

# FEZANA JOURNAL



SUMMER 2003, TABESTAN 1372 YZ

Mah Tir-Amardad-Sherevar 1372 YZ (Fasli)

Mah Bahman-Asfandarmad 1372, Fravardin 1373 YZ (Shenshai)

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ASSOCIATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

# FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (FEZANA)

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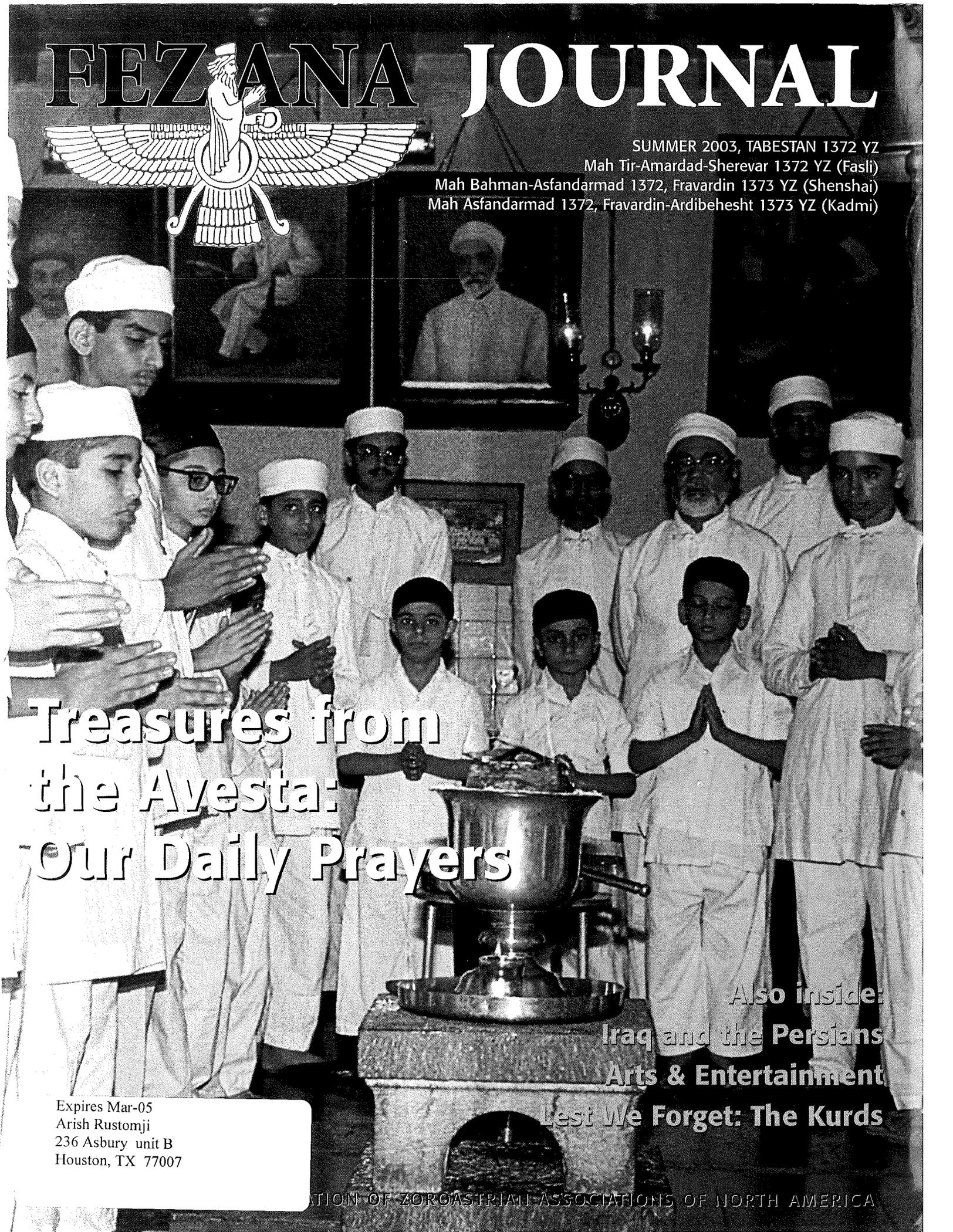


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- 2 Editorials - Our Daily Prayers - *Khorshed Jungalwala*
- 3 FEZANA Update, From the President - *Firdosh Mehta*
- 4 On the North American Scene
- 8 Zarathushti Rituals Seminar - *Ervad Jehan Bagli*
- 11 Interfaith - Interalia
- 14 Coming Events
- 18 Around the World
- 18 Resolution by High Priests
- 20 Great Moments of Persian History  
that happened in Iraq - *Roshan Rivetna*
- 22 From Babylon to Baghdad - *Farishta Murzban Dinshaw*
- 27 Cover Story: Treasures from the Avesta: Our Daily Prayers  
*Guest Editor Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw*
- 29 Rituals: Role and Significance in Our Daily Lives -  
*James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams*
- 34 The Three Great Zarathushtrian Prayers  
*Pallan R. Ichaporia*
- 39 Kemna Mazda - *Pallan R. Ichaporia*
- 41 Our Farazyat Prayers - *Ervad Jal N. Birdy*
- 48 The Importance and Efficacy of Prayers  
*Ervad Parvez M. Bajan*
- 52 Sraosha in the Zoroastrian Daily Rituals and Prayers  
*Philip G. Kreyenbroek*
- 55 The Gathas and Our Daily Prayers  
*Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw*
- 59 Importance of Interpretation: Illumination not Ritual  
*Susan Karani*
- 62 Response & Role of Purity in the Life of a Zoroastrian  
*Kaikhushroo M. JamaspAsa*
- 67 Some Daily Ritual Observances - *Khojeste Mistree*
- 70 Prayer - the Power of Healing - *Khojeste Mistree*
- 74 Lest We Forget - *Dinaz Kutar Rogers*
- 74 The Kurds - a Legacy of the Shah Nameh
- 77 My Mother Used to Say - *Parvin Damania*
- 78 Farsi Pages - *Fareshta Khatibi*
- 80 Youthfully Speaking - *Nikan Khatibi & Ushtavaity Davar*
- 84 Sunday Stories - *Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi*
- 85 Readers Forum; Errata
- 86 Laugh and be Merry - *Jamshed Udvadia*
- 88 Looking Back
- 88 Remembering Jal Daddy - *Khursheed Bapasola*
- 88 Our Beloved Dad, the "First World Cyclist" - *Lovji Hakim*
- 90 In the Press
- 91 Zarathushti Enterprise, Products & Services
- 93 Financial Corner - *J. Kheradi*
- 96 Please Give From Your Heart
- 98 Healthy Living: Nutrition - Joy of Eating - *Dr. Mehroo Patel*
- 99 Matrimonials; Personals; Milestones
- 103 Arts & Entertainment
- 104 Countertenor Bejun Mehta - Continuing on a High Note  
*Rashna Ghadialy*
- 107 Events and Honors
- 109 Books and Such

# Our Daily Prayers

**Khorshed Jungalwala**  
Chair, FEZANA Publications

In this issue, authors have expounded the reasons why we pray; significance of prayer rituals; some basic Zarathushti obligatory prayers, their meanings and observances; necessity of interpretation; importance of Sraosha; and theological laws of purity for performance of prayers.

Every surviving religion has focused on the importance of the ritual of prayer in an individual's daily life. It gives one a sense of religious identity and provides strength to vanquish the forces of evil, deceit and falsehood.

In the Zarathushti religion, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom, is one's creator and best friend with whom one communicates spiritually for an inner sense of joy, wisdom, guidance, and fulfillment.

In most extant religions, prayers are recited in languages of revelation that are not understood by the followers today. Hindus have Sanskrit, Jews have Hebrew, Christians have Latin, followers of Islam have Arabic and Zarathushtis have the Avestan and Pahlavi.

There are arguments for and against praying in the language of revelation. For centuries we have endorsed the concept that prayers said with faith and conviction in the language of origin, brings about a spiritual enrichment within a person who may or may not understand the esoteric significance.



Today, many are questioning the validity of praying in a language without comprehending the meaning as had been the case for centuries.

The Gathas are Prophet Zarathushtra's own words in the Avestan language, and so by reciting them, one is seeking to create a link between

Ahura Mazda the prophet and oneself. Recitation of prayers in the language of revelation helps to retain the original form and content which could easily be lost in modern translation. Moreover, if one prays in the translated form the divinely inspired spirituality loses some of its experiential quality.

Many Zarathushtis today are not satisfied with recitation of the daily prayers by rote and repetition without understanding the meaning. For example, the *Yatha ahu Vairyo* prayer reminds one of using the Good Mind and Truth. In order to use one's Good Mind (gain Wisdom) to get to the Truth, it is essential to understand the message the prayer conveys. This understanding may be a word by word translation or it may be of a general nature.

A satisfactory approach to performance of the daily prayers is to understand the meaning of the prayers, reciting them in the original language (Avestan or Pahlavi) with reinforced spirituality for divine inspiration. ■

## Past Issues on Prayer & the Avesta

Various aspects of prayer and the Avesta are covered in past issues of FEZANA Journal as follows:

- **"Journey of the Avesta"**, guest editor Pallan R. Ichaporia, [*Winter 1998*]. A historical roadmap/review of the entire corpus of Zarathushti religious scriptures – Gathas, Young Avesta and Pahlavi.
- **"A Zarathushti Prayer Guide,"** guest editor Kersey H. Antia, [*Fall 1999*]. A comprehensive guide giving suggested prayers for all occasions.
- **"Zarathushti Initiation Ceremonies"** [*Winter 1997*]. Covers the navjote/sedreh-pushhi ceremony and *kushti prayers*.
- This issue [*Summer 2003*] covers the daily (*farazyat*) prayers.
- Upcoming issue [*Winter 2003*] will discuss *yashts* and *nyaeshs*.

To order past issues, see the order form and rates on p. 111 and 112.

## IN COMING ISSUES OF FEZANA JOURNAL

Fall 2003:

**Aging**

Guest Editor: Dolly Dastoor

Winter 2003:

**Treasures from the Avesta – Yashts and Nyaeshs**

Guest Editor:

Jamsheed Choksy

Spring 2004:

**On Death and the Hereafter**

**READERS ARE INVITED** to suggest possible topics for future issues of the Journal. With suggestions, or if you are interested in serving as *Guest Editor* for an issue, please contact Khorshed Jungalwala or Roshan Rivetna.

From the President

## Honoring our Athravans

I wish to dedicate this message to the Zarathushti clergy – our athravans.

It has been said that our religion exists today because of our athravans. Who can deny that!

Their dedication, sacrifice, steadfastness and leadership to our community is legendary and has enabled our religion and community to survive the millennia of ups and downs.

The recent *Resolution passed by the Parsi High Priests* in India has received high degree of press, and opinions – for or against – abound in the media and on the internet. As FEZANA, we recognize that our jurisdictional responsibility is enveloped in USA and Canada, hence it would be inappropriate for us to remark on this issue. Personal opinions notwithstanding, FEZANA is committed to *inclusivity* of all schools of thought from a point of view of information and knowledge transfer.

FEZANA has not indulged, and wisely so, in matters of religious authority, or in defining who is or not, or can be or not, a 'Zarathushti'. This has been accepted as the honored prerogative of the two Mobed Councils of North America, and has been left as a decision of its Member Associations, since their autonomy is enshrined in the FEZANA Constitution.

However, FEZANA is always keen to support any works of the Mobed Councils that would be in tune with the objectives and purposes as stated in its Constitution. One such example is the recent North American Mobed Council's seminar on "*Rituals*" [see page 8] in Toronto, on April 19, 2003, that FEZANA was fortunate to sponsor.

Even though the unfortunate concern about SARS took a heavy toll, with four speakers canceling out, along with a few attendees, NAMC organizers did a marvelous job of conducting this event to enable those who were there to have a fruitful day of religious learning and *hamazor*.



Ervad Parvez Bajan from Mumbai, Mobed Kamran Jamshidi from Sweden and Prof. Almut Hintze from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK, deserve our special thanks for braving the SARS scare, and coming from overseas.

I was invited to deliver a *message from FEZANA*.

An edited version is reproduced below.

*Respected Dastoorji Sahebs, Ervads, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is with pride and passion that I stand before you, on behalf of the Zarathushti community of USA and Canada, represented by FEZANA.

We congratulate the North American Mobed Council for organizing this Seminar on "*Zarathushti Rituals, Past, Present and Future*", and wish them success.

FEZANA has always been there to support the good works of the NAMC, whenever requested to do so. It is with much pleasure that FEZANA has contributed to this event with funds as well as volunteer time through the members of its Historical Research and Preservation Committee, chaired by Er. Jehan Bagli.

Our aim is to offer FEZANA's leadership, to encourage you to think, speak and act, as far as rituals are concerned, from the point of view of what we can accomplish in this part

of our newly settled world; a world that is highly different in the social, political, economic and ethnic make-up, from the parental lands of Iran and India, where most of us experienced rituals in maintaining our spiritual and religious obligations.

Here we will have to make our own religious infrastructures, so that our future generations can keep the Mazdayasnan fire ever burning in our minds. However, no such endeavor or enterprise can succeed in a sustained way without the fire in the belly of its adherents. So I ask each and every one of you, if you have the fire in the belly, make the future of our religion enshrined in perpetuity on this continent.

Support the work of NAMC and our mobeds with emancipated vision and courage to boldly go in new areas of religiosity, and to those who don't have this fire in the belly, we ask that you re-ignite this fire and join us to achieve this goal of setting up the infrastructure of consecrated establishments for training of our athravans and practicing the divine revelation of Asho Zarathushtra, for our community.

We thank all the donors, speakers, volunteers and all attendees for their participation and support.

Rituals make us rich with religious devotion. Let us acquire this richness today.

*Respectfully,*  
Firdosh Mehta, FEZANA President

**Have you visited the FEZANA website lately?**

FEZANA officially communicates with the community-at-large via its website, FEZANA Journal and periodic communications from the FEZANA president and executive officers. To keep abreast of FEZANA matters visit:

[www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

Office of the Mayor  
CITY OF NEW YORK



# Proclamation

WHEREAS: NEW YORKERS OF MANY BACKGROUNDS ARE CELEBRATING THEIR NEW YEAR HOLIDAY ON THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST OF MARCH. PEOPLE WITH ORIGINS IN IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA AND KURDISH PEOPLE FROM MANY NATIONS WELCOME NOWRUZ AT 7:59:45 PM ON THE 20TH, THE MOMENT THE SPRING EQUINOX BEGINS IN NEW YORK CITY. PARSIS OF INDIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN DESCENT ALWAYS CELEBRATE ON MARCH 21ST. FOR ALL, NOWRUZ CELEBRATES THE BEGINNING OF SPRING, AND WELCOMES THE RETURN OF NEW LIFE, LIGHT, AND WARMTH TO THE WORLD AFTER THE LONG WINTER.

WHEREAS: THE POPULAR HOLIDAY ORIGINATED IN IRAN AT LEAST 3000 YEARS AGO, AND WAS OBSERVED BY THE SUMERIANS, BABYLONIANS, AND OTHER CULTURES OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA. WHILE ITS ROOTS ARE IN THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION, NOWRUZ IS CELEBRATED BY PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS. EACH CULTURE AND EACH COMMUNITY HAS ITS OWN TRADITIONS, AND ALL GATHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR SPECIAL MEALS, PRAYERS, AND JOYFUL CELEBRATIONS.

WHEREAS: DURING NOWRUZ, NEW YORKERS OF ALL AGES CELEBRATE THEIR RICH HERITAGE AND CHERISHED TRADITIONS IN HOMES AND RESTAURANTS, AND AT PUBLIC EVENTS THROUGHOUT OUR CITY, THE HOME OF PEOPLE FROM EVERY CULTURE AND EVERY NATION. WE ARE PROUD THAT THIS ANCIENT HOLIDAY IS NOW AN IMPORTANT EVENT ON OUR CITY'S CALENDAR. AS WE EAGERLY AWAIT THE FIRST CHERRY BLOSSOMS, DAFFODILS, FORSYTHIA AND TULIPS HERALDING SPRING, ALL NEW YORKERS JOIN THEIR NEIGHBORS IN CELEBRATING NOWRUZ AND WELCOMING THE SPRING EQUINOX, AFTER AN ESPECIALLY GLOOMY WINTER.

NOW THEREFORE, I, MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS IMPORTANT ANNUAL EVENT, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM MARCH 20 AND 21, 2003 IN NEW YORK CITY AS



NOWRUZ DAYS

*Michael R. Bloomberg*  
MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG  
MAYOR

I WITNESS THE FOREGOING HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE SEAL OF

**NY Nouruz proclamation.**

“New York City’s mayor, Michael Bloomberg issued a formal proclamation [left] recognizing the holiday of Nowruz on March 20th and 21st,” informs Tamina Davar in a posting on creatingawareness@yahoo.com. “Mayor Bloomberg’s proclamation is, to the best of my knowledge, the first-ever such proclamation by a US government leader,” says Davar, “which specifically and strongly states that the holiday is celebrated by diverse religious and cultural communities.”

“While they (like other government offices) were not willing to specifically mention each religious community that celebrates the holiday, they took great pains to mention that the roots of the holiday are in the Zoroastrian religion.”

Davar credits the office of Sayu Bhojwani, NYC’s Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs, for shepherding this proclamation through the system.

**White House message**

[Presidential Message released by the White House, Washington DC, from a posting by Kish DeSilva, on creatingawareness@yahoo.com].

“I send greetings to Iranian Americans observing Nowruz.

“During Nowruz, people of Iranian descent celebrate the arrival of spring, a season of rebirth. This joyous occasion provides an opportunity for Persians to cherish their rich heritage and enjoy the company of family and friends in anticipation of happiness and blessings in the year ahead ...

“Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous celebration to you, your families, and your relatives and friends in Iran.”

George W. Bush

**From Premier of Ontario**

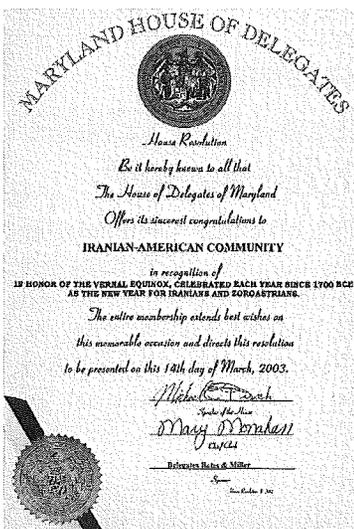
On behalf of the Government of Ontario, Premier Ernie Eves, sent a letter of greetings for the “Iranian New Year Celebrations (Norouz)”, to the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario:

“As Ontarians, we are proud of our diverse heritage ... as you celebrate Norouz, I wish you all the best for a safe and successful New Year.”

**Maryland Nouruz resolution.**

The Maryland House of Delegates passed a resolution congratulating the “Iranian-American Community in recognition of the Vernal Equinox, celebrated each year since 1700 BCE as the New Year for Iranians and Zoroastrians.”

The resolution was read in the chamber and the certificate handed to representatives of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, DC, at a ceremony held in the State Capitol, Annapolis, MD on March 17. [From posting by Behram Pastakia on creatingawareness@yahoo.com].



# Nouruz celebrations in North America



PHOTO: KAMALUKH KATRAK

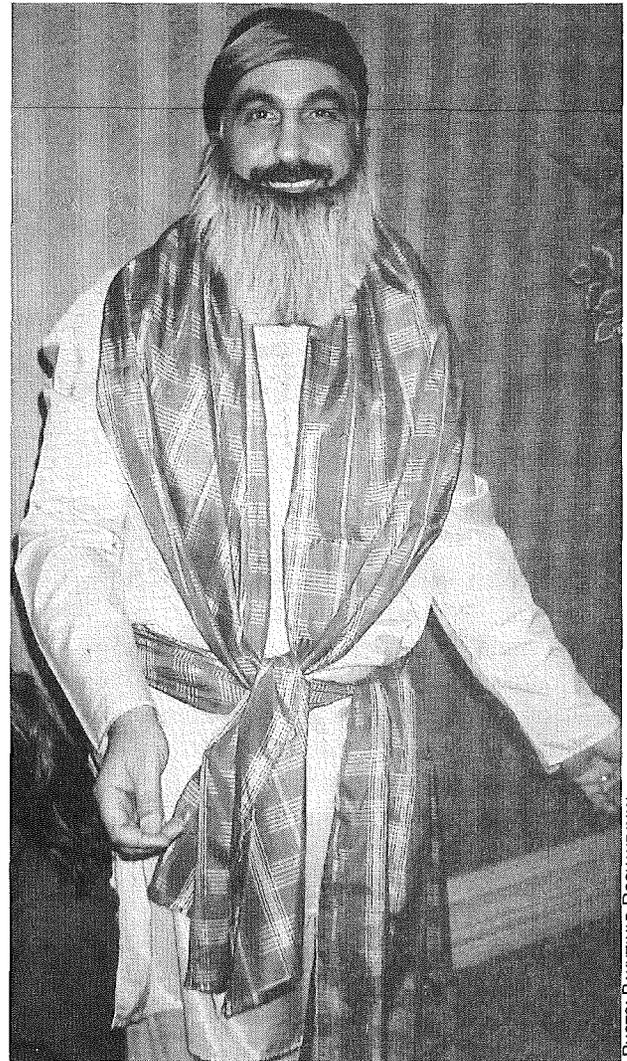


PHOTO: BAKHTAVAR ROSHANRAVAN

Left and below, the ceremonial "Haft Seen" table at the Farhadieh home in Chicago, set with traditional items symbolizing rebirth and new life; at right, the "Amu Nouruz" character visits the ZANT celebration in Dallas.



PHOTO: KAMALUKH KATRAK

The ZANT (Dallas) Nouruz celebration was visited by **Amu Nouruz** (Farhad Kiumarsi) [above] with his goody bags for the children. An evening filled with performances by all age groups and one that displayed the diversity that unites ZANT was in full display at the Renaissance Hotel in Dallas. Besides the traditional Nyesh ceremony and cultural song and dances, ZANT put on an original Play "Renaissance of Zoroastrianism", about the Sasanian Empire. [By Bakhtavar Roshanravan].

ZSBC (British Columbia) held a dinner-dance with a *live band* at the Executive Inn in Coquitlam. This was a double celebration, for ZSBC, founded in 1968, celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. ZANC (North-

ern California) celebrated with a Navroze Dinner and Dance at the Chandni Restaurant in Newark, CA.

ZAC (Chicago) gathered for prayers on March 21st, followed by a function with catered Iranian foods and entertainment at the darbe mehr on March 22nd.

The ZAH (Houston) function was held at their Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center, with a live band, DJ, and entertainment, and a buffet of ethnic *desi* and Persian cuisine. ZAF (Florida) celebrants were entertained with a play "History of Creation".

ZSO and Kanoun (Ontario) celebrated with an evening of dance and music, and invited the Hon. Minister of Culture and Citizenship.



The OCZF Nouruz jashan was led by recently initiated brothers Ervad Zaheer, as zaotar and Ervad Ferhad Balsara as raspi.

## Celebrations at two Toronto centers

**Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.** On March 21, ZSO celebrated the onset of the vernal equinox and the coming of Nouruz YZ 1372 with the performance of a *jashan* ceremony by 10 priests organized by Toronto mobeds. Among them was a young new mobed Ervad Pirhan Dastoor [see page 101]. Pirhan, a grade 9 student, was recently ordained as navar at F. N. Patel Agiari in Mumbai, in December. After the ceremony, Ervad Yezdi Antia explained the significance of the Nouruz jashan.

Traditionally NAMC recognizes, honors and welcomes all newly ordained priests into the priestly community of North America, with the presentation of an award, consisting of books and a token cash gift. In keeping with this custom Ervad Pirhan Dastoor was introduced to the Zarathushti community, and duly honored, by NAMC president Ervad (Dr.) Jehan Bagli.

The festivities that followed were enjoyed by some 400 strong Zarathushtis present.

[Submitted by Er. Kerman Katrak]

**Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation.** OZCF, a newcomer to the group of Zarathushti organizations, had their celebration festivity held in Western Toronto area, on March 22. The Jashan was attended

by well over 300 Zarathushtis. The event was marked by a historic initiation of the ritual by two young mobed brothers Ervad Zaheer and Ervad Ferhad Balsara. The Balsara brothers had their *navar* performed at Jeejeebhoy Agiary, Mumbai, in December 2000. Under the astute coaching of their father Firdosh, Zaheer, a 10th grader, was the *zaotar* and Ferhad, an 8th grader was *raspi* during the Jashan performance that included seven other mobeds.

The jashan was followed by a choir of nine children, coached by Khurshed Engineer and Hozhi Patel, who sang a *monajat* and the "March 21-Jamshedi Nowruz" song, composed for the occasion. The festivities



included a *lagan-nu-bhonu* served on banana leaves, with *lagan-nu-achar*, wafers, *rotli*, *patrani-machhi*, *papeta-murgi*, *pulao*, and *lagan-nu-custer* enjoyed by all present.

[Submitted by Er. Jehan Bagli]

## Canada Post issues Zarathushti Postage Stamp



The Zarathushti Stamp Project, conceived on the ZWIN and creating awareness e-groups, saw fruition this March, through the efforts of Dr. Dolly Dastoor, with Canada Post issuing Picture Postage stamps with a Zarathushti motif.

The stamp shows a "4,000-year-old Cypress tree, *Sarv-e-Abarkooh* in Iran, symbolic of the strength, vibrancy and rich foliage of the Zarathushti religion. As the tree has stood firm through time, so also has our religion," explain Manoucher Iranpour and his son Arya Zartosht, who submitted the winning design.

All the submitted entries and more about the stamp project, as well as an interesting history of the cypress of Zarathushtra, "*The Cypress of Kashmar and Zoroaster*" by Abraham Jackson may be viewed in the Winter 2002 issue of [www.vohuman.org](http://www.vohuman.org).

The stamp is legal tender in Canada for 48 cents. Each sheet of 25 stamps costs CD \$25 or US\$18. To order, please contact Dr. Dolly Dastoor at [dastoor@total.net](mailto:dastoor@total.net). ■

# GROUND BREAKING IN WASHINGTON

The Zoroastrian Center and Darbe Mehr of Metropolitan Washington (ZCDMW) broke ground, for a new darbe mehr, on Khordad Sal, March 26th, with proper ceremony and ample press coverage.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Center, to be located at the Vienna, VA site (at 2347 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna, VA 22181) opened with a recitation of the Avesta by Er. Brigadier Behram Panthaki and greetings from officials of ZCDMW. Guest of honor, Dr. Farhang Mehr stressed the importance of Zarathushtis from Iran and India to leave aside their differences and come together. A congratulatory message was read from NAMC president Er. Jehan Bagli. For information, contact [zcdmwask@yahoo.com](mailto:zcdmwask@yahoo.com).

[Below is the AP photo and excerpts from the AP story which was carried on [www.MSNBC.com](http://www.MSNBC.com), *The Washington Times*, and numerous other newspapers.]



Connie Sarah Bhiwandiwalla, 5, helps break ground with the ceremonial shovel for the new Zoroastrian Center in Vienna, VA...[photo: Linda Spillers/AP]

## Zoroastrians begin work on temple for their ancient faith in Virginia

By Michael Buettner  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIENNA, Va. Apr 02 – One of the world's oldest religions is establishing a new, American temple for the faith outside the nation's capital, the Zoroastrian Center and Darb-e-Mehr.

"You will see a magnificent building that reminds you of old Persian architecture," said Farhad Shahryary, assistant secretary of the Temple Committee. "This is a really joyful day. This has been a dream for about 20 years."

"It was decided to have something really big, being in the capital of the United States, which is basically the capital of the world," said Jamshid Goshtasbi, the group's president. "This will be a national center, a world center."

Zoroastrianism is considered among the oldest monotheistic religions ... Once the state religion of an empire that stretched throughout much of the ancient world, Zoroastrianism now has only about 200,000 adherents worldwide ... ■

## Two illuminating lectures by Dr. Farhang Mehr in Washington

North America's eminent Zarathushti scholar and leader, Dr. Farhang Mehr, together with an Interfaith Youth Panel, addressed a ZAMWI and an inter-faith audience of well over 150 on March 29, on "Relevance of Zoroastrianism in Today's Multi-faith World". This large mixed audience braved an evening snowstorm, to come to it.

The event, at the Geneva Presbyterian Church in Rockville, MD, was co-sponsored by ZAMWI, WZO (US chapter) and Washington's InterFaith Conference (IFC).

WZO (US chapter) then arranged for its contacts in US's largest library, the prestigious Library of Congress, to sponsor another talk by Dr. Mehr on "Impact of Religion on Politics in Middle East", on March 27. Its main objective was to make Washington's intellectual, university, think-tank and political circles aware that Zarathushtis are part of the US milieu – by offering a talk by a well-known Zarathushti with scholarly and political credentials, including as Iran's ex- Deputy Prime Minister.

This talk was widely publicized by the Library in its weekly gazette, leading newspapers and email flyers to all those circles. Well over 200 persons – mainly non Zarathustis – responded by coming to the talk, thus placing both the religion of Zarathushtra and Zarathushtis on the radar screen of those in our area who had no knowledge that a faith like the Zarathushti deen existed or its practitioners lived here.

After some years, ZAMWI thus revived its Lecture-Series of periodically inviting respected speakers to address Zarathushti themes. This impetus was provided to ZAMWI by the US Chapter of WZO. The Chapter looks forward to more such collaborative efforts in future. [From postings by Jimmy Dholoo and Adi Davar, on [creatingawareness.com](http://creatingawareness.com)]. ■

# Zarathushtrian Ritual - Past, Present and Future

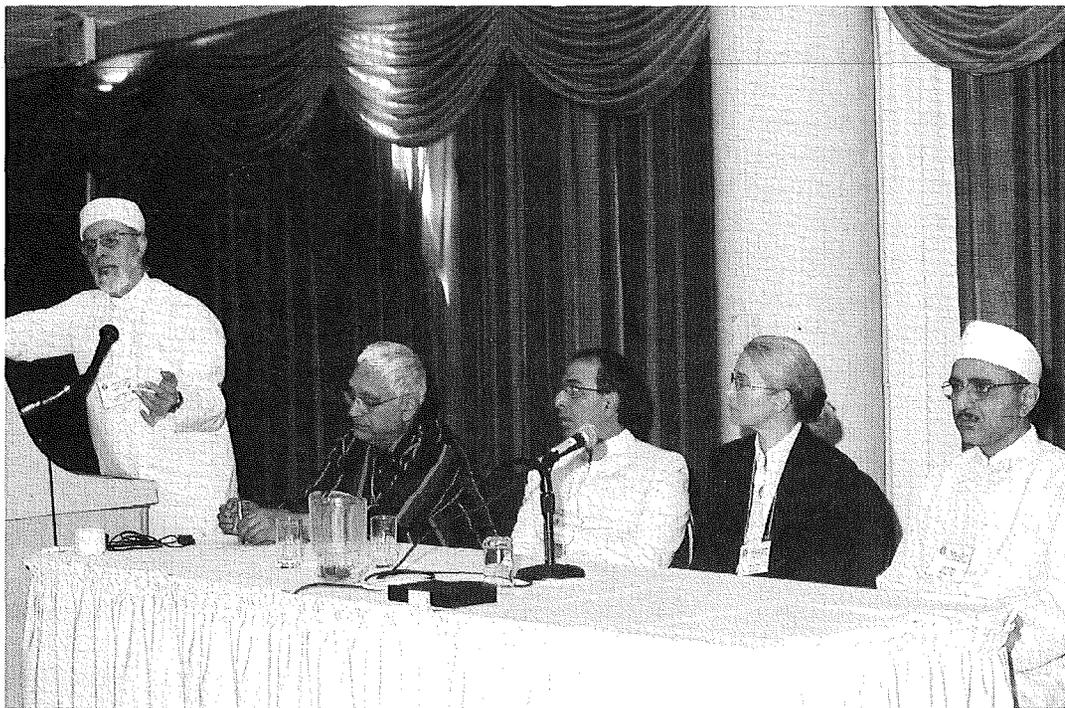
A one-day seminar in Toronto exploring aspects of Zarathushti rituals

By Ervad Jehan Bagli  
Mississauga, Ontario

It was a historical first of its kind, a full day seminar co-sponsored by NAMC and FEZANA that invited speakers from USA (Prof. Jamsheed Choksy, Prof. Gernot Windfuhr and Dr. Pallan Ichaporia), Sweden (Mobed Kamran Jamshidi), India (Ervad Parvez Bajan), UK (Prof. Almut Hintze) and Pakistan (Ervad Godrej Sidhwa). An enthusiastic congregation of some 70 Zarathushtis gathered at Ramada Hotel Toronto Airport, on the morning of April 19, with more than half a dozen Zarathushti clerics in their dagli/pagri adorning the crowd.

The event was slightly marred by the SARS outbreak in eastern Toronto that led to the withdrawal of speakers from USA and Pakistan. Their substitution brought in a talk by Ervad Jehan Bagli and a video of the Yasna ritual recorded by Dastur (Dr.) Firoze Kotwal at Colorado State University.

The spirit of collaboration and support for the seminar was not limited to FEZANA, its member associations, and generous donations from some community members. It was the *first time* in the history of NAMC that the event was generously supported by the *US Chapter of WZO*, to the extent of sponsoring a speaker to the seminar from abroad. While we gratefully acknowledge the support, we sincerely hope that the seeds of close cooperation have been sown through this event, for the Zarathushtrians to work in harmony as we move forward into the 21st century. It is imperative for all to put our



Speaker panel, l. to r. Er. Jehan Bagli, Mr. Behram Parsi (interpreter), Mobed Kamran Jamshidi, Prof. Almut Hintze, Er. Parvez Bajan.

minor differences in proper perspective, relative to the majestic goal of preservation of the Zarathushtrian faith around the world.

The seminar opened with welcome and introduction by presidents of NAMC, FEZANA, ZSO and OZCF.

**Professor Almut Hintze** started the day with an enlightening talk on the *Prophetic and Priestly Authority in Zoroastrianism*. The paper investigated the dual role of Zarathushtra as a visionary on the one hand and as a priest and initiator of a new type of worship on the other. On the bases of the Gathic passages, it was argued that the prophet derived his spiritual authority from the revelations received from Ahura Mazda.

As a prophet he provided the devotional model for Mazdayasnian. As a priest Zarathushtra established a new type of ritual worship preserved in *Yasna Haptanhaiti*. The Zarathushtrian faith is unique in that the

prophet himself has provided the mold and model for institutionalized priesthood as indicated by Zarathushtrötoma. The later priestly generation derives its religious authority direct from the spiritual descent from the prophet.

The next speaker, **Mobed Kamran Jamshidi**, grandson of Dasturan Dastur Ardeshir Azargoshasp of Iran, gave a lucid account of *Tajiks and Some of their Tradition*. He traced the history of present day Tajikistan along scriptural lines. Among the sixteen lands mentioned in the Avesta and later scriptures, Soghdiana was always mentioned first. From the time of Hakhmaneshis (Achaemenians) to the Sasanian era the land was known as *Soghd-e-Haf-tashyan*, land of seven nests, as seven glorious kings – Jam, Feraydun, Eraj, Manouchehr, Keykhosrow, Lohrasp, Gushtasp nestled there. During the time of the Arab or Tazis occupation

those who converted to Islam came to be recognized as Tazik.

Today Tajikistan is a republic state of Central Asia, bordered on the north by Kyrgyzstan, south by Afghanistan, east by China and west by Uzbekistan. Although the vast majority of Tajiks are Muslims, many Tajiks particularly those conscious of their roots, not only claim to be Zarathushtis, but also consider all Tajiks to belong to their forefathers' heritage. A number of these Zarathushtis have been officially initiated and with some scholars, are searching actively to disseminate their knowledge to the world.

Tracing the connection with the Avestan culture he referred to the sacred river *Daaiti* and *Hara-Bereza-iti*, a mountain peak mentioned in the religious texts, that are all located in the vicinity of Tajikistan of today.

Like Zarathushtis of Iran, Tajiks celebrate Nouruz, Mehrgan and Sadeh as important annual festivals. They also respect and revere all the elements of nature. Mobed Kamran also described many other social and cultural attributes of the people and the country.

**Ervad Parvez Bajan** followed with *A Historical Perspective of Zarathushti Ritual – its Traditional Values, Spiritual Significance and Social Relevance to the Past, Present and Future of the Faith*. His discourse touched on the migration of Parsis to India, and went on to the establishment of the Bahgaria panthak in Navsari. They were then followed by the formation of similar groups viz., Godavras, Bharuchas and the Khambatas in different parts of the region. These, together with the original Sanjanas, represented five ecclesiastical divisions serving the community in the 13th century.

He also traced the odyssey of the sacred fire from Sanjan via Bahrot to Udvada some five centuries later in 1742. The oldest extant manuscript written by the Meherwan family is housed in the Bodleian library in

Oxford. The later manuscripts are preserved in various libraries in India, and in Paris, Munich, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Copenhagen and Florence.

Religion, he stressed, cannot be understood by our imperfect reason alone, the element of faith is crucial for its complete comprehension. Faith in religious practices, must be imbued in the younger mobeds and in turn to the Zarathushti community at large, for without the basic cornerstone of spiritual conviction, true guidance cannot be ministered with reason alone.

Rituals are the expressions of religious aspiration of the community, and the tranquility of these solemn acts appeal to the spiritual sense of mankind. Changes in the mechanics of the ritual are inevitable due to varying circumstances in time. However, that should in no way weaken the faith. Loss of faith in these practices result only from misdeeds and deceit. He ended with the quote from Vd. XVIII.6 describing a true Athra-van as one who seeks wisdom, relieves distress, and who causes one to reach the best existence.

The colloquy on the *Significance of Some Zarathushti Rituals*, delivered by **Ervad (Dr.) Jehan Bagli** began with the historical background of the absence of rituals and priesthood as we know today in the Gathic era. This was followed by the gradual evolution of these practices in the Younger Avestan times, culminating in an explosive growth of rituals in the priest laden society of the Sasanian period.

Stressing the fact that rituals depict a precious treasure of doctrinal information from the scripture, he elaborated in detail on the *flower exchange ceremony* of the *Afringan* recital. He explained how the two performing priests assume the representation of the cosmic duality of the two existences: *Zaotar* for *Mainyava* – the celestial, and *Raspi* for *Gaethya* – the terrestrial. He then elaborated on the interaction between and the

transmission of souls from the spiritual to the physical world and back, that is portrayed by the flower exchange. It was emphasized that the point of the *humatanam* recital determines the completion of the circuit of communion through the Supreme Wisdom – Ahura Mazda incarnated by the holy Fire in the sacred space.

He then developed the importance of purity in the Zarathushtian faith and the subsequent evolution of purificatory rites to attain ritual purity for the participatory practices.

The talk ended with the delineation of the inner liturgy of *Yasna*. This was followed by the video of the Yasna ceremony in which **Dastur (Dr.) Firoze Kotwal** enacted the ritual together with an explanatory commentary by a member of the Department of Religious Studies, Colorado State University.

The seminar ended with a ninety minute discussion session with a Speaker Panel followed by an open forum with questions from the floor.

We sincerely acknowledge the support and guidance of FEZANA president Mr. Firdosh Mehta and the trustees of the US Chapter of WZO for their significant contribution. ■



## Ladder of Achievement

**I did - 100%**

**I will - 90%**

**I can - 80%**

**I think I can - 70%**

**I might - 60%**

**I think I might - 50%**

**What is it? - 40%**

**I wish I could - 30%**

**I don't know how - 20%**

**I can't - 10%**

**I won't - 0%**

[Posting on a classroom wall,  
forwarded by Dinaz Rogers]



*In front of Calgary's Chinese cultural center, back, l. to r.: Abad Mahava (Edmonton, Alberta), Aria Shahryary (Oakton, VA), Daryush Mehta (Kissimmee, FL), Jim Arjani (Mountain View, CA); front l. to r.: Nazneen Bahrassa (Little Rock, AR), Mitra Shahryary (Oakton, VA), Sherazade Mehta (West Roxbury, MA), ZAA Host Rashna Mehta (Edmonton, Alberta), Khushroo Todiwala (Fremont, CA) and Farhad Bahrassa (Little Rock, AR).*

## “Zee-Ski” December 2002

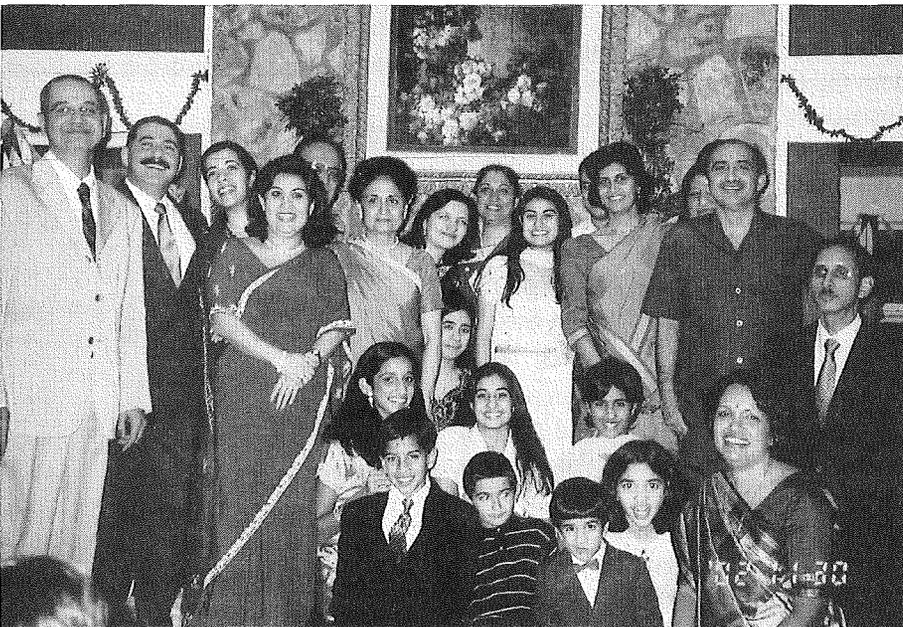
Between December 25, 2002 and January 1, 2003 nine young Zarathushtis from various locations in North America traveled to the beautiful Rocky Mountains in Alberta, Canada for this year's ZYNA-sponsored winter event. We started arriving in Calgary on December 25th. Members of the Calgary chapter of the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta opened up their hearts and homes to us for the evening and night of the 25th. After a tour of Calgary city, provided by Firdosh Mehta, we and other Calgary members were invited to Jamsheed and Yasmin Irani's home for

a delicious and sumptuous traditional Christmas dinner. After spending the night at Jamsheed and Yasmin Irani, and Zarrein and Lal Gohill homes, we embarked on our journey in a 15 passenger van for Canmore, Alberta.

For the next five days we enjoyed ourselves at the Banff National Park with days of skiing, ice-skating on famous Lake Louise right in the heart of the Rockies, touring the town of Banff, taking a sleigh ride and other fun activities. On December 31st, we left Canmore and stopped off at the Canada Olympic Park, on the outskirts of the city of Calgary. After a tour of the Olympic park, we headed back to Calgary for a New Year's Eve party hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta.

We had a wonderful time meeting new people and seeing new sites. We sincerely thank Rashna Mehta for the dinner arrangements, Adi Irani and the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta for their logistical support and hospitality.

- Sherazade Mehta, ZYNA co-chair



**Zarathushtis of North Carolina, “Research Triangle” area – Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill – gather at the home of Phiroze and Manjari Sethna, to celebrate the navjote ceremony of their son, Anosh (front, in black suit), on November 29. Er. Kersey Antia and Er. Mazda Antia officiated at the ceremony.**

## ZSBC celebrates 35th anniversary

The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, formed in 1968, celebrates its 35th anniversary this year.

“We are all indebted to the founding members of our Society: *Jassi Dorabji Bacha, Homi Merwan Engineer (Gilan), Noshir Minoo Fitter, Sam Boman Irani and Jamshed Khurshedji Pavri,*” notes the ZSBC newsletter, “for their foresight and hard work in laying the groundwork and drafting the first constitution and by-laws.

“Our deepest gratitude to Jamshed Pavri, the driving force behind the establishment of the Society and who, for almost 20 years, guided the Society through the years, the benefits of which are being reaped by our community today.”



*Delegates Yasmin and Aysha Ghadiali of New York, outside the UN building, which is reflected in the globe. Other Zarathusti delegates at the UN conference were Dr. Dolly Dastoor (Montreal), Suzie Karani (Chicago/New York) and Dr. Zareen Karani-Araoz (Boston).*

## FEZANA delegates at UN Status of Women Conference

Aysha Ghadiali  
Baldwin, New York

Adjacent to the fierce debate occurring in the Security Council about the role of the international community in Iraq, another equally important and older world issue was discussed in a CNN-less conference room this March at the UN: the Commission on the Status of Women worldwide in 2003. For two weeks (March 3-14) women from NGOs around the world, including FEZANA, converged at the UN to discuss issues ranging from violence against women in conflict and post-conflict areas, trafficking of women and girls to western countries, poverty reduction in developing countries through gender specific

economics, AIDS and gender, facts and myths regarding the Information Age, and effects of mass media, the Internet, and pornography on women's lives. Proudly representing FEZANA and all Zarathustis were Dolly Dastoor, Yasmin Ghadiali, Suzie Karani, Zareen Karani-Araoz, and Aysha Ghadiali.

It was with sadness that many speakers reported that the status of women presently throughout the world is not positive. In fact one UNIFEM leader equated it to "walking up a down escalator" sometimes the machinery just works against your better efforts. UN special rapporteur on violence against women, Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka, briefed the assembly. In the past

decade there has not been a decline in **violence against women**, and in fact advancements in technology have created new forms of old problems. Advancements in medicine in China and India have increased the number of female feticides. The boom of the Information Age expanded the popular phenomena of mail order brides, female trafficking through the Internet, and sex web-sites.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Jordan, I personally observed the increase of enthusiastic donations by NGOs to create computer labs. Without clear understanding in the planning stages these computers were at best unused and at worst used for pornography. The digital divide has become another divide to contend with. The availability of Internet computers in reality most benefits English literate peoples – a problem when two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women.

Another predominant theme discussed at the conference was that of the lives of **women in conflict and post-conflict areas**. Statistics have shown that areas where the economy is failing the first victims are always women. Too often failing economies in combination with war and strife lead to lawlessness and mob mentalities. The result of this lethal combination was seen in Gujarat last year when Hindu fundamentalists committed atrocities against the Muslim population including its women. I asked journalist Bina Srinivasan about the role of other minority groups in India. She stated that naturally many minority groups have

great fear of speaking up for their own safety, and unfortunately many minority groups, Parsis included, have strong feelings of discrimination against Muslims and each other in their own private thoughts.

While many sessions naturally focused on the lives of women in developing countries, there was also a great deal of discussion on the future of the *women's movement in the West*. Once basic economic freedoms are established the movement must continue into the social and political realm for real influence and equality. If women are only earning money, and do not have a true voice in deciding how that money is spent and deciphering what values are worth spending and fighting for, then they are not truly equal; whether it is equal say and influence in the personal house budget, or equal representation in the U.S. House Finance Committee. Political advancement is the next step for women in Western countries on the long walk to justice.

**Searching for solutions.** Once we are aware of the problems what do we do to end them? Outside factions cannot force a social conscious agenda on a nation. Hundreds of NGOs, thousands of Peace Corps volunteers, and countless bombs cannot motivate a people to honestly change. *It can only happen from within* when both men and women of the society are equally educated and have equal influence in creating the standard of future cultural norms.

It is an extremely slow process, that starts with educational awareness in combination with opportunity that allows a young couple to not "pray for a boy" in India, a mother to not pull her daughters out of college to pay for her sons' education in Jordan, and a high school student to not view science and technology as a male dominated field in America. Until these issues are at the top of the agenda they will remain on the down escalator.

When I looked around at the amazing people at this conference I could not

help but wonder: where are the men? Where are the young people?

There are plans for the next (48th) session in 2004 to discuss *the male dimension*. How do we bridge the gap, and how do we prove that it is in men's own self-interest to live in a fair society? Working with gender issues in Jordan I was often frustrated knowing that there would never be change without the true participation of men and women.

Despite "walking up a down escalator" one could not walk away from the hallowed international space of the UN and not feel a sense of gratitude, respect, and optimism for all the hard-working women in this world who do care to correct these wrongs.

In just a short week I spotted Kofi Annan in the cafeteria and women from all corners of the globe – even met women originally from Iran and Afghanistan who told us that they had Zarathushti grandfathers and forefathers – dedicated to lifting their nations to a higher plane where gender equality in all economic, social, and political terms is a reality.

I think all of us who had the honor of attending this conference representing FEZANA, walked away with a greater appreciation for our Zarathushti principals of gender equality. As we met with Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and others we told them about our rich history, and the amazingly modern and enlightened philosophy of Zarathushtra's vision for the good mind and human rights.

But the true battle remains and has always been: how as Zarathushtis do we transform all those well-meaning good thoughts into actions? ■

*[For the full text of this article, please contact Aysha Ghadiali at aghad@aol.com].*

**Aysha Ghadiali** is on the staff of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. Recently she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Sahab, Jordan, where she worked in a Women and Girls' Community Center.



*Delegates Suzie Karani and Dr. Dolly Dastoor at the conference*

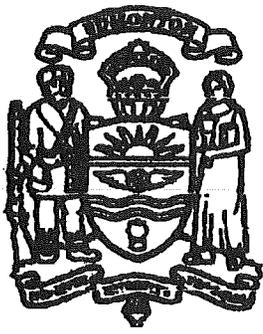
*[From a report of the conference written by Dr. Dolly Dastoor for ZONTA International. The full report is at [www.zontadistrict2.org/47thStatusWomen.htm](http://www.zontadistrict2.org/47thStatusWomen.htm)]*

In spite of several UN programs, there has been no real decline in violence against women around the world. New forms of violence are evolving and States are committing very little resources to this issue. Some disturbing facts:

- One woman in 3 is beaten around the world every day.
- There are half a billion adult women who cannot read or write making up two-thirds of the world's adult illiterates.
- Women account for 50% of those infected with HIV worldwide. In Africa that figure jumps to 58%.
- 10,000 girls are trafficked annually through the Balkans ...

Kofi Annan said "Only by investing in the world's women can we expect to reach our goals. When women thrive, all of society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life." According to the World Bank, when greater equality exists between men and women, "economies tend to grow faster, the poor move more quickly out of poverty and the wellbeing of men, women and children is enhanced." ■

*[Visit: [www.un.org/womenwatch](http://www.un.org/womenwatch), [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html), and [www.unifem.undp.org](http://www.unifem.undp.org)]*



## Edmonton City Council Opens with a Zarathushti Prayer

Upon the invitation of the City Chaplain, FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta opened the Spring Session of the Edmonton City Council held at City Hall, on March 11, with a Zarathushti prayer.

