was *Jamshed Nusserwanjee*, the Modern Maker of Karachi. His life of selfless service spurred many a youth for social service within the community as well as for non-communal organizations.

We are a practical people, capable of reaching great material and even ethical heights, but one problem our community must strive to overcome is its declining numerical strength which in the next quarter of this century, will leave us with a mere handful of hundreds. ■

Virasp Mehta was born in Karachi in 1925. Now retired he is managing trustee of Informal Religious Meetings which publishes a monthly bul-



letin on the Zarathushti religion; honorary secretary of the Dastur Dr. Dhalla Memorial Institute; and honorary treasurer of the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan. He writes poems and songs and is the author of numerous plays which have been performed in Karachi.

The Parsi pioneers from India first migrated in about 1870 to the southern tip of the 'dark continent' of Africa. They were paltry in numbers compared to their indentured and paid passenger compatriots from India, who were brought by the British to work on the sugar plantations of Natal in 1860. A few Parsi families settled in Lourenco-marques (Maputo) but the majority settled in Natal and Transvaal, while some ventured to East Africa, Zanzibar, Aden and Ethiopia.

BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD (1820-1910)

The first indentured and paid passengers from India arrived in Durban aboard the *S.S. Truro* in June 1860. **Rustomjee Jivanji Ghorkhodu** (1861-1924) known as "**Parsi Rustomji**", a resident of Adajan village in India, landed in Durban in 1874. Through dint of hard work and by following the Zarathushti principles of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, Rustomjee rose to become an astute businessman, humanitarian, philanthropist and political activist for the poor and downtrodden Indians and Africans of South Africa.

Fight for justice. The British colonial government had introduced harsh discriminatory laws against blacks (Land Act of 1916 including strict pass laws and job laws) and Indians (Immigration Act of 1905 preventing Indians from entering Transvaal province, a separate Residential Areas Act and the Indentured Act of 1860).

Based on his religious beliefs Parsi Rustomjee decided to fight these inhuman and unjust laws at all costs. In 1895 he and a group of businessmen decided to call Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi a young lawyer from Porbunder, to challenge these laws in the courts of South Africa. In 1896 Gandhi disembarked from the *S.S. Naderi* and was besieged by a hostile mob of white colonial agitators led by a racist sugar baron named Harry Sparks. The timely intervention by Parsi Rustomjee allowed Gandhi to escape with his life.

settlement in (from 1870) south africa

By Sohrab Framroze Shapurjee

Events that shaped the destiny of the Parsi pioneers to South Africa (in about 1870) and affected their identity through the colonial period (1820-1910), the union period (1910-1945) the apartheid regime (1945-1994) and the democracy of today.

Rustomjee worked tirelessly to gain justice, freedom and equality for all race groups. The Bai Jerbai Trusts and K. M. Gandhi library in Durban bear testimony to his philanthropy and vision of a non-racial South Africa where all could live in dignity, peace and harmony. He played a prominent role in shaping the destiny of India and south Africa and his untimely death in 1924 was mourned by South Africans of all races.

In 1870, **Dorabjee Dhunjihai Talati** (1840-1912)

established a tavern and hotel in Waterval boven. It is said that Dorabjee saved the life of President Paul Kruger when he was on the run from the British troops. In recognition for his friendship and valor, Kruger is believed to have given the Parsi community a plot of land in Braamfontein to use as a cemetery.

UNION PERIOD (1910-1945)

Fight for justice continues. After the end of the Anglo-Boer war the newly formed Union government continued passing further discriminatory laws

against the non-white population. Sorabjee and Jalbhai Rustomjee, sons of Parsi Rustomjee continued to fight for justice and equality for all races. In 1905 the Parsis called Sorabjee Shapurji Adajania (1877-1912) to help them fight the discriminatory immi-



Journeys against injustice: Indians V. Pathar, Parsi Rustomji (right) and A. Bayat (seated), were on the SAIC deputation to India in 1925. [Photo courtesy S. Shapurjee].

gration act of 1905 which prevented Indians from entering Transvaal province without a valid permit. Sorabjee defied these laws by marching from Durban to the Transvaal border and courted arrest and jail, together with Gandhiji. He launched many 'satyagraha' marches.

Status for Parsis as white Aryans rejected.

In 1906 V. Dorabjee, P. Dorabjee and P. Dhunjibhai made a writ petition to gain white status for them and their fellow Zarathushtis. They went to court in Johannesburg arguing their case on the basis of them being pure Aryans and that the locals and the British had always accepted them as being whites. The courts turned the case down. They appealed against the judgment and went to London to

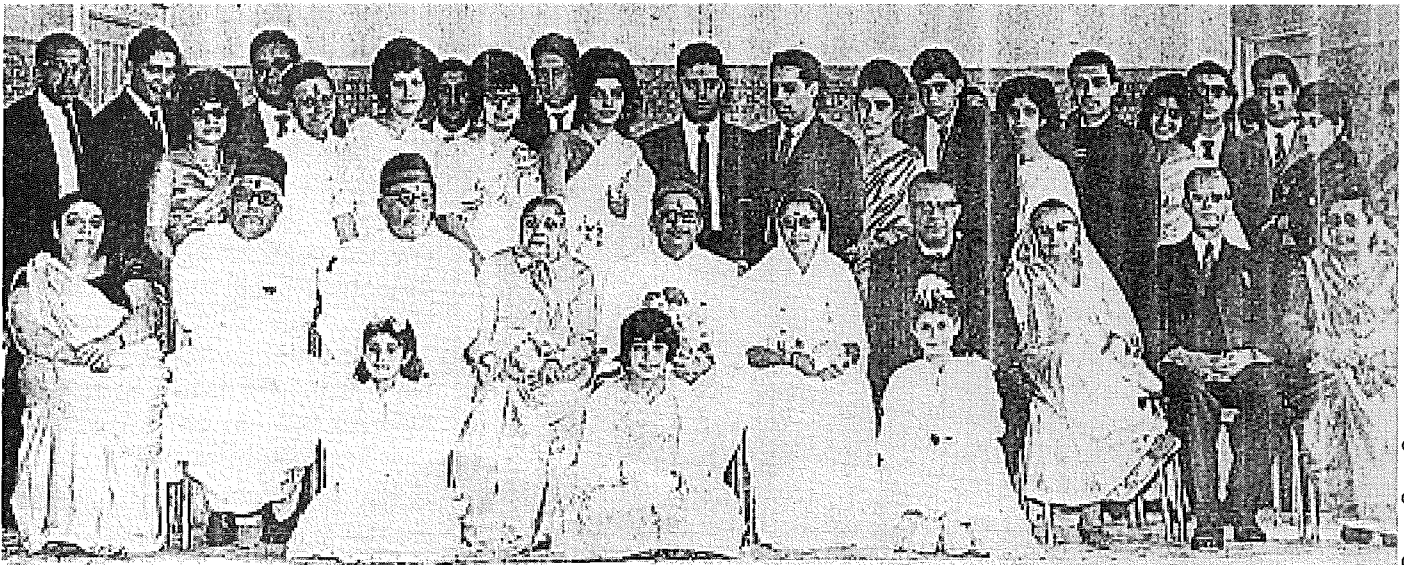


PHOTO: SOLLY SHAPURJEE

Zarathushti community of Johannesburg at the wedding function of Dina Mancherjee in 1963.

plead with the British foreign secretary, but to no avail – it was rejected.

Ghetto helped frame identity. As the number of Parsis grew the elders felt the urgent need to get the services of a priest to fulfill the spiritual and religious requirements of the community. Rustomjee had provided a house in Johannesburg to be used by the community for social and religious functions. The Parsis had tried for 80 years to get an ordained priest. Having no fire temple or place of worship most Parsis prayed at home and held social functions, jashans and gahambars to get the community together. The older generation tried to teach their children to read, write and speak Gujarati. Some sent their children to the Gujarati schools. Avestan prayers were taught by rote by elders of the family and the children were encouraged to actively participate in all religious ceremonies, customs and rituals.

As the Parsis were all required to live in specially designated Indian areas they were able to stay in close contact with each other, and preserve their religion, culture and customs. Indians were not allowed to go to white schools or varsity for tertiary education.

Shapurjee Cawasjee Patel (1886-1986) a behdin, an engineer by profession, managed in 1917 to get special permission from the British authorities in India to enter the Transvaal province as the official

priest of the Zarathushti community of Johannesburg. Shapurjee fulfilled most of the spiritual and religious needs of the community until 1948. Later *Dara Tavadia*, *Framroze Shapurjee* (in Johannesburg) and *Philip Wadia* (in Durban) ministered to the religious needs of the community.

The social, religious and cultural isolation and deprivation over the years had placed a very heavy toll on the community. Those who could afford, went to India to have the navjote of their children performed or to renew and maintain family, cultural, religious and spiritual ties. Others called mobeds from India or Zanzibar to perform navjotes and on very rare occasions, weddings as well. Generally the part-time lay priests performed navjotes, weddings and funerals for Parsis and for those married out of the community.

APARTHEID PERIOD (1945-1994)

With the advent of the Nationalist government (Malan, Verwoed etc.) harsher and more draconian laws were passed to keep the black populace subjugated (e.g. Group Areas Act of 1949, ban on Indian Brides Act of 1954, Immorality Act of 1958, Separate University Act of 1963, pass laws, removal of Coloreds and Indians from voters role, etc). Between 1920 and 1945 a few Parsis managed to immigrate to South Africa.

Government policy detrimental to marrying within the religion. With a small and static population the

choice for young men and women to marry within the faith in South Africa or India, became almost impossible. The immigration acts prohibiting brides to come from India added to their woes. This has tragically resulted in a large number of bachelors and spinsters in our community. Many opted to marry out of the faith; others sent petitions and memoranda to pressure the government to repeal or relax the law prohibiting Parsi brides from India. Drs. *Dara Randeria* and *Solly Shapurjee* were eventually allowed to bring their brides from India in 1968 and 1979 respectively.

The separate universities amendment act of 1963 prevented many aspiring Parsi scholars from attending the local white universities. Many left the country to pursue tertiary studies at universities in India, Great Britain and USA.

Many families emigrated to escape these degrading and dehumanizing laws, others went into political exile to carry out the struggle against human injustice. Many stayed behind to fight for freedom. A few were banned, under house arrest, jailed or sent into exile by the government.

DEMOCRATIC PERIOD, ANC GOVERNMENT (1994-PRESENT)

The Codesa talks at Kempton Park (1992-1994) paved the way to democratic elections in our country. In 1994 victory was finally attained when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of the republic of South Africa.

To add further Zarathushti luster on South African soil we had the appointment of **Frene Ginwalla** as the first Speaker of the new South African Parliament and her sister **Khorshed Ginwalla** as ambassador to Italy. **Zaver Rustomjee** who was consultant to the minister of trade and commerce, was appointed deputy director of trade and commerce.

Zarathushti principles in action. In spite of isolation, a harsh, hostile and discriminatory environment, the Parsis have, through their belief in the good Mazdayasni Religion and the will of Ahura Mazda, managed not only to survive but to fight for justice and fundamental human rights for all.

Plea for help from the world community. It seems paradoxical that the first world religion revealed to mankind by Spitama Zarathushtra and which has influenced all the major religions of the world could possibly face extinction in South Africa.

The 1920 census held by community elders recorded 250 Parsis in South Africa. Due to the impact of events and factors: social, economic, political, apartheid, isolation, emigration restrictive immigration, this number has now declined to less than 91 souls.

Zarathushtis of the global world village should put their heads together and play an active role, in trying to find a solution to the unique problems facing our microscopic community, so that we may survive in the next century. ■

[Also see "Interlude in South Africa" by Roshan Rivetna and Zarathushti Pioneers of Transvaal, South Africa" by Sohrab Framroze Shapurjee, in FEZANA Journal, Fall 2000].



Dr. Sohrab Framroze Shapurjee matriculated from the Johannesburg Indian High School, did his Inter-Science at K. C. College, Mumbai, and received his MBBS degree from Grant Medical College, Mumbai, in 1970. He is head of the department of Anaesthesia at Natalspruit Hospital in Johannesburg. Deeply involved with Zarathushti community affairs, he is treasurer of the Transvaal Parsi Association and researches on topics related to the religion of Zarathushtra. He lives in Johannesburg with his wife Mahrookh, an ophthalmologist, and four daughters Shanaz (an exponent of Bharat Natyam), Zarin, Roxan and Yasmin.

Sing Zarathushta's Fame

This is a tale eight thousand years old
When the Aryans were drawn into Zarathushtra's fold.
When men probed deep into spiritual treasures,
They had hardly time for worldly pleasures.

Zarathushtra's religion took luster and fame,
And Iran was proud of Zarathushtra's name,
Today the blaze is reduced to embers,
Behold its gasps and falling members.

Wake up Zarathushtis! Rekindle that flame.
Fan it and fawn it – its brilliance proclaim,
Take up the cudgel and fight for Ashem,
Teach all tender shoots to sing Zarathushtra's fame.

- By Dr. Homi P. Nanavaty, Dusseldorf, Germany

The advent of Zarathushtis in Australia – a false start. When the White Australia policy was finally lifted in 1967 a small group of Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis migrated to Australia. By 1970 the number had grown to above 30 adults. I immigrated to Australia in May 1969. The majority of immigrants were professionals like doctors, engineers, accountants and some business people. The biggest stumbling block for most has been the non acceptance of their Indian qualifications.

In the early 1970s the Zarathushtis decided to form their own association and the Australian Zoroastrian Association came into existence. Initially it was intended that the association would cover all the Zarathushtis in Australia. But as another Zarathushti Association was formed in Melbourne known as Zoroastrian Association of Victoria, the Sydney Association was later renamed Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW.

Boom in the 1970s. In the mid to late 1970s with the relaxation of immigration from Asia and a booming economy several Parsi families came to Australia along with a small number of Irani Zarathushtis. After the fall of the Shah's rule in 1978 a large number of Irani Zarathushtis and some Parsis from Iran came to Australia and our community experienced a period of tremendous growth.

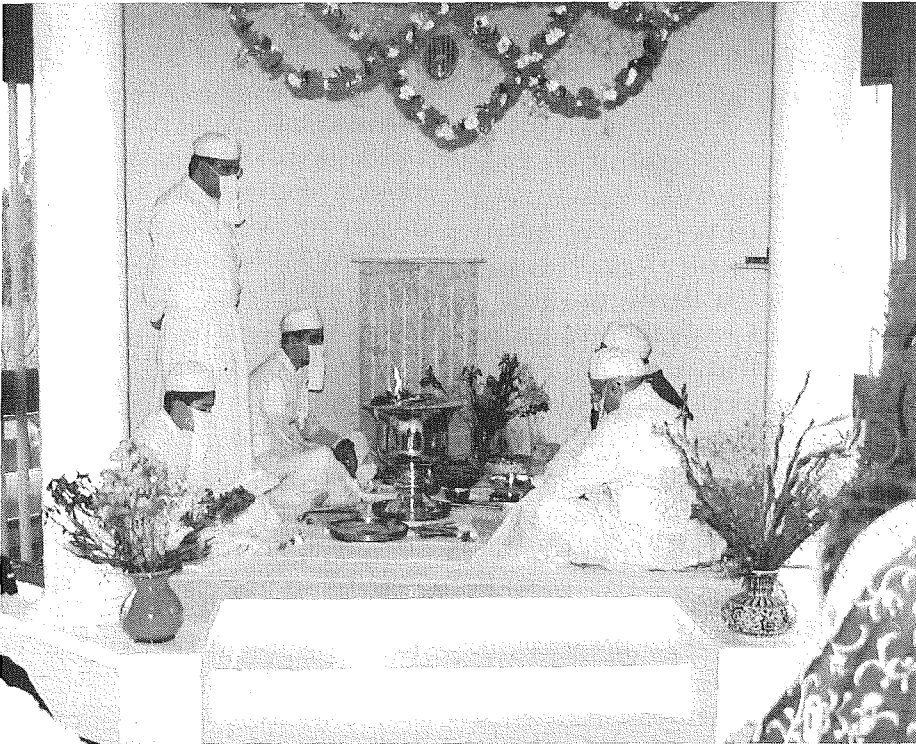
Till 1975 we did not have a priest to meet our spiritual needs. With the coming of Dr. Peshotan Katrak that need has been satisfied. Some of our members from the priestly family had the foresight to send their sons to Mumbai at their own expense and had them initiated as *navars*. Thus our community is now assured of having a second generation of priests to meet our needs.

First darbe meher in southern hemisphere. By the late 1970s some far sighted Zarathushtis felt that it was time for the community to have a place of their own but the biggest stumbling block was lack of funds. Under the leadership of president Dr. Boman

zarathushtis (from 1967) down under

odyssey of zarathushti migrants in australia

By Purvez Kolsawalla



Above, the Arbab Rostam and Khanum Morvarid Guiv Darbe Meher was inaugurated with a jashan on July 24, 1994, in Sydney, Australia.

Kalapesi and several dedicated people who had served on Management and Fund Raising committees, our dream finally came true, and one brilliant Sunday morning in 1986 we had our inaugural jashan. What had seemed unachievable until then was

suddenly a reality. This was the beginning of our journey but certainly not the end. After receiving munificent donations we finally had enough money to build our darbe meher.

But then calamity struck. The neighbors on our surrounding properties

objected to the Baulkham Hills Council regarding building our Darbe Meher on our property. When negotiations failed, we ultimately had to take the Council to the Land and Environment Court where our past president Noshir Irani brilliantly helped the barristers to present our case and we won.

After a ground-breaking ceremony the construction started. Due to the tireless work of Nawzer Ostowari who supervised the construction of the Darbe Meher single handedly, the auspicious day soon arrived. On July 24, 1994, under the leadership of President Gulu Billimoria, the Arbab Rostam and Khanum Morvarid Guiv Darbe Meher was inaugurated with great joy and happiness. All our Mobed Sahebs performed the inaugural jashan. In the presence of television cameras and intense publicity in the media, the first and up to now the only darbe meher in the southern hemisphere was established.

Growth of Zarathushtis in Australasia. With the passage of time more Zarathushtis have started to live in other Australian and New Zealand capital cities besides Sydney and Melbourne. Recently our Zarathushti brothers in Perth, Western Australia have formed their own association. They had their inaugural luncheon on August 24, 1997. Our New Zealand brothers and sisters have also formed two associations in Auckland New Zealand. Thus the Zarathushti presence is getting stronger.

The future. In the first few years a new phenomenon occurred. Young Australian Zarathushtis whom we proudly and fondly call Kangaroo Zarathushtis were born in Australia. That generation has now grown up and excelled themselves in all fields of life. Many of them have started to marry and the next generation of Kangaroo Zarathushtis have started to appear making it three and in some instances four generations of Zarathushtis in Australia (including some grandparents who later followed their children to Australia). Initially

there were some differences between the Iranian and Parsi Zarathushtis because of differences in culture, food and language. With the passing of years, however, this divide is disappearing. Instead of Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis a new breed is arising which is the Australian Zarathushtis.

Australia, being a Westminster style democracy, believes in multiculturalism, freedom of expression and an orderly political system. Due to a surprisingly low amount of racial tension compared to other countries in Asia, Europe and America, the Zarathushti community has flourished.

Australia being an island continent separated by vast distances and ocean, became an insular country. Coupled with the fact of its origin as a penal colony, the Australian psyche developed into an egalitarian model but it still had a cul-

tural cringe of inferiority towards the British Isles and America. But all this changed after the Second World War when the advent of air travel and television had a huge impact on the Australian nation. Our children are now very much influenced by American sports like basketball, American television programs and American fast food like McDonalds, KFC and Pizza Hut.

Yet our children are in a state of flux. The first generation of Australians who had migrated from the Indian subcontinent and from Iran have strong links with their lands of birth. The second generation has some links with the old country because of family in their root countries. These links will probably disappear with the third generation. Things that will also disappear are Parsi-Irani food to some extent and the spoken languages of Gujarati and Farsi. If anything, Australian Zarathushtis will be closer to their American-Canadian cousins cul-

turally and socially than their fellow religious compatriots in India and Iran.

Our young are extremely proud of their common Zarathushti heritage but having been born and brought up in Australia makes their assimilation easier. We are also fortunate that the great divide occurring among the 'traditional' and 'liberal' Zarathushtis has not affected us. We choose to be moderate, middle of the road Zarathushtis where change takes place by evolution and not revolution. Being Australians they will develop a distinct identity of their own. It will be similar to the American identity but not a carbon copy.

“ With the passing of years, however, this divide is disappearing. Instead of Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis, a new breed is arising which is the Australian Zarathushtis ”

It is estimated that in Australasia the Zarathushtis now number over 2000. It was felt that the time has now come for the Zarathushtis to form a confederation in Australasia. Under the able leadership of Dr Sam

Kerr, assisted by Capt. Noshir Sachinwala (current President of AZA), Darius Battiwala, Nauzer Bana, Noshir Irani, Dr. Purvez Kolsawalla (the last three being past presidents of AZA) the final draft of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of Australasia (FEZAA) has been finalized.

Thus with the blessings of Almighty Ahura Mazda and the hard work of all Zarathushtis we have flourished and grown. This is only the beginning of our odyssey Down Under. We shall progress even further with the coming of the new generation which is waiting in the wings to take control of our community. Of that I am abso-

lutely convinced. *Atha Zamayad, Yatha Afrinami.* May it be so as I wish, May it be so as I pray! ■



Dr. Purvez Kolsawalla is a lecturer in Marketing and Management by profession and had developed his interest in the Zarathushti religion in 1977. Since then he is a widely read scholar who has prepared a computerized Avesta-English dictionary. He submitted his first PhD thesis on *Haoma Yazata* in 1992. In 1996 he received his second doctorate (D.Sc.) in compilation of all Avestan scriptures with various translations, commentary and esoteric explanation. He was invited to present a paper at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1993.

He has been an active member of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW since its inception having been the President for six terms of office and a committee member for the other six terms. He has been involved as a Sunday School teacher of AZA and has conducted adult discussion classes for over fifteen years. Purvez is married and has two grown daughters. He was involved in setting up the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of Australasia (FEZAA) and is the current treasurer.



All humanity ...

All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all the others. I cannot detach myself even from the wickedest soul.

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

the parsis of singapore (from 1800s)

The earliest Parsi settlers came to the crown colony of Singapore in the early 1800s as traders and businessmen. According to an article entitled "The Generous Settlers" [The Citizen, Singapore, July 1, 1978]: "Though there were only a handful of Parsis – less than half a dozen – in the 19th century, all of them were successful and rich. Their names were synonymous with charity." Following in the tradition of their forefathers, the tiny community of less than 100 Parsis has built a reputation for being successful businessmen and great philanthropists, their largesse extending generously regardless of race, color or creed.

Before they died, Naoroji Mistri and Pirojsha Framroz, two of the earliest Parsi settlers, set up trust funds with the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and the Chartered Bank to look after the blind, the handicapped and other less fortunate Singaporeans.

Years have rolled away since they died but their charity continues. The Mistri Wing at the Singapore General Hospital was built at a cost of \$1 million in 1954 specially for child care. These are not the only Parsi trusts. In 1960 the community sold their old cemetery land off Shenton Way, put all the proceeds of about \$400,000 into a trust for annual grants to students in need – regardless of race, color or creed. The money may also be used for needy Parsis, but in practice most of the grants are made to non-Parsis.

Leading Parsis also sit on committees of some major clubs and social service organizations, specifically to perform their good deeds. Their contribution to welfare in Singapore is totally out of proportion to their numbers.

They do so with little fuss, without calling attention to themselves. And, as a minority race everywhere, they have not asked for special treatment; only to be allowed to live as ordinary people and to practice their religion.

Left, Parsi ladies at a celebration at the home of the Deboos in Singapore,

A block at the General Hospital is known as the *Mistri Wing*. Off Shenton Way there is a *Mistri Road*, behind it there is *Parsi Road*.

Who was Mistri? What is a Parsi? Mistri must have been a philanthropist otherwise the hospital block would not have been named after him. A Parsi comes from somewhere in India.

That is probably about all that the average Singaporean knows about one of the smallest, if not *the* smallest minority group in Singapore.

Although there are 100 Parsis here, only 30 are Singaporeans. The rest are here on professional visit passes, working as pilots with SIA, professors at the University, or in top management of firms ...

Here, as in other places where Parsis have settled, they do not come to public notice until someone uncovers one of their charitable works. Charity is a part of that triad by which every Parsi lives – good thoughts, good words and good deeds ...





“Parsi Road” [left] “Mistri Road”, and “Mistri Wing” – the childrens’ wing at the Singapore General Hospital, bear testimony to the philanthropy of the tiny community of Parsis in Singapore.

From childhood, Parsis in traditional homes are taught this philosophy of settlement. Enshrined in the garbas – Gujarati songs sung on happy occasions, is the story of the Parsis’ first landing on the Indian mainland about 10 centuries back.

On arrival, their leaders presented themselves at the court of the king, Jadiv Rana, who asked what they wanted if allowed to settle. After granting them their wishes of “freedom of worship”, “freedom to bring up our young in our own traditions and customs” and “a small piece of land”, the king asked:

“Granted. In return, what will you do for the country of your adoption?”

The leader, a priest, asked for a bowl of milk and a little sugar. The sugar he poured into the milk, stirred it and handed it to the king with these words:

“Sire, we shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness.”

The Parsis went on to play a role in the political, social and economic arenas, out of proportion to their numbers in India.

There are only about 100,000 Parsis in the world, with the majority of them in India. The city of Bombay has about 50,000 Parsi residents.

Their numbers are still dwindling, making them something of an “endangered specie” of the human race.

Until recent times marrying outside the race was not so prevalent. But, given their small numbers and the increasingly liberal views of the young, Singapore Parsis have come to accept mixed marriages. About 40% of Parsis have non-Parsi spouses.

In Singapore, there are now four Parsis married to local Chinese. One particular family has an English and a Chinese for daughters-in-law.

The practice of bringing up children of mixed marriages as Parsis depends on whether the father is a Parsi or not. The children of a Parsi father may be initiated into the religion.

There are at the moment only 19 Parsi children in Singapore – most in secondary or pre-university schools.

So small is the community that the doings of one is known to all. The slightest breath of scandal brings on a hundred frowns.

By the same token, a happy event is cause for a night out at the Singapore Cricket Club, the Singapore Island Country Club or a restaurant – for the whole community ...

While they like to stick together like other minorities, they do not try to perpetuate all their customs and traditions ... they are a practical people, keeping those that are useful and discarding the outdated ones ...

[Excerpted by Roshan Rivetna from “The Parsis of Singapore” by Briget Tan, The Citizen, July 1, 1978.]

From 1756, as the monopoly of the East India Company gradually eased, Parsi pioneers did a thriving trade along the China coast. They had the money, built their own ships, and most of all, had the entrepreneurial spirit to engage in risky ventures, having left the shores of Bombay on a sail and a prayer, some only in their teens. They were also well known for their integrity and fair play, and were deeply respected by both British and the Chinese as associates and as rivals.

Charity Trust. The beginnings of the present-day Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hongkong, Canton and Macao, started quite humbly in 1822, when a piece of land was purchased in Macao (which until 1844, was administered from Goa) for the establishment of a Parsi cemetery. Canton, however, was the hub of China trade in those days, with firms like that of Cowasjee Palanjee & Co. establishing ‘factories’ there as far back as 1794.

The first Parsi association formed in this area was in Canton in 1834. Parsis had begun to settle in Macao in the 1820s, and in Hongkong in the 1840s after the establishment of British administration, and in Shanghai in the 1850s after it was opened up to foreigners. The present Trust came into existence in 1874.

Enterprise and philanthropy. Though the number of Parsis in Hongkong has rarely exceeded 200



entrepreneurs of hongkong

event 27 (from 1800s)

The Zarathushti spirit of entrepreneurship and philanthropy is exemplified by the small community of Zarathushtis in Hongkong.

