

# JOURNAL

Dae – Behman – Spendarmad 1379 AY (Fasli) ● Amordad – Shehrever – Meher 1380 AY (Shenshai) ● Shehrever – Meher – Avan 1380 AY (Kadimi)

## CELEBRATING 1000 YEARS Ferdowsi's Shahnameh: The Soul of Iran



**HAPPY NEW  
YEAR 2011**

### Also Inside:

-  **Earliest surviving manuscripts**
-  **Sorabji Pochkhanawala: India's greatest banker**
-  **Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Visits ZTFE**
-  **U.S. Presidential Executive Mission**





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## SPRING 2011

### ZARATHUSHTI PHILANTHROPY

#### GUEST EDITOR

Dr Mehroo Patel

## SUMMER 2011

### FOOD FOR BODY AND MIND

#### GUEST EDITORS

Sarosh and Benafsha Khariwala,  
Arnavaz Chubb,

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Dae –Behman – Spendarmad

Amordad – Shehrever- Meher

Shehrever – Meher – Avan

1379 AY (Fasli)

1380 AY (Shenshai)

1380 AY (Kadimi)



Photo on cover:



Cover design  
Feroza Fitch of  
Lexicongraphics  
Photo credit see  
page 4

**Opinions expressed in the FEZANA Journal do not necessarily reflect the views of FEZANA or members of this publication's editorial board.**

**Published at Regal Press, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada**

FEZANA Journal Vo 24 No 4 ISBN 1068-2376

(USPS 021-495) published quarterly by FEZANA 5750 S. Jackson St Hinsdale IL 60521-5109. Periodical postage rate is paid at Oakbrook, IL 60523 and at additional mailing offices. Annual subscription \$15 (US) ; \$20 (Canada); \$30 (surface) and \$50 (air) for other countries; details on subscription Form. POSTMASTER: send changes to Fezana Journal, 8787 W. Airport Blvd. Houston, TX 77071

## A word from the Editor

Dolly Dastoor

The dreadful first decade of the 21st century is over. And what a decade it has been, One cannot help but think of the events that defined this decade: starting with 9/11 and the rise of terrorism, with the loss of thousands of lives; in the streets from Bali to Mumbai, two wars with further loss of civilian lives, health endemics: natural disasters from tsunamis to earthquakes to devastating floods, religious intolerance of ethnic cleansing in Darfu, to Rwanda to Burma. and the decade closing with an economic upheaval of historic proportions and a growing gap between rich and poor, rising anger, impatience and paralyzed political institutions This decade has defined the world into "them vs us".

And how did we the global Zarathushti community interface with this first decade?. It saw the birth of WAPIZ, the World Alliance of Parsi Irani Zarathushtis, an ultra conservative group which dominates the present Indian scene, a decade which saw the adult franchise for the BPP. A decade which saw the erosion of equal rights for women and men married outside the faith in life and in death, a decade which saw the epithets of "rogue priests" and "un-zoroastrian" attached to Zarathushtis who believe and practice the religion in its original form.

A decade which preferred to see Parsi properties in Udvada and land surrounding the Iranshah swallowed up by people from outside the community, rather than being preserved as "Heritage Site" with the fear that non-Zarathushti tourists may come visiting!! What is more important, that Japanese or Swedish tourists visit the Heritage site or a cosmopolitan Indian community lives in these homes? How long will it take for the present 100 parsis of Udvada to become 50 and then 20? Will the rest of the non-Zarathushti world ever know or care that the Zarathushti Heritage of Udvada is lost forever?

When all minority communities around the world want to preserve their "way of life" for their children to absorb the culture of their ancestors, the Parsi community in India thinks otherwise.

And yet the Diaspora marches on, The Diaspora held three very successful World Zoroastrian Congresses FEZANA/Houston 2000, London 2005, Dubai 2009. The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce

(WZCC) conceptualized in the Diaspora marches on with chapters in every continent. The Diaspora participated effectively in the Parliament of World Religions, Cape Town, 2000, Barcelona, 2005, Melbourne, 2009. UNESCO and the White House now recognize the celebration of Navroz, the Diaspora

participates in UN World Summits. (see FJ Fall 2010). The Singapore Diaspora participated actively in the Interfaith Cultural Exhibition, The Archbishop of Canterbury paid a historic visit to the Zoroastrian House, London, This decade has seen the growth and surge of the Zarathushti Diaspora.

In this issue we celebrate people who made history in their time, 1000th anniversary of the Shahnameh written by the renowned Ferdowsi, the 150th anniversary of the illustrious Rabindranath Tagore and the 100th anniversary of Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala, the banker par excellence.

All of us need to bear in mind that more than a thousand years of monumental effort of an extraordinary exemplary nature can be washed away in less than a thousand days. Such is the power of the waves of discord. Persepolis was not built in a day, but burnt down in a night.

May the second decade bring us back from the path of self destruction and move us once again to communal peace, harmony and growth. And while we dream of a better tomorrow let us not forget that tomorrow is made of many today's, and how we live our today will shape our tomorrow.





A joy of living in a North American Zarathushti community where we practice our traditions has been the rediscovery of the celebrations of *Sisdeh-Bedar* and *Tirgan*. These celebrations, atrophied in Parsi culture, are celebrated by Zarathushtis from Iran with gusto as decreed by the seasons every year.

A particularly delightful aspect of these "*Picnics in the Park*" is the inevitable playing of board games, i.e., chess and backgammon. I was recently introduced to a remarkable innovation, a four person game of chess! Of many a memorable conversation, as we battle in the games with our wits, one which often crops up is the question of whether Shatranj (Chess) was invented in Iran or in India. While truth can be difficult to define, especially in worldly matters, if the *Shahnameh* is to be believed, we can bring this ongoing debate to a close.

The *Shahnameh* can broadly be divided in three parts: *the mythical, the legendary and the quasi-historical*. In the historic section, the story is told of an Embassy of Sind (Hind) arriving in the court of Kesra Nushin-Ravan who reigned in Iran from 531 to 578. Known for his civil and judiciary reforms and fair treatment of his subjects, Nushin-Ravan was commonly known as the "just" (*adil*).

In the finely balanced court scene on the cover of this issue of the Journal, the king dressed in Safavid fineries, is enthroned on the right. He addresses the envoy of the Raja of Qanuj who has arrived with camels, elegantly saddled horses and white elephants laden with sumptuous gifts of gold, silver, rubies, diamonds and ambergris. After all these gifts are sent away to the treasury, the envoy offers his most special and mysterious gift: *Shatranj*! When no instructions are provided for the rules of the game, it falls to the astute vizier *Bozormehr* to decipher its strategy. *Bozormehr* in turn reciprocates the challenge and

invents the game of *Takht-e-Nard*. Nushin-Ravan, pleased with his vizier asks *Bozormehr* to travel to India and give it to the Raja himself. At the Indian court, the Raja, impressed with *Bozormehr*'s knowledge of numerous subjects, exclaims: "*This is truly an eloquent and wise man, quite apart from the business of chess and nard!*"

The pictorial displays in the commissioned manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* provide us an opportunity to delight in a unique art form. The embedded calligraphic text replicates what is illustrated on each page. Unlike paintings hung on a wall, the pictures are best appreciated close up in a book. The artist uses his skills to interpret the text with his paint brush. The game of chess is difficult to find in this particular representation of the story. The artist chose instead to detail the beauty of the Sasanian court. In a masterpiece of world literature which covers fifty monarchs (three of them women) beginning at the dawn of time, there are relatively few moments of peace and respite in the narrative; of which this is one of them. The sense of cultural refinement and respect for each other's kingdoms between Iran and India is palpable as one reads the manuscript. Put in this historic context it is easy to understand why Parsis chose to go to India when they were persecuted in Iran for their religious beliefs.

Now in the North American Zarathushti Diaspora we are getting back together again. Bring out the chess and backgammon boards and let the games begin!

#### Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to:

- (i) Ms. Massumeh Farhad, Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C., in sharing her knowledge in the interpretation of Iranian pictorial and calligraphic art.
- (ii) The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund that made the exhibition and brochure, from which much of this material is taken.

#### Reference:

"*Sunset of Empire*" -*Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi Volume III* translated by Dick Davis: ISBN 0-934211-68-X Mage Publishers [www.mage.com](http://www.mage.com)

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



# Calendar of Festivals

Calendar of Festivities September 2010 to March 2011

<i>Man Fravarain, Roz Fravarain</i>	Saturday, Aug 7	(K)
	Monday, Sept 6	(S)
Maidyozarem Gahambar		
<i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Sunday, Aug 29 - Thursday, Sept 02	(K)
	Tuesday, Sept 28 - Saturday, Oct 02	(S)
Paitishem Gahambar		
<i>Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad Aneran</i>	Sunday, Sept 12- Thursday, Sept 16	(F)
Jashne-Mehergan	Saturday, Oct 02	(F)
<i>Mah Meher, Roz Meher</i>		
Ayathrem Gahambar	Tuesday, Oct 12- Saturday, Oct 16	(F)
<i>Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>		
Jashne-Avangan(Avan Ardivisur Parab)	Tuesday, Oct 26	(F)
<i>Mah Avan, Roz Avan</i>		
Maidyoshem Gahambar	Thursday, Oct 28 - Monday, Nov. 01	(K)
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Daepmeher</i>	Saturday, Nov 27- Wednesday, Dec 01	(S)
Jashne-Adargan	Wednesday, Nov 24	(F)
<i>Mah Adar, Roz Adar</i>		
Death Anniversary of Zarathushtra	Sunday, Dec 26	(F)
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Khorshed</i>		
Maidhyarem Gahambar	Friday, Dec 31-Tuesday, Jan 04	(F)
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>		
Jashne Daegan	Friday, Jan 07	(F)
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Daepdin</i>		
Jashne Bahmangan	Sunday, Jan 16	(F)
<i>Mah Bahman, Roz Bahman</i>		
Paitishem Gahambar	Tuesday, Jan 11 - Saturday, Jan 15	(K)
<i>Mah Sheherevar, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Thursday, Feb 10 - Monday, Feb 14	(S)
Jashne Sadeh	Sunday, Jan 30	(F)
<i>Mah Bahman, Roz Meher</i>		
Ayatherem Gahambar	Thursday, Feb 10 - Monday, Feb 14	(K)
<i>Mah Meher, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Saturday, Mar 12 - Wed, Mar 16	(S)
Fravardegan/Panjeh/Hamaspathmedayem Gal	Wednesday, March 16- Mar 20	(F)
<i>Five Gatha days</i>		
Char-Shanbe-Soori (Heralding the New Year)	Tuesday March 15	(F)
<i>Tuesday Prior to NauRooz</i>		
NauRooz or Jamshedi NauRooz (New Year)	Monday, Mar 21	(F)
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>		

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

The Summer 2010 issue of FEZANA Journal is now available online.

The Cover Story is on Dynamism of the Diaspora – Building Zoroastrian Communities WorldWide



<http://zoroastrians.net/2010/12/09/fezana-journal-summer-2010/>

Photo on Cover by special permission

Nushirvan Receives an Embassy from the Raja of Hind Iran, Tabriz, Safavid period. ca. 1520s, Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper Lent by the Ebrahimi Family Foundation for the ongoing exhibit on the Shahnameh (open till April 17th 2011) at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.





## COMING EVENTS

**NOV 20-FEB 27 2010. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto:** Touring exhibition "The Splendour of India's Royal Courts.(FJ Fall 2010 pg 106)

**JANUARY 7-9, 2011, ENGAGING THE GLOBAL INDIANS,** The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, New Delhi, [www.pbd.org](http://www.pbd.org)

**FEBUARY 1-4 2011, YAZD, IRAN** 10th Anniversary International Volleyball competition Contact [vaneshvaran@ashtad.com](mailto:vaneshvaran@ashtad.com)

**FEB/MARCH 2011 UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

"Access and participation of women and girls to education, training , science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work" Contact FEZANA UN-NGO co-chairs [homidgandhi@gmail.com](mailto:homidgandhi@gmail.com); [afreed.mistry@gmail.com](mailto:afreed.mistry@gmail.com) and [bpastakia@aol.com](mailto:bpastakia@aol.com)

**MARCH 13, 2011** Nowruz at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Museums, Washington. A day long celebrations with display of the special exhibit SHAHNAMA: 1000 years of the Persian Book of Kings

**APRIL 22-24, 2011, FEZANA AGM, MONTREAL,** Contact [Dollydastoor@sympatico.ca](mailto:Dollydastoor@sympatico.ca)

**APRIL 2011, WZCC ANNUAL MEETING, TEHRAN, IRAN**

**JULY 1-4 2011, FIFTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS, VANCOUVER, BC,** [Congress2011@hotmail.com](mailto:Congress2011@hotmail.com)

**SEPTEMBER 2011 UNITY WALK** Unity Walk on 9/11/2011, Embassy Row, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. From Washington Hebrew Congregation to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, Massachusetts Ave, NW , Washington DC [www.911unitywalk.org](http://www.911unitywalk.org)

**SEPTEMBER 2011,** 64th Annual DPI/NGO Conference of the United Nations, BONN, GERMANY "Sustainable Societies: Responsive Citizens"

**JULY 4 2012** 13th Zoroastrian Games, hosted by Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.

**AUGUST 1-5 2012, SIXTEENTH NORTH AMERICAN Z CONGRESS, NEW YORK.** Zarathushti Existence in the Contemporary World [www.zagny.org](http://www.zagny.org)

**2012**

### FEZANA SILVER JUBILEE

#### FEZANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**APRIL 22-24, 2011**

**MONTREAL**

**FRIDAY 22, 5.00 p.m.**

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

**Present and Future leaders are encouraged to attend to chart the course of the North American Zarathushti Community**

**SATURDAY, 23,**

**SUNDAY, 24**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**election results  
showcase associations  
receive reports  
financial statements  
future planning**

**For more information  
visit [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)**

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In O. Henry's famous short story *"The Gift of the Magi"*, Jim & Della are dirt poor, but love each other dearly. There are only two things in their simple lives that they treasure: Della's beautiful long hair, and Jim's pocket watch that was given to him by his grandfather.

Now for Christmas, Della wants to buy Jim a platinum chain for his watch. To get the money for the chain, she decides to sell her hair to a wigmaker. When Jim comes home and she gives him the chain, Jim smiles and tells her that he sold his watch to buy her two tortoise shell combs that Della had long coveted.

Neither can use the gifts that they so lovingly bought by sacrificing something they treasured. Did they make the right decisions? Yes, according to O. Henry; because the gifts were given from the heart. Della's hair will grow back and she will be able to wear the combs some day. Some day they will be able to buy a new watch for Jim so that he can wear the chain, the symbol of his wife's love.

This story illustrates that it does not matter what you give. But it is important who you give it to.

Your donations to FEZANA will help to fulfill its mission to preserve and strengthen our religion.

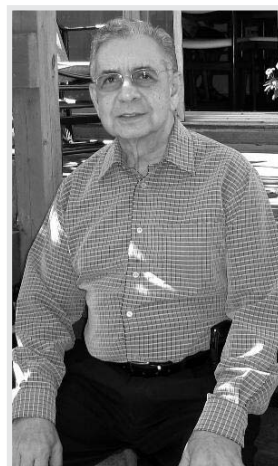
FEZANA has several funds to which donations can be earmarked: General Fund, Infrastructure Fund, Journal, Religious Education, Scholarships, Welfare, and Youth. The greatest need now is to supplement the General Fund which supports most of the budgeted

activities of FEZANA: administration, congresses, FIRES, publications, and university grants for Zoroastrian religion courses.

Kindly make your checks payable to FEZANA, indicate the fund you wish to support and mail to the Treasurer, Ratan Mistry, 1258 Water Lily Way, San Jose, CA 95129. Or donate through the FEZANA website: <http://www.fezana.org/Funds>. The website accepts credit cards and is completely secure.

And now, there is another painless way to donate to FEZANA every time you shop or browse on the Internet. FEZANA is registered as a "Cause" on [www.iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com). All you need to do is (1) go to [www.iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com); (2) select FEZANA as your Cause; (3) register yourself as a member; (4) select your favorite stores; and (5) shop or search for what you need.

Shopping or searching through iGive.com means a donation for FEZANA at no extra cost to you. A penny or more per search, a \$5 bonus for your first purchase and up to 26% of your purchases at over 730 stores like Amazon, eBay, Travelocity, Home Depot, and many many more. To shop and qualify for a donation, you must be logged in as an iGive.com member and you must reach the store through iGive.com or iSearchiGive.com.



### FEZANA FUNDS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Jerry Kheradi, MD, FACG, and Rustom Kevala, PhD**  
Co-chairs

**Ratan Mistry, FEZANA Treasurer, Celeste Kheradi,**  
**Morvarid Behziz, M. Ed , Youth Representative**

# **FEZANA Updates** **FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT**



## FEZANA

List of Donations received from July 1, 2010 to Sep 30, 2010

### FEZANA General Fund

Khurshid Jamadar, Coppell, TX	\$	100.00
Minoo Rao, Linwood, MI	\$	100.00
Kersi Bhesania, Toronto, ON	\$	80.00

**\$ 280.00**

### Zoroastrian Studies - Stanford University

Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago	\$	1,000.00
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### Navsari Atashbehram Fund - through World Zoroastrian Organization, Mumbai

Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania & New Jersey, Inc	\$	2,104.00
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### Total FEZANA General Fund

**\$ 3,384.00**

### FEZANA Welfare Fund

Fariba Pirghaibi on behalf of various donors, Laguna Beach, CA	\$	500.00
Dr. & Mrs. Farokh Contractor, Kenner, LA	\$	250.00
Bella Tata, West Vancouver, BC	\$	30.00

**\$ 780.00**

### Pakistan Flood Relief

Afshad & Meher Mistri, Mountain View, CA	\$	500.00
Prochy Sethna, San Jose, CA	\$	200.00
Behli & Zenobia Hansotia, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	\$	100.00
Kershaw & Bakthawar Byramji, Houston, TX	\$	100.00
Parastu & Jamshed Dubash, Shrewsbury, MA	\$	100.00
Darab B. Unwalla, Boca Raton, FL	\$	50.00
Richard & Zarine Weil, Oak Park, IL	\$	50.00
Rusi & Viloo Tavadia, Novi, MI	\$	31.00

**\$ 1,131.00**

### Total FEZANA Welfare Fund

**\$ 1,911.00**

### Grand Total

**\$ 5,295.00**

**FEZANA** has allocated a budget subsidy of \$5000 to support participation and involvement of Zarathushti youth and young adults of North America to attend the

### WORLD YOUTH CONGRESS, VANCOUVER, JUNE 30 - JULY 5, 2011

Application forms will be distributed to all **FEZANA** Associations and **Small groups**

**Contact Firdosh Mehta at [fdjmehta@shaw.ca](mailto:fdjmehta@shaw.ca) or visit [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)**





# FEZANA UPDATE



## THE ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr*  
6900 Halifax Street, Burnaby, British Columbia V5B 2R5, Canada  
Telephone (604) 420-3500



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Being given the opportunity to chair the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Vancouver, BC is getting to be an experience that I am truly just beginning to understand and appreciate. Over the last three years, I have made acquaintances with leaders in our community from all over the world, and have learned a great deal from working along side them. My vision from the start was to host an event that would not only be educational but be entertaining at the same time. We have a great variety of speakers and entertainment lined up for you. We are limited to 500 registrants so don't miss out on this unique experience that we have in store for you.

On a personal note, I am 35 years old and am a property developer/renovator by profession, owning and operating my own company. When I am not busy planning for the congress, I take time to build and fly airplanes. I also spend a lot of time playing the drums and enjoy travelling.

I would like to thank FEZANA and my committee and all volunteers, for their support and commitment throughout this enormous but gratifying undertaking.

**Zain Mavalvalla**  
**Chair, 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress**

### MESSAGE FROM CHAIR, SPEAKER COMMITTEE



I am very excited to be a part of this once in a lifetime event! We are working very hard to create a speaker group that is diverse, informative, as well as entertaining. Being a teacher by profession, I understand the importance of providing entertaining and captivating sessions in order to capture and hold audience interest.

Born in Hong Kong, I moved to Vancouver in 1994, where I have lived ever since. Vancouver has been voted one of the top three cities in the world to live in for a number of years...and in my humble opinion, rightly so! We are very excited to host energetic and dynamic Zoroastrian youth from all over the world next summer. I look forward to meeting many new people and reconnecting with friends. Make sure to check out the next issue of FEZANA JOURNAL for more details on the people that we have invited to speak at the congress.

**Shiraz Italia,**  
**Chair, Speaker Committee**



# FEZANA UPDATE

## MESSAGES FROM

**BENAFSHA KAPADIA, ENTERTAINMENT COMM. CO-CHAIR**



I am currently a student at Simon Fraser University and have been planning events since high school. The best part of this youth congress is going to be the events and entertainment, and there is nothing else I'd rather be doing than planning these. Also working in the tourism industry, I really can say that Vancouver is absolutely amazing! I am looking forward to seeing all of you here :)

**ARMIN BUZORG, ENTERTAINMENT COMM, CO-CHAIR**



I love being an active member in the Zoroastrian Community. My interests are dancing and racquet sports like badminton and tennis. My future aspiration as a professional is to get my degree and teach Dental Hygiene.



I am an UBC B.Com MIS Graduate working at TD Canada Trust as a Financial Advisor for over 2 years. Love all sports, specifically basketball and hockey. Black belt in Hapkido and have many years of volunteer experience for different causes. Achieving balance in all aspects of life is my goal at the end of the day and trying to have fun on the way!

**NARIUS DASTUR, WEBMASTER**



"I have been actively involved with the ZSBC in Vancouver for as long as I can remember. After having the pleasure of attending the 4WZYC in Australia, I knew I wanted to get involved with the congress in my home town. I recently graduated with a degree in Computing Science and I am now working as an IT Technician in the public sector. Keeping in tune with my skills and abilities, I am the webmaster for the ZSBC and 5WZYC websites. I'm very excited to be a part of the congress committee and I'm looking forward to seeing you all in Vancouver in 2011."





# FEZANA UPDATE

## MEHERNAZ BUZORG, FUNDRAISING COMM.



"I have been contributing to the Zoroastrian community of British Columbia since 2000. I graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor of Business Administration. I enjoy traveling, writing poetry, volunteering, and spending time with family and friends.

## EDDIE MADON, TREASURER



I was involved in the planning and hosting of the 5th North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress here in Vancouver back in 1991 and it's an honor to be involved as the Treasurer of the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress. I was born and raised here in Vancouver and I am so proud to call this jewel of a city home. I have a BA in Economics and am a Chartered Accountant by profession. I am currently a Director and

Broker of a Mortgage Brokerage. I have no doubt that the Vancouver Youth Congress will set the bar very high for future youth congresses – make sure you don't miss out on this fantastic event in perhaps the most beautiful city in the world!

## YOHAN IRANI, TRANSPORTATION



My name is Yohan Irani, I am a young, energetic & well disciplined Zoroastrian. Being on the Congress Committee, I'm responsible for to and fro transportation. Amongst my many hobbies, I enjoy travelling the most. Living in the beautiful city of Vancouver for the last fifteen years, I have mastered the roads extremely well.

Let me assure you here that I'm an intelligent, dependable and an efficient individual. I take ownership of my responsibilities and am admired and respected by family & friends.

During your short stay for the Congress, I shall do my very best to provide one and all safe transportation.

**WE WELCOME YOU TO THE  
5TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH  
CONGRESS  
VANCOUVER, BC. JUNE 30-JULY 5, 2011**



# FEZANA UPDATE

UNITED WE STAND *Building Bridges Across Oceans*



## 5TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS Vancouver, BC

JUNE 30 - JULY 5, 2011

Held at The University of British Columbia



Join us in making it a productive and interactive learning experience  
about our heritage and religion.

Come stay and play for 5 all inclusive days of fun and sun.

**Price : CAD \$ 640.00 \* All Inclusive. \* Early bird price until January 15, 2011**

Includes Accommodation, Registration, Gala Dinners, Transportation,  
Recreation and Meals for all five days.

( Registration limited to 500 participants on first come first serve basis )

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**Guest Editor Teenaz Javat**

The year 2010 marked the 1,000th anniversary of the great Persian epic Shahnameh composed in the 10th century by Ferdowsi, often referred to as the great Bard of Toos. The magnum opus is considered the Crown Jewel of Persian literature and is cherished by all Iranians, including non-Persian ethnic groups as well as the Persian speaking societies of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and across the great swath of Central Asia.

This voluminous work, regarded by Persian speakers and scholars as a literary masterpiece, also reflects Iran's history, its cultural values, its ancient religions and its profound sense of nationhood. Ferdowsi completed the Shahnameh at the point in time when Iran's national independence had been compromised with the Arab invasion in the 7th century CE. While there are memorable heroes and heroines of the classical type in this work, scholars have often deemed that the real, ongoing hero is Iran itself, referred to in the Shahnameh as the land of the noble Aryans.

The Persian language as spoken today is a living language, and had been around for over a millennium. The beauty lies in the fact that although the Shahnameh was completed in March 1010, it is still read by Persian speakers throughout the world in its original textual form. This makes the Shahnameh unique from other epics which are written in languages that are now dead. Because it is a living language, the Shahnameh has had a tremendous influence in shaping the modern identity of its readers across the erstwhile Persian empire which includes modern day Iran, Tajikistan and the newly minted republics of Central Asia.

Besides being of epic proportions, Ferdowsi has decorated his book with many universal virtuous and moral concepts sustained by Persian poetry down the ages. He laboured for 30 years to combine history, legend, fighting, feasting, hunting and politics in his stories. He went to great lengths to incorporate many universal virtuous and moral concepts too. (See page 13)

## SHAHNAMEH AND ME!

When Dolly Dastoor editor-in-chief of the FEZANA Journal and the erudite Behram Pastakia, the Publication Chair, FEZANA, requested me to Guest Edit this keep-sake issue, I agreed. Needless to say, at that point in time I had no clue as to how I would give justice to this living epic that pervades and expresses so much of Persian culture. Other than the story of Rustom and Sohrab, or the discovery of Fire by King Hoshang (which happens to be my son's favourite Shahnameh story), I was not aware of the richness of language and the great depth of culture and history that is stored in the 60,000 couplets penned by the Bard of Toos.

What I was sure of was that I would do my best to bring to our readers the essence of the Shahnameh in a voice that the laity would understand. Keeping in mind our readership, I did not want to clutter up the issue with scholarly articles but instead have scholars within the Zarathushti Diaspora write and tell us what they have learnt and what they wish to pass on to the next generation.

To that extent I have been extremely fortunate. After much thought, I contacted six stalwarts who gave freely and readily of their time and knowledge to make this edition not only an easy read but at the same time a go-to reference for the Shahnameh.

Over the past few months, I have been, at once humbled and honored to have come into contact with and worked with Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia (Mumbai), Ervad Dr. Peshotan Peer (Mumbai), Ervad Parvez Bajan (Mumbai), Pervin Mistry (Australia, Mumbai, Toronto), Farishta Dinshaw (Karachi-Toronto), Freddy Mirza (Toronto), Eddie Eduljee (Vancouver), Dinyar Patel (Boston) and Hamid Dabashi (New York). After doggedly chasing Prof. Charles Melville, Professor of Persian History, I finally pinned him down at the University of Cambridge which is the crucible of Persian Studies. We have an interview with him on the Shahnama Project. The bios of all the scholars appear below their contribution. They have, in a simple and cogent manner explained to us different aspects of the epic and its relevance in the present day.

As the research continued and the emails went back and forth, I realized one simple fact that it can be quite challenging at times to simplify and explain 6,000 years of history and explain aspects of it in a mere 1,500 words. But our contributors have worked above and beyond to bring this epic and its meaning to the average North American household (which is the mandate of this magazine) and beyond.



## SHAHNAMEH-THE SOUL OF IRAN

The singular message that the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi strives to convey is the idea that the history of Iran was a complete and absolute whole: it started with Gayomard, the first man on earth and ended with his fiftieth scion and successor, Yazdegerd III, thereby spanning 6,000 years of ancient Iranian history and culture.

What was of utmost importance to Ferdowsi it seems, was to prevent this history from losing its connection with future Iranian generations. And scholars, who have studied him and his epic, are unanimous in the fact that to that end he has succeeded.

My sincere hope is that our readers learn as much as I did in compiling and guest editing this one-of-a-kind issue for the FEZANA JOURNAL.

*Thank you*  
*Teenaz Javat*

### SALIENT TEACHINGS FROM THE SHAHNAMEH

<b>Yekta-Parasti</b>	(Worship of one God)
<b>Khoda Tarsi</b>	(Fear of breaking the commandments of God, respecting God)
<b>Din Dari</b>	(Religious Uprightness)
<b>Mihan Doosti</b>	(patriotism)
<b>Mehr beh Zan o Farzand</b>	(love of wife, family and children)
<b>Dastgiryeh Darmandegaan</b>	(Helping the poor)
<b>Kheradmandi</b>	(Pursuit of Wisdom)
<b>Dad-Khahi</b>	(Pursuit of Justice)
<b>Door-Andishi</b>	(Long term thinking)
<b>Miyaneh Ravi</b>	(Seeking and Acting in Equilibrium-moderation)
<b>Adaab Daani</b>	(Acting and Knowing correct manner-courtesy)
<b>Mehman Nawazi</b>	(Seeking the happiness of Guests-hospitality)
<b>Javanmardi</b>	(Chivalry)
<b>Bakhshesh</b>	(Forgiveness)
<b>Sepasgozari</b>	(Thankfulness)
<b>Khoshnoodi o Khorsandi</b>	(Being content and happy with existence)
<b>Kooshaayi</b>	(Hard Work)
<b>Narmesh Yaa Modaaraai</b>	(Being Peaceful and Kind)
<b>Vafadaari</b>	(Being faithful)
<b>Raasti o Dorostkari</b>	(Truth and opposing anything that is against the Truth)
<b>Peymaan Daari</b>	(Keeping covenants)
<b>Sharm o Ahestegi</b>	(Shame at committing immoral acts and also control over one's self)
<b>Khamooshi</b>	(Not acting loud-moderesty)
<b>Danesh Amoozi</b>	(Pursuing Knowledge-education)
<b>Sokhan Dani</b>	(Knowledge of Wise Words)

### Shahnameh by numbers

**Written by Abul-Qasim Hasan Ferdowsi (940-1021 CE.)**

**60,000 rhyming couplets (4,000 of which are lost)**

**62 stories**

**990 chapters**

**7 times the length of Homer's Iliad**

**Depicts 6,000 years of ancient Persian History**

**Took 35 years to write**

**No first edition with a publication date is available**

**2 copies created in the Royal court of Tabriz in 1330 and 1520 known as the Great Mongol Shahnameh and the Tahmasb Shahnameh respectively**

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## SHAHNAMEH AND THE ERA OF PISHDADIAN DYNASTY

ERVAD DR. ROOYINTAN PESHOTAN PEER

The title of this subject is very vast, and cannot be expressed within a few pages. It is therefore necessary to understand the same in a very wide context and an era of time which has no limits.

When we talk of the Shahnameh, we talk of the history of the Iranian Mazdayasnian Zarathushti Empire from ancient times up to the conquest of Iran by the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century CE.

Iranian History broadly comprises of five dynasties viz.

- *Pishdadian*
- *Kyanian*
- *Achaemenian (or Hakhamniah)*
- *Parthian (or Arshkanian)*
- *Sassanian*

The names of the first two dynasties reflect the general character of the rulers of those times – *Pishdad* meaning the ancient Law Givers, and *Kyan* meaning The Royal Ones. They are beyond any archaeological evidences, and are therefore considered to be at the mythological or legendary level. The latter three dynasties are named after their respective founders, for which archaeological and historical data is available.

However, there is a large unknown gap between the history of the second and third dynasties. It is believed that Prophet Zarathushtra was born in the latter part of the Kyanian dynasty.

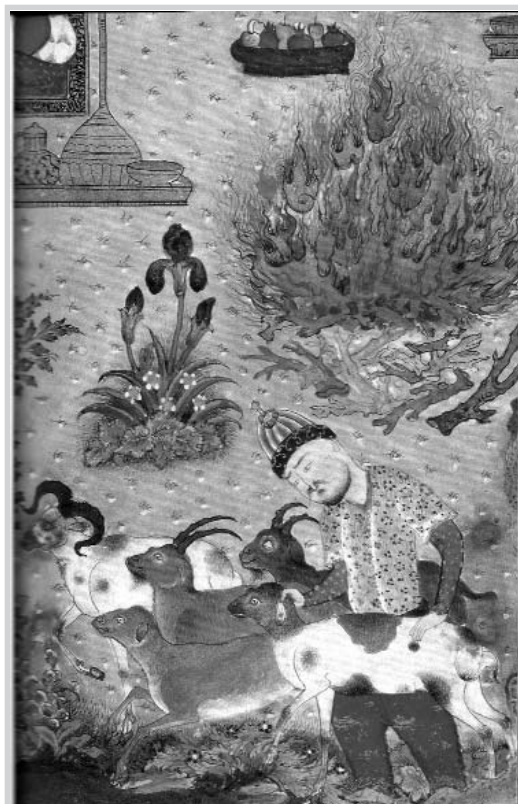
The Shahnameh deals with the descriptions of only three dynasties namely the *Pishdadian*, *Kyanian* and the *Sassanian*. There are doubts raised from certain quarters about the authenticity of the subject-matter of the Shahnameh. However, Ferdowsi has put them to rest by repeatedly adhering to data available to him from Zarathushti scriptural sources which corroborate the veracity of the subject-matter.

For instance, the way of life in the first two dynasties as portrayed in the Shahnameh by Ferdowsi is similar when compared to what we find written in the *Avesta Yasht* literature. The holy wars between Iran and Turan during the time of Prophet Zarathushtra can also be verified in the *Pahlavi Book Ayyatkar-i-Zariran*. The exploits of the founder of the Sassanian Empire *Ardeshir Babakan* can also be found in the Pahlavi work *Karnamak-i-artakhshir papakan*.

## THE SHAHNAMEH AND EVOLUTION

It must be understood right at the outset that the scriptures of practically all ancient civilizations try to outline the history of the creation of the Universe, its significance, its philosophy, and the appearance of man on earth. For instance, the description of the first legendary human being *Adam* in the Bible corresponds to that of *Gayomard* in the Iranian tradition.

The Shahnameh, starts with the legendary first person in the world by the name of *Gayomard* (*Avesta 'gaya-maretan'*) which signifies mortal man. He is also known in Pahlavi-Persian as '*Gilshah*' which means





king of the earth. It is with the narration of Gayomard, that the first dynasty of the Iranian history begins with the name 'Pishdadian'

According to Zarathushti tradition, the ancient Iranians, before the time of Prophet Zarathustra, were known as *Mazdayasnians* (the worshippers of the Supreme God Ahura Mazda, and the followers of the Mazdayasni Religion). It is only when Prophet Zarathustra appeared much later in the second half of the Kyanian dynasty, that he modified this ancient religion, added to it his own philosophy, after which it officially became known as the *Mazdayasni Zarathushti Religion*.

According to the Shahnameh, nine emperors have ruled in the Pishdadian dynasty. Their names are: *Gayomard, Hoshang, Tahmuras, Jamshid, Faredun, Minocheher, Navdar, Zav and Kershasp*, with a long foreign rule of the evil Zohak between *Jamshid and Faredun*. The earlier kings are credited with the invention or discovery of certain natural or material elements – like *Gayomard with metals, Hoshang with fire, Tahmuras with the art of spinning and weaving and the wearing of clothes*. Since we are dealing with the history of an infinite time-period, we have to understand that these rulers are not just successive descendants to each other. It is natural that many eons must have passed between them. For instance, the time frame from Gayomard to Hoshang indicates the beginning of mankind to that of the discovery of fire. (Photo page 14)

## THE GOLDEN AGE

In the entire Pishdadian dynasty, the reign of Jamshid is of particular interest from a very crucial historical point of view. First of all, it is mentioned that Jamshid ruled for nearly 900 years. His rule is mainly divided into two parts - one is the golden period followed by the great deluge from which Jamshid rebuilds the world through divine inspiration.

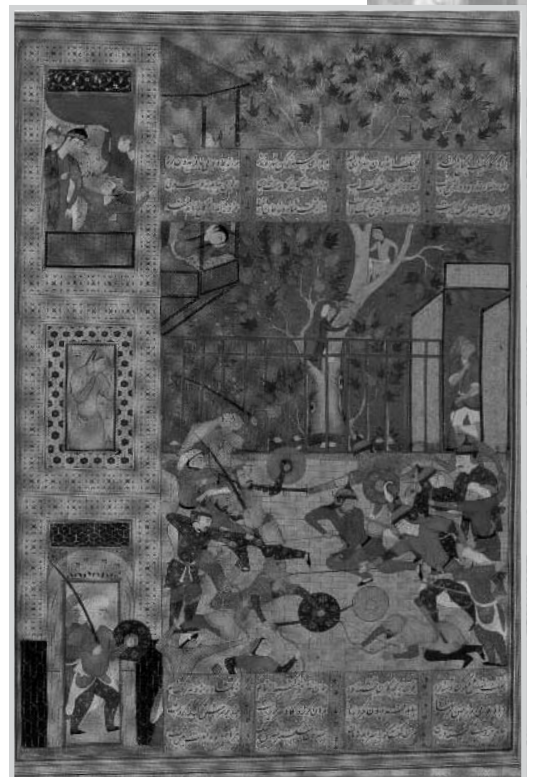
The second part reflects Jamshid more as a human being - his declaration of ego and his ultimate downfall at the hands of the evil Zohak. If one were to study the phenomenon very carefully, one may understand that this represents the actual destruction of one full civilization, and the creation of another new worldly civilization – perhaps the present one.

The Golden period of Jamshid, which is described in the Shahnameh and also the Avesta text of the Yashts, speaks of a time when there was no death, hunger or thirst. Everyone would remain young and all creation would be in a fresh state. This description is comparable to that of the Zoroastrian scriptural references to the "*Frasho-Kereti*" or the *Time of Renovation*.

Thereafter, there is the description of Jamshid building an enclosure to protect the important specimens of creation from the impact of the great deluge which destroys the world. After the deluge, Jamshid rebuilds the new world gradually in three stages.

This narration in the Shahnameh also corresponds to the second chapter of the Vendidad where it is mentioned that Jamshid was so spiritually advanced that the Supreme God Ahura Mazda tried to entrust him with the task of spreading the Good Religion in the form of a prophet. But Jamshid declined in all humility saying that he was still not up to standard.

However, in the final part of Jamshid's rule, it is so narrated, that after rebuilding the entire world, his ego gets the better of him and he declares himself to be God. He commands his people to worship him alone as God. This feeling of megalomania causes revulsion among his people. He falls from grace and his divine aura deserts him in the form of a bird. His people desert him and they bring in *Zohak* from a foreign land and Zohak ultimately kills Jamshid.





This episode reflects the theory that at this point in time the aspect of “*aham*” (*ego*) crops up in mankind and probably before this time period it is possible that humans lived in the ethereal form.

With the arrival of Zohak there was entry of evil for the first time in this world. Zohak was evil personified and the tyranny he unleashed could only be stopped by the saintly King Faredun. Faredun got rid of Zohak and relieved Iran from his clutches – signifying the triumph of good over evil. (photo page 15)

All the historical descriptions as narrated in the Shahnameh about the Pishdadian dynasty find reflection in the scriptures of all major religions. Just as the Iranians who were of Aryan stock, so were the Indo-Iranians and Indo-Europeans. The ancient kings as depicted in the Shahnameh are identifiable with personages in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament - Adam with Gayomard; Jamshid with Noah and so on. Also compare the Biblical concept of Adam creating Eve from his rib with that of the Hindu tradition of Brahma forming a woman from his own immaculate substance. The narration of the great deluge in the time of Jamshid is fully identifiable with that of Noah's Ark in the Bible and with the ship of Manu in the Shatapatha Brahmana of the Hindu tradition. As Jamshid is supposed to have rebuilt the world after the deluge, he is identified as the first person in the world in some later books. So too is the case with Noah and Manu (identified as Yama also in the Hindu traditions). From Jamshid onwards, many personages in the Shahnameh are identified with those in the Hindu tradition.

It is therefore evident that a critical study of the Pishdadian Dynasty is absolutely essential in order to have a better perception of great ancient civilizations like that of Iran, and the poet Ferdowsi has rendered yeoman service toward that cause with his meticulous and faithful rendering of such ancient accounts in his Shahnameh.

## In the words of the Kutar Brothers :-

*Ke ya rab to Ferdowsiye namvar  
Be ferdows darash aba eez o far  
Hamisheh beqorbat vara jaye bakhsh  
Bekhanand aganash nekuraye bakhsh*

“O Supreme Lord!

*May you give unto Ferdowsi the highest of  
honour in the Heavens.*

*May his place always be besides you and*

*May you bestow wisdom unto the readers of his  
Shahnameh.”*

*Adapted from “Proceedings of the All-India  
seminar on Ferdowsi and his Shahnameh” held in  
November 2001 under the auspices of Culture  
House of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mumbai and  
K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Feast of Sadeh. Painted by Soltan Mahammad c  
1520-30 folio 22v Courtesy of the Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, gift of Arthur A. Houghton published  
in Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi Vol1  
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Oriental Institute, Mumbai.*





## SHAYARAN-E- SHAYAR, THE IMMORTAL FERDOWSI

PERVIN JIMMY MISTRY

*never be the same in different ages*". He held Sarosh Yazad in high veneration: "When I write, I get inspiration in my ear from Sarosh Yazad." His descriptions are so graphic one actually sees and hears the events happening as many of the episodes seem to contain esoteric truths.

### THE KHODAINAMEH

#### A Precursor To The Shahnameh

Yazdgard III entrusted *Dehqan Daneshwar* to compile the Khodainameh using the extant Pahlavi chronicles such as *Yadgar-e-Zariran* and *Karmanak-i Artakhshir Papakan*. (Khodainameh was so called because the ancient Zarathushti Kings traced their lineage from Ahura Mazda.) Daneshwar's Khodainameh contained the historical records from *Gayomard up to Khusro-Parviz*. After Yazdgard's defeat, the Pahlavi Khodainameh came into the possession of *Caliph Omar* who had it translated into Arabic by *Ibn Moqaffa*.

*Daqiqi*, a distinguished poet at the court of the Samanids, was the first to translate the Pahlavi Khodainameh into Farsi poetical verses. In a verse dealing with the introduction of the religion of Holy Zarathushtra, *Daqiqi* confessed he was a fervent Zarathushti. He was murdered by a slave when only about a thousand verses were completed.[i]

Ferdowsi, inspired since early childhood by the greatness of ancient Iranian religion and its kings, wanted to complete *Daqiqi's* unfinished work but he declares that he did not possess a copy of the Khodainameh. A friend, *Mohamed Liakhan*, gifted him his own copy. Ferdowsi was 36 years old when he began compiling the Shahnameh. The first few couplets he read to the *Governor of the Khorasan Province, Abu Mansoor*, were the story of *Zohak* and *Faredun*. *Abu Mansoor* was so thrilled on hearing the couplets, he asked Ferdowsi to offer his complete work only to a King who alone would appreciate the work involved.[ii]



Ferdowsi, painted by Aqa Mirak c. 1520-30

Rarely in the history of mankind has any nation suffered as much as Iran, the Land of the Aryans. After the plunder and holocaust caused by Alexander, *Dasturan-e Dastur Adarbad Marespand* re-compiled the sacred Avesta and salvaged our scriptures. In the 7th century CE, the Arabs invaded Iran, destroying our religious books, demolishing the fire temples and inflicting devastation upon the people. Pahlavi and Farsi were banned on penalty of death. Yet, the Spirit of Zarathushtrian Iran remained unconquerable. ***It is mostly because of Ferdowsi that Iran never became 'Arab' although it had to accept Islam. He rekindled Iran's cultural heritage by reviving the Farsi language and poetry which has been an inspiration to the nation in the memory of its earlier sufferings and unmatched grandeur.***

The Shahnameh is a historical document. The stories are true stories and have their origin in Avestan scriptures and traditions. Ferdowsi writes: "Some of the stories seem like fables but circumstances and conditions can





## THE ENIGMA OF FERDOWSI

The story of Ferdowsi's life is as captivating as the Shahnameh stories he has narrated in verse. His real name was *Abol Qasim Mansoor*. His family belonged to the class of *dehqans* who were highly learned and were the preservers of national traditions through oral transmission from father to son. His date of birth is approximately 941 CE. and he died in 1020 CE. Not much is known about his wife but it is known that he left behind a daughter and his only son died at the young age of 37 when Ferdowsi was 65 years old and in the midst of versifying the story of Khusro-Parviz. In his own words, he composed 60,000 verses celebrating the 6,000-year-old history of ancient Iran, from Gayomard to Yazdgard III. Over the 35 years he took to pen the epic, Ferdowsi lived in penury and sadness.

No one has answered the perplexing question as to how *Sultan Mahmoud*, a zealot *Sunni*, invited Ferdowsi, a Shi'ite, to his court and commissioned him to write about the kings of ancient Iran who were *Mazdayasni Zarathushtis*, (a religion held in contempt by most Arabs). It is only *Ustad Saheb Behramshah Shroff* who provided an answer from the *Rivayat of Bahman Punjya*.

According to the *Rivayat*, when Sultan Mahmoud became the king of Ghazni, he ordered the genocide of all *Zarathushtis* in Iran unless they converted to Islam. At the time, the saintly *Dasturan-e Dastur Ardeshir Kermani*, proved to the Sultan the greatness of our religion by performing the *yasna* ritual wherein the Sultan witnessed the attendance of the divine *yazads*. Satisfied, the Sultan was able to accept the grandeur of *Mazdayasni Zarathushti* dynasties and tolerate the ancient religion and its followers. It was destiny that *Dasturan-e-Dastur Areshir Kermani* and Sultan Mahmoud were contemporaries, thereby saving the lives of *Zarathushtis* and preserving the religion of Prophet *Zarathushtra*. [iii]

Sultan Mahmoud sought after the *Khodainameh* and other similar *namehs* (works). He collected 7 old compilations and asked 7 of his court poets to put these into *Farsi* verse. The poet laureate

*Ansari* was asked to put into verse the story of *Rustom* and *Sohrab*.

Meanwhile, Ferdowsi's fame had spread far and wide and *Sultan Mahmoud Gaznavi* invited him to his court. Ferdowsi was reluctant but *Arsalan Khan*, the new Governor of *Khorasan*, persuaded him to go to Ghazni and remembering the advice of *Abu Mansoor* to present the *Shahnameh* only to a King, he agreed. At first, the court poets were opposed to him being invited by the Sultan.

*Ansari*, the King's favourite, recited the verses about *Rustom* and *Sohrab*. Ferdowsi recited his poetry about *Rustom* and *Asfandiar*. The Sultan was so ecstatic hearing Ferdowsi sing the episode, he asked him to complete the *Shahnameh*. Incidentally, Ferdowsi had already begun writing the epic several years ago when he did not expect any remuneration. Ferdowsi mentions in one of the couplets that he was 58-years-old when Mahmoud Gaznavi came to the throne. He had already started writing the *Shahnameh* at the age of 36 years, more than 20 years before Sultan Mahmoud came to the throne of Iran.