It is a long-standing tradition that each session opens with a prayer; but only recently has the Council started to invite non-Christian faiths, and this is the first time in its history that a Zarathushti was accorded that honor. Firdosh recited the following:

*Ba name Yazad, bakhshayandeh  
bakhshayashgar meherban!*

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

*Yatha Ahu Vairyo  
atha ratush, ashat chit hacha.  
Vangheush dazda manangho  
shyaothnanam angheush Maz-  
dai, Khshathremcha Ahurai  
ayim dregubyo dadat vastarem.*

*Doa Tandarosti  
Ya bari, Khoda! Khodavandi  
alamra, hame anjumanra [She-  
her e Edmonton] ba farsandan  
hazar sal der bedar, shad bedar,  
tandarost bedar, aedun bedar,  
bar sare arzanian. Salhae  
besyar va karnahae bishumar,  
baki va payandeh dar.*

*Hazaran hazar afrin bad, sal  
khojastey bad, roz farrokh bad,  
mah mubarak bad, chand sal,  
chand roz, chand mah, besyar  
sal arzanidar yazashne, va  
niyaeshne, va radi va zor  
barashne, ashahidar avare hama  
karo kerfeha. Tan darosti bad,  
neki bad, khub bad, aedun bad,  
aedun tarazbad!*

In the name of the kind, compassionate and benevolent Lord Mazda, I pray!

Righteousness is best of all that is good, The radiant goal it is of life on earth; This goal is attained when one lives righteously, for the sake of highest righteousness alone.

Those who make the Lord's work their will on Earth, so by their righteousness are worthy of leadership. The gifts of Good Mind come as reward for deeds done out of love for the Lord of Life. The Lord's protection surely comes down on him who serves those in need.

Lord and Creator of the world, grant that all the people in the [City of Edmonton] together with their progeny, may remain healthy and happy for a thousand years.

May they live under righteousness leadership forever. May they enjoy countless blessings, with auspicious years, with prosperous months and with fortunate days!

May their days and months and years be spent in peace, happiness and joy, and in the performance of many acts of worship and benevolence.

May righteousness pervade all their actions, and may they be blessed with health, virtue and the pursuit of excellence. May it be so, may it be so forever! ■

**In Memorium.** Joel Beversluis, 54, passed away in Grand Rapids, MI, on March 22, from cancer. Driven by a vision of creating community and cooperation among religions to promote peace, ecology and justice, Joel, a friend of the Zarathushti community, dedicated his life to interfaith work, and was the author of *A Sourcebook for the Community of Religions*, for the 1993 Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago.

## A call to dialog

All true religion wills justice, peace and harmony. Yet, as we engage here at United Nations, Geneva, in dialog we are conscious of the fact that wars are being fought in many parts of the world appealing to the name of religion. Our own religious communities are being divided along lines of competing doctrines or as a result of alliances between religions and national, ethnic and other secular groupings which have assured an 'holy' character. As was the case in the age of secularism, religion continues to be misused by those controlling power whose interests have little to do with religion, faith or the spirituality of believers.

The international community has failed to eradicate poverty, to provide for the general social welfare of all peoples, to resolve conflict short of the use of overwhelming military power and to rid the world of the scourge of weapons of mass destruction. We still do not have a truly democratic forum in which rich and poor, powerful and weak nations alike can share equitably and fully in responsibility for global affairs.

All of this defies the spirit of the Charter of the UN and the lofty aims set out in its Preamble. One cannot blame the UN alone for these failures which have allowed the law of the most powerful to dominate over the international rule of law.

Dialog within and between religions requires not just tolerance but deep respect for the other in his or her authentic relationship with the Holy. True dialog should enable each partner to deepen his or her own faith or belief, not to weaken or abandon it. An amalgam of spiritual truths is not to be sought, but, some sort of global set of minimum religious values. The accent needs to be to create a global culture of mutual respect which will provide a model to those who bear responsibility for governance ...

*Furhok K. Tangree  
La Roche sur Furon, France*



# Calendar of Festivals

## June - December

### Conference: Encourage New Business!

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) – Chicago Chapter will hold a conference on “Encourage New Business!”, on July 12, 2003, in Chicago. All Zarathushti businesspersons and professionals are invited [see ad p. 17].

### Economic/Cultural delegation to Iran

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce economic/cultural delegation to Iran and inaugural conference for the Tehran chapter of WZCC, has been postponed to Fall 2003, due to the war in Iraq [see page 91].

### Next NA Youth Congress

The next North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress will be held in Toronto, July 24-27, 2003. A week of post-congress activities is also planned. Contact: nazyc2003@yahoo.com [see page17].

### Unity Cup Soccer - 2003

The Third Unity Cup Soccer Games will be held on August 30-31, 2003 in Torrance, CA. Contact zsc@fezana.org [see page 16].

### Iranian Studies conference in Ravenna, Italy

The 5th European Conference of Iranian Studies, sponsored by Societas Iranologica Europaea (Rome) will be held, October 6-11, 2003, in Ravenna, Italy, at the University of Bologna. Contact Prof. Antonio Panaino, president, tel: 0039-0544-484729, panainoa@alma.unibo.it.

### Indian Parliament of Religions in New Delhi

The president of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam, will inaugurate the Parliament of Religions, on the theme of “Reviving the Culture of Healing, Harmony and Peace”, in New Delhi, December 7-10, 2003. The event is

<b>Daye Mas nu Jashan</b> <i>Mah Daye, Roz Fravardin</i>	Tue May 6 Thu Jun 5	(K) (S)
<b>Maidhyarem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Daye, Roz Meher-Behram</i>	Sat May 3 - Wed May 7 Mon Jun 2 - Fri Jun 6	(K) (S)
<b>Pir-e Sabz Festival</b> <i>Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Sat Jun 14 - Jun 18	(F)
<b>Pir-e Banu Festival</b> <i>Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Behram</i>	Fri Jul 4 - Jul 8	(F)
<b>Maidyoshem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Sun Jun 29 - Jul 3	(F)
<b>Jashne Tirgan</b> <i>Mah Tir, Roz Tir</i>	Tue Jul 1	(F)
<b>Fravardegan/Muktad/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar</b> <i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Thu Jul 17 - Jul 21 Sat Aug 16 - Aug 20	(K) (S)
<b>(Pateti) Navroz</b> <i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Tue Jul 22 Thu Aug 21	(K) (S)
<b>Khordad Sal (Birthday of Zarathushtra)</b> <i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad</i>	Sun Jul 27 Tue Aug 26	(K) (S)
<b>Fravardian Jashan</b> <i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Sat Aug 9 Mon Sep 8	(K) (S)
<b>Maidyozarem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roj Khorshed - Daepmeher</i>	Sun Aug 31 - Thu Sep 4 Tue Sep 30 - Sat Oct 4	(K) (S)
<b>Paitishem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Sheherevar, Roj Ashtad - Aneran</i>	Fri Sep 12 - Tue Sep 16	(F)
<b>Jashne-Mehergan</b> <i>Mah Meher, Roj Meher</i>	Thu Oct 2	(F)
<b>Ayathrem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Meher, Roj Ashtad - Aneran</i>	Sun Oct 12 - Thu Oct 16	(F)
<b>Jashne-Avangan (Avan Ardivisur Parab)</b> <i>Mah Avan, Roj Avan</i>	Sun Oct 26	(F)
<b>Maidyoshem Gahambar</b> <i>Mah Tir, Roj Khorshed - Daepmeher</i>	Thu Oct 30 - Mon Nov 3 Sat Nov 29 - Wed Dec 3	(K) (S)
<b>Jashne-Adargan</b> <i>Mah Adar, Roj Adar</i>	Mon Nov 24	(F)
<b>Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra</b> <i>Mah Daye, Roj Khorshed</i>	Fri Dec 26	(F)
	<i>Fasli (F), Kadmi (K) and Shenshai (S)</i>	

## UNESCO declares 2003 as year for celebration of 3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrianism

**“The 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrianism” will be the first in a series of annual recognitions of great historical personalities by UNESCO, over the next 47 years.**

“The Executive Board of UNESCO in its 161st and 162nd sessions has resolved that over the next 47 years, UNESCO, in association with Member States, may celebrate the anniversaries of 47 great historical personalities, who have served humanity,” informs Dr. Farhang Mehr, in a letter to FEZANA, “Hence UNESCO at the proposal of Tajikistan has announced the year 2003 as the 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrianism. Tajikistan is celebrating the anniversary of Zarathushtra in the month of November 2003 in Dushanbe – to be inaugurated by the President of Tajikistan. Dr. Mehr encourages FEZANA to “celebrate it in a big way befitting the occasion.”

Dr. Shernaz Cama, who heads the UNESCO *Parzor project*, and has been involved with the UNESCO declaration, informs FEZANA that the UNESCO Paris, Bureau of Public Information has confirmed that the “Executive Board and General Conference has voted in favor of celebrating the 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian culture in the year 2003. They have requested Member States to undertake celebrations locally.” In September, the FEZANA UN team, led by Behram Pastakia, had discussed this project, in response to a request from Dr. Cama.

FEZANA President Firdosh Mehta has requested Dolly Dastoor to co-chair an ad-hoc committee to coordinate UNESCO celebrations with FEZANA Member Associations and other organizations in USA and Canada. She will be working in cooperation with ZAGNY president, Homi Gandhi and ZAMWI president, Behram Pastakia, who will be coordinating this project with other international UNESCO agencies and possible FEZANA participation in celebration activities of other foreign countries.

Projects under consideration include: a film festival; display of books in schools/libraries; book readings; a large scale musical event; press articles /press conference; events for non-Zarathushtis; special issue of FEZANA Journal; a commemorative stamp or pin; symposiums; proclamations from mayors, Senate, Congress and White House; a special event at the Youth Congress; flyers in libraries; events at universities; materials geared to school-age children; and other such activities.

For information, contact Homi Gandhi (homi\_gandhi@usa.net) / Behram Pastakia (bpastakia@aol.com) or Dr. Dolly Dastoor (dastoor@total.net).

organized in partnership with the Parliament of the World’s Religions. Contact Rohinton Rivetna at rivetna@aol.com.

### **World Youth Congress**

The *Third World Zoroastrian Youth Congress*, will be held in Pune, India, from December 27, 2003 to Jan 3, 2004. [See ad on page 15].

### **NA Congress 2004**

The *XIII North American Zoroastrian Congress* will be held in the San Francisco Bay area December 29, 2004 to January 1, 2005. Contact Program Chair etarapore@bigfoot.com [see page 16].

### **2004 Zarathushti Games**

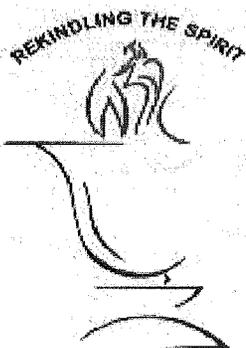
The next Zarathushti Games will be held around 4th of July, 2004. The location is to be confirmed. Contact zsc@fezana.org.

### **Parliament of Religions, Barcelona 2004**

The 4th Parliament of the World’s Religions will be held July 7-13, 2004 in Barcelona, Spain. This event follows five years after the 3rd Parliament in Cape Town, South Africa. Registration is \$425 (before June 30, 2003), \$495 (after June 30). Family/group rates available. Visit the Parliament website at [www.cpwr.org](http://www.cpwr.org) or contact Rohinton Rivetna at rivetna@aol.com.

### **Next World Congress**

The 8th World Zoroastrian Congress will be held in the UK, in the summer of 2005. For information, contact ZTFE president Dorab Mistry at godrej@globalnet.co.uk. ■



## *The 3rd World Zoroastrian Youth Congress*

The ZYA (Pune) and FOZYA (India), with the Bombay and Pune Parsi Punchayets are proud to host this mega event for youth (18 - 40 years) of the worldwide Zoroastrian community

**Venue: The five-star Taj Blue Diamond Hotel, Pune, India**

**Program: Dec 27 - 31, 2003: Main conference at Taj Blue Diamond.**

**Dec 30-31, 2003: Home stays for overseas delegates, sightseeing, New Years Eve gala.**

**Jan 1 - 3, 2004: Pilgrimage tour to Iranshah, Udvada, Sanjan, Bahrot.**

● [www.wzyc.org](http://www.wzyc.org) ● [info@wzyc.org](mailto:info@wzyc.org) ● Sarosh Palkhiwala, tel: 020-687 5456 ●

XIII NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS



**BEING  
ZARATHUSHTI:**

Looking  
at Issues,  
Searching  
for Answers

# XIII North American Zoroastrian Congress

**December 29, 2004 - January 1, 2005**

**Santa Clara Marriott Hotel - Silicon Valley  
in the San Francisco Bay area**

*Congress Chair:* Mr. Bomi Patel

*Program Committee Chair:* Mr. Erach Tarapore

*email:* [etarapore@bigfoot.com](mailto:etarapore@bigfoot.com)

**Theme: "Being Zarathushti: Looking at Issues, Searching for Answers"**

# ZSC

proudly presents

# 3rd Zarathushti Unity Cup



**in Torrance, California**

**Saturday and Sunday, August 30-31, 2003  
(Labor Day weekend)**

**Contact: [zsc@fezana.org](mailto:zsc@fezana.org)**

Zoroastrian Sports Committee (ZSC) is the Sports Committee  
of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America  
ZSC, P.O. Box 66828, Los Angeles, CA 90066  
**[www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)**



ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF ONTARIO  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ZYNA AND  
FEZANA  
PROUDLY HOST

**The 2003 North American  
Zoroastrian Youth Congress**

July 24-27, 2003

Toronto, Ontario  
Canada

www.nexus2003.com

Email: nazyc2003@yahoo.com



*Dr. Aban Daruwalla, a  
Weapon Systems Scientist at  
Naval Surface Warfare Cen-  
ter in Corona, California  
with Dr. Sally Ride, the  
first female NASA astronaut  
to go into space.*

**Inviting Zarathushti girls to participate in  
science and technology festivals and competitions**

“Sally Ride Festivals for Girls in Science and Technology” are held nation-wide, hosted by various academic institutions. They typically feature a street fair with display booths set up by business, industry and academia; and workshops where students receive hands-on experience. The Festival in November 2002, at the University of California, Riverside, drew 800 girls. Chief guest, Dr. Sally Ride, spoke of her experiences as a scientist and what it took for her to accomplish her dreams.

“I wish more Zarathushti girls would avail of this wonderful opportunity,” writes Dr. Daruwalla, who helps organize these Festivals, “This is the beginning of a new era where these girls will be the ones in the forefront ... we Zarathushtis have a lot to offer, so let us get started.”

Girls, parents and Zarathushti associations are encouraged to contact Dr. Daruwalla at DaruwallaAN@corona.navy.mil and visit [www.SallyRideFestivals.com](http://www.SallyRideFestivals.com) to learn more about this opportunity.

**WZCC - World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (Chicago Chapter)**

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***An Inaugural Conference***

**Saturday, July 12, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois**

“*Encourage New Business!*” advances the tradition and record of honest entrepreneurship set by previous Zarathushti generations for today’s world. From the splendors of ancient Persia, in industrializing India, in Iran, and indeed world-wide, the Zarathushti people gave earnest vigor to successful commerce. Today new generations awakened to the benefits and challenges of entrepreneurship: the most sophisticated high-tech endeavors as well as old-fashioned, hard-work businesses are in the hands of new entrepreneurs. This Inaugural Conference will move our spirit of enterprise forward, creating a vital engine of commerce in North America and the World.

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# Resolution by High Priests

Resolution decrying intermarriages and navjotes of their children, evokes strong reactions

## Nouruz celebrations in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, MAR 21 (CNA). During the official New Year's (Norouz) three-day holidays in Tajikistan, all educational centers as well as state and non-governmental organizations are closed across the country. Tajik President Imamali Rahmanov, in an address to the nation, congratulated the national festivity to Tajiks and all Persian-speaking peoples around the world, "All Aryan people believe that Norouz is the festivity marking the victory of light over darkness and oppression of vices by virtues."

IRNA reports that the Tajik president added, "the Tajik nation has been preserving its favorable customs and traditions such as the celebration of Norouz and its mother tongue from foreign invasions through the years."

[Source Info Net, posted by [iranehman@aol.com](mailto:iranehman@aol.com) on creating awareness@yahoogroups.com].

## Nouruz in Belarus

We are glad to inform you that we had some celebrations for Nouruz in Belarus among Zarathushtis and other groups interested in our religion. As always, we had the traditional *Haft Seen* table at home and also had celebrations at work offices, with traditional Persian music.

Many people are interested about it and we answered their questions. We recited the Gathas and prayers from Khordeh Avesta. Next week we will perform a jashan devoted to ZarRuz (Khordad Sal, Asho Zarathushtra's birthday.)

Nouruz is celebrated by Muslims and Bahai also, in our country."

[Posted by Jamshid Zartoshti, Minsk, Belarus, [info@avesta.org.ru](mailto:info@avesta.org.ru), website [www.avesta.org.ru](http://www.avesta.org.ru), on creating awareness@yahoogroups.com.] ■

## High Priests' Resolution

MARCH 7, 2003. [Preamble omitted]

... with a view to safeguard the survival of the community and prevent further damage to the Parsi Zoroastrian identity, we the undersigned High Priests hereby resolve as under.

(1) The High Priests are strongly of the view that our Religious Scriptures disapprove the marriage of Zoroastrians with members of other communities and faith and consider it to be a transgression of the tenets of the religion. The Parsi community recognizes only the marriage between two Parsi Zoroastrians where both the marrying individuals are born of Parsi Zoroastrian parents, and where the *ashirwad* ceremony which includes the 'nahn', holy sacrament, and prayers specific to the ceremony are duly and properly performed.

(2) The High Priests hereby declare that marriage of a Parsi Zoroastrian man or woman with a person of another faith cannot be considered as religiously valid marriage under the Parsi Zoroastrian faith.

(3) The High Priests hereby declare that the marriage of a Parsi Zoroastrian, male or female, with a member of another community or faith under any civil law of the country, is a civil contract. However, marriage from the Zoroastrian point of view is a sacrament and, therefore, such civil marriages may be valid from the point of view of civil law, but such marriages cannot be considered lawful from a religious point of view.



Dasturji Dr. Firoze Kotwal

(4) The High Priests hereby declare that the performance of navjote of children where only one of the parents is a Parsi Zoroastrian, cannot give religious rights of the Parsi Zoroastrian faith to such children.

(5) The High Priests hereby declare that the children born of Parsi Zoroastrian father with the mother belonging to another community or faith are not accepted in the community as per the religious tenets of the Zoroastrian Faith.

(6) The High Priests hereby declare that no Parsi Zoroastrian priest should perform the marriage ceremony where only one of the marrying partners is a Parsi Zoroastrian

and the other is not. Also, no Parsi Zoroastrian priest should perform the navjote ceremony of children of such mixed marriages.

(7) There have been stray instances in the past of mixed marriages in the community and navjote of children of Parsi fathers and mothers belonging to other communities and faith. However, this was never accepted by the priests or the community at large. In fact, the community at *Samast Anjuman Meetings* has, from time to time, condemned such acts. The High Priests reaffirm the resolutions passed at these meetings.

The High Priests request Panthakis, Priests and Trustees of all the Atash-behrams, Agiaries and all other institutions of all the Anjumans in India to take note of these Resolutions..."

Signed by: Dasturji Dr. Hormazd-yar K. Mirza (Udwada), Dasturji

*Dr. Firoze Meherji Kotwal* (Mumbai), *Dasturji Dr. Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa* (Mumbai), *Dasturji Meherji K. MeherjiRana* (Navsari), *Dasturji Khurshed Dastur Kekobad Dastur* (Udwada), *Dasturji Noshirvan Dastur Manchershaw Dastur* (Surat), *Dasturji Nadirshah P. Unvalla* (Bangalore).

## The Position Restated

*Three of the High Priests, Dasturs JamaspAsa, Kotwal and N. M. Dastur, subsequently offered a "restated position", excerpted below.*

MAY 5, 2003. ... We are sorry that our resolutions ... have evoked acrimonious debate and controversy ... As prelates it is our duty to guide members of our community ... Our declaration was neither a 'fatwa' nor a 'diktat', in fact our intentions were to set out some guidelines ... to safeguard the survival of our community and to urge our youth to marry within the fold in order to preserve our ethnicity and to prevent any further religious erosion of the community.

... we have, on further reflection, reconsidered our position as stated in paragraphs 4 and 5 with respect to the children of Parsi/Irani Zoroastrian fathers married to non-Zoroastrian women; the status of these children should continue as per the established practice and legal convention.

Therefore, if a Parsi/Irani Zoroastrian man marries out, then his children are treated to be Parsi/Irani as of race and Zoroastrian as of religion, if they have been duly admitted into the faith through a traditional navjote ceremony performed by an ordained priest. This is provided that the Zoroastrian father of such children has married as per the civil law of the land and has not undergone a marriage ceremony involving the rituals of another faith ...

As High Priests we have to take a long term view of what is right and proper for the survival of the community ... We trust that our restated position will clear many a doubt and misconception raging presently in the community.

## Reactions to the Resolution

The High Priests' Resolution drew a flurry of strong reactions, that crisscrossed the internet, and made their way quickly to the press, in India [*Jame Jamshed, Mid-Day, Afternoon Dispatch and Courier and Times of India*] and internationally, e.g. BBC [*"Parsis Split over marriage rule" by Monica Chadha, www.news.bbc.co.uk, April 21*] and the *New York Times* article, excerpted below [see full article at [www.NYTimes.com](http://www.NYTimes.com)].

## The New York Times

April 23, 2003

## Despite Birth Bonuses, Zoroastrians in India Fade

By AMY WALDMAN

**B**OMBAY, INDIA — This nation of one billion plus has tried just about every population disincentive known to man, including paying people to stop having children. So how to explain that one community here is paying its members to have more? Call it a sign of demographic desperation. The Parsis ... never large in numbers, are now dwindling... One cartoonist called them "Sparsees."

So for a decade now, the Parsi council here has been offering money — 1,000 rupees, or about \$21, a month until the child turns 18 — to any Parsi family that has a third child.

... One in three Bombay Parsis now marries outside the faith ... About half of those who marry out are women, whose children, under the strictures of the priests, have not been considered Parsis ...

So when a group of high priests issued a resolution last month reiterating their opposition to mixed mar-

riages, an uproar ensued. It was all the louder because the resolution proclaimed that the children of men who marry non-Parsis should also not be accepted in the community.

A debate is now raging over the best way to preserve [the] group ... The key question is on intermarriage ...

The Resolution warned that if the trend continued, the community's identity would be "diluted and subsequently wiped out."

... Reformers argue that notions of separateness amount to a doctrine of racial or ethnic superiority. The best way to ensure the religion's survival in India, they say, is to welcome people into it, particularly those who marry in — or at least not to exclude the children of those who marry out.

"If they would accept our children we would grow so much more," said Meher Amersey, the president of the Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians ...

## Resolution draws some endorsements ...

"Whole hearted support" came from the traditionalist segments of the community. The Board of the Traditional Zarathushtris Mailing List (at [tmzboard@hotmail.com](mailto:tmzboard@hotmail.com)) wrote:

"RESOLVED that the Board members of TZML...fully endorse and support their resolution... [we] express our solidarity and full support to our revered and learned Vada Dasturjis for their bold and righteous stand ..."

A similar endorsement giving "wholehearted support" was circu-

lated on the internet, by some mobeds from the UK.

## ... but mostly criticism

But not all were supportive. Some were scornful and insulting in their rhetoric, calling the high priests "bigots", "morons", "racist" and more. [*Such language is against Journal policy and not printed here.*]

One US mobed, Bahmanshah Sanjana of Houston, circulated a letter offering his willingness "to perform weddings and navjote ceremonies of all Zoroastrians irrespective of their

[Continued on page 33]

Recognizing the thousand years of Persian history and culture of the land that is now Iraq

Compiled by  
Roshan Rivetna



# Great moments of Persian history that happened in Iraq

For over a thousand years, from 559 BCE when the Achaemenian Cyrus the Great conquered the Medes, the Lydians and the Babylonians to become a Persian world power, until 641 CE when the fate of the mighty Sasanian Persian Empire passed into the hands of the invading Arabs, the lands that are present-day Iraq (and far beyond) were ruled for the most part, by successive Persian dynasties – the Achaemenians, the Parthians and the Sasanians.

Yet, in the recent spotlight on Iraq, little is mentioned in the media about this magnificent period of Iraq’s past. No one mentions that American soldiers were walking this past April over lands where Cyrus the Great and Darius and Yazdegerd III walked – lands which saw turning points in the history of the world.

No one mentions Cyrus’ liberation of the Jews from *Babylon*, nor of his stone cylinder (the world’s first “Bill of Human Rights”) that was unearthed there.

No one speaks of the battles at *Gaugamela* (between present-day Mosul and Kirkuk) and *Arbela* (present-day Erbil), where Darius III met Alexander.

No one mentions that Darius the Great’s horseback postal couriers – traveled on *The Royal Road* that goes through present-day Erbil.

No one mentions the marvels of architecture at *Ctesiphon* (just outside Baghdad), the magnificent capital city of the Parthian and Sasanian empires.

No one mentions the battles at *Qadisiya* (South of Baghdad) and *Nihavand*, where invading Arabs sealed the fate of the mighty Sasanian Empire.

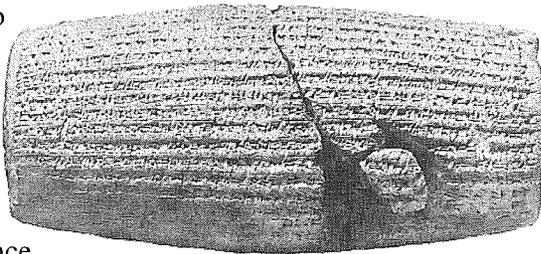
All too often, the lands where Iraq now stands are referred to as the birthplace of “the three major religions of the world – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.” But very few mention the religion of Zarathushtra, possibly the root of all three?

And when the Baghdad museum was looted of priceless treasures, and the National Library and collections of handwritten korans were set aflame last April, no one recalled the plunder of two millennia ago, at the hands of Alexander at Persepolis.

In the pages that follow we will touch upon some of these great moments of Persian history that happened in Iraq. ■

**O**n April 9, 2003, the world watched images of American tanks entering Baghdad's city center, amidst scenes of jubilation, as Iraqis thronged the streets and chanted "Thank you, Mr. Bush". The troops had made their way up from the south, through Al Hillah, the last outpost outside Baghdad, taking care not to disturb the site of the ancient city of Babylon that stood there.

The celebration was reminiscent of Cyrus the Great's entry into Babylon, two and a half millennia ago. In 539 BCE, Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army near Opis (later renamed Ctesiphon) on the Tigris. By October 10th, the Persians were able to capture Sippar "without a battle". Herodotus indicates that the Persians gained entrance into Babylon by diverting the Euphrates (or one of the many canals that penetrated the city). Cyrus entered the city on October 29.



The inhabitants of Babylon greeted Cyrus not as a conqueror but as a liberator. In the ensuing months, the Jews were allowed to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples.

Cyrus' generous edict [below] excavated in Babylon in 1879 is a significant historical record of this "benevolent conqueror". The clay cylinder is now in the British Museum; a replica is at the UN headquarters in New York – acknowledged as the world's first "Bill of Human Rights." It reads:

"... My numerous troops moved about undisturbed in the midst of Babylon. I did not allow any to terrorize the land ... I kept in view the needs of Babylon and all its sanctuaries to promote their well-being ... I gathered together all their inhabitants and restored their dilapidated dwellings ...

"... with the help of (Ahura) Mazda ... I will respect the customs and religions of the nations of my empire ... I will impose my monarchy on no nation... I will never let anyone oppress any others ... I prevent unpaid, forced labor and slavery ... I announce that everyone is free to choose a religion ... I implore to (Ahura) Mazda to make me succeed ..."

[//home.btconnect.com/CAIS/cyrus\_cylinder.htm; SOAS, UK]

## cyrus liberates the jews in babylon



PHOTO: WWW.NECTANEBO0.TRIPOD.COM

By Farishta Murzban Dinshaw



# FROM BABYLON TO BAGHDAD

*Palace of Khusrow I (Noshirwan Adil) at Ctesiphon, near Baghdad*

[PHOTO WWW.OICHICAGO.EDU/OI/IS/SANDERS]

Some of the ancient world's most famous cities – Babylon, Nineveh, Ur and Ctesiphon flourished in Mesopotamia (in present-day Iraq), leaving behind legacies of agricultural reform, architecture, astrology, literature and a host of inventions that impacted the world, like the wheel and writing.

**O**n March 20, 2003, USA and Britain started their march towards Baghdad following a final demand from the US president that Saddam Hussein and his sons leave Iraq. On April 9, the coalition tanks triumphantly rolled through the city roads, ending one more era in the chequered past of this region.

This is not the first time that this area between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris has seen invading troops. Over the course of 3000 years, this region, once known as Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), has been ruled by Sumerians, Assyrians, Greeks, Persians and Arabs and many unremembered warlords in between.

**Land between the rivers.** It was the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris that

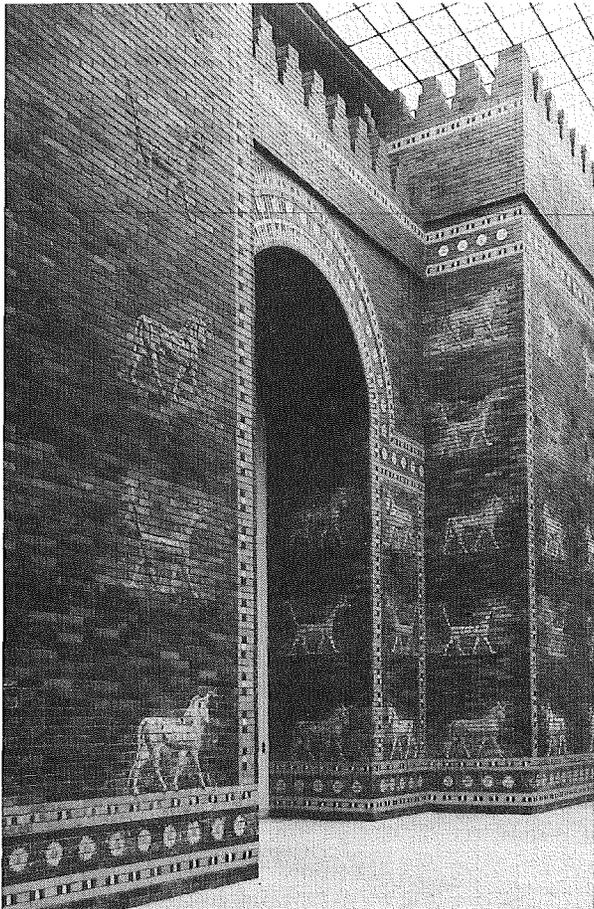
gave the land its name – *Mesopotamia* means 'between rivers' in Greek – and also its wealth. Edible fish were abundant in the waters, wild fowl thrived on the banks and the fertile land near the rivers yielded bountiful crops. As a result, settlements mushroomed along the banks and trade prospered. Some of the ancient world's most famous cities, Babylon, Nineveh, Ur and Ctesiphon flourished in Mesopotamia (in present-day Iraq), leaving behind legacies of agricultural reform, architecture, astrology, literature and a host of inventions that impacted the world, like the wheel and writing.

It is no wonder then that Mesopotamia's wealth caused envy

amongst its neighbors. The result was numerous invasions throughout history, letting hardly any dynasties last more than a few hundred years.

The earliest cities developed in the 'fertile crescent' between the two rivers. The city of *Uruk*, which was occupied for 5,000 years up until the third century, was one of the most important cities in Mesopotamia. Excavations here have unearthed the earliest evidence of writing. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, its legendary king, is one of the world's earliest major literary work. A temple for the celebration of the New Year festival celebrated in the spring was built in Uruk during the Parthian period.

*Ur*, located by *An-Nasiriya*, which saw action in the early days of the Iraq



*The Ishtar Gate of Babylon, reconstructed, at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.*

## Babylon Today

Long before the plunder and pillage of the Baghdad Museum following the “liberation” last April, the cultural heritage that lay in the land that is Iraq today, has over the years been shipped out, piece by piece, to museums and collectors around the world.

One such glaring haul-away, is the famed *Ishtar Gate* – one of eight gates to the city of Babylon that straddled the magnificent “Processional Way” leading from the Temple of Marduk to the *Akitu* (New Years Festival) temple. It was built during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE).

The entire remains of the Gate were lifted and reconstructed at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, where it is one of its major attractions today. German archeologists worked at the site for 20 years, until the outbreak of World War I. Only the foundations of the gate were found, going down some 45 feet. The Germans took many treasures, including most of the glazed relief figures of striding lions, which lined the Processional Way. There were 120 of them; they took 118. The French and the British took their share of treasures from Babylon to the Louvre and the British Museum.

Disregarding protests from UNESCO, which has responsibility for world heritage sites, in 1987, Iraq’s department of antiquities and heritage built brick walls on the original foundations, to provide an idea of what Babylon may have looked like. This “disneyfication” of archeology has irked many.

And until last April, the ubiquitous large scale portrait of Saddam Hussein stood at the entrance to Babylon, looking down on the splendor that was once Babylon. [Source: [www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq)].

war, is believed to be the birthplace of Abraham. The restored remains of the ziggurat (a temple atop a terraced pyramid) dominates the skyline today. The Royal Tombs unearthed here date back to 2600 BCE.

Of all cities in antiquity, *Babylon* was one of the most famous. It lay about 55 miles south of present Baghdad, near the modern city of *Al Hillah*.

The earliest history of Babylon is recorded in the *Code of Hammurabi*, (c. 1800 BCE) inscribed on eight-foot steles, found in 1901 by French archeologists in Susa. The 3,000 lines of code in cuneiform writing can now be viewed at the Louvre in Paris. The largest city in the world at the time, Babylon boasted many temples including the great ziggurat, the suspected basis for the legendary *Tower of Babel*.

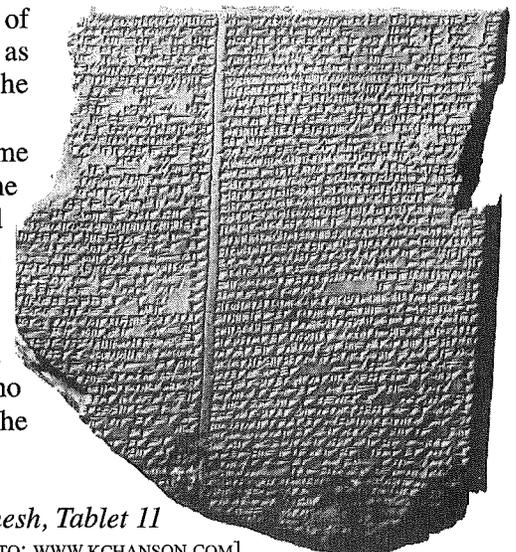
In 669 BCE, the Assyrians destroyed Babylon and built a new capital, *Nin-*

*veh*, on the Tigris River. Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq, is built near the ruins of this ancient site. Later, when the Chaldeans took over the region from the Assyrians, they razed Nineveh and did all they could to restore Babylon as the most magnificent city of the region. It was during the Chaldean period that the *Hanging Gardens*, a simulated hill of vegetation-clad terracing famed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, were created.

But along with the restoration came destruction – Nebuchadnezzar, one of the Chaldean kings, destroyed Jerusalem and persecuted the Jews. So, in 539 BC, when the Persian ruler, *Cyrus the Great* of the Achaemenian dynasty, seized Babylon and released the Jews who had been held in captivity there, he was hailed as a Messiah.

The Persian arrival in Babylon is recorded in *Cyrus’ cylinder* now at the British Museum. James B. Pritchard’s *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* describes Cyrus’ conquest:

“All the inhabitants of Babylon as well as of the entire country of Sumer and



*The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet 11*

[PHOTO: [WWW.KCHANSON.COM](http://WWW.KCHANSON.COM)]



*Darius III [right] encounters Alexander at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE. From a 11'x6' mosaic (c. 100 BCE) found at Pompeii, now at the Naples Museum.*

## The fate of the First Persian Empire was sealed on the plains of Arbela (Erbil) and Gaugamela (near Mosul) in Iraq

A few days after the fall of Baghdad last April, US troops and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters moved into the Northern Iraqi cities of Mosul, near the biblical town of Nineveh; into Kirkuk, site of a large oil field; and into Erbil, or the ancient Arbela, located on the strategic Royal Road.

Turning back history, it was on these same plains between the Tigris and Euphrates, at Arbela and Gaugamela (near Nineveh/Mosul), that King Darius III met his nemesis – Alexander of Macedon, in September 331 CE.

After a series of victories in the western regions of the Persian Empire, which stretched at the time, from the Hellespont to the Indus, Alexander headed east. With 40,000 soldiers on foot and 7,000 on horses, he crossed the Euphrates and the unguarded Tigris. Once contact was established, the Macedonians were ordered into camp to secure a good night's rest.

Darius, meanwhile, mobilized an army (number “over 1,040,000” according to Greek historians). His ‘coalition forces’ stretched in a great line “over 4 kilometers in length”. On his left wing were massed his best cavalry, the Scythian and Bactrian. On his far right, cavalry from Cappadocia, Syria, Media and Armenia. In the center was Darius himself, with the Royal Guard, the ‘Persian Immortals’ (whose spears were butted with golden apples), Greek mercenaries, and contingents from each of his satrapies: Indians, Carians and Mardians, Uxians, Susians, Babylonians, Parthians and Medes – hundreds of thousands of infantry.

On the front line was a deep cavalry screen of mounted archers, hundreds of the dreaded scythed chariots, and the still more dreaded elephants.

When Alexander approached, in the early morning, Darius’ men, having stayed up all night in anticipation, were already tiring. Alas, at the end of the day, Darius was defeated. Alexander went on to take Babylon, and Susa, and onwards to an orgy of slaughter and plunder at Pasargadae and Persepolis, where “the palaces famed throughout the civilized world fell victim to insult and destruction” [Quintius V]. Thus ended the mighty empire of the Achaemenians.

[Sources: “History of the Persian Empire” by A. T. Olmstead; “Persepolis” by Donald Wilber; Darrell Rowbottom at [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com)]. ■

Akkad (the surrounding provinces), princes and governors included, bowed to Cyrus and kissed his feet, jubilant that he had received the kingship, and with shining faces. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come again to life from death and had all been spared damage and disaster, and they worshiped his very name.”

The capture of Babylon established a true world empire as Cyrus was already the ruler of surrounding kingdoms including what are now Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

As Babylon prospered once again so did business, and a link of outposts expanded into a highway known as the *Silk Road*. The route stretched all the way from Babylon to Xian in central China, connecting cities in over a dozen countries including Samarkand in Uzbekistan, Kabul and Kandahar in Afghanistan, and ancient Taxila in the Indian subcontinent.

Merchants, philosophers, pilgrims, and adventurers tread the 8,000 miles over harsh mountains and burning deserts and created thriving market-towns along the way where travellers stopped to exchange their silks, gems, gods and ideas. Unfortunately, the money-spinning gave rise to marauding gangs, so when safer sea routes were developed, the era of the caravans declined.

Another contributing factor was that Darius shifted his capital further east to the ancient Elamite city of *Susa* (now in south west Iran) and the trade route from Sardis to Susa, known as *The Royal Road*, did not pass through Babylon. Also, the Persians were establishing new trade links with India and other eastern points. As a result, Babylon became impoverished, worsened no doubt by the 1000 talents of silver levied on them as taxes every year.

After the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander, the Greek Seleucid dynasty reigned in Mesopotamia, with *Seleucia* as their capital. When the Seleucid dynasty fell to the Persian dynasty of *Arsacids (Parthians)*, Mesopotamia became one of their richest provinces and was called *Khvarvaran*. The Parthians moved the government from Seleucia on the opposite bank of the river Tigris to an older city *Opis* and renamed it *Ctesiphon*.

The Parthians waged numerous campaigns against the Roman Empire and invested the spoils of war in their new capital. Ctesiphon not only became the most important city in the Parthian empire, but also one of the greatest cities in the ancient world. It is said that after one of the wars which Septimius Severus' army won, the Romans took away so much gold and silver that they were able to live on it for three decades. This may have been one of the reasons the Parthian empire began to deteriorate. In 224 CE, the Persian vassal king *Ardeshir* revolted, marking the beginning of the end of the Parthian rule in Mesopotamia.

An interesting side note is that the King of *Kirkuk*, the city so much in the news in Operation Iraqi Freedom, joined with Ardeshir I in his revolt against the Parthians. However, little else is known about the kingdom of Kirkuk, except that it had reached great prominence under Assyrian rule. The present city of Kirkuk stands on the site of the old city of *Arrapha*.

Two years later, Ardeshir finally took Ctesiphon for his own capital, and the second Persian rule of Mesopotamia began under the *Sasanians*. Ctesiphon became their winter residence and the city where the Sasanid kings were crowned. Although Ctesiphon was the capital of the Sasanid empire, Seleucia, the Greek city across the river, was considered its twin city and renamed *Veh-Ardeshir*, meaning 'the good city of Ardeshir'.

The Sasanid rulers wanted to resurrect Cyrus' title of 'King of Kings'

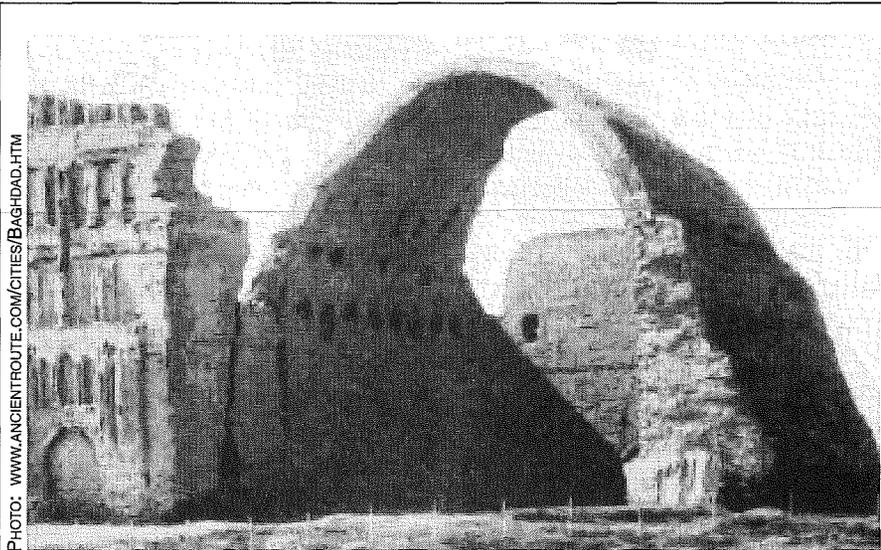


PHOTO: WWW.ANCIENTROUTE.COM/CITIES/BAGHDAD.HTM

*Palace of Khusrow I with the great arch, at Ctesiphon near Baghdad*

## Sasanian Monument on the Front Lines

In his press briefing on March 26th, Brig. General Tommy Brooks showed an aerial picture of a potential bomb target – an Iraqi military equipment building, located right next to the “monument at Ctesiphon”. He reassured viewers, though, that the monument, was marked on the roof with a “historical marker” symbol, and with the sophisticated precision targeting equipment available to the coalition forces, was in no danger.

The “monument at Ctesiphon”, 15 miles from Baghdad, a splendid example of Sasanian architecture, was the palace of Khusrow I or Chosroes I (531 - 579 CE) also known as Noshirwan, who was celebrated for his wisdom and justice. Khusrow rebuilt the winter palace at *Ctesiphon* (or *Tyspwn*), which was the seat of government for the Parthians and Sasanians, the center for trade with Asia, and one of the great cities of the ancient world.

The extant ruins of *Khusrow's Palace* (or *Takht-e-Kisra*) include a great vaulted hall ornamented with pilasters and the *remarkable arch*, which was, and possibly is, the widest, single-span vault of un-reinforced brickwork in history. It spans 85 feet and is about 110 feet high. It is believed the arch was built without any supports during construction. Each thin, unfired mud brick is laid on a slant, it's weight transferred to the side walls. The workmen worked inwards until the final few courses met in the high center of the pointed ovoid (a shape peculiar to Mesopotamia).

The splendor of those last days of the Sasanian Empire are proverbial. Khusrow fostered an artistic rebirth of the arts, trade and literature. In the grand hall, Khusrow, seated on a golden throne, inlaid with rubies, received ambassadors from the kingdoms of the world, serving as king, law giver and high priest in communion with Ahura Mazda. Before him lay a great jewel-encrusted carpet representing a garden, wrought in gold and silver thread, with emeralds for green meadows and rivers of pearls.

Ctesiphon fell to the Arabs in 637 CE and the palace and its treasures were sacked. The great carpet was so heavy, it was cut up and divided among the caliphs and soldiers. Vast stores of silver and gold, costly robes, chests of amber and musk – were carried away on camels.

Only parts of the enormous vaulted hall, and an east wall remain today. [Source: *The Splendor of Persia*, Robert Payne].

## "The Royal Road" through Erbil, Iraq

The town of Arbela, the present-day Erbil in Northern Iraq, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the world. Strategically placed on a plain 400 feet above sea level, it commands the road from Babylonia and Assyria into Armenia.

Arbela was also one of the stations on *The Royal Road* built by Darius the Great from Susa to Sardis. The distance of 1500 miles was purportedly covered in 6 days, by mounted couriers riding night and day, to form the world's first courier postal system. Herodotus remarks:

"Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers ...

"The entire plan is a Persian invention ... Along the road are men stationed with horses ... the first rider delivers his dispatch to the second, and ...

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night, stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

These words have since been immortalized by the US postal system and can be seen inscribed on the facade of the General Post office in New York. ■

and they added Armenia, Kushan, Cyprus and Egypt to their empire till the Sasanid empire reached the borders of China. But their strongest enemy was the Roman Empire, now called Byzantium. In 540 CE, *Khusrow I* conquered the capital of Roman Syria, Antioch and settled its inhabitants in a new city near Ctesiphon and Veh-Ardeshir, which was called *Khusrow's Antioch*.

As the cluster of settlements grew, the Arabs began to call the area *Al-Madain* or 'the cities'. Khusrow I's magnificent palace with, at 85 feet, the widest single-span vault of unreinforced brickwork in the world at that time, was the pride of Ctesiphon and its remains are still visible outside Baghdad. Today Al Madain and the adjacent *Salman Pak*, where Prophet Mohammed's first Persian convert and companion, Salman Farsi is buried, is a popular pilgrimage site.

The constant battles began to take their toll however and towards the end of the dynasty there were four kings in as many years. The last Sasanid king was *Yazdegard III*, whose reign began in 632 CE. Five years later, *the Arabs*, under the command of Khalid ibn Waleed, moved into the region and seized Ctesiphon from the Persians.

In 762 CE, the Arabs built a new seat of government, about 21 miles upstream from Ctesiphon, and called it *Baghdad* meaning "the gift from God", thus starting a whole new chapter in the history of the region, and indeed the world. ■

[Web sources: *usfca.edu*, *angelfire.com*, *world history.com*, *mesopotamia.co.uk*, *wikipedia.org*, *cradleofcivilisations.com*, *hostkingdom.net*, *iraq4you*, and others]

**Farishta Dinshaw** was born in Karachi, and now resides in Toronto.



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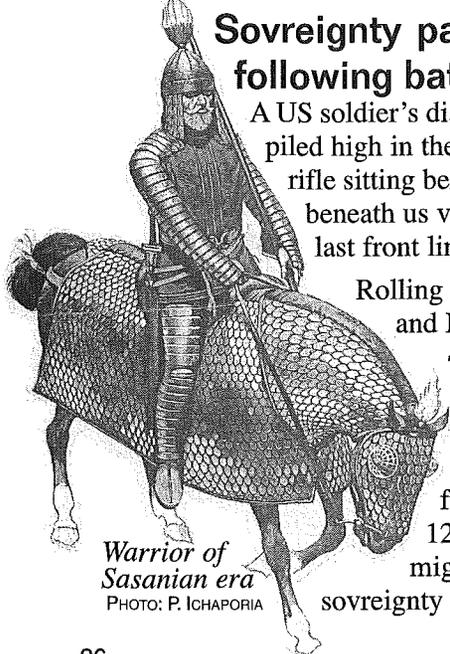
She was the initiatory Editor of *Funline*, Pakistan's first English magazine for children. She is the author of "Discovering Ashavan", an insightful story about a young boy who is befriended by Zarathushtra Spitama. A teacher educator by profession she has taught Zarathushtrian religion classes to children in Karachi.

## Sovereignty passes from the Persian Sasanians to the Islamic caliphs following battles at Qadisiya and Nihavand, near Baghdad, in 631 CE.

A US soldier's diary [Robert Fisk, *The Independent*, UK] dated April 6, 2003 reads: "Iraqi bodies were piled high in the pick-up truck in front of me, army boots hanging over the tailboard, a soldier with a rifle sitting behind them. Beside the highway, a squad of troops was stacking grenades as the ground beneath us vibrated with the impact of US air strikes. The area was called *Qadisiya*. This was the last front line as the Battle of Baghdad enters its first hours."

Rolling back history, it was on these same lands that Arab invasions, Qadisiya, nearby Hira and Nihavand, paved the way for the Islamization of Persia.

The last Sasanian emperor Yazdegard III ascended the throne when the Empire was embroiled in internal conflict. The Arabs meanwhile, united under the banner of Islam, dreamed of world conquest. Muslim penetration began under the first caliph, Abu Bakr with the capitulation of the city of *Hira* in 633 CE. The Sasanians then suffered a disastrous blow at the *Battle of Qadisiya* in 636, when the Arabs met the 120,000-strong army of the Persians under the command of Rustom. The fate of the mighty Sasanian Empire was finally sealed at the Battle of Nihavand in 641 and sovereignty passed into the hands of the Islamic caliphs. ■



Warrior of Sasanian era  
PHOTO: P. ICHAPORIA



# treasures from the avesta our daily prayers

Guest Editor  
Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw

*Photo above, Zoroastrian priests with their teachers reciting their morning prayers, at the Athornan Boarding Madressa in Bombay. [PHOTO BY SOONI TARAPOREVALA, COURTESY "A ZOROASTRIAN TAPESTRY, ART, RELIGION & CULTURE" BY PHEROZA J. GODREJ & FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE].*

## What it Means to Me to do My Sudreh Kushti

How beautiful it is for me to stand in Your presence  
To pray in Your light  
To be comforted in Your burning sandal,  
To bow in Your embrace,  
To re-energize in Your faith,  
To vibrate Your Gathas deep within my soul,  
To sing Your Avesta aloud in my heart,

To make me more appreciative when hard times befall,  
To make me more humble when good fortune bequeaths,  
To always know that You are and will be by my side,  
To always have You shelter my family and friends,  
For all these blessings I know not what I owe,  
But my love and adoration, for all this and more,  
How beautiful it is for me to stand in Your presence.

- By Homee Shroff, Chicago, Illinois

**O**ur daily rituals mean different things to different people. To some it is a meaningless mumbling of unintelligible words while going through the mechanical motions of untying and tying the kushti. Some, amongst this group, have stopped performing the daily kushti ritual either because of apathy or because they see no useful purpose in doing so.

There are others for whom the daily kushti ritual plays a very important role. They assign to the kushti ritual various mystical significances. The meaning and understanding of the words is not as important to them as their proper recitation and correctly performing the ritual itself. To them, the prayers are the words directly revealed by Ahura Mazda to Zarathushtra, and under no circumstances should they ever be questioned or analyzed. Each movement of the ritual is assigned deep esoteric meaning. While some of these esoteric meanings may defy logic, this group remains fully committed to the proper performance of the ritual itself.

I believe that in between these two, somewhat extreme, positions lies yet a third group. This group, more moderate in their outlook, want to fully understand the meanings of the words they recite and they want to understand the significance of the ritual they are performing. Once they understand the meanings of the prayers, they find that an “emptiness has been infused with spiritual significance.” The performance of the kushti ritual then takes on an entirely new role in their daily lives – no longer is it a rote recitation of words, but it serves as an instrument through which they are able to live better and more meaningful lives.

