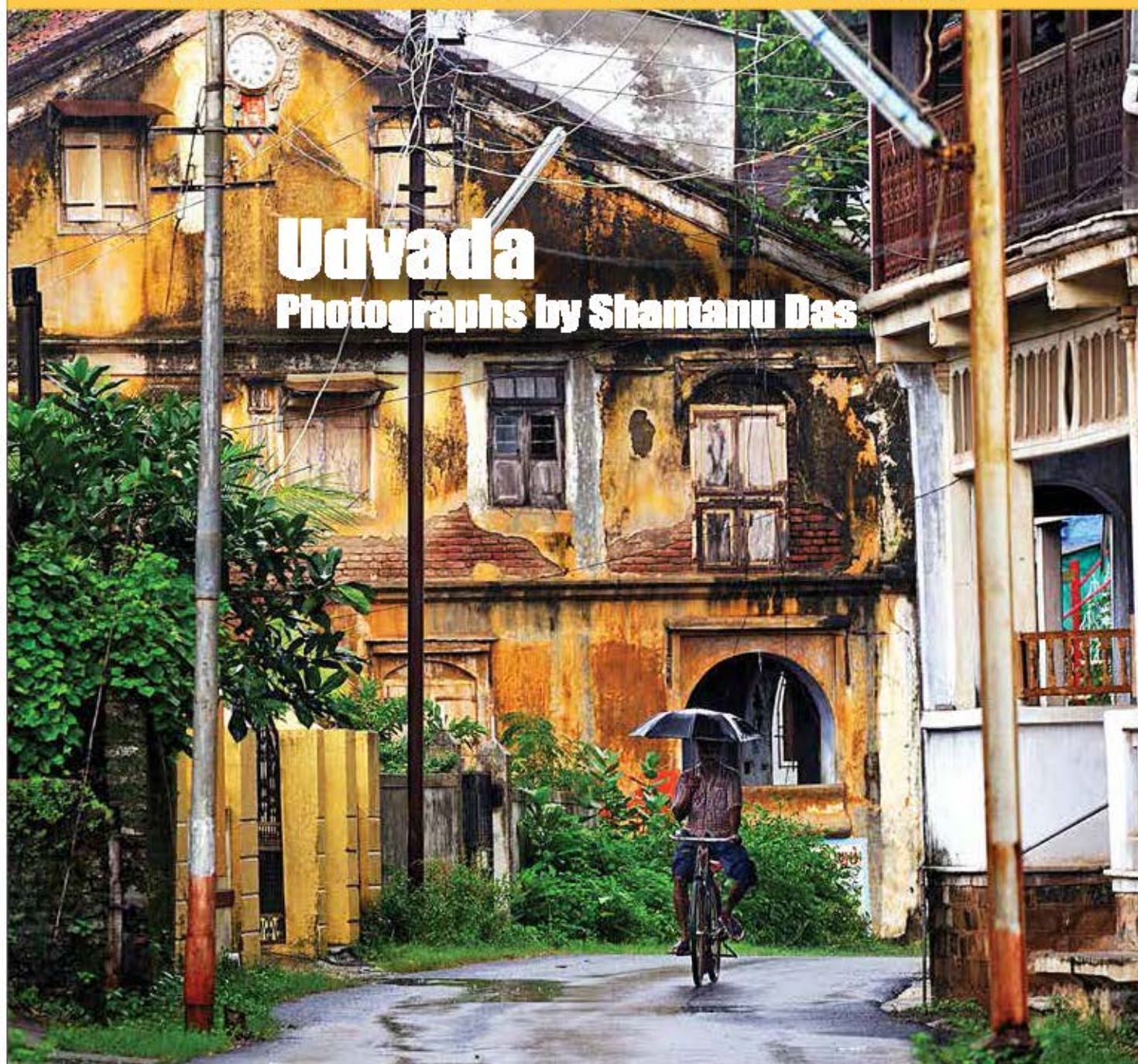


# JOURNAL

Fravadin – Ardibehešt – Khordad 1383 AY (Fasil) • Avan – Adar – Dae 1383 AY (Shenshal) • Adar – Dae – Behman 1383 AY (Kadimi)

**NOROOZ PIROOZ BAD NOROOZ MUBARAK**



**PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA**

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# FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

Vol 28 No 1 March / Spring 2014, Bahar 1383 AY 3752 Z



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a volunteer correspondent  
or reporter

### CONTACT

editor(@)fezana.org

**Editor in Chief:** Dolly Dastoor, editor(@)fezana.org

**Technical Assistant:** Coomi Gazdar

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

**Language Editor:** Douglas Lange

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

**Cover design:** Feroza Fitch, ffitch(@)lexicongraphics.com

**Publications Chair:** Behram Pastakia bpastakia(@)aol.com

**Columnists:** Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi: rabadis(@)gmail.com;

Teenaz Javat: teenazjavat(@)hotmail.com; Mahrukh Motafram:  
mahrukhm83(@)gmail.com

**Copy editors:** Vahishta Canteenwalla, Yasmin Pavri

**Subscription Managers:** Arnavaz Sethna: ahsethna(@)yahoo.com;

Kershaw Khumbatta: Arnavaz Sethna(@)yahoo.com



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Mr Shantanu Das

### SUMMER 2014

Zoroastrians of Central Asia

### FALL 2014

Gahambars: a tradition to perpetuate

Guest Editors

Ervad Soli Dastur and Kayomارش Mehta

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

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## A word from the Editor

Spring has finally arrived and the winter of 2013 has ended. For those of us living on the eastern part of the continent, it was a nightmare that never seemed to end. Some areas were more hard hit than others with broken water pipes, frozen water pipes, leaking roofs and leaking basements. But we all survived, thanking Ahura Mazda that we were not in a Tsunami, or in a hurricane or in the path of a mud slide, or at the bottom of the ocean with the lost flight MH 370 drowned with all our hopes and dreams

But what can we learn from all this?. Nature always has a message, which we often do not heed -- that however exquisitely our brains grow, developing mind-boggling inventions, the creator of this magnificent universe is supreme, S/He created it and s/he can destroy it so we need to live each day to its fullest with the principles of *Ushta and Asha*.

The Spring issue of the Journal is always full of our young achievers excelling in various disciplines, viz. academics, arts, dance, sports, winning awards and scholarships. It is also gratifying to see the proliferation of scholarships given by other FEZANA member associations as well as the Chothia and Vakshoori Foundations. The amounts of the scholarship though not exorbitant, are very decent. We thank our donors sincerely. For without the donors there would be no scholarship program. "Education", as Nelson Mandela had said, "is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the mind". And to progress on this continent, the mind set of the new generation needs to be opened.

In this journal we publish three sets of papers presented at the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress *The History of Udvada*, by Dasturji Mirza; *The Present State of Affairs in Udvada* by Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, abstracted by Ervad Soli Dastur from the transcript; the very important panel on *Demography and the way forward :Issues of Fertility and Solutions* . In addition we publish the in their entirety the presentatration of Daraius Khambatta on *Zoroastrianism: the Way Forward*, and

*Zoroastrian Legacy through the Ages*, by Khojeste Mistree..

The congress would have been so much more productive and thought provoking if these two legal and religious stalwarts, had an opportunity to talk to each other and exchange views from the same platform.



Having organized national and international congresses, we know what it entails to put these mammoth events together. Hence we asked the Hon. Secretary of the Congress, Maneck Davar and his very able assistant Ms Ashishwang Irani to write a piece on "Behind the Scenes". Firooza Punthaky-Mistree and Pheroza Godrej, the curators of the magnificent exhibition "*Across Oceans and Flowing Silks-From Canton to Bombay, 18th to 20th Centuries*", and "*No Parsi is an Island*" have written a detailed piece on how this exhibition was put together. The books launched at the congress "*Threads of Continuity*" by Ashdeen Lilaowala and Shernaz Cama and *Udvada*, Photographs by Shantanu Das have all been reviewed.

This will bring to a close the presentations at the congress and we move on to the FEZANA AGM in Seattle, May 16-18, 2014 and the XVIIth North America Congress, in Los Angeles, December 29-31 2014.

So my dear readers let me wish you all, rather belatedly a joyous beginning of a new Spring season, a new Zoroastrian year, full of hope and aspirations for great things for our global community.

*Soli Dastur*



## A Message from FEZANA President

**NAVROZE MUBARAK  
NOUROUZ PIROUZ BAD**

On behalf of the FEZANA Executive I would like to wish a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Navroze/Nourouz to fellow Zarathushtis and to our friends across North America and worldwide. May this year bring joy and peace to all of us and may we all continue to work collectively and harmoniously to ensure a happier, healthier, unified and knowledgeable global Zarathushti community in the years ahead.

It has been two years since I was elected President of FEZANA and I would like to reflect on some of the opportunities and creative ideas that were presented to us and the affirmative solutions and initiatives that we continue to support:

**Second Ten Year Strategic Plan (SP):** The "WAY FORWARD" - The second ten year plan (2011-2021) is a continuation of the first ten year plan, written in 1997. The FEZANA Executive with the help of the SP team, Committee Chairs and individuals from member associations is working on implementing the action plans identified to achieve the short and long term goals. Many of the FEZANA Committees are developing Terms of References (ToRs) that will define their mission, roles and operational responsibilities and they will use this as a road map to plan and conduct their activities. These ToRs will be presented to the member associations at the upcoming AGM in Seattle in May.

**Infrastructure Development in NA** - As stated by Rohinton Rivetna, Chair of the FEZANA Infrastructure Development in NA Committee, our past is a prologue for creating a vision for the future. The responsibility for the growth, sustenance and perpetuation of our community in North America, with a sound infrastructure base, hangs heavy on our shoulders. Without sound infrastructure the cohesiveness of any community will be at peril. A community failing to provide the essential services

and structures faces disintegration and over time, perhaps no more than two generations, extinction through assimilation. This is the risk we face in North America. That is the essence and the nature of this initiative -- to nurture and lay the foundation for developing initiatives

for the establishment of sound infrastructure and capacity building in North America.

The Infrastructure Development in NA Committee developed a list of needs that is fair and equitable, and captures the dreams and vision of all sectors of the NA community. As we develop this list of our infrastructure needs unequivocally, the paramount overarching goals are four fold:

- \* Establishing our identity as North American Zarathushtis
- \* Perpetuating our community in North America
- \* Gaining visibility in North America as Zarathushtis
- \* Branding of Zarathushtis in North America as an industrious, trustworthy community much like the stature achieved in the mother countries of Iran and India.

As plans are developed for these infrastructure needs, we need to have one eye focused on serving the above goals and the other on ways and means to perpetuate the developed infrastructure assets. It is one thing to develop these assets and quite another to perpetuate them. Every infrastructure asset conceived will be subject to that scrutiny to ensure its perpetuation both in terms of human and material resources needed for its perpetuation. Assets developed shall be income generating and/or self-sustaining.



# Editorial

At the last AGM in Dallas on May 4, 2013, after discussions among member associations on Infrastructure Development in North America, Homi Gandhi, VP FEZANA conducted an informal survey on the prioritization and next steps for Infrastructure Needs. The survey was completed by 20 of the 40+ people in attendance. The results disclosed that Establishment of Consecrated Atash Kadeh secured highest votes (13) as a priority project, followed by Enhanced Fires (12), and Building of Dar-e-Mehrs (7). ZAH representatives indicated that they would like to support financially the Atash Kadeh and Enhanced FIRES within their location. Similarly ZAC-California would consider supporting Athornan Institute and Retreat and Learning Center within their area. ZAC-Chicago would like to support a FEZANA Center with Admin Office, Archives, and a Museum of Zarathushti History and Culture. After that at the first meeting of the Infrastructure Committee, it was decided to concentrate on 2 projects (Atash Kadeh & Fezana Center) while FIRES works on its enhancement. We have sent out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to the Member Associations for the setting up of Atash Kadehs and the establishment of a FEZANA Center and are awaiting proposals that will be reviewed and discussed at the AGM in May.

FEZANA was founded with the purpose of giving the growing North American Zarathushti

community a united platform to plan and control its future. FEZANA's mission is to preserve our religion on the North American continent by providing a cohesive force. Our core values are being recognized and enhanced through a strong emphasis on education, economic stability, and volunteerism. And as we nurture a love for humanity and promote our Zarathushti way of life, we are increasing awareness of our religion and culture domestically and globally. This is the vision we are promoting to instill pride in our future generations.

Thanks to your generosity, we are able to do all this and much more. The work of deciding and distributing the scholarships, making sure that your donations are used wisely to help those in real need, and planning and coordinating religious education, workshops, sports, seminars, publications, etc. is done by committees made up of numerous volunteers who freely give their time, and often their money. To continue this work and prepare for our future, we need to continually raise funds. Please continue to support FEZANA's goals and activities with your generous donations.

***Katayun Kapadia,***  
***FEZANA-President***

## **Renew your Fezana Journal Subscription on Line.**

**It is easy, convenient, fast and good value:**  
**<http://www.fezana.org/journalsubscribe>**  
**Support the publication that supports you!**  
**Educate – Inspire – Build Community**

## HanjaMana

In a special issue of *Parsiana*, Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary educates us about the use of the Avestic word *HanjaMana* (Hanja=gathering, Mana=of minds/intellectuals) when individuals meet to deliberate over community matters. *HanjaMana*, is used also to denote a confluence where divergent rivulets come together bringing mineral rich contents that benefit large swaths of land, animal and plant life where the water flows, and ultimately into the ocean to benefit marine life (1).

What a noble ancient Indo - Iranian tradition! And why not perpetuate it for our future generations? World Zoroastrian Congresses (WZCs) and North American Zoroastrian Congresses have become the modern day *HanjaMana* for our Zarathushti diaspora.



*Whether such gatherings are useful or not, depends on what our expectations are and how we define parameters of success. How wide was the participation? How well did we connect, collaborate, create, communicate, educate, inspire, build community? Did we capitalize on heritages of humanity that bring people together in harmony: the arts, music, food, service, discovery, sports, service, culture? Did we transcend barriers of geography, language? Did we create awareness of particular concerns that affect the community? Are we leaving any legacies?*

If a respectful dialogue to listen to the point of view of the other is used as a yardstick, with many divergent opinions expressed without significant acrimony, the 10th WZC was a success. The WZC spotlighted our demographic decline and hopefully has created a soul searching within our ranks worldwide to find solutions (2). By professionally live streaming the proceedings from the venue at the National Sports Club of India, a new bench mark was set, with thousands worldwide tuning in to stay connected. The proceedings are available freely to a worldwide audience, archived on [Zoroastrians.net](http://Zoroastrians.net). A live simulcast of the proceedings in Farsi to be inclusive of our *humdins* in the Iranian homeland remains an aspirational goal.

The 10th WZC spawned the release of multiple stellar books, put the spotlight on unsung heroes, (a welcome departure from past practices) and sparked the staging of memorable side events, e.g., a photography exhibit in Colaba from an artist from Metropolitan New York, a *Shah-na-Meh* exhibit at the Alexandra School, Mumbai, spearheaded by a devoted Zarathushti from California. We re-discovered a Parsi performing art tradition, singing “*the Kirtan*” – translations of the Shah-na-Meh into a form of Gujrati poetry laced freely with Farsi words. We are grateful to the organizers of the 10th WZC for making arrangements to distribute the special summer 2013 issue of Fezana Journal about the Cylinder of Cyrus to all registrants. *The Zoroastrian Rhapsody*, a series of evening talks held on the sidelines of the exhibit, “Across Oceans and Flowing Silks” at the National Museum of Modern Art at Kala Ghoda was a delight. We can now conceive of collaboration to build on the relationships we have with museums in North America, to mount exhibits of such high caliber with help from our erudite coreligionists in the homelands. The legacy, of a renovated and refurbished, Alpaiwala Museum at Kharegat Colony will be a gift to future generations.

There were many lessons we learnt from the 10th WZC:

Inviting the **President of India** and hearing what he had to say about our community, was a benchmark in the history of the World Zoroastrian Congresses. Hopefully the diaspora will create events of this genre in the future that would bring international media coverage.

**Press:** Coverage by the local parsi press – before, during and after the event by the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, the *Parsi Times*, by *Parsiana*, by several on-line media outlets, and by the *National Press in India* with unfettered access to the proceedings was more than we could have hoped for.

**Funding:** Those who had the money stepped forward to facilitate the gathering much like the *Gahambars* held in ancient Iran.

One place where we found a lapse was a lack of cohesive thought and respect for the time allotted among several panelists. In the future, we could plan to have the chair talk to designated panelists months ahead of time. For example, panelists at the FEZANA workshop on “**Empowering Women to break away from the Circle of Poverty**” presented at the United Nations on March 10, 2014, prepared from November 2013 through multiple telephone conference calls and several revisions to our power point presentation. Given the collective brain power and experience on stage, a similar exercise by the panelists at the 10th WZC on Zarathushti Identity could have made it a smashing success and set the tone for the congress.

During the ensuing Global Working Group session at the Palamkote Hall at the Dadar Parsi Colony, the delegation from the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe reminded us that 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War. How should we, collectively on the world stage as a united Zarathushti community, commemorate the occasion? One answer would be to lift up the idea of non-violence, as we plan local events, to address issues of conflict resolution in our times.

Are WZC's useful? The answer is in the affirmative. We look forward to the folks in Singapore to put up stellar shows for our next worldwide *HanjaMana*. The evocative, “*Yazmaide*” – to be revered - is an apt description of a **HanjaMana** which brings our community together in *Hamazori*.

## References:

- (1) “How Useful are WZC's?” *Parsiana* : Tenth World Zoroastrian Congress Special Issue, December, 2014 Page13
- (2) *Fezana Journal*, Fall 2013 issue and supplement “Demographics” on line @ [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

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





# FEZANA UPDATE



## FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

<http://www.fezana.org>

Representing 26 Zoroastrian Associations and 12 Small Groups in the USA and Canada

Registered as a 501(c)3 Charitable organization Tax ID: 36-3521343

March 2014

FEZANA was founded with the purpose of giving the growing North American Zarathushti community a united platform to plan and control its future. FEZANA's mission is to preserve our religion on the North American continent by providing a cohesive force. Our core values are being recognized and enhanced through a strong emphasis on education, economic stability, and volunteerism. And as we nurture a love for humanity and promote our Zarathushti way of life, we are increasing awareness of our religion and culture domestically and globally. This is the vision we are promoting to instill pride in our future generations.

Thanks to your generosity, we are able to do all this and much more. The work of deciding and distributing the scholarships, making sure that your donations are used wisely to help those in real need, and planning and coordinating religious education, workshops, sports, seminars, publications, etc. is done by committees made up of numerous volunteers who freely give their time, and often their money. To assist the volunteers and elected executives, FEZANA maintains administrative headquarters in Burr Ridge, Illinois, and the FEZANA Information Research and Education System (FIRES) in Houston, Texas. To continue this work and prepare for our future, we need to continually raise funds.

To celebrate the arrival of Spring, heralded by our annual Navroze celebrations, we again request you to send your donations to a FEZANA Fund of your choice. Donations can be made on the FEZANA website [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org), or by sending a check to: Ratan Mistry, FEZANA Treasurer, 1258 Water Lily Way, San Jose, CA 95129. FEZANA also accepts endowments and donations of stocks, which will allow the donor to claim a deduction based on the full appreciated values of the securities.

*Help Zarathushtis be counted. Help FEZANA grow!*

**Katayun Kapadia**  
FEZANA President

**Rustom Koral, Jerry Kheradi and Zubin Bagradia**  
FEZANA Funds & Finance Committee

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

Registered Address: 5750 S. Jackson Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521, U.S.A.

FEZANA Administrative Office: 8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, Illinois 60527, U.S.A.

FEZANA Information, Research and Education System, 8787 W. Airport Blvd - Houston, TX 77071, U.S.A.

NGO in consultative status (Roster) with Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

# FEZANA UPDATE

## FEZANA

### DONATIONS RECEIVED - JANUARY 1, 2014 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2014

#### CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND IN MEMORY OF KERSI D. KAPADIA

FEZANA Executive Members	\$ 500
Firdosh and Rashna Mehta, Calgary, AB	201
Shapur and Yasmin Pavri, Houston, TX	200
Noshir Karanjia, Marlton, NJ	151
Aban Rustomji, Houston, TX	100

**1,152**

#### GENERAL FUND

Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California	550
Zoroastrian Association of Michigan	500
Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman	150
Zoroastrian Association of California	101
Aspi and Armaity Bharucha, Cincinnati, OH	100
Manek Dustoor, Carlsbad, CA	100
Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania & New Jersey, Inc	100
Jamshed Dastur, Newport Beach, CA	75
Noshir Motiwalla, Nashua, NH	40
Kamran Behrooz, Flower Mound, TX	30

**1,746**

#### Stanford University - Zoroastrian Studies

Zoroastrian Association of California	1,000
Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California	1,000
Zoroastrian Association of North Texas	1,000
Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia	1,000
Zoroastrian Association of Quebec	500
Zoroastrian Association of Alberta	101

**4,601**

#### ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Shapur and Yasmin Pavri, Houston, TX	500
Mehraban Dinyarian, San Antonio, TX	125
Anonymous	50

**675**

#### FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Nazneen Khumbatta, Sugar Land, TX	2,004
Freddy Engineer, San Jose, CA	1,000
Bergez Mistry, Montreal QC	500
Jamshed and Zavera Kanga, Lexington, KY	500
Prochy Sethna, San Jose, CA	500
Shapur and Yasmin Pavri, Houston, TX	500
Aspi and Aban Wadia, Cincinnati, OH	400

(Continued)

#### FEZANA WELFARE & CRITICAL ASSISTANCE FUND (Continued)

Jal Birdy, Corona, CA	\$ 400
Dolly Kapadia, Plainsboro, NJ	250
Burzin and Dianne Patel, Foster City, CA	200
Homyar Madan, Mason, OH	200
Noshir Dhalla, Foster City, CA	200
Parvez Mody, Orangevale, CA	200
R. Irani, Orlando, FL	200
Riasp and Shemaz Medora, Cincinnati, OH	200
Shapur K. Irani, Indianapolis, IN	200
Shayax Bhader, Calgary, AB	200
Zubin Ghyara, Fremont, CA	200
Parastu Dubash, Shrewsbury, MA	151
Farrokh Billimoria, Redwood City, CA	150
Kassim Scheherazade, Longwood, FL	101
Zarin Randeria, San Francisco, CA	101
Adi and Freya Gandhi, Los Angeles, CA	100
Adil Engineer, San Jose, CA	100
Amitabha and Jesmin Mitra, Voorhees, NJ	100
Anahita Rao, Fairfield, OH	100
Behram Shroff, McLean, VA	100
Behzad Dastur, Fremont, CA	100
Cyrus Toorkey, Cherry Hill, NJ	100
Iradj Yektashenas, Summit, NJ	100
Kassim Scheherazade, Longwood, FL	100
Mehemosh Vadiwala, Fremont, CA	100
Niloofer Desai, Frisco, TX	100
Nina Bhaisa, Cupertino, CA	100
P. and H. Irani, Lincoln, CA	100
Zal Bilimoria, San Francisco, CA	100
Dara and Mehrbanoo Behrooz, West Vancouver, BC	87
Darius and Jeroo Captain, Granite Bay, CA	75
Hoshang Sethna, Missouri City, TX	51
Jamshid Kekobad, Santa Clara, CA	51
Pareez Golub, Malvern, PA	51
Aazeen Irani, Montreal, QC	50
Jamsheed Vania, Palo Alto, CA	50
Jimmy Antia, Cincinnati, OH	50
R. F. Damania, Clovis, CA	50
Sam and Gulzar Engineer, Discovery Bay, CA	50
Fariel Desai, Scarborough, ON	43
Farhad Sethna, Richmond Hill, ON	30
Sam Cooper, Montreal, QC	30

**10,425**

#### GRAND TOTAL

**\$ 18,599**



# FEZANA UPDATE

## *Welfare Committee*

This winter has been exceptionally cold, so cold we heard that the Zoo keeper in Chicago were asked to move the polar bears indoors. But as the saying goes, "when the going gets tough the tough get going". The Michigan community went through a very challenging experience, but to counter the cold they showed the warmth in their hearts.

Twenty five year old Khushroo Mistry, an engineering student at Ann Arbor University, was in a coma due to brain aneurysm. A plea from his parents in India asking for some help locally was answered by the Zarathushti community in Michigan. They were thrown into an emergency situation with no experience. When a lemon is squeezed what comes out is lemon juice because that is the essence of a lemon that is what is within. What happened to the Michigan Zarathushti community was like the lemon. They were in a situation they had never been in before and what emerged was their true Zarathushti character.

Here is a part of the letter their treasurer **Bepsi Sanjana** wrote:

*Although we did not know Khushroo or his family, he will never be forgotten. It has been one incredible journey for all involved. His family cannot believe how total strangers have come forward to help them in their hour of need. Zoroastrians and non Zoroastrians came forward and helped out in any way they could. It was truly inspiring to see how our tiny community came together.*

*Last but not the least we cannot forget the quick assistance FEZANA gave to us. Without this assistance, we would have been completely stressed out. We supported the family for two months in a hotel, brought food to them, did their laundry, transportation, assisted with legal and banking issues, funeral issues. Thankfully, many vendors waived their fees. We were so lucky.*

*Again thank you for everything, and we hope never to see this kind of tragedy again in our community.*

**Bepsi Sanjana, ZAOM Treasurer**

They were not lucky as she writes, they were doing the ultimate right by doing good for the sake of goodness and not for any reward, like our Ashem Vohu prayer teaches us: and that is why when one is doing Ahura Mazda's work, one gets help from sources one never thinks about. Khushroo never got out of the coma he was in, but he was the cause for whom a community came together. We are sure his parents and sister will never forget the feeling of being part of a great community is. Our deep felt sympathy to Khushroo's parent and sister who were here the last two months of his life and to the Michigan community who became part of his extended family.

In our daily routine we forget how connected we are and what binds us together, not just as Zarathushtis but as part of humanity and creation. If we can be aware of that and live our daily life with that awareness, we create a great environment to live in and set an example for our younger generation to follow.

As the FEZANA Welfare committee we are so very grateful for so many donors who help again and again when we send an appeal. We also thank folks who help in kind and with their prayers for all we do, it renovates our faith in what a compassionate and generous community we are part of. We are in the process of working with three other situations that need help. Thank you for your support always.

**Houtoxi Contractor**

**Hosi Mehta**

**Freyaz Shroff**

**Co Chairs**

huty.contrator(@) gmail.com

hosimehta(@)aol.com

freyaz(@) kurniv.com

**FEZANA Welfare Committee**



Houtoxi Contractor



Hosi Mehta



Freyaz Shroff



# FEZANA UPDATE

## Volunteer Opportunities with FIRES!

*FEZANA Information Research Education System (FIRES)*

*FIRES' mission is to establish and provide global access to a centralized collection of materials in print and electronic form, primarily pertaining to the Zarathushti faith, culture and history.*

*FIRES is looking for enthusiastic volunteers for two exciting positions:*

### WEB DEVELOPER

*We are looking for someone who can help make our website more user-friendly and interactive.*

*Position Description: The project would include, making the site more user-friendly, improving the online library resource with enhanced search capability, and updating the site with an online calendar. The ideal volunteer is comfortable with web design and applications.*

*Time Commitment: 10 Hours a month (1 year commitment, or possibly longer, depending on your availability)*

*This work can be done from home anywhere in North America, to fit your schedule, but you are welcome to attend our team meetings via Skype, which take place every 1-2 months.*

### BOOK REVIEWER

*We are looking for volunteers who are interested in submitting book reviews.*

*Position Description: The position would include reading and providing a review of at least one to two books that have a Zoroastrian Connection.*

*Time Commitment: The time it takes you to read and review a book (two book commitment, or possibly more, depending on your availability) If you are creative and motivated, we want to hear from you!*



*Visit us at: [www.fires-fezana.org](http://www.fires-fezana.org)*

*Email us at: [info\(@\)fires-fezana.org](mailto:info(@)fires-fezana.org)*

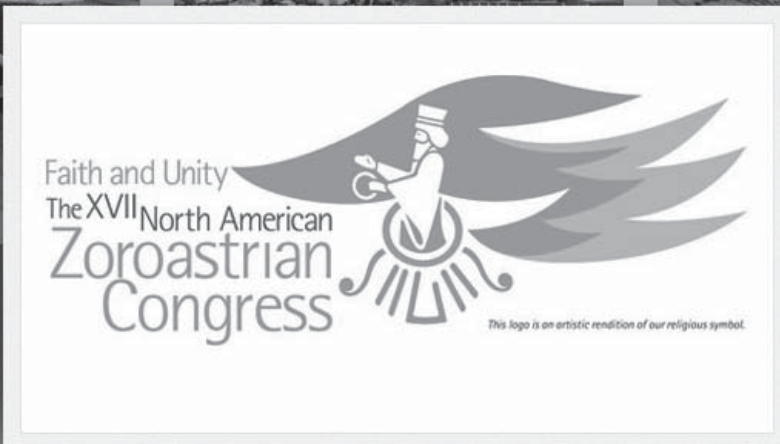
### HISTORIC OPIUM TRADE BROUGHT TO LIFE

Traveling the Opium Route to 19th Century China, Amitav Ghosh's talk "From Bombay to Canton" was full to seating capacity on April 17th at the Asia Society of Houston. Based on his research for the Ibis trilogy the author explored the opium trade that was funneled into China by British, American and Indian merchants. At the reception and book signing following the program, the author was pleasantly surprised at hearing of the Zoroastrian population in Houston and the events that take place at the Zoroastrian Houston of Association. As he was leaving the next morning a visit to the ZAH was not possible but he said he would come any time he was invited for "dhun-sak". And that may just happen!

*Aban Rustomji, Houston*

# FEZANA UPDATE

## *An invitation from Los Angeles*



**Dear friends,**

We look forward to welcoming you to the XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Los Angeles from December 29-31, 2014. Join us - Persians and Parsees - in our celebration of Faith and Unity. Let us bring in the New Year together!

We have planned several programs for people of all ages and varied interests. Panel discussions on medical, financial and social issues of practical relevance to our community members will further enhance a program that offers inspiring sessions on our religion - rooted in our history and culture - to reinvigorate our pride in being Zoroastrians.

In addition to the daily program, we have non-stop entertainment for three nights, great food, and babysitting care and children's programming during the Congress so that families can participate. Two action-packed days of sightseeing, along with three "crazy-fun nights" around LA prior to the Congress will give young adult singles in our community ample time to socialize and bond.

So we hope you will join us in sunny California this holiday season to meet up with old friends, make new ones and Live it Up in LA!

Best wishes,

The XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress Committee

**Tehmi Damania, Shida Anoshiravani, Khushroo Lakdawala,**

**DhunMai Dalal, Darayus Mistry, Shiva Khorshedien, Mehrdad Zomorodi**

# FEZANA UPDATE

Calendar of Festivals		
Calendar of Festivals	MARCH 2014 to SEPTEMBER 2014	
<b>FRAVARDEGAN/PHANJEH/HAMASPATHMEDAYEM Gahambar</b>		
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Sunday March 16 - Thursday , March 20	(F)
<b>CHAR-SHAMBE SOORI (Heralding the New Year)</b>		
<i>Tuesday Prior to Naurooz</i>	Tuesday, March 18	(F)
<b>NAUROOZ or JAMSHEDI NAUROOZ (New Year)</b>	Friday, March 21	(F)
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Hormazd</i>	Saturday, July 19	(K)
	Monday, August 18	(S)
<b>AVA ARDVISOOR NU PARAB</b>	Sunday, February 23	(K)
<i>Mah Avan, Roz Avan</i>	<b>Tuesday, March 25</b>	<b>(S)</b>
<b>JASHNE ARDIBESHTGAN</b>	Tuesday , April 22	(F)
<i>Mah Ardibesht, Roz Ardibehesht</i>	Tuesday, August 20	(K)
	Friday, September 19	(S)
<b>ATASH-NU-PARAB</b>	Monday, March 24	(K)
<i>Mah Adar, Roz Adar,</i>	Wednesday , April 23	<b>(S)</b>
<b>MAIDYOZAREM GAHAMBAR</b>	Wednesday, April 30 - Sunday, May 4	(F)
<i>Mah Ardibehesht, Roz Khorshed-Dae-pa-Meher</i>	Thursday, August 28-Monday, September 1	(K)
	Saturday Septemebr 27-Wednesday October 1	(S)
<b>ZARATHUSHT-NO-DISO (Death anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra)</b>		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz, Khorshed</i>	<b>Friday, April 25</b>	<b>(K)</b>
	Sunday, May 25	(S)
<b>DAE MAH NU JASHAN</b>		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Fravardin</i>	<b>Saturday, May 3</b>	<b>(K)</b>
	Monday, June 2	(S)
<b>MAIDHYAREM GAHAMBAR</b>		
<i>Mah Dae, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>	<b>Wednesday, April 30 - Sunday, May 4</b>	<b>(K)</b>
	Friday, May 30 - Tuesday, June 3	(S)
<b>PIR-E-SABZ Festival</b>		
<i>Mah Khordad, Roz Ashtad-Aneran</i>	Saturday, June 14 - Wednesday, June 18.	(F)
<b>PIR-E-BANU Festival</b>		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Meher-Bahram</i>	Friday, July 4 - Tuesday, July 8	(F)
<b>MAIDYOSHEM GAHAMBAR</b>		
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Khorshed-Dae pa-Meher</i>	Sunday, June 29 - Thursday, July 3	(F)
<b>JASHNE TIRGAN</b>	Tuesday, July 1	(F)
<i>Mah Tir, Roz Tir</i>		
<b>FRAVARDINGAN/MUKTAD/HAMAPATHMEDAYEM Gahambar</b>	Monday March 16-Thursday, March 20	(F)
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	<b>Monday, July 14 - Friday, July 18</b>	<b>(K)</b>
<i>Five Gatha Days</i>	Wednesday August 13 - Sunday, August 17 (Pateti)	(S)
<b>KHORDAD SAL (Birth anniversary of Zarathushtra)</b>	Wednesday, March, 26	(F)
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Khordad</i>	<b>Thursday, July 24</b>	<b>(K)</b>
	Saturday, August 23	(S)
<b>FRAVARDIN JASHAN</b>	Tuesday, April 8	(F)
<i>Mah Fravardin, Roz Fravardin</i>	<b>Wednesday, August 6</b>	<b>(K)</b>
	Friday, September 5	(S)

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





# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS (2014-2015)

### Applications are invited for the FEZANA Academic Scholarships

- \*\*MEHRABAN AND MORVORID KHERADI (MMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP**  
FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - THE FEZANA SCHOLAR.
- \*\*FEZANA 25th ANNIVERSARY ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP**
- \*\*MORVORID GUIV ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS**
- \*\*PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP**
- \*\*BANOObAI AND MANECKSHAW KAPADIA (BMK) ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP**
- \*\*FEZANA scholarships for three graduates and three undergraduates**

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 the USA or Canada.

#### **SCHOLARSHIPS:**

Scholarships for the academic year 2014-2015 will be awarded in September 2014.

#### **ELIGIBILITY:**

Applicants must complete the application form and provide documentation for:

- (1) proof of USA or Canadian citizenship. (For non citizens a minimum of one year or two semesters residency in USA or Canadian 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 (one preferably from an association nearest to you).

#### **AWARD CRITERIA:**

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

- \*The Mehraban and Morvorid Kheradi Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 and The 25th Anniversary FEZANA Scholarship will be awarded to post graduate students for scholastic excellence.
- \*The Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship of \$5000 will be awarded to qualified undergraduate students who demonstrates financial need and academic achievement.
- \*The Morvarid Guiv Endowed Scholarships of \$1000 will be awarded to one graduate and one undergraduate student who demonstrates financial need together with academic excellence.
- \*The Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowed Scholarship of \$2000 will be awarded for undergraduate studies to a student with good academic standing who demonstrates financial need.

#### **APPLICATION:**

Application forms are available from the FEZANA website at [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) or from Dr Dolly Dastoor [academicscholarship\(@\)fezana.org](mailto:academicscholarship(@)fezana.org)

**Completed application forms should be sent electronically by August 1, 2014 to [academicscholarship@fezana.org](mailto:academicscholarship@fezana.org)**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS - 2013

*"Education is one of the most important predictors - in fact- the most important predictor - of many forms of 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.

Investment in our youth is the 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**

### MEHRABAN AND MOROVID KHERADI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

#### THE FEZANA SCHOLAR (\$5,000)

#### SHAHZAD CHINDHY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

I am currently pursuing a medical degree from the University of Wisconsin (UW) School of Medicine and Public Health. Given the high costs of medical education, and the rising loan interest rates, I am sincerely grateful to FEZANA and the Kheradi family for selecting me as the 2013-2014 FEZANA scholar. Your generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to the community. I hope one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals just as you have helped me.



My goal in medicine is to become an interventional cardiologist, while also conducting cardiovascular research with the hope of decreasing the prevalence of heart disease (the number one cause of death in the US and the world) in our population. In addition to being a medical student, I have conducted research at several institutions including at the University of Cambridge, UK and have worked on multiple projects from generating heart stem cells, to studying the relationship between emotion and brain activity, to working with cardiothoracic surgeons on improving post-operative care after adult cardiac surgery. Throughout my academic career at UW Madison, I have aimed for excellence and have been on the Dean's list for all 8 semesters. I have been the recipient of the Wisconsin Academic Excellence State Scholar award and have graduated with a BS in Biochemistry and Psychology with high honors from the University of Wisconsin.



# FEZANA Scholarships

Outside of my academic activities, I like to educate others about the Zoroastrian faith. Since I immigrated to the United States in 2004, I knew no one in my high school, college or medical school (in Wisconsin) who was a Zarathushti, or even knew about Zoroastrian faith. This prompted me to educate my community about Zoroastrianism by hosting presentations/talks at my school. While I still can't say I have met a Zarathushti on campus, I can comfortably attest that there are quite a few who know about the religion.

My vision for the Zarathushti community is to see it flourish in size in the 21<sup>st</sup> century more than it has ever been. Good education in the religion and group meetings for young Zarathushtis would be the first step. The internet has made it possible for Zarathushtis to pass on their religious legacy of knowledge and goodwill to their peers and their generations. Social media has made it incredibly easy to connect to Zarathushtis all over the world and was one of the ways I remained connected despite living most of my childhood in a remote area of Wisconsin. In addition to education, I believe young Zarathushtis need family support in instilling the importance of the *sudreh and kusti*, and to serve as role models on how to engage in the Zoroastrian community. There has been a strong awakening in recent years. Already in North America, there are eight Zoroastrian temples, twenty-four associations and one North America Federation (FEZANA). This provides a strong infrastructure on which our community can grow.