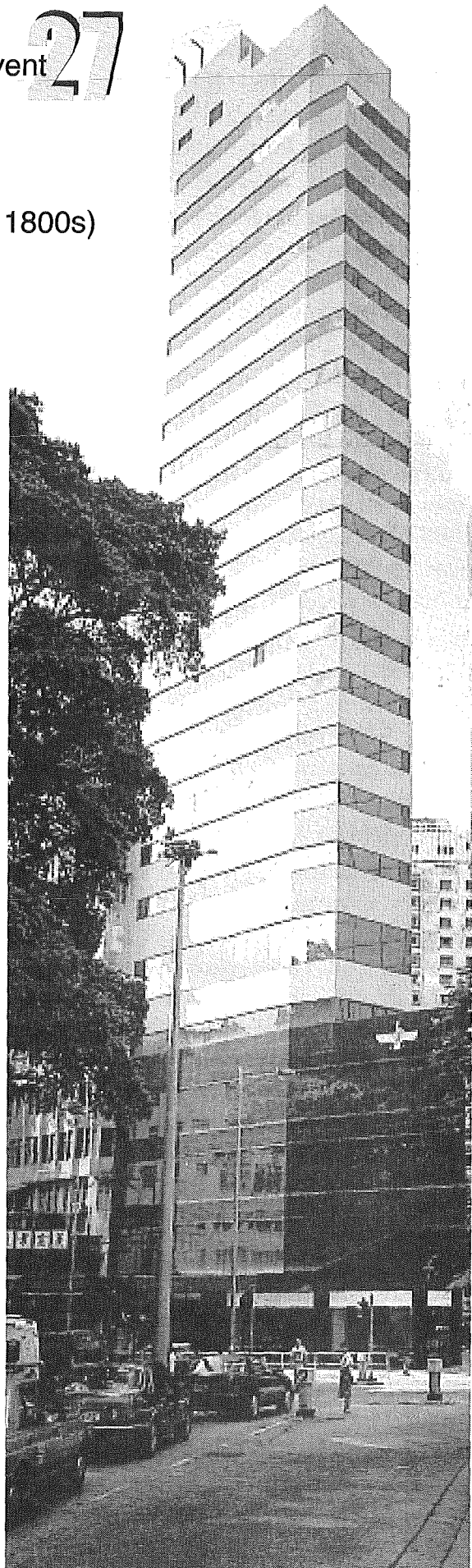
at any time, their contributions to the development of Hongkong have been significant.

In the first 25 years of Hongkong's history as a British colony (since 1841), as many as a quarter of all foreign firms in Hongkong belonged to Parsis. Latter-day Parsis too, have not only made tremendous contributions to the growth of Hongkong's trade and commerce, but have also helped in the formation and development of financial, educational, medical, social and sports organizations there.

Mody Road [photo left], Bisney Road and Kotewall Road are all named after notable Parsis of Hongkong. In Macao, the cemetery is located on *Parsi Road*. In 1994, the Governor of Hongkong formally opened the new 614-bed *Ruttonjee Hospital [photo below]*. The HK\$200 million 23-storey *Zoroastrian Building [photo right]* built in 1992 on the site of the original 2-storey *Zoroastrian Building*, is possibly the most valuable Zarathushti asset in the world today. Four floors are used by the community, whilst the rest are rented out as shops and offices.

With new income from this property, the Hongkong Zarathushtis are now foremost among donors of charity funds, giving generously to projects in India, Hongkong and worldwide.

[By Roshan Rivetna, based on materials from Viraf Parekh and Jal Shroff. Also see FEZANA Journal, Fall 1997].



PHOTOS: PARSIANA



The Peabody Museum in Boston records the earliest presence of Zarathushtis in North America – the visit of Rustomjee Hirjeebhoy Wadia of the illustrious Bombay ship-building family, who came to the Boston area in 1861, to set up trade with the Americans, and possibly an earlier visit, in 1851, by Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia.

The late Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver has recorded the stories of numerous early settlers in the US; millionaire Pestonji Davar in San Francisco in 1892, Maneckji Javeri prospecting for gold in California during the Gold Rush; inventor Dinshaw Ghadiali in 1901 (who, dressed in jama and pichori, stopped the July 4, 1919 parade in New York, bowed before the Mayor, and held the flag, which read “Parsi Zoroastrian American Forever” to his heart); and businessmen Phiroze and Behram Saklatwala in 1904 and Nasli Heeramanek in 1920, in the New York area. Dastur Dr. Dhalla, came to New York in 1905 for Avestan studies at Columbia and noted that there were eight Parsi businesses in the US, and the population “does not exceed 12 to 15 at any single period.”

The pattern of migration to the US and Canada picked up in the 1950s and 1960s, with Zarathushtis (both Parsis and Iranians) coming to study, most with barely a suitcase and a scarce \$20 in their pockets, and staying on, mostly as professionals. Stories of the early immigrants to North America is documented in FEZANA Journal [*“Coming to North America”*, Spring 1997].

It was after the 1960s that they started building their community structures. the first associations of record started forming (though there were some earlier attempts that did not take root) and were federated, in 1986 under the banner of FEZANA. Today there are 23 associations and a number of informally organized “Small Groups” across North America. Darbe Mehrs were built and the Mobeds Councils started getting organized. These developments are recorded in FEZANA Journal [*“Forging a Future, a Celebration of FEZANA’s Tenth Anniversary”*, Summer 1996.]

How is this growth shaping the identity of the North American Zarathushtis? What is being done to perpetuate our religion, culture and traditions on this vast continent? In this chapter, Homi Homji gives his perspective on the development of infrastructure for North Americans and its impact on the religion and the community. Dr. Jahanian gives a rare personal glimpse of the great visionary, Arbab Rustom Guiv and the man responsible for implementing the vision, Dr. Rustam Sarfeh. In closing, FEZANA treasurer Rustom Kevala and Funds and Finance Chair Dr. Jerry Kheradi talk about the need for building a sound financial base for FEZANA.

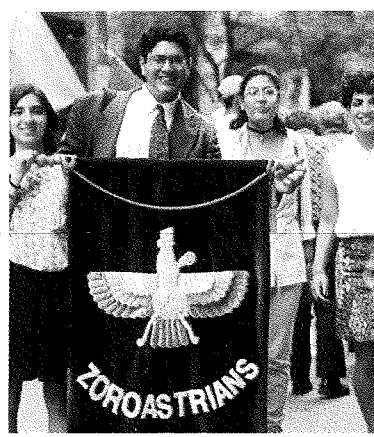
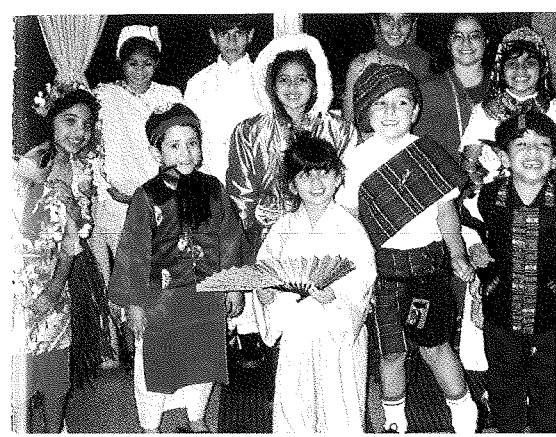
Framroze K. Patel, Guest editor

The arrival of Zarathushtis in North America in substantial numbers took place after the mid 1960s. They came from different countries and different backgrounds, mainly to achieve higher education and more lucrative employment, and settled down with relatives or the learning institutions. Those from Iran followed in 1979 after the revolution. Many existing Zarathushti families and institutions in North America teamed together to facilitate their immigration entries and temporary housing.

Associations. Several local club-type institutions were already formed and were corresponding with each other. The need was felt, however, to institutionalize these groups and register them as religious entities with the government, to promote the continuance of religious traditions, culture and inheritance. All major cities in North America with substantive Zarathushti population now have the status of registered charitable institutions and thanks to the munificence of the great philanthropist late Arbab Guiv, most have a community center and an informal atash dadgah. Today in USA and Canada there are 23 registered associations/societies, a dozen or so informally organized “small groups”, eight darbe mehrs or atash dadgahs, and numerous other social, sports, religious and charitable organizations.

Around the end of Shah Reza Shah Pahlavi’s reign, migration from Iranian Zarathushtis increased. Some of them established their Farsi-speaking associations and others joined in the existing associations and contributed well to their success and growth.

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. At that stage the need was felt to harmonize their working in the background of a powerful multicultural society, so as to provide guidelines and strengthen and preserve our own heritage with the help of a central coordinating body, since so far the only coordinating body was the biannual North American Zarathushti congresses,



Youth cultural show, Los Angeles; Youth at Parliament of World's Religions; ZAC (Chicago) chorus with Maestro Zubin Mehta



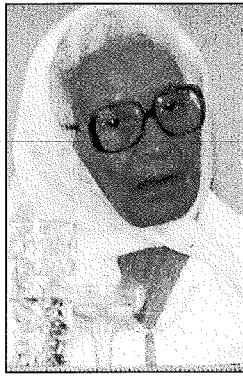
Iranian choir at ZSO banquet, Toronto; Jashan at Avesta conference, Boston; ZANT members of "Project Havarashta", Dallas



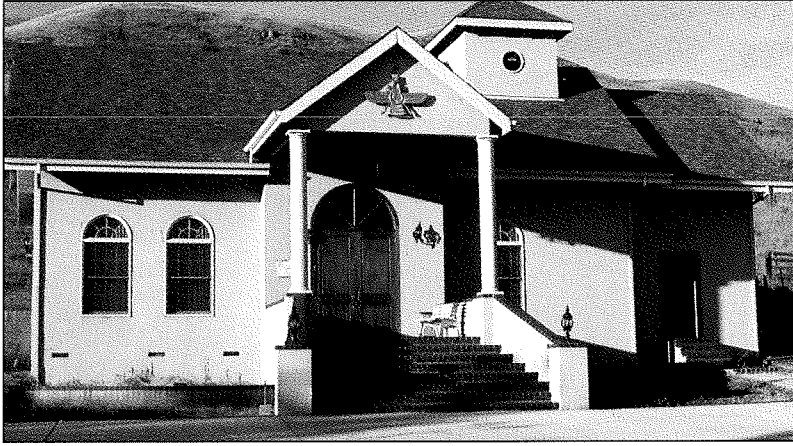
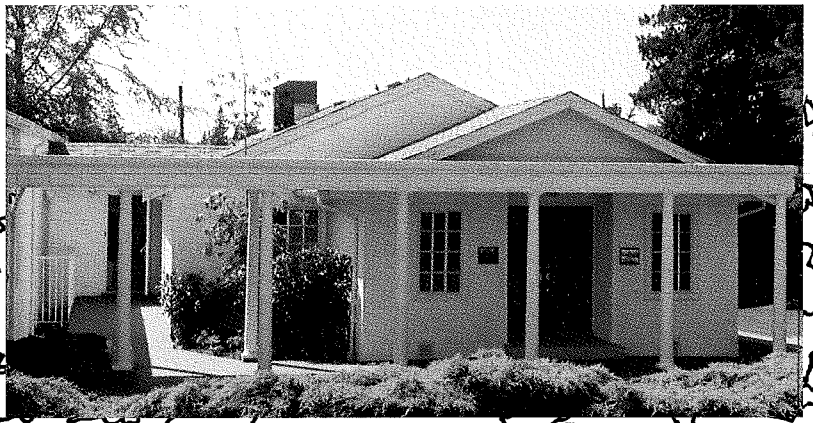
ZSO (Toronto) millennium banquet; WZC2000 co-chairs Davier and Dastoor; Group navjote by CIMNA mobeds, San Francisco.

First N. American Business conference, Las Vegas; Madame Morvarid Khanum Guiv; Zarathushti Soccer Tournament, California.





Arbab Rustam and Morvarid Khanum Guiv



Darbe Mehrs in North America, clockwise from top right:

Toronto: Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, mansion, in Willowdale; purchased in 1978; grant of \$600,000 in memory of Mehraban Guiv, Wintario grant of \$280,000; caretaker in residence.

New York: Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, purchased in 1977; first Darbe Mehr in North America; grant of ~\$250,000 by Arbab Guiv; fully renovated in 1994; caretaker in residence.

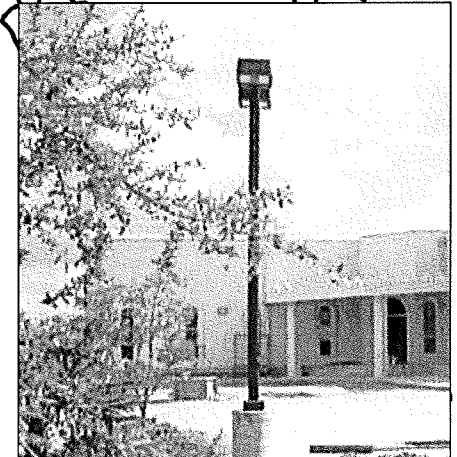
Washington, DC: North American Zoroastrian Center; 7-acre property with house in suburban Vienna; purchased in 1990 by Vansdar Committee; pledge of \$450,000 by Guiv Trust.

Chicago: Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr; first Darbe Mehr construction in North America; grant of \$150,000 from Arbab Guiv (& Parsi Partners); architect/contractor Rohinton Rivetna; built 1983.

Houston: Zoroastrian Heritage and Cultural Center; on 4.3 of 20 acres purchased by 41 Houston families; \$400,000 raised by community; architects Surti & Partners; 1996.

Los Angeles: Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr, building constructed; architect/contractor Iran Mavandadi/Keki Amaria; grant of ~\$600,000 by Guiv Trust; full-time priest/office manager; 1987.

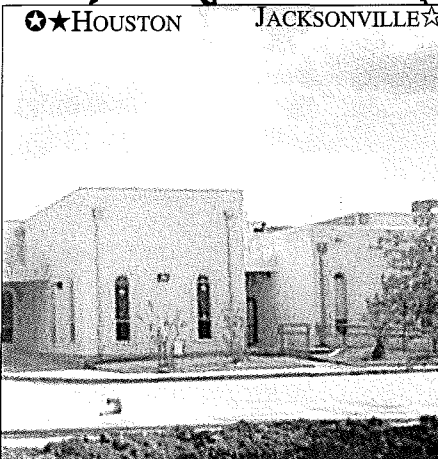
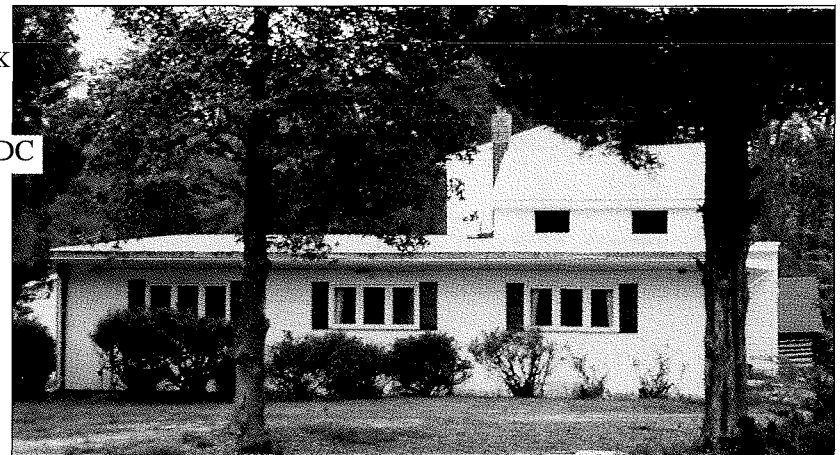
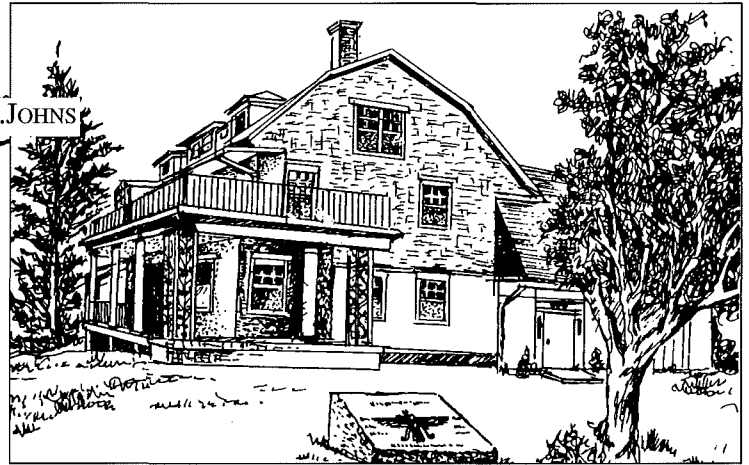
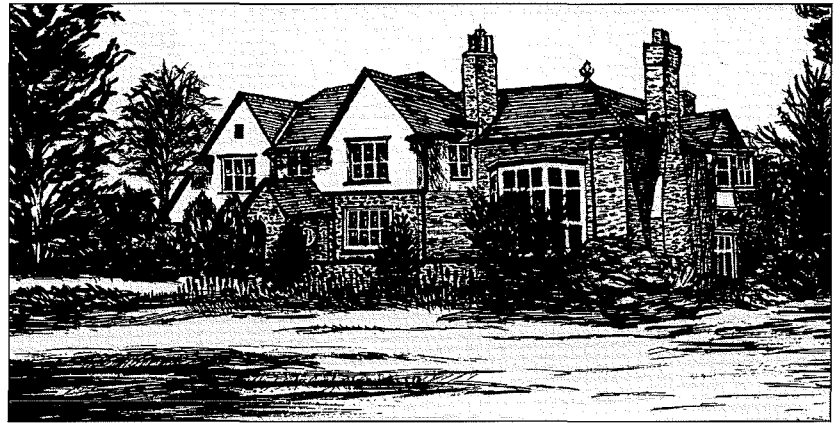
San Jose: Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr; atash kadeh on 10-acre hilltop site with panoramic view; grant of \$350,000 from Guiv Trust; leased to PZO for management; property purchased in 1986.



MAP BY ROSHAN RIVETNA

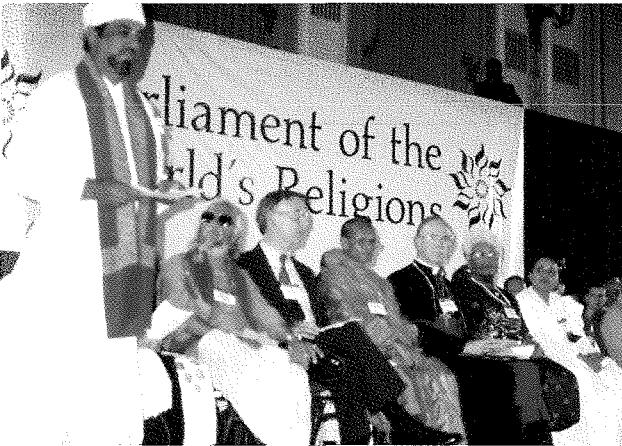
Zarathushti Presence in North America

⊙ Darbe Mehr ★ Association ☆ Small Group

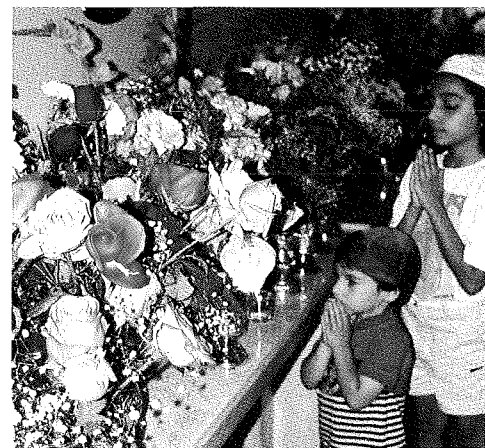
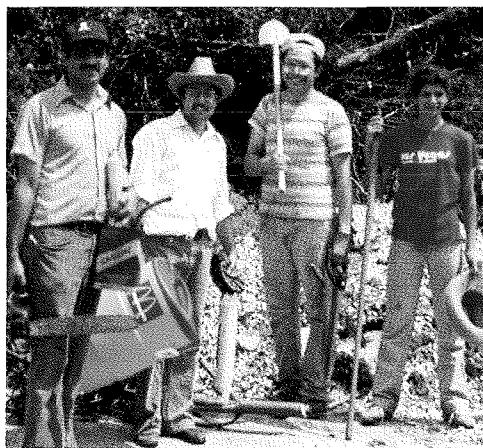
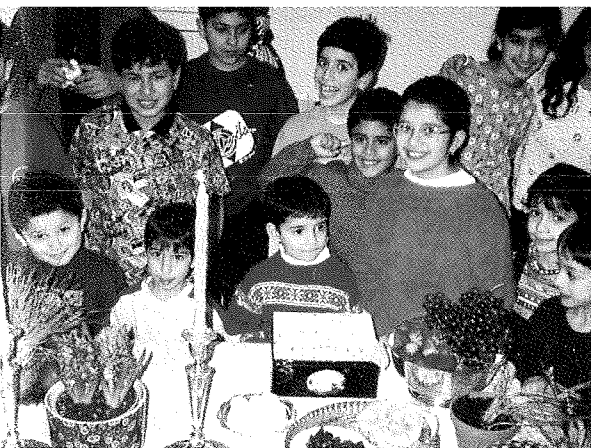




Jashne Sadeh bonfire in Houston; Beauty pageant winner Zarin Dastur, Los Angeles; "100th Toronto" Zarathushti scout troop.



NAMC president Kobad Zarolia, Parliament of Religions; FEZANA president Framroze Patel; Tree-planting at Houston center.



Haft-seen table in New Jersey; Clearing the brush on the Chicago darbe mehr property; Muktdad remembrance in Chicago.

"Golden Girls" dance group at ZSBC's 30th anniversary, Vancouver; Ervad Jamshed Ravji; Pir Sabz celebration in Vancouver.



growth of infrastructure in north america

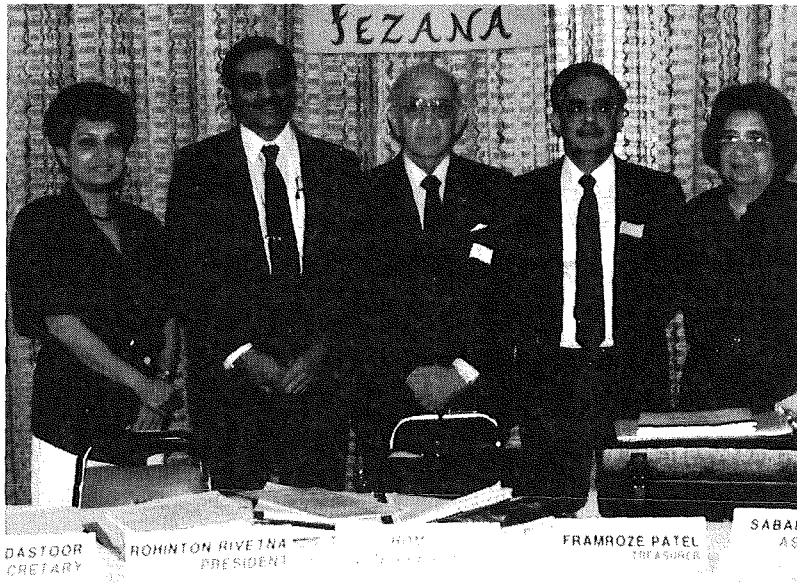
By Homi B. Minocher Homji

(from 1960s)

With the arrival of Zarathushtis in substantial numbers in the 1960s, associations started to be formed, until today there are 23 formally registered associations, a dozen informal "small groups", two Mobeds' Councils and numerous other organizations. A well-structured central body, FEZANA, serves to coordinate the work of the associations and provide guidelines to strengthen the community and preserve our religion and heritage.

which took no firm or universal decisions.

The momentous Fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress, held in Los Angeles in 1982, put up a formal proposal (for the third time by this author) to organize such a body and thanks to the critical intervention of Farangis Shahrukh, the proposal was accepted by acclamation. Rohinton Rivetna was allotted the onerous duty to work



First Executive Officers of FEZANA, 1985: Dolly Dastoor (Secretary), Rohinton Rivetna (President), Homi Minocher Homji (VP), Framroze K. Patel (Treasurer) and Sabar Balsara (Asst. Secy).

out the Constitution of what came to be known later as the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Nine associations participated in the Constitutional Convention in Chicago in May 1986 and worked for two days and nights to give a formal name and shape to the Constitution.

Mobeds councils. Just as the darbe mehrs (atash dadgahs) were being established in these associations, in course of time, the mobeds in the area of each association, who were caretakers of the atash kadeh, also felt the need to come together supportively with each other. As not unusual with us, it started with a great deal of controversy and acrimony between the strict orthodox and the modern liberal mobeds.

Some associations felt that the mobeds should be placed under the executive councils of the associations. The Chicago mobeds were reluctant at first to join, but Ervad. Kobad Zarolia, the initiator and Ervad Nozer Kotwal, both of Toronto, continued to work out the details of the proposed mobed council. Good sense prevailed, and at the 1992 AGM of the Council of Mobeds, hosted by the mobeds of Chicago, the *North American Mobeds' Council (NAMC)* was officially established.

They also established an intimate relationship with the Council of Ira-

nian Mobeds in North America (CIMNA) in California, under President Mobed Mehraban Zartoshty and Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi, both also being active members of NAMC. There is a constant exchange of information and visits between the two Councils. In 1992, NAMC was incorporated as a religious organization in Ontario and granted tax-exemption status.

Both Councils are active in holding youth camps, oriented to religion and producing and freely distributing very knowl-

edgeable religious and ceremonial literature and encouraging new mobeds to participate in joint ceremonies. Ties are maintained with mobeds in Iran and India. Since 1988, North American mobeds meet once every year in different cities, promoting frank and open discussions. But that should not be the end all.

Mobeds are the preservers and conveyors of our religion and in the changing social situation of North America, they need to act as agents of social change and to modernize and liberalize their religious wisdom and practices to conform to the changes necessary to survive with success in the North American

milieu. That should be the crucial test of their ability, notwithstanding the fact that in spite of being professionally pre-occupied, they render free and valuable service to the community whenever called upon, in rain or shine, at a moment's notice. Whatever 'parikas' are offered to them for their services are deposited by them in the Mobed Fund.

The crucial need therefore, is for retraining our mobeds to provide pastoral door-to-door services, equivalent to those practiced by the Christians and Jews. For that, however, they have to be highly trained in seminaries or theological missionary colleges and enabled to work on a full-time basis, provided the community is ready to dig deep into its pockets to finance such an evolving situation.

The youth. The Zarathushti youth of today in North America are very alert and audacious and easily adaptable to the North American culture, but not forgetful of their own culture and heritage. They are providing a responsible contribution to the religion and the community. They are participating in the executives and committees and easing into assuming higher responsibilities in future. They are forming their own associations and hierarchies with considerable initiatives and success. Our future is in good hands.

Social change. In conclusion, social change is inevitable, particularly in a new environment far from the home-based culture. Change cannot be stopped, but can be adroitly channeled into desirable avenues. That an immigrant community of vastly different cultures could so easily be established all over the North American continent and institutionalize their life style to conform to a vastly different culture, in a short period of forty years, is a marvel, even when compared to the Jewish immigrants in North America.

We have safe guarded our religion and culture very well and with the religion classes and the mobed councils as well as institutional involvement, the youth is well poised to take the future in their own hands and make the Zarathushti presence in North America a resounding and permanent feature.

Zarathushti fires will continue to burn and grow in this millennium even though the manipulative pulls of social stresses may create a community and a religion not strictly in conformity with our ancient heritage as we knew it in our parent countries. We cannot and should not resist these forces of change. Interfaith marriages will increase; so will children of mixed marriages. It is up to us to welcome them into the community, not to consider it a disguised stigma.

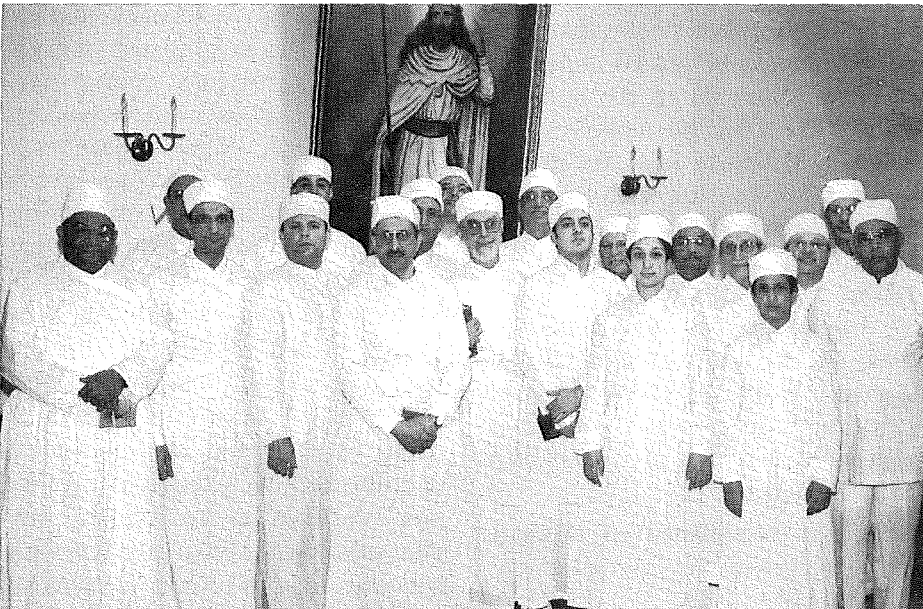
It concerns our own salvation and very existence. Else, catching on to the coat-tails of rabid orthodoxy will leave us with no religion and no community. We will just vanish into a historical relic.