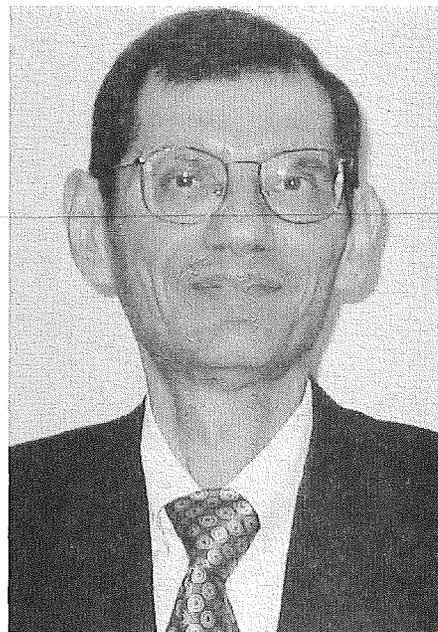
This gaining of ‘spiritual significance’ does not come easily. The meaning must come from within, and it requires knowledge as well as learning. While this understanding may develop in some individuals more readily, others have to work harder to find it. But when the ‘spiritual significance’ is revealed, there is an immense sense of spiritual satisfaction.

Many of us Zarathushtis (both Parsi and Iranian) living in the diaspora have scant access to religious information. We have no consecrated fire temples to which we and the family can go. We have no full time priests who can assist and explain the daily rituals. Many of us are left to fend for ourselves – often having to depend on incorrect information that is rampant on the internet.

Thus, the main purpose of this series of articles is to help supply the readers with a basic understanding of what the daily rituals entail. The meanings of the basic prayers are explained, as are the rituals themselves. We hope these articles are informative and useful, especially to those with children, so that they have material readily accessible to teach the youngsters when they are preparing them for their Navjote ceremony.

I wish to thank all the authors who contributed to these articles. Many were extremely tied up and busy with their own work, yet they took time out to prepare a paper. I must admit that in some cases I had to do some serious arm-twisting of the authors to force them to contribute a paper, but I did so as I knew that it would be worthwhile because of the tremendous wealth of knowledge they can impart to us. ■

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA or FEZANA Journal. Per its editorial policy, FEZANA Journal does not endorse or espouse any specific perspective.



**Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw** has been a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) since 1978. He served for 4 years on the Executive Committee of the ZAH, as the secretary. He has been active in teaching Sunday School classes to Zarathushtrian youth in Houston, and participated as session leader in the Gatha Studies Group for adults. He is currently an active member of the ZAH Library Group, which is working on opening a leading research library on Zarathushti issues, in Houston.

Sarosh was co-chairman of the Second International Gatha Conference in Houston in 1996. He was editor of the *Journal of the Research and Historical Preservation Committee, Volume II*, published by FEZANA in 1996. Sarosh served as the co-vice chairman of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, and was actively involved in coordinating and developing the program for that congress. Sarosh has served as guest editor of the FEZANA Journal, on the topic of “Date and Place of Zarathushtra”. He has actively participated in many other Zarathushti and interfaith activities; spoken to church groups; presented papers at several conferences; and published articles in FEZANA Journal.

# rituals

## role and significance in our daily lives

By James W. Boyd and Ron G. Williams

PHOTO: COURTESY CYRUS RIVETNA

Ritual can be an instrument of reassurance and stability as well as catalyst for transforming one's outlook; it can convey a timelessness, be artfully done and aesthetically pleasing; it can link us with our past in ways that are both evocative and reflective.

On first reading, Rohinton Mistry's latest novel *Family Matters* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002] is a condemnation of fundamentalist orthodoxy among lay Parsis in Bombay, fictionally set in the mid-1990s. In the epilogue, for example, the young Jehangir describes his father Yezad (who some five years before fervently embraced a religious life of ritual), in the following way:

My father has emerged from the bathroom, and is doing his kushti by the cabinet. His expression is always very intense when he prays. He finishes tying the knots and sits with his prayer book before the electric *afar-*

*gan*, in the wooden *chāir* no one else is allowed to use. He sits as though he is carrying a secret burden, whose weight is crushing him. He frowns a lot, his face contorting in pain. He doesn't just close his eyes, he clenches the eyelids shut, the cheeks rising, the brows pressing downwards to squeeze out whatever it is that haunts him. His Avesta recitations – the various *yashts*, *gehs*, *nyaeshs*, depending on the hour – are like a rebuttal, a protest. He is locked in a struggle.

Seeing my father like this, I think of him as he used to be, so jovial. Nowadays he hardly smiles, let alone laughs. And he never whistles, never joins in with songs on the radio. The

last time I heard him sing was for Grandpa, the night before he died. And the radio is seldom played – only while Daddy is out of the house. When he is home, he's either praying or reading, and says the music disturbs him [404-405].

I think of Daddy, who makes me feel that my real father is gone, replaced by this non-stop praying stranger [444].

In this passage and elsewhere in the novel Mistry conveys some of the real dangers of religious ritual: a rule-conscious behavior that deadens the mind and spirit; a burdensome sense of obligation; a stultifying preoccupation with proper and timely performance of ritual duties. To these

dangers we could add others. Ritual can be a way of reinforcing rigidity and social conformity to outmoded social customs or a kind of activity tied to an outmoded world view. The activities can be meaningless and empty because they are prescribed by others and not chosen by ourselves – and so the list of dangers grows.

But this is only one way of looking at ritual. Mistry, quite effectively, also suggests that ritual can be seen as a positive activity in people's lives. For example, Roxana, Jehangir's mother, delighted in the fragrance of frankincense; for her, "loban smoke was like angels and *fareshtas* floating through the house [23]. Even her husband, Yezad, before he became so "religiously fervent," on one occasion found himself re-visiting the fire temple he had really known only in his youth. He

became deeply enveloped in its reverent mood:

A dozen feet from the sanctum's threshold, he sat on the carpeted floor and rubbed his hands over the lush carpet, enjoying its gentle prickle, smiling at his childhood self. The fire was only a glow of embers. Not much smoke, though the room was rich with sandalwood fragrance. Occasionally there was a loud crack as a spark flew towards the high dome.

How still it was, how restful. And the fire burning ... burning continuously for almost a hundred and fifty years, since this atash bahram was built – the same fire his parents had gazed upon, and his grandparents, and great-grandparents. The thought filled him with quiet, with reassurance ...

How calming, thought Yezad, to watch all this, to let the peace of the moment fill the room. Why did it have such a timeless quality? How comforting, to see the figure in the flowing white robe, see him moving, unhurried, employing the various silver utensils in the ceremony, performing the mystical gestures that were repeated five times each day, performed with an elegance that could come only with the cumulative grace of generations and centuries, so that it was encoded in blood and bone...

[Later] Yezad approached the sanctum... The fire was burning vigorously, the flames leaping with joy, and the

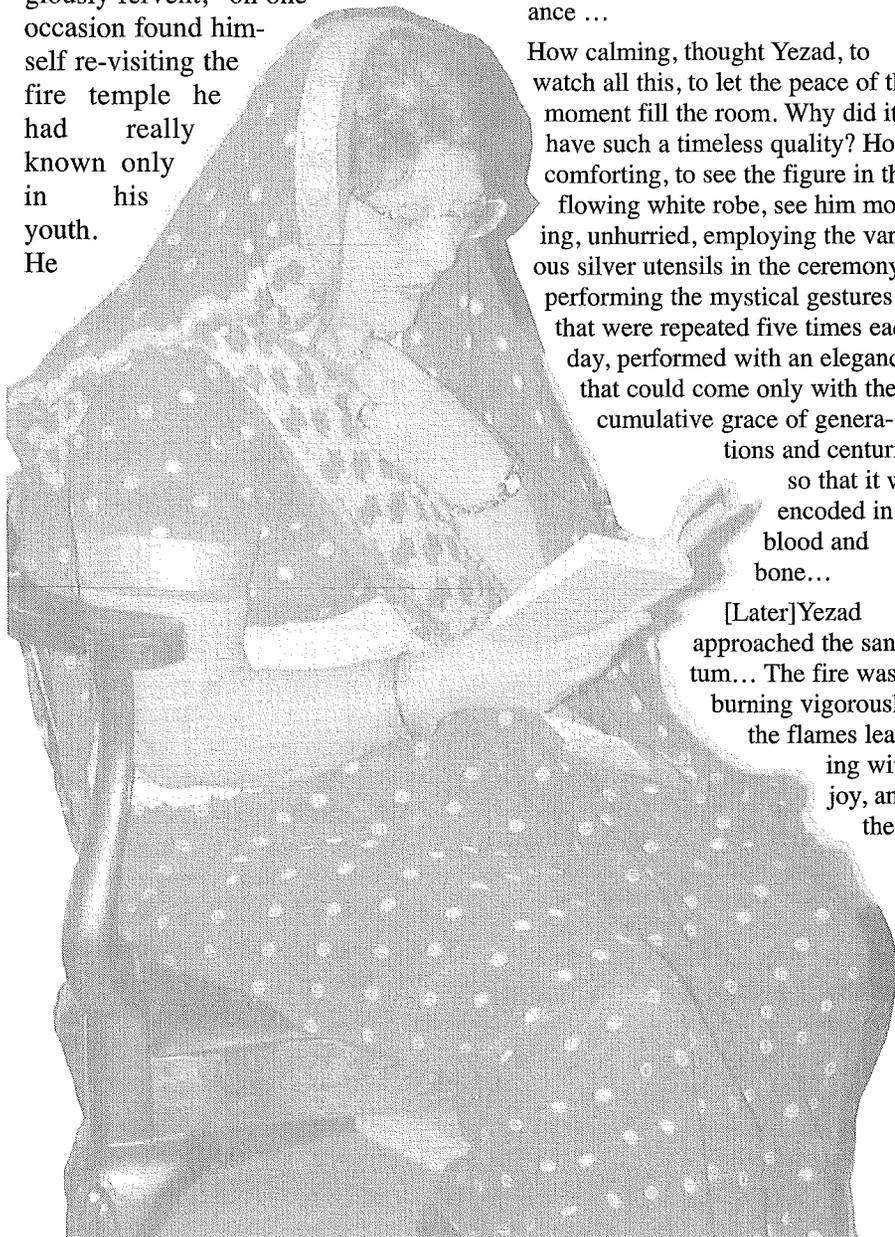
room was a dance of light and shadow ... He knelt; his forehead touched the marble threshold; he remained bowed for a long while (296-297).

This passage illuminates some of the beneficial aspects of religious ritual and, in the above instance, its setting. Ritual can be an instrument of reassurance and stability as well as a catalyst for transforming one's outlook; it can convey a timelessness, be artfully done and aesthetically pleasing; it can link us with our past in ways that are both evocative and reflective. That is, ritual need not be a way of living life badly – a ritual life can be lived well. And even more to the point (and one we wish to make in this short essay), ritual can be an integral way of creating a meaningful life.

Our intention here is not to write a review of Mistry's novel, but to explore the positive aspects of ritual practices in a general way. The Mistry novel, though fictional, affords us as students of the Zoroastrian tradition, an insider's glimpse into some of the dangers and benefits of ritual observance by lay practitioners. In the subsequent pages we speak as students of world religions and ritual traditions, and wish to address the richness that ritual brings to people's lives. In our work we have been struck by the following features of ritualized activity.

First, there is ritual's **uniqueness**. Engaging in a ritual activity (and here we are speaking of a whole spectrum of human actions – ranging from the recitation of daily prayers to celebrating someone's birthday), does not necessarily exclude detached reflection, but on the whole is an activity that constitutes its own mode of knowing.

Let us give a simple illustration. Consider how one learns to ride a bicycle. One can *reflect* on the rules of balance, the need for compensating when leaning one way or the other, and the requisite amount of forward motion needed to stay bal-



anced. This is one kind of knowing. But getting on a bicycle, trying to balance and go forward, i.e., learning the activity through bodily engagement, is in fact the way one learns to ride a bike. *Engaging in the activity transforms a person into one who knows the activity.*

“ One may know a great deal about the history and theology of a tradition, and even something about its rituals, but that person comes to know experientially something more when engaged in the rituals of that tradition. ”

This is true for ritual actions as well. One may know a great deal about the history and theology of a tradition, and even something about its rituals, but that person comes to know experientially something more when engaged in the rituals of that tradition. It is like knowing how to actually ride a bicycle – a kind of knowing that is fundamentally different from just thinking about what it takes to ride a bike. Herein lies ritual’s uniqueness. What you come to know in a genuine ritual act is a bodily knowing that is inclusive of mental knowing, but not reducible to it.

Consider the following: when actually doing a ritual activity that is meaningful to you, what new emotions might you possibly feel due to that action? What possible new thoughts might that action make you think? What new sensations and perceptions might it open in the body? [cf. Brian Massumi, “A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia Deviations from Deleuze”, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002, p. 8]

Engaging in a ritual activity can alter what we think possible in life by col-

oring our experience in very subtle ways. The character Yezad in the quoted passage above, while observing the priest ritually tending the atash bahram, began to sense the peace of the moment, its timeless quality; he perceived the fire’s flames leaping with joy, and the room became a dance of light and shadow. Yezad caught a glimpse of another way of knowing that was open to new emotions to feel, new thoughts to think, new perceptions to see – a glimpse, in effect, of another way of life.

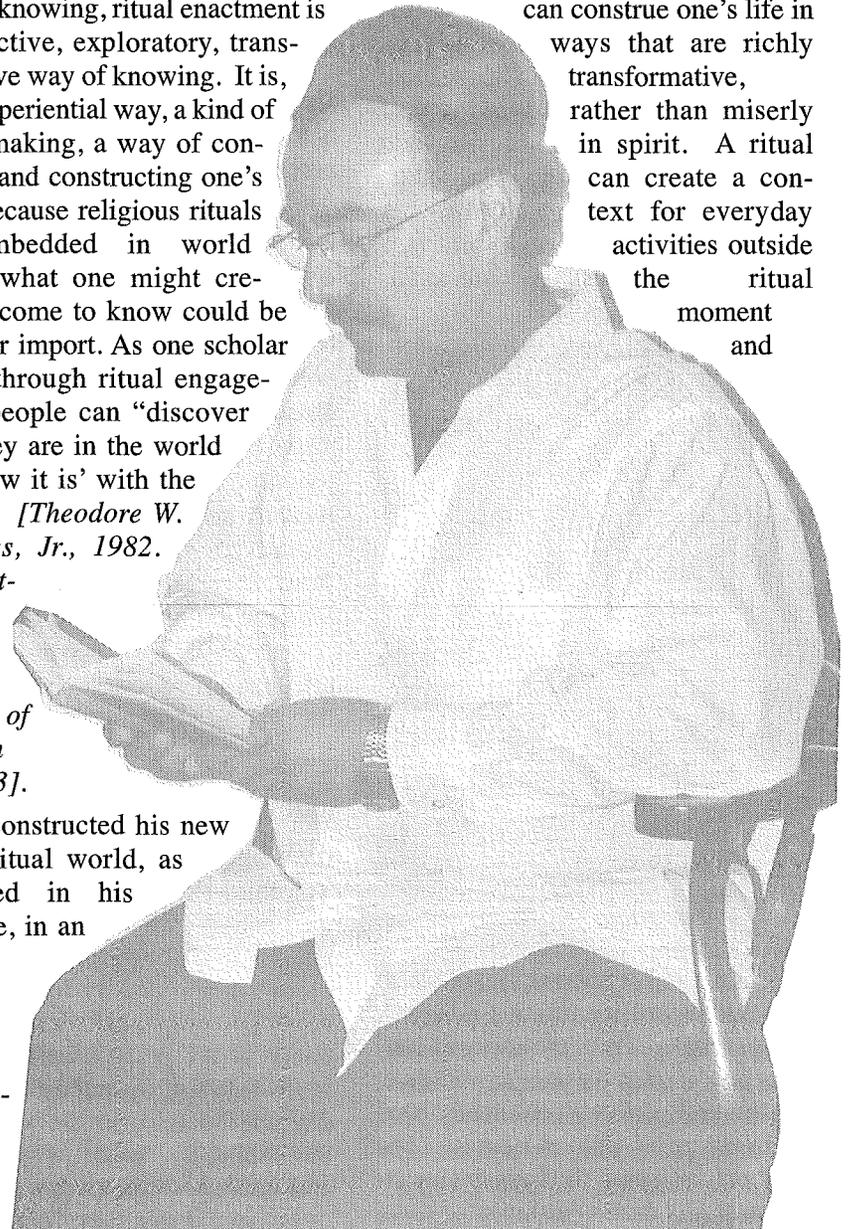
This is the second feature of ritual activity we wish to note: rituals are **productive of new ways of knowing**. In addition to being a unique kind of knowing, ritual enactment is a pro-active, exploratory, transformative way of knowing. It is, in an experiential way, a kind of world-making, a way of constructing and constructing one’s life. Because religious rituals are embedded in world views, what one might creatively come to know could be of major import. As one scholar put it, through ritual engagement, people can “discover who they are in the world and ‘how it is’ with the world.” [Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., 1982.

“On Ritual Knowledge,” *Journal of Religion* 62/2:113].

Yezad constructed his new found ritual world, as portrayed in his later life, in an almost mean-spirited manner. He seldom smiled, let

alone laughed, frowned a lot, and clenched his eyes shut when he prayed, as if carrying a secret burden. He construed his world in a very constricted way, and lost sight of an important teaching in his own tradition: the Zoroastrian virtue of moderation. As the *Menog i Xrad* affirms, religious activities, when done in moderation, bring cheerfulness to one’s life. To totally abandon oneself to ritual worship, as Yezad had done, when one should be working and earning a livelihood, is to be as immoderate and unbalanced in one’s use of time, as is a person who completely ignores all ritual observances.

But ritual activity can also be a positive way of world-making. One can construe one’s life in ways that are richly transformative, rather than miserly in spirit. A ritual can create a context for everyday activities outside the ritual moment and



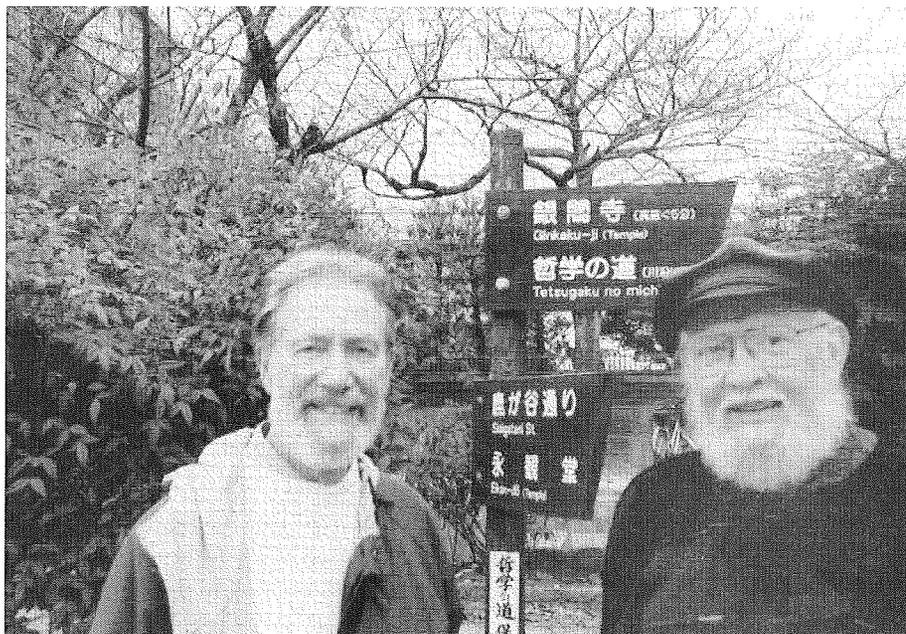
serve as a moral template, a touchstone for one's life.

Hints of this in the novel are seen, for example, in the party the family holds for Jehangir's older brother Murad's eighteenth birthday. Birthday parties are universal phenomena, and, incidentally, like most ceremonies of this type, are learned through participation. No one tells you: "These are the rules to follow for a birthday party!" Rather, by participating in such observances during the course of your life – you come to know it. In Murad's birthday party, the floor is decorated with chalk patterns, everyone sings Happy Birthday, and his mother, Roxana, brings in a round silver tray [photo below] that holds everything needed for the ceremony, including a garland of roses, lilies, and jasmine, which she slips around Murad's neck. She places in his hand all the symbols of good luck and prosperity: betel leaves, betel-nuts, dates, flowers, a coconut, dips her thumb in the little silver cup of vermilion and applies the paste to his forehead, and so on [431].



*The ritual 'ses' tray*

This is a ritual of affirmation, of blessings and prosperity, of good relations. These ritual gestures are a way of constructing, if even for only a short time, the kind of world we continually need to re-create as human beings. The memory, or better, the frequent enactment of this or similar kinds of ritual



*Profs. Boyd [at left] and Williams standing in front of a sign in Japan that reads "Tesugaku no michi" (the Philosopher's Walk).*

**Prof. James W. Boyd** [left] is a University Distinguished Teaching Scholar at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. Boyd's research interests center on Asian studies. He has published widely on various aspects of Asian religion including "Satan and Mara" (1975), "The Lion and the Dragon" (1979), "A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion", co-author Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, (1982), "A Persian Offering, the Yasna", co-author Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal (1991), and "Ritual Art and Knowledge", co-author Ron G. Williams (1993). Together with Williams, Boyd is a leading expert in the field of Ritual Studies, and he is currently researching Zoroastrian and Shinto rituals.

**Prof. Ron G. Williams** is chair of the Philosophy Department, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. William's scholarly pursuits are varied, including logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of science and more recently aesthetics and ritual studies. He is co-author of "Philosophical Analyses (1965) and "Ritual Art and Knowledge (1993), which he wrote with James Boyd. Together with Boyd, he is a leading expert in Ritual Studies and he is currently working on the aesthetic dimension of Zoroastrian and Shinto rituals.

affirmation, can serve as a guide, an integrating vision, for future actions. Rituals can creatively help us discover, in unique and productive ways, who we are in the world and "how it is" with the world.

The third and final feature of ritualized activity we wish to highlight is ritual's **artful complexity**. Efficacious rituals usually have a strong aesthetic component. It was the elegance of the priest's gestures in the atash bahram, repeated five times a day and honed over the years "with the cumulative grace of generations and centuries" that impacted Yezad as he sat a dozen feet from the sanc-

tum's threshold. As he observed the *bui* ceremony, it was the priest's regulated, 'ritualized' unhurried gestures that heightened their elegance and helped create an atmosphere of 'timeless quality.'

The artful aspects of ritual have a power to move one into another time and experiential space – a time when one temporarily sets aside or strips away the social constraints that govern our daily lives. Such moments can amend our sense of time, de-emphasize differences among participants, and incline us toward a feeling of belonging to a family or community.

Such was the case during Murad's birthday party. There was a great deal of tension between Murad and his father. Over the years he saw his father become more and more fanatical, and didn't understand what was changing him – there were cruel words said between them. No one in the family knew what might happen during the birthday ceremony. Young Jehangir narrates the scene:

There is a new wristwatch in the tray, Murad's birthday gift. Mummy has left it for Daddy [to give to Murad]. We wait, wondering how he will deal with it. She puts her fingers over her mouth to hide her anxiety.

He reaches for the box, hesitates, leaves it in the tray, and takes Murad's left wrist. He unbuckles the strap of the old watch and puts it aside, then picks up the new one from the tray. It has a metal band, and he passes it gently over Murad's bunched fingers, setting the dial on the wrist before turning his hand over to snap shut the clasp.

Still keeping Murad's hand in his, Daddy finally looks into his face. For a few moments they hold each other's wavering gaze. Now Daddy places his right hand on Murad's head, over the prayer cap, and I think he is saying a prayer. Murad waits without rolling his eyes or displaying any sign of impatience.

Then Daddy relieves him of the flowers and betel leaves and nuts, returns them to the tray, and hugs him. Murad responds by putting his arms around Daddu ... We can hear Daddy whispering, "Happy birthday, my son. Live a long, healthy, wealthy life, and lots of happiness" [431-432].

Here is an example of the power of ritual in all three ways we have endeavored to highlight. Consider first that the occasion is a ritual celebration. This day was marked off from the everyday through the creation of a special ritual setting (the auspicious chalk drawing). It had its own prescribed ritual activities (singing Happy Birthday, placing a garland of flowers round Murad's neck, and pasting vermilion on his forehead, etc.), and it included various items

and gestures that possessed aesthetic qualities (beautiful flowers, music, and even exquisite gestures, as when Murad's mother sprinkled rice over him, "her hands moving in a lovely arc that could be part of a dance").

By engaging in this ritual activity, the various members of the family left their differences behind and again realized a feeling of belonging together. The artful aspects of the ritual, together with the customary ritual gestures, had the power to move them into another experiential time and place; a new, momentary world of meaningful relations was constructed – feelings, thoughts, attitudes were amended by the productive power of the ritual. And what they came to know, in this instance a real sense of family, was a unique kind of knowing discovered only through their participation in the ritual occasion itself.

Rituals can and do play an important role in our lives. They involve a kind of knowing only realized by engaging in the activity itself, are ways of constructing worlds we live in, and due to their aesthetic qualities, often open our daily lives to a sense of the wonders of life. For these reasons, a ritual life can be a life lived well. ■

## High Priests Resolution ...

[Continued from page 19]

marriage to Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian spouses."

Many questioned the wisdom of such a declaration, in the face of the stark reality facing the community today: when it is believed that one of three Mumbai Parsis marries outside the faith; among them, many of the icons of the community – Zubin Mehta, and industrial stalwarts from the Tata, Godrej and Wadia families.

Mid-Day ran an article "Unsweetening the Milk" by Anil Thakraney:

"...the move could completely backfire. The more 'islanding' the community does of itself, the quicker it will vanish ..."

Priyanka Kakodkar wrote, in "Talinisation of Zoroastrianism":

"It's a community tiny enough to fit into Kolkata's Eden Garden stadium, but the orthodoxy's stand is going to shrink it even further."

And the debate goes on.

**Postscript:** The subsequent "restatement" by the high priests has softened the controversy somewhat, but raised yet another equally thorny issue of gender disparity.

- By Roshan Rivetna



## The Power of One

One *SONG* can spark a moment, One *FLOWER* can wake the dream  
One *TREE* can start a forest, One *BIRD* can herald spring

One *SMILE* begins a friendship, One *HANDCLASP* lifts a soul  
One *STAR* can guide a ship at sea, One *WORD* can frame the goal

One *VOTE* can change a nation, One *SUNBEAM* lights a room  
One *CANDLE* wipes out darkness, One *LAUGH* will conquer gloom

One *STEP* must start each journey, One *WORD* must start a prayer  
One *HOPE* will raise our spirits, One *TOUCH* can show you care

One *VOICE* can speak with wisdom, One *HEART* can know what's true  
One *LIFE* can make a difference, You see, it is up to *YOU!*

- Author Unknown [Forwarded by Jasmine Patel]

# the three great zarathushtrian prayers

By Pallan R. Ichaporia



Children of Dinyari School, Yazd, reciting the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer. [PHOTO BY KHOJESTE MISTREE, COURTESY "A ZOROASTRIAN TAPESTRY, ART, RELIGION & CULTURE" BY PHEROZA J. GODREJ & FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE].

*Yatha Ahu Vairyo* (Avesta: *Ahuna Vairya*, Pahlavi: *Ahunavar*), *Ashem Vohu* (also called *Asha Vahishta*), and *A Airyaman Ishiyo* are the three mighty prayers in the religion of Zarathushtra.

The most holy Zarathushtrian prayers are the triad which precedes the Gathas: the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, the *Ashem Vohu*, and the *Yenghe Hatam*; and the *A Airyaman Ishiyo*, which concludes the Gathas. The first three are better characterized as *manthras* (Middle Persian *nirang*, cf. Sanskrit *mantra*), that is, powerful meditational texts and truth-spells. There is no reason for questioning Zarathushtra's authorship of them. [Humbach-Ichaporia, "Heritage of Zarathushtra, a New Translation of His Gathas", 1994, p. 14].

The great potency of *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* is derived from its character as a primordial utterance of Ahura Mazda [Ys. 19.3, 4.8] who created it

after the spiritual beings, but before all the material things, and so it has the profound power to aid the living souls and distress the demons.

The language of *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* is purely Gathic, i.e., Old Avestan. The linguistic analysis and the structures of these two prayers show that they were composed by Zarathushtra.

*Ahuna Vairya*, the most sacred Gathic prayer was chanted for the first time in the material world by Zarathushtra himself [Ys. 9.14], and serves as the most powerful basic prayer for the Zoroastrians. [Humbach and Ichaporia, forthcoming "Concordance of the Gathas"].

*Yatha Ahu Vairyo* and *Ashem Vohu* are mentioned in the complaint of the Evil Spirit (Av. *Angra Mainyu*, Phl. *Ahriman*) in *Ashi Yasht* [Yt.17, 20] as follows:

*jainti mam ahuna vairya avavata  
snaithisha yatha asma ... asha  
vahista ... ayo xshustem*

He (i.e. Zarathushtra) defeats me and smites me with *Ahuna Vairya*, a weapon as heavy as a stone, and as big as a house, and he burns me like a molten metal with *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*).

The Avestan commentary on the above three holy prayers are found in the Yasna Chapters 19 to 21 which together are known as the *Baghan Yasht* (section of the holy texts).

## Yatha Ahu Vairyo

*Baghan Yasht* says that *Ahuna Vairya* was proclaimed by Ahura Mazda himself to Zarathushtra.

*Ahuna Vairya* is singled out as the “most victorious” [*Yasht* 11.3], and the “most healing” [*Vendidad* 11.3, *Ys.* 8.1, 7.7]. *Vendidad* 11.3 stipulates five recitations saying that “the *Ahuna Vairya* protects the body”.

Four Avestan *nasks* had chapters expounding the *Ahunavar* [see *Denkard*, 8.44, 9.1.1, 24.1].

Its supremacy among all the prayers is evident in the Pahlavi literature cited below:

*Dinkerd* [4.38-45, 8.43.81, 9.1.4]:

It protects life and property  
and smites demons

*Bundahishn* [ed. *Anklesaria*, p. 12, 13-14 ]:

Its great power comes from its primordial character as Ohrmazd fashioned it from “boundless light”, the “fire form” which was the source for all creatures. The first manifestation from the “fire form” was *Ahunavar*, the spirit of the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, “out of whom is the manifestation of creation and ultimate end of creatures. By reciting it, Ohrmazd revealed His own ultimate triumph to Ahriman (the evil spirit), which then fell, back in stupor and confounded for 3000 years [Bd.1.29-30]. *Ahunavar* is identified with Den “Religion”.

*Dinkerd* [8.45.1]:

Since *Ahunavar* is primordial, it is the summation and the epitome of the religion, ‘the seed of seeds of the reckoning of the religion’.

*Dinkerd* [8. intro., 6.17-18, 9.1-4] and *Zatspram* [28.1-3]:

Each of the 21 words of *Ahunavar* was used to name one *nask* of the Avesta whose total contents the *Ahunavar* prayer thus symbolize.

*Pursishniha*, Question 26 [K.M. *Jamaspasa* and H. *Humbach*, “*Pursishniha*”, *Wiesbaden*, p. 42-43]:

What manifestation of *Ahuna Vairya* do you have? and How is it when it becomes clear that Religion (is) resident in one’s body?

In accord with its great importance, *Ahunavar* is recited in numerous rituals including the *yasna*, *barsom* and *afriangan* ceremonies. It is recited with actions while tying the kushti, entering a house, and several other personal works [see *Dinkerd* 9.11 5-7]. It has to be recited after paring nails [*Saddar Nasr*, par. 14], pouring a drink, sneezing or coughing [*Sayast ne sayast* 10.7, 12.32]. It is very offensive to mumble this great *Ahunavar* prayer [*ibid.* 10.25b]. It must be recited properly so that a person next to one can hear it, or one’s own ears can hear it. [cf. *Herbedestan*].

The power of *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* is awesome and it is the great gift of Ahura Mazda revealed to Zarathushtra who has given it to us for our happiness in both the worlds – that of the material and the spiritual.

**Translations of the *Ahunavar*.**  
Translation in French by J. Kellens-E. Pirart [1988]:

*Harmonieux comme un digne de choix par l'existence le modele des actes de l'existence de la divine Pensee et leur emprise sont attribues au Maitre Mazda dont fera un patre pour les necessiteux.*

English translation of the French, by Pallan Ichaporria:

Harmony is one worthy/dignified choice for (one’s) existence, being the model for existence with divine thought. These attributes are assigned to the master/teacher Mazda who is for him, the needy.

Translation by Insler [1975]:

Just as the Lord in accord with truth must be chosen, so also the judgment in accord with truth. In consequences of (this) good thinking, institute ye the rule of actions stemming from an existence of good thinking for the (sake of the) Wise One and for the lord whom they established as pastor for the needy-dependents.

Translation by Humbach and Ichaporria [1994]:

Since He is the One to be chosen by the world, therefore the judgment emanating from truth itself, is to be

passed on the deeds of good thought, as well as power is committed to Mazda Ahura whom people assign as a shepherd/guide to the poor.

## Ashem Vohu

*Ashem Vohu* is generally considered not only as a great prayer, but it is also a meditational blueprint. This can be seen from the following two sentences:

*Ashem vohu vahistem asti,  
ushta asti ushta ahmai hyat ashai  
vahistai ashem.*

The verb of both sentences is *asti* = ‘it is’, which means that it does not express wishes (‘may it be’), but statements (‘it is’), thereby explaining that the *Ashem Vohu* is for meditation.

*Ashem Vohu* was composed by the prophet Zarathushtra and like his Gathas, it is a song full of high poetic technique. We can examine this by analyzing the text.

All the words except two, *ahmai* and *hyat* either occur twice or thrice (*ashem-ashai-ashem*, *vohu-vahishmem*, *asti-asti*, *ushta-ushta*) and these few words combine with each other to produce stunning syntactical variation (*ashem vohu vahistem - ashai vahistai ashem*).

*Ashem Vohu* owes its efficacy to the great elaborate arrangement and artistic repetitions of its four highly blessed words

- (1) *ashem*
- (2) *vohu/vahistem*
- (3) *asti*, and
- (4) *ushta*.

This fact invites Zoroastrians not to be content with simply reciting the *Ashem Vohu* but also contemplating and meditating on it. Zarathushtra far from declaring one single interpretation to be the only correct one, wanted his followers to ponder on the multitude of possible interpretations of *Ashem Vohu* (as is also the case with his Gathas), each of which might form the starting point of a chain of meditation on numerous

relations between the notions of 'truth – good/best—it is – at wish/wished for'.

This is the precise reason why Prof. Dr. Helmut Humbach and I have given two translations in our "The Heritage of Zarathushtra, A New Translations of His Gathas" and our "Zamyad Yasht – Yasht 19 of Young Avesta. Text, Translation and Commentary" [1998-Harrassowitz, Germany] and also in "Translation of Difficult Chapters of Vendidad – Text, Translation and Commentary" [forthcoming, Germany-Heidelberg University]. It is further explained in detail in the forthcoming "Concordance of the Gathas" where we have given three possible translations.

In "The Heritage of Zarathushtra – a New Translation of His Gathas", we have translated *Ashem Vohu* twice.

Truth is best (of all that is) good  
As desired, what is being desired  
is truth for Him/him who (represents)  
best truth.

or:

Truth is best (of all that is) good  
As desired, as desired, truth  
is for Him/him who (represents)  
best truth.

The *Ashem Vohu* consists of three lines of four words each. Note the repetitions "truth ... truth ... truth", "good ... best ... best", "desired ... desired". The first of two *ushtas* undoubtedly means 'as desired' but the second is ambiguous, as it can mean 'as desired' as well as 'what is being desired' [cf. *Ys. 43.1*]. Thus at least two different renderings of *Ashem Vohu* are possible. Zarathushtra may even have intended the ambiguities (as noted above) to provide a basis for his followers to meditate on the message of this stanza.

**The Pahlavi and Sanskrit versions of Ashem Vohu.** Both Pahlavi and Sanskrit versions have neglected grammatical rules:

(1) *Ashem vohu vahistem asti*

Pahlavi version:

*Ahlayih-i-abadi-i pahlom ast*

Sanskrit version (of Nairoasangh Dhaval):

*Punam samrddhih utkrshatara (atyyuttama)*

Righteousness is a perfect boon

(2) *Ushta asti ushta ahmai*

Pahlavi version:

*Newak ast (ahlayih) new.ak oy*

Sanskrit version:

*Shobhanam asti (..punyam...) shobhanam asau*

Righteousness is virtue. Happy is he (who...)

(3) *Hyat ashai vahistai ashem*

Pahlavi version:

*Ke ahlayenidar an-i-pahlom ahlayih*

Sanskrit version:

*Vah punyapracharayita atah parah punyah*

He who is the sanctifier of the best Righteousness

It seems that the Pahlavi translator had a less clear idea of the *Ashem Vohu*, having translated *ahmai* ('to him') by *oy* ('he') and had to insert the word 'sanctifier' for the final *ashem* (which in Pahlavi is *ahlayih* or 'truth'). But one must take into account that Pahlavi writers sometimes had to face the problem of word order. They did their best and at many places they are excellent, and we are grateful to them.

**Ushta and ushtatat.** The meaning of the word Av. *ushta* is ambiguous. *Ushta* can be both locative singular of the substantive *ushii* 'wish, desire', used adverbially in the sense of 'at one's wish or will' i.e. 'as desired by someone', and in nominative plural noun of the past participle *ushta* 'what is wished for, desired things'.

Thus the benediction *Ushta te* [*Ys. 9.25*] can mean both '(may it be) be as thou desirest' and '(may it be) to thee what is wished for' i.e., 'may happiness be to thee' or 'hail to thee'.

The word Av. *ushtatat* does not only mean 'the state of being at one's wish or will' i.e., 'the state of happiness', but it is also used to denote three

Avesta passages which are characterized by a repetition of *ushta*. One of them is in *Yasht 8.29* where the star *Tishtrya* utters:

*Ushtatat ... ushtatatem nimraomno...*

Ushta to me, O Ahura Mazda, Ushta O waters, and plants, Ushta, O Mazdayasna religion, Ushta shall be, O countries.

The other two passages called *ushtatat* (prayers) are the first stanza of the *Ushtavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 43.1*] and the second stanza of the *Ashem Vohu* [*Ys. 27.13*].

**The twelve elements of the Ashem Vohu are:**

- (1) *ashem*: 'truth, righteousness' (nominative).
- (2) *vohu*: 'good' (adj. or subst.).
- (3) *vahistem*: 'best' (adj) or 'supreme good' (subst).
- (4) *asti*: 'is'.
- (5) *ushta*: 'at wish, as desired'.
- (6) *asti*: 'is'.
- (7) *ushta*: 'at wish, as desired' (loc. sing) or 'What is wished for, desired things, happiness' (nom. pl. n).
- (8) *ahmai*: 'to him/it'.
- (9) *hyat*: 'which is' (*izafat*).
- (10) *ashai*: 'truth, righteousness' (dative)
- (11) *vahistai*: 'best' (dative).
- (12) *ashem*: 'truth, righteousness' (nom.)

**The Oldest Text of Ashem Vohu.** In 1976, Ilya Gershevitch discovered in the British Library, a real Avesta text of *Ashem Vohu* in old Sogdian character that may be of the 6th century BCE. I will give the Sogdian text first and then the Avestan text.

Sogdian (transcription):

*[rt]m wxst myst'y  
wst'y wst'y 'stw xm'y  
twrt'y 'xwst'y rtm*

Sogdian (transliteration):

*rtam vahu vahishtam asti  
ushta asti ushta ahmai  
hiat rtai vahistai rtam*

Avesta:

*ashem vohu vahisstem asti  
ushta asti ushta ahmai  
hiiat ashai vahistai ashem*

The prayer of *Ashem Vohu* in the Old Sogdian is the oldest one known, and in my opinion the Sogdian text may be called the Sogdian Avesta, as collaborated from the further Sogdian Avestan phrases discovered (given below) where the name of Zarathushtra is found.

Sogdian Avesta (transcription):

*xwpxw 'ddbg*

Sogdian Avesta (transliteration):

*xwaou adbag*

The artificer ultimate god

Avesta:

*Ahura Mazdao havapo [Yasht 5.85]*

The artificer Ahura Mazda

Sogdian Avesta (transcription):

*'xw 'sptk 'rt'w zrwsc*

The faultless truthful Spitama  
Zarathushtra

Sogdian Avesta (transliteration):

*axu espatē artaw Zrusc*

The faultless truthful Spitama  
Zarathushtra

Avesta:

*Ashava Zarathushthro Spitamo*

The truthful Zarathushtra Spitama

There is no doubt that local versions of Avesta texts were spread throughout Iran. (As we have Persian and Gujarati versions among present Zoroastrians). The Avestan texts were adopted by other Iranian populations (like Bactrians, Parthians, Medians and Achaemenids). Achaemenids gave the commentary and exegesis of Avesta in some of their Old Persian language inscriptions which were more or less political and secular.

The language of the Achaemenid (Old Persian) is very similar to Young Avesta, and some of their inscriptions resound the Gathic and Young Avestan sayings (discussed elsewhere) and the Avestan and Gathic languages possibly remained in their religious texts and possibly

also in their libraries. The Gathic Avestan language did not change to Old Persian but co-existed with it (Old Persian is one of the two Old Iranian languages; the other is the Gathic Avesta) but this is beyond the scope of this article.

**The Baghan Yasht and the Ashem Vohu.** The second chapter of the lost *Baghan Yasht* survives in Yasna 20. It is where the *Ashem Vohu* is interpreted for the first time. Thus there can be no doubt about the correct transmission of the text through the ages. The interpretation of the *Ashem Vohu* from the *Baghan Yasht [Ys. 20]* is given below:

Yasna 20.1:

Ahura Mazda proclaimed '*ashem vohu vahisstem asti*' – 'Truth is best (of all that is) good'. (By this) He announces that best good is linked to one in the same way as family members are linked to a family. (Ahura Mazda says:) 'It is the best good'. Thus He declares His religious law.

Yasna 20.2:

*'ushta asti ushta ahmai'* – 'As desired what is being desired'. (By this) He (Ahura Mazda) declares that every truthful is in the '*Ushta-ness*'; (i.e. in state of happiness) as are all truthful, in the same way as He declares that every truthful is in the '*Asti-ness*' (i.e. truthful living in happiness), as are all truthful.

Yasna 20.3:

*'yat ashai vahistai ashem'* – 'In truth for Him who (represents) best truth'. (By this) He (Ahura Mazda) declares that this (i.e., *Ashem Vohu*) embraces a manthra to which all the atash bahram are embraced, in the same way He has declared all the power assigned to truth, and in the same way he has declared truth to the calling of the righteous one, and in the same way he declared truth to you, the *Saoshyants*. These are the three religious laws (of Ahura Mazda). Each (single) word gives (His) proclamation, the complete word of Ahura Mazda.

The Avestan interpretation of the *Ashem Vohu* is extremely profound, and very exhilarating. Please contemplate on this deep understanding



of the *Ashen Vohu* as given by our great forefathers.

## A Airema Ishiyo

A *Airema Ishiyo* [Ys. 54.1] is one of the four powerful prayers of Zoroastrians. It is a Gathic Avestan prayer:

*A airyema ishyo refedhrai jantu  
nerebyascha nairibyascha  
Zarathushtrahe  
vangheush refedhrai manangho  
ya daena vairim hanat mizdem  
ashaya yasa ashim  
yan ishaya ahuro masata mazdao*

Let the vigorous tribe (of Vishtaspa) come to the support of men and women of Zarathushtra, (and) to the support of good thought, (following) the religious view that will deserve a prize worthy of being chosen. I ask for the invigorating reward of truth, which Mazda Ahura has devised.

[*The Heritage of Zarathushtra*, 1994, pp. 106-107, Heidelberg].

In the early struggle of Zarathushtra and his followers against the Turanian foes, A *Airema Ishiyo* possibly was intended as a prayer to call for a hypostasis of the might of the tribe (*airyaman*) of Kavi Vistaspa to safeguard the nascent Zoroastrian community. After the success of Zarathushtra with the rapid spread of the Mazdayasna *daena vanghu* religion among the Iranians, the prayer came to be used as a powerful manthra for invoking *Airyaman*, the *yazata* of healing.

Since physical ills and evil have a common source (*Angra Mainyu* /*Ahriman*), the prayer of A *Airema*

*Ishiyo* removes the source, being the highest form of medical art that is healing by incantation [See *Ardibehest Yasht* 3]. The *Airyaman* prayer thus acquired a special status in the religion. According to *Vendi-*

“ The A *Airema Ishiyo* prayer came to be used as a powerful manthra for invoking *Airyaman*, the *yazata* of healing. ”

*dad* [20.12] it is a spiritual weapon against “all sickness and death, all evil sorcerers and all evil persons belonging to *druj* (lie)”.

According to *Yasna* 54.2 this prayer is “mighty, victorious, counteracts hostility and is the greatest utterance of *Asha* (truth).”

The Avestan Fragment 4 surviving from the *fragard* 23 of the lost *Varshmansar Nask* [cf. *Dinkerd (Sanjana) Book* 9, 45.1] attributes the use of *Airyaman* prayer to several of the last *Saoshyants* (saviors) who will declare that by means of *Airyaman* prayer at the end of time Ahura Mazda will be the sole Master, and *Angra Mainyu* being deprived of its power will be annihilated. The *fragard* 23 in the lost *Varshmansar Nask* was titled as *Erman* (i.e., *Airyaman*). Furthermore *Erman fragard* is also

found in the other two lost *Sudgar* and *Baghan Nasks* which were similarly eschatological. *Baghan Nask* dealt more precisely with the prayer itself relating to the conclusion of the *Vahistoishti Gatha* [Ys. 53] [see *Dinkerd book* 9.45].

Manuschir Yuvan-Jam in his Epistle [91,7,10] on the discussion of the *Barsom* ceremony notes its importance by quoting a question of “Zardosht to Ohrmazd”:

How shall I purify as long as ‘*airyeme*’ (i.e., *Airyaman* prayer) is not recited?

The exorcising power of the prayer has endured as well its potency of restoring health and removing illness. The *A Airema Ishiyo* prayer continues to be recited by lay Zoroastrians. Their priests recite it during the great Persian offering of the *Yasna* (ceremony). Recognizing its potency of granting health both spiritually and physically it is recited as the matrimonial blessing in the *ashirvad* ceremony for the marrying couple. ■

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# kemna mazda

## a most frequently recited prayer

By Pallan R. Ichaporia

The blessed *Kemna Mazda* prayer, recited while tying the *kushti*, is one of the prayers for performing the ritual of *kushti-bastan*.

**K***emna Mazda* is the prayer of pleading for Ahura Mazda's defense against all evils with our wish that all the doors be shut down against wickedness, so they may not harm truth as we find it in the material existence (*astavat asha*) and our possessions.

The first paragraph of *Kemna Mazda* is from the *Ush-tavaiti Gatha [Ys. 47.7]*. The deep philosophy of this paragraph is found in several 'haitis' (sections) of the Gathas (which we will see later). This makes us ponder on the awesome insight of Adurbad Marespand in reconstructing the lost original kushti prayers. The most astounding nature of this first paragraph is that it is in itself a compact summary of several Gathic thoughts.

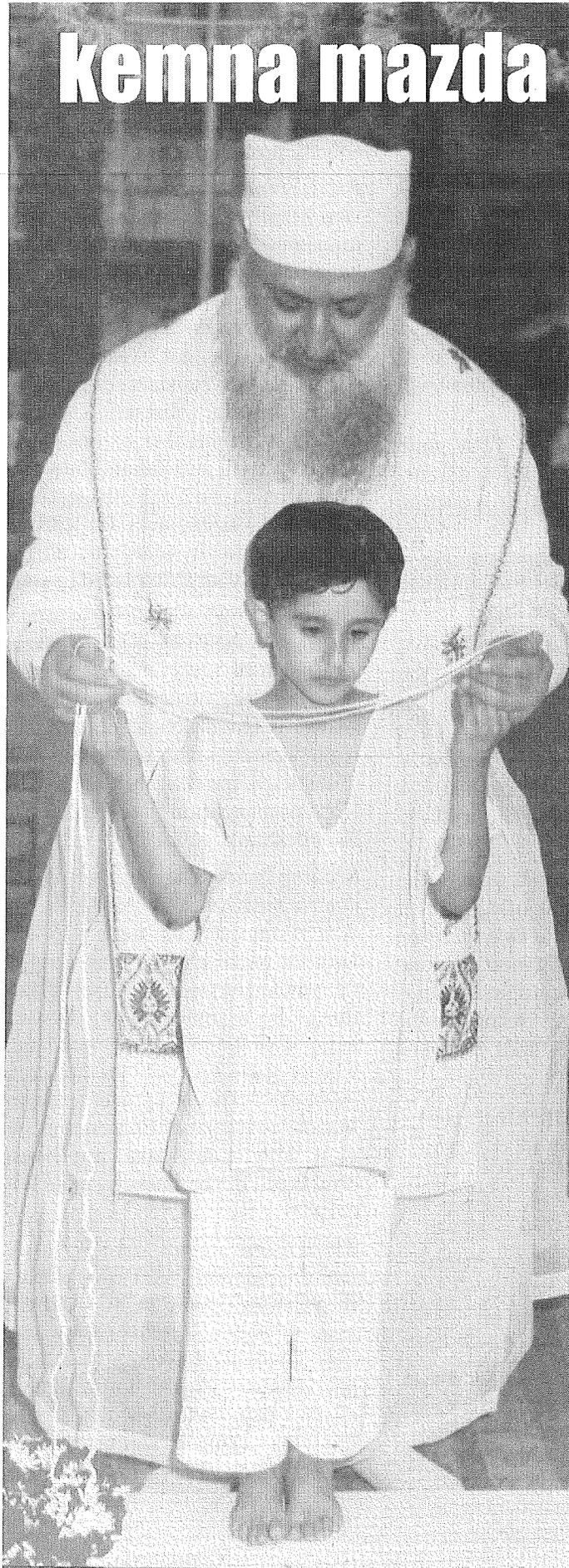
*Kemna Mazda* is also included in the *Sarosh Baj*, which is prayed before performing every Zoroastrian ritual, consequently *Kemna Mazda* is prayed two times, first when tying the kushti and then in the *Sarosh Baj*.

It is the most potent *manthra* next to *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*. *Vendidad* 8.19 bears witness to its effectiveness.

*Vendidad* 8.20 begins with *Kemna Mazda mavaite payum dadaat* and ends with *Mazda ahmai yahmai vashi kahamaichit* while the next paragraph [8.21] begins with *Patano tbishyantat pairi mazdaoscha* and ends with *mamerenchainish gaethao astvaitish ashe*.

Furthermore *Vendidad* 8.19 says *varethaghnish vacho framru* = 'by pronouncing (these) victorious utterances/prayers' together with *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, the evil in

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your path will be removed and your path will be purified [*yaozdayan, Vd. 8.22*].

## Text and translation

We will examine each paragraph of *Kemna Mazda* one at a time.

### The first paragraph is:

*kemna mazda mawaite  
payum dadao  
hyat ma dregwao  
didareshata aenanghe  
anyem thwahmat  
athrascha mananghascha  
yayao shyaothanaish  
ashem thraoshta Ahura-  
tam moi dastwam  
daenayai frawaocha*

O Mazda whom do you appoint as a guardian for one such as me, when evil/evil person tries to seize and injure me? Who other than Your fire and Your thought, by whose action (i.e. God's fire and thought acting together) truth is promoted. O Ahura, proclaim this for (me to understand) my religion.

