Vegetation on Earth: an Avestan Revelation

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Congress in San Jose
Trapped in the Tsunami
Whither the World Body?
Business & Enterprise

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Myrrh (Commipora abyssinica Engl.)
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FROM THE EDITOR

While the Tsunami disaster, with over 200,000 human beings wiped out in one catastrophic moment, shook the world in December [read “Trapped in the Tsunami” on page 14] developments of no less cataclysmic proportions were shaking the very existence of our scant 200,000 strong Zarathushtri community.


Meanwhile, 500 North American Zarathushtis came together at the XIIIth North American Congress in San Jose, for four days of deliberations (though not as confrontational, thankfully) on “Being Zarathushtri: Looking at Issues, Searching for Answers.” A flavor of the presentations, panel discussions, exhibits, workshops and galas, as well as the preceding WZCC (World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce) events, is given in this issue [see page 28].

The cover topic “Vegetation on Earth, an Avestan Revelation” is the brainchild of guest editor Sam Kerr. He presents a most interesting array of articles from respected authors, on aspects of vegetation and plant life, as it pertains to Avestan theology, rituals, liturgy and life. Sam also shares his vast collection of photographs of Persian gardens, roses, trees and flowers. Happy Reading!

Roshan Rivetna
Editor-in-Chief

FEZANA UPDATE

President’s Message

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

A Test of Faith

After the Gujarat, Turkey and Bam Earthquakes, the world faces another disaster of global proportions in the South Asian ocean earthquake/tidal wave, we have come to know as the Tsunami.

Excerpted below is an article my friends at the Edmonton Interfaith Centre forwarded to me. I took the opportunity to present my view of how a Zarathushti would respond, based on my understanding and belief. I do not claim this to be a scholarly, nor an official FEZANA response.

Faiths ask of quake: "Why did you do this, God?"
Alerting Humanitarians to Emergencies

By Peter Graff
Source: Reuters

London, January 6 (Reuters): It is one of the oldest, most profound questions, posed by some of the most learned minds of every faith throughout the course of human history.

It was put eloquently this week by an old woman in a devastated village in southern India’s Tamil Nadu state. “Why did you do this to us, God?” she wailed. “What did we do to upset you?”

Perhaps no event in living memory has confronted so many of the world’s great religions with such a basic test of faith as this week’s tsunami, which indiscriminately slaughtered Indonesian Muslims, Indian Hindus, Thai and Sri Lankan Buddhists and tourists who were Christians and Jews.

In temples, mosques, churches and synagogues across the globe, clerics are being called upon to explain: How could a benevolent god visit such horror on ordinary people?

Traditionalists of diverse faiths described the destruction as part of God’s plan, proof of his power and punishment for human sins.

“This is an expression of God’s great ire with the world,” Israeli chief rabbi Shlomo Amar told Reuters. “The world is being punished for wrongdoing – be it people’s needless hatred of each other, lack of charity, moral turpitude.”

Pandit Harikrishna Shastri, a priest of New Delhi’s huge marble and sandstone Birla Hindu temple, told Reuters the disaster was caused by a “huge amount of pent-up man-made evil on earth” and driven by the positions of the planets.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, a leading British Muslim cleric from Leicester in England said: “We believe that God has ultimate controlling power over his entire creation. We have a responsibility to try and attract god’s kindness and mercy and not do anything that would attract his anger.”
End of Time?

Many faiths believe that disasters foretell the end of time or the coming of a Messiah. Some Christians expect chaos and destruction as foretold in the Bible’s final book, Revelation.

“It is a sign of the last days,” says Maria, a 32-year-old Jehovah’s Witness in Cyprus.

But for others, such calamities can prompt a repudiation of faith. Secularist Martin Kettle wrote in Britain’s Guardian newspaper that the tsunamis should force people to “ask if the God can exist that can do such things” – or if there is no God, just nature.

It is a question that clergy have to deal with nearly every day, not just at times of great catastrophe but when providing consolation for the daily sorrows of life, said U.S. Rabbi Daniel Isaak, of Congregation Neveh Shalom, in Portland, Oregon.

In one modern view, he said, God does not interfere in the affairs of his creation. Disasters like the tsunami occur for the natural reasons scientists say they do.

“The world has certain imperfections built into the natural order, and we have to live with them. The issue isn’t ‘Why did God do this to us?’ but ‘How do we human beings care for one another?’”

Below is my view on how a Zarathushti would respond, as presented to the Edmonton Interfaith Centre.

When any disaster affects humanity, we justifiably ask this question, “Why did you do this, God?”

Many different religious and scientific explanations are sought.

Many various faith and non-faith based perspectives are mentioned.

As people of Interfaith, we respect and accept all answers that bring inner peace and consolation to all of God’s children, wherever they are and in whatever way they choose to do so.

There is no one answer that is equal or better than any other, just different answers.

There is a report of one Zarathushti family being victims of the Tsunami in Sri Lanka while vacationing, and only the youngest son survived.

So allow me to share with you my understanding of Zarathushtra’s revelation, as it would apply to any calamity.

The Yasna liturgy, ascribes all good things to Ahura Mazda (the God of Wisdom) and therefore, any act detrimental and destructive to humanity, could not be an act of God. The doctrine prescribes such calamities as the act of a force that brings death and destruction to humanity – opposite to God’s good, creative and life promoting force. Hence, it is our responsibility to learn to recognize such possibilities, enhance our knowledge about them, prepare for them and when we are afflicted by them, come together, join in our collective forces of good, create a better life for those who have survived, so as to surpass the forces of destruction by collectively contributing in any way we can to the forces of Construction.

For life must go on; as only Good Life will frustrate the forces of destruction.

So a Zarathushti response to “Why did you do this, God?” would be as follows.

God would not do such a thing to his beloved children, but what can we do to assist God to fix it?

So let us come together, in any individual and collective capacity that each one of us can offer, and make this world a wonderful place to live in.

With you in prayers, for those who lost so much.

Firdosh Mehta
President, FEZANA
Zpeakerbox: the community’s first youth online magazine

Kudos to three of our young Zarathushtis, Parizad Hathidaru (Vancouver), Sharon Batliwala (Ottawa) and Narius Dastur (Vancouver) for starting the first Zarathushti youth online magazine called Zpeakerbox.

Starting in May 2004 with a thought-provoking article written by Parizad, the creation of a website gave Zarathushti youth from all over the world an opportunity to meet fellow Zarathushtis and speak their minds about issues – rather than waiting a year or two for the next congress. This website is created by the youth, for the youth.

Over the past decade, people from around the world have turned to the Internet as a way of meeting new people and voicing their opinions on the issues that arise within society. It is certainly no different amongst our Zarathushti youth! Zpeakerbox has over 200 members since its launch this May and increasing steadily. News of this website has reached all over the world including Canada, United States, Germany, London, Australia, Dubai, India, Iran and Pakistan. Until now, the only form of advertisement has been through word of mouth and e-mail.

Members can participate in both serious and light-hearted discussions of various topics, share jokes, articles, pictures and even join a live chat. Youth can keep up with upcoming activities and receive information regarding future congresses and Zarathushti Games.

Sharon, Parizad and Narius have dedicated their time and effort to see this site succeed. They do this on a voluntary basis as Sharon is a full time nursing student at the University of Ottawa; Parizad is a Social Sciences student in Vancouver and Narius is a full-time computer science student at Simon Fraser University.

Registration is free and only takes a matter of seconds. For more information, visit: http://www.zpeakerbox.narius.net. Please type ‘ZYNA’ when asked for who referred you.

-Afreed Mistry

Successful fundraiser gala for ZACUCE

The Zarathushti Cultural Center of Delaware Valley Inc. (ZACUCE) held its second annual fund raiser in North Brunswick, NJ, on November 26. ZACUCE is a non profit organization, incorporated in 2002 by members of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) who foresee the need for a cultural center in the Tri-State area.

Dignitaries at the gala affair included Seema Singh, director and ratepayer advocate of NJ representing the New Jersey governor’s office, Rabindranath Panda, counsel (Education and Culture) from the Indian consul general’s office, and the Honorable Francis Womack, mayor of North Brunswick.

Highlights of the evening were a Parsi natak (“Tehmulji in Turmoil” by a group of Zarathushtis from New Jersey), Indian dances, a gara and Air India ticket auction and a silent auction.

ZACUCE appeals to the entire North American Zarathushti community to generously donate towards building this center to inculcate Zarathushti values and preserve the cultural heritage in our rising number of Zarathushti youth.

For information or to make a donation, please contact ZACUCE chair Jehan Kasad at jakasad@yahoo.com or fund-raising committee chair Khursheed Bapasola at kbapasola@yahoo.com.

New ‘Zoroastrian Students of Boston’ (ZSB) is formed

Zoroastrian Students of Boston (ZSB) is an organization of undergraduate and graduate students in greater Boston colleges and universities. ZSB hosts lectures with local professors, dinners, conversations about Zoroastrian culture and other fun events for its members. It also connects its 45+ members to the larger Zoroastrian community in the area, ZAGBA. If you are a student in the Boston area interested in being added to the ZSB mailing list, please email rkapadia@wellesley.edu, dmistree@mit.edu, or dmehta@mit.edu.

Fezana Journal – Spring 2005
Whenever authority has dominated free thought, intellectual vigour has declined and literary activity has found no expression in original thought, being obliged to content itself with writing commentaries and interpreting the thought of the past. Thought decays and dies when attempts are made to enforce standardization and uniformity. Despite such organized attempts to stifle thought, it has lived and grown.

- Dr. Dhall, Our Perfecting World: chapter on Evolution of Thought

A Weekend of Treasures, Traditions & Tributes
Grand ZAH library event honors the life and works of Dastur Dr. Dhalla

by Magdalena Rustomji
Houston, Texas

On October 16th and 17th, the ZAH Library held its second annual event at the Zarthushti Heritage and Cultural Center in Houston.

Featured on the program the first evening, was the play by Shahnaz Sidhwa, A Legend, based on Dastur Dr. Manekji N. Dhall’s autobiography, Saga of a Soul, beautifully portrayed by a ZAH cast. Edifying readings from Dastur Dhall’s books followed. Magdalena Rustomji read a special Ode to Dhall that she composed for the occasion.

Out of town guests included Dastur Dhall’s great-granddaughter Vahishta Canteenwalla and husband, Jehanbux, Arnaz Marker, wife of Pakistan’s Ambassador-at-Large Jamshed Marker, and editor of USHAO, Virasp Mehta, from Kansas.

A breath taking exhibit of beautiful garas, photos and other memorabilia were on display in the ZAH library, as well as a very special Dhall collection. Arnaz Marker is responsible for the ZAH Library being chosen as the repository of all Dastur Dhall’s books, documents and artifacts. She presented Aban Rustomji, chair of the Library Committee with Dastur Dhall’s academic documents, including those from Columbia University.

On the second day, Virasp Mehta led a Hambandagi to celebrate the life of Dastur Dhall. The program continued with a talk on “Dastur M. N. Dhall: His Intellectual Life” by Professor Yezdi M. Rustomji, who pointed out that Dastur Dhall discerned that there was a fundamental difference in being educated and learned. Virasp Mehta then led the group in an informal chat about Dastur Dhall, his life in Pakistan, and his outlook on life. He felt that Dhall’s greatness was in his humility.
New association in Atlanta

With the blessings of Ahura Mazda, the Atlanta Zarathushti Association (AZA) was formed in May 2004. Since its inception members have enjoyed a variety of functions ranging from New Year celebrations to hikes, facilitating the development of closer relationships.

The association is blessed with its own mobed, Rustom Kanga, always ready to serve the community. In August 2004, he performed mahrum-nu-jashan in reverence of departed family members. The jashan was held outdoors, in the midst of trees and fall flowers. The fragrance of sukhad and loban permeated the air.

In October, AZA held a fundraiser event, with Mahabanoo Mody Kotwal [photo above] a stalwart thespian on the Indian stage, performing a one-woman play Shirley Valentine by Willy Russell. This event was a great success – and a learning experience for the organizers as they collected advertisements for the brochure, sold tickets and concession stand items, and raffled restaurant gift certificates. It was an intimate evening of laughs, tears and camaraderie.

The Board members have put together an array of events, one each month. With Ahura Mazda’s continued blessings we hope to flourish as an association welcoming new members each year.

Nairika Kotwal Cornett
AZA coordinator, on behalf of the AZA Working Committee

Evacuation Assistance Program

The Atlanta Zarathushti Association has started a new program – the Evacuation Assistance Program (EAP) to provide temporary shelter and other assistance to Zarathushtis from neighboring states during an evacuation or similar emergency. The idea came from Yashfara Mistree, when a series of hurricanes hit the state of Florida, last fall.

The AZA EAP coordinator will maintain a list of families in Georgia that are willing to provide temporary shelter or assistance to evacuees. The program will be publicized through FEZANA Journal and by informing Zarathushti associations and groups in neighboring states.

In the event of an emergency or evacuation, neighboring associations, small group leaders, or individuals may contact the EAP coordinator, who will help organize temporary shelter or assistance with host families in Georgia. The EAP coordinator will publish a contact phone number and email address to facilitate the program.

In future, AZA will reserve a permanent email alias, like eap@a-za.org, for the EAP coordinator.

For information, contact the current AZA EAP coordinator Nairika Kotwal Cornett [photo above] at 770-533-9853 or 678-549-0727, email: nairika@bellsouth.net.
Snapshots of a Good Life

by Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi

Felicitation of Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani at the Darbe Mehr in Pomona, NY

Last Fall, my husband and I were asked to assist with an event honoring Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani on November 20, 2004. We readily agreed. However, come November 20th, little assistance was asked of us, because of the number of people who had already volunteered. There are few people in this world who invoke as much admiration, respect, and apparently, volunteerism, as Prof. Irani and his wife, Piroja. About 150 people – Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti, from the New York area and from far away – were already there when we arrived. “What is all this? I never expected so many people?” Kaikhosrov said as we greeted him, shaking his head gently.

It was an evening of reminiscence, good wishes and gratitude, an illuminating celebration, providing insight into the life of a noble couple and the impact of their good deeds on others – an album of sorts filled with snapshots of a good life lived by a couple most loved.

The program began with a benediction by Ervads Pervez Patel, Darius Antia, Kersey Antia and Rohinton Madon.

Speaking on “Philosophy Now, and What K.D. Irani Taught Me Then,” Dr. Kenneth Stern, Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York, noted that Kaikhosrov had ‘civilized’ him in various ways, including, instilling in him a taste for Indian food and an appreciation for the opera. Dr. Stern recalled Kaikhosrov’s advice to him when he first started teaching: “Remember, you’re not teaching a course, you’re teaching students.”

Former student, Dr. Oscar Muscarella, now an archeologist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, spoke of “An Archaeologist’s Involvement with Zoroastrianism.” Kaikhosrov was the first Zoroastrian Dr. Muscarella had ever met and after describing his work with Zoroastrian artifacts, Dr. Muscarella mused that he had never expected when he first met Kaikhosrov, that his career would involve him with Zoroastrian culture as much as it had.

Former student and later colleague of 42 years, Dr. Martin Tamny recalled a lunch meeting in 1997, with a former student who was so pleased with his favorite professor that he donated $2 million in stock to the City College Fund to sponsor the “K. D. Irani Visiting Professorship in Philosophy at the City College.”

Dr. Farhang Mehr stated that, in his opinion, “nobody as much as Professor Irani has discerned the true meaning of the philosophy of Zarathustra.” Dr. Ali Jafarey, with whom Kaikhosrov and Piroja, among others, founded the Zarathushtrian Assembly, stated that the Assembly owed its success to the couple. ZAGNY’s dean of religious studies, Dr. Lovji Cama spoke of the concrete contributions Piroja and Kaikhosrov had made to ZAGNY over the years, in serving as board members, arranging religious seminars and religion classes, “his wit, his sense of humor, and his ability to tailor his discourse to the level of his audience, made him an engaging speaker and a great teacher for the youth.”

A colleague, Dr. Jacob Stern, observed that “there is only a thin line which separates Prof. Irani from Don Quixote. Both men have carefully trimmed chin beards, both wear slightly bizarre clothes (though I admit I’ve never seen K.D. in armor), but most importantly, both set out to act as just men should act in a world whose most outstanding characteristic is its injustice. Don Quixote does not exactly understand this fact and, therefore, we think him mad. K.D. on the other hand, understands well that the world in which he attempts to act justly is itself an unjust place. Yet he seems to me, constantly astonished at that knowledge. This, I think, accounts for a most notable feature of his personality; that he is totally without cynicism and without any mocking sarcasm.”

Describing Prof. Irani as “the very soul of City College,” Dr. Stern stated that “thousands of his students and colleagues, both past and present, will attest to the depth of his knowledge, his intellectual honesty, his wisdom, and most importantly, to the profound influence he has had on their lives … If ever there was a man whose good thoughts and deeds give us hope for the world’s renewal that man is K. D. Irani.”

A colleague, Dr. Frank Grande, described how a reference letter from Albert Einstein helped Prof. Irani to get his first job at City College.

Providing insight into his personal life, Zarine Weil, the Iranis’ niece spoke of Piroja, “She is his biggest fan and foremost champion. Each is a pillar of strength to the other. They are the sort of devoted partners we all hope for and hope to be.” Speaking of her impressions as a four year old, Zarine stated, “I remember being charmed by the bright-eyed man with the pointy beard who seemed to have
an endless supply of stories to tell and a sweet lady who took such delight in every joke her husband told.”

Former FEZANA president, Framroze Patel spoke with gratitude to the Iranis for bringing him back to his religion after a period of disillusionment. Daraius Antia thanked Kaikhosrov for enlightening him through the religion classes. Arnavaz Patel thanked them for being “like grandparents” to ZAGNY’s youth; Shahriar Shahriari spoke of his experience making the documentary Domains of Belief as an amazing and exciting intellectual adventure. Aysha Ghadiali presented a compilation of messages from the Creating Awareness network. Kersey Antia thanked them for standing by him in challenging times; and Rustom Kevala spoke of his experiences compiling Prof. Irani’s papers for publication.

On behalf of a grateful community, Zareen Austin and Shiraz Unvala presented garlands made by Sheroo Kanga. Erach Munshi presented Prof. Irani with a framed maan patra. With characteristic wit and humility Kaikhosrov thanked the audience, “Thank you … You must realize that this is slightly embarrassing for me. I have been praised beyond my conception. This was an occasion where critical comments would be filtered out, but these are the kinds of things that happen at memorial meetings. Fortunately, I’m alive and I have the opportunity to hear them and I do appreciate that. You must realize that if I were dead, I couldn’t have been requested to speak; but now, I shall speak, because I rather like that.”

To an eager audience, Kaikhosrov spoke of his career in philosophy and in Zoroastrian studies. He concluded, “Religion without vision is blind. Religion without a way of life is empty. But there are people who think that if we perform these rituals and those rituals and so on and join in them, then that is religion. That is certainly something one should do, because that’s part of the social structure of religious life, but if you think that is religion you are missing something.”

Prof. Irani left the stage to resounding applause and a standing ovation. As the event wound down, a reluctant group said their fond farewells to the honored couple, taking with them these snapshots of a life well lived and, probably, “much hope for the world’s renewal” as well.

Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi
lives in New York City. She writes as a hobby.

New board at ZANC. As of Jan 8, 2005 a new Board of the Zarathoshti Anjuman of Northern California has been in office with office bearers: Nazneen Spliedt - president, Zarina Bhandari - vice president, Perin Marawala - treasurer, Ehler Spliedt - secretary, Adil Engineer and Kersi Daruwalla - members and Vanizhah Irani - youth member.

Nazneen writes: “We look forward to working with FEZANA and help in any way we can, following in the footsteps of our past president of many years, Bomí Patel.”

Photo, on the steps of the Rustom Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in San Jose, California: front from left, Homay Kasad (Sunday school coordinator), Nazneen Spliedt and Perin Marawala. Back, Adil Engineer, Ehler Spliedt, Annahita Jasavala and Rohinton Bhandari (Sunday school coordinators) and Kersi Daruwalla.
World Peace convocation in Korea.


In an effort to promote a more peacefully sustainable world, the IIFWP has assumed a mission to unify the Korean peninsula, hoping to bring economic prosperity to North Korea, while stabilizing the region on the whole. While the program was scheduled with case studies and strategy workshops, there was an opportunity to visit the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. The experience provided a first-hand view of the striking differences between these nations. One can notice how devoid the North Koreans are of natural resources. While a mountainous landscape full of lush green trees provides ample scenery in the south, the mountains in the north are stripped of their beauty from intensive logging efforts. With limited support from other countries and a weak economy, North Koreans have consumed vast amounts of their own natural resources for their sustainability.

The most affecting part of the trip was a visit to Freedom Bridge, connecting North and South Korea. Today, the bridge is an impasse with the sad reality that for the past five decades loved ones from both countries have been unable to visit each other. Yet, there is hope that Freedom Bridge will once again reunite the Korean people, and with the effort of organizations such as the IIFWP, a reunified and peacefully sustainable Korea may someday become a reality.

- by Mahrukh Patel
Jashne Sadeh celebration in Iran. About 13,000 people attended the Jashne Sadeh celebrations at Koshk-e Varjavand (a large tract of land donated by the late Dr. Varjavand, 16 km west of Azadi Square) in Tehran, on Friday the 10th of Bahman, January 28th, jointly organized by the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman and the Fravahar Youth Organization.

For the third year now, Sadeh is open to all. Invitations to the celebration had gone to government officials, university faculty, and other large organizations. The majority at the celebration were non-Zarathushtis who love the ancient Iranian culture. A government music band played as the crowd cheered.

The program began with prayers and a jashan. The newly elected head of the Iranian Mobed Council and Mr. Abadian, head of the Tehran Anjuman, welcomed the guests and speeches followed.

When it turned dark, a procession was formed of young women playing the traditional daf musical instrument, mobeds, and a large group of youth in white holding fire torches. As the bonfire was lit, the crown spontaneously began singing *Ey Iran*. It was a huge fire that turned the whole area bright, and burned for over an hour, as the people cheered. The program continued for three hours with music and entertainment, and many stood in line to buy the traditional *Aash* soup. The celebrations were shown repeatedly on Iranian TV channels. Sadeh was also celebrated in Kerman, Yazd, Ahvaz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Zahadan.

- Mehran Sepehri

Women’s Day celebration. For the first time, the Zoroastrian Women’s Organization of Tehran, *Sazman-e-Zanan-e-Zarthoshty*, celebrated *Rooze Zan* (Women’s Day) on January 25th (6th Bahman 1383), at Khosravi Hall, in anticipation of *Jashn-e-Esfandgan*. *Esfand* represents mother Earth and hence its significance from ancient Zoroastrian times. The program consisted of speeches, interspersed with classical Iranian music and entertainment. The highlight of the evening was the emotional felicitation of Khanum Parrineh, who has been the very popular sports teacher of generations of Zarathushti schoolchildren. Many of her students, now abroad, must also remember her. Still tall and stately at over 80 years of age, she was overwhelmed to meet so many of her past pupils. It was a memorable evening for all present at Khosravi Hall. [Posted by Dr. Mehrbanoo Bustani, Tehran, on creatingawareness@yahooogroups.com]
Distinguished visitor—an all-Australia report

Living in a far-flung outpost of the world, we, in Australia happen to live in a country as large as the USA (without Alaska) with a population of only 21 million. We could all fit comfortably in the State of New York. Visitors find it difficult to understand how we have managed to cope with logistical problems.

“Perth, WA,” wrote Zenobia Pavri, of ZAWA, “being perhaps the most isolated capital city is not often honored by distinguished visitors. For the first time in our history Perth was visited by a high priest. There was an unexpectedly large turn-out on 25th January to meet Er. Asphandiar Dadachanji and his wife Dhumai.

“For the past 22+ years Er. Dadachanji has served as the revered panthaki at the Vachha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai. He has initiated hundreds of navars, performed nirangdin ceremonies, high liturgy rituals, jashans, navjotes and weddings. Dignified, in dagli, pagdi, his white beard covered by a paddan he spoke to a rapt audience on the elaborate rituals and significance of a jashan in an enlightened but humorous manner, effectively demonstrating the link between our geti (physical) and minoi (spiritual).”

In Adelaide, capital of SA on January 29th, dastoorji showed the video of the transfer and enthronement of the 100-year-old consecrated fire at the Godrej Baug agiary in Mumbai. Farhad Master wrote “Dr. Keki Mehta and his wife, Syloo organized a gathering at their residence.”

Perviz Dubash, president of ZAV, Melbourne wrote, “The hall was absolutely packed. The audience enjoyed his witty and humorous style. Then, came the showing of the video, a magic moment which none of us will ever forget. Watching Atashpadsha’s march, with hundreds of mobeds in white, and thousands of Parsis in procession, there was not a single dry eye in the audience. Here, I noticed an unusual fact: most of the questions were asked by our youth.”

Er. Dadachanji’s response to sensitive topics was calm and firm but dignified and informative; a manner, most impressive to our Ervads Aspi Madan and Darius Pavri in Perth, Kaivan Antia in Adelaide and Tim Desai and several Ervads in Sydney, who benefited from the wisdom of his ecclesiastical discourse.

To top it all, Dhumai offered tips on preparing authentic dhanshak, vasanu and malido. The Malido she prepared in Sydney, indeed, brought back good memories of my childhood days in Surat.

by Sam Kerr, Sydney, Australia.

Medicina Alternativa and Holistic Health at Zoroastrian College

Throughout the Medicina Alternativa-Holistic Health Department, Zoroastrian College, Sanjan, organized the 18th World Congress of Medicina Alternativa in Mumbai in January 2004. Over 300 delegates from India, Taiwan, Germany, UK, USA and Thailand participated. At the 19th World Congress, in Mumbai in January 2005, two days were also allowed for Interfaith Peace topics. All are invited to attend this annual Congress organized by Zoroastrian College since 1986 in Mumbai.

Zoroastrian College president Prof. Dr. Meher Master Moos, [photo above] also attended health conferences in Sikkim and Agartala and was invited to lay the foundation stone for a hospital in Agartala.

Last year, a delegation from Zoroastrian College attended the Medicina Alternativa World Congress in Colombo Sri Lanka; young math wizard Minoo Jokhi presented his memory improvement course. Dr. Moos was invited by the Buddha Heart Association of Taiwan to give lectures on Ancient Cosmic Wisdom.

Over 30 persons have submitted research theses for their doctorate degrees this year through Zoroastrian College from India, Ecuador, Taiwan, and elsewhere.

Contact Prof. Dr. Meher Master Moos at mmastermoos@yahoo.com
The Tsunami – grieving and giving

As over 200,000 lives were swept away by the deadly waves across the Indian Ocean on December 26th, in possibly the worst natural disaster in our lifetimes, countless acts of compassion and goodness surfaced, as Zarathushtis, like all good citizens, found solace in prayer, and gave their share towards the recovery effort.

Zarathushtis in the tsunami.

Usheen Davar of New York City was vacationing in Phuket, Thailand when the Tsunami struck [see next page].

A Zarathushti family of five was among the 40 or so Indian nationals feared dead in the Tsunami disaster.

The Fozdar family of Princess Street, Mumbai – Kersi Fozdar (45) and his wife Keta (44), their two sons Anosh (11) and Farzan (8), Kersi’s mother Soono (76) and sister Meher (50) – were vacationing at the Hotel Yalla Safari Lodge on the east coast of Sri Lanka. On December 26th, Kersi was heading down for breakfast and Keta was getting the boys ready, when a huge wave entered their first floor hotel rooms, broke the walls and swept them all out.

The youngest, Farzan managed to cling on to a tree as he saw his family, three generations, all swept away. He was later able to give his rescuers the phone number of his maternal grand-father, Er. Behram Kamdin, a bui-walla at Ba naji Atash Behram, who flew to Sri Lanka with Farzan’s uncles. They were able to recover four bodies and bring them to Mumbai. Anosh [below] is still missing.

Farzan has now recovered from his injuries – fractures sustained when he fell from the tree – but the trauma of this nightmare will remain with him forever.

Relief efforts and Services.

FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta sent an appeal to all Associations for the FEZANA Tsunami Relief Fund. WZO chairman Sammy Bhiwandiwalla appealed to all Zarathushtis to “play their part in this international relief effort.” Victims were remembered at prayer services by many Zarathushti associations and individuals around the world.

Youth team.

Niloufer Randeria of Ahmedabad offered her services for two-weeks: “A couple of my friends, who along with me, work in the health-development sector, are determined to contribute to the relief efforts, if even in a small way. We intend to visit the affected areas (mostly Chennai and the coastal villages of Tamil Nadu), tie up with a relief organization or NGO and volunteer our services and technical support. We also intend to donate as much medical supplies, food and clothing as possible.” Working on a shoestring budget, the youth team would welcome any support from well-wishers. Contact Niloufer [nranderi@vsnl.net].

Canada.

Er. Dr. Soli Bamji of Toronto joined several hundred politicians, diplomats including Canadian prime minister Paul Martin and Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson, religious and ethnic leaders at the Interfaith ceremony at Ottawa’s Civic Center, on January 8, declared a national day of mourning. “We pay our respects to the people who have perished in this disaster,” said Er. Bamji, “and convey our deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to those who have suffered the loss of their families and friends.” Five Canadians have been officially confirmed dead and 146 remain missing.

Chicago.

Bomi Damkevala and Rohinton Rivetna participated in the The Assembly of Solemn Remembrance organized by the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, at Chicago Temple on January 26th. The Zarathushti prayer was from Afringan-e Daham:

“May all the souls of the saintly be collectively remembered here, from the First Man to the Savior-to-come …”

Tucson, AZ.

“About 350 people, including leaders of religious groups from Bahai to Zoroastrian” [Arizona Daily Star, January 10] participated in the Interfaith Community Service in memory of the Tsunami victims, in Tucson, AZ. Roshan Bhappu, who led the Zoroastrian prayer, was quoted in the Daily Star as saying “It’s a tragedy we have no control over, but we have each other.”

California.

At the University of California Davis, religious leaders and the campus community came together to share inspirational words and music in a multi-faith memorial service on January 26th. There were representatives from the Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and Zarathushti faiths. Ardeshir Damania gave a 10-minute talk on the Zoroastrian religion, and attributed the tsunami to the work of Ahriman.

by Roshan Rivetna
Trapped in the Tsunami

“It was a terrible experience and a miracle that we came out of it alive,” wrote Usheen Davar to her family and friends by email from Bangkok a few days after being caught in the tsunami, on December 26th.

Usheen, a resident of New York City, was vacationing in Phuket, an island off the southern coast of Thailand with her friend, Kimberly Selby. It was their second day on the island at the beachfront Bann Laimai Hotel on Patong Beach. The prior days of their trip were spent in Dubai, Bangkok and Chiang Mai, before arriving in Phuket on December 24th.

On Sunday, December 26th, Usheen and Kim felt the shaking from the earthquake that had hit that morning, but didn’t think much of it. They, like others, didn’t know that this was the first sign of what hours later was going to be the worst natural disaster of our time and the worst and longest day of their lives.

Wall of water. They started their day enjoying breakfast at the hotel’s beachfront café and were returning to their second-floor hotel room, when they heard screams and panic. Seeing a wall of water come rushing into the hotel, they scrambled up the stairs and made their way to the rooftop of the low 4-story hotel.

Speaking days later from Bangkok to a Star Ledger (a local NJ newspaper) reporter, Usheen described how they watched the streets flood with water, carrying cars, bodies, branches and telephone poles. “People being washed into the sea, vehicles flying, blood everywhere.”

Hours on rooftop. After two hours on the roof, some of the water was receding and there were signs of safety. As they started to make their way down, they once again heard screams and the ocean rumbling, only to suddenly realize that a second wave was approaching. They ran back up to the roof and watched the destruction unfold.

Due to the intense force of the rising water, the hotel structure started to crack. As panic struck, the girls thought it may be their final minutes to live. Borrowing a cell phone from one of the tourists on the roof-top, Usheen made a call to her sister, Ushvaitavy Davar, a FEZANA Journal youth editor, leaving a very chilling voicemail.

The girls knew that if a third wave approached, it would be the end for all of them, huddled on the rooftop. They decided to rely on their instincts and try to escape somehow.

The escape. The Star Ledger notes how leaving behind their luggage, the two made their way out: “first downstairs to their hotel room, grabbing bottles of water from the bar, a bag of chips and some bedsheets. Then out into the flooded streets, wading through the town’s maze of alleyways, scaling brick walls until they reached the Montana Grand Hotel, a 17-story high-rise farther inland.”

That night they slept on the floor, sharing a hotel room with an Australian. No one slept, as there were several earthquake and tsunami scares throughout the night.

Early next morning, Usheen and Kim went to the main road, and using whatever cash they had left, bribed a local resident to take them to Phuket International Airport. There, along with hundreds of others, many of them injured, they waited for a flight to Bangkok.

Usheen Davar [right] and friend Kim Selby in Bangkok. Above, the popular tourist spot, Patong Beach in Phuket, Thailand, as Usheen saw it the day before the tsunami. Facing page, Patong beach the day after. The car and debris were washed up to the remains of the beachfront café [in the lower left of the picture] where Usheen and Kim had breakfast, just a few minutes before the tsunami devastated the area. [PHOTOS COURTESY USHEEN DAVAR]
After being stuck in Bangkok for a few days, Usheen flew to Karachi, where her parents, Virasp and Kamal Davar of New Jersey were visiting relatives, before returning home to New York City days later.

**Somber experience.** Through this somber experience, Usheen, a member of the ZAGNY board of directors, is committed to helping “the Thai residents of Phuket who have lost their businesses, belongings, homes, jobs, schools, and many, their families.”

She has volunteered with *The Phuket Project*, to help rebuild the Kamala Children’s School. On the day after Christmas, a brand new building on Kamala Beach in Phuket, was due to open its doors to almost 200 children. An opening gala was planned, with balloons, food, gifts and a great sense of pride.

When the tsunami struck that Sunday morning, the building was destroyed, along with the hopes and efforts of many people who had worked so hard to build it. Two children were... [Continued on page 16]

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**Twelve weeks later** by Usheen Davar

Twelve weeks later since that day in Thailand that I will forever remember. Many people have asked me if my life has changed since the incident. I will say that it has – and in a strange way, for the better.

For days after the incident, I was extremely exhausted, walking around in a state of shock, blur and confusion. I was overwhelmed by the people calling me, including reporters searching for a story. I wasn’t comfortable with the attention and did not want it.

What a difference twelve weeks can make. Today, my life is pretty much back to normal, but I have changed, a little. I have learned to appreciate and be more aware of my surroundings and try not to go through each day on fast-forward mode. For example, just yesterday I realized that every morning I rush past the same security guard at work, and have never even bothered to stop for a minute to ask him his name. This man is putting himself out there every day to ensure our safety, and I, along with hundreds of others in the building, do not even know his name!

I have also learned not to take my work/job so seriously – my professional career should come second to my personal life. Success in the workplace is important, but shouldn’t be at the expense of living your own life. Knowing how to balance both is the key.

I realize now that it’s OK to ask others for help, even though people with strong personalities like mine, prefer doing things ourselves.

The incident has also reinforced how valuable strong ties with family and friends really are. Regardless of how busy you are, you need to make time for them. And once in a while, it’s good to do something out of the ordinary to show your appreciation towards the people that make a difference in your life. My family and...
is very important. Our grandparents and parents were right when they said that prayers can turn a disaster into a miracle. As I chanted our prayers after the second wave hit on December 26th, I am pretty certain they helped me survive and gave me the strength to find a way out of that hotel.

Last but not the least, I have been reminded that community service and volunteerism should be a part of all our lives all the time, and we should not expect anything in return. We sometimes tend to forget how lucky we are and the big difference our efforts can make to others. Volunteerism and community service can come in many shapes and forms. For example, I will forever be grateful for the kind gestures shown to us during the tsunami – the girl who lent me her cell phone on the roof, the guy who gave me his water bottle, the Australians who let us spend the night in their hotel room, and my dad’s colleague who helped us in Bangkok.

Now, twelve weeks later, even though something or the other reminds me each day of my experience, I am doing great. On those rare days when I do feel a little ‘blah,’ I have come to the conclusion that it’s OK to feel that way from time-to-time. It is only natural. I have a wonderful family, friends and colleagues that have been extremely supportive and have helped in making sure I continue to stay positive and keep my sense of humor and my energy.

Instead of spending time reflecting back, I am concentrating on moving forward. I have become a stronger person as a result of this and plan on continuing to live a very long, happy, and adventurous life. I just wish that the thousands of people who lost their lives on December 26th could have been as fortunate.

Speaking of fortunate, last week, during a meeting my client suddenly stopped in the middle of his sentence, “Usheen, do you realize how lucky you are?”

As I gazed at him for a moment, I was reminded of the beach-side fortuneteller in Phuket that I went to for fun at 11 pm on December 25th. He kept telling me how lucky I was going to be before the end of the year. With only six days left of the year, I was indeed very lucky, and that, I will never forget!

friends have done the extraordinary for me, and words cannot describe my appreciation.

My experience has made me realize how strongly I believe in the motto “live life by the moment.” That day on the roof, when the situation got quite intense, I spent a few minutes reflecting on my life and came to the conclusion that I was extremely content and that I had no regrets. I had done everything I ever wanted to at this stage in my life. I have always believed that if you want to do something, you should just do it, because in life you never want to have regrets, and a second chance may never come. On numerous occasions, I have done things even without the support of others. I’ve ‘gone with my gut’ and been happy with my decision.

Furthermore, I’ve been reminded that believing in your religion and values

Trapped in the tsunami

[Continued from page 15] also killed in the disaster. Usheen has held several fundraisers to raise money for The Phuket Project (www.PhuketProject.org), whose goal is to help the Thai people rebuild and recover from the disaster. From the support of their family, colleagues, and friends alone, Kim and Usheen have raised over $8,000. Through the assistance of The Phuket Project, volunteers have gone to Thailand to help rebuild.

To volunteer your services or to make a donation, visit www.phuketproject.org or contact Usheen at usheen@aol.com.

By Roshan Rivetna based on emails and interview with Usheen Davar, and article by Brian Donahue in the NJ Star Ledger, December 29, 2004.

Above, the fortuneteller on the beach in Phuket, the day before the tsunami, reading Usheen’s hand. “You will be very lucky,” he said, “before the end of the year.” [Photo courtesy Usheen Davar]
Human rights case against attacking Iran


American policy toward the Middle East, and Iran in particular, is often couched in the language of promoting human rights. No one would deny the importance of that goal. But for human rights defenders in Iran, the possibility of a foreign military attack on their country represents utter disaster.

The situation for human rights in Iran is far from ideal. Security forces harass, imprison and even torture human rights defenders and civil society activists. But the human rights discourse is alive and well at the grassroots level; civil society activists consider it to be the most potent framework for achieving sustainable democratic reforms and political pluralism.

Independent organizations are essential for fostering the culture of human rights in Iran. The threat of foreign military intervention will provide a powerful excuse for authoritarian elements to uproot these groups. They will use this opportunity to silence their critics by labeling them as the enemy’s fifth column.

Respect for human rights in any country must spring forth through the will of the people, as part of a genuine democratic process. Such respect can never be imposed by foreign military might and coercion – an approach that abounds in contradictions.

Instead, the most effective way to promote human rights in Iran is to provide moral support and international recognition to independent human rights defenders and to insist that Iran adhere to international human rights laws and conventions that it has signed.

ZTFE move to new premises. A jashan was performed on December 10th at Zoroastrian House (at 88 Comayne Gardens, London) [left], the home and place of worship for the ZTFE for over 34 years. In January, the ZTFE moved to the newly refurbished Zoroastrian Centre at Rayners Lane, Harrow [right] (at 440 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 9TL, UK, tel: 020 8866 0765). Long-time resident house-keeper Bridget McCallig also retired, after over 34 years of dedicated service.

ZTFE president Dorab Mistry said: “Let us all come together to say Thank You to Ahura Mazda for this beautiful House, for the transition to the new Centre, for the bounty of his blessings during the last 143 years and for more good wishes for the next many, many years.”

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2005. In late December, I traded the increasingly frigid weather of Washington, DC for the mugginess of Mumbai. There, I joined 27 other NRI youth selected from around the world for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas internship program, a fellowship set up by the government of India to showcase the country’s changed economic climate.

The program’s ambitious itinerary gave us an eye-opening look into the fruits of India’s post-1992 reforms. We marveled at the latest technological gadgetry at Reliance Infocom’s headquarters, received a crash course on the current domestic economic and financial situation at the Reserve Bank of India and Pune’s Symbiosis Institute, and visited world-class infrastructure projects around Mumbai.

After the two-week period, we joined 3,000 other NRIs for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) conference in Delhi, where the government made the case for foreign investment in India. The list of dignitaries included President A. P. J. Kalam, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, and Tata chairman Ratan Tata.

Besides meeting the movers and shakers of the much-touted “new India,” I took away from the program the strong friendships I built up with my fellow NRI youth delegates. Despite our different national backgrounds – from UK, Norway, South Africa, Mauritius, Malaysia to Australia – we bonded instantaneously due to our shared cultural heritage and keen interest in seeing India’s often-wobbly process of development continue on steadier feet.

The PBD Youth Internship Program is open to all youth (under 25) of Indian descent. Visit http://www.indiadiy.org/focus_youth/focus_youth.asp.

– by Dinyar Patel (email: dinyar.patel@gmail.com)
Whither the World Body?

Progress on the proposed Zoroastrian world body is stymied, as the traditional lobby led by Khojeste Mistree crusades against India joining it and formulates plans for another, parallel “Parsi-Irani” world body.

Compiled by Roshan Rivetna

**Memorandum of grievances and demands**

Excerpts from letter of December 19th, presented to FPZAI, signed by 21 out of 29 member anjumans of FPZAI present at the meeting: Bardoli, Nargol, Valsad, Ahmedabad, Saronda, Panchgani, Suvali, Olpad, Solapur, Jalalpur, Poona, Khargam, Kudiana, Shri Nagpur and Kampti, Dahanu Road, Surat Nanpura, Borivali and Suburban, Surat, Belgaum, Davier, Vyara Songhad, Mahava and Deolali.” According to Parsiana, Suvali, Olpad, Kudiana and Surat Nanpura are not members and Valsad has just joined as FPZAI’s 70th member. Among the members who chose not to sign this memorandum were Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai and Thane.

(1) We want an assurance that the Membership criteria of all three arms of the proposed World Body (IZO – WZO(I) – WZO – (F)) should be the same as that established in the constitution of the FPZAI as per clauses 1(b), (c), (d) and (e) of the Rules and Regulations [see Note 1 below]. This Membership Criteria should be introduced as an unalterable clause and should not be amended or deleted under any circumstances. Please take note that it is the absence of this clause in the present constitution of the proposed World Body which has resulted in our strong objection to our joining the proposed World Body. Please also take note that 41 letters of protest against joining the proposed World Body have been lodged with you on the 18th of December 2004 at the meeting of the FPZAI in Ahmedabad.

(2) The Final Draft constitution should be circulated amongst all the member anjumans for perusal and consideration …

(3) There are other issues like (a) Voting Weightage … and (b) management of defunct Anjumans, maintenance of Agiaries, Dokhmases, Aramgahs and other religious institutions should not come within the purview of the IZO, WZO(F) and/or WZO(I).

(4) Under no circumstances should the constitution be signed by the Office Bearers of FPZAI until a total consensus is reached through debate and discussion at a Special General Meeting of FPZAI…”

**Note 1.** Clauses 1(b), (c) and (d) define ‘Anjumans’ the ‘Federation’ and ‘Members’. Clause 1(e) states “Parsi Zoroastrian shall include (i) a Parsi descended from the original Persian emigrants and born of both Zoroastrian parents, professing the Zoroastrian Religion (ii) an Irani from Iran, professing the Zoroastrian religion, coming to India either temporarily or permanently and (iii) a child of Parsi father by alien mother, duly admitted to the Zoroastrian religion.”

