

FEZANA



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Mah Avan-Adar-Dae 1373 YZ (Shenshai)

Mah Adar-Dae-Bahman 1373 YZ (Kadmi)

Perpetuating the Religion, Strengthening the Community

Also inside:

3000th Anniversary Celebrations

Pune Youth Congress

Bam: the Zarathushti Connection

Arts and Entertainment

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN
ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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ON THE COVER

*Column bases from palace at
Pasargadae, Iran,
c. 510 BCE*

PHOTO CYRUS RIVETNA.

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Benevolent Guidance - Not Autocratic Rules

By Jamshed Udvadia
Editor, FEZANA Journal

A wag once asked a Christian prelate: "Bishop, can you show me the road to Heaven?" - to which the good man replied: "Sure, turn to the Right and keep going Straight."

Do we need much more than that to perpetuate a religion that has as its twin pillars the practice of Truth and Righteousness? If the followers of the Zarathushti deen (religion) were all selfless rational persons, we would not have to worry. Unfortunately, most people let emotion color their judgment when discussing religion; and when some of them perceive the Zarathushti deen as a private possession of an ethnic group, it complicates the issue.

It is said that when Zarathushtra first propounded his religious principles at the court of Kyani King Vish-taspa, several persons who could not grasp the ideology asked him for a simple enunciation. He is reported to have said: You only have to remember 3 words - *Manashni*, *Gavashni*, *Kunashni* (think good thoughts, speak good words, do good deeds).

Most Zarathushtis will tell you that that is the basis of our religion. The problem occurs when different groups try to define 'good'.

While the religion leaves that determination to each individual, via the use of his *Vohu Manah*, there are many things that can be done to bring the followers of the religion closer,

so that they act as a homogenous set rather than isolated pockets of self-righteous opinions.

Our Dasturs need to understand that times have changed since Zarathushtra lived and died; that while principles of the religion form a strong and unchangeable foundation, customs have to change in keeping with the changing world. Would it not help if they were more sensitive to the needs of the laity they were put in place to lead in religious matters? Should they act more like benevolent counselors and less like autocratic rulers



who expect their words to be accepted without question? Denouncing those who do not agree with their dictates only creates a furor and hurts the unity that is so ardently desired in a community, which has a world-wide count less than that of a medium-sized city.

Dasturs taking an unnecessary harsh stand and then backing off, mobeds using strong, almost indecent language, dasturs and mobeds calling certain practices 'invalid and illegal' without sufficient facts or law to back them up, cause a lot of confusion in the minds of lay people, who then begin to lose respect for the priesthood.

That does not make for strengthening the community. It generates apathy towards the religion and a drifting away from the community, since there seems to be no standard philosophy and interpretation of the scriptures that one can fall back on in difficult times.

We need to be more tolerant and more democratic in the way we deal with people, particularly those who profess the same religion - the Zarathushti deen. We also need a world 'council of elders' with representation from Zarathushti communities across the world, which could publish one standard official translation (with explanatory notes) of our scriptures, that any one could refer to and quote from.

At present, there are many questions about religious practices which find adherents on opposite sides and largely labeled as orthodox (or traditional) and moderates (or reformers). One prominent member of the community suggests that we should split along those lines harmoniously, rather than hold together with internal strife. Is this the way we want to go? Whether we do or not, will depend upon the flexibility of our mobeds in general and dasturs in particular, as also other protagonists who claim to speak for and lead the community.

Those who insist on rigid outdated customs and rules would do well to remember the fable, where the rigid oak crashes in a strong wind while the flexible reed bends, springs back and continues to grow. ■

FEZANA JOURNAL

wishes all
Zarathushtis
a happy and
prosperous
Nouruz 1373 Yz

May we see a flowering of
the religion of Zarathushtra
and growth, prosperity and
unity for the Zarathushti
community worldwide.

Sunrise over Camelot, Again

By Roshan Rivetna
Editor-in-Chief, FEZANA Journal

There are times when I feel so very sad and uncertain about the future of the Parsi Zarathushti community. Such as when I read the gloom and doom statistics in India [*Dinshaw Tamboly's article, page 46*]; or the alarming number of Johns and Michaels, Carols and Barbaras in this journal's Wedding columns; or see the many half-blond boys and girls, navjotes notwithstanding, who feel ill-at-ease coming to the darbe-mehr. (Though my spirit does soar when I see a John or Carol, and their little ones, *more* involved, and *more* Parsi Zarathushti in spirit, than even the "real" ones).

More alarming is to see some of my "pure" Zarathushti-Zarathushti friends and their children, gradually being swept away into the maelstrom of demanding American professional and social lives, with no time left to develop communal bonds; and those I occasionally hear about, who have lived nearby for decades, islands unto themselves, without ever a thought of coming to even a once-a-year Nouruz function.

The few shiploads of Zarathushti refugees who landed on the shores of India 1300 years ago, managed, not just to survive, but to mold a unique religious-ethnic identity in a vastly Hindu-Muslim milieu. Less than .01% of the population, the Parsis built a reputation for "integrity, industry and charity" and blazed the trail in commerce, industry and finance. They built industrial empires, amassed great fortunes, and returned their wealth, many-fold, extending their philanthropy liberally to others as well as their own community.



Surely sunset is not about to descend on Camelot?

I am told that while the handwriting may be on the wall for the Parsis, I should be happy that the religion of Zarathushtra is alive and growing, embraced by thousands of new followers – in Tajikistan or Venezuela or Brazil. My mind accepts this new reality. After all, it will help perpetuate the *religion*. But my heart still feels sad for the Parsi community.

The Parsi fraternity. With the Parsis I share an identity, tradition and history going back a thousand years. I share a way of life, customs and celebrations, *ses*, *chalk* and *toran*, rituals, *muktad* days, going to the agiary, and saying my prayers. I share a love for the good life, enjoy Parsi humor, and, I'm embarrassed to say, a well-made plate of *dhansakh* (with generous portions of meat in the *dar*) and *kavab*. I even look like them and talk like them, and am glad that my sons (and thankfully not my daughter) have the 'pucca' Parsi nose.

Despite their dogged individualism and their penchant for internal arguments and disagreements over anything and everything, there is, nevertheless, a remarkable Parsi fraternity that bonds every Parsi around the world. I recall a vacation in Paris some years ago when we ran into another Parsi couple on the Champs Elysee. We had never met, but there was immediate recognition, and we ended up going out for dinner together, talking about all the common friends and relatives we discovered we had.

It would be difficult for me to share this community camaraderie with Carlos or Renaldo in Brazil, and I'm sure the feeling is reciprocal.

Harmony over unity. The Iranian persona, too, has flowered over the centuries, with its own, unique identity, customs and culture.

Do we really need to drop our distinctive Parsi or Iranian persona? Do we really need to strive so hard to be one? Why are we in such a rush to all become "North American Zarathushtis"? Won't that come with natural evolution, over time?

Can we not, instead, savor and perpetuate our distinctive identities? Can we not, celebrate the diversity and respect the other? Can we not, encourage the other to flower and grow as they best feel and believe?

Collective commitment. In the wonderful countries of the western diaspora, where we have chosen to live, we have the freedoms, we have the opportunities, we have the means. We can very well live the Zarathushti life in our homes and preserve and nurture our customs and traditions in the manner of our choosing.

It is also our responsibility to seek out and invite those Zarathushtis on the fringes, to our homes and to our community gatherings, and genuinely welcome them into the fold.

Our major hurdles are our small numbers and our dispersion. Now, with the miracle of the internet, the world is getting smaller. With a keystroke, we can reach across the globe. With increased networking, communications and cheaper, faster air travel, local boundaries are expanding to encompass the globe. We can build 'virtual communities' that do not necessarily live in close proximity, but that can, now, with increased numbers, have a better chance of strengthening the communal spirit.

We could then leave it to our national and global organizations to bring all these disparate communities together under one "Zarathushti" umbrella, spanning across the globe and across the whole spectrum of ideologies.

With our collective commitment, we may very well see sunrise over Camelot again. ■

Perpetuating the Religion Strengthening the Community

By Khorshed Jungalwala
Chair, FEZANA Publications

The Zarathushti community has a history of a glorious past and a progressive present. Actions we take today to perpetuate our religion and strengthen our community will define our success for future generations. It is vital for the intelligentsia and the leaders of the community to provide the necessary vision to accommodate changes that enhance the fundamental philosophy and traditions. ***Our mission can only be accomplished if we promote harmony within the existing diversity in our community.***

The essential elements underlying the doctrinal and ritual (ceremonial) aspects have come under powerful scrutiny, providing perpetual reinterpretation to suit the changing times, conditions and migration to different parts of the world. Preservation of the fundamentals of religious philosophy is critical to the very existence of the religion. Rituals performed by the lay or priests with understanding, reverence and devotion are also essential to maintain a religious link with the divine and physical world.

Preserving, modifying and redefining the tenets of our religion and traditions through the ages have been observed in both mother countries of Iran and India. Zarathushti migration to all parts of the world in the past fifty years brings with it a self-imposed dilemma. Freedom to practice our religion is a birthright handed to us by most of our new homelands. It is now up to us to follow the doctrinal and ritual practices of our ancestors, with minor modifications that may be conducive to our current lifestyle for practical purposes.

Family unit. The practice and perpetuation of religion and community starts with the family unit. **Education** is one of the strongest preparations for life. Parents should show their children with words and actions that being part of our great religion is an honor and a privilege. They should incorporate Zarathushtra's ethical teachings into everyday activities; recite, perform and explain the various prayers and rituals; and explain the long *history* of our survival and growth through the ages, through good times and difficult times, that have challenged our survival.

Children and adults should be encouraged to *communicate* with their Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti friends and neighbors about their heritage.

Community groups. Much can be accomplished by groups of families and individuals (formal associations and informal groups) by rendering support to families during their difficult times; promoting *social and religious activities* like meals, gahambars, entertainment and jashans; conducting *classes* for adults and children and inviting scholars/knowledgeable priests to share their understanding at *seminars and conferences*; and giving *inter-married families* an opportunity to imbibe the Zarathushti vision.

Establishing *darbe mehrs* for various activities, as many FEZANA associations have already done, give the community a sense of belonging. Efforts to build a *consecrated atash adaran* in North America should be supported.

Recently, a rabbi suggested we build '*baugs*' in North America as we have



done so successfully in Iran and India. The baugs are the great legacy of our forefathers who had the vision and resources to bring a large number of Zarathushtis together within a geographical area to strengthen their religious and cultural identity.

FEZANA. It has several committees for the enhancement of religious and social agendas. The grassroots community should help supplement the efforts of its organizational body, FEZANA, by getting involved as volunteers, proposing constructive agendas; and offering own expertise for the benefit of others. Success will come if we respect diversity and show tolerance towards those whose views may not coincide with your own. The *North American Mobed's Council* makes education of priests and their initiation into priesthood a priority.

World community. The ease of communications today facilitates close interaction with Zarathushtis throughout the world. The day is not far when we will see a *One World Body* that will be representative of every Zarathushti individual, association and federation in the world.

It is our hope that we Zarathushtis come together as individuals, groups, and national and international organizations for the perpetuation of our religion and strengthening of the community and not become a page in history. ■

By Firdosh Mehta
President, FEZANA

I would like to focus on the theme of this issue of FEZANA Journal, "Perpetuating the Religion and Strengthening the Community" from the point of view of FEZANA's activities, with special emphasis on the FEZANA Strategic Plan presented at the AGM in August 1997 [see page 53].

The perpetuation of a religion and its communities can be two-fold. One is by development of **personal conviction and commitment**, which is generally brought about by education, learning and practice of the faith. The other is the development of **infrastructure and resources** that the community can avail of to promote its perpetuation.

Education. From the point of view of education and learning, FEZANA has and will continue to participate in publication of religious material, develop and share materials which could be utilized for religious education classes, provide scholarships for higher education at recognized universities and colleges, and sponsor or host conferences, seminars and congresses to enable individuals to acquire this knowledge base.

Infrastructure. Among the development of infrastructures, the FEZANA Strategic Plan envisages the establishment of a Zarathushti learning center with a library, a Zarathushti spiritual and theological center, which may include consecrated or semi-consecrated places of worship, a Zarathushti seminary or center for training and ordainment of clergy.

Even though it is quite understandable that establishment of such centers requires the will and commitment of various local associations, FEZANA can and does play a supportive role in encouraging and promoting these projects within the family of its member associations.

Worship/community centers. It is obvious that for any community to

Jasa me avanghe Mazda!
(O Wise Lord, come to our guidance!)

Strategies to perpetuate the religion and communities

survive and prosper as a cohesive group, it needs to have places and processes under which it can congregate and unite. We have eight worship/community centers across Canada and USA, and more will be established in the future. However, it is not just necessary to have a building or a place and not have the community committed to using it, and thereby providing the necessary resources for its upkeep and maintenance.

There was a time in our history when if twenty families moved into a new village or town, we would construct an agiary with a dharamshala and mobed's living quarters. Today we boast of having 15,000 to 18,000 Zarathushtis in North America, and we still discuss ways in which we can or cannot construct an agiary, where all the higher liturgical rituals can be performed. Assuming the physical and geographical barriers and injunctions contribute to difficulties in establishing such a house of worship, it is imperative that Zarathushtis of North America develop such structures from the first principles, and provide any and every resource to bring this to fruition.

Stark statistics. Needless to say, the perpetuation of any group of people is contingent upon their numbers and their capacity for growth. We have seen that in the last 50 years, the practice of endogamy and the stark statistics of births and deaths, has not effectively prepared us for the growth of our religion and community.

Much has been said in this regard and various new ways have been found to counter this situation. In North America however, we are showing a trend of growing numbers.

Even though this is a welcome reality, it is mainly done at the sacrifice of decreased numbers in other parts of the world.

The priesthood, Keepers of the Faith. Ultimately the effective increase in the number of committed Zarathushtis, and the consequent perpetuation, can occur with the participation of the North American Zarahushti priesthood, as they are truly the 'Keepers-of-the-Faith'.

Would it not be possible for them to accept some individuals or children into the community under certain conditions and adhering to strict guidelines, which could be prescribed by them? May our thoughts and actions always promote perpetuity of our religion and community. ■



Yasmin Pavri to chair Awards Committee

Due to the sad demise of FEZANA Awards Committee chair Er. Dinshaw Joshi, the FEZANA executive has appointed vice-chair Yasmin Pavri of Houston to serve as interim chair to complete Dinshawji's term until May 2004, and further recommended that Yasmin be reappointed chair for the next two-year term, by the 2004-06 executive.



During a busy two-week trip to India (and UK), December 27 - January 11, FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta fosters discussions and projects of common interest and concern, including several meetings on the 'world body'.

FEZANA president's trip to India/UK

[Excerpted from a report by FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta to FEZANA associations and others, on January 18, 2003]

Youth Congress in Pune. Upon arrival in Mumbai on December 27, 2003, I went by car to Pune to attend The 3rd World Zarathushti Youth Congress. As a 'Patron' I participated mostly as 'observer' except in one session, where I was on the panel. I also presented a paper on "North American Demographics", extrapolated from the article by Dr. Noshir Langrana [FEZANA Journal, Fall 1999].

We had excellent participation of about 20 young adults from USA and Canada, including the full complement of ZYNA co-chairs, at the congress. They were also encouraged to moderate a session and our team – Nahid Dashtaki and Negin Sharyari of California – came in first place for the Talent Quest.

We took the opportunity to increase awareness and a positive image of FEZANA and ZYNA. Mention was made of FEZANA's Religion Education, Academic Education and ZYNA's Performing Arts Scholarships. FEZANA's contribution to the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation was presented during Dr. Homi Dhallal's session. ZYNA members presented a donation to the Youth Wing of WZO India for projects in Udvada – youth hostel, museum etc.

I was greatly impressed with the professionalism and maturity displayed by our youngsters, for which we all can be justifiably proud. Many ZYNA members were interviewed by Hilla Guzder of *Parsiana*.

The congress was organized and conducted in an excellent manner. The evening programs of socializing and interaction between our youth in congenial surroundings, with different

themes every evening, was very impressive. The youth looked fantastic in their *daglis* and *garas* on 'traditional nite' (complete with *lagan-nubhono*) at the Pune Agiari grounds. We were given the opportunity to present FEZANA's financial support to congress president, Sarosh Palkhiwalla; and the ZYNA subsidy to attend the congress was presented to Aysha Ghadiali, Afreed Mistry, Cyrus Rivetna and Negin Sharyari. The ZYNA group also presented a plaque of appreciation to Sherazade Mehta as the outgoing co-chair of ZYNA.

The congress also gave me the opportunity to discuss youth issues and trends, to acquire a better understanding of the needs of our next generation, and to enable me to focus future deliberations and activities to be in tune with the aspirations of our youth.

[For more on the youth congress, see reports by youth delegates, page 28]

Archeologist, Roxana Irani. In Pune I had discussions with Dr. Roxana Irani, who was partially sponsored by FEZANA to present her paper on "Early Zoroastrian Settlements on the Western Seaboard of India", at the World Archaeological Congress in Washington, DC earlier in 2003.

Manuscript preservation. While in Pune, a follow up review was done with Malcolm Deboo of ZTFE regarding his activities in regards to preservation of manuscripts at the Dastoor Meherji-Rana Library, Navsari. Malcolm was requested to make a detailed report prior to the next FEZANA AGM, in May 2004.

Frohar Foundation. I had a short meeting with Dr. Arnavaz Havewala and Er. Cyrus Dastoor of *Frohar Foundation*. They presented me with

a CD of their recording of the North American Congress, Chicago, 2002.

PARZOR/UNESCO. Also in Pune, the PARZOR Foundation/UNESCO project and possible FEZANA contribution, was discussed with Lt. Gen. Adi Sethna.

Welfare donations to India. After my return to Mumbai, I had a meeting with Dinshaw Tamboly of WZO Trust Funds, India, on January 1st. I reviewed the various FEZANA donations made to individuals in India for medical and critical assistance, as recommended by the FEZANA Welfare Committee. Documents of fund transfers were reviewed and Mr. Tamboly was presented with a plaque of appreciation from FEZANA for his continued support and service to FEZANA.

Parsee General Hospital. On Jan. 3rd, I had a meeting with eight board members and directors of the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, to review FEZANA donations forwarded to the hospital from an anonymous donor in USA. We discussed FEZANA's structure as a not-for-profit organization and the tax implications in USA for charitable donation receipts. Their accountants presented me with a 2" thick binder of all the accounts and receipts of monies dispersed for medical equipment and supplies. These documents will be on file with the FEZANA treasurer.

I was given a tour of the hospital, showing many modern state of the art facilities and equipment. The chairman of the board, CEO and all others thanked and acknowledged FEZANA's support to the hospital. I would like to acknowledge FEZANA treasurer Rashid Mehin, for his efforts in transfer of these funds.

World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC). On January 4th, I met Yazdi Tantra of On-Lyne Comtech Ltd. regarding the *web site* he has set up for WZCC (India), and possible FEZANA promotion of the same. I also met with Zarin and Kersi Commissariat of WZCC (India). On

[Continued on page 91]

Community Awards – a legacy from Dinshaw Joshi

[This report was submitted by the late Dinshaw Joshi, chair of the FEZANA Awards Committee, before his sad demise on November 10, 2003 [See Personal Profile, page 14] The FEZANA Awards program, conceived and nurtured by Er. Joshi, is a fine example of his high standards and professionalism, in all his undertakings - Ed]

North American Zarathushti Community Awards for 2004 will be presented during the XIII North American Zoroastrian Congress, scheduled for December 2004-January 2005. The Awards Committee expects to invite nominations from the North American Zarathushti community sometime during April-May 2004 and announce the winners during the congress.

These awards have been presented at seven congresses since 1988 and have come to be accepted as a regular feature of North American Congresses. FEZANA now needs to establish and adopt standards for all issues relating to the awards, e.g. award categories, their definitions and evaluation criteria, rules governing the awards, criteria for selection of judges, item(s) to be presented to the winners, etc., and incorporate them into the Terms of Reference for future Awards Committees.

In the coming months, the 2004 Awards Committee proposes to consult selected North American Zarathushtis on the various issues related to awards, and submit its recommendations to FEZANA executives for their consideration. The Committee will welcome views and opinions from all Zarathushtis and give these due consideration in finalizing its recommendations. ■

LOOKING FOR YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

ZYNA is looking for 2 (or at least 1) representatives from each FEZANA Association and Small Group to liaise with ZYNA and keep the local youth updated on youth activities, and organize activities locally. Contact ZYNA co-chairs:

Afreed Mistry, 20 Linstock Drive, Brampton, ON, Canada L6P 1E2. Tel: 905-794-1956 (H), 416-262-5367 (C), email: amistry2525@yahoo.com.

Negin Sharyari, 108 Stanford, Irvine, CA 92612. Tel: 949-387-4683 (H); 949-836-4714 (C), email: nsharyar@uci.edu.

Freyaz Shroff, 1448 Hounds Way, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582. Tel: 843-281-8010 (H), 843-283-4676 (C), email: Freyaz@aol.com. ■



New ZYNA co-chairs Afreed Mistry, Freyaz Shroff and Negin Sharyari, at the Youth Congress in Pune, India

New ZYNA youth committee

New ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) co-chairs have been appointed by the FEZANA executive from nominations submitted by member associations. Three new co-chairs took office starting December 1, 2003:

Co-chair **Afreed Mistry** (Canadian representative) is a 26 year old telecommunications analyst living in Toronto. She is an active member of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario and is involved in many youth activities. For the past ten years, Afreed has been teaching the Zarathushti religion to children aged 6 to 14.

Co-chair **Negin Sharyari** (West coast representative) is a twenty-two year old high school mathematics teacher, originally from Chicago, now living in Southern California, while obtaining a masters in teaching. Negin is looking forward to working with North American youth to promote activities that will involve them more with their communities and bring them closer to each other.

Co-chair **Freyaz Shroff** (East coast representative) is a 29 year old human resources representative from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She is currently assisting FEZANA's Welfare Committee in setting up a critical assistance phone line.

The Committee, which also includes **Vista Pourbahrami** (ZSBC) and **Ruzbeh Daruwalla** (ZAH) would love to hear ideas and suggestions from the youth [see box at left].

Outgoing co-chairs. FEZANA recognizes outgoing chairs **Sherazade Mehta**, **Armaity Bamji** and **Morvarid Behziz** for some highly successful programs and activities during their three-year term: coordinating the Mobed session at NAYC 2003, youth programs at the World Congress in Houston and the North American congress in Chicago, youth trips, camps, and contributing towards the new FEZANA/ZYNA Performing Arts Scholarship and much more. **THANK YOU!** ■

The International Zoroastrian Organization

One world body with two independent operating arms – a workable paradigm

[This article reflects the opinions of Sarosh Collector, Khorshed Jungalwala, Farrokh Mistree and Gev Nentin, members of the former FEZANA World Body Working Group. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of FEZANA, or the FEZANA executive].

Rohinton Rivetna in his article [page 58] asks “How do we ensure that the world body for Zarathushtis, that we are striving to create, will indeed strengthen our community, and not divide us?” This is the question we address, albeit in part, here.

As president of FEZANA, Framroze Patel, appointed the *FEZANA World Body Working Group (WG)* in May 2001. The WG issued its report in August 2003 and having fulfilled the third mandate, decided to turn over further action to the FEZANA executive and FEZANA member associations. The report is yet to be acted on by the FEZANA executive. All WG publications are in the public domain <http://www.fezana.org/wbwg/>.

In 1997, through a referendum, FEZANA decided that there should be only One World Body. With this in mind the WG evaluated all models put forth by various groups. The WG concluded that the proposed models were viable in varying degrees but flawed, particularly in areas of parity

of voting, being susceptible to manipulation, lacking in transparency of operations, accountability and most importantly in checks and balances. These flaws are circumvented in the model proposed by the FEZANA WG.

The principal outcome of the meeting in Mumbai on January 21, 2003 was the paradigm of “One world body with two independent arms”. This is in keeping with FEZANA’s position provided attention is paid to both parts – the desire to have *one world body*, the need for the two arms to be *operationally* independent but *compatible* with respect to principles and structure, to ensure the existence of the world body as a single entity over the long term. The preceding is embodied in the FEZANA WG model which is based on the diagram offered by president Rustam Dubash of WZO and accepted in principle in the Joint Communique issued by the elected leadership of FEZANA, FPZAI (India) and ZTFE (UK) in May 2003.

The key features in the FEZANA WG model include:

(1) All three entities (the umbrella and the two operationally independent arms) are anchored in shared principles and embody structures that are compatible with each other.

(2) The world body derives its authority from Zarathushtis residing in regions and these regions are the same for the two independent operating arms, namely, WZOF and WZOI.

(3) The umbrella organization (IZO) is designed to be the facilitating body that brings the two arms together in One World Body; it guarantees operational independence of the two arms but has a say on issues that affect the structural integrity of the world body.

(4) Representation based on population is flawed. The FEZANA WG model offers an alternate method of representation that is equitable and not subject to errors or manipulation.

For over two decades the WZO and the WCZF (Federation) camps have worked diligently to create a world body but without success. The WG model provides a new beginning. Clearly, our future now lies in supporting a course of action that results in One World Body not just in name, but one that starts as an integrated structural entity and remains so in the future. We can do so by critically evaluating the FEZANA WG model and engaging its proponents in showing the robustness and efficacy of what they have proposed. ■

The FEZANA Directory of Zarathushtis in North America is available in pdf format at:

<http://www.fezana.org/phdir.102303.pdf>

Searching for information: The file is searchable but not printable. If you have difficulty please download the latest version of Acrobat Reader.

Updating your information: You can add/update information in the FEZANA Directory by visiting <http://www.fezana.org/pubs.zdir.add.htm>.

The new directory is being compiled and will be available on a CD in the not too distant future.

Contact: Noshir Jesung (njesung@socal.rr.com) or Farrokh Mistree (farrokh.mistree@eudoramail.com).

Zoroastrian Association of Houston Opens Library

“To serve as a leading repository of knowledge that fosters the awareness and study of Zoroastrian religion, history, traditions and culture.”

- ZAH Library Mission Statement

The dream of a library (thanks to the generosity of Yazdi and Shahnaz Sidhwa) at the Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center, in Houston, became a reality on October 25, 2003. The goal is for this library to become a leading research center in North America for Zarathushti religion, history and culture.

It was a wonderful two-day event for the Houston Zarathushti Community, starting with a welcome by ZAH chairperson Zarine Boyce, and Library Committee chair Aban Rustomji, a professional librarian, who has guided the Library Committee for over a year to bring this project to fruition.

The Library Committee members – Behroze Daruwalla, Rustom Engineer, architect Darayus Kolah (who designed the library’s custom-built furniture), Sarosh Manekshaw, Jehangir & Arnaz Mistry, Yasmin Pavri, Aban & Purvez Rustomji, Magdalena Rustomji, Arnavaz Sethna, Shahnaz Sidhwa, and Mani Surkari – were introduced through a comical skit.

Entertainment included songs by Er. Bomanshah Sanjana and Behzad Beheshti; a recitation, “Reflections” by Noshir Khumbatta; a classical Indian dance by Arzan Ghonda. The Sunday School children presented Vehishta Kaikobad’s adaptation of a story from the Caldecott Award winning book, *The Old Turtle* to the theme of “The Wisdom of Zarathushtra”.

Honored ZAH members Aspi and Nargesh Sethna officially “cut the



Above, Aban Rustomji [left] presenting a copy of “A Zoroastrian Tapestry” by Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, to the Houston Public Library. Accepting the gift is HPL Board Member Zarine Boyce.

Right, a Yasna manuscript, dating back to 1780, brought for display by ZTFE (UK) librarian Malcolm Deboo, aroused keen interest.



ribbon” and Er. Shapur Pavri gave the blessing.

On display was an exhibit of art works by Vehishta Kaikobad, Darayus Kolah, Karmin Guzder, Mitra Mehta and award-winning artist, Jimmy Engineer, of Pakistan.

Among the out-of-town guests were Malcolm Deboo [photo above] and Roshan Bharucha, senator from Pakistan. Next day, Jamshed R. Udvadia from Michigan, who is on the Faculty of Toad Hollow School of Storytelling, delighted young and old, with

stories from his childhood and from the *Shah Nameh*.

The Library includes a valuable collection from Dr. Dastur Dhalla donated by Shahrugh and Karen Marker. The goal is to build a large collection of Zarathushti books, including out of print, collector’s editions and the latest printed books and journals. ZAH hopes that the library will attract scholars and students for studies and research.

[Excerpted by Roshan Rivetna, from an article by Magdalena Rustomji]



ZATAMBAY off to a great start. *The recently-formed Zarathushti Association of Tampa Bay had its first meeting at Hira Villa, Jo Ann [at far right] and Soli Dastur's [kneeling] home in Sarasota, FL, in October. FEZANA representative Tehmi Dastoor opened with the sonorous peels of 'havanim' and 'lalo' (sacred implements) belonging to Soli's father, used in the Yazeshne ritual. The group discussed the significance and meaning of Yatha Ahu Vairyo and Ashem Vohu, Kemna Mazda, A Airyema Ishyo and Yenghe Hatam, read from Dastoorji Dhalla's "Homage Unto Ahura Mazda" and discussed future plans and actions, followed by a sumptuous Parsi lunch and tea. The next meeting will be at the home of Jamsheed [standing, center] and Arnaz [third from left] Marker.*

The 12th anjuman of PZO elects officers

The Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) of Northern California has elected a new Board and officers:

President: Homa Mojgani
VP: Shahryar Aryani
Treasurer: Rostam Sarvian
Secretary: Behrooz Farsi

The remaining general members are: Babak Babakan, Mojgan Abadian Hemati and Dr. Daryoush Yazdgerdi.

While the Board members have specific responsibilities, all anjuman decisions are by majority vote of *all* PZO members. Likewise, the anjuman's efforts are through the hard work of all its members.

Congratulations to the new board and officers with best wishes for a prosperous term for the anjuman, dar-e-mehr and the community they serve.

[From Kourush Dinyari]

Invitation to join IraNexus, a project of the National Iranian American Council

The National Iranian American Council (NIAC) is a non-partisan, non-sectarian and nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting Iranian-American participation at all levels of American life, by developing services and activities that encourage and aid Iranian Americans in effective civic participation. One of NIAC's most imperative projects is **IraNexus**: a comprehensive database of information on Iranian-American organizations nationwide. The Iranian-American community has had profound economic and professional success, yet their impact on American civil society has been minimal. The *IraNexus* database — through its ability to bring such organizations closer together,

strengthen their capacity, and help map out the community — is the first necessary step towards the development of a strong and influential Iranian-American community.



By joining *IraNexus* your organization will have access to potentially thousands of groups across the US and be able to connect and collaborate with them to share resources, experiences and expertise.

Together we can strengthen the Iranian-American community and help it make a positive impact on American civic life.

Sheherazade Jafari
IraNexus Project Manager
 (202) 841-5208
sjafari@niacouncil.org
www.niacouncil.org



Downtown Sarasota, from a cruise along the famous Longboat Key.

Update on the Florida Retirement Community

By Yasmin Kevala
Potomac, Maryland

My presentation at the FEZANA AGM in May 2003 and article [FEZANA Journal, Fall 2003] about the Florida Active Retirement Community in Sun City Center, FL have garnered considerable interest.

Last October, my husband Rustom and I bought a small bungalow in Sun City Center, which will become our base for further activities and exploration of the concept. We spent a delightful two weeks there during Christmas and New Year. The clubhouse was filled with people working out, swimming and enjoying the warm sunny weather. We went to the New Year's Eve dinner-dance and thoroughly enjoyed dancing to a live band – for \$35 per person. The two weeks passed by too quickly. We spent some time with friends, in nearby Tarpon Springs, North Tampa and Sarasota. We got our house ready for renters from New York who will be coming in February.

Sun City Center provides safe, secure and inexpensive living conditions for people 55 and over. Excellent medical facilities, access to airports and salubrious climate are of course there year round. There are three types of residents there – retirees, 'snowbirds' who come to Florida every winter, and a few who are working. Many

Canadians and Europeans also own homes there for winter use. During the summer, residents like to travel, take cruises, or visit relatives. Because of the 24-hour security patrols, year-round grounds maintenance and friendly neighbors, it is safe to leave the homes empty.

Nearby, Mira Bay offers homes with canal access to the Gulf, and Apollo Beach is a resort community with luxury condos and million dollar homes. They are building shopping areas and a Home Depot. Prices will surely go up as the area develops. Prices are higher in the more established areas – there is Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Brandon, Bradenton and Sarasota, all within a radius of 30 miles.

Group visit to Sun City. The new Zarathushti Association of Tampa Bay, ZATAMBAY [see page 10] will be hosting the next FEZANA AGM in Tampa, May 29-30, 2004 (Memorial Day weekend).

I am making arrangements to visit Sun City Center after the AGM. They offer a Preferred Guest program for \$39/night per family or \$109 for 3 nights, including breakfast and use of facilities: exercise rooms, swimming pools, sauna and tennis and discounted golf. You will see the 5,000-acre community, model homes, and pre-owned homes. We will visit

Mira Bay, Apollo Beach, Brandon and Sarasota. Developer (WCI) representative Ron Cress and my associate, Joy Sparkman, will be available to answer questions. If a sufficient number of people sign up, WCI will arrange an entertainment night and bus transportation.

Note that at least one family member needs to be over 55 to own a property at Sun City, but there is no age restriction in many of the surrounding developments.

For more information, or if you are interested in the group visit, please contact me at yaskeval@aol.com. ■

President Bush's new immigration proposals

A new 'temporary worker program' proposed by President Bush in January, would allow any of the estimated 8 million illegal immigrants in the USA or someone abroad to apply to work legally in the US for a three-year term, that could be renewed.

Applicants already in the US would have to pay a registration fee and show they are currently employed. Applicants from abroad would have no fee, but must have a job offer.

The employer must show that no Americans wanted the job.

The worker must return to their home country at the end of the term.

Upon return to their home country, the plan provides access to retirement benefits and new tax savings accounts.

Dependents of the workers would also be allowed in the US, if the worker can prove support.

The White House is also calling for an unspecified increase in the number of green cards granted annually.

However, an unresolved question is whether the new plan will allow illegal immigrants access, which they do not now have, to the process of applying for green cards or permanent US residency. ■

[Source: aolsvc.news.aol.com/news/]

By Roxanne Patel

ZACUCE would be the country's ninth Zoroastrian community center, and the closest one within 200 miles of Philadelphia, near where ZAPANJ members gather several times a year, for Nouruz, gahambars, navjotes and other functions. (The nearest center is in Pomona, New York, north of New York City.) It's still a long way off, though. So far, organizers have raised \$250,000 towards the \$1.2 million needed to buy the land and construct the facility within an hour's drive of most ZAPANJ members. Some \$30,000 was collected at a grand fundraiser in November, fea-

25th anniversary of ZAPANJ. In the meantime, ZAPANJ has another monumental event to celebrate: its 25th anniversary. It was 1979 when some 30 Parsis gathered in a South Jersey municipal building to elect the first ZAPANJ board and formalize their social circle into a cultural orga-

For information visit www.zapanj.org and www.zacuce.org. ■

Roxanne Patel is a senior staff writer for Philadelphia Magazine.

*We must not only act but also dream,
Not only plan, but also believe.*

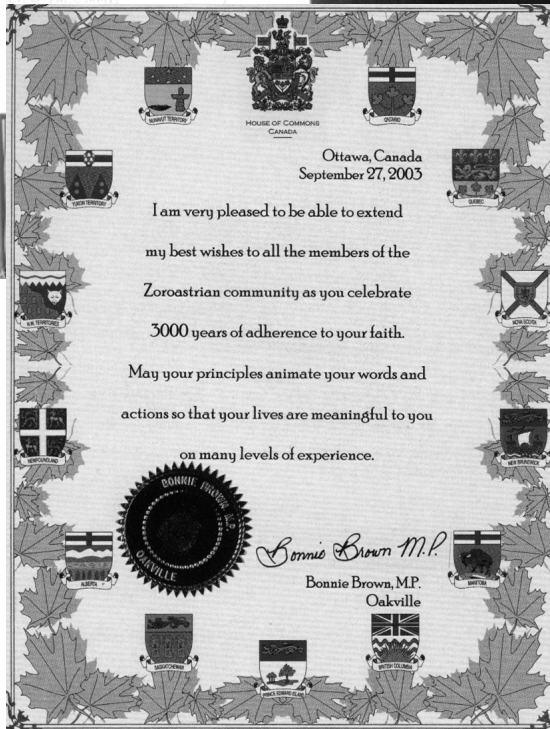
- *Anatole France* [SUBMITTED BY RUSTOM KEVALA]

OZCF GALA

Celebrations to mark the 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture



Above, OZCF president Kobad Zarolia [far left] with Gala sponsors and the Entertainment Committee with the "check" for \$127,000 (later revised to \$139,000) raised at the gala. Far left, Kamal Driver, center, with MCs Dan Madon and Niloufer Bhesania, singing the Canadian National Anthem. Left, congratulatory message for "3000 years of adherence to your faith" from Bonnie Brown, M.P., Oakville.



To celebrate the recognition bestowed by UNESCO, the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation hosted the 2nd Annual Black Tie Gala fundraiser evening on September 27, 2003.

The OZCF continues towards its vision of purchasing land for a place of worship and a cultural center, to serve the needs of the growing Zarathushti community in the Greater Toronto Area.

Over 350 patrons showed their support to this year's gala, at the St. Volodymyr Cultural Centre in Oakville.

The formal evening commenced with silent auction bidding, at five tables full of items. A delicious seven-course gourmet dinner, to the classi-

cal melodies of guitarist, George Gamentzy, was followed by a live auction presented by a professional auctioneer.

Her Worship Ann Mulvale, Mayor of Oakville, The Hon. Joyce Salvoline, chair of the Regional Municipality of Halton and The Hon. Peter Pomeroy, past chair, Regional Municipality of Halton were the guests of honor.

Numerous congratulatory messages were received:

"... Greetings to members of the Zoroastrian community on the occasion of the 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture. As sanctioned by UNESCO, this anniversary recognizes the deep historical roots of your faith ..."

*The Hon. James Bartleman
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario*

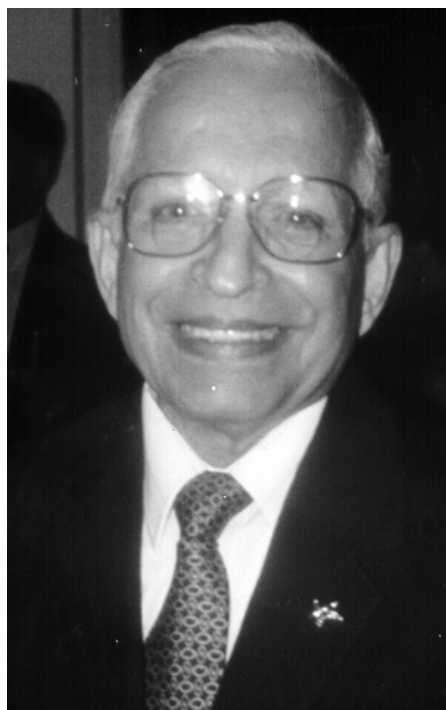
"... Greetings to everyone attending this gala in honour of the 3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture ... This occasion is testament to the rich blessings of your Zoroastrian heritage ..."

*The Hon. Ernie Eves
Premier of Ontario*

"... Essentially since the dawn of time, the teachings of Zarathushtra have inspired and illuminated the minds of countless followers around the world. Today, three millennia later, the Zoroastrian faith is alive and well in our great nation of Canada..."

*The Hon. Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage*

A total of \$139,000 was raised at the gala, in support of OZCF vision and goals. [From source materials submitted by Roshan Davar].



by Khorshed Jungalwala

Dinshaw Framroze Joshi was born and brought up in Bombay. His parents, Framroze and Dinbai, came from *athornan* families and it was this upbringing and leaning towards the Zarathushti religion at a young age, that made Dinshaw become a *navar* at the age of 11.

Professional life. Dinshaw served for over 50 years in the field of national and international public telecommunications service, first in India with the Indian Post and Telegraphs Department (P&T) and later with the World Bank in Washington, DC.

He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and physics from the Royal Institute of Science in Bombay and then went on to obtain both his Bachelor of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering from the College of Engineering in Pune, ranking first in the University of Bombay examinations.

He appeared for the Government of India Federal Public Service Com-

DINSHAW F. D. JOSHI

Stalwart of the North American Zarathushti Community

On November 10, 2003 the Zarathushti community lost a truly honorable and astute man Dinshaw Joshi who led his life with exemplary dignity and integrity. He was a supreme example of a senior statesman for our North American Zarathushti community, devoted to his family, his work and to his community.

mission examinations and ranked first for the Telegraph Engineering Service examination, thus starting his long and distinguished career with the Indian government in public telecommunications.

During his long tenure with the P&T, he served in all disciplines of telecommunications, and was selected for a UN Fellowship for training in London. He coordinated the special telecommunication facilities for the Indian Defense Services during the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-China conflicts and also served as the Communications Coordinator and Chief Liaison Officer during the visit of foreign dignitaries, including Queen Elizabeth, Jacqueline Kennedy, General Eisenhower, Pope Paul, President Nasser, and the late Shah Reza Shah of Iran.

He was appointed deputy director of the Telecommunications Research Centre. He designed and developed the National Telephone Numbering Plan for India which is still in use in the national long-distance Subscriber Trunk-Dialing (STD) network. Dinshaw was also a frequent member of the several Indian delegations to many international telecommunication conferences.

During Dinshaw's tenure with the P&T, Directorate assigned him both to New Delhi and later to Bombay. It

is as general manager of Bombay Telephones, the largest metropolitan telephone network in India, that he is most remembered. His innovative administration earned him the admiration and respect of both his staff and the general public. He created well-orchestrated public campaigns on the process of placing a simple telephone call for which he received commendations from the government of India. His meteoric rise led to Dinshaw being promoted to the level of deputy director general of the P&T.

He left India in early 1980s to join the World Bank as a telecommunications engineer – a position specifically created for him. During his tenure with the World Bank, he traveled extensively in Asia and Africa, advising and assisting the telecommunication entities on their efforts to modernize and improve their infrastructures. He also monitored hundreds of cases on Bank financed procurement, ranging from a few thousand dollars to over \$50 million.

Dinshaw was revered in international telecommunications circles for his advice, firm counsel and sterling professional achievements. Upon his mandatory retirement from the World Bank he was promptly hired by the World Bank again as a telecommunications Consultant, a position he retained until his death.

Community service. Throughout his professional career he never neglected the Zarathushti community. He was a staunch believer in service to the Zarathushti community. Elected a member of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, he drafted its first constitution and bylaws and was also instrumental in the establishment of the Delhi Agiary. He served as co-editor for many years of the anjuman journal, *Dipanjali*, that he himself founded. He was frequently invited as a speaker, by various Zarathushti and other civic organizations.

In Washington, Dinshaw was the first founder vice president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI) and subsequently served also as president. Based on his past experience, he was again responsible for the drafting of its constitution and bylaws.

Most recently, though, Dinshaw's involvement with the Zarathushti community has been at the national and international levels. As chairperson of the FEZANA Awards Committee, he had the monumental task of ensuring a fair and judicious awards process. Members of the FEZANA executive and committees have relied heavily on his counsel and sage advice over the years. He was the Appeals Coordinator for the FEZANA Welfare Committee. He was the Chair of the FEZANA constitution revision committee, a co-author of the early drafts of the proposed World Council of Zoroastrian Federations, and strong supporter of the proposals of the FEZANA appointed World Body Working Group.

His quiet but firm stance on issues of concern to the Zarathushti community worldwide has earned him utmost respect. He sought not to hold official positions and wield power for himself. He has been variously described by friends, acquaintances and co-workers as "righteous", "impartial", "straight-forward", "ingenious", "compassionate", "man of few words, but substantive action", "respectful of all". Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him

Remembering Dinshaw Joshi ...

"FEZANA will always be grateful to Dinshawji for his dedication and humanitarian service to our community. As chair of the Awards Committee, he gave us the best example of dedicated service, conducted with fairness and integrity ... FEZANA has lost one of its important pillars, for we owe so much to him."
- *Firdosh Mehta, president, FEZANA*

"Dinshawji stood tall among us. He leaves behind a legacy of steadfastness, single-mindedness and excellence of performance. I cherished his friendship and recognized in Dinshawji a person of great strength of character and conviction. His passing leaves a void in our hearts and in our minds."
- *Rohinton M. Rivetna, IL*

"Dinshawji served our North American community by building a legacy of dignity, integrity, compassion and love ... It is said that "When someone we love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure." Dinshawji has left for all of us a treasure of Love that is truly beyond any measure."
- *Meher Dadabhoy Amalsad, CA*

"Dinshaw Joshi was a grand man! He served our community well, and earned the respect and admiration of all ... He will be missed but he leaves behind a legacy, one that he has raised, of a high standard of professionalism and volunteerism."
- *Aban Rustomji, TX*

"I have always known him as a man of genuine integrity and humaneness – very few people with those traditional traits are left in today's world. His contributions to our community in India and the USA were tremendous, and he continued to serve until the end."
- *Zareen Karani Araoz, MA*

"He was known for his judicious, impartial decisions – and was appointed continuously as chair of the Awards Committee since its inception. We will all miss him."
- *Homi Gandhi, NY*

"The Zarathushti sky is less bright, with the extinction of one its bright stars! Yes, Dinshaw was the first Zarathushti to enter the field of telecommunications in India and perhaps, in the world. Yes, he rose to its highest rung in that country ... Yes, he was invited to join the World Bank because he was a world authority on the then cutting edge of telecommunications technology. Yes, he helped introduce modern telecommunications in developing countries ...

"But what Dinshaw cherished more than these sterling professional achievements, was being a Zarathushti and leading a life based on our faith's principles ... an outstanding human being, loving, compassionate, fair, devoted, steadfast and loyal ... and passionate about serving his beloved community.

"Such a man was Dinshaw Joshi. Those who had the privilege of knowing him, are aware in their minds and hearts that with Zarathustra at his side, he crossed the Bridge to enter Ahura Mazda's abode of song and light to attain *haurvatat* (perfection) and *ameratat* (immortality). But the Zarathushti community that he has left behind on this earth, is now poorer because he is no more with us."
- *Adi Davar, MD*

through the years will always think back on how Dinshaw would have advised us in any given situation. The North American and the world Zarathushti community have lost a truly great man who followed the lofty tenets of the Zarathushti faith in

all that he did, setting a brilliant example for us all to emulate.

He leaves behind his gracious wife Goolcher, beloved daughter Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami, son-in-law Farhad and granddaughters Anahita and Roksana. ■



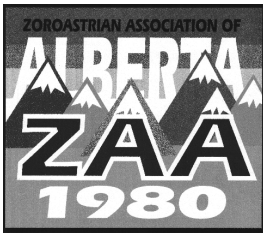
Zarathushtis around the world continue to celebrate the UNESCO-declared “3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture”, bringing awareness and recognition at all levels.

[See FEZANA Journal, Winter 2003]

Global celebrations of the UNESCO-declared fourth millennium of Zarathushti Culture

Alberta provincial government recognizes Zarathushti heritage

The Zoroastrian Association of Alberta – Edmonton Chapter organized a program at the Edmonton Public Library, on November 23rd attended by about 85 people from various communities, faith groups, learning institutions and the government of Alberta.



Display tables were laid out with *jashan* and *haft-seen* items, posters and books, *gara* and embroidered saris, filigree silverware, pictures of Persian art, and other items.

A similar program was held in Calgary, AB, on November 29, 2003, with Persian music and dance.

ZAA president, **Firdosh Mehta** was MC for the evening. Presentations were made by: **Sister Rosaleen Zdunich**, co-ordinator of the Edmonton Interfaith Centre; **Dipesh Mistry**, president of the Alberta Gujarati Association; **Ashvin Billimoria** of AGA, about his experiences with the Parsi community in Navsari; **Dr. Teja Singh** of the Sikh community, about his travels in Iran; The Hon. **Dr. Raj Pannu**, member of the Alberta Legislature, about his experiences with the Parsis of India. **Firdosh** presented highlights of Persian History and the early settlement of Parsis in Canada.

Keynote speaker **Dr. David Goa**, past curator of the Alberta Provincial Museum, gave an inspiring talk on Zarathushtra and his impact on the world.

On behalf of the Alberta Government, **The Honorable Gene Zwozdesky**, Alberta Minister of Community Development presented ZAA with a proclamation.

Two films were shown: a 15-minute edited version of *In The Footsteps of our Forefathers* by **Tenaz Dubash**; and *Zarathushti Culture – A Revival* by **Dr. Homi Dhalla** of the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation. Delicious refreshments included homemade *ravo*, *malido*, *bhakhra*, *chaput*, *puri*, *batasa*, potato patties and more.

“We crammed 3000-plus years of our heritage, history and culture into three hours of whirlwind presentations in

fast forward mode,” said Firdosh. “One look at the recognition from the Provincial government convinced us that we had succeeded in creating awareness about our proud past.”

[From notes by Firdosh Mehta]

City of LA declares 2003 as the “Year of Zoroastrians”



Orange County District Attorney Hon. Rackaukas addressing the CZC conference at Anaheim Convention Center.

The 3-day celebration in Southern California, organized by California Zoroastrian Center, started on Friday, December 19, with wine and cheese, fruits and dinner.

On December 20, about 800 people attended the conference, at the Anaheim Convention Center featuring seven speakers from Europe, Canada and the US, lightened with cultural dances and classical music.

Messages were received from the president of Tajikistan **His Excellency Emomali Rahmonov**, the director general of UNESCO **Mr. Koichiro Matsuura**, chief of administration **Mr. Perera**, and the Honorable Mayor of Los Angeles **Mr. James Hahn**.

The City of Los Angeles has declared 2003 as the “Year of the Zoroastrians (through the efforts of **Dolly Malva**). Orange County district attorney **The Hon. Tony Rackaukas** [photo above] also presented a proclamation. Both will be permanently displayed at the CZC.

The gala that night, with 3 singers, entertainment, dinner and dancing, at the Proud Bird restaurant near LA airport drew a large crowd.

Sunday, December 21st was Heritage Day. On display were Persian and Zarathushti cultural and religious artifacts, handcrafts and costumes. Slides and videos were shown and a 2-hour program on Firdowsi, that touched the emotions of all present.

CNN International broadcast a 9-minute interview with Dr. Khosro Mehrfar on December 21st, discussing basic principles of the religion, history and heritage, the UNESCO declaration and the CZC conference. Voice of America (VOA) also provided coverage of the event. A DVD of the event, including the CNN interview will be available shortly. [From report by Khosro E. Mehrfar, Conference Chair, emehrfar@yahoo.com]

New York gala attracts wide media attention

New York's gala event in the main ballroom of the New York Metropolitan Hotel, on November 15th, drew a diverse crowd of about 350 people.

After opening invocation prayers and welcomes by ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) president **Homi Gandhi** and Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) president **Shirin Kiamanesh**, the UN ambassador from Tajikistan (the country that initiated the UNESCO declaration) **Rashid Alimov**, addressed the gathering, in Persian and English. **Shashi Tharoor**, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the UN sent a message. It reads:

"I wish to salute this rich and ancient civilization ... and greatly admire the spirit of your remarkable community.

"At a time of religious conflict in so many places ... the values you celebrate today are all the more necessary. Your close ties with UNESCO ... reflect a commitment to the UN spirit of embracing diversity and our work to create a future without wars and violence.

"Your own history demonstrates that sustainable development can be achieved while preserving cultural integrity, human rights, economic justice and a compassionate social order ... the vitality of your community is witness to this commitment ..."

The highlights of the program were talks by two eminent Zarathushti scholars – **Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani**, on the morality of Zoroastrianism within the context of social justice; and **Prof. Farhang Mehr**, giving a powerful discourse on Iran and Iranian history.

One journalist (Simin K. in *The Iranian*) described the Parsi and Iranian Fashion Show that followed as "an amazingly beautiful procession of exquisite fabrics in astounding colors, flowers, candles and grace in motion set to traditional Persian music ... the whole thing was like a dream".

The event was covered well in local print and TV media: India Abroad, News India-Times, TV Asia, Iranian.com, Charles Bell, religion columnist of *The New York Daily News* [November 22] wrote:

"It was an opportunity for the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religion – which began long before Christianity with the writings and teachings of a Persian prophet named Zarathushtra – to show its vitality, durability and strong ethnic and communal identity.

"It was also a lesson showing that, in some ways, numbers are not important."

[From reports by Homi Gandhi and Tamina Davar]

A White light moment

The New York event inspired at least one young journalist to discover her own Zarathushti roots. Simin K. (not her real name) writes in "The Iranian", November 25, 2003, at www.iranian.com:

"... The sound of laughter, the Persian music and the candles finally got to me. The beautiful fabrics with vibrant colors got to me, the *donbak* and traditional Persian music got to me, all the sensory delights got to me and all the speeches ... all came together for me in an instant moment of clarity and recognition.

"There was beauty, grace, profound ideas, kitsch and a passion for justice mixed with prayers and a fun family outing. What was this, and why was it all so familiar to me and comfortable like a favorite pair of well-worn shoes? This was a celebration of the ancient religion from my country of origin 3000 years later. I stood there recognizing and understanding that these 3000 years were as much a part of me and who I was as anything else.

"In that moment I understood that there was knowledge and recognition of Zoroastrianism embedded in my body, in my genes, in my mind and in my soul.

"Was there actually a spiritual moment there? Yes there were many, but the amazing part of it was the recognition that this spirituality didn't have to be ... resplendent with religious pomp and circumstance. It wasn't a typical white light moment, just the moment in which I realized that everything that I had grown up understanding as my culture had a sacred, divine and religious origin. Everything that I had taken for granted as my culture of origin was totally intertwined with Zoroastrianism.

"Actually, that was the white light moment. There it was, everything that was so unique to my culture ... the high and the low, the shallow and the profound, the sacred and the profane, the kitschy and the classic, all were resonating with this ancient religion. And that afternoon in Manhattan, I truly felt at home amongst the Zoroastrians whom I came to finally see as my true kin, and that is when I realized I am a Zoroastrian, have been my whole life ..."



Performance at Washington National Cathedral. Members of ZAMWI with dancer Elaheh Davoudian [center] in a performance of “Cylinder of Cyrus” designed by Fereshteh Farahmand, at Interfaith Concert in November. Below, Kersi Shroff and Shahin Kamran being interviewed after the concert by the Voice of America.

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI) presented an original performance [photo above], at the 24th annual Interfaith Concert of The Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, on November 18. The program, designed by **Fereshteh Farahmand**, highlighting the “Cylinder of Cyrus”, was especially appropriate for the concert theme – “Let There Be Peace On Earth”.

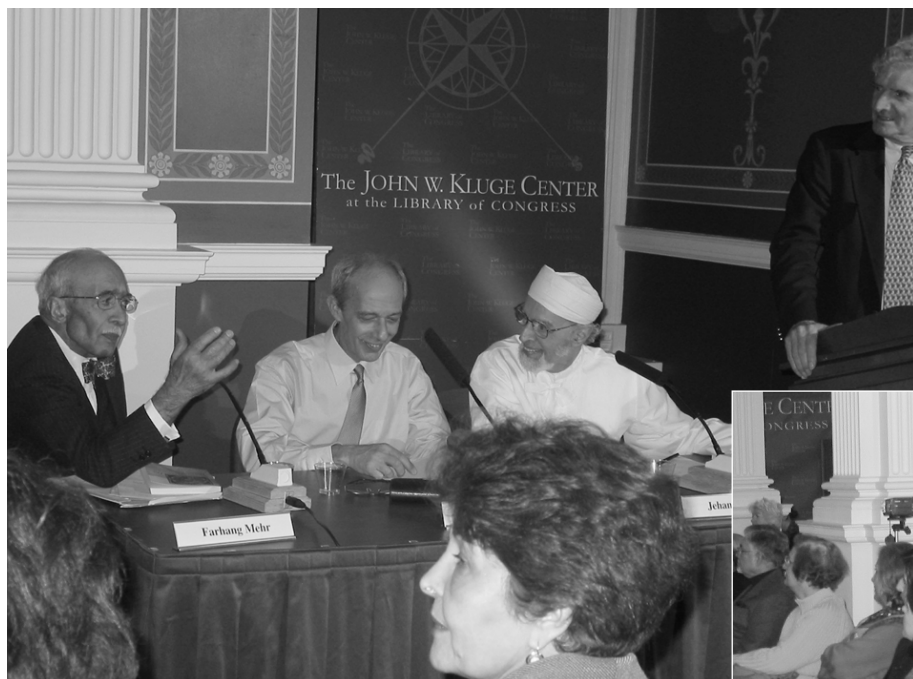
In past years, Zarathushti participation was limited to a presence in the opening procession. This year Zarathushtis joined eight other faith traditions – Baha’i, Hindu-Jain, Islamic, Jewish, Latter-day Saints, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Sikh – in performances of song, dance and chant. Over 1500 persons filled the historic Washington National Cathedral that evening, billed as “one of Washington’s most inspiring evenings”.

