



JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad 1381 AY (Fasli)

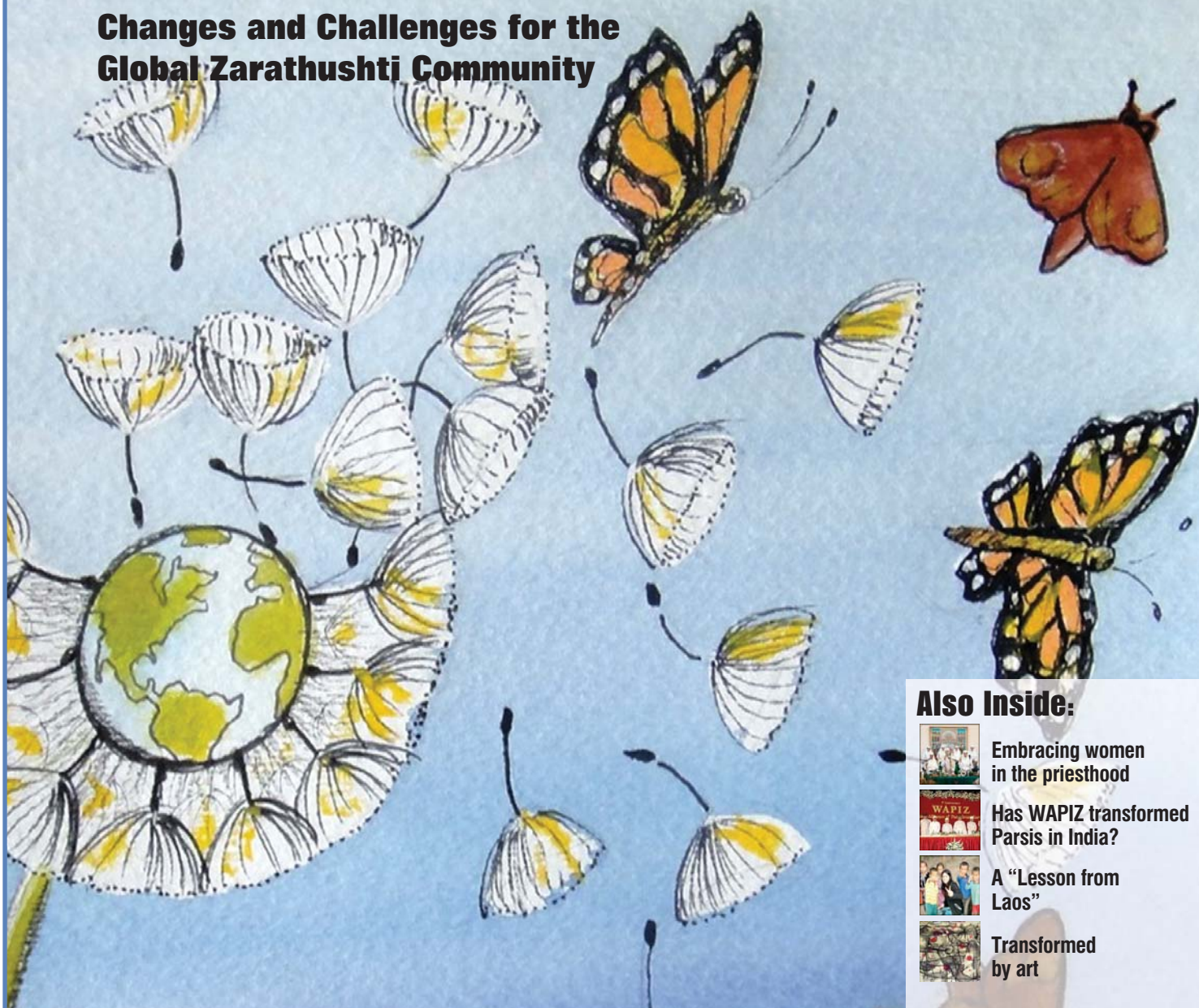
● Avan – Adar – Dae 1381 AY (Shenshai)

● Adar – Dae – Behman 1381 AY (Kadimi)

NOROOZ PIROOZ BAD**NOROOZ MUBARAK**

Transformation

**Changes and Challenges for the
Global Zarthushti Community**



Also Inside:



Embracing women
in the priesthood



Has WAPIZ transformed
Parsis in India?



A "Lesson from
Laos"



Transformed
by art



Editor in Chief: Dolly Dastoor
editor@fezana.org

Technical Assistant: Coomi Gazdar

Assistant to Editor: Dinyar Patel

Consultant Editor: Lylah M. Alphonse,
lmalphonse@gmail.com

Graphic & Layout: Shahrokh Khanizadeh,
www.khanizadeh.info

Cover design: Feroza Fitch,
ferozafitch@lexicongraphics.com

Publications Chair: Behram Pastakia

Columnists:
H. Shroff: dunbarhoshang@gmail.com
Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi :
rabadis@hotmail.com
Yezdi Godiwalla: godiwaly@uww.edu
Behram Panthaki: behrampanthaki@hotmail.com
Behram Pastakia: bpastakia@aol.com
Mahrukh Motafram:
maharukhm83@gmail.com

Copy editors: V Canteenwalla, Y Pavri

Subscription Managers: Arnavaz Sethna:
asethna@comcast.net
Kershaw Khumbatta
journalsubscription@yahoo.com

**Summer 2012
25th ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL ISSUE**

**FALL 2012
PARSIS IN POLITICS
1857 to 1954**

Guest Editor: Maneck Bhujwala

Photo on cover:



Cover design
Feroza Fitchof
Lexicongraphics
Illustrated by
Anaheet Gazder

2 Editorials- Dolly Dastoor

3 Message from FEZANA President

5 FEZANA Update

13th Zoroastrian Games
TORONTO 2012



13 SCHOLARSHIPS & FEZANA SCHOLARS



34 TRANSFORMATION-Cover Story

101 NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL



105 IN THE NEWS



117 INTERFAITH INTERALIA

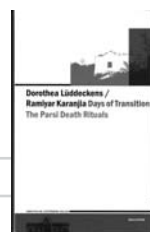
121 PERSONALPROFILES



123 IN MEMORIUM

124 MILESTONES

127 Between the Covers



Fravadin – Ardibehesht – Khordad
Avan - Adar – Dae
Adar- Dae- Behman

1381 AY (Fasli)
1381 AY (Shenshai)
1381 AY (Kadimi)

**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 Vol 26, No 1 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 \$25 (US) ; \$25 (Canada) and \$50 (air) for other countries; details on subscription Form. POSTMASTER: send changes to Fezana Journal, 8787 W. Airport Blvd. Houston, TX 77071

TRANSFORMATION

Seasons arrive and the world gets transformed, with its own colors, sights and smells, each season taking us closer to end of time. We cannot stop the change of season, and we cannot stop the transformation in our lives and in our societies. The world moves on. The world evolves, thoughts evolve, knowledge grows, cultural norms and mores evolve. Religious practices evolve, as no religion thrives in a vacuum.

And at the beginning of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of FEZANA we could not think of a better way to reflect on the transformation that is taking place in the Zarahushti world of North America in the past 25 years.

FEZANA has been the strongest catalytic force in transforming the North American community from a group of individuals Zarahushtis into a well-knit organization of 23 associations and several small groups of people spread across United States and Canada. The model of the Federation is what other diaspora communities would like to duplicate but have not been able to achieve. While respecting individual differences of member associations, FEZANA has still managed to forge a North American identity bringing the Iranian and the Parsi Zarahushtis together after several millennia. This may perhaps lead to a loss of the Parsi identity which is lament of some (see Maneckshaw page 86). The transformed North American identity has managed to embrace diversity of cultures.

FEZANA has transformed the community into a fertile creative community which is the direct or indirect result of a well settled and accepted group in the main frame. Being cohesive, like minded and non-confrontational produces results. Scholarships are provided for academic, sports, performing arts and religious education. (see page 13). Our students, academicians and scientists shine and are appointed to highest positions in academia, ideas are exchanged in bi-annual conferences, both for adults and youth and the world was brought to our doorstep in 2000 for the World Conference which has not been replicated in size and dynamism. Dar-e Mehrs have been built and the community continues to grow. FEZANA has transformed the North American Diaspora into a community without borders

Transformation of thought, ideas and actions in the social, political, legal and religious arenas have taken place around the Zarahushti world. This issue focuses not just on North America, but incorporates the actions and thoughts of organizations and individuals that are making a difference in and around them.



Kersi Shroff, an active member of the Zarahushti community from Washington, accepted the challenge to guest edit this issue and explore this difficult subject. He solicited articles from India, Pakistan, Iran, Australia, England to identify and reflect on the forces that are bringing about the transformation. The articles project transformations at the individual level Modi, Dastur, Ravji (pages 74, 94, 96) and at an organizational level, Pakistan, India Australia, Iran (pages 48, 57, 65).

Your comments and reflections are welcome .
I wish you a happy and prosperous 3750 Z

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dolly Dastoor". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Message from FEZANA President

Dear Fellow Zarathusthis;

Coming towards the end of my four year term as FEZANA President I take this opportunity to thank the Member Associations, Presidents, Committee Chairs and the North American Zarathushti Community-at-large.

It has been a pleasant journey for me, thanks to the cooperation that I have received from the Executive, Chairs and the Presidents. In June 2010 FEZANA started preparing a second short and long term Strategic Plan, keeping in mind the needs of the North American Zarathushti community. FEZANA, moving with the times, is now on Facebook, Twitter and on the Web. Our monthly electronic Bulletin has become ever so popular, just like the quarterly FEZANA Journal.

FEZANA's standing in the world Zarathushti Diaspora has also become very prominent. The North American community for the first time is being understood as it has entered into an open-minded dialogue with other regions of the world, as part of the the *Global Working Group (GWG)*. GWG regional members have now been able to understand us better. FEZANA is the only Zarathushti organization which has the structure of a multi country federation for the past 25 years.

Some individuals and associations in the western part of the world still have a misunderstanding that FEZANA Proselytizes and Promotes conversion. This is absolutely untrue. FEZANA, in keeping up with it's constitution does not interfere in any one's religion nor does it interfere with the working of individual associations. Our small community is widely spread in the vast lands of North America. In some cases, in schools and colleges there are only one or two Zarathushtis. Most friends and colleagues of our youth are non-Zarathushtis and we

have 60-65% marriages with a non-Zarathushti spouse.

Even though we know that blood is thicker than water FEZANA's constitution upholds and honors the autonomy of all associations. Today our community worldwide is facing mixed marriage acceptance issues.

Even in India, where we have a concentration of the Parsi/Irani community and infrastructure like religious establishments, welfare and assistance programs; the mixed marriages are around 32-38% and increasing every year.

Our Member Associations have the right to observe and practice our religion in their own jurisdiction as per the wishes of their own members which is enshrined in the FEZANA constitution. FEZANA membership includes Member Associations with all schools of thought of religious practice and we respect them all. As the President, I have always invited all views and encouraged everyone to take the opportunity to discuss, write and promote their views without disrespecting them. Our next generation in North America and in the Diaspora is very open minded and questioning, hence the burden is upon the present generation to give them knowledge and pass on the beliefs and values of our religion.

The operations of the *Global Working Group* are also based on the same principle of respecting autonomy and dignity for all. At the very first meeting in Dubai, which was also reinforced in Mumbai, all members in attendance agreed not to interfere or disrespect the working of other regions. Every region has its own challenges and the operating of the Global Working Group, based on Hamazori, is to work towards the goal of harmony on issues that can be termed as global and faced by all regions. Promoting our Zoroastrian/Zarathushti identity being one.

I earnestly wish that all present members of GWG will continue to work in unison and other regions will also join the GWG at the forthcoming meeting in New York on July 31 and August 1, 2012.



In 2012 FEZANA celebrates its 25 years - Silver Jubilee year and we could not have been able to achieve this significant goal without the cooperation and support of Zarathushti community of USA & Canada and well wishers from around the globe. I am grateful to all for your cooperation and support to FEZANA.

As always, I invite you to send me your thoughts on what is important to you, for the progress and betterment of our North American Zarathushti community and what role you would like to play to ensure a successful outcome.

Please join FEZANA on Twitter and Facebook and our web site www.fezana.org.

I look forward to meeting you all at the Silver Jubilee celebrations on August 2nd and FEZANA AGM

As always, I invite you to send me your thoughts on what is important to you, for the progress and betterment of our North American Zarathushti community and what role you would like to play to ensure a successful outcome.

Please join FEZANA on Twitter and Facebook and our web site www.fezana.org.

I look forward to meeting you all at the Silver Jubilee celebrations on August 2nd and FEZANA AGM on August 3rd in New York.

Best Wishes.

Bomi Patel, President

2012 FEZANA Silver Jubilee year



TAKE AWAYS

Behram Pastakia



The Butterfly, the universal symbol of transformation, graces the cover of the spring 2012 issue of FEZANA Journal. In North America, the story of the Monarch Butterfly as it migrates across countries to Mexico and then back again to Canada is even more stupefying as the transformation, though it occurs over generations, stays true to its ancient genetic memory. An apt metaphor, the butterfly, for Zarathushtis transforming to adapt to the countries and the climes where they live, yet staying true to their values and ethos passed on through the ages.

Coming together after centuries of separation from our co-religionists in Iran, the Parsis are learning what they had forgotten during their struggles on the Indian subcontinent. The beauty of the Haft Seen table, concluding the new year festivities with Sisdeh Bedar, the significance of Yalda; celebrating the life of the dearly departed with feasting at Sirooze, giving away Lork to departing guests, are examples of how we grasp traditions that lift up the cycles of nature that remind us of the laws of Asha. What binds us, young or old, of different ethnicities or nationalities, whether conservative or liberal, in the mosaic of North American society, is our duty to work in hamazori in caring for the needy.

Zarathushtis Stepping Forward, the first International Day of Service, scheduled for 5 May 2012, a legacy of the World Zarathushti Youth Congress held in Vancouver, Canada, is a fine example of this genre (page 118).

At the United Nations this spring we were treated to a delightful presentation by Zarathushtis showcasing work in rural Gujarat in helping the downtrodden. At almost every community event I find a young Zarathushti who has either volunteered in a distant country (page 120) or worked closer to home in the ghettos of the cities of North America in dealing with poverty and homelessness. These precious "take aways" are to cherish and to promote.

What motivates the Next Generation of Zarathushtis ?

The identity that we adopt for ourselves is one of humanitarian outreach going beyond borders, both literally and figuratively. The youth are now leading the way with innovative programs: high school graduates and college students volunteer as mentors to seven and eight year olds as they live the meaning of our Ahunavar prayer. We should stand back and let them take the spotlight, be available as resource persons when asked and watch with satisfaction the story of transformation unfold, as they fly upward and onward. Excelsior!

Dated: 3rd March 2012

Behram Pastakia, Chair, Publications Committee and Co-Chair, FEZANA's UN-NGO committee moderated the workshop entitled: "NGO Learnings: Empowering Rural Women to Overcome Poverty & Hunger" at the 56th Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York on 1 March 2012.



FEZANA Update



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 25th Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America will be held on August 3, 2012 at the Hilton Rye Hotel, Rye, New York. The AGM is open to the public. For details and more information, please contact admin@fezana.org.

Note, this year the positions of President, Treasurer and Assistant Secretary are open for nominations and elections, Bomi Patel the current President, having served two terms as President, the maximum allowed by the Constitution, is not eligible for re-election. Ratan Mistry, the current Treasurer has completed a two year term and is eligible to stand for re-election. Shiraz Italia the current Assistant Secretary has completed one year of her two year term and is eligible to stand for re-election.

Serving FEZANA as part of the Executive Committee is an honor and an enjoyable adventure. Please contact your local association before June 15, 2012 to show your interest in running or to submit your nomination.

NAHID DASHTAKI
SECRETARY, FEZANA

ACuPowder International, LLC

901 Lehigh Ave, Union, NJ 07083
908-851-4500 : Fax 908-851-4597

ACuPowder TN, Inc.

6621 Hwy 411 So, Greenback TN 37742
865-856-3021 : Fax 865-856-3083
email: daver@acupowder.com
web: www.acupowder.com



ACuPowder

AND

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF GREATER NEW YORK

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
IRANIAN ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION

INVITES YOU TO

XVI NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS

AUGUST 02 - 05 2012

HILTON RYE TOWN, NEW YORK



THEME:

**ZARATHUSHTI EXISTENCE
IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**



XVI NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS 2012

ZARATHUSHTI EXISTENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

AUGUST 02 - 05, 2012 AT HILTON WESTCHESTER, RYE BROOK, NY

HOSTED BY ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF GREATER NEW YORK
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH: IRANIAN ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION



The XVTH NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS will bring together Zarathushtis of all ages from all over the world to celebrate our community and explore the theme of the Congress "ZARATHUSHTI EXISTENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD".

Evolution depends upon adapting to the environment, and this theme challenges us to examine where we are, and how we need to adapt so that we not only survive but thrive. Speakers include respected scholars and historians, distinguished community members, and people who are making change in the world.

Topics presented will help us to look at who we are, who we want to be, and what we have to do to get there. Together, we will discuss these issues and their possible solutions. We welcome you to bring your ideas and expect to participate fully.

Besides the lectures, seminars and session, the adventurous can explore the city landmarks, enjoy Broadway shows, admire the breathtaking view of the city from a boat cruise, or connect with friends on Youth Night. We hope that our unique city will remind us that we exist within a wider international and interfaith community! Join us for a memorable experience & lasting friendships!

PROGRAM TRACKS AND SPEAKERS

ZARATHUSHTI CORE BELIEFS

Core beliefs are the unchanging center of a religion. As we discuss how we should adapt to the changing environment in order to survive and thrive, we should remain faithful to our core beliefs.

Ervad Soli Dastur will present a distillation of Zarathushtra's teachings. These core beliefs are not just abstract ideas; they shape our daily living. **Ms. Anahita Dua** will share with us how her core beliefs in Zarathushti religion influenced key decisions in her life. Late Dr. Roda Patel spent decades of her life helping the sick and poor at the free Gram Seva Hospital in one of the poorest areas of Gujarat. Her cardiologist husband **Dr. Khushroo Patel** will describe how their belief in Zarathushtra's teachings led them on this path.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Dr. Trita Parsi will be the Keynote Speaker at the congress. Dr. Parsi is the founder and president of the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) and the 2010 recipient of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order.

Dr. Parsi is a Zarathushti from southern Iran. He has studied the religion at University level and spent time in Bombay, researching the theology and the traditions. In addition to his

Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Israeli-Iranian relations, Dr. Parsi holds a Master's degree in International Relations from Uppsala University, and a Master's degree in Economics from the Stockholm School of Economics.

KHORSHED JUNGALWALA LECTURE

The Jungalwala Lecture at the XVI NAZC 2012 will be given by Prof. Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina. Born in Mumbai, India into a Parsi family Prof. Vevaina received his M.A. in 2003 and his Ph.D. in 2007 from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University. After completing his doctoral work, he served as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Undergraduate Core Curriculum and as the Lecturer on Old Iranian at Harvard from 2007-2009.



He is presently lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. His appointment at Stanford is the highlight of the Zarathushti community's effort to bring about Zoroastrian Studies at Stanford University.

ZARATHUSHTI IDENTITY

"Zarathushti Existence in the Contemporary World" is the theme of the Congress. This theme raises the question "who is a Zarathushti?"

Ms. Roshan Rivetna will provide a backdrop of history and demographics of Zarathushtis in North America. Then we will ask our audience a few questions about their perceptions and beliefs on Zarathushti Identity, using an electronic Audience Response System. This will give us an immediate preview of audience opinion on key questions.

This will be followed by the audience interaction with a panel of Zarathushtis. The panel is composed of the following members:

Ervad Dr. Jehan Bagli
Dr. Parastu Dubash
Mr. Jimmy Kumana
Mr. Mohsen Zandieh

Ervad Cawas Desai
Dr. Ali Jafarey
Ms. Ferzin Patel
Ervad Kobad Zarolia

Dr. Keki Dadachanji will moderate this session.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE: MOTIVATION, INSPIRATION, ACTION!

An intergenerational panel will showcase community activism from the local to the global arena. The session will focus on two key themes: community involvement and identity. Panelists will share personal experiences as well as showcase projects, reporting both successes and challenges. They will suggest solutions and directions. They will share with us what motivated them to stay involved with the community, and provide guidance to the audience members who may be experiencing isolation. The panel will be composed of:

Ervad Poruz Khambatta
Ms. Trity Pourbahrami

Ms. Farzin Avari
Ms. Behrose Taraporewalla

Mr. Navroz Gandhi will moderate this session.

The session will be followed by "speed-friending", which will allow Zarathushtis to reconnect with old friends and find new ones.

COMBATING POVERTY IN OUR COMMUNITIES ABROAD

Poverty among Zarathushtis in small villages and big cities of Gujarat is a serious problem. This session will seek to raise awareness of the scope of this issue and what is already being done to address it. Which models are most practical, sustainable and scalable? Further, we will discuss ways the North American Zarathushti community can participate in a solution. The format will weave in audio visual presentations and audience participation into an expert panel discussion.

Our panel includes anti-poverty veterans such as **Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly** and **Ms. Armene Modi** and will be moderated by **Mr. Kaizad Cama**.

REGISTER ONLINE NOW
[HTTP://NAZC.ZAGNY.ORG/REGISTRATION/](http://NAZC.ZAGNY.ORG/REGISTRATION/)

PRESERVING PERSIAN HERITAGE

Persian historical sites and Zarathushti pilgrimage sites will deteriorate unless we act to preserve them. The status of these sites, and work being done to preserve them, will be presented. Speakers to discuss Historical sites and Iranian treasures will include **Prof. Richard Nelson Frye**, and another scholar to be confirmed. **Mr. Alahyar Dabestani** and **Mr. Behmard Khosravi** also will speak on the status of Zarathushti pilgrimage sites and their status.

The session will be moderated by **Ms. Shirin Khosravi**.

THE SUDREH PUSHI / NAVJOTE CEREMONY AND THE KUSHTI RITUAL

The Navjote/Sudreh Pushi ceremony is the most personal of Zarathushti ceremonies, and the Kushti ritual a simple and personal daily Zarathushti ritual, yet their significance in Zarathushti religiosity is not properly understood.

Dr. Jehan Bagli, will discuss the significance and the role of the prayers used in the Navjote Ceremony, including the prayers of the Kushti ritual. **Prof. Kaikhosrov Irani**, will describe what occurred at his Navjote Ceremony, and how it was a meaningful experience that changed his life as a Zarathushti. **Ms. Nahid Dashtaki**, will talk about the Sudreh Pushi ceremony from an Iranian Zarathushti and young adult's point of view, and its significance in her life. The last panelist will try to make the Kushti ritual a meaningful experience by performing the ritual using an English translation.

Dr. Lovji Cama will moderate this session.

The above program and speakers may change for reasons beyond the control of the XVI NAZC 2012 organizers.

"FROM THEN TO NOW" : EXHIBITION

The exhibit room's theme, "From Then to Now", is in keeping with the Congress theme.

The exhibit room will showcase depictions of the separate tracks in the program. Panels of Heritage sites in Iran, Parsi contribution to India, Core Beliefs, philanthropic work done by Zarathushtis, all promise to make a lasting impression. A montage of photographs will highlight Zarathushti contribution to Education, Industry, Commerce, and community service in the western diaspora. The material will also celebrate our youth, entrepreneurs, artists and children of the community. Collages of Darbe Mehrs of North America will highlight our presence on this continent. A collection of artifacts will bring our culture and traditions to life, as well as take the delegates on a nostalgic walk down memory lane.

Visitors will have an opportunity to take photographs against a landscape of ancient Persepolis, as well as speak with our volunteers about the unique objects that represent our culture and traditions.

Nawaz Merchant nawazmerchant@yahoo.com 908-237-0116
Arnaz Maneckshana amanecksha@aol.com 201-342-7283

ADVERTISEMENT AND SPONSORSHIP

The Congress provides a platform for our small community to generate a strong sense of identity, and encourages renewal in our faith, beliefs and character.

Organizing such an event requires substantial funds and we are seeking contributions from our philanthropic individuals and businesses to meet the program expenses. We have defined four (4) levels of sponsorship program – Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Each level of sponsorship is associated with certain privileges.

Bronze	\$3,500
Silver	\$5,000
Gold	\$10,000
Platinum	\$15,000

On the occasion of the Congress we shall be publishing a Program Brochure. This provides a great opportunity for businesses and professionals to advertise their services and products to the community all over North America.

Back Cover	\$5,000
Inside Front Full Cover	\$3,000
Inside Back Full Cover	\$3,000
Full Page	\$1,000
Half Page	\$600
Quarter Page	\$400

For complete details of privileges visit our website or call
Kerman Dukandar 732- 742-2275 treasurer@zagny.org OR
Homi D. Gandhi 201-445-3917 homi@zagny.org

WZCC DAY 2012

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) NY Chapter is organizing WZCC DAY 2012 on August 01, 2012, the day preceding the Congress. The day's program will be highlighted on the website address below in the days ahead.

For further details, please visit www.WZCCDAY2012.com

FEZANA 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The year 2012 marks the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the founding of FEZANA. To mark this event, an evening of Celebrations, Dinner and Dance will be organized during the Congress on Thursday August 02, 2012.

This is an Add-On event and you can register for it on the website. This event is also available for non-registered guests.

ZARATHUSHTI MARKETPLACE

Calling all vendors to participate in the Zarathushti Marketplace. A unique opportunity to showcase, advertise and sell your products at the North American Zarathushti Congress.

A special space equipped with presentation tables has been designated which will be open throughout the entire Congress. Preference will be given to Zarathushti related items, but any other non-food items will also be considered.

For application forms and complete details please contact
Astad Clubwala 973-238-0630 clubwala@aol.com.

SOCIAL EVENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

We are working tirelessly to ensure unforgettable productions of entertainment programs throughout the Congress.

On Wednesday the youth are arranging a fun filled Pre-Congress Night. No registration is necessary for this event.

Starting Thursday August 02, we will feature a "Grand Opening Ceremony" and on Saturday evening; a Gala Banquet featuring talent from across our community, and conclude on Sunday with a eloquent retrospective Closing Ceremony and Passing of the Torch.

FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER & ENTERTAINMENT

Friday night will feature a fun-filled evening with entertainment and great food. Performances include live music of Adi Tamboli and other entertainment. This is an Add-On event and you can register for it on the website. This event is also available for non-registered guests.

AN EVENING IN NEW YORK CITY.

New York offers something for everyone; enjoy Manhattan on your own from afternoon to late night, choosing from a limitless variety of activities. Tour the city's most spectacular landmarks. Cruise around the island and enjoy breathtaking views of the New York skyline, or enjoy a Broadway show.

Participants will have the opportunity an evening in New York City. The Congress organizers will arrange for buses to take participants from the hotel to NYC and back.

Please check our website for links to websites, interesting shows and performances and ticketing information.

For all general queries about NAZC 2012, please contact

GEV NENTIN

Congress Co-Chair NAZC 2012
& President, ZAGNY

gev@zagny.org
Tel: 1-631-462-0763

FERZIN PATEL


Congress Co-Chair NAZC 2012

ferzin@zagny.org
Tel: 1- 845-354-5163

CONNECT WITH US ON

<http://nazc.zagny.org>

 <http://facebook.com/nazc2012>

 http://twitter.com/_zagny



NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI COMMUNITY AWARDS

The FEZANA Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for the following awards:

Outstanding Zarathushti Student Award
Outstanding Young Zarathushti Award
Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award
Excellence in Business or Profession Award
Humanitarian Service Award
Outstanding Zarathushti Award
North American Mobeds Council (NAMC) Community Services Award*

Awards will be presented at the 16th North American Congress, which will be held in New York in August 2012.

Deadlines

March 21st

Send an email to Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami and Navroz Gandhi identifying the award category for which you are planning to submit an application. The actual individual's name, while welcome, is not important at this stage.

April 30th

All nomination applications due. Nomination packages and complete instructions can be downloaded from <http://www.fezana.org>.

This is your opportunity to recognize and showcase the enormous talent and expertise that lies within our community, and to nominate those individuals who deserve recognition for either their community service or professional work.

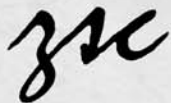
* Please note that while the FEZANA Awards Committee is collecting applications for the NAMC Community Services Award, the actual award recipient for this award will be determined by a committee selected by the NAMC.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami
Navroz Gandhi
Co-Chairs, FEZANA Awards Committee

sverahrami@yahoo.com
navroz_gandhi@yahoo.com

June 29 - July 3, 2012
York University

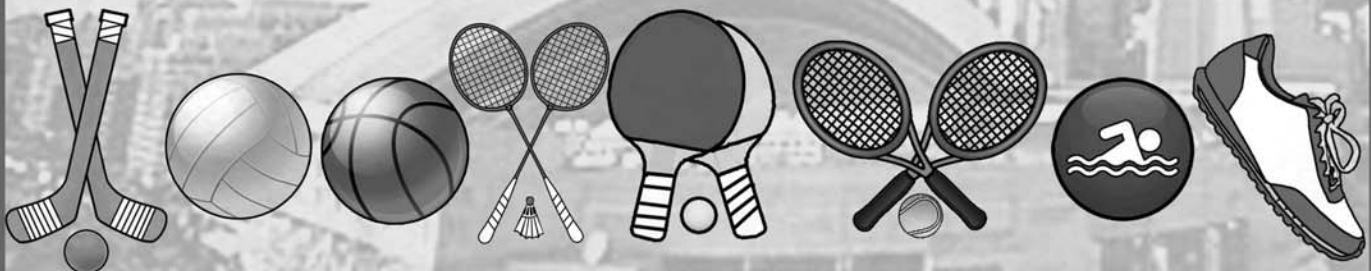


zoroastrian sports committee



Zoroastrian Society of Ontario

13th Zoroastrian Games TORONTO 2012



Registration details coming soon

www.zathletics.com

www.zso.org

www.facebook.com/ZoroastrianGames13

www.twitter.com/ZGames2012



FEZANA Update

FEZANA

DONATIONS RECEIVED - DECEMBER 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2011

FEZANA GENERAL FUND

Kersi Hansotia, Mississauga, ON	\$ 1,001
Jimmy Dholoo, Gaithersburg, MD	501
Jerina Kapoor, Saratoga, CA	500
Zal Bilimoria, San Francisco, CA	250
Darius Sorabji, Campbell, CA	200
Dr. Lovji Cama, Tenaflly, NJ	200
Jehangir Jasavala, Modesto, CA	200
Rustom Damania, Clovis, CA	101
Aspi Bharucha, Cincinnati, OH	100
Behram Shroff, McLean, VA	100
Farrokh & Katy Cooper, Fair Oaks, CA	100
Rustum & Navaz Bankwalla, Washington, DC	100
Gooloo S. Wunderlich, Annadale, VA	100
Burjor & Vira Santoke, Huntington Beach, CA	51
Boman Najmi, Potomac, MD	50
Darius Captain, Granite Bay, CA	50
Kamran Behroozi, Flower Mound, TX	31
Yezdyar Kaoosji, Fresno, CA	30
Freny Deboo, Deerfield Beach, FL	25

3,690

JOURNAL FUND

Rustom Kevala, Sun City Center, FL	45
------------------------------------	----

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Feroze & Anahita Sidhwa, Coppell, TX	1,000
Estate of Dr. Phiroze M. Ichhaporia, Montreal, QC	947
	1,947

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Farshid Salamati, Castro Valley, CA	250
-------------------------------------	-----

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FUND

Firoz & Firoza Mistry, Chapel Hill, NC	50
Yazdi Bharucha, Markham, ON	30
	80

FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Zoroastrian Association of California	\$ 3,386
Porus Austin, Stockton, CA	1,000
Aderbad & Sanobar Tamboli, Sugar Land, TX	500
Behram & Farieda Irani, Plano, TX	1,000
Farokh & Maneck Contractor, Kenner, LA	250
Dr. Lovji Cama, Tenaflly, NJ	200
Jehangir Bharucha, Redmond, WA	200
Porus Dinshaw, Mississauga, ON	200
ZAOM - Zoroastrian Association of Michigan	200
Mani Banker, Mississauga, ON	189
Kershaw Khumbatta, Sugar Land, TX	101
Dhun May, Santa Monica, CA (In memory of Golchehr Kaypour Hakhamaneshi)	101
Burjor & Vira Santoke, Huntington Beach, CA	100
Homai & Arvand Kasad, Belmont, CA	100
Kavasji Homji, Etobicoke, ON	100
Navroze Kabraji, Mississauga, ON	100
Nazneen Warden, Sugar Land, TX	100
Pervin & Adi Davar, Falls Church, VA	100
Tanaz & Farrokh Bhandari, Toronto, ON	95
Sharookh Lala, Farmington Hills, MI	75
Zarir Shroff, Toronto, ON	51
Binaifer & Navroz Dabu, Syracuse, NY	50
Debbie A. Marolia, Hartland, WI	50
Jimmy Patel, Mississauga, ON	50
Villoo & Parvez Gonda, Houston, TX	50
Khurshed & Katy Patel, Milton, ON	48
Darius Captain, Granite Bay, CA	25
Sharukh Petigara, North Vancouver, BC	25
	8,446

CREATIVE & PERFORMING ARTS SCHOLARSHIP

Porus & Hutokshi Cooper, Cherry Hill, NJ	150
Darius Captain, Granite Bay, CA	25
	175

GRAND TOTAL

\$ 14,633



FEZANA Update

Calendar of Festivals

Calendar of Festivals	MARCH 2012 to SEPTEMBER 2012	
FRAVARDEGAN/PHANJEH/HAMASPATHMEDAYEM Gahambar		
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Thursday March 15 - Tuesday, March 20	(F)
CHAR-SHAMBE SOORI (Heralding the New Year)		
<i>Tuesday Prior to Naurooz</i>	Tuesday, March 20	(F)
NAUROOZ or JAMSHEDI NAUROOZ (New Year)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Wednesday, March 21	(F)
KHORDAD SAL (Birth anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khorshed</i>	Monday, March 26	(F)
PIR E HERISHT FESTIVAL		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Amardad-Khorshed</i>	Tuesday, March 27-Saturday March 31	(F)
AVA ARDVISOOR NU PARAB		
<i>Mah Avan, Roz Avan</i>	Friday, February 24	(K)
	Sunday, March 25	(S)
FRAVARDEGAN (Remembrance of the Departed)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Sunday, April, 8	(F)
JASHNE ARDIBESHTGAN		
<i>Mah Ardibesht, Roz Ardibehesht</i>	Sunday, April 22	(F)
ATASH-NU-PARAB		
<i>Mah Adar, Roz Adar,</i>	Saturday, March 24	(K)
	Monday, April 23	(S)
MAIDYOZAREM GAHAMBAR		
<i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed-Dae-pa-Meher</i>	Monday, April 30 - Friday, May 4	(F)
ZARATHUSHT-NO-DISO (Death anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz, Khorshed</i>	Wednesday, April 25	(K)
	Friday, May 25	(S)
DAE MAH NU JASHAN		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Fravardin</i>	Thursday, May 3	(K)
	Saturday, June 2	(S)
MAIDHYAREM GAHAMBAR		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>	Monday, April 30 - Friday, May 4	(K)
	Wednesday, May 30 - Sunday, June 3	(S)
PIR-E-SABZ Festival		
<i>Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Thursday, June 14 - Monday, June 18.	(F)
PIR-E-BANU Festival		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>	Wednesday, July 4 - Sunday July 8	(F)
MAIDYOSHEM GAHAMBAR		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Dae pa-Meher</i>	Friday, June 29 - Tuesday, July 3	(F)
JASHNE TIRGAN		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Tir</i>	Sunday, July 1	(F)
FRAVARDINGAN/MUKTAD/HAMAPATHMEDAYEM Gahambar		
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Saturday, July 14 - Wednesday July 18	(K)
	Monday August 13 - Friday, August 17 (Pateti)	(S)
NAU ROOZ		
<i>Mah Fravadin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Thursday, July 19	(K)
	Saturday, August 18	(S)
KHORDAD SAL (Birth anniversary of Zarathushtra)		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad</i>	Tuesday, July 18	(K)
	Thursday, August 23	(S)
FRAVARDIN JASHAN		
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	Monday, August 23	(K)
	Wednesday, September 5	(S)

S=Shenshai; K=Kadmi; F=Fasli)



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

"Education is one of the most important predictors - in fact - the most important predictor of many forms of political and social participation from voting to association membership, to chairing a local committee, to hosting a dinner party, to giving blood. In short, education is an extremely powerful predictor of civic engagement" **R. Putnam.**

Education and training continue to fuel the engine of social mobility and contribute to social cohesion and integration in our ever more diverse societies and cultures. The benefits of education go beyond the economic returns---- contributing also to better health, citizenship, lower crime rates.

In this 25th anniversary year, FEZANA has received two new



endowments. Purvez and Aban Rustomji have endowed a

scholarship of \$5,000 for undergraduate studies and the Trust of Morvorid Guiv has endowed two scholarships of \$1,000 each to a graduate and undergraduate scholar. Cawas Kapadia has joined his brother Behram in increasing the Kapadia endowment to enable us to give a scholarship of \$2,000 to an undergraduate student. To commemorate the

25th anniversary Celeste and Jerry Kheradi have augmented the Kheradi scholarship to the FEZANA SCHOLAR to \$10,000 for this year only.

Investment in our youth is an investment in the future of the Zarathushti community. The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope. You have given hope to our youth, And your faith and trust in the FEZANA Academic Scholarship program by establishing endowment funds is much appreciated. Thank you.

Your continued financial support in this economically difficult period and your encouragement is of utmost importance to maintain this program and sustain the hope of the next generation.

Dolly Dastoor Ph.D

Chair, FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

In 2005 Drs Behram and Silloo Kapadia of Pittsburgh had endowed a \$25,000 scholarship for



undergraduate students based on academic standing and need. The endowment fund was a gift to the Zarathushti community in the loving memory of their parents **Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia** from their four children and their families. Both their parents had limited opportunities for education in their own lives and, as a consequence, they were not able to achieve the full potential of their natural talents and abilities. Partly because of that, they strived to provide the fullest education opportunities for their children, and instilled in them an awareness of the value and benefits of a good education. They achieved that goal by hard work in managing a family business and endured countless

personal sacrifices. The scholarship fund is a collective expression of the gratitude to their parents in a way that would perpetuate their vision and generosity. It was their hope that additional contributions would increase the amount of the endowment so that larger scholarship grants can be awarded in future years. Cawas Kapadia has added \$15,000 to the corpus allowing the scholarship amount to be increased to \$2,000.



NEW FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS



PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Living and Learning to Better our Lives

With great love and boundless energy, Purvez Shiavax Rustomji (1938-2010) lived to better our lives. His belief that we are duty bound to give was a result of the many opportunities he received. Those who knew him as an adult recall a visionary thinker who was dedicated to his community, but those who knew him as a child knew that Purvez was spirited to the point of delinquency. He had a knack of getting into trouble, but he was a good natured rebel. From age five to age 10, he sampled schools: in Quetta, St. Frances Grammar; in Karachi, BVS, St Patrick's and Karachi Grammar; and then finally Boys Town boarding school in Nasik. When Partition took place, Purvez was forced to come home to Quetta where he was now a teen and spoke not a word of English.

He claimed his life changed when he saw a 9 year old Aban, and he relentlessly pursued her for the rest of his life, but he still failed everything but PE and Geometry. With the help of the private tutor Father Cordeiro who recognized Purvez's gifts with mathematics, he would make up for the lost year's work. Eventually, Purvez had an

opportunity to apply for an **American Field Service (AFS)** scholarship, and he spent a year with the Booker family in Delaware where he learned the value of discipline and the structure of education.

He returned to Pakistan to work on his Bachelors in Civil Engineering and to marry Aban. Immediately, they left to work on their Masters in the US. Both set of parents pooled their assets, but it was not enough for tuition and board for a Masters in the US, so Purvez got loans from two trusts in Pakistan – *the Khajurina Trust and Eduljee Dinshaw Trust*. It took several years to repay the loans, and Purvez was always mindful that not only did he need to repay the loan, but he needed to do to repay his debts to the people who understood that a wild boy required patience. Purvez always had a list of those who helped him and spent a lifetime marveling at their generosity.

His main efforts to promote education in the Zoroastrian community were on a local, national, and international stage. For the World Congress in Houston in 2000, Purvez and Aban developed Zoroastrian Field Service or ZFS, which was modeled after his experience in AFS. ZFS funded 30 young students from India, Pakistan, Iran, and Australia to attend the Congress. With the profits of the 2000 Congress, Purvez and Homi Davier started the **Congress Legacy Scholarships** for Houston students. On the national stage, Purvez was a keen advocate of the FEZANA scholarship program, and he drafted a Scholarship Endowment Policy. Purvez had an iconic standing in the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, and he was involved in every aspect of community building. His business success also allowed him to have the freedom to dedicate time and resources to the Association.

In keeping with his philosophy that to give is to receive, the Rustomji family offers a scholarship opportunity for Zarathushti students who live and learn to better our lives.

THE PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI SCHOLARSHIP

Starting with the 2012-2013 competition, a \$5000 scholarship will be awarded to an undergraduate Zarathushti student who has obtained admission to an institution of higher learning in the US and Canada and who has been in North America for 12 months. This scholarship offers financial assistance to qualified Zarathushti students who demonstrate financial need and academic achievement. Eligible students include high school seniors who will be enrolling in college as well as those who are currently enrolled in college and are residents of the US or Canada for 12 months. Recipients of the scholarship may re-apply for an additional year of support; however, they will compete with the rest of the applicant pool and, thus, are not guaranteed an award.



NEW FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

MORVARID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

In an effort to support the education of Zarathushtis in North America, the Trust of Morvarid Guiv has established under the auspices of FEZANA two annual scholarships of \$1000 each to an undergraduate student and a graduate student who are in good academic standing and demonstrate financial need. Each scholarship will provide a \$1000 stipend to the selected candidate.

MORVARID GUIV

Morvarid Guiv was born in Yazd, Iran, to Ardeshir Mehraban Keikhosrovi and Doulat Rostam. She married Rostam Guiv at age 16 in Yazd and they later moved to Tehran. They had no children. Her husband was in the import and export business and also engaged in real estate endeavors.



Morvarid Guiv encouraged her husband in philanthropic work and together they created the **Rostam Guiv Foundation**. Morvarid Guiv and Rostam Guiv built numerous schools and buildings throughout their life in Iran, India, and America. In Tehran Pars, they built a housing colony that they rented to needy Zarathushtis at a very reasonable cost; they built two schools and one Zarathushti Maabad in Tehran Pars, to name only a few of the projects to which they dedicated themselves. The Foundation made possible the building of a five-story commercial and residential center in Tehran. The Rostam Guiv Foundation supports numerous charities and entities, including the Dar-e-Mehrs in New York, Washington DC, Chicago, IL, Los Angeles, CA, San Jose, CA, Sydney, Australia, and Vancouver, Canada.

Morvarid Guiv and her husband spent their later years in La Jolla, CA. Rostam Guiv passed away on October 7, 1980, and seven years later, on January 11, 1987, Morvarid Guiv passed away. She established the Morvarid Guiv Trust to support the Zarathushti community, including the publication of various Zarathushti publications.

The MEHRABAN and MORVORID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP THE FEZANA SCHOLAR



Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi born in Yezd, Iran, always stressed the importance of a good education.

This scholarship is in their memory for the excellent education they provided for their five children: Rostam, Sohrab, Jehangir, Farangis Izedian and Manijeh Nadjmi.

**To commemorate the 25th Anniversary of
FEZANA**

**Dr. and Mrs Jerry Kheradi has increased
the award for the FEZANA Scholar to \$10,000 for 2012-2013 only**





FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

MEHRABAN AND MOROVID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP—THE FEZANA SCHOLAR (\$5,000)

**DINSHA MISTREE, Ph.D. CANDIDATE,
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
Dissertation on Bureaucratic Accountability**

Scholarship

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Politics at Princeton University, broadly interested in corruption and the political economy of development, with a special focus on bureaucratic accountability in India. In my dissertation, I am analyzing the Indian Institutes of Technology – among the few institutions which ‘work’ in the Indian government. My research involves extensive travel and I am very grateful to FEZANA, and to the Kheradi family in particular, for supporting this dissertation research.

Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to meet Zarathushtis all over the world. I am continuously amazed by the generosity and the genuine affection that people in our community are so quick to demonstrate. Unfortunately, with all of the acrimony and the divisive community politics that also takes place, I believe that the things that make our community special – the generosity, the warmth, the history, etc. – do not get the billing that they deserve. This problem is further exacerbated because our youth oftentimes see the fighting and the bickering without being exposed to the virtuous qualities which make people so passionate about our community to begin with.

It is for this reason that I have sought to give back by focusing on our community’s strengths. In addition to occasionally writing for FEZANA Journal, I have presented at several congresses now, usually focusing on topics which make me proud to be a Zarathushti. I have worked closely with a Zarathushti charity which helps poor people in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Iran. I also regularly counsel Zarathushti students applying for universities and graduate schools. Currently, I am working with a co-religionist on building **AgriaryConnect**, a website which will let Zarathushtis abroad support agiary rituals online. This project was borne from the recognition that Zarathushtis outside of India and Iran are having greater difficulty getting their rituals performed, while priests in India are choosing more lucrative secular jobs instead of learning the higher rituals. Going forward, I plan to repay the pride and privileges I enjoy from being a member of this community by sharing those same benefits with others.



FEZANA 20th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$4,000)

SHEENA DRIVER JOHN F. KENNEDY UNIVERSITY Masters in Business Administration with an emphasis in Leadership.

How can one describe the feeling when hard work, determination and the strong will to get a good education get rewarded with a much needed scholarship? Both my mother and I lost our jobs to the economic recession in 2010 and found it extremely difficult to pay for my school education, leaving my prospects of completing my Master’s Degree in jeopardy. I did not want to get discouraged and stop mid-way due to lack of funds, so I applied for the FEZANA scholarship to get the financial assistance to complete my education and it could not have been offered to me at a better time. I am 4 classes away from completing my course and needed this financial boost to help me complete my education and receive a Master’s Degree in Business Administration with an emphasis on leadership from John F. Kennedy University.

Vision of the Community.

We have all read more than just a few e-mails and articles about Zarathushtis and their fun-loving traits; every now-and-then, we also receive informative newsletters that serve to educate us about our Zarathusti heritage. But how often do we think about the future of our community (for those of us who do) without seeing a red flag waving at the far end of our vision? Not often! As a community, we have nurtured several achievers and we have always taken pride in





FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

associating ourselves with such individuals. But the pride in the achievements of our fellow Zarathushtis may have stymied our prospects in the future. This is not to say that we have only basked in the glory of our past, but that we haven't done enough to build on the heritage left behind by our forefathers. The competition around us is fierce and with the technological prowess of the human race the world has become a very small place. If the adage, "*Survival of the fittest*," fits more appropriately to anything but Darwin's "Theory of Evolution," it would have to be in the 21st century. We pride ourselves in the quality of individuals that we breed, as opposed to the quantity which for most other communities is the yardstick of their progress but what we are really lacking is the vision that our ancestors had! I am not one to make tall claims without following them up with a practical and achievable *Plan Of Action*. Yes, POA; where '**P**' stand for **Pride**, '**O**' for **Organization** and '**A**' for **Awareness**.

Let us take pride in our heritage and history, let us organize our behavior and let us create awareness about Zoroastrianism as a way of life.

Scholarship

FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2000)



BOUSTANI MAZIYAR, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SCIENCE (GIS) AND REMOTE SENSING, MASTER OF SCIENCE,

I was born to a Zarathushti family in Tehran, Iran, and I attended University in Iran where I obtained a bachelors degree in Surveying. In 2010, I moved to United States to continue my education. I am currently pursuing a Masters degree in Geographic Information Science (GIScience) and Remote Sensing at California State University, Northridge, where I am also working as research assistant. During the time I was in Iran, I actively participated in the Zoroastrian youth group. Ever since I moved to the U.S., I have greatly missed that special sense of community among Zarathushtis. I desire to use

the skill and knowledge I learned in school to connect with Zarathushtis all around the world. The FEZANA scholarship will help me to continue pursuing this goal and it is my hope that I may one day contribute back to the Zarathushti community. I would like to thank the FEZANA committee for selecting me as this year's scholarship recipient.

AZVINA MEHTA DOCTORATE IN NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE, CANADIAN COLLEGE OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE, TORONTO.



I am extremely grateful to FEZANA for finding me a worthy candidate for the "All Round Academic Achievement Award". This scholarship will aid me in pursuing my Doctorate degree in Naturopathic Medicine at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto starting January of 2012. This four year intensive post-graduate program blends modern scientific knowledge with natural and traditional forms of medicine including; acupuncture, herbology, homeopathy and clinical nutrition. Since I obtained my degree in Nursing from McMaster University in 2009 I have been working primarily in the area of pediatrics. I am excited to begin my journey in natural medicine to help bridge the gap between conventional and alternative medicine.

My vision for the Zarathushti community would be for it to grow further in strength and to support charitable and righteousness causes. Charity to others has always been the strength of the Zarathushti community and I wish that we continue to be charitable not only to our own community but also towards the larger society we live in. While our community has held a strong sense of

identity in the past and managed to preserve its religion under very trying circumstances, it is a community of dwindling numbers. Therefore, I hope in the future more people could come forward to support events to provide a good mix of social and religious gatherings in order to preserve our heritage and provide an avenue to pass it onto the future generation. Once again I thank FEZANA for their generous support.



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS



AZAR NOORIFIROOZ
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY,
NORTHRIDGE, PHYSICAL
THERAPY, MASTER'S DEGREE,

Scholarship

The world is more meaningful when we have a goal to follow. I knew my life was designed to have one but I never knew it would be "education".

When I started school I found myself interested in studying. Studying hard became a habit. When I got accepted in "National University Entry Exam" in Iran in 1998 with a ranking of 757 from a couple of million participants, it was my first biggest accomplishment. I realized that education might be my goal and the meaning of my life.

When I was 17 years old, and months before my big exam I lost my father, but I continued studying hard, even harder to get accepted to one of the government funded schools which were free but needed better scores.

Years later, when we decided to come to USA, I was working hard until the last day in Iran to make myself well prepared for the big change. Although the future was vague and entering the unknown world looked scary, I was hoping I could find at least the opportunity to be able to accomplish some of my educational goals in USA.

When I got accepted in school in 2010, again I was experiencing one of the other most painful events of my life. I lost my kind mother after 3 years of struggle with cancer. She had been hoping we could follow our dreams here, but she was not given enough time to at least hear that I got accepted to the university.

After going to governmental funded schools, paying tuition was a big challenge, in addition to struggling with huge cultural differences, and all other complications of studying in graduate school in second language and working part time. Thus covering even a small portion of my tuition was a big relief. Having this fund for Zoroastrian students, specially for new immigrants like me with all complications and issues is very helpful. I hope all other immigrant students, can benefit from this scholarship at some point in their academic life. I also hope that I can find an opportunity to give to other people by helping them in the future.

As an Iranian Zarathushti I have always been involved in community and cultural events. I giving my time as volunteer in "KANOON E DANESHJOYAN E ZARTOSHTI (Zoroastrian student club)" and "AMORDAD"- the first independent Zarathushti weekly journal in Iran. I am proud to play a role in helping "good thought", "good word" and "good deed"-the best philosophy of life- find their deserved place between different groups of Iranian people.



NAVZAD DABU, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF
COMMUNICATION.

I am a student at Boston University in the College of Communication. As of this semester I will be studying film production, screenwriting, directing, and cinema studies, in hopes to enter a career as a filmmaker. The expense of studying at BU is extremely high, not to mention the cost of living in Boston, and the added budgets for the short films I actively produce. I am currently in production of a short film for which I am the producer, co-writer, co-director, co-editor and actor. The expected release for the film, *In A Day*, is April 2012. The FEZANA scholarship is a substantial source of money that goes a long way toward the required equipment such as cameras, lenses, sound and lighting. Anything that raises the quality of work is gratefully accepted.

As a member of a very small Zarathushti community in Syracuse, my involvement has always remained minimal, but not removed. My family has always given back, sometimes more than they have taken and that is a value that will never be forgotten. They have also taught me to know where I come from.



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

My Zarathushti ancestry is strong and storied and I am a product of their talents, their network, and their vision. It is an honor to be introduced into a list of scholars who have all had a great passion for their art, and the drive to do anything to succeed in it. The FEZANA Program is responsible for helping these scholars, such as my brother and myself, to achieve that success and I will forever be appreciative of that. The FEZANA scholarship is a reminder of who I am and that I will be supported wherever I choose to go and I will soon give back to this cause full-heartedly. My days in the cinema will grow from my education and I thank the Zarathushti community for being a part of it.

Scholarship



SHIAVAX RAO, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, LIFE SCIENCES,

My name is Shiavax Rao and I am greatly honored to be the recipient of the FEZANA Academic Scholarship. I am extremely proud to be a member of the Zarathushti Community, and greatly thankful and humbled to the FEZANA Committee for this award.

I am currently enrolled in the Life Sciences program at the University of Toronto working to attain my *Bachelor of Science degree*. My future ambition is to pursue medicine and I am well aware that achieving this goal will definitely be challenging. I am confident that my positive attitude, hard work, and dedication along with this great award from FEZANA will help me excel in post-secondary education and beyond. I am determined to grow as an individual while helping others during their difficult times, and would always go a long way

in giving back to my community and society.

My vision of the Zarathushti community is very positive. Zoroastrianism is the oldest monotheistic religion, which is surviving today in spite of a downward trajectory in population. In my opinion, the Zarathushti youth of today is very keen on continuing Zarathushti traditions, customs and practices. This kind of enthusiasm is precisely what can help reverse the population decline. I am optimistic and can envision this growth as I am one of these young individuals eager to preserve the true spirit of the Zarathushti religion. The youth of today will be the mature adults of the next decade and the hope of strengthening the future of our community lies in our hands.

ERVAD BAHROM FIROZGARY, RICE UNIVERSITY, TX, WIESS SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCE.

I am now a sophomore attending Rice University in Houston, Texas at the Wiess School of Natural Sciences to obtain a *Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and Cellular Biology*. I stay on campus at Rice, near Houston's medical center. I work and conduct research at the Baylor College of Medicine under Dr. Prema Robinson, and this year we have published a paper where I am a co-author. I will also embark on another research venture at the University of Texas's MD Anderson Cancer Research Facility this year as well, under Dr. Sajid Haque. I am very thankful for FEZANA's generosity with this opportunity and the entire Zarathushti community for yet again humbling me with this award! I am extremely grateful for being able to use this scholarship to help me get one step closer to my educational goal. I am blessed with a loving family and a supportive Zarathushti community filled with people who are always willing to help. I am indebted to FEZANA and all my fellow Zarathushtis and hope that we continue to thrive no matter what society we live in. Hard work really does pay off, and no matter how difficult the journey, we can pave our own pathways with Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.