## FEZANA 25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$3000)

**ALBORZ ZAMYADI, UNIVERSITY de LAVAL; CANADA, Ph.D Candidate in Geomatics**



Born in Tehran, Iran in 1983, Alborz Zamyadi graduated from the distinguished Alborz High School of Tehran. In 2006, he received his Bachelor degree in Civil-Surveying (Geomatics) Engineering from the Civil-Surveying Department of the College of Engineering of the University of Tehran. As of 2005, he had been enrolled in various professional careers from engineering positions to project management in several projects of geo-informatics and land surveying. In 2009, Alborz moved to Canada to follow his studies in Geomatics at Master degree level in the Geomatics Department of Laval University in Quebec City, Canada where he presently continues his academic excellence at a doctorate degree level.

In addition to his professional and academic life Alborz has also managed to be an active member of his local community. It includes several leadership experiences in student networks, youth groups, and professional events at local and national scales in Quebec and Canada as well as the international level. He is a lover of nature and for dialog with civilizations. Being a member of the international community of Couch Surfing for travellers where, as he states, he has had the privilege to host many international travellers in Quebec City including a number of Zarathushti





# FEZANA Scholarships

youths in 2011. Camping out in nature, playing basketball in open fields in summer, professional alpine skiing in winter, reading, and enjoying international music are among his major interests. As of a couple of years ago, Alborz began blogging to express his ideas about life, society, and wisdom. Currently he has two blogs where he frequently writes about his social and professional experiences.

## **MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (\$1000)**

**MICHAEL HEMATI, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.**



I'm currently pursuing a joint Master of Translational Medicine from the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine.

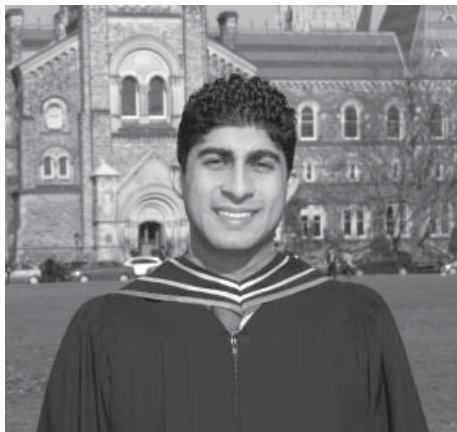
This program trains young professionals on applying translational research and engineering to solve fundamental problems in healthcare. This includes understanding the fundamentals of bioengineering, physiology and disease processes, along with core medical principles, clinical research methods, clinical trial design, as well as business and management.

After graduating I plan on working with surgeons at the UCSF Medical Center to help develop novel medical devices to help patients and pursue my entrepreneurial passion. Receiving a FEZANA Scholarship is a tremendous honor for me, for which I am genuinely grateful and humbled. It has helped me move one step closer to my goal.

I wouldn't be where I am today without my mentors; they helped develop my character and my career. Mentorship opened many doors for me and I want to do the same for our community's youth. Education is the link to our community's future and that begins with the youth. I plan on starting a mentorship program in the community to help young children become passionate about learning and solving real-world problems. [mhemati\(\(@\)\)berkeley.edu](mailto:mhemati((@))berkeley.edu)

## **FEZANA SCHOLARS (\$2000) GRADUATES**

**RAYOMOND DINSHAW, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, CANADA, FACULTY OF LAW,**



I am honored to have been awarded a FEZANA Scholarship when competing against so many qualified applicants. The generosity of the FEZANA Scholarship Program has allowed me to pursue higher education while minimizing the financial burden that this entails. This scholarship will help fund my studies at the Faculty of Law, Queen's University as I pursue a Juris Doctor degree.



# FEZANA Scholarships

In addition to valuing education, our community values philanthropy. As Zarathushtis in North America reach new levels of success through entrepreneurship and other business endeavors it is important that we give back to our Zarathushti community as well as to the greater community. Our own personal success is intricately tied to the success of our community. Maintaining strong ties and supporting fellow Zarathushtis in business and other endeavors will ensure that we succeed as a community. There is no limit to what a small community of intelligent, generous and hardworking individuals can accomplish.

I grew up in Mississauga, Ontario. Before attending law school I completed a Master of Science in Chemistry at the University of Toronto. During this time I published three papers on topics ranging from optics to astrophysics and have two more papers and a book chapter in press. To date, I have received nearly \$50,000 in scholarships, fellowships and awards. I volunteer at the Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF) and have previously volunteered at a hospital and in a mentorship program. I aspires to be a humanitarian lawyer, working for the United Nations or a not-for-profit organization.

## **JOHANN PAVRI, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SHOOOL.**



I am a first year Law Student attending The George Washington University Law School. I would like to thank the FEZANA board for their offer of a scholarship as tuition costs are increasing as financial aid is decreasing. Not only does this scholarship help me financially, it also motivates me to strive for excellence while representing the Zarathushti community.

Throughout my life, I have turned adversity into opportunities, taken challenges as learning experiences and have always made the best of what life has offered. In spite of the numerous obstacles faced, I have risen to every challenge that has presented itself, excelling in high school and at Rutgers, as an Honors Scholar. Each and every experience of mine has only cemented my desire to work in Law, and my confidence in my ability to pursue the profession by helping others.

As an ardent Zarathushti, I feel there needs to be a global awakening to try and address various issues within our community. However, there is certainly more unity as a result of diversity and I believe that our community will never die, but will only become stronger. Much of our thinking will have to change, but that should not dilute our traditions. I firmly believe that there are signs of growth and Zarathushtis all over the world will unite to preserve this great faith.

## **COWASJI JALL, CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY, ORANGE, CA, MFA in FILM PRODUCTION Returned to India and refunded his scholarship.**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

### **PURVEZ AND ABAN RUSTOMJI ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$5000)**

#### **PARENDI BIRDIE, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, ORGANISMAL BIOLOGY**



I would like to express my deep gratitude and sincere thanks to The Purvez and Aban Rustomji Scholarship Fund and to FEZANA scholarship committee for considering my application and granting me with this scholarship. This scholarship program reminds me that we truly are a community that lives in accordance with our values.

Recently, I have found myself reflecting and realizing how determined my parents were to instill an appreciation of the values and teachings of Zarathustra in my sister and I, as we were growing up in a small town in Kansas. Thank you mom and dad, I love you! These teachings have resulted in my decision to dedicate my life to making this world a kinder place for all who live here by working as a veterinarian. My parents always reminded me that Zarathushtra believed that all animals have a soul and conscience and should be treated with respect. It all ties back beautifully to our most venerated prayer, Ashem Vohu, which exhorts righteousness for the sake of righteousness.

My parents also emphasized the Zoroastrian ideal of service. Inspired by this, I have founded two campus animal rights organizations and interned at the largest animal rehabilitation clinic in Kansas, caring for injured and orphaned wild animals. For the past three years, I have helped establish my family's Montessori school, and now I am ready to put all of my energies into finishing my Organismal Biology degree and applying to veterinary school. I look forward to my journey ahead, filling each day with good thoughts good words and good deeds. [www.lawrencemontessorischool.com](http://www.lawrencemontessorischool.com)

### **KAPADIA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC STANDING (\$2000)**

#### **FARIN BAKHTIARI, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE, Psychology**



I was born in Kerman, Iran in 1990 and moved to the United States in December 2009. I started community college from the second month in this country and after two years transferred to a four year university program. In May 2014 I will be graduating with my bachelor degree in psychology at California State University, Northridge. My long-term educational goal is to complete a Ph.D. in family psychology, and my career goal is to become a university professor where I can teach and mentor future professionals, conduct research on Iranian families, and provide family life education workshops in the community.

I am especially interested in researching, educating, and supporting the





# FEZANA Scholarships

Zarathushti community. I believe our culture and family structures have very unique qualities, thus I would like to conduct research and provide family life education to Zarathushti families. I would like to expand the connection and communication between the Zarathushti community in Iran and the United States. I think that Zarathushti professionals can mentor future generations, so I would also like to help young people network with Zarathushti role models in professional occupations. I am proud that our community presents many helpful services to all generations, and I would like to be an active contributor to those services.

Besides school, my interests include: hiking, dancing, poem recitation (e.g., Shahnameh), playing basketball, trying new things, learning about life, and laughing. I started playing basketball in the only Zarathushti gym in Kerman (Bashgah Ardeshtir Hemati) when I was eight years old. By age fifteen, I was the only female Zarathushti player in our city's women's professional basketball team. In addition to school and sports, Iranian and Zarathushti culture and literature have always been fascinating to me. I found my passion for Shahnameh narration, poem performance, and being the master of ceremonies for different cultural events after joining the Society of Zarathushti Students (Kanoon-E- Daneshjooyan-E-Zartoshti) in Tehran. The Zarathushti community in both Iran and the United States have been very influential in my life and has allowed me to discover my talents and then to strengthen these skills.

I am honored to be chosen for the 2013-14 ***Banoobai and Maneckshaw Kapadia Endowment scholarship***. This financial award will allow me to work less and focus more on my education, which will help me assist our community better in the future. Organizations and scholarships such as FEZANA provide extra motivation for young Zarathushtis to succeed academically, ultimately helping our community by promoting positive images of successful Zarathushti role models.

## MORVORID GUIV ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP (\$1000)

### BEHROZE DALAL, GOOD SAMARITAN COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCE, CINCINNATI.

I live with my mother and sister in Fairfield, OH, where I grew up. It has always been my dream to be in the medical field, but it wasn't until high school when I realized that nursing is the field I would like to pursue. I am currently in my second year of college at Good Samaritan College of Nursing and Health Science in Cincinnati, OH and am pursuing my RN, and eventually my Bachelor's and Master's degree in Nursing. My ultimate goal is to become a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner.



This scholarship, awarded to me by the Morvorid Guiv endowment, will definitely help me with my college tuition and books. Hopefully someday, I will also be able help students, who like me, may be in need of money for college. I am extremely proud to be a Zarathushti, and I hope to give back to my community the same kindness that I have received time and again. Although my primary focus has always been my studies and to be an honor roll student, I have tried as and when I could, to give back to my community and have enjoyed giving my time. During my high school years, I volunteered at Mercy Hospital Fairfield, and also at the Baltimore-Washington Medical Center, when I was visiting Baltimore during my



# FEZANA Scholarships

summer vacation. Here I helped the nurses and the hospital staff in various non-medical tasks, which freed up some of their time, so that they could concentrate on their other important tasks. In my earlier years, I have volunteered at the local soup kitchens and the Ronald McDonald House in Cincinnati to serve ice-cream to kids during Christmas or Thanksgiving. I have also loved spending time after school, babysitting and helping the elementary school children of my school district with their home work.

Along with my passion for nursing, music has also been a huge part of my life. I play the piano and the clarinet and was in my middle and high school's band and the marching band program in high school. I was given the opportunity to play my instruments in front of judges and earned many awards and trophies. Awards that I earned in other areas were the Foreign Language Award for French, for the most outstanding student; was selected for leadership camp, which I also attended; was part of the National Honor Society and was nominated for the National Youth Leadership Forum in Nursing but unfortunately could not attend due to financial reasons.

I have worked very hard to be an honor student throughout my school years, therefore, for me, receiving the Morvorid Guiv Endowed Scholarship, is not only a great honor, but a constant reminder of my mom's teachings, that hard work combined with honesty always pays off. I am so grateful for having been selected for this prestigious scholarship, out of so many other applications. I express my deep gratitude and sincere thanks to the Morvorid Guiv Endowed Scholarship committee and to FEZANA for considering my application and granting me the Scholarship.  
*Recipient of FEZANA Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship for 2012*

## FEZANA SCHOLARSHIPS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (\$2000)

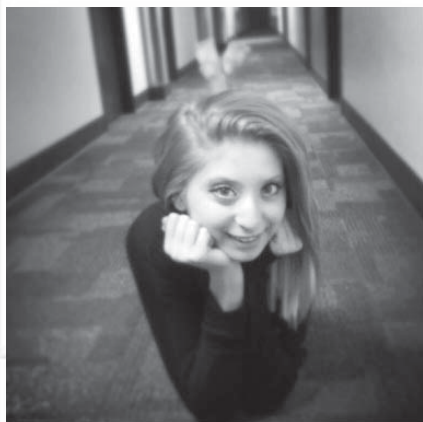
### ERVAD BAHROM FIROZGARY, RICE UNIVERSITY, TEXAS, BIOCHEMISTRY



I am currently a senior majoring in biochemistry and cellular biology at Rice University in Houston, Texas. In addition to serving one of the head academic mentors on campus, I am a forward for Rice's Varsity Basketball Team. I previously worked in the Texas Medical Center in Houston and worked at the Baylor College of Medicine in the Infectious Diseases Department under Dr. Prema Robinson. I am excited to use this scholarship to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor and hopefully motivate other Zarathushti students to work hard inside and outside of the classroom. Prayers are what have helped me stay strong and persevere through the long, intense practices and tricky, demanding classes here at Rice. Thanks to my supportive family, friend base, and the Zarathushti Community, I can achieve my goals and remain positive throughout my daily routines. Although I still have many aspirations left to fulfill, I am proud to be able to represent our Zarathushti Community with this award. 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.**



# FEZANA Scholarships



**MICHELLE BALSARA, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN, BIOLOGY**

UT has been absolutely amazing! I've been making so many new friends, experiencing Austin, and most importantly focusing on my schoolwork. Since I'm a biology Pre-med major, school has been incredibly time-consuming and stressful. I have mostly pure science courses and when put together, they can be a bit of a workload. However, I'm loving every second of it. I love biology and learning more about it every day is a joy! I've been quite active in the community here. I volunteer to tutor other students at UT who are having trouble with their courses. I've joined this fun Leadership organization called FLO, Future Leaders Organization. We attend Leadership summits

and do community service activities around campus and Austin. We've cleaned graffiti paintings off of concrete, had food drives for the homeless, and we even had a No Littering campaign. My plans for the future are bright, I think. I'm considering double majoring in Biology and nursing along with a Pre-med minor next year. This will be beneficial to me as it will help me stand out from other applicants when I apply to medical school and may even provide me with a cushioned safe option just in case things don't go as planned for me! There is so much diversity in everything! I'm having the time of my life but of course not forgetting why I am here!

## **KHODAYAR GOSHTASBI. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LA, NEUROSCIENCES**



I am currently a third year Neuroscience major at UCLA. I was born and raised in Kerman, Iran, and moved to the United States at the age of fourteen. Growing up in a Zarathushti/Iranian culture followed by moving to the States to pursue the infinite amount of educational opportunities has been a blessing, and I owe all of my achievements and future success to my wonderful family and amazing friends and supporters. I plan to pursue a medical degree with an enthusiasm for global health enhancement, and family, research, and soccer will certainly continue to stay a part of my life.

My religion is extremely valuable to me, and my involvement with the California Zoroastrian Center for the past few years has provided some of my most enriched and satisfying life experiences. I have been fortunate enough to take part in numerous cultural, entertainment, and historical acts for the *Norouz* and *Mehregan* celebrations. Furthermore, I am planning to stay active within my Zarathushti community, become the main speaker and coordinator of important events, and have an influence in making my religion stronger than ever by promoting the values and bringing the Parsee, American-born, and Iranian Zarathushti cultures together as one.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank the FEZANA organization for selecting me as one of the honored scholarship recipients; I believe that such generous awards prevent many students' financial setbacks from getting in the way of achieving their full educational and personal-growth potential.





# FEZANA Scholarships

## Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religion Education Scholarship

This FEZANA scholarship, set up by the daughters of Moobed Zardoshty and administered by the FEZANA Education, Scholarship and Conference Committee is awarded to any Zathushti student studying for a graduate degree in Zoroastrian Religion at a credited university. The award is renewable for three years.

*Students interested in applying for the scholarship should contact Dr Lovji Cama 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  
idcama(@)gmail.com 201-569-7359*



The recipient for 2012-14 is **MEHRBOD KHANIZADEH**.

Mehrbod Khanizadeh, obtained an admission to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in their MA program in the field of Religions, concerning Zoroastrianism, and based on the success of his first year he was allowed to upgrade his studies to a 3-year Ph.D. program under the supervision of Dr Almut Hintz (*Thesis proposal page 23*).

He has a Doctorate Degree in Veterinary Medicine (DVM) specializing in Animal Pathology (MSc) from the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. But being always interested to explore the ancient culture, history, languages and religions of Iran he finally decided to realize his dream by academically dedicating his life to this field. Therefore, after eight years of undergraduate studies in Iran and postgraduate studies in the Netherlands, he attended the *University of Shahid Beheshti*.

Entrance Exam for Master degree and was admitted in the field of Ancient Culture and Languages of Iran

After his masters he continued to work in Iran with Professor Katayun Mazdapour and her research-team, and the results from this project ***“Investigation in the Oral Literature of Iranian Zoroastrians and Its Comparison with the Middle Persian and Zoroastrian Persian Texts*** will soon be published as a book. He then began collaborating with scholars in the UK, Professor Almut Hintze, and in Spain, Professor Alberto Cantera, for the ***Corpus Avesticum Project***, a project designed to clarify many dark areas and gaps in Avestan Studies. It aims to collect as many manuscripts as possible, especially ***Iranian Sade Manuscripts***, and to investigate the manuscripts from different aspects e.g. the investigation of Colophons can reveal the history of scribes, priests and different religious schools. It becomes more important as there are very few documents available describing the Post-Islamic History of Zoroastrianism. The revision to the arrangement of the Avesta and its order is another feature of the project providing many details which are still vague to our knowledge. This will provide opportunities for researchers to pose more convincing theories regarding the inexplicable parts of the Avesta.



# FEZANA Scholarships

*Ph.D Research Proposal*

## **THE AVESTA AND PAHLAVI VERSIONS OF THE HŌM YASHT**

**MEHRBOD KHANIZADEH**

*School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London*

### **1. CONTEXT**

This research project is concerned with the most important text, the Yasna, of the religion of pre-Islamic Iran, Zoroastrianism. The Yasna, with 72 chapters, constitutes one of the books of the extant Avesta, the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism. Several texts of the Yasna—the Gathas, the Yasna Haptanghaiti and two sacred formulas—are composed in a more archaic language called Old Avestan. The remaining parts of the Yasna are composed in Young Avestan. During the late Sasanian era (224-651 CE), Zoroastrian priests began to translate the Avestan texts into Middle Persian. These translations included comments on the Avesta. In the manuscripts, the Middle Persian translation, together with any comments or glosses, immediately follows the Avestan phrase it translates. The Avestan original together with the translation and commentaries came to be known as *abestāg ud zand* ‘The Avesta and the Zand’.

### **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In analysing the Middle Persian translations of the Avestan texts, I will show the extent to which the Avestan religious scripture was understood by the Zoroastrian priesthood of the Sasanian era. I will analyse the way in which the translation relates to the Avestan original and study the commentaries to see how the Avestan text was interpreted in the Middle Iranian period. I will also examine the way in which the Zoroastrian belief system developed from Old to Middle Iranian times.

The Avesta is considered to be sacred and in the case of the Gathas to be the words of the

prophet Zarathushtra himself. Hence, it is likely that Avestan had a certain influence in shaping the language of Middle Persian religious literature. By examining the syntax and the lexicon of the Middle Persian translations and comparing them with the Avestan originals, I will investigate the relationship between the language and style of Middle Persian translations, on the one hand, and that of other Middle Persian religious texts, such as the *Dēnkard*, the *Bundahišn* and the *handarz* literature, on the other.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

The core of my PhD thesis will consist of an edition of the Avestan and Pahlavi version of the *Hōm Yašt*, which constitutes chapters 9–11 of the 72-chapter Yasna. My edition will be based on a fresh collation of the manuscripts, many of which are now conveniently available in electronic form on the website of the Avestan Digital Archive, see <http://www.avesta-archive.com/>.

I will also expect to travel in order to consult unpublished manuscripts in various library collections. My edition will include the Avestan and Pahlavi text in transliteration and transcription, a text-critical apparatus offering variant readings, an English translation and a commentary. Applying methods of textual criticism, I will compare and collate the extant manuscripts to generate an authoritative text for my translation. An extended commentary section will accompany the edition, dealing with various aspects of the text pertaining to its language, meaning, and its relationship with the Avestan version.



# FEZANA Scholarships

## 4. RESEARCH CONTEXT

An edition of the Middle Persian version of the Yasna does not exist. The first edition of the Avestan and Pahlavi versions of a Yasna text was Ph. Kreyenbroek's 1985 edition of the Srōš Yašt (Yasna 56–57). Later Josephson (1997) published a study of the Pahlavi version of the Hōm Yašt (Yasna 9–11), but my work will go far beyond her study in three main areas. First, my work will include the glosses, which Josephson ignores; secondly, I will edit a text that

is based on a fresh collation of the manuscripts which are now available and, thirdly, I will view this important part of the Avesta in the wider context of Zoroastrian ritual and literature.

With my thesis I am hoping to contribute to a better understanding of the Zoroastrian tradition.

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## FEZANA PERFORMING & CREATIVE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

### 2013 WINNERS



The 2013 Performing and Creative Arts Scholarships (P&CAS) have been awarded to four talented and creative young women from various areas of The Arts. Each awardee will receive \$1000 to further their education and training in their field of study.



**Kaipa Daraius Bharucha** studies music at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. Her specific field of study is "classical instrument - flute". Currently, Kaipa will use these funds to help with her undergraduate studies. She has plans to obtain her Master's Degree in Music, specializing in conducting. Kaipa's ultimate goal is to become a high school music and drama teacher. Her goals and aspirations do not end here. Kaipa would love to become the Arts Director for the Durham School Board to help further the arts programs in high schools. Along with her academic studies, she volunteers for many Zoroastrian Society of Ontario events, especially if it involves working with the community's children. Kaipa was also a recipient of the 2011 P&CAS scholarship and many other awards and certificates.





# FEZANA Scholarships

**Dina Zarir Lalkaka** attends California State University in San Jose. Currently she is pursuing her Master of Arts, in Jazz Studies with a concentration in "Jazz and Classical Vocal and Piano Performance". Dina's long-term goals include completing graduate school with eventually teaching at a college level as well as to continue recording and performing. She feels that being diverse in her styles of music will help with these goals. Dina has performed at various events of the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Northern California..Along with many other accolades Dina also received the 2010 FEZANA Academic Scholarship and the 2012 P&CAS scholarship.



**Roksana Pirouzmand** studies painting, sculpting, performance art and installation at The California Institute of Art in Valencia. Roksana left Yazd, Iran in order to pursue her dreams of becoming an artist. She has collaborated with filmmakers and photographers in Iran. Roksana would love to see and make happen an art center in Yazd for the Zoroastrian community.

states that her "artwork is inspired by information, interaction with people and internal dialogue." In the future Patience would love to teach at the graduate level. One of Patience's large projects was a movie **"Navjote - Portrait of Community and Self"**.

**Patience Dinshaw Rustomji** is currently enrolled at Parsons - The New School For Design in New York City to receive a Master's in Fine Arts. She studies "mixed media", which includes documents, video, photography, and life experiences. She



We congratulate each of our recipients and wish them well in their future endeavors.

The Performing and Creative Arts Scholarship (P&CAS) is accepting applications for 2014. This scholarship is for US and Canadian residents who are studying in the field of performing and creative arts. Please apply if you are studying to be a dancer, artist, singer, actor, etc.

Applications available on [www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org) and due by July 1, 2014.

For further information contact

**Sherazade Mehta, Chair, P&CAS committee at 972-385-4847  
or [sherazadem@yahoo.com](mailto:sherazadem@yahoo.com) .**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## THE FEZANA EXCELLENCE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP

THE WINNERS FOR 2013 ARE

## EXISS

*Delkash Shahriarian (Cricket) Fereshteh Bulsara (Weightlifting) Manijeh Rustomji (Running).*

The FEZANA Excellence in Sports Scholarship (EXISS) Fund is now accepting applications for 2014. 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, August 29th, 2014. 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](mailto:exissfund@fezana.org)



## FATAKIA SCHOLARSHIPS

### THE CYRUS R FATAKIA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS(2013-2014 )

This was the 6th year of Scholarship Awards for our Zarathushti Students, and it is our way of keeping our dear Cyrus's memory alive.

**BENAZ COLABEWALA** is currently enrolled at the Cal State University, Long Beach. She is now in her Final Year at CSU and she is majoring in Physics. She is a very active member and Ambassador of the Society of Physics Students. She is an integral part of a strong female leadership group at the Society. Due to her involvement, the Society of Physics Students, CSU Long Beach received the national Outstanding SPS Award 2012 from Washington.

**BEHROZE DALAL** is enrolled as a Sophomore at the Good Samaritan College of Nursing in Cincinnati, OH. Behroze wants to be a Nurse Practitioner. She was on the Honor Roll in High School and she received the Presidential Award for Academic Achievement in 12th

grade. She has also received a Scholarship from the Ohio Nurses Foundation in 2013 for academic excellence. Behroze is a bright and hard-working student who shows much promise and enthusiasm and is very deserving of this Scholarship.

Recipient of the FEZANA Morvarid Guiv Endowed Scholarship for 2013, and FEZANA Purvez and Aban Rustomji Endowed Scholarship for 2012

**ZENA TARAPOREWALLA** is enrolled as a Freshman at the University of California, at Los Angeles. She wants to major in Psychobiology and become a Pediatrician. Zena has earned the Silver and Gold Awards from her Girl Scout troop. She has received the AP Scholar Distinction in High School. She has also received the Academic Excellence in Foreign Language Award and is a member of the Award-Winning Marching Band at her High School.

*Congratulations to all the candidates and we wish them the very best of luck in their future endeavors!*

**The Cyrus R Fatakia Scholarship Committee**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## ZAGNY GOOD LIFE AWARD

At the recent ZAGNY 40th Anniversary and Parsi New Year Function, four students were awarded the Good Life emblem award. The Good Life Award is earned by youth after completing several community projects, completing a work book on Zoroastrian topics and writing an essay. The Good Life program emphasizes Community service as our religion teaches that the best way to serve Ahura-Mazda is by **"HUVARSHTA" – Good Deeds.**

Since the year 2006, he has trained in Martial Arts at American Isshinryu Karate. In June 2013, he was awarded a Black Belt and is an Instructor for Karate at Westling's Martial Arts Academy. As his summer project this year, he built a 3-D Printer from scratch. For the past 3 years he has been a beta tester for Android phone operating systems, and provides user commentary on a webpage, as well as participating in on-line forums.



*From left Tanaz Karai; Farah Randelia; Sam Merchant; Friya Randelia ,  
Darius Bamji not in photo (see below)*

The award was presented to **Sam Merchant, Farah Randelia, Friya Randelia, and Tanaz Karai** by **Lovji Cama** the dean of Religious studies and **Viraf Ghadially** the coordinator for Good Life program. **Darius Bamji** who was in India during the function was presented the award later. All students completed several community projects both in ZAGNY and outside the community.

Students are encouraged to earn this award after completing the religious classes conducted by ZAGNY as it gives them a greater sense of awareness of our religion and a sense of enrichment for performing community services that they can continue through their lives.

### GOOD LIFE AWARDS 2013

**Sam Merchant** is presently a senior at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, Flemington NJ.

In July and August 2012, Sam was a ZAGNY volunteer at the NAZC (North American Zarathushti Congress). He was a youth panelist in the discussion on Core Beliefs, participated in the dance program, and helped to install the Exhibit Room.

In August 2013, Sam was awarded the **"Good Life Program"** award, (Equivalent of Eagle Scout Badge) through a joint program with ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) and Boys Scouts of America. As his summer community project, he partnered with Darius Bamji and organized a donation drive to collect over 45 used cell phones, which were donated to **SAFE** in Hunterdon, a shelter for victims of domestic abuse. Since Feb 2013, Sam also volunteers at the Hunterdon County Library.

He plans to attend a university next year, and earn a Baccalaureate degree in Computer Science with a focus on Internet Security and Networking.



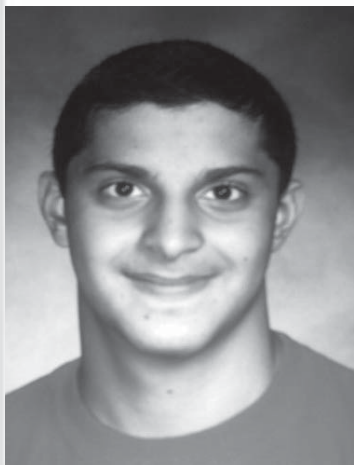


# FEZANA Scholarships

Hello, my name is **Friya Randelia**, a Parsi living in Parsippany, New Jersey. I am a junior in the Finance and International Business Academy at Morris County School of Technology. I participated in the 2012 North American Zoroastrian Congress as part of the evening banquet entertainment. After teaching Shah Nameh stories at ZAGNY for three years it has now become a passion of mine, and I plan to continue throughout my senior year of high school. One of my greatest achievements has been starting and leading a **People to People** food drive at ZAGNY. I am a Peer Leader for my Finance and International Business Academy. Furthermore, I am a member of Kiwanis Key Club, Jazz Band, and Skills USA. I have played soccer and basketball for my school. I have played the clarinet in the school band and Jazz Band and violin in the Lakeland Youth Symphony. Additionally, I volunteer at Saint Clare's Hospital and have joined the pioneer Junior Auxiliary group. Community service, involvement, and leadership play a significant role in my life and help me become a better person every day.

**Tanaz Karai**, a senior at Edison High School, Edison, New Jersey, is singularly focused on trying to become a teacher for the deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The summer of 2013 saw Tanaz prep for her SATs, complete level one of American Sign Language (ASL) from Gallaudet University in Washington DC, and work as a camp counselor at Camp Jotoni, a camp for physically handicapped children. During the school year, she works part-time at the Edison Public Library, volunteers at the local Rotary Club soup kitchen at the local Rotary Club, helps children with cerebral palsy at the Lakeview School and serves as a teacher's assistant at the monthly religious classes held at ZAGNY. Some of Tanaz's other interests include reading, baking and music.

Hello! I am **Farah Randelia**, a Parsi from Parsippany, New Jersey. I am a junior in high school in the Health Care Science Academy at the Morris County School of Technology. I belong to the Kiwanis Club, Jazz Band, and HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America) clubs at my school. I have played for both the soccer and basketball teams at my school. Apart from school, I have been playing first violin in the Lakeland Youth Symphony for the last eight years. I try to give back to my community by volunteering at St. Clare's Hospital in Denville. In addition to that, I am starting my third year at ZAGNY's Darbe Mehr in Pomona, New York as an assistant teacher with Shiraz Antia. In the second class, we teach the children about the different religious ceremonies and other aspects of Zarathusthi life. This last summer I received the Good Life Award at the Pateti function. For the future, I see myself pursuing a career in the medical field.



**Darius Bamji** I am 17, and a senior in High School, this year. I will graduate in September 2014, and am considering Business Management/Computer Science for my undergraduate degree. I enjoy keeping up to date with technology/gadgetry, and have played soccer for my town travel team. I have undertaken volunteering at Centra state Hospital in NJ, helped out with the local chapter of my Home work Helpers Club, and helped out internationally at the Happy Home and School for the Blind In Mumbai India, with a special software for the visually impaired called JAWS.

*Report by Viraf Ghadially,*

**ZAGNY Coordinator for THE GOOD LIFE AWARDS**



# FEZANA Scholarships

## Congress 2000 Legacy

### Awards

August 1, 2013

The Congress 2000 Legacy is an award program of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, established as a result of funds that ensued from the success of ZAH's World Zoroastrian Congress 2000. By supporting the next generation of our community's young minds we pay tribute to the success of ZAH and to the 2000 Congress.



Each year the Congress 2000 Legacy Award recognizes young Zoroastrian students who are studying at or about to enter the University at all levels and who have achieved excellence in their scholastic studies, in extra-curricular activities and who have made substantial contribution to Zarathushti community affairs



In November 2007 ZAH lost one of their talented youth members, Cyrus Rohinton Desai to cancer. This brilliant student was all prepped up for an exciting life in college when tragedy struck him. The Desai family generously contributes one award every year and that Legacy Award is named the **Cyrus Rohinton Desai** scholarship. It is given to a youth going to college for the first year, because all that Cyrus wanted was to attend college, even if it was for a day.

Outstanding Winners for 2013 are (photo left )

*The Congress 2000 Legacy Award*  
**SHAYAN NOSHIR BHATHENA-**

*The Cyrus Rohinton Desai Award*  
**ERVAD RAYOMAND PERCY KATRAK-**

### THE GOOLBAI KAIKHUSHROO PATEL FUND FOR THE SURAT PARSİ ORPHANAGE

ZAGNY has allocated \$25,000 from its Critical Assistance Fund as seed money for the new Goolbai Kaikhushroo Patel Fund, in honour of Framroze K Patel, a long standing respected member and past president of ZAGNY and FEZANA

All interest earned on this account will be sent to the Surat Parsi Orphanage annually. In addition the ZAGNY Board will periodically supplement the interest earned with additional funds from its Critical Assistance Fund. Mr Framroze Patel will assist in the annual disbursement of funds to the Surat Parsi Orphanage. The Surat Parsi Panchayat which manages the Orphanage spends Rs 8000 per child per year.  
<http://zagny.org/zagny-initiates-the-goolbai-kaikhushroo-patel-fund/>

**DONATE ON LINE at [ZAGNY.org](http://ZAGNY.org)**



# FEZANA Scholarships



**Shayan Bhathena** is a scholar athlete in the true sense of the word. She was invited to be a member of the National Honor Society and the Spansih Honor Society. She achieved the Gold Rank as a Girl Scout (the highest honor bestowed for Girl Scouts). She ran cross country for seven years and was a member of her school marching band. Besides academics and sports, Shayan has an impressive resume of social work including raising funds for Project Pink and volunteering for Habitat for Humanity. She has been an active member of the Youth Group at ZAH and served as its Historian and Treasurer.

**Ervad Rayomand Katrak** is an inspiration to our younger members. As a navar, he praticipates in community Jashans, Muktaad prayers and Gahambars, and has even participated in two Navjotes. Rayomand is an exceptional student with several AP credits. Despite his rigorous academic schedule he has managed to find time to complete his Eagle Scout badge, be a member of his school marching band and to volunteer at several local charities. He served as Treasurer

and as President of the ZAH Youth Group.

Both these awards were presented to our students by Honorable P. Harish, the Consul General of India (photo left) who was the chief guest. at our August 2013 New Year's function. Consul Harish gave a moving speech on the contributions made by Parses not just for the economic and industrial growth of India but also for its contribution for education, arts and charities.

Let us not forget our distinguished panel of judges who are selected by Dr. Farrokh Mistree from major learning institutions across the USA. This year the judges were:

**Dr. Poras T. Balsara; Dr Yezdi H. Godiwalla, Dr. Tinaz Pavri; Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna; Dr. Farah Shroff; and our ZAH Youth representative on the committee Mrs. Pearline E Collector. We at ZAH are fortunate to have such a dynamic panel of judges who care for our kids!**

The **Congress 2000 Legacy** Committee and the ZAH Executive Committee congratulate our winners. We believe these students deserve to be recognized as innovators and leaders for tomorrow's global community. By supporting the next generation of great minds we pay tribute to the success of the 2000 World Zoroastrian Congress I

With our best wishes,

**Homi Davier**  
**Dr. Farrokh Mistree**  
**Aban Rustomji**

**The Legacy Committee**





# FEZANA Scholarships

## ZSBC SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS

### ARZAN BALSARA

ZSBC Directors and members of the Scholarship Committee (*From left in photo Bella Tata, Dinaz Mizan, Arzan Balsara, Homi Italia, Farrokh Namdaran and Fariborz Rahnamoon*) extend their hearty congratulations to **Arzan Balsara** for receiving ZSBC's 2013 Scholarship Awards during Mehregan Celebration on Saturday Oct. 12, 2013. These are given out annually to those students who have completed Grade XII and have not only achieved good marks but also been active in our community and met other criteria laid down by the Committee.



## MEHRABAN & PARIDOKHT ZARTOSHTY EDUCATION FUND SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS

### MAHSA KABOLIZADEH and ROZMIN IRANI

We can be so proud of our youth, who have been studying hard to better their prospects, some of them even working part-time to earn towards their studies. Apart from this, they also do volunteer work. Thank you to all of the youth who have been contributing towards the well-being of our Zarathushti community despite the many scholastic and personal issues you have to handle. We urge all our youth to give some of their time to our community programs here, as it cannot be left to just a few enthusiastic few.

This year's scholarships under the above education fund sponsored by the late philanthropist Mehraban Zartoshty and his wife Paridokht, were awarded to **Mahsa Kabolizadeh and Rozmin Irani**.

This scholarship is for those in the second year of their graduate studies and thereafter, while The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia awards scholarship to those who have completed Grade XII and are going in for the first year of their college, university or technical institution studies. Congratulations to both Mahsa and Rozmin. Members on the Board of this Education Fund are *Homa Zartoshty, Bella Tata, Shirin Abadi, Khodadad Lohrasb, Kourosh Mehin, and Fariborz Rahnamoon*.



# FEZANA Scholarships

ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, INC.

THE FALI CHOTHIA CHARITABLE TRUST  
10300 Farnham Drive, Bethesda MD 20814  
301 564-3726 / 301 774-0841



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.

