

# JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1378 AY (Fasli)

Avan – Adar – Dae 1378 AY (Shenshai)

Adar – Dae – Behman 1378 AY (Kadimi)

**NAUROOZ PIROOZ-BAAD**

**NAUROOZ MUBARAK**

## 60TH ANNIVERSARY

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

December 10, 1948, Geneva



### Also Inside:



2008 WZCC AGM  
in Houston



A monument to Love:  
Mumbai's Taj Mahal



Taraporevala's Little  
Zizou: World Premieres



FEZANA delegates  
at UN/DPI Conference



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## Cover design

Feroza Fitch  
of  
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**Opinions expressed in the FEZANA Journal do not necessarily reflect the  
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## A word from the Editor

Dolly Dastoor

### ZARATHUSHTIS AND THE DIASPORA

John Hinnells in his book *The Zoroastrian Diaspora* writes that Zarathushtis have had several diasporas in their history starting from the first diaspora in Anatolia probably under the Archemenid. This continued with the Parthians and the Sassanians, till it assumed historical importance in the first century BCE and CE. The migration to India and the growth of the Parsi community was an important diasporas in the 10th CE which has existed till today. In the last century there has been a further spreading of an important Zarathushti Diaspora in two phases. The first in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century to China, Hong Kong, Singapore, East Africa and Britain and the second in the 1960s to Britain, Canada, Australia and the US. In the second wave Zarathushtis from India, Iran, Pakistan and East Africa formed the diaspora. They came for different reasons, economic, political, education and professional development. But not for trade as the people of the first phase. Many moved with families and they showed no inclination of returning back to their countries of origin. And they have not, though they maintain family ties visiting their relatives in their country of origin regularly.

So what is the point of discussing the diaspora outside of India and Iran. This new diaspora has developed its own identity, identifying with the country of their choice. They have made their mark in all professions and brought recognition to the religion by participation in Interfaith activities. They have attempted to project the Zarathushti religion as one of the great religions which has influenced the other religions. This Spring issue of the journal has several examples from different continents : Jehangir Sarosh, England, who is profiled on page 108 just retired as the *European President for Religions for Peace*, Russi Ghadiali, (page 102) in Singapore is the President of the Inter-faith Religious organization

representing ten religious communities, Kersi Shroff, (page 56) represented the Zarathushti faith at the ten Faith Leaders Observance of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Washington DC. Homi Gandhi (page 101) North America, was invited by the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to an interfaith dialogue.



The diaspora outside India and Iran has come to stay with their own community structures and traditions, reviving the ancient traditions of Naurooz, Yalda, Sadeh, Tirgan, Mehrgan, and the celebrations of ghambars. Successful world congresses for youth and adults have been held in North America, Australia and England. There should be no doubt in any person's mind that recognizing the diaspora and treating it with respect is in the interest of the world Zarathushti community. Dismissing the diaspora outside of India as of no consequence, and making unilateral "top-down" decisions for world events like the venue of the World Congresses in "command and control" style will serve no purpose. There will have to be a two-way interaction between the first diaspora of India and the newer diasporic communities which are an important source of global Zarathushti energy

# A Message from FEZANA President

## WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NOU ROUZ!

The Nou Rouz or the coinciding of the sun rise with the vernal equinox in 2009 will happen on the North American continent where the sun will rise at about 86 degrees longitude at the time of the equinox (11:43 GMT/UTC). This happens to pass through Indianapolis and a few miles east of Chicago and west of Louisville, Kentucky. In Chicago the sun will rise 11 minutes later at 11:54GMT/UTC and in Louisville, Kentucky the sun will rise at 11:46GMT/UTC. Today with Zarthushtis spread all over the world, it is time to revive the ancient festival with new vigor and understanding and introduce it to the world. Thus reviving the ancient knowledge and showcasing the wisdom of the great sage Zarathushtra, we hope that knowledge and wisdom will prevail over superstition, and peace and love will overpower upheaval and hatred. Ref:



[http://ahura.homestead.com/files/NouRouz/NOU\\_ROUZ\\_2009.pdf](http://ahura.homestead.com/files/NouRouz/NOU_ROUZ_2009.pdf). Naurooz (March 21, 2009) falls on a Saturday and I hope you will take advantage and celebrate the occasion in large numbers.

I want to take a moment to reflect on some of the opportunities and challenges awaiting us in the coming months.

First, on the momentous day of January 20, 2009. I want to make special note of the engagement of our youth in the political process. Many were involved in voter registration drives and campaigning, and many others had the opportunity to cast their first ballot in this historic election.

Second, I am happy to announce the support and whole hearted willingness on the part of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) Chairman, Mr. Dinshaw Rusi Mehta, and his Board of Trustees, to work with FEZANA for the better good of our Zarathushti community. I welcome this enthusiasm and look forward to working together with the BPP. The Executive has extended an invitation to the BPP Chairman and all the trustees to meet with our members and have an open discussion on May 22, 2009, in Orlando, Florida.

In December 2008, the ZAH hosted the WZCC-AGM and the Coming Together Roundtable (CTR) annual meeting. I gratefully acknowledge the Houston Community, including the youth for investing their time, resources and boundless energy in organizing these

well-planned events for visiting dignitaries of our community from India, Iran, Dubai and other countries. Hosting these international events in our part of the world brings us significant exposure and acceptance by and of our larger community.

I take this opportunity to thank the organizers of both WZCC AGM and CTR, especially Mr. Rustom Engineer for inviting and giving due importance to FEZANA in these world forums. We do need to direct all our resources and initiatives so that they can have the greatest local and global impact

There were some important suggestions and decisions made both at the WZCC and CTR meetings which will positively influence our community and the future generation. (Please see WZCC and CTR reports)

Maintaining our momentum in these challenging economic times will require our collective intellectual and entrepreneurial efforts. At a time of dwindling public support for new funds, based on the proactive advice of our consultants Mr. Kawasji Dadachandji and Mr. Zubin Bomanshaw of Integrity Investments, along with our Treasurer, Katayun Kapadia, Fundraising Committee Chair Dr. Jerry Kheradi and Vice President Rashid Mehin, we moved all our funds to cash in good time before the stock market took a sharp downturn.

I want to close by highlighting some of the upcoming events that celebrate the mission and promise of FEZANA: Our youth – ZYNA- will be organizing the Youth Congress, July 1st to 5th. The ZYNA co-chairs have been working diligently to make this event a success. They need your support in spreading the word to your local association and encouraging the youth to attend in large numbers. The much awaited youth congress was missed for the last three years. This will be the last congress before the 2011 World Youth Congress in Vancouver, BC. Though it is at short notice, I hope you all will support our youth and ensure maximum participation.

The FEZANA AGM will be held on May 23rd. - 24th in Orlando, Florida, hosted by the Central Florida Group and is open to all. I hope all member associations, and all the committees will be represented at the AGM.

Best Wishes,

**Bomi Patel, FEZANA President**





## ANJUMANA

Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary from Tehran in his benediction at the Fourth Coming Together Roundtable [CTR] shared an illuminating insight into the meaning of "anjumana". The ideas and voices of every individual, he said, is likened to many rivulets, in all their splendorous diversity coming together in a confluence to create a placid river of harmony. This lofty thinking was followed by the Zarathushti handshake – a symbolic Hamazor Hama Asho Baad. The unfolding of the Requests for Proposals [RFP] process for hosting the Tenth World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC), turned out to be anything but that. A turbulent river of thoughts spilled and gushed in cataracts over boulders (page:18). In a year dedicated to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the declaration of the moral document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one has to ask the question: What are the rights of minority populations in the worldwide Zarathushti Diaspora? Or put another way, do majorities have responsibilities towards or duties to care for minorities?

After the 8th WZC in London, a need was expressed globally that the selection process for hosting WZC's become more transparent. The RFP was a response to meet this need. As discussions to select the site for the 10th WZC gathered steam, I asked myself: Were we allowing expediency to trump truth and order? Were we witnessing culture wars within our miniscule fold? These doubts were fleeting; individuals gathered in Houston, demonstrated the capacity to make successful transitions. The prayers and monajat in the morning had left a salutary effect on those in the room. We may not have reached "completeness", but we bonded.

Three items which found wide support as a sampler:

**Celebration of Jamshedi Norooz Worldwide:** The celebration of the spring equinox is a time to be in harmony with the cycles of resplendent nature, a time for rejuvenation, a gift from the ancient Persian civilization to the world. We learned about the Gathic foundations of the Haft Seen Sofreh (1). Fariborz Rahnamoon from Canada emphasized the importance of preserving this artistic tradition, full of significance, crowned by history, and our bounden duty in passing it on to the next generation. This is a new day, a day which unites us all. It is a time for us to showcase the unique mosaic of our



## Behram Pastakia

culture to the world at large. Let us celebrate with gusto!

### **Saving Lives: Duties of Zarathushti Pravasis**

For reasons unknown, Parsi women are at extremely high risk for breast cancer. It boggles the mind to realize that a highly literate society does not take full advantage of technology available for periodic screenings which can save lives. An educational and awareness campaign coupled with providing medical facilities to potential beneficiaries in the Indian subcontinent, through the largesse of the worldwide Zarathushti Diaspora, proffered as an action item, in response to a plea from Khorshed Gotla, gained traction.

**Events of Interest to Zarathushtis worldwide:** Participating from Mumbai via web cast, Yazdi Tantra announced the availability of a calendar and of reports of events on [www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net). Recognizing the value of content available for Parsis, Iranis, Zarathushtis, all under one roof in cyberspace, Alayar Dabestani, Honorary member of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, recommended that relevant resource information be translated into Farsi so that it would be accessible to our coreligionists in Iran. Demonstrating an ethic of collective giving he offered to pay for such services.

"Anjumana" was manifest in all its beauty. Thank you, Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary and Erv. Peshotan Unwalla for your prayers! Far removed from even the notion of culture wars, we instead found action items to bind us together. The next time for accounting shall be at the Fifth CTR in Dubai; a time for taking stock; a time to see how far we have come in our journey together toward *haurvatat*. See you there!

- (1) Prayers appropriate for Jamshedi Norooz celebrations are available in Farsi, Gujarati and English script from the North American Mobeds' Council. Contact: Erv Soli Dastur [dastur@comcast.net](mailto:dastur@comcast.net)

*Behram Pastakia is chair of the Publications Committee of FEZANA*



America's Oprah has the famous "Angel Network" and now our North America's FEZANA will be having the "**FARESHTA CHALLENGE.**" The word *FARESHTA* means angel and denotes a special thanks giving ceremony performed by our priests for happy occasions and celebrations. With that in mind the fund and finance committee is launching a new campaign and we are naming it the "**FARESHTA CHALLENGE.**"

Have you ever experienced a time when you were not feeling well or sad about something in your life, and at that low point a stranger came along and gave you a compliment or did something nice for you? Just a simple gesture or kind word can make a world of difference to someone and you don't even know how much you helped. Donating to FEZANA is very much like this example. With a simple gesture of a donation you are helping the Zarathushti community and with FEZANA's global impact on the Zarathushti community we don't always see how your simple gesture affects people through the world. These people are very thankful that FEZANA is there. So please rise to the challenge and be a *FARESHTA*, a special angel.

The **FARESHTA CHALLENGE** will essentially be in the form of a competition. We will be dividing all the North American Zarathushti Associations into teams. These teams will be grouped together as far as possible in their own geographical areas. The first goal is to increase support and awareness for the FEZANA Funds and programs and in this challenge, each team will try and raise as much as possible for the various FEZANA Funds. We will keep a track of all the donations raised by each of the individual teams and calculate the total donated through December, 2010. Essentially, this will be a competition for a period of two years to raise money and see which team raises the most money for the period from January, 2009 to December 2010. The names of all the associations of the winning team will be announced at the North American Congress in Houston in December,

## FARESHTA CHALLENGE

2010. Each Association of the winning team will be presented with a plaque.

The second goal of this **FARESHTA CHALLENGE** is to build community spirit and increase awareness of the larger Zarathushti community by having the local associations working together for a united cause.

We all understand that during these difficult times everyone is concerned with their own financial situation. Let us not forget that there are others who are less fortunate than us and your kind donation will go a long way to help someone who is having a difficult time in their life. In the spirit of our Zarathushti teaching of charity and helping others, may you be blessed by Ahura Mazda.

FEZANA is comprised of 26 associations and 11 small groups and for this competition are being divided into the following **FARESHTA CHALLENGE** teams.

**TEAM 1** – OZCF, CZO, ZAQ, ZAAC, Z CLEVELAND

**TEAM 2** – ZAGBA, ZAPANJ, ZAGNY, IZA, ZAPA

**TEAM 3** – ZAMWI, AZA, Z VIRGINIA, ZAF, ZATAMBAY, CENTRAL FLORIDA

**TEAM 4** – ZAH, ZANT, ZCAT, ZAK, ZANO, Z ST. LOUIS

**TEAM 5** – ZAC (CHICAGO), ZAKOI, ZAOM, ZARM, ZMINNESOTA

**TEAM 6** – ZAA, ZSBC, ZANC, PZO, ZSWS

**TEAM 7** – ZCZ, TMZA, ZAC (CALIFORNIA), ZAAZ, SAN DIEGO

Thank you for your help in launching the

## **FARESHTA CHALLENGE.**

Let the race begin!

Kindly make your check payable to FEZANA along with your team number and mail to *FEZANA Treasurer, Katayun Kapadia 33 Preamble Drive, Mt Laurel, NJ 08054*. You can also make secure online donations at [www.FEZANA.org](http://www.FEZANA.org).

**Jerry Kheradi, MD, FACG, Chairperson,**

**FEZANA Funds and Finance Committee,**

**Morvarid Behziz, M.Ed., Co-Chair,**

**Katayun Kapadia, Treasurer,**

**Sassan Nadjmi, DMD, FACP,**

**Celeste Kheradi**



### List of Donations received October 1 through December 31, 2008

#### FEZANA GENERAL FUND

	(In US \$)
Farangis, Homayoun, & Iran Zardoshty in memory of their parents Mobed Faridoon Zardoshty and Mrs. Mehrbanoo Bamasipour Zardoshty	\$ 2,500.00
Firdosh Bhesania (Microsoft Matching Gifts Program - WZC 2009)	\$ 765.00
Sanobar & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 500.00
Farokh & Maneck Contractor, Kenner, LA	\$ 250.00
Behram & Farieda Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 200.00
Mehraboos Irani, Albuquerque, NM	\$ 100.00
Bakhtawar Roshanravan, Coppell, TX	\$ 130.00
Noshir & Nergish Bharucha, Cincinnati, OH	\$ 100.00
Noshir Irani, Buena Park, CA	\$ 100.00
Khurshed Tengra, Boise, ID	\$ 55.00
Firdausi & Niloofer Desai, Belmont, CA	\$ 50.00
Parizad Karnik, Austin, TX	\$ 30.00
Sarosh Olpadwala, Ithaca, NY	\$ 26.00
Zaraawar Mistry, ST. Paul, MN	\$ 25.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,831.00</b>

#### FEZANA WELFARE FUND

Farangis, Homayoun, & Iran Zardoshty in memory of their parents Mobed Faridoon Zardoshty and Mrs. Mehrbanoo Bamasipour Zardoshty	\$ 2,500.00
Sanobar & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 1,000.00
Behram & Farieda Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 500.00
Rashna & Firdosh Mehta, Weatherford, TX	\$ 150.00
Hormuzdyar Nekoo, Quebec, CA	\$ 100.00
Dhun Batlivala, Glen Ellyn, IL	\$ 50.00
Adi Davar, Falls Church, VA	\$ 50.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,350.00</b>

#### FEZANA CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Farangis, Homayoun, & Iran Zardoshty in memory of their parents Mobed Faridoon Zardoshty and Mrs. Mehrbanoo Bamasipour Zardoshty	\$ 1,000.00
Sanobar & Aderbad Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 1,000.00
Parvez Dastoor, Farmington, MO	\$ 500.00
Behram & Farieda Irani, Plano, TX	\$ 300.00
Jer & Phil Udvardi, Savannah, GA	\$ 50.00
Nazneen & Mehlie Warden, Sugar Land, TX	\$ 50.00
Aban Chavda, Clifton, NJ	\$ 31.00
Yezdi Pithavala, San Diego, CA	\$ 25.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,956.00</b>

#### FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Anahita & Feroze Sidhwa, Coppell, TX	\$ 1,000.00
Trust of Dr. Feroze M. Ichhaporia (C\$501)	\$ 384.53
Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
Dogdoe & Tehemtian Arjani, Glendale, CA	\$ 100.00
Adi Davar, Falls Church, VA	\$ 50.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,734.53</b>

#### FEZANA JOURNAL FUND

Adil Godrej, Manassas, VA	\$ 30.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 30.00</b>

#### FEZANA RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FUND

Noshir & Yasmin Medhora, Houston, TX	\$ 200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 200.00</b>

#### FEZANA CREATIVE & PERFORMING ARTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Mahrukh & Sorab Panday, Herndon, VA	\$ 200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 200.00</b>

#### PROJECT AMORDAD

Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC)	\$ 500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>

#### GRAND TOTAL

**\$ 14,801.53**

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**THE TWENTY SECOND FEZANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)  
MAY 22, 23, 24 2009, ORLANDO FLORIDA**

**HOSTED BY  
ZARATHUSHTI SMALL GROUP OF ORLANDO (CFG)  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH WZCC CENTRAL FLORIDA CHAPTER  
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**FRIDAY MAY 22** OPEN FORUM (6.00 PM TO 9.00 PM.)  
LIGHT DINNER WILL BE HOSTED BY WZCC-CFC

**SATURDAY MAY 23** AGM (8.30 AM TO 5.00 PM)  
LUNCH AND DINER HOSTED BY ORLANDO GROUP (\$20 PER PERSON)

**SUNDAY MAY 24,** AGM (9.00 TO 1.00P.M) LUNCH HOSTED BY WZCC-CFC

**SUNDAY MAY 24** WZCC CENTRAL FLORIDA CHAPTER MEETING

**FROM ASST SECRETARY NAHID DASHTAKI**

**Election of FEZANA Officers** (a) Vice-President and (b) Secretary for the 2009-2011 term of office. The deadline for receiving all nominations is March 28, 2009.

Vice-President Rashid Mehin and Secretary Firuzi Poonevalla are both eligible to run for a second term. Firuzi Poonevalla has decided not to stand for re-election.

**Resolutions:** All resolutions duly seconded for discussion or voting at the 2008 AGM, should be sent in latest by March 31, 2009

**Dues:** Member dues should be sent in. A membership form has been uploaded on the YahooGroups site. .

**HOTEL BOOKING**

Request "FEZANA AGM RATE" code LKFA

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Booking must be done before April 30, 2009

Inform FEZANA office Administrator Zenobia Damania [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org) of your booking to keep a count of the number of delegates attending.



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# Calendar of Festivals

Calendar of Festivities March 2009 to September 2009

## Fravardegan/Panjeh/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar

*Five Gatha Days*

Monday, March 16-Friday, March 20 (F)

## Char-Shambe Soori (Heralding the New Year)

*Tuesday Prior to Naurooz*

Tuesday, March 17 (F)

## NauRoos or Jamshedi NauRoos (New Year)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd*

Saturday, March 21 (F)

## Khordad Sal (Birth anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Khorshed*

Thursday, March 26, (F)

## Pir e Herisht Festival

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Amardad-Khorshed*

Friday, March 27-Tuesday March 31 (F)

## Ava Ardvisoor nu Parab

*Mah Avan, Roz Avan*

Tuesday, February 24, (K)

Thursday, March 26, (S)

## Fravardegan (Remembrance of the Departed)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin*

Wednesday, April. 8. (F)

## Jashne Ardibeshtgan

*Mah Ardibesht, Roz Ardibehesht*

Wednesday, April, 22. (F)

## Atash-nu-Parab

*Mah Adar, Roz Adar,*

Wednesday, March 25 (K)

Friday, April, 24 (S)

## Maidyozarem Gahambar

*Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed-Dae-pa-Meher*

Thursday, April 30-Sunday, May 4 (F)

## Zarathusht-no-Diso (Death anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)

*Mah Dae, Roz, Khorshed*

Sunday, April, 26, (K)

Tuesday, May, 26 (S)

## Dae Mah nu Jashan

*Mah Dae, Roz Fravardin*

Monday, May, 4 (K)

Wednesday, June, 3 (S)

## Maidhyarem Gahambar

*Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram*

Friday, May1-Tuesday, May 5 (K)

Sunday, May 31-Thursday, June 4 (S)

## Pir-e-Sabz Festival

*Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran*

Sunday, June 14 - Thursday, June 18. (F)

## Pir-e-Banu Festival

*Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Bahram*

Saturday, July 4-Wed July 8 (F)

## Maidyoshem Gahambar

*Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Dae pa-Meher*

Monday, June 29-Friday July 3 (F)

## Jashne Tirgan

*Mah Tir, Roz Tir*

Wednesday, July 1, (F)

## Fravardegan/Muktad/Hamaspathmedayem Gahambar

*Five Gatha Days*

Wednesday July 15- Sunday, July 19 (K)

Friday, August 14-Tuesday, August 18 (Pateti) (S)

## NauRoos

*Mah Fravadin, Roz Hormazd*

Monday, July 20 (K)

Wednesday, August 19 (S)

## Khordad Sal (Birth anniversary of Zarathushtra)

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad*

Saturday, July 25 (K)

Monday, August, 24 (S)

## Fravardian Jashan

*Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin*

Friday, August 7, (K)

Sunday, September, 6 (S)

F=(Fasli), S=(Shenshai), K=(Kadmi)



## COMING EVENTS

**MARCH 2009 - Zoroastrian Association of North Texas**  
Twentieth Anniversary Celebrations on March 21, 2009  
Details on calendar at:  
[www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)

**MARCH 2009, 3rd Annual Khorshed Jungalwala Memorial Lecture, March 29, 2009, Toronto**  
co-sponsored by FEZANA, ZSO, WZO,

**APRIL 2009 NAMC SEMINAR April 10-12, 2009, Houston.**  
North American Mobeds' Council Seminar, "Divine Message-Journey through Zoroastrian Scriptures". Coordinated by ZAH Library, contact Aban Rustomji, [aban@coatingrngineers.com](mailto:aban@coatingrngineers.com)

**MAY 2009 FEZANA AGM, ORLANDO**  
The Annual General Meeting, May 22-24, 2009 hosted by Central Florida Group. Coordinator Dinyar Mehta, [dinyarmehta@aol.com](mailto:dinyarmehta@aol.com)

**JUNE 2009 NAIN CONNECT**  
North American Interfaith Network - June 25-28, 2009 in Kansas City (Unity Village), Missouri. Experiencing the Spirit in Education: NAIN Connect 2009  
<http://www.nain.org/>

**JULY 2009 12th NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS** 12th North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress, July 1-5, 2009, Fremont, Cal, ZYNA in association with FEZANA Call 630-468-2705 or [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org)

**SEPTEMBER 2009 62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference on Disarmament**  
Mexico City, September 9-11, 2009.

**ZARTHOSHTY YOUTH CIRCLE -** (Ages - 16 to 40)  
Discuss culture, history, religion, community, life and philosophy – First Saturdays every month (for 10 months), from 7:00-8:00 pm. starting 6th December 08.  
M. J. Wadia Fire Temple Trust, Lalbaug, Mumbai  
Course-Director: Er. Dr. Ramiyar P. Karanjia  
Registration fees: Rs. 300/- (Rs. 100/- for students)  
Contact Roxane on + 98193 79345

**DECEMBER 2009 Fifth Coming Together Roundtable**  
Hamazor Hama Asho Baad, December 30, 2009 in Dubai  
To submit items for the agenda contact: Rohinton Rivetna [rivetna@aol.com](mailto:rivetna@aol.com)

### DECEMBER 2009 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The 2009 Parliament Embracing Difference, Transforming the world. will be an international inter religious gathering spanning seven nights and six days – from December 3rd to 9th - bringing together an estimated 8,000 to 12,000 persons. Visit: <http://www.cpwr.org/index.html>

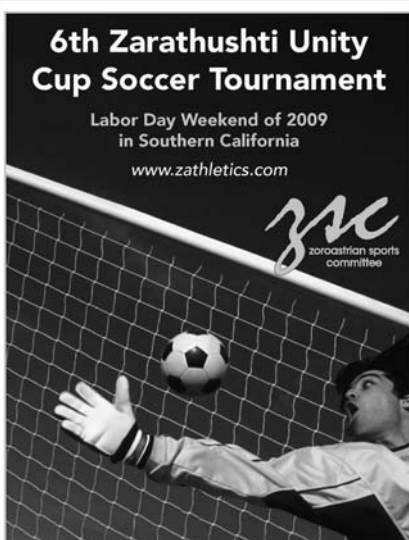


### DECEMBER 2009 WORLD CONGRESS, DUBAI.

9th World Zoroastrian Congress "Unity Through the Sands of Time" to be held in Dubai, December 28-31, 2009. Contact [meher\\_bhesania@hotmail.com](mailto:meher_bhesania@hotmail.com)



**DECEMBER 2010, FIFTEENTH NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS**  
HOUSTON, TEXAS, [www.zah.org](http://www.zah.org)



**GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY**

**APRIL 24 - 26, 2009**

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





## A MONUMENT TO LOVE

### Mumbai's Taj Mahal

*A horrific terrorist attack has ravaged one of Mumbai's most-loved symbols and taken the lives of many of its dedicated staff. This heritage hotel was not started as a commercial venture. It was Jamsetji Tata's gift to the city he loved — as the Taj Mahal of Agra was Shah Jahan's memorial to the woman he loved.*

**Russi M. Lala**

**MUMBAI'S PRIDE:** Before the Gateway of India was built, the Taj Mahal offered the first view of the city of Bombay to ships sailing into the harbour. Even now, with many more tall buildings on the skyline, the hotel engages immediate attention.

The 1880s and 1890s were a time of great construction in Bombay. The Grand Victoria Terminus was built, and after it the Municipal Corporation building, another beautiful structure, followed by the Churchgate headquarters of the B.B. & C.I. Railways (now Western Railways). But there was no hotel worthy of the growing city.



Being an ardent fan of Mark Twain, Jamsetji Tata may have read of the writer's fate in the so-called 'best' Watson's Hotel: Mark Twain and his family were roused every morning at dawn by doors slamming, servants shouting, and "fiendish bursts of laughter, explosions of dynamite." The Irish chef at the hotel was apparently more conversant with the French language than with French cooking, "serving up Irish stew on 14 occasions under 14 different French names." Sir Stanley Reed, Editor of The Times of India, said Jamsetji had an intense pride and affection for the city of his birth, and when a friend protested against the intense discomforts of hotel life in Bombay, he growled: "I will build one."

One day without consulting anybody, not even his sons or partners, he announced his plan to build a grand hotel. It was his personal contribution and money he was putting in — not that of Tata & Sons. Along the present Yacht Club at Apollo Bunder was a little bay where yachts used to scull. The British were reclaiming the land and he bought a substantial site of two-and-a-half acres on November 1, 1898 on a 99-year lease. There was no formal laying of a foundation stone but a traditional coconut was broken and a Parsi diva (oil lamp) was lit, perhaps by the well or spring between the present swimming pool and the lifts. This ceremony took place in 1900.



Many an interesting story is invented round the Taj being designed by an Italian/French architect who, after his exertions, went home and returned to find the building was put the wrong way around — what should have been in the rear was in front and vice versa. Heartbroken he went to the top floor of the Taj and flung himself out of the window. Dramatic! Touching! But not true. As anyone who stayed at the then-non-air-conditioned Taj in the summer would attest, the late

afternoon breezes that blow across Colaba do not spring up from the harbour but sweep in from across Back Bay. The U-shaped wings of the hotel were positioned to trap this breeze and extract the most benefit.

Indeed, the necessity to draw whatever relief there might be from the torrid heat of western India was certainly the inspiration behind the hotel's two most original features. At the time, the clientele Jamsetji expected was from abroad





## A MONUMENT TO LOVE

### Mumbai's Taj Mahal

and his endeavour was to make the hotel as cool as possible. Thus it had high ceilings and wide corridors, which would be conducive to air circulation. Furthermore, the Wellington Mews — another property Jamsetji bought — behind the hotel site was where the horses and carriages were housed and these could roll in directly from the west side.

One convincing explanation comes from the daughter of a Goan customs officer, Francis Xavier D'Mello, who was stationed in the customs shed at Apollo Bunder and witnessed the Taj rising stone by stone: "Jamsetji Tata came regularly to watch his great hotel being built. The customs shed provided the only shelter from the blazing sun, so Mr. Tata used to come there and have long chats with my father. Once my father asked him why he had put the entrance to the Taj at the back, and Jamsetji told him that he wanted the majority of his hotel guests to have rooms overlooking the sea. Jamsetji surely had some hand in his broad instructions to the architect."

Sadly, having designed the Taj along with a Parsi architect under Jamsetji's instructions, Sitaram died of malaria. The dome designed on the model of the Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus) had not been built. W.A. Chambers was called to help. Khansahib Sorabji Contractor built the solid structure.

The prospectus for the hotel to be underlined some salient features: "The Hotel, when completed, will be five storeys high, and will accommodate, beside hotel boarders to the number of 500, a number of permanent residents. Immense cellars, below the ground floor level will contain the refrigeration plant, which will cool the rooms of the inmates, and will also enable their food to be stored in a manner foreign to India. The ground floor will be occupied by the offices, first-class restaurants, and shops for the sale of articles generally desired by travellers. The first floor will be mostly taken up with a grand dining room, drawing room, reading rooms, billiard room, and a few grand suites, all provided with electric fans. The second, third, fourth and fifth floors will contain bedrooms, mostly double and furnished in the Continental style with sofa, tables and chairs, and other furniture, and on each floor bathrooms and lavatories. The kitchens etc., will be on the top of the house with a roof garden. The Hotel will be lighted throughout with electric lights, and many lifts, also worked by electricity, will convey residents from floor to floor with comfort. A Turkish bath will also be fitted up in the Hotel."

Jamsetji personally went to order the electrical machinery from Dusseldorf and chandeliers from Berlin. Furthermore, he made sure that if by chance electricity failed, a back up system of gas lights was at hand. There was the in-house soda bottling plant, an electric laundry, fans from the USA — and the first spun-steel pillars from the Paris Exhibition where the Eiffel Tower was then the latest wonder of the world. These pillars, a hundred years later, hold up the ceiling of the Banquet Hall.

For all his projects Jamsetji got the costing done thoroughly but not for the Taj. It was his gift to the city he loved — as the Taj Mahal of Agra was Shah Jahan's memorial to the woman he loved. It cost about Rs. 25 lakh. When the hotel opened, it had a large staff of waiters but only seven guests. It was Bombay's first public building to be lit by electricity and when it happened, those present outside clapped as they saw it lit.

As if such a grand edifice was not enough, he purchased two small islands near Uran called Panjoo and Dongri so that the guests at the Taj could go on picnics.

Jamsetji wanted to lease out the Taj to an experienced European hotelier. The plans fell through and finding the staff and running the hotel was to fall initially on him in 1902 and later on his partners and colleagues. The Gateway of India came up only in 1924 to commemorate the visit of King Emperor George V and Queen Mary in 1911. Before that at the Gateway site, sahibs used to sit at tables sipping burra and chotta pegs.



## A MONUMENT TO LOVE

### Mumbai's Taj Mahal

Perhaps, says Allen and Dwivedi (who have done research on the Taj), Jamsetji believed in starting a new venture on an auspicious date, Muhurat as it is called. It was decided to open the hotel on December 16, 1903, before the building was complete. Only one wing was ready and the dome had not been completed. A study of Jamsetji's medical reports of the late-1903 shows his health was deteriorating. His sons and colleagues may have decided to speed up the opening so he could have the satisfaction of seeing at least one of his dreams come true. Steel, the hydro-electric venture, and the Indian Institute of Science came up after his death.

Five months after the Muhurat, when Jamsetji died, a leading journal of Calcutta, The Empress, wrote in the obituary: "The new hotel represented, to Mr. Tata, something more than a mere commercial venture, and he had determined that the Taj Mahal Hotel should set an example, which should re-act throughout India, in removing one of the greatest hindrances to agreeable travel in this country. The plans were drawn with the sole purpose of securing an entirely worthy building, and he looked for no immediate financial returns. There is something peculiarly saddening in the coincidence that the fixing of the key-stone of the noble dome should have preceded, but only a few days, the death of the man who inspired it."

The lives of the clientele, which was mainly British, revolved round news from home. The P.&O brought the mail every Friday morning and left every Saturday evening. The London GPO's largest single destination was mail for India. It was rushed from London, sorted out between Aden and Bombay and special bags delivered within an hour of the arrival of the steamer. Saturday was spent in answering letters. The Sea Lounge at the Taj was created as a letter-writing room and by special arrangement mail from the Taj was directly delivered to the ship.

In years to come, world-renowned personalities have stayed there, from Somerset Maugham and Duke Ellington to Lord Mountbatten and Bill Clinton. The hotel was featured in a hundred books, including Louis Bromfield's One Night in Bombay, which is centred on the Taj.

The maharajas became the great patrons of the Taj and invited the hotel to do special catering in their states. The Chamber of Princes was to meet there regularly every January — hence the 'Princes' Room' at the southern end of the Taj. The business maharajas were to follow next; today the Taj is the most sought after venue for wedding receptions, and one can frequently see fire crackers being let off at the gate as the bridegroom's party dances merrily away.

As there was no Gateway of India for 20 years after the Taj came up, the hotel offered the first view of the city to ships sailing into the harbour until 1924. Even now, with many more tall buildings on the skyline, the hotel engages immediate attention. It is a symbol of Mumbai.

*Russi M. Lala is the author of For the Love of India — The Life and Times of Jamsetji Tata. He lives near the Taj Mahal hotel and even closer to Nariman House.*

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### IN THE MIDST OF THIS TRAGEDY HERE IS SOMETHING THAT MIGHT MAKE YOU SMILE.

There was an old (83) very deaf, very wealthy Parsi gentleman from Hong Kong who was staying at the Taj Hotel on the day of the tragedy. At about 7.30 pm he went downstairs to the Shamiana restaurant for dinner and returned to his room at about 9.30 or so, after which he got into his pajamas, took out his hearing aid and went to bed.

He awoke at about 8 the next morning, went into his shower and came out (still without his hearing aid!) He got ready in his nicest trousers and a shirt, opened the door and stepped out, till a Commando caught him in the corridor and asked him where he thought he was going.

His reply - to breakfast! (He was luckily evacuated immediately)

This parsi gentleman is Nari Pavri from Hong Kong, the brother of the late Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver. Jamshed Pavri is the beloved Zarathushti from Vancouver who helped many Zarathushtis assimilate in Canada after immigrating



# MUMBAI MASSACRE

## Connecting the Diaspora



Porus Dadabhoy representing the Zarathushti community

### CANDLE-LIGHT VIGILS BRING UNITY TO PEOPLE OF DIVERSE FAITHS AND NATIONALITIES IN RESPONSE TO EVENTS OF NOVEMBER 26, 2008 ALL OVER NORTH AMERICA

Friends of India Society International (FISI) held Candlelight Vigil in Naperville, IL on Sunday 7th Dec. 2008 in the City Hall of Naperville City. Event was attended by over 300 people from all over Chicago, Mayor of Naperville City, Consul General of India and leaders of several faiths. Several TV and newsprint media representatives covered the event.

## Memories of THE TAJ, MUMBAI

**Aban Daboo, Chicago, Illinois**

I was born and raised a stone's throw from The Taj and it was an emotional experience to see it going up in flames and destroyed by such a wanton act of hate and senselessness.

My very first memories of The Taj are going to the hairdressing salon, Madame Jacques, with my mom and aunt. They would get their hair permed and I would have my fringe trimmed. On the way home my mom would request the gardener for some plants which she would repot in our house with the result we had house plants courtesy of The Taj.

My husband and I are still so upset about The Taj because we used to take a walk along the promenade every day before we came to the U.S. After finishing homework with the kids we would walk down Colaba Causeway, go to the Gateway of India from Regal Cinema, walk opposite The Taj upto Radio Club and return via Strand Cinema. That was our routine for years and we saw The Taj Intercontinental being built from ground up after the demolition of the Greens Hotel.

One of my old and dear friend and neighbor grew up at The Taj as his father was the Chief Accountant and

they had a suite of rooms they called home. After a late night party if we were hungry, and the restaurants were closed, we would sneak up to his suite and raid the fridge for apples and oranges!

The shopping arcade at The Taj was a treat even for window shoppers. Guzder Jewelers, the Maharaja Shirt Shop, Joy Shoes, Indian Textiles, Artistic Boutique – just to name a few.

We attended countless weddings, gala events, New Year's Eve dances. The Tata Sports Club had their annual dinner-dance at The Taj and Mr. J.R.D. Tata always attended and mingled with his employees. For Parsi New Year's Eve, Jimmy Bharucha (animal trainer) used to bring his white horses up the grand staircase and it was always a beautiful sight under the rotunda of The Taj. Their Sunday buffets were outstanding and the most sophisticated pallets were surprised by the array of dishes and desserts. Their Christmas Cake was so popular that the entire process of soaking the fruits in rum would start from November. The Patisserie, their cake shop, was so popular that for Divali (Hindu New Year), Pateti (Parsi New Year) and Christmas they had special counters opened up to keep up with the demand for their legendary chocolate goodies.

Standing in the portico of the front entrance we have waved to celebrities like Shah of Iran, Queen Soraya, Jackie Kennedy, Queen Elizabeth and

Prince Phillip, Prince Charles and countless heads of states, actors and actresses. The chandeliers and pillars in the Crystal Room were from the old Petit Hall and the Rendezvous was one of the first restaurants to serve French food in Bombay. Their master chef, the late "Maskie" was a favorite of J.R.D. Tata and all his daughters attended St. Annes School - Lily and Carmen were my classmates and birthday parties at their house were always a treat because their dad prepared the most delicious cakes.

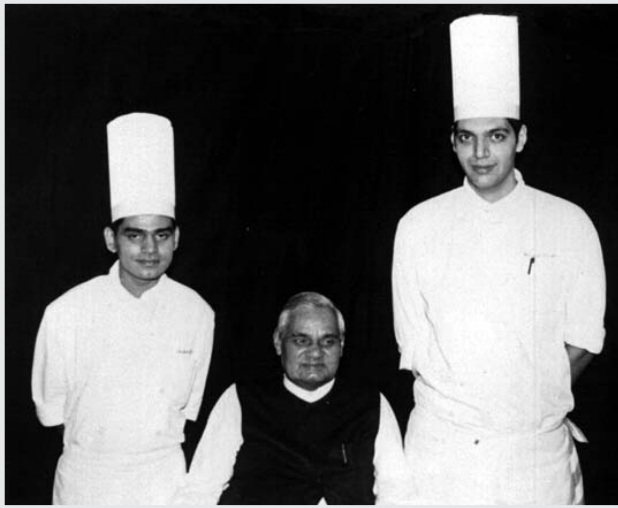
As young adults we enjoyed many a celebrations at their numerous restaurants and even though we would refer to it as the "old" Taj they constantly updated their services and eateries. I believe their latest addition is a restaurant by the Iron Chef.

Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city where I grew up in a Parsi colony, attended a Catholic school, then a Hindu college, worked for an American corporation where everyone was united. We had Hindu, Muslim, Jews, Catholics as friends and celebrated each and every festival with a lot of fun and joy. This senseless act has not only destroyed beautiful art and architecture which was a part of The Taj heritage but also fond memories of thousands of Bombayites to whom *The Taj was not just a hotel but an institution with joyous memories and tremendous history.*





# MUMBAI MASSACRE



The Taj Mahal Palace and Tower, Cama and Albless Hospital, Leopold Café, Oberoi Hotel, Nariman House, destroyed, 188 innocent people killed, why? Mindless terrorists created havoc and destroyed the dreams and hopes of the families of these 188 people. on the night of November 26, 2008 . In the 60 hours of carnage, before the terrorists were killed and 1 captured alive, three Zarathushtis were killed and one seriously injured

**Kaizad Kamdin**, 28 years old considered "one of best chefs in the country " according to Hindustan Times: This 6'5" man, well liked by all, and known as "the gentle giant", helped the guests out of the hotel, He phoned his parents in Pune on November 26 at 9.40 p.m. then again at 11.40 p.m. and then again at 3.45 a.m. saying "The police have come and I can go now ". His body was found at 7.30 a.m. outside the main kitchen, with three bullet

wounds on the face, below the abdomen and in the leg. 300 staff members of the Taj Hotel, from the junior most kitchen hand to the senior management , lined the pathway to the Towers of Silence when his body was carried. He is survived by his father Noshir, mother Navaz, and brother Astad. (In photo above, Kaizad Kamdin is on the left of the past PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee)



**Rohinton Maloo**, 48, a well known advertising name,

Managing Director of Cutting Edge Media, was dining at the Khandahar restaurant, with a friend at the Trident when the terrorists attacked. All the diners were taken to the 19th floor and shot in cold blood!! He is survived by his parents Baji and Dolly Maloo, his wife Nikki, daughter Narika and son Arshaan.(see photo on below)

**Farokh Dinshaw**, 52, a well known Karateka and fitness trainer was at the Trident having dinner at the "Tiffin" with a colleague Dev Bulchandani. He was hit by a random bullet in the lobby of the hotel, was rushed to the Bombay Hospital, operated upon, but he died. Dinshaw operated from 11 fitness centres, training thousands of students including members of the armed forces. He ran a martial arts school, a fitness academy and an adventure camping institute, and wrote books on Fitness (photo left below)

**Noshir Sanjana**, a security officer at the Taj, had finished his shift and gone home. He saw on TV the drama that was unfolding at the Taj and he felt obliged to return to the Taj at 1.00 a.m.. He helped a few people to safety before he was shot in the knee. He could not move, so he lay there all night and crawled out of the place in the morning by pulling himself up

**Café Leopold** jointly owned by Jehani brothers and Dehmiri was severely damaged, and destroyed. Nearly 10 people were killed and several injured during the shoot out.



The café was opened in 1871, named after the Austrian king Leopold. In 1991 it introduced its pub, the city's second . It has three foot beer towers imported from Canada. Café Leo as it is fondly called resumed operations three days later.

Nariman House, where the Rabbi, his wife and child were killed, was owned by Dadibai Nusserwanji Khambatta and Gulshan Khambatta. The Khambattas have been very regular with the payment of property tax. The last six monthly payment amounting to Rs 1.19 lakh was paid in September 2008. It was alleged that the Nariman house was used as a front for Israeli Intelligence.

Taj Mahal Towers reopened its rooms on 21st December 2008 with prayers recited by representatives of all faiths.

Photos courtesy Parsiana





# MUMBAI MASSACRE

## INDIA CARNAGE HITS CLOSE TO HOME

Rumy Mohta

***“Unprecedented events demand an unprecedented response. And this time the Muslim community in Mumbai has gone beyond merely condemning terrorism.”***

Because I grew up in the bustling city of Mumbai - what used to be known as Bombay - the carnage unfolding on Nov. 26 hit close to home. Having attended Elphinstone College, a block from the now-devastated Taj hotel, I could recall every road and lane where the gun battles raged on. The pictures from last week will remain forever in my memory.

As the events unfolded on TV, I got a disturbing phone call from my family in Mumbai, as I had planned to fly to India the next day to visit them. The reality of it all hit me then. I have friends and other relatives who live in South Mumbai, less than a couple of miles from the Taj and the Oberoi. Some of them work at the Taj and other places nearby. I felt a gnawing discomfort inside me and experienced great sadness as the day continued.

The mention of Leopold Café brought back the good old times of grabbing a relaxing *Irani Chai with a Brun-Maska* (hard bread with a sliver of butter). Leopold Café is one of the oldest Irani-owned restaurants in Mumbai. People from every corner - local and tourists alike - would gather for a cup of tea, a quick lunch, or a relaxing dinner with friends. The first gunshots in this terror attack at the restaurant shattered the lives of many. The first two people to fall by the terrorists' bullets were innocent Muslim workers at Leopold Café. The rest of the innocent victims were locals as well as tourists.

“Why?” asked a wailing mother after losing her two small children in this madness. This is a question people around the world are asking since the mayhem began in Mumbai. It started as a mild winter night on Nov. 26, 2008. By the time Mumbai's version of 9/11 was over, scores of people were left dead and hundreds injured, after 60 hours of terror.

The terrorists killed people from all walks of life, with no remorse. Even though at some locations the terrorists targeted people with U.S. or U.K. passports, many more were killed indiscriminately. Children were not spared, either, along with the adults. The terrorists - who are alleged to be Muslims - killed people of all religions: Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, and Zarathushtis. For the first time, Jews were intentionally targeted in India.

Was there any reason or rhyme to this madness? I can't find any, nor can anyone else.

The economic impact will be borne by all. Tourist traffic will slow down for a few weeks. Various businesses will bear the brunt of the impact. The attack in Mumbai was an attack on the financial heart of India. This does not signify the end though. The collective efforts of all will make it beat stronger than ever before. Leopold reopened on December 1, and people lined up to eat and drink there again. This was to show that nothing can hold down the spirit of the Mumbaikars. Taj reopened on December 21, 2008.

Unprecedented events demand an unprecedented response. And this time the Muslim community in Mumbai has gone beyond merely condemning terrorism. Muslim organizations in Mumbai have decided that local Muslim cemeteries, where unclaimed bodies are usually buried, will not open their doors for the last rites of these urban terrorists.

“The killing of innocents is against Islam. They are bringing shame to 250 million Muslims of India. These men are not Muslims. Why should we give them place anywhere? There is no place for them in our hearts and in our cemeteries,” said *Hamid Abdul Razzak*, president of *Dawat-e-Islami*, a Muslim organization in Mumbai.

People held a candlelight vigil on Sunday, Nov. 30. Men, women, and children of all faiths condemned the dastardly attacks that claimed the lives of many innocents. People spoke as one and stood together. People wept together and gave support to strangers.

On November 30, in a CNBC interview, *Ratan Tata*, chairman of Taj Group, said that “*rather than have us succumb to this kind of terror, what it has done is, I think, given us a resolve that nobody can do this to us. It has united us.*” This is what Mumbai is all about. Mumbaikars are resilient after repeated attacks. But, will they stop here this time?

Many believe this last attack will bring change to Mumbai and India both, in a good way. Now Mumbaikars have decided to say enough is enough, no more resilience clichés. Now they want answers, actions, and the end of terrorism. They want to breathe freely without worrying about a blast or a gunshot. They want to give their children a better Mumbai, free of corrupt politicians and terrorists. They want the politicians to take action whereby the terrorists won't dare think of India to wage their terror war.

This change will forever affect the lives of not only Mumbaikars but the people of the world.

***Rumy Mohta is president of Rites LLC. Contact him at (804) 290-0869.***

*This article appeared in*

*The Richmond Times, December, 5, 2008*



# MUMBAI MASSACRE

## REFLECTIONS ON THE MUMBAI TERRORIST ATTACKS

DECEMBER 4, 2008

**Rev. Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director**

***InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington***

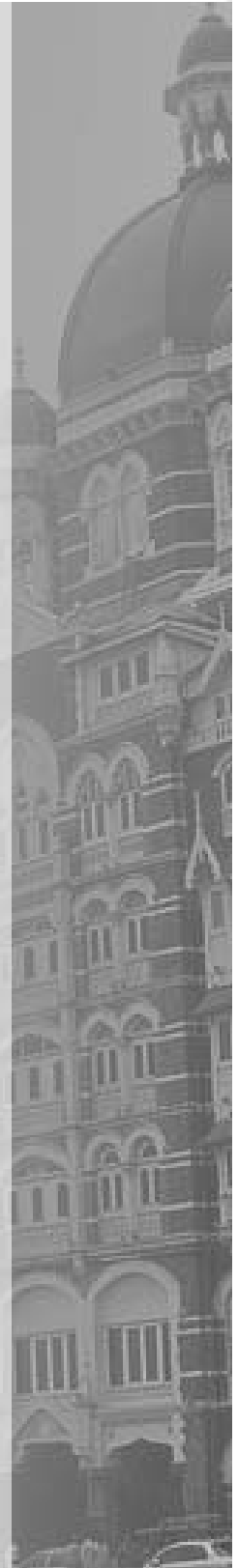
The InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC), which brings together 11 diverse faith communities in this region to advance justice, build community and nurture understanding, strongly condemns the horrifying acts of terrorism in Mumbai, India over 58 hours last week. These actions by a handful of extremist young men must be dealt with according to the rule of law and we urge full cooperation by all individuals and nations who can aid in the investigation to see that justice is done.