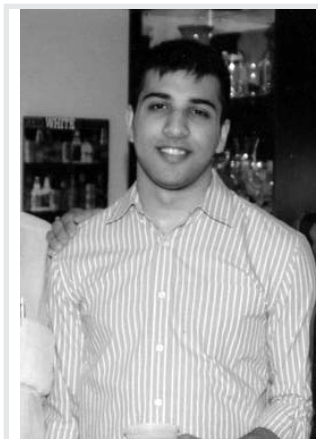
"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela



FEZANA SCHOLARS

KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDING FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT (\$1,000)



ERVAD CYRUS DARA PANTHAKKE, SIR WILFRED LAURIER UNIVERSITY, WATERLOO, CANADA. HONOURS, ECONOMICS PROGRAM WITH A SPECIALTY IN ACCOUNTING

Scholarship

First of all, I would like to thank the Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowment Scholarship and the FEZANA Academic Scholarship Program for the honor of being chosen for this scholarship award. This scholarship means a lot to me and will greatly assist me in achieving my academic goals.

I am currently a second year undergraduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. in the Honours Economics program with a Specialty in Accounting. My goal is to become a Chartered Accountant.

At the age of 9, I took the first step in fulfilling my duty to our great Zarathushti religion by becoming a fully ordained Mobed. Since then, I continue to fulfill my obligations in Toronto by participating in Jashans, Muktad days, performing Navjotes and other ceremonies. I am also fortunate for the recognition I received from the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) in this field.

As more and more young Zarathushtis are born in or coming to North America, it is our responsibility to spread the Zarathushti doctrine and culture and maintain our age old traditions and practices. The Greater Toronto Area has been doing this for many years with religious education classes. The main lesson the children learn is the Golden Rule: Do Unto Others As You Would Have Done Unto Yourself. It is with them that our religion will be carried into the future, and it is my vision that they will use their future influence and power to restore our religion to its previous glory. I hope to live in a community that continues to be respected and continues to produce successful and selfless members of society. *Ushta Te.*

PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$3,000)



BAHMAN ZOHOUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LA CHEMICAL ENGINEERING,

My name is Bahman Zohour. I am a senior student in Chemical Engineering at University of California, Los Angeles, graduating in summer of 2012. I am planning to attend graduate school for the same major at UCLA starting next year. My ultimate goal is to achieve my PHD degree in Chemical Engineering.

Last year (2010-2011) I was able to achieve the top ranking of my junior class in Chemical Engineering at UCLA, and that enabled me to join three most honorable engineering societies which are: **AICHE** (American Institute of Chemical Engineers), **Tau Beta Pi**, and **Aldpes (Alpha Lambda Delta Phi Eta Sigma)**. The main goal of my catalysis research is to be able to produce and optimize a fiber catalyst which can be used in natural gas and gasoline related processes and they will help us to have a greener environment by producing much less hazardous gases.

Being able to apply my ideas and create something new has been my biggest dream. My goal is to study hard, do research, and offer new designs to make changes. I am also very passionate about teaching and I definitely want to teach to our younger generation and show them the right path to achieve the best in their life.

I strongly believe that it is our good thoughts, good deeds, and good words that makes our Zarathushti society successful and one of a kind. We shall always be the best Ahura Mazda's believers and Ashu Zartosht's followers in life.

Once again I want to thank FEZANA, Khorshed Panthaky Endowment Scholarship and the committee for recognizing me and giving me the honor to receive this scholarship.



FEZANA SCHOLARS

ZENIA TARAPORE, WILFRED LAURIER UNIVERSITY , Honours Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing and International Business)



I am a fourth year Honours Bachelor of Business Administration student at Wilfrid Laurier University, with a specialization in Marketing and International Business. Being an active member of the Laurier community, I am the Promotions Executive for Students Offering Support (SOS), and a Mentor for the School of Business and Economics.

I am very honoured to receive the Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarship for Undergraduate Studies this year. This is the kind of assistance that goes a long way to aid in a student's future of hard work and success.

We are not a community until we give back to one another and help our fellow Zarathushtis looking for assistance. I propose that we start a **"Helping Hands"** program where a group of volunteers can offer their services to people in need. Doctors could offer their phone numbers to be called when people's children are sick, or a lawyer could offer lower rates for legal advice. We should create a place where volunteers offer child care, and elder care for people within the community. There could be an economic planning board that helps with financial situations, or an arbitration board that helps with disputes. A community is like a family, so it is our job to support one another in the burdens that we all face throughout our lives. Thank you to FEZANA for their generosity, I look forward to continuing to give back to our Zarathushti community.

Scholarship

KERSHAW K. KHUMBATTA, P.C. Certified Public Accountants

Business and Individual Tax Planning,
Accounting and Tax Preparations,
Federal and State Payroll Processing & Tax Audits,

Kershaw K. Khumbatta, CPA
Nazneen K. Khumbatta, Office Manager.

1455 HIGHWAY 6 SOUTH
Sugar Land, Texas 77478

Tel: 281-313-8006
Fax: 281-313-8036

cpa@khumbattapc.com



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2012-2013)

Applications are invited for the

FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS SIX FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

(THREE FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND THREE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS)

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

FEZANA 20th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

THE KHORSHED PANTHAKY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

BANOOBAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

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

Scholarships for the academic year 2012-2013 will be awarded in September 2012.

ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

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

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

The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed Scholarship of \$5,000 and the 20th anniversary FEZANA Scholarshi will be awarded to post graduate students for scholastic excellence

The Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship of \$10,000 will be awarded to qualified undergraduate student who demonstrate financial need together with academic achievement

The Morvorid Guiv Endowed Scholarships of \$1000 will be awarded to one graduate and one undergraduate student who demonstrates financial need together with academic excellence

The Khorshed Panthaky Endowed Scholarships of \$3,000 each to undergraduate students who demonstrates financial need together with academic excellence

0The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowed Scholarship of \$2,000 will be awarded for undergraduate studies to a student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

Application: Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at www.fezana.org or from Dr Dolly Dastoor (dollydastoor@sympatico.ca)

Completed application forms should be sent electronically by August 1, 2012
academicscholarship@fezana.org



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

CYRUS R. FATAKIA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



The Cyrus R. Fatakia Scholarship was initiated in 2008 in loving memory of Cyrus Fatakia, by his parents Rohinton and Erna Fatakia and his brother Darius Fatakia. Cyrus was a loving, bright, caring human being who would go out of his way to help others. He had a sense of humor, an infectious smile, a generous and loving spirit. He will forever live in the hearts of all who knew and loved him. Cyrus passed away in October of 2006 at a very early age. He had a Bachelor's Degree in Aerospace Engineering and a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was actively involved in the ZAC Youth community.

The Zoroastrian Association of California awards the Cyrus R. Fatakia Memorial Scholarship in August of each year to deserving students. The scholarship provides Zarthushti students with financial assistance to study at a college /university of their choice in the United States, and selection is based on both academic achievement as well as financial need.

Applications must be received no later than June 30th of the current year, to be eligible for the scholarship. Please contact Vira Santoke (vsantoke@zacla.org) for further information on how to apply for this scholarship.

2011 RECIPIENTS OF THE ABOVE SCHOLARSHIPS

DANISH BHANDARA:

Danish is a freshman at the Irvine Valley College with a double major in Nursing and Theatre Arts. She placed 1st in the Orange County Role-About Festival in 2010 for original monologue. She received the Irvine High School Heritage Award for achievement and dedication to Theater Arts in 2011 and was awarded the High School Jacket Letter for her contribution to the Irvine High School Choir. Danish is a talented, personable young lady with a great potential to be successful in her career.

ROSHEEN BIRDIE:

Rosheen is a recent immigrant to the United States from Pakistan. She is enrolled in U.C. Berkeley and intends to pursue a career in Medicine. She worked at the Parsi General Hospital in Karachi, assisting elderly patients, organizing a musical program and raising funds to improve their condition. In her young life she has worked with the *KARA Health Welfare Association* to provide aid to flood victims in Pakistan and worked at the Sindh Institute of Urology Transplantation where she has assisted patients and doctors and raised funds to improve the Urology facilities. She is an outstanding student and an excellent social worker who has rendered dedicated service to the sick, the aged and the needy. Rosheen is indeed very deserving of this Scholarship to pursue her goals in the Medical field.

BENAZ COLABEWALA:

Benaz has an A.S. degree in Physics from the Orange Coast College (OCC) in Costa Mesa, CA, and is currently enrolled in Cal State University, Long Beach. At OCC, Benaz

was on the Dean's List, and was also a member of the Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society. She won first place in an Intramural speech tournament held at her school. Benaz is extremely hard-working and we wish her the very best of success in all her future endeavors.

SHEENA DRIVER:

Sheena is currently enrolled in the John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, CA in the Master's program in Business Administration with a focus on Leadership and Strategic Business Planning. She received the Business Studies Outstanding Student Award after completing her Bachelor's Degree at this University. Sheena is hard-working, and is a stellar academic and business professional. (Sheena is the recipient of the **FEZANA Scholarship award 2011-2012**).

ROYA SALAMAT:

Roya is a young Zarthushti from Iran. She has a B.S. in Math from the Alzahra University in Iran. She has been admitted into the Computer Science Master's program at the Cal State Fullerton University in California. Roya has a passion for Art and has challenged herself to move beyond the norm of the typical graphic design student. She is highly motivated and pursues the call of the creative drive within, by finding a way to combine Graphic and Web Design with Computer Science. She is on her way to becoming an artist with a professional attitude as well as having motivation for self growth.

ROHAN VILMAS

Rohan who has roots in India, has been admitted to the U.C. San Diego School of Medicine. He has completed

his B.A. degree in Human Biology at Stanford University, CA. Most recently, he has worked as a Research Assistant in the Neonatology Department of the Lucille Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford School of Medicine. Rohan also did a Summer Fellowship program for a community Health Project, with the International Humanitarian Foundation in Southern India. Rohan hopes to become a leader in engaging the Zarthushti community in support of global health services, focusing on under-served areas in the U.S. and in the developing world. Rohan is an outstanding student, a promising scientist and clinician with great potential and promise. Rohan's willingness to take the initiative, his intelligence, interpersonal skills and motivation, all make him an excellent candidate for this scholarship. We are proud to present him with the Cyrus R. Fatakia Memorial Scholarship and wish Rohan the very best in the pursuit of his career.

ROSTAM ZOHOOR:

Rostam Zohoor is enrolled at the University of CA, Berkeley. He is working towards a Mechanical Engineering Degree. He has been tutoring college students in Math, Physics and Chemistry and is a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). His professor, J. Karl Hendricks was very impressed with Rostam's abilities and gave him the opportunity to join his Research Group in the Fall of 2011. Rostam is a bright, hardworking, self-driven and imaginative student destined to be an outstanding Mechanical Engineer and a leader in his field.



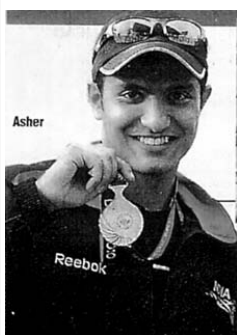
EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS

EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS 2011 RECIPIENTS



SHERRY PATEL, 18, MISSISSAUGA, CANADA **COMPETITIVE SWIMMING**

Sherry Patel has earned many accolades and medals in her blossoming swimming career including winning Gold in the 50meter butterfly, Silver in the 100m butterfly, and Bronze in the 100m breaststroke at the Ontario Cup competition. Having just completed a week long training camp prior to the Ontario Cup competition which included three to four workouts a day, and still being able to medal at the Ontario Cup is a good sign for her leading into faster meets this year. In the next few months she will be perfecting her technique in each of her strokes as she heads to Montreal for the Canadian Inter-university championships in February and the 2012 Olympic Trials in March and the Summer Nationals in July.



ASHER NORIA, 19, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, TRAP SHOOTING

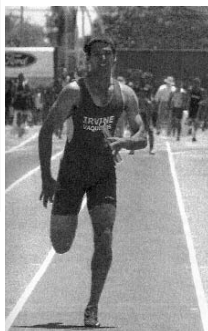
Asher Noria has achieved high rankings and wins in Trap Shooting since 2005. "My goal is to keep winning laurels for my country and my Zoroastrian community. This is year I have four senior world cups, and three junior world cups to look forward to, and if I shoot to my best ability, I will be knocking on the doors for London."

Asher's greatest achievements to date include: Best Young Achiever of the Year 2010 (Sahara Sports Awards); Silver Medal at the Commonwealth Games, Delhi 2010; Bronze Medal at the Asian Games, Guangzhou 2010; Titled Junior World Champion 2010 after shooting a world record at the World Championships, Munich 2010; Bronze Medal (junior) at the World Championships at Serbia 2011; and, Champion of Champions Trophy, Porpetto 2011



SHIRIN HOMIAR, 15, TORONTO, CANADA, TENNIS

Shirin Homiar is a junior ranked tennis player in Ontario. She plays for the Brampton Tennis Club and has participated in ICTA Tournaments as well as other tournaments and has won Singles as well as Doubles Matches and is keen on winning many more accolades in the future.



KAMRON SHAHBAHRAMI, 18, IRVINE, CALIFORNIA, TRACK AND FIELD

Until now, I have endured and overcome obstacles that have allowed me to achieve my greatest accomplishments yet. Daily practices and seasonal track meets throughout high school have culminated into the blessing of being recruited to a division 1 track team at the University of California, Berkeley. Along with track and field, campouts, merit badges, and leadership opportunities led me on the path to Eagle, the highest rank awarded to a boy scout. In 2012, I plan to demonstrate my athleticism in the 100m and 200m races during the outdoor season of the Pac-12 conference. I hope to end my Spring semester with a good GPA and possibly intern for a lab this summer.



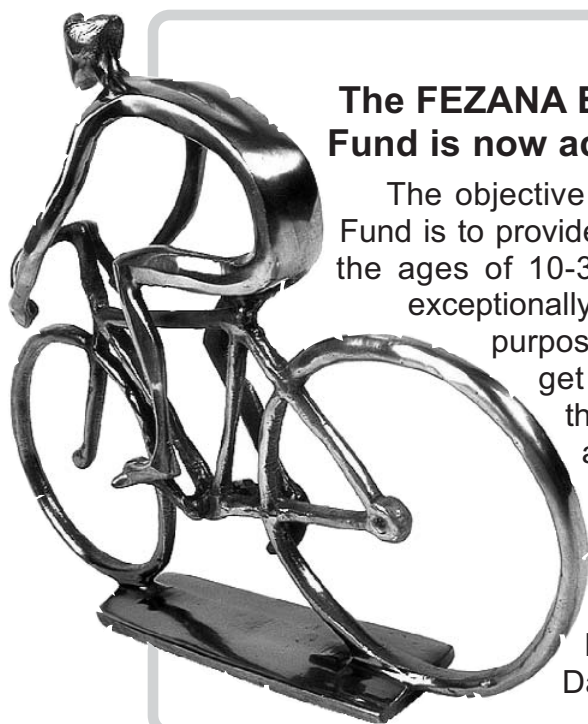


FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS



SANAEA MAHAVA, 15, EDMONTON, CANADA, FIGURE SKATING

Among many honors and accolades, Sanaea Mahava has received 2 Gold medals, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze in Figure Skating. She is committed to training for Figure Skating 6 days a week and wishes to continue training with professional coach.



The FEZANA Excellence In Sports Scholarship (EXISS) Fund is now accepting applications for 2012.

The objective of the Excellence in Sports Scholarship (EXISS) Fund is to provide financial support to young Zarathushtis (between the ages of 10-30, living in North America) who are performing exceptionally and at highly recognized levels in any sport. The purpose of the scholarship is to enable the recipients to get world-class training and/or study with experts in their field and thus fine tune and enhance their talent and capabilities. The deadline for applications is Friday, June 1st, 2012.

If you or someone you know may benefit from this scholarship, we encourage you to apply. For more details, please visit <http://www.fezana.org/exiss-fund> or contact Shiroy Dadachanji at exissfund@fezana.org

Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarship

The Scholarship is awarded to any Zarathushti student studying for a graduate degree in Zoroastrianism at a credited university. Students interested in applying for the scholarship should contact the following to obtain the necessary application form. Applications may be made any time during the year and the scholarship approval process will take about two months.

**Dr. Lovji Cama, Chair,
FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee,
ldcama@gmail.com
201-569-7359**



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS



THE ZOROASTRIAN SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIPS

On October 16, 2011, members of the Scholarship Committee (Homi Italia, Bella Tata, Farrokh Namdaran, Dinaz Mizan and Fariborz Rahnmoon) presented scholarship awards to Vista Namdarian, Xenita Anklesaria, Rozmin Irani, Azita Kermani and Bizhan Irani.

These scholarships are given annually to students who have completed Grade XII and have not only achieved good marks as laid down in the scholarship criteria, but have also met other conditions laid down by the Committee. The scholarships are aimed at assisting the students go to a college, university or institution of their choice, for further studies. On that Sunday, the event commenced at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, Burnaby, BC. and with prayers by Mobeds Firdos Balsara and Arzan Balsara in memory of the late Jamshed Pavri's death anniversary. Thereafter, a super presentation on Zoroastrian history was prepared and made by Jehangir Darabna.

Photo above from left: Azita Kermani, Xerius Anklesaria on behalf of his sister, Xenita, Bizhan Irani, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Homi Italia, Farrokh Namdaran, Vista Namdarian, Dinaz Mizan, Rozmin Irani and Bella Tata



MEHRABAN & PARIDOKHT ZARTOSHTY EDUCATION FUND SCHOLARSHIPS

To celebrate Mehrgan and after the death anniversary prayers performed by Mobed Jamshid Jamshidi for the late Arbab Rustam Guiv, on October 2, 2011 scholarship awards under the Mehraban & Paridokht Zartoshty Education Fund Association were presented by Bella Tata, Fariborz Rahnmoon and Homi Italia. Directors of this Association are Homa Zartoshty, Kourosh Mehin, Fariborz Rahnmoon, Bella Tata, Khodadad Lohrasb and Shirin Abadi.

Bella Tata gave a short talk on the scholarships and encouraged students who are in the first or later years

of university/college/technical institution to apply next year by visiting the web site

<http://www.ancientiran.com>. Congratulations to the awardees: Parmis Behmardi, Benafsha Kapadia and Kayras Irani, whose scholarship presentations were made directly to them or to their family member in their absence.

In photo above L to R: Fariborz Rahnmoon, Benafsha Kapadia, Bella Tata, Parmida Behmardi on behalf of sister Parmis, Kayras Irani



Congress 2000 legacy



The Seventh World Congress 2000 held in Houston, Texas, was co-hosted by The Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) and Federation of Zoroastrian Association of North America (FEZANA). The success of Congress 2000 can be measured in many aspects; one being that it provided us with a residual positive balance of funds. These funds were equally divided between ZAH & FEZANA with a decision that they would be used to preserve the history of the Congress 2000 and to recognize the academic achievers in our community.

At ZAH the funds were ear marked for the "Congress 2000 Legacy Awards". In its sixth year since its inception, the award recognizes two young Zarathushti students who have achieved excellence in their scholastic studies, in extra-curricular activities and who have made a contribution to the Zarathushti community.

Three years back one of the award was named as "*Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award*" in memory of a courageous young Houstonian who lost his battle with cancer. Cyrus parents, Rohinton and Thrity Desai have each year generously donated to the Congress Legacy Awards.

Past Congress Legacy Awardees:

2011 – Viraf Nariman, Mitra Khumbatta and Fram Haveliwalla as Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award

2010 –Zal Bhathena and Bahrom Firozgary as Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award

2009 - Naomi Bhappu and Hormazd Minwalla as Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award

2008 - Darius Byramji and Zarina Pundole

2007 - Veera Sidhwa and Nikita Bhappu



2011 Legacy Awardees



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

FEZANA PERFORMING & CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

RECIPIENTS FOR 2011

Kaipa Bharucha:

To further her training as a flautist at Wilfred Laurier
University Canada, \$1,000

Delzin Choksey:

To continue her Graduate Program MFA – Animation
Academy of Art University, San Francisco, CA \$1,000

APPLICATION FORM 2012

OBJECTIVES

The FEZANA Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship (P&CAS) provides financial support to Zarathushtis who are performing artists in music, drama, etc. or practice other creative art forms like literature, poetry, fine arts, sculpture, painting, etc. The purpose of the scholarship is to enable the recipients to study with experts in their field and thus fine tune and enhance their talent and capabilities, BUT NOT FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN THE ABOVE FIELDS.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must (1) profess and practice the Zarathushti faith (2) be high school graduates (3) be legal residents or citizens of USA or Canada. Foreign students holding legal status in USA or Canada may also apply provided they have been in North America for at least one year. Awards will be determined on an annual basis by the judges chosen by the P&CAS Committee. Applicants will be eligible to receive a maximum of two awards, which may or may not be in consecutive years.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be judged on their academic preparation, and past record in their program of study, their commitment to pursue the chosen art form, their annual financial need, the assistance pledged by other sources, extra curricular activities and services performed for the Zarathushti community.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Application forms will be available on the FEZANA website or from the members of the P&CAS committee. However, applications cannot be submitted electronically as examples and proof of the applicants work (portfolio) will be required.

Five (5) copies of this application form with all attachments (including portfolio items) must be submitted by July 31, 2012 to

SHERAZADE F. MEHTA

5400 Preston Oaks Rd, #3048

Dallas TX 75254 (U.S.A.)

Tel: (972) 385-4847

e-mail: sherazadem@yahoo.com



FEZANA SCHOLARS

**ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON, INC.**

THE FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST

10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814

301 564-3726 / 301 774-0841

Scholarship



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

The US Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Organization supports the Fali Chothia Trust's scholarship program by contributing to this worthy cause. Donations made to the trust are tax exempt, and go directly toward the corpus of the fund. Individual members of the Board of Trustees absorb all administrative, mailing, and other fund-raising costs.

If you wish to make a donation to this worthy cause, please send a check made payable to "ZAMWI/Fali Chothia Charitable Trust" to: 10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814.

Thank you.

THE 2011- 2012 RECIPIENTS OF THE AWARDS

HOOMAN ATTAIE is pursuing a Master of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering at Youngstown State University after migrating to the US last year as a refugee from Iran. He struggles to make ends meet by working odd jobs, and is determined to give back to his community once he is established in his own career.

PARMIS BEHMARDI is currently enrolled in a Master of Information program at the University of Toronto. She has been active in extra curricular activities, including serving as president of the Zoroastrian Youth of British Columbia and volunteering in Zarathushti and community activities. She feels strongly that it is her responsibility to educate non-Zarathushtis about our religion, and takes every opportunity to do so.

MOBEDYAR MALCOLM COOPER attends the University of Delaware as a music major, and hopes to pursue a career in opera. Malcolm's performances have already taken him across the US and as far away as China. He is an ordained mobedyar, and spends

much of his time volunteering with community organizations.

SHEENA DRIVER is obtaining a Masters in Business Administration at John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, Ca. She lost her father at an early age and has held jobs since she was 16. Sheena has been active in Zarathushti community and charitable affairs in Northern California and in India. (Sheena is the recipient of the 2011 FEZANA 20th Anniversary endowment Scholarship)

PARISSA JAVEDANI, a four-time recipient, is in her fourth year in medical school at the Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine. In addition to keeping up with a demanding curriculum, Parissa finds time to be a leader and volunteer in numerous organizations. (Parisa Javedani was the FEZANA Scholar for 2008-09).

KAIZAD PATEL is pursuing a Masters in Environmental Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is passionate about nature and

preserving the environment and has been involved in organizations engaged in nature conservation research. He hopes to put his education to good use by working with issues such as risk assessment, nuclear installations, and as a general advocate for "profitability through sustainability."

ERVAD RAYOMAND RAVJI is studying psychology at the University of Illinois. He intends to pursue a career in health care, and is involved in volunteer activities with hospitals and medical associations. He is a navar, maratab, and proudly carries out his priestly duties by serving his local Zoroastrian community in Chicago.

ROHAN VILMS is pursuing a Doctor of Medicine degree at the University of California. His childhood in Mumbai opened his eyes to the plight of the impoverished and he is passionate about focusing his career on improving health conditions in developing countries. He has served as a fellow with a rural community health project in south India.



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

Promoting vitality within the Zoroastrian community and awareness in the wider world

Young Zarathushtis are invited to apply for Vakhshoori Scholarships for the academic year of 2012-2013. The Vakhshoori Scholarship Committee looks forward to receiving your applications



Vakhshoori Foundation

THE MISSION

Promoting leadership among Zarathushti youth in academia, public life, and the arts.

This one-time grant helps finance undergraduate or graduate study by talented young Zarathushtis. Awards range between \$10,000 and \$1,000. The applicant must be a young Zarathushti enrolled in or accepted to an accredited institution of higher learning. If s/he is already enrolled, s/he must provide a tuition statement for the fall semester of 2012; if accepted but not yet enrolled, s/he must provide an acceptance letter. Candidates of diverse nationalities are welcomed to apply. All completed applications must be postmarked by June 15, 2012. For a copy of the application, please see <http://www.vakhshoori.org>. For specific questions, please contact Koorosh Vakhshoori at scholarship@vakhshoori.org

SEVEN SCHOLARSHIPS WERE AWARDED IN 2011-2012



AKHSHOORI FOUNDATION



Vakhshoori Foundation

Promoting leadership among Zoroastrian youth in academia, public life, and the arts

We were extremely happy with the quality of our applicants for 2011.

- **Ms. Sunoz 'Sunny' Soroosh: \$10,000**
 - o **Master of Public Health, Columbia University**
- **Mr. Bahman Sotoodian: \$5,000**
 - o **MD, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada**
- **Mr. Arsham Shahlari: \$5,000**
 - o **Ph.D in Mechanical Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Madison**
- **Ms. Sanaiya Sarkari: \$4,000**
 - o **B.S. in Biomedical Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology**
- **Mr. Bahrom Firozgari: \$3,000**
 - o **B.S. in Biochemistry & Cellular Biology, Rice University**
- **Ms. Shirin Sardar: \$2,000**
 - o **Ph.D in Computational Applied Mathematics, Rice University**
- **Ervad Farhan Panthaki: \$1,000**
 - o **B. Sc. in Mechanical Engineering, University of Waterloo, Canada**

Each winner has shown exceptional leadership in his or her respective academic field, community, and life in general. Here are their biographies in brief. We invite you to visit www.vakhshoori.org to view short video clips that some of the winners have provided detailing their personal views and life experiences.

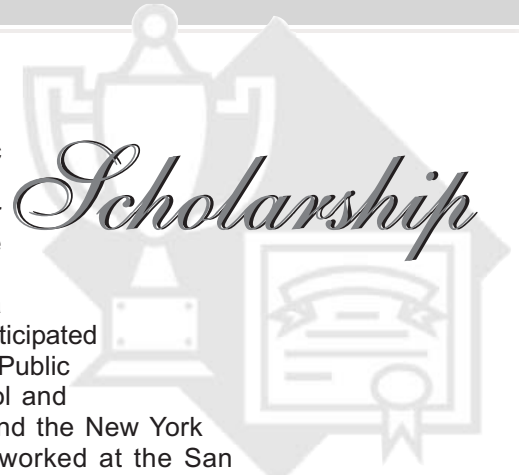
Koorosh Vakhshoori

Member of Vakhshoori Scholarship Committee



FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS

Vakhshoori Scholarship Recipients for the Academic Year 2011-2012



SUNOZ "SUNNY" SOROOSH is a second year Masters of Public Health student at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in the Socio Medical Sciences' Health Promotion Track. She did her undergraduate education at the University of California, Berkeley where she graduated with honors and also received a degree in Public Health.



She is an Iranian-American Zarathushti and a native of San Jose, California. Sunoz has participated in several prestigious internship programs in Public Health with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and the New York City Department of Health. She has also worked at the San Mateo County Department of Health and the International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs. She has worked in several health-related fields including HIV/AIDS, Diabetes Prevention, Emergency Preparedness, Occupational Safety/Health, and Geriatric Health. Sunoz has presented her research at national conferences, including the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students. She is a recipient of the 2010 Laura Jane Buck Memorial Scholarship from the Iranian-American Scholarship Fund and the Community Scholars Award Scholarship from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Her educational goals include obtaining a nursing degree and PhD, and becoming both a Public Health Nurse and a college professor. She hopes to work and do research in minority communities,

specifically her own Zarathushti community, to promote healthy behaviors and reduce preventable diseases. It is her goal to help eliminate the health disparities that exist in the United States today. In her spare time, Sunoz enjoys all types of dancing, especially Persian dance!

Sunoz is very passionate about her religion, and studied Zoroastrianism at UC Berkeley with Professor Martin Schwartz during her time there. She feels very thankful and blessed to be the recipient of the Vakhshoori Scholarship, as it will help her to reach her educational and career goals. Her biggest inspirations are her parents, because they came to the U.S. from Iran as teenagers and were able to become very educated and successful in their careers, despite the various challenges they faced in coming to a new country. She hopes to be as successful as they are someday.

BAHMAN SOTOODIAN was born and brought up in a Zarathushti family in Tehran. At the age of 17, he left Iran in search of a brighter future. For four months, he resided on his own in India where he completed his grade 12 and learned to converse in English. After immigrating to Vancouver, Canada, he studied Electronic Engineering at Simon Fraser University. While working part time and studying, his educational and research achievements brought upon him numerous scholarships that further motivated him to pursue his exciting vision. During his final year of study with the assistance of his colleagues, he satisfied his inner sense of curiosity and innovation by designing and patenting a device which may impact dentistry in the near future. However, through following the footsteps of great role models, his parents, Mr. Sotoodian found a new passion in his life. Through shadowing his dad and volunteering at different hospitals nationally and internationally, he gained valuable experiences that inspired him to embrace medicine for his future career. Bahman has just commenced his clerkship rotations at University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Besides the joy of studying, he spends his spare time backpacking in different countries and volunteering for winter sports, skiing and snowboarding world cups.



As the past president of Zoroastrian Youth Organization of B.C., Bahman has greatly enjoyed being involved in his religious community and to serve in any capacity that is bounded to his limitations. He hopes that Zarathushti youth will revive our community, strength our unity and move the Zarathushti community towards a brighter future.



FEZANA SCHOLARS

ARSHAM SHAHLARI was born and raised in Iran in a Zarathushti family. He finished high school and attended two years of college in Iran. During his college years in Iran he was involved with the Center for Zarathushti Students. At this center he and other members of the center were involved



in the organization of the annual Zoroastrian Olympics in 2003, the annual Camp for Zarathushti teenagers in 2003, and the annual competition for religious research and Gatha study in 2003.

Scholarship

Arsham migrated from Iran to the United States at the age of twenty to be closer to relatives, and to achieve greater prosperity and happiness. He finished his undergraduate studies in the field of Mechanical Engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri-Rolla) with highest honors. He worked as a consultant to the environmental compliance industry for 6 months and to the pharmaceutical compliance industry for more than a year after finishing his undergraduate studies. After this working period, he decided to continue his studies in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Arsham's research topic for graduate studies is "Engine Knock Analysis", and he is performing this research as a

research assistant at the Engine Research Center at the UW-Madison. "The Engine Research Center (ERC) is a world-leading research and educational institution dedicated to investigating the fundamental thermo-physical processes that control combustion performance and the pollutant emissions formed during combustion in internal combustion engines." (The ERC webpage)

For the past seven years that Arsham has lived in the United States, he has been active within local Zarathushti community organizations, including ZAKA (the Zoroastrian Association of Kansas) and the California Zoroastrian Center in Southern California. **(ARSHAM IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP 2010-2011)**

SANAIYA SARKARI was born and raised in Bombay, India. She is currently a second



year undergraduate student in Biomedical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. While at Georgia Tech she has held many leadership positions and sat on several philanthropic boards. She served as Junior CPC Delegate for her sorority, Alpha Omega Epsilon. Sanaiya was also a Project Coordinator for Team Buzz and Tech Beautification Day. Sanaiya is part of Gamma Beta Phi honor society, and has done so well academically that she is on the Dean's List. She has also spent her summer interning at the Biomedical Engineering Department of Atlanta's Saint Joseph Hospital, performing preventive maintenance on medical equipment and learning more about advanced diagnostic medical devices.

In the upcoming semester, Sanaiya hopes to join a tissue engineering lab where she will gain research experience. Sanaiya is also excited to participate in the study abroad program as she enjoys traveling and learning about new cultures. **(SANAIYA IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP 2010-2011)**

ERVAD BAHROM FIROZGARY was born and raised in Houston, Texas and is



currently a sophomore at Rice University. The son of Mahnaaz and Farrokh Firozgari and grandson of Mobed Mehraban Firozgari, he is also an Ervad and has been actively participating in Jashans, Navjotes and Gahambars in the Houston Zoroastrian community. After graduating as the co-valedictorian of his high school, Bahrom is now studying biochemistry and cellular biology with the intent of attending medical school after he obtains his Bachelor of Science degree. Aside from academics, Bahrom is involved with Rice's club basketball team and is also a head academic mentor. When he is not on campus, he is involved with the Zoroastrian Association of Houston and its youth group, volunteering within the Houston community and also hosting various informative sessions regarding Zoroastrianism. Bahrom works in the Texas Medical Center at the Baylor College of Medicine in the department of infectious diseases. His goal is to help his generation become more proactive in the North American Zarathushti community. He intends to spread information about the religion not only within the Zarathushti community



FEZANA SCHOLARS

but also in the non-Zarathushti community by getting more involved with various religious and community organizations. **(BAHROM IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2011-12 AND 2010-2011 FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP)**

SHIRIN SARDAR was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. In 2005 she received her Bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics from the University of Tehran. Sardar continued her studies and in 2007 received her Master's degree in Theoretical Mathematics from Mazandaran University.



After graduating with her Master's degree, she immigrated to the United States. She spent the first two years pursuing various jobs which expanded her experience and gave her a different perspective on the many walks of life. Sardar considers these to have been golden days because she started with the most basic jobs and gradually progressed. Sardar learned how to communicate with people from different races, cultures, and ways of life.

After working at various physical jobs Sardar was accepted into the graduate program at Rice University studying Computational and Applied Mathematics. She has been studying for the past two and half years and loves it because of the challenging material. Her expected date of graduation is May 2014.

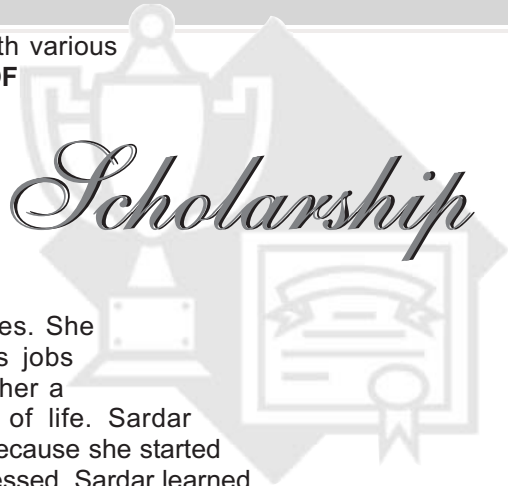
After Sardar graduates she hopes to work in industry for a short time and eventually open a small business (She is still searching and learning for this long term goal). Sardar is deeply connected with her Zarathushti heritage and she has contributed and will continue contributing by helping family members and friends immigrate and settle in the USA. One day she would also like to initiate a school for Zarathushtis from Pakistan, India and Iran. This school would be comparable to private schools with affordable prices and in its use of Zarathushti professionals.

ERVAD FARHAN PANTHAKI was born in Mumbai, India, and lived in Dubai, U.A.E for 7 years before moving to Mississauga, Canada in 2000. He is currently studying Honors Mechanical Engineering at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, and has completed his first co-op work term, with a company that manufactured structural, wing, and landing gear components for major commercial and military aircraft. While there, he also developed a mathematical model for calculating the natural frequency of the CNC machining tools as part of vibration analysis. Farhan is now starting his second year of the program, and performed extremely well in the first year, finishing 5th overall out of the 200 mechanical engineers in first term, and 2nd overall during the second term. Prior to this, during the year before high school graduation, Farhan was also accepted into the Da Vinci Engineering Enrichment Program (DEEP) held at the University of Toronto. Currently, his primary educational goal is to work towards graduating with Dean's Honors, a distinction that only few achieve..



Farhan does a lot of volunteer work leading or participating in many events. He currently has over 300 hours of service with various organizations such as Scouts Canada, and has been active within the different institutions he has attended. He is also actively involved in the Zarathushti community and after completing his Navar Ceremony in 2004, has performed numerous religious ceremonies and has even taken the role as head Dastoor during the Muktaad and Navroz prayers for the ZSO (Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) and the OZCF (Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation). Farhan has taken an extensive leadership role, volunteering as a leader for the OZCF Summer Camp, where along with the help of other young leaders, he planned, organized, and ran the camp for over 30 children involved with the foundation. After graduating from Religion Classes himself, Farhan became an assistant teacher, helping younger Zarathushtis learn more about the religion.

Currently, Farhan is assuming many leadership roles, the most notable of which is his selection to be the Mechanical Engineering Class Academic Representative and act as an ambassador to represent over 120 students. He gets involved wherever possible, and in recognition of his achievements, was selected to serve as a global scholar representing Canada at the Global Young Leaders Conference (GYLC) and the National Young Leaders Conference (NYLC), and presented with several other awards. He has achieved a lot of success through hard work and dedication.





OUR TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS GUEST EDITOR, KERSI BHIKHAJI SHROFF



My thoughts ran amuck when Dr. Dolly Dastoor asked me to seek worldwide contributions on transformation in the last twenty five years “of thought, ideas and actions in the social, political, legal and religious arenas of the Zarathushti community.” They ranged from our progressive faith portrayed in Dastur Dr. Dhalla’s “Our Perfecting World” to film director Stanley Kubrick’s nod to Zarathushtrian concepts in “2001: A Space Odyssey” (1968) which deployed Richard Strauss’s symphonic poem ‘Also sprach Zarathushtra’ to symbolize the transformative evolution of man to a higher being. The word ‘transformation’ comes from the Greek ‘metamorphosis’ – a change in form allowing adaptation to different environmental conditions, thus implying that the inevitable change resulting from human progress is a natural phenomenon. So, what was the need, I asked myself, to examine transformation that must occur and, in any case, wasn’t the buzz about the Mayan calendar predicting an end to the world on Dec 21, 2012? Would that not bring us to an apocalyptic end, sweeping the FEZANA Journal with it?

I was brought to my senses when the authors faithfully responded with highly articulate, philosophical and even lyrical articles on transformation. They analyzed and reflected upon the theme based on their experiences and thinking derived mainly through their Zarathushti roots, and by others on their attraction to the study of the Zarathushti faith. I can only marvel that they took to heart our request that they record “the birth of WAPIZ, the eighteen female Mobedyars, the transformation of the youth; ... the creation of a Zoroastrian identity; and an examination of the confluence of the distinct streams of the Zoroastrian Diaspora emanating from Iran, India, Pakistan, etc.” The result is an eclectic mix of articles on strong individual and collective transformations achieved through Zarathushti ethics; the transformation of our infrastructures; the philosophy and the spirit underlying transformations; innovative and unusual approaches to transformations; and, helping to achieve transformation for others. A trio of articles addresses the special case of Zarathushtis in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and their courageous efforts to transform while preserving their faith and traditions. By necessity, sorely debated issues of interfaith marriages, our methods of disposal of the deceased, loss of identity, the issue of acceptance; religious rituals; a budding Indian Parsi democracy enmeshed in controversy, etc., also are frankly presented. Clearly, the articles evidence Dr. Dhalla’s words that “our millennium of perfection lies ahead.”

My deepest appreciation to all the authors for their efforts and the valuable foresight and insight provided. To the readers I say, brew a strong cup of chai (or other favorite tippie) to accompany the feast that follows. And, to Dolly, I take my Parsi cap off for taking a reckless gamble with me.

Kersi Shroff, lately retired from the US Government’s Senior Executive Service, is enjoying life in Derwood, Maryland, observing nature’s transformative cycle in his verdant backyard, while occasionally dabbling in community and local affairs. visit kersi.shroff@gmail.com

**The 2nd North American Mama Parsi School Reunion
is to be held in Toronto, Canada
(29th June-1st July 2012).**

**This 3 day event is for just 140cdn, and it promises to be fun.
We invite all Mammians to come and join us to make this a roaring success.**

For inquiries and registration email

divadosi@gmail.com OR

mavalvala@rogers.com

You may also follow us on facebook.



DIMENSIONS OF INQUIRY ON RELIGION OR SOCIETY'S TRANSFORMATIONS

NATALIE R. GANDHI, Ph.D.

A MULTIPLE INQUIRY

Examining the many dimensions of transformation spurs our minds to see how much we can ask about religious change. As well, dimensions of inquiry help locate where we already know about the contours of a topic and have arrived at good answers to life's questions. Let me outline some abstract dimensions about religious or societal change and indicate one practical lesson for who is within our communities. Then, I will conclude with a reflection on spiritual transformation the religion of The Good Mind encourages for a cheerful outlook on life.

Listing conceivable ways in which religion or society may change is something one can start but not finish for good reason. For one, our imaginations are never as large, our horizons never as broad, as what we do not yet know. Second, A la Kurt Gödel, it is axiomatic that not all questions in formal systems have an answer. So then, how could we hope for an answer, for a complete list of ways a religion can transform, when inquiring here so informally?

OUR LATEST JOURNEY

Nonetheless, there is much to say for dimensions of inquiry readily at hand and each dimension could take lengthy exploration. Beginning analytically, consider abstraction's two grand eminences, space and time. Within our short lifetimes, a distinguished, venerable religion from antiquity has come from the land of its birthplace, Iran, and the land of its nurture and prominence, India, into the lands of freedom and economic opportunity into the West.

Is this the most revolutionary change we can have experienced? In being the bearers of the legacy the religion offers, are we more so on a revolutionary frontier than contemporaries inducted into historically shorter narratives?

Or, is a transition to the West a destiny rather than a change? Thirdly, could the transformation be a birthright that gives new energy to an ancient order of reason and goodness?

Two years ago I was startled to discover accounts of Indians (people from India itself) being stranded in pre-revolutionary America by shipping companies who did not wish to give laborers passage to return to their home country. Even in the new country's birth, some Indians were here and blended into North America, though their transport was not by way of the Mayflower.

Thus a perplexity arises for the first dimension of space: Did Zoroastrians arrive in the new world prior to our current generations of birth here? Over what range of spatial change should we inquire in learning about the Zoroastrian religion's transport or its people?

AN EARLIER SPREAD

We could well have directed spatial transformation to the path my grandfather took from Surat to Karachi, a distance of 739.4 miles by Google maps. Another choice of inquiry for spatial change would take the whole span across Western Iranian, Egypt, and the Central Asian planes. You can discover our ancestors produced glassware more fascinating than a glass from today's Crate and Barrel and moved goods over vast trades routes [see F. Demange, "Glass, Gliding & Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642)", Asia Society, June 30, 2007 and <http://asiasociety.org/files/glassgilding.jpg>]. Or, examine the Zoroastrian funerary artifacts lately discovered in China. [see China Archeology and Art Digest, Zoroastrianism in China, No. 13 (December 2000) and <http://www.chinaarchaeology.com/digest13.html>]

I know little of my grandfather's journey, yet his journey may be one thousands of Karachi-ites shared. Prof. Sumihara of Japan's Tenri University, remarked this January that Zoroastrian names are found on remote tombstones in Japan. His observation encourages our imagining that the spatial traverse across Asia's trade routes has even a wider parameter than realized when we view ancient glassware.

Then again, we are exploring a religion and in Zarathustra's cry for the Soul of the World, he had no geographic qualifier: The spatial range of the religion then is infinity and not a horizon of a human scale.

HORIZON OF TIME

When we wish to understand the transformations of a religion across time, what time span do we consider? In being a first monotheistic creed, an oldest creed, we really have impactful choices along the dimension of time; for we can inquire from the longest time spans to the shortest.

We can ask what change happens across thousands of years, asking how we may be just alike the people living one thousand years before Christ. Our sip from a Crate & Barrel glass is so alike the sip another took a thousands of years ago from that ancient glass. Or we can explore change across immediate time spans we experience today, imagining young people within an afternoon of protest during Iran's '98 summer uprising.

In speaking of time, do we speak of historical time or a larger metaphysical concept? If we attended to metaphysics, we discover more dimensions for exploring change. We find that fire, earth, air, and water are elements transformed in the picture of the universe held by ancient tradition. Mechanical, chemical, alchemical, occult, additive, complex, fractal, and emergent transformations may all have a different rendering in a Zoroastrian culture grounded



on a worldview assumption of four primordial elements than they might in modern metaphysical scenarios.

BEYOND THE NATURAL WORLD?

The nature of religion itself provides topics for inquiry on transformation. Does the practice of it transform as a natural phenomenon? As societies evolve, so do our religious concepts. And, does religion pertain only to the natural world or to a world that also has a supernatural part? If, contra Spinoza, there is a supernatural part; then is the supernatural world less subject to change than our natural world? Does our Zoroastrian version of an afterlife or an eternal life treat transformation differently than would, say a Mormon afterlife in which a heavenly-located follower recreates a new world? If things change in a Paradise beyond our lives here, what kind of change happens and how is it alike or different from the change suggested in other religious traditions?

Is our Deity a master-watchmaker who sets the scheme of life and nature into motion once for ensuing perpetuity or does the Deity wind the clock again each morning? Would our answer be similar to Descartes rationalist answer or different? How so? If the Deity is not Unchanging, does Ahura-Mazda forgive our mistakes in always the same manner or are his judgments subject to the nature and degree of our amends? If we become good, could He change a rather dire judgment and assess us more kindly? Or was His degree of kindness unlimited in the first instance?

RELIGION AND OTHER PURSUITS

Understanding the nature of religion also means setting it in contrast to other institutions. We can compare and contrast religion and political life in order to understand each better, and similarly we can compare and contrast religion with artistic endeavor, culture, science, legality, and more. In each contrast, we ask again how transformation pertains in order to find insight.

For example, we would not wish transformation of the Mona Lisa when we value the original remaining as it is and we can wonder if religion also offers us things we protect from change. Yet we value political life in democracies because of how it facilitates change in ruling power.

Democracies assist in transitions of power by election instead of by violence. Can religion also coordinate change in an adept way? For example, a person's transition through adolescence is aided by a religion's practice of a coming-of age ceremonies; in the Zoroastrian case, by a Navjot or Sudre-Pushi ceremony.

THE DYNAMICS DISTILLED

This analytic list of dimensions of inquiry on religious transformation can also suggest a corresponding list for exploring societal change. For an understanding of society we look to people, kinship, organization, culture, cuisine, and dress and we would want to understand change along all of these dimensions.

Summarizing the long list of dimensions for inquiry about transformation, along with a) space and time we include; b) whether transformation is welcomed or is abhorred; c) external to a person or people, or internal to a person or to a people; d) efficacious to what degree of change; e) efficacious at what level of concern; f) how ordered or disordered transformation may be; g) how aware or unaware we may be of change; h) whether change is smooth or discrete; i) how change may entail loss and growth or both of these; j) whether transformation pertains to a person or a community; k) if transformation is hidden or overt. The economic landscape behind religion or a society is no doubt fascinating for gaining depth about transformation.

Transformation naturally evokes its opposite, m) the immutable. Is a core or fixed point immutable in the face of transformation? Is this fixity a morality, a flourishing World, a creed, a belief system, a culture, a set of practices, a genetic line, a unvanquished Fire, a people transcending through time, or something with an ineffable aspect?

THE LEFT- BEHIND PRACTICES?

Seeing a transformation in the West helps those in the nurturing "Mother India". We read reports from afar of jostling over the "Who is a Zoroastrian" question and read that women in mixed-marriages contend in civic court to have their children recognized as within the Parsees of Mumbai. Naturally, at a remove from an up-front, up-close immersion in controversy and without "boots on the ground" we get concerned.

From a vantage point in the West, the controversy seems strained. Here we contend with receiving the simplest thing; just of recognition of an identity. Most people in North America do not know what or who a Zoroastrian or Parsee is. Oftentimes, our very human contemporaries are afraid of the unknown and we serve an endless function as good ambassadors, introducing people to our singular heritage.

Many who settled in the West hardly anticipated that our communities would adapt to mixed racial groups. Yet the community left the stern forebodings against change long ago and new generations find ways to take our Zoroastrian legacy forward. Many beloved non-Zoroastrians assist our communities here and we feel them so much a part of our undertakings.



So never despair when you see a young person full of energy and naivety who simply wishes the same love as given those close-to-kin racial extensions we enjoy; but take the short length of our lives to embrace and give the kindness to them that our aunties and uncles gave us. As a people, the Iranian Zarathushtis and the Parsis are distinctive in their kindness, their "niceness". Even foreign travelers have heard of this quality when we ourselves may not have realized how special and fleeting it is among the differing societies of humankind.

TRANSFORMATION TO THAT CHEERFUL OUTLOOK

Religions have adherents, societies are comprised of people, and transformations can work at the scale of the internal spiritual life of an individual. How may our inner minds, our mental dispositions, our spirits be transformed by a religion? H'sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher, praises the mind when it is in a quiet and calm state. In comparing the mind to water, he says, "... if a faint wind passes over the top of the water ...you no longer get a clear reflection ... The mind is the same way. If you guide it with reason, nourish it with clarity, and do not allow external objects to unbalance it, then it will be capable of determining right and wrong and resolving doubts."

Many have inner councils of despair or depression. The rate of depression in American society faces a daunting prospect if upcoming economic volatility gets even livelier. One noted thinker, the economist and Professor Julian Simon, offered a vigorous account of methodically lifting

oneself out of depression. Cultivation through habit-formation of the kind H'sun Tzu would approve was not a small part of Simon's counsel.

With a Zoroastrian worldview in mind, it is not hard to have a cheerful inner state. Though a person can succumb to being just frantic to read everything on the Internet with its wide-open floodgates for information, a Good Mind allows a person some repose.

The touch-points of a Zoroastrian ethos highlighting Light, Right, Truth, and Freshokereti, offer a very bright outlook for the World, for humanity, and for people. Cultivation of the Good Mind is an important help in life for our spirits, and brings an inner sunny disposition. It also offers a kinder view of people than H'sun Tzu's perspective, for we are similar to Ahura Mazda in sharing a divine aspect, that of Good Mindedness. In that, we are essentially good.

Natalie R. Gandhi, Ph.D.
is a Philosopher and Entrepreneur and serves currently as the Chair of WZCC-NY.

Copyright, Natalie Gandhi, 2012.



THE AMERICAN UROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION
HAS CONFERED THE DISTINGUISHED MENTOR AWARD
TO
DARIUS BAGLI, M.D.
HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN, TORONTO

This award is reflective of his track record of mentoring numerous research scholars and fellows by providing an excellent research environment, sharing his wealth of knowledge and impeccable standards and earning the respect and admiration of the entire

urologic research community,

Congratulations Dr Bagli, for all that you have contributed to the field of urology and the success of the Research Scholars Program. The Zarathushti community is proud of you.

**"WHAT IS TRANSFORMING THE ZARATHUSHTI COMMUNITY?"****NAWAZ MERCHANT, New York**

We are in the midst of a transformation. The Zarathushti community cannot help it. Some of our ancestors migrated to India about 1300 years ago, and others remained within a predominantly orthodox Muslim environment in Iran. Both underwent a transformation to adapt to their new contexts.

Over the last sixty years, Zarathushtis have migrated all over the world, to Europe and North America, to Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and even Peru. We have changed, within each environment, and yet we remain faithful to who we are. Ever since the fall of the Persian Empire, Zarathushtis have understood something that many communities do not. It's not about land, or acquisition, or dominance, which can provide security to a community. All those can be taken from us. But what if our 'home' is within us, part of the fabric of who we are? If our value proposition is such that other communities want us, even welcome us, well then! ***A community with such characteristics has no boundaries. We were global because of the changes forced upon us by history. We have been evolving as needed, ever since.***

Within North America, we exist in an environment that is very different from our 'old countries', or previous locations. How we immigrants (and children of immigrants) transform ourselves depends to a large part upon the context we find ourselves in. This shapes the pressures we need to respond to, on a daily basis. How is this new context characterized? The culture within North America is nuclear family driven, starkly individualistic (perhaps this is more characteristic of the US than Canada), market and marketing driven, determinedly diverse, and staunchly civic minded. How we adapt is driven by our intrinsic character, ethical code and reputation for bringing value, and that is a part of who we are.

CHANGE IN FAMILY STRUCTURE: Compared to the 'extended family' culture within India, life in the US is driven by the nuclear family. Corporate 'athletes' must pick up their roots and relocate every few years to accelerate their careers. The families that remained in Iran, perhaps from the necessity caused by being a minority within an orthodox society, may have developed strong bonds of fellowship for co-religionists. For Zarathushtis who have lived in India, Pakistan and Iran, where extended family is taken for granted, this focus on the nuclear family is a problem. So how can we adapt? Well, immigrants accustomed to wide family networks tend to bring strong networking skills with them. When we migrate to North America, we may feel isolated since tiny families of 'parent and child only' predominate. So we transform ourselves with associations and groups of friends who function as pseudo extended family members. It takes work. It takes

effort to visit Dar-e Mehrs, Gatha prayers, and Navroze functions, to drive hundreds of miles to meet other Zarathushtis, usually on the only days off from work that we have. It takes effort to make friends, to maintain connections, to host and to visit when invited. It even takes some effort to overcome disappointment when one does not click with another family, and to see this as just a happenstance, and not an affront to our personality. It takes a largesse and generosity of heart to know that others are as desperately busy with the raising of families in these micro units that are the norm in this new environment. For those who make the effort, it is well rewarded, as our bonds with our friends are deep and warmly affectionate. The immigrant's job is not only to survive. It is also, to make a new home.

The US culture is starkly individualistic, and ruled by the maxim *"if you don't value yourself, no-one else will"*. This means our more soft-spoken brethren find themselves at a disadvantage. They must represent themselves well, speak fluently and articulately, present themselves strongly and make a lot of eye contact! For individuals from traditional societies where playing together is more highly valued, this focus on individualism causes considerable stress. How can we adapt? Our intrinsic good nature and love of humor, jokes, friendship, and camaraderie allow us to build strong relationships with our new neighbors. Our integrity does not allow us to take advantage of anyone, so we feel compelled to return favors, share burdens, and help those around us. Our transparency and vociferous honesty may be unusual in many situations, but we are nevertheless, memorable for it. While the Canadian society may be more egalitarian, more determinedly equal, it is likely that relationships are still the key measure of acculturation. Business, career advancement and personal connections come from our networks, and we have the tools to build such networks in our family habits and training.

Individuals who grew up in the old countries tend to avoid making waves, or drawing public attention for fear of reprisals. In the North American context, speaking up is not only commended, in most positions it is required! This contradiction can cause hard-working (but publicity shy) immigrants to become frustrated with their lack of career progress. How can we adapt? Our core beliefs include the concept of 'good words', which includes seeking and listening to career advice and mentoring. When colleagues truly see us as individuals, they can get past our puzzling last names and the accent in our voices.

North America is also very market and marketing driven. Many find this aspect of American culture disconcerting, even shallow. When superficial traits like



appearance, and being attractive are taken as a measure of worth, alas, true goodness can be grossly undervalued. Nowhere does this matter more than in the choice of a life partner. Beware the trap of appearance, Zarathushti youth, for your happiness is better served by a person's inner worth than their outward gloss. Here too, our Zarathushti values serve us well. We have a litmus test from Asho Zarathushtra himself! Measure a person by their deeds, not what they claim they have done, but what you notice for yourself. Consider how they interact with those who are less fortunate, less glamorous, less wealthy. When we gauge those around us with this measure, we can see more than their exterior. Let us also learn to market ourselves well, for we owe this to ourselves. And let us always deliver value in our relationships, because anything less would contradict our self imposed standards of integrity.