## The Fali Chothia Charitable Trust is pleased to announce the recipients of 2013-2014 Awards

**Hoshang Daroga** is working toward a Master of Financial Engineering at UCLA. Hoshang has a degree in engineering, and an MBA in Finance. He is an exceptional young man, and has already achieved much success in his professional career. He hopes to embark on a career in Quantitative Research, his ultimate life goal being able to provide assistance to researchers and entrepreneurs. [hdaroga@gmail.com](mailto:hdaroga@gmail.com)

**Rayomond Dinshaw** is working toward a law degree at Queen's University. He has always maintained high academic standing, winning numerous scholarships and awards. His volunteer activities with Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian organizations has led him to aspire to work as a humanitarian lawyer, working for organizations such as the UN or Amnesty International. [rayomand.dinshaw@gmail.com](mailto:rayomand.dinshaw@gmail.com)  
*FEZANA scholar for 2013 and 2014*

**Michael Hemati** is pursuing a Masters in Transitional Medicine at the University of California, Berkeley. After graduating with a B.S. in BME from the University of Texas, he has worked in labs, medical facilities, and private companies, doing research in various technology-based systems. Among other things, Michael also volunteers in after-school programs for low-income children. [mhemati@berkeley.edu](mailto:mhemati@berkeley.edu)  
*Recipient of Morvarid Guiv Endowed scholarship (FEZANA for 2013)*

**Fardin Niroo** is obtaining a Masters in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Northwestern Polytechnic University. An academic achiever, his goal is to eventually start a company of his own. He is an active member of many professional organizations. [hdaroga@gmail.com](mailto:hdaroga@gmail.com)

**Zenobia Ravji** is working toward a Masters in International Journalism at the University of Illinois. She has been volunteering in international



# FEZANA Scholarships

projects since the age of 18 and has travelled to 20 countries in the process. She is passionate about serving humanity, and hopes to use her journalism knowledge to educate the world about international humanitarian issues. She is actively involved in FEZANA and the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago..zenobia.ravji(@)gmail.com

*Recipient 2013 Vakhshoori Foundation Scholarship*

**Artan Zandian** is enrolled in a Master of Environmental Design program at the University of Calgary. He did his undergraduate work in architecture at the University of Tehran, graduating with a 3.94 GPA. He has been actively involved in community affairs here and in Iran. He is specially interested in studying and rehabilitating ancient Zoroastrian architecture. artanzand(@)yahoo.co.uk

*Recipient of Vakhshoori Foundation scholarship for 2013*

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# FEZANA Scholarships

## Vakhshoori Scholarships 2014-2015

The Vakhshoori Foundation invites young Zoroastrians to apply for scholarships for the academic year of 2014-2015. These awards range between \$10,000 and \$1,000. For more details and application form please visit the foundation web site at [www.vakhshoori.org](http://www.vakhshoori.org)



Vakhshoori Foundation

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

### Vakhshoori Scholarship Recipients for the Academic Year 2013-2014

We were extremely happy with the quality of our applicants this year.

**Mr. Mehrbod Khanizadeh: \$10,000**

- Doctor in Religions, specializing in Zoroastrianism, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, England

• **Mr. Arash Zandian: \$7,000**

- PhD in Mechanical Engineering, University of California, Irvine

• **Mr. Dinsha Mistree: \$5,000**

- PhD in Political Science, Princeton University, NJ

• **Mr. Bahman Zohour: \$4,000**

- PhD in Chemical Engineering, University of California, Los Angeles

• **Ms. Yasaman Dmehri: \$3,000**

- Medical student, University of California, Riverside

• **Ms. Simin Kiany: \$3,000**

- PhD in Immunology/Cancer Biology, University of Texas at Houston / MD Anderson Cancer Center

• **Ms. Elham Yazdani: \$3,000**

- Ph.D. in Business Administration, the David Eccles School of Business, Utah University

• **Ms. Nousheen Bastani: \$2,000**

- PhD in Sustainable Agriculture, University of British Columbia, Canada

• **Ms. Zenobia Ravji: \$1,000**

- MS in Journalism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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](http://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 the Board of Directors**

**Vakhshoori Scholarship**



# FEZANA Scholarships



**Mehrbod Khanizadeh** is a Ph.D student specializing in Zoroastrianism at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He already has a Doctorate Degree in Veterinary Medicine specialized in Animal Pathology. For many years, Mehrbod has also been interested in exploring the ancient culture of Iran. Therefore, after Veterinary studies, He took the University Entrance Exam for Master degree and was admitted to the University of Shahid Beheshti in the field of the Ancient Culture and Languages. Due to the threat of the extinction of Oral Zoroastrian Literature, He chose to write his thesis in Iran on the oral literature of Iranian Zarathushtis. During his research, he collected the still-living Zoroastrian undocumented traditions from the elders living in Kerman, Tehran and Yazd.

His Ph.D research is concerned with the most important text, the Yasna. The Yasna, with 72 chapters, constitutes one of the books of the extant Avesta. During the Sasanian era (224-651 CE), Zarathushti priests began to translate the Avestan texts into Middle Persian. These translations included comments on the

Avesta. In the manuscripts, the Middle Persian translation, together with any comments or glosses, immediately follows the Avestan phrase it translates. The Avestan original together with the translation and commentaries came to be known as ***abestāg ud zand*** '***The Avesta and the Zand***'.

The core of Mehrbod's Ph.D thesis will consist of an edition of the Avestan and Pahlavi version of the Hōm Yašt, which constitutes chapters 9–11 of the Yasna. He will analyze the way in which the translation relates to the Avestan original and study the commentaries to see how the Avestan text was interpreted in the Middle Iranian period. He will also examine the way in which the Zarathushti belief system developed from Old to Middle Iranian times. With his thesis, Mehrbod is hoping to contribute to a better understanding of the Zarathushti and ancient Iranian traditions. He expresses his deepest appreciation to the Vakhshoori Foundation for the scholarship which assists him to achieve his educational goals. *Recipient of Moobed Faridoon Zardoshty Religious Scholarship (FEZANA) 2012 and 2013*

**Arash Zandian** was raised in Tehran, Iran. He is currently a second year Masters student in Mechanical Engineering at University of California-Irvine which will lead to the Doctor of Philosophy degree. He has been named the inaugural recipient of the Donald K. Edwards Endowed Fellowship in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering at UCI in 2012. He did his undergraduate studies in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Tehran, and graduated with a B.S. in 2011. The focus of his research in the past few years has been on efficiency improvement of the power generating units and development of renewable energy systems, which consequently address air pollution and global warming issues that not only threaten our future but also jeopardize the lives of all creatures. Life is an invaluable gift God has given us, and as our religion teaches and emphasizes, it should be praised and enjoyed by all; this creates a great duty for us to retain it for our descendants who wish to have a joyful life as we do, in the future.





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Aside from attending school, Arash has been teaching high school Mathematics and Physics courses to Zarathushti students, wishing to assist them to get admission to top universities. Meanwhile, he has been an active member of the Zoroastrian Students Organization (ZSO) for more than five years, where he took part in many activities and took responsibilities as organizer and manager in diverse social, religious and athletic events; the most important of which are: the 1st Zoroastrians' Invention & Innovation Exposition, annual Zoroastrians' Sports Olympics (Jam-e Janbakhtegan), Manthra Religious Competitions and Zoroastrian Teenagers Nationwide Camp. He has also been a key member in producing the 1st dubbed "Dari" film, which was released in 2011. It was a great stride in familiarizing our children with our mother tongue, and helps reinforcing the ties with their ancestors and keeps our community more united, he believes.

Arash wishes to encourage his peers to be committed to their society and to try to excel the name of the Zarathushti community in any academic, arts or sports related contest. Retaining our precious traditions and encouraging our posterity to keep this valuable treasure is the key to remaining united, and it is of prior importance for our community to thrive.

**Dinsha Mistree** is a Ph D. Candidate in the Department of Politics at Princeton University. He also has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in political science from the Massachusetts



Institute of Technology. Dinsha's research focuses on public institutions and political economy in the developing world. Dinsha will graduate in June 2014 and he hopes to follow in the family footsteps of becoming a professor (as both of his parents). Dinsha has been involved with several Zoroastrian community projects. He recently helped launch **Zoroastrian Return to Roots** (<http://www.zororoots.org>), a program which organizes trips to India (and soon to Iran) for Zarathushti youth. With Benafsha Shroff, he has also launched Agiary Connect (<http://www.agiaryconnect.com>), a website where Zarathushtis living outside of India, Pakistan, and Iran can get religious services performed at agiaries. This service enables priests to continue practicing our rituals and customs, even as many Zarathushtis continue to move abroad. Dinsha occasionally writes for FEZANA Journal and is involved in various Zoroastrian associations throughout the world. In his spare time, he is involved in entrepreneurship (he co-founded a coffee and chai company in Delhi and advises other entrepreneurs). He also enjoys playing soccer and basketball.

*Recipient of the Mehraban and Morvord Kheradi Endowed Scholarship , The FEZANA SCHOLAR 2012*

**Bahman Zohour** was born and raised in Iran in a Zarathushti family. He attended the Firooz Bahram High school. Eight years ago, he moved to the U.S. in search of a brighter future. Despite many challenges, he immediately started working full time at Fry's Electronics and enrolled at De Anza College, taking prerequisite courses in preparation for a four-year university. Currently he is a second year Chemical Engineering Ph.D student at University of California- Los Angeles (UCLA) where he received his Bachelor of Science degree with honors.

During his two years of undergraduate studies at UCLA, he maintained a high academic standing





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and received prestigious scholarships such as the UCLA Recognition Scholarship Award in 2010, Lena De Groff Scholarship Award in 2011, Rhone Poulence Scholarship Award in 2012, and FEZANA Scholarship Awards in 2012 and 2013. He was also invited to join many prestigious honor organizations, such as Honorsociety.org, Goldenkey, and TauBetaPi (TBP), and has actively participated in many of their outreach programs. While in his senior year, he was the recipient of the 2012-2013 Dean's Graduate Scholar Award. This is one of the most prestigious fellowships awarded by UCLA, and is offered in recognition of exceptional qualifications to an individual pursuing graduate studies in the field.

The potential to help the society have a healthier environment motivated Bahman to be a part of his current research group at UCLA. He started working in catalysis and reaction engineering research laboratory as an undergraduate student and carried on his research through graduate studies. Utilizing chemical engineering principles, his research group is making significant advances in producing new catalytic materials, which eliminates the production of toxic and hazardous by-products in the process of direct natural gas conversion to higher hydrocarbons and liquid fuels. In the context of his research, he has published many of his findings in top scientific journals. In particular, his research studies led to an important discovery which has significant mechanistic implications, consequently, it was featured on the front cover of the October 2013 issue of ChemCatChem journal.

He is also a big fan of sports such as basketball, volleyball, and swimming. He enjoys regular workout at the gym and outdoors walk.

He is extremely passionate about inspiring others to learn about science, engineering, and the Zarathushti religion. Since college he has participated in different teaching assistant, tutoring, and outreach programs. It is his biggest dream to become a university professor and be able to impart knowledge to many generations. Furthermore, as a young Zarathushti he wants to be part of our community that teaches and helps our younger generation. He deeply believes in the greatness of our religion and wants it to grow larger and stronger every day. He is determined to spread the greatness of the Zoroastrian religion. *Recipient of FEZANA Scholarship 2011 and 2012*

**Yasaman Demehri** was born in Tehran, Iran, and came to the USA when she was 17 years old. Currently, she is a first year medical student at UC Riverside School of Medicine. She graduated with a Summa Cum Laude and Honors from UCLA with a Bachelor Degree in Physiological Sciences. Yasaman conducted research in both China and the USA. She was one of the 14 students to be chosen to conduct clinical research at Peking University in Beijing, China in summer of 2011. There, she worked at the cardiovascular laboratory where she performed heart dissections, heart perfusions, and analyzed the effects of various medicine on cardiomyocyte contractions. This unique experience not only taught her the synchronized skills of heart dissection and the different research techniques employed in China and the United States, but it also reassured her goal to study medicine. She





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is interested in the research aspect of medicine, because she knows that innovation is an essential part of science, and she intends to use it to find cures and prevent diseases along with her medical career.

She has been involved in many community service activities and volunteering opportunities. In addition to volunteering at the Kaiser Permanente' Hospital, she has volunteered at the UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center (as part of the UCLA Care Extender's Medical Internship Program) for about three years, where she volunteered in multiple departments, such as ICU, Labor and Delivery, and Oncology. This experience taught her that medicine is more than just diagnosing and treating patients; it is about healing a human being on both physical and emotional levels.

She takes pride in being an Iranian and especially Zarathushti. As a result of her passion and interest in her background, she established the Persian Students Society. As the president of this student organization she organized several events and cultural shows, such as Jashne Norouz and Sade, to familiarize both non-Iranian as well as Iranian students about Zoroastrian religion and origin. Yasaman has also been involved in the Orange County Zoroastrian community by helping with cultural events such as celebrations and local talent shows. Furthermore, she is passionate in expanding her involvements as a future physician by focusing on informing and spreading health education among the Zarathushti community. As a physician she would like to contribute back to her community by continuing her involvements not only by volunteering her time, but also by providing them with useful resources and information, which would help them in making healthier decisions.

Yasaman credits her achievement to the support and encouragement of her family and her Zoroastrian community. She thanks the Vakhshoori Scholarship committee for their support in helping her achieve her goals of becoming an outstanding physician and a contributing member of the Zoroastrian community



**Simin Kiany** was born and raised in Shiraz, Iran. She received her B.S. in Medical Laboratory Technology and her M.S. in Immunology from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. She graduated first in her class both for her B.S. and M.S. After graduation, she worked as a research assistant in a clinical microbiology research center (considered the top-ranking microbiology research center in Iran) where she was among the few to be recognized and selected for outstanding work by Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. In addition, she taught for four years as a pathobiology instructor at Technico-Vocational Junior College in Shiraz, Iran, where the students' survey put her in the best instructor category for a few years in a row.

In August 2007 she left Iran for the United States and faced many challenges such as having a limited support-system and being in a completely new environment far from her homeland. She found a job within two months after arriving in the US as a research assistant at the Genome Technology Center at Stanford University. A year and a half later, she received admission to the University of Texas at Houston/ MD Anderson Cancer Center, the world-renowned cancer research and treatment center. Simin is currently a fourth year Ph. D student and for her current project she is developing a new immune therapy, which can effectively treat Osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer. Their research group is very optimistic about transferring the new treatment in the mouse-model to clinical trials to eventually



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potentiate saving patients' lives. Thus far, she has been the coauthor of sixteen published scientific articles. Findings of her studies have been included in over thirty presentations at scientific conferences.

She is motivated and dedicated to being an effective research scientist and educator, whose research and teaching in the biomedical field will make a difference in people's lives and the future.

As a member of the Zoroastrian community, she intends to be a leader and utilize her educational background to represent her community professionally. As an educated Zarathushti she will continually make her case and remind the new generation that one can achieve his or her goals despite the challenges and upheaval battles of life. She is very thankful to the Vakhshoori Foundation for considering her as a recipient of the Vakhshoori Scholarship and to the Zoroastrian community for their steady support over all these years.

**Elham Yazdani** was born in Yazd, Iran and raised in a Zoroastrian family. She received her bachelor degree in industrial engineering and an MBA from Sharif University of Technology. She has been involved in different activities in the Zoroastrian Society of Iran; she was the instructor of business-related workshops during the camping program held by ZSO. Elham is Ph D student in Business Administration-(Marketing), at University of Utah. She aims to apply the managerial concepts and design a clear map, which can guide our society to reach a better future. In her opinion, Zoroastrian youth are a rich resource of society and one of her main concerns is finding solutions for their problems. She is also very concerned about the Zoroastrian heritage and tries to initiate a local Zoroastrian community. She hopes that continuing her studies at University of Utah will help her to be an effective member of Zoroastrian society.



**Nousheen Bastani** was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She received her undergraduate and master's education in environmental science from the University of Toronto with high distinction. Currently, Nousheen is a first year Ph.D student in the Integrated Studies in Land and Food Systems program at the University of British Columbia (UBC), focusing on nutrient management and water quality issues associated with agriculture. Her current research involves developing a nutrient database for the BC Ministry of Agriculture.



She believes that passion is a very important aspect of life, because when you are passionate about something, you are motivated to do your very best. At a very young age, she knew she had a passion for the environment and that she wanted to make the world a better place for today and tomorrow. She is optimistic that her PhD research experience will allow her to develop the skills to determine how to protect freshwater resources from agricultural activities in developed





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and developing nations. In addition to research, she has always loved teaching and community engagement. In the future, she hopes to focus her efforts on conducting research that will affect government policy.

The Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr in Toronto, Ontario feels like her second home. As she has grown, she decided to give back to her community as much as possible. She has helped teach children their prayers and made sure that they understood the meaning of them as well. Every Jashne Mehrgan and Jashne Sadeh, she would select meaningful gathas for children to recite in English and Farsi. She has also volunteered for the 100th Toronto Scouts Troop by attending camps and teaching the youth campfire songs, knots, etc. During the summer months, she would help organize and run summer camps for Zoroastrian children and teenagers. She thinks it is important to keep our community alive and active so generations to come can learn how special our religion is and understand the strong bond and love of the Zoroastrian community. She believes that Zoroastrian youth should try their best to get involved in their local communities as we are the leaders of our faith. As Zoroastrian texts have stated, *"A thousand people cannot convince one by words to the extent that one person can convince a thousand by action."*



Zenobia Ravji graduated from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with a BA in economics, Spanish and health sciences and an MA in political science through the Civic Leadership Program. She channeled her passion for economics and politics into the position of an Associate Economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, as well as working on several political campaigns. What she discovered was that beyond her interest in economic policy, was a deep desire to educate the American population on the details of policy making and the people who frame the policies; to bring out the truth behind the faces of the government. This, in combination with her extensive international experience, her proficiency in six languages, and passion for interacting and connecting with people

of different backgrounds attracts her to international business reporting and human interest stories. Zenobia makes it her purpose to deliver the truth or what she likes to call, "raw journalism." She is currently learning from the UIUC faculty to deliver real news in the most effective and articulate way. She wants to channel her insatiable curiosity and desire for exploring the world into journalism. And most importantly, she hopes to use her skills to educate the world on the accomplished Zoroastrian community.

## Vakhshoori Scholarships 2014-2015

The Vakhshoori Foundation invites young Zoroastrians to apply for scholarships for the academic year of 2014-2015. These awards range between \$10,000 and \$1,000. For more details and application form please visit the Foundation web site at [www.vakhshoori.org](http://www.vakhshoori.org).

# Congress Follow up

IN THIS ISSUE WE PRINT SOME OF THE PRESENTATIONS  
OF THE 10TH WZC, MUMBAI 2013.

## ZOROASTRIANISM : THE WAY FORWARD 10TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS – KEYNOTE ADDRESS 28TH DECEMBER 2013

Darius J.Khambata  
Senior Advocate, LLM (Harvard)

*[NOTE : This is the written version of the speech that I made on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2013 as far as I can recall it. It is not nor is it meant to be a verbatim transcript of what I said. It does, I believe, contain everything I said and a little more. I have retained in this version a few things that due to paucity of time I omitted on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 2013.*

*I was deeply touched by the genuine appreciation of the audience. I sincerely cherish my religion and am proud of my ethnicity. I want both to survive. The object of saying what I did was to encourage a free, fair and dignified dialogue bereft of acrimony. If this speech makes more Parsis read and think about our great religion and exercise "Urvan" I will have achieved my objective. I have no other interest.*

*I welcome informed criticism and do not claim infallibility in my views. I only hope that those who take a different line or are critical of what I have said, do so on the basis of disclosed historical, legal or religious sources. Nothing that I have said is either new or radical. It is in fact a rational option that should not hurt any true Zoroastrian. I have taken pains to disclose, in the form of footnotes, my sources, all of whom are recognized scholars and masters of their subject.*

Vada Dastur Khurshed Dastur, Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla, Chairman, World Zoroastrian Congress, Mr. Nadir Godrej, Vice-Chairman, WZC, my old friend Mr. Maneck Davar, Honorary Secretary, WZC, Mr. Dinshaw Mehta, President and other Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and Trustees and office bearers of all the Panchayats and Associations of Parsis, Iranis and Zoroastrians from all over the world, my fellow Zoroastrians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fact that we are at all here today is a great tribute to Cyrus Poonawalla, Nadir Godrej, Maneck Davar and the other members of the WZC Committee. They have displayed Zoroastrian qualities of fortitude, compromise and rationality.

What a gathering this is! About 1% of the Zoroastrians diaspora are in this hall and this gathering is a grim reminder of our declining numbers.

### THE FIRST CONGRESS

But this is not a cause for dismay. The numbers at this Congress are still much larger than at the first Congress of Zoroastrians. I do not speak of the first Congress in modern times, that was in Tehran in 1960. I imagine the very first Congress must have taken place in a small village in what is perhaps now Southern Uzbekistan or North-Eastern Afghanistan (ancient Bactria) over 3400 years ago in 1500-1700 BC or thereabouts. Only two people attended. Neither of them was a Parsi. Neither had been born a Zoroastrian. One was called Maidhyamaha Spitama.



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The other was a man who had received a divine revelation from Ahura Mazda and had managed only one convert to his new religion until then, his cousin Maidhyamaha. That man's name was Zarathustra Spitama.

The rest of his tribe (who were not Parsis), had shown the skepticism, that some of our community shows even today, to Zarathustra's divine epiphany of Heaven and Hell, the monotheism of God, the antithesis between right and wrong, the conflict between good and evil, the temptations placed by the evil one (Angro Mainyu) before Zarathustra, the day of general and individual, final judgment and the future resurrection of the body.<sup>1</sup> This was a categorical departure from the polytheism that existed before Zarathustra.<sup>2</sup>

Today these are believed to be Judaic, Christian or Islamic concepts.<sup>3</sup> History, as always, confounds popular perceptions and notions and history tells us it was Zarathustra who first propagated these fundamental concepts which were absorbed by religions that followed. From dogma to practice, Zoroastrianism is a religion about sharing and propagation.

For lack of a following amongst his own, Zarathustra went forth to another land and another tribe, also not Parsis, and converted King Vishtaspa and his queen Hutaosa.<sup>4</sup> Thus spake Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism took root amongst what historians called the Avestan people.

## THE AVESTAN PEOPLES – THE SPREAD OF ZOROASTRIANISM

The Avestan peoples migrated from the Central Asian steppes around 1500 BC, another branch migrating into India through the Hindu Kush.<sup>5</sup>

1 Mary Boyce "Zoroastrians : Their Religious Beliefs and Practices" (2001), 1, 29, 77; R.C.Zaehner "The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism" (1961), 28-29

2 Boyce (supra) 3-12, 29; A.T.Olmstead "History of the Persian Empire" (1948), 24-29; Zaehner (supra), 28-29, 53-54, 65-66

3 Zaehner (supra) 57-58

4 Boyce (supra) 30-31

5 Boyce (supra) 2, 39

Thus were separated the two great branches of the Aryan peoples to be reunited millennia later under extraordinary circumstances, when a small group of Parsis fleeing the shattered remnants of a great empire, sought asylum in India amongst their long parted brethren.

The then predominant tribes of western and southern Iran were, to use that celebrated expression from the Book of Daniel, "*The Medes and the Persians*". Neither the Medes nor the Persians were Zoroastrians to start with.

Parsis (the anglicized term being "Persians") were those who settled in Pars in south western Iran.<sup>6</sup> The capital of Pars was Anshan. In the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC the Medes and the Persians were not Zoroastrians and even when the Medes conquered eastern Iran, as that great scholar Mary Boyce tells us, they were slow to accept a religious revelation from the Iranian tribes in the east who they looked down upon as inferiors.<sup>7</sup> It was only centuries after Zarathustra's revelation, that in the latter part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC, the tribes of Anshan or Pars in Southwest Iran, accepted Zoroastrianism as it spread throughout the Median world.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, whether we like it or not, historically and racially we are all descendants of converts to Zoroastrianism. I do not believe for a moment that this, at all, dilutes our commitment to our faith. To the contrary, it is he who has voluntarily accepted, rather than inherited, the divine revelation of Ahura Mazda, who is the zealot.

In those years of antiquity, the great flame of *Humata* (good thoughts), *Hukhta* (good words) and *Huvarshta* (good deeds) captivated hearts and minds of a multitude of tribes across Iran. The Persians wholeheartedly embraced Zoroastrianism as their own and what a religion they were to make it. As the Iranian peoples accepted Zoroastrianism they began to regard the religion as their racial heritage rather than as a

6 Zaehner (supra), 20

7 Boyce (supra), 48-49

8 Boyce (supra), 49



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universal message of salvation for all mankind.<sup>9</sup>

## THE CYRUS CYLINDER AND THE ACHAEMENIANS

**Khourosh the first of Anshan in Pars**, was born of a Parsi father in the line of Achaemenes, King of Anshan and a Median mother (daughter of the reigning Median monarch Hystaspes).

Khourosh is known to the world as **Cyrus the Great**. His "Cyrus Cylinder" is today displayed in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum. It is but a clay cuneiform cylinder, discovered in 1879. It is one of the most important objects of history and has a fascinating tale to tell.

It is a proclamation (rather like the Facebook of today) made in 539 BCE by Cyrus the Great as the conqueror of Babylon.<sup>10</sup>

It has been variously described as the first charter of human rights and part of it is inscribed on the walls of the United Nations. Think of it. It is an extraordinary statement of civil liberties, tolerance and magnanimity towards conquered peoples.

Cyrus granted his conquered subjects: freedom of religion, the prohibition of slavery, respect for all customs, traditions and religions, protection of properties and freedom from oppression.

Cyrus was gifted with the great quality of mercy. He displayed this in his pardon of King Croesus of Lydia<sup>11</sup> whilst King Croesus was being burnt at the stake and when he released the Hebrew tribes from their captivity in Babylon and gave them the right to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild their temple on the site of King Solomon's temple. He also promised them Persian funds.<sup>12</sup> For that he is the only gentile to be referred to as **"The Lord's anointed" in the Old Testament of the Bible (Isaiah 45 : 1)** almost a messianic reference. After his death the Jews who had not yet taken their funding approached **Darius**

**the Great** and reminded him of Cyrus' promises. Darius kept that promise and the second Temple was built.

**Xerxes the King of Kings** with his Persian Grand army marched 2000 miles to conquer Greece and laid waste to the Acropolis. His navy, made up of a coalition of ships including Phoenician, was defeated by the sharper Athenian ships in a naval battle at Salamis under the Athenian leader **Themistocles**, as Xerxes sat watching on his golden throne.<sup>13</sup> Years later when Themistocles was ostracized and banished from Athens he threw himself at the mercy of Xerxes who gave him the Governorship of Magnesia on the Meander, a city in Lydia.<sup>14</sup>

These were qualities of libertarianism, mercy, tolerance, generosity and fidelity to one's word.

## THE PARTHIAN EMPIRE

After the Achaemenian Empire the second great Zoroastrian empire was the Parthian or Arsacid empire.

A Parthian King called **Valaksh** commanded the compilation of the Avestan holy scriptures and also possibly even the Vendidad.<sup>15</sup> *The Vendidad is a Zoroastrian Leviticus*, a code of legal and ritual prescriptions. The Arsacids did not come from Pars. I am puzzled and somewhat amused when the Vendidad is sometimes misquoted in support of theories of the sanctity of the racial purity of Parsis, because it was initially sponsored by one not from Pars but nevertheless a devout Zoroastrian. It is a product of the times in which it was written. Scholars agree that it forms no part of the original revelation of Ahura Mazda through Zarathustra and indeed some say it indicates a lowering of ideals.<sup>16</sup> It cannot therefore be viewed as transcendental.

Practice should not make a religion. One ancient practice was of **"Khvaetvadatha"** that is marriage

13 Herodotus (supra), 445-46

14 J.M.Cook, "The Persians" (1983), 186 – some scholars attribute the appointment to Artaxerxes I; Barry Strauss "Salamis". The Greatest Naval Battle of the Ancient World", 303-304; Tom Holland (supra) 364.

15 Boyce (supra) 94-95

16 Dr. I.J.S.Taraporewala "The Religion of Zarathustra" 70-71

9 Boyce (supra) 47

10 John Curtis, "Ancient Persia", 40-41

11 Tom Holland, "Persian Fire", 14; Herodotus "The Histories", 40-42

12 Peter Clarke, "Zoroastrianism : An Introduction to an Ancient Faith", 153; Olmstead (supra), 57-58; Bible, Book of Ezra 6 : 3-5

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between brother and sister.<sup>17</sup> **Cambyes** the son of Cyrus the Great married two of his sisters, one of whom, **Atossa** later married Darius. Such next of kin marriages were quite common amongst the Persians of that time but all would agree that today such a practice would be completely unacceptable. This practice, as far as I'm aware, is not a practice mentioned in the Vendidad but I refer to it as an example of the danger of elevating practice to the status of religion. Indeed I do not condemn what is in the Vendidad; I only ask that the Vendidad be read and construed rationally and in the context of the age in which it was written.

## THE SASANIANS

The third great Zoroastrian empire was the *Sasanian empire*. During this time historians tell us that Zoroastrianism expanded to its peak and millions of new souls converted to Zoroastrianism. The religion spread far and wide and well beyond the Avestan people. ***The fire spread by proselytization to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Syria, Cappadocia (in modern Turkey) and even Albania***<sup>18</sup>. ***Holy fires were tended in all these places. Some of these were called "soul" fires and were given names such as 'Atash Bahram'***<sup>19</sup>.

That was the time of **Shapour I** who in 244 ACE defeated and killed the Roman emperor **Gordian** on the banks of Euphrates, in 260 ACE captured another Roman emperor **Valerian** and led him in chains, and who later subjugated a third Roman emperor, **Phillip the Arab**, who had to pay tribute to him (images captured in the stone reliefs of the Naqsh-e-Rustam).<sup>20</sup> The magnificent reign of **Khusrav I (Noshirwan the Just)** (531-578 ACE) marked the zenith of the Sasanian empire.<sup>21</sup>

Its end came amidst a great story of sacrifice which I now relate.

**King Yazdegard III** was defeated by the Arab

17 Boyce (supra) 97

18 Boyce (supra) 85, 110

19 Boyce (supra) 64, 87, 90, 122-123

20 Touraj Daryaee "Sasanian Persia : The Rise and Fall of an Empire", 7-8, 18; Gene R. Garthwaite "The Persians", 90-91

21 Taraporewala (supra) 69; Daryaee (supra) 28-31

barbarian hordes of Khalif Omar at the battles of *Qadissiyah* (636 ACE) and Nahavand (642 ACE).<sup>22</sup> When the Arab armies had plundered and torn through the heart of the third great Zoroastrian Empire, Khalif Omar gave an ultimatum to King Yazdegard either to convert and submit his kingdom to Islam or face annihilation. Yazdegard's defiant rejection of that ultimatum remains a masterpiece but for that he had to make the supreme sacrifice of his throne and his life. That sacrifice ultimately led to us being here today. He gave up his property and his material possessions for his religion. Let us not forget that.

## FLIGHT WITH THE FLAME: THE LANDING AT SANJAN

The story of Zoroastrianism in India starts with the flight of 2000 or 3000 refugees who ran away from intolerance and religious persecution in Iran. They sought asylum in India first landing in **Diu** in 917 ACE and then in **Sanjan** in 936 ACE.

The name Sanjan itself was given by them to the place where they landed. Sanjan is a small village in the province of **Khorasan in Parthia** (then north eastern Iran) from which they had come.<sup>23</sup> Sanjan, Khorasan is a small town in modern day **Turkmenistan**. Google it. You'll find it.

The legendary five conditions on which they were given refuge by **Jadi Rana** were :-

- (i) *To adopt the local language;*
- (ii) *To adopt the local dress;*
- (iii) *To live at peace with the people of the land;*
- (iv) *To take up arms along with the Rana in time of war; and*
- (v) *To introduce changes to their marriage ceremonies.*<sup>24</sup>

We have kept our word and the result has been:

- (i) the elevation of the Gujarati language to an unimaginably colorful use (all you have to do is visit the High Court Library or pick up your edition of "Parsi Bol" and you will know what I

22 Taraporewala (supra) 72

23 Boyce (supra)

24 Taraporewala (supra), 75

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- mean);
- (ii) the most elegant ladies in Gujarati sarees and garas;
  - (iii) the trust that we have earned from others to the extent that “Parsi Owned” has become a USP;
  - (iv) the great sacrifices that we have made for our nation in times of war, **Field Marshal Manekshaw** is but one of the so many valiant who have taken up arms and so many of whom have died for their country. We have kept our word; and
  - (v) this must be mentioned, **Tanaz Godiwalla’s** magnificent dinners post our sunset weddings.

**We have kept our word. We must remember that there was and is no condition that we would not accept any non-Parsi into our religion or permit any non-Parsi to be enlightened by the message of Zarathustra.**

## **ASHA: THE FORCE OF TRUTH AND URVAN : THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE**

We have in India freely practiced Zoroastrianism. The two great tenets of our religion are **Urvan** which signifies freedom of choice and **Asha** which means walk the path of righteousness.

‘Urvan’ literally means the chooser but refers to the soul. For each individual has complete freedom to choose his path, only guided by Zarathustra.<sup>25</sup> Linked to that, is the idea of “Man”; a word that in the Gathas combines the concept of both mind and spirit.<sup>26</sup>

What was “Man” if not what Zarathustra proclaimed in the 30<sup>th</sup> Yasna :

*“Hear with your ears the Great Truths, consider them with clear thought, deciding between the two and choosing – man by man, each one for himself.”<sup>27</sup>*

25 Taraporewala (supra) 29-30; Zaehner (supra) 41 – “Zoroastrianism is the religion of free will par excellence”.

26 Clark (supra), 127

27 Taraporewala (supra) 30; M.L.West “The Hymns of Zoroaster, A New Translation of the Most Ancient Sacred Texts of Iran, 51; Clark (supra) 126; Zaehner (supra) 42

Yet today our community is being haunted by a specter and that is the specter of intolerance. The democracy of thought and freedom of choice of our religion is being engulfed by the tyranny of reprisal and recrimination. The freedom, indeed the duty, to exercise choice is rapidly being stifled within our community.

The other great tenet is **Asha** and our basic prayer **Ashem Vohu** tells us that the path to happiness is by righteous living and by truth alone.<sup>28</sup> In its secondary sense Asha is the path to Ahura Mazda and fire is the outward symbol of purity, being the purest of Ahura Mazda’s creations.<sup>29</sup>

**Herodotus**, a Greek historian (often inaccurate) said that between the ages of five and twenty, Persian boys were taught only three things: how to ride a horse, how to use the bow and to speak the truth.<sup>30</sup>

On a lighter note, Herodotus also records how the ancient Persians resolved disputes. When important decisions were to be made the question was discussed when they were drunk and the following day submitted for reconsideration when they were sober. If it was still approved it was adopted; if not, abandoned. The reverse order was also sometimes followed.<sup>31</sup> If we continue on our current path this may soon be the only way we will be able to resolve anything!

## **THE 1910 PARSI PANCHAYAT JUDGMENT**

The true test of our commitment to Asha came several centuries after our arrival in India, in 1910 in the case of **Sir Dinshaw Manockji Petit v. Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy**<sup>32</sup> (“the Parsi Panchayat Case”). The case concerned J.R.D.Tata’s mother Sooni who was French and had converted to Zoroastrianism after marrying R.D.Tata. She was denied entry to an agiary. The Bombay High Court (**Justice Dinshaw Davar and Justice Beaman**) came to several seminal findings after hearing extensive evidence (including of

28 Taraporewala (supra) 90; Clark (supra) 122; Zaehner (supra) 60, 64

29 Taraporewala (supra) 17-23, 41; Zaehner (supra), 61

30 Herodotus (supra) 136

31 Herodotus (supra) 133

32 (1908) 11 Bombay Law Reporter 85 (DB)



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High Priests such as the great **Dastur Jamasp Asa**):

- (i) *Both Judges held that the Zoroastrian religion not only permitted but actually enjoined conversion of a person born in another religion and of non-Zoroastrian parents;*
- (ii) *However both the Judges also held that since the advent into India, there was not a single proven instance in India of conversion of a person born of both non-Zoroastrian parents to Zoroastrianism;*
- (iii) *Justice Davar held that there were certain elaborate ceremonies necessary and conditions to be fulfilled before accepting a person into Zoroastrian faith, and it was required that the desire to proselytize was actuated by pure intentions and convictions and not based on other considerations;*
- (iv) *Justice Davar also held that once such a conversion had taken place the persons were entitled to the full rights and privileges of a Zoroastrian;*
- (v) *Both Judges held that when the settlers made Trust Deeds (two or three hundred years ago), it would not have been within the contemplation of the settlers that an individual who was not a Parsi but converted to Zoroastrianism would be entitled to the benefits and use of the trust property. They applied a doctrine of interpretation based on the contemporaneous usage and understanding of terms;*
- (vi) *Hence Justice Davar also held that the Parsi community entitled to trust properties fell in three classes :*
  - (a) *Parsi descendants from the original emigrants and who were born of both Zoroastrian parents and who professed the Zoroastrian religion;*
  - (b) *the Iranis from Persia who professed Zoroastrianism; and*
  - (c) *the children of Parsi fathers by “alien” mothers*

*(as he put it) who had been duly and properly admitted into the religion;*

*The third category is odd. It is not from the Trust Deeds. It is not in our religion. The rationale for the third comes in Justice Beaman’s judgment.*

- (vii) *Justice Beaman held that the Indian Zoroastrians had adopted the caste system from other Indians and that whilst theoretically they adhered to their religion, whose principal tenets included the merit of conversion as a theological dogma, they erected about themselves real caste barriers and therefore the term Parsi had acquired a caste connotation. He attributed our refusal to allow non-Parsis into fire temples or to participate in death ceremonies, to caste and I quote him : “**This is not religion, it has nothing to do with religion : it is essentially distinctly irreligious : but it is pure unadulterated oriental caste**”.*

I believe Justice Beaman’s Judgment to be a very awkward and uncomfortable wake up call. A wake up call to which sadly, after a hundred years we have still not responded. “Parsi” and “Zoroastrian” had become synonymous in India not because of religion but because of caste. That is why whilst caste made the Zoroastrian religion hereditary in India, the great Persian priests in the Rivayats or answers sent to theological queries from India maintained conversion of non-Zoroastrian servants to Zoroastrianism was permissible albeit if ritual was strictly followed.<sup>33</sup> It is a caste that is inherited through the father and that is why we bar worship in an agiary to children of non-Zoroastrian fathers. This was the unspoken rationale underling Justice Davar’s inclusion of children of Parsi fathers from “alien” mothers. It has nothing to do with our religion. It is a manifestation of caste, pure and simple.

A hundred years have passed since then.

## CITIZENS UNDER A CONSTITUTION

We are now proud citizens of the world’s greatest democratic experiment and citizens under a visionary

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and great Constitution. Part of a vision that our founding fathers including **Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and Jamsetji Tata** dreamt of. For which nation in the world has a national motto which resonates with the message of Zarathustra. **“Satyameva Jayate” or “Let Truth prevail”** is nothing but an invocation to Asha. The three lions that grace our national emblem are the great symbol of that philosopher King Ashoka the Great – but they have their origin in the pageantry of the Achaemenians and were first found at Persepolis.