Their misgivings about the proposed membership of the FPZAI in the formation of the world body of Zoroastrians lies in their belief that thereby the Parsi Zoroastrians of India, hitherto considered the leaders of the Zoroastrian world, will be marginalized by the more numerous converts who are reverting to the faith in the Eurasian countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, etc., those who choose the Zoroastrian faith in Europe and the Americas, the progeny of Parsi women married to men of other faiths, as well as the Iranians who have migrated to the West.

Parsi press reports:

**Indian Federation (FPZAI) meeting**

[Excerpted from “Fascism at the Federation: World body Stymied” by Arnavaz Mama, Parsiana, January 2005].

A well orchestrated attack by the smaller, more orthodox anjumans under the baton of Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies greeted the leadership at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) in Ahmedabad on December 18 and 19, 2004.
Tempers ran high throughout the two days...The all-India body’s proceedings were disrupted for close to half an hour as a group of rowdies from Surat and elsewhere raised slogans and verbally abused delegates and threatened bodily harm.

The myriad tiny anjumans of rural Gujarat and elsewhere were too much under the sway of Mistree and others who are known to have gone to anjumans, especially where the populations generally comprise but a handful of families innocent of what is happening at the international level, and persuaded them into believing what they had to say.

According to Yazdi Desai, the genesis of the problem lay in the world body’s membership clause which accepted ‘Zoroastrians’ instead of ‘Parsi Zoroastrians.’

Khojeste Mistree accused the leadership of “sweeping things under the carpet.” He averred that the world body is “a mechanism to facilitate conversion. Why bow down to 2.5 million Zoroastrians? Eventually we will be marginalized.” [Also see FJ, Winter 2004].

FPZAI president Minoo Shroff responded “Have some faith. We are not fools ... I make a last plea to you: don’t abandon them (the Zoroastrians based overseas) ...”

FPZAI secretary Keki Gandhi noted, “We’ll give what you have put on paper to the other countries. But if you want us to throw away the effort since 1960, we won’t do it. It’s not nice to close the door on someone’s face. If you do, they don’t come back.”


What a great tragedy it is for the Parsi community that those who shout from the rooftops about the greatness of Parsis and the qualities of Parsi-panu themselves send it for a toss.

This Federation meeting brought to its knees, the pride, prestige and Parsi-panu that Parsis love to revel in. Uncouth, base behavior by the hooligans who had attended the meeting created bedlam.
[Khojeste Mistree] had successfully conjured up a doomsday scenario of imaginary threats to our religion should the World Body be formed in tandem with FEZANA, WZO and the likes. Some of the simple-minded persons that manage the Anjumans of small towns were taken in by the smooth talk that our religion was in danger and gave their authority to rank outsiders to speak on their behalf …

What does such atrocious behavior foretell for the Parsi community, apart from the feeling of contempt and disgust?

If such be the times that have befallen the Parsi community then we can only be sure of annihilation, obliteration, and extinction from God’s good world. And when this sad day does come about, and the history of the Parsis is written, historians will record at the end that the once proud Parsi community preferred to live in the past, disregarding the present and allowed a bunch of fundamentalists to guide it over the precipice.

It is very sad that the day is not far away when the Parsi race will become a thing of the past, but at the same time, it is a very happy feeling to know that our pristine religion will continue to spread over hafta keshwar zamin (the seven regions of the earth) and flourish till eternity.

[Excerpted from “Louts run amuck at Ahmedabad,” by Berjis Desai, editor, Bombay Samachar, January 2, 2004.]

A sad and sorry chapter has been written in the annals of our community’s affairs. The Federation meeting at Ahmedabad degenerated into a brawl. Our leaders of eminence like Minoo Shroff, Dinshaw Tamboly … were terrorized into silence. Physical violence was just inches away. The atmosphere was so charged, that violence was almost visible.

The voting rights of the FPZAI anjumans are utterly disproportionate.

The BPP representing over 40,000 Parsis has 5 votes, while the Khergam Anjuman, representing 4 Parsis has one vote. The so-called 24 out of 29 Anjumans that opposed the World Body collectively represented fewer Parsis than the ones in favor [among them Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai and Thane]. If the majority allows itself to be hijacked by some vociferous Anjumans from the hamlets of Gujarat, woe betide the community.

Parsis are a small, minority sect of people who practice Zoroastrianism. If they want to be xenophobic, racial and regressive, so much the better for the World Body to be without such people. Let it be a true Zoroastrian international organization whose doors are open to all Zoroastrians irrespective of race, color, sex or caste. Perhaps the IZO can do without members who put fascists to shame by talking about racial purity and preservation of semen-stock.

Orthodox to Form Parallel World Body

The orthodox have decided to form their own World Body to be called the ‘World Parsi Zoroastrian Association’ (WPZA). Areez Khambatta of Ahmedabad has promised a donation of Rs. 50 lakhs to form the seed capital. Khojeste Mistree shall be its general secretary. Yazdi Desai shall be its treasurer. Work has begun on framing its constitution. Membership shall be open to Parsi Zoroastrians only (born of both or atleast a male Parsi parent).

Several meetings have been held and this idea, which initially met resistance from some of the orthodox themselves, is now gaining ground. Upstage the heretics and beat them at their own game, is the strategy. Some of the conservative groups in London and North America have promised to join.

A marathon meeting was held in January, where among others Dastur Jamasp Asa and Dastur Kotwal, and noted tax expert, Homi Ranina, were present. Along with a parallel World Body, it was decided also to form a parallel Federation which shall provide in its constitution that in all religious matters, the decision of the High Priests shall be binding upon the Federation.

Dastur Kotwal was, however, of the view that the orthodox should not exit the present Federation so as not to lose control, until they are expelled by virtue of forming the new Federation. We are told that Dastur Jamasp Asa maintained a stony silence throughout the nine-hour meeting. Perhaps, he was silently praying.

Let us be honest and not delude ourselves. It is simply not possible to reconcile the two positions. On the one hand, you have a body which is open to any human who believes himself to be a Zoroastrian. You want to participate in the splendid resurgence of the Faith and experience the brotherhood of all those who feel likewise. On the other hand, you have some 10,000 Parsis who believe that the Faith is open only to Parsis born of Parsi parents. Who openly spout words like “protecting and preserving racial and semen-stock.”

How do you expect a reconciliation of such diametrically divergent views?

[Excerpted from “Orthodox to Form Parallel World Body” by Berjis Desai, editor, Bombay Samachar, January 23, 2005]

“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
Reassurance from FPZAI secretary

Why not a World Body of Zoroastrians?


A hue and cry has been raised against the formation of a truly representative World Body of Zoroastrians. This article is intended solely to apprise readers of the factual position and to allay any misgivings and misapprehension arising out of misinformation and misinterpretation.

‘Parsi’ missing from name. Much is being made of the fact that in the name of the World Body, the word ‘Zoroastrian’ is used and the word ‘Parsi’ is not used. It has been alleged that this is indicative of the intention to de-link the ethnicity of being Parsi/Irani from the Zoroastrian religion, in a move to facilitate the entry into the faith of any person professing to be a Zoroastrian. In other words, the entire World Body is being created to facilitate the entry of neo-converts and to diminish and erase the Parsi identity.

Parsi-Zoroastrian definitions. The 1908 judgment of the Bombay High Court [Beaman-Davar Judgement, Fed Newsletter, January 2004] establishes beyond any doubt that “The word ‘Zoroastrian’ simply denotes the religion of the individual. A Zoroastrian is a person who professes the Zoroastrian religion ... The word ‘Parsi’ denotes nationality or community and has no religious significance.”

In India we do identify ourselves as ‘Parsi Zoroastrians’ which means a Parsi professing the Zoroastrian religion. Though the term ‘Parsi Zoroastrian’ as defined in the 1908 judgment includes Iranis, whenever the word Parsi is used, even in India, our Irani brothers and sisters feel excluded.

Outside India, our co-religionists identify themselves as Zoroastrians and not as Parsi Zoroastrians. Even their associations are named ‘Zoroastrian.’ The word ‘Zoroastrian’ automatically includes Parsis as well as Iranis professing the Zoroastrian religion and there is no reason why Parsi Zoroastrians should feel that they are excluded.

The purpose of forming a World Body is to bring together, under one umbrella, Zoroastrians living in different parts of the world in diverse circumstances and situations.

Historical precedents. The proposal to form a World Body of Zoroastrians has been on the anvil since the 1960s when the first two world Zoroastrian congresses were held. It was also discussed as a special topic and unanimously approved at the third congress in Mumbai in 1978. Four more world Zoroastrian congresses and three world Zoroastrian youth congresses have been held. No objection has ever been raised against omission of the word ‘Parsi’ from the names of these congresses.

No wild, unwarranted and unjustified allegations have been made about the intentions of the organizers of those congresses.

In 1980 the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) was registered in UK and it continues to thrive to this day.

The individuals who are now so vociferous and aggressive in objecting to the formation of the World Body without the use of the word ‘Parsi’ in its name, saw nothing wrong for four decades. It is not as if the word ‘Parsi’ had always been used earlier and is suddenly being omitted now.

Lack of transparency. The issues relating to the formation of a truly representative World Body of Zoroastrians have been discussed and debated repeatedly at Federation meetings, and the free and frank discussions and viewpoints expressed are reported in the minutes of the meetings circulated to all Federation members. These discussions are also reported in Parsiana and Mumbai Samachar. Hence the allegations of “lack of transparency” is baseless.

Principle of Autonomy. It has already been explained as far back as June 2003, that the two arms of IZO – WZOF and WZOI – will function independently of IZO and of each other. They will submit reports to the IZO. IZO will have the privilege to consider the reports and make its recommendations, but neither WZOI nor WZOF will be bound to accept or implement such recommendations. Nor will WZOI have any say in the functioning of WZOF and by the same token, WZOF will not have any say in the functioning of WZOI.

This is the same principle as is applied to the relationship between the Federation in India and its member Anjumans. The Principle of Autonomy is enshrined in the proposed constitution of WZOF and each constituent regional federation will enjoy complete autonomy vis-a-vis WZOF. IZO and the other regional Federations who will be members of WZOF.

Groundless fears. Thus the fear that pressures will be brought on the Indian Federation by other regions and our religion, customs, community institutions and funds will be in danger of being taken over by the ‘converts’ is a figment of the imagination of those who are spinning horror stories to frighten the community for reasons best known to them.

If this is allowed to happen it can only result in dividing the community worldwide and in creating discord and disdain among co-religionists.

But good sense will prevail, and this will not be allowed to happen.
Commentary ... 

Rule by vociferous few

Our community cannot be ruled by a vociferous few whose claim to represent the community is based on their ability to rally the unruly instincts of man. At the Federation meet tempers ran high and in the frenzied atmosphere there was no room for expressing an alternate view.

We have very grave problems facing the community, not the least of which is that of diminishing numbers. The need of the hour is to consolidate all efforts at facing the several threats before the community and not frittering away invaluable human resources on avoidable conflicts.

The instinct for self-preservation is the driving force in the current debate on whether or not to join the World Body. We must realize, however, that the fundamental and fanatic position adopted by some can be just as big a threat of extinction as the fear of being flooded by converts and neo-Zoroastrians.

Rustom Cursetji, Parvez Bhesania, Kaizad Bilimoria, Trustees, Thana Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman

Servicing the global Zarathushti presence

Leading the insurgency attacks against the formation of the World Body is none other than the fiery icon of orthodoxy in the Parsi community of Mumbai, Khojeste Mistree. He is passionately leading the crusade as a “political activist” in influencing the BPP and FPZAI leadership against joining the World Body …

Mistree believes the Parsis will be marginalized and the converts (neo-Zoroastrians or pseudo-Zoroastrians as he calls them) will have a say. Mistree may be correct in predicting the marginalization of Parsis. That is happening today, but for entirely different reasons.

Mistree has failed to see the obvious hand-writing on the wall and has refused to face reality. Joining or not joining the World Body is a miniscule issue of minimal consequence to the average bawaji on the streets of Mumbai.

However, Mistree, by alarming the community in rallying support against the World Body, can make the Parsis of India more isolationist and is also dangerous and detrimental to the cause of good community stewardship and global vision.

His so-called “activism” over the past 30 years in India has failed the Parsi community, and has direct connections with the dwindling numbers.

The future of the world Zoroastrian community lies in world-wide Zoroastrian fellowship, establishment of international Zarathushti identity and in servicing the global presence, in large numbers, of its followers.

A World Body, if formed to truly represent all Zarathushtis, including the beloved Parsis of India, will be a body that will rightfully take its long-awaited place, among the other great and recognized religious bodies of the world.

Shahrokh Mehta Syracuse, New York

Telling the Western world our fears

I wish to share my views and those of many of us with similar thoughts, in response to your editorial comments [FJ Winter 2004, p. 16] reproduced in the Fed Newsletter [December 2004].

Nowhere in the name World Body of Zoroastrians is the term ‘Parsi,’ why? I am sure you too will not have any doubts if I say we are Parsis following the Zoroastrian religion. Right from the time our forefathers left Persia to settle on Indian soil we have with pride called ourselves Parsis, and now suddenly my identity is threatened, my identity is at stake, and I feel totally adrift, as you are asking us to join a World Body sans the term Parsi. Why?

Yes, folks like you of Indian origin (Parsis) now settled in the West should have seen to it that our diminishing race, at least retains the name and identity, and that it is not eternally lost.

If the diminishing trend continues (only a heavenly intervention can really save us) do you think anyone will remember the term Parsi? We will be swallowed up by the word Zoroastrian. Is it too much to ask the Western Zoroastrians to instill the ‘Parsi Zoroastrian’ in subsequent generations?

We applaud [that you are maintaining the religion and traditions], but then there has to be a sense of belonging to a name, the Parsi name, which for reasons best known to you, is nowhere in your agenda of the World Body! Why?

Certainly “carry the torch,” this is what every Parsi should strive for, but the torch bears have to be Parsi Zoroastrians.

Zoroastrian is a very loose term, to me only those who have had navjotes done, with atleast one Parsi parent is a Parsi Zoroastrian. I am not ready to accept any and everyone who professes to follow our religion to be clubbed under the Zoroastrian banner. No, we were the Chosen Few so to say, so I am not ready to have a mass conversion drive. The World Body by not coming out with its stance on such matters has sown the seeds of doubt that need to be addressed before joining it.

Hope you find it fit to publish my letter in your FEZANA Journal as this will tell the Western world our fears.

Mrs Roda Dara Hakim
Email: vadhakim@yahoo.com
From the editor …

‘Parsi’ and ‘Zoroastrians’-allaying the fears

A response to Mrs. Roda Dara Hakim [see letter previous page] and those who share her views, by Roshan Rivetna.

Preserving our Parsi Identity. You will be hard-pressed to find a people as passionately proud of their Parsi heritage and of being ‘Parsi’ and using that appellation, nor a people striving harder to instill Parsi values, traditions and ‘Parsi-panu’ in our children, as those of us Parsis who have chosen to settle in the West. To us, the question of our Parsi identity, and that of succeeding generations, is of even graver concern, than it is to you.

It sometimes tears our hearts out to think: Will our second, and third, and fourth generation still be called Parsis? Will they ever enjoy the fraternal bonds and benefits we enjoyed in India? And, most heart-rending – will they be accepted as one of our own? Or will they be relegated to second-class, as was done at the recent Public Meeting in Mumbai (“To hell with them! We don’t want them!” – FJ Winter 2004, p. 15).

As far as the need to preserve and protect the Parsi name, Parsi community, Parsi identity and Parsi-panu, we are behind you a hundred percent. It is also squarely on the “agenda of the World Body.” That, in fact, is the raison d’etre for the World Body.

However, it is not for Parsis alone though – but for all Zoroastrians.

Diminishing numbers. Our “diminishing race” is of deep concern to us as well. There are large numbers being lost – to inter-marriage, conversions out, disinterest, disenchantment …

This is our biggest threat right now – a black cloud looming over our heads. This is where we should be spending our energies and resources – at the grass roots level, at the anjuman and federation levels, and collectively supported and facilitated by a world body – to inspire our next generation to stay in the fold and to carry the torch.

Not for Parsis alone though, but for all Zoroastrians.

Perceived threats. Instead we are spending our precious and limited resources and causing great schisms within our ranks, trying to define the “Chosen Few” and building walls. We are fighting this perceived canard of “mass conversions” and hordes of neo-Zarathushtis taking over our baugs and agiaries and trusts, and marginalizing the Parsis – all enabled by the World Body to boot!

Membership criteria. The orthodox lobby at the FPZAI meeting seeks assurance that the membership criteria of the world body should be the same as for FPZAI [see “Memorandum”, page 18].

Should we then disenfranchise and debar from the world body, all the Iranian Zarathushtis of motherland Iran – our own ancestral stock; and all those Iranians who have now made their home in the Western diaspora? What about our daughters who have married “aliens;” and their progeny; and all those married out; married in; those adopted; and of unknown fathers or unknown mothers; and various shades in between?

What about those “converts” – Iranians who due to their circumstance and situation in Iran, had navjotes done as adults or not at all; or by questionable priests; those who wish to revert back to their ancestral faith in Iran and the Central Asian countries; and finally the Zarathushtis-by-Choice?

Can even the Parsis amongst themselves, let alone all Zarathushtis of the world, agree on where the wall should be built?

“Stance” of the World Body. The drafters of the world body, in their collective wisdom, think it prudent, and wisely so, to refrain from trying to define this wall.

But they have listened to your fears, and continue to listen. They have built in safeguards to ensure that no one lobby can manipulate or marginalize the other. They have ensured complete, unfettered autonomy for each member. They have ensured the protection and perpetuation of our cherished institutions and heritage, with no interference. They have ensured officers will be Parsi/Irani Zoroastrians. No new region can even join unless other regions agree. Finally, the world body is by design a facilitating and coordinating body, and nothing is binding on anyone.

SO WHY THIS PARANOIA? “World Body sans the Parsi Name.” Since the first world ‘Zoroastrian’ [1] congress in the 1960s, we have dreamed of a ‘Zoroastrian’ world body. Through six more world ‘Zoroastrian’ congresses, and now looking to the eighth, this year, organized by the ‘Zoroastrian’ Trust Funds of Europe, the ‘Zoroastrian’ world body has been developed and finally gained almost consensual acceptance by the elected leaders of major stakeholders.

In the meantime, the world saw the happy emergence of the Federation of ‘Zoroastrian’ Associations of North America and its 24 ‘Zoroastrian’ associations, and countless ‘Zoroastrian’ associations in the western diaspora; ‘Zoroastrian’ anjumans in Iran; and even in India – the World ‘Zarathushti’ Cultural Foundation, and ‘Zoroastrian’ Studies, of none other than Khojeste Mistree.

SO WHY THIS PARANOIA? Now, at the eleventh hour?

This whole crusade, based on fear, not facts, is perplexing and dispiriting – and driving a deep wedge into our fragile community.

It is time to put this disruptive chapter behind us and move on.

[1] The terms ‘Zoroastrian’ and ‘Zarathushhti’ are used interchangeably here.
### Calendar of Festivals Mar - Sep

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

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

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## Coming Events

### WZCC trade delegation & cultural tour to Iran
May 13-22, 2005. Contact Rohinton Rivetna at rivetna@aol.com or KCommissariat@yahoo.com [p. 109].

### FEZANA AGM, Pittsburgh, May 2005
The next FEZANA AGM will be held May 28 – 29, 2005 in Pittsburgh, PA, hosted by ZAPA. All Member Association representatives and committee chairs are encouraged to attend. Contact Rita Engineer, secretary, REngi12414@aol.com. tel: 561-487-4343 [see page 4].

### Congress of Ethnic Religions and Traditions
The world Congress of Ethnic Religions and Traditions 2005, will be in Antwerp, www.traditie.be, traditie@scarlet.be.

### Next World Congress, London, June 2005
The 8th World Zoroastrian Congress will be held in London, UK, June 24-27, 2005. Post-congress program will be held June 28 - July 1, 2005. Visit www.ztfe.com/Congress005 email congress005@ztfe.com [see page 26].

### Seminar at SOAS
“Keepers of the Fire,” the story of the Parsis will be presented by the London Middle East Institute at SOAS and Association Sargam, at the Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London, in October 2005. An exhibition of maps, texts and artefacts will be on display October to December 2005. Contact LMEI at ss7@soas.ac.uk.

### Next NA Youth Congress, Florida, December 2005
The 2005 North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress will be held
The spring equinox, Nouruz is celebrated world wide as ‘Earth Day’

“The vernal equinox calls on all mankind to recognize and respect Earth’s beautiful systems of balance, between the presence of animals on land, the fish in the sea, birds in the air, mankind, water, air, and land. Most importantly there must always be awareness of the actions by people that can disturb this precious balance.”

– Margaret Mead

John McConnell, the 89-year old founder of Earth Day, first introduced the idea of a global holiday called ‘Earth Day’ at a UNESCO conference on the environment in 1969. UN Secretary-General U Thant supported this global initiative to celebrate this annual spring equinox event.

The March Equinox was chosen for Earth Day in 1970 – the first Earth Day – a day suitable for international celebration. On this day, night and day are equal. This day is a million year symbol of the balance of nature and the equilibrium we seek on Earth.

Each year, since then, the Peace Bell at the United Nations has been rung on Earth Day at the moment Spring begins. This is followed by silent prayer – a time for heartfelt commitment to think and act as Earth trustees.

For celebrations worldwide for Earth Day, visit http://www.earthsite.org/.

Posted by Behram Pastakia on creatingawareness@yahooogroups.com.

from December 28-31, 2005 in Miami, Florida. The theme will be “ZEESTAN – Living a Zarathushti Life.” Visit the ZYNA page at www.fezana.org, or contact ZYNAangs@ aol.ocm.

Next Zoroastrian Olympic Games
The Tenth Zoroastrian Olympic Games will be in Los Angeles in Summer 2006. Contact the Zoroastrian Sports Committee of FEZANA at www.fezana.org, zsc@fezana.org.

Conference at Oxford
The Centenary Conference on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution will be held July 30 - Aug 2, 2006 at Oxford University. Contact Heritage Foundation, London, tel: 44 20 7499 9293, info@iranheritage.org.

Conference at SOAS
The Sixth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies, organized by the International Society for Iranian Studies, Iran Heritage Foundation and London Middle East Institute, will be held at SOAS, London, August 3-5, 2006. Tel: 44 20 7499-9293, info@iranheritage.org, www. iranheritage.org/sixthbiennial.

“Year of Aryan Civilization”, Tajikistan, 2006
President 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, page 37].

North American Congress, Toronto 2007
The XIV North American Zoroastrian Congress will be in Toronto in the summer 2007. The host association is the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. Contact ZSO president at sam.vesuna@sympatico.ca.

World Youth Congress, Australia, 2007
The Fourth World Zoroastrian Youth Congress will be held December 27, 2007 to January 3, 2008, at the University of Ballarat, in Victoria, Australia. Contact Shiraz Mistry Smileysjm@optusnet.com.au [see page 26].
ZOROASTRIAN TRUST FUNDS OF EUROPE (INC)
Proudly announces the hosting of

THE VIIIth WORLD ZOROASTRIAN
CONGRESS, London 2005

The Wembley Conference Centre, London, UK
Friday June 24 - Monday June 27, 2005

Post-congress program will be held at
The Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Zoroastrian Centre, Harrow
Tuesday June 28 - Friday July 1, 2005

For registration, hotel information and program details
please visit:

www.ztfe.com/Congress005 or email congress005@ztfe.com

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, Zoroastrian House, 88 Compayne Gardens, London NW6 3RU, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7328 6018 · Fax: +44 (0) 20 7625 1685

SPREAD THE WORD …
We want the ENTIRE WORLD’S ZARATHUSHTI YOUTH to be actively involved with organizing this Congress. Spread the word amongst your associations, family and friends.

PLEASE START SAVING, NOW! With your support and our honest endeavors, we hope to make this gathering of the clans, the BEST CONGRESS EVER, in true Aussie style!

As this living flame of our jashan fire itself seems to reach out to Ahura Mazda, arms uplifted for His blessings, we, the executive committee appointed of the next World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, ask for His blessings on this very honourable venture of ours.

Shiraz J. Mistry Delara C. Mistry Shirin J. Mistry Khushroo N. Patel
Chairman Vice-chair Hon. secretary Financial controller

Tel: ++ 61 3 9562 0543 · Email: Smilesjm@optusnet.com.au
During the latest season of excavations of the northern gate of Takht-e Suleiman, an ancient Zoroastrian fire temple located in northwestern Iran, the stamps of two seals were discovered which indicate that objects entered Takht-e Suleiman from other regions with special tags attached to them which seem to be advertisements. They signify that an early form of advertising was being practiced during the Sassanid era (224-642 CE).

Ebrahim Heidari, director of the Takht-e Suleiman project, had previously found many impressions of seals from this collection. Takht-e Suleiman, which means the throne of Solomon, is the largest and the most beautiful Zoroastrian fire temple in Iran from the Sassanid era and its fire was kept lit there for centuries. It is located in a mountainous area of northwestern Iran 42 kilometers north of Takab in West Azerbaijan province, and is one of the most interesting and enigmatic sacred sites in Iran.

There are some writings in the Pahlavi-Sassanid language on these seals which experts have not yet deciphered. These seals help archaeologists gain more knowledge about administrative and judiciary activities during the Sassanid era.

Archeologists have made a sensational discovery in Turkmenistan – a temple of water dating back to the third millennium BCE.

The Margianskaya expedition has been digging on the site of an ancient settlement called Gonur in the delta of the Murgab River, in the eastern Mary region [or Merv, where the last Sasanian emperor Yazdegard III was assassinated] some 200 miles east of the country’s capital, Ashgabat.

Archeologists discovered a hollow about 55 yards in diameter and 8 to 9 feet deep, a short distance from the royal palace dug out earlier.

Scientists suspect the hollow was a pool used for religious ceremonies [a dar-e-Aban?]. A system of gutters carried rainwater to it and there is evidence water also could flow into the pool from the Murgab.

It once was thought that tribes living there had been fire-worshippers, or water-worshippers – or perhaps worshiped both.

From http://washingtontimes.com, forwarded by Maneck Bhujwala.

Iranian female warrior skeleton found

DNA tests on the 2,000-year-old bones of a sword-wielding Iranian warrior have revealed the broad-framed skeleton belonged to a woman, an archaeologist working in the northwestern city of Tabriz said.

The tomb, which had all the trappings of a warrior’s final resting place, was one of 109, and DNA tests were being carried out on the other skeletons.

Other ancient tombs believed to belong to women warriors have been unearthed close to the Caspian Sea.

[From www.tvnz.co.nz/view, posted by N. Ovaissi on creatingawareness@Oyahoogroups.com]
Zarathushtis from USA, Canada and around the world gathered in San Jose for the XIII North American Zoroastrian Congress, “Being Zarathushti: Looking at Issues, Searching for Answers.”

by Roshan Rivetna

For four days, December 29, 2004 – January 1, 2005, The Doubletree Hotel in San Jose was abuzz with Zarathushtis of all ages and persuasions, deliberating and debating at the 40 sessions and panel discussions, celebrating their heritage and showcasing their talents, exhibiting their wares, recognizing and honoring their own, energizing their businesses and professions at the preceding Chamber of Commerce meet, dining and dancing at the galas, and last but not the least, just ‘hanging out’ in the lobbies, making new friendships and renewing the old, enjoying the generous hospitality of the host organization, Zoroastrian Association of Northern California.

Most heart-warming was the unprecedented large number (a whopping 54% of the total registrants) of younger, second generation Zarathushtis at the Congress and, again unprecedented, the healthy, 50-50 mix of Iranians and Parsis.

All participants were amply energized, educated and entertained, a tribute to the smooth orchestration of this Congress. As one delegate, Aban Rustomji, observed about this Congress: “It was light and joyful. To see a number of young people in attendance, willing to work for real and meaningful change, and to connect with young and old, was a thrill.”

Congress Proceedings are available for $7. Contact Ehler Spliedt at Nazehler@aol.com
The Congress opened with a prayer and benediction by Er. Kaikobad Jamshed [photo facing page] and Keikhoshrow Khorshidian; a soul-stirring rendition of a verse from the Ahunavaiti Gatha [Ys. 28.1] in Avestan, set to music by Sam Marzbani, sung by Ham-Avayan, choir of the Persian Zoroastrian Organization [photo facing page]; and the national anthems of Canada and the USA.

ZANC president and Congress chair Bomi Patel [photo right top, with wife Binaifer] welcomed the large gathering, and hoped “at the end of the Congress, you will leave with some new insights and be proud to be a Zarathushti.” Bomi introduced the Congress Executive Committee [photo next page] who had worked passionately for months to make it all happen.

FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta [photo right below, with wife Rashna] ended his welcome address with, “May we all strive for like-mindedness, because in our unity lies our strength. May we re-kindle the message of our Divine Messenger, learn from the lessons of our past and return to our communities wiser and more accepting, to live life as a united community…”

Messages of felicitation were delivered by representatives of FEZANA associations. Following the keynote address by Erach Tarapore [see next page] the ceremony concluded with Ham-Avayan singing “Ay Iran,” followed by young virtuoso Phiroz Tarapore’s riveting piano recital of Chopin’s Polonaise, and a rousing rendition of “Chaiye Hame Zarathushti.”
In a voice packed with emotion, Congress program chair Erach Tarapore [photo right with wife Siloo] delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremonies.

“We could coast if we so choose, but that would take us only in one direction – downhill.”

Erach remarked on “the incredible dedication” of our priests in North America, who “balance job and family with the demands for jashans, navjotes, weddings and death prayers.”

Citing the enlightened relationship between Dastur Dhalla and the Karachi community, Erach emphasized the need “to rethink our relationship with our priests.”

“Our community in North America is at a crossroads. “We have had to adapt to our new homeland in many ways. Our customs have adapted before in our 3,000 year history and will do so again.

“We need to ensure that the religion of Asho Zarathushtra survives. There are too many of us here in North America to consider any other option.

The team that made it all happen! Congress Executive Committee, from left, Annahita Jasawala - entertainment, Bejan Malhari - finance and fundraising, Kathleen Chothia - youth, Firoza Unwala - publications, advertising and web design, Bomi Patel - chair, Ehler Spiedt - venue and hotel, Nazneen Spiedt - publicity, PR, Siloo and Erach Tarapore - program and Minoo Italia - registration.

A successful congress

Tribute to the team. The selection of a reasonably priced and comfortable hotel, a well-balanced program, the opportunities to hear and be heard, to meet and mingle, the melange of entertainment, the dining and dancing, were all a tribute to the enormous contributions of time and talent of the Congress team [photo above] that made it all happen. The happy faces of the participants said it all.

Who came to the Congress?

- Total registrants for the 3 1/2 day event numbered 538.
- A heart-warming 290 (54%) were under 35, of whom 90 were under 21.
- The mix was 50% of Persian origin and 50% of Indo/Pakistan /Parsi origin. 35% listed their origin as North America.

THANK YOU to the Congress Team for doing their share to energize the community spirit.
The Congress offered a potpourri of over 40 plenaries, presentations, panel discussions and workshops: from prayers and rituals to community building, from Achaemenian fire temples to the Internet, from youth issues to those facing elders.

**The Gathas**

*by Dolly Malva*

Dolly Malva, center, chaired the first session of the Congress, on “The Gathas” with speakers Martin Schwartz [left] and Kambiz Sakhai.

**Prof. Kambiz Sakhai** (Graduate Psychology Department of New College of California, San Francisco) spoke on “Reason and Happiness in Zarathushtrianism.” In the history of ethics there is tension between the rational dimensions of life, and the tendency that underscores the striving for happiness. The pursuit of happiness is considered an individualistic endeavor, while rationalizing is supposed to promote the cause of the collectivity, thus the false dichotomy between reason and happiness. Zarathushtrian moral philosophy is free from this dichotomy.

**Prof. Martin Schwartz** (Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley) spoke on “Zarathustra’s Theology: New evidence, Fresh Considerations.” Zarathushtra, promoting a monotheism consisting of worship of Ahura Mazda, rejected all the deities of the rival polytheism. It was shown that Zarathushtra’s theology was radically different from pre-existent cultic conceptions, and argued that both polytheism and monotheism are inadequate categories for characterizing Gathic theology.

**Zoroastrianism in the Internet Age**

*by Lovji Cama*

Approaching the internet from different viewpoints, all three speakers, Dr. Lovji Cama, Dr. Khosro Mehrfar and Dr Jamshid Varza, arrived at the same message, that it is imperative that the community use the Internet to educate itself and the world about Zoroastrianism, use it to communicate among ourselves and to bring our small scattered community together.

Dr. Lovji Cama demonstrated how we use the Internet to store and make available our religious literature (www.Avesta.org and www.Vohuman.org sites); how we communicate through ‘chat’ groups and how associations broadcast via webpages. He pointed out ways of using the Internet for religious education: storing teaching material on a website, a virtual workshop for religion class teachers, webcast lessons for families who do not have live classes, webcast lectures at
The past came alive in the session “The Zoroastrian heritage.” David Stronach and Cyrus Rivetna shared their knowledge and expertise and left us with a quest for the future.

Field archaeologist extraordinaire, beloved teacher and distinguished scholar of Near Eastern archaeology, winner of the 2004 Gold Medal, David Stronach shared his findings and speculation on the discovery of Tepe Nush-i Jan, a prominent Median settlement located 60 km south of the former Median capital, Hamadan.

Following five seasons of excavations (1967-1977), the four major buildings that were exposed at Nush-i Jan are the best preserved Median structures found so far. Stronach drew attention to the design and decoration of the fire altar that was uncovered in the tall, majestic sanctuary. Parallels that could be detected in the religious monuments of slightly later Achaemenid Iran were of particular interest.

Together with other relevant evidence, such precious clues shed new light on aspects of the religion of the Medes in pre-Achaemenid times. Stronach’s upcoming book will provide us with answers about the Medes and Zoroastrians.

Cyrus Rivetna, an architect and photographer, gathered his information over a four-month tour of India in 2003 and Iran in 2000. His presentation took us on a magnificent photographic journey from Iran to India. Cyrus started from the pre-Achaemenian fire altars near Persepolis through the Parthian and Sasanian Empires where he pointed out the important structure of chahar-taq, a square building capped by a dome, which becomes the kebla at the core of the Parsi fire temple.

Cyrus led his audience to fire temples in India, pointing out features of their design, layout and function.

Commenting on the design of darbe mehrs in the West, Cyrus believes that while we build for present-day needs, we must reference and understand the past, and not disregard centuries of thought and evolution. Cyrus would like to see a fire temple built in the West, “It would instill a sense of pride and act as a magnet for our scattered communities.” Sadly, the thought that crossed my mind, was if this development would be a divisive or a constructive move?
The session featured a book reading and discussion with two acclaimed fiction authors whose work reflects Zarathushti life, identity and religion.

Fiction by writers of South Asian (Indian subcontinent) origin currently enjoys major recognition in North America; and Parsi Zarathushti characters and themes have been prominent in the works of several major authors, both non-Parsi, such as Salman Rushdie, and Parsi, including Bapsi Sidhwa (who was scheduled to be at the session but unable to attend) and Rohinton Mistry. As North American writers of Iranian origin also gain more visibility, young Zarathushti writers will hopefully join their ranks as well.

The writers at this session have helped introduce the Zarathushti religion and people to readers worldwide.

Boman Desai of Chicago, read passages from his novel A Woman Madly in Love [see FEZANA Journal Winter 2004]. His other books include “The Memory of Elephants”, “Asylum, USA,” and “Trio” (Book One) a panoramic novel about the Schumanns and Brahms.


Tamina Davar [left] chaired the session on Zarathushti fiction writers, with book readings by authors Boman Desai [center] and Sohrab Homi Fracis.

The hall was full to capacity to hear these learned scholars share their knowledge with the attendees.

Prof. Jenny Rose [photo next page] gave a refreshing historic perspective of the Zarathushti faith in relation to other world religions, “The Impact of the Zoroastrian Tradition on other Religions.” A PhD in Iranian Studies from Columbia University, she has published several articles and books relevant to the Zarathushti faith. She teaches at Saddleback College and Claremont Graduate College in California.

Prof. Rose examined the relationship of the Zarathushti religion with other developing faiths such as Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.
with over 500 people in the audience, the panelists at this session took to the lectern discussing what it means to them growing up Zarathushti in North America. Chaired by the talented Fereshteh Khatibi who was introduced by her daughter, Dr. Parmis Khatibi, the session warmed up right off the bat. Panelists included Dr. Parmis Khatibi, Jimmy Antia, Shenaya Tarapore, Silloo Tarapore, and Rohan Vilms.

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Issues discussed included the importance of social networking within the youth community, the significance of customs and rituals in one’s upbringing, and the influence parents have on their children being raised as Zarathushtis in North America.

For those who attended, one cannot forget the way Fereshteh Khatibi chaired the session with her motherly enthusiasm as she opened the floor to questions. Emotions were running wild in this session as one minute you were crying to hear a mother apologize to her family for the mistakes she made parenting, while the next minute you were fired up to debate the always controversial issues of interfaith marriage and significance of the sudreh kushti.

The session was running behind schedule because of the high demand of individuals wishing to speak from the floor. What was expected to be a small, two hour session turned into the largest session of the congress with over 500 participants lasting more than two hours. The session ended with a short prayer led by Ervad Jimmy Antia. Hats off to Mrs. Khatibi and the wonderful speakers who participated.

Growing up in a Zoroastrian family – a discussion of issues by Nikan Khatibi

Panel discussion on Zarathushti family issues: from left, Shenaya Tarapore, session chair Fereshteh Khatibi, Silloo Tarapore, Parmis Khatibi, Jimmy Antia and Rohan Vilms.

Planning for Aging

A very relevant session, “Community and Living, a Discussion of Issues,” chaired by Soonamai Dessai was canceled due to unavoidable circumstances. The scheduled speakers were: Elizabeth Boardman on “Planning Ahead for Aging in America in the Next Two Decades,” covering demographics, health, nursing home options and finances for the aged; Shahzad Contractor on “Planning for Retirement;” and Mehlli Bhagalia on “Life after Death – the Only Journey that Matters,” covering the soul’s journey as explained in the Zarathushti faith.
FEZANA: Collectively envisioning our future

by Firdosh Mehta

President Firdosh Mehta gave a power point presentation on the history, purpose and activities of FEZANA. Treasurer Rashid Mehin, provided a Farsi rendition. A copy of the CD was given to each member association and committee chair present at the Congress for their use in promoting FEZANA. (Thanks to Dolly Dastoor and Coomi Guzdar of Montreal for the initial setup and text of some of these slides).

The session showcased the achievements and future goals of the standing and ad hoc committees.

On behalf of the Co-ordination and Planning Committee Firdosh presented a list of upcoming activities.

Welfare Committee co-chairs Hosi Mehta and Houtoxi Contractor outlined the new critical assistance program with a 1-800 number to help victims of domestic violence. Their fundraising program, in Chicago, in September 2004, raised $30,000. In recognition of ZAC’s support for the fundraiser, the Welfare Committee presented ZAC’s representative Dilshad Antia $1,001.

Information Receiving and Dissemination Committee chair Khorsheed Jungalwala mentioned the excellent work done by Roshan Rivetna and her team towards publishing FEZANA Journal. Khorsheed’s long standing contributions on various FEZANA Committees was recognized with a special award presented by Firdosh, on behalf of a most appreciative FEZANA community.

Funds and Finance Committee chair, Jerry Kheradi, urged people to give generously to the Thousand Points of Light program. Noshir Jesung’s work as chair of the Census and Survey Committee was recognized and the FEZANA North American Directory (online and CD) was launched.

Negin Sharyari and Afreed Mistry reported on upcoming ZYNA events, including the next North American Youth Congress in Miami, Florida, in December 2005.

Academic Education Scholarship Program committee chair Dolly Dastoor announced that the number of applications was growing exponentially with 40 applications in 2004, of which 10 were awarded the FEZANA scholarship of $1000 each, and Minoee Modi received the Kheradi Endowment scholarship of $5000 for merit. Dolly recognized one of the winners, Noushin Isavadastar in the audience.

On behalf of the Religion Education and Conference Committee chair Kayomarsh Mehta, the five winners of the Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarship were announced. Suzie Karani, one of the winners, was presented her scholarship award of $1,000.

Reports were read from Hoshedar Tamboli, chair of Small Groups and from Er. Jehan Bagli, chair of the Heritage Preservation and Historical Research Committee. Ava Parsi read the Zoroastrian Sports Committee report, which included the successful completion of the Zarathushti Games in Vancouver, in July 2004. Rohinton Rivetna, chair of the External Affairs Committee, presented highlights of our involvement in interfaith work.

Awards Committee chair, Yasmin Pavri had just come from the Awards Luncheon [page 41]. The audience was requested to promote more nominations for awards to be presented at the next Congress (Toronto, 2007).

Homi Gandhi and Behram Pastakia, co-chairs of the UN-NGO Committee, gave a report of their activities, with participation of the young adult
members, Afreed Mistry and Suzie Karani. Behram introduced the “Operation Eyesight” [page 121] eyeglass collection drive at this Congress and urged that collections continue between Congresses.

The newly established Creative and Performing Arts Scholarship Committee, co-chaired by Anahita Sidhw and Sherazade Mehta, announced their launching of the application form for this scholarship. It was reported on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee that most of their goals were achieved, except those requiring large funding.

**World body.** Firdosh reviewed the January and July 2004 meetings of elected leaders of FPZAI, ZTFE, WZO and FEZANA and explained the IZO/WZOI structure in brief. He mentioned the FPZAI meeting in Ahmedabad, and informed everyone that a response was awaited on the course of action, to be proposed by FPZAI leaders, as a follow-up to the Ahmedabad meeting.

The session continued with an interactive Open Forum, moderated by Sherazade Mehta [left] and Negin Sharyari.

Dr. Jerry Kheradi suggested making an effort to communicate with Iranian communities in North America and spread the word among them about donations so they could avail themselves of funds through FEZANA.

**Viraj Soroushian** suggested an emphasis on social aspects and similarities between people of Iranian background and Parsis and focus on youth and encouraging participation.

**Dr. Borzoo Nadjimi** commented on the need for funding for reprinting of educational books like Dr. Dhalla’s *Theology of Zoroastrianism*. Firdosh responded that FEZANA could help with some seed money; the Publications Committee could follow up and help with publicity and marketing.

Four speakers presented their community’s approach to interfaith marriage.

**Dawn Kepler**, director of “Building Jewish Bridges: Outreach to Interfaith Couples” presented the Jewish approach to interfaith marriages and described how they struggle with many of the same issues facing Zarathushtis. The rate of interfaith marriages in the Jewish community is now about 50%, and of those only about a third bring up their children in the Jewish faith. She described workshops and programs set up in the areas of (i) education, (ii) psychological issues, and (iii) religious/spiritual issues, to help provide support to the couples.

**Vijay Kapoor**, a retired executive now studying Vedanta in California, described Vedic thought, which is the background for Hindu religiosity, and stated that strictly speaking interfaith marriages and marriages between castes is prohibited. Such injunctions are viewed as the preferred course (like speaking the truth), as opposed to an intolerable condemnation. While the reaction to Hindu interfaith marriages is harsher in rural areas, there is more tolerance in urban areas and abroad. Also, attitudes are more accepting towards a Hindu man than for a woman. The harshest criticism is for those who marry Muslims, then to a lesser extent to those who marry Catholics and other Christians, and the attitude is more benign towards those who marry into non-proselytizing faiths, such as Buddhists and Jews.

**Sarosh Manekshaw** from Houston presented a pragmatic Zarathushhti’s approach to interfaith marriage in a series of statements, his hypotheses, of the issues involved with interfaith marriages. Most important, Zarathushtis have fixated over interfaith marriages to the point of obsession. It is a wedge issue used by those extremists who wish to divide the community. He advised the conservatives that they should accept the fact that in democratic societies interfaith marriages will occur, while advising the liberals, to do as they wish, but not force themselves and their views on those who disagree.