The history of the United States explains why it is determinedly diverse. As a melting pot of many peoples, American and Canadian civil and legal structures afford many protections to minorities. This does not mean that, in practice, it is entirely secular. For example, in 'bible belt' states, Christianity retains considerable influence over membership to the local community. If our Zarathushti brethren cannot avail of community structures like childcare, networking, and social friendships because they do not attend local churches, are they to be secluded from the mainstream? They are not. They can reach out to local communities by participating in Parent Teacher Associations, fund-raisers, and a host of volunteer organizations. Zarathushtis have lived among the plethora of religions and castes that is India. Historically, Zarathushti traders flourished because of their ability to raise capital, take risks, and travel to far-flung realms. Curios and antiques abound in Zarathushti houses as evidence of this curiosity about other cultures. In the North American context, our natural acceptance of diversity is an advantage. Of course, for those of us whose world view is narrow and parochial, this is an opportunity for growth.

The culture in North America is also staunchly civic minded and attuned to equality in public affairs, as Alexis de Tocqueville vividly described almost two hundred years ago. Frequently, immigrants engage in more volunteerism in North America than they did in the old countries. Within the old countries, Zarathushtis are known to be somewhat eccentric in their love of neatness and cleanliness, and their outrage when public spaces are dirtied or defiled. Such civic mindedness is entirely in sync with the North American environment. Without making a conscious decision, many of us have adapted to the American context. We join affiliation groups, citizen's leagues, PTAs and advocacy organizations seamlessly, because it leverages something we already had within us, a need to partake in improving and maintaining our local communities.

Historically, immigrants have done well in North America, but not immediately. It took decades for the signage "No Irish need apply" to disappear from the windows of American stores. The small, geographically dispersed Zarathushti community has faced considerable pressures in this environment. However we are well suited to adapt to this environment because of cultural assets within our intrinsic identity. By leveraging the skills we have acquired, our friendly natures and our strong communal bonds, the Zarathushti community is redefining itself in North America. ***And that is transformation.***

Nawaz Merchant is a long time member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). She has been involved in a number of community activities such as literacy and mentoring. She lives with her husband and two teenage sons in NJ where she works for a bio-pharmaceutical manufacturer.



**I will work with you,
contact me...**

Yasmin Kevala

Mobile: 813 380-0064

Office: 813 634-0933

yasminhomes@verizon.net

www.tampabayupscalehomes.com

Tampa Bay area of Florida has **great home buying opportunities in all price ranges**, for every lifestyle: resort, retirement, or family living.



**Come and enjoy Florida,
the Sunshine State with us!**





THE ENDURING FLAME OF TRANSFORMATION

KEEPING FAITH & TRADITION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION

K. E. EDULJEE, Vancouver, Canada

THE FLAME & TRANSFORMATION

The Zarathushti faith is one of the oldest surviving continuous traditions on earth and successive ancient Zarathushti communities would have likely experienced several transformations over the millennia. However, regardless of what changed around the faith's beliefs and traditions – regardless of the vicissitudes those ancient communities faced – the core beliefs and traditions remained inviolate. The ever burning flame of the Mazdayasni Zarathushtrish was diligently handed down from one generation to the next, a symbol of endurance and transformation towards an ideal future, frasho-kereti – transformation with an enduring spirit (see notes 1 & 2).

CAN WE KEEP THE FLAME BURNING?

Whether the Zarathushti community of today can emerge from the present transformation with the faith's precious core ancient beliefs and traditions intact – with the flame burning brightly or even burning at all – remains an open question. Whether the Zarathushti community will emerge from this current transformation in a form that is Zarathushti in more than just name will depend very much on the spirit Zarathushtis impart to the current

transformation. For this present transformation presents special challenges.

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHALLENGES

In order to define these transformational challenges, this writer will place them in the context of the past great transformational challenge that took place following the Arab invasion of Iran. No community can know where it is going if it does not know from where it has come. If we have a clear and profound understanding of the past – both the good and the bad, the bright and the dark – we will be able to have a better depth of understanding of



Transformation



A plaque at the Atash Behram in Yazd, Iran states the flame has "been burning since about 470 CE and was transferred from Nahid-e-Pars temple to Ardakan, then to Yazd and to its present site."

what has helped sustain the community through previous transformations and what has not helped.

As we all know, during the past thousand three hundred years, the Zarathushti community has withstood great abuse and degradation. Those Zarathushtis who



remained or congregated in the villages of Yazd and Kerman, persevered and refused to abandon their traditions despite unimaginably adversity. Though separated by deserts, hostile forces and a few thousand miles, the communities in India and Iran maintained contact and provided mutual assistance. The Zarathushti migrants to India kept returning to Iran in search of orthodoxy. For hundreds of years both communities maintained traditions that included regularly performing religious ceremonies such as the Yasna ceremony. Today, what the Arabs and fanatics failed to extinguish over a thousand three hundred years the community may manage to extinguish from within – in just a single generation.

ORTHODOXY, TRADITION, RELEVANCE & THE SPIRIT OF TRANSFORMATION

Lament or anger will not stop this loss of tradition. Nor can orthodoxy and traditions survive on nostalgia alone. The question then remains, can orthodoxy and traditions remain relevant, meaningful and secure in today's transformation? This writer believes the affirmative is possible if the spirit of transformation is collaborative and not confrontational; if it is meaningful through deep understanding and does not rely on superficial compliance; if it is bright and positive. If so, the outcome will be a transformation to a community that maintains the rich heritage of what it means to be a Zarathushti.

To appreciate why this spirit is so essential to a successful transformation, there are valuable lessons we can learn from the past.

PAST REFORM PROPHETS SEPARATISTS FACTIONS

During the period in the aftermath of the Arab invasion of Iran, the community saw a proliferation of reformers who felt modernization – Zarathushtis becoming more Muslim than Muslims and more Christian than Christians – was the answer to the vilification heaped upon it by the conquerors. Zarathushtis were then being put down with labels such as 'fire worshippers' and new prophets (like the babas of India), sprung up across Iran in response. What happened is the little known consequence of those developments. Even after the Arab invasion, one Zarathushti faction collaborated with the ruling powers to eliminate the other (see notes 3 and 4). Transformation and reform were needed and inevitable, but they came in a divisive separatist manner. In the end, the separatist reform movements achieved nothing other than a division and weakening of the community. That experience remains a sad chapter in our history, but if we ignore what happened, we will be doomed to repeat the mistakes. Today, we also have a variety of factions with some engaging in vitriolic abuse if not threats of violence against the other.

REACTIONARY TRANSFORMATION

As in the example from the past we have just discussed, nowadays factions are sometimes formed in a reactionary response to a changing environment, or to 'modernize', or to compete with other faiths, or to appear progressive, or to address certain spiritual needs. Sometimes factions are formed because the main body refuses to accommodate change others see as necessary. Sometimes factions are formed in response to critical remarks made with the objective of making Zarathushtis feel ashamed and thereby either lose faith or react by diluting the faith into something meaningless and irrelevant. But, do we need to transform our beliefs and practices because of put-downs such as being called fire-worshippers and dualists, or haoma being labelled as a hallucinogenic drug, or being mocked because of the practice of placing bodies in towers of silence? That kind of solution is contrived and not authentic. A principle problem with several factions is they engage in put-downs, derisions, abuse and sometimes even threats of violence towards others – behaviours that are not compatible with the tenets of the faith, but behaviours that define the community nonetheless.

This writer believes we have another option that doesn't require the formation of divisive factions or the reinventing our religion as a reactionary response. When he examined all our practices in greater depth from a purely Zarathushti perspective – from accounts of actual practice and from source literature – he was amazed. He discovered that the lessons and meaning behind the teachings, symbolism and practices of the orthodox holistic Zarathushti faith are profound. They are spiritually and philosophically fulfilling. They light the path towards personal growth and are as valid today as at any time.

This author also realized that when there is security in the understanding of Zarathushti beliefs, practices and heritage, there is no cause for reactionary change. The impediment to this understanding is that it takes a great deal of effort and commitment to uncover what is authentic given layers of personal opinion and bias. Like layers of an onion, one is driven to tears trying to peel them away. Nevertheless, an in-depth understanding of Zarathushti beliefs and practices as well as a straightforward presentation of Zarathushti heritage speaks for itself and brings about a gratifying respect for Zarathushti precepts by Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis alike.

ZARATHUSHTI ADAPTION THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Past history has shown that Zarathushti practices can be adapted to changing circumstances without violating the core values and while maintaining the orthodoxy of the principles and reasons behind them. Our Zarathushti community has changed and modernized itself over the ages and will continue to do so. For one thing we have



Lighting a candle and praying at Pir-e Sabz, Yazd, Iran.

Generations may change. The spirit will endure.

Image credit: www.berasad.com

changed the language we use and many, many cultural customs. In a lighter vein, before Zarathushtis migrated to India, they did not wear saris or break coconuts. And before the Zarathushtis of Yazd migrated to Tehran, it is doubtful if they ever wore western wedding gowns or said 'merci'. But an enduring principle of how Zarathushtis managed transformation was that these consensual adaptations were primarily superficial. At the heart of all the transformed practices, the core principles of the faith nevertheless remained inviolate. There was no need for different factions to accommodate differences, say in changing clothing preferences. Those differences could be accommodated within the mainstream. That approach maintained orthodoxy. Our attempt at some lightness must end here for sadly there are examples of departures from orthodoxy – departures that resulted in much pain and yes, division into factions.

KABISA CONTROVERSARY

The issue around the Shenshai and Kadmi calendar is one such example. The so-called Kabisa / Qabisa controversy (we use the word with some reluctance since Qabisa means intercalation of a calendar in Arabic) started in Gujarat, India in the 1700s. Dosabhai Framji Karaka in his History of the Parsis informs us that this Parsi upon Parsi debate (it was not a Parsi-Irani debate) generated so much intense anger and hostility that in 1782-83 violence erupted between the two Parsi groups in Broach India – violence that can be described as a loss of farr, of grace. Around 1740 CE, an Irani immigrant Jamshid Vilayati finding himself at the centre of the calendar controversy wrote a verse in lament (notes 5, 6 & 7):

"Everyone is wrong in this dispute,
For all create disturbance with deception and depravity.

Everyone opposes everything;
Everyone takes religion into their own hands.
They have no shame before God and to the admonitions of religion,
No care for the tomorrow their today brings.
Upon investigation I see young and old alike bound by ignorance."

In many ways, the Kabisa controversy and earlier divisions stand as examples of a sad failure of leadership. The age-old values of the wisdom of Vohu-Mano; good sense; the goodness and beneficence of Asha; the good thoughts, words and deeds that lie at the heart of the orthodox Zarathushti creed; the kindness of Meher; enlightened leadership – all seem to have been discarded in favour of defending a position, even a wrong one. Each side to the calendar controversy had valid concerns, but neither was willing to validate and give voice to the concerns of the other. If they had, each would have found a way to accommodate the other or have found another better way.

COMING TOGETHER AS ZARATHUSHTIS

If we can learn anything from this lesson in history it is that in response to a disagreement (or simply different ways of doing things), rather than dividing into groups, we can decide to enter into a reasoned and respectful dialogue with the objective of finding a collaborative consensus where the entire community wins. It has been this writer's experience that when issues are examined in depth, deep below lies the common ground of shared values and history. Orthodox tradition with regard to the Zarathushti calendar is plainly outlined in the Bundahishn and Denkard (see note 8). If it were to be followed, there would be no controversy. We would be Zarathushtis first and Zarathushtis last. Is such a transformation possible?

HIISTORIC OPPORTUNITY & CHOICE

An in-depth understanding of the true meaning of our traditions will provide wisdom and self-evident answers to many issues that seemingly divide us. These intuitive answers will come from a wise, bright mind and the outcome will be right actions – actions guided by Saroosh. Zarathushtis have that capacity – of that I am entirely confident. Our ancestors suffered greatly, and they worked diligently to transform that suffering into a better future for succeeding generations. They succeeded, and for that we owe them a depth of gratitude for which words, even prayers of gratitude, will not suffice. Let us further honour their sacrifice by maintaining what they protected and by realizing our true potential. We now have an opportunity with which we have been endowed, to transform from the ordinary to the extraordinary. In the spirit of this transformation we can seek to regain our farr, our grace, and then our place in history as leaders by example and



Transformation....

Philosophy of Transformation

by force of character. Then, there will be no question about the relevance of the Zarathushti creed & tradition.

That choice in transformation is ours to make or lose.

BLESSING

**Hame andar kasan Zartoshti din ra shad baad.
Khubi va neki baad. Eidun baad.**

To one and all of the Zarathushti fold, may there be great happiness. May there be goodness and joy. So may it be.

NOTES:

1. Daena Vanguhim Mazdayasni Zarathushtrish in Avestan and modernized as Din Beh Mazdayasni Zarathushti, is translated by this author as 'the highest discerning Zarathushti belief in worship of God'.
2. The understanding of the transformative nature of fire as well as how fire could transform nature marked the beginnings of a systematic exploration of the workings of nature. The cosmic laws of the universe, asha, are symbolized by fire.
3. See Revolutionary Zoroastrian Sects at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/sects/index.htm>
4. See Mazdak and Mazdakism at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/sects/mazdak.htm>
5. See Surat's Great Kabisa Controversy at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/parsi/surat3.htm#kabisa>; and as reported by Dosabhai Framji Karaka in History of the Parsis: Including Their Manners, Customs, Religion, and Present Position (p. 104).
6. Translated by Susan Stiles Maneck, the original of Jamshid Vilayati's poem is located in the K. R. Cama oriental Institute, MS R207. [Jamshid Vilayati is not to be confused with Dastur Jamasp 'Vilayati' ('of the homeland').]
7. Farr (Persian) is derived from the Avestan Khvarenah. See <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/overview/simplified.htm#khvarenah>
8. See the calendar page with quotes from the Bundahishn and Denkard at <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm>
9. The closing blessing has been adapted and translated from the Doa Tandorosti's Pazand preface by this author with assistance from Ardeshtir Farhmand. Please excuse any imperfections.

Photo Credits: Flame: Steve Ryan at Flickr.

Girl praying at Pir-e Sabz: www.berasad.com

K. E. Eduljee lives in West Vancouver, BC, Canada. and is the author of the website Zoroastrian Heritage <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/> and the Zoroastrian Heritage discussion blog at <http://zoroastrianheritage.blogspot.com/>. He 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.



**Earning the trust of families,
one at a time.**

**Selecting a Financial Adviser is not
an easy decision.**

It's a matter of trust.

Zarir J. Sethna, CLU, LUTCF
Member Agent, The Nautilus Group®
A Service of New York Life Insurance Company

1330 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 1900
Houston, TX 77056
Tel: (713) 963-4229 Fax: (713) 963-4249
Email: Zsethna@fl.newyorklife.com
www.zsethna@nylagent.com



Financial Adviser offering investment advisory services through Eagle Strategies LLC, a Registered Investment Adviser





THE NAVJOT-SUDRE PUSHI CEREMONY AND THE FUTURE OF ZARATHUSHTIS: WHAT TO STUDY IN THE NEXT TWENTY FIVE YEARS

NORIKO KATSUKI. Japan

During twenty five years of its existence, FEZANA has been working as the network of Zarathushtis in North America. To me that is material work. Now you probably realize that you also need to develop the spiritual dimension in the next twenty-five years. Even while you may plan to build sanctified fire temples in North America that is still material work. I would therefore like to propose a path to spiritual work as follows.

You may have read a lot about the Parsi initiation ceremony, the Navjote, that has been studied and written about by many scholars. These studies speak about the meaning of Navjote, the sudre, the kustī, the prayers and how to perform the ceremony. But, is this enough for the future of Zoroastrianism? There seem to be no studies of the Iranian Zarathushti initiation ceremony, the Sudre Pushi, in the records. A study of the little known history of the Iranian Zarathushti ceremony may reveal the spiritual side of the ceremony. Therefore, I would like to present a few points that are missing in studies of the initiation ceremony.

It should be common knowledge that the present initiation ceremony is not the same as it was in Zarathushtra's time. The name Navjote has been applied only since the 15th century (according to *Mary Boyce, "Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices", London: Routledge, 2001, p.174*). At that time, Changa Asa, a Parsi merchant in Navsari, was working to make Navsari as the religious center of Parsis. He sponsored a mission to Iran to collect the knowledge of the Zarathushti religion from Zarathushtis from Iran, to spread it among the Parsis. The knowledge thus acquired became known as the Rivayats and led to some religious awakening in the Parsi community. The First Dastur Meherji Rana was instrumental in spreading the knowledge. It is to be acknowledged that the fifteenth century was the era of religious development of the Parsis. This can be contrasted with the later nineteenth century which saw the economic development of the Parsis. This later development is well recorded, but there are very few historical materials for understanding the religious development of the Parsis in the 15th century.

So, do we have no means of gaining knowledge of those days except through the Rivayats? I do not believe so. Tracing the history of the Navjote ceremony will be a new study for me, for which I need more references and historical records. Another Zarathushti tradition, the Dokhma, has benefited from historical research as noted by *Rukshana Naji and Homi Dhalla*, in *"The Landing of the Zarathushtis at Sanjan: the Archeological Evidence, Ed., Hinnells and Williams, London, Routledge, 2007, pp. 40-*

42. It is stated that a very simple Dokhma was in use in Sanjan until the 15th century. Later, in the 16th century, Parsis in Navsari built a new Dokhma based on the knowledge gained from the *Aspandiyar Yezdyar Rivayat*. Aspandiyar's knowledge seemed to be of great help to them in building a complex structure.

Similarly, here are a few examples of the knowledge of the period that could be gained through the study of the initiation ceremony. As you know, the words of the Navjote prayers are not only in Avesta, but also in Pahlavi and Gujarati. You don't need to remove those words from the prayers just because the mixed language in the prayers is not pure. But, a study of the mixed language will further reveal your history. It should be studied why those languages are mixed, even though historical materials are few and it is difficult to simply understand when and by whom the mixed language was introduced. A comparative study of the Navjote and the Sudre Pushi prayers will show you the process of religious developments in those days. A further study of the Shehenshai and Kadmi prayers will also help you understand the origin of the Iranian Zarathushti prayers. The differences in procedures of the initiation ceremonies should also be studied. Probably, these are common sense differences to you, but no one has critically analyzed the differences. Now is the time not





only to record the differences, but to search for the reason why these differences arose.

An examination of the physical characteristics of the kusti and handloom on which it is woven may also reveal some as yet unknown aspect of Zarathushti culture. There is a variety of tubular threads in the world. A comparative study of the kusti with other tubular threads will provide light on its certain unique features. If you visit the *Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology at Nagoya, Japan*, you will see a big circular loom. The loom was invented in 1906 by **Sakichi Toyoda** who was the father of Kiichiro Toyoda, the founder of Toyota Motors. The loom was used to weave big tubular cloth for use on sailing ships. Before the cloth is cut, it looks like a big kusti. In making the loom, Sakichi seems to have drawn upon an English machine.* (photo page 44) So what did the English machine draw upon? An anthropological study of the kusti handloom will also tell you your history much more than a kusti. As we know, there are two types of kusti handlooms. When and why did the type used at present become predominant? My view is that it would be easier to trace the history of the handloom and its source than that of the kusti.

Past Zarathushti studies have focused mostly on the religious principles, the history of Zarathushtis before and after Islam, and the history of Parsis during the British Raj. There are comparatively few studies of the Parsi era after Islam and before the onset of the Raj. Of the Zarathushtis who remained in Iran there are still fewer studies, and those studies have approached the eras not through an examination of the historical materials but only of the historical records. I do not mean to challenge the mainstream of Zarathushti studies, but I believe there is room for further research into the initiation ceremony to obtain further perspectives from examining the historical materials used during the ceremony. This research approach would also apply to the use of dokhmas, the inner rituals in a fire temple and the traditional daily customs.

As might be expected, the Zarathushti identity has been built on the splendid era of the Persian dynasties before Islam, and the practice of the religion in certain periods of history, such as, during the period of the Raj. However, little has been studied of the development of religious customs that continue to this day. As a result only the unique aspects of Zarathushti religion have come to the fore. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to understand the complete Zarathushti identity properly. The available historical materials and records are still not enough to learn about the missing era. But before they too vanish, we, scholars and Zarathushtis, should not only record but also research those to know more about the Zarathushti identity. The study of the development of

religious customs will inevitably help to open a path towards rediscovering Zarathushti spirituality for the future.

* The photo page 44 shows the big circular loom at the Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology at Nagoya, Japan. According to the Museum, the loom is still in working order.

Noriko Katsuki, Associate Fellow, The Institute of Policy and Cultural Studies, Chuo University, Japan. She holds a Doctorate degree in Policy Studies from Chuo University, Tokyo, Japan in 2009 and her dissertation was Study of Contemporary Parsis in India: particularly in Mumbai. She is studying contemporary Zarathushti identity in the world from several perspectives, e.g. business and historical perspective and has visited Mumbai, Tehran, Karachi, UK and USA several times for her research. Recent representative papers in Japanese are 'Orthodox versus Reformist: The Structure of Contention in the Parsi Community' and 'Diversifying Zoroastrian: the reaction of traditional Zoroastrians to new Zoroastrians'.






PREPARE FOR THE WORST, HOPE FOR THE BEST LEARNING FROM GIULIANI

NIKAN KHATIBI, California, USA

DISORDERS

30 million Americans have some form of major heart or blood-vessel disease.

1 million Americans have a heart attack every year.

25 million Americans have high blood pressure.

8 million Americans have ulcers.

12 million Americans are alcoholics.

DRUGS

5 billion doses of tranquilizers are prescribed each year.

3 billion doses of amphetamines are prescribed each year.

DOLLARS

\$19.4 billion are lost by American industry each year because of premature employee death.

\$15.6 billion are lost by American industry each year because of alcoholism.

\$15 billion are lost by American industry each year because of stress-related absenteeism.

\$700 million are spent each year to recruit replacements for executives with heart disease.

These numbers may seem impersonal. They do not reflect the pain and suffering of the victims of stress and their loved ones.

- E. A. Charlesworth & R. G. Nathan, *Stress Management*

"Tomorrow New York is going to be here. And we're going to rebuild, and we're going to be stronger than we were before... I want the people of New York to be an example to the rest of the country, and the rest of the world, that terrorism can't stop us" -Rudy Giuliani

Rudy Giuliani is constantly under stress, but is his character and more importantly, his policies during his time as mayor of New York a reflection of it? Is Giuliani a disorganized, impatient character? Has he choked under the pressure of the spotlight?



The thought is absurd. The way in which Giuliani dealt with the 9/11 crisis is a reflection of his ability to handle stress. But it wasn't always that easy for him. For most of his childhood life, Giuliani felt the pressures that many of us first generation Zarathushtis have dealt with. He was a child of working class Italian immigrant parents. Because of his father's ethnicity and inability to assimilate with the surrounding society, he was never able to hold a steady, quality job, which made things tough for Giuliani. Soon, his parent's inability to provide for the family led his father into organized crime where he later was convicted of a felony, forcing the family to relocate. Giuliani knew his only way out would be through education, something which he succeeded in doing, graduating cum laude with a juris doctorate from New York University (NYU)¹. All those years dealing with family stress, society pressures and insecurities, prepared him for what would be his defining moment. And so when 9/11 struck, so did Giuliani. With no hesitation, Giuliani coordinated the response of various city departments while organizing the support of state and federal authorities for the World Trade Center site, for city-wide anti-terrorist measures, and for restoration of destroyed infrastructure². He made frequent appearances on radio and television on September 11 and afterwards — informing the public of the situation, while also reassuring them that leadership was still there.

Giuliani's salient quality is not his wealth, nor his political successes. It is, for better and worse, his tenacious drive and ability to handle pressure — the sort of relentlessness that we associate with striving immigrants, not rich scions. So what was it about Giuliani that allowed him to handle 9/11 with such success? What can we Zarathushtis learn from this experience?

In the case of Giuliani, there were a number of clues by Islamic extremists, foreign intelligence agencies, and our very own CIA, alluding to potential devastating attacks to Americans, let alone New Yorkers. But instead of letting the stress of the unknown consume his life, Giuliani took arms; orchestrating one of the largest city-wide campaigns to boost resources for civil services. Giuliani decided that preparing for the worst case scenario was his



way of hoping for the best outcome – and although an attack did occur, he was as prepared as humanly possible. **Similarly, we Zarathushtis are dealing with a number of problems ranging from outside marriages, a shrinking population size, generational gaps, etc. The last thing we should be doing is constantly stressing out about concerns that we cannot predict. Instead we should be focusing on transforming our community to help combat such issues. In other words, we need to start expanding opportunities for Zarathushtis to get together, network, marry, brainstorm, whatever. The bottom line is the stress we all have as a community is unavoidable, but it can be manageable.**

Stress and the Body There will be many times when we feel as if challenges have no solutions. And although our body is programmed to cope with stress appropriately, it is our self-conscious, dire behaviors that corrupts those mechanisms. Our attempts to deal with stress through alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and damaging food habits destroys our natural responses. And in doing so, we transform our stress into what has been coined 'distress', which can be manifested in various capacities such as headaches, higher blood pressures, jaw/teeth clenching, immune system dysfunction, skin conditions, fatigue, muscle spasms, inability to focus, forgetfulness, and anxiety. So how do we as a human race, destined to face stress and intrinsically programmed to handle stress, cope with it? If not alcohol, binge eating, and sleeping, then what?

Breathing. Remembering to breathe is probably one of the most important stress relieving mechanisms. Why? In the moment of debate, our breathing patterns adjust to reflect the disorganized, adrenaline-rushing mind set. We begin to experience rapid, shallow breathing, which eventually leads us to hyperventilate, disrupting the normal gas balance in our body. By taking a step back, and engaging in a few deep, abdominal muscle assisted breathes, we are telling our mind to disengage and slow down.

Avoid overeating. We have all been guilty of late night snacks and junk food binges following a bad business deal or relationship break-up. Unfortunately, stress eating is a common problem in our fast-paced society. The sheer stress of things can not only compel us to eat faster, but potentially increase the amount we eat. Even more disturbing is the likelihood that we will reach for those sugary and starchy favorites we might call "comfort foods." Try your best to avoid the kitchen at all costs. And if you feel the urge to chew on something, grab a stick of gum, a few almonds, or some carrots. Because once the stress has passed, the last thing we want to deal with is feeling bloated or fat.

Exercising. Following a stressful day at work, sometime we just want to go home and curl up in bed. Studies have shown though that a routine exercise plan can help bump up the production of our brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins, and strengthen our self-confidence and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. For those insomniacs, routine exercise can also improve sleep, which is often disrupted by stress.

Self-Talk. There's a saying that goes, 'You are your worst critic'. That is why it is so important to be gentle when we talk to ourselves, even though we're not aware of it. This 'self-talk' determines our attitudes and self-image, so try to change both with a bit of positive chatter, especially during stressful times. It doesn't help the situation to put yourself down.

Balance. The most stressed out people in society are those that have lost the balance between the four key elements in life - *Family, Religion, Health, Work*.

Finding a solution. When stress overwhelms the system, we often feel as if our choices are limited. But in reality, there is more than one way to relieve stress. It's important to take a moment to stop, and investigate all options. Remember the saying your mom always said, 'never make a quick decision...sleep on it first' - there is some merit to that statement after all.

Handling stress is often a personal issue. But sometimes it can be too much - and that's where a strong network of supportive friends and family members is an enormous buffer against life's stressors. With the right attitude, all of us can be ready to tackle any challenge life throws at us, possibly as bad as 9/11.

References:

1. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/rwg/html/bio.html>
 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudy_Giuliani
- Reference for pic: theblaze.com

Dr. Nikan H. Khatibi is an award winning physician and published medical journal author and researcher. He is currently completing his specialty training in Anesthesiology in beautiful Southern California. He can be reached by visiting www.DrNikanKhatibi.com.
www.NextGenNow.org





HAS WAPIZ TRANSFORMED PARSIS IN INDIA?

BERJIS DESAI, Mumbai, India

The World Alliance of Parsi and Irani Zarthostis (WAPIZ) aims 'to strengthen the voice of Tradition and protect and preserve the Unique Parsi Irani Zarthoshti identity', according to its objectives. To economically strengthen the priestly class, to protect religious institutions, to be a centre for religious study, relief of poverty, are some of its detailed objectives. WAPIZ sees itself as a 'watchdog' of religious traditions. All its stated objectives are unexceptionable.

Some Parsis may love WAPIZ and several may dislike it, but none can ignore it. WAPIZ has cemented its position as the mainstream orthodox organization of Parsis in India. It is politically correct and cleverly distances itself from the rabid fundamentalist elements. Somewhat surprisingly, WAPIZ's Constitution permits a person, born of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother, to be its member. This feature of its Constitution has come to be fiercely criticized by the ultra orthodox. However, WAPIZ has refused to amend it. This is then a part of its intelligent strategy to present itself as a pragmatic, likeable body of sensible traditionalists.

The founding fathers of WAPIZ, individually, have often expressed views which are hardly different from the ultras. They have advocated '*Tokham Ni Jalavni ne Boond Ni Paasbani*' (roughly translated, preservation of Parsi genes and racial features). They have often talked about the need to preserve the racial purity of the community, which is reflected in their opposition to inter-faith marriages, blood or organ donation or adoption. However, as WAPIZ, they have carefully distanced themselves from officially toeing the above line. Of course, WAPIZ strongly opposes crematoria or any non-Dokhmenashini method of disposing the dead, Navjote of the children of interfaith married Parsi women, participation of non-Parsis in any religious ceremony or their entry into any religious institution. Knowing fully well that a sizeable number of Parsis in India bear identical views. It is to capture this large constituency that WAPIZ endeavors. In order to do so, it has successfully stripped itself of the stigma of being called racist or fundamentalist or retrograde. This exercise has been carefully planned and well executed by WAPIZ functionaries.

In India, Parsis, no longer enjoy the position of primacy in professional or social or political life, as before. Growing secular trends have eliminated the advantage, the Parsis enjoyed during British rule or even in the early years of Independence. The average Parsi feels insecure and, at times, alien, in his workplace and social surrounding. The highly visible micro minority of Parsis, who continue to be pockets of national and international excellence, cannot obscure the reality that the common Parsi increasingly feels strange, lonely and lost. He,

therefore, seeks solace in his community. It is exactly this profile, which WAPIZ loves. Look at your history, your heritage, you shall be swamped if you open your doors to outsiders. Security lies in being together, closeted in a ghetto-like environment, be distrustful of the stranger, says WAPIZ, though not, of course, in such explicit terms. Its message is packaged in modern, correct terms like preservation of traditions. As a result, a large class of Parsis, particularly in Mumbai and Gujarat, look towards WAPIZ as the only protector of Parsi interests.

Abjuring any extreme position, however dear it may be to the heart of its founders, has enabled WAPIZ to project itself as a responsible and respectable community activist. Had it stuck to its hardcore inner beliefs, it would not have had the mass appeal that it has today.

The Parsi populace, which is interested in community affairs, either identifies itself with it, or at least acknowledges that WAPIZ is the solid, acceptable face of orthodoxy. The exotic ultras have alienated themselves and ceded the entire ground to WAPIZ. This is a triumph of WAPIZ strategy, programming and careful window dressing of certain unpalatable ideas. WAPIZ also carefully distances itself from any violent demonstration by the orthodox (like the recent assault on a Russian Zoroastrian priest at Sanjan).

To counter the existence of WAPIZ, the reformist organizations have sprung to put forth the non-WAPIZ view of gender equality in interfaith marriages and their progeny, allowing prayers at the Towers of Silence for those not opting for Dokhmenashini, a more open door, if not universal, approach to participation by non-Parsis and other related ideas. WAPIZ has greatly aided this polarization process. However, this polarization is limited to India, and more particularly, Mumbai. WAPIZ has not established any significant reach over Parsis outside India. It does not have adequate resources to successfully operate outside its territory. Even if it did, it is unlikely to appeal to the Western mindset, seeped in the traditions of liberal democracy. WAPIZ would have to abandon too many of its core beliefs (gender inequality for interfaith marriages, opposition to open-door approach to non-Parsi spouses, openness to alternative methods for disposing the dead – to name a few) in order to capture the hearts and minds of Parsis abroad. In the process, it would have to dilute its core agenda to such an extent that it would lose its unique selling point as the mainstream orthodox group in India. WAPIZ has also burnt its boat with the hardcore traditional Parsis outside India for various reasons including clash of personalities. This makes its task all the more difficult.

In the absence of WAPIZ, reform minded individuals would not have united and organized themselves into



Transformation....

Transformation of Infrastructures

bodies like **ARZ (Association for Revival of Zoroastrianism)** which advocates universal entry into the Faith, **AIMZ (Association for Inter-married Zoroastrians)**, which fights for the rights of interfaith married women and their children, **ZTFI (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of India)**, and its earlier avatar, the **AFP (Adult Franchise for Progress)**, which unsuccessfully fought the BPP general elections despite the support of the rich and the powerful, and **AZA (Alert Zoroastrians)**, who have relentlessly pursued the BPP in general and its Chairman, Dinshaw Mehta, in particular over housing policies.

During the last bitterly contested election for a BPP trustee, all these liberal bodies combined with the formidable electoral machinery of the BPP Chairman, Dinshaw Mehta, behind an exceptionally strong candidate like Munchi Cama, to take on WAPIZ, which was unfazed by the unity of the opposition including WAPIZ's former allies like Mehta and the **Traditional Zarthustis (TZ)**. WAPIZ though defeated, performed exceptionally well, despite the odds heavily stacked against it. Had it not alienated Mehta, WAPIZ would have almost certainly won. This election shows that WAPIZ has established a solid and steady support base in the community.

While WAPIZ has some wise and shrewd leaders like *Khojeste Mistree*, whose skills of articulation are unmatched, it also includes some who bankroll its operations but cost it dear by their buffoonery and crudeness. Realizing this, its sober leadership has restrained the editors of **THE WAPIZ PAGE** (published periodically in a local newspaper) from adopting a shrill banshee-like tone and displaying their 'over the hill' frustration.

WAPIZ claims to have brought the 'burning issues of the community' (a curious expression, considering WAPIZ's allergy to cremation) to the fore. This is indeed correct. WAPIZ has effectively capitalized on the insecurity

of the middle and lower classes. If it adopts a gentler tone and does not blunder (as it did, by alienating its natural ally, Mehta), WAPIZ may soon control the Bombay Parsi Panchayet and a host of other social and religious institutions. However, the question remains whether WAPIZ can survive after Khojeste Mistree, its charismatic and natural leader, to whom it owes much of its success. Perhaps, it will, but in a diminished form. Barring Anahita and Yazdi Desai, the rest of its leadership is mediocre, to be polite. WAPIZ's salvation lies in nurturing a strong young leadership.

WAPIZ may not be politically fashionable. It may be spurned by the intelligentsia. However, it exudes a powerful appeal to a large section of Parsis in India. Worldwide, ultranationalist and extreme right parties are gaining ground. The Parsis of India will be no exception, as WAPIZ tugs at their emotional chords of past glory, Persian heritage, innate feeling of superiority and being different than the natives. The question in the title of this article must, therefore, be answered in the affirmative.

BERJIS DESAI is the Managing Partner of J. Sagar Associates, a national law firm. His weekly column, *PARSI TARI ARSI* in the Bombay Samachar, champions liberal and reformist causes.



"Good People Doing the Right Thing!"

PERSIS BEHRAMSHA
REALTOR®



4543 Post Oak Place
Houston, TX 77027

Phone: (713) 294-7747
Fax: (281) 598-5710

persis.realtor@gmail.com
www.har.com/persis



THE NEW LONDON ZOROASTRIAN CENTRE

a monument to faith and labour

NOSHIR J AVARI, England



When I was invited by Mr Kersi Shroff to write on the theme of *"Transformation ... of thought, ideas and actions in the social, political, legal and religious arenas of the Zoroastrian Community"* in celebration of FEZANA's 25th Anniversary, I knew immediately that the story of the New London Zoroastrian Centre ideally fitted the slot.

Some 25 years ago, by about mid-1980s, there had taken place in the UK a distinct change in the profile of the UK Zoroastrian community. This was on account of waves of Zoroastrian immigration into the UK in 1960s and 1970s from East Africa – more specifically from Zanzibar, Mombasa and Aden and, latterly, from post-revolution Iran. The East African Zoroastrians, in particular, originated from the traditional villages and towns of Gujarat, such as Navsari, Surat, Gandevi, Barooch, Valsad, Billimora, and several other lesser known places – as opposed to those Zoroastrians who had originally come from the great urban centres like Mumbai and Karachi before and after the Second World War. The background of the East African Zoroastrians was generally very traditional, and in the new environment of Britain they sought to promote the ideals they had been brought up on and to inculcate into their youth stronger Zoroastrian values. They were helped in this by the efforts of the evangelist *Khojeste P Mistree* who, in the late 1980s, organised trips to Gujarat for

Zoroastrian youngsters. This led to a quest for greater promulgation of *"Zarthostyanu"* in the daily lives of our people in the UK.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, an increasing number of community members felt that they were witnessing a distinct dilution process. The children, for example, felt ashamed to wear the *sudreh* and *kusti* at school; and there was hardly any recognition of Zoroastrianism in the host community. Therefore, despite the publication of an important document produced in 1959 under the Presidentship of the late Mr Jehangir D Moos, which stated that *"a Zoroastrian cannot live by bread alone; the spiritual side of life is of vital importance to any religious community"*; and despite all the good religious promulgation work carried out by the late *Dasturji Sorabji Hormasjee Kutar*, the bulk of the community in London felt that there was nonetheless a vacuum that required to be filled. An important aspect of this was the inadequacy of the existing community centre in London. Our Zoroastrian House at 88 Compayne Gardens, West Hampstead, had by now become too small for our requirements despite the extension built in 1983.

Many community members felt that a landmark multi-purpose Zoroastrian Centre was necessary for the future of our faith in the UK. For almost 140 years previously the community had possessed merely residential type accommodation. Although established as long ago as 1861, it did not even have a base of its own until 1920 when 168 Cromwell Road, South Kensington, was first purchased, moving from there in 1925 to 11 Russell Road, Kensington, and thence to 88 Compayne Gardens in West Hampstead in 1969, with an extension built thereon in 1983 with two specific donations of £50,000 each received from the Guiv and Zartoshty families. As against this, it is worth noting that many other South Asian communities, notably the Sikhs, Hindus, Ismailis, Punjabis, Bengalis, Muslims, etc, many of whom had come to the UK much later, had already established for themselves beautiful community centres.

The Zoroastrians were thus distinctly lagging behind, although history also tells us that the first Indian ever to travel to Britain in 1724 was a Zoroastrian Parsi - *Naoroji Rustomji Maneck (Seth)*; that the *first three Indian MPs returned to the British House of Commons (Naoroji 1892-95; Bhownagree 1895-1906; and Saklatvalla 1922-23 and 1924-1929) were all Zoroastrian Parsis*; that the first Indian medical graduate gaining his MD from St Andrews and FRCS from London in 1861 – *Mancherjee B Kolah* – was a Zoroastrian Parsi; that the first Indian ever to become High Court Judge in India – *Cursetji Muncherjee Shroff* – who read law at Oxford in 1864 – was a Zoroastrian Parsi;



that the first Indian lady to study at Oxford in 1889 – *Cornelia Sorabji* – was from a Christian Parsi background; and that the first Indian cricket team to visit Britain in 1886 was made up entirely of Parsi Zoroastrian players. Despite such a distinguished track record of successes, we as a community in Britain had failed to make a mark on the wider English society. One of our most celebrated achievers, Freddie Mercury, the greatest pop music icon in



the history of the 20th Century, was more a Zoroastrian in death rather than when alive. I am afraid that was the failure of the leadership in Britain at the time for not having been able to draw such people more closely into the community.

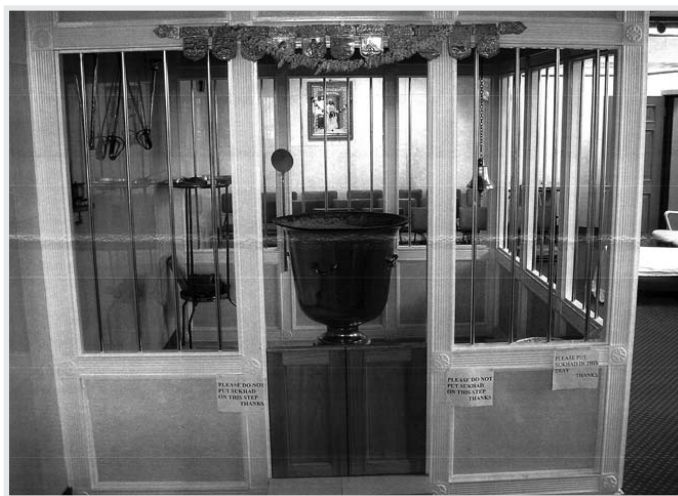
By the late 1980s it was felt that to promulgate greater social, political and religious recognition for the Zoroastrian community we had to have, as a first step, a large purpose built Zoroastrian Centre. At the Annual General Meeting in October 1992 this idea gained momentum via the setting up of a fund called: *"The Zoroastrian House – New Premises Fund"*, since by then some £15,000 had been collected through small donations. A special Steering Committee also started operating under my chairmanship in March 1993. By September 1993 I further articulated the entire concept by publishing a vision paper called: *"The Unimpeded March of the Zoroastrian Spirit into the 21st Century"*.

Successive Presidents without any exception unstintingly gave their time and energy to the realization of the project. Those of us at the helm knew very well that in order to bind our people and bring everyone together we had to succeed in creating a harmonious "meeting point". Slow and frustrating as the process was, every day, nonetheless, was a march of progress. All opportunities were exploited to augment the New Premises Fund – through such events as musical evenings, quiz evenings and house to house parties, or by encouraging donors all over the world to give whatever they could. The concept was kept alive with graphical charts and regular

newsletters. The entire process was best summarized at the occasion of my retirement as Trustee in November 2007 when my very good friend, and the past president of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, Dorab Mistry, described the story of the New Premises thus:

"The story of the New Premises project is, in fact, the story of seven ZTFE Presidents – the vision of Ervad Zal N Sethna; given structure by Kersey J Jasavala; put into motion by Rusi K Dalal, promoted by Mrs Beroze M Mody; and brought to fruition by Dorab E Mistry. The project was literally built brick by brick by Shahrokh Shahrokh and has been further embellished by Paurushasp B Jila."

Such was the progression of thoughts and ideas that took place within the vibrant democracy prevailing at ZTFE during the last 25 years. This process was not without its share of tears, frustration and, on occasions, very heated debates, but throughout the prevailing spirit was one which can best be summed up in the words of my very dear late friend and fellow Trustee – *Mr Bailey R Irani* – the founder of the World Zoroastrian Organisation – *"Faith in fire and Ahura Mazda"*.



Two people, however, I feel deserve a special mention. A particular vote of thanks is due to *Dorab E Mistry*, during whose Presidentship from 1997-2005 the community in the UK came very close together – he having encouraged the philosophy of "live and let live", which brought everyone from different backgrounds to work together. Secondly, thanks to magnanimous munificence of the late *Mobed Faridoon and Mobed Mehraban Zartoshty* and the rallying cry gallantly picked up by the larger Zoroastrian community in the UK that in September 2000 an art deco Grade II* listed former Cinema with an attached car park was purchased at 440 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, Middlesex, for £1.35million, which is now *The Zoroastrian Centre* – indeed the world's largest Zoroastrian Centre. After obtaining the relevant Planning Consents in August 2004, which coincided with the sale in December 2004 of the previous house at 88



Compayne Gardens, West Hampstead, the Centre was extensively refurbished by the Curzon Group at a cost of a further £2.2million, before its grand opening on Friday 24, June 2005 by Mobed Mehraban Zartoshty at the occasion of the Eighth World Zoroastrian Congress held in London. The generosity of the Zartoshty brothers throughout has been most legendary and in recognition thereof the Assembly Hall at the New Zoroastrian Centre is named Zartoshty Brothers Hall. The Centre is an imposing building of historic significance in the preservation of the English Heritage and like the cemetery at Brookwood in Surrey, the Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow is now a major asset for all Zoroastrians in the UK.

The effect of all our efforts during the last 25 years has been most electric. Successive presidents each year are now regularly invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Monarch at important State occasions. Our Mobed sahibs and other community leaders have an opportunity of an audience with either His Holiness the Pope, or The Archbishop of Canterbury, or with leaders of other different religious denominations. In June 2002 the Centre was visited by HRH Prince Edward and Sophie, Countess of Wessex. This was the first ever royal visit to a Zoroastrian gathering by the Monarch's representatives. In October 2011 HRH the Duke of Edinburgh visited the Centre in celebration of the 150 year anniversary of the Association. Our priests were invited to Buckingham Palace for the celebration of the Queen's Golden Wedding Anniversary, when Dr Ramyar Karanjia of the Dadar Madressa lit a fire in an Afarganyu and recited Atash-Niayesh prayers. At the turn of the century when the Millennium Dome was constructed depicting nine pillars of religion our representations succeeded in influencing the Prime Minister of the day, Mr Tony Blair, to agree to depict Zoroastrianism as one of the nine major religions of the UK at the Dome. Zoroastrians are to be included in the March Past Ceremony at the occasion of the London Olympics in 2012. Study of Zoroastrianism is now included in school curricula, particularly in areas of large immigrant concentrations. For a microscopic community such as ours these are monumental achievements judged by any yardstick. In 2006 we elected Paurushasp B Jila as our youngest ever British born President to lead the oldest ethnic community in the UK. Other much larger South Asian communities look at our achievements with envy. The promulgation march continued its various achievements when on 24 July 2006 Lord Karan F Bilimoria of Chelsea sat on the cross benches of the House of Lords as the first Zoroastrian Peer. There are many other achievements which space restricts me from mentioning.

Zoroastrians in the UK are truly proud of their achievements in the last 25 years. As a result of a sustained and meaningful promulgation of our ancient faith, our community in the UK has rallied round forcefully like at no time before. Attendance at Zoroastrian House is

not only regular, but large. Each month we have Hamkara Jashans where the community break bread together after prayers. The social calendars of Zoroastrian families are full of parties and merrymaking, meeting each other regularly each week. The community is indeed binding together. ***What joy, what fine hope does that engender for the future well being and prosperity of the Zoroastrians in the UK?***

**Noshir J Avari is a Counsel
Emeritus and Honorary Life
Member of Zoroastrian Trust
Funds of Europe**





THE PURSUIT OF PROSPERITY:

Why local Zarathushti Associations should embrace the WZCC

Eric Engineer, Dallas, USA

In 2000, when the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) was launched at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, its visionary founders declared a bold mission: “to bring prosperity to all Zarathusthis worldwide by facilitating networking, enhancing trade and commerce, and reenergizing the Zarathushti entrepreneurial spirit.”

THE FIRST TWELVE YEARS

In its first dozen years, the WZCC has clearly made a big impact on our small community. The organization has grown to nearly 1000 members spread across 17 chapters in 9 countries.

In local Zarathushti communities across the globe, the WZCC has been responsible for hundreds of events and programs—including keynote speeches and panel discussions, training workshops, professional networking sessions, youth mentorship and internship programs, business plan competitions, employment databases, monthly newsletters, online social networking groups, business/industrial site visits, and annual awards recognizing professional and entrepreneurial excellence.

Thanks to the efforts of WZCC chapters worldwide, countless professional relationships have been forged, new ventures have launched and secured financing, unemployed have found work, and youth have been paired with career mentors.

A GOAL WORTH PURSUING

As we know from our own history, as well as that of other communities, financial prosperity can have a profoundly positive impact on a society’s durability and influence. Wealth is an incredible force multiplier—allowing a small community like ours to impact



society in ways we might not today imagine. In North America, the Jewish, Mormon, and Ismaili communities are great modern day examples.

Our ancestors were well known for their work ethic, integrity, entrepreneurial spirit, and generosity. These were core elements of our culture—the fabric of the community. As a result, over time, several industrialists, business icons, and political leaders generated significant wealth and influence.

Through this wealth they were able to give back to their fellow Zarathusthis and also to their local communities. In India, this wealth and philanthropy also provided political influence and a favorable reputation that helped protect our community’s interests during the turbulence of the country’s partition.

If our community is successful in achieving the WZCC’s mission, we will live in a world where...

... Zarathusthis are recognized among the world’s most respected entrepreneurs, CEOs, professionals, artists, political leaders, scientists, and social workers;

... every Zarathushti has an advantage in the global marketplace due to a superior education, inspiration from successful mentors, and access to the best jobs;

... a first-time Zarathushti entrepreneur easily accesses capital to chase his/her dreams;

... Zarathushti families are not afraid when they lose a job because they can trust that their community will help them get back on their feet;

... local Zarathushti associations raise money for community projects in weeks rather than years;

... Zarathusthis are recognized worldwide as generous people, who have made their cities and countries better places to live via their leadership, industry, and charity.



Unfortunately, in more recent times, this important aspect of our culture has faded into the background. While we still have a handful of exceptional entrepreneurs and professionals, who are thriving and generously contribute to our community, we will need many more such success stories. (WZCC Youth Career Connect session at the Houston 2010 congress)

By reigniting the Zarathushti entrepreneurial spirit and investing in individuals' professional ambitions, the WZCC is laying the foundation for a happier, self-reliant, and more prosperous community. The wealth and influence generated by individual successes will no doubt make its way back into the community—collectively benefitting all of us in one way or another.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THE WZCC FOUNDERS' BOLD VISION?

Thanks to the tireless efforts of a handful of volunteers around the world, the WZCC clearly made headway in its first decade. However, it is going to take broader and stronger support by our local Zarathushti associations to fully achieve the WZCC founders' ambitious goals for the community at large.

TO SUBSTANTIALLY TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY, LOCAL ZARATHUSHTI ASSOCIATIONS MUST BETTER SUPPORT THE WZCC BY:

- **Embracing the WZCC's goal as their own.**

The WZCC is an independent body with chapters that run autonomously from local Zarathushti associations. While this separation has its advantages, it can also be a hindrance. Every association has a Board Director responsible for Entertainment, Religious Classes, Sports, etc. So why doesn't each association's Board have a Director who is focused on our community's Prosperity and responsible for liaising with the WZCC? If the WZCC is treated as a first-class citizen of an association's governance, it is more likely that the community's energy and attention will be directed toward this important goal.

- **Identifying and nurturing energetic, local leaders—who can bridge generations.**

With most initiatives, the quality of leadership often determines success or failure. We must identify energetic, passionate leaders, who are well connected, active, and respected in their communities. Most importantly, they must relate and inspire youth—while also being able to organize existing, senior leadership within the community.

- **Raising awareness that the WZCC is relevant to community members and their children.**

If you ask most Zarathushtis if they have heard of the WZCC, they are likely to say yes. However, if you ask them its relevance to them or their children, they are likely to be dumbfounded. The WZCC is about more than encouraging small businesses. It is about developing a new generation of prosperous entrepreneurs and professionals—who are in a position to give back to their community—to the benefit of all of us.

- **Celebrating and embracing local success stories.**

Role models are incredibly powerful motivators: just ask African Americans how President Barak Obama has changed their world view and, more importantly, that of their children. We must identify, celebrate, and embrace the successful entrepreneurs and professionals in our local communities. Whether they are CEOs or social workers, lawyers or teachers, entrepreneurs or entertainers—we should not be shy to celebrate their excellence. Moreover, we should strongly encourage them to work closely with our Youth.

True, substantial, and lasting change cannot be willed from the top-down: it requires local passion and energy!

If Presidents, Directors, and Members of every local Zarathushti Association act on the suggestions above, together we will be a step closer to bringing “prosperity to all Zarathushtis worldwide”, as boldly envisioned by the WZCC founders over a decade ago.

Eric Engineer is Youth Director of the WZCC and Chair of its Dallas Chapter. He is currently a Partner at Sevin Rosen Funds, a venture capital firm. He is also the Dallas Chapter President of TeXchange—Texas's premiere technology entrepreneur networking organization. Eric previously worked in a variety of product, marketing, and sales roles at Microsoft and Trilogy Software. He received his MBA from Harvard Business School and graduated from Rice University—where he earned a Masters Degree in Computer Science and a Bachelors Degree, cum laude, in Computer Science and Managerial Studies





SYNERGY

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. - Helen Keller

DINAZ KUTAR ROGERS, Oregon, USA

**This piece is based on Sanjay Panchal's documentary "Happiness is Ageless," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGWN4bRoChs> (Part 1) and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADMA4xrxNiE> (Part 2). Additional information and photographs were provided by Dinshaw Tamboly of the WZO. My heartfelt gratitude.*

Ever wonder when you see the twenty-second letter of the English alphabet in the autumnal sky—that is a flock of geese—why they do it? This flying formation, this vee, greatly increases their speed over flying solo. The flapping of each bird's wings creates an updraft that helps lift the bird flying behind it. When the leader tires, it retires to the back of the vee, and the new leader is encouraged by raucous honking. If a leader falls sick, a couple of birds will follow till it heals or dies. These nursing attendants then rejoin their former flock or form their own group.

Nature figured it out first: **teamwork promotes success and helps a community survive.** One human community that has persevered through teamwork is the Parsis of India, who long ago began caring for their disadvantaged brethren through charitable funds for schools, housing, hospitals, religious education, and other needs. This model of collective care is nowhere more evident than at the interconnected *Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizen Centre and Dolat and Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre* depicted in Sanjay Pachal's short documentary *"Happiness is Ageless."**

THE JOY OF LIVING

On a balmy Navsari evening, the residents have emptied the two linked buildings to gather on the terrace. They are dressed for the evening's entertainment, a fashion show. The first model sashays down the red carpet in a bright lime-green salwar kameez. Another woman struts across in a simple housedress. The runway models—men and women, Parsis all, and all over sixty—sway, swagger, bow, curtsy, and even try to get members of the audience to join them as they walk to the clapping of their peers. One gentleman model is stooped over and uses one hand to balance himself on his knee as he ambles across, determined to participate and enjoy himself. Fun triumphs over age and aches and pains.

Of course what matters in this delightfully unusual fashion show is not the clothes these fashionistas are wearing but the joie de vivre with which they interact with one and all. Winners are announced by the young administrator of the Centres, *Sharmin Tamboly*, and all the participants come out for a final bow. Some dance a jig as they collect their prizes. Sharmin has been with the Centres for thirteen years and considers working with seniors to be a joy and a privilege.

THIS PLACE CALLED PARADISE

A Hindu friend once said, "Oh, God, in my next reincarnation, let me come back as a Parsi."

The residents of the Centres are happy and old! Some are here because they have no family, and some have been placed here by loving families who cannot take care of them. Others, having heard glowing reports about this place, have themselves chosen the facility as their preferred residence.

The *Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Centre* opened in June 1998 in the center of Navsari, a town of about five lakh (five-hundred thousand) in Gujarat, India. The facility was conceived by the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) as a response to an increasingly aging Parsi population and a housing shortage that had two or three generations living in 500-square-foot apartments. Infirmaries were available for the ailing elderly, but no facility existed in the area for healthy senior citizens. The Centre became so popular a place to retire that an expansion was needed. With the financial help of *Rena and Behram Baxter of San Diego, the Dolat and Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre* was built adjacent to the first building and opened in December 2005.

The village streets leading to the Centres are narrow but clean. The architecture is typically Navsari, especially





the double doors with transoms. Inside the senior facility, the cleanliness is conspicuous. The residents' rooms are swept two to three times a day! Residents have a choice of single, double, or quadruple rooms, all with attached toilet and bath.