FEZANA is playing a vital role in binding together the associations, mobeds and youth, spread all over North America. FEZANA Journal is a light-house that helps chart their course and is highly valued as a source of inspiration and a medium of community expression. Zarathushti life in North America would not have survived and grown so well without FEZANA. It is a model worth following in communities everywhere. Not that we are perfect – our internecine conflicts, generated by egos and personalities, if not subdued in time, may yet bring the whole structure crashing down. We should be alert to that situation, as also to the need of avoiding violent conflicts between strict orthodoxy and liberal modernization. We should establish a regular atash aderan, with a full-time burning fire to act as our guide in future.

I am sanguine that the upcoming generation of young Zarathushtis, uninfluenced by our traditional conflicts, will create a harmonious community and ensure our perpetuity. Amen. ■

Homi B. Minocher Homji was deputy secretary, Federal Government of Pakistan in charge of rural and community development (1948-61) and managing trustee of the Bomanshaw Minocher Homji Parsi General Hospital in Karachi. Deeply involved in Zarathushti affairs since his arrival in Canada in 1978, Mr. Homji has devoted many years of service to the Zarathushti community in North America, having served as president of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario in 1982 and the founding vice-president of FEZANA for its initial 3 years. In 1998, he was recognized by FEZANA as "Outstanding Zoroastrian in North America." He has authored several books on Zarathushti religion and community.

North American Mobeds' Council meeting in Chicago, 2000.



The significant roles of Arbab Rustam Guiv and Dr. Rostam Sarfeh in the evolution of the Zoroastri communities in North America.

a tale of two rustams

By Daryoush Jahanian

PHOTO: DR. D. JAHANIAN

In 1974 when I attended the Zoroastrian congress in Chicago, the local community longed for a temple. That time the possibility of construction of even one Zoroastrian temple appeared to be remote. It was through the munificence of Arbab Rustam Guiv and his confidence in Dr. Rostam Sarfeh, and Dr. Sarfeh's total faith in Mr. Guiv that today the Zoroastrian communities enjoy the presence of six temples and hopefully in the near future one more – in Washington DC.

Relations between the two Rustams, however did not start on friendly terms. In 1944 Dr. Sarfeh, a young physician and graduate of American University of Beirut, with fresh ideas, became a candidate for the parliamentary elections against Mr. Guiv and lost.

After that he was elected to the Board of the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman and remained so until 1959 when he immigrated to the United States. During his years of community service Dr. Sarfeh founded and edited *Hukht Magazine*. Despite his support of Mr. Guiv's position in public, the differences could erupt at any time.

In 1966 while visiting Dr. Sarfeh in New York I informed him that Mr. Guiv had donated all of his wealth to the Guiv Foundation to be spent for the Zoroastrian community. Dr. Sar-



به ولای تو که تر بنده خویشم خوانی از سر خواجگی کون و مکان بر خیزم

"I swear to your greatness, if you call me your servant, I will rise as master of the world."

feh's comment was not very positive and in my opinion reflected his bitterness at the past defeat.

In 1971 Dr. Sarfeh returned for a visit to Iran. He had an opportunity to see Mr. Guiv's charitable projects. He was impressed that Guiv had even evacuated his own residence and donated it to the community. What truly touched Dr. Sarfeh came during a visit to Rustam Baug, where Mr. Guiv had constructed a housing complex for lower income families; most impressive was

the fact that Mr. Guiv himself had moved in and taken residence there.

On one occasion in 1971, Hukht writers had organized a lunch party to honor Dr. Sarfeh. Many Zoroastrian leaders and Iranian dignitaries were in attendance. At one point, when a photographer was to take a picture of Mr. Guiv and Dr. Sarfeh together, Dr. Sarfeh addressed Mr. Guiv before all the people, "You are greater than one can imagine, I cannot sit at your level. I will sit on the floor and you on the chair." The insistence of Mr. Guiv and other friends did not dissuade him. At the direction of Dr. Sarfeh this picture was placed on the cover of Hukht with a Persian poem underneath [photo at left].

This was a turning point in the relations between the two Rustams that influenced the future of Zoroastrian communities of North America. On the one hand it was based on total faith of Dr. Sarfeh in Mr. Guiv, and on the other hand Mr. Guiv's confidence in Dr. Sarfeh. The faith was so strong and indelible that after Mr. Guiv's death, Dr. Sarfeh bought the next lot for himself and announced, "it is a great honor to be buried next to this great soul."

Temples in seven major cities. In 1973 Dr. Sarfeh returned to Iran to raise funds for the construction of the *New York temple*. He did not plan to ask Mr. Guiv for a contribution,

because in his words “he had done all that he could.” In a wedding party as he was discussing the issue with friends, Mr. Guiv heard the conversation from a distance, came to Dr. Sarfeh and asked what they were discussing. On hearing about it, Mr. Guiv immediately told him that he would cover all the costs. The New York temple was inaugurated in the presence of the Indian Ambassador, the honorable Mr. Rustam Nargolvala.

Next, the *Chicago temple* was constructed. It was through Mr. Guiv’s generosity and the local community’s endeavor that this project became a reality. The Chicago community has enjoyed the interest and participation of the local members and financially remains strong. They can, however take advantage of the local scholar more effectively.

The 1979 turmoil in Iran brought many Iranians including Zoroastrians to the west. Mr. Guiv had financial assets, and was willing to spend for the community. He consulted Dr. Sarfeh who told him many Zoroastrian families have come here and taken residence. They are in need of temples and community centers, otherwise they will assimilate in the vast population. The Guiv Foundation and Trust were set up. The property in *Los Angeles* was purchased and the temple built. The Guiv Trust donated \$250,000 and the community’s contribution stood at \$650,000. Truly, such participation raised hopes for the survival of Zoroastrianism in the new continent. This center is the only one that enjoys the presence of a full time mobed.

The property of the North California Zoroastrian Center in *San Jose* is in the best location with a commanding hilltop view. The local community has constructed an *Atash Kadeh* there.

It has potential for more development, but this task requires expression of interest and active participation by the local people. A dedicated mobed has served the community for the past twenty years with full spiritual devotion. In the cities of *Vancouver* and *Toronto*, in Canada, Zoroastrian communities have temples that are utilized as a house of worship and a place for social gatherings.

Dr. Sarfeh always desired for the Zoroastrians to have a center in *Washington DC*, with a full time scholar to present our religion to all visitors from around the world. As once he said, “It was by the grace of God that General Khodarahm Shahryari volunteered to carry out the task.” This project is currently under way.

Guiv Foundation. In early 1992 I visited Dr. Sarfeh at his home to take over the task of the Guiv Foundation. There were many boxes full of papers covering the floor. I was overwhelmed by the volume of work and became concerned. He looked at me and said, “you cannot believe how much I worked in the past ten years.” In order to save money for the community I did the secretarial work, bookkeeping and even at times the accounting myself. Many nights I spent into the early morning hours.” Of course all this hard work would have gone to waste if I didn’t have the other trustees’ support and input.

I asked him what made him carry on. He told me, “because I had promised it to Mr. Guiv.” He added, in the last moments of his life I was at his bedside. For the last time he opened his eyes and said, “Dr. Sarfeh, I want you to promise me that all the money will be spent for the community as I have allocated.” I told him “I promise”. Then Mr. Guiv closed his eyes and passed away.

It is important to mention that all the charitable projects couldn’t have been accomplished without Mrs. Guiv’s encouragement, as she always remained a pillar of support.

Mission impossible. Considering all the projects – construction of seven Zoroastrian temples in North America and one in Australia (plus one center built by the local community in Houston, Texas) the Zoroastrians of North America, Canada and Australia have accomplished a mission impossible. It has given them direction and sense of responsibility and devotion toward community causes.

In 1996 when the Guiv Foundation was facing financial crisis, only a short conversation with the president of the Chicago association resulted in granting of a \$10,000 loan. A year later the same amount was extended by General Shahryari (the president of ZCDMW). This year the same gesture of goodwill was demonstrated by the southern California association.

Today the Zoroastrian centers more than ever are in need of full time qualified scholars. We hope this task will be accomplished in the near future. Once the genuine teachings of our prophet are realized, differences in interpretation of the scriptures will narrow and even disappear. ■

Daryoush Jahanian, M.D., is an obstetrician-gynecologist in the Kansas



City area, with degrees from University of Tehran and Washington University, St. Louis. He is a founder and president of the *Fravahar Zoroastrian*

Youth organization of Tehran. Daryoush served as trustee of the *Rustam Guiv Trust of California* 1981-89, is a trustee and VP of the *Rustam Guiv Foundation of New York* since 1990, and its president since 1992. He is a founder and two-term president of the *Zoroastrian Association of Kansas*. A noted author and lecturer on the Zoroastrian religion, Daryoush also teaches religion classes for children.

Upcoming New Darbe Mehrs and Expansions. With the blessings of Ahura Mazda, several new Darbe Mehrs and expansions are on the horizon: Chicago is building a 2,000 sq. ft. expansion off the main hall; Washington has submitted plans to the zoning board for approval for their Darbe Mehr; Houston is rushing to complete Phase II before the World Congress; Dallas and Boston are both raising funds for a place of their own; New York and Toronto, having outgrown their Darbe Mehrs, are looking at new properties .

financing the future of fezana

By Rustom Kevala and Jerry Kheradi

FEZANA's vision is to develop a Zarathushti community in North America that is well-connected, well educated, well grounded in Zarathushti religious thought, values and ethics, respectful of diversity, strong in collective giving, economically prosperous, a community which will be recognized for its contribution in all aspects of religious and communal life.

Strategic Plan. In 1997, under the leadership of president (1994-98) Dolly Dastoor, FEZANA developed a strategic plan (the Plan). The Plan is based on a broad vision of the future, a future full of growth and continuous progress for the community, revival of the spirit and knowledge, in an atmosphere of trust and comfort. The Plan is based on a vision to develop infrastructures for our human resources – our youth, our shut-ins, our frail and our elderly – to create an atmosphere of pride in our community, where all Zarathushtis can hold their heads up high and say “I am a Zarathushti” and people will know who they are.

The Plan includes 15 action items developed with input from many people:

- (1) Publish educational materials for parents, teachers and individuals.
- (2) Provide loans, scholarships for religious education and other higher education.
- (3) Update directories and maintain census records of birth, and deaths.
- (4) Continually organize youth and adult congresses and sports events.
- (5) Develop greater presence at interfaith events.
- (6) Establish a retirement home.

(7) Establish a Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce.

(8) Prepare informational material for informing non-Zarathushtis about our religion.

(9) Help to establish a united world Zarathushti organization.

(10) Establish mechanisms to resolve conflicts and settle disputes.

(11) Establish a center for research in Zarathushti culture, history and religion.

(12) Establish a program of Zarathushti Studies in a major University.

(13) Adopt a unified calendar for the community.

(14) Establish a consecrated place of worship.

(15) Establish a Zarathushti Developmental Bank.

FEZANA has published two books on religion and a videocassette. One of the associations has published course material based on our religious principles which is widely used by the Boy Scouts of America, and several other associations have prepared or are experimenting with educational material for teaching classes. FEZANA has endowment funds for scholarship and emergency assistance, publishes directories, organizes or helps to organize congresses and youth retreats. The FEZANA Journal keeps the community abreast of events and provides helpful information about our religion and history. But much more is needed.

Finances. So far, FEZANA has operated from volunteer labor and services. Most donations are passed through to various charities. In mid-2000, FEZANA had about \$130,000

in endowment funds and another \$130,000 in unrestricted funds.

In the not too distant future, FEZANA will need paid administrative staff and facilities to handle correspondence, record keeping, subscriptions and website maintenance. Preparation of quality religious education material will require purchase of books for research and time of trained educators, writers and scholars. A budget of \$50,000 to \$100,000 will be needed. Scholarship endowment funds will need to grow to over \$500,000 to allow FEZANA to give meaningful scholarships to potential religious scholars and community leaders. Community facilities and retirement homes will require millions of dollars. An endowed chair at a university will need at least \$2 million. A consecrated temple with an endowment for its maintenance will cost even more.

Fortunately due to our high education level, the average income of most 2-income Zarathushti families in North America exceeds \$60,000 per year and the combined net worth of Zarathushtis in North America easily exceeds 250 million dollars. We have over 100 millionaires* among us already! We do have the means to finance our future. We are confident that the community will come forward with funds for the coming years. ■

Dr. Rustom Kevala has been treasurer of FEZANA since 1998. His passion is to build up FEZANA into a viable, well-funded and well-respected organization to serve the Zarathushti community with the needed infrastructures and support mechanisms in North America.

Dr. Jerry M. Kheradi is a gastroenterologist in Providence, RI. As Chair of the FEZANA Funds and Finance Committee, he is committed to placing FEZANA on a sound financial base.

* The last US census showed that one in every 100 individuals in the USA has net assets of over \$1million.

With the 7th century destruction of the Persian Empire by the Arabs, there were only two distinguishable branches of Zarathushtis – from India and Iran. After 1300 years a new dimension is being added to this equation of the existing group dynamics. With the breakdown of the Soviet Republic there is now emerging a people who want to claim back the religion of their ancestors and assert their identity as Zarathushtis. In addition the people of Iran who were converted by force also want to claim back their pre-Islamic religious identity. The third leg of this dimension is provided by people who have learned of the ethical doctrine and want to be its followers.

Is the contemporary community prepared to redefine the parameters of its existing group structure? How will this expanding group affect the present Zarathushti identity as we know of it. Will the redefining be based on public opinion or is the community prepared to organize structures to facilitate the process of acceptance.

In this chapter Dr. Meher Master Moos will discuss the momentum generated by the people of Tajikistan who are re-emerging to assert their national identities which they consider synonymous with their religious identity. And Burzin Atashband will discuss the emerging Zarathushtis of Russia. Dr Jehan Bagli will discuss the working of the Zarathushtrian Assembly and the impact it has on the contemporary Zarathushti psyche.

Dolly Dastoor, Guest editor

event **31**

zarathushti revival in the **original homeland**

By Meher Master-Moos

(from 1990s)

Zarathushti revival in its original homeland of Ariyana Vaeja, the lands of old Iran, now part of the former USSR republics and Europe, and its impact on the existing worldwide Zarathushti community.

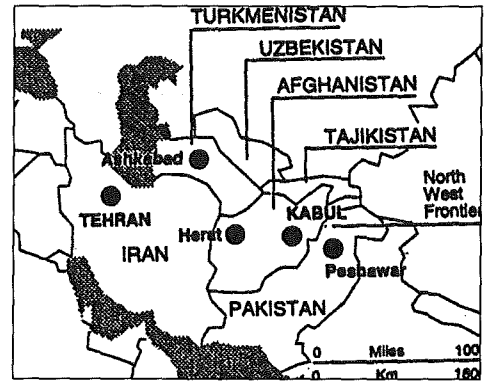
Background. In post-Sasanian times, in the mountainous regions of Mt. Demavand, a dynasty of Zarathushti priests (maghavs) ruled. In the high Caucasian mountains between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, in remote mountain villages of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Southern Russia, the Zarathushti Mobed families continued to preserve the faith in "Maghav villages". People from the regions of Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, also parts of Turkey, Syria, and Azerbaijan had been forcibly taken by the Russian Communist regime from their villages to work in the communes setup in Russia; as well as in the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan etc. wherever labor was required. These families lost their original roots, culture, faith and the second and third generations were absorbed in the main stream of communism.

Tajikistan was particularly badly affected. The province of Khorasan was part of the Iranian Empire even before the Achaemenian Empire. The people have preserved their Persian language and culture and way of life since times immemorial. The Tajiks are proud of the fact that Firdowsi, the national poet of Tajikistan was a Khorasani. The Tajik Film Studio produced a magnificent series of Shah Nameh films in Persian, even during the Communist regime.

Consul Zagrebely of the Russian Cultural Center, Bombay, described the Tajiks as "Parsis of the USSR". Prof. Dr. Rahim Masov, of the Academy of History, Tajikistan, wrote movingly in his book *The History of a National Catastrophe* how the politics of the Shah of Iran, the Czar of Russia and the British Imperial Raj in India, destroyed the Zarathushti strongholds and Persian culture of the Tajik people and how it was further destroyed by the communist regime by creating artificial political boundaries between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and forcing of the Tajik people to use Uzbeki and Russian languages and forget their own cultural Persian heritage.

Prophecy of Behramshah Shroff. Late Ustad Saheb Behramshah Shroff is recorded to have stated that when it is time for Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb to come out in public life, the population of people of Zarathushti ancestry and faith living in the regions of what was formerly part of the Iranian Empire and which after 1918 come under the communist regime would number about two to three crores (20-30 millions).

That time has come now! Since 1991, the desire of the people of these countries to revive their own original ancestral Zarathushti faith is becoming more and more apparent.



Dr. Mehr Master Moos [seated, center] at Tajikistan Society Headquarters in 1991.

REVIVAL IN TAJIKISTAN

In September 1991, I was invited to Tajikistan by the President of the Government of Tajikistan Friendship Society, Madame Maisara Kolonova. The Tajik people were very happy that their first guest was a Zarathushti. They made every effort to impress on me their original Persian Zarathushti ancestry asking the Zarathushtis in India and world wide to support them in the revival of their own Zarathushti culture and religion.

In response to their request, in 1992, the first step was taken. Through Zoroastrian College, a visit of the First Tajik Nouruz delegation to India was organized. Seven of the best scholars and personalities made contacts and friends with Zarathushtis in India. In October 1992, the Government of Tajikistan Friendship Society arranged a goodwill delegation visit through Zoroastrian College to attend the First Avesta World Conference in Tajikistan. An agreement was signed between the Tajikistan Technological University and the Zoroastrian College to enable persons from Tajikistan to visit India and study at Zoroastrian college in Sanjan, Bombay. Also the students and faculty of the Khujand and Dushanbe campuses could study there and take their diplomas and degrees by research thesis through Zoroastrian College.

In 1992 when Homi Sethna, Homai Billimoria and myself had stayed overnight in the Varoh village, in one of the communes in the lower river valley area, we had met one villager who said he was a mobed, he took off his shirt and showed us what he was wearing – a full length *sudreh* (up to his knees), with long sleeves, complete with ‘*bohiyun button*’ at the neck, as well as a woolen *kushti* tied

“ They made every effort to impress upon me their original Persian Zarathushti ancestry, asking Zarathushtis worldwide to support them in the revival of their ancestral religion and heritage. ”

around the waist three times with the final knot in the front. He took us to an adjoining room as he was afraid of the other commune members finding out about him wearing the *sudreh* and *kushti*.

In 1996, the Government of Tajikistan organized the Second Avesta World Conference to coincide with the 5th Anniversary of the Republic. Zoroastrian College was invited and a delegation of five including myself attended. President Emomaly Rakhmonov was very keen to revive the ancient culture and language of the Persian-Dari speaking Tajik people; and encourage the teaching of Avesta in their schools and colleges.

In the Khujand campus, Professor Kasamjaan informed us that he had visited Karachi Zarathushtis and stayed and learned from them. He was keen to come to Zoroastrian College in India for six months to study with Parsi priests. He said there were about 20,000 persons practicing the Zarathushti faith in the villages.

So many persons from Tajikistan have written to me requesting help.

Dr. Firuza Abdullaeva sent emails saying that on returning home to Dushanbe after attending the Zoroastrian College World Congress and visiting with the Zarathushtis of Mumbai in 1994, she had started the AVESTO Organization to enable her children and other family members and friends to revive and take pride in and know more about their own history, culture and ancient faith. She requested books on Zarathushti religion and Avestan prayers preferably in Persian language script.

REVIVAL IN RUSSIA

Zarathushti revival is going on in other republics also. In late 1997 from the southern Russian town of Krasnodar, a person claiming to be a Zarathushti priest – Sheikh Khalid Ismailvich Gasanian, visited Bombay. He said his father’s side of the family were all Zarathushti priests and high priests in earlier periods of history. They had a fire temple in

Georgia, which was previously part of the Empire of Iran but these lands were handed over to the Czar of Russia. After Georgia was taken over by the communists, his family and other Zarathushtis of the village were moved as labor to work in the Krasnodar district in southern Russia.

Change in policy. The policy of the Russian government has changed. They are now allowing people to rebuild their churches and places of worship. Zarathushtis in Apsheransk township were taking advantage of this new law to rebuild their fire temple. Gasanian came to Bombay to Zoroastrian College in the hope of meeting priests who would help him to rebuild their fire temple and consecrate the Holy Fire. He was also requesting funds for the rebuilding of the fire temple. He returned disappointed, as there was a major communication problem with the priests; and his own funds were so limited and his stay so short that it was difficult to arrange for him to meet suitable persons who would be willing to provide funds for his fire temple rebuilding project.

Congress of CIS countries. In May 2000 the first Zoroastrian Congress of the former communist countries was held in St Petersburg, Russia, organized by *Pavel Globa* of the Avesta School of Astrology [see next article] It was attended by Ervad Burzin Atashband, Zoroastrian College representative in Moscow. This group would like to construct a fire temple in Russia.

We are witnessing today the fulfillment of the prophecy made by Behramshah Shroff. There is a general awakening of the large slumbering population of Zarathushti ancestry residing in these countries, formerly within the old Zarathushti Iranian Empires until the downfall of the Sasanian dynasty in 651 CE. These are the people who will revive and carry forward the Mazdayasni Zarathushti faith in the 21st century, under the spiritual rule of

Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb. It is the bounden duty of Zarathushtis worldwide to support them in these efforts.

IMPACT OF THIS REVIVAL

What impact will this revival of the Zarathushti faith in the former USSR have on Zarathushti identity of the 21st century? Is the present Zarathushti community in India and the Parsis who have migrated from India to other countries, ready to accept and help the people of the ancient Zarathushti ancestral stock? Time only will tell. But we cannot wait too long.

“ There is a general awakening of the large slumbering population of Zarathushti ancestry residing in these countries ... these are the people who will revive and carry forward the Mazdayasni Zarathushti faith in the 21st century. ”

Another serious issue to be considered is whether such persons who are presently coming to India from these countries in the hope of meeting the Parsis in India and gaining support for their cause should be permitted to enter the existing fire temples. The bar in India against entry of persons not wearing a sudreh and kushti into the fire temples is based on historical and spiritual reasons.

Historically, when Zarathushtis came to Sanjan, among the terms on which the Hindu Raja granted them asylum was that land would be given to them to construct the Iranshah Atash Bahram in Sanjan on condition that only their own group would be allowed to worship there and they would not try to convert the local Hindu and Adivasi subjects. For the past thirteen centuries, the Parsi priests in India have kept their promise. Until today only Zarathushtis wearing sudreh and kushti are allowed inside the holy consecrated fire temples.

The spiritual reason for barring entry relates to the aura and *chakhras* and different grades of fire energies and vibratory frequencies that are in each individual person's aura. The holy consecrated atash bahram and atash aderan fires have a high grade of purity and vibratory frequencies that can have the effect of over-powering and extinguishing the lesser/slower speed fire energy in the chakhra of a person who does not habitually wear sudreh and kushti or recite the Avesta manthras. It is for their own safety that such persons should refrain from entering the fire temples.

An un-consecrated atash dadgah does not have such very high grade of vibratory frequencies. It is thus safe for anyone to come within the surroundings of an atash dadgah fire. The Zoroastrian College building, the Dadar Athornan Madressa and Cama Athornan Institute in Bombay as well as the Darbe Mehrs in

the West, all have only dadgah fires. It would therefore be possible to provide training for persons of Zarathushti ancestral stock at the Zoroastrian College building in Sanjan by providing an ordinary dadgah afargan to each trainee.

While the Zoroastrian College Avesta and Scriptural Studies department, since 1991, has provided educational materials in Avesta grammar, language and literature, much more remains to be done:

- It is of utmost necessity for Zoroastrian priests and scholars to learn Russian; and also transliterate the Avestan book into Russian script with translations in Russian, just as Parsi scholars and others have translated and transliterated into Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, English, German, French, Persian and other languages.

- Teaching materials in the form of video cassettes, computer CDs, audio cassettes, books on the web and printed books need to be prepared.

- Through Zoroastrian College we are prepared and willing to provide a Residential Training Center for people of Zarathushti ancestry.

- An exchange program would be beneficial. Send scholars and priests, especially of the younger generation, to these countries as exchange students and invite selected persons from there to India and Iran to train them for spreading the knowledge in their own countries.

This will provide a strong foundation for the 21st century. With global support of Zarathushtis worldwide it would be possible and practical to produce a new generation of well trained and educated priests and persons to carry on the torch of the faith for the coming millennium.

AN APPEAL TO THE WORLD COMMUNITY

Even though the Tajik Goodwill delegation of March 1992 met the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans in Bombay, and the FPZAI promised support there was no follow up. If Zarathushtis do not wake up now, if we do not heed the cry for help and support by these people of ancient Zarathushti ancestry for the revival of their ancestral religion, we run the risk of losing our people to other faiths mainly Christianity and Islam. ■

Dame Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos, is a barrister, advocate,

jurist and International Law professor. She is founder and president of *Mazdayasnie Monasterie, Zoroastrian College and the Shah*



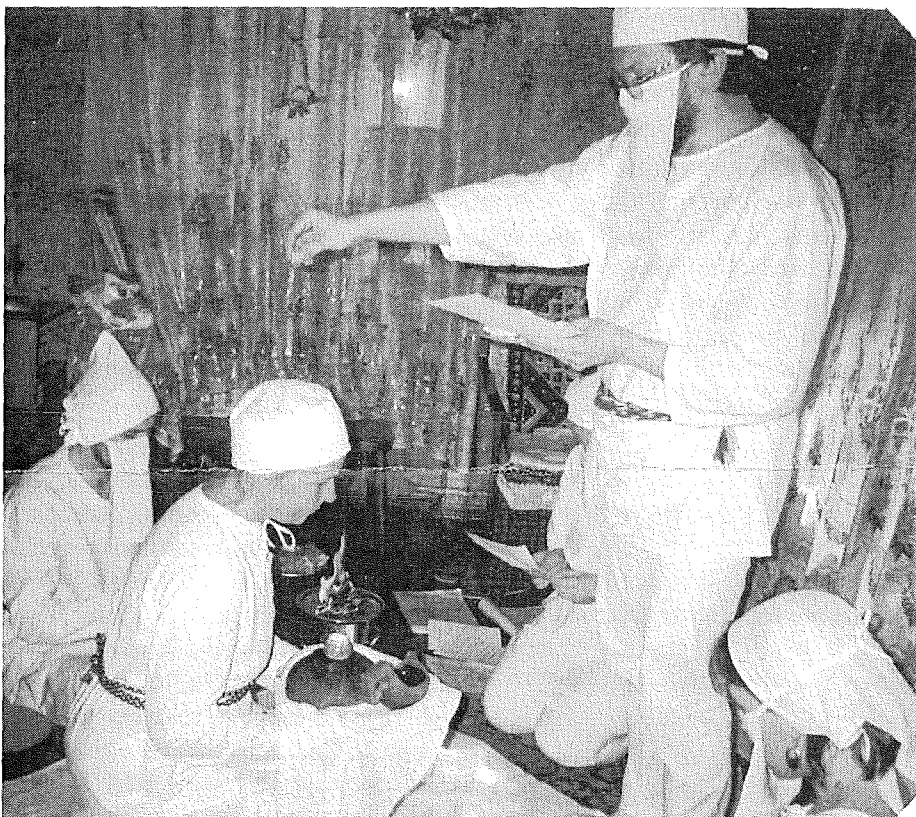
Behram Baug Society and author of over 15 books on law, religion and alternative medicine. Dr. Moos is a proponent of Ilm-e Khshnoom.

event **32**

zarathushtis of st. petersburg

By Burzin E. Atashband (from 1990s)

Globa Pavel Pavlovich, believed to be of Zarathushti descent, founded the Zarathushti group of St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1994. They are seeking help from Zarathushtis worldwide in getting books, religious items, sudreh-kushti and funds to build a fire temple.



Chistyakov Mikhail performing ceremony in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The Zarathushti group of St. Petersburg was formed in April 1994 through the painstaking efforts of Mr. Globa Pavel Pavlovich who is believed to be of Zarathushti descent from his maternal grandfather's lineage. He learned about the Zarathushti religion from his grandfather and is now trying to spread the faith in the CIS (Commonwealth of

Independent States) countries. They have a great interest in the Zarathushti faith, believe in its doctrines and say that the Zarathushti manthras are the answer for all their problems.