Ferdowsi dedicated the bulk of his poetry to *Jehan-Pahelvan Rustom*, praising his nobility and superhuman strength. Pleased, *Rustom* appeared in a dream and as a reward, gave Ferdowsi the direction to his buried treasure near *Maknabad*. One day, when the Sultan visited *Maknabad*, Ferdowsi revealed his dream. The Sultan had the identified spot dug up and indeed, as described by Ferdowsi, the gold chains buried by *Rustom* were found. Impressed, the Sultan gave Ferdowsi the gold chains but instead of keeping the reward to himself, Ferdowsi sold them and distributed the amount to poorer poets.

Before long it became evident to all around him that Ferdowsi did not labour for any payment or incentive other than his devotion to the preceding *Mazdayasni Zarathushti* dynasties. His only desire was to reinstate the former unsurpassed greatness, matchless heroism, moral values, justice, religious tolerance and belief in the ultimate victory of good over evil, all of which ancient *Zarathushtrian* Iran epitomized. In fact, he scornfully reveals his dislike of the riches of this world by writing, "*The homes that are the dwellings of today will sink beneath rains and sunshine to decay; but neither storm nor rain shall ever destroy the timeless monument of my poetry.*" The Sultan had promised to give Ferdowsi a thousand gold dirams upon completion of a thousand verses. But Ferdowsi opted for a lump-sum at the end.

Every rainy season, the mud dam on the river near his house at *Toos* would be carried away by the force of the water, thereby depriving the village of precious water needed for irrigation. He wanted to build a permanent masonry dam from the generous reward hoped for at the completion of his work.





## PALACE INTRIGUE AND BETRAYAL

*Hasan Meimendi*, the Sultan's vazir, also a Sunni, held Ferdowsi's verses of praise for the old Mazdayasni Zarathushti kings and Prophet Ali as heresy. He constantly showed his aversion towards Ferdowsi and poisoned the ears of the Sultan against him. When Ferdowsi completed the Shahnameh, he presented it to the Sultan through Ayaz, the Sultan's favourite slave. Meimendi persuaded the Sultan to give silver dirams instead of the promised gold dirams. Ferdowsi was in a hamam-khana (bath) when Ayaz delivered the bags of 60,000 silver dirams to him. Disappointed and angry, Ferdowsi gave 20,000 silver dirams to the owner of the hamam-khana; 20,000 to Ayaz who brought the reward and 20,000 to the person who sold him a glass of sherbet. He told Ayaz to report to the Sultan that he had not toiled for obtaining gold or silver but for his love of poetry!

Ferdowsi decided to leave Ghazni. Before leaving, he wrote on the wall of the masjid where the Sultan used to pray, "*The fortunate court of King Mahmoud is like a sea. What a sea! One cannot find the shore. I plunged in it but found no pearls. It was not the fault of the sea but of my stars.*"

Before leaving, he gave a sealed cover to the faithful Ayaz to give to the king after 20 days. He wrote in his satire: "*If you plant, even in paradise, a tree, which has bitter roots, water it from the river of paradise and feed its roots with milk and honey, in the end, it will show the qualities of the seed and would bear only bitter fruits.... If the Sultan had a king for his father, he would have placed a golden crown on my head. If the Sultan's mother were a born lady, I would have had gold and silver heaped up to my knees.*" (The Sultan's father was a slave at the Samanide court.)

From Gazni, Ferdowsi went to Mazandaran, Baghdad and Kohistan to seek support for his Shahnameh. *Nasir Lek*, the Governor of Kohistan, wrote to the Sultan reproaching him about his treatment of the great poet Ferdowsi. The Sultan was touched and permitted Ferdowsi, now old, feeble and heart-broken, to return to Toos. Ferdowsi died at the age of 83, eleven years after completing his Shahnameh. The Sultan's emissaries carried the belated reward to Tus just as Ferdowsi's funeral procession was leaving for his final destination. His daughter refused to accept the Sultan's gift but his sister accepted the payment and constructed the masonry dam on the river which Ferdowsi dreamed of as a child and had hoped to use the reward of his labours in the service of mankind.

## DENIED DIGNITY IN DEATH

*Abol Qasim Gurgani*, the mullah of Toos, refused to say the last rites for Ferdowsi because according to him, Ferdowsi spent his entire life glorifying the infidels and adorers of fire and therefore it was improper for him to

recite his last rites. That night, he dreamt of Ferdowsi in a magnificent palace, wearing a robe of emeralds and a crown. The mullah asked him as to how he attained such lofty heights in heaven and Ferdowsi replied, "*It is because I composed verses in praise of the Almighty who converts dust into those who can speak and see; who through a small ant reduces a ferocious lion to helplessness and who gives power to a mosquito over a brave elephant; through Him this world gets greatness and its lowest depth. I do not know who He is; whatever He is, He is!*" As soon as Gurgani woke up, after refreshing himself, he went to Ferdowsi's tomb and recited the obsequies he had refused earlier.

Ansari writes about Ferdowsi, "*He was not our master, nor we his pupils; he is our lord and we his slaves!*"

Jami, one of the leading poets of Iran who lived five centuries after Ferdowsi, writes, "*Gone is the greatness of Mahmoud, he is not remembered even in fiction except to this extent, that he did not know the worth of Ferdowsi!*" In Ferdowsi's words, "*Those who have insight and are religious will praise me after my death. I shall not die but be remembered evermore because in this world I sowed the beautiful seeds of my poetry.*"

And indeed, he has made his name immortal through immortalizing the kings and the glory of ancient Mazdayasni Zarathushti Iran. Ferdowsi, as the name suggests, made the world a paradise with the richness of his poetry and reclaimed the Iranian ethos and identity by preserving ancient Iran's unparalleled glorious historical record for posterity.

*May his soul rest in peace next to the Almighty! Atha jamyat, yatha afrinami!*

[i] Prof. T. Noldeke, *The Iranian National Epic*, K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1930

[ii] Aspandiar S. Gotla, *Shayaran-e Shayar Persia's Immortal Poet Ferdowsi*, 1998

[iii] Dr. Faramroze S. Chiniwalla, *Shahnameh's Immortal Shayaran-e Shayar Ferdowsi Tusi*, Book No. 9, Zarthushti Din Sahitya Mandal.







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## WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

### FARISHTA MURZBAN DINSHAW

dictated by men in their lives and the men in power.

*Asghar Fathi in Women and the Iranian Family* (1983) confers the status of "heroines" to Rudابه, Tehmineh, Gordafarid, Katayun and Ferangis because they are "worthy companions for the heroes of this epic".



The Shahnameh (the Book of Kings) is replete with the exploits of kings, heroes and warriors. As was the norm of the time, Iranian women were often neither seen nor heard; their places firmly entrenched within the four walls of the family home. Their socialized roles were that of the chaste wife, nurturing mother, dutiful daughter and their destinies were influenced and

*Alyssa Gabbay, a cultural historian* whose work focuses on the medieval and early modern Persia, wrote in *From Ill-Starred to Auspicious: Depictions of Daughters in Firdawsi's Shahnama* [sic] "*From Afrasiyab's angry declaration that "Any man who has a daughter behind a veil is ill-starred, though he wear a crown," to Haftvad's benign, slightly contemptuous affection for his female offspring ("He had one daughter, no more, whom he loved dearly although he reckoned daughters of no account"), to Ardashir [Bahman]'s appointing of his daughter, Humay, as his successor, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh exhibits a wide range of attitudes towards daughters... although an ideal clearly existed in which a daughter was submissive and totally obedient to her parents, especially her father (exemplified by the jeweler Mahyar and his daughter, Arzu, who was to become one of Bahram Gur's wives), some deviation from this norm or even rebellion could be tolerated. Occasionally, girls were able to*



## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

acquire power and exercise agency despite or even because of their fathers' attitudes.

However, in spite of the sexist depiction of women, if you look past Ferdowsi's portrayals of his female characters, you see glimpses of real women who make good, bad and ugly choices. You see the virtuous and the wicked, the strong and the frail, the loyal and the treacherous. In other words, they are flesh and blood, complex and flawed, beyond the one-dimensional 'Madonna' or 'Magdalen' versions of womanhood.

We can only celebrate female power when we accept that women can be just as loving and just as hateful as men, and sometimes these characteristics are in the same person.

Take *Rustom, pahelvan-e-jehan* (warrior of the world). He is generally considered Iran's greatest hero-patriotic and unimpeachable, symbolizing Iran's nationhood. On the other hand, he is also an irresponsible lover and a 'deadbeat dad', who carelessly left a bead bracelet to be given to any offspring that may result from one night of passion with an infatuated woman who snuck into his room.

Readers have their own favorites from among the heroines in the Shahnameh.

Dick Davis, translator of the Shahnameh, said in an interview, *"Of the poem's women, I love Rudabeh especially, and her magnificent mother Sindokht, and her hen-pecked bully of a father, Mehrab, who is a delicious and very accurate portrait of one kind of male who thinks he's a really macho, capable guy whereas in reality he always makes the wrong decisions and his women run circles round him."*

### MY OWN FAVOURITES HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS.

As a young adult steeped in stories of romance and adventure, I liked *Gordafarid*, the embodiment of the romanticized warrior princess. As a daughter of an Iranian warrior, when she hears that the Iranian army is falling behind in battle with the Turanian army commanded by Sohrab, she puts on armour, sweeps up her hair under a helmet and successfully fights off several Turanian soldiers. Finally, Sohrab defeats her in combat, but is stunned when he pushes off her helmet to reveal her long hair. She uses her quick mind and tells him, *"O lionhearted warrior, two armies are watching us and, if I let them see my face and hair, your troops will be amused*

*by the notion of you fighting a mere girl; we'd better draw aside somewhere, that's what a wise man would do so that you won't be a laughingstock before these two armies. Now our enemy, our wealth, our fortress, and the fortress's commander will all be in your hands to do with as you wish; I'll hand them over to you, so there's no need for you to pursue this war any further"*.

Enamored by her beauty and probably lulled into security by a masculine sense of superiority, Sohrab agrees. However, when they reach the fortress Gordafarid swiftly locks him out. It is not surprising that Iranian women celebrate her as an icon of modern womanhood, setting a standard of courage and intellect for women to emulate.

As a mature adult who understands that people are made up of a range of grays, my favourite female character is *Sudabeh, wife of Kay Kavus*, because she embodies human complexities. She is most often remembered as the experienced older woman who connived for seven years to seduce her handsome stepson, *Seyavash*. But if you read the story with compassion, you can feel the pathos of a middle-aged woman's obsession for a handsome youth who denied her and her pitiable desperation to hold on to her legendary beauty. (photo below *Sudabeh escorted to Hamaveran*)







*"I have been your slave ever since I set eyes on you, weeping and longing for you; pain darkens all my days, I feel the sun itself is dimmed. Come, in secret, just once, make me happy again, give me back my youth for a moment"* (p222). When he rejects her, unable to bear the thought that she will be pitied and laughed at, she tears her clothes and cries rape. Kay Kavus finds out that she lied, but cannot bring himself to punish her. Instead, Seyavash leaves his father's court for Turan where he is assassinated.

Rustam, who had brought up Seyavash, blames Sudabeh for the incident, and murders her.

The story of Sudabeh's obsession often overshadows another story about her. Many years earlier, when Kay Kavus had invaded Hamavaran, he had asked the king for his beautiful daughter's hand and married her. The king was forced to bear allegiance, but plotted to kill Kay Kavus after the wedding. Sudabeh first tried to convince her father to let Kay Kavus be; when that did not work, she informed her husband of her father's intentions. He did not pay any attention to her warning and was imprisoned. When Sudabeh heard what her father had done, she "... ripped her royal clothes from her body and tore at her musky hair and scared her face with her nails. She wept, and screamed at her father's envoys that they were dogs, and cried out to them, *'...I will not part from him or leave his side; though he shall die I will remain his bride.'*" This outburst was reported to her father, who was enraged. He took her at her word and had her sent to the fortress where her husband was kept in chains, and there she comforted him, ministering to him in his sorrow and misfortune." (p179).

**Both these stories are of the same woman - once the loyal, courageous wife, then a desperate, vindictive**

**woman. What fascinates me is the story that Ferdowsi never told (because he concentrated on the kings and warriors) of what happened in the intervening years to make Sudabeh who she became? One day perhaps there will be a Banunaméh that will give the answers. \*\***



Sudabeh Seyavash Reimagined.

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### Acknowledgement

*Sudabeh escorted to Hamavaran. Painted by unknown artist in Isfahan style 1604, by permission from British Library (MSS 966) published in Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi Vol1 Translation Dick Davies*

i. Paper presented at the Eighth Biennial Iranian Studies Conference 2010 (Los Angeles: 27-30 May 2010). International Society for Iranian Studies.

ii Quote from an interview with Dick Davis by Jahanshah Javid. (July 24, 2004). Retrieved from <www.iranian.com>

iii All quotes from Abolqasem Ferdowsi, Dick Davis (translator), Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings (Viking, 2006).





## SHAHNAMEH MANUSCRIPTS

A manuscript (1) of Ferdowsi's epic, the Shahnameh (2), written in the poet's own hand is not known to exist. We must, however, remain ever hopeful that this priceless treasure may have survived destruction – waiting to be discovered as have several old Shahnameh manuscript copies (3) during the past hundred years. The earliest surviving manuscripts known to us were written some two hundred years after the death of the poet around 1020 CE.

We are told that Ferdowsi wrote two editions or redactions of his epic. The first was completed in 995 or 999 CE and the second in March 1010 CE. 2010 was the one-thousandth anniversary of the Shahnameh's final 1010 edition.

## EARLIEST KNOWN SURVIVING MANUSCRIPT COPIES

We do not know what happened to Ferdowsi's original manuscripts. What we have are copies – perhaps even copies of copies.

The earliest surviving Shahnameh manuscript copy that is known to us – and one which is incomplete – dates back to 1217 CE and resides today in the *National Library (Biblioteca Nazionale)* of Florence. It was discovered as recently as 1977 by one *Angelo Piemontese*.

The next oldest known manuscript dates to c. 1276-1277 and is in the *British Library or Museum*. It is a single volume and contains no illustrations. About a hundred years ago, Britain and Russia effectively divided Iran as well as some of its treasures between themselves. Several Shahnameh manuscripts found their way into European hands as a consequence.

The earliest known illustrated Shahnameh codex (4) dates from around 1300 CE. Many illustrated Shahnameh codices are no longer in bound form. Shamefully, several have had their pages taken apart by western 'collectors' (sic) seeking to maximize their resale profit. The dispersed pages now lie in private collections and museums.

**K. E. Eduljee**

## RECENT MANUSCRIPT DISCOVERY IN BEIRUT

The most recent codex was discovered in 2005 – in battle scared Beirut. During a visit to the *Bibliothèque Orientale (Oriental library)* of *Saint-Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon*, Prof. Moosavi of Tehran University had a Shahnameh manuscript copy handed to him on the very last day of his stay. Sadly, the manuscript's colophon (5) had been cut out – perhaps because the manuscript had at some point been stolen from its rightful owner. As a result, we can only make an educated guess about the date of its writing – which in the estimation of Iranian scholars was sometime between 1250 to 1350 CE. This dating, if correct, makes it one of the earliest Shahnameh manuscripts known to exist.

The text of the Beirut Shahnameh manuscript is written in four columns on both sides of 496 folios (sheets i.e. 992 pages) of thick yellowish (presumably handmade) paper. Generally, there are twenty-five lines of text on each page. The manuscript contains no illustrations.

While it is commonly believed that

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh consists of 60,000 couplets, authoritative manuscripts generally contain fewer than 50,000 couplets (100,000 lines). The higher number includes verses added by the scribes in later manuscripts. The number of the verses of the Beirut MS is estimated at between 48,023 and 48,101. Nevertheless, the Beirut Shahnameh is over three times the combined length of the Greek epics, the *Iliad* (15,693 lines) and the *Odyssey* (12,110 lines).



Beirut Shahnameh 1250-1350 CE (approx)





## RECONSTRUCTION OF AN AUTHORITATIVE SHAHNAMEH EDITION

Since the Shahnameh MSS vary in content and since scribes were prone to error and editing while copying, there has been a desire to reconstruct what Ferdowsi's original manuscript would have looked like and several reconstruction projects have been undertaken.

One of the first attempts was *Mohl's* edition in 7 volumes (Paris, 1838-78) based on 35 manuscripts. Mohl's edition and French translation were used to author the only complete Shahnameh's English translation in verse – that by A.G. and E. Warner, (6-10 vols. London, 1905-25).

A ten-volume reconstructed edition was later published in Tehran (1934-35).

Next, a nine-volume edition was published in *Moscow* by Y. E. Bertel and others (1966-71). The Moscow edition was based, among others, on the *British Museum manuscript* dated 1276 and a *manuscript in Leningrad* dated 1333 – both of which were among those considered authoritative by the experts at that time.

In 1987, *Dr. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh* published the first volume of his reconstructed text. Volumes 2 to 5 have subsequently been published (1988-97). *Dr. Khaleghi-Motlagh* selected fifteen manuscripts on which to base his edition and these manuscripts included the British Museum and Leningrad MSS. According to a review by *Dick Davis*, Khaleghi-Motlagh now considers the Leningrad manuscript copy to be *ghayr-e asli* meaning secondary and inauthentic (6).

## ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

Generally speaking, the oldest manuscript copies discovered to date have no illustrations. At some point in their production, the Shahnameh manuscript copies began to include illustrations – commonly miniature watercolour paintings. While the earlier illustrated manuscripts have the artwork

contained neatly within the borders of a container box itself within the written page (see figure 2), in later manuscripts, the illustrations effusively flow out of their containers boxes (see figure 5). Trees begin to spread their branches into the margins and dragons seem poised – ready to consume heroes and text alike. At times the miniatures dominate the pages relegating the text to a second glance.

Western art collectors have raised the price of the manuscripts mainly because they fancy the illustrations. They have little interest in the text. To this end, some collectors have tragically resorted to cutting out the illustrations and discarding the text. As well, publishers have cropped the page images to show only illustrations and museums have matted pages so that the text is not visible. Even much of western scholarly interest in the Shahnameh focuses on the artwork. For a Zarathushti, the medieval images and Arabic-Farsi naskh script, while elegant, hide the true treasure buried in the Parsi words.

The earliest known illustrated manuscript copies date back to the reign of the Mongol *Ilkhan Khans* (1255 - 1335 CE) who occupied and established themselves in Iran for a century. The Ilkhanate was founded by Genghis' grandson *Hulagu* and was originally based on traditional Aryan lands occupied by Genghis Khan. Beginning with *Mahmud Ghazan* in 1295, the khans embraced Islam.

It became traditional for Mongol *Ilkhan Khans*, and later the *Timurid sultans* (1363 - 1506 CE) and *Safavid shahs* (1502 - 1736 CE) to commission the production of a Shahnameh manuscript (and there was a school of art typical of each dynasty). These manuscripts are frequently known by their sponsors' names. The manuscripts are also known, sometimes infamously, by the names of their modern owners. During the times of the three dynasties noted above, there were two principle centres of art – *Tabriz* and *Shiraz*.

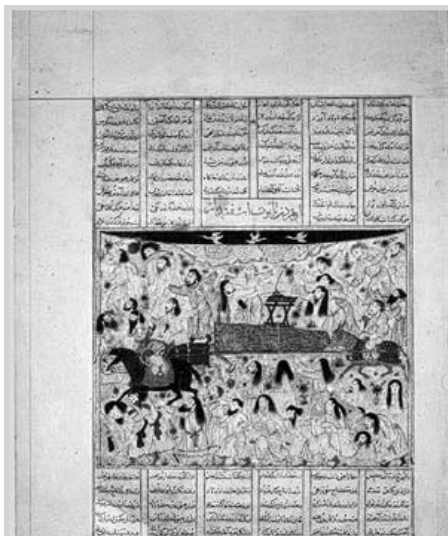


Figure 2. Mongol manuscript folio 1330s  
Tabriz Sindukht Becoming Aware of  
Rudaba's Actions

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Smithsonian  
Institution, Washington, D.C.





The following manuscripts have achieved some notoriety and are listed chronologically:

## GREAT MONGOL / DEMOTTE MANUSCRIPT (DISPERSED)

Among the earliest illustrated manuscripts is the Great Mongol manuscript dating back to the 1330s Ilkhanid period. It is also known as the Demotte manuscript after *Georges Demotte* (1877-1923), the dealer and reseller responsible for its dismemberment and dispersal as individual pages.

When Demotte could not get an offer that met his profit objective, sometime between 1910 and 1915, he took the manuscript apart. He even resorted to splitting some folios (pages) with illustrations on both sides and selling the two resulting leaves individually.

When Demotte peeled apart the pages – itself a feat – he mounted each illustration onto a new fabricated folio which he constructed by pasting an illustrated page segment to an unrelated text-only segment. Some pages were inevitably damaged and Demotte's scheme resulted in irreparable mutilation, the joining of unrelated pages, and dispersal of pages with incomplete text.

The frontispiece and colophon that might have revealed information on the patron, the calligrapher, and the date and place of production are lost, and it is therefore not known with any certainty, where and when the manuscript was produced. By piecing together collateral evidence, researchers *Oleg Grabar* and *Sheila Blair* have surmised that the manuscript was possibly commissioned in Tabriz by the vizier *Ghiyath al-Din ibn (son of) Rashid al-Din* sometime between November 1335 (when he organized the appointment of *Arpar*. 1335–36 as successor of *Abu Sacid*) and his death on May 3, 1336. (7)

According to *Grabar* and *Blair*, the original manuscript probably consisted of two volumes of about 280 large (29 x 41 cm) handmade paper folios with 190 opaque watercolour illustrations.

Today, only 57 illustrations (A fifty-eighth illustration was destroyed in 1937 and is known only from a photograph) and several text pages are known to exist scattered among public and private collections including the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harvard University's Fogg Museum, and Worcester Museum.

## BAYASANGHORI (BAYSONQORI) MANUSCRIPT (INTACT)

The *Bayasanghori* (or *Baysonqori*) illuminated manuscript, resides at the Golestan Palace, Tehran, Iran, and is included in UNESCO's Memory of the

World, register of cultural heritage items. The manuscript is dated c.1430 CE.

The patron of this manuscript was *Prince Bayasanghor* (*Baysonqor*) (1399-1433 CE), grandson of the founder of the Timurid dynasty, *Timur* (1336-1405 CE). The calligrapher of the manuscript was *Maulana Jafar Tabrizi Bayasanghori* (*Baysonqori*) and the artists were *Mulla Ali* and *Amir Kalil*. The binding was done by *Maulana Qiam-al-Din*.

The manuscript is in quarto format (38.26 cm), written in a minuscule Nasta'lip script on Chinese (Beijing) fawn-coloured hand-made paper from *Khan Baligh*. It consists of 700 pages with 31 lines of text per page and 21 illustrations. The covers are made from stamped leather, the outside being gold-plated with two lacquer-work borders. The preface contains an illustration of *Ferdowsi* in discussion with the poets of *Ghazna*.

According to page nine of the manuscript's introduction, the manuscript was copied from several prior manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* – copies that we now understand included legends penned by other poets who emulated *Ferdowsi's* style. As a result, the manuscript contains 58,000 verses making it one of the most voluminous. In the process, the scribes also edited the language, ostensibly to 'modernize' the language. The *Bayasanghori* (*Baysonqori*) manuscript has in turn served as the basis for subsequent manuscripts.

## TAHMASPI/HOUGHTON MANUSCRIPT (Dispersed)

Illuminated with 258 miniature paintings, the *Tahmaspi* (*Tahmasbi*) manuscript is one of the most lavish and

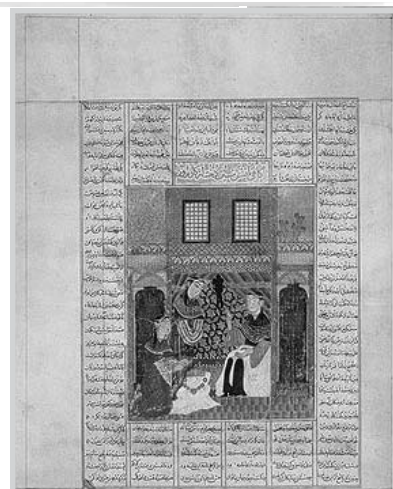


Figure 3. Mongol manuscript folio 1330s Tabriz – Isfandiyyar's funeral – Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Joseph Pulitzer Bequest 1933







## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN



well known of the Shahnameh manuscripts. Named after its patron *Shah Tahmasp I* (1524-1576 CE), the second monarch of the Safavid dynasty, the Tahmaspi manuscript was in 1576, given as a gift to either the Ottoman *Sultan Selim* or *Sultan Murad III*. *Martin Dickenson* and *Stuart Welch*, authors of *The Houghton Shahnameh*, and others, suggest that the manuscript may have been commissioned and started in 1522 or shortly thereafter. This would be during

The manuscript which had been housed in the Ottoman Royal Library and possibly the Qajar Royal Library, was at some point acquired by *Edmond de Rothschild*. In 1959, Rothschild sold the manuscript to *Arthur Houghton*, a member of a prominent New England and upstate New York business family, and president of Corning Glass Works.

To the horror of many, soon after Houghton acquired the book, he proceeded to take apart the 742 large (32 x 47 cm) folios with the intention of individually selling the illustrated pages containing the miniature paintings. Some of these he placed on display at Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and later donated 88 illustrated folios to the museum in order to reduce his tax liability (8).

In 1976, Houghton offered to sell the remaining pages to the Shah of Iran for US\$20 million, an offer that the Shah refused. On November 16, 1976, Houghton had seven folios auctioned at Christie's in London. In a subsequent 1988 auction fourteen folios sold, with one selling for £253,000. In 2006, a folio was sold at Sotheby's auction house to the Aga Khan museum in Geneva for 904,000 Euros (US\$1.7 million). The museum eventually acquired additional folios (9).

Figure 5. Tahmaspi or Houghton manuscript  
Artist Sultan Muhammad Tabriz, c.1530.  
Hushang, grandson of Gayumars. Feast of Sadeh

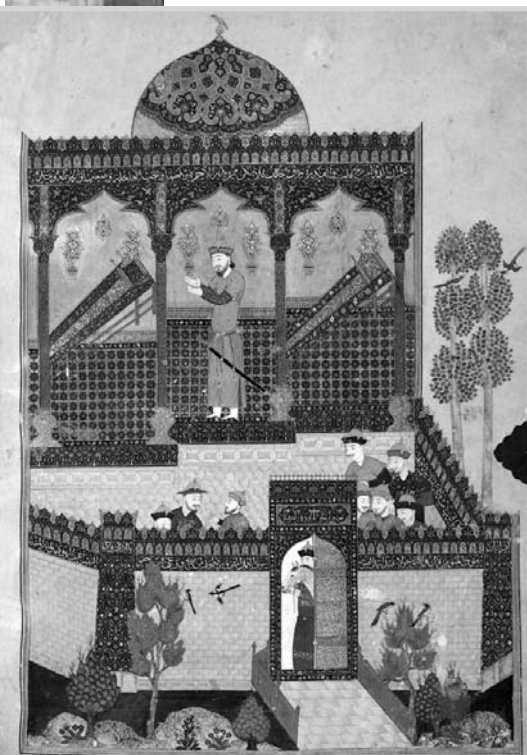
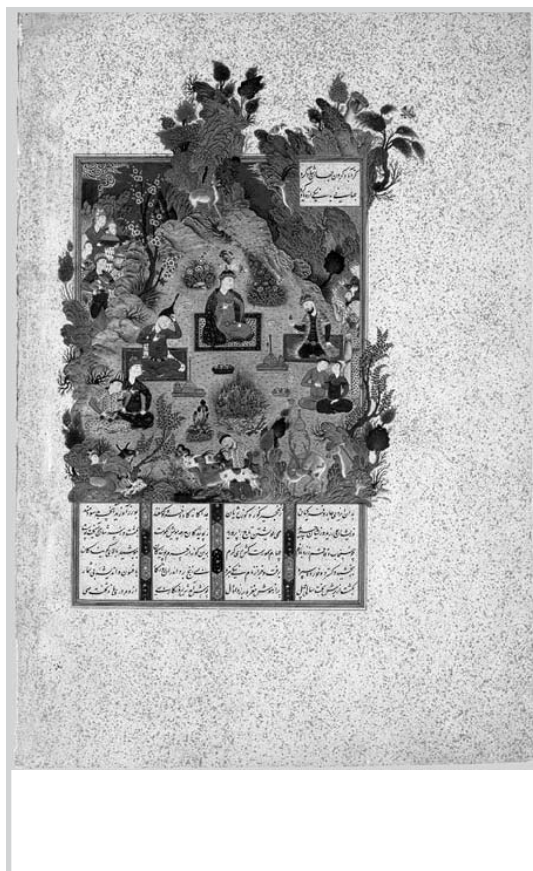


Figure 4. Bayasanghori (Baysonqori) manuscript  
folio c. 1430 CE Tabriz Faramarz son of Rostam  
mourns the death of his father and of his uncle  
Zavareh. Gulstan Palace, Tehran



the reign of Tahmasp's father, *Shah Isma'il I*.

Largely completed by 1540, the manuscript was produced at Tabriz in northern Iran over a thirty-year period by a variety of calligraphers and illustrators such as *Mir Mosavar*, *Sultan Mohammad*, *Aqa Mirak*, *Dust Mohammad*, *Mirza Ali*, *Mir Seyed Ali*, *Mozafar Ali*, *Abdolsamad*, and their assistants. Of the illustrators, Sultan Mohammad is most renowned. His miniatures display an evolution of style from one painting to the next.



The 118 folios that had not been sold by Houghton by the time of his death in 1990 were offered for sale by his foundation for Fr. 70 million. When the collection could not find a buyer at that price, *Oliver Hoare*, a British art dealer arranged an exchange of the folios with a painting, Lady No. 3 by Willem De Kooning (1952-53), owned by the Islamic Government of Iran – but one the Iranian government had removed from public display considering it lewd (in 1989, another one of De Kooning's paintings had sold for \$18 million at an auction at Sotheby's).

## GUJARATI TRANSLATION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Parsi Zarathushtis who could not speak Persian, petitioned the *Kutar brothers Faramarz and Mahiar* – both well versed in Persian and Gujarati – to transliterate and translate the Shahnameh into their adopted Gujarati script and language. The brothers spent ten years and published the first volume in 1914 and the final tenth volume in 1918. In order to print the ten volumes, the brothers purchased a defunct printing press in Bombay, India, which they named the Shah Nameh Press (FJ page 28) Their work appears to have been based and modelled on Julius Mohl's reconstructed Persian text and French translation – as was the Warners' English translation we mention below.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Various attempts have been made to translate the Shahnameh into English, and the translations that this author recommends are:

1. **Warner, Arthur and Edmond, The Shahnama of Firdausi, 6 vols. (London: Keegan Paul, 1905-1925)** – as a primary reference. While not perfect, it is the only reasonably complete English translation in verse and one that best preserves the heritage value.
2. **Zimmern, Helen (1846-1934), The Epic of Kings - Hero Tales of Ancient Persia (1883)** – as a secondary reference. This is a prose translation and a quick introduction to the first part of the Shahnameh.

An authentic and complete translation of the Shahnameh which maintains the original lines of verse is needed. From a Zarathushti perspective it would be preferable if all nouns related to the Zarathushti religion that Ferdowsi used – nouns such as *Khoda*, *Yazdan*, *mobed*, *Ahriman*, *div*, and *Zand-Avesta* are transliterated without translation. And perhaps some enlightened artist can illustrate the scenes in a style appropriate to Zarathushti-Iranian heritage as well.

**FOR BIO OF K.E. EDULJEE SEE PAGE 35**

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

A review of the literature on the various Shahnameh manuscript copies gives rise to a variety of emotions. On the one hand, elation that the manuscripts have survived and with them a heritage – a heritage that could very well have disappeared had it not been for Ferdowsi's single-minded determination to fulfil his mission. On the other hand, regret that we do not know what happened to Ferdowsi's own manuscript – if it has been destroyed or if it still exists, waiting to be discovered. We must remain forever hopeful.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES:

- (1) Manuscript meaning manual-writing is abbreviated MS. 'Manuscripts' is abbreviated MSS.
- (2) Shahnameh is also spelt Shah Nameh, Shahnama, Shah nama, Shahname, Shah name, Shanameh, Shaname.... The name is commonly translated as 'Book of Kings'.
- (3) The Shahnameh manuscripts that exist today are all copies that at some point originated from the author's own manuscript written in his own hand.
- (4) A manuscript bound into a book is called a codex. Several are called codices.
- (5) Colophon: the end note that named the scribe, year of completion and patron.
- (6) Jstor at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/176284>
- (7) Metropolitan Museum of Art
- (8) According to Dr. Habibollah Ayatollahi quoting Souren Melikian in Art and Auction Magazine's October 1994 issue.
- (9) A folio from the Qavam al-Din manuscript produced in Shiraz by calligrapher Hassan b. Muhammad b. 'Ali Husaini al-Mausili in May 1341 CE; a colophon and five illustrated folios from a 1482 CE manuscript (ex Demotte) produced in Shiraz by calligrapher Murshid b. 'Izz al-Din; an illustrated folio from a manuscript sponsored by Sultan 'Ali Mirza Karkiya and produced by calligrapher Salik b. Sa'd in 1494 CE.



[This article is based on information contained in the Zoroastrian Heritage's Shahnameh web page at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/index.htm>.]





## SUCH IS THE STOCK I SPRING FROM

It would be a gift for his beloved Parsi community—a line by line, word for word translation of the Shah Nameh of Firdowsi from Farsi into Gujarati. That germ of an idea came to *Faramroze*, one of the four Kutar brothers and was bolstered by Zarathushtis in the community who approached our Grandfather, whom we affectionately called motabawajee: *"Dastoorji...with your command over both Farsi and Gujarati you would perform a great service to the community by translating the Shah Nameh from Farsi into Gujarati—other wise this great epic is lost to most Parsis."*

At the same time others discouraged motabawajee from taking on this monumentally difficult, time-consuming task. But motabawajee was not a man to shirk from challenge, which by now he had come to think of as his obligation to the Parsi community.

**THE TRANSLATION BEGINS.** And so, without further ado, with the help of the 'Holy Yazdaan' and with his brother *Mahiar* assisting, our grandfather painstakingly began the monumental task. Every day, after the day's duties were done, the two brothers would devote some hours to studying, reading, making notes by hand and scrupulously learning all they could about this great

## DINAZ KUTAR ROGERS

poem. Faramroze was aware of partial and complete translations in English, French, Italian, Russian and other

languages of this epic poem and also the great joy these tales brought to all who heard them.

In Northern India and in Kashmir the exploits of these Persians were celebrated in the Urdu language. Sir Henry Laird had reported in his travels how little children in Iran and the surrounding regions would weep at the recitals of the tales from this extraordinary book. As the translations progressed, so did Faramroze and Mahiar's elation and enthusiasm. Our Grandfather approached *K.R. Cama* of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institution in Bombay, for a loan of his copies of the ten volumes of the French translation by the German Orientalist, Jules Mohl. Mr. Cama turned down the request; the volumes were in his private collection. Disappointed, but undaunted Grandfather kept searching. Even though Faramroze did not understand French, he felt Mohl's translation would be of great help.

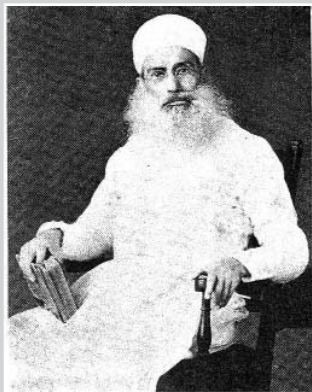
Shortly thereafter, as though in answer to his prayers, Faramroze saw an advertisement in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* offering the said Mohl translations for sale. He immediately purchased the volumes. It is said *Jeevanjee Jamshedjee Modi*, noted Avestan scholar of the time, was looking for the same volumes, and procured them from Paris, though it took him about five years to do so.

Progress on the translations was slow but sure. The brothers worked over them for ten long years, with great personal hardship and sacrifice. Family members pitched in and helped—from fetching a glass of water, or a plate of food, to looking up a reference book. A major part of the translations was done in the *Bandra Agiyari* in Bombay.

**THE NEXT STEP—PUBLICATION.** Finally, the translations were completed, but the brothers did not have the courage, the means or the know-how to publish their impressive work of ten volumes.

Then help came from precious friends: *Mr. Meherjeebhai Behramjee Dotiwalla*, a Farsi scholar and a devoted, religious man, without whose assistance, the volumes would have never reached the community; and a great friend, *Ervar Dr. Jeevanjee Jamshedjee Modi* who wrote a glowing six-page *deebacho* (forward). This is worth reading as is the *kholaso*, (explanation), and the *deebacho*, by the Kutar brothers.

Now Grandfather had pledged to sell each volume for the sum of two rupees (less than 6 cents at today's rate

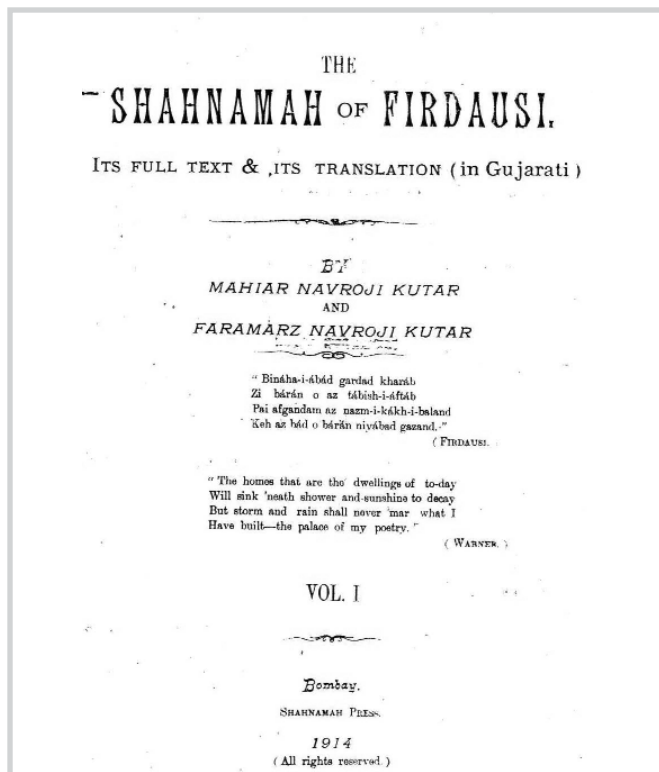


Ervad Mahiar Navroji Kutar  
1865-1940



Dastoor Faramroze Navroji  
Kutar 1868-1957





of exchange). That would be twenty rupees for the set. But there was one thing that no one had counted on--World War I. The war had inflated the price of paper and printing ink, and the cost of each volume was now estimated to be almost seven rupees! No one would print the volumes for two rupees. However my grandfather had given his word/pledge to the community--two rupees per copy; he refused to renege.

Once again, as though by divine intervention, his prayers were answered, and grandfather was able to purchase a defunct press (at Frier Road and Karvar Street, Maneckjee Rustomjee Contractor Building No. 50-62, Fort, Bombay). He named it *The Shah Nameh Press*. These volumes were registered under the Government of India's Act XXV of 1867. Each volume was dedicated to a great Parsi Zoroastrian. Volume I was printed there in 1283 YZ (1914 AD), and Volume X four years later.

**Volume I:**The First Dastoor Meherjee Rana (he who dazzled Akbar the Great with his piety and dedication, and inspired Tansen to write a three line poem about him).

**Volume II:**The late Dastoor Sahib Pahalan Faredoon and The late Dastoor Sahib Darab Pahlan.

**Volume III:**The late Dastoor Sahib Jamashp Asha.

**Volume IV:**The late Deshai Shree Khurshedjee Themurjee.

**Volume V:** The late Seth Maneckjee Navrojee Seth.

**Volume VI:**The late Seth Noshervanjee Ratanjee Tata and The late Seth Jamshejee Noshervanjee Tata.

**Volume VII:** Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy, Baronet.

**Volume VIII:** The late Sir Cawasjee Jehangir Readymoney, C.S. I.

**Volume IX:**The late Dastoor Darabjee Khurshedjee Dastoor DarabPahalan and The late Dastoor Erachjee Sohrabjee Dastoor Meherjeeerana (the two Ustaad Sahebs, Darabjee Khurshedjee of Surat who taught Farsi to great uncle Mahiar and Erachjee Sohrabjee of Navsari, tutored grandfather Faramroze in Farsi).

**Volume X:**The late Dastoor Darabjee Mahiyarjee Dastoor Merherjee Rana.

## AN UNFINISHED DICTIONARY.

Besides Persian, Faramroze was a scholar of Avesta, Pazend, and Pahlavi. At the age of sixty-one he started writing a Persian-Gujarati dictionary, but was unable to finish it, even after fifteen years of hard work. So, at seventy-five, due to old age and failing eyesight, after writing 175,000 words, the last few letters in the Persian alphabet were left unfinished. No one has tried to continue his work.

He was also the author of *An Account of Navsari Atash-Behram, and the life of Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy and Desai Khurshed in Persian verse*.

**A PROMISE KEPT.** Urged to sell the Shah Nameh volumes at a higher price than the promised two rupees, our Grandfather narrated the following tale:

*"The author of these magnificent tales of pre-Islamic that is Zarathushti Iran, was a humble Muslim poet called Firdowsi. He composed this marvel of Iran in pure, classical Persian, using the least amount of Arabic words, which were a constant reminder of the defeat and subjugation of Zarathushti Iran by Islamic Arabia. It took this man, born in a village called Shadab, near Tus, in Khorasan in Eastern Iran, some thirty years to complete 60,000*





## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN



couplets, in 1010 AD. The long years of this labor of love had left the poet in an impoverished state.

"According to some, it was under the patronage of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni or Ghaznavid (who even though Turkish, loved and favored Persian literature) Firdowsi began this formidable task which was completed in 1010 CE, the day or roj was Ashishvagh and the month Asfandarmand, 380 YZ in the Zoroastrian calendar.

"Firdowsi was promised a treasure in gold coins and seven thousand dinars on completion of his epic poem. Assuming that a poor poet from Toos would not know what to do with such wealth, or failing to understand the value and excellence of this classic, a treacherous minister substituted a chest-full of silver coins instead. But the cause of this treachery was more likely not the king's, but that of his vazeer, minister Khaj Hassan Maimandi, who was envious of the poet's talents and being held in high esteem by others. Besides, Firdowsi was a Shite Muslim and Hassan belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam, a schism that has traditionally set apart the Arab Sunni Muslims from the Shiite Iranian Muslims. Gravely disappointed at this deceit, the poor, embittered poet died in 1020, ten years after the completion of his magnum opus.

"Meanwhile, the king's conscience troubled him, so he dispatched the promised payment of gold, to Firdowsi. As the caravan of twelve camels bearing gold and other gifts was making its way to the poet's home through the Rudbar Gate, Firdowsi's funeral procession was heading the other way from the Gate of Razan to the cemetery."

**"If Firdowsi did not make any money for his Shah Nameh", Grandfather stated, "why should I?"**

True to his word, our grandfather sold the Shah Nameh volumes for two rupees each, personally absorbing the financial loss of Rupees 5,000--a great sum of money in 1914.

**"Such is the stock I spring from"**

Titus Maccius Plautus

Roman Dramatist.

Circa 254-184 BCE

**My Thanks to P. N. (Phiroze Noshirwan Kutar)**  
for  
**this wonderful Kutar family- treasure that I knew nothing about.**

An earlier version of this article was published in the  
FEZANA JOURNAL FALL 1997 (pages 70-71)

**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 Vaego and the ancient Zarathushti deen.



**Shahnameh exhibition in New Delhi , December 5, 2010**

**Ferdowsi Symphony, in the Ukraine in January 2011 .**

Iranian composer Shahin Farhat, professor of music at the University of Tehran is scheduled to record his recent work, the four movement

**Shahnameh Audio files ( Farsi)**

[www.anvari.org/iran/poetry/shahnameh\\_ferdowsi](http://www.anvari.org/iran/poetry/shahnameh_ferdowsi) -Audio files



## MY PASSION FOR SHAHNAMEH

FREDDY M IRZA



My passion and love for the Shahnameh goes back 25 years when I bought the seven volumes of the Shahnameh written in English prose by Dr. Bahman Sohrab Surti of Hyderabad, India. The vivid details and the flowing style in which these stories are written makes it extremely difficult to put the book down, even now, after reading some of the volumes several times over.

Ferdowsi's epic is extremely illustrative, which is why, I often chose to relay these stories in my religion classes, and am not in the least bit surprised when both children and adults stay captivated as each episode unfolds.

### ART OF STORY-TELLING:

My love for story-telling can be traced back many years. My parents Erach and Gool Mirza were excellent story tellers. They used facial expressions and mimicked their voices to add value to the characters depicted in whatever stories they told us. It all started in 1984 when I was living in Ottawa and my own children were young. We started an informal religion class for children and before long it became a regular weekly story time and almost all the tales I recited were from the Shahnameh.

I took the stories from the Shahnameh and used the following guidelines to make sure the children remained interested. One must be mindful of the fact that in the early 70's and all through the 80's there were not many south Asians living in the Ottawa area, so I tried to infuse an element of awe and wonder in the stories I retold. I would:







## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

1. **Memorize** as much as possible and then recite it without the book, in my own style.
2. **Create the atmosphere.** At the North American Youth Congress held in Toronto in July 2003 I was asked to tell a story from the Shahnameh. As the lights dimmed, I came out wearing a turban and a cloak (to look like Ferdowsi) and narrated the stories of Rustom and Sohrab, King Shyavak. It created the perfect atmosphere for this event.
3. **Use age-appropriate words and description.** I try to avoid the unpleasant details of a battle, or an execution without distorting the story too much, especially with a lot of young children in the audience.

### USING STORIES FROM THE SHAHNAMEH TO COMPLEMENT RELIGION CLASS:

Here are some of the examples of stories related to the topic:

Over the years that I have taught religion class to children both in Ottawa and in Toronto, I have been using these stories to develop several skills, the main being play-acting. Drama, in my mind is an excellent tool to develop a child's vocabulary, imagination, and memorization skills. They remember the various historic names and events much better when they either relate a story or are playing a role

Topic	Shahnameh Story
Ahura Mazda & Amesha Spentas	There are numerous stories in the Shahnameh dealing with wisdom, truth, sovereignty and devotion. My favourite ones are: Story of Zal as it relates to the love, devotion as well as his wisdom to overcome injustice; Stories of Tehmurasp, Faredun, and other Pishdadian and Kayanian kings who ruled with truth and justice.
Rituals	Haoma and Baresman ceremonies performed by Athawayan, father of Faredun, Vivanghan, father of Jamshed and Pourushasp, father of the Holy Prophet Zarathushtra.
Fires	Stories of King Jamshed installing the Holy fire "Adar Farah"; King Kaishusrrou starting the Fire Adar Goshasp and Prophet Zarathushtra bringing the Holy Fire "Adar Burzin Meher" in his hand to the court of King Gushtasp.
History	Shahnameh is an excellent source for the history of the Pishdadian and Kayanian dynasties.

from Shahnameh. In addition to that, drama also helps children appreciate the difficulties faced by various kings and their knights in another era.