**Commentary.** The first paragraph is from *Ushtavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 46.7*]. The literal translation is slightly modified for better understanding.

(1) The meaning of the first line *Kemna Mazda* is 'O Mazda whom do you appoint as a guardian'. This thought is also found in the *Spentamainyu Gatha* [*Ys. 50.1*]: *ke moi ... ke me na thrata visto* = 'Who has been found as my protector and who is my protector (other than You)?' Zarathushtra has repeated this question. Of course the answer is: God's fire and thought acting together.

(2) *hyat ma dregwao didareshata aenanghe* = 'when evil/evil person tries to seize and injure me'. This is reinforced in the *Ushtavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 46.8*]: *ye va moi yao gaethao dazde aenanghe* = 'if some one (evil) should plan to destroy my possessions'.

(3) *anyem thwahmat athrascha mananghascha* = 'Who other than Your fire and Your thought.' This is echoed in *Spentamainyu Gatha* [*Ys. 50.1*]: *thrata ... anyo ashat thwatcha*

= '(who is the) protector other than truth and You (God)', and in *Ahnavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 31.3*] *mainyu athrascha* = 'by (Your) spirit and (Your) fire'.

In the *Fravardin Yasht* 77-78 such a profound saying is reinforced: *yat titarat anghro mainyush dahim ashahe vangheush, antare pairi acvaitem, vohucha mano atarascha* = 'when the evil spirit attacked the good order (*ashahe vangheush*), in between (the evil spirit and good order) came (Your) good thought and (Your) fire'.

(4) *ashem thraoshta* = '(by good thought) truth is promoted/nourished'. Identical thinking is seen in *Ahnavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 34.3*] *gaethao ... yao vohu manangha* = 'the possessions must be nourished with good thought'.

(5) *moi ... daenayai frawaocha* = 'proclaim for (me to understand) my religion'. The same thought is apparent again in *Spentamainyu Gatha* [*Ys. 50.1*]: *kat moi urva ... anyo ashat thwatcha Mazda Ahura* = 'proclaim for my soul the truth, O You, Mazda Ahura'.

**Conclusion.** As noted above, the selection of the first paragraph of *Kemna Mazda* for the *kushti bastan* ritual was done with utmost care and shows the profound insight of Adurbad Marespand as we recognize the thoughts of *Kemna Mazda* are found all over in the Gathas.

### The second paragraph is:

*ke verethrem-ja thawa  
poi sengha yoi henti  
chithra moi dam  
ahum bish ratum chizdi  
at hoi vohu seraosho  
jantu manangha  
mazda ahmai yahmai  
vashi kahamichit*

Who is the resistance-breaker able to protect those who exist by Your proclamation/teaching? As a judgment, assign bright things to be in my house, O Healer of Existence. Let obedience (hearkening) come to him through good thought to whomever You wish, O Mazda.

**Commentary.** This paragraph is from *Ushtavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 44.16*]. In Ha 44, Zarathushtra asks rhetorical questions to Ahura Mazda. Compared to the first paragraph, the second has an equally profound religious maxim.

**First Line:** The key word is *verethrem-ja*, a compound noun translated as 'resistance-breaker' which also means a 'conqueror', or 'victorious'. This is also an epithet of *Yazata Verethrajan* (Behram) as seen in the Younger Avesta. In this paragraph the 'resistance breaker' is Ahura Mazda, Himself. Ahura Mazda is the breaker of resistance put up by evil, and Zarathushtra proclaims that if you live by the teaching of Ahura Mazda, then He will be your protector by smashing all the obstacles in your path placed by evil.

This deep, discerning thought totally agrees with the first paragraph where Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda, "Who will be our guardian?" The answer is obvious that Ahura Mazda is our guardian who will remove all obstacles in our life when we live by His proclamations (revealed to Zarathushtra).

**Second Line:** The key words are *chithra moi dam*, and *ahum bish, moi dam* is translated as 'my house' and with the word *chithra* preceding it, the whole sentence becomes 'bright things be assigned to my house', being a judgment of Ahura Mazda who is *ahum bish* = 'the healer of existence'. This is a prayer to Ahura Mazda "O Healer of Existence as per your judgment, make my house bright (full of happiness by smashing evil)".

**Third Line:** *at hoi vohu seraosho jantu manangha* = 'Let obedience (hearkening) come to him through good thought'. Zarathushtra wishes that obedience to Ahura Mazda, or hearkening of His teachings, come to every man through his good thoughts. This is similar to *Ushtavaiti Gatha* [*Ys. 43.12*]: 'Let obedience (hearkening to Ahura Mazda) come to me'.

[Continued on page 42]

# our farazyat prayers

By Ervad Jal N. Birdy

The word *farazyat* means an obligatory task, a duty. In respect to prayers it signifies those prayers that are considered the minimum obligatory to be recited on a daily basis.

## Introduction

I was once told about a Parsi lady who went to the agiary on her birthday and was presumed abducted because she did not return home at the appointed time. "One prayer led to another and I just felt like reciting all the prayers I could; Oh! I feel so good," she explained with glee.

Obviously, this lady was receiving a great deal of spiritual pleasure from reciting words she did not understand, but came away feeling good about herself anyway. This is what prayer does to those who yearn to spare some time trying to attune themselves with their maker and desire to show appreciation for His bounty. This brief article is not for skeptics who dismiss prayers as something insignificant and unnecessary. It is written for those who do consider prayers to be beneficial in some mysterious way, both to themselves and to their surroundings. Due to shortage of space and to make it easily understood by a majority of readers, only the salient points and explanations are given here.

The word '*farazyat*' means an obligatory task, a duty. In respect to prayers it signifies those prayers that are considered the minimum obligatory to be recited on a daily



*Woman praying at Wadiaji Atash Bahram, Bombay 1982. [PHOTO COURTESY "ZOROASTRIANS OF INDIA – PARSIS: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY" BY SOONI TARAPOREVALA. THE IMAGE HAS BEEN CROPPED FROM THE ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH]*



reciting the mantras as well as helping to move the whole creation closer towards rejuvenation and becoming one with Ahura Mazda, a process known as *frashokereti*.

### **Ameshaspands and Yazads**

Before going further, a few words about *ameshaspands* and *yazads* may be beneficial. Our farazyat prayers involve praise and attunement with Ahura Mazda, ameshaspands and yazads. Ahura Mazda is the supreme architect of this whole creation and is assisted by the seven ameshaspands, which are really His own attributes sometimes visualized by beams of light emanating from Him. The heptad of ameshaspands is a holistic concept where each ameshaspand, not only has a principal role to play through his own attributes in bringing about *frashokereti*, but also possesses the attributes of all the other six entities.

For instance, Ardibehesht Ameshaspand is entrusted with inculcating righteousness but also has the wisdom of Bahman Ameshaspand and the humility of Spenta Armaiti, etc., embodied in his makeup. Ahura Mazda Himself is of course one of the seven ameshaspands, possessing the particular attributes of the other six.

The ameshaspands are assisted by co-workers, or *yazads*, which again can be visualized as beams of light emanating from the ameshaspands. There are thirty-three yazads in all including the seven ameshaspands. This holistic entity is charged with the goal of bringing about *frashokereti*. They reside at various stations in the universe and have distinct roles to play in both the spiritual and the physical worlds. Above all, they display an implicit oneness in achieving their common goal.

It is hoped that the above explanation will clear any misconceptions about the role of the ameshaspands and yazads being separate and different gods from Ahura Mazda, which is really not the case.

### **The Padyab Kushti - attaining a clean physical and mental state**

The *Padyab Kushti* prepares one to attain a clean physical and mental state and makes one ready for the process of attunement with Ahura Mazda through farazyat prayer. The Padyab Kushti prayers (and the Zarathushti navjote ceremony) are covered in depth in the special issue of FEZANA Journal on Zarathushti Navjote and Sedreh Pushi ceremonies [*"The Kushti Prayers"*, by *Ervad Kersey H. Antia*, FEZANA Journal, Winter 1997].

### **Sarosh Baj - attuning with guide and protector, Sarosh Yazad (Sraosha)**

The recitation of *Sarosh* (or *Srosh*) *Baj* attunes one with *Sarosh Yazad* (*Sraosha*) who is our guide and protector, both on this earth and on our journey to the *Chinvat Pul* when our life on earth has ended. *Sarosh Baj* is described elsewhere in this issue [see page 52].

### **Din-no Karmo - affirmation of faith**

The commonly recited *Din-no-Karmo* is a short affirmation of faith, which is part of the Parsi-Zarathushti navjote ceremony. It is composed of both Avesta and Farsi passages and begins with the Avesta passage from *Din Yasht*, "*Rajistiyao, Chistiyao ... Mazdayasnoish*," or 'we praise the Divine knowledge contained in the Mazdayasni religion of Ahura Mazda'.

It concludes with the Farsi passage, "*Din beh raast ... Dadeh Zarthosht*," or "this noble faith was created by Ahura Mazda and given to Asho Zarathushtra to bring to the people of this world. We recognize this as the religion of Ahura Mazda, the religion of Zarathushtra."

### **The gahs - evolution of the soul**

According to our religion, a day is divided into five time zones or 'gah': *Havan Gah* runs from 36 minutes before sunrise to midday, *Rapithwan Gah* from midday to 3.00 p.m.,

*Uzirehn Gah* from 3.00 p.m. to 36 minutes after sunset, *Aiwisuthrem Gah* from the end of *Uzirehn Gah* to midnight and *Ushahin Gah* from midnight to the next *Havan Gah*. An exception to the above is during the short winter days when the *Rapithwan Gah* is omitted and the *Havan Gah* continues till 3.00 p.m.

The five *gah* are often believed to depict the evolution of the soul as it journeys down from the heavens and once purified, journeys back upward, to be merged with its maker.

● *The Havan Gah* signifies the journey of the soul from the upper heavens down to earth to undergo purification; this is like the dawn of the soul's progress, when *Meher Yazad* (signifying the rays of the morning sun) presides over the *gah*.

● Next, during *Rapithwan Gah*, come the trials and tribulations as the soul undergoes the heat of the afternoon sun in order to achieve purification. Very appropriately, *Ardibehesht Ameshaspand* (divine fire energy) presides over this period.

● Having had some of its evil dissolved during the afternoon heat, the soul is ready for spiritual progress during the *Uzirehn Gah*. This progress is symbolized in the *Gah* prayer by the progression of souls of the *magavs*, or saints of the highest spiritual order. *Avan Yazad* in the form of "*Nafedro apam apascha Mazdadhatiyo*", or "the purifying waters of Mazda", holds sway over this *gah*.

● Having achieved perfection during the *Uzirehn Gah*, the soul is now ready to coach other souls in their progress. This task is somewhat similar to the role Asho Zarathushtra and spiritually evolved saviors play in helping other souls towards *frashokereti*. This occurs in the *Aiwisuthrem Gah* and *Farrokh Fravardin*, the entity entrusted with divine souls holds sway over this period.

● Finally, having achieved purification, the soul is ready to merge into the divine abode of Ahura Mazda (*Bereziai Namanyaicha*) mentioned in

the *Ushahin Gah*. *Sarosh Yazad*, the guide and protector of the soul during purification, accompanies it to Ahura Mazda's abode once it is perfected.

**The hamkars.** During each of these time periods, a pair of yazad-like entities (called the 'hamkars' or co-workers for the particular gah) operate on earth, with which one attunes during the prayer. For instance, *Savangh* and *Vis* in *Havan Gah*, *Fradat Fshue* and *Jantu* in *Rapithwan*, *Bereza* and *Nafedhro Apam* in *Uzirehn*, *Fradat Vispam* and *Huziait* in *Aiwisuthrem* and *Bereza* and *Nmaanay* in *Ushahin*.

These hamkars perform beneficial functions for the furtherance of creation during each of their respective time periods and assist in transporting the effect of your prayers to their destination, Ahura Mazda. It is therefore important to recite the correct gah for any given time and place.

#### **Significant passages from the Gah.**

● Each gah prayer begins with the customary *salutation to Ahura Mazda* – *Kshnaoithra Ahurahe Mazdao* – followed by three *Ashem Vohus*. Whenever three *Ashems* are recited, the need to adhere to good thoughts, words and deeds should be passed through the mind. In addition, it is useful to remember the three stages of the evolution of our soul, viz., we were once with Ahura Mazda, we are now separated for the purpose of purifying our soul and once perfected we will finally merge into Ahura Mazda once again.

● The three *Ashems* are followed by what is called the *Fravarane* formula, which is contained in almost all of our prayers. It is a declaration that the person reciting is a born Mazdayasni and a true follower of the Zarathushtrian religion, which shows the path of turning evil into good.

● This declaration is followed by the *announcement of the current gah* or time period so that we are switched on to the right wavelength for the rest of the prayers.

● The gah then continues with the *proclamation of the hamkar and*

*yazad* having sway for the particular time period and expresses our desire to attune with those particular entities. Whenever the word '*Yazamaide*' occurs at the end of a sentence, it signals attunement. In the *Havan Gah* alone, which takes just about three minutes to recite, *Yazamaide* occurs over thirty times, signifying the many spiritual entities, which are invoked during that particular period.

● The third paragraph is also common to all gahs and *seeks attunement with Ahura Mazda, the ameshaspands, Asho Zarathushtra and His fravashi and the fravashis of several other yazads*. It is interesting to note that in this paragraph, the status of Asho Zarathushtra is placed higher than that of the ameshaspands and lends strength to the belief that His stature is that of a yazad rather than that of a mere mortal.

● The next few paragraphs sing the *praises of the particular hamkar and yazad* having sway over the gah.

● These are followed by the last paragraph beginning with "*Thwaam aatarem ...*", which is again common to all gahs and *sings praises of fire energy*, the basic element of all creation, while proclaiming the desire for the universe to attain *frashokereti* soon.

● Finally, each gah ends with *Yenghe Hatam*, a remembrance of the souls of the past worthies and a salutation to the appropriate yazad having sway over the gah, is repeated.

#### **Khorshed and Meher Nyaeshs - attuning with the yazads**

Khorshed and Meher are both yazads of Ahura Mazda in the spiritual world. They are manifested in the physical world as the sun and the rays of the sun respectively. Both are vital for the sustenance of life on earth. When Zarathushtrians recite the twin nyaeshs, they sing their praises and, more important, attune themselves with the two yazads seeking help for their souls to progress

towards the divine realm and ultimately to Ahura Mazda.

The two nyaeshs must be recited together, since the sun and its rays are inseparable. Also, they must be recited only during the daylight hours for obvious reasons and while facing the sun's location at the time of day, i.e., east during the *Havan Gah* and west during the *Rapithwan* and *Uzirehn Gahs*. Further, while it is beneficial for the sun's rays to fall on the body during their recitation, it is not absolutely essential.

#### **Passages common to both nyaeshs.**

The nyaeshs are composed mainly in Avesta with Pazand passages at the beginning and end and also a few lines from the Gathas. There are many passages, which are common to both nyaeshs.

● One peculiarity, however, of *Khorshed Nyaesh* is that in the *opening passage* between "Pa Nam-e-Yazdan" and "Ahura Mazda Khodai Avazuni", which normally occurs in all our prayers to yazads, a passage "*Setayam, Zabayam, ... Bizaval Bashad*" has been interpolated at a later time and contains certain Arabic words foreign to our scriptures. These words all praise Ahura Mazda in the same way as the Avesta does; only they are not in Avesta. This does not occur in the *Meher Nyaesh* and the historical situations under which only the *Khorshed Nyaesh* is affected in this way is not clear. Even so, Parsis have followed their tradition and recite the passage as handed down by their ancestors without further alteration.

● The opening passage is followed by the *repentance* beginning with "*Az hama gunah ...*", which is in Pazand, the language used by Dastur Adarbad Marespand. In this passage one repents for any non-righteous behavior committed knowingly or unknowingly and declares to henceforth tread only the path of righteousness in order to counteract the wrong behavior and bring about renovation to his or her soul.

● *The third and fifth* passages beginning with "*Nemasete Ahura-*

*mazd ...*” and “*Nemo Ahurai Mazdai ...*” respectively, express the desire to attune oneself with the Creator, the ameshaspands who work in harmony with *Khorshed Yazad*, with the soul of Asho Zarathushtra and with other perfected souls working at different stations of the universe for its renovation.

● **The fourth passage** beginning with “*Frastuye humatoee-byescha ...*” is almost like the repentance passage described above; only it is in Avesta. It is often referred to as the *Avesta Patet [Ys. 11-17]*.

● There now comes a line, which should be recited during the appropriate gah. The one for *Havan Gah* beginning with “*Vohu ukshya manangha ...*” comes from the Gathas [*Ys. 33-10*]. It depicts the start of the soul’s journey in the *Havan Gah* when one is asking Ahura Mazda for uplifting one’s consciousness, attaining necessary courage to tread the path of righteousness and bodily strength to carry out righteous deeds. The line for the *Rapithwan Gah*, beginning with “*Ima raochao ...*” comes from the *Haptan Yasht [Ys. 36-6]* and extols the virtues of *Khorshed Yazad*, signifying the heat through which the soul passes in its journey on earth, as explained in the gah section earlier.

Lastly, the particular line for *Uzirehn Gah*, beginning with “*Yehmi Spenta thwa ....*”, which comes from the Gathas [*Ys.43-6*] expresses the yearning to meet Ahura Mazda once the evil mixed with the soul has been dissolved through overcoming one’s trials and tribulations on this earth.

● **Passages six and seven**, beginning with “*Hvara-kshaetem Ameshem raem ...*” and “*Mithrem vispanam ...*”, sings the praises of *Khorshed* and *Meher Yazads* respectively.

There is a certain amount of allegory here, which is quite common in all our prayers. *Khorshed Yazad* is referred to as riding a swift stallion depicting the enormous speed with which light travels, while *Meher Yazad* is depicted as possessing a

thousand ears and ten thousand eyes. This does not mean that this *Yazad* is some kind of an ogre; it merely signifies that *Meher Yazad* has the power to hear and see everything and is the supreme judge before whom the soul acknowledges its adventures on judgment day.

● **Passages eight and nine**, beginning with “*Tishtrim star-em ...*” and “*Vispem ashaonem ...*”, praise other heavenly bodies in the universe besides *Khorshed Yazad*. Two such particularly bright stars, viz., *Tishtrim* (Sirius) and *Vanant* (Formalhaut), are mentioned by name, signifying the knowledge our religious writers must have possessed in millenniums past.

Besides the stars themselves, their fixed paths in the sky and the various time periods existing in the universe, viz., *zarvane akarne* (infinite time), *zarvane darego khadat* (time cycle of 81,000 years) and *thvashe khadhat* (human life time) are praised. Further, one’s own soul and *fravashi* (Divine influence attached to all living things) as well as the glorious *Mazdayasni* religion are praised.

#### Particular passages of interest in *Khorshed Nyaesh*.

● **Passage ten** is the well-known *Fravarane* formula described in the gahs, which announces *Khorshed* or *Meher Yazad* with whom one is seeking attunement.

● **Passage eleven**, beginning with “*Hvara-kshaetem Ameshem raem Ahura-taspem yazamaide ...*” is quite interesting as it refers to the beneficial effects of the sun. It states that because the sun shines on the earth, thousands upon thousands of divine emanations, gather together, get mixed together and shower their blessings upon the earth. Let us see what modern science has discovered recently.

In 1958, the van Allen electromagnetic belts were discovered by Explorer 1 satellite and confirmed by Gemini 11 later. We now know that these electromagnetic belts around the

earth trap or “gather” electrons, protons and particulate matter, which get “mixed” with hydrogen and nitrogen during thunderstorms and “shower” down on to the earth in the form of ammonia fertilizer as “blessings”.

**Paragraphs twelve and thirteen** of *Khorshed Nyaesh*, beginning with “*Aat yat hvare uzu-kshyeiti ...*” and “*Yedhi-zi Havare noit uzu-kshyeiti ...*”, are also interesting. These state that when the sun shines on the earth, it purifies the waters of the oceans, rivers, streams and lakes. If the sun did not shine, these waters will become polluted and no life could be sustained on earth and no other *yazad* would have the power to remedy this situation. It is interesting to note that the bactericidal effects of the ultraviolet and infrared components of the sun’s rays on bacteria and viruses were only discovered by science during the last two centuries.

Doesn’t it make you feel proud to know that what science is just discovering now was known to the compilers of our sacred Avesta prayers millenniums ago?

**Paragraphs fourteen and fifteen** of *Khorshed Nyaesh*, beginning with “*Yo Yazate hvare ...*” and “*Yazai mithrem ...*”, further praise the beneficial effects of *Khorshed* and *Meher Yazads*, who by cutting darkness, thwart the forces that thrive in darkness. They state that the one who sings the praise of these two *yazads* sings the praise of Ahura Mazda and the whole creation.

**The remaining paragraphs** of *Khorshed Nyaesh* further praise *Khorshed Yazad* in different ways. There are two points worthy of note in this section; one is the interpolated Pazand paragraph beginning with “*Ahura Mazda khodai avazunie mardum ...*”, which should be recited in ‘*baj*’ or without opening the lips. It is customary not to have Pazand manthras clash with Avesta manthras when the former is sandwiched between two Avesta passages, as is the case here.

● The other passage of note is the one beginning with “*Roj nek naam*

...". This is also in Pazand but since it occurs at the end of the prayer, it can be recited aloud. It announces the day, month and the gah in which the prayers are recited so that they can be recorded appropriately in the *Ganj-e-Dadar Ahuramazd* (Ahura Mazda's treasury); much like saving a file on your computer! It is believed that all prayers go to this divine treasury from where they are disbursed by Ahura Mazda as needed, to the person depositing the prayer, or to the whole creation.

**Particular Passages of Interest in Meher Nyaesh.** We saw earlier that Meher is one of the thirty-three yazads in the divine heavens. One of its tasks is to generate thought forces (*mithra*) of honesty, devotion and righteousness in all the other yazads so they act as a holistic entity for the purpose of attaining frashokereti. This is why Meher Yazad is also known as Mithra.

Meher Yazad is also sovereign over the non-physical world of the seven '*dakhyus*' (or stations enumerated later) where souls from earth initially reside. In the physical world (i.e., on earth), Meher Yazad's role is to help instill the same qualities of honesty, devotion and righteousness in all living things. We acquire these qualities of Meher Yazad through the sun's rays while reciting the *Khorshed-Meher Nyaeshs*.

● The opening *paragraphs ten and eleven*, beginning with "*Mithrahe vouru goyoitish ...*" and "*Mithrem vouru goyoitim yazamaide ...*" are known as the lesser and greater '*ksh-numans*' of Meher Yazad. The lesser kshnuman is a proclamation of Meher Yazad's qualities while the greater kshnuman ending in *yazamaide* proclaims the desire to attune oneself with Meher Yazad.

In addition to the thousand ears and ten thousand eyes mentioned earlier, Meher Yazad is also described allegorically as one who never sleeps but watches over everything tirelessly. The latter paragraph then names the seven *dakhyus* or stations that exist

in the non-physical world, i.e., *Aivi, Antare, Aa, Upairi, Adairi, Pairi* and *Aipi* over which Meher Yazad has sovereignty.

● **Paragraphs 13**, beginning with "*Ahe-rya kharenenga-cha ...*", expresses the hope that through Meher Yazad may there be a righteous civilization on earth.

● **Paragraph 14**, beginning with "*Aach-a-no zamyat avangahe ...*", explicitly calls on Meher Yazad to cultivate honesty, righteousness, devotion and ultimately happiness in one's self and in one's family.

● *Meher Nyaesh* concludes with the common paragraphs similar to those explained earlier for *Khorshed Nyaesh*.

### **Vispa Humata - on good thoughts, words and deeds**

This is a short prayer to be recited during the daylight hours immediately after reciting the *Khorshed-Meher Nyaeshs*.

Its message is equally short and simple: All good thoughts, good words and good deeds are a result of exercising the good mind, while all evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds are not. All good thoughts, good words and good deeds lead one to Ahura Mazda's highest heaven, while evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds lead one to pain and suffering.

### **Doa Nam Setayesh - thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda**

This three-minute prayer is one of thirty-six Pazand-language *setayeshs* (prayers of praise) composed by Dastur Adarbad Marespand. Thirty of the thirty-six *setayeshs* are devoted to the thirty days of the month, bearing their respective names. The *Doa Nam Setayesh* is considered one of the farazyat prayers and being in Pazand, is meant to be recited daily at the end of the Avesta prayers.

**Significant passages from Doa Namsetayesh.** As with all prayers, it is helpful if certain key thoughts are

passed through the mind either at the time of praying or just afterward.

### ● "*Ba Nam-e Yazade ...*"

This prayer is essentially a thanksgiving to Ahura Mazda for the bounty He has showered on mankind. It begins with copious adjectives for Him which include "a Being who exists now, who has always existed and who will always exist in the future, who is wise, full of love, keeper and protector, forgiving, creator and sustainer, of progressive mentality and who is all-powerful."

A contentious point is in relation to *Ahura Mazda being a forgiver of one's sins*. Our religion teaches that for every action, a reward or retribution is inevitable and a tally is kept for everyone somewhere in Ahura Mazda's account book. The forgiving nature of Ahura Mazda should be seen as affording man the facility to repent for his evil actions, to make a conscious attempt to turn away from them and to perform as many good deeds as possible to bring around the tally in his favor.

Another question often asked is that *if God is all-powerful, why is He not able to wave a wand on all the pain and suffering* that is present in the world and make it all go away instantly. The answer becomes apparent when one compares the situation to a child starting school and aspiring to become a surgeon. God in His infinite wisdom has deemed that unless the child goes through the trials and tribulations, successes and failures, it will never gain the proper experience necessary to become a good surgeon. Any divine interference will therefore be counterproductive to the child's progress towards its goal.

So also, a soul in its sojourn on earth, which has reached a certain stage in its progression toward salvation, has to undergo a prescribed course and strive hard to achieve its goal by itself. It has to experience both happiness and sadness. It can certainly seek the strength and courage for

overcoming its difficulties from Ahura Mazda, but it cannot become perfected if the pain and suffering is removed from its path. Such is the natural law the Creator has devised for the functioning of His universe.

● **“Sepaas O-e Burzorg ...”**

The prayer continues with praising and giving thanks to Ahura Mazda’s creations. These include the heavens, the ameshaspands, the yazads, the sun, the moon, the stars, other planets, the earth, the (fire) energy that sustains the universe, the air we breathe, the nourishing waters, the plants, the mineral kingdom, the animal kingdom and lastly mankind.

● **“Yazashne O-Nyaeshne ...”**

The praises to Ahura Mazda continue for bestowing supremacy on mankind over all other earthly creations and giving him the responsibility to watch over them through his unique intellect and power of reasoning. The passage states that man possesses two kinds of intellect, one is the self-intellect (*asne-kheredi*), which he is born with and draws on instinctively, while the other is the knowledge that is acquired by listening to others (*gosho srute-kheradi*). Armed with this reasoning, man is able to distinguish between good and evil and thereby fight against evil and turn it into good. This will eventually enable him to lead himself and all the other creations toward frashokereti.

● **“Namaz O-e Vispa Aagah ...”**

Ahura Mazda is next praised for sending Asho Zarathushtra to teach His glorious message to mankind. Praises are also showered on Asho Zarathushtra for bringing man His powerful manthras, which are potent instruments for man’s progress on earth, for his fight against the forces of darkness and achieving ultimate salvation.

● **“Pa Farmane toe Khaavar ...”**

Having praised Ahura Mazda and His creations, one goes on to proclaim a resolve to follow His prescribed religion, perform only

righteous deeds, turn away from evil deeds and keep one’s six senses free of all evil influences. By doing so, we are able to cross the Chinvat Pul (Bridge of the Separator) at the first attempt and achieve God’s highest heaven in one lifetime.

● **“Setayeshne O-e Avakshidar ...”**

The prayer closes with further praises of Ahura Mazda and seeking His help for living a righteous life.

**Doa Tandarosti – seeking God’s blessings**

The Doa Tandarosti is also a Pazand-language prayer meant for reciting at the end of the farazyat prayers. It asks for God’s blessings for our self, our friends and relations and also for the whole community. A summary of the blessings follows:

● Good health is vital for living a long life. Divine blessings come to the one who lives a righteous life. May the divine ameshaspands and yazads also hear this prayer of mine. May these hopes and wishes be fulfilled. May the teachings of Zarathushtra bring joy and happiness to the whole community.

● May the righteous leaders of our lands, members of our community, (and in particular the persons whom I will name hereafter) live a healthy and happy life for a thousand years. May we live under the protection of

our righteous leaders. May we remain strong forever.

● May our days, months and years be blessed with joy, peace and happiness.

● May we continue to recite our scriptures and practice our rituals and continue with our noble tradition of being charitable. May we always remain righteous and pure of heart, enjoying good health and spirits.

● May Ahura Mazda, the ameshaspands and yazads fulfill these sincere wishes of mine.

**Recitation of names.** In the section where names of family members are to be recited, a particular format is followed. Only the names of living Zarathushtis are to be included; there are separate prayers for deceased Zarathushtis. The senior-most member of the family comes first, followed by others in order of seniority. In case of a married couple, the husband’s name precedes the wife’s. Names of priests precede those of the laity (or *behdins*). Prefixes for various persons are:

**Ervad:** a priest, i.e., a male who is an ordained *navar*.

**Osta, Osti:** a man or woman belonging to a priestly family, but not a *navar*.

**Behdin:** a man or woman not belonging to a priestly family.

[Continued on page 52]



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# the importance and efficacy of prayers

By Ervad Parvez M. Bajan

Prayer is the highest type of expression through which man conveys to his Heavenly Father his feelings of joy and sorrow, gratitude and love, hope and fear, or in his hunger and thirst for the divine grace lays down his grievances before him, confesses his guilt, craves for help, seeks mercy. Devotion is the first requisite.

## Zarathushtra – spiritual reformer

**A**mong the prophets of the world, the spiritual status of Zarathushtra is unique. He was a world teacher whose mission was to give spiritual illumination to all mankind. The very word Zarathushtra means ‘illumination’.

The advent of Zarathushtra was the cosmic manifestation of divine plan for a new cycle of spiritual and ethical evolution of mankind. His religion inspired the Iranian nation with the loftiest ideals of life. He brought a message of hope and love for all humanity that will last forever. Zarathushtra was a prophet of humanity whose mission was to give spiritual illumination to all the living souls. The spiritual teachings of Zarathushtra are of great importance, because of their historical interest and their intrinsic religious, ethical, philosophical and spiritual values.

Zarathushtra was a great spiritual reformer and a founder of new religion. He proclaimed a divine message, which had never been heard before by mankind. He was the first prophet to promulgate and teach pure monotheism in the world, a profound concept of the supreme godhead – Ahura Mazda.

*A devotee prays at the sacred Bhika Behram well, in Bombay.* [PHOTO COURTESY “ZOROASTRIANS OF INDIA – PARSIS: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY” BY SOONI TARAPOREVALA. THE IMAGE HAS BEEN CROPPED FROM THE ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPH]

Monotheism is a belief in one supreme divine principal, ever living, and all knowing. Man must have unshakable faith in this one supreme divine principle.

The religion of Zarathushtra teaches us to believe in:

- The existence of one God – Ahura Mazda.
- The immortality of the soul or life after death.
- Full responsibility for our thoughts, words and actions.
- Ultimate victory of Good over Evil, Truth over Falsehood, Justice over Injustice and Peace over War.

The *sudreh and kushti* (the sacred shirt and girdle) are visible symbols of the religion. They are the sacred 'alats', implements to fight evil. They are the symbols of purity, simplicity and righteousness.

Prophet Zarathushtra said:

*Aevo pantao yo ashahe vispe anyesham apantam*

There is only one path, that is of righteousness, all other paths are no paths.

### Prayer as a petition to God

Man has always prayed. Primitive man who did not understand natural phenomena worshiped power in the invisible beings that he feared. He humbled and humiliated himself before them, strove to placate and mollify them. His more enlightened descendants began worshiping goodness or knowledge or righteousness in Gods. Prayer in its origin is instinctive and it gradually grows rational and moral.

Man has always wearied God with his extravagant demands. He has prayed that fortune may drop from the skies and always expected that God should answer all his prayers.

Man's mental and moral progress has purified prayer. Naturally, he prays for his health and vigour of body, for

food and riches, for offspring and long life. In his nobler mood, he prays for purity of mind and heart. He prays that God may strengthen him to fight temptation, vice and sin. When he falters and falls, he feels contrition for his misdeeds, strips his heart bare before God, and implores him to wipe out his transgressions.

Homage, invocation, sacrifice and the outpouring of prayer are the various expressions of the inward longing of man to commune with the divine, to enter into mutual intercourse with him. Those are outlets through which man pours forth his heart to the fountain of all bounty.

The individual who surrenders himself to unseen powers, who kneels down in humility at the altar, who with uplifted hands pays homage to the hidden forces behind the rising sun or the waxing moon or the roaring sea and who carries an offering to the fire or a libation to the waters is physiologically greatly affected. Such attitudes of spirit have great subjective value, for they deeply influence man's character.

“ Devotion is the first requisite. Mere murmuring of a few formulas with the lips, while the heart does not pulsate with devotional fervor, are no prayers. ”

Prayer is the highest type of expression through which man conveys to his heavenly Father his feelings of joy and sorrow, gratitude and love, hope and fear, or in his hunger and thirst for the divine grace lays down his grievances before him, confesses his guilt, craves for help, seeks mercy. Devotion is the first requisite. Mere murmuring of a few formulas with the lips, while the heart does not pulsate with devotional fervor, are no prayers. Where there is no such devotion, there is no prayer, and where there is no prayer, there is no religion.

Ahura Mazda is bountiful and benevolent. Man prayed to Him. Prayers are generally petitions for gifts of health, long life, offspring, cattle, chariots, riches and victories over enemies. Ahura Mazda hears prayers even in thought. Righteous thinking is prayer. Such prayer lifts man to Ahura Mazda. Potent is the power of prayer unto Ahura Mazda, says Zarathushtra [Ys. 28.10].

Bountiful Ahura Mazda is munificent in showering his gifts upon mankind and he knows what is best to give. Zarathushtra implores him to give what pleases him [Ys. 51.18]. He prays for long life [Ys. 43.13]; that he may be enabled to perform the good deeds of the Holy Spirit through righteousness [Ys. 28.1]. Vigor and endurance are the essential qualities that enable man to fight wickedness and cling to righteousness and Zarathushtra prays for them [Ys. 43.1].

The general Avesta term for 'prayer' is 'namah' – 'bowing, obeisance, homage, reverence, prayer', later *namaz*, (Phl. tr. *niyayishn*, *namaz*, Skt. tr. *namaskriti*). The Avesta term means also 'obligation, debt, loan'. Regarding 'prayer' [Ys. 44.1]:

That do I ask Thee, Tell me aright, O Ahura! As to the Prayer. How shall be the Prayer of your devotee? O Mazda! One like Thee shall instruct a friend as my follower! Then, to grant help unto us, so that *Vohu Manah* may come to us!

### Prayer and Ceremony

Prayer is described thus:

The prayer is regarded as a spiritual weapon and protection, which (prayer) is of good origin (sincerity), bringing upon the faithful the divine boon, devotion, and piety, and the source of which is good thought, good word, and good deed.

[Ys. 58.1]

Further, prayer is good, it is best for the people of the world; and it is a protection and defense against invisible evil forces.

[Yt. 11.2]

There are also other words for 'prayer' in the Avesta :

● **staota**: 'praise, song of praise'. Phl. tr.: *stayishn, stayitarih*'. Skt. tr.: *stuti*.

● **staoma**: 'praise, hymn'. Phl. tr. *stayishn, stayitar*. Skt. tr. *stota*.

● **vahma**: 'adoration, praise', Phl. tr. *niyayishn*, Skt. tr. *namaskriti*.

● **vachah**: 'word, speech', Phl. tr. *gowishn*, Skt. tr. *vachana*.

● **sravah**: 'chant, word, teaching', Phl. tr. *srav, stayishn*, Skt. tr.: *ukti*h 'speech', *sarasvati* 'learning', *vadana* 'word (of praise)'

● **manthra** 'thought (force), word, holy word, spell, holy spell'; same as Skt. *mantra*. Phl. tr. *manthr, framan*, Skt. tr. *vani, manthra, manthravani, adesha*.

### Divine origin of manthra

Among the Avesta words for 'prayer', Av. *manthra* occupies an important position. It is the Holy Word of divine origin, and Holy Word of Ahura Mazda:

Three collections of the Manthra are mentioned in the Avesta :

(1) **Manthra Spenta** 'the Holy Word'. *Manthra Spenta*, the yazata presiding over the Holy Manthra, is 'holy, effective, full of glory'. Holy names of Ahura Mazda form a section of the *Manthra Spenta* [Yt. 1.1-2]; and further it is stated [Yt. 13.80-81; Vd. 19.14]:

... Ahura Mazda ... Whose soul (is) Manthra Spenta, white, shining, bright.

Phl. tr. *manthraspand*, Skt. tr.: *manthra vani*.

(2) **Fshusho Manthra** 'the Word of Prosperity'. *Fshusho Manthra* is one of the names of Ahura Mazda [Yt. 1.13]. Yasna 58-59 are regarded as a section of *Fshusho Manthra*, and in ancient times there was a collection of *Fshusho Manthra*, as mentioned in Yasna 59.32.

Phl. tr. *fshush-manthra*, Skt. tr. *prashna avistavani* [Ys. 58.22], *vrid-dhi pramana* [Yt. 1.13].

(3) **Staota Yasnya**: 'the hymns pertaining to worship'.

*Staota Yasnya* is characterized as 'the laws of the first life', [Ys. 55.6]. Several chapters of Yasna, including the cantos of the Gathas, formed sections of *Staota Yasnya*: [Ys. 14-17, 28-56 and 58].

Phl. tr. *stot yasn, stot yasht*, Skt. tr. *stuvanti ijisni, stuta ijisni*.

“ Homage, invocation, sacrifice and the outpouring of prayer are the various expressions of the inward longing of man to commune with the divine ... those are outlets through which man pours forth his heart to the fountain of all bounty. ”

### Prescribed rules for chanting the manthra

The Avesta prayers are the holy manthras, and in ancient times they were recited and chanted very carefully according to the prescribed rules. Among the Avesta prayers, **Ahuna Vairya** (later *Ahunavar*, the prayer beginning with *yatha Ahu vairyo*) is the most sacred formula, recited with special reverence and devotion by Zarathushtis on various occasions. It is the holy word of God, which was uttered in the beginning of the worldly creations [Ys. 19.1-2].

In the material world Zarathushtra first chanted *Ahuna Vairya*, "observing the rules of metre, four times, with louder intonation at the end" [Ys. 9.14]. *Ahuna Vairya* should be learnt by heart, and should be recited and chanted without remissness, without disturbance [Ys. 19.5-7].

### Ritual purity

Av. *Yaozda* is generally explained as 'purity, purification', but it is used in the special sense of 'ritual purity, rit-

ual purification'. The Zarathushti purificatory ceremonies are based on the principle of ritual purity. All fire-temples and places of worship are ritually purified and consecrated places, and hence they are meant only for Zarathushtis. Even Zarathushtis – both males and females, priests and laymen – have to observe certain rules of ritual purification, particularly when a Zarathushti wishes to enter a fire-temple or to attend a ceremony.

Before entering a fire-temple, a Zarathushti must have taken a bath, must have put on proper dress, and must have performed the kushti ceremony. These are the minimum requirements for a Zarathushti, when he or she wishes to enter a fire-temple. In certain circumstances, even Zarathushtis – males and females, priests and laymen – are strictly forbidden to enter a place of worship or to attend a religious ceremony.

### Worship

Zarathushti worship consists either of simple oral recitations of portions of the sacred word or such recitations combined and accompanied with the performance of ceremonial ritual. These recitals are compositions in the sacred language of the Avesta, original or more often, extracted from previous compositions, or of a combination of the Avesta and Pazend languages.

Generally a Zarathushti prays individually by himself/herself, but on several important occasions public worship by the whole congregation is also performed.

Of the ancient sacred recitals the most necessary to every Zarathushti for daily use are those comprised in the **nirang-i-kushti**, i.e. the prayer recited while untying and retying the sacred thread '**kushti**' round the waist, on the sacred shirt, the '**sudreh**'. Every Zarathushti learns this by heart as he has to recite it sev-

eral times a day. The rest may be orally recited or read out from the sacred prayer books. The recitals combined with ceremonial ritual are universally done only by the priests, since most of the ritual must be performed by priests.

### **Yasna 'ceremonial worship'**

Generally Zarathushti ceremonies are based on the principles of *yaozda* 'ritual purity' and *khvarnah* 'human magnetism'. There are ceremonies, which should be performed in the Zarathushti house if there are facilities for the same. There are certain other ceremonies of high order, which are performed only in the ritually purified place.

**Yasna.** The general Avesta word for 'ceremony' is *yasna* – 'sacrifice, worship'. The word is used also for the ceremony of invocation and dedication of high order, requiring ritually purified utensils and libations, and performed by specially qualified *Yozdathragar* priests only, and in ritually purified places.

The Yasna ceremony occupies an important place in Zarathushti rituals. It is celebrated on various solemn occasions for remembrance of the souls of the departed, as well as on festive occasions such as thanksgiving services.

### **Visperad and Videvdat ceremony.**

As noted above, the Yasna is the basic ritual text. Other ritual texts, *Visperad* and *Videvdat*, are supplementary texts, and are never recited exclusively as independent texts in the ceremonies.

As noted above, some of the chapters of the *Visperad* are enlarged chapters of *Yasna*, and some other chapters of the *Visperad* are intermingled with those of the *Yasna* for recital in the *Visperad* ceremony.

In the *Videvdat* ceremony, all three texts are recited, and their chapters are intermingled and arranged in a particular order for recitation.

In the *Yasna* ceremony, Ahura Mazda, *amesha spentas*, and the

yazatas are invoked and worshiped by chanting the sacred manthras, by performing the ceremonies with ceremonial implements, and dedicating the consecrated offerings and libations. The offerings include spiritual virtues and powers, and good creations of the world.

In Yt.11 it is said:

*Nemo vohu nemo vahishtem  
Zarathushtra gaethabyo*

O Zarathushtra! Prayer is good for the people of the world.

Of the worldly creations of Ahura Mazda - the sky, the waters, the earth, the plants, the animals, the fire and the holy men, the human being is the most precious creation. He uses these worldly creations for his daily needs and makes his living better. It is therefore necessary that man should propitiate the master of the universe – Ahura Mazda through prayer and worship.

“ Zarathushtra in his own Gathas speaks of fire as a bright and powerful creation of Ahura Mazda ... But nowhere does he enjoin the worship of fire. ”

### ***Khordeh Avesta* - the book of daily prayers**

The general Avestan prayers are contained in *Khordeh-Avesta* which means 'the smaller or selected Avesta.' This is the book of daily prayers, which contains a collection of prayers selected from other major works of extant Avesta literature viz. *Yasna*, *Visperad*, *Vendidad* and the *Yasht* literature.

The *Khordeh-Avesta* therefore, contains daily prayers including the *kushti* prayer, *Hoshbam*, five *gahs*, five *nyaeshs* (praise, litany), the *afriangan* (benedictions, blessings) containing invocatory prayers and blessings etc. besides some prayers in the Pazend language.

### **Ahura Mazda's creations**

#### **The misnomer of 'fire worship'.**

Zarathushtis venerate different creations of nature through daily prayers dedicated to them. As one of the most amazing creations, and one of the noblest and most inspiring emblems of God, fire received universal homage and veneration not only amongst Zarathushtis but in nearly all countries and in nearly all the religions of the world, particularly in the religions of the Aryan people.

In pre-Zarathushti times, *holy fires* were consecrated and installed in properly constituted and sanctified places, which were used as the places of worship in ancient Iran. This practice of establishing holy fires goes back to the Indo-Iranian period. Besides ancient Iranian culture, references to the holy fires are found also in the Vedic literature.

This outward and visible regard for fire as a beneficent and indispensable creation of Ahura Mazda and as a potent and salutary natural agent, must have given rise to *the misnomer of the Zarathushtis being called fire worshippers*. But it is a gross misconception generated through the ignorance and disregard of the essential and

underlying principle that none of the elements, though esteemed as objects of great usefulness, was ever regarded by Zarathushtis as in themselves deities independent of Ahura Mazda, the Supreme God, who alone has again and again received the highest veneration as being the sole object of worship and adoration.

Throughout all the sacred writings, the most solemn and emphatic injunction has been laid to worship Ahura Mazda – the supreme God and him alone, and in all times Zarathushtis have in their writings been called Mazdayasna, i.e. the worshippers of Mazda. So that though the ancient Iranians esteemed fire as the symbol of divinity and as such worthy of respect and reverence, they

never professed themselves to be the worshippers of fire. Zarathushtra in his own Gathas speaks of fire as a bright and powerful creation of Ahura Mazda and prefers it as a symbol of divinity, to idols and other created objects. But nowhere does he enjoin the worship of fire.

The writer of the famous epic, *Shah-nameh*, Firdowsi also emphatically bears testimony on the point and warmly repels the charge of fire-worship often hurled against the Zarathushtis:

*“Ma gui ke atash – parasta budand, Parastand e pak yazda budand.”*

**“Do not say that they were fire-worshippers; for they were worshippers of the Holy God.”**

### Rituals and ceremonies

When men began to lead settled agricultural life, they began to offer the first fruits of the harvest and produce

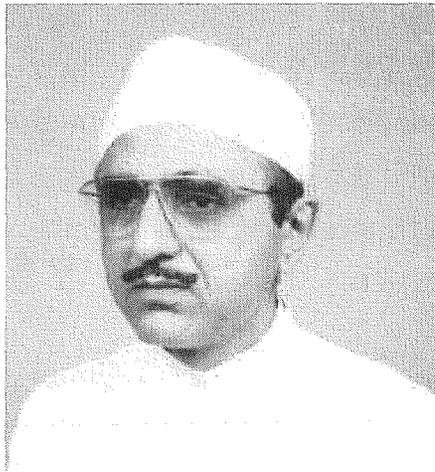
of the cattle as thanksgiving offerings to the Almighty. Rituals and ceremonies are outward expressions of one's mind.

Every Zoroastrian is enjoined to pray during the five watches (*gah*) of the day. [See “*The Farazyat Prayers*” by Er. Jal Birdy, on page 41].

True prayer should be offered with devotion, sincerity of heart and deep yearning for spiritual joy. True prayers should be devoid of outward gestures, vainglorious expressions and other forms of hypocrisy.

The best type of boon that can be desired through prayers is to be worthy of divine joy which leads to true happiness, which is lasting, whereas material happiness is fleeting.

Thus, the prayer purifies the heart and the soul, gives inner strength and self-confidence and leads to enlightenment. ■



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# Sraosha in the Zoroastrian Daily Rituals and Prayers

By Philip G. Kreyenbroek

Sraosha represents the divine force which enables man to be in contact with God

### Srosh Yazad

*Sorush* (Avestan: *Sraosha*, Pahlavi: *Srosh*) is the only Zoroastrian yazad whose name lived on in the post-Sasanian Persian tradition, which must mean he had a very special place in people's hearts. Perhaps more than any other yazad, Sorush connects the untainted, immutable, ideal sphere of God with the rough and tumble of this world, which is far from ideal and therefore all the more in need of a link with the divine.

Sraosha's name (from the Avestan root *sra-*, 'to hear') indicates that 'hearing, listening' is a central ele-

### Farazyat ...

[Continued from page 47]

**Khurd:** a child whose navjote has not yet been performed.

The suffix “Ra” is mentioned after each name as a punctuation; for instance, *Ervad Barjor Ra*, *Osta Sam Ra*, *Khurd Yasmin Ra*, etc.

### Conclusion

It is hoped that this brief article will help those Zarathushtis who find our prayers a useful tool in living everyday lives and will enhance their understanding of why we say our prayers and what the basic farazyat prayers convey. ■

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Rows of *muktad* tables at the H. B. Wadia Atash Behram in Mumbai. Tables are set with *muktad* vases in memory of departed loved ones, whose *fravashis* are said to wander on earth during the ten *muktad* days. [PHOTO BY HOMYAR MISTRY, HOMZ PRINTS, COURTESY "A ZOROASTRIAN TAPESTRY, ART, RELIGION & CULTURE" BY PHEROZA J. GODREJ & FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE].

ment of his character and functions. The role he plays in the relations between God and Man can most clearly be seen in the Gathas. There, Sraosha is 'hearkening, listening' in its various aspects. Man needs to listen to the voice of God, especially at times of crisis or when experiencing a reality that transcends the boundaries of ordinary reality. Thus in Yasna 33.5, Zarathushtra addresses Ahura Mazda as follows:

I (Zarathushtra), who shall invoke Harkening (Sraosha), greatest of all, to you at the 'time of loosening', when I have reached the realms of Good Thought, the straight paths on which Ahura Mazda (Lord Wisdom) dwells according to Righteousness (Asha).

The 'time of loosening' is clearly a time when normal conditions no

longer apply. It seems likely that the words refer to a state of heightened awareness, perhaps induced by ritual acts, which allows Zarathushtra to perceive divine Truth. When he is in such a state, Zarathushtra hopes to "invoke Sraosha, greatest of all", i.e. he will open himself to a form of 'hearing' that will bring him into direct contact with the Divine.

Similarly in Yasna 28. 5 Zarathushtra says:

Truth (Asha), shall I see you when I find Good Thought (Vohu Manah) and the way to the very strong Ahura Mazda, which is Harkening/Sraosha, the greatest, through this manthra: May we turn away evildoers by means of the tongue.

Thus we learn that the way to God can be found above all through 'hear-

ing'/Sraosha, which/who will come when one actively engages in the battle between good and evil, using prayer ('the tongue') as an instrument. The coming of Sraosha is clearly a form of grace, but it can only take place when Zarathushtra is prepared for it, having made himself into a worthy recipient for God's Word by active efforts. In Yasna 43. 12 we find:

And when you (Ahura Mazda) told me (Zarathushtra): 'You will come to Truth by discernment', you also said, "Not without Hearing." I must arise before Sraosha/Hearing will come to me, accompanied by wealth-granting Reward (Ashi), who shall distribute the rewards to both groups (the good and the wicked) at the Time of Salvation.

In other words only by 'hearing' God's word can Zarathushtra find

Truth, but in order to 'hear' he must first 'arise', i.e. be actively striving for Truth and Righteousness. When he has thus purified his inner being, Sraosha will come to him, so that he shall hear God's voice and the rewards for righteousness will be his.

Sraosha also represents the believers' 'listening' to Zarathushtra [Ys. 45. 5]:

Now I shall proclaim what the Most Holy One told me:

Listen (you who are gathered here) to the word that is best for men.

Those who shall realise Hearing and Respect to me for it, they shall attain to Wholeness and Immortality ...

Just as Zarathushtra must be prepared to welcome Sraosha/Listening to the word of God in order to reach his goal, so his followers must 'listen' to him and be respectful of the divine message he imparts, in order to have eternal life.

Sraosha, in other words, represents the divine force which enables man to be in contact with God through the ability to 'hear the divine word'. In parts of the Avesta which reflect a less elevated and perhaps more 'popular' view of the religion, he is the Angel who protects the pious man by answering his prayers and defeating the forces of evil, especially at night. This role led to an understanding of Srosh as the 'Lord of this world', a being who belongs to the pure untainted sphere of God but who also plays an active role in this world.