Ceremonies. Some selected persons, both men and women become priests called *herbads* who perform the *navjote* of others of any age. They make their own kushti from three dif-

PHOTO: BURZIN ATASHBAND



PHOTOS: BURZIN ATASHBAND

Left, Mikhail investing a new initiate with a sudreh and kushti, home made of 3 colors – yellow, blue and red. Right, Delegates at the First Zoroastrian Congress of CIS countries, in St. Petersburg: from left, Globa Pavel, Chistyakov Mikhail, junior dean, Ms. Sokolona Nilolavna, editor of “Mithra” magazine, Burzin Atashband (with glasses).

ferent colors – yellow, blue and red. For their navjote, after a bath and prayers with pomegranate juice are recited, the whole ceremony is performed and the kushti is tied around the waist on a white garment.

On festivals like Nouruz, they have the holy fire burning, they dress in white and every one, including women wear the ‘padan’ i.e. the mouths are covered. They believe it is a good practice, and also helps them prevent getting infections.

Beliefs. They are very strong in their beliefs and do not like their group members believing in other religions. They say they do not visit churches because they do not believe it as their own. They say the Zarathushti religion is the religion of their ancestors which brings happiness, charity, progress and positive thinking.

They believe that Lord Zarathushtra was an Aryan and he gave every human the freedom of choice of following good or evil and they have accepted the good i.e. to be good Zarathushtis. According to them Zarathushtra was born in Russia and preached the religion from the Ural mountains and it is their duty as true Aryans to spread the religion.

Prayers and priests. Every week the community meetings are held in some Zarathushti house. They know the kushti prayers, Sarosh baj, Sarosh Yasht Hadokt and other com-

mon prayers which they have printed in Russian and English script.

They have translated the *Khordesh Avesta* which they want to publish and are also trying to translate the *Bundahishn*. They publish a journal called *Mithra* which consists of articles about the Zarathushti religion namely on Stoat Yasht, Studkar Nask, on asho ravans, Zarathushti astrology, stars and planets, special days and holidays, Nouroz, caps of Persia, strong Aryan men – Kershasp, fire temples and more.

According to them Parsis are the original Zarathushtis, but they too can follow the religion of Zarathushtra. When asked what their reaction would be, if in India the doors of the agiaries are closed for them. They said that it will be the Parsis who will be the losers in not letting them pray, because they have realized the religion of Zarathushtra and will follow its doctrines all their life, as they have been given the rights to do so by Lord Zarathushtra.

Mikhail Chistikov is one of their priest who enthusiastically spreads the religion among Russians. He is interested in learning all the fundamental duties of a priest.

Needs. Their immediate need is to form a strong group of believers and to build a fire temple. They require funds, religious books, priest clothes, photos of Lord Zarathushtra, barsam,

afargan, sudreh-kushtis, Avesta dictionary and other such items. They have planned to do jashans on festive occasions, for house warming, good health and general prosperity.

The above was gathered following my visit to the First Zoroastrian Congress of CIS countries in St. Petersburg in May 2000. What I have mentioned is what they discussed at the meeting, what has been told to me by them and what I have seen.

I found them to be sincere, very interested in our religion, trying to gather all the information they can about the religion of Zarathushtra, and are sincerely trying to follow and spread it. They staunchly believe themselves to be Aryans and proud of their Zarathushti ancestry. ■

Burzin E. Atashband is founder-member of the Moscow-based Zoroastrian Association of Russia (TZAR), which currently has 11 members – all professionals or students, from India, USA, Iran or Pakistan. They keep in contact with Zarathushti groups in St. Petersburg, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He can be reached at burzin@caravan.ru.



event **33** **impact of the** (from 1990s)
zarathushtrian assembly
on the zarathushti psyche

By Jehan Bagli

Actions of the California-based Zarathushtrian Assembly are extremely distressing for some, who are indoctrinated into non-acceptance of those born of non-Zarathushti parents. On the other hand, there are those who consider the message of Zarathushtra as one for all humanity, and are sympathetic to the work of the Assembly.

Iranian and Parsi psyche: Historically, the *Rivayats* spanning over four centuries (1478-1780) trace some of the fundamental differences in the understanding of the religion of Zarathushtra between the Iranian and Parsi priesthood. A major focus of the difference rests on the importance of the words of Asho Zarathushtra in the Gathas relative to the beliefs of the later Avesta and ritual performances. The Iranian psyche clearly emphasizes the Gathic teachings, while giving lesser importance to the Younger Avesta with rituals playing a secondary role.

The Iranian Zarathushti community visualized a silver lining of hope during the later Qajar rulers in the early part of the 20th century to regain their religious freedom. They were then thrust into modernization by the late Reza Shah Pahlavi in the later half of the century. This burst of prosperity, kindled among the community, the zeal to study their history and religion.

Two men, among others, played a major role in this vigil. One of them was a remarkable Zarathushti, *Arbab Keikhoshrow Shahrokh* from a learned family in Kerman, who then represented Zarathushtis in the Iranian *Majles*. The other, an ardent patriot, who played a key role in this

awakening, was Ibrahim *Pour-e Davoud*, the son of Muslim parents. This Muslim scholar translated the Gathas into Persian and presented the religion of Zarathushtra to the Iran of the 20th century, as preached by Zarathushtra free of the syncretism, that we have today.

This reinforced the early psyche of the Iranian priesthood and the understanding of the religion by the community. Pour-e Davoud's efforts were also widely applauded by Parsi Zarathushtis of India at that time. In summary, the Iranian Zarathushtis evolved believing that the religion of Zarathushtra is universal for all mankind, and the impact of rituals was secondary for their spiritual existence. The beliefs that evolved in the Younger Avestan era (5th century BCE and later) and the later texts such as *Bundahishn*, *Vendidad* and other compositions of Middle Persian origin were of secondary importance.

Since their arrival in India in 936 CE, the Parsis by design adopted a strict exclusionary attitude linked with some rigid ground rules. One of these was not to accept a non-Zarathushti as a member of the Zarathushti community. Secondly, their priesthood followed the ceremonial practices that evolved in the Sasanian epoch,

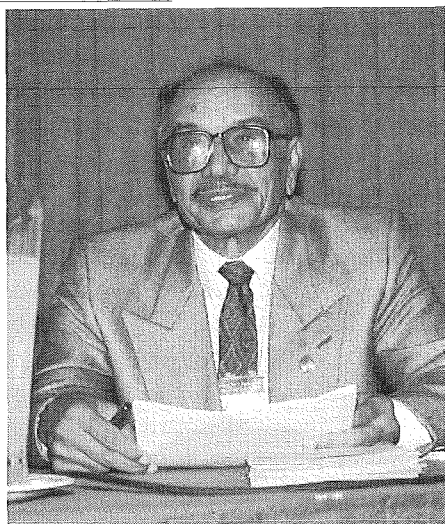
heavily laden with rituals. For them, the Gathas fulfilled the role of a fountain head of all Younger Avestan and Middle Persian texts. To summarize Parsis came to regard the Zarathushti religion and teachings as their inherited treasure, not to be contaminated by the rest of humanity. They regarded their rituals as serious means of attunement with the divinity and drew spiritual power through their performances. They see a precise continuity of a firm link in the Younger Avesta as well as Middle Persian texts, with the message of Asho Zarathushtra.

The Assembly and the mindset: It is against this backdrop of history, that we must examine the genesis and influence of the Zarathushtrian Assembly on the Zarathushti psyche in North America and globally.

The Zarathushtrian Assembly was founded in Los Angeles, California in 1990 by seven individuals led by Dr. Ali Jafarey, a Zarathushti theologian, born of Muslim parents. Dr. Jafarey was inducted into the Zarathushti faith through a navjote ceremony by Mobed Rashid Shahmerdan of Iran. The major objective of the Assembly is to study and disseminate the knowledge of religion of Zarathushtra and to promote the Zarathushti fellowship.

The Assembly believes among many aspects of Zarathushti theology, that caste, color, race and nationality do not play any discriminatory role in the universal message of Zarathushtra. Furthermore, all beliefs in false gods, goddesses and similar imaginary beings, and the performance of rituals to appease them should be abandoned and all irrational ideas and practices should be discarded.

Zarathushtis, both Parsis and Iranian have always respected and appreciated the Zarathushti scholarship of Islamic literary men such as Ibrahim Pour-e Davoud, Abol-ghaasem Hasan, Firdowsi, Tusi and many others. It is for the first time in the long history of the Zarathushti religion,



Left, Dr. Ali Jafarey, co-founder of the Zarathushtrian Assembly. Right, Dr. Jafarey, officiating at initiation into the faith, of a Jewish American, an Englishman, a Cuban American and an Iranian.

that the Parsi community is faced with a Zoroastrian scholar of Islamic parentage, who has taken up the cudgel to revive the *daena vanghui* to its Gathic purity and Zarathushti universality.

The Assembly asserts it does not convert people. It disseminates the divine message of Zarathushtra, and accepts those who, after due consideration, decide of their own free will, to choose the Good Religion, and recognizes them as Zarathushtis through their *navjote* (*sedreh pushi*) ceremony.

It is important to point out that the Assembly does not reject rituals outright. In fact *navjote*, wedding and funeral (*porseh*) ceremonies are essential parts of the religion as practiced by the Assembly. Prayers for the ceremonies are, however, carefully composed to emphasize the Older Avestan Gathic prayers in preference to those formulated in the later Sasanian times. It is generally believed, particularly by traditional Zarathushtis that the Assembly rejects all the Zarathushtrian texts in favor of the Gathas. This has led to dubbing the assembly as the "Gatha-alone cult". The fact is that while the Assembly regards Gathas as the true scriptures and the actual words of Asho Zarathustra, it has publicly asserted the younger Avesta

and Middle Persian literature as valuable texts of the Zarathushti tradition.

It must be emphasized that the exclusionary socio-religious attitude followed by the early settlers from Khorasan in India, was perhaps essential under the prevailing circumstances for their very survival and that of our glorious faith. They deserve due credit for their action. However, following that mind-set for over a thousand years, has invariably entrenched the sentiment as a dogma of the religion. The undisputed fact is, that the Gathic vision of Asho Zarathushtra radiates the universal message of salvation for all mankind without reservation.

Consequences: The actions of the Assembly are extremely distressing for some Zarathushtis (mostly Parsis) of North America and those around the world, who are indoctrinated into non-acceptance of those born of non-Zarathushti parents. To add insult to injury, it is sentimentally devastating for them to see that the organization is led by a Zarathushti of non-Zarathushti parentage. On the other hand there are many Parsis who consider the message of Zarathushtra as one for all humanity, and are quite sympathetic to the work of the Assembly. While these Parsis may not entirely comply with the ritualistic and spiritual brand of Zarathushti practices of

the Assembly, at least on philosophical and rational grounds they are in consonance with the views of the Assembly.

This has drawn a new wedge in the North American and global Zarathushti community. Ironically, from a philosophical and rational vantage point, the Assembly has bridged the inherent cultural gap between Iranian and Parsi Zarathushtis by bringing them closer on a commonality of greater consequence. In principle, the Assembly has firmly institutionalized the views, that Iranian Zarathushtis and their priesthood have held for a long time.

In North America, we live in a highly dynamic social fabric, continuously influenced by technological advances. In theory, the human, the civil, the affirmative and the religious rights of people to live in freedom, irrespective of caste, color, or creed within the constraints of the law, are protected. For the emerging generation entrenched in this culture of secure human rights it is extremely difficult, even ironic, to accept that the Good Religion of Zarathushtra is a religious heritage of a tribe of people. The thought that no one else has a right to the religion of Good Conscience, and that the presence of non-Zarathushtis would vitiate our holy sacrament, may seem

to the youth, as a violation of religious rights of some human beings.

The actions of the Assembly tear through the sentiments of those who sternly uphold that the traditional ground rules of the 10th and 11th century should and must apply in the 21st century even in a materialistic socio-cultural environment of the West. Furthermore, to mount a debate on a scholarly basis, to demonstrate that these exclusionary measures are in harmony with the doctrine of Zarathushtra's religion is not easy. For there is little by way of theological armament available, for Parsi Zarathushtis to argue the case of preserving their traditional notion in the face of a changing climate. Their serious concern is causing them to turn to attributes that clearly demonstrate their fears.

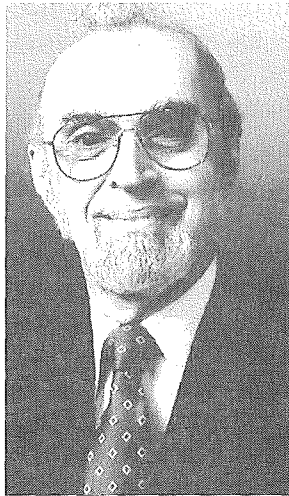
Countenance over Confrontation: It is a fact that the Zarathushtrian Assembly, that celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, is here to stay. Accusing them of alleged violation of Zarathushti doctrine, and scriptures leads only to acrimonious debates, that only promotes disharmony. The Assembly has always maintained that it is not interested in being a party to any organization, or demanding anything of other Zarathushti organizations. The energy that is spent in the negative publicity can be best utilized in consolidating the unity within.

These Zarathushtis ignore the fact that they are providing valuable publicity to the Zarathushtrian Assembly, that would otherwise need extra efforts to make its existence known. Callous remarks such as "Gatha alone cult...has thrown open the doors of our sacred religion to any Tom, Dick and Harry that wants to waltz in" show a sign of desperation of traditionally oriented Zarathushtis. They would perhaps benefit greatly by turning their frustrations, towards convincing the Zarathushti youth, why the brand of Zarathushtrian practices promoted by the Assembly are inconsistent with their idea of the

Zarathushti religion in a rational manner. Such efforts can go a long way to positive thinking and preservation of the traditions of the faith.

It must be realized that all Zarathushtis strive for guidance and enlightenment from the Supreme Intellect, Mazda, as they understand it best. While the mode of perception may vary, the final goal of salvation remains common. In the name of the Wise Lord, through tolerance and respect, it is prudent to terminate the rancor and acrimony. For the sake of harmony within the community at large, the best and the only recourse is to be benevolent and unselfish enough, to permit the worship and veneration of Ahura Mazda by all in whatever way they choose to follow. Let peace and tranquility prevail to allow all Zarathushtis young and old, to address the more important issues to pervade the Good Religion and refresh the world. ■

Dr. Jehan Bagli retired as Distinguished Research Fellow at Wyeth/Ayerst. He has a PhD in medicinal chemistry from the University of London. An ordained priest through



navar and martab ceremonies, Jehan was a founding member of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec and editor of *Gavashni*, a North American publication. He is presently chair of FEZANA's Research and Preservation Committee and in charge of training mobedyars. He co-authored the book, "Understanding and Practice of the Jashan Ceremony". He is the recipient of the FEZANA's Excellence in Profession/Business Award.

Matters of the Heart

I've been thinking a great deal about how we we perceive Ahura Mazda and feel His presence in our lives? When we read the Gathas or other parts of the Avesta and make an intellectual discovery, there is an ecstatic, euphoric feeling. But I've noticed that this feeling is strongest when it comes from the heart.

Its those moments when your heart soars in spontaneous prayer to Ahura Mazda because you realize the depth and extent of His (its) glory and manifestation here on earth. Your heart is overfilled with a divine presence and you can feel the rapture in your entire being.

This does happen when you make an intellectual breakthrough, but it also happens when you intuitively know something or are just filled with that divine light, love and presence. Its really wonderful!

If we spend all our days analyzing our scriptures, we may just end up confused and in an ill state of mind. Analyzing each and every word of scripture and ignoring the heart is not wise. Ahura Mazda is to be discovered in our daily lives and in creation. The Amesha Spentas are manifestations of Ahura Mazda on earth and this beautiful creation can easily make one's heart soar in a spontaneous and heartfelt prayer.

There is an entire side to the religion of Zarathushtra which deals with the heart and not just the mind. When Zarathushtra communes with Ahura Mazda, he is in state of 'hyperconsciousness' (a higher level of consciousness) that involves all the senses – not just the mind – and the heart plays a major role. Whenever we feel something strongly, all the senses come into play.

The religion of Zarathushtra has a side other than the intellectual, scriptural one – I hope we can all discover it in our hearts and feel the rapture in our beings.

Jasmine L. Patel
Baltimore, Maryland

Could it be the will of Ahura Mazda that our forebears kept our faith in sacred wraps to be delivered to present-day Zarathushtis, who are today rediscovering its freshness and rejuvenating it, much like the Sasanian regeneration 1500 years ago? Bit by bit, as we peel the layers, the world is beholden at its timeless quality and relevance today.

Are we, the first generation of the “western diaspora”, together with our brothers and sisters of our ancestral homelands, up to the awesome responsibility which lies on our shoulders? Only history will pass judgement on that.

In this chapter we present the landscape as we cross into the third millennium. While our community is dispersing in the four corners of the world and new identities are emerging, we are building infrastructure – associations, federations, a global body, Mobeds’ Councils, and organizations to support business and enterprise and revival of the Zarathushti heritage. There has been a burgeoning of publications, information flow, networking, congresses and conferences. All serving to bring the dispersed peoples together [R. Rivetna].

Zarathushtis are gaining their rightful stature in the eyes of the interfaith world [Rusi Dalal] – a world that is realizing Zarathushtra’s timeless contributions in all spheres [Keki Bhote]. In closing, *Shahriar Shahriari* transports us into the wondrous world of the Internet and futuristic communications.

We are truly at the threshold of a Zarathushti renaissance.

Rohinton M. Rivetna
Guest editor

event 34 At the threshold of a zarathushti renaissance

(turn of the third millennium)

By Rohinton M. Rivetna

The landscape at the turn of the third millennium – the growth of organizational infrastructure, increased networking and communications, the burgeoning of publications, and above all, the commitment of the next generation – all portend a revival, a rediscovery, a rejuvenation of the religion of Zarathushtra.

This century has witnessed a dispersion of the followers of Zarathushtra, as never before in the three millennia of the faith’s tortuous history. In this, the “Western diaspora” or the “second diaspora” (the first being the migration from Iran to the Indian subcontinent in the tenth century) Zarathushtis are now settled in all corners of the world – notably in North America, Britain and Europe, and in Australia and New Zealand.

World community. As we assume the proportions of a “world community” that is on the one hand geographically and ideologically diverse, yet bound together truly as one big family, a fraternity, across the globe, we ask ourselves, what is it that binds us? It is no doubt our religion and its practices; that indeed is the glue that keeps us together, but it is also our heritage, our ethnicity, our history and not the least our institutions and infrastructure, both secular and spiritual. As we chart our future course, we learn from the lessons of history.

Hearth and family-based practice. Historically, the practice of our faith has been hearth and family-based, without a central institutionalized structure. Parent teaches child, Zarathushti values are preserved and nurtured in the home, and the teachings of Zarathushtra are practiced every day. Today the trend is to have others

teach our children, much in the fashion of the Sunday School, but that cannot replace the value of learning from the parental role model. The West is just awakening to this simple truth which Zarathushtis have practiced for generations.

The values of *honesty, industry, righteousness and charity*, for which our noble ancestors were known in India and Iran, were not ‘taught’, they were nurtured within the home, family and community. It is most heartening to see, among the new generation of young families growing up today, a renewed fervor and awareness of our rich heritage, and to witness their efforts to inculcate these values in the next generation.

At times we forget that ours is a faith, a tradition, a belief and a teaching, which all raise many questions. At times there are no answers. At times it does not stand to reason. But the faithful still worship without a deep understanding, and blessed are those who worship Ahura Mazda without the promise or expectation of self-fulfillment, offering only selfless service. These are the ones that attain the gift of spirituality.

Local community structures – associations and darbe mehrs. At a community level, our tradition of the *gahambars* is our religion in practice – families coming together, worshipping

and sharing a meal, reminding us of the importance of giving, sharing, equality and togetherness. They are our guide to our community structures.

The *punchayets* of yore assumed the social, welfare, administrative, and at times adjudicative responsibilities for the local community, primarily secular in nature. So far, in the Western diaspora, we have taken heed and followed in their footsteps, albeit tempered by the prevailing 20th century environments. Today there are possibly a hundred or so registered associations, anjumans, organizations or societies, in Iran, India, Pakistan and the western diaspora.

On the spiritual side, the institution of the Zarathushti *fire temple*, representing the 'temple culture' is as old as the religion itself. Ancient fires have been preserved and guarded zealously in Iran through three millennia of harsh treatment of history. The Iranshah Atash Bahram was consecrated upon landing in India, and is among the most venerated of the holy fires. Today in India and Iran, an atash bahram, agiary or atash aderan is located around every corner – very much an integral part of the spiritual life of a Zarathushti.

In the Western diaspora, within the past 50 years that Zarathushtis started migrating there ten darbe mehrs (atash dadgah) have been built – 2 in Canada, 6 in the USA, 1 in UK and 1 in Australia. Darbe Mehrs in the West are unique in that they blend the secular and the spiritual. With the will of Ahura Mazda, we shall soon have a consecrated atash dadgah in the West.

Our associations and our darbe mehrs are the bastions of our faith, drawing the community together for prayer observances and communal activities. They are the fortifications that have sustained our community, and we must continue to nurture and guard them. Nothing that we do should threaten our community units, compromise them or deter them from their mission.

The local community is a living, thriving organism with a mind of its own. It meanders around, selecting, eventually the best course. One must always seek its collective wisdom, and not expect to give it counsel.

Regional federations. With the proliferation of local associations, came the realization for associations to

“ Our associations and our darbe mehrs are the bastions of our faith, drawing the community together for prayer and communal activities. ”

“come together” as regional federations, to seek common directions. Within the last two decades, regional federations have been formed in India (Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India – FPZAI), North America (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America – FEZANA) and most recently, the new Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of Australia (FEZAA).

Let us take a look back at how *FEZANA* was born and its founding principles. In the early 1980s, the run for forming associations was beginning to taper off. Since the formation of the first associations – the Zoroastrian Association of America in Chicago in 1965 (which functioned for 3 or 4 years and then folded) and the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec in 1967, there were seventeen associations in existence then [1]. Unfortunately, at that point in time (having just gone through a “conversion-acceptance” exercise as is our wont to do every so many years), there was considerable mistrust and misapprehension between the associations, fearing the other had some hidden agenda.

The fears were assuaged only when all – including the doubters and resisters, were brought into the decision-making process. The magic happened when people of all the various persuasions sat down together, and forged agreements that today we call the FEZANA charter.

The FEZANA charter is that much sounder because it embodies the collective wisdom of all the founding associations, and not just one association or one person. It is unique because it is based on governance by our communities (the associations) and not by the elected officials. The officers of FEZANA have no voting rights, they are the “Executive” branch, executing the wishes of the “Board of Directors” who are the associations, who in turn reflect the wishes of its constituents.

In 1996, FEZANA achieved **NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) status** with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

World body. Extending ourselves into the global arena, we find our ship of state without a rudder. We have now indeed, become a world community, but there is no one at the helm to synthesize our energies. The London-based World Zoroastrian Organization started on a track when the global community was still shaping. As we set up our local associations and regional federations, the next logical step is for the regional federations (or associations in those regions where federations do not yet exist) to “come together” in a common forum for communication and coordination of world issues. There are efforts underway to restructure WZO to meet the present global scene, but its past baggage and its burden has made its universal acceptance laborious. Little by little, as the months and years go by, there is more and more understanding and recognition of the need to use the existing regional federations as building blocks. But patience is fraying and our ship is still at sea.

Learning the lessons of history, we must realize that to ensure a sound structure that will stand the test of time, all the stake-holders (the world regions and WZO) must set aside egos and pride of authorship, and come together at a common table, with mutual trust and respect.

Business and enterprise are the lifeblood of a community. Prosperous businesses translate to a prosperous community, with the capacity to reach out to its own and beyond. While some may feel the entrepreneurial spirit of the last 200 years is dead, there are numerous shining examples around the world, that proclaim that it is alive and well. Efforts are also underway to develop a *Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce* to promote business and enterprise worldwide.

Burgeoning of information and communications. Within the last couple of decades, although dispersed, Zarathushtis are coming together with greater frequency for national and world seminars, conferences and congresses. Following the First World Congress in Tehran in 1960, Congresses have been held in India (1964, 1978, 1985 and 1990), in Iran (1996) and, for the first time, in the west (in Houston, USA) in 2000. Youth Congresses, planned by the youth, for the youth, are popular and draw large attendance.

There has also been a growth of organizations, to support and promote Zarathushti heritage and culture, to support youth activities, sports and various other endeavors.

A plethora of new books and informational materials on the religion and the community are being published. Excellent magazines like *Parsiana*, *FEZANA Journal*, *Hamazor*, *Payk-e Mehr* and association newsletters, serve to inform and educate. Technological advances of the Internet are unfolding before our eyes, bringing Zarathushtis together with the touch of a key.

Secular supports the spiritual. In the final analysis, however, the measure of our success lies in the human beings we produce – spiritually awakened and steeped in service. History will be our judge. We engage in secular activities to support the enhancement of our spirituality (which is our ultimate goal). Deep

down within each one of us, is our own innate spirituality. To bring out that spirituality so that it is reflected in our thoughts, our words and our deeds is to truly practice the teachings of Zarathushtra.

It is my reading that we may have swung too far towards the secular, at the expense of the spiritual. Performance of jashans, prayers and other ceremonies could certainly be path-

“ In the final analysis, the measure of our success lies in the human beings we produce – spiritually awakened and steeped in service. We engage in secular activities to support enhancement of our spirituality ... ”

ways to the nourishment of the spirit, if so designed (with more participation from the devotees). Let us rediscover our spiritual riches and strive for our spiritual growth and nearness to Ahura Mazda. Bring the focus back to the enhancement of the spiritual, through devoted practice of the religion with the support of our secular systems. The monuments we build in stone and mortar, may last for a few centuries, but our legacies of the spirit will live on for eternity.

Mobeds Councils. Following the practice in Iran (but not in India), within the last two decades, the mobeds of North America have organized into two Councils: the Kankash-e Mobedan (Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America) and the North American Mobeds' Council. This is a major step forward towards our goal of developing a cadre of learned priests, who are not only performers of the rituals, but also well-versed in the doctrine and able to fill the ministerial needs of the community.

A century ago, Ervad Shariarji Bharucha advocated, through the Rahnumai Sabha, a learned ministry, that delivered sermons to the community. That promise has yet to be fulfilled.

Identity and change. Identity is what defines the religious, social and cultural makeup of a community. It lies, of course in our belief systems and in our religious practices, our heritage and traditions; it lies in the way we look and dress; in our foods and in our sense of humor; it is expressed in our music, our poetry and our art; in our thoughts, words and actions. It is shaped in our homes and hearths, in our temples and our communal organizations. These are the last bastions before our community melts into the family of the nondescript. A well-respected identity brings pride of belonging and togetherness.

Within the last few years we have witnessed the emergence of new identities, the “*neo-Zarathushtis*” – those, primarily in Central Asia, who claim Zarathushti ancestry, as well as those who declare themselves Zarathushtis by choice. Devout Zarathushtis of the traditional persuasion anguish deeply over the rationalization of their faith by the neo-Zarathushtis, founded in reason and intellect, rather than belief and heritage; a faith preserved by their ancestors, in exclusion, with untold sacrifices.

We must come to terms with the fact that these new identities will emerge. Be prepared for this shift in paradigm, so we, as a world community, can together chart our course, instead of spending our energies in fighting fires.

Belief and reason, science and religion have always been in conflict. Belief is blind to reason and ironically properly postulated, reasoning could make the impossible believable. These are the 2 rocks between which we must navigate our ship.

Religions are the embodiment of its doctrine and its practices. Stress on the doctrine alone could turn us into secular humanists. Stress on customs and traditions alone ignores the intellect. One without the other strikes

[Continued on page 130]

(from 1980s)

building bridges of understanding

By Rusi Dalal and Rohinton Rivetna

Zarathushtis are gaining recognition and respect in the interfaith arena, and taking their rightful place among the world's major religions.



Rusi Dalal, then president of ZTFE, being introduced to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the Commonwealth Day interfaith observance, 1994.

RECOGNITION IN UK

“King of the Zoroastrians”. Ever since Prince Charles, heir apparent to the throne of the British monarchy stated that when he becomes King, he wants to be called “the Defender of Faith” rather than the monarch’s present title of “Defender of the Faith”, there has been a fervor of inquisitiveness in Britain as to who Zoroastrians are. In July 1994, the Prince had further added, “I happen to believe that Catholic subjects of the Sovereign are as important as Protestants, not to mention the Islamic, Hindu and Zoroastrian.”