**However, the intrinsic beauty of the epic is unveiled when one can sing the verses in Persian. I hope to fulfill my passion to learn Farsi and to sing the stories of the Shahnameh in the language it was written a thousand years ago.**

**Freddy Mirza** is a teacher in the Religious Education Sub-Committee of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) and has been teaching the tenets of our religion to children for over 20 years. He is the Chair of the Religious Events Sub Committee of the ZSO and a member of the ZSO Interfaith Sub-Committee as well as the "100th Toronto-First Zoroastrian Scout Group" of which he is one of the founding members. He is a recipient of several awards from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism for volunteering his services to the community and to the Scouting movement. Freddy Mirza is a Senior Marine Inspector with Transport Canada's Marine Safety Branch in Toronto. He lives in Toronto with his wife Kety. and is the father of two adult children, daughter Roxanna, and son Farzad, married to Michelle Bamji.





## THE LEGACY OF FERDOWSI

### FERDOWSI AND THE SURVIVAL OF IRANIAN ZARATHUSHTI LITERATURE

If the Arabs and Islamic zealots who ruled the Iranian Aryan lands from c. 650 CE had tried to obliterate Iranian-Zarathushti literature, they had not anticipated that some 350 years after the Arab invasion of Iran, *Hakim Abul-Qasim Mansur* – otherwise known as Ferdowsi Tusi, the Tusi Poet from Paradise – would ensure that a great body of the literature would survive and even be revered.

Indeed, many Iranians consider Ferdowsi's epic, the *Shahnameh* to be the greatest literary work of all time (1). In the auction houses of the world, single pages of *Shahnameh* manuscripts sell for millions of dollars (2). Yet, in his closing years, a destitute Ferdowsi had to flee the wrath of the prevailing despot *Sultan Mahmoud*. When Ferdowsi passed away, *Aboul Kasim Gourgani*, chief sheikh of Tus, proclaimed Ferdowsi to be an infidel who had devoted his life to the glorification of fire-worshippers and misbelievers (sic), and therefore refused to pray over Ferdowsi's grave. (3)

***So how did Ferdowsi succeed in making the Shahnameh a favoured text that even rulers who otherwise persecuted Zarathushtis could not resist patronizing? What was Ferdowsi's mission? What underlying messages did he seek to convey? What is his legacy? What can we do with his endowment?***

First, Ferdowsi worked with the system while stretching the boundaries of propriety to the limits of personal safety. Next, he appealed to the glory of the Iranian nation and the vanity of rulers who sought the legitimacy of a royal tradition that stretched to the beginnings of history.

### FERDOWSI' GOALS & THE REVIVAL OF PERSIAN (Parsi)

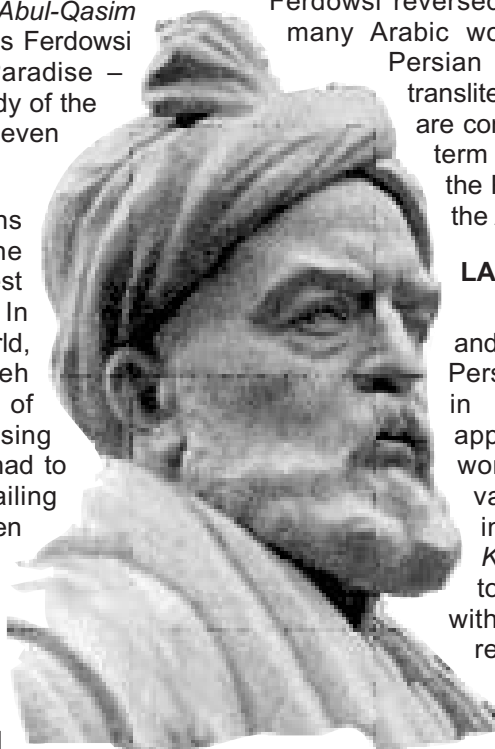
One of Ferdowsi's stated goals was to revive the Persian language. He succeeded and elevated Persian to a level of great beauty,

culture, and sophistication by writing the *Shahnameh* in Classical Persian – and not Arabic, the then favoured language of court literature. The Persian vernacular of his day had just emerged from Middle Persian Pahlavi and had become heavily admixed with Arabic words. Ferdowsi reversed the trend by expunging as many Arabic words as he could from the Persian he used. If the *Shahnameh* transliterations this author possesses are correct, Ferdowsi even used the term *Parsi* and not *Farsi* to name the Persian language, *Farsi* being the Arabic version of *Parsi*.

### LANGUAGE AND MEANING

In expunging Arabic words and replacing them with classical Persian, Ferdowsi also engaged in an exercise that is less apparent. He subtly linked the words he used to Zarathushti values and concepts. For instance, he used the words *Khoda* (4) and *Yazdan* to refer to God and the Divine – words with direct links to Zarathushti religion. Today, ironically, throughout the traditional Aryan lands, orthodox Muslims are trying hard to stop the use of *Khoda* in reference to their God.

Ferdowsi also sought to correct myths and slurs against Zarathushtis, one of the most prevalent being the labelling of Zarathushtis as 'fire-worshippers'. The lines that I refer to are those commonly translated as, "*Do not say that the Zarathushtis were fire-worshippers. They were worshippers of one God.*" Let us examine the transliterated text: "*Ma pandar ka atash parast bodand. Parastandeh pak-e yazdan bodand.*" This author translates the lines as follows: "*We imagine they were fire-worshippers. They were worshippers of a pure Divinity.*" When translated directly, the words go far beyond correcting a myth. *Pak-e Yazdan*, Pure Divinity, can carry several connotations, one of them being a true God. Further, if Divinity or Godliness is the repository of a community's highest values and ideals and if the Zarathushtis worshipped a pure Divinity, then the lines beg the question: how does one describe what the other worshipped? The capacity that allows the reader to make







meaning in several layers is yet another achievement in Ferdowsi's use of language, an achievement he made possible with the use of sophisticated poetry.

## USE OF POETRY. A TRADITION ESTABLISHED BY ZARATHUSHTRA

In using poetry, Ferdowsi continued a tradition established by Zarathushtra himself. Ferdowsi's style of incorporating allegory and poetry was later continued by Omar Khayyam (c. 1050-1122), Hafiz (c. 1325-1388 CE) and others.

## CONNOTATIONS USING KHODA AND WINE IN VERSE

In using Khoda as the word for God and in mentioning the use of wine and other practices not consistent with the new regime in the Iranian Aryan lands, Ferdowsi and subsequent poets used poetry, subtlety, allegory and word-play to convey ideological messages. The connotations can be many. For instance, in speaking about the pleasures of wine, we have the direct meaning as well as meanings in layers below. Perhaps the poets were emboldening the revival of an old culture that the Arabs that sought to supplant with their own. Perhaps they were alluding to the desire for freedom to enjoy life according to ancient Iranian customs free from Arab Islamic prohibitions. Perhaps, that the individual was sovereign to make choices based on wisdom. Or that Iranians had a cultural heritage that was sophisticated and mature enough for them to

figure out for themselves what was good or bad – without the need for patronization by an imposed foreign culture typified by *Azi Zahak*, the foreign king who ousted legendary King Jamshid (5) and who Ferdowsi 'Arabized'.

## THE TRADITION CONTINUES: Omar Khayyam

Omar Khayyam, who closely followed Ferdowsi in time, spawned a number of imitators as well. As such, there are times when we cannot be sure about the original authorship of some verses such as:

*"How much more of the mosque, of prayer and fasting?*

*Better go drunk and begging round the taverns.*

*Khayyam, drink wine, for soon this clay of yours*  
*Will make a cup, bowl, one day a jar."*

Consider the juxtaposition of religion, wine and clay. What is the 'wine' that is better than the imposed religious norms? What is the 'clay' that can be fashioned into something one day?

*"When once you hear the roses are in bloom,*  
*Then is the time, my love, to pour the wine;*  
*Houris and palaces and heaven and hell\* -*  
*These are but fairy-tales, forget them all."*

*(\*reward and punishment for following the prevailing religious norms?)*

*"O cleric, we are more active than you,*  
*Even so drunk, we are more attentive than you,*  
*You drink the blood of men, we drink the blood of grapes,*  
*Be fair, which one of us is more bloodthirsty?"*

Then in a line *"Enjoy wine and don't be afraid, God has compassion"* could the poet be trying to embolden rebellion? To whose concept of God does the poet refer? Certainly not the one in whose name transgressors and infidels are killed. So deep down, was the author really talking about enjoying wine?

## THE TRADITION CONTINUES: HAFIZ

Continuing the tradition, Hafiz (also spelt Hafez) wrote:

*"Dar kharabat-e moqan noor-e khoda mibinam"* (Ghazal 357). Shahriar Shahriari translates 'kharabat-e moqan' as the 'tavern of the magi' and therefore this author translates the line as: *"In the tavern of the magi, I see the Light*



of God.” We can hardly imagine that the magi owned taverns. If so, what was the tavern of the Zarathushtis where Hafiz saw the Light of God?

This very powerful message above echoes Ferdowsi's ‘*pak-e Yazdan*’ and other references. Hafiz is also credited as writing: “*In the monastery of the magi, they honour us. The fire that never dies, burns within our hearts.*”

**HOW STRONGLY DOES THE ETERNAL FLAME BURN?** However, is the sacred eternal fire of Zarathushtis – the one that should never die in our hearts – inexorably dying out? Is it now burning on the fumes of a past grandeur that enlivens the pages of the Shahnameh?

## TRAGIC CYCLES OF GLORY & LAMENT

There is one clear message that Ferdowsi has left us. It is not hidden. Yes, the Shahnameh extols an Iranian-Zarathushti heritage that is rich and glorious. But it also laments that we have been our own worst enemy. The Shahnameh's epic, the Avesta, other Zarathushti texts, and now history, chronicle three glorious but tragic cycles. The Aryans rose to great heights when they were noble and sunk to great depths when they lost *their grace, their khvarenah, their farr*. The tragic cycles began with renowned King Jamshid who lost his grace and exemplified the saying that ‘pride goes before a fall’. Next came the glory of the Achaemenians and King Cyrus, only to end in internal weakness and the devastation wrought by the barbarous Alexander. But sadly we had still not learnt the lesson of history that internal dissention leaves the Aryan lands vulnerable, and Arabic devastation followed Sassanian rule – as had Zahak supplanted Jamshid's rule in the very first cycle. Relating the legend of Jamshid, Ferdowsi wrote, “*That poet spoke well who said, ‘When you become a king, seek to be a servant.’*”

If we Zarathushtis are to regain our grace, we will need to do more than becoming giddy on the

heady wine of past glory. We will need to learn from the lessons of the Shahnameh that Ferdowsi spent his life trying to preserve. Internal dissention – the anger, aggression, and abuse that marks disagreements between Zarathushtis – hardly exemplifies the creed of good thoughts, words and deeds to which Zarathushtis pledge themselves. Is that conduct wise? Wisdom is an ideal to which Zarathushtis are supposed to aspire and one which Ferdowsi holds as a beacon to light our path and see the dangers.

## FERDOWSI' LEGACY. THE NEED FOR ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP.

Ferdowsi and subsequent poets have left us a legacy of hope and lament. The question is what we will do with this gift. *The Shahnameh is more than just a Book of Kings; it is a book on leadership and the qualities of enlightened leadership. And each Zarathushtrian is a potential leader. Can we realize that potential?*

**K. E. Eduljee** lives in West Vancouver, BC, Canada. He is the author of the website *Zoroastrian Heritage* <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/> and the *Zoroastrian Heritage* discussion blog at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/>. His web-page on Ferdowsi is at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/index.htm>.

*Eduljee is a past director of the Zoroastrian Society of BC and a founding trustee of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr trust for BC. His efforts in Zarathushti heritage are directed towards providing objective information on Zarathushti religion, promoting the good name of the community, and honouring the memory of Zarathushtis who through the ages have performed great sacrifice in order to faithfully preserve Zarathushti heritage and its core values.*

### Notes:

- (1) See <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/index.htm>
- (2) See <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/index.htm#manuscripts>
- (3) Edward Henry Palmer, 1902 Encyclopaedia at <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/F/FIR/firdausi.html>
- (4) See Etymology of Khoda at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/2009/12/khv-xv-and-hv-sounds-in-avestan.html>
- (5) See <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/page06.htm>







## FERDOWSI AND HIS SHAHNAMEH

### IT'S IMPORTANCE & INFLUENCE ON THE PRESENT DAY COMMUNITY

*By Ervad Parvez M. Bajan*

#### SHAHNAMEH – AN INTEGRAL PART OF IRAN'S NATIONAL LIFE:

Ferdowsi, like Homer is a national institution, and his epic – Shahnameh – has become an integral part of the national life of Iran. He has revived and immortalized the great ideals of Iran. No poet has ever dominated the consciousness of a whole race more thoroughly and none for so long a period. He has rendered to Persia all the precious gifts that the poet can confer: the long voyage through realms of gold, enrichment and delight beyond any power to measure. Enchanted by his magic rhythms, even the lives of the lowliest have been touched with splendor. Bricklayer and Camel-driver lighten their toil to the accompaniment of his stately verse. The school-boy finds his ambition stirred and his imagination kindled. King and scholars, grandee and saint, have all been over the centuries nourished and refreshed at this inexhaustible fountain of wisdom and beauty. The appeal of Ferdowsi is universal. The pathos of the stories, the legends of an imaginative race, the love of beauty and valour, the scenes of fighting and feasting, the sense of the greatness of the Almighty and the transitoriness of mortal things – all these themes are treated with an elevation that uplifts and delights both young and old.

Ferdowsi drew largely upon Pahlavi Chronicles for his narratives. His knowledge of military strategy and maneuvers is so minute and profound, that it may be surmised that he had received military training and made a study of the science of war. He seems to be at home in the arts of archery, swordsmanship, horsemanship and fortification. He is among the greatest of war-poets; and excels not only in description of single combats but of sieges and general engagements. He displays a perfect knowledge of weapons of war and the dispositions of troops, both infantry and cavalry, in battle array.

#### SHAHNAMEH FORMED IRANIAN NATIONAL CHARACTER

Ferdowsi would not have been the national poet of Persia unless he had known how to instruct as well as delight his readers. As he himself observes, most of the legends contain a moral; and no one can study the Shahnameh without realizing what a powerful influence it had

in forming the national character. Most of the pages of the Shahnameh are filled with ethical lessons and maxims, many of which are put in the mouth of kings, heroes, priests and other personages of the Epic. His teaching is singularly pure. It may be said of him that he has written nothing or next to nothing unfit to be read by children. Every Persian school-boy knows the following verses, which represents the Persian ideal of a just and bountiful monarch.

*Faridun Farrokh Firhسته Nabud  
z mashk va z anbar sarashteh nabud  
ba dad o dahish yaft an nikui  
to dad o dahish kun Faridun toi*

*The blest Faridun was but earth  
No being of celestial birth,  
Be kind, be generous, all will see  
Faridun's very self in thee.*

#### DIGNITY TO PERSIAN CULTURE

Ferdowsi was not merely a poet. He has been also a supreme teacher whose lessons of purity and truth are sound and inspiring. Into the comprehensive net his poetic vision he swept all the component elements of Iranian life, and his poem became like a Divine Comedy, not merely a record of life, but a critical insight in all the elemental forces that sway it, and, what is more important, an evaluation of them that was both just and noble. He has thus brought to bear on every subsequent epoch in Persian life, the fundamental and constitutive experience of the race. It is not merely that he conceives in various guises great historic episodes and personalities; he made them significant and typical. He comprehended and expressed in permanent and communicable form the essential elements of Iranian greatness.

#### REVIVED THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT IRAN

It is safe to call Ferdowsi the chief individual creator of the spiritual unity of Iran. But for him there might have been no record of the spirit of ancient Iran. Thus Iran owes him an immense debt, for he restored the scattered ages with a song and his poem has helped to hold the nation



together. Persia owes much to the Shahnameh. In many countries we have seen foreign influences obliterate the indigenous styles and deflect national character, but every invasion of Persia seems to have enriched her life in essential ways.

The great Seljuks for example, conquered Persia by might of arms, but they in turn capitulated to Persian culture and were soon more Persian than the Persians. The Mongol invasions swept over Persia with a remorseless destruction more terrible than anything that ever afflicted any people. Great cities were completely obliterated, yet the Soul of Persia went marching on and, despite the flood of Far Eastern influences that followed in the train of the Mongol invasions, the course of Persian culture was neither checked nor diverted. Its genius shone more brightly. That Persian Culture remained true to itself through these bleak years was partly a tribute to the spiritual unity and force of character to which Ferdowsi contributed so decisively.

The creative influence of this great man overflowed into every phase of Persian life and sustained with self-renewing force. Much of the ceramics of the time is decorated with scenes from the Shahnameh. It has often been said that the art of painting and decoration received precious content and inspiration from Ferdowsi, and that he provided the artists with themes to illustrate. This is true, for Ferdowsi filled the mind of Persia with a galaxy of vivid and exciting images.

## MORAL CHARACTER AS DEPICTED IN THE SHAHNAMEH

The moral character of Ferdowsi judged by his utterances and the quality of his poetry indeed was very high. His poetry reveals a man singularly pure minded and magnanimous, gentle and generous, deeply religious in the best sense of the term, and burning with lofty patriotism without parallel in the history of letters. He condemns falsehood, cruelty, cowardice, duplicity, avarice and disloyalty. His speech is always informed by a spirit of deep piety, high seriousness and absolute sincerity. There is neither cynicism, nor blasphemy in Ferdowsi. He has a clean, reverent and humble mind, and with all his confidence in the immortal character of his poetry he has no arrogance. His tolerance and generosity toward other religions is worth

appreciating when he says there was a King of India wise enlightened and victorious.

To him life is a divine gift to be enjoyed to the full within the limits of natural laws and the moral code. For Ferdowsi, fear of God and avoidance of pain to others are the only limitations upon the traditional free and joyous living of the Iranians :

***Bitars az Khuda-u mayazar kas,  
Rah-e rastgari haminast-u baes.***

Fear God and harm no creature. This alone is the road to Salvation, and this will suffice.

Ferdowsi's religion is pre-eminently the worship of the one God, all powerful, all merciful, all-pervading, and eternal. In his view, God is the sole creator of the earth and of the heavens and heavenly bodies. He has no equal, partner or rival. He is the sole supreme and eternal master of the Universe. There are no other Gods in the Shahnameh. Ferdowsi does not employ any celestial hierarchy or numerous agencies of the Godhead. The angel *Sarush*, - *Sraosha* – of the Zarathushti scriptures- frequently appears on the earthly plane to convey God's messages. However, in all probability, the passages in which Sraosha is made to intervene in human affairs were taken from Avesta or Pahlavi sources.

## SHAHNAMEH – A MASTERPIECE OF PERSIAN LITERATURE

Persian literature is among the most ancient of living literatures. There has been for a thousand years an unbroken continuity of literary masterpieces; and such is the vitality of the language that even the earliest of these is scarcely obsolete or even obscure today. Unlike the French which is strong in prose and weak in poetry, Persian literature is prolific in verse, poor in prose.

According to the Iranians themselves, there have been three great "prophets" in the realm of letters, Ferdowsi, Anvari and Saadi, each supreme in the sphere of Masnavi, Qasida and Ghazal respectively.

Ferdowsi's fame rests upon the Shahnameh. It is a versified history of Iran from the earliest times to the overthrow of the Sassanian Empire. It is a gigantic poem in rhymed couplets, half







history, half legend. The traditional 60,000 couplets mentioned by the poet himself are not to be found in any of the extant texts of the Shahnameh, which range between about 44,000 and 54,000 verses.

Any heart responsive to the poetic impulse and tolerably acquainted with the language, must feel the haunting melody of his poetry and its elevating and inspiring quality. By eschewing the Arabic element in the language, he imposed an artificial restraint upon himself. Yet he wields his literary weapon with consummate power and supreme effect. The Iranian history and culture are preserved in his glowing pages in a shape of splendor and majesty beyond all comparison. His power is such that to the genuine Iranian the Shahnameh is more than history, more than poetry. It is RELIGION. Although in the centuries that followed, tens of thousands of verses in the manner and meter of the Shahnameh have been written in Persian, no poet has succeeded in emulating the simplicity and majesty of Ferdowsi.

## INFLUENCE OF SHAHNAMEH

It is universally acknowledged that no poet of Ferdowsi's stature has arisen in Iran till the present day. Even according to Western scholars, as an epic poet he alone is comparable to Homer. In any case, Ferdowsi's place is in the front rank of immortals, along with Homer and Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Vyas and Valmiki.

The Shahnameh's claim to pre-eminence is two-fold. It is both a literary masterpiece and the complete national epos of Iran. It describes not only the political and military history of ancient Iran but its entire life. It is at the same time poetry of the highest order. It is noteworthy that the vogue of the Shahnameh spread not only in Iran but in all Islamic countries. It is Iranian culture that has, apart, of course, from the Quran, influenced the entire world of Islam; and for centuries the Shahnameh summed up and represented the culture of Iran.

The ancient Persian names celebrated by Ferdowsi in his epic, are household words, not only in Iran and Afghanistan, but in large parts of India and Central Asia. From Hoshang to Yezdegrid, and Garhasp to Bahram Chubin, the names of Ferdowsi's kings and warriors, are adopted in lands and peoples not necessarily of Iranian lineage. The entire nomenclature of the Parsis of India, both male and female, is, of course, derived practically from the pages of the

Shahnameh. It is remarkable that these Parsi names do not hark back to the original forms preserved in their religious books.

Even epithets and descriptive names bestowed by the poet upon his characters are bodily adopted by Parsis and Muslims e.g. Tahamtan, Piltan, Jehangir, Jehanbukhsh, Jehandarshah, Khurram, Shahriyar, Ruinton, Farrukh, Humayun, Khujasta, Gulchehr, Gulandam, Mahrui, Namdar, Mihrban, Davar, Sarafraz, Shirmard, Shirdil, Sardar, Sipehdar etc.

European opinion of the Shahnameh was expressed by the greatest and most versatile of Orientalists, Sir William Jones, over 200 years ago, in these memorable words : *"A glorious monument of Eastern genius and learning, which, if ever it should be generally understood in its original language, will contest the merit of invention with Homer himself."* And the great English poet-critic, Theodore Watts-Dunton, refers to the Shahnameh as a *"standing wonder in the literature of poetry"*

There is no question that the soul of Iran has been kept alive by the strains of the Shahnameh for a thousand years. Both as the vital source of national inspiration, and the grand prototype of great poetry, the Shahnameh occupies a unique position in the world's literature. It is the inexhaustible mine on which the writers and creators of Iran have drawn for their subjects, figures and phrases. Ferdowsi is the father of most that is good, true and beautiful in the literature of Iran. From his pages soldiers have derived material spirit and heroic ardors, statesmen have learnt policy, kings royal dignity, and the whole Iranian nation a pride and patriotism that have kept them together against a thousand calamities for a thousand years. Conquerors like *Nadirshah* turned to the strains of the Shahnameh for inspiration and conquering zeal. The wise *Abul Fazl* exhorted the great Akbar to give his days and nights to its noble and stimulating pages. Such was the poet, such is the poem, and such ancient Iran of glorious memory as described in the pages of the Shahnameh. It is 1,000 years since the Master disappeared from the plane of earthly existence.

***Jehan yadgarast-u ma raftani***

***Zi mardum namanad juz az guftani***

*"The world endures whereas we pass away.  
Nothing survives of man except his Written Words."*



## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

His last Memorable Words

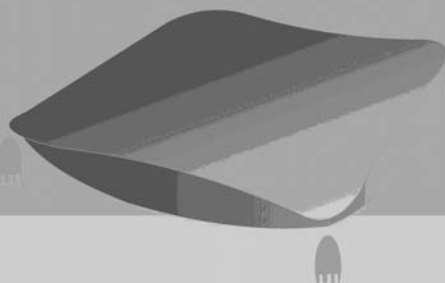
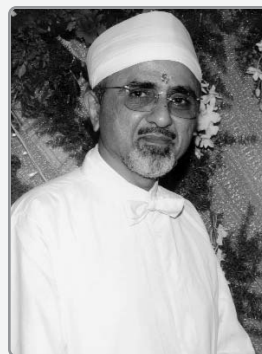
Basi ranj Burdam dar in sal-e-si  
Azam Zindeh Kardam dar in Parsi.  
Na miram azin pas ki man zinda-am  
Ki tukhm-e sukhun-ra paraganda-am.  
Haran kas ki darad hush-u ray-u din,  
Pas az marg bar man kunad afrin.

*"I have taken a lot of pains in writing this memorable volume for thirty long years and with this, I have brought back to life the glories of Iran. Whoever has wit, and faith and judgment will shower benedictions upon me after I am gone. But I shall not die; henceforth I am alive for ever, since I have scattered far and wide the seeds of speech."*

**Ervad Parvez M. Bajan** is a qualified priest having undergone his Navar and Maratab in Navsari at a very young age. He is also a graduate in Physics and Mathematics from The Royal Institute of Science, Mumbai and holds a post-graduate degree in Law, specializing in International Law and Criminology. He was awarded the gold medal for his Masters Degree in Avesta, Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian Languages from Bombay University.

At present, he is a lecturer in Avesta, Pahlavi and Ancient Iranian Languages at St. Xavier's College Mumbai and Sir J. J. Zarthoshti Madressa, Mumbai. He is a Trustee of the Athornan Mandal - the apex body of the Zarathushti clergy. He is also a member of the Governing Body of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute.

He has presented several research papers on the Shahnameh in India and abroad. Apart from his scholastic pursuit, Ervad Bajan is the Panthaky (Head Priest) of Seth B. M. Mevawala Fire-temple in Mumbai which is managed by the Bajan family for six generations since the enthronement of fire in the 1851



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## THE RELEVANCE OF FERDOWSI'S SHAHNAMEH TO THE YOUNGER GENERATION

ERVAD RAMIYAR PARVEZ KARANJIA

An epic is an evergreen piece of literature, which combines religion, history and ethics to form the cornerstones of a well-rounded education for any civilization.

The Iranian epic Shahnameh is a 1,000-year-old poem written in chaste Persian. It contains the history and legends of prehistoric and historic Iran with all its greatness and pettiness, romance and tragedies, heroes and villains, glory and shame.

It has relevance for all ages, but more so for the younger generation. It has everything the younger generation identifies with and looks forward to. It has a superhero, heroes galore, monsters, humor, excitement, narrative/story, intrigue, passion, faithfulness, treachery, deception, love, messages, happy endings and lots more.

The word Shahnameh means "The Book of Kings." It was composed a thousand years ago by a poet whose real name was *Abul Qasim Hasan*, better known by his pen-name Ferdowsi Toosi. The Shahnameh comprises 60,000 couplets of which about 4,000 are lost to us now. It ranks among the greatest epics of the world along with the Iliad and Odyssey of the West and Ramayana and Mahabharat in the East.

**Considering the vast period that the Shahnameh embraces and the delicacy of its style, it is hardly equaled and certainly not surpassed by any other epic. For this reason, Ferdowsi is regarded, and rightly so as the Homer of the East.**

A few decades ago recitations of the Shahnameh in Persian as well as in its versified translations became popular among Zarathushtis in India. They were recited with a lot of fervor, emotion and

role-play. Even today, the recitation of the Shahnameh is carried out with great fanfare across the Zarathushti diaspora

The Shahnameh covers three major Iranian dynasties— *the Peshdad, the Kayan and the Sasan*. Of these, the Kayan dynasty holds pride of place as almost 55% of the Shahnameh is dedicated to its rulers, with the other two occupying about 10% and 35% respectively. Two of the major historic dynasties the Achaemenian and the Parthian are almost overlooked in the Shahnameh. The great paladin Rustom is undoubtedly the hero of the Shahnameh, and significant space is devoted to his exploits and his relationships with other kings, especially of the Kayanian dynasty.

The Shahnameh is primarily based on Avestan texts, Yashts, the Pahlavi texts and some books now no more extant, like the *Bastan Nameh composed during the reign of Noshervan Adel* and *Khuda Nameh by Daneshwar Dehkan composed during the times of Yazdegerd Sheriyar*. There is a treasure trove of wise and philosophical sayings on life as well as a lot of information on the Zarathushti religion in the Shahnameh.

Ferdowsi, the composer of the Shahnameh, was destined to be great. Since childhood he had a fascination for nature, poetry, languages and ancient Iranian history. He was enthralled by the stories of great Iranian kings and heroes. It was just a matter of time before his passion turned to life-long commitment. Ferdowsi took 35 years to complete the Shahnameh.

The Shahnameh serves many purposes:

- 1 *It entertains*. The singing of the Shahnameh in chaste Persian is pleasing to the ears and is also very elevating and inspiring.
- 2 *It admonishes*. Many do's and don'ts of life, making up life's philosophy, are ingeniously woven into the fabric of the Shahnameh.
- 3 *It educates* us about ancient Iranian history. In fact, it is the most valuable and expansive source for the history of Pishdadian and Kayanian period. Many important events, like the southward migration of the Indo-Iranians, the practice of wearing the Sudreh-Kusti, the use of the Gurz and the birth of prophet Zarathushtra, took place during this period.



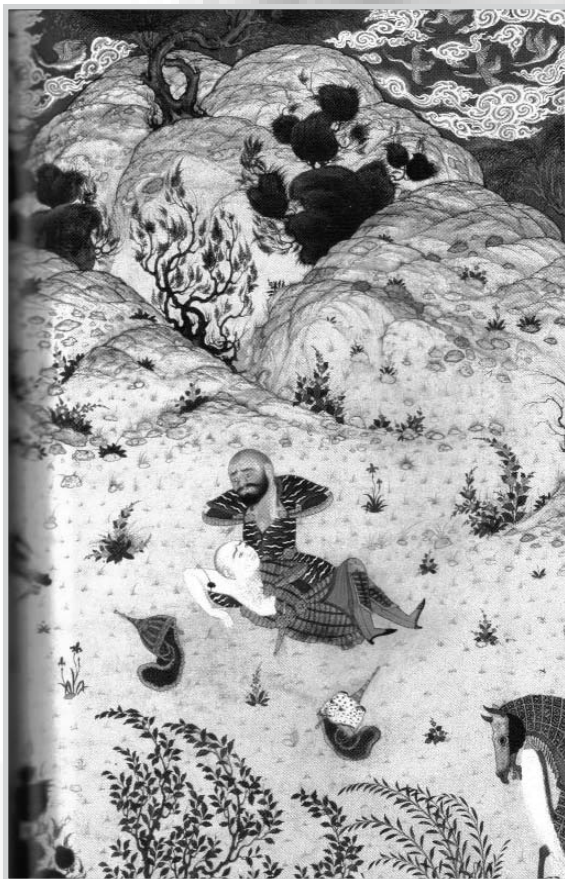
## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

- 4 *The Shahnameh also tells us a lot about our religion.* Fire-temples, Dokhmes (towers of silence) and the role of divine being Sarosh are rich in references throughout the epic.
- 5 *It gives us ethical and moral teachings-to be kind and compassionate, not to be greedy, not to lie and not to be treacherous.*

The earliest recollections of Iranian history for any child are the wonderful tales of romance and valour like those of *Rustom and Sohrab* or *Faredun and Zohak*. These tales mould and fire up the psyche of children. Children love super-heroes and super-villains and the tales of Rustom Pahelvan fighting *Safed dev* and Faredun fighting Zohak can provide them food for their imagination.

**Rustom is the quintessential hero of the Shahnameh. His fight with a mighty elephant when he was a child inspires children to be strong and courageous. His breath-taking escapades from the 7 dangerous stations (Haft-e-khan) convey what brain and brawn, valour and prayer can do to help us surmount problems in our life. His tragic duel with his son and the death of his son at his hands show that the mightiest of mighty fall to human misgivings.**

(photo 1 below, Rustom weeps over Sohrab)



Children love wars and monsters and they too are a plenty in the Shahnameh. Almost half of the Shahnameh is about wars – between Mazdayasnis and Daevayasnis, the Iranian and Turanians and the Iranians and Romans. The episodes of war bring out the best and the worst in human nature.

There are monsters a plenty in the Shahnameh. These are referred to as *Azdahs* (literally, fire spewing serpents)–the Iranian answer to the oriental dragons. There are mighty warriors, princes and kings like Kersasp, Hushang, Irach, Rustom, Gustasp, Asfandiyar tackling these huge monsters and saving people.

For the youth and the young at hearts there are endearing romances, culminating either in happy endings or in tragedies. *The romances of Rustom-Tahmineh, Bizan-Manizeh* (photo right), *Siyavakhsh-Firangez*. *Khushru-Shirin* (photo page 42) each have a different flavor to it and bring out different aspects of love. The passion of unrequited love and the bitter aftermath of rejection is played out in the episode of *Siyavakhsh and Sodabeh*. The episode of *Ardeshir* brings out the conflict of interest of a young princess caught between the love for her father *Ardavan* and faithfulness to her husband *Ardeshir*. As the epic unfolds, human frailties as well as humane qualities like pining, sacrifice, foolishness, fool-hardiness, trust, blind-faith all have their time of day in the Shahnameh.

There is of course a lot of treachery and court-intrigue that goes on, which is expected in a royal magnum opus of this scale. But this too can be used constructively, cautioning us against our own human frailties, as well as safeguarding us against the deceptions and guiles of those around us.



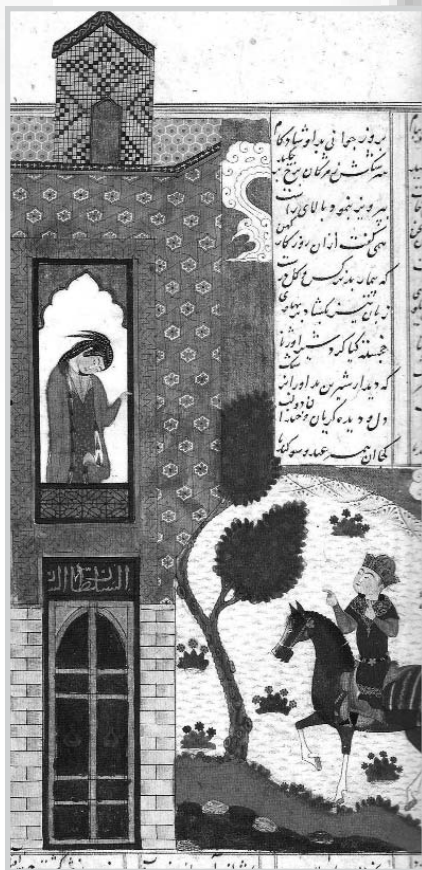




# SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

There are rare glimpses of humor-like when *King Kae Kaus* attempts to fly by having his throne lifted with the help of four huge birds and then falling off in a forest, or *King Faredun* appearing before his sons in the form of a huge Azdah and scaring two of them out of their wits.

Children would also enjoy the fairytale-like world of fantasy in episodes



like that of a worm growing up to a gigantic size and finally being killed in an ingenious way by *Ardeshir* or *King*

*Behram* tackling two monstrous lions bare-handed to get his crown and avoid war.

Reading the Shahnameh can be quite a daunting task as the sheer size of the epic can put you off. The translation of the epic in Gujarati spans ten volumes (with Persian text, by *Mahiyar and Faramarz Navroji Kutar*) and in English it has been translated into seven volumes (without Persian text, by *Dr. Bahman Sohrab Surti*). However, it is not necessary that it has to be read as a whole, from cover to cover. It can be read piecemeal - king by king, character by character or episode by episode.

History reveals that *Guru Gobind Singh*, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs was so inspired by the Shahnameh that he composed the '*Zafar Nameh*' in the metre of the Shahnameh, transforming Sikhs into a virile and marital race. The Shah of Iran had set ten syllabic couplets of the Shahnameh into special military tunes to which soldiers marched and performed other exercises thereby instilling a sense of patriotism and valor in them.

It would be wonderful to re-discover the musical as well as the literal value of the Shahnameh and utilize it to bolster up our religious and community pride by learning about our rich roots and splendid heritage.

The Shahnameh can help us gain back the traits of loving and living, sharing and giving, trusting and risking that we fast seem to be losing.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Photo 1 Rostam weeps over Sohrab.* Painted by painter A and C c 1520-30/folio 155r Private Collection Published in Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi Vol 1 translated by Dick Davis

*Photo 2 Bizan and Manizeh* Published in Stories from the Shahnameh Vol 2 translated by Dick Davis.

*Photo 3 Khoshrow and Shirin*, Published in Stories from the Shahnameh Vol 3 translated by Dick Davis

**Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Parvez Karanjia**, is the Principal of Dadar Athornan Institute and Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy Zathoshty and Mullan Feroze Institutes for Indo-Iranian Studies. He has obtained his Masters and Doctorate in Avesta-Pahlavi from Bombay University. He teaches Avesta and Pahlavi at undergraduate and post graduate levels. He has worked as a research scholar with Universities and Institutes in Sweden, Germany and Moscow. An author of various books, he conducts courses and seminars, gives talks, and presents papers on Zarathushti religion, spirituality and Iranian history all over the world, for children, youth and adults.





## THE SHAHNAMA PROJRCT - A ONE-STOP SHOP ON THE SHAHNAMAH.

**Prof. Charles Melville**

Guest Editor Teenaz Javat doggedly pursued Charles Melville, Professor of Persian History, University of Cambridge, Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, in getting his take on the Shahnama Project. *The Shahnama Project* is building a powerful online resource that will stimulate research and interest in Persian cultural history with an aim to bring together the Book of Kings. Here are excerpts from the interview which took place over email and over phone.

**FEZANA: Can you give us an overview of the Shahnama Project and how it was conceived?**

**Charles Melville (CM):** The Shahnama Project provides a rich resource of images and information about illustrated manuscripts and paintings of the Shahnama. It aims to provide an extensive database organized around the collections (museums, libraries) that hold illustrated copies of the text. A researcher on the text can easily find out what portion of the book or illustration is available in say London, Paris, Tehran, New York, Berlin, St Petersburg etc. The researcher can see all the paintings of a particular episode in the text (death of Rustom, for example), and compare how the scene was depicted at different times and in different places.

It also provides a numerical count of the illustrations, divided by century and subject, so that we can see what pictures were particularly popular at different periods in time and so on. This sort of information supports a number of possible analyses, for example the relationships between the text and the image.

The Project was conceived as a way of supporting and initiating research in Persian culture, and particularly the Shahnama as a major expression of this, in western academia and more specifically in Cambridge, historically one of the great European centres of Persian Studies.

**FEZANA: What is it that you are trying to achieve (as I see there are several Shahnama projects)?**

**CM:** As mentioned, the Project is aimed to stimulate academic research, and in a wider sense, bring an awareness of this masterpiece of Persian and world literature to a larger audience. We hope the website, and the newly established '*Shahnama Centre*' in Cambridge, will become the focal point for work and discussion about the Shahnama and the arts of the book with which it is associated. The current exhibition and associated events (lectures, concerts, readings and debates) at the *Fitzwilliam Museum* (till January 9 2011), is helping to realize some of these goals, especially in bringing Ferdowsi to the British public. The response has been most encouraging.

I hope that future stages of the work will focus more on the educational potential of the website and the material we have collected.

**FEZANA: What is your role in it?**

**CM:** I am the founder and director of the Project, and have raised the necessary support in grants and funds to maintain it since 1999. Several people have been involved in collecting and processing the data (photos, analysis of the manuscripts etc.), participating in conferences and publications and developing the website. The Shahnama Centre is currently run by *Dr. Firuza Abdullaeva*, formerly at St. Petersburg and Oxford. I maintain the overall direction of the project.

**FEZANA: In your opinion did Ferdowsi's Shahnameh influence the western cannon? If so how?**

**CM:** Not so much in the arts of the book, I mean, Shahnama paintings and Persian art in general were not particularly influential on western art. However, the epic f course did find some echoes in the







west, most famously the poem Rostam and Sohrab by the 19th-century English poet Matthew Arnold. On the whole, western poetry was more influenced by Iran's lyric poets rather than Ferdowsi's epic.

## FEZANA: How and at what stage were paintings added in to the Shahnameh?

**CM:** The first documented (surviving) examples are dated around 1300, probably in Baghdad. The pictures are small narrow strips, inserted across the page of text, rather like cartoons. These early manuscripts are very small. The artists quickly became more confident, and began to take over the whole page, spilling into the margins.

**Prof. Charles Melville** read Arabic and Persian at Cambridge, took an M.A. in Islamic History at SOAS, and returned to Cambridge in 1984 as University Lecturer in Middle East & Islamic Studies and Fellow of Pembroke College. He was made Reader in 2001 and Professor of Persian History in 2008. He has been a long-serving member of the Governing Council of the British Institute of Persian Studies and chairman of the Research Committee, and has also served on the Board of the Societies Iranologica Europaea (1995-2003). From 1999, he has been Director of the Shahnama Project, and since 2006 he has been President of The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA), both based in Cambridge.

Professor Melville's main research interests are in the history and culture of Iran in the Mongol to Safavid periods, and the illustration of Persian manuscripts. Recent publications include edited volumes of *Safavid Persia* (1996), *Shahnama Studies* (2006), and 'Millennium of the Shahnama of Firdausi' (*Iranian Studies*, 2010, with Firuza Abdullaeva); *The Persian Book of Kings. Ibrahim Sultan's Shahnama* (2008, also with Firuza Abdullaeva) and *Epic of the Kings. The art of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (2010, with Barbara Brend).



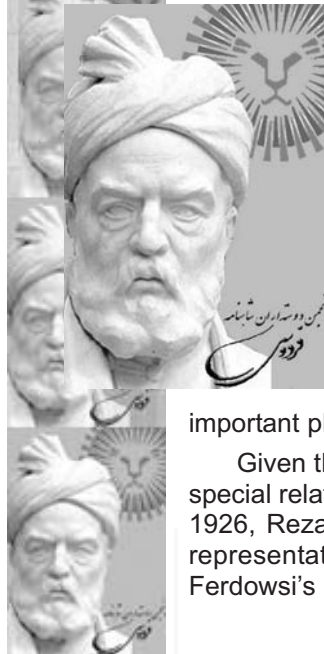
## SHAHNAMEH MILLENARY

### DINYAR PATEL

The year 2010 had special resonance for admirers of the poet considered to be the Homer of Iran: according to common tradition, it was one thousand years ago that Ferdowsi completed his epic poem, the Shahnameh. Laboring for three decades, Ferdowsi drew upon Iran's rich historic memory, stretching from the creation of the world and the mythic days of Jamshid until the fall of Yazdegird to conquerors from Arabia, in order to construct poem, roughly 50,000 verses in length.

While Ferdowsi's patron, Mahmud of Ghazni, apparently showed little interest in the poet's epic work, and an aggrieved Ferdowsi apparently spent his final years never coming to terms with the lack of appreciation shown by the royal court, the Shahnameh has become a towering literary landmark. Within Iran, it has become a cherished source of historic and cultural connectivity for both Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis; outside of Iran, it has inspired countless generations of writers and artists and established Iran's important place in world culture.

Given that the Shahnameh draws so deeply on Zarathushti tradition, the poem has always had a special relationship with Iranian Zarathushtis and Parsis. This extended well into the 20th century. In 1926, Reza Shah Pahlavi, newly installed on the Iranian imperial throne, deputed the Zarathushti representative in the Iranian Majles (parliament), *Kaikhosrow Shahrokh*, with the task of finding Ferdowsi's grave for the purpose of building an elaborate mausoleum. Some eight years later, in





1934, the Shah once again turned to Shahrokh in order to manage millennial celebrations for Ferdowsi's birth.

The birth millenary was marked with great pomp and festivity across the Arabian Sea in Bombay. Here, Parsis held communal feasts, minted special Ferdowsi memorial medals and published special editions in newspapers and magazines. Parsi schools and businesses observed a holiday on the day that the Shah declared to be Ferdowsi's birth date. Soon after, Parsis pressured the Bombay Municipal Corporation to rename a leafy road in Dadar Parsi Colony after the poet. Ferdowsi Road, rendered in signage in both English and Marathi, remains there to this day.

Over seven decades later, the Firdausi celebrations have taken a much more international tone. Below is a listing of selected special exhibits and conferences on the Shahnameh held in 2010 and 2011:

## **"ROMANTIC INTERLUDES: WOMEN IN FIRDAWSI'S SHAHNAMA"**

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

*24 April 2010-16 January 2011.*

<http://www.mfa.org/exhibitions/romantic-interludes>

The exhibit strives to tell the stories of "a number of resourceful and colorful female characters" in the poem. The MFA's exhibit coincided with two other Boston-area exhibits, one at the Harvard Art Museum and one at Harvard's Houghton Library.

## **"THE EPIC OF THE PERSIAN KINGS: THE ART OF FERDOWSI'S SHAHNAMA"**

*The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom.*

*11 September 2010 - 9 January 2011.*

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/whatson/exhibitions/shahnameh/>

Includes manuscripts and miniature paintings from the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, the British Museum, the Royal Asiatic Society, and elsewhere. The exhibit was reviewed in *The Economist* in September 2010.

## **"SHAHNAMA : 1000 YEARS OF THE PERSIAN BOOK OF KINGS."**

*Smithsonian Freer Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC.*

*23 October 2010-17 April 2011*

<http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/shahnama/>

Contains 33 paintings and objects, including folios, miniature paintings, and Sasanian silverwork. Since the Smithsonian is a US government-funded institution, the exhibit has provoked interest amongst the press in Iran.

## **SHAHNAMA MILLENNIUM CONFERENCE: FERDOWSI :THE NEXT THOUSAND YEARS."**

*Clare College, Cambridge University, United Kingdom.*

*13-15 December 2010*

[http://www.iranheritage.org/Shahnama\\_conference/default.htm](http://www.iranheritage.org/Shahnama_conference/default.htm)

Includes lectures by leading scholars such as Dick Davis, Charles Melville, and Francois de Blois.

## **SHAHNAMEH CONFERENCE.**

*K.R. Cama Institute, Mumbai.*

*8-9 January 2011.*

<http://krcamaorientalinstitute.org/news.php>

The conference includes talks by scholars of the Shahnameh from India, the US, and Europe.

**Author's Note:** A complete English translation of the Shahnameh (translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner; five volumes), rendered as text files, can be found on the website of the Princeton Shahnameh Project: <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/shahnama/start.epl>.

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*Dinyar Patel, is a Ph.D. Candidate, Modern South Asia, Department of History, Harvard University*







## THE ZARATHUSHTI THAT SITS AND SINGS IN OUR SOUL

**Hamid Dabashi**

There is a melodious Zarathushti sitting and singing somewhere in the heart of every Iranian. Noruz is when we remember and hear that Zarathushti most, when the floating signifier of the color of green (color of earth and color of life and color of rebirth) graces our Sofreh Haft Sin and begins to signify and ignite memories we did not even know and do not exactly grasp for how long we have had, or more precisely they have held and embraced us.