The Constitution of India abolishes discrimination based on amongst other things caste. An exclusion from a place of worship based on caste would be illegal and unconstitutional. No doubt Article 25 protects the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion and Article 26 reserves the right of every religious denomination to establish religious and charitable institutions and to manage their own affairs in matters of religion. But Articles 25 and 26 are *“subject to public order, morality and health ...”*. To my mind an exclusion based on caste would be immoral and un-Zoroastrian.

Mahatma Gandhi had famously said about Parses: *“In numbers beneath contempt but in contribution beyond compare”*. The question before us today and in this Congress is whether we allow those numbers to fall beneath the line of extinction and become fossilized as was predicted by that great historian Arnold Toynbee or we somehow save our religion for future generations.

I know that this is a controversial debate and it has genuine votaries on both sides. I believe that the strong views expressed on either side are supported by genuine convictions and to say otherwise would be to devalue the debate. The debate must be dignified and without rancor.

Consider the extreme nature of what is happening today, in the guise of subserving the assumed intention of the settlors of trust properties. Freedom to worship is being actively denied to many true and good Zoroastrians who are not of Parsi origin or whose fathers are not Parsi Zoroastrian or indeed

even to Parsi Zoroastrians married outside the community.

Do we let dogma and caste triumph over good thoughts, good words and good deeds?. One of the greatest Zoroastrian Parsis who strode this earth was **Sir Jamshedji Kanga** acknowledged by many to have been India's greatest lawyer and a wonderful human being. He was a Mobed and wore his Mobed's cap to Court for every day of his almost seventy year practice. Yet each evening on his return from Court he would light one cigarette, carefully removing his priests' cap before he committed that one daily act of “heresy”! Did that make him any the less a devout Zoroastrian and Parsi? Not in the least. He never allowed dogma to triumph over *Asha and Urvan*.

The descendants of those who sought refuge here from the scourge of religious intolerance and bigotry, cannot now appropriate the fire to themselves. Was that the dream of the 2000 who fled Iran sacrificing their worldly possession? The time has come to free Zoroastrianism from the shackles of property law. To monopolize Zoroastrianism is to kill it.

We do not need to sacrifice our identity to reclaim our religion. That is a myth that is being propagated.

It is a sobering thought that today a Zoroastrian from **Uzbekistan** (the birth place of Zarathustra) or a re-converted Zoroastrian descendant of any of those valiant kings *Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Shapour, Khushrav Noshirwan or Yazdegard*, would not be able to assert a right to enter an agiary since he or she would not fit within the strict confines of the Parsi Panchayat judgment.

This is a matter of shame. Nothing less than that. It does not behoove us as Zoroastrians or as Parsis.

Yesterday, walking in the leafy forests of Mahabaleshwar, I wondered whether Zarathustra himself – born of parents who were neither Parsi nor Zoroastrian – would be able to get admittance today to an agiary as a matter of right. Perhaps not. That is, at once, both farcical and tragic.

Does the future of Zoroastrianism lie with Mumbai

# Congress Follow up

Parsis or must we now pin our hopes and destiny on the Zoroastrian diaspora abroad? I hope that we, Mumbai Parsis rise to the challenge. We are the descendants of those valiant 2000 and it is in that spirit that I salute those true and valiant Zoroastrians who wage a sometimes lonely battle for their right to worship. To them I say do not despair for you partake of the struggle for Asha or truth and Ahura Mazda walks beside you.

## THE RANGOON CASE

Some years after the Parsi Panchayat Case, there arose an interesting matter in which to apply and perhaps extend the principles laid down by the Bombay High Court. It came to the Privy Council from Burma, in **Saklat v. Bella**<sup>34</sup>. Bella was the fourteen year old daughter of a Goan Christian and a Parsi Zoroastrian mother. She had had her Navjote and entered an agiary. Some worthy members of the Parsi community objected and filed proceedings to bar her entry.

The Privy Council (in a judgment delivered by **Lord Phillimore**) followed the Parsi Panchayat case that required the dual qualification of being both a Zoroastrian and a racial Parsi before one could assert a right to enter an agiary. It held that maternity was of no importance in matters of race.

The Privy Council however also evolved a doctrine which is very important and apposite:

- (i) *It held that although when property was set apart for public or charitable uses it would be a malversation to apply the funds for persons who were not objects of the Trust, this principle did not prevent the rendering of some convenience or service of such a nature as would not hurt the lawful recipients;*
- (ii) *The Privy Council consequently held that the trustees were not bound to exclude others who were also Zoroastrians but who did not strictly meet such dual qualification (and hence had no title to share), provided their admission would not hurt the beneficiaries. So it was only if the numbers admitted were too large or the persons were disorderly or unpleasant in*

*their habits or they substantially interfered with the convenience or benefit of those for whom the endowment was created that the trustees would be required in law to exclude them.*<sup>35</sup>

The Privy Council held that, the suggestion that, Bella's conversion was impossible or had not been completed by due initiation, was not established. It was also held there was nothing to show that allowing entry to a Zoroastrian (Bella) would cause desecration within the fire temple and that accordingly such entry would not be a case of substantial interference with the devotion of worshippers.<sup>36</sup>

In these years of controversy I have not seen anything that establishes that the presence of a Zoroastrian born of a non-Parsi father and Parsi mother, in an agiary desecrates our holy and powerful fires. There is no basis for this in law or in religion. Let no one tell you that permitting entry into an agiary, of a Zoroastrian who is not born of a Parsi father is either against the law or against our religion.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

I therefore offer two solutions:

Firstly if it causes such great anguish to Parsi Zoroastrians to have a true and pure Zoroastrian, who is not born of a Parsi father, stand next to them in an agiary to worship Ahura Mazda, then let new agiaries be consecrated. Let our great soul fires seed the fire in such new agiaries. For that there has to be a spirit of sharing and magnanimity. There is clearly no breach of trust if Trustees of existing agiaries permit a flame to be lit from the fire burning within and hence permit a new agiary to be consecrated. The rights of beneficiaries of the existing agiary are not thereby affected. The trust deeds for the new agiaries may permit entry to all Zoroastrians including those with a non-Parsi father.

Alternatively our agiaries and Atash Behrams can and must throw open their doors to all Zoroastrians. This is the preferred alternative. This is the nobler alternative. It will behoove us as Zoroastrians and as Parsis. This will be completely within the duties of Trustees and the bounds of the law of Trusts. The rights of beneficiaries will not be diluted. There is

<sup>35</sup> Supra, 303

<sup>36</sup> Supra, 303



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nothing in our religion that suggests that the presence of a Zoroastrian, whose father is non-Zoroastrian or is not a Parsi, in an agiary will desecrate or dilute the holy fire – no such evidence was led in the Parsi Panchayat case or in the Rangoon case and I believe that there is no theological basis for such apprehension.

I think that every true Zoroastrian will agree that the fire of Zarathustra and the right to worship is inexhaustible, so it can and must be shared. It will be like the fish and loaves of bread that Christ shared amongst his congregation. It is infinite.

As regards other rights such as housing, education and health, a more doctrinaire approach can be adopted based on a strict construction of the Trust Deed. Until the Parsi Panchayat case is reconsidered by a higher Court, rights of enjoyment of other properties that are by their nature exhaustible, will have to be allowed only strictly in accordance with the inferred desire of the settlor, i.e. only for Zoroastrians born of a Parsi father.

Do not, I beg of you, make our soul fires and our great religion a hostage to fortune! The choice is clear we must either allow the fire to spread or risk its extinction. ***The keepers of the flame must not lock it in their embrace and extinguish it!***

As Justice Davar held, conversion to Zoroastrianism is a matter of elaborate ritual and purity of conviction. It is neither routine nor easy. I do not advocate active proselytization; I advocate acceptance, humanity and tolerance. I advocate inclusion not exclusion.

The expression “Parsi Zoroastrian” is completely alien to our religion. It is a term from Trust deeds and we demean Zoroastrianism by introducing that term into religious discourse.

I appeal to our worthy and respected High priests, one of whom is here today, to eschew legal controversies and follow the example of the great priests that have preceded you, **Dastur Naryosang Dhawal, Dastur Kirdar, the second great prelate of the Sasanians<sup>37</sup>, Dastur Meherji Rana, Dastur Kukadaru, Dastur Dhalla, Dastur Jamasp Asa** propound and spread

Zoroastrian philosophy. I implore you to revitalize our religion and evangelize our youth. You enjoy great respect but with that respect comes responsibility. It is a far greater trust that you are charged with.

Today’s speech is not a legal opinion nor even a legal analysis. It is but the suggestion of an approach for debate and consideration. An approach of tolerance and magnanimity. An approach that is within our religion and that will be within the Parsi Panchayat case and that will subserve the great constitutional values laid down in the Constitution of India. ***It will reflect the tolerance and libertarianism of Cyrus, the generosity of Darius, the magnanimity of Xerxes, the sacrifice of Yazdegard, the magnificence of Khusrav Noshirwan the Just and the valor shown by Parsi Zoroastrians through the ages. It would combine the concepts of Urvan and Asha.***

## CONCLUSION: THE CHINVAT BRIDGE

We must all cross the Chinvat bridge one day. As a community and as a religion we stand today at the same crossroads that the Mughal empire stood in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The warring sons of **Shah Jahan** battled for his succession. Finally **Aurangzeb** triumphed sending the decapitated head of **Dara Shukoh**, the eldest son, to his ailing father. Do we go the way of Dara Shukoh and look to a libertarian renaissance or do we go the way of Aurangzeb and fall into the abyss of bigotry and intolerance that marked the decline of the Mughal Empire. Let us not make the same mistake, for the price we will have to pay will be far too high.

Zarathustra himself exhorts us in these magnificent words of the 30<sup>th</sup> Yasna :

“May we be the ones who will make this world splendid,  
Mindful One and Ye Lords, bringers of Change,  
and Right,  
as our minds come together where insight is  
fluctuating”.<sup>38</sup>

It will not be easy but we must remember those stirring words of **Lord Wavell** “*Without courage there cannot be truth, and without truth there can be no other virtue.*”<sup>39</sup>

“We desire your fire” was Zarathustra’s plea to

38 M.L. West (supra), 55

39 Lord Wavell, “A Viceroy’s Journal”

37 Boyce (supra) 109-111

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Ahura Mazda in the 34<sup>th</sup> Yasna.<sup>40</sup> It is also a clarion call to all to receive the truth of the divine revelation from Ahura Mazda. It is an exhortation not to the physical element of fire, but to faith.

It is in the spirit therefore of tolerance, respect for Asha or truth, Urvan or freedom of choice and the great Zoroastrian dream, that I beseech every Zoroastrian to walk the path of the righteous, to reaffirm the timeless truth of our faith and to give his or her fire to Zarathustra.

***Light that fire and it shall be everlasting, the cause is just and will endure, the flame shall never wane or flicker and the dream shall never die.***

***Darius J. Khambata***, Senior Counsel, LL.B. (Bombay), LLM (Harvard), practices before the Bombay High Court and the Supreme Court of India. He is currently the Advocate General of Maharashtra. Traditionally the Advocate General is regarded as the 'Leader of the Bar' at the Bombay High Court appearing for the Government of Maharashtra in its major litigation before the Bombay High Court and the Supreme

40 Clark (supra) 127-128

*Court of India. Prior to his appointment as Advocate General, he served as Additional Solicitor General of India appearing for the Government of India in its major litigation before the Bombay High Court.*

*He has appeared in a number of important constitutional, corporate and commercial matters for both the Government of India as well as for the Government of Maharashtra as well as for several domestic and international commercial arbitrations. His expertise extends to constitutional law, administrative law, securities law, corporate law and environmental law. He has successfully defended constitutional challenges to several laws including those pertaining to service tax and VAT and to the provisions of the Income Tax Act, the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act, the National Investigation Agency Act, the Competition Act and the ban on Gutka.*

*He is a Trustee of the M.C. Chagla Memorial Trust and the H.M. Seervai Memorial Trust. He is a member of the London Court of International Arbitration.*

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## A ZOROASTRIAN LEGACY THROUGH THE AGES

Khojeste P. Mistree

Talk given at the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress, Mumbai – December 2013



As one of the oldest religions in the world, Zoroastrianism is the religious cradle which gave birth to the ethical mores of many ancient civilizations. The premium placed in the teachings of the faith on **Truth, Justice, Good Governance, Righteous Behaviour and above all tolerance of other faiths**, has had a civilizing effect on the ancient world.

The constancy of moral force established by the Mazda worshipping, **Achemenian Dynasty** (550-331BCE) was given due recognition and sanctity in the Bible which referred to it as **“the laws of the Medes and the Persians which altereth not”**. We the Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrians are the inheritors of both a religious and a historical legacy. But the determinants for the continuity of these legacies depend upon two factors; first, for us as a community, being willing recipients of this legacy and secondly, for us to have the strength, vision and the willingness to hand down the legacy intact to our future generations. In other words, we have inherited something which we must preserve and cherish and we have to in turn leave behind a legacy for our future generations.

The first, is the legacy that we inherit from our religion and history. The theological teachings and the ancient legends concerning our **Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra the Righteous**; the great deeds of our kings, priests and warriors, which form a composite part of our heritage; this then is the legacy of the Zoroastrian people. The sanctity of this legacy in our collective memory, and in our consciousness, is

an effort to preserve the historical foundation of the faith. The other is the legacy that we as the present generation, wish to hand down, to the generations who follow, and those who will be our inheritors and our heirs. This remains entirely in our hands, how much we choose to pass down to the next generation, will determine the completeness of this legacy and its permanence in history. For example we have no historical information on the period immediately preceding the departure of the Parsis from Iran or of the years following the aftermath of their arrival in India. This dark period continues until the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, when we begin to get glimpses of the community's existence in India. The shadow that falls over this period, is one where the legacy, for unknown reasons was not passed down to successive generations and hence there is no information of substance which can be handed down to succeeding generations.

Today we have our 3000 year old religious legacy which is our faith - Zoroastrianism. In time and place, Zoroastrianism can claim an antiquity that takes goes back to circa 1200 to 1500 BCE. As the followers of the oldest revealed religion in the world, we the Zoroastrians have borne our ancient faith with a sense of optimism and fortitude. Our followers have survived the vicissitudes of time with remarkable strength, and today we survive as a small community of some 120,000 people in small pockets all over the world.

Zarathushtra's emergence in those troubled times, as a Prophet of the ancient world, led the late Professor Mary Boyce to note that Zarathushtra was *“a religious genius of the highest order; and his teachings bear the imprint of a highly original mind which joined powerful logic to spiritual profundity”*.

The confluence of Zoroastrianism with other faiths resulted in some of the cardinal Zoroastrian tenets being assimilated within other faith structures. Close contact between the Jews and the Zoroastrians in Achaemenian times, caused extensive transmission of Zoroastrian ideas into post-exilic Judaism in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE and later on, into Christianity and



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thereafter into Islam. For nearly a thousand years from the time of **Cyrus the Great in 550 BCE** until the defeat of the last Sasanian monarch, **Yazdegard III**, in 651 CE, Zoroastrianism remained the powerful faith of the Iranian people, in their spiritual homeland of **Airyana Vaejah**. Despite the antiquity of the times, Zoroaster, as he was known to the Greeks, did not remain confined to the Iranian national frontiers. Outside of Iran the personage of prophet Zarathushtra, scaled astonishing heights and his name was attached to legends and stories throughout the Near East and Europe.

Eulogized by the learned of the Platonic Academy, as the archetypal, prophet-philosopher, Zarathushtra came to be regarded as the most celebrated Prophet of the East.

In the Jewish tradition, Zarathushtra came to be identified with **Baruch**, the scribe of the prophet **Jeremiah**. In Christian lore, he was identified as **Nimrod** and during the Renaissance, in the Platonic Academy in Florence, the academicians clamored for a theological tradition handed down by Zarathushtra, who was seen by European philosophers as the founder of the seven liberal arts, and of magic and astrology. In the Chaldean Oracles Zarathushtra was regarded as the wisest of the ancient philosophers. In the Raphael fresco, "*The School of Athens*" at the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican, a bearded sanguine Zarathushtra contemplating a sparkling globe is depicted. Centuries later, the German philosopher, **Nietzsche** adopted Zarathushtra as the central figure for his *magnum opus* – *Thus Spake Zarathushtra*. In other words, Zarathushtra's influence extended beyond the land of Iran.

What catapulted Zarathushtra in the minds and imaginations of these people was the recognition of divinity which he expounded with a new ethical awareness, propounding a cosmic dualism, by firmly separating the forces of Good from those of Evil. This he symbolized through the imagery of light and darkness, to be experienced through the paradigm of truth and falsehood. In a period, when people led amoral lives and where ethical standards survived only as blurred images of grey, the elaboration of a universal struggle between Good and Evil set Zarathushtra and his teachings apart.

Mankind, confronted in daily life with discerning the

truth from the lie, was helped and strengthened by the covenant of **Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom**. This covenant promised the defeat of Evil and the renovation of the world which at the end of time, would be made wonderful, in accordance to the will of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra preached, was the sole Creator of all that was Good and as the upholder of both the spiritual and material worlds. He is seen as the embodiment of Wisdom and as a totally Good, Just and Perfect Being worthy of worship. Evil, Zarathushtra preached, was outside the domain of Ahura Mazda and the affliction of Evil he declared, in his hymns the Gathas, was the cause of corruption and imbalance in the physical world. This then is part of our unique religious legacy. The role of man, in Zoroastrianism, is quite simply to be Ahura Mazda's *Ashavan*, the one who untiringly combats evil and safeguards the Good which is inherent in the world created by Ahura Mazda. In what seems to be an apparently unending cosmic battle, Zarathushtra taught that if man brought beneficence to the soul by speaking the truth, being righteous and by supportive acts of charity, then there was the promise of hope and salvation for mankind. Man is promised that there will be an end of time, in a historic sense, when the world will be restored to a perfect state – *the "Making Wonderful"*. **And this is our greatest legacy, the framework of a conscious and ethical religious life, culminating in a beautiful world. A legacy unique to the people of ancient Iran.**

Our historical legacy begins around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when the Achaemenian **King Cyrus** came to the throne in circa 550 BCE and succeeded in uniting the Medes and the Persians, two powerful Iranian tribes, after defeating his grandfather **Astyages**, at Pasargadae. Cyrus' richest and most profitable conquests were that of Babylon and Lydia. In 539 BCE a date which, according to Boyce, "*was to be memorable in the annals of the Near East*", Cyrus marched through and entered the great city gates of Babylon without resistance or bloodshed.

It is said that as the rebel Babylonian governor led the Persian army into the City, the people spread sheaves of barley on the streets and turned out in large numbers to watch the entry of Cyrus the Great: an honor, very few Kings in the Near East have had. The Jews hailed him as a savior, for liberating them and ordering the rebuilding of the second temple in Jerusalem, with expenses paid from the "Persian coffers". This earned

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him the epithet of the **“Anointed One of God”, the Jewish God Yahweh**. In an era where harsh subjugation of a conquered people was an acceptable way of life, it is the constancy of Cyrus’s ethics that demand an explanation. Cyrus’s ethical behavior arose out of the force of his religion – which placed a premium on Truth, Order and Righteousness. I know that some scholars are reluctant to acknowledge Cyrus as a follower of Zoroastrianism, but Cyrus is our King, a Zoroastrian King and we cannot be disenfranchised from the legacy of Cyrus which is embedded so deeply in our hearts and minds. If we only study ancient Iranian history, we will have a sense of pride, a sense of belonging, and a sense of being part of this greatest civilization that once ruled the world. This extraordinary Persian emphasis on truth, is recorded by the Greek historian **Herodotus**, who stated that, **“The Persian noblemen of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, were taught at the age of five, to ride a horse, to shoot an arrow and to speak the truth”**. It is this adherence to the truth that directed Cyrus’ actions at all times. His political and administrative actions became the measure of a good and just king in the ancient world.

With the conquest of Babylon, Syria, Sardis, Lydia, Palestine and Phoenicia, Cyrus formulated what is now known as the first **“Bill of Human Rights”** in which he gave all the people under his rule, the freedom of worship, the right of abode, the right to live as a free people. He abolished forced labor and returned to the people, the statues of their gods. Cyrus permitted diversity in culture and left a legacy of religious tolerance unprecedented in history. The Cyrus Cylinder which is housed in the British Museum is a testimony to the vision of this great king.

The official policy of the Persians, during the Achaemenian and Parthian (248 BCE–224 CE) periods, was not to foist Zoroastrianism, nor any other facets of Persian life and customs upon their non-Zoroastrian subjects. This then is our true historical legacy. We, as the bearers of the Zoroastrian religion, are part of the classical religions of the world such as Judaism and Hinduism which are ethno-focused. Zoroastrianism has been the religion of the Iranian people only, historically we have no evidence of the religion being exported to non-Iranian people (the Iranian-Armenians being an exception) and if it did, it was for so short a period of history and without imperial sanction, that it is not seen as being part of

classical Zoroastrianism. As Zoroastrians, we are part of an ethno-focused religion and this is what has helped us to survive as an identifiable force. It is my contention, that had we culturally and ethnically assimilated with the invading Islamic forces, that over took Iran in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, as is being suggested today, we would have ensured the dilution of our faith and our identity.

The next Achaemenian king, **Darius the Great (522-486 BCE)** clearly declared that his rule and authority emanated from the will of Ahura Mazda. In his ethical exhortations, he famously declared, **“It is not my desire that the weak man should have wrong done to him by the mighty, nor is it my desire, that the mighty man should have wrong done to him by the weak. What is right, that is my desire”**. It is so appropriate in the times we live in, that as Zoroastrians it is our religious duty to adhere to that which is right.

Few know that it was King Darius who built a canal linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, 2400 years before the Suez Canal, thus establishing a navigable sea link connecting the East to the West. At Alexandria, Darius left an inscription underlining his ethnic origins: “I am an Achaemenian from Persia. By the Grace of Ahura Mazda, I seized Egypt; I gave order to dig this canal....”

He promulgated his own universal laws, the tone and content of which were linked to the great Zoroastrian concept of establishing a rule of righteousness, with justice for all. It is within the tradition of monarchical proclamations, that the essence of Zoroastrian ethics, as found in the religion, was defined, transmitted and indeed sustained by the Iranian people and not by non-Iranians. According to **Richard Frye**, **“It is the Zoroastrian Law which gives the real background of Roman law which is the background of all western law”**. This is another historical legacy we have bequeathed to the world.

Towards the last years of the great Achaemenian Empire, a new force rose in the west, that of **Alexander of Macedon**, seen in the west as Alexander the Great.

Ironically, the Achaemenian Persians, who gave the world their **“Ordinance of Good Regulations”**, and the first **“Bill of Human Rights”**, became all at once, a marginalized people, swept aside by the flash flood of Hellenism.

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Alexander's propaganda machine which he took with him during his conquests, created a legend around him that has become difficult to dispute. Nevertheless, in the Zoroastrian sacred texts, Alexander earned for himself, the unenviable sobriquet of "*gajaste*" – "the accursed one"; to us as Iranian Zoroastrians, Parsis or Iranis, Alexander is not the "Great", he is the Accursed One.- a title he holds even today, amongst the Zoroastrians of Iran. He merited this infamy for the destruction and plunder of Pasargadae, Persepolis and Ecbatana and for the merciless massacre of our priests and defenseless men, women and children living outside these great city palaces.

So deeply did Alexander's conquest cut into the Iranian psyche that even today, mothers in Iran tell their children to go to sleep quickly or else "Iskander will come" - *Iskander mio madh*.

After the death of Alexander in 323 BCE, his empire in parts was ruled by the **Selucid Greeks**. It is during their rule that the beginning of a resurgent Persian empire took place amongst the **Parni** tribesmen of Central Asia who had settled in North-Eastern Iran. The Parthians who are the ancestors of the Parsis and the Iranians who come from the Province of Fars, Kerman and Yazd are all descended from the various Iranian tribes. Because they all spoke the Iranian language, they saw themselves as part of the larger Iranian community. Iranian scholar **Shapur Shahbazi** calls the Parthians, from whom the Parsis have descended, "*the noblest of all the Iranians...*". Parthian military skills were well-known in the ancient world. They amazed the Romans with whom they constantly fought, by their ability to shoot arrows accurately over their shoulders as they retreated on horseback, giving rise to the English phrase, "**to deliver a Parthian shot**", which colloquially is termed as a "**parting shot**".

The emergence of a Parthian Empire breathed new life into the Zoroastrian religion under the Parthian **King, Valaksh, (r. 51-78CE)**. The first collection of the Avestan scriptures from the scattered texts from all over Iran were brought together, compiled and codified under Valaksh. Zoroastrian worship was promoted, fire temples were built and the Parthians maintained for themselves, ever-burning dynastic fires. According to Mary Boyce, it was during Parthian times, that the Zoroastrian High Priests, established

the three great sacred fires of the faith; **Adur Farnbag (the Fire of Fortune)** in the province of Fars, **Adur Gushnasp (Fire of the Stallion)** in the province of Media and **Adur Burzin Mihr (the Exalted Fire of Mihr)** was kept burning in the home province of Khorasan from where the Parsis originate. These fires were kept burning throughout and according to legend are said to have spiritual qualities of flight and of surviving without fuel. It is from these sacred fires that we have inherited our religious identity. Therefore, it is not tenable to claim that Zoroastrianism is a Universal religion because a religion which has survived millennia as an ethno focused faith, devolves on one from a belief system, a set of practices, ethics and a spirituality unique to a group of people. Historically, despite their Imperial might and extensive geographic sway the faith as an imperial policy was not known to have been extended beyond the borders of Iran. This fact is crucial to understanding the faith and its response to other faith groups.

It is during the mid-Parthian period that the formation of the national epic of Iran began to take shape. In the popular minstrel tradition, tales and exploits of the **Kayanian** kings and their paladins were recited in the halls of the Parthian noble families. A thousand years later, this national epic was put together by the great bard, **Firdausi Tusi in his Epic poem, the "Shahname"**. Firdausi received his inspiration from a Pahlavi chronicle called the "**Khwadag Namag**" – **The Book of Kings** and this literary legacy has kept our history alive for us. So we have a legacy of history, a legacy of religion, and a legacy of literature – and this is what makes us Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians.

One of the most important contributions to world architecture was the Parthian development of a free- standing dome. This Parthian invention became the leitmotif of Byzantine and Islamic architecture in later times. Today when you look at a dome, the architectural books tell you that it comes from the Islamic civilization. In fact the first dome came from the drawing board of a Parthian architect and it can still be seen in Firuzabad which is two and a half hours drive from Shiraz. So the first free-standing dome was created by a Zoroastrian architect long before Islam invaded Iran.

The Parthians were followed by the **Sasanians (224-651CE) whose founder was Ardashir Papakan (r. 224-240CE)**. He ordered his **High Priest Tansar to**



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collect all the Pahlavi works and their commentaries (*Zand*). Another powerful Sasanian **High Priest, Kirder** established several sacred fires and Zoroastrianism was centralized under the umbrella of six Sasanian kings. The defeat of Yazdegird III (632-651CE) at the hands of the Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, marginalized the faith and its people. The Iranian Zoroastrians took refuge in the desert province of Yazd, where the Sasanian High Priest sought sanctuary, and to which they took their sacred fires. The Zoroastrians lived there in obscurity and under difficult circumstances until modern times.

## ***The next phase of our historical legacy begins on the shores of India.***

Although there is a dark period that follows the arrival of the Parsis in India, a poetic version of our early years was encapsulated in 1599 by **Bahman Kay Kobad in the Qisse-i Sanjan**. I must state here that misconceptions and fallacies about the Parsi arrival abound. The Qisse records that we came in three boatloads each boatload bringing men, women and children. However, its historical foundation cannot be verified. This story of the Parsi arrival in verse form has given rise to another narrative legacy, by which we are today defined as a community in India. The apocryphal but popular story, titled ***"The Sugar in the Milk"*** reinforces the imagery that Parsis have sweetened India by their presence and the subliminal message is one of a peace loving community that fits into the great jigsaw of India almost seamlessly. And this perhaps is the most potent identity and brand image that outsiders have of us; that here we are a community that basically spreads sweetness.

Parsis in India are well known for their charitable works. One is not clear when charity became institutionalized within the community in India, but the steps taken by **Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (1783-1859)** to form the a registered charitable trust the **"Sir JJ Parsee Benevolent Institute"**, inspired others to do the same. The close identification of the Parsis of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with philanthropy is a socio-religious legacy which we should be proud of.

But while trade, wealth and education, created a new social awareness for the Parsis, it brought about changes, which affected the Parsi religious identity. The ethnic identity of the community despite the changes, remained largely intact. To this day, if we walk down Fountain area, nine times out of ten, we

can recognize a Parsi Bawaji because we maintain our ethnicity and our way of life. The twinning of religious identity with the ethnic identity continued strongly until the 1900s when the **Petit vs Jejeebhoy** case delinked and split the identities into two separate social forces one emanating from religion and the other exclusively ethnic. However, throughout history the Parsi and Iranian identity has an umbilical connection with the faith and until 80 years ago all three terms, Zoroastrian /Parsi and Irani were used interchangeably and meant one and the same thing. In the archives of the **Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe**, there is a letter written by **Kaikhosrow Shahroukh**, to the Association in which he addresses himself as a "Parsi from Kerman". This indicates that the term Parsi included all Zoroastrians and not just the Parsis of India.

In my opinion, the real value of our community lies in the religious life of our people being inextricably linked to our ethnic core. Religion cannot be left at the altar of Parsi legal luminaries, doctors or others who have not received academic training in the study of the faith and its history. This is our tragedy today that we want to sweep away the traditions rather than academically study the faith in depth. We have an ethnicity which we should be proud of as it has given us our fabled values and ethics; this is our historical religious heritage and it comes from an expansion of an individual's moral capacity absorbed through an adherence to the religious precepts of the faith.

Zoroastrianism has survived despite all odds for over three millennia because of a foundation built with the interlinking blocks of religion and ethnicity. Like the Jews who come from the twelve tribes of Israel and like the Hindus who come from the caste system, the Zoroastrians come from two groups or tribes, the Parsis and Iranis and Zoroastrianism has never been a religion shared with non-Iranian people.

Today in India our ethnic identity reigns supreme. Aspects of our community are variously described as ***" Parsi theatre, Parsi food, Parsi exhibition, Parsi businessmen, Parsi owned cars and as someone so aptly described - the Parsi religion.*** Thus in India, the legacy of the Zoroastrian identity is linked with our ethnic identity of being a Parsi. Doing any socio-religious surgery by tampering with our brand image will change the perception that outsiders have of our community. It is fashionable in some quarters to

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state “let the Parsis die out but not the religion”. This approach is self-destructive, because for centuries the faith and the ethnic identity have been inextricably linked and have a symbiotic relationship and the separation of one from the other will ring the death knell of our community. It is similar to telling an Iranian Zoroastrian, that the Iranian identity should be obliterated and only the Zoroastrian identity should be safeguarded. I cannot emphasize enough that this can only be damaging to the carefully constructed identity that we have as a community cultivated over the centuries.

The Government of India for example, has released Rs 100 million for a “Parsi” fertility project. It is an ethnic grouping, called the Parsis, to whom the monies have been given and not to promote or increase the number of Zoroastrians. The Government of India recognizes the importance of our ethnicity and of us being Parsis. So for those who believe that the monies were given to increase our tribe and our ethnicity it can only happen if we marry within the fold, for the Government of India is interested in increasing the Parsi-Irani population and not just the Zoroastrian one. It is significant to recognize that it is with our ethnic identity that one is recognized in India.

In India this legacy of our ethnic identity, represents a standard of high ethical values and a certain measure of behavioral responses, cultivated and projected over the years as the natural face of the community. Hence, non-Zoroastrians to this day, respect and trust us and believe that our community has given more to India than it has taken.

In Iran because the entire population is Iranian the only allegiance they have for self-identification that separates them from the Muslim population, is one of religion and hence in Iran our people are seen as Zarthushtis with their own ethnic Iranian customs and traditions.

In fact the Zoroastrians of Iran have understood the importance of preserving their ethno geographic identity. By calling themselves Iranian or Iranis they are preserving their ancient ethno-geographic identity and they further micro-filter their ethnicity by calling themselves Moriabadi, Zeinabadi or Ahrestani - the names of the village they come from. Any attempt to disconnect the Parsi Iranian ethnic identity from the Zoroastrian identity will in effect de-link the

community from its historical legacy and turn us into a faceless religious group with no moorings linked to our historical past.

For those who wish to experiment with a new non-ethnic religious system, my advice is if it matters so much do it but don't expect the majority of Parsis and Iranis to fund it. If you want to set up a new fire temple with new laws, do it. But don't expect the legacy we have inherited in India for over a 1,000 years to be given away just because it is fashionable to be eclectic. Religion does not work on flavors, religion works on legacies and our legacy is that of our Parsi and Iranian forbears. It is only in the marrying of ethnicity with the religion that we as a community can be seen as a complete whole. Being a Parsi or an Iranian Zoroastrian is a collective community identity.

As I have said before, the choices we make in our life time will determine the kind of legacy we leave behind. If we as a community forget our own religion and history, or follow just a miniscule part of it, through choice, we will be handing down to the next generation an incomplete, divided legacy. The concept of choice has been totally twisted from the metaphysical message of Zarathushtra's Gathas. The choice is always between right and wrong; it is not a carte blanche given for the exercise of individuality. By destroying a part of our identity, we will lose the *raison d'être* of our existence and the flame that flickers within us will weaken with each new generation and we will have less and less to hand down to our succeeding generation.

But if we salvage our historical identity and rebuild our legacy bit by bit, then we can once more recreate the spirit of Zarathushtra within us. So the message I leave you with is that each one of us must leave an “identity legacy”. It is our patrimony and our gift to the generations to come.

This is the true gift of the Magi that we can give our children and their children and the time to start is indeed now- as our story is ancient and is of a time of “Long Duration”.

***Atha Jamyat Yatha Afrinami***

***Khojeste P. Mistree is noted scholar of the Zoroastrian religion, and a Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat.***

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## EARLY HISTORY OF UDVADA

Dastur Dr. Peshotan Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza,  
High Priest Iranshah AtashBehram Udvada.

Talk given at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress, Mumbai – December 2013

### PROLOGUE

After the downfall of the Sassanian Empire in Iran, the ancestors of the present Parsi community in India, under the leadership ascribed to the High Priest Dastur Neryosang Dhaval, migrated to India in order to preserve and protect religion and community. They landed on the west coast about 150 km north of Mumbai in 716 .CE.

Later, the High Priest of the Parsis requested King Jadi Rana to allot a plot of land where only the “Behdinaan” (People of the Zoroastrian Religion; the Parsis) would have access for the purpose of consecration of the Holy Fire Atash Behram. The request was granted, the Holy Fire Atash Behram was consecrated and installed in 721 CE, and was named Iranshah, the Spiritual King of Iran thereby appending the memories of ancient Iran with Zoroastrian Religion.

The Parsis gradually migrated from Sanjan and settled in various places in Gujarat on the west coast of India. They required priestly services in their new settlement. Mobed Kamdin Zarthosht was the first priest who went from Sanjan to Navsari in 1142 CE, as a practicing priest in Navsari. Later, more priests began to migrate to new Parsi settlements. They formed themselves into various groups. In around 1290 CE., priests of various places assembled in a council and fixed their territorial boundaries, duties and rights and therefore the five dioces (Panthaks) of the priestly groups were formed, namely:

1. Sanjana Priests of Sanjan (now of Udvada)
2. Bhagaria Priests of Navsari
3. Godavra Priests of Surat
4. Bharucha Priests of Bharuch
5. Khambhata Priests of Cambay (Khambhat)



Around the end of 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Gujarat , including Sanjan was invaded by Sultan Mahmud and his commander Ulughkhan. The holy fire was carried to the caves on top of the Bahrot Hills, later brought to Vansda, then Navsari, Surat, again to Navsari, Valsad and Udvada.

When the holy fire was in Vansda, at the instance of Changa Asha the then leader of the Parsis in Navsari, the Holy Fire was brought to Navsari in around 1419 CE. under the leadership of three Sanjana High Priests. In Navsari, the Sanjana priests were under the territorial jurisdiction (Panthak) of the Bhagaria priests of Navsari with the arrangement and agreement that Sanjana priests would perform ceremonies of the Holy Fire Iranshah only (*Boi Dadan*) while the Bhagaria priests would perform all the other religious ceremonies. This arrangement lasted for a long time. Thereafter controversies leading to quarrels arose and the matter went to courts of law.

Ultimately in 1740 CE, with the permission of the government issued by Shri Damaji Rao Gaekwad, the Sanjana priests in Navsari (forefathers of the present members of the Nine Family Athornan Anjuman, Udvada) decided to carry the Holy Fire Iranshah AtashBehram to the territorial jurisdiction (panthak, diocese) of the Sanjana priests. After a short stay at Valsad, the Holy Fire Iranshah was



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brought to and enthroned at Udvada in 1742 CE.

Initially the Sanjana priests had in mind to shift the Holy Fire back to Sanjan for which permission from Peshwas was also obtained. They halted at Udvada. Udvada was a small village with serene and quiet ambience, while Sanjan by then had become a commercial center. The serene ambience attracted the Sanjana Priests to stay put and enthrone Iranshah at Udvada. Since then Udvada came into prominence as 'sacred town; place of Parsi pilgrims - 'Yaatraa-dhaam'.

## ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD UDVADA

Udvada was a small village then under the rule of the Maharaja of Mandvi Rajya (kingdom) near Surat. It was a summer retreat, a holiday resort for the Royal family. A small palace of the king called in Gujarati *medi* also existed in Udvada. Medi is a building with a terrace. after 270 years though the medi is no more in existence, the area is still called *Medi Vadi*, more popularly known in Parsi Gujarati as "*meri vadi*". In recent times some Parsis ignorantly tried to link it with Queen Mary of England, but it is not so.

It is said that because herds of camels belonging to the Maharajas used to graze there, the village was called *Untvada* which later changed to *Udvada*. However literary scholars (*Sahityakars*) explain the etymology of the word Udvada as a Sanskrit-Gujarati compound word *Udanvaas*. Sk. (*Udan* means a peninsula). Even at present Udvada is surrounded by water on 3 sides - west, north & east (east side more prominent during high tides and monsoons). The Gujarati word *Vaas* means a dwelling, a place where people reside. According to the Sanskrit-Gujarati grammatical law of *samas* viz. compounding of words with dropping of a consonant; from *Udan* + *Vaas* 'n' is dropped to derive the word *UDVAS*. *Vas* is synonymous with Gujarati *Vada*. Thus the word Udvada is derived meaning a peninsular town.