With utmost compassion and grief, the IFC stands in solidarity with all those who were killed or injured and their families as well as for all those many, many others who were so deeply affected by these atrocities. In the global community that is reflected in the Washington, DC area population, we need not look far to realize that these acts of violence reverberate close to home. Within our small staff at IFC, we feel the effects of the violence directly through the story of our young professional Indian staff person, Nilanjana Chowdhury. Her friend lost two friends in the attacks and her sister attends meetings a couple of times a month at one of the hotels that was bombed. I'm sure there are many other stories like this right here in this room.

In the midst of unspeakable violence against innocent victims, there is a tendency to look for easy answers by blaming an entire religious or ethnic group or nation for these actions. As in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this has included assailing all Muslims or persons seen as having a certain appearance. IFC recognizes that "the hateful words and deeds of a few people associated with a particular religion may stigmatize all members of that faith community" (IFC Policy Statement on Violence in the Name of Religion and on the Dangers of Religious Stereotyping, 1995).

We must not fall prey to those who may use these attacks to advance fear and prejudice for that will only divide us and weaken our sense of common purpose. Instead in times of legitimate fear and uncertainty, we must rely on the faith that grounds us in the truth of our existence. This truth, though rooted in diverse religious traditions and experiences, is that we are unified through our collaboration to build a peaceful, just and sustainable world. Stemming from our faith, this truth can help us to transcend fear and division and lead us on the path toward understanding and addressing the underlying causes of violence. At times like this, it is also important to remember that violence is often a last resort of those who have given up having their legitimate needs met. We know we have much work to do to build bridges of understanding and to ameliorate injustices. Doing so will be the building blocks for a lasting and just peace and enable good people of the world to overcome those who seek our destruction.

We cannot always choose what happens to ourselves or to those we care about, but we are responsible for how we respond to that over which we have no control. This is a moment in which we can choose our response. As people of faith, we must respond out of our passion for justice and hope, rather than fear and vengeance. We have the spiritual resources to hold firmly to our commonly held values and we have each other for support and guidance as we navigate what is a time of great loss for our local community, our country and our world.





## IVth COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE

by *Roshan Rivetna*

### What is The Coming Together Roundtable?

With migrations from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Iran, mostly in the last half century, Zarathushtis are now a "Community Without Borders" spread all over the globe. Never before has there been a greater need to keep these pockets of Zarathushtis connected with each other and with the mother countries. The Coming Together Roundtable (CTR) provides such a forum -- to bring together Zarathushtis from around the world for information sharing, dialogue and action on matters of global import. The format of the Roundtable is open and free flowing. There is no protocol, no hierarchy, and no authority. It is a forum for any persons, especially those in leadership positions, to come together and work together for the growth and welfare of our Community. The basis for the CTR is firmly embedded in the concept of "Hamazor" -- it is said that "Dialogue brings minds together and action brings hearts together."

The CTR is a legacy of the Eighth World Zoroastrian Congress. Becoming aware of the need for our Community to Come Together the organizers of that Congress, in London in 2005, enabled holding of the first CTR. Since then, two succeeding ones have been held, in Mumbai in January 2007 and January 2008, at the Athornan Madressa in Dadar.



### The IVth Roundtable

The IVth Roundtable was held on December 31st, 2008, graciously hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Houston. The meeting was conducted by Rohinton

Rivetna, with Firdosh Mehta and Behram Pastakia, and attended by about 35 persons, from India, Iran, Canada and USA, plus a few more who participated through webcast facilities provided by Yazdi Tantra of On-Lyne Systems, and ZAH. (photo left around the table Bomi Patel, Firdosh Mehta, Rohinton Rivetna, Behram Pastakia)

The tone for the day -- Hamazori -- was set by Benedictions and a Monajat by Er. Peshotan Unwalla and Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary and a Presentation (#3) on Hamazori, by Er. Ramiyar Karanjia (in absentia).

Among discussion items addressed by the CTR were the following:

### Venue for the Next World Congress (WZC).

The need for an equitable process to select the venue for WZCs arose at the 2005 World Congress in London. The concept of "Request for Proposals" was mooted and approved at the CTR in London and two subsequent CTRs. An RFP document outlining the selection process and evaluation criteria was drafted by Rohinton Rivetna, Firdosh Mehta and Behram Pastakia, with input from representative stakeholders in North America, India, UAE, UK, Iran, Australia and New Zealand. The document finalized in July 2008, was circulated widely. As per the process, proposals were invited, and received from Australia, Iran, and Singapore, Mumbai sent a letter. They were evaluated by a Selection Committee of four independent individuals from India, Iran, NA and Europe who had experience in hosting World Congresses. The evaluations were tallied by an independent accountant who provided the results in a sealed envelope. The sealed envelope was opened at the Houston CTR, and the venue was announced as "Singapore."







## IVth COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE

This announcement evoked strong objection from the Iranian delegates. (photo page 18 right) Zarathushsti M.P. in the Iranian Majlis Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari made an impassioned plea for holding it in Iran: "Remember the Congress is for our children to become more aware of our culture and heritage," he said, "Our Congresses are becoming more International showcases instead of bringing us back to our roots," and he, along with Khodayar Attaie (WZCC Director, Iran Region) proceeded to leave the meeting. Rohinton persuaded them to stay, and opened the floor for further discussion. Questions were raised on the viability of Singapore as host for a World Congress and on the selection process followed, especially in the face of the firm decision made by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to host the Congress.

Rohinton requested a group of four, including Kersi Limathwalla (WZCC president, from India), Bomi Patel (FEZANA president), Dr. Ekhtiyari (MP, Iran) and Alayar Dabestani (USA and Iran) to discuss the matter over the Lunch break and come to a consensual agreement. After Lunch, spokesman Kersi Limathwalla presented the outcome: "In view of the strong decision made by BPP (Mumbai) that the Congress should be held in Mumbai, Iran and USA had agreed to support Mumbai." Also, Kersi would urge that the next WZCC AGM after Dubai in 2009, be held in Iran. Iran has also requested that if the next Congress is held in Mumbai, the following one after that be held in Iran.

Bomi Patel suggested, and most concurred, that a global council/committee with elected representatives from BPP, Iran, ZTFE, FEZANA and other regions, be charged with allocating future world congresses, including the youth congress; and that BPP take the initiative in this regard.

### Promoting Celebration of Nou Rouz.

Fariborz Rahnamoon presented a paper on promoting the celebration of Nou Rouz more widely. He urged the community to take a lead in promoting public celebrations of the event all over North America and around the world, and initiate programs to promote the real significance of Nou Rouz. He drew attention to the astronomical event, when sunrise will coincide with the equinox, which will unfold in the vicinity of Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville, Kentucky, on Nou Rouz 2009. He urged communities in these areas to spearhead the celebration of the Real Nou Rouz and promote mass media coverage. Fariborz offered to help those associations in formulating the program. Details are at [www.ancientiran.com](http://www.ancientiran.com).

**Iranian youth immigrants to USA.** Fariborz Rahnamoon drew attention to the fact that Zarathushti youth from Iran are legally arriving in USA on a daily basis. They are well educated but are lost in their new environment and need guidance to find the right job, to upgrade their education and to settle down. Finance is

not their problem – they need help to settle down quickly in the right environment with the right job. He urged that local associations take the initiative to seek out these new immigrants and assist them, as they have no means of finding the local associations.

**Economic Support for Iran.** Dr. Ekhtiyari presented the economic status of Zoroastrians in Iran: "... The population trend is dwindling ... Very few youth are left now, especially in Yazd and Kerman ... The best way we can help is to create employment opportunities in Iran, so that they are not drawn to come to America. This can be done (1) through direct foreign investment in Iran. Arrangements can be made to protect the investment; or (2) by bringing an old/outdated technology system that may still be usable in Iran ... it would create jobs for Iranian youth, and profits for the investor ..." It was decided to form an Iran Economic Advisory Council comprising of Khodayar Attaie, Alayar Dabestani, Bomi Patel, Dr. Ekhtiyari, and Kersi Limathwalla, to help and advise in this matter.

### Community Enhancement Projects.

Firdosh Mehta presented the status of numerous community enhancement projects, many of which needed further support, including: participation in Pravasi Bharatiya Divas; ParZor Foundation projects; Gene Study project (Avestagen); Dastur Meherji Rana Library and K. R. Cama Oriental Institute projects and efforts for Manuscript Restoration; World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation projects including archeological excavations at Sanjan; web-based world-wide directory of Zoroastrian individuals and businesses at [ZoroastrianDirectory.com](http://ZoroastrianDirectory.com) and Parsiana Yellow Pages; academic fund for school children in Iran; the Iranian newsletter Amordad; Parsi Resource Goup projects; the Persepolis Fortification Tablets of the Oriental Institute in Chicago; assistance to religious infrastructure – agiaries, atash behrams, dokhmas, aramgahs, darbe mehrs; Sadhana School for Autistic students in Mumbai; Farohar Foundation, producers of Zarathushti heritage films; and various other needy welfare projects for food distribution, hospitals, schools, playgrounds, sports centers, science centers, rural community support and more. Behram Pastakia urged support for Operation Eyesight (eyeglass collection will be done at the Dubai Congress) and developing a project through Parsi General Hospital for screening Zarathushti women for breast cancer.

**UN and Interfaith Programs.** Behram Pastakia encouraged participation in UN events, especially as this was the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Rohinton Rivetna, a trustee of the Parliament of World's Religions announced the next Parliament, in Melbourne, December 3 – 9, 2009, and distributed a beautiful, glossy brochure with a warm welcome from the local host – Zoroastrian Association of Victoria ([pwr@zav.org.au](mailto:pwr@zav.org.au)) which read: "We the Zoroastrians of Victoria open up our hearts and





## IVth COMING TOGETHER ROUNDTABLE

homes to all Zoroastrians of the world, to visit our beautiful country, enjoy our hospitality and take pride in our glorious heritage.”

**Other discussion items included: Duties, Rights and Privileges of the Diaspora Communities;** passing the torch to the next generation and the YLEP Youth Leadership Enhancement Program in Dubai; Zoroastrian Bank seeking patronage from NRIs; preparation of a document on the Code of Civil Conduct; and promoting the Ethic of Collective Giving.

The need was expressed to put Farsi translations of important information on the web and in Farsi-language publications. Alayar Dabestani offered to fund an administrator, based in India, who could translate the information into Farsi. Dr. Ekhtiyari offered to facilitate the printing of translations in Iranian publications.

**Next Roundtable.** The next CTR will be held on December 30, 2009, during the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai. For detailed reports of all the proceedings visit [www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net) (category “Round Table”) maintained by *Yazdi Tantra of On-Lyne Systems*

*Mumbai or contact CTR administrator, Percis Dubash of Mumbai ([pdubash1@gmail.com](mailto:pdubash1@gmail.com)).*



First row from left: Firdosh Mehta, Minoo Shroff, Jamshid Dinyar, Rohinton Rivetna, Natalie Vania-Gandhi.

Second row from left Rustom Engineer; Behram Pastakia, Esfandiar Ekhtiyari, Mehraban Firozgari, Khodoyar Attaie, Rusi Gandhi.

*Photo credits: Roshan Rivetna, Yazdi Engineer, Homi Davier Videos for Coming Together Roundtable 2008 <http://zoroastrian.net/2009/02/06/ctr-2008-video-of-proceedings-z/>*

## PARZOR CONFERENCE

**PARZOR’s two-day conference, while concerned with all demographic subgroups, brought to light the dire situation of elderly Parsis.**

### EXCERPT

When youth were asked what were the critical issues currently being faced by the Parsi community, the typical responses were “dwindling population,” “intermarriage,” and “issues related to conversion.”

One of the themes that seemed to pervade throughout the seminar was the poor mental health of the community’s elderly population.

On Saturday December 13 and Sunday December 14 the **PARZOR Foundation** held a conference in Mumbai, India entitled “Research on Socio-Economic, Attitudinal, Demographic, Scientific and Health Aspects of the Zoroastrian Community in India.” The PARZOR Foundation, directed by Dr. Shernaz Cama in Delhi, was chartered by UNESCO in 1999 to examine the culture of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in India.

This particular conference was organized in part by request of community members and organizations to study the reasons for demographic and socioeconomic changes amongst the Parsis. Researchers from eminent universities and organizations including the Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS) were asked to comment on studies that they conducted on various aspects of the health of the community. A dedicated team of researchers used a combination of interviews, home visits, focus groups and surveys to gather information. They visited participants in baugs, old-age homes and private homes in and around Mumbai and in Gujarat in attempts to portray the attitudes of a more complete profile of India’s Parsis.

The conference was thematically split between the two days, with Saturday being dedicated to socioeconomic and demographic studies of the community. Three presentations were made by faculty members at TISS, each covering a different demographic group: the family, youth and senior citizens. The main objective of the study on the



## PARZOR CONFERENCE

family was to explore various dimensions of the demographic change in the Parsi community and “to draw implications for preserving its numerical strength and identity.”

**Critical issues faced by the Parsis** The study on the youth revealed that many young participants would like to start their own business while participation in social service activities was relatively low. When asked what were the critical issues currently being faced by the Parsi community, the typical responses were “dwindling population,” “intermarriage,” and “issues related to conversion.” When asked for possible solutions to these issues, youth respondents offered the following: “more interactive meetings” (34 percent of respondents), “having more children” (25 percent), “disallowing ‘inter-caste’ marriages” (21 percent), and “opening up the religion to others” (18 percent).

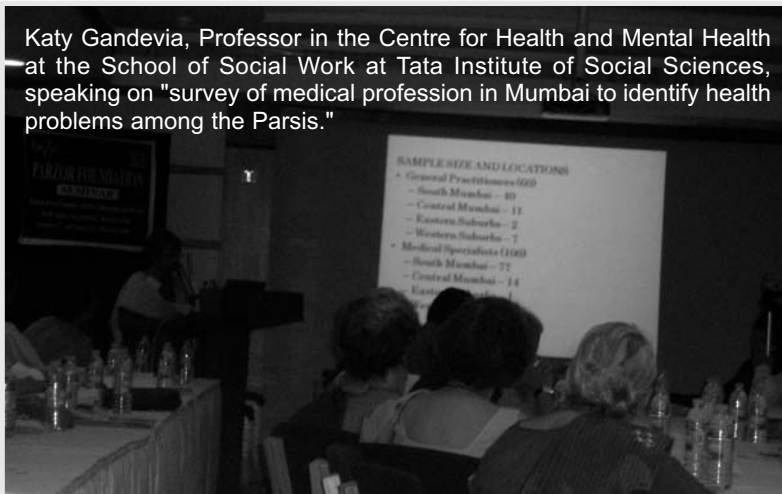
**Research on the elderly** revealed a dire need for home-based services for the Parsi aged population and suggested the creation of a community based organization to help facilitate such services through a combination of professional and volunteer efforts. Many of the conference participants were also shocked to learn that two-thirds of the elderly respondents in the survey reported an annual income of less than 25,000 rupees per annum.

The second day was dedicated specifically to exploring the medical health of the community. Eminent physicians and researchers shared their findings and opinions regarding studies into various common medical problems within the community. In a survey of Mumbai physicians it was reported that the most common health problems afflicting the community were cardiac problems, cancer (and within this category breast cancer), diabetes and stress/anxiety. Many cited a “sedentary lifestyle” and lack of attention to preventative health measures as key factors leading to the observed trends.

Other studies dug deeper into the body to focus on hematological, biochemical, immunological and cytogenetic studies of the Parsi community in India. The studies came up with interesting findings regarding the aforementioned dimensions of medicine; however, because of the small sample sizes of those studies, no conclusive inferences could be made and the need for larger studies and further research was expressed.



Katy Gandevia, Professor in the Centre for Health and Mental Health at the School of Social Work at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, speaking on “survey of medical profession in Mumbai to identify health problems among the Parsis.”



While several points were made at the conference, one of the themes that seemed to pervade throughout the seminar and within each session was the poor mental health of the Parsi community’s elderly population. As per the 2001 Census, 31 percent of Parsis in India are above age 60, with many of these people unmarried and/or living alone. More than 80 percent of elderly responders, regardless of marital status, stated that their major problems were poor housing, lack of money/financing, poor health, insufficient medical care and loneliness.

The presenters took special care to stress that the research conducted was meant to shed light on some trends and issues perceived by those participating in the research and could not be generalized to the entire Parsi population in India, much less for those living abroad. Each

day concluded with brainstorming sessions, as a major goal of PARZOR and this conference was to ensure that we move the findings of the research from thought into action. Representatives from all of the Indian panchayats, anjumans and baugs were asked to attend the conference so that insights could be shared and implemented in their



## PARZOR CONFERENCE

host communities. Ensuring that the implementation phase occurs will take great effort and cooperation from all sectors of the community but, if undertaken, could have great benefit for India's Parsis.

*Report by Shireen Cama*



Shireen Cama and Dr. V. Saroja Voruganti, with the newly elected trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat in the background

### PARZOR HEALTH MODULE SEMINAR

#### Proposed Genetic Studies in Parsis:

These studies were proposed at a health module seminar held under the auspices of PARZOR, a UNESCO based organization to promote health studies in Parsis. This seminar was held at YB Chavan Centre auditorium in Mumbai on December 13 and 14, 2008.

#### Genetic study of complex diseases in Parsis in India

Dr. Saroja Voruganti from the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research (SFBR), San Antonio, TX gave the first presentation. The proposed study is a population-based genetic epidemiological study aimed at

localizing genes that are influencing common complex diseases such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), obesity, type 2 diabetes, etc., in the Parsi community in Western India. The proposed study will help in the evaluation and understanding of the various patterns and age-related changes over generations (at least three generations) of the risk of CVD, diabetes, obesity and other complex diseases. Identification of genes related to these complex diseases will help in identifying the relevant functional mutations and ultimately help in understanding the contribution of these genes to susceptibility towards a particular disease in family members in Parsis. This study will also help create a comprehensive genomic database of the Parsi community that will include information related to various traits, socio-demographics, dietary intakes, health history, and genetic background.

Dr. Voruganti and her colleagues from SFBR are proposing a similar study in the Parsi community from North America. Similar to the study proposed in India, this study will help in identifying genes that predispose individuals to the risk for common complex diseases. In addition, the study will help assess and evaluate the influence of regional environments, life style and admixture (if any) on the genetic component of the phenotypes related to complex diseases.

#### The Avestagenome Project

Dr. Sam Gazdar of Avesthagen Limited, India gave the second presentation. The Avestagenome Project is a population genetics and multi-disciplinary study on the Parsis in India. It is a holistic study incorporating genetics, transcriptomics (study of gene expression at RNA level), proteomics (large scale study of protein structures and functions), metabolomics (systemic study of cellular profiles and their metabolites) and stem cells

from the blood of volunteers with the aim of identifying biomarkers and disease targets. The proposed

project aims to understand and the molecular basis of longevity seen in the Parsi-Zoroastrian population and to create a medical database of the community. It also aims to understand at the molecular level, the increased incidence of certain diseases related to ageing such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases and neurological diseases.



***Dr. V. Saroja Voruganti** is a postdoctoral scientist at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research, San Antonio, Texas. She received her Ph.D. in Nutrition from the University of Texas at Austin in 2005. Previously, she received her Diploma in Dietetics & Hospital Food Service from the IHMCTAN Mumbai, India and her B.Sc. (Honors) degree from the University of Delhi, India. Dr. Voruganti's research is focused on (a) the identification of genes that influence the development*

*and progression of complex diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and (b) investigating the effect of gene x environment interactions on obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in understudied populations. She is currently working on initiating a genetic-epidemiological study investigating the genetics of complex diseases in the Parsi Zoroastrian community. Email: [svorugan@sfbrgenetics.org](mailto:svorugan@sfbrgenetics.org)*





## “Zoroastrianism 101: The Homeland and Times of Zarathushtra”

Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism (SSZ)

**Jesse S. Palsetia. Associate Professor**

**Department of History, University of Guelph, Canada**

Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC) hosted the third SSZ (*Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism*) Conference at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, in Chicago, November 21-24, sponsored by SSZ (co-chairs Rohinton Rivetna and Pallan Ichaporia) with generous support from the *World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO)* and *WZO-US president Keki Bhote*. The gathering was an occasion for scholars, members of the Zarathushti community, youths, and other interested parties to gather, to discuss and ruminate, the history, message, writings, and culture of Zarathushtis from their ancient origins to the present day. Speakers came from across North America and Britain, and

were generously housed by members of the local Zarathushti community and the hosts of the gathering, the Rivetnas. The program was preceded by a welcome dinner for speakers and guests at the home of Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna.

On Saturday, members of ZAC presented an all-day seminar on “Zoroastrianism 101: The Homeland, Life and Times of Zarathushtra.” Presenters/session chairs included Naheed Vatcha, Spitaman Tata, Hoshi and Neville Vazifdar, Keikhosrow Mobed, Farida Sharyari, Persis Damkevala, Cyrus Rivetna, Shazad Mehta, Pesi Vazifdar, Burjis Sidhwa, Tushad and Zenia Mehta, Rushna Patel, Rashna Balsara, Kristy Taylor.



(from left standing Jesse Palsetia, Farrokh Vajifdar, Dastur Kersey Antia, Kekhosrow Mobed, Dinyar Patel, sitting, Rohinton Rivetna, Shahin Bekhradnia, Keki Bhote.

*Jehangir Mobed presented the Life of Arbab Guiv and Jamshed Modi spoke on Diversity.*

**DAY ONE** began with a Monajat by *Mani Rao* and ZAC choir and a Kavi Khabardar poem by *Edul Udvadia*; and a benediction from *Hoshi and Neville Vazifdar*. A formal welcome was given by ZAC President *Hosi Mehta*, and opening remarks by *Rohinton Rivetna*. Both men spoke of the objectives of the program to provide a forum for members of the Zarathushti community around the world to meet to discuss and ponder the state of the Zarathushti religion. *Rohinton Rivetna* offered the signature theme underlying the gathering: to have Zarathushtis think about their heritage and to learn from each other's perspectives.

The first day's sessions indeed offered a gamut of outlooks both scholarly and non-scholarly on Zoroastrian topics. *Spitaman Tata, Hoshi and Neville Vazifdar, and Kekhosrow Mobed and Farida Sharyari* presented papers on early Zoroastrian and Persian history, the benedictions to the departed souls in the jashan ceremony, and the significance of the Shah Nameh among Zarathushtis respectively.

**SESSION 2** included a history of the Avestan language by *Cyrus Rivetna* and the significance of the Zarathushti environmental outlook by *Shazad Mehta*.

**SESSION 3** included an account of the life of Arbab Rustom Guiv by *Jehangir Mobed* and the diversity of the Zarathushti community in North America by *Jamshed Modi*.

**SESSION 4** examined the historical Zarathushtra. *Naheed Vatcha* discussed the history of dating Zarathushtra. *Burjis Sidhwa and Persis Damkevala* examined the birthplace of Zarathushtra, and *Zenia and Tushad Mehta* presented a traditional understanding of Zarathushtra among Parsis. In the final session of day one, *Rashna Balsara* examined the challenges faced by Zarathushti parents in raising children in the Zarathushti religion and culture. *Kristy Taylor* presented a fascinating slide show of her travels across Iran and Azerbaijan and the places associated with the Zarathushtis. The first day's presentations offered an engrossing combination of outlooks on the Zarathushti heritage





## ZOROASTRIANISM 101



(left Keki Bhote and right Shahin Bekhradnia)

that reflects that there is intense pride and fascination among Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis of various backgrounds in their heritage.

**DAY TWO** included scholarly presentations on the Zarathushti religion, culture and history.

**SESSION 1** Following an opening monajat and benediction by Mani Rao and Bomi Damkevala respectively, Rohinton Rivetna introduced *Farrokh Vajifdar* (photo left) from London, UK, who provided a creative and enthralling interpretation of the yasna texts and salvation theology. Vajifdar noted the significance of the Zarathushti religious outlook among early religions, and the freedom of choice offered in the Zarathushti Din.

**SESSION 2** examined the history of Parsi interactions with Iran and the history of the Iran League by graduate student Dinyar Patel of Harvard.

**SESSION 3**, *Keki Bhote* of the World Zoroastrian Organisation noted the history of Zarathushti influences in Central Asia, and *Shahin Bekhradnia* from Britain noted the pervading influence of Zarathushti and Iranian culture in Tajikistan from her travels to the region.

**SESSION 4**, *Dastur Dr. Kersey Antia* of Chicago continued the theme of examining Zarathushti and pre-Zarathushti Iranian influence in the history of Georgia and the Caucasus region. Session 4 concluded with *Professor Jesse Palsetia* examining the history of the Parsis of India and their attempts to safeguard and compose identity in pre-colonial and colonial India.

The day's sessions concluded with a workshop chaired by *Keki Bhote* and with thoughts on the Zarathushti community of North America offered by *Farrokh Vajifdar* and *Shahin Bekhradnia*. The visitors from Britain urged North American Zarathushtis to continue to examine the nature of their social and religious customs, the relations between South Asian Parsis and Iranian Zarathushtis, and to be innovative in addressing issues unique to the Zarathushtis of North America.

On the final day of the conference, a roundtable dialogue of scholars and interested community members continued the discussion on whether the North American community. All the participants agreed that the North American Zarathushti (NAZ) community is in an advantageous and challenging situation. North American Zarathushtis were urged to vigorously pursue strategies that ensure the inclusive nature of the community in North America and to avoid the schisms that have affected older Zarathushti diaspora centers. Indeed, as a historian, I have noted that while distance may physically separate and outlooks vary among the Zarathushtis of North America, the NAZ communities are offering up models of inclusiveness, education, and cultural and religious innovation that can provide solutions to not only the issues that face North American Zarathushtis, but may also offer perspectives and solutions for the wider world Zarathushti diaspora.

A delicious lunch was catered by *Aban Daboo* on Saturday; *Roshan Rivetna*, *Dinaz Weber*, *Bachi Damkevala* and *Mani Rao* provided breakfast and lunch on Sunday and all the teatime snacks; *Mehroo Bhote* provided delicious desserts on Friday. Registration volunteers *Dinsoo Rivetna* and *Aban Vazifdar* provided great support.

The SSZ papers will be available on the SSZ website at [www.s-s-z.org](http://www.s-s-z.org). For information about SSZ, contact *Pallan Ichaporia* ([PRIchaporia@aol.com](mailto:PRIchaporia@aol.com)) or *Rohinton Rivetna* ([Rivetna@aol.com](mailto:Rivetna@aol.com)).

Photos courtesy Roshan Rivetna



*Jesse S. Palsetia. Associate Professor  
Department of History, University of Guelph,  
Canada*



## AN UPDATE ON THE ZOROASTRIAN INFORMATION CENTRE UDVADA

### **Homi Dhalla Ph.D**

In the last few years, some attention has been focused on Udvada from a socio-cultural-architectural viewpoint. This began with the documentation and listing of heritage structures and amenities in Udvada. Among other factors, the study observed that the overall town planning reflects a quaint architectural fabric which is medieval in character. A generous grant from the Central and Gujarat Governments followed, which led to the birth of the *Zoroastrian Information Centre (ZIC)* on April 24, 2008. Although attempts were made by certain elements in the community to sabotage this project, they did not succeed.

In the last nine months, there has not been a single incident which shows the ZIC in poor light. On the



contrary, the impression of the visitors has been very positive and is a tribute to this institution. Bus loads of students from various parts of Gujarat have been brought to provide a glimpse of our religion, history and customs. This would enable young minds to empathize with the Zarathushti way of life – an important element for harmonious relations in a multicultural and multi religious society. It would also ignite enthusiasm in the youth of our community to know more about our religion and rich cultural heritage.



The community has been fortunate that for the first time

an overall development of Udvada has been taking place. Attention has been

paid to the security, roads, lighting and sewage system. Perhaps the greatest danger to the town is the onslaught of the ocean which has been gradually destroying properties on the seafront. A project to solve this problem is already being implemented by the government.

Ever since I launched the *World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation (WZCF)* in 1998, I have been working for the preservation of Zarathushti culture. Hence it has been extremely rewarding and challenging to have been asked to work on the ZIC. In my own humble way, my contribution to this Centre has been to provide the complete data for the five dynasties of ancient Iran viz., *Pishdadian, Kayanian, Achaemenian, Parthian and Sassanian*, besides writing briefly about the teachings of Prophet Zarathushtra and the role of the Holy Fire in our religious tradition. Furthermore, having initiated the project for the conservation of the *Bahrot Caves and the Sanjan excavations*, a room has been earmarked to showcase these two important historical projects.

The saga of the holy Iranshah may be divided into three distinct phases. **Sanjan** marks the beginning of the Zarathushti story, **Bahrot** the turbulent period and **Udvada** depicts the peaceful and safe enthronement of the Iranshah in all its glory. Perhaps it was in my destiny to have played a role in all these three phases.

The *Zoroastrian Information Centre* has been the precursor to another cultural centre, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Memorial Museum at Navsari which was inaugurated on October 19, 2008.(see page 94) May we



### **Dr. Homi Dhalla –**

*Trustee, Foundation for the Development of Udvada*

have many more centres to showcase our rich culture and heritage.





## SHABE YALDA

December 21, 2008

Dear Zarthushti Community Members

I wish you all a wonderful Shabe Yalda:

-the longest nite of the year; the next day the sun comes back for a little longer than the last day and the sunshine increases daily after that

-the first day of winter

-the winter solstice

-a traditional Persian celebration on around the late night of December 21 where we read poetry, eat lots of interesting food including anar and watermelon and tell stories; elders are very important at this gathering

-we usually read the Divan-e-Hafiz in Persian and English and sometimes supplement with other great Persian poets; in this participatory poetry reading, each person holds the book and counts 1, 2, 3 and then opens

the book and finds their poem; someone reads it in English and someone else reads it in old Persian (it's nice to have a scholar who reads this old Persian verse as it's not easy for contemporary Farsi speakers to grasp the full meaning). Almost inevitably each of us picks a poem that speaks to some part of our life. The poem delivers a personal message. In the multiple layers of this profound verse the meaning is not always

clear but sometimes you feel like you are talking to your grandmother about your life; it's like getting advice from a wise beloved one. So there is a little swish of 'magic' to Yalda. To illustrate, this year, my mom's poem was all about enduring pain and suffering and the rewards at the end of the road. She has lived with illness most of her adult life.

As a Parsi married to an Irani I started celebrating this wonderful tradition of our ancestors about 15 years ago. Having grown up in Canada where most people celebrate Christmas I am so happy to have found one of our traditions that happens at the same time. Reclaiming our old traditions is one of the ways in which I feel we have the opportunity to decolonize our minds: we used to embrace everything British as best.

I go regularly to our children's schools and teach the children about Yalda. They love it! Recently I went to our 7 year old Arman's class where they learn in French so I took the Divan-e-Hafiz to show them the book we read and then chose poetry books in French. One little girl picked a poem about war; both her parents are in the military. As I noted earlier, there is something amazing about this participatory poetry tradition of our people!

Each year at our home we celebrate Yalda and often invite friends from the majority culture. They are always honored to be included in our traditional celebration. Funnily enough, some of our Parsi family/friends find it harder to enjoy this celebration. I have found this enigmatic as many of these same people are happy to wish all a Merry Christmas--adapting well to the traditions of the people here (a hallmark of Parsi ways of being). I feel so blessed to be able to converse in Farsi--albeit in a limited fashion; when we read the Persian poetry we always read it in English and Old Persian. I love hearing the Old Persian even though I don't understand it. This

language is our old language and it lives in our bones doesn't it?

Recently having spent 3 months in India with our whole family, I did notice that many of our Parsi community members feel very little if no connection to Iran. Even though Farsi and Gujarati are somewhat parallel in sentence structure and share many common words, most of our community members

show no interest in learning Farsi or learning about modern day Iran. In some parts of the Zarthushti diaspora, such as North America, there is a divide between the Parsis and the Irani Zarthushtis which is slowly being bridged by the younger generation. I feel privileged to be able to walk in both parts of our community and pray that we may all see the beauty in knowing each other, loving each other and seeing that we are indeed one people.

*Yalda Mabarak to You All!*

*Warmest Wishes from Vancouver CANADA*

**Farah Shroff**



FARS

Photo : Hassan Ghaedi

FARS NEWS AGENCY





## YALDA, THE VICTORY OF LIGHT OVER DARKNESS

By Tamara Ebrahimpour, Press  
TV, Tehran

**On Yalda festival, Iranians celebrate the arrival of winter, the renewal of the sun and the victory of light over darkness.**

Considered the longest night of the year, Yalda eve is the night when ancient Iranians celebrated the birth of Mithra, the goddess of light.

Every 21st of December Iranians celebrate Yalda which means birth in Syriac. It is believed that when this night ends, days become longer as light (Sun) has defeated darkness. (the sun leaves the winter solstice)

Ancient Persians believed that evil forces were dominant on the longest night of the year and that the next day belonged to the Lord of Wisdom, Ahura Mazda.

The Persians would burn fires all night to ensure the defeat of evil, would hold feasts, give charity, honor their deities and pray to the goddess Mithra.

As Yalda coincides with the beginning of winter, people also celebrated the end of the previous harvest by eating dried and fresh fruits and praying to the deities for a bumper winter crop next year.

One of the main features of the Yalda festival was the temporary subversion of order, a practice which lasted up to the Sassanian period. i.e. Masters served servants, children headed the family and a mock king was crowned.

Today the Yalda festival is a time when family members gather at the home of the elders until after midnight. Guests are served with dried fruits, nuts, and winter fruits like pomegranates and watermelons, which symbolize the red color of dawn in the sky.

They also practice bibliomancy with the poetry of the highly respected mystic Iranian poet Hafez. Persians believe whenever one is faced with difficulties or has a general question, one can ask the poet for an answer. Hafiz sings to the questioner in his own enigmatic way and allows



individuals to look in the mirror of their soul through his poems.

Pomegranates, placed on top of a fruit basket, are reminders of the cycle of life -- the rebirth and revival of generations. The purple outer covering of a pomegranate symbolizes "birth" or "dawn" and their bright red seeds the "glow of life."

Watermelons, apples, grapes, sweet melons and persimmon are other special fruits served on Yalda night and all are symbols of freshness, warmth, love, kindness and happiness.

**Symbolism of Fruits:** On this night, the oldest member of the family says prayers, thanking God for the blessings of the previous year, and prays for prosperity in the coming year. Then he cuts the melon, and the watermelon and gives everyone a share. The cutting symbolizes the removal of sickness and pain from the family. Snacks are passed around throughout the night: pomegranates with angelica powder (gol-par) and Ajil-e shab-e yalda, a combination of nuts and dried fruits, particularly pumpkin and watermelon seeds and raisins. This mixture of nuts literally means night-grazing; eating nuts is said to lead to prosperity in days to come. More substantial fare for the night's feast include eggplant stew with plain saffron-flavored rice, rice with chicken, thick yogurt, and halva (saffron and carrot brownies). The foods themselves symbolize the balance of the seasons: watermelons and yogurt are eaten as a remedy for the heat of the summer, since these fruits are considered cold, or sardi; and halva is eaten to overcome the cold temperatures of winter, since it is considered hot, or garmi. Into the night of festivities the family keeps the fires burning and the lights glowing to help the sun in its battle against darkness. They recite poetry and play music, tell jokes and stories, until the sun, triumphantly reappears in the morning.

Source: <http://www.art-arena.com/yalda.htm>



## YULE

### YULE

*The sun is setting low on the western horizon.  
Sky serpent swallowing him once more  
Yule night has arrived; sun's longest slumbers.*

*We eat and drink all that is red  
Wine, pomegranate and watermelon,  
The colour of dawn, a reminder of what we eagerly wait for.*

*Shamash, Marduk, Sekhmet,  
Descending immortals, you'll rise again  
Apollo, Ra salutations to you.*

*Good night Osiris, weak and tired lying in your coffin,  
Enclosed by darkness, tricked by Seth again!  
An infant sun is born, Horus soaring up onto the sky.*

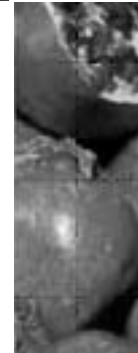
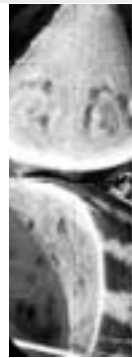
*Mithras born of a rock and out from the cave,  
Becoming sol invictus and turning the wheel  
Darkness, now a fading memory.*

*Oak king sings outside, as the Holly king lays slain  
Dawn has arrived, Yule has ended.  
Drink up your wine*

**-Nabarz, December 1995**



**Payam Nabarz** is author of *The Mysteries of Mithras: The Pagan Belief That Shaped the Christian World* (Inner Traditions, 2005). *The Persian Mar Nameh: The Zoroastrian Book of the Snake Omens & Calendar* (Twin Serpents, 2006). *Divine Comedy of Neophyte Corax and Goddess Morrigan* (Web of Wyrd Press, 2008). He is the Editor of *Mithras Reader: An Academic and Religious Journal of Greek, Roman and Persian Studies*. Vol 1 (2006) and Vol 2 (2008).







# جشن سده فروزان باد آتش مهر میهن



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بخش جشن ها





## S A D E H

Sadeh is a mid winter festival celebrated by Zarathushtis, popularly known as Jashn-e Sadeh. In Iran it is the third largest celebration after NAVROOZ and MEHERGAN. Even though this festival is not celebrated in India, Parsees in North America are absorbing the traditions from Iran which they had forgotten after the migration to the Indian subcontinent and are relearning in the new diaspora. (see photos from

for practical purposes. ***This big step in the history of human civilization is the significance behind the celebration of Sadeh.***

The brief English translation of the FARSI text below provided by Mobed Firozgary says :- "Jash ne Sadeh is one of the biggest, amongst Fire Celebrations, and the oldest, amongst the ancient Iranian Festivals. (If, Nourooz celebrations are attributed to Shah Jamsheed,



حش «سده» بزرگترین حش آتش و یکی از کهنترین آیینهای شناخته شده در ایران باستان است. در این حش در آغاز شامگاه دهم بهمن ماه، همه مردمان آتش زرتشت سرزمینهای ایرانی بر بلندای کوهها و بام خانهها، آتشیایی برسی افروخته و هنوز هم کوبیش بر می افروزند.

مردمان نواحی مختلف در کنار شعلههای آتش و با توجه به زبان و فرهنگ خود، سرودها و ترانههای گوناگونی را خوانده و آرزوی رفتن سرما و آمدن گرما را می کنند. همچنین در برخی نواحی، به حش خوانی، بازیها و نمایشهای دسته جمعی نیز می پردازند.



Zoroastrian Association of North Texas and Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington).

In the Shahname, Sadeh is referred to as a celebration of mankind's discovery of igniting fire. The legend goes that King Hoshang saw a snake and threw a stone to kill it. The stone missed the snake but hit another rock creating a spark and a fire. Even though fire caused by natural phenomena of lightning, volcano, etc, had been known to man, it was realized for the first time that fire can be created at will and be controlled

Sadeh Celebrations are much, much, older than Nourooz, because in the *Shahname*, Shah Hoshang predates Jamsheed" personal communication Mobed Mehraban Firozgary)

This Celebration takes place at the late hours of 10th of Bahman (January 30) and every Iranian Zarathushti makes it a point to set ablaze a pyre of firewood, either on their home terraces or hilltops but generally as a group celebration. Everyone participating is expected to bring wood for the fire! Prayers are

recited in either case and a festive mood is created. They sing songs and celebrate to mark not only to maintain the old tradition but also to mark the waning of the winter cold and the approach of Spring season.

An outward significance of participating in the festival and offering wood to light the Physical Fire is to fight the Evil - the cold of the winter, by helping to provide Heat and Warmth. A deeper significance is to remind us to feed and light the Inner Fire to fight the Evil - in our mind, our bad thoughts.

**Fire - Atar or Adar** has a very deep significance in the religion and is mentioned in several places in our scriptures.

**Gathas - Yasna 43.9** Asho Zarathushtra communes with Ahura Mazda:

What is Thy Holy Will? To Whom daily my utmost homage should I pay?

Unto Thine Inner Flame I pay my homage & to Thine Eternal Law.

**Gathas - Yasna 46.7** Who will protect me from evil in my hour of need?

My Inner Light and Willpower shall protect me from evil.



## S A D E H

**Haptan Yasht - Yasna 36** Through the Agency of Thy Divine Fire , approach we Thee and Thee alone, O Ahura Mazda!

**Gathas - Yasna 46.7**, Kem Naa Mazda The use of words Aathraschaa Mananghaschaa together clearly suggests that the prayer does not refer to physical fire. Instead it refers to Flaming Fire of Thought.

**Atash Nyaish** The Fire of Ahura Mazda gives instructions to everyone....

It cannot be the external fire. The fire he refers to is the flash of the intuition which becomes their Teacher.

In all these references of Atar, the external fire also implies internal essence, the Divine Spark, the Fravashi , the Element of God within us. So each time we offer a piece of sandal wood to the fire, we remember that **Fire is the Visible symbol of the Invisible Divine Light, the Divine Spark , the Fravashi within us. It is this Internal Flame** that needs to be kept burning by living a useful, meaningful life, by practicing *Humata - Good Thoughts, Hukhta - Good Words and Huvarashta - Good Deeds and by following the path of Asha - Righteousness, Truth and Divine Order.*

Let us join in prayers at the Jashn e Sadeh, to thank Ahura Mazda for providing us this INNER FIRE which can guide us to lead a good life and help our soul attain Perfection and Immortality.

The word "Sad" means one Hundred. The question is asked : What are these one hundred days in our Zarathushti calendar that impel us to celebrate Jashn-e-Sadeh on this particular day i.e January 30th

**Fariborz Rahnmoon of Vancouver, Canada writes :**

"Sadeh is the celebration that has continued from the days when our ancestors had two seasons:

Seven months of summer and five months of winter. Sadeh is celebrated on the 10th of Bahman / 30 January and is one hundred days from the beginning of the five month of winter which starts on the 1st of ABAN / 23 October.

**(Thirty days of Aban + 30 days of Azar + 30 days of Dey + 10 days of Bahman = 100)**



This translates into: (9 days of October + 30 days of November + 31 days of December + 30 days of January = 100 )

**Mobed Mehraban Firozgary of Tehran writes**

"Sade" appears to have been derived from Sad=100. However, in the Iranian mythological version (mainly the *Shahname*), the day the fire was discovered is, fifty days before Norooz. To justify the 100, some explain it as a period of 50 days + 50 nights; some explain that the lands of our ancestors had just two seasons, the long summer - from Norooz (March 21) to the 1st

of Aban Mah, (October 23) following with the "Long Winter". The Jashn e Sade falls exactly 100 days after 1st Aban. Some, even, doubt the root of the word "Sade". The dari word "Sote"= Burnt (Latin Soot?) and other roots are suggested for "Sade".

**Excerpted from articles by Kayomars Mehta, Fariborz Rahnmoon and Mobed Mehraban Firozgary by Dolly Dastoor.**

**Source:**  
<http://www.oshihan.org/Pages/SadehE.htm>

**Photo credit Ardeshir Bakhtani , ZAMWI**



## THE MERIDIAN OF ZARATHUSHTRA

Zarathushtra calculated the first meridian and called it "Nim Rouz", which means "Mid Day". The Meridian of Zarathushtra was located in ancient Sistan at 62 degrees longitude. Even today that location in Afghanistan is called the Nimruz Province.

When it is mid day at the Meridian of Zarathushtra (62 degrees longitude) there is sunshine from Japan, the land of the rising sun, to the western tip of Africa. What better location can there be for an intellectual and scientific meridian. [i]

***Nou Rouz is when the sunrise coincides with the vernal equinox at a predetermined longitude.***

[http://ahura.homestead.com/files/IranZaminFifteen/NOU\\_ROUZ\\_\\_\\_NIM\\_ROUZ\\_15.mht](http://ahura.homestead.com/files/IranZaminFifteen/NOU_ROUZ___NIM_ROUZ_15.mht)

Fariborz Rahnamoon, Vancouver, Canada

**Let us celebrate Jamshedi Nau Rouz 2009 together**

***Zarathushtis wishing to send pictures from reports of events, to be posted on [www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net) are requested to use jpg, jpeg, or png, formats. For uploading movies and videos mp3, mp4, m4a, wav, ogg, mov, wmv, avi, or mpg formats are required. Points of contact: Percis Dubash, [pdubash1@gmail.com](mailto:pdubash1@gmail.com), and Yazdi Tantra [yazdi@on-lyne.com](mailto:yazdi@on-lyne.com),***



## Best Wishes from The Fali Chothia Charitable Trust

The Fali Chothia Charitable Trust was established in 1988 to help provide scholarships and interest-free loans to needy Zarathushti students. Awards are based on financial need, educational achievement, and community service. The trust is established under the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI), and awards scholarships to students from all parts of the US and Canada.

To demonstrate solidarity and trust between organizations while serving community causes, the US Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Organisation joins the Fali Chothia Trust's Scholarship Program by adding up to fifty percent to every scholarship we give from our Trust's resources. This partnership enables us to significantly increase the amount of our scholarships.

All donations made to the trust are tax exempt, and go directly toward the corpus of the fund. Checks payable to "ZAMWI/Fali Chothia Charitable Trust" may be sent to  
Chothia Trust 10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814.





# World Zoroastrian Congress Awards - 2009 Call for Nominations

## AWARD CATEGORIES



Outstanding Zarathushti Award



Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting  
or Literature Award



Community Service Award



Excellence in Technology and Engineering Award



Excellence in Medicine Award

The World Zoroastrian Congress Awards are the most sought-after, prestigious and recognized awards. They have been instituted to encourage, acknowledge and reward valuable contributions and outstanding achievements made by Zarathushti men and women in various fields.

Submit your nominations in English or Farsi via email to:  
[wzcawards@gmail.com](mailto:wzcawards@gmail.com)

Closing date: 31st March 2009



9th World Zoroastrian Congress  
**DUBAI** 28th - 31st Dec, 2009  
Unity through the sands of time

For details and bookings, please visit us on [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)

# Zoroastrians from all over the world are coming to Dubai. Are you?

## World Zoroastrian Congress, Dubai 2009

The Zoroastrians of Dubai are pleased to host the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress from 28th December to 31st December 2009. The Theme of the Congress is "Unity through the sands of time". The objective is to promote solidarity, welfare and progress. The who's who from the corporate world will participate in the program. The four days Congress will focus on different topics. The evenings will be filled with excitement and entertainment.



### Event Highlights (28th – 31st Dec 2009)

- Trade Show focusing on entrepreneurial opportunities for small, medium and large businesses.
- Daily Programs covering socio-economic, technology, medicine, science, arts, culture, heritage, youth, education and other interesting topics.
- Leading regional & international companies will display their innovative technologies, products and services.
- World renowned guest speakers from leading regional and global organizations will participate.
- Young Leaders of Youth Leadership Enhancement Program will share their thoughts with the community.
- Grand cultural events showcasing the rich Zoroastrian tapestry.
- Not to be missed: glittering Persian night and the fabulous New Year's Eve Party.
- Special Placement Bureau for those seeking international career opportunities.
- Sightseeing and Shopping Tours of Dubai.
- Investment opportunities in prime properties in Dubai and other countries.
- Gala Awards Night and Desert Safari with dinner and dance.