The UNESCO-declared celebrations were introduced by Bob Abernathy, executive editor and host of Religion and



Ethics Newsweekly, which airs on public channels in the USA. A short segment of the concert was aired on PBS channels, with 240 TV stations nationwide. There was a lot of media presence, and Kersi Shroff and Shahin Kamran were interviewed by Voice of America, Indonesia [see photo above].

[From input by Jimmy Dholoo and Behram Pastakia]



The classic, high-columned auditorium of the Library of Congress was filled to its capacity of 150 persons, mostly non-Zarathushtis, at the symposium featuring eminent speakers, l. to r., Farhang Mehr, Stanley Insler and Jehan Bagli. The symposium was moderated by the director of the Kluge Center, Professor Prosser Gifford.



Seminar at Library of Congress, Washington

In a truly historic collaboration, the Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, UNESCO and the World Zoroastrian Organization co-sponsored a seminar "Zarathushtra's Contributions to Humanity" on December 11, to celebrate the UNESCO-declared 3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture, supported by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington.

Dr. Jehan Bagli, president of the North American Mobeds Council, overviewed Zarathushtra's time. Gathic philology places Zarathushtra circa 1500 BCE, when tribes worshipped and feared nature. Zarathushtra introduced free moral choice to worship a universal God who is a friend. Unaccepted in his native land, he journeyed east where King Vishtaspa spread his universal teachings all over Asia.

Dr. Stanley Insler, professor at Yale University, described Zarathushtra's motivations. Zarathushtra's world is corrupt and violent. He found inspiration in nature obeying immutable principles independent of human whim. This truth, insured by a powerful God, maintains a harmonious world; but deceit also exists, causing disharmony. Truth can defeat deceit if humans comply with the laws of God through civil society. A lawful civil society brings harmony to mankind.

Dr. Farhang Mehr, professor-emeritus of Boston University, explained the important influences of the Zarathushti religion on Judaic religions, such as moral judgement after death, the end of the world, a final savior, and concepts of angels and devils.

The videotape is archived and available from the Kluge Center (<http://www.loc.gov/kluge>).

- by Hormuzd Katki

Other celebrations of the UNESCO-declared "3000th Anniversary"

Other major celebrations have been covered in FEZANA Journal [Winter 2003]:

- **First Zoroastrian Film Festival – Chicago 2003**, October 17-19, by Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago and Zarathushti International Film Festival (ZIFF).
- **Cultural Program, Vancouver**, November 16, at the H. R. MacMillan Space Center; and **Mehergan Music Festival**, October 11, in North Vancouver.
- **UNESCO Parzor Exhibit** in Delhi (July 10) and Mumbai (October 2-4).
- **International Symposium**, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 5.
- **ZWIN exhibit** (Zarathushti Women's International Network) on its website at www.zwin3.net.

Upcoming celebration in Singapore

The president of Singapore will be guest of honor at a major celebration planned by the Singapore and Hong Kong Anjuman, May 28-29, 2004. For information, contact Russi Ghadiali at rghadial@irf.com. ■



The "Silk Road Orchestra" performed ancient, modern and folklore music, at the Zarathushti heritage showcase event at Markham Theatre in Toronto.

Series of festivities in Ontario

In Toronto, the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, under co-chairs **Zarine Chenoy** and **Freddy Mirza**, organized a series of events. The inaugural extravaganza "Showcasing 3,000 Years of Zoroastrian Heritage and Culture" on Friday, November 28 at the Markham Theatre, featured over 100 performers, from 4 to 85. The program opened with a recitation of "The Word of Zarathushtra" from the Gathas, by ten mobeds. The Silk Road Orchestra, Tabriz Azerbaijanian Music and Dance Ensemble, and professional groups performing classical, traditional and folkloric music, captivated the crowd.

Among the dignitaries present were **The Hon. Derek Lee**, MP from Scarborough Rouge River and **The Hon. Jim Karygiannis**, MP from Scarborough Agincourt.

There were displays of Zarathushti artifacts and continuous showing of a video "Zoroastrians" by **Khushnum Panthaky** and a power point slide presentation on "Who are the Zoroastrians" by **Roxanna Mirza**. In the intermission, the audience had a taste of Iranian and Parsi snacks (maivo, bhakhras, kabobs).

The celebrations continued at the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr on November 30, with a *Youth Open House*, with activities by the **100th Toronto – First Zoroastrian Cub Pack** and the children's **Sunday Religious Classes**.

On December 7, in collaboration with the MOSAIC Multifaith Organization, there was a demonstration of a *jashan* ceremony by **Ervads Yezdi Antia** and **Nozer Kotwal**, and an informative Q&A panel discussion with **Ervads Yezdi Antia**, **Jehan Bagli** and **Darius Bharucha**. **Mr. Cohen**, president of MOSAIC honored the event with his presence. Future festivities include:

- Zoroastrian Film Festival in January at the Albion and Westside Cinemas.
- Special event at the prestigious *Royal Ontario Museum*, on January 31, with speakers **Dr. Jehan Bagli**, **Dr. Jamsheed Choksy** and **Gayle Gibson**.
[From a report by Roxanna Mirza]



At the celebration in Sydney, from left, Dr. Hossein Vahidi (Iran), Ms. Athena Hafshejani (Sydney), Dr. Shahrokh Vafadari (London), Dr. Parviz Koupai (Los Angeles), Mr. Nafari (treasurer of the Persian Cultural Foundation, Sydney) and Dr. Jalil Doostkhah (Queensland).

International scholars gather in Sydney, Australia

The UNESCO declaration was celebrated in Sydney, Australia, with intense vigor by Zarathushtis, as well as Australian and International scholars. A conference, titled "Zarathushtra" was held under the auspices of the *Department of Studies in Religion and Centre for Millennial Studies, the University of Sydney* in conjunction with the *Persian Cultural Foundation of Australia*, at the Macquarie University, November 15-16; followed by a panel discussion on November 17; in-house discussion sessions on November 18-20, and a dinner and discussion forum at the Sydney dar-e-mehr, organized by the Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW, on November 21.

The theme of the seminars centered around the life and teachings of Zarathushtra. Some overseas scholars, contributed their papers in absentia: **Professor Jalil Ashtiani**, **Dr Oric L'Vov-Basirov**, **Mr B Ebneyousef**, **Professor Richard Frye**, **Professor Kaikhosrov D Irani**, **Dr Farhang Mehr** and **Professor A Mirfetros**.

Among those who presented papers were **Dr Massoud Ansari**, specialist in law, University of Tehran, American University at Beirut and US universities; **Dr. Allison Betts** [photo left, with Sam Kerr] archeologist from Sydney University, and one of three co-directors on a





Panelists at the Sydney conference, from left, Dr. Mas-soud Ansari, Dr. Hossain Vahidi, Dr. Shahrokh Vafadari, Dr. Jalil Doostkhah, Dr. Ali Jafarey, Antony Karasulas, Shahriar Shahriari and Dr. Partov.

project in Uzbekistan; **Dr. Jalil Doostkhah**, retired professor of language and literature, University of Isfahan, now resident of Australia; **Dr. Iain Gardner**, professor of humanities at Sydney University, **Dr. Ali A. Jafarey**, honorary director of religious affairs, the Zarathushtrian Assembly, Anaheim, California; **Antony Karasulas**, doctorate student, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia; **Ramin Marzbani**; **Dr. Abolghassem Partow**, visiting professor, University of California, Los Angeles; **H. Shahbaz**, **Shahriar Shahriari**, scholar of Zarathushti studies, Los Angeles, California; **Dr. S. M. Torabi**, head of Persian studies, Australian National University; **Prof. Gary Trompf**, professor, History of Ideas, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney; **Dr. Bhuvan Unhelkar**; **Dr. Shahrokh Vafadari**, scholar and organizer of religious studies in London, UK; **Dr. Hossein Vahidi**, scholar and retired professor of economics, University of Tehran; and **Dr. Iraj Yassini**, Iranian scholar. *[From a report by Sam Kerr]*

Prominent scholars and government officials at Tehran celebrations

PHOTO: WWW.IRANIAN.COM/PHOTODAY/2003/DECEMBER/Z1.HTML



Opening prayers at Khosravi Hall, Tehran Anjoman, on December 12: from left, mobed from Kerman, Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary of Tehran, and mobed from Yazd.

In his invitation letter announcing the UNESCO-declared anniversary celebrations in Tehran, December 11 and 12, **Rostam Abadian**, director of the *Zartushti Anjoman of Tehran* wrote:

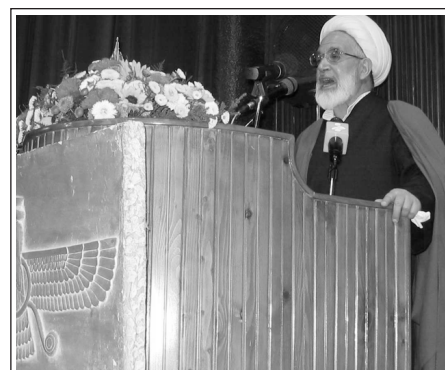
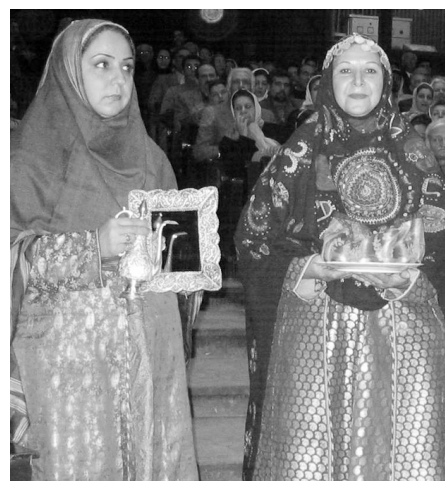
"I would like to take this opportunity to invite all Zoroastrians to come to Iran, in order to better understand the Zarathushtis here, come to know the pilgrimage places, visit the historical sites and marvel at the Demavand mountain which reflects the glory and the beauty of the wise creator Ahura Mazda. We look forward to our youth from all over the world, including USA, to remember and care for their motherland Iran, so that we may welcome them to Iran as visitors, as professionals and for the advancement of technology."



At the residence of Goodarz and Mahvash Goodarz in Tehran, on December 15, standing from left: Dr. Rustom Shahriari, Dr. Iranpour Bus-tani, Mobed Mehraban Firouz-gary, Dr. Abdin Salih (head of UNESCO office in Iran in charge of UNESCO operations in Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian Republics), Mr. Homi Gandhi, Mr. Goodarz Goodarz. Seated from left, Mrs. Mahvash Goodarz (sister of Dr. Mehrborzin Soroushian of California), Mrs. Katayoun Shahriari, Mrs. Shahnaz Khosravi, Dr. Mehrbanoo Bustani and Mr. Cyrus Khosravi.



FEZANA representative Homi Gandhi [in white with black pagree cap] addressed the gathering at Tehran University on opening day. To his left are Er. Dr. Kersey Antia and his wife Dilshad. Right, ladies offer the traditional Iranian welcome.



Majlis Speaker Mehdi Karroubi

Over 1,000 people filled the impressive Ferdowsi Hall, at the School of Literature of Tehran University, for the opening day of the two-day celebrations in Tehran, on December 11 and 12. Among the distinguished guests were the head of the Islamic Iranian Parliament (Majlis) His Excellency **Mehdi Karroubi**, minority Zarathushti Majlis member **Dr. Khosro Dabestani**, **ambassadors of Austria, the Republic of China, France and Germany**, director of the Tehran anjoman **Rostam Abadian**, mobeds from Tehran, Yazd and Kerman, and university scholars. Simultaneous Farsi-English and English-Farsi translations were available.

The morning session began with a prayer and a beautiful choral rendition of the “*Ashem Vohu*” song. After an opening message from **Dr. Karroubi** [see excerpts at right] and a response by **Dr. Dabestani**, **Homi Gandhi**, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York and FEZANA’s main representative at the United Nations, addressed the gathering. His message was:

“Take up the challenge to further our world towards the common goals, which we have inherited from the days of Zarathushtra, and forge ahead! Go out into this world, with confidence and humility, to work for a better future for the whole mankind! Listen to your inner voice! Just as Good Thoughts lead to Good Words resulting in Good Deeds (*Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshtha*). Think clearly, because with clear mind you will speak out the clear words and take clear actions!”

A presentation by **Ervad Dr. Kersey Antia**, head priest of Chicago and a prayer ceremony followed before the morning tea break. The day’s program continued with folklore dances, traditional music and presentations by scholars and mobeds. A sumptuous lunch was served at the university dining hall.

The second day’s function at the hall of the Tehran Zartoshty Anjoman, started with ‘*baj*’ prayers by 3 priests [photo page 21] and addresses by **Dr. Abtahi**, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Minorities Discourse and Culture, **Dr. Dabestani** and the Head Priest from Tehran, Jehangir Oshidari. After a traditional Zarathushti lunch, and prayers at the adjoining dar-e-mehr, videos were shown and awards presented to outstanding students. After tea, there was a cultural program in the main hall, with a talk by the French ambassador. It was once again a standing room only event with over 1,000 people. The program ended with recitation of poetry by **Tooran Shahriari Bahrami**.

[From a report by Homi Gandhi]

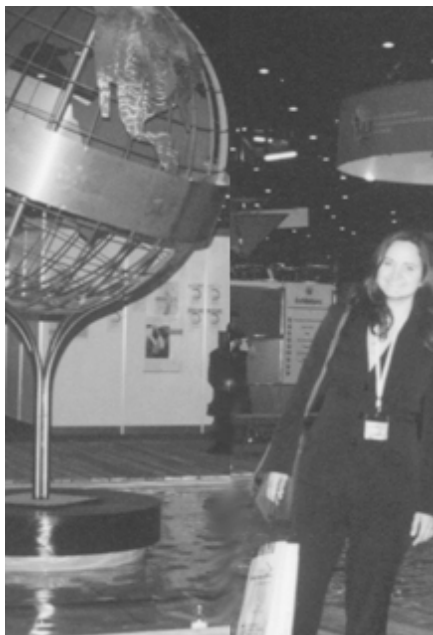
The Tehran event was widely covered in the media. Excerpts from an IRNA report are given below.

Karroubi: Muslims respect Zoroastrians as monotheist

TEHRAN, DEC 11, IRNA – Majlis Speaker Mehdi Karroubi said that Muslims regard Zoroastrians as followers of a monotheistic faith ... he added that Muslims are of the idea that their Zoroastrian compatriots believe in God.

“Iranian Muslims take pride in their ancestor’s monotheistic faith and their belief in the divine Zoroastrian belief before the advent of Islam in their land.” The officials added that a great prophet called Zoroaster was assigned to call Iranians to “right deeds, words and thought” several centuries before the advent of Islam ...

“Zoroastrians are well aware that in accordance with Iran’s situation, the divine beliefs such as monotheistic Zoroastrian faith have been recognized officially” he added... ■



Presswalla at WSIS, Geneva

FEZANA participates in WSIS, Geneva

Jenny Presswalla, 23, of Tampa, FL, currently a graduate student in International Communication at American University, Washington, DC, represented FEZANA at the "World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)" in Geneva, Switzerland, December 10-12, 2003.

The Summit, organized by the International Telecommunication Union and endorsed by the United Nations, aims to bridge the digital divide – the gap between those who possess IT resources and those who don't. UN officials, Heads of State, and representatives from the private sector, civil society, and other NGOs came together to present workshops and devise a plan of action to bring information technology resources to all.

Jenny's participation was made possible on account of FEZANA's status as an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

The next session of WSIS is scheduled for November 16-18, 2005, in Tunis, Tunisia [see www.un.org]. Zoroastrian youth are encouraged to participate in future UN events. Contact Behram Pastakia at BPastakia@aol.com.

Zarathushti presence at Thanksgiving service in Tucson, Arizona



Homee Shroff [left] was invited to speak at the Tucson, AZ Thanksgiving Interfaith Service, on November 25, coordinated by the Interreligious Multi-faith Council of Southern Arizona.

"I wore the traditional *dagli* and *topi*," says Shroff, "I spoke about the Zarathushti religion and displayed the farohar."

In 1993, Homee, now a lawyer in Chicago, and his parents, Roshan and Perin Bhappu of Tucson, Arizona, were largely instrumental in initiating monthly religious discussion and prayer groups for the 35-40 Zarathushtis of the Tucson area.

"My father Roshan, and I also try to participate in interreligious events as much as possible," says Homee, "To bring awareness of our religion to varied audiences."

Interfaith Voices Radio features Zarathushtis

The lead story on the *Interfaith Voices Radio* show (formerly *Faith Matters*) sponsored by the United Religions Initiative (URI) in early October, was "Who are the Zoroastrians?" Behram Pastakia, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington and Ervad Behram Panthaki of ZAMWI were featured.

Zarathushti participation at upcoming UN events

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CWIS) [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw] will hold its 48th session March 1-12, 2004 at UN Headquarters, New York. The meeting will focus on gender equality. Participants representing FEZANA are Nina Bilimoria, Dolly Dastoor, Homi Gandhi, Aysha Ghadiali, Susan Karani, Shahrokh Mehta, Afreed Mistry and Roxanna Mirza.
- The annual NGO conference will be in New York, September 8-10, 2004 [see previous reports in *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 2002 and Winter 2003].
- World Summit on the Information Society, Phase 2, will be in Tunis, Tunisia, November 16-18, 2005 [see report at left].

COMING EVENTS

2004 Zoroastrian Education Day

Zoroastrian Education Day, on April 4, 2004, at International Students House, London, UK, will concentrate on the historical and current aspects of the faith's socio-religious concerns: on marriage, children and religious education, and their application today.

Speakers include **Rabbi Albert Friedlander**, a president of the Council of Christians and Jews, and of WCRP UK, **Burjor Avari**, **Farrokh Vajifdar**, **Maneck Mehta**, **Er. Zal Sethna**, **Shahrokh Vafadari** and **Jehangir Sarosh**.

Contact Burjor Avari at 0161 445 7554, B.Avari@mmu.ac.uk or Farrokh Vajifdar at 020 8878 4810.

2004 Zarathushti Games

The next Zarathushti Games, co-sponsored by the Zoroastrian Sports Committee (ZSC), FEZANA and ZSBC, will be held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, July 1-4, 2004. Contact zsc@fezana.org [see page 26].

Parliament of Religions, Barcelona 2004

The 4th Parliament of the World's Religions will be July 7-13, 2004 in Barcelona, Spain. This follows five years after the Parliament in Cape



Town, S. Africa. This exciting gathering will be the signature event of a 141 day Forum of Cultures, co-sponsored by the Universal Forum of Cultures Barcelona, with the support of UNESCO. Registration is \$495. Visit www.cpwr.org or contact CPWR trustee Rohinton Rivetna [rivetna@aol.com] who is coordinating the Zarathushti participation.

CESS - call for papers

The Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) invites panel and paper proposals for the **Fifth CESS Annual Conference**, October 14-17, 2004, at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana [<http://cess.fas.harvard.edu>].

2004 WZCC Business Conference

The World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce, WZCC, will hold a **Business Conference** in San Francisco, on December 28, 2004 (one day prior to the NA Congress). Contact Edul Daver at (732) 469-1866, daver@acupowder.com.

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 Publicity chair Nazneen Spliedt, nazehler@aol.com [see page 25].

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.

"Year of Aryan Civilization", Tajikistan, 2006

President Emomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan has declared year 2006 as "The **Year of Aryan Civilization** to further protect and value the intellectual treasures of our ancestors ... and strengthen the national identity of the future Tajik generation" [FEZANA Journal, Winter 2003, p. 37]. ■

Calendar of Festivals March - August

Fravardegan/Panjeh/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar		
<i>Five Gatha days</i>	Tue Mar 16 - Sat Mar 20	(F)
Char-Shanbe-Soori (Heralding the New Year)		
<i>Tuesday prior to Nouruz</i>	Tue Mar 16	(F)
Nouruz or Jamshedi Navroz (New Year)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Sun Mar 21	(F)
Khordad Sal (Birthday of Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad</i>	Fri Mar 26	(F)
Pir e Herisht Festival		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Amardad-Khorshed</i>	Sat Mar 27 - 31	(F)
Ava Ardavisoor nu Parab		
<i>Mah Avan, Roz Avan</i>	Thu Feb 26	(K)
	Sat Mar 27	(S)
Fravardegan (Remembrance of the departed)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Thu Apr 8	(F)
Jashne Ardibeheshtgan		
<i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Ardibehesht</i>	Thu Apr 22	(F)
Atash-nu-Parab		
<i>Mah Adar, Roz Adar</i>	Fri Mar 26	(K)
	Sun Apr 25	(S)
Maidyozarem Gahambar		
<i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed - Daepmeher</i>	Fri Apr 30 - Tue May 4	(F)
Zarathusht-no-Diso (Death anniversary of Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Daye, Roz Khorshed</i>	Tue Apr 27	(K)
	Thu May 27	(S)
Daye Mah nu Jashan		
<i>Mah Daye, Roz Fravardin</i>	Wed May 5	(K)
	Thu Jun 4	(S)
Maidhyarem Gahambar		
<i>Mah Daye, Roz Meher-Behram</i>	Sun May 2 - Thu May 6	(K)
	Tue Jun 1 - Sat Jun 5	(S)
Homaji Baj		
<i>Mah Daye, Roz Govad</i>	Mon Jun 7	(S)
Pir-e Sabz Festival		
<i>Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Mon Jun 14 - Jun 18	(F)
Pir-e Banu Festival		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Behram</i>	Sun Jul 4 - Jul 8	(F)
Maidyoshem Gahambar		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Tue Jun 29 - Jul 3	(F)
Jashne Tirgan		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Tir</i>	Thu Jul 1	(F)
Fravardegan/Muktad/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar		
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Fri Jul 16 - Jul 20	(K)
	Sun Aug 15 - Aug 19	(S)
(Pateti) Navroz		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Wed Jul 21	(K)
	Fri Aug 20	(S)
Khordad Sal (Birthday of Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad</i>	Mon Jul 26	(K)
	Wed Aug 25	(S)
Fravardian Jashan		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Sun Aug 8	(K)
	Tue Sep 7	(S)

(S=Shenshai, K=Kadmi and F=Fasli.



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: Bomi Patel

Program chair: Erach Tarapore, etarapore@bigfoot.com

Publicity chair: Nazneen Spliedt, nazehler@aol.com

Website: **www.zanc.org/congress**

Theme: “Being Zarathushti: Looking at Issues, Searching for Answers”

Hosted by ZANC in association with FEZANA

Program: The program revolves around the theme “*Being Zarathushti: Looking at Issues, Searching for Answers.*” Some of the topics for discussion will be: Relevance of Zoroastrianism in the 21st Century; Zoroastrianism in the Internet Age; Zoroastrian Archaeology and efforts to preserve our heritage; What we need to do to assure the future of Zoroastrianism in North America; Inter-faith marriages; The Message of the Gathas.

Pre- and Post-Congress Programs: Visit the website for information on sight-seeing tours, FEZANA meetings/workshops and WZCC - Chamber of Commerce business seminar.

Speakers: Prominent community members, university professors and scholars as well as speakers from different backgrounds and perspectives have been invited to discuss the many varied topics.

Youth: There will also be a special focus on discussion of topics of interest to youth. The Congress Youth Committee is planning activities and entertainment for the youth.

Entertainment: Entertainment to suit all age groups will include a *Youth Dance*, a night of special *Persian* food and entertainment, and a *Gala New Year’s Eve Dinner-dance*. All events have been reasonably priced for adults and youth to attend and enjoy.

Z-Bazaar: Entrepreneurs, artists and businesses will have a place to display their wares at the *Z-Bazaar*. This is an excellent opportunity to reach a large and varied audience.

Registration: Visit www.zanc.org/congress. On this site you can register for the congress, find instructions on how to reserve your hotel room, book your car or reserve tables for the Z-Bazaar. **Take advantage of Early Bird registration prices valid until June 30, 2004.**

Accommodations: The Santa Clara Marriott Hotel, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is located 4 miles north of San Jose International Airport, and 26 miles south of San Francisco International Airport.

Room Rates: \$69 per room (plus taxes) for up to 4 persons, valid from December 24, 2004 – Jan 3, 2005.

Contact Marriott central reservations at 800-228-9290, and specify “Event Code NAZNAZA” to get the discount.

Appeal for donations: ZANC has kept the registration fee reasonable to attract wider participation, and needs to raise an estimated \$40,000 to pay for congress costs. Please send your tax-deductible contributions payable to “*ZANC for NAZC*”, to P. O. Box 4568, Foster City, CA 94404. For information contact Nazneen Spliedt at (650) 624-8888 or nazehler@aol.com. Donor categories are:

- Patron: \$1001 or more ● Benefactor: \$501 – \$1000 ● Sponsor: \$201 – \$500
- Donor: \$101 – \$200 ● Contributor: \$51 – 100 ● Supporter: Any amount

IN COMING ISSUES OF **FEZANA** JOURNAL

Summer 2004:

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

Guest Editor:

Jamsheed Choksy

Fall 2004:

Death and the Hereafter

Guest Editor:

Farrokh Mistree

Co-Guest Editor:

Khojeste Mistree

Future topics in the works:

- Daily rituals and customs
- Good and Evil
- Vegetation on Earth
- Focus on Youth

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■ A R O U N D T H E W O R L D ■

"Parsee Voice" public meeting in Mumbai

A Public Awareness Meeting, was called by the orthodox "*The Parsee Voice*" publication in Mumbai, on November 21, 2003.

Presentations were made by "*The Parsee Voice*" editor **Adi F. Doctor**, chief guest **Dasturji Jamasp Asa, Er. Dr. Rooyintan Peer** and **Khojeste Mistree** – all espousing strongly traditional positions on adoption, inter-married Parsee women, unification of the calendar and the world body.

Other invitees included Dasturji Khurshed Dastur of Udvarda, Ervads Aspandiar Dadachanji, Aspi Nal-

ladaru, Parvez Bajan and Ramiyar Karanjia.

The Resolution. A resolution was passed unanimously by the several hundred Parsis present, stating the community "strongly disapproves of the attempt by FPZAI and BPP to table, discuss and debate inter alia the following issues having disastrous religious consequences on the traditional fabric of the community:

- Legalizing **adoption** by Parsis;
- **Acceptance** of children of Parsi women married outside the community; and
- Unification of the three Zoroastrian **calendars**."

The meeting further resolved that "in no circumstances should the over-1200 years old Anjuman of Parsis of India be equated and put on par with the foreign persons/pseudo-Zoroastrians who claim to profess the Zoroastrian religion", and "with a view to maintaining this separate identity and for preserving our religion as practiced and handed down to us by our ancestors, the community thoroughly disapproves of FPZAI or BPP joining or associating with any **World Body** of Zoroastrians existing as on date or proposed to be set up."

The full report may be requested from Adi F. Doctor, email: *theparseevoice@yahoo.com*). ■

Weighty issues brought up at Indian federation, FPZAI meeting

Several weighty issues, not necessarily on the agenda, were brought up at the meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, at Bardoli, November 29-30, 2003. 19 anjumans, of a total membership of 69, were present along with other concerned community members.

Among matters arising were: the *Pune Youth Congress, children's programs*, a Parsi event in Ahmedabad, safeguarding *ancestral properties* from encroachment and the India chapter of *WZCC*.

In his presentation on *Parsi Demography*, Census Commissioner for India, Mr. Banthia, stated: "Preservation of the Parsi community is a major concern for our country ... The single great service a Parsi can render to his community is to get married and produce children."

In the evening, a charitable dispensary, the Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeebhoy Medical Center, Bardoli, was inaugurated.

Open Forum. At the Open Forum the next day, Khojeste Mistree, echoing the sentiments of the Public Meeting held earlier [see previous page] presented arguments against:

unification of the calendar ("The leap year intercalation is wrong..."); *conversion* ("In Classical Religions like ours, race is linked with religion"); and joining the *world body* ("where the nomenclature of being Parsi or Irani has been dropped totally").

Mr. Mogrelia of Chennai stated that 100 out of 110 respondents from his anjuman accepted the *children of intermarried couples*. There were discussions on promoting *intra-marriages, matrimonial bureaus, marriage counseling* and of *fertility clinics, defunct anjumans, housing colonies* and *demographics, adoption laws*, the *G6PD* enzyme deficiency, *genetic profiles* and more.

Navroze Davar (VP, Nagpur) commented that controversial topics such as intermarriage and calendar unification should not be discussed at Federation meetings, as they divide rather than unite the community.

The BPP trustees assured the meeting that they have no hidden agenda. To allay apprehensions BPP chair Mr. Minoo Shroff added that this assembly is not authorized to pass any resolutions.

[Excerpted from a report by Marzban Giara (giara@vsnl.com) published in *Jame Jamshed*, December 21, 2003]

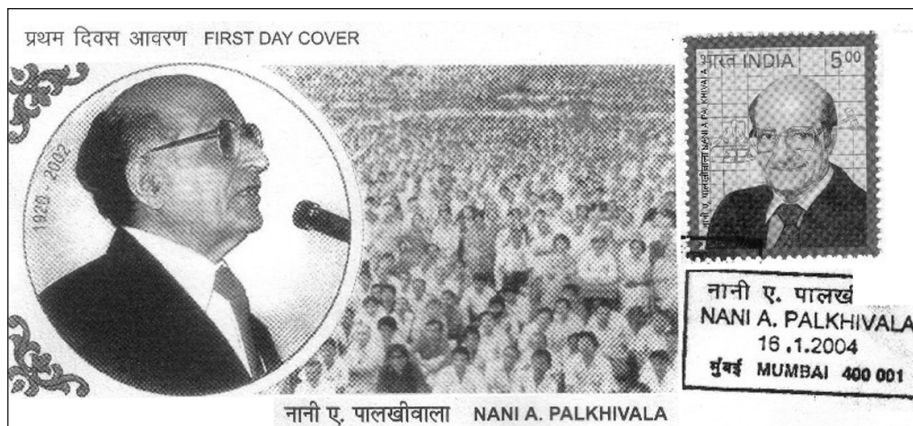
New internet news agency in Tajikistan

A new internet news agency, *Avesto*, has been launched in Tajikistan. The purpose is to cover objectively and efficiently, political, economic and social events taking place in Tajikistan as well as provide information-based support for the process of democratic reforms in the country. [Posted by zumspenta@yahoo.com at creating awareness@yahooogroups.com]

Dual Citizenship bill passes for PIOs

Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) living in 16 designated countries, including Britain, Australia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Italy and USA, will now be entitled to dual citizenship. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2003, which amends the Citizenship Act, 1955, provides for overseas citizenship of India to PIOs.

Dual citizenship would offer a wide range of benefits to about 20 million PIOs living abroad, including a free visa entry, permission to stay longer in India, eligibility to purchase agricultural land, but would not be allowed to contest or vote in elections. Further, it would facilitate trade and investment by the Indian diaspora. [From www.in.news.yahoo.com]



India issues Nani Palkhivala postage stamp

On January 16, 2004, India issued a First Day Cover and postage stamp to commemorate the life of legal legend *Nani Ardeshir Palkhivala* (1920 - 2003).

The former President of India, Dr. R. Venkataraman paid tribute to this eminent jurist: "Nani Palkhivala was a multifaceted and multisplendored personality. He was an eminent lawyer, a towering intellectual, a distinguished ambassador

(Palkhivala was India's ambassador to Washington from 1977 to 1979), a doughty champion of civil rights and above all, a humanist." A brilliant orator, his review of the Budget and the financial health of the nation, that he presented over a period of 4 decades, was eagerly awaited by the press and the public. Author of many celebrated books, such as "Law and Practice of Income Tax" and "We the People" have become classics. [Sources: "The Legend of Nani Palkhivala" by M. R. Pai and "Tributes to N. A. Palkhivala" by the Forum of Free Enterprise. Photo courtesy Noshir M. Lam].

Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Lecture

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi's acceptance speech receives standing ovation in Oslo

After her acceptance speech, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2003, Shirin Ebadi of Iran, received a five minute standing ovation from world dignitaries present in the audience, in Oslo, December 10. Excerpts from her powerful speech are given below.

This year, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to a woman from Iran, a Muslim country. Undoubtedly, my selection will be an inspiration to the masses of women who are striving to realize their rights, not only in Iran but throughout the region - rights taken away from them through the passage of history.



PHOTO: CNN.COM

Today coincides with the 55th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a declaration which begins with the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, as the guarantor of freedom, justice and peace. And it promises a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of expression and opinion, and be safeguarded and protected against fear and poverty ...

Allow me to say a little about my country, region, culture and faith.

I am an Iranian. A descendent of Cyrus the Great. The very emperor who proclaimed at the pinnacle of power 2500 years ago that "... he would not reign over the people if they did not wish it. And [he] promised not to force any person to change his religion and faith and guaranteed freedom for all". The Charter of Cyrus the Great is one of the most important documents that should be studied in the history of human rights ...

The people of Iran have been battling against consecutive conflicts between tradition and modernity for over 100 years. By resorting to ancient traditions, some have tried to see the world through the eyes of their predecessors and to deal with the difficulties of the existing world by virtue of the values of the ancients. But, many others, while respecting their historical and cultural past and their religion and faith, seek to go forth in step with world developments and not lag behind the caravan of civilization, development and progress ...

The decision by the Nobel Peace Committee to award the 2003 prize to me, as the first Iranian and the first woman from a Muslim country, inspires me and millions of Iranians and nationals of Islamic states with the hope that our efforts, endeavors and struggles toward the realization of human rights and the establishment of democracy in our respective countries enjoy the support, backing and solidarity of international civil society. This prize belongs to the people of Iran. It belongs to the people of the Islamic states, and the people of the South for establishing human rights and democracy...

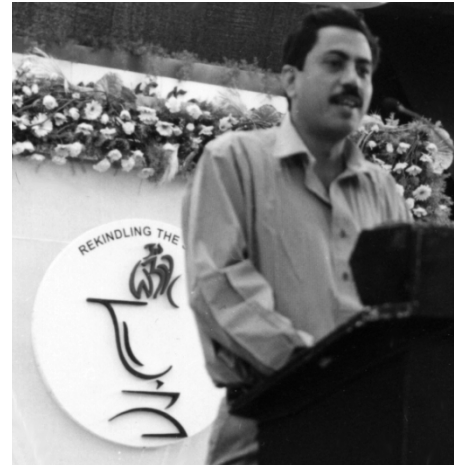
If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence, acts of terror and war, and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century - that most disaster-ridden century of humankind, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race, gender, faith, nationality or social status. ■

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Impressions of the World Youth Congress, Pune, India, 2003

*by ZYNA delegates:
Aysha Ghadiali, Cyrus Rivetna, Negin Sharyari
and Afreed Mistry*

Photos by Cyrus Rivetna



Sarosh Palkhiwala, president, 3rd World Zoroastrian Youth Congress.

A GATHERING OF YOUTH

by Aysha Ghadiali

"Rekindling the Spirit" was the theme of the Third World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in Pune, India from December 27-31, 2003. What an appropriate theme it was as youth from four continents (from India, USA, Canada, UK, Middle East and even a couple from Viet Nam and one from Tajikistan) converged at the Taj Blue Diamond Hotel in one of India's newest hot spots, Pune, to discuss the major issues of the day regarding the future of the Zarathushti deen in India and abroad.

The young organizers from the Pune Parsi Punchayet were gracious hosts who kept our days busy with interesting dialogues and discussions ranging from modern Parsi culture, Zarathushti history, rituals, the Parsi dynamic in India, and of course the future directions the faith is heading towards, across the globe.

No congress is ever all work. Our nights were just as packed with excel-



At the main congress venue, the Garden Court of the Taj Blue Diamond, Pune: front row from right to left, ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) delegates Sherazade Mehta, Negin Sharyari and Afreed Mistry.

lent dining, socializing, music, and dancing all with an Indian and international flair. The youth delegates from North America were given an excellent opportunity to meet and mingle with their peers, and to compare and contrast the issues that affect our lives and relations with our ethnic and religious community.

While clearly there are some major issues which do not currently affect us in Canada and the US, such as life in Parsi *baugs* and Parsi job placement preferences, the number of similarities of being a minority in this liberal, global dot-com age were undeniable.

Aysha Ghadiali is on the staff of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, and recently served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Jordan.

LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS

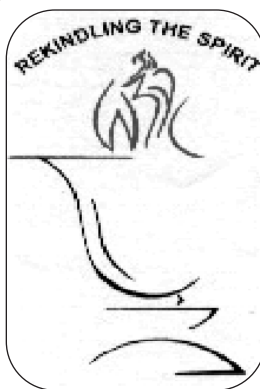
by Cyrus Rivetna

The three-day program was packed with lectures and delegate discussions, on topics ranging from religion and rituals (*Khojeste Mistree*, *Rus-*

tom Chothia), changing times, culture (*Homi Dhalla*, *Phiroza Punthakey-Mistree*), *Shah Nameh* readings by *Er. Parvez Bajan*, entrepreneurship (led by entrepreneurs *Shernaz Engineer*, *Viraf Deboo* and *Naushad Forbes*), demographics (*Armaity Khushru-shahi*, *Behram Dastur*, *Anahita Pundole*, *Malcolm Deboo* and *Firdosh Mehta*), motivation and careers (*Prof. H Moogat*, *Zareen Karani Araoz*) and lectures and discussions focused on youth (*Noshir Dadrawala*, *Sarosh Bana*, *Parvez Panthaky*, *Dinshaw Tamboly*, *Malcolm Deboo* and speakers from *ZTFE*, *ZYNA*, *FOZYA* and *ZYA*, Pune).

On the first day, a packed house came to listen to the powerful rhetoric of *Khojeste Mistree* presenting his views on the history, current state and future of our religion, in a presentation enti-

tled "*Foundation of a Legacy*". His convincing elocution, and forceful presentation of interpretations set the tone for the remainder of the congress.



The delegate discussion on "*Do Changing Times Justify Changes in Approach to Religion?*", was supremely moderated by the talented *Bapsy Dastur* of Dubai. The youth appeared to show maturity beyond even that of the adult speakers, with their insightful and non-confrontational views on change. The majority of

the youth were moderate, and saw change as inevitable and necessary, but only if carried out in a careful and cautious manner.

The topic of intermarriage seemed to appear in nearly every session. All speakers made their stance against inter-marriage very clear, however, the youth delegates questioned the

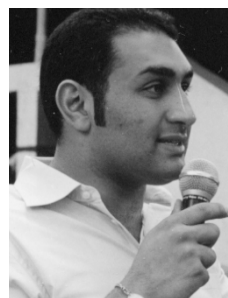


From top, Inaugural night at the Taj Blue Diamond; North American delegates at Traditional Night at Sir J. J. Agiary; at the “Winding Down” panel session: Khojeste Mistree [with microphone] and Firdosh Mehta [right].

harsh one-sided stance, given the reality of the situation today.

Homi Dhalla opened the session on preserving Zarathushti culture and heritage with a film on the outstanding activities of the **World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation** (WZCF). This was followed by a superb presentation by the knowledgeable and dedicated **Firoza Punthakey-Mistree**. Her presentation of Iranian and Parsi cultures gave an inspiring over-view of our rich heritage. I found the session to be a delightful break from the other heavy-weight sessions. The deep sense of pride gained from an understanding of our past accomplishments is essential for the perpetuation of our religion. I look forward to more sessions such as this one, at future congresses.

In the session on “*Leadership and Entrepreneurship*” the youth had an opportunity to ask questions of successful business owners and entrepreneurs. Youth were encouraged to participate in the emerging WZCC – **World Zarathushti Chamber of**



Commerce, which is quickly growing throughout India with chapters in Mumbai, Delhi and Pune.

I was disappointed that throughout the entire three-day program, **there was not a single youth speaker** on the schedule. Not even in the session entitled, “*Empowering the Youth*”!

It was only when the scheduled moderator was not able to participate, that **Phiroz Austin** [above] of Montreal took the podium, and did a tremendous job moderating the session on “*Zoroastrian Youth: Increasingly Connected, Decreasingly Committed*”.

Indian delegates and those from the West realizing the need for continuity, shared ideas and information on successful programs.

The congress ended with a “*Winding Down*” session, which was a free for all Q&A session. The majority of the questions were directed to *Khojeste Mistree*, and that gave him the opportunity to reinforce his views presented at the beginning of the congress.

After attending this congress, I was very impressed and proud to be a Zarathushti, partly because of what I heard from the speakers, but mostly because of the sincerity and commitment of the youth delegates and the questions they raised.

While I send my warmest thanks to the organizers for putting together an excellent program jam-packed with thought-provoking topics as well as practical information, I do feel that the selection of speakers could have been diversified.

Besides the lack of youth speakers noted above, the *absence of priests* as speakers was also curious. Furthermore, all the speakers present seemed to be of a similar mindset. We all know that that is not the case. When planning a congress then, one should be mindful of presenting varied viewpoints on all topics, in an objective manner. In this way the delegates are given a picture of the various stances, and are in a better position to form their own opinions. If not, the congress could be viewed as a forum to promote a particular agenda rather than a free exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Cyrus Rivetna is an architect and photographer in Chicago, currently on a three-month project studying the design and construction of traditional fire temples in Gujarat.

ENTERTAINMENT

by Negin Sharyari

The entertainment at the congress was outstanding. On the inaugural night, held in the Garden Court of the Taj Blue Diamond, there was an elaborate and professionally performed *fashion show* [see next page]. The outfits were magnificent and the models were stunning!

The next evening consisted of a humorous *natak*, “*The Good, The*



From top, delegates at Tandoor Nite on the rooftop of Bombay Brasserie; buffet lunch at the Taj; Patra-nu-Bhonoo on the Traditional Theme Nite on the grounds of the Sir J. J. Agiary.



Fashion Show. A model in the fashion show executed by the Zarathushti youth of Pune, weaving in threads of history into a story linked to the clothes worn by youth today. The show was conceived and visualized by Zarin Boyce and choreographed by Rashnae Boyce, and performed by 28 models.

Poor, and The Googly” created by Dinyar Contractor and troupe, followed by a **tandoor dinner and dance** on the rooftop of the Bombay Brasserie.

The third and most breadth-taking night was at the lavish **Poonawalla Stud Farm**. The Poonawalla family was generous to open their stud farm to congress attendees and present us with a film, highlighting their beautiful farm, numerous victories, and gorgeous horses. The impressive function continued with an acrobatic fire show

and a belly dance. Lastly, the amazing event concluded with a delicious dinner, as attendees danced the night away.

On the 30th of December, the **closing ceremony**, held at the Sir J. J. Agiary acknowledged the wonderful congress committee that made the youth congress such a successful event. During the **Talent Quest**, talented Zoroastrian youth from all over the world were recognized. In fact, Nahid Dashtaki and Negin Sharyari, of California, who performed a **Persian/Hip-Hop dance routine**, came in first place for the Talent Quest.

Additionally, the Sir J. J. Agiary had a religious and cultural exhibition. The vendors displayed typical Parsi ladies’ vocations such as weaving of the *kushti*, stitching of *sudreh*s, making *torans*, and various Parsi delicacies like *bhakra*, *dar ni pori*, etc. Yet, perhaps the most interesting part of this **traditional evening** was experiencing the **Patra nu Bhonoo** and being surrounded by Zarathushti youth dressed in saris and *duglies*.

Now, all good things must come to an end and those fortunate enough were able to attend the **New Years Eve**

Party at the Pune Turf Club. It was wonderful ringing in the New Year with old and new Zarathushti friends, and indeed the conclusion of the Third World Zoroastrian Youth Congress was a great beginning to 2004. Therefore, wishing everyone a prosperous, healthy, and joyous new year, I know that congress attendees left Pune with fantastic memories.

Negin Sharyari, a co-chair of ZYNA, is a high school mathematics teacher while obtaining a Master’s in Teaching, in Southern California.

REFLECTIONS

by Sherazade Mehta

At the end of the five days in Pune, I had time to reflect on the congress. We, as the North American group were small, but were well represented. There were about 30 delegates representing Canada and the United States. As the congress progressed we knew there were many differences between the youth in the West and that of India.

After meeting and discussing with each other, we were able to dispense with the misconception that those of us who live in the West do not know enough or understand our religion, traditions, rituals and culture, and that the youth of India take for granted the religious and cultural infrastructure they have.

The result of this was to set up communication between the youth groups of India and the youth groups of the West. This way they can have continuing dialogue with their counterparts in other parts of the world. ZYNA has taken a leading role in making sure this happens.

By the end of the congress, we were able to make good friends and lasting relationships and we as youth from two different parts of the world gained a better understanding and respect for each other.

Sherazade Mehta is president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area, and outgoing chair of ZYNA. She is an elementary school teacher in Boston.

POST-CONGRESS TRIP

by Afreed Mistry

The Napolitan Travel Agency arranged a three-day post-congress trip in Gujarat. On January 1st, New Year’s day, 14 of us set out from Pune by road to **Bordi**. We reached around sunset and looked around the area where the **Bahrot caves** are located. We could not trek up to the caves as it was getting dark. The Bahrot caves are where our ancestors took shelter many years ago.



Post-congress trip to the historic Sanjan Column

That evening we stayed at Globe Hotel in **Udvada** and some members of the group attended the late night *boi* ceremony at the Udvada Atash Behram. The Atash Behram looked very beautiful in the night as it was lit only by *divas* and there was no artificial light.

On Day 2, we all went to the Atash Behram and agiaries to pray and then left for **Daman** and **Devka** beach. There we saw old Portuguese forts built in the 1400s. Some of us took a boat ride and watched the sunset.

On Day 3, we went to **Sanjan** and visited the historic Sanjan monument and Dasturji Kookadaru Agiary which was built in 1990. The Sanjan monument was erected in memory of our ancestors who came to the port of Sanjan and settled here. Beside the monument a time capsule containing replicas and miniature items which exemplify Zarathushti heritage has been buried so that the Zarathushti community will always be remembered by generations to follow.

At the site, we also got an opportunity to see how they collect '*toddy*' from the toddy palm tree, in Gujarat. At lunch time we all said our good-byes and departed.

Afreed Mistry is a telecommunications analyst in Toronto. She is co-chair of ZYNA and has taught children 6 - 14, the Zarathushti religion, for the past ten years.



PHOTO COURTESY MEHRBORZIN SOROUSHIAN

At the last 'war dakhma' of Iran (c. mid 18th century), seven miles outside Kerman: from left, Er. Dr. Kersey Antia and his wife Dilshad, Goshtaspour Naderi and Korush Behizadeh.

The war dakhma. In 1721, the army of the Sunni-Moslem governor of Kandahar (present-day Afghanistan), on his march towards the capital city of Isfahan, center of Shiat power of the Safavids, launched a ruthless attack on the Zarathushti villages on the outskirts of the fortified city of Kerman. Countless thousands of Zarathushtis, who could not outrun or hide from Mahmud's talibans were sworded down. Remains of the victims were placed in this dakhma, which was rapidly built at a remote mountainside. This practice of war dakhmas dates back to Achaemenian times. [From "*The Last War Dakhma of Iran*" by Dr. Mehrborzin Soroushian. For the full article, please visit at www.vohuman.org.]

Er. Dr. Kersey Antia's visit to Iran. Last November and December, Er. Dr. Kersey H. Antia and his wife Dilshad visited Iran. On November 3rd, he addressed a standing-room-only gathering of over 750 people at the Kerman Zarathushti community hall adjacent to the darbe mehr, on the topic "*Relevance of Zarathushtra's Message in Our Times*". The other speaker, Prof. Almut Hintze spoke on "*Zoroastrian Eschatology*".

The next day, at a function to celebrate the UNESCO-declared "3000th anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture", Dr. Antia spoke on "Influence of Iran on Other Countries", and Dr. Hintze spoke about "Ancient Indo-Iranian Languages". Dr. Antia also conducted seminars at the Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman.

The Antias visited Bam, just a few days before the earthquake, and took, possibly one of the last videos of the magnificent citadel in all its glory. ■

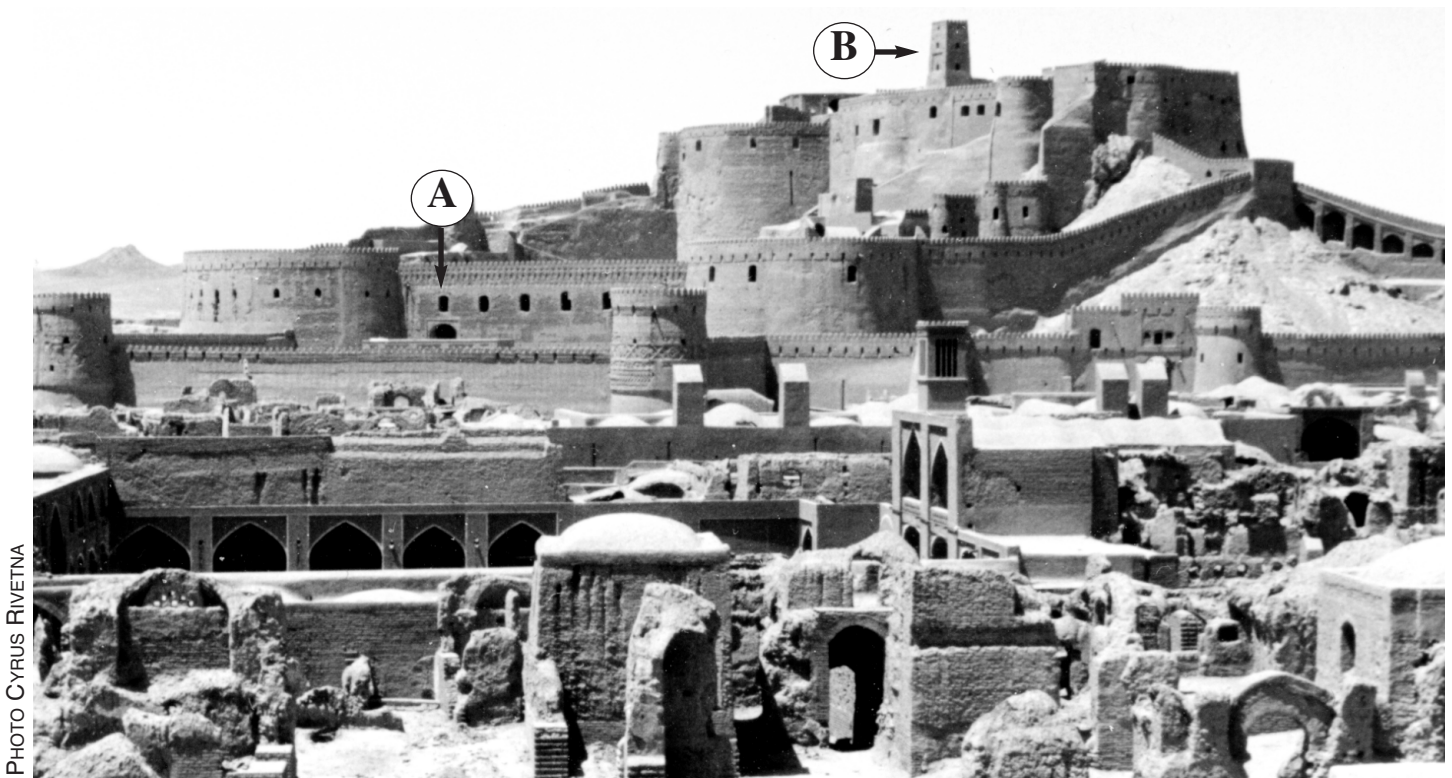


PHOTO CYRUS RIVETNA

Top, aerial photo shows the heart-wrenching devastation of the historic 2,200 year-old fortress by the earthquake of December 2003. Above, photo taken on the youth trip to Iran in May 2000. The doorway marked "A" in both pictures may be used as a reference point. The watchtower atop the hill, marked "B" [also see photos next pages] is demolished. Right, Shanaya Deboo by one of the 30 or more crenelated watchtowers, most of which are now just mounds of dirt.

BAM The Zarathushti Connection

by Roshan Rivetna

Photographs of Bam before the earthquake were taken by Cyrus Rivetna during the visit of 34 young Zarathushtis to Iran in Spring 2000, which was recorded in the film "In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers" by Tenaz Dubash, [see FEZANA Journal, Fall 2000]

On December 25th, Dariush Kasravi left his home in Bam and drove to Kerman two hours away, for the "Zartosht-no-diso" (death anniversary of Zarathushtra) prayers the next day. His wife, Mehri and four grown children were in Tehran, 600 miles away.

He wasn't home at dawn the next morning. He wasn't home when the 6.6 magnitude earthquake flattened the town of Bam (pop. 80,000) along with Dariush's home, like a house of cards, in the space of just ten earth-shattering seconds.

Casualties. Providence was watching over Dariush; and over several other Zarathushtis who had traveled to Tehran or Kerman for the

"Zartosht-no-diso" prayers. But not so blessed were the 30,000 others who were entombed, most in their sleep, under the tumbling debris, suffocated by the mud brick dust. 30,000 lives snuffed out in the blink of an eye!

Among them were two Zarathushti families, seven people in all: Feraydoon and Mehrnaz Kaviani and their one son (their other four sons and a daughter were out of town); and Soroush and Fariba Soroushpour and their two grown children. Their remains have been buried, after *Porseh* ceremonies in Kerman or Tehran.

Rumors of some Zarathushtis among the several hundred students who per-

ished in the dormitories at Bam university, and of visitors in the hotel that was devastated, have not been verified. The Kerman Zartoshti Anjuman, has not received reports of any other Zarathushtis dead or missing. There are no reports of Zarathushti injuries, either – perhaps a testament to the catastrophic nature of this temblor.

Zarathushti population. The Zarathushti population of Bam has within the past couple of generations, dwindled now to only about 30 families, less than 100 individuals. Many have moved to Tehran or Kerman or gone abroad, or have second homes there. Many, who are farm owners, visit only during the date harvest season in June/July. At the time of the quake, it is estimated there were no

more than a dozen or so families in town.

The city of Bam. The mud brick homes and surrounding desert notwithstanding, Bam, in south-eastern Iran, is a highly cultured pocket of Iran, with a rich heritage and a long and chequered history.

Located strategically on the Old Silk Road, Bam was, in ancient times, a center of trade between the east and the west. It arose in Sasanian times (226 - 651 CE) and was a major center for the production of silk and dates.



PHOTO: CYRUS RIVETNA

Situated in an agriculturally rich area of Iran, Bam is a beautiful oasis in the midst of a vast desert, and is known the world over for producing the most delicious dates.

After the earthquake, most of the city is in ruins. Also demolished are the old “Shah Mehr Ized” prayer house and a Zarathushti guest house, both of which were no longer in use, located near the ancient Zarathushti fire temple and the Zarathushti burial grounds. The date farms, outside the city are not so badly damaged.

The citadel. Bam is a popular tourist destination, largely because of the magnificent fortress and citadel, *Arg-e-Bam* on the outskirts of the city. Last year, it attracted 10,000 Iranian and 30,000 foreign tourists.

As horrific as is the loss of life, equally heart-wrenching is the devastation of this fortress that had straddled the rocky hilltop, witness to 2,200 years of history.

The largest mud-brick structure in the world, the historic Arg-e-Bam was on the list to be declared a “World Heritage Site” by UNESCO.