Srosh is thus invoked particularly at times when 'heaven and earth', the pure and the polluted, or the sacred and the profane, meet. Most dramatically this is the case at death, when the soul no longer belongs to this impure world but is thought to linger here for three days, then to make the unimaginable transition to the hereafter, while the body has become unclean and must be disposed of. At such times Srosh is prominently invoked in prayer and ritual.

## Srosh Baj prayer

The religion of Zarathushtra has many rituals whose aim is to consecrate or purify persons or objects. In such rites Srosh is usually invoked first, when the powers of evil and pollution are still strong. In daily religious life of many Zoroastrians the *Srosh Baj*, a prayer composed of various Avestan and Middle Persian texts and dedicated to Srosh, plays a central role. The meaning of the prayer is as follows:

“ When he has thus purified his inner being, Sraosha will come to him, so that he shall hear God's voice and the rewards for righteousness will be his. ”

Pazand Introduction:

In the name of God. May the bounteous miraculous power and glory of the Lord Ohrmazd increase. May (this prayer) reach Srosh, the righteous, the vigorous, whose body is God's command (i.e. prayer), who has a hard weapon (prayer), whose weapon is powerful, (who is) the Lord of the creations of Ohrmazd (i.e. the world).

I expiate and repent of all sins. Every wicked thing, wicked word and wicked deed that I have thought, spo-

ken, or done; that I have committed consciously or unconsciously in the world; those thoughts, words and deeds of the body or the soul, of this world or the next, I ask forgiveness for with three pronouncements, being penitent and repentant in mind.”

(1) *Yatha Ahu Vairyo; Ashem Vohu*; the Confession of faith; the prayer for the watch of the day; the dedication to Sraosha; a ritual exchange of phrases.

(2) Another dedication to Sraosha:

We worship Sraosha, accompanied by rewards, beautiful of form, promoting the world, righteous, master of righteousness.

Vendidad 11. 3:

The *Ahuna Vairya* prayer (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*) protects the body. *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*.

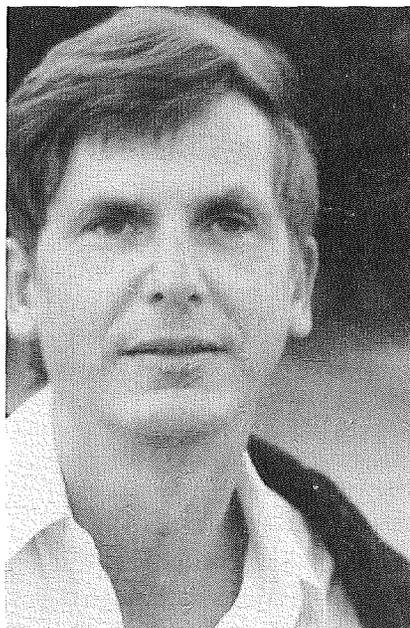
Yasna 46.7: *Kemna Mazda*:

Whom will you give to the likes of me as a protector, Mazda, when the wicked one wishes to capture me and harm me? Whom other than your fire and your thought, through whose actions one nourishes righteousness, Ahura? This knowledge proclaim to my mind!

Yasna 44. 16, *Ke Verethrem Ja*:

Who shall break the resistance in order to protect those who exist, in

[Continued on page 87]



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# the gathas and our daily prayers

By Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw

Performing daily rituals and prayers, within the framework of the Gathas can promote Asha and eventually *frashokereti*.

## What are the Gathas?

The Gathas are the hymns of Zarathushtra. They are in a language known as Gathic Avestan. These hymns were composed by Zarathushtra, a priest, approximately 3,500 years ago, to help transmit to his followers his vision of a message that was revealed to him by Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra's Gathas are extremely complicated hymns to fully understand. First, they are written in an ancient language, the grammar and syntax of which is not fully understood. To make matters more complex, Zarathushtra used many words which implied double, or even more, meanings. He also utilized metaphors for explaining many of his ideas. Thus, it is difficult to ever know, with complete assurance, what exactly Zarathushtra meant. This is why there is currently so much controversy about what the Gathas say.

There are now numerous translations of the Gathas, none of which interprets the Gathas in the same way. This is primarily because each of the translators brings to his work his own personal biases based on his social, cultural and religious worldview.

There are primarily two schools of translation: the first is based on comparing the language of the Gathas to Sanskrit (a language that is very similar to Gathic Avestan). Such translations tend to be more literal, and in the process lose much of the depth and feeling of Zarathushtra's message.

The second is based on an understanding of the tradition that has been handed down for some 3,500 years. These translations attempt to bring out the essence of Zarathushtra's message as understood and practiced through this period of time. These translations are, how-



ever, labeled by some as having incorporated ideas and beliefs of later-day priests.

Hence, when one reads a translation of the Gathas, it is important to understand not only who the author of the translation is, but to also try to understand the background, beliefs and worldview of that translator.

### The Gathas and Our Religion

One way of trying to understand the relationship between the Gathas and our religion, is to compare it to the relationship between a constitution and a country. Just as a constitution lays out the framework and principles by which a country shall be governed, so too do the Gathas draw out the basic belief systems on which our religion is based. Like a constitution, the Gathas are broad-based – they tell us ‘what’ we need to do, not ‘how’ to do it.

Continuing with this analogy, over time, a country’s legislature develops a legal system of laws and rules to govern itself – none of these laws themselves being specifically mentioned in the constitution – but each law must meet the test of constitutionality before it can be incorporated into practice. Laws are enacted and laws are rescinded depending on the social conditions prevailing in that particular period of time.

Similarly, over time, Zarathushtrian priests developed religious rules, rituals and practices. These prayers and rituals became incorporated into the daily lives and activities of lay Zarathushtis, and eventually became a part of the ‘tradition.’ Some of these rituals have been changed over time to keep up with the prevailing conditions. However, it is important to remember that, despite these rituals and traditions being developed long after Zarathushtra, they all meet the test of being in accord with Gathic doctrine.

### The Gathic Message

**Good and evil.** It is beyond the scope of this article to describe all the vari-

	GOOD 'ASHA'	EVIL 'DRUJ'
SPIRITUAL (Menog)	❖ Ahura Mazda	
	❖ Other Ahuras (in the plural)	❖ Daevas (in the plural)
	❖ The (Amesha Spentas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spenta Mainyu</li> <li>● Vohu Manah</li> <li>● Asha Vahishta</li> <li>● Khshathra Vairyo</li> <li>● Spenta Armaiti</li> <li>● Haurvatat</li> <li>● Ameretat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Angra Mainyu</li> <li>● Aka Manah</li> </ul>
	❖ The (Yazatas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sraosha</li> <li>● Atar</li> <li>● Ashi</li> <li>● Geush Tashan</li> <li>● Geush Urvan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aeshma</li> <li>● Druj</li> </ul>
	❖ House of Song	❖ House of Lie
MATERIAL (Getig)	❖ Sky	❖ Destruction of the elements
	❖ Water	
	❖ Earth	
	❖ Plants	
	❖ Animals	
	❖ Man	
	❖ Fire	
	❖ Life/Creation	❖ Death/Destruction
	❖ Good Thoughts, Words and Deeds	❖ Evil Thoughts, Words and Deeds
	❖ Purity/Cleanliness	❖ Contamination/Filth
❖ Health	❖ Disease	

Matrix of good and evil in the spiritual (menog) and material (getig) worlds

ous doctrines contained in the Gathas. However, the most unique and important message that Zarathushtra delivered was about the dichotomy between ‘good’ (*asha*) and ‘evil’ (*druj*). In nearly every verse he pleads for assistance from Ahura Mazda to help promote good in this world. So, he not only draws the difference between good and evil, but he also points out the distinction between the

cosmic or spiritual (*menog*) world and the created or material (*getig*) world. These four parameters are related in what I would like to term ‘symmetrical dichotomies’.

The best way to understand this relationship is with the help of a diagram [above]. This diagram utilizes a 2-by-2 matrix with ‘good’ and ‘evil’ on one axis, and the ‘spiritual’ and ‘material’ worlds on the other.

Zarathushtra also lays out the framework, in the Gathas, for an interaction between the 'good' spiritual and material worlds. This is by assigning, as a guardian, an individual *Amesha Spenta* over each of his seven material creations [see below].

Material Creation	Amesha Spenta
Sky	Kshathra Vairyo
Water	Haurvatat
Earth	Spenta Armaiti
Plants	Ameretat
Animals	Vohu Manah
Man	Spenta Mainyu
Fire	Asha Vahishta

This duality of good and evil, between Ahura Mazda and *Angra Mainyu*, 'evil spirit', was a unique concept developed by Zarathushtra. He assigned all that was good, in both the spiritual and material worlds, to Ahura Mazda, while making the evil spirit responsible for all that was evil.

**Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu**, the evil spirit are by no means ever considered to be co-equal or co-eternal, and most certainly, Zarathushtra never, never considers any form of evil worthy of worship.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra assigns creative powers to Ahura Mazda,

while *Angra Mainyu* has no creative role; Ahura Mazda is Wise, whereas *Angra Mainyu* is ignorant – a clear inequality thus exists between the two. Further, a central thesis of Zarathushtra's was that in the end all evil, and thus *Angra Mainyu*, would be totally destroyed, and only good would remain. Thus, *Angra Mainyu* is not eternal.

Great confusion arises from the definition of the terms – monotheism and dualism. In this short article we cannot go into an in-depth analysis; but suffice it to say that neither correctly describes the Zarathushtrian doctrine. To say also that the Zarathushtrian doctrine represents a 'cosmic dualism' is only half the answer. It is in fact a state which changes with time. Or as Boyd and Crosby point out, it is a "cosmogonic dualism and an eschatological monotheism."

**Concept of time.** To explain this, the concept of time in the Avesta needs to be understood.

There are two forms of time: 'unlimited' or 'boundless' time, and 'limited' or 'finite' time, each divided into two parts. Unlimited time spreads from negative infinity to positive infinity, being divided in the middle by finite time.

The period of unlimited time, up to the start of limited time is when both Ahura Mazda and *Angra Mainyu* exist separately, in "endless light" and "endless darkness", respectively.

The first part of finite time is known as the *bundahishn* or 'creation', when Ahura Mazda first creates the *menog*, or spiritual world, and then the *getig*, or material world. All the creations of Ahura Mazda are perfect and good.

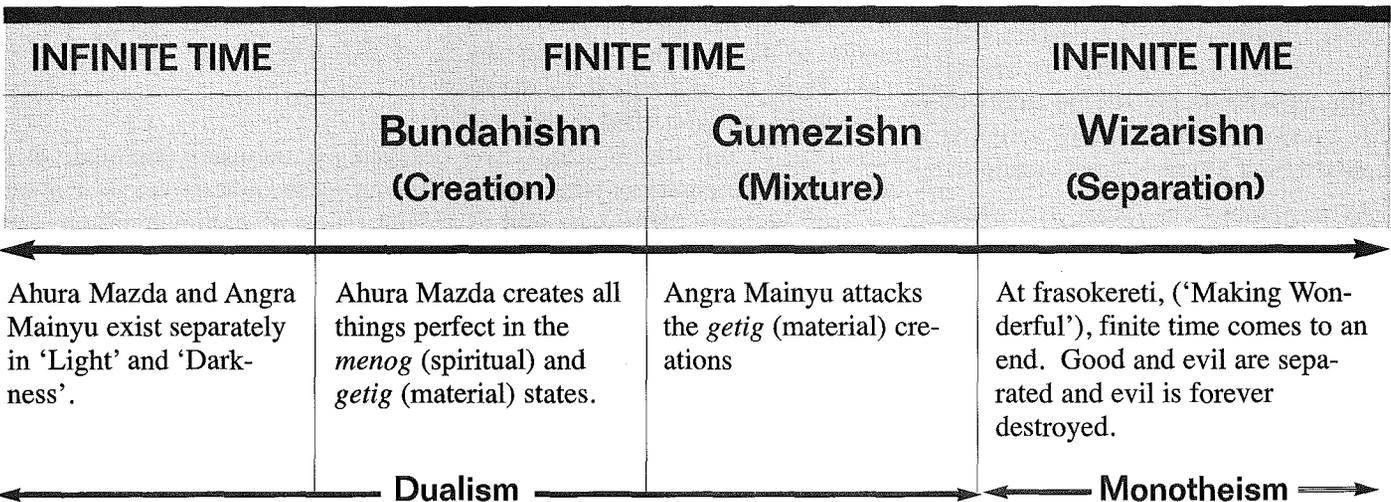
The second part of finite time, is the *gumezishn*, or 'mixture'. In this period, *Angra Mainyu* attacks the *getig* creations of Ahura Mazda and sullies them and brings forth evil and misery.

*Frashokereti*, the 'Making Wonderful' will bring to an end the second period of finite time.

This will then lead into the second part of boundless time, *wizarishn*, or 'separation', when evil will be separated from good, and when *Angra Mainyu* will be totally annihilated and destroyed, and when evil will completely cease to exist. Only goodness will remain, and Ahura Mazda will forever reign supreme.

This concept may be represented schematically [see diagram below].

**The Zoroastrian doctrine**, thus, is very clear: In the period of finite time, Ahura Mazda (all good) and *Angra Mainyu* (all evil), two primal, independent beings, both exist separately. Ahura Mazda, in His wisdom, knowing of the existence of *Angra Mainyu*, creates both the *menog* and *getig* worlds. All creations of Ahura Mazda, the *amesha spentas* and the *yazatas*, in the *menog* state, as well as the seven material creations (sky,



water, earth, plants, animals, man and fire) in the getig state, are created perfect by Ahura Mazda. Angra Mainyu, because of his evil nature, attacks the good creations of Ahura Mazda and inflicts harm and destruction on them.

Frashokereti, the 'Making Wonderful', will bring about the end of finite time, and at this time, Angra Mainyu along with all evil, will be forever destroyed. Then, eternity will start, when "wickedness having been destroyed, Ahura Mazda and all spenta gods and men will live for ever in perfect, untroubled goodness, harmony and peace." Thus, we see cosmogonical dualism turning into an eschatological monotheism.

This transition from a dualism to a monotheism, as described in the *Bundahishn*, is alluded to in the Gathas, where Zarathushtra does state that at the end of time all evil will be destroyed.

### **Our Daily Prayers and Rituals**

But what has all this to do with our Daily Prayers and Rituals? Everything!

As has already been pointed out, Zarathushtra fervently prayed to Ahura Mazda to give him and his followers the ability to discern, using the Good Mind (*Vohu Manah*), between Truth (*Asha*) and the Lie (*Druj*).

It is during our daily performance of putting on our *sudreh* and tying our *kushti*, while saying our prayers, that we too, like Zarathushtra, are asking Ahura Mazda to give us the ability to do good in order to further and promote Ahura Mazda's good creations.

As is pointed out [page 34] while praying the *Ashem Vohu* prayer, we commit ourselves to doing good because it is the proper and right thing to do. While praying the *Kemna Mazda*, we use Zarathushtra's own

words to ask Ahura Mazda to protect us from the influences of evil. We acknowledge that it is through Ahura Mazda's 'good mind' and through 'His fire' that we shall be protected. Hence it is absolutely essential that we pray in front of a fire.

We recognize that purity of spirit is integrally tied to purity of body and our physical surroundings. Hence, we must wash or bathe before saying our prayers. We must be guardians of our environment and attempt to ensure that we do not cause pollution or harm to the physical elements or plants and animals.

By understanding the purpose and meaning of our prayers and performing our rituals daily, we can see how we promote *Asha*, and eventually *frashokereti*, or the 'Making Wonderful'.

### **Conclusion**

The recital of our daily prayers while performing our *kushti* ritual is absolutely essential. However, it is imperative that we fully understand the meanings of the prayers themselves, as well as the basic Gathic principles on which these prayers are based.

When correctly performed, the *kushti* ritual can help promote a greater awareness and understanding of the religion, and can help in developing an inner spirituality.

The *kushti* ritual is also important for one more reason – it is what makes us uniquely Zarathushtrian. The principles of "doing good" are not unique to the religion of Zarathushtra. They are contained in every other major religion. But in the performance of our *kushti* rituals we stand out as different from the others. As Prof. Farhang Mehr once said to me: the *sudreh* and *kushti* are the uniforms of the Zarathushtrians – they are symbols of our identity and make us stand out as belonging to a unique group. ■

## **A look at passages from six of our daily prayers**

**By Susan Karani  
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All of us have a tendency to unconsciously recite our daily prayers without any real regard for their meanings, or without treating our prayers as our prized 'alone-time' with God. This is very unfortunate, as it is wasted time. The real power of our daily prayer comes from within ourselves and from God. If we are not listening, if we are not consciously interpreting and understanding, no goodness can come from the ritual. Our prayers need to be treated as a mechanism of enlightenment, or an interaction with God, or goodness – not as a process of repetitive superstition.

“ The real power of our daily prayer comes from within ourselves and from God. If we are not listening, if we are not consciously interpreting and understanding, no goodness can come from the ritual. ”

Praying is intensely personal. It is meant to be interactive, as it is our sole mode of communication with Ahura Mazda – the essence of our spirituality. How often, though, do we really consider and reflect on our daily prayers? How can we interpret our daily prayers – and how can we apply them to our daily lives? Moreover, if praying implies a 'oneness' with God, how can we reinterpret

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Zarathushti girls in Yazd, holding candles during the Sadeh festival

[PHOTO AP, THE EDMONTON SUNDAY SUN, MAY 5, 2002]

# the importance of interpretation: illumination, not ritual

## Finding enlightenment in our daily prayers

God's message to us through the words of our daily prayers?

This essay looks at six of our daily prayers: *Ashem Vohu*, *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Kem Na Mazda*, *Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda*, *Nirang-e-Kushti Bastan* and *Kerfeh Mozd*; each prayer has its own significance and its own theme. I have chosen excerpts of each prayer, translated from the Avestan and interpreted the passage accordingly.

### ***Ashem Vohu:* goodness and humanism**

*Ashem vohu;*

To think a good thought, to  
speak a good word,  
to do a good deed (virtue)  
is good;

*vahishtem asti;*

it is the best thing;

*ushta asti;*

it is everlasting happiness;

*ushta ahmai hyat ashai*

everlasting happiness comes to  
him who is virtuous for the sake  
of virtue itself

*vahishtai ashem.*

which is best.

This, the most basic of our prayers, is perhaps the most difficult to interpret because of the vague good and evil language. What exactly is meant by 'goodness', and what consists of a 'good deed'? A 'good word'? A 'good act'? And what is happiness then? What is virtue? The implication is that we must interpret these

terms as best we can using our conscience and reason, as Zarathushtra suggests elsewhere.

'Everlasting' is a powerful word; what would not compel us to act in 'goodness' if we are to experience everlasting happiness? Surely we do not experience everlasting happiness here on earth out of a simple good deed.

The final point is to continually act out of goodness (inferential of humanitarian, humanist and charitable influences as well); as such, we may experience 'feeling good' after the good deed is done. Moreover and more importantly, we act moralistically because we want to do the right thing, because it is the right thing to do.

Furthermore, in the afterlife, we will experience everlasting happiness (i.e. heaven); if not compelled to act for the sake of goodness (if we do not recognize and act upon the right thing to do), we will experience unhappiness, or a taste of hell. The idea of ‘goodness’ as an imperative for our consciences to interpret is the most fundamental idea of the religion of Zarathushtra; as humans, we are beings with free consciences. Also essential to this idea is that good acts bring about eternal happiness.

### ***Yatha Ahu Vairyo:* humanitarianism and the power of God**

#### ***khshathrem-cha Ahurai***

and the Power and Glory of  
God the creator

#### ***a yim dregubyo dadat vastarem.***

(is) to him (who) gives  
protection or support to the  
one in need.

This prayer is powerful; this passage, the very last part of *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, suggests that the greatness of God will come, in some form and to some extent, to the one who does good, or he or she who protects and supports “the one in need”. In protecting the needy, or the poor, sick, children, etc., the do-gooder could, for example, legally protect or defend or house/provide shelter for the needy.

In supporting the needy, the do-gooder could economically, psychologically, emotionally support the sick, the jobless or the hungry or provide clothing, shelter, food for the less advantaged. Ultimately, this prayer suggests that the “glory” of God is within the one who is compelled to act out of kindness, generosity and humanism.

### ***Kem na Mazda:* spirituality**

#### ***Ashem thraoshta ...***

The Divine Law will progress  
and thrive.

#### ***Ahura! tam moi dastvam***

O! Creator! Do Thou clearly  
reveal to me this teaching

#### ***daenyai fravaocha***

of (Thy) religion do Thou reveal

#### ***ke verethrem-ja...***

who is the smiter of the  
enemy...

This appears to be the most important daily prayer in terms of spirituality. Here I define spirituality as interactiveness, requiring our communication with Ahura Mazda while saying this prayer. The words are “reveal to me this teaching of (Thy) Your (Zarathushtra’s) religion.” I interpret this to mean that by evoking the Divine Law (i.e. the word of God, or ‘goodness’) while saying the words of this prayer, Zarathushtra’s religion becomes ours. We listen to our consciences.

This prayer is crucial to feeling a oneness with God, with our good selves. It is profound and emotional for religious Zarathushtrians. To me, God is in large part, my Good Self. It is everything good inside me and everything good in the world. It is everything good I do and everything good others do. This sort of conception brings the spiritual world down to earth; it makes the ephemeral and the non-physical, or the impalpable, easier to comprehend.

#### ***Pata-no tbishyantat pairi Mazdaoscha***

Protect us from those that do  
harm O! All-Wise Lord,

#### ***Armaitishcha, spentascha;***

O! Divine-Love which  
helps mankind to progress;

#### ***nase daevo drukhsh,***

perish (thou)  
O! evil wickedness,

#### ***nase daevo chithre,***

perish (thou)  
O! seed of evil ...

There are two predominant themes in this passage. First, ‘mankind’ implies everyone; the term does not signify only Zarathushtrians; rather it implies all believers and non-believ-

ers. Here the prayer suggests that all of humanity is meant to progress and be banished of evil. Second, ‘evilness’ or ‘wickedness’ is also discussed here. What precisely does this mean? This prayer again compels us to be interpretive; it compels us to interact with God, to invoke our consciences about what is evil and not only to reject it, but to stamp it out with good thoughts, good words and good acts.

### ***Jasa me Avanghe Mazda:* personal commitment and consciousness**

#### ***Jasa me avanghe Mazda***

Come to my aid,  
O! All-Wise Lord.

#### ***Mazdayasno ahmi,***

A Mazda-worshipper I am,

#### ***Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish!***

A Mazda-worshipping follower  
of Zarathushtra!

#### ***Fravarane astutascha fravaretascha***

I declare obedience to and  
support for my faith

#### ***Astuye humtem mano,***

I accept the thought which is  
absolutely pure;

#### ***Astuye hukhitem vacho,***

I accept the word which is  
absolutely pure;

#### ***Astuye hvareshtem shyaothanem...***

I accept the deed which is  
absolutely pure...

#### ***Ahurai Mazdai vispa vohu chinahami,***

I acknowledge all blessings  
from Ahura Mazda,

#### ***aesha asti daenyao***

#### ***Mazdayashnoish astuitish.***

such is my reverence and  
obedience to the religion of the  
Mazda-worshippers.

This prayer is a pledge; saying this prayer symbolizes an individual commitment to the tenets of our religion. It requires our consciousness, our concerted efforts to do what is good and virtuous. It is firm obedience to faith and purity. This reference to “pure” is also interesting;

also note that in terms of moral acts, 'purity' here has been interpreted by other scholars and priests as perfection, or moral perfection, and non-violence. Moral perfection is constitutive of divinity; our source for moral perfection originates in Ahura Mazda, and God is what gives us our moral courage and power, or our conscience. This prayer is crucial, as it reminds us to always look to Ahura Mazda, our conscience, for guidance, before/instead of looking to any other sources.

### **Nirang-e-Kushti Bastan: repentance and conscience**

#### **Hormazd Khodae**

O! Almighty Lord  
Ahura Mazda!

*az hama gunah patet,*  
from all (my) sins I turn back,

*pashemanum az  
harvastin dushmata,*  
(and) I repent from every evil  
thought,

*duzrukhta, duzvarshta...*  
evil word and evil deed...

*oem bun bud ested.*  
which may have  
happened through me.

*okhe avaksh ... pa patet hom...*  
I do turn back having  
conscientiously  
sought forgiveness...

This prayer explores the concept of repentance. What does it mean to 'repent', as stated in this prayer? Yes, we must feel really and truly sorry for our "evil words, thoughts and deeds," but how do we repent? My inclination is that since this is an essentially individual and personal religion, as devotees, we must also treat this prayer like all the others, but most like *Kem na Mazda*, as an interactive/spiritual prayer.

We invoke our conscience here as well. What have we done wrong since we prayed last? How can we seek forgiveness? How can we act upon our regrets? How can we correct our wrongs and ensure that we

do not act in such a way again – and ensure that next time, we will act out of goodness? These thoughts are among those which we should contemplate while saying the Avestan words.

Also, another extremely important part of this prayer implies that a sinful act "which may have happened through me" is also included as a sin on our own person, implying that even if a sin was committed by a separate agent, if we did not object to that sin carried out by a separate agent, we are still to blame. Thus, we must repent.

### **Kerfeh Mozd: happiness and pluralism**

*Kerfeh mozd gunah gazareshnera,*  
For the blessings of good deeds  
and for deliverance from sins,

*kunam ashahi ravan dusharamara.*  
I do acts of virtue, for the  
love of my soul.

*ham kerfeh hama vehane*  
may all the good deeds of  
all the blessed people

*hafta keshwar zamin,*  
of the seven continents of  
the earth reach (me),

*zamin pahana, rud drana,*  
as wide as the earth,  
as long as the rivers,

*Khorshid-bala, bundehad berasad.*  
as high as the sun, (and) in their  
pure and ancient form.

*Asho bed derzi.*  
May the righteous (people) live  
for a long time.

The first phrase of this prayer implies that we are virtuous, i.e. that we act out of goodness, integrity and truthfulness, because we love ourselves and basically because we want to be happy (even though 'happiness' as such is not explicitly mentioned here). The second part of this prayer implies that "blessed people" are not only Zarathushtis, but rather all people "of (the) seven continents". This is a beautiful prayer, and it invokes

an image of God as all the good deeds of all the people of the world.

This prayer thus, in some form, reveals what God really is. By this rationale, he reveals himself in human acts. This prayer calls for all those acts to touch oneself and make oneself better, more virtuous, more moral, and ultimately, happier.

The phrase, "May the righteous people," i.e. not only Zarathushtis, but all people, "live for a long time" should persuade us to think in universalistic and pluralistic terms. We have all inherited this earth, and as such we all live together, share common land and blood, speech and appearance. Essentially, we are one. What we do for our community members we must do for non-believers as well. This is the word of our prayer.

**Concluding note: why reinterpreting our prayers is crucial.** I encourage you to share in this interpretation and reinterpret our daily prayers for yourselves. Without understanding and digesting what our prayers mean, and without conscientiously praying and making our prayer-time spiritual, our daily prayers are meaningless. If they have no effect upon our own lives, they will have no effect in the world. ■

NOTE: *The author requests readers to send any commentary on this article to: karani\_suzie@yahoo.com.*

SOURCES: *Translations included in this essay are from "Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians," tr. Framroz Rustomjee, Third Ed. Bombay: 1976.*

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*Dastur Dr. Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, being greeted at a navjote ceremony in Mumbai.*

# the response and role of purity in the life of a zoroastrian

By Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa

The principles and theology which underline the code of purity need to be understood clearly, if it is not to become an impediment, but a weapon to give the worshipper added strength and confidence in order to fight and reject the forces of evil in the physical world, and in the hereafter.

Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran, was given to the Iranian people by Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra who lived in remote antiquity some three millennia ago. The teachings were passed down orally, in the form of hymns, known as the Gathas, making Zoroastrianism, the oldest revealed religion in the world.

## The theology of the laws of purity

In his message the prophet revealed that there is the One, Supreme, Omniscient, Creator, Ahura Mazda (Phl. Ohrmazd) the Wise Lord, who is eternal and totally good. Zarathushtra also recognized that no evil or imperfection could possibly come from Ahura Mazda, for if it did, the Wise Lord would cease to be totally good and perfect. He saw evil as the antithesis of good in both the physical

and spiritual worlds. Hence he revealed that there were two primordial spiritual beings irreconcilably opposed to each other in thought, word and deed. He declared that *Spenta Mainyu* (Phl. *Spenog Menog*) the Beneficent Spirit was locked in conflict with *Angra Mainyu*, the Hostile Spirit (Phl. *Gannag Menog*) whose intrinsic nature is to destroy and thereby thwart the Good Spirit whom the Prophet saw as the hypostasis of Ahura Mazda, Himself.

Zarathushtra's revelation is based upon the fundamental concept of cosmic and ethical dualism, a dualism in which a Zoroastrian is taught to promote all that is good and Ahuric in the world and reject its antithesis, evil, which is parasitic and dependent upon the existence of the good creations. Evil is seen to be extrinsic to human condition and alien to the principle of the Good

Life. Thus Zoroastrianism recognizes that good and evil, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, purity and pollution, life and death all proceed from two distinct loci and do not come from the same source.

According to the *Bundahishn* (story of Creation) Ohrmazd created the spiritual and physical worlds in a pure state. Hence pollution, disease, decay and death that exist in the world are afflictions of evil brought about by Ahriman. According to this religious perception, Zoroastrians cannot remain neutral in the conflict between Ohrmazd and Ahriman.

It is through the understanding of the traditional observances that it becomes abundantly clear that in Zarathushtra's vision the world sullied by the forces of evil needs to be purified by eradicating all that is evil. The entire Zoroastrian theological system from the doctrine of creation

to the final unfolding of the 'Making Wonderful' (*Av. frashokereti*), is built upon the principle of purification at all levels. Purity is linked to sanctity and pollution is linked to impurity. Purity within the religious system is not based upon mere physical cleanliness and un-cleanliness or contamination, but is embedded within the notion of ritual purity, which should not be comprehended within the framework of modern day hygiene.

Thus ritual purity represents goodness and order in the world, and a state of cosmic perfection, whereas its opposite, impurity, is an affliction upon the seven good creations of Ahura Mazda. Hence purity is always linked to sacredness and sanctity whilst pollution is deemed to be ritual impurity, the seed of which comes from the world of Ahriman.

## Relevance of the laws of purity

The maintenance of ritual purity laws is central to Zoroastrian theology and practice. The notions of purity and pollution are reflected chiefly through the world of rituals which are quintessential to the faith. Every ritual has within it a doctrinal law, which is to be experienced through the performance of the rituals, and therefore non-believers whose notions of purity and pollution are outside the Zoroastrian framework, or those who do not practice the necessary ritual observances, are not permitted to participate in the religious activities and rituals observed by the community, as they are seen to be outside the ritual parameter of the religion.

The *concept of cosmic and ethical dualism* necessitates the importance of ritual purity both from the point of view of the beliefs, and the practices of the faith. Purity is part of godliness in Zoroastrianism and hence in the Vendidad [*Vd. 5.21*] it is stated:

*Yaozhdao mashyai aipi  
zathem vahishta*

Purity for man is  
the best from birth

Moreover, it is important to uphold purity in both the physical and spiritual worlds, as a Zoroastrian has to believe in both these worlds in order to declare, as one does in the all-important *Ahunavar* prayer:

*Yatha Ahu vairyo atha ratush ...*

Just as one desires the  
temporal Lord (*Ahu*)

So also one desires the  
spiritual one (*ratush*)...

“ Ritual purity represents goodness and order in the world, and a state of cosmic perfection, whereas its opposite, impurity, is an affliction upon the seven good creations of Ahura Mazda.”

The link between the physical and spiritual worlds is highlighted in the *nahn ritual* when the celebrant declares:

*In khuram pak-i tan  
yozdathra-i ruvan ra*

I drink this for the purity  
of the body and the soul

Thus individual purity contributes towards a collective purity of the universe which in turn will bring about the final renovation of the world, when according to the Story of Creation (*Phl. Bundahishn*) [*Gr. Bd. XXXIV.33*]:

There will be renovation in the universe, the world will become immortal at will, up to eternity and eternal progress.

Hence a proactive approach to personal and social purity codes are very important as these codes are internally relevant and unique not just to the Zoroastrian faith, but to the bringing about of a renovated, sanctified, and purified world.

## The role of man

The importance of ritual purity can hardly be understated, as man, Mazda's finest creation, has been

given the responsibility and task to fight against the forces of evil in the world. Thus if one follows the internal codes of purity in one's daily life at a physical level, the chances are that a Zoroastrian will be conscious of purity as a force of good, at a psychological level, which in turn will give a Zoroastrian an uplifting experience of purity on a spiritual level.

Purity then becomes the vehicle of experiencing cosmic order, whilst its opposite, impurity creates or generates disorder. According to religious law Zoroastrians, because of a strong understanding of cosmic dualism, cannot remain neutral or indifferent to the heightened conflict between the forces of Ohrmazd and Ahriman during the 9,000 year mixed period (*Phl. Gumezishn*) [*Gr.Bd. I.26*].

## Some scriptural sources

There are many scriptural sources which throw light on the theology underlying the need for purity and pollution. The Gathas give the worshipper the blueprint showing Zoroastrian dualism [*Ys. 30.3-6, Ys 45.2*] thereby establishing the basic doctrinal need to promote it, whereas the *Vendidad*, and the later Pahlavi/Persian texts, like the *Shayest-ne-Shayest*, *Arda Wiraz Namag*, *The Rivayats* to the *Dadistan-i Denig*, and the Persian Rivayats, outline the codes of purity in a very specific manner for the devotional Zoroastrian to strive and implement these in one's daily life.

Ritual purity is required not only in one's personal life, but is also necessary in the services propitiating the divinities of the Zoroastrian pantheon, in order to safeguard them against the forces of evil, even in the spiritual world. Prophet Zarathushtra was a priest (*Av. zaotar*) of an earlier unnamed religion and therefore it is reasonable to assume that the prophet knew of some ritual practices from the earlier religions which he incorporated within the belief paradigm of his own revelation.

## The need to protect rituals and the seven creations of Ahura Mazda

All the seven creations of Ahura Mazda, the sky, water, earth, plant, animal, man and fire are regarded as sacred and therefore have to be protected from pollution resulting from the affliction of evil. Each creation is under the guardianship of a Bounteous Immortal (Av. *Amesha Spenta*). Each of Ahura Mazda's creations has been afflicted by evil during this nine thousand-year period of conflict, and so it falls upon man to try and expel evil and its agent, pollution, from the creations through the observance of right conduct, ritual practice and prayer.

Metal which symbolizes the creation sky, can be made clean through the use of *gomez* (unconsecrated bull's urine), [Vd. VII, v. 74-75]:

... if they be of gold, you shall wash them once with *gomez*, you shall rub them once with earth, you shall wash them once with water, and they shall be clean ... if they be stone you shall wash them six times with *gomez* you shall rub them six times with earth, you shall wash them six times with water and they shall be clean.

Likewise, if the earth is rendered impure through the pollution of a corpse due to the arrival of the *nasa* (the fiend of putrefaction), when the body is placed in the *dakhma*, then [Vd. VII v. 46]:

When the corpse ... has lain on the ground for a year, clothed with light of the heaven and beholding the sun (*Phl. khurshed nigarishn*), then the ground is clean again O! holy Zarathushtra.

If a corpse has been placed in the waters or fire by a human being, then [Vd. VII, v. 27]:

...upon them comes and rushes the *druj nasu* ... and they are unclean thenceforth forever and ever.

In fact, the living who have perpetrated this pollution, are held accountable for causing such pollution when their soul on the fourth morning after death, is given its judgment at the

Bridge of the Separator (Av. *Chinvato Peretav*) [Per. Riv. p. 74]"

...for the soul of any person who brings dead matter to water or fire will never be liberated from hell.

The greatest single cause of pollution in Zoroastrian theology is death and so to bring any putrefying matter in direct contact with fire or water is a great sin [Vd. VII v. 25-27]. In fact it is said that [History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. I, p 302],

...to see the corpse of an *ashavan* (a Zoroastrian) without due ritual precaution robs the beholder of purity.

“ ... so it falls upon man to try and expel evil and its agent, pollution, from the creations through the observance of right conduct, ritual practice and prayer. ”

These injunctions are strictly observed and therefore for the above stated reasons, non-Zoroastrians are not allowed to see the face of a Zoroastrian corpse once the ritual bath (*Phl. sachkar*) is administered. Thereafter in a funeral ritual a *paiwand* (physical link) is maintained so that the *spenta* (holy) power of one person linked with another will give added ritual strength to make worship more effective, thereby weakening the power of evil and the consequent impurity.

Zoroastrians have a special sensitivity to both water and fire. Water is not regarded as the sole primary purifying medium in a scientific sense, and so one's ritual impurities cannot be washed away through the general use of water. Water has to be consecrated through a series of complex rituals involving prayers, as otherwise the water itself is vulnerable to pollution.

Zoroastrians see the world of water and indeed all the six creations as having the life force of Ahura Mazda within them and hence pollution,

which is the weapon of evil, should, as far as possible, be kept away from each of the seven creations.

Hence, Herodotus, the Greek historian and therefore no friend of the Persians, noted, “they have a profound reverence for the rivers; they will never pollute a river with urine or spittle...” He further stated, “the Persians believe that fire is a god and never burn their dead (on it)” [Histories 1.136, III 16].

## Ritual purity should not be confused with science

The Zoroastrian community must understand that the codes of purity are not injunctioned because of the notion of physical hygiene from a mere scientific point of view. It is not advisable for practicing Zoroastrians to confuse the role of ritual purity with those held in science as the purity codes are not to be relegated to the level of mundane sanitary codes.

The laws of purity and pollution should be seen within a religious framework, far removed from the answers which lab technicians and other secular specialists may give. Hence it is said, [Supplementary Texts to the *Shayest ne Shayest*, XX v. 4].

man ought to discharge these three duties every day: to ward off the demon of defilement (pollution) ... to proffer the faith and to perform meritorious acts.

Zoroastrian purity codes are structured to fight the affliction of evil which is seen as a force in both the physical and spiritual worlds, as there is no dichotomy or difference in a theological sense between these two worlds.

Angra Mainyu or Ahriman is not a spillover virus or merely a hygiene code, but is seen as the force of destruction which creates an imbalance in an otherwise structured and ordered world.

Physical bodily cleanliness is important and part and parcel of living a Zoroastrian life. However, the rea-

sons for maintaining cleanliness are those embedded in Zoroastrian theology and ritual practice, and are to be understood specifically within the framework of cosmic and ethical dualism. Samuel Laing and the Rev. John Wilson – both Christians, living in 19th century British India – argued that the codes of Zoroastrian ritual purity were linked to ‘polarity’, ‘hygiene’ and science, versus it being found in the theological and religious understanding of the faith itself. [“A Modern Zoroastrian” by Samuel Laing; “The Parsi Religion” by John Wilson].

The theological assumptions in Zoroastrianism are very different to those of Christianity, or for that matter to those of a Christian mindset. Parsi scholars of the 20th century also fell prey to this notion of confusing ritual purity with the code of hygiene. In particular, Dastur M. N. Dhalla and J. J. Modi took the Laing-Wilson paradigm, and saw the purity laws in Zoroastrianism as being in consonance with science. Appealing as this may be to the modern mind, the danger occurs when a given religious practice does not merit scientific approval, which is then dropped arbitrarily and a rationale is offered by those who wish to take this counter-religious position, as to why such practices should be rejected and abandoned within the modern context of the faith.

Hence purity laws, and the principles which lie behind practices, appertaining to menstruation, the cutting of hair, the paring of nails, walking barefoot, entering fire temples in a ritually impure state, the sipping of *nirang* during the *nahn* ritual, disposal of the dead and indeed many other codes of purity, which are theologically right, have been thrown to the wind.

Unfortunately, this rejection of the purity code is done without a proper study being undertaken as to the importance of maintaining at least

the principles, if not the detailed practices which Zoroastrians have adhered to faithfully, for thousands of years.

**Forms of religious pollution.** In the texts, different forms of religious pollution have been listed. Some impurities are expelled from the

“ The role of man is to remove the forces of evil from the world so as to contribute to the defense of the good creations, and its ultimate victory and redemption in order to bring about a cosmic salvation. ”

body, like urine, blood, semen and faeces, likewise some bodily functions like saliva and breath are also seen to be unclean ritually. Hair and nails once cut, are also seen to be sources of pollution. All these impurities fall under the general category of the Pahlavi term ‘*hikhr*’, that is whatever leaves the body in sickness or health is regarded as *daevic* and therefore ritually impure.

No *hikhr* should come into direct contact with a Zoroastrian, for if it does, then the person is contaminated and is seen to be in an impure state (Phl. *riman*). An awareness of the reasons which lie behind the codes of purity in Zoroastrianism should be understood first, in order to encourage the worshipper to experience the nuances of this reality.

The *manthra* for change, which may be applicable in everyday life should not be used as the reason to discard age-old traditions and practices, which have a definite bearing to final renovation of the world and a direct relevance in the physical and spiritual life of a Zoroastrian.

### Promotion of ritual purity in the fire temple

Ritual purity can be generated by qualified priests, through the performance of high inner rituals which are performed in the precincts of a fire temple or a ritually consecrated area. Through the format of prayer and

with the specific format of the ritual, the forces of evil are contained and a level of ritual purity is enhanced in the world with a concurrent weakening of impurity and pollution.

**High ‘inner rituals’.** In a fire temple, all the ritual implements have to be cleaned with well water (Phl. *pak*), then they have to be dried and made ritually pure (Phl. *paw*), and thereafter the implements are consecrated (Phl. *yashte*) for use in the high inner rituals by the priests. The *paw mahal* ceremonies require the ritual wearing of clean white

clothes and the wearing of the *padan* (Av. *paitidana*) by the priests whose ritual efficacy is enhanced if the laws of purity are followed carefully.

Ceremonies such as the *nirangdin*, *vendidad*, *yasna* and *baj* act as catalysts to promote harmony in the world. This means that if these rituals are done with greater regularity and frequency, then impurity and pollution, will through ritual action be lessened, bringing one closer in time to the eventual ‘Making Wonderful’ (Av. *frashokereti*).

### Padyab-i-kushti: individual ritual purity

Individual ritual purity can also be achieved through the performance of the *kushti* ritual which brings about an awareness of one’s commitment to Ahura Mazda as well as it affords a sense of ritual protection to the celebrant [*Saddar I*]. The act of performing the *padyab-i-kushti* wherein the *kushti* is untied and re-tied by the wearer is obligatory. If one through personal choice and free will, dispenses with this commitment, then it is construed to be “running around naked” (Phl. *wishad dwarishnih*) [*Shayest ne Shayest*, 4 v. 8].

The wearing of the *sudreh* and *kushti* is exclusively Zoroastrian and distinguishes the wearer from those of other faiths. A Zoroastrian cannot declare to be a “*Mazdayasno ahmi, mazdayasno Zarathushtrish*” without

accepting the responsibility of committing oneself to the basic tenets of the faith. Therefore, just before one unties the kushti a Zoroastrian recites the *Kemna Mazda* prayer in which one declares:

*Nase daevo druksh, nase daevo chithre, nase daevo frakarshite...*

Perish O! demonic fiend, perish you of demonic seed, perish O! demonic being...

and whilst re-tying the kushti with the recitation of the *Hormazd Kho-dae* prayer a Zoroastrian declares:

*Ahremen awadashan dur avaz dashtar; zad shekasteh bad...*

May Ahriman be kept away, driven afar and be destroyed.

Likewise, in the kushti ritual the Zoroastrian repents for the sins of bad thoughts, words and deeds in both the worlds, hence in the same prayer one declares:

*az an gunah manashni gavashni, kunashni tani ravani, geti minoani ohke awaksh pasheman.*

I am repentant for all the sins in the world of thought, word and deed of the body and of the soul, in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

This prayer clearly reflects the importance of the body and the soul, in both the worlds. Therefore, the performance of the padyab-i kushti is a must for all Zoroastrians, not only from the point of rejecting evil and impurity from the body and soul, but because both the sudreh and kushti are invested with great religious symbolism [Dd. XXXIX].

## The Nahn purificatory ceremony

The next level of religious purity is the 'nahn' ceremony in which the celebrant undergoes a four-stage purification. The nahn (Av. *sra*) is administered for a number of different occasions which include celebrations like the navjote and marriage. It is also undertaken, when a Zoroastrian woman requires to regain ritual purity after giving birth to a child, or when a Zoroastrian requires to purify

oneself after having had to deal with death in the family.

The nahn ritual cleanses the celebrant in order to receive the blessings from the divine or spiritual world. The celebrant is made to recite a formulae of prayers by a properly ordained priest, after which the person is made to chew three pomegranate leaves in order that the celebrant may taste the juice of immortality; the leaves are to be seen as an offering from the plant world. This part of the ritual is known as the 'jamvani baj':

*Itha aat yazamaide Ahurem Mazdam ye gamcha*

*ashemcha dat apascha dat urvaraoscha vanghuhish*

*raochooscha dat bumimcha vispacha vohu.*

Thus then we worship Ahura Mazda who created the waters and the good plants, who created light and the earth and all things good.

Thereafter the celebrant is made to recite in an intoned voice:

*In khuram pak-i-tan yozdathra-i ruvan ra.*

I drink this for the purification of the body and the soul.

**Nirang.** The celebrant takes three sips of a libation known as 'nirang'. This nirang is obtained after an elaborate and complex high liturgy which culminates in the transformation of gomez into consecrated nirang after an all-night prayer vigil by two priests who pray, continuously, with ritual exactness for over eight hours.

The full *Nirangdin* ceremony is spread over a period of 18 days. In the nahn ceremony, nirang cannot be substituted by any other liquid, as the whole purpose of sipping the nirang, is specifically "for the purity of the body and soul" and this cannot come about by sipping any other unconsecrated liquid.

In the Persian Rivayats [tr. by B. N. Dhabhar, p. 333] it is written:

The life of the religion is from nirang, and the life of nirang is from the high priest, and the life of the

high priest is from meritorious deeds and a virtuous disposition. Nirang is that which is prepared with *varas, hom, urvaram, parahom, manthra, zand* and the barsom; because although the body be black as charcoal, if it (i.e. nirang) be given for drinking, the light of God settles on it, and it becomes pure and bright like the sun."

Clearly the Persian Rivayats were carefully thought-of answers, given by learned Iranian dasturs from Yazd, Turkabad and Sharifabad to their Parsi counterparts in India mainly between the 15th and 17th centuries. This means that the importance and use of nirang were known to the Iranian high priests and so it is wrong to assume that the making and use of nirang was something which was developed by the Parsis in India.

The third phase of the nahn is to proceed for the ritual bath. Before the commencement of the bath, an elder lady member of the family performs an 'achoo michoo' ceremony in order that the blessings of the seven *amesha spentas* may enter the celebrant's body. During the bath the celebrant rubs a few drops of nirang onto the body whilst the priest standing outside recites the first part of the *Srosh Baj* prayer. Taking a bath with cold, well water completes the physical purification of the celebrant.

This is preceded by the psychological and spiritual purifications brought about through the chewing of the pomegranate leaves and the sipping of nirang, respectively. Thereafter, the celebrant emerges from the bathroom, wearing a set of clean clothes after which the kushti is retied and the nahn ceremony is deemed to be complete.

## Conclusion

The principles and the theology which underline the code of purity and pollution need to be understood clearly if it is not to become an impediment, but a weapon, to give the worshipper added strength and confidence in order to fight and

reject the forces of evil in the physical world, and in the hereafter.

Every Zoroastrian ritual is linked to the spiritual world as well as concurrently to the eschatological beliefs of the faith. The function of purity in the hereafter is to ensure the eventual expiation or putting out of action (Phl. *akerenoit*) of evil and pollution from both the worlds.

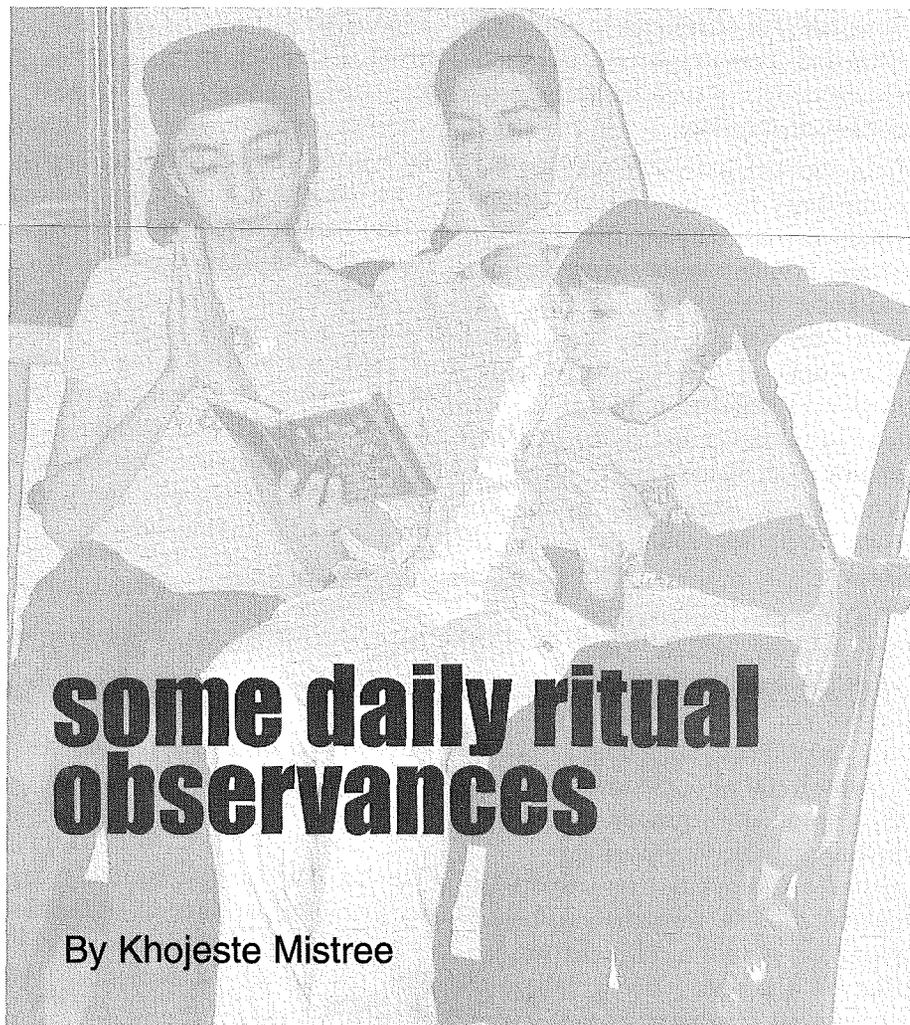
Prophet Zarathushtra saw the world within a dualistic framework of an unremitting conflict between the forces of goodness of which purity is a part, and the forces of evil, of which pollution is a part, with the latter continuously threatening the goodness and purity of Ahura Mazda's world.

The role of man is to remove the forces of evil from the world so as to contribute to the defense of the good creations, and its ultimate victory and redemption in order to bring about a cosmic salvation. For Ahura Mazda, it is said, declared [Vd. V.21]:

Purity is for man next to life,  
the greatest good; that purity  
O! Zarathushtra, that is in the  
religion of Mazda. ■

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**A thousand people cannot convince one by words, to the extent that one person can convince a thousand by action.** - [Dinkerd 6.15]



## some daily ritual observances

By Khojeste Mistree

Ritual observances give the worshippers a sense of devotion and worship so that through the sacred order enacted in the ritual, a Zoroastrian is able to re-establish one's link with the spiritual or divine world.