It is interesting to note that during ceremonial recitations the priests recite the name of the village as *Udepur*, which means the same as *Udanvas*. The Gujarati word *pur* or *puri* means a town, Gujarati *nagar/nagri*.

## EARLY HISTORY

Little known early history of Udvada reveals that for

centuries before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century it was under the rule of the Maharajas of Dharampur Rajya (kingdom) with Dharampur city as its capital. Presently it is a royal heritage city on the banks of Swargavahini river at the foothills of Sahyadri mountain range near the present day cities of Vaghai & Vansda in Gujarat state. Under British rule it fell under Bombay Presidency and was given the status of nine gun salute by the British. It acceded to the Union of India in 1948. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the Portuguese captured Vasai (and built Vasi fort in 1531), Daman, towns and villages around Daman including Udvada. Udvada remained under Portuguese rule till the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. There is an old well in Udvada with an inscription that is probably in Portuguese on the wall of which the year 1714 is inscribed. This well is still in existence and is under the ownership of a priestly family of Udvada.

In 18<sup>th</sup> Century Udvada came under the rule of the Marathas - the Peshwas. In 1731 CE., Shri Pilaji Rao Gaekwad conquered Mandvi Raj. Later, Peshwa Chimaji Aappa asked Maharaja Shree Durjansinghji of Mandvi to capture Vasai fort from the Portuguese. Durjansinghji carried out the mission successfully in 1739 and in return Peshwas gave back his Kingdom of Mandvi and gifted some more villages and towns. Thus in 1742 when Shree Iranshah was brought and enthroned in Udvada it was under the rule of Maharaja Shree Durjansinghji of Mandvi who was under the overlordship of the Peshwas. Presently, Mandvi city is 61kms east of Surat and near Kakrapar Atomic Power Station Township on the banks of the Tapti river in the district of Surat (Bardoli Taluka). To avoid confusion it may be noted that there is a Mandvi City in Kutch near the city of Bhuj which in olden times was a major port and was under the rule of the Maharajas of Kutch. The history of Udvada is not to be confused with this city.

## PARSIS IN UDVADA BEFORE 1742 CE.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a population of Parsi laities (Behdins), mainly agriculturists, and also a priestly family residing in Udvada. In 1697 CE, a Dakhma came into existence; consecrated under the leadership of Dastur Darab Hormazdyar of the Revayat. Before 1697 CE, Parsis of Udvada had to carry their deceased (ravans) to Valsad for Dokhmenashini during which they had to endure

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difficulties, particularly during the monsoons. For this reason they complained to the government (Portuguese) that they were not willing to stay in Udvada. The Government offered to construct a dakhma at their expense but Parsis respectfully declined the offer as they only required permission. Finally, it was decided that Parsis would construct the Dakhma out of their own funds and the government would waive their taxes for 2 years. Those original Parsi laity families are Kadvana, Kotkotia, Pesina, Bachana, Kumana etc, who constitute the Behdin Anjuman of Udvada and along with Athornan Anjuman constitute Samast Anjuman of Udvada.

## SHREE IRANSHAH IN UDVADA

On Parsi Roj Khordad, Mah Farvadin 1112 A.Y.; Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1742 CE the Sanjana priests brought Shree Iranshah AtashBehram to Udvada and enthroned it in the house of the priest Mobed Mehernosh Hormazd Bhathela. This house was in its original state till about two and a half decades ago. Unfortunately, it is no more there and in its place another private house has been built. Fortunately, the new owner is a staunch orthodox Parsi and has earmarked the place where Shree Iranshah was enthroned as his family prayer room.

With necessary permission from Maharaja Shree Durjansinghji of Mandvi & the Peshwas, Shree Iranshah has remained enthroned in Udvada since then. During the past 270 years religious minded and philanthropic Parsis built buildings at the present site to house Shree Iranshah. Namely: Minocher Bahman; Bhikaji Edulji who completed the mission by selling off his personal jewellery and properties in 1770 CE; Seth Jamshetji Nanabhai Guzder repaired and improved the old building in 1812 C E.; Dadabhai and Muncherji Pestanji Wadia in 1830 CE and Bai Motlabai Maneckji Wadia built the present building in 1896 CE. The present premises is maintained by the trustees of Wadia Charities where Holy Fire Iranshah is enthroned and is burning with radiance and glory.

In 1891 CE. Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit constructed a Dar-e-Meher a consecrated Atash Dadgah near Shree Iranshah. In 1830 CE Seth Pestanji Kharshedji Modi constructed a new Dakhma for which through the good offices of Hormuzji Maneckji Patel, the then Maharaja of Mandvi Shree Hamirsinghji donated

the present Doongarwadi land, a hilly area to the Anjuman. We, Parsis, are highly indebted to the Hindu Kings, Portuguese government and charitable Parsis and Trustees of Wadia charities mentioned above.

May the Holy Fire Iranshah Atash Behram burn with radiance and glory till eternity at Udvada and bless the Parsi community in particular and humanity at large. Amen!

## Dastur Dr. Peshotan Dastur Hormazdyar

**Mirza**, born in Udvada, received his priestly education and training at: Seth Sorabji Manekji Damanwala Madressa, Udvada. The M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, Andheri. and was Ordained the Zoroastrian Priestly orders of Navar, Maratab and Samel; performing higher liturgical services and 'Boi' ceremony of Holy Iranshah Atash-Behram, Udvada. Appointed Dastur (High- Priest) of Iranshah Atash Behram; Samast Anjuman, Udvada on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

Dastur Dr Mirza obtained a doctorate in Chemistry from the University of Bombay and along with his University studies in Science he studied Avesta-Pahlavi and Iranian History at Sir J.J. Zarhosti Madressa and Mulla Firoze Madressa, Mumbai. He held the position of lecturer in Chemistry at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai; and a Development and Documentation Scientist at International Draxon Industries, Tehran, Iran. He retired from the post of General Manager- Technical Services in a Chemical manufacturing company in Mumbai. He is presently working as a Technical Advisor to a chemical manufacturing company in Mumbai. He is a member of the Research Committee of The K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai,. Trustee of the Athornan Mandal and Udvada Anjuman. He is a former member, Science and Technology Sub-committee, Bombay Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Dastur Dr Mirza has attended and participated in Religious and Technical seminars and conferences, was an invited presenter to the World Conference on Spiritual Regeneration and Human Values, Bangalore, January 2003 and attended a conference of World Religions Dialogue and Symphony at Mahuva, Bhavnagar in 2009. He has lectured on Zoroastrian Religious and Historical subjects in India, Singapore, Dubai, Karachi and Iran.

# UDVADA TODAY



**Presentation of Dastur Khurshed  
Dastur Kaikobad Dastoor, High Priest ,  
Iranshah Atash Behram Udvada  
at 10th WZC, 2013, Mumbai**

**Transcribed and summarized by  
Ervad Soli P. Dastur**

## ***Udvada Statistics***

The population of Udvada is around 7,000; of which the Parsi population from the original 9 Sanjana families is only 81 who reside in Udvada village, and 18 Behdins in nearby Sodfalia. 60 of them are over 70, 15 above 60.

## ***Mobed Families***

Udvada Samast Anjuman comprises of 9 Sanjana families who have a right to perform the Buoy ceremony in Iranshah. In 1990, there were 596 Mobeds in these 9 families; which reduced to 458 in 2012, a reduction of 138 in 22 years, of which 20 – 25 Mobeds serve Iranshah year around. All Pav Mahel liturgies are performed, with 5-6 Nirangdins per year. There are 15 Mobeds below 50 and so we can take care of Iranshah for the next 30 – 40 years.



## ***Facilities***

Udvada has four Dharamshalas and two hotels.

**Sodawaterwala Dharamshala** is managed by the Udvada

Anjuman. It was dilapidated and falling apart. Thanks to the good offices of Vispy Unwala and the munificent donation by *Silla Vatchha*, it is brought to its original form with a very decent renovation with attached bathrooms, thanks to the architect, *Jamshed Bhiwandiwalla*.

Damanwala Dispensary serves all Zarathushti free of charge including medicines from donations received. We even serve non-Zarathushtis at a very nominal charge. Those who cannot afford to pay get all services free. There is a Parsi lady Doctor Shirin Shroff, in charge of it.

We have a ***Mistry High School*** with 1000 students up to standard 12 – but unfortunately, not a single Parsi student.

We have a functioning Dokhma and we are served by volunteers from Daman and Vapi. All ***Kriya Kaam*** (obsequies) for four days are performed by Udvada Mobeds free of charge.



# Congress Follow up

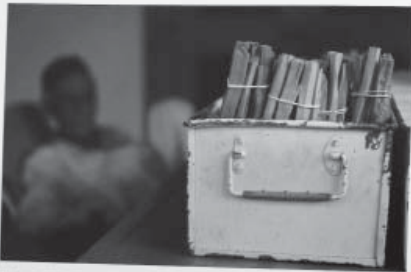
## What Udvada faced to build a Zoroastrian Information Center?

Now some facts about what we face in Udvada as a community. In 1999 a detailed study of Parsi Culture in Udvada was performed by a College from Mumbai. It found that 4 out of 215 heritage houses are lost every year due to neglect and closures. **In the last 15 years, a total of 40 heritage houses have been lost!**

To protect these houses, in January 2002, **Honorable Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Narendra Modi**, at the founding ceremony of the Institute of Management in Ahmedabad appreciated the contribution of the Parsi community in Gujarat for over 1300 years, they have followed a code of conduct to preserve their identity without offending any other community. *He commented that Udvada is a showcase of the Parsi community, and declared their intention to project Udvada as a place of harmony and religious tolerance, and opportunities will be provided for this miniscule community to realize their purpose and potential.*



Renowned hotelier of Ahmedabad, **Mr. Jehangir Cama** was given the responsibility to create an NGO that will support a suitable plan for converting these thoughts to reality. This resulted in the start of the *Foundation of the Development of Udvada (FDU) with the Board of Trustees comprised of Mr. Cama as a co-chair, Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly as a Managing Trustee, and Mr. Minu Shroff, Mr. Burjor Antia, Mrs. Homai Modi, Dr. Homi Dhalla as Trustees and myself as the Chairman.*



The FDU Board submitted a proposal with the help of conservation architects *Pankaj Joshi and Jamshed Bhiwandiwalla* to the Government of Gujarat to establish a **Zoroastrian Information Center (ZIC)**. The Government of India accepted this proposal and sanctioned a grant of one crore and 21 lac rupees to be spent for Udvada.

But our own community members went to the Gujarat Chief Minister and also confused the old people of Udvada. They told these old people: ***if Udvada becomes a Heritage Village, they will neither be allowed to put a nail in their homes, nor to paint their homes and they will have to get permission for everything.*** They misguided the community but they failed.



Then they went to the non-community people in Udvada and told them that these Parsis will take away their funds. This was done by our own people, the so called defenders of our faith. Nothing happened then. They confused all the people, including my own colleague Dasturjis who signed a letter against Udvada which they presented to the Gujarat Chief

Minister.

They took a copy of the WZO Hamazor magazine which presented a photo of some Mobeds performing Navjote of some Brazilian converts and showed it to the Chief Minister and told him that if this activity is carried out by WZO then they will convert Muslims to our religion and then terrorists will come and defile our Atash

# Congress Follow up

Behram. That put an end to the whole project. This is what we can do to each other as a community.

During the last three days from this platform, we talked about history, the great Hakhamanian Period, our legacy. But how are we going to protect what we have when our own brothers and sisters in the name of the religion are not ready to spare even the sanctity of our Iranshah and Udvada.?

Our own community brothers and sisters have been saying that if Udvada becomes a *Heritage Village*, the tourists from Brazil and Venezuela will come directly to Udvada, (Udvada does not have an airport!!) expose themselves on our beaches and even try to enter our **Atash Behram**. Please do not laugh. It is the sad state of our community.

And the signature campaign and lots of negative propaganda went on, even non-Parsis collected signatures, banging on each door and telling people that your Atash Behram is in trouble and your Dasturji is allowing non-Parsis in the Atash Behram. This stopped the whole project. But we were still fighting and never gave up.

The funds were sanctioned by the Government and we started the **Religious Center**. We wanted to inaugurate it on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007 but they brought in a stay order saying that a Religious Miracle has happened and the **Iranshah Information Center** will never open. They wrote this in all community and other papers; but the good work always goes on.

On **Adar Mahino (month) and Adar Roj, (day) 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008**, on the Anniversary of Iranshah the function was held and the **Zoroastrian Information Center** was inaugurated without the Chief Minister. of Gujarat,

## **Udvada 9 Sanjana Families in Iranshah Service**

We have a very strict norm for Iranshah service. The Mobed who serves Iranshah has to go through a strict code of conduct of taking a nine nights Bareshnum in isolation and after performing daily liturgies, he is allowed to enter the Sanctum Sanctorum of Iranshah.

A Mobed in Iranshah service cannot eat any outside food, The food has to be prepared by his own family members using the well water. These are the strict and stringent conditions a Mobed has to follow to perform Iranshah Buoy ceremony; and we are still accused of selling Iranshah.!!!



## **Campaign against Udvada Anjuman**

The people who have not even stayed for two nights in Udvada started the campaign that Iranshah is being sold off. These are the same people who say they preserve our religion by propagating lies. If that is the case then this beautiful religion of Zarathushtra will never prosper. Even the renovation of Iranshah was criticized. *You cannot shift Iranshah*. Don't you renovate your flats, Ladies and Gentleman? We shift Iranshah with absolute pure sanctity. We do not put up a *"Tamasha of Band Waajaa"*

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(a big show with a band)! **I challenge anyone over here who has seen Iranshah being shifted.** Nobody. We do not allow anybody to witness it. We take so much care to do that. Still we are accused of violating the **Iranshah “kas”** (power).

I want to share this negative propaganda with the International Zarathushtis since they are here today. Before you sign a petition or an email, please ask us what is really going on in Iranshah. We are there 365 days. Though I am in Bombay, my eyes and ears are in Udvada. Iranshah is regularly shifted from one building to the other every two years because there is so much soot on the wall of the Gumbaj that it has to be cleaned.

And here I like to acknowledge *Messrs. Bomi Mistry, Cyrus Siganporia, Aspy Irani, Keki* and other volunteers who come to perform this wonderful job for Iranshah.

## **2010 Episode of 167 Acres of Land near Iranshah**

In 2010 we faced the greatest difficulty for Iranshah. Just 500 meters from Iranshah, a private land of 167 acres was sold off to a non-Parsi. Industrialization and commercial buildings, etc. all started to come up. Nobody except Udvada Anjuman with Dasturji Peshotan and I went to the Gujarat Chief Minister to stop this project. We started a petition campaign on computer. Even there we were not spared. “Don’t sign this petition because then it will encourage FDU!” How can we work to preserve Udvada, Ladies and Gentlemen, when we are accused of all this?

## **Gujarat Chief Minister to our Rescue**

We continued the project and thanks to *Mr. Behram Mehta of Ava Water, our lawyer Mr. Rustom Marshall, and our architects Messrs. Pankaj Joshi and Jamshed Bhiwandiwalla* who stood rock solid behind us and with the good offices of *Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly*, the door to the Chief Minister was once again opened for us. He assured his support to us and in March 2010 he gave the *Udvada Area Development authority*, where I am appointed as one of the members, to look at the Udvada Development.

## **Our Iranshah Donors – Thank you so much!**

We always have great donors who stand rock solid behind us. We have *Industrial Boilers, the House of Engineers, the Prudential Shipping Company, the Masters, the Kathawalas, Mr. Shahrukh Kathawala* and so many strong donors whom I want to thank for their support without which we would not be able to do what we are doing today. The Udvada Anjuman thanks and blesses all of you from the bottom of our hearts!

Year after year, we have superb support from Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and other North American Zoroastrian Associations who donate 5 to 6 lacs of rupees for distributing among the Udvada poor people and Charities. We are very thankful to all of you.

We want to thank the Press, *Jame Jamshed, Parsiana, Parsi Times, Mumbai Samachar* who always carry our articles and Iranshah news in their publications.

## **The Blacks and the Whites!**

Udvada Anjuman faces a serious problem. There are some who think that Parsis cannot be black; they have to be fair. Once the children of the Surat Parsi orphanage came to pay respect to Iranshah and they were stopped with the allegation that they were children of “Dubries” (non-Parsi). Ladies and Gentleman: their fathers and brothers are Khandias, Chashniwalas in all our Agiyaris and Atash Behrams and how can we stop them from Iranshah or any Agiyari, just because they are black!



# Congress Follow up

## Final Comments

This has been a wonderful Congress and I am sorry to bring all these matters of Iranshah to your attention. I want to thank Dr. Cyrus Poonawala and Mr. Nadir Godrej and you all to give me such a great honor in this Congress.

I want to end this presentation with the words of **Shams-ul-Ulema Dr. Ervad Jivanji Jamshedji Modi:**  
" The times are rapidly changing. The 'new' has been springing rapidly upon the 'old'. As often said, the heresy of to-day becomes the orthodoxy of tomorrow; the liberalism of this year, the conservatism of the next. Many a ceremony, ritual, or custom has been spoken of, as having become obsolete or as being more honored in the breach than in the observance. Many more will be obsolete in the course of a few years. Customs are often as despotic as fashions, but they also change as fashions." Let us think of change from here.

## Atha Jamyaat, Yatha Aafrinaami! (So I wish! May it be so!)

**DASTUR KHURSHED DASTUR KAIKOBAD DASTOOR** is one of the Vada Dasturji (Head Priest) of Shree Pak Iranshah at Udvada for the past 11 years. He is the President of Udvada Athornan Anjuman, Udvada Samast Anjuman and the Chairman of Foundation for Development of Udvada. Since 2002 he is a Trustee & the President of Athornan Mandal, Mumbai and has taken keen and active interest in the affairs of the Dadar Athornan Institute of which he himself is an alumnus.

He has performed higher liturgical ceremonies at the Udvada Atash Behram since age 16, and actively participates in the complex procedures involved in shifting the Holy Iranshah fires at times of repairs and renovation to the Atashbehram. He has the unique distinction of performing the "boi" at the Iranshah Atash Behram even after becoming the Vada Dasturji.

Dasturji Khurshed took his religious education at the Dadar Athornan Institute (Madressa) and was initiated Sampurna (complete) Navar and Maratab at the ages of 12 and 14 respectively and gave his first boi at the Holy Iranshah Atash Behram in Udvada soon thereafter.

He had his academic education from the Dadar Parsee Youths Assembly High School (DPYA) and passed S.S.C. with Avesta as second language. He graduated from the H.R. College Of Commerce & Economics (University of Bombay).

As part of his religious and spiritual duties, he delivers lectures on the Zoroastrian Religion and History to people of varied age groups of children, youth and adults all over Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Navsari, Surat, Baroda and Delhi.

In 2005, he was invited to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress in London to address the community there. In 2009 he was invited to the World Zoroastrian Congress at Dubai. In 2010, he was on a lecture circuit across the eastern North America, addressing community members in Florida, New York, Boston and Toronto on various religious, historical, social and community issues. He addressed the Jewish Synagogue in New York on the comparative aspects of Zoroastrian and Judaic religions. January 2013, he was invited to present a paper on 'Historical Chronology of Kisseh-I-Sanjan and the Iranshah Atashbehram' at the Conference in Navsari celebrating 140 years of the First Dastoor Meherji Rana Library. .

**Photo credit Shantanu Das**

# Congress Follow up

## DEMOGRAPHY AND THE WAY FORWARD: ISSUES OF FERTILITY AND SOLUTIONS

Panel presentation on 29th December 2013 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45. a.m.

*From left Dr Zinobia Madan, Dr Nozir Sheriar; Mr Dinshaw Mehta, Panel Chair, Roshan Rivetna; Dr Armaity Desai, Dr Pervin Dadachanji and Dr Anahita Pandole*



Panel Chair Roshan Rivetna presented some rather disturbing demographics for India. The Zoroastrian population of India has declined from 69,601 (as reported in the 2001 GOI census) to 61,000 (estimate from Prof. Armaity Desai-TISS, pending results of the 2011 census), which is a decline of 8,601 or 12.4% in a decade.

She showed a chart of world wide population shifts (which she had presented in detail at an earlier session on worldwide Zoroastrian demographics at the Congress, and also published in **FEZANA Journal, Fall 2013**) which showed large percentage gains in USA, Canada, Gr. Britain, New Zealand and Singapore, but due to the small numbers in these Diaspora communities, did not compensate for the large declines in Iran and the Indian subcontinent.

Rivetna showed a graph, based on data reported in Parsiana, of a very significant upward trend in the Death-to-Birth ratio in Mumbai, from 303 in 1992 to 741 in 2011 -- over this 20-year period there were only 3,456 births to an alarmingly high number of 17,715 deaths in Mumbai! Rivetna then invited the illustrious panellists to discuss concerns and corrective actions being taken to address these issues in India.

## FERTILITY – A MAJOR ISSUE IN THE PARSI COMMUNITY OF INDIA

PROF. ARMAITY S. DESAI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Hon. Research Advisor and Coordinator, UNESCO PARZOR Projects (Demographic and Health), Former Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and Chairperson, University Grants Commission, New Delhi.*

(Presentation at the World Zoroastrian Congress, Mumbai, December 30, 2013, for the Panel on Fertility in the Parsi Community)

### INTRODUCTION: THE ISSUE

Several factors affecting the community's demographic decline are well known and will be discussed by other speakers such as late marriage, non-marriage, inter-marriage, preference for self-selection of partners which can delay marriage till a suitable match is found, migration, women's education and employment outside the home, nuclear type of family and the westernised life style resulting in a desire for a higher standard of living and, related to it, the size of the family. The reasons for the existence of these factors have been explored. In this short statement, it is not possible to connect fertility issues to all these factors, although they do exist as seen in recent research on Parsis. On the other hand, the issue concerning fertility is much less researched and hard data are difficult to come by. In fact, scientific biological studies are lacking on genetic mutations which may have taken place over centuries in an ethnically small population of Parsis, who were a handful at the start in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, and reached their peak as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 1941 of just 1,14,890, and then again declined to a mere 69,601 in 2001. The birth-rate in 1901 at 24 per thousand, peaked to 29.2 per 1000 in 1921, but by 1926, it came down to 21.7, and the decline steadily continued with 15.7 in 1943 and by 2001 it has halved to 6.7 per 1000. Though the population peaked in 1941, actually the birth rate then, was only 16.6 per thousand, suggesting the decline had started over a decade earlier. However, in recent years, we have had some light thrown on the socio-economic and attitudinal aspects of the issue which need our concern and attention.

Parsi children in the below six age group is only 4.7% of the total Parsi population in the 2001 Census while it was 9.5% in 1901, a loss of 50% in the last century. In 2001, only 12.8% children were 14 and below. The 2001 census gave the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for Parsi women as .94 during their entire reproductive period, whereas, the required rate for replacement is 2.1 per 1000 women. In 2011 it is estimated to be .89. This is the loss of a future reproductive population. It has subsequently led to an aging community with 31% over the age of 60. Hence, why our population has gone down so much is explained by the factors just mentioned earlier, more particularly due to decline in the number of marriages within the community, increased number of the unmarried, some due to late marriage and, therefore, correspondingly the number of children born. These are all socio-psychological factors, but what is the position with regard to fertility levels, male and female, in the community? Are there any research studies on the actual fertility of married Parsi couples or their reproductive health?

### RECENT RESEARCH

I will draw my data on the socio-economic and attitudinal aspects, as well as history of conception from three studies undertaken at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, in recent years, and to be published by SAGE Publications. Three researchers conducted the studies focused on three demographic groups and examined them in depth. The family study was authored by Prof. Shalini Bharat, financed by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust; the youth study authored by Prof. Lata Narayan, and the elderly Parsis authored by Prof. Siva Raju, were both financed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. These were sponsored by the PARZOR Foundation, because of its concern with the loss of vulnerable heritage resulting from the demographic decline. All three studies were conducted on the Parsi population all over India,



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both urban and rural Maharashtra, Gujarat and pockets of Parsi dominated areas in other parts of the country wherever they are settled in some numbers. The sample size for the study on the family was 132 for the exploratory qualitative study and included additionally 36 key informants and 8 focus groups. The quantitative study had a sample of 1,132. The youth study, a survey, similarly covered 761 respondents between the ages of 20 to 35 and the study of the elderly had 835 respondents over the age of 60, besides a qualitative study in institutions for them. An exploration of perspectives on children and childlessness brought out interesting responses, among the many issues studied by these authors. The findings are presented on three aspects:

- a) The ideal number of children desired and actual number in families of respondents.
- b) History of conception.
- c) Childless couples

## DATA

### 1. Desired and actual number of children

The studies bring out that, in case of both women and men, the emphasis is on attaining a higher standard of living, leading to postponement of marriage for a protracted period of education among a substantial number in the community to achieve better job prospects, time needed to build up a career, the need to set up independent households, difficulties in finding suitable partners, preference for independent choice in partner selection, emphasis on suitability for companionship and compatibility than other considerations, the high degree of individualism of both males and females, the lack of push either from the family or the community to get married, and treating remaining unmarried as an accepted fact. All these have all coalesced to delay marriage with a shorter reproductive life span or stay unmarried. As a result, families tend to limit the number of children. While most stated that two children were ideal, in fact, the actual number was less with only one child among some of them. The main reason given for limiting children was that they wanted the

best for the child and so going beyond one or two children was not possible. Economic considerations had high priority followed by factors such as limited child care support for working women, although only 12 % asked for day care, and a majority had parents, in-laws, relatives and domestic help. Some working women wanted only one child to give quality time to the offspring. Moreover, the sex of the child is not a consideration as both male and female children are equally desired, with no preference for a son, thus having more children to have a child of a preferred sex does not occur. *Between the ideal and reality, there was a gap, as while considering two as the ideal number some had only one child.* The amount offered by the Trusts for having 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> child was seen as too inadequate and most rejected the idea, except a few who were economically disadvantaged. There is no pressure from the elders who respect the couple's decision. *Hence, a major factor can be considered as attitudinal in limiting the family, based on their perception of the standard of living to which they aspired.*

Interestingly, we found this pattern throughout the three studies. Even the study of the elderly also showed only 2 children followed by 1. Very few had three or more children. These study respondents would have been married in the 1970's and eighties and, hence, the two and one child norm for married couples has become the norm for now three generations and seems to have come to stay resulting in lack of population replacement.

However, among half the number with only one child, factors which were stated that influenced the decision included age, medical advice against pregnancy, miscarriages, and possible secondary infertility. Some of them had several miscarriages. Social factors included job demands and lack of adequate child care support. A few considered it God's will. Prevalence of contraceptive use was high in almost two-thirds of those in the family study and a quarter did not use because of spouse being sterilised, menopause, death of spouse, lack of sexual activity and natural methods. Hence, *the use of contraceptives is high in the community that limits size and among a few their non-use may imply secondary sterility.* A study by Singh and Gowrie (TISS) had quoted 12.7% per cent as primary sterility in 1999 when it was only 5% for Indian women.

## 2. HISTORY OF CONCEPTION

Conception history is a good indicator of fertility. In the study on the family, almost half of the women had two conceptions and a less than a fourth had one. While almost two-thirds reported all their conceptions resulted in child birth, over one-third reported only some resulted in delivery, half of whom were due to induced abortion because of medical advice, miscarriage in a few, while less than a third due to unwanted pregnancy. These data were further corroborated by the study of the elderly (above age 60) for whom the average age at conception was at almost 27. Most had experienced two conceptions in their reproductive life followed by one, while one-tenth had no children. *These data point to the need for further studies on the reproductive health of Parsi women. It is hoped that the community does not wake up a few decades from hence to take action on this issue as it did before it recognised that there was a demographic decline.*

A very small number had more than two children. The mean of the outcome of conception, of the study of the elderly of the 707 respondents, was only 1.2. Hence, restricted births were already taking place 3 generations ago. A few had miscarriage of which more were spontaneous than induced. Interestingly, almost one-third had not used contraceptives in that generation, but had succeeded in controlling their family size. In the study of the elderly, a probe into the the genealogy of the family showed that in the case of their parents, the mean of conceptions was 3, in their generation 2.6 (respondents) and their children 1.5. *Further, the high use of contraceptives in the community is a major factor in consciously controlling births.* Hence, the fertility decline has impacted community demography.

*In all the reasons explored, housing seemed to be the least factor in either getting married, as among the youth studied, or for limiting the family among the respondents of the family study and the study of the elderly.* This fact needs to be noted with our propensity to invest in brick and mortar than in the various serious concerns and issues confronting the community as well as the vulnerable population of the community. While housing was not seen as a major factor in our studies, *care of the aged was expressed by a number of the respondents in all three studies for non-marriage.* Some of those who did not

marry stated that they needed to care for their elderly parents. Women felt the need to find a spouse nearer their parents and men felt bringing a spouse would lead to dissensions and disturbance of domestic life. We need to wake up and note these reasons for non-marriage for taking action that would free adult children for marriage.

## 3. CHILDLESSNESS

Childlessness in the community is a further factor for serious consideration. One in every 10 Parsi women in the 45 to 49 age group is childless compared to one in 20 in India in the 2001 census. Not having children can impact the marriage. The studies showed the attitude to childlessness in the community was basically a resigned acceptance. Unlike the rest of India, no prejudice or unsolicited comments came from both male and female spouses, who were in fact supportive, or from the spouse's respective families, or the Parsis in the community with whom they interacted. These attitudes may partly stem from the higher level of education in the community and partly from the number of never married in the community. If we take the number of childless with the number of never married, this becomes a substantial number of those who will not have a reproductive life span. In the latest study of youth (2008), 70% were unmarried between 20 and 35 and 62% between 25 and 30. The family study showed 26% not married at the time of the study and 9% never married (beyond the age of reproduction). In the study of the elderly, 15% remained unmarried. By contrast, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2005-06 showed that 28.1% of urban Indian females between the ages of 20 and 24 were married and 16.7 urban males between 25 and 29. Over the age of 45, the number of unmarried in the Indian population was only 1.6% in the census of 2001. *The issue of the increasingly large number of the unmarried, both male and female, also needs to be addressed.*

In the study of the family, 66 women who were childless between 30 and 60 were studied. These showed that 5 had opted to remain childless for economic and medical reasons, and one who had children by a previous marriage. Of the rest of the 61 respondents, 34 or more than half, had never conceived, 13 had conceived just once, and 4 had conceived 2 to 4

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times. Of the 17 women who had some history of conception, 9 reported miscarriage within 3 months, 1 had a still born and 1 died after birth. Reasons given for childlessness were ovarian cyst or blocked fallopian tubes among 27 and husband's low sperm count among 21, 2 had miscarriages, 6 did not know the reason, 3 could not remember the reason and 4 declined to respond. *It may be reiterated that the conception history of those who had only one child and those who had none shows the need for undertaking studies on reproductive health, as merely focusing on increasing fertility without a better understanding of contributing health and genetic factors might not be adequate.*

Treatment for childlessness was undertaken by only 25 of these 61 respondents, which is a very serious situation in an educated community for a large number in this small group studied having accepted their situation without seeking help. Among the help sought by 25 respondents, fourteen had infertility counselling, 11 had medical treatment for infertility, and only 5 had taken assisted conception such as IVF. Reasons for not choosing IVF method included lack of knowledge, low popularity, lack of access, and economic cost which was the major reason by almost two-thirds of the respondents. Alternatives sought were adoption from relatives and adoption agencies, and supporting education of other children.

There were 60 respondents in the study of the elderly who were childless. Over four-fifths attributed it to late marriage and older age at marriage, while another over two-fifths attributed it to the fertility problem of the spouse, and two-fifths considered it God's wish. Just a few said they were not interested in having children. Medical reasons included health problems of spouse in almost half the sample, infertility (18%), uterus related problems (17%), and 7% said they were medically fit and had no reason, while 15% did not disclose the reason. Among the elderly also 6 had adopted children.

## THE WAY FORWARD

1. The above shows the great need for active reaching out to those who face childlessness but it should be at a very early period in their marriage, as well as offer group counselling during late adolescence and young adulthood, that is, from age 18 to 25.
2. There is a need for promoting access to treatment

and supportive professional counselling to help women and men carry through their efforts. It will not be enough to provide financial incentives if there is inadequate targeting of information to those who need it, and accompanied by counselling to motivate as well as to sustain the process of treatment. *A lot of hand holding is required because of the frequent frustrations in the treatment process and the tendency to drop out.* While the community has on offer assistance for IVF through the scheme of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, its knowledge and use seem to be lacking as shown by the findings of these studies, perhaps, because it lacks more adequate targeting and counselling. Also, it needs to draw younger couples to come forward for treatment, which is only possible with strategies for reaching out specifically to the younger target group. It is late if couples wait till in their forties to get IVF treatment.

3. We also need to offer in such schemes a range of treatments by a panel of doctors suitable to the needs of the specific couples and their location.
4. As couples not conceiving, or not succeeding in fertility treatment, are going in for adoption, the legal issues connected with adoption of Parsi and non-Parsi children need to be seriously examined. Human need overrides social sanctions, which sprang up after migration to India to preserve the religion, though religion itself may not have espoused it. It bars couples from fulfilling their marriage, and needs recognition in a country which gives rights to all its citizens through a Constitution which did not exist till the last century. While promoting intra-community marriages is one thrust already undertaken by the BPP, we also need to consider those women who do not find suitable partners though interested in marriage. They may have a great desire for children some of whom sublimate it either through children of their relatives, neighbours and others.
5. The issue of the large number of the increasing number of the unmarried also needs to be addressed as well as those widowed or divorced at a younger age to have a child, through IVF technology with a Parsi male donor, or conception through a surrogate mother. It may appear controversial today, but it may also be an option for the future. Already, single people can adopt a child then why not through an accepted medical process and especially if the child is of your



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own and that of a Parsi donor? Generally, such applications should be processed by a thorough study to examine the capability for the parenting role, economic capacity and family support.

6. Freezing one's egg or sperm, if marriage is to be delayed, is another possibility for the future to assist the community to increase its numbers and especially when marriages take place at a late age. We need to use our funds judiciously to go in for the new technology if we want to make the effort to increase the number of children and at least bring us to a stage where we arrest the decline.
7. Besides these suggestions on assisted technology for procreation, there has to be a relook at our values and lifestyles that limit the number of children to the extent of not reaching a replacement figure. This calls for self-introspection by couples as there is a high degree of individualism in the community, and a lack of community cohesiveness which can support a high degree of motivation to assure its survival.
8. Perhaps, Government can be persuaded to reduce the tax on Parsis for every child born. It could well become a better incentive for families than the help the Trusts offer, which is inadequate and appears as charity to the recipient.
9. There is also an increasing need to create child care facilities, as a substantial number of married women work, and depending on domestic help is not going to be a possibility if some women do not have family help in child care.
10. While housing was not seen as a major factor in our studies, care of the aged was expressed by a number of the respondents in all three studies. One possible solution is to free the youngsters by providing home based services for our very large number of aged, who would certainly be reluctant to leave their homes for institutional care. Such home based services consist of personal care, food, management of income and assets, medical care and companionship. While focusing on buildings and providing institutional care within Parsi baugs, we have lost sight of the grave problem of an aging community far greater than those of the US, UK, Europe and several countries in Asia, including Japan, and its impact on the aged as well as the family. Institutional care is not a feasible answer to the needs of the

large number of aged, 31% above the age of 60, in the community, not only on account of cost but more so on the emotional trauma it causes to the aged who have to leave their roots and live with strangers, making adjustments at an age when psychologically they are unable to do so.

11. Aside from these recommendations, there is a great need for undertaking both reproductive health and genetic research in this vital area of the community's survival. It is expensive but the community must come forward to undertake it.

The community has a lot of work to do if it wants to increase the number of children and at least stem the demographic decline if not increase the population. Sayeed, Bhagat and Roy at IIPS have predicted from their calculations that with the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) further declining from 1.0 to .75 in 2051, the total population will be 32,000. If TFR of 1 remains constant, the population would be 34,000 and should TFR increase by 1.4 in 2011, and 2.1 in 2021, then after that it will remain constant, and the population will be 47,000. *Even just stabilising it at the current level should be our first aim, or else, we will commit ethnic suicide.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Prof. Shalini Bharat, Prof Lata Narayan and Prof Siva Raju of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences for their permission to use the data. These studies are marked by asterisk\* in the references below. The studies are to be published in a 4 volume series by SAGE and will provide a goldmine of information on the current situation of Parsis in India. Some of the interpretations and the recommendations are the sole responsibility of the author of this paper.

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**Prof. Armaity Desai** has a Diploma in Social Service Administration from the Tata Institute of Social Services, Mumbai and an M.A and Ph.D from the University of Chicago. For 18 years, she taught at the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, and from a young teacher, became the Principal of the Institute. She has been a member or office bearer of several organizations-international, national

and local. She served with the U.N. in committees and training programmes related to social work education for the Asian Region and served on two Committees of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. She was the Founder President of the Asia and Pacific Association for social work education. After her retirement in April 1999, she has been involved in activities related to higher education and social work. Her accomplishments include The Katherine Kendall Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding contribution to Social Work Education in 1992 and the Professional Achievement Citation of the University of Chicago Alumni Association in 1992.

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## Anahita Pandole

India's population of Parsis has declined - a paradox in a country that is grappling with a population of more than 1.2 billion. Studies have found that fertility in our community has been declining for more than a century and it is a common knowledge that deaths have exceeded births in every year since 1955. Is Infertility Parsi centric? Are Parsi women more prone to fibroid uteri; endometriosis, PCOD. The prevalence of infertility is higher in our community due to social factors, that cause couples to delay starting a family.

- Many Parsis do not get married.
- For those who do: the average age is 27 for women and 32 for men.
- They delay child bearing after marriage for many reasons-including:
  - 1) wanting a house of their own before starting a family.
  - 2) Some are career oriented and consciously want to wait a few years before starting a family.
- For a community that is small to begin with, even a few hundred youth choosing not to have children or restricting family size makes a big impact on the community.
- 

## INFERTILITY

Infertility is not a disease but in today's time it is an extremely common medical problem. Infertility

# Congress Follow up

is defined as the inability to conceive for more than one year. 90% of infertility is treatable with advances in medical and surgical procedures - like **Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ART)**.