**Ervad Kersey Antia**, head priest from Chicago, stated that indications are that interfaith marriages are on the increase in North America, with possibly disastrous consequences to the community. While we should pro-

[Continued on next page]
This plenary session had four speakers and a wider range of subjects than other sessions at the Congress.

Annahita Farudi and Maziar Toosarvandani reported on their Dari language project. Spoken uniquely by Zarathushtis in the Yazd region of Iran, Dari is considered to be an endangered language, losing its strength as the unifying thread of traditional Iranian Zarathushtri communities. Refreshingly, they found that in Qasemabad, the community took great pride and interest in their language and the religion and culture it represented. The project is dedicated to documenting and studying the language, raising awareness of its endangered status, and preserving the culture of the Dari speaking Zarathushtris of Iran.

The next two speakers dealt with the ongoing effort to preserve the valuable books, manuscripts and documents at the Meherjirana Library in Navsari, India. Included in the collection are the original Grant Deed or Sanad from the Mughal Emperor Akbar to the First Dastur Meherjirana and several ancient manuscripts of Avesta and Pahlavi texts.

PARZOR project has microfilmed over 90,000 pages of valuable manuscripts in a specially constructed microfilm chamber constructed on site at the Meherjirana Library. These materials are available for study by scholars. PARZOR is now working with the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property in Lucknow and the Iranian Cultural Centre Conservation Department to conserve the precious documents.

Malcolm Deboo showed the dire condition of some of the treasures in the collection at the library. Working under the auspices of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) and FEZANA he aspires to restore some of the most important of these manuscripts to pristine condition, for the benefit of future scholars. He displayed a 200+ year old folio manuscript of the Avesta, which generated a great deal of interest and discussion in the audience. If funds can be raised, this manuscript will be restored by an expert at the University of Cambridge, who will go on to train conservators in India to continue the work on other manuscripts.

Arman Ariane has been active in establishing courses in Zoroastrianism at Claremont Graduate University in California. Their School of Religion is one of the largest doctoral programs in religion in the US; introducing these courses there means that future scholars will be aware of Zoroastrianism and its effect on other religions. His lecture included a video of a spectacular, public Jashne-Sadeh ceremony at Claremont in February 2004.

Interfaith marriage...

[Continued from previous page]

mote marriages within the fold, we must begin to accept interfaith marriages. He has been approached by many to explain the faith to the non-Zarathushtrian partner, and for this we need to develop books and educational materials. Where this is properly done, the non-Zarathushtrian spouse has begun to understand the beauty of the religion and some have even inquired on how they can convert.

Statistics show that most children of interfaith marriages do not practice the Zarathushtrian religion, but this is more likely because the couple is wary that they will not be accepted within the Zarathushhti fold.
Interfaith work and FEZANA

by Suzie Karani

Two prominent local interfaith leaders were invited guests at the Interfaith plenary presentation on December 31st: Rev. Charles Gibbs, executive director of the United Religions Initiative (URI) and Rev. Andrew Killi, executive of the Bay Area Interfaith Council.

Firdosh Mehta began the program with an introduction to the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (CPWR) and the Zarathushti delegation at the Parliament of World’s Religions, last summer 2004, in Montserrat and Barcelona, Spain. His talk was accompanied by an interesting powerpoint presentation of photographs of the Parliament event.

Rohinton Rivetna, a founding trustee of the CPWR, gave a brief history of the Parliament and stressed that our objective should not be to use the interfaith forum to showcase our own religion, but “to promote understanding between faiths, to recognize and respect each others’ diversity, and move collectively towards a global society of peace and justice.”

Suzie Karani, a youth delegate to the Parliament in Barcelona, presented her experiences and view.

The fourth panelist, Malcolm Deboo presented the various activities and involvement in interfaith work by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE).

The first Parliament of World’s Religions was at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893. The centennial was celebrated in Chicago in 1993, and subsequent Parliaments have been held in Capetown and Barcelona, with participation from religious leaders and anyone interested in promoting peace, religious plurality and humanitarian efforts.

ZYNA session

by Afreed Mistry

An open forum session was conducted by ZYNA co-chairs Negin Sharyari and Afreed Mistry for all youth attendees at the Congress. The session started with a brief update on ZYNA activities followed by a promotional slide show on the upcoming North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Miami. The open discussion was a success with a lot of feedback. Many youth signed up to help with future activities.

E-newsletter. ZYNA has started an e-newsletter named “Asha” for all youth in North America. To receive the newsletter, contact ZYNAangels@aol.com.

ZYNA events in 2005 include:

Nouruz trip. Over the Good Friday long weekend March 24 - 27, ZSBC, ZYBC and ZYNA will host an event in Vancouver, BC. This will include the Nouruz celebration on March 26th with the BC community. Contact ZYNA angels@aol.com.

Holiday Youth Program. ZSO and ZYNA will be implementing a new Holiday Program for the Youth (HPY) in Toronto, July 31 - August 7. This week long camp will be for high school graduates that are moving onto university. The program will teach life skills, public speaking, debating, career-counselling, sports, cooking and there will be a motivational speaker. Check the ZYNA page at www.fezana.org.

Youth Congress. ZAF and ZYNA will host the next North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Miami, Florida, December 28 – 31. The theme will be “ZEESTAN – Living a Zarathushti Life.” Youth interested in volunteering to help, contact ZYNAangels@aol.com. Registration and details will be on the ZYNA page at www.fezana.org.

Looking for reps. ZYNA is still looking for reps from various cities in USA and Canada. To volunteer as a ZYNA rep or to organize a local ZYNA event contact ZYNAangels@aol.com.

For Nouruz and during the ensuing year, may you experience

Enough bliss to maintain your sweet composure,
Enough trials and tribulations to make you stronger,
Enough sorrow to savor your humanity,
Enough hope to keep you motivated.

- Submitted by Sam Kerr
Sunday School teachers workshop by Hosi Mehta

There were over 30 participants from over 12 different areas at the Sunday School teachers’ workshop.

The most obvious and exciting observation was that by far the majority of teachers and participants interested in religious education were in their 20s and 30s.

Most of them had gone through religious education classes and camps, and were interested in sharing and enhancing their positive experiences to the younger generation in their home communities.

We had a very interactive open forum where we shared successes, concerns, problems and solutions on topics ranging from information, participation and transportation, to motivation at different age levels.

All present were given a questionnaire asking for their needs in different areas; information will be sent as requested. Persons not present at the workshop may contact Kayomarsh Mehta at kayomehta@aol.com, tel: 708-974-1238.

Participation and discussion was so vibrant and alive that the one-hour session went on for two and a half hours. Action items resulting from the meeting are: set up a yahoo group (Viraf Soroushian), transfer materials to electronic format and help set up a website (Parizad Satarawalla); follow FEZANA curriculum in general; and tabulate questionnaire information.

Thank you to all in attendance for their time and commitment towards an educated community.

What does “Being an observant Zoroastrian” mean in North America by Dolly Dastoor

The views expressed in this discussion group were a true picture of the community, as a cross section of the community was represented judging from their ages.

The participants were divided into four age groups. Each group was asked to discuss a set of questions for an hour and then report back to the whole session.

The questions (printed in the Congress program book) covered: the form of religious education received, importance of understanding prayers, role of Zoroasthhti camps and congresses, suggestions for establishing the religion in North America, survival of Zoroastrianism as a practiced religion, importance of Zoroasthhti practice, inter-generational differences, Zoroasthhti identity, social circles and friendships, family celebrations and festivals, day-to-day challenges, importance of Zoroasthhti philosophy and ritual.

The under-30s felt that there was “no laundry list” of observant Zoroasthhtis, each one observed it in their own special way, living their lives with Zoroasthhti principles. There were similarities and differences in the way they practice the religion, feeling more comfortable in the Indian cultural group than in the American group. It was interesting to note what this group expressed; that the things they had felt silly and irrelevant when they were younger they now find meaningful.

The 30-plus group mentioned that young adults are returning to learn more about their religion and were wondering as to how they should bring religion to their children, and expressed the need for a religious syllabus. They felt that there should be a structured environment for religious education, which was fun but that did not distract from the seriousness of the education. They felt that conversion should be regulated so that “we do not become a minority in our religion”; 30% of the group wanted the religion limited to people born in the religion and 70% did not.

In the 40-plus group, it was felt that children should have a Zoroasthhti identity; rituals were thought to be important to bring people together. Some parents went to their child’s school during Nowruz to explain the meaning of the celebration. They advised that we should celebrate festivals and birthdays on the actual day rather than on a weekend for convenience. This group felt very comfortable with their Zoroasthhti identity and did not care what others thought of them.

The 50-plus group said that 100% of them grew up in the old country where they were held in tremendous respect, with properties, charities and name recognition, even though the religious education they received back home was miniscule. Here they are asked “Zoro…what is that?” This group felt that as parents and grandparents they need to make things happen, take time off to celebrate Nowruz. The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario sends a list of Zoroasthhti festivals and holy days to the school boards to permit children to take time off to observe these holy days. Some played tapes of prayers in their homes for ambiance, some kept copies of the FEZANA Journal in their office to start a conversation about the religion.
ZWIN session

Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz, ZWIN (Zoroastrian Women’s International Network) director, introduced what ZWIN was all about, and its genesis at the World Congress in Houston. The purpose of this network, in 16 countries, is to support one another and the community, specially our youth. To join, send an email to zwin3-subscribe@yahooogroups.com.

Zareen urged all interested persons to bring ideas to the group and utilize the network in innovative ways to contribute to the community’s needs. ZWIN has supported individuals in their career aspirations, professional ventures, health issues and in challenges of transition and migration. Last year ZWIN worked across continents to realize the “Dream Come True” program for four selected girls from India, who were brought to Canada. They also helped support a young child who was in New York for critical treatment.

Diana Damkevala facilitated an interesting discussion on how

ZWINers could best contribute their efforts. There was a request from FEZANA to have ZWIN members assist its Critical Assistance Committee that aims to support abused women in the community in North America. Zareen also raised the issue of having ZWIN helping our young people meet and know each other, so that we can help them stay within the community.

ZWIN will be supporting a “Help the Aged Food Scheme,” through the Mancherji Joshi Memorial Trust in India. They support the elderly and young children in Dadar, in need of adequate meals. If you can help in a big or small way, please contact zareen@managingcultures.com.

ZWINzisn is ZWIN’s International Student Network, connecting Zarathushti students studying/living internationally, providing them with hospitality reps in 29 cities. To join, send email to ZWINzisn-subscribe@yahooogroups.com.

The highlight of this ZWIN session was the awards presented to two women, who have done extraordinary work for the community, much of it behind the scenes.

Roshan Rivetna was given an award “in appreciation of her tireless commitment to the community, her caring willingness to help and support any individual or community cause, the outstanding standards maintained in the FEZANA journal and for her quiet dedication to the future of our youth.”

Even more than the award, one and all were touched by the heartfelt words expressed by her husband Rohinton [at left with the award, presented by Dolly Malva] who accepted the award on her behalf. He explained how Roshan felt it a privilege to be able to serve. Zareen elaborated on how Roshan had helped, in discrete ways, to connect many (young and old) eligible Zarathushtis.

Khorshed Jungalwala was given an award “in appreciation of her outstanding dedication to the Zoroastrian community, her tireless and meticulous leadership work towards the formation of a Zoroastrian World Body, her helping uphold the highest standards for the FEZANA Journal, her guidance and mentorship with integrity, dignity and grace.”

FEZANA past president Framroze Patel [at left with Khorshed] spoke of his respect for Khorshed and the tremendous contribution she had made by her mature and candid feedback and invaluable contributions during his presidency. We were glad to see Fer- oze Jungalwala, like Rohinton, speak with such warm love and deep admiration for his wife.
The FEZANA awards luncheon started with a special recognition for Dinshaw Joshi who passed away last year. Dinshaw served FEZANA ably in many ways. Everything that he undertook was done quietly, with dignity and integrity. While seeking no special recognition for his own efforts, he was passionate about the community recognizing outstanding Zarathushtis.

Dinshaw chaired the Awards committee for over ten years and meticulously set up the award procedures and guidelines. His contributions to FEZANA and the Awards Committee will be sorely missed. The trophy and plaque presented to Dinshaw were accepted by his wife Goolcher Joshi and his daughter, Shehernaz Joshi-Verahrami [photo above].

The Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award was presented to Framroze Patel, founding member of ZAGNY and past president of FEZANA. Framroze looks upon community service as part of being a Zarathushti and has provided his dedicated service to local, national and international Zarathushti communities for over thirty years and continues to do so. Framroze has been involved with FEZANA since its inception as treasurer, vice president and president. Framroze was one of the founding members of ZAGNY and a founding trustee of the Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Temple in New Rochelle, NY. He is one of the few who have served the ZAGNY community from its inception to the present.

Excellence in Business or Profession Award went to Dr. Dhun Noria of Toronto. Dr. Noria focuses her energy to commitment and excellence in her professional life, her business, her devotion to her family.

In 2004, two new rotating trophies were donated to FEZANA. The Joshi and Verahrami families donated a trophy for the Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award in the name of Dinshaw F. Joshi.

A trophy for the Outstanding Student Award [photo above, front] was donated in memory of the Late Shirin Nariman Das-toor by her five children, her twelve grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

FEZANA is grateful to the families for their generous donations.
Outstanding Zarathushti Framroze Patel

Excellence in Business Dr. Dhun Noria

Outstanding Youth Susan Karani

Outstanding Student Boman Irani

Humanitarian Service
Dr. Lovji & Mehru Cama

Excellence in Arts
Farobag Homi Cooper

and friends, in her personal life and by her extensive voluntary activities to help the community of Toronto at large.

After obtaining her Fellowship in Anatomic Pathology, she started Laboratory Services at the Scarborough Grace Hospital. In 1986, with business partners she successfully constructed a modern medical professional building near the hospital. She is the owner and medical director of Eglington Diagnostic Laboratory, and several other medically related businesses and medical laboratories. She is a tireless fundraiser for several causes. As chair of the Building Capital Campaign for the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, she has raised $1.3 million (Canadian) within two years.

The Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Service Award was presented to Dr. Lovji and Mehru Cama. Lovji’s involvement with the community started before the tri-states’ Zarathushti community was formally organized as ZAGNY. Even during his student days at Columbia he was an active member of the group of Zarathushis that met informally. His greatest contribution to the community has been his youth-related activities. In 1973 Lovji established the first religious classes in the New York area. He has been teaching Zarathushti history, culture, philosophy and religion to children for 30 years.

Mehru is a founding member of ZAGNY and has since volunteered her services whenever there was a need. She played a major role in organizing the 11th North American Congress and in site selection and fundraising for the new darbe mehr. The Camas are well respected and beloved in the greater New York area where they have worked for many causes within ZAGNY as well as other charitable organizations for over twenty years.

Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award went to Farobag Homi Cooper. Farobag has been music director of the
Chicago Philharmonia since 1985. He also serves as artistic director of the Chicago Performing Artists Series and principal conductor of its resident ensembles, the Mostly Mozart Chamber Players, Camerata Virtuosi, and Baroque Masterplayers. Farobag’s varied performances have ranged from the piano at Carnegie and singing at the MET in New York City to conducting in Kiev and making a splash debut with his Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra at the World Congress in Houston.

A renaissance man, Farobag’s extraordinary musical achievements spanning the spectrum from philosophy to finance have given shape to a more profound musicality which he defines as a deep ocean of passion with insight into humanity. His most recent creation, ZAINA [see page 4] is further testament of his dedication to his Zarathushti brethren and the Philharmonia’s upcoming CD, Salut D’amour, will feature design, photography and essays contributed by seven Zarathushti artists and authors.

The Outstanding Young Zarathushti Award was won by Susan Karani who is a rising scholar of Zarathushti studies and a human rights advocate. While an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, she studied at Université Européan, Tours, France and at the Université de Paris, La Sorbonne, Paris. She recently graduated with an MA in Human Rights studies from Columbia University and has accepted a full scholarship at the University of Michigan where she will pursue an MA/PhD in Iranian Studies at the Department of Near Eastern studies.

Susan has contributed her time and enthusiasm to the FEZANA-UN delegation for the last three years, and attended conferences at UN headquarters, NY. Susan was selected as a Zarathushti youth leader to participate in the Parliament of Religions in Barcelona, and as a research assistant by Harvard University’s Pluralism Project. She has also worked at the

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### Hall of Fame


#### Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2004: Dr. Farhang Mehr
- 1996: Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani
- 1990: Maestro Zubin Mehta

#### Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award
- 2004: Mr. Framroze Patel
- 2002: Mr. Kayomarsh P. Mehta
- 1998: Mrs. Farangis K. Shahrokh
- 1996: Mr. Homi Minocher-Homji
- 1994: Dr. Dolly Dastoor
- 1992: Mr. Homi Davier
- 1990: Mr. Rohinton and Mrs. Roshan Rivetna
- 1988: Mr. Minoo Dastoor

#### Excellence in Business or Profession Award
- 2004: Dr. Dhun Noria
- 2002: Mr. Firdaus Bhathena
- 1998: Dr. Yasmin Thanavala
- 1996: Mr. Adi Dastur and Mrs. Mehroo Jussawalla
- 1994: Dr. Jehan Bagli
- 1992: Mr. Mehli Mehta and Mr. Jamshed Mavalwala
- 1990: Mr. Meherwan Boyce

#### Excellence in Performing Arts, Literature or Painting Award
- 2004: Mr. Farobag Homi Cooper
- 2002: Mrs. Bapsi Sidhwa

#### Paradise Award
- 2002: Ms. Tenaz Dubash

#### Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Service Award
- 2004: Dr. Lovji Cama and Mrs. Mehru Cama
- 2002: Miss Bella Tata
- 1998: Mr. Jamshed and Mrs. Yasmin Ghadiany
- 1996: Mrs. Katy Driver
- 1994: Mr. Minoo Treasurywala
- 1992: Mr. Rustom Irani
- 1990: Mobed Mehraban and Mrs. Paridokht Zartoshty
- 1988: Mrs. Sabar E. Patel

#### Outstanding Young Zarathushti Award
- 2004: Ms. Susan Karani
- 2002: Ms. Sherazade Mehta
- 1998: Mr. Orang Demehry and Mrs. Parastu Dubash
- 1994: Mr. Darius Bagli
- 1992: Mr. Mehran Sepehri
- 1990: Mr. Sarosh V. Kanga
- 1988: Prof. Jamshed Choksy

#### Outstanding Zarathushti Student Award
- 2004: Mr. Boman Irani
- 1998: Mr. Phiroz Tarapore
- 1996: Mr. Arash Anoshiravani
- 1994: Mr. Cyrus Hirjibehdin
- 1992: Mr. Murzban F. Morris and Miss Shanaya Deboo
- 1990: Mr. Neville M. Billimoria
- 1988: Mr. Zubin Jal Panthaky

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**Nominations for next North American Awards.** A call for nominations will go out in late 2006 for awards to be presented at the next North American Congress, in Toronto in the summer of 2007. We have so many talented, hardworking individuals in our community who deserve recognition. We urge you to submit nominations for deserving individuals. Look for the nomination form on the FEZANA website (www.FEZANA.org) or ask your FEZANA representative.
The Outstanding Zarathushti Student Award was awarded to Boman Irani who is working on his doctorate in Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Florida. His research topic is obesity and he plans to go to Harvard for post-doctoral research in that field. He has done research in the central melanocortin system as it relates to obesity and the central nervous system and has done some original work in trying to unravel the obesity mystery. He has maintained an outstanding graduate GPA of 3.93 while taking some of the more challenging core curricular courses in the graduate program.

Boman not only excels in the classroom and laboratory (where he spends virtually every weekend) but has also been very active in the Gainesville community as an active member of the Indian students association. He has led free health checkups for Gainesville residents at the annual Health Care for the past four years.

On Education and Industry...
- Education elevates … and enlightens a person. - Ganj-i-Shaygan, 93.
- I will stand against Bushyasta (demon of idleness) which weakens us. - Vendidad XI.9
- They advance (the prosperity of) the world of piety by their industry. - Gatha Ushavad, Ys. XLVI.12
- Do not practice idleness, so that duty and righteousness which you ought to do, may not remain undone. - Mino-i-Kherad, II.29, 30.
- Perform works of industry. Relieve those who have fallen in distress. - Visperad XV.1
- Be industrious and discreet, and eat (bread earned) by your own honest labor, and make a share for God and the Good. Such habit in your work is the greatest righteousness. - Mino-i-Kherad, II.42-49.
- Industry is good for the progress of work. It is good, to keep one’s self away from sin, and to be diligent in works of goodness … - Mino-i-Kherad, II.70, 88.
- Industry and purity of language are good above everything. Be industrious in making a store of righteous works, because that will be of use to you in Heaven. - Mino-i-Kherad, II. 92-97.
- The diligent (man) (who is) righteous through his (good) deeds and the man possessing good wisdom through humility, questions all, so that he may render the world prosperous. - Gatha Vohukshthra, Ys. LI.5
- I repent if I have committed the faults of arrogance, pride, slander for the dead, avarice, anger and sloth. - Patet Pashemani, 10.

Source: “A Treasury of Quotations from Zoroastrian Texts” by Er. Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia
Entertainment at the Congress: fun-tastique!

by Annahita Jasavala

Nenshad Bardoliwalla and the BGQ band topped off the evening with Jazz. Farzeen Chhapgar and Hormazd Commissariat started off the California Caliente dance with a Salsa dance demo/lesson. DJ Teymour continued the dancing music well into the night.

Next day’s luncheon started with Maharukh Driver’s production of “Zarthoshti Sagan – a Fashion and Cultural Showcase” – a tapestry of our traditions with performers dressed in traditional Parsi and Persian outfits accompanied by music from India and Iran, and it too concluded with “Chayye Hame Zarathushti.”

That evening titled “A Touch of Persia” commenced with Ham-Avayan singing an Ahunavaiti gatha verse in Farsi. Following delicious Persian cuisine, emcees Nina Daruwalla and Homa Moghani guided the attendees on an exotic dance and musical journey down the Silk Road. The renowned Ballet Afsaneh performed Persian and Tajik dances including a Peacock dance that was especially stunning.

Sarvar Kaboli’s dance fluidly depicted the “Victory of the Eagle.” Avijah Shaidaie’s dance “The Desert Wind” got the audience swaying and clapping. Ustad Mohammed Nejad accompanied by Bita presented Persian melodies performed on Persian instruments: ney (flute), taar (lute) and daf (drum). Mahvash Guerami and her student Beatrice Potsalitos performed a classical Persian duet on the santoor (dulcimer).

Everyone danced the night away to DJ Teymour’s Persian music.

Adi Tamboli entertained Indian music lovers as they danced to the tunes of yesteryear well into the morning. Adi was extraordinary!
The Z-Bazaar, though small in number of vendors, was a great success for all.

For the first time we had set up a bookstall with a commercial bookstore, Borders, who accepted a book list of Zarathushti writers, prepared by the organizers. Borders took the financial risk of ordering and shipping these books which are commercially available in North America, but were never offered in such a great variety on one table.

In addition Malcolm Deboo [library@ztf.com] of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) offered books, which are not available in the USA and Canada, mostly publications from India and the UK and hard to get anywhere else.

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"Grand Gifts from Iran" offered artifacts of Zarathushti interest imported from Iran, under the guidance of Silloo Mehta of California (tel: 714-995-8765).

"Pars Art" from San Diego, Hassan Hatefi of Carlsbad, California (tel: 760-730-3409) sold China pieces impressed with farohars and other Zarathushti emblems.

Kali Patel from San Dimas, California (626-967-0037 see advertisement in this issue] was there to offer Australian Kraft cheese and butter.

However most important at the Z-bazaar were the young Zarathushti artists.

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**A Touch of Persia**

by Farida Bamji

From the land of Asho Zarathushtra
To the great Persian kings
Where Shahnameh was penned
It’s glories we still do sing.
On the night of December 30th
The XIII Congress that evening
“ A Touch of Persia” to us did bring!

The costumes beautifully
Draped and bejeweled
Music was heady and inspiring
Reminded me of stories
From the Arabian Nights
Related by Sherazade
To her valiant king.

Tho’ the evening has faded
The memory lingers on
Of a once proud nation
Where our ancestors were born
Unfortunately tho’ it’s a little
Late in life, the awakening of
My proud ancestry, culture
As well as heritage has just begun.

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Congress delegates were treated to a musical journey down the Silk Road with Ballet Afshaneh.

The following night was “A Night among the Stars” and New Year’s Eve. DJ Glenn Truitt rocked the party revelers with scavenger games and themed dances. The bubbly, hugs and kisses flowed freely as friends old and new rang in 2005, with Zarathushtis resolving to continue on the path of good thoughts, good words and good deeds!
Nazzi Mehdiabadi from Lubbock/Houston, TX offered her hand painted T-shirts.

Kainaz Amaria from Foster City, CA offered her artistic photos from the Bay-Area.

Kourosh Soroushian from San Jose, CA offered a CD with music written and performed by himself, an instrumental journey in eastern and western harmony.

Then we had the fundraising and informational tables from – FEZANA, ZACUCE (proposed Zarathushti Cultural Center of Philadelphia area, ZANC, the Young Ratheshtars, Claremont College of California – all offering a variety of books, CDs, T-shirts, raffle tickets and more.

Coming together is a beginning, Staying together is progress, and Working together is success! - Henry Ford

[From ZSO Newsletter]
WZCC Annual General Meeting

The third annual general meeting of WZCC, on December 28 at the Doubletree Inn San Jose, opened with a benediction from Ervad Kobad Zarolia and warm welcomes from the San Francisco chapter chair Jamshed Gandi and ZANC president Bomi Patel. FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta emphasized that there was nothing wrong in creating wealth, provided it was used to make the world a better place.

President Rohinton Rivetna traced the progress of WZCC since inception in 2000, stating that WZCC now had a presence on every continent and was “growing far beyond the expectations of the dreamers who gathered in Las Vegas in 1997, with the vision of a Zarathushti business fraternity.” “Not any ordinary chamber of commerce,” he said, “but a fraternity, with roots in a strong business tradition. A fraternity with a vision to make this organization the economic engine of our community.”

Director Bomy Boyce presented the Treasurer’s report for Sarosh Collector. Chapters remitted 40% of dues collected to WZCC headquarters. Some chapters pay their contribution in kind with services provided. Administrative and websites services are donated by the India region and WZCC Journal production services by the Middle East region.

Corporate secretary Edul Daver noted that plans should be made for a smooth transition for the eight initial directors who would be retiring in 2006 (after their two 3-year terms are up). WZCC now has chapters in Australia, Canada, India (4), Iran, Middle East, Pakistan, USA (5) and UK, with representatives in Hong Kong, Singapore and China. Total membership stands at 816. The first 250 members who pay dues for 3 consecutive years will be recognized as Founder Members.

Meher Bhesania (director, WZCC-Middle East) reported on “most gratifying results in 2004, exceeding the most optimistic expectations.” The focus remained on providing value-based programs including: management skill building programs, seminars and networking opportunities, seeking out and announcing business leads and job vacancies and hosting a “Two-Way Trade Program” and a 22-member business delegation from India. Due to these efforts, a few Zarathushtis have gained employment and captured business opportunities in UAE. A successful tie-up has been achieved between Parsi Dairy Farm of Mumbai and the Kamat chain of

Businesses & professionals

WZCC holds third annual general meeting, business conference and luncheons,
gather and network by Roshan Rivetna
recognizing WZCC award winners and showcasing Zarathushti success stories

restaurants; the delicious kulfis are now available in Dubai, and shortly in Muscat.

Chapter and Activity Reports. Kobad Zarolia, speaking for chair Sam Meer, reported that the Toronto chapter is building momentum with young leadership keen to harness new talent and ideas and had held bimonthly meetings to develop and showcase local talent. Hoshang Karani, speaking for chair Pheroze Nagarwalla, spoke of the Chicago chapter’s focus on bringing youth into the fold, their Business Advisory Board that offers guidance to new businesses, and their plans for an Entrepreneurship Conference in 2005.

Chair Rusi Gandhi described numerous very successful presentations organized by the “vibrant and active” New York chapter. “We created WZCC history by being the first in inviting a foreign dignitary, the Consul General of India,” said Rusi, “and by covering the function on International TV ASIA.” Jamshed Gandi, who played a key role in organizing the Business Conference said the San Francisco chapter was started by a small group of interested individuals including Natalie Vania. They hoped to gain momentum and boost participation in the Bay area. Zareen Karani Araoz, manager of the zchambers group urged members to avail of “WZCC’s communication network arm” that “links Zarathushti businesses and professionals, provides a channel to form a cyber-community so that members are aware of the competencies and needs of others and can support, contribute and gain access to one another, as well as mentor and be mentored by successful fellow Zarathushtis.”

To join send an email to zchamber-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Mehr Bhesania presented plans for a new publication of the WZCC, to be launched in February 2005, whose purpose is to “act as a vehicle for spreading knowledge, understanding and the good work done by WZCC chapters around the world.” Rohinton Rivetna applauded the ME Region for taking on this monumental task and looked forward to a “world class” publication.

Full reports from officers, directors, chapter chairs and special activity coordinators are in the “2004 Annual Report” compiled by corporate secretary Edul Daver (daver@acupowder.com) which can be viewed at www.wzcc.org.
BUSINESS CONFERENCE

The WZCC Business Conference and luncheon followed the AGM, on December 28.

Showcasing Zarathushti Businesses: Kersey and Meher Bhesania [photo previous page] showed a powerful video presentation of opportunities in Dubai, which currently boasts a booming economy – besides oil, in the areas of construction, tourism, real estate, manufacturing and services.

Parvez Varjavand [above] discussed the problems for business enterprise in Iran, but stated that these could become future opportunities. He urged WZCC to help make that happen for Zarathushtis in Iran.

Hosi Mehta and his son Shawn Mehta [photo above] of Chicago area discussed how they built their automotive repair business “Mehta Motors” and the pitfalls they faced [see FJ Summer 2004]. Mehta Motors has built a reputation of “industry and integrity” which has earned awards from the local Chamber of Commerce and, above all, many satisfied customers.

The keynote speaker at the luncheon on December 28th was Zubeen Shroff [photo above] partner in Galen Associates New York speaking on the importance of “Developing a Network in Establishing Careers” from the perspective of a first generation American. He gave an interesting presentation about the business of Health Care and the Health Care Industry.

Another riveting speaker, after lunch, was Farrokh Billimoria [photo above] of Artiman Ventures, Inc., in the Silicon Valley, California. He made a compelling presentation on cross-border investing between US and India; why invest in India? What has changed in the last decade? Where are the opportunities and what are the growth drivers?

The luncheon speaker on December 31st was Ayesha F. Nariman [photo previous page] the 2002 Democrat candidate for the US Congress in New York’s 26 congressional district giving her thoughts on “The Business of Politics – an Immigrant’s Odyssey.

Ayesha presented her solution to the grim social security picture facing the next generation of US citizens as “the number of retirees grows from approx. 42 million today to 74 million by 2042, while the number of workers supporting each retiree decreases from 37:1 in 1940 to 2:1 in 2040. Nariman’s solution is (i) to rename FICA taxes as FICA Savings; (ii) segregate social security trust funds from the US operating budget; (iii) require Congress to return the $3 to $4 trillion borrowed from Social Security; and (iv) require the trustees to place the surplus in a defined benefit plan blind trust invested in equity and bond markets.

The next WZCC AGM will be at the VIII World Zoroastrian Congress in London, June 2005.
**“Revving Your Business”**

**interactive session**

**Diana Damkevala** senior account director at RR Donnelley and **Dr. Natalie Vania** founder, Arshiya Ventures, led a panel discussion and interactive session which brought together successful and inspiring Zarathushti entrepreneurs to discuss the core lessons of business life.

Panelists were **Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz** (Managing Cultures), **Dr. Cyrus Bamji** (Canesta), **Homi Bodhanwala** (Quizno’s Subs), **Rusi Gandhi** (ReMax Properties), **Jamshed Gandhi** (Bertorelli, Gandi, Won & Behti) and **Hosi Mehta** (Mehta Motors).

Through a series of thought-provoking questions Diana and Natalie worked with the audience to develop insights into the phases of starting (Execution of a Dream), managing (Built to Last) and growing (Good to Great) a business.

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**WZCC 2003 Annual Recognitions.** From left, “Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur,” Farrokh R. Patel, founder of Pegasus Products and The Cover Company, New Jersey [see back cover]; FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta presents the trophy for “Outstanding Young Zarathushti Professional/Entrepreneur” to Zubin and Zenobia [not in picture] Tantra, founders of five Physical Therapy clinics in the Chicago area. The “Outstanding Zarathushti Professional” recognition was awarded to Dr. Zarin Turel, head of the Nuclear Chemistry Division at the Institute of Science, Mumbai. [See FEZANA Journal, Winter 2004 for awardee profiles]

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Top l. to r. Diana Damkevala and Dr. Natalie Vania. Left, Dr. Cyrus Bamji, inventor of the “virtual keyboard”. The 3-D sensoring technology developed by his company Canesta, in San Jose, has applications in the security, automotive and video games industries [see business profile on page 114].
vegetation on earth
an avestan revelation

Guest editor
Sam Kerr

Re-forestation attempts in Cambodia with young Sandalwood trees grown in a plant nursery. [Photo: Forest and Wildlife Science Research Institute (FWSRI), Phnom Penh, Cambodia, courtesy Ardeshir Damania]
Sam Kerr is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and of several colleges of surgery. Sam was surgeon/lecturer at the University of NSW and College Hospitals, Sydney 1968-2003. He is now Emeritus Surgeon. He has initiated/been a founding member of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales in Sydney and lectured/published widely on the social, cultural, historical and scriptural aspects of the religion of Zarathushtra.

My long involvement with your Zarathushti settlements scattered over the vast land mass of North America dates back to the time even before FEZANA was formed and firmly consolidated.

Preoccupied far away in a breakneck schedule of life, my early impression, somehow, perhaps intuitively, was that your pulsatile groups showed a certain promise of things to come. This lingering aura of a distant unknown energy seemed to have persisted in my psyche.

Then, one day I received a scribble on a notepaper attached to my FEZANA Journal: “… please perform a jashan in Sydney on …” This was a kind of ‘global hamazor’ to be celebrated from east to west on Sunday, August 29, 1993, commencing at 9 am, in commemoration of the centennial of the Parliament of the World’s Religions [see FJ, Winter 1993]. We were truly joyful in Sydney to be the first to commence the round of the global jashan celebrations.

A total outsider, I offer deep gratitude to the organizers of FEZANA for making me ‘acceptable’ to that once remote and unknown energy. I now have reason to suspect that global consciousness among Zarathushti communities could well become convincingly vitalized much earlier than I would have dreamt.

I am sincerely thankful to the distinguished writers of these articles for their excellent and thoughtful contributions to this theme of “Vegetation on Earth – an Avestan Revelation.” The many articles on the theme by no means encompass all that could be included relative to our social, cultural, historical and scriptural ideals. - Sam Kerr

The Zarathushti book of creation, Bundahishn regards plants and vegetation as the fourth creation of Ahura Mazda, after the heavens, the earth and the waters. So important is the plant kingdom that the Zarathushti creation myth relates the very genesis of mankind through this creation.

In this issue of FEZANA Journal we discuss the Zarathushti perspective on eco-theology and the Avestan imperative for stewardship of nature and the environment. We explore the enduring beauty of plants and gardens, their efficacious nutritional and medicinal qualities and the place of plant life in Zarathushti devotional and ceremonial observances.

The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA, the Journal or the guest editor. Per its editorial policy, FEZANA Journal does not endorse or espouse any specific perspective.
Every aspect of nature is part of a divine scheme of Ideal Order, worthy of respect, to be treated by us with a will to enable it to perform its role in the progression of creation, so that all aspects of creation are made to cooperate toward the goal of perfection.

Considerations of eco-theology are concerned with the place of flora and fauna in the vision of creation of a theology. There, we encounter a set of issues:

- How do we take the world to be a creation of a supernatural creator?
- Are we the entities of creation to be viewed as having some special purpose or function?
- What attitude are members of a tradition expected to adopt towards these entities?

**Divinity.** Different kinds of theologies provide different perspectives on these issues. Archaic polytheistic traditions provide different deities for different entities. Monotheistic traditions naturally ascribe all creation to a single divinity.

In the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, which accept the account of creation as given in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, a single divinity created the world. The world was created as a place where humanity would live. The existence of flora and fauna could be comprehended by their being of utility to human life.

In polytheistic religions the function and status of specific entities in the world depended on the divinities that represented and protected them. And the standing of the divinity depended on the social structure of the pantheon and the alliances and tensions among them. The stories of their relationships were reflected in events on earth and frequently provided explanations of natural phenomena.

**Growth, death and regeneration.** The world of vegetation consisted of grasses of pastureland, cereals and trees yielding fruits and firewood. During the early pastoral period pastures were of major importance. There were divinities of stature to protect them. During the agricultural period human existence depended on the adequate availability of cereals, with a looming threat of harvest failure.

The crucial events of growth and death of vegetation, a concern in every early civilization, called for explanation. There is in Greek mythology an account of this situation—the myth of Demeter and Kore.

The story in brief is this: Demeter, the goddess of earth had a daughter, Kore, the goddess of corn, who was abducted by Hades, the lord of the underworld. Demeter, in a state of deep depression, lost interest in the world, especially the earth’s supportive function for vegetation. Kore’s absence on earth resulted in the absence of cereals. In this dire condition, Zeus was called upon to inter-
vene. Zeus and the gods worked out a compromise: Hades would hold Kore for a certain period each year, and return Kore to her mother for the rest of the year. When Kore emerged from the underworld vegetation flourished, only to die when she was taken back to the underworld. Thus the natural phenomenon of generation, growth and death were explained and the time of harvesting determined by the story.

This myth is particularly significant because not only does it account for the seasonal regeneration of vegetation; it also becomes the paradigm for resurrection myths.

One can look at the emergence of flora and fauna and the evolution of their earlier forms to more complex ones as part of an underlying Order. Even though frustrated from time to time, here and there, evolution marches on hopefully to a scheme of harmony which would be perfection. It is we, humans, who through conscious judgment must participate to bring about this ideal final state, termed the final renovation.

Thus every aspect of nature is part of a divine scheme of Ideal Order, worthy of respect, to be treated by us with a will to enable it to perform its role in the progression of creation, so that all aspects of creation are made to cooperate toward the goal of perfection.

It is interesting to note that various mythologies of plant and animal life disappeared as archaic and non-functional modes of thought. However, the Biblical account of creation by divine command, i.e. pure creative acts of God is still considered by many today as literally true, thus leading to a rejection of the Theory of Evolution from Darwin to its contemporary formulations. This is the main conflict between science and religion in contemporary discussions, especially Fundamentalist Christianity.

Progression of creation. There is another theological vision which may well have originated with Zarathushtra, and that is, the postulation of a principle which underlies existence, in accordance with which creation unfolds. We encounter this notion of ‘orderliness’ in Chinese religious thought as coming from the mandate of heaven; or reconstituted in its dynamical form as the transforming balance between the complementary powers, Yin and Yang. In the Buddhist account, what we call existence would be considered the ephemeral manifestation of causal laws generated by various needs and desires, but ultimately unreal.

Focusing on Zarathushtra’s vision we come to see that the world was conceived to evolve according to a divinity-created ideal principle of Order, it is called Asha, the ultimate Truth. This Order is manifested in nature as well as in society. However, the world we find ourselves in is not an ideal one. That is to be understood by the fact that in the world there are two vectors, one to promote Asha, the other to oppose it. Thus the extraordinary orderliness of existence, as well as the appearance of chaos and disorderliness is accounted for.

It is open to scientific understanding as the revelation of Asha inspiring us to respect this grand design on its path to eventual perfection. 

What must impress anyone is the enormous underlying movement toward increasing organization of complexity in the vast set of possibilities of disorganization. For a believing Zarathushtrian this is a vivid functioning of Asha. Regardless of one’s belief, there is no doubt that there is not, nor can there be, a conflict between science and religion in the enlightened faith of Zarathushtra.

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The word ‘ecology’ meaning ‘the science of the relations between living things and their external world’ was coined in 1866 by the German philosopher and zoologist Ernst Haeckel.
Gardens. The typical walled garden in this ancient Iranian painting depicts closely the Avestan word ‘pairideza’ (‘walled enclosure’) later corrupted to the word ‘paradise.’ It also depicts all the features of a typical Iranian ‘chahaaar baug’ so-called because it has four areas divided by paths with flowering shrub and scrub or narrow water channels in the shape of a cross. This layout has been carried through and symbolized by the ancient concept of the ‘four quarters of the world’ divided by four great rivers.

The walls ensure their private, enclosed nature and the strategic use of shade-giving trees and protective wind breaks (Plane and Ash trees, tall oriental Poplars, native Cypress, Palm, Judas trees, Willows and some exotics) in lateral sunken beds towering over the shrub, afford protection for the delicate plants and refreshment for the visitor.

Sometimes, one central alley is broad with raised walkways flanked by flower beds (perennials, Roses, Lilacs, evergreen Viburnum shrubs, Forsythias) between which are rills and pools, shaded by fruit trees (wild Sour Cherries, Almonds, Pomegranates, Walnuts, vines and Orange groves) and fragrant shrub with masses of colors (Anemone, Muscari, Ranunculi) under-carpeted with Clover and sparkling with spring flower-bulbs (Tulips, Irises, Poppies) nestling under the shade.

At other times, the broad central passageway is occupied with cascading water flowing down a steep gradient having walkways by its sides with orchard trees spread out towards the high walls – an oasis garden.

Occasionally, a garden is fashioned around a natural spring. Water jets and fountains are essentially latter-day (modern) non-Iranian inclusions added during renovations of gardens hundreds of years old.
“Settled pastoralists, Zarathushtra’s people tended cattle, sheep and goats and kept dogs for herding and hunting in the rich grasslands and dense wooded forests. Becoming one with the natural world they saw themselves as custodians as well as dependents.” - Mary Boyce

of all the Creation stories none touches scientific realities in the making (and the unmaking) of life as much as our scriptural concept does. It emphasizes a sacred moral and ethical code that embraces the sanctity of all life. The symbol of the Tree of Life [next page] and the use of its aromatic portions for fire are widely documented.

The righteous and good soul doth offer as fuel for the Fire of Ahura Mazda, only those plants, which bear the sweetest fragrance…

[Vendidad 14.3]

Ahura Mazda’s fourth creation

The sequence of development of life on earth occurred thus: following the sky, the earth and the waters, Ahura Mazda’s fourth creation was plant life, ahead of his fifth (animal) and sixth (human) creations, all ordained to exist until the end of zravaaney daraegeo khadaatey (earth time).

…and Mazda, through righteous acts, created and clothed the bare Earth first with trees and plants…

[Gatha Spenta Mainyu 48.6]

This first life on earth, a green mantle of freshness/flourishing greenery of vegetation (Avestan: varena meaning ‘an exquisite garment’; see also the Gathic words varena and varana) cladding the naked earth, was planned to initiate the life-giving atmospheric capsule of air (our environment with the precise proportion of oxygen, carbon dioxide and nitrogen).

…and the druj shall flee, like an arrow well darted, as hastily as would the previous season’s green freshness covering the Earth.

[Vendidad 9.46]

To the Gothic/Avestan peoples, among the first documented ‘greenies’ on record, all life, not just human life, has a higher destiny. Ahura Mazda’s supreme attribute ameretat (immortality) the protector of such life, thus endowed all vegetation on Earth with the spirit of sacredness and the noble value of its conservation, forever.

Hadokht Nask [XXII.13] quotes the comparative value of regretful actions:

… ridiculing others, encouraging acts of idolatry, withholding charity from the needy, cutting down trees … then, it becomes obligatory to commence chanting the Gathas.