The Zoroastrian religion as followed by the Parsis of India and the Zoroastrians of Iran, is so diverse in its historical development, with each having its own unique identity, and so culturally integrated into the living traditions of the faith, that it is difficult to recognize at one level where religion begins and daily traditions and rituals end; nevertheless each in its own distinctive way has conferred a reciprocity of sacredness and meaning to the practice of the faith. This sacredness is conveyed and expressed, for the living and by the living in the ritual prac-

tices associated with the faith. Rituals serve as the functional interpretation of the religion and the practice of it asserts and creates the conditions, which ensure the survival of the religion for all times.

It is when there is a historical separation of religion from its ritual base, as happened in Ancient Greece – that the demise of the latter results in the demise of the former, that is the religion itself. Thus the practice of rituals is integral to upholding the faith. The corpus that forms the daily rituals as practiced by a Zoroastrian is not only inherited from past genera-

tions but it is continuously strengthened and recreated by the constant re-enactments of such rituals by generations that follow.

In an era of rapid social change, the complexity of the milieu within which Zoroastrians are living today, results in many inconsistencies and creates a strain on the practices of daily observances, forcing many to discontinue old practices. This cultural and ritual discontinuity can also lead to religious and social disintegration of an identity and a value system which emanates from the abandoning of such practices.

Thus, the practices of ritual observances which take place in traditional Parsi homes are done individually and collectively within a nuclear family. Rituals then are a set of practices involving purity, prayers, gestures and symbolism. Symbols enable one to formalize a belief paradigm within a religious formation of doctrine. Every religious observance is an expression of a very particular set of beliefs appertaining to a specific community.

Due to the limitations of space this article will largely address the common practices of the Parsis. It should be noted that a variety of daily rituals are followed by different people depending upon the traditions established by the families concerned.

## Ritual practice - an expression of beliefs

In order for a daily ritual to be classified as being part of mainstream classical Zoroastrianism, it must conform to, and be supported by, doctrinal beliefs; it must be in consonance with established practices that are wholly Zoroastrian in content and form; it must have its source in the religious texts, or in the long established oral tradition.

All ritual observances in Zoroastrianism aim at two main things – the

removal of evil and the sanctification of the act, which has its basis in the Zoroastrian understanding of the cosmic and ethical dualism that exists in the world. The goal of every Zoroastrian ritual is to purify the physical world and rid it of the affliction of evil. This purification is both ethical and ritual which every Zoroastrian should seek for oneself. Ritual observances also give the worshipers a sense of devotion and worship so that through the sacred order enacted in the ritual a Zoroastrian is able to re-establish one's link with the spiritual or divine world.

“ The corpus that forms the daily rituals is not only inherited from past generations but it is continuously strengthened and recreated by the constant re-enactments of such rituals by generations that follow. ”

Prophet Zarathushtra himself recognized the importance of praise and worship in order to enhance the ritual dimension of experience. He declared,

**I shall seek to glorify Him through worship and piety... [Ys. 45.10]**

**Praising, I shall encounter You with such worship O Wise One ... [Ys. 50.9]**

Clearly worship entails the enactment of rituals which establishes a structure or order so that one is able to create a link and harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds, within the confines of a sacred space. This furthers ritual purity and results in the removal of evil in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

## Daily observances in the life of a Zoroastrian

The daily observances to be followed by a Zoroastrian revolve largely around the enactment of the *padyab-i-kushti* ritual, the lighting of the daily *divo*, and the propitiation of the home fire in the *afarganyu*.

**Padyab-i-kushti.** A traditional Zoroastrian on rising in the morning

recites the *Shikasteh Shikasteh Shaetan* prayer and then unties the *kushti* on recitation of the *Ashem Vohu* and reties it on the *Hormazd Khodae* and *Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda* prayers. One then proceeds to wash the hands and face. The next ritual act is to greet the rising sun after which the *kushti* is untied upon the recitation of the *Kemna Mazda* prayer (which was omitted in the earlier *kushti* ritual). After this one bathes and then the *kushti* is retied on reciting the *Hormazd Khodae* prayer and *Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda* (without the recitation of the *Kemna Mazda*) prayer.

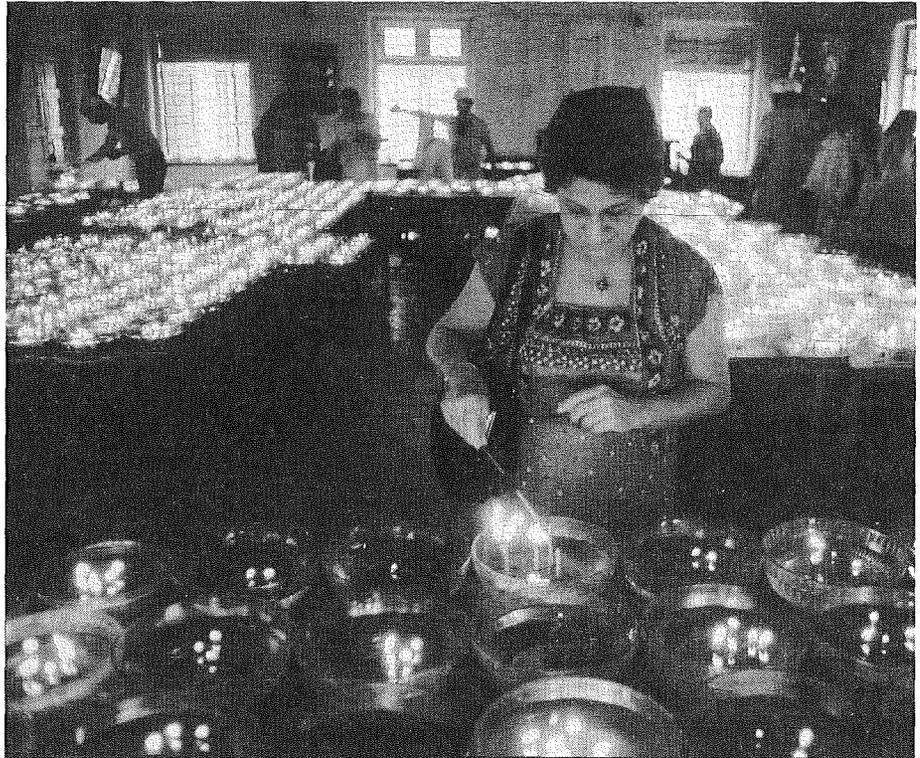
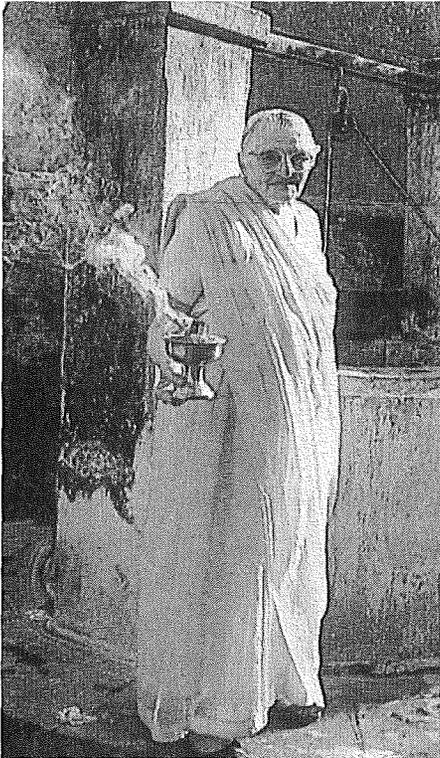
Next the *farazyat* or obligatory prayers are recited. These prayers can vary from individual to individual but in the main consist of the *Srosh Baj*, *gah* prayers, *Khorshed* and *Mehr Nyaeshs* and on *hamkara*

days, the *yasht* or another *nyaesh* associated with Hormazd, Ardibehesht, Adar, Srosh or Behram are recited. Thus on Hormazd Roz, *Hormazd Yasht* is recited with the other obligatory prayers.

In the past, the *farazyat* prayers were also recited by many individuals after sunset and before taking the evening meal. This evening formulae of prayers included the *kushti* ritual, *gah* prayers, *Cherag no Namaskar*, the *Srosh Yasht Vadi* and the *Atash* and *Mah Bokhtar Nyaeshs*. (The *Khorshed*, *Mehr* and *Avan Nyaeshs* are not recited once the sun sets).

Before retiring to bed the *kushti* ritual is done once more. This is mandatory as this ritual is meant to safeguard and protect the individual when asleep. At night when the moon has risen, Zoroastrians face the moon and recite a litany of praise by way of the *Mah Bokhtar Nyaesh*, thanking the moon for the light it casts upon the earth.

Practicing priests and traditional lay people do their *kushti* ritual at every *gah* change and after visiting the rest room as part of their obligatory purificatory rite, technically called the *padyab-i-kushti*.



Left, the fragrance of the *sukhad* and *loban* wafting through the rooms of the house removes evil, in a ritual sense. [PHOTO BY SOONI TARAPOREVALA, COURTESY "A ZOROASTRIAN TAPESTRY, ART, RELIGION & CULTURE" BY PHEROZA J. GODREJ & FIROZA PUNTHAKY MISTREE]. Right, devotees visit the *Aslaji* fire temple to light a *divo* on the day and month dedicated to *Meher* [PHOTO COURTESY "ZOROASTRIANS OF INDIA – PARSIS: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY" BY SOONI TARAPOREVALA].

**Lighting a divo.** In a Zoroastrian home it is customary to have an oil lamp (*divo*) burning continuously in honor of the *yazata* or divinity of the day. Some Parsi families light an oil lamp only on *hamkara* days or on any other auspicious occasion in the family.

**The home fire.** A ritual particular to Zoroastrians involves taking a small incense burner (*lobandan* or *afarganyu*) with burning embers of coal, upon which are placed shavings of sandalwood [photo above]. This is



taken around the house, while reciting as many *Ashem Vohus* as possible. Generally the *afarganyu* is taken from the kitchen, first to the front door, which is opened so that the fragrance can spread from the main entrance through the whole house. The *afarganyu* is taken room by room and then brought to rest on the *prayer*

*table* [photo below] or in the prayer niche generally kept in a corner away from direct access. This ritual is performed twice in the day at sunrise and sunset.

It is believed that the fire of the *afarganyu* establishes a sense of *Asha*, which is truth, order and righteousness in the house. The fragrance removes evil in a ritual sense and in so doing, re-establishes peace, harmony and well being for those in the home.

The sanctity of the prayer table should be maintained by not approaching it, without taking a bath, without covering one's head, or if one is menstruating, or physically dirty. Thus it would not be appropriate to light a *divo*, or recite prayers, or touch the prayer table, if for example, one is dirty in a physical sense, or if one is in a ritually unclean state.

This injunction is common to many religions such as Orthodox Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. In the past, orthodox Catholics as well as those from the Eastern Church had similar ritual prohibitions.

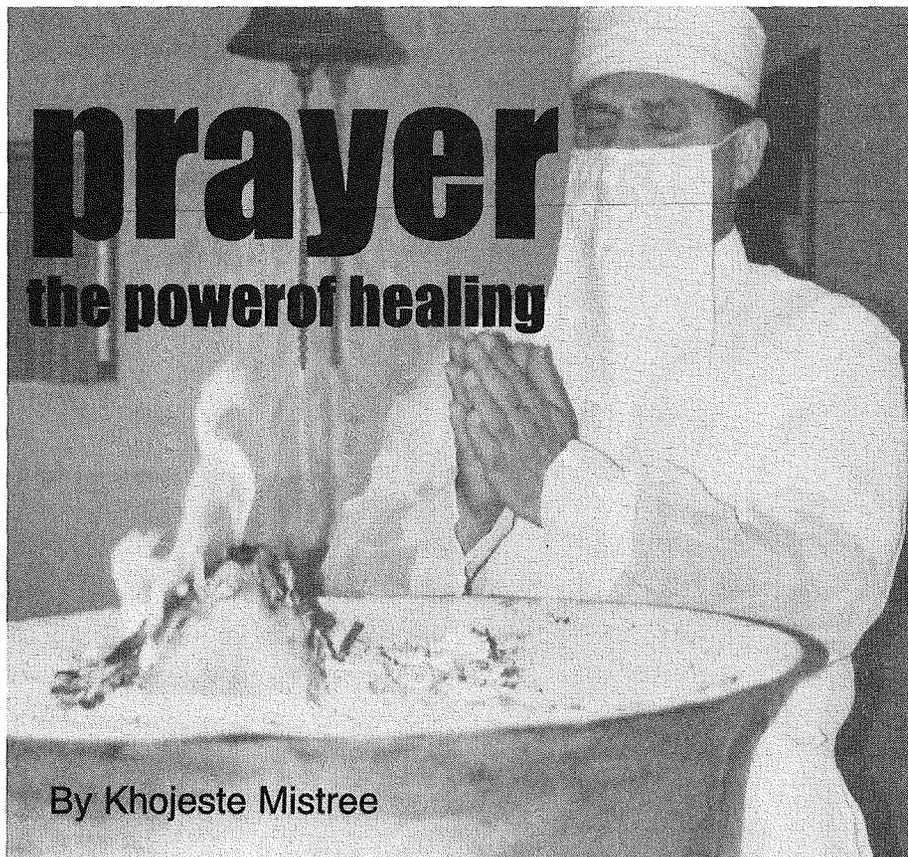
Thus for the establishment of sacredness the physical world has to be made clean (*pak*) and all the ritual implements have to be ritually pure (*paw*) and consecrated (*yashte*). When this transformation happens in the physical world, then a link or communication can be possible with the spiritual world through the actual performance of the ritual itself. Purity has to be maintained at all costs, if the ritual is to be sacred and efficacious through the power of prayers. The liturgical invocations are a kind of invitation for the divine beings (*yazatas*) who are invoked through the medium of prayer.

**Visiting the fire temple.** Zoroastrians go to the fire temple to thank the holy fire, who is seen as "the son of Ahura Mazda..." [At. Ny. v.6] for

protection and well being given to the worshipper. Every Zoroastrian is expected to perform the *padyab-ikushti* before entering the inner precincts of the fire temple. The focal point of worship should be the holy fire which is given an offering of sweet scented wood. A *divo* is lit as one's affirmation or allegiance to the *Padshasaheb* (a sacred fire is traditionally addressed as the 'Lord-King'). Moneys are left by way of a thank you to the priest who tends the fire. Kissing of photo frames and worshipping any other icon should not be part of main stream Zoroastrian worship.

A Zoroastrian should go to the fire temple to pray with fervor and a commitment, as well as to seek communion with the "son of Ahura Mazda", and in so doing, upon completion of the spiritual audience with the holy fire, ember ash (Guj. *rakhia*) should be applied at the midpoint of one's forehead, as a mark of respect to the divine king of the Zoroastrians. Soon upon leaving the inner precinct of the fire temple, the sacred ash is rubbed off, so that the ash doesn't fall on non-sacred ground.

These traditions and customs, have been sustained over the centuries, as part of the oral tradition giving the community an identity and a sense of religious strength. This religiosity has resulted in an orthopraxy which has been the cementing factor which has kept the community together in devotion and worship, ensuring the survival of the faith to the present time. ■



By Khojeste Mistree

Zoroastrian prayers have a multi dimensional role. We have prayers of ethical instruction, like the hymns of the prophet, we have prayers offering worship, like the *nyaeshs* and *yasna*, and we have prayers of well being, such as the *Doa Tandarosti*. Within this entire corpus of liturgy we also have formulae of holy words known as *nirang*. Since ancient times prayers have been used for the purpose of healing. It is believed that through the power of a set formulae of prayers (*nirang*) a Zoroastrian is able to contest the forces of evil and restore balance and harmony in the world.

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## Prayer - a link between the physical and spiritual

The Avestan term for the holy word is 'manthra' and a string of manthras forms a *yasna*, which translates as prayer or praise.

What then is prayer? It is a medium or vehicle of communication between man and the spiritual world. A *yasna* or prayer enables a Zoroastrian to gain access into a subtler dimension of reality, a dimension that takes one beyond the sense or tangible state. Thus, prayer acts as the link between the seen and unseen worlds, namely the physical and spiritual worlds. It is said [Ys. 61.1],

... and let us send forth in our liturgies between heaven and earth, the holy prayer of the righteous man for blessings...

In prophet Zarathushtra's hymns, he extols,

He wishes O Wise Lord to recite hymns of praise for us and for the Truth (Av. *Asha*), if he might receive for himself the 'sweetness of speech' (Av. *hudemem vakhedrahya*).

In other words it is through the 'sweetness of speech' that a Zoroastrian is able to generate a gnosis of understanding truth, for within the holy word lies the potential good deed. The prayer or formulated utterances may be likened to truth itself. Truth or *Asha* is the world of Ahura Mazda, which affirms itself to that which is right. Good words offer results in good deeds and prayers are clearly good words, which therefore have the potential to produce good deeds or good actions.

Remember, that Zoroastrian prayers can never be used for evil purposes, as the religion of Zarathushtra upholds a cosmic dualism, where only that which is right and good can ever come from the world of Ahura Mazda and so it follows that evil, disease, pain, suffering and indeed death, cannot be attributed to the working of the Wise Lord.

Thus, it is held that prayers or holy words equip a Zoroastrian [Ys. 61.1]

for the encounter with and the displacement of Angra Mainyu with his creatures, which are likewise evil as he is, for evil is filled with death...

In the *Srosh Yasht Hadokht* [3.v.3] it is stated that:

...the faithful one who pronounces most words of blessings is the most victorious in victory; the holy word (*manthra spenta*) takes best, the unseen 'druj' (evil) away.

“ A prayer uttered with appropriate ritual preparedness and motivation, generates a kind of power which helps one overwhelm the forces of evil. ”

The implication of this is that a prayer uttered with appropriate ritual preparedness and motivation, generates a kind of power (Phl. *amal*), which helps a Zoroastrian to overwhelm the forces of evil.

### The yazata Srosh, Lord of Prayer

The *yazata/yazad* Srosh is recognised to be the Lord of Prayer. One of Srosh's epithets is 'tanu manthra', that is, 'whose body is the sacred word'.

*Sraoshahe ashyehe takhmahe*

propitiation to Srosh accompanied by Ashi, the valiant,

*tanumanthrahe darshi draosh ahuvryehe* [Ys. 57.1]

the embodiment of the sacred word, the strong, weaponed one, the follower of Ahura.

It is through the medium of prayer that a Zoroastrian is given the strength and discipline to battle against the many forms of evil.

In the Avesta, Srosh is the only *yazata* to have two hymns dedicated in his honor. In the Gathas, he is recognised to be the greatest of all (Av. *vispe mazisstem*) [Ys. 33.5]. Srosh is the key *yazata* who can smite evil and that means disease, hence we pray:

*yo janta daevayao drujo ash, aojangho ahum merecho...*

[Ys. 57.15]

Who (is) the smiter of the very strong demoness *druj*? (who is) the destroyer of life ...

In the same *yasna* we declare:

*paro vispe daeva anuso tarshata nemante tarshata temangho dvarenti* [Ys. 57.18]

all the demons, flee from him, fearful, against their will, fearful they hurry into darkness

A few verses further we recite [Ys. 57.22]:

*yenghe ahuno vairyo snaithish, visata verethraja yasnascha.*

*Haptanghaitish fshushascha Manthro yo varethragnish vispaoscha yasno. Keretayo*

to whom the Ahuna *vairya* prayer, served as a victorious weapon and *Yasna*.

Haptanghaiti and the Fshusho Manthra the victorious, and all recitation of acts of worship.

Within Srosh Yazata lives the power to frighten away the demons of disease and death. Moreover Srosh whose body is the *Ahunavar*, that is the victorious weapon to ward away evil, is by these attributes able to protect the body. Hence we declare:

*Ahunem vairim tanum pait* [Vd 11.3, and baj of Srosh]

The *Ahunavar* protects the body

In the *Rashne Yasht*, Zarathushtra is said to have asked Ahura Mazda "what of the Holy Word is created true?" and Ahura Mazda replied:

the most glorious word itself, this is what in the Holy word is created true, that which is created progress making... that which is healthful, wise and happy, that which is more powerful to destroy than all other creatures.

[Yt.12 v.2]

Prayer in other words gives one an existential experience of well being, good health and the power to fight evil. Not only that, but prayer also helps one to grow internally, in a spiritual way. In the *Yasht* fragment it is said [Ys. 21 v.4]:

For the reciting of the word of truth ‘ O Zarathushtra, the pronouncing of that formula, the Ahuna Vairya increases strength and victory in one’s soul and piety.

The *Yatha Ahu vairyo* is the prayer of creation and it stems from the pure light of Ahura Mazda, so that when one recites it properly with the right intonation and consciousness, then from that prayer emerges a spirit, the spirit of Ahura Mazda – hence in Gujarati we say “*Yatha thahri madad*”. Ahura Mazda himself created the holy word out of his own self, out of his own astral light. Hence it is said that “the holy word is the soul of Ahura Mazda” [*Ys. 13.8*].

In the Persian Rivayats it is said [*Per. Riv. p. 10*],

The Creator Ohrmazd has given injunction unto Zarathushtra that *Yatha Ahu vairyo* is the smiter of the demons and the protector of body.

### Prayers of healing: the formulae of nirang

Zoroastrian prayers have a multi dimensional role. We have prayers of ethical instruction, like the hymns of the prophet, we have prayers offering worship, like the *nyaeshs* and *yasna*, and we have prayers of well being, such as the *Doa Tandorosti*. Within this entire corpus of liturgy we also have formulae of holy words known as ‘*nirang*’. There are different compilations of nirangs or incantations, which are normally sandwiched between a *baj*, which is referred to in everyday usage as the *baj levani ne baj mukvani kriya* – that is “the taking and leaving of the *baj*, within which the *nirang* is sandwiched.”

Since ancient times Zoroastrian prayers have been used for the purpose of healing. It is believed that through the power of a set formulae of prayers a Zoroastrian is able to contest against the forces of evil and restore balance and harmony in the world. Imbalance is theologically seen as evil, and therefore when a person is ill, the religious perspective is that there is an imbalance within

the person, which stems from the affliction of evil. If there is an affliction, which is always considered to be evil, then a Zoroastrian must learn to fight it and one of the modes of fighting this evil, is through the use of nirangs or formulae of prayers.

“ Since ancient times Zoroastrian prayers have been used for the purpose of healing ... through the power of prayers a Zoroastrian is able to contest against the forces of evil and restore balance and harmony in the world. ”

In Zoroastrianism, healing is not just the curing of human illness, but it is the act of restoring order and harmony in the body and the world around one. In the ancient texts, we find scriptural references confirming the prayer connection to healing. In the Vendidad it is said [*Vd. 7 v.44*],

let one apply the healing by the holy word (mantra) for this one is the best healing of all the healers.

**Five forms of healing.** In the *Ardibehsht Yasht* five forms of healing are explicitly mentioned [*Ard Yt. v6*]:

*Asho baeshazo, dato-baeshazo*

one who heals by means of righteousness, one who heals by means of law and justice

*kareto-baeshazo, urvaro baeshazo*

one who heals by means of a knife, one who heals by means of plants

*manthro baeshazo baeshazanam, baeshazyotemo yat manthrem-spentem,*

one who heals by means of the word. But the one who heals by means of the holy word

*baeshazyo ... aesho zi asti baeshazanam baeshazyotemo*

he indeed is the best amongst all the healers.

This shows that the most efficacious form of healing is achieved through prayers. Ardibehesht represents the Best Order in a physical sense and so illness, which is a form of disorder in the body, has to be tackled with a formulae of prayers which restores order back into the body of the person. Ardibehesht is also the Best Truth and is directly linked to Ahura Mazda and therefore it falls upon the yazata Ardibehesht to drive away sickness, the evil forces and indeed death [*Ard Yt v7*]:

*Yaska apa dvarata mahrka apa dvarata*

perish O sickness , perish O death

*daeva apa dvarata, paityara apa dvarata*

perish O demons, perish O opponents

Hence in the *nirang of the Ardibehesht Yasht* which one recites three times the last section runs as:

*Dadar e-pak, Ahriman napak*

Ohrmazd, the Creator, is pure, Ahriman is impure

*Ahriman khakh shavad, Ahriman dur shavad,*

may Ahriman be turned to dust, may Ahriman be driven afar

*Ahriman dafe shavad, Ahriman skekasteh shavad,*

may Ahriman be driven afar, may Ahriman be vanquished

*Ahriman halak shavad. Aval din-e Zarathushti pak.*

may Ahriman be overcome the foremost is the pure religion of Zarathushtra

Ahura Mazda buland Kavi beh awazuni – Ashaone – Ashem vohu

Ahura Mazda is exalted, glorious, good and the increaser

**Healing by high inner rituals.** There are two forms within the art of healing, one which is done by way of high inner rituals and the other by way of the use of nirangs.

The high inner rituals are performed by *yozdathragar* priests within the

precinct of the *Urvis gah* in the fire temple. For example to avoid famine or any other natural disasters, the Yasna of *Hom* is celebrated [*Per Riv. p.278*].

To ward away sickness as many *Meher Nyaeshs* as possible should be recited on Roz Meher, with an equal number of *Hom Yashts*, together with the performance of a *Fireshte*. In the morning a Yasna in honor of Ardafravash should be performed in the name of Faredoon. Why Faredoon, because according to Chapter 20 of the Vendidad, it is stated that *Thraetano* (Faredoon) was the first person in the world who was given 10,000 healing plants by Ahura Mazda. However, in the Persian Rivayats [*Per. Riv. p. 279*] it is stated that,

hence many nirangs and *afsun* (charms) with the intermixture of certain Avestan texts are composed in the name of Faredoon to ward off illness

### Healing by recitation of nirang.

The other root for the Zoroastrian healer is the nirang path – nirangs are formulae of prayers to be recited in a specified format. There are many nirangs, which can be used for a multitude of purposes. To be a successful nirang practitioner or healer, one has to maintain a high form of ritual purity:

... a righteous man 'O' Spitama Zarathushtra who is a purifier who should be a speaker that speaks truly, and an enquirer of the sacred texts... and one who understands the purification from the religion of the Mazdayasnians that is he understands its religious formulae, the nirangs.

[*Sh ne Sh. 12 v23*]

Moreover it is stated:

... that the life of the religion is from nirangs. [*Per. Riv. p.333*]

Nirangs normally are passed down orally within the priestly tradition and sometimes vary in content and form. However, one must be very careful today not to fall prey to a number of made up, erroneous nirangs which Zoroastrians recite

often from a position of blind faith rather than proper understanding.

**Structure of the nirang.** The formulae of the nirang is sandwiched in a *baj*. We have, for example:

*Ohrmazd ni baj*  
*Ardibehesht ni baj*  
*Srosh ni baj*  
*Hom Yazad ni baj*  
*Vanant Yazad ni baj*  
*Teshtar Yazad ni baj*  
*Spendarmad ni baj*  
*Shah Faredoon ni baj*  
*Behram Yazad ni baj*

The general structure of the nirang format is more or less the same. First one must perform the *padyab-ikushti* and then one takes the *baj* with the words:

*Khshnaothra Ahurahe mazdao.*  
*Ashem vohu (1)*

Then the introductory formula, as given hereunder begins:

*Pa name yazdan Ahura*  
*Mazda Khodae*

In the name of God,  
may the bountiful

*awazuni gurz khvarahe awazayat*  
power and glory of  
Ohrmazd increase

Then one takes the invocation of the specific divinity, for example if it is Srosh:

*Srosh-i asho-i-tag-i tan farman-i*  
*shkaft zinizin awazar-i salar i-dama-*  
*i hormazd be rasat*

This is followed by the words:

*Fravarane mazdayasno*  
*Zarathushtrish*

I declare to be a worshipper  
of Wisdom, a follower of  
Zarathushtra

*Vidaevo Ahura tkaesho* (and then the relevant *gah* prayer)

against the demons and an upholder  
of Ahuric teachings

Next one recites a small *kshnuman* of the divinity concerned, in this case Srosh:

*Sroshhe ashyehe takhmahe, tanu*  
with propitiation of Srosh,  
accompanied with rewards

*manthrahe darshi drash Ahuiryehe*

the brave, who has the sacred  
word of the body, with bold club,  
the Ahurian

*khshnaothra, yasnaicha vahmaicha,*  
for worship, for adoration,

*khshnaothraicha frasastayaecha,*  
for propitiation and praise,

*Yatha Ahu vairyo zaota fra me mrute*  
Let the divine priest make known to  
me, the *Ahunavar*

*atha ratush ashat chit hacha fra*  
so also the spiritual world guide  
(Zarathushtra) in accordance with

*Ashava vidhvao mraotu*

With truth, the righteous knowing  
one, will proclaim to me...

This is then followed by the larger *khshnuman*:

*Sraoshem ashim huraodhem*  
*verethrajanem*

We worship *Srosh* accompanied  
by *Ashi*

*Fradat gaethem ashavanem*

Well formed, victorious,  
increaser of the world

*Ashahe ratum yazamaide...*

We worship the righteous spiritual  
judge of the righteous

Thereafter the nirang is recited once, twice or however many times and always ends with one *Ashem vohu*.

The next stage is what is called *baj mukwani kriya*.

After having recited the main nirang, one generally prays two *Yatha Ahu Vairyos* followed by the words:

*Yasnemcha vahmemcha aojascha*

I bless, praise, desire, the strength,  
*Zavarecha afrinami...*

and the force of (name of divinity)

Here again the small *khshnuman* which was repeated earlier, is recited, followed by one *Ashem vohu*.

The last part of the nirang, always begins and ends with a set formulae of prayers: *Ahmai raescha, Hazangarem, Jasa me avanghe Mazda* and *Kerfeh Mozd*. ■



### Invoking Behram Yazad in times of difficulty

The ritual of *Mushkil Aasan*, also known as *Moshgel Goshay* is observed by many traditional Zoroastrian families in times of difficulty. It is believed that Behram Yazad (Av. *Verethragna*, Phl. *Vahram*) comes to one's aid, when invoked through the recitation of the "Story of Mushkil Aasan" (about a poor wood-cutter) and the *nirang* in honor of Behram Yazad.

A table is laid [photo above] with: a tray with offerings of grams, cardamom, sugar crystals, flowers, dried dates and some sweets, a *Khordeh Avesta* prayer book, a photograph of Zarathushtra, a *Mushkil Aasan* icon, and a divo, known in Gujarati as the '*Mushkil Aasan no divo*'.

It is a simple ritual which involves the shelling of grams while narrating the story, with another person affirming the same. After the recitation of the *nirang* the mixture of grams, dried dates, and sweets are distributed to other Zoroastrians. This ritual is done either every Tuesday or on a Friday, or it is done on the days dedicated to Hormazd or Behram.

To order the booklet with the story and the *nirang*, contact Khojeste Mistree, Zoroastrian Studies, [zstudies@vsnl.com](mailto:zstudies@vsnl.com). [PHOTO BY FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE, COURTESY "A ZOROASTRIAN TAPESTRY, ART, RELIGION & CULTURE" BY PHEROZA J. GODREJ & FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE]. ■



# Lest We Forget

By Dinaz Kutar Rogers

### Do you remember any stories or sayings?

"Lest We Forget" is hosted by Dinaz Kutar Rogers, a high-school biology teacher and published writer. Readers are invited to contribute their stories, lores, legends and memories related to our faith, community, Iran, India, that we grew up with as young children. Jot down those sayings your mother used to say, and send them in, with your version of the meanings, to Dinaz at 1240 Takena SW, Albany, Oregon 97321, tel: (541) 967-1911, email: [drogersor@msn.com](mailto:drogersor@msn.com).

## The Kurds A legacy from the Shah Nameh

The recent spotlight on the Kurds in Project Iraqi Freedom brought to mind an excellent book "*Children of the Jinn: In Search of the Kurds and their Country*" by Margret Khan [Seaview Books, New York 1980]. The author asserts that, long before they had to yield to Islam, the Kurds were firmly Zarathushtis, celebrating Nouruz on 21st March, constructing and worshipping in fire temples, believing in the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil, and speaking a language much like Persian. According to Khan, there is a very quaint lore about where most of these light-haired and light-skinned Kurds came from (but one must bear in mind that not all Kurds look like this). King Solomon banished 500 *Jinns* from his kingdom to the far away Zagros mountains in northwestern Iran. Before settling into this exile, these resourceful *Jinns* decided to bring with them 500 virgin brides from Europe. They settled in a place called Kurdistan.

FEZANA Journal carried an article about the Yazidi Kurds [Spring 1999] based on an article "Are the Kurds Zoroastrians?" by Arnavaz Mama [Parsiana, March 1992]; and Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi touches upon it in her "Sunday Stories" [FEZANA Journal, Spring 2003]. Here I will relate the story of Zohak and how the Kurds came to be, as I recall it from my childhood.

# The Brave Feraydun and the Rooster (who saved the world from the evil Zohak)

By Dinaz Kutar Rogers

*“Mar-ray moo-voel/moo-vee Juh-vaak jevol/jevi che”*

“May you die, you cursed person, you are just like Juhvaak.”

My grandmother, rained down such thunderbolt-like pronouncements on strangers and family alike when they were deemed nasty or crooked, or in any way brought shame on family, our Parsi community, or our Zarathushti faith. Or she would yell this out, at times out of sheer frustration or for a melodramatic effect.

Later, upon reading the *Shah Nameh*, I discovered that the name was Zohak and not Juhvaak. But, such is the charm of the mangled Gujarati language in the hands of the Parsis; the zee-sound mutated to a juh-sound, especially among our elders not exposed to the English language. Give us anything and we’ll make it our very own, after all we own the word ‘our’—*aapro, aapri, and aproo!*

**Storytime.** When we were children, my brother Maneck and I would play all over our tiny two bedroom flat and at times on one of the high beds, made from beautiful black teakwood. He would also entertain, amuse, and most of the time, frighten me with stories. “A long time ago on the top of a mountain in Iran, an evil man was bound and chained to some rocks by our brave Fareydun.

“Each night, this evil Juhvaak would gnaw away the chains to a point where they could be easily snapped. But as he was about to break free and unleash his terror upon the world, the crowing of the rooster would herald sunrise. Lo and behold, by the powers of the rays of the rising sun, the chains grew back to their original thickness. Angry and frustrated at these powers of light and goodness,

next night Juhvaak would start chewing the chain all over again.”

No matter how many times my brother told me this story, I was always pleased and relieved that Fareydun had saved yet another day for truth and goodness, and the world was safe from evil and bad people like Juhaak .

**Rooster heralds a new day.** It has often been recounted that as the poet William Blake watched the sunrise he would greet its arrival with an exuberant shout “Holy! Holy! Holy!” Now, come to think of it, could this be the reason why rooster is a forbidden food at the Parsi dinner table? [See “The Much Revered Rooster” below].

On festive, auspicious occasions such as Pateti-Navroze, Jamshedi-Navroze, or birthdays, a ‘*marghi*’, a live female chicken was bought at Crawford Market and prepared for cooking by my grandmother and mother.

“Always buy a *marghi*, never a *margho!*” was the lesson passed on to us.



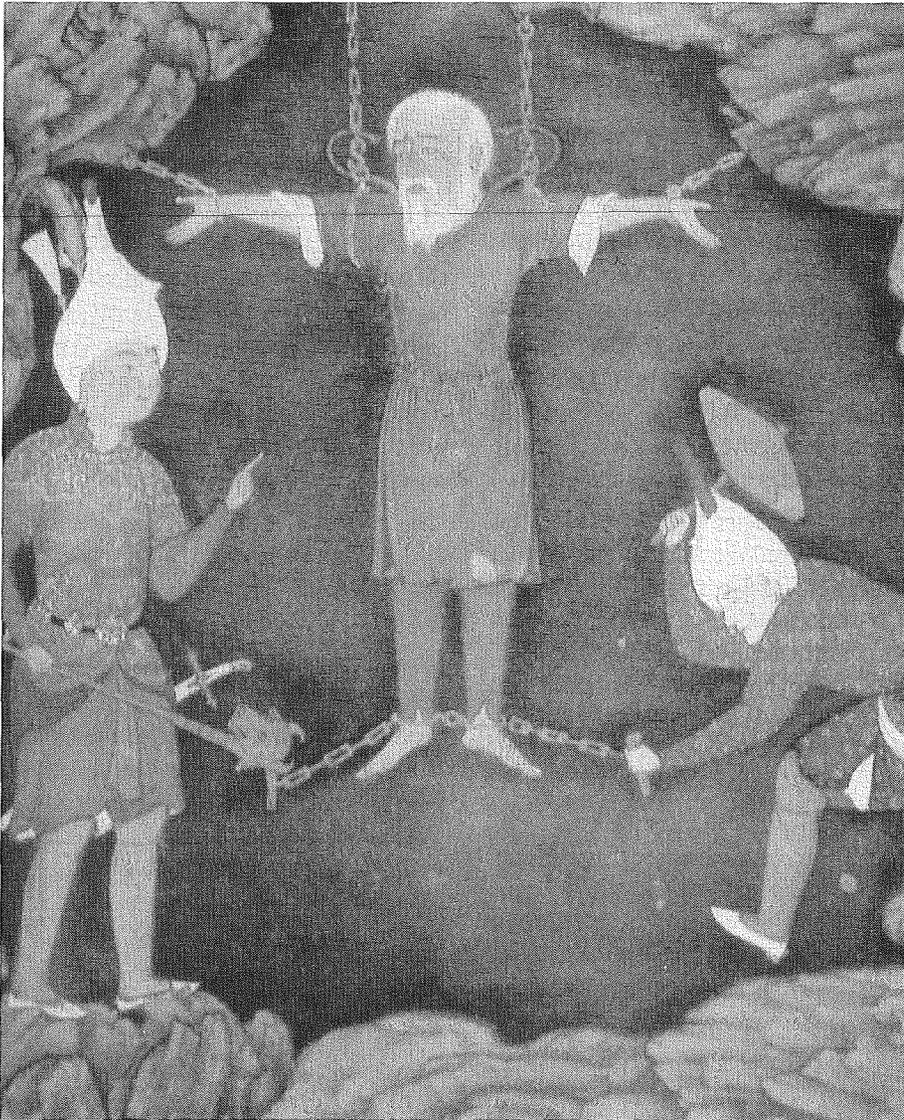
## The much-revered domestic rooster

Zarathushtis adhere strictly to the adage “*Margho nahi kaapvo*” (‘A rooster must never be sacrificed’). Not surprisingly, among their culinary delights are *marghi naa faarchaa* (marinated/battered fried portions of hen), *marghi no pulaav* (saffron-flavored rice with pieces of hen), etc. – it is always a ‘*marghi*’, never a ‘*margho*’. There is an appropriate saying in Gujarati “*Maahri paasey margho kapaavio*” (‘I was made to cut the rooster’) when one is ‘reluctantly obligated into doing a generally forbidden and unpleasant task.’

In our scriptures the divinity *Usha*, personifying the glory of dawn, is the Yazata of Glowing Optimism and Hope. Even Asho Zarathushtra reveres *Usha* in *Gatha Ushtavaiti* [Ys. 44.5] and *Gatha Spenta Mainyu* [Ys. 50.10]. The recital of *Usha Baami* (*Hoshbam*) at the time nearing dawn, between the end of *Ushahin Gah* and the glow of dawn, is a tranquil prayer during the early hours. Called ‘*parodars*’ in Avestan, the bird is considered ‘knowledgeable’ in *Hadokht Nask* [verse 41] since “it listens attentively to these recitations, attaining wisdom as it walks away.”

During Avestan times, in an economy based on the slow cycle of the soil, the early morning crowing of the rooster was a most welcome sound. It heralded a new day with growing optimism and with no place at all for inactivity, void, negative attitudes or procrastination.

- Sam Kerr



*Left, Zohak is imprisoned in a cave at Mt. Demavand. Feraydun is at left, holding the ox-headed mace.*

[PHOTO COURTESY "THE LION AND THE THRONE" EHSAN YARSHATAR, DICK DAVIS, STUART CARY WELCH, MAGE PUBLISHERS].

*The ox-headed mace ('garood') is still used in Zarathushti rituals.*

*Above, Kaizad, son of the author's cousin Phiroze D. Kutar, carries a silver 'garood' for his navar initiation, at the family home on Kutar Street, Navsari, in the 1980s.*

mals, seasoned, marinated, and cooked in wines, saffron, roses and other spices. Zohak was so pleased with these new and exotic delights of the palate, that he promised "anything you wish" to Satan.

Delighted, Satan asked only to kiss Zohak's shoulders and after doing so, Satan rubbed his eyes and nose where he had planted his kisses, and then disappeared. Lo and behold, two black serpents sprang from Zohak's shoulders. When all methods to get rid of them failed, Zohak ordered them cut off. Unfortunately the serpents grew back, every time.

Satan, this time disguised as a physician, advised Zohak that the only solution was to feed the two serpents with a daily menu of two human

brains. Satan knew that this would eventually, lead to the annihilation of the human race, a scenario that brought much delight to Satan.

Meanwhile in Iran, after 700 years of amity, contentment, harmony, and abundance, Iran's King Jamshid's ego got the better of him. Modesty was replaced by arrogance, disdain, and insolence and he ordered his people to worship him as a god. This repelled and angered his people and the leaders among them turned to Zohak, who eventually sat on the Iranian throne.

Jamshid fled but was hunted down and brutally killed by Zohak. Thus began Zohak's one-thousand-year reign when killings, rape, arson, plunder, and other incarnations of evil rained down upon Iran. Zohak

enslaved and corrupted Jamshid's daughters Arnavaz and Shernaz.

The worst obscenity among many was the nightly ritual of putting two young men, taken from all social and economic ranks, to death and their brains fed to the two black serpents. Fortunately for Iran, righteousness prevailed in the form of two royal Iranians, Armayal and Garmayal, who devised a plan to mix the brain of only one victim with that of a sheep's brain. The lucky man whose life was spared was told to flee as far away as possible.

One by one, night after night, they fled, homeless and always mobile, leaving behind a legacy, *a people known as the Kurds*.

One night, in his dreams, Zohak saw his own doom riding toward him in

the form of three men; Fareydun, the youngest among them, carried a mace; its tip in the shape of a cow's head. The astrologers interpreted the dream as a foreshadowing of Zohak's death and the thought of his death frightened Zohak greatly. In order to divert his fate, Zohak's spies, captured, tortured, and killed Fareydun's father. Fareydun and his mother fled to safety in the Elburz Mountains.

Desperate, Zohak summoned local Iranian leaders so that he could build a formidable army to ward off the future threat from Fareydun.

During this meeting, a blacksmith, **Kavah**, cried out for justice and mercy; all but one of his eighteen sons had been killed, their brains served as food for the two serpents. Fearing a grieving father's anguish and wrath, Zohak spared Kavah's one son, but not before he asked Kavah to sign a proclamation that he had forced other Iranians to sign. This stated, in Zohak's words, that Zohak was a good, honest, merciful, and moral man. Infuriated at this blatant lie and the acquiescence of other Iranians, Kavah stormed out. This bold move inspired others to do the same. The revolt against Zohak had taken root.

At sixteen, Fareydun implored his mother to tell him about his heritage. She told him all, including about the destruction of their home and that the brain of his father had been fed to the serpents. Outraged, Fareydun set out to free Iran of this evil and eventually managed, with the help of this mace, to capture Zohak.

As Fareydun was about to kill him, the angel Sarosh interceded; the time was not right for Zohak to die. Instead, Fareydun was to bind Zohak in enormous metal chains and leave him in the caves at the top of Mount Demavand 18,600 feet high in the Elburz Mountains, where neither his family nor his cohorts could rescue him.

"All through the night, the enraged and frustrated Zohak would eat away at his chains. As he was about to break the last, thin, chewed-up link,

[Continued on page 85]

## *My mother used to say...*

"The old forget. The young don't know." - Japanese proverb

### **"Sootaylow saap nay jagaarvo nahi(n)"**

*A sleeping snake should not be woken up.* The almost identical saying in English is "Let sleeping dogs lie". Snakes are feared throughout India as some of them are highly poisonous, like the cobra. If a snake is coiled and asleep it poses no danger; but if it is teased and woken up, it may attack and bite the victim causing harm or even death. This saying is commonly used to speak about someone or some situation that is known to be volatile but is stable at present. It would be prudent not to disturb it.

### **"Kaag-no vahaag na ker"**

*Do not make a tiger out of a crow.* This saying is used when someone is making a big thing about a small incident. The nearest English equivalent is "Making a mountain out of a mole-hill." When I was a teenager if I brought home an unbelievable story I had heard at the 'railings' or 'katera' (the railings bordering one of the many gardens of the Parsi Colony, Dadar, which were a popular evening meeting place for Parsi youth) and relate it to my mother, she would sternly utter "Kaag-no vahaag na ker!".

### **"Saathi, a-nay boodhi naathi"**

*At 60, intelligence ran away.* When an old person talks nonsense or does something silly this saying is used. It simply means at the age of sixty your intelligence deserts you. It was a way for the young to take a dig at seniors.

### **"Aav-ray varsaad, geh variyo varsaad; oonni, oonni rotli, a-nay karela nu shak"**

*Welcome, O blessed rain; hot, hot, rotli (chappati or flat bread) and karela (bitter melon) vegetable stew.* This is a rhyme uttered to children by mothers. In Gujarat there is a perpetual shortage of rain. So after every hot summer the rains are welcome. When it does not rain for weeks in the hot summer the mother recites this couplet. She exhorts the rain to come soon to cool things down so that everyone can eat hot 'rotlis' and bitter melon stew. Bitter melon (karela) is found in Asian stores in the US. In India, this vegetable is also consumed by those suffering from diabetes. My father-in-law got rid of his diabetes for good by eating nothing but *karela* and drinking the liquid in which it was cooked as a soup continuously for a number of months.

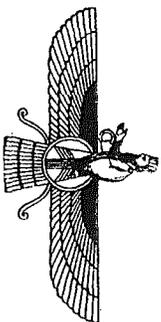
### **"Gher gher maati na vasan"**

*Every house has clay utensils.* In the past, every house had a number of clay utensils/pots. Just as *maati* (clay) pots break easily if one is not careful, relationships can also break due to verbal disagreements. In other words, even a household that seems to be strong from the outside and the inhabitants living seemingly happily, can have some weak points.

### **"Maryu toh tir, nahi toh kathi"**

*If you hit something, it is an arrow or else just a piece of wood.* *Tir* means an arrow and *kathi* means a wooden stick. If they are kept side-by-side they are both wooden sticks, but one is capable of much greater damage than the other if used correctly. If you want to do something and are dilly-dallying over it, do it forcefully with your best shot, like a hunter using a bow and arrow to hunt instead of just a wooden stick. This saying is also used when a sharp remark fails to disconcert the recipient so that the verbal barb falls useless like a piece of wood. ■

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# بازگشت به ارزشهای ایران باستان

پس از حمله اعراب مسلمان به ایران و تبدیل دین زرتشت از اکثریت به اقلیت، سه بار گرایش عمومی برای بازگشت به ارزشهای ایران باستان گسترش فوق العاده ای یافت.

در قرن دهم میلادی، نخستین موج گرایش به ایران باستان، سبب به وجوه آمدن «جنبش احیاء» گشت که تا پایان آن قرن ادامه داشت. برای ما، تنها یادگار قابل لمس از آن دوران، «شاهنامه فردوسی» است. در حقیقت این کتاب ارزنده حاصل کار چند نسل کوشش فرهنگی مردم ایران زمین است که توسط فردوسی پس از ۲۰۰ سال ریخ، جمع بندی شد.

بنا بر این شاهنامه مصاره نخستین موج گرایش به ایران باستان است.

دومین موج گرایش به ایران باستان، در پایان قرن نوزدهم آغاز گردید و در سالهای میان دو جنگ جهانی، رفته رفته رو به افول گذاشت. تنها یادگار قابل لمس این موج دوم، گزارش اوستای استاد پور داود است.

موج سوم گرایش به ارزشهای ایران باستان و دین بهی، پس از انقلاب ۱۹۷۹ در ایران آهسته، آهسته، پا گرفت و هنوز نیز پایدار مانده است.

مصاره این موج سوم که ما هم اکنون در آن قرار داریم چه خواهد بود؟

در بررسی این سه موج، لازم می آید که نخست ببینیم که این امواج چرا بوجود می آیند و آیا اگر این موج سوم شکست بخورد، موج های دیگری در راه خواهند بود یا خیر؟

پاسخ این پرسش، مثبت است. یعنی اگر این موج سوم نیز افول کند، موج چهارم در راه خواهد بود. اما نمی توان زمان پیدایش موج چهارم را حدس زد ولی مسلماً، گرایش به ارزشهای ایران باستان مجدداً ظهور خواهد کرد. ولی چرا چنین خواهد شد؟

# بازگشت به ارزشهای ایران باستان

ایرانی از يك سو نمی تواند گذشته پُرافتخار ایران باستان خود را فراموش کند و از ته مانده آیین نیاکان که در حافظه تاریخی اش نقش بسته است، دست بشوید و نه ، قادر است از دینی که بین او و خدایش پیوند برقرار می کند ، دل برکند. زیرا آلترناتیو دیگری ندارد. از این رو هنگامی که دینش او را می رنجاند و او سبب های شور بختی خود را در آن می بیند به ناچار، به سوی پاره دیگر عاطفی خود رو می آورد و چون از آن پاره باستانی، جز مقداری شکوه و عظمت بر باد رفته و شعارهای گنگ، و نا مفهوم چیزی حاصل نمی کند. لاجرم ، یا با دینش آشتی می کند و به سوی آن باز می گردد و یا مکتب دیگری را برمی گزیند .

اینجا این پرسش پیش خواهد آمد که اگر این بازگشت حتمی است و امواج دیگری در راه خواهند بود، پس چرا ما این همه جوش بزنییم و حرارت بخرج دهیم؟ اینبار نشد، بار دیگر!

از این جمله ها بوی فرار از مسئولیت برمی خیزد! ما نباید سنگینی بار کاهلی و ندانم کاری خودمان را بر دوش فرزندانمان قرار دهیم! ما باید کوشش کنیم ، با چشمهای باز، گذشته را بکاویم، حال را دریابیم ، تا بتوانیم آینده را بسازیم.

اکنون که دانستیم که اگر این موج سوم نیز شکست بخورد ، امواج دیگری ، در راه خواهند بود. دوباره این پرسش را به میان می آوریم که اگر این موج سوم دستاوردی داشته باشد، آن دستاورد چه خواهد بود؟ ما می توانیم نه از روی غریزه ، بلکه از روی منطق ، از همین حالا، «سازماندهی» را «دستاورد» این موج سوم بدانیم و بکوشیم تا بدان دست یابیم.

در دو موج اول و دوم، دستاوردها خود جوش و به همت دو فرد ، وابسته بود. هم «فردوسی» و هم «پور داود» يك تنه ، کوشیدند که یادگار ارزنده ای برای هموطنان خود باقی بگذارند. اما آنها اگر امیدی برای «زرتشتی» شدن جامعه ایران داشتند، این امید نه بر پایه ، اصول علم جامعه شناسی و روان شناسی ، بلکه بر مبنای ندایی درونی ، بود.

امروز تحقیقات جامعه شناسی و مردم شناسی ما را قادر می سازد که بر پایه آنها، پیدایش امواج دیگری را پیش بینی کنیم. و چون ابزار ما فقط منحصر به ندای درون، نیست. پس باید به کمک همین یافته های علمی ، نیاز ها را شناسایی نموده ، آگاهانه دستاورد این موج سوم را در دستور کار خود قرار دهیم.