**Don't miss the World Zoroastrian Congress 2009.**  
It's going to be an unforgettable experience. Make sure you are there with your family and friends!



9th World Zoroastrian Congress  
**DUBAI** 28th - 31st Dec, 2009  
Unity through the sands of time

For details and bookings, please visit us on [www.wzcongress.org](http://www.wzcongress.org)



## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

What advances a community is not so much to prop up its weakest and most helpless members, but to lift up the best and most gifted, so as to make them of greatest service to the community.

Jamshetji N. Tata

*Scholarship*

When FEZANA started the academic scholarship program in 1999, only two scholarships of \$1000 were awarded for a total of \$2000. In the last eight years the program has grown exponentially and in 2008 we have awarded eleven scholarships of \$5000, \$4000, \$3000 (eight) and \$1000 for a total of \$34,000.

We now have four endowed scholarships. A new endowed scholarship

"The Khorshed Panthaky Scholarship" of \$3000 each for two undergraduate students was added this year.

In addition the program has inspired other organizations and associations in North America to develop their own scholarship programs, all of which undergo a strict selection process. It is heartening to note that organizations and individuals are beginning to recognize that education is a personal achievement of an individual's desire to succeed requiring the right opportunity. It is also recognized that the investment in our youth is the investment in the future of the Zarathushti community. We are pleased to see the FEZANA scholars receiving other community awards as well.

Your continued financial support, in this economically difficult period and your encouragement is of utmost importance to maintain this program

**Dolly Dastoor Ph.D**

**Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program**

### MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP THE KHERADI SCHOLAR

**PARISA JAVEDANI**

**OREGON HEALTH AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE**



**PARISA JAVEDANI** is a first year medical student at Oregon Health and Science University's School of Medicine in Portland, OR. Since starting medical school, Parisa has continued working with underserved populations by volunteering in free clinics in the Portland area. She has also undertaken a leadership position in the SNMA student group. This group's goal is to provide support for minority students who hope to pursue a career in medicine. Currently, the group is working on projects at all academic levels encompassing students from kindergarten to undergraduate levels of study. These projects aim to provide mentorship and support for minority students at critical points in their academic career. In her free time, Parisa enjoys skiing, swimming, and travelling.

Parisa feels this FEZANA scholarship shows the importance and value of giving back to the community, and she is grateful to those who have made this scholarship possible. Parisa also hopes her journey will motivate Zoroastrian youth to set high goals and work

towards achieving them.

### FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship

**BEHROZ NOWROJEE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**BEHROZ NOWROJEE** was born in Bombay, India and raised in Miami, FL, since the age of eight. She has earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education at the University of Florida, and is currently working towards her Master's degree in Special Education, a competitive program at the University of Florida that is accredited as fourth in the nation. Throughout her undergraduate study she has earned numerous







## FEZANA SCHOLARS

prestigious scholarships, a result of maintaining a 4.0 Major GPA, and earning multiple President's Honor Roll distinctions, Dean's List Awards, and memberships in honor societies. While receiving these accolades, Behroz is continuing to follow her dream of becoming an inspiring and successful teacher by volunteering at countless Elementary schools, assisting teachers, underprivileged children and spearheading school improvement initiatives. Her Master's degree will help her provide a stimulating learning environment where she will be able to differentiate instruction in order to accommodate diverse learners, giving each child an equal opportunity. Her vision for the Zoroastrian community is for it to serve humanity and continue making great contributions around the world, using the humanistic principle of the equality of all mankind. This scholarship is a great honor and is enabling Behroz to continue embarking on her journey towards higher education in order to become an effective, compassionate, humanistic elementary school teacher who can cater to the needs of all of the students in her classroom, molding them into good human beings, ready to contribute to society and make this world a better place to live in.

*Scholarship*

### FEZANA SCHOLARS

**FARZAD KAMYAR,**

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MEDICINE**



I am currently studying Medicine at the University of California Irvine and my plans are to either use my MBA along with my medical degree to pursue a career in healthcare policy, or to specialize as a Neurosurgeon. The FEZANA scholarships are increasingly becoming more important in students' lives and I am grateful to have received one. We are in a time where tuition costs are increasing while federal financial aid packages are decreasing. This leaves students, such as myself, in a position where we rely heavily on private loans, family contributions, and scholarships to fund our education. For some, scholarships are the difference between being able to attend or not attend school. Therefore, I encourage parents to have their college bound children apply. It is absolutely critical for the Zoroastrian youth to attend colleges, universities, and professional schools to not only further their education, but also enrich their life experiences. Education enables them to pursue their dreams by remaining competitive in today's global economy and also provides them with the tools necessary to further our religion. I interact with the youth at various functions and am pleased to see that many are actively pursuing advanced degrees and flourishing at their universities. The future is bright for these young

students and I have great confidence that they will prosper in their future endeavors.

Photo above Farzad Kamyar with Manijeh Torki, his Zarathushti fiancé, an OB/GYN doctor that works at USC County Hospital.

### **SHABNAM ROSTAMIRAD, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, BIOCHEMISTRY and MOLECULAR BIOLOGY.**

I was born to a lovely family in Iran. My elementary and middle schools were public schools in my home town Ahvaz. However, when I was fifteen years old, I competed in a provincial exam with twenty thousand participants, and finished in the top forty. Because of that, I could enter an elite high school, as the classmate of many brilliant students. After high school, I wrote a national exam with over a million and half of my peers, and I ranked among the first three thousand





## FEZANA SCHOLARS

examinees. This enabled me to enrol in Ahwaz University of Medical Sciences- a highly competitive medical school in Iran.

Beside my academic activities, I have always been an active member of Zoroastrian community. I have taught in Dini classes, coached our athletes for different competitions, and was a member of youth society for a long time.

Currently I am in the process of completing my master's degree at University of British Columbia in the department of biochemistry and molecular biology. During my studies in Vancouver, I was able to receive on average one scholarship per year for my academic and research achievements.

My master's project is quite interesting since it involves finding a cure for some of the hereditary eye disorders, and as a person, who has devoted her life to science, I would like to adopt a career in academia as a researcher and my graduate studies will provide me with great deal of training and experience to achieve my goal.

FEZANA scholarship, thanks to the kindness of the Board and the donors, will assist in achieving my education and career goals, and increase my chances of success. Without a doubt, this award will prove to be extremely valuable for me, helping to reduce the financial burdens of pursuing a degree in biochemistry and molecular biology.

*Scholarship*

### JIMMY ANTIA , TUFTS UNIVERSITY, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

The world is changing rapidly – and with it new threats and opportunities emerge for security, cooperation, economic growth and environmental protection. Understanding how international relations affect everything from the United States' War on Terror, to the growth of the national economies is essential for the security and growth of countries. As a master's student of international relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy I study the nexus of two increasingly intertwined issues – international security, and international development.

The FEZANA scholarship has allowed me to continue my course of study at the Fletcher School and contribute towards the understanding of the development-security nexus. This past summer, I interned with a United Nations field office in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, an area devastated by the 2005 tsunami, and before that, a 30-year civil war. As part of my project, I evaluated the process of reintegrating former soldiers of the civil war into civilian life. Moreover, I analyzed the policy decision-making process of the field office, and offered advice on mitigating against possible negative effects of providing aid. As part of an environmental study tour to China, I examined the political and security implications of China's rapid growth, and what it meant for Chinese citizens, the environment, and China's neighbors.

As I begin to complete my final year of study, I hope to use the knowledge and skills I have learned in helping the U.S. government create effective strategies to aid countries plagued by civil strife and poverty. I would like to thank FEZANA for allowing me to continue on my path.



### BAHAREH ABADIAN, ORANGE COAST COLLEGE

I am extremely honored to be one of the recipients of the FEZANA scholarship for the past two years. And I would like to thank the FEZANA committee members for their generous support.

As an undergraduate Biology major at Orange Coast College, my plan is to complete my major and continue my studies toward medical field. This scholarship certainly is a major help that enables me to pursue the career of my dream in the future. The California Zoroastrian Center gave me a great opportunity to work as a volunteer and



get experienced. As a current Vice President of the Youth group at California Zoroastrian Center, I would like to create unity between the Zarathushti community, especially the youth, by help planning out various events. I hope to be able to serve my community sometime in the future by giving back to the society both financially and by offering service. Having such a great supportive organization in the Zoroastrian community motivates me to eagerly take steps towards achieving my goals (Photo page 37: Bahareh Abadian with Rashid Mehin, VP FEZANA) Photo courtesy Ardeshir Baghkhani

## Scholarship

### **YASAMAN DEMEHRI, Orange Coast College**



My name is Yasaman Demehri. I was born in a Zarathushti family in Tehran, Iran. My family and I came to the USA in 2004 in seek of a better life and more opportunities. I am currently living in Orange County, CA. I am majoring in biology at Orange Coast College. I have a 4.00 GPA and I am involved in most of the on and off campus activities. I am looking forward to pursuing higher education, becoming a successful physician, and to be a contributing member of the Zarathushti society. Since I came to the USA I have been witnessing a remarkable increase in the number of the Zarathushti families here in Orange County, which has made our Zarathushtrian society more united with more activities that helps acculturate the teens who were born in

the USA and familiarize them with the Zarathushti history and traditions. I am also grateful to be receiving the FEZANA Scholarship, which has helped me in my education costs and supporting me to achieve my goals. In photo Dr Bahram Goshtasbi, President CZC Board handing Yasaman the FEZANA check. Photo courtesy Ardeshir Baghkhani

### **MEHERAZADE SUMARIWALLA Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT**

Biology and Chemistry are two areas that have always fascinated me. Since I was in middle school at the Bombay International School (I was born and raised in Mumbai, India), I have been curious about the things around us and how they work. What makes an atom what it is? And how does a nerve cell transmit impulses? These were some of the questions to which I wanted answers. In the 8th grade, I participated in an all India science essay competition on Biotechnology and my paper was adjudged amongst the 50 best in the country. The main focus of the paper was genetically modified crops, such as rice, cotton and others, and since then, my interest in that area has only grown. There is a whole world of possibilities waiting for someone to unearth it, and I very much want to be part of that discovery process. It's so exciting to think about crossing a grape and an apple, and producing a new and delicious fruit!

I am currently a freshman, studying at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT where my classes this semester have included Biology, Biology Lab and Organic Chemistry, amongst others. I will be continuing with these subjects next semester, along with three other classes (including dance), and I am planning to pursue a major in the Molecular Biology & Biochemistry department.

In addition to my academic interests, my extra-curricular activities and sports have also been a big part of my life. I have played squash, tennis, soccer, track & field and touch rugby. I was on the squash and tennis teams while at St Paul's School, NH. I successfully completed several speech and drama examinations held by Trinity College, London and participated in various Model UNs, including one at Harvard University. But my greatest passion has always been Ballet, Jazz and Contemporary dance. I have been dancing since the age of six and have completed numerous examinations of the Royal Academy of Dance, London, with Distinction.







At St Paul's School, NH, I was a member of the Ballet Company which performs several times each year, including public performances.

At my school in India, I was House Captain and a School Prefect. At St Paul's, I headed the International Society, wrote for the school news paper, was a Prefect as well as a member of the Independent Study Program Committee, the Yearbook staff, and the Lectors Guild.

At Wesleyan, I am a freshman representative on the Student Council. During the fall, I decided to try my hand at a new sport and joined the Crew team! This semester I am once again playing squash, on the Wesleyan team.

While this scholarship aids me financially, it also reminds me that I represent the Zarathushti community. I am one of many, many talented young individuals who are the future of our wonderful religion (even if it is a religion with a following of small numbers); and we are the ones who will have an impact in the near future. What we do with our education, and our careers, and the leadership roles we assume, can go a long way in determining the progress of our community as well as the larger global community. I am indeed grateful to FEZANA for awarding me this scholarship.

*Scholarship*

## BANOOBAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

**KAINAZ MISTRY,      MCGILL UNIVERSITY,  
PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR**

The FEZANA scholarship has provided me with a platform to be able to study at one of the top ranking universities in the world: McGill University. Having completed a year in general science I decided to opt for a major in Psychology in the Faculty of Science. Furthermore, as I am navigating through this ocean of academia I find the growing need to quench my thirst of knowledge in areas that I am slowly discovering to be interesting and as a result see myself doing a minor in Neuroscience, in addition to my major.

Education the backbone to a secure future, something I know I will have, thanks to this scholarship, will allow me to reach a stage in my life where I will be able to help the needy and deserving in our community. Reciprocating what my community has done for me.

I see my microscopic yet mighty strong community having a great future because of the unity within it- all its members reaching out and helping one- another. It is important to recognize how this help is strengthening our community by making the youth, the future of our community, aware that under the shadow of our community we can reach new heights. The support of my community means a lot to me and I will in turn provide help to it when I am able to do so. Thank you FEZANA ! Photo above, Kainaz Mistry with the President of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, Faredoon Mistry.





## KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Khorshed Panthaky, was a permanent resident of the US for nearly forty years. Her early education and development of interests in music, fine arts and drama started in Bombay. She painted in water colors and oils. She also studied designs and textiles at the J.J.School of Arts, Bombay. Khorshed then proceeded to London where she studied art and drama at the City Literary Institute, London. She continued her education in art, drama and theatre design at the American Academy of Dramatics in New York. She was a costume designer and seamstress, and she specialized in leather designer bags. As a hobby, she had learnt to play the mandolin, Hawaiian guitar and violin. She had made her home in New York.

From 1986 until her death on November, 23, 2007, Khorshed worked as a free lance Tour Guide and Tour Manager speaking fluent French and Italian. She enjoyed this work as it involved traveling and meeting people. She was a person of indomitable will and courage, vivacious and loved life. Although she had taken ill in the last few years of her life, she never complained and kept herself busy with work till the last day of her life. Khorshed is missed by her sisters Dhun and Bachu, both teachers in Mumbai, and her close friends. May her soul rest in peace.



*Submitted by Mehru Cama*

## THE KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

### **FARIBA KHOSHNASIB, University of Texas, Dallas, Applied Mathematics**

Two years ago, I left Iran during the third year of my studies as a Bachelor's degree student in Mathematics. When I entered USA in 2006, I was told that I will make a great physician. I found a job at a hospital to find my field of interest in medicine but meanwhile I heard the shocking news of my father's disease. This was now my oath to serve patients as much as I can. During this time, I received the honor of being represented as an excellent student in Dean's list because of maintaining a 4.0 GPA. I have worked during the day, gone to school in the afternoon and got back home at 10 p.m. during these two years. I had to sacrifice my resting time during the night to study. After 1.5 years, I finished all the prerequisites for applying to medical school and went on to continue in Applied Mathematics and I succeeded to receive my Bachelor's degree in less than a year. I was admitted to the fast track program in UT Dallas in which I was allowed to take 2 graduate courses along with my undergraduate classes. Working two jobs and going to school full-time has made me so tired that at times stopped me from getting the best results in a class. Now that I have received the honor of being a FEZANA scholar, I promise to use this scholarship for school tuition and therefore I will focus on my studies much more than work. After finishing my Master's degree in 2009, I am planning to pursue my goal to receive a doctorate in medicine or perhaps a PhD in Mathematics. Thanks to sacrifice and support of my family, friends, ZANT and FEZANA, I will have the honor of serving the Zarathushti community and humanity in any possible way in future. Photo above who presented her with a cheque Fariba with Anahita Sidhwa, a member of the Academic Scholarship Program.



### **BENAZ COLABEWALA FULLERTON UNION HIGH SCHOOL , GRAPHIC DESIGN**



# **M**OOBED FARIDOOON ZARDOSHTY

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP**

FEZANA has established a Religious Education Scholarship fund in memory of late Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty. We are grateful for the munificence of the Zardoshty sisters, late Pari, Homayoun, Iran and Farangiz and their families for their generous donation to FEZANA in memory of their beloved father to set up this scholarship fund.

The Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Scholarship(s) is to be awarded to selected Zarathushti individual(s) for higher studies and research in Zarathushti religion at a recognized institution of higher learning anywhere in the world. These scholarships are awarded for a period of five years. An amount has been budgeted for each academic year and may be divided between one or more selected individuals. The Religion Education Committee of FEZANA will manage the eligibility of selection of awards. Awardees will be required to allow FEZANA and/or Zarathushti community to receive the tangible benefits from their study and/or research.

All interested Zarathushti individuals can request an application for scholarship from

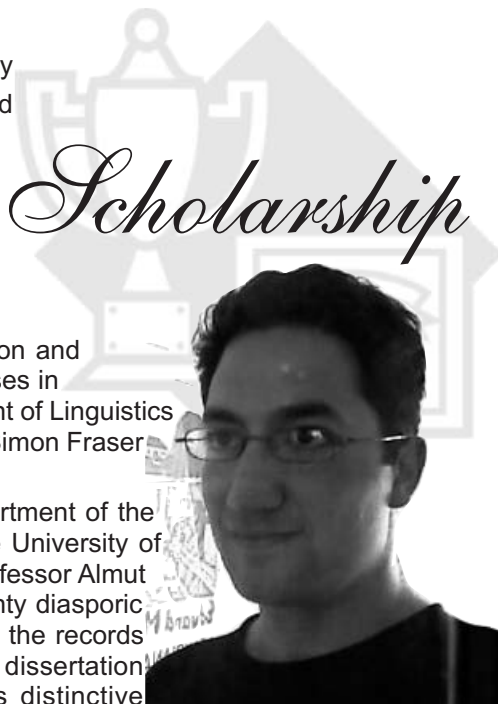
Lovji Cama Ph.D Chair, FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee  
58 Leroy Street, NJ 07670, e.mail [ldcama@verizon.net](mailto:ldcama@verizon.net) 201-569-7359

*2007-2008, 2008-2009 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO  
RASTIN MEHRI*

## **RASTIN MEHRI**

**A**s a native Persian speaker I completed my Primary and Secondary Education in Tehran, Iran at Rostam Abadian and Razi high school. I hold two bachelor degrees; a Bachelor in Fine Arts and a BA in Religious Studies, both from The University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I also hold a Masters degree in Religious Studies, from The University of British Columbia, with a special concentration on Early Eastern Christian History, and Biblical and Classical Languages (2003). My interest in teaching and communicating my research led me to secure a temporary teaching position in Religious Studies at Langara College in the Department of Arts, where I taught a course on 'Religion and Modernity' (2003). Since 2004 I have been teaching introductory courses in Classical Persian Language (LANG118 and LANG168) in the Department of Linguistics and since 2007 through the Center for Distant and Online Education at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada.

I am currently completing the second year of my PhD in the Department of the Study of Religions in the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, U.K., under the supervision of Professor John Hinnells and Professor Almut Hintze. The focus of this project is on the Parsi and Iranian Zarathushti diasporic community in British Columbia, Canada. Since 2007 I have examined the records and history of this unique immigrant community in the province. My dissertation seeks to answer fundamental questions regarding the community's distinctive history, beliefs and practices, and social situation in British Columbia, and the way in which the community defines its ethnic identity. Since 2007 I have also undertaken the study of Avestan, Parthian and Pahlavi languages with Almut Hintze and François de Blois. I hope to contribute to the field of Zarathushti scholarship and my ultimate goal is to promote the study of this outstanding and fascinating tradition in Canadian universities.







## Chothia Scholars

### FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST

The Fali Chothia Charitable Trust was established in 1988 to help provide scholarships and interest-free loans to needy Zarathushti students. Awards are based on financial need, educational achievement, and community service. The trust is established under the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI), and in the past 19 years has awarded scholarships and loans to students from all parts of the US and Canada. To demonstrate solidarity and trust between organizations while serving community causes, the US Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Organisation is once again joining the Fali Chothia Trust's Scholarship Program by adding up to fifty percent to every scholarship we give from our Trust's resources. This partnership enables us to significantly increase the amount of our scholarships. I am grateful to the WZO US Chapter, and thrilled that its support is resulting in a significant increase in the help we are giving to our young scholars.

*Scholarship*

Your continued financial support remains of utmost importance. Your help is essential in assisting our deserving youth to attain the level of education they are capable of achieving. We rely on your donations

**JIMMY ANTIA**, pursuing an MA in International Relations at Tufts University, hopes to fulfill his vision of creating public policies that protect the developing world from war and poverty. Jimmy studied in Costa Rica as a Fulbright scholar, and he says that as a Zoroastrian mobed, he has dedicated his life "to the concept of Frashokerati — or perfecting the world." (also received the FEZANA Scholarship)

**BURZIN DARUWALLA** is working toward an MBA at the University of West Georgia. He prides himself on excelling at all he does, having attained his Bachelors of Commerce degree with distinction, and having been on the Dean's list at his current university. He has volunteered with animal rescue organizations as well as other benevolent institutions that benefit the needy.

**AYESHA DUA** is enrolled in the Medical College of Wisconsin where she plans to obtain an MD. She hopes to practice as a pediatrician, and has already gained experience in her chosen field by volunteering at numerous hospitals and organizations. In addition to being the recipient of academic awards, she is an accomplished musician, and has given concerts in Carnegie Hall and Italy.

**JERITA DUBASH** is enrolled at the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and dreams of "opening free clinics to ensure underserved communities access to medical resources ... to make healthcare affordable and comprehensive for everyone living in America." Jerita also hopes to work with Doctors Without Borders. Her resume is replete with volunteer work, including a medical mission to the Dominican Republic.

**SIMIN ENGINEER** had to delay her hopes for a university education for almost fifteen years so that she could work in her parents' business after her father's illness and eventual death. Determined to earn a degree, she worked full-time while simultaneously going to school for a few years. She is now enrolled in the Food Science and Nutrition program at the Texas Woman's University, and hopes to help other Zoroastrian students as soon as she is able.

**PARISA JAVEDANI** is enrolled in the MD program of the Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine in Portland. She graduated cum laude from the University of Oregon with a 3.85 GPA, and has been the recipient of awards such as the FEZANA, Ahura, Rotary, the Presidential scholarship, and the Top Female GPA award. Parisa also has contributed to her community by being a stellar volunteer and a pioneer in establishing the Persian Club at the University of Oregon. (FEZANA SCHOLAR 2008-09)

**FARZAD KAMYAR** is pursuing his MD at the University of California School of Medicine at Irvine. Farzad decided to pursue medicine after having earned an MBA and a career as a software engineer. His years of volunteering at medical facilities have led him to aspire to a new career in healthcare, and to set up a nonprofit organization to provide care to the underserved. Farzad has been an active member and volunteer of the California Zoroastrian Center. (also received FEZANA scholarship)

**SHAVIR NAGARWALLA** is doing his MBA at Vanderbilt University. Shavir is a Gold Medalist from Mumbai University, and has received several academic honors such as Best Student of the Year, Academic Excellence Award, and the prestigious Tata Scholar award from the JN Tata Endowment. He has volunteered with Zarathushti institutions in India, and has been a leader in corporate social responsibility programs.





## **P**ERFORMING AND CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP

The Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship is accepting applications for the 2009 year. This scholarship is for US and Canadian residents who are studying in the field of performing and creative arts. So if you are studying to be a dancer, artist, singer, actor, etc please apply. Applications are due by May 31, 2009. Applications are on [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org). You can also contact Sherazade Mehta chair of the P&CAS committee at 972-385-4847 or [sherazadem@yahoo.com](mailto:sherazadem@yahoo.com) for further information.

### *The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia's Scholarships:*

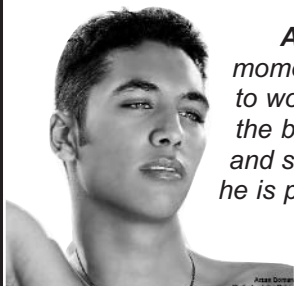


Left to Right, Aurash Yazdgerdian, Dinaz Mizan, Bella Tata and Farrokh Namdaran

Each year, ZSBC provides scholarships to those students who have successfully passed their secondary school examination with 85% or more marks, and who meet the other criteria laid down by the ZSBC Scholarship Committee members, who currently are Homi Italia, Dinaz Mizan, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Farrokh Namdaran and Bella Tata.

On October 12, 2008, at the death anniversary gathering of the late Jamshed K. Pavri, major founder of ZSBC in 1968, at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Burnaby, B.C., scholarship awards were presented by

Dinaz Mizan, Farrokh Namdaran and Bella Tata to Arzan Bomanbehram and Aurash Yazdgerdian. Our heartfelt congratulations to both these young gentlemen who will go on to pursue their post-secondary studies. Parents are requested to encourage their children to put in scholarship applications next year when the announcement is made. Application can be found at <http://www.zsbc.org>.



**Arzan Bomanbehram:** *Arzan is studying at Kwantlen Polytechnic University at the moment in the Criminology Program; hoping to be an RCMP officer in the future. In addition to working part-time at Tommy Hilfiger, he is also in a modeling competition that started in the beginning of September. Out of 500 applicants, Arzan was chosen to be in the top 12 and since then the number has now dwindled to the top 4 models, and we are proud to say he is part of that.*



## Congress 2000 legacy

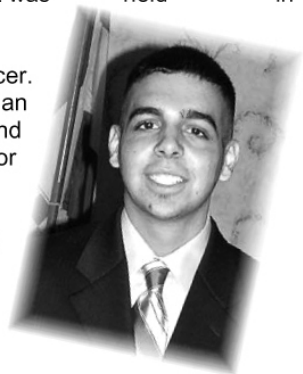
### 2008 Award Winners – Darius Byramji & Zarina Pundole

#### - *Recognizing Academic Excellence*

The Congress Legacy Award was established as a result of the funds that resulted from the success of World Zoroastrian Congress 2000. Each year, the award recognizes young Zoroastrian students who are studying at the University level and who have achieved excellence as students in their scholastic studies, in extra-curricular activities and who have made substantial contribution to Zoroastrian community affairs. By supporting the next generation of great minds we pay tribute to the success of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress that was held in Houston. The winners for 2008 were awarded \$3,000 each.

In November ZAH lost one of their talented youth member Cyrus Rohinton Desai to cancer. Cyrus had just graduated from Klein High School in Houston and was all prepped up for an exciting life in college when tragedy struck him. This brilliant student, a loving son and brother, Cyrus will be remembered for his leadership, his courage and his sense of humor and will be missed.

Hence at the ZAH 2008 AGM it was announced that ONE of the Legacy Awards would be named the **CYRUS ROHINTON DESAI** scholarship and it be given to a youth going to college for the FIRST year, because all that Cyrus wanted was to attend a college, even if it was for a day.



Congress 2000 legacy .....is an award program of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston



**Zarina Pundole** University of Houston, Masters in Law, majoring in Oil and Gas International Law . She has her LLB from Government College in Mumbai. An active youth member at Zoroastrian Youth Associations in Pune and Mumbai Zarina worked on minor litigation matters for the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. She arrived in Houston and got married to Faraidon Pundole who was a recipient of the Zoroastrian Field Service at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in 2000. She was awarded \$3000

**Darius Byramji** is pursuing a business degree at University Texas In Austin at the McComb Business School. An honor roll student who was actively involved with Zoroastrian Youth Program and was the President of the Z Youth Group 2007-2008. As an eagle scout he worked on community projects that painted church signs, to volunteer for different foundations and organizations Darius also cares about the school environment. He is involved in the Interact Club, Senior Men, and the National Honors Society. Interact Club helps to make the school a better place by providing a recycling program for teachers and students and serving for various volunteer projects around the school. Senior Men seeks to set a good example of what a "real man" is like for younger students by providing positive male role models through everything they do. National Honors Society holds high standards for all its members in both academic achievement and community volunteerism. Darius has spent many hours tutoring other students and working to assist me and other teachers to earn the volunteer hours that National Honors Society requires. Through all he has done for the school, Darius has made Cy Ridge a better place to be.





## The Mehraban and Paridokht Zartoshty Scholarships

The awards are given every year by the Mehraban & Paridokht Zartoshty Education Fund Association under the trusteeship of Homa Zartoshty, Kourosh Mehin, Khodadad Lohrasb, Fariborz Rahnamoon and Bella Tata. This year's awards were presented at the Arbab Rostam Guiv Darbe Mehr, Burnaby, B.C., during the death anniversary ceremony of Arbab Rostam Guiv on October 5, 2008.

This year's recipients were Armin Buzorg (cheque presented to her mother, Mahdokht Arghavani, by Bella Tata), Shabnam Rostamirad (cheque presented by Morvarid Yeganegi), Kayras Irani (cheque presented by Rostam Yeganegi) and Nima Bastani (cheque presented to his brother Pouya by Keikhosrow Edalati.) Heartiest congratulations to the successful applicants. Students are encouraged to apply for the 2009 scholarships, for which the criteria and form are available at <http://www.ancientiran.com>.

*Scholarship*



*Left to Right, Bella Tata, Kayras Irani, Mahdokht Arghavani, Pouya Bastani, Shabnam Rostamirad and Fariborz Rahnamoon*

**ARMIN BUZORG:** I'm currently studying for Dental Hygiene and will graduate in June 2009. I would like to eventually get a degree in Dental Hygiene and my future goal is to teach.

**SHABNAM ROSTAMIRAD:** Vision is one of the most delicate and at the same time important senses in human body. Even though essential to our lives, there is little known about our retina and its organization at the molecular level. As a graduate student in the department of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of British Columbia, I'm working on a novel and unidentified protein involved in the visual system. If identified and characterized, this protein could explain why some individuals lose their eye sights some time in their life span due to inheritant diseases.

I am very excited about my project, and I would like to continue my graduate studies and complete my Ph.D degree. In addition, my goal is to pursue a career in academia as a principle investigator.

**KAYRAS DARAYUSH IRANI:** I am a 22 year old Paramedical student. My family and I have lived in Richmond, British Columbia for 11 years. I am currently a licensed Emergency Medical Responder through the Emergency Medical Assistant Licensing Board. I have just been accepted for the next level of Para-medicine Training at the Academy of Emergency Training in Burnaby, to become a Primary Care Paramedic (PCP). After successful completion of this program, I will be able to apply for licensure through the Emergency Medical Assistant Licensing Board of B.C. Even after completing the PCP program, I wish to pursue the Advance Care Paramedic and Critical Care Paramedic Training programs. My goal is to reach Critical Care Para-medicine so I can have a career as a flight Paramedic. I currently work part time for a transportation company called ATS. During my free time, I enjoy playing Badminton and going swimming.

## ***FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2008-2009)***

### **Applications are invited for the**

**MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI (MMK) ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP  
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - THE FEZANA SCHOLAR.**

**FEZANA 20th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP**

**THE KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES**

**BANOOBAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP**

All scholarships are open to Zarathushti applicants who have obtained admission for attendance at institutions of higher learning (accredited degree-granting colleges or universities) in USA or Canada.

**SCHOLARSHIPS** Scholarships for the academic year 2009-2010 will be awarded in September 2009.

The FEZANA Scholarships

The MMKeradi Scholarship for \$5000

The FEZANA 20th Anniversary Endowed Scholarship \$3000

The Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarships \$3000

The BMK Scholarship for \$1000

**ELIGIBILITY:** Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

- (1) proof of USA or Canadian citizenship. (For non citizens a minimum of one year or two semesters residency in USA or Canada is required)
- (2) past academic records and accomplishments (attach documentation of the past four years only)
- (3) program of study
- (4) annual financial need including assistance already pledged by other funds, charitable institutions or the institution of choice;
- (5) other financial assistance available from family and friends
- (6) community service including contributions to Zarathushti functions and organizations
- (7) three reference letters

**AWARD CRITERIA:** Applicants will be rated on Scholastic Achievement (40%), Financial Need (40%), Extra-curricular Activities (10%) and Community Service (10%).

**The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi** Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 and the **20th anniversary FEZANA Scholarship** of \$3000 will be awarded to **post graduate students** for scholastic excellence

**The Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarship** of \$3000 and **The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia** Endowed Scholarship of \$1000 will be awarded for **undergraduate studies** to a student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

**APPLICATION:** Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) or from Dr Dolly Dastoor ([dollydastoor@sympatico.ca](mailto:dollydastoor@sympatico.ca))

**Completed application forms should be post-marked August 1, 2009 and mailed to:**

***DOLLY DASTOOR Ph.D, Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program,  
3765, Malo, Brossard, Quebec Canada J4Y 1B4***



# Ahura Scholarship

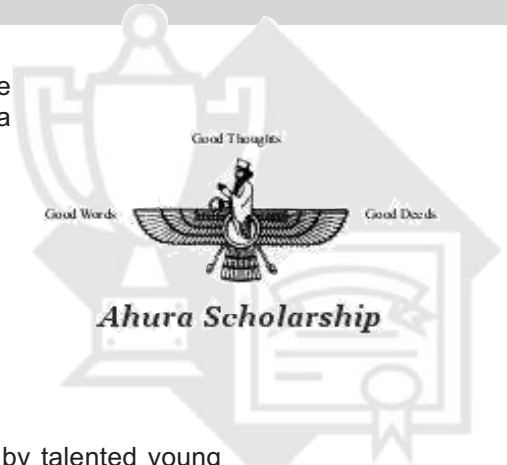
Young Zarathushtis are invited to apply for the Ahura Scholarship for the academic year of 2009-2010. There were five grants last year, and the Ahura Scholarship Board looks forward to receiving your applications this year.

## The Ahura Scholarship Mission:

"To promote leadership among young Zarathushtis in the academic, social, and political spheres."

## About the Ahura Scholarship:

This one-time grant helps finance undergraduate or graduate study by talented young Zarathushtis. Ahura Fellows receive \$3,000; Ahura Strivers receive \$1,000. Applicants must have been accepted to or be currently enrolled in an accredited institution of higher learning. Candidates of diverse nationalities are invited to apply. Payment of the scholarship is dependent on receipt of a tuition statement and confirmed enrollment for the fall semester of 2009. All completed applications must be postmarked by July 15, 2009. For a copy of the application, please see <http://www.pzo.info>. For specific questions please contact Koorosh Vakhshoori at [vak1232003@yahoo.com](mailto:vak1232003@yahoo.com).



## AHURA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR 2008-2009

We were as overwhelmed and impressed with quality of the applicants this year as we were last year. And we were particularly excited to have expanded our applications pool beyond North America. Here are this year's Ahura Scholarship recipients:

### AHURA SCHOLARS: \$3000

- **Ms. Pantea Gheibi**  
*Field: Bio-engineering, University of California at Davis, USA*
- **Mr. Afshin Abadi**  
*Field: Electrical Engineering, University of Southern California Los Angeles, USA*

### AHURA STRIVERS: \$1000

- **Ms. Mehernaz Percy Savai**  
*Field: Aeronautics and Astronautics, Purdue University, USA*
- **Ms. Parisa Javedani**  
*Field: Medical student at Oregon Health and Science University, USA*
- **Ms. Shireen Havewala**  
*Field: Development Studies, The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK*
- **Mr. Jimmy Antia**  
*Field: International Relations, The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University, USA*

Each one has shown exceptional leadership in different aspects of his or her respective academic fields, community, and life in general. Here is each recipient's short biography. We also invite you to visit [www.pzo.info](http://www.pzo.info) to view short video clips that some of the recipients have provided detailing their views and life experience. The full URL is:

<http://pzo.info/content/view/9/21/lang,english/>

**Koorosh Vakhshoori**

**Member of the Board of Directors, Ahura scholarship**





## Ahura Scholarship



**Pantea Gheibi**, a first year undergraduate student at University of California, Davis, pursuing a Bachelor degree in biomedical engineering.

In recognition of superior academic achievement and promise of leadership I was selected as the alumni scholar (The Cal Aggie Alumni Association of the University of California, Davis) for the year 2008-2009 from Santa Clara County.

*Scholarship*

I was the co-captain of the girls' tennis league championship in 2007-2008 academic years. I am the founder and the first year president of the mathematics club at my high school. I was an active member of many clubs during the past years, both in and out of my high school (e.g. key club, international club).

I attended the National Youth Leaders Conference, a leadership program in Washington D.C. in fall 2006 from Santa Clara County and was selected to attend GYLC (Global youth leaders' conference).

I believe that I have earned many leadership skills from volunteering. I have been the only student member of the DMHS's English Learners Advisory Committee (ELAC) for the past two years. I worked as a volunteer for the EL (English learner) department during the summer as a helper and sometimes as a translator during the school year. In addition, this year besides being one of the officers of the PZYO (Persian Zoroastrian Youth Organization), I am volunteering as a teacher's aid for children (religious) classes at Darb-e Mehr (San Jose).

Besides my leadership achievements, I was a CSF (California Scholarship Federation) lifetime member and a Del Mar P.T.A. Scholar for academic excellence in 2008. In addition, Bank of America has presented me an achievement award in the field of Science in Spring 2008.

Overall, I have started my life from zero several times and experienced so many unique things throughout my journey to America, but what I have been through my whole life has made the person that I am today, a hard working, bilingual, multicultural student.

Video click: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3IDg3qWoH4>

**Afshin Abadi** is a second year graduate student at University of Southern California Los Angeles, in Electrical Engineering. Afshin completed his B.S degree in Electrical Engineering from Yazd University and his M.Sc in Biomedical Engineering from Amirkabir University, Tehran, Iran.



During his time in Iran, Afshin was an active member of the Zarathushti community with a number of activities in the community. He participated in every Zarathushti sport competition. As a volunteer, he was involved in the organizing of the Zarathushti events.

He is one of the founders of the Zoroastrian Society at the University of Southern California (USC), currently serving as the vice president. Last year, the society endeavored to have university professors join as advisors. The Zoroastrian Society at the USC plans to invite professional Zarathushti speakers in the near future to familiarize the student body of USC with the Zarathushti religion.

Video click: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7M4LtUCbuM>

**Mehernaz Percy Savai**, from Surat, India, is currently in her first year at Purdue University. In 2007, she graduated with distinction with a B.E in Electronics and Telecommunication from Pune University. After college, she worked as a lecturer in an engineering college. She is currently pursuing her masters in Aeronautics and Astronautics.





## Ahura Scholarship

During her bachelor studies, she was the president of many organizations such as ELESA (Electronics Students Association), VSI (VLSI society of India) student chapter and INVIGOR (national level technical festival). She was selected among top 40 students of India to attend a 1 month summer school at IUCAA (Inter University center for astronomy and astrophysics). She was voted the 'Student of the year' by the faculty and classmates. Participating in the development of advanced airplanes, space shuttles, and satellites would fulfill her aspirations. She plans to do a PhD after her graduate program. In the long term, she would like to become a professor in order to share her knowledge and experience and instruct the next generation of aerospace engineers.

Video click: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wlu6IKZi\\_O0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wlu6IKZi_O0)

*Scholarship*

**Parisa Javedani** is a first year medical student at Oregon Health and Science University's School of Medicine in Portland, OR. Since starting medical school, Parisa has continued working with underserved populations by volunteering in free clinics in the Portland area. She has also undertaken a leadership position in the SNMA student group. This group's goal is to provide support for minority students who hope to pursue a career in medicine. In her free time, Parisa enjoys skiing, swimming, and traveling.

In 2008, Parisa graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR. During her undergraduate time, she was a member of several honor societies and received several prestigious awards, including the Presidential Scholar and Bowerman awards, from the University of Oregon. At the University of Oregon, Parisa undertook leadership positions in student organizations on campus, including a vice-president position in Alpha Chi Omega. Aside from her academic achievements, Parisa was also an active member of both the Portland and Eugene communities, and she volunteered for over 5 years with several non-profit organizations. (PARISA JAVEDANI IS RECIPIENT OF THE KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP --THE FEZANA SCHOLAR FOR 2008-09)



Parisa has provided an article instead of video clip. Here is the link to it:

<http://pzo.info/content/view/23/21/lang,english/>

**Shireen Havewala** is currently pursuing her masters in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London. She graduated this year with a B.A in Political Science from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, India.

She has had the opportunity to represent India at several conferences organized by the United Nations significant ones being those in Vienna and Lahore. Shireen was also actively involved in initiating the first Right to Information (RTI) campaign in Bombay. Shireen has been involved in a lot of social causes such as working on a food chain programme for the poor through the Social Involvement Program department in college. She has helped at the Xavier's Research Centre for Visually Challenged (XRCVC) by writing examination papers for the blind students and working with them on various projects. She has lent her time to the physically challenged children at the spastic society of India by teaching them at the elementary level.



At her current institution she is actively involved in working with Amnesty International. She hopes that this experience and opportunity will help in her goal to bring about that little change in the world that we all strive for.

Having been a recipient of various Zoroastrian Scholarships, she hopes to use this support and encouragement to strive harder and work towards her goals and prove herself worthy enough to be a part of the Zoroastrian community and the world in general.

Video click: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=t0T9qRA9rbw>



# Human Rights

## Editorial

Niaz Kasravi, Ph. D.

***All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.***

### Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This year, we celebrate the 60th anniversary of one of the United Nation's major foundational documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In honor of this significant occasion, this issue of the FEZANA Journal is dedicated to celebrating human rights, recognizing how far we have come in the last 60 years, and highlighting some of the challenges that lie ahead.

I am honored to be the guest editor of this issue. As a Zarathushti, I believe that we as a community have a great understanding and personal connection to the human rights movement. After all, the first ever human rights charter known to man was a proclamation by the Persian King Cyrus the Great in 538 BCE, promising to respect the traditions and customs of all the people of his empire and vowing to prevent any form of oppression from taking place within his land – all concepts unheard of for rulers in his time.

Going beyond this oft-cited historical example, the simplicity of Zarathushtra's message, the beauty of the Zarathushti religion and the most direct link it provides to the underlying notion behind human rights is what we are taught from the very beginning: humata, hukhta, huvarshta – good thoughts, good words, good deeds. Given that we grow up with these guiding principles, many of us have chosen to devote our lives and our careers to advancing the cause of human rights worldwide.

In this issue, you will get a glimpse of what some Zarathushtis are doing to advance the human rights movement: Attorney at Law Kersi Shroff presents a historical overview of the UDHR, Dr. Homee Shroff and attorney Gloria Goldman discuss the humanitarian issues of U.S. immigration policy; activist and attorney Raio G. Krishnayya ties in the case of Zarathushtis and protection of the rights of those without a state; author Zerbano Gifford focuses on the prevalent issue of gender discrimination and the need to empower women; Kersi Limathwalla, chartered accountant, active community worker and the International President of WZCC, portrays the plight of the physically handicapped; activist and medical student Shireen Cama focuses on human rights and mental health; social activist Diana Katgara reports on the participation of FEZANA's delegation in the UN NGO Conference in Paris France and also contributes a piece on the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster; human rights activist Nassrin Farzaneh sheds light on the issue of child soldiers; and Cyrus Cama interviews activist Tennaz Dubash on the issue of human trafficking, Dinaz Rogers gives us the transliteration and translation of Cyrus Cylinder, Ervad Jeahn Bagli gives us glimpses into the concept of social justice in the Zoroastrian doctrine and finally Jasmine Chapgar gives a heart felt plea for the right to live of those suffering from mental illness.







# Human Rights



Many human rights violations plague our world, and although we are far better off for the creation of human rights bodies, declarations, and treaties, the main challenge remains enforcement. Enforcement begs the question of whether to enforce through threat or through incentive. Until recently, the most egregious of human rights violators who committed war crimes (i.e. genocide, torture, rape) were tried by war crimes tribunals set up to deal with specific violations. In July 1998 in Rome, the International Criminal Court was established as a permanent body to handle these cases. Other forms of punishment include the highly debated sanctions, and reparations/payments. Yet, however necessary some of these “negative” enforcements may be, we must also emphasize the need to create incentives for countries and individuals to comply with human rights. These “positive” enforcements serve to create potential rewards which often come in the form of economic, social, or political incentives (ex. receiving financial aid in return for compliance).<sup>1</sup> And although tackling this major challenge of enforcement is a huge and complex undertaking, there is no option but to push forth.

The key to begin this task lies first in *education and awareness*. The articles in this issue educate us about some of the humanitarian work being lead by Zarathushtis across the globe. Yet, every one of us can make a significant contribution and create positive change; there is a simple way: *acceptance*. Our world today is overcome by war, fear, discrimination, and many times hatred of those who are different – everything that goes against the fabric of human rights ideals, everything that goes against being a true Zarathushti.

***In 538 BCE, Cyrus the Great liberated Babylon and promised to respect the diversity within his land. It is upon us to honor this legacy and live our lives with an open mind towards everyone with whom we share this plant.***

<sup>1</sup> Ouellet, J. Enforcement Mechanisms. Retrieved from BeyondIntractability.org. Website: [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/enforcement\\_mechanisms/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/enforcement_mechanisms/)

## Niaz Kasravi PH.D

*Niaz Kasravi serves as the Director of Community Relations for the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA). She received her Ph.D in Criminology, Law and Society from the University of California, Irvine. In her academic career, she focused on sociology of law and issues of law and inequality. Through a National Science Foundation grant, she traveled to Iran to work with Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient of 2003, on women's role in the reform movement*

*Dr Kasravi has worked as the Lead Researcher and Associate for the Domestic Human Rights Program of Amnesty International USA, helping build a new program for the organization. At Amnesty International she focused on racial profiling, prison conditions, juveniles in the criminal justice system, civil rights and the “war on terror” as well as other domestic human rights issues*

*Additionally, Dr Kasravi has served as Policy Associate for Stop Prisoner Rape, a national human rights organization working to end sexual violence behind bars. She also served as a consultant for several California-based foundations, including the Rosenberg Foundation, the Fund for Nonviolence, and the Women's Foundation of California.*





# Human Rights

## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A LANDMARK PROVISION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Kersi B. Shroff, Attorney at Law\***

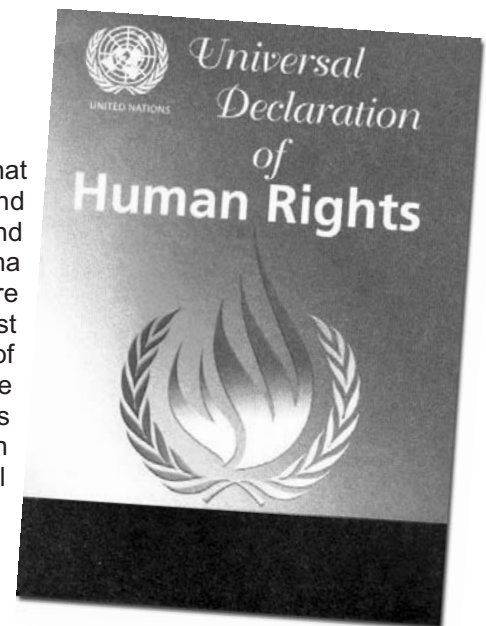
### INTRODUCTION

Human rights could be said to be as old as humanity itself. The idea that individuals have some form of basic rights can be found in religious and cultural thought through the ages. Traces of rights can be found in Greek and Roman writings. The Chin Dynasty founded over 2200 years ago in China believed in fair treatment of all, regardless of cast. Tolerance and liberty were emphasized in the inscriptions of the Indian Emperor Asoka, and Buddhist writings express the rhetoric of freedom. The Zoroastrian view of freedom of religion, recognized as a fundamental human right, and the glory of the Proclamation of Cyrus the Great are explained in accompanying articles published in this issue of the FEZANA Journal, and in a short piece written in 1998 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The European tradition of natural law also incorporated human rights elements by developing the idea that there was a law higher than that of governmental authority. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries introduced a new chapter in the human rights movement with the adoption of the British Bill of Rights (1689), the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776), the U.S. Constitution (1787), and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). More recently, Mahatma Gandhi's epic resistance against the British in India explicitly invoked the notion of rights.