The foundations in some parts, go back to Achaemenian times. With the accretion of ages, across Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic dynasties, the looming fortress, with its ramparts, bastions and crenelated watchtowers, and walls, in some

places 80 feet high, covered an area of over two square miles.

A masterpiece of Iranian architecture, the interior of the fortress once housed a small town with bath-houses, schools, gymnasiums and mosques, with domed halls, spacious courtyards and arched doorways.

The tourist sign at the Jame mosque, built in the Saffarid period (869-903), mentions the “fire temple” that originally occupied the site.

But that was all before December 26. Now, most of the fortress and nearby structures have crumbled to dirt. Many of the 30 guard towers are piles of rubble, and almost all of the reconstruction

efforts of recent years are destroyed. Fortunately, the most ancient core foundations and walls have largely survived.

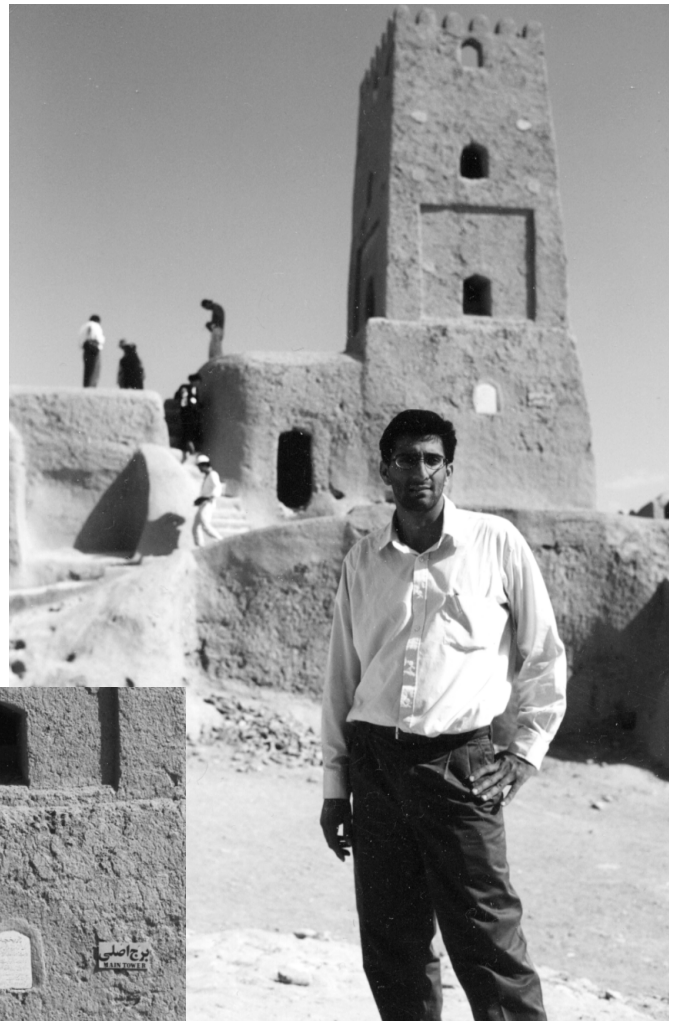
Truly, a historical loss of monumental proportions, for Iran and for the world.

Business Venture in Bam. Many of our millionaire Zarathushtis can trace the source of their wealth to Bam when it was a hub of

trade and a center for the production of silk and dates.

Besides the fortress, the Bazaar of Bam with its ancient marketplace area – the ‘*Gheysariyeh*’ with its beautiful arched entrance gateway, has architectural and historic significance. Built by Zarathushtis (declares the tourist sign) in the early Qajar era (1796 - 1925) it was operated by only Zarathushti merchants.

Over the last few generations, due to dwindling trade, most Zarathushti merchants moved out and abandoned their shops – the Gheysariyeh now sat vacant. Subsequently, the



Cyrus Rivetna (above) and other members of the youth trip, at the base of the distinctive square watchtower [marked “B” on page 34] atop the citadel, in May 2000. This tower is now a pile of rubble.



PHOTOS CYRUS RIVETNA



Post quake devastation. Above, the Sazeman Miras Farhangi (Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization) sign bears testimony to the “historical Gheysariyeh building, which belongs to the Zoroastrians”. Right, Zarathushti caretaker/guard, watching loyally over the debris of the Gheysariyeh. [PHOTOS AND CAPTION FROM MANUCHEHR IRANPOUR, POSTED ON CREATINGAWARENESS.COM]

“National Heritage Foundation” started to look for entrepreneurs, especially Zarathushti ones, to bring this historic building back to life.

A year ago Mr. Parvez Varjavand of California, recognizing the potential of this opportunity, wrote to the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, and other business-minded Zarathushtis: “A unique opportunity exists for Zoroastrians in Bam ... if there should be enough Zoroastrian interest and investments, we could have the Gheysariyeh back. This could mean the fantastic possibility to be able to reap the benefits of having one of the main tourist attractions of Iran in our hands ... Such an investment could mean the possibility of generating revenues for our community ...”

This seemed to be an excellent community project. The WZCC planned an Economic and Cultural Delegation to Iran, with a visit to Bam, in June 2003, which was postponed due to the Iraq war.

But that was all before December 26.

Today, Parvez Varjavand still thinks “it might be a superb idea for Zoroastrian entrepreneurs to take over the Gheysariyeh and re-build it with earth-quake proof measures ... here is an opportunity to rebuild a structure that is of a caliber that even has the attention of UNESCO ...” Further, Varjavand, an architect with experience repairing old Zarathushti homes in Yazd, feels “a program of giving funds for the rebuilding of Zoroastrian public structures, homes and businesses” is essential “and would create increased community pride and cohesion.”

Rebuilding projects. FEZANA’s communications with the Zartoshti Anjumans and other prominent Zarathushtis in the area, indicate that funds collected would be most effectively utilized in long-term, more enduring rebuilding of lives and properties. There has been thought of collectively building a school, community hall or guest-house. Besides monetary help, also needed is the assistance of experienced Zarathushti architects, engineers and

[Continued on page 97]

May their sweet souls rest in peace

by Farida Bamji, Ontario, Canada

It’s heart wrenching
To see the death and destruction
Of innocent people
Ancient civilization
O! why this infliction
On the people of Bam?
Where everything was serene
So calm!

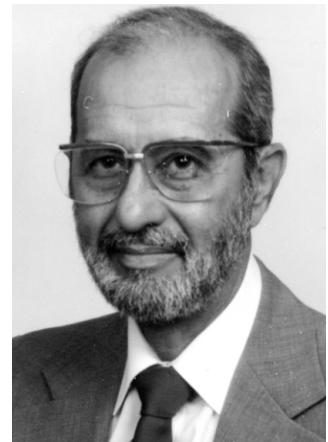
As the River of Tears
Continues to flow
Fearful of what the future holds
Words fail to express
Our deepest sympathies
And sincere condolences
May their sweet souls
Rest in eternal peace ...

The Bamji family name

The Parsi surname **Bamji** has roots back in Bam. Farida Bamji (who wrote the above poem) probably has some ancestral connection to Bam. So also do Ester and Roshan Bamji of Chevy Chase, MD and all the Parsi families who bear this common name.

perpetuating the religion, strengthening the community

Editor Jamshed R. Udvadia



Jamshed R. Udvadia

has been an Editor of FEZANA Journal for the past six years. In 1985 he started religion classes for Zarathushti children and adults of Detroit area and vicinity. After retiring as a Computer Programming Supervisor he has devoted his time to storytelling, radio reading for the handicapped, playing in Contract Bridge matches and gearing up to teach his grandchild to be a Zarathushti lady.

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA or FEZANA Journal.

Till recently, the Zarathushti Deen (religion) appeared to be losing followers. One of the causes was some confusion, mostly in India, about the distinction between the religion and the ethnic community (the people of Pars or Persia), which included the Irani Zarathushtis and the Parsis of India. The Irani Zarathushtis being suppressed by their Islamic government, the Parsis of India considered it their responsibility to perpetuate their religion; but with very little contact from their homeland in the old days, they formulated their own exclusionary rules, perhaps good for the ancient times, but which might need amendment in view of the changing times and perceptions.

Since the orthodox do not adapt well to change, this resulted, very recently, in some rather rigid and controversial declarations by the Parsi High Priests in India, concerning marriage outside the community and acceptance into the fold, of children of mixed marriages. This further resulted in many predictions that the Zarathushti community was dying and that one of the most ancient religions of the world would cease to exist.

The FEZANA Journal editorial board has decided to tackle this problem by opening up discussion on these thorny issues. As a result, I have invited Zarathushtis of differing backgrounds, and various vocations to express their views. In the following pages you will find articles written by the president of NAMC, the chair for Religion Education, vice-president of FEZANA, past president of FEZANA, a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, youth groups and a Sunday School teacher. There are also essays from professionals in various disciplines and homemakers, who have taken an interest in the nurturing of the community, in the proper religious education of its children, in the correct interpretation of the religious scriptures and supporting the community in various ways.

I hope that this will spark a round of discussion in Zarathushti communities world-wide on this difficult and sometimes controversial subject, and that there will be a further amicable exchange of views between them. It is often said: 'Where there are five Zarathushtis, there are usually six opinions.' Let us see if we can start a dialogue that will reduce the six to a single consensus on **PERPETUATING the RELIGION and STRENGTHENING the COMMUNITY.**

Jamshed R. Udvadia, Editor

perpetuation: contri- bution of the priest- hood

In the present day world of 'reason', the religion of Zarathushtra is not only surviving but showing strong signs of proliferating momentum. One wonders what it is, that has permitted the religion of Zarathushtra to perpetuate?

By Jehan Bagli
Mississauga, Ontario

Historical background

Today we live in an era when scientific and technological advances have made natural birth only one of the several ways that life procreates; organ transplant has become a routine way of saving lives, and travel into outer space is fast becoming a part of the tourism industry. One would expect that emergence of a benefactor named Zarathushtra, who taught about a way of life, nearly four thousand years ago, would be totally buried into obsolescence, under the heavy crust of cultural and scientific weight. That certainly is not the case.

The facts of history clearly demonstrate that the teachings of that great thinker-*manthran* – is so inextricably tied to

human life, that it rose to a peak as a religious way of life for multitudes of nations, in the sixth century BCE. The Zarathushtrian faith however, suffered a severe blow through Macedonian domination, in the 4th century BCE. The religion was clandestinely practiced for a few centuries only to be resurrected to the height of a State religion during the Sasanian era (226-641 C.E.). In the present day world of 'reason', the religion is not only surviving but showing strong signs of proliferating momentum.

One wonders what it is, that has permitted the religion of Zarathushtra to perpetuate? The simple answer is its inherent strength. However, it is unequivocal that, but for the oral transmission of the scriptures by those dedicated and knowledgeable men – 'the priests' in today's terminology – the religion could not have been perpetuated.

Perpetuation by professional priesthood

An organized priesthood in the Zarathushtrian faith did not exist in the early era, until the religion reached western Iran, centuries after the time of the prophet. Historically the insemination of a priestly class can be traced back to around the 6th century BCE, when the Medean *magi* usurped the reins of the religion of Zarathushtra from the *athravans* of eastern Iran. This powerful Mesopotamian priesthood adopted and accepted the teachings of Zarathushtra. In doing so the *magi* ensured the transmission and perpetuation of the religion through the entire Iranian world of the time.

However, there was a heavy price tag associated with this takeover. The powerful magian priesthood concomitantly elected to make some profound changes in the philosophical, theological and ritualistic aspects of the Gathic religion, to satisfy their agenda for aspirations of power. Be that as it may, the religion perpetuated in its syncretic form, maintain-

ing the conceptual integrity of the faith.

After the fall of the Achaemenian clan, the faith began to recover steadily under the Parthians. It was not until the Sasanian era (226-641 CE), that clergies were once again professional '*mobed*' (derived from Old Persian '*magupati*'), who were empowered to interpret and administer the religious measures.

“ For continued preservation of the socio-religious theme of Zarathushtra's teachings, priestly training needs to be revolutionized. The training of Zarathushti priesthood in North America should be open to all Zarathushti men and women who innately get the calling. ”

The professional clerics continued to enjoy the respect of the laity, even after their migration to India. It was a series of events, around late 18th to mid 19th century in India, which charted the downfall of priestly dominance. The collapse of the priestly hegemony left behind a class of ritual performing priesthood, which in time, was at the mercy of the grass-root community for their livelihood.

Priests in North America

Broadening of the role of the priesthood. Barring few exceptions, there are no professional Zarathushtrian priests in the western world in general and in North America in particular. Mobeds in the west faithfully preserve their religion, on a volunteer basis, despite their other professional commitments. Their clerical services are largely limited to the performance of the outer liturgical ceremonies. However, many of these dedicated individuals, despite their ardent volunteerism, take little time or interest to reasonably familiarize themselves with the philosophy, history, spirituality and/or theology of the religion they help perpetuate.

For the survival of religion of Zarathushtra into the next century and further, this must change. The changing socio-cultural fabric, will compound the job of the future priesthood to bridge the vacuum of a worldly society, with the notions of spirituality and piety.

In the western world, advances in biotechnology coupled with genetic engineering, adds a new dimension to the responsibility of priesthood in general and Zarathushtrian clergy in particular. Issues such as organ donation, abortion, euthanasia, use of fetal tissues or stem cells, cloning, and different modes of procreation have significant socio-psycho-religious ramifications that will greatly accentuate the need for proper priestly guidance.

Over centuries, Zarathushti clergy has interacted with laity no more than to fulfill their ritual needs and through that, realizing their responsibility to perpetuate the religion. **In this 'age of reason', particularly on this continent, a broadening of that role is demanded.** Doctrinally, the life of a Zarathushti priest should be in tune with precepts outlined by the prophet in his profound hymns [Ys. 33.6]. An ideal Zarathushti priest of the future may need to do more than that, to assist in leading the "moral and spiritual consciousness" of the Zarathushti community.

The Gathas say, God of Zarathushtra is a friend and companion, the sustainer of the faith. The mobed should be no less. The conventional training of the priesthood either in Iran or in India can fall far short of the target to fulfill the needs of the community of the future. **The heredity principle has become a part of the tradition, but has absolutely no doctrinal bearing.** It has served its purpose, and the time has come for it to go.

Training for Perpetuation

For continued preservation of the socio-religious theme of Zarathushtra's teachings, **priestly training**

needs to be revolutionized. The training of Zarathushti priesthood in North America *should be open to all Zarathushti men and women who innately get the calling.*

Despite the egalitarian position of gender, clearly vindicated by Asho Zarathushtra in the Gathas, and the significant religious contribution of women over centuries, the tradition has chosen to retain the patriarchal character of the past, and has dragged a practice of the social domain, into the core of the religion.

In order to satisfy the broader needs of the community for counseling in crisis situations and in conflicts, a mature outlook is essential. While the process of imparting the knowledge of the religion should be initiated at an early age, *the decision for priestly commitment must wait at least, till 16-18 years of age* and must evolve as a gradual but deliberate choice. It is not imperative to push a child of 10-12 years of age to become a priest.

North American Mobed Council (NAMC) has a *mobedyar* (assistant to a priest) *training program* in place, which can permit a child to train at his own pace, for the performance of some of the outer liturgies. Mobedyar training can constitute an excellent prelude to the process of becoming a mobed. Presently, training of Parsi priests in North America is directed primarily toward learning to recite parts of Yasna prayers – with no understanding of the prayers – needed for them to undergo the ceremony of *navar*. The resulting product is an *Ervad*, who has explicitly no knowledge of how to perform even the common outer liturgical ceremonies of *navjote* or *jashan*.

With the passage of time the curriculum of training must be expanded to include not only an introduction to the history, theology and philosophical aspects of Zarathushti religion, but also some exposure to the study of comparative religion.

In order to equip a mobed for *ministerial services* for counseling, in crisis and conflict resolution, an acquaint-

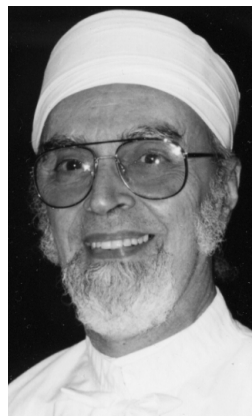
tance with psychology and sociology related to the prevailing way of life on this continent should also constitute a part of their curriculum.

Given the opportunity, NAMC can modify the present curriculum of the mobedyar program and evolve it, to introduce some of these topics. The picture is quite simple. Crisis and conflicts are the products of disharmony of the physical with the spiritual, within a human being, and propagation of the same without.

Spiritual counseling can bring peace and comfort both within the individual and among those at odds. These problems cannot be solved just by recital of prayers; it demands an in-depth understanding of the theology together with the comprehension of the prayers. This can happen only if we initiate a cadre of clerics with ability to handle such situation, and for community to evolve confidence and respect for their priesthood to reflect their potential.

In the short term, perpetuation through religious ceremonies will suffice, but will the ceremonial recitals be adequate for the community of 2150 CE? ■

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli retired as Distinguished Research Fellow of



Wyeth/Ayerst. An ordained priest (navarmartab), Dr. Bagli is president of the North American Mobeds Council, and in charge of training mobedyars.

He is a founding member of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, and chair of FEZANA's Research and Preservation Committee. Dr. Bagli has co-authored books on jashan and obsequies and has been recipient of the FEZANA Excellence in Profession/Business Award.



PHOTO: GITI CARD, IRAN

In this paper, I will examine some lessons from history that point out where Zarathushtis (Z) succeeded in the past and where we failed. I will discuss the four pillars of Z and their impact on a well-balanced community. Finally, I will summarize the ingredients of success and my hopes for achieving our *Passion for Z*.

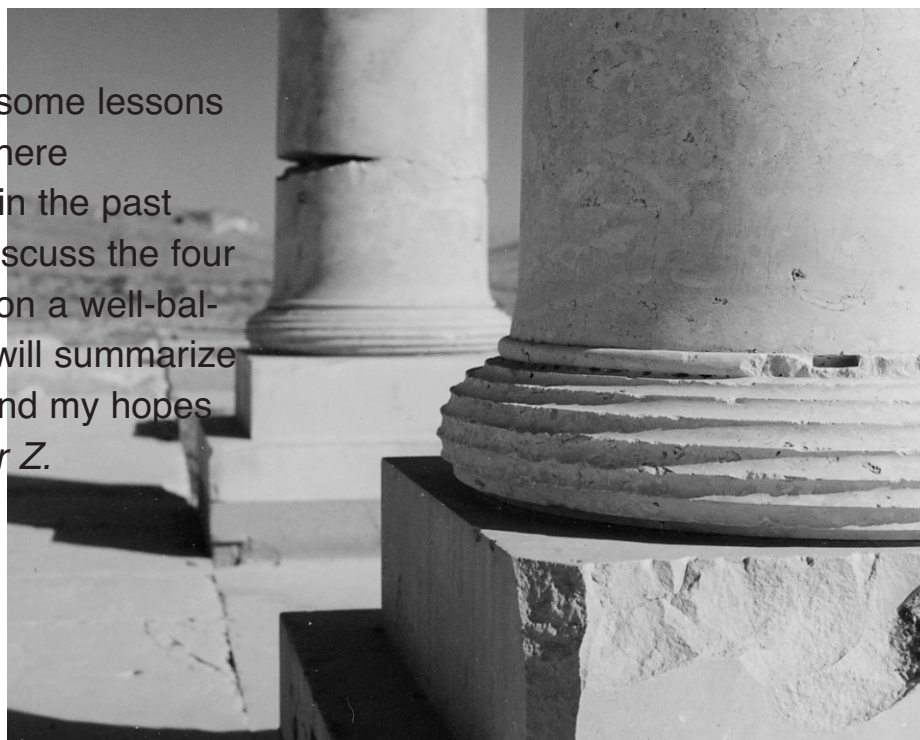
by Rustom Kevala
Potomac, Maryland

Lessons of History

Historically, Zarathushti religious affairs have been the purview of hereditary priests, the *athornans*. From the earliest times, our scriptures were considered too holy to be written down and were therefore transmitted orally by the priests. The Parthians, and later the Sasanian theocracy, began to consolidate the scriptures into written manuscripts, but it appears that only after the Arab conquest of Iran, were there serious attempts to rewrite and codify religious practices and rituals for preservation. Intense theological activity was directed towards preventing the exodus of Zarathushtis to Islam through exclusionary formulae [1] and religious requirements called Rivayets [2]. This does not seem to have helped much.

As hopes of re-establishing Zarathushti hegemony in Iran vanished, a devout group of Zs, mostly consisting of athornan families, found sanctuary in Hindu India. Thereafter in India and Iran, the religion seems to have become static and ritualized. In Iran, the religion had to go underground and many of the rituals and customs had to be discarded just to survive.

Theological activity again intensified after the Parsis came in contact with



Column base from palace at Pasargadae, c. 510 BCE. PHOTO: CYRUS RIVETNA

passion for z

European scholars interested in translating our scriptures. The new theologians were generally not practicing priests; and the influence of the athornans began to decline as rich benefactors and powerful trading families controlled community charities, temples, and dokhmas.

Success in maritime trade during the 19th century saw many Parsis migrating to Africa and the Far East. These Parsis built temples and continued contact with the Bombay Parsis, but the smaller pockets inevitably died out. The exception seems to be Hong Kong and Singapore. We need to study why they have remained virile and active in spite of political changes and small numbers.

In the 20th century, thousands of Zarathushtis from India, Iran and Pakistan began to spread to all the seven continents of the world. These Zs were generally young, seeking higher education and better economic opportunities. Unexpectedly,

they found themselves and their children exposed to subtle pressures to attend local churches and enter into discussions about their religion. Through this interaction, they learned about religious commitment, Sunday schools, and community building. Zarathushti groups formed, rented meeting rooms in community centers and churches, and began to have their own 'Sunday Schools' for their children. This laid the framework for the formation of local anjumans in major metropolitan areas, leading to the incorporation of FEZANA and the independent mobed councils.

Today, as the second generation of Zarathushtis begins to take control of the local anjumans, serious discussions for building religious infrastructure, support groups and retirement communities are under way.

In North America, theological introspection has spawned intense organizational and interfaith activity and

progress toward a 'new world' religious infrastructure. The population seems to have stabilized at 20 to 25 thousand (no one knows for sure) and growing; but as the population ages, higher birth rates and influx of new Zarathushtis will be needed to sustain the growth.

The Four Pillars

Today, no matter where one travels in the world, one can identify four categories of Zarathushtis: Devout, Secular, Theological, and Organizational. These are the Four Pillars of Z: each essential for the survival and growth of Z in the 21st century [3].

Devout Zs believe in the 'old time religion' and traditions handed down from their ancestors. Their numbers seem to be small, especially among the second and third generation Zs.

Secular Zs are worldly Zs who do not consider themselves to be 'deeply religious'. They want to preserve their Parsi or Iranian heritage and culture, which they consider synonymous with the religion - good thoughts, good words, good deeds. The majority of Zs seem to fit this category.

Most of today's **Theological Zs** are self-taught, participating in discussions on the Gathas on the Internet; but a few do go deeper and study other scriptures, history, and comparative religion. The Theological Zs are active in many interfaith organizations and are beginning to bring a better understanding of Z religion to the leaders of other faiths. Opportunities for advanced studies and scholarly research in religion are increasing. Zarathushtis are slowly entering faculties in religion and history at the university level.

Organizational Zs are deeply committed to serving the community's need for organization, planning and leadership. They serve on committees for various purposes: social activities, religious education, scholarships, finance, sports, publicity, etc. They publish newsletters, man-

age websites, conduct classes, and even set tables, serve food, and clean up after each meeting.

Ingredients of Success

Of course, most Zs embody several of these characteristics in different proportions. What varies is the *passion* exhibited in one or more of these characteristics. All four pillars must carry the weight equally for the community to function effectively. The larger the community, the better the chances that equilibrium can be established.

“ If the community attains a critical mass, Zs would find it easier to find Z life partners, patronize Z businesses and develop a self-empowering network. ”

When we say we want to perpetuate the religion, we really mean that we wish that there were more of us. In his 1992 book, *Tribes* [4], Joel Kotkin points out that the economic success of Jewish, Chinese and Indian 'tribes' in the global economy is due to their ability to network within their communities. If the community attains a critical mass, Zs would find it easier to find Z life partners, patronize Z businesses and develop a self-empowering network. Due to continuous movement of families from city to city in search of better jobs and advancement, smaller pockets of Z communities, say under 500, find it difficult to create a sustainable community.

The first ingredient for success therefore is *planning*. A community without a plan is like a ship without a rudder. We will never reach any goal without a well-thought-out plan that we can take responsibility for. FEZANA did develop a *Strategic Plan* [see page 53 and www.fezana.org] back in 1996. We seem to be moving in the general direction of the plan, but it is time to set new goals and make new plans if necessary to take into account our new understanding of the Four Pillars, the

need for sustainable numbers, and other ideas to perpetuate the faith.

Secondly, we need to *empower imaginative and effective leaders* to carry out the plan. Effective leadership is always a scarce commodity, since it requires unreasonable time demands, much diplomacy and a very thick skin.

If we all buy into the plan, the leader's task will be easier and the community can work together to make it all come about.

The Road Ahead

In the larger Z communities, the community center, if present, becomes a focal point around which newcomers buy homes; but if for every new family, one family leaves the area, there can be no growth. Each larger community like Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York and Washington DC should therefore *develop a plan for attracting Zs* to settle in their metropolitan areas.

The smaller communities can develop plans to grow also, if they are located in good climatic or scenic areas; but their focus should be to develop a sustainable network for social and commercial interaction with nearby small communities. Finally, there are some areas where an ideal Z retirement community can be established. All of these need careful planning and nurturing to come to fruition.

The difficult planning area is to *'balance' the pillars*. We have too many Secular Zs and so we need more devout Zs. We have too few theologians of stature and our organizational Z population is not growing. Religious education materials, library facilities, encouragement of advanced religious studies, and paid clergy can all help. In North America and the UK, there are ample opportunities for entering into tenured teaching and research positions in religious studies for those who want to devote their lives to theological

pursuits. Non-profit organizations and fundraising are other important areas for which courses and research funds are available. We need mentoring and direction to guide more of our youth to pursue careers in those directions.

Leadership is a thankless job that pays nothing. Leaders are hard to find and even harder to keep. So we need to **recognize and nurture leaders** whenever and wherever we can. It has been recognized that Zs married to non-Zs, non-Z spouses, and the newly-converted Zs are often the most passionate and hence likely to be strong pillars of the community. Yet, there is some hesitancy in electing them to leadership positions. Youth activities like sports and congresses are also helping the community to identify the leaders of tomorrow.

Once a person volunteers for a leadership position, we should make it easier for him or her to serve the community by providing travel allowances, administrative support, and leadership training. Soon, we will need office facilities, meeting facilities, storage facilities, community retreats and camping facilities; and various and sundry equipment.

As we grow in numbers, we will have the financial strength to make it all come true. The future is going to be as bright as we want it to be. ■

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A glorious past blended with a distinguished present, should generally portend a brilliant future. However, in the case of our community, can it be really so?

community at the crossroads

By Dinshaw Kaiki Tamboly
Mumbai, India

As one who is concerned about the future well-being of our community, I thought it pertinent to share some home truths with those interested in a matter such as the survival of their community.

It is a fact that we live in a world, which has changed beyond comprehension, when compared to the world of days gone by.

Aging community

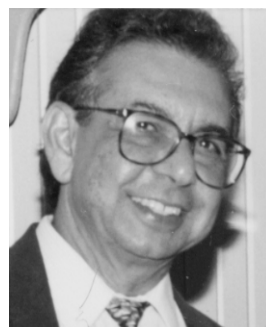
Our Zarathushti community is an aging community; perhaps the only community that is plagued by a zero growth rate, making it all the more imperative, that it not only retains but substantially enhances its economic health. The standing of our ancestors, as leaders of society, motivators of men and matters, acknowledged nation builders, all stemmed from the fact that they had an excellent combination of head and heart firmly fixed in the right place. This resulted in

economic stability and financial strength for the community.

Let me share some figures that should be of interest, of the percentage of people who are over 60 years of age. In Japan it is 8%, in Europe, North America and the western world 13%. For the whole of India it is 3%. Compare these percentages with those of Parsis – **28%!** Are we ready to read the writing on the wall and do something about the problem, or do we continue to sweep the problem under the carpet and pray that nothing will happen?

Diminishing numbers

Our diminishing numbers are such that we may have already gone beyond the point of no return. Some die-hards amongst us will not believe this, but this is the harsh reality. We are thrilled when we hear some community or religious leaders proclaim that we Parsis shall never die out; but please pause and ponder. The truth could well turn out to be quite different.



Rustom Kevala is a past president of ZAMWI and has served as chairperson of the FEZANA Publications and Congress committees and on the Board of FEZANA as treasurer from 1998 to 2002. He also helped with the development of the current FEZANA Strategic Plan.

It is a fact that we are a highly literate and educated community. It is also a fact that every community that achieves a high level of literacy also achieves high levels of incomes and high levels of aspirations which, in turn, leads to a sharp decline in the growth of its population. Our depleting numbers in India appear to be the price that we are paying for being literate, educated, affluent and career driven.

“ Increase in numbers and economic strength are both equally important for our survival ”

Call to the leadership

It is for the leaders of our community, who have impressive resources available, to not only recognize existing facts and circumstances, but also to display the courage and wisdom to redefine their agenda for helping the rank and file of Zarathushtis. Called for, by our leaders, is an objective analysis of the ‘*State of the Zarathushti Community*’ at a global level. Required, is an approach that is in harmony with the elements of the changing global scenario. Practical decisions that would propel the community forward are of prime importance. Increase in numbers and economic strength, are both equally important for our survival.

The strengths and weaknesses of a nation, community or institution are entirely dependent on the quality of human beings that lead. Success or failure is either a crown to wear or a cross to carry, depending on the quality of leadership provided. The time has indeed arrived for community leaders to think and act collectively on a global scale as well as to provide new direction.

When the educated and right thinking members of any community remain distant from providing leadership and managing community assets, what direction can a community take, except going downhill?

Wisdom and vision, capacity to foresee the future, restructuring old policies and keeping in tune with the times, is what one expects from its leaders. It is not only an educated but also an enlightened community that will be able to withstand the uncertainties of the future where competitiveness will be the driving spirit in all spheres of human endeavor.

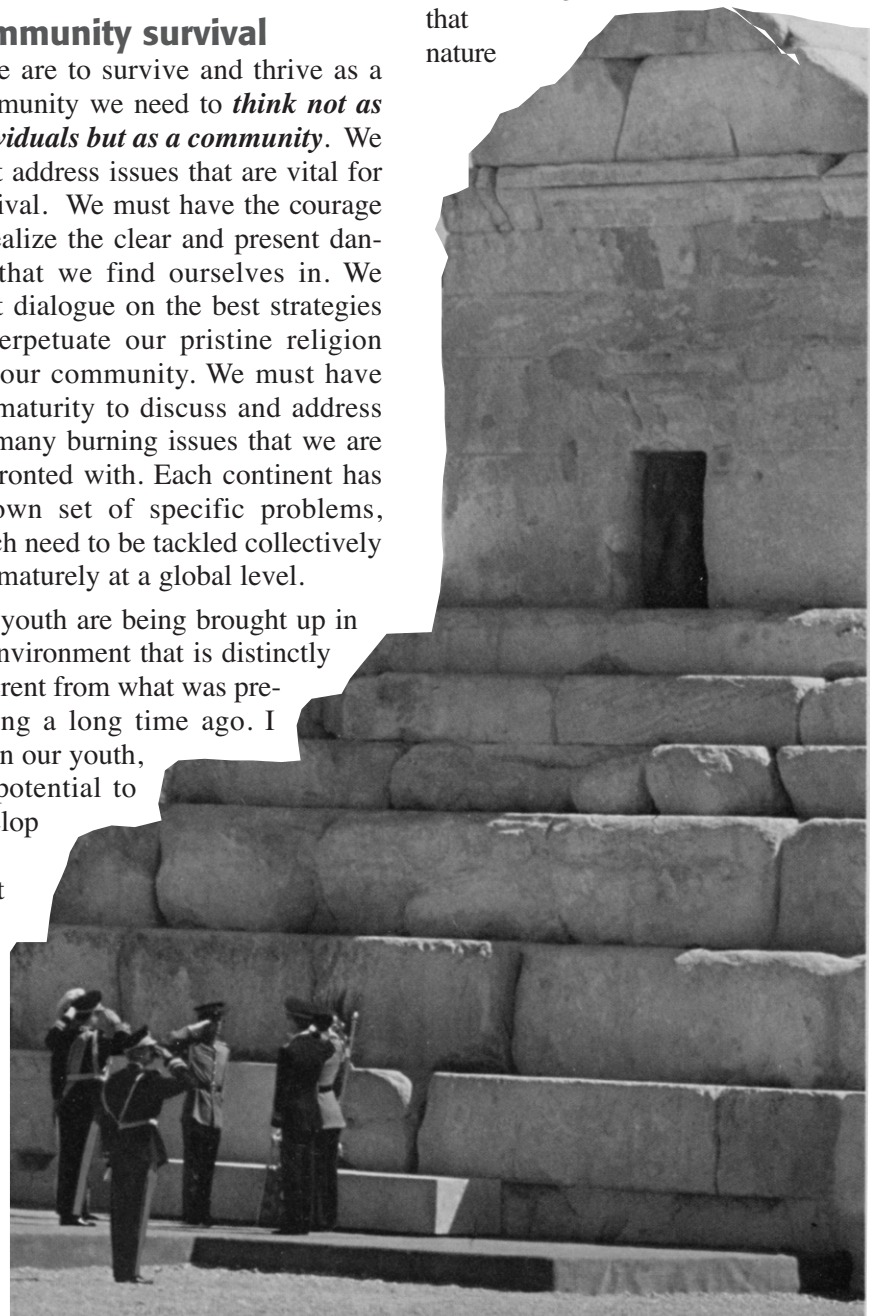
Community survival

If we are to survive and thrive as a community we need to *think not as individuals but as a community*. We must address issues that are vital for survival. We must have the courage to realize the clear and present danger that we find ourselves in. We must dialogue on the best strategies to perpetuate our pristine religion and our community. We must have the maturity to discuss and address the many burning issues that we are confronted with. Each continent has its own set of specific problems, which need to be tackled collectively and maturely at a global level.

Our youth are being brought up in an environment that is distinctly different from what was prevailing a long time ago. I see in our youth, the potential to develop into great

leaders and if properly nurtured, to sustain and enhance the reputation of Zarathushtis as the most civilized, benevolent and successful people that have ever walked the face of this earth. To achieve a sound future for our youth, we shall have to think and act as a community and not as individuals.

To survive as a community, we shall need to *consider change in many diverse directions*. Change is the only thing that remains constant in life. Change not for the sake of change, but when thrust upon us by nature has to be accepted. If we avoid changes that nature



Cyrus the Great's tomb at Pasargadae, c. 530 BCE

wishes to impose, we can only consign ourselves to the dustbin of history.

“ To survive as a community, we shall need to consider change in many diverse directions. ”

A depressing feature that has recently emerged is that our levels of tolerance have begun to dip sharply. There is a sharp division amongst individuals professing views that are either completely outdated, or absolutely futuristic. We must **focus on being moderate and pragmatic**, not pursue extremism at either end.

Intolerance if not checked will only create a sharp division with the possibility, God forbid, of tearing apart the very fabric of our community. The intolerance that is now displayed in various matters big and small with so much frequency needs to be cast off. **Tolerance will have to be an essential component of our mindset**, if we are to survive.

As a community we are indeed at the crossroads.

If we are to ensure that we survive as a community, we shall have to put behind us and overcome whatever differences there may be that divide us and instead **focus on goodwill, unity and harmony**. The future that we shall leave for our youth will hinge on the teamwork with which the leaders of our generation combine and the maturity with which decisions are taken.

We elders always stress the **importance of discipline** upon our youth. We however forget that discipline always percolates from the top downwards, be it in a nation, community, institution or family. Our incessant controversies on various issues have all but disillusioned our youth. We preach very easily, but forget to practice what we preach. Without discipline, no country or

community can progress. The importance of discipline cannot be stressed enough. Some elders of our community have themselves forgotten that discipline is the backbone of progress, the promise of peace and prosperity, the instrument of liberty, the foundation on which to build the lofty structure of a nation.

Marching on in Unity

I would urge our present day leaders to remember that they are expected to lead as far as they can and then vanish. Their ashes should not choke the fires that they themselves have lit.

We Zarathushtis, are achievers. Our goal has always been to influence history, not to merely observe it being made.

We will have to realize that to survive, we shall need to live in unity, with peace, harmony, understanding and appreciating diverse viewpoints, with mutual respect for one another.

Let it not come to pass that whilst Zarathushti Deen as a religion will flourish, Parsis as a race will perish.

Let us ask of ourselves what each one of us can do to sustain our future as a vibrant community. If we are honest with ourselves we shall not find the answer to be easy or to our liking.

HAMAZOR, HAMA ASHO BAAD – Let us be one in strength and righteousness. ■

Dinshah K. Tamboly is a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet; chair of WZO Trust Funds, India; on the International Board of WZO, London; managing trustee of the WZO Trust, Navsari and the WZO Trust for Women and Children, India; as well as numerous other welfare and cultural trusts/foundations in India. Professionally, Mr. Tamboly has worked in senior management positions for Bombay Dyeing, Reliance Industries and Tata Textiles.



Transitioning for the future: a briefing for generational consumption

By Jim Engineer
Aurora, Illinois

Participants in the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago's Young Adult Chat Group (ZAC-YAC) discussion session were Zenobia Damania, Zarine Damkevala, Jim Engineer, Sarosh Fatakia and Cyrus Rivetna.

Perhaps no generation is more challenged to take the reigns of our community and advance our horse further in the race toward inter-religious harmony and understanding, than the present generation of young Zarathushti professionals.

Young North American Zarathushtis in particular have a unique and special opportunity to lead the communities in which they have been raised, and ultimately can make a difference in perpetuating the Zarathushti community at-large in North America and the world.

How do we inspire the current younger generation beyond role models, parental and community guidance and religious education?

Members of the newly formed discussion group of young Zarathushti professionals in the Chicago area (ZAC-YAC) recently sat down to brainstorm the future and to identify strategies to perpetuate the Zarathushti religion and communities. Following are findings categorized by internal and external considerations:

Internal considerations

The group identified four points of interest, all of which are co-dependent on the other and must exist together to perpetuate the religion:

Two youth groups discuss effective ways of perpetuating the religion and strengthening the community: ZACYAC, the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago's Young Adult Chat group, in Chicago; and ZYNA, the Zoroastrian Youth of North America, during the youth congress in Pune.

zacyac & zyna discuss the future

(1) **Strengthen community structures at local, regional, national and global levels.** While our foundation to date has been provided by our parents, we youth have a responsibility to strengthen the fabric of those communities by assuming leadership positions, challenging the status quo and challenging existing community boards to develop a plan of succession. One such idea is to initiate a plan to implement term limits for board members so new board members can lead with new ideas, innovation and a fresh perspective.

“ Young North American Zarathushtis have a unique and special opportunity to lead the communities in which they have been raised, and ultimately can make a difference... ”

(2) **Provide continuing education for youth.** We find ourselves wanting to learn more about our religion, less spiritual, and in search of more guidance from a practical standpoint on

how to more effectively incorporate the Zarathushti religion into our lives. By fostering innovative programming, incorporating both social, cultural and religious elements, we will be more in tune and better able to understand our religion. Such programming will develop leadership opportunities, role models, and renew our focus on self-improvement and spirituality.

(3) **Provide a professional and vocational network.** By providing young Zarathushtis with a young professional's networking group we will be better able to support our professional and political aspirations. Such an organization could also serve as a bridge for membership recruitment into the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce. Networking among Zarathushtis also will help build Zarathushti businesses and professional services, collectively accelerating our professional and, quite possibly, our political success.

(4) **Perpetuate the priesthood.** We recognize the value of the apprentice system we have inherited from India and Iran and would like to encourage young priests to continue the tradi-

tion. However, we believe a proper understanding of issues facing young Zarathushti priests in North America will help sustain their interest in serving their community for life. Perhaps a new organization of young North American Zarathushti priests could be created as a collaborative effort between the North American Mobed Council and the Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America to generate interest, provide a forum for discussion, and a building of close relationships among young priests as they mature.

External considerations

(1) **Continue to create a public identity.** Interfaith groups such as the Council for a Parliament of World's Religions and United Reli-



Bull's head column capital, Apadana Palace, Persepolis, c. 500 BCE. PHOTO COURTESY PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY BY JOHN R. HINNELLS

PHOTOCOURTESY PERSIAN MYTHOLOGY

gions, along with global Zarathushti channels powered by the Internet, such as the CreatingAwareness message group, are all outstanding forums to enhance awareness of the Zarathushti religion. We must generate dialogue and mind share among the world's religions to keep us engaged, involved and active in the interfaith movement. The downside is that very few young Zarathushtis participate. The solution is to strengthen our local community infrastructure so role models and leaders can inspire locally and develop a leadership structure that engages the younger generation.

(2) **Be a good neighbor.** By thinking globally and acting locally, we can truly celebrate the teachings of our religion, practice it in a more meaningful way and understand that being a Zarathushti means performing Good Deeds. By volunteering and being engaged within the communities we serve, we will be more able to share the good religion with others and enhance our standing in the world. ■

Jim Engineer has been actively involved in the development of our North American Zarathushti infrastructure for more than 10 years. In 1999, Jim started his own public relations consulting practice, **e-Rainmaker .com**, focused on promoting emerging companies in the information security industry. Jim is a member of the Public Relations Society of America, the Information Systems Security Association and the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce. He can be reached at jim.engineer@e-rainmaker.com.



Effective ways to perpetuate our religion and community

By Sherazade Mehta
West Roxbury, Massachusetts

Participants in the ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) discussion session were: Pheroze Austin, Montreal, QUE, Cyrus Bhansali, San Jose, CA, Meher Bharucha, Toronto, ONT, Zarine Damkevala, Chicago, IL, Navroz Gandhi, Annapolis, MD, Aysha Ghadiali, New York, NY, Zareen Hakim, Montreal, QUE, Farokh Lam, Boston, MA, Sherazade Mehta, Boston, MA, Afreed Mistry, Toronto, ONT, Bergez Mistry, Montreal, QUE, Cyrus Rivetna, Chicago, IL, Negin Sharyari, Los Angeles, CA, Freyaz Shroff, North Myrtle Beach, SC, and Zain Turner, Montreal, QUE.

During the Third World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Pune, India, in December 2003, a number of the North American youth delegates held an open forum to discuss the topic of "Effective ways to perpetuate our religion and strengthen the community".

Our discussion revolved around three major topics: education, community involvement and social interaction.

Education

One of the topics of discussion revolved around the education of our Zarathushti community and the North American communities in which we live. Some suggestions for further facilitating our education are:

- Encourage each one of us to read **English translations of our prayers** immediately after praying in Avesta. If we do this in our personal/daily lives and encourage our mobeds to do this at religious ceremonies (jashans, navjotes/sudreh-pushis, weddings, etc) we will gain a better understanding of what we are praying.
- Impart more **awareness to other communities** as to who Zarathushtis

are. For example, in January 2004, exhibits/artefacts on the religion of Zarathushtra were set up at the Royal Ontario Museum. More seminars and lectures can be arranged through various colleges and universities around North America. With more education on the Zarathushti deen (religion), the understanding will be greater.

“ Our discussion revolved around three major topics: education, involvement and social interaction. ”

- **Distance Learning** – the idea is to educate those youngsters who do not live in a community that offers religious education classes. The concept of video conferencing can be utilized here. Children from one city can video-conference into a religious education class in other cities.

- Many associations are developing **religious education curriculum** for children. The associations can share their curriculum with others.

Community involvement

Another topic for discussion revolved around community involvement, especially of our youth. There is a concern that not enough youth are involved in community affairs; only a handful of youth take leadership roles in their associations. We need to get more youth involved. North American associations need to encourage their youth to volunteer to take up positions on their executive boards.

The youth need to be guided in these positions so they don't feel over-

whelmed by the task at hand. This guidance should be in the form of support rather than conditions. Individuals should be given roles of responsibility in their local associations; e.g. organizing community get-togethers for both youth and adults. Anjumans should hold more youth gatherings to find out their interests. Mentoring programs could also be set up within the communities between adults and youth, or between older and younger youth.

Social interactions

We also discussed the importance of social interaction of young Zarathushtis within their local communities and also with other Zarathushti communities in North America. This could be achieved by organizing sports and social events, and also other outings and camps of various types.

ZYNA can play a very active and supportive role in bringing to fruition many of the suggestions discussed above. However, this can only be achieved with commitment from the member associations and 'small groups' of FEZANA. ■

Sherazade Mehta is currently president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA). Among other things, she helped initiate and develop curriculum and teaches



children's classes at ZAGBA. Sherazade has also been a very active co-chair of ZYNA – Zoroastrian Youth of North America, committed to ensuring a representative voice for Zarathushti youth in all matters affecting the community. Sherazade teaches grades 4-6 at a Montessori school in Boston area.

To overcome the decomposition and demise of our community, all we need to do is to turn within, and discover and manifest our real inner values; and we shall find that our community is regenerated and revived – vital and growing.

real values

By Shahriar Shahriari
Westminster, California

My grandma used to say, "the more love you give, the more love you'll have ... the supply of love is endless, and you will never run out".

I used to think about this like an endless ocean that was separated from a low lake by a mountain. I used to imagine myself like a pipe that cut through the mountain and linked the ocean to the lake. I used to picture if I were a bigger pipe, I would be able to carry more water to the lake ... and the more water I let flow, the more water I'd be able to give. As I grew older, I often thought about this, and I used to ask myself if this was the case with love only, or if there were other things similar to this? Until one day, it dawned on me, like a revelation, that this was a law – a spiritual law, if you will.

A spiritual law

I realized that our real values, our spiritual values, the values that stem from our very essence, our being, all obey the same law; and I saw that there were many other things that worked in the same way. Artists, writers and poets all know that when we are in the flow, when we let our creativity pour out, we enter a self-feeding cycle. The more we create, the more creative we become. It is as if we exercise and strengthen our creativity muscle. Judges know that the more they dispense true justice, the more just they become. It is as if there is a faculty of

discernment that is sharpened through practice. Teachers know, the more they teach and share their wisdom, the wiser they become. As the saying goes, "we learn best by teaching". So it goes with spiritual values such as truthfulness, compassion, appreciation, sense of beauty or any other spiritual value that we may give ourselves to; but the converse is also true.

Shadow values

The values that I have mentioned so far are all expansive and life-affirming values. There may also be values that are contracting, and life-negating. These are generally values that we have been indoctrinated into. Rather than coming from our inner core, they actually come from the veiling of our essence. Perhaps another way of describing these values is to label them as shadow-values – the shadow side of our inner essence. These values too are self-feeding and self-perpetuating. Values such as fear, greed and acquisition of power. Values such as fabricated notoriety and cheap renown, and acquisition of riches through exploitation.

Every one of us has experienced periods of irrational fear in our lives. We all remember too well that the more we feared, the more things we found to be afraid of; in extreme cases, this could have led to paranoia. Our history abounds with people who were taken to the extreme by their greed, and lost everything they had worked for. Our present day economy provides us with a plethora of fallen financial wizards who are

either spending time in prison, or are paying their lawyers handsomely to keep them out of jail.

Pursuit of the shadow values is an addiction that, given enough time and nurturing, will only lead to destruction. Real values are expansive and life affirming; shadow values run away from the real source. Because they cannot penetrate the veil of our inner essence, they become protective of what they possess. They hold on ever so tightly; yet time passes and everything transient shall decay. Holding on will neither stop the wheels of time nor slow down the process of decomposition.

Real Solution

The only real solution is to renew. Just as Zarathushtra said – may we be among those who renew the world... He might just as well have said, “May we have an expansive mentality and life-affirming attitude. May we act to renew and rejuvenate and recreate. May we strive to give more of our real values, until we discover our endless essence and infinite source.”

A community is also like an individual. It has its external and worldly challenges. It also has its soul or essence. Just like an individual, a community can also pursue its real values, or it can hold on to the veil and fabricate shadow values.

The fiery test of values for a community, just like in the case of an individual, is whether these values are life affirming and expansive, or whether they are contracting and life negating; put another way, whether following these values will lead to the endless supply and source, or whether it is merely holding on to what can only decay with time. Entropy is a sure sign of the shadow.

World View

Zarathushtra presented a world-view that affirmed life. He painted a picture in which our highest spiritual attainment would be the renewal of all that we come in contact with. He

asked us to look at what is, and look at what could be; then he asked us to do the real work of bringing what is, closer to what could be. This is Zarathushtra’s spirituality in action.

Zarathushtra asked us as individuals and as a community, to tap into our real values. Wisdom, justice, love, truthfulness, compassion, happiness are but a few values that Zarathushtra wanted us to propagate.

“ The fiery test of values for a community, just like in the case of an individual, is whether these values are life affirming and expansive, or whether they are contracting and life negating. ”

He would never have asked us to keep our love of wisdom and truth concealed, because we may fear the community around us, or we may not trust the host culture in which we live, or because our forefathers may have been persecuted, or our numbers are dwindling. He would never have asked us to limit our charity to our kin, nor our compassion to our fellow Zarathushtrians, nor our wisdom to our neighbors or ethnic group. He would never have approved of the labels we give others and ourselves, which only create boundaries and separate us from each other. He would not have wanted us to confine ourselves to a particular locality or tribe.

Wisdom has an endless supply that only needs to be shared. Truth is an open path that only needs to be trodden upon more and more, until it becomes the only path. Love is an infinite source that sees no barriers to its outpouring – except for when we choose to withhold it. Courage is a choice that is available to everyone at every given moment in time. It only needs to be chosen.

Yet there are intelligent individuals among us who have chosen contracting values. They have chosen those paths because the fog that veils their

real values is so thick that they do not see the life-negating aspect of their choices. To the contrary, they do it in the name of affirming life as it is and as it has always been. They do it to save the community in spite of the so-called ‘heretics’ like me. All they want is the survival of a way of life, a cultural tradition that has come through generations (although nobody quite knows how many generations).

What they do not see is that a culture is like fine cuisine. It changes with time and place. The real value that creates the fine cuisine is the appreciation of gastronomic fulfillment and sharing of a joyous experience. Similarly, the real value that creates a cul-

ture is psychological happiness and social cohesiveness.

Turn to the light

To consider the wisdom and the values we have inherited from Zarathushtra as an ethnic and cultural tradition, is akin to replacing the shared joyous experience merely with food. Yet the truth is we are all after the shared joyous experience. We all wish to uncover our inherited wisdom as well as our real inner values. We cannot fault those who pursue the cuisine, or want to preserve the culture because, as the poem goes:

“They are children
chasing shadows in sight

[Continued on page 52]

Shahriar Shahriari has authored the books “*Thus Spake the Real Zarathushtra*” and “*The Z Factor*”, regarding the spiritual philosophy of Zarathushtra. He is also the webmaster of



www.Zarathushtra.com. Most recently he has produced a DVD set of an interview with Professor K. D. Irani, entitled “*Domains of Belief*”.

The focus of the navjote should be shifted from last minute learning of the kushti prayers, to imparting and instilling sound fundamentals of our religion over years before the ceremony.

can navjote be made more meaningful for children and their parents?

By Kayomارش P. Mehta
Palos Hills, Illinois

Navjote is a ceremony for initiation and confirmation of a Zarathushti child into the religion. The ceremony is a spiritual and religious exercise. It is an established custom that each Zarathushti child should be formally initiated into the religion by undergoing the navjote ceremony, usually between the ages of 7 and 15 years of age and as a rule before the age of puberty.

The word 'navjote' is made up of two words: 'nav' (or 'nao' Av. 'new') and 'jote' (Av. 'devotee'). The word navjote literally means a new initiate to practice the Zarathushti religion.

The ceremony is so named, because after its performance, the child is initiated and confirmed as a Zarathushti. After the navjote, the child is expected to begin to lead a true Zarathushti life, practicing the ethics and values of the religion.

Role of parents

It is the parents' duty to provide good religious and moral education to their children and to prepare them for their navjote. Parents are held morally responsible if they fail in this duty. The parents need to be conscious that

starting at an early age, the child learns to observe and absorb their behavior and their actions. Their role of influencing and infusing Zarathushti values and principles in the early years of the child's growing up is extremely crucial.

As parents, they need to lead a true Zarathushti life and act as perfect role models so that the child may learn from their example. Parents can only do this, if they have taken the trouble to learn the basics of our religion, understand the meanings of our prayers and customs and follow the tenets and practices of our religion on a day to day basis.

Religion education for parents of younger children is extremely important, for them to be able to instill the basics of Zarathushti ethics and values into the child. For only when the parents learn the basics of our religion and the meanings of our prayers, they can truly begin to put into practice the ethics and values of our religion and impart them to the child. Mere learning of the philosophy of the religion is not sufficient – the principles of the religion need to be practiced in our daily life.



Column bases from Persepolis and Susa, 6th century BCE. From top, Type A – angular ridges; the commonest Type B – outlined tongues with triangles on top; rarest design, Type C – tongues topped with lotus; and Type D – pointed lotus buds with palmettes above. COURTESY “PERSIA AND THE WEST” BY JOHN BOARDMAN.

Is knowing kushti prayers enough?

The preparation and the focus of the navjote should be shifted from last minute preparation to learn just the *kushti* prayers, to the more important and long lasting result of imparting and instilling sound fundamentals of our religion over several years before the navjote.

Knowing the kushti prayers is important – but it is far more important that, the parents understand the meanings of the prayers and teach the meanings to the children. In learning the meanings of the prayers, parents will learn how to live their daily life and through their example, the child will learn to lead a true Zarathushti life.

Instill Zarathushti values

From an early age, the child should be taught the importance of speaking the truth, living a life of righteousness, of making the right choice, and acceptance of responsibility, both personal (in following the path of *Asha*) as well as to the community and the world (service of mankind, charity to the needy, etc.). The child should be brought up to ‘think good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds’. Parents should lead an exemplary life of self sacrifice that the child may observe and follow.

Sudreh-kushti

Does investment of the *sudreh* and *kushti* make a Zarathushti, or are they really symbols of a more mature conduct and state of mind?

The *sudreh* and *kushti* are not mere external symbols for a Zarathushti. They constitute an apparatus, ‘*alat*’, meaning a subtle absorber of divine energy which permeates the whole creation. We need more research to understand how, with their special design, they enhance the energy centers of our body. We need to wear them constantly and perform our Kushti prayers with full comprehension on a regular basis, to remind us of the teachings of our religion.

An angel may not require such reminders; a philosopher may seldom require the help of symbols, but till we all become angels and philosophers, recognizing the frailty of human nature, let us be true to our glorious forefathers and stick to these noble symbols of our glorious faith. For we can rest assured that these distinguishing symbols of our faith will always help us by their daily suggestions and make us lead a nobler and a better life.

Navjote age

Considering the above, should the recommended age of the navjote be raised from the currently accepted minimum of seven years?

Navjote is not a mere ceremony but a spiritual and religious exercise. It is intended to attune the child with all the good energies in the universe. It has a profound effect on the body, mind and soul of the navjotee. It is important to instill the fundamentals of our faith at an early and impressionable age.

Navjote can and should be done at an early age, provided that the seeds of knowledge have been planted in an age appropriate manner. More important is the continued reinforcement of that knowledge by continuing religion education as the child grows up. The discipline of repetitive performances of performing the kushti and reciting the daily prayers with full understanding will shape the child’s moral and spiritual character.

Navjote ceremony

The ceremony is followed by a celebration announcing the preparedness of the initiate to lead a Zarathushti life. Care should be taken that the celebration and partying do not overshadow the importance and significance of the ceremony. For this reason, it may be appropriate to perform the navjote in the morning at the darbe mehr or at a fire temple and have the celebration in the evening.