Zoroastrianism is the bedrock of our historical memory, the ground zero of our time immemorial, the frame of our most cosmopolitan cultural disposition. In *Mazdayasna va Adab Farsi/Mazdayasna and Persian Literature*, the late *Mohammad Mo'in* (1914-1971), the preeminent literary scholar of his time, traced the varied forms in which our Zarathushti heritage had survived in our literary masterpieces. In his *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, the medieval Persian philosophical genius, *Shahab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash al-Suhrawardi* (1155-1191) introduced a monumental allegorical pantheon of Zarathushtrian wisdom into his "*Philosophy of Light*." In the world at large, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1885), *Nietzsche* (1844-1900) gave the European philosophical world the metaphoric memory of the ancient Iranian prophet to be received by a much wider global audience; while in *Magic Flute* (1791) *Mozart* (1756-1791) took his musical genius for a tour of our most ancient heritage. It was also in India and in search of Pahlavi and Avestan sources that *Sadeq Hedayat* (1903-1951) discovered his own literary prowess and gave us his *Blind Owl* (1937). Zoroastrianism is woven into the memorial alphabet of our literary and artistic disposition.

The ancient disposition, the globalism of vision, and the contemporary resonances of our Zarathushti heritage seem to gel and gently and generously expand its emotive universe, reminding us of the irreducible cosmopolitanism of who and what we—as a people—are. Being a Muslim, a Shi'i, has never been an obstacle or an impediment to claiming Zarathushtis as integral to our sense of who we are. Just look at the *Sofreh Haft Sin* on every Noruz celebration of the vernal equinox, on which the remnants of our ancient and worldly celebration of life and rebirth sit gracefully next to a copy of the Qur'an or a picture of *Ali ibn abi Taleb*. How did that happen?

Not doctrinal or ritualistic distinction of one religion versus another, but the historical consistency of a people who can borrow and bank on any aspect of its historical memory that it wishes, and the result is invariably consistent and above all trustworthy, reassuring, communally affirmative.

I believe the continued presence of Zarathushtrian motifs and manners in our communal and creedal contexts is the most telling testimony of our abiding sense of worldliness, that it is our lived experiences, historical memory, cosmopolitan culture that collectively determine the course of our history and not the vacuous claims of one dynasty or another republic. How is it that Zarathushtrian motifs have persisted in our poetry and literature, seasonal rituals and philosophical disposition—all despite the fact that Iranians have been instrumental in the making of Islamic Civilization? That Islam in Iran has always had a particular disposition (whether Iranians have been Sunni or Shi'i) is entirely because of this dignified Zarathushti heritage, quietly sustaining the course of our history with an undertone that is always evident but rarely visible.

Consider our language, and hear in it the echoes of the most cherished and distant memories of our historical whereabouts. Read our *Shahnameh* and wonder where and whence and how was it that Ferdowsi could have composed that opening with that revelatory felicity—*beh name-e khodavand jan-o kherad/kaz in barter andisheh bar nagzarad*/In the Name of the Lord of Soul and Wisdom/Above which no thought can cross. Listen to those words—*Jan/Soul, Kherad/Wisdom, Andisheh/Thought!* Where do they come from—what archaic articulation of thought and sanctity resonates in them and still make us stand up in awe or sit down with reverence when we hear them spoken or recited. ***Zarathushti is the invisible color of our character and the fined-tuned resolution of our culture.***

We are an ancient people, and in our young we have invested the distant memories that have bonded and then let us loose upon the earth. Zoroastrianism is the oldest, most ancient, and most abiding disposition of our cosmopolitan culture. In Zoroastrianism we hear the distant



melodies of songs that still defines the very quintessence of our being. We have a claim upon the world, a haq e ab o gel/a right to water and soil, as we say in Persian, by virtue of our Zarathushti heritage, which gives us our sense of historical depth, chronological continuity, the outer reaches of our emotive universe.

My elder daughter's name is Pardis, from Avestan origin, meaning, "enclosed garden," from which Europeans get their sense of Paradise and Arabs their Ferdows. All my other children—Kaveh, Chelgis, and Golchin—carry in their names, the hidden and obvious resonances of who and what their names say they are, a melodic chord that echoes in the long highways and byways of our ancient historical landscapes. Every time I call their name and have and hold and kiss and claim them as mine I am also claiming a distant root in the green and growing tree of their unfolding and precious lives here in North America. And they will carry the echoes of that memory into my and their posterity. Every sense of decency and respect for other people's heritage, their pride of place, and their historical sense of who and what they are all comes from my awareness and humility of being a drop in a vast ocean that embraces me—with varied shades of piety and sanctity—beginning with a Zarathushti heritage that has announced our entry into a moral history.

From Zoroastrianism to Manichaeism to Mazdakism to Islam to Shi'ism to the vast and variegated world that extends from India to the Arab and the Muslim world to Europe and then by virtue of identical struggles for liberty and a pride of place all the way to the rest of Asia, Africa, and

Latin America, we feel connected and committed not by way of forgetting who and what we are but precisely by virtue of remembering how it was that we happened to be what we are. The sustained presence of Zarathushti motifs in our culture and character is the clearest indication that from Zoroastrianism to Islam these variations on the theme of the scared have all been (in one way or another) and thus they remain integral to us but none of them is singularly definitive to that sense of our worldliness we call home, that we as a people carry in the variegated pastures of our soul the footprints of all that has happened or has graced our history and memory and made us the people that we are with a multidimensional sculpting of our consciousness.

There is a lesson in humility to be learned from such historical facts, and the even more abiding fact that we as a people carry within ourselves a cosmopolitan worldliness that can only be denied by fanaticism and absolutism of one sort of power or another only at the heavy cost of denying or suppressing that which always rises in us in defiance against any categorical claim on our polyfocal culture. Zoroastrianism is the bedrock of that imaginable citadel in which we as a people live and upon which every solitary and absolutist claim can only raise the flag of its categorical claim on us in vain. ***The Zarathushti that sits and sings in our soul whispers always something otherwise. Just look at those bushes of fire over which we jumped last Chahr-shanbeh Suri in defiance of a dark fanaticism that now rules our homeland and told us not to do so. Well we did—the Zarathushti in us did.***

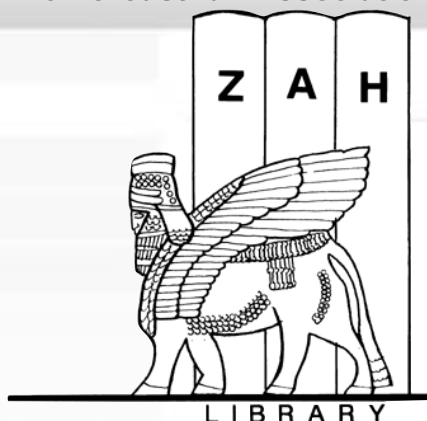
**Hamid Dabashi** born 1951 in Ahvaz is an Iranian-American historian, cultural critic and literary theorist. Educated in Iran and then in the United States, he received a dual Ph.D. in sociology of culture and Islamic studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University. He wrote his dissertation on Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority with Philip Rieff, the most distinguished Freudian cultural critic. An award-winning author and frequent lecturer around the globe, he lives in New York with his wife and colleague, the Iranian-Swedish feminist, Golbarg Bashi. He is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City. Dabashi is the author of nineteen books. Among them are his *Authority in Islam*; *Theology of Discontent*; *Truth and Narrative*; *Close Up: Iranian Cinema*; *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*; an edited volume, *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*; and his one-volume analysis of Iranian history *Iran: A People Interrupted*.<sup>[3]</sup>







**The Zoroastrian Association of Houston, Library, held an essay competition to promote Zoroastrian Scholarship among the youth. The competition was open to all Zarathushtis under age 25 living or studying in USA or Canada.**



**The winning essay is reproduced below**

## **The Shah Nameh: A Glorious Past - A Prologue to the Future**

**MITRA KHUMBATTA**

*"You have to know the past to understand the present"* says Dr. Carl Sagan. 1000-1100 CE marked the completion of one of the world's most epic literature masterpieces, the Shahnameh, a complete documentation of Persian history. Ferdowsi creates this compilation in the hopes that the glory of the fallen Persian Empire could be documented and rebuilt once again by future generations. The overall motion of the Shahnameh shows the progression of evil into the hearts of men and women and the actions each hero takes to counteract these mishaps. From primary mythology to the end of the Sassanian reign, the Shahnameh documents, in couplets and verses, the journey of the Persian Empire to its peak and beyond.

The Shahnameh starts with the story of King Kayomars and the idea of monotheism, eventually leading to the word "Mazdayasni" meaning "the Mazda-worshipping religion" (Karanjia 27). *Kayomars'* story is one that encompasses the first true battle between good and evil, a battle which will continue throughout this epic and time after. One plummeting blow to the Mazdayasni followers was the death of Kayomars' son, *Siyamak*, brought about by the Daevayasnis. After a year of mourning, his grandson *Hoshang* met the Daevayasnis in battle and avenged the death and defeated the evil of this time, the Daevayasnis. Kayomars passed away peacefully after reigning for thirty prosperous years and earning the title "*Saoshyant*" or "*the benefactor of mankind*" (Karanjia 29). The epic continues with King Hoshang and his revolutionary discovery of fire, leading to the start of the *Jashan-e-Sadeh* festival which continues in full swing even today. King Jamshed ruled during the Golden Age where "ill health had almost vanished from his kingdom. No one knew what old age was. Father and son looked alike" (Karanjia 38). Jamshed's coronation marked both the spring solstice and a new festivity known as Jamshedi

Navroz, which all Zarathushtis continue to celebrate with happiness. The escalation of power and the prosperity of his seven century rule caused Jamshed's own demise when he proclaimed that "*you may call me your God*" (Karanjia 46). Realizing his mistake too late, the Iranians turned their back on their leader and found another in Babylon, *Zohak*.

Zohak's reign is one of the darkest periods in Persian history. Here we see the full effect of Ahriman and the treachery that can befall mankind when one is easily swayed. Ahriman planted the first seed of corruption by means of a man named *Ablis*, who gained the trust of Zohak and used Zohak's naiveté to carry out the evil plans of Ahriman. Not twice, but thrice did Ablis strike, and Zohak fell further and further into Ahriman's snare, further and further into darkness. Digressing completely from the Mazdayasni path, Zohak turned to Ablis for guidance time and time again, blind to his treachery. Zohak's tale shows the path of evil and the repercussions that ensue when we humans stray down the wrong path. Eventually, Zohak's haunting reign came to a close with the rise of



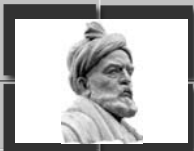
## SHAHNAMEH - THE SOUL OF IRAN

Faridun who left him chained in a dungeon in Mount Demavend (Karanjia 69). The juxtaposition of this story with evil shows that evil is most prevalent at night but with the dawn of a new day, the Sarosh Yazad drives away the evil. Ferdowsi's Shahnameh documents the reign of the Persians but deeper than that, it teaches the future generations life lessons. The individual stories of the Kings teach the future about life, love, religion, lies, betrayal, and hardships, along with the necessary skills to overcome the obstacles that stand in our way. Ferdowsi's epic then, can be categorized as a guide to living the perfect life. His stories have shown the hero in a

time of trouble, when Ahriman wormed his way into the hero's life and heart as the hero digressed from the path of Asha. Through a series of tests the hero prevailed and returned to the path annihilating the evil from his mind and expunging it from his heart. Thomas S. Monson once said *"The past is behind, learn from it. The future is ahead, prepare for it. The present is here, live it."* This was all Ferdowsi ever wanted.

**Ms Khumbatta was awarded a prize of \$1000 and free registration to the 15th North American Zarathushti Congress, Houston, TX, December 2010**

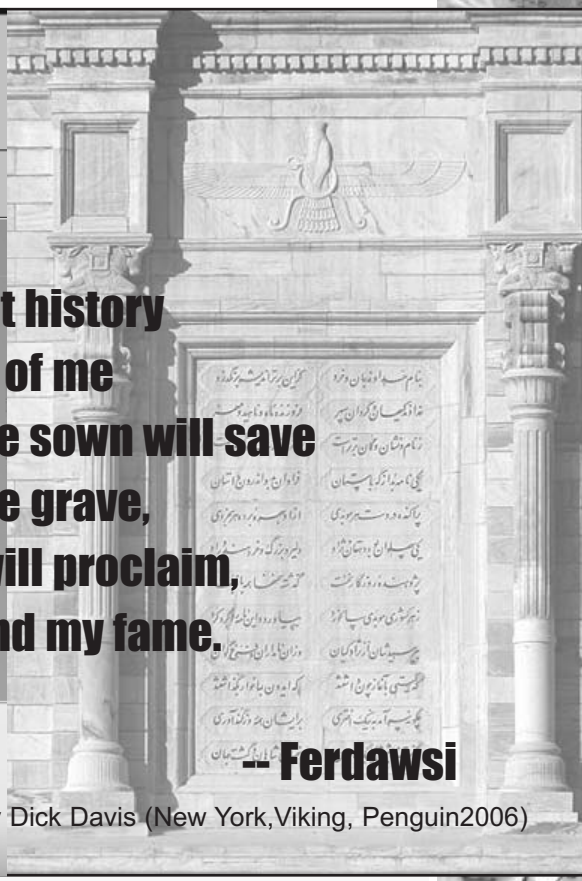
**Mitra Khumbatta** is attending the University of Houston, for a degree in Chemistry. She also works at Baylor College of Medicine as a student researcher which she finds as one of the most rewarding experiences in her life. After graduation, she plans on attending medical school. She has been attending Sunday school since she was a child and was always very active in the Houston Zarathushti community whether it be participating in plays from the Shahnameh or other ZAH productions. As a child, she acted in one of the ZAH productions of Cyrus the Great, which sparked her interest in the Shahnameh and its author. The driving forces in her life comes from the continuous support of her family and friends and her will to succeed grows stronger each and every day.



**I've reached the end of this great history  
And all the land will fill with talk of me  
I shall not die, these seeds I have sown will save  
My name and reputation from the grave,  
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim,  
When I have gone, my praises and my fame.**

**-- Ferdowsi**

Source: The Shahnameh, Book of Kings translated by Dick Davis (New York, Viking, Penguin 2006)





# In The News

## Vada Dastoorji Ervad Kaikhushroo Navroji Dastoor visits Zoroastrian community of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana (ZAKOI)



(L to R, Homiyar Madan, Faredoon Deasi, Rusi Rao, Vada Dastoorji Ervad Kaikhushroo Navroji Dastoor, Jehan Madan, and Cyrus Joshi)

On Saturday, September 25th, 2010, Vada Dastoorji Ervad Kaikhushroo Navroji Dastoor, Meherjirana 17th (direct descendent of the first Meherjirana) was felicitated and honored by the Zarathushti community of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana (ZAKOI) as the newly appointed High Priest of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman. This felicitation was hosted by Kashmira & Ronny Sadri and Bakhtavar and Faredoon Desai, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The event was held in a banquet room at The Atrium Hotel in Cincinnati, and was attended by almost 100 people, some of whom came from as far as Florida, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cleveland, Bahamas, Lexington, Louisville, and Dayton.

Vada Dastoorji's daughter, Kashmira Sadri, and his son, Meheryar Dastoor, who flew in for the evening from Florida, presented their father with

a shawl and flowers, and Rusi Rao, one of the oldest members of the tri-state Zarathushti community, presented Vada Dastoorji with a gift on behalf of the community members. Four priests from the tri-state community who were attending the function, came on the stage to offer their respect to the Vada Dastoorji.

Vada Dastoorji led the audience in a two-minute Humbandagi, and gave a wonderful speech that touched everyone's hearts. In his speech he said, *"A new time is approaching.....humanity is today slightly on the spiritual path, it seems. ....some change in consciousness is happening in humanity....."* *"Our only real enemy in our life is our ego. It is the first enemy we can face. If ego is substituted with love and humility, then all the problems of humanity could be solved. Love the whole creation.....To have mental peace, abolish ego, ask for humility..... Let there be love and peace in your heart, and for that follow the true tenets of our Zarthushti Din. May all the religion's saviours arrive here on this globe, and establish a brotherhood, and let there be Heaven on Earth."*

The audience gave a standing ovation to this wonderful speech that gave a message of universal brotherhood based on love, peace, and humility.

The felicitation ceremony was followed by a scrumptious parsi dinner of *pallav-dar, sali-ma-marghi, (chicken with potato straws) fish pie, vegetables, parsi sev, cake, and mango ice-cream.*

It was the first event of its kind in the tri-state area of Kentucky, Ohio & Indiana, and was very well received by the community as well as by the invited non-parsi guests. It was a memorable evening for all present and we hope, for the Vada Dastoorji as well. We pray to Ahura Mazda for Vada Dastoorji's long and healthy life, and we wish him success in all his good work for our Zarathushti religion.

**Reported by Bakhtavar Desai**

# In The News

## THE FUTURE OF UDVADA



Udvada is a sleepy, peaceful small size town about 206 kms north of Mumbai , on the palm fringed beach of Gujarat , where the holiest of consecrated fires of the Zarathushti community resides in the Iranshah Atashbehram. The most activity seen in Udvada is around the Atashbehram with Zarathushtis from around the world coming to pay their respects to the fire. Once a thriving bustling town dotted with homes and hotels belonging to Parsis it now looks like a ghost town with hardly 100 Parsis living there. The traditional bungalows and the traditional life style is in jeopardy of being swallowed by real estate giants who would like to make easy money by building high and low rise buildings without consideration of adequate infrastructure for sanitation and drinking water. Haywire developments and commercialization will destroy the charm of this quaint village, and could salinate freshwater wells that the community considers sacred and crucial in religious ceremonies of the Yasna and Vendidad.

*"Ecological imbalance is already a big concern for us, with houses and commercial establishments on the beach having borne the brunt of beach erosion. Though the government is said to have spent a sizeable amount on butting barricades, a visit to the beach shows that the worst is far from over,"* says resident Sarosh Irani. Mukesh Pathak, CEO of Gujarat Nature Conservation Society says *"who will bear the responsibility of waste management and other concerns that accompany the commercialisation of any area that houses a fragile eco system."*

But in September October 2010, a land deal in Udvada became the centre of concern and chaos after a 200-acre agricultural plot in the backyard of the Iranshah Atashbehram (fire temple), was sold to a

private builder Nucleus Developers Pvt. Ltd. How did this happen and what would be the implications for the Atashbehram? The effluents from industries would pollute the ground water in the area which is used for worshipping by the community members.

According to Parsee Voice "the Baug -e-Iranshah Charities was a trust established in 1958 by Kaikhushru J. Dubash who donated his 150 acres to this trust 15 acres was then sold to Mr Jamnadas Nagardas Modi on 4/4/1966 by the Trustees after taking permission from Charity commissioner The trustees were Dasturji Dr Hormazdyar Mirza, Shri Jhangirji Chiniwalla, Dr Homi R Bana and Khorshed K. Dubash . The Udvada Anjuman and the Baug-e-Iranshah Charities are separate entities... Known as Tata Wadi, owing to its one-time owners, the plot was sold in the early 1980s to a gentleman who locals refer to as Lalu Jogi, a businessman from Daman. Although the exact cost of the current deal with Nucleus, whose signboard stands at the entrance of the property, is not clear, it is estimated to be in the region of Rs 40 crore". "There are over 25 fully-grown coconut and mango trees inside, yielding fruit worth lacs during season. The land was sold by the Baug -e-Iranshah to its present owners , who in turn wanted to sell to Mumbai-based company called Nucleus in September who wanted to set up an industrial unit and a residential complex there.

This would pose a huge problem to the scantity of the Atashbehram which has been burning fire continuously day and night for over 1,250 years . The Udvada Samast Anjuman that represents the local Parsi residents, headed by Dastur Khurshed Kaikobad Dastoor, wrote to the Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi seeking his intervention, over the transfer of 200 acres of agricultural land behind the shrine for non-agricultural use, which would have facilitated setting up of industries there. An online petition was also floated internationally, meetings were held with officials from various ministries in Gandhinagar. "This place holds great importance for Parsis across the world. We do not want industry to come up here," Dastoor said.

FEZANA and NAMC presidents in a joint communiqué also petitioned the Gujarat government

Valsad District collector Nalin Thaker said, *"A part of the land near the holy place was sold to a Mumbai-based company called Nucleus in September while transfer for some other parts was under process."*



# In The News

Permission was cancelled for the development of an industrial estate, following which the developer approached the Revenue Tribunal against the cancelling order. The tribunal ordered a status quo on the matter. "The Nucleus management was informed about the decision." This stay order expires on December 8th

**Rusi Sorabji of California, who visited Udvada in November 2010 writes**

*"I was given a ride on the Vespa around the site, where I took some pictures of the vast well maintained lands with mango and coconut orchards and a good sized bungalow in their midst. There was a barricaded gate with the sign board that reads, "Nucleus Developers of Lower Parel, Mumbai".*

*The property is well protected in with a barbed wire fence. The Gate to the property was not more than 100 yards or so east of IRANSHAH and about the same or little more North from the popular ASHISHVANG HOTEL. It was manned by 2 or more gruff looking men armed with "lathis", (bamboo sticks). At the far Eastern end of this orchard land are the bungalows of the IranShah Dasturjis"*

*Google Earth at 1100Ft elevation gives you a good idea of the proximity and layout of the land and the Fire Temple in UDVADA.*

*When I talked with the owners/managers of the Globe Hotel where I stayed, they seemed complacent, for they gave me an impression as if the problem had been resolved for good.*

*When I talked with the dastur of the Pundol Agiary next to the Globe, he blamed the Trustees of IranShah for the mess they had created by selling the land at a throw away price some time ago, as they wanted funds for a school.*



*seven brothers all of them gone, now he is the last one left, praying and waiting for Ahura Mazda's call anytime."*

*His talk sets me thinking. What happens to this old man's house which bears a plaque "DIN DASTUR HOUSE 1340 –1310". Will some non-Parsi buy it?. Do we have a listing of how many Parsi houses are lying locked unused or for sale? Zarathushtis from elsewhere may be interested in buying them or rebuilding them as their holiday homes, thus maintaining the Zarathushti presence around this Mecca, this St Peter's, this Temple Mount, this Kedarnath, this Holiest of Holy Place of Worship of the Peace loving Zarathushtis. Where are the so called leaders of the Community? I wonder how many Parsi young men are left in Udvada?"*

*Time alone will tell what the future holds for Udvada.*

*Photos courtesy Rusi Sorabji*

*Article abstracted by Dolly Dasfoor from "Fire Eaters" by Shailesh Bhatia in Mid Day Report of November 15, 2010*

# In The News

## The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Visits ZOROASTRIAN TRUST FUNDS OF EUROPE ZTFE

Friday 1st October 2010



ZOROASTRIANS welcomed The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams, 104th Lord the Archbishop of Canterbury to their place of worship in Harrow. The visit took fifteen months in the making and was carried out with clock work precision. The Lord Archbishop is senior most religious leader in the UK, second only to H M Queen in terms of protocol and the senior most primate bishop of the worldwide Anglican Communion



It was indeed a historic occasion – a first for both religions – Zoroastrianism and Christianity. (photo left His Grace with President Malcolm Deboo, with Past President Dorab Mistry on side)

The foundation of the See of Canterbury by St Augustine dates from 597 CE.

On a rainy Friday afternoon, October 1, 2010, precisely at 1.45 p.m., His Grace was welcomed to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) by Mr Malcolm M Deboo, President of ZTFE and Mr Dorab Mistry, past President and Interfaith Representative of the ZTFE.

Parsi Zoroastrian women wearing traditional colourful 'garas' welcomed His Grace by performing the traditional 'achhu michu' ceremony with Mrs Shernaz B Sadri JP, ZTFE Joint Social Secretary, (photo left below) garlanding him with flowers. This was followed by the Iranian Zoroastrian women, Mrs Mahnaz Ostad and Mrs Mandana Moavenat, sprinkling rosewater, allowing His Grace to see his face in the mirror and offering him figs, almonds, pistachio nuts and Persian sweets. (photo page 54)

After introductions, to the mobeds, Trustees and Managing Committee of the ZTFE and other leading members of the Zoroastrian community, His Grace was shown the gallery of photographs of past Zoroastrian stalwarts of the ZTFE, including past presidents. His Grace was delighted to see the photograph of his friend the Late Professor Mary Boyce "Honoured Friend of the ZTFE" He was aware of her immense contribution to Zoroastrian Studies.

Reverend Rowan had been a lecturer in divinity at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford successively, spoke several languages and was delighted to learn that Professor Boyce together with the Zoroastrian philanthropists Mehraban and Late Faridoon Zartoshty had established the only Chair in Zoroastrian Studies in the world at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

With past president Dorab Mistry officiating as Master of Ceremonies, President Deboo formally welcomed His Grace, noting the visit as *"historical, the first time in the 149 year old history of the Zoroastrian*



# In The News



*Trust Funds of Europe, that we have been graced by the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury. We are delighted and humbled you have put time aside to spend the day with us face to face and get to know us better. We believe you are a true friend to make so much free time available to us. We, Zoroastrians value your friendship and present to you today a mosaic spread of our Zoroastrian religion, heritage, culture and cuisine”* inviting the Archbishop to raise any question and points he wanted addressed.

His Grace responded *“For a community relatively small in size, its contribution has been enormous to the life of this country and also the life of so many great world religions.”* He added; *“In the light of this community I feel that I am touching some very great roots of the religious inspiration of so many of the world religious faiths at this present point in time”*. The Archbishop expressed his delight at being invited to *“listen, learn and deepen our friendship”*, adding that *“for a small community in size your contribution is great”*. His Grace concluded by thanking his Zoroastrian host by stating; *“It’s important in this country to remember the smaller communities of faith, just as I have sometimes said; there is no such thing as a small church, only small Christians. Heart and vision is what matters.”*

Several presentations were then made. **The Lord Karan Bilimoria CBE DL Baron of Chelsea, Chairman of Cobra Beer and the first Zoroastrian member of the House of Lords**, the upper chamber of the UK Parliament, gave an account of the first three non-British members of Parliament who were all Zoroastrians namely Dadabhai Naoroji (Liberal 1892), Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree KCIE (Conservative

1895), and ‘Comrade’ Shapurji Saklatwalla (Labour 1922, Communist 1924) and joked that by him being an Independent, the Zoroastrians had represented the full array of the political spectrum.

**Dr Rashna Writer, Historian and Lecturer in Zoroastrian Studies at SOAS**, gave an account of “Who are the Zoroastrians?” tracing the history of the Zoroastrians as the established people of Iran with the vast Achaemenian Empire established by Cyrus the Great 2500 years ago, to the rule of the Zoroastrian Kings of Iran ending with Arab conquest of Persia in the seventh century, leading to the migration of Zoroastrians to India in the 10th century seeking religious freedom and economic redress, landing at Sanjan and seeking permanent sanctuary. This being granted, Zoroastrians, by now referred to as Parsis – those who came from Persia, adopted India as their own country, prospered and to date have greatly contributed to the well being of India. Dr Writer concluded with the Zoroastrian contributions to UK, with the first recorded arrival of a Zoroastrian, Rustom Maneck Sett in 1723.

**ZTFE Past President and current Vice President Paurushasp Jila** gave a power point presentation of the history of the establishment of the present day Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe dating from 1861 with a Memorandum and Articles of Association, making it the oldest religious organisation in UK of South Asian origin.

**Counsel Emeritus Noshir Avari**, informed the Archbishop of the concept and mode of Zoroastrian worship in the United Kingdom, mentioned that during all the 35 Jashans (Thanksgiving festivals) the Zoroastrian priests pray for ‘the monarch, for it is under her rule, in her land that we must live’.

**Ms Nazreen K Avari, Religious Teacher** of the Zoroastrian Education Fun Club, gave a power point presentation on how Zoroastrian values were being inculcated into the very young through the religious educational fun club she runs with two other teachers.

The Archbishop and guests were then invited by the Master of Ceremonies to watch a short film *“Zoroastrian Footprints On Sands Of Time”*, premiered at Ninth World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai 2009. The film highlighted the advancement of the Zoroastrian community in various parts as they have migrated throughout the world in the last 50 years, Though dispersed they meet at World Zoroastrian Congresses every 5 years. The Eighth

# In The News

was held in 2005 in London at the Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow.

**Ms Shernaz Engineer**, the founder of Verity Group, a London based employment enterprise, and Chairperson of World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), UK Chapter, informed the Archbishop of her endeavour to promote entrepreneurship amongst the Zoroastrians and express ethical and moral values through commerce.

**Mr Jehangir Sarosh**, an eminent interfaith representative and President Emeritus of Religions for Peace, Europe, spoke about the Zoroastrian community's active involvement in furthering interfaith dialogue in UK and Europe. Jehangir addressed the Archbishop, as an ardent supporter of the interfaith movement, with regular interaction between communities of different faiths

**Mrs Zerbano Gifford** founder Trustee of Asha Centre, eminent Social Worker, writer, politician and former Harrow Councillor – first Asian Councillor elected and Liberal politician, spoke of the “Asha Centre”. Set in the idyllic Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire as a place of ‘beauty and inspiration for all faiths and people’ on Zoroastrian principles for the preservation of the natural elements of the earth and of goodness and charity. **Mr Mark Gifford**, Zerbano's son made a power point presentation elaborating various activities that included the young Zoroastrians summer holiday camp and also of getting together of Palestinians and Jewish young students at Asha Centre as a prime example of the working for good interfaith relations.

The formal presentations were followed by a tea break at 4 pm, with a lavish spread of Iranian and Parsi delicacies sampled by His Grace who thanked the Zoroastrian women for laying out a delicious spread for him.

At 4.30 pm, His Grace together with the Bishop of Willesden and other eminent guests visited the Setayash Gah to witness a demonstration of the Bui Ceremony, with the recital of the Atash Nyaish by Ervad Rustom Bhedwa. His Grace together with the guests put on prayer caps, removed their shoes and entered the Setayash Gah accompanied by the priests, President Deboo, Lord Bilimoria and Dr Writer. His Grace was shown a sudreh and kusti and its importance for Zoroastrians explained as well as the significance of wearing the padan during the bui ceremony, pavis (ritual furrows on the floor), striking the bell nine times and the instruments

displayed on the wall, used collectively to protect the Holy Fire from the evil forces.

At 5 pm the Zoroastrian Centre was open to ZTFE members and their families and noteworthy invited guests to celebrate Jashn-e Mehregan and dine with His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

At 5.15 pm His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury together with the Bishop of Willesden returned to the Zartoshty Brothers Hall where a fire was lit in a silver afarganyu on the stage and Atash Nyaish recited by Ervads Rustom K Bhedwar, Jal Karkaria, Marzban Dastoor, Zal N Sethna, Zubin R Bhedwar and Zubin P Writer. After the recital Ervad Rustom K Bhedwar gave a brief explanation of the ceremony. During the recital, His Grace sat with his head covered and followed the prayers in the Khordeh Avesta in English Transliteration and Translation by Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga.

The guests and the congregation were then entertained by the children of the Zoroastrian Education Fun Club to the performance of Sheer-e Shireen – The Sweetened Milk. The performance and the positive message of Sheer-e Shireen of welcoming refugees; their cohesiveness, contribution and loyalty while at the same time not raising arms against their adopted country; very pertinent as the



issue currently very topical in the UK, was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



# In The News

In his welcome address President Deboo referred to His Grace The Lord Archbishop as a Friend of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe and of the Zoroastrian faith community in the UK. This was followed by the story of the Zartoshty Brothers & ZTFE as presented by **Past President Dorab E Mistry**. Then **Lord Karan F Bilimoria** observed that religion does play an important part in the lives of the citizens of UK as it was evident during the recent state visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, who he was privileged to meet and to represent the Zoroastrian community. His Lordship presented a copy of *"The Gathas of Zarathushtra: Hymns in Praise of Wisdom"* by *Piloo Nanavutty*. His Lordship presented to the ZTFE President a gold medallion presented to him by His Holiness The Pope.

His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury commenced by thanking the ZTFE and the Zoroastrian community for their warmth in welcoming him earlier in the afternoon and thanking all those who made presentations to educate him very successfully and so very attractively about Zoroastrianism. His Grace also thanked young children for their magnificent performance of 'Sheer-e Shireen' observing that he had expected to meet some new friends today, but had not expected to meet prophets, priests and kings.

In his address, His Grace informed the audience that he was familiar with the Zoroastrian faith in his personal capacity as he had a Zoroastrian friend, but also academically recognised that the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were deeply saturated with Iranian (Zoroastrian) religious imagery and ideas. He was also deeply aware of the deep loss in the Zoroastrian heritage and the persecution of its followers in Iran, but impressed by their dynamism, honesty and integrity in the Indian Sub – continent. Their arrival as religious refugees to India meant that the Zoroastrian community became yet again an interpreter, a mediator between different worlds. It carried with it an understanding of the complex religious environment of India, the Hindu and Sikh traditions, Jainism and Buddhism, as if the Zoroastrian community through its history and its geography was destined to be one carrying all these histories, all these legacies, all these understandings of God, befriending them all, threatening none of them. That is a very great gift of God, a very great gift to the rest of us through the Zoroastrian community.

In his closing remarks, His Grace returned to Zoroastrian integrity and standing before a purifying

fire, which is central in the Zoroastrian tradition, a concept shared by all in the UK and in our world at the moment. Integrity is vital for us, integrity is hard work, but it can be done when we believe that the light, strength and life in whose presence we stand, the God in whose presence we sit, is a God whose will is for our wholeness and our welfare. His Grace concluded by thanking the Zoroastrians not only for hospitality but for inspiration. Thanking the Zoroastrians for being witness to that fiery integrity which many centuries, many millennia of Zoroastrian history illustrate. Thanking the Zoroastrians for their contribution to the world of inter religious dialogue which Zoroastrians represent in their habitation in so many different places and in so many different languages, and in all of them shown the same honesty and welcome. Thanking the Zoroastrians for the gifts given to all of humanity and the gifts God has given through Zoroastrianism. His Grace ended by once again thanking the ZTFE and the Zoroastrians of UK for making him feel so much at home in this unforgettable environment and this unforgettable community.

The Zoroastrians spontaneously all stood up and gave His Grace a standing ovation. The address by His Grace was most complimentary and well received by the Zoroastrian community. (The full address by His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury to the Zoroastrian community can be found on the ZTFE website.)

Various gifts were exchanged as a token of the appreciation of the Lord Archbishop's historic visit to the ZTFE. The mobeds made a presentation of a woollen shawl wrapped around the shoulders of His Grace as a traditional mark of respect of holders of high office together with a silver ZTFE medal. A Gatha CD was presented by Trustee Ervad Rustom K Bhedwar. On behalf of the Iranian Zoroastrian community, **ZTFE Joint Secretary Mandana Moavenat** presented His Grace with a Zoroastrian carpet from Iran. President Malcolm presented a copy of the 6kg book; *"A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art Religion and Culture"*, edited by Pheroza Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree.

ZTFE Silver Medals were presented to Bishop of Willesden Pete Broadbent and Canon Guy Wilkinson, Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who will be retiring at the end of 2010 and who was the liaison between the ZTFE and Lambeth Palace over the last fifteen months.

# In The News

**Past President Rusi K Dalal** thanked His Grace for his time spent honouring the ZTFE and the Zoroastrian community in the UK with his presence. He observed that the learning and knowledge of the ancient Zoroastrian religion of His Grace was profound. The devotion of his time to witness the practicality of the day to day religious lives of the Zoroastrian community and its understanding was deeply appreciated and acknowledged by ZTFE.

At 7.45 pm, His Grace was invited to partake in the Ghambar meal with all present, The meal of dhan dar (rice and lentil dish), kolmi-no patio (prawns in sweet and sour tomato gravy) and lagan-nu custard (baked custard), was prepared by Zoroastrian caterers Armin and Yazdi Dastoor.

At exactly 8.30 pm the previously agreed time, His Grace departed the Zartoshty Brothers Hall. It was still raining when President Deboo and Lord Bilimoria escorted His Grace and Canon Guy Wilkinson to their waiting car.

The historic first, and one hopes not the last, visit of the The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams, 104th Lord the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Zoroastrian place of worship in Harrow came to a happy and delightful end.

*Adapted from the report of  
Malcolm Deboo, President, ZTFE'  
Photos courtesy Max Nash (copyright)*

## **K**HOSROW MEHRFAR PRESENTS ON "RENEWABLE ENERGY IN THE U.S MARKET", AS INVITED GUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN

On November 11th 2010, Mr Khosrow Mehrfar, was the keynote speaker at the 5 day "Global Energy" meeting in Sevilla, Andalucia Spain. This was at the invitation of the Government of Spain and he was one of the 8 special delegates from the US. Spain is the 2nd largest renewable market and a pioneer in advanced technology including Nano-Gen, thin film, crystal spray and Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) for clean energy generation and distribution.

Khosrow, based in California, spoke on "Renewable Energy in the U.S. Market", which was well received in the EU journal reports and Spanish media publications, specially the "Energy Efficiency" section and the "quick financial self sufficiency" of the renewable as part of the bigger picture of



creating an "Economically Sustainable Energy Environment".

Mr Mehrfar is the CEO of Mehr Solar Inc. and Mehr U.S. Corp. He is involved in academic work, teaches on producing clean energy and related businesses in renewables and collaborates with the office of the U.S. Congress for developing a plan "Roadmap for America's Energy Future" a house bill titled under "Congress H.R. 5899". spearheaded by California District 21st congressman Honorable Devin Nunes.

### **Congratulations Khosrow**

# In The News

## Zarathushti Students Ask President Barak Obama Tough Questions During His Visit To India

**St Xavier's College, Mumbai, November 7th 2010**

On November 7th a Town Hall meeting was held in the Quadrangle of St Xavier's college, Mumbai University, when several hundred selected students interacted with President Obama and Michelle Obama during their visit to India this fall.



The Forum addressed values, resilience in overcoming tragedy, human dignity, globalization, entrepreneurship, economic co-operation, world peace, tradition, faith, democracy, common humanity, partnership, poverty reduction, innovation, India's place on the world stage, youth leadership, strategic planning looking out twenty years, clean energy technologies, research in space, pluralism, agriculture, food security, public-private collaborations, accountability, open societies, world citizenship and freedom.

Michelle Obama, during the trip to India proved to be an exemplary role model for young women. Her words struck a chord:

*"My family didn't have a lot of money. My parents never went to college. I grew up in a little bitty apartment in a working-class neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. My parents worked hard to pay the bills and to keep a roof over our heads. But even though my parents couldn't give us material things, they gave us something much more precious -- they gave me and my brother strong values. They taught us to treat others with dignity and respect. They taught us to push for excellence in every single thing we did. They taught us to be humble and to be grateful for everything we had. They taught us to put every last bit of effort into our education and to take pride in our work. They taught us that our circumstances didn't define us, and that if we believed in ourselves, if we made the most of every single opportunity, we could build our own destinies and accomplish anything we put our minds to."*



After her introduction of the President, the first Lady invited the students to put tough questions to her husband. While Zenia Motivala, the lucky one in a front row seat got to shake hands with the President, and **Zenobia Rao**, (photo left) a 19-year-old chemistry student at St. Xavier's was asked to attend, Afsheen Irani and **Jahan Peston Jamasp** (photo left below) were the Zarathushti youth to ask questions.



Jahan, a student of HR College of Commerce asked, *"what do you believe is a possible methodology which governments, either yours or any other government in the world, can adopt to basically incorporate human core values, the moral values of selflessness, brotherhood, over the materialistic frame of thought which people work by today?"*

Obama reminisced about M.K. Gandhi, his visit to Mani Bhavan in Mumbai, impressed with the Mahatma's simple living and high thinking. The impact that Gandhi had on Martin Luther King Jr., and the use of non-violence in the civil rights struggle in the USA; the common histories of struggle for social justice that bind the two countries together and how these events had an impact on his own life were themes which recurred during the three days of the President's visit to India.

At St Xavier's college in Mumbai he said: *"I do think that at my best, what I'm trying to do is to apply principles that fundamentally come down to something shared in all the world's religions, which is to see yourself in other people; to understand the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of*



# In The News



*station, regardless of rank, regardless of wealth, and to absolutely value and cherish and respect that individual; and then hopefully, try to take that principle of treating others as you would want to be treated and find ways where that can apply itself in communities and in cities and in states and ultimately in a country and in the world.*

*One of the other things I draw from all great men and women, like a Gandhi, though, is that on this journey you're going to experience setbacks and you have to be persistent and stubborn, and you just have to keep on going at it. And you'll never roll the boulder all the way up the hill but you may get it part of the way up".*

Second year management student, 19 year old **Afsheen Irani** (photo above) from Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, a business student at HR College of Commerce and Economics was spontaneous: "Sir, my question to you is why is Pakistan so important an ally to America, so far as America has never called it a terrorist state?" There was a collective gasp in the quadrangle from the assembled youth.

The question was splashed not only in the national media in India but reverberated across the oceans landing on the front page of the Washington Post. Since her impromptu question, she was inundated with requests for interviews and invitations to be on talk shows and panel discussions including BBC-World TV

.President Obama skillfully used dialogue to deepen understanding, challenging the students to view a country against which India has fought three major wars, from a fresh perspective, underscoring the importance of nurturing a stable, prosperous and democratic Pakistan as being in the best interests of India. Afsheen is on several committees at her college, including a solar-electrification project for rural India. .

Obama impressed the youth with his considered responses to the frank and fearless questions. He took the opportunity to urge the youth not only to seek positions in business and finance, but to consider public service as an option in their career choices.

As the strategic partnership between the USA and India flowers, it opens many avenues for people-to-people exchange. The Parsis of India and Pakistan and

the Zarathushtis in America will have increasing opportunities to build bridges in years ahead connecting the western diasporas with the home countries.

*Photos of Students*

*Courtesy Jame Jamshed, Mumbai*

*Photo of President Obama,  
The White House*

*Sources:*

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2010/11/07/town-hall-with-students-mumbai>

Watch the Video: The Obamas at St Xavier's college, Mumbai, India: 65:25 minutes



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# In The News

## A Cross-Cultural Cancer and Cardiac Health Raising Awareness within a Community

Parizad Avari and Farhad Daruwalla



Just over a year ago, Dr. Behram Pastakia, from North America, highlighted the raised incidence of breast cancer in Parsi women in India compared to the rest of the Indian population. The important message was relayed, across the waters, by Mr. Jehangir Sarosh in the United Kingdom. These important issues addressing our community concerns were further discussed at the Coming Together Roundtable at the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress held in Dubai on 27th December 2009. It remains difficult to conclude the precise risk of breast cancer in Parsi women settled in America, UK or other parts of the world, however, education within this field remains paramount. Inspired by our elders, we rose to the challenge of raising awareness amongst our community.

Overcoming many hurdles, from fundraising to advertising and organising an event, we decided to raise awareness not only on cancer, but also heart disease; two of the biggest causes of disability and mortality, affecting every family. Furthermore, the event was completely free to all attendees and everyone was invited to attend. The aim being not only to create awareness amongst Zarthushtis, but also local people from the borough of Harrow regardless of faith or culture.

On Sunday 21st November 2010, our Cross-Cultural Cancer and Cardiac Health Awareness Fair was held at the Zoroastrian Centre (Zartoshty Brothers' Hall) in Harrow, London. The event was the first of its kind to be held for Zoroastrians within the UK, and coincided with the start of the UK designated Inter Faith Week 2010.

We invited eminent and leading consultant physicians and surgeons from London's National Health Service (NHS), who kindly volunteered their time to speak and answer questions on heart health, as well as breast, bowel and prostate cancer. The emphasis was on prevention, early detection and treatment based on the latest clinical evidence and the experience of these top doctors. The panel (from left in photo) included Mr. Austin Obichere (Consultant Colorectal Surgeon, Honorary Senior Lecturer and Director of the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme at University College London Hospital). Ms Kunji Patel (volunteer from Bowel Cancer UK), Dr. William Teh (Consultant Radiologist and Director of the North West London Breast Cancer Screening Services), Mr. Manohar



Pancharatnam (Consultant Urologist from North West London Hospitals), Dr. Nikhil Parchure (Consultant Cardiologist of South London NHS Trust)

Exhibitors from various health charities were present to provide advice and literature, to consolidate and complete the learning process. These included The British Heart Foundation, The Stroke Association, Breast Cancer Care, Bowel Cancer UK and the Prostate Cancer Charity. Furthermore, health checks and professional dietary advice was also available from dieticians of North West London Hospitals. A Health Trainer was present on-site to promote local walks, smoking cessation, and give further advice on diabetes and stroke.

# In The News

No Zoroastrian event can end without food – After tea, coffee and snacks, a full Zoroastrian lunch was served to approximately 250 attendees, catered by Armin Dastoor. This was followed by a quiz and raffle, through which a grand total of £716.00 was raised for charity, Cancer Research UK.



*Photo above A team of medics: from left Jogisha Kukadia, Farhad Daruwalla, Parizad Avari and Dr. Eddie Guzdar. This team played an important role in organizing and advising from a medical perspective, as well as supporting the event on the day.*

We would like to thank the numerous volunteers who ensured the event ran smoothly and the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) for providing the premises to hold the event. Furthermore, we thank our generous sponsors for their contribution, namely TATA Group of Industries, Godrej Limited, Avari and Associates, Verity Education and Armin's Catering.

As this was the first time we had organised such an event, we requested all attendees to complete a feedback questionnaire to ascertain the level of interest. From 73 completed feedback questionnaires, 100% rated the event as either excellent or very good. The majority of individuals indicated that they would make lifestyle changes, particularly to their diet and 97% said they would attend again and definitely recommend the event to their family and friends. Furthermore, for those who attended the event feeling worried, most said that they felt much more aware about the issues discussed during the course of the day.

We hope that by promoting awareness of heart disease and cancer prevention and screening, that everyone will be empowered to make healthy lifestyle choices that ultimately enhance the quality and quantity of human life. Going forward we will be providing further support to help Zarthushtis and others make the change, and we wish to spread the message globally.

**After all, prevention is better than cure and early detection saves lives.**

With best wishes,

***Parizad Avari and Farhad Daruwalla,***

For further information, please contact Parizad Avari (parizadavari@hotmail.com) or Farhad Daruwalla (fdaruwalla@gmail.com).

***Parizad Avari*** is a final year medical student at Barts and the London School of Medicine, Queen Mary's University of London, with an intercalated BSc in Neurosciences. She is secretary for the Young Zoroastrians in the UK, team leader for assisting students from inner-city state schools and spends her free time drawing. She also has a keen interest in running, having completed the London Marathon and raising over £5300 for the British Red Cross.

***Farhad Daruwalla*** is a final year medical student at Guy's, King's and St Thomas' School of Medicine, King's College London, and has an intercalated BSc degree in Surgery and Anaesthesia from Imperial College London School of Medicine. He is also social secretary and trumpeter for King's College Concert Band and enjoys playing for the King's College London Lacrosse Team.



# In The News



In a rare historic moment the Temple of Understanding brought together sixty-six interfaith leaders, from around the globe to assess the challenges of the present ecological crisis and together co-create a new narrative in how we relate to the earth and its resources.

In addition to issuing a joint statement to Robert C. Orr, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, the interfaith visionaries committed to taking action both within their communities and on a global scale. They were invited to form a council for the newly created committee, The Interfaith Consortium for an Ecological Civilization (ICEC), which has been developed by the Temple of Understanding and other organizations in connection with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP).