It was only in modern times that the yearning in the hearts of men and women for a freer existence first found expression in international law after the founding of the United Nations in 1945. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was unanimously approved by the Third General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, in Geneva, Switzerland. It has since become the fountainhead of what is recognized as international human rights law and has influenced the constitutions of many countries and numerous human rights treaties. A specific reference to the divinity of God, however, did not find a place in the Declaration on grounds that a reference to a deity (under a proposal by Brazil and the Netherlands to recognize that "human beings are created in the image of God") and was rejected on grounds that it would offend nations without a natural law tradition and those that are un-believers.

The Universal Declaration was born from the flames of the twentieth century's two World Wars that inflicted an unprecedented loss of human lives, caused a massive destruction of cities, and resulted in the displacement of large sections of humanity. The complete disregard and contempt for human values exhibited during the conflicts led to a general conviction that the explicit recognition of basic human rights could provide one of the cornerstones on which peace could be built. When the formation of a new United Nations was first thought of, it was noted that a failure of the previous League of Nations was the absence of any mention of human rights in its formative document. Early ideals for a new order for human rights were pronounced by U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his 1941 State of the Union address in which he proposed a future world peace linked with the protection of four essential freedoms: "the freedom of speech and expression, freedom to worship God in one's own way, the freedom from want, and freedom from fear." These sentiments were also included in a joint statement issued in 1941 by the allied powers that their victory against the enemy was essential in order "to defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom





# Human Rights

and to preserve human rights and justice.” This articulation of the struggle as a fight for freedom and democracy had a beneficial effect on the drafting of the future Universal Declaration.

## UNITED NATIONS CHARTER

When the UN Charter was first drafted, human rights issues barely got a mention and the U.S. suggestion that promotion of human rights be included among its main objectives was rejected by Britain and the Soviet Union. Britain's objection was based on the protection of its colonial empire and the Soviets were mainly concerned with avoiding any further aggression against its motherland and also harbored expansionist aims. Only a single sentence in the draft called for the promotion by the new organization of “respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.” This was included among the provisions dealing with social and economic questions, and was not central to the purposes for which the proposed body was to be set up.

The posture began to change when delegates from 50 countries met in San Francisco in April 1945, a number of whom had been inspired by the allied descriptions of the war being fought for freedom and democracy and by Roosevelt's “four freedoms” speech. Among the delegates were people like *Carlos Romulo of the Philippines, Charles Malik of Lebanon, and many delegates from other countries including Brazil, Canada, Egypt, India, and Mexico*, who were supportive of a human rights purpose for the UN. They were backed by other national and international groups such as the *Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Jewish Committee, the National Association for Advancement of Colored People and the American Association for the United Nations*. In separate meetings these groups prevailed on the United States to agree to a Human Rights Commission being set up as part of the UN Charter. This time the Soviets did not object knowing that the UN Charter would protect purely domestic affairs from intervention. When the Charter was completed in June 1946, article 2(7) limited UN intervention “in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State.” Nonetheless, the principles of human rights were given a prominent role in various places in the Charter. The Preamble gives a resounding recognition of the member nations' reaffirmation of “*our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.*” Article 1 of the Charter includes respect for “human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”

## COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The incorporation of a human rights standard in the UN Charter was a victory for the small nations of the world, but the Charter did not spell out those rights. It was uncertain as to what those rights might be, and, of those, which would be considered ‘universal.’ The task of drawing up a detailed bill of rights was assigned to a Commission on Human Rights, established in June 1946. The hopes were not very high that the Commission would be able to bridge the power struggle between human rights and national interests. Commission member Charles Malik, a Professor of Philosophy, was particularly unenthusiastic: “Intrigue, lobbying, secret arrangements, blocs, etc. It's terrible. Power, politics and bargaining nauseate me. There is so much unreality and play and sham that I can't swing myself into this

### HUMAN RIGHTS: A SACRED TRUST

Washington National Cathedral calls the nation to honor the dignity of all persons. We believe that we are to be voices and agents for peace, justice, and the needs of the poor and underserved.

The Cathedral has designated this area as the Human Rights Porch. The three statues (left to right) and half boss (above) reflect this theme.

#### Óscar Romero (1917–1980)

“Voice of the Voiceless”

Roman Catholic Archbishop of San Salvador, Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez was a tireless friend of the poor and the oppressed. Defiant in the face of mounting death threats, Romero bravely pleaded with national and international leaders to bring peace and justice to El Salvador. Archbishop Romero was assassinated while saying mass in a small hospital chapel.

#### Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

“First Lady of the World”

A lifelong advocate for justice and equality, Eleanor Roosevelt redefined the role of first lady in partnership with her husband, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As chair of the UN's Commission on Human Rights, Mrs. Roosevelt led the drafting and passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, this document still serves as the standard for basic human rights worldwide.

#### John Walker (1925–1989)

Sixth Episcopal Bishop of Washington (1977–1989) and Dean of Washington National Cathedral (1978–1989)

A pioneer and visionary, Bishop Walker was the first African-American graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary and the first black bishop of Washington. As bishop and dean, his leadership was instrumental in the last phases of construction of Washington National Cathedral. Bishop Walker died on September 29, 1989: eighty-two years to the day from the laying of the Cathedral's foundation stone and exactly one year before the completion of this house of prayer for all people.

#### Human Rights Half Boss

“Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

Located in the rib vaulting of the low interior porch, this half boss stone celebrates the triumph of justice in the cause of human rights. The half boss depicts water cascading into a pool, where it takes on the forms of a man, woman and child being freed from the bondage of injustice and oppression. A broken chain hangs from the mouth of the figure.





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atmosphere and act.” Malik’s despair was not unwarranted as events were rapidly moving to create the conditions for a ‘cold war’ that would quickly bring an end to the Soviet-American alliance that had facilitated the creation of the United Nations.

It is to another member, former *First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt*, appointed as the Chairman of the eighteen-member Commission, to whom history accords the recognition of skillfully shepherding the document that eventually won acceptance as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Roosevelt also adopted the shrewd tactic of making the Declaration a non-binding General Assembly Resolution that made it pass despite some profound disagreements among some members. Passing it as a Declaration “was a blessing in disguise...because it floats above all local and regional contingencies and ... , the Declaration served as a midwife in the birth of ...other more concrete and detailed international instruments.”



In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt the Declaration has a twofold importance: First, it puts into words some inherent rights which individuals must have in order to acquire a sense of security and dignity. Contemporary world conditions required the enumeration of certain protections, she wrote. The effect, she thought, would be to help forward the education of the peoples of the world. Second, it was important that the Declaration be accepted by all member nations of the UN, not because they will live up to all its provisions, but because they ought to support the standards towards which nations must then onwards aim. She concluded: “Since the objectives have been clearly stated, men of good will everywhere strive to attain them with more energy and, I trust, with better hope of success.”

Apart from Roosevelt and Malik, other Commission members who played crucial roles in framing the Declaration were: *Rene Cassin, of France*, a Nobel laureate and a legal genius who helped shape the Declaration from a mere list “into a geodesic dome of interlocking principles” ; *Peng-chun Chang, from China* a philosopher, diplomat and playwright, who had a “serious but respectful philosophical rivalry” with Malik; *Hansa Mehta of India* who ensured that equal rights for women were clearly articulated in the Declaration, ahead of their recognition in many legal systems; and *Carlos Romulo*, a Pulitzer Prize winner for a series of articles predicting the end of colonialism, and after joining the U.S. Army served as an aide to General Douglas McArthur where he was awarded a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. The Commission was supremely supported by *John Humphrey, the Canadian director of the UN Human Rights Division*, who wrote the first draft of the Declaration. However, it was a later draft prepared by Cassin that formed the basis of the eventual Declaration. Later research suggests Humphrey must still get considerable credit, although he himself stated that the Declaration had no father in the sense that Thomas Jefferson was the Father of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. *According to Humphrey, it was the very anonymity that gave the Declaration some of its great prestige and authority.*

## **FREEDOM OF RELIGION ( Article 18 of the Universal Declaration) :**

The main provision on freedom of religion

***Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance***

The right to change one’s religion or belief was added to the Article at the suggestion of Charles Malik, whose native Lebanon provided a haven for those fleeing religious persecution, including those who had changed their religious affiliation. Malik’s suggestion was not well received by Muslim states because of the Koranic sanction against apostasy (murtad) and was a “deal breaker” for Saudi Arabia which abstained from voting on the Declaration.



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Article 18 has a more elaborate description of religious freedom than in the U.S. Bill of Rights, although the Declaration does not parallel the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution under which “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...”

Finally, although the existence of God was not explicitly recognized in the Declaration, a religious perspective is essential to the understanding of human rights. All religious traditions emphasize duties together with rights: human beings have duties to themselves, to those around them, and to society at large. The transcendent nature of human rights was evocatively described in 1994 by Czech President, Vaclav Havel, who said:

***“Politicians at international forums may reiterate a thousand times that the basis for the new world order must be universal respect for human rights [B]ut it will mean nothing as long as this imperative does not derive from the respect of the miracle of being, the miracle of the universe, the miracle of nature, the miracle of our own existence.”***

*To put God’s majesty in another way, Eleanor Roosevelt said it best: “Human rights start in the human heart.”*

- 1 Hilary Charlesworth, “The Challenges of Human Rights Law for Religious Traditions,” in *Religion and International Law*, p. 401, (Eds. Mark Janis and Carolyn Evans).
- 2 Human Rights Resources Center, *Mankind and the Freedom of Choice in Zoroastrian Scripture*, available at: [www.hrusa.org/advocay/community-faith/zoroastrian!.shtml](http://www.hrusa.org/advocay/community-faith/zoroastrian!.shtml), last visited January 29, 2009.
- 3 Gopinath Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (1946), cited in Charlesworth, *supra* note 1, at 402.
- 4 *Id.* (Hilary Charlesworth).
- 5 Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New, Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 10 (2001). Professor Glendon’s provides a thoroughly researched and insightful account of the drafting of the Declaration.
- 6 *Id.*
- 7 *Id.* at 10-11.
- 8 *Id.* at 20.
- 9 Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Origins, Drafting, and Intent*, at xi.
- 10 Eleanor Roosevelt, *The Promise of Human Rights*, 46 *Foreign Affairs* 470-477 (April 1948), available at [www.udhr.org/history/113.htm](http://www.udhr.org/history/113.htm), last visited December 8, 2008.
- 11 Mary Ann Glendon, *supra* note 5, at xx, 11.
- 12 *Id.* at 70, 184.
- 13 *Id.* (p. 184).
- 14 Hilary Charlesworth, *supra* note 1, at 412.
- 15 *Id.*
- 16 As quoted by Cherie Booth, Q.C., in “Common Wealth,” a paper delivered at the 13th Commonwealth Law Conference, Melbourne, Australia, April 2003.



**\*Kersi Shroff** is Assistant Director of Legal Research and Chief, Western Law Division, Directorate of Legal Research, Law Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The Directorate is the legal research arm of the United States Congress on issues of international, foreign and comparative laws. To mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Directorate organized a seminar on December 10, 2008, at which Kersi moderated a panel of four human rights scholars.

The Universal Declaration was also celebrated at an event organized by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington. Kersi spoke on the Zoroastrian view of human rights based on a text provided by Dr. Jehan Bagli, to which Kersi included his own remarks.

During his education at the B.V.S. Parsi High School in Karachi, Pakistan, Kersi won the Hyson’s Human Rights Trophy for three consecutive years in inter-school debates on human rights issues.

*The views expressed in the article are of the author alone.*



# Human Rights

## What in our faith tradition impels us to promote Human Rights ?

***Ann Delorey, Consultant for Advancing Justice***

On December 10, 1948 the United Nations' General Assembly adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). This document is based on a "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family that is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (Preamble to the Universal Declaration). The declaration is a "soft law" in that the articles it contains serve as a moral blueprint for achieving peace, justice, and security. In theory, all countries have accepted the UNDHR. For this reason it can be used as a unifying set of standards to guide the global community toward sustainability.

The InterFaith Conference (IFC) recognizes the opportunity to lift up the UNDHR as a moral statement with ties to the aspirations of its diverse member faith communities. The IFC in collaboration with the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area hosted a Faith Leaders' Observance of the 60th anniversary of this important document and the justice movement it inspired and continues to inspire. The event took place on December 2, 6:30-8:30 pm at the *Soka Gakkai Center*. As part of this Faith Leaders' Observance, IFC is collecting testimonials from each of its member religious groups on how that particular faith is impelled to support universal human rights. Ten faith communities were represented at this event (photo above)

Here are excerpts from some of those testimonials:

**Buddhist:** The Mahayana Buddhist doctrine, that all living beings possess Buddha-nature is for me the point which speaks most directly to the issue of human dignity and equality. The religious philosophy of Buddhism is at once what the Buddha teaches as well as a teaching by which people may themselves become Buddhas. Thus there is an inherent dignity to all humans, regardless of their present status, since through their efforts they may manifest the supreme human condition of Buddha hood or enlightenment. In the Buddhist scriptures, this notion of equality is central to the theme of the *Lotus Sutra*, in which the Buddha states "*From the start I took a vow hoping to make all persons equal to me without exception.*" This commitment to the realization of the fundamental equality between the Buddha and we ordinary human beings is concisely expressed in the mantra "*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*" (lit. "I devote myself to the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra"), which stands at the core of Nichiren Buddhist practice. --

***Bill Aiken, Director of Communications, Soka Gakkai International, USA***

**Zoroastrian:** Zarathushtra, some 3500 years ago, hailed freedom for humanity in bondage, rule of free choice in domination, and moral justice for all mankind. He proclaimed in his holy hymns that human beings are charged with the responsibility of bringing the flawed and the imperfect *Getig* world, the world of actuality, to its pristine state of *Vohu Khshthra Vairya* - the rule of Truth and Good thinking. Society can benefit when its members collectively apply their gift of freewill through the pursuit of Truth, wisdom derived from Good Thinking, unconditional love and compassion leading to spiritual enlightenment. These are the values that Zarathushtra propounded: to bring the Good rule *Khshthra Vairya*; through the quest of Global truth - *Asha*; and thinking befitting the Good Mind - *Vohu Manah*! A Right action at a Right time and place, performed in a Righteous way generates Right results. That is the concept of *Asha* in action. It ensures justice and promotes a society to perfection. --

***Erv Jehan Bagli, Past President of the North American Mobeds' Council***

**Protestant:** The recognition that there is no absolute right is the genius of the Universal Declaration and also is the foundation of the Protestant principle: only God is absolute. That requires of us confession, repentance, humility, and gratitude for God's grace. All rights, however defined, must be seen in a larger perspective in which other rights are also considered. Protestants will look to the witness of scripture for guidance; we will consider the wisdom of tradition as instructive; we will explore every avenue of reason, including the latest and best science; and we will ground our decision making in our own experience within the framework of the human community, which requires order and compassion for the individual to flourish. Perhaps it comes down to a matter of reciprocity: as humans, we should grant to others (all God's creatures) the same rights that we would claim for ourselves. -





# Human Rights

**E. Maynard Moore, Ph.D United Methodist**

**Sikh:** The founder of the Sikh faith, *Guru Nanak*, spoke of "One Light" from which emerges all creation. This God is found within each of us, and he defined God as love -- free from gender, caste, color, race and nationality. The love of God, said Nanak, was not limited to only a particular people, be they Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, etc. None was excluded - not even the agnostic or the atheist. Human rights are the core of a just and egalitarian society, Yet, as member of a small poorly understood and unknown minority, I, too, have become intimately familiar with the inequities that exist in many societies, including this - be they matters of equal opportunity in the work place, or as victims of hate crimes, particularly in the post 9/11 reality. --

**I.J. Singh, DDS, PhD**

**Baha'i:** The source of human rights is the endowment of qualities, virtues and powers, which God has bestowed upon humankind without discrimination of sex, race, creed or nation. To fulfill the possibilities of this divine endowment is the purpose of human existence. Human rights can be established in terms of social status when members of the community realize that the gift of life and conscious being obligates them to meet responsibilities owed to God, to society and to self. Mutual recognition by members of the community of the truth that their lives emanate from one and the same Universal Source enables them to maintain ordered relationships in a common social body. The social body does not create essential human rights. Its office is that of trustee under appointment to act for the community in the preservation of the relationships, which represent the moral achievement of the members, and to cherish and protect that unity of spirit, which is their highest mutual obligation. --

***Adapted from a presentation to the first session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Lake Success, NY; February 1947***

**Islam** The right to life and sanctity of life is the most basic of human rights. God equates the saving of one person as if they saved all of humanity by explicitly saying to us *"And whoever saves a life, it shall be reckoned as though he has saved the life of all human kind"* The corollary is that *"whoever kills a person....it shall be reckoned as though he has killed all human kind"* God admonishes us with these phrases in the Holy Qur'an 5:32. Protecting the rights of every individual, while dealing equitably with every single one, is the cornerstone of an Islamic society.

**Rizwan Jaka, Board member, All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS)**

**Jewish Faith** Jewish sacred texts, both Biblical and rabbinic, are replete with statements commanding or urging us to consider all life to be sanctified-it is a holy gift to us and is immensely valuable. Therefore the possessor of the life, the person must be valued in that same way. This is an open acknowledgement of the fact that every human being is entitled to a set of basic rights that preserve this life and make possible for it to be lived without being threatened by other humans.

**Rabbi Brett Isserow, Beth El Hebrew Congregation, Alexandria, VA**

*Photo credit Jimmy Dholoo*

**Ann Delorey** is the Consultant for Advancing Justice for the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, an organization that brings together 11 diverse faith traditions for dialogue, community building, and advancing social justice. Ann holds a Masters degree in Theological Studies from Wesley Theological Seminary in Social and Political Ethics. She is a practicing Quaker in the tradition of the Religious Society of Friends.





# Human Rights

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which outlined a "common standard of achievement" for the future of human rights has become the cornerstone of a burgeoning international human rights movement. Over the past half a century, the number, scope and implementation strategies of international human rights treaties and conventions has increased tremendously creating a vast body of human rights laws.

The UDHR was not a binding treaty, but rather a declaration of principles and aspirations, with no legal obligations. But since its adoption by the General Assembly, most states have endorsed its main provisions. The United Nations has promulgated different human rights treaties: most notable are the two international covenants-The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). These covenants, when they came into force in 1976, transformed many of the principles of the UDHR into binding treaties. Some of the more specific instruments are Convention against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment, (1984) The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989, but in force from 1992) European Convention on Human Rights 1973, the American Convention on Human Rights 1978 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1983. Within the framework of International Labor Organization (ILO), several conventions protecting social rights have also been enacted, dealing in particular with freedom of association and collective bargaining, abolition of forced labor, equal remuneration and non-discrimination in employment.

An important evolution in the international human rights regime has been the change of emphasis from promotion of rights as articulated in the declaration and conventions to active protection of

## Evolution of Global Human Rights

rights. Many of the conventions mentioned have established special commissions or committees to monitor the treaty's provisions (e.g. the Commission on the Status of Women, The Committee on Torture).

A major breakthrough in the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian law was the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), decided by the diplomatic conference in Rome under the UN banner, on 17 July 1998. The court is designed to judge perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression.

There has been an impressive increase in the number of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grass roots movements which draw their legitimacy and inspiration from these international obligations. Thanks to the United Nations, human rights have now become part of the political process of most countries which inspires a wide variety of NGOs. The UN Conference on Human Rights in 1993 acknowledged, that international laws and mechanisms that had been established to promote and protect human rights had not responded adequately to the concerns of Women. The Declaration and Program of Action adopted in Vienna therefore gave a new visibility to the issues of women. In December 1993, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Some months later the Commission on Human Rights appointed a special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. On March 12, 1999, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted an Optional Protocol to the Women's Convention of 1979. The CSW meets annually at the UN headquarters in New York, two weeks prior to the International Women's Day, March 8th. NGOs including FEZANA, which monitor the work of the commission meet in

parallel sessions to present their points of views.

Numerous obstacles of a political nature interfere with the implementation mechanism. There is a wide gap between the legal obligations and state practices. The ratification of legal instruments and procedures does not always indicate the willingness or capacity of governments to respect their obligations. Many states ratify all possible human rights instruments without having the slightest intention or capacity to implement them. The number of ratifications of international treaties in the field of human rights is therefore not a good indication of real progress in the protection of human dignity.

Even though these instruments may be weakly implemented and sanctioned, international human rights obligations are nowadays a powerful source of legitimization, signaling the foundations of political order and good socio-economic policies.

*Dolly Dastoor Ph.D standing at the UN building, New York in front of a silenced gun*





# Human Rights

## Celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

To mark this event, the Directorate of Legal Research, Law, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. organized a seminar on December 10, 2008, at which *Kersi Shroff*, Assistant Director of Legal Research and Chief, Western Law Division, Directorate of Legal Research, Law Library of Congress, Washington, D. moderated a panel of four human rights scholars. He also made available buttons which said "I am a World Citizen" -- [www.worldservice.org](http://www.worldservice.org)



The distinguished panel Left to Right: Kersi Shroff, Moderator, Asst Director, Division Chief, Directorate of Legal Research, The Law Library of Congress, M. Douglas Bellis, Deputy Legislative Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives, Office of Legislative Counsel, Folabi Olagbaju, Director, Amnesty International, USA - Mid Atlantic Region, Fredrick Tipson, Director, Washington Liason Office, United Nations Development Program Andrea Worden, Senior Advisor on Criminal Justice, US Congressional-Executive Commission on China

*Photos Roshan Bamji Ebamji@aol.com*

Gûshtâ yê mañtâ ashem ahûmbish vîdvâ ahurâ  
thwâ âthrâ suxrâ mazdâ vanghâu vîdâtâ rānayâ.

*Listen unto him, the enlightened teller of Truth... who before  
Thy radiant light, Reveals the Truth to the contending sides*

*Ys 31.19*





# Human Rights

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TURNS 60:

FEZANA delegates join  
International NGO's at  
UN/DPI Conference

***Diana Katgara***

FEZANA recently had the opportunity to participate in the 61st Annual Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from September 3-5, 2008. This was the first time that the DPI/NGO three-day conference was held outside the UN Headquarters in New York.

The annual conference is held with a different theme every year, and is an opportunity for NGO's who are affiliated with the UN to come together, listen to speakers and discuss issues in a spirit of collaboration. This year's conference was called, "Reaffirming Human Rights: Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 60", and commemorated the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris in 1948.

Five of us -- Homi Gandhi, Mickie Katgara, Armene Modi, Naheed Vatcha and I -- had the opportunity to attend this conference as members of the FEZANA delegation. We participated in a conference where over 2,000 NGO's and other civil partners from over 90 countries gathered to discuss and reflect on the state of Human Rights today.



Our own FEZANA delegation was an international one, with two of us from Canada, two from the United States and one from India. This was the first time any of us, other than Mr. Gandhi, had attended a UN conference and we were unsure of what to expect. After a number of international conference calls where we were briefed on what to expect and how best to be prepared by Mr. Gandhi and Dr. Pastakia, who have previously attended some of these conferences, we were quite excited to meet each other in Paris.

With the first change of location in 6 decades and a move to a European country, conference organizers highlighted the accessibility of the assembly to NGO's working in African, Asian and European countries. There was an air of change and hope at the conference with encouragement that each of us not only as organizations, but also as individuals, has a role in standing up against human rights violations.

Although this year's conference was a celebration of the 60th year of the

Declaration, it was also a reminder that sadly, human rights violations continue to occur around the world. Themes that ran through the conference were the universality of human rights, the need for increased awareness and education about human rights amongst the world's most vulnerable populations and the role that individuals in civil society can play in taking a stand against global human rights violations. Presenters at the conference spoke about the strength and courage of human rights defenders, some of whom were attendees at the conference; people who are on the front lines of fighting human rights violations, very often putting themselves at grave personal danger to stay and fight violations rather than flee to safety. The keynote speaker at the closing ceremonies was Ingrid Betancourt, who joined attendees via a live satellite feed from United Nations Headquarters in New York. In an emotional speech she moved many conference attendees with her commitment to human rights and her



# Human Rights

appreciation for those who had worked hard for the six and a half years that she was held in captivity to free her.

For many of us living in North America engaging in a defense of human rights seems out of reach. Many of us are isolated from where human rights violations occur or are not connected with those who work hard to uphold them. So, the question is, how can we really make change and stand up against the violations of the rights of our fellow human beings? This is a difficult question, to which most of us don't have the answer. However, I do believe that this question is a good first step in engaging in the process of alleviating human rights violations.

In keeping with this theme speakers stressed that it is important to increase our own awareness. Also, that education and awareness are important cornerstones for moving towards actualizing the Declaration for all. We live in a world where the media inundates us with information

about catastrophes and human rights violations, whether it is the war in Darfur, farmer suicides in India, growing poverty rates, or violence against women. It is also important to remember that those who are already our world's most vulnerable people are also the most vulnerable when it comes to global disasters such as the current global economic crisis. We are made aware of the atrocities through the media but we are not always made aware of how we can exercise our right to do something about them. However, getting involved is something we can all do. If there is a specific cause or an issue that we find moves us, we can get involved by finding organizations and people that are doing meaningful work in making human rights a reality.

There are always those who are working to alleviate human rights violations, there are always organization or groups of people working towards this desired end and

most often they are under funded and overworked. However, it is their very existence that gives us all hope. Locally we as individuals and as a community can get connected with an organization we are all familiar with Amnesty International, volunteer at a shelter or a food bank, join or start a group ourselves and of course we can always donate. Our Zoroastrian community is a great place to start, there are already many worthwhile initiatives that youth and adults in our community have taken on.

The inspiring conclusion that I came away from the conference with was that, each of us has the potential to play a role in alleviating human rights violations in the world and being a human rights defender. As Kiyo Akasaka, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information noted during the closing ceremonies – "Indifference is the number one enemy to the good."

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## United Nations Human Rights Prize 2008

The 2008 United Nations Human Rights Prize winners include a doctor working in the Congo treating women and girl victims of sexual violence, a posthumous award to a Nun who defended the rights of the poor, landless and indigenous peoples of Brazil and the immediate past UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The UN General Assembly established the prize forty years ago to recognize "outstanding achievements in the field of human rights." The awards were presented at a ceremony in New York on 10 December 2008 to mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For 2008 six individuals and one organization have been awarded the prize.

The winners are Louise Arbour, Benazir Bhutto (posthumous), Ramsey Clark, Dr. Carolyn Gomes, Dr. Denis Mukwege and Sr. Dorothy Stang (posthumous). The organisation, Human Rights Watch is also a recipient.

**LOUISE ARBOUR** (photo on top) Prior to her appointment as High Commissioner for Human Rights, from 2004 until 2008 Louise Arbour served as the Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and was responsible for the first indictment in history of a sitting head of state, the then President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic.

**BENAZIR BHUTTO** (photo on right) was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988 and 1993. Regarded as an ardent advocate for democracy and human rights Ms Bhutto was assassinated following a political rally in Rawalpindi in December 2007.

**RAMSEY CLARK**, veteran human rights defender and former Attorney-General of the United States is recognized for his steadfast insistence on respect for human rights and fair judicial process for all, in accordance with international standards.

**Dr CAROLYN GOMES** is the Executive Director and co-founder of Jamaicans for Justice, the premier human rights advocacy group in Jamaica, developing innovative local and international partnerships to advance the cause of human rights.



**Dr DENIS MUKWEGE** co-founded and operates the General Referral Hospital of Panzi, in Bukavu, South Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. An average ten to twelve women arrive at the hospital daily for treatment, many of whom require major surgery. Dr Mukwege describes the sexual violence in the region as a weapon of war, which has destroyed entire communities.

**SISTER DOROTHY STANG** of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was murdered in 2005 in Anapu, Brazil. Despite numerous death threats Sister Dorothy had defended the rights of the poor, landless and indigenous populations of the Anapu region of Brazil for nearly forty years.

For 30 years, *Human Rights Watch (HRW)* has documented human rights violations across the globe and played a major role in campaigns for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and more recently the Coalition to ban cluster munitions.



Commenting on this year's winners, *the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay* said, "*The Human Rights Prize sends a clear message to those who stand for human rights and freedoms that the international community is grateful for and supports their tireless efforts to promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*"

The winners are selected by a committee made up of the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council.

Previous recipients have included *Nelson Mandela, Amnesty International, Jimmy Carter, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Reverend Dr. Martin L. King.*

The Human Rights Prize is awarded every five years, in accordance with a resolution of the General Assembly, which was adopted in 1966. The Prize was first awarded on 10 December 1968, the International Year for Human Rights and the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.





## Human Rights

# *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great*

***"On the third day of the month of Arahshamnu Cyrus the Great entered Babylon (Bab-el, the Gate of God). They filled the street with palm branches in front of him. The King's peace was placed over the city. Cyrus's public statement was read to all."***

***--Nabonidus Chronicle. 539 B.C.***

In the 19th year of his reign, (540 BCE.), Cyrus II, the King of Persia, began his campaign against Babylonia and with this victory the Persians became a part of the Biblical text. If there was any apprehension in the conquered populace, Cyrus assured them that he was not a foreign conqueror but the King of Babylonia. To further give surety, he kept his army under rigid control and proclaimed "My numerous troops walked around in Babylon in peace. I did not allow anybody to terrorize the country." This could have been a beginning, in the ancient world, of what might have been a declaration of human rights.

Within a year, Cyrus liberated some 40,000 captive (since 589 B.C.E.), Babylonian-Israelites along with the wealth of their looted temple. Expecting to be re-enslaved by this new king, the Babylonian Jews were so impressed by this noble gesture that this King of the Persians became the only non-Jewish person to win this title--*the Lord's Anointed, the servant of Yahweh, the Anointed of Israel--in the Hebrew Bible.*

One has to read Second Isaiah for such acclamations and more about this great king. This liberation of the Babylonian Jews was helped by the Iranian temperament of the king's religious ideology of universal understanding.

***Who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd (ruler), and he shall perform all My pleasures and fulfill all My purpose; even saying of Jerusalem, She shall again be built, and of the temple, Your foundation again shall be laid.***

***Isaiah 44:28***

***---THE BIBLE***

Cyrus, along with other Persian Kings, has been mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. This command to send the Jews back is also mentioned in *Ezra* (1. 1-11) and confirmed by the Jewish historian of the first century *Joseph Flavius* who provided a more detailed description than the Bible.



The *Cyrus Cylinder*, the first deed of right of nations in the world is a baked-clay cylinder in Akkadian language with cuneiform script. This cylinder was excavated in 1879 by archaeologist *Hormuzd Rassam* in the foundations of the Esagila (the Marduk temple of Babylon), as was the custom of the Mesopotamians.

It is one of the most famous of the cuneiform texts. Cyrus' respect for human race and his promotion of religious open-mindedness and independence shows through in the *Cyrus Cylinder* text. The wording describes Cyrus' peaceful conquest of and entry with his huge army into Babylonia. It also speaks of respecting and granting equal rights in religious, racial and linguistic matters. Moreover, it talks about the return of all the slaves and captured peoples to their homelands and the restoration of their temples.

The *Cyrus Cylinder* dated 539 B.C. is in two pieces, 23 cm long, 11 cm wide, with over 40 written lines. The transliteration and translation by *Robert William Rogers* in the *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* 1912, is an interesting read.



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	Transliteration (Rogers 1912: 380-84)	Translation (Adapted from Rogers 1912: 380-84)
1	[.....]-ni-Šu	[.....] his troops
2	[.....]-ki-ib-ra-tim	[..... four] quarters of the world
3	[...] -ka gal ma tu-û i Š -Šak-na a-na e-nu-tu ma-ti- Šu	[...] a weakling was established as ruler over his land
4	Ši-[..... ta-am]-Ši-li ú- Ša-aŠ-ki-na ſi-ru-Š u-un	and [.....] a similar one he appointed over them,
5	ta-am-Ši-li É-sag-ila i-te-[..... -ti]m a-na Uriki ú si-it-ta-tim ma-ĥa-za	like Esagila he made [...] to Ur and the rest of the cities,
6	pa-ra-aŠ la si-ma-a-ti- Šu-nu ta-[..... ]i ũ-mi- Šá-am-ma id-dí-ni-ib-bu-ub ú ana na-ak-ri-tim	a command dishonoring them [...] he planned daily and in enmity,
7	sat-tuk-ku ú-Šab-ti-li ú-ad-[di..... iŠ] -tak-ka-an ki-rib ma-ĥa-zi pa-la-ĥa iluMarduk Šar ilāni [Šá]-qi- Še a-Šu-uŠ- Šu	he caused the daily offering to cease; he appointed [...] he established within the city. The worship of Marduk, king of the gods [...]
8	li-mu-ut-ti ali-Šu [i-te]-ni-ip-pu-uŠ &ucirc-mi- Šá-am-ma na-[..... niŠe] i-na ab-Ša-a-ni la ta-ap-Š ú-úĥ -tim ú-ĥal-li-iq kul-lat-si-in	he showed hostility toward his city daily [...] his people; he brought all of them to ruin through servitude without rest.
9	a-na ta-zi-im-ti-Ši-na iluEllil lililani iz-zi-iŠ i-gu-ug-ma [... ] ki-su-úr-Šú-un ilāni a- Ši-ib lib-bi-Š ú-nu i-zi-bu ad-ma-an- Šú-un	On account of their complaints, the lords of the gods became furiously angry and left their land; the gods, who dwelt among them, left their homes,
10	i-na ug-ga-ti Šá ú- Še-ri-bi a-na ki-rib Babili ilu Marduk ti-[..... ] li-sa-aĥ-ra a-na nap-ĥar da-ád-mi Šá in-na-du-ú Šú-bat-su-un	in anger over his bringing into Babylon. Marduk [...] to all the dwelling places, which had become ruins,
11	ú niŠe mât Šú-me-ri ú Ak-ka-dikiŠ a i-mu-ú Ša-lam-ta-aŠ ú-sa-aĥ-ĥi-ir ka- [...] - Ši ir-ta-Š i ta-a-a-ra kul-lat ma-ta-a-ta ka-li- Ši-na i-ĥ i-it ib-ri-e-Šu	and the people of Sumer and Akkad, who were like corpses [...] he turned and granted mercy. In all lands everywhere
12	iŠ-te-'e-ma ma-al-ki i- Ša-ru bi-bil lib-bi Šá it-ta-ma-a ĥ qa-tu-uŠ-Šú m Ku-ra-aŠŠar ali An- Šá-an it-ta-bi ni-bi-it-su a-na ma-li-ku-tim kul-la-ta nap- ĥ ar iz-zak-ra Šú[ma- Š u]	he searched; he looked through them and sought a righteous prince after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. He called Cyrus, king of Anshan, by name; he appointed him to lordship over the whole world.
13	mâtQu-ti-i gi-mir Um-man Man-da ú-ka-an-ni- Ša a-na Š e-pi-Šu ni Še ſal-mat qaqqaduduŠa ú- Š á-ak-Ši-du ka-ta-a-Šu	The land of Qutu, all the Umman-manda, he cast down at his feet. The black-headed people, whom he gave his hands to conquer,
14	i-na ki-it-tim ú mi-Š a-ru iŠ-te-ni-'e-Ši-na-a-tim iluMarduk belu rabu ta-ru-ú niŠe e- Šu ip-Še-e-ti Šá dam-qa-a-ta ú lib-ba-Šú i-Šá-ra ĥa-di-i Š ip-pa-al-li-is	he took them in justice and righteousness. Marduk, the great lord, looked joyously on the caring for his people, on his pious works and his righteous heart.
15	a-na ali-Šú Bab-ilani ki a-la-ak-Šú ik-bi ú- Š a-aŠ-bi-it-su-ma ĥar-ra-nu Babili ki-ma ib-ri ú tap-pi-e it-tal-la-ka i-da-a-Šu	To his city, Babylon, he caused him to go; he made him take the road to Babylon, going as a friend and companion at his side.
16	um-ma-ni-Šu rap- Ša-a-tim Šá ki-ma me-e nari la &uacute;ta-ad-du-ú ni-ba-Š&uacute;un kakke-Š ú-nu ſa-an-du-ma i-Šá-ad-di- ĥa i-da-a- Šú	His numerous troops, in unknown numbers, like the waters of a river, marched armed at his side.
17	ba-lu qab-li ú ta-ĥa-zi ú- Še-ri-ba-aŠ ki-rib Babili ala-Šú Bab-ilaniki i-ti-ir i-na Š ap-Šá-ki m, iluNabu-na'id Šarru la pa-li-ĥi-Š ú ú-ma-al-la-a qa-tu-u Š- Šu	Without battle and conflict, he permitted him to enter Babylon. He spared his city, Babylon, a calamity. Nabonidus, the king, who did not fear him, he delivered into his hand.
18	niŠe Babili ka-li- Šú-nu nap-ĥar mâtŠ ú-me-ri u Ak-ka-diki ru-bi-e ú Š ak-ka-nak-ka Šá-pal-Š ú ik-mi-sa ú-na-aŠ -Š i-qu Še-pu-u Š- Šú iĥ-du-ú a-na Š arru-ú-ti- Šú im-mi-ru pa-nu-uŠ - Šú-un	All the people of Babylon, Sumer, and Akkad, princes and governors fell down before him and kissed his feet. They rejoiced in his sovereignty; their faces shone.
19	be-lu Šá i-na tu-kul-ti- Šá ú-bal-li-tu mi-tu-ta-an i-na bu-ta-qu ú pa-ki-e ig-mi-lu kul-la-ta-an ta-bi-iŠ ik-ta-ara-bu- Šu iŠ-tam-ma-ru zi-ki-ir-Š ú	The lord, who by his power brings the dead to life, who amid destruction and injury had protected them, they joyously blessed him, honoring his name.
20	a-na-ku mKu-ra-aŠ Šar kiŠ-Š at Šarru rabu Šarru	I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the





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	<i>dan-nu Š ar Babilī Šar mât Š ú-me-ri ú Ak-ka-di Šar kib-ra-a-ti ir-bit-tim</i>	powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world,
21	<i>mar mKa-am-bu-zi-ia Šarru rabu Šar alu An-Š á-an mar mari mKu-ra-aŠ Šarru rabu Šar alu An-Š á-an ŠA.BAL.BAL m Š i-iŠ-pi-iŠ Š arru rabu Šar alu An-Š a-an</i>	son of Cambyses, the great king, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, king of the city of Anshan; great-grandson of Teispes, the great king, king of the city of Anshan;
22	<i>ziru da-ru-ú Ša Šarru-ú-tu Ša iluBel u ilu Nabu ir-a-mu pa-la-a-Š ú a-na tu-ub lib-bi- Šú-nu i h-Ši-ha Šarru-ut-su e-nu-ma a-na ki-rib Babilī e-ru-bu sa-li-mi-i Š</i>	eternal seed of royalty whose rule Bel and Nabu love, in whose administration they rejoice in their heart. When I made my triumphal entrance into Babylon,
23	<i>i-na ul-šī ú ri- Š á-a-tim i-na ekal ma-al-ki ar-ma-a Š ú-bat be-lu-tim iluMarduk belu rabu lib-bi ri-it-pa- Š ú Šá mare Babilī ú . . . an-ni-ma ú-mi- Šam a-Š e-'a pa-la-ah- Šú</i>	I took up my lordly residence in the royal palace with joy and rejoicing; Marduk, the great lord, moved the noble heart of the residents of Babylon to me, while I gave daily attention to his worship.
24	<i>um-ma-ni-ia rap-Ša-tim i-na ki-rib Babilī i-Šá-ad-di-ha Šú-ul-ma-niŠ nap-har mat [ Šu-me-ri] ú Akkadiki mugal-[l]i-tim ul ú- Šar-Ši</i>	My numerous troops marched peacefully into Babylon. In all Sumer and Akkad I permitted no enemy to enter.
25	<i>dannat Babilī ú kul-lat ma-ha-zi- Šu i-na Ša-li-im-tim a Š -te-'e mare Babilī . . . ] ki ma-la lib- . . . ]-ma ab- Š a-ni la si-ma-ti-Šu-nu Š ú-bat-su-un</i>	The needs of Babylon and of all its cities I gladly attended to. The people of Babylon [and . . . ], and the shameful yoke was removed from them. Their dwellings,
26	<i>an-hu-ut-su-un ú-pa-a Š -Ši-ha ú-Š á-ap-ti-ir sa-ar-ba-Šu-nu a-na ip- Še-e-ti-[ia] iluMarduk belu rabu ú-ih-di-e-ma</i>	which had fallen, I restored. I cleared out their ruins. Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced in my pious deeds, and
27	<i>a-na ia-a-ti mKu-ra-a ŠŠarru pa-li-ih-Š u ú mKa-am-bu-zi-ia mari šī-it lib-bi-[ia] ú a]-na nap-har um-ma-ni-ia</i>	graciously blessed me, Cyrus, the king who worships him, and Cambyses, my own son, and all my troops,
28	<i>da-am-ki-iŠ ik-ru-ub-ma i-na Ša-lim-tim ma-har-Š a ta-bi-iŠ ni-it-ta-['id i-lu-ti- Šu] šir-ti nap-har Šarri a- Ši-ib parakke</i>	while we, before him, joyously praised his exalted godhead. All the kings dwelling in palaces,
29	<i>Ša ka-li-i Š kib-ra-a-ta iŠ-tu tam-tim e-li-tim a-di tam-tim Šap-li-tim a-Ši-ib kul- . . . ] Šar-ra-ni mati A-mur-ri i a- Ši-ib kuŠ-ta-ri ka-li-Š u-un</i>	of all the quarters of the earth, from the Upper to the Lower sea dwelling [ . . . ] all the kings of the Westland dwelling in tents
30	<i>bi-lat-su-nu ka-bi-it-tim ú-bi-lu-nim-ma ki-ir-ba Babilī ú-na-aŠ-Š i-qu Še-pu-ú-a iŠ-tu [ . . . ] a-di alu A ŠŠurki ú Šu-Š anki</i>	brought me their heavy tribute, and in Babylon kissed my feet. From [ . . . ] to Asshur and Susa,
31	<i>A-ga-deki mât E Š -nu-nak aluZa-am-ba-an aluMe-túr-nu Deriki a-di pa-at mât Qu-ti-i ma-ha-za [ Šá e-bir]-ti nâruDiqlat Š á i Š-tu ap-na-ma na-du-ú Šú-bat-su-un</i>	Agade, Eshnunak, Zamban, Meturnu, Deri, with the territory of the land of Qutu, the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose sites were of ancient foundation—
32	<i>ilâni a-Ši-ib lib-bi- Šu-nu a-na aŠ-ri-Šú-nu ú-tir-ma ú-Šar-ma-a Š ú-bat da-er-a-ta kul-lat niŠe- Šu-nu ú-pa-ah- hī-ra-am-ma ú-te-ir da-ád-mi- Šu-un</i>	the gods, who resided in them, I brought back to their places, and caused them to dwell in a residence for all time
33	<i>ú ilâni mât Šú-me-ri ú AkkadikiŠ á m, iluNabu-na'id a-na ug-ga-tim bel ilâni ú- Še-ri-bi a-na ki-rib Babilī i-na ki-bi-ti iluMarduk belu rabu i-na Š á-li-im-tim</i>	And the gods of Sumer and Akkad—whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of the gods, had brought into Babylon—by the command of Marduk, the great lord,
34	<i>i-na maŠ-ta-ki- Šu-nu ú-Še-Ši-ib Šú-ba-at tu-ub lib-bi kul-la-ta ilâni Š a ú-Še-ri-bi a-na ki-ir-bi ma-ha-zi- Šu-un</i>	I caused them to take up their dwelling in residences that gladdened the heart. May all the gods, whom I brought into their cities,
35	<i>ú-mi-Ša-am ma- h ar iluBel ú iluNabu Š a a-ra-ku ume-ia li-ta-mu-ú lit-taŠ-ka-ru a-ma-a-ta du-un-ki-ia ú a-na iluMarduk beli-ia li-iq-bu-ú Ša mKu-ra-aŠ Šarri pa-li- hī-ka u mKa-am-bu-zi-ia mari- Šu</i>	pray daily before Bêl and Nabû for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son,
36	<i>da [ . . . ] ib-Šu-nu lu-ú [ . . . ] ka-li-Ši-na Š ú-ub-ti ni-ih-tim ú-Še- Ši-ib [ . . . ] paspase u TU.KIR.HU [ . . . ]</i>	their [ . . . ] I permitted all to dwell in peace [ . . . ]





# Human Rights

***This translation of Cyrus the Great Cylinder is the courtesy of K. C. Hanson's Home Page.***

## NOTES:

*Esagila* — the temple of Marduk

*Marduk* — the patron god of Babylon

*King of Anshan* — a small kingdom in what is now southern Iran

*land of Qutu* — a region in the Zagros mountains along what is now the border between Iran and Iraq

*Nabonidus* — the last Neo-Babylonian king (reigned 556-539 BCE)

*Cambyses* — Cyrus's son and successor, who reigned c. 530-523 BCE

*Bêl* — an epithet of the god Marduk (see Jeremiah 50:2; 51:44)

*Nabu* — the Babylonian god of writing and wisdom (see Isaiah 46:1)

In October 1971, the Shah of Iran celebrated with pomp and grandeur, the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire established by Cyrus the Great. The Cyrus Cylinder, on loan from the British Museum, served as the official insignia. Appearing on bank notes and postage stamps, the Cylinder became an integral element of the Iranian cultural identity. The British Museum houses the original cylinder and one of its many replicas is at the United Nations Headquarters. *In 1971 this human rights document was described as the first of its kind and translated into all the six official languages of the United Nations.*

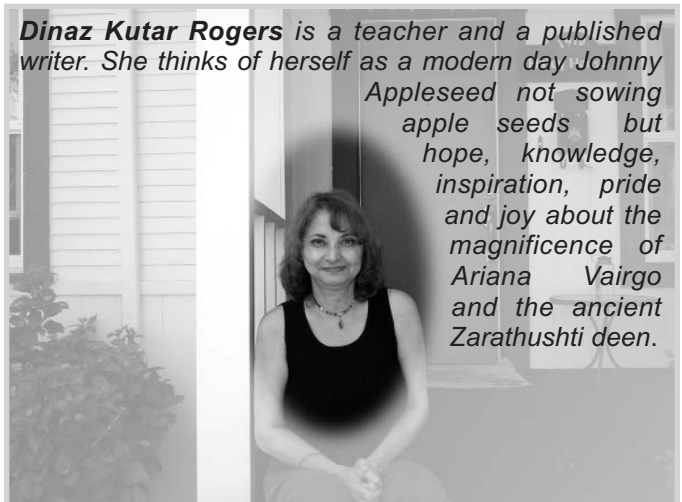
In recent times there has been a more open and accepting approach that the Persians were not the tyrants portrayed in history. This gradual change in the perception of the ancient Persians rests heavily upon the Cyrus Cylinder, so much so that in a recent British Museum exhibition on Ancient Persia. Alexander the Great is mentioned as Alexander of Macedon, (In some parts of Iran he is Alexander the Accursed (Michael Wood documentary on Iran on PBS) because of the burning of Persepolis, along with defeating and devastating the ancient world's largest and most powerful empire).

The clay Cylinder along with other magnificent artifacts in gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other excavations-elevates the ancient Persian Empire to its well deserved place within the ancient Greece, Roman, Assyrian, and Babylonian Empires.

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***Dinaz Kutar Rogers*** is a teacher and a published writer. She thinks of herself as a modern day Johnny Appleseed not sowing apple seeds but hope, knowledge, inspiration, pride and joy about the magnificence of Ariana Vairgo and the ancient Zarathushti deen.





# Human Rights

## Zarathushtra and Social Justice

**Ervad Jehan Bagli Ph.D**

Justice is inherent in Iranian history. Going back to a mythical era, the legendary House of Pishdadian derived its name from the *Avestan, Paradhata*, meaning the 'ancient law givers' in the history of humanity.

A baked clay cylinder, excavated by the Iranian archeologist, *Hormuzd Rassam*, in 1878 with a message inscribed in the Akkadian Cuneiform script, has been hailed by United Nations as the first charter of Human Rights. This Charter was the enactment of none other than the Achemenian, Cyrus the Great, exalted as the anointed one in Jewish scriptures of *Deutero Isaiah (Isaiah 45.1)*.