The role of the attendees at the navjote is to become co-helpers of the initiate in doing good and help

the navjotee lead his/her life in the right direction. They have a responsibility to take up that role in the initiate’s life. This generates responsibility to each other and to the cause of the religion and results in community bonding. ■

Kayomارش Mehta is chair of Religion Education for FEZANA and ZAC (Chicago)



and has successfully formulated a universal Zarathushti religion education curriculum. He has served as president of ZAC and continues to

serve on its board of directors. He has promoted awareness of our religion in colleges and universities. He was awarded the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti award in 2002. He is working on establishing a ‘North American Zarathushti Learning Center’ in Chicago. Kayomارش has his own Financial Planning business.

Real Values

[Continued from page 50]

When in truth
what they seek is light.”

The solution is enlightenment.

As with any shadow, its cause is the separation of our perception from the source. All we need to do is to turn around – away from the shadow – but for a moment, and we shall see the light source that created it in the first place. Buried deeply within any shadow value, if sought earnestly, is a source of light – a real value – that when turned towards, dispels the shadow.

To overcome the decomposition and demise of our community, all we need to do is to turn within, and discover and manifest our real inner values; and we shall find that our community is regenerated and revived – vital and growing. ■



Strategic Plan 1997-2007

for a healthier Zarathushti community *by Dolly Dastoor*

“Much has been achieved since the blue-print for our community was drawn up, but much remains to be done to establish ourselves on this continent. We need proactive Zarathushtis with vision and passion to come forward to take this plan a notch higher. Change is a constant in life. We need to accept it and be prepared for the changes taking place around us – changes in political and social structures in the world which, in turn, affect all minority ethnic communities. To be forward thinking, we need to anticipate change. I challenge the community to review the plan and to move it forward.” - Dolly Dastoor

Zarathushtis in North America are living in rapidly changing times and we do not have the luxury of taking for granted the infrastructures that were inherited by us in our countries of origin. We have to create our own and be very specific as to where we want to be as a community 50 years from now.

At the 1996 FEZANA annual general meeting, President Dolly Dastoor undertook a ‘Strategic Planning’ exercise which identified collective goals for the community and the organization (FEZANA). The first Strategic Plan was developed with the collective effort and input from many members of the community across the continent and is based on a holistic vision for the future, for the development of the infrastructures for our human resources – our well-bodied, our youth, our frail, our elderly.

The collective vision in 1996 delineated four collective goals or ‘shared spaces’ for the community:

Learning to live a Zarathushti life
Thousand points of light
Internal structures
External structures

These shared spaces align closely with the Mission Statement of FEZANA adopted in March 1995, which states:
 (1) To preserve the religion of Prophet Zarathushtra (*learning to live a Zarathushti life*)

(2) To be a strong federation committed to putting the Zarathushti community firmly and clearly on the North American map, and ensuring the survival, unity, progress and prosperity of the Zarathushti community on this continent, thereby preserving its religious and cultural entity (*Thousand points of light*).

(3) To work in cooperation with Zarathushti communities abroad, in deliberations for a common goal of a united world Zarathushti community (*External structures*).

(4) To provide effective leadership in addressing the critical issues of our times with wisdom and righteousness (*Internal structures*).

FEZANA Journal [Winter 1996] describes in detail each of these areas, identifying Zarathushtis who had volunteered to develop action plans, and the three facilitators of the Strategic Planning exercise.

We are at the half way mark of our plan having completed six years. It is time to review our progress and our strategy. *Have we been moving in the right direction towards our goals? How many milestones have been achieved? Where have we succeeded and where do we need to double our efforts? What needs to be revised and reviewed? Are all the goals still relevant?*

On the following pages we take a look at the first 10-year strategic plan – the goals, action plans, milestones and operational achievements in the first six years of the plan.

1. Leading a Zarathushti Life (First Mission Statement)

Goals: To be identified as a distinct religious community; to be able to articulate our beliefs, history, ancestry and cultural heritage with pride; to have available knowledge and tools to ensure perpetuation of our religion and values.

Action Plan: Define values and ethics leading to a “Zarathushti way of life”, print essays, books, manuals on meaning of religious practices, prayers, rituals, festivals customs etc., develop Gatha study guides, courses, community service projects for youth and young adults.

Milestones:

- (a) Make available religious educational materials that are suitable for use by members of our Zarathushti community in North America.
- (b) Develop a certificate course in religious studies for children and adults.

Operational Achievements:

We have developed, and are continuing to develop, material for religious education. *The Good Life Book*, (ZAGNY); *The Zarathushti Religion: A Basic Text*, 1998; *The Legacy of Zarathushtra* (widely disseminated both within the community and outside; it is prescribed course material at 2 universities); *Understanding and practice of Jashan Ceremony*, 2001 by Ervads Jehan Bagli and Adi Unwalla; *Jashan and Afringan for Beginners*, 2002 compiled by Ervad Yezdi Antia; *Understanding and practice of Obsequies* – in preparation. Books prepared by NAMC.

Two films have been produced with the support of FEZANA: *Paradise*, 1997 by Shahriar Shahriari and Shervin Shariari; and *In the Footsteps of our Fathers*, 2000 by Tenaz Dubash.

A *syllabus for religious education* was developed by the Religious Education Committee in 1997-98 (President D. Dastoor and chair of Religious Education Committee K. Mehta). All the larger associations have regular structured *religious education classes*.



Dolly Dastoor, PhD, is chair of the FEZANA Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee. Dolly served as president of FEZANA (1994-1998) and co-chaired the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress, 2000.

2. Thousand Points of Light (Second Mission Statement)

Goals: Create a well connected community, increase harmony and unity among Zarathushtis, motivate and integrate youth in all community affairs.

Action Plan: Develop and promote FEZANA Journal as an effective communication medium. Update and publish directories at local and national level at regular intervals to keep Zarathushtis connected. Organize activities to help the elderly, the frail and fragile of the community. Organize and support all youth activities, congresses, interactive seminars for constructive dialogue between youth and adults. Include youth in all sub-committees.

Milestones:

- (a) Make funds available for loans, bursaries, scholarships for religious education and higher education.
- (b) Update directories and maintain census records of births and deaths.
- (c) Increase subscription to Journal by 5% annually.

Operational Achievements:

The *Academic Scholarship Program* was established in 1998. The amount and number of scholarships/bursaries have been growing. An *endowed Kheradi scholarship* has been established. Since 1998, 17 scholarships have been awarded. In 2003 a *FEZANA Scholar* was named for outstanding academic achievement. A *religious scholarship fund* was set up in 2002 for higher studies in Religious Education by the *Zartoshty sisters*; scholarships were first awarded in 2003.

There have been 3 editions of the *North American Directory* (1996, 1998, 2001). An electronic version exists on the website. *Census* data was collected in 1997.

We hosted the *7th World Zoroastrian Congress* and the *Zoroastrian Olympics in 2000* with over 2000 persons in attendance. The cultural events (including the Z orchestra) during the World Congress were attempts to promote Z culture. There was a successful *Mobed's Conference* in 2003 and *Avesta conferences* in 1997 and 1998, and the *Gatha Conference* in Houston. Conferences and the sports events are well structured and continue to attract large participation.

Cultural events are being organized: e.g. the annual *Film Festivals* by Feraydoon Demehri of Vancouver; the *Chicago Film festival*; the *Book Readings* of Parsi authors, by Houston and Chicago.

FEZANA Journal has grown tremendously in quality, content and appearance, and is now read in over 30 countries; although it has not been possible to meet the goal of 5% annual increase in subscriptions.

3. Internal Structures (Third mission statement)

Goals: Infrastructures are needed within the community to internally support our organization; make us financially self-supporting and strengthen our base as a religious community; build and sustain a strong well knit and cohesive North American Community; establish an Economic Council to raise funds.

Action Plan: Set up small study groups to recommend on topics, determined by the FEZANA President, to be relevant to the attainment of the vision of the community. Establish a Council of elders to advise the president on difficult and divisive issues and arbitrate any conflict within the community. Establish a mechanism to help the frail and fragile members of the community of all age groups. Establish network services for individuals and marital counseling. Establish a consecrated place of worship in North America

Operational Achievements:

Procedure for conflict resolution: an attempt was made during the World Congress to train and have available people who would be able to solve conflicts on the spot. This could continue.

Due to the efforts of the dynamic chair of the Fund-raising committee, the *economic base* of FEZANA has increased more than 50%. The *World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC)* has become a reality with chapters around the world. The *Zarathushti Women's International Network (ZWIN)* has been successfully helping women and students around the world.

Four associations have formal structures for helping *senior Zarathushtis* [see *FEZANA Journal, Fall 2003*]. Talks are underway for a *retirement center* at Sun City in Florida; Houston and Ontario also have plans. More can be done in this area.

Zarathushtis across the continent continue in their efforts to establish roots in the communities they live in. Zarathushtis in the Dallas, North Texas area (ZANT) have purchased land, Zarathushtis of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC), and California Zoroastrian Center (CZC) have bought additional property for expansion. In Toronto, ZSO is rebuilding a larger structure on the existing property and OZCF has plans to build a center at a new site. Zarathushtis of Washington (ZAMWI) also have ambitious plans to build a center on their property in Vienna, VA.

4. External Structures (Fourth mission statement)

Goals: Strengthen linkages with Zarathushti and other religious organizations, scholarly community and the secular world. Develop a strong effective Worldwide Zarathushti council. Develop a center for Zarathushti studies and a spiritual center in North America.

Milestones:

- (a) Greater participation at Interfaith events
- (b) Promote a unified calendar for the community.
- (c) Promote a united body of World Zarathushtis to co-ordinate the activities of Zarathushtis all over the world.
- (d) Establish Centers for Research in Zarathushti Studies.
- (e) Sponsor a program of Zarathushti Studies in a Major University.
- (f) Establish Zarathushti Cultural Centers.

Operational Achievements:

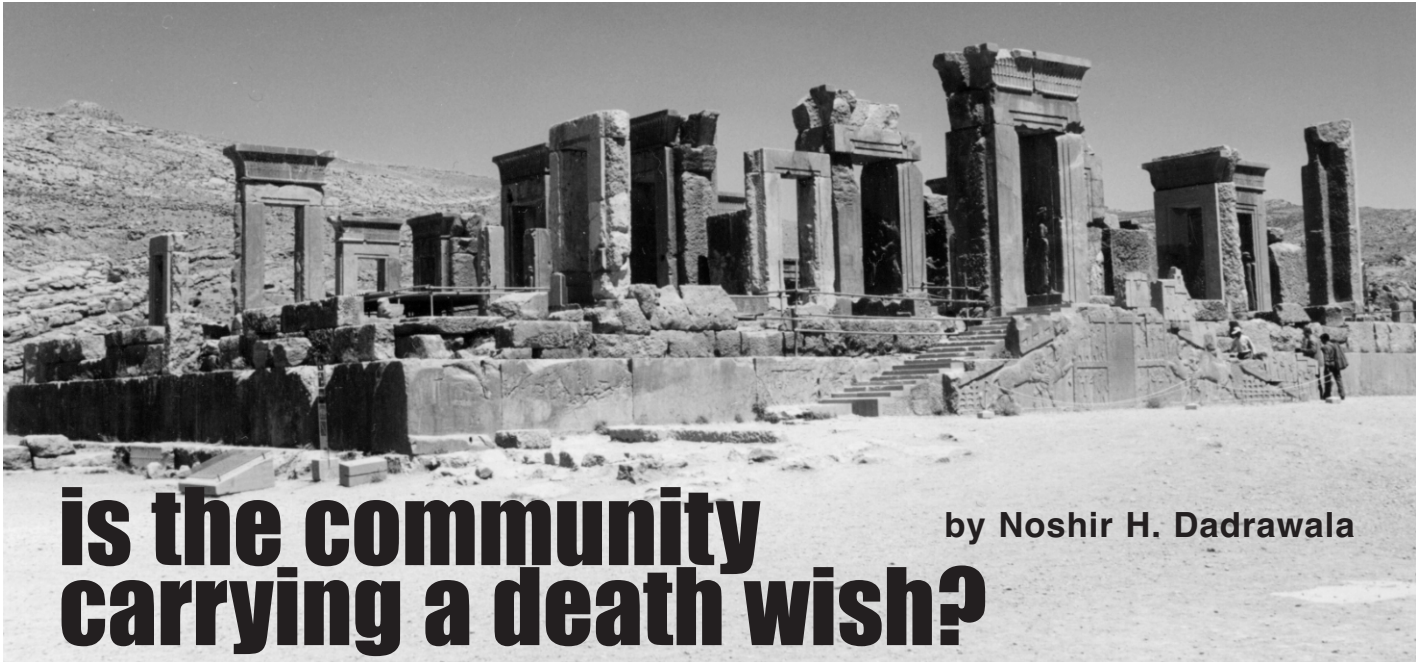
The *Unified Calendar* project is a dream which we will have to postpone.

The *United World Body* proposal is progressing satisfactorily and may be realized due to the efforts of many.

The project to build a *Zarathushti Spiritual Center* in Crestone, Arizona, has not progressed. We have been very visible at *Interfaith* events from coast to coast both in USA and Canada. Our members have been on editorial boards of *Interfaith journals*, have made *major presentations*, have been *visible at events* to mourn national disasters, etc. We have served as trustees and directors on *Interfaith councils*, served on organizing committees for the inter-religious *Peace Summit* (Delhi, 2003) and participated in *Parliament of World Religions* events in Chicago and South Africa.

FEZANA has an *NGO category III status at the UN* and members of the community participate in several of the activities. The *UNESCO declared 3000th anniversary* of Zarathushti Culture was celebrated around the continent, creating greater awareness and name recognition for the community. The concerted efforts by FEZANA and several associations have attracted the attention of the media.

Though we have not been able to build a National Center, attempts are made around the continent to *work with the universities* and other organizations. The establishment of the *Heritage and Cultural Center in Houston*, the work done there, and the establishment of a library in the center are examples of establishing external structures. ■



is the community carrying a death wish?

by Noshir H. Dadrawala

*If, as a community, you think you are beaten, you are,
If, as a community, you want to survive, but think you can't,
it is almost certain you won't.*

*A community's survival doesn't always depend on its wealth or numbers,
But sooner or later the community that survives
Is the community THAT THINKS IT CAN!*

Very often, we find well-intentioned and well-meaning community leaders speaking from public platforms and writing in various publications about “the imminent extinction of our community.” People are entitled to their views. However, when faced with a problem, the last thing a prudent individual or community would want to cultivate are negative thoughts.

Agreed, we are not procreating like rabbits, and our youth have not been able to reach the dizzy heights our ancestors achieved in a totally different era. Yet, have we really come to a stage where everything ahead of us looks dark and dismal? Are we not, in essence, cultivating a death wish?

Positive affirmation

The most common weakness of all human beings and communities (as a body of human beings) is the habit of leaving their mind open to the negative influence of other people.

It is a scientific theory that any impulse of thought which is repeat-

edly passed on to the subconscious mind of an individual or a community, is finally accepted and acted upon by the sub-conscious mind, which proceeds to translate that impulse into its physical equivalent, by the most practical procedure available.

When individuals or communities are injected with the first dose of negative thoughts, they either tend to ignore or abhor them. If they are injected with more of the dose for a time, they become accustomed to them and endure them. If there is a systematic method adopted for injecting repeated doses of negative thoughts for a long period of time, individuals and communities finally embrace them and become influenced by them.

Like people, communities are creators of their own fortune or misfortune, because of their positive or negative beliefs picked up by the sub-conscious mind and translated into its physical equivalent.

The subconscious mind makes no distinction between constructive and

destructive thought impulses. It works with the material others (or we) feed it, through thought impulses. The subconscious mind is known to translate into reality a thought driven by pessimism just as readily as it will translate into reality a thought driven by optimism.

Like the wind which carries one ship east and another ship west, the law of ‘positive affirmation’ and ‘negative suggestion’ will either lift you up or pull you down, according to the way you set your sails of thought as individuals or as a community.

Faith is a state of mind, which may be induced, or created, by affirmation or repeated suggestions - positive or negative. The trouble is we seem to have filled our minds and spirits with only negative thoughts.

Will we survive?

Very often, people ask me, “Will the community survive through the twenty-first century?” When not in the mood, I generally dismiss the question with the wise words of Dr.

Albert Einstein: "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough."

At the bottom of my heart, however, I believe what the noted American preacher Henry W. Beecher said, "Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith." I would choose to hold it with the handle of faith; not blind faith, but faith based on past experiences and present resources.

Coping with change

What are the facets of the community likely to undergo a change or likely to be threatened by change? Moreover, what are the facets where change is threatening our very survival?

I would broadly identify four facets, which, in my opinion, are the building blocks of our community:

1. Social and cultural
2. Economic
3. Ethical
4. Identity

Let us examine each of these facets and its impact on the 'survival' of the community.

1. Social and cultural

Our community has a remarkable ability to adapt to the social and cultural environment of any geographical area they reside in. Ever since we left the shores of Iran in the wake of Arab persecution and arrived on the friendly shores of India, we have, as a community, been through several stages of social and cultural evolution. After our arrival in India, we gradually lost our hold over the sweet Persian language and adopted Gujarati. With the winds of westernization in this century, even Gujarati is being gradually abandoned for English.

When we arrived in India from Iran, we also changed our food habits and dress. The 'traditional' sari is a dress our women adopted in India. Even the famous *dhansak* is a cuisine we developed in India. The diaspora too has adapted itself to the host culture.

So let's face it, despite undergoing social and cultural changes over the centuries, the community has sur-

vived retaining its distinct and unique religious and ethnic identity. It is possible that through this century, we will go through many other social and cultural changes, but these may not necessarily affect our survival.

2. Economic

Thankfully, the Zarathushti religion has a very positive outlook on the subject of wealth and economic betterment. In fact, the religion looks upon poverty and want as manifestations of evil. Every Zarathushti is encouraged to create wealth, provided it is generated through righteous means and used for righteous purposes. Charity should begin at home, but not just stay there.

Our ancestors have bequeathed large properties (both movable and immovable) to the community in trust. It is essential that we learn to respect and not abuse these generous bequests.

One can hardly imagine a strong and dynamic community sans economic prosperity. Fortunately, the resources available with the community are plenty. What we perhaps lack are able administrators for these resources. Much of our economic prosperity will depend on how we manage and augment our present resources.

What about individual excellence, one may well ask? Our ancestors largely created their phenomenal wealth through trade. What about sports? From a virtually all-Parsi cricket team, today, we do not have a single Parsi test cricket player. We seem to have lost out in so many fields.

My response would be, let us accept the change. If there has been a shift in career interests, let us accept the fact and strengthen it. Today, more and more of our youth are interested in modern creative fields of fashion designing, hotel management, catering, choreography, computer software, etc. As I see it, our youth today are possibly as creative as our ancestors were in their time and age. So what if we have less number of our youth entering traditional fields of career. It does not matter what one does in life – *the important thing is*

to constantly endeavor to give one's best to achieve excellence. In the words of Oliver Goldsmith, "If I am a cobbler, the best cobbler I would be. If I am a tinker, no tinker can mend a kettle like me."

3. Ethical

The community is well known for its values of honesty, integrity, loyalty and tolerance. They are even better known for their innate sense of humor and positive attitude to life. These are qualities we have in our blood. Agreed, there are a few dishonorable exceptions. However, by and large, our value system down the centuries has remained intact and likely to remain that way.

“ It is important for every Zarathushti youth to recognize that being a Zarathushti is a *duty*, for we are carriers of a culture and a unique ethic of living. ”

It is important for our youth to understand what it means to be a Zarathushti. It is no use saying, "I am proud to be a Zarathushti" unless one really knows what one is proud about. Being a Zarathushti is more than just confessing a religion. It means, and has always meant, belonging to a particular people – a historic group that has been the bearer of its faith and civilization. It is important for every Zarathushti youth to recognize that being a Zarathushti is a *duty*, for we are carriers of a culture and a unique ethic of living.

4. Identity

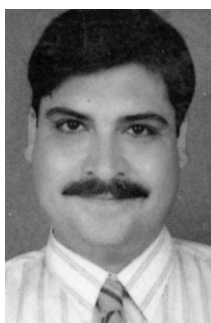
As we have already seen, the community after arriving in India went through a number of social and cultural changes. The language, clothes and diet changed, but there were certain ground rules that they strictly followed without compromise, which helped them retain their unique religious and ethnic identity.

“ The survival of the community as a unique religious and ethnic group will depend entirely on how much we adhere to these fundamental customs, traditions and precepts. ”

What sets us apart from others is not just our belief in *Humata, Hukhta, Huvaresha* (good thoughts, good words, good deeds) but our way of life. For example, we wear the *sudreh and kushti* not just as an outward symbol but as a ‘*tarikhat*’ (religious discipline) for spiritual development. Add to that, our special reverence for fire as a living embodiment of Ahura Mazda’s truth and a consecrated channel that links us to Divinity. We pray in the language of revelation (Avestan). These prayers are full of meaning and devotion and have the added power to heal both physically and spiritually. These, then, are the customs, traditions and precepts, which give us our unique religious and ethnic identity.

The survival of the community as a unique religious and ethnic group will depend entirely on how much we adhere to these fundamental customs, traditions and precepts. ■

Noshir H. Dadrawala is a management and tax consultant for Non-Profits In India. He is the author of several books including “*Management of Philanthropic Organizations*” and “*Law Governing Voluntary Organizations*”. He writes regularly for the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, *Mumbai* and other Parsi publications, and speaks on religious matters under the auspices of the *Zartoshty Brothers Fund*.



How do we ensure that the world body for Zarathushtis, that we are striving to create, will indeed strengthen our community, and not divide us?

towards a robust infrastructure for Zarathushtis of the world

by Rohinton Rivetna

“What we achieve in Unanimity, what we achieve in Cooperation, is likely to survive. What we gain here and there by conflict and overbearing manners and threats, will not survive long.”
- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

How will history judge our actions (or inactions), over this past well-nigh quarter of a century, for Zarathushtis dispersed across the globe, to ‘come together’ under the banner of a ‘world body’? Will it move us forward in our mission to perpetuate the religion and strengthen the community worldwide?

The long-drawn-out process is consuming our precious and limited resources. Are these efforts really moving us towards unity and convergence? Or are they further dividing us and driving a deeper wedge between the dispersed and disparate groups? Can we really expect that all the diverse Zarathushtis and Zarathushti organizations, now spread across the globe, with differing histories, ethnic backgrounds and traditions, can live happily ever after under one umbrella?

How do we ensure that the road we follow, and the structure we create will indeed strengthen our community?

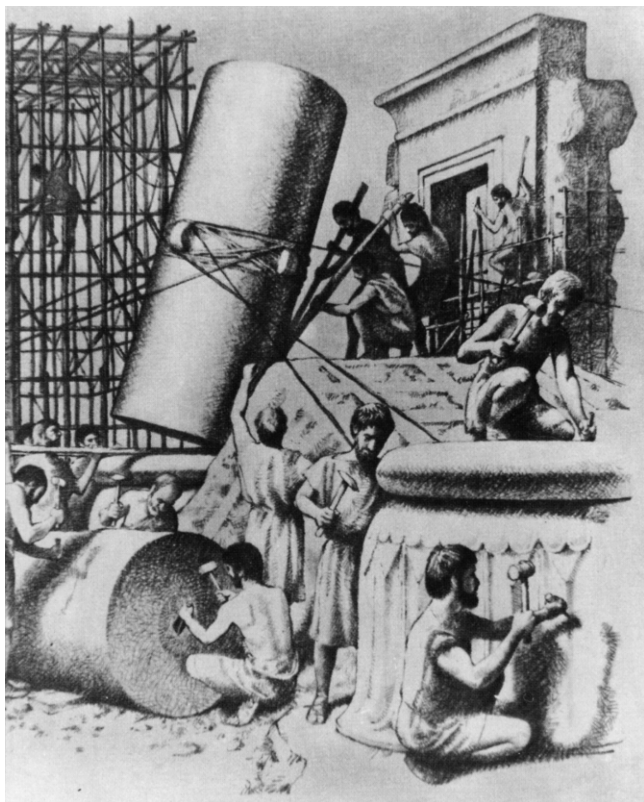
The long road

The idea for a world body was mooted at the First World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran in 1960, and at subsequent World Congresses in Mumbai (in 1964 and 1978). The saga of its evolution may be likened to the ascent of Mount Everest – a

tortuous path, fraught with unexpected twists and turns. We have weathered many a storm, and come a long way from base camp; but just when the sun-drenched peak appears to be within reach, yet another snow-cloud looms ahead.

Today, we appear to be closer to the top than ever before. The breakthrough emerged at the Mumbai Meeting of regional leaders in January 2003. A testimony to the wisdom of collective thinking, the ‘*Sense of the Meeting*’ – the concept of ‘One world body with two independent Councils under one umbrella (WZO)’ – was developed consensually at the meeting. Subsequently this ‘*Consensual World Body Concept*’, developed further by WZO leadership into a chart showing WZO-Individuals (WZO-I) and WZO-Federations (WZO-F) with the nexus provided by a new umbrella body, the International Zarathushti Organization (IZO), was approved by an overwhelming majority of WZO’s Board members in December 2003. FEZANA’s Working Group has further offered detailed evaluation and proposals for the three bodies comprising this model.

The long-time search for the elusive nexus, now appears close at hand. Barring further unexpected storms, this portends well for the final ascent.



Artisans at Persepolis [FROM "PERSEPOLIS" IRAN TOURS FLYER, BY HOSSAIN-KASHEF, NAVID PUBLICATIONS, IRAN].

Guiding principles

An inordinate amount of time and talents have been expended. The kinder perspective may grant that this development was happening during a time when transformations, heretofore never imagined, were taking place, adding an increased level of complexity.

While the end does not always justify the means, the future historian's view of this saga will, no doubt, be tempered by the value this structure brings to the community. The means, often, also govern the end. If the means adopted are harsh, disrespectful of diversity, and disregard for the minority point of view, we would surely have sown the seeds of discord.

On the other hand, if we make a commitment to certain guiding principles, we could well be on the threshold of an age of growth and progress.

● In our thoughts, words and actions, *we remember that we are religious/social organizations*, not given to politicizing. Our actions are

not confrontational or threatening or adversarial, but show tolerance, wisdom and compassion. We believe in "Cooperation not Confrontation". We engage in compassionate action.

● *We celebrate our diversity. We promote harmony, even above unity.* We treat each other with dignity and respect, no matter how divergent our views; to diminish the dignity of another is to diminish one's own. We exercise forbearance and restraint. We make sure our fervor does not turn into fanaticism.

● *We listen to all with an open mind, and seek understanding.* We know the value of appreciative enquiry. We listen with empathy to *all* concerns and fears. We bring all stakeholders to the table in dialogue, for we believe in the wisdom of collective thinking.

● *We use statesmanship to bring about convergence and consensus.* We do not indulge in pressure campaigning, play partisan politics or get pressured into 'choosing sides'. That only polarizes the community. Our decisions are based on reason, not emotion; based on facts, not personalities. On matters of import, we do not "vote", for then there are "winners" and "losers", and we can ill afford to leave *any* interest, albeit minor, behind. We strive for convergence and consensus.

The new paradigm

Globalization, dispersion and migrations of Zarathushtis from our ancestral homelands of Iran and India to the Western Diaspora – UK, North America and Australasia, has precipitated the need for a global infrastructure. In 'coming together'

organizationally, we can sail the ship together, or else, in our own canoes unto ourselves, we could easily be lost, one by one, in the vast ocean.

The *evolving face of the faith* and its followers – with the emergence of new ideologies and 'neo-Zarathushti' identities (those who wish to revert to their ancestral faith as well as those who wish to embrace the religion by choice) – lends yet another level of urgency for proper world infrastructure. We need to prepare for this new paradigm.

As a world community, we should come together and chart our course, as we navigate our ship between the rocks; so we can be *masters of our destiny and not victims of our fate*.

Global Infrastructure

At this juncture in our history, thus, building sound infrastructure for our world Zarathushti community is of momentous proportions. With the grace of Ahura Mazda, we may be nearing convergence on the '*Consensual World Body Concept*' which is comprised of:

(A) *A representative body of regional federations/associations*, that could (i) internally coordinate, network, facilitate, support, nurture and nourish the global Zarathushti community; and (ii) externally represent the interests of Zarathushtis in international forums. Institutionally this will form the governance branch. This structure is embodied in the WZO-F (based on the World Council of Zoroastrian Federations (WCZF) model, modified as necessary).

(B) *A body of individuals and associations* that could serve the socio-economic, welfare needs of the global Zarathushti community. This structure is embodied in the WZO-I (possibly the existing WZO, modified as necessary).

(C) *An umbrella organization* (the *ONE* world body) at the helm, that would serve as the nexus (linkage) between the two autonomous arms, providing a forum for communication and discourse. This would be the

face of global Zarathushtis to the outside world. This structure is embodied in the proposed new IZO.

Design requisites

Certain design essentials will help the above concept to come to fruition and pave the way for a robust and enduring infrastructure:

- There should be only **ONE world body**, formed solely on geographical lines. Forming separate organizations on ideological lines will have grim repercussions. It will create a great schism, and force the world community into the ugly position of having to 'choose sides'.

- **Autonomy** of the constituent arms of the world body should be assured; to include administrative and religious autonomy of federations, associations and individuals in all regions.

- The **definition of a Zarathushti** has eluded us for a century or more, and torn our people apart.

Devout Zarathushtis of the traditional persuasion anguish deeply over the rationalization of their faith by neo-Zarathushtis and those of the liberal persuasion, founded in reason, intellect, and individual choice, more so than belief, practice and heritage; a faith preserved by their ancestors, in exclusion, with untold sacrifices.

Religion cannot be democratized. Matters of the heart, of belief and conviction cannot be decided by a vote, nor swayed by verbal war, revolution and strife. Guided by our organizational infrastructure, through sustained dialogue, understanding and appreciation of the various positions, over time solutions will emerge and transformations occur, in a natural manner.

As prudent men and women, we must build our ship with **robust mechanisms, filters and proper checks and balances** to keep us on course.

- Lest we are driven off course, we must design and build in **safeguards against manipulation** and **protection against takeover** by individuals or special-interest groups.

- We must make the structure **modular**, with hooks for future growth [see below].

- The world body must have a strong **internet network** and **web presence**. It will be the face of global Zarathushtis to the outside world.

In the final analysis, it may be said that the long gestation for the world body will have been rewarded, if it results in a robust structure, achieved consensually, having undergone the full process, from conception to debate to convergence and finally consensus. This generation will have, then, indeed served well, and sown the seeds for communal growth for posterity.

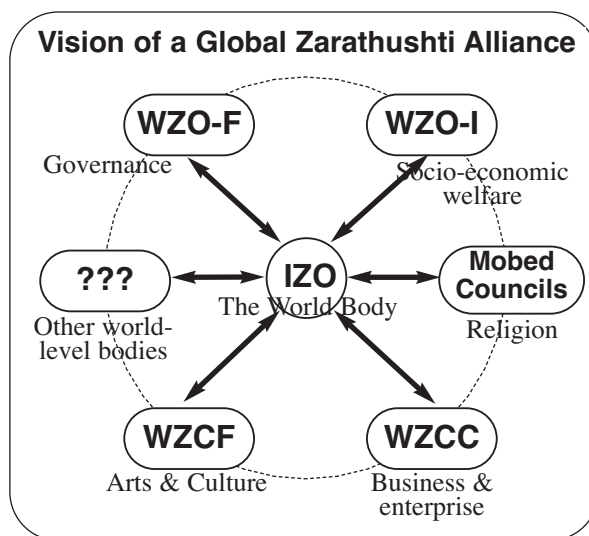
Vision of a 'Global Alliance'

The '**Consensual Model**' on the floor today offers a world body (IZO) with two autonomous arms: representation and governance (WZO-F) and socio-economic-welfare (WZO-

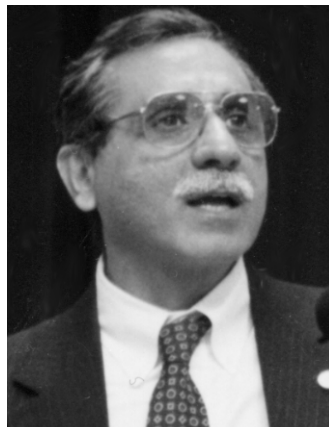
I). Can we extend the nexus, in future, to other world level organizations that support the various institutions of humankind:

- **Religion** (e.g. the Council of Mobeds)
- **Business and enterprise** (e.g. World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce)
- **Arts and culture** (e.g. World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation)
- **Science and technology**
- **Learning and scholarship** and more

Dare we dream of a future **GLOBAL ZARATHUSHTI ALLIANCE** situated in a **WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CENTER** – a "Coming Together" of these various world-level institutions, each completely autonomous, for discourse and dialogue, with the common goal of perpetuating the religion and strengthening the community? ■



Vision of world-level institutions of humankind "coming together", in a 'Global Alliance', with the nexus provided by IZO, the world body.



Rohinton M. Rivetna spearheaded the founding of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago and served as trustee and president. He was the prime architect of FEZANA and its constitution and served as president for eight years. In 2000, he spearheaded the founding of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce and served as its first president. He is founding trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the Worlds Religions.

preservation & expansion

by Daryoush Jahanian

The two aspects of perpetuation of religion are *preservation* and *expansion*. Preservation without expansion in a world with rapidly increasing population, does not meet the goal of perpetuation.

Preservation

In preserving the religion every family shares the responsibility. No one can leave it for others and find the easy way out by saying, "Even if we bring up our children in our way, there is little chance for the second generation", and as those fascinated by the Western world say, "We want to fall in the mainstream of life".

Children growing up in this country develop two identities: cultural and national. **Cultural identity** is taught and imparted by us. It is our religion, rich history and traditions that have shaped our Zarathushti identity. Instilling the Zarathushti faith in our children is accomplished by teaching them from a very young age whether at home or preferably in the classes wherever available. Children educated in-group, pay attention better and compete for learning more.

Religious education should be prioritized over other activities. *Navjote* or *sedreh pushi* should be performed after adequate religious education. That per se is a memorable ceremony but does not instill the faith in our young generation. We must encourage our youth to attend community activities, congresses, conventions and even the Zoroastrian Olympics to meet their peers and develop the Zarathushti identity. It is the utmost duty of the organizers of these func-

tions to choose the right topics and lecturers, so that our youth receive correct knowledge.

The **national identity** is automatically shaped by learning about American history and growing up with American values. If our children possess both identities, the two will reconcile, otherwise there will be struggle between them and usually the national one will deny the other. These children will feel very uncomfortable if in public they are asked about their origin and even family.

Expansion

We are living in the age of Internet. Many people around the world are finding the message of Zarathushtra appealing. We are quite fortunate to have received the genuine words of Zarathushtra as expressed by him nearly four thousand years ago. Several religions do not enjoy this advantage.

The *Gathas* are the diamond and the nucleus of our religion as much as the Koran holds that position in Islam. Once the *Gathas* are realized, the differences with the later Avestan writings are better appreciated. For instance in the *Gathas*, Yama is considered a sinner, in the *Vendidad* he is a hero. In the *Gathas* gender is not an issue at all, men and women are addressed equally, and they possess the same status before God for their



PHOTO COURTESY "PERSEPOLIS" BY DONALD N. WILBER

Column capital from Gateway to All Lands, in Persepolis, c. 500 BCE

Daryoush Jahanian, MD, a



practicing obstetrician-gynecologist, is a founder and president of Fravahar Zoroastrian youth organization in Tehran. He has served

on the boards of art and religion organizations. He is the founding president of the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas and has also served as a trustee of the Rustam Guiv Foundation of New York.

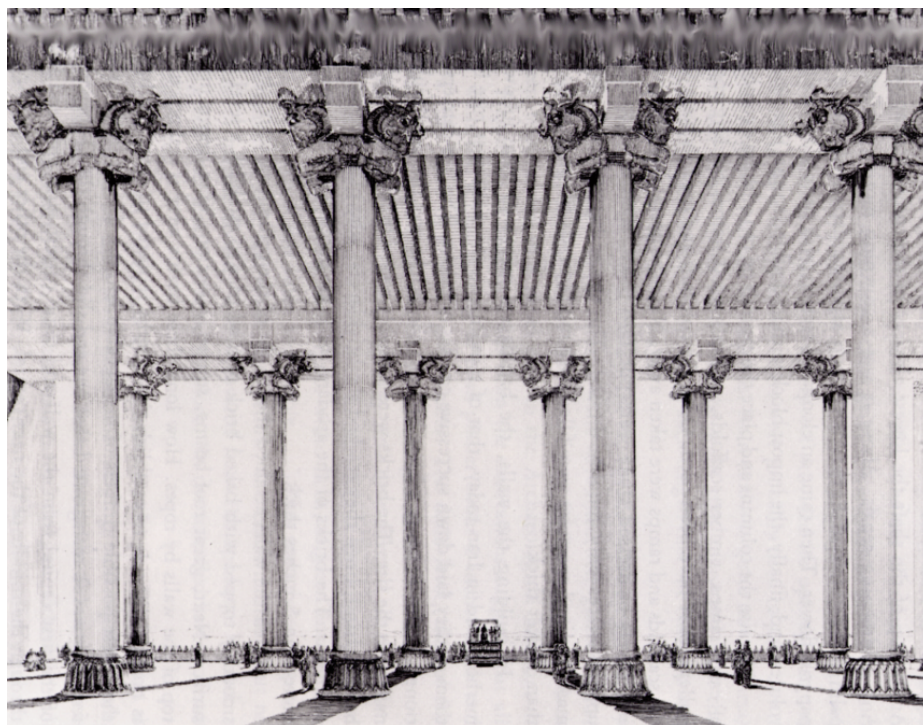
“ The Gathas are the diamond and the nucleus of our religion ... Once the Gathas are realized, the differences with later Avestan writings are better appreciated. ”

The Gathas are appealing to many people; they are the source of spiritual and moral inspiration in today's world. They are perpetual. That is why so many people around the world are in love with Zarathushtra. We have to open our hearts to these men and women regardless of their origin. Time has come and we should have the courage to tackle the sensitive issues and not to shun them.



Vohu ukhshya manangha
kshathra ashacha ushta tanum.

*Raise Thou our souls
into Thy realms of light. [Ys 33.10]*



Reconstruction drawing of the great hall of the Apadana, at Persepolis. The hall originally had 72 columns that rose to 65 feet in height. [FROM "PERSEPOLIS" BY DONALD N. WILBER, "PERSEPOLIS REKONSTRUKTIONEN - KREFTER]

Interfaith marriage is a major trend among North American Zarathushtis ... we must deal with in a positive way to ensure perpetuation of our faith.

Statistics show that inter-faith marriage is a major trend among North American Zarathushtis, which will have major consequences on the structure, cohesiveness, identity and perhaps even the survival of the Zarathushti community here. It is not something that the community can ignore or wish away. It is something that we must deal with in a positive way.

Because the Zarathushti community identifies itself as not just a religious, but also ethnic, community, histori-

These common factors make it easier to pass on the faith to the children. Intrafaith marriage must be encouraged. This must be achieved by positive stimuli such as religious education which creates a pride in the religion and a desire to marry a

Zarathushti spouse and to pass our faith on to our children, and involving our children in the celebration of our festivals, rituals and customs.

Factors that lead to interfaith marriages

We cannot escape the reality that interfaith marriages have become a fact of life in North America. Few families remain unaffected by this phenomenon. What are the causes?

We live in a secular society, where the differences between religions and ethnic backgrounds are minimized. Religion itself is of background importance only. It is easy for us to meet and know persons who have ideas, desires, values and attitudes that are common to us and the only difference is that they belong to a different faith. If religion or one's ethnicity is not a major part of our identity, then it is easy to accept interfaith marriage as a possibility.

This is compounded by the fact that our numbers are small and scattered. Finding the right person who is also of the Zarathushti faith becomes a problem of inventory and opportunity i.e. there are not enough Zarathushtis around for young people to have a choice.

What is a successful Zarathushti Marriage?

From the point of view of the Zarathushti community let us have a selfish definition of Zarathushti marriage, whether it is intrafaith or interfaith, as one which brings happiness to the couple and where the children are brought up as practicing Zarathushtis. By this definition, a marriage where the children may have their navjote done but do not know what their religion teaches, who do not know Zarathushti traditions, do not follow a Zarathushti way of life and drift away from the Zarathushti community, should be regarded as a Zarathushti marriage that has not fulfilled its potential.

On the other hand a marriage where the children, having had their navjote performed, understand what the reli-

gion teaches and follow the traditions and beliefs and are part of the Zarathushti community must be regarded as a fulfilled Zarathushti marriage.

Adaptations within an interfaith marriage

An interfaith marriage demands a greater measure of understanding and giving, of compromise and adaptation on part of the couple and the families involved and to a certain extent on the part of the two communities involved.

The adaptation and compromise start at the wedding ceremony itself, which is either two ceremonies, one in each faith, with sometimes contrary demands. Or, it is an integrated ceremony requiring a fair amount of invention, compromise and adaptation on part of all the participants. Sometimes the easy way is chosen of having no ceremony, just a civil marriage. Cultural adaptations are also required by the couple and the families involved. The close knit nature of Zarathushti society often tends to make the non-Zarathushti spouse feel like an outsider.

Perhaps the biggest problem is the decision as to the faith of the children. This should be discussed before marriage and not left to a later stage, when strong feelings may endanger the marriage or require a compromise on part of either spouse.

Once the decision is made to have the children follow the Zarathushti faith, it is usually up to the Zarathushti spouse to carry the burden of instruction of the children into the faith. Not just the initiation but also the customs, traditions and the way of Zarathushti life. Maintaining a Zarathushti milieu in the home becomes a difficult task. The non-Zarathushti spouse can help little in these matters.

Lucky is the Zarathushti in an interfaith marriage whose spouse wholeheartedly supports the decision to bring up the children as Zarathushti, from a belief that this is the best religion for the children.

Children of interfaith marriage

Statistically, one should only expect 50% of the children of interfaith marriages to grow up as Zarathushtis. However the actual number is much less, especially if one counts only those who are active members of the Zarathushti community.

Here are some likely reasons why children of inter-faith marriages do not grow up in the Zarathushti faith:

- Conflict between the two faiths and failure of the Zarathushti spouse to influence the child towards our faith.
- Given the choice, the preference of children to belong to the majority community.
- The presence of a larger extended family from the non-Zarathushti side of the marriage with its non-Zarathushti influence.
- Lack of a solid Zarathushti identity in the household.
- The absence of a strong commitment in the Zarathushti spouse to want the children to grow up as Zarathushtis. This is compounded by the lack of support from our community members, who often treat the children and spouses of interfaith marriages as outsiders.

Community response to inter-faith marriages

Interfaith marriages will happen as noted above. To lose the children of these marriages from our community is a disaster. So the Zarathushti community must change its attitudes towards inter-married Zarathushtis. The origins of these attitudes are from a different time and place and a different society.

We must welcome the families of interfaith marriages. We must welcome them to our religion classes, our religious ceremonies and to our social functions. We must make it easy for their children to be initiated into our religion, if the family so decides. We must make them a part of our community if they so wish. Acceptance of those involved in

interfaith marriages is imperative to our survival.

We must encourage inter-married Zarathushtis to bring up the children as Zarathushtis. Occasionally family pressure is used to discourage the child who marries out from becoming a part of our community. It should be the other way around. The family should provide whole hearted support to the marriage once it happens, and make special efforts to integrate the non-Zarathushti spouse into the family and the community.

There are examples of interfaith marriages where the children have been brought up as Zarathushtis and the families are very much a part of the community. The non-Zarathushti spouse is part of the community and contributes towards it, sometimes more than many Zarathushti community members.

These successful interfaith marriages happen because the non-Zarathushti spouses have made the unbelievable act of generosity of giving their children to our community. They have shown an enormous amount of love, trust, respect, courage and sacrifice in their decision to have their children grow up in the Zarathushti faith. The community owes its gratitude to such individuals. Some of these individuals would like to formally become Zarathushtis; in mind and spirit they already are. The community must find a way to make this possible.

The generation which has grown up in North America faces the danger that if interfaith marriages become the norm, the future Zarathushti society will become so ethnically diverse, that it may no longer have the cohesiveness that a common shared ethnicity provides.

As with any endeavor, the future depends on the choices each one makes, personal choices as well as community choices. May Ahura Mazda guide us all to create a successful, thriving Zarathushti community.■

[Condensed from an article written for FEZANA Journal, Oct 1999]

Spirituality of the mind helps preserve and sustain the religion while traditions and culture help nourish the community

nourishing the community by preserving our religion

by **Mahrukh Motafram**
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

What does it mean to our children and us to be Zarathushtis in today's world? How can we best utilize the basic tenets of our religion, 'good thoughts, good words, and good deeds,' to strive for a better life both physically and spiritually? Since I became a parent, it has been important for me to understand the significance of walking in the footsteps of our forefathers, who felt so passionately about integrity and charity.

They paved the way

I began my journey back in time in India where I spent the first 21 years of my life. Any Parsi born and raised in Bombay would appreciate the strong presence of the community, one that is well known to this day for being one of the most vibrant and prosperous throughout India, and indeed, the world. The Parsi community was well established during the time of my youth, and we were merely enjoying the benefits of our forefathers' labor and vision. Their vision helped establish institutions

and organizations that laid the foundation for an infrastructure upon which our community built and thrived.

Zarathushti philanthropists gave rise to the commonly heard phrase, "Parsi, thy name is charity". Charity was practiced with the simple intention of giving, with nothing expected in return except the fulfillment derived from helping the needy. It probably took just a handful of individuals to feel that way and set the standard to inspire many others to continue. In this fashion, over the course of generations, was the community built, of which I am so proud.

The down side was that several generations became dependent on the philanthropy of our ancestors. Being a Parsi became more to do with the benefits one could enjoy (subsidized housing, scholarships, jobs in Central Bank), rather than anything to do with the spiritual core of our religion.

The challenge

The challenge now is to create a landscape in North America, which assimilates the core spirituality of our religion into the existing foundation of charity and integrity. The responsi-



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bility for creating this infrastructure for the benefit of succeeding generations rests on our shoulders. Thus, the need to understand the Zarathushti philosophy took root, leading us to search for answers that would inspire the need to sustain our true beliefs. Inspiration needs to come from within, through believing and having trust in oneself. To achieve confidence, one has to satisfy the intrinsic need for fulfillment - in other words, a spiritual need. The satisfaction one gets in return will generate the passion one requires to build a strong belief for one's mission.

That's probably one of the main reasons we have so many dedicated volunteers including myself. The need to serve the community is deeply embedded in my soul, with no expectations in return. It is simply about preserving, sustaining, and nourishing my religion, so that generations to come can reap its benefits just like I did in India!

How does one go about understanding and practicing the true essence of the Zarathushti religion?

We live in Milwaukee where there are only about a dozen Zarathushti families. My children consider themselves to be as American as hamburger and apple pie! There was a time in the past when I regretted not living in an area with an established Zarathushti community. I felt my kids would have an easier time of it, if they were surrounded by many fellow Zarathushtis. Raising our kids would be extremely simple in that case, through reliance on the established community; but that's not how things worked out. We were on our own. We were compelled to figure out a

way to teach ourselves, in order to practice the religion we understood, with our children. Looking back, I think that was probably the best thing that could have ever happened to us as a family!

Strategy for leading life right

The beauty of the Zarathushti religion is that we can practice it as individuals, as a family and as a community. We decided to begin with our family first, and then spread the message around to the community at large.

That's when we started tracing our thoughts back to the most basic principles known to man and in ways to the basic rudimentary Zarathushti rule – the value of truth

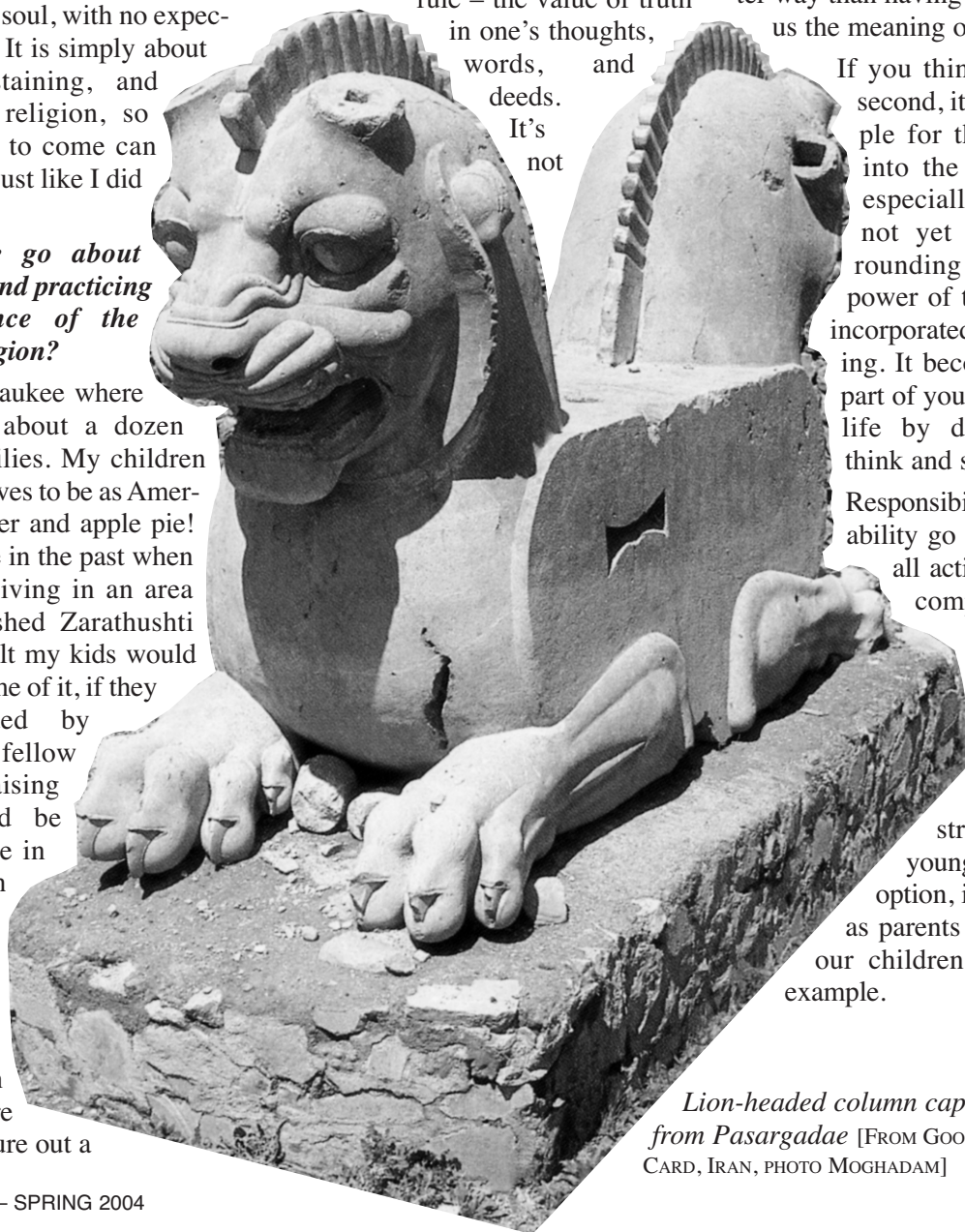
in one's thoughts,
words, and
deeds.
It's
not

“ Since I became a parent, it has been important for me to understand the significance of walking in the footsteps of our forefathers, who felt so passionately about integrity and charity. ”

easy, till one sets one's mind in the right direction. The path of truth is a difficult one; there is no instant gratification; it's deferred. One has to be patient in one's endeavors; what better way than having children to teach us the meaning of patience!

If you think about it for a second, it's an easy principle for the young to get into the habit of doing, especially when they are not yet tainted by surrounding influences. The power of truth needs to be incorporated in everyday living. It becomes an integral part of your being, a way of life by doing what you think and say.

Responsibility and accountability go hand in hand for all actions. Inculcating compassion for the less fortunate and willingness to help others in need goes a long way. Respect for strong and weak, young or old is not an option, it's a given. If we as parents set the standard, our children will follow by example.



*Lion-headed column capital
from Pasargadae [FROM GOOYA
CARD, IRAN, PHOTO MOGHADAM]*

In the world, issues are more complicated today than they were before. Children are faced with far greater challenges and with higher expectations. They need to develop a good sound mind to guide them through making those difficult decisions.

Our religious tenets have life's coping skills deeply embedded in them. Let's understand for ourselves and teach them to our children. This may just be the beginning of what could be an awakening for this phenomenally simple, yet profound Zarathushti philosophy, a strategy for leading life right.

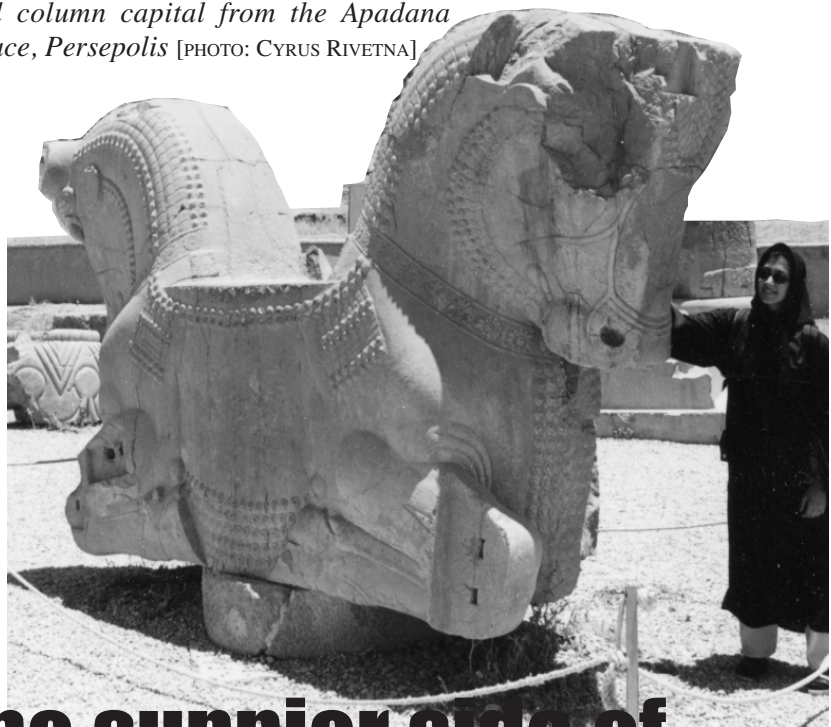
In conclusion, I do not wish to leave you with the impression that spirituality is the only way to perpetuate the religion. It's certainly one powerful way to achieve self-perfection. However, the other important piece also is the traditional and cultural side to the religion, which helps strengthen the community. As a Zarathushti, spirituality of the mind helps preserve and sustain the religion while traditions and culture help nourish the community for further growth and development. ■

Mahrugh Motafram lives in Milwaukee, WI with husband Feroze, daughter Freya, 17, and son Jamsheed, 11. Born and raised in a Zarathushti colony in Bombay, she has a MS in biochemistry



from the University of Illinois and an associate degree in business and marketing from Waukesha County Technical College. At present, she is primarily busy raising her family, volunteering at her children's school, actively working as vice president of FEZANA, and a Creative Marketing Consultant for area hospitals.

Bull column capital from the Apadana palace, Persepolis [PHOTO: CYRUS RIVETNA]



the sunnier side of sunday school

Making religious instruction interesting for children

A unique form of Sunday School education, enabling a child to explore his religious/cultural values through sensory experiences.

by **Vehishta Kaikobad**
Houston, Texas

In his formative years, the soul or psyche of the child, experiences life through the senses. Therefore, in our Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) Sunday School, we enable the child to explore his religious/cultural values through sensorial experiences, thereby aiding the child to move from concrete to abstract development. This unique form of Sunday School education has sparked tremendous interest in our young Zarathushti children. Parents often tell me that their children look forward to coming to our sessions.

How did this happen? How can you make it happen? The answer simply lies in seeing the world through the eyes of the child.