“Who are these Zoroastrians?” asked the media, questioning, “Will Zoroastrians accept Charles as the King of Zoroastrians?”

Prior to this episode, the death, in November 1991 of rock star musician Freddie Mercury (Farokh Balsara) yielded a surprise to the millions of admirers when his funeral in London was conducted according to the ancient Zarathushti rites. The first monotheistic religion with its concept to do good and fight evil was revealed in most newspapers. “Zoroastrians are enjoined to lead an industrious, honest and charitable life and the followers of the religion are encouraged to live well and enjoy themselves – although in moderation, since excess is considered the work of the destructive spirit” is a quote from the Independent Newspaper [*London, November 28, 1991*].

On the national scene. Dadabhai Naoroji’s Parliamentary Centenary celebrations in 1992 commemorating the election of the first Asian Member of Parliament, focussed the nation’s attendance to Dadabhai’s Zarathushti descent. A London Road was named Naoroji Road.

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) the epic body representing Zarathushti interests joined the Interfaith Network for the UK, thus opening its door for dialogues with national forums, inter-governmental bodies, Amnesty International and other such institutions.

Zarathushtis began to be involved – consulted and heard – in the religious field, in politics (with two recent Zarathushti City Mayors), in the educational sector and indeed in the social and cultural life of the nation. Since 1994, for the first time, Zarathushti representation has been included at the Commonwealth Day Observance held annually at Westminster Abbey. During this solemn ceremony, the President of ZTFE is formally presented to Her Majesty the Queen as Zoroastrian representative of her Realm [*photo, left*].

London Zarathushtis have been able to establish a place of study of the religion of Zarathushtra, through the benevolence of the Zartoshty brothers, at the prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at London University.

Millennium Dome. Within a spectacular 365 m. diameter dome, in London, are some 14 zones of various intrigues, to explore. One of them is the “Faith” zone, which depicts illuminated visuals with sound effect, with quotes from nine major faiths in the world, including the religion of Zarathushtra.

Colorful, ceremonial photographs display the Zarathushti faith, illustrating our life cycle from agarni, birth, navjote, wedding, jashan, the youth, reverence of the holy fire and finally the inevitable end of the individual’s life.

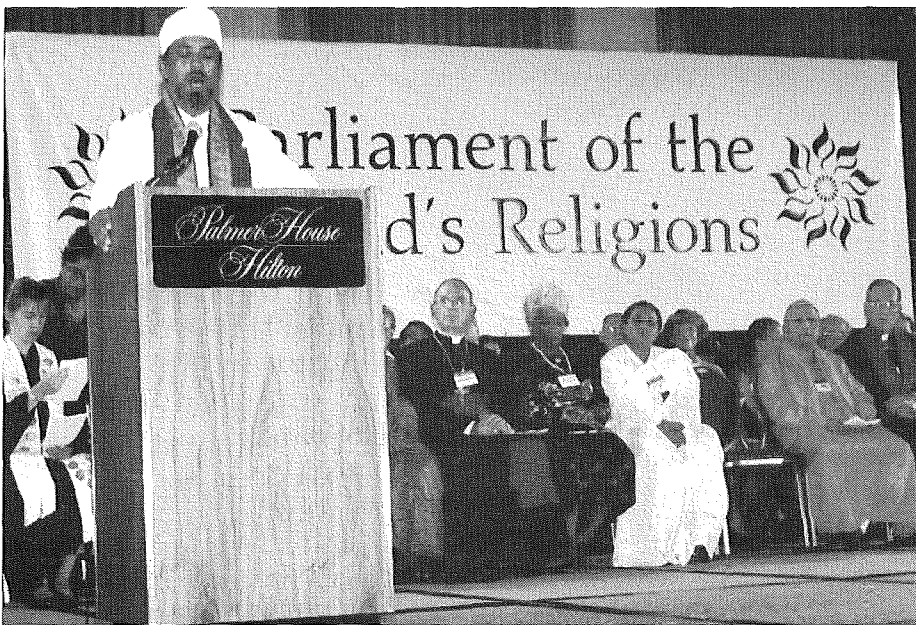
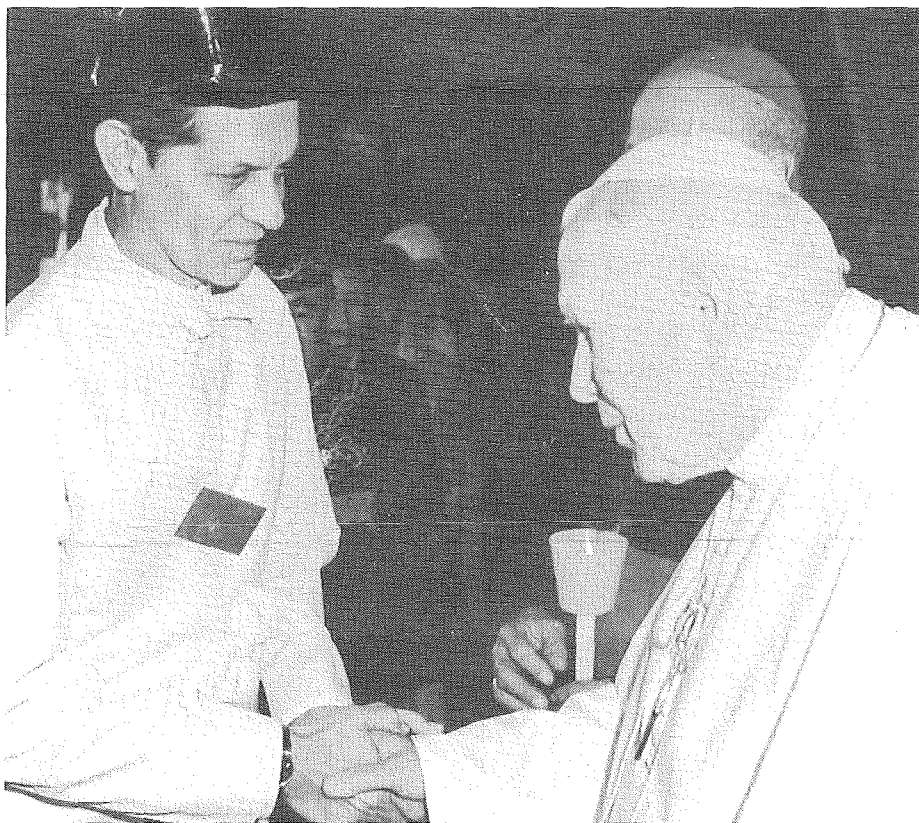
It was truly a moment of pride to witness High Priest Dastur Dr. Jamasp Asa intone the passage from Yasna 60.5, to the thousands gathered in Grant Park on the Chicago lakefront, at the closing ceremonies of the 1993 *Parliament of the World's Religions*. Earlier about 80 Zarathushtis including High Priest Jehangir Oshidari from Iran, joined 8,000 delegates at this momentous celebration. In 1999, about 20 Zarathushtis joined 5000 delegates in Capetown, South Africa, for the week-long *1999 Parliament*.

Whether it was the *United Religions* charter-signing ceremony in Pittsburgh in 1999; the *UN Millennium Peace Summit*, when High Priest Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal addressed the august assembly at the United Nations headquarters in New York; the interfaith conference at the *Vatican*, when Dr. Homi Dhalla met the Pope; or a plethora of programs in all major cities, these days, a Zarathushti is sure to be present.

Why interfaith? Interfaith efforts began with the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, when the eastern religions were recognized for the first time by the west. While not present in person, a paper by Dr. Jivanji Modi is in the records of the Parliament. If the 20th century is known for creating understanding among the faiths, the 21st will be known for celebrating and respecting the diversity.

Why then is there strife and war, hate and intolerance, and man's inhumanity to fellow man – mostly rooted in religious and ethnic intolerance? Humankind's most urgent task at hand for the 21st century is to build bridges of understanding among the faiths and engender respect and harmony.

Zarathushtis are well-suited to take on this challenge. The first act of tolerance recorded in history is by a Zarathushti – Cyrus the Great, when he captured Babylon but allowed the Jews to rebuild their temples. With our non-proselytizing tradition, our



Top, Dr. Homi Dhalla at the Vatican with Pope John Paul. Above, Ervad Kobad Zarolia addressing the Parliament of World's Religions, Chicago 1993.

acknowledgement that we are not the sole possessors of the Truth, and seeing the reflection of Zarathushtra's vision in other faiths, make us well-suited to serve as bridge-builders.

The benefits to us are many. In seeking understanding of others, we understand ourselves better; the recognition and respect accorded us

benefits our children; and above all, it affords us an opportunity for service to humankind to move Ahura Mazda's creation forward towards frashokereti. ■

[Rusi Dalal's biodata and photo are on page 71 and Rohinton Rivetna's on page 11].

zarathushtra's legacy to the world

By Keki R. Bhote

Zoroastrianism's contribution as the mother religion to world theology is well known. What is less known is Zarathushtra's seminal contribution to the world of agriculture, economics, science, leadership and the world's entire ecosystem, as part of his grand vision to move our earth to perfection, with the help of man.

Zoroastrianism's contribution as the mother religion to world theology is well known. Zarathushtra's sublime message of: Ahura Mazda as architect of the universe; the cosmic *Law of Asha*, governing the physical and spiritual domain; freedom of choice for man, coupled with responsibility born of choice; man's conscience as a compass to guide him along the path of moral values; eschatology; and service to humanity, make his theology as fresh and pristine pure, and as relevant to modern man as when he formulated it.

What is less known, however, is Zarathushtra's seminal contribution to the world of agriculture, economics, science, leadership and the world's entire ecosystem, as part of his grand vision to move our earth to perfection, with the help of man.

Zarathushtra's contribution, placed in the context of an age much earlier than projected even a decade ago, becomes all the more resplendent. Modern archeologists have initiated techniques that have moved historical timelines back by a few thousand years. There is no longer a slavish acceptance of a theory of a unilinear cultured progression. Cultural advances were made as far back in the upper Paleolithic Age as 20,000 - 10,000 BCE, that were obliterated by cataclysmic natural disasters. Today, archeologists have

moved back Zarathushtra's age to around 5,500 BCE. Zarathushtra was, indeed, the reformer, the helmsman of a cultural renaissance sweeping the world at the dawn of civilization.

Institutionalizing agriculture. The world of Zarathushtra's era was heralding a revolution far more significant than the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century or the Digital Revolution today. It was the revolution that moved society from the nomadic/hunter age to the domestication of livestock and on to the neolithic age of grain cultivation. The transition took centuries.

While Zarathushtra did not invent agriculture, he was a leader in its institutionalization. He was the visible symbol of the transition, stressing farming with religious overtones. In the Gathas, he states:

"he who cultivates grain cultivates Asha (righteousness) ..."

and again:

"the earth is most joyful where one of the faithful sows the most grain, where he waters the ground that is dry or drains the ground too wet."

Zarathushtra put the husbandmen at the center of his religious system over the priest or the warrior. He urged three major innovations of the sixth millennium: (1) the domestication of cattle; (2) the beginnings of competent irrigation; and (3) use of a

full range of cereals improved by mutation or hybridization.

Further, there is speculation that with the spread of his religion and economic principles to the then civilized world, the agriculturization of south-east Europe and eventually of all Europe could have their origins in Zarathushtra's economic reforms.

In the great debates and schisms of that era between the nomadic Aryans who eventually migrated to India and the Iranian aryaans who stayed, Zarathushtra firmly came down on the side of the latter, as the champion of a settled family existence. In accelerating an agricultural way of life, he paved the way for material progress, increases in the hitherto limited population and the development of cities, culminating in the later urban civilizations of Susa and Babylon.

Role in economic and scientific progress. The settled life that Zarathushtra advocated saw a flowering of culture. Skins of wild animals as garments were replaced by woven cloth. Pottery – that accurate metric in archeological dating – developed into the hard, sand-tempered, high furnace temperature ceramics of superior quality. Copper, the "molten metal" that Zarathushtra mentions in the Gathas, started to be processed in workshops.

In science, Zarathushtra freed the mind held captive by dogma, with God's gift of Vohu Manah (the Good Mind) to each person. Zarathushtra encouraged the spirit of scientific inquiry in exploring the human body, in health, anti-pollution of the air, the waters, Mother Earth. He channeled the older Magian rituals into a study of astronomy and the physical sciences for which they gained fame.

Molding of leadership. Zarathushtra's teachings and life were the first codification of leadership, practiced by true leaders through the centuries and by true leaders (not managers) today. The attributes of leadership are: ethics, trust in people, vision, inspiration, freedom and conceding authority/power.

● **Ethics.** Zarathushtra's *Law of Asha*, with its moral emphasis on

ethics, has been scrupulously followed by leaders of yesterday and today. (The pity is that we have too few leaders and too many managers).

● **Trust.** Zarathushtra trusted God and his omnipotence. He trusted his followers to spread his message to all mankind. His trust in the goodness of people has spawned today a leader's full trust in his people. And they have responded by earning his trust.

● **Vision.** Zarathushtra's vision was panoramic. His vision of God was not a narrow, personalized, political God, but a transcendental, cosmic Ahura Mazda. His vision of a world moving toward perfection has lifted the sights of today's leaders to view the world as a global village.

● **Inspiration.** Zarathushtra's inspiration, in a mystic revelation from God, enabled him to see the essential unity of all living things and lift man beyond his self-centered focus. It has found resonance in the leaders through the ages inspiring their followers to causes nobler than their basic instincts.

● **Help.** Zarathushtra enjoined his followers to help the downtrodden:

"Happiness to him who brings happiness to others."

A true leader, likewise, helps his people grow, helps them reach their full potential, which has no limit, no asymptotic barrier.

● **Freedom.** Zarathushtra was passionate about the freedom of choice – the same freedoms that the enlightened leader gives to his people to achieve higher goals than dictated by management.

● **Power paradox.** Zarathushtra had no formal power, no positional authority. Yet, he has influenced millions of people with the electrifying spell of his Gathas. The true leader emulates the prophet – acquiring real power, paradoxically, by giving up formal power.

Zarathushtra's grandest global message. But transcending even the greatness of his theological and economic contributions has been his

grand vision of the essential unity and interdependence of the elements of the earth – animal, plant, mineral and the human. Even in his day, he bemoaned the ravages to all of them due to man's wanton destruction. The goal of life, he proclaimed, was to move the whole earth to perfection. And who better as protector, preserver and rescuer than man – the central mission entrusted to him by God.

Today we see the cycle of destructiveness repeated by man's myopic and self-centered actions. If we are to be true to Zarathushtra's heritage, let us become crusaders for the purification of our lands, our waters, our air; for the protection of our animals, our plants, our minerals. By becoming soldiers in God's army in protecting Mother Earth, hopefully perfect ourselves in the process. ■



Keki R. Bhote is President of Keki R. Bhote Associates, specializing in quality and productivity improvement. A long-time student of Zoroastrianism, Keki has been a pioneer in furthering the 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 conferences and over 100 church groups/clubs on the religion. He is on the Board of Directors of WZO and VP, Center for Ancient Iranian Studies.

"Grandpa, Grandpa... what is the big deal about using physical fires for our prayers? Why can't we use the virtual fire?"

"What's wrong with the physical fire?"

"Nothing Grandpa. It's just that it is so..... inappropriate!"

"Inappropriate? But why?"

"You know what I mean Grandpa. The physical fire consumes raw materials like trees, it pollutes the atmosphere, it needs a physical location that needs to be constructed, and that consumes more raw materials. Plus, you can't have it wherever you are. You need to make arrangements for it.

"I mean, say the new immigrants to Mars. Just how are they going to set up physical fires there? It seems unfair to deny them the ability to pray in front of a fire, just because they are migrating to a different planet."

"Sit down young lady and let me tell you a story about my younger days. It seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

When your Grandma and I were about your age, many of our families had migrated to this part of the planet. At that time, we didn't have virtual fires. Virtual Reality was just an idea, being born.

I remember there was a rage going on about the use of fires in the fire temples that we were setting up here in this part of the world. There were some who wanted to stick to the old ways and they called themselves traditionalists; and there were those who wanted to change and modernize things, and they were labeled liberals.

Some would claim that the fire that was to be used for prayers needed to be real wood fire – and not just any wood, it had to be sandalwood. Others were saying that we want to pray facing a real fire here in our new home. It would be inappropriate to limit ourselves to sandalwood, since we would then have to import it from other places.

They came up with the idea of gas fires and some would even use flick-

event 37 **future of communication**

By Shahriar Shahriari

The year: 2050.

Location: A Zarathushti home in the present-day northwestern United States of America.

The People: Grandpa and his 17-year-old granddaughter.

ering electrical flames. The electric flame as well as the gas fire were much cleaner, safer and more readily available. Since we did not have anyone tend to the fire here, we would use the piped gas or plug in the electrical flame, and would turn it on or off, depending on our needs.

This caused a big uproar, particularly in the homelands. To some people, it was blasphemy. To others, it was the rejection of our heritage, yet others were happy to see this change ... and the debate went on and on.

I think there was something appealing about the physical fire, because the electrical flame never caught on. There was an element of unpredictability and randomness about the gas fire, as well as the heat and light energy that it emitted.

You see my dear, even *we* were not immune from those debates at that time.

I remember I would argue that when the gas oven came and replaced the wood stoves, we had a much more progressive lifestyle. We could then cook in cleaner kitchens and actually eat in the same place. We no longer needed to separate the hearth of the kitchen from the heart of our homes.

Some people, however, would react and say, "you are now reducing our fire temples to the same level as our kitchens. How dare you." I guess they could not see the fact that a cleaner fire would be more aligned with Zarathustra's teachings.

So you see young lady, it is not surprising that you are experiencing resistance like we did. Nowadays, instead of the debate between the wood and gas fire, we have the debate between the physical and virtual fire. Instead of migration from East to West, we have colonization of other planets, and so on.

What's more, in my days we did not have the Contact Rooms that you find in every home today. You may take it for granted that you can go to your own CR and connect and be with anyone in the world that you want. You meet others there. You go to parties, to picnics, gatherings with your friends from around the world. And you can do it by simply walking into the CR.

When I was your age, we actually physically traveled to different places, or else, we had to use gadgets like the telephone and the computer to contact and communicate with others.

In my times, they did not even have those. The only way they communicated was by physically going to visit the person. So can you imagine how difficult it was to spread news even about trivial stuff like somebody getting married or having a baby?

During those times, they used to have the local 'gossip', who had a real function. His/her function was to spread the news. They used to live in proximity of each other, so they did not need to go far to meet one another.

During my time, we used the telephone and later on something else called email. It was the early stages

of the Internet. It enabled us to communicate with others. It bridged the distance between us, but it still lacked a certain element – the element of being able to see each other and feel and touch each other. I mean, we could not hug through email, for example.

I remember those who were pioneers in technology, would look at physical and social phenomena and then create models for them on the Internet. The local gossips were replaced by the chat rooms. The news would be spread through using what we called community sites and email aliases. Books and libraries were being replaced by web sites. Later on, some web sites started to take on the role of entertainment. Others ventured into educating people and eventually replaced the physical schools. These were the predecessors of the virtual classrooms that you go to.

But there was more. What happened was that the nature of socializing itself, changed. Especially once Virtual Reality took hold. When VR became a practical way of communicating, it changed the way we worked and played and lived.

VR made it possible to be with others without actually leaving our homes. We could then go to business meetings, go on vacations, go to social gatherings, go to school without ever physically going there.

For you this is the obvious and normal way of living. For us, it was a major transformation of reality, as we knew it.

But that was not the end of it. Like every other time in history, the last battleground now is that of religion. While there are churches and temples that have never had any physical existence, there are also those who swear that they would cut off their hands before they go Virtual.

Don't worry my daughter. Just like gas ovens and gas fire temples, we will also have virtual prayer gatherings in virtual temples, in front of virtual fires. [Contd. on page 110]

visions & visionaries

In the previous chapters we have portrayed the events of the past millennia to try and understand the development and evolution of our psyche and identity. We now look to the building blocks of the future – the dreams, hopes and aspirations of all Zarathushtis. A cross section of our global community was asked the question: “What do you think the Zarathushti community will be like in the year 2050?” Over 100 invitations were sent and responses were received from 54 adults and 30 youth from 15 countries. Visions from the youth are presented first, arranged alphabetically by country, followed by visions of adult leaders, similarly organized.

The future is hopeful as both the adults and youth have a vision of a strong united thriving community, with the youth envisioning a global diversity. The thread of the inevitability of change runs through most of the visions but how we manage this change is emphasized strongly. As one youth wrote “The future depends upon how much we will invest in the present.” We are a small community and we can only build our future on a solid foundation if we share, dialogue and learn from each other. Thank you for sharing.

Dolly Dastoor, Guest editor

VISIONS OF THE YOUTH

AUSTRALIA

DR. NAVAZ HIRAMANNEK, 24; doctor (intern);
Sydney, NSW.

In the future with the grace of Ahura Mazda, I see a proud and distinguished, united Zarathushti community, where our religion is once again a way of life. Where *Atash* all over the world burns for ever inspiring holy reverence, deep and intense religious faith in the hearts of every Zarathushti. Where each one of us is the guardian, charged with the duty to preserve our religion, its customs, rituals and traditions in their entirety and to bequeath them unaltered to future generations as a noble and priceless heritage.

The future depends on our actions today. We all need to pattern and mold our lives, and give gladly whatever sacrifice of time, money and personal ambition may be needed, so that the identity and integrity of the commu-

nity be preserved and the noble religion conserved in its pristine purity for future generations.

ZUBIN HIRAMANNEK, 18; law and commerce student; winner Global Scholastic Competition;
Sydney, NSW.

With the grace of Ahura Mazda we have overcome mass persecution and annihilation. This has given us the inherent strength that if channeled correctly will in the future lead to a strong, proud and united Zarathushti community, where the religion of Zarathushtra will once again be seen as a dynamic, vibrant and vigorous form of living. However, our future is what we make of it. For the survival of our community, we Zarathushtis need to understand and cherish our privileged heritage, our simple yet profound religion and unite as one family. With reverence, devotion and dedication at an individual and community level we can preserve our most glorious and ultramodern though ancient religion.

BELARUS

LUKASHEVICH YURIY, *economist, translated Avestan and Pahlavi texts in Russian, created Russian website AVESTA: www.avesta.web.servis.ru; Minsk, Republic of Belarus.*

The Avestan Republican Byelorussian Association (ARBA) was organized in 1996. Since then contacts with Zarathushtis all over the world have been made and much done for support of the religion of Zarathushtra in Belarus. Therefore I consider it possible for myself to state the vision for the future of global Zarathushtis.

I see the most bright prospects for the religion all over the world, including us. The number of Zarathushtis all over the world will grow steadily. The religion of Zarathushtra is not of the past alone. It is of the past, the present and the future, it is a religion of eternity. Talking with the various people, it is clearly visible, that many simply do not have sufficient information. Given that, no educated person never will reject principles of Zoroastrianism, nor ever reject the words of Prophet Zarathushtra.

The future of the community is impossible unless we stop senseless conflict and excessive dogmatism. Our force and our development is in our unity. The majority of Zarathushtis understand it, and we believe, that in the near future all internal disagreements will disappear as a terrible dream.

I see the Zarathushti community open for all people, who have made a choice of the heart and reason to be part of the Good Religion. The efforts of Zarathushtis of all the world should be directed such that maximal people could join the doctrine of Zarathushtra. Then we shall be strong, and by 2050 anywhere in the world the people will not be afraid for their life, to recognize themselves as 'Zarathushtis'.

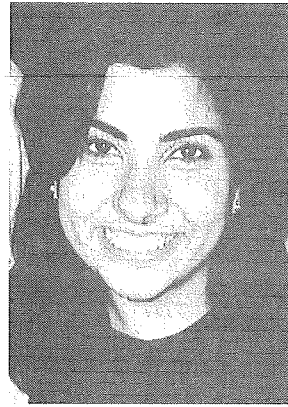
Our organization exists for just a short time, but we see huge interest in the ancient heritage of the Aryans. If we were not separated, Zoroastrianism for a long time would exist as the leading religion in many countries, including ours. Nobody can exist separately. For this reason always please dialogue and help us, which allows us to be together and to carry the light of the Zarathushti Din.

I see the future of the global Zarathushti communities expressed by the words: unity – action – openness – mutual aid. The future depends on us, with the blessings of Ahura Mazda!

CANADA

DILSHAD MAROLIA, *law major; secretary, Zoroastrian Association of Quebec; Montreal, Quebec.*

The Zarathushti community is one that today boasts of immense intellectual wealth, yet, despite our espousing values of progress, it is somewhat disconcerting that



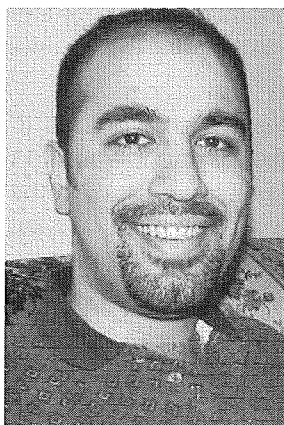
the future does not seem overly promising. With Zarathushtis the world over having reduced numbers of children, it is quite likely that by 2050 the birth rate will have fallen so low, that the population, especially within the western diaspora, will be an aging one unable to repopulate itself if the present practice of vehement opposition to interracial marriage continues. Hopefully, Zarathushtis in 2050 will be representative of a community embracing broad minded values whilst managing to keep their core beliefs, identity and heritage in an age of ever increasing commercialism and communalism.

ROXANNA MIRZA, *third year student of naturopathic medicine; active in Zarathushti youth activities; Etobicoke, Ontario.*

Zarathushtis have always enjoyed the debate regarding the necessity to modify our beliefs and traditions as time progresses. Where do I see our community in 2050? The same way it has always been.

Where would I *like* to see us? At a point where we have learned to fully recognize and appreciate that religion for which our forefathers sacrificed so much to ensure that we share in their privilege. It is not just a matter of learning about our religion, but rather it is the practice of unconsciously incorporating it into our daily lives harmoniously that has yet to be accomplished with time.

PERVEZ J. MISTRY, *civil/mechanical engineer; chair of the Youth sub-committee; editor/chair of the ZSO newsletter; ZSO executive officer (1998-2000); Mississauga, Ontario.*



Based on current trends, I can't help but feel that in 2050 our once-great Zarathushti religion will have shrunk to a mere 'philosophy for healthy living', our revered prophet Zarathushtra will be on par with the likes of Deepak Chopra and other such motivational speakers. Why? How could such a 'religion among religions' be reduced to something ordinary and mundane?

It is we ourselves who are attacking the faith from within. In learning about the religion, we view it as a simple study of grammar and history – we are taken in by research done by 'scholars' whose profession requires

them to develop and prove new hypotheses, no matter how offensive (the phrase "...like moths to a flame..." comes to mind).

I believe we have lost the true love, the fire that burned in the hearts of our ancestors. We must correct ourselves now by continuing our sacred rituals and learning their meanings. They simply cannot be discarded because someone says that it is irrelevant or 'un-Zarathushti'! We have to search for inner significance within the religion and not take it at simple face value, which is what is happening now. We must view our religion with the awe that it so rightly deserves!

INDIA

FARAH BHARUCHA, 23; *commerce graduate; project coordinator; software technology; Zoroastrian Field Student winner; president, Pune Zoroastrian Youth Association; Pune, Maharashtra.*

Looking into the Crystal Ball!

I have been asked to share what I think our Zarathushti community will be,
 When all of us youngsters have aged a good deal, in the year 2050.
 Looking back to our glorious past, at the track record of our ancestors so great,
 I'm sure every single one of us is capable of being a citizen who's first rate!
 The Zarathushti community will have leaders in every sphere of life,

With Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds, we will peacefully emerge from all strife.
 Educated, enthusiastic, hard-working entrepreneurs we will be,
 Fifty years hence, we Zarathushtis will shine even brighter – just you wait and see!

KHUSHNOOMA YAZDI ITALIA, *Zarathushti Field Student winner; M.Sc., Sheth G. S. Medical College (KEM Hospital); Valsad, Gujarat.*

The Zarathushti religion, which brings happiness, charity, progress and positive thinking will not hesitate in adapting new changes with modern science, by 2050. Good thoughts, words and deeds, incorporated in today's new generation with great faith in the religion is increasing and they will give rise to a strong Zarathushti community in the future.

In spite of decreasing population, there will be enough and truly faithful Parsis, who will keep the fire burning throughout and as mentioned in the Shah Nameh, our religion will persist till the end. I truly believe it. Have faith in us – the young.