The inscription reads:

***"Now that I put the crown of the kingdom of Iran ..... on the head with the help of (Ahura) Mazda, I announce that I will respect the tradition and religion of the nations of my empire...Never let my governors look down or insult them until I am alive. As long as I am the King of Iran I never let anyone oppress others...and (will) penalize the oppressor."***

Cyrus not only set the Jewish people free and helped them rebuild their temples; he restored the gods of Babylon, Sumer, Akkad, Susa and Ashur through acts of justice. These Iranian Monarchs were devoutly conscious of their social responsibilities and respected the Human Rights of the people they governed. They lived in consonance with the Will of Lord Wisdom – *Ahura Mazda* – as proclaimed by the prophet *Asho Spitama Zarathushtra*.

Zarathushtra, some 3500 years ago, hailed freedom for humanity in bondage, rule of free choice in domination, and moral justice for all mankind. He proclaimed in his holy hymns that human beings are charged with the responsibility of bringing the flawed and the imperfect *Getig* (Av.Gaethaya) world, the world of actuality, to its pristine state of *Vohu Khshtira Vairya* – the rule of Truth and Good thinking.

Society can benefit when its members collectively apply their gift of freewill through the pursuit of Truth, wisdom derived from Good Thinking, unconditional love and compassion leading to spiritual enlightenment. These are the values that Zarathushtra propounded: to bring the Good rule *Khshtira vairya*; through the quest of Global Truth – *Asha*; and thinking befitting the Good Mind - *Vohu Manah!* A Right action at a Right time and place, performed in a Righteous way generates Right results. That is the concept of *Asha* in action. It ensures justice and promotes a society to perfection.

It is relatively easy to formulate laws to secure Human Rights. However, man-made regulations do not necessarily influence human behavior, their mode of thinking, or change their beliefs. Legal frameworks beyond those essential to establish civic order, begin to erode human freedoms. For therein, lie the seeds of fear and conflict. Dignity of Mankind implicitly rejects the notion, that Basic Human Rights require a legal scaffold to secure them. A proper practice of Freewill in consonance with Truth and Thinking through the Good Mind is the ideal one can look for, to secure basic Human Rights.

Causing personal harm to oneself using one's innate freewill, is tantamount to impair and wound a part of the whole. Such actions are counterproductive not only to oneself, but to the society, community and to mankind in its entirety.

It is through dialogue and intercourse within the human brotherhood that mankind will sow the seeds of social justice and make *Vohu Khshtira Vairya* a possible reality.

Humanity must recognize the Oneness of brotherhood of Mankind, for to be One with Mankind is to be One with God. To respect mankind and the creations of nature is to respect God- Ahura Mazda. The strands to weave that social fabric, and to make that dream a reality, are entrenched in living by the tenets of Zarathushtra. It is the sacred duty of each one of us to watch over the physical and moral well-being of the less fortunate among mankind and to care for creation.



# Human Rights

The last line of *Ahuna Vairya* prayer reminds us  
**khshthremcha ahurai a yim dregubyo dadat vasta rehem .**

*Ahura empowers him, who  
 Rehabilitate the less fortunate*

The opening line of Ys 43.1 tells us

**ushta ahmai yahmai ushta kahmaichit**

*Radiant Happiness to him who radiates happiness to others*

Zarathushtra revealed the roadmap to social justice with brilliant clarity some 3500 years ago. Until such time, that the entire human race comprehends the implications of his teachings, begins to relate to the Divinity in each other, not just believes his words, but learns to live by them, *Vohu Khshthra Vairya* will remain a vision waiting to be attained



**Submission from the Zoroastrian community to the event organized by the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area and the Interfaith Conference of Washington DC on 2nd December 2008 by the Soka Gakkai Center .**

***Ervad Jehan Bagli**, a resident of Toronto, Canada has served for many years as the President of the North American Mobeds' Council.*

## Happy Sepandarmazgan ~~

**Love & Friendship day...**

Sepandarmazgan is the day we celebrate, Love and Friendship, On this day we venerate Mother Earth and women

. Sepandarmaz is Earth Guardian Angel, a symbol of humbleness toward the entire creation. . Just as the Earth embraces all creatures and loves them a mother loves all children alike. A mother is symbolized by sepandarmaz or earth.

In ancient Iran" each day of the month had a name, and the fifth day of the month was Sepandarmaz. Whenever the name of a day coincided with that of the month, a feast was held. So we have the feast of **sepandarmazgan** on the sepandarmaz day of the month of Esfand (originally Spand or Espand). On this day Women and girls were made to sit on special chairs and men and boys had to obey them and bring them presents and gifts.

Reminding men to acclaim and respect women.

***Was Sepandarmazgan the precursor of Mother's Day, International Women's Day and Valentine's Day?***





## THE ZOROASTRIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEGACY:

### FOUNDATIONS IN HISTORY GIVE RISE TO ENFORCEMENT QUESTIONS

*Raiomand G. Krishnayya*

On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the General Assembly of the then newly-formed United Nations.<sup>1</sup> The UDHR sought to usher in an era that proclaimed the universality of human rights, as well as to serve as a reminder that the ultimate goal of all nations was to make war obsolete.<sup>2</sup> The UDHR, although a major instrument in the founding of modern human rights principles, was not the “Big Bang” of human rights concepts. Arguably, other documents throughout history delineated these rights and their echoes reverberate in modern notions of human rights.

In this context, the *Cyrus the Great Cylinder* (Cylinder) is a very significant Zoroastrian contribution to the evolution of the principles that comprise human rights law. The Cylinder has been interpreted by scholars to be the first human rights document in history proclaiming religious tolerance.<sup>3</sup> While there is debate about the authenticity of whether the Cylinder is merely propaganda, most people accept that the precepts of the Cylinder reflect human rights values as understood today.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the religious teachings of Zarathustra espouse the underlying spirit of all human rights principles. Consider the phrase, “*humata, hukhta, hvarashta*,” or “good thoughts, good words, good deeds.” These words proscribe a general code of conduct for all people, regardless of social and economic classes and need not be relegated to the exclusive province of religious teaching, but rather have a secular quality that proscribe a code of conduct applicable to all. Additionally, it is a code of conduct that is arguably applicable to the State as a foundation for creating, implementing and enforcing policy, especially as it relates to its citizens and to other States.

The Zarathushti experience, however, is important beyond the evolution of human rights principles. It is important in the pragmatic sense and raises the more complex question, how to enforce human rights protections for those without a “State”? There is an important distinction between being associated with a State and not. By virtue of being recognized as a State, in

the international community, the ability to interact with other States increases exponentially. Moreover, the power of sovereignty provides the State greater ability to enforce human rights values internally and externally. When the Zarathushtis fled Iran, although they were able to save their religious and cultural practices as well as becoming some of the most successful and influential members of society in India, they lost the powers that came with being part of the Persian Empire. They no longer had the sovereign powers associated with being a State. To understand the dichotomy between sovereignty and human rights enforcement, consider the history of human rights at the time of the UDHR’s adoption.

Prior to World War II (WWII), the doctrine of State sovereignty was supreme. The doctrine historically allowed States to operate with absolute immunity and autonomy; any edict deemed to be in the State’s interest was permitted and required no consideration about whether the law was discriminatory, oppressive or worse. The end of WWII changed the notion of sovereignty and gave birth to human rights documents like the UDHR, which were designed to place limitations on State sovereignty, and therefore State conduct.<sup>5</sup> Arguably, the underlying premise behind the creation of these human rights instruments is that the State is both the source and the enforcer of human rights. Therefore, the key actor in human rights enforcement is the State.

Thus, the Zarathushti story is important to human rights enforcement, because it raises the issue of enforcement by the individual. The Zarathushti story is also important because arguably it is the first historical case of a people who have had to face the pragmatic question of human rights enforcement without support vis-à-vis the powers of the State. Thus, as the Zarathushti story continues one can learn more about the changing modalities of human rights enforcement. Since there exists other groups and other situations similar to the Zarathushtis, one must consider the modalities of human rights enforcement outside of State assistance,

In this respect, there are still two important principles with regard to human rights enforcement. First, most legal remedies to human rights violations are enforceable only in domestic jurisdictions. Second, the emergence of international tribunals, although increasingly prevalent, is dependent on the exercise of State power.

The most egregious human rights violations are handled by the *International Criminal Court (ICC)*. The ICC created after 1998 ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute), was designed to be the jurisdiction charged with investigating and prosecuting the most serious of international crimes:



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crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes<sup>6</sup>. Although the strict requirements before the ICC may assert jurisdiction, the importance of tribunals like the ICC is that apolitical organizations with investigative and prosecutorial powers can investigate situations such as those involving the possible persecution of persons without a State.

In the broader sense, the fact that the ICC is "Stateless," and does not depend on any one State's support for existence, has created a new method of human rights enforcement that gives greater access to the individual to be heard. However, the ICC is not the endpoint to a truly objective justice system, there are limitations. For example, the ICC is severely limited in its jurisdiction, namely that jurisdiction is still dependent in part on whether the human rights violator (i.e. the State) is a party to the *Rome Statute*. This was done as a compromise to protecting the values of State sovereignty while allowing the ICC to operate with independence.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the existence of the ICC symbolizes another evolutionary step in a truly independent justice system that can operate outside of the political influence of domestic justice systems.

In the context of those who are "Stateless" and may be subject to religious persecution, the value of the ICC allows individuals—who otherwise must remain silent out of fear of persecution—recourse. To be sure, Zarathushtis in Iran are officially recognized as a religious minority and permitted to practice their religion, hold events, and operate Zarathushti schools. Hence, they have been able to retain and pass on their religion and culture to generations of Zarathushtis. However, given that Iran is a theocracy where the religion of Islam permeates all aspects of life; there is debate about whether Zarathushtis are persecuted and to what extent. However, one could argue that persecution may be grounds for requesting an independent and objective investigation as to whether the persecution occurring rises to the level of an international crime. Note that persecution alone will not grant an individual an automatic right to be heard in the ICC; however, the claim, in theory, would trigger inquiries about the source and nature of the complaint and would put domestic authorities on notice about conducting fair and impartial investigations.

In the final analysis, the creation of individual modalities of enforcement like the ICC renders the status of one's membership to a State irrelevant. The question of whether persecution of "Stateless" people is occurring in any context must be investigated by the ICC. The importance of such an investigation not only confirms whether persecution is occurring, but also determines the intent of the perpetrator. And if the persecution rises to the level of an international crime

that falls within the subject matter jurisdiction of the ICC, then the matter may be adjudicated and restitution imposed; an example of the true practice of "humata, hukhta, hvarashta."

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- 7 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Art. 17, July 17, 1998.



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# BHOPAL: Nearing 25 Years of Perseverance in the Face of Corporate Crime

## Human Rights

Diana Katgara

The story of the Bhopal gas disaster is a story in progress. On December 2, 1984, Bhopal, also known as the city of lakes, was relatively quiet in India's Madhya Pradesh state. At midnight on December 3, 1984, twenty-seven tons of methyl isocyanate (MIC) and other toxic gases, including hydrogen cyanide, leaked out of a chemical plant that was owned by *Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) USA – now a subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company – and operated by Union Carbide India Ltd.*, poisoning half a million people. As the world watched in horror, what would be the world's worst-ever industrial disaster, began to unfold. Today, almost two and a half decades since that ghastly night in December, Bhopalis continue to raise their voices so that the rest of the world does not forget this catastrophe.

This horrific story begins with a chemical plant that was improperly designed by UCC in an attempt to save money. It continues with UCC using inferior technology, lax operating procedures and maintenance and safety standards resulting in the inevitable disaster. On that night of December 3, 1984, none of the six safety systems were operational, resulting in this avoidable disaster. The deciding factors that caused this outcome were:

- *The plant location (built near a densely populated area, instead of the other side of town where the company had been offered land)*
- *Using hazardous chemicals (MIC) instead of less dangerous ones*
- *Storing these chemicals in large tanks instead of several smaller ones*
- *Possible corroding material in pipelines*
- *Poor maintenance of the plant*
- *Failure of several safety systems (due to poor maintenance and regulations)*

- *Deficient staffing policy*
- *Negligence on the part of UCC and the governments of India and Madhya Pradesh*

Despite these obvious flaws, UCC denied any negligence and insisted that the disaster was an act of sabotage by a disgruntled worker. For those who survived the first three days of intense horror, the story continues with the ongoing health implications caused by the effect of gas exposure that even now impacts the local population and a new generation of children born after the disaster. Of the half a million people who were exposed to the deadly gas that night, over 8,000 died in the first three days. 20,000 more have died as a result of gas exposure that night, and a whole new generation continues to be affected.

Today, an estimated 120,000 to 150,000 people continue to suffer chronic illness from the exposure. In addition, the devastation continues due to ground water that has been contaminated by the toxic waste left behind. In fact, some of the most vulnerable populations who have no other access to water have been forced to consume this contaminated water for their daily needs for the last 25 years. These are amongst some of the same people who were initially affected by the gas leak in 1984. There are also those who moved to the area surrounding the abandoned factory after the gas disaster, who continue to get sick. Hence, the gas disaster of 1984 continues to claim the lives of Bhopalis, and hold the same fate in store for generations who are not yet born.

However, speaking about the devastation and educating others is only part of the story of the Bhopal disaster. Through this story, also runs the hope and strength that Bhopalis have, in fighting for their right to life and for achieving justice with regard to Dow Chemicals Ltd. being held

responsible for the devastation that their subsidiary caused.

The current situation in Bhopal can clearly be seen as a human rights issue. In 2004, Amnesty International put forth a report called, "*Clouds of Injustice: Bhopal Disaster 20 Years On*". In this report, Amnesty outlines the rights of Bhopalis which have been denied since the disaster. The report documents several human rights abuses including: the denial of the right to life for thousands of people who died in the initial aftermath of the disaster and thousands more who have died as a result of exposure since the disaster; the denial of the right to a remedy, and to a decent standard of living; and their right to live in a safe environment that is free of contaminated drinking water.

December 3, 2009 marked the 25th anniversary of the Union Carbide (Dow Chemicals Ltd.) gas disaster in Bhopal, India. In the last 25 years, survivors in Bhopal have persevered and shown immense courage in the face of corporate crime. To learn more about Bhopalis and what you can do to support this struggle for justice visit [www.bhopal.net](http://www.bhopal.net).

<http://webreportages.canalblog.com/>

**Diana Katgara** was born in Mumbai, India and moved to Toronto, Canada with her family. After receiving her Bachelor's Degrees in Philosophy and Social Work from York University in

Toronto she lived in Bhopal, India for 9 months. There she had an opportunity to meet and learn from survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide (Dow Chemicals Ltd.) gas disaster and ongoing water contamination. She currently works in Toronto, as a Community Engagement Worker.







## RIGHT TO LIFE VIOLATED

**Diana Katgara**

contaminated by the toxic waste that Union Carbide has dumped in sacks on the factory area which has seeped into the ground after years of monsoons and ICMR



Adil (left) and Shanu (right) were born to parents who were exposed to the gas leak in Bhopal on the night of the disaster in 1984. There never was an explosion. They also live in communities that are only able to access water contaminated by Union Carbide's toxic waste. There has shown to be higher incidents of congenital malformations in children born to gas exposed parents and families who are forced to use contaminated water. One of the ongoing demands of the Bhopali survivors is to increase research on the effects of the gas and contaminated water. After their last *Padiyatra* to Delhi and 6 month *Dharna* there, the Federal government agreed to re-start the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) research which had been discontinued.

Bhopali survivors and activists contend that their *Right to Life* is being violated. The drinking water in the communities surrounding the factory has been

studies have indicated that consumption of that water is linked to morbidity. They contend that the lack of ongoing research into the effects of the gas disaster and the use of contaminated water on people's health, results in them not getting rational medical treatment for the consequences the poisons have. Instead they are given pills at the government hospitals which just fill their bodies with more chemicals and this has been going on for 24 years. Without more research on the effects of the gas and water effective treatment is difficult.

In addition the lack of access to clean water and the lack of economic rehabilitation schemes for those who can't work the labour intensive jobs, which they would have been able to, if they hadn't been made sick, denies them the right to live a decent life.

*Sambhavna is a Sanskrit / Hindi word which means "possibility". Read as "sama" and "bhavna" it means: "similar feelings" or "compassion".*



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The *Sambhavna Trust* is a charitable trust run by a group of eminent doctors, scientists, writers and social workers who have been involved with various aspects of the Union Carbide disaster ever since its occurrence in December 1984. While an estimated 120,000-150,000 survivors of the disaster are today chronically ill, the clinic run by this trust has provided direct treatment to approaching 30,000 people and provided support to about the same number through its health initiatives in 10 communities close to the Union Carbide factory. The clinic's architecture has been designed to be welcoming to those who have been going to hospitals for 20 years and to provide an atmosphere of rational care and warmth. (Photo above of the The Sambhavna Clinic)

(photo

The video <http://webreportages.canalblog.com/> highlights many of the initiatives Sambhavna takes on, the health care, the medicine garden, the pharmacy, the panchkarma, the yoga therapy, and the wonderful staff that makes the vision of Sambhavna a reality for Bhopali survivors. At the end you hear the children laughing and it gives a real sense of the sounds of

Sambhavna---the sounds of perseverance and love and hope.

The strength and heart of Bhopalis still awes me, given all the horrors and human rights violations that Bhopalies have been persevering against, the spirit of love and hope they carry is for me just so compelling.



**Sambhavna's Hope.,**  
**a picture of smiling girls at Sambhavna Clinic**

Photo credit: The pictures of Shanu and Adil have been taken by Micha Patault.

The pictures of the girls smiling was taken by Andy Spyra.



**Diana Katgara**

*This is the place I spent 9 months between 2006 and 2007, and from where I sent many of you emails and where I really became connected to the issues in Bhopal and Bhopalis.*



# Human Rights

## DEFINING DISABILITY

**Kersi Limathwalla**

**VENUE:** YMCA Swimming Pool

**PARTICIPANTS:** Physically Disabled

**OCCASION:** Prize Distribution Function

After having distributed a few prizes, I routinely extended my hand to a young boy standing before me and wonder why does he not respond, when I realized he had no hands to extend and receive the prize. This occasion has stayed with me over the years and created a lasting impression of awe and admiration for the disabled. For these young athletes, a disability (or handicap) is viewed as a challenge and overcome with grit and without pretence. It reminds me of the term "handicap" that is often used in games and tournaments for the able bodied in order to encourage them to be strong and act like a champion. To me, these disabled athletes at the YMCA are the true champions who won the game of life, a celebration and triumph of the indomitable human spirit, like the internationally renowned physicist *Stephen King* who has reached the pinnacle of human endeavor and achievement in spite of crippling disability.

*Hellen Keller* made the same point so wonderfully and touchingly in her prose:

*I slip back many times,  
I fall, I standstill,  
I run against the edge of hidden obstacle,  
I lose my temper, and find it again and keep it better,  
I trudge on, I gain a little, I feel encouraged,  
I get more eager and climb higher,  
and begin to see the widening horizon.  
Every struggle is a victory.*

## GLOBAL INITIATIVES

On April 3, 2008, the United Nations (UN) announced the **First International Treaty on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. The office of the UN Secretary General Ban hailed it as a "historic moment" in our quest for realization of universal human rights for all

persons, creating a fully inclusive society. The UN Spokesperson, Ms. Okabe noted that *"It is estimated that there are at least 650 million persons with disability worldwide, of whom 80% live in less developed countries."* This is a significant revelation, translating into 1 in 10 of the global population (taking into account that all disabilities are not pronounced and visible).

With the UN at the fore, awareness is bound to spread significantly on this issue. However, much work remains considering that despite the new UN treaty, 2/3 of the UN Member States offer no legal protection for the disabled. Even in the United States disabled people face discrimination and 2/3 of them are unemployed in spite of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. However, there is some hope for U.S. legislation, with cooperation from rights groups, to pave the way for redressing discrimination by industry, employers and protecting the right of the disabled. Another instance of hope is in the state of Tamil Nadu India, there was a recent declaration of children with Type 1 Diabetes as "metabolically challenged" - on par with disabled persons. But these are sporadic and isolated initiatives by a few member nations.

An issue of such dimension cannot be resolved by the UN alone or a few select member nations. It calls for an inclusive approach, to include:

- ⊗ *The disabled themselves – their mindset and attitude*
- ⊗ *Immediate family – the awareness, outlook and support they can provide*
- ⊗ *Concern and initiative by society to work towards redress*
- ⊗ *Voluntary acceptance by industry as part of Corporate Social Responsibility*
- ⊗ *Rights Group to spread awareness and mobilize support*
- ⊗ *Governments through legislation that is easy to implement*
- ⊗ *United Nations – encouraging member states to become proactive through a universal approach*

## AN ISSUE OF DEFINITION

In order to solve any problem, we must first define it. Visible and physical disability is the type commonly observed, understood and that with which people





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sympathize. But there are several disabilities that go unnoticed or are camouflaged due to social stigma, such as mild mental disability or severe metabolic disability. At times, these veiled disabilities impede normal functioning to a much greater extent than a visible physical disability. Since the extent and types of disability are so wide and varied, there is no universal criteria or definition of disability beyond the dictionary meaning. The “disabled” are commonly referred to as “handicapped” in some countries, and in recent years, to be more respectful, they are sometimes referred to as “challenged”.

Ultimately, what matters, is not what this group is called, but rather what is done to protect them from discrimination, segregation, and economic marginalization. We must work towards providing equal opportunities for the disabled in the social, political and economic process. This requires a universal inclusive approach, which may be challenging, but it is the only way to provide full human rights to the disabled by all UN Member States.

On my frequent visit to the disabled school, I was amazed and touched by the students’ vibrant, playful and happy attitude, despite their handicap, as if they were unaware of its existence. I began to think, if they are so happy, what exactly is the handicap and what is it that they need? They do not need our pity, which is what is offered most to this population. Rather, what this group needs most is love, respect and to be made to feel equal. *For them the handicap has been overcome and does not exist. It is our perception that needs a change.*

## HUMAN OBLIGATION

The solution is a complete change in perspective. Our perception of human rights – not just for the disabled, but in general – must change. *We must replace the word “right” with “obligation”. “human obligation” is what is needed in this changing environment.* This is no play on words but a change in perception. The crusade of “human rights” has not brought the desired results because the focus has been on rights, when it should be on obligation.

The initiative starts with a fundamental change in our mindset, attitude and approach. In regard to the disabled, we often consider them not equal, but lesser humans - in terms of ability and capacity - we have pity

on them and dole out concession out of compassion. Whereas, in reality, they have proved to have that extra capacity – beyond what the rest of us possess - which has helped them overcome their disability with effort, grit and determination.

Additionally, a “right” is often something that is demanded, whereas an “obligation” is voluntary and comes wholeheartedly. Obligation dawns only when there is a realization for gratitude. Most of us are fortunate enough to have an easy life and often feel no need for gratitude. Awareness, consciousness, and realization lead to a feeling of gratitude, which is responsible for a sense of obligation in life - as opposed to rights. *“I cried because I had no shoes, till I saw a child who had no feet.”* The realization for gratitude that we have feet to stand on creates a sense of obligation for the little child who may not be so lucky. This awareness can create thunderous shakeup, more potent than the collective demands of all the right activists.

Taking a philosophical view, one can argue that we each have shortcomings that can be seen as our disability or handicap. Often we are more aware of our own disabilities than anyone else’s and go to great lengths to disguise them. This is in contrast to the disabled who do everything in their power to overcome the challenges they have. *From this perspective, who has the greater disability and who is really disabled?*

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# Human Rights

## **Changes in U.S. Immigration Law: A Post -1996 Non-Humanitarian Approach**

**Gloria Goldman,**

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**Dr. Homee F. Shroff,**

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The United States of America since its inception has stood for freedom, salvation and hope: freedom from oppression, salvation from abuse and hope from despair. Like a lighthouse shining its beacon of light across the stormy waters, the U.S. has globally provided a safe haven from the abuses of human rights. But, such haven can only be as effective and as sanctified as its immigration laws and policies. In 1996, the US adopted the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which due to its restrictive nature, has had a negative and chilling effect on U.S. immigration policies. Immigration attorneys as well advocates of human rights have observed a steady decline in the humanitarian concepts that our government once stood for, and historically handed to foreign nationals seeking a safe haven in the U.S. Furthermore, this decline in humanitarian laws and policies have placed an extremely high and sometimes unjust, unfair and unreasonable standard of governmental and administrative discretion with the most sympathetic and dire cases, based upon which these humanitarian laws were originally created. More often than not, advocates of such causes receive only silence from the government to the multiple requests and appeals for humanitarian relief, a silence that is sometimes more deafening than ignorance.

The following are true stories of two cases that occurred before the 1996 restrictive policies<sup>1</sup>. Were these cases to be presented and tried today, there would be no relief, no hope and no future for those involved.

**The first case** begins in 1988, when MG was only one year old and her mother was incarcerated for a crime. MG at the time of her mother's incarceration lived with the MS family in a housing project in East Los Angeles. The MS family had come from Mexico to seek a better life for their two sons, but they were undocumented. MG's mother was released from detention when MG was seven years old. However, the Los Angeles courts adjudicated that, in the best interest and welfare of the child, MG should continue to reside with the MS family and they should legally adopt her. However, because the MS family was undocumented, adoption was not possible. The MS family appeared in immigration court, and in 1996, the family was granted relief through suspension of deportation, and the MS family was officially able to adopt MG in 1999. MG was twelve years old at this time, and in eternal gratitude and appreciation, she "formally" changed her name to Gloria, after her attorney. The MS family and MG were fortunate because they were granted relief shortly before the 1996 law went into effect. Today, this relief would be impossible. If MG and the MS family had waited a while longer, the outcome would have been much different.

**The second case** begins also in 1988, when the VZ family of six – parents and their four children entered the U.S. on visitor and student visas respectively. The family overstayed their visits after the respective permits expired while the father became an abusive alcoholic. He severely beat his family and spent much of the family's money on alcohol. The abuse continued until his family lost all consciousness. In 1992, the father was convicted of felony domestic violence and deported. In the interim, the children excelled in school, received several scholastic awards and honors – including a visit to President Clinton at the White House – graduated from college and became leaders in their community. In 1995, the family voluntarily appeared before the immigration court requesting relief from their overstay because returning to Mexico would have meant imminent harm and danger from the abusive husband/father who had influential governmental allies in Mexico. While the case was pending in court, the 1996 immigration law passed, making any and all types of humanitarian relief obsolete. Hence, the family was denied relief in immigration court as well as on appeal. Eventually the case reached the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Office of Immigration Litigation



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(OIL), who, surprised by the government's reluctant stance in this case, offered a humanitarian outcome by which the VZ family could remain in the U.S.

The outcomes of cases as the those above are what shape the future of families, society and the nation for generations to come. Good policies and laws along with appropriate humanitarian relief work for the benefit of all humankind. They prevent the breaking up of families and the destruction of lives. Ironically, the same society that shapes laws and policies that prevent humanitarian relief ultimately has to pay for the consequences of these broken lives.

<sup>1</sup> Initials will be used to protect the identities of individuals discussed.

## GLORIA A. GOLDMAN



*Gloria A. Goldman practices in Tucson, Arizona, along with her son, Maurice Goldman in Tucson and New York. Gloria came to the United States in 1949 with her parents who were refugees from Europe. She received a Bachelor of Science in Deaf Education from Wayne State University. In 1990, Gloria received her J.D. from the University of Arizona. She was the chair of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Arizona Chapter from 1996-1998. In 1996, Gloria received the AILA Annual Pro Bono Award. She has lectured nationally, and was the Chairperson of the 2000 AILA Basic Curriculum in Chicago. Gloria currently serves on the AILA National Board. She is highly respected within the immigration legal arena, and continues to argue complex cases and do Pro Bono work. Gloria*

*was Homee Shroff's attorney who very successfully represented him in becoming a U.S. citizen under the EB-1 (First Preference Extraordinary Ability Alien) Category.*

## HOMEE F. SHROFF

*Homee F. Shroff received his Bachelors and Masters Degree in Architecture and Planning from the University of Texas and University of Kansas. He received his Ph.D. in Regional Science from Boston University. After working for a few years as Executive Vice-President for a R&D Company, and Adjunct Faculty in a Community College in Tucson, Arizona, and Fairfax, Virginia, Homee went on to pursue a J.D. at De Paul University in Chicago. He clerked for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, the City of Chicago, and a private immigration law firm. After passing the bar, Homee worked as a trial attorney for a private law firm which dealt with civil subrogation and arbitrations. Upon returning to Tucson, Arizona, he started his immigration practice. Homee is a recipient of several awards and has published several articles. He continues to do pro-bono work. Homee is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association where he is the Arizona State Chapter Secretary.*



**ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA  
SENDS  
NORUZ GREETINGS TO ALL**





# Human Rights

## *Soldier Boy*

**Nasreen Farzaneh Ph.D**

**Child Soldier:** Any person under the age of 18 who is a member of or attached to a government armed force or any other group's armed force, regardless of the existence of conflict.

The impact of war on children, whether as civilian bystanders or active participants, ranges from psychosocial damages of malnutrition, disease (including HIV/AIDS), physical injuries, and death. Available data indicates that children are three times more likely to be seriously injured or permanently disabled by armed conflict than to be killed by it. Most countries in which the recruitment of child soldiers is prevalent, or has been in the recent past, are developing nations (*i.e. Liberia, Uganda, Sudan, Chad, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Afghanistan, Colombia, and Angola, among others*) undergoing societal crises such as rebellion, civil war, ethnic cleansing and genocide, and war with neighboring states. For the most part, these societies tend to lack adequate formal and informal structures that acknowledge and protect human rights, let alone the civil rights of the child. The conditions under which many children in these countries live - in particular, those from the poorer classes - are considerably below the accepted international standards of well being and individual development. A common trend among child soldiers is they generally come from the poor and marginalized sectors, isolated rural areas, the conflict zones themselves, and from disrupted or non-existent family backgrounds, which increases their vulnerability to abuse, violence, and exploitation. While many of these children are abducted and recruited by force, a vast number join voluntarily for armed services through indoctrination and/or promises of material rewards.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs by NGOs and the United Nations (UN) agencies have attempted to address the needs of these children by reintegrating them into their families and communities and providing them with services including psychosocial support, formal education and accelerated learning, apprenticeships and vocational training. Yet the fate of many of these children remains bleak. Through my work with international NGOs and UNICEF, I had the opportunity to interview some of the children who had received reintegration support in Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. While the majority were happy to have been reintegrated into their families and communities, they expressed little hope of leading "normal" lives not only due to the trauma they had experienced, but also due to poverty, lack of opportunity for continuing their education and/or enrolling in vocational schools because of financial constraints, negative perceptions of community members towards them, and feelings of being a burden on their families as an "extra mouth to be fed".

A considerable number of children are still voluntarily or involuntarily engaged in different types of warfare in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. According to the recent annual report on *Children and Armed Conflict* issued by the Secretary General of the United Nations, the number of armed groups and forces identified as using children has climbed from 40 in 2006 to 57 in 2007. This reflects the fact that policies and laws that have been agreed upon internationally are not filtering down to the ground fast enough. When conflict is present, children continue to be at risk of recruitment. The recruitment of children for warfare, if unchecked, can become institutionalized as part of state/non-state strategy for terror and destruction regardless of existing international laws such as the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). This is not to say that international efforts at raising the status and the civil rights of children are inconsequential, rather their effects are limited so long as there is a lack of understanding and coordinated action at local, national, and international levels in addressing fundamental elements of welfare in these societies.



**Nassrin Farzaneh** obtained her Ph.D. in Sociomedical Sciences from Columbia University, New York, in 2007. She has published her dissertation titled, *Children at High Risk: The Case of Child Soldiers in Iran and in El Salvador*. Since 2000, she has been working on projects related to children involved in armed conflicts. She has worked as an international consultant in El Salvador, Uganda, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan.



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## THE FINAL FRONTIER

**Zerbanoo Gifford**

When I was awarded the prestigious NESTA (National Endowment Science, Technology and Art) Fellowship in Britain, I was in the privileged position to follow my own fancy. I decided to use my Fellowship to not only expand my own horizons but to meet as many of the world's inspirational women as possible. My goal was to record and celebrate the achievements of extraordinary women at the beginning of the new millennium in every field, be it business, government, the arts, science, academia and religion. I also wanted to inspire a new generation and to show that in today's celebrity-obsessed society a real heroine is someone who changes lives not frocks.

I met over three hundred women from every background originating from over sixty countries. I was surprised that even women who were at the top of their fields who had money, fame and power, had experienced some form of subtle or overt discrimination. I was even more intrigued to discover how they had dealt with it in their own lives.

One of the fascinating women I met, Rekha Mody, daughter of one of India's famous industrialists, Rai Bahadur Gujarmal Modi, explained that her family did support women's empowerment, yet "My brothers' birthdays were celebrated, but we girls never had a birthday celebration. It was so culturally embedded that the boys knew they were going to inherit everything and that we were not going to inherit anything." She went on to tell me that in order to stop passing tradition prejudices down the generations she made a point of celebrating her own daughters' presence in the world. "I celebrated the birth of my second daughter, Isha, with a champagne dinner for a hundred people, much to the amusement of my family and friends, who did not understand the celebration of the birth of a second daughter."

The Commonwealth human rights lawyer, Maja Daruwalla, the daughter of the late, great Sam Manekshaw, told a delightful story. "When I was born in Quetta, my father, who was in the army, was collecting his papers when his disappointed batman ran in, saying 'Another baby' meaning a girl child had been born." She adds that her father always tells the story with the rider that he never wanted a son.

It seems unbelievable that we have now begun to explore the origins of the big bang, which cost seven billion dollars, gone to the moon, expense unknown, discovered the secrets of our DNA, priceless, and are

able to send message instantly around the world. Yet we allow half the world to be under-represented, under-resourced and under-valued. Even worse, in many families a boy is still the dreamed of child. A girl is second best.

Throughout the world there is still endemic violence against women and horrific practices, such as infanticide and traditions where girls are sexually violated and abused are accepted. There are even laws in places like Saudi Arabia where women are not allowed to drive.

I did not find a country in the world where there was true equality, even though in most countries there was legislation in place to protect women. One Scandinavian, Anna-Lisa Fazer, whose own grandfather had been one of the founders of modern-day Finland, explained that although there was no legal discrimination in her country, she never felt able to achieve her true potential, being a woman. This is due to what I refer to as barriers in their own mind.

Today for many, feminism has become the dirty "f-word". It is often believed that if women challenge the status quo, they are whiners who need to get a grip on themselves. So long as this is the held view, I am a feminist. I believe that societies that do not encourage everyone to have an equal stake and to realise their God-given goodness and potential deprive all of us of a resource of untapped talent.

I am always compelled to explain to women, especially young girls, that a great deal of talent is lost to the world for want of a little courage. Having courage enables you to challenge out-dated ideas that imply that women are somehow unworthy of fulfilling their vision. Girls and young women need to be courageous because often their in-built lack of confidence holds them back and prevents them from achieving their full potential.

Interestingly, I have found that there are two aspects of our lives that really hold women back from achieving. One is our own in-built lack of confidence and fear of failure and being rejected. The other is society's in-built conditioning that a woman should be supportive and happy to be a second-class, child-bearing, rearing citizen. Any other ambition is doomed to failure.

Yet, I have found that though there is a growing appreciation in every sphere of women's particular gifts, especially among enlightened men. Women are still under-represented when it comes to positions of power. However, women are now more sought after, especially



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in the corporate world, for their particular abilities to co-operate, think intuitively and laterally, be sensitive to potential problems, their ability to work better as a team, and be more flexible and better listeners. They are not afraid to ask awkward questions and sometimes be bloody-minded but they always get the job done. As they say, the cock crows, but the hen lays the egg. Often the eggs are golden.

There is now so much research that shows when women are involved at the highest level, everyone benefits. Those ranked in the Fortune-500 companies, which have a higher percentage of women on the board, found the top quarter outperformed those in the bottom quarter with 53% higher return on equity. There are so many examples around the world that make it very plain that the participation of women is not just a human right, but a human responsibility. It is also financially prudent.

There is nothing inherent in women that makes them unsuitable for leadership. In fact, they are ideally placed in modern society to be at the forefront and to help change the world for the better.

There is no doubt that religion and community have an impact on the way women are perceived. Zoroastrian women are fortunate to be born into a community that values education and encourages women to achieve. My book "Confessions to a Serial Womaniser- Secrets of the World's Inspirational Women" had a disproportionate number of Zoroastrian women, not just because I was a Zoroastrian, but because they were outstanding in their field. Not only had they achieved at the highest levels, becoming editors, industrialists, intrepid travellers, but also seemed to be individualistic, often bordering on eccentric. They were fun and possessed qualities of greatness, a sweetness of being and a self-confidence which is often grown from self-doubt. They also had an ingrained commitment to empower others as well as themselves.

Today, individually and as a global community, we have to decide whether we want to tackle the final frontier, the true equality of men and women. For too long, women have not demanded their human rights. Surely



in the twenty-first century the rights of women warrant everyone's attention.

I have also set up an international web scheme, whereby many of the women featured in the book have agreed to act as mentors ([www.ashacentre.org/women](http://www.ashacentre.org/women)). Anyone looking for a mentor simply visits the website, determines who they would like as a mentor, fills in the on-line form and they are matched up. By developing a website linking women from so many countries and different backgrounds, a truly global network of friendship and support is created. Because done over the internet, distance and boundaries are not problematic. There is an immense sense of gratification when I receive e-mails from women who tell me their lives have been changed by being matched with a mentor. The mentors also enjoy giving something back and helping someone else achieve her goals. This will continue to grow in this fast-changing world of communications with the addition of voice to text, videos to still photographs, and blogs. And I intend to include more inspirational women whenever I come across them.

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*Pioneer for Asian women in British politics, she chaired the Commission 'Looking into Ethnic Minority Involvement in British Life' and was a member of the advisory group to the British Home Secretary. A former director of Anti-Slavery International, she was awarded the Freedom of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, for her work combating modern slavery and racism.*

*Zerbanoo has authored: The Golden Thread: Asian Experience in Post-Raj Britain, Dadabhai Naoroji: Britain's First Non-white Member of Parliament, Asian Presence in Europe, Celebrating India, Thomas Clarkson and the Campaign Against the Slave Trade, Confessions to a Serial Womaniser: Secrets of the World's Inspirational Women*

*As the director of the ASHA Centre, Zerbanoo actively promotes philanthropy and peace worldwide. For more information see [www.zerbanoogifford.org](http://www.zerbanoogifford.org) [www.ashacentre.org](http://www.ashacentre.org)*





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## GENDER EQUALITY: A LONG JOURNEY AHEAD

*Farishta Murzban Dinshaw*

On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Subsequent treaties and declarations, such as the Vienna Declaration (1993) and the Beijing Declaration (1995), highlighted women's rights because, unfortunately, the description "human" is not obvious enough to encompass their rights and needs without further clarification.

In spite of the fine words in these treaties, women's economic, social, political, and cultural rights continue to be neglected. In order to correct these disparities there is now a UN-sanctioned strategy called "mainstreaming gender" [1]. This is an acknowledgement that in many cases our society supports male privilege, and that gender biases are linked to social constructions of masculinity and male identity, often operating below the level of consciousness. They are embedded in cultural beliefs, work practices and tend to be perpetuated within different institutions of society – the family [for instance, in many families it is expected that women will eat after the men have been served]; in the media [women are often commoditized in commercials]; in legislation [many countries do not recognize domestic violence as a criminal offence]. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen identified seven types of inequality [2] that women face in comparison to men: **1) Mortality inequality (2) Natality (birth) inequality (3) Basic facility inequality (4) Special opportunity inequality (5) Professional inequality (6) Ownership inequality (7) Household inequality.**

### GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN NORTH AMERICA

In the USA, Canada and other developed countries, women do not have to deal with obvious forms of gender persecution such as female genital mutilation, trafficking for prostitution, female infanticide, or honor killings. With increasing number of women in the workforce and with more women choosing intimate relationships outside the boundaries of marriage, many people believe that gender discrimination is an issue of the past. The truth is that gender discrimination in developed countries is surreptitious. Women continue to experience 'invisible' discrimination – lower pay for the same work, disparity in access to athletic opportunities, higher premiums than men of the same age for individual insurance policies providing identical coverage, unequal distribution of household and care-giving responsibilities, exclusion from male-dominated informal networks, and being subjected to derogatory and derisive comments. In mainstream media where racist, anti-Semitic or homophobic comments make headlines, sexist slurs often go unnoticed. There was no uproar over the Oscar-winning song "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp" (2006) referring to women as "hoes" and "bitches". During the 2008 election campaign, thousands of Facebook members joined anti-Hillary Clinton groups such as "Hillary Clinton: Stop Running for President and Make Me a Sandwich," and "Life's a bitch, why vote for one? Anti-Hillary '08". A part of mainstreaming gender is to use everyday opportunities for awareness-raising and education. "The Campaign for Gender Equality" ([www.campaignforgenderequality.org](http://www.campaignforgenderequality.org)) states, "We believe that we have a tremendous opportunity to use what happened in the 2008 election to become a force/a voting block, to educate, to raise awareness and to articulate the gender inequality that exists and to change the way this culture treats women."

### GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND ZARATHUSHTI WOMEN

Zarathushti women, particularly those living in urban areas, enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that are awarded to them by a liberal religious doctrine. Asho Zarathushtra in his Gathas exhorts each individual, man or





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woman, to think with their own good mind and choose the right path. This illustrates that he credited women with the ability to make their own decisions. The “*Yengeh Hatam*” prayer states that all men and women who are righteous are deserving of respect. The only criterion for homage is righteousness, not caste, not status, not sex. The *Farvardin Yasht* lists the names of 250 men and women who are worthy of being venerated because of their righteousness. Females have the same Navjote (initiation) ritual as males and wear the same badges of the religion - the sudreh and kusti. (Picture on page 81 is an artistic representation of Artemis, an Iranian Admiral in Xerxes's army circa 480 BCE. Source: bahrameradblg.blogspot.com)

However, culture often trumps religion. In early post-Zoroastrian times, the treatment of women vacillated between respect and bigotry. Although granted economic and social freedom, women were not intrinsically valued. For instance, the payment to a physician for treating a man was an ox, a prized animal, while for a woman it was a she-ass. Women also received less remuneration than men for equal amounts of work. Men isolated women during their menstrual cycle as that was considered the handiwork of an evil spirit Jahika. Later, when Zarathushtis fled Iran because of religious upheaval and settled in Gujarat, India, they adopted the mores of the Gujarati Hindu culture, including social inequalities like dowry and disassociating widows from celebrations. The major factor responsible for changing the status of women in the Parsi-Zarathushti community was education. By 1870, over 1000 Parsi girls had already had the benefit of secondary education. In the mid-nineteenth century, reformists Dadabhai Naoroji, Khurshedji Cama and Sohrabji Bengalee created quite a storm in the local community when they started taking their wives and daughters to public functions and letting them mingle with the British. After that there was no looking back as Parsi women participated in all walks of life, including the national movement for swaraj (independence). Today, the Zarathushti/Zoroastrian Women's International Network (ZWIN), a web-based forum, links intergenerational Zarathushti women across the globe in an effort to promote and empower women in public, corporate and civic arenas. Yet, we are still not entirely free of biases entrenched in our culture. Few realize that the symbolism of the tilli (the red powder mark on the forehead) is gender biased – men have a vertical stroke representing the rays of the sun, and women wear a red dot signifying the moon which shines in the light of the sun. Another glaring oversight is in the *Ashirwad* (Blessings) given to the bride and groom in which the priest prays for the union to be blessed with male offspring. We may have come a long way, but the journey to gender equality is far from over.

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[1] Gender mainstreaming has been defined by the United Nations as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and program, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and program, in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, UN document A/52/3, Chapter IV, par 4).

[2] This is based on the text of his inauguration lecture for the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, reproduced as a cover essay “Many Faces of Gender Inequality” in *Frontline* (Volume 18 - Issue 22, Oct. 27 - Nov. 09, 2001). You can read the full text at <<http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1822/18220040.htm>>



# Human Rights

## Human Rights & Mental Illness

**Shireen Cama**

Human rights and mental health are inextricably linked; human rights violations throughout the world – in the form of gender-based violence, forced migration, and systematic torture, to name a few – can have tragic effects on the psyche of the survivors. People who have had their basic rights stripped from them are more likely to suffer from major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and problems of substance abuse. Young children who are the victims of or who have been exposed to some form of trauma often regress in their developmental trajectory. However, the linkage between mental illness and human rights abuses goes both ways. Just as being the victim of human rights violations can lead to psychiatric disease, living with a mental illness can result in gross infringement on one's most basic liberties.

Psychiatric disorders – such as depression, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia, dementia and disorders of substance-abuse – account for almost 15% of the global disease burden. Of the non-infectious diseases, psychiatric illness make up nearly 30% – contributing far more to the overall load than cardiovascular disease and cancer. (Prince, M et al, 2007). In spite of this impact, mental illness remains a low priority throughout the world, with most countries spending less than 1% of their health budget on mental disorders (World Health Organization, 2001). Even in the most resource rich countries, two-thirds of those suffering from mental illness receive no treatment, and this figure jumps as high as 90 percent in parts of the developing world (Lancet Global Mental Health Group, 2007).

The barriers to accessing mental health services are numerous and are often entangled in a web of complex cultural, societal and economic issues. In many parts of the world, mental illness is horribly stigmatized and people are discouraged from acknowledging or seeking help for their condition. Because of the debilitating nature of many psychiatric disorders, people suffering from mental illness are often unable to work productively, will resort to self-soothing through alcohol and drugs, and are subjected to a life of social isolation. They are often found spinning in a cycle of poverty, especially after the de-institutionalization policies carried out in the U.S. and other countries left many mentally ill patients homeless,

uneducated, and bereft of any form of consistent medical treatment. According to a 2003 report by Human Rights Watch, the rate of mental illness in the U.S. prison population is three times higher than in the general population, and “prisons have become the nation's primary mental health facilities.” (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Even when people with mental illness do receive treatment, this ‘treatment’ can be grossly inadequate and utterly inhumane. In many parts of the world, including the United States, the reluctance to acknowledge the impact of mental illness alongside other diseases of the body means that insurance companies will not pay for some forms of treatment; thus, impoverished individuals – in whom the prevalence of psychiatric disorders is higher – are denied care. A report from India's National Human Rights Commission stated that many of India's mental hospitals are “dumping grounds for families to abandon their mentally ill member, for their economic reasons or lack of understanding and awareness of mental illness.” It goes on to say that the “living conditions in many of these settings are deplorable and violate an individual's right to be treated humanely and live a life of dignity” (National Human Rights Commission, 1999).

Despite the many obvious and deplorable human rights violations incurred by those suffering from mental illness, some progress has been made over the years. In 1991, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the “Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and for the Improvement of Mental Health Care” (i.e., the MI Principles) resolution to help guide nations in interpreting the standards of international human rights law as they relate to mental health (World Health Organization, 2004). These principles underscore the rights of people with mental illness to live and work in their communities, and put forth standards of treatment and living conditions in psychiatric institutions. Some countries have used these international principles to guide mental health policy and legislation within their borders to protect the rights of the mentally ill. Researcher/clinicians such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Dr. Vikram Patel have shown that identification and treatment of mental illness in low-income, low-resource countries can be performed





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in a manner that is both de-stigmatizing and cost-effective (Kohn, D, 2008).

Most definitions of human rights incorporate a philosophy of dignity, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, for many people suffering from mental illness, these rights have been ignored. Fundamental changes must be made in the way that we as a society view mental illness and in how we act to protect the human rights of this vulnerable yet valuable segment of our community.