During absolute necessity some clearance was permitted but with strict limits:

In truth, a good Mazdayasnian, well versed in the texts of the scriptures, will fell trees only in one area of 9 lengths of the extended arms within the 4 sides of a square (about 18 square meters).

Vendidad 16.2 adds:

A good Mazdayasnian…he carefully selects areas devoid of plants, trees or sources of firewood during the necessary clearance for a path, passageway or road.

Settled pastoralists, Zarathushtra’s people tended cattle, sheep and goats and kept dogs for herding and hunting in the rich grasslands and dense wooded forests. Becoming one with the natural world they saw themselves as custodians as well as dependents.

Such was their reverence for their planted trees that they named them after noted persons and loved ones:

nameni apo, yazmaide;
nameni urvaro, yazmaide
reverence by name to the Waters;
reverence by name to the Trees

[Fravardin Yasht XIII.79]

The sociology of such co-existence enabled Zarathushtra’s people to recognize the action of the sun’s rays,

Ahura Mazda gave admirable light and heat to the Sun to make the Earth fertile by felicitating the growth of Vegetation and increasing…

[Tir Yash 8.7]

as also of the moon beams – that abundant foliage attracts clouds and, therefore, rain.

When the light of the full Moon shines the attraction of moisture from the waters causes green colored off-shoots to begin to sprout…

[Mah Yash 7.4]

Our Avestan ‘Paradise’ – a blissful haven on earth

To the aesthetically sensitive Iranians, nature and culture have always coalesced in parks, gardens and reserves. The main feature, the surrounding wall, protected their garden against wind and provided blissful seclusion from dust and distraction. The word ‘paradise’ stems from ‘pairi-daeza’ (pairi: ‘surrounding’ and daeza: ‘wall’, i.e. an enclosure surrounded by walls).

Vendidad 3.18 and 5.49 speak of

a walled enclosure covering the allotted ground built by the Mazdayasnians.
Our paradise on earth, the walled garden with its lingering aura of fragrance is a personal world of spiritually blissful reverence in a world of nature’s closeness – an enchanted place to reflect on and enjoy the refreshment of the mind and relaxation of the body.

To the outside world, sadly, the attribute of this blissful paradise has been linked entirely to the Islamic period after 641 CE. The Egyptians did not lay down parks and gardens for commoners, but are credited as the originators based on a painting of trees on a nobleman’s tomb wall in 500 BCE. By 1,000 BCE, Media, the first recognizable Zarathushhti Empire outside the ancestral homeland, recorded the first concept of public parks, botanical gardens and game reserves meant for the enjoyment of all. During Achaemenian times a garden, orchard or park was called pairi-daeza. By 300-400 BCE, this influence spread to Greece and Rome. In his Asian travels, Xenophon (430-354 BCE) studied the aesthetics of gardens. The Greek word ‘paradeisoi’ (as ‘garden’) entered the first Greek Bible. Then, becoming the Garden of Eden, ‘paradise’ was embraced by all three Abrahamic religions.

**Plane Trees.** Socrates (469-399 BCE) first learned of the splendor of allotting one third of the land area to houses and two thirds to trees, orchards and gardens. The modern city of Tehran is still adorned with Plane trees.

**Cypress Trees.** Through the ages, the magnificent Cypress tree (der-aakht-e-sarv) with its luxuriant growth of deep evergreen hue has represented all that is beautiful, majestic and lasting. Initially taken by the Romans to Italy and colonies it has rarely survived even 2000 years in Europe, mainly succumbing to the outside world, sadly, the attribute of this blissful paradise has been linked entirely to the Islamic period after 641 CE. The Egyptians did not lay down parks and gardens for commoners, but are credited as the originators based on a painting of trees on a nobleman’s tomb wall in 500 BCE. By 1,000 BCE, Media, the first recognizable Zarathushhti Empire outside the ancestral homeland, recorded the first concept of public parks, botanical gardens and game reserves meant for the enjoyment of all. During Achaemenian times a garden, orchard or park was called pairi-daeza. By 300-400 BCE, this influence spread to Greece and Rome. In his Asian travels, Xenophon (430-354 BCE) studied the aesthetics of gardens. The Greek word ‘paradeisoi’ (as ‘garden’) entered the first Greek Bible. Then, becoming the Garden of Eden, ‘paradise’ was embraced by all three Abrahamic religions.

**Plane Trees.** Socrates (469-399 BCE) first learned of the splendid of Iranian gardens from Cyrus the rebel prince, younger brother of Artaxerxes II (404-358 BCE). Artaxerxes, after quashing the rebellion and defeating his younger brother paid divine honors to the Plane Trees and even entrusted a commander to nurture the plantation.

Achaemenian documents record the welfare of orchards and wilderness reserves taking precedence over other matters of State. Darius I introduced new foliage, “Plane trees from beyond the Euphrates” into Iran

**Tree of Life.** There are many later paintings and drawings of the Tree of Life, but this tablet (however crude it may appear) is one of the earliest. It is among the original Sumerian cylinder seals and clay tablets excavated circa 2,500 BCE. The tablet is prepared by rolling the seal on wet clay, which is then baked. Once baked the tablet cannot be altered. The original Sumerian (of Indo-Iranian origin) concept was that wisdom is likened to a tree whose fruit endows those who eat it with health and longevity. The symbol of an Elixir of Life had already been well established in antiquity by the Indo-Iranian cultures long before Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other cultures recognized it. This 4,500 year old tablet shows a man and a woman seated below the Tree of Life. Behind the woman one can see the serpent allegedly tempting the woman.

This concept was expurgated in the Bible as the tree of life in the garden of Eden by the Jews and Christians. The Book of Genesis 3.22 mentions such a tree as “the giver of eternal life.”

- Sam Kerr
to a tumorous growth in the main trunk. These tumors have not been observed in Iran and the whole of the eastern classical world.

Nominated ‘Miraas-e-farhangi’- Iran’s National Heritage listing of the Sarv-e-Abarkouh and Sarv-e-Cham are living proof of reverence to plant life. Said to be 4,000 years old they live disease-free in their chemically unpolluted crisp dry desert environment. At their base the devoted village custodians maintain a shrine with a living flame.

**Sensitivity of plant life**

Believing that impulses from the brain are electrical in nature it was presumed that plants have no feeling as they lack human and animal type perceptive consciousness. Nerve impulses, in fact, occur due to chemical changes at the synapses. All life has the ability to perceive, feel and react. The chemical sensitivity of plants has even been attributed to the domain of thought and emotions behaving like other extrasensory perception-class signals.

The fragrance of flowers can alter under differing environmental conditions, as also the diverse aura of people can reflect upon plants near them. Rashna Yasht XII.17 talks of foliage reflecting warmth when nurtured with care. Rashna, yazata of Truth/Justice is called ‘upairi-urvara(m)’ (highly affectionate).

The villagers around Yazd talk of their everlasting affection for their Cypress – “We are attached to it” and “It grows on us.” After Caliph Ja’afar al Mutawaqqil ordered the cutting down of the ‘Sarv-e-Kashmar’ in Khorasan in 861 CE, a strong resolve occurred among Zarathushtri villagers in Iran to plant and nurture a Cypress in every village courtyard to grow “like the tree of Zaradust, taller and more luxuriant than any other in the land of Iran.”

**REFERENCES**

Khordeh Avesta and Vendidad translations from Kavasji Edulji Kanga and Tehmurasp Rustomji Sethna.
The fundamental aspect of any Zarathushtrian devotion is the establishment of connectedness, of oneness or harmony between the physical and the Divine to complete or to make perfect the communion. This is true, from the simplest ritual act of *Padyab-Kushti*, to the most complex liturgy of *Yasna*. A devotee, whether a performing priest or a laity, primarily through ablution carries out physical cleansing, and dawns a tranquil state of mind to create around oneself an environment of sacredness. For the inner liturgical ceremonies a *pavi* (pure space) represents the sacred space.

Afringan flower ritual
Zarathushtrian rituals invariably depict an expression of the doctrinal information embedded in the scriptures. For example the flower exchange ceremony that one has so frequently observed, during the *afringan (jashan) ceremony*, has deep theological implications. The flowers arranged in two rows imply the concept of cosmic duality of the two existence: *mainyava* (Pah. *menog*) – the celestial or spiritual, and the *gaithaya* (Pah. *getig*) – the physical or terrestrial, world.

During the ritual the principal clergy *zaotar* and his associate *raspi* assume the representation of the spiritual and the corporeal existence respectively, with the sacred fire in the middle as an embodiment of Ahura Mazda. The exchange of flowers with the words of “*athe zamyat*...” between the two priests, implies an interchange or an interaction between the two spheres of existence.

The most climactic moment of the afringan ritual is the gathering by the *zaotar*, the three flowers of the vertical row. First it is done in descending order from the right, and second time in ascending order from the left row. Each time, the flowers are handed to the *raspi*. The descending and ascending order of picking the flowers is believed to depict the two-way transport of the righteous souls. The souls, after their righteous earthly existence, that have returned to their spiritual abode, are glorified here. This enactment is carried out during the recital of the *humatanam* prayer. It is here that we see the two priests
holding *paiwand* (linking hands) with each other, and the rasp in contact with the spiritual entity, the consecrated Fire with one hand. This is an expression of the oneness or harmony of the two complements of creation in communion with Ahura Mazda. That is the moment that epitomizes the fulfillment of the synergy and realization of harmony between the physical experience and the spiritual reality for the ritual. These intonations when recited fervently emanate divine brilliance to the participating congregation, pulling them into the sphere of reality of existential spirituality.

**Inner liturgies**

The most central of the entire inner liturgical sacrament is the *yasna ceremony*. The term ‘*yasna*’ is derived from the Avestan root *yaz* or the Sanskrit root *yaj* meaning ‘to worship/praise’. There are two major parts to this ritual. The first part is the *paragna* ritual which by definition precedes the *yasna* proper. The Avestan root *para* meaning before or what precedes, and the Sanskrit *yagna* analogous to Avestan *yasna*, meaning worship).

**The paragna ceremony** is a ritual that involves an elaborate process of consecrating a number of apparatus, including metal utensils, collectively known as ‘*alat*’. In addition, the ritual elaborates rites to purify and consecrate the requisites, originating from the animal and plant kingdom, that are essential for the *yasna* ritual.

Articles derived from the plant kingdom are the *Barsam*, the *Urvaram* (plant, represented by the Pomegranate) and *Aiwiyaonghan* (Date Palm twigs).

The word *Barsam* is derived from the Avestan word *baresman* which comes from the root *barez* (‘to grow’). In earlier times Barsam was prepared from the twigs of any suitable plant [*J. J. Modi*, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees,* p. 261 and SLS ch. XIV.2]. *Yasna [XXV3]* appears to associate Barsam with the twigs of the *Haoma* plant.

**Soma, Haoma and the Ephedra plant.** *Soma* or *Haoma* juice is extracted from the twigs of the *Ephedra plant*, *Ephedra vulgaris* [Rich.] of the *Gnetaceae* botanical family. It was known not only to the ancient Aryans, but also to the Persians and the Chinese. The latter called it ‘*Ma Huang*.’ It’s medicinal properties were well known in Ayurvedic and Chinese herbal remedies. It was treasured for treating allergy, asthma, cold, cough, diarrhea, fevers, hay fever, headache, malaria and rheumatism. The medicinal property is attributed to the alkaloid, Ephedrine, which produces central nervous system stimulation, peripheral vasoconstriction and elevation in the blood pressure. It is also known to help in maintaining oxygen supply to the brain at high altitudes (by increasing the number of red corpuscles in the blood).

**Barsam or Tamarisk plant.** Another plant used in rituals, perhaps when twigs of Ephedra are not available is the *Barsam* (or *Tamarisk* of the *Tamaricaceae* family). The twigs are tied in bundles during the ceremony. In ancient Iran, the Tamarisk [*Tamarix aphylla* (L.) Karsten] bush was used to form this bundle, and it was bound with a slender strip of bark from the Mulberry tree. Prof. A. V. Williams Jackson, while traveling in Iran in 1903, mentions the large Tamarisk bush from which the twigs were cut by Zarathushhti priests for use in the religious ceremony [*A. V. W. Jackson, “Persia Past and Present*].


**Dadestan-I-Dinik [Sacred Books of the East XVIII, p. 165]** refers to Barsam as “vegetable sacred twigs.” According to Darmesteter in ancient times the twigs could have been of the Pomegranate, Date, Tamarind or any tree, plucked with ceremonial observances [Sacred Books of the East V. p. 22]. Since the exodus of Zarathushhti to India, the use of plant twigs as Barsam was modified and replaced with metal wires.

The number of twigs or wires used varies with different ceremonies. During the performance of the *yasna* ritual, a bundle of 21 twigs/wires is tied together with a cord made from Date Palm leaves and is supported on a crescent shaped stand called *mahru* (‘moon face’). The number 21 relates to the 21 words of *Ahuna Vairya* and in turn commands the reverence of the original 21 *nasks* of the Zarathushtrian scripture.

In the ritual, the barsom symbolically serves as a channel through which the material creation *getig* unifies with the spiritual realm of *menog*. It
also symbolizes homage to the creation of the plant kingdom. To a question addressed to Ahura Mazda [Vendidad XIX, 18, 19]: “How shall we further the creation?” the Divinity responds “Go towards that tree that is beautiful, high growing … let the faithful man cut a twig of Barsam…”

**Date Palm leaf and Pomegranate.** Accordingly, the ceremony for collecting the **Date Palm leaf** (Awiya-onghan) and **Pomegranate twigs** (urvaram) is performed by a priest with the highest order of ritual purity.

“... The Date Palm tree historically has been recognized as a tree of life, and an emblem of immortality.”

The Date Palm tree has historically [Modi, ibid, p. 273] been recognized as a tree of life, and an emblem of immortality. For the ceremonial collection of the Date Palm leaf the priest enters the yard with a pot of consecrated water and a knife. After selecting a leaf, the priest makes pav (pure) his hand and knife with the consecrated water, reciting the holy mantra, cuts the leaf carefully, washes it one more time, puts it into the pot of water and returns to the sacred space of yasna-gah. Here the leaf is cut into three narrow strips and braided into a cord, with the loose ends tied to prevent unraveling.

The Date Palm cord is now ready for tying the barsom. Tying of the cord around Barsam is a symbolic gesture that portrays unification or oneness of creation. This is also analogous to the tying of the kushti which is a symbolic circle that unites those who wear it [Modi, ibid, p. 275].

The term urvaram is derived from Avestan urvara (the tree). The Pomegranate tree has been held sacred by the Babylonians. Traditionally in Middle Eastern culture the Pomegranate is accepted as the symbol of fertility and fecundity in nature, and an emblem of prosperity [Modi, ibid, p. 276-277].

Pomegranate leaves are traditionally chewed by the candidate to affect ritual purification of mind and body, during the sade nahn before the navzote ritual. The ritual for collection of Pomegranate twigs is analogous to that for the Date Palm leaves. These twigs are collected traditionally for the explicit purpose of preparation of parahaoma a preparation that is a mix of consecrated water, crushed twigs of Pomegranate and of Haoma plants.

**The Haoma ritual.** This brings us to one of the most controversial and debated ritual that forms the central sacrament of the yasna: the Haoma ritual. The Haoma plant has a checkered history. Although the original identity of the plant has been obliterated through antiquity, the plant is generally regarded as one of the ephedra species.

It is clearly evident from the Haoma Yasht that the consecration of Haoma is a pre-Zarathushtrian ritual. However history has evolved it as a central sacrament in Zarathushtrian traditional ritual. Twigs of the Haoma plant are ceremonially consecrated for use in the preparation of parahaoma. It is the enactment of straining of the crushed Haoma and the Pomegranate twigs with consecrated water that constitutes the ritual of parahaoma.

The vegetable kingdom, per the myth of the later tradition [Bundahishn (BTA) VID, 1-6 and Zad-sparam VI] originated when Ameretat pounded a dried plant, mixed it with water, and Tishtar rained the water on earth to sprout a hundred thousand species. This first animate creation of the Wise Lord thus continues to play a central role in Zarathushtrian ritual and justifies its crucial presence in Creation as a whole.

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Gardens have the potential to satisfy nine basic human needs (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, freedom) across four existential states (being, having, doing and interacting).

- Mike Steven, Lecturer in Landscape Studies University of Western Sydney, Australia
Fruits, flowers, grains, plants – are of special significance in Zarathushti customs and ceremonies. They are symbolic of all that is good and all that we wish to shower as blessings on our loved ones.

The use of plant life – fresh flowers, fruits and leaves in household and religious ceremonies has been traditional in many cultures from ancient times. The elaborate Japanese tea ceremony, known as chanoyu, is based on the belief that tea was spiritually linked to peaceful ideals promoted by Buddhism. The Hindu ritual of puja incorporates bhog or offerings to the divinities of flowers, fruits, and cooked food. From using a drink made from the Haoma plant to chewing Pomegranate leaves during the navjote ritual, different parts of plants have played an integral role in pre-Zarathushti rituals too.

Over the centuries, plants have grown to represent all that is good and all that we wish for in our lives. If we were to single out one practice, each celebrating the symbolic use of plants in the two cultural traditions of the Zarathushtis, it would be the Haft-Seen table in Iran and the Ses ritual on the Indian subcontinent.

Haft-Seen table. For Iranians, the Nouruz celebration centers on the Haft-Seen table [photo above] displaying seven items, each beginning with the Persian letter ‘S’ (seen).

- **Sabzeh** (sprouts) represents prosperity. From Peshdadian times, twenty days before the coming of Spring, 12 pillars of clay were built and on each of these was grown one of the 10 grains – wheat, oat, rice, beans, lentils, millets, lima beans, peas, and sesame seeds. On the sixth day after the vernal equinox, the greens were harvested and distributed to the people as a sign of abundance.
- **Senjed** (the sweet, dry fruit of the Lotus family) represents love since the aroma of its leaves and its blossoms was said to cause love to bloom. The elders obviously shared Tennyson’s sentiment that a young man’s fancy turns to thoughts of love in spring.
- **Seeb** (Apple) represents health, beauty and fertility. In ancient times, apples were split in two, and each half was given to the groom and to the bride to prevent infertility and sterility. So far the Nouruz table represents prosperity, love and good health. What else can one ask for?
- **Samanu** (a pudding from sprouted wheat) represents growth.
- **Seer** (garlic) stands for healing power.
- **Serkeh** (vinegar) symbolizes patience.
- **Somagh** (Sumac) symbolizes the spice of life.
- **Sonbol** (Hyacinth) represents Spring and rejuvenation.

Sagan ni Ses. On the Indian subcontinent an auspicious occasion would be incomplete without the ses ritual. The Gujarati word ‘sagan’ (Pah. shogoun) means ‘auspicious blessing’. It is a tray (usually of silver) containing symbolic representations for the blessings.

Although some ideas are carried forward from Iranian tradition, like the paro, much of the ritual is from Hindu belief. The paro, a hollow metal cone containing rock sugar (sakar) and dried dates symbolizes a ‘mountain of sweetness.’ In Iran, a cone of crystalline sugar covered with green silver-foil (khand e sabz) is used instead, but in the scorching
symbolize sweetness and dried dates (khajoor) symbolize resilience. Another essential of the ses is the coconut, considered auspicious on occasions like weddings, festivals, a welcome or at the start of any new venture or for a new house or car, because every part of its tree – the trunk, leaves, fruit, sweet water and coir – are useful. The coconut thus possesses multiple symbolisms from versatility and resourcefulness to a representation of the inner and outer world.

Each item on the Achoo Michoo ceremonial tray [photo above] has a significance to ward off evil. The pan, sopari, coconut, dates and rice, along with an egg for fertility and a cup of water or coconut symbolizing purity are rotated over the head and then discarded – getting rid of evil omens, as it were.

During the madav saro ceremony performed before the wedding by the families of the bride and groom, these same standards are mixed, along with gems and silver, in the soil in which a mango sapling is planted. This reinforces the idea that plants represent the virtues we wish to shower as blessings on our loved ones.

Flowers are intrinsic to special occasions too, from the navjote initiation to the Muktd or Fravardegan ceremonies for the remembrance of departed souls [see photo above]. The bride and groom wear elaborate garlands and carry bouquets of flowers at the wedding ceremony. There is a romantic language of flowers associated with bridal bouquets; for instance red roses denote love, orange blossoms denote fidelity.

Parsis also hang garlands (torans) made of mango leaves, marigolds or
In his royal proclamation Darius the Great called upon Ahura Mazda to bless his land and to deliver it from three ever-present menaces: lies, external aggression and drought. Realizing the importance of agriculture as a corner stone of civilization and human progress he focused on promoting it throughout his empire.

Feat of engineering
Darius promoted a system of underground irrigation canals – qanats, so devised as to turn the arid Iranian plateau into the breadbasket of the world. The energy and birth of Spring, the growth and contentment of Summer, the wisdom to let go of leaves in the Fall, the rest and quiet renewal of Winter - Ilan Shamir, National Speakers Association, National Association for Interpretation National Story-telling Network

Darius promoted a system of underground irrigation canals – qanats, so devised as to turn the arid Iranian plateau into the breadbasket of the world. By this ingenious feat of engineering was contrived to move and deliver the water to the middle of arid land often hundreds of miles away from its source, with minimum loss to evaporation in the hot desert-like climate.

To this day the landscape of eastern Near East is dotted with these ancient qanats, bearing witness to the importance Zarathushtis and Iranians gave to nurturing Mother Earth by turning it green and keeping it fertile and agriculture-rich [1].

Transplanting agricultural products
Darius and his successors were also instrumental in having agricultural products native to one part of the empire planted in other parts. This helped to diversify and improve local agriculture products. Alfalfa, abundant in Media (western Iran) was successfully taken and planted in other parts.

Advice from a tree
Stand tall and proud
Sink your roots deeply into the earth
Reflect the light of a greater source
Think long term
Go out on a limb
Remember your place among all living beings
Embrace with joy the changing seasons, for each yields its own abundance:
The energy and birth of Spring
The growth and contentment of Summer
The Wisdom to let go of leaves in the Fall
The rest and quiet renewal of Winter

Farishta Marzban Dinshaw
was born in Karachi. She was the editor of Funlife, Pakistan’s first English magazine for children, until she migrated to Canada in 2001. She has co-authored handbooks for teachers and has taught Zarathushtrian religion classes to children. She is a recipient of the Eve Bunting scholarship awarded by the Highlights Foundation for writing for children program at Chautauqua, USA.

nurturing mother earth
a Zarathushtrian pre-occupation
by Mehrborzin Soroushian

Above, raw fruit of the walnut tree. [Photo by Peter Anderson, “The Royal Horticultural Society - Fruit and Vegetable Gardening in Australia,” courtesy Sam Kerr]
Now that thou art overlord of whatever thou wilt survey, pray ask thy officials to travel the length and width of this, my land. Perchance, they are at all able to locate a single vast stretch of earth that is not green and fertile, grant me the privilege, O Lord, of turning it into lush agricultural soil.”

The Sasanians, like the Parthians and the Achaemenians before them, so valued innovation and produce that they offered annual awards of excellence in agriculture.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, those Zarathushtis allowed to live in Yazd, Kerman and those in villages set the unique precedence of planting and nurturing fruit trees in their backyards. They also initiated the dry fruit trade exposing excess fruit in the court yards and roof tops to the sun for use during the winter months or for functions and gatherings. Often, the fruits grown by Zarathushtis villages were of much superior quality and, therefore, prefaced by the title ‘Shah,” e.g. Shah golabee (King pear). Following liberalization in the early 20th century, the miniscule Zarathushti community of Yazd and Kerman, finding a more tolerant and fair environment, emerged as outstanding agriculturalists, totally out of proportion to their small numbers.

The majestic Cypress was one tree that could be found in most Zarathushti households. Its characteristic evergreen foliage, longevity and endurance under harsh natural conditions must have served as a symbolic and emotional source of inspiration to Zarathushti lady (note two afargans on the wall) by wind tower in the village of Cham. The vents carry cooling winds down to the water channels beneath. [PHOTO ROSHAN RIVETNA]

Diagram of a typical qanat system.
the Zarathushtis of Iran in their silent endurance of life under very difficult conditions imposed on them.

In Iran, even now, on auspicious occasions, symbolic gestures of heartfelt cordiality and solidarity are shared between Zarathushtis with the simple exchange of a small branch of the Cypress.

After the passage of so many centuries from the time of Darius the Great, whose qanat system has continued to be in use, the pioneering of the new system of irrigation in 20th century Iran led by another Zarathushti, Dr. Esfandiar Yeganegi is indeed, noble and noteworthy [3].

I Dr. Mehrborzin Soroushian was born in Kerman, Iran and attended the Kaviani and Iranshahr Zoroastrian grade and high school. He obtained the BSc from London University, MSc and PhD. from University of California, Los Angeles. Mehrborzin and his wife, Mehrbanou and their two sons live in San Diego. He is a co-founder of the web-journal of Zoroastrian heritage, www.vohuman.org

Floral dresses. In Iran, Zarathushtis, Kurds and the tribal nomadic peoples are fond of wearing colored dresses adorned with floral (usually roses) designs and bright colored patterns. They call it the ‘Happy Dress.’ Orthodox persons tend to wear mainly the traditional, dull grey monotone or black dress. In spite of their underprivileged and dispossessed social status, their dresses continue to embody their zest and their innate spirit of life – that of positivity and joyfulness unto themselves and that of offering bliss to others. The vibrant, radiant blush of colorful blossoms and patterns seems to invigorate their inherent vibrant energy, too.

[Photo by N. Kasraian, “Our Homeland Iran” published by Sekeh Press, Iran, 1990, courtesy Sam Kerr]
The aromatic resins, Frankincense and Myrrh were once highly prized all along the Silk Road for their religious, cosmetic and medicinal values. The Biblical Three Wise Men, who traveled to Bethlehem from Kashan in Persia to greet the infant Jesus were said to have brought gold, Frankincense and Myrrh as gifts. Around 1200 BC the domestication of the camel led to a complex trade network from remote valleys to the market-places where sheiks, kings and emperors vied for the finest grades of these two priceless resins.

Frankincense
Frankincense is obtained from the leafy forest tree, *Boswellia thurifera* Roxb. Ex. Flem (family Burseraceae). Other species of *Boswellia* including *B. sacra* (Arabia), *B. papyrifera* (tropical northeastern Africa), *B. frereana* (Somalia), and *B. serrata* (India) produce a type of oleo-gum-resin, which is exploited commercially as Frankincense.

It is procured by making a longitudinal incision in the trunk of the tree, below which a narrow strip of bark five inches in length is peeled off. When the milk-like juice exudes and hardens by exposure to the air the incision is deepened. In about three months the resin has attained the required degree of consistency, hardening into yellowish large, clear globules. Between May and the end of September these globules are scraped off into baskets. The inferior quality sap that had run down the trunk is collected separately.

**Loban.** The Arabs used the milky sap of the tree and called it ‘*al lubán*’ (Arabic for ‘milk yogurt’), which became Anglicized to *olibanum*, the common English name for Frankincense. The best fragrant Frankincense *oleoresin* comes from the remote Dhofari region of Oman.

According to Herodotus, 1,000 talents weight of Frankincense was brought as annual tribute by the Arabs to King Darius I. The same amount was offered to the divinity Bel on the great altar of Temples in Babylon and Bel during the annual feast of Bel.

The Zarathushtis of Iran and the Indian subcontinent have, to this day, preserved the ritual of incense burning by sprinkling a little loban on their coal and Sandalwood fire urn.

**Frankincense oil.** Derived from *Boswellia sacra*, and *B. carteri*, *B. serrata*, and *B. frereana*, Frankincense oil is a pale yellow/amber liquid displaying a tangy-fresh, sparkling odor like pine-lemon. The characteristic bouquet is dependent on the species from which the oil was distilled, the method and time of distillation. Although used as a medicine in the past, its principal use today is as incense and pastilles.
Myrrh

Myrrh is a yellowish to reddish brown aromatic gum resin with a bitter, slightly pungent taste obtained from a tree (especially Commiphora abyssinica Engl. of the botanical family Burseraceae) traditionally of north eastern Africa and southern Arabia origin.

The word is derived from Arabic/Hebrew murr or maror meaning ‘bitter.’

It was first recognized in about 1822 at Ghizan, a barren, dry district on the Red Sea coast. Found in the Middle East, India and northeast Asia, the growth varies from a shrub of 5 to 9 feet, to a tree of 15 feet. Its knotted branches stand out at right-angles and end in a sharp spine. The leaves are musty smelling and its flowers white. The trifolate leaves are scanty, small and of unequal oval shape.

Uses of Myrrh. Myrrh oil is extracted from the trunk, stem and branches by steam distillation. It blends well with Juniper, Cypress, Lavender, Frankincense, Tea tree and Vetiver oil. It is used widely in aroma therapy. Its healing qualities make it an antiseptic, deodorant, stimulant and fungicidal agent.

In ancient times Myrrh was used by many cultures for religious ceremonies. The Egyptians used it in their worshipping rituals, for making the embalming fluids and for fumigation of dead bodies before mummification. Myrrh pellets were used to rid homes of fleas. It was an essential part of the combat gear of Greek warriors for its extremely high antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties to help clean wounds, prevent infection and spread of gangrene in infected parts. The oil, incense and perfumes have been used in Jewish religious rites from remote ages.

Sandalwood

Sandalwood, Santalum album L., belongs to the botanical family Santalaceae. Twenty to thirty feet tall, it bears opposing slender drooping branches and smooth grey-brown bark. As the tree grows the essential oil develops over 15 to 20 years in the roots and in the dark heartwood, which is covered over by the outer sapwood. It takes 60 to 80 years for the center of the slender trunk (the heart wood) to achieve its greatest oil content when the tree reaches its full maturity.

Herbalists have used it as a remedy for infections, including leprosy and syphilis, for the relief of bad breath, dental caries and gum disease. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is used to treat bleeding disorders, wounds and ulcerative and eruptive skin diseases.
Sandwich Islands, Western Australia, Vietnam and New Caledonia. The Indian government has made an attempt to curb its possible extinction by trying to limit Sandalwood exportation. Its uprooting and removal is prohibited whether on private or temple grounds until it is thirty years old. Continuing poaching and smuggling of this prized commodity have created socio-economic and law and order problems in areas bordering Tamil Nadu.

Pieces and chips of Sandalwood are burned as incense and offerings to the sacred fire in Zarathushti temples in Iran and on the Indian subcontinent. The oil distilled from the wood shavings (60 kg. of oil per ton of heartwood) is used in the formulation of perfumes, lotions, soap and candles. It is used in folk medicine as a paste to smoothen the skin complexion and clear rashes. It is dabbed on the forehead during religious ceremonies.

**FOR FURTHER READING:**


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**Dr. Ardeshr B. Damania** did his higher education at the University of Bombay and the University of Birmingham, England. During his early career with the FAO, Rome, he traveled to many parts of the world. Later, he joined the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Aleppo, Syria. He is currently Associate Research Geneticist, Genetic Resources Conservation Program, University of California, at Davis. His research interests include biodiversity conservation, early agriculture, crop domestication and plants of economic and medicinal importance.
The Pomegranate is one of the oldest fruits consumed by humans. Often mentioned in folklore and mythology, it has cultural and religious significance in many civilizations. Its medicinal uses are legendary.

The Pomegranate (Punica granatum, Punicaceae) is the traditional fruit of the central Iranian plateau where it originated. It is also one of the most ancient fruit trees to be domesticated and is known to have been grown in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Its cultivation became naturalized over the whole Mediterranean region from ancient times.

The field gene bank maintained by the Seed and Plant Improvement Institute (SPII) at Yazd, in central Iran, has over 700 different types of trees, some of which date back to antiquity. Its only related species in the wild is P. protopunica, which is endemic to the island of Socotra (Yemen) in the Indian Ocean. It is now widely cultivated in Iran, India and the drier parts of south-east Asia, Malaya, the East Indies and tropical Africa.

The tree was introduced into California by Spanish settlers in 1769. In the US it is grown for its fruits mainly in the drier parts of California and Arizona.

Cultural significance. In Iran, where it is grown in the central courtyard of Zarathushhti homes, the Pomegranate tree has cultural significance. It signifies immortality, fertility or reproductive energy. Its flower-bud is included in Zarathushhti religious rites. During the navjote and marriage ceremonies, a few danas (seeds) of the Pomegranate fruit are included in the ceremonial ses. The child whose navjote is to be performed is asked to chew a Pomegranate leaf, after the purification bath.

It is said that a dying Zarathushti in ancient Iran was given a few sips of the Haoma juice. If Haoma was not available, Pomegranate juice was given instead. Even after death a few grains of the Pomegranate fruit are placed in the person’s mouth.

Medicinal value. There is no fruit crop that has a higher medicinal value than the Pomegranate.

The fresh fruit juice, an excellent cooling beverage, also alleviates thirst during fevers and sickness. It tones up the function of the liver, heart and kidneys. It supplies the required minerals and helps the liver to store vitamin A. It increases the body’s resistance against infections, particularly tuberculosis. The fruit features prominently in Ayurvedic medicine.

The juice is of great value in gastrointestinal disorders. As an appetizer and a digestive agent it is useful in colitis with excessive mucous. An astringent, it binds the stools and tones up the intestines. A tablespoonful with equal quantity of honey gives beneficial results in bilious vomiting i.e., bile containing fluid and nausea, burning in chest due to excessive secretion of bile, flatulent
colic and morning sickness. The bark may be used as a very strong purgative but has several side-effects.

Its astringent properties causing cells to shrink make it a valuable medication for diarrhea and dysentery. If the patient develops dehydration due to profuse purging as little as 50 ml. of Pomegranate juice allays the symptoms by controlling the diarrhea and also blood with stools. The flower buds being mildly astringent are useful in chronic diarrhea and dysentery in children.

The bark, both of the root and the stems has anthelmintic properties of destroying parasitic intestinal worms. The root-bark is preferred as it contains a greater quantity of alkaloid punicine, lethal to tapeworms. The cold decoction of the fresh bark (90 to 180 ml for adults and 30 to 60 ml for children) given three times every hour to an adult followed by a purgative after the last dose kills and expels the worms.

The juice of the fruit with a little saffron added is useful in fevers to allay thirst. A sherbet of the ripe fruit is beneficial in the treatment of typhus, gastric and asthmatic fevers. The root bark is also given as a febrifuge to allay fevers.

The skin of the Pomegranate fruit is considered highly beneficial in the treatment of perineal itching resulting from poor hygiene or worm infestation. The skin of the fruit is roasted until it is brittle and black. Its powder is mixed with a little vegetable oil and applied as an emollient.

The seeds of sour and sweet Pomegranate are useful as a remedy to dissolve gravel in kidneys and bladder. A tablespoonful of seeds, ground to a fine paste is administered with a cupful of horse-ram soup.

Powder of the dry rind mixed with pepper and common salt is applied as a very good dentifrice as toothpaste or powder. Its regular application strengthens the gum, stops bleeding, prevents pyorrhea, cleans the teeth and strengthens the crowns.

Conclusion

The Pomegranate is one of the oldest fruits consumed by humans. Its medicinal uses are legendary. Its domestication and cultivation was concentrated in Iran around the town of Yazd, where Zarathushitis congregated after the fall of the Sasanian Empire in 641 CE.

As the fruit, leaves and flowers of the tree are included in Zarathushhti religious ceremonies, the tree is grown within the open spaces in every Zarathushhti home in Iran and in the gardens of Zarathushhti fire-temples and shrines. The Pomegranate is mentioned in folklore and mythology. In recent years, researchers are finding new medicinal uses for this very ancient fruit.

Dr. Damania’s profile is on page 70.

The therapeutic actions of many herbal plants have been recognized from Avestan times. In the Vendidad [20.1-14] herbal plants known for “keeping sickness afar” are praised. Various parts were used fresh or as moistened pulps, extracts, boiled decoctions, or oil extracts, for rubbing on the skin, incense for inhalation, granules or powders. Their beneficial effects were of such high esteem that they were later ritually consecrated and entered liturgy.

Plants in the Avesta

A plant or flower was assigned to Ahura Mazda and each of his divine attributes and later to the thirty days of the month [1], [2]. To this day, seven plants and flowers representing Ahura Mazda and the Amesha Spentas decorate the Nouruz ‘haft chin’ (‘seven items from plant life’) table, which was later called the ‘haft seen’ (seven items beginning with the letter ‘seen’ or ‘S’) table.

To Ahura Mazda was assigned myrt-hous (Av: mourtah, Pers: mourd containing Niaolucie); to Ameretat, iris (containing aromatic oil); to Mithra or Mehr, mandragore (Av: mithro-gia, Pers: mehrgiah, containing Belladona); to Sraosha, solace (containing atropine); to Ashtad, opi-ace (containing morphine); to Zamyad, Haoma (Ephedra Vulgaris), a small plant with yellow flowers
During Avestan times, the beneficial effects of herbal plants put them in such high esteem that they were later, ritually consecrated and entered liturgy.


The merits of garlic (Pers. seer) and Rue (Pers. sedab) in lowering cholesterol, reducing blood pressure, combating heart disease and in treating infections, were well known to the Avestans.

The Hebrew Talmud recommended no tax be imposed on Rue, a healing agent.

The Parthian king, Mithradates (132-62 BCE) using a preventative antidote formula, a form of ‘antitoxin therapy’ imbibed non-toxic doses of Rue as the primary ingredient with opium, aconite and other poisons. Rue was used for earache, joint pains and shaking fits of ague. To thwart plague, it was strewn around the house to deter fleas.

Avicenna (980-1,037 CE) recommended a mixture of Frankincense and Rue to be rubbed on the forehead for some types of headaches [4]. It is still used to relieve gout, rheumatic pain, palpitation, stomach disorder, dizziness, tension headache, cough, to regulate menstrual cycle and eliminate intestinal worms.

Since the extract from the hemp seeds of Canabis Indica (Av: bhangh, Pers: shahdaneh; Sanskrit: bhanga) [5], [6] has hallucinating effects, it was used mixed with wine for anaesthesia in ancient Iran [7].

Frankincense (Av: vohugaona, Pah: hugvan, Pers: kondor) contains benzoid and was used for inhalation therapy.


It is interesting to note that the Avestan word ‘paiti,’ used as a prefix with plants meant ‘against’ toxins (antidotes) [9]. Some ancient Iranian plants, still prescribed are Borage (Pers: gavzaban), Sweet Marjoram (Pers: marzangoosh) and Chicory (Pers: kassni).

Medical schools and scholars – some milestones
Our homeland. Fravardin Yasht [XIII.97] mentions Saena, (son of Ahum-stuta known for having hundreds of disciples) founded the School of Ekbatana. Later, Plutarch (45-125 CE) confirmed that “hundreds of pupils studied philosophy, astronomy, medicine and geography there.”

Thrita [Vendidad 20:2] was said to be skillful in healing wounds, offering medications to combat illness, fevers, treating snakebites and in prophylactic medicine. Fravardin Yasht [XIII.131] refers to Fereydoon, son of Atbeen of the Athawyan family and to Yima [XIII.130] as being able to recognize and treat skin, bone and dental diseases.

Media. Early in the establishment of the Median Empire in 715 BCE, the founder Dai-akku (Gk: Deioce) and mobed-physicians founded the second Ekbatana University. For the first time graduates had to obtain a license to practice medicine.

Achaemenid times. Darius the Great (522-486 BCE) founded and financed the Saiis School of Medicine in Egypt. An Egyptian, Ujahorus was appointed director [10]. Among the physicians, philosophers and scientists who taught there was the Persian mobed-mathematician, Ostanes [11]. Universities were also recorded at Borsipha, Arshoi and Miltius with Academies of Science in Ekbatana and in Sardis.

Parthian era (247 BCE-224 CE). Major inscriptions or monuments, records of arts, literature and generally significant documents are, somehow, conspicuous by their absence. Yet practical medical knowledge and
expertise was carried through into Sasanian times.

**Sasanian era (224-641 CE).** In 250 CE Shahpur I founded the **University of Gondishapour** attended by scholars and students from distant lands.

During the reign of Khusrow I, the great Anoushiravan-e-Adil (531-579 CE), seven scientists from the Roman Empire were given asylum in Iran and assigned to university posts. This was the glorious era of Gondishapur University where medical science, anatomy, dentistry, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, military commandery, architecture, craftsmanship, agriculture and irrigation flourished. Its library had 400,000 books and 25 halls on eight floors.

The Gondishapour hospital was part of the teaching university complex. There were outpatient and inpatient facilities and the best pharmacy of its time.

A medical conference, a great first world event attended by hundreds of scholars, mobed-physicians and mobeds from various countries, was convened in 550 CE in Ctesiphon under the patronage of Khusrow I, as mentioned by Ferdowsi in the Shah Nameh [13].

**Arab destruction.** The destruction perpetrated by Arab invasions has left only a few documented names (from among hundreds) of Iranian mobed-physicians [15].

**Borzoya** was sent to India from where he brought medical and scientific books, herbal plants and the game of chess. He invited Indian physicians to Iran. **Mobed Khordad Barzin** was invited to China to treat the daughter of the queen. **Mobed Bakhtafarid** was a scholar of Avesta and Pahlavi. **Saroshiyar Bavand** was a noted scholar. **Jabrail Syriani** was one of the professors and founders of the Gondishapour hospital. **Tribunos,** was the personal physician of Khusrow I, and also a professor in Gondishapur [14].

**REFERENCES**


**Daryoush Jahanian, MD,** was born in Tehran. He lives with his wife Mahindokht and two sons, in Kansas, where he practices obstetrics/gynaecology. Dr. Jahanian is founder/president of the Fravahar Zoroastrian Youth Organization in Tehran, trustee/president of the Rustam Guiv Trust, California, and founder/president of the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas. He has lectured widely in conferences, congresses and interfaith organizations and is the author of “The Zoroastrian Doctrine and Biblical Connections.”

**Herbal remedies**

Briefly described are some common herbs used medicinally and as preventative for optimum health. You will recognize many being used medicinally to relieve common symptoms. Found in common supplements, as part of whole foods, food supplements, herbal teas and topical applications they are vital to health maintenance, primarily due to their antioxidant, immune enhancing and stress relieving effects.

The benefits of *echinacea* for its immune boosting activity against colds and flu are well known. *Blueberry* or blueberry as it is commonly known is a favorite in helping to halt or prevent macular degeneration. You will recognize *chamomile* as a traditional remedy for stress, anxiety and insomnia. *Green tea* is another favorite used extensively to combat mental fatigue and may lower the risk of many cancers.

*Willow bark* is the natural aspirin and is known to relieve pain especially headache, backache and toothaches. *Valerian* root, the natural Valium, is known to act as a sedative and also improve circulation. *Ginseng* is another well-known herb for its adaptogenic properties.
Herbs are used medicinally and as preventatives for optimum health. As part of whole foods, food supplements, herbal teas and topical applications, they are vital to health maintenance.

roots are used to strengthen the adrenal and reproductive glands, enhance immune function, boost energy and relieve stress.

Cinnamon, ginger, garlic, turmeric and cayenne are favorites in flavoring foods, and for good reason. Cinnamon is useful in digestive problems, diabetes and weight loss. Ginger root is an antioxidant, which cleanses the colon and aids in circulatory problems. Garlic is a potent detoxifier, enhances immune function and is good for virtually any disease or infection. Turmeric has many properties, including protecting the liver against many toxins, antibiotic, anticancer and anti-inflammatory effects. Cayenne or red pepper aids digestion, improves circulation and acts as a catalyst for other herbs.

Common herbs found in food preparation are rosemary, thyme and sage. Rosemary leaves help to fight bacteria, relax the stomach and stimulate circulation and digestion. Thyme is effective in reducing fever, headaches and respiratory problems. Sage leaves stimulate the central nervous system and digestive tract and also have estrogenic effects.