Approximately 10 years ago at the World congress in Pune, Mr.Minoo Shroff, the chairman of the BPP first conceptualized this idea of a fertility clinic for Parsi couples. We started working together with the Bombay Parsi Panchayat since then and a fertility clinic was set up in a South Mumbai Hospital.

## TREATMENT

When the couple comes to the clinic a brief history is taken, both partners undergo medical testing to determine the best possible treatment and way forward. Blood tests are done and a transvaginal sonography is of great importance.

Minimally invasive surgeries like laparoscopy and hysteroscopy play an important role in the treatment of infertility. It is an important diagnostic tools used in female infertility as it is not only used in diagnosis of pathologies like PCOD, fibroid uteri, septate uterus but can also be used to treat these pathologies.

Once the results are compiled a treatment plan is laid out for the couple. More often than not all they require is counseling. Some may need follicular monitoring and fewer still needed Intra Uterine Insemination (IUI), which is a fertility enhancing technique which involves the deposition of well prepared sperm as close as possible to the oocytes. While some patients need a simple procedure like an IUI, other couples need to progress to more advanced procedures to achieve their dream of motherhood.

**In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)**, is commonly known as the test tube baby procedure.

**Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI)** is a significant advancement over the IVF technique and involves the injection of single sperm into the egg using a delicate glass pipette. It is very useful in severe male infertility, in older women, women producing fewer eggs and in immunological infertility.

680 couples have visited the clinic, some for infertility and some for a regular checkup after

marriage. 73% have followed up on a regular basis. Over the years there have been 230 live births including twins and triplets.

It is interesting to note that 42% of the couples that visited the clinic were in the age group of 35-40 years and 30% in the age group of > 40 years.

The success of infertility treatment at the clinic depended largely on the age of the women, quality of her eggs, the uterine lining and her hormonal status & absence of other disease, such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity etc.

Each couple presented different obstacles to overcome and an individual strategy is devised for all couples. This very program that was till now funded by the BPP for families who cannot afford this treatment has now been taken up on a national level in a more structured form by the Parzor foundation. Through the Ministry of Minority affairs the **Jiyo Parsi** scheme was launched in Oct 2013 ( It has 2 components – **advocacy** which involves counseling of families, encouraging early marriages among the community youth, etc and the **medical** component which would involve treating fertility related issues as soon as they are detected).

Any project idea that is thought of and gets into an implementation stage-----there are always legitimate concerns.

Q) Will it make a difference?

Q) Will it be a case of too little being done too late?

In my opinion the **Jiyo Parsi** scheme is definitely a step in the right direction.

**Dr Anahita Pandole** is a practicing consultant Obstetrician and Gynecologist at the Jaslok Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital, and Masina Hospital. She completed her MD in 1994 from Nair Hospital and worked as an Associate Professor till 2003 at Sion Hospital. Since 2005 Dr Pandole has been actively involved with the Bombay Parsi Panchayat Fertility project. She is also involved in a public interest litigation to stop the proliferation of illegal hoardings in Mumbai.



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## DR PERVIN DADACHANJI

When Dr. Anahita Pandole and I started the infertility clinic many years ago, the first lady to come to me had paranoid schizophrenia. The next, Depression. I told Anahita, these patients should not get pregnant. They need psychiatric help! This of course worried me as I was supposed to help couples have babies. Anyway, after that I have had several couples come to me with varying levels of issues. Let me discuss the major psychological aspects of infertility that I noticed.

1. Non consummation of marriage. The most surprising and probably the easiest to remedy, cause.
2. Relationship issues with spouse and in-laws.
3. Anxiety issues due to poor coping and lack of support.
4. Isolation from each other and from friends who have children. This is a significant factor as the couple goes through a grief reaction following their inability to bear kids or when IVF fails. They may also be at different stages of the Grief Reaction. So while one partner may be still in depression the other is in anger mode causing more trouble in the marriage.
5. Guilt and shame: may feel responsible for the problem.
6. Loss of control: Most traumatic for the woman – she feels angry, tearful, frequent calls to the infertility experts, only has thoughts of pregnancy.

## WHY IS COUNSELLING IMPORTANT?

1. Enables couples to cope with childlessness
2. Provides help with decision making with respect to medical treatment.
3. Avoids partner conflict
4. Increases communication
5. Improves acceptance if treatment fails
6. Support for plan B – adoption etc

## WHAT IS DONE IN COUNSELLING?

Ideally it should be started before any treatment is given. Here, the role of the gynaecologist is very important. They need to be aware of signs of anxiety, depression, problems in the marriage and refer early.

1. Communication skills are facilitated between partners
2. Recognition and working through feelings; all feelings are okay. eg. Jealousy of sister having children
3. Helping with coping strategies
4. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the individual and the couple and build on the strengths

***The medicalization of infertility has unwittingly led to a disregard for emotional responses that couples experience where women feel flawed and men inadequate. We need to get together to change that.***

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## Demography and the way forward Seeking solutions at an individual level

Dr. NOZER SHERIAR

*“With an open mind, seek and listen to all the highest ideals.*

*Consider the most enlightened thoughts.*

*Then choose your path, person by person, each for oneself.” - Zarathushtra*

The reduction in the population of Parsees has been a burning platform issue for the community since the 1941 census with every subsequent census reporting a 10% reduction in population. When such a consistent trend is reported it is important to analyse and understand what changed so as to cause a decline after consistent growth. Something changed in the preceding decade.

## MULTIFACTORIAL CAUSES FOR THE DECLINE

### 1. Intervening Generation of Never Married.

Of my dad's siblings 5 out of 9 did not marry.

In the GenNext all 8 of my siblings & cousins married

# Congress Follow up

with 10 children between them - still far short of replacement.

This has come up time & again when I speak to acquaintances & patients.

## 2. Deliberate or Conscious Low Fertility Rate by Choice

No children or one child families due to aspiring to a certain standard of living & concerns about child support & child care in increasingly nuclear families Parsees led this trend way before it affected other communities in India.

Our problem is further amplified by a small population base where small changes cause major consequences.

## 3. Biologically Reduced Fertility

Because of delayed marriage & postponed planning for pregnancy.

This may often result in just one child where two are desired.

## 4. Loss of Young Parents & Consequent Families from India's Census

Emigration causes a loss from the only nationally mandated record of our largest population in India We always depended upon safety in numbers in Mumbai & a few other cities & towns.

We need to track populations everywhere & be secure in that they with their younger populations have an important role to play.

## 5. Exclusion of Children of Parsee Women due to Marriage out of the Community

These may be small numbers but the children of these mothers are excluded from replacement numbers & lost to the community forever.

**Leave aside growth we are nowhere near replacement - not for unmarried, not for intermarried, not even for married.**

Since there are many causes it follows that there need to be many individualised solutions

### OBSERVATIONAL STUDY & ANALYSIS

Presented here is an objective analysis of the pregnancies involving Parsee patients cared for by me over the last 7 years from 2007 - 2013

**Couples** - 173 with 205 pregnancies amongst them  
Exclusion of 6 couples & 5 pregnancies from the total where data was incomplete

If we estimate 250 births each year then these comprise 11.7% of total estimated births in Parsees over these 7 years enough to be representative

**Caution** - The cohort only includes those pregnant  
Single practice bias may be present

### DATA -

**Couples** - 167 totalling 200 pregnancies

**Both parents Parsees** - 116 (69.5%)

**Mother Parsee** - 25 (15%)

**Father Parsee** - 26 (15.5%)

**Singleton** - 194 (97%) **Twins** - 6 (3%)

**Spontaneous abortion** - 19 (11.3%) **MTP** 15 (8.9%)

**Ectopic pregnancy** - 5 (2.9%)

**Fertility treatment** - 34 (17%)

**IVF** - 4 (2%)

### Age at marriage

**Both parents Parsees** Mother 26.8 years

Father 29.2 years

**Mother Parsee** - Mother 28.5 years

Father 28.5 years

**Father Parsee** - Mother 23.3 years

Father 27.8 years

### Time to first pregnancy - 2.7 years

First year - 26.9%

Second year - 50.3%

Third year - 68.3%

Fourth year - 88.0%

### Number of children

One - 73 (43.7%)

Two - 90 (53.9%)

Three - 4 (2.4%)

### Second pregnancies planned - 24 (32.9%)

### MYTHS

Data calls into questions many myths & impressions

#### 1. Parsees marry much later than other communities

More influenced by class and education & comparable to other communities with similar backgrounds

#### 2. Parsees marry out of the community since they don't find suitable Parsee partners

Those that intermarry find partners around the same age irrespective of community hence in most cases it was not a second choice

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## **3. Parsees wait indefinitely before starting a family**

More than half had their first within 2 years & 90% within 4 years.

## **4. Parsees have a higher incidence of infertility**

Comparable to similar populations in other communities. In most cases basic treatment resulted in success. Every couple who needed medical assistance accessed it themselves without depending on assistance

## **5. Most Parsees opt for a single child**

More than one child in 56.3% with another 14.7% likely to opt for another pregnancy totalling to 71% Expecting a third child from any large number of couples is unrealistic

## **PERSONAL OPINION**

### **1. Work with Reproductive Health & Rights**

Incentives are not desirable or effective - they have never worked.

Charity never really appreciated

You can't buy reproductive behaviour.

Accept that people will plan pregnancies when they are ready & have the family size that they think is right for them.

We must see reproductive behaviour at the individual level.

Appeals to reproduce for community & country will never be heeded.

### **2. Supportive Measures could Make a Difference**

Real time or virtual non pressured meeting of youth

Let young people have a good time with other

Parsee youth & attraction will do the rest..

Revitalise and coordinate local activities and organisations HPY, YCZA & associations in baugs & suburbs.

Some great couples I care for found each other online/

### **3. Supporting & Hand Holding Promising Families**

Priority affordable housing for young couples

Support growing families by reducing rent slabs

Start at a commercial rent & reduce this as the family grows/

Avoids the charity of a cash payout.

Quality & professionally managed child care

The community has space - needs professional accountable management.

## **4. Medical Reproductive Health Measures**

Should not just be about infertility

Cover all aspects of reproductive health for young people & couples.

Publications, booklets, website.

## **5. Marriage Out of the Community**

The only demographically favourable solution at this time seems to be when the children of Parsee men marrying out are inducted into the community - this would probably exceed replacement level for their one Parsee parent.

Where the Parsee woman marries out not all of them may want their children inducted into the community but we may add a small number to the community population. .

Gender equity and contemporary reproductive rights give women the same rights as men & the rights of Parsee women marrying out need to be seriously discussed, deliberated and acknowledged by our enlightened community.

## **MEDICAL STRATEGIES**

We need every medical strategy possible

Each has to address the needs of individuals to be acceptable & successful.

### **1. AWARENESS**

Programs & strategies - books, brochures & websites

Create an awareness about reproductive health, healthy pregnancies & planning families.

The community is blessed with adequate expert resources.

### **2. ACCESS**

Reliable healthcare at the right time & not just for infertility.

Offer & encourage non biased premarital counselling

### **3. ASSISTANCE**

Graded infertility treatment on request - technology rarely the answer.

Basic evaluation, counselling & simple therapies suffice in most cases.

Avoid over treatment by seeking advanced treatment solutions to simple easily treatable clinical conditions



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## 4. ACCEPTANCE

Reproductive choice & behaviour - we cannot force a change,  
Accept, explain, rationalise & extend support when necessary,

## 5. ADAPTATION

Vital to survival with an intelligent discourse on contentious issues  
Change is the only constant  
The community accepted major changes many times after coming to India  
We need consensus on at least a few divisive issues

**Unfortunately in our community**

**Everyone knows the problems**

**Every one knows the solutions**

**Every one thinks these don't apply to them**

*"I know there is strength in the differences between us.*

*I know there is comfort where we overlap."* -

---- Ani DiFranco

**We need to Respect our Differences & Find Ways to Increase the Overlap**

**Dr. Nozer Sheriar** is a consulting obstetrician and gynaecologist, and the Secretary General of the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (223 societies and 29000 members), Past President of the Mumbai Obstetric and Gynaecological Society.

He serves on the Technical Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and on the Medical Advisory Panel of the Family Planning Association of India. He is a postgraduate teacher and has edited 15 books and published over 80 chapters and papers. Dr. Sheriar was a founder member of the Youth Wing of the Bandra Parsee Association and is a Trustee of the Young Collegiate Zoroastrian Association.

**'Jiyo Parsi - A Government of India funded Program to increase Parsi population'**



**Dr. Zinobia Madan**

Since many years, our declining population has been a burning problem and we Parsis are living with the dreaded threat of extinction. The 2001 Census of India was an eye opener, as the numbers have declined from 1,4000 in 1941 to 69,601 in 2001. Further shocking figures are that Parsis account for only 0.0017% of the world population & only 0.0058% of the Indian population. In fact even more disheartening are estimates to show that by 2050 our numbers will be only 36,730 and by 2100 there will be further decline to 19,382. With a trend towards a more aging demographic profile, we have more of middle aged and elderly population & very few younger adults. Unlike other communities in India, Parsis tend to marry very late with age at marriage for Parsi women being 27 years & Parsi men being 31 years.

There are statistical estimates to show a sharp fertility decline in the Parsi community in India. The **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** of the Parsi community has reached below 1, which means that on an average, a Parsi woman in her total child bearing age has less than one child. **More than 30% of Parsis are "Never Married."**

In addition to late marriages, voluntarily and involuntarily not having children is an important factor for the low fertility rates in the Parsi community. Since 1950s, deaths have outstripped population replacement rate which can be attributed to medical and socio-cultural reasons.

Studies conducted by the **National Commission for Minorities (NCM)**, & Joint studies conducted by **PARZOR**, & **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)** identified the reasons enlisted below for important

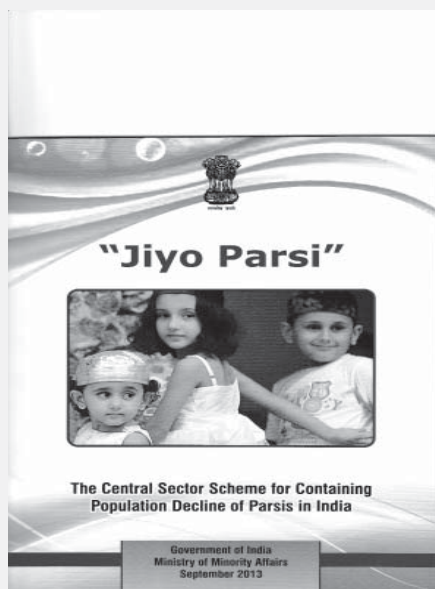
# Congress Follow up

decline in our community's population.

- 1) No marriage, Late marriage, Late conception
- 2) Overall fertility decline
- 3) Emigration
- 4) Marrying outside the community
- 5) Increased separations and divorces

Of the above enlisted, late marriage and conceiving at late age are identified as the two major causes of low fertility rates in Parsis. The other reasons accounting for this worsening scenario are increased executive stress in today's Parsi youth, prioritizing high income earning prior to marriage & postponing marriage indefinitely only after achieving these. These further are causes of late marriage, infertility, less births in the community and declining population.

**As responsible community members, each one of us need to contribute in our own small way to prevent these alarming statistics from further getting worst over the years.**



Keeping this as a backdrop, we prepared an evidence-based proposal covering social and medical relevant issues to the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MOMA), Government of India and also proposed ways of tackling this problem by a multipronged

approach, targeting to correct infertility thereby increasing birth rates.

Our proposal was evaluated thoroughly by the Ministry and after resolving some of their very pertinent queries on the execution and implementation of our proposal, the Government of India ultimately gave us the go-ahead & for the first time officially announced the launch of the Program “**Jiyo Parsi**,” at a function

hosted by them in New Delhi. A grant Rs 10 crores for implementing this 4 year planned Program is to be executed jointly by PARZOR along with Bombay Parsi Panchayat and Anjumans all over India, was announced.

## **OBJECTIVE OF ‘JIYO PARSI’ PROGRAM :**

The overall Objective of this Program is aimed to reverse the declining trend of Parsi population by adopting a scientific protocol along with structured interventions.

### **Key Objectives :**

- To assist approximately 150-200 Parsi couples to resolve their fertility problems
- To reverse declining trend of Parsi population by increasing births - combining social and scientific approaches
- Providing expensive infertility treatment as either free / subsidized treatment based on income, thus making it affordable & practical
- Treatment by reputed experts in Infertility

### **A Very Important Objective is to motivate more Parsis to :**

- ❖ Marry
- ❖ Marry young
- ❖ Have children at an early age &
- ❖ Have larger families

### **TARGET PARSI POPULATION:**

**The target groups within the Parsi community for the Infertility treatment would include:**

- 1) Parsi married couples of child bearing age who seek assistance under the Scheme.
- 2) Younger adolescents / younger adults for detection of diseases resulting in infertility. For screening of younger adolescents, written consent of parents / legal guardian is mandatory.

### **Way forward in target groups:**

*Parsi couples all across India of reproductive age will be aimed for entry in the program. Through Bombay Parsi Panchayat, as well as other Panchayats and Anjumans, background information and data will be gathered to identify different target groups for counselling*

# Congress Follow up

and treatment.

- This information from different regions will be collated for quick and easy contact with individuals, and then advised for appropriate measures.
- 
- Such data will serve as a Ready Reckoner to plan line of action.

## **The Program will follow a two-pronged approach:**

Counselling family members & boys / girls of marriageable age to having early marriage, treatment of medical issues from puberty onwards, conceiving at the right age, and approach for assistance to treat infertility as soon as it gets detected, will all be a part of advocacy. Even those with 1 child will be advised to go ahead to plan for others.

After awareness creation, is the actual implementation of the Program starting with protocol designing, followed by deciding which hospitals on an all India basis we could empanel, further enrollment of couples, medical intervention, data collection and storage. Reimbursement to hospitals has been planned directly by Government of India.

## **Outreach Programs to be undertaken by Parzor Foundation with assistance of BPP in Mumbai and other Anjumans in India will include:**

- Aggressive Publicity Campaigns
- General Information Sessions
- Media Publicity
- Jiyo Parsi Website, Jiyo Parsi On Facebook Counseling

## **Counselling has been planned for the following groups:**

- Parsi married couples of child bearing age.
- Younger adults for detection of diseases resulting in infertility.
- Specific Counselling for women to encourage conceiving early after marriage.
- Meetings for groups in Baugs highlighting advantages of early marriage, reasons for marrying within the community and early planning of family.
- General Counselling with respect to lifestyle

and stress effects on infertility.

- Counselling for elders of families to provide support to young couples to start family at early stage of marriage

## **The Objectives for setting up a JIYO**

### **PARSI Website will be :**

- Providing direct access for enrolment in program.
- Providing direct access to medical information.
- Linking with doctors for treatment.

## **The Objectives for setting up a JIYO PARSİ Query Cell” on Facebook or other media will be :**

- Resolving health queries from Parsi couples.
- Discussion with Gynaecologist / Infertility Expert in full confidence would be facilitated.

## **METHODOLOGY OF ADVOCACY:**

### **Advocacy will be planned, organized and implemented as follows:**

- In Mumbai, 2 Social Workers planned to conduct meetings in different areas of Mumbai with a total of 30 meetings to be conducted every year for 4 years.
- In rest of India, 2 Social Workers to conduct meetings in different cities/towns across the country, with 20 meetings to be conducted every year for 4 years.
- Manpower Appointment of Staff - Assistant / Office head,
- Contact BPP & all Anjumans to collect data available & establish systemic work plan for 4 years.
- Organize space for meetings, lectures, contact & consultancy for patients in various towns.
- Identify hospitals/ nursing homes / private clinics & doctors.
- Finalize working agreement with them for following regulatory and legal guidelines of Good Clinical Practice, ethics and confidentiality.

### **Materials for Advocacy will include:**

- Creating draft material for print and electronic media.
- Pamphlets to be printed & presentations to community groups.



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- Publicity in Parsi press, by electronic media and others.  
Pamphlets (Hand outs)

## Medical Treatment

Parsi couples to be enrolled for this Program will be requested to give written consent to participate in the Program, once they are confirmed to satisfy eligibility criteria for enrolment as laid down in the protocol. These couples will be counselled, the cause & duration of infertility in the couple will be identified and as per the gynaecologist's discretion, the couple will be planned for treatment for any of the **Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART)**, which include **In-vitro Fertilization (IVF)**, and **Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI)**. The couple will undergo all required investigations for detection of infertility, counselling & treatment for infertility, as per the protocol and based on international guidelines, the requisite financial expense would be planned in this current Program.

Earlier BPP had initiated awareness among young couples to conceive early by age of 35 & had extended financial support towards fertility treatment for young couples who could

resulted in clinically assisted pregnancies in 222 of the couples treated.

## Among the special highlights of the Program include:

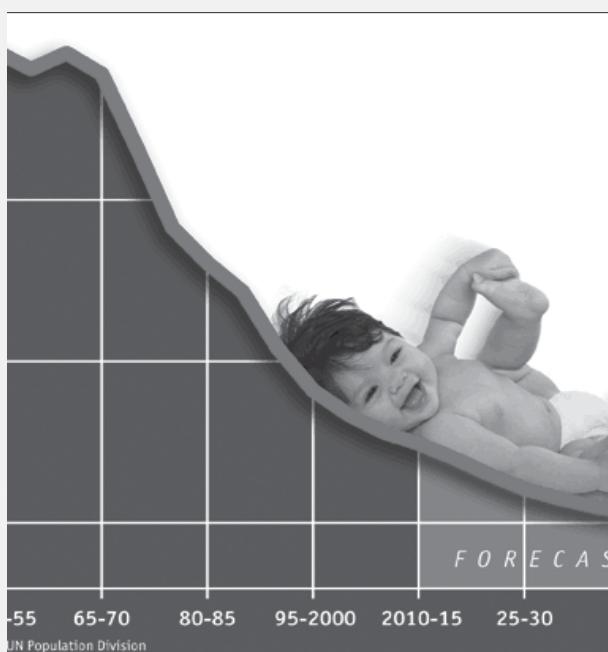
- *Providing medical assistance to conceive by using reproductive assisted technologies to conceive 1<sup>st</sup> child, and also for subsequent children.*
- *Centres to start initially in Mumbai, Gujarat & Delhi*
- *Number of cycles of treatment as required will be decided by the treating doctor.*
- *Parsi married couples seeking assistance who undergo IVF / ICSI, will be provided medical assistance subject to maximum cost of Rs 5 lakhs, or as per actual cost whichever is less.*
- *The treatment will be provided in empanelled hospitals / clinics by MOMA in consultation with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Parsis of each town / city.*
- *Based on Annual family income from all sources, financial assistance will be decided as follows :*

SR. No	Annual Family Income	Financial Assistance to be provided
1	Rs. 10 lakh & below	100%
2	Rs. 10-15 lakh	75%
3	Rs. 15-20 lakh	50%

While Parsi married couples will be covered up to Rs 5 lakh per couple or the actual treatment cost whichever is less, Parsi boys and girls (up to 30 years of age) suffering from treatable clinical problems resulting in infertility will get assistance up to Rs 15,000 and Rs 25,000, respectively.

About 7% of the funds will be spent for counselling of the Parsi youth and their families for early marriage, conceiving at the right time and training volunteers. The rest will be spent on detection and fertility treatment for married couples.

It is hoped that the community especially the newly



not conceive, This we are informed, has

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married couples will take such a Program very seriously and make the best of it.

**For this program to succeed, as a community we need to have the right mindset, cooperation within community members and being focused on our goals to achieve desired results.**

With the **Jiyo Parsi Scheme**, we need to revive our hopes to restore our beautiful Parsi Community. By taking the first right step in this direction, we still can attempt to save our beautiful community from becoming extinct.



**Dr. Zinobia Madan** is a Consultant in Healthcare & Lifestyle Medicine and a Senior Advisor to Pharma, Nutrition & Biotechnology organizations. She has introduced more than 75 new pharmaceutical drugs and nutritional products in the country & successful completion of more than 50 medical research projects. The Government of India, Ministry of Minority Affairs (MOMA) launched a special scheme “Jiyo Parsi,” in New Delhi, on September 23, 2013 by announcing a grant of Rs 10 crores for implementing a four year planned Programme by PARZOR along with Bombay Parsi Punchayat and Anjumans all over. The grant was sanctioned based on the proposal prepared by Dr. Zinobia Madan & Dr. Shernaz Cama along with inputs from Dr Anahita Pandole and Professor Dr Armaity Desai.

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2691 Credit Valley Rd., Suite 101  
Mississauga, ON L5M 7A1

Off. : (905) 828-3434  
Cell : (416) 832-1005  
Fax : (905) 828-2829  
Tollfree : 1 (866) 838-3434  
[zeenia@zeeniakola.com](mailto:zeenia@zeeniakola.com)  
[www.zeeniakola.com](http://www.zeeniakola.com)



*“The referral of your friends  
and family is the greatest  
compliment you can give me.  
Thank you for your trust.”*

*Zeenia*

# ARE PARSI TRUSTS IN THAT MUCH OF A MESS?

**ADI ENGINEER**

That several Parsi trusts could be better run is not a point of contention but is the picture as bad as it is being made out to be? There is no shortage of arm-chair critics who without leaving the cozy confines of their enclave, decry the functioning of Trusts and Trustees at large. Lambasting the activities of community Trusts has become fair game. It is not difficult to list shortcomings of any system. We all know what is going wrong with the world today, right from global warming to terrorism. The more important aspect is to examine the causes for the problems and fix them where possible rather than wax eloquent on the shortcomings.

After a renowned speaker concluded a scathing attack on the functioning of Parsi Trusts, at the recent World Zoroastrian Congress another veteran community leader politely requested the speaker to come forward and take up Trusteeship for the benefit the community. What followed was an awkward silence and the expression of an excuse on why that was not possible for the eminent speaker!

Having heard critical views largely from non-trustees let us also see the same issues from the perspective of the trusts and take an 'inside out' view. Our community Trusts in India fall into broadly two categories. The first are family trusts where wealthy Parsis of yore left funds and assets for community, be they in the form of Agiaries, housing or financial aid for the poor. Several of these trusts have been rendering yeoman service to the community for close to the past century and even more. They are often administered by Trustees who are descendants of the original donors. In many trust deeds the donors have expressed a specific wish that they would want their descendants to be the trustees in preference to others. This is quite natural and perhaps, a safeguard against misuse of trust assets. How likely is it for unconnected persons

to come forward and invest their time and energy for what is recognized as a thankless and bothersome job? The performance of these trusts range from excellent to mediocre and poor. So, it is a mixed bag.

Can we underestimate the contribution of the Parsi General Hospital to our community at Mumbai!

Even in the current times, Trusts like the ones from Hong Kong are giving the much needed support to the less privileged in our community and deserve our full appreciation. Apart from pre-eminent Trusts founded by the likes of Tatas and other giants the R D Sethna trust is famed to be the largest in aiding professional education and is indeed well run. Their aid is not exclusively for Parsis but for all communities. For Parsi students pursuing professional courses their assistance stretches up to a really handsome amount. So, it is not as if meritorious Parsi students aspiring to be top professionals are held back for want of finance.

The other category of Trusts is like the panchayats where Trustees are elected. Here the problem of Trusteeship is far more complex. Firstly while sounding very democratic the process of elections throws up the dynamic of group politics as also individual one-upmanship. It may not seem desirable but politicking is a reality. The power play we have seen in Mumbai where money power in holding large dinner meetings for the electorate and massive advertising campaigns have left nothing to imagination. The roots of corruption get seeded from such election campaigns. Here, a strict code of conduct needs to be brought in swiftly before more damage is done.

There are no qualifying criteria for the candidates. Consequently, the elections throw up a motley team of individuals who are often very diverse in their mind-set and capabilities. This makes teamwork an uphill



## Congress Follow up

task, particularly as they all enjoy equal authority in decision making. There are also influential persons acting behind the scenes who have vested interests. These persons have close links with some trustees and are ever keen to fish in troubled waters.

The rough and tumble of Panchayat politics gets issues moved to the Charity commissioner and the courts. Incidentally, this is not just peculiar to Mumbai. Unseemly conflicts and infighting makes Trusteeship an unenviable experience which only a Panchayat Trustee can vouch for.

In terms of suggestions for improvements, the term of Trusteeship also needs to be reduced in keeping with the times. Trusteeship for seven year terms breeds complacency and inefficiency. Some Parsi Panchayats have a much healthier model of giving a term of three years for their trustees and offer the chairmanship to be rotated among the trustees after the first year.

However, despite all these comments, several panchayats in India are doing excellent community service. One such in a metro city generates funds through letting out their well appointed hall for public functions. This revenue enables them to provide a range of facilities to their Parsi members including medical insurance for their senior citizens and education aid for Parsi students. In Poona Parsi Panchayat over forty poor families get regular monetary support, apart from sixty students getting aid for school fees and even tuition fees and over fifty persons getting assistance towards medical expenses. Several trusts at metro cities like Calcutta, Chennai, Mumbai etc. and several in Gujarat and WZO provide relief to the less fortunate.

The point being made is, that criticisms are not entirely unfounded and are even welcome but it would be grossly unfair to tar the working of all trusts and panchayats based on the poor profile of a few of them. Perhaps the recent upheavals at Mumbai have dominated the critics thinking. However giving in to pessimism is not the answer. Let capable Parsis come forward with a spirit of unity and tolerance and share the burden of working for the betterment of our community.



**ADI ENGINEER-** *is well known in the corporate sector for his very successful career as the Managing Director of TATA POWER Co. Ltd. And since his retirement he is a Director with over twenty reputed companies. He has been a member of several expert committees appointed by the Government and has been a spoke person for the Power sector in many interactions with the print Media and Television.*

*Adi is a Civil Engineer from Pune University, and a Chartered Engineer and also a registered Architect. Prior to joining the Tatas he held senior management positions with the Multinational ICI Group setting up and operating large Chemical plants all over India. His expertise in Project Management has won him International awards.*

*Currently he is Vice-president of the Board of Trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat and a trustee of his ancestral Agiary.*

*A veteran professional, a successful CEO, but more importantly Adi is a person committed to the concerns of our Zoroastrian community.*

# Behind the Scenes

## The Layers Beneath the Exhibition- The making of “Across Oceans & Flowing Silks From Canton to Mumbai 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”



***Pheroza Godrej  
and  
Firoza Punthakey Mistree***



Perhaps the most interesting and stimulating analysis of the Parsi Community emerging from the exhibition “Across Oceans and Flowing Silks...” is the comment made by Homi K. Bhabha, the Rothenberg Professor of English and American literature and Language, Harvard University, who wrote: *“Layered cultural traces mark the lives and times of a minority community that came from elsewhere and made its home where it found itself, amongst friends and strangers, and from there reached out to make the rest of the world its own.”*

In a sense this comment best encapsulates the core of this highly successful exhibition. Like its protagonists, the Parsis and Iranis, the exhibition reaches out to both friends and strangers stretching and expanding to include the rest of the world in its expansive and colourful history.

The historical period which the exhibition covers is a small window spanning the 18<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and explores two hundred years of Canton’s trade history, when Parsi merchants traded with and lived in China. They say that every idea has a life of its own and over time it grows on a course one least expects- and so it was with this exhibition.

Any exhibition has several important aspects to it after the idea in its nascent form is firmly fixed in one’s heart and mind. The heart giving it passion and life and the mind a cohesiveness that carries the theme and so it was with this exhibition. Once we fixed our hearts on the idea of explaining in visual form the Parsi trading links with China, a story line had to be worked out.

We embarked on this exhibition on the China Trade, having just finished the mammoth SOAS exhibition ***“The Everlasting Flame Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination”*** in London. We were working literally back to back with an inauguration deadline slotted in for the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 one day before the opening

# Behind the Scenes

of the 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress and the gods of time eternally elusive would not be on our side. Not satisfied by the daunting task of putting up an exhibition with an acutely limited time line, we decided that a catalogue was a must, however herculean and daunting the task might be. We rationalized to ourselves that there was no point of an exhibition if it did not endure in the pages of a catalogue, because at the end of it, we would have nothing to remember the exhibition by.

As time was short we had to fall back on well-wishers of the community and our own personal contacts. The generosity of our contributors *Jesse Palsetia, Ghulam Nadri, Tirthankar Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Mariam Dossal and Rusheed Wadia* must be acknowledged. Unhesitatingly each one of them, despite their busy schedules and demands, confirmed their acceptances on a telephonic request by Pheroza Godrej. With all of them living in different parts of the world they all agreed to contribute to the catalogue and each one of them faithfully abided by the pressing deadlines -- it was another miracle.

We pulled all stops to get our core team together with whom we had worked earlier, when producing the monumental visual encyclopaedia “*A Zoroastrian Tapestry Art Religion and Culture*” So we roped in *Sudha Seshadhri* our visual expert, coordinating editor and friend and *Rumi Majoo* of Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co. Ltd to hold together for us the matrix of our network and organize and control the many aspects of setting up an exhibition, which practically entailed doing just about everything.

We decided that for the uninitiated public, to plunge straight into an exhibition on China and the Parsis would make little sense and so the story line had to be expanded. **Yazd** home to the Iranian Zoroastrians was included to represent our Iranian roots. **Sanjan** and the Parsi arrival on its shores, became a secondary starting point of our history but the leap from Sanjan to China could not be taken without the inclusion of the trading activities of our ancestors in **Surat** and their role in the growth of Bombay. Few can dispute that the ethos, social infrastructure and architectural skyline of Bombay owes much to those spirited and feisty Parsis who came from Gujarat at the behest of the East India Company in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to work in the marshy mosquito ridden islands and build, what became the famed port city of Bombay.



Once we were able to knit into the story line the important role of the Parsis in building the ports of Bombay and the three-masted sailing ships, it gave us a seamless entry into the world of the China trade, the life style of the merchants and their lasting legacy of philanthropy. With this done, the exhibition began to take form.

Our next step was twofold; images had to be identified and families had to be persuaded, to lend their treasures from the China trade, for the exhibition. We were in fact overwhelmed not just by the generosity with which hundreds of objet d'arts were loaned to us but the number of people who came forward, in response to our



# Behind the Scenes

advertisement, to loan their antiques, porcelain, textiles paintings and much more.

One of the dangers in such an exhibition is to take on more than one can exhibit, we were careful not to over extend ourselves in terms of what we could display. We explored the resources of several museums among them were the **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya** (formerly Prince of Wales Museum of Western India) Mumbai; *the Tapi Collection, Surat; Tata Central Archives Pune; the TS Rahman Marine Museum Nhava and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet owned F.D. Alpaiwalla Museum*. From abroad we sought objects from the *Peabody Essex Museum, the Maritime Museum Greenwich, The Hong Kong Museum of Art and others*.

With the visuals chosen and the story line formatted we approached National Institute of Design (NID-Ahmedabad) trained designers *Suranjana and Vikas Satwalekar* who mentor many budding designers, to take on the exhibition as a challenge. Our brief to them was that the exhibition should create the magic of the Orient and should hail the resilience and free spirit of the Parsi traders who made Canton their own. We wanted richness, colour, magnificence, the “wow factor” and a flourish of creative spirit to envelope the exhibition. We wanted Parsis and Iranis to view the exhibition with a sense of pride and amazement at the enterprising spirit of their ancestors and we wanted the non-Zoroastrians to understand where we came from, what we have contributed to India and the world and what makes up the ethos of a Parsi Irani Zoroastrian.



Research for the project had been on-going for over a year. The shape colour and design of the adobe homes of Yazd had to be worked out, new research on the East India Company and its workings in Surat and Bombay, the shipbuilding forays, and details of Canton, how and where the Parsis lived, what they ate, how they dressed and of course what they traded in China in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries began to take shape with the arresting faces of the Chinese Hong Merchants. The visuals of the 13 Factories and that remarkable strip along the mouth of the Pearl River, made famous by Amitav Gosh in his novel *River of Smoke* emerged in the exhibition. Opium being the chief commodity, Sudha found the very interesting engravings of the opium factory in Patna belonging to the Welcome Library and we added to it an opium time line that would give at a glance the history of the opium trade.

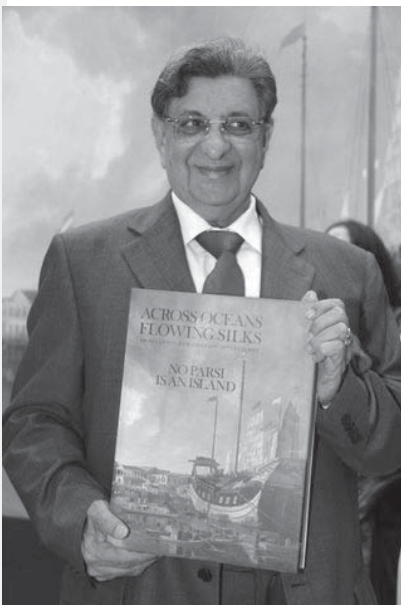
For the Parsis, China trade without porcelain is a non-starter and so when we discovered a cache of porcelain vases, plates, bowls, statues and decorative pieces, stored for decades in the F.D. Alpaiwalla Museum waiting to be unearthed, we took the help of curator-keeper, *Nivedita Mehta*, and decided in a moment of extravagance to take the whole lot. Once having declared our intention to take most of the 800

# Behind the Scenes

pieces of Alpaiwalla porcelain, we were left with the problem of how to display it without losing its historical context. It is then in our research we came across a series of paintings by a Chinese artist detailing various shops in the Foreign Concession of Canton's Hog Street. Among them was an artist's rendition of a shop selling China ware. It hit us then, that this was how we could show almost every piece of porcelain we had collected. A replica of the China ware shop was accurately created and it miraculously accommodated every piece of porcelain ware leaving the display so much more fascinating, giving a peep into the material life and times of Canton. The last section of the exhibition depicted the opulent life style of the Parsi China merchants, and the philanthropy that emerged as a life style choice from the wealth created by them in the opium and cotton trade.

Three pavilions were used to depict the densely carved furniture found in Parsi homes, with Chinese vases and bowls and portraits to offset them. So in came a string of carved chairs and tables, some beautifully carved Chinese chests, lacquered stools, monk's chairs, garden stools and engravings and paintings depicting Chinese social scenes and vistas.

Every piece temporarily loaned for the exhibition had to be put on the computer, discretely labelled with a corresponding number, insured and packed by professional packers whose job was to ensure that the objects travelled to and from the exhibition safely. This in itself was a huge operation and required methodical work and a system to be put in place. This was ably done by *Rumi Majoo & Sharoukh Marolia* of Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co. Ltd on loan to us for the exhibition. *Shannen Castelino* from Godrej Archives was seconded for archiving over a 1000 images on the computer for easy referencing and this was vital as all the images were eventually used in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition.