# Welcome to

# Youthfully Speaking



*'the mouthpiece for the next generation'*

## Relationship Qualms Among Zarathushti Youth

Recent conversations with many of my Zarathushti friends have made me reflect more about the dynamics and social relationships amongst our youth. It seems as though most Zarathushti youth would like to potentially be in a romantic relationship and an eventual marriage with other Zarathushtis. However, it seems as though primarily because of the difficulty in meeting people and distance, the youth don't feel resolute about finding a Zarathushti partner.

The main reason why our youth say they aren't in a relationship with other Zarathushtis is because there simply aren't many to choose from. Most of us aren't in situations where our universities, clubs, parties and other social environments are swarming with Zarathushtis, thus the opportunity to even remotely get to know another Zarathushti on a friendship level is sparse. Of course there are the occasional community celebrations in which parties and gatherings do bring together an abundance of interesting and attractive Z-folk with whom to mingle. However, the people that attend these functions are predominantly the same people that have been attending these functions since childhood. This leads us to the second main reason why Z's find it difficult to be in a relationship with other Z's.

This second reason is something that I'm sure all of our parents have heard us say at some point. "But, I've known him/her since we were in diapers, we're practically like cousins!" So yes, there are many eligible Z's at our respective association gatherings, but they tend to be the same people that we've grown up with and as a result we feel that we know them all too well and thus aren't interested in them in "that" way. Most of the Zarathushti couples I know consist of individuals that have met each other at later points in their lives, in their mid-20's and not those that have known each other since childhood. This dilemma of being surrounded by the same group of people is potentially solved when you encounter individuals at congresses and other out of association functions. At these occasions, we make many new friends and reunite with those we haven't seen in a while. At the end of it all, we've had a great time and met some remarkable people, but it's time to pack the bags and get back to real life which doesn't involve being surrounded by only Zarathushtis for 4 consecutive days. Leaving these new friends that we've met brings us to problem number 3: distance.

So the youth that we've grown up with are for the most part considered ineligible, and we've met some fun people away from our Z niche at home, but now what? How are you supposed to get to know this person when they live half way across the continent? How do you start getting to know them when you've only met them for 4 days? Distance is a deterrent that unfortunately keeps many of us from pursuing relationships. On the other hand, there are many Zarathushtis that have overcome this fear of distance and are in relationships that span across the continent and even overseas; but they too face many difficulties such as learning to know more about each other without diminishing their bank accounts, and more importantly missing out on simple day-to-day occurrences.





Since we are encompassed by a heterogeneous society with few Zarathushtis, it is inevitable that we will find it difficult to get into relationships with other co-religionists. Taking this into consideration, it is surprising to note that many Zarathushti youth have a strong desire to ultimately be with a Zarathushti for various personal reasons. Through the great efforts of congress organizers and individual youth associations, we manage to create a few social opportunities, but perhaps there is something more that we can do to increase our Zarathushti acquaintances. Although we have our yearly functions, and frequent congresses, perhaps we could create more of an informal collaboration between organizations that are within driving distances from each other. For example, we could have the Boston, NY, and Philadelphia group or the Toronto and Michigan group get together for an informal gathering. Obviously, this suggestion is not ideal for some associations that are farther away from others, but it's these types of informal get-togethers that help bring the youth closer to one another and may break down barriers formed by distance.

**Ushtavaity Davar**  
[Ushta@aol.com](mailto:Ushta@aol.com)

***\*\*\*For next time: Has the youth in your association organized an event to create awareness or bring the youth together? Please let us know of the happenings in your respective areas!***

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Sorrow

The wind blowing  
 Relief from all the pain  
 Sanity set free  
 Insanity banished to hell  
 Can no longer  
 Will no longer  
 Body asks  
 Flirts for air  
 Air that accompanies me  
 To  
 My beautiful land  
 Of Sanity  
 How I cherish it  
 How I worship it  
 How I let  
 It  
 Save me  
 From myself

*Mori M*

(Untitled)

I want to pin down clouds  
 For you  
 To sleep on  
  
 I want to serve you  
 Tears of the moon  
 To drink  
  
 Capture the laughter of children in heaven  
 For you  
 To hear  
  
 Blister my body  
 For you  
 To keep you away from sun's harm  
 I would  
  
 Sacrifice myself  
 For you  
 I would  
  
 Just to know  
 Your heart will still beat  
 After mine will stop

*Mori M.*



## INTERFAITH CAFÉ

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an 'Interfaith Café'. What exactly was it? An oversimplification would be a discussion group. But although the essence of it was literally that, it was definitely a great deal more. It was above all, an experience. Youth of all different religions were grouped together to discuss similarities and differences in each of the religions. I thought I would share a few of those questions with you to raise some thoughts.

- How do you define truth?
- What is the most difficult principle in your faith to practice?
- How can we turn our ideas into concrete actions?
- How can we learn to understand one another better?
- How does my faith help me live my daily life?
- How do all religious traditions reach the same goal (God)?
- How do we-or can we- address equality & balance of male/female within our faith?
- How can we stay solid in our religious beliefs but not feel superior to others?
- How does religion contribute to environment and sustainable living?
- How does semantics or language help to separate or bring us together as people of different religions?

**Nikan Khatibi**

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If you do feel strongly about one of these questions, please share your thoughts with us.

***\*\*Do you have any ideas or issues you want discussed? Maybe here in the journal or at future congresses? Well, here's your chance. Email back!***





Well everyone, its that time of year again where Zarathushtis from all around North America, come and enjoy a week full of activities and fun! If you do not already know, the 10th North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress will be held in Toronto, ON, Canada from July 24th to July 27th, 2003. We here at Youthfully Speaking would like to extend our support to the Congress organizers and encourage every youth out there to definitely sign up and embark on this journey of extravaganza. Please check out [www.Nexus2003.com](http://www.Nexus2003.com) for more information.

## بازگشت به ارزشهای ایران باستان

حاصل این موج سوم، باید سازماندهی باشد؛ اما سازماندهی هنگامی میسر خواهد شد که برنامه وجود داشته باشد و برنامه آنزمان می تواند آماده گردد که هدف يك جنبش و آرمان ایدئولوژیکی آن، مشخص شود! پس نخستین گام جدی و اساسی روشن کردن آرمان است. هرچه انرژی بیشتری بر روی روشن کردن زوایای گوناگون يك باور گذاشته شود، به همان نسبت توان تئوریک آن، افزایش می یابد. واقعیت این است که در امواج گذشته، خبری از سازماندهی نبود. در این موج سوم نیز عدم سازماندهی، عامل اساسی نابودی جنبش خواهد بود. سازماندهی وجود ندارد، زیرا برنامه نیست! برنامه نداریم زیرا هدف ایدئولوژیکی جنبش نا مشخص و نا روشن است. وجه مشترك این سه موج، شور و شمار بوده است! این احساسات پاک و شوریدگی پیروان ارزشهای ایران باستان، هرچند ارزشمند است و در صورت وجود «هدف»، «برنامه» و «سازماندهی» می تواند بسیار مفید نیز باشد، اما در نبود آنها، عامل بازدارنده و حتی مخربی محسوب می شود!

فرشته یزدانی خطیبی  
Fereshteh Yazdani Khatibi



# SUNDAY STORIES

## 4. Feraydun Liberates Iran

By Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi

Here is the next installment in our series of stories from the Shah Nameh, written for children.

Zohak was a cruel and tyrannical king. The people in his kingdom were unhappy, but fear caused them to curb their anger. One day, Zohak awoke from a dream, terrified. He had dreamt that three warriors had come to fight him. The youngest of these three warriors had imprisoned him. Horrified about what this may mean for his future, Zohak asked the wise men in his kingdom to interpret the dream. Many of them were afraid of Zohak and told him, "Great king! No one will ever be able to defeat you! Your dream is but a trick of your imagination!"

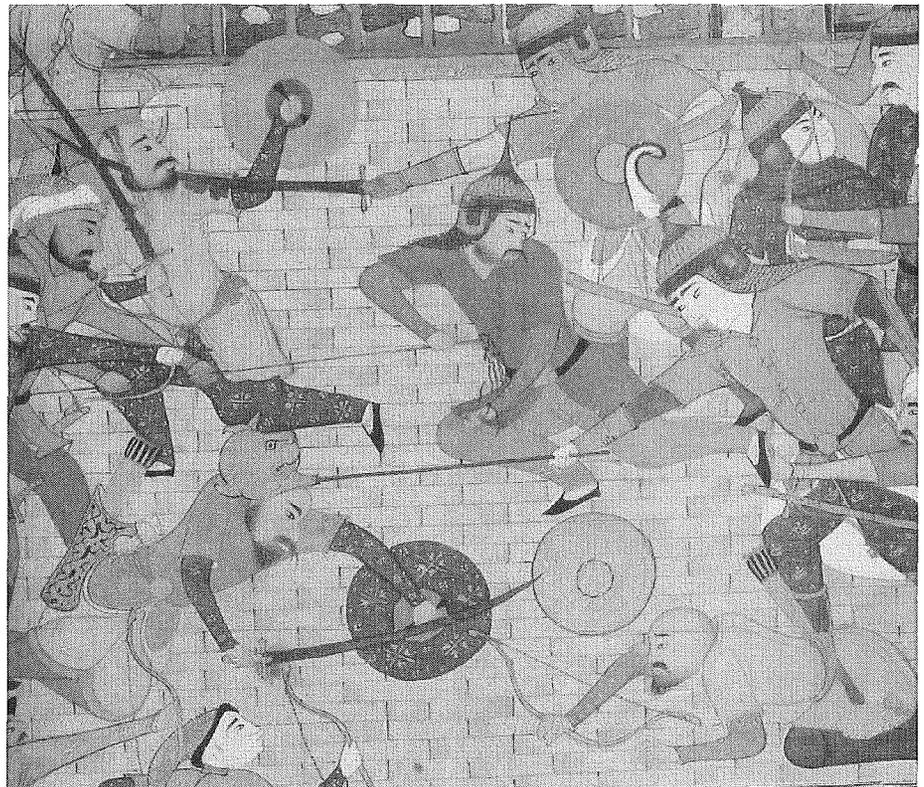
Just as Zohak was beginning to believe them, one honest wise man began to speak. "Beware!" he said, "Your days, Zohak, are numbered, for your dream has foretold your fate! There shall come to you a young man called Feraydun, who will topple you from the throne and take your kingdom. Your people shall welcome him as their king for he shall rule with a benevolence you have never shown. Beware Zohak for your fall is at hand!"

Fear clutched at Zohak's heart and he was determined not to be met with such a fate. He ordered his soldiers to search for Feraydun and bring him to the palace in chains.

### The young Feraydun

Feraydun was a young man who lived in the kingdom with his mother, Faranak. His father had been killed by Zohak. As soon as Faranak heard about Zohak's decree she sent the young Feraydun into hiding in the uplands. But with Zohak's men in hot pursuit, Feraydun was not safe there; so Faranak fled with him to Mount Elburz. Here she entrusted Feraydun into the care of a wise old man.

As the years passed, Feraydun grew apace. His knowledge was vast and his skills tremendous. The divine *farr* (halo or glow) of great kings that went before him rested on his face, so there could be no doubt about his nobility. As a young man, he began to question his mother about his heritage. Finally, Faranak



*Feraydun, at right, with the ox-headed mace in battle with Zohak's army.*

[PHOTO: "THE LION AND THE THRONE" EHSAN YARSHATAR, DICK DAVIS, STUART CARY WELCH].

told him the story of his father. "You are the son of Atebin, who has descended from the great King Tahmuras. Zohak imprisoned and killed your father many years ago. Then when he dreamt that you may avenge his death, he ordered your death as well. We have hid you for all these years so that you may live to fulfill your destiny."

Feraydun was angered by the story and he swore to avenge his father's death and to remove the evil Zohak from the throne. He prepared to march on Zohak's palace. Feraydun carried a large mace in the shape of an ox-head with him. His brothers marched by his side, and as he entered Iran, the people of that land united behind him to overthrow a tyrant!

## Battle of Zohak and Feraydun

Feraydun's army of good men camped a few miles from Zohak's palace to rest before the day of the attack. During the night a messenger of God appeared before Feraydun in the guise of a young man. He told Feraydun the way in which he would be able to defeat Zohak. The next day, Feraydun's army marched on the palace and captured it. All the prisoners and slaves were set free. There was great joy as Feraydun took the throne.

While this was happening Zohak was vacationing in the country. When he heard that the people of Iran had accepted Feraydun as their King, he and his army marched on the palace. The people of Iran fought Zohak's army with courage in their hearts and the remembrances of their sacrificed loved ones on their minds. Zohak and Feraydun engaged in a fierce battle.

Just as Feraydun was about to destroy him with his mace, the young messenger of God appeared before him again. "Feraydun!" he commanded. "It is the will of God that you shall not have Zohak's blood on your hands. You are victorious! You

have captured him and the people of Iran are free. Chain Zohak deep in the caves of Mount Demavand for it is his destiny to suffer there until the time comes for him to die!" Feraydun obeyed.

## Feraydun is crowned king

After Zohak was secured in the vaults of Mount Demavand, Feraydun made a promise to the people of Iran that he would rule with benevolence and justice. The people rejoiced.

On the first day of the month of Mehr, Feraydun put the Kyanid crown on his head and became the true king of the Iranian people. They rejoiced in a great celebration for this was the day the world was at peace again.

Every year from that day forward the Zarathushtis celebrate Feraydun's ascent to the throne by celebrating the Festival of Mehragan.

*Next time: Meet Feraydun's sons. ■*

**Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi** lives in New York City. She writes as a hobby.

## The Brave Fareydun and the Rooster...

*[Continued from page 77]*

the crowing of the rooster heralding the rising sun would bring forth a miracle. The thread-bare fetters would grow back to their original, thickness ... all thanks to that Iranian *margho!*"

My brother concluded with our Gujarati rendition of the rooster's crowing – "Kook-re-kook".

I laughed out loud with relief that the evil man was not going to follow us all the way to India – and in relief and gratitude, flapped my hands as if in flight and jumped off the high, black mahogany bed, crowing "kook-re-kook".

Somewhere from the kitchen, my grandmother yelled at us, for making all the racket. "Mar-ray movaa bev, juhaak jeva chev!" (Of course, she in no way was comparing us to the evil Zohak, but using this expression just for dramatic effect, more as being mischief-makers). ■

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## READERS FORUM

*This column is a forum to present information and opinions. Letters (under 250 words) may be submitted to the editor. FEZANA Journal reserves the right to edit all materials for clarity and space.*

## Time to hold our heads high

As I read the Spring 2003 issue of FEZANA Journal, I was amazed to read of the achievements of Zarathushtis throughout the world. In every field of human endeavor we are flourishing and excelling beyond imagination; from business entrepreneurship to sports to literature to archeology! And, I am not talking about past glory and the golden era of the Parsis in India. This is today!

Just look at the advertisements and read the stories of new Zarathushti businesses all over the world. In the teaming millions of India today, we have two Parsi judges of the Supreme Court and two Parsi billionaires who made it to the Forbes list!

I would urge all the cynics and pessimists who waste their time and energy on putting down our community, to read with what great fanfare WZCC (the recently formed World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce) has been embraced by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. In Mumbai, where, as we all know, any form of real estate is at a premium, "When approached for office space for the new Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce," notes the Journal [page 19] "without batting an eyelid, BPP trustee Dinshaw Mehta showed several possibilities, along with furnishings, equipment and part-time staff."

I would fervently urge your readers to take pride in who we are, our heritage, our culture, and our religion, instead of adopting a defeatist attitude. Let us teach our children to be proud and hold their heads high

when they say, "I'm a Parsi" or "I'm a Zarathushti".

*Aban Daboo  
Aurora, Illinois*

## **An exciting time to be a Zarathushti**

The recent spate of articles in the press about the high priests' ruling at first left me quite embarrassed and depressed. I do not want the West's first view of the religion of Zarathushtra to be that of an ancient dying ethnicity whose leaders base their arguments on "superior DNA" and appear to be indifferent to the desires of many of its people.

But after some more thought, I realized that religion is not about a numbers game. It is about how strongly the people believe and act in their

principles. This has been liberating, and I am uplifted and energized.

Traditional Parsis will always be an important link to the past no matter how small their numbers. This is a tribute to them, not a criticism of them. If you believe in any religion, then you must stay true to those principles. I find it uplifting that some Parsis will bravely continue the tradition of an ethnic religion.

But I believe in different principles. I believe in modern multifaith societies in the West. I believe in democratic principles, both in government and in religion. I don't want to hide in this society, but be visible and active in it. And I don't think that the way the religion is practiced by the Parsis will apply in the West lock, stock and barrel. There are going to be important

differences, especially social differences. We should not be afraid to take a stand and proudly live as we choose. I am energized that I live in this exciting formative era of the religion of Zarathushtra in the West.

A lot of people worry that we are doomed. On the contrary, I think this will be our finest moment. This is an exciting time to be a Zarathushti, and I want to do my part on this grand stage.

*Hormuzd Katki  
Kensington, Maryland*

## **Persian please, not Farsi**

As a PhD student in Near Eastern Studies and a teacher of Persian, I am requesting that the 'Persian' language *not* be referred to as 'Farsi' in an English text.



# **Laugh and be Merry**

**By Jamshed Udvadia**



The old Chief sat smoking the ceremonial pipe, eyeing the US government officials sent to interview him. "Chief Eagle Eye," one official began, "you have observed the white man for 90 years. You have observed his wars and his material wealth. You have seen his progress and the damage he has done." The Chief nodded that it was so. The official continued, Considering all these events, in your opinion, where did the white man go wrong?

The Chief stared at the government officials for over a minute, and then calmly replied, "When white man found the land, Indians were running it.

No taxes...No debt...Plenty buffalo...

Plenty beaver...Women did all the work...Medicine man free...

Indian man spent all day hunting and fishing, all night playing with squaw."

Then the Chief leaned back and smiled, "White man dumb enough to think he could improve system like that."

*[submitted by Nina Bhaisa, CA]*

A blonde wanted to go ice fishing. She'd seen many books on the subject, and finally getting all the necessary tools together, she made for the ice. After positioning her comfy footstool, she started to make a circular cut in the ice. Suddenly, from the sky, a voice boomed, "**THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE.**"

Startled, the blonde moved further down the ice, poured a thermos of cappuccino, and began to cut yet another hole. Again from the heaven the voiced bellowed, "**THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE.**"

The blonde, now worried, moved away, clear down to the opposite end of the ice. She set up her stool once more and tried again to cut her hole. The voice came once more, "I said: **THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE.**"

She stopped, looked skyward, and said, "Is that you, Lord?"

The voice replied, "No, this is the manager of the hockey rink."

*[submitted by J. B. Mistry, TX]*

"Laugh and be Merry" (from the title of a poem by John Masefield) is compiled from various public sources as also personal experiences and stories submitted by our subscribers and others.

According to linguistics, the Persian language belongs to the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian languages. The Iranian branch is composed of many languages including Persian, Soghdian, Kurdish and Parthian. The Persian language has different dialects such as Tajik, Dari, Farsi, Isfahani, Khurasani, etc.

'Persia' is what Greek historians called Parsis at the time of the Achaemenids, and like all historic proper names its antiquity is its best defense. Over the centuries 'Persia' was used to refer to the whole country of Iran and therefore could be used interchangeably with Iranian. Fars and Farsi is the Arabic form of Parsis and Persia. Since Arabs did not have a 'p' sound, they turned Pars into Fars.

Linguistics call the language of Darius and Cyrus Old Persian; the language of the Sasanids, Middle Persian; and our language, Persian. All three stages belong to the Iranian branch of Indo-Iranian languages. Farsi, Dari and Tajik are only dialects of the Persian language and should not be used to refer to the Persian language itself. You don't hear anyone calling English, Irish or Australian or for that matter even American either!

*Fereshteh Davaran*

*Department of Near Eastern Studies  
University of California, Berkeley  
[Courtesy of Shara Godiwalla and  
Dolly Dastoor]*

### **Let's implement standard nomenclature**

More than five years ago, FEZANA adopted the standard nomenclature of Zarathushtra, Zarathushti, and Zarathushti Deen for the name of the prophet, the followers and the religion. As we get better known in international circles, it would be desirable to encourage use of these standards *now* before the Greek and Western corruptions viz. Zoroaster and its derivative forms take hold.

The original name Yeshua has been modified by the Westerners to Jesus and has become so entrenched that it

is now almost impossible to revert to the correct Jewish original, so that there are many people who today, do not even know that Jesus was born and raised a Jew. Vedantic religion has been replaced by the term 'Hinduism' (coined by the British) which does not even bear a close resemblance to the original. This is because no one took the trouble to correct the usage in time, before it became international usage.

We still have time. I strongly urge our community leaders all over the world to take the trouble to use the more authentic terminology, when we register as members of a new group, such as the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington. It is still possible to change to the original term in our NGO status with the U.N. Also, it is necessary to substitute 'Zarathushti' for 'Zoroastrian' in the expansion of FEZANA, which should be done as soon as possible.

This will be a *one-time effort* as against the continuing efforts (more than ten years) that we are expending in creating a new World Zarathushti Organization.

*Jamshed Udvardia  
Lansing, Michigan*

### **Sraosha ...**

*[Continued from page 54]*

accordance with your teaching? Show me a judgement promising to give me splendid things, life-healer. Then may Sraosha/Hearkening come with Good Thought (Vohu Manah), O Mazda, to whomever you wish!

(3) Vendidad 8. 21:

Protect us from the hostile one, Mazda and Bounteous Armaiti! Vanish, demonic devil! Vanish, you of demonic origin! Vanish, demon-created one! Vanish, demon-produced one! Vanish and be gone, devil! Run away, devil! Disappear completely! May you disappear to the North! You shall not destroy the physical world of righteousness."

Yasna 49.10 – *Nemascha ya Armaitis Izhacha*: Homage, accompanied by

devotion and offerings! *Ashem Vohu; Yatha Ahu Vairyō* (twice).

(4)

I desire worship, adoration and strength for Sraosha, who is accompanied by rewards, brave, has the Sacred Word for body, who has a strong club, the *Ahurian*. *Ashem Vohu*.

(5) Yasna 68.11 – *Ahmai Raeshcha*:

Unto him splendour and fortune. Unto him health of body. Unto him toughness of body. Unto him resistance of body. Unto him possessions bringing great happiness. Unto him sturdy offspring. Unto him lengthy long life. Unto him the best existence of the righteous (i.e., Paradise), the luminous, which offers all happiness! May it happen as I wish. *Ashem Vohu*.

(6) Yasna 72.9 – *Hazangrem Baeshazanam*: A thousand remedies; ten thousand remedies (three times). *Ashem Vohu* (three times). Come to my aid, Mazda (three times).

### **Siroza I. 20-21– Dedication:**

For power of attack, well-built, beautiful of form, victorious, Ahura-created. For triumphing superiority. For *Raman* of good pastures. For *Vayu* of good actions, who is superior to other creations; that part of you, *Vayu*, that belongs to the Holy Spirit! For self-governing *thwasha* (space). For boundless *zurwan* (time). For *Zurwan* of long dominion! *Ashem Vohu*.

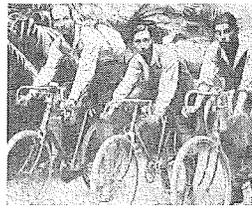
Pazand text – *Kerfeh Mozd*:

For the reward of virtue and the forgiveness of sin, I do righteous deeds for the love of my soul. May all virtuousness, of all good beings of the earth of seven climes, reach the width of the earth, the length of the rivers, the height of the sun, in their original form!

May it be righteous! Live long! May it happen as I wish. *Ashem Vohu*. ■

### **Eratta**

The opening sentence in "Current status of the restructured WZO charter" [*Spring 2003, p. 24*] should read "Dinshaw Tamboly and Dadi Engineer ..." and *not* Dadi Mistry. The inadvertent error is regretted. ■



The families of world cyclists Jal Bapasola and Adi Hakim [featured in "Endurance" by Porus B. Cooper, FEZANA Journal, Spring 2003] remember their fathers. The authors would like to get in touch with families of the other pioneer cyclists on this world trip, in the 1920s – Rustom Bhumgara, Gustad Hathiram and Keki Pochkhanawalla. Contact Lovji Hakim at [lovjih@bestweb.net](mailto:lovjih@bestweb.net) or Khursheed Bapasola at [kbapasola@yahoo.com](mailto:kbapasola@yahoo.com).

## Remembering Jal Daddy

Jal P. Bapasola, the world cyclist, my husband Noshir's father and our children Sam and Sherry's grand-father, was a man of determination and strong will. He had a loud commanding voice and loved to narrate stories of his travels – the one about the Simpon Pass was oft repeated.

Jal daddy was an achiever and even at the end of his life stretched himself towards living to make a century! He would exercise daily, eat heartily, wake up at 4 am to pray daily and always followed a strict routine.

He passed on the year after he reached his 100th birthday. Rati, his dear wife had expired only three years before, and he was greatly distressed at not having her by his side to celebrate this achievement with him.

**Medal collection.** I am the proud custodian of some of his medals and awards. I know that at least one of his medals was melted and used to create a casing, hook and chain for another big beautiful medal to be used as a pendant, which was presented to me at my *agharni*.

He must have received many souvenirs from his world cycling tour.



Jal Bapasola's medal collection; below, celebrating his 100th birthday, in 1996, with grand-children Sherry and Sam Bapasola.



The ones I have which I will pass on to future generations include eight gold medals and souvenirs from the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League, the Khar Youth League, the Calcutta Parsi Club, the Persian Consul, M. J. Dehdushti, and Subimal Chatterji of Calcutta, and a gold pin and a pair of gold cuff links presented by the Parsi Pioneers.

There is also a collection of nine silver medals, presented by the Young Men's Parsi Association, the Golvala

Brothers V. S. Bath, the Tutorial Sporting Club, the Y.M.Z.A., the Gurjar Seva Samaj Rangoon, the "Indian Wellwishers of HongKong", and the Kobe (Japan) YMCA.

There are two other large and pretty silver medals engraved with writing in an Oriental language, perhaps Japanese or Chinese, which I have yet to get translated.

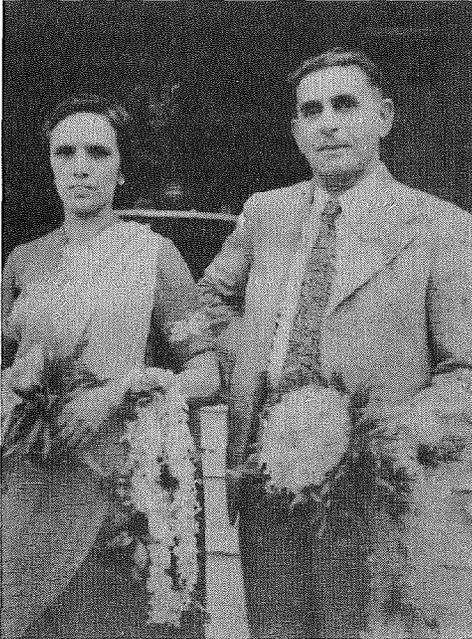
*Khursheed Bapasola  
Voorhees, New Jersey*

## Our beloved dad, the "First World Cyclist"

The seven sons and families of Adi B. Hakim thank the authors of articles about the greatest of all feats of endurance in the 20th century, that of bicycling around the world. Over the past 70 odd years, countless articles have been written all over the world complimenting the heroic accomplishment of the illustrious Parsi men who traversed the world on a bicycle. Their incredible journey was recorded in Ripley's "Believe it or Not" publication.

Adi B. Hakim is survived by seven sons [*photo next page*], Dara, Khushru, Lovji, Eruch (deceased), Rumi, Changis and Eddie. Dara and family live in Baroda, India. Rumi and family live in London, UK and the rest in the USA.

It was 15th of October 1923 when the five young Parsi men embarked on



Left, early photo of Adi Hakim and his wife Naju. Right, sons Eddie, Changis, Rumi, Khushru and Lovji; not in photo are Dara and Eruch (deceased).

their journey. They traveled through some of the most inhospitable terrain in the old colonial world and endured personal hardship that one cannot even imagine in this modern world. Just imagine way back in 1923 in most parts of the world there existed only dirt roads and rudimentary methods of communication (telegraph). Visa formalities were archaic and traverse through many countries was a hazardous task. They traveled around the world without any money for basic necessities and food. Many days and nights they had no food or shelter after a hard day's ride for lack of funds.

These men, one of whom was our dear departed dad, Adi Hakim, were truly men of great pluck and courage. We are truly proud of their accomplishment as the first "Around the World cyclists". They were Indians; they were Parsis and they were a courageous, sporting bunch from the Dadar Parsi Colony Weight-lifting club.

We remember, over the years, so many other Indian cyclists came to Baroda to meet our dad and ask for

guidance and encouragement for their own attempts to circumnavigate the world on their bicycles.

The space limitation imposed by the editor does not allow me to narrate the many feats of endurance recorded in the book that was published by the cyclists. I would have liked to mention the many kind compliments that were written by some of the world's prominent men of that era as well as the press around the world.

One of them was written by the then president of the USA, Calvin Coolidge who said, "Sport and adventure increase International friendship and good fellowship."

Another quote from Mussolini, Prime Minister of Italy: "Such deeds of heroism and adventure deserve all praise and encouragement."

First President of Germany, Fred Ebert called their adventure "The greatest feat in the cycling history of the world." There are many more quotes by the world press and great men, including a foreword in their book by Jawaharlal Nehru.

We remember our dad fondly. He was a gregarious soul, fun loving, sportsman, friendly disposition, outspoken, self confident and very charitable. He had a wonderful personality and left a lasting impression on all those who met him. He worked and retired as a sales executive with Burma-Shell.

**Trust fund.** It is befitting that in lasting memory of our dad and our equally kind mother, the Hakim sons and families have setup a *Naju and Adi B. Hakim Charitable Trust Fund*, in Baroda which donates monies to needy Parsi families via the Baroda Parsi Panchayat. We ardently hope that this fund takes care of the needy Parsis and will perpetuate the memories of our dad and his great accomplishment. May it generate enthusiasm, courage, sportsmanship and a spirit of adventure in the next generation of Parsi youth. ■

*Lovji Hakim on behalf of all the Hakim sons, families and well wishers.*

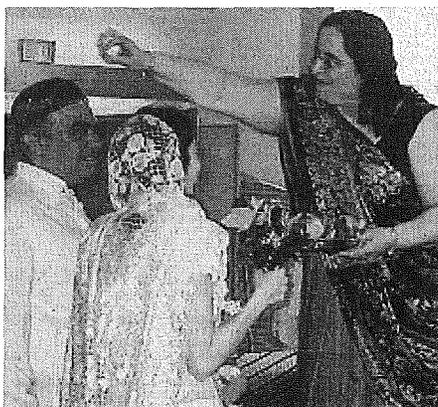
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[From THE DAILY HERALD, Chicago, April 26, 2003]

## A different holy matrimony

Janet Souter



Nergish Mehta welcomes "bride" Bakhtavar Press, and witness Hosi Mehta, to the wedding stage

... This recreation of a typical Zoroastrian wedding ceremony, hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago is about to begin. It's part of "The World in Our Backyard" program that recently was offered by the Council for the Parliament of World's Religions ...

The Zoroastrian faith originated in central Asia and is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions ...

The wedding vows emphasize the ceremony is about more than just the bride and groom. It binds the families as well, with witnesses testifying that they give the bride to the groom and the groom will cherish the bride... the priest then chants admonitions and blessings in the ancient Avestan language ... and asks the religion's supreme God, Ahura Mazda, which means Wise Lord, to bestow good words and worthy achievement ...

Zoroastrians celebrate a wedding like everyone else ... lots of food and socializing ...



PHOTOGRAPHS BY FAROKH JASSAWALLA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

DADAR, INDIA, MARCH 21 – The couple, who were childhood friends, with family members at the Parsee Zoroastrian temple.

### VOWS

## Sherri Treasurywala and Cyrus Mistry

**O**n most weekends, Dr. Sherri Treasurywala would wake up at 7 a.m., put on her Reeboks and jog along the Hudson River ... then rested ahead of a busy week as a director of business development for Hoffman-LaRoche, in Nutley, N.J.

It was the life immortalized by sardonic cartoonists and female pulp fiction writers: the 20-something high achiever in New York. Driven, focused and lonely.

In London, Cyrus Mistry, a specialist in interbank stock trading for the Bank of New York, spent his weekends eating takeout pizza from Harrods ...

The couple are Parsee Zoroastrians – members of a fire-worshipping [see

note below] religious community whose faith, first established in Persia, predates Christianity. The Zoroastrian's numbers have dwindled to an estimated 150,000 worldwide, in part because the high priests do not recognize interfaith marriages or allow conversions ...

[From THE NEW YORK TIMES WEDDINGS/CELEBRATIONS SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2003]

**NOTE:** In response to letters, The New York Times issued the following correction: "The Vows column ... referred incorrectly to an aspect of the couple's religion, Zoroastrianism. While fire is widely used in ritual, it serves only as a divine symbol; adherents do not worship it."

**BBC WORLD SERVICE**

April 28, 2002

WWW.BBC.CO.UK/WORLDSERVICE

In Praise of God this week comes from Bombay, and it joins one of the oldest living religious communities in the world – the Zoroastrians or Parsees. Martin Palmer takes us on a fascinating spiritual journey into a faith which originated in Persian more than three thousand years ago, but whose followers believe it still speaks to all humankind today: about taking care of the earth and the whole of creation, and about how every man and woman has an important role to play in the cosmic struggle between good and evil ...

**ZARATHUSHTI ENTERPRISE  
■ PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ■**

## WZCC Business Digest

The UK chapter of WZCC was launched at the ZTFE Jamshedi Navroze function on March 21st at Zoroastrian House, London, by Rt. Hon. Gareth Thomas, MP for Harrow West; Karan Bilimoria, MD, Cobra Beer, Ltd. (who will serve as founder president) and Jimmy Contractor, Tata Ltd. (who will serve as founder VP). Guest of Honor was Cllr. Navin Shah.

**WZCC directory.** Homi Davier, through services provided by *Avesta Computing*, has enhanced the directory updating capability at the WZCC website. **Business persons and professionals are urged to visit [www.wzcc.net](http://www.wzcc.net) and enter their business/personal profiles.** This directory is the heart of our business and professionals networking efforts. Please avail of this opportunity.

The first **Business Advisory Board (BAB)** of the WZCC has been established by the Chicago Chapter, reports chapter chair Hoshang Karani. The idea was floated by Homi Davier at the last AGM. The Chicago chapter embraced the idea. "It is now fully functional and ready to undertake its first challenges," says BAB manager Yaz Bilimoria, who, himself has business experience operating two Quiznos restaurants, and well on his way to owning a third.

The BAB is staffed with experienced business persons and professionals available for consultation and advice for new and existing businesses.

Other WZCC chapters are encouraged to establish BABs in their areas. Until such services are available, the Chicago BAB will entertain requests from outside Chicago as well, to the extent possible. Contact [yaz@bilimoria.com](mailto:yaz@bilimoria.com).



The e-group, [zchamber@yahoo.com](mailto:zchamber@yahoo.com), coordinated by Zareen Karani Araoz provides excellent opportunity for networking. To subscribe, send email to: [zchamber-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:zchamber-subscribe@yahoo.com).

For WZCC information, visit [www.wzcc.net](http://www.wzcc.net), or contact WZCC secretary Edul Daver at 17 Geiger Lane, Warren, NJ 07059, tel: (732) 469-1866, [daver@acupowder.com](mailto:daver@acupowder.com). ■

*Rohinton Rivetna,*  
President, WZCC  
[Rivetna@aol.com](mailto:Rivetna@aol.com), (630) 325-5383.

### WZCC Economic Cultural Delegation to Iran Postponed to Fall 2003

The tour to Iran and business conference in Tehran, originally scheduled for June 2003, [see *FEZANA Journal, Spring 2003, p. 95*] have been postponed due to the situation in Iraq, to the fall of 2003. There is a possibility for delegates to also attend an Avesta Conference/UNESCO celebrations in Tajikistan, planned for Fall 2003.

Contact Rohinton Rivetna, tel: (630) 325-5383, [Rivetna@aol.com](mailto:Rivetna@aol.com).

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Those with an electrical/mechanical engineering degree interested in joining the Canadian Forces, please contact Er. Bomanshaw Kotwal at (905) 819-9124, or visit [www.dnd.com](http://www.dnd.com).

## HONORS

### Rusi Gandhi receives RE/MAX award



Rusi Gandhi, a broker/associate with RE/MAX Properties Unlimited, was recently presented with the prestigious RE/MAX of

New Jersey 100% Club Award, at the 17th Annual RE/MAX of New Jersey Awards Ceremony.

Gandhi is founding chairperson of the New York chapter of WZCC; business manager of FEZANA Journal; and longtime member of ZAGNY and ZAC.

He has over 25 years of real estate experience, in residential and commercial properties.

**Gandhi donates to the local Zarathushti association or FEZANA, 10% of fees** he receives when members of any Zarathushti organization or their families and friends purchase, sell or rent a commercial or residential property in the US, Canada and 52 countries listed by Re/Max & International Real Estate Federation (Paris).

Contact Rusi Gandhi at 973-575-6005 (x117); [rusigandhi@remax.net](mailto:rusigandhi@remax.net), website: [www.rusigandhi.com](http://www.rusigandhi.com). ■

**Visit the new Business Directory at the WZCC website:**

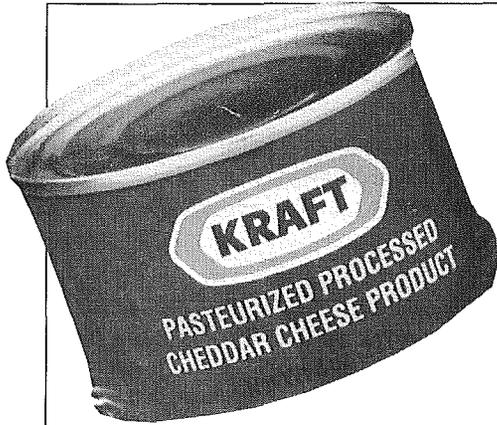
**[www.wzcc.net](http://www.wzcc.net)**

(Website designed, maintained and hosted by Avesta Computing Service of New Jersey)

To join the Zarathushti business email group, send an email to:

**[zchamber-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:zchamber-subscribe@yahoo.com)**

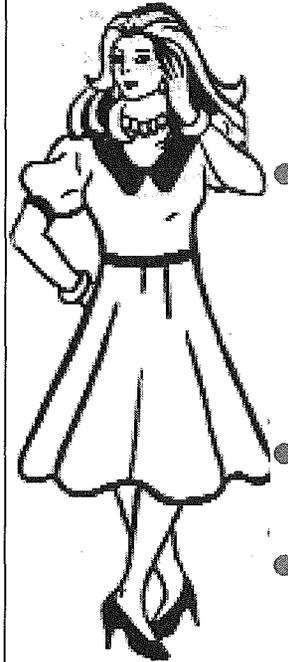
**In memorium.** WZCC mourns the sudden and untimely passing of *Brig. Parvez Cawasji*, of heart failure, on March 10. A most enthusiastic and efficient worker, he was among the core group that offered their talents and resources to WZCC (India) in Delhi.



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# Financial Progress Report



**Dr. Jerry M. Kheradi** chair of FEZANA Funds and Finance

**W**e continue to make progress within the FEZANA Funds. The funds are growing at a slow but steady pace. Please continue to support the funds so the money is there and ready when the need arises to give a lending hand to the community.

Kindly make your checks payable to FEZANA, indicate the fund you wish to contribute toward (General, Welfare, Critical Assistance, Religious Education, Scholarship and Journal) and mail to: Rashid Mehin, FEZANA Treasurer, 583 Beverly Place, San Marcos, CA 92069.

In the name of Ahura Mazda,

**Jerry Kheradi, MD**, Chairperson, Funds and Finance Committee  
**Rashid Mehin**, Treasurer

*Committee: Rustom Kevala, PhD, Mitra Nadjmi-Rashidi, Esq., Rita Engineer, Celeste Kheradi.*

**"Thousand Points of Light"** donors are shown below. Each \$100 counts as 1 Point of Light. Help us reach our goal of 1000 points. Donations received February 1 through April 18th, are shown in bold.

	2001-2	2003	Total		2001-2	2003	Total
Anonymous, FL	5		5	Nari & Dinoo Dastur, CT	1		1
Anonymous, NY	Gen 1		1	Erv Soli & JoAnn Dastur, FL	2		2
<b>Anonymous</b>		<b>Rel 1</b>	<b>1</b>	Edul & Niloufer Daver, NJ	1		1
A Wellwisher, MI	1		1	Homi & Nargish Davier, TX	1		1
Dr Babak Abadi, PA	1		1	Jimmy & Freny Deboo family, MI	1		1
<b>Parviz &amp; Simin Ardeshirpour, NC</b>	1	<b>Sch 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Ross Dinyari</b>		<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Dr. Cyrus F Austin, AZ</b>	Wel 13	<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>14</b>	Yezdi N Dordi, CA	5		5
Porus Austin, CA	2		2	Jimmy Dubash, VA	1		1
Zubin & Silvia Balsara, AR		Gen 1	1	Manek R. Dustoor, MI	2		2
<b>Edul &amp; Tehnaz Bamji, NJ</b>		<b>Wel 1</b>	<b>1</b>	A.D. & G.A. Dutia, AL	3		3
<b>Dolly &amp; Pesi Bevadam</b>		<b>Wel/Cr 2</b>	<b>2</b>	Tony & Swati Elavia, MA	1		1
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<b>Beach Cigar Group, FL</b>	Gen/Wel/Cr 20	<b>Wel/Cr 4</b>	<b>24</b>	Rumi Engineer, CO		Sch/Wel/Cr 3	3
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Firdaus & Jasmin Bhathena, MA	1		1	Rusi D Gandhi, NJ	1		1
Rustom & Sheroo Bhathena, OH	1		1	Sorab Gandhi, CA	5		5
Homi & Ellen Byramji, NJ	1		1	Eugene Gauger, MI	1		1
Dr. Lovji D. Cama, NJ	7		7	Jamshed & Yasmin Ghadiali, NJ	2		2
Dr. Nadir Camay, CA	1		1	Rashna Ghadialy, IL	1		1
<b>Sohrab D. Charna</b>		<b>Cr 1</b>	<b>1</b>	Mr. & Mrs. Sorab K. Ghadiali	3		3
Homiyar Choksi, VA	1		1	Soonu & Jal Godiwalla, TX	1		1
Cyra & Lyla Contractor, PA	1		1	Noshir L Hansotia, MO	1		1
<b>Hutoxi &amp; Dr Farhad Contractor, PA</b>	1	<b>(g) (h) 2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Piloo E. Ilavia, TX</b>		<b>Cr 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Farokh Contractor</b>		<b>Cr 1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Behram K &amp; Farieda Irani, TX</b>	4	<b>Wel/Cr 4</b>	<b>8</b>
Katy & Farrokh Cooper, CA	2		2	Hormuz & Shahdookht Irani, GA	6		6
<b>Phil F. Cooper, CA</b>		<b>Wel 1</b>	<b>1</b>	Mervan and Katayoun Irani, MD	1		1
Tommy and Nairika Cornett, GA	1		1	<b>Minoo S. Italia</b>		<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Tammy &amp; Behram Dalal, NC</b>	1	<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Rohinton Boman Irani, NY</b>		<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Phiroze H. Dalal, CA</b>		<b>Cr 5</b>	<b>5</b>	Rustam H. Irani, MA	1		1
Dr Ardeshir & Parvin Damania, CA	2		2	Jim & Homai Jagus, PA	5		5
Diana Damkevala, CA	1		1	Iraj Jahanian, MD, MO	1		1
<b>Maneck Daroowalla, NY</b>	1	<b>Gen 1</b>	<b>2</b>	Khurshid & J.J. Jamadar, TX	2		2
Adil Daruwala, CA	1		1	Rumi & Kashmiri Jamsetjee, IL	1		1
Farrokh N Dastur, CA	1		1	<b>Dinshaw &amp; Goolcher Joshi, MD</b>	2	<b>Cr 2</b>	<b>4</b>
Meher N. Dastur, CA	2		2	Khorshed & Dr Firoze Jungalwala, MA	(d) 1		1

[Contd. on next page]

# FINANCIAL CORNER

Thousand Points of Light [Contd]			2001-2	2003	Total	2001-2	2003	Total
Jamshed & Rita Kapadia, MA		1		1		Rohinton & Roshan Rivetna, IL		2
Homi & Shireen Kapadia, PA		5		5		Dinaz & Dan Rogers, OR		2
Dr Natasha Karanjia, PA	Cr	2		2		Villoo & Solee Rudina, TX		1
Dolly Kerawalla, CA		1		1		Purvez & Aban Rustomji, TX	(d)	2
Mr & Mrs K.S. Kermani, NY	(a)	5		5		Neville Sarkari, WY		1
Dr Rustom & Yasmin Kevala, MD	(f)	2		2		Nargesh & Aspi Sethna, TX		1
Delara Kheradi, NY		1		1		Prochy Sethna, CA		10
Celeste Kheradi, RI		15		15		Behram Shroff, VA	Cr	1
<b>Dr Jerry Kheradi, RI</b>	Sch	(f) 65	<b>Sch</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>70</b>	Dr Burjis & Hovi Shroff, FL		5
Kershaw & Nazneen Khumbatta, TX		1		1		Dr Nariman & Parrin Shroff, FL		2
Jasmin & Maneck Kotwal, NJ		2		2		Zubeen Shroff, NY		1
Zenobia & Shahrookh Lala, MI		1		1		Feroze & Anahita Sidhwa, TX	(Sch/Wel/Cr)	10
Mathew Lungen, NY	Sch	(f) 1		1		Yezdi N. Soonavala, MI	Gen	1
Jinobya Machhi, WI	Cr	1		1		Nazneen & Ehler Spliedt, CA		1
Borzoo Kushesh & Mahindokht	(b)	1		1		Bella Tata, BC		1
Dolly Malva, CA		1		1		Khurshed M Tengra, ID		1
Mehran & Dr. Mitra Mazdyasni, CA		1		1		Jamshed Udvadia, MI		5
Noshir & Yasmin Medhora, TX		2		2		Perry Unwalla, FL		1
Farahnaz Mehdiabadi, TX		1		1		Rayomand J Unwalla, PA		1
Hosi & Kim Mehta, IL		1		1		Dick & Sheroo Vazir, FL		2
Merwan and Rukshana Mehta, MO		1		1		Jer Vijan, AZ		1
Shahrokh & Gool Mehta, NY		2		2		Dr. M. Darius Vohman, GA	Gen	1
Hoshi & Nawaz Merchant, NJ		2		2		Parviz & Parvin Yeganegi, BC		4
<b>Mehraban &amp; Mahbanoo Mehr</b>			<b>Gen</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	ZAPANJ, DE, PA & NJ		2
Pesi Mistry, NY		1		1		Farangis Zardoshty & family, AZ	(c)	260
Tehmton & Aloo Mistry, MO		1		1		Mehraban Zartoshty, B.C		25
Jehangir and Olive Mobed, IL		1		1		Z Assoc of Alberta, Canada		3
Rumy Mohta, VA		1		1		Atlanta Z Anjuman, GA		1
Nesh Inc.		1		1		Z Assoc of N Calif, CA		2
Minoo Netervalva, CA		2		2		Z Assoc of N Texas		2
Percy K Nikorawalla, NJ		1		1		<b>Total Points</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>53</b>
Jamshed & Farzana Palsetia, MA		1		1		(a) in memory of Dr. Keikhosrow and Morvarid Harvesf		<b>668</b>
Farhad & Firoza Panthaki, MA		11		11		(b) in memory of Irandokht Ezzati		
Drs. Khushru & Roda Patel, IL		1		1		(c) in memory of Mobed Faridoon Zartoshty		
Mr & Mrs Randolph Paulling, GA	(d)	1		1		(d) in memory of Nargesh Mistree		
Yasmin & Shapur Pavri, TX		1		1		(e) in honor of the 70th birthday of Dr Jehangir Kotwal		
Dr Parvez Pohowalla, OR		1		1		(f) For Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Scholarships		
Godrej & Piloo Randeria, TX	Gen	1		1		(g) In memory of Mrs. Mitha Morris		
Dr. Minocher Reporter, OR		1		1		(h) For Mr. & Mrs. Dinshaw Nariman		
Jamshed & Tamara Rivetna, TX		1		1				



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# Caution! The Seven Most Common Investment Sins to Avoid!

## Seven investment sins:

(1) **Investors have no financial goals.** Without a goal you don't know where to start or stop. Not having a 'course' is like a ship without a rudder or compass. We all know a ship like this will never reach its destination. You must have a plan, a goal and chart a 'course' to achieve your financial goals, whether it's more income or growth of your principal to offset inflation. This is why all types of people who give investment advice – business people, real estate brokers, stockbrokers, life insurance agents, mutual fund brokers, CPAs, and attorneys – generally agree that investments that are not beating taxes and inflation are not achieving your financial goals.

(2) **Investors do not understand the law of compounding.** If you were asked the question: "Which would you choose: \$100,000 cash or a penny doubled every hour for 30 days?" What would you choose? The penny was the right choice. It would be worth \$10 million in 30 days. This is the power of time and compounding.

(3) **Investors are greedy in that they are impatient and do not look at the overall picture.** To have any good investment be successful, you should look at a 3 to 5 year span. If you could achieve a 10% average return per year, this would achieve the goal of beating both inflation and taxes. As an example: One of the largest mutual funds, in business since 1929, would have paid you an

8% income and given growth on principal for the 20 year period from 1975 to 1995.

	\$100,000 Principal	Invested Income
1975	\$100,000	\$8,000
1980	\$247,777	\$16,158
1985	\$292,857	\$19,830
1990	\$306,050	\$24,484
1995	\$427,325	\$34,186

That's right! Your investment of \$100,000 grew in 20 years to \$427,325 and your income grew annually from \$8,000 to \$34,186 by the 20th year. This is the actual picture of this particular 20-year period performance record. You do not have to keep the investment for 20 years; you could have it for 5 or 10 years. This is simply a look at past performance for a specific 20-year



## Profitable Catering Business for Sale

Established since 1977. Known throughout North America

Business provides catering services for any sized occasion as well as prepared ready-to-serve meals. Specializing in

"Parsi" cuisine and primarily serving the Greater Metropolitan Toronto Area and North America for the last 25 years. The business has fully equipped facilities to handle catering for up to 1,500 people. The business represents excellent opportunities for expansion and diversification in one of North America's largest cosmopolitan marketplaces.

It also represents an excellent immigration opportunity for overseas entrepreneurs looking for a successful business in Canada. The owners are looking to retire after 25 very successful years.

With serious inquiries, contact Yesna Bhesania at:  
**(416) 236-3702, Email: byesna@hotmail.com**



### **Thank you from Nazneen**

Thank God and all the wonderful people who helped us. Nazneen is ok as such and at home recovering from the chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment which was given to her after her surgery in New York. She has started a six-month treatment to lower her chances of a relapse. We are at present in the middle of another round of scans to evaluate the situation, just waiting and praying that things are normal since there are small areas with some left over tumor after the surgery. She may require further specialized treatments.

It's been a long year but the future is hopeful thanks to God and all the wonderful Zarathushtis who helped us. Firdosh [Mehta] thanks to you and FEZANA's kind help, and Homi [Gandhi] and Rashid [Mehin] for all their kind efforts to make this day possible for us.