KEEPING HEALTHY

In Sanjay Panchal's documentary, the videographer zooms in on a physical therapist at work on a Parsi gentleman. The gentleman is dressed in the classic sadro-kusti-legho, that is, holy shirt, thread, and pajama bottoms. He is talking in our typical Parsi dialect—Gujlish, Gujarati generously sprinkled with English—about his doctor's prognosis for his broken leg.

In another room, a lady sits for her infrared treatment. Her serene face bespeaks the worry-free quality of her life here. Yoga classes help the residents to be limber and build stamina; meditation classes enhance wellbeing. Regular visits by a doctor and an understanding with a nearby hospital for emergency cases are other measures taken to look after the residents' health.

For minor ailments, a sick bay is set aside. Residents who become bedridden return to the care of their families or are sent to a Parsi Infirmary. For those who cannot afford medical care or the expense of room and board, not only is all that paid for by the WZO Trust and donations but they are given a stipend of Rs.1000.00 for personal expenses.

FOUR-STAR CUISINE

Residents are encouraged to go for leisurely walks, visit the fire temple next door, shop, and visit friends and family, but they are expected in the Centre dining room for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, as well as for morning and afternoon tea. After all, the residents are a family in their own right. I am sure they are happy to dine in. The chief cooks, *Bapsy and Khorshed*, have worked at the facility since the beginning. "It is like working in your own home," says Bapsy. For lunch the kitchen staff prepares a feast of vegetarian and non-vegetarian Parsi, Indian, and Chinese cuisines, and they are willing to accommodate requests.

ENTERTAINMENT

At home in the Centers, residents enjoy time at the carom board, play card games, watch television, and read. Some chat with friends in the day room or on the verandah, while others pray in their rooms.

Planned excursions are also part of the social life of Centre residents. A weeklong stay at the WZO's Sanatorium in Sanjan is followed by a day trip to Udvada (the holiest place in India for Parsis). Picnics to places close to the Centers are another entertainment. In addition, the local WZO committee organizes programs to bring together the entire community of Navsari and nearby towns. On August 21, 2011, the spotlight was on the vocal

and musical talents of the entire Parsi community, young and old. About 700 Navsari residents participated in this event at Jamshed Baug. I noticed that in all the festive activities depicted in the documentary and photographs, not a single participant or spectator is wearing a sari. Apparently the salwar kameez has taken over.



Enjoying a hearty meal

A MODEL FOR SENIOR HOUSING

The simple design of the *Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy and Dolat and Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centers* stands in contrast to the swank interiors of many assisted living and independent living facilities in the United States, which boast elegant entrances and dining rooms replete with crystal chandeliers. Yet life in the Navsari Centers seems more comfortable. The focus is on humanity, on community and care. Furthermore, whereas the cost of senior living facilities in the United States is often prohibitive, lack of personal financial resources is no barrier at the Centers, which are funded through charitable donations. The Centers have transformed many lives and also changed that blessed piece of land where they sit.

Parsi philanthropy has long provided housing, hospitals, schools, and libraries for the betterment of our community. Most of us who grew up in Bombay have been at the receiving end of this philanthropy. We have also heard from our elders of the British expression "Parsi, thy name is Charity." I am happy that this noble tradition is carried on now more than ever.

Dinaz Kutar Rogers

is a teacher, a published writer and a poet. 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.





KARACHI PARSIS – A BEACON OF CHANGE. An interview with Byram Avari Pouruchisty Sidhwa, Pakistan

In all cultures there are people struggling for survival. Some are starving, some are living in sheer poverty, some are thrown into slavery, and some just can't get their footing; but in all of these situations there seems to be a common theme that presents itself over and over. Many of these people become so desperate to live they will give up their morals and give in to whatever they can to get by. Occasionally there is one person stronger than the rest, one able to hold onto their morals, one that would rather die than give in.

With just 1600 and some odd in numbers, the Karachi Parsis are "that one person stronger than the rest" to have embraced and welcomed change by choosing to move forward with an attitude of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities change can bring.

*The Resolutions passed by the **Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (KPATF)** under the dynamic and futuristic leadership of its far sighted Chairman Mr. Byram D. Avari and his fellow trustees are a beacon to fellow Zoroastrians all over to embrace change in the face of survival.*

In conversation with Byram D. Avari, the man who made it happen.....



What is your personal view on mixed marriages?

Personally I'm not in favour of mixed marriages. In an ideal situation I would like all Parsi boys and girls to find suitable Parsi matches within the community. But today because of the dwindling Parsi population of the country and the inequitable boy vs. girl ratio, many young men and women do not find suitable matches within the community. Today's Parsi girls are much more independent, professional and educated and when they do not find a mental stimulus within the community, they choose to opt out. Likewise there are boys in the community who are also finding it difficult to find proper matches. So this is really fait accompli. There is nothing much that one can really do as this is happening all over the world.

Are we saying since this is a fait accompli, there is nothing that can be done to prevent mixed marriages?

As the Chairman of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund and a person in a position to help, I take it as my social responsibility to try and do whatever I can. And to this end I am trying to make arrangements to get some Zarthosti Irani girls to come across to Karachi in order for some of the boys to be able to find suitable girls. I would also like to find suitable matches for the Nassesalars in order for them not to be forced into marrying outside the community. I can safely say here that none of the young people want to opt out of the religion, but they want to get married and thus are forced into opting outside the community to find suitable partners. This dilemma is what we have tried to address through the introduction of the new rules.

What in your opinion are the Zarathushtis exposed to up against the Muslim majority in Pakistan? What is the threat that we face when we live with a Muslim majority?

I think the threat is that of conversion. I firmly believe if we were a religion that allowed conversion, we would have been an immediate threat to the Muslim majority here in Pakistan. We would have been persecuted and life would have become very difficult for us. The other minorities that have been persecuted have been subjected so, due to the fact that they allow conversions. The Christians, Hindus and Baha'is' all allow conversion and this, the ruling majority finds as the single biggest threat. Since we do not allow conversion, we are safe.

There could be an argument that because of the rules passed by the KPATF, it will now become easier for the girls to marry outside the community. What do you have to say to defend your stance?



Byram Avril with sons Dinshaw (left) and Xerxes



I do not agree with this. The girls who want to marry outside the community are the ones who are already out of the country. They are marrying outside the community irrespective of the new Resolution. We have merely informed those that are planning to marry and those that are already married that we will allow them to enter KPATF controlled Wadia Dar e Mehr and also to get the Navjotes performed of their children if they plan to or have already retained their Zoroastrian religion. To say we made it easier for women to marry outside the religion is ridiculous.

Why did the KPATF pass this Resolution? What were you influenced by?

It so happened some years ago *Khojeste Mistree* met me outside the Indigo Café in Bombay and asked me to support some of his ideas that he had put forward back then in the courts of law and wrote a letter confirming his views. I put up his views to the trustees of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund, and we decided that we did not want to support his stand. We discussed his views and accordingly we passed the following three Resolutions:

1. *That the KPATF will allow Zoroastrian men and women who have married outside the community but have retained their religion to enter the KPATF controlled Wadia Dar e Mehr.*
2. *That the KPATF will allow Navjotes of the children of Zoroastrian Mothers and non-Zoroastrian fathers to be conducted in the Agiaries. For now, this decision only encompasses the Wadia Dar-e- Mehr as the Dar-e-Mehr's affairs are looked after by the KPATF while the Hirjikaka Dar-e-Mehr has a separate Trust Board.*
3. *That the KPATF will allow prayers of the deceased to be held in all the premises controlled by KPATF, even if the deceased has chosen to be either buried or cremated. Parsees staying in other parts of Pakistan i.e. Lahore, Quetta, Multan & Rawalpindi are either buried or cremated and their funeral rites are conducted by the Mobeds of their areas in their Anjuman premises. In Karachi until now because of the existence of the Towers of Silence, dokhma-nashini was the only option. In other cities of Pakistan, where there is no Dokhmas and there is only burial, and in these places as there are no Mobeds, KPATF sends Mobeds from the Wadia Dar e Mehr to go for prayers of the deceased who require burial.*

Can the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust instruct the Mobed Saheb's of the Dar e Mehr's to actually allow this?

Now remember each Dar e Mehr of Karachi is controlled by separate Trustees. For our part, the Wadia Dar e Mehr comes under the control of the KPATF and therefore the trustees can instruct the Mobed Sahebs to follow Resolutions passed by the KPATF, as far as entry to

the Agiary is concerned. They cannot force Mobeds Sahebs to carry out Navjotes although the KPATF would have no objection to these being done in KPATF premises and Agiaries.

Are you saying that the trustees can even allow a non Parsi to enter the fire temple?

Yes they can. There is a privy council's decision to this effect that the trustees have the authority. This is mentioned in the *Book of Judgments* which has been published by Parsiaana. This is the reason why we, the Trustees, have allowed that any man or woman who has retained their religion can come into the Agiary and pray. Also if the children of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother can be inducted into the faith, then why can't the children of a Parsi mother and non Parsi father be allowed to be inducted into the faith? We are a progressive, open religion. We need to accept the facts of life. When women are allowed in Parliament, and can become Prime Ministers and Presidents, why cannot they be given such a basic right? We call ourselves educated so why cannot we practice equality here?

How did these resolutions become public?

All the above 3 resolutions were passed and minuted. Subsequently, we wrote to the Chairman of the Bombay Parsee Punchayet with a copy to *Khojeste Mistree* and the other Bombay trustees, giving our point of view. *Jehangir Patel*, the owner of *Parsiana* requested for the last 3 years accounts and annual reports of the KPATF to be sent to him. When these were received by them, they wrote an article in the *Parsiana* highlighting these 3 Resolutions. That is how it became known internationally.

Why this decision of the KPATF was not made public here in Karachi?

We did not feel it necessary to publicize these Resolutions in the newspaper as they were recorded in the KPATF annual report, so in that sense it was public knowledge. We did convey our decision to the Mobeds Sahebs, to let two Parsi women who had retained their religion to enter our Wadia Agiary and this instruction was agreed to by them.

This decision therefore does not apply to the Hirjikaka Dar e Mehr?

Correct, the *Hirjikaka Dar e Mehr* has its own trustees and it is upto them to allow Parsi Women who have married outside the community, who have retained their religion to enter the Dar e Mehr.

Why did it take the KPATF so long to take these progressive steps?

Khojeste Mistree request prompted us to take these decisions. Otherwise, we would probably not have taken any such steps. We were always cognizant of the eroding



numbers and our dwindling population and knew that some steps were needed to be taken to give solace to those who retain our religion to have the facilities outlined in this resolution.

For those who choose burial instead of dokhma-nashini, what choices do they have in Karachi where there is no provision for burial?

We do not have a burial ground in Karachi but there are burial grounds in Lahore, Quetta and Rawalpindi and therefore, the KPATF will undertake to send the body of any Karachi Parsi who wishes to be buried instead of being dokhma-nashined. We are already sending the Mobeds of the Wadia Dar e Mehr to Lahore and Quetta to perform the funeral rites of the Parsis living in those cities. Due to the shortage of Mobeds in these places, even Navjote and Weddings today will be performed by the Karachi Mobeds.

Why was there never any arrangement done to have a burial ground for Parsis in Karachi?

Back in 1987 in a meeting of about 400 people the proposition of the Avari Colony was being discussed. There were people who were against the construction of the colony and wanted the same piece of land to be used for burial purposes. We, the then trustees of the KPATF were against using the land around the Dokhma for burial because by law a graveyard cannot be set up in an area where there is a housing colony. In the case of the Karachi Dokhma, it was in the center of Defense Housing Authority Colonies and a graveyard on the lands around the Dokhma would not be legally allowed. Like the Dokhma and other graveyards which were located far from housing colonies but had housing colonies developed around them, it was legally possible.

Since some members of the community wanted a graveyard, we applied to the government and got a land near Sonmiani which was very far off from Karachi. We requested the various persons who had initiated the request for a graveyard to obtain the lease from the Government and to procure the land. This turned out to be an expensive proposition as one had to provide for water, a boundary wall around the graveyard, maintain it and also employ some people to tend the garden and arrange security etc. The land at Sonmiani was also allocated to the Hindus, Christians, other Muslim sects and Baha'i's. This land was very far away and nobody came forward to fulfill their commitment to fund this project and eventually the allocation of this land was cancelled. As far as the KPATF was concerned, we did not want to expend any of our monies as it was believed that as a Dokhma was existing, we had no reason to arrange for a graveyard.

Can Parsi women who have had civil marriages performed years ago benefit from these new Resolutions?

They can benefit from these resolutions as long as they have retained their religion and have not married Muslims through religious ceremonies. The son of a well known owner of car workshop and showroom had a civil marriage abroad with a Muslim girl and has retained his religion. He is a practicing Zarathushti even after marrying a Muslim girl.

What if that woman claims that she has not had her Nikah (Islamic marriage vows) solemnized?

This is not possible because a woman in Pakistan who marries a Muslim man has to convert. There is no such thing as a Civil marriage in Pakistan. You cannot retain two religions. A woman marrying a Muslim is considered to be a Muslim and there is no way that either she or her offspring can become Zarathushtis. Alternately, if the woman marries a Muslim abroad and has been married under a civil marriage she can benefit from the new resolutions as long as she has retained the Zarathushti faith. As I said, this is not possible in Pakistan because of the absence of the civil marriage in this country and the Islamic law requiring both spouses to be Muslims.

What if a woman wants to get the Navjote of her already baptized children done after the introduction of these new rules?

This will not be possible as once she or her children are ordained in another religion, their Navjote cannot be performed.

What if a woman and her children who have been baptized, rescind their religion and then make a request for a re-conversion?

That is upto the Mobeds. There are some things that the KPATF can allow but cannot force the Mobeds to do. If a particular Mobed does not agree to re-convert the woman and perform the Navjote of her children then there is nothing the KPATF can do. While the KPATF can allow entry of Parsi women retaining their religion after marriage to enter the Dar e Mehr, they cannot force the Mobeds to re-convert their children to the Zarathushti faith by performing Navjotes.

Change is the act, process or result of alterations through time. There is no doubt that with time comes change; whether it a new law or the birth of a new generation. Have we ever asked ourselves what could be one of the reasons why the Zarathushti religion has survived these many centuries? It is the religion's capacity to accept change faced by the challenges of time that has sustained it thus far. I'm optimistic, a bit of a bend does not break the bow!!!!

Pouruchisty Sidhwa, Pakistan See bio page 61

**OUR PAKISTANI PRESENCE,****From Colonial Elite ... to a Minority within Minorities**

The 20th century represented the beginning of an era of unprecedented connectivity and globalization, as large numbers of people sought their fortunes in distant, foreign lands and countries. With this large migration and movement of the masses, a fallacious belief has often resulted that such migrations are unique to modern times. In reality, the migration, and movement of people has been an essential component of the human experience. Within this context, there exists considerable interest and motivation to study the case of Pakistan and its Parsi community and how it has transformed over many years of living in a Muslim country.

TINY, BUT SIGNIFICANT

It is also of special significance that the smallest of Pakistan's minorities also represents Pakistan's most distinct and recognized community. Parsis are not even a tenth of a decimal point in the population of Pakistan; nonetheless, their economic and social influence on Pakistan has been significant.

The Parsis became the favored trading agents, merchants and shipbuilders of the British and this continued until after Partition right into the late 1970s. The Parsis were known for their entrepreneurial skills which have now been completely diluted as most children from entrepreneurial families are becoming professionals. Gone are the days of the Parsi "Sethias" as these have become a dying breed. Ours is now a risk-averse community and prefers job security and steady income rather than the turmoil of entrepreneurship where each day can be a struggle to survive the pressures of competitors and the government and running the risks of being targeted and victimized. However, we are a very compassionate lot and tend to stand together in times of need and the amount of charity that is done within the community through different Trusts is phenomenal.

GOING WEST

One now hears of a Parsi professional either working at a top position in a school, pharmaceutical companies, legal and medical practice, banking etc. The Pakistani Parsis have perhaps produced the best doctors, lawyers, businessmen, architects, engineers, bankers, teachers, artists' traders, stock market pundits etc. But these are now mostly part of the Diaspora that is now living in Australia, Canada, Europe and North America. Pakistani

POURUCHISTY SIDHWA, Karachi Pakistan

Parsis continue to produce 'diamonds' and steadily loose them to the West as the socio-economic and political climate in Pakistan does not encourage the youth to stay on in this country. Pakistan has lost more Parsis to emigration than to intermarriages and deaths. Many of our youth would like to settle away from their homeland to secure a better and safer future.

What has not changed is that those remaining in Pakistan are generally well respected, tolerated and are not harmed. This is largely due to their minimalistic numbers and therefore hardly a source of threat to the ruling majority. Harmless and timid and trust worthy is how we are now described by the Muslim majority. We are not a burden on the Government or the State, as we look after our own from "womb to tomb" by way of our own housing, hospitals, infirmaries, doctors, charitable trusts, jobs etc.

THE GENDER FACTOR

With a community that prided itself on being able to find suitable partners for marriage, Pakistani Parsis with their dwindling population face an issue of the greater ratio of girls to boys. We find more and more of our eligible girls not finding suitable partners in the community. Those that cannot find what they want in our community because of the ratio gap, age differences, parental involvement or more importantly lack of suitor involvement, opportunity, and the prejudice of opposing groups ... so many factors, seek the next best opportunity and opt out. Whoever makes one feel happy, secure and respected is the ultimate goal for most. Some of them wish to remain inside the precincts of our religion and to this end the **Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (KPATF)** has passed a resolution to allow women who have opted to marry outside the community, but who retain their religion, admission in the KPATF controlled agiary and also allow the performance of their children's navjote. Inter marriages although still frowned upon, are not considered such a dishonor. Girls are definitely not ostracized from the family as used to happen maybe twenty years ago. There is a reluctant acceptance and understandably so!

BURIAL AND OTHER CHOICES

After years of struggling to find support for the right to be either cremated, buried or 'dokhma nashined', KPATF's resolution on this has been like oxygen to the bed-ridden. The Karachi Parsis now have the option to be either buried, cremated or 'dokhma nashined'. KPATF has allowed their premises to be used for all three types of



disposal of the dead and for prayers to be allowed in their premises. Also for Karachi Parsis who wish to be buried, the KPATF will provide for the body to be flown to Lahore, Quetta or Rawalpindi for burial in their Parsi graveyards.

PAUCITY OF PRIESTS

This brings us to another dilemma which is being faced by the community here. There is a continuing shortage of mobeds in Karachi and the complete absence of them in other parts of the country. From a community that had mobeds lining up on agiary chairs, we are now reduced to a handful of old mobeds who find it difficult to perform back to back ceremonies sometimes. The political environment and the lack of security coupled with how Pakistan as a whole is projected in India does not help us resolve this dilemma. We are finding it difficult to lure mobeds from India despite offering handsome salaries and paid for accommodations.

PARSI EDUCATION, FEW PARSI STUDENTS

Our two schools, the *Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi Boys School (BVS)* and the *Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School (MPGS)* continue to make an excellent contribution to education. With now only a handful of Parsi boys and girls studying in these schools, these institutions are a testament of the existence and contribution that the Parsis made, and are continuing to make in the field of education. The word Parsi will never be an extinct word in the Pakistani education context.

SO WHAT HAS CHANGED?

From a vibrant community where soon to be betrothed used to line up in queues waiting to get a house in one of the Parsi housing schemes we have empty flats in most Parsi "chawls". The same chawls that used to have a host of energetic youth playing in their compounds today wear a deserted look. Ours is a geriatric community, one that needs medical attention and proper care. With youth flying out in droves, the older generation has been left to the mercy of those present.

Parsi girls today are comfortable in stylish 'shalwar kameezes' as they do not want to generate the wrath of the fundamentalists. But even today you will find them in pants, and long skirts in most multinational organizations. The sari continues to be worn at weddings and navjotes but has been replaced by a pant/blouse and 'shalwar kameez' at a more somber setting like a funeral or a jashan.

We still drive new cars and hold positions of value in the social setup of the country. Some however would now

like to keep a low profile following the ethnic, political violence that has been the mainstay of this country.

The Pakistani Parsis have integrated themselves into Muslim society while simultaneously maintaining their own distinct customs and traditions (and thus ethnic identity). This in turn has given the Parsi community a rather peculiar standing: they are Pakistanis in terms of national affiliation, language and history, but not typically Pakistani in terms of consanguinity or cultural, behavioral and religious practices.

Pakistan had been a tolerant society till the mid-1970s, where Hindus, Christians, Parsis and other minorities lived peacefully. However, Pakistani society underwent a U-turn after military ruler General Zia ul Haq staged a coup in July 1977, overthrowing a democratically elected government, and thereafter decided to fight a proxy war in Afghanistan. Though General Zia ul Haq perished in a plane crash in August 1988, his legacy lingers and a tolerant, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society has been brutalized so much so that neither the poor nor the elite feel safe.

The dwindling Parsis within this milieu face a challenging future, but they are nonetheless transforming and adopting in order to meet those challenges.

Pouruchisty Sidhwa is Group HR Director at the House of Habib in Pakistan, a conglomerate of automotive, engineering, retail, packaging and allied businesses. Having spent 23 years in multinational banks like HSBC, Citibank & RBS, Pouru has now diversified into the manufacturing world. She loves acting, compering, hosting shows and writes poetry and articles in her spare time. Pouru is mother to a 13 year old daughter Sharmene.





ZARATHUSHTIS FROM KARACHI : EXPLORING NEW FUTURES IN THE DIASPORA

DAVID KNAUTE, Paris, France

Parsis settled in Karachi from the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, few thought that the Zarathushti community would grow so fast and so prosperous. Even fewer would have believed of the tremendous changes that were about to occur in the region. In 1947, India and Pakistan became two separate States, and Parsis from Karachi started living in a different country from their sisters and brothers in Bombay, Gujarat, Hyderabad and other parts of India. Even till today, travelling back and forth from India to Pakistan is very complicated, due to visa arrangements, and family ties between relatives living on both sides of the border have become looser and looser. Parsis living in Karachi have actually more family connections overseas than in India and many spend part of the year overseas – mostly in the USA, Canada, Australia – to reunite with their dear ones.

In such a context, maintaining religious customs has become particularly difficult. The main hub of religiosity for all Zarathushtis remains Bombay, where most of them are settled. This makes the location of Karachi quite convenient. Still, like other Zarathushti communities, the one in Karachi remains greatly dependant on Bombay, for instance for the training and recruitment of priests. It is then hard for it to thrive as a religious community. Most importantly, it is now heading towards an unsolvable spiral down, result of a seemingly unstoppable demographic crisis. The city, once proudly considered as a model for Zarathushtis worldwide – being characterized by a well-respected, successful community with all the requirements at hand to practice Zoroastrianism: two fire temples, two towers of silence, and proximity to holy places in India – is now thinking of its mere survival! Outlooks for the future can only seem obscure when looking at what happened in other cities of Pakistan, where Zarathushti communities, once renowned, have vanished (Sukkur, Peshawar) or wither to the point of soon vanishing (Quetta, Lahore, Rawalpindi).

The case of Sukkur, interior Sindh, is particularly revealing. The Parsi community there once prospered, thanks to railway construction, but the last residents left very soon after Partition, in the late 1950s. Several Zarathushtis from Karachi, who lived part of their childhood in Sukkur, have never travelled there (although it is only one hour flight away from Karachi) to visit the graves of their close relatives and other places they may remember from their childhood. Sukkur's Parsi old cemetery, built in the 19th century, was closed in 1907 and the site is close



to abandon in spite of the fact that the Parsi Quetta Anjuman paid for its maintenance until the mid-1990s. The 'new' cemetery has been absorbed into a non-Parsi neighbourhood as a result of urban sprawling. (photo above) When I visited Sukkur in April 2010, I was guided by a local chokidar, who was in charge of the maintenance of the former Parsi quarter, comprising of an agiari, a school and a dharamsala. The compound, inhabited by the chokidar's family, was in a very poor condition and could have been anytime seized by either local authorities or local investors. (view from outside Parsi quarters, sukkur)

How should Parsis from the diaspora and originating from Pakistan reflect about such hard facts? Should they come and help communities to replenish themselves, and even resettle in Pakistan? Or should they focus on consolidating Zoroastrianism and Zarathushti communities in the New World? The first option seems unconceivable. The trend towards outmigration is too strong and unlikely to reverse. It applies not only to Parsis but also to other ethnic and religious groups, who would at no price abandon their lives and new lifestyles in the diaspora to come and live again in Pakistan, now considered a quasi-hell, especially by non-Muslim minorities. Still, no one wants to forget or ignore her/his origins, least of all Parsis who have so strong ties with the Indian sub-continent. Many Parsis originating from Pakistan would still, in an ideal world, live in a place where they can practice their religion like their ancestors, and remain near sacred places such as Bombay, Navsari, Udvada or Sanjan! The most prosperous



families, who obtained dual nationality, can easily choose to rotate between Pakistan and diaspora destinations, but this is an option for only a handful of people.

In the diaspora, including in North America where the Zarathushti community is the best organized the faith as it is practiced in India and Pakistan is hardly possible. Firstly, many individuals are isolated from the rest of the community while on the Indian sub-continent, most people live in baughs or in Parsi colonies. The lack of socialization among diaspora community members has a direct impact on the level of practice of the religion. There is no fire temple to pay homage to Ahura Mazda and bow to his spirit within the fire. The practice of the tower of silence has been completely abandoned and only the UK community has a proper Zoroastrian burial ground at Brookwood.

It seems obvious, then, that Zarathushti communities in the diaspora should develop adequate infrastructure to protect the traditional prayers, rites and rituals and imbibe the younger generation with a minimum of faith to sustain the religion. Some traditions such as the Sudreh and Kusti should be promoted, since there are irreplaceable signs of

religious belonging. The community size is substantially growing in some of these destinations, especially in the New World, so more priests should be trained to put an end to the existing shortage. Zarathushti organizations should actively strive to encourage their youth to take up studies in Zoroastrian history and philosophy and encourage them to organize trips to India, Pakistan and Iran to keep the historical roots of Zarathushtis alive.

If Zarathushtis progressively abandon the basic constituents of their religion, will they be able to still maintain their faith and identity? This is hardly conceivable since the Parsi identity is indeed firstly based on the religion, then on its ethnicity. Today, the controversies sparked off by the issue of mixed marriages highlights the necessity for Zarathushtis from the diaspora to be clear about what they want for their future. In particular, how do they foresee the coming decades? For those who originate from Pakistan, what will they do if in thirty year time, there is virtually no Zarathushti left in the country? Will they turn to India as a substitute, but what if the demographic crisis keeps hitting there as well, or if their offspring cannot identify to their ancestral lands there?

The question that remains is whether it is acceptable for Zarathushtis to accept and/or consider the end of their communities in Pakistan or elsewhere. If this may occur soon in Pakistan, the same could happen in India, first in Gujarat, then in the longer term, in Bombay. The absence of a homeland where it is possible to return to is a great challenge for any community, and this could be of great damage for Zarathushtis...

In any case, the preservation of cultural heritage is already at stake. Tangible heritage includes primarily religious monuments such as the hundreds of fire temples in India, including the nine Atash Behrams (8 are in India, 1 in Iran) and the towers of silence. The latest are now in use in Bombay, Hyderabad, Karachi and some parts of Gujarat only. Many people within the community now voice in favour of their disuse, which was initially considered as a result of the extinction of vultures but also because of the fact that many Zarathushti communities in the diaspora proved that it is possible to manage with other funeral practices. However, turning the towers of silence into mere cultural heritage would have more than a symbolic importance, since they continue to symbolize the sacred character of fire and of the earth for Zarathushtis, and are certainly not obsolete funeral practices rooted in the past.

Besides, a looming danger for any diaspora community is assimilation. This is particularly true in the case of Zarathushtis, whose way of life can in general



terms be characterized as Western. Their high proficiency in English, the level of education and their many professional successes, including in the diaspora, make it easy for them to integrate within host communities. It is up to them to make good use of such advantages while at the same time maintaining their religious and ethnic identity. Some of the challenges ahead will be for Zarathushtis from the diaspora to break the isolation of smallest communities, and encourage the concentration of a substantial number of Zarathushtis in some key localities such as Houston (United States) or Toronto (Canada). They will also have to find durable solutions to the demographic crisis that already threatens their existence in places like Pakistan.

Another major challenge for Zarathushtis in the diaspora will be to strengthen their efforts to reunite. Communities originating from India and Pakistan (known as Parsis) are still very differentiated from Zarathushtis from Iran. The main separator remains language but there is also other issues pertaining to national identity. How to envisage the future of Zarathushti communities in Iran, where the immediate condition of an entire people – the Iranians – remains uncertain and fraught with anxiety? How can Zarathushti communities from the diaspora help their coreligionists in Iran? What kind of support do Zarathushtis living in Iran may expect from those living in the diaspora? What should Zarathushtis think and do about Iranian Muslims expressing their wish to convert to their original faith? These questions merit clear answers, since Iran is indeed the original homeland of Zoroastrianism and Zarathushtis struggle more than any other Zarathushti community to maintain the religion alive.

The complexity of the issues at stake, and the great challenges lying ahead, will require first and foremost a strong, inclusive leadership for all Zarathushti communities. The problem is to define the kind of leadership which is required. Can any legitimate group be identified to lead a small community marked by its plurality and cultural diversity? Should the model of leadership be centralized or regional? Is there any consensus? What are the views of younger generations?

The Global Working Group, which met in October 2011 in London, will certainly become a key institution to define the roadmap which will make it possible not to obliterate or at least not put at jeopardy the future of Zarathushti communities. Its elected community representatives come from the various regions and include Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), and the Federation of Parsee Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) among others. The focus on youth and the

recognition of the declining population trend at the occasion of the first meeting constituted positive signs.

In Karachi, all these developments will certainly be welcomed. But they will have to be accompanied by renewed efforts to promote all aspects of Zoroastrianism, and contribute to the forming of a modern identity that requires from any community to be plural, open to change and mobile in a globalized world.

Editor's note:

After the concept was accepted in Dubai during the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress in December 2009, the elected Zarathushti representatives of federations from different parts of the world met in India in January 2011. The name **Global Working Group** was suggested by Sam Balsara, Honorary Member of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce, and was formally adopted in Mumbai in January 2011.

David Knaute, 30 years old, was trained as a social anthropologist at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)* in Paris. In 2009-2010, he lived in Karachi where he was introduced to the Zarathushti community. In March 2011, he published a household survey of the Zarathushti community from Karachi in partnership with the Karachi-based Young Mazdayasnian Zoroastrian Association (YMZA) and the Parzor Project in New Delhi. David currently lives in Paris, where he works as a human rights activist.





EMBRACING WOMEN IN THE PRIESTHOOD

Iran welcomes eight women mobedyars, but full equality is still elusive

ZAHRA SETHNA, Nova Scotia, Canada



Zoroastrianism was among the first religions to teach gender equality, but its modern practice has not always treated men and women as true equals. One area that has largely been off limits to women in modern times is the priesthood.

Perhaps, then, nothing marks this issue's theme of 'transformation' more than the news that eight Zarthosthi women were ordained as mobedyars by the Anjoman-e-Mobedan in Tehran in February 2011.

According to *Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary*, a senior member of the Tehran Anjoman, the initiative began in 2002, when funds became available to expand the religious education classes offered by the Anjoman.

The news was met with an enthusiastic response, with dozens of students selected by way of an entrance exam. Several high profile teachers, including *Katayun Mazdapour*, *Katayun Namirianian*, *Dr. Rustom Vahidi* and *Mobed Kuroush Niknam*, agreed to teach subjects ranging from ancient Iranian language and culture to the insight and philosophy of Zarathushtra. Mobed. Firouzgary himself taught recitation of the Avesta and ceremonial rites to the students, who attended all-day classes each Friday and were granted certificates at three levels of the course after successfully passing exams.

Of the first class of 25 women and 28 men at the general knowledge level, almost all passed on to the

second level, which covered higher religious knowledge. In 2003, a new group of more than 70 students began their general knowledge studies.

By then, word had spread of the program to Zarathushti communities outside of Tehran, and those groups began to request classes in their own areas. In 2004, teachers from Tehran and Shiraz began to travel weekly to Kerman and Yazd, often finding classes crowded with more than 100 students eager to learn about their religious heritage.

To reach the third level of study, which qualified students as specialists who could become religious teachers, researchers or mobedyars (priest's assistant), required mastery of Avesta grammar, Pahlavi texts and deep study into the Gathas.

"Six women of the original second graders and three ladies of the later Avesta classes are highly religious, have very sweet prayer tones and have insisted in learning to recite fluently the entire Khord-e-Avesta, the portions of the Gathas and the Yasna that are needed for all the rituals that mobedyars are allowed to perform," Mobed. Firouzgary said via email.

"In order to value the continued and sincere efforts that these ladies have put in, and in order to honor the equality of men and women [that is] amongst the teachings of Zarathushtra and the Iranian culture, the



Anjoman-e-Mobedan invited these nine ladies for a refresher course in Avesta recitations and a practice of simple ceremonies like performing the Sudre Pushi [Navjote], marriage, praying of Jashans on various occasions, and death ceremonies."

According to Mobed. Firouzgary, this is not the first time in history that Zarathushti women have been allowed to participate in religious ceremonies.

"Several other ladies, including my own sister in the U.K., do Navjotes and prayers for death ceremony, and even funerals if called upon," he said. "We have other examples in Iran, as well," noting several women who have since passed away.

Beyond these modern examples, there is a historical precedent for women's participation in religious rites. In the April 2006 issue of the journal Teaching Theology & Religion, (Volume 9, Issue 2, pages 79–84), Dr. Jehan Bagli wrote:

"According to later Zoroastrian text (Aerpatistan 1-37, Vendidad (Vd) 4.45) in the early era, any aspiring Zoroastrian can undergo priestly training and become a performing priest, or Athravan. The eighth book of Dinkard even speaks of the women assuming the duties of the performing priests (Dinkard, Book 8, 28.6). The ability of a woman to tend a consecrated fire is also recorded in other Zarathushtrian texts (Erbedestan Ch 5.6,7; 6.7)."

Dr. Bagli, as a member of the North American Mobeds Council, passed a motion in 2008 that would allow any person born of two Zarathushti parents to enter the mobedyar programme run by the council. The resolution was unanimously passed and since then two women in North America have begun training to become mobedyars.

One of them is Mahshad Khosraviani, a 20-year-old student at the University of Toronto. Squeezing in her religious practice along with her studies and other activities is not always easy, but Khosraviani is motivated to serve her community. *"It is a choice I have made to better serve Ahura Mazda, and I don't see it as a sacrifice. It's the feeling I get when I sit and pray. Talking to Ahura Mazda calms me down,"* she says, *"feels like it's only him and I and no one or nothing else exists."*

Khosraviani has demonstrated devotion to the Zoroastrian religion for years, teaching Avesta classes at the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, working with children who are preparing for their Navjotes, writing articles for the society's newsletter and acting as a guest speaker on the radio.

"I've always been so amazed and mesmerized by the history of my country, my people, and my religion and those who have contributed their life so our generation could have a better understanding and freedom of choice."

She says she is looking forward to becoming a mobedyar so that she can help people during the important moments of their lives. *"We are present with the family in many joyous times – like the birth of their child,*

their Navjote or wedding – but at the same time we are present in some of the difficult times... But mostly I'm doing this because I love my religion, my people, I love teaching, and touching people's hearts in a way that hopefully will motivate them to either follow in my path or at least live a life of righteousness."

Overall, response to the news of the women initiates has been positive. "After hearing the news, I have been inundated by congratulatory messages and notes," said Sarvar Taraporevala, one of the new mobedyars. "It is therefore a duty to express my sincere gratitude to all well-wishers and give them my solemn word that I will do everything at my disposal in order to carry out my newly bestowed responsibility to the best of my knowledge and aptitude."

Behnaz Naeimabadi, another of the initiates in Iran said, *"I took up the challenge of becoming a mobedyar very seriously and put in my utmost efforts in qualifying for that post. I am confident that we women mobedyars will succeed in achieving our pious goals."*

But while many Zarathushti communities have welcomed the news, more work is needed to gain full acceptance and equality for women in religious practice. Women are still restricted from performing certain ceremonies and from taking part in religious rituals during their menstrual cycle.

Perhaps the strongest argument for allowing women full equality comes from a search of the religious texts themselves. As Khosraviani says, there is no mention within the Avesta or the Gathas that forbids women from becoming mobeds or mobedyars.

"In fact there are parts that say women have the same rights and responsibilities toward their religion and faith as men do," she said. *"In the eyes of God, everyone is treated equally and everyone is given their role/responsibility to perform."*

Photos by Parva Namiranian

Zahra Sethna A writer and editor with over 12 years experience in print, video and online formats, Zahra Sethna has worked as a communication specialist with UNICEF, a news writer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and a web producer at The New York Times. She has authored three guide books to New York City and contributed to publications such as BBC Travel, The New York Times, Picture, Clear and Maisonneuve magazines. She lives in Nova Scotia with her husband, Stephen.





QUOTES FROM THE MOBEDYARS

Behnaz Naeimabadi**Lives in: Yazd, Iran****Age: 30**

The Anjoman-e-Mobedan's announcement for introducing female mobedyars interested me greatly. Having earlier attended a series of religious classes that were held in Yazd by the Anjoman-e-Mobedan, the Gatha Pouyan and others, I took up the challenge of becoming a mobedyar very seriously and put in my utmost efforts in qualifying for that



post. I feel so proud and honoured that I have succeeded.

My future goals are to see to it that I acquire further religious knowledge to both satisfy my inner needs and to propagate the same amongst our community, especially the younger generation. At the same time, I will strive to do my best in performing any religious ceremony, in collaboration with my male counterparts or alone as the situation may demand. I am confident that we women mobedyars will succeed in achieving our pious goals.

Fariba Maali**Lives in: Yazd, Iran Age 40.**

مزدا

اینجانب فریبا مالی فرزند سهراب مالی وفیروزه نجمی متولد 1350 از اهالی مریم آباد یزد و در خانواده ای

زرتشتی چشم به جهان گشوده ام تعالیم دین زرتشتی را نزد استادان دینی موبدیاران آقای مهربان آفرین و آقای پرویز مالی و آقای بهروز نجمی زاده فراگرفته و در برگزاری مراسم های مختلف دینی و برپایی جشن های ماهیانه که در سالن اجتماعات زرتشتیان مریم آباد تشکیل می شد حضور فعالانه داشته و از سال 67 عضو فعال گاتها پویان یزد می باشم و نیز برای پر کردن اوقات فراغت تعطیلات تابستان دانش آموزان زرتشتی مبادرت به تشکیل کلاسهای مختلف فرهنگی و هنری نموده ام و در زمینه تهیه اطلس جغرافیای زرتشتیان ایران زیر نظر خانم دکتر فرزانه گشتاسب به جمع آوری اطلاعات جامع در مورد زیارتگاه ها و مکانهای مختلف زرتشتیان در اطراف استان یزد و مراسم و آداب و رسوم دینی به جای مانده از نیاکان زرتشتی فعالیت دارم و هم اکنون به عنوان سرپرست درمانگاه زنان و زایمان بیمارستان مجیبیان مشغول به خدمت بوده و دانشجوی فن آوری اطلاعات و ارتباطات می باشم و همیشه آرزوی آن را داشتم که به عنوان موبد یار در خدمت جامعه زرتشتی باشم و برای رسیدن به این هدف در کلاس های مختلف دینی شرکت نموده و با گذراندن سه دوره دانش پایه در یزد و گذراندن دوره تکمیلی آن به مدت تقریبی یک سال شامل اوستا



خوانی و مراسم های مذهبی زیر نظر جناب موبد مهربان فیروز گری و فلسفه و جهان بینی اشوزرتشت زیر نظر جناب موبد دکتر اردشیر خورشیدیان و آئین ها و گاتها شناسی زیر نظر جناب موبد پدram سروش پور از انجمن زرتشتیان تهران با موفقیت به درجه موبد یاری نائل آمده ام و همواره به این موضوع ایمان داشته ام که میتوان فرهنگ کهن ایرانی را که موبدان زن همپای موبدان مرد در جامعه انجام وظیفه می کردند دوباره زنده کرد و موبدیاران زن نیز می توانند در کنار موبد یاران مرد در رشد و سربلندی جامعه زرتشتی نقش ارزشمندی داشته باشند و امیدوارم از افرادی باشم که با بالا بردن سطح آگاهی و دانش خود در امر آموزش نونهالان زرتشتی کوشا باشم و در آینده با پژوهش درباره دین و آیین خود باورهای گاتهای را در بین مردم نهادینه کنم و همچنین با شرکت در مراسم های مختلف دینی در کنار موبدیاران مرد مانند نیاکان خود انجام وظیفه نموده و در رشد و سربلندی جامعه زرتشتی کوشا و مفید باشم و در این امر خطیر همواره با همراهی و تشویق خانواده ام توانسته ام بر مشکلات پیش آمده غلبه کنم و زمانی که اسامی موبد یاران زن توسط انجمن محترم موبدان تهران اعلام گردید با استقبال بی نظیر هم کیشان مواجه شدم و امیدوارم مردم با این دیدگاه مثبتی که نسبت به نقش موبد یاران زن در جهت ارتقاء سطح دانش جامعه زرتشتی دارند ما را در این امر خطیر و پر مسئولیت یاری دهند تا بتوانیم در حد توان خدمتگذار جامعه زرتشتی باشیم .

باتشکر فریبا مالی

**Brief translation of Fariba Maali**

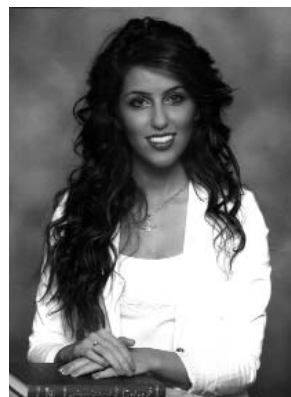
I feel proud and delighted to have succeeded and look forward to doing for our community what our female ancestors did and much more. I strongly believe that along with my male counterparts we can strive and succeed in the propagation of the real messages of Asho Zarathushtra. The fact that, so far, our community members have well received the news of our participation gives us added incentives to achieve our goals.

**Mahshad Khosraviani, Lives in: Toronto,
Ontario, Age: 20**

Aside from wanting the same rights and freedoms as men in my religion and opening a path for others in future, I am doing this for myself. I don't care if I won't be allowed to practice later on or if I'm not accepted in the Parsi community. It's the feeling I get when I sit and pray. Talking

to Ahura Mazda calms me down – feels like it's only him and I and no one or nothing else exists.

I think the greatest part of being a mobbed, or a mobedyar in my case, is being a real part of people's lives and some of their important moments. We are present with the family in many joyous times, like the birth of their child, their navjote, wedding, but at the same time we are present in some of the difficult times, such as time of the dead, sickness, time of loss or grief. I think what I'm looking forward to doing the most is to be with God's people, to share their joys and sorrows.



Mobedyar Kaviani

انینایی با یکی از زنان موبدیاران ایرانی

در پاسخ به دعوت مهرآمیز دکتر دالی دستور تلاش می کنم خود را به اختصار معرفی نمایم. اینجانب مهرزاد کاویانی متولد 1347 شهرستان بم در ایران، کارشناس شیمی کاربردی و کارشناس ارشد آلودگی و حفاظت محیط زیست آب و دریا از دانشکده علوم و فنون دریایی تهران هستم.

نظر به علاقه مندی خودم، درخواست انجمن موبدان را پذیرفتم تا بتوانم از این راه گامی در گسترش اندیشه های اهورایی و آیین راستی، خرد ورزی، وجدان پروری، انسان دوستی و گسترش آیین و فرهنگ اشوزرتشت بردارم. بر این باور هستم که با آوای خوش می توانم باورهای اشوزرتشت را به همکیشانم انتقال دهم و همزوری بیشتری را بوجود آورم. در جریان دوره ی آموزشی از پشتیبانی همسر و فرزندانم برخوردار بودم.

دوره های دینی و موبدیاری که اینجانب گذرانده ام از این قرار است: ابتدا تمام کلاس های دانشپایه سوم که حدود 9 ماه است و در کرمان ارایه شد، گذراندم و جهت آموزش پایانی موبدیاری دوره ی فشرده جهان بینی اشوزرتشت و فلسفه سنت ها را زیر نظر فرنشین انجمن موبدان تهران، موبد اردشیر خورشیدیان و اوستا خوانی را زیر نظر موبد مهربان فیروزگری و مفاهیم گاتا و آیین ها را زیر نظر موبد پدرام سروش پور را گذرانده و آزمون های هر دوره را جداگانه پشت سر گذاشتم و گاتها را با خط دین دبیره میخوانم.

در این راستا از سالها پیش دسته ای از کارها را در همکاری با انجمن ها و سازمان های زرتشتی به انجام رسانده ام:

1- همکاری با انجمن زرتشتیان کرمان جهت برگزاری مراسم دینی و فرهنگی از جمله مدیریت جشن سده سال 87 و مجری در سال های بعد و همیاری در برگزاری کارگاه گاتاشناسی و گاتها خوانی و همیاری در همایش انجمن ها و همایش سازمان زنان سراسر کشور و همیاری در جشن ها

2- باشندگی در همایش مانتره دوره ی 15 و 16 گاتها خوانی

3- باشندگی در کارگاه کارآفرینی و مدیریت زمان اسفندیار اختیاری

4- شرکت در همایش موسیقی کانون دانشجویان زرتشتی سال 87-88-1386

5- شرکت در دوره های دانش نامه پایه سوم انجمن موبدان

در انتها دیدگاه هازمان زرتشتی را به این امر دینی و فرهنگی (موبد یاری زنان) مثبت می بینم و به آن ارج می نهم و همزوری هر چه بیشتر این هازمان را از درگاه اهورا مزدا آرزو مندم.



TRANSFORMATION:

Natural Zarathushtrian - Sophisticated Zarathushtrian - Simple Zarathushtrian.

Recently I attended a Navjote ceremony of my cousin's grandchild in New Zealand.

Almost all of my family attended this happy occasion. They came from far and wide.

Australia, India, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

After a hearty evening meal, we fondly reminisced about the golden, olden days in Bombay. We talked lovingly about our grand parents, parents, uncles, aunts and on and on. Each one had their strengths and weaknesses, idiosyncrasies and temperaments. The combined stories would have been a good theme for a Hollywood movie, if not Hollywood, a Bollywood movie, at least. The stories involved drama, pathos, comedy and wisdom. Each one of us thanked Ahura Mazda for being born into such a 'multicoloured' family.

But, within all the multifaceted glow, one quality stood out - the Spiritual Dimension.

The thoughts, words and actions of our ancestors had the quality of a spiritual calibre. A quality which cannot be intellectually analysed, and a dimension which could not be adequately worded. I am sure they were not even aware of their spiritual stature. In this age of iPads, iPhones, Twitter and Face Book. I can only term them as **Natural Zarathushtrians**.

While penning these thoughts I wondered, if I was viewing my family with rose coloured glasses, but nay, I soon realised that in my childhood and youth, spent living in the Parsi neighbourhood of 'Khetwadi', Bombay, most of the humans were adorned with this Spiritual glow. They were humble, tolerant, respectful, and affectionate.

It looks to me, that in this, over technological age with over inflated egos, we are gradually becoming **Sophisticated Zarathushtrians**.

A transformation is happening, unfortunately in the negative direction.

Do we need proof, of this change? All one has to do is to log on to the Internet and listen to the ranting and raving of the self-anointed intellectuals.

There was an Indian Guru who once asked his disciples: "Put yourself in God's shoes - if you created humanity and you decided to give them one perfect gift what would you give them? Remember it should be a perfect gift, he said. Think about it and give me an answer." Varied answers were spit out, good health, intellectual prowess, wisdom of the ages, compassion, etc., etc.

PERVIZ DUBASH, Melbourne, Australia.

The Guru smiled and said, there is only one perfect gift. "God Himself".

And that is what He has done. He has put Himself in everyone's heart.

So one need not search for spirituality, There is no need to develop spirituality.

It is already embedded in us. All we need to do is to tear down the veil of intellectual sophistication, and claim our right as **Simple Zarathushtrians**.

The 15th century Persian Sufi poet Jami expresses it beautifully:

***"The essences are each a separate glass
Through which the Sun of Being's Light is passed,
Each tinted fragment sparkles in the sun,
A thousand colours but the Light is One."***

Perviz Dubash, Past president of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria, was born in Bombay, India and graduated with a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering, Indiana Institute of Technology Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA.

He worked in Consulting Engineering Firm in St. Louis Missouri, USA and as a Technical, Officer, Air India, Bombay, India. After his marriage to Nergish (nee Daruwala) he settled in Melbourne, Australia. He is the father of three children and three grand children. Perviz co-ordinated the Zarathushti presence at the Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia. He initiated the representation of The Religion of Zarathushtra in the Museum of World Religions in Taipei, Taiwan.





ZARATHISHTIS IN AUSTRALIA: HOW AND HAVE WE TRANSFORMED??

NERGISH UDWADIA

ERVAD ARMIN DUMASIA

Melbourne, Australia

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Change: the inevitable. In its own irony, nothing is permanent but change. Everyone you meet and everything that happens is for a reason and the change that transforms you not only as a person but society as a whole is transformation in itself.

Transformation by its very nature is of little significance if it does not create lasting value. Transformation has been at the very core of civilisation and it is the very fabric through which society lives and breathes.

Transformation of people or society is critical to their evolution. When transformation culminates in the creation of expression that is of value to its people it can be contrasted with its dimensional opposite – stagnation – of the mind and body that seeks to maintain the status quo.

Transformation of culture or cultural change refers to the dynamic process whereby the living cultures of the world are changing and adapting to external or internal forces.¹

Western civilisation has often found those arriving with ideas, perceptions and behaviours derived from the more ancient eastern civilisations to be at odds. The culture clash that often ensues has by no means escaped those Zarathushtrians who have arrived in Australia over the decades from Iran, Pakistan, Africa and more so India.

The confluence as well as the conflict (divergence) seems omnipresent amongst our Diaspora. This dichotomy of views is nowhere more apparent than in religious and cultural pursuits – wherein they tend to form the basis of divisions and inequality.²

ZARATHUSHTRA'S PROGRESSIVE WORLD

The Zarathushtrian religion throughout millennia is known to be progressive, tolerant and respectful of other cultures and communities. We are free to practice the tenets of the religion for the benevolence of the Zarathushtrian community itself, rather than any misconstrued faith.

Human beings are creatures of habit. Essentially we tend to not want or accept change, however opportunistic it may be and prefer continuity, more so when religious norms practiced for millennia are in the spotlight.

Extreme viewpoints – from strict trite pursuits to outright rejection still seem to be commonplace and rear their ugly heads in the most uncanny of situations. The lack of clarity on the practical teachings of the faith and a more moderate, practical, all encompassing viewpoint does not dominate.

Nor does the higher realm of thinking on the cause and effect of extreme viewpoints merit any logical debate as this would necessarily require introspection of self and one's relation to another.

So then how does one truly transform given the myriad of divisions and inequalities religion can so clearly create? One needs to truly believe & understand the essence on which our Zarathushtrian religion is built – Humata, Hukhta, and Hvarshta. To practice whenever, wherever and with whomever possible Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

The voices of reason and clear thinking dissolve when it comes to religion. Transformation, to be truly effective needs to stem from within. The Zarathushtrian religion as a whole has transformed since time immemorial, be it the landing on the shores of Sanjan, to imbibing the Indian culture and yet preserving the communities' recognition as an Iranian / Zarathushti lineage.

In Australia, the voice of reason, that of the more tolerant and of the youth is gaining momentum. There are a multitude of reasons for this; primarily the Diaspora of today do not have any significant historical "baggage". They have either been born in a multi cultural society such as Melbourne, which incidentally is ascribed as one of the most tolerant and culturally diverse cities, or have had the opportunity to arrive at an early age and absorb the tolerance and openness that is Australian society.



The transformation is clearly visible in the so called generation X wherein they question, their roots and the history and culture that makes them Zarathushtis. This questioning leads to a transformation in itself by finding out more of their own heritage and past and co relating it in the present multicultural society. Where the youth express their want and interests to learn and better understand the very premise of our religion, they do turn to a few young Mobeds here from whom they can get a better line of reasoning and understanding.

The Zarathushti youth in Australia have transformed through integration and knowledge sharing, be it interstate experiences with other fellow Zarathusthis or something as simple as going to India and imbibing the quantum of knowledge in religious and ceremonial activities and keeping more than the faith & the flame alive in them. Living in a multi cultural society and not loosing one's identity, in itself shows the transformation of the community as a whole towards a more positive and ever lasting commitment....no matter what" Chaiye Hame Zarthoshti" !

Transformation in our interaction, albeit at a slow pace with the many local inter faith councils and organisations, is allowing for a greater depth in the understanding and acceptance of the Zarathushtrian faith whilst importantly generating more openness in our own thoughts and actions towards others.

Zarathushtra's religion was the first monotheistic religion which transformed the way a society lived. Cyrus the Great transformed the way we thought about our fellow human beings by putting into words and actions the world's first charter on human rights. The Cyrus Cylinder as it is commonly known still survives today with the original on display at the British Museum and a replica on permanent display at the UN headquarters in New York. We feel proud that its features are reflected in the rights and liberties granted to Australian citizens and residents.

To quote from The Gathas: *Let wisdom come in the company of truth . . .* Zarathushtra, The Gathas, Y50.5

Equality of all human beings, not just amongst Zarathushtrians, is fundamental in being aware and able to transform.

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformation_of_culture

2 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dichotomy>

Nergish Udwadia is the president of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) Inc Melbourne, Australia. In September 2010 Nergish was the first media reporter for the FEZANA UN/DPI NGO conference held in Melbourne. She had also volunteered for the Parliament of World Religions held in Melbourne in December 2009. Nergish participates in various Inter Faith associations in Melbourne promoting an understanding of the Zoroastrian faith. Nergish is self employed and works as an educator in the financial sector. Nergish, can be contacted at nergishu@gmail.com.

Nergish is pictured with her "baby" (a Mastiff X Rottweiler X Rhodesian Ridgeback) Zanthra!!



Ervad Armin Dumasia is the vice president and committee member of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) Inc based in Melbourne, Australia. He participated in the 5th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress 2011, in Vancouver, British Columbia. Armin, a practicing Mobed, participated in the opening Jashan ceremony and also presented a brief paper on Unity in Diversity.

Armin holds a Masters degree in Management Information Systems from Monash University and a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Mumbai University, India.

Armin works at RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) within the international admissions team. Armin can be contacted at armindumasia@gmail.com.





ZARATHUSHTIS IN TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE:

Working For a Larger Purpose

In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Rustom is the champion of champions, a great hero who repeatedly saves the Persian Empire through his awesome brawn. Such a name is associated with brutal strength, and it seemed a fitting choice when the Indian government decided to designate their newly-developed unmanned flying drones as Rustom-I. But the Indians did not name this stunning technological achievement after some mythical strongman from antiquity. Instead, they named it after a more recent hero of Zarathushti lineage, one who used his brains more than his muscle. They named these drones after **Prof. Rustom Behram Damania**, an important aerospace engineer responsible for conducting the early research which led to the development of India's unmanned drones.

Zarathushtis have made remarkable achievements in almost every segment of human civilization, from music and literature to law and politics to business and industry. Zarathushtis have been just as prolific in the fields of science and technology. Zarathushti scientists and technologists have played prominent roles in promoting government research, in pursuing academia, and of course, in developing firms in private industry. But what defines so many of our co-religionist techies is not just their passion for science, but for their passion to serve our community and the society at large. What follows is a brief summary of the manner in which Zarathushtis scientists and engineers have positively influenced our community and the world.