Another more and more common antioxidant herbal extract is grape seed extract. This herb strengthens and repairs connective tissue, including that of the cardiovascular system, and moderates allergic and inflammatory responses. Ginkgo Biloba is another fairly well known herb for its antioxidant activities especially its ability to enhance circulation and aid in mental functioning.

Aloe Vera used for skin disorders also heals burns and wounds and stimulates cell regeneration. Aloe Vera can also be taken internally to soothe stomach irritation and aid in healing. Calendula flowers are another natural anti-inflammatory and skin soother aiding in rashes and sunburn. Cloves have antiseptic properties and their essential oil is applied topi-
cally for relief of mouth pain. *Eucalyptus oil* has a mild antiseptic action and reduces swelling by increasing blood flow and is useful in colds, coughs and other respiratory disorders when applied externally.

Fruits contributing herbal ingredients include cranberry, red raspberry, papaya and hawthorn. *Cranberry* acidifies the urine and is helpful for infections of the urinary tract. *Red raspberry* strengthens uterine walls and helps relax uterine and intestinal spasms. *Papaya* stimulates the appetite, aids digestion and is good for heartburn. *Hawthorn* lowers cholesterol and increases Vitamin C levels and is useful for anemia, cardiovascular and circulatory disorders.

**Anti-aging properties**

We can ask why more and more people are turning to natural supplements? People today want to stay healthy while improving longevity. They are gaining confidence in these natural remedies from a growing support of scientific data.

Many herbs have antioxidant properties; this not only slows the aging process, but also wards off disease and promotes general well being.

The main nutrients involved in slowing the aging process are antioxidants. Their anti-aging benefits lie in their ability to neutralize free radicals in the body, thought to be the cause of premature aging, heart disease and cancer. Free radicals are highly reactive byproducts of chemical processes in the body causing harmful oxidation that can damage the integrity of cells and body tissues. Antioxidants scavenge these free radicals in the body, and research has shown that this not only slows the aging process, but also wards off disease and promotes general well being. Many of the herbs described above have excellent antioxidant properties. Some important ones include turmeric, green tea, ginkgo biloba, grape seed extract, bilberry and hawthorn.

Education is a key in knowing which herbal remedies are appropriate for you and make sure you do this with guidance from your health care providers. We are fortunate to have access to these tried and true herbal remedies that are gaining popularity as both scientific and anecdotal claims justify their use.

**Dr. Khorshed Balsara**

migrated from Bombay to Canada in 1966. She graduated as Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, University of Guelph in 1987 and manages her own holistic pet clinic with personalized house calls for pets. As the Canadian division leader for Oxyfresh Products she integrates pet products with veterinary practice and distributes health and wellness consumer products for both people and pets. Her passion for crucial life skills of leadership, visioning and self motivation has led to her Empowerment of Children Workshops. Cutting down her veterinary practice has given more time for her family – Darrin and their four daughters.

Led by the persuasive efforts of local Zarathushtis and environmentalists to thwart industrialization, the wilderness area was, at last in February 1991, declared a heritage site – an Ecologically Fragile Green Zone under legal protection from industrial exploitation.

**Pristine ecosystem**

Dahanu, the main town along sprawling beaches is the nucleus around small hamlets – Gholvad, Bordi, Zai and Ichh (whence arose the surnames Zaiwalla and Icchaporia). The picturesque 16 km coastline shows Zarathushti mansions all the way to Gholvad and Bordi.

This 250,000 acres of the Dahanu-Gholvad-Bordi stretch of verdant land has enjoyed a pristine unspoiled ecosystem. Led by the persuasive efforts of local Zarathushtis and environmentalists to thwart industrialization the wilderness area was, at last in February 1991, declared a heritage site – an Ecologically Fragile Green Zone under legal protection from industrial exploitation.

**Chikoo fruit from the vadis of Dahanu** [PHOTO BY FAREZAN B. MAZDA, COURTESY PARSIANA].

**The healing power of being in a garden** is now being documented by medical studies. These studies show that patients in hospitals who look out on a garden take less medication and go home quicker than those who look out on a parking lot or on other buildings. Alzheimer's patients are no longer violent when placed in a garden.

- Judith Handlesman 1997
exploitation. It boasts 95,000 acres of tropical forests, 80,000 acres of farms, 60,000 acres of grasslands and 6,500 acres of wetlands.

It is in this, once barren land of the 175,000 strong indigenous Warli (‘king of the jungle’) tribe, that the early Zarathushti agricultural pioneers settled, working diligently to convert it into an oasis of greenery. Planting their famous Chikoo orchards (vadis), adding lychees, mangoes, coconuts and many other crops they developed it into a veritable green belt. Presently, about 250 Zarathushti families (900 individuals) live here.

Pioneer cultivators
In 1898, guided by a relative employed in the Dinshaw Petit Sanatorium in Gholvad, Kavasji Pallonji Ichhaporia (Patel) and Ardeshir Irani obtained a graft from a Chikoo tree. Originally distributed by the Portuguese from South America the sapling was brought by Sir Dinshaw Petit from Singapore and nurtured to grow in his estate at Gowalia Tank, Mumbai. A unique genus of the Sapodilla plant – Kalipatti (dark green leaves) it flourished in the Gholvad plantation. Initially distributed free of charge to popularize this unfamiliar fruit, it was first put up for sale in 1905. Today, it commands a premium price. The fruit is eaten un-peeled or mashed and frappéd into creams and custards, and used in ice-creams and mousses. Puréed Chikoo mixed with mayonnaise makes a great sauce for cold fish or chicken.

Four generations after Kavasji, Rohington Batlivala continues the family heritage. His cousin Pheroze Patel has branched into lychees grown also by 25 other farmers. Originating in China, the Lychee plant sapling was brought by...
The yeast and alcohol content is used to advantage in Zarathushti cuisine and bakery products and household delicacies like bhakhra, tittar, fofulji, sadhna and kumas. Toddy is also used in meat and chicken dishes and is a worthy substitute for baking powder or yeast. The mouth-watering boomla (Bombay Duck) rubbed with a paste of gram flour, oil, garlic, cumin seeds, dried red chilies, raw sugar and vinegar are baked in a clay pot with toddy for 20 minutes. “Ooni keetheli taari,” a mixture of warm toddy with ginger and jaggery is an excellent cure for upset stomachs.

Due to the large population of Iranian Zarathushtis, Dahanu is possibly the only place in India, where one can relish authentic Iranian home-cooked food.

Community facilities and fears
The Anjuman Adarian at Bordi was established in 1916 by the Zai-Bordi Parsi Anjuman Trust, through an initial seed donation of Rs. 1,000/– and a land grant worth Rs. 1,500/– in 1914 by Bomanji Zaiwalla. Each year gahanbars and jashans are conducted in Gholvad and Dahanu.

Sadly, due to falling interest rates, the adarian is in dire need of maintenance funds (estimated at Rs. 9 lakhs) to augment its resources. The Soonabai Pestonji Hakimji high school and maternity home are funded by Ms. Dhu nbai, in memory of her mother. The best school in the district, it offers college level courses in science, commerce and recently, technical education through regular donations.

Kavasji’s son, Darabsha Patel in 1925 from his sister’s garden in Calcutta. Each Lychee plant needs to be enclosed entirely in nylon mesh to exclude bats. Recently, Aloe Vera plantations have been added to the existing cash crops of Mango, Coconut, Lime, Toddy, Jambul, Sitaful, Fudina (peppermint) and Le mon grass (hari patti).

Toddy, a favorite drink
The nutritive valued Toddy (Taari), the sap of the Palmyra tree is a favorite Zarathushti drink. A 20 years old healthy Palmyra tree gives up to ten liters of toddy daily. The tree is tapped by cutting the bud of its Tadgola fruit, inserting a small pipe into it and letting the juice (sap) drain into an earthen pot tied underneath.

Tapped before dawn, the neera is a refreshing sweet drink. Fermentation of alcohol commences after sunrise as the sun’s rays, acting as catalyst, multiply the yeast cells, releasing alcohol as a by-product. It then develops its legendary sour taste, aroma of fermenting yeast and intoxicating effect.

Sadly, the three Gholvad-Dahanu Chikoo harvests of November, April and September are becoming unpredictable due to carbon, sulfur and nitrogen-based pollutants from a power plant just north of Dahanu. This year there has been only one crop, in July. The acid rain is causing havoc to other trees, too.

Consequently, the Zarathushtis of Dahanu are beginning to seek diverse vocations or greener pastures elsewhere. Some have opened bakeries, restaurants and hotels. Dr Behramshah Mazda, a medical practitioner is an avid ultra-light aviator, through whose courtesy we have obtained aerial photographs. Rohington Batilivala has developed part of his estate into a housing complex for vacationers.

Naddir Minoo Patel, a metal-lurgical engineer (specialized in Engineering Ceramics), resides in Dadar Parsi Colony, Mumbai with his wife, Aileen and daughters, Sanaea and Karishma. His favorite pastime, the study of Zarathushti history and theology was inspired by Vedic scholars, Irach Taraporewala and Navrooz Minochehr-Homji. He has attempted to shed light on the ethics of Zarathushtra’s philosophy and Indo-Iranian postulates in his comparative study of the Rig Veda and Upanishads.

Only God can make a tree ...

Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Knowing grass, I appreciate persistence. - Hal Borland

He who plants a tree plants hope. - Lucy Larcom

The earth laughs in flowers. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree.

For poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree.

- Joyce Kilmer, Trees, 1913
The Zarathushti calendar was a solar calendar based on precise astronomical calculation. That the New Year starts exactly at the time of the vernal equinox is proof that the ancient Zarathushtis possessed knowledge of astronomy. Zarathushtra, himself a mathematician and an astronomer, is credited for formulating the concept of a meridian, which he called nim-ruz (mid-day). The place, Nimruz, located in Seistan in Iran was designated as zero longitude, such that when it was mid-day in Seistan the whole of the eastern hemisphere from Japan to Africa had sunshine.

Zarathushtra is also said to have calculated the Nouruz (‘new day’) of 1725 BCE when (it is recorded) the vernal equinox coincided with sunrise at Seistan on the meridian.

Within the astronomically and mathematically precise calendar the festivals called gahanbars seem to have been unevenly spread. This is so because they are based on the seasons of two entirely different regions of the earth – initially of the harsh cycle of the soil of the primal Aryan homeland in the Arctic region and, later, of the four distinct seasons of the more amicable temperate climes after migration.

Origins of gahanbar in Airyana Vaeja

Visperad [1.2] talks of the year divided into six parts called ‘gahanbars’ during Sasanian times.

(1) Maidyozarem – midspring, when fresh vegetables are in plenty. (April 30 to May 4).
(2) Maidyoshem*** – midsummer, the time for harvesting corn (June 29 to July 3). The middle of the 7th month (Fravardin – Mehr) of the Arctic summer.
(3) Paitishahem – end of summer, gathering of fruits (September 12 to September 16).
(4) Ayathrem*** – beginning of winter, sowing of winter crops (October 12 to October 16). The beginning of the fifth month (Avan or Aban to Esfand) of the Arctic winter.
(5) Maidyarem – the middle of perfect rest, when farmers, shepherds and their animals are resting (January 1 to January 5).
(6) Hamaspathmaidem – equality of heat and cold, day and night in preparation for the revival in nature (March 16 to March 20).

*** Note that the second gahanbar, Maidyoshem and the fourth, Ayathrem are the traditional gahanbars of remote times, when the Aryans lived in Airyana Vaeja in the Arctic, where there were only two seasons – five months of winter and seven months of summer.
The middle of Summer occurred, then, in June/July (Tir/Teshtar) and winter commenced in October (Avan/Aban). The summer festival was obviously chosen in mid-summer since it would be the best time of the year for outdoor activities during the celebrations. The winter festival was celebrated earlier in the beginning of winter, since any time later the freezing Arctic cold would make outdoor festivities impossible.

After migration to the temperate climate, they did not discard these two gahanbars (of remote times) and added four more to incorporate the four distinct seasons of their new settlements.

**The new settlements**

Each Gahanbar was a five day festival of merriment marked by joyous exuberance and communal togetherness for the propitiation and worship of the elements, a festival of thanksgiving for the fruits of labor in a cycle of sowing, harvesting and rest. The outdoor festivities, enacted in the fields and orchards in close proximity to and interaction with Mother Nature, were accompanied by vigorous communal dancing and joyful singing in the obvious veneration for her abundant gift of produce.

All six gahanbars were celebrated nationally with intense vigor until the loss of the Sasanian Empire in 641 CE to the Arabs. The joyfulness of gahanbars then became converted per force (like so many other joyous Zarathushti festivals) into rather somber occasions marked only by a solemn recitation of prayers followed by a low-profile consumption of food and quiet dispersal. Such dismal practices continue to this day.

The origins and real purpose of the gahanbars were soon forgotten. Hoping to establish credence and to justify the latter-day imposed change several theories were put forth in scholarly works. One linked the gahanbars to the Semitic creation theory. Another assigned them to the creation of the sky, water, earth, vegetation, animals and humans. Later, they were even assigned to the Amesha Spentas. Still later, since the Amesha Spentas included Ahura Mazda the number of festivals was increased to seven, including the day of Nouruz.

**Conclusion**

The true origin and purpose of each gahanbar is obvious from the very name. They were seasonal festivals dating back to the time when the original Aryan homeland was in the Arctic region, which had only two seasons. After migration to the temperate region having four seasons it was noted that the old festivals did not coincide date-wise with any of the four new seasonal festivals.

The migrant Zarathushtis, true to their inherent high-spirited nature, enjoying life to its fullest, continued to maintain their two old festivals and added four more festivals dedicated to the four new seasons. In an environment of domination and discriminatory persecution, the less privileged co-religionists, crushed by the heavy burden of the cruel jizya tax, were, indeed, provided for by the affluent members of the community.

**Fariborz Rahnamoon** was born in Yazd, received early education in Bombay and returned to Iran with a masters degree in cost Accountancy. In 1991 he migrated to Sydney where he obtained permission to install the bas-relief of Cyrus the Great in Olympic Park. Fariborz, wife Manijeh and three sons have now settled in Vancouver. He is the ex-director of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, chairperson of the Arbab Guiv Trust, editor of Iran Zamin and webmaster of www.ancientiran.com (e-mail ancientiran@yahoo.com).
Zarathushti cuisine of the Indian subcontinent is a thoroughly satisfying blend of flavors and ingredients of Iran, with the superb variety of herbs, spices, seasonings admixed with mostly kid-goat meat (sometimes chicken), pulses and a wide variety of vegetables found in Gujarat.

Zarathushtis of the Subcontinent enjoy a thoroughly satisfying blend of flavors and ingredients of Iran with the superb variety of herbs, spices, seasonings admixed with mostly kid-goat meat (sometimes, chicken), pulses and a wide variety of vegetables found in Gujarat.

**Nutritive content**

Carrying a blend of unique taste and balanced wholesome nutrition the cuisine has a fair combination of meats with vegetables; typically, the meats always forming part of the vegetable dish. Also, its large kathor (pulses, lentils and legumes) and onion content promotes anti-cholesterol and anti-lipid action. The soluble fiber in Indian vegetables – beans, papri, bheeda, doodhi (white gourd), sweet potato, sooran, cauliflower, eggplant, karela, kantola etc, relished with rotlis (flat bread) provides bulk for protection against digestive disorders and colon cancer.

Rotlis of wheat flour, oil, water and salt are good sources of iron, protein, thiamine, potassium, calcium and carbohydrates. Wheat flour (3/4 cup) contains 3 gm of protein, 22 gm of carbohydrates and is a significant source of iron and potassium and gives 105 calories.

**Proteins.** Western diets, grossly rich in animal proteins – meats, poultry and sea-foods, and high in fats and calories tend to promote an unhealthy, overweight constitution.

**Fats.** Conflicting reports linking all fats with cholesterol have tended to diminish the usefulness of fats which, albeit in moderate amounts, are essential in maintaining health. A ready source of energy, fatty acids (Linoleic acid in almonds, safflower oil, corn oil, margarine, sesame oil) assist absorption of calcium and fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

**Vitamins.** It is better to obtain vitamins from food rather than in mega-dose tablet form, which can cause mal-absorption of other nutrients. Vitamin A in green, deep yellow or orange vegetables and organ meats, maintains skin, hair and nails, gums, bones and teeth healthy and promotes eye function.

Vitamin D in cod liver oil, mackerel, sardines and milk helps in the
absorption of calcium and phosphates for healthy bones and teeth.

Vitamin E, in poultry, seafood, cooked greens, seeds, nuts, eggs is an efficacious antioxidant, and protects the integrity of cellular and intracellular structures. Vitamin K in spinach, other green leafy vegetables, cabbage, potatoes, organ meats and wheat bran, is important for normal blood clotting.

Typical meals

The following is a brief outline limited to some typical dishes and a few delicacies.

Breakfast. Traditional Parsi breakfast egg dishes – akuri, Parsi poro, khima per eeda, tamota per eeda, sali per eeda, bhida per eeda, mixed vegetables per eeda, bheja per eeda – are excellent combination of rich proteins, vitamins A, C and K, and fiber.

Lunch. Top on the list for lunch on auspicious days the traditional dhan dar is simple – lentils cooked with turmeric and salt served with white rice – but has a high nutritive value. One cup cooked lentil has 18 gm proteins, 40 gm carbohydrates, 1 gm fat and is a fairly good source of iron and potassium and gives 230 calories. A half cup of cooked white rice gives 3 gms of proteins, 28 gms of carbohydrates, traces of fat, thiamine and 131 calories.

The Parsi favorite for Sundays, dhanshak, kavab and kachuber is tasty and rich in nutrition. The dar is a rich mixture of toovar dal, pink masoor dal with added vegetables – red pumpkin, eggplant, doodhi, tomatoes, spring onions, methi leaves, green chillies, ginger, garlic and herbs like mint and cilantro. The tender kid-goat meat with the special mixture of spices gives a distinct flavor. The rice is browned and garnished with fried onions. The kavabs of minced meat garnished with spices are either baked or fried. Three beef kavabs give 24 gm proteins, 15 gm fat and 237 calories. The dar is rich in proteins, iron, the vegetables and kachuber (sliced onions with vinegar) contribute the minerals, vitamins and fiber and carbohydrates (in the rice).

Another favorite, fish curry rice served with kachuber and lemon is a combination of ingredients in the right proportion to bring out a unique fusion of taste, texture and the satiety factor. The fish contains omega fatty acids not offered by a vegan diet. The coconut, besan, ground cashew/pea nuts supply a rich source of essential fatty acids.

Other notable examples of nutritive and tasty dishes are khichri sauce, gos na ras-chawal, khichri-patto, kheema-rice and mutton bafat.

Dinner. Kathor dishes like masoor ma gosh, chora, chana dal and other legumes are high in vegetable protein, iron, fiber, and minerals like potassium, thiamine and soluble fibers, which add to the nutritional value of the dish and help lower blood cholesterol and blood sugar. The onions, tomatoes, curry leaves, ginger, garlic, cilantro, spices like turmeric, chili powder, dhanshak masala all add to the flavor.

Desserts and snacks. Most sweet preparations are a mixture of flour, milk, eggs, ghee or oil (fats), sugar and condiments.

Tea time delicacies like kumas, bhakra, karkaria, chapats, khajas, sa(n)dna and fofali went from Iran. Delicacies like koprapak, mehsurpak, dar ni pori, jalebi, batasa, and khari biscuit are of Indian origin.

Dishes made for auspicious occasions include sev, ravo, malido.

Sev is a fine vermicelli. One cup gives 46 gm carbohydrates, 3 gm proteins, 7.2 gm fat and 346 calories.

Ravo (semolina) (1 cup) gives 30.1 gm carbohydrates, 7.4 gm proteins, 10 gm fat and 252 calories.

Malido, a rich concoction of wheat flour, semolina, sugar, nuts, dry fruits, ghee and delicate herbs (nutmeg and cardamom) is relished with crispy caramelized pancakes – papri.

Dar ni pori is a larger and thicker version of the Indian puran-poli.

Varadhvaru(n) is a crispy cake, rich in wheat flour, semolina and nuts.

Nuts and fruits like almonds, cashew nuts, raisins etc, which are added to the above dishes, are good sources of calcium, potassium, riboflavin, fiber and protein.

Slivered almonds (1/4 cup) has 200 calories, 7gms of protein, 90mg of calcium, 247mg of potassium and 4.8 gm of fiber.

Fruits used in jashans, such as Pomegranates, oranges, apples, mangoes, bananas, papayas, limes, and coconut are good sources of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and fiber.

We owe it to ourselves and future generations to keep our tradition alive and avoid the temptation for fast foods of modern-day living.

Shernaz Hormazd Sanjana, inspired by her traditional family elders, thoroughly enjoys the time-honored Zarathushhti home cooking. She has a bachelors degree in Home Science, majoring in Food Science and Nutrition, from SNDT University, Mumbai. Married in an athor-nan family she has maintained traditional Zarathushhti values and a deep appreciation of Zarathushhti cuisine. She lives with husband, Hormazd and son Karl, in San Antonio, Texas.
As Zarathushtis, we have a responsibility to stand up for what is good and fight evil. In Jasa me avanghe Mazda, we recite:

“I dedicate myself to the excellent Mazda yasnan religion which preaches peace, non-violence, disarmament and self-sacrifice and shows the path of righteousness.”

A vegetarian diet not only respects the God-given rights of other living creatures to enjoy a peaceful, torture-free existence but also greatly enhances our own physical and spiritual health, as well as quality of life.

Impact on the Environment

Vegetarianism and Zoroastrianism go hand in hand for a variety of reasons. We are conscious and careful of our environment in the non-polluting manner of disposal of the dead. We treat it with the respect it deserves. We pray Khorshed and Meher Niyayesh out of reverence for the scintillating sun, Ardwisur Yasht in honor of the flowing waters, and Atash Niyayesh in reverence of fire. These recitations are important and valuable if they become meaningful when our good thoughts and words are backed up by good deeds.

What we eat has a profound impact on the well-being of the environment. A vegetarian diet is much more environment-friendly than a meat-based diet because rampant deforestation of our precious tropical rainforests is done in order to create space for cattle grazing. The deforestation leads to extinction of countless plant species, including those not identified as potential medicinal plants, whose efficacy would otherwise have been discovered to save human lives. Besides, water runoff from cattle grazing and meat production factory farms, compared to plant farming, cause soil erosion and pollution of streams, lakes and rivers.

Humanitarian aspect

Zarathushitis are renowned for their generosity and willingness to help the underprivileged. Hence, the saying, “Parsi, thy second name is charity.” Yet world hunger could be eradicated if all the grain used as cattle-feed were given to humans, instead. It takes about 12 pounds of grain to produce one pound of grain-fed meat. From a humanitarian

Power of the Pomegranate

Scientists keep finding new powers of the Pomegranate. One recent study shows that an extract of this fruit discourages the development of prostate cancers in an animal model [Journal of Medicinal Food, Fall 2004]. Another study shows that eating Pomegranates can reduce total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol and improve lipid rations in diabetics. Previous research has shown that consuming Pomegranate fruit or juice can help lower blood pressure and help keep blood platelets from sticking together to form unwanted clots.

[From “Pomegranate has power of health,” by Joe and Teresa Graedon, The Sunday Oregonian, October 31, 2004, submitted by Dinaz Rogers.]

Pomegranate tree by the shrine in Cham [photo courtesy F. Demehri]
standpoint, this is truly unconscionable, considering that over 60 million people starve to death each year, 15 million being children.

One of the 101 names of Ahura Mazda is Besh-tarna, which means “The Reliever of all pain and suffering.” If everyone were vegetarian, we would have more than enough food to feed everyone on the planet, and relieve a lot of pain and suffering. Fewer humans, and clearly, fewer animals would suffer.

**Moral and health implications**

The moral and health implications of our eating habits are very closely intertwined. Whereas we kill animals for food, they eventually kill us because their flesh contains cholesterol and saturated fat, which are linked to coronary heart disease, among other ailments.

“... eating a vegetarian diet drastically reduces one’s risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, obesity, hypertension, and several other diseases.”

Numerous scientific studies have shown that eating a vegetarian diet drastically reduces one’s risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, obesity, hypertension, and several other diseases. Meat, considered nasso (dead matter) is not meant for consumption by humans, who are natural herbivores. Our teeth and digestive system are very similar to those of plant-eating animals (such as the gorilla) unlike the sharp teeth and short digestive systems of natural carnivores.

At the heart of the issue is a compassionate regard for life and a devotion to Ahura Mazda, the omniscient creator of all life. No matter how much we try to blot out from our minds the callous cruelties that animals are subjected to in factory farms and slaughterhouses the simple truth prevails. We cannot truly be happy if we base our happiness on their suffering, however cleverly the horrors are concealed by the meat industry’s deceptive propaganda.

As long as we continue to condone the atrocities with our money, our lofty goals of attaining world peace and disarmament are hypocritical. Complacency is comfortable but it does not foster spiritual progress. Our religion specifically requires that we abstain from flesh foods on Ahura Mazda’s birthday (Bahman roj), but why not show compassion for animals on all days of the month?

As followers of Prophet Spitama Zarathushtra, let us challenge ourselves to live more compassionately by changing our eating habits and, in so doing, encouraging others to follow suit. In this every one of us can make a huge positive impact. Here is a prayer from Fravardin Yasht [94]:

_Ushtha-no zato athrava yo Spitamo Zarathushtra.

At the birth of Zarathushtra, all of nature rejoiced and exclaimed, “Blessed are we that the prophet Spitama Zarathushtra is born.”

Let us follow in Zarathushtra’s footsteps, and be a cause for all of Nature to rejoice.

[Courtesy: Proceedings of the World Zoroastrian Congress 2000]

**Armaiti May**

24, who was raised in Santa Monica, CA, always had a love for animals. She graduated from UC Berkeley in 2001, earning a BS in Biore-source Sciences. She is a veterinary student at UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and plans to heighten awareness about animal welfare issues and spread vegetarianism.

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_My journey into aromatics started as a child, in India, where essential oils are used extensively as attar in Ayurvedic medicine. Ayurveda, the ‘Science of Life’ uses herbs in various preparations, aqueous and oil extracts. The principle is to secure a balance between the sharira (body), indriya (senses) satva/manah (mind) and atma (spirit/soul).

Good health (a continuing feeling of well being) is experienced only when one possesses a proper equilibrium of the mental and physical faculties and spiritual awareness.

About 20% of all plant life contains aromatic oils, which are the prana (life force). As naturally available immuno-enhancers they are the good earth’s offering to humans.

The Vedas describe different methods of extracting and purifying oils, perfumes and scents. Indian texts emphasize aromatic extracts are able to fulfil all four objectives of human life:

“Through gandha (aroma) one obtains all desired objects; it is also the cause of dharma by being useful in religious practices; it becomes the conduit of finance and is helpful in bringing about liberation”

— Gandhasara
Ayurveda, the Science of Life

Ayurveda bases its diagnosis of diseases on an inherited genetic constitution. The basis rests on misuse of, and over-indulgence in foods and sensuous pleasures. The liberated toxins accumulate in the bile and blood, resulting in ailments and even untimely aging.

Thus, all human ailments are oriented either to gas (vata: air and ether – light, dry and cold), bile (pitta: fire and water – hot and wet) or phlegm (kapha: water and earth – cold moist, slow and heavy). These are the three doshas.

Fierce smelling aromatic substances which are wet, heavy, calming and warming are beneficial to gas oriented (vata) persons. Essential oils classified as coolants, heat dispelling, drying nutritive and calming are conducive to bile oriented (pitta) persons. Essential oils having pungent, astringent and bitter odors which are warming, drying and stimulating, are beneficial to phlegm oriented (kapha) individuals.

Rose extracts

The use of rose water and its oil is part of the Iranian tradition, too. Tridoshiki in action, it balances all three body types. Water of Rose contains aqueous water soluble chemicals from the plant plus microscopic drops of the essential oil. It is gentle and less potent than the essential oil.

Essential Oil (Rose Attar) is a highly volatile aromatic substance, steam distilled from a single botanical source. The flowers are either steam distilled or cold pressed and more recently, extracted through the use of carbon dioxide. The CO2 extracts contain more of the delicate trace elements, which do get destroyed through the steam method.

The effleurage method involves a solvent to absorb the essential oil. Animal fat or ghee absorbs the oil and then alcohol or hexane is used to separate it. This method is not so popular for all extracts, but fragile flowers like the rose are extracted by this method. The oil is called a Rose Absolute.

In India ancient techniques are still in use for distilling the attars. The fragrant rose is steam distilled into Sandalwood, which is used both as a fixative and a solvent.

The aromatic extract

Almost all essential oils have anti-viral, anti-fungal and anti-bacterial qualities. Compared with modern antibiotics, which destroy the normal flora they are pro-biotic cell promoters, which do not destroy the natural flora of the body.

"Essential oils have anti-viral, anti-fungal and anti-bacterial qualities. Unlike modern antibiotics, they do not destroy the natural flora of the body."

Rose oil can also be used in a bath, as a compress, in a vaporizer and as a spray-mist to refresh. For skin application it is mixed in a carrier of cold-pressed vegetable oil of jojoba, almond, black seed sesame, avocado,
Farida Irani trained under Professor P.H. Kulka-nri at Ayurveda Faculty, Pune University. Farida practices Alternative Medicine in Sydney. Her practice, “Subtle Energies,” includes Ayurveda, Ayurvedic aromatherapy, remedial and therapeutic massage, reflexology, remedial therapies, Bowen technique, stress management, relaxation and meditation, color therapy and pranic healing. She conducts seminars and workshops. Her book, “The Magic of Ayurveda Aromatherapy” is about her work in these unique oils used in harmony with other healing sciences.

Brahmin, Ashwagandha in a dilution of 2.5% to 3% (6 drops in 10 ml).

Systemic therapy. It is useful as an antiseptic, antispasmodic, anti-tubercular agent, anti-viral, aphrodisiac, astringent, bactericidal, haemostatic, laxative, regulator of appetite, sedative, tonic for the heart, liver, stomach and genito-urinary system.

Dermatologic therapy. It is beneficial for all skin diseases – acne, dry sensitive skin, itchy eyes, mature wrinkles, broken capillaries, eczema, herpes, shingles, radiation burns, conjunctivitis and mouth ulcers. It is safe for babies, especially the rose water.

Neurologic therapy. A potent anti-depressant, it is useful in migraine headaches, sleep disorders, psychic disturbances, impulsive and rage reactions and in inducing spiritual balance. It relaxes and invigorates the psyche, imparts tranquillity and well being, brings relief to stress and soothes frustration and irritability. Ancient lore says it has been used to entice lovers and lure aggressive traders.

Customs
The Ayurvedic jam /preserves, Gulkand is made with layers of rose petals and rock sugar in a glass jar, which is left in the sun for a few days. It is very therapeutic for stomach ulcers and abdominal upsets. Falooda, a drink, is made with milk, rose water, tunkhmaria seeds, rice vermicelli and vanilla ice cream or cream. It cools the system, preparing the body for the summer heat. It balances the agni or pitta energy – the digestive fires in Ayurveda.

During Nouruz and special functions it is customary to bless family members or visitors with a sprinkle of rose water from a silver container – a gulabaksh [below].

After a wedding or Sudreh-push ceremony rose petals are showered over the heads symbolizing harmony, abundance, happiness and joy. The aroma of the rose in the presence of a Sandalwood fire has a spiritual association, too. A positive feeling of joyful energy and a balanced clarity of thought emerges and painful memories from the heart-chakra are replenished with love, peace and harmony. The aroma of Sandalwood cleanses the whole house and the environment on a physical and spiritual level.

Talking of my own experience I know I can feel the effect of their use as they begin to synergize my own prana to address my clarity of thought and enhance my spiritual energies.

A sprinkling of rose-water from the long-necked gulabaksh, is a sign of welcome. Photo Cyrus Rivetna

A member of the botanical family Rosaceae and the genus Rosa, the rose has been identified as a wild flower, even in fossil form. The rim has five sepals alternating with five petals – a common arrangement. In many varieties the stamens in the middle become petal-like and create multiple layers.

Airyanic roots
The rose plant in Indo-European languages has its origin in Avestan ‘varedha’ – a sweet smelling fragrant flower plant. In modern Persian the rose is ‘vard’ (Arabic: vard juri – jur; Sasanian Firuzabad was famous for rose scent in the air). In Sappho’s Aeolic Greek dialect it was ’wrodon’; in Etruscan Greek ‘rhodian’ (from the island of Rhodes). Thence, the Latin and Old Normandy derivative ‘rosa’ flowed into the English word, ‘rose.’ A fragrant flower being ‘gool’ in Persian, the courtesy was also extended to the rose. ‘Goolistan’, then, became a rose garden.

The Asiatic rose. For 5,000 years China and Persia had remained the documented habitat of the naturally fragrant varieties of roses, freely recurrent in bloom and the only ones that bore yellow flowers. The first documented reference to the aesthetics of Asiatic roses is by the Indo-Aryan Sumerians c. 4,000 BCE. Later, clay tablets record Sargon I of Akkad (2,684–2,630 BCE) as having “brought vines, figs and rose trees from beyond the River Tigris” – Iran and further east. Thence, they were carried to Egypt, Greece, Rome and further west.

In medieval times the Crusaders took the choicest varieties to the west. The Asiatic rose has been glorified in art, architecture and verse for ages. Initially, the ‘king of flowers’ in Greece ‘basileus ton antheon’ it became the ‘queen of flowers’ in 600 BCE in Sappho’s Ode to the Rose as late as 600 BCE.

Fragrance
Bred primarily for appearance, European roses cultivated from two or
more of eight Asiatic species were only summer flowering and without fragrance. Western preoccupation with external appearances, even at the expense of finer intrinsic qualities, was unfortunately extended to roses, too. Amazingly, the delicate fragrance is still not taken into account when judging roses.

Deeply rooted in age-old tradition Iranian perfumes, oils and creams in medication, and essence in food were extracts of fragrant roses long before this was ever done outside Asia.

The ‘scattering of rose petals’ and ‘sprinkling of rose water,’ signs of goodwill and welcome, have, to this day, remained typically Iranian.

Stone reliefs of Darius I (521–486 BCE) show him seated with scent bottles and incense cones with Xerxes (486–465 BCE) behind him holding flowers. Such is the emphasis on sweet scented-ness being perceived synonymous with virtue that a newly-wedded Zarathushti couple is showered with a basketful of rose-petals with the incantation “may you remain ever so virtuous in your togetherness.” Zarathushti homes are traditionally refreshed in every sense at sunrise with garlands of roses and flowers and at sunset with fuming Sandalwood, Frankincense and Myrrh.

“Perfumed sweet scented-ness pervades the house, where kinship of long duration has endured and where courage, purity and righteousness has been established … carried through from Peshdadian and Kayanian times.” Ashishwang Yasht XVII.6

“At the end of the third night when dawn breaks the soul of the righteous is sustained by fragrance released to the winds from plants bearing perfume.” Hadokht Nask XXII.7

A sweet-scented person is deemed to “possess integrity, credibility, righteousness and an aura of impeccable conscience.” On Chinvat bridge the soul’s conscience appearing as a maiden says:

“…thou art good, of lofty character, fair in dealings, sweet scented, of fearless strength and free from spite … such as I, thy own Conscience, appear to thee.” Hadokht Nask XXII.11

Many a Persian poet has lamented the fading away of the rose and the nightingale’s breathless rapture as it withered with time:

“The red roses have blossomed; the nightingale’s gone into a stupor. Everywhere … the hue and cry of ecstasy” – Hafiz

by Sam Kerr
“When the rose is faded and its garden
gone thou wilt no longer hear the
nightingale sing … the suitor has left
a bird without care …”

— Jalal ud din Rumi

“… alas, that Spring too
should vanish with the rose
That youth’s sweet-scented manuscript should close!”

— Khayyam

It was as if everything one hoped
would remain enduring, had to end in
its own perfect time. The timing of the
fading away of the rose seemed to be
the ‘perfectes’ – a distinct privilege,
clearly denied to the thorns, which had
no chance to fade. Indeed, they
became more menacing as they dried.

Chemistry
So delicately poised is the chemistry
that the emanations respond signifi-
cantly to the surroundings. Since
they diminish in sunlight the picking
needs to be completed before sunrise
to obtain the choicest fragrance.
Even human presence and colorful
clothing, merely walking past the
blossoms, will create a profound
effect upon their emanations.

When asked “What gift hast thou
brought us from the Goolistan?” the
poet replies:
“I intended to fill the folds of my robe
with roses as presents for my friends.
But when I approached the rose bush
the exhilarating fragrance of the roses
hastily transcended my desire to
pluck. I could not but let go the hold
of my robe.” – Sa’adi

The consonance of appreciable tem-
ple harmonies of voice and music,
too, are known to promote the finest
flowers in temple gardens in India.

Appreciation in Europe
The Greeks and Romans associated
roses with pain, suffering and death,
decorating tombs to appease the spir-
ts of the dead and carving them on
ceilings to signify all conversation be
held secret (sub-rosa). They used a
rosary of rolled petals in cult prac-
tices. The Romans forced peasants to
grow roses instead of food crops for
their orgies. No wonder the early
Christians associated roses with sym-
 bols of orgy.

The legendary rose of
Persia. The elegant Gool-e-
surati rose [right] had been
ominated a National Treasure
of Persia ages before any nation
deemed any other variety of
rose to be so. Its velvet-text-
tured undulating petals, in
shades from white (of the Gool-
e-Sefid) to pink ( likened to the
rosy cheeked, blushing, com-
plexion – surat – of a beautiful
Iranian lady) to deep red (of the
Gool-e-Sorkeh), signifying
deep admiration, amorous joy,ashfulness, embarrassment …
the Gool-e-surati has remained
the very symbol of life itself.
The true Iranian and Chinese
rose has a single layer of petals.
The ovary of the flower, the
rose hip, has on its rim five
sepalas, which alternate with five
petals. This arrangement is
common to all roses, but in many types the stamens
have become petal-like too, creating multiple layers.
Its allure represents the passion of living and the thorns,
the difficulties one endures to reach that state. Such
eesthetic tastes glorified in poetic couplets were posted
on the palace gates of Khusrow the Great (531-579 CE)
when Europe was still subservient to Roman occupa-
tion. English history had still not ‘begun’ and the
Renaissance in Europe was to occur 1,000 years later.

Rose water mixed with saffron as ink is commonly used
for writing charms and romantic verse.

“…the twist, the turn of thy hair
– tell me, what be the reason?
Thy inebriated eyes’ distant stare
– tell me, what be the reason?
…though rose petals have not been scattered…
thy rose scented aura
– tell me, what be the reason?” — Jalal ud din Rumi

Such was the legendary resplendence of the fragrance
of the rose water – ‘Gool ab’,
that the nectar itself, by its very
name, became the Rose. Indeed, its time-honored extrac-
tion from the blossoms of the
Gool-e-Sorkh and Gool-e-
Surati in the rose fields of Qamsar in mid-Spring is witnessed
by thousands.
A Sasanian portrait was deemed
incomplete without a rose held
sensitively between thumb and
index finger.
Of significance, too, is a lone
rosette carved in the gable end
of the entrance, the only adorn-
ment on the tomb of Cyrus the
Great (599-529 BCE) shown in
a sketch by envoys of Queen
Christina of Sweden in 1638.
Now, only the lower end of the
rosette remains as the trace.

The pinkish-red Gool-e-surati rose. This is the
true Iranian rose, originated from Rosa Persica,
with a heavenly fragrance, which grows in the
legendary fields of Qamsar, near Kashan. They
are harvested before sunrise to obtain the maxi-
mum quality and quantity of fragrance.
Slowly, the Church changed them into Christian symbols of the Virgin Mary, Rosa Mystica and Rosa Sine spina, and the State as royal emblems. From the deep red Gool-e-sorkh, to the pinkish-red Gool-e-surati, to the pure white Gool-e-sefid, it was the yellow rose Gool-e-saarg which signified the highest symbolism in western culture. The aesthetic, culinary and medicinal values came much later.

The first authentic record of the aesthetic appreciation of the rose is in the Indo-Iranian Minoan frescos at Knossos on the Island of Crete, dating to the 16th century BCE. The Indo-European origins of the fresco roses are seen in the color of the blossom and foliage. Indeed, they appear to be that of Rosa Persica of Asiatic origin.

National flower
Now, the rose is the national flower of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, England, Iraq and the Maldives and the official flower of the US States of New York, Iowa and North Dakota; the Cherokee rose in Georgia, the Province of Alberta, Canada and the prefectures of Hokaida and Ibaraki, in Japan.

A Rose Garden was first established in the White House grounds in 1913 and June was nominated National Rose Month in 1969. It became the National Floral Emblem in 1986 when President Reagan signed Proclamation 5574.

References
Khordeh Avesta translations of Kavasji Edulji Kanga and Tehmurasp Rustomji Sethna
Sam Kerr’s profile is on page 53.

There is a sufficiency in the world for man’s need, but not for man’s greed.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi

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.

Wine & Roses
“We revere the good and best waters Mazda-made holy, all the waters Mazda-made holy, and all the plants which Mazda made, and which are holy.”

- The Zend Avesta, Yasna XVII, 12

Every morning, my mother would place a glass of water, or in rare cases limbu nu sherbat (home-made lemonade) on the table in front of her as she recited her daily prayers.

On Friday mornings, for the Mooshkale Asahan Behram Yazad divo-buTTi prayers, along with water and limbu nu sherbat – a few flowers, sweet meats, pieces of rock candy, and unshelled grams (arranged around an oil wick flame, all placed on a German silver koodoochee) – would grace the upper right-hand corner of the two-tiered stone platform in the kitchen. The consecrated water would then be given to a younger family member to drink or to someone who was not feeling well.

Flowers and fragrance
Special attention was paid to the flowers ordered for all auspicious occasions: a birthday, Pateti-Navroz or Khordad Sal. Mother would ask the mali or phoolwalla to use flowers with a “ma-jay-no soj-jo pum-raat” (good fragrance). These flowers would be strung in torans across the lintels of doors and in garlands draped around the big, framed picture of Asho Zarathushtra, the photographs of our late mawwaji (maternal grandfather) and all my grandmothers’ late brothers.

The likes of dahlias, zinnias and marigolds were considered ‘jungle’ (wild) flowers. “The sweet and pleasant fragrances that please Pak Dadar Ahura Mazda are missing in these

Eating or drinking consecrated food or water is a practice found in the Vendidad, and still followed today. In the draona service small cakes called draona are blessed and then given to those present, to eat.