The keynote speaker, Van Jones, a prominent environmentalist and author of the bestselling book, *The Green Collar Economy*, set the stage for a frank, penetrating and informative discussion among the visionary leaders. *"Imagine a coalition that unites the best labor and business*

## TEMPLE OF UNDERSTANDING'S HISTORIC EVENT 50TH Anniversary Gala and Juliet Hollister Awards 66 Interfaith Visionaries Convene to Discuss Sustainable Development October 19, 2010, Pierre Hotel, New York City

*leaders, social justice activists, environmentalists, intellectuals, students, and more – all sharing the burdens and benefits, risks and rewards of the journey to a green-collar economy."* *"Juliet Hollister, founder, understood the power of a group for effective action. She was so proud to see the continuation of her lifelong work to bring people together to create positive change,"* said Alison Van Dyk, Executive Director of the Temple of Understanding.

The conference was held at the Pierre Hotel in New York City on October 19, 2010 in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of The Temple of Understanding. Roland G. Smith, 14 Emmy Awards winner TV personality, was a Master of Ceremony for an action packed program

With a musical "Invocation for World Peace" by Michael Fitzpatrick, TOU Board of Trustees presented "*Interfaith Visionary Awards* to sixty-six leading Interfaith Visionaries from international interfaith organizations". *Amongst these sixty-six recipients, there were two Zarathushtis -Dame Dr. Meher Master-Moos and Homi Gandhi* (photo right). Dr Moos was unable to attend.

Juliet Hollister Awards are granted to individuals who are: religious figures who integrate religious values into their place of worship where their adherents congregate; and secular figures who promote greater understanding of spiritual values in areas such as the arts, education, media,

government, science, law, and ecology. 2010 awards were given to His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, His All Holiness, Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and



Ecumenical Patriarch, The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, and Karen Armstrong, one of the world's great scholars on religious affairs and a best-selling author.

**The Board of Trustees presented Interfaith Visionary Lifetime Achievement Award to Sister Joan Kirby, TOU's UN Representative.**

**Homi** was invited by Won Buddhism UN Office and Inter-religious Work, a key organizer of the G20 Summit in Seoul, Korea to participate in the G-20 Seoul events on November 9, 10 and 11, 2010. He was invited to contribute in the "Dialogue on Fair Globalization", a G-20 Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Religions. (see 72)

# In The News

## BAPSI SIDHWA HONORED BY GREG MORTENSON



On November 13, 2010 the Central Asia Institute (founded by Greg Mortenson) awarded Bapsi Sidhwa the 2010 **Spirit Lifetime Achievement Award**. The gala fundraiser, attended by over 1000 guests was held at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas.

Bapsi Sidhwa and Greg Mortenson share a bond with the Karakoram Mountains. Bapsi's book, *The Pakistani Bride* is set in this remote region on the roof of the world. And although decades separate Bapsi's novel from Mortenson's books and his humanitarian work, the underlying message is the same. (Photo above Bapsi Sidhwa, Greg Mortenson, Geena Davis)

It was during Bapsi's honeymoon in the Karakoram Mountains, while the Silk Road was being constructed, that she first became aware of the stories woven into the lives of the people living in this remote area. After returning home to Lahore, she felt an inner urge to write – to tell the story of the run-away bride, which she had heard. Bapsi's sensitive story-telling gave the readers an inside look into the desperate poverty and hard lives of the Kohistani tribesmen, but their resilient strength and wisdom are also captured by Bapsi's empathetic writing.

The guests were welcomed by Sadia Ashraf, who also gave a moving account of the devastation caused by the recent floods in Pakistan. She introduced Bapsi Sidhwa as Pakistan's leading writer and invited her to speak.

Bapsi held the audience spell-bound with a reading from *Cracking India*. She recounted how she had been struck by the incredible beauty and grandeur of the Karakoram Mountains. *"There is something mystical in those mountains, which energizes me,"* she said. On the subject of life's lessons, she said, *"life has taught me that circumstances that appear to adversely affect us can work to our advantage. I had polio as a child. Since this illness affects the nerves, my parents were advised not to send me to school. This made for a childhood of extreme loneliness. I filled the silences in my life by an inordinate amount of reading and daydreaming. I realize now that this time I had to myself made me a writer. Who would have thought what my parents considered an affliction would turn into a source of pride for them? And a source of immense satisfaction in my life."* She said

Greg Mortenson had been her hero ever since she read his personal story in *Three Cups of Tea*. The best seller chronicles his work to build schools, especially for girls, in the remote reaches of northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was during Mortenson's unsuccessful attempt to scale the K-2 mountain peak that he was rescued by villagers; he promised to repay his hosts by building schools for the children living in these inaccessible areas.

Compeered by TV and film actor Michael Rady, the rest of the program was kicked off by a special address from award-winning actress Geena Davis, followed by a talk by Danny Pudi (starring in NBC's show *Community*). Greg Mortenson spoke at the very end.

Each guest received Greg Mortenson's new book *"Stones into Schools"* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *"Cracking India"* in celebration of their work. The evening ended with many in the audience asking Bapsi Sidhwa to sign their copies of *Cracking India*. Graciously acquiescing to the requests of her admirers, Bapsi had a word of encouragement and advice for each of her fans.



Reported by Anahita Sidhwa, Dallas, who attended the event .

Photos courtesy Viraf Patel of Dallas , CAI website <https://www.ikat.org/> Bapsi Sidhwa <http://www.bapsisidhwa.com>,

# In The News

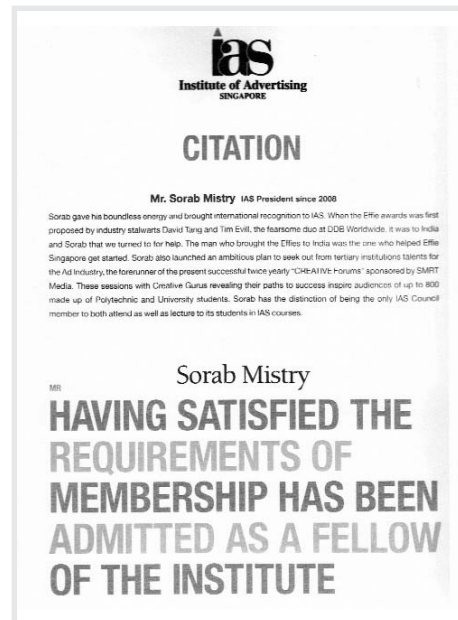


On November 16, 2010, Sorab Mistry was conferred as Fellow of the Institute of Advertising, Singapore (IAS) in the presence of over 600 guests at Hotel Shangrila, Singapore. The citation of his award reads

“Sorab gave his boundless energy and brought international recognition to IAS. When the Effie awards was first proposed by industry stalwarts David Tang and Tim Evill, the fearsome duo at DDB Worldwide, it was to India and Sorab that we turned to for help. The man who brought the Effies to India was the one who helped Effie Singapore get started. Sorab also launched an ambitious plan to seek out from tertiary institutions talents for the Ad Industry, the forerunner of the present successful twice yearly “CREATIVE Forums” sponsored by SMRT Media. These sessions with Creative Gurus revealing their paths to success inspire audiences of up to 800 made up of Polytechnic and University students. Sorab has the distinction of being the only IAS Council member to both attend as well as lecture to its students in IAS courses”.

In his acceptance speech quoting Isaac Newton Sorab said “*If I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants. I have been blessed with a career that spanned 35 years in 6 countries with 2 world renowned companies. I have had the good fortune to learn at the feet of the great masters who gave selflessly of their valuable time.*” He went on to say “*that all through my career I have passionately served the Industry with a strong belief that we must give back to the community what we were fortunate to have received; and this Chinese proverb says it better than I could ever have :*

*“If you want happiness for an hour take a nap. If you want happiness for a day go fishing. If you want happiness for a month get married. If you want*



*happiness for a year inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime help others”.* - Chinese Proverb

Sorab's career of over 35 years started in India where after graduating with a degree in Economics and Statistics from St. Xavier's College in 1973, he joined McCann-Erickson Advertising in Tehran, Iran, as a Management Trainee, was sent to McCann-Erickson London for General Management training. On return to Iran he was a member of the Management team in charge of several multi-national accounts, such as Coca-Cola, General Motors, and Nestle. In 1979, following the coup in Iran, Sorab was transferred to McCann-Erickson London in charge of General Motors and Coca-Cola.

After immigrating to Canada in 1979 he graduated as a Certified Advertising Agency Practitioner (CAAP) and from 1980-90 worked for J. Walter Thompson(JWT) in Toronto, Canada, starting the Pepsi Cola account and held a series of management positions including National Director of Strategic Planning of JWT Canada. He returned to McCann-Erickson Toronto as Vice President in charge of Coca-Cola in Canada but was transferred to McCann India as Executive Vice President of the joint venture, to open up a new operation in Bombay to lead the launch of Coca-Cola into India.

He was the first President and Chief Executive Officer of the newly established McCann-Erickson, India and then Area Director, South Asia, comprising India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal and



# In The News

elected Executive Vice President of Asia-Pacific. Finally in December 1998 Sorab was appointed Chairman of the Company in India. In September 2002 he moved his base offshore to Dubai, U.A.E. and then to Singapore when he was promoted to Area Director of South & South-East Asia.

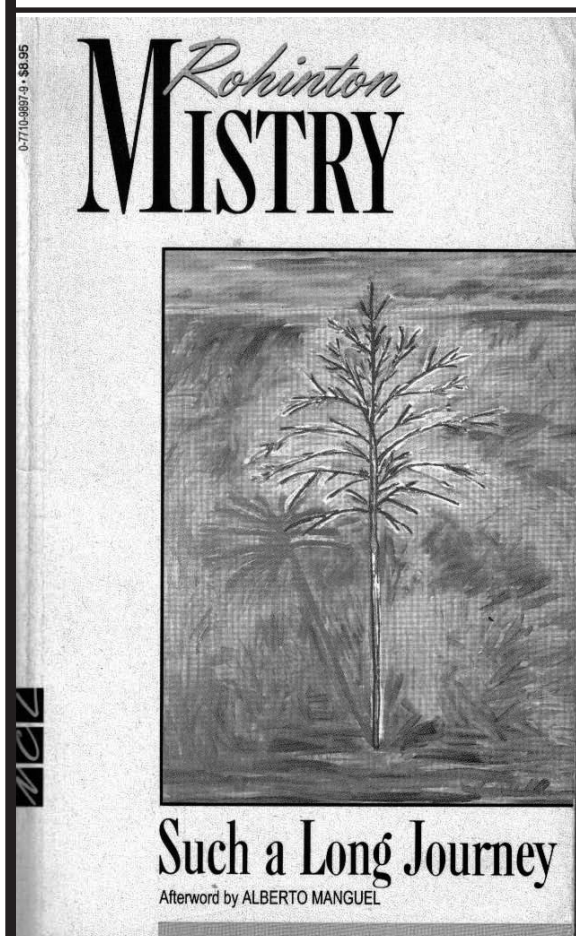
At present Sorab is the Chairman of the IAA (Singapore) and IAS (Institute of Advertising Singapore); as well as the Chairman of the Effie Awards (Advertising Effectiveness). He has been a guest lecturer at York University, University of Toronto, at various Management schools in India, American

University of Dubai and most recently, at the three Universities in Singapore. He shuttles between Toronto and Singapore.

Sorab was global consultant for Zoroastrian Youth Leadership Program at the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai, December 2009.

**Congratulations Sorab Mistry on a brilliant career as a seasoned International Marketing Communications Professional, with broad exposure to strategic and operating issues and a track record in challenging leadership situations.**

*"Such a Long Journey" embarks on an even longer journey !!*



Winner of Canada's Governor General's Award for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writer's Prize and short listed for the Booker Prize Rohinton Mistry's *"Such a Long Journey"* (1991) one of the most acclaimed novels of our time, was part of the University of Mumbai's BA syllabus since 1997. However in 2010 it was pulled out mid-term by the Vice-Chancellor Rajan Welukar after Aditya Thackeray, grandson of Bal Thackeray of Shiv Sena, took objection to the way Maharashtrians and the Sena were portrayed in the book. Never mind the Parsis in the book were ridiculed!! Copies of the novel were burnt and a 24-hour notice was given to Vice Chancellor Dr Rajan Welukar to drop the novel from the second year syllabus. The very next day the university cravenly bowed down to this demand and issued notices to all colleges dropping the novel from the syllabus, regardless of the fact that it was mid-term, and papers for the first semester were being set

Instead of cutting short the "long journey", the road ahead is longer and better paved with sales doubling!! A sad day indeed when Vice-Chancellors bow to political pressure from young students.

# In The News



**Minu and Mehroo Patel, of Chicago, awarded Beverly McElmurry's International Nursing Award of Sigma Theta Tau Society, for contributions to International Nursing.**

On October 16, 2010,. Minu Patel MSc and Mehroo Patel MD were awarded Sigma Theta Tau International, Honor Society of Nursing, Alpha Lambda Chapter's : Beverly McElmurry Award for Contributions to International Nursing. This was in recognition of their collaborative work with the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Nursing and the Bel-Air Hospital, in Panchgani India, in establishing a College of Nursing of International status. (Photo left Minu Patel, Connie Zak, President of Alpha, Lambda Chapter of Sigma Thea

Tau, International Honor Society of Nursing, Dr Mehroo Patel)

Minu thanked the organizers and mentioned that both Mehroo and himself were particularly pleased to receive this award especially because neither of them were nurses. Mehroo in her speech mentioned that "this award is not just for us. It is for all of you, and many more who have helped along the way. It means a lot to us. It prompts us to emulate Dr. Beverly McElmurry's work and carry her legacy forward".

While on a visit to Panchgani, Fr Tomy, Director of Bel Air Hospital requested help to develop a College of Nursing of International status, as a capacity builder to alleviate nursing shortage at Bel-Air as well as all of India. Thus the collaboration between the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing, the Indian Red Cross Society of Maharashtra, the Bel Air Hospital in Panchgani and the Patels, started seven years ago and mushroomed under the leadership of Dr. Beverly McElmurry. She advanced the cause of Nursing in many parts of the world not by imposing ways of her home country but always considering ethnic and cultural ways of the countries she was collaborating with.

The Patels worked as facilitators and catalysts providing whatever resource was needed and requested. Upon construction, of the CON, the Bel-Air library had a few empty bookshelves lining up in a large 4 walled hall. They wanted books, the Patels gave them books – all donated, by themselves by the Nurses of UIC – CON and their friends elsewhere.. A couple of thousand books have been sent to Bel-Air Hospital where students and teachers and nurses are enjoying and sharing with other colleges there. The Patels set up a Bel-Air Benefit Foundation which collects monetary donations to pay for the shipping for and other Bel-Air support

**CONGRATUALATIONS MEHROO AND MINU ON A JOB WELL DONE!**

## Corrections FEZANA Journal - Fall/September 2010

Page 23 , column 2, line 14

**"Dr. Ichaporia presented exposition of the *Bahman Yasht*."**

should read : **"Dr. Ichaporia presented exposition of the *Behram Yasht*"**

Page 29 , the first line under **OLD AVESTA**

**"yaanim.mano, anim vacho.aanim shiaaothnem"**

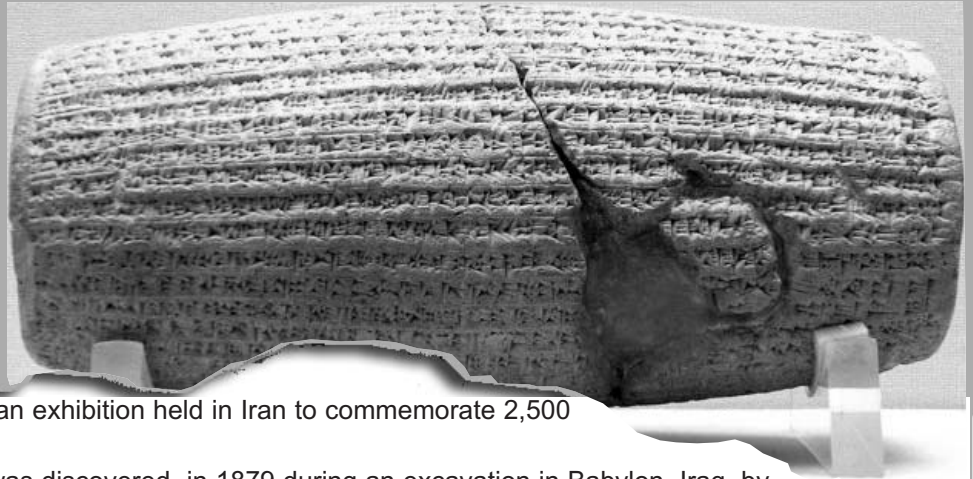
Should read **"yaanim.mano. yaanim.vacho. yaanim shiaaothnem"**

**Thank you Dr Ichaporia for bringing this to our attention**

# In The News

## Cyrus Cylinder Returns to Iran

On September 12, 2010, the Cyrus Cylinder, the terracotta document written in Babylonian Cuneiform by Cyrus the Archemian, 2500 years ago and hailed as the "first charter of human rights" returned for a second time to Iran to be displayed for four months at the National Museum of Iran said its director Azadeh Ardekani. The first



journey was made in 1971, for an exhibition held in Iran to commemorate 2,500 years of the Persian monarchy

This terracotta document was discovered in 1879 during an excavation in Babylon, Iraq, by the British Museum team. And except for its short sojourn in 1971 it has remained in the British Museum. A facsimile is displayed at the UN headquarters in New York

The cylinder has special value to peoples of the world as it symbolizes tolerance and respect for other people, and other faiths, and this has a special resonance for the present troubled times. The cylinder records that Cyrus captured Babylon without a struggle, restored shrines dedicated to different gods, and repatriated deported people who had been brought to Babylon. This decree allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Such enlightened acts were rare in antiquity and hence he is referred in the Bible as "the annointed one".

The return ended a long and protracted diplomatic battle between the UK and Iran, with the spirit of Cyrus's charter prevailing. The cylinder was carried to the National Museum in a protective case by Dr John Curtis, of the British Museum.

The exhibition opened at the National Museum in Tehran on September 12, 2010 and attracted 77,366 visitors between September 12 and October 22, 2010



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# In The News



## **Delkash Hormoz Shahriarian Creates History**

**What an honor for the first Zarathushti participant in the U.S. Women's T20 Cricket Open Championship which engraves a New Chapter in American Sports History.**

The home of the first official Cricket Stadium built in the USA at Central Broward Regional Park in Lauderhill, Florida, was buzzing with the beauties of sport on October 8, 9 & 10, 2010, as sixty of America's top lady cricketers traded their heels, perfume and polish for helmets, bats and gloves to kick-off the first inaugural history-making U.S. Women's Cricket Open Championship. This was an honor for the players, coaches and managers who will be bragging about the prime event for generations! *(Photo above Delkash Shahriarian with the Runner-up Medal and Team Trophy)*

At these games, the four best competing women's cricket teams from the USA represented a true cross section of the USA cricket world. Two teams came in from California, and the other two, including the team Delkash is part of, the New York Warriors, flew in from the Northeast to compete for the honor of hoisting the U.S. Open Championship Trophy. International players from Canada, Australia, the West Indies and South Africa also participated.

Out of the cradle of cricket at the Philadelphia Cricket Club in 1887, the USA's first women's sports champion prevailed; now 123 years later, an American Women's Cricket Champion team was crowned at this event. The New York Warriors secured Runner-up position at this event. American sports history was made when the honorary pink commemorative balls;

(October is Breast Cancer awareness month) were bowled out at the Stadium by Commissioner Margaret Bates of Lauderhill, Florida, who has pioneered the development of learning centers through sports like cricket, honored this special event.

Delkash is currently the only Indian player amongst the East coast teams and the only Zarathushti to play at a US National level sporting event. She was selected during the trials in May 2010 to play at this prestigious national event for the New York Warriors team. She has been an important and vital contributor to the New York team which includes players from team USA and West Indies. As a specialty batsman her strength has been in making quick runs with big hits required for this T20 tournament and with her athletic skills, Delkash made significant catches and fielded numerous boundary hits.

Her tryst with cricket formally started as the captain of the Sir Ness Wadia Club, Rustom Baug women's cricket team. She was successfully able to lead her team to victory at the 2004-2005 All-Parsis Women's Tournament for two successive years, over strong teams like Godrej Baug and Dadar Parsi Colony. With the absence of the Zarathushti community's presence in the field of national level US cricket, and in a sport dominated by men, Delkash has worked hard to earn a position in the New York Warriors team to provide exposure and make our Zarathushti community more renowned in the USA. With the recent opening of the Rustomjee Builders sponsored cricket nursery in Rustom Baug, she hopes that one day our community will have representation at the national and international level. Delkash is regularly training to improve her cricket skills and is looking to find sponsor's to assist her with professional training.

Delkash has achieved comparable recognition off the field. She earned her Bachelors degree in Architecture from Rachna Sansad's Academy of Architecture with First Class Honors and is a Post Graduate Architect from the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York. She was awarded '**Best Student of the Year' 2005** by Pidilite Industries and nominated by Practicing Engineers Architects and Town Planners Association (PEATA) from Academy of Architecture. She is currently working as an Architect in New York and is a very talented upcoming Zarathushti, constantly striving to make her family and community proud. Delkash hopes to continue excelling in every endeavor she undertakes and to be a role model for all the younger women who dare to dream!

# In The News

## RATAN TATA GIVES \$50 MILLION TO HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

Harvard Business School has received a gift of \$50 million from the Tata Trusts and Companies. This marks the School's largest international donation in its 102-year history. Ratan Tata (from left), the chairman of Tata Sons Ltd., meets with Harvard President Drew Faust and Harvard Business School Dean Nitin Nohria.(on sofa)

At an afternoon press conference on the HBS campus, Dean Nitin Nohria announced that the Tata Companies, the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and the Tata Education and Development Trust, which are philanthropic arms of the Tata Group, India's largest company, are donating \$50 million to the School.

The gift, the largest from an international donor in the School's history, will fund a new HBS facility to support the School's broad range of executive education programs.

"Ratan Tata knows firsthand the transformative educational opportunities offered through Harvard Business School's (HBS) executive education programs," said Harvard President Drew Faust. "Thanks to this generous gift, HBS will be able to expand its already robust offerings in executive education, deepening ties with leaders across the country and around the globe."

Calling it a privilege and a pleasure to "give back to Harvard a little bit of what it gave to me," Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata Sons Ltd., said he hoped the new facility would both encourage and inspire future leaders to take advantage of the executive education offerings at HBS.

Tata attended the Advanced Management Program in 1975, one of three executive leadership programs offered by HBS.

Nohria said Tata's generous gift offers HBS the opportunity for its pioneering executive education program to take an important "step forward."

Founded in 1868, the Tata Group comprises more than 90 companies in seven business sectors: communications and information technology; engineering; materials; services; energy; consumer products; and chemicals. Known for its innovative philosophy, the international corporation has created pioneering innovations like the new Tata Nano, a \$2,500, two-cylinder car that seats four and gets 55 miles to the gallon.



Officials hope to break ground next spring for the new academic and residential building, to be named Tata Hall, with completion scheduled for the fall of 2013.

*Photo by Susan Young/Harvard Business School*

## TWO ZARATHUSHTIS WIN AWARDS -

**Actor, Boman Irani, gets 'Teacher's Achiever of the Decade' award, and Founder of Indian Blood Donors organization, Khushroo Poacha, won a \$10,000 award in Amgen Foundation's 'Patients/Choices/Empowerment' contest.**

Actor **Boman Irani** who made his debut in films in 2002, was awarded **Teacher's Achievement Award** in Mumbai at Taj Land's End on Nov. 20, 2010. He came to Mumbai after 40 days of shooting in Berlin for "Don 2" to celebrate his son's birthday and to attend the tenth edition of the glitz and glamour night.

Nagpur based NGO Indian Blood Donors led by founder **Khushroo Poacha**, has created an SMS blood donor helpline **"SMS Now! A Life Depends on It,"** connecting needy patients with blood donors in real time at the cost of a normal SMS.

They won \$10,000 cash prize in an online competition **Patients/Choices/Empowerment** sponsored by the **Amgen Foundation in conjunction with Ashoka's Changemakers**. Winners were selected from among 10 finalists who submitted innovative health solutions and will be featured on **Changemakers.com** as ideas that empower patients to make informed decisions.

# In The News

## HEALTHY LIVING WITH Dr. NIKAN H. KHATIBI

### Getting The Right Tests To Help You Live Longer

When was the last time you saw your physician for an annual check-up? More importantly, how do you know it was complete, and that the right tests were being ordered that catered to your health concerns?

I can't tell you how many people I talk to who don't ask their physicians questions with regards to tests being ordered on their behalf. There is nothing more disheartening than seeing a patient who doesn't come across motivated about his/her health. As a physician, I do my best to inform my patients about routine exams and tests that are being ordered. But there is something else to be said about a patient who comes to see me and knows exactly the concerns they have and the research they've done to ask the right questions.

Over the last century, preventive health care has become an important aspect of medical practice, leading to significant improvements in overall health in the United States. People are living longer and healthier lives thanks to the developments in health research and nutrition. But in order for you to enjoy the benefits of living longer and healthier, it's important to know exactly what test to have done. That way, you can minimize the time spent getting expensive and possibly harmful tests. So for your next check-up, let's make sure you have all the facts...no matter how old you are!

Preventative services everyone should get no matter the age (that's teens and adults):

**Blood Pressure Check:** High blood pressure, known as hypertension, affects over 900 million people worldwide and is one of the leading causes of death from cardiovascular disease (CVD). It is influenced by an array of things including, but not limited to diet, activity level, emotions, room temperature, background noise, muscle tension and body position. Believe or not, this simple test, can tell you a lot about how your body is doing.

**Height and Weight:** Significant loss in height can indicate bone degeneration and/or loss. While unexpected weight gain/loss can point towards a serious underlying health problem.

**Blood Work** Including cholesterol checks, glucose to rule out diabetes, thyroid function tests to rule out any thyroid disorders, and blood electrolytes looking for kidney or heart dysfunctions.

**Breast Exams** by your physician (for women): Every 3 years starting at age 20 then yearly after age 40. Be sure to ask your physician for tips on how to self-check your breasts – you could be doing it wrong and just not know!

**Cervical Cancer Screening** with a Pap Smear (for women): This is a great procedural test looking for possible infections or abnormalities that may raise concerns for cancer down the road. It should start three years after the onset of sexual activity or at age 21, whichever comes first. Three consecutive annual pap smears should be done, and if normal, the time frame can be extended to testing every 3 years. This also may be a great opportunity to ask your physician about the new Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which decreases your risk of cervical cancer. It's only 3 doses, and is recommended for teens between 19-26 years of age.

**Lifestyle Counseling:** This includes diets, safe sexual practices, tobacco and alcohol use, depression screening, and vitamin supplementation.

**Preventative Services** for older individuals i.e. 40 years of age and over:

Everything I mentioned above

**Breast Cancer Screening:** All women should check their breasts at home routinely looking for 'lumps and bumps' that raise concerns and immediately see their physician. Now this is where it gets tricky. The United States Preventative Services Task Force, or USPSTF for short, recommends optional annual mammogram exams for those women between the ages of 40-49 and mandatory annual mammograms for women between 50-75 years of age. However, any individual with a family history of breast cancer, or a history of abnormal breast exams, I would strongly recommend considering having a mammogram done on an annual basis starting at age 40. Breast cancer is no joke – it is the most common female cancer in the US, the second most common cause of cancer death in women, and the main cause of death in women ages 40 to 59.

**Colon Cancer Screening:** Most colorectal cancers arise from little polyps that progress from small to large (>1.0 cm) polyps, and then to dysplasia and





# In The News

cancer. The progression from polyp to cancer is believed to take at least ten years. That is why, regular screenings beginning at age 50 for individuals at average risk is so important. The preferred method is a colonoscopy every 10 years. Other appropriate options are available including, yearly fecal occult blood test (FOBT); flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years; or double-contrast barium enema every 5 years. For those individuals with a first-degree relative with colorectal cancer, there's a higher risk and thus a different screening recommendation. The recommendation for higher risk individuals is to begin screening 10 years before the age the cancer was diagnosed in the affected relative.

**Prostate Cancer Screening** (for men): For an American male, the lifetime risk of developing prostate cancer is 1 in 6, but only a small percentage of individuals actually die from it. The most effective means of detecting prostate cancer early is through a screening, which involves a digital rectal exam (DRE) and measuring the amount of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in the blood. A number of physicians recommend getting both the DRE and PSA level at age 50, with annual evaluations to about 75 years of age.

**Immunizations:** Last year it was the bird flu, this year it was the swine flu, and next year it could be the dog flu, kidding of course. But seriously, annual flu shots are important, especially for older individuals with a less effective immune system. This means that older individuals are more prone to catching infections and in need of longer recovery times. In addition to the flu vaccine, there is also the pneumococcal vaccine and shingles vaccine which you should speak to your physician about

Annual check-ups are not only an opportunity to discuss preventative screens and procedures, but also, a time for individuals to review their medications, learn about flu shots, and to discuss 'stressors' one may be experiencing in life. I hope the next time you see your physician, you'll be ready to go. Now that's healthy living!!

*Dr Nikan H Khatibi is a certified medical physician currently completing his specialty training in anesthesiology at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Southern California.*

[www.DrNikanKhatibi.com](http://www.DrNikanKhatibi.com)



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# INTERFAITH INTERALIA G-20 MORAL POLITICS SUMMIT



(Photo above Homi Gandhi with the Head Dharma Master of Won Buddhism)

It all began with an email invitation from Won Buddhism Headquarters to participate in the G-20 Moral Politics Summit in Seoul, South Korea. This was to take place just ahead of the G-20 political leaders' summit in the same city. A large number of people were invited from four corners of the world to speak out on the most important issues facing humanity. There were politicians and diplomats, theologians and professors, lawyers and businessmen, artists and architects, interfaith visionaries and faith leaders, music conductors and singers, etc.

The first day of the conference, entitled **"G-20 Universal Ethics Summit"**, began with a welcome address by Ven. Dr. Chung Ok Lee, Executive Director, UN Affairs and Interreligious Work, Won Buddhism International, challenging all delegates to face the issues of Importance of Ethical Politics, Creativity and Spirituality, Moral Leadership and Green Redemption, and different business cultures. Among many speakers, there were Korean Ministers and diplomats. At the end of the day, "Ethics" recommendation was drafted and handed over to the Korean Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for onward dispatch to G-20 Seoul Summit Preparatory Committee.

**"G-20 Women Leaders Summit"** was held on the second day at the Eundeok Cultural Center in Seoul. H.E. Shin Nakyun, Republic of Korea National Assembly Representative, opened the meeting, highlighting the contributions of women in the Korean society and remarking how a large pool of community asset was still not fully utilized for the world at large. Women's perspective on Economic Reform, Development and Global Security, and new approaches to Gender Equality were discussed. The discussion sessions were organized with intermittent performances of traditional Korean dances, traditional Korean Bamboo flute music, and Won Ministers' Choir. G20 Women Leaders recommendation was drafted and handed over for

onward dispatch to G20 Seoul Summit Preparatory Committee.

On the third day, we were driven in two coaches to the Won Buddhism Headquarters in Iksan Holy Land, almost 200 kms southwest of Seoul. After a Chinese lunch hosted by Dr. Na Young Ho, President, Wonkwang University, Iksan, we assembled at the Headquarters for a *"Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures, and Religions"*. Presentations were made on the history and future of the Inter-religious movement and how the civil society can move forward with Inter-faith to shift the dialogue to an action level. ) This, coupled with United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, has to look forward to a paradigm shift in the purpose of the production-consumption cycle. And that called for a religious initiative on Green Redemption. This followed with a walking pilgrimage to Won Buddhism Iksan Holy Land. The visit to Holy Land ended after a meeting with, and blessings from, the Head Dharma Master of Won Buddhism.

The activities of three days were blanketed with the morning meditation and Chi Kung sessions. These sessions added to the spirituality of the event. And on our return trip to Seoul, we continued our Pilgrimage meditation at Young San Holy Land and ended the (Photo below Homi making his presentation)



meditation at the Enlightenment Place of the Central Peak of Sambat.

Koreans are very welcoming, hospitable people and they will go a long way to make your stay and experience of Korea pleasant in all manner. When a stranger asks as to where to change the Metro for the final destination, the local Korean will get down at the transfer station and walk down with you to the platform where you are supposed to take your transfer train. It was an unusual experience of hospitality in a city which moves fast because it is indeed the wired capital of the world!

**Homi D Gandhi, FEZANA Main Representative to the UN**

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

## LIVING THE MEANING OF OUR Yatha Ahu Vairyo PRAYER ZARATHUSHTIS OF HOUSTON HELP HONDURANS TO BUILD A MEDICAL CLINIC

Since 2001, the Baylor College of Medicine's non-profit organization *Shoulder to Shoulder Foundation*, in alliance with the *Asociación San Lucas, Honduras* aims to improve health and the provision of health services for underserved people in the area of Santa Ana, Intibuca, Honduras, and to promote self sufficiency at grass roots level. The Foundation strives to provide experience to students and faculty of Baylor College of Medicine and affiliated institutions as well as community members who share a passion to address. Volunteers from Houston and various parts of the nation help to construct and facilitate the clinic in Santa Ana which is a quaint village located high in the rugged, lush rainforests along the Honduran and El Salvadorian border.

Due to economic constraints, the facility can currently only serve as a primary care clinic, helping locals who have minor injuries, wounds, diseases, or medical concerns that are not extremely urgent.

In July 2010, a group of fifteen individuals went to Santa Ana, Honduras on a "Goodwill Mission". that was different from the usual medical brigade. The group was organized by Roshan Sethna, of Zoroastrian Association of Houston, in co-ordination with Dr Fareed Khan, a physician with Baylor College of Medicine. The members from the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, both youth and adult community members, were Roshan Sethna, Nilufar Kasnavia, Nasreen Khosravian, Darius Khosravian, Bahrom Firozgary, Burjis Cooper, and Malcolm Irani. They were joined by Drs Fareed Khan, Rubina Khan & Muhammad Nadeem and Rice University students Jacinta Leyden and Nathan Lo. (photo above)

Roshan Sethna who is on the Board of Shoulder to Shoulder says "Yes, my goal is to raise enough funds to complete this clinic, (in Santa Ana) but I also want to introduce members of our community to a world that very few will experience firsthand. I want the young aspiring medical students to learn compassion and humility. It is a fantastic feeling to give without ever expecting anything more than a smile and a hug in return. I know that all of us that went there fell in love with "our village" of Santa Ana and the people of Honduras".



The team of volunteers helped inside the clinic by giving check-ups to villagers and supplying them with prescribed drugs from the doctors in the group, and some volunteers worked outside in the blistering Honduran heat alongside local men from surrounding villages to build a fence and irrigation system

Bahrom Firozgary, 18, who is majoring in Biochemistry at Rice University said "*Medicine is cool but you can't be a doctor without having the human aspect, and the social skills to interact with others*".

He enjoyed digging mud in order to build a fence and place an irrigation system, but enjoyed shadowing the physicians who were also visiting Honduras. The trip taught him about all the things that make someone not just a good doctor, but a great doctor.

"This trip made me a better person," said Firozgary, who is currently working part-time in the Baylor College of Medicine's research department in infectious disease. "*I learnt it takes more than just smarts. It takes social skills too*".

Along with all the memories, the volunteers brought back from their memorable experiences, they seek to spread one imperative message: Santa Ana needs support. From unfinished rooms to lack of sufficient medicines, the clinic is in much need of new resources to fulfill the role of being the only hospital for miles in the border region of Honduras.

**You can contribute at [www.bcm.edu/shouldertoshoulder](http://www.bcm.edu/shouldertoshoulder) or by snail mail to**

**Baylor Shoulder to Shoulder Foundation  
Department of Family and Community Medicine  
3701 Kirby Dr, Suite 600, Houston, TX 77098**

**If you wish to join the next Zarathushti brigade, contact directly.**

**Roshan Sethna - [rosh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rosh@sbcglobal.net) or 713-856-9359.**



# INTERFAITH INTERALLIA

**Ardeshir B. Damania (PhD)**  
**University of California, Davis**

PART 1

## The Visit Of Dasturji Meherji Rana To Mogul Emperor Akbar's Court

The Akbarnama which literally means the Book of Akbar, is an official biographical account of Akbar, the third Mughal Emperor (1556–1605 CE) written in Persian and it includes vivid and detailed descriptions of his life and times. The work was commissioned by Akbar himself, and written by Abdul Fazl, one of the Nine Jewels (Navaratnas) of Akbar's royal court. It took Abdul Fazl seven years to complete the manuscript. The original manuscript contained a number of paintings including miniatures, done in the Mogul school style, supporting the

texts. Akbar himself was illiterate and dyslexic, but recognizing this he invited several learned people to his court to gain knowledge and advise him. He rarely made any major decision without consulting them. When he noticed that some of his subjects were quarreling constantly over religious matters, in far corners of his empire, he decided to act. (Author's note:- Despite the depiction of Akbar, played by Prithviraj Kapoor, as a big and heavy set man in the 1960 blockbuster film Mogul-e-Azam, he was in reality a small and physically weak person).



Mogul Emperor Akbar  
(1556–1605 CE)

### THE DEBATES AT THE IBADAT KHANA

Akbar had built the new city of Fatehpur Sikri at Agra in 1569 CE and therein constructed a house of worship which he called Ibadat Khana. In 1575 he sent invitations to the leaders, theologians, and priests of all faiths in his kingdom to come to his court and explain the teachings of their religions, viz., Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. These debates and discourses took place at the Ibadat Khana from 1575 to 1579 with Akbar himself taking part in the debates on many occasions especially Thursday evenings. One would think that Akbar, being a Muslim would know a great deal about Islam, but that was not the case because Akbar at heart was a Sufi, and had an open mind which liked to absorb the good traditions and beliefs of all religions.



[ Photo above) - Akbar's City Fatehpur Sikri built in red sand stone]

**Dastur Meherji** (1514-1591CE) was born in a priestly family at Navsari (photo below). His father's name was Rana Jesung (thus he took the name Meherji Rana).



India at that time was under the rule of the Moguls. Akbar had first met Dasturji in 1573 when the former laid siege on Surat. Their meeting took place at Kankrakhadi (present day Rustompura) in Surat. Impressed with Dastur Meherji's knowledge, appearance, and personality, the emperor promised to invite Dasturji to his court in Delhi at a date to be determined later. That invitation came in 1575 and accordingly Dasturji, after a journey several days long, arrived at the Royal Court of Akbar on Roj Hormazd, Mah

Khordod 947 YZ (or 1578 CE). Dastur Meherji Rana was chosen by Akbar since he was the undisputed spiritual leader of the Parsi community in India during the sixteenth century, renowned not just among the Parsis but also other communities on account of his piety, vast knowledge and spiritual powers. Akbar's Prime Minister Abdul Fazl and court historian Badaoqi recorded the visit of Parsi priests from Navsari at the Royal Court over two years, 1577-1578 CE, in their memoirs.

Each invited leader of the major faiths was told to state their beliefs and teachings fearlessly to the court,

# I INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice



unmindful of hurting anyone's feelings. Akbar sat through most of the debates and arguments that ensued. One night, as the debate was in progress, Padre Rodolfo Acquaviva, who had arrived from Goa with Padre Francisco Henriques, came in to the Ibadat Khana. He was considered the most learned priest of

conviction of Padre Rodolfo, and disappointed in the behavior of his own courtiers.

Photo on left shows Akbar holding a religious assembly in the Ibadat Khana (House of Worship) in Fatehpur Sikri; the two men dressed in black are the Jesuit missionaries Rodolfo Acquaviva and Francisco Henriques with a Bible set on a cloth on the carpet. Illustration is from the Akbarnama. Miniature painting by Nar Singh, ca. 1605 CE.

Similarly, the Islamic hardliners at Akbar's court attacked Guru Arjan Singh, the Fifth Guru of Sikhism, and a new faith at that time. Sikhism's founder, Guru Nanak Dev, took what he considered the good aspects of both Hindu and Mohammedan religions and established this new religion. The court critics asserted that Sikhism treated both, the Hindu Gods and Muslim Prophets with contempt and should be banned. Then Akbar himself decided to have the holy book of the Sikhs - Granth Sahib, a copy of which was brought to the court by Guru Arjan Singh, translated and read to him. He found nothing in it but love and devotion to God. Akbar decreed that the book was worthy of reverence and the critics were once again silenced.

## THE TANTRIK'S TRICK

It is said that during Dastur Meherji Rana's stay in Delhi a Hindu tantrik, named Jagatguru, claimed that with his occult powers he would make two suns shine in the sky simultaneously. He challenged all holy men in Akbar's court to respond to this 'miracle' and disprove his occult powers. It appears that the tantrik with the aid of certain spells and jugglery had launched a shiny metal plate in the sky and the sun's reflection made it appear as if there were two suns in the sky. Nobody was aware of the tantrik's trick and attempts by many holy men to thwart the magician failed. However, later in the same evening, Dasturji Meherji Rana arrived. He performed the sacred Kusti prayers and then took the name of Ahura Mazda with the loudest voice he could muster. The plate came crashing down, confounding the magician and amazing the whole court.

Inspired by this drama that unfolded before his very eyes, the famous musician "Mia" Tansen composed a raga on the spot - 'Raag Sarang' which had the lines "Elahi Parsee Padhe Sho Kabool" (Author's note:- I here give the literal translation as follows): "By God the prayers of the Parsee are accepted". Tansen then refers to Dasturji Meherji with the words "Lambi lambi dahadee

Christendom in Hindustan at that time. He was immediately verbally attacked by the Islamic assembly as to the truth of the Gospel. His detractors did not display calm judgment but instead put forward old unproven assertions about Christ. Padre Rodolfo tore their statements to pieces with his reasoning and logic and they were put to shame. Then they began attacking the Bible at which point Padre Rodolfo, who could take no more, told the audience in presence of Akbar, "If these men have such an opinion of our Book (Bible), and if they believe the Koran to be the true word of God, then let a furnace be lighted, and let me with my Gospel in my hand, and the 'ulama (those backing Islam) with their holy book in their hands, walk in to that testing place of truth and the righteous will be manifest". The black-hearted and mean spirited attackers of the Bible shrank back in horror at this proposal and would take no part in the challenge. Akbar was impressed with the fearless

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*Shah Mehreyari, tere mukh pi barshat noor* i.e., "Very very long beard, Shah Mehriyar, your face is radiant with fame". Tansen in his time was the "Sangeet Samrat" (King of Classical Music) and one of the Navratnas at the court of Akbar. Akbar thought very highly of him and immensely enjoyed Tansen's singing and playing of the rebab, a string instrument. Tansen was a devout Hindu and died in 1589 CE.

## DIN-I-ILLAHI, THE NEW RELIGION

Akbar and the enlightened men of his court were most impressed with the Zarathushti (or Parsi) religion and its beliefs that Dastur Meherji Rana put before them. Akbar was not fully convinced of the principles of the other religions although he treated all the religious leaders that came to Fatehpur Sikri equally without offending anyone. However, wise as he was, Akbar decided not to embrace Zoroastrianism openly. Instead, he resolved to form his own new religion which he called Din-i-Ilahi (Divine Faith). The new faith took major portions from the Zoroastrian religion as explained to him by Dastur Meherji Rana. Akbar also adopted the Zoroastrian calendar and declared 14 Zoroastrian feasts as holidays in his entire kingdom. The new calendar was called Tarikh-i-Ilahi. Akbar named himself as the first prophet of his new religion and two of his courtiers, who were also scholarly persons, as his first two disciples. They were Abdul Fazl and his brother Faizi. Islamic prayers were dropped at the court. There was much opposition at first to this new development. Various Muslim clerics, among them the Qadi of Bengal and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, responded by declaring this to be blasphemy against Islam. But Akbar's mind was made up. "Raja" Birbal, one of the Navratnas and Akbar's Hindu principal advisor and Grand Vazir, had already been convinced by Dastur Meherji Rana's arguments in favor of Zoroastrianism. It is well-known that Akbar put a lot of weight behind Birbal's counsel which often included a great deal of wit and wisdom.

*(Part II will be published in the FEZANA JOURNAL Spring 2011 )*

**Dr. Ardeshir B. Damania** was born in Bombay, India and holds a Bachelors Degree in Botany and Zoology and a Masters Degree in Plant Ecology from the University of Bombay. He also has a Masters and Ph.D. in Plant Genetic Resources from the University of Birmingham, England. Dr Damania has worked for international organizations like the UN and the World Bank and has traveled widely, including Iran in 1992, which is where he became more intimately involved with Zoroastrian history and the topics related to migration of Parsis to Hindustan. Dr Damania takes a keen interest in Indo-Persian history and matters pertaining to the Parsi community and the Zoroastrian religion contributing several articles on Parsi/Zoroastrian topics in popular journals. He is currently working at the University of California, Davis in crop plant genetic resources as well as origins of agriculture and crop domestication.

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# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## JUST A SIMPLE BUDDHIST MONK

By Teenaz Javat

*"The greatest challenge facing our century is that we are raising a generation of passive bystanders."* With this statement His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama began a 90-minute discourse into Human approaches to World Peace at Toronto's Rogers Centre last month. (photo below Dalai Lama with one representative of each religion, Sam Vesuna, president of ZSO facing camera)

*"The light is too strong,"* he quipped as he puts on a visor to shield his eyes from the sharp glare. It was evident right from the start that the master orator knew how to play the audience.

*"Oneness of humanity is what binds us, as all 7 billion of us who share the earth want to be happy. Nobody wants trouble. Fundamentally we are all same, as we all want to create a better world, but the responsibility for that lies with us. We can no longer be bystanders,"* he went on to reiterate.

The Dalai Lama also went on to elaborate that the past century witnessed two World Wars, the Korean conflict, civil wars in Africa, use of weapons both conventional and atomic and millions killed in suppression and violence.

*"But an even bigger threat looms in the 21st century which is the passivity of the youth,"* he said. *"The excessive use of force in the past century is causing the*

*problems in this one. We must now stop that. It is up to the youth to create a better vision and healthy world. And to create that we must be warm hearted, must have compassion, forgiveness, tolerance and look more inwards. All the material wealth of the past century did not stop the carnage that took place."*

In his light-hearted way the Dalai Lama's message that science and technology gives us immediate gratification, while prayer takes time, was not lost on the audience. *"People,"* he went on to add, *"are more interested in instant gratification and turn away from prayer."*

**Promote dialogue to preserve peace.**

*"We must create a happy century, must promote the concept of dialogue, as conflicts cannot be solved by force any more, and for that we need our youth. They*



As an honorary citizen of Canada, the Dalai Lama loves to come to Toronto. That sentiment is echoed several times over, as over 18,000 people packed the Baseball arena on a week-day afternoon to listen to some pearls of wisdom the 75-year old Nobel Laureate had to offer.

Not one to dwell on his own personal struggle or the struggle for the people of Tibet, the Dalai Lama presents himself as a tireless advocate of world peace. He aims to stir up the youth and inspire them to overcome the challenge of passive bystanders.