I. Zarathushti Technocrats

Some of the most famous Zarathushti scientists are like Damania in that they plied their craft for government research agencies. Perhaps no Zarathushti scientist is more famous than **Homi Bhabha**, the father of India's nuclear program. Bhabha was born in 1909 in what was then British-India. Having access to some of the finest schools in India and the United Kingdom, Bhabha eventually received his PhD from the prestigious Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University. From 1939 onwards, Bhabha continued his research while based at the *Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore*. By this time, Bhabha had already made quite a name for himself in particle physics by discovering the phenomenon which has come to be known as Bhabha scattering. Not satisfied by merely doing his own research, the venerable scientist also used this time to pressure the Indian government to fund science and physics' research.

Bhabha's lobbying resulted in the creation of the *Indian Atomic Energy Commission*. Despite being underfunded, Bhabha's Commission made great strides in researching nuclear energy and in helping India pursue a nuclear weapon, a necessity given India's belligerent

neighbors, China and Pakistan. Unfortunately Bhabha tragically died in 1966 at the age of 56 in a plane crash while en route to a meeting of the *International Atomic Energy Agency's Scientific Advisory Committee*.

Despite Bhabha's tireless efforts, he did not live long enough to see India's first successful nuclear test, which finally took place in 1974. To the credit of the community, however, this explosion was overseen by another Zarathushti, **Homi Nusserwanji Sethna**, who was in charge of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission at the time. Sethna was a chemical engineer by training, having received his PhD at the University of Michigan, and following his retirement, Sethna did important agricultural research as well. But even though Bhabha and Sethna were high-profile leaders for atomic research in India, they merely represent the tip of a much larger iceberg: there have been a number of other Zarathushtis involved in governmental scientific research in India and abroad.

II. Zarathushti Techies in Academia

While Damania, Bhabha, and Sethna all made important contributions to their fields and to their country, it would be a mistake to think that all Zarathushti scientists have simply been involved in drones and nuclear weapons. What Zarathushti techies do tend to have in common is that they thrive in academic settings. A recent *FEZANA Journal* article by **Edul Davar** highlighted the trajectories of some 42 Zarathushti graduates from the Indian Institutes of Technology, among the most prestigious engineering programs in the world. Almost all of them are now based in the United States after becoming professors, entrepreneurs, and corporate leaders. It is also worth noting that many are involved in their local Zarathushti communities. In my own time at MIT (from 2001-2006), there were also about ten Zarathushti students in any given year, and many of them were also involved in local community events.

With so many great students, it should come as no surprise that several Zarathushtis have also become successful professors. What is surprising is that even though these professors are among the world's best at what they do, they find the time to engage and encourage younger Zarathushtis. One such professor is **Nergis Mavalvala in the physics department at MIT**. Professor Mavalvala's area of expertise is gravitational waves, and in 2010 she was honored with a *MacArthur Fellowship*, more commonly known as the "*Genius Award*." She also found the time to address the Zarathushti Youth Congress in Vancouver in 2011. Down the river, **Professor Mahzarin Banaji of Harvard** has become one of the leading psychologists in the world. Among other areas of study, Banaji has focused on implicit prejudices: whether and



why certain people are sometimes predisposed to certain thoughts and feelings about others. Fellow psychology professor **Jamshed Bharucha** is also the current President of Cooper Union. Both Banaji and Bharucha have led sessions with the Zarathushtis Students of Boston. Yet another professor of repute is **Dinshaw Patel**, of the Sloan-Kettering Institute and Cornell University. Patel is an expert in structural biology and recently was inducted as a member of the *National Academy of Sciences* in 2009. Patel has also served the Zarathushti youth in New York. Once again, these Zarathushti techie professors represent the tip of a much larger iceberg: Zarathushti professors in science and engineering are not hard to come across.

III. The Past Meets the Future: Zarathushti Industrialists and Tech Entrepreneurs

Many Zarathushtis have used their good minds to create highly lucrative commercial projects in the industrial and tech sectors, and they have traditionally used this money to support their societies and our community. Among the most well-known of these visionaries was **Jamsetji Tata**, who founded the Tata Group, which is one of the largest corporations in the world today. In the 1860s, Jamsetji Tata began to invest in improving cotton mills before going into steel manufacturing. There were very few scientists in India at the time, and so Tata also founded the *Indian Institute of Science*. Over the years, the House of Tata has sponsored and/or employed a dizzying number of Zarathushti scientists and engineers, while Tata and Sons is one of the most charitable corporations in the world.

While the story of Tata is well-known, there are several other successful Zarathushti industrialists who have leveraged technology profitably, while also serving the community. The Poonawallas carry on this legacy today. **Cyrus and Zavaray Poonawalla** founded *The Serum Institute* in 1966. While neither of them were particularly adept in their studies, at least initially (Cyrus would later earn a PhD in 1988 from Pune University), they assembled a team of researchers and created what is today one of the largest pharmaceutical manufacturing factories in the world. Indeed, the vaccines from the Serum Institute end up in one out of every two children in the world, and they work closely with the *Gates Foundation*. In addition to having such an impact on the world, both brothers are among the leading supporters of Zarathushti causes today.

In North America, Zarathushtis have found success in starting ventures in the high-tech sector. For instance, serial entrepreneur **Firdaus Bhathena** has created and sold several Web-based ventures, including *WebLine Communications*, which was acquired by Cisco for \$325 million in stock in 1999. Continuing the tradition of community involvement, Bhathena has complemented his professional life by being active in the Zoroastrian

Association of the Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) for several years.

Zarathushtis have a rich and illustrious history in the fields of science and technology, and there are positive signs that this trend will continue. Zarathushtis are pursuing science and engineering educations across the world; there should be little doubt that several will conduct government research while many others enter academia. And of course, while the Zarathushti industrial conglomerates will continue, our community can also boast of several entrepreneurs and workers in the high-tech sector. Indeed, Zarathushtis can even claim one the youngest tech-entrepreneurs in **Cyrus Pishavar**, a teenage wunderkind based in Silicon Valley. Pishavar recently created an *app for Facebook called High School Memories*.

Equally important, Zarathushti scientists and techies have shown amazing resolve to support the community, whether it be through donating money, through volunteering in local associations, or by offering to mentor and speak with Zarathushti in allied fields. This should not be taken for granted, as there are many in our community who lament that our current generation of Zarathushtis is less generous than our forbearers. Fortunately, it appears as though the Zarathushtis who are successful in these sectors find ways to balance their professional lives while meaningfully contributing to the community.



Dinsha Mistree is a PhD student in the Department of Politics at Princeton University. He has Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in political science from MIT, along with a Master of Arts in politics from Princeton. He is currently studying corruption, bureaucracy, and the political economy of India. For the academic year 2011-2012, Dinsha is conducting field research in India on the Indian Institutes of Technology, exploring why the faculty at these universities "work" while bureaucrats in so many other public institutions do not perform. When not thinking about politics, Dinsha enjoys spending time with Zarathushtis in whatever part of the world he finds himself. Dinsha was awarded the FEZANA Outstanding Young Zoroastrian Award in 2007 and he is the **FEZANA SCHOLAR** for 2011-2012 having been awarded the Mehraban and Morvarid Kheradi Endowed scholarship. He can be reached at dmistree@gmail.com.



GIVING VOICES TO THE VOICELESS – Transforming Women's Lives in Rural India

The Birth of “Ashta No Kai” (For A Better Tomorrow)

ARMENE MODI, Pune, India.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step”, an ancient proverb states. My journey from Tokyo, Japan to the remote villages of Shirur County in Pune District was inspired by Gandhi's oft-quoted message, “Be the change you want to see in the world”. It began in 1997 with the chance reading of a book titled “May You Be the Mother of a 100 Sons”. A simple statistic in the book that 61% of Indian women were still illiterate according to the 1991 census shocked me. It spoke volumes of the condition of women, particularly marginalized women in India in the 1990s. Literacy was clearly a powerful solution to empowering and envisioning a better tomorrow for poor women. The statistic was like a wakeup call shaking me out of my complacency. It was my 10th year of a successful career teaching English at a well-known university in Japan. I felt that as an educator my skills were perhaps, more needed back home. That is how **Ashta No Kai (ANK)**, a women's literacy and development project was born - to educate and empower marginalized women in India.

As a first step, I wrote a one-page proposal to set up a small project in a local slum near my mother's home in Pune. While circulating it among friends and colleagues in Japan, the response was, much to my great surprise, overwhelming. My campaign plea that literacy could change the cycle of poverty and dependency which characterized the lives of poor women touched a chord among many Japanese. The idea of a slum school was reminiscent of the terakoya schools in Japan's Edo period in the nineteenth century which had helped ordinary Japanese achieve a high level of literacy. As a result, more than one thousand Japanese friends, colleagues, and acquaintances sympathetic to the cause pledged their wholehearted support. Before long five groups formed an umbrella organization - *Ashta no Kai-Japan* -, in *Shizuoka Prefecture*, *Kawasaki city*, *Sumida-ku* (a ward of Tokyo) *the island of Kyushu*, and a student group at *Obirin University*. The project seemed to have taken on a life of its own.

INSPIRATION FROM A ZARATHUSHTI DOCTOR

With such resounding support it was impossible to limit ANK's work to just one slum in Pune. The reach had to be wider. During one of my trips to Pune I had the good fortune to meet a renowned surgeon and social activist **Dr. Banoo Coyaji**. Her NGO, the KEM Hospital Research Center had a health project in 30 villages in Shirur County. Dr. Coyaji suggested that ANK's work would be more effective if it were rural based as the need for such an intervention was much greater in villages. She kindly offered to assist in setting up the project which was a great boon as I had no experience in the social sector field. I

was also very struck with a quotation of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru that was prominently displayed in her office, “To awaken people it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”. It was as if fate itself had led me there.

ANK was formally launched on October 9, 1998 with 23 Japanese supporters who had come to Pune especially to attend the opening ceremony. Ten drought prone villages and hamlets located in the interior of Shirur County at a distance of about 55 to 70 kilometers from Pune were selected as the project area. The villages with an approximate population of 15,000, lacked basic infrastructure, such as adequate schools, clean water supply, health care facilities, toilets, electricity, and good roads. A typical village consisted of a central cluster of houses, surrounded by many satellite hamlet settlements, which were two to five kilometers away. Access to many hamlets was difficult due to lack of transportation and bad roads. As in many parts of the country, the status of women in Shirur County too was low. Poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, and social traditions hampered women's progress and affected the quality of their lives.

An initial survey conducted in the project area revealed that there was a high level of illiteracy among women; 54% as compared with 23% for men. Fourteen literacy centers were set up in the target villages with the hope that the campaign slogan of 100% literacy would soon become a reality. I was in for a rude shock. After two years of struggling to promote literacy, the program had benefited only a few women. The top down approach of assuming that literacy was what rural women needed had not worked. While many women realized the long term benefits, their need for literacy paled in comparison to the immediate necessities of their daily life. What women wanted were income-generating activities and access to credit.

EMPOWERMENT FROM MICRO-CREDIT

Fortunately, around the same time the *Self-Help Group* (SHG) movement was taking off in India. The reality on the ground dictated that ANK too should begin to organize women into these micro-credit models of voluntary savings and loan collectives. 125 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were soon established in ten villages to enable rural women to access funds for emergencies and undertake income-generating activities. SHGs proved to be a great boon to poor women. Despite having no collateral as individuals, they were now able to access credit to undertake income-generating activities by collectively pooling whatever little savings they had and escape the clutches of money lenders who charged as much as 120% interest.



SHGs initiated a silent revolution in the villages. More than 2,000 women were helped to personal empowerment and some degree of financial independence. It is important to point out that ANK merely acted as a catalyst in setting up the SHGs. All decisions regarding SHGs were made by the women themselves; from the selection of members and office bearers, the meeting date, monthly saving targets, and loan disbursement, to the amount of interest and repayment schedule. Poor and illiterate women now began to make decisions that affected their lives and gained individual strength and confidence as part of a group.

Today SHGs are run entirely by village women and act as a backbone for the majority of village activities. Women, who had hitherto never left the four walls of their homes except to fetch water, have suddenly realized their strength in unity. They band together to solve the problems of their village, whether it is banning illicit liquor sale in the village, the poor quality of the school's midday meal, absentee teachers or even infrastructural problems like water shortages and bad roads. In addition, village women successfully run diary cooperatives as well and manage 200 backyard poultry projects.

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

The combination of added financial autonomy and increased confidence levels has given rural women a significant voice in their communities. They are now viewed as assets rather than liabilities and have begun to negotiate new roles and opportunities for themselves. Women have begun to participate in village governance and development and have started demanding their rights for public services and goods. It is encouraging to see poor women who once were powerless gain a greater sense of security, a greater sense of dignity, a greater sense of self worth and a vision of the future. More importantly, there is a positive change in their social status. They command greater respect within their households and extended families.

When it was clear that the literacy program for adult women was not effective, ANK decided to turn its attention to decreasing the dropout rate for girls believing that the educated girl of today would become the empowered woman of tomorrow. Educated girls, it was felt, would more likely resist pressures to marry too young or have too many children, and would be better mothers. It was a major challenge since in 2000, there was only one high school over four to eight kilometers away from the ten villages ANK worked in. Parents fearful for their daughters' safety and skeptical of the benefits of educating them did not encourage them to attend high school. Girls as young as 13 and 14 were married off.

A BICYCLE BANK!

To improve access of village girls to higher level education and address the social problem of child marriages, I decided to launch an innovative (at the time) initiative - a Bicycle Bank in 2001. Village girls were given



bicycles to attend high school since most of them lived over four to eight kilometers away from the nearest high school resulting in high drop-out rates. The bicycles proved to be wheels of change that impacted the lives of hundreds of girls. To date, ANK's *Bicycle Bank* has enabled 900 girls to stay in school. Girls' attendance in schools is at almost 100%; in fact, in some village high schools there are more girls than boys in the classroom. More importantly, fewer village girls are now married off before the legal age.

A natural offshoot of the Bicycle Bank project was a Scholarship program that was launched in 2004 which has, so far, provided 500 girls with scholarships to pursue higher education. From the nine girls who applied in 2004, the number of applicants has grown to 96 this year. They are pursuing higher studies and venturing into fields like computer science, electronics and engineering, automobile engineering and pharmacy besides the traditional ones. It is very encouraging to note that many rural girls are now availing of opportunities presented to them that their mothers and grandmothers could never have dreamed of.

Another initiative for adolescent girls, *Kishori Mandals* was also launched in 2001. Weekly meetings conducted by empowered grassroots workers raised awareness of gender issues, laws relating to evil customs like dowry and early marriages and gave girls critical inputs in life skills.



They provided a platform for girls to build self-confidence and independence. A similar program, *Kishor Mandals*, was initiated this academic year to help adolescent boys, who are at an impressionable age, question traditional male stereotypes in society and work on changing their own attitudes to promote a more gender equitable society in village communities.

RAISED STATUS OF WOMEN

Ashta No Kai has made great efforts to help poor rural women make a better world for themselves. It has supported women's empowerment efforts and addressed their multi-dimensional needs by giving them access to work and income, access to information, opportunities and choices. The combination of added financial autonomy and increased confidence levels has given rural women a significant voice in their communities. They are now viewed as assets rather than liabilities and have begun to negotiate new roles and opportunities for themselves. Women have begun to participate in village governance



and development and have started demanding their rights for public services and goods. It is encouraging to see poor women who were once powerless gain a greater sense of security, a greater sense of dignity, a greater sense of self-worth and a vision for the future. More importantly, there is a positive change in their social status. They command greater respect within their households and extended families.

Ashta No Kai was established in 1998 to bring hope, strength and a vision of empowerment to marginalized women. Thirteen years later, it is watching the seeds it planted grow, knowing that it has made a positive difference to the lives of the many women and girls it has touched.

MY PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

I have never regretted the decision to "retire" from teaching and reinvent myself as a social activist. Needless to say, this decision was largely influenced by my

Zarathushti upbringing and my mother who was my role model. She lived her motto: "to live is to give" believing strongly in the Zarathushti value that happiness is best attained by making others happy. Seeing first-hand how bravely she dealt with life's challenges gave me the courage and confidence to embark on this adventure. Although my work in the social sector has not been a smooth ride, it has been a rich journey of discovery and learning. I feel truly humbled to observe how cheerful and content the women are despite the little they have. I admire their courage and fortitude, their resilience, endurance and strength despite their struggle for survival working against incredible odds of poverty, victimization, vulnerability and exploitation.

It is encouraging to know that ANK's efforts towards empowering rural women have resulted in their finding a voice and a platform to participate actively in their own development. The project has been effective in enabling many rural women to achieve their full potential as literate, healthy, skilled and socially aware individuals. There is still, however, much work to be done. I look forward to a day when gender inequity, poverty, violence and injustice will be replaced with a world where women and men work together as allies to build a culture of peace and where Gandhi's dream of "wiping the tear from every eye" will hopefully, become a reality.

Armene is deeply interested in peace education and has participated in, as well as organized various international conferences based on peace and human rights including the International Institute of Peace Education, the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, and the Global Campaign for Peace Education.



Armene is the recipient of several awards for her contribution to the empowerment of rural women. She was selected as one of India's 24 "Real Heroes" by the CNN-IBN network in 2008 which was an initiative to "recognize, acknowledge and celebrate ordinary India's unsung heroes who made a difference to people's lives by silently and selflessly contributing to the betterment of society". She has also received the Dr. Sushila Nayar Literacy Award for Outstanding Contribution to Women's Literacy in Rural Areas from the All India Committee for the Eradication of Illiteracy Among Women.



"A MEDIATOR BETWEEN DIFFERENT WORLDS"

One Quaker's Transformative Journey with Zarathushtra's Divine Songs

Thomas Wolfe. Washington, DC, USA

"The Zoroastrian community, displaced into the great Indian subcontinent, that astonishing, fertile, hospitable environment where so many religions have rubbed up against each other for so many centuries...even millennia, that transposition to India meant that the Zoroastrian community became an interpreter, a mediator between different worlds. It carried with it an understanding of the complex religious environment of India, the Hindu & Sikh traditions, Jainism and Buddhism, as if this 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. This is a very great gift of God, a very great gift to the rest of us through this great community."

Rowan Williams: Archbishop of Canterbury

**Address to the
Zoroastrian Community Friday 1st October 2010**

"The place of Zarathustra among the Prophets is unique. He was born not merely to uplift the Iranian race so many thousand years ago, but His was a message meant for all humanity and for all ages. For Zarathustra was not merely the Prophet of Iran, but also the world teacher. His message is the eternal teaching of Truth, Love, and Service, and has a very special value for humanity today."

Dr. Irach

Jehangir Sorabji Taraporewala

**Foreword to
"The Divine Songs of Zarathustra"**

I am a Christian Quaker on the Board of Directors of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan DC, one of, if not the, most developed interfaith groups in this struggling world. We have served the Washington DC community for 32 years with 11 faith communities working together through three centers devoted to *Truth, Love, and Service*. This is my personal story of how the Gathas transformed my mind through understanding and my heart through love.

The wisdom of Dr. Irach Jehangir Sorabji Taraporewala, the author of "The Divine Songs of Zarathustra" came into my life through the generous gift of his book to me by Dr. Behram Pastakia, one of the Zarthushti Board members of our InterFaith group. My story of growing in the Light of God through the transformative knowledge found in the Divine songs,

begins with reading the following translation of three prayers:

*As Lords temporal work their will on Earthe,
So by their gathered Asha teachers wise
The gifts of Vohu Manu come to reward
For deeds done out of love for the Lord.*

*Ahura's Kshatra will come down
On all who serve to love with zeal
Our meekest sisters and brothers.*

*Righteousness is best for all that's good,
The radiant goal of life on Earthe:
This Light attained when we live righteously
For the sake of highest righteousness alone.*

*These men and women both do we adore
Where every act of worship is alive
With Asha the eternal law of life
Who by Mazda-Ahura now are seen
As best and noblest mortals recognized
These are the truest leaders of mankind.*

**Translation
directly from The Divine Songs of Zarathustra**

So my story upon hearing these songs unfolds like this... I was aware of Zarathustra in a vague, powerful, yet distant way through the teachings of *Merwan Sheriar Irani*, later known as *Meher Baba*, but the power of Zarathustra's message to change my mind and heart came when a fellow IFC Board member lovingly shared with me a truly beautiful and inspired translation of Zarathustra's Songs of God. The beauty of the message itself appealed greatly to me and a life changing moment came when I was waiting for a 6 PM meeting with a prior Board member, Rustom Kevala, and his beautiful bride Yasmin. They were unfortunately delayed (or so I thought) until almost midnight and so I had five or so hours to read the Divine Songs. Almost immediately upon reading the above prayers a musical version was present in my heart. That song has stayed with me in devotion to this day. What a blessing it was and is to me to sing these songs! That waiting period ending up with setting these three translated song/prayers into music, and singing them



during worship to my *Adelphi Maryland Quaker* community. I also was honored to teach them to our middle school aged children in our version of "Sunday school" that we Quakers call First Day school.

As a Christian Quaker I believe these tender moments and sentiments are born of the transformative power in the Divine Songs of Zarathustra. They are again echoed mightily by Rowan Williams, present Archbishop of Canterbury when he finishes his October 2010 address to the Zarthushti community saying... *"We Christians read in our scriptures that 'God is a consuming fire' We recognize that image of painful purification that fire suggests is one that tells of the integrity, that wholeness, is costly. It's hard work letting go of our lives and our self-protections and that is why the call to integrity is something that will never be simple, yet is always attractive, because we want wholeness."*

"So this Zoroastrian Faith, this religious tradition, and this community, for which the concept of integrity standing before a purifying fire is so central, is a tradition and a language which has a great deal to say to all of us in this country and in our world at this 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."

We, as Quakers, are also a smaller religious group with only 100,000 members in the United States. There are now more Quakers in Kenya than in Great Britain and the USA combined. This gives us one major aspect in common with the Zoroastrian community which is that we are known to have an effect beyond our numbers. We Quakers like to think of ourselves as the yeast in the bread which is a very small proportion of the whole weight but without which the dough does not rise to its destined height. I hold that analogy as applying equally to the small numbers of those devoted to Ahura Mazda in these times. Being a small percentage does not hinder (nor should it embarrass) the yeast as it goes about its work of helping the larger mass to grow more fully, for that is the job of the yeast.

May Ahura Mazda be pleased with the fire in our hearts, brought through Zarathushtra, toward Service, Love and sharing of the Light of Truth.

Thomas Wolfe, a Christian Quaker on the Board of Directors of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan DC,



A SLICE OF THE ZARATHUSHTRIAN HEART

Zoroastrian Association of Victoria, Australia, participated in a project NISHKAM (selfless) with a multifaith organization COMMON in Melbourne.

COMMON established six years ago has successfully initiated and completed many humanitarian projects in its short span of life. Project NISHKAM involved buying a 20ft. container filling it up with the barest necessities of life (food, clothes, footwear, and of course sweets for little children, etc.) and sending it to the poorest and most needy people in villages of Philippines who were ravished by a typhoon, December 2011.

All religions promised to give a slice of their hearts, to make up the 'COMMON CAKE'. A timely gift at Easter.

Our slice of the Zarathushtrian heart was:

1200 Kg. rice, 500 children's thongs (flip/flops), and a load of sweets, chick peas, etc.

Small gift packs for children in Philippines from Zarathushtrian children of Melbourne.

How true are the words of Ashem Vohu - "Happiness to him who makes others happy".

Perviz Dubash, Melbourne, Australia



TRANSFORMING PARSI DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: AN EVOLUTIONARY, BUT CONFUSING PICTURE

JEHANGIR PATEL, Mumbai, India

**“Sometimes decades pass and nothing happens; and then sometimes weeks pass and decades happen.”
Vladimir Lenin, Russian ideologue and leader**

One is loath to start an article quoting a sociopath like Lenin but sometimes even tyrants can make relevant points. For decades community developments moved at a leisurely, evolutionary pace, like two continental plates pressing against each other giving rise to mountain ranges over millions of years. And then like an asteroid hitting earth causing untold destruction, dramatic change occurs in a matter of seconds.

THE EXPANSION OF PARSI FRANCHISE

For the Zarathushti community in Bombay — and what affects the largest concentration of Parsis impacts the world community -- *the transforming point was the introduction of universal adult franchise (UAF) in 2008.*

The Bombay High Court sanctioned an electoral scheme proposed by the then trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) whereby any Parsi/Irani Zarathushti over the age of 18 would be entitled to vote for a trustee. Till then there was an indirect electoral system whereby the community at large voted for a limited number of people (the figure was determined by the number of people on the BPP's list of donors). These elected representatives along with the donor voters elected trustees as and when vacancies occurred.

UAF was not willed by the community nor did the leadership see the necessity of democratizing the system. There was no Parsi Spring. No awakening to or yearning for the right to a direct vote.

Those who wanted adult franchise were small, fractured groups without much following. But a chain of events that saw the trustees of the BPP under relentless attack largely over their housing policy, brought about change. The trustees' internecine battles that spilt into the public arena resulted in their agreeing to adult franchise in order to broker peace. Solicitor and The Bombay Samachar columnist Berjis Desai was the catalyst.

Trusteeship electioneering took place on a scale and magnitude never seen before. Whereas in the past candidates had to reach out to an electorate of around 2,000 to 3,000, the figure had now jumped to over 20,000. A bothersome voter registration process coupled with a measure of apathy prevented the figure from going higher.

Get-togethers were arranged at the major housing colonies, private halls, clubs and elsewhere. Banners and posters were placed at prominent junctions. Leaflets and literature were distributed at the electoral meets, dropped

off at houses and mailed. Numerous advertisements appeared in the Parsi Press.

No opinion polls however were taken to gauge the public's political leanings. But the more savvy candidates geared their manifestoes and public utterances to appeal to the orthodox and traditionalist voters. That strategy partly paid off. The community did not want religious extremism at either range of the spectrum. But what worked best for the candidates was familiarity with the electorate.

Not everyone was happy with the election results. Many criticized the mudslinging and obscene amounts of money spent by the candidates to woo the voters. They felt the old system was better. There was a certain amount of class and social bias against votes being given to all and sundry.

THE BITTER FRUIT OF DEMOCRACY

Having obtained office after an expensive and long drawn out poll battle, the new trustees unfortunately frittered away much of their goodwill. Promises of building hundreds of flats, remained just that, promises. Populist measures replaced realistic thinking and planning. The trustees' energies appeared directed more at their perceived opponents and the liberal section rather than alleviation of poverty or bringing the community together.

Already, one trustee, citing the costs and conflicts wants to put a moratorium on BPP's future elections, ostensibly till a code of conduct is finalized or the number of trustees falls below five. Elections should not be held hostage to the whims and fancies of the trustees. They must be bound by the election scheme proffered by them and sanctioned by the courts. Their ill-conceived notion is bound to be challenged in a court of law. The trustees have endlessly created controversies and disputes.

The issue of housing 104 Parsi families had been finalized in 2007-2008 by the previous board of trustees. The decision was challenged in the courts of law by the new board of trustees.

A compromise was arrived in court whereby the trustees agreed to build 300 flats in two years for the poor, in exchange for selling flats built earlier on an ownership basis. When the time lapsed and even basic plans were not approved, the opposing party moved a contempt petition in the Bombay High Court. The court has now ordered mediation.

In the case of the ban on the renegade priests, the Supreme Court of India ordered mediation. The BPP banned the priests from performing religious ceremonies at Doongerwadi and two agiaries under their jurisdiction as



the mobeds were performing funerary ceremonies for those opting for alternative means of disposal to dakhmenashini. That mediation is continuing over the last seven months at considerable cost to both parties.

In the Sanjan case where a group of 45 vigilantes allegedly assaulted a Zarathushti lady and a Russian Zarathushti who was undergoing a navar ceremony, the matter has now moved from the Bombay High Court to the magistrate court in Sanjan.

A proposal to redevelop the Parsi-Lying-In Hospital by the institution's managing committee has been stymied by the BPP which owns the property. The Hospital has been shut since the last 15 years or so. The BPP trustees are at loggerheads with some of the Hospital trustees.

Instead of resolving disputes expeditiously, the trustees have permitted them to fester. This endless litigation is taking a considerable toll on the trustee's time and the trust's finances.

A WORLD BODY

The important issue of developing a world body to represent the worldwide Zarathushti community has long been debated. A public dissension between the traditionalists and the liberals had surfaced in December 2004 at the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) meet in Ahmedabad.

A group of traditionalists led by community activist **Khojeste Mistree** opposed the formation of a Zarathushti world body which they termed "cosmopolitan." The FPZAI was on the verge of giving their consent to the formation of the global organization. The formal announcement of the new world body was to be made at the 8th World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in London June 2005.

Choreographed bedlam broke out at the FPZAI meeting in 2004 disrupting the proceedings for around half-an-hour. A few months thereafter Mistree, along with former Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat president and soft drink concentrate magnate, **Areez Khambatta** and others, formed the *World Alliance of Parsi Irani Zarthoshtis* (WAPIZ) as an alternative to the proposed global body being considered by FPZAI earlier.

In place of the perceived "cosmopolitan" world body, a ragtag group of small anjumans mostly from south Gujarat comprised the new "global" body.

While BPP chairman Dinshaw Mehta and Mistree were electoral allies, Mehta left the running of the FPZAI to Mistree who filled the seats with WAPIZ nominees from small anjumans whose membership numbers were in single or double digits. Every member anjuman has one vote on the general body: thus Jabalpur with a population under 10 had the same voting power as the BPP which represents 40,000 Parsi and Irani Zarathushtis! The larger anjumans such as Delhi, Surat, Baroda, Bharuch were

sidelined while Ahmedabad left the FPZAI, refusing to be member of an organization that had Khambatta as a vice-president. But the mid-2011 BPP trusteeship election caused by the resignation of **Noshir Dadrawala**, saw a split between the Mehta and Mistree camps with Mehta supporting **Muncherji Cama**, and Mistree, **Anahita Desai**. Cama won. All attention now is focused on the next FPZAI meeting tentatively scheduled this February 11 and 12 in Bombay where Mehta and others will attempt to wrest control.

But while the traditionalists rallied around WAPIZ other organizations such as the *Association for Revival of Zoroastrianism* (ARZ), *Association of Inter-Married Zarathushtis* (AIMZ), *Alert Zoroastrian Association* (AZA) ensured the liberal voice is not drowned out.

A World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay is looming and no committees have been formed to date. Aside from dates (end December 2013) and a venue (National Centre for the Performing Arts) little else if anything has been finalized. So tied down are the trustees with the day-to-day management of their affairs that the associations outside Bombay don't even get replies to letters sent by them. Where does that leave the global community? Will the Global Working Group (GWG) formed as a liaison body between the different nations evolve into a much vaunted and desired world body? The world body they envision is meant to further the well-being of those born of a Parsi father. The children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsis are excluded as are non-Parsi spouses. This racial and sexual discrimination may run afoul of US laws. In India racial discrimination by private players is still legal.

THE DISENFRANCHISED PARSIS

A courageous woman, **Goolrookh Gupta**, took the Valsad Parsi Anjuman to the Gujarat High Court when they passed a resolution barring Parsi women married to non-Parsis entrance to the local fire temple and Doongerwadi. The three-judge bench is expected to give its verdict soon. If Gupta wins it will be a marathon milestone for Parsi women. (The case has gone to appeal)

In Karachi, their Anjuman has permitted the children of Parsi women married to non-Parsis the right of admission to the fire temple. Funerary prayers are also permitted for those opting for alternative systems of disposal to dakhmenashini.

But, will Indian Zarathushtis be able to sit across a table and discuss meaningful issues? The answer may not be found until after 2015, when the next major trusteeship elections are held. It is pointless to expect that the present set of trustees is going to initiate major changes. They are too set in their ways, too much the victims of circumstance, often of their own making.

Consider further the confusion caused at *Delhi's Kaikhushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-E-Meher* golden jubilee



celebrations last December when Mehta told a puzzled audience that the BPP was the apex body of the Parsis in the world! This because any Parsi Zarathushti over 18 years of age anywhere in the world can vote for the Bombay trustees (they have to be, however, registered as voters on the BPP electoral rolls).

With such approaches, expecting transformative miracles is foolhardy. Democracy takes time to grow roots.

The community has adapted to it better than its leaders have. But, eventually the slow evolutionary changes will come about. And then Zarathushtis all over the world will have a legitimate and formal forum to meet and discuss the issues that matter most to them.

Jehangir R Patel is the editor and publisher of *Parsiana* magazine. He has been in the field of journalism since 1968. He lectures on reporting skills at the Xavier Institute of Communications since 1977 and also serves on the Institute's Management Advisory Board. Aside from *Parsiana*, he has edited and published *Voyage*, a travel magazine and edited the *Diners Club* magazine, *Signature*, from 1977 till 1991.

Born in Srinagar, Kashmir he graduated from Yale University in 1968, worked with *The San Francisco Examiner* and *The Hartford Times*, starting his journalistic career in India editing *Freedom First* along with Mr Minoo Masani. His extra-curricular activities include gardening and pets. He was active in Scouts and drama during school days; and fenced (foil) for Yale.

Married to Veera (née Parbhu) they have a daughter, Simin, who is a PhD candidate in history from the department of oriental studies at Balliol College, Oxford University. Her thesis revolves around the Parsis in colonial Bombay.



UUNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATION AMONGST THE ZARATHUSHTIS

Darayus S Motivala, England.

We know that Prophet Zarathushtra's teachings are complex, but although I do not claim to be a scholar, I believe that he has put forward Five Fundamental Freedoms. The first and most important is the *Freedom of Choice* (30.2), followed by the *Freedom from Fear* (30.9), *Deceit* (32.14), *Ignorance* (43.3) and *Religious Tyranny* (32.12 & 44.20). It is desirable that we lead a good life with integrity and harmony and be conscious of our environment. It is desirable to think for ourselves and not be misled by others, to decide our own paths and to manage the change in our lives. It is our duty as a Zarathushti to improve our lives and of those around us (43.3). We should lead a happy productive life and protect the purity of the environment and all creatures living in it. Zarathushtra was a great philosopher and perhaps that explains why he has deeply influenced other religions in the world.

In exercising these freedoms, we are faced with one constant aspect of life -- change. Transformation happens as we evolve as human beings through the years and some of the factors that influence its path are our needs, our environment, our past and our thoughts. And so it is that the customs, rituals and beliefs of a religion evolve through time and location. The Zarathushti religion is no different in this respect and the most significant change took place when a group of dedicated Zarathushtis left Persia where life was oppressive to find a new life in India.

Whilst the refugees continue to enjoy an environment of freedom and opportunity, those Zarathushtis left behind have had to put up with the whims of fortune, depending on whether the rulers of the time are sympathetic or hostile. The Parsis from their secure base in India have improved their living standards by becoming great industrialists and businessmen and women either in India or migrating to other welcoming hosts such as the United Kingdom, North America, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and more recently in Australia and New Zealand. The contribution of this minor ethnic group to their host nation, particularly in India, is immense and is visible in all aspects of life. We should all commend them for their achievements. The Zarathushti remaining in Iran, who enjoyed a brief period of excellent living conditions such that Parsis too were attracted there, have once again found themselves living in an atmosphere which is difficult and controlling. Whilst they are free to practise their religion, the environment in Iran for a religious minority is not favourable. Their opportunities to improve the quality of life are limited and many have chosen to escape to welcoming countries in the West. Where they have been given opportunity, the Iranian Zarathushtis have also excelled themselves in a variety of disciplines. As we are so widely dispersed, our ethnic customs, rituals and celebrations are inevitably different, reflecting some aspects absorbed from the dominant host culture, but we all share the same tenets and beliefs of our great religion.



We are all Zarathushtis and therefore we should accommodate and respect these differences.

It saddens me to see certain vociferous individuals who show little or zero tolerance and are disrespectful to other Zarathushtis, all in the name of our great religion. My aim in this article is, therefore, to examine some of the reasons for these differences in the hope that it might persuade others to become more tolerant.

RELIGIOUS RITUALS: The wearing of the Sudreh / Kushti, the Navjote ceremony, the reciting of our daily prayers, etc. were all introduced by the Zarathushti priests, long after Zarathushtra. They were introduced by the priests so that they could officiate at such ceremonies, thereby exerting power and control over the ordinary people. This by no means is uncommon in other religions. On the positive side, these rituals have provided certain aspects of identity to the Zarathushti and according to many people they now constitute an integral part of their being a Zarathushti. The Parsis have been free to maintain this identity and have continued these traditions through the years. However, the Iranian Zarathushtis even in more tolerant times have been less inclined to maintain these outward symbols of their identity – indeed it is interesting to note a correlation between a more tolerant environment which prevailed for about 55 years in Iran, and a decline in the importance attached to these distinct markers. Having said that, we should note that today the wearing of the Sudreh / Kushti and the recital of the daily prayers is also waning amongst the Parsees. It should be stressed that following these rituals does not make one a true Zarathushti and not following these rituals by itself does not make one less of a Zarathushti.

The Navjote ceremony was again introduced by the Zarathushti priests and the Parsees should be applauded for preserving it through the years. Initially, it was performed when the child was capable of understanding its meaning, usually in their mid to late teens(9.5). The Navjote ceremony is now performed much earlier in life as the Parsees prefer to have it done before puberty and as a result some of its significance to the child is lost in many cases. The performance of the Sedreh – Pushi amongst the Iranian Zarathushtis has become less frequent and when it is undertaken, it is done at different stages in childhood and occasionally as an adult.

INTER-FAITH MARRIAGES: One of the big changes that have taken place in the 20th century is the increasing occurrence of marriage of Zarathushti with people of non-Zarathushti background. We should applaud the Parsis and the Iranian Zarathushti for wishing to preserve the Zarathushti identity in spite of their miniscule numbers in India and Iran. In doing so, they have maintained our traditions, rituals and beliefs through the years. Nevertheless, we should not confuse these needs of our ethnic groups with any religious requirements. However, we are a minority and therefore it is not surprising that more and more of our young are finding their life partners

from outside the faith, and particularly so in the West. We should be careful not to foist these invented and unenforceable rules on our youth. We have seen, over and over again, that when faced with this situation, the Zarathushti spouse has chosen to protect their partner and children by turning their backs on the community in which they grew up. Thus, the community loses not only the current member but all future generations. Conversely, we have seen that where the community has received the non Zarathushti spouse, the opportunities for the Zarathushti lineage to continue are far greater, irrespective of the gender of the Zarathushti partner. We should also remember that Zarathushtra consistently promoted gender equality(46.10).

DISPOSAL OF OUR DEAD: Changes in the methods of dealing with our dead has certainly taken place recently even though the overall principles are still maintained. Zarathushtra taught us that we should be careful not to pollute our environment(Vendidad Chapters 5 to 12) and therefore Zarathushtis from Iran built Towers of Silence (Dakhma), well away from urban areas, where their dead were laid to rest, and it was done this way in a desert context, to maintain a high level of non-pollution. The bodies were picked clean by local birds of prey and the bones disintegrated from the strong heat of the sun's rays, helped by the application of nirang. The Parsees wishing to continue this custom built their Dakhmas, well away from urban areas, the most well-known being the one in Bombay, which operates within a monsoon climate. At the time, Malabar Hill was largely forested and undeveloped, so the remains of the bodies were devoured by various birds of prey. However, the sun's rays in India are not present the whole year as in the Persian desert. As urbanisation of Bombay grew, the Parsis protected their Dakhmas in Malabar Hill and the vultures that nested in the vicinity. Unfortunately for them, change is being forced upon them as the population of vultures has diminished very dramatically in the last few decades partly through the ingestion of diclofenac which is now banned in India. The Parsis have tried to maintain these traditions by looking at alternative ways such as solar concentrators however, this has not been entirely successful. The Iranian Zarathushtis were able to use their Dakhmas throughout the Islamic rule but its use was banned in the 1940's and its final use took place in the 1960's. They, like other Zarathushtis who do not have access to Dakhmas, chose to bury their dead as the only method widely available. With the advent of crematoria, more and more Zarathushtis outside of Iran are choosing to use this method since it is more in keeping with Zarathushtra's teachings on environmental protection. Therefore, in my opinion it is wrong for some members of our community to insist that the use of the Dakhmas is the only method available for all Zarathushtis. Perhaps in the future, the new technology of Promession will be a more acceptable method for the majority of the Zarathushtis.



The above mentioned differences are just a few examples of the how the transformations have taken place within the Zarathushti community. There are many more. Language is sometimes a barrier between the various ethnic groups. The Parsis prefer to use Gujarati and perhaps Hindi amongst themselves whilst the Iranian Zarathushtis prefer Farsi and Gavri (Dari). Today, with the change of location from the motherland, English has perhaps become the prevalent language amongst the Zarathushtis. Like any other minority, the Zarathushtis have taken on the culinary tastes, dress and rituals from their host nation. The Parsis have taken to wearing the sari and some of the celebratory rituals such as the tila mark on the forehead from the Hindus. The laying out of the Haft S(h)in table at the start of the New Year is more prevalent amongst the Iranian Zarathushtis. As we interact with each other more, particularly in the West, we should enjoy and appreciate our ethnic differences and not use them as barriers to integration.

So what of the future? We have seen that some Zarathushtis are more inclined to migrate to faraway lands which offer them prosperity and others have chosen or been forced to leave their homeland because of freedom and security issues. The numbers in North America will continue to grow and we could potentially see the largest number of Zarathushtis living there. India will continue to have some influence on some Zarathushtis around the world for the foreseeable future but in a very different environment than it is today. We have already seen a change over the last few years and this will accelerate as more and more Parsis integrate with the indigenous population and the power and control of the conservative elements will wane. The transformations that have taken place amongst the Zarathushtis in the West will occur in India but at a different pace. With these changes, which are already happening in India today, will come tolerance of our ethnic differences wherever we live and this will allow us to follow the open principles of our great religion. To some, this may seem a very rosy picture of the future but we can see signs of it today. Prominent Zarathushti organisations and individuals are today openly calling for unity and acceptance amongst the community. Whilst accepting that this is sometimes said without conviction, I believe that the mood of the community will make it happen.

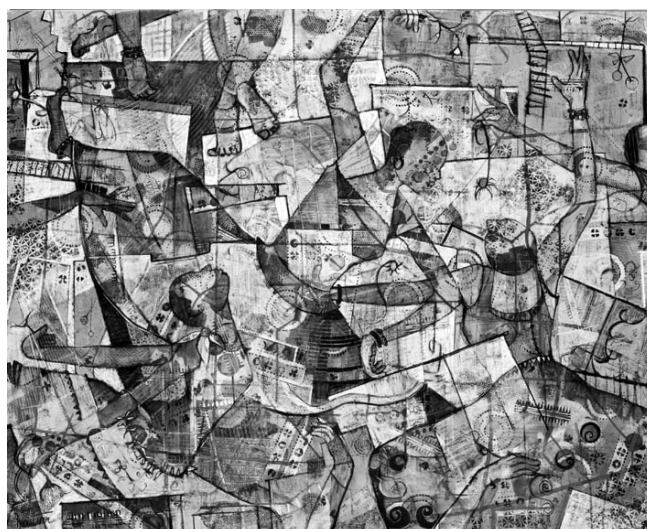
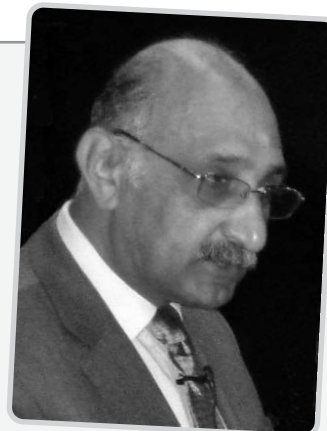
As I stated at the outset all religions are exposed to transformation through time. We should all embrace the changes that will make Zoroastrianism flourish through the generations. If we don't then we run the risk of disenfranchising future generations. I am very proud to say that the World Zoroastrian Organisation will continue to adapt to the transformations while safeguarding the identity and interests of Zarathushtis.

References are shown as Superscripts and the numbers refer to the verse in Gathic Yasna except where stated otherwise.

The author acknowledges the assistance given to him with some of the details by Shahin Bekhradnia, President of WZO, and Farrokh Vajifdar, a London based Zarathushti researcher.

Darayus S Motivala

B.Sc. (Hons.) is married to Arnavaz and living in an Oxfordshire village in England. They have a daughter, Zenobia, and have recently become grandparents to Finlay. Darayus is one of the earliest IT graduates and spent 35 years in the industry, initially as software developer and then moving into Sales and Marketing for 20 years. He was a Branch Manager for a British IT solutions company. In 2002, he changed his life style and went into the hospitality industry, owning a restaurant and a café. He took early retirement in 2009. Darayus has taken a keen interest in Zoroastrian community affairs since he became a WZO Committee member, some 17 years ago. He is currently, WZO's Chairman and in the past he has held the posts of Hon. Secretary and President.



**QUEST FOR UNITY BEFORE & AFTER FEZANA: TRANSFORMATION BY UNUSUAL APPROACHES****Adi Davar, Washington, DC, USA**

By the late 1980s, North-American Zarthushti (NAZ) numbers almost doubled from those a decade before, as thousands found refuge after Iran's Khomeini Revolution or came from other countries seeking better economic lives. Like their forefathers settling in N. China after the Arab invasion and in later centuries, various parts of Asia and Africa, they spread across North America (NA) in small or large pockets. To protect their interests and preserve Zarathusti identity, they too formed associations/groups wherever they settled. These consequently tripled to over twenty between mid to late- seventies and eighties. In these unique circumstances, the quest for unity - before and since the birth of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) - led NAZ to develop unusual organizational, religious and social approaches different from their forefathers' in other lands. Three of them are discussed here, leaving the rest to other contributors to this special issue of the FEZANA Journal.

FEZANA's UNIQUE INFRASTRUCTURE

With foresight, leaders of the few NA associations existing in the late-70s, agreed on the organizational solution of uniting into a "federation of associations", modeled on the United States Senate. That would give every association, small or large, a voice to elect trustees for the federation's board from NA candidates standing for election and on all board discussions. Also envisaged was delegation by the board, of main community subjects - under Terms of Reference, to "committees" for conception and implementation.

It took almost a decade for this bold vision to become a reality as "FEZANA". Its design is unique among Zarathusti bodies, but works successfully. Inter-regional rivalries manifest among Zarathustis elsewhere, were avoided. It harnessed a cross-section of NAZ talent to work harmoniously together for the whole community. FEZANA continued the ongoing NA practice of periodic "national congresses". These reinforced unity, as NAZ who attended, formed personal relationships as they met, socialized and discussed substantive presentations of social/religious issues.

FEZANA member associations built centers and daremehrs - the latter thanks to a munificent Iranian Zarathusti (IZ) Arbab Guiv. As they became epicenters for religious, as also community, social and educational activities, they bonded members far beyond what fire temples might have. Further, mobeds had always rallied in NA by meeting the community's religious needs in homes and centers/daremehrs on a volunteer basis not witnessed elsewhere. Later, after FEZANA's formation, they developed forward-looking infrastructures for North American and Iranian priesthood. Encouraged by FEZANA, they are playing a role not usual in other lands. The laity showers them with affection, and even created "dasturhoods" in Toronto and Chicago.

From their inception, most associations started regular religious-education classes for their young and adults. Some mobeds assist them. But parents who are more religiously knowledgeable, primarily provide teaching. Therefore understandably, teaching leans towards imparting the Sassanian interpretation of the faith with its ritual practices/ customs, not essential percepts that Zarathustra actually taught. Nevertheless, larger numbers of NAZ are acquiring sounder religious perceptions than what most adults gleaned in mother countries.

INTER- ACTION OF IRANIAN AND PARSI ZARATHUSHTIS

Hundreds of IZ families/individuals gained refuge in NA besides in UK/Europe, thanks to the World Zoroastrian Organisation's single-handed efforts in early-mid 1980s.. Thus, their overall numbers in NA are close to those of Parsi Zarathustis (PZ). They had exemplary educational, social and economic credentials. No other Zarathusti community had ever encountered this combination of factors. Initially, they led to uneasy relations between IZ and PZ. These were hardly eased by their inability to converse easily because most IZ were comfortable in Farsi/European languages in which PZ were not. Thinking, cultures, social customs, food etc. also differed. Communication therefore took place more "within" each group, than "between" them. This became evident once IZ attendance at associations' gatherings increased. Equally unsettling for PZ was their perceived role-reversal vis-à-vis IZ: Arbab Guiv and Mehraban Zarthoshty munificently helped build daremehrs/ centers as epicenters of community activities in NA, whereas until the 1920s it was PZ who had generously endowed fire temples, schools and even financial resources in Iran.

Both groups deserve credit that they found ways, under FEZANA's tactful eye, to foster social unity and think of themselves as one Zarathusti community. Once IZ were comfortable that little prospect of government harassment existed, they gradually began participating in associations and FEZANA as managers and leaders. In associations having significant IZ presence, newsletters, meetings, discussions, etc. in English were translated into Farsi for many years. At their Navruz/Pateti functions, Iranian and Parsi food was served in rotation. IZ began attending community religious ceremonies, although PZ mobeds perform them differently from IZ mobeds. In turn, PZs began attending Sadeh and seasonal jashans, which had meant little to them. Close friendships developed between IZ and PZ individuals. But one has still to witness more than a few unions between the young from both groups, although many are marrying into other ethnic/religious groups.

RELIGIOUS ISSUE OF ACCEPTANCE:

As in all mother countries today, interfaith marriages, navjots of children of mixed marriages, or acceptance of a



non-Zarathusti believing in our faith, were vociferously opposed in NA in the early-80s. A few scholars supported them in newsletters or small seminars. But this emotive religious issue, predating FEZANA's creation, was not approached in large open forums until the Quebec Association decided to do so at its 1981 Congress in Montreal.

Its sizeable audience was presented with a paper, carefully researched in the Gathas, historical practices, customs and legal evidence and including specific modest proposals for tackling the issue. It caused an uproar. No Zarathusti forum had heard anything like this. Long queues demanding discussions, necessitated the Congress' extension by a day. Ultimately, a large majority mandated the Quebec Association to: send the presentation and its proposals, with a Questionnaire, to Mumbai/Tehran High Priests, knowledgeable scholars, community leaders and influential laity on all continents; report on their responses at the next Houston Congress; and then send all this to every NA association for discussion/vote by its body-politic. Except for the Mumbai High Priests, everyone had endorsed both the analysis and its proposals as sound. So did almost all NA associations by small or large majority. Accordingly, the Montreal meeting can rightly be recognized as having caused a paradigm shift in the thinking of NA Zarathustis, constituting a major transformation.

This deliberate yet careful approach helped unite NAZ on this emotive religious issue. Outcries against intermarriages or navjots of children of mixed marriages gradually became muted and now, are hardly heard. More mobeds are performing them under Zoroastrian rites. But this evolution, coinciding with FEZANA's early years, took over a decade. By and large, the wellspring of NAZ "silent majority" tapped by the Montreal presentation and its follow-up, changed perspectives and helped heal divisiveness.

INVOLVING THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN NA COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The NAZ younger generation is at least as savvy, versatile and astute as its adults who have dominated Zarathusti affairs since decades. It is equally committed to the faith's perpetuation. Born and raised in the NA milieu, it has an in-built advantage of acute awareness of critical twenty-first century issues the community will face, and better sense for wise institutional solutions. Yet, despite lip service that the young are "our future torch-bearers", adults have hardly allowed them to play major roles in shaping our future.

Consequently, the two are not united on this social issue. The young are respectful of adults, but are restive and continue exchanging views between themselves on the Internet and in small meetings, biding time to run community affairs. Almost the same adults are still rotating as FEZANA's senior office-bearers or participating in its major initiatives. It is so, also in some associations. Is it ego that they alone can do excellent jobs? Is it fear of fading from the community's memory that prevents them from stepping aside? Or disdain that the young are not as

capable as them? Whatever the reason, their attitude reflects a worldwide Zarathusti phenomenon, not of NAZ alone.

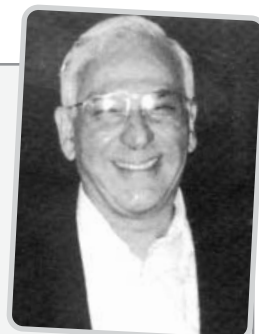
When this issue was raised at FEZANA's San Francisco AGM some years ago, the "solution" mooted was to reserve Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary positions (which most adults did not want) for young adults in all associations and FEZANA. Meanwhile, the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI) was the only one where adults encouraged the young to stand for all positions and became President four times.

To foster change on this issue, WZO, FEZANA and ZAMWI organized a well-attended "dialogue" in the Washington DC area in 1996, between seven first-rate young adults from across NA and three much-respected NAZ leaders. The former's presentations on issues facing contemporary NAZ were so outstanding, that WZO published them in a well-distributed book. But neither FEZANA nor any association mounted any follow-up dialogue. Later, FEZANA's solutions included creating a Youth Column in its FEZANA Journal, encouraging youth to organize periodic NA Youth Congresses and supporting their participation in such World Congresses. But still absent are substantive actions to hand the younger generation responsibility for shaping and running community affairs.

The young have now started the *Next-Gen* movement, discusses and meets periodically. But adults have still to take serious notice. The aging ones in power show little inclination to retire and cede their responsible positions to the young. Surprisingly, they are refraining from pressing their aspirations, e.g., putting-up their best candidates for Board positions in associations and FEZANA, actively canvassing for them and coming enmass to get as many elected as possible. NAZ quest for unity will remain incomplete until the young get responsibility to run their bodies-politic. So for further transformation to take place, the youth need to be more engaged in community affairs.

These organizational, religious and social initiatives are unique amongst any Zarthushti organizations anywhere. Others which followed, had the same characteristics. This approach of thinking "outside the box", probably accounts for FEZANA's growing influence in the world-wide Zarthushti world.

Adi Davar, holds degrees in economics and law from Bombay University and a Masters in international law from Harvard University. Consultant on international economic development. Senior executive in the Tata Group and the World Bank – where he retired as a Director of East Asia & Pacific Region. He is active in community affairs, internationally, nationally and locally. Researcher, writer and speaker on Zoroastrianism, its history and contemporary issues.





TRANSFORMATION AND LOSS OF PARSI IDENTITY

Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw, Houston, USA

IDENTITY

Identity is that set of behavioral or personality characteristics by which we are recognizable as a member of a group. Our identity is that which defines us: It differentiates us from the other, whilst binding us to those who are similar.

Communities with a common identity represent safety, strength, harmony and familiarity. Such groups fulfill the need for bonding, cohesiveness, integrity, recognition and security.

The strength of a community is built on the interdependence of its members. If members become independent of the group (by abandoning or diluting their identity) and depart, the community as a whole weakens. A disintegrated, divided community cannot survive. Thus, preserving identity and cohesiveness are the two main ingredients required for ensuring the survival of a community.

THE ZARATHUSHTRIAN RELIGIOUS-ETHNIC LINK

That Mazdaysnan (the worship of Ahura Mazda) and ethnicity are linked together and goes back to the times of the Achaemenian emperors. In the Persian inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes, they both declare themselves to be:

arya arya ciça -- *Aryan of Aryan stock*

Darius further states that:

Uramazda nap harriyanum -- *Ahuramazda is the God of the Aryans.*

These statements clearly show that our ethnicity, as arya-, and our religion, as Mazda worshippers, have always been intertwined and characteristic of our identity.