[1] Eating or drinking consecrated food or water is a practice found in the Vendidad, and still followed today. In the draona service small cakes called draona are blessed and then given to those present, to eat.
**Association of flowers with yazatas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yazata</th>
<th>Flower (Pahlavi)</th>
<th>Flower (English equivalent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hormazd</td>
<td>Murd Yasmin</td>
<td>Jasmine with leaves like the Myrtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahman</td>
<td>Saman-i-safid</td>
<td>Trefoil (clover)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ar dibehesht</td>
<td>Merezan gosh</td>
<td>Sweet Marjoram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheherivar</td>
<td>Shah-sparem</td>
<td>Basil-royal. Kings' Plant or foil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spendarmad</td>
<td>Faranj mashk</td>
<td>A sweet basil, lit., the musk of the Firangis or Franks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khordad</td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amerdad</td>
<td>Chambe</td>
<td>It is the Sanskrit Champak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daepa-adar</td>
<td>Vadr uz (vadrang) bui</td>
<td>Orange flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adar</td>
<td>Az ergun</td>
<td>Anemone or the Marigold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aban</td>
<td>Nilo-par</td>
<td>Water-lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khors hed</td>
<td>Marv-i-sped</td>
<td>Cat-thyme Katzen-kraut (German)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohor</td>
<td>R uges</td>
<td>Rush or Leek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tir</td>
<td>V anoosh</td>
<td>Flower of the Wan tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosh</td>
<td>Meren</td>
<td>Vine-flower, Fleur de vigne (French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daepa-meher</td>
<td>Karad</td>
<td>Species Pandanus odoratissimus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meher</td>
<td>Vanush</td>
<td>Violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sraosh</td>
<td>K heri Sorkh</td>
<td>Pepper grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rash na</td>
<td>N istarun</td>
<td>Narcissus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farvadin</td>
<td>A oroz</td>
<td>Cocks comb, Celastia cristata?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behram</td>
<td>Sisenbar</td>
<td>Water mint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram</td>
<td>K heri zerd</td>
<td>Yellow pepper grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guad</td>
<td>Vadrang-bui</td>
<td>Mountain-balm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daepa-din</td>
<td>Shambalit</td>
<td>Fenu-greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Din</td>
<td>Gul-i-sad varg</td>
<td>Rosa centi-folia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashisang</td>
<td>Hamak hamak</td>
<td>Buphthalmus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astad</td>
<td>Hamak Hom-i-Safid</td>
<td>White Haoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asman</td>
<td>Nana nanu sparam</td>
<td>Bread-vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamyad</td>
<td>K alkam</td>
<td>Saffron, Crocus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marespand</td>
<td>Artashiran</td>
<td>A bitter plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aneran</td>
<td>Haoma dato ai Hom</td>
<td>Haoma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above, chart showing connection of different flowers with each yazata, from J. J. Modi’s book [1] pages 374-375, with minor editorial changes. Left, Jasmine vine [PHOTO BY JOHN GLOVER, “THE SCENTED GARDEN” BY PAMELA ALLWEDICE”, COURTESY SAM KERR].
Flowers, “was my mother’s rationalization. She preferred roses, jasmine and spider lilies, to name a few.

She, and my father, taught us that Zarathushtis revere Ahura Mazda – the creator of all good things on this earth – by offerings of *myazd* (‘banquet’): fruits, flowers, vegetables, fragrances, sweet meats, *draona* (small cakes), water, milk, wine, sweet syrup and sherbats.

Liquid libations would be poured in glasses or in a metal *kanseeyo* (bowl) reserved for prayer. *Papri*, *malido* and fruits, prayed over in an *agia* by the priests, is referred to as *chasni*.

Flowers in profusion, are an integral part of all Zarathushti ceremonies – navjotes, weddings and *muktaad* (ceremonies for the *fravashis*, the souls of the departed). Stage backdrops at the open-air baugs (Albless Baug, Cama Baug and others) in Mumbai, where navjote and wedding ceremonies are performed, are the epitome of floral art, as grand as the spectacular floats at the annual June Rose Parade in Portland, Oregon or the grand floral parade in Pasadena, California, every new year.

A boutonniere, sprinkled with rose water, is presented to each wedding or navjote guest as they enter the baug. Toward the end of the ceremony, an overhead basket is opened up (by pulling strings) to shower rose petals on the navjote child or the bride and groom. Of course, the highlight of our association with plants is the custom of enjoying a Parsi wedding or navjote feast (*lagan nu bhonu*) on a *kera-nu patru* (banana leaf).

**On wine**

There is no injunction against wine in the Zend Avesta, in which it is prescribed for women during childbirth [*Vendidad V, 52*] and considered a healthful drink. The old Aryan root *madh* (remedy) and *daru* is a later Persian word for wine. Parsis use the vernacular *dava-daru* for medicine.

**Plants in the Avesta**

In the Hormazd Yasht [*I, 9*], as in other parts of the Avesta, the blessed and virtuous alliance of the holy *fravashis*, flowers, plants and waters is expressed as:

> “Worship me, O Zarathushtra, by day and by night, with offerings of libations well accepted. I will come unto thee for help and joy, I, Ahura Mazda; the good Sraosha will come unto thee for help and joy; the waters, the plants and the *fravashis* of the holy ones will come unto thee for help and joy.”

The importance and reverence for nature is expressed in our Zarathushhti Deen by representation of a flower for each *yazata* (angel) [*see chart previous page*]. This is further enhanced in the way in which flowers are placed by the priests during ceremonies. During the jashan ceremony, priests hold and exchange fragrant flowers and great care is taken in the arrangement of eight flowers during the recital of the aifrangi prayer.

**> References**


**> Remembernce is a way to exile,**

**Forgetfulness is a way to redemption.**

- Legend engraved at Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, the first Holocaust Memorial
HEALTHY LIVING

The Healthy Living column by Dr. Mehroo M. Patel will return in the next issue with an article on “Carbohydrate Confusion.”

Contemplation on vegetation and meditation

by Meher D. Amalsad

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My grandmother used to tell me: “Meher, pain may not be optional, but suffering is.”

Hippocrates said: “Let food be thy medicine, let medicine be thy food.”

When I bridge these two guiding philosophies, I see a path that shows me that pain can be made optional by selecting the right foods.

Foodless and brainless foods. The food mood relationship tells me that not only pain but also fat as well as diabetes can be whittled by making the proper food choices and by avoiding the foodless and brainless foods in our DIET (Did I Eat Today).

So what are foodless and brainless foods? Foods that are hydrogenated, processed and canned; fast foods and TV dinners. They are stripped of the essential Omega-3 fatty acid – whose deficiency contributes to degenerative conditions like heart attacks, arthritis, skin problems, immune systems disorders and mental illness.

Essential fatty acids. The Omega-3 and Omega-6 oils are two essential fatty acids that together form the membranes of every one of the billions of cells in our bodies, make up a very large part of the brain’s active tissues, and are the only fats which play key roles in regulating the cardiovascular, immune, digestive and reproductive functions; inflammation and healing; functioning of the brain; and body heat and calorie burning (weight loss).

Flaxseed [photo below] oil is the only oil that has higher levels of Omega-3 than any other natural product. It does not get stored as fat but gets used up as energy. That is why flaxseed oil is called the brain fat.

Alleviating pain. On the other side the leading cause of most pain is the accumulation of acidic byproducts in the muscles, which interfere with the normal conduction of electrical impulses in the muscle tissue. This pain can be sublimated by drinking 8-glasses of distilled water daily (with cinnamon, lemon and a little honey) and choosing foods that flush the toxins from the body and neutralize the inflammation-causing acids.

Foods for good health. Following are some foods that help keep the acidity in balance and improve the immune system:

- **Tofu**, low-fat yogurt (with live active cultures) and low-fat cottage cheese with cinnamon. Add a little honey if you are not diabetic.
- **Stone-ground whole wheat** products like whole wheat bread, pita, tortillas and pasta.
- **Boiled eggs**, lentils, soy beans, garbanzo beans, string beans, squash, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, garlic, ginger. Add green peas and carrots if you are not diabetic.
- **Oatmeal** with flax meal, pearl barley, and unsweetened seven-grain cereal. After cooking add RAW (not roasted or salted) almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds. (Only RAW nuts and seeds have live enzymes with healing properties, which are otherwise destroyed by the heat of roasting or salting). Add peanuts or peanut butter if you are not allergic to peanuts.
- **Aloe Vera** juice with cherry juice. Make a cocktail per your liking.
- **Apple cider vinegar** and lemon juice (fresh, not bottled) to be added to the cooked food just before serving.
- **Turmeric, cinnamon, cumin, clove, sage, dried mint, parsley, coriander, fennel seeds, black pepper, red pepper, and curry powder.**
- **Apples and bananas** with peanut butter and soy milk. Make a smoothie by adding strawberries, cherries or blue berries.
- Add cold-pressed flaxseed oil to already warmed food before serving. Do not use it in frying, or heat the food with flaxseed oil in it. Likewise, do not cook with garlic, ginger or onion. Instead add them to the cooked food just before serving to get the optimum benefit from their natural nutritional and antibacterial properties.

Not only pain but also fat as well as diabetes can be whittled by making the proper food choices and avoiding the ‘foodless and brainless’ foods.

Foods to avoid. Try to stay away from the following foods:

- All fried, processed and canned foods. The preservatives, dyes, colors and high fructose corn syrup cause a host of debilitating problems and contribute to insulin imbalance and weight gain.
- Colas, tea, coffee and sugary stuff including all sugar substitutes.
- Nightshade vegetables like tomatoes and eggplants as they contribute to joint pain.
and meditation, also helps to expedite the healing process.

- Here is a **static energy exercise** that is simple but powerful as it removes pain with time.
  1. From a hardware store, buy a 1-foot long, hollow, white, 1-inch diameter PVC pipe.
  2. Rub the PVC pipe on a woolen cloth for a minute to charge the pipe with static electricity.
  3. Starting from top to bottom, wave the charged pipe above the painful area. Get as close to the affected area as possible without touching it. For example for knee pain, start from the thigh, passing through the knee area going towards your ankle. For back pain you start from the top of the spine and do it all the way to the base of your sole.
  
  Do this exercise for about 15-20 minutes 2-3 times a day. You will feel the static energy as you wave the pipe around the affected area. For better results use it directly above the skin without any covering on the affected area.

- Let us focus on **energy healing** through white light meditation and the **Ashem Vohu** prayer. There is a white light rainbow meditation healing that helps reduce pain and expedites the recovery process.
  1. While reciting the Ashem Vohu prayer put one of your hands or both hands on the joint that causes pain.
  2. Breathe in and imagine a rainbow of light (with all seven colors) entering through the front of this joint.
  3. Breathe out and imagine a white light (merging of all seven colors) leaving through the back of this joint.

- Do this exercise for about 15-20 minutes 2-3 times a day. You will feel the static energy as you wave the pipe around the affected area. For better results use it directly above the skin without any covering on the affected area.

**Other helps to healing.** In addition to foods, the following will also help:

- Use a **good quality shower-head**, to block toxins from the water lines. These toxins get rapidly absorbed through the skin pores during a hot shower, resulting in a host of debilitating pain problems.

- It is said that serenity of the spirit starts with the sole. **ACU-LIFE sandals**, designed on the principle of **ACU-PRESSURE**, helps in stimulating the tiny nerve endings in your soles that correspond to your body’s vital organs, which in turn flush the toxins from your body. For more information, call 800-423-5176.

**Healing with prayer.** Besides proper foods, prayer with reflection

- Potatoes, white bread, white rice and refined pasta, as they spike the insulin levels in the body which puts a toll on all vital organs.

- Red Meats, to avoid ingestion of growth hormones and antibiotics injected in animals. The former contributes to pain; the latter impairs the human immune system.

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**On health …**

The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don’t want, drink what you don’t like, and do what you’d druther not,”

- Mark Twain

To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals. - Benjamin Franklin

The first wealth is health.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

God heals and the doctor takes the fee. - Benjamin Franklin

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**Meher D. Amalsad** lives in Westminster, California with his wife Katayoon and daughter Anahita. He is listed in Who’s Who in the World. He is author of BREAD FOR THE HEAD™. His life’s work is focused on

**Creating Unity within Diversity in Humanity.** To subscribe to his free Bread4theHead.com Z-inspirational newsletter visit: http://www.bread4thehead.com/

************
A treasure for the community

As always, reading and sometimes re-reading FEZANA Journal is truly a treat. You have created a treasure for the entire Zarathushhti community. Annahita Jasavala
Modesto, California

... We all appreciate the efforts you have put in over the years to make FEZANA Journal such an informative and interesting magazine, covering such a vast spectrum of topics.
Daisy Mehta
Sunnyvale, California

... Needless to say, I am really, really a great admirer of the people who have made this community Journal so professional, covering everything an immigrant Zarathushhti would like to read about. Your dedication and your efforts are remarkable.
Pervez P. Patel
Elmhurst, New York

Children’s section

I consider FEZANA Journal probably the best contemporary source of knowledge of our great religion, and eagerly await each issue – the articles are excellent and the selection of topics very systematic.
As a practicing pediatrician and father of two, I feel our community needs a source of information catered to children. I am suggesting a children’s section – “FEZANA Kids,” organized as a pull-out section, containing stories, activities on our religion and culture, arts and crafts projects, competitions, and more – a much needed aid for parents.
Dr. Ardeshir N. Irani
Farmington Hills, Michigan

[Excellent idea. FEZANA Journal would love to hear from anyone interested in taking up the challenge to develop a children’s section. - Ed.]

We received a number of letters on the issue of demographics [“The Zarathushhti World,” FJ Winter 2004]. Some are excerpted below.-Ed.

I hope the sun never sets on our religion

This [FJ, Winter 2004] was one of the most interesting and varied issues in a long time. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it from page to page.
Your team has always done such a fabulous job, that no words or thanks from our community can be enough.
I sincerely hope the sun never sets on our religion, and I am sure, with people like you and the many undaunted Zarathushhtis in North America, it will never happen!
Shiraz Bhesania
Vancouver, British Columbia

“Seminal treatise” on declining numbers

I applaud your editorial team for putting together a seminal treatise [FJ, Winter 2004] on the abysmal decline in our numbers.
The excellent op-ed pieces backed by a litany of irrefutable facts and statistics as well as the urgent call to action will hopefully awaken us all from our deep slumber. The writing has long been on the wall but you emblazoned it in a concise compelling format.
We are the guardians of our faith. We are the masters of our destiny and our children’s destiny. We must approach the issue of our very survival on a war footing and embark on a coordinated universal game plan otherwise posterity will treat us as no more than a dot; a blip here, a speck there, a muted extinction.
I hope that you will continue to be valiant and unrelenting in your efforts to unify and preserve our small world of believers in the message of Zarathushtra.
Sharookh Daroowala
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Well-researched and relevant

Congratulations on an exceedingly well-researched and relevant issue of the Journal pertaining to demographics. Your Journal team and the FEZANA executive deserve to be congratulated on a most remarkable achievement. With all our resources at Parsiana we would not have ventured on such a vast undertaking. It is a mammoth operation for which you all must have had to work very hard.
Jehangir Patel
Editor, Parsiana

Decline or migration?

I am delighted that FEZANA Journal has come out with world wide population figures for Zarathushs. If out of the total of 124,953 the population of Iran and India is taken out, we are left with 31,352 for the diaspora.
Some in India are disputing the “declining numbers” by claiming that migration accounts for a large percentage of the numbers lost. It is therefore important to know how many of those Zarathushhtis in the diaspora are Parsis, so that we may derive a more realistic number of Parsis from India who have migrated out.
Ava Khullar
Delhi, India

Reverse the gloom

I was discouraged to read the latest issue of FEZANA Journal on demography. One should not be downhearted even in the modern world of change and technology. What is important is the preservation of rituals and customs, not names, beliefs or feelings.
I have always urged Zardushti-Parsi families to strive to have sons marry
within the community since boys usually leave and join the community of their wives. Girls everywhere are the preservers of traditions. My student Jamsheed Choksy is a rare exception. The children of mixed marriages, like his, should be welcomed into the community.

There have been worse times in the past for minorities and with email, cell phones, etc. people can be kept together all over the world. Zoroastrians can even think like Baha’is, but the latter do not have the rich heritage of rituals and customs of Zoroastrians. Whosoever partakes of these can be accepted as a Zoroastrian. Forget race, ethnicity and even hewing to certain beliefs (Iranians always have changed, adapted and persisted).

You are an endangered minority, but then everyone should exert themselves to preserve and nurture the wonderful culture and history of Zoroastrians. Let people wrangle over beliefs and ethnicity but all should accept the culture, rituals and customs of the Zoroastrians and then one can be called a true Zoroastrian.

Richard N. Frye
Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Somehow, we shall survive!
I read all your articles with great interest. Some of the laments you addressed [FJ, Winter 2004] are my laments too. I hope we don’t wither away! That is my daily prayer. The statistics are so dismal right now, but somehow we shall survive!

Farida Major
Davie, Florida

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This happened in a small town in India quite a few years ago. Shapoorji, the new mobed was asked to perform the navjote of young Yazdi on the coming Sunday. The parents had said that the young boy did not want to drink the consecrated nirang which was supposed to be administered by the mobed just before the ceremony. They said it was the custom nowadays to just mix 2 drops of nirang with an ounce of Pomegranate juice to kill the taste. Shapoorji discussed this with the panthaky who was strongly opposed to the dilution.

Two days before the navjote a delegation of orthodox members of the community led by the panthaky came to strongly advise the parents of the correct customary procedure. The relatives and friends of the boy argued saying old customs had changed. Tempers became heated and the result was inconclusive. Shapoorji, on hearing of this fracas, went to see the vada dasturji and acquainted him with the problem.

"Respected dasturji, the panthaky and friends say that the dilution would vitiate the navjote, while the parents and friends of the boy maintain their position equally forcefully. So please tell me what is the custom in this community?"

The wise old man reflected for a few seconds. “Shapoorji, inconclusive argument IS our custom.”

A n older couple were lying in bed one night. The husband was falling asleep but the wife was in a romantic mood and wanted to talk. She said: “You used to hold my hand when we were courting.” Good-humoredly he reached across, held her hand for a few seconds and turned back to sleep.

A few moments later she said: “Then you used to kiss me.” Sighing, he reached across, gave her a peck and settled down to sleep.

Seconds later she said: “Then you used to bite my neck.” Wearily, he threw back the bed clothes and got out of bed.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To get my teeth!”

[Submitted by Anaheeta C. Minwalla, Fairfax, VA]
Heads in the sand

You have done a marvelous job in researching all the data on demographics, which will be useful to so many individuals, and hopefully wake up those who keep their heads buried in the sand.

Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan

I wept!

Your latest issue – so diversely enthralling in its ability to inform and entertain, has superseded all expectations. Congratulations to all involved in making FEZANA Journal such an utterly unique magazine, and such a pleasure to read.

I picked up your magazine, early one morning from my mailbox, on our way to work. Our residence was to undergo extensive repairs, and we had been warned of power shortage for the day. I was in a sombre mood. The thought of us staying at work, running our family business for twelve hours, was enough to erase the last traces of smile from my face. Then, reading the gloom and doom awaiting the Parsis, in the “Commentary” section, was the last straw that broke the camel’s back.

I wept!

Flicking through the pages, I came across Bomi Damkevala’s submission of “Never underestimate a Parsi.” That plastered the smile back on my face, and I burst out laughing.

From the article by Jamshed Choksy on Zarathushtis in Sri Lanka, to Soona Olija’s narration of the adventurous spirit of the early Parsis who arrived in Arab dhows on the shores of Seychelles, to Shapur Irani’s “Spark of Iranshah,” I enjoyed them all.

We join the many who sing the praises of your publication. Thank you, and keep the torch burning!

Pervin Paterasp Nirumvala
Burnaby, British Columbia

[See ad for the Nirumvala’s Delta4 Projection Systems on page 112]

The illustrious Parsis of East Africa – a long overdue mention

Reading about Zarathushtis of East Africa [FJ Winter 2004] left an emptiness in me! Nary a mention of those from Kenya, for that matter, hardly any names from any of the three constituent countries of East Africa! In fairness to all, and in loving memory of those who left foot-prints in the history of the Parsis of East Africa, I strongly feel their mention is long overdue.

Dinshaw Mehta, together with a de rigueur ‘white’ manager, opened the first bank in Zanzibar, some time in the 1890’s, and then moved to Nairobi. That was the National Bank of India, which subsequently morphed into National & Grindley’s, and finally the present day NatWest in the UK.

Dr. Elchi Sorabhjee was the first person in East Africa to own a Buick, and the first one to bring a Jaguar XK-120 to Zanzibar. He was also an ‘Oxford Blue’ in Rugby. His brother, Jal Sorabhjee was the first Asian to own an airplane, a Piper Super Cub. For legal work as a Barrister he was honored with Letters Patent from the Queen as Q. C. (Queen’s Counsel).

Nariman Mehta was a high official in the Kenya judiciary. He was appointed MBE by the Queen for years of faithful and extremely dedicated service. Jamshed Dinshaw Byramjee gave a good chunk of his time to public service, in addition to running his own business enterprise. For that he received the MBE from the Queen. He was also a DDGM in the Masonic fraternity. After years of service to the British Crown, Homi Amrolia received his MBE from the Monarch, at Buckingham Palace. During the investiture, he was described as the “Model Civil Servant.” Of significance is the fact that these honors bestowed, were upon individuals who toiled under the yoke of racial segregation – no mean feat, and quite humilitating.

Dr. Nariman Dottiwala was every Parsi’s doctor, in Mombasa. His gentle and caring nature endured him to those who sought relief from whatever ailed them. Dr. Dottiwala together with his dear wife Gool, made our Parsi community of Mombasa, proud.

Edulji Cowasji Bajina (my uncle – kaka) was head of the Asian staff working at the Port of Mombasa. He was instrumental in ‘importing’ many young Parsis from India to work at the Port. Among them were Er. Dara Karkaria and his cousin Er. Jal Karkaria. Many of us owe a deep sense of gratitude to these worthy priests. After a hard slog at work, to come home and teach us prayers and rituals, not to mention performing various jashans, navjotes and weddings, that is dedication to the faith, non pareil!

Every time a boat arrived from India, Edulji Bajina would be there, going on board to offer assistance to any Parsis arriving from India, in clearing customs and immigration.

On a personal note, I joined the Kenya police force in 1952, and was later posted to the CID headquarters in Nairobi. My work made me privy to some highly classified information. At the time, the Government of India was tacitly aiding the Mau Mau terrorist gangs against the white settlers of Kenya. This made me a suspect in the eyes of white officers of the Force.

It wasn’t till some one vouched for my loyalty, that I was accepted in the inner sanctum. It was given out that I was a Parsi, therefore, ipso facto a loyal servant of the Crown! That was from British army officers who left India and retired to farm in Kenya!

Am I proud to be a Parsi? Ya betcha!

Erich Bajina (erich.bajina@sympatico.ca)
Mississauga, Ontario
My cousin, Gul Sarkary of New York, mentioned that FEZANA Journal has published an issue on Zarathushtris around the world. You may be interested to know that my husband Erach Pestonji Daver and myself, Heera Daver have lived in Brazil since 1959.

Originally from Bombay, Erach and I were both living in London, when the then president, Joselino Kubeschek, invited the automobile industries to open their factories in Brazil. Erach, an electro-mechanical engineer, came here to work with Kaizer-Frazer that was putting up a factory for Willys Overland in São Paulo.

We were married here. It is interesting to note that I married the same man four times: once by proxy; then in the Indian embassy since Erach had an Indian passport; then again in the British embassy since I had a British passport; and finally, according to the Brazilian law. We liked the country and stayed on.

Later, we bred rabbits on a large scale at our farm of about 510 598 sq. meters about 80 km from São Paulo. I have been teaching English to Brazilians, and Portuguese to foreigners for the last 45 years. We are both retirees (Erach is 77 and I am 74) but keep active in every way. Erach has now invented a special type of construction which uses plastic softdrink bottles within concrete walls which makes the construction very economical and strong.

Other than a few that come on contract basis temporarily, we do not know of any other Zarathushtis settled in Brazil or South/Central America. However, we do have relatives all over the world – in England, Canada, USA, a nephew in Nigeria, and various relatives in Jamshedpur, Bulsar and other places in India – with whom we have contact fairly regularly.

Heera Daver
Rua São Fortunato-123, Interlagos, São Paulo, Brazil CEP 04783-050
e-mail: hezd@uol.com.br

Errata. FEZANA Journal regrets the following errors in Winter 2004:

- Malcolm Deboo’s title, in the photo caption on page 14, should be ZTFE secretary (not president).

- The email address in the matrimonial ad #F04-24, on page 116 is incorrect. The correct email is: pearlbibi@yahoo.ca.
A life and death issue

I recently came across a very thoughtful book The Parsis of India by Jesse Palsetia, which shows how the non-resolution of what the Parsi identity really is, is leading us to our demise and, will eventually relegate us to history. There is nothing more important than this life-and-death problem facing the community, which has remained unresolved, as revealed in Palsetia’s book. Therefore, I’ve taken the time to write a synopsis, with my comments, for publication in FEZANA Journal.

This issue, of our very survival, needs to be addressed threadbare, from a historical perspective, inviting readers’ reactions and views, and starting a discussion that can increase our awareness of this sword hanging over us.

Kersey H. Antia
Orland Park, Illinois

[Dr. Antia’s paper is excerpted on page 141. Readers’ thoughts and comments are invited on the grave issues addressed therein. - Ed]

Parsis Have a Dream

Twice in the past, Zarathushtris almost vanished, like the Phoenicians who actually vanished: at the hands of Alexander in 330 BCE and a second time, when the Arabs, soon after the demise of Prophet Mohammed in 632 CE, defeated the Zarathushtri Empire, ending it forever.

The few who escaped by sea route to western India, the Parsis, integrated themselves well, while still maintaining their religion and culture. By their sheer labor, they brought glory to India, its industries, commerce and charities. Fifty years ago, the Parsis of Mumbai numbered about 100,000. Thereafter their population fell every year, to just 40,000 in 2005.

During the last 30 years many Parsis have migrated to the West. It is almost certain that in spite of their Herculean efforts to preserve their religion and culture in their adopted land, Park, Illinois

[Continued on page 143]
Is Your Life Half Fulfilled?

Have you ever spent the afternoon flipping through magazines reflecting on societies completely different from your own? The glossy pages profile lives filled with excitement or opportunity you thought only existed in novels. Your daydreams let you explore how great it would be to travel, lead a company, serve the poor, or even run for mayor...CRASH. Your mind runs into a roadblock when your friend calls you on the phone, your computer alerts you email, or you remember you have a deadline for your college paper. So you shove the dream aside – not the magazine version – but the one that was beginning to formulate in your own spirit. Of course, you do have to go back to your responsibilities, just try not to squelch your spirit.

If you felt a spirit tug when you read about how so many of our very own Zarathushti youth have succeeded in life that is knowledge about yourself. You experienced a sense of joy because these youth did not just talk about reaching success...they actually did it. Just think about the times you felt this kind of elation. Chances are your heart had witnessed an authentic vision.

Vision allows us to put our dreams into action and embrace knowledge about how to live our lives. While purpose is the "why and what" of life, vision is the essential "how." Thankfully, we will never control our total destiny – that is Ahura Mazda’s job – but through vision and using our good mind, we can determine the shape our purpose will take. We can question our current circumstance, compare it to the vision, and make plans accordingly.

Having this understanding, you should live each moment according to your desire and passion. Following the three tenets of our religion i.e. good thoughts, words, and deeds, should inspire you to make each day a memorable day. If you’re still in school, find out what inspires you in life and go after it. I have always looked at my life as I would my hall way closet. What is it that I am storing up in there rather than using? What gifts and abilities and resources remain on the shelves of my heart when they could be serving the heart of the community, my association, or school? At one point in our lives, we must all take an inventory of our physical, emotional, and spiritual
selves in order to gain a deeper sense of who we are and help us stay on track with our vision and ultimate purpose in life.

Spirituality is the very essence of our existence. Every moment of life is the perfect time to reach out to your spiritual side and find out what you truly lust for and desire. I for one, realized that although I have a great deal of passion for medicine, my spiritual sense has led me down the road towards politics and no matter how busy I say I am, I have always allowed my inner spirituality to take highest priority. I encourage you to listen to your inner selves and find out what hidden talent you have that can benefit this community, this country, and more importantly, this world.

So begin each day with happy, positive thoughts. Repeat them as often as you can. Slow down, live each day, each moment, be with what you are doing, even if it is sitting in front of your dorm window or taking a moment to think while you’re in the library. Live in the here and now, expecting the best, and no doubt you will get it. Dispel all negative thoughts, replace them with positive ones. This helps the healing process, it builds your self-esteem, it energizes you and gives you peace of mind. I have always said that if one thinks positively...then you set in motion positive forces which bring positive results to pass.

We Zarathushtis are a unique community in that we are small in numbers, but large at heart and for this reason, we must all work together, put politics aside, and allow our spiritualities to guide us towards success in life.

_____________________________________________________________

Food For Thought

Prayer – There is no manual, no step-by-step techniques to teach us how to pray. For praying is simply a way of reaching out to Ahura Mazda, for being in communion with Him, and yes, it is generally a selfish act, for we tend to ask for something.

A prayer usually takes the guise of a petition or plea turned heavenwards. When you pray, you surrender yourself to Ahura Mazda, faith in Him being the source of all prayers. But have you even wondered about the nature of your prayers and whether or not you only pray when in desire or facing a dilemma? Feel free to send your comments.
Ush tavaity Davar
Ushta@aol.com
Ushta was born in Karachi, Pakistan and moved to NJ with her family when she was 2. A member of ZAGNY, Ushta attended religious classes for a number of years, and then proceeded to teach the youngest class for 3 years. She is currently obtaining her Master's in Human Genetics from Sarah Lawrence College in NY and will graduate in May 2005. Ushta was also selected for a Fellowship in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities for the 2004-2005 year. For the future, Ushta hopes to use her educational background and experience to understand more about the health needs and concerns of the Zarathushti community.

Like many of you reading this, I was born into the Zarathushti faith. However, it wasn’t until after my Navjote that I really started to question what being a Zarathushti meant to me. It was then when I realized that although I knew the basic tenants of the religion, and all my prayers, I didn’t really understand what or why I was saying them, or what being a Zarathushti meant to me personally. In essence, I was everything I didn’t want to be; a “blind follower”.

As I began my quest to understand and reflect more about the religion that I was initiated into, I realized that the teachings were actually quite consistent with some of my personal beliefs and the way that I wanted to live my life. Once I started to understand more about what the Zarathushti religion meant to me personally, I felt more connected religiously and spiritually.

It’s been many years since my initial reflection on the religion. Between the time that I began my search for a deeper understanding of the Zarathushti religion and now; my views and feelings about my faith haven’t changed much. However, over the past few years, I have noticed that I haven’t felt as consistently connected to the religion as I once did when I was younger. Although I still wholeheartedly value and believe in the religion, I’ve begun to question why over the past few years I haven’t felt as spiritual as I once did.

In searching for these answers, I realized that part of the reason why I haven’t felt as connected religiously lately is because I have been very content with my life. It seems as though the toughest times are when we seek the greatest guidance. There is a sense of comfort and peace for me when I turn to faith in my times of need. In speaking with many of my peers, I’ve realized that I am not alone in this way of thinking and that perhaps it is just human nature to turn to religion or spirituality in our times of need, loneliness, and grief. So does this mean that I am less of a religious Zarathushti than I was a few years ago when I felt more connected? I’m pretty sure and would like to think that the answer to that is “no”. Conversely, perhaps the reason why I don’t feel as spiritually connected “these days” is because I have already sought out what the Zarathushti religion means for me in my life and I am very comfortable with my faith, thus leaving me feeling very internally content with my life.

Although recently I’ve seen myself turn more to faith in my times of “need”, I’ve also found myself equally reflecting upon my faith and life in times of sheer happiness and being very grateful for the fact that I can feel such contentment. My understanding of and faith in the Zarathushti religion has given me guidance that has ultimately left me with confidence and a positive outlook for each day. It has also helped me appreciate life’s many experiences including both the sad and happy moments. Our religion encourages us to not “blindly follow”, thus I hope that everyone at some point in their life is able to take time out to reflect and question what the Zarathushti religion means to them personally.

“From the beginning you fashioned for us physical bodies, an awakened conscience and a directive intelligence through Your own Mind. You infused life’s breath into mortal forms. You granted us capacities to act and true teachings to guide us so that one could choose beliefs at will.” (Ys.31.11-13)

I am very interested in hearing others’ thoughts and opinions on this topic.

*Feedback is appreciated!*
I was recently sent a book from one of my friends and was able to briefly look over it before writing this article. It told the true story of a Zarathushti gentleman born into a mobed family who married outside the religion. He approached his family to tell of his wife to be and had asked for his family’s love and blessing to marry this non-Zarathushti girl. To his surprise, his family quickly rejected the idea of him marrying outside the religion and did not respect his decision because it would bring down the family name. He was devastated, especially coming from a mobed family where the tenets of the religion are so highly regarded in daily life.

Another true story comes to mind when a Zarathushti man married outside the religion and for the longest time, the parents would not talk with him. He had three children and as the children approached their teen years, finally the parents decided to open up a little and talk with their son. One day, his aunt had invited the family over for dinner and when setting the table, the aunt decided to use paper utensils for the non-Zarathushti wife because the aunt felt that the girl was unclean.

It is truly a shame to hear such true stories that have taken place around the world. In a religion where the essence of its principles are based on practicing good thoughts, words and deeds and an individual is allowed to chose his or her own path, one begins to question such unrighteous acts. We as a Zarathushti society must learn to adapt to today’s culture and respect other people of different religions. Having the freedom to choose is one way of saying you are a true Zarathushti. We have to update our religion to the needs of today’s society and today’s younger generations. Our future lies in the hands of today’s youth and we must listen to them and accept that times have changed.
Making spiritual connections

SPARSE ZOROASTRIAN COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER AT MEETINGS, ONLINE

By Robin Evans
Mercury News

Their faith might be 3,500 years old, but with its focus on protecting the environment, good thoughts, good deeds and taking personal responsibility, it’s as up-to-date as the Sierra Club or Dr. Phil. The biggest difference for Zoroastrians in the modern age: they seldom see one another. “We drive long distances to meet others,” said Silloo Tarapore…

Pared down by war and persecution and restrained by a prohibition against proselytizing and a slow acceptance of intermarriage, this ancient Persian religion has only about 150,000 followers worldwide.

Maintaining community and a continuity of faith in a religion that’s struggling to survive is just one of the concerns of the Zarathoshti Association of Northern California. The organization is hosting the 13th North American Zoroastrian Congress. On community issues, the answers have proved to be in their own back yard. The technology of Silicon Valley, where many Zoroastrian engineers, doctors, accountants and businessmen immigrated after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, provided connections that promise to turn a thinning community into a thriving – and powerful – one … Jamshid Varza believes: “For a small community like ours, scattered across continents and countries, the Internet is the best thing to happen.”


Followers of Zoroaster share faith of 3 wise men

By Don Lattin, CHRONICLE RELIGION WRITER

Almost everyone knows about the magi, the “wise men from the East” who herald the birth of Jesus with gifts of gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

But few realize that these three kings of Orient are not Christians or Jews, but Zoroastrians – members of an ancient faith that not only survives to this day, but holds its national convention next week in San Jose.

Who were these pagan astrologers, following yonder star into the Gospel according to Matthew and onto the set of countless Christmas cards and nativity scenes?

And what do they have to do with Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian faith that heavily influenced the development of Judaism and Christianity?

Zoroastrians are followers of the Prophet Zoroaster, a monotheistic philosopher whose teachings became the state religion of the Persian Empire in the seventh century B.C. Cyrus the Great, the Persian king, released the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and allowed them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Many scholars believe that the Jews brought back many ideas gleaned from the Zoroastrian faith…

Over the centuries, their faith survived two great challenges. Alexander the Great, known to Zoroastrians as “Alexander the Accursed,” conquered the Persians in the fourth century B.C., burning the capital city of Persepolis and its library full of Zoroastrian manuscripts. Muslim invaders wreaked havoc in the seventh century and continued to be harsh rulers over the centuries, forcing a band of freedom-seeking Zoroastrians to seek refuge in India, where they became known as the Parsis, the “people from Persia.”

FROM SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, DECEMBER 25, 2004
A life-long commitment to the Zarathushti community

ZWIN Award winners: Roshan Rivetna & Khorshed Jungalwala

Many Zarathushti women contribute to others and to our communities—and many go unacknowledged. People notice, but some women do things with such modesty, discreetly doing their good work, that they can almost go unnoticed. Of course, Ahura Mazda’s computer reckons all this into the equation, and we know that people like this must be happy, since they bring happiness to others. ZWIN wanted to give recognition to two of these very special women at the North American Zoroastrian Congress in San Jose [see page 40].

The first is a very gracious lady, our dear and loved Roshan Rivetna [above], who has worked behind the scenes to support her dedicated husband, Rohinton (who was founding president of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago as well as of FEZANA) and also contributed to the community in so many tangible and lasting ways.

This ZWINner is the prime architect behind the growth of FEZANA Journal from a fledgling newsletter in 1991 to the world-class magazine it is today, and has worked with a passion on its production, from concept to distribution, for the last 15 years. What many don’t know is that this ZWINner does more than produce the Journal – she gives of herself and her time to assist any and every cause for the community. Plus “in her spare time” she takes great pleasure in helping young (and old) single Zarathushti men and women meet each other – “poon noo kam!” She has also helped with advice in every initiative that ZWIN has undertaken.

All this, as she continues to be a loving wife, mother, grandmother and a gentle and kind human being. Their son Jamshed, who is presently vice president of the Zoroastrian Association of North Texas, lives with his wife Tami and three daughters in Plano, Texas; daughter Zenobia and her husband Darius Damania and newborn Ness, live in Glen Ellyn, a Chicago suburb; and son Cyrus is an architect in Chicago.

Roshan comes from a very traditional “bhannar-gannar” family, with even an agiary room in the bungalow where her family lived. She went to Queen Mary High School in Mumbai, and later came to the University of Pittsburgh for her master’s in Nuclear Physics. She then returned to India and worked at the Atomic Energy Establishment Trombay and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai.

Roshan came to Chicago as a new bride in 1966. She worked in High Energy Physics at the Argonne National Lab for 15 years and at AT&T Bell Laboratories (which subsequently became Lucent Technolo-

gies) as a telecommunications engineer, until she retired in 2001.

Roshan feels truly blessed that she can now devote full time to the many causes and projects she is so passionate about.

Roshan is deeply concerned about the dwindling numbers in our community and dreams of a time when “our worldwide dispersed communities can come together, and grow together, with mutual respect, despite our differing views.”

She hopes that her efforts with FEZANA Journal have helped connect our far-flung community members, and to preserve and perpetuate our beautiful customs and traditions, our history and religion. Her greatest joy is in seeing our next generation growing up to be responsible Zarathushtis, and carrying the torch.

Roshan is an outstanding role model of all that is best in Zarathushti women – in the family and in the community.

Roshan sees ZWIN as a “mini world body,” without the encumbrance of a formal organization, and wants ZWIN to keep doing what it is doing so well.

The ZWIN community also recognized a woman that we are all very fond of and have a great deal of respect for – Khorshed Jungalwala [photo next page]. This ZWINner and her spouse have been pillars of the Boston area community and Khorshed has contributed to the larger FEZANA and world community in various ways.

This generous and gracious lady has opened her home and her kitchen (with superb cuisine) to many more
people than we can imagine. Any Zarathushti in need coming to their area, Khorshed has welcomed and kept in her home and under their wings. People from overseas, people with ailing children, people who are suffering, people who are immigrating—she and Phiroze have taken care of them, sometimes for months, expecting nothing in return.

Khorshed is a woman of the highest integrity, dignity and diligent responsibility—an example to us all. But more than that, she is a compassionate human being. If someone is in trouble or needs help, she and her husband are by their side in a minute. She lends support and works to have people understand one another better. She has always taken the high road and met numerous challenges with fortitude, grace and faith.

Khorshed is the granddaughter of Khan Saheb Pestonji and Coovarbai Wadia, and daughter of Dhanjishah and Tehmina. She was born in Surat and grew up in Pune and feels she learnt a lot from her parents and brothers, who had a high sense of integrity and were loving and non-critical.

She graduated in history and political science and then became a lawyer, receiving the first prize in International Law. She worked with Mulla & Mulla in Bombay. Musically talented, she is also a Licentiate of the Trinity College of Music, London in piano and voice, and has performed both in India and England.

In 1968 she married Dr. Firoze Junagalwala, senior research fellow at Cambridge University, England and then came to USA, when he joined Harvard University. She is currently a contracts specialist with a company in Belmont, Massachusetts. They have a daughter Ferzin, a son Jehangir who are both married, and Khorshed is totally devoted to her grandson, Davin.

Firoze and Khorshed were founding members of the Zoroastrian Association of the Greater Boston Area—ZAGBA (1983) and Firoze was its first President. Khorshed was the President from 1992 – 1996. She has helped organize national and international conferences such as the Gatha Conference in Houston (1996), the Harvard University seminars, and the International Avesta Conference in Boston (1997). She was a member of the FEZANA Historic Research & Preservation Committee, a director of the Zoroastrian Education & Research Society, and chair of the FEZANA Publications Committee since 1998, and has co-authored a book on Central Asian Republics (1995).

Khorshed was appointed chairperson of the FEZANA World Body Working Group from 2001 to 2003. Her vision is to see a truly representative World Body for the world Zarathushti community—built on trust, respect, equality, and legitimate rights of the majority and minority.

Khorshed was a member of the Board of Directors of the Third World Scholars Consortium from 1993 – 1999, and, as a strong supporter of religious tolerance, participates in special projects of the Pluralism Project of Harvard University established by Prof. Diane Eck. She was a member of The Governor’s Advisory Council and continues to perform as the Justice of Peace in Massachusetts.

An avid supporter of classical music and dance, Khorshed has held various positions on the boards of arts councils and cultural organizations recently retiring as president of the MetroWest International Concerts Association (affiliate of Columbia Artists) after 12 years.

Khorshed feels that the Zarathushti community has a glorious past and a progressive future. She believes that the actions we take today will define our success for future generations, and that our mission can only be accomplished if we promote harmony within the existing diversity of our local, national and worldwide community—and show tolerance towards those whose views may not coincide with our own, as long as they follow the righteous path.

We are proud to have these two gracious women in our ZWIN community and they stand for all that is best in our larger Zarathushti community.

Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz is founder and president of Managing Across Cultures, a cross-cultural management consulting firm. She is the spirit behind ZWIN, the Zoroastrian Women’s International Network (ZWIN3@yahoogroups.com)

Sudreh kushti ...

[Continued from page 98] suicide; and an increasingly monocultural world will be poorer for it.

There is much talk of establishing a consecrated fire temple in North America. Is this a logical step considering that the custom of not wearing the sudreh-kushti has reached epidemic proportions? We need to be observant Zarathushis first before trying to enact grandiose schemes.

To each and every one of you, I urge you to look within. Confront this challenging issue and search for answers. Give “Operation Sudreh-Kushti” the importance it deserves and a chance to survive.

Zaver Shroff (Patel), DVM, MS is a graduate of Bombay Veterinary College and University of Minnesota. She is a veterinarian and lives in California with her husband and children.
At midnight on July 1, 1997, 156 years of British rule in Hong Kong ended when the colony was handed back to China. At the ‘handover’ ceremony Charles, Prince of Wales, said, “We shall not forget you, and we shall watch with the closest interest as you embark on this new era of your remarkable history.”

With these few words and an incredible fireworks display the world saw a new dawn and a new beginning for Hong Kong. Similarly, but on a much smaller scale, The Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston served as a platform for the launch of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, on December 29th, 2000.

Why SynergyZ? Parvez Varjanyad was winner of the $200 prize to name the new WZCC Journal. His entry of ‘Barsam,’ representing hamazori or ‘strength in union’ came closest to representing WZCC’s aim of networking and working together and led to the collective decision by the Journal team to name it ‘SynergyZ’ (with a Z for Zoroastrian).

It will be a constant reminder to work together for the greater good, as has been our teaching for 3 millennia. If and when we really grasp this teaching, there will be no stopping our community. We could reach heights never imagined by humankind – such is the strength of hamazori and togetherness and such has been the wisdom of our forefathers. We are glad to perpetuate this teaching in the WZCC Journal.

Rohinton Rivetna, President, WZCC
Rivetna@aol.com, (630) 325-5383.
All members of WZCC will receive the first, commemorative issue of ‘SynergyZ’, the new WZCC Journal, and all future issues.

To become a member of WZCC, contact your local chapter chair or sign up on the WZCC website:

www.wzcc.net

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
2004 WZCC Recognitions

Nominations are invited for:
A. Outstanding Entrepreneur.
B. Outstanding Professional.
C. Outstanding young (35 & under) Entrepreneur/Professional.

Nomination forms are available at www.wzcc.net.

Contact: Homee Shroff at homabs2004@yahoo.com

WZCC-Houston holds business/tax seminars

On January 19, WZCC-Houston (chair Zarir Sethna, zarirs@sbcglobal.net) organized a dinner seminar at the Mayuri restaurant, with three speakers: Jal Guzder, on starting a new business; Purvez Rustomji, sharing his experiences in starting his business – Coating Engineers; and Arish Rustomji, speaking about how he used technology to improve the organization (Coating Engineers).