1. Firstly, by creating an *ambiance of joy* and being motivated as a religious instructor. The teacher must prepare himself for this task to create an interesting session.
2. By preparing an *environment, which belongs to the child*. In our Houston Sunday School, the generosity of Mr. and Dr. Mrs. A. Tamboli, Dr. and Mrs. Yezdi Sidhwa, and others enabled us to set up a room to meet the children's needs.
3. By creating material in the form of *manipulatives* which the children can use independent of adult supervision or assistance on a repeated basis to absorb abstract religious concepts.
4. By encouraging *multi-age group activities* within the same environment.

5. By allowing the *youth to interact with the younger ones* through formal presentations, projects, etc.

6. By allowing *children to choose topics* they wish to discuss. The teacher's role is to evolve his/her instruction and facilitate a group discussion based on the child's needs and not merely on what the adult wants the child to know.

7. To make the mode of *instruction gentle, humorous and interactive*, as opposed to instructive.

8. To initially *make the curriculum 'holistic,'* where the child can relate to his immediate environment and events that occur in his/her daily routine. The art of teaching religious topics lies in the adult's ability to connect the above with the beautiful and essential elements of the Zarathushti deen (religion), which in essence, are so universal in nature.

9. By *inviting guest speakers* and visitors from within and outside the community to participate in our discussions.

10. By imparting *comparative religious education* and awareness, which is instrumental in developing appreciation of ethical values. We have cajoled interest in the antiquity of our own religion, by relating it to topics such as Egyptian and Roman civilizations and even Greek mythology.

11. By presenting evidence of our ancient religion in the context of a *historical time line* of major religions of the world – through pictorial presentation.

12. By allowing children to *role-play* cultural/religious events and ceremonies such as jashans, navjotes, mukhtad, etc.

13. By *educating the parents* to communicate religious values positively as a way of life on a daily basis.

14. *Dramas, field trips*, etc. are always an ongoing source of sparking interest in the young child.

The 'sunnier side'

In our Sunday School, every prayer, every story, every item (ses, sudreh,

etc.) is put on the shelves with a picture and a label, so the child can touch, feel and correlate with the object and the associated picture and label. This form of learning creates a '*sunnier side*' of learning and helps the child to understand concepts realistically and more meaningfully.

The direct (and indirect) goal of the religious instructor is to:

- Sow the seeds of religious pride in the fledgling psyche of the child.

- Nurture his/her spirit with love, care and patience.

- Answer the child's many inquiries with wisdom and understanding.

- Develop strength in his/her faith without giving mixed messages.

- Spark interest in his/her existence as a Zoroastrian as one born with a purpose in this great religion.

- Guide him/her toward that 'best light.'

Nurturing the spirit of the child fills us with hope. Hope, Sofia Cavalletti comments: "... is the dynamism that urges us to view the reality in which we are immersed in a positive manner. When we observe this view, we do not see regression in the universe; we see life constantly moving towards an ever-higher degree of complexity." ■



Houston Sunday School Curriculum

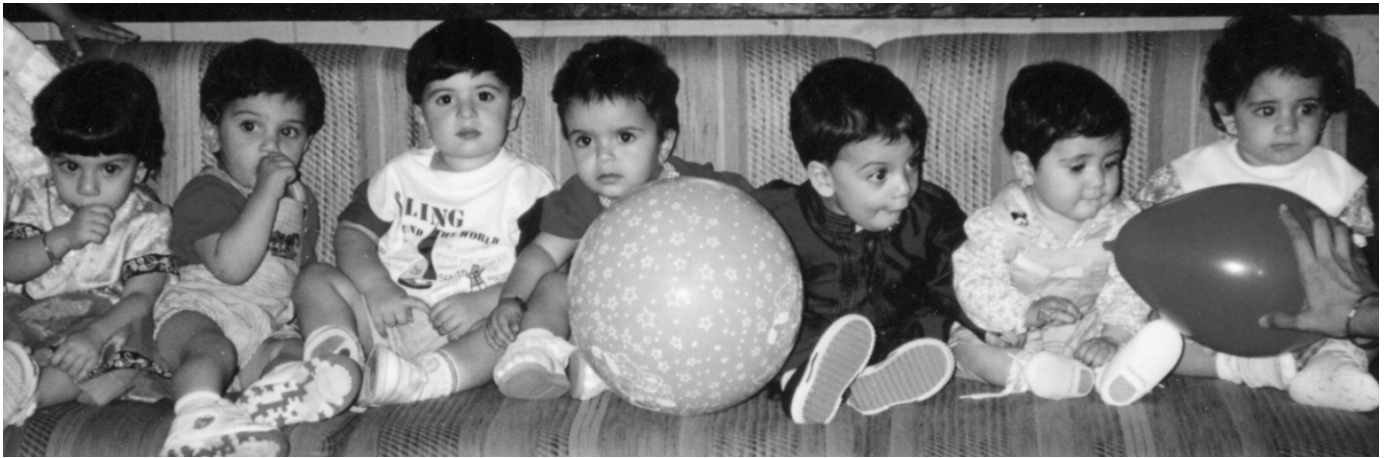
1. Life of Zarathushtra
2. Iran and its history
3. The Amesha Spentas and their functions
4. Topics from the Gathas
5. Prayers from the Avesta
6. Shah Nameh stories
7. Persian fairy tales
8. Special ceremonies (humbandagi, navjote, jashan etc.)
9. Comparative religion and cultures
10. Famous Zarathushti personalities.

Motivational Activities

- Quiz and elocution competitions, dramas, puppet shows, plays, creative dancing, songs.
- Environmental awareness as noticed in prayers from Avesta and Gathas.
- Notice Zarathushti ethical values in special events e.g. Spring Festival, Mother's Day, United Nations Day, Earth Day etc.

Vehishta

Kaikobad is the Sunday School teacher at Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH). She is currently serving at a Montessori school as Master Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator. She volunteers as docent at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.



Baby boom in Detroit. A few years ago, Detroit Zarathushtis were getting together to celebrate a number of 'agarnis' (9 in all) for their expectant mothers. The next year they were celebrating first birthday parties.

A heartwarming example of one Zarathushti community that appears to be doing something right, to defy the alarming statistics of declining numbers and interfaith marriages.

While the statistics of declining numbers and Zarathushtis marrying outside the faith in North America are grim and a cause for grave concern, there is one community of about 100 Zarathushtis living in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, that is happily defying the odds.

Of the dozen or so newly married young couples in the area, almost all have married within the faith and are raising Zarathushti children. A heartening majority of these newly marrieds are of the second generation, born and raised in North America, or came here with their parents at an early age.

In just one year, a few years ago, the community celebrated nine separate 'agarni' ceremonies – all in proper Zarathushti tradition, for nine expectant mothers, all married to Zarathushti husbands.

How and why did all these young men and women look for and find Zarathushti spouses?

According to Jeroo Chinoy, whose two sons have married Zarathushti girls and settled in the area: "It has a lot to do with the parents. It does not happen overnight – starting at birth, continue always to instill your philosophies, your values and your ideas in your children. You have to be there 100% of the time for your kids, and always keep an open channel of communication.

"Kids are growing up in a different world today; discuss, listen and try to understand their thoughts and feelings and then strike a balance between their environment today, and yours, a generation ago, in India."

Burjor and Behroze Gandhi, whose two children are also married to Zarathushtis and living close by, said: "While

they were growing up, we did not give them a choice – we just took them with us to all the parties and functions; we exposed them as much as possible to Zarathushti friends, had friends come over to the house for 'overnights' and encouraged them to go to youth congresses. It is very important for them to belong and be involved with a group or circle of Zarathushti friends."

According to Aban and Aspy Daboo of Chicago, whose two children are also married to Zarathushtis: "We always sat down and talked to our kids about the benefits of marrying within the religion. We never threatened them about disowning or excluding them, but we did tell them very clearly what our values and expectations were. We have to keep re-enforcing our values, especially during their teen-age years." Aban also stresses the importance of Zarathushti families in the area to keep in touch and encourage their children to form friendships with each other.

Villoo and Rusi Tavadia's two children are also both married to Zarathushtis and raising children in the area. "The mothers stayed home and took great care of the kids," said Rusi, "We taught them family values and guided them in the right direction."

While statistics do portend gloom and doom, with a committed effort by the parents, by friends and family, by the community, connections made at youth congresses, through responsible matrimonial columns such as the one in FEZANA Journal, and of course, a commitment by the youth themselves, we could very well reverse the trends. ■

[Reproduced in part from an article by Roshan Rivetna in FEZANA Journal, Winter 1999].

interaction with neo zarathushtis, a new paradigm



Griffin head column capital at Persepolis
[PHOTO CYRUS RIVETNA]

Zarathushtis of a continuous tradition now face a new paradigm and must deal with others who claim to be Zarathushtis.

by **Lovji Cama**
Tenaflly, New Jersey

The 20th century has brought tremendous changes to the societies in which both Iranian and Parsi Zarathushtis live. A new paradigm is on the horizon which requires us to redefine our thinking in a manner that ensures perpetuation of the religion and community.

The new paradigm

The two main branches, the Iranian Zarathushtis and the Parsis, each with a continuous tradition passed on from generation to generation, look upon themselves as the guardians of the religion and keepers of the faith.

Western Zarathushtis. The exodus of both Parsi and Iranian Zarathushtis into North America and other countries of the West has resulted in the formation of a society of Western Zarathushtis who are already into their second generation. Their world view, especially in North America, is quite different from the Zarathushti societies in India and Iran and with whom they will have less and less in common with each passing generation. As time progresses, it is possible that the North American community and other Western communities will be quite different from that in India, Pakistan or Iran, but they are and will remain Zarathushtis of a continuous tradition.

Neo-Zarathushtis. As our world becomes smaller and smaller with

increasingly fast communication, especially via the Internet, and Zarathushtis spread out into various parts of the world, it is inevitable that the religion will be better known around the world. The universal message of Zarathushtra is bound to attract some people who do not have a Zarathushti tradition.

In previously Zarathushti lands surrounding Iran a new freedom has led some to look back to their roots and to study the old religion and today we find groups that are intensely interested in the religion. The *Yazidi Kurds*, the *Tajikistan group*, the *Uzbekistan Anjuman* and the Zarathushti groups in *St. Petersburg, Russia* and in *Kiev, Ukraine*, have been documented in FEZANA Journal [Spring 1999].

In Iran, there is a new interest in the ancient religion. Outside of Iran, the constraints against conversion are not present. We know that in the US, the *Zarathushtrian Assembly* in California accepts all those who want to live by Zarathushtra's teachings. Most of the members are of Iranian origin, not born of Zarathushti parents. In the last two to three years, a strong movement, encouraged and guided by the Zarathushtrian Assembly has taken root in *South America*, leading to many followers there.

Zarathushtis of a continuous tradition now face a new paradigm and must

deal with others who claim to be Zarathushtis.

These Neo-Zarathushtis can fall into the following two groups.

- *Zarathushtis of a discontinued tradition*, whose parents are not Zarathushti but whose ancestors were Zarathushtis.

- *Zarathushtis without a historical connection to the religion*, who have no Zarathushti tradition but are attracted to the religion, because of the intrinsic values taught by the religion. Examples of these are the groups in Germany and Sweden and individuals such as Mr. Joseph Peterson. For them history is unimportant and rituals may be of less significance, yet their belief in the teachings of Zarathushtra may be very strong because it has been arrived at after a real quest.

At the present time, the so called 'Neo-Zarathushti' groups have sprouted up by themselves learning about our religion from whatever books they can find.

While the neo-Zarathushti groups in the west have access to Zarathushti literature and have made use of it, the groups in the old Zarathushti world generally have limited access and have expressed a desire for books and material. We should help them.

As to rituals and practices, many of them have a poor idea of those having never seen authentic Zarathushti rituals performed. Some have expressed interest in the rituals and others have expressed a disdain for them. Other groups may be developing their own rituals. Of course if we do not interact with them, we should not be surprised to find them performing their own versions, which may appear strange to us.

Handling diversity

We are one of the few religions in the world that looks with suspicion at anyone who wants to follow our beliefs. This strange attitude is bred from the way we have been forced to insulate ourselves from the society surrounding us during the last thousand years. Before this unfortunate period, the Zarathushti religion, though not particularly proselytizing, was inclusive of all who wanted to join it, provided they understood the beliefs and followed the practices of the religion. Furthermore, the Persian Rivayets show that the Iranian Zarathushtis had no objection to accepting persons not born of Zarathushti parents, as long as they were properly educated about the religion.

Diversity of modes of worship and ethnic diversity have been a part of Zarathushti history. Our religion can handle it again.

In order to deal with this new paradigm, we (the Zarathushtis of a continuous tradition) must realize that religion and ethnicity are two different things and it is only our history that has made the two so inter-

twined that some of us have trouble separating the two. We must accept the fact that it is possible to be a Zarathushti without belonging to the Parsi or Iranian ethnic groups.

“ Different modes of worship and ethnic diversity have been a part of Zarathushti history. Our religion can handle it again. ”

Keepers of the Faith

History has given us a responsibility to be the keepers of the faith. This of course means that we must do everything in our power to survive and grow. Our attitude to others who wish to learn about our religion should be helpful, accepting, instructive and we can guide and help them materially and spiritually, if necessary towards a proper understanding of the Zarathushti deen (religion). It is better that they learn from us and follow a correct version of the religion and not something that could make a mockery of our religion.

I am not advocating any form of proselytizing, for that has almost never been a tradition of the Zarathushti deen; nor am I advocating losing our ethnicity or our particular way of life.

Modus operandi

What kind of modus operandi can we have in dealing with groups and individuals who want to follow the

Zarathushti religion and who do not belong to the continuous tradition?

In dealing with others who wish to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra, we have to make them aware that Zarathushtis of a continuous tradition are an ethnic group who may or may not accept them as members of the ethnic group. This attitude does not imply that the honesty of their beliefs is in question. It is important that we have a civil and honest dialogue with them, so that they can understand where we are coming from.

Those of us who are too conservative may not want this interaction, but they should respect those who do. The Neo-Zarathushtis may just accept the teachings of Zarathushtra as they are enunciated in the Gathas. Some may not be interested in our rituals and they will certainly not have the same customs that we do.

If we accept that others may want to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra in their own way, then it is possible to conceive of a future world of Zarathushti sister communities bound together, not by a common culture or ethnicity but by a much larger concept. The concept of a brotherhood of co-workers with Ahura Mazda, who will live their lives in a way that will move creation towards frashokereti, as taught by the greatest thinker and teacher of all times, prophet Zarathushtra. ■

[Abstracted from a lecture delivered at the World Congress, Houston, 2000. For the full text, contact Dr. Cama at ldcama@verizon.net. Dr. Cama's profile is on page 64].

HALL OF A 100 COLUMNS. PHOTO: A. BAKHTIAR, "PARSA PERSEPOLIS" BY WERNER DUTZ & SYLVIA MATHESON, F. GHANI.



in search of a zarathushti identity

An extract from “Zoroastrian Identity: Siberia of the Soul” by Aspi D. Moddie

“We are not entirely in control over what we are saying, as the events of our time are proving stronger than our capacity to express them.”

- Rustam Bharucha, "The Question of Faith"

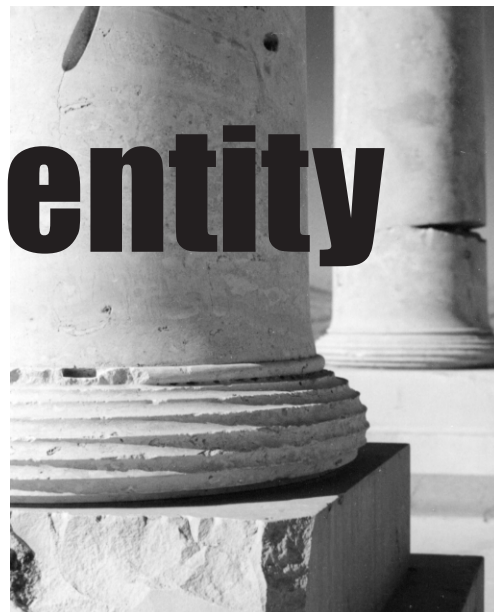


PHOTO: PASARGADAE, CYRUS RIVETNA

World's perceptions of the Zarathushti

'Identity' is a repeated theme at Zarathushti congresses, almost as if Zarathushtis were seeking a will-o'-the-wisp, a constantly delusive goal. The quest is laid to rest between congresses, when it seems more satisfying to be apathetic or indulge in the genetic pastime of dispute.

Let us begin by asking what have been the world's perceptions of the Zarathushti. From ancient to modern times, Zarathushtis have been perceived as fire-worshippers, and with distinctive ways of the disposal of the dead, avoiding, as a rule, the customary burial or cremation. Often there is an existing perception – chiefly within the community – of being quarrelsome. There seem to have been internal quarrels over the centuries, between priests and laity, over calendars, over orthodoxy and reformist views of the religion, over everything except good traditional food.

Since the landing at Sanjan a millennium ago, the external image of Parsi Zarathushtis has stemmed from the story of 'sugar in the milk'; a people whose contributions have sweetened the society in which they lived; reaching a peak between 1850 and 1950 in India, in so many walks of life, especially in business, banking and the professions.

Social science scholars will tell us that identity comes from a sense of shared history, from shared beliefs in common origins and cultures, from shared mythology and legends, and from a sharing of geographical space (Iran, Gujarat or Mumbai) over long periods of time. With human variations, all these then manifest themselves in certain perceptions or beliefs, certain attitudes to life and people, and certain world views. Where these have a certain sameness, a certain identifiable similarity, there is a shared feeling of identity within and between groups.

Global identity

Since the lost collective identity of the Sasanian empire, have we shared different cultures of exile; Iranian Zarathushtis, the beleaguered culture of exiles in the old shared, but later isolated spaces of Iran; Parsis as 'friendly aliens' – Nirad Chowdhury's apt phrase – in the Indian subcontinent, a new shared space in the last millennium; and the recent diasporas from Iran and India in North America, Europe and Australia, now more ardently seeking their identity in new host societies, with no earlier shared space or shared history? To the extent this is so, we hardly have a clear global identity. We have only a tribal recognition of each other in names, in fading customs, in social get-togethers and in isolated, non-congregational religion, which is largely ritualistic.

Collective memories

Another psycho-sociological question which arises is, how far do we share the same collective memories of times past, historical or folk legend or mythologies? Memories of a heroic past like the people of Mewar in Rajasthan, or the Samurai of Japan? Or of historical persecution, capped by a traumatic holocaust, as in the case of the Jews? Perhaps, of all contemporary Zarathushtis, only the Iranians may share, like the Jews, a sense of identity of a long persecuted past.

“ First, let's call off the 150 year psycho-social conflict of orthodox-reformist. It is now dysfunctional and negative. ”

Zarathushti children, even in the more closely populated places like Mumbai, Pune, Tehran, London, Toronto and Sydney, do not go to bed, sharing the same traditional bed-time stories, if any. Their parents hardly share a common sense of history, legend or mythology. Even the Shah Nameh has gone unread and forgotten. Many have discarded the sudreh and kushti, 'the badge of all our tribe', after the Navjote is performed; so much for its significance beyond a social, ceremonial occasion.

Science has now undone the myth of racial purity in a genetic sense. It is strange that an educated modern community, which does not relish the idea of its exclusivity being influenced by the Hindu caste system in Gujarat in earlier centuries, should now seek a discredited identity of racial, ethnic purity. We seem to have lost the tolerant Catholicism of King Cyrus with the Jews and Babylonians, the very foundation of the Achaemenian Empire.

Individual achievers

One wonders whether Hinnell's charge of 'apathy in the community' is not a reflection of the absence of a deeply felt sense of identity. Is this why we are a community of individual achievers, not community achievers? Why are our priests so vocal about mixed marriages, the Navjote of their progeny, the disposal of the dead, and so silent about the core identity? Are we now seeking a real sense of identity in a relative vacuum? Where is the urge for it beyond articulate Congresses? Is this also why we are so blind to the prospects of demographic nemesis in the 21st century, not caring what lies beyond? In our history in the last

millennium, we always

look outside for legitimacy and law – from the Rivayets from Iran to the British rulers even, in the founding and functioning of the Panchayet and the making of social laws, as in inheritance. Unlike the Jews, with whom we were compared by the early Europeans, we seemed to lack a solid intellectual and philosophical tradition in our priesthood, to give that sense of coherent religious identity to our laity. Is this why a few now beat their wings for the answers through a shell of a world body, without a prior vital vision of a Zarathushti 21st century?

“ Do we, as small globally scattered groups, unsurely straddling centuries of divisive unsure ideas, suffer from a kind of Siberia of the Soul? ”

Going deeply soulwards

From the gut comes a final question. Do we, as small globally scattered groups, unsurely straddling centuries of divisive unsure ideas, suffer from a kind of Siberia of the Soul? Till we go deeply soulwards without harsh orthodoxy or unfeeling liberalism, till we build bridges of tolerant understanding and mutual respect, till we seek the heart of Zarathushtra's message, we shall never know the true answers to a long lingering problem. It needs to be internalized in each dispersed community, in each lay person, in each priest.

Jean Anoulih said: "Love is above all the gift of one-

self". In this inter-faith world, where no religion can claim the exclusive Absolute Truth and be a quarrelsome isolated entity, where is that 'gift of oneself' to what may be the Zarathushtis' last century of recognition? Where is that Reiki of healing? Where is Zarathushtra's *Vohu Manah* for all mankind, before we go down unsung, unnoticed in our little worlds?

If we must start with an agenda, could it be an agenda of two cardinal needs. First, let's call off the 150-year psycho-social conflict of orthodox-reformist; it is now dysfunctional and negative. Second, with much respect for each side's bona fides, let us go within ourselves to find soulful mutual identity in the Vohu Manic spirit of Zarathushtra's teaching. ■

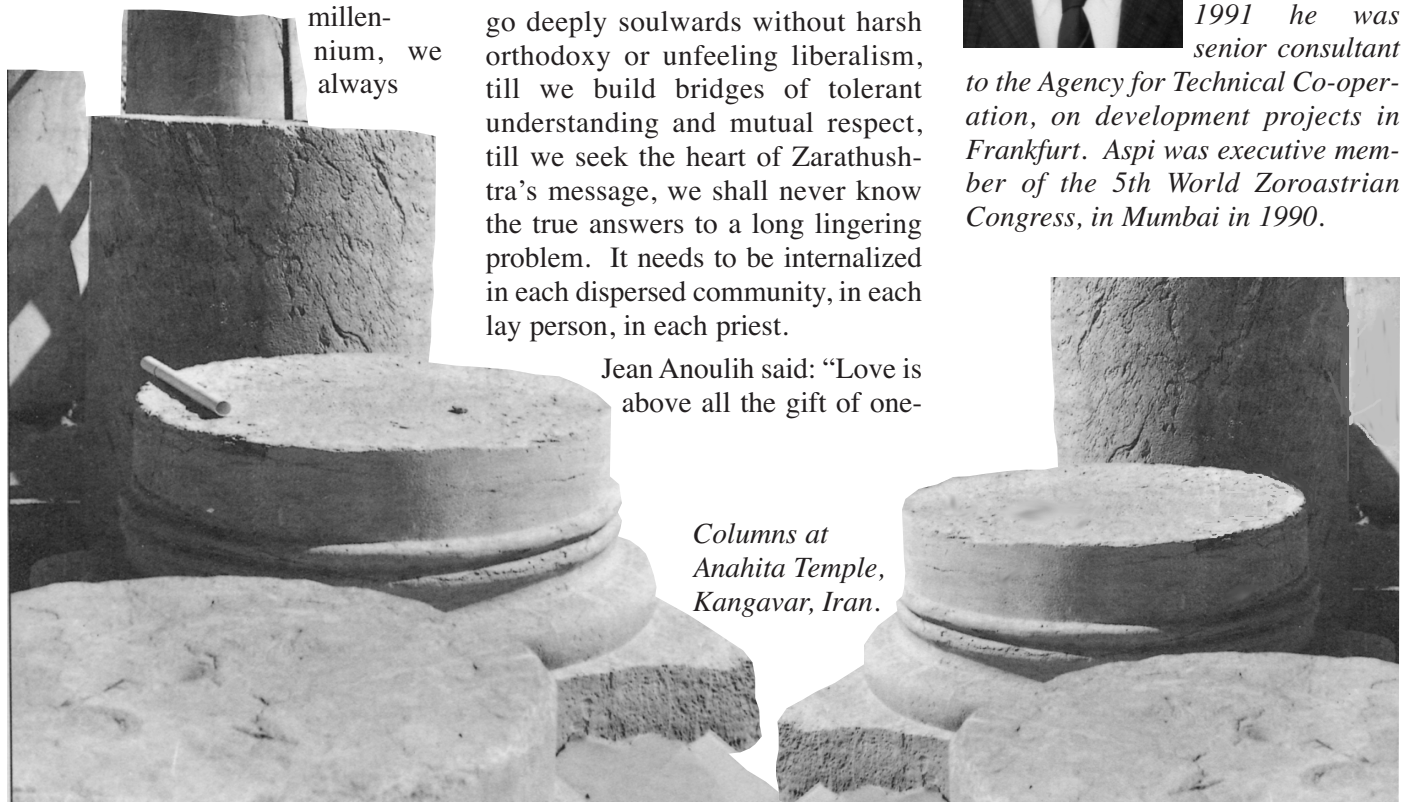
Aspi D. Moddie served in World



War II, and became an IAS officer in 1945. From 1966-1976 he was a board member of Unilever, India, and from 1978-1991 he was senior consultant

to the Agency for Technical Co-operation, on development projects in Frankfurt. Aspi was executive member of the 5th World Zoroastrian Congress, in Mumbai in 1990.

Columns at Anahita Temple, Kangavar, Iran.



Bridging the socio-theological past into the new millennium^[1]

Making a commitment to seek knowledge of the past in order to know one's role in the present so that one may be able to follow the path of *Asha*, existentially by creating a holy fire, in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

by Khojeste Mistree
Mumbai, India

The Zoroastrian paradigm

In Zoroastrianism, time is not a cyclic phenomenon, but one in which man progresses towards a definite end. As evil has a beginning, it has to have an end and therefore the purpose and role of man is to work towards bringing about the *frashokereti*, the 'making wonderful' with the final neutralizing of the evil spirit – Angra Mainyu. Along the way, the wicked Angra Mainyu who is seen as a spirit force to reckon with, afflicts the seven creations of Ahura Mazda and corrupts the mind of God's finest creation man, whose goal it is to banish or put evil out of action, known in Pahlavi as *akarenit*.

As the forces of good and evil do not spring from the same source, the Zoroastrian paradigm is a unique one, wherein both good and evil are seen to be separate and distinct realities in both the physical and spiritual worlds. This dualistic framework has given us Zoroastrians a value system, which is intellectually tight and progressive in the true sense of the word.

Ahura Mazda is seen as a being who is omniscient (all knowing), and

ever-present, a being who is the embodiment of truth, who is wholly wise, just, and perfect. Perfect to the point that there is no imbalance or imperfection in Mazda's Being, for Mazda dwells in endless light known in Avestan as *anaghra raocha*. Pure light then becomes the empirical reality of wisdom, manifested in a flame or a glow which you and I can see and experience.

In the *Atash Nyaesh* litany to the fire we declare [*Atash Nyaesh* 5.4]:

*Tava atarsh puthra
Ahurahe Mazdao*

*Unto thee O fire, son of
Ahura Mazda*

The consecrated fire of the fire temple is not a mere symbol or representation of God, but in fact, the son of God, who is to be worshipped and cared for, by all the traditionally initiated members of the faith.

In a sense I liken the holy fire to the living embodiment of Jesus, who is seen as the son of God in Christianity. In other words, it is from this empirical reality of a holy fire that man is guided into choosing the path of *Asha* or the truth "... *athro Asha aojanho* ..." [*Ys.* 43.9] as versus seeking to promote the lie.

The role of the complete man is to realize the interdependence of 'truth' and 'lie' in both the physical and the spiritual worlds, at all times.

*He who comes to the truthful man,
to him shall future glory appear, but
a long period of darkness, foul food
and the word woe ... by your own
deeds O wicked men.* [*Ys.* 31.20]

Hence Zoroastrian spirituality is not based upon the rejection of our spiritual existence, but the enhancing of it, through the recognition that with the material existence there is an order and/or a truth (*Asha*) which manifests itself in man as *ushta* – happiness. Thus the role of man is to internalize the truth (*Asha*) in order that the state of happiness may increase within oneself and in so doing man learns to spread harmony in the environment.

Religion, not philosophy

Prophet Zarathushtra's revelation, in my opinion, is not to be relegated as a mere philosophy. His teachings form the basis of a religion and not a philosophy of a religion, offering a unified system of beliefs and practices which in turn gives the worshipper a sense of belonging in both the physical and spiritual worlds. In other words, mere good thoughts, words, and deeds, is not the complete Zoroastrian manthra. The role of the soul in Zoroastrianism can hardly be ignored, for all our efforts to live the good life physically, is done to safeguard the well-being of the soul and the spirit in the hereafter.

This well-being is ensured both collectively and individually through the performance of rituals which gives each religion its unique and distinct flavor.

A Zoroastrian identity through the ages has been based upon a separate racial identity embedded through the need to observe a unique set of rituals founded upon an equally unique doctrine. Secondly, the identity enables one to discover the unique message of the prophet's teachings, and thirdly it helps one to maintain a strong economic power base, which as a small

[1] Presented at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston, December 31, 2000. Edited by Farrokh Mistree. For the full transcript please contact farrokh.mistree@eudoramail.com.

community, we have succeeded in doing most ably, over the ages.

Modern day 'individualism'

I would like to develop this model one step further by questioning the notion of identity with that of modern day 'individualism.' At a basic level, individualism presupposes the right of the individual, as against the authority of a higher source. It is this notion of individualism which leads one to believe that one's religion is personal, and that it can be changed to suit the times both in its 'belief and practice paradigms', with an interpretation offered in whatever manner one so chooses to do. Unfortunately, 'orthodox,' which means following the right path, is seen in a pejorative light as a label within the community, whereas liberalism, reformism and modernism are seen as virtues to be emulated, particularly within the context of the Zoroastrian diasporas.

Where does the Zoroastrian model of individualism fit into all of this? The Zoroastrians till the 18th century were led by a powerful and educated clergy. The priests looked after the religious needs of the community and they commanded a respect from the members of the community both in Iran as well as in India. The community then, was run through a form of collectivism where the greater good of the community was promoted at all times,

Column capital from Gateway to All Lands, Persepolis, c. 500 BCE.

PHOTO COURTESY
"PERSEPOLIS" BY
DONALD N. WILBER

as versus the individualism of one's own religious beliefs and practices.

“ Well-being [of the soul] is ensured both collectively and individually through the performance of rituals which gives each religion its unique and distinct flavor. ”

I recognize that any religion does have a personal dimension to it; what one does at a family level or as an individual by way of beliefs and practices are indeed one's own. However, and this is the point one should bear in mind, that one should not foist one's personal beliefs and practices upon the collective code of beliefs and practices of the community. It is the notion of individualism coupled to the continuing progress of westernization of the community which has today resulted in a plethora of alien beliefs and practices, such as vegetarianism, reincarnation, conversion, inter-communal marriages, and indeed the adoption of the Fasli calendar at the turn of the 20th century.

The manthra of change is promoted within our community today. If each religion offers its own path to salvation, then how can one mix different levels of religious realities under the guise of change and/or reform?

There are many examples of religious pluralism which come to mind. Some popular statements such as God is one, God is responsible for both good and evil in the world, the Gathas are devoid of ritual instruction and therefore any ritual practices upheld by the worshipper are seen as moving away from the pristine teachings of the

prophet. It is these sorts of beliefs comprising individualism and change for the sake of it, which I believe have brought about a 'Gathas only' position by those who seek to create another brand of Zoroastrianism in the real world, namely, a Zoroastrianism embedded in a philosophical mode devoid of any meaningful ritual practices as formulated over the ages.

What does this religious lacuna show to the seeker? That here is a community, dynamic and highly intelligent in every sphere of human endeavor, not willing to invest in the spiritual well-being for its people on a collective basis. Alas, I see this lacuna as a bankruptcy of the Zoroastrian spirit.

Moreover, I believe that the 'Gathas only' movement has stifled the collective soul and spirit of the Zoroastrian community, particularly, here in North America. I believe that the emphasis on North American individualism has superseded the collective authority and well being of the divine or spiritual world, by not working towards something intrinsic and basic to the faith.

Response of the community

The response of the community on a global basis should be to generate collective actions in the physical world in accordance with the truth and the 'good mind' so that the religious restructuring may get stronger in the spiritual world, and therefore, by extension for Ahura Mazda, as well.

After all, when one prays the *Ahunar* one recognizes the desirability of both the physical and spiritual worlds:

*Yatha Ahu Vairyo atha ratush
ashat chit hacha vangheush dazda
manangho*

*in accordance with the truth and the
establishment of the good mind*

*shyaothananam angheush Mazdai,
in order that one may generate the
deeds of life for Mazda,
khshathremcha Ahurai*

*and sovereignty and dominion for
Ahura*

a yim dregubyo dadat vastarem.

so that one may become the leader or facilitator to help the poor.

In short, the most powerful manthra of the Zoroastrian faith which is deemed to have its own spirit for one to invoke, gives one the key as to how to become a better Zoroastrian.

Let us fellow Zoroastrians first desire and recognize the temporal and spiritual dimensions within ourselves; secondly, let us generate the deeds of life and sovereignty for Ahura Mazda in a collective sense and thirdly, let us apply the first two postulates, by becoming the conscious facilitators to remove imbalance from the world afflicted by Ahriman, the evil spirit.

The dawn of the new millennium should not just be seen as 2001 of the Christian era, but one where a Zoroastrian makes a commitment to seek knowledge of the past in order to know one's role in the present so that one may be able to follow the path of *Asha*, existentially by creating a holy fire, in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

[Continued on page 77]

Khojeste P. Mistree is co-founder of Zoroastrian Studies (ZS), a public charitable trust established to promote the dissemination of religious knowledge. He has an Hon-



ours degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford. Khojeste is an educator and teacher of the history, culture and religion of Zarathushtra, and a noted speaker at local and international conferences. He is author of "**Zoroastrianism – an Ethnic Perspective**" and co-author of "**The Zarathushti Religion – a Basic Text**", and has been interviewed in print, on radio and on television.

proselytization is not the answer

The first step to perpetuate our religion and strengthen our community is to energize our own faith. Ignorance leads to weakening of belief, while awareness leads to spiritual strengthening.

by **Pervin J. Mistry**
Mississauga, Ontario

Perpetuation means to preserve something without changing it. Our microscopic community has perpetuated itself for millennia, because our ancestors staunchly followed the tenets and our unique life style that makes us a distinct community.

The term 'Parsi'

We are identified as the Parsi Zarathushti community. 'Parsi' does not distinguish those who sought refuge in India after the Arab conquest of Iran. The term Parsi has been designated to our religious community by our Achaemenian ancestors who have revealed to the world, on rock inscriptions written in cuneiform script as well as in Old Persian and other languages of the empire, that they are Parsis:

*"Parsa parsahya puthra
ariya ariyachithra"*

In 559 BCE Cyrus overthrew the Median rule and established the first Parsi Empire. The Achaemenians have described their 'tokham' (lineage) as Parsi with equal pride as they have described their religion as Mazdayasni Zarathushti by naming Ahura Mazda in all their inscriptions, left for posterity to know. Ancient Greeks called the Achaemenian Empire 'Persia' and its Zarathushti residents 'Persis'.

The founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashir Papakan, is also referred to

as *khvatay parsikan*, the king of the Parsis [*Pahlavi text, Karmanak i Artakhshir i Papakan*].

Since the term Persis or Parsi indicated the whole Zarathushti population of Iran, from ancient times, as a community, we are Parsi Zarathushtis and as such, a Parsi is a Zarathushti and a Zarathushti must be a Parsi! The terms Parsi Zarathushti and Mazdayasni Zarathushti are interchangeable. Irrefutably, Mazdayasni Zarathushtis are Parsis only and/or ethnicity is as pivotal to our perpetuation as is the religion.

Avesta condemns conversion

Asho Zarathushtra was the first divinely appointed messenger. His revelation is based upon the foundations of the Mazdayasni religion itself. His mission was to put on the right track all the Mazdayasnis who had deviated from the path of *Asha* and were influenced by *devayasni*. It follows that the so-called conversions were only between the two paths of good and evil and not from religion to religion. Unless a person converts the inherent vices, 'converting' from one religion to another will not be spiritually beneficial.

Righteousness can be achieved by following any religion into which one is born. If 'convert' means to leave one's religion of birth and adopt an alien faith, there is absolutely no equivalent word in the sacred Avesta. A Mazdayasni

Zarathushti, who is also a Parsi, is born through tokham alone. There is not a single recorded evidence of Parsi Zarathushti kings converting conquered nations.

The Avesta condemns conversion as well as intermarriage. If we alter our scriptures to accept proselytes, by the very act of deviation, we will not be perpetuating our religion but establishing a cult devoid of divine revelation.

Demographic paranoia

In the last century, our numbers in Iran and India dwindled due to emigration and also due to low (universal) birth rate. Consequently, this produced a demographic paranoia. False missionary zeal and lack of religious knowledge are paving the way to proselytize *juddins* and accept inter-religious marriages. The solution for perpetuating our religion and community does not lie in opening our doors to embrace

the melting pot

assumption. History has proven such 'open door' adaptation dilutes faith and practice and leads to religious and ethnic disappearance. The solution lies in educating the community in order to halt the diminishing religious values and promote pride in who we are.

“ Rituals are religion's soul; it's very existence! When a community moves away from rituals, it loses its soul. ”

It is important to note that worldwide, we have never been much more than a hundred thousand for the past thirteen centuries. Yet, we survived against unbearable persecutions and holocausts because we followed our tenets faithfully and have not opened our doors to proselytes. By increasing the numbers, are we prepared to be swamped by the converts who will be greater in numbers and who will practice our religion the way they conceive it to be correct?

Other religions

By accepting proselytes, has any religion gained spiritually? No! Rather, it splinters the religion into various sects. The religion that is followed by these sects in various parts of the world differs greatly and

this has distorted the original message of their prophet. Conversions within these proselytising religions have also led to wars and mass killings in various parts of the world. This has been spiritually detrimental to both the religions. The splintered sects are fighting among themselves. There is no brotherhood within the religion.

Till today, we stand as **one** community and that itself is of greater strength than numbers. Our social, economical and religious contribution to India and to the world is exemplary in spite of our numbers. It is only because we are one community and have preserved our tokham.

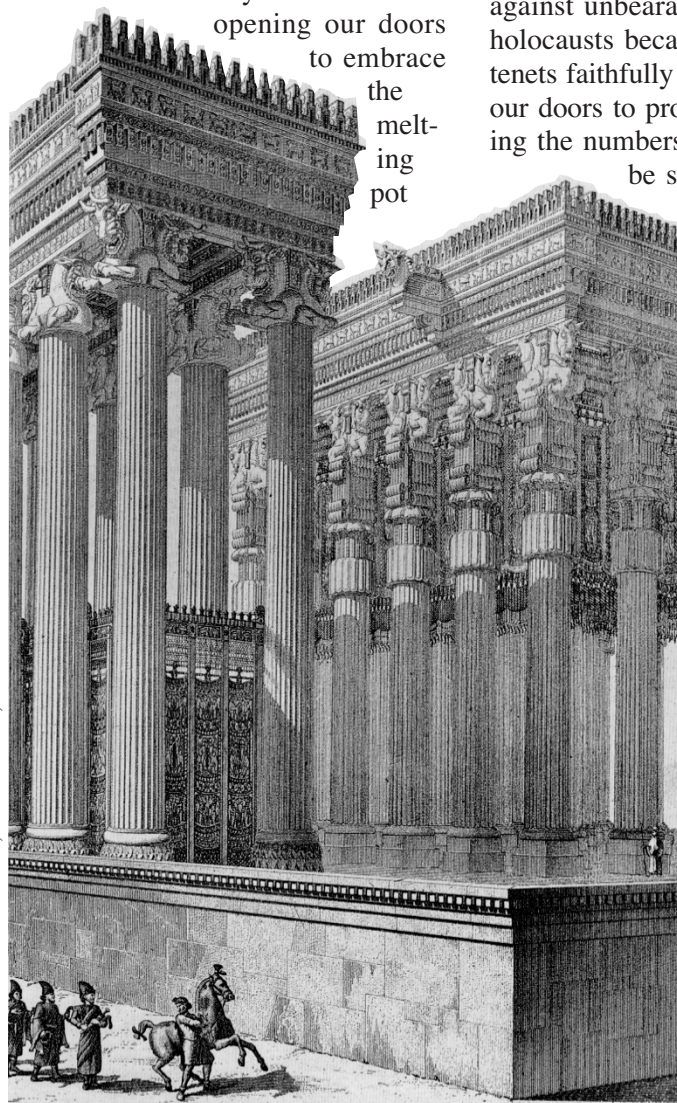
Energizing our faith

The first step by which we can perpetuate our religion and strengthen our community is to energize our own faith. Ignorance leads to weakening of belief, while awareness leads to spiritual strengthening.

Scriptures. After the destruction of our scriptures by the Arabs what we know of our religion today is mostly through oral tradition and through the composition of Pahlavi texts written in Iran in 9th century CE. Deen Dasturs who wrote these texts, specifically the *Dinkard*, have not excluded *Vendidad* as un-Zarathushtrian or non-Avestic; nor have they segregated the holy Avesta into older and younger sections.

In fact, they declare the holy Avesta to be a consolidation of 21 *nasks* whose names and contents they have stated, and which they unequivocally affirm were the divine revelation of Ahura Mazda to Asho Zarathushtra. The 21 Nasks are interdependent and divided into three categories: *dati*, *hadhamanthric* and *gathic*. The *Vendidad*, *Visperad*, *Gathas* and *Yashts* have their place and relevance within the 21 nasks of the holy Avesta.

Rituals. Do we know how scientific our rituals are? They are not merely mumbo-jumbo uttered by priests for remuneration. They include and employ the energies of sound, light, metals, water and kinetics to act as



Columns, 65 feet high, at the Apadana Palace, Persepolis, reconstruction by Ch. Chipiez.

Above all, as a religious group, we practice the most important spiritual discipline which is ‘*boonak pas-bani*’. It is to practice this religious mandate that we are enjoined to abstain from proselytism and intermarriage. The injunction in the *Vendidad*, *Husparam Nask*, *Dinkard*, *Gathas Chithrem Buyat* and *Patet* against proselytism and intermar-

Are we, as a community, aware and proud of our rich heritage? Do we know our history, religious legacy, scriptures, traditions and rituals that would result in our feeling the inner

Canadian Theosophist, Jam-e-Jamshed and presented papers at Zarathushti and interfaith congresses and conferences.

*Yazdan Panah Bad! MAY GOD
PROTECT US!*

[SUBMITTED BY DINAZ ROGERS]

necessary changes for the new millennium

“We urge all anjumans/associations and all members of the community, wherever situated to debate and discuss the contents of this paper. Let us all seriously consider these recommendations with an open mind of how they can best be implemented for the good of the community locally and worldwide. These issues are particularly urgent for the younger generation, which faces the question of interfaith marriage more frequently than ever before. As we face the new millennium, let us cast aside our prejudices and move forward in the spirit of an enlightened progress that will bring renewed strength and vigor to our ancient faith. Delay in implementing these modest suggestions is not an option.”

by Shapur F. Captain, London, UK.

There are 36 signatories to this statement. Signatories from USA are:

Dr. K. H. Antia, Prof. K. D. Irani and Mrs. P. K. Irani. The remaining are from UK.

Over the past decade, members of the community have been concerned at the demographic trends and restrictive practices within the community. Zarathushtis the world over have been concerned about the two major problems facing the community, namely: (1) Dwindling population and (2) interfaith marriages.

There is now, within the community, sufficient awareness of the gravity of the above topics, not only in the west but also in the east. Let us remember that in 1993 and 1994, two non-Zarathushtis were converted into the Zarathushti religion – and openly so, in India. In Iran too, throughout the Pahlavi years, non-Zarathushtis were joining our faith. By these acts, our religious elders have shown to us that the time has come for the community to accept the simple and clear fact that the religion of Zarathushtra is *UNIVERSAL*, and, like all universal religions, not only does it “permit conversion” but also “enjoins it”.

To help maintain a perspective on the matter, what better source to quote from than that of Zarathushtra’s own words from the Gathas [Tr. Dastur Firooz Azargoshasp]:

Explain to me O Mazda all of the said facts and enlighten me with thy inspiring words so that I may convert all the people onto the right path. [Ys. 31.3]

Where are thy faithful devotees O Mazda who ... will use those teachings with intellect and will try to spread Thy message. [Ys. 34.7]

The wise man who propagates the true religion and makes the people aware of my holy message, which leads them to perfection and immortality shall enjoy the highest bliss. [Ys. 31.6]

In 1903, in a letter to Er. Jivanji Modi, secretary of the BPP, Kaikhushru Dastur Jamaspji writes [1]:

“... there is no bar in our religion to accept non-Zoroastrian converts. Every Zoroastrian reciting his obligatory daily prayers, such as Khorshed and Meher yashts, prays that our Mazdayasni religion may spread to all the “hafta keshwar zamin” (i.e. the seven regions of the earth). The athornans of days gone by did not just sit around wishing this (spread of religion) to come true, but travelled to distant lands to spread the religion (refer to yasna 41.6) ...”

Dwindling population

It is a well-chronicled fact that about a century ago Zoroastrians used to

have large families; 7 to 8 children in a family was quite common, and 12 to 15 was not unknown. In the last 50 or 60 years, the family size has dwindled to 3 or 4 children, and now down to an average of 1 or 2.

Seeing these trends in family size over the past 50 odd years, the leaders of our community (wherever based) have tried to persuade our youth to marry early within the faith and have large families. These pleas have fallen on deaf years, possibly because rapidly changing social conditions and the sheer economic pressures of modern life. To enforce this policy, those who married non-Zarathushtis were ostracized.

Proposed solutions. As the population decline has been most marked in India, it is relevant to look at some proposed solutions. There is, and has been for many years in Mumbai, the opinion that if the young of our community are provided with *low cost housing*, they would be encouraged to marry early and have families. Much has been written on the subject of housing in Mumbai and much debate has occurred on the subject; but it is worth mentioning that the lack of housing has not affected other

religious groups in Mumbai or elsewhere in India.

Recently a *financial incentive* was offered to young Zoroastrian couples in India to have more than two children. These measures may help, but only marginally; and, therefore, are not the solution to the problem.

The reasons for our dwindling numbers are well recorded, and include:

- An aging population
- Late marriages
- Low birthrate
- Economic emancipation of youth.
- Expectation of a better standard of living.
- Interfaith marriages.

Interfaith marriages

As a community, we have to face the reality that more of our numbers (of both sexes) are marrying non-Zarathushtis. This is a fact of life and we cannot just wish it away. In days gone by, interfaith marriages were few. Presently, a third to a half of our youth, outside India, marry outside the fold, and in the next 10 to 20 years this proportion is bound to increase.

Such interfaith marriages affect families and the community in two ways – social and religious, both a source of continuing debate and discussion.

Social effects. It is only natural for a Zarathushti to want his/her non-Zarathushti spouse and children to be made welcome into the community. If the non-Zarathushti spouse is ill-treated or badly received, the family will feel rejected and may turn its back on the community and religion. Due to the increase of interfaith marriages, there are now more Zarathushtis (individuals and communities) who accept and welcome non-Zarathushti spouses and children to our social and religious functions. There are, however, some Zarathushtis who oppose any attempt at integration and who, by their actions, make it impossible or difficult for non-Zarathushti spouses to come and feel welcome at our communal and religious gatherings.

Religious effects include:

(a) *Children of interfaith marriages.* For well over 70 years, it has been the accepted practice to have the navjote performed of children of Zarathushti fathers and non-Zarathushti mothers. Recently, and for no apparent reason, some of the mobeds have refused to perform the navjote and initiate these children into the faith. On the other hand, in the West as well as the East, some of the enlightened mobeds do perform the navjotes of children of mixed marriages, regardless of whether the mother or father is a Zarathushti. It is hoped that such children are made welcome into the local communities.

(b) *Adopted children.* In Iran, adopted children, usually of Muslim parentage, have long been accepted, initiated into and eventually married according to the principles and ceremonies of our faith.

(c) *Interfaith wedding ceremonies.* Normally these are registry marriages. However, there is a gradual increase in the number of Zarathushti ceremonies for interfaith marriages taking place in the West.

(d) *Attending religious ceremonies.* As a general rule, non-Zarathushti spouses are encouraged to attend and are welcomed at ceremonies performed by families in their homes. This is certainly the practice in the West, though not in all locations.

Need for change

There are many mobeds in the West and the East who have recognized their duty to satisfy the religious needs in the matter of interfaith marriages. Iranian mobeds have performed marriages and initiations of mixed married couples and their children. Iranian mobeds have also converted non-Zarathushtis to the faith after being convinced that the convertees have adequate knowledge of our religion and sincere commitment to uphold its principles. Similar conversions have also taken place in India, North America and Europe.

We should re-consider with more open minds the attitude of the Iranian mobeds. Their high priest, the late

Ardeshir Azargoshasp, strongly formulated this view of our religion: "We must persevere to propagate it. We must accept persons who want to embrace the Zoroastrian religion. In fact, we should follow those who set an example for us." This view was endorsed many years earlier in 1903 by a panel of renowned Parsi priests as well as a number of outstanding Parsi figures and western scholars.

Despite these events, past and present, our community remains divided between those who strenuously oppose interfaith marriages and those who accept it. The latter group recognizes that changes are required in our communal thinking and religious practices. They understand that such changes are imperative and will enhance and enrich our community, and that they certainly will be beneficial in slowing down the erosion of our dwindling population. Moreover, despite the differences of opinion, we note that changes are taking place and that the pace of change is increasing.

Nor is change anything radically new in our religion. We must accept the fact that there have been changes in our religious observances and practices over the past 100 years, e.g. the non-observance of Bahman month.

In the preface to his book "*The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*", Dr. Jivanji Modi states:

"The times are rapidly changing. The new has been springing rapidly upon the old. As often said, the heresy of today becomes the orthodoxy of tomorrow; the liberalism of this year, the conservatism of the next. The reader will find that many a ceremony, ritual or custom has been spoken of as having become obsolete or has been honoured in the breach than in the observance. Many more will be obsolete in the course of a few years. Customs are often as despotic as fashions, but they also change as fashions ..."

Suggestions for the new millennium

Bearing Dr. J. J. Modi's quotation in mind, we venture to suggest that:

- We should *impart the true principles and history of our religion* to children throughout their formative years in order to instill pride in our Zarathushti way of life.
- Non-Zarathushti spouses and their children be invited to and *made welcome* at all our social functions and religious ceremonies without any reservations.
- The navjote ceremony of *children of interfaith marriages* should be performed and these children integrated into our community.
- *Non-Zarathushti spouses* should be encouraged to learn about the Zarathushti religion and bring up their children in the Zarathushti way of life. If, as a result of such a study, the non-Zarathushti spouse wishes to embrace the Zarathushti religion, the community should facilitate this. This will help inter-married families bind themselves strongly and further into the community.
- Our Zarathushti marriage ceremony should be performed if requested for interfaith marrying couples.

Stimulus for thought

We close with the comments of well-respected Gathic scholar, Prof. Stanley Insler:

“The restriction concerning initiation into your religion arose at a time when other religions threatened its existence. In the free world, such threats hardly exist today. Zoroastrianism is a religion that honours the freedom of choice among its most important principles, and in essence that consists of the individual and personal choice of each human being to ally himself on the side of good or evil in the world. Because choice is a primary concept of the religion, it must also be extended in an equally effective manner to the question of acceptance into the faith of those people not born as Zoroastrians.

“If a person sees the benefits of the religion and chooses of his own free will to enter it, it is a demonstration in itself of that person’s decision to support the forces of good in the world. It was exactly that way when Zarathushtra first founded the faith... Should it be any different today?”

May Ahura Mazda guide our community to the right path of self-preservation and may the religion of Zarathushtra shine gloriously throughout *hafta keshwar zamin*.

ATHA ZAMYAD, YATHA AFRINAMI! ■

Shapur Captain, *born and raised in Karachi, received his education from the late Dr. Dasturji Maneckji N. Dhalla and Dr. Maneck Pithawalla. Shapur, who has a degree in accountancy, immigrated to the UK in 1956. He has been an active member of the Zarathushti community in the UK and has been involved with the World Zoroastrian Organization since its incorporation.*

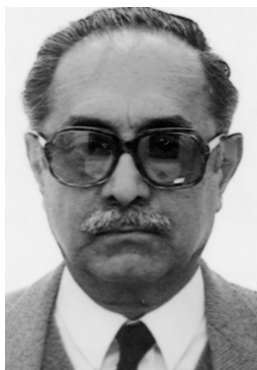


PHOTO: PASARGADAE, CYRUS RIVETNA

AZMY BIRDI, UK. *Member of ZWIN (Zarathushti Women’s International Network)*

The single most important thing is to actively *welcome non-Zarathushti spouses* of Zarathushtis and the children of mixed marriages into our community, encourage their navjotes, and make them feel wanted. ■

HORMUZD KATKI and MEGAN GUENTHER, *Washington DC.*

Exercise tolerance for the beliefs of other Zarathushtis. We are fortunate to live during a historic renaissance of the Zarathushti deen. Non-Zarathushtis are learning about us; former Zarathushtis want to return to the religion and born Zarathushtis are adapting the religion to their homelands.

Zarathushtis all over the world are experimenting with a variety of beliefs spanning from universalist Zarathushti ethicism to Parsi-ethnic Khshnoom mysticism. But the Zarathushti community is wracked by infighting between the universalist faction and the ethnic faction. Our time is reminiscent of the early Christian church when many believed that the religion should remain ethnically Jewish while others believed the religion should be open to all. The tension between these two views split the church and the culturally Jewish arm of Christianity became extinct. A united Zarathushti community remains attainable, but this will require each of us to understand, respect and find value in the beliefs of other Zarathushtis and commit to maintaining a single diverse worldwide Zarathushti community. ■

DR. KHOSRO E. MEHRFAR, *Southern California, is president of Cyber Business Corporation and a co-founder of www.vohuman.org.*

Zarathushtis have a common root no matter where we live. We are all descendants of a great people with heritage and history as old as history itself. Every one of us inherently carries a responsibility of historic magnitude to keep Zarathushtra’s flame of wisdom alive and well.



open forum

“Of all the actions that could be taken to perpetuate the religion and strengthen the Zarathushti community worldwide, what is the one most important, in your opinion?”

Short answers were invited from the community to the above question. We received some enthusiastic responses which are listed below in random order. Since this was a question addressed to the community at large, no precedence has been given to title or age or community standing.

Jamshed R. Udvadia, Editor, FEZANA Journal



We Zarathushtis (Persians, Parsis, Iranis, etc.) are a mixture of: (a) Our religious belief (same basic fundamentals for all); and (b) Our environment.

Our environment is deeply rooted in the ‘*culture*’ of where we lived. This ‘*cultural gap*’ **must be bridged** in our generation and

closed in next generations. We Iranians are Zarathushtis brought up in Persian culture. We Parsis are Zarathushtis brought up in Indian culture. Both historic, both respectful, both wonderful and both beautiful but in different ways. We need to work on this cultural gap to perpetuate the religion and strengthen the community – with *JOINT* festivals, ceremonies and days of heritage of *GLOBAL UNITED ZARATHUSHTIS* in our local communities. ■



BAHRAM R. SHAHMARDAN, PhD,
California, author of “Journey of Life Eternal”.

Have an open mind – “A mind is like a parachute, it only works when it is open”.