PARSI IDENTITY

What uniquely identify us as Parsis are:

Religion: – We are Mazdayashni Zathushtis;

Ethnicity: – We are originally from Persia, and of Iranian descent (arya-);

Culture & Traditions: – We have blended our original Iranian traditions with those of Hindus during our domicile in India.

I will use these three primary characteristics to develop the Parsi narrative.

FOUNDATION OF THE PARSI IDENTITY

The earliest history of the Parsis comes from the Qesse-ye Sanjan, a story of the migration of the Iranian Zarathushtis, starting in the 7th Century, after the conquest of Iran by the Arabs, to their settling and establishing themselves in India.

On their landing in India, the Iranians asked the local ruler, Jadi Rana, for asylum, which was granted on the basis of their accepting the following conditions: (i) Explain their religion and customs; (ii) Renounce their native language and take up the local language; (iii) Women to wear the local dress; (iv) Lay down their swords and arms; and, (v) Marriages shall take place only at night.

In 790 CE, the first Atash Behram was consecrated and the community subsequently came to be known by the locals as Parsis.

PRESERVING THE IDENTITY

Throughout this period the Parsis remained strongly orthodox. They had willingly subjected themselves to the ordeals of a distant migration in order to preserve their religion and their identity. To them their religious identity as Zarathushtis and their ethnicity were synonymous. In order to preserve their identity they had to preserve both. Thus, they engaged in endogamous (within the tribe) marriage. The Hindu caste structure also prevented inter-marriage between the communities. They remained a non-proselytizing community, with a strong emphasis on ritual purity. But some customs were gradually simplified and others were adapted to Indian conditions.

WHAT CHANGED?

Religion: – Unchanged – Remained strongly orthodox.

Ethnicity: – Unchanged - No inter-marriage or conversion

Culture & Traditions: – Significant changes – Had to adapt and take on many of the local Hindu customs.

THE PERSIAN RIVAYATS AND CALENDAR CONTOVERSY (15TH TO 18TH CENTURIES)

THE PERSIAN RIVAYATS

Until the mid-18th century, the Parsi priests of India had looked up to their Iranian counterparts as the authorities on religious matters. Starting in the 15th century, the Parsi priests started sending emissaries to Iran with lists of questions relating to religious issues. In 1478, Hoshang Nariman, sponsored by a leading Navsari Parsi, Changa Asa, returned from Iran with the first set of answers, as well as with copies of religious manuscripts. This and subsequent sets of correspondence between the Parsis and the Iranian Zarathushtis came to be known as the Persian Rivayats, and continued for several hundred years.



THE CALENDAR CONTROVERSY

During the course of this correspondence it became known that the Parsi and the Iranian calendars differed by one month. Evidently, sometime during the period 1120 to 1130 CE, the Parsis had intercalated (added) one month, and as a result the Parsi calendar was one month behind the Iranian calendar.

In 1746, several Sanjana priests, believing the Iranians to be correct, decided to adopt the Iranian calendar. They came to be known as the Kadmis, or "ancient" ones. Most of the other Parsi priests, however, continued with the existing calendar and came to be known as the Shenshais. The disagreements between the two groups soon heated up and the issue became bitter to the point of violence. Matters were somewhat placated when a wealthy philanthropist, Dady Seth, built the first Kadmi Atash Behram in Mumbai in 1783 CE. This calendar controversy led to the first major schism within the community. While the Kadmi priests continued to look towards the Iranians for their religious guidance, the Shenshai priests declared their independence and decided to take religious matters into their own hands.

WHAT CHANGED?

Religion: Significant changes: Schism between Kadmis and Shenshais; One month difference in Navroz; Minor changes in rituals and prayers; Both communities remained staunchly orthodox.

Ethnicity: No change.

Culture & Traditions: No change.

Despite the religious dispute the leaders, and the community as a whole, remained staunchly orthodox and strongly committed to preserving and protecting their Parsi identity.

PARSIS IN THE 17TH TO 19TH CENTURIES

BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Soon after the seven islands of Mumbai were ceded, in 1662, to the British by the Portuguese, Parsis from the hinterland started migrating to Mumbai and established themselves as trading partners with the British. This rapid Parsi migration greatly impacted the urbanization, growth and culture of the city. Many Parsis made fortunes in trade, finance and ship-building. The Parsis were highly regarded by the British as industrious and honest, and this started a long period of collaboration between the Parsis and the British East India Company.

In Mumbai, the Parsis quickly set up the essential infrastructure for maintaining the community – a Dakhma in 1670, and the Vachha Modi Agiary in 1673. Priests

were imported from Gujarat, and as the affluence of the Parsis in Mumbai increased, power and control shifted from the priests in Gujarat to the wealthy merchants in Mumbai, who began to play a leading role in influencing and directing community affairs. They were strongly focused on maintaining the Parsis' distinct religious identity and culture.

BOMBAY PARSI PUNCHAYET

The growth of the Parsi community in Mumbai required a base of governance to preserve communal morals and unity. The Sethias recognized the need to preserve social and religious norms and to build a sense of community. Formal governance was instituted in the form of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP).

The BPP was first constituted in 1725 by five prominent, lay Parsi merchants. They were primarily interested in the social and civil needs of the community and gained the ability to mete out punishment (by ostracizing the wrong-doer). This power was exemplified in the behdin-mobed dispute. The mobeds (priests) had decided that their daughters could not be married to behdins (lay persons), but that they themselves had the right to marry the daughters of behdins. The BPP found this to be discriminatory. Since the mobeds were unwilling to give their daughters in marriage to behdins, the BPP in turn prohibited any behdin family from giving their daughters to mobeds in marriage. The mobeds were outraged and appealed to the British, but lost. This ruling strengthened the BPP, and gave them the power of exerting control over the priesthood.

In 1787, the BPP was reconstituted under government authority and given legal rights and increased membership. This body now became key in shaping the Parsi identity. They gradually took over the leadership role from Navsari and started controlling religious matters as well. They outlawed bigamy and child marriage. In 1836 the BPP put "out of caste" 3 priests for performing Navjotes of illegitimate children. They also took similar action in the case of one Mobed Laskari, who committed bigamy. During the period from 1818 to 1823, the BPP proscribed rituals deemed to be Hindu or Muslim, such as visiting their holy places, the wearing of charms and amulets, those pertaining to wedding and funeral rites, and other superstitious practices.

The BPP was instrumental in defining Parsi identity in matters relating to marriage, role of men and women, and religious observances. It was during this period that the BPP was most effective, and that Parsi identity and communal unity were at their peak.

In about 1836, the BPP went into decline. Nepotism prevailed and members lacked interest in community affairs. Rulings were delayed, inconsistent and unevenly enforced. Several prominent leaders resigned in frustration. Parsis felt that the BPP had abdicated its responsibility to safeguard the community's interests. A



clique of newly-formed, reformist Parsis opposed the BPP, and the power that the BPP once wielded gradually eroded.

WHAT CHANGED?

Religion: Significant changes: Leadership over religious matters gradually shifted from the priests in Gujarat to the Sethias in Mumbai; Doctrinally unchanged; The BPP strictly controlled religious purity by proscribing non-Zarathushtrian rituals and ceremonies.

Ethnicity: No change – Strong opposition to inter-marriage and conversion.

Culture & Traditions: Significant changes: Shift from rural to urban environment; Start of interaction with Europeans; BPP was formed to dispense social justice, with the primary focus of preserving Parsi identity; The subsequent decline of BPP led to split in community mores.

WESTERN INTERPRETATIONS OF ZOROASTRIANISM – 1830s TO 1860s

REVEREND JOHN WILSON

In 1813, the East India Company was forced to permit missionaries to enter India with an aim of proselytizing and converting Indians to Christianity. In 1829, the Rev. John Wilson arrived in Mumbai and was immediately impressed by the outstanding and progressive character of the Parsis. Thus, the Parsis became a prime target for Rev. Wilson's evangelical efforts.

Rev. Wilson studied the then available (Antiquetel du Peron's) translations of the Avesta. He set about attacking the religion by vilifying the doctrines of the religion on the following grounds.

1. Zoroastrianism robbed God (Ahura Mazda) of his glory by admitting to the powers of an Evil Spirit.
2. Because of the veneration of the Amesha Spentas and the Yazatas, Zoroastrianism was polytheistic.
3. Because of the veneration of fire, water, and the earth, it was a form of nature worship.
4. That the Avesta was not written by Zarathushtra.
5. Zarathushtra was not a prophet, since there is no record that he performed miracles.

These arguments were published by him in the vernacular newspapers and soon a vigorous debate ensued within the community. Various individuals gave complicated, divergent and often totally misleading statements, further adding to the confusion. The only coherent response came from Dastur Edulji Sanjana of the Wadiaji Atash Behram, who strongly defended the then prevailing orthodox views.

Despite Rev. Wilson's attacks, he was able to convince only one Parsi to convert in 1839. The conversion caused outrage, and unified the community in its opposition to proselytization. The Parsis challenged it in court, but the British justices ruled in favor of Rev. Wilson.

Since the community felt that even their priests were unable to defend their religion, Rev. Wilson's attack had its desired effect. It spread confusion and left several people (especially the educated, Westernized Parsis) distressed that they were unable to explain their beliefs and doctrines to the British.

MARTIN HAUG

Martin Haug, a Lutheran, German scholar studied the Avesta and was the first Western scholar to isolate the Gathas from the rest of the Avesta as the hymns of Zarathushtra himself.

In his book: "Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis," (1869) he concluded that Zarathushtra's theology was a rigid monotheism, with Ahura Mazda creating both the Good (Spenta Mainyu) and the Evil (Angra Mainyu) Spirits. This was, of course, anathema to the orthodox Parsis who could not conceive how Ahura Mazda could be responsible for the creation of the Evil Spirit.

Martin Haug also deflected Rev. Wilson's charges of polytheism by stating that these were concepts added by later-day, ignorant priests. By doing so, Martin Haug dichotomized the religion into two periods: (1) the original pure religion of Zarathushtra, and (2) the later priestly corruption. Dr. Haug's concepts of Zoroastrianism were championed by the elite, reformist Parsis, who could now present themselves to the British as followers of a monotheistic, progressive, Protestant-like religion, but these ideas were abjured by the orthodox.

WHAT CHANGED ?

Religion: - Major change: Rev. Wilson's attack left the Parsis in disarray about the nature of their doctrines; Martin Haug defended the religion against Rev. Wilson's charges, but compounded the error by mischaracterizing the religion as monotheistic, and then dichotomizing it by proposing two separate theologies; This was the origin of the basis for the present differences between the Reformist and the Orthodox Parsis.

Ethnicity: – No change.

Culture & Traditions: – Major change: The Wilson attack forced the Parsis to more carefully think about their religion and doctrines. It initially brought together communal unity in their opposition to proselytization, and how to defend the Parsi identity. Martin Haug helped the elite Western-minded Parsi to better ingratiate themselves with the British. This led to a



move towards a more Westernized approach to Parsi culture and traditions. These Western interpretations caused the community to split between the Reformist and Orthodox Parsis.

PARSI EDUCATION AND THE REFORM MOVEMENT – 1840s TO 1900

WESTERN EDUCATION AND THE PARSI

Even prior to the Wilson conversion incident, Parsis had eagerly embraced English-medium schools. Immediately after the Wilson incident, attendance at these schools temporarily dropped, but rapidly increased soon after. While the Sethias themselves were not Western educated, they insisted on their children receiving an English education.

The Parsi elite contributed to the opening of several English-medium schools and especially to schools for girls. They also assisted in the establishment of institutions of higher education – Elphinston Institute, Grant Medical College and Government Law College. Several Parsis attended these institutions and graduated with distinction.

By the mid-1850s the merchant princes were in decline as trade declined and manufacturing took over. College educated Parsis now formed the new elite. A group of Parsis who had met as students at the Elphinston Institute formed the core group of reformists.

This Western education, along with close interaction with the British, led to the rapid Anglicization of the reformed Parsis.

PARSI REFORMISTS

The Parsi reformists developed a fondness for all things British – their language, sports, fashion, food, consumer goods, and their customs and manners. “The Parsis wanted to be like the British, and to be liked by the British.” (Hinnells). They rapidly assimilated with the British, aping their customs and abandoning their Parsi identity.

Dismayed by the past ignorance of the state of religious knowledge of the priests, The Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha (Religious Reform Association) was founded with the goal of promoting social and religious reform. The reformists reinterpreted the religion to reject all things traditional that did not meet their rationalist views. Rather than maintaining communal harmony and unity, the reform movement led to a split in the community. The reformists now considered themselves the new elite and caretakers of the religion. They focused on the Gathas, considered the religion to be monotheistic, and simplified and translated prayers into the vernacular.

One of the more prominent reformists was Kharshedji Rustomji Cama. He studied Avesta and Pahlavi in France and Germany under the leading Western scholars of the times. In 1861 he started three schools for Parsi priests,

at which he himself taught. K.R. Cama was also responsible for introducing the Fasli calendar.

Another leading reformist was Dastur M.N. Dhalla of Karachi who studied at Columbia University under Prof. A.V.W. Jackson, a staunch Protestant. Under the tutelage of Prof. Jackson, Dasturji Dhalla transformed himself from an orthodox priest into a reformist. In his earlier book “Zoroastrian Civilization” Dasturji Dhalla brings out his orthodox views – for example, that Zoroastrianism was a dualistic religion. This view changes in his later book “The History of Zoroastrianism” where, after being influenced by Prof. Jackson, he changes Zoroastrianism to being a monotheistic faith. As the head priest in Karachi, Dasturji Dhalla remained an influential leader in the reform movement.

What Changed?

Religion : – Major changes: Western education led to the growth of the religious reform movement; The reform movement made major changes to the doctrines and rituals of the religion; It set up a schism in the community on a religious basis

– reformists vs. orthodox.

Ethnicity: – No change.

Culture & Traditions: – Major changes: Growth of Western education dramatically changed Parsi culture and traditions; Considering themselves an elite, the educated wanted to emulate all things British, including their customs and manners, in the bargain giving up their Parsi traditions and ways; The community split into the educated, British influenced reformists and the traditional-minded orthodox;

Parsi identity was severely damaged.

THE DAVAR – BEAMAN JUDGEMENT ISSUES OF THE CASE

In 1903 Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata married a French lady – Suzanne Briere (later known as Soonamai Tata). Prior to the wedding Suzanne had her Navjote performed by Dastur Kaikhooshroo Jamaspji. The wedding was then performed according to Parsi rites.

Claiming her to be a Parsi, R.D. Tata stated that she had the right to enter all Fire Temples and have her body consigned to the Towers of Silence. The BPP, being Trustees of the latter as well as of several Fire Temples, refused her permission on the basis that they did not recognize the validity of the Navjote. Several prominent Parsis then filed suit against the BPP.

The suit by the plaintiffs, who included neither R.D. nor Soonoo Tata, questioned: 1) Whether the Defendants are validly appointed Trustees of the properties and Fund of the BPP, and whether, in the event of the death or resignation of one or more of them, they have the right of filling vacancies as they occur; and 2) Whether a person converted to Zoroastrianism is entitled to the benefits of



the Religious Institution and Funds in the possession and management of the Defendants. The second point was the more contentious. The case was heard by two judges: Justice Sir Dinshaw Davar and Justice Sir Frank Beaman.

THE DECISION AND CONSEQUENCES

The Court concluded:

1. The Zoroastrian religion permits conversion.
2. The Parsis since arriving in India have never attempted to convert.
3. There was no proved instance of children of both non-Zoroastrian parents being admitted into the Zoroastrian religion.

Noting that the BPP properties were exclusively for Parsis, and since Parsis accepted no converts, the Justices ruled against the admission of Soonoo Tata to BPP properties.

An unintended consequence of this case was that Justice Davar rendered an opinion on how a Parsi should be defined:

"The Parsi Community consists of Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants; and who are born of both Zoroastrian parents, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, the Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion, who came to India, either temporarily, or permanently, and the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion."

In effect this case led to a distinction being made between a "Zoroastrian" and a "Parsi," and how a "Parsi" was defined.

IRANIAN DEFINITION

It is interesting to note that during this same period, KayKhosraw Shahrokh, a very prominent Iranian Zoroastrian, wrote a letter to Sir Mancherji Bhownaggarie, a British MP. In it he refers to himself not as a Zoroastrian, nor as an Iranian Zoroastrian, but rather as "a pure Parsee from Kerman Persia." * See copy.

WHAT CHANGED?

Religion: – Major Change: Further widening of the rift between the reformists and the orthodox.

Ethnicity: – Major change: First legal definition of a Parsi; Children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers accepted as Parsis; Individuals with both non-Parsi parents not admitted as Parsis, i.e., no conversion.

Culture & Traditions: – No change.

THE SECOND PARSI MIGRATION – TO NORTH AMERICA 1960 +

Beginning in the 1960s and into the 1990s, the first generation of Parsis immigrated from India and Pakistan to

North America – most for improving their economic status, while those from Pakistan did so because of deteriorating security considerations for minorities. The large majority were professionals who instantly prospered in their new homeland. Currently, approximately 20% of Parsis live in North America.

The Parsis have opened numerous community centers and prayer halls, in various cities. However, no Fire Temples have been consecrated. The Parsis, together with the Iranian Zoroastrians, meet at Navroze and at the occasional Gahambars to socialize. Many communities have started Sunday Schools for the children, but in most part this is limited to once a month.

Most Parsis are well educated, many with post-graduate degrees. They are upper-middle class, and have integrated and assimilated into the American (Canadian) ways and culture. Many have developed a more reformist outlook, and most have abandoned their rituals and traditions. Many have even stopped wearing their sudra and kusti – a hallmark of Parsi identity. (In the opinion of this author, barely 20% of North American Parsis wear their sudra-kusti, with, unfortunately, the women and second generation immigrants at an even a lower percentage).

THE PETERSON NAVJOTE

On May 5, 1983, Ervads Antia and Hormuzdiar performed the Navjote of Joseph Peterson. This Navjote drew praise from the liberals and condemnation from the orthodox. This act further exacerbated the schism between the two groups and increased the animosity towards each other. What this act clearly showed was the independence of the North American priests from the authority of their Indian counterparts, which led to a weakening of religious authority of the latter.

THE ZARATHUSHTRIAN ASSEMBLY

In 1990 a non-profit movement, the Zarathushtrian Assembly, was founded by Ali Akbar Jafarey, with the financial support and moral encouragement of several prominent Parsis and Iranian Zarathushtis.

The philosophy of this group was radically reformist, in which they emulated many of the points of the early Parsi reform movement. They believed the religion to be monotheistic and to consist solely of the Gathas. This came to be known as the "Pristine Pure" religion of Zarathushtra, with all the later Avesta, the rituals and ceremonies being condemned as later priestly corruptions. Ali Jafarey personally conducted Navjotes, converting several individuals to Zoroastrianism, and publically favoring proselytization. The Assembly has founded several chapters in Latin America and Europe.

Ali Jafarey has, in many publications, promoted the independence of the Assembly from the priestly authority



of India, and drawn a distinction between the Parsis and the neo-Zoroastrian converts.

NORTH AMERICAN MOBED COUNCIL (NAMC)

The NAMC was set up in the 1990s, in Canada, to assist the community with its religious affairs. It initially consisted of more orthodox mobeds, but in recent years has been influenced by some reformist mobeds. In 2000, the NAMC passed a resolution which distinguished between a Parsi and a Zoroastrian.

- Parsi is a race.
- Zoroastrianism is a religion.
- The term "Parsi" applies to the descendents of the original migrants who left Iran to settle in India to preserve the Zoroastrian religion.
- A "Parsi" is a person born of both Parsi parents who has an inalienable right to practice the Zoroastrian religion.
- A "Zoroastrian" is a person who believes and follows the teaching of Zoroaster.
- It is recognized that "Zoroastrianism" is a universal religion.
- It is further recognized that a Zoroastrian is not necessarily a Parsi."

While the definition of a "Parsi" is partially taken from the Davar-Beaman decision, the NAMC had taken upon itself to vaguely define a "Zoroastrian." Again, this unilateral act of defining a "Parsi" and a "Zoroastrian," without input from or discussion with the priests of India, showed the independent stance of the NAMC and further widened the rift between the priests of India and North America.

WHAT CHANGED

Religion: – Major changes: A dichotomy between Parsis and neo-Zoroastrians (converts) has been created; A rift between the priests of North America and India was created; Rituals and traditions are being abandoned in favor of a protestant (reformed) approach; Attempts are being made to expunge the Avesta, in favor of solely the Gathas.

Ethnicity: – Major change: Being lost in favor on inclusion.

Culture & Traditions – Major change; Traditions and culture are rapidly being abandoned, with nothing to replace them. The second and third generation of North American Parsis will have no knowledge of or experience with practicing their rituals and traditions.

The Parsi identity, in present-day North America, is being grievously eroded.

THE FUTURE IN INDIA

The reform movement, led by the "intelligentsia," has control over several leading Parsi publications and is actively promoting their views. The orthodox, in order to preserve their identity, are fighting back. This has led to animosity between the two sides and is extremely divisive.

The practices of the religion will remain strong for a while in Mumbai, because of the infrastructure – colonies of Parsis living together in close proximity in Baugs, as well as of the presence of religious institutions such as Agiaries and Atash Behrams. The functioning of the Dakhma in Mumbai is coming under serious attack from the reformist.

Outlying towns will suffer due to the steady decline of Parsi population. An acute shortage of practicing priests will be felt within the next couple of generations, as fewer will have the incentive to take on priestly responsibilities.

Most important, the Parsis are losing their prominent role as an elite in India.

IN NORTH AMERICA

Not only has the term "Parsi" been totally abandoned in North America (neither FEZANA nor even a single member association has incorporated the term in its name), it is now becoming negatively construed as being a racially charged term. The North American Parsis consider themselves secular, pluralistic and "Universalist." They have rapidly assimilated and acculturized into North American society, at the expense of abandoning their Parsi identity.

The lack of consecrated Fire Temples has led to an indifference to the religion and its ritual practices. The Zarathushtrian Assembly has been instrumental in attempting to expunge the Parsi identity while promoting a neo-Zoroastrian identity.

We North American Parsis have become fixated on conversion and inter-marriage – these two issues are raised ad nauseam at every Congress, seminar, and discussion forum; while there is a glaring absence of meaningful discussions on how to preserve and protect our Parsi identity, heritage, culture and traditions.

We North American Parsis are going through a crisis of self-esteem: We do not even wish to call ourselves Parsis.

We are losing sight of who we are: We have little or no knowledge of our religion, culture or history, and we have willingly abandoned our Parsi panu. We are blissfully happy to wallow in religious ignorance.

We have very little left of our culture and heritage to pass on to the next generation: And, it will be an order of magnitude less for the generation after that.



In the case of us Parsis – especially the North American Parsi – we are obsessed on being accepted by and integrated into the Western cultural milieu. Hence, we are ready to abandon our Parsi traditions, culture, rituals, and even the essence of our doctrines. We want to be “Universal” to show that we are broad-minded and accepting of all who profess to be Zarathushtis; we want to be considered a “Monotheistic” religion, in order to be acceptable to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic majority amongst whom we live; we wish to abandon our thousands-of-years-old rituals because they are considered to be primitive; and we wish to reject our traditions because they appear to be archaic in the Western setting.

As we Parsis are discarding our identity, our community is disintegrating into oblivion.

FORECAST FOR NORTH AMERICA

GRIM!!

Parsi identity will disappear with the next two generations. It is doubtful whether our grandchildren, while knowing of themselves to be of Parsi origin, will have any sense of Parsi identity.

What is tragic is that, by us abandoning our Parsi identity, we are depriving our future generations of their right to inherit their millennia-old identity, and to make their own choice as to whether or not to practice the religion at it was handed down by hundreds of generations of their forefathers.

We will have no one to blame but ourselves for our lost identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have liberally borrowed from many works, but I especially wish to thank the following authors for helping me develop an insight into the serious problem of loss of identity:

Palsetia, Jesse S.: *The Parsis of India, Delhi, 2008*
Maneck, Susan Stiles: *The Death of Ahriman, 1997*
Hinnells, John R.: *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies, Aldershot, 2000*

I also wish to thank **Malcolm Deboo, President ZTFE** for providing me with the copy of KayKhosraw Shahrokh's letter.

FINALLY

While the conclusion is dire, it is not yet irreversible if quick action is taken to rectify the crisis. I believe that education and enlightenment are the keys to evaluating the damage to our identity. Thoughtful minds and people of strong will and character are required to reorient the discussion, away from the present emotionally charged and extremist-dominated views, towards a thoughtful,

strategic and balanced approach for identifying ways for preserving and maintaining our Parsi identity.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author, and do not represent positions endorsed by FEZANA or any of its member organizations

Sarosh Manekshaw has been a member of ZAH since 1978 and has served on the Executive Committee for four years. He has conducted Sunday school classes for both youth and adults. He is a valued member of the ZAH Library committee. He was the Co-Chair of the Second Gatha Conference held in Houston in 1996, and editor of the Proceedings of that Conference. He served as Vice-Chairman of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress, held in Houston in December 2000. Sarosh was a guest editor of the FEZANA Journal, and contributed many articles over the years.



NRT

Dinyar Hodiwala

Broker Associate



T (732) 398-2731
e- hodi@cbmoves.com



For all your Real Estate needs

Residential (Estate Homes, Farm-Houses, Custom-Homes)
Commercial (Hotels, Office Space, Retail, Shopping-Centers)
Investment Properties (Land, Multi-Family, Office Condos)
 Within USA & Internationally



Coldwell Banker

3228 Route 27 .
Kendall Park . NJ 08824 . USA





Letter from Kaykhusrow Shahrokh to Sir Muncherji Bhownagherrie 1907

Teheran Persia.
April 10th. 1907.

To His Excellency:-

Sir Manucherji Merwanji Bhownagherrie
Hon. Member of British Parliament.
London.

Most Respected Sir:-

How much fortunate shall I be to reach to the high dignity of gaining the honour of representing myself as an atom before the rays of the sun of your Excellencies Benevolence.

I am a pure Parsee from Kerman Persia, that after being 11 years a teacher in the Parsee School in Kerman I have travelled through Russia & returning to Persia it is about two years that I live in Teheran. As I saw generally Mohammedans, Bahists & Christians protest with Zoroastrians in Persia & as there was not a special book among Parsees in Persia to peruse & use in their schools to know about their religion, to be able to answer rejectors & protestors, therefore I intended to write something on this purpose & I have published a small book in pure simple Persian language & it has been ^{recently} scattered among Mohammedan priests & nobles, & protestors, & they themselves run for gaining it & knowing properly about Parsee religion.

Although it is not worthy of being offered to your Excellency, but as Mr. Ardeshirji Edulji, the representative of Bombay Parsee Committee in Persia lead & urged me to forward one copy, therefore I forwarded by this post through the (Persian Chronicle Editor) to be offered to your Excellency. Asking apologies, hoping the acceptance of that book, & wishing your Excellency long life, prosperity, glory & successfulness for ever.

I remain, Most Hon. Sir

Yours Most Obedient Servant.
Kaykhusrow Shah Rokh Kermani



“LESSONS THE TIARA TAUGHT ME”

My Journey to Miss Illinois USA 2012

ZENOBI RAVJI, Chicago, USA

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my Zarathushti community for their strong support and unwavering faith in my abilities. Participating as a finalist in the Miss Illinois USA 2012 pageant was a life transforming experience. I stepped out of my comfort zone and into uncharted territory, teaching me more about myself than I ever thought possible!

Throughout my journey to success, what has resonated most with me are the incredible people that I have shared my adventure with along the way. This mixed with my own path of self-discovery have truly shaped my experience

Each moment taught me a valuable lesson that I will use to build a strong foundation for successes that lie ahead. While I cannot list every single moment in this

Zarathushti community waving green flags (support to match my emerald green dress) and my family in the front row waving a banner and ringing a cow bell, which brought much excitement to the weekend's emcee and audience. I was filled with so much gratitude and humility to have one of the largest cheering sections at the pageant. This moment solidified my lesson of gratitude. What you focus on expands. Always. The glamour and excitement of pageants comes at a cost. I am so extremely grateful for the support from my sponsors. I never imagined I would achieve not only the financial support, but also the moral support from my Zarathushti community, who cheered me on all the way to the stage. Thank you. Thank you very much. I realized very quickly that the more gratitude I expressed for my support, the more I received.



journey, I would like to share with you a few. These particular five lessons will give you a vision of my journey, the people who were part of it, and the person I have grown into. So in no particular order, here we go...

1. Green Flags and Cow Bells. As I looked out from the stage at Miss Illinois USA I saw my wonderful

2. The Beauty Queen Preparation. I have a new found appreciation for beauty queens. Preparing for Miss Illinois USA meant double work outs at the gym, planning and cooking my own meals (thank you, MOM!), juggling a full time job, and trying to enjoy ever moment of this extraordinary adventure. With the glamour and excitement,



comes pressure and responsibility. These moments were my lesson in courage. I had always wanted to be part of the pageant experience but didn't have the courage till now to stand up in front of an audience as the best me I could possibly be. I found that facing seemingly intimidating situations creates a newfound courage and appreciation of the human spirit.

3. Pageant weekend taught me to be myself.

Pageants are not about having the best dress, the fittest body, or the brightest smile. I learned that pageants are about learning to be yourself and accepting yourself for the wonderful person you are. I was being judged on being the best possible Zenobia I could be. That meant being myself. There is nothing more beautiful than knowing and embracing the fact that your true self is the expression of beauty.

4. People. The people I have met in this journey have taught me a lesson in selfless love. The long phone calls, messages, letters, emails, and flowers are a reminder of how extremely blessed I am. I had support and help in every aspect of the pageant preparation process. A team was created out of selfless love to ensure success at Miss

Illinois USA. And, surely I did succeed in ways I couldn't have imagined.

5. The crowning moment. Seeing the crowning moment from the perspective of the stage has a completely different effect than seeing it from the audience. The rest of the 82 contestants and I dreamed of the same crowning moment. When I watched the crowning moment I felt an incredible sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. As I stood on that stage I felt the presence of everyone who had helped me in my journey. I felt their love, their support and extreme humility to be representing my Zarathushti community and myself. The Crowning Moment taught me that Miss Illinois USA was not about the crown but about the journey.

THIS IS EXPERIENCE WAS TRULY TRANSFORMATIONAL.

The journey began with my interest in the scholarship opportunities that lie with the Miss Universe Organization and ended with a clear new perspective of my life purpose. I have spent the majority of my youth searching for a deeper meaning and purpose for my life. And, at the end of the journey it became clear to me. Hours before the crowning moment, I sat alone outside my hotel room. I was contemplating my entire journey, its purpose and place in my life. One particular moment stood out to me. In preparation for the interview portion of the contest a question we were asked to prepare an answer for was: "What person would you most like to meet and why?" My answer: "Mother Theresa. She embodies the qualities of the person I strive to be: compassionate, courageous, and a strong conviction for helping others." This led me to dive deep into studying the life and experience of Mother Theresa. What I learned from this was that permanent glory does not come in winning titles, medals, awards, or crowns. It comes through serving others. Sure, it would be nice to have my moment of glory on stage, but it would be truly a soulful experience to dedicate my life in service. At that moment I realized my purpose was to lead a life of service: to help and uplift all those who crossed paths with me.

This journey was not just about me. It was about all those who travelled with me in the moment and in the experience. I am so incredibly humbled and grateful that you allowed me to be part of your journey. I will continue to wear the expression of your love and support as I go forward in my journey of success. My Zarathushti community has truly blessed me with an experience I will always cherish. It's an experience that made me more of who I am.

Please check out the "Miss Illinois USA Pageant" section on my website, www.ZenobiaRavji.com for more pictures of the event.





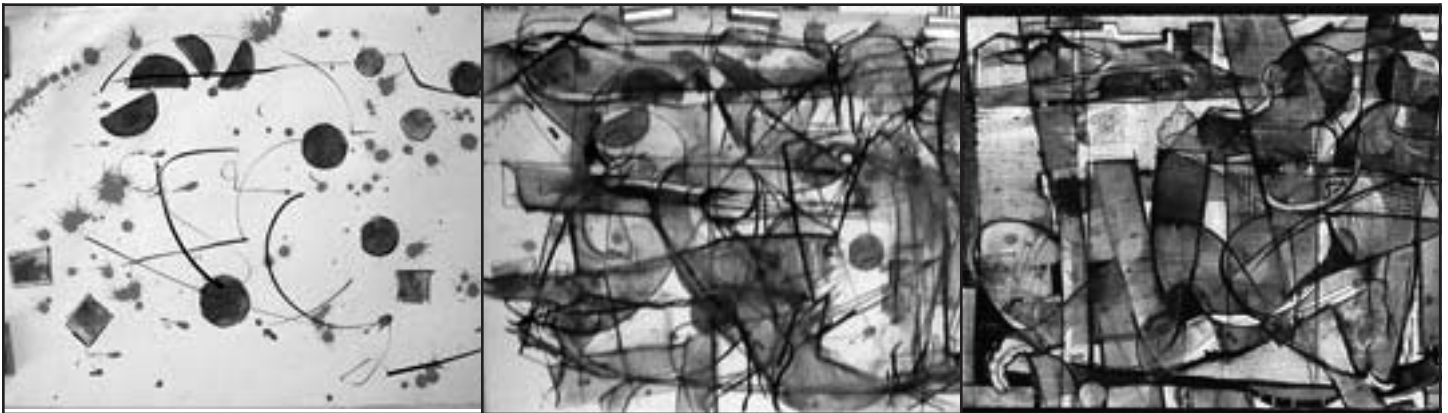
TRANSFORMED BY ART

DELNA DASTUR, Virginia, USA

EVOLUTION

My drawings and paintings change dramatically as I work on them. Below is an example of the great

effects by using tools like combs and templates over thick mediums and gels. The surface became rich with ridges and patterns.



transformation that takes place between the beginning and the ending of a piece.

My artistic journey has taken many twists and turns. Early in my career I chose to switch from oil painting, in which I did my graduate degree, to charcoal. The simplicity of charcoal, its capacity to range from gentle washes to strident, aggressive marks appealed to me tremendously. I explored the various types of charcoals available, from slender sticks which created fine, delicate lines, to really thick batons which I used very forcefully to create intense black marks. I incorporated brushes, shimmies and cardboard stumps into my arsenal of tools to manipulate the material thereby creating interesting textures. During this period of exploring the range of possibilities with charcoal, my subject matter tended to be more traditional, including still life to landscapes and figures.

After a period of time I felt the need to incorporate colour. This began slowly. Initially I poured and splattered coloured ink onto the paper over which I continued to work with charcoal. Soon thereafter, I started adding soft, coloured pastels. Before long these pastels shared equal space with the charcoals and the purely black and white drawings were infused with colour. Along with this transformation came the change of subject matter, and gradually the work became more and more abstract, yet it retained a touch of reality.

After working on paper exclusively for several years I decided to move to canvas, which is far less fragile than paper. A new period of experimentation began. The dry materials suitable for paper were exchanged for liquid, flowing acrylics. I explored various ways to create textural

Throughout my career I have always been willing to take risks, to move away from established and successful ways of working, to explore new ways to grow. After a period of working with fluid, glorious acrylics, I returned to my original passion for charcoal and pastels, now investigating how they would work on textured canvas. My use of acrylics persisted however, although they served a more subservient role. They were used as a printing medium for woodblocks and stamps providing a base over which I created my compositions in charcoal and pastels.

The investigation of new materials and methods continues. The current exploration is the introduction of transfers as an additional layer to my paintings. I learnt how to use a particular technique to transfer carefully chosen images, (like miniatures), from books onto the canvas. This has added yet another dimension to the work, adding to its complexity.

I intend to explore this new avenue until I am ready to push the boundaries further, to find yet other ways to challenge my creativity. I want my audience to be totally absorbed when viewing my multi-layered paintings. I want them to try to unravel the narrative hidden between the layers. Although my subject matter continues to be abstract, a closer look now reveals dancing figures concealed amidst cityscapes, and trysting lovers hiding behind palatial columns. Royal processions of horses and elephants are led by winged escorts and encroaching cities are bathed in a golden glow.

Little did I anticipate as a young mother how my life would be transformed by my art. I continued to work in my studio while raising my family, and endeavoured to exhibit



my drawings and paintings. As the work grew and improved, greater opportunities presented themselves and reputable galleries approached me. Recently I had a solo show at Gallery Art Motif in New Delhi and last year exhibited my newest work at Gallery Plan B in Washington, D.C. I was rewarded for my perseverance with a positive review in the Washington Post.

In addition to my passion for creating art I have discovered that I also thoroughly enjoy teaching it. I teach a class entitled, "Exploring Abstraction" at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and at the Art League in Alexandria, Virginia. More significantly, during my hiatus each winter in India, I volunteer to teach art to deaf children at the Central Society for the Education of the Deaf in Bombay and to street children through the charitable organization, El Shaddai, in Goa. There is nothing comparable to this experience, the utter fulfilment I experience in sharing my skills with these underprivileged children.

In conclusion I can say with complete conviction that art has certainly transformed my life. Fellow artists and students have expanded my friendships worldwide, and I look forward to the promise of exciting new experiences continuously.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The paintings used in this issue of the FEZANA JOURNAL are courtesy of Delna Dastur

Delna Dastur born in Mumbai, received her B.A. from the University of Mumbai and moved to the US and continued her education at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, majoring in Art History. After graduating she relocated to Virginia where she pursued her M.F.A. in oil painting at American University in Washington D.C. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group shows in many galleries in the States and India, and reviewed in several newspapers and magazines including The Washington Post, The Washington Times, Time Out Delhi, Span Magazine, (published by the American Center, New Delhi), Parsiana etc. She is a faculty member at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and The Art League, Alexandria, Virginia. When in India, she teaches art and language skills at The Central Society for the Education of the Deaf, Mumbai and at El Shaddai for street children, Goa. delker25@aol.com www.delnadastur.com



SILVER VOICES - I

Farishta Murzban Dinshaw interviewed community members who have lived in North America for more than 25 years and have seen the Zarathushti community take seed and flourish in their new homeland. In the first of a three-part series, seven Canadians talk about the changes they have witnessed and their vision for our future. Subsequent articles will feature stories of American Zarathushtis, and Generation 1.5 or those who immigrated to North America before or during their early teens.



BELLA TATA,
Vancouver British
Columbia

Coming to Canada: I came to Vancouver in 1981 as an independent immigrant. My sister already had a place when I came, so we stayed

together. There were about 700 Zarathushtis in Vancouver at that time. We had good friends from India who were already here, and they guided us.

Transitions: The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia was already established, and I helped from the start with the children's education program. In my view, our community here, comprising of Zarathushtis from Iran, India, Africa, Europe, are free-er thinkers than those in India. We have done navjotes/sedreh pushi for the children of interfaith marriages, and embraced non-Zarathushtis at our community events. We are a united community and proud of it.

Looking Forward: I have no idea what our community will look like in the coming years, but I hope that we will be united, understand the changes in our lives and in the times, and be proud to be part of a righteous, charitable minded and progressive community. I believe FEZANA is doing its best to keep the community united, but every individual is entitled to his/her own beliefs, and we should respect one another, no matter how different our views are. **



**MAREZBAN
CANTEENWALLA**
Calgary, Alberta

Coming to Canada: In 1971, I left Karachi to study at the University of Oklahoma, where I obtained my Masters degree in Structural Engineering. I moved to Toronto in 1976, but could not find work in my

profession. The "Go West" movement was big in those days so I moved to Calgary to work with what is now TransCanada Corporation. There were only four or five Parsi families in Calgary in those days. The following year, I married Bakhtawar who was from Pune, and her family knew someone in Calgary so we called them and that is how we started meeting them informally. When we had a baby, they saw us as "young people" and took us under their wing, offering us advice and help. We have grown since those days but we are still a very small community; our head count is likely less than a hundred people although we have about thirty or so families.

Transitions: We do have a formal association - the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta. It was incorporated in 1980 and of the founding members only Firdosh Mehta and I still reside in Calgary. Our Association is unique in that it has two chapters representing Zoroastrians of Calgary and Edmonton, and, although there is one President, each of the chapters has its own Vice-President and other committee members. It is a three hour drive between Calgary and Edmonton so we alternate our Annual General Body meetings (AGM) in each city or hold one midway. Calgary hosted FEZANA's 6th AGM in July 1993, and the President at that time, Rohinton Rivetna, called us a "small community with a BIG heart". There has been a change in our demographics since we first started and that reflects the change in interest; there are many seniors in Edmonton so they are not as active as before, but we keep in touch. We are observing an increase in attendance of Iranian Zarathushtis. This may be because one of the Social Secretaries and one of the committee members is Iranian. I believe that in Vancouver things have to be translated into Farsi for the benefit of the older Iranians, but we have a younger population so language is not an issue.

In the past thirty-six years, many things have changed, but others have remained unchanged. Our Calgary membership is quite liberal and accepting, but it is unfortunate that as a community on the whole we are still struggling with the same challenges that we faced years ago. In Karachi, when I was growing up, we attended lectures at Katrak Hall and we discussed intermarriages,

and these same issues are still being debated at conferences. Not to say that conferences are not needed. My son, Zubin, met his wife, Ushtavaity, at a conference. I think we need them to hold our community together, and provide opportunities for people to mix and form connections, as well as to learn.

Looking Forward: We should encourage and support young people to become priests and lay priests. I am old school. I feel we need our priests to give us a sense of religious identity. In the absence of a formal place of worship in small communities, having a priest come to the

house adds a sense of sacredness to the proceedings. **



DR. SAM COOPER
Joliette, Quebec

Coming to Canada: In 1959, I left Karachi for West Germany to do my Masters, and then my PhD. In 1967, I left on a ship from Southington, UK, for Montreal, but the first port we touched was Quebec City. I arrived here during Expo 67 [the International and Universal Exposition]. I worked at the University of Montreal for two years before moving to Joliette, which is a small town 40 miles away. I was single at that time and busy with my work so I did not even know about any other Zarathushtis in Quebec. It was only when an old neighbor from Karachi visited me about ten years later that I found out about the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ), which had been founded the same year I came to Canada.

Transitions: Mixed marriages are more acceptable now. This was not the case when I got married. Now at functions, you see many young couples with a non-Zarathushti spouse and they are welcome. Technology has also made it easier to keep in touch with the community. In early days, there was no email, and no Internet system. There weren't even telephone cards. Canada is also much more multicultural than before, people are becoming aware of different cultures. When I worked in Montreal, one colleague asked me, "Is it not originally from Iran?" but did not know more than that. Now, I am auditing a course about Manichaeism at the Concordia University and next winter there will be a course on Avesta.

Looking Forward: What I see in the FEZANA Journal is how much progress young Zarathushtis have made in North America, but geography is a big problem here. Canada and the USA are vast countries, so it is important



to have regular conferences and religious classes. Parents have to make an effort and certain sacrifices. Our scholars should also write books so that Canadians and Americans get to know about our religion, as do our youth. **



ARMAITY MEHTA
Mississauga, Ontario

Coming to Canada: I was born in Surat, but was brought up and had my schooling in Bombay. I came to Canada in 1965 with my 23-month old daughter. As my husband had come before me, I had no problem settling in.

Transitions: In Bombay, we were totally involved in Parsi-style living and lived in Shahpur Baug. I try to keep that lifestyle in the house. I still light a diva every day. There used to be a problem getting kakras for the diva so I used to bring them from Mumbai on my visits home. I brought some four or five chawk dabbas and would use them on the verandah of our house, but I cannot do that anymore because I now live in an apartment. You have to adapt to where you live. Even the egg for the achoo michoo, I put it in a plastic bag before breaking it near the door.

When we first came, over forty-five years ago, there must have been about 200 Parsis in Toronto. We knew a few families from Bombay, a couple from Africa. On Navroze and other occasions, we used to have parties at one another's houses. We are more than ten times the number now and they are from all over the world. When the darbemeher was opened [in 1975] I had the pleasure of meeting Arbab Guiv who had donated money for the building. Now, there is second darbemeher in Oakville.

Looking Forward: I do not know if more Parsis will be coming from India in the future. They are making so much money there nowadays; they have servants and gadgets so I don't think they will give up all those luxuries to start all over again. Young people will come for studies and they might stay, but I think they will mostly go to the States. Building a seniors' home [in Toronto] would be an interesting idea; they might like to be together because of the language and the food. I think to maintain our community in the future, we need a constant reminder that because we are away from home we should still live as Parsis in our house and follow our customs, language, and be a humble Zarathushti extending help to others. **



**GOLCHEHR
DEHMOUBED**
Richmond Hill, Ontario

Coming to Canada: I was born in Yazd, and I moved to Toronto with my family in 1985 after living for 10 months in Germany.

Transitions: The darbemeher [Mehraban Guiv Darbemeher] already existed when we came. After a few years I became active with Kanoun [The Iranian Zoroastrian Cultural Kanoun]. I was on the committee and organized all kinds of activities and did fundraising for the darbemeher. There were very few Iranian Zarathushtis here at that time, mainly those who had come after the Revolution. There are many more families now. In those days, there were more young people coming to the darbemeher. My children were very involved as well. I don't know why, but there are less young people coming to functions now.

There were not too many Iranian celebrations at that time, but now we celebrate many of them – Asho Zarathushtra's birthday, Jashan e Sadeh, Mehrgan, Tirgan, NoRooz. Iranian Muslims celebrate some of them so there are now shown on TV, and some of them are also celebrated in schools.

Looking Forward: We need a bigger, better darbemeher for all of us. I would really like to see that. In Toronto, we also need more Iranian mobeds. The women mobediar program in Iran is a good thing, and we should have them in North America too. I think we should have more conferences and get together functions for the young generation so that they can meet and get to know each other. That will encourage them to marry Zarathushtis. **



JAMSHID JAM
Thornhill, Ontario

Coming to Canada: I was born in Yazd in 1932. At the age of 18, I left Iran and settled in Karachi, Pakistan, where we opened Paris Bakery and Café New York. I lived there for fifteen years before returning to Iran after the Pakistan-India war in 1965. I first came to Canada in 1976, thanks to



my brother, Khodayar, who was already living in Canada. My family immigrated here for good on 27 October 1979.

Transitions: The world has changed in the last 25 years, not only the Zarathushti community. I remember that when I first joined ZSO [Zoroastrian Society of Ontario] their membership fee was \$10. I may even have the receipt somewhere. Now, it is \$100. The darbemeher [Mehraban Guiv Darbemeher] was shiny and new at that time. Now, it is in such need of repair that it is a challenge to get new members. In 1976, when I first came here, there were maybe 10 Iranian Zoroastrian families; one of the first to immigrate here was Bahram Parsi. Large numbers started coming during the Gulf War in 1990. I volunteered on the ZSO committee that helped in the immigration and resettlement of Iranian refugees who came here via Pakistan and India. I worked for my community as a service, so I am blessed that I was recognized several times for my volunteer work not only by the Zarathushti community, but also by the Ontario government.

Looking Forward: I wish for greater cooperation among the Zarathushti community in Ontario, I wish that our Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr in Toronto would be renovated and once again a vibrant part of our community, and I wish for all Zarathushtis to be united under one universal calendar, the original Fasli calendar, which is based on the seasons and the earth's rotation. **



ETI VAJIFDAR
Toronto, Ontario

Coming to Canada: I am a Zarathushti by choice, not by birth. I was born in Tehran in a Muslim family. My father was religious, but he did not impose it on us so I grew up with secular ideals. I met my husband, Khushroo, while he was working in Tehran, and later we got married in Jordan as he was working there at that time. We lived in Dubai for six years before coming to

Canada in 1987.

Transitions: What impressed me about the Parsi community when I came here was they were selfless in the work they did for the community. We had the darbemeher by then, but they didn't cater the food as they do now. At gahambars and functions, volunteers would cook and serve everyone. The Zarathushti Iranian community was different in those days. This was late 1980s, early 1990s. The Parsi community had already

been in Toronto for twenty years or more, but the Iranians were just starting to come here. The Parsis were an established community and they had the advantage of language [English]. The Iranians were still finding jobs, settling in so working for the community was not a priority. The Parsis, from what I have noticed, are generally more religious than the Iranians. But I must say that I have never met resistance from them because my involvement with the community has established me as a person who cares for the community. Since we came in 1987, the number of Parsis may have gone up by about twenty per cent. The Iranis that were here had some connection with India or Pakistan, but the Zarathushti community that came from Iran has ballooned. From my observation, the two communities have not unified as there are differences in culture, food, language, and even in the practice of religion. Iranian Zarathushtis maintain that the Parsis have accepted many Indian rituals.

Looking Forward: My fear for our community is that within the next twenty five years it will be gone. There are some non-Zarathushti Iranians who are out of Iran now who want to discover the religion of their ancestors, but they are not welcome. When they [birthright Zarathushtis] talk about maintaining the religion, I wonder what will you maintain if there is no one left to maintain it? Zoroastrianism is a beautiful religion; it has to be preserved. Not the ceremonies, but the religion. If you do not preserve the true message, you have lost the whole notion of the religion. **

Farishta Murzban Dinshaw is a new Canadian.

She works with a non-profit community agency to raise awareness about problem gambling and family violence amongst ethno cultural communities in Southern Ontario. She also teaches in the MA in Immigration and Settlement Studies program at Ryerson University, Toronto, and is interested in issues related to South Asian Diaspora identity.





NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

“PASSAGE OF TIME AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ZARATHUSTRAIN TRADITION”

NAMC SEMINAR ON FEBRUARY 25, 2012 IN HOUSTON, TX.

Did you know that Zarathustrian legend credits the origin of the human race to the Peshdadian dynasty? Are you aware that Greek historians claim Zarathustra composed more than two million words? While the common belief is that the Achaemenian dynasty practiced the Zarathustrian religion, do you know that the prophet's



name does not occur in any of the inscriptions or artifacts from that era?

The Zarathushti community of Houston, TX, got a taste of a few of these vastly rich historical nuggets in lecture presentations by four eminent mobeds of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC). The library committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) promoted a lecture series “Passage of Time and its influence on Zarathustrian Tradition” on Feb. 25, 2012 in Houston, TX.

The program started with Ervad Soli Dastur enlightening the attendees on the “Zoroastrian

Connection in Peshdadian and Kayanian Dynasties.” Ervad Cawas Desai followed with a very well researched talk titled “Evolution and Practice of Zoroastrianism during the Achaemenian and Parthian Dynasties.” Ervad Jehan Bagli brought to light the practice of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian dynasty in his talk “Zoroastrian Faith: Revival in Sasanian era.” The final speaker, Ervad Kobad Zarolia, president of the NAMC, spoke on the stark realities of the “Future of Zoroastrianism in North America.” *(Photo left the Library committee with speakers Ervads Soli Dastur, Kobad Zarolia, Cawas Desai and Jehan Bagli)*

The program concluded with a Q&A session with an animated audience, energized with a wealth of information, asking insightful questions of the learned mobeds.

The program was well attended and it was refreshing to see even the community's youth in the audience.

The ZAH, with the support of the association's library committee, is one of the few organizations in North America that periodically invites experts and scholars in the field of Zoroastrian studies to further the knowledge of the community in not only the religious aspects of the faith, but also in Zoroastrian history and culture. The ZAH is also home of FIRES (Fezana Information, Research, & Education Systems.)

Report by Meheryar Rivetna, Houston



Air One Tech
Heating & Air Conditioning Company.
Specialty: Air Conditioning, Heating,
Refrigeration, Sales, Service.
Website: www.aironetech.com
Phone: (703) 966-2257
Fax: (703) 337-6511
email: dj@aironetech.com
info@aironetech.com



NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

Ashavan Mobed Shahbahram Shahzadi.

Died February 23, 2012

ASHAUNAM VANGUHISH SOORAO SPENTAO FRAVASHAYO YAZAMAIDE.

**WE REVERE AND REMEMBER THE NOBLE, COURAGEOUS AND PROSPERITY PROMOTING
SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.**

They say nobody is indispensable and we all face the end of life some day.

But there are those that leave a foot print on the sands of time.

A life that touches with ASHA, all other lives that it meets.

And one such pious soul was Ashavan Mobed Shahbahram Shahzadi.

The High Priest of California Zoroastrian Centre (CZC)

The Zarathushtis, not only of CZC but all over the world
will experience a loss that is irreplaceable.

For he was a kind and gentle soul

that was a friend to all and with malice to none.

We pray that his soul resides in the House of Song and Eternal Light

In the domain of Mazda Ahura.

May his legacy live on for all times to come.

With deep sympathy and heartfelt condolences to his beloved family.



In fond remembrance,

Firdosh Mehta

Calgary, Canada.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FIRST YEAR NECESSARY DEATH CEREMONIES OF PARSI ZARATHUSHTIS.

The performance of after death rituals is an integral part of the Zoroastrian religion as they are meant for the comfort of the soul of the deceased and make it feel loved and remembered. It is the duty and obligation of the near and dear ones of the deceased to have the ceremonies of their loved ones performed at least for the first year.

"The Association for the Performance of the First Year Necessary Death Ceremonies of Parsi Zoroastrians" is a registered Society formed in 1942 for performing necessary death ceremonies for those people

who did not have anybody who would have them performed. The Association believed in avoiding expenditure on ostentatious performances of ceremonies.

The Association is especially meant for those people who are either unmarried, or those who are married and do not have children, or those who have children who are staying abroad and unable to have the rituals performed. In such cases these people are worried whether their ceremonies could be performed. The Trust takes the responsibility to have the rituals performed of the people



NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

who register for the same, once the Trust is notified of the demise of the person. There is a need for awareness about these schemes in our community.

The Association was actively patronized till the 1990s but since then it has not taken any new members. It was decided to revive the Association as a need for performance of the first year death ceremonies was felt by our community members who did not have immediate family members to have them performed. Since there was an existing scheme in place, the trustees were requested to revive it.

Some new Trustees have been incorporated in the Association after its revival. They are from religious and ritual field, as well as from the fields of accounts, law and banking. Among the present Board of Trustees are Er. Dr. Ramiyar P. Karanjia, Er. Aspandiyar Dadachanji, Er. Tehmasp Mogul, Mr. Aspi Engineer, Mr. Limji Nanabhoy, Mrs. Shernaz Mehta and Mr. Maneck Kalyaniwala. Er. Pakzad Katpitia, Panthaki of Mithaiwala Agyari looks after the day to day workings of the scheme. The Annual general meeting of the Association was held on July 9, 2011 where a number of Zarthushtis attended.

One has to become a member of the society by paying a nominal membership fee of Rs.51/-. If one desires to have the after death ceremonies done, a form has to be collected from the Trust's office at Mithaiwala Agiary Compound, Jehangir Daji Street Grant Road (West) and fill it in with necessary details. Information and forms can be had from the trust administrator Ervad Pakzad Katpitia on the email pakzadkatpitia@gmail.com.

Two options are available. In the first option of Rs. 25,000/- rituals performed will be Sachkar, Bhoi aagal bhantar, Baj of Sarosh, Geh Saarnu, Sarosh na karda, afternoon uthamnu, Chaharum ni baaj, shiav with utensils, Night uthamnu, Daham Yazad, Afargan Farokshi, 3 satum, Afargan, Baaj, Farokshi, and 1 satum from 5th to 9th day (ABFS), Afargan Baaj Farokshi 1 satum for Dasma divas (ABFS), (10th day) Afargan, Baaj, Farokshi and 3 satum for Siroja with shiav, Afargan Baaj Farokshi 3 satum for Masiso (first month anniversary) Afargan, Baaj, Farokshi and 1 satum every month, Chhamsi as per Masisa with shiav, Varsi as per Masisa with shiav, Farokshi on Mah Farvardin Roj Farvardin, 10 days Muktd in Anjuman Afargan, Baaj, Farokshi, Kalashiyo will be provided by the Association.