In February, two young Houston professional CPAs, Kershaw Khumbatta and Ruzbeh Daruwalla presented a program on aspects of the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 and the Tax Relief Act, covering: itemized deductions, reporting of charitable contributions, rental and residence tax laws, auto depreciation, S Corp changes, Roth IRA, foreign accounts, etc.

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$3,000/- or near offer.
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WZCC Business Delegation to Iran

All are invited to join the 18-day (or optional 10-day) WZCC business delegation cum cultural tour to Iran, starting May 13. Parvez Varjavand, Alayar Dabestani and Khodayar Attaiie (Regional Director, WZCC-Iran) are lending support in identifying business opportunities.

“Iran is ready to receive members of WZCC. Our Parliament rep Dr. Niknam has been most cooperative and sympathetic to the goals and ambitions of WZCC. International tensions have cooled. Please come, the community is well prepared to receive you with open arms.” - Parvez Varjavand

Contact Rohinton Rivetna at rivetna@aol.com or Kersi Commissariat (WZCC-India) at KCommissariat@yahoo.com.

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from London to Sydney – all of a sudden, the world has become a smaller place.

“Promoting business and information, through networking, within our own community, has to be the quintessential need today, enabling us to address the challenges of tomorrow.”

San Francisco hosts Business Conference with Congress
The San Francisco chapter of WZCC (chair Jamshed Gandi, jbgandi@bgwbcpas.com) hosted the very successful Business Conference as a prelude to the Congress in San Jose [see page 48]. Gandi said: “WZCC was formed with the basic concept of fostering business needs, networking solutions, entrepreneurial wherewithal, and community financial wellbeing. The WZCC has set up chapters from San Francisco to Delhi, and

Chicago chapter seminar on franchising
WZCC-Chicago (chair Pheroze Nagarwalla, nagarwalla@hotmail.com) hosted a dinner meeting at Greek Islands restaurant on December 4, 2004. Sal Sheikh of ‘Franchise Net’ presented an interactive session on the ‘why’ and ‘how-to’ of selecting and starting a franchise business, followed by sharing of experiences by three Chicago-area franchisees: Niloufer Darukhanavala (Kumon), Yaz Bilimoria (Quiznos) and Boman Damkevala (Great Clips).

Los Angeles chapter presents Marketing and Business talks
The Los Angeles chapter (chairs Kali Patel and Homi Bodhanwala, WZCC_LA@yahoo.com) hosted a series of meetings with Diana Damkevala, senior sales rep with R. R. Donnelley, who spoke on methods of marketing one’s products; and business consultants from Wells Fargo Bank who presented some eye-opening federal programs available to new business owners.

Contact Perviz C. Patel or Cowas G. Patel at (626) 967-0037.

Australian Kraft Cheese in blue tins: $75 /case of 36 cans
New Zealand Creamery Butter: $60 /case of 24 cans
Pakistan chapter gets started

The fledgling WZCC-Pakistan (chair Noshervan G. Irani, industec@cyber.net.pk) got started with a meeting of three persons: the chair Mr. Irani, Cyrus Cowasjee and Percy Gazdar. As a first step they have placed announcements publicizing WZCC in local Zarathushti bulletins, encouraging community members to participate in WZCC activities so that “together we can revitalize the future of our community.”

Innovative programs by WZCC-UK

Lynne Brindley, chief executive of the British Library hosted WZCC-UK (president Karan Bilimoria, jcambatta@cobrabeer.com) at the British Library on November 16, 2004. Graham Shaw and Ursula Sims-Williams, spoke on the wide range of Zarathushti materials in the Library, from manuscripts, letters and rare printed books to drawings and photographs. Groups were then taken on organized tours of the Business Section of the library.

On February 21st, 2005, WZCC-UK organized a program at the prestigious London Business School, one of the 10 top MBA schools in the world. Guest Speaker was Dinesh Dhamija, founder and CEO of ebookers, one of Europe’s leading Internet entrepreneurs, and a veteran of the travel industry.

WZCC-UK chapter (chair Rusi Ghandhi, rusi@garden.net) created history again on February 20th, 2005, hosting the area’s first ‘Entrepreneur Day’. The darbe mehr in Suffern, NY was rocking with 17 exhibitors and over 60 attendees. New and established business owners and professionals participated, each speaking about their products and services. It was also a great opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas. WZCC-UK chapter raised $539 for the Tsunami Funds from the 50/50 raffle, Meher Hodiwala donated her winnings of $160, Roshan Mountwala (Mahwah Florist) donated $117 from sale of her flower arrangements, and Avan Patel (Chocolate Divines) raised $104. $101 was donated to the SSF-Phuket project to rebuild the Kamala Child Development Center in Phuket, Thailand [see story on page 14]; the rest was sent to the FEZANA Tsunami appeal. With 33 members now, WZCC-UK has reached yet one more milestone.

- by Rusi Gandhi

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Launching new E-commerce website
Zahanbax and Roshni Patel announce the launching of their new E-commerce website: www.navruzinc.com. Navruz Inc. takes pride in providing quality products at discount prices: apparel and accessories, watches (Bulova, Calvin Klein, Lucien, Piccard), TV and projector systems (Samsung, Sharp, Panasonic, Canon), kitchenware and appliances (Coventry, Noritake) and more.

New Restaurant in Vancouver
“Ed Madon is spicing up the Heights with his new Bombay Bhel restaurant,” wrote the food critic in Burnaby Now. Eddie Madon, a chartered accountant has just opened the new Bombay Bhel restaurant in Vancouver following upon the success of five other restaurants in the Bombay Bhel chain in the Toronto area. FoodVancouver.com commented: “Overall, this was a great dining experience. Bombay Bhel is a classy and inviting place to eat some very well prepared Indian food.”

**Inventor Cyrus Bamji**

Cyrus Bamji’s start-up CANESTA, in the Silicon Valley, has invented a ‘virtual keyboard’, designed mostly for travelers, who can now communicate through their cell-phones or PDA’s, and leave their bulky laptops at home. A beam of light projects the keyboard onto any flat surface, like an airline tray table. The technology is currently being marketed by their spinoff company, Celluon.

**Applications.** At the core of the technology is a low-cost (around $150) ‘3D sensor’ – an imaging optical radar, with far-reaching applications, e.g. in video games, where the screen is controlled by the player’s body actions instead of a joystick; the automobile industry (customized airbag deployment, pedestrian detection, advanced cruise control); and in the security industry, for intruder detection and perimeter protection. CANESTA is working with automobile and security companies to bring this ground-breaking technology to market.

**CANESTA is born.** Cyrus and partner Nazim Kareemi met at an MIT gathering in 1998. Kareem’s experience in the technology business was complemented by Cyrus’ ongoing supply of ideas, making the two an ideal team. They were joined by an engineer colleague, Abbas Rafii. CANESTA, an acronym of the three founders’ names, started in a small room, in 1999, and was funded by themselves for a year.

“At first, instead of earning money, we were burning money,” said Cyrus.

In 2000 they went after their initial round of venture capital and raised $3 million.

Cyrus, previously from Cadence Design Systems of San Jose, has five degrees from MIT spanning physics, math, electrical engineering and computer science.

“One reason I quit my job to start a company, is that I felt that at the end of my career, I would regret not having tried it. I believe many would reach the same conclusion, if they felt like I did.”

Originally from Bombay, Cyrus lives in California with his wife Nagja and 8-year-old daughter, Dinaz. [Also see WZCC conference, page 51].

**Xerxes Wania starts new company, Sidense**

Xerxes Wania [left] has left Synopsys, “I decided it was time to start a new company” he writes. “We started Sidense in September and it has been very exciting for all of us.”

They now have nine employees and are designing a new type of non-volatile memory. Currently, they are prototyping their design and raising funds from Angel investors and VCs.

“The next few years will be full of challenges and I look forward to it.”

**Pooladi-Darvish – unlocking energy in ice.** Dr. Mehran Pooladi-Darvish, associate professor, chemical engineering at University of Calgary, believes that hidden in the Arctic, beneath the frozen tundra and in deep ocean sediments is the key to an almost immeasurable energy resource – natural gas hydrates. “Potentially, it’s a clean, long-term source of energy.”

Pooladi and his students have developed simulators to turn this solid energy into natural gas. Field results in the Mackenzie Delta beneath the shores of the Beaufort Sea were consistent with the simulations.

Born in Iran in 1966, he obtained his masters at the Petroleum University of Technology in Iran, and a PhD in Petroleum Engineering at the University of Alberta. He joined the University of Calgary in 1997. Mehran lives with his wife Behrokh, 2-year-old son Arshaya, and newborn girl Vista, in Calgary.
Billionaire Mistry
Construction baron Pallonji Mistry, India’s fifth wealthiest man, just got $1.7 billion richer. The reason is the sizzling stock market debut of Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. The 75-year-old’s investment firm owns 87 percent of TCS.

Mistry, like the Tatas, is a member of the entrepreneurial Parsi ethnic community.

Though reclusive, Mistry built a booming construction business. He did not diversify or acquire companies in his path, preferring instead to consolidate. People who know him describe him as humble and affable.

“He has excellent business acumen and is unassuming,” says his son Cyrus P. Mistry, managing director of Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Ltd. In early 1970s, Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Ltd. started bidding for projects in the Middle East and won a contract to build the palace of the Sultan of Oman. “That was the biggest challenge my father undertook, and in a sense he was the pioneer in taking Indian construction business overseas,” Cyrus said.

Pallonji built many landmark structures in the Middle East. His imposing structures have also filled out the skyline of India’s financial capital.

His family is said to have substantial real estate holdings in Bombay and other parts of the country.

Pallonji lives with his wife and two sons in a cream-colored Georgian mansion overlooking the Arabian Sea in Bombay. “He spends about an hour in prayer each day and is an intensely family man,” Cyrus said.

The family also has a passion for horses, and runs two stud farms in Pune. Mistry’s eldest son Shapoor looks after the farms. Known to never lose his cool, Pallonji commands immense respect in the business community.

[Excerpts from a Reuter’s report submitted by Maneck Bhujwala]

Forbes honors Tata Ratan Tata, who is credited with the phenomenal growth of the Tata group in the past decade has been named as Forbes’ Asian Businessman of the Year. Crediting Tata, 67, with modernizing perhaps one of the most respected business houses of India, Forbes said Ratan Tata has spent the past decade more than doubling the revenue of the corporate giant. “The genius of Ratan is he understood what needed to be done in India.”

[Submitted by Behram Pastakia]

Starbucks and Tata Tata Coffee Ltd. has signed an agreement last week with Seattle-based Starbucks Corp., the world’s largest coffee chain, to sell premium arabica grade coffee beans.

Starbucks would buy coffee beans at a 40 percent price premium (over global market prices) from Tata Coffee, for its quality as well as environment and labor-friendly policies.

India produces 4 percent of the world’s coffee. Tata Coffee produces 10 million kg from 7,000 hectares of plantations, and competes with Nestle Ltd and Hindustan Lever Ltd in India’s branded coffee market.

[Submitted by Behram Pastakia]
The Year of Scholarships

This year we shall devote all our effort towards a very worthy cause, which is to raise as much as possible for our very deserving and exceptional Zarathushti students. Last year we had 40 applicants for the Academic Scholarship Award and all the six judges agreed that we had the most exceptional deserving students. However, because of lack of sufficient funding, we could only help 10 of these students by awarding them $1,000 each from the Academic Scholarship Fund and $5,000 to one student from the Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Scholarship - the FEZANA Scholar. As we all know, college expenses have accelerated over the last few years and the above amounts hardly make a dent in a student’s yearly expense. For these reasons, the Zarathushti community has to get together to support and encourage our younger generation to continue the hard work and effort in obtaining their graduate and post-graduate degrees. This important subject was discussed at the 13th North American Zarathushti Congress in San Jose, California at a special meeting of the Scholarship Committee chaired by Dr. Dolly Dastoor.

At all the North American Zarathushti Congresses, our FEZANA Annual General Meetings and at our local Association functions everyone always stresses the importance of our youth: the youth are the future of our community and how we should get involved and support our youth. This past year, the Scholarship committee received 40 applications of highly intelligent and motivated students seeking financial help to defray some of the expenses of obtaining a higher education. These students, many of them in North America on student visas, are maintaining 3.5 - 4.0 averages, taking the most challenging course programs, taking loans from family and friends while holding jobs just to reach their goals. They are active within the Zarathushti community participating and donating their time to various programs at the Association levels. Maybe we should begin supporting the youth at this very tender and important time in their lives to show them that the Zarathushti community is watching over them and trying in this small way to help and support them.

The Academic Scholarship Fund was able to distribute $10,000 for the past two years thanks to the profits of the World Zarathushti Congress held in Houston, in December 2000. But sadly, those funds have now been used up and there has been very little support for the Academic Scholarship Fund. The need is great and the Scholarship Committee would like to help more of these very deserving students who graduate and go on to serve our community. We can all help by sending a donation towards this very worthy cause, our youth - the future of our Zarathushti community.

Kindly make your tax deductible checks payable to FEZANA, indicating either Academic Scholarship Fund or Kheradi Endowment Fund or Performing- Creative Arts Scholarship Fund and mail to: Rashid Mehin, Treasurer, 583 Beverly Place, San Marcos, CA 92069. Thank you for all your support and may you and your family be showered with the blessings of Ahura Mazda.

Jerry Kheradi, MD, FACC, chairperson, Funds and Finance Committee.
Committee: Rashid Mehin (treasurer), Rustom Kevala, PhD, Kia Kaviani, DMD, Celeste Kheradi.

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- **Masters in Landscape Architecture** from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, is seeking a position in a multidisciplinary architectural firm. Please contact variava@uiuc.edu.

[More on page 113]
**Financial Corner**

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"1000 points of Light" donors are shown above.  Each $100 counts as 1 Point of Light. Help us reach our goal of 5000 points. Donations received from October 25, 2004 through February 21, 2005 are shown in bold. Funds: C=Critical Assistance, G=General, J=Journal, R=Religious Ed.; S=Scholarship, W=Welfare.
**FINANCIAL CORNER**

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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 M obed Faridoon Zartoshty
(d) In memory of Nargesh M istree
(e) In honor of the 70th birthday of Dr Jehangir Kotwal
(f) For Mehraban & Morvorid Kheradi Scholarships
(g) In memory of Mrs. Mitha Morris
(h) For Mr. & Mrs. Dinshaw Naran
(i) For reprint of “Legacy of Zarathushtra”
(j) In memory of Behram J. Gandi
(k) Damkevala Endowment Fund
(l) In memory of Morvorid Kheradi
(m) ZYNA Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship
(n) In memory of Dinshaw Joshi

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| Farangis Zardoshty & family, AZ G.R.(c) 336 | 336
| Mehrban Zartoshty, B.C       | 25     | 25    |
| North American Mobeds Council | R 10   | 10    |
| Z Assoc of Alberta, Canada    | 3      | 3     |
| Z Assoc of Greater Boston Area, MA | W 1 | 1 |
| Z. Society of British Columbia, BC | W 2 | 2 |
| Atlanta Z Anjuman, GA         | 1      | 1     |
| Z Assoc of N Calif, CA        | C,G,W 7 | 7  |
| Z Assoc of Chicago, IL        | W 2    | 2     |
| Z Association of Florida, FL  | G 2    | 2     |
| Z Association of Pennsylvania, PA | W 2 | 2  |
| Z Association of North Texas  | 2      | 2     |
| Zoroastrian Community         | G 1    | 1     |

Total Points 1517 476

DONATIONS & 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. Make checks payable to “FEZANA,” specifying the fund (General, Welfare, Critical Assistance, Religious Education, Academic and Creative/Performing Arts Scholarship and Fezana Journal). 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 information, visit: www. fezana.org.
May you be as beneficent amongst others fulfill their dreams? How can we help we have worked hard for it, how can we help we have made it, of course we have opportunities, better living conditions, freedom of thought and expression, freedom to live ones life ethically and or righteously, etc.

We can all connect with that, as that we use our experiences to better others’ lives?

Some of these young people have escaped religious persecution but do not talk about it for fear of harm to their family back home.

So many young people are being lost to drugs and illegal and immoral activities because they cannot find jobs or anything constructive to do. These are young lives that will almost never get back on track.

Someone asked me what are you doing about it, being on the welfare committee? With sadness in my heart and tears in my eyes, I had to honestly reply, nothing.

I felt guilty enough to want to share this feeling with you so we can collectively think of some way to help.

Please think of some constructive suggestions that we can work on as individuals or as a community.

We believe in the GOOD religion, we have it, now let us share it. Please convey your thoughts to us.

FEZANA Welfare Committee
Houtoxi Contractor (412-367-2948 HFMC31@aol.com)
Hosi Mehta (630-833-6923, hosimehta@aol.com)

“May you be as beneficent amongst those around you, as Ahura Mazda is in His creation” - Afrin-i-Buzorgan

Grateful Thanks!
FEZANA gratefully acknowledges donations (over $50) received from October 25, 2004 through February 21, 2005. This does not include donations (over $100) for the Thousand Points of Light program.

General Fund:
Rohinton Madon, ($60); Persis Mehta, MO ($51).
“Congratulations to Tishtar for graduating from school with first class” - Darsi Cooper, IN ($131).

Critical Assistance Fund:
Khushroo & Shari Daruwalla, FL ($51); Tamina Davar, VA ($51) in memory of Dinsnow Joshi; Jawahir L. Seper ($51); Ron H. Tata ($85).

Journal Fund:
Aban and Pesi Vazifdar, IL ($61).

Welfare Fund:
FEZANA is very grateful for the generous donation of $15,000 by Dr. Hoshedar and Anahita Tamboli of Florida, and thanks them for their support and generosity.

Welfare (Tsunami) Fund:
A. J. Balaporia ($51); Alayar & Giti Dabestani, WA ($1,000); Khurshed Dastur, PA ($100); Nari Dastur ($500); Shirin Engineer, MD ($501); Rusi Gandhi, NJ ($101); Jerry & Celeste Kheradi, RI ($500); Shahrokh Mehta, NY ($51); Mahrukh Neville Tikkoo, CT ($100).

North American Awards Committee Activity Fund:
• Donation of $5000 was received from the Joshi and Verahrami families, for a rotating trophy for the Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award in the name of Dinshaw F. Joshi.
• Donation of $5,000 was received for a rotating trophy in memory of Late Shirin Nariman Dastoor, for the Outstanding Student Award: Sheroo & Minoo Bhathena, ONT (CANS$500); Anahita Bhathena, IL (CANS$142); Dolly Dastoor, QE ($300); Farahad Dastoor & Jean MacRae, ME ($700); Sarosh & Noshir Dastoor, ONT (CANS$500); Neville Dastoor, ONT (CANS$625); Zubin Dastoor & Jasmine Cooper, VA ($801); Dinaz & Khushroo Dadyburjor, ONT (CANS$300); Adel and Natasha Irani, TX ($400); Tanaz Pardiwala and family, NY ($1,000).

Opportunities to help

Besides the opportunities for giving listed in this section, other worthy projects seeking funding described elsewhere in this Journal, are:
• ZAINA, Zoroastrian Artists International Network [p. 4].
• ZACUCE, cultural center in Delaware Valley [p. 5]
• FEZANA’s “1000 Points of Light” campaign [p. 116].
• Zoroastrian Society of Ontario for larger darbe mehr [back cover].

“Ah! But a man’s reach should exceed his grasp: or what’s a heaven for?”
- Robert Browning

[Taken from ZAMWI Newsletter]

Tsunami relief efforts
• As was done for the Gujarat and Bam earthquake disasters, FEZANA mobilized procedures for a centralized collection of funds for victims of the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia on December 26, 2004. FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta appealed to all FEZANA associations “to coordinate our efforts and pool our resources.”

Donations for tsunami victims are still being accepted. Please make checks payable to FEZANA [see p. 117], marked ‘Tsunami Relief Fund.’
• WZO chairman Sammy Bhiwandiwalla has appealed that “our community make a united response … all donations will be forwarded to the disaster relief coalition in the name of the World Zoroastrian Organization.” Donations may be made by credit card at: www.w-z-o.org.
Over 100 pairs of used eye glasses were collected at the FEZANA table at the Congress last December. Connections were made with a penitentiary in Canada, where the eye-glasses are sorted, measured and labeled by the inmates, before shipping to the needy in Asia and Africa through the Lions Club.

The Operation Eyesight project, spearheaded by Behram Pastakia, has been operating successfully since 1999. Used and usable eyeglasses and frames are collected and sent to other countries (No damaged or broken eyeglasses/frames are accepted). Collection boxes, posters and informational pamphlets have been sent to FEZANA associations, promoting future collections at local association level. For information, contact Behram Pastakia at bpastakia@aol.com.

Can our community rise to the challenge of finding a kidney donor who could save a young woman’s life?

FEZANA has received an appeal to search for a kidney donor, from Prof. Dhanjoo Ghista of Singapore. He writes:

“My daughter Kitayun, 35, was very suddenly diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure last August in Singapore, and both her kidneys rapidly deteriorated to being presently extremely damaged and almost non-functional. Being a US citizen, she moved to Boston to avail of the best medical treatment, and is now living on her own in Cambridge. She is on intensive peritoneal dialysis, and trying to cope with her ailing health.

“She urgently needs a kidney transplant. Kitayun’s blood group is B -ve. The kidney donor could have blood group B -ve or B +ve or even O; and should be below 45 years of age.

“I am appealing to anyone who could be so magnanimous as to donate a kidney. I know this requires a tremendous sacrifice, and hence it is with great gratitude that I am making this appeal.

“Kindly contact me at mdghista@ntu.edu.sg, Tel (Singapore) 65-6792-5521 or Kitayun at kitayun@yahoo.com.”

Appeals for aid

Below is an example of just one of the large number of appeals for aid received by FEZANA in the last quarter. Please give generously; send donations to FEZANA as indicated on page 117.

Father of 13-year old daughter with Cerebral Palsy in all 4 limbs, is appealing for financial help for medical expenses (physiotherapy, acupressure, medicines) and schooling (at Spastic Society of India Prenios course at Bandra).

Navar Fund

Eleven-year old Cherag, son of Er. Homiyar Mobedji of Ahmedabad, will soon be initiated and ordained as a navar-martab in Navsari, through the beneficence of the Navar Fund, set up by Er. Kersey H. Antia of Chicago. Present-day costs for the ceremony are approx. Rs. 54,000/-. Donations towards this worthy cause will be gratefully accepted. According to our Pahlavi texts, as long as a navaria lives and prays, some boon and blessings go to the donors. Please send donations payable to “ZAC Navar Fund,” and mail to K. Antia, 8318 West 138th Place, Orland Park, IL 60462.

Sponsor a child chess champion in Iran

We are looking for a sponsor for a gifted 12-year-old boy in Iran, a national level champion chess player, who has already won championships in the Middle East. Donations may be made to Child Foundation (Bonyad-e Koodak), a non-profit organization that helps Zarthushti youth with financial assistance to finish elementary and high school in Iran. Visit www.childfoundation.org. For information, contact Bijan Khosraviani at 408-
Baimai Surti Foundation (registered in Canada in 1988 by Dhunjishaw Surti) helps the needy and dispossessed members of our community in India, by creating financial stability in their lives, and get their lives in control by becoming productive members of society. Among the many ‘success stories’ are: helping a Montessori school teacher add more classrooms, setting up a supply store business, a welding shop, a poultry farm, starting a private physiotherapy clinic, supplying sewing machines to women, buying motor rickshaws for enterprising young men, and purchasing more cows for a dairy farm. Since 1999 they have disbursed approx. Rs. 11 lakhs for helping with self-employment, Rs. 8 lakhs for education of children and adults, and Rs. 6 lakhs for medical aid. Trustee Edul Kanga writes:

“Zarathushtis in North America may not be aware of the dire needs of those in our shrinking community in India, having difficulty just surviving… Our younger generation need to be made aware of their own kith-and-kin who can hardly make ends meet, and are in dire need of help, which we, in the West can easily provide to better their lives … 100% of the donations are channeled into the various programs. We count on your support and generosity to enable us to help fellow Zarathushtis in the areas of self-employment, education, disaster relief, medical, and help alleviate poverty…”

Donations, payable to “Baimai Surti Foundation” may be sent to Edul J. Kanga. (Trustee), 646 Sequin Crescent, Mississauga, ON, L5H 1W5, Canada, edmarnikanga@aol.com.

Zoroastrian Symphony Orchestra Fund

♦ Special Premium ♦

Are you interested in having a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be on the podium and conduct the ZSO in a short work at the 2005 World Congress in London?

A donor of over $5000 can have such an experience! Only a dose of love and courage is requisite. The Music Director will introduce this person to the art and craft of leading an orchestra and will work towards ensuring an enriching experience.

FEZANA has established the ZSO Fund to assist with the Orchestra’s performance at the 2005 World Congress in London. Donations are 100% tax-deductible and high visibility is assured.

Please send your check payable to FEZANA marked “ZSO Fund.” Contact Farobag Homi Cooper at cpas@chicago-philharmonia.org.

In this world of haves and have-nots, only the haves can make the difference in the lives of the have-nots.

-Edul J. Kanga

Yazd Kasnaviyeh cultural and athletic facility

On behalf of the “Zoroastrian youth of Yazd Kasnaviyeh,” Sasan Kolahdooz appeals to Zarathushtis for assistance in completing the cultural and athletic facilities at Kasnaviyeh Hall, in Yazd. With the endeavors and efforts of the parish’s youth, the 800 sq. meter fieldhouse, built at an expense of 300 million rials, is now 80% complete.

“But now this place, which is incomparable, and the only one of its kind in Yazd, is lying unfinished,” says Sasan, “Our youngsters are determined to complete this project, and are requesting more financial assistance from you, our honorable coreligionists around the world.”

After completion of the project, an annual gahanbar will be held on behalf of all the benefactors. To make a donation, contact skolahdooz@yahoo.com.
Zarathushti Youth Scholars of 2004

by Dolly Dastoor, PhD,
Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Committee

The vitality of a virtual Zarathushti nation depends upon a well educated citizenry and recognizing the need that education is a personal achievement gained through opportunity and an individual’s aim to succeed, the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program is committed to providing resources to its young citizens to succeed. Keeping in mind that the investment in our youth is investment in the human resource development of the future Zarathushti community, FEZANA started the Academic Scholarship Fund, in 1999. The fund, started from donations made in recognition of Dolly Dastoor at the end of her term as president of FEZANA, has grown 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 and mother. Since 1999 the committee has received 95 applications and awarded 28 scholarships. The demand for scholarships and need for assistance has grown from 12 in 2002, to 20 in 2003 and 40 in 2004. In 2004 we were able to award only 10 scholarships with one FEZANA scholar receiving the endowment scholarship. Reading through the biodata of the scholarship winners, one realizes that these students are not only academically gifted but display a spirit of volunteerism espousing different and difficult social issues, all ingredients to making great leaders for tomorrow.

Appeal. To fulfill the dreams of these and other students we need stable financing. We are appealing to you the readers to donate generously to the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Fund, to help set up a stable corpus from which scholarships can be awarded annually. Trusts and endowments have supported many of us who came to this continent, in pursuit of higher education. Today we are successful and most are in a position to assist financially. It is time to give back some. A youth Dilshad Khambatta Eames (biography attached below) has set an example. Dilshad, a past recipient of a $1000 scholarship from FEZANA, has repaid that scholarship in full as she is now in a position to do so. Thank you Dilshad and we hope others will follow your example.

Minoee Modi (Boston/Tufts University, Boston, Moral and Political Philosophy) is THE FEZANA SCHOLAR for 2004 and recipient of the $5,000 Mehraban Kheradi Endowment Scholarship for outstanding merit and contribution to the Zarathushti community.

After completing her master’s, Minoee hopes to earn a doctorate in philosophy and then a law degree to involve herself in implementing, through legislation, those theories that have proven best over years of scrutiny. She is also an active member of the FEZANA team to the UN DPI/NGO conferences in NYC.

Born in Raleigh, NC, she spent her formative years in India and Japan, earning her BA in English and Asian Studies at Cornell University in 1996. She then switched to philosophy after stumbling upon a course at Harvard University that seemed to address the problems of human interaction in a more rigorous and direct way. She enjoys eating, and therefore cooking, Nihon Buyou (Japanese traditional dance), cleaning everything in sight, writing poetry, playing the piano and her cats. She is involved in the Indo-Japan women’s empowerment NGO Ashta No Kai (Organization for a Better Tomorrow). Minoee writes: “Words cannot express the gratitude I feel for FEZANA’s generosity. It has given me not only tremendous financial, but also mental support, and I can only imagine the tremendous effort that went into making the scholarship possible. I am honored and thankful. I intend to use these funds with much forethought, humility, economy, deference for the source, and awe for the three-thousand-year-old tradition that connects me to it.”

Roda Amaria (Denver/University of Colorado, Medicine) graduated Summa Cum Laude from University of Colorado, Boulder, in molecular biology and biochemistry, with research in developmental biology in cancer and juvenile diabetes. Roda is a third year medical student doing clinical rotations at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. She wants to pursue an internal medicine residency. Next year she hopes to be an exchange student in Mumbai hospitals. She says “Thank you FEZANA.”
Zebalda Bamji (Mumbai/Howard University, Washington DC, Human Genetics and Genetic Counseling) pursued an undergraduate degree in Life Sciences from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai. Zebalda is currently pursuing a master’s and is also a research assistant at the National Human Genome Center, and a teaching assistant in human genetics, biochemical and molecular genetics. She enjoys gardening, reading, music, cooking, and socializing. She worked as secretary of BPP’s Holiday Program for Youth. She writes:

“I greatly appreciate FEZANA’s contribution. I also thank my parents without whose love and support I could not excel. I am grateful to my fellow Zarathustis who offer their help in many ways, as this goes a long way in optimizing our community’s welfare.”

Kaizer Cooper (Boulder, Colorado, Computer Information Systems and Accounting) is pursuing a double master’s degree – in Computer Information Systems and Accounting. He also works 35 hours a week to support himself and pay for his tuition. To distinguish himself in today’s competitive market he is also pursuing professional qualifications in accounting by completing the CPA exams. He writes:

“The scholarship helped me reduce the hours I worked and allowed me more time to concentrate on academics. I sincerely thank all the donors, trustees, and FEZANA for the wide variety of programs it offers and for providing noble service to our community in the US and Canada. The scholarship I’m sure does make a difference to every student receiving it.”

Ayesha Dua (Wisconsin/St Georges, Grenada/NYC, Medicine) is a first year medical student. Ayesha was assistant secretary of ZAC-Chicago, an MC and organizer for the NA Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago, and an instructor for piano, ballroom dancing and Indian classical vocal music. A winner of “Miss India Wisconsin 2001,” Anahita has volunteered as ‘traveling brothel doctor’ providing medical care in Kamatipura, Bombay’s red-light district. She was the only female on an all-male football team, to play in a State championship.

“The scholarship is a reminder that after I am qualified and start earning, I will support my community just as they have supported me financially and with all the encouragement. Medical school is hard, and, of course, expensive, so encouragement and finance are the two things I need to succeed. The scholarship is a reminder of my duties to my community and I am grateful for it. Thank you.”

Arya Goodarzi (Iran/University of California, Los Angeles, Computer Science and Engineering), is a student at UCLA’s Henry Samuel School of Engineering and Applied Science. He is involved in student organizations and is founder of the Persian Student Society Club. He writes:

“A scholarship is valued not only for its monetary value, but also as a sign of high achievement. This scholarship has motivated me to surpass my own expectations and excel at school. I owe a substantial part of my success to FEZANA for granting me this scholarship. It has given me a reason to promote my beliefs of being Zarathushhti and inspire my colleagues with Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. I foresee this scholarship as a starting point to my destiny, and that is being a good person who helps others in believing that: ‘The only way in life is the way of the truth.’”
Nina Godiwal (Houston/Wharton School of Business, Business Administration). After a BBA in Finance from the University of Texas, Austin, Nina pursued a four year career on Wall Street in investment banking, then in the media and entertainment industry. She returned to school for a master’s in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Women’s Studies, at Dartmouth College. Currently, she is working towards her MBA at The Wharton School. Nina has been a very active member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston and has volunteered in Asia’s worst slums, at Dharavi, India.

“The Zarathushti community has always been a major part of my life. I have the utmost respect for those in ZAH who taught, guided and molded my experiences. My most remembered teachings were not from books but from these dedicated people who shaped so many young Zarathushtis into the future leaders that we are today. I am grateful to be encouraged by the Zoroastrian community through the merit of this FEZANA scholarship.”

Noushin Isadvastar (Iran/San Jose State University, Engineering Management) will graduate with a master’s in May 2005. She already had a master’s in Industrial Engineering from Iran. With a full time job, and a 20 month old daughter, Niusha, she has managed to maintain her grades at A level. Noushin is an active member in the Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) and is in their singing group (Ham Avayan).

“I was very excited to apply for the FEZANA scholarship, and never thought I would be one of the ten winners out of 40 applicants. This has enhanced my belief in working hard and studying wisely and God will pay it back to us. As human beings we cannot understand it. I thank all who are involved in this and other programs that help our Zarathushiti youth to move forward.”

Dilshad Eames Khambatta (Pune/Boston, classical singer) studied classical voice and opera at the State University of New York, at Purchase, NY, and has completed a certificate course in Music and Dance for Children-Orff Schulwerk at The Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. She recently sang the role of Barbarina in Opera by the Bay’s production of The Marriage of Figaro. Her opera performances include First Lady in Mozart’s Die Zauberflote, Suor Zelatrice and La Maestra della Novizia in Puccini’s Suor Angelica, Zerlina in Don Giovanni, Suzanna in Le Nozze di Figaro, Constance in Dialogues des Carmelites, Euridice in L’Orfro, Alice in Falstaff and Elizetta in Il Matrimonio Segreto.

She has traveled extensively with well-known choral groups such as The Salzburger Dom Chor (Austria) and The Boston Pops, and performed in India, Salzburg, Hong Kong and NY. She performs regularly as a soloist at churches in the Boston area. In December 2000, at the World Congress in Houston, she sang Jashme from Ahura, a composition for soprano and orchestra by Meher Maden-Jansen of Mumbai. In Spring 2005, she will perform at an evening of opera and arias with Opera by the Bay, in Massachusetts.

Parendi Mehta (Florida/Rhode island, Economics and International Relations) is a second-year undergraduate at Brown University, RI. She would like to work for an international or non-governmental organization that regulates global economic policy, to address inequities and injustices of international development. She is actively involved with the Brown Democrats, Amnesty International and the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, teaches English to Spanish-speaking immigrants and makes them aware of their rights in the US.

“This scholarship, besides helping to reduce the financial burden of my education, is a wonderful incentive to succeed in college and help realize the importance of giving back to our community as we strive to reach our personal goals. I am extremely grateful that our community considers education a top priority. With continual encouragement from our community, our parents and peers to pursue our career goals, future leaders will successfully confront challenges to work towards universal happiness and justice for all humanity.”

Tushna Soonawalla (Dubai/University of Alberta, Engineering) hopes to complete her masters in Engineering Management in Winter 2005. The program courses deal with issues of managing projects, people
skills, conflict resolution and other topics that aim to narrow the gap between engineers and management. Her undergraduate degree was in Electrical Engineering also from the University of Alberta. She is involved in both Zarathushti and non-Zarathushti activities around the campus. She writes:

“I am very grateful for this scholarship as it has enabled me to take all the courses needed to finish my program. Most of my undergraduate studies were paid for through various university bursaries and the help of my family. However, since this masters program provides very little financial assistance, this scholarship has allowed me to keep my part-time job, finish my program and has eased a great financial burden on myself and my family. I encourage other students to make use of all the assistance that is available through our community and thank FEZANA board members for their generosity.”

The Academic Scholarship Program Committee is comprised of: Dolly Dastoor (Quebec), Zena Irani (Pennsylvania), Jerry Kheradi (Rhode Island), Rashid Mehin (California), ex-officio Firdosh, Mehta (Alberta), Purvez Rustomji (Texas), Anahita Sidhwa (Texas).

Performing & Creative Arts Scholarship
The committee of the FEZANA-ZYNA Performing & Creative Arts Scholarship (P&CAS) is pleased to announce this scholarship. It provides financial support for performing arts (music, drama, dance, etc) or creative art forms like literature, poetry, fine arts, sculpture and painting.

Application form for 2005, is available on the FEZANA website at www.fezana.org, or from your local association.

Donations towards this fund are welcome. Please make checks payable to FEZANA, with a footnote “For P&CAS Fund.”

P&CAS Committee: Anahita Sidhwa (afsidhwa@dccc.edu), Sherazade Mehta (sherazadem@yahoo.com) and Negin Sharyari (nsharyari@aol.com)
Scholarships available

A list of miscellaneous scholarships is given below:

- **FEZANA Scholarships** and Mehraban & Morvarid Kheradi Endowment Scholarship – 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 Zardohty Religion Education Scholarships** for higher studies/research in Zarathushhti religion at an institution of higher education anywhere in the world. Kayomarsh P. Mehta, kayomehta@aol.com, tel: 708-974-1238, www.fezana.org.

- **Fall Chothia Charitable Trust** scholarships for students in NA universities. fer-ozafitch@lexicongraphics.net, tel: 301-564-3726, www.zamwi.org/about/2001FCCT.pdf

- **ZAC (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago) loans/scholarships** for study in USA & Canada. ZACscholarships@yahoo.com, www.zac-chicago.org.


- **Performing & Creative Arts Scholarship** offered by FEZANA/ZYNA. Application form is on www.fezana.org. Anahita Sidhwa, afsidhwa@dcccd.edu.

- **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. Visit www.upakar.org.

- **Individual Advanced Research Opportunities (IARO)** scholarships, 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/NSF. Email: NSF@iie.org.

- **Harvard’s Pluralism Project** offers research grants. staff@pluralism.org, or www.pluralism.org/research/student_grant.php. For summer internships, visit www.pluralism.org/resources/calendar/summer_internships.php

- **National Science Foundation** offers grants for documenting endangered languages. Visit www.fedgrants.gov/Applicants/NSF/OIRM/HQ/04-605/Grant.html.

- **Gates Millennium Scholars Program** offers awards for science studies. www.gatesfoundation.org/Education/Scholarships/Announcements/Announce-040607.htm.


- **Scholarships for Commonwealth citizens**, www.csfp-online.org/hostcountries/uk/

- **Royal Society scholarships** in science. www.royalsoc.ac.uk/funding/

- **Marshall scholarships** for Americans in UK. www.marshallscholarship.org.

- **Fulbright exchange programs**. Visit www.fullbrightexchanges.org/base/grant.asp.

- **UNESCO ‘Information for All,’** an international information society initiative offers funding for information literacy projects. www.portal.unesco.org/ci/en/

- **MANAS University** invites participants to an unforgettable Central Asian cultural and educational experience at the International Summer School in Kyrgyzstan in Summer 2005. www.summerschool.manas.kg. Email: summerschool@manas.kg.

- **Indicorps fellowships** for a one-year public service program in India. www.indicorps.org. Email: info@indicorps.org, or contact 2004 Indicorps scholar, Roshni Kasad at roshnikasad@yahoo.com.

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### ZAC Scholarships

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) will be awarding scholarships for the 2005-2006 academic year, to students at institutions of higher learning in the USA or Canada. Applicants will be evaluated on merit, community involvement and financial need. Application deadline is July 1, 2005. Forms are available at www.zac-chicago.org. Contact Cyrus Rivetna at crivetna@hotmail.com.

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### Matrimonials

**FEZANA** will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; we do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna (see inside cover).

**Attractive female, ‘young’ 56,** educated, fun loving, good sense of humor. Interested in meeting professional gentleman under 65 from USA or Canada. Contact pearl@sadhra@yahoo.ca (Note there was an error in the email last time).  

**Young, vivacious, graduate girl, 26,** working with a consulate in Mumbai, looking for a loving, well-educated, good natured Parsi boy between 27 - 34, who is seriously considering marriage. Cell: 91-9820 257467, rashnad@hotmail.com.

**Young man, 27, 5’7”,** software development engineer in Seattle. Contact cousin marukg@netscape.net.

**Young woman, 29,** masters in pharmacy, working in London. Contact dilmah@hotmaill.com.

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### Matrimonial services

They have been providing matrimonial matching services the old-fashioned way, long before websites, and are committed to helping couples get together:

- Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, banaji@vsnl.com.
- Mrs. Serah Kotval, Dadar, Mumbai, tel: 91-22-2412-3570.
**MILESTONES**

Submit “Milestones” to Mahrukh Motafaram, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045. (262)821-5296, mmotafram@msn.com.

Top, Amy Vatcha, after her navjote ceremony at Saher Agiary, Mumbai, in December, seen here with parents Persis and Sohrab Vatcha of Mountain View, CA, brother Sam, and grandmother Scylla Vatcha of Mumbai.

Below, A navjote initiation per the Kadmi tradition, in Sydney, Australia. **Natalie Kerr**, daughter of Naaz and Mathew stole the hearts of the witnesses as she recited, flawlessly, the entire Kadmi prayers and took the oath of the Jashme Avanghe Mazda, at the darbe mehr in Sydney, on February 26th. Er. Dr. Peskhotan Katrak officiated.

**BIRTHS**

**Neferty Amooyan**, a girl, to Roshnee and Kamran Amooyan, in Toronto, on January 28.

**Karmin Sanaya Bamboat**, a girl, to Khushnana and Hoshedar Bamboat, granddaughter to Minoo and late Viloo Damania of Mumbai, in Toronto, on November 29.

**Jesil Bharucha**, a boy, to Jamshed and Sneha Bharucha, in Houston, October 20.

**Milan Cyrus Boga**, a boy to Cyrus and Shernaz Boga, grandson to Goolu and Sam Poulad, in Houston, November 11.

**Cyrus Dadina**, a boy, to Rohinton Dadina and Navaz Katki, a brother to Shireen, in New York, on January 17.

**Ness Darius Damania**, a boy, to Darius and Zenobia Damania, grandson to Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, and Minoo and late Viloo Damania of Mumbai, in Chicago, on December 30.

**Kushal Daruwala**, a boy, to Adil and Sona Daruwala-Chawla in California.

**Maeve Gallagher**, a girl, to Mehnosh Pestonji and Maureen Gallagher, granddaughter to Jini and Russie Pestonji and Finn and Gayle Gallagher, niece to Lehnaz Pestonji and cousin to Tanya in Toronto, on October 31.

**Zal Italia**, a boy, to Arzin and Sohrab Italia, brother to Zara, grandson to Ruby and Minoo Italia and Yasmin and Homi Daruwalla, in Houston, on December 23.

**Daneesh Khosravi**, a girl, to Hormuzd and Nuvana Khosravi, in Portland OR, on August 25.

**Sameer Machhi**, a boy, to Tannaz Machhi and Debasish, brother to Rohan and Ashish, in Houston, on November 8.

**Shireen Mehta**, a girl, to Sanobar and Hector Mehta, granddaughter to Gool and Fakir Jokhi and Dr. Aspi and Pervin Mehta of Mumbai, in Northern California on December 31.

**Roya Merchant**, a girl, to Mehrnaz and Rohinton Merchant, granddaughter to Homa and Rashid Dehmer, in Toronto, on December 9.

**Sam Modarai**, a boy, to Mandana and Mehraban Modarai, brother to Yasmin, grandson to Jamshid and Parvin Jam and Behdukht and Jamshid Modarai, in Toronto, on October 4.

**Ava Ratzenberg**, a girl, to Benafsha Irani and Joerg Ratzenberg, in Northern California, on October 29.
Farha Suntoke, a girl, to Lily and Kiaomar Suntoke, sister to Vahishta, granddaughter to Shirin and Dara Wadia, Jeroo and Hosang Suntoke of Mumbai, in Mississauga, ONT, on February 5.