MEHER DARA MODY, *student, Zoroastrian Youth Association; Dr Dadabhoy Naoroji Scholar; Zarathushti Field Student winner; Pune, Maharashtra.*

The religion of Zarathushtra is the longest surviving religion that has survived a number of threats of extinction. The main reason for its survival has been the adaptation to new situations and with the times over centuries.

Future of Communication [Continued from page 107]

You see, no matter what is our actual surrounding and lifestyle, whether it is physical or virtual, one thing never changes. Our essence is spiritual.

As spiritual beings, we need to create and we need to connect, and we need to give direction to our world. As Zarathushtra taught us, it is our innate tendency to be progressive. Even when we are regressive, we are so, because we think we are being progressive.

Our spiritual and innate gift of being progressive is the impetus for our creativity. Our drive to create is what impels us to connect and communicate. So no matter what is the technology of our times, we will still be engaged in the dialogue of this versus that. This is why the process of communicating is more important than the means through which we communicate.

The real trick to being human, Zarathushti or not, is to realize that the outer fire is nothing more than a reflec-

tion of the inner fire. Regardless of whether the outer fire is physical or virtual, we shall ultimately realize that within every one of us lies the fire that never dies." ■



Shahriar Shahriari is the author of "Thus Spake the Real Zarathushtra", "1+1=3" and his latest book, "The Z Factor" has been published by FEZANA. He has extensively translated the works of Omar Khayyam, Rumi and Hafez, and composed over 500 original poems. He is the creator and webmaster of www.Zarathushtra.com.

Why worry about the future? Rather think positively about it. We have to continue with an open mind, not be dogmatic about prevalent rituals and customs and be logical in our thoughts and deeds. I am sure that by the year 2050 the Zarathushti community will certainly flourish and would be looked upon as one of the most practical religions based on *Manashni, Gavashni and Kunashni*.

PASHNA MUNSHI, *first year medical student; Global Scholastic Essay Competition (second place); Mumbai.*

My generation will keep the torch of the religion of Zarathushtra shining way beyond 2050! Religion will be revived in its classical form through top of the line education to priests and laity. Traditions – the backbone of the community, will thus gain strength and our sacred fires will be looked after with greater devotion. For young Zarathushtis living in the diaspora to develop a strong sense of roots, pilgrimages to India and Iran will be organized.

‘Adopt a Zoro Custom Clubs’ will be opened all over the world to enable every Zarathushti household to adopt two Zarathushti customs every year.

Even a tiny diamond radiates brilliance, so will this small community sparkle, until frashokereti.

FARAIDOO PUNDOLE, *second year engineering student, electronics and telecommunications, Wadia College; Zarathushti Field Student winner; Pune, Maharashtra.*

2050! What a challenging world. A world of super fast computers, flying machines and in such a world where will the Zarathushti Community be? My vision is a mixture of calculation and a distant dream.

As of today the Zarathushti community is very conscious of our subcultures – Irani and Parsi. The year 2050 will hold us Zarathushtis only as one large community. A community that will be occidental. The oriental language will be learnt by all Zarathushtis and they will take to meditation and they will have a common temple where community, caste and creed will be no bar. The only qualification required to follow the religion of Zarathushtra will be Ahura Mazda’s consciousness. We will never be extinct. *[Continued on page 115]*

PAKISTAN

NADIR DARRAH, *24; chartered accountant; studying to be a chartered financial analyst; Karachi.*

It is December 2050 at the 17th World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston. In the fifty years that have elapsed since the last congress held in Houston, the global Zarathushti community has become just that – but in thought,

based on the true ideals of Asho Zarathushtra, rather than geography. This congress, unlike its predecessor fifty years ago, is not characterized by petty bickering and infighting. The Zarathushtis, having extricated themselves from the mire of outdated rituals and ego-inspired battles, now promote unity in diversity. In the face of the unknown this is as good a vision as any other fantasy.

DALEARA JAMASJI-HIRJIKAKA, *married, one daughter; senior editor, Academic Division, Oxford University Press; Karachi.*

In the year 2050 my two-year-old daughter will be a grandmother probably living somewhere in the West, and I shall be long gone. The way lifestyles have changed in the past five decades I am not sure whether this is an exercise worth undertaking. During the course of the past two centuries ours has emerged as a relatively privileged community in the subcontinent.

After almost thirteen centuries of living mostly in one part of the world, the community, in the past few decades, has decided to opt for new worlds on the other side of the globe. While in many ways Zarathushtis have excelled in their new homelands, yet in the West they are one of the many migrant communities trying to make a mark in a competitive environment.

There are already many first generation American and British Zarathushtis. How well they and their children are able to maintain their individuality in a society that insists on conformity remains to be seen. For therein lies the key to the survival of the community well into 2050 and beyond.

SHAHNAZ YEZDI SETHNA, *born in Mumbai, brought up in Tehran, now settled in Karachi; studied Physics in college; mother of two; Karachi.*



Next fifty years?!

Zarathushtra’s teachings are still pure and more valuable than before. Most of the community will be in the West, some searching for their real identity, roots and religion. With freedom of thought, they will start to clear the dust of history from religion to uncover the fundamental teachings of Zarathushtra. Thereby our numbers will increase.

Read

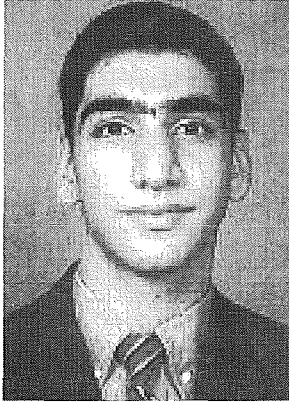
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The global Zarathushti community will change to a mixed community. Someday my son may hang a picture of his granddaughter from a mixed marriage of his Zarathushti daughter from Earth married to a Martian boy and living on the moon!

NARIUS J. SHEKDAR, *second semester student, Bachelor of Science (I.T.); Karachi.*



Although Zarathushtis are largely concentrated in India, their concentration will grow in UK, North America, New Zealand and Australia. There will be resurgence in Iran and also in the Zarathushtis becoming a highly educated net-intelligent community with Udvada being the focal rallying point of pilgrimage.

Zarathushti religious knowledge will be widespread over the Internet and discussions, decisions and dissemination will attract many outsiders to learn more about it. New archeological finds in the Persian/Caspian Sea area will shed immense light on the extent, rich influence and greatness of Zarathushti history and Zarathushtis will once again revert to their business, philanthropic and entrepreneurial way of life.

Priests' influence on the masses will become less and there will be separation of religion and political power. Our prayers will be simplified and better interpreted which will attract more younger Zarathushtis to return to the fold. There should be true Fire Temples in other countries and not only in India, Pakistan and Iran. Knowledge is power and the priests must pass it onto the populace, so that with the acquired knowledge, they can not only make their own decisions but endeavor to reach the pristine glory and respect held by our forefathers.

SOUTH AFRICA

SHANAZ SHAPURJEE, *matric student, Roedean School; proponent of Bharat Natyam dance; Johannesburg.*



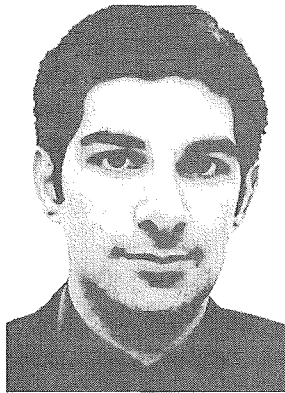
Being an eternal optimist and staunch supporter of solidarity, I believe that the religion of Zarathushtra will flourish in the future. I foresee the global acknowledgement of the religion of Zarathushtra. With knowledgeable, enlightened global leaders, I anticipate a harmonized community built on faith, love and firmly

rooted in its beliefs. I envision an *atash bahram* in every major city in the world!

In order to thrive in the future, we need to recapture the intrinsic essence of our heritage and culture, and given the amount of exposure the religion of Zarathushtra is gaining through the Internet, I have no doubt that it will.

UNITED KINGDOM

KERMAN JASAVALA, *MS in Advanced Information Technology; creator of website for ZTFE; chair, Young Zoroastrian Committee, London, 1993-98; chair, Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, 1997; winner of World Community Award 2000 for Outstanding Zarathushti Youth; London, UK.*



I would wish to see a larger, stronger and more unified community in the year 2050. We should continue to uphold our beliefs and values but also be tolerant and compassionate towards others. Zarathushti children should be given the opportunity to learn about their religion and heritage alongside their mainstream education. The establishment of a consecrated fire by 2050 would be a wonderful achievement for the Zarathushtis of Europe and would provide a central focal point for the whole community. Above all I would like to see us retain our strong sense of identity within a multicultural society.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

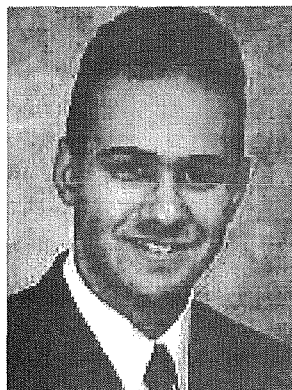
MOBED MAZDA K. ANTIA, *lawyer, law clerk to Chief Judge William Zloch of the southern district of Florida; Fort Lauderdale, Florida.*



Meaning. This word alone will define Zarathushti communities in the coming decades. What the religion of Zarathushtra *means* to each person individually and collectively as a whole, will shape how the religion evolves here in North America. Religion has to have value to an individual, it has to add to their daily existence. Some search for spirituality, others for the semblance of order through tradition and custom, still others search for meaning through philosophy. Regardless of the reason, the key element is *meaning*. Without it a community cannot evolve. With

this, comes a community whose members appreciate the value that the religion brings to their existence.

NENSHAD D. BARDOLIWALLA, MC of the 1998 North American Congress in New York; active in Zarathushti community; interested in exploring synergies among music, technology, psychology, religion, statistics and philosophy of science; San Mateo, California.



Within the next fifty years, Zarathushtis of North America will cease attacking each other like hordes of fanged carnivores, striving to overpower each other with their close-minded notions of what the religion of Zarathustra is and who should be allowed to practice it. Instead, the youth of the 21st Century will learn from their elders'

myriad mis-steps and strive to live amongst each other and the rest of the world as ambassadors of civility and goodwill, believing and acting in accord with the prophet's message: that the world would reach ever closer towards perfection if we all were to have good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds.

CYRA CONTRACTOR, 20, sophomore; major in Business at American University; Washington, DC.



My vision for the future of our community is based on their happiness. If the youth of today can be proud of who they are, then only are they more likely to marry within the Zarathushti faith. They must be happy and willing to marry into the faith. It will be these united religious marriages which will help to rejuvenate our religion. Then these children will grow up with a family

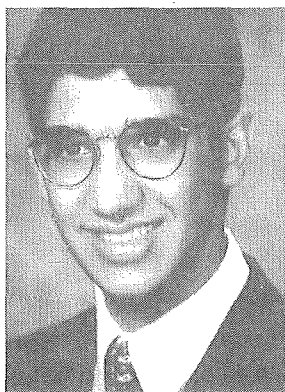
who shares in the same values and faith. Again it will be their children who will reach out to more people to share the beautiful message that our ancestors were so fortunate to receive more than three millennia ago. Today our children are more aware and more interested in helping to keep a positive vision of the year 2050.

ERVAD ZUBIN DASTOOR, certification engineer; married with 7 month child; Alexandria, Virginia.

The Zarathushti community is at a critical stage in history. We are being torn in two by opposing views. The orthodox belief is that the religion is exclusive to those

born to Zarathushti parents. The liberals feel that all those who choose to lead their life according to the teachings of our prophet Zarathustra should be accepted into the religion and our communities. These diverse views will ultimately produce two separate and distinct followers of the religion by the year 2050, most probably sooner. I believe that our community needs to resign to this fact, and both factions should practice the religion as they see fit. Ultimately, one group will survive and flourish.

NEVILLE DASTUR, senior in high school; youth member of Board of Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



The year 2050 is still many years into the future. I strongly believe our religion will progress and prosper, and be known throughout the world as a religion of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. The religion of Zarathustra will become known around the world for its beliefs and values and will once again take its rightful

place as one of the major religions of this world. It will once again be viewed with respect around the world.

I've always believed that Zarathushtis are hard working, courageous, kind and charitable people, and I am certain this will continue forever. There are many Zarathushtis in North America who have not visited India in years, whether it is due to lack of money or other issues. There are many Zarathushtis who have never even met the family that they have in India. I am fortunate enough that I am able to see my family in India about every two years. I pray that by 2050, all Zarathushtis in North America will be able to go and meet their family in India.

JIM ENGINEER, founder of *e-rainmaker.com* (www.e-rainmaker.com), a Chicago-based public relations practice focused on emerging technology companies; past co-chair of ZYNA and editor of FEZANA Journal's Youthfully Speaking section; Aurora, Illinois.



In the year 2050, I expect to be 80 years old and reading the vision of my children and their children. I expect my religion to be more vibrant, open-minded, accepting, and rid of the plaque that coats the minds of some extremists. I refer specifically to those on the far right, who have entered this millennium by exemplifying

views that would have seemed archaic and exclusionary three hundred years ago. Eventually the middle and moral majority of our time will awake and accept those who are non-Zarathushti and seeking in earnest to become a part of our universal faith. It shall be a way of life in 2050, but only through leadership, compromise and goodwill. The time for healing and acceptance is now.

NIKAN KHATIBI, *freshman, pre-med major at University of California, Irvine; editor of Fezana Journal's Youthfully Speaking section; ZYNA representative; Youth Board member of the California Zoroastrian Center; Laguna Niguel, California.*

What I see in the year 2050 is change. First of all, I see many Zarathushtis marrying outside the religion. As a parent, I know I will do my best to convince my young one to marry within the religion, but in the future I will not be able to control how my children will marry, whether it be in or out of the religion.

Secondly, I see many different groups of Zarathushtis in very remote places being educated and feeling pride towards their religion due to the vast collection of information on the Internet. The capabilities of the Internet will allow our society to spread and grow globally. Thirdly and most importantly, I see a clear abomination of the words 'Parsi' and 'Iranian'. No longer will these words be used in our religion because the new generation will break this so called culture barrier, and invite one another in. Therefore in the future we will truly be able to say that we are Zarathushtis.

BIJAN KHOSRAVIANI, *Student/Strategic Marketing Engineer, Silicon Valley; San Jose, California.*



The year 2050? Hmm! I think they will be still debating whether or not to invite Dr. Jafarey (no, just kidding!). As one said: "Those who predict don't have the knowledge, and those who have the knowledge don't predict!"

I certainly hope that all people in the world would be Zarathushtis.

To me, it is not as important that they call themselves Zarathushtis. As long as they follow the way of Asha and do the right thing, we have accomplished our goal: "Making all people in the world true Zarathushtis". I hope by 2050 people are no longer value-based on the money they have, but rather on the units of Asha they have accumulated.

Enthusiasm ...
the sustaining power of all great action

CYRUS RIVETNA, 29, *architect; student of photography; Hinsdale, Illinois.*



Currently, in the year 2000, Zarathushtis no longer have the convenience and luxury of being centralized in just a few locations. We are scattered throughout not only various countries, but also in various cities as well. Inevitably, in 2050, we will have developed diverse communities with differing cultures and traditions. Even in 2050, however, these

new cultures will be in their infancy, evolving slowly, but constantly referring back to the glory of our Iranian and Parsi ancestors.

Of course, we will all still be connected through the various organizations and publications that have been created, and through the Internet. All the petty quibbling of today will be looked at as a bit silly, and will be replaced with petty quibbling current to the year 2050.

Like it has for the past 2000 years, the religion will continue to change form, imperceptibly, like an amoeba, influenced perhaps, but never fundamentally changed by either events or individuals. And regardless of the current trends and beliefs, each of us will continue to use the Good Mind that Ahura Mazda has given us, to practice the religion of Zarathushtra in a way that best fulfills us.

SHAHRIAR SHAHRIARI [*photo on page 110*] *author, poet, speaker, creator of www.zarathushtra.com; Westminster, California.*

Istand for the possibility of collectively creating a world by the year 2050, in which every member of the human family, regardless of what they may call themselves, has understood the core spiritual teachings of Zarathushtra, and consciously chooses to live by them.

I stand for a world wherein: the spirit of progress prevails; where people listen to all points of view, and select wisely, taking full responsibility; a world in which choices are made for the sake of the goodness of the choices alone; and where every individual is happy, because they work for the happiness of everyone.

ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH OF NORTH AMERICA (ZYNA) CO-CHAIRS: **ARMAITY BAMJI**, *manager, Equities Operations; Mississauga, Ontario.* **MORVARID BEHZIZ**, *student, University of California; Los Angeles, California;* **SHERAZADE MEHTA**, *elementary school teacher; Boston, Massachusetts.*

The year 2050 celebrates the 50th anniversary of the resurgence of the great Zarathushti religion. We all have our parents and grandparents to thank for that. At



ZYNA co-chairs clockwise from left, Morvarid Behziz, Sheradade Mehta and Armaity Bamji.



the turn of this century, the Zarathushti community around the world was not at peace, with constant rivalry bringing down the spirits of all concerned. If not for the vision and foresight of the youth, the religion would surely have gone the way of the condor.

In 2001, a new World Zoroastrian Body (WZB) was formed where all Zarathushtis, Irani and Parsi, had an equal opportunity and footing. The youth continued following the examples set by their ancestors and chose to educate the next generation, which they believed was the only way to ensure the survival of our faith. Subsequently, the number of same-faith marriages increased giving our much needed population a boost a few years later. At the same time, the WZB, which had on its board several well known dasturs, passed a motion identifying children of inter-faith marriages as good standing members of the community who should be recognized as such with no prejudice.

The well-known Parsi philanthropist family Tata, set up a historical fund in the year 2041. This fund was used to re-build the walls of Persepolis as a tribute to our great ancestors. Currently, construction is in the final phase and with the help of the Iranian Government, we expect completion by 2052.

The World Zoroastrian Body applauds the efforts of our parents and grandparents for not only having the vision and foresight to build a strong community but for also having the courage to see it through.

We are now the leaders of our community and through our parents' and grandparents' time we have learned from their mistakes and accomplishments to go forward to make our community, religion and faith strive for the unity we see now in 2050.

YAZDIN MISTRY, given chartered accountancy examination; Zarathushti Field Student winner; Mumbai.

Do we Parsis have a future? Are we an endangered species well on our way to oblivion?

Certainly not! I firmly believe that the Zarathushti community will not only survive, but will regain its past glory by the year 2050 for the following reasons:

- Today's youth are more confident, better educated and are more involved in community matters.
- Our fire temples, religious classes and religious talks are now being frequented by the youth – which was not so a decade ago.
- Our youth discussions teach more than dictums.

I firmly believe, as stated in the *Jamaspi*, that the Zarathushti community will return to its motherland Iran under the leadership and guidance of Shah Varzavand Saheb. I look forward to this grand return when the religion of Zarathushtra will reach its zenith. ■

It Makes Me Sad

by *Roya Kowsarkhizi, New Jersey*

It's late at night, I cannot sleep
 Too many emotions running deep
 News of lives lost overseas
 Students fighting for democracy
 Speaking against fanatics and hypocrisy.

It makes me sad, at the same time angry
 I cheer them on from over here
 Hoping they will win, knowing lives will be lost
 And families will grieve
 So how can I not help it
 but also be feeling guilt?

Would I do the same if I were in their place?
 Would I have the courage
 To speak against injustice
 And not allow fear and threats
 To shut the doors in my face?

I don't know, I am not there
 I can only wish them success from far away.

Here from the land of the free
 I wish other nations would put into practice
 The very same liberties
 And people everywhere
 Regardless of race, religion or nationality
 Would come together
 Planting gardens of Truth
 For future generations to see
 That have flowers growing tall and strong
 Rooted in the principles of
 Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. ■

On the need for a vision. Our objective is to clarify and lengthen our personal and collective vision and to pursue that vision relentlessly. G. K. Chesterton in England once said that if we only had more visionaries among our statesmen, we might get something really practical done! If that be the case, how much more we need visionaries in religion to get something really practical done. It is not practical to have just old ideas, or to do things only in the old ways. Without vision, the people perish.

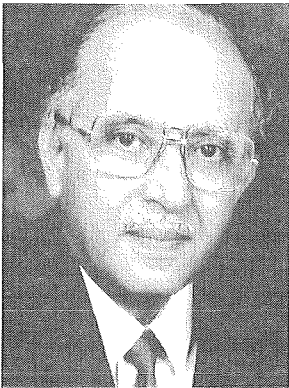
Our old world is passing away before our eyes, and unless we can achieve a vision of that which must take its place, and share that vision, the portals of the future might not open for us at all. And we and our faiths would perish, visionless, with the decadence of a divided and transient civilization. I want to see with my eyes and my mind and my heart a better world than we have ever known before since the dawn of time, and I want to identify it, and I want to believe in it, with you."

[By Jehangir Sarosh, World Council of Religion and Peace; quotation from a speech by Dr. Dana Greeley, a co-founder of WCRP, at the first WCRP Conference in 1970 in Japan]

VISIONS OF ADULT LEADERS

AUSTRALIA

DR. SAM KERR *surgeon, with appointments at University College Hospitals, University of NSW; author and lecturer on Zarathushti religion; Sydney, NSW.*



The last 50 years of a steady Zarathushti diaspora to the West, seeking refuge or greener pastures, has seen diverse groups and many subgroups try to mingle, as they once did during Gathic times. The dialectic phenomenon of discord is something we just had to have. Zarathushti emphasized this was, indeed, the very purpose of life. It is as if Ahura Mazda has set the stage for this process (the neo-settlements) and the means, too (inquiring Zarathushtis).

By 2050, a century of interlude will have vitalized the global consciousness of Zarathushtis convincingly. Our precious cultural heritage will not only be preserved but also enhanced. The future, indeed, looks ominously bright.

DR. PURVEZ DINYAR KOLSAWALLA *[photo page 78], University lecturer in Marketing and Management; past president, Australian Zoroastrian Association; active member of the community; Sydney, NSW.*

As the Zarathushti community enters a new millennium, it will face opportunities and challenges which were never encountered before. There is an obvious resurgence in the religion of Zarathushti and its message. Unlike the past few centuries, however, where tradition and rituals guided the laity, there is an intense desire to explore and more importantly interpret the message of

Zarathushti. These diverse and often conflicting opinions should be encouraged and allowed to flourish as freedom of thinking is a key plank of our religion. Let all of us practice the religion of Zarathushti in the best way we can do under the circumstances in which we live. *May there be unity amongst our diversity.*

DINAZ MISTRY, *Consultant, Human Resources and Training, active member of the community; Sydney, NSW.*

The future of the religion will probably have two streams, both influenced heavily by the cultures that nurture it. In India and Iran we will see more traditional activity because it is inevitable that religious activity will go with the flow – past merging into future. Rituals and visiting of agiaris and atash behrams will continue to dominate, because of their great efficacy. In the West, the absence of these institutions, the lack of agiaris or atash behrams in the local vicinity will lead to inevitable change. Great materialism will lead to an inner search for more perfect knowledge. The Gathas will help. Information technology will reconcile the two streams.

CAPT. NOSHIR SACHINWALLA, JP, President, Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW, North Rocks, NSW.

The Zarathushti community has survived for thousands of years till today. This community had its ups and downs. Sheer strength and conviction in their beliefs to follow the path of righteousness handed down by our Prophet Zarathushti in a very simple form *Humata, Hukhta and Huvareshta* – Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.



Living by these tenets, our community has survived till today. I am confident that our

Zarathushti community will be vibrant, energetic and prosperous with our atash aderan and atash bahram in all continents on this globe

CANADA

ERVAD DR. JEHAN BAGLI [photo page 99], senior research scientist, retired; chair, FEZANA Historical Research and Preservation committee; editor, *Gavashni*; Mississauga, Ontario.

Since the time of the first savior Asho Spitama Zarathushtra, there appears to be little by way of progress among Zarathushtis, to recognize the innate divinity. The constant reminders of “man is Mazda’s supreme creation” and “listen with your ears ... reflect with a clear mind, man by man” has to this day remained words, that await to be transposed into harmonious communal actions.

As the babies of today turn into the adults of tomorrow, the lagging spiritual perception will alter. The religion of Zarathushtra will drift closer to its message, as the community and the clergies will discern the crust of the tradition from the kernel of the message. The ancient recognized the activity of the divine, in the rhythm of life-breath. The Zarathushti community of tomorrow will detect the mysterious nearness of the divine, as they identify the limitations of science and technology. The turn of a generation will perceive the veracity of the religion of Zarathushtra – giving, is to experience, the true benevolence of Mazda. The community will approach the recognition of the spirit of Mazda within. The single force that cannot be seized by the senses, yet a palpable characteristic that demarcates the living from the dead.

As for your old men dreams they will dream,
As for your young men visions they will see. [Joel 2.28]

DR. DOLLY DASTOOR [photo page 11], clinical psychologist, assistant professor at McGill University; Lt. governor, Dist.2, Zonta International; past president, Zoroastrian Association of Quebec; past president, FEZANA; co-chair, 7th World Zoroastrian Congress; Brossard, Quebec.

In 1900 if somebody had asked me what do you think the Zarathushti community will be in the year 2000, even in my wildest dreams I would never have thought that the two main groups of Zarathushtis in Iran and India, separated over centuries would be living together, and that the people of the original Zarathushti lands would have been awakened with a thirst for the knowledge of the religion of their ancestors. That the internet would be both a boon and a curse, connecting the diasporic community as a family and yet allowing each member of the family to fight to maintain his/her own turf. But both these developments were necessary to come together and move forwards.

My vision for 2050, which in the scheme of boundless Time is just a breath away, is to see Zarathushtis of all shades, colors and countries forming a cohesive religious community. I hope to see the emergence of religious scholarship where dialogues and discussions are based on rationality devoid of polarization. I hope to see the emergence of a community which has internalized the doctrine and is living a Zarathushti life. I hope to see the development of binding political and social structures, and the emergence of leaders with vision and foresight who will begin to pull this disparate group of people into a Virtual Nation – a Zarathushti Nation leading the way to *frashokereti*.

ERVAD GEV KARKARIA, accountant; president, Zoroastrian Association of Quebec; Kirkland, Quebec.

Being ever an optimist and having seen ever active, vibrant, enterprising youth as evidenced by successful youth congresses of the past, I see a thriving successful Zarathushti community 50 years hence.

North America will replace India as the stronghold of future Zarathushtis and will play a dominant role in charting our future worldwide. As our present youth pass on the torch to the next generation, I visualize a Zarathushti community dedicated to replace current polarization, factionalization and intolerance with peace, harmony and tolerance.

PERVIZ MADON, counselor for battered women; president of Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) and chair of the Womens’ Committee; served on the boards of multicultural, interfaith, counselling services. Vancouver, British Columbia.



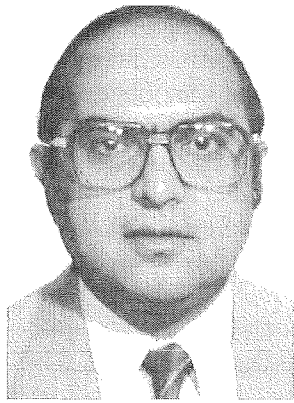
My vision of the global Zarathushti community is that we stay united, work *with* all our differences i.e. values, customs, traditions, beliefs and not work against each other which will be so detrimental for the future of this community. Be open and not rigid in adapting to changes around us because what worked thousands of years ago may not necessarily work in this 21st century. Be positive and energetic role models for our future generations as they will ultimately be the torch bearers of this beautiful religion.



If we open a quarrel between the past and present, we shall find that we have lost the future.

- Sir Winston Churchill

FIRDOSH MEHTA, engineer; active in multifaith work; past president, Zoroastrian Association of Alberta; vice-president, FEZANA; Edmonton, Alberta.



Since 2000 two new generations of Zarathushtis have come into this world. Zarathushtis are more aware and committed in their practice of the faith than ever before. Remnants of Parsi tradition in the old countries like India and Pakistan, are slowly relegating themselves to the academic studies of historians and sociologists. The world is now more secular and individualistic.

Even strongly traditional countries like India are engulfed in cosmopolitan and egalitarian social reforms. The caste system is a thing of the past, except in remote rural villages and within precincts of the inner sanctum of some places of worship.

More people are embracing the faith in central Eurasia, Australasia and the Levant, and this growth is no more restricted by birth patterns. With extraordinary development of world economies, it is increasingly difficult to practice traditions of the past that are looked upon as encumbrances to the freeing of the human spirit. But, it is also the time where the ethical theology of Asho Zarathushtra is promoted throughout the education and justice systems. The 'chem-bio-med' science of criminology is now advanced enough to understand the workings of the human mind. It is easier to decipher between *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu*, and the world has done a full circle in respecting and requiring individual responsibility as the prime motivator of an International Code of Justice. The greatest contributor to this New World Order is the guiding spiritual ideology of the Gathas of Asho Zarathushtra.