The most intensive research and writing had to be accomplished in less than two months and every caption had to be well researched and the panel text accompanying the catalogue sections had to be written up. More than that, we had to be ready with easy to read caption titles for the images to be displayed and the panel write-ups for the various sections of the exhibition. There was no stopping, we were on an unending spiral of write, edit, abbreviate and proof read at an unbelievable pace, when nights merged into days and days became endless nights.

The catalogue was a herculean task. Originally conceived as a seven article, 115 page volume, in the course of the exhibition planning, it expanded to a 388 page catalogue with over 800 images and much of the credit for the design essentials and printing of the catalogue goes to *Spenta Multimedia*- a feat accomplished in less than 10 days. The spectacular cover "**A View of the European Factories at Canton**" painted by **William and Thomas Daniel**



# Behind the Scenes

was plucked out of the treasures of the National Museum Greenwich by Sudha and the minute we saw it, it became the fulcrum of the exhibition. It is the catalogue, which serves as an enduring legacy. At times when we rub our eyes with disbelief and ask ourselves, did we really pull the exhibition together in less than two months? The reality is there for us to see, when we hold in our hands the catalogue as a credible testimony of our efforts - an exhibition of many layers through the many kaleidoscopes of time and history. **(Chairman of the Congress Dr Cyrus Poonawalla holding the catalogue on the inauguration of the Exhibition, see page 86 )**

## A ZOROASTRIAN RHAPSODY

Presents a screening of the celebrated documentary film:

**"Café Irani Chai"**

Directed by

**Dr. Mansoor Showghi Yazdi**

**Film-maker and**

**Owner of Showmansshow**

Date : Tuesday, January 21, 2014

Time : 6.30pm sharp

Venue : National Gallery of Modern Art,

Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall,

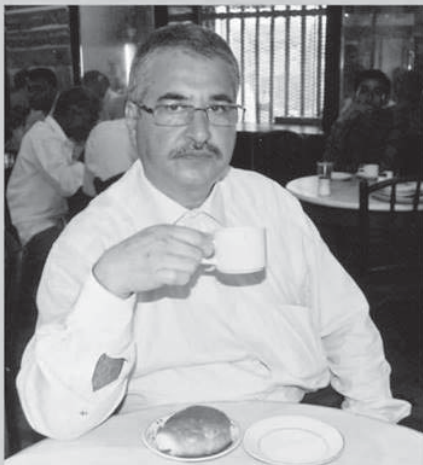
M.G. Road, Fort, Mumbai - 32

Please do join us for tea at 6 pm

In association with :



Café Irani Chai Foundation  
& Indo-Iranian Friendship Society



The film features the Iranians who walked to India – in the 18th and 19th centuries - from Yazd and Kerman in Iran settling down in Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad and were known for their Restaurants, Cafes and Bakeries which serve the irresistible **Bun Masko Irani Chai**.

## ZOROASTRIAN RHAPSODY

The exhibition was accompanied by several connecting outreach programmes attended by the general public.

These programmes were a unique component complimenting both exhibitions, whether they were guided tours, lectures, films or discussions; followed with interactions with the public. To conceptualise these and to identify the right person for the occasion was a challenging task. Baring one occasion, all those who were invited participated whole heartedly and as the time approached for unveiling the exhibition, the related programmes which were free to the

public also began to attract an over-whelming response. As space was limited in the auditorium, yet another dimension took place, that is to record these programmes.

So like the catalogue which is there for us to see after the show is over, the videos are there to view.

## 'NO PARSI IS AN ISLAND' curated by Ranjit Hoskote and Nancy Adajania with Pheroza J Godrej at the National Gallery of Modern Art

'No Parsi is an Island', an exhibition that cast a curatorial eye over 150 years of art created by artists of Parsi origin, ranged across a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, drawing, tapestry and film. It included 14 artists: Pestonji Bomanji, Manchershaw F Pithawalla, Sorab Pithawalla, Jehangir A. Lalkaka, Shiavax Chavda, Adi Davierwalla, Piloo Pochkhanawala, Jean Bhowanagary, Homi D. Sethna, Jehangir Sabavala, Nelly Sethna, Homi Patel, Mehlii Gobhai, and Gieve Patel. The earliest works in the show dated back to 1882 and the most recent ones were made in 2013. Distinguished members of the Parsi community, these artists are also regarded as major contributors to the history of modern Indian art.



# Behind the Scenes

## ACROSS OCEANS & FLOWING SILKS FROM CANTON TO BOMBAY 18th - 20th CENTURIES and NO PARSI IS AN ISLAND

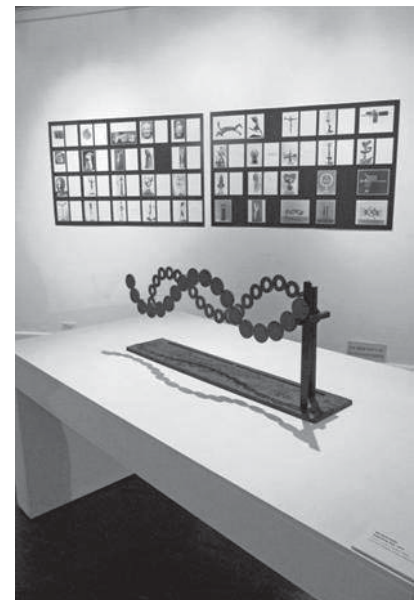


The idea for what would develop into a complex exhibition with more than 146 exhibits came up in conversation during an informal lunch pertaining to various projects being handled by Ranjit Hoskote, (photo left) Nancy Adajania and Pheroza Godrej. As one topic followed another, the three curators found themselves discussing an exhibition to be held at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, to coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress. Pheroza had already approached the city's *Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya* (formerly The Prince of Wales Museum) for the loan of their celebrated works by *Pestonji Bomanji* and she was delighted that the Trustees of the CSMVS had magnanimously consented to lending these national treasures. As the lunch progressed, ideas abounded and Nancy suggested that this would be an ideal time to take forward the study of Pestonji Bomanji, which had been initiated by the late *Arvind Fondekar*, deputy director of the CSMVS, and to develop the idea by adding the works of *Jehangir Lalkaka and the two Pithawallas, Manchershaw and Sorab*, to the constellation. This formed a natural starting point for the curatorial adventure, and the selection of the other artists.

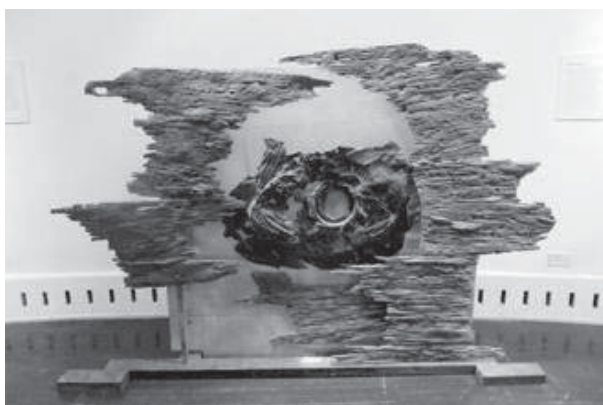
One of the linking threads for the exhibition was the influence of the J.J. School of Arts – memorably associated with the philanthropic founding of that institution through the magnanimity of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the first baronet of Bombay – as a training ground for many of the artists. Another thread was the story of Parsi artists at work in a cosmopolitan public sphere, shaping it and experimentally being shaped by it. Yet another thread was provided by the connections of the artists under review with the larger narratives of anti-colonial struggle, national modernity, urban transformation and

# Behind the Scenes

cultural debate in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century India. Hence the title, with its reference to John Donne's vision of the individual indissolubly connected to all other individuals, all their destinies interlinked: **'No Parsi is an Island'**. The unprecedented number of footfalls that this exhibition attracted were a tribute to the Parsi artists who have played a key role in the evolution of modern Indian art. These priceless works have been returned to their original homes, but they remain vivid in the city's collective memory – they remind Bombay's citizens of the invaluable experiences of delight and illumination that a dynamic museum can provide.



**UNDULATING RED**  
and other photographs  
Artist Adi Daviervalva



**MONSOON** – Artist Piloo Pochkanawalla



**DAWN OF PROHIBITION** Artist  
Sorab Pithawala

# Behind the Scenes



TEXTILE DISPLAY Nelly Sethna

**Firoza Punthakey Mistree** is part of Zoroastrian Studies, a Mumbai based community organization, which helps in the dissemination of information on Zoroastrianism. She has recently co-curated with Pheroza Godrej, an exhibition titled “Across Oceans and Flowing Silks From Canton to Bombay, 18th- 20th Centuries”; and has co-curated with Dr Sarah Stewart and others, an exhibition at the Brunei Gallery SOAS, titled “The Everlasting Flame Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination”. She has co-edited with Pheroza Godrej the largest visual compendium on the community and its people, titled *A Zoroastrian Tapestry Art Religion and Culture*.

**Pheroza Godrej** is an authority on the work of British artists in India. She has a B.A. (Hons), B.Ed., M.A. Eng. Lit., M.A. Ancient Indian Culture. Along with Pauline Rohatgi, she has several publications to her credit, the latest being *Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists-Paintings and Drawings from the Victoria and Albert Museum 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century*. She has co-edited with Firoza Punthakey Mistree. *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture*, in 2002. Her interests in the arts is wide ranging and includes a specialized knowledge of modern Indian painting. This led her to found the Cymroza Art Gallery in Mumbai in 1971. Since then, her speciality has extended to the prints of Indian subjects by British artists.

**Photo credits: Jasmine R Driver, Parsiana Publications  
Godrej Group**



## CREATION OF A CONGRESS

**Maneck Davar**

I was in Dubai at the 9th World Zoroastrian Congress when the Bombay Parsi Punchayet secured the mandate of hosting the Xth WZC in 2013 in Mumbai.

Even as Dinshaw Mehta, Chairman, BPP, held the WZC trophy I was envisioning what a Congress should be. Central to this was the thought that this could provide a unique opportunity to spotlight the Parsi community, its achievements and history, to other communities, apart from it being a forum for discussion of contemporary issues.

I presented a blueprint to the trustees of the BPP in December 2011. I was of the view that what distinguished a Congress from any conference was grandeur in the scale of its execution. Two key aspects, the invitation to the President of India to inaugurate the Congress and the cultural exhibition at the NGMA, formerly the Cowasji Jehangir Hall, were part of the plan I presented.

The first hurdle that we faced was the venue. Mumbai, critically lacked the basic infrastructure of a convention centre. There was no covered area which could house 1500 delegates and also facilities of banqueting and smaller conference areas. The only venue was the new stadium at the National Sports Club of India; this was still awaiting licenses to operate from the local authorities. As by March 2013, the licenses were still not in place and we booked the NCPA as the second best option. We were expecting 1500 delegates (the final count was close to 1300) and to fragment them, as the NCPA had auditoriums seating only up to a thousand, was not the best solution. Once the NSCI was available, the venue was shifted, resulting in some confusion.

The major issue of funding was resolved by Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla's spontaneous offer to be the main sponsor. My friend Nadir Godrej immediately acceded to my request for funds. With contributions from Shapoorji Pallonji and the Zoroastrian Co-op. Bank and from delegates' fees, our financial requirements were fully met.

In the organisation of any event, especially in India, the

biggest challenge is behind the scenes. We had to get multiple permissions from all local authorities. We had to secure NOCs from both the Central Home and External Affairs Ministries as it was an international conference. Our biggest challenge was to secure visas for Parsis of Pakistani origin but holding passports of other countries. We managed to get visas for 31 such delegates largely due to the personal efforts of Keki Daruwala, Member, Minorities Commission, Nergish and Dadi Mistry and my personal contacts.

The President of India's presence at the Congress was due to the efforts of Nergish and Dadi. It speaks volumes of the credibility and the special space the community still enjoys in the hearts of Indians that the President agreed to attend an event which had religious, apart from cultural social and economic overtones. The President's presence, as anticipated, put the Congress on the front pages of all newspapers.

The preparation and security considerations behind the visit of the head of state were a tension-filled chapter, not apparent to many. We had to make revisions in the program at the last minute to accommodate security checks and protocols. The President expressed passionate concern about the community's decline in numbers. In spite of a breach in protocol, when part of the Paranjoti Choir's performance had to be accommodated after the President's speech, it was a matter of quiet satisfaction when the President's aide informed Nergish that the Congress was one of the most elegant official events the President had attended.

The vision of making the Congress an event which would leave an imprint in the consciousness of people from other communities was partly achieved by the President's visit and principally by the exhibition at the NGMA. Ably curated by Pheroza Godrej and Firoza Mistree this was one of the finest exhibitions on the history of any community, as also one of the finest hosted at the NGMA.

Another exhibition which would have done the community great honor was the Cyrus Cylinder at the Museum.

# Behind the Scenes

The Cylinder, on loan from the British Museum, was to come to Mumbai in 2014. I spoke to Neil McGregor, the Director of the British Museum, when he was visiting on the occasion of the display of the Egyptian Mummy and requested him to reschedule the Cyrus Cylinder viewing to coincide with the Congress. He readily agreed. It was a tragedy that due to the in-fighting of the BPP trustees, the full benefit of the 'Cyrus Cylinder' could not accrue to the Congress and the community, as the Museum authorities were unsure of the fate of the Congress and did not make the exhibition an integral part of the Congress as was originally planned. While the in-fighting amongst the trustees is a sordid chapter which some day needs to be written to expose the venality of those who occupy this high office, it was clear that the entire aim was to deny any credit to Chairman Dinshaw Mehta, who worked hard for the success of the Congress, but was forced to take a back seat, which he did in the larger interests of the Congress and the community.

There is one incident I wish to recount. In the trustees meeting on Tuesday November 26, 2013 where by a majority of 4 to 3 the decision to 'postpone' the Congress was taken. I begged with all not to take this disastrous step, which would cause the greatest harm to the credibility of the community. I further pleaded that it would be a real loss of face for the community to inform the President of India of its cancellation.

I told them I was aware that the first copy of the police complaint against Mehta by four trustees was marked by them to the President of India in an effort to sabotage the President's presence at the congress. In spite of that, I told them, I was confident the President would attend. The President did not disappoint the community, disregarding the complaint with the contempt it deserved.

There were many organizing glitches in the conduct of the Congress, not adhering to the programme schedules being the main one, apart from the lines for meals on the first day. I am firmly convinced that an event of this size and nature has to be conducted without fear or favour; there were too many vested interests who needed to be given time to speak at the Congress and quite a few speakers did not adhere to their timings. Consequently, there were huge delays, which the delegates to their credit bore for the most part with equanimity.

Finally, the conduct of any successful event is a team effort. If the Xth World Zoroastrian Congress was appreciated, it was because of the commitment and dedication of persons who each performed their designated roles and duties not just competently but beyond expectations. All the compliments I have personally received as the face of the organizing team, I have humbly accepted on behalf of all involved who worked tirelessly, with little recompense, for the larger cause.

**Maneck Davar** is the Proprietor of **Spenta Multimedia**, India's largest custom magazine publisher established in 1995 has a stable of thirty six custom publishing titles and seven newsstand magazines. Spenta titles include JetWings, JetWings International, The Smart Manager, Marwar, HAIR, FlyLite, EliteLife, Solitaire International, Liquid, Apparel, First Update, Imperia, Hello, Life @ Club, The Chartered Accountant Journal, Investime, @TCS, India Boating to name a few. Spenta Multimedia is a completely integrated print and online media company with in-house content, design, digital and print capabilities.

He has over 30 years experience in print journalism and publishing having written for and worked with major Indian newspapers and magazines - **The Times of India, Indian Express, Statesman, Midday and India Today** and was the assistant editor of the national weekly **Blitz**, city editor and chief reporter of the Mumbai newspaper **The Daily**, editor and publisher of the law magazine **Lex et Juris** and editor and publisher of **Gentleman Group** of magazines

He is also Chairman and Managing Director of Mumbai Boat Show Pvt. Ltd., Blue Water Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Liquid Publishing Pvt. Ltd. and The Smart Manager Pvt. Ltd.

Being associated with many NGOs, Maneck is the Chairman of the Kala Ghoda Association which conducts the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival and Chairman of The Society for the Protection of Children in Western India. He is also on the Board of Trustees of Apne Aap Women's Collective and Make-A-Wish Foundation of India.





## HOW DOES A CONGRESS WORK

**ASHISHWANG IRANI**

**EVENT COORDINATOR**

**10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress**

Thank you very much for your kind words, and giving me an opportunity to write about my experience. We are thankful for the support of the FEZANA JOURNAL received during the 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress. It had indeed helped us to convey our message and updates to our overseas delegates.

The success of an event depends upon good management and execution, and we had a great combination of both. The 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress has been an impressive and a pleasurable journey for me, and I thank Mr. Maneck Davar, Hon. Secretary of the Organizing Committee, for giving me this opportunity to work on such a magnificent event.

It was a great experience interacting with delegates from all over the world. I was totally amazed with the enthusiasm and the interest delegates showed in participating at the Congress. Every morning my inbox would surge with their queries about registration process, program, speakers, etc.

Our first step was to finalize an online portal which could enable the delegates to easily make payments online. This process took about a month and a half of documentation, follow up etc. As soon as the process was over, the registration commenced. We had two processes for registration

1. Either the delegates could register online or
2. Directly go to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat office to register themselves by filling in the form.

Both the processes enabled the delegates to register very conveniently.

My motive was to help the delegates, resolve their queries and grievances and to make sure that we assisted the delegates in the best possible way. At times it would get monotonous and repetitive as some of them had similar questions but I understood that each one of them had their own apprehensions. It was a smooth and in a way enjoyable process.

Some delegates, who were finding it difficult to register online, would write to us with their queries, and we would make sure that each step of the form that needed to be filled was accurately explained to them before they submitted the form. We also assisted them for procuring their visas by sending them the invitation letters and any other documents which were required by the embassy.

A funny thing that I recollect was that there were some delegates who refused to register until they knew the caterers and what the menu for the event was.

Special arrangements were made for our Iranian delegates to register online and make the payment directly to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat or on arrival as they were unable to pay online due to the country's security measures. Made sure that all the delegates after their arrival had paid the fees.

Apart from registration I was also involved in planning, co-ordination, execution and marketing for the event, attending to continuous queries from the advertisers and exhibitors. At times, I would panic but I would try to be calm and patient.

Our aim was to make this event a most memorable event for all our delegates! It was truly a privilege to be a part of this incredible event!



# Behind the Scenes

**Ashishwang Pervez Irani holds a Bachelors degree in Commerce & Economics and Post Graduation Diploma in Marketing Management and this opened the window to a fast and swift sector of Marketing & Event Management. Ashishwang has 6 years of experience in the industry with some coveted organizations in India, with global roots. She initiated her career with L'Oréal India as an Event Co-ordinator where she played an integral part in their annual L'Oréal Professionnel COLOUR TROPHY EVENT for two consecutive years. She traveled to Paris representing India for the international edition of the property. She later moved to Leo Burnett followed by Spenta Multimedia where she currently holds the position of Event Co-ordinator and Manager Marketing & Sales. Ashishwang was instrumental in spearheading the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress 2013, in Mumbai. In addition to being a passionate professional Ashishwang also explores destinations through her love for travel and meeting new people. She loves to follow different genres of music for its calming effect on her and for also inflating her with energy to deal with situations better.**



## UN Secretary-General's Ban Ki-moon Message 2014

**N**owruz is a time when millions of people from Western, Central and South Asia and other regions around the world come together, as they have for over 3000 years, to celebrate the New Year and first day of spring.

Nowruz reminds us of the values and aspirations we all share for peace through tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. Expressed in a rich array of ways across the world, Nowruz embodies the power of cultural heritage to build bridges between people. It also celebrates diversity as a strength and as the foundation for a more peaceful and sustainable world. At this time of global change, when all societies face new pressures, the need for solidarity between all people and harmony with our planet has never been more essential.

On this International Day of Nowruz, I offer my best wishes to those who celebrate, and express hope that all people can use the occasion to reflect on the beauty of nature, the promise of Spring and the power of culture to build peace "



**I call on every woman and man to carry forward this message of peace, unity and renewal that stands at the heart of the mission of the United Nations and at the heart of the Nowruz celebrations.**

# In The News CELEBRATION & MESSAGES OF NOROUZ



The 5th international Norouz (Persian New Year) celebrations took place in Kabul on Thursday March 20th 2014 with countries recognizing Norouz attending the festivity. Norouz is the oldest ever festival commemorated in the world, recognized by the UN General Assembly.

Presidents of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan attended the event. The Iranian president who was attending the event said that Norouz is an elegant heritage of ancient times and a good opportunity to lead to political union among the countries.

**President Rouhani** described Norouz as the most ancient tradition of history and wished success for Afghanistan. He asserted that "Like the virtue of the Spring whose figure is pleasant upon the spring breeze, we should adopt moderation in our conduct as moderation is not a mere political motto restricted to individuals or one country but rooted in culture, literature and history."

**Source: Mehr News Agency (photos by Reza Ghaderi, Islamic Republic News Agency)**



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# In The News



## Obama Family around Iranian NoroozHaftsin table in the White House

On the heels of inclusion of NowRuz into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 30 September 2009, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly recognized 21 March as the “International Day of Nowruz”.

A resolution “to recognize the cultural and historical significance of Nowruz and wish Iranian-Americans, the people of Iran, and all those who observe this holiday a prosperous new year and expresses appreciation for Iranian-Americans’ contributions to U.S. society” introduced in 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives was passed on 15 March 2010.

Now over 300 million people all around the world celebrate the festival of NowRuz in the footsteps of the ancient Persians.



# In The News

## North American Mobed Council Seminar

*So may we be like those making the world progress toward  
Perfection; May Mazda and the Divine Spirits help us and  
guide our efforts to the Truth; For a thinking man is where  
wisdom is at home.*

Yasna 30.9

The Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) was the venue for a North American Mobed Council Seminar held on February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Arnavaz Sethna welcomed the attendees on behalf of the ZAH Library Committee, the hosts of the seminar. Jangoo Mistry introduced the speakers who were accompanied by Ervad Kobad Zarolia, the President of NAMC.

### The Program:

Speaker	Topic	Association
<b>Mobedyar Khushroo Mirza</b>	<i>Zarathushti Core Principles in Our Daily Lives</i>	Toronto
<b>Ervad Faraidoon Pundole</b>	<i>Concept of Sin in Zoroastrianism</i>	Houston
<b>Ervad Tehemton Mirza</b>	<i>Concept of Heaven in Zoroastrianism</i>	Toronto
<b>Ervad Poras Balsara</b>	<i>Persepolis – Rising from the Ruins</i>	Dallas



The speakers (from left in photo above Ervads Poras Balsara, Faraidoon Pundole, Themton Mirza, Mobedyar Khushroo Mirza, NAMC.President Ervad Kobad Zarolia)

delivered their lectures and followed with a question and answer time. Each speaker spoke with passion and challenged the audience to think and pose questions and comments.

Some of the key points of the lectures and discussion were:

- Consider the spirit behind the Gathic message
- Reflect on the application of our religious doctrine to our daily life
- Reflect on the meaning behind our rituals
- We may evolve and observe change, but the *Gathic Principles* remain for all times
- What is heaven, what is hell, who goes to heaven, who goes to hell?
- What is wrong (sin) what is right; how do we repent?
- Our religion is reflective, not prescriptive
- We reflect with our good mind to make good choices
- We adhere to the concept of service to others, aid to the poor and to those in need
- We are to strive for the *Best Righteousness*
- We are to examine our life and to seek the best existence
- We are to seek spiritual well being
- We strive for the best righteousness because *it is the right thing to do*
- We care for all living things
- Persepolis – The ruins tell a story. In 1979 UNESCO designated Persepolis as a world heritage site; Persepolis has an amazing system of plumbing and amazing architecture, beautiful reliefs on walls have symbolism and figures from various cultures

On the second day of the seminar there was an informal session where the attendees had an opportunity to sit with the presenters, ask questions and to pursue the lecture topics. The participants were very animated and contributed to an invigorating discussion. Ninety-

# In The News

five persons attended the seminar, including about fifteen of the Youth Group (Middle and High School students).

Aban Rustomji, Chair of the ZAH Library Committee closed the session, thanking the speakers and guests and noting that the lectures were stimulating, challenging and thought provoking. The spirit of the seminar was animated, there was sharing of information, research, and reflection upon the Principles and how they help guide our daily life, our interaction with others, and with our world.



**Library Committee with speakers** *Sitting L to R Arnavaz Sethna, Nargesh Sethna, Yasmin Pavri, Aban Rustomji, Zubeen Mehta. Magdalena Rustomji and down below Ervad Faraidoon Pundole. Standing L to R Rustom Engineer, Ervad Porus Balsara, Ervad Tehemton Mirza, Ervad Kobad Zarolia, Mobedyar Khushro Mirza, Meheryar Rivetna, Yezdi Engineer and Nauzer Billimoria.*



Youth group (middle and high school students) with the speakers

**Photo credit : Yezdi Engineer**  
**Report by Magdalena Rustomji,**  
**ZAH Library Committee**

## 19 PROMINENT PARSI DOCTORS DON'T SUPPORT AVIARY PROJECT

**Dr. Homi Dhalla**

The Aviary Project which was being planned for over two years was to be financed by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP). The BPP Review of September and October 2012 furnished details about this project. Arising out of this, a number of thorny questions arose, many of which were not answered at all by the advocates of this project. Two Dasturjis also expressed their negative views in the media.

According to the project report, the doctors were expected to shoulder a major responsibility in ensuring that diclofenac is not prescribed to patients, in order to prevent vulture mortality. At the Doongerwadi Advisory Committee where the Aviary Project was discussed, I had suggested that a panel of doctors be appointed to decide whether this project is implementable, but this suggestion was ignored. Now, 19 prominent Parsi doctors have written to the Trustees of the BPP, making it very clear that they shall not participate in this project.

Out of these doctors, 14 are Consulting Surgeons while 5 are Consulting Physicians. Kudos to Dr. Jehanbux Chichgar who has taken the initiative in this matter. The original letter signed by the 19 doctors has been delivered to the Trustees of the BPP. I have been authorized by Dr. Chichgar to release the letter addressed by the doctors to the Press for the information of the community.

# In The News

Dr. Jehanbux A. Chichgar,  
Motabhoy Mansion,  
130, Maharshi Karve Road,  
Mumbai – 400020  
February 4, 2014

The Trustees,  
The Bombay Parsi Punchayet,  
Mumbai  
Dear Lady Trustees & Gentlemen,

## Re: Aviary Project

We have carefully perused the articles regarding the aviary project which have appeared in the BPP Review of September & October 2012. In order to critically evaluate this project, it has been imperative to also examine the views of the critics of this project. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) will be actually implementing this project as it has years of experience in vulture breeding. The reports state that basically it is diclofenac that has been responsible for vulture mortality in the country.

The BPP Review of September 2012 (p.14) states that “*A continuous watch and an aggressive educational campaign within the community will have to be promoted and maintained in order to dissuade the Parsi Irani patients and the doctors from taking or prescribing any drug harmful to the vulture population such as Ketoprofen and / or aceclofenac that bio-transforms or metabolizes to diclofenac...*” From the above, it is quite obvious that doctors have a significant role to play in the successful implementation of this project. After an objective evaluation, these are our observations:

1. As there are 1051 combinations of diclofenac, it would be an extremely difficult task to ascertain whether drugs which are to be prescribed to critically ill patients in an emergency contain diclofenac or not. Besides this, it is imperative to note that 0.004-0.16 ug g of diclofenac in a corpse would cause vulture mortality.
2. It is further disconcerting to note that experts in this field, through their research papers have stated that there are also other drugs which would lead to vulture mortality. These drugs are carprofen, indomethacin, ketoprofen, paracetamol, meglumide, metamizole, naproxen, phenylbutazone, analgin, nimesulide, flunixin and ibuprofen.
3. Besides this, The Project Proposal prepared by BNHS (BPP Review October 2012, p.23) states that 72 hours before death, diclofenac should not be given to the patient. Moreover, relatives of the deceased would be required to make a ‘Statement’ that three days prior to death, diclofenac was not administered to the patient. In this context, it is impossible to predetermine the precise day on which a patient would die. Moreover, how reliable would a ‘Statement’ from a relative be?

Objectively evaluating this project, we conclude that doctors would be required to shoulder a heavy responsibility in the implementation of this project. After carefully considering various factors, we are of the opinion that at the practical level, we would not take the responsibility of being involved in the implementation of this project.

***Yours sincerely***

***sd, Dr. Jehanbux A. Chichgar MD . Consultant Physician & 18 other doctors***



# In The News

The Zarathushtrian Association of New Zealand  
&  
The Zoroastrian Youth of New Zealand  
proudly present:

## **THE 6<sup>TH</sup> WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS**

**AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND  
DECEMBER 2015**



**WHAT:** The 6<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Youth Congress  
**WHEN:** 28<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016  
**WHERE:** Kings College, Auckland, New Zealand  
**WHO:** Youth from all around the world between ages 15-35 are invited  
**WHY:** To provide a memorable, religious and social experience, as well as the opportunity to form a strong networking base for our young global Zoroastrian attendees.

**REGISTRATION OPENS:**  
July 2014

**SPONSORSHIP & DONATIONS:**  
We are welcoming sponsorship and donations from our global Zoroastrian community. For more details kindly email [6thwzyc@gmail.com](mailto:6thwzyc@gmail.com)

**QUESTIONS:**  
For any questions regarding the Congress please email [help.6thwzyc@gmail.com](mailto:help.6thwzyc@gmail.com) or visit our website [www.6wzyc.co.nz](http://www.6wzyc.co.nz)

**EMBRACE    ENHANCE    EVOLVE**

# In The News

A New Home For The Future Generations

## Arzan Sam Wadia

On Saturday March 29, 2014 the Zarathushti community of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut got one step closer in the realization of its dream of a new and permanent home in the Tri-State area. Amidst pouring rain, considered by many as a very auspicious sign; over 175 Zarathushtis gathered at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Pomona, NY to break ground for the New Darbe Mehr Building.



The Ceremonial Groundbreaking was one milestone in a long journey that started 40 years ago, when ZAGNY was formed in 1973. Since then the tri-state community has grown and thrived and is already seeing the children of the third generation amongst its midst. The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) call The Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr their home. The Darbe Mehr is administered by the Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Trust, an independent body made up of representatives of both ZAGNY and IZA. The Darbe Mehr moved to its current location in 2000. However the old building had started to show its age a few years ago, and a core group

of 16 individual families took it upon themselves to build a new one. They formed the New Darbe Mehr Initiative (NDMI). NDMI put up the starter seed funding in 2010. Architects within the community drew up plans, came up with ideas, engaged the community and finalized a design. The design was presented to the local town planning board and approval to start construction was finally received on March 13, 2014.

In the meanwhile, a massive fund raising effort was underway at all levels. From large scale events like the XVI North American Zarathushti Congress 2012 to Malido, Bhakra, Batasa and Cookie Bake Sales, no stone was left unturned to raise the funds. In December 2013 the community voted on setting a benchmark target for fundraising. On achieving that, construction of the New Darbe Mehr would begin.

And on March 29, 2014 the Ceremonial Groundbreaking of the Darbe Mehr took place at the site. **Cyrus Cama, President DMZT** welcomed the guests on this auspicious occasion. ZAGNY and IZA priests accompanied by their colleagues from nearby ZAPANJ led the congregation in prayer to begin the ceremony. Gev Nentin, President ZAGNY and **Shirin Khosravi, President IZA** informed the large crowd about the history and background of the project and the community. The Mayor of Pomona, NY along with other town officials were part of the audience and were touched by the decision of the Zarathushti community to “*finally lay its permanent roots*” and build their permanent home in the town. **Edul Daver of NDMI** outlined what had been achieved and reminded everyone that there still lay a long road ahead till the new building is built, and all the funding acquired.





# In The News

**Mayor Brett Yagel** welcomed the Zarathushti community and said that the town of Pomona was honored that such a diverse and ancient faith as Zoroastrianism would be a part of their small town permanently. The FEZANA Executive was present and **Katayun Kapadia, President FEZANA** congratulated both ZAGNY and IZA on the occasion and appreciated the collaborative spirit and camaraderie exhibited by the two associations in so many events over the years.



Gev Nentin President ZAGNY, Cyrus R. Cama, Chair DMZT, Lovji Cama Past President ZAGNY, Prof. Erach Munshi First President of ZAGNY, Shirin Khosravi President IZA, Edul Daver NDMI, Brett Yagel Mayor of Pomona NY

ZAGNY and IZA kids accompanied by the adults sang a couple of devotional songs on the occasion before the entire group moved outdoors amidst pouring rain, to break ground at the exact location where the future “***Kebla***” or the sanctum sanctorum of the Darbe Mehr will be. Priests led the gathering in prayers while sprinkling rose petals, laying of cypress leaves and putting in a hermetically sealed box containing Zarathushti artifacts into the pit. Then everyone had the opportunity to fill the hole with soil and become a part of this very auspicious ceremony.

With a vote of thanks to all present, Cyrus R. Cama, President DMZT concluded the events for the day. All in all it was a momentous occasion for one of the oldest associations in North America to lay the foundation for their new and permanent home. The large number of children and youth in the audience was the encouraging sign that this massive undertaking was to create a home for this coming generation and the generations to follow, to celebrate and unite in the practice of their faith for the Zarathushtis of the future.

**Arzan Sam Wadia** practices as an architect and urban designer. Originally from Bombay, he currently resides in New York City with his wife Shirrin. Arzan is a board member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and also runs *Parsi Khabar* ([www.parsikhavar.net](http://www.parsikhavar.net)) an online portal about Parsis.

**Photo credit Arzan Sam Wadia**



L to R: Jehangir Madon, Rohinton Dadina, Noshir Karanjia, Khushroo Vimadala, Pervez Patel, Rohinton Madon



# In The News

## The Power of Cultural Influences and Inspirations for Success

ARZAN SAM WADIA

In a year round series of events planned for the celebration of 40 years, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) invited an elite group of prominent Zoroastrians who are innovators, leaders and trail-blazers in their respective field of Music, Academics, Social Change, Culinary Arts and Finance. These leaders came together to share their stories of struggle and success for one special, thought-provoking evening.



On March 14, 2014 a sellout crowd of over 200 people gathered at the prestigious Cooper Union, to hear financier *Navroze Udwadia*, chef *Jehangir Mehta*, philanthropist *Dinyar Devitre*, educator *Jamshed Bharucha* and music Maestro *Zubin Mehta* participate in two panel discussions moderated by ZAGNY's own *Shanaya Deboo* and *Anahaita Kotval*.

Amongst other things the panelists discussed how their cultural background influenced their careers.



The first panel had Navroze Udwadia, Dinyar Devitre and Jehangir Mehta in conversation with Shanaya Deboo. **Navroze Udwadia** spoke about the challenges he faced as he left India at a young age to be in a foreign land. He said that he strongly believed in the adage **"Learn, Earn, Return"**, where one learns in the first part of their lives, earns in the second part of their lives and then returns back to the society in the last part of their lives. This he feels is also in sync with his Zarathushti belief. (In photo left sitting Shanaya Deboo, Navroze Udwadia, Jehangir Mehta and Dinyar Devitre)

**Jehangir Mehta** spoke about the challenges of being a chef of distinct cuisine in a world-class gastronomic city.

Jehangir mentioned how he prefers to be eclectic in his cuisine and then focusing on being the best at it.

On being asked how much luck and chance played a part in his career success, **Dinyar Devitre** said that **"Luck is the child of preparation and opportunity"** and one needs to be prepared and work hard in what they do, and have to be savvy at it. Success will then follow; for some earlier and others a bit later. Dinyar urged the youth in the audience to focus on education. As CEO of Pratham USA, he feels that a larger educated base will affect more aspects of society, be it politics, economics and so on.

After taking some questions from the audience the panel ended. During the break, the audience was served some Parsi-themed appetizers catered by Jehangir Mehta's restaurant.

# In The News

Jamshed Bharucha (left) Zubin Mehta (right)



The next panel had educator **Jamshed Bharucha and Maestro Zubin Mehta** in conversation with Anahita Kotval. **Zubin Mehta** was really happy to be amidst Parsis, who he seldom gets to meet. He started off in Parsi Gujarati, making most of the opportunity in speaking the tongue. Zubin reminisced about his upbringing in a very musically dominated home, where grades in school were a big priority, as was the case with all Zoroastrian homes in Mumbai in those years.

**Jamshed** remembers how as a boy growing up, he was destined to be an engineer because his family wanted him to. His formative years in India instilled in him a deep appreciation of education. And today in

his capacity as the President of Cooper Union he is embarking on creating new partnerships with Indian universities. One amazing quality that he treasures as an Indian is the ability to remain serene and calm in the face of stress and difficulty. That is a very Indian trait and has stood him in good stead all his professional life. Jamshed elaborated on what the words **Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds** mean to him. He feels that the aligning of these three leads to real authenticity in life.

On the question of identity, Zubin remembers that he had never had an issue with either his Indian or Zoroastrian identity and had never felt looked down or differently because of it. Zubin felt that his love for food and great Indian/Parsi food was something that got left behind when he moved out of India. Having left India decades ago, Zubin still holds an Indian passport and is an Indian citizen. On being asked if that was a conscious decision, Zubin said that it had never occurred to him to become a citizen of another country. He was born an Indian and therefore remains to this day carrying an Indian passport.



Through both the sessions the speakers went back to how their growing up in Parsi households in India with the Zarathushti belief system and Indian values which in many ways moulded them for what they would encounter in their personal and professional lives over the years.

The evening ended with a musical performance by soprano **Tara Jamshedian of ZAGNY**. (photo left). Gev Nentin, President ZAGNY thanked the panelists, moderators and the audience for making a truly historic and memorable evening.

The entire event is recorded live. View at [www.zagny.org/video](http://www.zagny.org/video)

**Photo Credit ZAGNY**

**Arzan Sam Wadia** practices as an architect and urban designer. Originally from Bombay, he currently resides in New York City with his wife Shirrin. Arzan is a board member of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and also runs Parsi Khabar ([www.parsikhabar.net](http://www.parsikhabar.net)) an online portal about Parsis.