*"Change."* he says, *"is possible, and it can be brought about by humility and grace."* Laughing at himself for feeling hot in cold Toronto, he adjusted his maroon woollen robes in an attempt at cooling off.

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

must now shoulder the responsibility to create a peaceful century."

He gave the example of Afghanistan, as after the 9/11 incident he proposed that world leaders talk to the Taliban, talk to Osama bin-Laden, ask them what their problem was.

He was brushed aside, as the west mounted invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan in a bid at obtaining lasting peace. Now a decade later the invasion of Afghanistan which is indeed a clash of civilizations has offered up no solution to the problem. The spirit of dialogue is the key to world peace and that is conspicuous by its absence.

"Peace," he warns, *"will not drop from the sky. Peace depends entirely on our own action."*

Dalai Lama gave a fabulous analogy when he compared the human body with that of carnivorous animals, saying their teeth and nails (claws) were meant to kill. Our human body is not meant to kill; it has evolved sufficiently to deal with life in a gentle, intelligent manner. Our brain and its power to reason separate us from animals. Even then why are we behaving like them?

We must use the compassion we are so capable of, to resolve the problems we have today in the world. Peace will come through our action not just prayer. Our methods must involve a realistic approach not just wishful thinking.

Toward the end of the discourse Dalai Lama in his classic humour proclaimed that he may not be the best Dalai Lama but surely he is the most popular Dalai Lama and when questioned if there will be a female Dalai Lama, he was not opposed to the fact. In fact *"A woman, is made for great compassion"* he said *"and there is no restriction on women becoming a Bodhisattva"* So he does not rule out a female Dalai Lama to lead the way."

The great diplomat that he is, ended the talk by saying, *"It is up to the people of Tibet how they want to proceed with the institution of the Dalai Lama. I am just a simple Buddhist monk, doing what I know best-talking peace and non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression."*

**Prepared by Tanaz Javat**  
**For bio see page 13**

## Dalai Lama By the Numbers

Birth name:	Lhamd Thondu
Known as:	His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso
Birthday:	6 July 1935
Installed as spiritual leader of Tibet:	1940 at age of 4
Exiled in India:	1959 till date
Lives in:	Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan political administration in exile
UN Status:	Refugee
Lost his freedom at age:	16
Lost his country at age:	24
Author of:	72 books
Travelled to:	62 countries, 6 continents
Honorary citizen:	Canada
International Awards received:	84
Nobel Winner:	1989 Peace Prize
Advocate of:	Non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression
Best known as:	A Simple Buddhist Monk

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## Zarathusthi Voice to ban Cluster Munitions

The First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) to the Convention to ban cluster munitions was held in Vientiane, Laos from 9 to 12 November 2010. Close to 1000 persons participated, including political leaders, diplomats and representatives from civil society. *European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL)* and *Religions for Peace (RfP)* have been involved in the cluster munitions work since 2008 and a ECRL/RfP delegation included Bishop Ioannis Sakellairiou from the Greek Orthodox Church, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh from the Sikh Community accompanied by Nirankar Singh, Mr Jehangir Sarosh from the Zoroastrian faith and Venerable Vy Sovichea from the Buddhist faith. The Delegation was accompanied by *Ms Allison Pytlak from Religions for Peace International secretariat* and *Ms Ingrid Rosendorf Joys from the ECRL secretariat*.

Post conference, the delegation visited a cluster munitions affected district of Laos – Xiengkhouang Province to meet with recent cluster munitions victims and saw the work going on to assist the victims and their families and to clear the land from the threat of unexploded bombs.

*ECRL Co-Moderator, Mr Jehangir Sarosh, said: "In my travels I have seen a lot of poverty, but when one sees the land of Laos scarred with craters and vast areas contaminated with unexploded ordinance (UXO), in a country where the majority live off the land, one felt this was enforced poverty, a cruelty to the gentle people of Laos. When we met the young man, 22 years old, who had been blinded just a few days before our arrival by an unexploded ordinance, next to his house where he has lived for years, it was impossible for me to comprehend how people can live with this kind of fear day after day, trying to earn a living from the land infested with UXO's. I am glad that we the representatives of religions were there, for it gave him and others comfort and hope that people from far away lands cared."*

The Convention on Cluster Munitions prohibits all use, stockpiling, production and transfer of Cluster Munitions. Separate articles in the Convention concern assistance to victims, clearance of contaminated areas and destruction of stockpiles. The Convention was adopted by 107 states on 30 May 2008 and signed on 3 December the same year. The Convention became binding international law for the States Parties when it entered into force on 1 August 2010. Future States Parties will accede to the Convention by submitting their ratifications to the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Cluster munitions are large weapons containing dozens to hundreds of smaller sub munitions, often called bomblets, within a larger container. They are dropped from the air or fired from the ground. The container opens in the air and scatters the bomblets over a wide area - sometimes the size of 2-4 football fields. Because a certain proportion of the sub munitions fail to work properly, huge quantities are left on the ground and, like landmines, remain a fatal threat to anyone in the area long after a conflict ends. Over two dozen countries are affected by this weapon. Tens of thousands of civilians worldwide have been killed or injured by cluster bombs.

The ECRL/RfP delegation was deeply moved by what it experienced during the six day long stay in Laos and will continue to work with the issue of cluster munitions. Among current plans are advocacy efforts to bring more countries onboard to the Convention and to raise awareness of the threat the civilians meet in their nearby areas in affected counties.

Should you wish to collaborate in this effort, contact Jehangir Sarosh [jehangirsarosh@btconnect.com](mailto:jehangirsarosh@btconnect.com)



# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

## T

## agore And His India

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

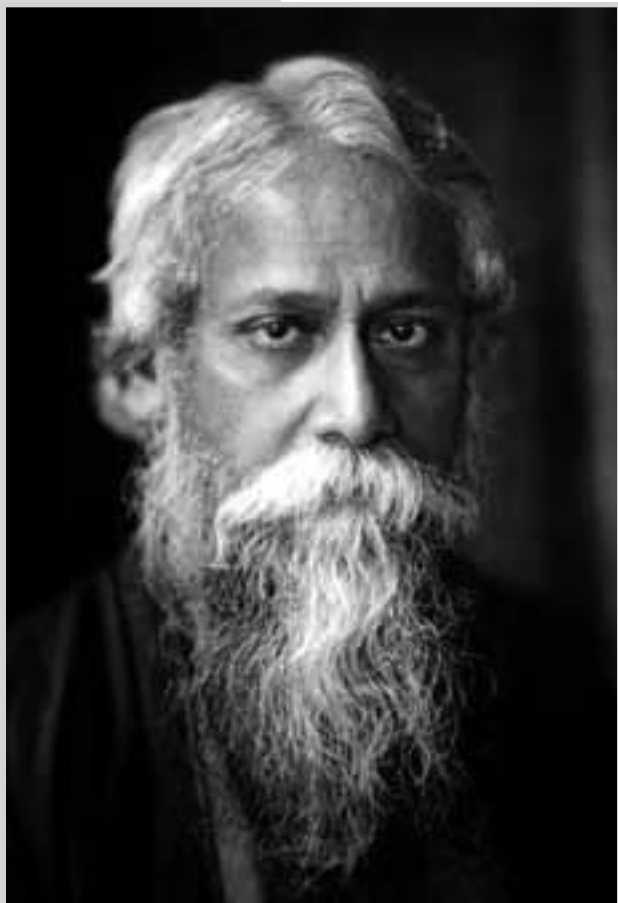
AMARTYA SEN

### VOICE OF BENGAL

Rabindranath Tagore, who died in 1941 at the age of eighty, is a towering figure in the millennium-old literature of Bengal. Anyone who becomes familiar with this large and flourishing tradition will be impressed by the power of Tagore's presence in Bangladesh and in India. His poetry as well as his novels, short stories, and essays are very widely read, and the songs he composed reverberate around the eastern part of India and throughout Bangladesh.

Rabindranath did come from a Hindu family—one of the landed gentry who owned estates mostly in what is now Bangladesh. But whatever wisdom there might be in Akhmatova's invoking of Hinduism and the Ganges, it did not prevent the largely Muslim citizens of Bangladesh from having a deep sense of identity with Tagore and his ideas. Nor did it stop the newly independent Bangladesh from choosing one of Tagore's songs—the "*Amar Sonar Bangla*" which means "my golden Bengal"—as its national anthem. This must be very confusing to those who see the contemporary world as a "clash of civilizations"—with "the Muslim civilization," "the Hindu civilization," and "the Western civilization," each forcefully confronting the others. They would also be confused by Rabindranath Tagore's own description of his Bengali family as the product of "*a confluence of three cultures: Hindu, Mohammedan, and British*".

Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath, was well known for his command of Arabic and Persian, and Rabindranath grew up in a family atmosphere in which a deep knowledge of Sanskrit and ancient Hindu texts was combined with an understanding of Islamic traditions as well as Persian literature. It is not so much that Rabindranath tried to produce—or had an interest in producing—a "synthesis" of the different religions (as the great Moghul emperor Akbar tried hard to achieve) as that his outlook was persistently non-sectarian, and his writings—some two hundred books—show the influence of different parts of the Indian cultural background as well as of the rest of the world.



**150th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore  
( May 7, 1861- August 7, 1941)**

**Rabindranath Tagore, born on May 7, 1861, a Nobel Prize winning poet is the only poet in the whole world who composed national anthems of two countries: Bangladesh and India.**

# INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

For Tagore it was of the highest importance that people be able to live, and reason, in freedom. His attitudes toward politics and culture, nationalism and internationalism, tradition and modernity, can all be seen in the light of this belief. Nothing, perhaps, expresses his values as clearly as a poem in Gitanjali:

*Where the mind is without fear  
and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been  
broken up into fragments  
by narrow domestic walls; ...  
Where the clear stream of reason  
has not lost its way into the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit; ...  
Into that heaven of freedom,  
my Father, let my country awake.*

The Gitanjali or 'song offerings' by Rabindranath Tagore (1861--1941), First published in 1913.

This work is in public domain according to the Berne convention since January 1st 1992.

Both Gandhi and Nehru expressed their appreciation of the important part Tagore took in the national struggle. It is fitting that after independence, India chose a song of Tagore ("*Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka*," which can be roughly translated as "*the leader of people's minds*") as its national anthem. Since Bangladesh would later choose another song of Tagore ("*Amar Sonar Bangla*") as its national anthem, he may be the only one ever to have authored the national anthems of two different countries

## Tagore and Education

Tagore was concerned not only that there be wider opportunities for education across the country (especially in rural areas where schools were few), but also that the schools themselves be more lively and enjoyable. He himself had dropped out of school early, largely out of boredom, and had never bothered to earn a diploma. He wrote extensively on how schools should be made more attractive to boys and girls and thus more productive. His own co-educational school at

Santiniketan had many progressive features. The emphasis here was on self-motivation rather than on discipline, and on fostering intellectual curiosity rather than competitive excellence.

Much of Rabindranath's life was spent in developing the school at Santiniketan. The school never had much money, since the fees were very low. His lecture honoraria, "\$700 a scold," (E.P. Thompson reports that when he delivered political criticism it seems he was scolding people) went to support it, as well as most of his Nobel Prize money. The school received no support from the government, but did get help from private citizens—even Mahatma Gandhi raised money for it.

Rabindranath insisted on open debate on every issue, and distrusted conclusions based on a mechanical formula, no matter how attractive that formula might seem in isolation (such as "This was forced on us by our colonial masters - we must reject it," "This is our tradition—we must follow it," "We have promised to do this—we must fulfill that promise," and so on). The question he persistently asks is whether we have reason enough to want what is being proposed, taking everything into account. Important as history is, reasoning has to go beyond the past. It is in the sovereignty of reasoning—fearless reasoning in freedom—that we can find Rabindranath Tagore's lasting voice.

**Tagore and his India by Amartya Sen** abstracted from [www.Countercurrents.org](http://www.Countercurrents.org) (send a page to a friend)

**Amartya Sen** (born Nov. 3, 1933, Santiniketan, India) studied at Trinity College, University of Cambridge (B.A., 1955; M.A. and Ph.D., 1959). Indian economist who was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for his work in welfare economics and social choice. Sen is best known for his work on the causes of famine, and his research led to the development of solutions for limiting the effects of food shortages.



## Khurshed Shapurji Dabu (April 20, 1889 – October 30, 1979)

### A Life Sketch and Reminiscences Part 2

*Dastur Dr. Kersey H. Antia*

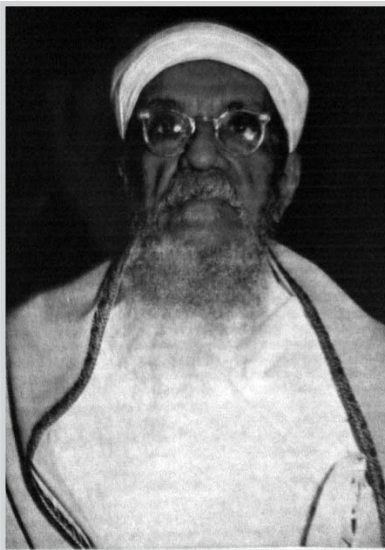
#### DABU'S INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY

Dabu lived so frugally on his salary as a dastur that Dasturji Kotwal who had a young family to support told me often that the salary was nowhere near enough to defray even his basic expenses. But his frugality and forthrightness stood him in good stead for not yielding to pressures from any quarters. Still, he was maligned by the orthodox and Ilme Khshnumists for signing the Declaration of Fourteen Dasturs (Chaud Dastur No Khardo) under the leadership of Sir Rustom Masani, himself an ervad, who was concerned about the high priests not agreeing even on basic issues.

As Masani's sons had married out, the orthodox insinuated that it was merely a ploy on his part to put forward a liberal plank. Dabu held firm but in the end the decibel level of the orthodox noise got so high that it forced some of the signatories to withdraw their support. But Dabu saw it as a right move and did not budge. Even as many high priests in his times firmly upheld that there was no conversion at all in Zoroastrianism, he did not shy away from boldly declaring: ***"There is nothing to prevent any one not born a Parsi from professing his spiritual allegiance to Zarathustra and adopting his message... thus Zoroastrianism is still open to adoption by the world to which the religion was offered."*** (*Message of Zarathustra*, p.16).

Even though he was orthodox in many ways, such honesty did not endear him to the orthodox who already were critical of him as a theosophist—he was the only formally theosophist dastur in our history. But he preached what he saw as truth: *"the message preached by Zarathustra was meant to be a world religion, as it embraced immutable Divine laws applicable to humanity,"* (*Zarathustra and His Teachings*, p.22). He was often known to say Zoroastrianism is not any one's property. When consulted, he had often opined that a Parsi woman does not cease to be a Zarathushti just because she

marries out unless she renounces her religion. Thus, in many ways he was not a typical orthodox dastur.



I was surprised to learn from Feroza H. M. Seervai's poem in *Parsiana* (May 2003, p. 4) that the present dasturs maintain that: "The law provides merely a contract / Ashirwad makes marriage a sacrament /... Do not marry by law;" that is, civil marriages are not recognized in Zoroastrianism. Now, this fatwa is so much in contradiction with what Dasturji Dabu advised me in writing in 1966 when I wrote to him about my own sad situation of not finding a mobed to perform my ashirvad in the USA. He forthrightly advised me that a civil marriage was well and good enough for my circumstances.

#### AS PRINCIPAL OF THE CAMA ATHORNAN INSTITUTE (1946-48)

As I was growing up in Surat, Dabu's name was well known there amongst all communities. I remember my theosophist father taking me regularly to hear his lectures at Annie Besant Hall, where his audience was mostly non-Parsi. However, I came in direct contact with him only when he became the principal of M. F. Cama Athornan Institute on August 1, 1946, when I was ten years old. Rumors were afloat amongst us kids then that he was an ultra strict teacher and we were at first very terrified when we learned of his appointment.

But such fears proved to be unjustified. I still very vividly remember tears in his eyes, an extremely rare phenomenon, when he said he would miss us when we were going on a month-long summer vacation. He added that he found us Athornan kids much better behaved, compliant and disciplined than the students at the Surat Parsi Orphanage, where he often had to resort to meting out physical punishments. He did not have to do it at the Cama except once, which was witnessed by me personally and was due rather to his





misinterpreting a student's behavior. His presence enhanced the spiritual milieu at the Institute and uplifted our morale.

Our classes began with a prayer he selected from the Gathas (Yasna 33.12-14), followed by a 10-15 minute sermon by senior students every morning, which he commented on with his own wise and well-informed remarks, no matter what the topic was. He was a voracious reader and seemed to be very conversant with most subjects. We saw him reading or writing all the time when he was not teaching. However, he did not like us to unthinkingly memorize our sermons. He spoke extempore and exhorted us to do the same, often making us give impromptu speeches on various topics. His classes on religion were so interesting and inspiring that we all listened to him with rapt attention. He never ever resorted to notes and he closed his eyes as he spoke to us because he did not want to waste his eyesight unnecessarily.

He would ride his bicycle even when he was around 60 after we were all done playing sports. He attended our evening prayers unflinching. He loved dogs, who always followed him around. He lived with his wife and daughter in a two-storey building adjunct to the Institute. He chose to perform the navjote ceremony of his granddaughter (who later became a lawyer and married a Hindu lawyer) at the Institute and all the ordained priests amongst us students participated in it.

He had also devised a Zoroastrian prayer on the model of the jashan prayer that, according to him, could be performed in the presence of non-Zarathushtis. I was very much impressed by it, but Dr. J. N. Unwala, an orthodox board member of the Institute (and a distant relative of mine, and later my Avesta professor) objected to it and forced him to desist from performing it there. Dabu abided by the decision as he was left with no choice in the matter.

#### **AS HIGH PRIEST OF THE WADIAJI ATASH BEHRAM (1947-1977)**

During his short presence in Bombay, his lectures and weekly writings such as "*Athravan No Dini Prakash*" ("*A Priest's Light on Religion*") and "*Rahnumae Din*" ("*Guidance for Religion*") in Jame Jamshed (later published in book form) made him very popular and he was appointed as the seventh high priest of Wadiaji Atash Behram on June 5, 1948, even before he served out his two-and-a-half year contract as the principal of the M.F. Cama Institute.

My guess is the trustees of the Institute were relieved to see him leave and they never appointed a principal of his stature thereafter. Even as he accepted the dasturship, he expressed hope that it would not interfere with his preference for being true to himself and for independent thinking.

He spoke and wrote in a very simple but inspiring style. He was equally at home talking about the Gathas or the Gita, the Shahnameh or the Ramayana, the Avesta or the Bible, or lecturing in Gujarati or English. Unlike Dasturji Maneckji Dhalla, he wrote in Parsi Gujarati and not in shuddh (standard) Gujarati.

He was a very strict disciplinarian. We were all struck by the fact that he refused to let a student attend his mother's wedding when she remarried, as well as when he did not take time off for attending his own daughter's wedding. But he distributed jalebi to everyone on his birthday. He kept working as usual throughout the day, even after attending an all-night Vendidad ceremony performed by two students at the Institute, even as we were feeling so tired and drowsy.

He donated all the money he received as ashodad for performing navjotes, weddings, etc., but someone created trouble for him with the Income Tax Department for not reporting his income. However, he came out fine and even continued to donate his ashodad money in the name of its donor, after I believe, keeping one rupee as a token payment. He is known to have performed about 1,500 weddings and about 1,700 navjotes but he never stayed after these ceremonies were over nor did he allow any dinners to be sent to his home, as was the custom then. He put on the dasturi shawl only when performing ceremonies and refused to perform ceremonies in hotels as he felt they lacked the requisite purity. For the same reason I was informed by Ervad Nader Turel, he refused to go abroad, though he was invited often.

#### **OPINIONS ON ZOROASTRIAN PRACTICE AND CONVENTIONS**

He established on scriptural evidence that the muktad ceremony should consist of ten days only, which has now become the norm. He also realized that higher-ranking mobeds were becoming rarer and rarer, so he encouraged the mobeds of different sects to act as one. Hence I was not surprised to see Surati mobeds performing "boi" in his Wadiaji Atash Behram when I visited it lately. Dabu was also relatively broadminded in his political views and fully endorsed



Annie Besant's Home Rule League for Indian independence.

Dabu evinced foresight, broadmindedness and pragmatism despite his moorings in the ultra-orthodox nineteenth century. He would have been even more progressive and pragmatic if he was born later. When there are no mobeds available in the future, it will be logical to allow behdins (laymen) as para-mobeds or even full-fledged mobeds. Unfortunately, however, the Parsi mentality vis-à-vis the Iranian Zarathushti mentality, is to opt for all or nothing and against any change, even if it means self-destruction.

Even though theosophists tended to be ultra-orthodox and even though Dabu, too, discouraged intermarriages, he did so on social grounds. His concern was also for the Parsi women and their offspring being rejected by their in-laws, and so instead of living in religious limbo, he preferred for her and her children to accept her husband's religion and live in religious peace. Intermarriages, however, were then not as rampant and not as seriously threatening to the very existence of our community as they are at present. Being a pragmatic and serious thinker, he would have seen the need for some adjustment in the community's lose-lose, zero-sum attitude toward intermarriages. Alas! How long one has to wait for that to happen!

### **DASTURJI DABU AS A PUBLIC SPEAKER**

I kept in contact with him even after I immigrated to USA for higher studies in 1965. His advice was more liberal than the dasturs of our times, most of whom I knew personally. I attended his lectures on Saturdays in the Anjuman Atash Behram whenever I was in Bombay. My father was also a great admirer of Dabu and would not miss his lectures, even if it meant not waiting for me to join him.

I invited Dasturji to give a speech on religion and social service at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Chembur, Bombay, in 1959 and the students were so very enthralled and impressed by his speech. It was chaired by Prof. A. R. Wadia, the director of the Institute, who was a classmate of Dasturji at Wilson College in Bombay.

Even as all students, mostly non-Parsis, were quite swept off their feet by his speech, delivered as usual without any notes, a very dear Parsi professor of mine made no comments about his speech at all but shocked me by commenting on his un-ironed clothes which was due, however, to his wife becoming

totally blind by then and not being able to help him with daily chores.

It was such a privilege to escort him in the Institute's car from Wadiji Atash Behram to Chembur but when I tried to escort him back, he preferred to ride alone and advised me to do my studies and not spend any more time on him. Wise use of time was so critical to him and it rubbed off on me.

### **ILME KSHNUMIST OPPOSITION TO DABU'S DASTURSHIP**

Many orthodox Parsis resented his appointment as the high priest of the Wadiji Atash Behram because he was a Theosophist. Ilme Kshnumists were particularly critical of him, even though, as Mary Boyce has pointed out, Ilme Kshnum is greatly influenced by Theosophy, and even though he lived next to the founder of Ilme Kshnum, Ustad Behramshah Shroff, in Surat, who reportedly liked him enough to make him executor of his will.

We kids anxiously awaited reading the Ilme Kshnumist weekly, Parsi Avaz, every Sunday. It contained carping criticisms of Dabu, but Dabu just brushed it aside as a "*dhobi ghat*," where washermen washed dirty linen of other's..Dabu far outlasted Parsi Avaz. Even after his death he was criticized for his Theosophist leaning and Khojeste Mistree has even claimed that Theosophy prevented Dabu from maintaining and preaching the true Zarathushti tradition.

Theosophy was extremely popular among the Parsis in Dabu's days and many orthodox Parsis found in it a vehicle for expounding and even supporting their orthodoxy. Dabu did not claim the elite status of possessing an esoteric key to the Avesta as Ilme Kshnumists did.

Dabu had a master's degree and a gold medal in Avesta-Pahlavi. I, for one do not recall Dabu preaching Theosophy per se. Instead, he concentrated on the Zarathushti tradition and teachings first and referred to similar Theosophical wisdom only if it coincided with Zoroastrianism in his view, even when at odds with the standard scholarly opinion on reincarnation in Zoroastrianism. Dabu firmly believed that without reincarnation we cannot explain the working of God, and actual examples of some people vividly remembering their past life strengthened this view. Even such a profound Avesta scholar as Irach J.S. Taraporevala interpreted certain Gathic verses as denoting reincarnation and Dabu often quoted from them.



When we once asked him if he had had any mystical experiences in his life, he replied that the only time he had experienced it was just before giving a lecture on the Atash Nyaesh, when he saw himself surrounded by beautiful light (like something described in Yasna 30.1, I would say), which for him reinvigorated the significance of fire in Zoroastrianism. Thus, he was true to Zoroastrianism to the core.

Dabu's interest was not in promoting the belief in Theosophy or reincarnation per se, but in inspiring people to take Asha and religion seriously, and leading a Zarathushti life, so as to attain salvation. He himself fulfilled Asho Zarathushtra's injunction to do all that one can in one's life, perhaps more than any Parsi in his times. Dabu need not be judged by his association with Theosophy, but rather for his stoic, saintly, progressive and inspiring character which made him a true and exemplary Zarathushti. There is a real need today for preachers like Dabu to guide us.

### AN APPEAL FOR A FITTING DABU MEMORIAL

It pains me to note that we have not fulfilled our duty to the dastur who freely gave everything life offered him, even his hard-earned income, to the community. Almost thirty years after he passed away, we have not even raised an appropriate memorial to

him. For example, an appropriate tribute would be a permanent essay and elocution competition prizes on his life and work as well as on Zoroastrianism in general. Let us not fail in our duty. May his pious soul rest in Garothman and guide us from there. Amen!

***Dastur Dr. Kersey H. Antia** is high priest of the Zarathushti community in Chicago since 1977, and has served as an honorary priest for over half a century. A fully-ordained priest, with the Best Boy medal and the Prefect Medal from the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute in Mumbai, Dr. Antia studied religion and Avesta-Pahlavi under Dasturji Dabu, Mirza and other learned priests, and has won essay prizes from K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and other institutions and Avesta-Pahlavi scholarships in college. He has lectured widely and is author of numerous papers on religion and psychology. A clinical and management psychologist in private solo practice in Illinois, he is also affiliated with several hospitals. He is listed in several Who's Who and included in Outstanding Religious Personalities and Scholars of the 20th Century, and others*

## ZOROASTRAIN SCRIPTURES

### NAMC SEMINAR HOSTED BY ZAMWI INC

***Shirin Havewal***

The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (ZAMWI) hosted the North American Mobed Council Seminar on Sunday, September 19, 2010. The topic for the seminar was Zoroastrian Scriptures. The speakers for the seminar were *Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki, Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli, Ervad Dr Soli Dastur and Ervad Gustad Panthaki*. Along with these distinguished speakers, I was given the opportunity to present my thoughts on Zarathushti priesthood in particular and the future of Zarathushti faith in general.

The conference opened with a welcome by Ms. *Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami* and a message from NAMC president *Ervad Kobad Zarolia*. Both of them expressed pride in the work being undertaken by young and elderly members of the community for the progress and welfare of Zoroastrianism. The big turnout for the

seminar was good encouragement to have similar initiatives in the future.

The first speaker was **Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki** who presented on the Khordeh Avesta. our main prayer book a cherished possession in every Zoroastrian household. It was fascinating to learn that we have multiple versions of Khordeh Avesta in circulation and use. The contents of each book vary in language, size and substance. Ervad Panthaki also mentioned that the core of each prayer remains the same in all the versions with additions and deviations in the beginning and at the end which are in Pazand; a clear indication that these were added at a later date after our migration to India in the 9th Century and thereafter.

His presentation was followed by **Ervad Jehan Bagli** on Yasna. which is the central sacrament of





*Photo from left Ervad Jehan Bagli, Ervad Behram Panthaki, Shireen Havewala,, Ervad Gustad Panthaki., Ervad Soli Dastur*

Zarathushti faith. His talk focused on the meaning and the historical origin of the Yasna Ritual. He elaborated on the theoretical significance of the celebration and described the practical elements involved in its performance.

As the session progressed, the audience had the opportunity to hear from **Ervad Soli Dastur** who engaged the audience in understanding Visperad. The Visperad is a form of prayer intended to celebrate the seasonal festivals and a medium through which all the chiefs or "rads" or the best of the creations are invoked. This session appropriately followed the Yasna session, as the celebration of the Visperad is the celebration of Yasna with an additional recital of the 23 chapters of the Visperad. It gave us a better understanding of the two scriptures and their connection.

The last priest to present was **Ervad Gustad Panthaki** who spoke on the Vendidad. His in-depth research on the Vendidad, one of the rare Zoroastrian documents, was insightful and thought provoking. He expressed the importance of this volume as it provides history, injunctions, admonitions, background of rites

and rituals, instructions, penalties and more. Furthermore, an underlying message conveyed through this textual source is the importance of having "Faith". He stressed on the importance of having faith in the teachings of the Vendidad as opposed to its mere advocacy and practice. After all, faith is important to retain the best from prayers and rituals.

After these well expressed educational sessions, it was my turn to talk on priesthood and the

survival of our faith. This was a great opportunity for me, to express thoughts of a young generation amongst an audience of priest and elderly members. Through my paper, I wanted to convey that the survival of our faith depends on a joint effort between the priests and the rest of the community.

The priests form an integral part of customs, rituals and traditions which are undertaken for Zarathushtis. Our community needs a devoted, dedicated and a committed group of priests to teach, understand and express the true essence of religion. The Mobeds need to spread the divine and thought provoking message of Zoroaster, educate the young about rituals and customs and most importantly advocate it in a more youth and community friendly manner. If the community wishes to gain from these teachings, they must reciprocate by making an attempt to understand the lessons taught, adhere to the rituals and customs practiced, value the knowledge of the priests and translate their words of wisdom into actions. The community can also show its support for the priests by developing knowledge and training centers, improving the scope of Madressas, establishing trust funds for the



priests to support their families comfortably and most importantly show a keen interest and respect for the knowledge given and spread.

Following our presentations, there was an informal discussion to address questions amongst the audience. The quality of questions and the debate that followed was exceptionally good. However, a large part of this discussion was dominated by various interpretations and reasonings. In the past, this disparity in thought has led to a lack of consensus. This time around it was no different. If this trend continues, it will leave our community more divided than united.

The main aim of this seminar was to provide a platform of engagement, between the priests and members of our community. It succeeded in doing so, but it brings three fundamental issues which need to be addressed at the earliest.

Firstly, forums such as these are meant to be used to develop strong consensus on basic tenets of the religion. Once a strong foundation is established, priests and other scholars can advocate new and creative ways to practice these established tenets. As a practicing Zarathushti, each individual must respect the practice of his fellow Zarathushti. Wouldn't we rather have our community members practice Zoroastrianism in some form rather than no form at all?

Secondly, the way this seminar was organized is worth mentioning. It had few speakers, who spoke briefly but expressed their teachings in a simple and relevant manner. Their approach in educating the audience was concise and well articulated. In the past, I have attended seminars, where the topics are presented in a technical manner and seem endless. A scholarly or academic seminar would demand technical and theological discussions which may last for a long duration. But regular seminars, meant to educate the ordinary members of the community should be short, yet informative. A good seminar would comprise of speakers who can manage to translate the complicated and difficult to understand (as they are in a different language) texts, scriptures and teachings of our religion in a simple manner. The ZAMWI and the NAMC team managed to put-together such a seminar.

Finally, this seminar had a good turnout but it lacked a young audience. The ZAMWI and other North American communities can attract young Zarathushtis by having them participate and express their views in such seminars. The message to my fellow young Zarathushtis would be to make the best of these opportunities as they are a good way in letting the elders know your concerns and opinions and bridging the so called "generation gap". Such an exchange of thoughts would lead to dialogue, which in turn leads to ideas for reasonable solutions.

We are drenched in a glorious history yet oblivious to it. Seminars/workshops/and other such forums of engagement are perfect moments to reconnect with our glorious past and work towards a promising future.

All in all, this seminar was well organized, informative and most certainly encouraging.

It is initiatives like these and many more undertaken by our community that remind us everyday that "Good thoughts good words and good deeds are good in theory, better when understood and best when practiced. The fate of our faith can demand no less."

**Shireen Havewala** from Mumbai, graduated from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) London, UK with an MA in International studies and Diplomacy. Her main interests lie in public policy and political consulting. She is currently working for an international strategic advisory firm, based in Washington DC. Shireen has been involved in a lot of social causes such as working on a food chain program for the poor through the Social Involvement Program department at her university and as a volunteer for Amnesty International. Amongst her other credentials and experience, she has been a recipient of various Zoroastrian scholarships.





## An Awakening...Of Sorts?

**NAHEED VATCHA**

I started my path to understanding the Zarathushti religion in perhaps an unlikely way. It was my study of Hinduism, Buddhism, and an amalgamation of different philosophies called, "New Age" thinking that ultimately led me to appreciate the religion of my birth. During this period I did not deviate from what I considered to be my Zarathushti cultural roots. However, I found my religion to be archaic and without meaning to my life. For example, Zarathushti prayers were laborious to recite and incomprehensible, and did not apply to difficult periods of my life. In addition, all major religions present stories and fables that are allegories to help its followers navigate through life. I found these to be lacking in the Zarathushti religion. Lastly, few of the people in my circle of friends and family could help me come to terms with the larger questions of life, and hence, I was left to ponder this on my own.

My time spent studying the more esoteric nuances of various religions was not wasted. It prepared me to understand what I consider, paradoxically, a very practical and yet esoteric religion. My introduction to the religion of Zarathushtra would not have come about had it not been for those who have committed to a path of personal growth, using Zarathushti principles, and been willing to share their time and knowledge. After all, how would one realistically begin the task of explaining the concept of frashokereti (deliverance of the world) and amertat (immortality) if one has not consciously embarked upon the path of asha (truth and righteousness).

My education of the religion started in earnest in Chicago during the monthly young adult religion classes, for which I am extremely grateful to the Zarathushti Learning Center of North America and Kayomars Mehta. These sessions were so well attended that we moved from a small room to a larger hall, and often times a one hour class morphed into two, if not three hours. These discussions, as well as the lecture series of the North American Mobed Council (NAMC), which I attended in Chicago, and recently in Washington DC have been essential to my understanding of the texts, tenets, and rituals of the Zarathushti religion.

The role that the NAMC has taken on as educator of the religion is unique.

These dasturs (priests) have committed to making themselves available to all those who are genuinely interested regardless of knowledge. From my

perspective, the community-at-large has responded enthusiastically. Although I have much to learn, this information provides me with the framework upon which I base my interpretations which are in turn colored by my belief systems, experience, and level of spiritual awareness. Brigadier Behram Panthaki's discussion of the waves of destruction of the texts, as well as the various languages the texts have been translated into, reminds me to engage my *Vohoo Mananh* (good mind) and follow the religion in a manner that best represents my truth, and not the truths of others. Similarly, Dr. Jehan Bagli's discussion of the Yasna ceremony and purification process, reinforces the goal of life itself, which is to give each one of us the opportunity to embrace our pristine state, hence, embodying the characteristics of the Amesha Spentas (the divine qualities of Ahura Mazda).

I am grateful to all those individuals who have guided me. Through them I have learned that this religion is certainly not archaic, and, on the contrary, it grows with you, the practitioner. I find that the power of Zoroastrianism will enhance our personal lives if we integrate prayer and ritual as opposed to compartmentalizing them to certain aspects of our lives. Finally, as was mentioned in the Washington DC lecture, "*nobody has the God given right to Zoroastrianism*" and all are free to benefit from the wisdom and deeper understanding of the Zarathushti religion.

***Hamazor asho bim, (may we be united in strength and righteousness)***

**Naheed Vatcha**, from Washington DC, is currently a consultant at an intergovernmental agency that focuses on social and economic development of agrarian societies. Prior to this, she completed her MBA at the University of Maryland and worked for three years in Chicago in the private sector. In addition, she is interested in metaphysics and is drawn to the teaching of all religions.







## ZARATHUSHTIS IN THE NEW DIASPORA

AN ANCIENT RELIGION'S EVOLUTION IN NORTH AMERICA

ADI ERACH MEHTA



From Left: Front Row: Ervad Brig. Behram M. Panthaki, Ervad Dr. Jehan F. Bagli, Ms. Shireen R. Havewala, Ervad Dr. P. Soli Dastur, Ervad Gustad M. Panthaki ; Second Row: Feroza Fitch, Ervad Kobad Zarolia, Rohinton Tengra, Kersi Shroff ; Third Row: Farida Guzdar, Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami, Zenobia Panthaki, Zenobia Taraporewala, Last Row: Urvaksh Patel Photo credit Rubina Lovelace Patel, Washington

I had the pleasure of attending the seminar ***"Divine Message: A Journey Through Zoroastrian Scriptures"*** given under the joint auspices of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc (ZAMWI) and the North American Mobed Council (NAMC) on September 19, 2010 in Washington DC. I congratulate ZAMWI and NAMC on their foresight and dedication to Zoroastrianism. I learnt about the conference purely by fluke while surfing the net to research some aspect of our religion that I needed to explore. This was my first such conference and I found it most enlightening.

I came away from the conference thinking that NAMC is a group of forward looking Zarathushti scholars who dedicate their time and effort to carry out a role in North America that has been neglected elsewhere, including in India. Priests should not only lead prayers and worship, but impart religious knowledge and wisdom to the laity (behdins) so as to educate and enlighten them throughout life. In my

limited experience, the priests (dasturs) today in India are content to recite prayers by themselves or at the request of the behdins but do not seem to be able to take the time or make the effort to have educational seminars away from prayers to educate the behdins about Zoroastrian religion, rites, culture, and most importantly, the inherent wisdom of our religion. In contrast, NAMC has made education a primary goal with a meld of religious services and informational seminars. My personal thanks to all the mobeds present: not only the four who presented but to all the others present who added to, embellished and enhanced the total experience leaving us with a sense of enlightenment and great pride in a unique religion.

The conference commenced with a short prayer led by Ervad Brigadier Behram Panthaki, no doubt to draw the community closer together in their faith. What a superb way to start! My only humble suggestion would be to start all such conferences with a prayer that may be known by everyone – the *Din No Karmo*. This prayer



is a confession of faith and lends itself well as a communal prayer. I would also suggest closing these conferences by communally reciting the *Tan Darosti* for the anjuman. The old adage that a community that prays together stays together would fit well.

The first lecture on the Khordeh Avesta was both useful and very enlightening. The details are well documented in the Spring 2010 edition of FEZANA JOURNAL. Suffice it to say that in spite of praying extensively from the Khordeh Avesta regularly throughout my life, the Brigadier helped me understand it better. **Ervad Panthaki's** discussion on the important and equal role of women in our religion and the blend of religion with preventative health practices was very insightful and revealing. The Brigadier's detailing of the Farajyad prayers that I grew up on and memorized emphasized the innate understanding of our religion that my mother taught me as the "Grand Priestess" in my life and its importance in our daily lives.

**Ervad Dr Bagli's** wonderful mix of the ritual set up of the Yasna and his explanations and interpretations of the scriptures contained therein was truly uplifting. He engendered a sense of pride and ownership of the ceremony. His explanations provided understanding of a ceremony that we, as behdins, only request and witness but do not necessarily understand or participate in.

**Ervad Dr Soli Dastur** presents magnificently. By word and deed, he brought the Visperad to life by starting with the roll call of priests and going over the significance of the words and the object of the ceremony. He is a showman who knows his art finely but is a committed teacher and priest who imparts knowledge exquisitely.

It is difficult to verbalize the impression and impact **Ervad Gustad Panthaki** left one with. A soft spoken and eternally calm individual, he dissected the Vendidad, the book that outlines the laws of our religion and helped draw distinctions between myth and ritual, hyperbole and reality.

The last of the dissertations was by a charming and well spoken young lady, **Ms Shireen Havewala**, who has clearly viewed the plight of our dasturs in India. Her discussion of the plight of dasturs should motivate us, not only to find ways to improve their income but also to make them a more important part of our lives by mandating that they pay more attention to providing their flock with guidance and scholarly religious education beyond simply reciting words from rote memory. This would not only provide the *raison de etre*

for their increased income but also help to strengthen the ties of all of us to a wonderful religion that is being sadly neglected mainly through a lack of focused education.

The culmination of the day was a group interactive discussion which deserved a longer time slot. The questions and discussion was fast and lively and the concerns and issues faced by Zarathushtis in North America were aired. All the mobeds present participated and were involved: they defended religion and rituals when it was needed, explained when confusion seemed to be occurring and advised appropriate change when the change was clearly needed and inevitable. They understood and made it clear to the audience that while the tenets of our religion are timeless, the practice of religion needs to be put into the context of the time and environment we live in.

As the discussion progressed about needed changes and appropriate acclimatization of our religion to our present day realities in North America as opposed to those in India, I could almost picture an exactly similar discussion occurring back in time when our forefathers came as refugees to India and considered the concessions required of them. Why do we need to change our ways, our names, our dress, our wedding ceremonies? How dare someone decree what we can eat and force us to give up beef? However all the changes were made in the final count with a sense of cooperation and consensus.

At this meeting, we discussed tradition and change. For example the tradition of some of our rituals was questioned. The mobeds seemed to be unanimous about the need to maintain some of these since they represent the uniqueness of our religion and confer a sense of purpose, pride and identity. On the other hand, there are some realities that need to be recognized and a change made. One that has already been recognized is the lack of priests and thus the mobediyar program developed by the NAMC; that this, a salient departure for the religion where priests can only be made based on familial lineage is incontestable. It is a viable, forward looking and uplifting solution for our environment. Ordaining women into priesthood, which had historically been allowed in the religion until the move to India, would be considered forward thinking.

Similarly, the consecration of mixed marriages and the induction by Navjote of the issues of such marriages is a hot topic of debate in India and elsewhere but the NAMC has again acted positively and with conviction so as not to let our religion die for



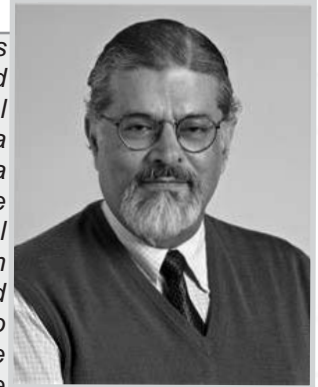
lack of reason, tact and trying. Just as our forefathers came to an understanding and an acceptance of change so as to let the religion prosper and flourish in their new environment, it can only be hoped that such wisdom will prevail today. The NAMC represented at this conference has clearly faced these issues and decided boldly and with conviction when they addressed them at this interactive discussion group. They truly need to be applauded and we can only hope and pray that the wisdom they have shown will be shared by the mother ship in India and no major rift occurs in our small and rapidly dwindling community.

The question of a consecrated place of worship (such as an agiary or fire temple) was addressed and the logistics of maintaining an eternal fire without a full time priest was discussed. The mobeds reviewed the history of fire and recounted that originally there were only home hearth fires with places of worship being developed much later in the history of our religion and thus while a place of worship (such as an agiary or fire temple) would symbolize our religion, the logistics may actually deteriorate the concept so that not having an agiary on the continent in no way repudiates our commitment to our faith.

Our religion requires some change with thought and process to fit our environment. We must not take on the adage "When in Rome, do as the Romans do!" This would lead to a repudiation of our beliefs, our customs, our rituals and our unique individuality. The Zarathushti din is the only religion that decrees that our conscience (Sarosha) be our final judge as we pursue righteousness (Ashoi) by practicing good thoughts, good words and good deeds (Manashni, Gavashni, Kuneshni or Humata, Hukta, Haveresta). Though the Zarathushti religion is very individualistic, we can make it more communal by choosing congregational prayers at all meetings and committing ourselves to educating our children about the richness of our religion. The speakers at the seminar made these points eloquently and with conviction.

These 4 mobeds and the NAMC have not only forged a way ahead but by their dedication, their dissertation, their discussion, their dialogue, and by the advice and education they imparted, they not only truly epitomize the greatness of our religion but also encourage us with the strength of their leadership. For me, it was a wonderfully fulfilling day and I owe a debt of gratitude and loads of thanks to the organizers and these 4 brilliant mobeds and scholars of the Zarathushti religion.

**Adi Erach Mehta** was born in Nairobi, Kenya and completed half his medical school education in Uganda prior to leaving for Canada as a political refugee. He completed his medical school and residency in London, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec prior to joining the faculty of the University of Manitoba. He is currently faculty staff at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio where he resides with his wife and three sons.



**Ahmâichâ khshathrâ jasat mananghâ vohû ashâchâ  
at kehrpêm utayûitîsh dadât ârmaitish ânmâ**

**Unto him who chooses correctly shall come the  
strength of the Lord through Good mind and  
Righteousness**

**Ys 30.7**



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مجله وزین و گرامی «فرانا» از من خواست شرح کوتاهی را که دربردارنده نظر شخصی من در مورد کنفرانسی که در روز یکشنبه، 19 سپتامبر در واشنگتن دی.سی. برگزار شده بود، در چند سطری خلاصه کنم. کنفرانس در بامداد زیبایی در سالنی بگنجایش 100 نفر برگزار شد. از هفته ها قبل از کنفرانس، تمام جاها رزرو شده بود.

جلسه در راس ساعت 10:30 با نیایش همگانی شروع گردید. در این کنفرانس از چهار موبد وارسته و پژوهشگر از اماکن مختلف دعوت شده بود تا يك بیک در مورد نیایش های گوناگون آگاهی هایی در اختیار زرتشتیان این ناحیه قرار بدهند.

ابتدا موبد بهرام پنتاکی در باره خرده اوستا، و سپس موبد دکتر جهان باگلی در مورد سرودهای یسنا سخنان ارزنده ای ایراد نمودند. پس از گفتار ایشان، نوبت به سنوال و جواب با رعایت نوبت از سوی شرکت کنندگان رسید که پژوهشگران با دقت و حوصله به يك يك آنها پاسخ میدادند.

سپس نهار در محیطی آرام و در کنار دوستان صرف شد.

سومین سخنران موبد دکتر سولی دستور در باره ویسپرد، و سپس موبد گستاد پانتاکی درباره وندیدا سخنان بس شیوانی ایراد نمودند. و پس از آن نوبت به سنوال و جواب رسید که با حوصله خاص ایشان و گاه با بذله گویی جواب داده میشد.

در آخرین قسمت نوبت به بانو شیرین هاووالا رسید که ایشان در مورد آینده موبدان سخنانی ایراد نمودند.

در واقع باعث افتخار ما زرتشتیان این ناحیه بود که چنین وارستگانی را دعوت نموده و از دانش آنها بهره مند شویم. از نظر من آنچه در آن روز گفته و شنیده شد، آنقدر ارزشمند بود که با خود فکر کردم امروز با کوله باری از يك جهان آگاهی به منزل برمیگردم.

در پایان از بانو فیروز فیچ و دیگر افرادی که در برگزاری این کنفرانس زحمت زیاد کشیده اند، سپاسگزاری میشود. همچنین از انجمنهای دیگر خواستارم که چنین کنفرانسهایی را برگزار کرده و اطلاعاتی را در اختیار همکیشان و دیگر افراد علاقمند قرار دهند.

ایدون باد  
شهناز غیبی  
واشنگتن دی.سی.

THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS WRITTEN BY A ZARATHUSHTI LADY  
SHAHNAZ GHEIBI OF WASHINGTON DC, WHO ATTENDED THE  
NAMC SEMINAR ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2010

THIS IS THE IMPRESSION OF WHAT AN IRANIAN ZARATHUSHTI VIEWS THE  
NAMC PRESENTATION MADE BY PARSIS

# Personal Profiles

## Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala: India's Greatest Banker - Edul Daver

Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala's quest for starting a bank began in 1910 when he resigned from his position as an assistant accountant at the Bank of India. He was 28 years old. Mr. Stringfellow, who was the manager at the bank, sent for Sorabji to seek confirmation of what he regarded as a "huge joke" that Sorabji was planning to start a bank of his own. In a fatherly way, Stringfellow asked Sorabji not to make a hasty decision and to reconsider. Sorabji's immediate reply was: "Sir, I have made up my mind. I resign the bank's service. One day my bank will be bigger than yours."

Twenty-seven years later on July 5, 1937 various newspapers carried the following headlines: *"India's Greatest Banker Passes Away. A genius who worked a Modern Marvel. Bank Clerk who Became Mighty Chief. Central Bank — Its Father Sorabji Pochkhanawalla Dead."*

"Sakerbai, Sorabji's wife, partner and strongest supporter, made the following entry in her diary: "He had done his duty to his wife, sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and friends and made the best use of the life given to him by God. He never hesitated to extend a helping hand to his enemies also and endeared himself to people of all castes and to his own community."

This is a story about a very unusual man, a self taught man, an ambitious man with vision, who having been subjected to discrimination had very strong convictions that an Indian sponsored bank, managed by Indians and manned by Indians, could and would succeed.

Nusserwanji Sorabji Pochkhanawala was a proprietor of Mazagaon Hotel and Wellington Hotel on Esplanade Road; thus, the name Pochkhana, meaning "hotel." He had four sons, the youngest of these being Sorabji. Nusserwanji died when Sorabji was only six years old. He had deposited his wealth in the Agra Bank which shortly afterwards went into liquidation. Nusserwanji's elder brother, Hirjibhoy ungrudgingly accepted the family's responsibilities, giving them a priority over his own interests.

Sorabji matriculated from Bombay University at the age of 16 and then joined St. Xavier's College. He was impatient with academic theory and wanted pragmatic experiences. So, Hirjibhoy, who worked at the Chartered Bank as a head clerk, arranged for Sorabji's position as a clerk with a salary of Rs. 20 per month. During the next seven years, Sorabji strove to learn everything about his job, and more.

He also realized that practical experience could carry him only so far; he needed further training. Therefore, he joined book-keeping classes held on Sundays and a correspondence program offered by a school in London

which prepared him for the Institute of Bankers examination. As if this was not enough, Sorabji, who had learnt to play the violin as a child, gave violin lessons to supplement the family income.

He continued to partake in family duties, such as gardening and going to the bazaar, which he particularly enjoyed. Even in later years one would see Sorabji going to the local market buying vegetables, fruits, and especially fish. Sorabji's day started at 5:30 AM with a visit to the bazaar, after which he attended book-keeping school, gave violin lessons, and then took a hurried breakfast at an Irani restaurant. He would be at the bank by 10:00 AM and worked late until 8:00 PM, frequently on Saturdays and Sundays as well. After dinner he played the violin and harmonium and by 10 PM he was back at his desk studying for the bank examinations. His efforts paid off and Sorabji became the first Indian to become a certified associate of the Institute of Bankers in London. He refused to accept the widely held assumption that Indians were not fit in terms of temperament and ability to manage banks or even rise to senior positions in a banking institution.

In 1905, the Bank of India was founded under the sponsorship of Indians such as Sir David Sassoon, Sir Cawasjee Jehangir, and R.D. Tata. Sorabji greatly desired to join the new bank. His first application was rejected with the comment, "I suggest you apply again after a few years when you have grown more whiskers." Sorabji persuaded his friend Sir Shapoorji Bharucha to take him to see Sir David Sassoon. He was so intent that he offered to work without salary to gain experience. Sir David was so taken back and impressed that he hired Sorabji as a sub-accountant at a salary of Rs. 150 per month.

Interestingly Hirjibhoy and other family members were incensed that Sorabji was leaving a stable job at the reputable Chartered Bank to join a new and uncertain venture. They considered the move immature and ill-conceived and refused to talk to Sorabji for days. He realized the risk but also cherished the opportunity for advancement at a new bank. His spirit was crushed when, shortly after joining, Mr. Stringfellow was appointed manager at a ghastly high salary of Rs. 5000 per month. Sorabji continued to work diligently but noted incidents which made him believe that a fair deal for Indians in banking was still out of the question.

At this time he married Sakerbai, a charming and courageous woman who was bound to her husband by temperament, ideas and outlook. Sorabji valued her intuition and consulted her in great detail. In all that he accomplished subsequently it is clear that her presence and her receptivity to his ideas, however bold, were a

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constant source of strength, and she supported him through many crises.

His relations with the Bank of India began to sour and he gave Stringfellow his resignation. As can be imagined, his brothers and family chastised him for his foolishness. Only Sakerbai, always quietly at his side, understood the kind of dilemma her husband faced and his motives.

An excerpt from an old directory read as follows: *"The origin of the Central Bank of India was the ambition of Mr. S. N Pochkhanawala to establish an institution entirely under Indian control with himself as manager. His project secured the invaluable support of the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta under whose chairmanship the Central Bank of India was founded, being registered in Bombay on 21 December 1911. Operations were commenced early in the next year with an authorized capital of Rs. 50,00,000. Two key figures in the early days who helped Sorabji succeed were Kalianji Jetsy and S. Vicaji. Sorabji had studied other bank failures and identified the major cause as 'a failure to introduce what could be described as OPEN BANKING. This meant constant disclosure of what the Bank was doing, a rapport between the bank and its depositors and sustained by the public confidence that nothing it should know was withheld."*

Considering the youthfulness of the new Central Bank's sponsors, and built-in prejudices, it was surprising that subscriptions were gathered with relative ease. This could be attributed partly to Sorabji's personality and partly to the growing movement for "swadeshi," or economic self-reliance.

Sorabji's philosophy was simple: *"Central's dealing will be straightforward and its books clear. With honesty, efficiency and an 'open' association of the Bank with its supporters, success would be assured."* In 1913 a severe banking crisis hit India and 64 banks, of which eleven were in Bombay, closed their doors. Central Bank, which was only two years old, survived.

During these unnerving times, Sorabji found himself the proud father of a daughter. His reaction was, "Let as many daughters be born as God wishes but let my bank be safe and that will satisfy me like having a son." Sorabji and Sakerbai went on to have three daughters (Sheroo, moti-Mehru (older Mehru), Jaloo), two sons (Noshir and Ratton) and they also brought up my mother, nahli-Mehru, (younger Mehru) who had lost her parents at a very young age.

I recall my mother talking about Sorabji taking the entire family to major bank openings in exotic places like Simla and even Colombo in Ceylon. My mother, who was Sorabji's brother Edulji's daughter, and also the youngest girl, always got sort of preferential treatment. If the

brothers and sisters needed anything special, nahli Mehru would be recruited to do the asking. They had wonderful stories and memories of the Sorabji family house, Buena Vista, in Worli. In fact, in 1979, our daughter Zaneeta's navjote was held in Buena Vista's compound.

Sorabji's crowning professional success came in 1923 when the Central Bank took over control of the Union Bank of India and the amalgamation with the Tata Industrial Bank. In 1934, he was knighted for his services to the nation.

Rapid growth brought "growing pains" and internal dissension, and in 1928 Sorabji was faced with what got called the "Masani Affair." The board accused Sorabji with keeping them in the dark and criticized Sorabji with being impatient and speculative. The atmosphere was so poisoned that on December 21, 1928 Sorabji offered to resign from the Bank. The board got unnerved by Sorabji's threat of resignation and dissension evaporated with resignations of the managing director and Masani.

Sorabji's initiatives and qualities were many. He showed concern for his staff. He had a remarkable ability to impart his own zeal to all those who worked with him. He implemented systematic training sponsored by the bank itself, an initiative that broke new ground. He scrupulously followed the principle that efficiency alone would be the decisive factor in business. Finally, Sorabji was a pioneer in public relations.

Sorabji was fond of sports and took daily morning swims. He continued to play the violin. He also took interest in the Indian stage and turned to writing plays. He wrote "Nasib-Na-Nakhran," "Khushro Shirin," and "Yezdezard Sheriar." "Khushro Shirin" was produced in 1927 with great success by Madan Theaters and Sorabji shielded his identity behind the initials S.N.P. He even wrote poetry and in his own way he expressed his affection for Sakerbai by writing poems addressed to her in the local papers. An amiable weakness of his, of which he was by no means ashamed, was fondness for good food.

On May 21, 1937 Sorabji returned to Bombay from Calcutta with a small boil which was diagnosed as a carbuncle, something that would take two months to heal. It did not get better and a team of doctors held consultation until Sorabji himself impatiently decided for an operation. The operation was performed but Sorabji's temperature remained high and after 24 hours of unconsciousness he passed away. As the news spread, thousands flocked to Buena Vista at Worli to pay their respects. People of all religions mourned, bringing the entire area of Pedder Road and Warden Road to a standstill as his funeral procession wound its way to the



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Towers of Silence. It was unlikely that anyone in the crowd was aware of the conversation that had taken place 27 years earlier.

**Stringfellow to Sorabji:** "Do not make a hasty decision to leave the Bank of India. Take the next 24 hrs to reconsider."

**Sorabji to Stringfellow:** "Sir, I have made up my mind. I resign the bank's service. One day my bank will be bigger than yours."

**TODAY THE BANK RANKS AMONG THE TOP 10 IN INDIA WITH THE THIRD LARGEST BRANCH NETWORK**

**Edul Daver, is the great nephew of Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala and lives in New Jersey.**

**Credit: " Pochkhanawala The Banker" by N.J. Nanporia**



Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala



Sakerbai and Sorabji with their family



The Central Bank HQ in Mumbai, India



Sakerbai and Sorabji at a party to celebrate the conferment of knighthood

Top Photos : Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala and The Central Bank HQ in Mumbai, India.

Middle Photo : Sakerbai and Sorabji with their family.

Standing LHS clockwise: Jaloo, Noshir, nahli Mehru, Ratton, Sheroo, Sakerbai, Sorabji, mohti Mehru.

Bottom Photo: Sorabji and Sakerbai at a party to celebrate the conferment of knighthood

# Personal Profiles

## MIT Astrophysicist Nergis Mavalvala Wins MacArthur Grant

**Sunita Sohrabji**



MIT quantum astrophysicist Nergis Mavalvala was announced Sept. 28 as one of 23 winners of the coveted 2010 MacArthur Fellowship, also known as a genius grant, and will receive a \$500,000 “no strings attached” award over the next five years.

*“I had always known of the MacArthur fellowship and all the wonderful scientists, historians and artists who had won it in the past, but I never, ever in my wildest dreams thought that I would be one of them,”* Mavalvala, the first-known Parsi to receive the award, told India-West.

*“I am incredibly humbled and so grateful to my colleagues and everyone who has supported my work,”* she said from her office at MIT on the afternoon the winners were announced.

When she received the call 10 days ago from MacArthur Fellows Program director Daniel Socolow, Mavalvala was sure it was a hoax. It wasn't until she woke up Sept. 28 to 200 congratulatory e-mails, that she realized she had actually won.

Mavalvala, who was born and raised in Karachi, studies gravitational waves, which can penetrate regions of space which light or electromagnetic waves cannot. Albert Einstein first predicted the existence of gravitational waves in 1916.

*“Everything we know about the universe comes from observing light,”* said Mavalvala, adding that gravitational waves are a different kind of tool that allow researchers to learn *“new and enormously interesting things.”*

Black holes, for example, are very dense, massive stars that light cannot escape from, said Mavalvala. But by using gravitational waves, researchers can explore the environment close to black holes, she explained.

The 42-year-old Mavalvala told India-West she is uncertain yet how she will use her half-million dollar grant. *“The thing that very much excites me about this grant is that it can be used for speculative, risky, flat-out*

*crazy ideas that would otherwise be hard to get funding for.”* She declined to elaborate on those ideas, jokingly saying she wasn't prepared for colleagues to hear them yet.

Mavalvala attended the Convent of Jesus and Mary high school in Karachi, where she was inspired by her physics and chemistry teachers.

*“Advanced biology meant dissecting an animal, and I knew I couldn't do that, so I quickly moved to the physical sciences,”* said Mavalvala with a laugh.

The daughter of Minoo and Meher Mavalvala (who now live in Vancouver, B.C.), Nergis lives in Arlington, Mass. She credits her parents for recognizing her ability in math and science early on, and always encouraging her work. An older sister, Mahrukh, who also studied physics, is now an actuary living in Seattle, Washington State.

Mavalvala received her Ph.D. in physics from MIT in 1997, and a bachelors' degree in physics and astronomy from Wellesley College in 1990.

Mavalvala joined the physics faculty at MIT in January 2002. Before that, she was a postdoctoral associate and then a research scientist at Caltech, working on the Laser Interferometric Gravitational Wave Observatory, known as LIGO.

The MacArthur Fellowship program, started in 1981, each year awards grants to 20 to 30 fellows, to pursue their own creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations. Grants are made to individuals, not institutions, and there is no application process.

The 2010 fellows include a stone carver, a quantum astrophysicist, a jazz pianist, a high school physics teacher, a marine biologist, a theater director, an American historian, a fiction writer, an economist, and a computer security scientist.

*“This group of fellows, along with the more than 800 who have come before, reflects the tremendous breadth of creativity among us,”* said MacArthur president Robert Gallucci, in a press statement announcing the awards.

*“They are explorers and risk takers, contributing to their fields and to society in innovative, impactful ways. They provide us all with inspiration and hope for the future,”* he said.

**Sunita Sohrabji is a staff reporter for India-West newspaper and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area**

*“Reprinted with permission from India-West:  
www.indiawest.com*



### BIRTHS

Darius Kotwal, a boy, to Ashtad and Patricia Kotwal, grandson to Gool and Minoo Kotwal (Toronto, ONT) and Jeannette and Juan Carlos Del Rio in Orlando, FL on August 24, 2010.

Chelsea Jessica Perry, a girl, to Armaity (Katrak) and Scot Perry, granddaughter to Khushroo and Perin Katrak and Doug and Claire Perry in Toronto, ONT on September 12, 2010.

Arnaz Burzin Bharucha, daughter to Parvana and Burzin Bharucha, sister to Cyrus in Mississauga, ONT, on September 16, 2010.

Mason Mehta, a boy, to Zersis and Jennifer Mehta in South Florida on October 10, 2010.

### NAVJOTES

Rhea Dotivala, daughter of Tannaz & Kaiomarz Dotivala, granddaughter of Havovi & Godrej Dotivala and Freny & Erach Mistry at Allbless Baug, Mumbai, India on February 9, 2010.

Sasha and Sara, daughters of Rashmi and Ashish Katrak, (British Columbia) in Pune, India on July 17, 2010.

Lila Kothari, daughter of Yasmin and Reji Kothari, granddaughter of Katy and Kersi Bhathena and Yasmin and Kanti Kothari at the Darbe Meher, Burr Ridge, IL on July 31, 2010.

Kaizan and Kurush Mehta, twin boys to Arzan and Vira Mehta, grandchildren of Persis Sadri and Pervin and Sam Mehta (Navsari, India), cousins to Simin, Shazmin and Zabhishta in Bedford, TX on August 8, 2010.

Karizma Alleck, daughter of Yasmin and Antich Alleck, granddaughter of Minoo Crawford and Padmavati Alleck at the Darbe Meher, Burr Ridge, IL on August 29, 2010.

Farah Desai, daughter of Bakhtavar and Fred Desai, granddaughter of Aloo Desai and Mani and Rusi Rao in Fairfield, OH on August 29, 2010.

Danesh and Meherangiz Patel, children of Arnavaz and Khushru Patel in Mississauga, ONT on September 4, 2010.

Shanaya and Brandon Patel, children of Ron and Michele Patel, grandchildren of Yezdi and Roshan Engineer (Houston, TX) and Gulrukh and Cawas Patel, great grandchildren of Coomi Engineer, Khorshid Jobani

and Coomi Patel in Mississauga, ONT on September 5, 2010.

### WEDDINGS

Cyrus Irani, son of Nargish and Phiroze Irani, to Cynthia Park, daughter of Lucia and Jin Chul Park in Bloomfield, MI on July 10, 2010

Daryush Mehta to Andrea Gabert in Boston, MA on August 2, 2009

Dean Kotwal, son of Gool and Minoo Kotwal to Cate, daughter of Jane Sutcliffe and Will Prichard in Thornhill, ONT on August 28, 2010

Tanaz Balaporia, daughter of Zarin and Adil Balaporia (Pittsburgh, PA) to Andrew Walendziewicz, son of Patricia Walendziewicz in North Huntingdon, PA on September 5, 2010

### DEATHS

Jijibhoy Nusserwanji, husband of late Nergesh, father of Aban Amroliwalla and late Ashish Nusserwanji, grandfather of late Burzin Amroliwalla and Mashya Amroliwalla (Dina) (Toronto, ONT), great grandfather of Jia and Burzina Amroliwalla in Mumbai, India on August 10, 2010.

Aramaity Hoshang Ranji, mother of Shiroy Ranji on August 15, 2010

Homi Byramji Jawat, husband of Betsy Jawat, father of Nilufer Keku Aga (Oakville, ONT) and Anahita Tariq Hameed (Dubai), grandfather of Cyrus and Zeenia, Aleyha and Aanya in Karachi, Pakistan on August 21, 2010

Freny Behram Mehta, wife of late Behram Mehta, mother of Dinaz Irani (Karachi, Pakistan), Veera Irani (Karachi, Pakistan), Farida Cawosse (Iran) and Gooli Burzin Mama (Mississauga, ONT), grandmother of Anaida Mama in Karachi, Pakistan on August 23, 2010

Mani Nusserwan Rustomji, wife of Nusserwan Rustomji, mother of Naomi and Nasha Rustomji, sister of Banu Anklesaria (Karachi, Pakistan), Villi, Perviz and Rohinton Deboo (Houston, TX) and aunt of Gayve Anklesaria (Houston, TX) in Karachi, Pakistan on August 29, 2010

Behram Khambatta, father of Zeena Bhathena (Toronto, ONT) in Mumbai, India on September 2, 2010.

Goolcher Laher, wife of Pervez Laher, mother of Fred (Kashmira) Laher in Mississauga, ONT on September 12, 2010.

Zarira H. Irani, 59, sister of Dinaz B. Mizan, Adil H. Irani, Pesotan H. Irani of Richmond and Firoza R Aref of Mumbai in Mumbai on September 15, 2010.

Banoo Keki Elavia, mother of Farzana Sidhwa (Houston, TX) and Kashmira Elavia (Mumbai) in Mumbai, India on September 17, 2010.

Cawas Tamboli, brother of Nargis Meerza, cousin of Rusi and Zareen Tamboli, uncle of Zarine Ghaznavi and Janine Mancherjee (Toronto, ONT) in Mumbai, India on September 18, 2010.

Jehangir Nadarshah Cawasji, father of Shernaz Feroze Bhandara (Houston, TX), grandfather of Zubin, Burzin and Zarine Bhandara in Karachi, Pakistan on September 21, 2010.

Pravin Premji, husband of Bapsy Premji in Toronto, ONT on September 24, 2010.

Tehmurasp Daver, 82, husband of Freny, father of Farzana Rohinton Unwalla of Port Coquitlam, BC, Dinyar (Sanover), Montreal/Calgary, Benaifer, in Mumbai, October 1, 2010.

Uwe Pfuetzner, husband of Thrity Pfuetzner, father of Cyrus (Roopa) Pfuetzner, grandfather of Angad, Leah, and Sophia in Mississauga, ONT on October 10, 2010.

Perin Vania, grandmother of Natalie Vania (New Jersey) on October 11, 2010

Dr. Khodabash Sioshansi, husband of Taji Sioshansi in Lafayette, CA on October 15, 2010.

Bijan Ahrestani, husband of Shiva (Shahnaz) Ahrestani (Washington, D.C) on October 31, 2010.

Soli Irani, 92, father of Dinyar Irani (Irvine, CA) and Cyrus Irani (Arlington, TX) and Farida Rumi Khambatta (Vancouver, B.C) in Arlington, TX on November 5, 2010.

Dr. Meher Hansotia, 61, father of Jamshed and Jehangir Hansotia, brother of Zenobia Hansotia (Behli Hansotia) (South Florida) in Karachi, Pakistan on November 8, 2010.

Perin Rustomji Dubash, mother of Mina Dubash (South Florida) in Karachi, Pakistan.

Cyrus Engineer, 69, brother of Minoo (Gool) Engineer, uncle of Reuben of Surrey, BC in Mumbai, on November 20, 2010.



**In loving memory of Mrs Arnavaz Piroz Dubash (1921-2010),  
beloved mother of Farida Major  
May her soul rest in eternal peace**

**BELOVED MOTHER OF MINE**

Beloved mother of mine, where do I begin  
to tell you of the love I have for you - within  
You were the greatest influence in my life...  
the sole reason I think I turned out to be,  
a good mother, a good wife  
Strictest discipline whilst growing up  
was the anchor for me and my brother -  
and that's helped us in life  
our precious and dearly loved mother.



Whilst the discipline part is generally that of the father  
Dad's playful (German Shepard) personality was only good for love  
Because when it came to enforcing the rules.....you towered above.  
You sent us to the best of Cambridge Schools - even though the fees were way out of  
your league  
For education, to you, meant "everything to make life complete."  
Papa and you sacrificed your lives for the two of us  
How can we, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you enough.  
I thought I could take your passing in my stride...  
but I could not, I simply cannot...my mother...my queen....my life.  
MUMMA TAMUNE GAROTHMAAN BEHST !!!  
THANK YOU

**YOUR EVERLOVING DAUGHTER - FARIDA J. MAJOR.**

# Matrimonials

Female, 37, MS in MIS (University of Arizona) and MBA (University of Minnesota) working in Minneapolis. Originally from Bombay, in US since 1999. Enjoys hiking, going to the gym, dance, listening to music and cooking. Contact 612-859 7341, armaity\_b@hotmail.com. [F10-22].

Male, 51, athletics coach in US University, looking for someone with a great personality, attractive, athletic, easy-going, passionate, good sense of humor, with a good heart and an open mind, who likes to travel. Along with enjoying life, he feels it's only satisfying when you can make a difference by giving yourself to help, and commit to worthy causes. Contact bkanga@aol.com, 504-450 7598. [M10-25].

Female, 55, well-settled in US, young at heart, in excellent health, good sense of humor, enjoys travelling, good cook and home maker. Divorced with two grown children. Interested in meeting well-settled gentleman in good health. Contact friend at 281-499 1832. [F10-26].

Male, 40, MES (Elec. Engg), electrical engineer residing in Australia Intelligent, kind and considerate with a good sense of humor; believes in the importance of family and will give total commitment to life partner; from athornan (priestly) family who strives to live a good life and to think in a high manner. Enjoys art, keeping abreast with latest technology and keeping fit. Interested in meeting women with similar interests, preferably between 30-34 years old. Contact dreamer732@live.com. [M10-27]

Female, 40, studied arts, film producer, works for large event production company on US west coast. Very sociable, outgoing, enjoys sports and classical music. Contact 949-380 9650. [F10-31].

Male, 31, 5' 9," born in Bombay, settled in Australia, working as a Physical Therapist (partner in practice), smart, compassionate, loyal and motivated. Enjoys camping, outdoor activities and listening to music. Interested in meeting Zoroastrian girl 25-30, good sense of humor, educated, down to earth, non-smoker willing to settle in Adelaide, Australia. Contact jennybshah@ gmail.com [M10-36].

Male, 28, 5' 11" , MS in Electrical Eng with Computer Networking from San Jose University, California. Enjoys outdoor activities, badminton, volley ball, travelling, singing, listening to music, collecting coins, stamps, movies. Interested in meeting educated, home loving, working girl, upto 27-years old. Contact dynamic.dinoo@gmail.com. [M10-38].

Female, 29. Our highly educated, friendly, compassionate daughter is a successful professional as well an animal welfare activist in California. She has been involved in the Zoroastrian community and has co-taught vegan cooking classes at the California Zoroastrian Center. It is very important to her that a potential marriage partner has or aspires to have a cruelty-free diet and lifestyle. If you are interested in contacting our wonderful daughter please contact us at (310) 392-5911, mazdayasnie@netzero.net or call her directly at (310) 826-2584. [F10-39].

Female, 31, working in the medical profession, in Maryland. Loves to travel, hike and work-out. Interested in meeting a gentleman 32-42 years old, with a good sense of humor and similar interests. Please call 240 481 9236 [M10-40].

Male, 47, MS (Bombay University), professionally well-placed with a French freight organization in Norfolk, VA. Interested in meeting a life partner with interests in classical music, operas, Zoroastrian history, horseback riding, bowling, and one who loves pets. Please contact gsunav@lsuhsc.edu, or call 318-402-5159. [M10-41]

Male, 44, MS in Computer Science from Pune University. Software consultant at a German-based corporation, and prefers to station in Mumbai. Interested in management reading, music, trekking, and biking. Please contact gsunav@lsuhsc.edu, or call 318-402-5159. [M10-42]

## Looking for a Soul Mate?

Try these matrimonial sites and services:

<http://matrimonial.zoroastrianism.com>

[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)

[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)

Mrs. Gool Banaji,

Parel, Mumbai, goolpesi@gmail.com

Please send all submissions for "Milestones" to Mahrukh Motafram, 2390 Chanticleer Drive, Brookfield, WI 53045, maharukhma83@gmail.com Tel: 262-821-5296. NOTE: If no year is specified, it implies "within the past 12 months."

**FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials.**

**Contact Roshan Rivetna rrrivetna@aol.com.**

## Letters to the editor....

My Dearest Fellow Zoroastrians,

My name is Shapur K. Irani. I live in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

I have lived in the USA for 56 years. I am 82 years old. I am providing this information because my last hope and desire is that my religion, Zoroastrianism, shall not perish from this earth.

May the name of Ahura Mazda, our God, along with Zarathushtra, our prophet, live forever.

The population of Zarathushtis in India is diminishing every year, leaving our future very uncertain.

As you are aware there are seven Atash Behrams in India, five in Mumbai, one in Udvada, and one in Navsari. The Udvada, Atash Behram is the oldest and the most famous. The future of our Agiaris and Religious Institutions are of great concern due to the diminishing population and availability of qualified persons to care for them.

I have not been to the Udvada Atash Behram in 56 years, my desire is to worship in the presence of this All Mighty Fire.

I am thinking it is high time we bring a spark from this fire to North America, (preferably Toronto Canada) the location of the highest population of Zarathushtis and rekindle the spark to our hearts desire.

The time for action is now before we lose all opportunity to preserve this sacred tradition. .

Even though it seems impossible, remember your prophet also faced impossible tasks before the religion was accepted. Now it is up to us to do the impossible.

May Ahura Mazda and Zarathushtra Bless You All.  
Like to hear from you.

Shapur K. Irani  
skjirani@comcast.net

### A Readers Opinion

*The Editor, FEZANA Journal*

I was greatly impressed by reading your editorial of "Diaspora" in the Summer/June 2010 issue. It was like a breath of fresh air to read an editor who has the gumption to say it as it is in the Indian Diaspora .

Every day, we, in North America, read about the shameful Tamashas in Bombay & surrounding Anjumans, the dictats of the Dasturs & the BPP who think that they have the God given right to control the lives of the whole Indian Parsi Zarathushti community.

On the heels of these nataks circulates a letter written in 1903 by Dastur Jamaspasa [grandfather of the present Dastur Jamaspasa of Wadiaji Atashbehran] to Dr. Sir Jivanji Modi, the then secretary of BPP, stating that conversions of non Zarathushtis are allowed in our scriptures. By cowing down to some die-hards of the BPP, the present Dasturs are ignoring this letter of a wise & learned Dastur.

You, as an editor, have a duty in North America, to inform your readers to go on a very educative Google link:-[parsikhabar.net/issues/ervad-khushru-madon.../2711-united states](http://parsikhabar.net/issues/ervad-khushru-madon.../2711-united states)

May your future editorials be always full of motivation & nerve as the summer issue.

Yours sincerely,

*Ervad Jal M. Panthaki Montreal, Quebec, Canada*

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*To the Editor, FEZANA JOURNAL*

I refer to the letter to you dated Aug 15th which appeared at p 126 of the fall edition. It was from Porus Dadabhoy. The main theme of the summer issue dealt with the Zoroastrian diaspora being created in North America, England, Australia and elsewhere.

In his letter Dadabhoy commented that your editorial was "hurtful and wrong" and that " Zoroastrians in America are " Eloquent, Affluent, Arrogant, as your editorial".

Dadabhoy specifically commented on the article by Parastu Dubash as follows: "You state that we have excelled in our professions.. 120 professionals listed in a population of 30,000 or 0.4% is nothing"

Unfortunately Dadabhoy failed to appreciate a simple distinction between academics and professionals. The heading of the article by Dubash was "creating a list of North American Zarthushti ACADEMICS" (emphasis added).

Dadabhoy failed to understand that the term professionals includes among others, medical practitioners, accountants, lawyers and many more. In conclusion, Dadabhoy your boot is on the wrong foot.

Hoshang Shroff Vancouver, CANADA



## Two New Translations Of The Gathas

BOOKS  
ARTS

### 1 Helemut Humbach And Klaus Faiss

### 2 Khosro Khazai (Pardis),

Over the last two centuries many translations of the Gathas, or songs of Zarathushtra, have been published. Each differ widely, for many reasons.[1] One reason is that they are a type of highly complex ritual poetry whose very genre is little understood. They are full of obscure morphology, syntax, specialized vocabulary, poetic devices, and seemingly intentional ambiguities. Finally, they are in a different dialect, the corpus of which is tiny. By one estimate, only 20% of the text is largely comprehensible.[2]

The result is a high degree of uncertainty and guesswork, largely masked in the translations. This is extremely important to bear in mind, since readers can easily be misled on important doctrinal disputes based on the "authority" of the Gathas, not realizing the extent of the speculation involved.[3] This is a problem for those who wish to make any translation their main religious guide – as attractive an idea as that might seem.

It's understandable then to see widely different interpretations of the same material, even by translations that are "informed by solid philology." For example, Nyberg (1938) portrayed a shamanistic Zarathushtra; Humbach (1959) emphasized ritual and Zarathushtra's role as priest; and Insler's translation (1975) focused on moral and ethical teachings, and saw the Gathas as filled with metaphors, downplaying ritual elements.

Some translations start with the premise that later Zoroastrianism was a "radical distortion of the prophet's own teachings" a theory that was proposed by Martin Haug in the mid-1800's, and disproved by later scholars.[4] Nevertheless, many translations ignore or even denigrate the importance of Zoroastrian tradition in understanding the Gathas.[5] To a degree, many conclusions of such studies are inevitably reflected in the assumptions.

In spite of the difficulties, work by scholars over the past two centuries has brought much light on the Gathas. They have been able to propose plausible, if not always convincing solutions to many puzzles, but the research has been largely confined to technical journals and symposium papers, little known to the general public.

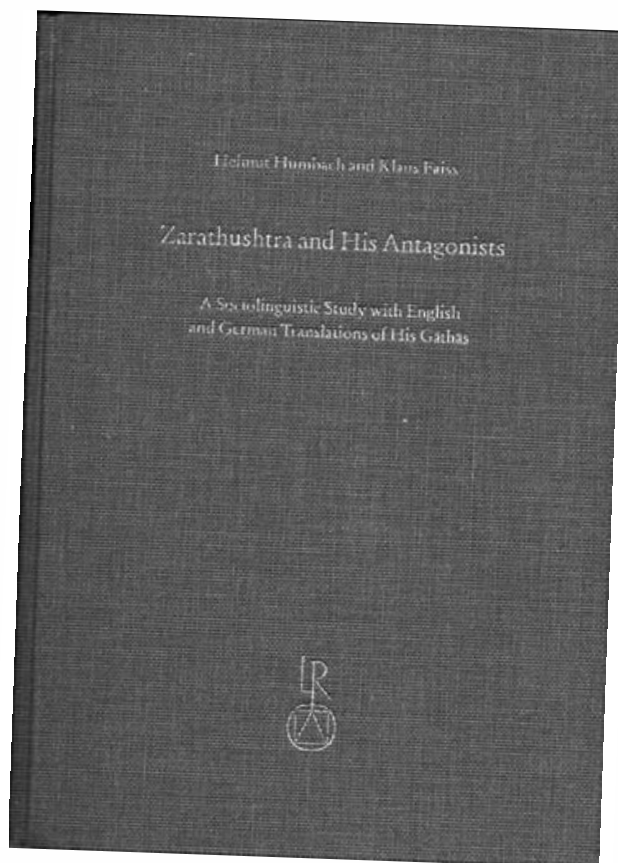
The two recent translations reviewed below differ widely in approach, intent, and conclusions.

### 1. ZARATHUSHTRA AND HIS ANTAGONISTS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY WITH ENGLISH AND GERMAN TRANSLATION OF HIS GATHAS (July 2010) .

#### HELEMUT HUMBACH AND KLAUS FAISS

**Publisher:** Wiesbaden: Reichert; **ISBN-10:** 3895007684; **ISBN-13:** 978-3895007682. **Hard cover, XVI+195 pages. EUR 69,00;**

Helmut Humbach's name has stood out as one of the foremost authorities on the Gathas for many decades. I would even say that serious researchers can ill afford to ignore anything he has written on the subject. He has issued several complete translations, beginning with his *Die Gathas des Zarathushtra* in 1959. In 1991 he issued a substantially revised translation in English in collaboration with J. Elfenbein and P. O.



Skjærvø. Yet another appeared in 1994, this time in collaboration with Parsi scholar Pallan Ichaporia. His latest study and translation, this time in collaboration with linguist Klaus Faiss, builds on earlier work.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The 72 page introduction provides a broad overview which makes the whole subject accessible to general readers. Humbach and Faiss provide background on the issues and problems, and underscore the necessity of bringing many disciplines to bear on the problems. Topics covered include: Background on Zoroastrianism; evidence for a pre-Zoroastrian Mazdayasnian religion; probable date and location of Zarathushtra;[6] contents of the Avesta; literary genre and ritual nature of the Gathas; relation between Gathic Avestan and other languages; nature of the Pahlavi and Neryosangh's Sanskrit translation (both of which Humbach and Faiss generally, but not always, dismiss as incompetent); usefulness and limitations of the 1000+ Rig-Veda hymns in understanding the Gathas.

They find the Pahlavi literature "overburdened with speculations." (I find this ironic given the high degree of speculation in all translations and interpretations of the Gathas!) Regarding the influence of Bartholomae's dictionary for the past 100 years, they remark (p. 19) that "most Parsi priests of our time erroneously believe to follow an indigenous tradition of Gatha interpretation, not being conscious of the influence of the so recent and so questionable European way of thought upon their own thinking." To Humbach and Faiss there "seems to be a basic difference between Zarathushtra ... and the views of his priestly successors," (pp. 21-22). They consider the Yashts in particular as "far from Zarathushtra's viewpoint."

Though their "point of view ... is admittedly that of outsiders," it is generally sensitive to the living tradition and contemporary Zoroastrians. They (p. 49-50) reject Nyberg's influential theory that Haoma – and thus its rites – were denounced by Zarathushtra in Yasna 32:14, even though haoma/soma clearly had a prominent place in pre-Zoroastrian and subsequent observance: "any religious tradition is strongly linked with the ritual practices followed by its adherents, an experience which does not favor the idea of such a far-reaching break in the development of Zarathushtra's Mazdaism." [7]

### B. TEXT AND TRANSLATION.

**Section B** presents a "corrected" text, and substantially revised translations of the Gathas, Yasna Haptanghaiti, Ahunwar, Ashem Vohu, Yenghe Hatam, and Airyaman Ishiya. The transcription is slightly modified from earlier systems, abandoning the "fad" of the "ugly and uneconomical" (Gershevitch's descriptions) ii and uu for y and v. The English translation is definitely more readable than the 1991 translation, but is still very literal. Comparing it with Humbach 1991, it is surprising to see how many differences there are. You often find singular changing to plural, past changing to present, nouns changing to participles, different glosses changing meaning of passages entirely. Some changes are clearly better, such as "beneficent" used for spenta (previously "prosperous"); yasna is translated as "celebrate" not "worship." Other changed wordings seem more awkward at best (e.g. "creamy Yazata/deity" Y41.3/4 or "osseousness" in Y41.3/4, "juicy good thought" in Y45.4) In a few cases they seem to have dropped a word, e.g. Mazda from Y31:8 and Y33:10, and most puzzling from both the Avestan and translation of Y34.1 & Y34.5. They abandoned the archaic "thou" but instead use "you" vs. "you" to distinguish the singular and plural second case pronoun. They render Haurvatat and Ameretat as "integrity/nectar" and "immortality/ambrosia" based on Greek analogues (Homer, c. 8th cent. B.C.) Undoubtedly some will continue to find Humbach's translation of Y53.7 needlessly graphic.

### C. NOTES.

**Section C** includes 31 pages of detailed notes, mainly additions and corrections to Humbach 1991 Gathas, Part 2.

### CONCLUSIONS.

Drs. Humbach and Faiss have made these remarkable and pivotal compositions easily accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike, providing valuable new insights. Not only is this clearly the philologically best-informed translation to date, but it draws on a wide range of disciplines. While many passages of the Gathas remain puzzling, the detailed notes they provide are invaluable in understanding the problems, and provide clues to a better understanding.

It is not the ideal format for a devotional text. Zoroastrians who recite the Gathas in their ancient language may find the differences from the vulgate text too speculative to be used for prayer purposes. While important work remains to be done, I expect this will remain the definitive translation for many years.

**2 THE GATHAS – THE SUBLIME BOOK OF ZARATHUSHTRA** (Brussels, 2007) .

**KHOSRO KHAZAI (PARDIS),**

**PUBLISHER:** Brussels-Belgium: European Center for Zoroastrian Studies;  
**ISBN:** 2-930473-00-2; **EAN** 9782930473000. **Soft cover** 168 pages. **PRICE:**  
**Europe:** 15 Euro, **USA and the rest of the world:**  
**US\$ 20** ( postage Included;)

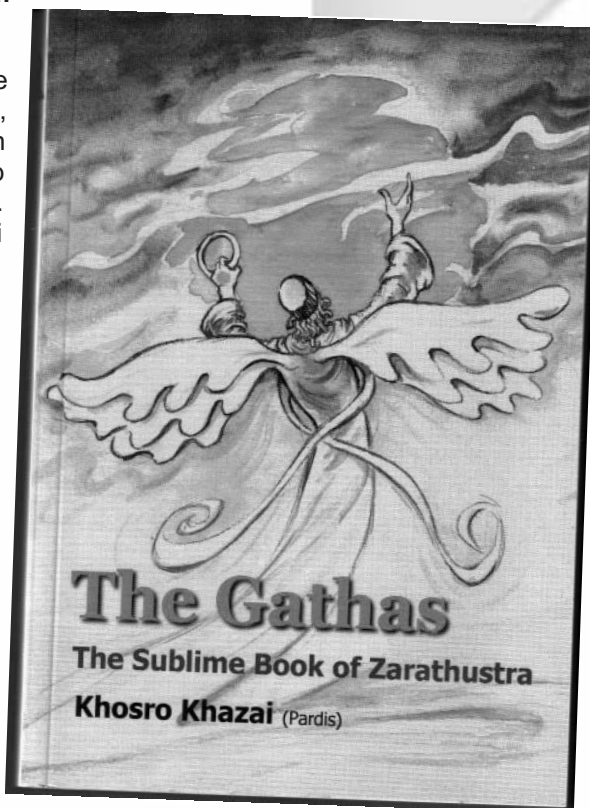
Dr. Khosro Khazai (Pardis) has published nine books and over 160 articles on range of subjects, including philosophy, history, and linguistics. Although not born into a Zoroastrian family, he took a deep personal interest in Zoroastrianism while in college. After receiving his PhD, he taught at Pahlavi University in Tehran, and later at other institutions in Australia and Europe. He eventually founded the European Center for Zoroastrian Studies based in Belgium. Its purpose is “to familiarize Iranians and Europeans to Zarathushtra’s existential philosophy and doctrine.” The Center hosts lectures, seminars, and “Zoroastrian festivities.” Although they have no born-Zoroastrian members, they are very active in promoting their interpretation of Zoroastrianism (for example, spending over \$1000/month on postage alone), and performing their own initiation ceremonies (Sedreh pooshi); about 40% of initiates are European, and 60% Iranian. In a 2007 interview he said:

*“At our center, no born Zoroastrian has become a member yet. I do not know why. The born Zoroastrians are generally very kind and sincere to us and participate in our ceremonies. A group of the born Zoroastrians in Iran has become defensive against what we say. For example, when we say the Gathas, the sublime book of Zarathushtra, is the only sacred book that has come from the Iranian culture, they say “What is Avesta then? Avesta is very dear to us. But during these times of clash of cultures, we should present only those things to the people that are acceptable to them. We should win this cultural struggle and we will do, no doubt about it! ... after the Islamic revolution tens of thousands of Iranians ... took refugee status in Belgium.... We receive 500 to 600 letters a month from those who want to become Zoroastrian.... (Their interest in converting to Zoroastrianism) has more to do with establishing an identity rather than a political reaction. Iranians want to go back to their own traditions, to those of their ancestors.”[8]*

#### A. INTRODUCTION .

In the introduction, Dr. Khazai acknowledges the pioneering work of linguists and researchers. He mentions Mills, Geldner, Bartholomae, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, Insler, and others (Henning, Gershevitch, Hintze, Narten, Olsson, Schwartz, P. Oktor Skjærvø, and Humbach are conspicuously absent), but feels that previous translators have been “too sure of their linguistic knowledge and too preoccupied with word-by-word translation.” (p. 12). He feels the true interpretation of the Gathas “can only be determined by the understanding of its spiritual context and the wisdom of its message.” He also wanted to “give more freshness to the texts” and make it “more accessible to a greater public.”

In addition to his approach, Khazai also differs radically from other linguists in his views on the relationship between the Gathic Avestan language and other Indo-European languages. Whereas most literature places the European languages on separate branches of the Indo-European language tree, and modern Persian deriving from Old Persian (via Middle Persian), Khazai takes the view that Gathic Avestan is the source of Modern Persian, and “one of the sources of many European languages.” He also places the Gathas as older than Sanskrit “by several centuries.” Khazai doesn’t explain his reasoning for these departures, other than the “linguistic structure” being “older than Sanskrit.”[9]





The apparent heart of the objections of the group of born-Zoroastrians, mentioned above, is Khazai's contention that many parts of the Avesta belong to pre-Zoroastrian religions "that had been rejected and fought against by Zarathushtra himself," filled with "meaningless rituals and myths" and "beliefs completely foreign to the original sublime doctrine of Zarathustra...." – Haug's antiquated and discredited theory mentioned above. He contends that knowledge of the Avestan language fell into oblivion, and only two or three volumes of the Avesta were extant in the ninth century. Perhaps Khazai's statements are only hyperbole; but the Pahlavi texts demonstrate detailed knowledge of the Avestan language, and survival of 19 of the 21 ancient nasks into the ninth century. Furthermore, the Persian Rivayats attest to their survival even centuries later.

The introduction then summarizes the key messages and doctrines he finds in the Gathas: The aim of life is "to live a happy and joyful existence"[10] the key to which is helping others (including animals and plants), and creating "a society based on righteousness, serenity, progress, and prosperity." The need for harmony between the two worlds (*astvat/physical and manahya/spiritual or mental*). Three pillars of Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed. Strict equality of men and women reflected in the fact that the word Mazda is feminine, while Ahura is masculine. Goodness of God/Ahura Mazda. Mankind's partnership essential for perfecting the universe. Absolute freedom of choice is a fundamental, Wisdom needed to distinguish good from bad choices.

Khazai consistently renders the six "attributes" of Ahura Mazda as Righteousness (Asha), Good Thought (Vohu Manah), Self-Dominance (Khshathra), Serenity (Armaiti), Evolution and Perfection (Haurvatat), and Immortality (Ameretat). He also places a lot of importance on the Gathic word *maga-* which he interprets as "Assembly of Magi" – a view generally rejected by scholars, but still propagated by Khshnoomists. Historically the term the magi refers to the priests of the Median people of Western Iran, thus separated from the Gathic peoples by time and geography.[11]

He sees a close affinity between the real Zarathushtra and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and other modern existential philosophers, who emphasized the importance of personal freedom and individuality. At times Khazai seems to reinterpret the Gathas in terms of his personal struggle with Iranian authorities – e.g. whereas Zarathushtra speaks of the duality between "those who tend cattle or those who don't" (Y31:9, *vAstryAT vA AitE YV vA nOiT aMhaT vAstryO*) Khazai interprets this as "righteous teacher and ... the corrupt leader."

A brief biography of Zarathushtra and his family follows, derived from Pahlavi or later sources. He follows the Greek interpretation of the name Zarathustra as meaning "Bright Golden Star",[12] and follows the astrological calculations of Zabih Behruz in placing his exact date as March 27, 1767 BCE. This he exaggeratingly avers is "accepted by all Zoroastrians in the world" (p. 37).

He concludes his introduction with a brief overview of how the image of Zarathushtra evolved throughout European history, a subject covered so admirably by Jenny Rose's *Image of Zoroaster* (2000).

## B. TRANSLATION

Included are translations of the Gathas, Ashem Vohu, Ahunwar, and Yenghe Hatam. The English translation is actually in turn translated from the Persian edition. The translation is extremely loose and non-literal, and departs in many ways from recent scholarly work. For example, he renders *daevas* by "deceitful wrong doers" in Y32.1, "deceitful people" in Y32.3, "false gods" elsewhere. All of Zarathushtra's pastoral imagery has been replaced, such as *geush urvan* "the Soul of the Cow" becomes the "soul of Mother Earth", *vAstrya* – a shepherd/ herdsman, becomes "righteous teacher", *zaotar*, generally understood to mean "officiating priest" becomes "worshipper", etc.

For some reason, Khazai doesn't indicate the beginning of each of the five Gathas, but simply labels each of the seventeen chapters (which he calls "songs") with a descriptive heading, such as "Song 14 (Hat 49) Resistance against oppressive rulers."

## CONCLUSION .

This new translation of the Gathas is intended more as an inspirational and devotional text than a scholarly work. It is very readable, in spite of uneven copy editing. The Persian translation is especially to be commended in making Zarathushtra's words more accessible to Persian speakers. Khazai brings the perspective of philosophy to the work of understanding the Gathas, and the loving hand of a devotee and religious leader. In my mind however, there is not enough explanation or justification given for the significant departures from the views of other linguists, historians, and traditional Zoroastrians. Many practitioners are likely to be uncomfortable with Khazai's views, especially his

assertion that Zarathushtra's early followers completely distorted or misunderstood his teachings, which then fell into total obscurity, only to be rescued by modern philologists and a proper "spiritual sensitivity." The resulting translation resembles the views of 19th and 20th century European existential philosophers, and perhaps speaks a little too directly to the current political situation in Iran and Khazai's "cultural struggle" than illuminating the words of Zarathushtra. Yet it is remarkable that Zarathushtra, the great *zaotar* and *manthravan*, has chosen words that always seem to say more to each individual than their surface meaning alone.