It was the folks in Tajikistan who got UNESCO to celebrate the

3000th anniversary of Zarathushtra. Whether or not it is the 3000th or the 10,500th anniversary is not important. What is important is that the Zarathushtis of Tajikistan made this happen and not the Zarathushtis of Udvada and/or the Parsi Punchayet. The question arises: Will the Zarathushtis of Udvada and the Parsi Punchayet accept that the folks in Tajikistan who made this happen are Zarathushtis? If the answer is no, then we do have a problem which is why in my humble opinion, it is important to have an open mind. ■



BACHI KARKARIA, Resident Editor,
The Times of India, New Delhi

The most important thing is *tolerance*. To learn to accept different opinions, different ways of being Zarathushti. An enforced unity could end up being the most divisive issue for the Zarathushti community in India and

Zarathushti communities worldwide. Broadmindedness will hold us together, not drive away our co-religionists. The Zarathushti deen has survived for 3,000 years because of the wisdom of simplicity. Let not small minds kill it by complicating it. ■

I do believe that the only person I can change is myself and everyone of us has the freedom and responsibility to do so.

The most vital functions to preserve the most important thing, our life, are very simple. When was the last time one of us had to sit and think “Hey! I have to breathe today”. If I had to do that it would be too late, I would not be sitting and writing this.

Our religion is like that, it is very simple, very basic and that is what makes it very profound. We are given a formula, a flow chart to follow the process of thoughts, words, deeds-actions. We are supposed to educate ourselves, not just by opening books but also by opening our eyes and our hearts and really observing, absorbing and imbibing.

Once we have perfected that awareness we are expected to go to the next stage and digest those experiences, internalize them and come up with a summary to articulate that experience to ourselves so that we know what our thoughts are and by saying them aloud it confirms our thinking to ourselves and at the same time we can communicate and share with other like-minded people and improve ourselves through the process. It is a filtering, polishing and perfecting process for our thoughts.

The final step is to take action to culminate and bring to fruition our thoughts and words.

This is the sequence we are enjoined to follow to perfect ourselves. Once we have mastered these three levels, we can help others on their path to reach the goal of ‘*frashokereti*’ – the perfection of all creation. When there is a short circuit in the system, problems occur and that is the state our community is in. We start getting in the middle of the first step and all of a sudden BOOM, our ego kicks in. By ego I mean

our lack of knowledge and confidence in the full topic, in ourselves and our lack of faith in Ahura Mazda. We start correcting others, telling them what to do etc.

Sometimes we perpetuate that ourselves due to lack of knowledge and confidence in ourselves by looking for an easy way out by asking others and following what they say blindly because of their position and status.

I have tremendous respect and reverence for our learned priests and scholars. They have kept our religion alive and thriving but ***for our religion to prosper and blossom we need the active participation of each individual*** to avail of the freedom we have in today’s environment to take on the responsibility to follow the steps before taking any action.

We need to live our religion on a daily basis and prove to ourselves that we belong and not just take it for granted because we were born in it.

We need to work on perfecting ourselves before we can even start improving others.

We need to recognize the tremendous goodness in ourselves because we are a small part of Ahura Mazda and realize that every living being has that in them and learn to respect and revere others for who they are and refrain from trying to make them like us.

After going through the process of answering the questions posed to me for this topic in my mind and from my experiences I have come up with this plan of action for myself to follow.

I do believe that the only person I can change is myself and every one of us has the freedom and responsibility to do so.

GOOD THOUGHTS! HAPPY NOURUZ!

Hosi P. Mehta



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and intermarriage or watch our religion inbreed itself into extinction. The notion of spreading our faith by such means is frowned upon by purists with disregard as to how our religion was first spread. A religion is a guiding set of beliefs and principles that no 'exclusive group' owns. People are free to believe what they wish.

Human beings, just like animals, must find ways to adapt or face extinction. There is growth or death; there is no middle ground. If Zarathushtis are to survive as a religious community, rather than as a cult, we can begin by opening our minds and hearts to those willing to join us. ■

KEIKHOSROW MOBED, board member, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC).

The way to strengthen our community is for the older generation who now serve on the board of our associations, to step down and refrain from standing for election again and again. The old guard is encumbered with baggage that is hard to shed. The future of our community should now be in the hands of the younger generation, especially those born here in this country. This **new guard should take the leadership and responsibility** now for leading the community. ■

ERVAD JAL N. BIRDY, vice-president, Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA); past president, North American Mobeds Council (NAMC).



Which version or interpretation of the Zarathushti religion are we trying to perpetuate? The one understood by emerging Zarathushtis of the earlier Russian states?

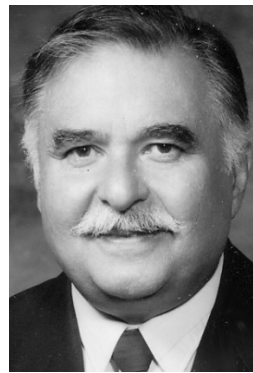
The Gatha alone version? The version practiced by present day Iranians under centuries of persecution? Or the version preserved by the Parsi-Zarathushtis after their

migration to India? Each has firm adherents who believe theirs is the only correct one.

What *is* worth preserving and perpetuating is a Zarathushti way of life. Parsi-Zarathushtis of up to a century ago have shown the way admirably. A minuscule community in a vast ocean of other cultures, they have survived intact, religion and all, due to their **following rules engrained through generations**: honesty, integrity, charity, moderation, hard work, thirst for knowledge and taking care of the unfortunate and needy. They practiced without question certain unique **rules prescribed by their religion**: sudreh-kushti, reverence to fire, faith in their sacred texts and religious ceremonies, laws against conversion of non-Parsis and against mixed marriages. These rules passed down through generations constitute

the most important action in perpetuating the religion and strengthening community. ■

PARVIZ VARJAVAND, California; architect, collects Persian rugs and artifacts; involved in restoration of Zarathushti buildings in Yazd, Iran.



"It is legitimate to be different."

To go forward and prosper, we must learn the art of getting along with one another. We can preserve and teach what we cherish without putting down someone who has chosen another path in our religion. Now that we have several groupings of 'Zarathushtis', we may finally have to accept that all these diverse views have legitimacy. Let us **create an Ecumenical Council** to act as mediators and make peace between warring factions. It really comes down to practicing tolerance and love for one another even when our views differ dramatically. ■

LYLAH M. ALPHONSE, assistant editor, Boston Globe; author, www.lylahmalphonse.com.



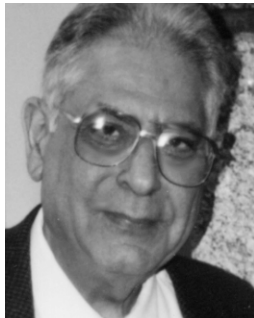
The best way to strengthen the community and perpetuate Zarathushti religion would be to **allow conversion and to welcome with open arms the children of interfaith marriages**. At a time when the number of Zarathushtis worldwide is dwindling, we should be willing to accept those who have a sincere desire to be part of the community. We should be less concerned about bloodlines, more concerned about spirituality, and embrace those who want to learn about and live in the faith. ■

FREYA DHUNJISHA, secretary, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago.



We the present generation have to **set an example for our children**; be open-minded and practical, keeping in mind we are now living in different times, many of us in a different culture. Make our religion easier to follow and more attractive for the younger generation to carry on; that means prayer books with easy translations and our priests reciting in English, along with the Avesta language. We need to be more tolerant of members who marry out and make them feel

welcome to join our fold. Simplify and shorten death rituals; keep them from getting 'overwhelming' for the grieving families. Religion classes for children and adults should keep to the basic tenets of our religion, preferably taught by priests. They become too humdrum if taught, translating everything word by word from our prayer books. "Reform" is the one singlemost thing I would concentrate and build upon. ***Keep our religion simple and basic and easy to follow, as it is meant to be.*** ■



SAM VESUNA, *president, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO)*

As we celebrate under the auspices of UNESCO, the 3000th anniversary of Zarathushti culture we rejoice to see so many countries of Central Asia which were formerly part of the Soviet USSR taking a

lead in these celebrations. We must communicate with, welcome and enthusiastically identify ourselves with the people of these countries who take pride and show devotion to their Zarathushti traditions. After more than seven decades of forced Communist atheism they may have lost touch with the formal practices and rituals of their religion, but the love of their Zarathushti culture and traditions has survived in their hearts and minds.

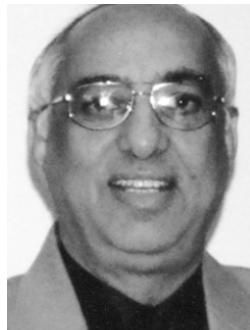
While other faiths are aggressively active in restoring their religion in these countries, we have been complacent and done nothing. We have the talent, ability and financial resources to ***assist and guide these brethren to return formally to the path of Asho Zarathushtra's teachings and religion.*** Posterity will question and condemn us if we fail to grasp this opportunity. ■

KHURSHID AVASIA, *Mumbai, India*

The one ***strong bond in the community is our Parsi 'baugs' (colonies).*** When you are born and raised in a particular environment, that environment becomes a way of life and those you interact with daily from birth become a part of your extended family sub-consciously. This results in strong net-working bonds. If one from that group wishes to migrate and someone else in the colony knows someone even vaguely, it is a source of back-up for difficult decisions.

Somebody always knows someone who can help, leading to even closer bonds. Even years after having not being in touch, when in need you can still call upon them for anything. I have been born and brought up in the Parsi colony and am lucky to stay in one after marriage. You bond well with 'bawajis' and their families across the globe if you desire. ■

ERVAD KOBAD ZAROLIA, *president, Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF); past president North American Mobeds Council (NAMC).*



When our forefathers landed in India 1300 years ago, what was their strategy to perpetuate the religion? They built fire temples and invited a mobed family to look after their religious needs. Now let's see what we did in North America for the last 35 years. Travel 'back home' was easy and inexpensive, so we never "burned our bridges". We continued to be dependent on our homelands. For our religious nourishment, we just took a trip back home, visited our favorite agaries and atash bahrams, and came back all recharged. As our communities grew, we built halls to satisfy our social needs but hid our *atash* in a back room. Our leaders and communities concentrated on social more than religious needs, since we had easy access to our homelands.

My strategy to perpetuate the religion is for us to symbolically "burn our bridges" – we cannot forever go back to our homelands for our spiritual nourishment. ***Start building religious buildings of beauty and pride, to house our atash*** to glorify our religion and satisfy our community needs. Let's go ahead and act, instead of debating and dreaming. ■



RUSTOM B. ENGINEER, *Zoroastrian Association of Houston*

Reformists and the traditional followers of Zarathushti deen must ***respect each other's right to practice the religion*** the way they wish to follow. The biggest risk to the perpetuation of the religion is to get alienated and believe in neither of the two belief systems.

It is very important that we follow the teachings of Zarathushtra with total devotion either in the traditional or the reformist mode. In this way, if the two groups do separate out, so be it. At least the traditional group, however small it may be, will serve as the custodian of the traditions and religious practices, while the reformist group may go out and spread the word of Zarathushtra around the world and increase in numbers. A few generations from now, it is conceivable that each group would become more moderate in their belief systems and consequently recognize the strength of the other, thereby helping to perpetuate and strengthen the Zarathushti community worldwide. ■

MINOO PRESS, *board member, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC).*

The most important thing our religion needs today is ***forward looking priests***, well educated in the teach-

ings of Zarathushtra and having a working knowledge of teachings of other prophets, capable of showing our community how to handle issues of daily living the Zarathushti way, and who have a good understanding of the purpose of religion in man's life. We should identify and support priests that show such promise, and we should have the capability to offer them a comfortable living, serving our community. We can start with one and build on it. ■



SHAPUR K. IRANI, *founder and proprietor, Irani & Co. Tea Merchants, Indianapolis, Indiana.*

**"Little minds have little thoughts
Big minds have big thoughts"**

Let us all collectively think big. All North American Zarathushtis should **collectively contribute towards purchase of real-estate properties**, for one Association at a time, instead of each association struggling to establish itself on its own. We can pool our resources nation-wide to help one association purchase the property and then move on to the next one. These should be outright purchases to avoid high interest costs. This is what other communities have done, very successfully.

We should not fight over small things. As long as we continue to fight among ourselves, we will remain small people. If only we could get together, we can create an empire. ■

FERAYDOON BAHRASSA, *Little Rock, Arkansas.*

Encourage **mobedyar training** of non-mobed children and include female children in the mobedyar programs. Discourage all the unacceptable superstitious activities such as: not allowing women in the kitchen during their monthly period (if they have followed all the hygienic procedures); using bulls urine as *nirang* (instead we need to use pomegranate, grape or apple juice – because if consecration purifies the bulls urine it can purify the juice too); *dokhmenashini* (burial is the best way especially if anyone needs to later re-examine the body for legal purposes forensic-DNA studies). ■

KAMBIZ YEGANEHI,
management consultant, California.

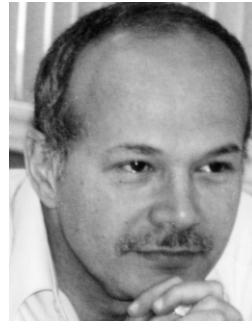
Many people, especially Iranians, wish to convert to the Good Faith. Obviously quantity without quality will pollute the community.

However, without quantity our community's demise is certain.

So our main challenge as a community is to increase our numbers by emphasizing on quality and taking the risk that a

few may be rotten apples. We must let go of our attachment to **'survival'** and shift our commitment, instead, to Zarathushtra's teachings of **'freedom of choice'** and **'inclusion'**.

Our priority as a community should be to **organize a central committee with 'conversion' as its mission**. This committee should put together a global program to create/fund educational centers to educate non-Zarathushtis about the Good Faith, train scholars to teach and convert people, and publicize the Good Faith throughout the world. As our



numbers increase so will our strength to bring goodness to a world that is so desperately in need of it. ■

JIMMY DHOLOO, *vice president, Engineering, Aeroflex/Weinschel, Maryland; Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington*

(ZAMWI)

Create universal awareness of this wonderful religion, based mainly on the Prophet's songs and having done so, **welcome with open arms, all those who sincerely espouse prophet Zarathushtra's message**. This does not mean mass conversion. Conversion is a form of 'intolerance' of other faiths and I am strongly opposed to it. Religious merit does not lie in blindly converting the masses into one's religion; but religious merit does lie in graciously accepting and welcoming all those who freely choose to espouse that faith. ■

FEROZA SARAN, *social worker, Pune, India.*

Whilst attending the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress at Pune, I was surprised to learn from the only Iranian delegate present, that Avesta classes are compulsory for Zarathushti children in Iran, and they even have to pass examinations in the same. We have absolutely no such classes in India. Home is the first and most important school, and parents are the first and most important teachers. We have to **educate the parents first**, to enable them to educate their children in matters of our faith. User friendly books, cassettes and CD Roms on the Zarathushti religion, suitable for all ages should be made easily available, for use in homes, school libraries, agiaries etc. Religious customs should be scientifically explained to our highly intelligent kids, and then the right beliefs and practices will surely follow. Sunday classes should be encouraged in all localities and residential colonies. Right knowledge will lead to unity in thought, word and action amongst Zarathushtis worldwide. ■

ABAN AND ASPY DABOO, *Aurora, Illinois.*



Educated persons know the difference between right and wrong, and have the confidence and knowledge to lead a truly Zarathushti life. **Religious education** must be imparted by scholars who have devoted their entire lives to learning the true religion of Zarathushtra and not by self-appointed 'scholars' who have

read a few translations of the Gathas, Vendidad, etc. Religion education classes should have a set curriculum and consistency, so that everyone is on the same page and should include knowledge of our culture and ethnicity. Educate the children in the language of their forefathers: Persian and Gujarati.

At home when a child has questions regarding spirituality, religion, life, and death, parents should take time to explain and answer all the questions as truthfully as possible. Correct knowledge of the religion gives us the privilege to talk intelligently about our faith instead of saying "We believe in Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds." There is much more to our great religion and culture. Let us teach our children to be well-informed Zarathushtis, Parsis, Iranis, and caring human beings. ■



JIM BHAVNAGRI, *Michigan*

If we are to survive as a clan then we need to give up the exclusivity that we call religion. Short of allowing conversion I think we should **accept any and all persons of one Parsi parentage**. ■

ANN ARNAV AZ ELAVIA, *president, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC).*

Encourage and involve our Zarathushti youth in all countries. Let us act as bridge builders between different generations of Zarathushtis; involve our youth in decision making at all levels; encourage youth forums inter and intra-country; hold open dialogue and discussions about what our religion means to them.

Let us be accepting of ideas about our religion different than our own. Let us **respect each others religious ideology and show tolerance** to others who do not share our beliefs. Let our generation and elders of our community not just preach but rather practice the basic tenets of our religion – 'good thoughts, good words and good deeds'. Let us be the role models that people want to emulate. Let us instill pride in our children of being Zarathushtis, but let us also show respect to other religions around us. If we can start at the grass-roots of our community, we will have a strong faith that will cross all boundaries and



perpetuate our religion forever. ■

CYRUS RIVETNA, *architect, Chicago.*

We must engage the interest and involvement of community members, in particular the youth who are the future of our community. Without them the

darbe mehrs will be built, but without people to use them. The Sunday school system may have no students to teach. The culture will be preserved, but there may be nobody except museums, to appreciate it. Our texts will be preserved, but nobody, save historians, may read them.

Parents should be active in their communities, and encourage their children to become involved. Associations should encourage youth participation; let youths become productive members of the community. They



should be invited to join committees, and be given responsible positions.

In North America, there are many ways to gain fulfillment; religion, for many, may not be one of them. For this reason, parents and associations must make a concerted effort to attract Zarathushti youth to be involved in productive and fulfilling ways. ■

HOMI GANDHI, *president, Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY).*

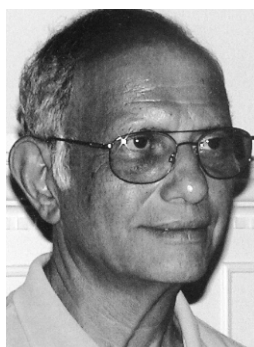
It is not like telling someone to pick up one item before jumping out of a flying plane or a burning house. These actions involve 'you', the self, as an individual. Here is a larger question for the community.

The most important action, in my opinion, is for men and women to **marry, build a strong family, and procreate the future generation of children and be role models to them** to be good human beings, helping others, devoid of hatred, understanding other person's viewpoint and working for the betterment of humanity. This requires an open mind and acceptance of others with diverse philosophies of life. Once Zarathushtis are ready and willing to accept this, the community will be strengthened and the perpetuation of the faith will follow. If Zarathushtis believe that in every single human being there dwells 'fravashi', then it is about time that we practice what we believe in. ■

HOMI M. DAVIER, *co-chair, Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress, Houston.*



For the past many millennia, Zarathushtis have been in quest of Asha and it continues today. Insofar as the Zarathushti deen is concerned, one has to first discover and accept the glories of our rich history, steeped in centuries of traditions and rituals, before they reach for the truth.

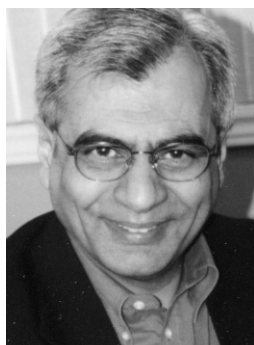


Notwithstanding the different angles presented by our priests, scholars and new lines of thought, the fact remains that we are in a state of confusion bordering inertia. Are we running out of time? Can the diversified opinions ever come together? Can we not collectively move forward for the preservation of the oldest religion? If like me, your answer is 'yes', our community leaders need to call for extensive research, hours of dialogue followed by a solution to be accepted by all.

The quest for the preservation of one's history, its rituals and traditions are of supreme importance for the longevity and perpetuity of any community. ■

ERVAD SOLI P. DASTUR, Sarasota, Florida.

Of utmost importance is knowledge of our *Daena Vanghuhi* taught by our Asho Zarathushtra – *humata, hukhta, huvaresha*. All of us have a duty to increase our own knowledge of our religion, to speak and spread this knowledge to the world with all means at our disposal and to act with this knowledge to help all, especially those less fortunate, so they can join us in our quest for acquiring and spreading the knowledge of our beloved Daena Vanghuhi to *hafta keshwar*, according to the words which we pray in all nyaeshs and yashts of our daily prayers but do not follow up on them in our daily lives [*Khordeh Avesta* by Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga,



English translation from the original Gujarati edition, pps. 41-42]:

Dad din beh Mazdayasnan agahi ravai

goafranganl bad hafta keshvar zamin aedun bad.

May there be justice of the good Mazda-worshipping Religion, (its) knowledge, promulgation and fame (or glory) in the seven regions of the earth! May it be so!

SHAHROKH MEHTA, Syracuse, New York; president, Integrated Technologies, LLC, a management consulting firm with regional and national practice.

Two words – **Religious Education**. Each and every Zarathushti (born into the religion or by choice) should have access to a 'religious education for understanding' program. This mobile, digital, and virtual curriculum will educate and re-educate the community towards the understanding of the Zarathushti philosophy; meaning of the fundamental prayers; practice of Zarathushtra's message in their daily lives; study of the Persian/Zarathushti history, interpretation of the rituals, and the nuance of the traditions. When equipped with the powerful knowledge and true understanding of the religion, community members both young and adult, will have internally strengthened themselves and in turn, will be able to perpetuate this universal religion, as competent practitioners rather than with superficial claims of religiosity, affiliation and legacy. [See my article "Adult Zarathushti Deen Education Program", FEZANA Journal, Summer 2002 or email SamMMehta@aol.com for an electronic version.] ■

KHURSHED PASTAKIA, secretary, Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association, India.

Growing evidence that statistics and intelligence, leading to the hysteria over WMD, were 'sexed up' by politicians eager to curry favor with a George Bush anxious to avenge his father's humiliation and a Tony Blair riding piggyback on Uncle Sam, proves the gullibility of intelligent men and women who got influenced into suicidal misadventure by politically motivated manipulation of information.

The question is whether the 'extinction hysteria', currently gripping our intelligentsia stems from population



statistics is 'sexed up' by the powerful pro-intermarriage lobby whose tentacles reach deep into the governing bodies of our federations, associations/anjumans and most importantly, the Parsi press?

The only way to perpetuate our religion and community is to **provide traditional religious education** to our kids. Reading from good books by great authors is better than taking the kids to religious class where the teacher has liberal credentials. If kids grow up with religion, the community is automatically strengthened. ■

NIKAN KHATIBI, youth co-editor, FEZANA Journal is republican candidate for the 2004 Laguna Niguel (California) City Council, www.JoinNikan.com.

The most important action that we must take is to **educate and unite our community**. Once we have achieved

this, we will be able to spread and teach the principles of our religion to the world. We are a small religious community and cannot afford to spend our time bickering over differences in opinions and cultures. Instead, we must set an example for our children so that we can truly become one united religion that can stand tall and withstand the progression of time. Once we have done this, only then can we share the beauty of our religion to others.



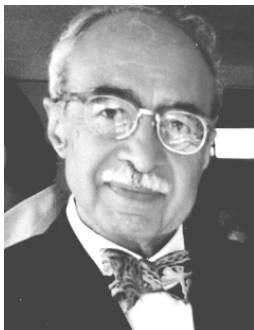
RUSI J. TAVADIA, Troy, Michigan.

It is up to the *parents to take the responsibility* to perpetuate the religion and strengthen our community by guiding their children to the good path. The lack of action by parents and selfishness on their part is the root cause for children getting out of control and out of being a part of the community.

SUSAN KARANI, student, pursuing masters in Human Rights Studies, Columbia University, New York.

We need youth educated well about our religion; not only about the story of the Persians and our prayers and customs, but about scripture and theology, even Zarathushti law. The latter are fundamentally what our religion is about. Our youth should have a curriculum centered on all these themes, and inclusive of different perspectives. It is important to teach not what to think, but how to think about our religion.

One of my fears for the Zarathushti community is that due to the so-called 'melting-pot' effect amongst other reasons, we are losing members of our community, and



that our loss is largely due to marriage outside of the faith. I mean not to suggest that we should restrict inter-faith marriages, but rather that we should not so quickly dismiss them, if we do not wish to alienate our Zarathushti offspring – and their children.

We are a small community. It is crucial that we come together on fundamental points. My prayer for Zarathushtis is that we (the youth) not only have the wisdom and energy for the preservation of our faith and culture, but more importantly, we face issues affecting us with an open mind.

DR. FARHANG MEHR, professor-emeritus of International Relations, Boston University

If we observe certain principles, we can survive, preserve and expand our religion, and the community will never perish. **We must preserve Zarathushti principles and precepts by conducting our lives according to them.** This requires first that we know and understand what they are, and secondly practice these precepts in our lives.

Principle 1: We should agree to disagree without being disagreeable. We must unite against attacking each other publicly. Denigrating our co-religionists and asha-van of other religions in public is against Asha and against the precepts of the Zarathushti religion, which is to respect all. Disagreement, per se, is not bad, but we must be ready to dialog with each other with respect. We must keep our solidarity and unity, and protect the honor of all good people irrespective of their religion, who are unfairly treated.



Principle 2: We need to develop the humanitarian aspects of our religion. We must propagate the moral and humanitarian foundation of the Zarathushti religion. That has made our religion relevant to all times and to all places. These include freedom of choice, human rights, equality of human beings and protection of the environment.

Principle 3: We must explain and propagate the contributions of the Zarathushti religion, to other religions. These include Zarathushti morality, the concept of moral after-life, mental and cosmic dualism, and the whole area of eschatology.

ABAN RUSTOMJI is currently involved with setting up a library at the Zoroastrian Association of Houston.

Vital, purposeful communities **have a more positive assessment about the future.** Confidence of the future is closely tied to our ability to attract and mobilize the energies of youth. To remain vital our community must change, but that change can prove costly – leading to conflict that negatively impacts member growth. If we practice faith without explicit expectations for our members, we will experience less vitality and more conflict.



Purpose-driven vitality can be measured by the quality of spiritual support and the quantity of financial support that members offer the community. Cultural affinity, community involvement, organizational focus, finding inspiration in worship, and challenge to recover a fresh sense of mission and purpose all need infrastructure – one that we presently lack.

PURVEZ RUSTOMJI, engineer, business owner, is a longtime member of Zoroastrian Association of Houston.

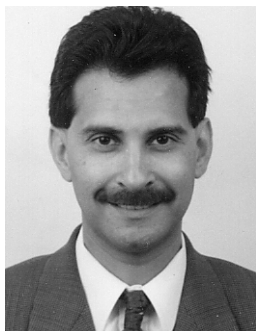
One Unified World Zara-thushti Body is the single most important element that is needed for Zarathushtis. With the global reach shrinking, national boundaries graying, communication milliseconds away, a community without a unified world body is a ship with a broken rudder. FEZANA has brought together 24 North American Associations; it is time that the world federations get together and form a unified world body. ■

DORAB MEDHORA, consultant, Bangalore, India.

Address factionalism – diverse thinking on the fundamental philosophy and doctrines of our religion. There are too many organizations that have sprung up – each propagating their own interpretation and many times to suit personal needs. **Create a body of learned luminaries from both the religious heads and the laity** who will make an indepth study of the teachings and the message conveyed by our prophet. This will bring about uniformity in thinking, culminating in elimination of diverse and conflicting views. There must be an organized effort to elevate knowledge and interpretation of our religion among the guardians of the religion and make their remuneration attractive enough to encourage qualified persons to take up this important position. Enlightenment is the key to overcoming our community's state of affairs. ■

ASPHANDIAR MANECKJEE, member, Capital Region Interfaith Council (CRIC), Ottawa, Ontario.

We should follow in our forefather's footsteps. It is not the quantity, but the quality that is important to preserve our religion and the community. As role models we should promote within our families and community the religious tenets of Asha or righteousness.



Throughout the world our community survival is in danger, as we have been influenced by 'New Age Ideas' that are evil and contradictory to our religious tenets of Asha. These ideas are based on greed, selfishness, materialism, dishonesty, corruption and on making profit. Sadly today, there are many conflicts leading to breakdown of our community; these conflicts can only be resolved by working together according to the tenets of Asha as taught by our Prophet Zarathushtra. ■

MEHER AMALSAD, Westminster, California, author of "Bread for the Head". For more Z-inspiration, visit www.Bread4theHead.com

Inculcate the spirit of LOVE, (Light Of Valuable Energy). When we share with LOVE, we show others the LIGHT, which makes them a part of our LIFE.

The core of the Zarathushti religion is focused on good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, through unconditional love and spirituality. The prime focus is on reaching out, instead of pointing out; on lighting a candle, instead of fighting darkness.

There is light in what we say as also in what others say. We can choose to put these two lights together and create more light, or put out these two lights altogether and create more fight. Instead of fighting things in life, focus on lighting things in life. Only then we will be able to give life to life, which in turn will enable us to effectively perpetuate the religion and strengthen our bond with the global Zarathushti community. ■

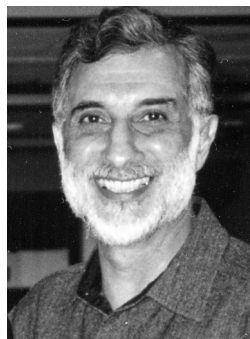
ERACH D. TARAPORE, trustee, Zarathushti Anjuman of Northern California, and **SILLOO K. TARAPORE**.

Educating the community about our religion is the most important action needed at this time. Merely being born of Zarathushti parents does not automatically give a child a Zarathushti identity, especially in North America. We need to be proactive in studying our religion. We need generally accepted, readable translations of our scriptures into English, with explanatory notes, that are available to everyone. We need study groups.

Understanding our scriptures will underline the beautiful and timeless truths of Zarathushtra's teachings, his deep trust in Man as a staunch supporter of Good, his emphasis on freedom of choice and personal responsibility. Education will bring a more enlightened view that could sweep away the petty bickering that threatens our community today. Religious education can reveal to us the spiritual fulfillment in Zarathushtra's message so we regain pride and faith in our own heritage. With education alone can we re-instate our commitment, our sense of Self as a religious community. ■

LOVJI CAMA, dean, Religious Education, Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York.

Every Zarathushti child must be made aware of two factors that, make us Zarathushtis, what we are: (1) the unique teachings of Zarathushtra and (2) our long history from pre-Zarathushti times to the present.



Zarathushtra's simple and powerful message is of hope, for a morally and materially perfectible world and promise of happiness for all of creation if the right choices are made. No other religion places such a great responsibility on, or respect for human beings, by making mankind the co-worker of Ahura Mazda.

Our history teaches us our experience as a community, from compassionate and just rulers of a vast empire to a small community whose future is by no means assured. It also teaches us about the great struggle it has been for the Iranian Zarathushti and the Parsis to keep the religion alive. If a Zarathushti child realizes these two, how can we fail to perpetuate community and religion? ■

YEZDI M. RUSTOMJI lectures in sociology at the University of Houston.

Today Zarathushtis ask each other, *How do we perpetuate religion and community?* Zarathushtra, millennia ago, had asked Ahura Mazda – *where bend my step* – also desperate to find a way to perpetuate religion and community, his own family and tribe having shunned him.

Despite many setbacks Zarathushtra's religion is well maintained to date; and his community has not been. The latter is a crisis of falsified social memory. It is the assertion of an exclusive religion. A historical exigency to preserve community then has become today, a community disintegrating article of faith. While once a necessary survival strategy, today it must be disparaged, for truthfully, it always was irreligious.

Zarathushtra the prophet of Righteousness lifting his voice with veneration always asked the Creator of the Good Mind to show His precepts; and today's Zarathushti will also please Ahura Mazda – *yearning to learn to perpetuate religion and community, truthfully.* ■

FAROBAG HOMI COOPER, Cooper & Associates, Wealth Management Group; Principal, New England Securities; Music Director, Chicago Philharmonia.

Habitually, we get so caught up in the daily hassles of life maintenance, that we forget that there is a universe outside of our self-created world. Wherever our expertise may lie, it will do our heart good to adjust the lens to *embrace a wider view.*

A large-scale view should not be deemed as being either in favor of scholarly theological inquiry or, for that matter, in disfavor of "ethnic purity". Diversity may be a propellant for life sustaining circulation yet perturbing to the hoi polloi. Tolerance might suffice temporarily until hatred eventually overflows with a vengeance.

Our mind may be compared to a mirror: it only reflects light if it is not covered by dust. It is vital to develop a calmed mind, a cool head, and a tranquil heart in order that gentle breezes brush away the dust. We must incessantly be aware of the fragility of our moral consciousness. It is a consciousness that requires invigorating the



mind in order to uplift the spirit: this is the essence of *Vohu Manah*, and can lend definition to our heritage. ■

SAROSH MANEKSHAW, environmental management consultant; executive, Zoroastrian Association of Houston.

It is by *avoiding extremism, by educating ourselves, and following the path of moderation* that we will become a more vibrant and prosperous community.

There is rising extremism within the community which is polarizing the moderate majority and forcing them to take sides. Many moderates are so disgusted by the extremists that they have become apathetic towards the religion and lost interest in participating in community affairs. At one end of this religious spectrum are those who add extraneous, mystical and esoteric interpretation to the teachings of Zarathushtra, drawing us back in to the dark ages of the religion, where any change towards modernizing the institutions is to be avoided. At the other extreme are those who have so radically Islamicized/Christianized the religion of Zarathushtra that they have left it totally devoid of its rituals, traditions and religious institutions – they wish to change the Zarathushti deen from a living religion to merely a universal doctrine to live by.



The means for perpetuating the religion is through education (of both youth and adults) and insisting on moderation. It is imperative that we actively search for and develop a sense of Zarathushtrian identity. We must find out what are those principles and doctrines that we have followed that have allowed us to survive and prosper, against insurmountable odds, through thirteen hundred years of persecution. We must determine what are the religious institutions (rituals and traditions) that have cemented us together for these past centuries, and helped us preserve our religious and communal identity. We must question whether the movements towards pluralism, secularism, assimilation, aculturalization and universalism are hurting or helping our community. ■

BEHRAM PASTAKIA, president, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI).

"ASHISHWANGH" – *Prosperity with integrity* should be the watchwords of our Zarathushti community. In a highly competitive world marketplace of knowledge based economies, highly educated individuals with lead-

ership abilities will thrive. Investment in the education of our youth is the key to our future success. The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce is on the right track – creating entrepreneurs who enhance material wealth! Institution building and performing acts of charity is easier for individuals (and communities!) who are prosperous.

The concept of prosperity, ‘*Ashishwangh*’, is promoted in our faith. We are enjoined in our scriptures to participate fully in this material world. Our forefathers lived the ethos of “*industry, integrity and charity*” and hence are so well respected even today.

We must unite now as a world community to facilitate projects that can highlight our abilities and become the instruments of change at the cutting edge of technology to



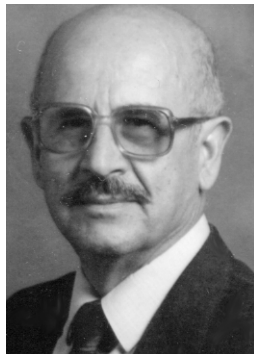
enhance the weal of the larger civil society. Constructing a “model superhighway” toll road in India, to address the bottleneck of snarled traffic which chokes commerce; building an earthquake-resistant school/clinic for the people of Iran; making the Parsi General Hospital in Mumbai, ‘paperless’ to enhance efficiency, are three examples of show-case ventures for our worldwide Zarathushti community to

consider.

Successful implementation of these projects is within the realm of reality. *If we put Zarathushtis on the forefront of changes in commerce, industry and technology, we will be living the tenets of our faith, benefiting the society around us, and strengthening our own community.* The theme of prosperity with integrity is repeated in our scriptures. May *Ashishwangh* shower blessings upon us as we go forward together on this journey. ■

BELLA TATA, past president, *The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia*; chair, *The Eighth North American Zoroastrian Congress, Vancouver, 1992*.

Focus on providing a comprehensive and reasonable educational tool to help those who are born, or not born into the religion, to understand the message of Prophet Zarathushtra, and work towards being true Zarathushtis, and having their navjotes/sedreh pushi done.



Religion should not be exclusive – inclusiveness and sincerity of purpose and belief supercede notional rights which we may feel we are born with. Respect for each human-being will strengthen and not weaken the cause.

Bridging the generation gap will strengthen the community, and although this may be as

Open Forum Responses

The responses printed above do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA, nor are they indicative of any trends among North American Zarathushtis in general. Invitations were sent by email to associations and individuals, and posted on newsgroups on the internet. Almost all responses were printed, after editing for space and clarity (but not for content). Late-comer responses may be published in a future issue - *Ed*.

Trip to India

[Continued from page 6]

January 5th, I met with Farrokh Rustomji, CEO of Sir J. J. Charity Fund regarding the suggestion by Behram Paskia for a toll highway in Western India. We also discussed the topic of utilizing real time, satellite-assisted medical support across the globe.

Udvada. On January 7th, we visited Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada, the Dasturji Koyaji Mirza Hall and the WZO Museum. We met Er. Parvez and Er. Darius Bajan and family, and thanked them for their recent visits to FEZANA sponsored events in North America.

Parsiana. On January 8th I met with Jehangir Patel of *Parsiana* and thanked him for his assistance and support for the distribution of FEZANA Journals to subscribers in India and announcements of various FEZANA scholarship activities.

Book project. On January 10th, I met with Bachi Karkaria (in New Delhi) and reviewed progress on her book project, which FEZANA has partially supported.

World Body Meetings

On January 6th, a *preliminary informal meeting* of representatives of ZTFE (Rusi Dalal and Malcolm Deboo), the BPP (Minoo Shroff, Dinshaw Tamboly, D. R. Mehta, Er. Burjor Antia, Behram Dastur and M. P. Colah) and myself, was held at the BPP board room to discuss the agenda of the 8th January meeting, and the concerns voiced in the local media [see page 26], regarding a ‘Zarathushti World Body’.

On Jan. 8th, the *World Body deliberation meeting* continued at the Westend Hotel with the same individuals as the January 6th meeting, plus the traditional section of our community represented by Dasturji Dr. K. Jamasp Asa, Khojeste Mistree, Tehnaz Parakh and Adi Doctor. Dissertations by the invitees were tabled, which solicited the recognition of the Parsi/Irani/Iranian Zarathushti identity during the formation of the world body.

Discussions involved recognition of the *IZO/WZOI/WZOF “consensual structure”* of ‘One World Body’ as developed after the January 2003 Mumbai meeting, now agreed upon in principle by ZTFE, FEZANA, FPZAI (BPP) and International Board members of WZO, with future course of action being planned. The FEZANA

Working Group report of August 2003 was referenced during the discussions.

Other individuals, including senior BPP officials, Sarosh Bana of WZO India, Behram Pastakia (president, ZAMWI) and Cyrus Rivetna (ZAC-Chicago) were also present. A tentative followup meeting of the elected leaders group is planned for the first week in July 2004, in London.

Informal discussions were held earlier, during the congress in Pune, with BPP trustees Dadi Engineer and Mrs. Silloo Kavarana and Dadi Mistry of WZO –Delhi.

On January 9th, I had a **meeting with FPZAI (the Indian Federation)** secretary, Keki Gandhi, in New Delhi to go over the deliberations of the January 6th and 8th meetings. Similar discussions were undertaken by me, with Rumi Sethna and Sammy Bhivandiwalla of **WZO-UK**, and Dorab Mistry of **ZTFE-UK** in London on January 11th.

A detailed joint report from ZTFE, FEZANA, FPZAI (BPP) and WZO will be forthcoming from BPP, the host of the above meetings.

Post Note to trip report: Though world body formation has been ongoing for over a decade, a '**consensual IZO/WZOF/WZOI model**' has evolved only since the January 2003 Mumbai meeting. The four major participants, FPZAI/BPP, ZTFE, FEZANA and WZO have embarked on a path of coming together as One World Body. As we come to the table to develop the charters of WZOF, WZOI and IZO, based on agreement under a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding, we believe that our global community has truly come up with a formula for harmony and peaceful progressive co-existence.

We are cognizant of the various needs of our worldwide community, and paying attention to concerns expressed by sections of our community at both ends of the theological spectrum.

We will deliberate further on this at the next AGM in Tampa, Florida. ■



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.

Little things matter

*Not in the clamor of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves, are the triumphs and defeats.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Upon my arrival in the USA, acquaintances suggested that I anglicize or at least shorten my name. "How about Dorothy, Doris, Dee...?" they offered, "so much easier to remember and spell," or "Hey, how about Dinah, or Diana, that sounds so much like Dinaz."

"No, thank you." I was sympathetic but adamant. Even though my name is often mispronounced and misspelled, it will not be changed. The 'zed' in 'Dinaz', was enough to cause consternation for some Americans, so with a little sadness, the British 'zed' mutated to the American 'zee' – but 'Dinaz' stayed.

My Parsi name is an integral part of me and is my Zarathushti badge of honor; it is as good as wearing the Asho Farohar necklace or tie pin. Besides when others ask "What an unusually pretty name. Where does it come from?" I am given a perfect

opportunity to share my Zarathushti heritage.

I am often reminded of stories from Ellis Island, where immigrants from Eastern Europe were asked to shorten their long surnames, which often contained more consonants than vowels. Most, in their eagerness to become true 'Americans', did so. Now the second and the third generations are claiming their lost, true heritage and reverting back to the names their forefathers carried to the American shores.

My name is still and will ever be foreign to most and that is fine with me. I still get unsolicited mail addressed to Mr. Dinaz Kutar Rogers, yet mail from back home, is Dinaz Daniel Rogers – which used to draw chuckles from my husband and his family. "Your middle name is a man's name?" We were all getting lessons in cultural customs. I had to explain to all here,

that for us, a woman's middle name is her father's and upon marriage, her husband's. So I adopted my maiden name as my middle name.

I am quite aware that in business and other aspects of life a name change can be expedient. A friend of mine who owns a travel agency is now Kay instead of Khorshed. It was the surname Unwalla, that gave the 'Parsi' away in State Farm's Long Term Care TV commercial. I am still trying to figure out, if Russi in 'Russi Taylor' is Parsi, when the credits roll at the end of "The Simpsons".

What we call ourselves is a personal, private decision. Still, preserving our names and giving Zarathushti (Parsi, Irani, Persian) names to our children, is a potent way to contribute to our goal of enduring till the end of time. Or we can compromise and give each child one Parsi/Irani and one 'American' name, e.g. Daraius Daniel or Diane Armaity.

Firdowsi said, "I have toiled and drudged for thirty long years and have revived the glories of Old Persia with my poetry." Taking inspiration from him, we too can do our small part to reinvigorate the richness and brilliance of our faith and culture and pass it on to our children.

Lest we forget, upon the Arab conquest of Iran and other countries, besides conversion to Islam, Arabic language and Arabic names were imposed on the conquered peoples. Even though Zarathushti-Iran took seven years to conquer, contain, subjugate and a couple of centuries to convert, Iran kept her language but with the Arabic script. Even in this day and age, quite a few Iranians still cling to their ancient heritage by holding on to 'true Iranian' names with great pride and consider their Persian names, an honor and tribute to their ancestors. Some cite the fact that their names are to be found in the *Shah Nameh*!

What else can we do to support and perpetuate our heritage? Perhaps, personalized car license plates, like *PARSI*, your first name *RUSTOM* or last name *GOWADIA*, or one of our beloved nicknames, *BAWAJI*, would

be a great way to broadcast and express our unique legacy.

When missionaries come to my door, I tell them politely that I know a lot about their faith, but would they like to know something about mine? "Zoro... Zara... what?" I give them, and anyone else who shows interest in our faith, a pamphlet by Rohinton Rivetna "*Zoroastrians: Followers of an Ancient Faith in a Modern World*".

A long time ago I used to lament that there were no books on our religion. All I had to do was ask and look! Keep faith-related books in your library and share them with your family and others. When a school textbook mentions our religion, however briefly, write a thank-you note to the publishers. Remind and inform those who omit our faith or lump it with "Others" like voodooism.

Write letters to Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti authors, thanking them for devoting their time and talent to our faith, history and culture. Last December, I discovered a book, "*In Search of Zarathustra: the First Prophet and The Ideas That Changed The World*", by Paul Kriwaczek. I e-mailed my thanks and appreciation to the author. He is one of the two authors, who has replied, along with Dr. Mary Boyce.

Share *FEZANA Journal*, *Parsiana*, and other such publications with

others. FEZANA's recent publication, "*The Legacy of Zarathushtra*" edited by Roshan Rivetna showcases our religion and community in a very attractive way. The article "*Telling Others Who We Are*" [*FEZANA Journal*, Winter 2001] has many excellent suggestions about disseminating information about our faith.

I suggest we write to PBS or BBC and ask if they would produce a documentary on our religion and our people, as they have for other faiths. Let us keep an eye on how Daraius III, and the Persians in general, will be portrayed in the upcoming motion picture about Alexander. Invite the local news media to navjote or wedding ceremonies. Keep an open mind, be informed, be curious, speak up. We accomplish, in proportion to what we attempt.

Dissension and dissatisfaction exist amongst us over certain sensitive issues, but let us think of what our brethren in Iran have endured – we in India have had it so good, especially with freedom of religion. Through good times and through horror, our distant and not-so-distant ancestors persevered to keep the flames of the religion of Zarathushtra burning bright. We reap the benefits of their strength. Let us continue in their noble footsteps for the generations to come. ■



TRADITIONS by Dinaz Kutar Rogers

*Ah, the stories from our heritage vast
Are a sumptuous and nostalgic repast.
They spring deep from within the heart
And will live on after we depart.*

*Westerner, Iranian or India's Parsi
English, Russian, Gujarati or Farsi.
Enchant us with at least one story
You must have in you – your own glory
In each heart, an heirloom – song, poetry, or prose
Come, broadcast your fragrant, ancestral rose.*

In their father's footsteps

Like generations of family before them, Mississauga brothers entered Zoroastrian priesthood. Teens balance homework, basketball and religious duties.

by *Aparita Bhandari*

... Much like the faith that's enjoying a bit of rejuvenation, especially in North America, the Zoroastrian community is finding new ways to address the shortage of priests.

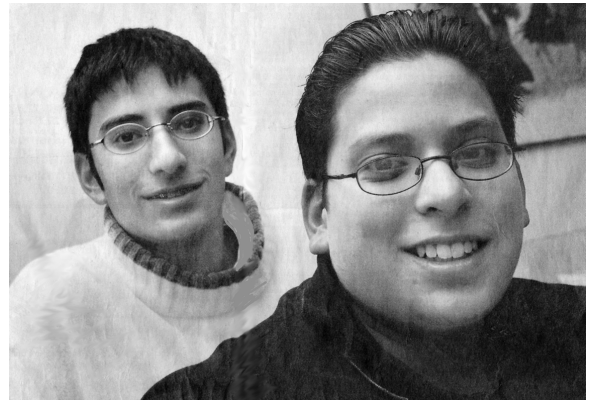
For Zaheer and Farhad, the decision to undergo the navar ceremony was never in question. Their father is a mobed, and the tradition has been handed down for generations even on their mother's side.

In the Zoroastrian faith, fire is sacred, as it is conceived as the incarnation of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda is God and the creator of the universe in the Zoroastrian faith,

regarded by some as the oldest surviving monotheistic religion ...

This year, Zoroastrians across the globe, in association with UNESCO, are celebrating the 3,000th anniversary of Zoroastrian culture.

"Zarathushtrianism is more of a philosophy that became a religion," says Jehan Bagli, a priest and president of the North American Mobed Council, "It was the first monotheistic religion propounded by anybody."



BERNARD WEIL, TORONTO STAR

Three years ago, Zaheer Bulsara, 16, and his brother, 14, travelled to India for the month-long preparation and ceremony to be Zoroastrian priests.

FROM TORONTO STAR, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2003.



NEWSDAY PHOTO/MIA AIGOTTI

Farokh Hirjibehedin, his wife Pouru, son Cyrus, and in-laws Pervin and Homi Neku

... Far from ancient Persia where the religion began, the faithful continue the traditions ... This time of year, leading up to Navroz, is perhaps the most solemn for the Parsis ... The 10 days before the New Year are when the "souls of our dear departed are invited with utmost respect to visit us in this world," says Ervad Pervez Patel. The community will mark Navroz with prayers, a festive meal and entertainment at the darb-e-mehr in Pomona ...

"What I personally miss is having an agiary close by," says Yasmin Ghadiali ... "In Bombay, that is how I started my day. It's just a very peaceful, solemn place."

Commitment to handing down the faith is evident in the family of Homi Neku, 90. Three generations gather regularly for evening prayers in their New Hyde Park home ... Neku reads from the Avesta as the diva, or holy lamp, flickers.

LIFESTYLES FAITH

FROM NEWSDAY LONG ISLAND, SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 2003

A Holy New Year

For Zoroastrians from India and Pakistan, August is a solemn time of renewal and blessing

By Lavina Melwani

Zarathushtra's Conception of Good and Evil

by Cyrus R. Mehta

About Morning Prayers at Harvard. *A service of Morning Prayers has been held daily at Harvard since its founding in 1636. Held in Appleton Chapel, the service consists of a brief address given by members and friends of the University, with music provided by the Morning Choir. This service, designed to enable students and faculty to attend nine o'clock classes, is open to all. This article is excerpted from an address given by Dr. Cyrus R. Mehta, at the Morning Prayers service on Friday, October 16, 1998. Dr. Mehta is the Zarathushti representative to the United Ministry at Harvard.*

A theological puzzle

A fundamental theological puzzle often posed in one form or another is this: "How could a benevolent, all wise, all merciful Creator permit the existence of evil?" We shall explore Zarathushtra's approach to this puzzle as expounded in the Gathas.

To set the stage, let us try to imagine how the world might have appeared at the dawn of civilization, when our ancestors had barely evolved from the animal to the human mentality. It is reasonable to assume that concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral behavior were not yet firmly established in their collective consciousness. People acted on impulse with very little thought for the consequences of their actions on others. This did not seem in the least incongruous at a time when the very concepts of morality and ethics were in a primitive state.

Gradually, as people began to identify first with their family, then with their community, then with their tribe, their conscience was awakened. They became aware of doing good to others and, by contrast of

doing harm to others as well. In this way, good and evil emerged simultaneously in their minds, each depending on the other for its very existence. Zarathushtra captures this emergence beautifully in the *Ahunaavaiti Gatha* [Ys. 30.3]:

Now at the dawn of life the Twin Spirits, which were dormant at first, did unfold themselves.

In their thoughts, in their words, and in their deeds they are of two kinds — on the one hand Better and on the other hand Worse.

And between these two, the Wise discriminate rightly; not so the Unwise.

In this verse Zarathushtra captures the moment at which one's sleeping conscience is awakened. We become aware that for every thought, word and deed there are two choices; a better choice and a worse choice. And it is we alone who decide, through discrimination, which choice to make. If we are wise we discriminate rightly, if not we make the wrong choice.

Zarathushtra refers to the two choices as twins (*yema*). This is important. It implies that they emerge together and that it is impossible to conceive of one without the

other. The moment we become aware of good, that very moment we also become aware of evil. Can one conceive of strength except in relation to weakness? Can one conceive of life except in relation to death?

“ He exists in our hearts and illumines our minds with this ability to distinguish between right and wrong. ”

There is an episode in the old television series, *The Twilight Zone*, which demonstrates the absurdity of a world with only good and no evil in it. Here is a brief rendering of the story as narrated by my friend Ray Kurzweil:

"The gambler had not expected to be here; but on reflection, he thought yes, he had shown some kindness in his time. This place was more beautiful and satisfying than he had imagined. Everywhere there were magnificent crystal chandeliers, the finest handmade carpets, the most sumptuous foods, and yes the most beautiful women, who seemed intrigued with their new heaven mate.

"He tried his hand at roulette, and amazingly his number came up time after time. He tried the gaming tables, and his luck was nothing short of remarkable. He won game after game. Indeed his winnings were causing quite a stir, attracting much excitement by the attentive staff, and by the beautiful women.

"This continued day after day, week after week, with the gambler winning every game, accumulating bigger and bigger winnings. Everything was going his way. Week after week, month after month, the gambler's winning streak remained unbreakable.

"After a while, this started to get tedious. The gambler was getting restless, the winning was starting to lose its meaning. But nothing changed. He

[Continued on page 97]



Cyrus R. Mehta, PhD, is founder and president of Cytel Software Corporation and Adjunct Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard School of Public Health. In 2003, Dr. Mehta was recognized as "Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur" by the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce [see page 112].



The great bird, *simorgh*, with rich, colorful plumage, raises the white-haired boy Zal on Mr. Elburz. [PHOTO: DETAIL FROM FOLIO 63V OF THE HOUGHTON SHAH NAMEH, COURTESY "A KING'S BOOK OF KINGS", BY STUART GARY WELCH, THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.]

The simorgh raises Zal

For years, Salm prayed to God for this one gift and finally, God granted him a son.

When the nurse came to tell Salm that a woman of his court had borne him a boy, Salm was overjoyed and rushed to the woman's chamber to greet his son. When he saw the infant, Salm drew back in

shock! Smiling at him he saw a rosy cheeked, beautiful baby boy with big brown eyes, but *long white hair*.

"O God what is my sin that you have given me a son with an old man's mane?" Salm wailed. His grief knew no bounds. Salm took his son to Mount Elburz and abandoned him at the foot of the mount.

A *simorgh* (a great bird) saw the helpless baby and took him to her nest. Over the years as Salm lived with his unhappy secret, the simorgh took care of the baby as if it were her own son.

Eventually, Salm realized that he should have been grateful for God's gift and not abandoned his son as he had at the foot of Mount Elburz. He prayed to God for forgiveness and went in search of his son. When he found the simorgh, he thanked the great bird for her kindness, and asked forgiveness from his son. The simorgh had named the boy Dastan, and she was sad to see him leave.

When Dastan said he did not wish to leave her, the simorgh comforted him. "Dastan", she said, "I shall always love you. Take this feather from my wing and keep it with you

SUNDAY STORIES

7. Zal and Rudabeh

By Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi

A great bird, *simorgh*, raises the baby Zal on Mt. Elburz. When he grows up, Zal falls in love with the beautiful Rudabeh, who was, unfortunately descended from the evil king Zohak.

One of Manoucher's most loyal warriors was Salm, the son of Nariman. Salm was a noble man who had given his word to Feraydun that he would serve and protect Iran. It was known throughout Iran that Salm was so beloved of the king, that he got anything he asked for. There was one thing Salm desired above all else – he wanted a son to carry on his family's name and continue the line of great warriors into which he had been born.

forever. If you find yourself in trouble, fling it into a fire, and in haste I shall come to your aid.”

Dastan took the feather and returned to Iran. There, he received a hero's welcome for having survived so many years in the wild, and because of his hair, he came to be known as *Zal-e-Zar* (the Golden Graybeard).

Zal's love for Rudabeh

One day, Zal and his friends went on a hunting trip. They traveled far and found themselves on the border of Kabol, a kingdom ruled by King Mehrab, who was descended from Zohak, the evil king of Iran who had been deposed by Feraydun. Mehrab extended the hand of friendship to Zal, and invited him for a feast at his home.

Zal politely declined the invitation, saying, “My lord, ask me anything but this and it shall be done. My father, Salm, and his King Manoucher, the lord of Iran will not look kindly upon my entering the home of one who is descended from the demon king Zohak.” Mehrab understood Zal's concern and went away.

Over the next few days, Zal met the king and his men more frequently in the country. There Zal heard that Mehrab had a beautiful daughter called Rudabeh. A poet from Kabol told Zal [1],

*In purdah, and unseen by anyone,
He has a daughter
lovelier than the sun.
Lashes like ravens' wings
protect a pair of eyes like wild
narcissi hidden there;
If you would seek the moon,
it is her face; if you seek musk,
her hair's its hiding place;
She is a paradise arrayed in
splendor, glorious, graceful,
elegantly slender.*

From that day on, Rudabeh occupied all of Zal's thoughts.

In the meantime, Rudabeh had also heard of Zal and his glorious deeds. She turned down the proposals of other kings to marry her, and prayed for a chance to be with Zal. Her companions laughed at her and reminded her of Zal's gray hair; but Rudabeh would not be dissuaded. She said to her companions, [1]

*Oh may my heart admit
no one but him;
And see you mention to me
none but him;
I do not love him for his hair and
face, But for his virtue
and his godly grace.*

When the companions realized that Zal and Rudabeh were in love with each other, they arranged for a secret meeting between them. At that meeting, they decided to marry each other, even though they knew that Salm and Manoucher would not bless the union because Rudabeh was descended from Zohak. Zal promised to convince Salm and Manoucher that Rudabeh should not have to pay for Zohak's misdeeds.