In the second option of Rs. 40,000/-, the extra rituals of Afargan, Baj, Farokshi and 3 satum will be done on Parab and Farvardin Roj every month and a Vendidad anytime during the year, as soon as possible after death. Every two to three years these charges will be suitably modified keeping in mind the prevailing rates for new members. However no extra money will be charged from members who have joined the scheme prior and have already paid.

The Trustees may make minor changes in the rituals mentioned above depending on the practices of the different Agyaris.

For performance of after death rituals, the Association will follow the existing standards and traditions laid down by the High Priests of the Community. If a person expires at any place, whether in Mumbai or outside, where Dokhma/s are available, then the after death rituals for the first four days will be performed only if the body is consigned to the Dokhmas. If a person dies in a place where there is no dokhma, and is cremated/buried, the first four day death rituals will be performed by the Association. There is no restriction against that. The restriction for not performing first 4 day rituals is only when a body is cremated/buried where dokhmas are available.

Presently the performance of rituals from the Association is restricted to Mumbai. In future if a need is felt, other places will be considered. In Mumbai, the ceremonies will be performed at a few select fire temples where the Panthakis and Trustees have agreed to be part of the scheme and are aware of the purpose of the scheme and realize that having rituals performed for the departed ones is a boon and blessing for the self. The Administrator will ensure that there is no laxity in the performance of rituals.

ERVAD Dr RAMIYAR KARANJIA

Principal, Dadar Athornan Madressa



NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL

ERVAD BOMANSHA KOTWAL FELICITATED FOR HIS 45 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICES TO THE ONTARIO COMMUNITY.

On December 11, 2011, the Ontario community said "Thank you" to Ervad Bomansha Kotwal for his 45



years of service to the community. There were speakers who reminisced, remembered and recounted the various contributions Bomansha had made over the years.

Bomansha and his wife Silloo (photo left) organized the first children's religious classes in 1976 in

the party room of their apartment building. And 35 years later these classes continue to be the backbone of the community service to the children. He has also prepared countless children for their Navjotes, in his own home on Mississauga and at the Dabe Mehr. He initiated the custom of performance of Muktads in 1982, another incentive for the community to come together.

He has been unwaveringly focused on the preservation of prayers and traditional rituals of the religion which has brought him in conflict with his peers and the laity but he refuses to bend or give into pressure. He is the heart and soul of the religious activities of the Zarathushti community of Ontario.

Over the years Bomansha has raised two hundred and fifty thousand rupees for the renovation

of the Navsari Atashbehram, and sends food parcels, sadras and kuistis for the poor in Navsari, Songad and Vyara. The money so collected is through collection at Ghambars and Muktads. He has not forgotten his roots in Navsari.

Bomansha's integrity, devotion and dedication will be long remembered, for the torch that he has lit and kept alive for so long will be carried forward by the younger mobeds of the community,

Congratulatio Bomansha

Submitted by Putli Mirza, ZSO

TWO NEW ERVADS FOR SINGAPORE



Ervad Jehan Zubin Dastoor (age 11 years) and Ervad Zane Zubin Dastoor (age 9 years) sons of Jasmine and Ervad Zubin Phiroz Dastoor, of Singapore (originally of Montreal and Washington, DC) were initiated into the Zarathushti priesthood at the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary on Hughes Road on Roj Asfandarmad, Mah Tir, YZ 1381, December 21, 2011. Ervad Jehan dedicated his navar ceremony in memory of his maternal grand-father, late Behdin Fali Jehangirji Cooper and Ervad Zane in memory of his paternal great grand-mother late Austi Shrinibai Nariman Dastoor

Ervad Zubin, son of Dolly and Phiroz Nariman Dastoor, of Canada completed his murtab ceremony on Roj Bahman, Mah Tir 1381 YZ, December 19, 2011, also at Vatcha Gandhi Agiary in memory of his maternal grandfather late Behdin Manchershah Maneckji Bharucha.

(Photo from left Ervads Zane, Zubin and Jehan)

In The News

Zoroastrian representation at Lambeth Palace in Celebration for Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh to mark The Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty's Accession

Dr Rashna Writer



From left Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, Malcolm Deboo, President of ZTFE, Ervad Rustam K Bhedwar and Paurushasp B. Jilla, Vice-President, ZTFE looking at the 19th C illustrated manuscript of the Shahnameh

2012 marks a momentous event in the United Kingdom when the nation celebrates the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne. Her Majesty's first public engagement to mark the Diamond Jubilee was her attendance, with His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at Lambeth Palace, the London home of the Archbishop of

Canterbury to meet and address the leaders of Britain's main religions. Along with the several Christian denominations represented, were members of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths. Each group displayed a 'religious treasure' and elaborated on its particular significance to the royal party.

The Zarathushtis were represented by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe led by Malcolm M Deboo, President; Paurushasp B Jila, Vice President; Ervad Rustam K Bhedwar, Trustee; and Dr Rashna Writer, Senior Teaching Fellow, Department of Religions at SOAS. The selected 'religious treasure' was a 19th century illustrated manuscript of the Shahnameh. The royal party seemed genuinely interested when Mr Deboo and Dr Writer explained to them the cultural and totemic significance of The Book of Kings in the Iranian world and the fact that in the late 19th century, a delegation of Parsi Zoroastrians led by then President of the ZTFE Dr Dadabhai Naoroji had petitioned the then Shah of Persia Nassuridin Shah Qajar, while he was a guest of Queen Victoria, to look kindly on his Zarathushti subjects.

Photo credit Andrew Dunsmore



Homi Battiwalla has been appointed executive vice-president Colas, Hydration & Mango Based Beverages. Battiwalla has been with PepsiCo for over 15 years joining the company as a management trainee in

HOMI BATTIWALLA, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT OF COLAS, HYDRATION AND MANGO-BASED BEVERAGES (PEPSICO), INDIA

1997. Over the years, he has worked across various beverage brands including Mountain Dew, 7UP, Tropicana, Aquafina and Mango Slice. He holds a BE degree in electrical and electronics engineering from Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra and an MBA in Marketing from Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi. He will be taking charge of the marketing role for the

Cola category (Pepsi, Diet Pepsi) along with his current responsibilities.

Speaking on the appointment, Deepika Warrior, executive director - marketing, PepsiCo Beverages, India said, "Homi's rich experience and in-depth understanding of the beverage industry, positions him well to lead the marketing responsibilities for brand Pepsi as we look forward to continue the brand's

winning performance. Homi has been singularly responsible for some iconic brand building & marketing on brand Slice and consistently positioning Tropicana in the breakfast nutrition space. He has proven his leadership skills in successfully growing the juice & juice based drinks category for PepsiCo."

Source Parsi Khabar

In The News

THE BOMANJEE DINSHAW PETIT PARSEE GENERAL HOSPITAL A HERITAGE JEWEL ENTERS ITS CENTENARY YEAR



The annals of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital represent a facet of a bygone era in the history of the Parsis as a story of compassion and charity care. More than a century ago, the prestigious “Cumballa Hill Family Hotel” Property was donated by an eminent philanthropist and industrialist Seth Bomanji Dinshaw Petit, who envisioned a munificent hospital that would serve the needs of the Parsi Community in Mumbai. Thus began the legendary crusade of his son Jehangir Bomanji Petit of fulfilling his father's dream of a Parsi Community Hospital, wherein, a Trust Deed dated 12th April 1906 was executed. Taking the lead, young Jehangir went about working passionately for the Hospital Project and on 27th March 1912, the prestigious Hospital was inaugurated by Sir George Clarke, the then Governor of Bombay.

After Jehangir's glorious contribution, his younger brother, Dhunjibhoy and his son Maneckji carried on with his vision with similar enthusiasm. Maneckji's cousin Dinshawji Hormusji Petit, a solicitor by profession, took over after his demise and today his son, Mr. Homa D. Petit, also a solicitor, is the President of the Hospital and is poised along with the Managing Committee to take the benevolent Institution into the future. He and the Hospital's Managing Committee meet regularly to review the Hospital's day to day affairs ensuring a smooth and orderly functioning of the Institute. Under his guidance the Hospital has undergone a sea change, wherein, all the three wings of the 'L' Shaped Hospital i.e. Main Wing, 'A' Wing and the 'Jokhi' Wing, each with ground floor plus two levels

HOMA D. PETIT, President

have been renovated/updated during the last two decades with dedicated efforts and perseverance of Mrs. Aban H. Petit, Vice President.

RESTORATION & REFURBISHMENT

The first phase of updating the “Jokhi” Wing took place between 1991 and 1995 through the munificent donation of Rs.45 million by Mr. Keki F. Jokhi – Shapoor F. Jokhi Charitable Foundation. This wing houses the State-of-the-art Intensive Care Unit on the 2nd floor with 16 beds with latest life support equipments as well as central monitoring system. On the first floor there are 4 ultra modern Operation Theatres while on the ground floor there are Departments of Radiology, Ultrasonography, Electrocardiography and Pathology, each equipped with the latest equipment in the respective field.

The “A” wing was renovated in 1999 at a cost of Rs.80 million through generous donations from Zarhosti Brothers of Canada, Mr. Keki F. Jokhi – Shapoor F. Jokhi Charitable Foundation. the Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao. It won the prestigious *Heritage Award* for the year 2002. It houses 61 single occupancy rooms with attached toilets and baths. A number of the rooms are air-conditioned with TV sets and telephone facilities with vast corridors in front and overlooking a lush green garden, a

In The News

rare sight in South Mumbai. A modern Labour and Delivery Room on the first floor handles maternity cases.

The renovation of the Main Wing commenced in 2004 and was inaugurated in March 2009 at an estimated cost of Rs.195 millions. The Ground Floor named the *Nusly Petit Wing* [Sir Dinshaw Petit, 4th Baronet] has been renovated from the donation received from the Trustees of F. D. Petit Sanatorium Trust and accommodates the Reception Area, Medical Stores, Pharmacy, Administrative Office, Physiotherapy Department, Casualty and Offices of Senior Executives and a State-of-the-Art Conference Room.

The First Floor of the Main Wing is named the *Hong Kong Wing* as it was renovated from the generous donations from the Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity funds of HongKong Canton & Macao and donations from the Estate of Late Feroze Sorab Wadia. It houses Free Female and Male as well as Geriatric Patients.

The Second Floor named the '*Maneck Italia Wing*' accommodates subsidized patients. It was renovated from the munificent donation made by Mr. Keki F. Jokhi – Shapoor F. Jokhi Charitable Foundation, and donations from the Estate of Late Mr. Jamshed P Munsiff

The prestigious *Pallonji Shapoorji Home for Senior Citizens* of the B D Petit Parsee General Hospital was inaugurated in 2007 at an approximate cost of Rs.56.75 million. It accommodates senior citizens 65+ in homely rooms with excellent facilities for all sections of our Community.

As a part of renovation and up gradation, the entire support infrastructure and ancillaries of the hospital were upgraded to meet the modernized hospital requirements, these comprise of 100% Back-up Power Supply, High Tension Sub-station to lower electricity cost, solar water heating system, a revamped water supply network with rainwater harvesting, a fire hydrant system, structured underground cabling with completely revamped IT Hardware as well as state-of-the-art Hospital management Information System (HMIS).

In addition to the 'L' shaped 3 wings, the Hospital site is also home to a Nursing School, Laundry, Nutrition Department, Out Patient Department, doctors' quarters and nurses hostel. Plans are afoot for an ultra modern OPD building.

The hospital of course is more than its building – the beautiful gardens in front provides a happy escape from the noise and pollution of Mumbai. The gigantic beauty of the awe inspiring, over a 100 years old Peepal tree stands like a silent sentinel in this garden of paradise along with other trees

of Mango, Jack fruit, Almond and Ashoka.

Bougainvilleas, mozzondos and hibiscus add vibrant colour with a statue of a lady in the centre, holding aloft a basket filled with fresh flowers. And at the prominent corner of the driveway that encircles the garden, stands the marble statue of the great philanthropist and founder of the Hospital, Bomanji Dinshaw Petit.

The Hospital Coat of Arms "We Serve" on its wrought iron gates sums up the motto of the hospital committee members and the staff. The grand entrance to the Main Wing with its distinctive Mangalore tile roof has a large white marble vase filled with red hibiscus from its own garden, in front of a marble bust of the founder. A life size painting of Bomanji above a carved console table greets the visitors. The imposing old stone staircase with bronze busts of Jehangir Petit & Maneckji Petit and beautiful lights lend the Hospital an understated elegance. As you walk in further, a timeless calm prevails with spacious, long and airy corridors. There is no congestion, no sense of claustrophobia no antiseptic smell to make the



In The News



institute conducive to healing and recuperation. The environments at the hospital is courteous yet disciplined. The air is redolent with chuckles and smiles as the senior doctors take their morning rounds walking the long corridors of the Hospital with their group of junior briefing them on their respective patient cases.

Of the 222 beds, in the hospital, 94 are for free female and male including geriatric patients, 25 are subsidized beds for poor patients and 16 well equipped ICU beds for all categories of patients. In addition there are 61 'A' category single room beds with attached bathroom, some of which are air conditioned with TV and telephone overlooking the lovely garden, ideal for soothing the patients' body and mind. There are 11 'B' category beds, 5 pediatric beds and 12 beds for staff members. There are four well equipped and State-of-the-Art Operation theatres and one Maternity Operation Theatre to handle maternity cases. The total number of occupied bed days during 2010-11 was 57,622 with an occupancy rate of 71.1%. A total of 3147 in-patients were treated

during the year. 54.8% of the occupied bed days were utilized for free and subsidized patients; with women & children accounting for 52.75%.

SUPPORT SERVICES

An elaborate huge kitchen with 3 dieticians, 12 cooks and 20 serving staff with their fast moving food trolleys bring nourishing and tasty multi-cuisine diets to the patients. The Hospital has a large number of well known honorary Physicians, General Surgeons, Neurologists, Orthopaedics and Cardio Vascular Surgeons, Gynaecologists, Nephrologists, Urologist and Ophthalmic Surgeons, etc. They are supported by 30 resident doctors including ICU Internists / Registrars, 130 Nursing Staff, 250 ward boys and women besides administrative and management staff led by competent CEO, Maj. Gen. (Retd) M. L. Malik with long years of experience to his credit.

In 2010-11 from a total expenditure of Rs.172.61 million the hospital spent Rs.94.59 million on charity cases. The cost of free medicines to the free / poor

inpatients as well as OPD patients was approximately Rs.10.72 million. In addition the Hospital provided free and subsidized diagnostic services to the free and poor in-patients as well as OPD patients. The Hospital has tie-up with other hospitals for specialised investigation facilities not available in our hospital such as CT Scan, MRI, Dialysis, Cancer detection. This is provided free to the poor and free patients.

NORTH AMERICAN CHARITABLE DONORS

(i) Zarathushtis of USA and Canada have donated nearly USD 437,742 during the last decade. The hospital management is indeed grateful and deeply appreciative of the efforts undertaken by Dr. Yasmin and Jamshed Ghadiali, of New York who year after year have taken personal interest at their own expense and time to garner an annual fund raising drive for this historic Parsi institution.

(ii) Zarthosti Anjuman of North California, under the active guidance and participation of Dr. Homai Kasad and her family and friends, who also at the cost of their personal time and expense have collected and donated nearly USD 250,000 during the last decade.

The Management expresses their sincere thanks and gratitude for the zeal and labour of love undertaken by them for the cause of this iconic Zarathushti Institute which serves and cares for the under privileged members of the Parsi Zarathushti Community.

The hospital continues to maintain an "Indigent Patient Fund" (IPF) for free/subsidized treatment

In The News

to the Indigent and Weaker Section patients in accordance with the Hon'ble Bombay High Court Order dated 17th August 2006. During the year the hospital spent Rs.127.95 lacs from IPF for providing Healthcare Services. In addition the hospital also maintains a "Poor Patient Subsidy Fund (PPSF)" to provide free/subsidized Healthcare Services to those poor community members whose income limit exceeds the limits specified in the High Court Orders but are in a state of financial distress. Rs.316.54 lacs was spent from PPSF for providing Healthcare Services to poor in patients and OPD patients. Thus not only do we have beds for indigent and weaker section patients far in excess of the percentages specified by the Court but our definition of poor patients is much wider and the volume of Charity Care provided by our hospital far exceeds the directions issued by the Bombay High Court.

The Hospital Management finds it extremely difficult to maintain the present level of Charity Care for free and subsidized patients with a progressively increasing operational deficit over the last five years. Hence there is a need to take an objective hard look at the

economics of running our hospital so as to initiate appropriate measures to enhance the revenue / earnings of the hospital by exploiting the unutilized assets of the hospital for its sustenance.

In view of the hospital economic status at this juncture of reaching the milestone of centenary, it is imperative that all community members, institutions and charitable trusts, large hearted donors, medical fraternity and well wishers contribute munificently to the hospital and give serious thought for ensuring the survival and growth of this vital historic Institute, to meet the critical needs and aspirations of all our Community Members.

Winston Churchill words are so apt when he said "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

This year the hospital celebrates the 100th year of its everlasting spirit of compassion, charity & care. May Ahura Mazda guide the management to continue to serve our Zarathushtis with the same zeal & dedication, with generous support from kind and thoughtful donors.



Mr. Homa D. Petit is the President of The B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, Director of The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Ltd., Trustee of the J.B.Petit High School for Girls and on the Managing Committee of the J.N.Petit Institute and N.M. Petit Charities, as well as other charities and institutes. Mr Petit is a solicitor, a partner of Messrs Gagrut and Co and an Advocate of the Supreme Court of India. At present he is a senior partner of "Vigil Juris" a firm he started in 2004. His name is on the Roll of Solicitors of the Supreme Court of England and Wales.

DR ESFANDIAR EKHTIARI REELECTED FOR A SECOND TERM IN THE IRAN PARLIAMENT

Following a breathtaking one-week campaign for Iran's Parliamentary election, Iranian Zarathushtis re-elected Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiari on Friday March 2nd for a second term in the Iran parliament with 4959 votes out of a total of 6660, equal to a rough 75 percentage.

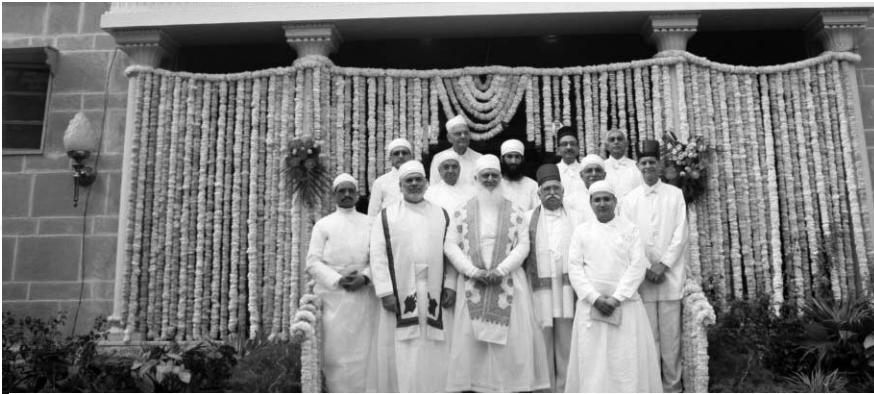
The other two candidates were Koorush Azargoshaasbi (1177 votes) and Dr. Farshid Akhtari (466 votes).

This was the 9th parliamentary election since the victory of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The parliament is the national legislative body in Iran, and currently has 290 members, one of whom represents Iranian Zoroastrians. Each member is popularly elected for a four-year term.

Special report, Ramin Bamasi, Asst to Dr Ekhtiari, Iran

In The News

DAR- E- MEHR OF THE DELHI PARSI ANJUMAN CELEBRATES FIFTY GLORIOUS YEARS, (1961- 2011)



(1st row) from left Ervad Cawas Bagli, Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, Vada Dasturji Firoze Kotwal, Dadi Mistry, Ervad Rohintan Sidhwa, 2nd row) from left Ervads Sam Laskari, Jamshed Sidhwa, Yezad Kapadia, Ervad Rukshad Panthaki, Faroukh Rustomji, Ervad Nausherwan Dastur, Homi Gandhi, Homi Dhalla.

Preparations for the celebration of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman's (DPA) Dar-E-Meher completing its 50 years began months prior to the event with great enthusiasm. The benign presence and blessings of the Holy Fire, the "Padshah Sahib", housed in the Dar-E-Meher, has for the Delhi Zarathushtis acted as the focal centre around which all the activities, forward looking initiatives and programs have taken form and meaning for the progress and health of this small Parsi-Zarathushti community.

When 'the Day' arrived, the Dharamshala and Dar E Meher stood freshly painted with polished marble and sparkling silver. Several new carpets were added to cover the cold floor in winter, as also custom made lights adorned with the 'asho farohar' symbol, and two beautiful new stain glass window panels with flower and bird motives showing the Zarathushti

reverence for nature. The flowerwalas worked from the early hours on the 18 December to beautify the whole venue with a profusion of white and yellow chrysanthemums, gladiolas and marigolds. The Dar-E-Meher truly looked dressed for its fiftieth birthday. That a few heartbeats skipped as the renovation work missed several deadlines added to the excitement. The Community Hall had already been turned into a modern air conditioned auditorium two years prior, hence the whole Anjuman complex had now become a comfortable venue for all its activities.

The two day program had been meticulously worked out to encompass the religious significance, along with some serious content plus fun and entertainment. Good Parsi food

AVA KHULLAR, INDIA

was not left out. Underlying all this planning was the basic philosophy of the DPA –to stay true to the tenets of the faith but take a pragmatic view of the present state of the community and move with the times.

One of the prime concerns of the Anjuman is how to keep the flock together and united when around 45 percent of the member families are mixed marriages. Measures have to be taken to ensure that the non-Parsi spouses and children are not lost to the community. Keeping this in mind, on December 18, a jashan performed by six mobeds was held in the open grounds so that all members and friends could attend (photo below) An explanatory talk was given to convey the significance of the jashan especially for the benefit of the non-Parsis. Members were encouraged to invite their friends from other faiths to witness and appreciate this wonderful thanksgiving ritual. This was in keeping with the DPA's involvement in the capital's interfaith activities. It could be



Outdoor Jashan for all to attend

In The News

truly said that the minuscule Parsi community is now known and recognized in North India because of these efforts.

On December 19, the Salgira, (anniversary), the Maha Jashan, performed by ten dasturs/mobeds, was held inside the Dar-E-Meher. It was an honor that *Vada Dasturji Kotwal* who performed the Jashan when the Dar E Meher was consecrated in 1961 was with us fifty years later to bless the occasion. *Fali Nariman* was so moved by the experience that in his keynote address on the second day '*Continuity and Challenges: Zoroastrianism in the 21st Century*', he referred to the jashan performed in the resplendent setting of the Dar-E-Meher as a '*world class concert*'.

The celebrations were inaugurated by Delhi's Chief Minister, *Ms. Sheila Dikshit*, who the President of the DPA, *Dadi Mistry* described as not only a good friend but a 'friend in need' whenever the Anjuman has turned to her for help. A special issue of the DPA journal, *DIPANJALI*, was also released by Ms. Dikshit. Simultaneously, during the two days, Parzor displayed its textile exhibition, showcasing some of its newer acquisitions.

On both days our vada dasturs, eminent guests, and scholars from UK, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia and India participated in four panel discussions on issues impacting the current situation of the community.

Dasturji Kotwal explained the role of the priest as pastor arguing that the rightful role of the priest was as "educators of

their flock" and must help Zarathushtis to stay on the right path. *Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor* followed up with a discussion on Hamazori, "a beautiful concept that we have forgotten. Hamazori is sharing of spiritual energy and is indicative of the need for spiritual and physical unity in the community".

A common theme during the day's proceedings was the endangered status of the Parsi priesthood. Priest and laity in the audience debated ways to help stymie this trend. "The priesthood is in danger" Kotwal observed, "*Without priests who have maintained the traditions, rituals, and a corpus of knowledge, there can be no Zoroastrian religion.*" *Dinshaw Mehta*, Chairman, BPP, spoke about a new community trust being set up for financially supporting priests.



Keeping the interest and participation of Zarathushti youth in religious and community matters has been a perplexing issue, for a faith that has not institutionalized congregational worship, priestly sermons and formal religious instruction like other faiths. The session on

Zarathushti Rituals and their Relevance conducted by *Shernaaz Engineer* and *Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia*, our guests from Mumbai, was introduced to involve youth and clarify their doubts and queries.

The Environment and its Supreme place in Zarathushti Teachings was highlighted by *Homi Dhalla* and *Ms. Savitri Bhandari*, from the Delhi Government gave a picture of the efforts made to green Delhi by creating large biodiversity parks along the banks of the Yamuna and on acres left barren through mining to make the Capital the greenest city in India. *Ms Shernaz Engieer* and *Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia* had an interactive session with the youth regarding the significance and meaning of rituals and practices in Zarathushti religion.

The session on "*The Persian Homeland: Perspectives*" chaired by *Anton Zykov* was an eye opener for the Parsis of India, who believe that they are the final authority on all matters regarding the Zarathushti religion. *Ms Shahin Bekhradia* in an emotionally charged presentation

In The News

entitled *"Why has the Voice of Zoroastrians from Iran been Neglected?"* dispelled such notions. Going back to the century when the priests in India were turning to their Iranian colleagues for advice on religious matters through the Rivayets, thus recognizing their superior knowledge, Shahin Bekhradia acknowledged that there was a time later when Iranian priests were greatly oppressed by the Islamic regime and unable to present their views effectively at world conferences because they could not speak in English. They were therefore openly referred to as ignorant on religious matters. However their fervor and determination against such odds was so strong, that the situation

Ms Bekhradia's paper struck a sympathetic chord among the open minded audience in Delhi.

Dr. Reza Hosseini from Afghanistan presented a slide - show on the "Archaeological Excavations in Ancient Afghanistan" highlighting the dangers from the Taliban and fear among the few Zarathushti families in the Balkh region of revealing their true faith, to the extent of having a "public" Muslim name!

Dastur Mehraban Firuzgary from Iran was to be accompanied by Mobediar Ms Mehrzad Kaviani the new woman recruit, which would have been the first time a lady mobediyar would have spoken at an event in

Parsi clothes with the poise of professional models and then performing dance numbers, choreographed by the little ones themselves, displaying acrobatic skills that thrilled the audience.

Ultimately the celebrations were a heart warming and happy team effort of the Parsis of Delhi showing that the hard work put in can also be very satisfying.



The Farohars

has now radically changed and a strong and effective program of imparting religious training to men and women has been launched with teachers of eminence training students who themselves are highly educated and have enrolled because of their strong desire to understand the Zarathushti faith and serve as mobeds and mobediyars.

India. However visa problems prevented them from attending which was an opportunity missed.

After the day long dose of serious deliberations there was fun and laughter in the evenings with *Yezdi Karanjia's* group from Surat, (the only surviving Parsi natak group), performing 'Ghar Ghungro and Ghotalo' and Delhi's own little Farohars taking centre stage on day two with a fashion parade confidently displaying



Ava Khullar was associated with the Centre for the Study of Developing Studies, (CSDS) in Delhi, where she carried out demographic and socio - economic studies of the Parsi community. She is a trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anujman as well as a member of the Executive Council of the Parzor Foundation. She is particularly involved in Parzor's work to revive Parsi embroidery.

In The News

Lieutenant Colonel Cainaz Vakharia, United States Army, Military Intelligence



On October 15, 2011, Cainaz Vakharia was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (LTC), a distinction bestowed on those who serve our nation in the higher echelons of our Armed Forces. LTC Vakharia, now Cainaz is now referred to in the Army is a Senior Intelligence Officer, currently serving at the Pentagon. She is in the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program and specializes in the South Asia region.

Cainaz graduated from Tulane University in 1994 and has served in Wiesbaden, Germany, Incirlic, Turkey, Camp Essayons, Korea, Fort Sill, Oklahoma and Washington DC. As part of her FAO training,

Cainaz learned Hindi and Urdu at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia, spent one year in Wellington, India attending the Defense Services Staff College and earned her master's degree from Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies. Upon completion of her FAO training, Cainaz served as the South Asia Analyst in the intelligence directorate of the Army Staff.

Cainaz Vakharia has received numerous awards and commendations throughout her 17 years of military service. Her love for what she does is evident in the many accolades she has received from her superiors and peers throughout her career. She is known as someone who goes above and beyond the call of duty, one who stands by her principles and an officer who leads by example.

Cainaz is the daughter of Adi and Arnavaz Vakharia.(Dallas, TX). She has a twin sister Keshvar Buhariwalla and a younger sister Mazarin Vakharia. Cainaz is married to Michael Heaton (also a LTC in the US Army), and they have three children: Kashmira (7), Aryana (5) and Zubin (2).

By Keshvar Buhariwalla

THE JOINT SERVICE COMMENDATION MEDAL TO CAPTAIN NEVILLE F. DASTOOR FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE FOR THE ARMED FORCES



Captain Neville Dastoor served as a JAG Attorney (JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL) and as member of the *JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE 435*, where he was directly involved in the prosecution of the Taliban Insurgents. He distinguished himself by meritorious service as Recorder for the Detainee Review Board, Parwan, Afghanistan from October 2011 to February 2012 during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. **His citation reads**

"During this period Captain Dastoor played a critical role in ensuring the legitimacy, credibility and transparency of the United States detention operations and the Detainee Review Board process. His proficiency and dedication to the Legal Operations Directorates' mission inspired him to spend countless hours creating and perfecting training materials used by the Recorder cell. He set the "gold standard" for case preparation. He was hand-picked to serve as one of only three Recorder Team Leads, where he mentored, trained and supervised seven other Recorders at a time when operational tempo was the highest in the history of the Legal Operations Directorate.

The Z community feels proud to have a member amongst us who has served his country well and has been recognized for his efforts.

Congratulations to Neville and his parents Tehmi and Firdaus Dastoor.

(See FEZANA JOURNAL Vol 25, No 2 Summer 2011 pg 113)

In The News



As reported in 'India West': at a glittering event in New York on December 14, 2011 United Nations Secretary-General Ban

Ki-moon awarded the Silver Medal in the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation/UNCA Global Prize to MediaGlobal News, a non-profit media agency based at the United Nations Secretariat, for its reporting on issues related to climate change and its disproportionate impact on the least developed countries and the small island developing states.

Nosh Nalavala, the MediaGlobal News bureau chief, received the award. The UNCA awards are given annually to honor the best media coverage of the United Nations, and are open to worldwide media. Previous

winners of the award include the Associated Press and The Economist.

MediaGlobal News was founded in 2006 by Nalavala to create awareness in the global media of the suffering of the world's poorest countries on issues of economic development, global health, food security and the impact of climate change on developing nations. *"Our correspondents highlight interrelated issues such as climate change and food security in the world's most vulnerable countries,"* said Nalavala."

" KHURSHID MISTRY WINS THE MUMBAI MARATHON 2012- Half Marathon "



Ms Khurshid Mistry won Standard Chartered Mumbai

Marathon January 15, 2012- Half Marathon under the Veteran Category. 9,876 runners participated for the Half Marathon. Ms Mistry completed 21 kms in 1hour 53 minutes and secured 3rd position under the Veteran Category (2nd Indian woman in the category).

This is the second time Ms Mistry has run a Marathon. Her first was in 2008 where she completed 21 kms in 2 hours 4 minutes and secured 5th position amongst Veteran women. For the next four years due to injury she could not participate in the Marathon but this year despite all odds she decided to run the Half Marathon again.

Ms Khurshid Mistry is a sprinter and trains daily with coach Mr Dinanath Maurya at Priya Darshini Park. In the past 3 years she has won a number of accolades in 100mts, 200mts and 400mts in various competitions in State, National and International level. In August 2011 she won 4 Gold Medals in 100mts, 200mts, 400mts and 4*400 mts Relay at the National Veteran Athletic Meet at Pondicherry. She is preparing for her upcoming State and National Level Meets.

Ms Mistry is an Associate Vice President at UTI Mutual Fund who is extremely proud of all her achievements.

In The News



The Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal was presented to 60 recipients from across the country and various walks of life during the inaugural presentation ceremony on Monday, February 6, 2012, at Rideau Hall.

Wanda Bedard Fereydoonzad, of Montreal, was a recipient for her work with 60 million girls, a public foundation that invests in the women of tomorrow.

His Excellency the Right Honorable David Johnston,

Sixty Canadians Honored During the Inaugural Presentation Ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee Medal at Rideau Hall, Ottawa

Governor General of Canada, presided over the ceremony, along with the Right Honorable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada.

"The recipients who are honored by this medal have made Canada better," said His Excellency. "Individually, they have improved the well-being of many in our communities, and together, they have helped to create a smarter, more caring nation."

They represent a mosaic of individual experiences and accomplishments. Like Her Majesty, they inspire others to take up the call to service."

60 million girls is a completely volunteer run public foundation that raises funds to support education projects for the most marginalized and vulnerable girls in the developing world. In the six

years since the foundation was started, close to \$1.5 million has been invested directly supporting well over 10,000 children in education projects in South America, Africa and Asia. Because of the foundation's volunteer base and a policy of ensuring that the maximum of each donation goes to the projects supported, administration costs are less than 1% of revenues.

Research shows that programs directed to the education of girls are more effective than virtually any other community investment in the developing world. 60 million girls has chosen to invest in the women of tomorrow. Visit the website: www.60milliongirls.org.

COURSE IN ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES AT CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ENDOWED BY WORLD ZOROASTRIAN COUNCIL (WZC).

Say, "I am a Zoroastrian," anywhere in the world and you will have to carry on a lecture in religion, philosophy, and history. You would still need to lecture in places like Iran, India and every so often in other parts of the world where someone may recognize the name by asking, "So, you're a fire worshiper?" says Arman Ariane, the main driving force behind the establishment of an endowment to support Zoroastrian studies at Claremont Graduate University.

Shortly after 9/11 the University decided to become a center for inter-cultural understanding and to expand their religious studies. In 2002 Arman was approached by the university to join the Board of Visitors (an advisory board) and by 2003, with the support of the California Zoroastrian Center (CZC), Zarathushtrian Assembly and members of Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) the Zoroastrian Council was established.

In 2004, with the financial support of CZC and *Shahrooz Ash, Dr. Shahpour Salamat, Mr. Dariush Irani* and others, the Council endowed a course in Zoroastrian studies at

Claremont Graduate University for the first semester. The course taught by Prof. Jenny Rose became very popular and has had more students registered than most other courses at the graduate level.

Raising \$7000 for every semester was not an easy task and going back to the same donors in the small Zoroastrian community for the next semester was even harder. Money was raised by selling \$2 tea and \$4 Ash, books and T-shirts at Nowruz and other events !!!

Arman then decided to replace himself on the council with someone with more credibility. The current Zoroastrian Council made up of energetic and experienced Zarathushtis, turned the endowment of the course over to the World Zoroastrian Council (WZC). This became the first WZC project in North America, followed by a fundraising event at CZC.

In December of 2011 the final payment was made to the university and for about \$150,000 the course will be fully endowed one semester per year

This may be a small amount compared to the millions that other councils have invested in their religious studies, but it is indeed a great accomplishment for our small Zarathushti community in Diaspora.

Prof Jenny Rose will teach a 17 week course on Zoroastrian Studies which she has been doing since 2004.

She offers two alternating classes, one a taught course on the Origins and Influences of the Zoroastrian Tradition, and the other a seminar on Zoroastrian Cosmology, Eschatology, Ethics and Ritual. These courses complement those taken by graduate students majoring in Biblical Studies, Philosophy and Religion, History of Christianity, Jewish Studies, and Islamic Studies.

One of the goals for the School of Religion is to provide graduates, who will go on to teach religion at colleges and universities, a thorough foundation to explain the close relationships among the world's religious traditions. The courses in the Zoroastrian religion highlight the importance of Zoroastrian teachings and their influence on later religions.

Courses at the Masters and doctoral level in religion are offered with over 250 students doing graduate work in religion, and it is one of the largest doctoral programs in the United States. The School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University is hopeful to expand its partnership with the

Zarathushti Community in reaching the highest standard of Zoroastrian studies in North America.

**Submitted by Arman Ariane,
Zoroastrian Studies Council,
Claremont Graduate University (CGU),**

THE COUNCIL OF ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES CGU:

Ardeshir Anoshirvani MD, Chair, Shida Anoshirvani, Jessica Irani, Cyrus Irani, Dr. Ali Jafarey, Ardeshir Baghkhaniyan, Shahrooz Ash, ShahBahram Pooladzandi, Arman Ariane

Editor's note: Arman Ariane would like to acknowledge Mrs. Shida Farhangi Anoshirvani, who was the main force in raising sufficient funds for the endowment. The contract as approved by the Council, was drafted by ShahBahram Pooladzandi.

FARROKH MISTREE HONORED BY AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS (ASME) FOR FURTHERING ENGINEERING DESIGN EDUCATION

Farrokh Mistree, Ph.D., professor at the University of Oklahoma, Norman was recognized for lifelong dedication and numerous contributions to the engineering design community, particularly for instilling a passion for design in generations of students as an inspirational advisor and mentor by ASME.

He received the Ruth and Joel Spira Outstanding Design Educator Award.

This award, established in 1998, recognizes a person who exemplifies the best in furthering engineering design education through vision, interactions with students and industry, scholarship and impact on the next generation of engineers, and a person whose action serves as a role model for other educators to emulate. The award was presented to Dr. Mistree during the International Design Engineering Technical Conference in Washington, D.C., Aug. 28 -31.2011.

As an ardent educator, researcher, technical leader, and mentor Mistree has inspired countless students to study engineering design and, more importantly, to learn how to learn. His current research focus is on learning to manage uncertainty in multi scale design (from molecular to reduced order models) to facilitate the integrated design of materials, product and design process chains. Currently, Mistree is focusing on creating and implementing, in partnership with industry, a curriculum for educating strategic engineers — those who have developed the competencies to create value through the realization of complex engineered systems.

An ASME Fellow, Mistree served as chair of the Design Engineering Division's (DED) Honors and Awards Committee (1997-2003), co-general chair for the 1998 Design Engineering Technical Conferences, and conference papers chair for the 1994 ASME Design Theory and Methodology Conference. The DED honored him with

Distinguished Service awards in 1998 and 2003, and the Design Automation Award in 1999.

Farrokh Mistree received his bachelor's of technology degree in naval architecture, with honors, at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in 1967, his master's and doctoral degrees in engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1970 and 1974, respectively. He was a senior lecturer (1976-81) at the University of New South Wales, Australia, then an associate professor (1981-87) and professor (1987-1992) at the University of Houston before joining the faculty at the George W.Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. At Georgia Tech (1992-2009) Mistree served as the founding director of the Systems Realization Laboratory (1992-97).

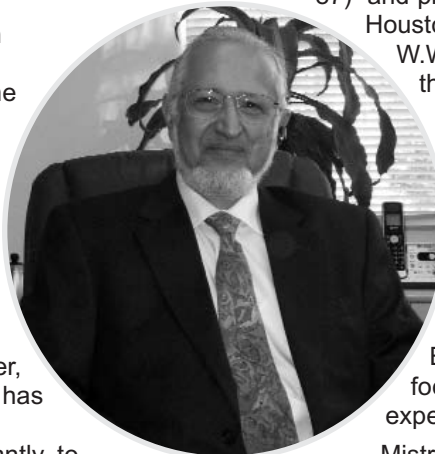
After retiring from Georgia Tech as professor emeritus in August 2009, Mistree joined the University of Oklahoma (OU), Norman, where he is professor, director of the School of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering, and L.A. Comp chair where he focuses on developing a curriculum anchored in experiential learning.

Mistree has supervised 28 doctoral students and more than 50 master's degree students. Twelve of his doctoral students are pursuing highly successful careers in academia. In addition, he has mentored two students, one master's and one doctoral, who now own several for-profit colleges in Orissa, India.

He has co-authored two textbooks, one monograph, and more than 350 technical papers covering the design of mechanical and structural systems, ships and aircraft, as well as more than 30 dealing exclusively with education.

Farrokh has been very active in FEZANA and has contributed very generously of his time and expertise to several committees with his advice and knowledge

Congratulations Farrokh.on a well-deserved award.



INTERFAITH INTERALIA

25

YEARS OF INTERFAITH JOURNEY

Religions Working for Peace Dr. HOMI DHALLA, Mumbai

October 27, 1986, was an important landmark in the history of the interfaith movement. The late Pope John Paul II had invited the religious leaders and representatives from the far corners of the world to Assisi, to celebrate the **World Day of Prayer for Peace**. Assisi was chosen as it is the place



Homi Dhalla with Pope Benedict XVI in Assoso, October 27, 2011

which the seraphic figure of St. Francis has transformed into a centre of universal brotherhood. I was invited to represent the Zarathushti community and had the opportunity of meeting Pope John Paul II. He emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue and also collaboration among various religions to foster peace. To highlight this he had stated that "...either we learn to walk together in peace and harmony, or we drift apart and ruin ourselves and others".

Since that event, the interfaith movement has grown both in numbers and global importance. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of that event, Pope Benedict XVI had once again invited world religious leaders to Assisi on October 27, 2011. (photo above) I was again invited to represent the Zarathushti community worldwide. The theme of the event was "Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace". On October 27, Pope Benedict and the entire delegation

departed from Vatican station at 8 a.m. by train. On the journey from Rome to Assisi, the train slowed down at all stations along the way because thousands of people and children had collected to greet and cheer us. Having reached Assisi we were taken by bus to the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels. This was one of the most charming places of worship with exquisite paintings of Biblical figures on the walls and ceiling.

We were shown a video of the 1986 function and was surprised that I figured in it reciting Avestan prayers. (photo left with Pope John Paul II 1986) After this a few religious leaders delivered speeches, followed by an address by the Pope. We then had lunch with the Pope in an adjoining hall. This was a frugal meal, reminding us of all the poor and deprived millions who often have to go hungry.

In the afternoon, each delegate was assigned a separate room in the residence adjoining the Basilica which was meant for silent reflection and personal prayer. Then, the entire delegation walked from the Basilica to the Piazza San Francesco where the first meeting was held 25 years ago. A large multitude of people had already gathered there for the function which was open to the public.

Devotional songs and dances depicting the message of world peace were performed. A few delegates were introduced to the Pope. A solemn renewal of the pledge of peace was read out by some of the religious leaders from various traditions. The entire delegation was asked to carry a small lamp being a symbolic gesture of the need to spread peace and light in the world. The function concluded with brief remarks by the Pope.

The delegates were then transported back to the Assisi railway station where we were again greeted by large numbers of people who had gathered to bid us farewell. We returned to Vatican station at 8.30 p.m.

The next day we were invited to the Vatican when a few delegates were introduced to the Pope. We were invited to lunch by the Cardinal Secretary of State. I was very fortunate to have been invited to the Assisi meeting of 1986. It had a profound influence on my life as it offered me an opportunity of meeting several prominent leaders of all religions. This event actually launched me into the global interfaith movement, offering me an opportunity of projecting the Zarathushtrian religion on the world stage.



From Left Dr Homi Dhalla with Pope John Paul II at Assisi in October 26, 1986 and at the Vatican in 1996



INTERFAITH INTERALLA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

**Come
together**

with your association,
family and friends

and join us on

May 5th, 2012

for the First Annual International Day of Service



ShoeDrive

Zoroastrians Stepping Forward
a NextGenNow initiative

ShoeDrive

Many of us take our shoes for granted. Shoes enable us to get where we are going as well as to accessorize. Could you imagine a life without shoes—working on a farm, going to school, or traveling along hot roads?

We want you to think about doing just that—we are not asking you to forgo your shoes. Instead we ask that you unite in collecting shoes for those in need.

Join us for Zoroastrians Stepping Forward's
1st Annual International Day of Service.

**On this day
our community
will take a unified step
toward
helping those who need it most.**



**For more information,
Facebook® - Zoroastrians Stepping Forward
www.zoroastrianssteppingforward.weebly.com
zoroastrianssteppingforward@gmail.com
626.378.5564 - Behrose Taraporewalla**

INTERFAITH INTERALLA



Zenobia Ravji

Working for Peace and Justice

On February 7, 2012 I had the great privilege of sitting side by side with world peacemakers and leaders at the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Event. Representatives from various religious organizations were asked to take part in a tree watering ceremony, symbolizing unity and peace among the religions of the world. Our very own, Homi Gandhi (past president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) represented the Zarathushti people on behalf of FEZANA.

The message of the event was strengthening the mission to uplift humanity through continued peace efforts among the religions of the world. Scholars, religious leaders, and Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the UN, as well as, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary General of the UN spoke on the importance of religious unification and tolerance among our fellow human beings.

It was almost surreal to be sitting in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations. To be in the same seats as the people who dedicate their lives to continued peace, stability and harmony in this world was a profound yet humbling experience.

While all the speakers were insightful and uplifting, one in particular stood out to me. Her name was Yuka Saionji, the Deputy Chairperson of Byakko Shinko Kai, a spiritual organization dedicated to world peace and raising the consciousness of humanity. The organization originated in Japan over fifty years ago. Overcome by emotion and tears, Yuka spoke of her beloved Japan's struggle to rise to its feet after what Japanese refer to as "311" (March 11, 2011, being the day of the massive Tohoku earthquake). What impacted me most was when she spoke of the power of prayer and the role it played in uplifting Japan and uniting the Japanese people. I interpreted Yuka's message of prayer as a means of acknowledging a higher power or consciousness within us and in all of humanity. As a result, we realize we are all connected in this web of life.

It was an absolute privilege to be sitting side by side in the United Nations General Assembly Hall with individuals who have dedicated their lives to improving the overall well being of humanity. I hope to one day accomplish a fraction of their significant contribution to our global family.

Zenobia Ravji belongs to the Chicago Zarathushti Community. She holds a Masters Degree in the Economics of Public Policy through the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. She is passionate about philanthropy and social activism. In 2009, the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign awarded her with the Mothers Association Humanitarian award for leadership in the Community. Through her experiences as a campus leader, Zenobia has had the distinctive opportunity to educate her university as well as communities around the globe about our Zarathushti people. One day Zenobia hopes to turn her passion for philanthropy into a career, traveling to the developing communities around the globe in creating a more unified and peaceful society.

Letters to the editor

To the Editor FEZANA JOURNAL

Through the medium of your Journal I wish to thank all my friends and colleagues for the good wishes and congratulations I received on the occasion of my appointment as an Officer of The Order of the British Empire (OBE)

I cannot tell you how overjoyed I am. As an immigrant to Britain to be recognized and accepted by my adopted country gives me a sense of belonging and being welcomed.

I wish my community would similarly welcome those who are "returning" or accepting Zoroastrianism and offer them the feeling of belonging. I appeal to ZAGNY to open their hearts and doors and welcome the "new Zoroastrians" by inviting them and offering them an opportunity to have their voice heard at the upcoming

XVI NAZC 2012, just as you and I have been offered the welcome to North America and Britain

With love and peace

Jangoo Sarosh, OBE, London, England

INTERFAITH INTERALLA A LESSON FROM LAOS

g for Peace and Justice

ZENOBIARAVJI

Nothing feeds the soul more than service. My first service trip consisted of volunteering in the small Mayan community of San Lucas, Guatemala. It was the summer



after I completed my freshman year at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. We worked with the Mayan people on projects, such as building homes, constructing schools, and teaching English. The experience had such a profound affect on me that I continued to create, lead, and participate in several projects in the developing communities of Latin America and Africa.

I recently returned from a service trip to Laos, a small country located in South East Asia. I had the opportunity to volunteer with the Hmong people, an Asian ethnic group predominantly found in China and Laos. While in Laos, I volunteered with a non-profit organization called Big Brother Mouse. Located in the country's cultural capital, Luang Prabang, Big Brother Mouse helps Hmong children achieve academic excellence through their literacy project, which teaches children, teenagers, and adults how to read in English and in the Laos language. During my time with Big Brother Mouse I taught Hmong teenagers how to read, write and speak English. In turn, I learned about the Hmong culture, their history, and people. This most recent service trip to Laos solidified my life ambition to choose a path of service.

The beauty lies in the intention of service: I go in with the intention of helping others and leave being served myself. Through the presence and humility of the new

people I connect with during my service projects, I learn about a new culture, a new way of life. This helps me to further understand who I am, where I come from, and my place in this world. The experience of all philanthropists



and peace activists resonates with me: it is indeed true that through serving others you serve yourself.

I believe it is imperative that we as a human race make it a common goal to serve each other. Connected in this family of humankind, helping our fellow brothers and sisters is a means to a more peaceful and productive world. A personal goal of mine is to work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to further my passion for service projects in developing communities, human rights, and creating a more peaceful world. My simple message to all of you searching for depth in your life lies in our fundamental Zarathushti teachings: your life finds meaning when your thoughts, speech and actions are dedicated in serving others.

You can read more about my various service project experiences at www.ZenobiaRavji.com. Please contact me through my website if you are interested in volunteering in developing communities and I can help guide you in the right direction!

Personal Profiles

FAITH IN THE FUTURE: AN INTERVIEW WITH Dr. JEHAN BAGLI

Farishta Murzban Dinshaw

As FEZANA celebrates its silver jubilee in 2012, its eponymous Journal will showcase many transitions in our community in the past twenty-five years. One marked one is FEZANA's relationship with the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC), which was founded in 1990. Initially, the Executive Committee of FEZANA had vociferously opposed the formation of an independent Council of Mobeds as they believed that mobeds should be part of FEZANA. Over the years, the relationship between the two associations has improved. In this interview, Dr. Jehan Bagli, former President (2002 – 2008), leaves the past behind and focuses on the future of NAMC and our faith.

Dr. Jehan Bagli is a unique combination of man of science and a man of faith. On one hand, he is internationally renowned for his research contributions in the field of medicinal chemistry with over 60 published papers and 49 United States patents on potential drug candidates. On the other hand, he is also internationally renowned as a Zarathushti priest and scholar. He has presented at many conferences, presided over countless religious ceremonies and rituals, and published numerous papers and books about Zarathushti doctrine. His latest project has been to edit a volume on Zarathushti faith for the 'Encyclopedia of Indian Religions' scheduled for publication in 2013. He has been an active member of the North American Zarathushti community for nearly fifty years, and in 1967, was the founding President of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ).



MOBEDS

FMD: What is NAMC doing about the chronic shortage of mobeds in North America?

JB: One program that was initiated during my presidency was the mobedyar program. This was to train laity in doing some of the basic rituals. It started in the hope that we would have mobedyars in areas where there were no mobeds, but now suddenly people are becoming conscious of this program, and ironically the interest is in areas where there are already mobeds. For the training of a mobedyar, you need a mobed to train the candidate, so if there are no mobeds in the area it leads to the idea working against itself. These are some of the challenges that need to be resolved.

FMD: What is your stance on allowing boys from non-athornan families to become a navar?

JB: The idea of hereditary priesthood evolved simply because in earlier times priests had tremendous power and also wealth and they wanted that preserved and kept within the family. I am sure that this is going to change. Even in India, priests are talking about it.

FMD: What is NAMC's response to women mobedyar that were initiated in Iran last year?

JB: It was about two years ago, at an AGM, we discussed the possibility of women mobedyar. Unanimously, we agreed to welcome the idea in North America, and we are already training a young lady in Toronto, and one in Pittsburgh. Ervard Soli Dastur has taken on the task for the lady in Pittsburgh. What we have done is to draw up a curriculum, which is quite elaborate, but informal. We see that they are trained in essential activities such as performing jashans, and last rite prayers. I have to mention, mobedyars are restricted in that they cannot perform navjotes and weddings by themselves, but they can assist. This is to prevent them from the burden of making responsible decisions as in cases of interfaith marriages or navjotes of children of mixed marriages. There is no time limit for training of mobedyar; when the mobed involved feels that the person is ready, ordainment can be performed. We have drafted an ordainment ceremony in which they will have to perform a jashan as the senior priest in front of a congregation. After that they get a certificate of recognition from NAMC.

FMD: In terms of changes in our practices, do you see a parallel between what is happening now in North America to what happened when Zarathushtis migrated from Iran to India?

JB: We are trying as much as possible to maintain the traditional observances of the rituals. Often we get complaints from laity that this prayer is too long to sit through for one hour and they request a shorter jashan for instance. Personally, I feel that the hour they spend to meditate and pray is well served. We now also have a booklet describing portions of prayers the congregation can participate in the jashan. The idea came up as a way to involve the laity in the jashan and to prevent boredom. I am personally not keen on shortening the prayers, but there are exceptional occasions when depending on the cases mobeds may comply with the wishes of the families requesting the prayers.

Personal Profiles

FD: So who decides that this kind of drive-through jashan is acceptable? Is it by referendum? Is it an executive committee decision?

JB: You must realize that NAMC as a body has not assumed this kind of decision making authority. So, any time there is an issue of this nature, we have simply left it to the conscience of and judgment of the individual mobed. NAMC has taken a position on some issues, for instance, that the navjote of a child of an interfaith couple can be done. However, there is no imposition on the membership that they have to do it or they cannot do it. That decision is left to the individual mobed. It would not be to NAMC's advantage to make schisms within the membership.

UNIVERSALITY

FMD: NAMC is clear on its website that it sees Zarathushtra's message as universal, but this viewpoint is not wholly reflected in our community. Do you come across resistance to this ideology?

JB: The whole issue of Zarathushtis and non-Zarathushtis has to be very clearly thought out. Non-Zarathushtis are as much a part of humanity as are Zarathushtis. As I always say, Zarathushtra did not create Zarathushtis, Christ did not create Christians; they were the messengers of the same Divine entity who created all humans. We have to see the One-ness of the people. The unfortunate thing is that by these kinds of discriminatory attitudes we make Zarathushtrian religion a tribal religion. This is a disservice to the prophet and to his message. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, even in Russia, people are very conscious of their ancestry. There was a gentleman who came to Sanjan to be ordained as a mobed. The people of the Panchayat physically attacked him. I think it is very shameful that they did that in the name of religion.

FMD: Really. You can be firm about your principles without being disrespectful. What is your viewpoint about the reclamation of faith by Iranian Muslims? Do you think that is a trend we will be seeing in the next twenty-five years?

JB: I think we will be seeing a lot of this as time goes by. More people have the courage to talk about Zoroastrianism more openly than they did a few years ago. I think they are within their rights to make the choice and we should accept them. I am frequently approached about this matter by Iranians in Toronto.

FMD: Do you think that the generation that is born here and is not so strongly associated with Indian traditions will be more accepting?

JB: I think it is our duty to educate the younger mobeds in North America to realize that this is something they are going to face and they should understand the universal message of Zarathushtra. We have lost the spiritual aspect of our faith and this will need to be brought back. Parents have to be educated too. We are planning a seminar in Toronto in April 2012 and we have to do more and more to educate the youth. I think several Iranian groups are doing a

lot to put up videos on YouTube. You have to be careful though not to use technology to fill up the Internet with garbage.

RITUALS

FMD: In North America, we have been forced to move away from the tradition of dokhmanasheeni to other forms of disposal of the dead such as cremation and burial. Now there is talk of 'green burial'. Does NAMC have a position on this?

JB: Green burial would be ideal and closest to the idea of dokhmanasheeni, which, I have to say, is a very eco-philic system of disposing dead bodies. But only when it works. There are some people who believe that those who do not go through dokhmanasheeni go to Hell, which is total nonsense. It is the soul that goes on a journey in the afterlife, not the physical body or the organic matter.