*Jasmine, Aspi and Nazneen Kolah  
Helsinki, Finland*

### **ZSO's fundraising for building larger premises on the site of the present darbe mehr in metropolitan Toronto**

Zoroastrian Society of Ontario plans to demolish the existing Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr building (which was a gift from the Guiv family in the late 1970s) and build larger premises on this prime property, in a desirable section of Metropolitan Toronto.

The Building Committee is faced with the daunting task of raising \$2.2M (Cdn) in the next 3 years.

The Committee welcomes donations from Zarathushtis to help "make our dream a reality". Income tax receipts will be issued to US donors also. Mail checks to BCCC Committee chair, Dr. Dhun Noria, ZSO-BCCC, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M2M 3S6, tel: (416) 447-3482, fdnoria@hotmail.com. [Also see ad on last page].

### **OZCF's fundraising to purchase a parcel of land in the western Greater Toronto area and build a new center**

The Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation plans to purchase a parcel of land and build a house of worship and cultural center to serve the growing needs of Zarathushtis settled in the western part of the Greater Toronto Area (the present darbe mehr is in eastern Toronto).

The target is to raise \$2.8 M (Cdn) over 3-5 years. In phase 1, the goal is to purchase a 5-15 acre parcel for \$900,000 Cdn. \$1,900,000 will be raised in phase 2, for the building. OZCF has collected \$630,000 in cash and pledges as of Dec. 2002.

OZCF invites Zarathushtis worldwide to contribute. Mail checks to OZCF treasurer, Er. Nozer Kotwal, 4244, Taffey Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario, L5L 2J2, tel: 905-820-0461. Visit [www.ozcf.com](http://www.ozcf.com).

## **FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS (2003-2004)**

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### **Applications are invited for the FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS and the MEHRABAN DORAB KHERADI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS.**

The scholarships are open to Zarathushti applicants who have obtained admission for attendance at institutions of higher learning (accredited degree-granting colleges or universities) in USA or Canada.

**Scholarships:** Scholarships for the academic year 2003-2004 will be awarded in September 2003.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible the applicant must complete the application form and provide documentation for: (1) proof of status in USA or Canada (a minimum of one year residency in USA or Canada is required); (2) past academic records and accomplishments; (3) program of study; (4) annual financial need including assistance already pledged by other funds, charitable institutions or the institution of choice; (5) other financial assistance available from family and friends; (6) community service including contributions to Zarathushti functions and organizations; (7) three reference letters.

**Award Criteria:** Applicants will be rated on Merit of Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extracurricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%).

**Application:** Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) or from Dr Dolly Dastoor at [dastoor@total.net](mailto:dastoor@total.net). Signed and completed application forms should be post-marked August 1, 2003 to:

**DOLLY DASTOOR Ph.D, Chair FEZANA Scholarship Committee  
3765 Malo, Brossard, Quebec Canada J4Y 1B4**

Eating and enjoying our food promotes growth and health. We spend almost 12% of our life in eating activities. Mealtimes are social and cultural enjoyable times, be they enjoyed as intimate twosome, in private family settings or in larger groups. A lot of business, from personal, to professional is conducted over breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Food also performs sustenance and nutritive functions of growth, repair and replacement of our body's tissue. Hence for our own benefit we need to account for nutritive value of the foods we eat, as well as quality and quantity. During periods of growth, from birth to late teens, our food must supply more energy (calories) than the amount we have utilized, whereas in adults we need to equalize these. We spend more energy in youth than in later life as activity declines.

Basic components of food are protein, carbohydrates and fat. Most foods are composed of all three, though butter and oils are all fats; sugars and syrups are all carbohydrates, and most vegetables are protein and carbohydrates together. All foods also provide other nutrients - vitamins, minerals and antioxidants all of which help in repair, remodeling and replacement processes.



This column on living a healthy and balanced Zarathushti life, is brought to you by **Mehroo M. Patel, MD, FRCS(Ed.), FAAFP**. Questions and suggestions for future topics will be welcome. Dr. Patel has a family practice in Chicago since 1978 and practiced as a cardiothoracic surgeon in Mumbai and UK. A fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians, she was nominated twice as Illinois Family Physician of the Year.

## Nutrition: Joy of Eating

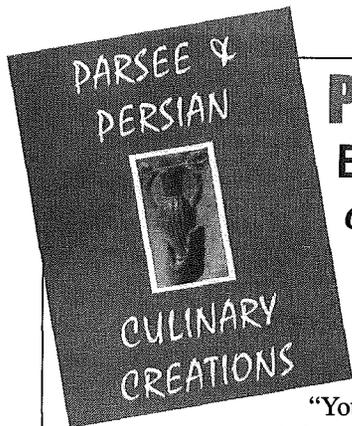
To be enjoyed at its best our food needs to be prepared and presented in attractive and appetizing form. All five of our senses - sight, smell, taste, touch, and sounds participate in the whole eating experience - hence food at the table must look, smell, feel, taste and sound (sizzle and crackle) inviting and entertaining, besides being nutritious.

Nutritionally balanced meal portions; combinations and quantities need a great deal of attention in preparation and serving of meals. Each average meal should follow the formula of 2:1:1; two weight units of carbohydrates, one weight unit of protein and one weight unit of fat. Using the food pyramid, select appropriate foods

from each food group, paying extra attention to fruits and green vegetables - remember 5 to 9 a day. Eat larger, denser portions and more calories in earlier parts of the day (breakfast and lunch), while cutting down on portions for dinner and late evening snacks. Oh, yes, I know all of us do just the opposite, but it's nice to focus and try.

### *Eat out for a change!*

Of course, we have to break the routine and eat out occasionally - it helps to dissipate stress, and lift up our spirit. Occasionally is not a twice-weekly affair. Again focus on portions and the food pyramid. Go easy on bread, fries and dense carbo-



## Parsee and Persian Culinary Creations Exotic Made Easy the American Way

*Compiled and Edited by Mehroo M. Patel, MD*

Yielding to popular demand, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago has published this second cookbook - a sequel to "*Parsee Culinary Artist*". Compiled and edited by Dr. Mehroo Patel MD, this book has a foreword by Roshan Rivetna and an essay "Focus on Nutrition" by Karmeen Kulkarni, a board-certified advanced diabetes manager.

"Your cookbook is special because of the nutritional information for each recipe ... for those of us who are concerned about reducing our fat intake, the low-fat substitutions are very helpful" - *Renate Nagarwalla*.

"We had a dinner part for 14, and used only recipes from your cookbook. It was a great success" - *Cherie Sorokin*

"Dr. Patel has done a superb job of simplifying, and adapting labor-intensive dishes, to suit today's home chef, without sacrificing flavor, texture or appeal ... For the health-conscious, nutritional breakdowns follow every recipe" - *Shernaz Mohanty*

**A unique and valuable feature is the complete nutritional analysis after each recipe.**

**\$20 +\$3 S&H.** Please send check payable to "ZAC" to: ZAC, 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

hydrates to leave room to enjoy dessert. One tip is to order appetizer size portions, another is to share and the third, leave some aside right at the beginning of the meal and bring it home for lunch the next day.

### Drink, toast and celebrate!

No celebration is complete without a cocktail, wine at dinner and/or after dinner drinks. Whether you enjoy a drink regularly or occasionally, socially or just to celebrate, limit it to one or two and count its calories as part of that meal –

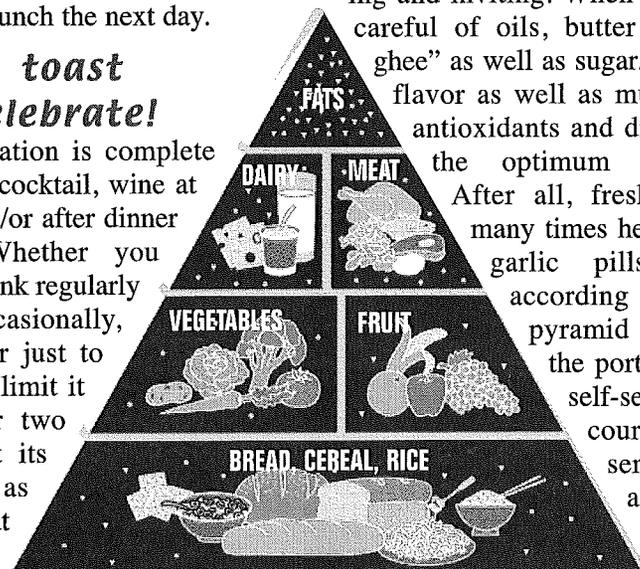
yes, alcohol provides calories equal to carbohydrate portion of the meal. That translates to eating bread, potato, rice or dessert reduced by that amount. Non-alcoholic drinks except water and sugar-free sodas also contain calories and should be consumed accordingly. Soda and cocktail mixers contain calories and salt, so be wary and judicious.

### Fast food, any one?

Don't be too hard on yourself or the family. In this fast-paced world we all need fast food once in a while. Maybe the kitchen is being remodeled or you don't have time to prepare food, on a short trip out of town or an extended vacation. All these situations call for a quick bite, so include it in your meal plans but not in addition; just because there is the big yellow "M" staring at you and the aroma is inviting, we do not have to stop by. Make a wise choice, hold the mayonnaise, ketchup and French fries, and skip the soda, shake and dessert.

### Parsi bhonu!

Forget our Parsi meals and banquet? No way, Parsi meals are healthy and nutritious besides being mouthwatering and inviting. When cooking be careful of oils, butter and "pure ghee" as well as sugar. Spices add flavor as well as much-desired antioxidants and digestives in the optimum proportion. After all, fresh garlic is many times healthier than garlic pills. Choose according to the food pyramid and mind the portions. When self-serving a ten-course banquet, serve yourself a sample size portion of each an save for the seconds. Eventually, you won't need to go for seconds, either.



#### RESOURCES

- Food pyramid, calorie counts and values are available from the American Dietetic Association, American Diabetes Association [[www.dietetics.com](http://www.dietetics.com), [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org), [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)].

- Our "Parsee & Persian Culinary Creations" published by Zoroastrian Association of Chicago [see previous page] has nutritional analysis of every recipe in the book and some healthier alternatives.

- The American Association of Physicians of India (17W300, 22nd St, Ste 300A, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181, tel: 630-530-2484) has published a guide on nutritional values of Indian foods, "Indian Foods: AAPI's Guide to Nutrition, Health & Diabetes". This book is authored by dieticians of Indian descent and has many helpful hints.

Next issue: Designer Diets. ■

## ■ MATRIMONIALS ■

FEZANA will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; we do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivoetna [see cover].

**Attractive and slim  
Parsi female, 22,  
B.S. Business,  
currently  
pursuing MBA.**

Seeks well-educated  
gentleman with a  
caring nature, good  
personality and  
sense of humor.

**Please contact:  
MyFairLldy@aol.com**

[F02-28]

**Male, 26, computer engineer**, good-natured, fun-loving, enjoys music, movies, the outdoors. Contact [maverick0977@hotmail.com](mailto:maverick0977@hotmail.com). [M03-11]

**Female, 23, computer science graduate**, doing masters in Toronto, green card holder (Canada), seeks life partner. Contact uncle in New Jersey at 732-549-3772. [F03-12]

### Looking for a soulmate? Try these websites ...

[www.ozemail.com.au/  
~zarathus/soulmate.html](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~zarathus/soulmate.html)  
(traditional Zarathushti website)

[www.matchmeup.com](http://www.matchmeup.com)  
(as exhibited at Houston Congress)

[www.marriagetoday.com](http://www.marriagetoday.com)  
(also wedding products & services)

[www.parsibazaar.com](http://www.parsibazaar.com)  
(view or register matrimonials)

### On Moderation

"u andar tan drustih padmanig khwarishnih u tan pa kar kashta weh."

"For health, moderation in eating and keeping the body active, are good."

[Mino-i-Kherad, II. 82, "Treasury of Quotations" by Ramiyar Karanjia]

## PERSONALS

A friend is trying to get in touch with **Mrs. Khorshed Bhavnagri**, author of a book *"The Law of the Spirit World"*. Originally from Byculla, Mumbai, Mrs. Bhavnagri is now believed to have settled in Canada, possibly Vancouver. With information, please contact Dinaz Rogers at [drogersor@msn.com](mailto:drogersor@msn.com).

## MILESTONES

Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafrah, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045, tel: 262-821-5296, email: [mmotafrah@msn.com](mailto:mmotafrah@msn.com).

NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."

## BIRTHS

### Boston baby boom

In the past two years, a number of families in Boston, and others with close ties to the Boston Zarathushti community, have celebrated the births of eagerly awaited grandchildren, children, brothers and sisters. These babies join an already growing number of young children, toddlers, and infants that grace ZAGBA events and other Boston community occasions with their presence.

When people talk about the declining population of Zarathushtis, many point with pride to Boston, and ask "What declining population?"

Many of these infants have started attending children's religious classes with their older siblings in a class that is geared to the 10 and under, with a majority under 5. Congratulations to the growing Boston family – the six babies listed below, those in earlier FEZANA Journal Milestones, and those on the way!

- by Parastu Dubash

**Shirin Dadina**, a girl, to Rohinton and Navaz Dadina of Dobbs Ferry NY, granddaughter to Amy and Soli Katki

and Sheroo and Behram Dadina of Mumbai, on April 23, 2002.

**Zinara Dubash**, a girl, to Parastu and Jamshed Dubash of Shrewsbury, MA; sister to Zarius, granddaughter to Gool and Shahrokh Mehta of Syracuse, NY and Aloo and Yezi Tata of Dehli, India; great-granddaughter to Nargish Vania of Syracuse, NY, on November 26.

**Nathan Haws Guzdar**, a boy, to Sally and Dinshaw Guzdar of San Francisco, CA, brother to Maya Dale, grandson to William and Joan Haws of Silver Creek, NY, and Adi and Ruty Guzdar of Framingham, MA, on August 5.

**Yezad Jahangir William Nakra**, a boy, to Jahangir and Teresa Nakra, grandson to Dinyar and Ruby Nakra of Mumbai, and Jane and Stephen Marrin of Baldwin, New York, in Bradford, MA, on April 21, 2002.

**Sanaya Firuzeh Panthaki**, a girl to Farhad and Firoza Panthaki, sister to Zaal and grand daughter to Perin and Sheriar Talavia of Saronda, India and Nergish and Dadi Panthaki of Pune, India, in Boston, MA, on August 9.

**Kirina Sirohi**, a girl, to Ashu and Hufrih Sirohi, granddaughter to Noshir and Aban Udwadia of Mumbai, and Sarjeet Singh and Shakuntala Sirohi of UP, India, in Burlington, MA, on August 7.

**Autria Sarvar Aidun**, a girl, to Mira Salamati Aidun and Sohrab Aidun, grand daughter to Rostam and Paricher Salamati, in Dallas, TX, on December 23.

**Sheyaan Bhesania**, a boy, to Percy and Nelly Bhesania, brother to Joyaan, in California, on January 7.

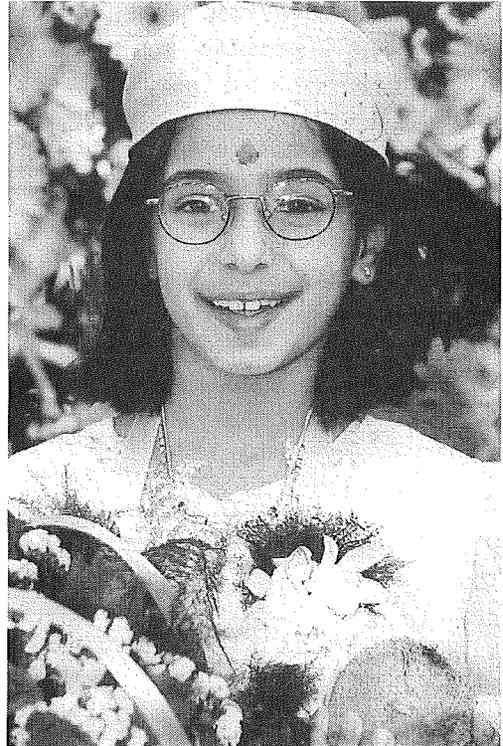
**Ferona Bustani**, a girl, to Niloufer and Anoshak Bustani, in Dallas, TX, on November 5.

**Cyrus Chinoy**, a boy, to Zubin and Aruna Chinoy, grandson to Homai and Alex McPherson, and to Adi Chinoy, in Montreal, QUE.

**Ava Jangi**, a daughter, to Daryush and Tinaz Jangi, in North Vancouver, on January 17.

**Bergis Karbhari**, a son, to Veera and Dicky Karbhari, brother to Anaheez, in Mississauga, ONT, on February 12.

**Sima Kootar**, a girl, to Aspi and Maharukh Kootar, sister to Cyrus, grand-



Binaifer Alpaiwalla [top] and Zara Patel.

daughter to Jal and Viloo Kootar and Gertrude Martins, in Mississauga, ONT, on October 3.

**Xerxes Mistry**, a boy, to Tehmus and Jarafshan Mistry of Auckland, New Zealand, grandson to Yazdi and Thrity Mistry of Auckland, New Zealand, and Jamshed and Roshni Mobed of Houston, TX, on September 22.

**Ariana Paige Bedford**, a girl, to Binaifer and Bruce Bedford, granddaughter to Farida and Sarosh Kham-

batta, niece to Sunita and Zubin Khambatta, in Chicago, on March 28.

**Darayus Zal Parakh**, a boy, to Zal and Carole Parakh, brother to Zarine, in Dallas, TX, on January 2.

**Fiona Patel**, a girl, to Tina and Nareeman Patel, granddaughter to Katy and Khurshed Homi Patel, and to Carm and Harold Craddock, great-granddaughter to Gool Homi Patel and niece to Goolnar and Michael Haw, in Mississauga, Ontario, on January 26.

**Anush Sarosh Patel**, a boy, to Anu and Sarosh Patel, of Fremont, CA, on March 7.

**Farah Pavri**, a girl, to Azarmeen and Rezwan Pavri, granddaughter to Dinar and Dinyar Pavri in New York, on January 30.

**Kaizan Satta**, a boy, to Nafeeza and Darayus Satta of Foster City, California, on January 16.

**Behzad Talaviya**, a son, to Zenobia and Viraf Talaviya, brother to Perzaad, of Mississauga, Ontario, on December 17.

#### NAVJOTES, SEDREH-PUSHI

**Binaifer Alpaiwala**, daughter of Jasmine and Feroz Alpaiwala, of Dallas, TX, in Mumbai, India, on December 31.

**Karl Aria**, son of Nina and Percy Aria of Saratoga, CA, in Mumbai, December 17.

**Eric and Carl Canteenwala**, sons of Jehangir and Purveen of San Jose, CA, in Mumbai, on December 28.

**Jehan Ghandhy**, son of Arnavaz and Astor Ghandhy, of Ontario, in Mumbai on December 6.

**Yazdaan Moogat**, son of Farrokh and Farzeen of California, in Pune, India, on January 1.

**Avvan and Darayus Sanjana**, children of Bepsi and Pesi Sanjana of Michigan, in Mumbai, on January 1.

**Zara Patel**, daughter of Arbez and Hoshang Patel from Dallas, TX, in Karachi, on January 2.

#### NAVAR INITIATION

**Pirhan Dastoor** [photo below] son of Binayfer and Nauzer Dastoor, brother of Bianca, from Toronto, Canada, at the Patel Agiary, Mumbai, India, on December 22.

#### WEDDINGS

**Vispi Jilla**, son of Sabar and Noshir Jilla, to **Sharmeen Irani**, daughter of Khorshed and Dr. Phiroze Irani, in New York, on May 17.

**Natasha Desai**, to **Norman Burr Furlong III**, in Houston, on March 8.

**Darius Kasad**, of Northern California, son of Homai and Arvind, and **Suzanne Larder**, were married on the beach in Hawaii, on October 13.

**Arzan Lali** of South Bend, IN, to **Delnaz Parabia**, of Bakersfield, CA, on January 4.

**Jasmine Chavda** of Chicago, to **Phillip Letourneau**, in Las Vegas, on March 22.

**Sanobar Jokhi** and **Hector Mehta**, of California, in Mumbai on March 24.

**Scheherazade Treasurywala** of New York, daughter of Bhikhoo and Kersi Treasurywala of Mumbai, to **Cyrus Mistry**, of UK, son of Jessie and the late Dhun Mistry, in Mumbai, on March 21.

#### DEATHS

**Dinamai Contractor**, mother of Farhad (Houtoxi) Contractor of Pittsburgh, in Mumbai.

**Rostam Jehanbakshi**, 100, husband of Sharvar (Tehran), father of Mahroz, Sohrab and Farengish (all of Tehran), Parvine (Keikhosrow) Mobed of Chicago, and Mahin Khorshidian of California; grandfather of nine, and great-grandfather of nine, in Tehran, on April 2.

**Shirin Falahati (Namdarian)**, 70, mother of Iraj Namdarian of Port Moody, Canada, in Tehran, on January 18.

**Shahriar Farrokhzad**, 97, in North Vancouver, on December 11.

**Dinyar Parsi**, 88, husband of Soltan Parsi, in North Vancouver, on December 17.

**Parichehr Parsi**, mother of Freydoun Parsinejad of Chicago, in Iran, March 23.

**Diana Minocher Patel**, sister of Maneck Khushroo Sanjana of Toronto, Canada, in New York, on January 26.

**Pirojshaw Navroji Phiroz**, 89, husband of late Dinamai, father of Arnavaz, Aspi, Freny, and Yezdi, and grandfather of Zal, Adil, Farhad, and Famaza, in South Africa, on March 4.

**Behram Sohrab H. J. Rustomji**, 90, past principal of BVS Parsi Boys School, Karachi, "Behli Master" to generations of schoolboys, in Karachi, on December 14 [see obituary next page].

**Nadir Saher**, son of Ratanbai Bejanji Saher, husband of Seroo, father of Rohinton, and brother of Dolly Jain of Mississauga, in Surat, India, February 9.



*Ninth-grader Ervad Pirhan Dastoor of Toronto, was ordained as navar at the F. N. Patel agiary in Mumbai, in December. As a newly ordained mobed, Ervad Dastoor was welcomed into the community and honored by Ervad (Dr.) Jehan Bagli, president of the North America Mobeds' Council, at the ZSO Nouruz function in March.*

Nadir Saffari, father of Cyrus Saffari, in Houston, on January 12.

Jeroo Sanjana, mother of Rusty Sanjana and Rhoda (Warris) Mahmud, in Houston, on January 1.

Gulcher Hoshang Sethna, mother of Farsis and Kayomarz of Toronto, Canada, in Karachi.

Cyrus Suraliwalla, 49, husband of Kashmira, father of Havovi, son-in-law of Roda and Ardeshir Elavia of Vancouver, brother-in-law of Hootoxi (Arda-e-Viraf) Minocherhomjee of Chicago, brother of Khurshid and Thrity of Mumbai, in Vancouver, on April 2.

Freny Vakharia, daughter of Ratanbai Bejanji Saher, and sister of Dolly Jain of Mississauga, Canada, in Navsari, India, on February 14. ■

### Shirinbanoo Sohrabji Kutar

A LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO THE  
UK ZARATHUSHTI COMMUNITY

Dr. (Mrs) Shirinbanoo Sohrabjee Kutar was the first chairperson of the World Zoroastrian Organization and held that position for 11 years and an active member of the Managing Committee for many more years. She was also a past president of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe for 10 years and its Committee Member for well nigh 40 years.

Shirinbanoo brought dignity and decorum to the WZO through her charming and vibrant personality. She was open-minded and used her Vohu Manah to excellent effect. She had a soft and yet a steely side to her personality, which enabled her to do communal work and yet evoke respect from all around her.

Shirinbanoo was preceded in death by her husband, Dastur (Dr.) Sohrabji Kutar, the very revered and respected high priest of UK for many decades. She is survived by daughters Perin and Shernaz.

[Based on posting by Darayus S. Motivala, on behalf of chairman Rumi Sethna and the Managing Committee of WZO, on creatingawareness@yahoo.com, on May 1] ■

### Behram Sohrab H. J. Rustomji May 13, 1912 - December 14, 2002

EDUCATOR, ARCHIVIST, HUMANIST, VISIONARY PRINCIPAL OF BVS SCHOOL

"Hazaaro Shukrana" – a thousand thanks, these were Behram Sohrab H. J. Rustomji's favorite words. And they epitomized his spirit of love, generosity, enthusiasm and energy. As a teacher and principal of the Bai Virbaijee Sopariwalla Parsi Boys School in Karachi for almost three decades, he influenced countless young men and women. Popularly known as "Behli Master," his dress projected his humbleness – a white pant and shirt, and always a black topi covering his head.



As principal of one of Karachi's foremost schools, he was a visionary and true teacher under whose leadership the school enjoyed high academic standards and a varied program of extra curricular activities. He used his leadership role to create awareness about the parsi community by inviting visiting scholars and dignitaries to the school, opening up the minds of his students to other outside ideas and influences, long before such things were 'fashionable'.

As a keen student of history, Behli Rustomji was also a composer, and felt compelled to compose a national anthem for the new nation of Pakistan in 1947. However, his friend Mr. Chagla approached him with his own score and asked Behli to play it. As a historian, Behli considered it a memorable honor that he was the first person to play Pakistan's national anthem, on his mother's piano.

He was most gratified that the Parsis of Karachi had the wisdom to open both their schools to non-parsis around the time of partition. Today, although Parsi children are in a minority in both schools, the schools are vibrant institutions that have brought honor to the community.

Behli with his wife Gool collaborated on the translation of Dasturji Dr. Maneck Dhalla's autobiography into English. They also wrote words and music for many devotional songs in English and Gujarati and were active in producing amateur plays and musicals for community benefits.

The city of Karachi was extremely dear to Behli. In 1952 he had written about its history in a book, "Karachi: 1839-1947." In 1971 Mr. Mohammed Ali Rangoonwalla gave him an opportunity to

truly serve the larger community by putting him in charge of the Rangoonwalla Community Center. With his characteristic energy, enthusiasm and vision, it became a true center of learning, an adult education center, catering to the needs of all ages, including the physically challenged.

Throughout his life he was a voracious reader, and a prolific writer. Despite physical handicaps in later years, he continued to write articles and essays.

He left the following message to be read at the BVS assembly after his departure from the material world: "Life is full of joy and wonder. His hands have created much beauty and every day is a miracle. I am very grateful to Him for the many blessings bestowed on me. May all prosper in the family, the school, the community, the nation and the world. May each of you the students, the staff, and the parents, proceed always "Towards that Best Light!"

Remembrance by Anahita Sidhwa, with input from Roshni Rustomji-Kerns, Anahita and Feroze Sidhwa, Soonamai Dessai and Nazneen Spliedt, his daughters and nieces. ■



# countertenor bejun mehta continuing on a high note

by Rashna Ghadialy

PHOTO BY DAN REST / LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO



Bejun Mehta as Armino, in Lyric Opera of Chicago's 2003 production of *Partenope*. From left, Elizabeth Futral as *Partenope*, Mehta, David Daniels as *Arsace*, Patricia Bardon as *Rosmira* and Kurt Streit as *Emilio*.

In the opera music world today, countertenors are breaking new grounds or rather reaching new highs. Among them, the thirty-something American countertenor, Bejun Mehta, has rapidly established himself as one of the leading stars.

Bejun Mehta has been profiled in a CBS's "60 Minutes II" segment from Jan 30, 2002, and *Parsiana*, June 2002 issue. His year 2003 performances in Handel's *Partenope* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the role of Armino and as Guido in Handel's *Flavio* with the New York City Opera have received sensational reviews in the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, respectively. He continues to dazzle the audience with his strong voice and remains a crowd drawer. Bejun is a born performer, on and off the stage. His confident, extrovert personality emulates in his performances

on stage, and conversations with fans back-stage and in informal settings.

To an opera novice, the countertenor concept can be challenging. A countertenor voice has existed, in some form or another since at least the Middle Ages. The terminology of what is a 'countertenor', however has become clouded. A countertenor is a male alto/soprano – a man using his developed falsetto *or* a man with a light, unusually high tenor voice, who may use some falsetto at the top of his range. Handel, Mozart and other composers wrote the parts of countertenors for the castrati to sing. In our era, those roles were sung mostly

by women sopranos. Recently, in this androgynous age, countertenors with their fluid and muscular sounds, have reclaimed these roles.

**Mehta in Chicago.** This past February, a group of Chicagoland Zarathushtis had the pleasure of attending Mr. Mehta's performance of *Partenope*. For some, it was their very first opera and initially feared that they would nod off. On the contrary, the lively romantic music kept our attention involved in the performance. It was a special treat to meet Bejun back-stage, he was gracious and engaging.

A day later, at a reception at Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna's home, we had the opportunity to acquaint ourselves further with this star. Down to earth, amiable, and extremely articulate, Bejun was open to answer any question from his Zarathushti audience, provided we answered his queries on the Zarathushti religion. His questions were a reflection of his readings, search for a spiritual identity and longing to belong to a community.

He mentioned that as a child his father, pianist Dady Mehta, a first cousin of maestro Zubin Mehta, had emphasized on rearing Bejun and his brother Navroj as Americans without a Parsi label. During their upbringing, Bejun's father had brought up his sons with values emphasizing good thoughts, good words and good deeds, which Bejun as an adult realized were the watch words of the religion of Zarathushtra. Bejun's mother, now a retired opera singer, is a white American from whom he received his early voice lessons. Bejun expressed a keen interest in meeting Zarathushtis and even a Parsi partner.

(He was oblivious of the existence of Zarathushtis other than Parsis.)

**A singing career.** One of the reception guests inquired from Bejun of how to encourage young singers to stay in the performing arts profession where the competition was stiff, mentors were not easily available, and opportunities to turn professional were limited. Bejun responded,

"If you really, really, really want something and know that in your heart, then no matter what, you will eventually succeed."

Obviously, Bejun spoke from his own experience. As a child, he was a wunderkind boy soprano. At puberty when his voice changed, it brought a tragic end of his singing career. He took up cello, flirted with conducting, and even sang baritone for a while but turned out to be just average. Bejun knew that he was not average and could not settle for anything less than par excellence. His calling was to be an opera singer. At age 27 destiny led him to read about

*[Continued on page 107]*

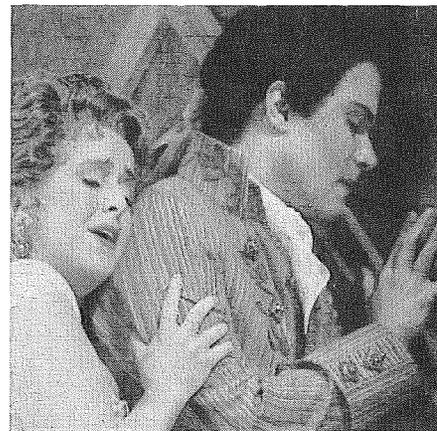


PHOTO: SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

*Bejun Mehta as Guido in New York City Opera's performance of Handel's opera "Flavio", in April 2003.*

### **What they said ...**

"The Lyric is fielding a perfectly integrated vocal ensemble that includes today's hottest countertenors, David Daniels and Bejun Mehta ... The superb cast of six is rewarded by delighted bursts of applause ... Mehta was a pleasure to watch and to listen to ... in the end when the united Armindo [Mehta] and Partenope blend voices in one of the opera's glorious moments of Handelian inspiration."

*John von Rhein  
Chicago Tribune Music Critic*

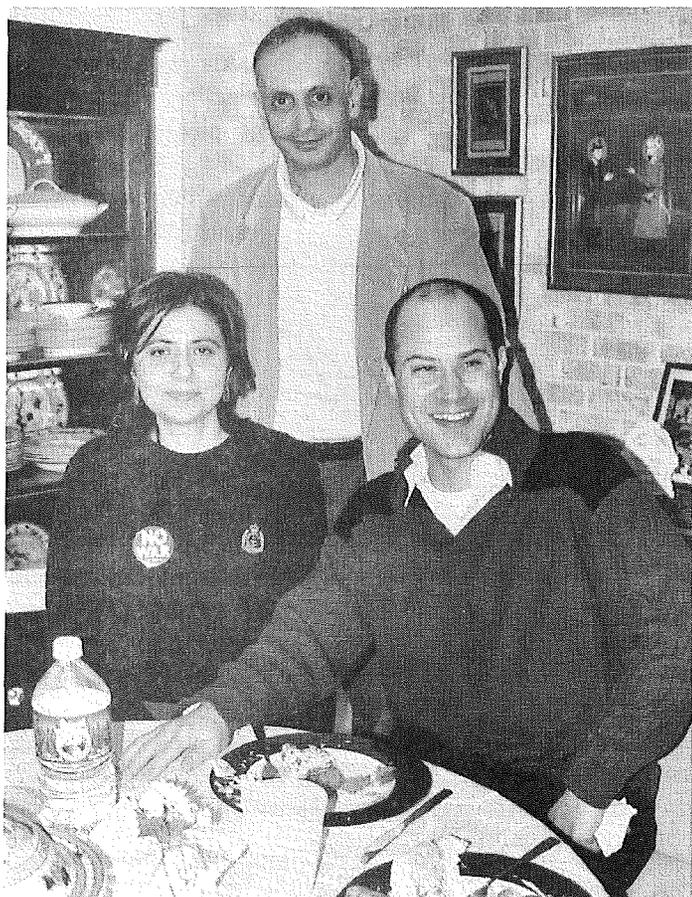
"He walked on the stage, and it was like a star had arrived."  
*Marilyn Horne on "60 Minutes" speaking of Mehta's first recital as a countertenor.*

"The main news about (New York) City Opera's "Flavio" is the music – especially the countertenor Bejun Mehta as Guido ... Mr. Mehta has been known for some years as a sensation, and he justified his reputation on Sunday (April 6)..."

*Anne Midgette  
The New York Times*

### **Upcoming highlights**

Mehta is booked many months ahead; upcoming are the title role in Orlando at Glimmerglass; a Covent Garden debut; a return to New York City Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, NY.



*From left, Rashna Ghadialy, Farobag Cooper, music director of the Chicago Philharmonia, and Bejun Mehta, at a reception by the ZAC in Chicago in February.*



Good sport Bejun Mehta [center front] obliges ZAC choir members by joining in a rendition of *Chaiye Hame Zarathushti*, with Farobag Cooper at the piano.

## Getting to know Bejun Mehta

Charming and unassuming, young opera star Bejun Mehta endears himself to the Chicago Zarathushtis, who are quick to claim yet another noted Mehta as their own, alongside 'Aapro Zubin'.

"He does not have, what you might call a 'Parsi palate', and while he is singing, he does not have spicy or very hot foods," warned father Dady Mistry. So, unlike his legendary uncle, the Maestro Zubin, for whom were set out extra bowls of hot chillies and Kolah's *achars*, for Bejun Mehta, the ZAC (Zoroastrian Association of Chicago) ladies gingerly prepared a very toned-down, albeit Parsi dinner – of vegetable *pullav*, *raitu*, *jerdaloo ma boti* and *sali*, *kheema kabobs* and *kaju-ni-marghi*.

"I was looking for dhansakh!" said the charming Bejun, at the reception for him at the Rivetna home in Chicago, on February 22nd, during his visit to Chicago to sing in *Partenope* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Belying his star stature in the opera world, Bejun Mehta turned out to be

very much a delightful "nice Parsi boy" instantly endearing himself to all present. And the Chicago Zarathushtis were quick to claim yet another noted Mehta as their own, alongside 'Aapro Zubin'.

Bejun Mehta is yet one more star in the already star-studded Mehta family. Father **Dady Mehta** is an internationally recognized pianist, having won awards in Vienna, Geneva, Munich and Warsaw, currently on the faculty at Eastern Michigan University, teaching piano and chamber music. His mother is an opera singer of European descent.



Brother **Nuvi (Navroj) Mehta** is music director of the Marquette Symphony in Michigan, the Nova Vista Symphony in Sunnyvale, California, the San Diego Chamber Orchestra, and a music lecturer at the University of San Diego.

Of course uncles **Maestro Zubin Mehta** and **Zarin Mehta** (executive director of the New York Philharmonic, and recently shortlisted for the CEO position at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra) and great-uncle, the late **Mehli Mehta** have already made their marks in the music world.

Brought up in Ann Arbor, MI, and currently living in New York, Bejun was not "brought up in the tradition of my father" nor formally initiated into the Zarathushti faith with a navjote ceremony. However, he is quick to add: "My father lived the religion in his own quiet way, and there is no doubt that it has been a very major part of my upbringing."

"Many of the things I have learned are in here," says Bejun, glancing with interest, through a copy of FEZANA's *Legacy of Zarathushtra*, "I'm sure I have more of this in me than I know." Earlier, Dady Mehta had ordered 20 copies of *Legacy* "to give to friends in the States and in Europe" with a note: "thanks for putting it together in such a compelling way." Obviously, Dady is very much a Zarathushti at heart and so, no doubt, is Bejun.

This was confirmed two days later, when we received a Thank You note from Bejun. It said: "... I learned so much from the whole gathering and hope I was able to contribute to some good effect. I feel more a part of the Zoroastrian community than I ever have. Thank you."

- by Roshan Rivetna

## Countertenor...

[from page 105]

an opera singer, David Daniels who had a similar experience as him and by then had become a countertenor. This inspired him to try the same path. And lo, Bejun discovered that he too could sing countertenor notes.

**Support for the Arts.** Our conversations with Bejun also brought up a thorny issue of lack of support for the Arts in the Zarathushti world both, the old World and especially the new diaspora. Bejun inquired of the existence of classical music pieces written by Zarathushtis.

We informed him that very few existed. We knew of: the longest piano piece ever composed, by an Indian Parsi Kaikhosru Shapurji Sohrabji (1892-1988); and Parizad Irani's piece *Zarathushtra* which made its world debut at the 12th North American Zoroastrian Congress 2002 in Chicago this past summer, performed by the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra conducted by Farobag Homi Cooper. A copy of the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra performance at Congress 2002 was presented to Bejun as a gift.

One of our community members mentioned that it is high time Zarathushti musicians in the western world learn a lesson from the Christian and Jewish world and develop classical music pieces inspired by our Zarathushti scriptures. After all, Bach, Handel, Mozart and Mahler composed the *Messiah*, *Requiem*, *Resurrection*

inspired by their religious identities and often times commissioned by their religious institutions.

During our encounter with Bejun Mehta, he deeply touched our hearts, challenged our minds, and bonded with us. He is a true role model for inspiring musicians and has through talent, hard work and perseverance reached stardom. We wish Bejun the very best. May we have the opportunity to hear our countertenor sing in the near future, Zarathushti arias. Amen.

**Rashna Ghadialy** is an opera fan and currently resides in Chicago. She was chairperson of the 12th North American Zoroastrian Congress held in Chicago in July 2002. Since then, Rashna has been working to promote the Arts in the Zarathushti North American community. She would like to hear from you if you are dedicated to this cause. Please contact her through FEZANA Journal.

### NOTES

"Brilliant 'Partenope' suits Lyric season perfectly," Chicago Tribune; Feb 3, 2003; John von Rhein.

"Visual Slapstick Like Handel's Ornaments," The New York Times; April, 8, 2003; Anne Midgette.

"On a High Note," The New York Times; March, 4, 2001; Charles McGrath.

The author thanks Freya & Farokh Dhunjisha, Sarosh Fatakia, Renata Nagarwalla, Minu & Mehroo Patel, and Adil Pooniwala for their input. ■

## Freelance writer

**Michelle Mama**, daughter of Nilufer and Danny Mama of Brampton, Ontario, is an active member of Toronto's theater community. A freelance writer and producer, with a BA in cinema studies, literature and drama from the University of Toronto, Michelle co-founded *Tecumseh Massive*, whose mandate is to foster, write and produce new Canadian works with a fresh, young perspective. She also co-founded two theater companies, Kefi Produc-

tions and Live Bait, and worked on two monologues written by playwright Lanford Wilson for the Fringe Festival. [ZSO newsletter].

## Grammy nomination

**Rushad Eggleston**, of Foster City, California, was nominated for a "Grammy" award, with his friends Bruce Molsky, Michael Doucet and Darol Anger who comprise the group "Fiddlers 4". The group was nominated for their traditional folk album "Fiddlers 4" [ZANC newsletter]. ■

## EVENTS AND HONORS

**Zarina Confectioner**, daughter of Gonnie and Zarir of Surrey, British Columbia, received a \$1000 Retail Scholarship from "Retail BC". Zarina is preparing for a career in fashion retail, taking a Fashion Marketing Certificate program and a concentrated Fashion Merchandising Program in BC.

Zarina has aspirations to become a "great Vancouver retail entrepreneur"; her goal is to open a high-end menswear shop with services that include personal shopping, styling, and specialty spa treatments [forwarded by Dolly Dastoor].

**Captain Porus Dinshaw**, Canadian Ministry of Health Air Ambulance pilot escorted the Pope throughout his visit to Toronto. He flew his helicopter, Bandage I, side by side with the Pope's to respond immediately to any medical emergency. The highlight of his call to duty was when he was able to officially meet and shake hands with the Pope. At the end of the trip, the Pope presented him with a medal in appreciation of his service [OZCF newsletter].

**Frene Ginwala**, speaker of the National Assembly, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, is one of the 10 commissioners of the Commission on Human Security established in June 2001. The commission is co-chaired by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Goals of the commission are: (1) to promote public understanding, engagement and support of human security; (2) to develop the concept of human security as an operational tool for policy formulation and implementation; and (3) to propose a concrete program of action to address threats to human security. [By Dolly Dastoor; also see [www.humansecurity-chs.org](http://www.humansecurity-chs.org)]

## Sohrabji Dastur celebrates his 100th birthday



Karachi Zarathushtis had the privilege of honoring another Quetta-ite, **Ervad Sohrabji Dastur**, on his 100th birthday on March 26th – Mehra Marker was greeted in July 2001.

Sohrabji's birthday began with a visit by the president of the Quetta Anjuman, Ardeshir Marker and his bride Farahanaz. Later in the day, KZBM (Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal) president Dr. Gool Talati, and managing committee members presented him with a shawl – the traditional mark of honor; and WZO's board

member Toxy Cowasjee presented him a gift on behalf of her Association. In the evening, indeed all week while Sohrabji was in Karachi, friends came to greet him. What strikes all who meet him is the kindness exuding from his eyes, and the profusion with which he thanks the visitors even before they could greet him.

According to KZBM's newsletter, *What's On*, Sohrabji was born in Udvada, India in 1903. He became a 'Yozdathregar mobed' attaining the highest level of priestly education. At the age of 16 his family migrated to Quetta.

Sohrabji has led a selfless life dedicated to the service of others; an exemplary life of honest hard work, with tolerance and a broad-minded approach. Sound theological and school education has made Ervad Sohrabji Dastur a priest of moderation and enlightenment, who, notes *What's On*, "believes that religion evolves progressively through the times, while its basic principles, doctrines and beliefs remain unchanged."

Gardening is his other accomplishment – he is famous for his roses in seven different colors on a single plant. Sohrabji and his wife Piroja raised three children: Jerbanoo Nadirshaw who lives in Karachi, Feroze who lives in Philomath, Oregon, and Rustom who now looks after the Quetta dar-e-meher.

- by Sunnu Golvala



**Sherizaan Minwalla**, daughter of Farhad and Ayesha Minwalla of Cincinnati, OH, graduated in May 2002 as a J. D. from Chicago-Kent Law School, and passed the Illinois Bar examination held in July 2002. Sherry lives and works in Chicago.

**Meher (Motivala) Merchant**, of London, UK, was picked by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, as one of the nation's champion caregivers, in recognition of the care she gives her husband Russi, an Alzheimer's victim. Meher is one of 13 winners who received £1,500 Dixons vouchers and were presented to the Trust's president, HRH The Princess Royal (Anne) at a Gala Award Ceremony in October.

**Marsha Malbari** of British Columbia was awarded the Commemorative Medal for the Queen's Golden Jubilee, for her services to community and Canada, on the recommendation of the executive director of the Youth Volunteer Corporation of Canada. Marsha is chairperson of ZSBC's youth committee, instrumental in re-vitalizing youth activities in the Vancouver, BC area.

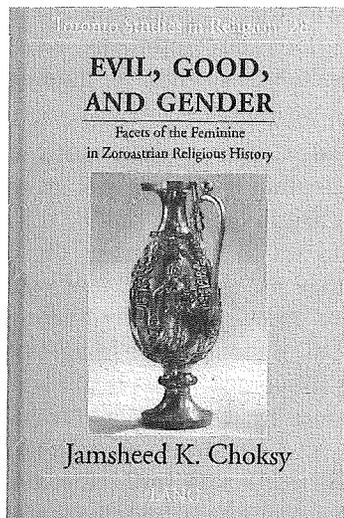
**Maneck Sattha** of Toronto, custodian and scoutmaster was awarded the Medal of Merit by the National Commissioner of Scouts Canada, for his "meritorious work for Canadian youth over the years."

**Bella Tata** of Vancouver, BC was



among the few recognized by the Government of Canada, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne. Bella was selected

for her significant achievements and contributions to her community and to Canada. She was awarded the Medal at a gala award ceremony. Bella has also been the recipient of Canada 125 Commemorative Medal. Bella is Executive Assistant Officer, Pacific Region of Industry Canada and active in the Zoroastrian Society of BC as past president and board member for many years. ■



**Evil, Good, and Gender  
Facets of the Feminine  
in Zoroastrian Religious History**

**By Jamsheed K. Choksy**

*Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002,*

*ISBN: 0-8204-5664-0, 166 pages.*

*Tel: (212) 647-7706*

*www.peterlangusa.com*

This approach provides him a forum to guide the reader to specific primary sources, focussing for the most part on texts, artworks, coins and other items that explore the implications of the religion's attitudes towards gender-related issues. At the same time, the heavy reliance on scholars who are intimately involved in Zarathushti studies leads to a lack of critical analysis – a benign explanation – for some of the religion's questionable beliefs and traditions that affect women.

The problem could have been avoided by relying more heavily than the author prefers on theoretical paradigms drawn from other disciplines to search for reasons and the development of theory to explain Zarathushti belief systems. Unfortunately, the author wants to shy away from viewing "gender-related issues of the past as misogynist," and in doing so, does not differentiate between a misogynist and a broader feminist perspective that would have allowed him to present a more nuanced picture.

Chapter 2 provides a straightforward discussion of the rise of the religion – the life of the prophet, scriptures, dualism and the feminine, spiritual entities, the sectarian sacred history, worship and death rituals and the emigration of Zarathushtis to India and their subsequent dispersion to other countries.

Chapter 3 takes us into the domain of female demons and beneficent female spiritual beings, clarifying the gender-specific linkages of notions like deceit, sexuality and avidity that are part of the faith's symbolism of the demonic female entities, while the divine female divinities are depicted as working to ensure that cosmic order is upheld. Choksy stresses the point of the faith's dualistic system, and how this orientation accommodated the contrasting notions of order and disorder and simplified the acceptance of the connection between evil and the feminine.

**Dualistic Dilemma: Good and Not-So-Good<sup>[1]</sup>**

**By Ketayun H. Gould**

**Professor Emerita, University of Illinois**

This monograph reflects the strengths and weaknesses of a work done by a historian of religion whose central concern or disciplinary training does not extend to gender studies. Choksy [right] brings the remarkable range of his scholarship to do a superb job of examining doctrinal, theological and ritual developments over time in the relationship between evil, good and gender.



The introduction provides a review of the main thesis of the volume. Basically, Choksy lays out the dichotomy between evil and good as 'interlinked

religious concepts', with its origins attributed to spiritual entities who act in opposition to each other as advocates of these dual principles.

In many societies, gender came to be associated with evil, and Choksy elaborates on this connection in the context of the

Zarathushti religion. Male clerics subsequently transformed this concept into yielding demonic female spirits. At the same time, Zarathushti beliefs did not exclude the feminine from goodness. In fact, Mazdean rites included several female spiritual beings who played important roles in expelling evil and serving as the role models for mortal women.

At the outset, Choksy acknowledges that this study places a heavy reliance on the source materials that the religion of Zarathushtra provides.

The context for this analysis is the Zarathushti attribution of malevolence and benevolence to the feminine, the masculine, the female and the male. However, when Choksy extends this theme to include socio-religious development during modern times, he loses his vision of how the "images of the female and male in theology, were fundamental in defining both women's and men's cultural roles and statuses."

Specifically, the monograph contains five chapters and a brief introduction.

[1] I have drawn on my earlier, more detailed review of this book. See, Ketayun H. Gould, "The good, the bad, and the not-so-beautiful," Parsiana, November 2002.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the male dominated religious and societal world views that feminine as a gender were weak willed and easily led astray by the devil's menagerie. Choksy illustrates this Mazdean belief by referring to the myth of the *Bundahishn* regarding the act of the first woman, Mashyana, whose image was projected upon women to reinforce the belief that women, acting independently, will always end up creating the conditions that produce evil. The main emphasis in this section is the tie between pollution and evil, including the threats posed by menstruation and childbirth, plus a discussion of the feminine connection between evil and good in the afterlife.

Chapter 5 is a historical excursion into antiquity and the middle ages for a search of the available records that might divulge the socioreligious aspects of Zarathushti women's lives. The pre-modern period saw very little significant change in the male dominated secular order, leading to the conclusion that despite some ability to engage in gender appropriate work, the old dichotomy between evil, good and gender continued to restrict women's functions in the spiritual life of the community.

Finally, as stated before, the problems with the book are most evident in Choksy's concluding chapter on socioreligious development during modern times. The emphasis on "images of the female and male in

*theology*" (italics mine) that is supposed to be "fundamental in defining cultural roles and statuses" is often lost in the amount of coverage that he devotes to statistics on the effects of western-style societal influences that might have been responsible in bringing about some secular changes.

Consequently, Choksy fails to stress strongly enough that a relatively egalitarian ideal that might govern societal sex-role behavior might not provide a bulwark against continuing negative

“... a historical excursion into antiquity and the middle ages for a search of the available records that might divulge the socioreligious aspects of Zarathushti women's lives.”

images of women in the religious texts and traditions. As a result, the chapter paints an overly rosy picture of women's "social and religious liberalization" without any mention whatsoever of some acrimonious issues that have affected

Zarathushti women's spiritual lives. For example, the status of Parsi women married to non-Parsis, the status of their children, their legal status as Zarathushtis, etc., are all subjects of vital concern that deserve particular coverage here since quoting scriptural traditions seems to be the accepted way of justifying the legitimacy of these gender-related religious laws.

Instead of tackling these thorny issues, Choksy backs away from a topic that is nothing but vital in view of the book's central concern with gender by making some general, non-threatening comments such as the "increase in the frequency of marriage across confessional communities" has succeeded in "bringing

new issues and concepts into familial settings." A newcomer to the field could read this statement and have no inkling whatsoever about how these socioreligious developments have discriminated consistently against Zarathushti women.

In general, Choksy seems more at ease in dealing with material from *the past*, and in drawing out the religious and social functions of these ideas such as the effects of the decline of diabolism in diminishing perceptions of the negative images of Zarathushti women. This is not surprising since by discipline and training, he is a historian of religion whose interest lies in furthering discussion of "continuity and change in the history of religions." It is in this capacity that this book should be read and appreciated for its impressive scholarship and contribution towards furthering the cause of Zarathushti studies. ■

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**Dr. Ketayun Gould** is professor emerita in the School of Social Work, University of Illinois. Her writings have dealt with two main areas: feminist theory, models and practice frameworks in the area of women and ethnic minority concerns; and historical and demographic studies of the Parsi Zarathushti community in India. Currently she is authoring a book on the historical and demographic decline of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in the rural and urban areas of Gujarat.

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