The World Zoroastrian Federation is called upon by UN authorities for international conflict mediation. Zarathushtis have the unique distinction to be proud of this contribution.

We are achieving greater heights of success in all fields of human endeavor. A Zarathushti is preparing to leave the space station on a shuttlecraft to orbit the sun closer than planet Mercury. She has memorized the Khorshed Nyaesh in the language of her ancestors and will recite it close to the Great Ball of Fire, where no man has gone before. Translations of this Nyaesh will be simulcast in 721 languages over 243 countries and the sun will shine upon her in all the glory of Ahura Mazda.

Meanwhile on earth, the Zarathushtis of Houston will open the Time Capsule, read this article in the FEZANA Journal of Winter 2000, and wonder how close their world is, to this vision.

BELLA TATA, immediate past president of Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC); Executive Assistance Officer, Industry Canada, Pacific Region; Vancouver, British Columbia.



This is the Fall of 2000, when there is so much happening on the North American continent. We are gearing up for the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Texas, and this has been an experience not many of us will forget. Looking ahead to what our global Zarathushti community will be in the year 2050 I know it will not be what it is now –

changes occur with every moment, but to predict what changes will take place is like looking at a crystal ball. There will be subtle changes in our faces, our voices, our names and the culture as more Zarathushtis build their homes out of Iran and India.

The US will have its first Zarathushti senator, and Canada its first Zarathushti federal minister. There will be more priests qualified to counsel and guide, as traditions start changing. There will be no homeless or impoverished co-religionists, as we would have become charitable once again and more aware of others needs. We will have greater respect for one another as our growing spirituality overrides our personal views. We will not be judgmental because we are not 'gods'.

I would have liked my vision to include a homeland of our own but, unfortunately, this is unreal as there is no great need to find and build a country for ourselves when most families are economically stable and persecution does not force our dwindling masses to flee.

SAM VESUNA, retired business executive; president, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario; actively involved in community affairs in Ontario and FEZANA; Unionville, Ontario.

Fifty years is but a drop in our history, and yet it can be a momentous period in making the "U" turn to a thriving and growing Zarathushti community instead of an endangered and declining one. I visualize my educated Zarathushti community will use reason, guided by the ethical and moral teachings of Asho Zarathushtra in making personal and community decisions. That different viewpoints will be heard, pondered and respected. That we will accept and not discriminate against those who are genuinely attracted and practice the teachings of Asho Zarathushtra. That priesthood will be a chosen vocation and not hereditary. That some prayers will be recited in languages we understand. That our youth will be the dedicated torchbearers of these changes.

HONGKONG, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

JAL SOLI SHROFF, *businessman; president, Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao; Hongkong.*



By 2050, I believe that our numbers will multiply and the Zarathushti community will be a law abiding, flourishing community living in harmony with each other and with *all* that inhabit this glorious world of ours.

The destiny of the community rests in *our* own hands. Change is inevitable but it is how each one of us, old and young, unite

to accommodate and manage this change which will determine our future. The alternative – dogmatism, will inevitably lead to self-destruction.

Let us keep alive the fire in our hearts and follow the basic teachings of our noble religion, Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

INDIA

DR. HOMI DHALLA, *founder-president, World Zoroastrian Cultural Foundation; Mumbai.*



I foresee a growing awareness of the importance of preserving our culture – our songs, poetry, language, music, even our historical sites.

As the interfaith movement is gaining importance in an increasingly pluralistic world society, I visualize Zarathushtis playing a more active role in it.

With the migration from India to foreign shores on the

increase and with the emergence of the Russian Zarathushti community and others in that region, I see a rich mosaic of Zarathushti life dotting the globe.

JAMSHED GUZDER, *businessman, entrepreneur; chair, Bombay Parsi Punchayet; president, Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Associations of India; Mumbai.*

In futuristic scanning, there is room for many perceptions. However we Zarathushtis are forward looking (in many respects) and can envision where we should be, half a century hence.

The keynote to our survival will have to be our unflinching faith in our simple, clean and scientific religion which



is the bedrock of our ethics and value systems. To do that we have to sustain our basic value systems, without being dogmatic or fadists. Our religious instructions should be sustained extensively and at the grass-roots level i.e. it should be imparted to our infants and children first.

Our aim should be “good health for all”, so that no Zarathushti is malnourished or uncared for,

medically. Our other aim should be “housing for all” – every Zarathushti must be respectably housed. None should be shelterless. The community in different parts of the world, should create a corpus for the aged and the disadvantaged, so that they do not face deprivation.

Another goal should be “education for all”, not just basic education but formal and informed education which gives a cutting edge competitiveness to our Zarathushti children, and even the adults, so that they have an edge over their competitors.

Lastly we must develop our flair for agriculture, trade and industry, in all of which we were pioneers and the community acquired its wealth, in the cause of distributive justice, and not self-aggrandizement.

These goals coupled with our probity, should see us through much beyond 2050. We will survive well if our religion and Fire are kept intact.

DASTUR DR KAIKHUSROO M. JAMASPASA, *[photo page 55] Avesta Pahlavi scholar; high priest, Anjuman Atash Bahram; Mumbai.*

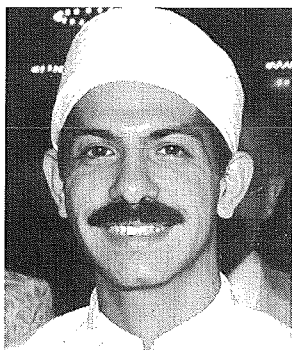
It is indeed difficult to predict day to day occurrences, leave alone what might happen 50 years hence, but, one is inclined to be optimistic about the future of our illustrious community and I for one, believe that Zarathushtis the world over shall thrive in peace and prosperity as they have done in years gone by.

Our community has survived in the face of various hardships – persecution by Islam in Iran and the voyage on stormy seas. Our valiant ancestors put up a brave and gritty front and sailed to India only for the survival of our religion and community. Moreover, we Parsis can mingle in any society anywhere in the world due to our peaceful and fun loving natures, at the same time contributing to the advancement and well-being of that society. This has been amply evident in the way the Parsis have contributed to Indian society itself.

Survival of all these traditions that we are so proud of, lies with our youth and they must be made aware that to maintain this rich heritage bestowed upon them through the ages they must follow the three golden tenets

preached by the religion of Zarathushtra – Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. These principles shall be the guiding light in all their endeavors and shall keep the Zarathushti community flourishing way beyond 2050.

ERVAD DR. RAMIYAR P. KARANJIA, *Avesta-Pahlavi scholar; author of books on Zarathushti religion; lecturer in Iranian Languages; principal, Athornan Boarding Madressa and Sir J. J. Z. and Mullan Feroze Madressas; Dadar, Mumbai.*



Values, doctrines and practices are the fundamentals of every religion. While the former two aspects are essential at a humane, personal and intellectual level, the third one is essential at a day to day level and is invariable for the continuity and sustenance of religion and religiosity.

Most responsible members of the diaspora community today are first generation emigrants from India who have known and seen religious practices first-hand. However, in 2050, the global community would be the third generation. Unless concrete steps are taken to ensure that the third aspect of religion is respectfully adhered to and followed by the coming generations, the essence of living a Zarathushti life may be lost for future generations.

DR. AVA KHULLAR, *sociologist interested in the working and situation of the Zarathushti community; New Delhi.*

For global Zarathushtis the next 50 years are crucial. Will they point towards a Zarathushti frashokereti (healing-renewal) or eventual extinction?

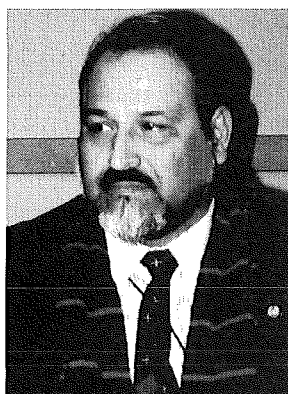
The West has taken the challenge of revitalizing the Zarathushti spirit in their youth, but can it be sustained for at least three generations to establish a secure foundation? The surging Iranians and neo-Zarathushtis hold great potential; but will the latter phenomenon be nurtured pragmatically by the global community? In India, after the post-independence decades of decline, economically and demographically, encouraging signs of renewed pride in Zarathushti identity is growing with a “back to the roots” movement by enterprising youth and couples to Gujarat, spearheaded by WZO. But is this too little too late? My gut feeling senses glimmers of optimism.

DASTUR DR. FIROZE M. KOTWAL, *high priest of the Zarathushti community, respected worldwide for his robust and unbiased conservatism; Mumbai.*



The fate of our global Zarathushti community, fifty years ahead from now, cannot be measured by one uniform yardstick. It will vary from place to place and from country to country. Those who will strive sincerely with courage and optimism to preserve and protect their ancient Iranian identity and racial traits, beneficent customs and traditions and pursue the Zarathushti way of life, will be able to save themselves from the imminent danger of extinction. This is the only time-tested and sensible approach towards building a peaceful and harmonious community for the future.

KHOJESTE MISTREE *lecturer and author, co-founder and managing trustee of Zoroastrian Studies, whose aim is to promote Zoroastrian tradition and Iranian culture through proper education; Mumbai*



For a religion and a people who have survived for over three thousand years with a cohesive religious identity, the next fifty years will bring about great changes in the belief and practice paradigms, in our diasporic community. North American Zoroastrianism is going to be significantly different with many new groups, sub-groups and cults proliferating in the New World. The paradigm of inclusion will over-run traditional beliefs and practices, with ethnicity long forgotten as a norm.

The UK-Europe-Central Asian groupings will have some of the spill-over fervor from across the Atlantic; however, the UK Zarathushtis will seek to retain their ties with India as their religious mother-ship. The traditional consecrated fire temple will become a living reality in the UK, in the next ten years.

Sub-continental Zoroastrianism will undergo changes, but the places of worship and the institutions will remain intact, as a legacy of the past. The core of beliefs and practices will be followed by the majority of Zarathushtis living in Hindu India.

There is every likelihood that the Zarathushti religion may see a major turn-around in Iran, with the people nationalistically linking themselves to their ancient past. A resurgence of rituals and festivals will give people a new sense of identity.

Zarathushtis living in Australasia will fall somewhere in-between the radicalism of North America and the traditionalism of India.

The community will grow globally, and there will be a greater interest in wanting to understand the metaphysics and to experience the mystical dimension of the faith, founded upon a better knowledge-base of beliefs and practices.

HOMAI N. MODI, *social worker; proclaimed Woman of the Year 2000 by the American Biographical Institute; trustee and hon. secretary, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute; Mumbai.*



My Vision is:

(1) A proper world body set up with representation in the United Nations.

(2) Wise, humane and honest, trained intellectuals of a high order as trustees of punchayets, associations, trusts and as religious leaders.

(3) Promotion of religious scholars and learning so that

ancient manuscripts can be deciphered and disseminated to the public.

(4) Not just teaching of our religion to the community, but seeing that Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds are followed by teacher and the taught.

(5) Solving with wisdom, long contentious issues such as conversion, intermarriage, adoption, declining population etc. which solutions will be followed not just by some, but by the world community.

(6) A bit of our glorious past; perhaps a homeland of our own – *Ariyana Vaeja*.

DAME DR. PROF. MEHER MASTER-MOOS

[photo on page 95] barrister at law, advocate; president, Zoroastrian College, Mazdayasnie Monasterie and Shah Behram Baug Society; Mumbai.

The Abed Saheb-e-Delan of Demavand Koh had predicted to Late Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff that at the time of the advent of Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb in public, the Zarathushtis in India would have dwindled to about 11,000. In the regions of ancient Iran, (presently the former USSR republics from Tajikistan Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, southern Russia, Azerbaijan and the regions surrounding the Black Sea and the Caspian sea), a dormant population of persons of original Zarathushti ancestral stock would awaken and the Zarathushti population of such persons would be between two and three crores (20-

30 millions). We are witnessing the gradual fulfillment of this prophecy; and the time is rapidly drawing near for the advent in public of the great Rainidar Saheb.

In North America, Europe and in Russia and other Eastern European countries there are persons who are not born of both Zarathushti parents but who are now very keen to be initiated into the Mazdayasnie Zarathushti Din. It is the work reserved for Shah Behram Varzavand Saheb to decide who amongst these persons is spiritually fit to be accepted within the Zarathushti fold.

I have no doubt that the global Zarathushti community in the year 2050 will be healthy and flourishing, although perhaps the new priests will need to be properly trained in their performance of ceremonies whose practice is preserved best in India by the Parsi priests for the past several centuries.

DINSHAW K TAMBOLY, *management consultant; trustee, Bombay Parsi Punchayet; managing trustee, World Zoroastrian Organization Funds, World Zoroastrian Trust for Women and Children; chairman, WZO Trust Funds; Mumbai.*



Change is the only thing that remains constant in life. Those who do not adapt to change are consigned to the dustbin of history. It is thus necessary that practical steps be taken to shape the even greater changes that lie ahead – to direct them rather than allow us to be victimized by them.

We are fortunate that we have within us youth with excellent potential. Our youth have amply demonstrated that they have lying latent in them, a deep reservoir of awesome talent in various spheres of human endeavor.

Our youth have demonstrated that they possess the all-important quality of having open minds. Whilst they are receptive to what is taught, they think rationally, analyze objectively and execute decisively. Such traits are illustrative of leadership qualities, and we Zarthushtis are indeed fortunate that our youth have been so blessed.

Some generations are born to create civilization whilst others to maintain it. Let us encourage and motivate our youth and help them to achieve their destinies.

My conclusion is that we Zarthushtis are a community with a brilliant past, an extremely fulfilling present and an outstanding future.

Great souls are they who see that spiritual is stronger than material force, that thoughts rule the world.
- Emerson



IRAN

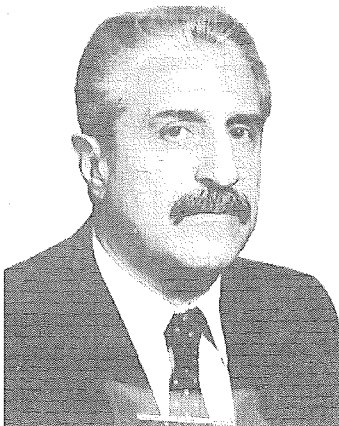
DR. MAHYAR ARDESHIRI [at left above, with Firoozeh Ardeshiri] chair, Headquarters of World Zoroastrian Congresses, Tehran.

May we, with Ahura Mazda's blessing, *Hamazor bim* – with unity and dedication preserve our Zarathushti and ancient Iranian heritage.

May we, with Ahura Mazda's blessing *Hamazor hama asho bim* – with all *ashavan* disseminate our culture and religious potential in the interest of universal peace and friendship.

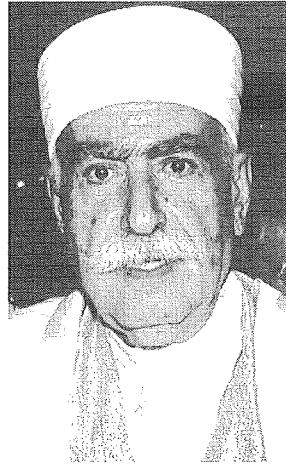
May we, with Ahura Mazda's blessing, *Ham kerfeh kerfehkar-an-bim*, with all righteous people from all world monotheistic religions, stand for and contribute to freedom of choice, human rights, protection of environment, universal education and happiness of mankind as preached in the Gathas.

MOBED KEIKHOSROW MAZDYASNI, grandson of late Dastur Tirandaz Mazdyasni, acting president of the Anjoman-e Mobedan; Tehran.



As regards our vision of the global Zarathushti community in the year 2050, it is our firm belief that the strong foundation stone, being the teachings of Asho Zarathushtra that has kept up our community for all these past millennia will, for sure, keep us even further united and prosperous in the year 2050.

DASTOOR DR. JEHangIR OSHIDARI, president, Kankash-e Mobedan, Tehran.



Since the Zarathushti community is dispersed all over the world with less unity among them and just publicizing some lectures and ideas in journals like *FEZANA Journal* and *Payk-e Mehr* it is hard to predict about the year 2050 from now.

These days nobody is aware of his/her future and there is no effective body to answer our questions religiously, socially, economically, etc. then how

can we think of 50 years from now?

However, from the speeches and workshops of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress, I hope we would conclude a beneficial outcome for the Zarathushti community in the future and the Congress recommendations should be followed up seriously.

PARVIN MEHERABANI ZARDOSHTI, vice-president, Zarathushti Women's Organization, Tehran.



In 2050 the world society and the Zarathushti community as a part of the world society will be shaped more or less as the Prophet has promised.

The significant characteristic of the religion of Zarathushtra is believing in Asha which, according to the Gathas, is the norm of existence. *Haptan-haiti* regards Fire as the symbol of civilization, the civilization

in correspondence with the norm of existence.

When we renew our kushti, we remind ourselves our duty (*khish-kari*) to revive the world, to try to maintain world peace, to find a way to bring different cultures and peoples together, and to conserve the environment i.e. not to pollute the four elements.

Today the United Nations which is the objective and actual form of universal friendship organization (IRMAN), though very slowly, is trying for the 'betterment' of the world. There are strong parties and organizations which try to conserve and protect the environment. We hope that the declaration of human rights will be observed, step by step and eventually the world will be the manifestation of what Zarathushtra has promised.

NEW ZEALAND

ERVAD JAMSHEED BURJOR SIDHWA,

logistics sales supervisor; past (founder) president of (TMZANZ) Traditional Mazdayasni Zarathushtee Anjuman of New Zealand, Inc.; Auckland.



Come 2050 and two things are certain. Our little community will have grown and be embracing Asho Zarathushtre's teachings more fervently than ever. Insha-Ahura, Iran and India will continue as homebases to well consolidated satellite communities fostering assimilation between Parsis and Iranians.

More Parsis will experience Iran. It's mystical impact on Parsi psyche will inspire a healthier ethnic identity, transcending ones set by passports. Shah Nameh volumes will adorn homes. It's immortal passion may even inspire us to make a block-buster on Rostam/Sohrab, putting Conan to shame.

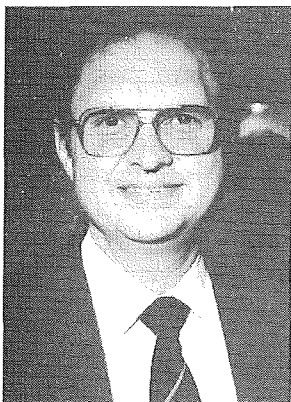
Iranshah and other atash bahrams in India will continue to beckon us from overseas. Pro-active leadership may favorably reposition some poorly patronized agiary atash sahebs and also alleviate some long-term community problems.

Many of yesteryear's contentious subjects will be dispelled as Zarathushtis will discern better, leading to fulfillment of those promises to Ahura Mazda in the littlest of our prayers.

Atha Zamyat Yatha Afrinami.

PAKISTAN

BYRAM D. AVARI, JP; *Honorary consul of Canada; chair, Avari Group; manager, Pakistan – Canadian Airlines International; chair, Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (1990); chair, Dastur Dr. Dhalla Memorial Institute (1998); Karachi.*



The Zarathushti community will retain its dynamism and drive. 2050 will see it as cohesive as before, inspite of the usual infighting which develops from 100% literacy and the majority of the community having the same standard of living. The population focus will shift from the Indo-Pak-Iranian subcontinents to North America and Australia. The

Zarathushtis will carry even a higher premium, establishing themselves in these new communities as leaders of business, industry and social programs.

Despite all arguments, the number of Zarathushtis will remain the same and will become more religion-oriented as the youngsters of today are taking a greater interest in their heritage and beliefs. Rituals will be simplified and the stranglehold of the punthakis in India/Pakistan will be diluted. The essence of the Zarathushti spirit will shine rather than the number of rituals for navjotes, weddings, funerals and other rites.

TOXY COWASJEE, *president, Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal; Committee Member, WZO; Karachi.*



It is my hope that it will be a community ruled by Asha and Vohu Mana. Judging from current statistics, by 2050 there will be only a few Zarathushtis in the sub-continent. Therefore, the focus is on today's Zarathushti youth in North America and their progeny. If they are given the chance to think for themselves without blindly accepting what has been handed down to them, they will do right by the community. The onus falls on us not to hand down futile impediments that create rifts, so that the community of the future can live with tolerance and foresight.

RUSSIA

MICHAEL CHISTIakov *[photo on page 95] born a Russian Orthodox, was initiated by Pavel Globa. In 1995 he was initiated again as Junior Dean of the St. Petersburg Zoroastrian community (registered in the city council in 1994). He holds weekly services and teaches Avestan language in Russian towns that have Zoroastrian groups. His translation of the Khordeh Avesta into Russian will be published shortly. His main aim is to adopt the Zarathushti canon for Russian Zarathushtis and unite groups in different towns into one strong Zarathushti community.*

Our times are the times for ancient prophecies to come true. It's the time when the savior Saoshyant Aushdarmah is to appear. In those few decades our task as Zarathushtis is to unite our efforts, to relinquish all bookish pharisaical arguments, to revive the essential spirit of the religion, and its moral power. The Zarathushti religion is to become again the global religion, so that people of any nation could join the community regardless of

their country of origin or their language. I believe the Avesta to be the 'New Testament' of the coming age of Aquarius. Our main causes are gaining victory over evil and bringing forward the approaching 'frashogird'.

SINGAPORE

RUSSI GHADIALI, *businessman; president, Parsi Association of Singapore; president, Inter-Religious Organization; Singapore.*

I am not a sage nor do I have a crystal ball to gaze into and predict the state of the religion in 2050. I am just expressing my personal opinion, and the same is not meant to upset any individual or association. Let me apologize in advance in case anyone has a different viewpoint.

The world is changing fast, every second, and there is one thing, which is constant – the change in all aspects of life. There is no way we can expect that the changes will not effect our own religion and us.

Ten years ago, children depended on their parents for religious education and in some cases on the priest but not anymore. With the computer and Internet, they get a lot of information and knowledge faster than ever before. This new development is going to have a major impact on our religion and community in the coming years.

For over a thousand years, the belief was that the Zarathushtis (or Parsis) in India were the only surviving Zarathushtis; later their children migrated to UK and USA. We know now that is not correct. We are now aware of many Zarathushtis who also survived – in Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Italy and other countries. The religion and customs they follow have no local influence like the Parsis had on them from the Hindus in India. It is time to recognize this and expect that future Zarathushtis will be very different.

The Zarathushti population is rapidly aging; the orthodox are dwindling and time will come when the pure Zarathushti Parsi (ideology) will disappear. The community will accept anyone who wants to profess the Zarathushti religion of their own free will and not out of force.

After all religion is personal and comes from your heart, either you believe in it or not depends on you as an individual.

SOUTH AFRICA

SOHRAB FRAMROZE SHAPURJEE [photo on page 76] *chief anaesthetist at Natalspruit Hospital; treasurer, Transvaal Parsee Association; Johannesburg.*

In my dreams as I travel through time in this new millennium, I have a vision that in 2050 we will have a strong, diverse but globally united, prosperous, enlightened and thriving Zarathushti community, that will serve as a beacon to mankind.

The community, priests, elders and youth leaders will play a vital role in keeping the eternal flame of our religion, culture, customs and heritage alive by following and practicing Humata, Hukhta and Huvareshta, and treading the Path of Asha. Zarathushtra's message will be heard and listened to, by all mankind.

SWEDEN

MOBED KAMRAN JAMSHIDI, *grandson of Late Mobedan Mobed Ardeshir Azargoshasb; designer of plastic molds and machines; Gothenburg, Sweden.*

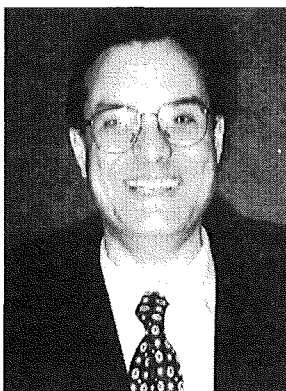
Year 2050? Let me see! Where are we now? First from one perspective ...

Yes, we are divided. We have different opinions about what the 'Zarathushti Din' is. Some see and seek Asho Zarathushtra in 'Koh Demavand' and some consider Ahura Mazda as pure intellect or 'big bang'. Some believe in and do religious ceremonies, some even dislike those. Some do them in long versions and others in short ones. And so on.

The other side of this perspective ... the above-mentioned are all natural happenings, considering the historical-social situation of ours. Do not get confused. It is a procedure of *thinking, living and moving forward*. One thing is definitely sure. 'daena vanguhi' is in absolute progress – both qualitative and quantitative and no one can stop it. We are on our way, the right way. Just be creative and constructive in every moment.

UNITED KINGDOM

DORAB MISTRY, *business; president, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE); London, UK.*



There will be a larger proportion of our community living in the western world than in the old traditional countries. The community will possess more shades of religiosity and there could be clear cut demarcations between the Progressive or Reformist wing and the Traditional wing. The community in the western world will also have come to terms with western culture and will take pride in its own ethnicity. There will be more Zarathushti institutions established by the community in the West.

RUMI SETHNA *accountant; chair, World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO); London.*

The migration of Zarathushtis from the mother countries of Iran and the sub-continent to the West, will



probably continue for a few decades before ending by the middle of the new millennium, with more Zarathushtis living in the West than in the mother countries.

Zarathushtis from different parts of the world will bear widely-differing social and cultural imprints of the countries they live in. Their leaders, young and old, will however

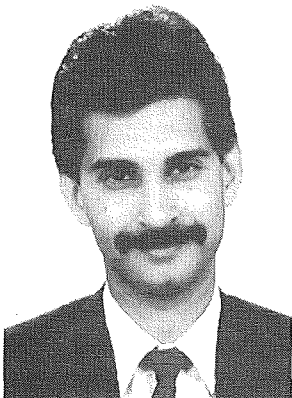
rise to the challenge of ensuring that the core teachings of Zarathushtra, the essential religious infrastructures and practices to sustain them, and the fundamental Zarathushti values of life, remain rooted within their communities despite their differing social and cultural values.

Liberal societies of western countries, will force Zarathushtis living in them to search for the essence of Zarathushtra's teachings, and adapt practices, to perpetuate their ancient faith. Led by conscience, reason and rationality, their search will foster great strength and conviction in the faith. Those in Iran and the sub-continent are likely to find the theocratic tendencies of those countries flowering into open societies of greater religious tolerance. Wisdom of the Zarathushti leaders globally will make them reach out for a dialogue between them, based on careful listening and search for commonalities that bond rather than divide.

A restructured World Zoroastrian Organization will facilitate this process and our community more dispersed than today, hopefully is likely to achieve greater solidarity and unity by the middle of the new Millennium.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MEHER DADABHOY AMALSAD, *professional speaker; author of Bread for the Head; Westminster, California.*



My three year old nephew and I were at Disneyland talking about the Space Mountain ride. Suddenly, I asked him what his concept was about space and he said: "It's a place where my Mom parks her car."

So in the year 2050, what kind of space will the Z-community have in our global society?

Is it going to be a Space Mountain in which we will have the freedom to exercise Good thoughts, Good words, and Good deeds? Or is it going to be an assigned parking space where the community will be stagnant in the parked mode?

I believe that this Z-Space will depend on the size of the space that we will have in our hearts for tolerance and compassion for others in our community.

That is what I see as a part of our Z-Space in my Z-Vision 2050.

DASTUR DR. KERSEY H. ANTIA, *psychologist; Head Priest for the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago for over 25 years; Orland Park, Illinois.*



The Parsis will dwindle to only 20-30,000 by 2030 in India. Few in the West will survive by 2050 as most are marrying out already, and yet we have done little for their acceptance and religious survival and left them with no religious institutions, scholarly priests, etc., to fall back upon.

However, Irani Zarathushtis should fare much better

because they and their priests have favored acceptance throughout centuries and have defined what the religion of Zarathushtra is and is not. They have benefited greatly by their present regime's emphasis on even minorities following their priests and studying their religion even as the rest of us are engrossed in materialistic pursuits. Their sufferings will inspire them to remain true to their roots which then may also be acclaimed by others in large numbers. Parsis still could reverse their decline by following the Iranis, which they so ardently did in the Rivayat times.

FARSHID BAKHTYARI, *software engineer; president, Iranian Zoroastrian Association; New York, New York.*

Let's compare the vision of today with the vision of a few 1000 years ago when the religion of Zarathushtra was the world's dominant religion. We can then determine whether we are going to survive all the social, cultural and political issues or are we destined to vanish.