So it came to be that these two lovers set out on the path that fate had chosen for them, not knowing what lay ahead, but certain that each would risk everything for the other in the name of love. ■

Next time: Zal and Rudabeh's worlds collide.

[1] “*The Lion and the Throne*”, by Ehsan Yarshater, Dick Davis and Stuart Gary Welch, Mage Publishers, 1998.

Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi lives in New York City. She writes as a hobby.

Bam ...

[Continued from page 37]

volunteers to design and execute a coordinated rebuilding plan, for Bam and possibly, the nearby, equally earthquake-vulnerable Zarathushti strongholds of Yazd and Kerman.

SOURCES

Zarathushti casualty figures are from Kasra Kasravi, of Sacramento, CA, who was born in Bam, and is Dariush Kasravi's brother; and confirmed by FEZANA treasurer Rashid Mehin, in communication with Mr. Nazari, president of the Zartoshti Anjoman in Kerman and others. The story of Bam and its business potential is from interviews and emails with Parviz Varjavand and postings on creatingawareness@yahoo.com. ■

Good and Evil ...

[Continued from page 95]

just kept on winning every game, until one day, the now anguished gambler turned to the angel in charge, and said he couldn't take it anymore. Heaven was not for him after all. He had figured he was destined for the 'other place' anyway, and indeed that is where he wanted to be.

“ ‘But this *is* the other place’, came the reply.”

We long to live in a carefree world where everything goes our way effortlessly. Yet, in such a world our triumphs would lose their meaning. Success without failure, happiness without misery, life without death; all these are contradictions. Neither twin can exist without its opposite mate.

Zarathushtra perceived this clearly. He acknowledged that good and evil co-exist on this earth; that evil and suffering are stark realities of human life. By that very acceptance he understood why the all wise Ahura Mazda should allow this state of affairs? It was so that we might have the freedom to make our own mistakes, suffer the consequences, learn from the suffering, and eventually make the right choice.

Only if evil co-exists with good do we have the freedom of choice and the opportunity to struggle against evil. It is only through free choice and self-effort that we can conquer weakness, fear, and all other forms of evil. In this sense, Ahura Mazda is neither Good nor Evil.

He represents the Wisdom and the power of discrimination whereby we can freely choose one path or the other. He exists in our hearts and illumines our minds with this ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Thus did the great prophet Zarathushtra resolve the fundamental dualism of good and evil.

“I shall take the soul to the House of Song, with the help of the Good Mind Knowing the blissful rewards of Ahura Mazda for righteous deeds. As long as I have power and strength I shall teach all to seek for Truth and Light.” [Ahunavaiti Gatha]

Great men show their greatness by the way they treat little men

On a whim, Dady Banaji, a third year architecture student at Sir J. J. School in Mumbai, wrote off a letter to a Benjamin H. Swig, whom he read about in the February 1956 issue of Fortune magazine. Dady wrote about his ambition to pursue his studies in the USA.

To his surprise, within a few days, Dady received a letter from the millionaire advising him to apply for admission to Stanford University, closing with "Meanwhile I am making inquiries to ascertain if anything can be done to help you." Dady was not aware that Benjamin had donated \$500,000 to Stanford.

Even before he heard back from Stanford, he received a letter from Benjamin: "They advised me you have been accepted. Congratulations. Please contact me when you get here. We will be glad to help you obtain further financial aid ...". Soon thereafter, Dady arrived in California and visited Benjamin.

Benjamin H. Swig was owner of Fairmont Hotel, atop Nob Hill in San Francisco. Rising from humble Jewish background, he was on the board of 87 social and religious organizations, president of seven major businesses, had nine synagogue affiliations, six honorary degrees, and dozens of awards.

Soon after the meeting, Dady received a note saying, "It was very nice to have you come in the office the other day. I hope you are getting settled ...".

Dady often wonders why this busy man had gone out of his way to help a student from the other side of the globe, whom he had never seen or known.

Maybe its just that **truly great men show their greatness by the way they treat little men.** ■

by Minocheher Damania, Mumbai

READERS' FORUM

Readers may submit letters (under 250 words) to the editor on topics of general interest. The Journal reserves the right to edit materials for suitability, clarity and space.

On "Legacy"

FEZANA's "*The Legacy of Zarathushtra*" is **the greatest book I have ever read** on our religion and community; short, sweet and to the point. I give a copy to all interested persons.

Shapur K. Irani
Indianapolis, Indiana

Parsis in Kenya

Last September I was in Nairobi, Kenya, where I came across "*The Legacy of Zarathushtra*", an excellent book which fills in a much-needed gap in the information sector about the religion; and the *FEZANA Journal* [Spring 2003] paying tribute to Zarathushti sports persons, also a much-overdue recognition.

Your readers may find it interesting that the Zarathushtis' zeal and love of sport also extended to East Africa, where one man, **Burjorji Commisariat**, through his love and effort, established cricket on a very strong footing in the country.

While in Nairobi, I met the curator of the Asian African Heritage Exhibition, in the National Museum. It finally recognizes the role of the 'Asians' – as all Indians in East Africa were known – in the development of the country, from the time they were brought to build the railway line, until independence of Kenya.

The curator has asked me to do a piece on the Parsis in Kenya, which will form a part of the exhibition in Nairobi, and later in India. When completed, I will send a copy to FEZANA to hold in trust and archive for use by any persons undertaking research about Zarathushtis.

Kersi Rustomji
Lavington, NSW, Australia
rustomji@austarnet.com.au

Making ceremonies more meaningful

We have preserved our religious traditions as well as the language in which we pray, for centuries after we lost our empire. The older generations tended to accept all traditions, and found them sufficient to inspire their faith and seek spiritual solace, even though they did not understand what they prayed.

In the new world, however, our children evince a ceaseless spirit of inquiry and want to know what we are praying and doing. As other faiths are actively trying, especially on this continent, to woo converts to their own religious ideology, we will lose our children to them (and a few we have already lost) if we do not **inspire them with the theological significance and sound understanding** of at least our most basic rituals, namely the initiation, wedding and funeral ceremonies.

What needs to be done, is not so much to change them, but devise "add-ons" that will bring out their beautiful significance and relevance.

Navjote. My teacher, Dasturji Daboo used to have every navjotee repeat certain English translations after the navjote was performed. Even in Sasanian times, such efforts were made by priests. Thus the *Hormazd Khodae* prayer in Pahlavi was added as a rough translation of the Avestan *Kemna Mazda* prayer.

Further, as Parsis have the navjote performed before the teenage years, unlike the Iranians who opt for it after reaching adulthood, it may be appropriate for them to go through a second navjote in a simple but serious vein as an adult, after familiarizing oneself with the basic tenets.

Wedding. The entire wedding ceremony was conducted in Pahlavi, as it

was essential that one entered the contract with full understanding. Iranians have revised their ceremony; they question why Parsi priests ask the bride's parents if they received "2000 silver dhirams minted in the town of Nishapur" and "two gold dinars" from the groom, even though we left Nishapur at least a thousand years ago. We will be only following our Sasanian tradition if we make our prayers understandable.

Every afringan begins and ends in Pahlavi, so that the Sasanians could follow. As I translated the wedding prayers, it dawned on me that it was an attempt by the Sasanians at translating the famous Gathic wedding chapter [Ys. 53]. So it will not be inappropriate to reintroduce the prophet's own advice in our ceremony.

Funeral. The funeral ceremony has also seen changes – from reciting *Ushtavaiti* to *Ahunavaiti Gatha*; and the way it was recited is different.

It is unfortunate that the only time many of us will ever "hear" the full *Ahunavaiti Gatha* is when we lie dead. Even so, it is better for the soul to hear the prophet's own words, before the body is finally laid at rest, and I hope we keep this tradition. This recitation is very intimately personal in nature, when the soul of the deceased comes to grasp with what difference his life made to this world. Hence it may make sense to recite it in private, in the presence of nearest relatives, and arrange for eulogies, and hymns during the funeral afterwards.

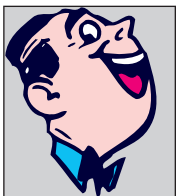
It should be noted that unlike past generations, future generations, at least on this continent, will not find these ceremonies sufficient to hold their allegiance to the religion, unless they are provided a thorough appreciation of the theology.

*Er. Kersey H. Antia
Orland Park, Illinois*



Collector's item?

A reader points out the error in the stamp issued by the Maldivian Islands [FEZANA Journal, Winter 2003, p. 19] showing Zubin Mehta with the baton in his *left* hand and the violinists also all *left-handed*? Could this be a possible collector's item? ■



Laugh and be Merry

By Jamshed Udvardia



A CURE FOR THE COLD.

Viola, the sweet and kind church organist, was 85 and had never been married. The pastor came to call on her one afternoon early in the Spring. She welcomed him into her Victorian parlor and invited him to have a seat while she prepared a little hot tea.

The young pastor noticed a glass bowl sitting on top of her old pump organ filled with water, in which floated, of all things, a condom. Imagine his shock and surprise. Surely, Miss Viola had flipped! When she returned with tea and cookies, they began to chat. The pastor kept looking at the bowl with the strange floater. Soon he couldn't contain himself any longer.

Pointing to the bowl he said: "Miss Viola, I wonder if you would tell me about that?"

"Oh Yes," she replied, "Isn't it wonderful? I was walking downtown last fall and I found this little package on the ground. The directions said to put it on the organ, keep it wet, and it would prevent disease ... and you know ... I haven't had a cold all winter."

[Submitted by Rustom B. Engineer, Houston, TX]

QUOTES

"I must say I find television very educational. The minute someone turns it on, I go into the library and read a book." and "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend; and inside a dog, it's too dark to read." - *Groucho Marx*

"I haven't failed. I found 10,000 ways that won't work." - *Ben Franklin*

"You're only young once, but you can always be immature." - *Dave Barry*

"If you can't change your mind, are you sure you have one?" - *Anon*

[Quotes submitted by Dinaz Kutar Rogers, Albany, Oregon]



The Varahramian family with God's gift of five children; four boys – Khodadad, Jamshid, Rostum and Ardeshir, and a girl – Gauhar.

The story of Shahvarahram Izad

by Manijeh Deboo
Laguna Woods, California

I am the fourth generation of Hormaz-Bahman and his wife Lal-Espandiar Varahramian, “Ravan shad bad.”

Approximately 140 years ago, the couple lived in the house at Shaibani Street in South Tehran. This house, called “Shavarahram Izad” is a very holy place for Zarathushtis. It is said this house had a decorative pond with gold and silver fish, and a holy well where a white snake would appear often to have a drink of water.

Hormaz and Lal did not have any children. They would often come to the holy well, light a divo, put loban and sandalwood on the fire and pray

to Ahura Mazda to grant them many children and a large family.

One day Hormaz fell asleep on a bench near the well and had a dream. He heard a loud echo-ing voice saying, “This is a very holy place, keep it always clean, keep the fire burning and always say the prayers. This property belongs to the Zarathushti people for worship.”

He woke up from his sleep and discussed the dream with his wife. The couple decided to move out and donate the property to the Anjuman of Tehran for the use of the Zarathushti community. Later, with the help of other donations, the Atash Bahram was built on that site. ■

Memories of Bombay, from a neighbor in New Jersey

Excerpts from the diary of a World War II veteran

**by Khursheed Bapasola
Voorhees, New Jersey**

I met Mary Ellen Hodes-Wood when I was selling Girl Scout cookies door-to-door in our neighborhood with my daughter Sherry.

When I mentioned that my accent was from Bombay, Mary Ellen told me she was working on compiling a book of her father's letters. When I mentioned that we were Parsis, she was very excited, "You are a God-send!". She had read about Parsis and Bombay in her father's letters and wanted me to help her understand some of the terms, which I was happy to do.

I, in turn, was thrilled that someone in my neighborhood knew about Parsis. On Navroze I took her some falooda and she invited us for dessert on passover the following week. Now I have a new friend in the USA, one with whom I have a link back to the town of my childhood.

Mrs. Hodes-Wood was kind enough to share some excerpts from her father's diary for FEZANA Journal, written while Lt. Colonel Hodes, who was serving in Assam during World War II, visited Bombay.

March 3, 1943:

I went off with my Parsee driver. He certainly is proud of the Parsees ... They are all well-to-do, we saw some beautiful Parsee homes ...

A Parsee acted as our guide ... He was dressed in his long black coat and bowler hat, without a rim, with red fluting around the edge, the symbol of all Parsees. This man is an excellent scholar in English and had a nice English library.

FEZANA JOURNAL – SPRING 2004

In memory, everything seems to happen to music. - *Tennessee Williams*

Memory is the thread on which the beads of man are strung, making the personal identity necessary to moral action. - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Nobody belongs to us, except in memory. - *John Updike*

The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future too. - *Eugene O'Neill*

March 16, 1943:

I met a wonderful old Parsee gentleman ... he was 72 years old and as keen and intelligent as a youngster. He spoke English well and knew all about American history. And had just read "Gone with the Wind" ... he was a wonderful guide. Full of stories about India and his hopes for the future of India. The front of his house had a beautiful design dusted in powder of different colors upon the ground. They must have a stencil thru which they dust powder... It was a good-luck sign – his daughter-in-law had a birthday and this was in her honor. Primitive, medieval, but so honest and sincere.

May 20, 1944:

RAF (airplane) through Nagpur to Bombay ... Mody brought me home in his Chrysler... Also, one of the most gorgeous homes in this vicinity belongs to his brother *Sir* Mody ... This clan of Parsees must have plenty of the old "Rail".

From Memoir written in 1989:

In India is a group of individuals very much akin to our American Quakers. They are a very small part of the Indian population, but they are an elitist group. They are also in large measure the backbone of industrial India.

At the seacoast in suburban Bombay, I saw what looked like a huge silo ... The top was open to sky and was rimmed by what seemed to me a thick fur cuff. On closer inspection, I realized this fur-like rim was a cluster of huge vultures all sitting and perched on top of the "Well of Loneliness"... a Parsee cemetery... In no time at all the bodies were stripped clean... the skeleton fell through the grates... in this way the body finally returned to the earth that bore it... I was deeply moved by this experience.

I have come to know many Parsees, a superior race who have made the world a better place.

I am sharing this with FEZANA Journal, so that my fellow North American Parsi Zarathushtis can be proud, here in the new world, and come to be known, in North America as well, as those "who have made the world a better place". ■

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DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof

State of New York, } ss: In the District Court of the United States.
Southern District of New York, }

I, Jamshed Ardeshir Irani, aged 22 years, occupation student, do declare on oath that my personal description is: Color white, complexion dark, height 5 feet 8 inches, weight 120 pounds, color of hair black, color of eyes black, other visible distinctive marks none.

I was born in Yezd, Persia on the 4th day of Jan., anno Domini 1898; I now reside at 8 East 3rd St., New York City, N. Y. (Give number and street.)

I emigrated to the United States of America from Charbourg on the vessel Olympic; (If the alien arrived otherwise than by vessel, the character of conveyance or name of transportation company should be given.) my last foreign residence was India; I am not married; the name of my wife is _____; she was born at _____ and now resides at _____.

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to The Shah of Persia, of whom I am now a subject; I arrived at the port of N.Y., in the State of N.Y., on or about the 4th day of July, anno Domini 1920; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein: SO HELP ME GOD.

X Jamshed Ardeshir Irani (Original signature of declarant)

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court

On the Wall of Honor at Ellis Island

According to his landing papers [above], upon arrival at Ellis Island, on July 4th 1920, 22-year-old **Jamshed Ardeshir Irani**, who was of "white" color and "dark" complexion, born in "Yezd, Persia", declared his intention to "renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity" to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and to The Shah of Persia", and further stated: "I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America ..."

Little more is known about Jamshed Irani. Sadly, he died soon thereafter, from an illness, during a visit to India, while still in his early twenties.

It was much later that his nieces and nephews – Moti Irani of Birmingham, MI, Jamshed and Ardeshir Irani of Toronto (children of brother Jehangir) and Dilnavaz Khory and Ardeshir Irani of Toronto (children of brother Feredoon), decided to commemorate the memory of their courageous ancestor, who was among the very earliest Zarathushti immigrants to America. In 1986, Moti approached "The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation", who have now engraved Jamshed Ardeshir Irani's name on the American Immigrant Wall of Honor at Ellis Island.

- by Roshan Rivetna

[Read the fascinating stories of other early Zarathushti immigrants to USA and Canada in "Coming to North America", FEZANA Journal, Spring 1997]



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WZCC Business Digest

An idea whose time has come. We constantly remind ourselves that the potential the WZCC holds is limitless and unparalleled. There are few, if any, communities endowed with the resources, both human and material, that our community possesses. Providentially, we are situated in every corner of the globe, poised and positioned to take advantage of globalization and the watershed economic transformations taking place, especially in India. WZCC is an idea whose time has come. Thanks to the foresight of many, it is now squarely on the radar screen.

WZCC AGM and Board Meeting was held in December 2003 in Toronto [see page 112]. **Natalie Vania** [nvania@malch.com] is the new chapter chair of the San Francisco chapter; we look forward to the next WZCC AGM and business conference in that fair city, just preceding the next North American congress.

The website (www.wzcc.net), continually improved through the efforts of **Homi Davier** (courtesy of **Avesta Computing**, New Jersey), now offers Yellow Pages. **All business persons and professionals are urged to enter their profiles.** Contact Davier@CapricornTravel.com for instructions.

Visit to India. During my visit to India in December 2003, it was most gratifying to see the Mumbai and Delhi chapters

in action, under the enlightened leadership of: India region president **Minoo Shroff** and secretary **Kersi Commissariat**; WZCC director **Dadi Mistry**; Mumbai chapter chair **Kersi Limathwalla** and secretary **Yazdi Tantra**; and Delhi chapter chair **Rustom Daroga** and secretary **Veera Mavalwalla**.

The new **Pune chapter** was inaugurated in November, with chapter chair **Adi Engineer** (Engineeradiengr@hotmail.com).

A session on "Leadership and Entrepreneurship" at the **World Youth Congress** in Pune, inspired the youth to consider the business option. WZCC (India) now has **permanent office space**, courtesy of the Bombay Parsee Panchayet (at R. N. Gamadia Polyclinic, #8, Gamadia Colony, Tardeo, Mumbai 400 007, tel: 2492 3870), furnished with a computer system, courtesy of Dadi Mistry; **Kersi Wadia** has been appointed to assist with worldwide membership.

A Trade Delegation to Dubai, UAE is planned for April 2004. WZCC (Middle East) regional director Meher Bhesania (meher_bhesania@hotmail.com), has invited Zarathushtis to explore opportunities in UAE.

WZCC (Australasia) spearheaded by Sydney businessman **Phil Madon** (pars09@yahoo.com) is planning an inaugural function.

Contact WZCC corporate secretary Edul Daver at (732) 469-1866, daver@acupowder.com or visit www.wzcc.net

Rohinton Rivetna, president, WZCC Rivetna@aol.com, (630) 325-5383.

Visit the Business Directory and Yellow Pages at the WZCC website:

www.wzcc.net

(Website designed, maintained & hosted by Avesta Computing, New Jersey)

For a step-by-step guide to the website, contact website manager Homi Davier at Davier@CapricornTravel.com

Post business news on the Zarathushti business email group: **zchamber@yahoogroups.com**
To subscribe, send an email to: **zchamber-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**

WZCC (India) website

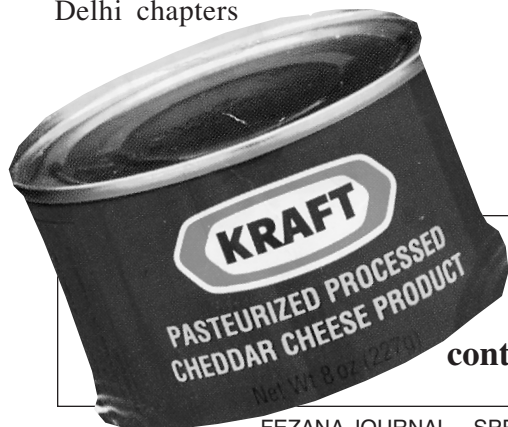
The WZCC website now features a link into the new interactive website launched by WZCC (India).

It includes members' lists-yellow pages, classified ads, message boards, On-Lyne chat, and contacts for doing business with India. Businesses and Professions are welcome to register online and take benefit of interaction through the various forums.

Members and non-members can register their ads free online and interact with each other directly. There are forums where any one can post their views and comments. The site also has interactive chat rooms, giving a whole new meaning to the concept of 'global village' for worldwide Zarathushti businesses.

Please visit the website at **www.wzccindia.on-lyne.com** or enter from the India Chapter link on **www.wzcc.net**. Your comments and suggestions will be most welcome.

Yazdi Tantra, WZCC(India) web manager, yazdi@on-lyne.com.



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WZCC CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

New York chapter (chair Rusi Gandhi, *Rusi@garden.net*) organized a meeting on November 16 at the darbe mehr. Prominent psychologist Patricia Stecker spoke on managing day-to-day stress levels; and Yoga instructor Shernaz Sethna discussed and demonstrated how one can achieve one's full potential by making Yoga a way of life. Delicious lunch was provided by Yasmin and Jamshed Ghadiali. [By Rusi Gandhi]

The Los Angeles Chapter (chair Cowas Patel, *kpimpexp@aol.com*) hosted a general meeting on February 28 at the Woodlands India restaurant. Diana Damkevala, Senior Sales Representative with R. R. Donnelley, presented ways to increase sales and profits through effective marketing. [By Cowas Patel]

The Chicago Chapter (chair Hoshang Karani, *hkarani@msn.com*) has established a **Business Advisory Board (BAB)**, staffed with experienced business persons and professionals in a number of fields (legal, accounting, marketing ...). The Chicago BAB offers its services for consultation and advice to new and existing businesses. Contact yaz@bilimoria.com. ■



Mumbai chapter meeting. Over 100 members and prospective members attended the meeting of the Mumbai chapter of WZCC-India, at the Diplomat Hotel on December 16. *Photo shows from left, program chair Zarine Commissariat, Minoo Mody, Mumbai chapter chairperson Kersi Limathwalla, WZCC president Rohinton Rivetna, India region president Minoo Shroff, Darius Forbes and Jamshed Guzder.*

Keynote speaker **Rohinton Rivetna** spoke of WZCC's potential and promise to be the "engine for the economic well-being and prosperity of our community". **Darius Forbes**, CEO of Forbes Marshall, offered mentoring services to growing entrepreneurs. **Jamshed Guzder** magnanimously donated Rs. 2 lakhs to the Chamber, and was honored as patron-in-chief. WZCC-India director **Minoo Mody**, India region secretary **Kersi Commissariat**, BPP administrator **Homi Mullan** and Mumbai chapter secretary and web manager **Yazdi Tantra**, were felicitated for their painstaking efforts to get the chamber started. A very healthy interactive session followed on the future course of action. ■



Fali Nariman elected to WZCC Honorary Members Guild

The Honorable Fali S. Nariman, M.P. Rajya Sabha, senior advocate, Supreme Court of India, was elected honorary member of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce for 2003. The presentation was made by WZCC president Rohinton Rivetna [center] at a program on December 5 at the Radisson Hotel in Delhi, to felicitate Mr. and Mrs. Nariman [right] and to welcome Rustom E. Daroga [left] as the new chairperson of the Delhi chapter of WZCC. The program was hosted by WZCC director Dady Mistry [second from left], his wife Nergish and chapter secretary Veera F. Mavalwala. The Delhi chapter, inaugurated barely a year ago in January 2003, is an active member of the WZCC network. ■



Clockwise from left, keynote speaker Bomy Boyce of Toronto, and WZCC directors Kobad Zarolia (VP-Operations), Sarosh Collector (treasurer), Homi Davier (VP-International Affairs) and Edul Daver (corporate secretary).

WZCC AGM 2003

The Toronto chapter hosts the second Annual General Meeting of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce at the Toronto Airport Ramada Inn, on November 22, 2003.

By Edul Daver
Corporate Secretary, WZCC



Kobad Zarolia started the day with a **benediction**, and **Jang Engineer** [left] Toronto chapter chair, welcomed the participants.

In his **keynote address**, **Bomy Boyce** described an entrepreneur as someone who takes a vision and makes it a reality with spirit, motivation and calculated risk. He views WZCC as a legacy to our children which would help create the cycle of **success** → **income** → **power** → **confidence** → **more success**.

Sarosh Collector presented the **treasurer's report** and budget; and explained the formula for chapters to reimburse 40% of membership dues collected to WZCC headquarters.

Edul Daver presented the **secretary's report**. Five new directors were elected to the WZCC Board: **Phil Madon** (Australasia region), **Kersi Limathwalla** (India region), **Khodayar Attaie** (Iran region), **Meher Bhe-**

*san*ia (Middle East region) **Hoshang Karani** and **Bomy Boyce**.

Total membership, which was about 100 at the last AGM, is now over 400. The first 250 members who pay their dues for three consecutive years will be recognized as "Founding Members".

Homi Davier presented the **VP-International and IT reports**. The Chamber's primary motive is to encourage networking amongst Zarathushti businesses and for these relationships to nourish and grow with collective strength. Currently there are operating chapters in Chicago, Houston, Mumbai, Delhi, Iran, Los Angeles, Middle East, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, and UK.

Homi gave a demo of the website (www.wzcc.net) and urged all members to register and complete their profiles on the website; and to utilize the 'Update Section' for job related and general business postings. The Yellow Pages will be activated shortly. Homi gave examples of successes achieved as a result of web postings and interactions on the zchamber@yahoogroups.com egroup.

Comprehensive **Regional directors and chapter reports** were submitted outlining the excellent work under way at the chapter level. **Percy Tantra**, representative from the Middle East, and chapter chairs **Rusi Gandhi** (New York), **Hoshang Karani** (Chicago), **Jang Engineer** (Toronto) and **Natalie Vania** (Silicon Valley/San Francisco) were present and highlighted their chapter activities and plans.

In general, every region and chapter operates independently utilizing varying formats, with varying degrees of success. A SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) of chapter duties is being formulated to maintain some uniformity, but without constraining innovativeness. A communication vehicle is being developed for chapter chairs to learn from each other's successes and failures.

Rohinton Rivetna [right] in the **president's report**, explained the WZCC journey from inception to the



Top, Toronto businessman **Farokh Noria** [second from left] presented the 2002 WZCC recognitions to l. to r., **Cyrus R. Mehta** (Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur), **Arda-e-Viraf Minocherhomjee** (Outstanding Zarathushti Professional) and New York Chapter chair **Rusi Gandhi**, accepting on behalf of **Hanoz Gandhi** (Outstanding Young Entrepreneur/Professional). Above, l. to r., **Percy Tantra** (representing Middle East) and chapter chairs **Hoshang Karani** (Chicago) and **Natalie Vania** (Silicon Valley/San Francisco).

present global structure. WZCC has a flat infrastructure, where the chapters, each completely autonomous, are the basic units. The central organization provides a forum for communication and networking. **Recognitions.** The 2003 Honorary Membership was bestowed on **Fali S. Nariman** [see page 111]. The 2002 Recognitions [see photo above and *FEZANA Journal*, Spring 2003] were presented by **Farokh Noria**.

WZCC pins. The idea of a WZCC pin that members could wear with pride was promoted by our beloved late director **Sam Motashaw** of Ger-

many. The pins are now a reality, thanks to **Farokh Noria** who designed, manufactured and donated 1,000 blue and gold pins. The pins are Sam Motashaw's legacy and we shall remember him and his enthusiasm when we wear it.

Business showcase. Three Toronto-based Zarathushti businesses were showcased: **Sorab Pourmandigarian** (**Iran tours**, www.sohrab-rp-tourism.com); **Zarine Baxter** (**Papeterie** - fancy papers and stationery, www.papeterie.ca); and **Jehangir Bhatena's Quick 'n Easy cash loan** business.



Open Forum. A spirited open forum generated some good suggestions: need for better marketing of WZCC; record success stories, lessons learned and chart improvement; piggyback with other Chambers; patronize Zarathushti businesses. Youth present indicated WZCC needed a clearer vision and mission statement, more professional meetings, robust Yellow Pages, and direction on getting started in business.

The 2004 AGM and a business conference will be held one day prior to the 2004 North American Congress in San Jose, CA, December 2004. Chapter chair Natalie Vania will coordinate the business segment – on Silicon Valley success stories and growth strategies. ■

OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

If you know of any opportunities available, please post them in:

- This column, or
- The WZCC e-group
zchamber@yahoo.com,
- The wzcc website
www.wzcc.net

OPPORTUNITIES WANTED

Please assist these Zarathushtis in their job search.

- **Programmer/analyst**, young mobed from Toronto area, is looking for an opening in the IT sector, willing to travel. Visit <http://mehbad.tripod.com> or contact mehbaddastur@yahoo.com.

● **MBA**, University of West Georgia 2003, BBA (University of Bombay) in bookkeeping and accounting. Seeks position in accounting, finance, or economics. Contact mahafrin@hotmail.com, (678) 457-0345.

● I am **studying medicine in Iran** and wish to continue my studies abroad (USA, Canada, Europe). I am looking for a Zoroastrian connected with a university, who can help me in getting admission and financial aid. I will be most grateful. Contact Atoosa at yasnaahoor@yahoo.com.

● **MBA in MIS** from Florida, MBA (marketing) and BS (Mech. Engg), with experience in Management, Information Systems, Marketing, is actively networking for any job leads since his current company is on the verge of closing down. Contact Yezad at yezad1@yahoo.com. ■

NEW BUSINESSES

Naturopathic doctor with practice in Toronto

Roxanna Mirza, daughter of Katy and Freddy Mirza of Toronto, the first Zarathushti to qualify as a naturopathic doctor in Canada, has set up practice in Toronto. After receiving her regulation in Ontario in 2002, Roxanna spent five months in India working with homeopathic doctors and in naturopathic hospitals, and co-edited a book on Pediatrics and Homeopathy, written by the noted Dr. Farokh Master. ■

Package deal for visitors to Mumbai

Enjoy a three nights and four days stay in Mumbai in a double room, double-occupancy, inclusive of all currently applicable taxes, transfers airport/hotel/airport and half-day guided tour by a/c luxury car and daily buffet breakfast at bargain prices: Rs. 14,450 (3-star hotel), Rs. 17,100 (4-star hotel), Rs. 24,000 (5-star hotel). Contact noshirantia@hotmail.com

Opportunities in Dubai, UAE

Dubai (which is about a 3-hour flight from India or a 6-hour flight from UK) has been implementing a strategic plan aimed at diversifying its economy and pursuing policies conducive to foreign investments. According to *Dubai Vision 2010* master plan, the government has identified three major sectors to play a pivotal role – tourism, IT and media – in addition to the traditional industries, trade and services.

The world's leading companies have set up offices in Dubai. Foreign ownership of real estate is a recent development – the creation of two of the world's largest man-made palm-shaped islands, **the Palms**, off the coast, have sent a frenzy of interest around the globe, and buyers are investing as the "world's most desirable location" is still rising from the seabed. Villas on the beach are still priced at affordable rates and can be bought on freehold basis by non-residents.

WZCC (Middle East) is actively advising Zarathushtis about job opportunities and business projects that can be set up in UAE – manufacturing of industrial valves, seafood cans, bio-fertilizer, etc.

Our agenda is to invite Zarathushti businesspersons for investment to this country that is innovation-friendly, protects public interest, is income tax free and creates a winning environment for business. We are here to advocate entrepreneurship and increase productivity. Our mission is to help our Zarathushti businesses and community flourish. It can happen only if WZCC members believe in this vision that we articulate together.

by **Meher Bhesania**
chair, WZCC (Middle East Group)





Delna Bhesania in 2003 "40-under-40" list

Delna Bhesania, 39, founder of **Bardel Animation Ltd.**, was selected to be among its 2003 list of 40 young achievers under 40 years of age, by *Business in Vancouver* magazine. Bhesania is the daughter



of Sheraz and Behram Bhesania of Vancouver. Visit the Bardel website at www.bardelentertainment.com.

Her success-story was reported *Business in Vancouver* [January 2004]:



"Delna Bhesania doesn't fit the mould cut by typical 40-under-40 award winners. She entered animation and founded Bardel Animation Ltd. merely because she wanted a career change after looking after children in a playground.

"She and partner Barry Ward opened shop in a spare room in Bhesania's apartment. "At that point it was just something else to do," said the graduate of Eric Hamber high school. Animation was not her passion or her love: "Sorry to disappoint."

"But that beginning hasn't held her back. She now professes a passion for an industry that has provided her work for nearly two decades. During that time, she and Ward (now her husband) have ridden a reputation for high-quality work and stellar project management to become a company that

works with leading US studios and offers its own animation properties.

"The company has a core staff of 11 and hires help based on the projects it has on the go. Generally, that means between 80 and 150 people are toiling for Bardel at any one time, said Bhesania.

"Bardel has worked with such television and film animation companies as DreamWorks, Fox and Warner Bros. By developing its own product, the company can reap future profits from merchandising, video games and video deals. As Bardel continues to work for others, it has also developed and sold a TV series around the Silverwing trilogy, inked a deal with the MegaBlocs toy company and completed the award-winning *Christmas Orange*.

"To get Bardel to where it is, the CEO and mother of two has eschewed traditional business training in favour of hiring the best." ■

Kaizad Dadyburjor recognized as "Small Business of the Year"

On August 14, 2003, **Kaizad R. Dadyburjor**, president/CEO of



Sigma Systems, Inc. [photo at right below, with VP Bobby Khullar] stepped forward at the awards banquet of the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce to accept his award for the "2003 Small Business of the Year". His dream had come to fruition.

In 1993, at age 25, entrepreneur Kaizad Dadyburjor decided to



branch out on his own, and started Sigma Systems, Inc.

an IT company, then specializing in build-to-order computer systems for state/local/education and corporate clients in the local Texas area.

With his dedicated employees, the business grew; as the industry began to shift, in 2000, Kaizad brought on another bright young entrepreneur, **Bobby Khullar**, to help him expand nationally and diversify its offerings.

In 2002, Sigma started IT Services and Corporate divisions, garnering clients such as John's Hopkins and Northrup Grumman, and reached revenues of \$12,000,000.

In 2003, Sigma opened the Federal Sales division, and picked up important contracts from NIH, Air Force and US Dept. of Education, with projected revenues of \$23,000,000.

Kaizad lives with his wife Ayesha in Dallas area. From employees to charities to friends to family, Kaizad is a man of many passions, and freely devotes himself to each one. Visit the www.sigmapc.com. ■

Tourism Award for Dilna Khory

Dilna Khory (development officer, Convention Services) of Burlington, Ontario, has won the Convention Ambassador Tourism Award of Excellence for 2003. The award recognizes businesses and individuals who have made outstanding contribution to the growing Tourism economic sector. ■



Jasmine Jasavala – paramedic with a mission

In February 2003, *Jasmine Farshogar Jasavala*, 48, mother of two teenage daughters, went on her first voluntary mission – to Cambodia. As a member of *Global Medic*, Jasmine (who is the daughter of Bapsi Guard and granddaughter of Coomi Bhathena) and other volunteer paramedics and nurses from the Toronto area, collected and shipped \$500,000 worth of hospital and ambulance equipment – stretchers, beds, uniforms, splints, bandages, backboards, defibrillators, and trauma equipment.

While in Cambodia, they trained ambulance, fire and police personnel in basic first aid and life-saving skills.

Says Jasmine of one of the local hospitals she visited, “It has so very little, I feel compelled to do a fundraiser of sorts and donate all the monies.” A young boy had died of pneumonia, “and all we could do was stand there helpless, because they did not have a ventilator ...”

“All of us use our own vacation time, and fund the whole mission ourselves,” says Jasmine, who has been a paramedic with the Toronto EMS for 23 years.

In November, Jasmine was off to the battle-scarred areas of northeast Sri Lanka, delivering two 40-foot shipping containers packed with two

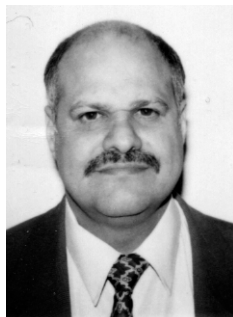
used ambulances and more equipment. The team taught emergency medical techniques and even helped reconstruct a school in one of the villages.

Jasmine would like to see this project expand and include medics from all over the world willing to participate and maybe sponsor a village or city in the third world, “We hope to be able to aid countries destroyed by war and raise global awareness to the plight of their peoples.”

Support the cause by buying a Global Medic T-shirt for \$10. Visit www.dmgf.org or contact Jasmine at 905-829-1279.

Jimmy Ghadiali in Hall of Fame

Jimmy Ghadiali of Aventis Pharma Ltd was inducted as an inaugural member in the



Canadian Healthcare Marketing Hall of Fame in December 2003. These awards were established to honor healthcare marketeers who

have contributed to the avocation and are an inspiration to others.

After 30 progressive years in the pharmaceutical industry, Jimmy has survived several mergers, downsizings and acquisitions, overseeing eight district managers and 65 hospital reps in four divisions including cardiology, hematology, diabetes, oncology and rheumatology/infectious diseases.

Starting as a sales representative in Winnipeg, he rose to be national sales training manager, product manager, national director of sales in the hospital division of Hoechst Roussel, commercial director of hospital products and in 2000, he was named national Sales Director, specialty therapeutics for Aventis Pharma.

Jimmy lives in Montreal with his wife Roshan.

FINANCIAL CORNER



Dr. Jerry M. Kheradi *chair of FEZANA Funds and Finance*

Financial Progress Report

To all our readers we wish you a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2004. Norouz Mubarak!

I would like to make this report short and sweet so as to accommodate Dr. Dolly Dastoor, the scholarship committee chairperson, to submit an extensive report of all the achievements of the academic scholarship winners.

The Funds and Finance Committee has been working hard and FEZANA looks forward to receiving donations towards the *Thousand Points of Light*. The Norouz letter of appeal for donations is successful and we sincerely thank those of you who have donated and at the same time we appeal to the others to give whatever you can towards this good cause. Please review the last two issues for a list of the distributions from FEZANA towards various appeals.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

Jerry Kheradi, MD, Chairperson, Funds and Finance Committee.

Committee: *Rashid Mehin* (treasurer), *Rustom Kevala*, PhD, *Mitra Rashidi*, Esq. and *Celeste Kheradi*.

FINANCIAL CORNER

Thousand Points of Light	2001-3	4Q	Total		2001-3	4Q	Total
Anonymous, FL	5		5	Tony & Swati Elavia, MA	1		1
Anonymous, NY	Gen 1		1	Freddy Engineer, CA	1		1
Anonymous	Rel 1		1	Rumi Engineer, CO	Sch/Wel/Cr 3		3
A Wellwisher, MI	1		1	Adil Feroz, GA	1		1
Dr Babak Abadi, PA	1	Wel 1	2	Sami R. Framjee	Wel 10		10
Parviz & Simin Ardeshirpour, NC	Sch 2		2	Rusi D Gandhi, NJ	1		1
Dr. Cyrus F Austin, AZ	Gen 16	Wel 3	19	Golmeher B. Gandi		(j) 2	2
Porus Austin and Khar, CA	Wel 4		4	Sorab Gandhi, CA	5		5
Zubin & Silvia Balsara, AR	Gen 1		1	Eugene Gauger, MI	1		1
Edul & Tehnaz Bamji, NJ	Wel 1		1	Jamshed & Yasmin Ghadiali, NJ	2		2
Dolly & Pesi Bavadam	Wel/Cr 2		2	Rashna Ghadialy, IL	1		1
Thritee, Soozan & Trista Baxter, NY	(e) 1		1	Mr. & Mrs. Sorab K. Ghadiali	3		3
Beach Cigar Group, FL	Wel/Cr 28	Wel 1	29	Soonu & Jal Godiwalla, TX	1		1
Zazu & Tinaaz Bhandara, CA	Gen 2		2	Noshir L Hansotia, MO	1		1
Firdaus & Jasmin Bhathena, MA	1		1	Piloo E. Ilavia, TX	Cr 1		1
Rustom & Sheroo Bhathena, OH	1		1	Behram K & Farieda Irani, TX	Wel/Cr 13	Rel 2	15
Meena S. Birdie, FL	Gen 1		1	Hormuz & Shahdookht Irani, GA	6	Gen 8	14
Mezdie R. Birdie, FL	Gen 1		1	Mervan and Katayoun Irani, MD	1		1
Homi & Ellen Byramji, NJ	1		1	Minoo S. Italia	Gen 1		1
Dr. Lovji D. Cama, NJ	7		7	Rohinton Boman Irani, NY	Gen 1		1
Kamal E. Campbell, GA	Wel/Cr 1		1	Rustam H. Irani, MA	1		1
Dr. & Mrs. Nadir Camay, CA	1	Gen 1	2	Rustom and Sarvar Irani, FL	Gen 1		1
Sohrab D. Charna	Cr 1		1	Irani Family Foundation	G/R/S/W/Cr 10		10
Homiyar Choksi, VA	1		1	Jim & Homai Jagus, PA	5		5
Cyra & Lyla Contractor, PA	1		1	Iraj Jahanian, MD, MO	Gen 4		4
Dr Farhad & Hutoxi Contractor, PA	(g)(h) 3	Cr 3	6	Khurshid & J.J. Jamadar, TX	2		2
Dr. & Mrs. Farokh R. Contractor, LA	Cr 1	Wel/Cr/Rel 4	5	Rumi & Kashmira Jamsetjee, IL	1		1
Katy & Farrokh Cooper, CA	2		2	Dinshaw & Goolcher Joshi, MD	Cr 4		4
Phil F. Cooper, CA	Wel 1	Gen 1	2	Khorshed & Dr Firoze Jungalwala, MA	(d) 1		1
Tommy and Nairika Cornett, GA	1		1	Afried Farokh Kamdin, NY	Wel 2		2
Tammy & Behram Dalal, NC	Gen 2		2	Jamshed & Rita Kapadia, MA	Rel/Wel 7		7
Keki Dalal		Cr 1	1	Homi & Shireen Kapadia, PA	5		5
Phiroze H. Dalal, CA	Cr 5		5	Dr Natasha Karanjia, PA	Cr 2		2
Dr Ardeshir & Parvin Damania, CA	2		2	Dolly Kerawalla, CA	1		1
Diana Damkevala, CA	1		1	Mr & Mrs K.S. Kermani, NY	(a) 5		5
Maneck Daroowalla, NY	Gen 2		2	Dr Rustom & Yasmin Kevala, MD	(f) 2	Jr/Wel 2	4
Adil Daruwala, CA	Gen 2		2	Delara Kheradi, NY	Sch (f) 1	(f) 5	6
Dolly Dastoor, QE	Sch 1		1	Celeste Kheradi, RI	Sch (f) 15		15
Farrokh N Dastur, CA	1		1	Dr Jerry Kheradi, RI	Sch (f) 70		70
Meher N. Dastur, CA	2		2	Kershaw & Nazneen Khumbatta, TX	1		1
Nari & Dinoo Dastur, CT	1		1	Jasmin & Maneck Kotwal, NJ	2		2
Er. Soli & JoAnn Dastur, FL	2	Jr 1	3	Kaizad Kotwal, OH	Gen 1		1
Edul & Niloufer Daver, NJ	Gen 2		2	Zenobia & Shahrookh Lala, MI	1		1
Homi & Nargish Davier, TX	1		1	Mathew Lungen, NY	Sch (f) 1		1
Jimmy & Freny Deboo family, MI	1		1	Jinobya Machhi, WI	Cr 1		1
Ross Dinyari	Gen 1		1	Borzoo Kushesh & Mahindokht	(b) 1		1
Yezdi N Dordi, CA	5		5	Dolly Malva, CA	Gen 2		2
Jimmy and Mary Dubash, VA	Gen/Wel 4		4	Mehran & Dr. Mitra Mazdyasni, CA	1		1
Manek R. Dustoor, MI	2		2	Noshir & Yasmin Medhora, TX	2		2
A.D. & G.A. Dutia, AL	3	Gen 1	4	Farahnaz Mehdiabadi, TX	1		1
				Hosi & Kim Mehta, IL	1		1
				Merwan and Rukshana Mehta, MO	1		1
				Shahrokh & Gool Mehta, NY	2		2
				Hoshi & Nawaz Merchant, NJ	2		2
				Mehraban & Mahbanoo Mehr	Gen 1		1
				Manou Mobedshahi, CA	(i) Jr 25		25
				Pesi Mistry, NY	1		1

"1000 points of Light" donors are shown above. Each \$100 counts as 1 Point of Light. Help us reach our goal of 1000 points. Donations received from October 16th through December 31, 2003 are shown in bold.

[Continued on next page]

FINANCIAL CORNER

Thousand Points of Light [Contd] 2001-3 4Q Total

Tehmtan & Aloo Mistry, MO	1			1
Jehangir and Olive Mobed, IL	1			1
Rumy Mohta, VA	1			1
Nesh Inc.	1			1
Minoo Netervala, CA	2			2
Percy K Nikorawalla, NJ	1			1
Jamshed & Farzana Palsetia, MA	1			1
Farhad & Firoza Panthaki, MA	11			11
Drs. Khushru & Roda Patel, IL	1			1
Mr & Mrs Randolph Paulling, GA	(d) 1			1
Yasmin & Shapur Pavri, TX	Sch 3			3
Dr Parvez Pohowalla, OR	1			1
Godrej & Piloo Randeria, TX	Gen 1			1
Dr. Minocher Reporter, OR	1			1
Jamshed & Tamara Rivetna, TX	1			1
Rohinton & Roshan Rivetna, IL	2			2
Dinaz & Dan Rogers, OR	2	Jr	2	4
Villoo & Solee Rudina, TX	1			1
Purvez & Aban Rustomji, TX	(d) 2			2
Neville Sarkari, WY	1			1
Nargesh & Aspi Sethna, TX	1			1
Prochy Sethna, CA	Wel 15			15
Behram Shroff, VA	Cr/Wel 2			2
Dr Burjis & Hovi Shroff, FL	5			5
Dr Nariman & Parrin Shroff, FL	2			2
Zubeen Shroff, NY	1			1
Feroze & Anahita Sidhwa, TX	Sch/Wel/Cr 10			10
Yezdi N. Soonavala, MI	Gen 1			1
Nazneen & Ehler Spliedt, CA	1			1
Arnavaz Sukhia, NJ		Gen 1		1
Cyrus Subawalla, IL	Cr 2			2
Bella Tata, BC	1			1
Khurshed M Tengra, ID	Gen 2			2
Jamshed Udvadia, MI	5			5
Perry Unwalla, FL	1			1
Rayomand J Unwalla, PA	1			1
Minoo & Shirin Vaghaiwalla, FL	Perf.Arts 1			1
Taera M. Vakil, FL	Gen 1			1
Cainaz Vakharia, VA		Wel 1		1
Dick & Sherroo Vazir, FL	2			2
Jer Vijan, AZ	1			1
Dr. M. Darius Vohman, GA	Gen 1			1
Parviz & Parvin Yeganegi, BC	4			4
ZAPANJ, DE, PA & NJ	2			2
Farangis Zardoshty & family, AZ	(c) Rel 325	Gen 1326		
Mehraban Zartoshty, B.C	25			25
North American Mobeds Council	Rel 10			10
Z Assoc of Alberta, Canada	3			3
Atlanta Z Anjuman, GA	1			1
Z Assoc of N Calif, CA	2			2
Z Assoc of Chicago, IL	Wel 1			1
Z Association of Florida, FL	Gen 2			2
Z Assoc of N Texas	2			2
Zoroastrian Community		Gen 1		1
Total Points	840	42		882

PLEASE GIVE FROM YOUR HEART

FEZANA DONATIONS AND APPEALS

Donations. Unless specified otherwise, please send all donations to: **Rashid Mehin, FEZANA Treasurer, 583 Beverly Place, San Marcos, California 92069, tel: (760) 891-0699, Email: rmehin@yahoo.com.**

Please make checks payable to "FEZANA", specifying the fund name (General, Welfare, Critical Assistance, Religious Education, Scholarship and Fezana Journal). For specific earmarked donations, write the recipient's name, in the memo section on the check. All charitable donations to FEZANA are tax deductible in USA. Donors of \$250 or more will receive a confirmation letter for tax records. For donations under \$250, use your canceled check as a receipt.

Appeals. All appeals for community welfare, medical, social and critical assistance should be sent to the FEZANA Welfare Committee: chair – **Houtoxi F. Contractor, 2301 Colony Court, Pittsburgh, PA 15237, tel: (412) 367-2948; HFMC31@aol.com. For more information, visit www.fezana.org.**

Grateful thanks!

FEZANA gratefully acknowledges donations received from October 16 through December 31. This does not include donations acknowledged under the "1000 Points of Light" program [see previous page].

General: Boman Najmi, MD (\$50); Ardeshtir Sidhwa, AZ (\$51); Homi Patel, IL (\$60); Manek Dustoor, MI (\$50).

Critical Assistance: Jamshid Marker, FL (\$60); Tehmtan Mistry, MD (\$50); Bella Tata, BC (\$50); Nosh Vadoli, CA (50).

Scholarship: Lovji D. Cama, NJ (\$50); Navaz Dolasa, NY (60);

FEZANA Journal: Keki R. Dastur, Karachi (\$50).

Religious Education: Zarine Dotivala, NJ (\$51). ■

Key to "1000 Points of Light":

- (a) In memory of Dr. Keikhosrow and Morvarid Harvesf
- (b) In memory of Irandokht Ezzati
- (c) In memory of Mobed Faridoon Zartoshty
- (d) In memory of Nargesh Mistree
- (e) In honor of the 70th birthday of Dr Jehangir Kotwal
- (f) For Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Scholarships
- (g) In memory of Mrs. Mitha Morris
- (h) For Mr. & Mrs. Dinshaw Nariman
- (i) For reprint of "Legacy of Zarathushtra"
- (j) In memory of Behram J. Gandhi

Funds: Cr=Critical Assistance, Gen=General, Jr=Journal, Rel=Religious Education; Sch=Scholarship, Wel=Welfare. ■

Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarship

FEZANA has established a Religion Education Scholarship fund in memory of Late Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty. We are grateful for the munificence of Zardoshty sisters, Pari, Homayoun, Iran and Farangis and their families for their generous donation to FEZANA in memory of their beloved father to set up this scholarship fund.

The Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Scholarship(s) is to be awarded to selected Zarathushti individual(s) for higher studies and research in Zarathushti religion at a recognized institution of higher education *anywhere in the world*. Current plans are to award these annual scholarships for a period of five years starting in 2003. An amount has been budgeted for each academic year and may be divided amongst one or more selected individuals. The Religion Education Committee of FEZANA will manage the eligibility and selection of awards. Awardees will be required to agree to allow FEZANA and/or the Zarathushti community to receive a tangible benefit from their study and/or research.

All interested Zarathushti individuals can request an application for scholarship from:

Chair of FEZANA Religion Education Committee, Kayomars P. Mehta, 8122 Circle Drive, Palos Hills, IL 60465, USA. Email: kayomehta@aol.com, Tel: (708) 974-1238.

Deadline for receiving the completed applications with all attachments is **March 31, 2004**.

For further information, visit FEZANA website www.fezana.org.

FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS (2004-2005)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

**Applications are invited for the FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS
and the
MEHRABAN DORAB KHERADI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP
FOR MERIT – FEZANA SCHOLAR.**

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 2004-2005 will be awarded in September 2004. The Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Scholarship for Merit will be for \$5000.

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; and (7) three reference letters.

Award Criteria: Applicants will be rated on Merit of Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extra-curricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%). *The Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Endowment Scholarship will be awarded on merit only.*

Application: Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at www.fezana.org or from Dr Dolly Dastoor (dollydastoor@sympatico.ca). Completed application forms should be post-marked August 1, 2004 to:

**DOLLY DASTOOR Ph.D, Chair, FEZANA Scholarship Committee
3765 Malo, Brossard, Quebec Canada J4Y 1B4**

FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program

Zarathushti Youth Scholars of 2003

Youth are the backbone of any community and educated youth are the potential leaders of the future. With this in mind, FEZANA in 1999, started the Academic Scholarship Fund to award annual scholarships. Applications are invited each year from Zarathushti students studying in North America and living here for at least 12 months. The applications are rated by a committee of five judges [See scholarship announcement on page 119]. The fund was started from donations made in recognition of Dolly Dastoor at the end of her term as president of FEZANA. The fund has grown since by private donations, by the addition of the surplus from the WZC 2000 and by an endowed scholarship from Dr Jerry Kheradi in memory of his father. Since 1999 the Scholarship Committee has received and reviewed 55 applications and awarded 17 scholarships, in varied disciplines, even though many more applicants deserved to be awarded. In 2003, 20 applications were received and 9 scholarships were awarded. For the first time in the 2003 competition, the Mehraban Kheradi scholarship of \$5000 was awarded for outstanding merit; the recipient, Roshni Cooper of Pennsylvania, was named FEZANA Scholar for 2003.

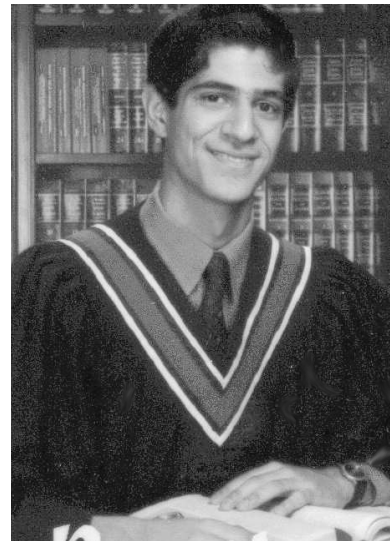


FEZANA Scholar for 2003, **Roshni Cooper** [center] receiving the Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Scholarship award from Dr. Jerry Kheradi, at the ZAGBA function on December 13. Also in the picture are Roshni's parents Cawas and Ruby Cooper.

Roshni Cooper, a freshman at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, plans to major in electrical engineering and computer science. She is a member of MIT Parliamentary Debate Association, the Society of Women Engineers and the South Asian American Students Association. Roshni enjoys dancing ballet and playing the piano. In 2001, she received the Good Life Emblem Award from ZAGNY for community service.

Roshni is highly grateful to Dr. Kheradi and his family and to FEZANA for the recognition she has received through this scholarship. She feels honored to have been selected as the recipient of this award and appreciates that the community recognizes and encourages Zarathushti youth in this manner.

Pouya Bastani is a student at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, majoring in computing science and music, planning to obtain PhD in artificial intelligence (AI) and music composition. Pouya volunteers as a daycamp assistant, and as a listener for the Read Along Program for children.



Pouya gives generously of his musical talents. At the Norouz celebrations, he played his own composition and was accompanied by his mother singing; and for Sadeh he entertained on the piano at the darbe mehr. Pouya was born in Tehran and has been living in Canada.

"I hope that by accomplishing my goals," says Pouya, "I will be able to contribute to the betterment of the world, according to the principle of Prophet Zarathushtra."

Zarin Behramsha [photo next page] is a second year student at the University of Texas at Austin, enrolled in the McCombs School of Business. She is a member of Gamma Beta Phi, an honors and service organization that enrolls individuals based on high grades. She is considering the option of graduating in Business Route to Engineering and is interested in working for a company that deals with telecommunications or biotechnology. Zarin was an active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston youth group, and has worked with Habitat for Humanity. Zarin was born in Houston.



Zarin Behramsha [front, center] with the Zoroastrian Association of Houston committee, at the ZHCC in Houston, upon receiving her scholarship award.



Fredoon (Freddy) Mistry, being handed the FEZANA scholarship by Rumi Engineer, president of Zoroastrian Association of Rocky Mountains.



Susan Karani receiving the scholarship award from Framroze Patel, immediate past president of FEZANA at a ZAGNY function in New York, on November 15.

Susan Karani, an MA student in human rights studies at Columbia University has served as a FEZANA representative to the UN for two years and is active in organizing Zarathushti youth to attend these conferences and become interested in humanitarian initiatives. Susan will pursue a graduate degree in Old Iranian religion and languages, being interested in Sasanian law and religious ethics. Susan has a special interest in religious education and hopes to make that a lifelong profession in educating Zarathushtis and others about the intricacies of the Zarathushti religion. Suzie was born in Illinois.