FMD: I think many of the dokhmanasheeni advocates are more against cremation because of the implication of 'defiling fire'.

JB: The fire is sacred no doubt, but if your friend's house is burning, you won't say, "We cannot put it out because it is sacred". Fire which is sacred is the one that is specifically consecrated and enthroned in a place of worship. Those are the fires that we should distinguish and not make all fires in general sacred. We must distinguish between all physical fires and the consecrated fire that is the embodiment of Ahura Mazda.

FMD: What do you think of the "bride price" in the wedding ceremony where 2000 Nishapur coins are offered for the bride? NAMC has gone on record saying that they are not in favor of the change to the ceremony (Fezana Journal, Fall 2011, p88). Why is NAMC taking this stance when they can take a pioneering step to make the ceremony more gender-equal?

JB: Giving the bride price is again optional. If the bridal couple and the priest want to omit the line they can. It is a very small part of the liturgy. Gender equality is an essential part of our religion. In fact, it is embedded in the very name of the Creator; Ahura is masculine while Mazda is feminine. It is just that it was not observed rigorously by the society that followed Zarathushtra so these attitudes have filtered through.

FMD: On the subject of gender politics, Canada has legalized same sex marriage. Looking into the future, what do you think will be NAMC's stance on this issue?

JB: NAMC is a very diverse group, and the 15-17 people who turn up at the AGMs do not necessarily represent the entire membership. I think we would need to educate ourselves on the topic. I have done some reading from which I gather that being gay is not a matter of choice. If we begin to acknowledge the Oneness of the human race and the presence of the Divine within that race, that's where acceptance comes from. That is what we have to focus on for the future.

Fariashta Murzban Dinshaw see bio page 100

In Memorium

SABAR BALSARA

1930-2011

FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF FEZANA

Ms. Sabar Balsara, my sister, passed away at age of 81 on March 24, 2011, in Toronto.

Sabar had a long career in secretarial work, since her graduation from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, with a B.A. in English (Honors). After her graduation, she was assistant secretary for Sir Rustom Masani, but was soon promoted to secretary. Sir Rustom Masani was an eminent Zarathushti, an author of repute, the Chairman of UNESCO for India, and the Chancellor of the University of Bombay.

After Sir Rustom Masani passed away, Sabar became the personal secretary to Madam Sofia Wadia, Head of the Theosophy Hall and Theosophist Association of India. In 1967 she gave up that position to come to Canada and settle down with the rest of the family.

Shortly after coming to Toronto, she joined the Department of English, University of Toronto, as secretary to the Chair of the Department, and held this position until her retirement in 2004. Many Zarathushti students remember her as a very kind and considerate person who was always ready to help, and advise on how things were to be done for their Masters thesis and other studies. She used to read their work, edit it and help them in various ways.

Because of her affiliation with the University of Toronto, Sabar was able to procure the use of many of the University halls, and we all remember Ceeley Hall where ZSO held its meetings. We remember going to the Annual General Meetings that were held there. She and Professor Jamshed Mavalwala were instrumental in securing the medical college hall and its facilities for our very first North American Zoroastrian Congress. Together with others on the Committee, Sabar produced the first proceedings of the Congress, and the tradition of publishing proceedings continues.

She served the Zarathushti community from around 1971 as Secretary to various committees, as Vice-Chair, Executive Officer, member of Seniors Committee and on other sub-committees of the ZSO.

After Bomy Boyce retired as editor of the ZSO newsletter, Sabar took over this task and did a fantastic job for many years of reporting and disseminating news to the community through the newsletter. Her newsletters were read not only in Ontario, but also in the U.S. and in various parts of the world. One of her newsletters caught the eye of Arbab Rustom Guiv in 1978. In it she had noted the need for a Zoroastrian Centre in Ontario. That is how Arbab came to Toronto and the rest is history of the Mehrban Guiv Darbe Mehr.

When the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) was formed, Sabar was the first assistant secretary of the organization, working with Rohinton Rivetna and our dear late Homi Homji. She also assisted Dr. Jehan Bagli in the editing of the FEZANA Journal in its formative years.

Sabar was very much a family person, loved by all, especially by her grand nieces and nephews on both the Balsara and Nanavaty sides of the family. They remember her fondly for her generosity and all the kind and lovely things she did for them.

She will always be remembered for her services to the Zarathushti community of North America and in particular the community in Ontario. Everyone knew Sabar through her Newsletters for ZSO for many years.

I, her youngest brother is the only survivor of the family, I miss her presence and the fact that we could pick up the phone and talk to each other. We pray that her soul rests in everlasting peace and may Ahura Mazda bless her for all she has done for people here on earth.

Sincerely

Dr. Russi D. Balsara,
Toronto, Ontario

MILESTONES as of March 15, 2012

BIRTHS

Paiti Irani, a girl to Feradoon and Mahzad Irani in Richmond, BC on September 20, 2011.

Zenia Shroff, a girl to Roxane and Nekzad Shroff, sister to Shenaya in San Jose, CA on October 17, 2011.

Zayne Kerawalla, a boy to Geeta and Burges Kerawalla, brother to Cyrus, grandson to Ruby and Godrej Kerawalla in Walnut Creek, CA on November 4, 2011.

Yazad Kadva, a boy to Alysha and Freddy Kadva, grandson to Dinshah and Rashna Kadva (Modesto, CA) in San Jose, CA on November 8, 2011.

Sophia Naderi, a girl to Erin and Massud Naderi, granddaughter to Zarine and Paul Balsara (Danville, CA) in Irvine, CA on November 22, 2011.

Zenia Nariman, a girl to Anahita and Shahzad Nariman (Houston, TX) on November 23, 2011.

Jia Sanjana, a girl to Kurush and Khyati Sanjana, granddaughter to Bahmanshah and Freny Sanjana on November 29, 2011.

Zyah Batliwalla Varma, a girl to Zeena and Arjun Batliwalla Varma, granddaughter to Zarine and Neville Batliwalla in San Francisco, CA on December 12, 2011.

Kyra Commissariat, a girl to Ambrose and Hormazd Commissariat, sister to Diana in Sunnyvale, CA on December 12, 2011.

Freyana Mistry, a girl to Pervez and Zenobia Mistry, granddaughter to Pervin and Jimmy Mistry (Mississauga, ONT) and Dara and Katy Panthakee (Toronto, ONT) sister to Kerfehger, Shrivux, Meherzad and Zarina in Perth, Australia on December 26, 2011.

Sofia Panthaky, a girl to Roxanne and Phiroze Panthaky, granddaughter to Purviz and Kuroosh Mistry and Jai and Noshir Panthaky in Mississauga, ONT on December 29, 2011.

Torin Behram Kelly, a boy to Roshan and Brandon Kelly, brother to Ara, grandson to Gool and Farrokh Patel, nephew to Zarine Patel and Shenaz Patel, in Morristown, New Jersey, on January 21, 2012.

Syrah Merwan, a girl to Pearl Panthaky and Kerman Merwan, granddaughter to Jal and Meher Panthaky and Kersas and Khorshed Merwan in Mississauga, ONT on January 23, 2012.

Aidan Darius Beesley, a boy to Zenobia Homavazir and Blair Beesley, brother to Anaita and Neville, grandson to Mehroo nad Dara Homavazir, great grandson to Freny Homi Degamwalla, nephew to Armaity Homavazir, in Toronto on January 29, 2012.

Kayhan Dalal a boy to Mahrukh and Yazad Dalal, grandparents Freny & Hormazd Dalal and Behram & Gulshan Sorabji, in New York city on February 5, 2012.

Ethan Moos, a boy to Maria and Zach Moos, brother to Dylan and Zain, grandson to Perviz and Phiroz Moos and Giuseppe Di Mauro & Antoinette Zito in Montreal on February 9th, 2012.

Kian Darbari, a boy to Shahnaz and Kaizad Darbari, grandson to Zenobia & Percy Shroff and Goolu & Pervez Darbari in New York, February 23, 2012.

NAVJOTES

Jedd and Ethan Daruwalla in Coral Springs, FL on December 4, 2011.

Porus Pavri, son of Yasmin and Cyrus Pavri (NY), brother of Farah on December 14, 2011.

Jenovia and Rushaad Mistry, children of Shenaz and Darayus Mistry (Foster City, CA) in Mumbai, India on December 16, 2011.

Freyana Sunavala, daughter of Armeen and Farhad Sunavala in San Ramon, CA on December 18, 2011.

Malcolm Mehta, son of Freni (late Hoshedar) Mehta (FL) in Udvada, India on December 24, 2011.

Anush and Jennaz Patel, children of Anu and Sarosh Patel (Fremont, CA) in Mumbai, India on December 27, 2011.

Zal and Vehan Nagarwala, children of Farhad and Kashmira Nagarwala (ONT) in Mumbai, India on December 29, 2011.

Farah and Natasha Irani, children of Furrokh and Khushnam Irani (FL) in Udvada, India on January 4, 2012.

WEDDINGS

Adrian Dastur, son of Farid and Persis Dastur to Kristy Garbutt, daughter of Terry and Cheryle Garbutt in Coquitlam, BC on October 9, 2011.

Cyrus Mistry son of Arnaz and Jehangir Mistry (Houston) to Prathima Setty (San Francisco, CA) daughter of Reeta and Bala Setty. in Cancun, Mexico on December 4, 2011.

Anosh Doctor, son of Adil and Yasmin Doctor, Toronto to Monaz Engineer daughter of Binaifer and Tempton Engineer, in Mumbai on January 6th 2012.

CONGRATULATIONS GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

Congratulations to Mehroo and Keki Bengali on their 50th Wedding Anniversary, celebrated in New Jersey with their son Minoo, daughter-in-law Dinaz, grandchildren Shawn and Pearl, and friends on February 11, 2012

DEATHS

Roshan Pochee, mother of Aban Kavasmaeck (Percy) (FL) in Mumbai, India on December 6, 2011.

Dara Daruwalla, husband of Khorshed Daruwalla, father of Zenia Mehta (IL), Mehernaz (Naushad) Mistry, Tushad Mehta, brother of Ruzbeh Hataria, grandfather of Aarish and Friyana Mehta in Mumbai on December 12, 2011.

Edul Minocher Khambatta, father of Rumi Khambatta (Vancouver, BC) and Mehra Zubin Hansotia in Mississauga, ONT on December 12, 2011.

Boman Abadan, 37, son of Niloufer and Abadan (Quetta, Pakistan), brother of Mitra and Farhad, cousin of Freny and Hormazd Romer San Francisco, CA on December 13, 2011.

Manimai Sohrabji Divecha, mother of Pesi, Rohinton, Kersi, Shahveer, Aspi, Sami, Jaloo, (late) Gev and (late) Firoze in Toronto, ONT on December 20, 2011.

Morvarid Romer, mother of Sarvar Rana, Nairasangh, Kiumars, Gity Haveliwala and Nilufer Abadan in Toronto, ONT on December 31, 2011.

Keki Billimoria, husband of Tehmi Billimoria, step-father of Roshan Burjor Daver in Brampton, ONT on January 1, 2012.

Framroze (Fali) Spencer, 85, husband of Nyna Spencer, father of Curtis, Ronnie, Richard and Cheryl in League City, TX on January 13, 2012.

Freny Patel, mother of Katie Vazifdar (Houston, TX) in India on January 16, 2012.

Dosi Feroze Sethna, wife of Firoze Cawasji Sethna, mother of Gulshan (Minoo) Dubash (FL), Jehangir (Shirin) Sethna (Vancouver, BC), and Kamal (Feroze) Nanavaty (Vancouver, BC), grandmother of Danny, Sandra, Veera, Sara, Hormaz and Roy in Vancouver, BC on January 22, 2012.

Gool Vakil, wife of late Kaiyomerz Vakil, mother of Dhun Sarosh

Contractor, grandmother of Burzin and Jehan, sister of Noshir and late Behram Katrak in Toronto, ONT on January 23, 2012.

Mahin Banou Yadegarjam, 90, wife of Fereydoon Fereydoonzad, mother of Fereshteh, Bahman (Sima Marzbanian), Mehri (Hormozdiar Atashband), and Farhad (Wanda Bedard), died in Montreal on January 26, 2012.

Soona Firoze Lala, mother of Maharukh (Bejan) Irani, Sharookh (Zenobia) Lala, grandmother of Khushnaaz (Zubin) Daruwala, Cyrus (Nikki) Irani, Ava Lala, Yazad (Katie) Lala and great grandmother of Ava and Katy Daruwala on February 2, 2012.

Edal Desai, husband of Prochie, father of Ratu (Neville) Kumana and Faredoon (Rashna) Desai, grandfather to Shirin Arzan Sam Wadia, (Brooklyn, New York) Sorab, Xerxis and Zehan, in Mumbai, on February 4, 2012.

Dolly Aspi Rabadi, wife of Aspi Rabadi, mother of Adi and Aadil, mother-in-law of Suzy, grandmother of Rayanne, in Toronto, on February 6, 2012.

Phiroze Dinshaw, husband of Mani, father of Bomi (Nina) of Wilton, Connecticut and Najoo (Tim), grandfather to Erik, Cyrus, Jesse, Dilshad and Natasha, on Mumbai, on February 6, 2012

Rostam Mehraban Kheradi, 82, son of the late Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi (Yezd, Iran), husband of Homai Parsiani, father of Parvaneh Kheradi (MD), Farokh Kheradi (PA), Bijan Kheradi (RI), eight grandchildren Nooshin, Banafsheh and Niloofar (MD), Alexander and Camran (PA), and Saam, Tessa and Zachary (RI), brother of Sohrab Kheradi (NY), Jehangir (Jerry) Kheradi (RI), Farangis Izedian (Boston, MA) and Manijeh Nadjmi (RI) in Maryland, on February 8, 2012.

Hutoxi Cyrus Mehta, wife of Cyrus Fali Mehta, mother of Neville, sister of Xerxes (Smita) Antia, of New Jersey, in Mumbai, on February 14, 2012.

Dara Dossabhoy Bhagwagar, 84, husband of late Vinnie, father of Michiko (Khershed) Cooper and

Roxanne (Petu) Dholoo, grandfather of Vivian and Jahan Cooper, and Delna and Farhad Sepoy, in Fairfax, VA, USA, on February 17, 2012.

Amy Rustomji Elavia, 89, wife of Rustomji Elavia, mother of Darayus (Arnavaz) Elavia, grandmother of Rohena (Gautam) Ullal, Eric (Zinnia) Elavia, Kevin Elavia, and great grandmother of Jayden Ullal and Serena Elavia, aunt of Arnavaz (Jamshed) Antia and in-law to Sheroo Eduljee (mother of Arnavaz Elavia). in Chicago, IL on February 19, 2012.

Shirin Jamzadeh (Mazdaie) 86, wife of Late Esfandiyar Jamzadeh, mother of Meherangiz Ghandeharizadeh (LA); Farhangiz Khosravi (Michigan)

Fereidoon (Indianapolis) and Gohar (Bethesda), grandmother of Shahriyar Ghandeharizadeh, Shahram Ghandeharizadeh, Kambiz Ghandeharizadeh, Kourosh Ghandeharizadeh, Mahnaz Khosravi, Davar Khosravi, Mehernaz Khosravi, Asha Jamzadeh in Tehran, Iran, on February 21, 2012.

Mobed Shahbahram Shahzadi, husband of Banoo, father of high priest of California Zoroastrian Centre, brother of late Mobedan e-Mobed Dr. Rostam Shahzadi (Iran), in Fountain Valley, CA, on February 23, 2012.

Nariman Dhanjishaw Dukandar, father of Kerman (Jasely) Dukandar, (New York), grandfather of Jasmine and Tina in Ratlam, India on Feb 25th 2012.

Rashida Darashaw Daruwalla 95, wife of late Darashaw Daruwalla and mother of Hoshang (Kashmira) and grandmother of Jimmy, in Maryland on February 28, 2012.

Arnavaz Aga, 76, wife of (Late) Faredoon Aga, mother of Khushnum Malcolm Darukhanawala of Dubai, Zubina Zubin Mehta of Mumbai and Mahrookh Khushru Fitter of Huntington Beach, CA, sister of Hoshi (Nergish) Aga of Birmingham, AL and Nelly Cama of Tillson, NY, in Mumbai, on March 13, 2012.

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."

Matrimonials

FEZANA Journal will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties; We do not assume any responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at RRRivetna@aol.com

Male, 38, 5' 9", Bachelors In Hotel Management (Gold Medalist), Masters in Management Studies (Mumbai University), Certificate of The Indian Institute of Bankers (CAIIB), working as a Senior Manager for India's largest Private Sector Bank in Mumbai. Interests include reading, music, swimming, travelling, outings and spending time with family. Looking for a qualified, understanding and honest partner, with good family values, willing to settle in India (preferably Mumbai). Contact kayzadnb@rediffmail.com, or call 91-9004418127. [M12-01].

Female, 29, M.Com in Banking and Finance (Pune University), currently working in Pune. Willing to settle abroad. Contact dnnf04@hotmail.com, or call Pune 02026054056. [F12-02].

Male, 33, PhD (Physics), scientist at Bhabha Atomic Research Center, Mumbai. Contact pourus_m@yahoo.com, or call 98 2178 3834. [M12-05].

Female, 29, BE (computers), working as Software Developer with a multinational company based in Pune, India. Would like to settle abroad. Contact mahrukhg@hotmail.com, or call 98 9038 0542. [F12-06].

Male, 31, BE (Electronics and Telecommunications), working as Software Developer with Microsoft, in Seattle. Contact mahrukhg@hotmail.com. [M12-07].

Female, 25, 5' 10", Commerce graduate, in family construction business in Mumbai. Interested in boy with a business background, preferably from Mumbai. Contact anaishac@gmail.com. [F12-08].

Male, 39, Solicitor (Mumbai) and S. Ct. of England and Wales, placed with prestigious legal firm in Mumbai. Contact maneknmanek@gmail.com. [M12-10].

Male, 32, 5' 10", MS (Electrical Engineering) from US

University, Circuit Design Engineer with firm in California. Hobbies include gliding, reading, movies. From loving, close-knit family with good family values. Contact anosh.d@gmail.com. [M12-11].

Male, 30, 5' 7", MIS and MBA in Information Technology, manager at University in Sydney, Australia. Interests include a passion for computers, travel, cricket, learning guitar, listening to good music, reading and tasting different cuisines. Contact naren_28@hotmail.com. [M12-12].

Male, 36, Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree from Wharton. Well placed as Operations Technology Manager in reputable company on the US East Coast. Contact ztechmgr@hotmail.com [M12-13].

Looking for a Soul Mate? Try these matrimonial sites and services:

www.chaalokaajkariye.com (new website, launched in 2011)

www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com

www.zoroastrians.net

www.TheParsiMatch.com

www.shaadi.com

www.ParsiMatrimony.com

www.ParsiShaadi.com

www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com

Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, goolpesi@gmail.com, tel: 91-22-2416 6120.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Reviewed by Shazeen R Gandhi

Memories and Impressions of Switzerland Ten short Stories

Anita Sumariwalla

BOOKS
ARTS &

pps

638 Xlibris Corporation

Paperback \$23.99; Hardcopy \$34.99

e.book \$9.99

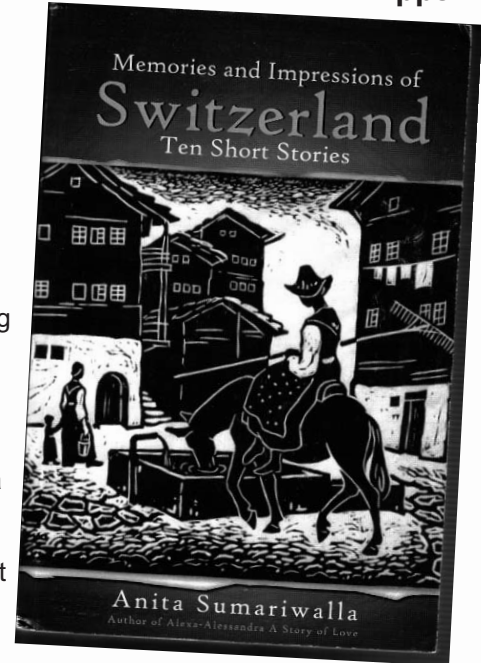
ISBN 078-1-4568-8631-8

Anita Sumariwalla's second book, *Memories and Impressions of Switzerland*, is a compilation of ten short stories. Although the book is long, there is a certain charm and uniqueness about these stories, that keeps you wanting to read more.

All the stories are set in Switzerland, and involve characters from all realms of Swiss society. As can be expected the stories are of a universal nature, with love being a central theme in all of them. But, they are told gently, and with great empathy. This is largely a matter of voice. Sumariwalla writes with such a nuance, that it almost feels like you are sitting in a French café, across the table from a Swiss friend, listening to stories pour from her mouth – accent and all. It is a bit uncanny but it gives the read an authentic feel.

Sumariwalla was born and brought up in Switzerland. And although she immigrated to the United States in 1961, she has made several extended visits to Switzerland to visit her family and walk in her “beloved Swiss mountains” since that time. Sumariwalla's love for the country of her birth is evident in each story, which paints as vivid picture of the beautiful Swiss countryside as that of the characters that move the story. The mind's eye is further aided in imagining the beautiful setting in which these stories take place by the sketches and drawings that accompany each story. These are reproductions of drawings by the author's mother, Marta Hurlimann, a well-known Basel artist and teacher.

All in all, *Memories and Impressions of Switzerland* is an unusual, but gratifying read, for the American bookworm.



**JASHAN PRAYERS WITH UNDERSTANDING
TEXT AND TRANSLATION FROM
“MY PRAYER GUIDE”
BY DASTOORJI N.D. MINOCHEHER-HOMJI**

**AVAILABLE FROM
ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF CHICAGO
METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**

Hot Tea Across India

By Rishad Saam Mehta

BOOKS
ARTS &

Published in India by Tranquebar, 2011,
pps 188; \$15 .

ISBN: 978-93-81626-10-8

Rishad Saam Mehta is described as a travel writer and all-round road trip junkie, and his latest work, *Hot Tea Across India*, captures some of his most interesting experiences. Rishad traverses India in various modes of transportation, such as a motorbike (his Bullet has an adventure to tell), hitch-hiking on a truck, and in numerous cars, buses and trains. His journeys are detailed in each chapter, with beautifully told antidotes regarding his many exploits along the way. Rishad's personal antidotes and asides will have you laughing from beginning to end. The simple pleasure of a cup of tea permeates the chapters in some manner, but how those cups of tea come to be are the fascinating narratives revealed along the way.

Rishad Mehta states, *"A cup of hot tea has been an integral part of every adventure I've had and every journey I've made in India."* His adventures have been many and his journeys have crisscrossed Indian roads with the total distance measuring in the thousands of kilometers traveled. That is the reference point one must remember when reading this book, this is an author who has walked the walk and can therefore talk the talk from personal experience. The book is laid out in individual short story chapters, with some linking to the next but otherwise telling of yet another adventure. One of the authors' greatest strengths lies in enabling the readers mind to so clearly visualize the landscape, the current situation he is detailing, and most importantly the feel for the personal connections he makes with the locals throughout his various journeys.



Road trips can be as mundane as driving from one point to another or they can be as adventures as traversing desolate mountain passes on a motorbike, alone. Rishad Mehta's quests seemed to routinely border on the high adrenalin rushing types, but surprisingly, these same journeys produce soul searching moments to ponder on. The author details one such journey that was 10 years in the making - a solo motorcycle trip that starts in Delhi and ends in Kashmir, the adventure of a lifetime! This excursion was via the high road to Leh, the road that goes over five mountain passes and is the epitome of motorcycling in India. This 2000-kilometer ride, over the span of a month, begins with tales of the simple task of getting a motorcycle from Mumbai to Delhi by train, or maybe not so simple! From there the seemingly breath taking journey of a man and his bike enthalls the reader through the landscapes of northern India and Kashmir. The exploits along the way, so well spun into a beautiful tale, bring you directly to the foothills of the Himalayas.

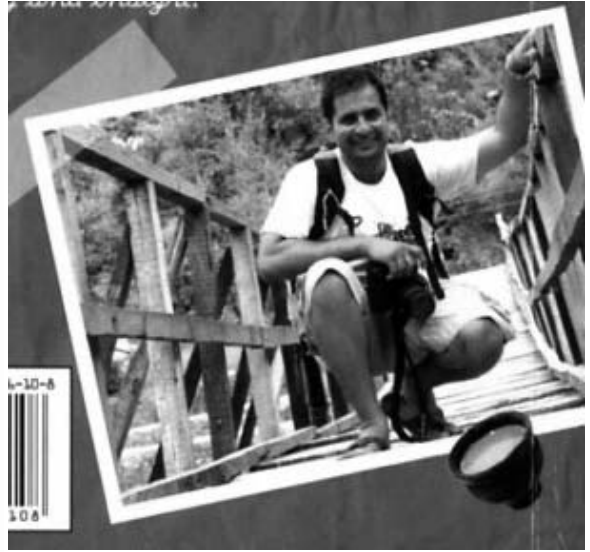
To take part in an automobile rally is one thing, to take part in the Raid-de-Himalaya – the world's highest automobile rally is yet another, winning the toughest of these races to date, is what Rishad Mehta accomplished.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Reviewed by Keshvar Buhariwalla

Explore with Rishad the human spirit of the lone soldier on an outpost in Kashmir, the nomad whose traveling satchel creates culinary delights over wood burning stoves and the many chai wallas who have intriguing stories to tell. The tale of Rishad Mehta and his dear friend Chetan hitchhiking on a truck from Mumbai to Delhi encompasses life on the road and lessons learned on pasteurized milk, you will laugh out loud. This and many other fascinating adventures await the reader. Rishad Mehta shows you India and her people, the beauty, charm and warmth of both clearly dominate the pages. This book is available on Amazon and to learn more about the author, visit him at www.rishad.co.in.

Keshvar Buhariwalla lives in Flower Mound, Texas with her husband Kali and her three sons. She is active in the Zoroastrian Association of North Texas and enjoys participating in her local book club and running group.



Laughter in the House: 20th Century Parsi Theatre

By Meher Marfatia, illustrated by Sooni Taraporevala

Published by 49/50 Books, 2011, pps 285

Rs. 2,500, available from Jame Jamshed , Mumbai

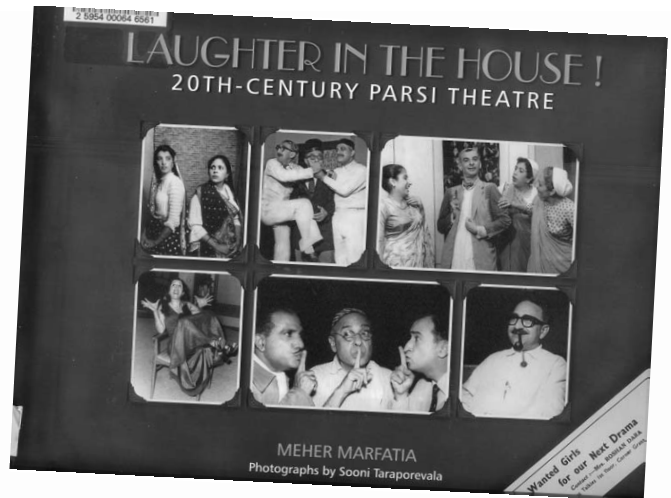
ISBN 978-81-921367-0-7

Reviewed by Jangoo Mistry

Have you ever laughed so hard in a play that tears rolled down your cheeks and your stomach hurt so much that you wanted the actors to stop, if just for a few seconds, so that you could recover? It happened to me when my parents took me to see Behram Ni Sasu.

Now along comes the delightful new addition to Parsi literature: "Laughter in the House: 20th-Century Parsi Theatre", that will bring those childhood memories back to life. Written by Meher Marfatia, the book is gorgeously illustrated by the famous award-winning Sooni Taraporevala. This "unabashed journey of joy dedicated to the community that knows how to laugh at itself" will delight you.

The author, Meher Marfatia, is former assistant editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India and is now a free-lance



writer who also writes a column for the Jam-e-Jamshed newspaper. Long in the making, this volume allows her to blend both her passions: reporting on the performing arts, as well as the culture of the Zoroastrian community.

Right in the beginning, the book sets the stage beautifully with a spread of advertisements used for the different plays, followed by several full-page photographs of various scenes from the plays with the names of the performers, the name of the play, and the year in which it was shown.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Reviewed by Jangoo Mistry

The book is neatly divided into vignettes of playwrights and directors, male and female comedians like Ruby Patel and Dinyar Contractor, supporting artistes who designed the sets and provided the music that brought these plays to life.

The interesting history of serious Parsi theatre is traced from 1850 till the turning point production of Adi Marzban's Piroja Bhavan in 1954 which started the production of social comedies handling universal themes like love and marriage.

In perhaps the most fascinating chapters of the book, the author paints portraits of four of the most heralded writers of the era -- Adi Marzban, Pheroze Antia, Dorab Mehta, and Homi Tavadia. Amazingly versatile, broadly educated, and steeped in Western arts and culture, these authors were gifted with a natural sense of humor. But they were strict disciplinarians, and demanded nothing short of perfection from their cast and crew. Padma Shri Adi Marzban, for example, who was a prolific writer, producer, director, actor, radio personality and newspaper editor, had studied theatre arts in Pasadena, California, and was incredibly well-read with sweeping interests. Credited with close to 100 Parsi Gujarati plays and author of close to 5,000 radio scripts, the genius had some eccentricities of his own. He slept in a stiff, straight line on one narrow side of the bed; the rest of the space was entirely devoted to books laid out in piles across the mattress. Playwright Dorab Mehta wrote 300 plays and authored the award-winning weekly column Jamaas ni Jiloo in Jam-e-Jamshed for 54 years! But Adi Marzban looms large over everything and everybody else in the book, just like he did in real life.

The Parsi Gujarati Theatre's role as a vital strand of the Indian National Theatre (INT) is often not recognized. In fact, the Parsi wing of INT produced many memorable plays like Tirangi Tehmul and Taru Maru Bakalyu with an ensemble of Parsi and Gujarati actors and directors working together and delighting mixed audiences.

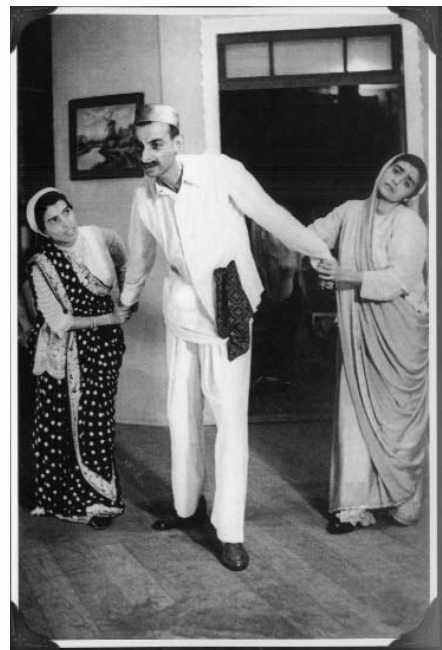
To complete the chronicle of the Parsi Theatre in the 20th century, the book devotes a few pages to the fledgling efforts in Calcutta and Surat to keep the Parsi theatre going, as well as those outside of India -- in Australia, America and Canada. But these efforts have been sporadic and have not been able to consistently bring back the golden age of 60s and 70s.

Mumbai was the fountainhead of "koyla naataks", but there were home-grown troupers from Ahmedabad to Hyderabad. A little corny, a little slapstick, and often



bordering on the absurd and outrageous, the naataks nevertheless provided fun and laughter in more innocent times. The very names that the plays were given set the expectations for slapstick humor: Mua Luchaa, Kataryu Gap, Gustadji Ghore Charya, Pakar Maru Puchhru, Tirangi Tehmul, Taru Maru Bakalyu, Hamlet no Omelette.

Unfortunately, from the heydays of the 60s and 70s to the 1990s, the Parsi theatre has been on a steady downhill dip with lazy plots and worn-out themes. Poor audience attendance, desertion of the Gujarati language by younger members of our community, and inferior productions have almost extinguished the Parsi theatre as we knew it before. The brilliant way the scripts were written, directed and acted is nowhere to be found. There are no comedians like Jimmy Pocha, who would be greeted by deafening whistles and whoops when they made their entry on the stage. There are no performers like the ones of



BETWEEN THE COVERS

yesteryear who had to wait for minutes before the thunderous applause would die down and they could utter a single line. John Steinbeck said: "Theatre is the only institution in the world which has been dying for four thousand years and never succumbed". Will this hold good for the Parsi theatre, or will we just regretfully resign ourselves to accepting that the age of the Parsi nataak has passed, never to return?

Laughter in the House makes for a great coffee table book that you will want to pick up again and again to lift your spirits. It is an over-sized book (9-1/2" by 12"), printed on glossy paper with excellent photographs that will bring a smile to your face every time you see them. The book comes with an audio CD of 4 original soundtracks, including the 960 revue Hasa Has, Adi Marzban's Parsi Qawwali, and songs by Dinshaw Daji.

The theatre, of course, is its people. What the book succeeds in doing so well is bringing back to life those incredibly talented writers and performers, their memories, their struggles, and their successes. They brought a touching simplicity to a generation that derived pleasure from simple things.

Meher Marfatia set out to write a book *"that presents the best and brightest theatrics from a forgotten era"*. In that she has succeeded brilliantly. This is not a book that you sit down and read from cover to cover in one sitting. It is a narration in words and pictures that you pick up from time to time and enjoy in little doses. It is awareness, fun, and nostalgia all wrapped up in an attractive package. Milton Berle once said: "Laughter is an instant vacation". Take a vacation with Laughter in the House. You'll be glad you did.

"Jangoo Mistry worked at Ford Motor Company in Detroit for 32 years, and is now working and living in Houston. He is a member of the ZAH Library Committee and on the Board of WZCC's Houston Chapter."

Days of Transition: The Parsi Death Rituals

Authors: Dorothea Luddeckens and Ramiyar Karanjia

Review By: Ervad Gustad M. Panthaki

Published Wallstein Verlag, Gottingen 2011 Pages 175

ISBN 978-3-8353-0837-4

Reviewed by: Ervad Gustad M. Panthaki

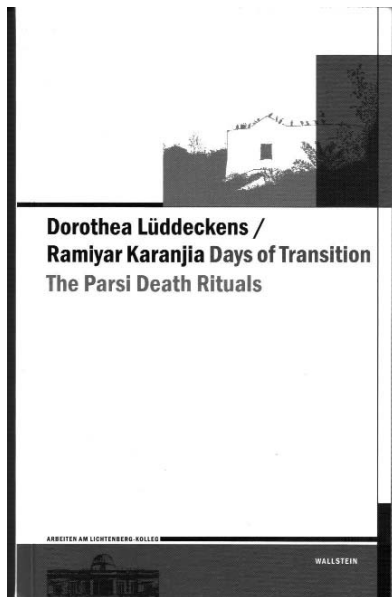
Days of Transition is a compact 146 page study of Zoroastrian death rituals. Prior to it, only Rististan (1917, in Gujarati) by Ervad Shariyarji D. Bharucha, and a 47 page monograph entitled Funeral Customs and Ceremonies of the Parsis in India by Homi Dhalla, were available for reference.

Days of Transition is divided into eight sections: Introduction, Zoroastrianism, Concepts Related to Death Rituals, Ritual Context, Death Rituals and their Theoretical Interpretation, Zoroastrian Death Rituals: Break and Continuity, Epilogue, and Appendices.

Luddeckens' fieldwork experience is the basis of the text, and Karanjia acted as her counsel, answering questions which she posed to him during the writing process. Luddeckens' 'fieldwork' was to observe an enactment of Parsi funeral practises by Doongarwadi attendants. She (Luddeckens) gives a useful overview of dokhmenashini and Zoroastrian theology, noting that the later term (theology) with reference to an academic standard (accepted by all) is lacking which makes it difficult to separate 'correct practises' from 'interpretations'. It is mentioned that more than 90% of Bombay Parsis support

dokhmanashini, despite the constant debates regarding the rationality of cremation in lieu of a declining vulture population.

Perhaps it is a fault of the translation (from German to English), but since this book is meant for more than an academic audience, it would have been better to convey many concepts with an ease of explanation without using terms/words such as: emic, missiology and parti pris. Such writing style, in the case of academia or novella, belongs to a bygone age and presently conveys a snooty unapproachable character of preaching/lecturing which I am sure the authors did not intend.



In the second chapter, one reads that it was not until the 4th or 6th century CE that the written tradition of Avesta began. There are contradictory opinions to this in *Outlines of Parsi History* by Dastur (Dr) H. K. Mirza (pp.282-283), and in *A Grammar of The Pahlavi Language* by Peshotun Dastur Behramjee Sunjana (Introduction pp.6-10). Both of these works conclude that that an Avesta canon was compiled in Pahlavi.

For those who question the importance of rituals in any religion, Luddeckens reflects on page 33 that “practices constitute and reflect the living religion”, and that rituals provide “three important functions: to provide a link with the unseen world; to invoke and express gratitude to divinities; and to represent religious doctrines in a symbolic manner”. Further to this point, it is very nice that the author has compiled *Seven Pillars of Zoroastrianism* to coherently outline the tenets of faith.

In the third chapter, Luddeckens provides a prelude to death rituals by explaining the role of humans to fight against evil and bring about Fraso-Keret. The nine components

of the human body as given in the Avesta (Yasna 55:1) are explained, giving a brief account for each. Luddeckens has organized some informative passages about Ahura Mazda, Angra Mainyu, the Amesha Spentas, the Yazatas, and Fire. On page 42 we read that “although Parsis are unanimous regarding God’s omniscience and purely positive ‘nature’, positions differ with regard to his omnipotence”. It is not clear what this means. Luddeckens might be referring to the theory of certain sections of Zoroastrian scholars, that Ahura Mazda is equal to Angra Mainyu; which is from this reviewer’s perspective, a misunderstanding of Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, resulting from a concern to determine the origins of evil. As Dastur (Dr.) H. K. Mirza writes: “Thinkers and philosophers of all countries devoted time and energy all these ages to this problem of evil.....None of these theories and beliefs satisfies all thinking minds in all countries! Evil remains an eternal and universal problem!” (Mirza’s reply to *The Breakdown Of The Zoroastrian Tradition As Viewed From A Contemporary Perspective* by Khojeste Mistree)

Within a discussion on eschatology, on page 53, Luddeckens writes that in the Vd. 19,30-32, “the figure of a young woman with two dogs appears”. However, two dogs are not at all mentioned in Vd. 19,30-32; only a young woman is mentioned in Vd. 19,30 (Gujrati Translation of Vendidad by Er. K. E. Kanga), while the Pahlavi Vendidad 19,30 notes a well shaped (a maid) possessing the dogs. On page 54, Luddeckens writes that “the soul enters an afterlife that is positive or negative in nature based on the way life was lived on earth (cf. Y. 48,7; Y. 49,7-11)”. Yet, Y. 48,7 and Y. 49,7-9 make no such reference to justify the previous statement. On page 58 it would be helpful to indicate that ‘the soul of the righteous one go up above the Hara-berezaiti’ is an

allusion to the height of Mount Alborz.

On page 63, Luddeckens quotes Choksy (1989, p.10), that “each aspect of the world.... entire religious cosmos. Protection of the material creations from impurity is, therefore, believed to safeguard the gods and the whole universe”. I find this to be a typical misinterpretation of the Vendidad. It seems more reasonable that the purpose of the purity injunctions is to protect human beings and natural elements from nasu. Further to this, Bharucha in *Rististan* gives an excellent commentary on the topic. There is no reason to believe that our present awareness for environment and ecology is unique, or was absent in a culture that was once nomadic and dependant on the cycle of nature for its maintenance. Amitav Ghosh has written in the novel *Sea of Poppies*, that the gifts such as fire and water which Nature gives us, should be used with the greatest care and caution. There can be no doubt that this awareness of connection to nature, was more predominant among the Persians.

The fourth and fifth chapters of *Days of Transition* contain a map of the Doongarvadi, a description of the buildings, the aspects of the sagri, the bunglis, Dakhma, the funeral ground; all of which are very well described. The only criticism of this, is that Luddeckens should have presented a larger map of all of this material which is very intricate. There are five Dakhmas built on the Doongarvadi site. The description of a Dakhma with its wonderful architectural plan will be welcomed by most readers. Similarly, the description of the chotra and its use is necessary, because most people would not be familiar with it (discontinued in use over the last decade). Luddeckens describes the upper and the lower bunglis, with measurement and amenities.

On pages 71-76 we read about priests: training, initiation, full-time

and part-time priests, prestige, working hours, pay. It explains designations; Ervad, Mobed, Dastur, Panthaki, and scholar priest. According to Er. (Dr) Ramiyar Karanjia, a scholar priest is a recently coined term; of unknown origin, but in use since 1990. Currently there are three scholar priests: Ramiyar Karanjia, Rooyintan Peer and Pervez Bajan. There is no information available about who confers the title.

The work, qualification, grades and restrictions about corpse-bearers are briefly explained on pages 76-77. There are very interesting and informative passages on the Inner and Outer rituals, Padyab-kusti, Obligatory (Farziyat) prayers, how to offer homage after a ceremony (loban mookvu), Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo, and the term taking and leaving the Baj, which are presented between pages 78-87. It is good that the author noted that the Zoroastrian liturgical day starts with sunrise (Havan geh), hence the second uthamna takes place in the last geh (Ushahen) of the third day after the death.

Luddeckens provides information on pages 82-83 as to why when reciting prayers for the dead, a priest may shorten Jas me avanghe Mazda and omit Ahmai raesca and Kerfeh Mozd. However, the quoted information of Y. 30,5 and 9,25 for sudreh and kusti, should read Y. 30,5 and 9,26. On page 83 we read Ashem Vohu And Yatha Ahu Vairyo correspond to Yasna 27,14 and 27,13 respectively. Yet, the current Yasna text used by priests and seminary students show only 12 verses. Therefore, Luddeckens should have mentioned that she is

referring to the version of the text by Prof. Geldner.

Between pages 90 to 132 ,all important ceremonies and procedures - from before death to muktad - are described briefly and fairly accurate. Chapter 5 is a single chapter describing death ceremonies and procedures. Pages 90-103 provide information rarely found in other books; preparation before death and after death, how to dress the dead body, sagdid (viewing of the dog), sejdo etc. However, it is wrong to write, on page 99, that the "...the brain is still functioning and the words of the Geh saranu prayer, if heard...", because a body is not accepted into the Doongarwadi without a doctor's Death Certificate (i.e. brain dead confirmed). On page 105 one encounters the "Ox-Soul" in Yasna 28,1 which is a typical Western translation of the word "geus urva", instead of its meaning as 'soul of the universe'. We read on page 106, that according to tradition, the Ahunavaiti Gatha has the power to sever the connection between the body and the spirit. Perhaps the authors should have mentioned which tradition this is (or whose)? Because, if it is true, then those priests who daily perform Yasna ceremonies would not survive! One may refer to Dastur Dabu in Rahnuma e din, pages 516-520, for an alternate and excellent explanation of the geh sarana. Luddeckens mentions on page 113, footnote 40, that "in the course of the Afringan ceremonies various foods, drinks and flowers are consecrated". However, items in the Afringan ceremonies are offered as gifts and are not consecrated. The consecration is done during pav mahel (inner ritual) ceremonies (refer to Dastur Dabu, Athravan no Dini Prakash, pp.44-45). One encounters on page 121, the Afringan of Dahman Yazad, yet there is no Dahman Yazad in Zoroastrian ceremonies, only Dahm Yazad. The Afringan of Dahman also known as

Hamakara Afringan, is performed almost daily, whereas Afringan of Dahm Yazad is performed only once, on the third day in Ushahin geh after the death (refer to Dastur Kotwal, Zarhosti Dharma ane Kriyao vishe Lakhano, page 81). Luddeckens has written (pg.127) that the muktad ceremony originally consisted only of five days (the Gatha days), however there is no reference for this surprising bit of information.

In sections 6.1 and 6.2, Luddeckens commentary regarding the Zoroastrian death rituals, indicates that she has not understood that two factors are core features: preserving natural elements of air, water, earth, fire; and protecting the living from nasu (infection). Moreover, Luddeckens seems not to distinguish between the Soul (Av. Urvan) and the Spirit/Divine Spark (Av. Fravashi). It is the Fravashi that remains forever, and not Soul. All Zoroastrian ceremonies after the fourth day from the individual being deceased, are for the Fravashi.

In the final analysis, Days of Transition provides a commentary to an enactment of death ceremonies, which is devoid of much of the context of the meaning and purpose of these rituals. It is surprising that two academics (Luddeckens and Karanjia) did not afford enough attention to a general edit of this work, which contains many small errors (for example page 151: a Dadgah fire, is not a consecrated fire—the building for this fire is consecrated). Nevertheless, no book length examination of death rituals/ceremony has been produced since 1917, and as such Luddeckens and Karanjia have attempted a monumental task. Hopefully this will contribute to further discussion and literature surrounding the topic.



FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (FEZANA)

Registered address: 5750 South Jackson Street, Hinsdale, IL 60521 USA

www.fezana.org

FEZANA Office: 8615 Meadowbrook Dr., Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Administrator: Zenobia Damania admin@fezana.org tel 630-468-2705

EZANA OFFICERS

President: Bomi Patel, 4296 Mountcastle Way, San Jose, CA 95136, Tel: 408-264-4395, bomifezana@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Katayun Kapadia, 33, preamble Drive, Mt Laurel, NJ 08054, Tel 856-722-1030 kkatayun@msn.com

Treasurer: Ratan P Mistry, 1258, Water Lily Way, San Jose, CA 95129 USA Tel:408-642-1201. ratanmistry@hotmail.com

Secretary: Nahid Dashtaki, 12851 Longden St, Garden Grove, CA 92845 USA. Tel 714 390-4838. ndashtaki@gmail.com,

Asst. Secretary: Shiraz Mavalvalla, 8191 Bowcock Road, Richmond, BC. V6Y 1C1 Tel 604 274-4973 shizaitalia@hotmail.com

FEZANA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Zoroastrian Association of Alberta, (ZAA): President: Neelum Austin, 316-30 McHugh Court N.E. Calgary, Alberta T2E 7X3 Tel 403-271-1273 bpaiji@shaw.ca

Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC): Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, 8900 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2R5, Canada, Tel: 604-420-3500, President: Homi Italia, Tel: 604-438-2076 Homiitalia@hotmail.com

Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF): 4244 Taffey Crescent, Mississauga, ON L5L 2J2, President Jal Panthaky Tel: 905-568-4946, jal_panthaky@yahoo.ca

Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO): Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2M 3S6, Tel: 416-733-4586, President: Daraius Bharucha, Tel: 905-427-3177, dbharuc593@rogers.com

Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ): President: Faranak Firoozi, 4220 Melrose, Montreal, Que, Canada H4A 2S4 Tel 514-486-6408 farankfiroozi@yahoo.com

California Zoroastrian Center (CZC): 8952 Hazard Avenue, Westminster, CA 92683, Tel: 714-893-4737 info@czc.org President: Shiva Khorshidian; Rep Dr Sohrab Salamatipour

Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA): President: Tahamton Aresh, Tel: 949-759-0519.

Zarthushti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC): President: Nazneen Spliedt, Tel: 650-624-8888, nazehler@aol.com

Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) President Tehmi Damania, 1424E Walnut Avenue, Orange CA 92691 Tel 949-583-9973 tdamania@zacla.org

Persian Zoroastrian Organization (California) (PZO): 10468 Crothers Road, San Jose, CA 95127, Tel: 408-251-7408, President: Hooshang Mehrshshi, hooshang@pzo.info; contact@pzo.info

Zoroastrian Association of Rocky Mountain (Colorado) (ZARM): President: Neville Rustonjee,, Neville_rust@hotmail.com

Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (District of Columbia and Washington DC suburbs) (ZAMWI): President Mehrdad Aidun: zamwi_president@yahoo.com

Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF): President: Jahabux B Daruwala,, Tel: 305-792-4225, Address: 21050 Point Place, Apt. # 1205 Aventura, FL 33180 jisam@comcast.net

Atlanta Zarthushti Association (Georgia)(AZA): Representative: Cyrus Aidun : Tel 404-894-6645

Cyrus.aidun@me.gatech.edu; Farzan Bharucha, President,

Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (Illinois) (ZAC-Chi): Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Hinsdale, IL 60521, Tel: 630-789-1983, President: Dinaz Weber Tel 630-830-3430 kenanddina@yahoo.com

Zoroastrian Association of Kansas (ZAK): President: Daryoush Jahanian, P.O. Box 30011, Kansas City , MO 64112 Tel 630-334-4084 djahanian@gmail.com

Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana (ZAKOI): President: Abad Kelawala, Columbus, Ohio akelawala@yahoo.com; www.zakoi.org

Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (Massachusetts) (ZAGBA): President: Aspi Engineer, 2B Prescott Way, Woburn, MA 01801 Tel: 781- 938-0195, aspidengineer@gmail.com

Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM) President: Neville Bugli, 42729 Wimbledon Way, Novi, Michigan MI 48377 Tel 248-926-9626 nbugli@sbcglobal.net

Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania, New Jersey & Delaware (ZAPANJ): President Freny Ranji, 726 White Horse Pike, Collingswood, NJ 08017 Tel: 856-854-2251 dinyar@msn.com

Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (NY City Area) (ZAGNY): 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY 10901, Tel: 845-362-2104, President Gev Nentin 631-462-0763. nentin@optonline.net

Iranian Zoroastrian Association (New York City Area) (IZA): 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY 10901, Tel: 845-362-2104, President :Shirin Kosravi, Tel: 631-470-0884, sherrykiamane@hotmail.com



Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA): President Sarosh Sepai, Tel 724-234-2228
president@za-pa.org, secretary@za-pa.org

Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (Texas)(ZANT): President Zal Parakh
 Tel:214-616-1484,
zal_parakh@yahoo.com
president@zant.org; www.zant.org

Zoroastrian Association of Houston (Texas) (ZAH): 8787 West Airport Blvd, Houston, TX 77071, Representative: Sarosh Collector, Tel: 713-882-8465,
scollector@cdadvisorsinc.com

Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS): President: Mitra Khosravi, Tel: 425-945-1221,
zsws1@yahoo.com

FEZANA CORRESPONDING MEMBERS (SMALL GROUPS)

Zoroastrian Association of Atlantic Canada (ZAAC): Secretry KianBehizade, Kian_behi@yahoo.com

Zoroastrian Association of Arizona (ZAAZ): President: Perseus B. Munshi,
 Tel: 480-705- 4797
pbumunshi@gmail.com

San Diego Zoroastrian Community: Chair: Hoshang Khambatta, Tel: 858-450-0190, khambatta@sbcglobal.net

Central Florida Zoroastrian Community: Chair: Sarvar Demehri, Tel: 407-767-9799, sarvar1@aol.com

Zarathushti Association of Tampa Bay (ZATAMBAY): Chair: Soli Dastur, Tel: 941-351-2240,
dastur@comcast.net

Zarathushti Association of New Orleans: (ZANO): Chair Rohinton & Armin Tarapore, Tel: 504-443-1929,
rktarapore@cox.net

Minnesota Zoroastrian Community: Chair: Jehangir Rudina, Tel: 952-898-2980, jerudina@aol.com

St. Louis Zoroastrian Community: Chair: Persis and Minoo Mehta, Tel: 314-569-1828, pmhelix@yahoo.com

Cleveland Zoroastrian Community: Chair: Kamal Mehta, Tel: 440-944-1181, knmkersi@aol.com

Zoroastrian Center of Austin Texas: (zcat): Chair: Ketty & Aspi Wadia, Tel: 512-263-3131, kwadia@austin.it.com

Zoroastrian Association of Virginia: (To be ratified): chair: Rummy Mohta, Tel: 804-639-6977, richtrvl@aol.com



Zarathushthrian Association of Norway
Wishes a very happy Norouz and all the best in the new year of 3750 Mazda Yasni.

انجمن زرتشتیان نوروز
 فرخنده جشن نوروز جمشیدی و فرا
 رسیدن سال ۳۷۵۰ مزدیسنی را به
 زرتشتیان نوروز شاد باش می‌گوید.



DET NORSKE
 ZARATHUSHTHRISKE
 TROSSAMFUNN

انجمن زرتشتیان نوروز

www.dnzt.org

TLF: 957 55 306

Subscription Rates (US dollars)

	US	Canada	Overseas (Air)
1 year	US \$ 25	Can \$25	US \$ 50
2 years	US \$ 45	Can \$45	US \$ 90
3 years	US \$ 70	Can \$70	US \$120

Single Issue: \$5 plus shipping (US - \$5.00, Canada - \$5.00, Overseas Air-only - \$15 for 1 to 3 copies). **Full set of archival Journals**, 1991 - 2005: \$225 plus shipping. "Periodical Rate" may take upto 2 months (for UK, Europe) and upto 4 months (for Asia, Australia, Far East).

Advertising Rates (in US dollars)

To advertise contact: Dolly Dastoor Tel 450-656-2036 e.mail dollydastoor@sympatico.ca

	Full page	Half page	Quarter Page	1/8 Page
Per Issue	US\$200	US\$100	US\$ 50	US\$ 30
Per 4 Issues	US\$600	US\$300	US\$150	US\$100

Covers: Inside front \$350; Inside back \$300; Outside \$500. **Fourth ad free.**

FEZANA JOURNAL Subscription/Advertisement/ Sponsorship Rates

Sponsor an Issue

To sponsor an issue of the Journal, contact

Dolly Dastoor [see left].

Individual Sponsorship is \$1500

Group Sponsorship is \$300 each
(five or more sponsors)

All sponsors will be duly
acknowledged in the Journal.

All amounts are in US dollars

**FEZANA Journal depends on your
subscriptions, donations, advertisements and sponsorship**

**Please check your address label for your subscription status
Renew for multiple years to avoid book-keeping**

----- Cut Here -----

FEZANA JOURNAL Subscription/Donation/Address Change Form

Make additional copies as needed. Enclose check or money order **in US dollars**, payable to "FEZANA", and mail to: **Kershaw Khumbatta, 1455 Hwy.6 South, Sugarland, TX 77478, /Fax Credit Card orders to 281-313-8036 (after 6 pm). journalsubscription@yahoo.com** enquiries/updates contact: **Arnavaz Sethna, email: asethna@comcast.net, tel: 281-499-1832.**

Total enclosed (US funds only):

Subscription: \$_____ for _____ years
o airmail

Donation: \$_____ Fund*

Total amount: \$_____

* Funds are: General, Welfare, Critical Assistance, Religious Education, Scholarship and Fezana Journal

Cardholder authorizes payment by issuer identified below, and agrees to comply with the obligations set forth in the Cardholder agreement with the issuer. Only Visa or Mastercard accepted.

☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD

Expiration date (Mo/Yr): __ / __

Cardholder's Signature. Cardholder's name (Fill out
(reqd for credit card purchase) address on credit card below).

Billing address on credit card, if different from above: _____

Peel off and attach address label from last issue of your Journal
(or copy it here by hand including expiry date)

Personal Subscription ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Gift Subscription ☐ New ☐ Renewal
(Fill out donor's name and address in box above)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Dr _____
Last name First name

Middle Initial _____

Street _____ Apt.No. _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/PIN _____

Country _____ Tel. No. _____ Fax. No. _____

Email address _____

☐ Check here if this is an address change