**Shireen Cama** is from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is a student at Harvard Medical School. She received a B.A. in Economics from Yale University, and has worked in several NGOs in the US and abroad. Shireen is currently working in Mumbai through a grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health.

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## TREATY BANNING THE USE IF CLUSTER MUNITIONS

One hundred governments from around the world convened in Oslo, Norway, on 3 December 2008 to sign the most significant disarmament and humanitarian treaty of the decade. The treaty bans the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions, committing each government to provide victim assistance and to clear contaminated land. This treaty sets a new global standard for peace and human rights. Conscience calls us to continue working together on this issue, which is integral to the Religions for Peace commitment to disarmament

Senior religious leaders and lay people of faith around the world in Religions for Peace helped advocate for the passage of this important treaty. In October 2008, H.E. Dr. Mustafa Ceric, Reis-I-ulema of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a Co-President of the Religions for Peace World Council, hosted the European Faith Leaders Conference on Cluster Munitions in Sarajevo.

Source Dr William F. Vendley, Secretary General, Religions for Peace



# Human Rights

## Interview with Tenaz Dubash on Human Trafficking

**Cyrus Cama**

Though we live in a modern society where certain freedoms are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, there are countless instances in which citizens' rights are violated. Such topics are rarely featured in the mainstream media, and when they are, they are usually related to domestic violence, violations of civil liberties, or torture. Human trafficking is another form of social injustice that is rampant throughout the world. Unfortunately, many people are completely unaware of what it is or that it even exists. According to the US Department of State, human trafficking is equivalent to "modern-day slavery," involving victims who are forced, defrauded or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation." While there are an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 human trafficking victims (mostly women and children) in the U.S., there are several millions around the world.

The good news is that many individuals, organizations, and even countries are working together not only to prevent human trafficking from occurring, but to help the victims of these heinous crimes as well. The Zarathushti community of North America's own Tenaz Dubash, at Safe Horizons, is one individual who is making a difference not only in this field, but also in the lives of the individuals she works with.

### EXCERPT OF INTERVIEW WITH TENAZ DUBASH

*Q: Statistics indicate that human trafficking affects millions of people worldwide, but who are these*

*victims? What segments of society are they likely to come from?*

**TENAZ:** That's a good question. Human trafficking being a form of human slavery can affect anyone; men, women, children, though not many elderly, since they are limited to the types of work they can do. Individuals, who are trafficked, have to be able to provide some value to their traffickers and are unfortunately treated as commodities.

At my organization (Safe Horizon) we actually don't use the term "victim" to describe our clients but instead use "survivor." Most of our clients have been deceived by traffickers who may have promised them jobs as receptionists, laborers, or even the opportunity to study some sort of trade abroad. The harsh reality is that, on arrival, their papers are taken away and most people are forced to work against their will in order to "pay back" the traffickers for the costs of transporting them to another country or putting them up in some sort of housing. Often times they, or their loved ones, are threatened with harm or even death. They are severely traumatized in every sense of the word.

Working closely with these people and seeing them overcome, physical, sexual and psychological trauma makes them "survivors" in my mind.

*Q: How common is human trafficking and where is it most prevalent today?*

**TENAZ:** I personally work with people who are trafficked into the US, but it is an international crime that is very prevalent everywhere -- in

Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America. Every country is either a source country or a destination country. I have worked closely with clients from Africa, Mexico, Ukraine, Russia, and Bangladesh. Wherever there is poverty, lack of education, greed, and the ability to manipulate and deceive naïve individuals - that's where trafficking occurs. Unfortunately globalization has made the process of human trafficking even easier than it used to be.

*Q: Is it safe to say that poverty-stricken areas where people have few opportunities for education or social and economic movement are prime recruiting grounds for traffickers to prey upon others? Are poverty and lack of education the major causes?*

**TENAZ:** Most definitely. When people lack education and have few opportunities for economic advancement, they often will be willing, at least initially, to do whatever seems reasonable to get out of a desperate situation. Weak law enforcement and corrupt governments are also huge contributing factors. Many trafficking rings are actually run internationally by local mafias who often pay off the authorities.

*Q: What in your opinion are some possible solutions to this global problem?*

**TENAZ:** You know, and it pains me to say this, I'm not sure there is an absolute solution to the problem. Historically, humans, who are driven



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by greed, have always exploited others.

One thing I'm a great supporter of is micro-finance programs. Human trafficking survivors are forced to be dependent on their traffickers. Micro-finance loans, however small, allow otherwise poor people to start businesses and support themselves. Really any sort of poverty alleviation program would help the problem. There is some progress being made at the International level. The US government puts out a "Traffic in Persons," or TIP report, annually, and economically sanctions countries that perform poorly. Average citizens can also help by being vigilant and knowing what human trafficking is and how to identify it.

*Q: We've discussed what human trafficking is, what causes it, and possible solutions. On a more personal level, why do you feel that human trafficking is an important issue, especially given the myriad number of human rights issues that unfortunately exist today?*

**TENAZ:** I feel that it's important because this work involves the most vulnerable people in the world. I've worked with survivors of domestic violence and other populations and all these issues are very important. However, those who have been abused, especially if they are citizens and recognize the problem, have some sort of safety net, in terms of shelter, food stamps, Medicaid – that they can tap into. Individuals who have been trafficked, in many cases don't even speak local language of the area they've been trafficked to, and they're usually not very educated. They are truly isolated, living in a completely different world where they are completely reliant on their traffickers for survival. I think it's extremely important to be working with these people who need help the most.

*Q: What inspires you in your work? Was there a particular person, experience in your life, or even something about the Zoroastrian religion that influenced your decision to take up this line of work?*

**TENAZ:** There was not really any one person or experience that led me to this work. It really was more of the life path that I had been on. I had studied communications and for the first part of my career, worked for a

lot of different television stations and media companies. After working hard for some time I went through a reflective period and decided that I wanted to do something positive and help people with the skills and experience that I had gathered. I decided to make a documentary on the subject and eventually, through people I knew, joined Safe Horizon.

*Q: Do you feel that the Zarathushti community should get more involved in this and other human rights issues? Why or why not?*

**TENAZ:** It's very important to get involved because we as a community believe in good thoughts, good words, and good deeds as well as happiness on to others. How could you not want to help, in any way possible, people who are affected by human trafficking, poverty, or any kind of abuse? Zoroastrianism to me has more to do with being a good human being than anything else.



*She is a community organizer and independent documentary film-maker. For information on her documentaries go to: [www.tenazdubash.com](http://www.tenazdubash.com)*

*Tenaz Dubash has a Bachelors from Cornell and a Masters from the Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University.*

*Cyrus Cama Bachelor in International Business, Information Systems, & Religion from George Washington U in DC. Master in International Commerce & Policy from George Mason... Currently a software engineer for PNC Bank/Capital Markets...*







# Human Rights

## Mental Illness; Hidden and Lonely The Right to Live

**Jasmine Chapgar**

On page 117 of this issue of the Journal, you can read a bit about a brilliant, warm-hearted, handsome, and talented 23 year old boy – my younger brother Zal. He struggled with mental illness since Sept. 2007, and jumped off a building on Dec 1st, 2008. The photo on this page was taken in May 2008.. I still cannot believe the words as I write them and my heart is filled with grief. But this is not about my sorrow or the remarkable person Zal was.

Please read about him, and also read the newspaper articles that discuss his life and illness. Search: "Zal Chapgar" on the internet, or newspaper site <http://philly.com> The articles discuss Zal, and the difficulties of the mental health system.

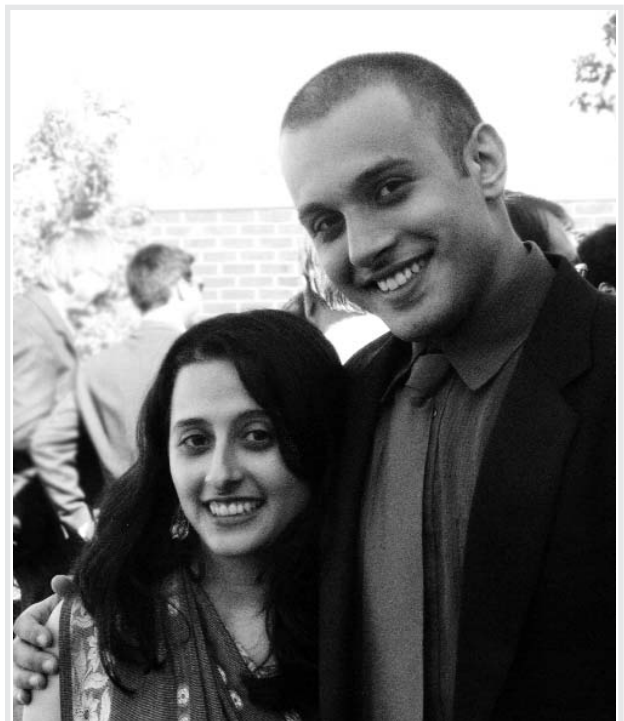
I write this to create awareness to problems that we as a community can change - the attitude toward mental illness and the support given to the mentally ill.

In college, my brother suddenly started hearing voices in his head. Schizophrenia was one of the possibilities – a scary thought. I had never heard of anyone around me having it. The word had negative connotations with little familiarity. It was a foreboding name to accept for him – and us. Yet when I started discussing it, nearly everyone in fact new someone with it – a family member, a friend. But until then it was never mentioned, especially not like other illnesses are. I thought... 'why did they never mention it? Why don't people talk about it?'"

Maybe Zal would have been more receptive if it was something openly discussed like other diseases. Schizophrenia affects 1% of the population - and that is just one mental illness among many. Yet despite its prevalence it appeared a dark and hidden illness.. My parents too, fell in line - they did not talk openly about it to many people and stopped attending community events. I, too stopped going to events for the most part, but on the few occasions I did, was asked to avoid discussing details with people that didn't know what was going on. I'd answer 'Zal's not doing so well' or at most 'Zal is having some depression'. Both were true – but only a fraction of the truth.

Then again – based on the responses of the people that did know what was happening, would it have helped if more people knew? Most people did not rush to Zal's side the way they have for people with a physical illness. Some did not visit him without prodding, even after obvious alarms - he was hospitalized a few times – twice for overdosing on cough syrup. I met a person my age whose younger brother has schizophrenia and what she said was very telling... how hard

it is on the family and how it should be treated like any other disease -



but it's not. She mentioned the huge difference in reactions to her brother's schizophrenia and then a year later to her father's cancer. There was no strangeness or blame with the cancer- everyone knew, talked about it and offered help. But with her brother, things were kept quiet, or talked of in an unsympathetic and 'weirded out' way, even though they are both illnesses all the same. And with schizophrenia, socialization is important to recovery - yet people tend to keep their distance.

After a difficult and chaotic period, Zal came home last winter, saw a psychiatrist, and took



# Human Rights

medication (neither of which seemed to help much). There was no clear diagnosis or treatment. He was aware of how he appeared to others, though he believed the voices he heard were real. It was frustrating, and he slipped into a deep depression. He slept constantly and did little when he woke up in the evenings. I would rush home from work when he woke up and ask to do things together- to which he often gave half-hearted "maybes" and mostly "nos".

One evening as usual he rejected all my ideas for that night and I began to feel that I was just being a pest and perhaps I should stop... but I persisted, making suggestions for the next day. He weakly replied, 'when... well, probably not.'. Again I thought, "I'm just being annoying...". Then he said "You know what Jas? I'm really lucky to have you. If it wasn't for you, I would commit suicide." I cried, "Well you will always have me, so you cannot do that, but why?". And he said "I just feel so alone". And he cried, and we hugged and talked.

So, I learned that night - even if he says no 90% of the time, at least he sees someone is truly there for him. I don't know if my efforts kept him going longer but I know I am glad I devoted myself to him. But I do think after a while, it wasn't enough ... just having his sister and a few others around. He was lonely, and had become habituated to my attempts to cheer and involve him. I did tell this to others in his life - some tried here and there, some did not. I do think that if even one unusual person or friend (who had

mostly faded away by then) had reached out to him that holiday weekend before, it might have changed his mind. He checked his voicemail right before he jumped. Perhaps to see if there was some reason, any small sign, not to do it.

At his funeral, hundreds of people came - some that hadn't seen him in months or even years. While touching, it was also sad. If a tiny portion of them had reached out to him when he was alive and struggling, it may have added to his reasons to live. Now the room was overflowing with people and tears - but too late for Zal.

Suicide is a tragic and common end to people with mental illness.

To the people reading this - reach out to them. Make the time. Support them and their family. People can do more than they realize... and even if you are rejected repeatedly - as will probably happen - at least the person knows that you care about them, knows that you would be upset if they were to end their life. It means more than you think.

*Jasmine Chapgar, heart broken sister who loves and misses her brother Zal deeply. She still cannot believe he is gone. email: jasneko@yahoo.com*

## EDITORIAL NOTE

**THE FEZANA WELFARE AND CRITICAL ASSISTANCE** committee provides assistance and help to Zarathushti individuals and families in North America facing difficulties due to medical emergencies, natural disasters, violence, abuse and legal issues. **ALL INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL**

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From the Desk of Meher Amalsad, Westminster, California, USA

Author of **Bread For the Head™**

Email: [babameher@prodigy.net](mailto:babameher@prodigy.net)



I don't want to pit Red America against Blue America  
I want to be the President of the United States Of America  
Senator Barack Obama – “What’s Next For America ”  
In Des Moines, Iowa, USA. (November 10, 2007)

**Spirituality comes, when we transform our barriers of love, into carriers of love**

© 2009, Meher Amalsad, Author of **Bread For the Head™**

January 20, 2009

**My Dear and Respected President Barack Obama:**

As a member of the ZOROASTRIAN community of America ,

I want to congratulate you for becoming **OUR** next historical

**President of the United States Of America .**

You have won the hearts of Americans with your exemplary dignity and humility.

You have inspired America with the fundamental **ZOROASTRIAN TENETS** of

**'GOOD THOUGHTS, GOOD WORDS AND GOOD DEEDS,**

for which you have my respect and admiration.

You have proposed a **CHANGE**

without compromising the essence of our core values and ideals.

And...

**You have emerged by displaying precisely the kind of character and judgment we need in a President.**

It says in my book **Bread For the Head™**

"The difference between **ORDINARY** and **EXTRA-ORDINARY** is that the **EXTRA-ORDINARY** know how to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**"

Thank you President Obama for making a difference in humanity.

**May God Bless You**

**As you have blessed America**

**With the gift of your enlightened leadership.**

You are a leader with a heart and your heart is in humanity.

For which, President Obama....

I wish you a

**SUCCESSION OF SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSES IN YOUR ENDEAVORS.**

With Divine Blessings of love and light to you and your family from

*Meher Amalsad*

*Author of **Bread For the Head™***

*For more Inspiration visit: [www.Bread4TheHead.com](http://www.Bread4TheHead.com)*



# In The News

## AYSHA GHADIALI AND DINYAR PATEL REFLECT ON THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA - JANUARY 20, 2009

**AYSHA GHADIALI**



On January 20, 2009, we left my apartment at four thirty in the morning. We had tickets, but my friend Maryum and I wanted to get as close as possible to history. Barack Hussein Obama was about to be inaugurated as the 44th President of the United States, and for all of us living in the District of Columbia the four-day weekend was our version of a political Mardi Gras.

We walked toward the Mall, the large grassy public square of our capital city, and joined the assembling crowds. There was some pushing and yelling, but for the most part it was joyous. People would burst out into song, the

occasional "Yes We Can!," and vendors were selling anything and everything with Obama's face as if he was a sports hero and rock star combined. We waited in the cold, bundled in layers, and snacking on granola bars until finally the ceremony began. Surrounded by tall people and out of sight of the jumbo screens, I couldn't see much except the Capitol building straight ahead adorned with various historic flags. But, I could hear perfectly clear as the new, young President made his first speech to the world.

People silently cried. The military gun salutes fired. It was finally official. I found the prominent mention of American global responsibility and energy scarcity to be particularly important and the truth that his father would not have been served in a restaurant 60 years ago particularly moving. It's not that Obama is the most eloquent speaker ever, or that we will agree with him on every policy, but this complicated man with a vast biography acknowledges that being American is not a black and white identity. He refused to be put in a box. He literally couldn't fit into the boxes which society created. Thousands and thousands of Americans see themselves in his life story not because they are of a mixed race or of a broken home, but because many of us have a complex identity too. Whether we are first or second generation Americans, whether our lives have been split between two or more countries, or we have lived abroad, we have had the difficult task of explaining ourselves to others. There is something very American about refusing to be defined by other people's definitions.

As former President George W. Bush's helicopter escorted him away from the Capitol, the largely partisan crowd furiously waved goodbye. Future historians will be a more impartial judge of Bush's legacy, but for those of us that supported this new administration it is time to test

President Obama's mettle as well as our own.



*Aysha Ghadiali is currently a research associate at Resources For The Future, an energy and environment think tank in Washington, D.C*

*Photos Aysha Ghadiali*

# In The News

**DINYAR PATEL**

For Inauguration Day, both the media and government authorities predicted up to five million attendees, gridlocked transportation, rigorous security, and terrible weather -- in short, a logistical nightmare. But it was also a once-in-a-lifetime event, and I would not have missed it for the world (or even for looming Ph.D. qualifying examinations). I woke up at 4:30am, boarded a crowded subway train by 5:00, and then spent about three hours walking with thousands of others through the security obstacle course that was downtown Washington, DC, past people selling Obama hats, Obama scarves, Obama mugs, Obama cookies, Obama beanies, and even "official Obama toe warmers." Seeing the thousands of people gathered on the Mall was a truly inspirational sight. Together with some friends I took a seat along the parade route, on Pennsylvania Avenue, where we shivered and speculated about the weather in Hawaii for the next ten hours or so.

But the crowd came alive during the inauguration ceremony, which we heard over loudspeakers, and again during the parade, when now-President Obama walked only about forty feet in front of us. Those moments made it all worth it.

**ZAMWI Youth group joins in festivities for President Barak Obama's Inauguration** -- January 22nd 2009 - in Bethesda, Maryland at "A Passage to India". -- Parsi dishes were on the menu.

*Photo credit Dinyar Patel (sitting extreme right)*



Barack Obama ordered his first new tuxedo in 15 years for his inaugural celebration on January 20, 2009. And Homi Patel, the Mumbai-born chairman and CEO of the leading American suit maker Hartmarx Corp, personally saw to it that the President-elect got what he wanted.

The one-button black tuxedo with satin lapels was prepared for Obama by HSM, a suburban Des Plaines, Illinois, union shop. Cost \$895 at Nordstrom department stores. Chicago-based Hartmarx is the parent company of HSM.

Obama's latest purchase added to his growing collection from the 121-year-old suit maker. Earlier in 2008, he bought six suits

from the largest US-based menswear maker, which he wore throughout the campaign.

Patel told WWD.com, the website for Women's Wear Daily, that he was working with the president-elect's staff to determine if Obama will wear a suit with a topcoat to the inauguration ceremony.

As for Obama's two-button suit, it was a classic power suit, said the Mumbai-born Patel. "It's strong, navy, and it does make you look powerful, but what makes it presidential is the man in it," he said. Hartmarx is the largest U.S. tailored clothing company; their products are made in Des Plaines, IL.

"We don't talk about this because we've been making suits for presidents, vice presidents and senators for more than 100 years," Hartmarx CEO Homi Patel told the Sun-Times. "The reason we continue making them is because we don't talk about it."

Patel, 59, told DNA that Obama has been a client of his company ever since he first stood for election to the US Senate in 2004. Patel said he had supported Obama's campaign for the senate and the ties resulted in a business relationship as well.

Patel, who has been with Hartmarx since 1979 and became CEO in 2001, hails from an illustrious Parsi family of Bombay. His father was chief accountant of the Central Bank of India while his uncle, Dr Jal Patel, was physician to the viceroy of India, the governor of Bombay, and Mohammed Ali Jinnah before Independence.

Later, he was physician to the president of India and continued to be JRD Tata's personal physician till his end.

*Source*

[www.dnaindia.com/report](http://www.dnaindia.com/report)

*Photo*

[www.kellogg.northwestern.edu](http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu)



# In The News

## ZAGNY'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Parade of ZAGNY Presidents from left Homi Gandhi, Astad Clubwalla, Lovji Cama, Eruch Munshi, Kaikhosrov D Irani, Framroze Patel, Gev Nentin. Not in picture the late Ivy and Farokh Gandhi.

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) celebrated its 35th Anniversary on January 24, 2009, at Arbab Rustom Guiv Dare Mehr in Pomona, New York. The celebration began with Aatash Niayesh prayers performed by young priests, *Ervad Porus and Karl Khambatta, Ervad Bezan Madon,*

*and Ervad Farhad Ranji.* All the current ZAGNY priests were awarded a plaque for their services. Additionally, *Ervad Pervez Patel, Ervad Dr. Daraius Antia, and Ervad Noshirwan Hormazdiar* were presented with Shawls for their yeoman services to the Zoroastrian community throughout these 35 years. A video presentation of 35 years, "*Glimpses of Past*", created by *Ferzin Patel*, displayed how we have come through these past years having fun but creating footmarks in the sands of history. A Parade of Presidents followed with the seven of the nine presidents (2 past presidents-Ivy and Farokh Gandhi passed away) who have served ZAGNY through these past 35 years. *Dr. A M Gondane, Deputy Consul General* from India in New York and Mrs. Gondane attended the function. The program was interspersed with Appetizers and Dinner, which all enjoyed. Finally, Hidden Gems provided a musical entertainment of old and new Indian songs.

## First elected Board of Directors of San Diego Zarathushtis on November 16, 2008



standing from left: Dr.Ramin Amani, Mr. Daryush Bastani, Mr. Rostam Akhtarkhavari, Mr. Bahram Bozorg Tchami, Mr. Mehran Sepehri - sitting from left: Mrs. Niloofar Sepehri Mrs. Jaleh Framrose



# In The News

## THE CITY OF BROSSARD, QUEBEC HONOURS MAHATMA GANDHI ON THE DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT LEADER.

Brossard in south west Quebec, honoured *Mahatma Gandhi* on his martyrdom day on Friday by installing his bust at the city centre.

*Indian High Commissioner Shashishekhar Gavai* joined *Mayor Jean-Marc Pelletier* in unveiling the bust at the main entrance of Brossard City Hall and City Library. The city also plans to name the City Hall area as Mahatma Gandhi Court.

The mayor said the unveiling of the bust was a momentous occasion for the city and its 1,500-strong Indian community. as well as a "dream come true" for him, he said.

Calling Gandhi a "great man" who faced extremism and hatred, he said the Mahatma remained a great

example of perseverance and a model of liberty, democracy and fraternity.

High Commissioner Gavai thanked the city for honoring the great Indian leader and dwelt on the values and principles dear to Gandhi. He said his tools of peace, non-violence and truth are as relevant now as they were during his lifetime. The bust, he said is a symbol of the growing Indian-Canadian cultural relationship.

The bust has been gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. It carries Mahatma's quotation: "You must be the change you want to see in the world" and Albert Einstein's tribute to him in French, English and Hindi.

[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Gandhis\\_bust\\_unveiled\\_in\\_Canadian\\_city/articleshow/4058628.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Gandhis_bust_unveiled_in_Canadian_city/articleshow/4058628.cms)

*Nau Rooz Mubarak*  
*to our fellow Zarthustis*  
*across North America and the World*

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**Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation**

# In The News

## *Inauguration of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Memorial Museum, Navsari*

Marzban Jamshedji Giara



Besides the Atash Behram, the First Dastur Meherjirana Library and Jamshed Baug, Navsari now has one more landmark to be proud of. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Memorial Museum was inaugurated on Sunday October 19, 2008 *Roz Bahman, Mah Khordad 1378 Yezdezerdi* by *Vada Dasturji Meherjirana* after a jashan ceremony. Present on the occasion were *Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 8th Baronet, trustees of Sir J.J. Charity Fund and Sir J.J. Parsee Benevolent Institution, trustees of Surat Parsee Panchayat and principals and staff of Sir J.J. and R.J.J. Schools at Navsari.*

Vada Dasturji Meherjirana lauded Sir Jamsetjee's philanthropy and services to his community and country and to humanity at large. He suggested that a lesson on the life and noble deeds of Sir Jamsetjee be included by the Dept. of Education, Government of Gujarat in school textbooks so that the present youth get an opportunity to know about Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy. This Museum will serve as an inspiration to all who visit it to emulate his example.

The present Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy in his speech said: "The purpose of converting Sir J.J.'s birthplace into a memorial museum is to showcase the contribution made by one man in the fields of philanthropy, education, healthcare,

women's education and community service. This museum aims to enthuse our youths about the ideals set by Sir Jamsetjee. It portrays his world of adversity, adventure and accomplishment. His vision was as large as his generosity."

The ancestral home (left) where Sir Jamsetjee was born in 1783 has been renovated and transformed into a Memorial Museum to commemorate his 225th birth anniversary. This project has been undertaken by Sir J. J. Charity Fund and Sir J. J. Parsee Benevolent Institution. The research, concept and curation has been carried out by the team of *Mrs. Homai N. Modi, Dr. Homi B. Dhalla and Mr. Jamshed A. Bhiwandiwalla*. All three of them were also present and felicitated at this function. Girls of Seth RJJ School, Navsari presented a garba recital specially composed for the occasion titled "Jamshed Jejee taro danko vaghe gher gher". The inaugural function was ably compeered by Ms. Pouruchisti Kadodwalla, Head Mistress, Sir J.J. Primary School, Navsari.

*Mr. Homi D. Mehta*, a trustee of Sir JJ Parsee Benevolent Institution while proposing the vote of thanks stated that *Navsari is also the birthplace of Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of India and Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata, the father of Indian industry*. The houses in which they were born still exist at Navsari. He suggested that these heritage houses could also be converted into memorial museums so that future generations would be inspired by their noble lives. This Museum located at Vatcha Mohalla at Malesar in Navsari is a 5 minute walk from Ava Baug Bus Stand and Jamshed Baug, and a 10 minute rickshaw ride from Navsari station and Atash Behram.



*Information in the Museum is available in English and in Gujarati. Entry into the Museum is by prior appointment only. The Museum can be visited from Monday to Saturday between 10.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. For an appointment please call Mr. Jehanbux Kodia, Manager, (Off: (02637) 235099 Mobile: 98797 35551) during normal working hours. The Museum is closed on Sundays. Admission to the Museum is free.*

# In The News

## Diversity In Toronto Feeds Informs And Humbles Film Maker

Michelle Mama



Last year this time, Michelle Mama almost got ulcers.

And no, she does not suffer from irritable bowel syndrome.

She was just too scared to break the news to her parents about her impending 10-day visit to Iraq in March of 2008.

"I did not know how they would react to this news. As in their mind I was a city girl, and Iraq at the best of times was not on their list of places to visit."

Mama did go to Iraq to make a powerful and heart wrenching documentary called 21 days to Nawroz.

As she sashayed into the brightly lit atrium of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in Toronto, it was hard to place her in the bleak and dusty environs of northern Iraq.

Glamorous and charming, Mama wears many caps. Just over a year ago, she was the host of CBC's Fashion File. As a writer, producer and director she has produced the Restaurant Makeover, Loving Spoonfuls and Renovate my Wardrobe series for Canadian television.

### GROWING UP BROWN IN A SEA OF WHITE

Growing up in Brampton, Ontario, Mama, who now lives by herself in Toronto remembers being the only brown face in a very white school.

Passionate about theatre ever since her high school days, she was also a huge fan of cinema.

Mama's parents Nilufer and Danny wanted her to become a lawyer.

Having majored in English literature and cinema studies with a minor in drama, at the University of Toronto, Mama, "found theatre to be the most satisfying of all the arts. Theatre was immediate, authentic and although it is extremely difficult to make a living out of, I knew I could not stray."

She did take up jobs like hosting CBC's fashion file in 2006 as it provided good moolah.

Although comfortable on stage, Mama realised she was camera phobic.

"The move to television was a steep learning curve for me, but once I got over that fear there was no looking back."

### IRAQ CALLING

Meanwhile, her cousin Sherezan Minwalla a lawyer for the United Nations was about to visit the Sulemaniya province of northern Iraq on an assignment documenting the 20th anniversary of the Halabja massacre.

In March of 1988 Saddam Hussein attacked the town of Halabja, 260 km north-east of the capital Baghdad with chemical and biological weapons as part of his plan to destroy the Kurds who formed a majority in that province.

5,000 people died instantly while another 12,000 (out of a population of 70,000) died in the three days after the massacre.

Human Rights Watch went on to define the attack as the genocide of the Kurds.





# In The News

Mustard gas, and nerve gas agents like sarin, tabun and cyanide gas were used on the Kurds who were farmers or cattle herders. 75 per cent of the victims were women and children.

What Mama found 20 years later is a place which has been held up as a shining example of peace in the Middle East, ever since U.S. sanctioned protections were put in place in 1992.

But how has this experimental democracy really affected women?

21 days to Nawroz is what Mama describes as the ultimate story telling.

"Making this documentary has been the hardest part of my career. The emotional pull a documentary has is intensely rewarding - having to bear witness and report it."

68 hours of film was produced over ten days.

The documentary explores the lives of three very different Kurdish women as they prepare for the Nawroz feast. They have learnt to reckon with the past and are now looking to the future.

It follows the lives of Razaw a feminist lawyer who defends women victims of honour crimes, Alwan who was an eight year-old girl who witnessed unspeakable horrors during the siege on Halabja 20 years ago and Banaz who is a tech-savvy 17-year-old who came of age post-Saddam, and is brimming with optimism.

After studying hard and securing a scholarship to the American University, Banaz hopes to desperately stay in Iraq and make Kurdistan a better place, but she

can't seem to rally support among her pessimistic peers. Will she keep going or give up?

"Making this feature is creative nourishment for me. It makes the cheesy world of television look more real when what you care about is allowed to be worked on," said Mama.

She hopes to one day see the production on stage.

The saga in the Middle East is what Mama calls 'real' reality as opposed to the reality shows that are scripted and so completely disconnected to reality.

"I have been very lucky to be living in Toronto. The diversity feeds my passion as the city so totally defines me. Even though I travel a lot, I always want to return to Toronto," says Mama.

"The city feeds my creativity as everybody here has a story to tell. No one is from 'here.' All are from 'somewhere else' and yet we create magic in living together. That itself is a challenge as we are by default forced into seeing different sides of the prism."

This diversity feeds, informs and humbles her.

And it is here that she credits this ease of adaptation to her ethnicity.

"Parsis by nature are like chameleons. It is in our DNA to adapt and we manage to do it with ease almost anywhere we go. We are the perennial outsiders so we have no choice but to reach out.

"And I think that has helped define me as a person, as I have learnt to celebrate, embrace and investigate my own culture."

**Teenaz Javat, is a free lance journalist in Toronto**

## **NATASHA BILIMORIA , EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FRIENDS OF THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST AIDS, MALARIA AND TUBERCULOSIS, PART OF THE OBAMA –BIDEN TRANSITION TEAM**



On September 19, 2008, the Center for Health and Social Policy (CHASP) and the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law (Strauss Center) hosted Natasha Bilimoria, Executive Director of Friends of the Global Fight, who discussed international efforts to halt the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases by 2015. Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, is a non-

profit organization aiming to engage Americans in the prevention of these diseases in the developing world.

AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (TB) together kill six million people annually worldwide.

Bilimoria previously served as senior public policy officer at the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, and spent four years with the Clinton Administration, including the US Department of Treasury.

*Her speech is available on the FEZANA website [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)*

# In The News

## Taraporevala's Little Zizou: World Premieres in New York and Washington DC: November 2008

Little Zizou, a feature film directed by award-winning screenwriter and photographer Sooni Taraporevala, world-premiered on November 9 in New York as the Mahindra Indo-American Arts Council (MIAAC) Film Festival's Closing Night film. The MIAAC Festival is the most significant U.S. South Asian film festival.

This was the directorial debut of Taraporevala, best known for screenplays for *The Namesake*, *Mississippi Masala*, and Oscar-nominated *Salaam Bombay*.

Little Zizou was screened to 150 at the Museum of Arts and Design; and at a red carpet gala to more than 300 at Lincoln Centre's Walter Reade Theater. Introduced by director Mira Nair, screenings concluded with a discussion chaired by Richard Peña, program director of the Film Society of Lincoln Centre. Joining were producer Dinaz Stafford; and actors including Boman Irani, New York-based Zenobia Shroff, Taraporevala's children Jahan and Iyanah Bativala, and her husband Firdaus Bativala.



Photo left, Behram Pastakia, Sooni Taraporevala, Zenobia Taraporevala with her children, Feroze and Dinaz at the Smithsonian premiere)



Gala attendees included, among others, author Salman Rushdie (who grew up in Mumbai, and loves Taraporevala's book), actress Sarita Choudhury, Maximum City author Suketu Mehta, and cookbook author/actress Madhur Jaffrey. Little Zizou was nominated for Best Actress, (Zenobia Shroff); and Best Picture; and won two major awards: Best Director and Best Screenplay.

Little Zizou next premiered in Washington DC, at the annual South Asian Literary and Theater Arts Festival at the Smithsonian Institution. More than 600 packed the Natural History Museum's Baird Auditorium for the film, and for the lively discussion, moderated by Terry Hong, Media Arts Consultant, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program.

Little Zizou has premiered at festivals in Europe, India, and East Asia, earning awards. A March 2009 India theatrical release is planned, followed by other countries.

Report by Tamina Davar

Photo credit Nancy Bhargava.Ph.D

**Read profile of Sooni Taraporevala on Page 119**

# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

## Zarathushti Religion Represented at the Interfaith Choir Festival in Irvine, California



On Sunday November 16, 2008, the Fifth Annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Choir Festival was held in the LSD Chapel in Irvine, California. The theme of this year's event was "Harmony and the Spirit of Cooperation". The festival was rich in music and choral presentations from various religious and cultural organizations. Overall, the event was joyous and magnificently harmonious.

There were short presentations by the representatives of various religious traditions including Sikh, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Judaism and Islam. Ardeshir Anoushiravani, MD represented the Zarathushti religion with the following presentation: (photo above)

I am convinced that if Zarathushtra were amongst us, he would have thoroughly enjoyed all these musical presentations. Zarathushtra invented the word "Grutha-mana", which means "the Abode of Songs". Zarathushtra defined this word as the reward for righteous people, as the worldly heaven for promoters of progress and peace. One can say that we are all spending an evening in "Grutha-mana" the Abode of Songs.

In humble adoration, with hands outstretched, I pray to Thee, O Ahura Mazda!

*Through Thy benevolent spirit, Grant me in this hour of joy, All righteousness of action, all wisdom of the good mind, That I may thereby bring joy to the Soul of Creation. (Gathas, The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra 28.1)*

Zarathushtra not only wants harmony between human beings, but he promotes a unique philosophy of life; that we have to be in harmony with the creator, "Ahura Mazda" to bring joy to "the Soul of Creation". Zarathushtra instructs us that we show our dedication to our creator by living a "Good Life", by enhancing our knowledge and wisdom, by making the right choices, by following the path of Asha, by practicing Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. He first and foremost, requests us to be in harmony with Ahura Mazda's divine order and live harmoniously with our universal environment. Zarathushtra does not try to inculcate us with the message of God, but he wants to teach us the language of God so that we all can get God's message for ourselves.

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# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## ZARATHUSHTIS TO DISCUSS ANCIENT CONCEPTS OF EQUALITY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

*Religions Working for Peace and Justice*



**LOS ANGELES**, December 22nd 2008 – The concept of equality is central to the ancient Zoroastrian faith. The Gathas of Zarathushtra emphasize that good thinking and individual choices made through the use of the good mind, *Vohu Mana*, is what uplifts human kind – not our gender or ethnicity. This ancient, timeless concept led to the declaration of the first human rights charter in history proclaimed by Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenian, of Iran. These ideas will be shared by members of the community in the United Nations at the

### 53rd Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

**The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men,  
Including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS**

**New York City, March 2nd - 13th, 2009**

The delegation includes Mantreh Atashband (Toronto, Canada), Anahita Dua (Aberdeen, Scotland), Homi D. Gandhi (Glen Rock, New Jersey), Kamalrukh Katrak (Branford, Connecticut), Farah Minwalla (Las Vegas, Nevada), Afreed Mistry (Toronto, Canada), Deena Patel (New York, New York), and Trity Pourbahrami (Pasadena, California). They have come together with a common vision, becoming standard bearers for Zoroastrian ethics, reaffirming their ancient beliefs and celebrating current successes. One such success story is how Zoroastrians are working globally, to model the equal sharing of responsibilities in care giving for people living with HIV and AIDS.

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Phone: 301-493-9131



### *Faith Group Leaders' Observance of the 60th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights:*

December 10th marked the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). In recognition of this 60th anniversary year, the IFC co-sponsored a Faith Leaders' Public Observance of the UNDHR held on Tuesday, December 2nd, 6:30 PM at the Soka Gakkai International Center in Washington DC. Kersi spoke on the Zoroastrian view of human rights based on a text provided by Dr. Jehan Bagli, to which he included his own remarks.

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## HOMEER F. SHROFF REPRESENTS THE ZARATHUSHTI FAITH AT TUCSON, ARIZONA , INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Tucson, Arizona held its Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on November 25, 2008 which was sponsored by the Inter-Religious Council of Southern Arizona and the Tucson Multi-Faith Alliance. Dr. Homeer F. Shroff, Esq., represented the Zoroastrian Faith. Other faiths represented in the service included Hindu, Jewish, Islamic and various Christian faiths. Homeer spoke on "Having Faith" and "Giving Thanks." These topics are appropriate given the times we live in. With respect to faith, Homeer emphasized how important it is, especially in today's difficult times, for us to have faith in ourselves, in our fellow persons and in God. Homeer went on to say that having faith is the one constant in our life, while everything else, from the day we are born until we die, is either fleeting or temporary. Homeer added that people come and go in our lives, material things wither and age with time, even time itself is forever fleeting, but having faith, may it be in ourselves, our fellow persons or in God always remains with us, if we allow it to. Homeer also emphasized that in difficult times, it is sometimes human nature to simply stand back and blame something or someone else for our problems. It is also human nature, in difficult times, for one to wait and hope for someone else to fix the problem. But, that is not the answer. It is in difficult times, that it becomes



more important than ever for us to hold on to our faith in God, humanity and ourselves. And, in holding on to that faith, it is equally important for us to evaluate our priorities, examine our past, recognize our mistakes and continuously strive to improve ourselves. He ended his talk with a Thanksgiving poem which appears below.

### I GIVE THANKS

I give thanks each day that I am healthy,  
I give thanks each day that my family and friends are healthy,  
I give thanks each day that there is no tragedy, man made or natural,  
I give thanks each day that there is food, shelter and life,  
I give thanks each day that all is well with the world;

I give thanks each day that I am sick that I can get treated,  
I give thanks each day that my family and friends are sick, that they can get treated,  
I give thanks each day that when there is tragedy, man made or natural, that there are survivors and that there is treatment and care,  
I give thanks each day that there will be food, shelter and life when the worst is over,  
I give thanks each day that all will be well in this world;

Finally, I give thanks each day that when someone passes on, that I have been fortunate to have known them;

And, I give thanks each day that with my unshaken faith, all has been, is and will be, well in this world, our life!

### TRADITIONAL PARSİ SNACKS

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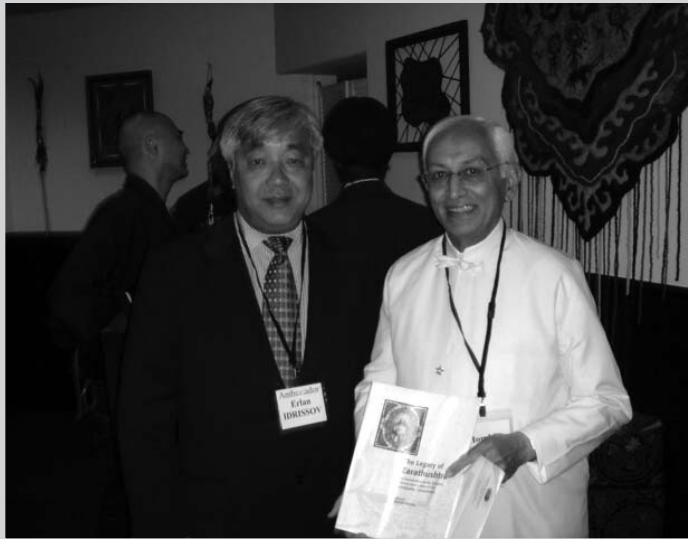
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# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## **Homi Gandhi invited to the dinner and Interfaith dialogue hosted by the Ambassador of Kazakhstan His Excellency Erlan Idrissov**

At a dinner and interfaith dialogue hosted by Kazakhstan Ambassador, His Excellency Erlan Idrissov, at Kazakhstan Embassy in Washington DC on December 11, 2008, Homi Gandhi, Co-Chair, FEZANA Interfaith Committee, presented 2 books "The Legacy Of Zarathushtra", published by FEZANA, and "The Good Life-An Introduction to the Religion of Zarathushtra" published by ZAGNY. This photograph displays the presentation of these books.



During the discussions, many expressed concerns about a bill passed by the Kazakh parliament which seemed, would restrict religious freedom in Kazakhstan. The bill was, at the time of the dinner, on President Nasarbayev's desk. He had two options: to sign the bill or to send it to the Constitutional Council for their review of its consistency with the Kazakh constitution and with international law. These concerns were subsequently followed up with Ambassador Idrissov, urging him to communicate the concerns of religious leaders in the US regarding the President signing this bill.

It has been learnt recently from the Kazakh Embassy that the President did not sign the bill, but referred it to the Constitutional Council. This demonstrates openness to genuine dialogue and a commitment to inter religious cooperation.

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# R

## USSI GHADIALI, PRESIDENT OF PARSI ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH EAST ASIA, SINGAPORE, HEADS THE INTER-RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, (IRO) SINGAPORE



On January 12th 2009, at the Raffles Town Club, Mr Wong Kan Seng, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs launched the 60th anniversary celebrations and unveiling of the IRO stamp. Photo on left shows Russi Ghadiali, President of IRO displaying the anniversary logo and the replica of the stamps. Speaking on the occasion Mr Wong said that when people think of the IRO they associate it with ethnic harmony that has prevailed in Singapore for many years.

This multi religious body was launched in March 1949 with Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Christian religions affirming their commitment to inter-faith endeavors. The Zarathushti members joined in 1961, the Taoist and Baha'I in 1996 and the Jains in 2005. Today the IRO comprises of 10 faith community members. (photo above) The IRO and its members who are leaders in their respective communities set a bold and powerful example for others to follow in inter-faith dialogue and mutual understanding. This is crucial as the real casualty of terrorism and extremism is the erosion of trust and cohesion between religious communities within the society. Mr Wong

concluded by saying that he "wished to put on record the Government's appreciation of the contribution of IRO and its members over many years and it has preserved and enhanced ethnic harmony which Singapore has come to showcase as one of its most valuable and precious feature". The official launch was attended by the members of the parsi community of Singapore



The 10 faith communities and the Tourism board had endorsed Singapore's bid to host the 2013 World Zoroastrian Congress.



*From left Ervad Percy Khambatta, Mrs Khambatta, Armin Dotivala, President Russi Ghadiali, Shirin Ghadiali, Neville Dotivala, Dolly Dastoor*



## HAVAN GAH

### **Ervad Brigadier Behram M. Panhaki**

(part 2 of 5)

*The discussion of Gah represents the Contemplation Session, of the NAMC, AGM held at Zoroastrian Religious and Cultural Center at 1187 Burnhamthorpe Rd., Oakville, Ontario, Canada on May 24/25 2008.*

I studied the writings of a few luminaries for this presentation: *Dastur Khurshed Shapoorji Daboo, Dastur Nowroze Minochehr Homji, Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, Tehmurasp Sethna and James Darmesteter*. The last three have made translation of the Gah verbatim and there is a commonality amongst their work. Dastur Minochehr Homji gives philosophical interpretation and Dastur Daboo takes a very different approach in that he follows scholar Sohrab Balsara who in the translation of *Nirangeestan* has made a comparison of gahs with five stages of evolution of a soul in attainment of a spiritual life.

Daboo quotes three words from the Gathas: *Ushao, Arem Pithva and Kshapa*. This is a reference to *Ushtavad Gatha - Line 4, Paragraph 5 of Yasna Ha 44*: "*Ke ya ushao arem-pithwa khashapacha*". According to him there is mention of only three Gahs in the Gathas – *Ushao=Bamdad, Arem Pithva= noon; middle of the day and Kshapa=night*. He translates the line as "Who except you will bring the different changes in the day - Sparkling dawn, hot mid day and dark night?" Does that mean that the other two Gahs i.e. Havan and Ujiran were added later? He attributes this explanation to the poetic composition of the Gathas in which the other portions of the day i.e. the morning and evening are left out.

Dastur Daboo asserts that names like *Havan and Ushahin* have not been primarily selected to identify different times of the day but indicate progressive stages of soul's journey for attainment of final spirituality; *Havan Gah* being the second stage of the soul in its journey toward excellence. He explains that during this stage the soul fights to conquer, defeat, and surmount personal traits, feelings, vices like greed, lust, anger, revenge, pride, hatred. He concludes that at the end of this stage the soul would overcome selfishness, put aside personal motives and would start thinking about the well being of others i.e. the world.

Dastur Minochehr-Homji also considers Havan as the spiritual stage, i.e. second of the five stages of the soul, in its evolutionary journey towards perfection. This explanation sounds logical as we see in the main

core of this prayer i.e. Paragraph 5 of Havan Geh: *Havanim ashavanem ashahe ratum yazamaide; Haurvatatem ashavanem ashahe ratum yazamaide; Ameretatem ashavanem ashahe ratum yazamaide*; We praise Havan, followed by Haurvatat, the ideal concept of Mazda's perfection i.e. universality and ending with Ameretat the ideal concept of Ahura's eternity i.e. immortality.

Where as Daboo and Minochehr-Homji consider *Ushahin* as the first stage of soul's journey to salvation *Ervad Marzban Hathiram* considers *Ushahin* as the last stage of salvation and Havan as the first stage. Hathiram interprets that in man's haste to commence his cosmic journey, full of enthusiasm, he makes mistakes and often takes the wrong path. *Saavanghi* collects the good and bad deeds for future use. *Visya* is the compassionate, the merciful who through love guides man away from evil, giving gentle lessons on the way.

Dastur Minochehr-Homji interprets Havan as a development stage of the soul. He considers *Saavanghi Visya*, the enlightened advancement of the soul as the associate accompaniment of Havan and reveres the prayer expounding the precious sublimity of the mind that apprehends truth. May this prayer afford moral courage to the devotee; give him triumph over the forces of darkness; render him averse to malice and hatred, help him cross over life's obstacles and hurdles. He ends by stating that besides the gospels of the five Gathas, this prayer is excellent, and redeems the soul.

The prayer that is praised refers to the sentence: "*Airyamanem ishim ashavanem ashahe ratum yazamaide*".

Kanga relates to *Airyamana as Yasna Ha 54, called "A Airyema Ishyo"*. You may recall that only half the portion of this Ha is recited as a benediction during the *Ashirwad* ceremony. He explains that *Airyamana* is the name of the yazata, too: powerful, victorious, keeping away from hatred; overcoming and removing all afflictions. He is the angel presiding over peace, happiness and comradeship, and is the yazata giving ease and comfort by driving away the false notions from the mind regarding magic and witchcraft.

Thus we see that during this stage in order to progress further and higher the soul is struggling to overcome personal traits that have disparaging effect. In this fight it is helped by "*A Airyema Ishyo*" prayer that has calming effect and brings constructive attributes.