#### ADDENDUM

There are two essential elements of the Gathas that I think have not been adequately explored by translators to date, although the subjects have been briefly touched upon in the technical literature. One is understanding the nature of a society which is largely livestock based. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that anyone who has raised livestock, or lived on a cattle ranch, will have a radically different perspective than one who hasn't, and *vAstrIm ... avAstryO* would immediately resonate with them. The pastoralist/herdsman must be keenly and constantly aware of the clock and the seasons. Being late with a feeding or milking will have serious repercussions to the operation, hurting production (future reward), health of the animals, and future prospects for the community. I think *asha* in the sense of "order" i.e. following the plan/right path also resonates more deeply in this context than "righteousness" or "truth". (Cf. Boyce, History, I, p.27) Y44.5 notes that the creation of dawn, noon, and nightfall remind us of our duties. Humbach takes it to mean that Zarathushtra only recognized three ritual times of the day, but it could just as easily refer to actual pastoral duties. Like the priest tending the fire, the pastoralist rarely takes a day off, and then only with careful planning. Everything that their future health and happiness depended on could come crashing down, if cattle rustlers disrupted their operations. Indeed, the people's survival would have been linked to successfully defending against marauders. In exploring these issues, I think sociologists could contribute a lot to Gathic studies.

The second essential element that has been little explored is the nature of manthra and the manthravan. Humbach and Faiss touch on the subject, but a full treatment is still wanting. As an example, research along the lines of Staal's focusing on the alinguistic ritual use of Vedic mantra might bear useful fruit for Iranian traditions. Iranologists have given a great deal of attention to Vedic soma, whose ritual was not perpetuated, but virtually no similar analysis of mantra, whose practice not only survived in Hinduism, but may even be said to be central to the religion today. (Cf. Alper, Harvey P. Understanding Mantras. SUNY series in religious studies. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989, p.2.)

#### NOTES

1. Ilya Gershevitch, 'Approaches to Zoroaster's Gathas', Iran, Vol 33, 1995, p. 1.
2. Gershevitch (JRAS, 1952, p. 174) cited in Malandra, "Gathas II", Encyclopædia Iranica (2000). Compare Humbach/Faiss 15.2, 2010, p. 21.
3. Such as the supposed denouncing of Haoma or Yazatas; see below.
4. Boyce, History II, p. 2, H.-P. Schmidt, 'Old and new perspectives in the study of the Gathas of Zarathustra', Indo Iranian Journal XXI, 1979, 83-115. See also Boyce History I, p. 225: "there is not the smallest piece of evidence to suggest that his proclamation of one original Godhead led him to deny the present existence of other yazatas, ... to whom veneration should be duly accorded."
5. Cf. Insler 1975.
6. They leave the date open, but still seem to favor the dating of Greek historian Xanthus, not addressing Ilya Gershevitch's objections in "Approaches", p. 10.
7. Similarly Humbach 1991 II, pp. 89-90. Might "fire-resistant" haoma have any role in the ritual ordeal?
8. [http://www.czcjournal.org/articles/Interview\\_with\\_Dr.Khosro\\_Khazai\\_English.pdf](http://www.czcjournal.org/articles/Interview_with_Dr.Khosro_Khazai_English.pdf)
9. The use of comparative linguistics for dating the Gathas was discredited by Henning, Zoroaster, London, 1951, p. 36. See Ilya Gershevitch, "Approaches to Zoroaster's Gathas", Iran, 33 (1995), p. 2-3.
10. Not to be too pedantic, but Khazai may be exaggerating again here. He translates many different words as "happiness", e.g. *xshnut-* (Humbach, Insler: "satisfaction") *ushta* (Humbach: desire; Insler: wish) *urvâdah-* (Humbach: "enthusiasm"), *savah-* (Humbach: "benefit/salvation"; Insler: "Mighty One"), *rafenah-* (Humbach and Insler: "support"), *spen-* (Humbach: "fortune"; Insler: "virtuous").
11. Humbach and Insler among others have detailed discussions of the term.
12. This is basically a "forced and fanciful etymological distortion of the true name of Zarathushtra by Greek philosophers." (Humbach/Faiss, p. 5.)

**Joe Peterson has translated many religious and esoteric texts, and contributed articles on Zoroastrianism to two textbooks on religion. He has collected rare documents on Zoroastrianism at his website [avesta.org](http://avesta.org), and lives in Minnesota.**

# Many Paths, One Destination

by RAM RAMAKRISHNAN

Published by Wheatmark, Tucson, Arizona 2009

ISBN 978-1-60494-148-7; \$26.95 pps 350

## LOVE, PEACE, COMPASSION, TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH WORLD RELIGIONS

Despite the fact that the word religion in its Latin origin religare refers to binding and uniting, in practice the religions tend to be limiting and often divisive. At their foundation, all religions are based upon that *One Ultimate Reality, One power of Energy or One Divine Spirit* which is infinite, ineffable and unitive in nature. This is a potent assertion of the essential commonality among all religions. Creation is a manifestation of that single Reality, the Energy of Life. It is that core Spirituality on which the religions are founded, that embodies the equality among mankind in this pluralistic society. The author Ramakrishnan in the preface of the book asserts that "Various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord" but somehow fails to emphasize the commonality of core Spirituality which is the focus of unification, that should pervade among mankind. On page xxvii of his preface, he expresses the purpose of the book, without zeroing in on how men and women can converge on the Oneness among the diverse faiths.

In the first chapter the author discusses the concept of God, in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Sufism by quoting from various scriptural texts. However, he ends up by concluding that "God Consciousness" is common to all religions and that Universal Truth is the thread that holds diverse faiths together. In the opinion of this reviewer, it is not just the consciousness, but the spirituality, and the attributes that emerges from that awareness, that is the fundamental essence of all the religious experiences. This spiritual element, that shapes the human behavior, appears to be eroding with the advancing technocracy in the material world. This erosion is largely due to the creeping in of the secular outlook among mankind, which is elegantly described by the author under the heading 'Secularism' as a religion in two pages of chapter 12 of the book.

Although Islam is justifiably classed with Judaism and Christianity, as an Abrahamic Faith in the preface and the author clearly asserts, that "the teachings of Muhammad were based in part on those of Judaism and Christianity" (pg 61). However, one notices sparse mention in the

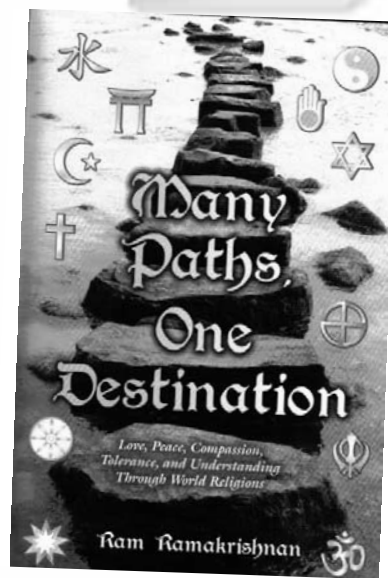
book, of the widely accepted notion, that Zoroastrianism, to some degree, had directly or indirectly impacted all the Abrahamic Faiths. The reason for this may be due to an obvious confusion arising from the chronological dating of Zarathushtra. This becomes clear in the chapter on Zoroastrianism, where it states, that the founder of Zoroastrianism "is believed to have lived about 600 BCE." – the erroneous traditional date. In contrast, the very next section on 'Beliefs' states that "Zoroastrianism was established around 3500 years ago - before Judiasm, Christianity and Islam".

Similar fallacy is also noticeable in the statement "after four hundred years scribes began to collect scattered pieces of Avesta" (pg 153). The period mentioned here, refers to an epoch after Zarathushtra. To the best of our knowledge, in recorded history of Zoroastrianism, we know of no such collection of scattered Avesta, until we reach the Parthian era some 1700-1800 years after the time of the Prophet. This retrieval initiated by Parthian monarchs, was only after the decimation of Zoroastrian scriptures by Alexander, the Macedonian. There are some statements in chapter on Zoroastrianism that sound rather contradictory. For example, pg 153 states, Zoroastrianism as "the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religion". Ironically, two pages later it is stated, "like Judaism, Christianity and Islam Zoroastrianism is monotheistic". Similar contradictory assertions are also noted in relation to the concept of resurrection. The three grades of sacred fires are correctly distinguished and explained on page 156. However, later (pg 168) perhaps, due to an oversight *Atash Aderan*, instead of *Atash Dadgah*, is mistakenly defined as a household fire.

The ethic of reciprocity familiarly known as The Golden Rule –has been stressed in some thirteen

BOOKS

ARTS





different faiths. 'Do not do unto others what you do not wish others to do unto you' has become a fundamental cornerstone for human attributes in all religions. However, it is surprising that despite the occasional mention in some of the chapters (1,3,4, and 11) the author has failed to highlight this concept as a major commonality among the diverse Faiths. The term 'Golden Rule' does not even appear in the book at all.

Remarkably there are very few spelling errors in the book. Research in general on various major religious traditions appears to be quite thorough. It is however, striking for this reviewer, to note that no reference is made to Persians in the discussion of liberation of Jews from Babylonian captivity (pg 95) in the sixth century BCE. Also there are twelve symbols of various religions on front and rear cover, however, the one for Zoroastrian Faith is missing. With the

exception of Christianity, all the quotes in chapter 1 as well as in all the other chapters on major religions bear no references. Presence of these references would have immensely enhanced the value added utility for the volume.

It is indeed unfortunate that the book does not have a word index. A degree of repetition is unavoidable during a discussion of diverse religions. However, there is copious repetition on certain ideas and concepts throughout the book. For example we notice pages under the title 'Wisdom' in the sections on Zoroastrianism, Sufism, Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism saying essentially the same things. In contrast, a full page under the title 'Ahura Mazda' does little justice to that 'Wisdom personified'.

Regardless of the critical analysis, the book provides a very good overall knowledge of all major and minor Faiths. Furthermore the last chapter of the book goes the extra mile to provide an example of a human being - Pope John Paul - who lived and died by following the practice of 'Golden Rule'. The book ends with several suggestions how humans can use their creative ability to evolve a New World of Love, Peace, Compassion, Tolerance and Understanding.

To this end the book can help provide a pathway to Peace and clarity of mind, body and soul of the confused and mangled mankind, of the world of today and deserves to be a part of the library of every family household.

## Stories from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi

Translated from the Original Persian by Dick Davis

Illustrated

Mage Publishers 2005

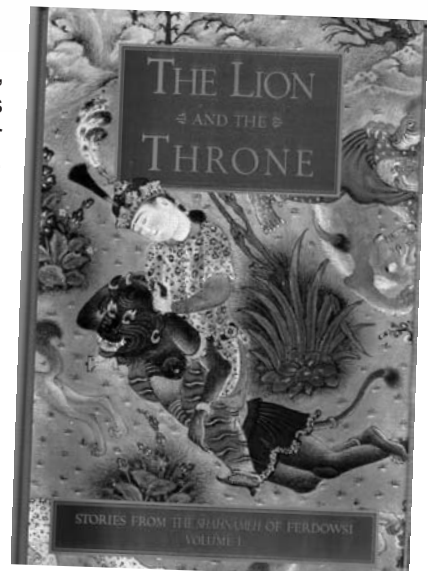
### THE LION AND THE THRONE Volume. I

ISBN 0-934211-50-7

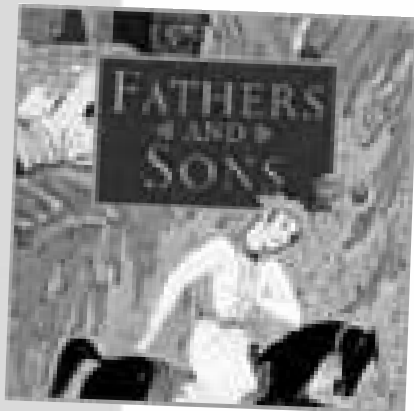
"The Shahnameh is the Persian national epic, a poem of more than 40,000 lines completed by the poet Ferdowsi in about the year 1000. Some 30 years ago Yarshater rendered into elegant modern Persian prose the opening narratives of the epic, and now Dick Davis, the foremost translator of Persian literature into English, has translated those tales and added two additional narratives taken directly from the epic poetry. The book also contains a short summary of the entire Shahnameh, an essay by Stuart Cary Welch entitled "Illustrating a Shahnameh," and other appendixes. The prose rendering is as smooth and polished as Davis's translations always are. The publishers outdid themselves in producing a beautiful book that is in many ways reminiscent of a medieval Persian manuscript. Illustrated with numerous paintings, details of paintings and cartouches, section headings in gold ink, flowers at

chapter heads, decorative borders and many other details, the volume is a rich and evocative example of bookmaking. More a coffee-table book than a scholarly volume, recommended for general readers and undergraduates."

Review  
Choice Magazine



**STORIES FROM THE SHAHNAMEH OF FERDOWSI Volume II  
FATHERS AND SONS  
ISBN 0-934211-53-1**



"This splendid book is the second in a projected set of three volumes that will recount all the major events of the Persian national epic, the Shahnameh or Book of Kings. Written in rhyming couplets by the poet

Firdowsi and completed in about 1010, the epic runs to more than 40,000 lines. Volume 1, Ehsan Yarshater's *The Lion and the Throne* (CH, May'98), was translated by Davis largely from an earlier Persian prose translation. Davis translated the present volume directly from the original text and presents it to the reader as a felicitous mixture of prose and verse. *Fathers and Sons* begins where volume 1 left off, recounting the epic from the legend of Seyavash to the death of Rostam, bringing to a close the purely legendary part of Shahnameh. Davis provides an informative introduction as well as a translation that is a joy to read. This reviewer particularly welcomed an increased amount of verse in this volume. Aimed at a wide and varied audience, not exclusively academic, these volumes appeal to the eye as well as the ear. Like its predecessor, this volume is beautifully produced in every respect. Available in large academic and general libraries collecting Middle Eastern literature and cultural history."

**Review W. L. Hanaway, Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania**

**STORIES FROM THE SHAHNAMEH OF FERDOWSI  
Volume III**

**SUNSET OF EMPIRE**

**ISBN 0-934211-68-X**

With this volume, Davis completes his prose and verse translation of most of the Shahnameh, the Persian national epic, which Ferdowsi completed in about 1010 CE. The first two volumes, *The Lion*



and the Throne (CH, May'98) and *Fathers and Sons* (CR, Feb'01), rendered the mythical and legendary parts of the epic; the present volume presents the "historical" section. Davis's translation is smooth, elegant, and up-to-date, with no attempt at "stained-glass" effects. He found a felicitous combination of prose and verse that seems just right for its purpose. The verse sections are particularly good, and one wishes for more. This set supersedes *The Epic of the Kings*, Reuben Levy's translation (CH, Apr'68), hitherto the standard modern prose rendition. The physical book is sumptuous. The design is consistent throughout the three volumes, but the opulence seems to increase with each. No detail is overlooked, and the publishers out do themselves here in the taste and splendor of their reproductions of Persian miniature paintings. Summing Up: Essential. No collection of Middle East studies or art history should be without this three-volume set.

BOOKS

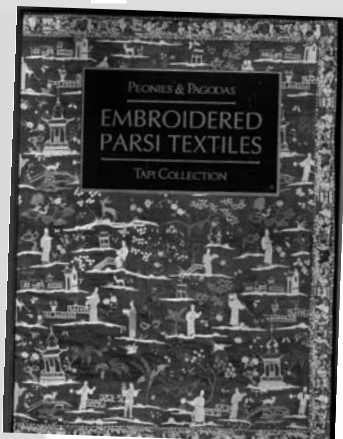
ARTS

**Review W. L. Hanaway, Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania.**

*Dick Davis was born to English and Italian parents in Portsmouth, England, in 1945, and educated at the universities of Cambridge (B.A. and M.A. in English Literature) and Manchester (PhD. In Medieval Persian Literature). He lived in Iran for eight years (1970-1978) and married a Persian lady.*



*He also lived for some time in both Italy and Greece. He is currently Professor of Persian and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Ohio State University. As author, translator or editor, he has produced over 20 books as well as academic works. These include translations from Italian (prose) and Persian (prose and verse), and eight books of his own poetry (the most recent of which is 'A Trick of Sunlight', 2006). His translations from Persian include Attar's 'The Conference of the Birds', a book of medieval epigrams ('Borrowed Ware'), Pezeshkzad's 'My Uncle Napoleon', and Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh'.; (He has recently completed a verse translation of the 11th century poet Fakhraddin Gorgani's Vis and Ramin) one of the most beautiful of Persian love stories.*



*"Peonies and Pagodas"* chronicles a vivid and visual collection of Parsi embroidered textiles from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. It describes how the Parsis, originally of Zarathushti descent, fled

their homeland in Persia in the eighth century to avoid religious persecution and arrived on the western shores of India seeking sanctuary.

Upon arrival in Sanjan, the reigning Hindu king gave them asylum in his kingdom, stipulating certain conditions. One of these conditions being that Parsi women adopt the attire of the Gujarati women. Thus the sari became the traditional dress of the Parsi woman.

Apart from the history of textiles, the book also covers a commercial link the Parsis had with China and later the British, giving us a deeper understanding of how this industry evolved. The Parsis enjoyed economic freedom and were favorably treated by the British who soon employed many Parsis as a liaison between themselves and other Indians. This benefitted the Parsis and when commercial opportunities opened up in China in the eighteenth century, a trade in raw cotton saw the foundation on which many fortunes of Parsi families were built.

As commercial trade between India and China flourished, some enterprising Parsis delved into the textile market favoring Chinese made silks and embroidery to the traditional Indian embroidery. Beautiful symbols and motifs depicting different aspects

## Peonies and Pagodas

### EMBROIDERED PARSI TEXTILES, TAPI COLLECTION

Edited by Shilpa Shah and Tulsi Vatsal; Published by Garden Silk Mills Ltd; ISBN 978-81-905935-1-9 Pps 196 US \$125.00 inclusive of freight (outside India); Rupees 3000.00 in India.

of Chinese life were embroidered onto yards of silk thus creating the "gara". The word "gara" derives from the Gujarati word "galo" meaning width. It is difficult to define the creation of the first gara but it probably was some time from 1830 to 1840. These first garas imported from China were actually five meter pieces of silk fully embroidered framed by an embroidered border all around. Many years later, Indian craftsmen from Surat were able to duplicate the Chinese garas. However, these "Surti" garas as they were known were identifiable by the use of net used as a backing to the embroidery as well as the use of the French knot and khakha stitches whereas the Chinese craftsmen mainly favoured the satin and chain stitches. Although all garas are hand embroidered, the finish is exquisite on both sides. Each gara tells a story depending on the motifs embroidered across the length of the sari. Thus a gara depicting Chinese male and female figures came to be known as a "cheena-cheeni no garo". Birds on a perch were known as the "chakla-chakli no garo" and circles became a "kanda-papeta no garo". In the TAPI Collection, one of the most intricate and detailed embroidery is that on a purple gara (Cat. No5). Embroidered in white, its pattern consists of an elaborate river scene with over two hundred birds. Not a single motif is repeated and it bears a resemblance to a landscape painting.

By the 1950s the garas had disappeared from style with many being cut up for cushions, tunics, borders and other mundane household items. In the early 1960s, a Parsi lady was instrumental in bringing about a revival of the gara art. By this time one could only obtain an original Chinese gara if it was handed down or bought second hand. "There is a revival today but the embroideries done here cannot match the intricate design, fineness of execution or subtlety of the colours of the old Chinese embroidered garas.

The price of these has escalated and most of the saris are disintegrating with the ravages of time and weather". (Deepika Sorabjee, Sari Sorority, August 2010)

Fifteen different and varied sources have contributed to making "Peonies and Pagodas" informative and interesting, giving the reader an insight into the beautiful world of specialized Chinese embroidery. Definitely of great interest to students of textile history, it is also a great source of information to the Parsi population about a part of their heritage and would leave a lasting impression and impact on all of us who own one of these exotic garas.

Shilpa Shah and Tulsi Vatsal have produced a visually stimulating text, colorful cover and stunning illustrations of the different patterns and motifs denoting aspects of Chinese life. These garas have become an invaluable part of our heritage, one we should strive to protect and wear with pride and privilege and pass onto future generations.

**Zerene Saklatvala** was born in India and immigrated to Canada in 1969. With her artistic bend, she free lanced as a calligrapher, often working for a company that provided medals and awards for distinguishing Canadians. She teaches in a private school in Montreal and has influenced and shaped the lives of many. With her positive attitude and sunny disposition, she is a role model for both the young and the old.

Peonies & Pagodas: Embroidered Parsi Textiles can be purchased or ordered from:

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# Mantra – The Rules of Indulgence

An imprint of Harper Collins Publishing  
www.eccobooks.com ISBN 978-0-06-089985-1

pps 214 USA \$34.95 Canada \$37.95

BOOKS

ARTS



I was intrigued! Why Mantra for the title of his cook book, I had wanted to ask Chef Jehangir Mehta when he had delighted and charmed us on his visit to our Centre a few weeks ago. A cursory look at the contents revealed why. And, the introduction to the book with the foot notes to the recipes confirms appropriate

the title is.

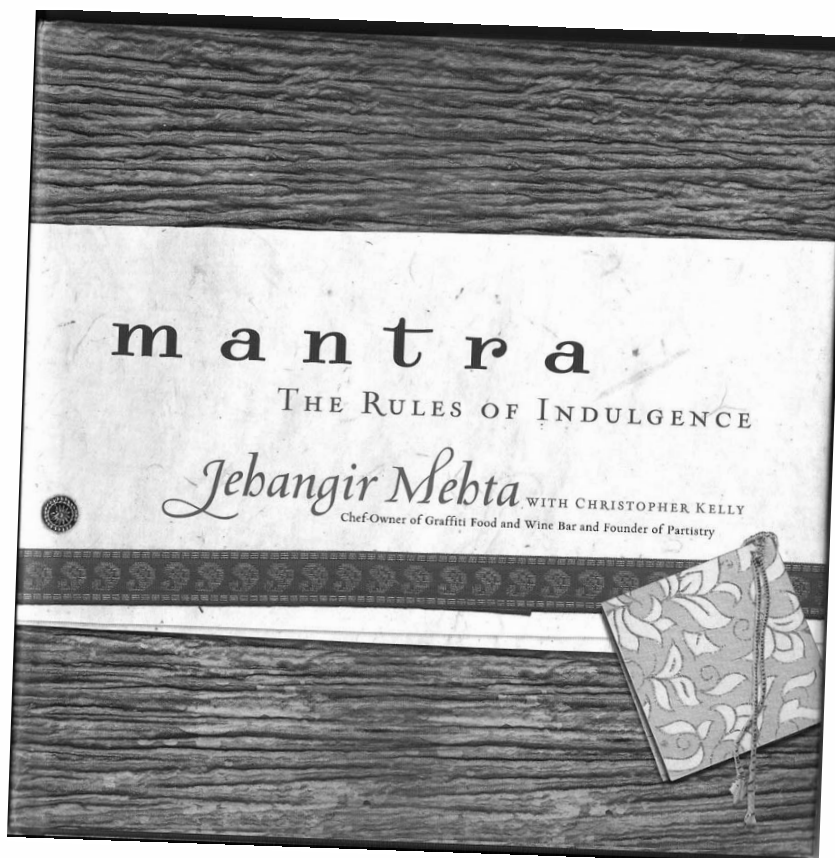
Those of us who grew up in the sub-continent will immediately relate to Jehangir as he goes down memory lane reminiscing of bapaiji, (paternal grandmother) mamaiji (maternal grandmother) and mum too insisting on regular doses of nature's bounties, like it or not, and conjuring recipes containing those ingredients that promised, and delivered, good health. In spite of protestations from us young 'uns, supported on rare occasions by dad, we had to gulp down cauliflower, carrots, okra and what not, or else face starvation. But, these ladies had a way of making such unappealing items palatable, and enjoyable, by throwing in fennel, chives, dill, turmeric and basil, among other herbs and spices. Jehangir has done just that in his book and has gone several steps beyond mamaiji by making his concoctions look appetizing and delicious to boot.

If you are looking for dhansak, jinga – "kolmi", (prawns) in deference to Jehangir who hails from Bombay – no patio or the ubiquitous papeta ma gosh, (meat with potatoes) forget it. But, for good measure, he has

thrown in naan khatai, bhakras, dar ni pori, falooda and rava to remind us that these tasty foods do exist in his world. He reminds us of honey with hot water as beneficial in many ways but what I fully subscribe to, with my modification on the measure, is a half Parsi peg of Courvoisier mingling with it as a panacea.

Yes, you have to get hold of this book, a copy of which is in our ZAH library, compliments of Jehangir. It is so different. I attest to that, being a collector of cookbooks. We pay tribute to Bobby Flay, Emil, Batoli and others but Jehangir also stands on the same pedestal as they.

Proof: runner-up in the prestigious *Iron Chef* contest. So, relax with orange marigold iced tea and slowly digest what he has offered by way of saffron-glazed nectarine Carpaccio, turmeric Yorkshire pud, fenugreek financier and oh, so many other recipes that are completely unique and, so healthy to have. And, if you must, thoroughly enjoy basil cocktail, followed later by dill ice cream at dinner or strawberry lemongrass jam for breakfast spread thick on apple-rosemary brioche. I dare our readers to refrain from trying several of his truly tasty recipes. C'mon people, indulge.



# Useful Plants and Drugs of Iran and Iraq

BOOKS  
&  
ARTS

**David Hooper. : Publications of Field Museum of Natural History, Botanical Series, Volume 9, pages 69-241, Chicago, Illinois, June 30, 1937.**

"Useful Plants and Drugs of Iran and Iraq" is not a book. It is a full-length paper published in the journal of the Field Museum of Natural History (Botanical Series) and can be found in Volume 9, pages 69 to 241.

The material described by Hooper is the result of three separate exploration and collecting expeditions made in Persia (Iran) and Iraq. The first collection was made by Henry Field, leader of the Field Museum Anthropological Expedition to the Near East in 1934. The specimens were mostly obtained from the bazaars of Tehran, Isfahan, and Baghdad, whereas others were gathered from fields and home gardens where these plants had been cultivated. The second collection of these types of plants were made in 1933 by Captain P. Johnston-Saint of the Wellcome Historical Medicinal Museum in London. The third collection was made by J.M. Cowan and C.D. Darlington in the spring of 1929. The drugs collected were all of vegetable origin and were found in the bazaars of Tehran, Hamadan, and Kermanshah in Persia, and in Baghdad.

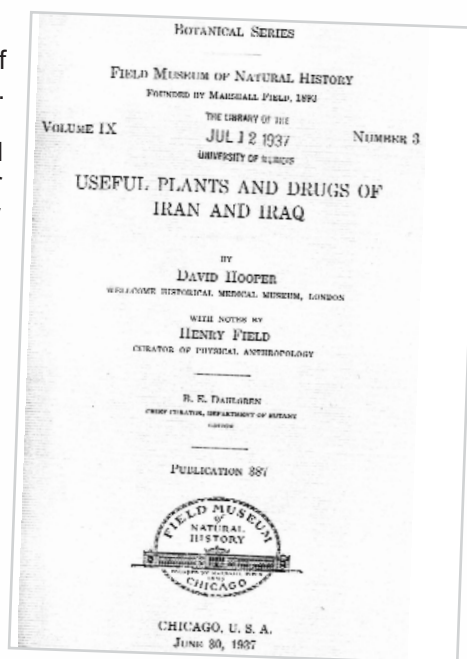
In his long career as a pharmacologist David Hooper (1858-1947) received several recognitions. He was awarded the Herbarium Bronze Medal by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain when only 20 years old. In 1884 he was appointed quinologist (one who studies the cultivation of the Cinchona tree and the uses of its compounds in medicine) to the Government of Madras, India, and spent several months in Holland studying specimens of Cinchona plants that are responsible for the manufacture of quinine for the treatment of malaria. He was based at the botanical gardens at Ootacamund until 1896. This botanical garden, from 1861 onwards had played a major role in the introduction of Cinchona to India from South America. His last important task was the botanical investigation of native plants and drugs from South-Western Asia. The results of this study were published in the subject of this review. Hooper's main contribution to science lies in his industrious and meticulous collection, arrangement, and publication of the information regarding the origin, composition, and uses

of plants of medicinal value. Hooper's modesty and pleasant manner won him many friends at whose disposal he was always ready to place his time, energy and unique knowledge of South- and West-Asia drugs obtained from plants.

In Iraq Dr. Hydari, Director of the Rustam Agricultural Experimental Farm at Hinai near Baghdad, presented to Field Museum scientists a number of varieties of Gossypium (cotton), Hordeum (barley), and Triticum (wheat) species. Dr. Calvin K. Staudt, Director of the American School for Boys in Baghdad, contributed information regarding local drugs and their uses.

Because of the difficulties involved in recording the colloquial names for the various plants and drugs and their transliterations, there are inevitably certain discrepancies, but I believe that the list of native names in alphabetical order with their Latin equivalents should be of value to the reader. The useful plants and materia medica of South-West Asia may be considered to be fairly well known, but the author hoped that this report will be of value in making existing information even more accessible and in encouraging medical officers to publish additional information. The rapid advance of westernization in Iran under Reza Shah Pahlevi and in Iraq under King Ghazi necessitated the accurate recording of the rapidly disappearing primitive medical folklore of these countries.

We have an opportunity here of studying crude botanical drugs and comparing them with the names of the plants that they came from in ancient literature.



One of the first and most important work of Persian pharmacology is the "*Kitab Ulab Nyat an Haqa 'ig-uladviyat*" or the "Book of the Foundations of the True Properties of the Remedies" written around the year 970 CE by the physician Abu Mansur, who also visited Hindustan during one of explorative journeys.

This paper by Hooper lists the medicinal plants of Iran and Iraq in an alphabetical order according to their botanical or scientific names. The properties of the wood of the plants, their seeds, and leaves are given. The name of the plant(s) is also repeated in the Arabic script. At the end of the paper a comprehensive alphabetical list of about 1320 native names (mostly in Arabic) and their Latin equivalents are given which is most useful.

The paper demonstrates once more the wealth of knowledge that the older generation had about the various uses of plants and herbs for medicinal purposes. Unfortunately, we are losing an entire encyclopedia of indigenous knowledge when a village doctor passes away. Hooper died in 1947 at Bromley in Kent, England, but he left behind a well-documented record of his findings while still on this earth.

I would not hesitate to recommend this publication to any student who wants to study the medicinal uses of plants of the Near East, for they are all here already documented and listed. The original publication is very difficult to find. But you can read the entire book on the internet:

<http://www.archive.org/details/usefulplantsdrugihoop>

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## **Returning to India as a US Delegate of the Presidential Executive Mission through the US-India Business Council (USIBC),**

***Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz***

It was a pleasant surprise for me to receive an invitation from USIBC to be a Delegate on the Presidential Executive Mission to India, I, as President of my company, Managing Across Cultures, along with the 200+ US CEOs were all part of this Mission,. The purpose of the Mission was to build better corporate and trade relations between

India and the US, and to demonstrate the interest of US businesses in supporting the ties with India. As President of Managing Across Cultures, I have actively participated in meetings and events of USIBC in the past and strongly supported their efforts, corporate and economic, to forge stronger US-India collaborations. *(Photo left President Obama addressing the Indian and US CEOs at Hotel Trident Mumbai)*



**Goals of the Presidential Executive Mission:** For this Mission, the USIBC said its goal was to enhance two-way trade, spur investment by India into the US, create opportunities for greater US export-led growth of high technology and high-end manufactured goods that will support India's \$ 1.7 trillion infrastructure build-up, and foster new frontiers of technology collaboration. This is clearly happening and will now expand enormously. For exciting details, please see <http://www.rediff.com/business/slide-show/slide-show-1-obama-visit-us-signs-trade-deals-worth-usd-10-bn-with-india/20101106.htm>

# BUSINESS

**Other Delegates from the US:** Others on the 200+ member US Executive Delegation, besides Ron Somers , President of USIBC, included leaders like Jeff Immelt, Chairman and Chief Executive, GE, Louis Chênevert, Chairman & CEO United Technologies, USIBC Chairman Terry McGraw of McGraw Hill , Indra Nooyi, Chairperson and Chief Executive, PepsiCo, David Cote, chairman and chief executive, Honeywell, Paul Hanrahan, chairman and chief executive, AES and others. I am not aware of other Zarathushtis on the US Delegation.

**Zarathushti participants from India:** From the India side, of course, we should all be very proud to see prominently there our renowned leader, Mr. Ratan Tata, Chairman of the Tata Group, as well as Mr. Nadir Godrej, MD of Godrej Industries, who were there for the USIBC meet and the Presidential Address on the 6th of November at the Trident in Mumbai, as well as Zubin Irani, who is now the Senior Managing Director of Commercial Companies, India Region at United Technologies. Rustom Desai, Country Manager, India, for Corning, was one of the prominent speakers for the FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce) meeting in Delhi. And I am sure there were other Zarathushtis involved from India.

**President Obama remarked:** *"Indians have helped build America and Americans have helped build India"* indicating the mutuality of the relationship. President Obama's talk at the Trident focused on the business goals for Americans that he wanted to achieve, but his very warm and memorable speech in Parliament was much more inspiring and heartfelt.

**My own professional perspective:** With my own professional bias, as a cross-border collaboration consultant and professor, one thing that stood out for me about the sensitivity of President Obama's talk in Mumbai was that he pointed out that part of the challenge in this relationship is the perceptions that Indians and Americans might have of each other, and that efforts should be made to change these.

This is very much the area that I have been working in intensively, especially in the corporate world between India and the US. So it was of particular interest for me, since I believe that all corporate collaborations across borders depend heavily on the relationships created. These relationships, in turn, depend on the ability of people on both sides of the ocean to know, understand and respect the cultural perceptions and expectations of their partners. It has been found that managing these perceptions appropriately is particularly critical for Joint Ventures, Global Sourcing Partnerships, Acquisitions, as well as for collaborations that set up R&D Centers etc., and whenever teams across borders need to aim for excellence together. Many successful US corporations realize that these are often the "make or break" issues, more than Indian corporations do, and so they invest in identifying and addressing them.

This area of "soft skills" was also mentioned several times in the meetings by other corporate leaders as a critical factor that needed to be addressed in collaborations. However, what I pointed out was that as long as these skills are called "soft skills" instead of "critical business skills", business people will not give them the due emphasis and attention they need!

It is in these areas of culture, communication, cross-border team-building and changing perceptions , and aiming for excellence in partnering, that I have been helping Indo-US and other businesses for the past 20+ years, often at very critical junctures. I consult with partners on both sides of the ocean, to assess and identify the people issues in global collaborations, build effective cross-border teams and brief and coach MNC leaders and country managers in India. Being on the Senior Leadership Coaching Panels of Dell, Intel, American Express and others, I see the issues that many leaders of MNCs in India face as they struggle to accept some cultural realities, like: seeming commitments may not always be firm commitments, deadlines may be "flexible," and avoidance may be an acceptable business way, rather than saying a direct and candid "no"..

**Accomplishments of the Presidential Executive Mission:** Most people ask "Did anything concrete come from President Obama's trip?" Let us look at a few highlights:

# BUSINESS

1. During President Obama's visit, it is said that 20 deals worth \$10+ Billion were signed between the US and India which will result in creating more than 50,000 jobs in the US. The biggest deals were with Boeing, GE and Harley Davidson. This also means access for India to these investments and benefits, especially for infrastructure.
2. Many bans on sharing technologies were lifted, so India will gain a great deal, particularly as President Obama promised to loosen export controls of sensitive defense equipment and other high technologies to India.
3. President Obama also publicly declared India a world power
4. President Obama promised the US backing for India for a permanent seat in the UNSC
5. It was helpful that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh remarked courageously and made it clear that "India is not in the business of stealing jobs from the U.S.... outsourcing (work to India) has helped improve the productive capacity and productivity of America."
6. The relationship between Prime Minister Singh and President Obama was greatly strengthened---the foundation on which much can and should be built.

The informal, but more impactful and real opportunities created: Personally, I think the unannounced business outcomes are going to be even greater. There were 200+ CEOs from leading US companies, (with clear objectives for their India businesses) meeting for three days with top leaders from Indians companies. One day was in Mumbai, organized by the US-India Business Council, that Obama addressed at the end of the day. The second day in Delhi on the 8th, was organized by CII (the Confederation of Indian Industry) with powerful speakers from Government and Industry, and the third day on the 9th organized by FICCI.

Actively participating and exchanging ideas from India on one or all of these days were Minister of Industry Anand Sharma, Sam Pitroda, Advisor to the Prime Minister for Technology, Innovative and Knowledge, Mr. Arun Maira, Member of the Planning Commission, Mukesh Ambani, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, head of the Planning Commission, Minister Kapil Sibal and others, along with the leaders from the US corporate world, as well as the Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke, and other leaders from the US Government and Embassy. I believe that the interaction between these leaders, including the formal and informal discussions, will have a major impact on partnerships that will be forged, on deals finalized and on new areas of cooperation and innovation that will be explored in the future.

These tea-time conversations were what stimulated and motivated me to think of many new possibilities, and talk them over with these industry leaders (Indian and American) on the spot. It was a memorable week, and I am grateful to USIBC for this invitation and to Ron Somers for his outstanding leadership of this group.

**Encourage more participation by WZCC:** I would encourage all those interested in Indo-US business to attend USIBC meetings. They are mainly in Washington and in different cities in India. I would also encourage any large ventures in the US dealing with India to join the USIBC, which could really give a boost to their business. WZCC itself, since it comprises largely of leaders of India and US ventures, needs to take a more active role in USIBC and at least one representative attend the USIBC Summit each June in Washington DC. Minimally, I advise those interested to go the USIBC web-site and sign up for the USIBC Daily Investor Report. It is one of the most informative sources of current business information about India and the India markets and about foreign collaborations (not only US). The USIBC website is: [www.usibc.com](http://www.usibc.com)



# BUSINESS

Apart from the practical aspect of the trip referred to above, writing for **FEZANA JOURNAL** about the experience also made me reflect on much of what I saw from a different perspective, and raised some questions:

1. Who and where are the really successful role models for our community of Zarathushtis in the US? Are they nationally revered, as a Ratan Tata may be---largely for their Zarathushti values, even in business? It is clear that Zarathushtis in India are much more active and prominent on the national scenario, even as industrialists, than perhaps we have been able to be in the US, although many Zarathushtis here are very “successful” or rich. What are we seeing as “success” and how will our choice of coming here and not adequately maintaining our “heritage” affect our future generations----a legacy that we may not be able to leave them in this country, and the lack of really inspiring role models like the Tatas, Godrejs, the Shapoorji Pallonjis and others that still exist and lead in India?
2. I also see that there are many non-Zarathushti Indians who have come to the US, but have continued to be active in Indo-US relations and on the business front in investing in India. They also actively lobby for India in the US. These are people like Rajat Gupta, Indra Nooyi, or other entrepreneurs like Narendra Patni (Patni Computers), Amar Bose (Bose Corporation), Desh Deshpande (who donated to found the Deshpande Center for Technology Innovation at MIT), Vikram Pandit (Chairman of Citigroup) and others. It is also thanks to these leaders that India is on the radar screen of Americans, besides the opportunities that India itself presents---- many created and spurred by these (non-Zoroastrian!) NRIs from the US.

***Why aren't there more prominent Zarathushti players contributing back to these ties with India, and taking a lead in the national scenario here in the US and also advocating for India?***

3. Do we even adequately know or help our families know the opportunities that India holds today and for the future? I see many unemployed or underemployed Zarathushtis struggling here in this economy, who might be really valued in the Indian scenario with their education and their experiences from North America. A few have returned, either temporarily or permanently, and are currently thriving and happy in India.
4. Have the first generation of Zarathushtis who came here failed to keep that flame burning in our children by perhaps:
  - i. Getting too Americanized and letting our children forget where we all came from and what made us who we are?
  - ii. Not realizing adequately what India has been for our own formation, and what it can/ will be in the future?
  - iii. Not encouraging ourselves and/or our children to feel enough of an obligation to think about and contribute to the well being and image of India in this country? Has our leaning towards “Westernization” prevented us from some of this? And is that a loss, and can or should that be redressed? How can we do that, if we so want to?

These are questions that we as a community and responsible professionals and parents need to ask ourselves. I am happy to hear differing perspectives and experiences about this.

*So, was it a successful trip? For Indo-US business relations, certainly. For me, personally, and for Managing Across Cultures, it was most stimulating and has sparked many creative ideas that we hope to build on.*

***Dr. Zareen Karani Araoz***, Founder and President of Managing Across Cultures, is also an International Director of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce and Founder Director of ZWIN. She has been a Professor of Cross-cultural Management in the US and India and was International President of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research. Managing Across Cultures has been advising Senior Corporate Leaders and Teams from MNCs for the past 20 years in over 20 countries, to identify their people challenges and help their cross-border collaborations aim for excellence and be more effective.



## Training For the International Manager

*Yezdi H. Godiwalla, PhD*

Training the expatriate would enable him or her (subsequently referred to as “him” for simplicity sake, even though it would expressedly mean “him or her”) to deal with the unfamiliar foreign task and cultural environments. He can better manage personal stress and improve his self efficacy, cross-cultural empathy, communication and leadership, adaptation and achievement.

Training the expatriate for his foreign assignment involves pre-departure training. Pre-departure training focuses on improving on his knowledge of self, self efficacy, the nature and content of his foreign assignment, host country's culture and operating systems, cross cultural communication and empathy, host country's language, adaptation to the host country work and non-work environment strategic perspective through achievement-orientation and broader leadership, skills for the overall management of the foreign unit.

Knowledge of the self makes him understand who he is and why he has certain views and biases. This enables him to understand the host country's people and values from a definite point of reference. His self efficacy, self-confidence and strengths-weakness profile may be assessed and improved in the context of the specific foreign assignment.

Stress management and a higher tolerance level for coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and unfamiliarity would free him from tensions and emotional duress that would inhibit his fuller personal performance. Better stress management would enable him to achieve better emotional stability and equanimity. This relaxed emotional state helps to better deal with the diverse range of issues and solve seven unfamiliar problems through effective cognitive competence. Ability to correctly perceive, reason, analyze, synthesize and formulate an action plan is important. This ability is better executed when the individual is free from undue stress anxiety or self doubt. With “self efficacy”, the expatriate can better concentrate on his work.

Cross-cultural training would make the expatriate skilled in being more sensitive and empathetic to other cultures, ways of life and basic methods of working and decision making. The knowledge of cultural differences and how he in particular, should adapt and cope with the challenges would help in being better prepared in dealing with the unfamiliarity and differences in culture of the host country. Knowledge of the host country culture would include the knowledge of history and cultural details, such as values, practices, and mores, how they view religion, relationships, family, work, organization, materialistic things, rules, authority, gender roles, individualism versus community needs, risks and uncertainty, and foreign companies and cultures. The expatriate's awareness and detailed knowledge of the host country's culture would take the vagueness and fear away.

Cross-cultural communication and decision-making are vital if he is to work in teams of host country nationals as he works to gather information, discuss, decide and implement solutions, strategies and plans of action in the foreign assignment. He has to interact with the host country nationals because they have a fuller knowledge of the facts and also the insights to manage in the local context. What works in the expatriate's home country might not work as well. Viable working methods are culture specific and endemic to the local ways of doing things. The expatriate has to know the effective communication methods, including a working knowledge of the host country language, so that he may gain better insights of the local situation.

Social interactions and work relationships in the host country work and non-work environments are important for the expatriate for his being better accepted by the host country nationals at work setting and in non-work social setting. His people or social skills would help him have better interpersonal competence and, thus, improve his skills to influence and lead in the host country culture. His knowledge of himself would help him relate host country nationals in the conceptual mapping of values with himself being a fixed bearing in the configuration of values.

Achievement-orientation and strategic perspective would help him to stay longer in his foreign assignment, as opposed to a pre-mature return to his home country. Achievement orientation requires setting goals and having the tenacity to pursue them until they are accomplished. This requires adaptation to local conditions and methods and strong persistence together with team work.

Leadership in the local cultural context and task environment requires all the attributes of the earlier dimensions. Leadership skills need to focus on the overall picture and vision, longer term or strategic perspective, set long-term objectives, corporate strategy of the foreign subsidiary, shorter-term operating goals or targets, and, the skills for

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involving all relevant people in the process of strategic management and operating activities. The skills of cultural adaptation, relationship building, communication and decision making in the host country culture would help in achieving the objectives and goals.

Post-arrival mentoring is important. It helps to prevent him from making costly, initial mistakes. On all important decisions and ceremonial situations, he should have the benefit of guidance and insights of a wise mentor who is intimate with the host country culture and operating environment. Such a mentor would be a major resource for the expatriate who would confide and express his inner thoughts and feelings. He can seek advice regarding his plans for change, the rate of implementing new ideas, the better sequence of actions to make the change viable and better accepted by the host country nationals. The mentor can be a former effective expatriate familiar with the culture and operating conditions of the country of the foreign assignment.

As a manager, his generalist skills are more important than as a specialist when he was in his home country operations. His rational skills of planning and organizing must be matched by effective people skills, in small groups, larger departments and the organization as a whole.

He must be perceived as a leader, a CEO, an ambassador who represents his corporate headquarters and his home country. He must be at the same time dignified and elegant, yet humble and hands-on. No detail or task should be too big or too little for him. His integrity must be above reproach and his motives, always noble. For such an important attribute building, he must build a stronger better self-esteem and self efficacy. That is, no matter how big or difficult the problem he must convince himself that he truly has the inner fortitude and skills to solve the problem. Such self-confidence must radiate to the host country nationals, both inside and outside the foreign subsidiary unit. When he interacts with host country nationals outside his organization, he must exude optimism, confidence and realism as to what he has the CEO and his organization can contribute to the host country. In his figurehead role, he has to act out the part of a victorious general and a triumphant CEO. The training for such a magnanimous and jubilant yet realistic executive should be the creed of every organization whether or not it is developing managers for overseas assignments. Thus, a proper organizational culture for the focus on career, skill and personal growth of every individual is important. For the expatriate in particular, the additional and valid cause must be pursued that of further improving his self-worth, self efficacy and self-confidence, together with a greater tenacity, motivation from within, self discipline and self monitoring, strong focus on goals, dealing with local delays bureaucracies and setbacks, and coping with unfamiliarity and being far away home country environment. This is his strongest asset, namely to be able to carry out the MNC headquarters' philosophy, values, visions, objectives, goals and strategies in a far away culture, all on his own.

To conclude, an expatriate's training goals include: developing his managerial leadership skills, people and interpersonal skills (in small teams and large groups), cross cultural communication skills (including a working knowledge of local language), longer term and strategic perspective that is backed by tenacity of purpose, adaptation and achievement orientations backed by self efficacy, stress management and emotional stability, building local relationships at work and in non-work settings, decision-making in small and large teams, and a quick reasoning and learning capability backed by an upbeat and optimistic sense of goal orientation that would motivate the host country nationals.

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