Cyrus the Great, who gave mankind the First Declaration of Human Rights was a Zarathushti, following the Gathas. Zarathushtra tells us to use our Good Mind, and also gives us the freedom to choose – our path in life, in our profession, religion, or in our companion. The concept of 'freedom of choice' is one of the strong pillars of the religion of Zarathushtra. No other religion in the world gives man such freedom.

Where are we today? Do we have the same vision? Are we truly respecting and practicing 'freedom of choice'? Or it is something that can only be found in books? Where and how did we lose our vision or actually Zarathushtra's vision?

I believe the religion of Zarathushtra is going to be once again the world's dominant religion. Would it happen in 50 years, probably not, but I believe by then we are well into this journey. Human beings have started to search for a religion based on the Good Mind. Human beings will not follow meaningless traditions (note the word 'meaningless', I didn't say 'all') just because they are traditions. Man needs a logical answer. Statements such as "it was our ancestor's way of life" or "its God's will" would not satisfy them any more. Advances in communication such as Internet will make this journey much easier. Zarathushtra's words and vision can easily be transferred to all corners of the world.

I believe 50 years from now, World Zoroastrian Congresses will be with people from all corners of the world, Zarathushtis of different colors, race, ethnicity, nationality and so on. Let our vision reflect Zarathushtra's vision where every human being is free to choose. Let us make, once again, the religion of Zarathushtra the world's dominant religion. This will happen eventually!

ERVAD JAL N. BIRDY, *structural engineer; president, North American Mobeds Council (NAMC); vice president, Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA); Los Angeles, California.*



The year is 2050. The future of the Parsi and Iranian Zarathushti community in North America has taken a brighter turn, thanks to the foresight of the generations that followed the wave of quibbling migrants who arrived here during the final quarter of the last century.

Looking around them at other small communities, these smart new Zarathushtis have realized that in the mixed North American 'Salad Bowl' each ingredient can exist as a separate entity while still making up a most tasty dish. They have taken a lesson in survival from their forebears and are actively practicing selected rituals, customs, and a disciplined Zarathushti way of life, which allows them to live contentedly as a distinct and respected entity. Most significantly, they have come to realize the importance of marriage within the fold and are actively promoting it.

The future of Zarathushtis on the Indian sub-continent looks equally bright. Dynamic new leaders have emerged and old time-tested values have been re-instilled. The agiaries and atash bahrams are filled to capacity on *hamkar* days indicating that faith and devotion in their ancestral religion has truly returned.

Yes, the world Zarathushtis are certainly coming into their own once again.

HUTOXI CONTRACTOR, *business; president, Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

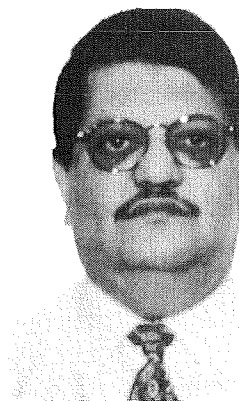


I am very optimistic for the future of our community based upon my confidence in the youth of today. Our efforts in trying to bring the community together in various ways, such as conducting youth congresses, building dar-e-mehr, sharing camaraderie will bear fruit. Our children today are more aware and taking a deeper interest in our religion which is a very positive sign.

Sitting back today and thinking of the year 2050 I can envision my grandchildren as well as my great grand children being an integral part of the Zarathushti community.

If we as parents/guardians continue to guide them on the path of Asha, I feel assured that they will keep the flame of our glorious religion alive and burning within their hearts always.

HOMI M. DAVIER, *businessman, transportation and software industry; co-chair, World Zoroastrian Congress 2000; married to Nergish for 25 years and sharing the joy of a bubbling young 23-year-old daughter, Jenisteen; Houston, Texas.*



Our Zarathushti world has seen three millennia of change so diverse, unpredictable with mass diasporas from Iran to the East and now towards the West. Through all these changes we have seen empires which have risen from the earth and ended in ashes. These changes are what have allowed us to stand firm, together with the belief that it is our cultural past and history-rich religion which ends up controlling our future.

Such changes will continue till the year 2050 and beyond. The changes which would be of interest for me would be the social and cultural exchanges between the Zarathushtis from the Indian subcontinent and those from Iran and the rest of the world.

I can envision progress in trade and commerce bringing worldwide Zarathushtis together through a vibrant Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, creating a path to prosperity and economic welfare for our entire community.

I can see a religious upheaval leading to a distinct difference in the manner in which our Zarathushti religion will

be practiced. Will there be tolerance between the history-rich traditionals and the new reformists? Will questions remain to be unanswered? Will we see more compassion towards other communities and their beliefs?

Let us remind our future generations to keep searching for their roots whilst conquering new territories and boundaries.

DR. ALI A. JAFAREY [see page 98], *director, Religious Affairs, the Zarathushtrian Assembly; Anaheim, California.*

The Good Religion is historically the first universal religion. Zarathushtra started a worldwide pacific propagating movement that won over peoples from the modern western China to the Middle East. It flourished until the fall of the Sasanian Empire. Then came a pause of over 14 centuries.

The movement, although in its early initial stage, has begun afresh. It is attracting global attention, particularly from the peoples of Iranian stock, who want to return to their sublime ancestral religion.

By 2050, the movement will be in its second stage, with thousands of active Zarathushtrians-by-choice from all races and nations working to spread the Divine Message all over the world.

DOLLY R. MALVA, *manager/administrator, City of Los Angeles; president, Zoroastrian Association of California; Downey, California.*



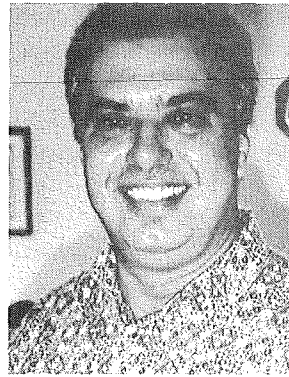
Fifty years from now, our community will be a very vibrant, intelligent, hard-working, high tech community. The present youth will still continue to illuminate the light of our sacred fire and hope they will follow the path of righteousness in the years to come with a Good Mind, Good Words and Good Actions.

The community will be more tolerant and charitable and learn from the experiences of the present Zarathushtis, which will make them better leaders of the world. They will still continue the traditions of our faith and establish a strong identity allowing for greater pride in their religion.

With better communication between Zarathushtis of Iran and other Zarathushtis settled all over the world, there will be more integration and assimilation between them.

HOSI P. MEHTA, *president, Mehta Motors, Inc. auto repair business; president, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago; Elmhurst, Illinois.*

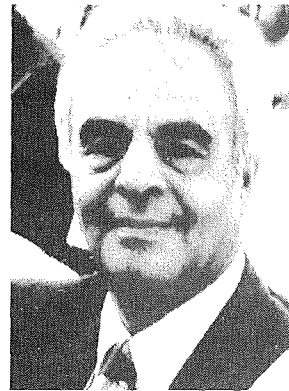
Ours is a religion of goodness, positiveness, understanding, tolerance, love and compassion for all cre-



ation. Bringing out the best in each other and making others better for knowing us and dealing with us should be our mission. When we work on these concepts, we are working towards *frashokereti* and that should be our goal in life. That is my vision, my dream for everyone.

Good Thoughts!

MOBED KEIKHOSROW MOBED, *business; member of Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America (Kankash-e Mobedan); board member, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago; Westmont, Illinois.*



In America, a Zarathushti cannot, on one hand, forget his proud ancestors; and on the other, firmly believe in his Zarathushti religion. However, whenever the Zarathushti youth look toward their associations (anjumans) and make suggestions for the progress of the community, they are faced with a tall wall that separates them from their anjumans.

Conflicts and controversies among the board members causes many youth to stay away.

In North America, Zarathushti youth must be respected and encouraged to join the anjumans. They need to be encouraged to carry out Zarathushti community work. It is indeed necessary to teach the youth the tenets and principles of the religion. Our youth are the ones who will carry the Zarathushti torch through the years to come.

BOMI PATEL, *director, hardware and systems technology, University of California-Santa Cruz; president, Zoroastrian Association of Northern California (ZANC); San Jose, California.*



In my vision for 2050, the global Zarathushti community will be as prosperous as ever. Although there may be a decline in the number of Parsis and Iranis in India and Pakistan, the global community will be much larger in number mostly due to the now liberalized religion policy in some areas of Central Asia. There are a large number of followers

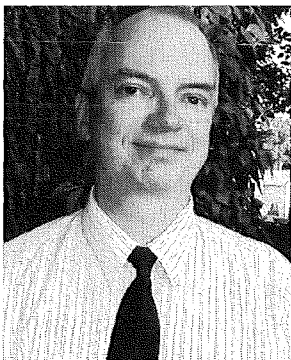
who were afraid to proclaim the religion in these coun-

tries. Now, with the situation changing, people will openly come out and proclaim their Zarathushti religion. Another prominent factor is the active role played by the youth of our community. With their enthusiasm and interest, they will lead the way well into the next century.

FRAMROZE K. PATEL [photo on page 11],
Certified Public Accountant, founder member and president (1980-1982) of Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY); treasurer, vice-president and president (since 1998) of FEZANA; Woodbridge, New Jersey.

We need to make sure that we keep the religion of Zarathushtra vibrant. It is truly said by one of the scholars that "No Priests No Zoroastrianism". We must reflect on this statement. Our priests through the ages have kept the religion of Zarathushtra alive. It is they who have passed our scriptures from generation to generation. They are indeed the keepers of our *manthras*. We need to keep this tradition alive. We need the future priests to be well learned in all aspects of theology. This is my vision.

JOSEPH PETERSON, software engineer for IBM; he practiced the Zarathushti religion since age 15, and underwent the navjote ritual in 1983. He has made virtually all Zarathushti religious texts available on the Internet at www.avesta.org; Minneapolis, Minnesota.

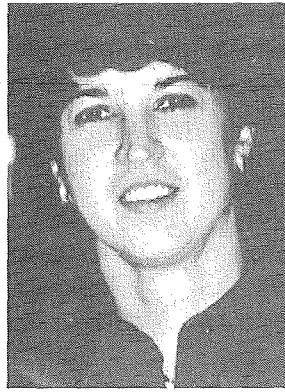


My vision for the global Zarathushti community derives from Dinkerd [3:87]: "The highest relation with the Mazdyasnian religion is (formed) by the faith of all mankind being confirmed in the good religion, and their thoughts being in unison with Ohrmazd through a Zarathush-trotum." To me this means

reestablishment of the Zarathush-trotema office, separation of religious from ethnic issues, establishment of atash bahrams in USA, Canada, UK and other population centers, correction of the calendar through remedies spelled out in the Pahlavi texts, a standardized prayer book, and official/orthodox positions on dogma, cults, and creed.

ROSHAN SETHNA, past president of Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH); ZAH representative to FEZANA; co-chair, Operations, World Zoroastrian Congress 2000; Houston, Texas.

Fifty years from today, I have every confidence that the Zarathushti community will be stronger in number and



also our valued traditions and rituals. Just as we teach these to our children with zest and enthusiasm today, let us pray they continue to do the same.

ROHINTON M. RIVETNA [photo on page 11],
director of Environmental Engineering, retired; founding president, FEZANA; founding trustee, Parliament of World's Religions; founding member, United Religions; Hinsdale, Illinois.

On the global Zarathushti landscape 50 years hence, I see a prosperous and growing community, with sound infrastructure in place. Our darbe mehrs and our associations, the bastions of our faith, have come together as regional federations in each major region of the world to sustain and support each other. A well-structured world body provides a forum for these regional federations to come together at a common table, so, they can be masters of their destiny and not victims of their fate.

These secular structures serve to support the spiritual. There are consecrated aderans now in the West tended by priests well-versed in the doctrinal, ritual and ministerial aspects of the faith. For spiritual sustenance, Zarathushtis still converge at the Iranshah in Udveda and the ancestral fires around Yazd.

Long-standing issues that tore our people apart at the turn of the millennium have now become a bitter memory. Guided by our organizational infrastructure, solutions emerged, imperceptibly, over time, through sustained dialogue, with grace, compassion and understanding; not through revolution, strife and uncontrolled verbal wars on the Internet. Our people have realized that religion cannot be democratized, matters of the heart, of belief and conviction cannot be decided by a vote. We have now learned to live in harmony, each group, much like a musical instrument, striving for individual excellence, playing in unison in a grand orchestra.

The religion of Zarathushtra is now well recognized and respected in the western diaspora as it has been in our mother countries of Iran and India. Our people have built a reputation for truth and integrity, for industry and enterprise, for learning and scholarship. It is a caring and compassionate community, with a deep and abiding love

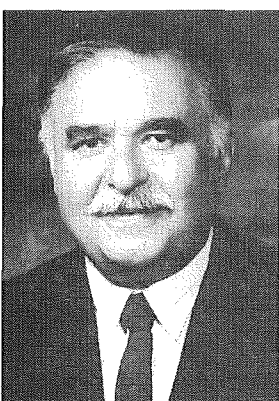
and respect for others, both within and outside the faith. As in the mother countries, in the western diaspora too, the name “Zoroastrian” is now synonymous with “industry, integrity, and charity”.

With commitment and confidence, our youth, unencumbered by much of the baggage that we of the first generation in the diaspora carried, have made it so.

MEHERBAN ROSHANRAVAN, *chemical engineer; born in Chem, Iran, grew up in Mumbai; president of Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (ZANT); Dallas, Texas.*

The global Zarathushti community, in the year 2050, will be stronger and richer in diversity than it is today. For time brings change, not only in the ways that traditions are understood, but also in the ways people identify themselves. Globalization is a strange phenomenon insofar as it breaks boundaries between cultures, religions, societies and nations without completely dissolving their unique histories. In this way, dangerous claims of purity are more difficult to make, and forces people to focus less on exclusive definitions of what it means to be Zarathushti and more on the common connections that allow for greater realms of kinship and joy. Indeed whether a global Zarathushti community is to survive into the year 2050 depends on the community’s willingness to aspire towards a common humanity that embraces rather than shuns Zarathushti diversity.

PARVEZ VARJAVAND, *architect, projects include restoration of old Zarathushti homes in Yazd; married to Susan, a convert to the religion of Zarathushtra; their children Bahram, Delbar, and Nahid, consider themselves Zarathushtis; San Carlos, California.*

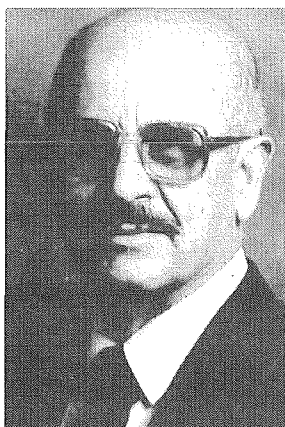


The New ‘Barsum’. We will continue to differ about what the religion of Zarathushtra should be. To minimize tension between us, here is my suggestion. Let’s establish a central agency to set guidelines by which one may call oneself a Zarathushti and thus belong to our larger *barsum* (‘*Barsum*’ is a bundle of twigs tied together with a cord, symbolizing the

uniting force of love and *hamazori*). In addition to defining who is a ‘Zarathushti’ the Barsum office could gather statistics for Zarathushtis, set a code of ethics, and even disburse funds. As a secular council of elected representatives, the religiously neutral Barsum office would offer only a common public and political platform for various Zarathushti groups.

Under the principle of separation of church and state, it would strictly avoid religious power such as found in dogmatic administrations of other faiths whose codified religiosity has deadened spiritual essence. Thus, it would leave each Zarathushti subgroup free to pursue what it most cherishes, with civility.

MOBED MEHRABAN ZARTOSHTY, *philanthropist; president, Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America (CIMNA), Kankash-e Mobedan; San Diego, California.*



My view about our community – I think we are well qualified in everything. We are known for our honesty, integrity and charities. The only quality lacking is *unity*. We need to be more united and solve our problems with wisdom and stick to what we believe. Agree to disagree for good reasons, for the welfare and benefit of our community. We need to have great leaders

like Dadabhai Naoroji, K. R. Cama, Arbab Kaikhosrow, Sir Pherozechah Mehta and so on.

We have scholars and well-educated people but we do not help them financially; don’t encourage, respect and value them. Instead we go after outsiders to be our lecturers, leaders and authorities. Even look to them as our ‘*baba*’, ‘*pirbaba*’ and so on. Look at our learned Parsi scholars how poorly they live.

In this regard, a story comes to mind. When the learned Late Dastoor Minocher-Homji of Mumbai was invited to Iran for the 2500th anniversary Royal Festival, my brother met him at the airport and accompanied him to his hotel. He was shocked and saddened to see the worn condition of the esteemed dasturji’s suitcase. My brother had a new suitcase bought for him and when he went to exchange it my brother asked the Dasturji to give him the old suitcase to throw in the garbage. At which Dasturji exclaimed “Oh No! Fardoonji, this is my neighbor’s suitcase that I have borrowed and I have to return it to him”. It is sad that one of our most enlightened and esteemed scholar and high priest should be living thus. It was the same, with our great scholars and high priests in Iran as well – Mobed Firoz Azargoshasb and Mobed Rostam Shahzadi. We must rectify this sad state of affairs.

FARROKH MISTREE, *professor of mechanical engineering; started and taught Sunday School since 1974, first in Sydney, Australia, then in Houston and now in Atlanta; lives with his wife Yashfara, mother Nergesh and sons Dinsha and Behram, in Atlanta, Georgia.*

My Dearest Dinsha and Behram:

You are products of a wonderful American mother and a Zarathushti Indian father and you have inherited a rich



heritage from both. I am pleased that you and your families are living a Zarathushti life in North America; a Zarathushti life that is rooted in scholarship that has led to wisdom and a practice that has facilitated spiritual growth. I note that you and your families are happy and comfortable

with the very notion of being Zarathushti and are steadfast in your quest for Asha that, I believe, is the bedrock for scholarship and self-improvement. I am delighted to see that you have passed on more knowledge about our faith to my grandchildren than I was able to pass onto you.

With much love and many positive thoughts,
Papa

December 31, 2050

YUGOSLAVIA

DR. VERA MEHTA, *political affairs officer, United Nations; preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and building operations, post disaster reconstruction and emergency services in the Balkans; teaching, academic and research work, development projects, human rights activities in over 100 countries of the world; Belgrade, Yugoslavia.*

I envision:

- Reawakening of the true essence of inner Zoroastrian spirituality and not its destruction by dogmas on forms of prayer and modes of worship.
- Greater pluralism in beliefs and lack of bigotry and hatred, and yet adherence with respect and humility to our thousands of years of heritage and practices.
- Coming to grips with different religious, social and economic issues as well as specific problems of different Zarathushti communities world wide.
- Elimination of gender discrimination with greater gender justice and equality for women with respect to lineage, progeny, marriage and women's participation in the affairs of the community and religion.
- Use of the powerful tools of communication and networking that technological advances will give, to spread messages of goodwill to brother and sister Zarathushtis. Violent thoughts and words used in destructive controversies, giving way to respectful expression and acceptance of differences.
- Full blossoming of humanitarian and philanthropic impulses, which are already on the wane, save for a few

shining examples, to once again become the hallmarks of the community, notwithstanding the spiraling rate of materialism and the compelling forces of individualism.

- The narrow microcosm of the Zarathushti community moving into the realms of expanding human consciousness so that every Zarathushti, in ways big and small, will join the global fight against poverty, injustice, bigotry, violation of human rights and destruction of the planet.

- Finally, the prosperity, well being and power of the Zarathushti community built on the pillars of peace, harmony, compassion, truth, determination, generosity and virtue. ■

Threshold of Renaissance ...

[Continued from page 102]

hollow. Do we know where to strike the balance? Some of us might think we have all the answers. If we think we have reached the top, we must extend a hand, rather than hurl stones at those below. But mind you, we seldom hear from those who have truly reached the top.

Do we have the infrastructure to anticipate and prepare for these eventualities before they occur, so that we can be *masters of our destiny and not victims of our fate*. It is not too late to start right now, to learn everything we need to know about the challenges that face us, and continue the dialogue until our understanding deepens and solutions develop naturally. We look for solutions that are not confrontational or threatening or autocratic, but solutions that show tolerance, wisdom and compassion, and demand sacrifice on everyone's part. We make sure that our *fervor does not turn into fanaticism*. We are all yearning for peace, but there can be no peace without justice; and *peace with justice* demands understanding from all. We choose *cooperation not competition*. We promote *harmony, above unity*.

As we close this century and move to the next, we are learning to keep a firm grounding in tradition, while yet reaching to find ways to mold to new climes and times; accepting evolutionary changes, if and when they occur through common usage, with grace and understanding. We are standing, not firm and unbending as the oak, but supple as the willow. For with the winds of change, the oak may fall, but the willow will stand.

Today we are poised on the threshold of a Zarathushti renaissance. As our next generation begins to take the helm, we shall move ahead with mature judgement, respecting our past with civility and compassion. With faith in our heritage, we shall reach for newer heights of fulfillment, accomplishment and excellence of the spirit. ■

[Rohinton Rivetna's biodata and photo are on page 11]

[1] A record of associations and darbe mehrs in North America is in FEZANA Journal [Summer 1996].

Zarathushtra

by Tooran Shahriari Bahrami, Tehran

With us will remain they name
 So long as there is darkness and light, Zarathushtra
 Pleasing and enchanting thy holy words,
 Worthy to adorn thy holy site, Zarathushtra
 With thy celebrated three principles
 You have soared to the heights, Zarathushtra
 Thy sun-like splendor lights up the world
 You, the source of Persian pride, Zarathushtra
 The light of thy fire, everlasting,
 Brightens up our sight, Zarathushtra
 Thy Gathas, all-embracing and universal,
 Remains undying, pure and upright, Zarathushtra
 Wisdom, you have called God's greatest gift
 Allowing man to explore the furthest sites, Zarathushtra
 Mankind's indebtedness to thee may never cease
 As long as there continues the fight between Goodness
 and blight, Zarathushtra.
 Everything has an order, Asha, behind which stands
 God, with all his might, Zarathushtra ...
 Influenced by thy words, Plato and Pythagoras
 Introduced them to the western 'Diet' Zarathushtra
 Thus unknowingly, disciples of Western thought
 Quench their thirst through thee, noble democrat
 Zarathushtra.
 A leader of man, you showed them
 The shortest path to God and all that's right, Zarathushtra.
 [Some stanzas from the original poem in Persian, translated by Vida Bahrami Keyani]

The Sign

by Shahriar Shahriari, California

Searching, searching, I looked to find
 Searched everywhere, even my mind
 To find my way looked for a sign
 Pointing me further down the line.
 This pointing sign I could not find
 Though I could see, was worse than blind
 As if by design, came to me a sign
 Pointing at me, showed me what's mine.
 Looking outside, you'll surely find
 Signs pointing nowhere, the only kind
 But if you pause, you'll see the sign
 Will come to you, your path define.
 So if you look somewhere out there
 You'll find a sign pointing nowhere
 But if you sit and look within
 You'll see pointing fingers unseen. ■

The Future Rests on the Simple

by Soonoo Engineer, British Columbia

We are not born to ever rise,
 To evolve, to survive eons ahead.
 The mere passage of time does not ensure our being;
 Mere growth does not portend a glorious end.
 We who have opted for things faster, richer, vaster,
 Could with greed scuttle ourselves.
 Having bridged the stars, harnessed the atom, pried
 the mystery of life, commanded instant information,

[Contd]

----- Cut Here -----

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Offer Him Good thoughts as incense sweet,
Flowers, as Good words, Good deeds.

Sky is no limit for His grace,
Your eternal link to retrace.

As Light in you, O beg Him, "Stay",
In darkness to show you the way.

He come in so many ways,
To be in tune with Him, pray for His grace. ■

Good Thoughts, Words, Deeds

by Meher Amalsad, California

History shows –

Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds
are truly energized

When we spread so much Peace around us,
there is no room for war.

When we spread so much Love around us,
there is no room for hate.

When we spread so much Good around us,
there is no room for evil.

When we spread so much Health around us,
there is no room for sickness.

When we spread so much Light around us,
there is no room for darkness. ■

I Would Be Happy If Only

by Kambiz Tehrani, USA

I would be happy if only
I could sing a love song
to God unconditionally

I would be happy if only
I could absorb the light of God thoroughly.

I would be happy if only
I could be a co-worker with God wisely.

I would be happy if only
I could live from within to leave my body
and touch my soul.

I would be happy if only
I could gain the experience to free my spirit
and reach my goal.

I would be happy if only
I could dream of the mountaintop
to gain the wisdom and free my soul.

I am a soul, born of love.
In this journey to freedom,
to God,
my strength comes from its love
and my courage from its wisdom. ■

To Be the Best Zarathushtrian

By Rohinton N. Davar, New York

Life can be whatever you make
Only the fruits of labor are yours to take
With grace, though, there are golden rules
To forge your future, use them as tools.
Strive to be better, never feel superior
Try to be humble, never feel inferior
Pursue knowledge, for it is unholy to be ignorant
Be proud of yourself, but not arrogant.

Fear not to ask questions
Better to learn than have pretensions
No problem is too hard for you to think
A thought can inspire within a wink.

Shy away not from science, music, literature, art
Once acquired, they never can part
Share your joy, lend a hand
How easy it is to make a friend.

If with the rich you seek parity
First sacrifice all for some charity
Thank your Creator for your good fortune
Forget not the poor's misfortune.

Have faith, patience, mercy courage
Not greed, hatred, envy, rage.
Resist not to swallow false pride
If you don't, to yourself you have lied.

Judge not others with sinful ease
Gossip and lies does God displease
When doubts and despair tear you apart
Muster your prayers to strengthen your heart.

When faced with obstacles you cannot surmount
On your Vohu Manah, you can always count.
More than any, have God's love
Doubtless it returns, like the homing dove.

Draw from your conscience, your heart, your mind
Therein lies the happiness, for you to find.
Likened your soul to Mazda's land
With pure righteousness upon which you stand.

Let each day be a short season
You harvest not, yet sow with a reason
And in it you sow only the seeds
Of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.
So be yourself, you shall be free
Heed and you shall, the very best be. ■

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COVER DESIGN: **Zenobia Rivetna**

A ZARATHUSHTI BLESSING

*FEZANA Journal wishes all Zarathushtis much
peace and prosperity in the coming millennium*

May Sraosha, willing obedience to Mazda,
Prevail over disobedience in this house,
Peace over strife, Gentleness over pride.
May Truth triumph over the lie,
The truthful word over the lying word.

May Harmony wipe out disharmony
So that our minds may know joy,
Our spirit attain the sublime,
Our bodies be content,
And our lives be made perfect.

May the Light of Wisdom penetrate
Every nook and corner of this house.
May the radiance never leave this house.

May the blessings of our beloved Fravashis,
Guardian Spirits in Man and Creation,
Be with us from generation to generation,
Till the end of Time, and the coming of the
Glorious Springtide of the world – Frashokereti.

*[Based on Doa Tandarosti in Avesta, translated by
Piloo Jungalwalla, submitted by Rusi Sorabji]*

FEZANA JOURNAL is the official publication of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America

FEZANA JOURNAL is published four times a year, for the purpose of disseminating news and views, as well as educational and inspirational articles about the Zarathushti religion, culture and practices as they pertain to Zarathushtis in North America. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA or FEZANA Journal.

Editorial Policy

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, materials published elsewhere, or materials posted on the Internet, with due acknowledgment, unless specifically requested otherwise. The official language of FEZANA, and that of the Journal is English.

ON THE COVER: Detail from "Unity Quilt" to commemorate WZC 2000. Designed and crafted by **Khurshid Bamboat** of London, it has 76 logos of Zarathushti organizations around the world. *[photo: courtesy Khurshid Bamboat]*.

INSIDE COVERS: Collection of photographs depicting the Zarathushti landscape worldwide. **INSIDE COLOR PLATES [pages 85-88]:** Darbe Mehrs of North America and a collection of photographs depicting the Zarathushti landscape in North America.



ie Dossabhoys of Indore with triplets; Dastoor Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal; Persis Khambatta, Miss India 1965; Maestro Zubin Mehta.



Girl in Iran; new navar Baghdad Bana of Victoria, Australia; Jashan at Australian Zoroastrian Association in Sydney, Australia.



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oy in Iran; Meher Master Moos & delegates with "Zoroastrian Flag" at Tehran Congress; Zarathushti community, Mhow, India.



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A ZARATHUSHTI ODYSSEY
2000

An illustration of Zarathustra, the prophet of Zoroastrianism, depicted in profile. He has a long, dark beard and is wearing a white turban and a white robe with a dark sash. He is holding a small, ornate object in his right hand. The illustration is set within an oval frame with a gold border, which is itself set against a dark red background. The entire central graphic is surrounded by a white, textured border.

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