In the last paragraph of the Geh we recite "*Mithrem vouru-gaoyaoitim hazangra-gaoshem,*



*baevare-chashmanem, aokhtonamanem yazatem yazamaide*". Kanga praises Meher Yazata of wide pastures whose power of hearing are as sharp as or equal to thousand ears and whose power of vision is as powerful as ten thousand eyes. Minochehr-Homji views Mithra as the universal, cementing bond of law-light-love and just dealings with men, Ahuras's power that is man's vigilance, of widespread fame for its noble aim and instruction, offering unalloyed joy to its selfless devotees.

### Second (Biji) Havan

**Dasa avathra mânghô zayana dva hâmina**

**Taêca heñti sareta âpô sareta zemô sareta urvarayâ**

**Adha zimahe maidhim adha zimahe zaredhaêm**

**Adha zyâscit pairi-pataiti adha fraêshthem  
vôikhnanâm.**

### (Para 4, Fargarad 1 of Vendidad)

*Tehmurasp Sethna* translates this as that in the Aryana country for ten months is winter, two of the warmest seasons of the year (in another version of the Venidad it is stated, there are seven months of summer and five of winter. See also *Bund. XXV.7*). That water is cold, land is cold, trees cold, here in the middle of winter, here in the heart of winter, here during the cold of winter snow falls round about, and here there is most distress.

For the five months from *Mah Avan, Roz Hormuzd up to Vahishtoish Gatha*, the hours of *Rapithvin Geh* are considered as Second Havan. For the remaining seven months i.e. from *Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd, to Mah Meher, Roz Aneran*, all five gehs are accounted and recited. As per *Ervad Kanga*, the reason is during these five months, according to original calculation, of winter, hours during the day-time are shorter than those of summer months. Moreover during winter there is less heat during noon time. The *Rapithvin Geh* pertaining to summer season therefore is discarded. In the Persian Rivayat it is figuratively written that heat during these winter days is buried underneath the earth.

*(The words Geh and Gah are used interchangeably)*

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**Brigadier Behram Panthaki** was born in India in 1942 and graduated from Poona University, in Physics and Mathematics. He received his religious education and became a navar and later a martab from M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, Bombay, under the guidance of High Priest Dastur Firoze Meherji Kotwal. In the army he served with the 2nd battalion of the 8th Gorkha Regiment and was the ADC (Aide-de-Camp) to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. He served on the Indo-China and Indo-Pakistan borders, had three postings in Jammu & Kashmir and was on the faculty of the College of Combat, Mhow and the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. He holds 12 military honors and retired in 1994 after 30 years of outstanding service to join his family in USA.

Behram is one of the very few practicing priests from Bel Air, Maryland in the north to Richmond, Virginia in the south. He participates in the children's religious education class once a month, and also holds adult religious discussion groups simultaneously with the children's classes. He is often invited to speak at the University of Maryland, George Washington and George Mason Universities, and at churches, area schools and support groups. He is the Zoroastrian Faith leader of the Washington chapter of the Inter Faith Conference. At present he is the Director for Human Resources at The Kingsbury Center, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC







## North America Has Two New Ervads

**Rustum Chhor**, son of Khushru and Aban Chhor, brother of Tanaz and Behroz, grandson of Sorab and Nergish Chhor, nephew of Jeroo and Darius Captain (San Francisco, CA) completed two Barashnums (nine nights retreat) and had his Navar ceremony at Vatcha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai. The ceremony was performed by Mumbai's well known Dasturji Aspandiarji Dadachanji on December 24, 2008.



**Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (ZANT) has their first Texas born and trained Zarathushti priest**

**Burzin P. Balsara**, 9, son of Pearl and Poras T. Balsara became an ordained Zarathushti priest on Dec. 25, 2008. He completed the two Bareshnums and the subsequent Navar ceremony at the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary in Mumbai, India. Ervad Burzin is eager to join his dad and other priests in serving the ZANT community.

*FEZANA JOURNAL congratulates Rustum and Burzin on this major achievement and wish them much success as they begin to serve the Zarathushti community.*



# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING.....

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# YOUTHFULLY SPEAKING.....

ANSWER KEY on bottom of page 104

## HAFT- SEEN MATCH THE FOLLOWING.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1 SENJED  | a Hyacinth- One of the first flowers in spring.                              |
| 2 SAMANU  | b Apple –Representing Good Health  |
| 3 SONBOL  | c Red berries – Representing sunrise and the conquest of light over darkness |
| 4 SEER    | d Milk Representing the animal world   |
| 5 SEEB    | e Fruit of the Lotus Tree –rep Love  |
| 6 SABZEH  | f Garlic for health and vitality.  |
| 7 SUMAC   | g coins for wealth.  |
| 8 SHIR    | h Mirror to reflect the past.  |
| 9 SHEESHA | i Green sprouts for new life   |
| 10 SEKEH  | j sweet pudding made from germinating wheat.                                 |

From all of us in the Washington, DC area,  
Here's wishing our Zarathushti friends around the U.S.  
and the world

A Very Happy Norooz,  
and warmest wishes for a peaceful, Happy New Year!



# ZAMWI

**Zoroastrian Association  
of Metropolitan Washington**





# Personal Profiles

## Tireless Campaigner And Titanic Achiever – Interfaith & Human Rights



On January 1, 2009, after 10 years as the *European President of Religions for Peace*– the largest global coalition of religious communities cooperating for peace. Europe's most highly recognised Zarathushti can now savour his retirement and his promotion to *President Emeritus*. He recently celebrated his 70th Birthday and on 26th November 2008, the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe conferred its highest honour by electing him an Honorary Life Member. Retirement will give Jehangir and his beloved wife Irma a little more time together and enable him to devote more to the *Eruch & Roshan Sadri Foundation*. (ERSF, a large charitable trust set up by his family to administer the Estate of his late sister Roshan) On January 28th Jehangir and Irma left for India on a whirlwind tour to inspect projects of the ERSF and to meet prospective recipients of further funding.

Jehangir has been involved in Interfaith Activity since 1970. In 1990, after a great deal of persuasion, he managed to get the Zarathushti Deen (faith) into membership of the Interfaith Network of the UK. For 16 years Jehangir was the official representative of the Zarathushti community on all recognised UK bodies. His tenacity, his determination and his own enormous profile culminated in 2000 at the Millennium celebrations when the Zarathushti faith was recognized as one of the nine major faiths in the UK. Recognition in Europe soon followed. There is no doubt that Jehangir has enjoyed a profile particularly in Europe, which has been at times more widely recognised than that of his beloved Zarathushti Faith. His organisational work has opened doors for other Zarathushti representatives to enter. It can be said that Jehangir devoted a big chunk of his professional life to promoting Interfaith Understanding, Harmony and Human Rights.

*Dr William Vendley, the Secretary General of Religions for Peace, based at its HQ at 777 United Nations Plaza in New York says “Jehangir’s dedication to the God-given dignity of each person is rooted in his Zoroastrian faith. It is a faith he expresses with simplicity, appealing modesty and committed action. Jehangir has laboured with brilliance to help build peace and justice through multi-religious cooperation.”*

*Brian Pearce, the founder director of the Interfaith Network of the UK, from 1987 to 2007, pays tribute: “In his farsightedness, Jehangir became involved in interfaith work at an early stage, when it was still regarded as a somewhat marginal activity and before its crucial importance was recognised as it is today by all faith communities.”*

Asked what he considered his most endearing legacy and his most prominent achievements, Jehangir says “Facilitating the building of

- National Inter Religious Councils in different countries,
- The European Women of Faith Network
- European Interfaith Youth Networks and
- The European Council of Religious Leaders

And then bringing all these aspects into one European Body working together at international, national and local levels completed what my wish was to see *All moving Forward Together*”.

### What were the challenges that he faced and enjoyed tackling ?

Says Jehangir “the challenges that pleased me most were

1. When I invited six prominent religious leaders of different faiths, they all came to a meeting and we inaugurated the *European Council of Religious Leaders, ECRL*, a body now fully recognised by the European Union, Council of Europe and The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe ( OSCE ) and many national governments in Europe. Zarathushtis now have a seat on this body as one of the nine traditional religions of the world.
2. Building an *Inter-Religious Council in Ireland*. A council that transcends national / political boundaries (Northern Ireland / Eire ) and to have two very distrusting / uncompromising, even warring communities to agree on a common constitution.”

*Bishop Emeritus Gunnar Stalsett, an acknowledged leader of the ECRL, who served on the Norwegian*

# Personal Profiles

Nobel Peace Prize Committee for 15 years, worked with Jehangir over many years and says

*"Jehangir Sarosh has been a genuine interpreter of Zoroastrian spirituality. He is a devout defender of the dignity of every human being and a champion of religious freedom and other fundamental human rights. His voice carries weight and his tireless efforts as a bridge builder are widely respected"*

Jehangir Sarosh was born in Indore, India in 1938 and came to England in 1952. His parents had embarked on a unique odyssey with their children to move to the UK and they travelled first by boat to Iran and then drove in their 14 year old Ford convertible through Iran, West Asia and Europe, arriving in London, December 1952. As a result of this move, Jehangir's education was disrupted and he undertook a series of jobs to keep the family pot boiling. He did a stint in the Royal Air Force and after a brief career in civilian work he embarked into business. Of those difficult days he now says

*"My travels by car from India to London and then again from London to the Southern tip of India, my being forced to join the military at an early age of 14 years, living in an alien environment, with boys of totally different culture and a harsh military regime offered me a perspective of life very few are privileged to have received. Although unbearable at the time, it was the best education I received in human weaknesses and strengths and our universal needs"*

*"Perhaps that is why when I was successful in business I did my best to share that success with my siblings and brothers-in-law, and managed to give each of them an established business upon which they built their own fortunes"*

*"Marrying outside the faith, not only kept me separated from our community, but also created a distance between some of my brothers and sisters and myself. So I suppose I have always been a bit of a loner and have worked for the family but not so much with the family".*

**How did Jehangir get into the Interfaith movement and what sparked his interest in religion ?**

*"I have had from an early age interest in philosophy and through that into religion. I had no interest in Interfaith itself, but was more interested in learning the philosophy of the different religions, and reflecting back on that time, I suppose I was guru hunting."*

His lack of formal education has meant that he is largely self-taught and treasures his reading.

*" Having read Plato, Aristotle, Gurdjieff, Aurobindo, Krishnamurti and other teachers, Irma and I used to love going to retreats where there were profound teachers such as Dr Jean Kline, Frederick Lionel, Swami*

## *The Roshan Sadri Charitable Foundation*



The charitable foundation established with the legacy of Roshan Sadri (nee Sarosh) has a specific remit to assist the Zoroastrian Community.

The trustees are focusing on projects that help the community rather than an individual, i.e. they are hesitant to fund individual education or medical needs. For example the trustees are more likely to support a school project, and not an individual through school or college, similarly a hospital project rather than meet the cost of a medical operation of an individual..

Your application has a better chance of succeeding if the project is for the welfare of the community.

Do not hesitate to contact the administrator to seek his help, before applying.

Please visit <http://www.ersf.org.uk/> study the projects they have supported, and make applications,

*Jehangir Sarosh  
jangosarosh@yahoo.co.uk  
Labels: grants available*

# Personal Profiles

Bhaviananda and others. They had a great influence in my search for that eternal question – who am I”?

“When I got involved in the World Conference of Religions for Peace, and learnt that it was where different faiths worked together for common good, rather than academic or theological discussion, I really got interested and committed to this work ”

**Does interfaith and human rights campaigning go hand in hand ?**

“ Interfaith challenges religions: religions challenge human rights by offering the concept of Dharma ( duty / responsibility ) and Human Rights challenge religious traditions – for example equality for women, freedom to practise one’s religion, the aspect of caste and class systems and rights to education etc ”

“Interfaith cooperation is a necessary and natural evolution in the world of religions. A realisation by each religion that Freshokeriti : the kingdom of heaven on earth, cannot be brought about by any one religion alone ”

**Do you feel we Zarathushtis care enough or do enough about Human Rights ?**

“It is not enough just campaigning for Human Rights, we have to ensure people are given access to take advantage of those rights. For example, Right to Education is useless without schools and access to those schools. Zarathushtis, through their charities and charitable works have enabled the poor and marginalised to claim their human rights. So Yes, as individuals, Zarathushtis do make a good contribution. As a community I think we need to look again. Our religious philosophy has so much to offer yet we do not wish to share the philosophy and teachings of Zarathushtra. Our attitude reminds me of that beautiful Japanese proverb:

**Catch a butterfly,  
Hold it and watch it die;  
Or let go and watch it fly.”**

**Does Jehangir have in mind a political leader who most embodied his ideals?**

“It has to be Mahatma Gandhi for his Ahimsa and love for the poor and oppressed”

**Any favourite personality from Human Rights or Interfaith ?**

“I have been fortunate enough to meet so many wonderful people, especially women and young dedicated individuals; impossible to choose one. Each had his/her own beauty. Ofcourse I have also met some truly bigoted so-called religious leaders”

**Do you frequently read scriptures of other religions? Any that has left a deep mark?**

Says Jehangir “I am convinced that through reading other philosophies and scriptures, especially the Buddhist and Hindu scriptures, I have developed a greater love and respect for Zarathushtra’s teachings. The writings of Sufi masters have probably had the deepest impact on me”

**What is your favourite reading? “ Anything that helps me understand What is life all about ”**

**A favourite film?** “ Lawrence of Arabia and Dr Zhivago ”

His modesty and self deprecatory nature can be seen from his answer to my question – **Amongst all the faith practitioners in the UK that I have met, you are perhaps the least controversial and most liked – Why ?**

“I did not know that was the case !”

Brian Pearce, who gave up a highly successful 25 year career in the UK civil service to establish and run the Interfaith Network, says of Jehangir “ *A major factor in the success of his interfaith work has been his deep respect for other people and his desire to understand their fundamental commitments and concerns together with his own open and engaging personality and his constant and infectious good humour ”*

Jehangir has admirers in all faiths and regions. Dr Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia praises Jehangir in the following words “*not many people are devoted to religious dialogue like Jehangir Sarosh. His Zoroastrian faith does not prevent him to be in the forefront of the promotion of worldwide mutual understanding among all religions and cultures. I highly value my friendship with Jehangir. His work to promote Human Rights and to foster understanding and harmony are remarkable.*”

Dr William Vendley says “ *A consummate team player, he has demonstrated again and again that leadership consists in service and the empowerment of others. His intelligence, empathy for others and selfless commitments to the common good have brought forth tangible fruits in recognition and peace-building. His labours have extended the path of principled cooperation that the world’s religious communities now learn to tread. Happily, Jehangir’s joyous spirit is wonderfully contagious. He invites all who work with him to taste the peace we are offered here and now.*”

I first met Jehangir in 1993 and have been a big admirer of this indefatigable campaigner. Over the years, we have worked closely as I became President of the ZTFE and he guided me to involve the Association and our community in Interfaith work. It was enlightened self interest, for Zarathushtis to participate in Interfaith work and so raise the profile of our small but significant community. Jehangir says the Millennium celebrations of 2000 were a watershed and when the community finally



# Personal Profiles

embraced and acknowledged the importance of Interfaith networking. In many ways, I (Dorab) have considered Jehangir my Interfaith Guru.

**Finally I asked him about his reflections on the teachings of Zarathushtra** – the faith that he has almost single-handedly placed in the public arena and has got recognised as a major traditional religion in the UK and now in Europe. He says with emotion

**“ The beauty of Zarathushtra’s teachings is and always has been that the traditionalist, the reformer, the liberal and the orthodox can live together for He, Zarathushtra, made it clear in his Yasna 30.2 that we did not have to obey Him but had to decide according to our present day context. No other Prophet, to my knowledge, has given his followers that freedom and responsibility. In our post modern scientific age, it is vital we share this teaching for they are not dogmas but reasonable (in every sense of the word) guidance. Faith and reason is the marriage of religion and science.”**

Jehangir is the Chairman of a successful Import-Export business which has offices in the UK, India and USA. His two sons now manage the business and he is very pleased he has been able to take a back seat from business.

**What next for this tireless and intrepid campaigner ?** His work for the ERSF will take more of his time and he will strive with his colleague trustees to expand its operations. He also says “ If I had funding, I would love to travel and meet the young and the old of our community. To help them see beyond the narrow traditionalist, reformist, liberal or orthodox views to the whole and reasonable religion of Zarathushtra, not as a teacher but in dialogue and discussion groups where we could share and learn from each other.

”

*In an exclusive interview with Dorab Mistry*

**Dorab Mistry** was President of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe 1997 to 2005 and was Chair of the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress in London in 2005. He has succeeded Jehangir Sarosh in some of Jehangir’s earlier UK responsibilities. Dorab is a director of Godrej International Ltd in London.



## *\$500,000 Needed For A Zoroastrian Centre For Kentucky, Ohio And Indiana (Zakoi)*



For the past 3 years ZAKOI has been working hard at raising funds to build a modest Zoroastrian Center for our growing community here. We need to raise about \$500,000 to make this happen.

Our current fundraiser is a raffle of a beautiful new Gara set (Vago) donated to ZAKOI by one of our members. Tickets are \$10 and for every 5 tickets sold, the 6th is free.

The drawing is in August 2009.

You can view the beautiful Gara, on <http://www.zakoi.org/live/zakoicenter.html>

To purchase the tickets, please contact Armin Daroona at [adaroona@gmail.com](mailto:adaroona@gmail.com). Mail your checks payable to "ZAKOI Center Fund" to: Armin Daroona, 5139 Claridge Dr, New Albany, OH 43054, U.S.A. You raffle tickets will be mailed to you. Donations are also requested for our Zoroastrian Center Fund. Please mail your checks to Bakhtavar Desai, 6383 Jamesfield Court, Fairfield, OH 45014, USA.

Your donations to ZAKOI Center Fund are tax-deductible,

Raffle tickets are not tax-deductible.

Assistance of the North American community with tax-deductible donations to the "ZAKOI Centre Fund" or with purchase of raffle tickets for the Gara will be greatly appreciated

Thank-you and all the best to you from our community!

Bakhtavar Desai, President

Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana (ZAKOI)

## 19. Zarathushtra

A long time ago in a small town called Rae there lived a young couple, who were expecting a child. The young mother-to-be, Doghdhova, was having strange and frightening dreams. She woke up one night in terror, screaming. Her husband, Pourushaspa, woke up and comforted her. "I am so scared," she cried.

A few days later, Doghdhova had a very bad dream again. A dark mist covered her home and scary creatures seemed to be coming towards her. She moved about in her sleep as if she was defending herself. Pourushaspa tried to wake her up but Doghdhova was in a deep sleep and did not hear him. Then suddenly, she calmed down. She heard a voice within her say "I am of the Lord and He is my Savior." Suddenly, in her dream, a beautiful flaming angel came forward with a book in one hand and a wand in the other. He waved the wand and the mist lifted. He threw the book at the scary creatures and they scattered! Slowly, the angel soothed Doghdhova. "The Lord looks after His own, and your son will be one with Divine Grace. He will become the Prophet Zarathushtra and bring peace and happiness to the land" the angel told her. Doghdhova smiled in her sleep and had a restful night.

The next day, she gave birth to a son. He was a beautiful baby and he smiled when he was born. His parents named him *Spitaman Zarathushtra*, which means He of the Golden Light.

At that time, Darasarum was the chiefton of the town of Rae. He was told of Zarathushtra's birth and he began an evil campaign to get rid of the little baby. His henchmen stole Zarathushtra from his home and put him in the path of stampeding cattle. But an angel softly whispered to a cow nearby and she stood firmly over the little one and saved his life.

Another time, Darasarum put Zarathushtra in the den of a hungry wolf, but instead of eating him, the wolf cuddled up next to the baby and went to sleep. Then, Darasarum threw Zarathushtra on a huge bonfire. But the fire turned into a bed of roses and Zarathushtra was found sleeping soundly upon it. Finally, Darasarum tried to stab Zarathushtra, but his fingers became stiff and the dagger fell from his hands. He could never use his arms ever again.

At the age of 15, Zarathushtra left his home and wandered into the wilderness and up to the heights of the mighty Mount Elbruz. There, he spent 10 years in prayer and contemplation.



Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi lives in Marina Del Rey, CA. She writes as a hobby



- 1 Sunday Stories is usually excerpted from a translation of the Shahnameh by Dick Davis. However, in the second volume of this translation, Davis references, but does not tell, the story of Zarathushtra. Since this story is significant in the Zarathushti community, I have used ...In Search of My God, which was published in 1978 by The Lost Generation Publication, A division of The Zoroastrian Foundation, Los Angeles, California, as a source instead of the Davis translation.
- 2 Gatha Ahunavaiti Yasna 46, as quoted on page 26 of ...In Search of My God.

During this time, Angra Mainyu, the creator of all evil, offered to make Zarathushtra the King of the entire world, if only he would forsake the Lord Ahura Mazda. But Zarathushtra refused. The Angra Mainyu threatened to bring great harm to Zarathushtra if he did not renounce his faith, but Zarathushtra simply prayed and continued to believe in Ahura Mazda.

Then one day as Zarathushtra prayed before a fire, he had a vision of Ahura Mazda. And the Wise Lord said to him, "*You are now ready Zarathushtra. Go forth into the world and drive out all evil. Bring realization to the people that there is only one true and Supreme Being. Teach them how to lead a good life.*"

Zarathushtra left Mount Elbruz with his kinsmen. He took the message of Ahura Mazda to a lot of towns and villages. He wandered far and wide but no one was interested in what he had to say. His friends laughed at him. His enemies tried to hurt him. Sometimes, Kings would imprison him for his teachings.

So Zarathushtra cried in despair to Ahura Mazda:  
To what land shall I turn, whither shall I go,  
Forsaken by kinsmen and nobles, am I;

Neither do my people like me,  
Nor do the wicked rulers of the land.

How then, shall I please Thee,  
Ahura Mazda?

A few days later as Zarathushtra continued to preach, he found his first convert: his cousin, *Maidhyomah*. They set out together to find other people with open minds who would listen to Zarathushtra and think about what he had to say.

**Next time: Zarathushtra arrives at the Court of King Vishtaspa of Bactria.**

## BIRTHS

**Joshua Simon Liam Jones**, a boy, to Farzeen Italia and Simon Jones, grandson to Asish Italia and Merle Jones in Toronto, ONT on September 17, 2008.

**Hvovi Rustam Irani**, a girl, to Jennifer and Rustam Irani, sister to Meher, granddaughter to Homai and Pourus Khajautia (Tampa, FL) and Amy and Gustad Irani (Boca Raton, FL) in Tampa, FL on October 2, 2008. (photo below)



**Mina Sharon Frederking**, a girl, to Roxana and Chris Frederking, granddaughter to Katy and Noshir Daruwala (Chicago, IL) and Sharon and Jon Frederking on October 25, 2008.

**Parinaz Dastur**, a daughter to Delnavaz and Behzad of Fremont, CA, granddaughter to Byram and Arnava Mistry of Toronto, ONT. and to Rusi and Sanobar Dastur of Ahmedabad, India, a niece to Afreed Mistry on October 25, 2008.

**Khishi and Jehan Khambatta**, twins, to Yasmin and Arees Khambatta, grandchildren to Shahariar and Arnava Khambatta (Manchester, UK) and Freny and late Nozer Soganporia (Mumbai, India) in Mississauga, ONT on November 5, 2008.

**Rayan Rustom Bhathena**, a boy, to Parivash and Rustom, brother to Naomi, grandson to Katy and Kersi Bhathena (Chicago, IL) and Banoo and Homi Golwala (Toronto, ONT) in Milwaukee, WI on November 8, 2008.

**Nishaan Jokhi Singh**, a boy, to Monaz and Jay Singh, grandson to Gool and Fakir Jokhi (Mumbai, India) and to Gurbir and

Bhupindarlal Singh (San Francisco, CA) in San Bruno, CA on November 11, 2008.

**Vivaan**, a boy to Sharmeen and Freddy Pithavala, grandson to Zarine (WZCC corp. secretary) and Kersi Commissariat, and Roshan & Jangoo Pithavala, nephew to Shazneen Porus Buharivala of TX, in Mumbai on November 15, 2008

**Indira Sabir**, a girl, to Sonia Sabir and David Barton, granddaughter to Khurshid Sabir in Markham, ONT on November 16, 2008.

**Darian Pavri**, a boy, to Anahita Deboo and Cavas Pavri, brother to Ariana, grandson to Yasmin and Shapur Pavri (Houston, TX) and Gulistan and Farrokh Deboo (New Canaan, CT) on November 19, 2008.

**Nadia Bharucha**, a girl, to Serena and Kaiwan Bharucha, sister to Darian, granddaughter to Roshan and Khurshid Bharucha (Quetta, Pakistan) and Farida and Cyrus Vania (Karachi, Pakistan) on November 20, 2008.

**Darayus and Darya Pithawala**, twins to Hutoxi and Jamshed Pithawala, brother and sister to Aban and Jasmyne, grandchildren to Mehroo Pithawala and Dinshaw and Ketty Batliwala (Orleans, ONT) in Toronto, ONT on December 4, 2008.

**Ashton Sorabji**, a boy, to Delna and Zahin Sorabji, brother to Aiden, grandson to Roshan and Jimmy Ghadialli (Montreal, QUE) and Parvein and Parvez Sorabji (Toronto, ONT), great grandson to Sheroo Mistry (Toronto, ONT) in Calgary, Alberta on December 6, 2008. (photo below)



## NAVJOTES

**Farokh Confectioner**, son of Darayus and Kolly Confectioner in Newark, CA on November 8, 2008.

**Jehan Wadia**, son of Keki and Jasmine Wadia (Mississauga, ONT) in Mumbai, India on November 8, 2008.

**Sanaaya Lakdawala**, daughter of Porus and Roshan Lakdawala (Gilroy, CA), granddaughter of Armaity and Noshir Watchha at the Dar-e-Mehr in San Jose, CA on November 16, 2008.

**Mehrin Patel**, daughter of Dilshad and Neville Patel (Folsom, CA) in Karachi, Pakistan on December 12, 2008.

**Anosh Dumasia**, son of Binaifer and Malcolm Dumasia (Fremont, CA) in Nasik, India on December 17, 2008.

**Karl, Neville, and Sam Hiramaneck**, sons of Kamal and Adil Hiramaneck (San Jose, CA) in Mumbai, India on December 24, 2008.

**Yazad and Yasna Mistry**, children of Nauzer and Armin Mistry (Mississauga, ONT) in Mumbai, India on December 25, 2008.

**Jehan and Zane Dastoor**, sons of Ervad Zubin and Jasmine Dastoor (previously of Alexandria, VA), grandsons of Dolly and Phiroz Dastoor and Katy and Late Fali Cooper (Mumbai), in Singapore, January 3, 2008 (photo below). Ervad Zubin Dastoor and Ervad Nozer Kotwal (Toronto, ONT) performed the ceremony.





## WEDDINGS

**Lillian Bharucha**, daughter of Adil and Veera Bharucha (Houston, TX) to Cyrus Irani, son of Behram and Farieda Irani (Plano, Texas). The wedding was performed by Dasturji Firoze Kotwal of Mumbai, India and Ervad Maneck Sidhwa of Houston. This was the first wedding ceremony performed by Dasturji Kotwal outside of India. The guests were treated to a traditional Parsi wedding meal prepared by Chef Cyrus Todiwala, of London, England, at the Petroleum Club of Dallas on July 5, 2008 (photo below)



**Roxanne Jagosh**, daughter of Jimmy and Shirin Jagosh (Halifax, NS) to Darren Martell, son of Thomas and Wanita Martell in Halifax, NS on August 2, 2008.(photo below)



**Sonia Behrana**, daughter of Zenobia and Mehelli Behrana, to Ronald Rash at the Sweetwater Country Club in Sugarland, TX on November 22, 2008.

**Cyrus Wadia**, son of Phiroze and Goolcher Wadia (San Anselmo, CA) to Christy Chandler in Sausalito, CA in November, 2008.

**Firdaus Dotiwala** (New York City) to Azita Dashtaki (Orlando) in Orlando, FL on September 20, 2008 (photo below)



## GOLDEN WEDDING

**Rati and Noshir Mistry** of Richmond Hill, Ontario celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 8, 2008

## DEATHS

**Purviz Fanibanda**, 69, mother of Bomi Fanibanda, sister-in-law of Darius Fanibanda (Los Altos, CA) in Ahmedabad, India.

**Rustom N. Desai**, 92, father of Firdausi and Niloofer Desai (Bangalore, India) in Mumbai, India.

**Cyrus Desai** 21, son of Thrity and Rohinton Desai, brother of Anahita in Houston, October 12, 2008

**Silloo Khushroo Messman**, 68, sister of Perin Roomy Hormuz (Reno, Nevada) in Rohnert Park, CA on October 31, 2008.

**Manoocher Kamdar**, husband of Malekeh Kamdar (California), mother of Mahnaz (Bahram) Farhadieh (Chicago, IL), Parviz, Fariborz and Farhad Kamdar, grandfather to Mandana, Gita and Mina Farhadieh in Los Angeles, CA on November 8, 2008.

**Zal Chapgar**, 23, son of Jehangir and Kerban Chapgar (New Jersey), brother of Jasmine Chapgar on December 1, 2008.

**Dhun Bhathena**, wife of Savak Bhathena, mother of Hoshi, sister of Coomi Keki Patel (Windsor, ONT), aunt of Cawas and Jimmy (Ontario) in Mumbai, India on December 7, 2008.

**Homai Lilaowala**, 91, mother of Hormuzd Lilaowala (New Jersey) in Mumbai, India on December 8, 2008.

**Perviz Fram Framji**, mother of Arnaz Framji in Pakistan on December 28, 2008.

**Dr. Dali Patel** in Bethesda, MD.

**Alamai Pestonji Bhathena**, 89, of Mississauga, ONT, daughter of Nadirshah and Paricher Bamboat, mother of Mrs. Roshni K. Aibara, (Adelaide, Australia) and Firdosh Pestonji Bhathena (Mississauga, ONT) grandmother of Nazneen K. Aibara and Natasha K. Aibara (Adelaide, Australia); Meherzad P. Bhathena and Yazad P. Bhathena, (Mississauga, ONT) in Mumbai, India on 31 December 2008

**Coomy Canteenwalla**, 81 survived by her brother Homi Italia (Koomi), sons, Marezban (Bakhtawar), Aspy (Anita), daughter Kashmira Dastur (Khushrav), grandchildren Zubin (Ushtavaiyi), Pervez (Alison), Cyrus (Amanda), Percy (Katie), Jimmy, Burgess and Narius, in Burnaby, BC on January 7, 2009

**Goolbanu Kaikhushru Tarapore**, 94 mother of Sarosh (Bakhtawar) of Mumbai, Rohinton (Armin) of New Orleans, and Keshmira (Minoo) of Mumbai. Grandmother of Adil (Dilshad), Meher (Darayus), Rohinton & Danesh of Mumbai, Shahrukh of Cherry Hill, NJ and Arshish of New Orleans. great grandmother of Xerxes, Jehan and Faridun of Mumbai, in Mumbai, on January 10, 2009

**Tehmi Bomansha Chinoy**, 99, mother of Dr Minoo (Jeroo) and late Sam Chinoy, grandmother of Coover (Roxane), Zubin (Kashmira), Cyrus (Rashne) and Diana, in Windsor, ONT, on January 14, 2009

**Rustom Sheriar Tirandaz**, 66, husband of Armaity, father of late Behram, Faredoon and Darayus,

brother of Dinyar (Roshan) in Mumbai, January 27, 2009 (see page 118)

**Eruch Dinshaw Commissariat**, 60, husband of Kashmira, father of Piran, brother of Makku (Dubai), Roshan and Piloo (Mumbai), brother-in-law of Homi (Nergish) Davier, Houston, and Binaifer (Marzee) Tarapore (London, England) in Houston, January 29, 2009

**Dolly Dinshaw Sarkari**, 82, mother of Roshni (Zahanbax) Patel, grandmother of Ruzbeh & Navaz, in Grosse Pte. Woods, Michigan, on January 30, 2009.

*Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafram, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045, mmotafram@msn.com, Tel: 262-821-5296. NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."*

**Female doctor, 41. Uncle seeks confidential response for Parsi/Zoroastrian, dainty niece, M.D., 5' 2", with global experience and perspective, from eligible bachelors with equivalent achievements in Europe or America, Phd., M.D. preferred. Contact porusdad@yahoo.com (630) 960 2425. [F09-05].**

**Male, 45, Ph.D. (Finance), very well-placed professionally, in USA, with passion for life and a great sense of humour. Contact sammykar@gmail.com. [M09-6].**

## Matrimonials

FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna rrrivetna@aol.com.

**Female, 33, degree in Culinary Art, working as a Pastry Chef in Vancouver, BC. Enjoys reading, movies, traveling, and has a great love for animals. Contact theasg@gmail.com. [F09-04].**

## Dastur Nadirshah Pestonji Unvalla

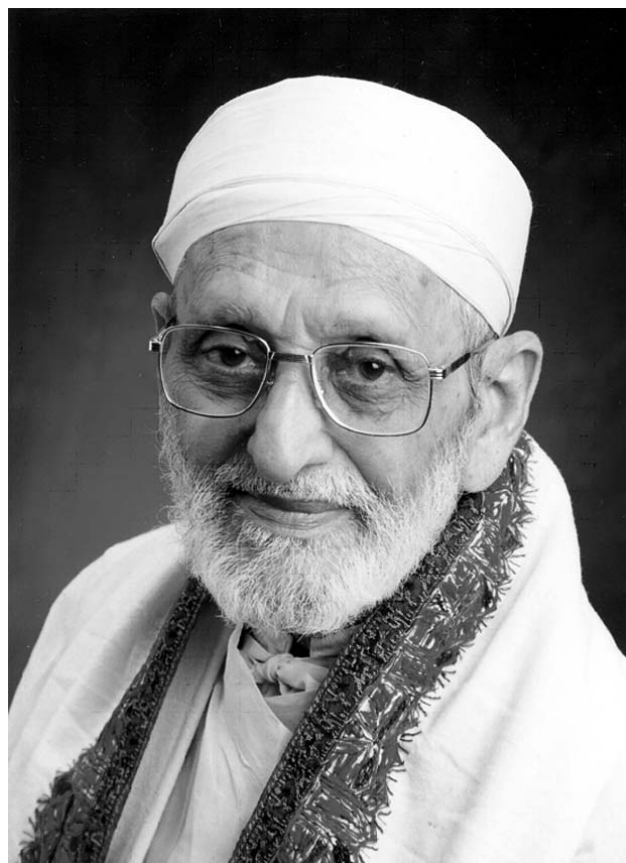
**Roj Avan Mah Amardad 1285 Y.Z.  
18th January 1917**

**Roj Adar Mah Tir 1378 Y.Z.  
25th November 2008**

Dasturji Nadirshah Pestonji Unvalla was the appointed Dasturji of the Bangalore Parsi Zoroastrian community.

He started his career in 1934, as an Assistant Mobed at The Bai Dhunmai & Cawasji Dadabhai Daremeher, Bangalore under the guidance of his father, Mobed Saheb Pestonji Jamshedji Unvalla, the then Panthaki, of the Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman.

In 1965 after the demise of his father, he was appointed as the Panthaki and continued to serve the Bangalore Anjuman as Panthaki and Mobed till his retirement in 1996. Though retired as a Panthaki, he still continued to help in performing ceremonies as and when required.



In 1996 the Anjuman, in its appreciation of his long, selfless and devoted service to the community in Bangalore, bestowed on him the Title of **Dastur**.

Nadirshah, the oldest of eight children (5 daughters and 3 sons) was born at Nargol on 18th January 1917, Roj Avan Mah Amardad 1285 Y.Z. His Navjote was performed at the age of nine at Udvada and soon after in 1926 his parents enrolled him as a boarder at the Dadar Athornan Madressa so that he would become a full-fledged Mobed. Here he studied the prayers, (*Yazashne*, *Visparad*, *Vendidad*) Iranian History, the Avesta & Pahlavi languages.

He became a Naver in 1931 and completed the Martab and Samel in 1932 (passing through this major test which involved considerable cross-examination by senior mobeds). Only after success in all these tests can a mobed perform the 'boi' and be declared fit by the Udvada Anjuman to perform the Boi ceremony of the Pak Iranshah Atashbehrum. Subsequently, in 1932 Nadirshah was admitted to the Cama Athornan Institute at Andheri for further studies. Here he mastered advanced topics in Avesta, Pahlavi and Persian. In those years, this esteemed institute was run by the Principal Dr. Iruch J.S. Taraporewalla who had high hopes for Nadirshah's progress.

But life took a different turn. Nadirshah's father Pestonji Unvalla was finding it difficult to support a big family, hence he withdrew his son from the Institute in 1934 and asked him to assist in running the Panthak as an assistant mobed.

### HEARTFELT DEVOTION TO DUTY

From August 1934 Nadirshah actively served the Bangalore Anjuman first as an Assistant Mobed, later as Mobed and then as Panthaki. In the mid-1990's his frequent requests for retirement were consistently put aside! Finally in June 1996 he retired due to failing health and advanced age. His long, illustrious service of 62 years involved his performing all the different religious ceremonies and prayers initially under the guidance of his father.

Nadirshah always prayed with meditation and deep thought, invoking the blessings of *Ahura Mazda*, the *Amesha Spentas* and the *Fravashis*. His prayers have always been heartfelt and most efficacious. This is evident in the level of development and prosperity witnessed by the Parsi Community of Bangalore.

Later he started giving lectures on important occasions, at community gatherings and children's sessions to impart religious knowledge to the Parsees of Bangalore. Nadirshah having obtained the title of a full-fledged mobed performed numerous Yezashne and

Vandidads in the Bangalore Agiary to the satisfaction of the Behdins.

During his tenure, the Tower of Silence was established in Bangalore involving much laborious work on the part of his father and great dedication on the part of the Trustees. The Dokhma of Bangalore, completed in 1940 is the last one built in India. There were many conflicts and much opposition to the Dokhma, legal cases too were fought in the Mysore Courts on that score. In all this, Nadirshah's assistance to the Trustees and legal advisers proved invaluable. After the conflicts subsided, a compromise was reached, a formula was devised and a document was signed by both parties, which bore the signature of Nadirshah.

He was instrumental in the construction of The Lady Jehangir Kothari Memorial Hall Annexe. During his tenure the Bangalore Anjuman celebrated four jubilees of the Agiary – The Silver Jubilee in 1951, Golden in 1976, Diamond in 1986 and Platinum in 2001. Each time he galvanized the community from far and near and raised large resources for the community's benefit. Nadirshah worked closely with all the Trustees, Presidents and Secretaries for the benefit of the Community and always gave advice on religious matters staunchly upholding the faith at all times.

Nadirshah has always looked at his calling in life as though through the most wide – angle lenses. No request went unheard or unattended. He always strained himself to the utmost while performing his religious duties. Of course the liturgical ceremonies took up a large part of his day but despite that he had defined for himself a much larger role as is evident in his all-encompassing commitment to the community. He rushed to the bedside of those ill in hospital and he visited the older, infirm members of the community offering his support but more importantly they found in him someone who truly cared for them. Many have acknowledged his invaluable assistance by bequeathing large sums to the Bangalore Anjuman.

There are numerous episodes where he took on the mantle of friend, philosopher and guide to the entire Parsi Community. He has been at their service on a round-the-clock basis never thinking of himself even when exhausted after a long day's work.

All these services and many more were extended to the community. He was truly a leader of many parts and proved himself a great source of support and guidance. For Nadirshah, his priesthood was a holistic avocation not just a limited, narrow-minded job. He was exceptional, even outstanding in the role God had charted out for him.

***Ervad Yezdi Unvalla, his son.***



# Obituary

## CYRUS R DESAI (1987-2008)

Our beloved son, Cyrus Desai, was born in Houston, Texas on January 8th, 1987. From a very young age, Cyrus was gifted with a very strong left and right brain. Cyrus graduated from Klein High School with Honors. He was an officer in DECA, (Distributive Educational Clubs of America), and an active member of FCCLA (Family Career Community Leaders of America) for which he won second place in State Competition in the Business Entrepreneurship Section.

In middle school, he was named "Language Arts Superstar" by his English teacher and had the opportunity to get his poem published. He took an active part in Math competitions and won several awards for his school.

Cyrus was also very athletic and loved sports. He played for All American Football League for several years and then for his middle school team. He participated in the Zoroastrian Olympics in Los Angeles and Houston, winning medals in Basketball and Track.

A born leader, Cyrus was an active member of the ZAH Youth Group and was elected Vice President and



Cyrus was a Freshman at the University of Houston Business School when he was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma, a very aggressive bone cancer. He remained upbeat throughout his treatment. He continued his passion for sports and was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to throw the first pitch at the Astros Baseball Game at Minute Maid Park. He also went to the Lombardi Awards in 2007 and had the opportunity to have dinner with Howie Long.

Cyrus had developed an interest in poker so several members of the ZAH planned a trip to Las Vegas to celebrate his 21st birthday. He had the time of his life.

Despite the best efforts of some of the finest doctors of MD Anderson Cancer Center, Cyrus lost his battle which he had waged so valiantly against Osteosarcoma on October 12, 2008. Cyrus was 21 years, 9 months and 4 days when he went on his spiritual journey. His memory will live on in the many lives he has touched by his vibrant

personality and cheerful demeanor. Till the very end, he was courageous and never complained in spite of being in severe pain. He brought great joy to our family for the short time he was with all of us. May God

Bless Cyrus and grant him eternal peace.

***Parents Thrity, Rohinton and sister Anahita Desai***

## ZAL CHAPGAR

(1985-2008)



Zal Chapgar, beloved son of Jehangir and Kerban Chapgar and adored brother of Jasmine died tragically on December 1, 2008. He was 23 years old - much too young. As the overwhelming presence of mourners at his funeral (despite the lack of public notice) attest, he touched many lives during his short earthly sojourn. As one friend put it, he was like a stellar explosion - making a huge impact. Blessed with an incredibly brilliant mind, a handsome appearance, and a fearless nature -

he made an impression on all he met. But most striking was his genuine kindness, compassion for all living things and unconditional acceptance of people whatever their condition, intelligence, or walk in life. He was a beautiful soul.

Despite being unorganized and careless in school, he was a National Merit scholar, AP scholar with distinction, won an award scholarship from the John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (IAAY) for his SAT score in 7th grade, received awards in Pennsylvania Science Fairs and other academic distinctions with ease. He participated in Boy Scout trips with gusto - completing the 100 mile trek at Philmont. He played football and won Sectionals in wrestling - a feat for him. He studied philosophy in college, wrote poetry, and was very knowledgeable and interested in astrophysics. He played the violin and piano, and had a lovely tenor voice, which won him a place in a select high school choir and in the college choir.

He also loved basketball, chess, poker and a wide variety of music, and until the last year of his life was very sociable. He was well liked for his friendliness, charm and outgoing personality.

His unusual mental capabilities, reckless nature, and iconoclastic thinking, combined with his sensitive nature and traumatic experiences eventually led him to stormy passages, leading to mental problems and depression. His intellect and his troubled mind were at odds as he tried to make sense of what was happening to him. His last months were filled with messages from God, and other beliefs those around him could not fathom - a constant source of frustration to him.

More about his life and struggles can be read in the various articles in the Philadelphia Inquirer. The site is philly.com (Search for "Zal Chapgar" or google Zal Chapgar). The short bio video and photos in the album in the Philly guest book are a glimpse of Zal.

***He is missed terribly  
by his family every day.***

# Rustom Tirandaz, R.I.P.

(1943-2009)

On Republic Day (January 26), when one was at the lovely, lively annual concert of the Activity High School at Peddar Road, vivaciously put together by Principal Perin Bagli and her talented young students, in the crowd there was a lovable lion-in-winter, with his snowy beard and benign smile, Rustom Tirandaz, enjoying the foot-tapping dances with wife Armaity.

The next morning (January 27), he was summoned to a destination so far away that we've lost him forever. Rustomji surely had no idea on that Monday evening that these were the last few hours of his life – and neither did we, because we put off the urge to walk across during intermission to say hello, keeping it for another time. Alas!

However, it was a fitting tribute to his spunk and indefatigable spirit that the end came swiftly and suddenly, with no suffering. And he went, quite literally, on his feet...

He was a good man, with much goodwill – which was amply demonstrated at the recent Parsi Punchayet elections, when his surprise victory was greeted with joy.

Being a politician, and a former Mumbai Corporator, he had the propensity to be able to work the crowd with much gusto at any public gathering. He could make fiery speeches at the drop of a hat, full of wit and bravado, endangered by his ability to repeatedly put his foot into his mouth! But his gregarious disposition, easy accessibility, and genuine enthusiasm to do his best for the community won him much admiration.

It is a huge loss to the BPP to be bereft of its Vice-Chairman. A fearless voice against the lobby that is furiously working to debilitate and dishonour the august Punchayet, poor Rustom Tirandaz had, in recent weeks, been bearing the brunt of their enormous ire. Yet every time they whimpered, he roared; and often when they simpered, he snored – too bored to be bothered!

Perhaps, he wasn't always right in the manner in which he expressed himself. Perhaps, his no-holds-barred bluntness was a slap in the face of those too Machiavellian for the community's good. However, he was not someone who would cause the community pain – for personal gain.

His death is not just sudden and untimely, but an irreversible blow to the community that had come to



The late Rustom Tirandaz, on the day he won the BPP election (October 2008), elated and determined to forge ahead...(photo above)

count upon as a friend in need. We needed him at this juncture, as a BPP veteran, to help Chairman Dinshaw Mehta steer the course through choppy waters. Our little boat has lost a mighty oarsman.

Let us pray for his family – his gentle wife, who has had to endure so much on account of his passion for public life and the consequences thereof, his children, his brother Diniar Tirandaz, and other family members and close friends, who will feel his absence like gaping void in the gut.

As for the rest of the Parsi and Zoroastrian Irani community, let us learn what we can from his life and continue his good work, diligently and determinedly, without fear or favour, but with ample fervour, in the best interests of the faith. May the person who eventually steps into his shoes at the BPP be attuned to his ethos of service before self – and be as impassioned a champion for the community, with the tenacity to hold firm against disruptive forces.

Rustomji, we'll miss you. And if we flounder, do holler down at us from heaven...

**Posted by Shernaaz Engineer, Mumbai, India on January 27, 2009 Email: [zfeatures@gmail.com](mailto:zfeatures@gmail.com)**

# Sooni Taraporevala

Photographer and Screenwriter of International Fame Turns  
Director For UPCOMING FILM:

BOOKS  
&  
ARTS

## Little Zizou

"Zizou" is the nickname of Zinedine Zidane, world-famous French football/soccer player of Algerian origin. "Little Zizou," or Xerxes, is an avid soccer-playing Parsi boy who earnestly prays to his long-dead mother to bring his idol, Zidane, to Mumbai.

The feature film **Little Zizou**, set in Mumbai among the Parsi Zoroastrian community, reveals an unconventional cast of characters, both actual and imaginary, who with the absent soccer star Zizou, inhabit this modern city as they are pulled into the community's biggest conflict.

Little Zizou is the directorial debut of Sooni Taraporevala, best known as India's first internationally-known screenwriter, as director Mira Nair's longtime creative partner, and especially to Zoroastrians as author of the book *PARSIS: the Zoroastrians of India – a Photographic Journey*. Little Zizou's November 2008 world premiere in New York, followed by Washington DC., earned two awards so far.

Taraporevala was thrust into fame at age 31 with her first scripted film, 1988 Oscar-nominated *Salaam Bombay*. Directed by Mira Nair, the film explored the world of Mumbai's street children – and was shot largely in Mumbai's Grant Road neighbourhood where Taraporevala grew up. Now considered a cinema classic, *Salaam Bombay* features in the curriculum of most film schools.

Meeting Mira Nair as a Harvard undergraduate (Taraporevala received an MA from New York University) led to years of collaboration and the start of her award-winning screenwriting career with *Salaam Bombay*, continuing with *Mississippi Masala*, *My Own Country*, and *The Namesake*, directed by Nair; *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*; *Such a Long Journey*, based on Rohinton Mistry's novel; and numerous undeveloped commissions.