Fredoon (Freddy) Mistry [photo top right] is a student at Cornell College, Iowa, majoring in biochemistry; eventually to go to medical school to be a cardiologist and to build an efficient artificial heart. At 16, he was the youngest student to graduate with honors from Highlands Ranch High School, with a cumulative GPA of 3.9. He won the state and regional championship for shot put and was chosen to participate in the US Junior Olympics. Freddy volunteers for the Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke Foundation and for all Zoroastrian activities. Born in London, Ontario, Freddy moved with his family three years ago to Littleton, Colorado.

Navaz Mistry [photo overleaf] is a third year student at the University of Toronto majoring in psychology with a double minor in physiology and zoology. Her area of interest is physiological/biological psychology. Navaz volunteers as a PR director of *Peace for Peace*, Toronto, and is involved with events for celebration and empowerment of youth activism. She has been a guest lecturer on the religion of Zarathushtra as she believes in furthering the values and wisdom of the religion. "I will do my best to repay the contributors of the FEZANA scholarship fund," says Navaz, "By following through on my vision of the Zarathushti community and properly allocating my funds to further my education." Navaz was born in Dubai, UAE and has been living in Canada.

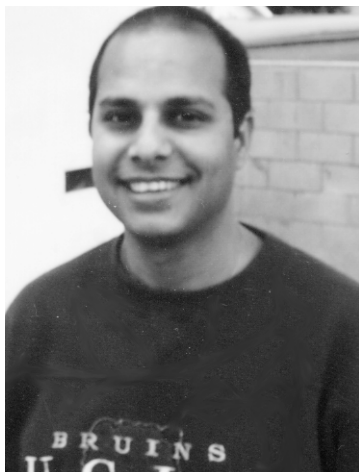
Cyrus Sarkari is in his final semester in the aviation maintenance technology program at Purdue University.



He has also applied to the graduate program (master's). Cyrus is involved with two research projects which deal with continuous business improvements of two major airlines, this allows him to work very closely with the operations/management of an airline. Cyrus was born in Mumbai and

has been in the US since 2001. He says, "It is us (the youth) who will shape the future of our community and keep our heritage alive for thousands of years."

Ervad Adil Tata a qualified marine engineer changed his career for a major in computer engineering and a minor in computer science at the California State University at Long Beach. After completion of his studies he



intends to work in research and design.

Adil has been a practicing priest in Mumbai for muktad, jashan and navjote ceremonies. He competed in the "All Parsi Sports Meet" in India, and has been an active member of the Bandra Parsi Youth Association. Born in Mumbai, Adil has been living in Los Angeles since 1999.



Shekufeh Zonji [left] and Navaz Mistry [second from left] received their scholarship awards from ZSO president Sam Vesuna [center] at a function in Toronto.

Shekufeh Zonji, an honors science student at McMaster University, Ontario has chosen medicine as her career path. She has been very active as president (2002-2003) of the Student Administrative Council. She is an Avesta Class teacher for 5-8 year olds, organizes and participates in Gatha readings for the Iranian Kanoon, is social coordinator for the ZSO youth committee and volunteers for annual muktad prayers cleanup at the darbe mehr. "The Youth Congress in Toronto changed my views about our community and its future," says Shekufeh, "I believe that effective education about our religion is the key to bringing our community closer and making it stronger." Shekufeh was born in Mumbai and has been living in Toronto for 5 years.

How you can help. Please give generously to the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Fund to allow us to honor and support the excellent work of our young men and women. It is up to you and your generosity to strengthen this important academic scholarship program and be part of the future of the youth of our community.

Dolly Dastoor (chair), Zena Irani, Jerry Kheradi, Rashid Mehin, Purvez Rustomji and Anahita Sidhwa. Academic Scholarship Program Committee. ■

Scholarships available

A list of miscellaneous scholarships is given below:

● **FEZANA Scholarships and Mehraban Dorab Kheradi Endowment Scholarship for Merit - FEZANA Scholar** for students at institutions of higher learning in USA/Canada. Dr. Dolly Dastoor, dollydastoor@sympatico.ca, tel: 450-656-2036, www.fezana.org.

● **Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarships** for higher studies/research in Zarathushti religion at an institution of higher education anywhere in the world. Kayomars P. Mehta, kayomehta@aol.com, tel: 708-974-1238, www.fezana.org.

● **Fali Chothia Charitable Trust** scholarships for students in North American universities. Feroza Fitch, ferofzafitch@lexicongraphics.net, tel: 301-564-3726, visit: www.zamwi.org.

● **ZAC (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago) loans/scholarships** for study in USA & Canada. ZACscholarships@yahoo.com, www.zac-chicago.org.

● **ZSBC (Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia)** awards scholarships to its members seeking admission to a university. Homi Italia, (604) 438-2076, www.zsbc.org.

● **Performing Arts Scholarship** offered by FEZANA/ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America). Sherazadem@yahoo.com, www.fezana.org.

● **Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships** support graduate education for immigrants and children of immigrants. www.pdsoros.org.

● **Houtan Scholarship Foundation** offers a scholarship of \$2,500 per semester for studies in Iranian language and culture. Visit www.houtan.org.

● **Indo American Community Foundation** offers scholarships of \$2,000 per year to Indian Americans pursuing educational, artistic or athletic goals. Visit www.upakar.org.

● **Individual Advanced Research Opportunities (IARO)** scholarships, funded by US Dept. of State, for research in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Tajikistan). www.irex.org/programs/iaro. Also visit www.irex.org/programs/roberts for study grants in Iran.

● **Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund** offers fellowships to scholars from any country and in any discipline, whose life, security or work is threatened in their home regions. Visit www.iie.org/SRF.

● **Harvard's Pluralism Project** offers summer research grants in the comparative study of religion, anthropology, sociology, history, government, religious pluralism, and American religious life. Email: staff@pluralism.org, or www.pluralism.org/research/student_grant.php.

Scholarships

● **Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL)** offers grants for projects that will support protection of endangered languages. nos-
tler@chibcha. demon.co.uk,
www.ogmios.org. The **Endangered Language Fund (EFL)** is another source for funding for this purpose.
www.haskins.yale.edu. ■

ZAC Student Loans/Scholarships

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) will be awarding scholarships for the 2004-2005 academic year, to Zarathushti students at institutions of higher learning in USA or Canada. Applicants will be evaluated on merit, community involvement and financial need. **Application deadline is July 1, 2004.** For forms, contact ZACscholarships@yahoo.com or www.zac-chicago.org.

Appeals

FEZANA-ZYNA Performing Arts Scholarship Fund

ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) has provided \$5,000 as a startup amount for a FEZANA /ZYNA Performing Arts Scholarship. A new ad hoc committee to administer this scholarship will be announced in the near future. Donations towards this fund will be gratefully accepted. Please send checks to FEZANA [see page 118] marked "Performing Arts".

Baimai Surti Foundation aids needy in India

The "Baimai Surti Foundation" of Canada, founded by Dhunjishaw Surti, in memory of his mother, has been providing yeoman service to needy Zarathushtis in India.

The Foundation helps set up small ventures and home businesses. Success stories include a home school, provision shop, physiotherapy clinic, poultry farm, sewing machines and motor rickshaw purchase. Over the past 4 1/2 years, the Foundation has

disbursed over Rs. 13 lakhs for self-employment as well as medical aid, education and poverty relief.

Trustee Mr. E. J. Kanga is appealing to the "Diaspora Zarathushtis in North America, "As a successful community in a New Land, it is our duty now, to stretch out a helping hand to the old, infirm and those who are being left behind in today's globalized-digitized world."

Please make your checks payable to "Baimai Surti Foundation", and mail to Dhunjishaw Surti, 1624 Bloor Street East, #81, Mississauga, ON L4X 2S2, Canada, or contact Mr. Kanga at edmarnikanga@aol.com.

Mazda Dumasia, 7, gets treatment in UK

Mazda Dumasia, 7, of Mumbai is suffering from a hereditary metabolic disorder, resulting in attacks of 'cidp' with episodes of brain strokes. Presently, he is partially paralyzed. Mazda was brought to UK for treatment with a pediatric neurologist at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. Expenses are estimated to be over £20,000. The WZO Trust has sent an appeal for help for Mazda. Please send your donations to FEZANA [see page 118], marked "Mazda Dumasia".

Medical appeals

Among the large number of appeals received by FEZANA recently, are:

84-year-old Dina, in India, is suffering from arthritis, and needs to have knee surgery. The anticipated cost is \$3,000, which she cannot afford.

Mitra battling HIV. A 15-year-old Parsi girl from Pune has come to the US to see pediatric AIDS doctors and raise funds for the high costs of her medications. Mitra contracted HIV from a botched blood transfusion when she was 13 days old.

Please send your donations to FEZANA [see page 118] marked "Welfare Fund".

Iran Zamin project to revive culture in Tajikistan

Fariborz Rahnamoon, editor of *Iran Zamin* [see www.ancientiran.com] is spearheading a project to build cultural centers in Tajikistan. Referring to the declaration of 2006 as the "Year for revival of ancient Aryan Civilization and Culture," by the president of Tajikistan, Fariborz writes [*Iran Zamin*, October 2003]:

"Let's come together and with the help of the one and only government in the world that shares our aspirations, revive our ancient culture ..."

The project includes building cultural centers in Dushanbe and other cities, to be ready by 2006. Please send contributions, payable to "Iran Zamin for Tajikistan 2006 Fund", to Iran Zamin, 703 Donegal Place, North Vancouver, BC V7N 2X6.

Zoroastrian College Tajikistan project

Dr. Prof. Meher Master-Moos, president of Zoroastrian College, who has been a longtime and tireless worker for the Tajik cause, has appealed to Zarathushtis in North America for help in the College's projects in Tajikistan:

- Sponsor suitable persons from Tajikistan to come to Zoroastrian College, Sanjan (\$1500).
- Send mobeds (preferably Persian-speaking) to Tajikistan (\$1000).
- Contribute for printing books, CDs in Tajik and Russian languages.

Please send checks payable to "Shah Behram Baug Society", to Mazdayesnie Monasterie, Mustafa Bldg, 2nd floor, Sir P. M. Road, Mumbai 400 001. For information, contact mazocoltajik@rediffmail.com.

FEZANA JOURNAL depends on you...

The Journal depends solely on your subscriptions, advertisements, sponsorships and donations to pay the high costs of printing and mailing. Please check your address label for your subscription status. Use the form on p.128.

Preserving the imperiled Dari language



In 2003, Annahita Farudi and Maziar Toosarvandani did fieldwork in Yazd, for a project to preserve the endangered Dari Language [see *FEZANA Journal*, Winter03, p. 108]

Persons interested in traveling to Iran to help with further fieldwork, may contact Annahita and Maziar [see www.darilanguageproject.org].

If you know of further funding sources (charitable trusts, academic institutions) for this activity, please contact bpastakia@aol.com.

Donations for this project may be sent to FEZANA [see p. 118] marked "Dari Language Project". ■

Opportunities to help

Besides the opportunities for giving listed in "Appeals" section above, other worthy projects seeking funding, described elsewhere in this Journal, are listed below:

- The new **ZAH library in Houston** will welcome donation of books and journals [see page 9].
- Fundraising campaign is under way for a new **Zarathushti Cultural Center, ZACUCE**, in the Philadelphia area [see page 12].
- **Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF)** is raising funds for a new center in the Greater Toronto Area [see page 13].
- ZANC is raising funds for the **North American Congress** in San Francisco. [see page 25].
- **Rebuilding projects** in earthquake-vulnerable areas of Iran - Bam, Kerman, Yazd [see page 35].
- **Sponsor publication of a book on Persian literature** by Zartosht Azadi of California. [see page 134].

HEALTHY LIVING



This column on living a healthy and balanced Zarathushti life, is brought to you by **Mehroo M. Patel, MD, FRCS(Ed.), FAFAP**. Questions and suggestions for future topics are 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.

Disorders of Eating

Eating disorders are manifestations of underlying personality disorders with overriding focus on self-image. They fall into three groups: overeating, eating too little and perversions of eating.

Overeating

Over eaters love their food above all else and indulge at lib, which then becomes a self-propagating habit. Some over eaters grow up thus, having been overfed by indulging parents. Our brains have capacity to control eating by means of specialized centers for appetite as well as satiety (feeling of satisfaction). Conditioning and learnt reflexes easily overrun these centers, so the wake-up call comes only when weight gain and obesity become apparent. Some of us indulge in overeating in response to stress, depression or compulsive behavior. Obesity, hyperlipidemia, diabetes mellitus and their sequale are the results of unchecked long term overeating.

Treatment of overeating starts with education and motivation [see "Designer Diets, *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 2003]. Underlying behavior and psychological factors must be taken into account.

Under eating

This is prevalent amongst adolescent population, as well as those who are overweight or outright obese. Arguably this is done to lose weight or control weight, and is integral to most drastic diet plans. Under eating is often accompanied by diet aids or appetite suppressant pills or stimulant containing pills as in *Ephedra*.

The balance can tip easily if such plans are unsupervised and followed for more than a couple of weeks, and lead to unpleasant consequences. Often there is an underlying factor of over indulgence in body image, sometimes a behavior disorder or affective disorder. In order to achieve rapid response the individual may resort to strict exercise regimen or extended hours everyday. If corrective steps are not taken in reasonable time, starvation response sets in with ketosis and biochemical and electrolyte imbalances. In an attempt to check this over-correction, rapid weight gain occurs. Such yo-yo loss and gain cycles become the starting point of metabolic syndrome (Syndrome X), insulin resistant diabetes, cardio vascular disease and coronary heart disease.

Perversions of eating

A group of disorders called bulimia, binge eating, eating and purging, and anorexia nervosa are some of the abnormalities encountered amongst young adults with adjustment disorder, negative self image, depression, anxiety, psychosis and other mental illnesses. Early recognition, early and continuing treatment are essential to avoid morbidity and even death.

Underlying psychological illnesses have to be managed in order to successfully treat these disorders – the road to recovery is long and arduous. Specialized professional help is almost always needed, in spite of which relapses do occur and call for repeated interventions.

Phagy and bezoars. An unusual group of eating disorders (phagy) is indulgence in eating substances not meant to be foods – dirt, paper, straw, hair, wool etc. These substances are not digestible, hence collect in the stomach or intestines forming ball-like structures taking the shape of the organ they lodge into. These stomach-balls are called *bezoars*.

They lead to bowel obstruction, vomiting, malabsorption, electrolyte and metabolic imbalance. They often present as acute surgical emergencies. Surgical treatment to relieve the symptoms become necessary but behavior modification and psychotherapy are essential to prevent future occurrences.

Most eating disorders have underlying behavior and psychological abnormalities, hence prevention by way of vigilance, early recognition and appropriate management is essential.

Next Issue: Fitness and Figure. ■

Medical professionals- doctors, nurses, dentists, medical technicians - invited to join Zoroastrian Medical Network

A network of medical professionals was formed at the Chicago congress in 2002, with the goals of:

- Networking among Zoroastrian medical professionals.
- Mentoring in health care.
- Community service and welfare assistance.

All medical personnel in the US and Canada are welcome. Our goal is to create a list of 100 doctors and 100 other medical personnel, in order to reach critical mass.

For information or to join, please contact Porus Dadabhoy at porusdad@yahoo.com. ■

■ MATRIMONIALS ■

FEZANA will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; we do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna [see inside cover page].

Well-traveled architect, male, 36, working in a major US city, interested in sports, arts, crafts, museums, dancing and photography, looking for a like-minded, slim, mature, independent woman, with strong family values.

Contact neville_rust@hotmail.com.
[M04-1]

Female, 31, flight attendant in India, B.Com. Contact friend at VilooR@hotmail.com or tel: (817) 416-9411. [F04-2]

Widow, 72, in very good health, school-teacher, well-settled in USA with large home. Looking for companionship; must be in good health.

Looking for a soulmate?

Visit the Zarathushti matrimonial page on the internet:

<http://matrimonial.zoroastrianism.com/>

■ ■ ■ MILESTONES ■ ■ ■

Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafraam, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045. (262)821-5296, mmotafraam@msn.com. NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."

BIRTHS

Ava Bamji, a girl, to Zubin and Allison, granddaughter to Roshan and Esadvaster (Ester) Bamji, in Silver Spring, MD, on November 23.

Danesh Bharucha, a boy, to Shiraz and Darius Bharucha, grandson to Dara and Meher Suntok of Oakville, ONT, and Dinaz Bharucha of West Hill, ONT, on September 13.

Noble Bhathena, a boy, to Adil and Jasmine Bhathena of Vancouver, brother to Eva, and the tenth great grandchild to Mrs. Coomi Bhathena of Toronto, on December 21.

Hormuz Kali Buhariwala, a boy, to Kali and Keshwar Buhariwala, brother to Zaal and Cyrus, in Dallas, on October 9.

Jasper Buhariwala, a boy, to Khoorshed and Shahernaz Buhariwala, brother to Jason, in Toronto, on October 31.

Nadia Dinyarian, a girl, to Mehraban and Parvin Dinyarian, sister to Farzin and Bijan, in San Antonio, TX, on March 5, 2003.

Yohan Kasad, a boy, to Marzban and Shireen Kasad of Fremont, CA, brother to Rukshad, on November 25.

Tia Mirza, a girl, to Raiomond and Nina Mirza of Montreal and England, in London, UK, on November 21.

Gabriella Olson, a girl, to Maynaz and Matthew Olson, sister to Madison and Sophia, granddaughter to Dr. Katie Irani, in Houston, TX.

Karl Patel, a boy, to Burzin and Diana Patel of Foster City, CA on December 17.

Vira Vatcha, a girl, to Rinavaz and Nariman Vatcha, sister to Kyra, granddaughter to Marzban and Meher Shroff of Richmond Hill and Cawas and Shireen Vatcha of Markham, ONT, on October 15.

Naila Yazdani, a girl, to Natasha and Kaizad Yazdani, granddaughter to Jehangir and Dogdo Irani of Las Vegas and Dinaz and Shahrokh Rustomji of Unionville, ONT, in Las Vegas on November 1.

NAVJOTES, SEDREH-PUSHI

Rehan Anklesaria, son of Jemi and Vera Anklesaria, in London, ONT, on December 27.

Mazda Bhathena, son of Toshar and Zareer Bhathena of Newark, CA in Mumbai on December 28.

Dinaz Bamji, daughter of Nagja and Cyrus Bamji of Fremont, CA in Mumbai on December 20.

Rushad Bharda, son of Khushroo and Havovi Bharda of ONT, in Mumbai, on December 18.

Cyrus Cooper, son of Piroozi Cooper, grandson of Perween Cooper of New Canaan, CT, and nephew of Farobag Homi Cooper of Chicago, on October 12.

Zoheb and Ushain Satta, sons of Darayus and Nafeeza Satta of Foster City, CA, in Mumbai in January.

WEDDINGS

Nenshad Bardoliwalla, son of Hutoxi and Dinshaw Bardoliwalla and **Dilnawaz Kapadia**, daughter of Mahrukh and Sohrab Kapadia, in Mumbai, on January 5. The couple will reside in Oakland, CA.

Zubin Choksey, son of Kersi and Meher Choksey of Lombard, IL, to **Nicole Phillip**, in St. Croix, on November 19.

Adil Engineer to **Zinaida Golwalla** of Baltimore, MD and Karachi, in Mumbai on January 3.

Farzad Irani, son of Jeroo and Khodi Irani to **Nazneen Jamshedian**, daughter of Zarine and Farokh Jamshedian in Toronto, on December 28.

Zubin Sukeshwala and **Farzeen Ogra**, daughter of Rohinton and Pervin Ogra of Romeoville, IL, on December 27.

Aspi Ustad and **Zeenia Anklesaria** in Richmond, BC, on November 2.

Phiroze Warden, son of Phiroze and Behroze Warden to **Farzana Reporter**, daughter of Homai and Piloo Reporter, in Toronto, on October 11.

ANNIVERSARIES

Manijeh and **Ardeshir DeVitre** of Salt Lake City, UT, celebrated their 50th, golden wedding anniversary with their children Karmeen and Hector, on March 12, 2003.

Tehmi and **Dara Patel** of Mississauga, ONT, celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on November 29.

Arnavaz and **Kersi Sarkari** of North York, ONT, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on December 27.

Dady and Roshan Kapadia of Northern California celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends on December 28, with a tandarosti and 'ashirwad' by Dastur Kobad Jamshed.

DEATHS

Dr. Framroze Pirojshah Antia, brother of Ervad Yezdi Antia of Toronto and late Gustasp, Pallon, Fareedoon, Peshotan, Savak, Dara, Rata and Shera, in Mumbai, on October 19.

Ervad Minocher Bajan, panthaki of Mevawala agiary, Mumbai, father of Ervad Parvez Bajan, in Mumbai.

Sanaya Bamboat, 3 months, daughter of Khushnuma and Hoshedar Bamboat of Toronto, granddaughter of Dolly and (late) Pesi Bamboat and Minoo and (late) Viloo Damania of Mumbai, niece of Darius (Zenobia) Damania, in Toronto, on January 16.

At one month old, and just over 5 lbs, baby Sanaya was the smallest baby in the world to ever receive a liver transplant last November, at the Sick Children's hospital in Toronto. While the transplant was eminently successful, Sanaya later succumbed to various complications.

Maherji Bilimoria, 64, son of Tahemina and (late) Navroji Bilimoria of Bilimora; husband of Bachi, father of Malcolm (Yasmin) and Neville (Ami); brother of Godrej (Avan) Billimoria, Katy (Noshir) Daruwalla (all of Chicago), and Jeroo (Marzban) Sarkari of Bilimora; grandfather of Sara, Rachel, Zachary, Hailee and Asha, in Chicago, on December 28.

Nozer P. Dadachanji, husband of Louise and brother of Kavas Dadachanji of Victoria, BC, in Victoria, on October 10.

Shirin Nariman Dastoor, 95, wife of (late) Ervad Nariman J. Dastoor, mother of Phiroz (Dolly), Perin (Soli Pardiwala), Noshir (Sarosh Zarolia), Sheroo (Minoo Bhathena), Katy (Freddy Mirza); and grandmother of Zenobia (Harry Siliphant), Farahad (Jean MacRae), Ervad Zubin (Jasmine Cooper), Shernaz, Dinaz (Khushroo Dadyburjor), Anahita, Tanaz, Natasha (Adel Irani), Neville, Merzi (Elizabeth Flynn) Roxanna, Ervad Farzad; and great-grandmother of Darius, Jehan, Aidun, Roxanna, Zane and Rachele; in Toronto, on November 25.

Roda Framroze Driver, sister of Rusi, Temul, Nariman, Homai, Perin, Mani, and Diana, in Toronto, ONT, on October 17.

Khosrow Farahi-far, father of Simin Mobaraki, Rostam, Rointon and Ramin Farahi-Far, uncle to Shahin Kamran Foroutan, in Tehran, on January 28.

Motan N. Irani, mother of Rusi, Behram, and Irene, mother-in-law of Viraf Mahava and Lise; grandmother of Hufarish, Farzin, Anita, Veronique and Caroline in Ottawa, ONT, on November 30.

Noshir Rashid Irani, husband of Mehernaz, father of Rezhin, in San Diego, on September 9. Per the deceased's wishes, the body was flown to Mumbai, for dokhmenashini at Doongarwadi.

Dinshaw F. Joshi, 82, husband of Goolcher, father of Shehernaz (Farhad) Verahrami, grandfather of Anahita and Roksana, in Chevy Chase, MD, on November 10 [see profile page 14].

Khorshed Malbari, grandmother of Nevin (Roxana) Dubash of Chicago, in Dubai, on January 16.

Meherbanoo Kekobad Marker, 102, mother of Jamsheed (Arnaz) Marker of Florida and Karachi, Khurshed and Minoo of Karachi; grandchildren Niloufer (Sam Reifler), Aban (Kairas Kabraji), Meher (Cyasp Noshirwani) and Ardeshir (Farahnaz) Marker; great grandchildren Sheheryar, Shahpur and Rosheen Kabraji and Arish, Sohrab and Rustom Noshirwani; in Karachi, on January 20 [see obituary].

Soli Master, husband of (late) Dina, father of Hilda (Rumi) Sethna, in London, UK, on January 28.

Banoo Mullanfiroze, mother of Khorshed Mistry, in Houston, TX, on December 20.

Jehangir Panthaky, brother of Jal Panthaky of Mississauga, ONT, in Mumbai, on November 8.

Mini Patel, wife of Minoo Patel, mother of Goshpi Byram Avari of ONT, in Karachi, on November 11.

Dr. Khanak Esghi Sanati, scholar and author, in Ottawa, on January 1. An advocate of the Paarsi language, Dr. Sanati endeavored to never use any Arabic words in his writings or speeches [from posting by Fariborz Rahnamoon on zoroastrians@yahoo.com].

Rustam Shapurji Sagar, father of Vispi Sagar of Houston, in Mumbai, on December 20.

Dolat Rustam Sethna, mother of Yasmin Darius Contractor of ONT, and grand-

mother of Percy and Nazneen Contractor, in Ahmedabad, India, on October 30.

Jamshed Merwanji Tehsildar, 84, husband of Tehmina, father of Tehmtan (Taruna) Tehsildar of New Jersey and Freya (Robert) Loftus of Washington, DC, grandfather of Simone and Zareen, on December 9, while on a visit to Dallas, TX.

Hoshang Vandrevalla, husband of Kaity, father of Marazban (Khorshed) of Chicago and Ruby of Mumbai, grandfather of Cyrus and Malcolm, in Mumbai, on December 2.

Riyad Wadia, 36, of New York and Mumbai, son of Nargis and Vinci Wadia, brother of Roy Wadia, after a prolonged illness, in Mumbai on November 30 [see page 128].

Omid Yazdanipour, 1 year old, son of Sima and Khodarahm Yazdanipour, brother of Armon, after a prolonged illness, in Potomac, MD, on February 3. ■

Mobed Jamshedji Framroz Andhyarujina

PRIEST AT UDVADA
ATASH BAHRAM FOR 60 YEARS

Mobed Jamshedji Framroz Andhyarujina, passed away in Pune on November 27, 2003.

Born in 1918, Mobed Jamshedji completed his priestly exams at 15, and served as a priest at the Udvada Atash Bahram for 60 years.

During that time he performed countless ceremonies, like Nirangdins, Homayesh and other rarely performed ceremonies. He was responsible for starting the tradition of performing ceremonies at the Udvada dokhma during *muktad* days, and continued that tradition for over 30 years.

He took part in the consecration of two dokhmas and an adaran during his life time. He initiated many mobeds through their navar ceremonies and guided them to live a good life.

One of his most popular discourses was on the history of the priestly clans of Udvada and their management of the Udvada Iranshah from the time of Neriosang Dhaval.

He led a truly selfless and pious life devoted to the Zarathushti faith but

balanced by realization that in today's world freedom of thought and achievement of academic excellence was essential, an idea which he endowed in all his six children, four of whom live in Northern California – Kobad Jamshed (who has served as mobed for the Northern California community for the past 20 years), Dhan Yezdi Amaria, Homai Cyrus Zarolia and Maky Cyrus Mirza.

- Dhan Yezdi Amaria

Meherbanoo Kekobad Marker (1901-2004)

EXEMPLARY ROLE MODEL AND PIONEER OF MOVEMENTS IN PAKISTAN.

Many happy memories and recollections come to mind of Mehra Aunty, as we all lovingly called her. My favorite one was of a garden party. We were all playing a game where the question was asked, "If you were marooned on an island and could take three items with you, what would they be?" Mehra Aunty's choice was her "prayer book, a packet of seeds and a watering can".

We all knew of her deep faith and of her love for her garden. The seeds she planted in all of us are now spread across the continents as we remember her simple grace, her dignity and her exemplary role model as a devoted daughter, wife and mother.

Mehran Kekobad Marker was a pioneer of many movements that served the nascent nation of Pakistan. Exuding great moral and value judgments, she developed a true love for serving causes that were of importance to women and children.

She started the Girl Guide movement, pioneered a women's cottage industry, developed adult literacy centers and maternity health clinics, a Ladies Purdah Club, and established the Lady Dufferin Hospital ...

She truly lived her life according to the tenets of our religion.

[Excerpted from posting by Aban Rustomji on creatingawareness@yahoo.com; also see profile in FEZANA Journal, Summer 1998 and Fall 2001] ■



Cellist Ayesha Dua performs with Chicago Philharmonia

Ayesha Dua of Brookfield, Wisconsin was invited by **Farobag Homi Cooper** to perform in the cello section of the **Chicago Philharmonia** on November 23. Her participation made her not only the first Zarathushti, but also the youngest to perform with the Orchestra in a professional setting. Ayesha initially drew attention to her talent as principal cellist of the Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra, also conducted by Farobag, at the North American Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago on July 4, 2002. ■

Bapsi Sidhwa in New York playwright festival

Bapsi Sidhwa's **Feroza Among the Farangees** (which played in London as *Sock 'em With Honey*) was among four new plays selected for the 2003 South Asian Diaspora Playwright's Festival, by the Indo-American Arts Council and Lark Theatre Company, in New York last November. The play, directed by Madhur Jaffrey, is about a Parsi girl caught in a clash of cultures between her Jewish-American boyfriend and Zarathushti family. ■

Below, filmmaker Riyad Wadia, whose feature film *"Fearless: The Hunterwali Story"* was the award-winning biography of his great aunt Nadia Wadia who, as *"Fearless Nadia"* [right] the daredevil queen, dominated the Indian box office in the 1940s and 50s.



Riyad Wadia: a short life, lived to the fullest

Internationally acclaimed filmmaker, Riyad Vinci Wadia, 36, of Mumbai and New York, passed away after an illness, on November 30, in Mumbai. He is survived by his parents Nargis and Vinci Wadia, and brother, journalist Roy Wadia [see page 127].

Producer-director **Riyad Wadia** was a scion of the illustrious Wadia family of Mumbai, with a 60-year history in film production. His grandfather, J. B. H. Wadia was a pioneer filmmaker who founded the Wadia Movietone Studios in 1933, and produced some of India's first film hits.

Riyad's films, the toast of many festival circuits – from Cannes, to Sundance, Toronto, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, London and Venice – include the groundbreaking short film *BOMgAY*, a series of vignettes exploring gay identity in contemporary India. Wadia has been featured in many publications, including Time magazine and has shared the stage with luminaries such as Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and Salman Rushdie. He worked with Mira Nair in pre-production of her award-winning film *Monsoon Wedding*.

One of his main aims was to spread the gospel of Bollywood around the world. "Bollywood has been derided as nothing more than pop culture. But there is a great need to take such movies to an international audience. Film, after all, is an international language that can be understood and appreciated by all."

Riyad's debut feature, released at the London Film Festival in 1993, was *Fearless – the Hunterwali Story*, biography of his great aunt, Nadia Wadia, aka Fearless Nadia, the legendary, whip-cracking, pistol-packing, daredevil heroine of the Indian screen in the 1940s and 50s.

Wadia had also been a columnist for various newspapers, and had organized a travelling retrospective exhibit of old film posters and memorabilia from the Wadia film archives.

[By Roshan Rivetna. Sources www.suntimes.co.za/2002/03/arts/durban, www.hvk.org/articles/0579/0173.html. Photos: www.planetout.com].

"Mr. Happy" band entertains US troops

Xerxes Mistry, son of Khorshed and Adil Mistry of Kingwood, Texas, is with the "Mr. Happy" band group that was enlisted to entertain US troops in Japan for a week last fall. [From ZAH newsletter, October 2003]

The Rummy Game

The Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC) presented Bachi Karkaria's *The Rummy Game* (an adaptation of D. L. Coburn's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *The Gin Game*) at The Century Center for Performing Arts, New York, January 29-31. The play, directed by Sam Kewala, starred two of Mumbai's foremost theater artistes, Sabira Merchant and Hosi Vasunia. The premiere was in aid of Project Mainstream, for the street children of Mumbai.

The adaptation is set in a Parsi Old People's Home. In a scathingly funny battle of wits, two feisty home residents play Rummy card games to overcome their loneliness. It is a spirited, eloquent and bittersweet comedy in which a card game becomes a metaphor for life.

Earlier performances played to packed audiences in India, Dubai, London, and Europe.

Below, Sabira Merchant and Hosi Vasunia in *The Rummy Game*.



PHOTO: WWW.TATA.COM

"WE'VE COME UNDONE"

Written and Performed by
Kayhan Irani



'Artist' Kayhan Irani raises social consciousness through the theater

Kayhan Irani is an 'artist' with a passion to "ignite the world with beauty and truth" from the unconventional platform of the theater. After graduating from the High School of Performing Arts in New York, she has done some traveling and writing (for Indian Express), and performed her major work *We've Come Undone* in many venues including Theater for the New City, SALAAM Theater, Chashama Theater in Times Square, several colleges and even Burning Man. She facilitates Theater of the Oppressed workshops and programs for schools and various organizations and is on numerous panels to discuss social issues.

We've Come Undone, created and performed by Kayhan, is a series of moving monologues inspired by stories from the Arab American, Muslim and South Asian communities experiencing trauma in a post 9-11 America caught in the grip of distrust. Interweaving drama, dance, music multimedia and interactive theater techniques, this poignant piece aims to enlighten, activate and inspire.

Kayhan, daughter of Teshtar and Noshir Irani, lives and works in New York City. She can be booked to perform her show or facilitate a workshop. Visit www.thehousethatwebuilt.com; email: kayhani-rani@msn.com; and listen to her radio interview at

EVENTS & HONORS

Iranian Shermine Sharivar is crowned Miss Germany 2004



A 21-year-old Iranian student, **Shermine Sharivar**, was elected Miss Germany 2004 at a gala evening in Duisburg, Germany in January.

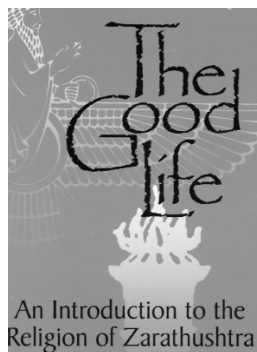
Shermine, hailing from Aachen, wins 60,000 euros, trips, and a 10,000-euro stay in a beauty spa. She will represent Germany in the Miss Europe and Miss Intercontinental competitions. [From a posting by Manuchehr Iranpour on creating awareness@yahoo groups.com.] ■

Miss Canada Nazanin Afshin-Jam places second in Miss World 2003



Nazanin Afshin-Jam, a 24-year-old Iranian-Canadian from Vancouver, who was crowned Miss World Canada 2003 last fall, placed second, after Miss Ireland, in the Miss World 2003 contest held in China in December.

Nazanin, a graduate of the University of British Columbia, is an actress, model and Red Cross educator. She holds a pilot's license, and has achieved the highest possible rank in the Royal Canadian Air Cadets ■



The ZAGNY "Good Life" Program

The "Good Life" religious emblem program, organized by the Zoroastrian Association of New York (ZAGNY), is offered to all Zarathushti youth in North America as a recognition of religious learning from a Zarathushti congregation. The program consists of guided learning of the basic tenets of the religion using a text book [at left], completion of a work book through a counselor, and community oriented service projects. The purpose of the program, which is also linked with the Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts of America, is three-fold:

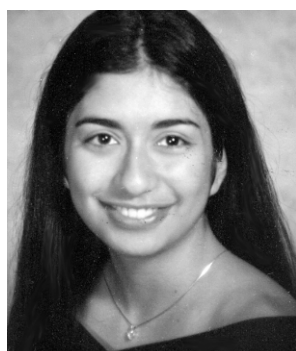
- To make youth more aware of their faith, its outlook and achievements.
- To encourage them to achieve meaningful spiritual experience in living their faith and to inculcate the practice of the religion.
- To encourage Zarathushti youth/scouts to participate in community oriented projects, thereby practicing 'Huvareshtha' – Good Deeds.

For information on the 'Good Life' program, contact Temilyn Ghadially, National Coordinator, Religious Emblem Administrative Council, ZAGNY, 106 Pomona Road, Pomona, NY 10970-3510. Email: tghad@hotmail.com.



Black belt in Karate

Pervin Taleyarkhan, 17, daughter of Navaz and Rusi Taleyarkhan, of Knoxville, TN, received her 3rd Degree Black Belt in Karate at a special ceremony in Knoxville, on December 6. She trained at the Jack Butturini Karate School of Martial Arts – ranked in the top 50 of all US martial arts schools with over 500 students. Pervin is the first woman to receive this honor in the history of this school. ■



From left, Rashna Clubwala, Julie Bharucha and Persis Commissariat

ZAGNY youth awarded Good Life Emblem

Three youth were presented the **Good Life** emblem award at ZAGNY's Pateti function on August 23rd, by Viraf Ghadially who had also been their counselor. Viraf indicated that the community should be proud of these talented youth, "Via their service projects, they have demonstrated that 'Those who serve God best are those who render good deeds via service to the community.'" He also recognized three other youth who are currently doing the Good Life program: **Danesh Modi**, **Sheri Nentin** and **Rushad Dutia**. The three awardees are:

Rashna Clubwala [left] attends Hobart and William Smith College in

Geneva, NY. She is active in various clubs and extracurricular activities. In 2002, Rashna conducted a survey on Osteoporosis among Parsis. Rashna is also a member of many of her school's honor societies, including the National Honor Society. Rashna has a passion for music – she plays the piano, takes voice lessons, and participates in her school's musical productions.

Julie Bharucha [center] 16, is a junior at Pine Bush High School, participates in several projects at school, as a girl scout and at ZAGNY. She is on the Varsity tennis team, a member of the National Honor Society, volunteered at Arden Hill hospital and

worked with Shiraz Unwala teaching a young Zarathushti class. She says, "The Good Life award has provided the opportunity to volunteer in my community, and to grow as a person." She is continuing her "good deeds" by championing a community project to collect items for under privileged children in Belize.

Persis Commissariat [right] is a tenth grade honor student at Shelton High School. Of her many accomplishments, her most recent were awards for "top student in 9th grade math and history". She is on the soccer team and also enjoys drawing and talking online with her friends. Her ambition is to become a pediatrician and help young children. ■

- by Viraf Ghadially



Distinguished Toastmaster

On December 22, **Shahrokh Mehta** received the highest award from Toastmaster International – that of a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM). Less than 1% of all Toastmasters achieve this recognition. Toastmasters International is the world's leading organization devoted to the improvement and development of individual communication and leadership skills. There are approximately 8,800 Toastmasters clubs and more than 175,000 members in 70 countries. Shahrokh is the current Eastern Division Governor, responsible for the training and development of 22 clubs and over 500 members. He is past president of Empire Statesmen Toastmasters Club that is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2004. ■

Ontario achievers

Dr. Zubin Austin's short play, "Playing" has been expanded into a feature length film by Perry Andrews Talent Management Company. Zubin, an associate professor at the University of Toronto's faculty of Pharmacy, is the son of Dina and Hosie Austin of Brampton, ONT.

Vardanish Divecha, son of Shermin and Darayus Divecha of Brampton, ONT, was awarded a merit scholarship from the Organization of South Asian Professionals for outstanding academic performance, at an awards ceremony at the RBC Auditorium in Toronto, in October.

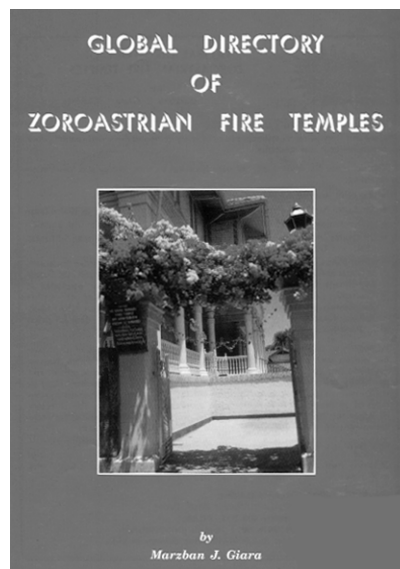
Kurush Minocher, son of Yasmin and Sammy Minocher of Hamilton, ONT, was awarded the Lord Strathcona Medal, the highest award bestowed on a Model Air Cadet. He has a glider pilot and private pilot license.

Farishteh Panthaky, graduated from the Cawthra Park S. S. with five awards – gold shield, gold medallion, the Arts award, and awards for music and academic achievement.

Shehnaz Pardiwala of Ontario, is the recipient of two gold medals for "2003 Skyline Club Summer Tennis Championship" in women's singles and doubles events. ■

[From ZSO Newsletters]

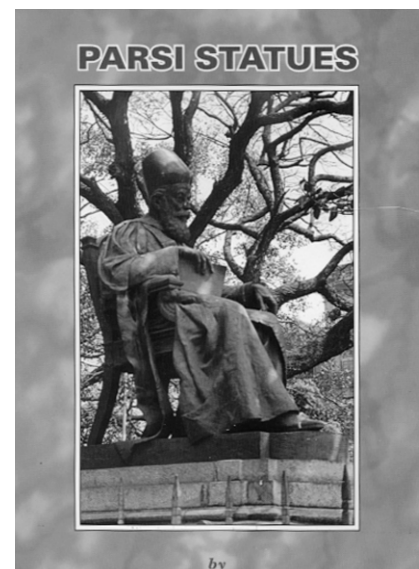
■ BOOKS AND SUCH ■



A collector's volume of Zarathushti fire temples around the world

"Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples"
by Marzban J. Giara

Updated 2nd edition; 200 color photos, with history of 158 firetemples in India, 29 around the world + more. Price: USD\$40 + \$10 S&H. ■

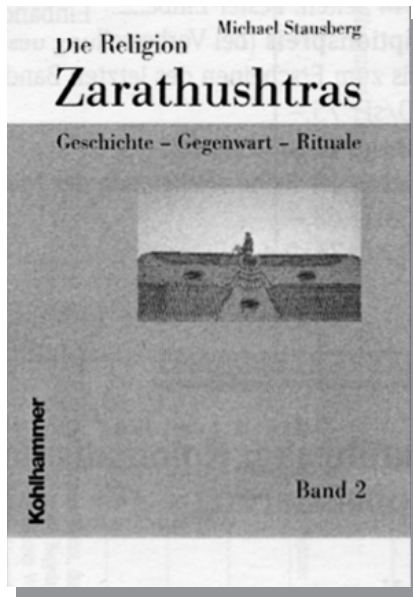


A magnificent record of over 200 Zarathushtis immortalized in statues

"Parsi Statues"
by Marzban J. Giara

A painstakingly researched archival record of 226 statues of Zarathushtis in India; plus a chapter of Parsis on stamps. 240 color photographs. To order, see below. ■

Ordering books from India. Order books by mail from the **Parsiana Bookstore** (at Parsiana, 39B Amrit Keshav Nayak Road, K K (Navsari) Chambers, Fort, Mumbai 400 001) and pay by credit card. Tel: 2207 4335, email parsiana@vsnl.net; or contact Giara Publications at giara@vsnl.net.



A three-volume set on Zoroastrianism - history, the present and rituals.

“Die Religion Zarathushtras. Geschichte – Gegenwart – Rituale” by Michael Stausberg

Vol. 1 (2002, 482 p., 12 illustrations, \$75, ISBN 3-17-017118-6) discusses pre-modern Zoroastrian history.

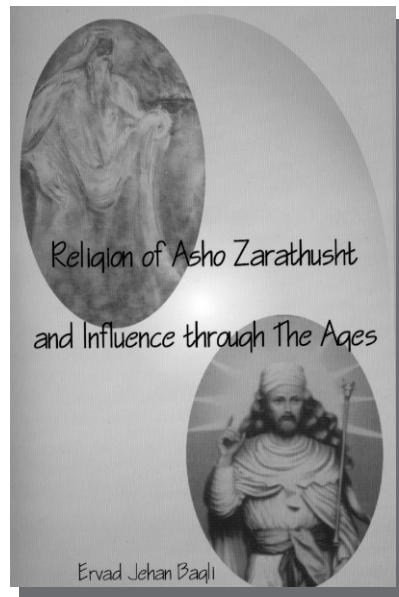
Vol 2 (2002, 444 p., \$75, ISBN 3-17-017119-4) is a survey of the present Zoroastrian communities including their recent and contemporary histories. Covers the communities in India, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, East Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and the Mazdasnan movement.

Vol. 3 (August 2004, ~ 560 p., and 2 CDROMS, \$75, ISBN 3-17-017120-8) will provide a review of Zoroastrian rituals.

Michael Stausberg, Dr. Phil, is head of a research group on Zoroastrian rituals at University of Heidelberg. He is the author of *Faszination Zarathushtra* (1998) and editor of *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (2004).

Publisher: Kohlhammer, vertrieb@kohlhammer.de, www.kohlhammer.de, Fax: 0711/78 63-8430. In North America: www.eisenbrauns.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO RENATE NAGARWALLA FOR TRANSLATING FLYER FROM GERMAN. ■



Lectures on history, calendar, prayers, spirituality & doctrine

“Religion of Asho Zartosht and Influence through the Ages” by Ervad Jehan Bagli

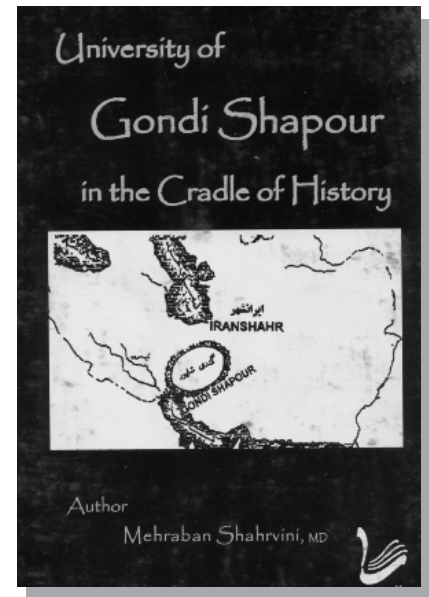
Foreword by Farhang Mehr. Published by Informal Religious Meetings (IRM) Trust Fund, Karachi, 2003.

The book is a compilation of essays and lectures by Dr. Bagli, who is president of the North American Mobeds' Council (NAMC), covering: history of the religion, the religious calendar (unified calendar), prayers, spirituality, theology, doctrine and socio-religious topics.

Price. In USA: US \$8+\$4 shipping; In Canada: Cdn \$12+\$4 shipping. **To order**, send check payable to NAMC, to: Jehan Bagli, 1569 Wembury Road, Mississauga, ONT, L5J 2L8, Canada. All revenues will be divided between IRM and NAMC.■



Errata. Er. Jehan Bagli's *The Religion of Zarathushtra and Influence through the Ages* was erroneously mentioned as “sponsored by NAMC” [FJ, Winter 2003, p. 4]. Please note that it is a publication of the Research and Preservation Committee of FEZANA, completely and solely sponsored and published by the Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund of Karachi. ■



First factual text on 4th c. Sasanian university at Gondi Shapour

“University of Gondi Shapour in the Cradle of History” by Mehraban Shahrivini, MD

The Gatha Translation Committee is pleased to announce that their worthy goal of sponsoring a book about the University of Gondi Shapour, has now been accomplished, and the project was eminently successful.

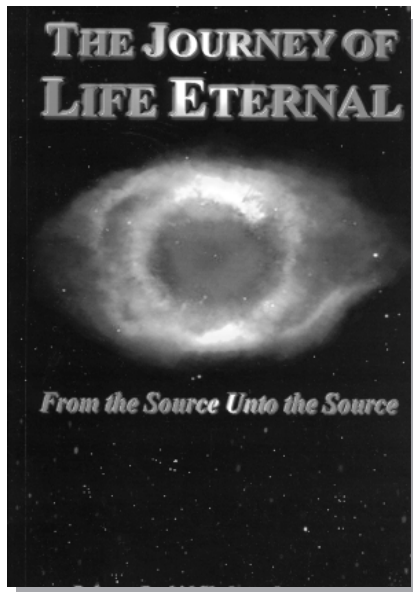
The book (hardcover, ISBN 964-93860-4-1) authored by Dr. Mehraban Shahrivini, in Farsi, is the first factual text on this prestigious center of learning, which was a shimmering star in fourth century Persia during the Sasanian dynasty.

Complimentary copies are being distributed to Zarathushti anjumans worldwide, to each individual who graciously donated to the Gatha Translation Committee; and to universities, libraries, and other institutions of learning. The book is not available for sale.

For further information, please contact Dr. Sharvini, in Vancouver, BC, at 604-922-3490, fax: 604-922-3491.

On behalf of:

Gatha Translation Committee
Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D., chair
Jacksonville, Florida. ■



Bold, new self-help work on how-to embark on the spiritual path

“The Journey of Life Eternal: From the Source Unto the Source” by Bahman Rashid Shahmardaan, PhD.

Paperback, 280 pp., 54 illustrations/photos, ISBN 1-59405-034-1, \$19.95, 2003. New Age World Publishing, California, tel: 510-848-1786, info@nawpublishing.com, www.nawpublishing.com.

This bold new spiritual work was inspired and tutored by Dr. Dinshah K. Mehta, a spiritual master who received ‘seven principles of right surrender’ as a gift for humanity from his ‘Guiding Mind’.

Journey offers a fresh new way to illuminate and understand Eastern ways of thought. Dr. Shahmardaan applies his teachings to modern society and current events. Many will find this book educational and inspiring. Those who may be disillusioned by organized religion but would like to know more about spiritual principles will find it a real blessing.

Dr. Bahram Shahmardaan has been a theologian and a spiritual practitioner for over 35 years. In 1980, he established the American branch of The Society of Servants of God, which was originally founded by Dr. Mehta in India.



Mobed with a mission. When he’s not performing jashans and navjotes all over Florida and neighboring states, **Ervad Soli P. Dastur** of Sarasota, is at his computer designing calendar programs[see FJ, Winter 2003] or placing Avestan manuscripts and valuable books on the web.

‘eZ Books’ on the Internet

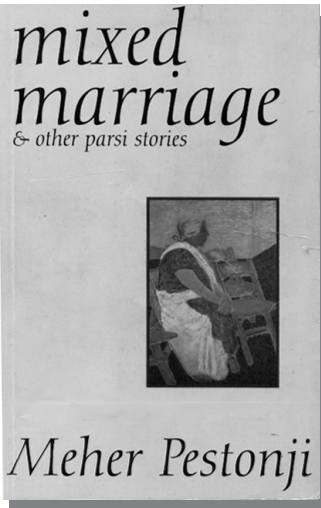
Let’s look into the legendary ‘*Jam-e-Jamshed*’ (the bowl of King Jamshed) to look into the future, and what do I see? A mobediyar or an ervad at a jashan reciting the prayers from an electronic PDA! When I became a priest, reading our prayers from a book was ‘*verboden*’. Now, seeing ervads praying from books is common place; and PDAs cannot be far behind!

With that future vision, I set out on my mission to place electronic copies of certain rare and valuable works on the Internet. I have now placed the following ten monumental works (several 1000 scanned pages in .jpg format) each obtained after a long saga of searching, through the generosity of persons around the world. My good friend Joseph Peterson graciously agreed to place them on his website at www.avesta.org. The last three are on my website at www.etarapur.com.

- (1) *Kavasji Eduljee Kanga’s (KEK) Avesta language grammar* (in English), courtesy of Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of Dadar Athornan Madressa.
- (2) and (3) *KEK’s Avesta-Gujarati-English dictionary and English-Avesta dictionary*, courtesy of Phiroze J. Kutar, Mumbai.
- (4) *Dastoorji Sunjana’s Pahlavi grammar* (Gujarati) courtesy of Sam Kerr, Sydney.
- (5) *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra* by *Jatindra Chatterji*, courtesy of Ervad Sohrabji Panthaky, chief priest, Columbo, Sri Lanka.
- (6) *KEK’s Gujarati Khordeh Avesta* with word by word translation, courtesy BPP.
- (7) *KEK’s English Khordeh Avesta* with word by word translation, courtesy BPP.
- (8) *Dr. Irach J. S. Taraporewala’s The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*.
- (9) *Dr. Purvez D. Kolsawalla’s compilation of our scriptures*, with translations by multiple scholars side by side, courtesy of Jamshid Zartoshti, Minsk, Belarus.
- (10) *101 Names of Ahura Mazda (in Gujarati)* by *Er. Kaikobad Eduljee Karkaria*, courtesy of Sam Kerr, Sydney.

Please contact me for instructions on viewing and searching these eZ books.

- by Soli Dastur, dastur@comcast.net.



Mixed Marriage and other Parsi Stories by Meher Pestonji

HarperCollins Publishers India,
1999. ISBN: 81-7223-367-1, 180 p.

Review by Saros Cowasjee
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Bombay Parsis are the principal characters in all the twelve stories in this volume and with few exceptions they are drawn with severity. They are depicted as self-centered, clannish and money-minded; people who pride themselves on their racial purity and disdain the Indian poor. Their lack of courage is highlighted both in "Dilemma" and "Riot"; in the latter Ratan is unable to summon up a single Parsi to help her two Muslim friends in distress.

Though some may question Pestonji's portrayal of the Parsis, few, however, will question her artistry. Even her weakest stories such as "Dilemma" or "Growing Up" are skillfully presented and the reader is persuaded to continue reading to the very end.

As for her best, they would rank alongside those of Rohinton Mistry which whom she shares many of her social concerns. The writing is consistently good, the suspense is always there, the movement from narration to dialogue and back is smooth and timely.

What strikes the reader is her descriptive skill – whether of place or people. The title story, "Mixed Marriage", presents a scathing but accurate picture of Cusrow Baug: "An island adrift, where even a Mercedes owner could live in charity housing." The "Riot" shows Bombay erupting in communal strife like "milk boiling over when left on high heat." And "Raghu" offers, among other things, an unforgettable picture of Lonavla in the rains. It also presents a Parsi in considerable psychological depth: a man volatile, arrogant, unpredictable but essentially kind.

Among other memorable stories in this volume are "Transcience" and "The Gift". The former is about two old women, a housekeeper and her servant, who learn through the accidental death of a young man the transcience of life and the need for tolerance and compassion. "The Gift" pleads that what is done through love supercedes that what is done through a sense of duty. Both stories carry a strong message and not for the Parsis alone.

Meher Pestonji is a freelance journalist in Mumbai. Her other works include "Pervez" (2002).

Saros Cowasjee, PhD, is an author [*Raj Stories*, FJ Winter 2002] and professor emeritus of English, University of Regina. ■

BOOKS & MORE

● **"Persian Words for Persian Speaking People"** by **Zartosht Azadi** is available for \$12 from Persian Stores in LA, or send \$15 to PO Box 1285, Placentia, CA 92871. The purpose of this book is to eradicate Arabic words and Arabic grammar from the Persian language. [*From creatingawareness@yahoogroups.com*]

● **"A Short History of Persian Literature"**. Author **Zartosht Azadi** of Orange County, CA, is looking for sponsors to help publish his book on Persian literature, expected to be about 500-600 pages. Contact azadi1@earthlink.net. [*From creatingawareness@yahoogroups.com*]

● **"Parsi Settlements and Absorption in India"** by **Mani Kamerker and Soonu Dhunjisha**, hardcover, 220 p., Rs. 390. Available from *Parsiana Bookstore* [see page 131].

● **"Ancient Persia, the Civilization of Ancient Iran"** (CSUF History 491T) is a course offered by **Prof. Touraj Daryaei** of Orange County, CA. Contact tdaryaei@fullerton.edu. [*From creatingawareness@yahoogroups.com*]

● **"www.abebooks.co.uk"** a great bookshop on the internet, "the world's largest online marketplace for secondhand, rare and out-of-print books", offers many Zarathushti books. [*Posted by Henry Palsson, spentomad@yahoo.se on the egrouppasha@bahnhof.se*]

● **"www.theparsichronicle"** is a new website, started by Ader Gandhi of California, to "keep a chronicle of Zoroastrians mentioned in the news – a living history of our community." Contact Ader@Gandi.com.

● **"Shahnameh of Firdowsi"**, a seven CD set, contains images, pictures animation, Persian couplets and pictures of Iran, past and present, is available in a gift box. Contact Benaifer Mistry, Mumbai at benaifer@bom4.vsnl.net.in. [*From creatingawareness@yahoogroups.com*]

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