Hunter Mckayla Crystal Traquair, a girl, to Anita and Michael Traquair, sister to Maverick, granddaughter to Behram and Sheraz Bhesania of Vancouver, in Maple Ridge, BC, on February 13.

Kashmira Vakharia Heaton, a girl, to Cainaz and Michael Heaton, granddaughter to Adi and Arnavaz Vakaria of Dallas, in Washington, DC, on December 15.

NAVJOTES, SEDREH-PUSHI

Natasha and Navid Darayyan, children of Gitty and Darioush Darayan of Houston, on December 4.

Danesh and Daniell Dubash, children of Jamshed and Jessica Dubash, in Houston, on December 18.

Sanaya Dukander, daughter of Niloufer and Rumy Dukander of Chicago, in Mumbai, on January 5.

Peymon and Bahram Hormozdyaran, children of Homa and Tahmunt Hormozdyaran in Toronto, on July 17.

Zara Minwalla, daughter of Zenia and Aderbad Minwalla of Northern California, granddaughter of Bejan Malbari, in Karachi, on December 14.

Kamran and Armaan Panthaki, children of Rashne and Mahiyar Panthaki of Mississauga, ONT, in Mumbai, on December 4.

Azita Patel, daughter of Neville and Dilshad Patel of Northern California, in Karachi, on December 17.

Zoish Pithawala, daughter of Meher and Burjiz Pithawala of Northern California, in Mumbai, on January 4.

NAVAR-MARTAB

Ervads Behram and Rayomand Antia, children of Mona and Adil Antia of Richmond Hill, ONT, in Mumbai, on December 14.

Ervads Cyrus and Zubin Bhandari, children of Rohinton and Zarina Bhandari of Northern California, in Mumbai in December.

Ervad Freyhan Daruwalla, son of Parveen and Zarir Daruwalla of Toronto, in Mumbai, on December 9.

Ervad Farhan Panthaki, son of Rashne and Mahiyar Panthaki of Mississauga, ONT, in Mumbai, on November 28.

Ervad Rishad Unvala, son of Rashna and Rusi Unvala of Mississauga, ONT, in Mumbai, on December 8.

WEDDINGS

Kyle Barhamand, son of Dr. Fariborze and Barbara Barhamand of Chicago, to Holly Denby, at the Hyatt Lodge, Oakbrook, IL, on January 15.

Karl Billimoria, son of Roda and Bomi Billimoria of Mumbai, to Zenia Mistry, daughter of Zarin and Farokh Mistry of Mumbai, sister of Zenobia (Zubin) Tantra of Chicago, at Al bless Baug, Mumbai, on January 22.

Daraius Commissariat of Dallas, son of Aban and Nauzer Commissariat, to Anoshe Sohrab, of Dallas, daughter of Cyrus and Mahnaz Irani, in Karachi, on January 1.

Xerxes Commissariat of Los Angeles, son of Aban and Nauzer Commissariat, to Diana Irani, daughter of Dinyar and Shireen Irani, in Los Angeles, March 11.

Viraf Karai, son of Freny and Phiroz Karai to Winifer Kasad, daughter of Piloo and Sarosh Kasad of Mumbai, in Mumbai on December 16, 2004.

Mahiyar Panthaky, son of Dhuin and Darayus Panthaky of Mississauga, ONT, to Sanaeya Gazder, daughter of Nauzer and Niloufer Gazder of Toronto, in Mumbai on December 31.

Ervad Cavas Pavri, son of Ervad Shapur and Yasmin Pavri of Houston, to Anahita Deboo, daughter of Farrokh and Gulestan Deboo, on October 16.

ANNIVERSARIES

Gooli and Burzin Mama of Mississauga, ONT celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on November 8.

Tanaz and Kewmars Bamboat of Munster, IN, celebrated their Silver Anniversary with family and friends at the Indian American Cultural Center in Merrillville, IN, on December 26.

DEATHS

Rouintan Afshari, 52, uncle of Sima Yazdanipour, in Tehran, on March 1 [ZAMWI].

Rostam Rostami Asrabad, husband of Kian Yazdani Bioki, father of Giti, Darioush, Kourosh and Arash, and four
grandchildren, in Dayton, OH, on December 22 (ZAMWI).

Ardeshir Avijegon, 65, husband of Parvin Gheiby, father of Arsham Avijegon in Mumbai, Arshia Avijegon of Fort Wayne, IN, brother of Shirin Avijegon-Irani of Toronto, and Feraydoon Bahrassa of Little Rock AK, in Iran, on January 3.

Ernavez Boatwala, mother of Percy and Farhad Boatwala and Swapna Noshir Photographer in Mississauga, ONT on February 1.

Minoo Bhathena, father of Noshir Bhathena of Houston, TX, and Shernaz Garcia Of Austin, TX and Homi Bhathena of Pune, in Pune, on December 2.

Roda Bhathena, mother of Noshir Bhathena of Houston, TX, and Shernaz Garcia of Austin, TX and Homi Bhathena of Pune, in Pune, on November 9.

Zal Kaikhushru Contractor, 76, husband of Roshan, uncle of Rashna (Rohinton) Shroff of Seattle, Noshir (Anjali) Banaji of Vancouver and Farhad (Houtoxi) Contractor; grand-uncle of Laila and Cyra Contractor, in Mumbai, in August. Zal was a tireless and committed social worker and activist. Through the NAB, ‘People to People,’ Lions, the CER and WZO – he provided a lifetime of service to humankind.

Shirin Meherwan Cooper, wife of late Meherwan Cursetji Cooper, mother of Kersi and Anaheeta Cooper (Toronto, ONT), Nawaz and Khushroo Toorkey (Secunderabad, India), grandmother of Shireena, Zubin, Neville, Xerxes, Natasha, Veera, and Cyrus, in Secunderabad, India, on February 24.

Mehra Faredoon Driver, 93, mother of Jimmy Driver of Mumbai and Katy Driver of Toronto, in Mumbai on October 26.

Bailey Rustom Irani, husband of Kayayun, father of Zerbanoo Gifford, Genie, Rustom and Nuswan, in London, on April 28. A successful businessman with property and hotels in UK, Bailey Irani was past president and trustee of ZTFE, and founder president of WZO and devoted a lifetime of service to the Zarathushhti community in UK.


Parin Jeevan Irani (formerly Paridokht Atashband) wife of Jeevan Irani, mother of Arsheesh and Mitra (Karachi), Anita and Burjore Sethna (Thorn Hill, ONT) and Afshad and Farishte (New Hampshire), grandmother of Narius, Cyrus, Armaishit, Aized, Kaizad, and Parizad, in Richmond Hill, ONT on January 28.

Shernaz Jinnwala, mother of Havovi Jokhi, in Ahmedabad in January (ZAPANJ).

Tehmina Maneckji Jokhy, aunt (adoptive mother) of Sheraz (Behram) Bhesania (nee Jokhy), grandmother of Delna-Barry, Tanya-Carl and Anita-Michael; great-grandmother of Zoe, Zara, Maverick and Liam; in Vancouver, on January 21. Dearly remembered by all her nieces and nephews and friends in Mumbai and USA.

Minoo Joshi, 63, grandson of Mancherji Joshi, founder of Dadar Parsi Colony, former purser with Air India, in a fire that engulfed his flat at Amardad Building, Dadar, on January 29.

On the 2nd of August 2004, at the Turf Club in Pune there was a happy ‘Monsoon Wedding’ of Farokh Karani (son of Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz, and grandson of Major General Noshir and Alu Karani) from Boston, and Rashna Saiwalla (daughter of Havovi and Cyrus Saiwalla) from Mumbai. Er. Yezdi Aibara, priest from the Karani Agairy of Cusrow Baug in Mumbai, presided over the ceremony.

There was much joy as the couple celebrated with their many friends who had specially come down for the occasion. There were four days of fun, food and celebrations with all the traditional ceremonies and guests from many parts of the world at their home (Karani Bhavan) in Pune. The couple will make their home in Boston.
Romin, 18, and Danyal, 14, Kalapesi, sons of Mitra and Eruch Kalapesi of Karachi, in October. The tragic loss of two young lives in a traffic accident in Karachi, has devasted the close knit community. Friends wrote: “Romu was love personified, teaching us that we excel by giving, not getting.” “Danyal’s initials engraved by him in the cement at Anjuman Bagh will constantly remind us of our light-hearted, smiling friend, who spread cheer and joy wherever he went.”

[What’s On, KZBM Newsletter]

Jehangir Peroshaw Kharas, 86, husband of Ava, father of Jamshed Kharas of Las Vegas, Khurshoo (Alexis) Kharas and Hira of San Diego, grandson of late Ruttanjee Peroshaw Kharas, in La Jolla, CA, on December 28.

Dastur Sohrabji Rustomji Makujina, 102, beloved priest of Quetta Dar-e-Meher, Pakistan, in Quetta, February 22.

Aspi Machliwala, husband of Khursheed Machliwala, father of Pervin Kersi Shashtri (Toronto) in Mumbai on January 29.

Khodadad Mazdai, 65, husband of Seema, father of Bahman and Bita, brother of Abou Mazdai, of a lung clot, in Indianapolis, on March 5.

Esfandiar Mehrfar, father of Dr. Khosro Mehrfar of California, in Tehran, in March. Esfandiar represented a generation whose dedication, self-reliance, hard work and industry resulted in a thriving Zarathushti community being established in Tehran, and brought about an enduring and effective presence in the fast-growing, national capital.

Dr. Burjor Dhanjishaw Mistry, 94, father of Adil D. Khory of Karachi and Roshni K. Hebert of Largo, FL, grandfather of Dinshaw Khory of Karachi, Shireen Hebert of Ohio and Marc Hebert of Costa Rica, and great grand father of Darayus Khory of Karachi, in Mumbai, on October 23.

Gulcher Rustom Ogra, 74, mother of Rohinton (Pervin), Yasmin (Kanti) Kohari, Marazban (Parveen), and Fer- oze (Yasmin), grandmother of Reji, Anita, Danesh, Farzeen, Khushnaz, Narius, and Danny, great grandmother of Lila and Soli, in Chicago, on February 4.

Siloo Minoo Pajnigara, wife of Minoo Pajnigara, mother of Delna (Karachi) and Burzin (Mississauga, ONT) in Karachi, on February 5.

Naju Daver, pioneer of the gara revival

Naju Daver [fourth from left, in gown] passed away in Mumbai on December 28. Best known for reviving the ancient art form of the exquisite, hand-embroidered ‘Gara’ saris, Naju Daver is shown here at a family navjote celebration, with all the ladies wearing her gorgeous gara creations.

[Photo courtesy Naju Daver, 2001]

Bahadur Ardeshir Palkhiwalla, “Top Speed” scoutmaster

Scoutmaster Bahadur Ardeshir Palkhiwalla, 89, passed away on March 15. For over 50 years he was active with Homavazir’s 11th Central Bombay Bharat Scout Group. A lover of nature, he published a booklet on trees in Dadar Parsi Colony, and was instrumental in having trees planted regularly in the Colony. He was the embodiment of selfless service and sacrifice. For years, we scouts would go every Sunday to his residence to bring the flagpole, notice board, haversacks, registers, etc. for our Sunday morning parade and return the items to his residence after the parade. Always unassuming and cheerful, he led by example. Our Group’s motto was ‘TOP SPEED.’ Under his leadership we were trained to excel. Deeply religious, he would go to the agiary regularly and prayers were a must before dinner at camp. May his soul progress and continue to guide us.

- Marzban Giara

Yes, indeed Bahadur was always there for us like a pillar, like a monument. He gave us all strength and inspiration. Both Bahadur and the late Jal Khan molded our lives and imparted by example, a work ethic and values, which have stood by us through the years. If we are able to achieve anything in our lives, it ought to be dedicated to their memories. Let us reaffirm and pledge to redouble our efforts to work with TOP SPEED to bring harmony, solace and peace to our community in their memory, so that we may fulfill their dream.

- Rohinton Rivetna

Farah Palkhiwalla, daughter of Burgise and Khursheed Palkhiwalla, in December [ZAPANJ].


Goolnar Minocher Shroff, 90, mother of Dr. Mehernaz Noshir Irani, Kayomarz
As sends a 1-year complimentary subscription to each

Born in the USA, we learnt all the Parsi –

face of challenges; a caring, compassion -

Burjor Toorkey, father of Cyrus

Abe nahar, Benafsha and Zenia Shroff, of

Irani, Anaheeta Kolah, Zubin Kolah,

Phiroza) Shroff, grandmother of Rahzin

In 1978 he was prop -

cultural issues. Appointed as President’s

He has been mentioned in Guinness

Kairshasp Nariman Choksy – Sri Lankan of the Year

K. N. Choksy, PC, MP, Minister of Finance, Sri Lanka, was named Sri Lankan of the Year 2003 by LMD, the pioneer business magazine of the country.

The January 2004 issue of LMD states:

“Perhaps his greatest contribution was

Kairshasp Nariman Choksy [above] was born in 1933 in Colombo, Ceylon, as the fourth of six children to Queen’s Counsel Nariman K. Choksy (the first Zarathushti to take Law in Sri Lanka) and his wife Khorshe. After passing through Law College, he was called to the Sri Lankan Bar in 1958. He attributes his success to his father’s strict disciplinary routine, inculcating in him proper standards of honesty and integrity, and to his mother imbibing in him the more humane qualities of life. To his wife Frey, whom he calls “the wind beneath my wings” he attributes much of his success as a lawyer and a politician.

In 1993 he was appointed Minister of Constitutional and State Affairs, a portfolio he held till 1994, and since 2001 he has held the finance portfolio. He is the first Sri Lankan Zarathushti and among the very few in the world to become a minister in the government.

[Excerpted from article by Dolly Dastoor, first published in Hamazor]

Establishment of North American Zarathushti Cemetery

Pre-purchase options available

Through the generous munificence of a ZAMWI member, a Zarathushti subsection has been established in Parklawn Cemetery, Rockville, Maryland, a suburb of Washington DC, for burial of community members.

Per the donor’s wishes, these plots are available to any Zarathushti in need in North America, either resident or visiting. In view of the bulk nature of the acquisition of this property we have a six month window of opportunity to purchase additional lots at a concessional rate. These sites in the Zarathushti community lot in Maryland, may be pre-purchased, with the option to reserve lots for family members.

Contact: Kody Yazdanipour, email: yazdanipour@comcast.net, or tel: 240-631-0362.

[From ZAMWI newsletter]
Accolades for Aban Daruwalla. Aban Daruwalla, combat systems specialist at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Corona, CA, was honored as chief guest by the NSWC (Port Hueneme Division) for their Women’s History Month celebration. The national theme was Women: Inspiring Hope and Possibility. Daruwalla gave her message on A Tribute to Hope, pointing out the influence of four women including her mother. The backdrop was made by their multimedia department according to Aban’s specifications: “A group with faces of all women that could be found on earth and within them the picture of my mum in a larger size than the rest, because she was so influential in my life.” She later presented an inspirational session “Suit Up, Strap In, Blast Off, Destination Mars,” to raise children’s awareness of math and science careers.

Zarathushti soldier deploys to Afghanistan

Percy Engineer, a Staff Sergeant with the Texas Army National Guard and an active duty veteran, has been called up and is mobilizing to Afghanistan in March, for one year, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Percy entered military service upon graduating high school in 1997, and has been commissioned in various military operations around the globe. In 2002, Percy joined the Texas Army National Guard while attending the University of Texas at San Antonio. Immediately after September 11th, he was sent overseas during the onset of military operations in Afghanistan. In spite of being the youngest person assigned to his position, he has received numerous recognitions and was recently promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

The current mobilization mission for Percy and his troop of 130 soldiers of the 111th Area Support Group is to provide command and control, garrison and base support responsibilities in five locations in and around Afghanistan. They are also responsible for the reception, staging, onward movement and integration of soldiers and units arriving to serve tours in their area of responsibility. The 111th ASG will provide support to combat-ready forces in their crisis support role.

Percy, son of Roshan and Yezdi Engineer of Houston, can be reached at percy.engineer@gmail.com. Let us keep Percy in our thoughts and prayers along with all our young men and women in uniform; and pray for their safe return and speedy accomplishment of their mission on behalf of us all!

Miss Universe Canada 2005 contestant. Farnoush Goshtasbi, 26, niece of Shahnaz Goshtasbi and Daryoush Goshtasbi, was a contestant in the Miss Universe Canada 2005 competition on January 25. Farnoush, a graduate of the University of Calgary is a member of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia. She manages her family’s restaurant and hopes to own her own restaurant some day.
Shaan Darius Kandawalla and Jamshed Jehangir Kakalia graduated with an MBA from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Business, Class of 2004. Of the 900 graduates, there were only two Pakistanis, “both our own, home-grown, proud Zoroastrians from Karachi.” [What’s On, KZBM Newsletter]

Scouter Freddy Mirza of Toronto was awarded the Medal for Good Service by the Scouts Canada Council Honours and Awards Committee, for outstanding service to Scouting, at a recognition ceremony at the Ontario Science Centre on March 30, 2004. [ZSO Newsletter].

Shireen Gandhi [left] is incoming president of the Public Relations Society of America (Minnesota Chapter). In an effort to improve diversity in the local communications industry, the Chapter contributes funds and human capital to the Urban Journalism Workshop. The program aims to lure minority students to journalism careers, notes the Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal. Shireen is daughter of Keki [below] and Rose Marie Gandhi of Los Angeles. Keki taught structural engineering at UCLA for over 30 years. He came to the US as a student in 1949, and is a founding member and president of the Zoroastrian Association in southern California. “In the beginning it consisted of just five or ten families,” notes Keki’s brother Adi Gandhi, “We used to celebrate Pateti-Navroz with a potluck dinner in a park. Like all associations, we too had our ups and downs. Twice it was on the brink of breaking up, but with the intervention of members, Keki was offered the presidency. He regained the confidence of the community, rejuvenated the organization, and gave it back in the hands of the community.”

Neville Irani, son of ZANT president Behram Irani and Fareida, of Dallas was voted Homecoming King for Plano Senior High School for the graduating class of 2004-2005. [ZANT newsletter].

Mira Mehta, [far left in photo] a junior at Brown University played a major role in putting the women’s rowing team in first place at the 2004 NCAA championship on Lake Natoma, Sacramento, California. Going into the 2004 NCAA championship, Brown was ranked ninth, behind Radcliffe, Yale, Princeton and other strong college teams. After the Brown coaches [at right in photo] promoted Mira to the all-important position of first-boat coxswain, the Brown crew romped to victory in Mira’s skilful hands. The coaches and rowers were all praises for Mira. Mira is the daughter of Cyrus and Satu Mehta of Cambridge, MA.

Alex Marshall, son of Pervin and Aspen Marshall of Ottawa, was one of 31 recruits selected out of 140 applicants to serve as a member of the Ceremonial Guard in Ottawa this summer. He underwent intensive training to prepare for his duties in the changing of the guard ceremony, and as sentry duty at the Governor General’s mansion.

Alex recently graduated with honors from a commercial aviation program in Thunder Bay. He hopes to pursue a career as a pilot in the Canadian forces.

[OZCF Newsletter]
Steiger Award for the Empress. Empress Farah Pahlavi was recipient of the prestigious 2005 Steiger Award for Charity. It was a proud moment to see the Iranian national flag raised in Germany, by German officials, probably for the first time after over 25 years. The Empress said:

“In this moment of heartfelt honor and appreciation, a strain of agony, sadness and hope runs through me. I am gripped with a sense of sorrow, because many of our dreams turned into a nightmare. I agonize, over the heartbreaking state of affairs in my country, and the suffering that many of my compatriots of all ages and gender, have had to endure in the last quarter of a century. At the same time, this award sends a message of hope to those who fight for social justice, to believe and have faith that the seeds planted with love and care will survive all calamities and will grow again with the winds of change.

“I would like to dedicate this award to all the men and women, some of whom are no longer with us, who helped, and toiled tirelessly with me. I am especially thinking of the brave and committed Iranians … who have so many dreams and aspirations, and who are steadfast in achieving their goal in spite of all the obstacles …

“Our country is blessed with a rich heritage and culture dating back to ancient times. There are good reasons to feel positive about the future of Iran and its people … Many times in our long history we have suffered periods of internal discord, confusion, and civil strife but succeeded in emerging stronger each time. It is my conviction that light will prevail over the darkness and Iran will rise from her ashes.”

[Submitted by Manuchehr Iranpour]

The Parsis for President Clinton. Taking the opportunity at a book signing in Miami, Lyla Toddywalla [left] personally presented a copy of Sooni Taraporevala’s Parsis, the Zoroastrians of India to President Bill Clinton. Later she received a letter of thanks signed by Mr. Clinton.

TIFR scientist wins prize. A senior professor of physics in Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Dr. Spenta Wadia, has been selected for the prestigious Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) prize 2004 for his significant contribution in theoretical physics. The award, carrying a cash prize of $10,000 has been announced by the Academy of Sciences for the developing world, Trieste, Italy.

The annual TWAS prizes, awarded in eight fields of scientific research, rank among the highest accolades given to scientists in developing countries and Wadia is the only Indian to receive the award for the year 2004. The awards will be given at a function to be held in Alexandria, Egypt in November 2005.

[Source: www.mid-day.com submitted by A. B. Damania]

Ontario Awards. Ontario Volunteer Awards were presented to five Zarathushtis – Rushad Amaria, Anahita Daryushnejad, Nozer Kotwal, Afreed Mistry and Cyrus Tampal – by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration at Premier Ballroom, Toronto, on November 23. The five were nominated by the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario for all the hours of volunteer service rendered by them to the community.

ZSO honorees. At the 2004 Nouruz function, the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario honored two dedicated volunteers with award plaques. Morvarid Fereidooni was recognized for her zealous work as the most active member of the past Kanoun executive. She was thanked for donating 10% of her fees as a real estate broker, to the ZSO Building Capital Campaign. Mantr eh Atashband was recognized as an active volunteer especially in youth-related programs. She was a member of the Committee that organized the successful Youth Congress 2003 held in Toronto.
**Sohrab Wadia in Oklahoma!** While Sohrab Wadia dreams of starring in a Broadway show, on Broadway, his gig with the national tour of the Broadway production of “Oklahoma!” currently touring the US and getting rave reviews, is no mean accomplishment.

Broadway is a tough market to break into; Wadia auditioned four separate times, before he was hired. He plays the role of Ali Hakim, the Persian peddler, who goes from town to town selling his wares and seducing the local girls. “It is a fun role, and funny,” says Sohrab, “I love Ali. If I didn’t, it would be hard to play him 8 times a week, week after week, for 10 months.” The tour (through LA, Hollywood, San Francisco, Baltimore, Newark and other cities) goes through June 2005. “It’s a wonderful show,” says Sohrab, “The sets, costumes, dancing, lighting – everything is world-class and a joy to be a part of.” [visit their website at www.oklahomaontour.com].

Pianist, singer and actor, Sohrab is the son of Nariman Wadia (of K. Wadia Jewellers in Mumbai) and Coomi Wadia, conductor of the acclaimed Paranjoti Chorus that tours and records around the globe. When Coomi was felicitated on her 35th year as conductor in 2003, with a gala concert at the new Opera House in Mumbai, Sohrab played a Mozart piano concerto with the Bombay Chamber Orchestra that evening.

Sohrab came to the US to study piano and later opera and theatre, in 1989. He has studied at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University and at the University of Tennessee. He has been doing work, slow and steadily over the last ten years. He performed a world premiere of an opera with Rostropovich conducting in 1994 in Evian, France; and has worked with many regional opera companies like Opera Memphis and the New Jersey State Opera.

“The future is anyone’s guess,” muses Sohrab, “I’d like to continue auditioning for musicals and opera, and delve deeper into acting for TV and film … and of course, land that starring role on Broadway!”

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**Movie Stars?** If you see The Pink Panther with Steve Martin, look for Behram and Sheraz Bhesania in the JFK airport scene (which was in fact the Vancouver airport, transformed). They are the passengers checking in behind Steve Martin. You’ll see them again along with the Paparazzi chasing Bianca (a look-alike) for her autograph. The Bhesanias, of Vancouver, have been ‘starring’ as extras since they retired some years ago. One of Behram’s big roles was as Sadam Hussein in a TV commercial.

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**DJ Dariush**

Born and raised in Tehran in a Zarathushti family, Dariush Rateshtari had already built a name for himself as “the official DJ” at all the Zarathushti weddings back home, even before he moved to the Washington DC area, in 1999.

Although he considers it as a part-time job, Rateshtari, 32 has invested heavily in stereo systems, high watt speakers, lights, amplifiers, woofers and mixers, and has been successful in bringing Persian music to the Washington nightclub scene. Though most of his albums are Persian, his repertoire embraces popular ethnic and international beats, as well as American rap, hip-hop and rock-and-roll. His unique approach brings Rateshtari a diverse clientele – in the dance clubs, and as contracts for weddings and private parties. For more about Dariush, visit www.djdarish.com. [Source: The Washington File, forwarded by Tamineh Jamaspian]
Persia’s Hollywood presence goes back to 1916 in D. W Griffith’s silent era film *Intolerance*. Through different ages in history, starting with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great and up to modern America, Griffith attempts to portray intolerance as a consistent historical fact. However, Cyrus was depicted as a ruthless barbarian who wishes to destroy Babylon. Yet Cyrus is known to be the very ruler who established the first declaration of human rights.

The Persian Empire reached its peak under Darius, but it is his son Xerxes I who is best remembered. It was his army that invaded Greece and was initially resisted only by a minute Spartan force of three hundred at Thermoplae. *The 300 Spartans* (1962) is a sensible unpretentious movie that does a pretty good job of retelling the story of the Greek Leonidas and his tiny army facing the mighty Persian army of Xerxes I. The strong-jawed Richard Egan is suitably laconic as Leonidas …

Richard Egan turns up again in the fifth century BCE as, of all people, Xerxes/Ahasuerus in *Esther and the King* (1960) [poster at right]. Fair-haired and clean-shaven, he is a peculiar picture of a Persian monarch, but then the movie is a peculiar picture of the Persian Empire. Joan Collins plays opposite Egan as Esther. Just as she is about to be married to her soldier-fiancé, back from the Egyptian wars with Ahasuerus (as Xerxes is referred to in the Bible), she is carried off and eventually wins the beauty contest for Persia’s new queen. She learns to love Ahasuerus, a monarch beleaguered by all the intrigues of an Oriental court, and bothered by the upstart Greeks – “Alexander, I’ll cut him off in his youth,” he mutters presciently, since the boy conqueror has yet to be born.

Historically, “*Alexander The Great*” (1956) [poster above] directed by Robert Rossen, starring Richard Burton, is surprisingly accurate in event and production, and certain scenes, such as the decisive battle against the Persians, are well handled. The scenes were shot with the help of the Spanish army, 45,000 extras (10,000 more men than the actual army of Alexander).

There is no mention of Persians in Stanley Kubrick’s *Spartacus* (1960) starring Kirk Douglas, yet it is interesting to note his life was avenged by none other than the Parthians. Indeed the Roman senator and General Crassus played by the magnificent Laurence Olivier was historically killed during a battle against the Parthians shortly after having crushed the gladiators rebellion, and crucified them along the Appian Way.

Indeed, the only Empire to have resisted Roman conquests was that of the Parthians. A short reference to that is made in Samuel Bronston’s *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) with Stephen Boyd and Sophia Loren.

There are rumors that an adaptation of Steven Pressfield’s best selling novel *The Gates of Fire*, directed by Michael Mann, will be a remake of the battle of Thermoplae, with
George Clooney or Bruce Willis in the title role.

As for Persia after the Arab conquest, it seems that its geographical identity is obscured in films such as 1001 Nights, from Sinbad to Aladdin, indifferently set in Baghdad, at the time historically under Persian rule, but without further precision.

One film however can be distinguished for describing the adventures of Persian poet-mathematician Omar Khayyam – William Dieterle’s *The Life, Love and Adventures of Omar Khayyam* (1957) [poster previous page] with Cornel Wilde, Michael Rennie, and Debra Paget. Even if Hollywood tends not to fully expose the depth of Khayyam’s writings it is nevertheless a tribute to his legend.

The 1950s and 1960s led many biblical adaptations of epics such as Cecile B. DeMille’s *Ten Commandments* with Charlton Heston or *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* with Yul Brynner and Gina Lolobrigida. Hollywood seems once again interested in exploring the past and with successes as Ridley Scott’s *The Gladiator* we may indeed see such ‘sword and sandals’ films reappear.


“When will Hollywood delight us with a historically accurate epic on Cyrus the Great and how he established the world’s first declaration of human rights?” is still a question in suspension.

[Excerpted and adapted by Roshan Rivetna from “Ancient Persia’s Virtual Absence in Hollywood” by Darius Kadivar, a multimedia documentalist who lives and works in France. Source: www.payvand.com/news/03/jan/1084.html]

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**Early play about the Persian wars, by an eyewitness, Aeschylus**

**The Persians** is the earliest surviving play in Western literature, and the only existing account of the Persian wars composed by an eyewitness, Aeschylus. The play is set in the capital of his defeated Persian enemies, where the Queen Mother, Atossa, awaits news of Xerxes’ invasion into Greece. It also includes the appearance, as a ghost, of Xerxes’ father Darius, who declaims the ruin of his empire.

Aeschylus was a veteran of the Battle of Marathon and the Battle of Salamis, the miraculous defeat, against all odds, of the Persian navy. Rather than a triumphalist play written from the Athenian victor’s perspective, this masterpiece provides a moral lesson on the subject of tyranny, designed to touch the heart and conscience of any oppressor.

The National Actors Theatre’s production of *The Persians*, played at Pace University’s Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts in New York, in 2003, stars Len Cariou as Darius and Michael Stuhlbarg as Xerxes. [www.playbill.com].

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**Cyrus is coming to a theater near you.** An action adventure with a cast of thousands about the Persian emperor Cyrus is set to become the most expensive British film ever made.

Oscar-nominated director Alex Jovey, hopes to shoot this $80m (£49m) epic, the first, about the shepherd boy who founded an empire that stretched from the Mediterranean to India.

Jovey, 32, is amazed that the story of Cyrus’s rise in the sixth century BCE has gone untold on celluloid. “He was an astonishing character who is mentioned in the Bible and the Koran. He’s a kind of Robin Hood, a champion of human rights, who drew up a bill of rights for his people – a precursor of the Magna Carta called the Cylinder of Cyrus – which is in the British Museum.”

Finance, Jovey claimed, was solid, with distributors already keen to buy into the story. Jovey was in talks with several internationally known actors, but said the project was not “dependent on big names.” [Source: “Cyrus is Coming to a Theater Near You” by Fiachra Gibbons, The Guardian, May 17, 2003, posted by Feri Demehri on creatingawareness@yahooogroups.com]

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**Queen album brings rock to Iran**

Bootleg albums made Freddy Mercury’s *Queen* one of Iran’s most popular bands. *Queen*, has now become the first rock act to receive an official seal of approval in Iran. Western music is strictly censored in the Islamic republic, but an album of Queen’s greatest hits was released in Iran in August. The cassette, costing less than $1, comes complete with translated lyrics.

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**Pianist is honored**

Pianist Tehmie Gazdar of Mumbai, was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, London. The honor is accorded “only to past students of the Academy who have achieved distinction in the profession.”
In 1922, Jehangir Rustomji Wadia, an automobile engineer from Bombay, came to the Dayton Wright Airplane Co. in Dayton, Ohio, to take a flying course under the tutorship of Pilot "Bernie" Whelen.

In a half-page article entitled "Preparing for Aerial Age, Says Native of India" in The Dayton Daily News of October 8, 1922, Wadia is quoted as saying that only two to three percent of India's 340 millions have any education, which has a deterrent effect on the industrial progress of the country. "Even now, there is no manufacturing institutions in India," Wadia declared, "As a consequence India has not developed to the point where it will use airplanes for several years."

Wadia said that several attempts to institute aerial mail routes have been failures. Believing that the country would be eventually forced to use the airplane, Wadia viewed his training in Dayton, as preparation for that era.

Jehangir Wadia is the father of Piloo Godrej Randeria of Houston.

The Silk Road Theater Project (SRTP) was created to showcase playwrights of Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean backgrounds, whose works address themes relevant to the peoples of the Silk Road, whose voices have been long absent from the American stage. SRTP believes it is imperative for American audiences to better understand the histories, perspectives and beliefs of Silk Road peoples.

Executive director Malik Gillani invites participation from the Chicago area Iranian community. Visit www.srtp.com, email: malikgillani@gilloury.com.

It is perhaps the most famous minute-and-a-half in classical music: the opening 21 bars of Richard Strauss’ Also sprach Zarathustra, also known as the theme from 2001: A Space Odyssey. The music was inspired by the philosophical discourse by Friedrich Nietzsche in which the ancient Persian seer Zoroaster emerges from his cave after 10 years and shares his accumulated wisdom with the rest of the world. Infamous for its image of the Superman (not the Marvel Comics’ Man of Steel, but a highly evolved human), the book wades through concepts of life, death and human aspirations. Strauss clothes these ideas in very beautiful music.

In 1925, Yasmin Kharshedji Surveyor, aunt of Mumbai physician Dr. Aspi Surveyor, became the first woman in India to be awarded a Commerce degree. At a time when girls couldn’t dream of going to college, she overcame many obstacles (such as no women’s toilets) and was the only woman student in the College.
Reading about other pioneer cyclists [FJ, Summer 2003], arouses the memory of our dear father, the late Sohrab Rustomji Engineer who too had headed for a trip round the world on a bicycle with a colleague, the late Mr. S. D. Driver.

Their bicycle journey started on April 18, 1927, planning to go through India, Baluchistan, Persia, Turkey, Europe, England then through North and South America, Japan, China, Australia, Ceylon and back to India.

To meet their expenses they sold their picture post cards (at left) and did odd jobs. They received donations from appreciative people like nawabs and other rich families.

Our mother, Dolly Sorab Engineer, tells us that our father who was only 18 then, did not receive permission from his parents for this adventure. So, our father took a few clothes and went to stay at his uncle’s house, from where he and his colleague, took off and boarded the ship. Next day, his parents were shocked to see their son’s picture in the newspaper with an article about their world tour!

Our father toured all of India, passing through dense forests encountering dangerous animals like tigers, lions and snakes. He had also traveled to Iraq as he told us an amusing story of the swiftness of the thieves of Baghadad – about how an unsuspecting lady’s handbag that she clutched under her arm, was cleverly replaced by the thieves, with an old shoe.

Their journey was cut short midway – either because of a severe civil disturbance or due to the accidental death of a third colleague.

Our father, I am told, had left for the trip with a good crop of hair on his head but he returned a bald man. He is fondly remembered now by his three children (photo left), 8 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. [by Armaity Suresh Patel, email: armysuresh@yahoo.com]
Nothing could be more important than the life-and-death issues that are addressed in Palsetia’s book. Nevertheless, due to extreme space constraints, only excerpts of Dr. Antia’s paper are published below. The full text may be requested from him (8318 West 138th Place, Orland Park, IL 60462). Also see Dr. Antia’s letter on page 98.

This is the first full-scale attempt at depicting how the Parsis tried to maintain their identity in Bombay while integrating culturally into the Indian masses – today a mere 70,000 or so against the one billion of India. Each chapter provides the Parsis’ response to safeguarding their identity at a given historical moment, as they transitioned from an isolated group to a community with a pluralistic vision.

The Introduction describes the advent of the Parsis to India from Persia. Throughout their stay in India, Parsis showed a remarkable ability to adapt themselves to the social and cultural norms of their setting. They strictly followed endogamy to safeguard their identity. The caste system in India virtually ensured its uniform application among them, thereby fostering their sense of self-identity.

The first chapter deals with the advent of the Parsis from various parts of Gujarat to Bombay. Their quest for prosperity and pre-eminence is seen by Palsetia as an integral part of their quest for maintaining identity and of their efforts for ensuring economic, social and political relevance and viability as a (microscopic) community.

The second chapter describes the rise and decline of the Parsi Punchayet’s authority and powers. With the passage of Parsi Laws in 1865, the BPP lost its legal authority, and was reduced to the status of a charitable institution.

The third chapter describes the challenge to Parsi identity caused by the conversion of Parsi youth to Christianity by British missionaries in 1839, which shattered the very assumptions Parsis had about the British rule.

Chapter four describes the Parsis’ efforts at starting various educational institutions, and how it led to divisions within the community between the traditionalists and the newly educated class that advocated social and religious reforms.

Palsetia’s elaborate efforts at explaining how the Parsis’ admiration and emulation of the West shaped their response to their religious views is interesting and insightful. The reformist agenda (or modernity) made the unanimity of religious views and practices impossible and “the plurality of thought contributed to heterodoxy of religious thought within a conservative religious tradition.”

The fifth chapter provides a comprehensive review of the need for a code of laws for maintaining Parsi identity and how the Parsis finally succeeded in enacting it, albeit not without encountering serious disagreements between reformists and traditionalists. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, XV of 1865 was modeled on the English Divorce Act of 1858. By defining a Parsi marriage, the Act ipso facto defined a Parsi. The marriage was to be of two ethnic Parsis, at least 21 in age, solemnized by at least one priest, in the presence of at least two Parsi witnesses, parental consent being obligatory when a party to the marriage was under 21. A marriage was declared void if one party converted to another religion.

Definition of a Parsi: the Davar-Beaman judgment. The question of the Parsis’ religious identity came to the fore when a French lady, converted to Zoroastrianism and married R. D. Tata, and Sir Dinshaw Petit et al filed a suit against the BPP claiming the right of all Zarathushtis to the use and benefit of Punchayet properties and funds. Palsetia’s in-depth treatment of this suit stands out as one of the best references on the subject: I found this chapter very informative, insightful and even-handed.

The two judges in this case, Davar, a Parsi, and Beaman, an Englishman ruled in favor of the defendants from their own distinct perspectives, and mostly, though not totally, agreed with each other, which left certain conversion issues ambiguous, and eventually resulted in further litigation.

Davar defined a Parsi as Parsi by birth and ethnicity, but, as Palsetia points out, by implication a Parsi can be a Parsi, even when professing another faith. Davar’s acknowledgment that children born of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers could be Parsi, without however, sanctioning the practice, contradicted the resolution of the Anjuman meeting of 1905 which laid down only children of both Parsi parents as being Parsi.

If Davar was guided by social and moral considerations, as Palsetia
points out, his ruling left some room for accepting the children of Parsi mothers, especially since 1950 when the constitution of India prohibited gender discrimination.

The two judges arrived at a similar ruling from differing perspectives on the same facts. “For Beaman history provided an explanation of the Parsis’ situation, to Davar history provided as much a validation.” While Davar took into consideration the traditions, rituals and sensibilities of the Parsis, in arriving at his judgment, Beaman found them to be of no concern to the court, and even derided the “jealous bigotry” of the “most orthodox, the most bigoted champions of the defendants’ case” (who are prepared to overlook immorality and bastardy – anything but alienage). These judgments led to intense debates over reforms, purity of race, intermarriages and the problems stemming from rampant westernization.

Zarathushtis in the western diaspora. Palsetia believes that “The independent actions of the Zoroastrian communities outside India will perhaps have the greatest influence on Parsi tradition in the years to come.” He details the efforts of the North American Zoroastrians towards being “more accommodating, inclusive and relevant in contemporary life” and hopes “pressures” from them on their co-religionists in India might inspire them to be more accommodating to the needs of the times and Zeit Geist, failing which the two will go their separate ways and break the millennial tradition of Parsis always being ONE community worldwide.

Commentary. Despite a magnificent attempt for survival by North American Zarathushtis, the odds are unfortunately against them for making it to the next century in the melting pot of America for various reasons, such as: spread over vast distances, easy assimilation in the American culture, no central facility to train or ordain priests, no erudite high priest to guide future generations, no means or willingness to maintain even one priest full-time but total dependence on voluntary priests, no unanimity among the priests and laity, no central or local library worth the name. There is no yearning on the part of the average Zarathushti, young or old, to know his/her religion and history, no means and perhaps no chance to compete with the vigorous and unceasing efforts of major churches to gain new converts, many a Zarathushti having already been lost to it.

There are no donations or funds essential for basic survival needs such as permanent maintenance of fire-temples, resting places, etc. though the Punchayet or welfare mentality is not quite absent even in North America. There is no unanimity about what Zoroastrianism is, and is not, but rather conflicting versions of it. There are no wealthy benefactors such as Tata, Wadia, Petit, or Jeejeebhoys, no readiness to contribute for religious causes as an upper middle class, though most churches in North America are solely supported by it, no united religious authority speaking with one voice, no members of the new generation familiar with Avesta, Pahlavi and religious lore, no central social service organization.

There is no possibility by and large for the present generation to undo or even match the achievements of the first generation in America, no possibility of the third generation remaining Zarathushti, as the second generation itself is mostly marrying out, no unanimity yet about the critical issue of acceptance/conversion though most have become liberal after their children married out. The situation in India and around the world is hardly any different.

Palsetia’s conclusion. Palsetia laments the decline in the Parsi population and sees no hope for reversing the trend. Nevertheless, he concludes on a very optimistic note: “History reflects that while the unforeseen course of events ultimately determines the destiny of peoples and nations, it has always remained within the Parsis’ ability, when they are so united, to reshape their circumstances and influence events to their benefit.”

Palsetia’s book should be read and admired as a laborious, painstaking, well-researched, balanced, timely, eye-opening work and the best and only book on this important subject by a Parsi, when most Parsis are interested in everything else but Parsi-ism. Let Palsetia’s labor of love inspire Parsis to preserve their identity and heritage, even at this late stage! Amen!

“**For the Love of India, the Life and Times of Jamsetji Tata**”
by Russi M. Lala

Hardcover, 245pp., Viking-Penguin Books, India.
ISBN 0-67-005782-7

(Order by check or credit card from Parsiana Bookstore, 91-22-2207-4335, email: parsiana@vsnl.net.)

This meticulously researched biography of Jamsetji N. Tata, regarded as the “Father of India’s Industrial Revolution,” by bestselling author Rusi M. Lala, was launched by no less than President Kalaam of India, on July 23.

This magnificent biography insightfully explores how a man of humble birth, living in the 19th century when the sub-continent was firmly under British rule, implemented visionary projects which laid the foundation for his nation’s industrial development. Indeed, a century later, India did become the world’s 6th largest industrialized nation thanks to his far-sighted endeavors.

Thanks to Russi Lala’s fascinating penmanship, the saga of Jamsetji’s life and his tryst with his nation’s destiny, is now available for Zarathustis to make them aware of this unique Zarathushti and his towering national achievements. [Excerpted from review by Adi Davar]
Parsis have a dream...

[Continued from page 98]

countries, their third generation will get melted in the melting pots of those countries. For the third time, will the Parsis of Mumbai survive or end as the Phoenicians did?

Let us declare a truce on disputes for a couple of years, during which we can concentrate on our real problems, reverse the negative growth and stay firmly saddled on the Zarathushhti steed, instead of wasting our precious time and energies on quarreling.

Let it not be recorded in religious history that they were fiddling, like Nero, while Rome or Mumbai was burning; and on account of their own selves, they disappeared. Let us be faithful to our ancestors who rose up like the Phoenix, bringing unparallel glory to their adopted motherland.

With enlightened leadership, our noble faith has weathered the heaviest of storms and survived them, so let us have a dream that we shall overcome, with heart within and Ahura Mazda overhead.

Noshir M. Lam
Mumbai, India

“Zoroastrianism: Ancient Religion, Modern Decisions”

This hour-long documentary is being backed by WGBH, Boston’s PBS station (with 120 million national viewers).

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A trailer and press-kit are available if you can host a fund-raiser in your city. The project is fiscally sponsored by ZAGBA, so contributions are tax-deductible. Contact Tenaz at 212-486-8959, tdubash@aol.com, www.tdfilms.info.

“Parsi Presence in Kenya,” by Kersi Rustomji, is now available on CD. To order, see page 97.

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