Taraporevala began her career as a professional photographer. Even as a screenwriter, Taraporevala was often on her film sets shooting photos (one became *Salaam Bombay*'s poster). Encouraged by renowned Indian photographer Raghubir Singh, for 20 years

Taraporevala photographed the Parsi community. In 2000, she produced *PARSIS*, a first-ever visual book on the community, republished in 2004 by Overlook Press.

Her book and previous screenplays took months or even years. But Taraporevala wrote the first Little Zizou draft in just 10 days. In her 20 year screenwriting career, this was her first non-commissioned script. And although Taraporevala was no stranger to film sets, it was also her first time directing.

Taraporevala assembled an ensemble cast who brought her script to life – including her children Jahan and Iyanah Bativala, Imaad Shah (son of actor Naseeruddin Shah, who has himself played previous Parsi roles), Boman Irani, New York-based actress Zenobia Shroff, and a cameo appearance by Bollywood superstar John Abraham – whose mother is Parsi.

The film's theme: Zoroastrian fundamentalism – through the eyes of a young Parsi boy. The setting is local, but the story reflects a divisive phenomenon facing communities worldwide. Yet Little Zizou is a comedy: complete with lively cartoon drawings, unrequited love, a healthy dose of Dean Martin songs, and yes, a message of tolerance.

Taraporevala had returned to Mumbai in 1992, having lived in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles; and having penned screenplays examining India and the diaspora – including street children, AIDS, and race relations – set in many locations, from Mumbai to the American deep South. But Little Zizou allowed her to "come home" in a different way, with a film set in her hometown, in her own community.

The Mumbai of Little Zizou is grounded in this deep familiarity. It's a Mumbai where an elderly Parsi man, armchair-conducts classical music as a painting of conductor Zubin Mehta hangs on the wall above; while a group of middle-aged Parsis belt out oldies songs with gusto (and alcohol). A flamboyant grandmother "dresses for dinner" in her once grand, now decaying Udvada hotel; while a young man and his friends construct a flight simulator in an abandoned Parsi maternity hospital. And friends and colleagues of many faiths pray in whatever way they know during a time of crisis.



It's also Mumbai where a mild-mannered cartoonist envisions frenzied Russians invading the city – or at least the Cozy Building and his Parsi neighbours; where reverie-derived Brazilian Carnival dancers burst into a rally on Parsi fundamentalism; and where a young boy missing his mother can hold onto his one simple dream.

## Little Zizou

*Presented by Mira Nair and Indian Films, produced by Jigri Dost Productions. Currently screening at major festivals; with theatrical release in 2009.*

[www.littlezizouthemovie.com](http://www.littlezizouthemovie.com)

[www.soonitaraporevala.com](http://www.soonitaraporevala.com)

## Tamina Davar in Conversation With Director Sooni Taraporevala

***In writing and directing this film, how were you able to encompass such a wide range of Mumbai Parsi characters, actors, and actual people?***

For years Mira [Nair] has been telling me to do my own "Parsi" film. I didn't before – I was too busy writing scripts for other people – but also because then I felt that the richness of real life could never accurately be portrayed on film. We had excellent Parsi theatre actors but few who were comfortable in front of a camera.

This time, when I began writing, I made a list of all the Parsi actors I could use – they are a long list of all ages – and that gave me confidence to embark on this mad adventure. I tried to showcase as much Parsi talent as possible: from actors, to [choreographer] Shiamak Davar, [singer] Gary Lawyer, and [metal sculptor] Arzan Khambatta. We even have a portrait of [conductor] "Apro" Zubin in lieu of the real thing!

***Being a photographer and a writer ensured your confidence in those areas. How did producing your photography book on Parsis compare to producing this film? What helped as a first-time director?***

The best cast, crew and producers a first time director could ever hope for.

My book I produced alone. With the film I had my multi-talented partner, [producer] Dinaz Stafford.

For two years I'd been trying to find finance. Sheer luck had Dinaz run into a friend from Indian Films [leading Bollywood film investment company]. We



formed Jigri Dost Productions and signed on the dotted line a month after that initial meeting. Dinaz did a fantastic job – brought together a brilliant crew and brought us in within budget – giving me everything I wanted – including Brazilian dancers and all those Dean Martin numbers! But what I'm most thankful for is that she made sure I never compromised – even if it made life more difficult for her. She always reminded me to stick to my instincts and not get swayed. It helped that the film was set within the Parsi world. The locations, our production office were all thanks to family and friends.

Both of us are from The Mira Nair school of filmmaking: maximum bang for the buck. We had no overheads – did everything ourselves. Both of us operate from drawers under our bed.

***People say your film brings your Parsi photography book to life. How did you create that visually?***

One shot is an exact replica: the interior of the agiary with lit diyas where Boman Pressvala is praying, which was of course not filmed inside a real agiary. The actual [book] photo was taken at Aslaji Agiary during Meher Mahino, Meher Roj. We shot the film scene in a hall above Sethna Agiary used for weddings and navjotes. The Panthaky, a family friend of my husband Firdaus, who had performed our wedding and who used to be an Air-India pilot (fitting, considering the film's flying theme), was very sweet, loaning us hundreds of diyas and the wonderful old mirror portrait of Zarathushtra that reflects the flames so beautifully.

The scenes in Udvada were there because I have photographed there extensively, know many people, and love the place; a chapter in my book is set there.

The crew were amazed – they didn't know such a place existed in India. Majestic Hotel is where we used to go when I was a kid. In 2000 – after my book – I was in Udvada and came across it again. An old lady Khorshed Patel was sitting surrounded by her dogs. She was the owner, living there alone. I went in, chatted, she gave me a tour; I photographed her and the hotel; and made a mental note that if I ever made a film I had to find a way of bringing Majestic into it. Five years later I did. We didn't have to dress the hotel – what you see is exactly how it was. The spirit of Khorshed Patel is who I channelled for the character played by Mahabanoo Mody-Kotwal.

And of course Cozy Building, and the lane with the fire temple, is where I grew up – which feature in both film and book. The crew nicknamed it "Parsi Film City."

We started the shoot there and stayed for two weeks. It was a good place to begin, as it really set the tone for the family nature of this film. We took over the lane completely! One neighbour was the location, another was the make-up room, the lane is where we had our breakfasts, and my house is where the Russians burst into. There was lots of excitement and we tried to minimize the nuisance. The crew was so wonderful and respectful. After we left, I'm told we were missed.

**Your film is populated by family, friends, and community. One memorable scene features Boman Pressvala singing with a group of raucous grown-up "Scouts." Who were they?**

They are actually a group called "Rovers," or grown-up Boy Scouts. I didn't call them Rovers because nobody would have had a clue. I was inspired by real life: my father went to St. Xavier's school and his gang of Rovers are whom I've grown up with. They're a fun-loving motley gang of all ages and communities; they are to me the true spirit of cosmopolitan Bombay. They meet at least once a month, going on "camps" (where they drink, tease each other, and generally have fun), and attend each others' family functions.

I wrote this scene for them. To film it, I brought in my dad and his Rovers. [Guitar player and lead singer] Gary Lawyer is my dad's cousin. We plied them with booze; they had such a good time they didn't want to leave. My art director, in charge of the alcohol, called her father – a hard drinking Sikh – asking how many bottles to bring. He said five should be more than enough. By 10 pm she was scrambling to find an open

liquor shop because of course they had gone through all five bottles!

**How were the world premieres?**

During the New York award ceremony, I was passed a note – a torn-out piece of paper from the program with a handwritten message: "I laughed with my whole body and belly. I worked very hard this year for the UN and for Obama. I want to send Obama your film as a gift for his enjoyment and for its message to the world." I later met the lady who sent me this note. She was elderly; she took my hands in hers, looked into my eyes and told me very few things made her happy anymore but Little Zizou gave her lots of joy. I was so touched and happy I nearly cried.

The two New York screenings were staggered with "Q & As" so we couldn't sit through entire screenings, but in DC we did. Boman, his wife Zenobia, Dinaz, and I watched the entire film with the audience. It was such a high. They were laughing from the word go. There can be no better feeling. I've become a laugh junkie!

Everywhere we screened, people wanted to help us in whatever way they could. They wanted to send all their friends to see it. I think the film made them feel good, left them with a smile on their faces and love in their hearts.

**What compelled you to write Little Zizou?**

Initially I was reacting to the fundamentalist rhetoric dividing the Parsi community, nonsense that I never heard while growing up. But I was also reacting to all the crazy stuff going on elsewhere in the name of religion. Every religion has its lunatic fringe. It's something we can all identify with in today's world. I didn't want to legitimize it by treating it with serious intent – which is why in the film, it's treated like a cartoon – like a joke.

But when I started writing, many other storylines and themes emerged: chief amongst them my belief, hope, faith that people we love who have passed on have not disappeared; that they are still up there somewhere, helping us, guiding us. Like Little Zizou, I believe in angels.

**Tamina Davar** is making a documentary film on Sooni Taraporevala. She worked with Taraporevala as media relations/marketing strategist for PARSIS: the Zoroastrians of India – a Photographic Journey, both 2000 and 2004 editions. Davar, a former magazine editor and longtime media relations director, has secured abundant press coverage on North American Zoroastrians, and has curated many Zoroastrian related events. Currently London-based, she is an actor. A trailer for Davar's documentary film can be viewed at [www.avanprojects.com](http://www.avanprojects.com)

## Ancient Iran has won an award!

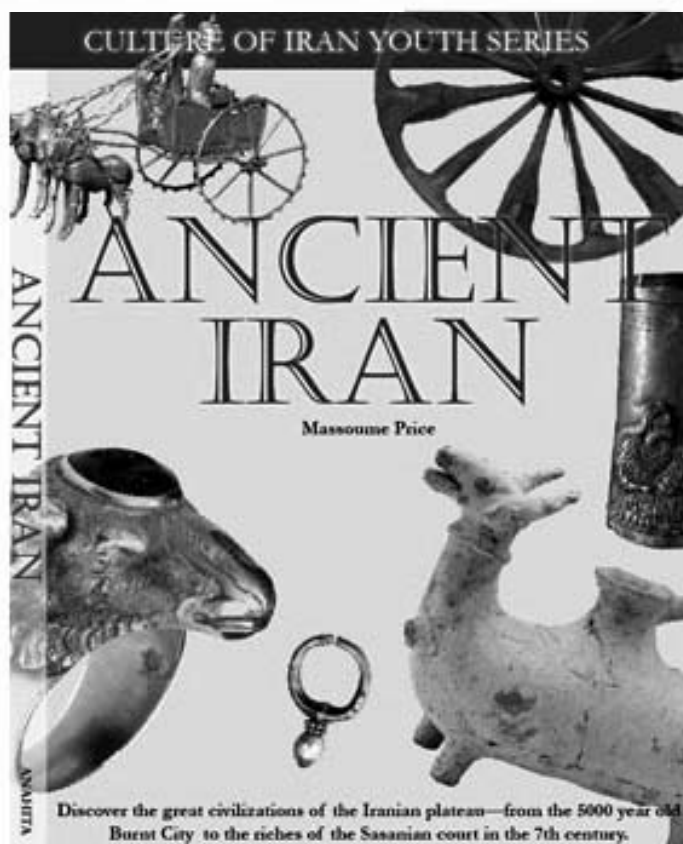


*Ancient Iran is being honored with a bronze medal from the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards for one of the best books for Young Adults!*

**Ancient Iran, a pictorial history for young readers by Massoume Price, has won the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards bronze medal for one of the best multicultural non-fiction books in 2008**

The Moonbeam Awards, one of the most prestigious in U.S., are dedicated to identifying the best children's books published each year for the North American market. The Awards are one of the fastest growing U.S.-based award contests focused on children's books. Winner, Finalists, and Honorable Mentions appear for an entire year at [www.moonbeamawards.com](http://www.moonbeamawards.com). Winners will also be featured in [www.IndependentPublisher.com](http://www.IndependentPublisher.com) and highlighted prominently in their newsletter, which goes out to more than 20,000 subscribers worldwide, many of whom are agents, buyers, and librarians.

The 138 medalists listed this year were chosen from a total of 1,085 entries (an average of 36 per category). Many of these books are by little-known authors, illustrators and publishers from around the world, and the award brings them to the attention of the children's book audience. Creating books that inspire our children to read, to learn, and to dream is an extremely important task, and these awards were conceived to reward those efforts.. Ancient Iran was chosen in category 20 which selects and rewards the



best multicultural non-fiction books of the year published globally. The book was recently published in Vancouver by the author and social anthropologist, Massoume Price. Educated in both Iran and England, Massoume has written extensively on many aspects of Iranian culture. Her book *Iran's Diverse Peoples* (2005); was called by the Middle East Quarterly "must reading for anyone who wants to understand ethnic and religious diversity in Iran". Her website - [www.cultureofiran.com](http://www.cultureofiran.com) - is used widely as an on-line reference source. The book has already become a bestseller amongst the Iranian community in Canada. For additional information on the awards please consult the site below:

The book has been greeted with great enthusiasm, it won a prestigious award from Moonbeam in US, and just very recently a large order from the British Museum has been received. They loved the book and will launch it with their upcoming exhibition on Shah Abbas in February 2009. Massoume is one step closer to printing the second volume "*Medieval & Modern Iran*" in May 2009.

[www.independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=1250](http://www.independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=1250)

For information on the book and to purchase  
[www.anahitaproductions.com](http://www.anahitaproductions.com)  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



Reviewed by: Professor Yezdi H. Godiwalla  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

## Locked Horns

### Conflicts and their Resolution in Community Based Natural Resource Management

Edited by Astad Pastakia pages 332

Publisher Karnataka, India: Books for Change, 2008

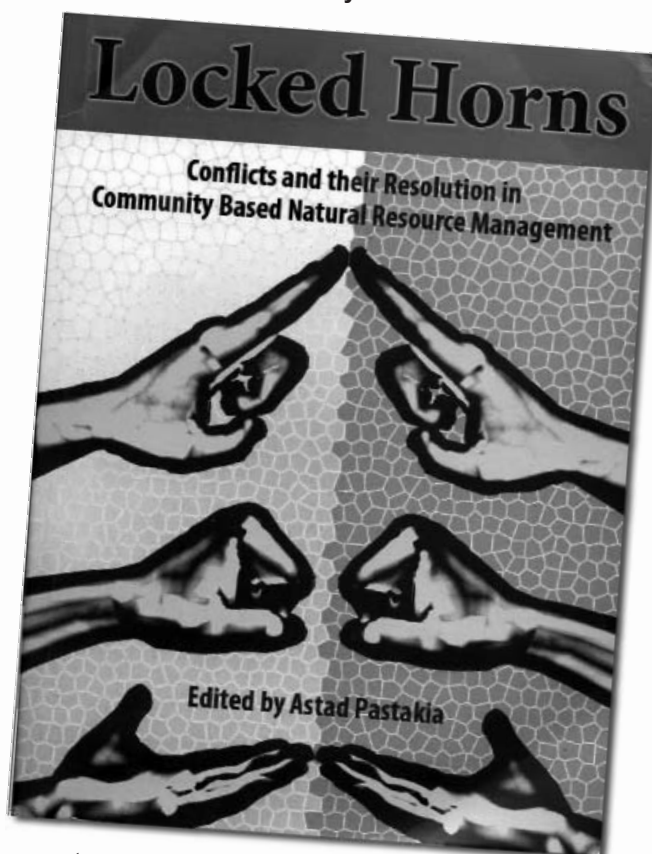
ISBN 978-81- 8291- 040-9 Price Rs 600 in India US\$22.00 outside India

Reviewed by: Professor Yezdi H. Godiwalla  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

This interesting book is edited by Astad Pastakia. It is a tribute to his brilliance, dedication and assiduity to contribute to the body of knowledge and to marshalling an anthology of diverse works in the form of selected cases and papers for explaining the reasons for the many difficulties, emotional upsets and violence that occur in communities as they struggle to scrounge for scarce natural resources of water and land and forests, and, yet keep striving for a semblance of an equitable and even meaningful balance among the strife-ridden natural resources communities' stakeholders in modern India. The book presents many different perspectives that have come from four review papers and two concluding chapters, including a few written by Pastakia, and, also, fifteen cases written by many other specialists who work in this field of endeavor and who come from different parts of India. The many cases, in addition to the papers and chapters, are interesting to read, and they are informative and professionally, often scholarly, inclined.

He critically examines the process of the democratic decentralization of resource management in the context of rural development planning, pursuant to the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution that are aimed to provide greater role to Panchayat administrative action and also involve private initiatives and involvement in the management of the common property for the purpose of both, resource conservation and development for sustainable and efficient approaches to common resource related issues. The decentralization of power, as a consequence to the two Constitutional Amendments, through the increasing privatization of managing the common natural resources is the crux of the issue. Although apparently an unplanned and unintended consequence, such a move of decentralization and privatization generates conflict at grass roots level.

The book is interesting in that it gives an exposure for the Western mind and the urban Indian dweller about the trials, friction and potentially eruptive, conflagrate situations that occur, as a very densely populated



segment

of our world's region tries to satisfy its needs for the scarce water and land. It also discusses the attempt to realize the dichotomy of using the natural resources for satisfying the community's current needs and for saving it for the future generations through a wise, ecologically oriented approach.

In view of the growing scarcities of natural resources that lead to conflagrations of conflicts in communities, there is the wrestling for greater control over the natural resources, its ownership and use, an outcome that has yielded to the wider arbitration by *Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM)*. Diffusing and resolving conflict has been a priority in the three western Indian states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, from which the case studies are drawn. While the other levels and types of conflicts have been studied

by behavioral scientists and researchers, however, these community conflicts, at its lowest or grass roots levels, and in this context, have not attracted much attention. This book thus presents an anthology of case studies and papers that fill in a void.

### STRUCTURE AND NATURE OF THE BOOK

The book has three parts. Part I of the book has four papers in the form of chapters, which provide good background information in the grounding of the ideas and concepts related to conflict in these scenarios and they are helpful in analyzing the cases. Part II presents the fifteen cases written by various authors. In Part II Pastakia presents summarized findings of and inferences from the cases, together with concluding discussions.

The book is not just a compilation of a few chapters and many cases, although they are very interesting. It also makes a major contribution in the form of many paradigms that engender good attempts to conceptualize some of the events in these fifteen cases in which the various case authors provide mid-level theories, as opposed to broad theories of higher levels of abstraction.

In his chapters in the latter part of the book, in addition to inferences from the cases, Pastakia also provides a useful outlay of conflict theories from management and other literature. There is also an applied nature of conflict theories as the book's various contributing authors provide multiple mid-level (as opposed to higher level, broad theories) paradigms. There is also a good review of applied concepts that may be useful to study the conflict in communities over scarce natural resources, such as the tables on pages 301, 304, 307 and 314, on "alternative model on conflict management" in Part III, Chapter 1 on alternative theory on conflict management. The book, although essentially applied in nature, is very rich in varied textured theories offered by Pastakia and other contributing case authors.

As a person twice graduated from Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad, which is well known for its case method of instruction, Pastakia has demonstrated in his anthology of chapters and cases, that case analysis can lead to good insights. Case method is not without theoretical foundations, but case method is supposed to induce better analytical skills and enduring student learning outcomes. The chapters in Part I provide the cluster of related concepts. If the reader is not familiar with conflict theories, such a review of concepts on conflict would be useful. It is similar to having refresher sessions in conflict, as in the 1967 Administrative Science Quarterly issue that is devoted solely to conflict issues.

### PART I

Part I has four chapters which consist of scholarly, theoretical papers. They focus on the foundational theories in conflict, its causes and management. There are some good ideas and discussions that give the reader a good sense of what one can expect in the cases that follow in Part II. This conditioning is most useful on analyzing the cases. The chapters raise several approaches in the study of conflict, such as mapping techniques in the study of conflict, the Pastakia compiled typologies of conflict, based on sources of conflict on state, and scale of conflict, from which comes the title of the book, *Locked Horn*; and causes of latent conflicts. Other conceptual models include: root cause and analysis; guiding principles in traditional conflict management; and the yielding of individual's private property for the "larger public purpose" as in the cited Supreme Court decision.

The three natural resources, water, land and forest, are also studied for the background of how laws related to them were created or formed, and for their legal rulings and precedents. These include a landmark, basic statute, *Land Acquisition Act, 1894*, which outlines the basis by which the state government can acquire private lands. The Act outlines the ways by which the government can acquire land, take over its possession, assess compensation for its taking over, and the payment of the compensation. Communities' customary rights to public land and its use by them eroded, after the British Raj took over land for its colonial rule needs and after the political creation of a new class of people, the landlords, or *Zamindars*. Their lands were converted into State owned lands that meant the State would decide on the use of the land. In fact, the State had an unquestioned and free hand in the taking possession of private lands without the consent of the private individual who owned it. It did not have to subsequently set out the scope of public use. This led to an uncertainty of the nature of State's management of scarce natural resources, yielding way to potential conflict over their use by communities.

### PART II

Fifteen cases comprise Part II of the book. The fifteen cases are written by various authors, are interesting and absorbing to read and are meaningful in that they give a fuller flavor of the many specific, different examples of conflict. They present the nature and extent of serious conflict in communities over the scarce natural resources of water, land, and forest land.

There are interesting and useful diagrams, tables and applied models in Part II of the book that deals with the many cases as the case authors have attempted to compress their inferences into a figure or table. An

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&  
ARTS

example of the use of tables is the application of the stakeholder approach in pages 162-163.

It may be useful to categorize cases, based on Pastakia's own diagnosis of the case problem areas. There are six cases on land related conflict issues; four cases on water related conflict issues; and five cases on forest land related conflict issues, totaling fifteen cases. Out of these fifteen cases, Pastakia has diagnosed seven to have conflict in latent state; and eight, in manifest state. Within the seven latent, five are diagnosed as having internal boundary; and two, external. Out of the manifest state, two are diagnosed to have internal boundary; and six, external.

### PART III

Part III of the book provides two concluding chapters which discuss many useful inferences, arrive at systematic analyses, and integrative frameworks and converging discussions. There are logical synthesis and meaningful descriptive synthesis of the body of knowledge on conflict analysis and management. There are diagrams and tables that present useful paradigms on the conflict management, e.g. page 314.

The chapters in Part III are important in that they reflect the major findings of the book. They are well done and they deserve a second reading.

### CONCLUSION

The book is outstanding. It is very well written. It reflects the hard work of Astad Pastakia, the editor and as an author, and also, as the coordinator of this anthology. The book reflects that Pastakia has performed all of these roles so very well.

It represents what appears to be an intransigent struggle over natural resource utilization and conservation. It also reflects a struggle of rural India trying to deal with problems of the use of scarce natural resources in modern India through the method that reflects the culture of the old Indian civilization, with some modification of the legal overtones of the last two centuries. One wonders if the barely emerging legal system inherited from the British Raj can obliterate or overrule the five thousand year matured Indian civilization. It is an educative eye opener to a naive Western and, perhaps also, to the urban Indian reader that there was a very civilized society in India before the advent of the East India Company and the British Raj.

In its compressed effort, it reflects the cumulative wisdom of the many contributing authors and case authors. It is a great feeling that such people of high education help the rural people to sort out their problems arising out of conflict as they struggle to live a decent life in beautiful rural India.

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## **“Beyond Our Differences” - A film by Peter Bisanz on Discord and Violence. aired on PBS on the Bill Moyers Journal**

This film talked about violence, pain and division in the world, as seen by various spiritual leaders as well as historians and authors.

It quoted extensively from the author, scholar and historian Karen Armstrong and interviewed or quoted from people like the Dalai Lama, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Deepak Chopra among others. The message was that all religions are a relationship between the creature and the creator, with spirituality being a common universal experience for humanity.

All of humanity has the same needs, aspirations and problems and by looking at the purposes of the differences in philosophy, it will lead us to the same goal.

Fear of annihilation is the basis of much of the fundamentalism amidst us today.

We need to appreciate and celebrate diversity and accept differences in people with their differing faults.

Bishop Tutu opined that ' Religions came in to the world to reduce the rage in our hearts.'

As Rumi said, I looked for God everywhere and did not find Him and in the end  
" I found God in my heart"

Reported by Nazneen Spiedt, San Francisco



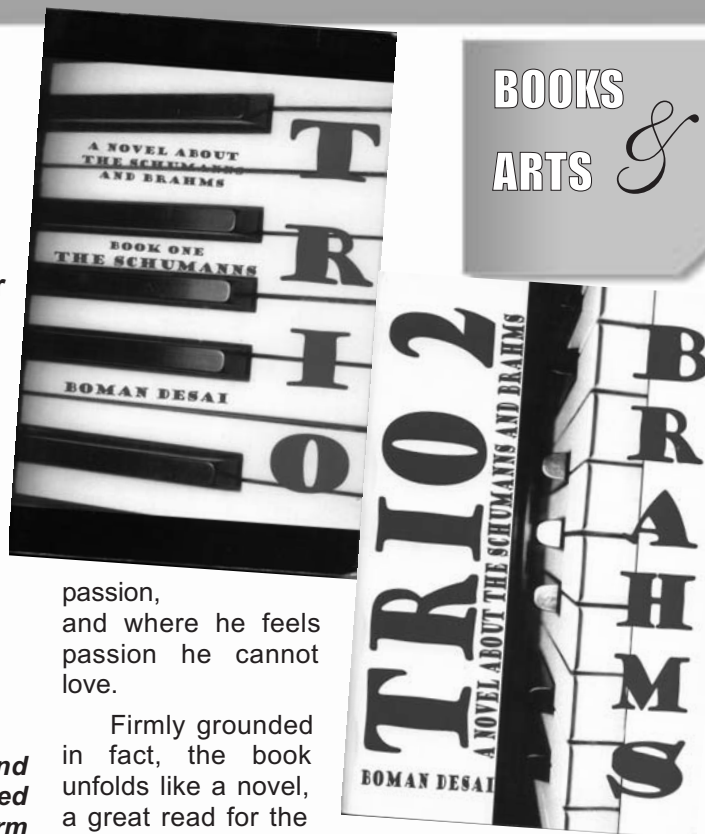
# Trio

by Boman Desai (2004)  
ISBN: 1-4140-4659-6  
pp 432; \$17.50 from publisher  
\$25.45 from Amazon

# Trio 2

by Boman Desai (2006)  
ISBN: 1-4259-3592-3  
pp 390; \$17.50 from publisher  
\$25.45 from Amazon

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*"It gives me great pleasure to recommend Boman Desai's Trio and Trio 2. He has dramatized the story of the Schumanns and Brahms in the form of a novel, citing their original correspondence of 43 years among his sources. He has researched this most romantic of stories thoroughly, but writes so compellingly that it is like discovering the story anew. The great composers of the age make appearances when their lives intersect those of the trio, and I was glad to see that Desai presents them to us, warts and all, with the deepest sympathy and understanding. It is perhaps his greatest achievement that they appear as fullbloodedly as if they might have been his neighbors."*

**Zubin Mehta, Conductor, of International Renown**

## SYNOPSIS

Johannes Brahms was just twenty when he fell in love with Clara Schumann (wife of Robert, mother of eight, and the greatest woman pianist of the age). He was also indebted to Robert who got his first six opuses published. Robert soon committed himself to an asylum where he died two years later. Clara was forbidden to see him because the doctors imagined she would excite him too much, and Brahms became their go-between. His love blossomed, Clara welcomed his affection, but both loved Robert too well to abuse his trust. Brahms learned to associate love with renunciation – and, coupling this love with early experiences playing dance music for sailors and prostitutes, he became a victim to the Freudian conundrum: Where he loves he feels no

passion,  
and where he feels  
passion he cannot  
love.

Firmly grounded in fact, the book unfolds like a novel, a great read for the beach, the summer, the winter – a book in which one may live for a while, a narrative of love, insanity, revolution, politics, war – and music.

**Trio Reviewed in FJ Spring 2005 by Farobag Homi Cooper**

**Boman Desai** grew up in Bombay and lives in Chicago. He studied Architecture and Philosophy, got degrees in Psychology and English, and was set to become a market analyst, when an encounter with Sir Edmund Hillary (who had an office two floors above his own) brought him back to writing novels. He got his first break when an elegant elderly woman submitted his stories to Debonair in Bombay. The stories were published, but the woman disappeared. Her identity remains a mystery. He has since published stories and articles in the US, UK, and India, won an Illinois Arts Council Award and the Stand Magazine Prize for fiction, taught at Truman College and Roosevelt University in Chicago, and currently teaches at the University of Southern Maine. He is the author of four other novels: *The Memory of Elephants*; *Asylum, USA*; *A Woman Madly in Love*; and *Servant, Master, Mistress*.





**WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**HOUSTON CHAPTER**



**2008 WZCC GLOBAL AGM**

**DEC 28<sup>TH</sup> – DEC 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2008**

**HOUSTON, TEXAS**



2008

## WZCC AGM IN HOUSTON: A TOUCHING MOMENT

**Natalie Vania Gandhi**

December 28 to 31 saw the 2008 WZCC Global AGM take place under the gracious, capable, and dedicated hosting of the WZCC Houston Chapter. Meetings were held at The Zarathushti Heritage & Cultural Center. A worldwide quorum of distinguished Officers, World Directors, Chapter Chairs, Youth, and observers participated. The tone of the day was set with a beautiful benediction by Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary of Iran and Ervad Peshotan Unwalla of Houston along with six young second generation mobeds from Houston (photo below)

Meetings were convened by VP *Kersi Limathwalla*, as Past-President Rohinton Rivetna observed. Kersi gave great credit and well wishes to *President Bomy Boyce*, whose health required him to pass leadership at this time into Kersi's ready hands. Bomy's vision of business cell and advisor support to emerging businesses is a strong undertaking of the Board. As well, Kersi looked to metrics for assessing the value of WZCC to the membership as he shapes the organization's global community and strategy. "The AGM is a time for annual stocktaking and reporting" said Vice-president Limathwalla, in his opening address, "While we will take a look at our activities through the years, the bottom line by which we will be measured is the number of members that we helped to get started in business and the number of existing businesses that we have helped to grow." Minutes from *Edul Daver* summarizing the 2007 AGM held in Pune were approved by the Board. Reports from the Treasurer, Secretary, Chapter Chairs, and Special Activities were presented to the Board. The Treasurer's Report was presented on behalf of Treasurer Framroze Patel by *Director Rusi Gandhi*

Interactive sessions with the Houston community included presentations by; Director *Hoshang Karani* on acquiring and re-engineering a manufacturing business, He said "WZCC is like a bank-the more you put in it, the more you get back". Director *Fariborz Rahnamoon* on the situation of Zarathushti Iranian Youth, *Kaemerz Dotiwala* on targeting a business for WZCC focus, *Zarir Sethna* on creating financial entities to assist businesses, *Parvez Varjavand* on nurturing Youth in the home territory of Iran, FEZANA Past President *Rustom Kevala* on developing connections between our physical, human, and business resources, *Jal Gazder* on the assists WZCC can give to new businesses, *Director Minoo Shroff* on encouraging more to enter business life,







distinguished Parliamentarian Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari on promoting the success of all Zarathushtis worldwide, and Founding President Rohinton Rivetna on programs WZCC may undertake to advance its objectives..

**Youth Forum** Houston's Youth arranged a Youth session surpassing high marks. Introductions were given by Behroze Daruwalla, Zal Sethna, Mitra Khumbatta, Darius Byramji, Jamsheer Anklesaria, and Mitra Mehta.

Speakers Sonia Behrana, Rash, who in 2007 established her own The Behrana Law Firm explained the "Benefits and Pitfalls of Various Business Entities". Eric Engineer, an MBA from Harvard Business school and a senior associate at Sevin Rosen Funds gave a very informative session on "Venture Capital 101" Amy Godiwalla, a District manager for Healthpoint, a pharmaceutical company made an insightful presentation on "How to Successfully Lead and Influence People" Cyrus Mistry, an Enterprise Product Manager at Google in Silicon Valley presented on

"Entrepreneurship within an Organization". and Lara Balsara, Business Diversification Executive at Madison World, in Mumbai "Thinking small Beating Big—a David and Goliath Story of an Advertising Agency in India. They all provided superbly assured, informative, and timely



From left Cyrus Mistry, Amy Godiwalla, Eric Engineer, Lara Balsara, Sonia Behrana

information. Their topics ranged over business entities, venture capital, leadership, motivation, entrepreneurship within the large organization Google, and the strategy of the smaller firm, The Madison Group. Sessions were carried live with real-time, globally accessible, video-conferencing with the facilitation of Yazdi Tantra and the Houston team.

Special activities discussed at WZCC include support for the SynergyZ journal from Director Meher Besania. As well, Meher's plans and presentations for the 2009 World Zoroastrian Congress December 2009 in Dubai along with the 2009 WZCC AGM excited people. In particular, the ongoing Youth Entrepreneurship Program is a focus for the World Congress. Facilitation of summer interning by Youth is also an assignment from President Limathwalla to Director Rusi Gandhi of the New York Chapter. Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz discussed member polling and external activities.

Another special focus of the AGM included the Iranian delegation. Many had made the journey to Houston. We celebrate the opening of Tehran's Chapter and enjoyed meeting their visitors. We were honored to have the Regional Director Khodayar Attaie and Iran's distinguished Zarathushti



From left Khodayar Attaie; Fariborz Rahnamoon, Alayar Dabestani, Dr Esfandiar Ekhtiyari, Mobed Firozgari, Esfandiar Behzadi



representative to its Majlis (Parliament), Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari, with us for the 2008 AGM. They gave moving insights.

Indeed, the most touching moment of the AGM came in connection to our ancient roots and our Youth. The Board was alerted to ongoing immigration of Iranian Youth into America as facilitated by non-Zarathushti NFPs. The concern is over the hard prospects these young and capable people face in unplanned arrivals. Our Zarathushti community does not have timely information for people who come and we are thereby not "at the ready" to protect and assist newcomers.

A participant from overseas inquired of the American participants as to whether job prospects would be improving now. The first unraveling due to the global financial crisis has taken place, so will there be uplift? It was the moment that was the most affecting, for the honest answer can only suggest a grave outlook. As such, our Youth, our Entrepreneurship, and our *Freshokereti* (our renewing growth), must anticipate and surmount economic downturn wherever we are in the global community. Let us hope that an organization with the implicit vigor of WZCC will be a force by which we prevail and acquire strength. We have done as much over centuries and eons.

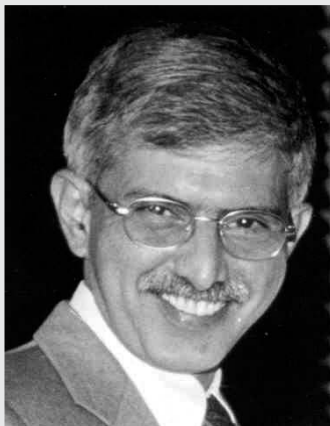
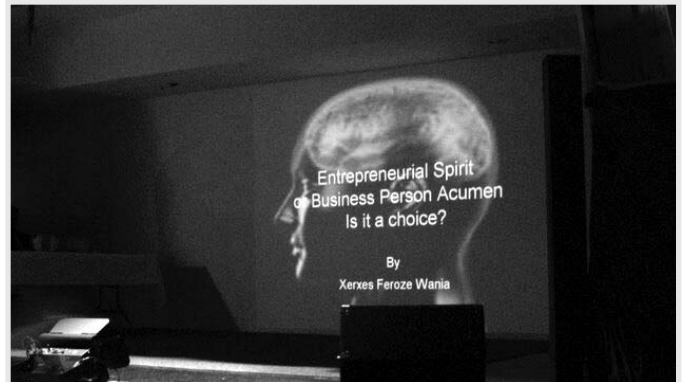
**AWARDS NIGHT.** The AGM meeting included presentation on December 30 of the 2008 WZCC Awards. The Master of Ceremonies for the well orchestrated evening was Homi Davier (left top) who welcomed the 225 plus guests with a Texan welcome.

The WZCC Awards are administered by WZCC- Australia (Director Phil Madon pars09@yahoo.com). The audience heard spirited addresses from President Limathwalla and Past President Bomy Boyce. Xerxes Wania, CEO of Sidense Corp, of Toronto, provided an engaging Keynote on the entrepreneurial spirit, of how to recognize an "Entrepreneur" from a "Businessperson". (photo top) Director Minoo Shroff elaborated the global financial situation.

Sam Balsara, (left middle) chairman and managing director of Madison World, India's largest communications Group was awarded *WZCC Honorary Membership*. Mr Balsara has been named by The Economic Times as "India's Most Influential Media Person"

Jal Shroff of Hong Kong (right) was awarded the *Outstanding Zarathushti Professional Award*. Mr Shroff is instrumental in launching the "Fossil" brand of fashion watches in USA. Fossil Inc (NASDAQ:FOSL) is a public company based in Dallas, TX with net sales exceeding US \$1.4 billion and net income \$123M. Fossil makes watches and jewelry for the world's leading fashion labels.

Dr. Viloo Morawala-Patell (left, bottom) was awarded the *Outstanding Zarathushti Entrepreneur*. She is the founder and chairperson of Avesthagen, a leading systems biology company focused on convergence of food, plasma and population genetics. The Avesthagen Project will compile a genetic, genealogical and medical database of the Zarathushti community





(see page 32) . She was also named the *Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur of the Year (2006)* by FICCI, India

*Nowshir Engineer*, of Dubai, (photo left) was named the *Outstanding Young Zarathushti Entrepreneur*. In 2003 he opened the Institute for Media and Communications and with hard work they now have offices in six Indian Cities and in Dubai, with 500 students going through their training programs each year.

The evening concluded with splendid entertainment from Kaemerz Dotiwalla, and Peshotan Unwalla, singing popular parsi songs, Kamalrukh Gandhi, orchestrating the hilarious comedy . "*Bawas on Broadway* ", ably assisted by ZAH Entertainment Troupe. Tenor *Naushad Mehta* and talented singer *Lyla Daroga* sang beautiful operatic renditions.

A visit to the historical Alamo and a boat ride along the Riverwalk in San Antonio were also arranged, as well as a 4 day cruise to Cozumel, Mexico on Carnival Cruise ship Ecstasy.

The Houston hosts for the WZCC AGM had the special energies of Rustom and Yasmin Engineer at the helm. They were assisted by many parties, including *Behroze Daruwalla*, *Houston Chapter chair*, *Yezdi and Roshan Engineer*, *Arnavaz and Hoshang*

*Sethna*, *Zarir and Roshan Sethna*, *Homi Davier*, *Kaemerz Dotiwalla*, *Sarosh Collector*, *Nouzer Buchia*, and *Kershaw Khambatta*.

Sponsors of the 2008 AGM included MKM Engineers, Inc., Pika International, Inc, the Dabestani Group, and North Houston Bank.

Roshan Rivetna was tireless

in creating detailed records on the 2008 AGM. More information can be found at **www.WZCC.net** and members can access helpful on-line resources such as a **WZCC LinkedIn Group**.



WZCC was launched in Houston on December 29, 2000 during the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress implementing the vision of *Sarosh Collector*, *Homi Davier*, *Rohinton Rivetna*, and *Kobad Zarolia* to form a Chamber of Commerce to promote business and enterprise among Zarathushtis globally.. Today it has 21 chapters world wide- 9 in USA, 6 in India and one each in Melbourne, Toronto, Iran, Dubai, Pakistan and London.

*Photo credits Homi Davier; Yezdi Engineer, Roshan Rivetna,*

Full report of AGM, Awards Night on

<http://wzcc.net/AGM2008.asp> OR

<http://zoroastrians.net/2009/02/09wzcc-agm-2008-and-ctr-2008/>

video on <http://wzcc.net/AGM2008.asp>



# BUSINESS

## Photo Gallery for the WZCC AGM/ Entertainment



### Photo legend

- 1 Kersi Limathwalla President WZCC with Minoo Shroff
- 2 Behroze Daruwalla Houston Chapter Chair, Darius Vania, and Minoo Shroff,
- 3 Perviz Varjavand with Kaemerz Dotivala
- 4 Audience on Awards Night
- 5 Polynesian Entertainment
- 6 The ZAH Entertainment Troupe

*Photo credits Homi Davier, Roshan Rivetna, Yezdi Engineer*



# BUSINESS

## WZCC's Glittering

## Felicitation for Minoo Shroff

By Shernaaz Engineer

Minoo Shroff is an icon of inspiration for the younger generation. His grace, erudition, good heartedness (and big heartedness), geniality and passion for public service was amply admired during his long stint as Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet.

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce-India (WZCCI) hosted a grand felicitation for him recently at the Cusrow Baug Pavilion, presided over by *Pallonji Mistry*, with illustrious speakers like *Nadir Modi*, *JJ Irani*, *Adi Engineer*, *Kersi Limathwalla* and messages from *Lord Karan Billimoria* and *WZCC President Bomy Boyce*.

The packed-to-capacity crowd comprised several worthies like BPP Chairman *Dinshaw Mehta* and his co-trustees – *Rustom Tirandaz*, *Arnavaz Mistry* and *Jimmy Mistry*; former Trustees *Dadi Engineer*, *Dinshaw Tamboly* and *Maneck Engineer*, High Priest *Dasturji Dr. Jamasp Asa*, *Dr. Mehroo Bengalee*, *Katy F. Mehta*, *Dadi Mistry*, *Behram Dastoor*, *Phili Kharas* (WZCC Mumbai Chapter Chair) and many more.

At the very outset, the new Chairman, *Dinshaw Mehta*, was welcomed by WZCC's International Vice-President, *Kersi Limathwalla*, who offered him a floral greeting and the wish: "God has given you a great opportunity to lead the community and may you do so in a manner such that the community remembers you for a long time."

Of Minoo Shroff, Mr. Limathwalla exulted, "It is a special privilege for me to stand here this evening, as I was also part of the felicitation function when Minoo Shroff was appointed Chairman of the BPP. We have assembled to say thank you to



From left Dr J.J. Irani, Minoo Shroff, and Pallonji Mistry

someone who has devotedly worked for the community for more than 20 years. We shall remember him for his approach to bring consensus into the board room, his tireless effort to converge divergent views, and the diligence with which he applied himself. In my association with him for nearly 30 years, I have yet to come across a person as diligent as him in welfare work."

*Dinshaw Mehta* said of his predecessor, "He ushered in Adult Franchise during his term as Chairman of the BPP. He has several other major achievements to his credit, and we wish him all the best."

Eminent lawyer *Nadir Modi* quoted the Raymond slogan to assert, "Minoo is the complete man – in every sense. One has always thought of him as a quintessential Zoroastrian. He personifies the best qualities of our community, silently doing what he thinks is right to do. Just to know him is a liberal education in itself. He was the captain of the ship when it was sailing through smooth and rough waters. Praise is redundant for him."

*Adi Engineer*, former Managing Director of Tata Power, also spoke eloquently when he commended Mr. Shroff's contribution to the community: "Parsis, in order to pay tribute to Minoo, should not praise him, but follow his precedent and work with unity of purpose. Minoo has been a catalyst, that important ingredient that completes a chemical equation. And he follows the Zoroastrian tenet of giving open-heartedly." Mr. Engineer

also commended *Villoo Shroff*, insisting: "Behind every successful man is a supportive and loving wife!"

The stage was then set for Chief Guest *Pallonji Mistry* to take over. He said, "I generally don't make speeches – this is an exception. Minoo's deep and abiding interest in the community's affairs and his global perspective make him much admired and liked across the community."

*Dr. J.J. Irani*, Director, Tata Sons, commended Mr. Shroff with the words, "Minoo is a great symbol of the values Parsis pride themselves for. He has rekindled within me the urge to do something for the community. Despite provocation, he has never lost his equanimity. He is one of the rare professionals in public life without a personal agenda. He is an example of what a person in public life should be."

Minoo Shroff, overwhelmed by the spontaneous upsurge of emotion and goodwill he has managed to generate through years of dedicated community service, was his usual unassuming self. "At such an occasion, hyperbole and exaggeration are to be expected," he began disarmingly, going on to concede, "My 22-year long odyssey at the BPP has been exacting and arduous. An intrusive and very critical press made life difficult for those of us who were managing the BPP. The Trust has a very wide spectrum of activities and we need to forget past acrimony and move ahead by finding sensible compromises. I remember my chat with Queen Elizabeth a couple of years ago, when she spoke to me for almost fifteen minutes asking me, "Why are you Parsis so pre-eminent?" Then she answered the query herself by saying, "I think it is because you are so confident of yourselves!" We need to rediscover our strengths. I wish the new Board all the best and thank the entire BPP staff

# BUSINESS

and my former colleagues who, even if they never agreed with me, never doubted my bonafides."

*Farrokh Rustomjee*, Honorary Secretary of the WZCC's India Chamber, proposed the vote of thanks and *Zarine Commissariat*, WZCC's International Corporate Secretary was the hostess-with-the-mostess, orchestrating a perfect evening for much admired and revered former BPP Chairman, Minoo Shroff!

## **BOMY BOYCE WZCC PRESIDENT FELICITATES MINOO SHROFF**

As Global President of WZCC I am delighted that we honour one of our own. Minoo needs no introduction for he is known and respected for his continuous involvement with our community over several years.

There are few men like him who do not crave recognition or applause, stands tall for his convictions and lends his support to those who desire it. With his stellar business acumen, and a very wide perspective of current affairs he provides a platform the business oriented can feast upon. It was his vision, which created the venture capital program and which he

liberally but prudently deployed assisting many to sow their seeds of entrepreneurship. Minoo is an economist with stellar business credentials and a lifetime of achievements through his superlative community service.

Minoo headed the complex organization called the BPP, which he steered skilfully through the quagmire of the rules, legal issues and most importantly turmoil of beliefs and emotions of the community. He brought dignity to the organization and gave it some semblance of stability, which it so badly needed. His absence will leave a significant void and after years of selfless service to the community, we hope Minoo will have the opportunity and time for other pursuits with his family and friends.

Minoo has tremendous reach and helped me in harnessing the agreement of the Zoroastrian Titans for the first innovative electronic interface "*Talk of the Titans*" and dialogue between the Zoroastrian luminaries in India and the North American participants. He played a role of a coordinator and delivered the keynote address in his inimitable

manner. The North American community found him to be distinguished, incisive and very committed to our community.

As chairman of the India Chamber of WZCC, he has provided a continuous impetus to our organization. He also provided guidance and motivation wherever required and won the hearts and minds of the members with whom he came in contact. We wish to see him continue to contribute to WZCC organization for many more years and for the past years we say a humble and truly sincere Thank You.

As a personal friend, I have enjoyed our talks and visits, our collaboration and our vision of the future for WZCC. He is a true gentleman – dignified, accomplished and gracious.

We bow our heads to this noble leader and we wish him well in the next chapter of his very interesting lifetime of achievements.

*Good Luck and God Bless.*

*Bomy Boyce, Global President, WZCC*

The **WZCC NORTH TEXAS CHAPTER** held its third meeting on November 16th 2008, with a guest speaker Mr. Nozer Buchia of Equicap Group of Companies from the Houston Chapter. Equicap is an investment Management company, which is involved in **BUILDING WEALTH THROUGH REAL ESTATE**.

Mr Buchia introduced Equicap, its location and business philosophy, its investment guidelines, financial overview and targeted returns. He gave an overview of some of the projects that they have partnered with others in Houston, as well as their expansion to Eastern Europe, India and other parts of the world.



Nozer, then spoke of encouraging entrepreneurship and mentoring the young adults of our community, in a world of challenges that we face. He elaborated on the Foundation that he and his wife Persis are planning to establish to nurture and support young entrepreneurs.

*Photo: L to R Jamshed Rivetna-Treasurer, Nozer Buchia, Firdosh Mehta-Chair, Kashmira Contractor-Secretary*





## FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (FEZANA)

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