# History and Culture

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ANCIENT IRAN | PERSIA

One topic that has received little attention in academia is ancient Iranian warrior women. There are in fact numerous references to ancient Iranian female warriors, from classical sources to post-Islamic Iranian literature. Perhaps the most authoritative source on the importance of pre-Islamic Iranian women is ancient Zoroastrian theology. As noted by Nigosian,



Saka warriors on the battlefield, female officer preparing her arrows for battle (c. 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> BCE). Source Cernenko, 1989

(1993) “no distinction is made between the genders ... both occupy the same place of honor ... on the same level in ... power” (p. 81). This discussion will provide a brief sketch of Iranian warrior women among the Sakas, Sarmatians, Achaemenids, Parthians, the Pontic kingdom and the Sassanians.

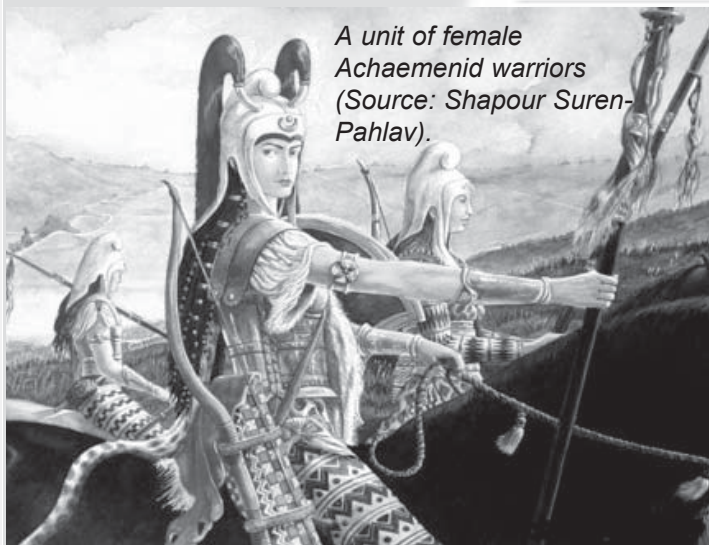
The Zoroastrian *Yasna* (main liturgical text collection of the Avesta) states “May a good ruler, man or woman, reign over us in both the material and spiritual existences”

(*Yasna* 41.2), thus declaring women as capable as men in leadership. As noted by Boyce (1972), Zoroastrianism recognizes women as “*men’s partners in the common struggle against evil*” (pp. 308, footnote 83). Female warriors feature prominently among the Sakas (or Scythians) and their Sarmatian successors in ancient Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Archaeological finds have unearthed conclusive evidence of weapons used by ancient Scythian and Sarmatian female warriors. Tombs of Scythian noblewomen dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE near Ordzhonikidze (in modern Ukraine) have yielded several examples of combat equipment, notably bows and arrows inside Gorytos cases, spears, javelins, knives, swords and sheathes (Chernenko, McBride, & Gorelik, 2001). These warrior women were found to wear the standard Iranian riding costume seen among Iranian peoples of the period: the long coat, ankle boots, and headgear typical among Medes and Persians. Greek vase paintings of North Iranian warrior women, identified as *Amazons*, are depicted with Medo-Persian tiaras and trousers (Mariusz & Mielczarek, 2002; see also Sekunda, 1992). According to Pokorný (1959) and Shahbazi (1989) the term *Amazon* is derived from Old Iranian root term *Maz* (to make Combat/war), with the full Iranian term being *Ha-Mazan* (Warrior). Equally remarkable in the Ordzhonikidze tomb finds of female warriors was the discovery of beautification items such as mirrors buried alongside weapons. The mirror was apparently hung on the girdle belt, even as the female warrior participated in battle (Chernenko, 1983).

The Iranian cousins of the Scythians or Sakas in Achaemenid Persia (550-330 BCE) had numerous similarities, especially warrior women. The rights of women in Achaemenid Persia were remarkably “modern” by today’s standards: women worked in many “male” professions (e.g. carpentry, masonry, treasury clerks, artisans, winery working), enjoyed payment equity with men, attained high-level management positions supervising male and female teams, owned and controlled property, were eligible for “maternity leave,” and received equitable treatment relative to men in inheritance (Brosius, 1998, 2010). This egalitarian status helps explain the significant presence of Achaemenid women in the military. Oyster, Sloan, and Stang (2011) for example, report of “*all-female units protecting the*



# History and Culture



A unit of female Achaemenid warriors  
(Source: Shapour Suren-Pahlav).

king in Persia" (p. 310), an assessment concurred by researchers such as Goldstein (2003). Quintus Curtius for example reports Achaemenid princesses having been escorted by "horsemwomen" (Lucarini, 2009). Another example is Ctesias' description of Roxanne (Roxanna), sister of Teritouchmes (Artaxerxes II son-in-law) as "very beautiful and highly skilled with the bow and javelin" (as cited in Llewellyn-Jones & Robson, 2010, p. 54). Note the similarity of Roxanne's weaponry to the aforementioned finds of warrior women at Ordzhonikidze. Girls (like boys) received military training in traditional martial arts and physical education and were integrated into Iranian military culture and folk traditions. Perhaps history's most famous Achaemenid female warrior was Artemesia of Caria, a member of the Achaemenid war council during Xerxes' 480 BCE invasion of Greece and in command of a naval squadron during the fatal Battle of Salamis (September 20, 480 BCE). Despite having just one vessel remaining, Artemesia succeeded in disabling the ship of King Damasithymus of Calynda, even as the Greeks were winning at Salamis. Xerxes reputedly respected the military acumen of Artemesia but made the error of disregarding her advice to not engage the Greek fleet at Salamis.

Warrior women continue to appear during the Parthian dynasty (247 BCE-224 CE). One notable example is princess Rhodogune, daughter of Parthian King Mithradates I (c. 171-138 BCE). Polyaeus reports of Rhodogune being informed of a revolt while preparing for a bath; she vowed not to bathe or brush her hair until the revolt was crushed. She then rode at the head of her army to lead a very successful battle (Polyaeus, trans. 1793).

The Sassanian Empire (224-651 CE) was the last of ancient Persia's great pre-Islamic empires. Shapur I (r. 241-272 CE) won a series of spectacular victories over the armies of Rome at Mesiche (244 CE), Barbalissos (c. 253 CE) and Edessa-Harran (c. 260 CE) (Dodgeon & Lieu, 1991; Ferrill, 1988; Dignas & Winter, 2007; Farrokh, 2005, 2007). In reference to the forces of Shapur I during these campaigns Zonaras writes: "*in the Persian army ... there are said to have been found women also, dressed and armed like men*" (1870, XII, 23, 595, 7-596, 9). A very interesting account of Shapur I's wife is provided by Tabari: "*a clever, beautiful and strong woman ... overcame him [Shapur I] in wrestling in a way that was by no means tender, so that he [Shapur I] was astonished by her strength*" (as cited in Dodgeon & Lieu, 1991, pp. 286-287). Tabari's reference may be suggestive that female martial prowess was valued among the Sassanians.

Sassanian military culture returned to the "Achaemenid-like" reverence for all three entities (Ahura-Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita) at Taghe Bostan (Daryaei, 2009). Arab invaders faced stiff resistance from Iranian women warriors such as **Apranik** (military commander 632-640 CE), **Negan** who died with her sword in hand to hand battling the Arabs in 638 CE (Farrokh, 2007) and **Azadeh Dailam** who led a determined resistance movement in northern Persia against the Arab caliphate in Northern Iran in 750s CE. The warrior ethos of Iranian women continued to endure centuries later, notably the Lur female fighters of Karim Khan Zand who participated in the defeat of Pathan invaders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Izady, 1992), and **Sardar Maryam Bakhtiari** who led a force of Bakhtiari warriors during the Constitutional Revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bakhtiari, 2003). To this day, women in Iran's tribal regions continue to be seen wielding their weapons.

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Lur women from Malayer (northwest Iran) pose with their weapons at local shooting range, early 1960s. Majority of locals are descendants of Karim Khan's Lur warriors.

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**Kaveh Farrokh teaches history at University of British Columbia (UBC) Continuing Studies. He has received numerous citations (including Wall Street Journal) and awards including Best History Book Award (2008). He has been interviewed by numerous media outlets including the BBC, the History Channel, Armenian national media, the Voice of America Network and the Leonard Lopate Show in New York City. His most recent book "Iran at war: 1500-1988" was published in May 2011.**





# History and Culture

## ZOROASTRIANISM MANKIND'S FIRST KNOWN ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE SOCIAL JUSTICE. DETERMINING THE LOCATION AND TIME OF PROPHET ZARATHUSHTRA.

Part 3 of 3  
Revised November, 2013

PILSUM MASTER  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

*This Installation will develop the idea that Zarathushtra and Kavi Vishtaspa were products of this Indo-Iranian heroic world of semi-nomadic Chariot Warriors interacting with Settled Irrigation Farmers of Central Asia.*

*Zarathushtra's philosophy and ideas—aside from being divinely inspired—were shaped by the conditions of the location and time in which he was born. According to many western scholars, portions of the Gathas are probably the only part of the Avesta that can be attributed directly to Zarathustra. It can be shown that some of the utterances in these Gathas were a result of the conditions in which Zarathustra lived. We have a reasonable way of correlating these conditions to a particular time and place in history (or the Archaeological record); therefore, we have a way of assigning the time and place of the Prophet.*

### Archaeological evidence of “proto-Zoroastrianism” in Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC)—By Victor Sarianidi (2010)

In a recently acquired publication of the Russian Academy of Sciences reporting on the Margiana Archaeological Expedition evidence is presented that in the area, shown as BMAC (see Figure 11), the people practised religious rituals that are very similar to what was practiced later in Zoroastrianism, and this form of worship was firmly established by 1800 BCE. Sarianidi's 2010 publication explained the following:

**CULT OF FIRE** was present in BMAC by 1800 BCE: Excavations of the capital settlement of Gonur gave evidence to believe that the cult of fire was very important in the religious life of the local population. A Temple of Fire was built, the first one discovered in Central Asia. Thick layers of smoke residue on the walls prove that fire in the altars was burning almost constantly, a kind of an “eternal flame.” (p. 130)

**CULT OF WATER:** On the southern outskirts of Gonur archaeologists found a large reservoir, specially dug canals and a system of ceramic pipes laid under the foundation of the encircling wall that supplied the reservoir with water from the Murgab River. (p. 134) [Water was filtered and probably used for ritual ablutions. (Sarianidi, 2010, p. 135)]

**CULT OF EARTH:** The archaeological excavations at Gonur prove that the Earth was equally sacred. Everything was done to protect the sacred “pure” nature of the earth from the decomposing corpses. (p. 136)

**CULT OF SOMA-HAOMA:** Remarkably, out of five excavated temples, four were used for the production of the cult beverage of Soma-Haoma. The Soma-Haoma drink was used for ritual libations. (p. 146)

**VARA:** was a round structure encircled with three round walls. The first wall had nine passages, the second had six and the last one had three. (p. 155) [This type of settlement is mentioned in the Avesta. (Sarianidi, 2010, p. 155)]



# History and Culture

## THE END OF THE BMAC CULTURE :

The increasing demand for tin and its occurrence in the Zeravshan Valley attracted the Steppe peoples into the area (Anthony, 2007). Note the presence of tin deposits designated by "T" ( Figure 11).

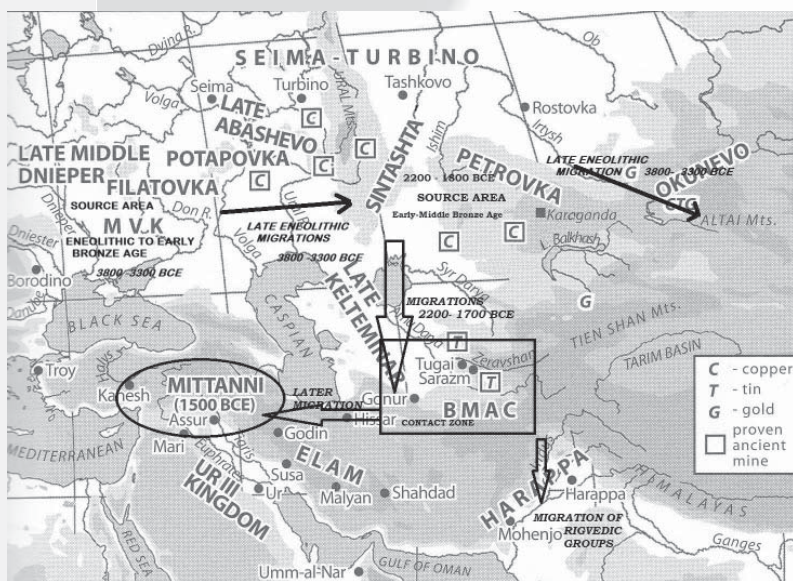


Figure 11. First Eastward Migration far to the Altai Mountains from the Pontic-Caspian Steppe in the Eneolithic (3800-3300 BCE). Then South in the Early to Middle Bronze Age—2200 to 1800 BCE. Then west to Anatolia in Late Bronze Age (1500 BCE). (Adapted from David W. Anthony).

Between 2000 and 1800 BCE, side-by-side with the growing BMAC culture, the Petrovka people—a

sister Steppe culture of the Sintashta—had started mining tin in the Zeravshan valley and subsequently established a settlement at Tugai ( Figure 12). The Steppe people migrated across one thousand kilometers of desert, and their burial remains indicate that they brought along war chariots. Very quickly the agriculture communities of the Zeravshan valley abandoned their settlements and the Steppe tribes expropriated the tin mines and established a metal-working colony at Tugai.

**The BMAC cultures of Margiana were the source of the non-Indo-European words borrowed into the Proto-Indo-Iranian languages** (Anthony, 2007, and Mallory, 1999):

Linguists have recognised 55 words in the old Indo-Iranian language that were borrowed from a non-Indo-European language, most likely the language of the BMAC culture. Amongst the 55 words were terms borrowed for bread (*\*nagna-*), ploughshare (*sppara*), canal (*\*iavia*), brick (*\*ist(i)a-*), camel (*\*Hustra*), ass (*\*kkara*), sacrificing priest (*\*ucig-*), soma (*\*ancu-*), and Indra (*\*indra-*). The BMAC fortresses and cities were an excellent source for the vocabulary related to irrigation, agriculture, and camels.



Figure 12. Upper reaches of Amu Darya River and the tributary Zeravshan River.

# History and Culture

**THE CONTACT ZONE & THE INDO-ARYAN AND IRANIAN SPLIT.** (Anthony, 2007; Mallory, 1999; Lamberg-Karlovsky, 2002):

## **MORE MASSIVE MIGRATION BY 1800 BCE:**

By 1800 BCE, the Sintashta-Petrovka culture was replaced by a new Steppe culture—the Andronovo—that began to move into the downstream reaches of the Zeravshan valley closer to the Aral Sea and even into the Amu Darya river delta. Some of the Andronovo settled in oases, becoming irrigation farmers, while others moved farther south (upstream) into **Margiana and Bactria—the “Contact Zone”** (Figure 11).

After 1800 BCE, most of the fortified locations in BMAC (e.g., Gonur, Togoluk) were abandoned (Figure 12). Climate changes probably disrupted irrigation-based agriculture and made it unsustainable. The sedentary population embraced or were forced to adopt the ways of the invading Steppe cultures.

## **HOW THESE EVENTS PROVIDE CLUES TO ZARATHUSHTRA’S LOCALE AND CHRONOLOGY**

### **DATE OF THE GATHAS**

Prior to 2200 BCE, the Sintashta-Petrovka cultures (Figure 11) are considered by most archaeologists and linguists as the Proto-Indo-Iranian branch of the Steppe Cultures living north of the Caspian-Aral Sea axis.

Between 2200 and 1700 BCE there was a break up of Indo-Iranian unity (Skjærvo, 1995), during which a northern Avestan (Iranian) culture and language evolved. It included the Andronovo culture north of the Aral Sea and extended southward into the peoples of the Contact Zone north of the Zeravshan valley. It was predominantly a Steppe Culture influenced by the BMAC culture and language; they worshiped the Ahuras and Daevas.

After 1900 BCE there are archaeological and linguistic clues that distinct Old Indic dialects evolved and separated from the Iranian dialects (Anthony, 2007). In this southern part of the Contact Zone the Old

Indic religion and the Old Indic language (the Indo-Aryan) emerged as a synthetic mixture of the old Central Asian (Soma-worshipping) religion and the new Indo-European elements of the Steppe Cultures that worshiped the *Ahuras and the Daevas*. They replaced *Verethregna* with *Indra* as their God of War, and started using Soma with their sacrifices. During this time, an additional 383 non-Indo-European words became incorporated into the Old Indic language (Anthony, 2007).

Skjærvo (1995) states that Old Avestan, the language of the Gathas, is extremely archaic and is largely identical to the oldest Rig-Veda (Old Indic), suggesting “that the Old Avestan texts were composed by authors who lived not many centuries later than the separation of the Indian and Iranian tribes” (p.161). The leap forward in the understanding of the Avesta language was made possible by the similarities in Avesta and Sanskrit (the daughter of the Old Indic languages). This, however, led to Western scholars dating the Gathas to a time closer to or even later than the compilation of the Rig Veda.

The time frame selected by this correlation may not be correct. As suggested by Watkins (1995), the rhythmic pattern in the Gathas and in the *Yasna Haptanhaiti* is not only very similar to the Old Indic of the Rig-Veda but is also the same as in the Italic (the European branch of the Indo-European language that separated centuries before 2200 BCE, long before the Avestan Rig-Vedic split). This suggests that the similarity in the composition and metre of the Gathas and the Rig-Veda are at least partly due to the composers of the Avestan and Rig-Vedic cultures retaining a poetic technique that goes back to the Indo-European times. This tradition continued centuries later even after the separation of the Iranian and Indic people. Trying to determine the age of the Gathas and the *Yasna Haptanhaiti* in relation to the composition or compilation age of the Rig-Veda, therefore, creates problems.

The Gathas, credited by most scholars to Zarathustra, were probably composed between 2200-1700 BCE (most likely just after 1900 BCE) and within or north of the Contact Zone where Proto-Indo-Iranian developed into the Avestan language. The place names in the Avesta are all confined to Central Asia



# History and Culture

and eastern Iran/Afghanistan/Tajikistan. This is also the area where the traditional (pre-Zoroastrian) religion recognized two types of deities, just as was the case with the parallel religion of the Rig-Veda, which Indic speakers were carrying south into India after 1700 BCE.

Zaehner (1961) states, *“The language of the Avesta very soon seems to have become a purely liturgical language which was no longer spoken and only very imperfectly understood”* (p. 26). The Magi appear first in the historical record during the first millennium BCE, which is approximately the same time frame that some scholars erroneously assigned to Zarathustra’s life, that is, 900-600 BCE (Mallory, 1989). According to Zaehner (1961), *“It is then fair to conclude that it was the Magi who were responsible for the drawing up of the Videvdat, (part of the non-Gathic Avesta), indeed we have the impression that the authors are not only writing in a language that is not their own, but are doing so in one the rudiments of whose grammar they had quite failed to master”* (p. 162). If Zarathustra compiled the Gathas and the Yasna Haptanhaiti as late as first millennium BCE, during the time of the Magi, they would not have composed it in the Old Avestan language, a language more or less extinct by that time.

## ZARATHUSHTRA—HOW THE SERIES OF EVENTS DISCUSSED SO FAR INFLUENCED HIS PHILOSOPHY:

### THE OLD RELIGION OF THE INDO-IRANIANS—INTO WHICH ZARATHUSHTRA WAS BORN:

According to Boyce (2005), there are elements in Zoroastrianism which go back to Indo-European times. There are several elements in the Old Religion that are common to the BMAC culture or taken from it after the Steppe peoples mixed with the BMAC. There were cult gods of *Haoma* and *Geush Urvan* (the primordial cow). -Nature gods personified some physical phenomenon— *Sky, Earth, Sun, Moon, and Wind*. The Indo-Iranians also held that there was a natural law (‘*rta*’) that ensured that the sun maintained its cycle and the seasons changed.

Most important for the Steppe culture was the system of patron-client, with reciprocal obligations built into

the system. This was also carried to the relationship with the Gods, such that sacrifices made to them would require reciprocating with granting favours to the person offering the sacrifice (Anthony, p. 461).

### ZARATHUSHTRA (GATHAS)

According to Mallory (1989), the Gathas, credited by most scholars to Zarathushtra, *“appear to be composed in an essentially rural environment where stockbreeding is held in esteem along with agriculture. Urbanism of any sort is not suggested. Hints of political structure represented in the Gatha are limited to family, village and tribe or to district and country”* (p.52). This is in sharp contrast to the proto-urban centres of BMAC.

Yet, *ustra*, as it appears in Zarathushtra, is a word for “camel” that was derived from a non-Indo-Iranian language, probably the BMAC (Anthony, 2007, p. 455). Therefore it is entirely possible that Zarathushtra lived in the time immediately after the BMAC’s walled cities were abandoned. He may have descended from the BMAC society that adopted the Steppe Cultures’ pastoral ways after the abandonment of the BMAC urban centers.

*Vishtaspa* and his clan, those with *aspa* (“horse” in Indo-European languages) in most of their names, were derived from the Steppe-based ruling elite in the Contact Zone; in Central Asia, further north in the Amu Darya basin; or near the Aral Sea (areas where horses were more important than camels).

*“The Gathas reflect an opposition between the believers in Zarathustra’s teachings and the unbelievers, not a conflict between Iranians and foreigners”* (Mallory, 1989, p. 52). This suggests that the Gathas’ composition occurred after the split between the Avesta-speaking Iranians and the Old Indic speakers.

*“We can use the hymns (of the Gathas) to build a picture not only of the world into which the prophet was born, but also of how he thought the world should be transformed in accordance to his own vision of God”* (Clark, 2001, p. 130).

According to Zaehner (1961), *“Zoroaster’s world view*



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is rooted in the actual conditions of his time. He does not, however, start from any abstract principle; he starts from the concrete situation as it faced him" (p. 40). He was amongst a settled pastoral and agricultural community of original non-Indo-European mixed with the early arrival Indo-Iranian Steppe peoples. As Zaehner (1961) continues, this community was in conflict constantly with "a predatory, marauding tribal society which destroyed both cattle and men and which was a menace to any settled way of life" (p. 40).

## THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AHUNA VAIRYA PRAYER

This prayer voices Zarathushtra's attempt to obtain social justice while providing comfort to the poor pastoralists of his time. That is, if justice is not available during life, He assures them that—by staying righteous—they will reap the rewards in the afterlife.

The interpretations of the **Ahuna Vairya** prayer by Bartholomae in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Moulton (1913) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are probably closest to this meaning. According to these sources, Zarathushtra seems to have taught, through the Gathic texts that the merits of an *Ashavan* (one who firmly believes in Asha and uses it to progress through life *no matter what his social status*) are being faithfully recorded day-by-day, to be brought out at the Last Day for judgment. *Asha* is righteousness and order, or truth.

Part of Bartholomae's interpretation of the **Ahuna Vairya** prayer teaches that the Role of Zarathushtra is more than a Prophet:

- Zarathushtra as Overlord (*ahu*) takes care that none of the faithful man's good works shall be lost, but entered in the account to his credit, and stored in Ahura's House.
- As judge (*ratu*) Zarathushtra accomplishes the final enfeebling of the world of *Druj* (the Lie) and enables the final dominion of *Ahura Mazda*.
- Zarathushtra serves as shepherd of the *drigubyo* who are the poor husbandmen (average person in Zarathushtra's day) whose virtues are at last to win Ahura Mazda's reward.

The *drigubyo* were the peaceful agriculturists that were being preyed on by the predatory marauding sections of the society.

## CONCEPT OF JUSTICE IN ZOROASTRIANISM

According to Clark (2001), "One major area in which Zoroastrianism has both suffered and triumphed is that of social conditions. Persecution first under Alexander and then during and after the Arab conquest has no doubt heightened the modern Zoroastrian sense of social justice. Today the creation of a just society, which includes care for the planet's ecological system, is more than merely a Zoroastrian ambition, but it is a demand made upon all who claim to be *ashavans*" (p. 130).

History has not been kind to Zoroastrianism, because if it had flourished and not almost extinguished, then, today it may have supplied the perfect solution for our troubled world.

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Sad.

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**Pilsum Master** is a retired Minerals Exploration Geologist who spent 30 years in the mining industry as a Professional Geologist and Manager of Research as well as an IT administrator. He has published articles on geology and industrial minerals for the Alberta Geological Survey and for the British Columbia Department of Energy and Mines. He is interested in the Zoroastrian religion and in the archeology and pre-history of Central Asia, Iran and India. Pilsum maintains a website on these subjects. <https://sites.google.com/site/azaintis>

## Zoroastrian Women Organization (ZWO) In California

In February 2010, Zoroastrian Women Organization (ZWO) was established as a nonprofit corporation. It was recognised and approved under the US government Section 501 (C) (3)..effective 04-08-

promote self-esteem and self-confidence to the Zoroastrians as well as celebrating religious, and cultural ceremonies.

Members of the board from left *Shahin Ravani* (Board member), *Dowlath Afshari*(Treasurer), *Manijeh Behziz*, (President) *Nahid Afshari* (Board member), *Sima Mehrshahi* (Secretary).

A new building was purchased at 10528 Whitehead St. Mather, CA 95655. And their mailing address is 2731 Citrus Rd., Suite B, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742

Since 2010, ZWO has sponsored successful events, celebrating religious and cultural ceremonies, such as Norooz, Mehregan, Yalda, and Tirgan. Also ZWO sponsored events, such as family picnic, religious classes, talks, baking & cooking classes, sports programs, dance classes, establishing investment club for Zoroastrian families, and small loan program.

*Hamazoor Bim, Hamazoore Hama Ashoo Bim*

**Manijeh Behziz, President**  
**Zoroastrian Women Organization**



2010. Therefore all donations are tax deductible

Some of the most important goals of this organization include but are not limited to teach Zoroastrian thought, provide, develop, and promote social, religious and educational services, workshops, recreational activities in a way that

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America  
presents

# EMPOWERING WOMEN

**to break away  
from the vicious  
circle of poverty**



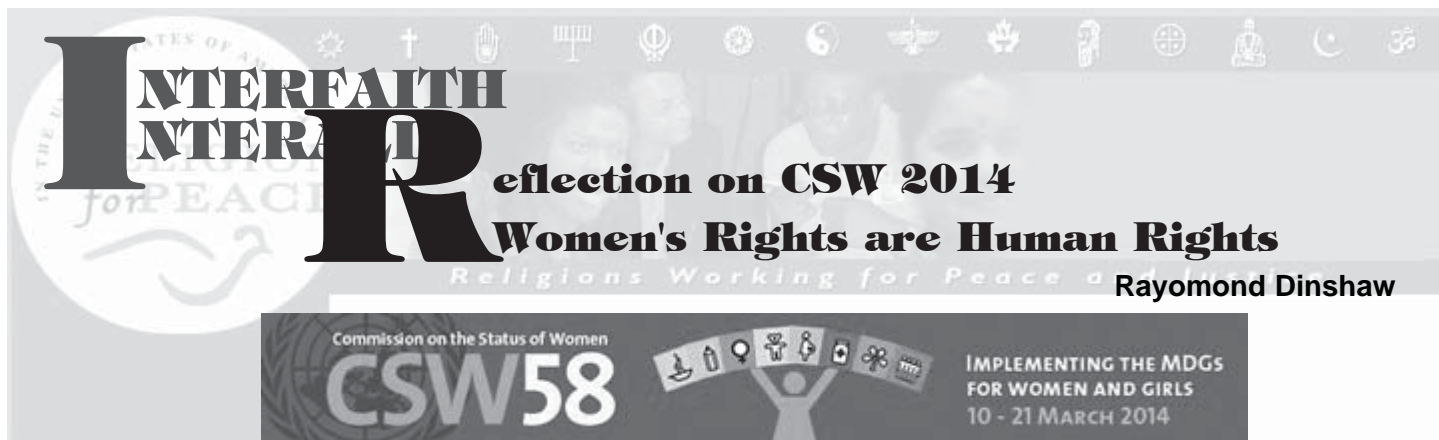
**A panel event at the Commission on the  
Status of Women Conference at the United Nations**

Monday, March 10th, 2014  
2:30 pm to 4:00 pm  
Church Centre, Drew Room,  
777 United Nations Plaza,  
New York, NY



Contact Afreed Mistry  
[afreed.mistry@gmail.com](mailto:afreed.mistry@gmail.com)  
+1-416-302-9754





*Rayomond Dinshaw and Tanya Bharda at the United Nations Conference Building attending an Official Meeting on the Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls."*

**Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 11 March 2014:**

This week I had the fortunate opportunity to attend the United Nations 58<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 2014) in New York City along with other members of the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee. This year's CSW took place as a prelude to Beijing +20, which will take place next year, and represents 20 years since the last monumental conference on women's rights. It was at that conference that Hillary Clinton gave her famous speech entitled: **Women's Rights are Human Rights**. She echoed the same ideas this year and stated "women's rights are

human rights and human rights are women's rights"; I was there in the UN chambers to witness the force, these words had on the participants and delegations.

I was very fortunate to attend the panel discussion on International Women's Day at the UN and hear international personalities speak on the issues of women's rights. Most notably *Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary General, Hillary Clinton, the former US Secretary of State, and the UN General Assembly President* were present and united in their call to action: significant progress has been made in the realm of women's rights but much still needs to be

done.

The panel members not only focussed their discussion on the struggles of women and the future agenda for women but there was also dialogue on how boys and men need to become more involved in contributing to the discussion of women's issues. The UN General Assembly President called on boys and men to bring these issues to the forefront of political and social discussion.

As next year marks the end to the **UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** a common theme was the post 2015 development agenda. Hillary Clinton spoke to the fact that specific goals need to be made targeting issues facing women; most importantly regarding women's sexual reproductive rights and health. There was also significant focus on ending child marriages, it was correctly stated that '*child marriages*' is a contradiction in terms, a child cannot be a bride.

Joining the FEZANA UN-NGO Committee has been a rewarding experience. I not only had the opportunity to attend CSW but I was involved in preparing the FEZANA presentation. *Tanya Bharda, Nurelle Mehta, Afreed Mistry, Behram Pastakia and Mani Rao* presented an inspirational workshop on ***Empowering Women to Break Away From The Vicious Circle of Poverty***. They spoke from personal experience based on their work with Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in India and provided suggestions to participants based on the successful practices of other NGOs. Overall this experience has been very rewarding and I would encourage all Zarathushti youth to get involved in this committee.

**Rayomond** is a second year Juris Doctor candidate at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. In law school, Rayomond is specializing in International Law and hopes to eventually work for the United Nations or a non-governmental organization specializing in human rights. Prior to law school, Rayomond completed a M.Sc. and Honours B.Sc. in physical chemistry at the University of Toronto.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN POSTER

**Design and Photo credit**

**Delzin Choksey, California**

## Zoroastrian Delegation at the CSW Meeting at the United Nations, March 2014

In a perfect world, there would be equality for all women and girls everywhere - without exception.

But how do we reach this? What would need to change? What would we see and experience - globally, nationally, locally and even in our own families? These questions were at the heart of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting at UN Headquarters in New York, NY, USA.

CSW's theme this year was ***"Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls"*** an important topic as discussions are underway regarding the post-2015 MDGs and Beijing+20. After two weeks of deliberation, UN Member States reached a conclusion on the theme, which we now need to make sure our respective Governments adhere to.

FEZANA was well represented, *Tanya Bharda, Nurelle Mehta, Afreed Mistry, Behram Pastakia and Mani Rao* presented an inspirational workshop on ***Empowering Women to Break Away From The Vicious Circle of Poverty***.

**Nurelle Mehta**, a Political Science student at Brock University, Ontario, presented the problems faced by rural villages in India, illustrating how lack of education, no access to clean water, malnutrition and lack of employment contribute to the vicious circle of poverty.



# INTERFAITH INTERALIA

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

**Afreed Mistry** from Toronto, presented examples of how India's largest private sector bank, ICICI, has contributed to alleviating poverty by providing small loans to the rural women, empowering them to lift themselves out of poverty.

**Tanya Bharda**, who is pursuing Women's Studies at University of Toronto, continued the discussion on the importance of education by speaking from her experiences with NGOs in India, addressing issues that the Indian girls are facing with parents being a barrier for not allowing girls to attend schools.

**Mani Rao**, a health consultant from Chicago, covered the health challenges of malnutrition, teenage pregnancy, infertility and lack of health education faced by women, children and infants in Kharel, Gujarat.

**Rayomond Dinshaw**, a Law student from Queen's University, Ontario, Canada put together the panelists' presentations.



The picture of the entire FEZANA team taken at the entrance of the Religions for Peace Office on the 9th floor of the Chruch Building, 777 United Nations Plaza -- just before the team went to the Drew Room in the basement to present the workshop on 10 March 2014 **L-R:** Havovi Bharda, Tanya Bharda, Nurelle Mehta, Homi Gandhi, Mani Rao, Afreed Mistry, Rayomond Dinshaw, Behram Pastakia. Not in Photo :Nina Mistry



# Personal Profiles

**Dr ZINOBIA MADAN, PhD, MAMS, FIMSA, FICN**  
Senior Adviser – Medical Programs & Clinical Research,  
Founder, ClinOma Healthcare

## FROM A BUDDING SCIENTIST TO A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," says Dr Zinobia. And rightly so, at age of 13, when she won *the Meritorious Science Award at Nehru Centre* from the renowned Nuclear Scientist, Dr Homi Sethna, that was her first step in her scientific journey.

Selected by Mumbai University at 19 to undergo in depth training in research at National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, & joining Jaslok Hospital for a career as a biomedical scientist with PhD awarded in 1991 in cardiovascular research were some of her distinguished accolades very early in life.

Almost 25 years in the Pharma industry, she made significant contributions in areas of clinical research, medico marketing, regulatory, medical writing, pharmaco vigilance and headed big research and medical teams in leading multinational & Indian Pharma companies. Her last position in Pharma Industry was as Medical Director, Abbott Ltd, where her role involved heading all these functions of India teams.

On September 23, 2013 she was awarded the Membership of The National Academy of Medical Sciences, (MAMS), a Fellowship of the International Medical Sciences Academy (FIMSA) & was made a (Fellow of the International College of Nutrition (FICN).

Dr Madan is also the Director of "Jivo Parsi", the Government of India, Ministry of Minorities, Central Sector Scheme for Containing Population Decline of Parsis in India (see page xxx)

Currently in addition to being an Independent Adviser to Pharma Industry, through her venture **ClinOma Healthcare**, Dr Madan has been promoting the keys to healthy living, emphasizing the importance of **'Adding Years of Healthy Life.'**

On February 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, Dr Zinobia Madan was felicitated in New Delhi at a function organized by The Indian Solidarity Council in association with **International Institute of Education & Management** with two prestigious awards,



**"Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award for Innovations in Healthcare"** in recognition of her overall multifaceted contributions to the Healthcare field, in the field of research, keen involvement in guiding & executing several research projects, spearheading medical launches of several new products including Nutritionals, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnological, as a woman entrepreneur for introducing the Lifestyle Medicine concept through a Clinic approach, at ClinOma Healthcare & for imparting knowledge to groups of individuals on advantages of healthy living and how it is achievable by right lifestyle practices.

**"Jewel of India" Award for Landmark Contributions in Healthcare.** was conferred in recognition of her innovative social & medical contributions to the Healthcare field. She introduced the Lifestyle Medicine concept by her new venture ClinOma HealthCare, wherein patients with diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, cancer and several other lifestyle related diseases receive counselling on diet, exercise, yoga and extended care approaches. In conjunction with these approaches, the patient is also advised to continue the medicines prescribed by their physician / specialist. These lifestyle approaches are aimed to improve the health of our population and also importantly reducing the economic burden by reducing or eliminating high treatment costs incurred by patients later.

In her journey of success, she feels she has a truly great life, travelling worldwide, meeting inspiring people and studying newer scientific fields of interest. Living her dreams while working for society, more importantly, she enjoys every bit of her work thoroughly.

## BIRTHS

Zaara Zubin Tantra, a girl, to Zubin and Zenobia (IL) on June 27, 2013.

Zaosh Damania, a boy, to Nozer and Meenaish Damania (New Jersey) on September 4, 2013.

Darreis Tristan Molto Panthaky, a boy, to Rahnuma Panthaky and Michael Molto, grandson to Jal and Meher Panthaky and Yvonne Molto and Lynden Grey in Los Angeles, CA on September 18, 2013.

Zoey Olivia Zubin Major, a girl, to Zubin and Andrea Major, granddaughter to Farida and Jimmy Major (South Florida), niece to Rumi Jimmy Major on December 18, 2013.

Darius Cama, a boy, to Dixie and Kaizad Cama, grandson to Nilufer and Nevil Kadwa (Modesto, CA) and Mehru and Lovji Cama (New Jersey) in New York City on December 26, 2013.

Aidan Arjani, a boy, to Mandy and Neville, brother to Joshua, and Grandson to Mehroo and Minoo Arjani (Hamilton) and Linda and Gene Beauchamp (Brockville) in Ottawa on January 17, 2014.

Parisa Anosh Doctor, a girl, to Anosh and Monaz Doctor, granddaughter to Adil and Yasmin Doctor (Toronto, ONT) and Tehmtan and Benifer Engineer (Mumbai, India) and great granddaughter to Ferdoon Behramsha Doctor (Mumbai, India) on February 19, 2014.

Katie Damkewala, a girl, to Jamshed and Nazneen Damkewala, granddaughter to late Parvez and Daulat Damkewala (Delhi, India) and Erach and Roda Vandrewala

(Mumbai, India) in Redmond, WA on February 26, 2104.

Darius Burzeen Karanjawala, a boy, to Burzeen and Tina Karanjawala, grandson to Kamal Mehta & the Late Kersi Mehta (Willoughby Hills, OH) and Eruch & Lily Karanjawala (Santa Maria, CA) in Houston, TX on March 13, 2014

## NAVJOTES

Annika and Bianca Vesuna, children of Farokh and Binaifer Vesuna (New York) in Mumbai, India on November 23, 2013.

Zarin Immermann Nowrojee, daughter of Eruch Nowrojee (New York) and Janet Immermann in Mumbai, India on December 1, 2013.

Shania Irani, daughter of Farhad and Nina Irani (South Florida), granddaughter of Jerroo and late Soli Irani and Aloo and late Behram Khajotia, sister of Cyrus, Darius and Karina on December 26, 2013.

Natasha Dinshaw, daughter of Nina and Bomi Dinshaw (New York), sister of Dilshad in Mumbai on December 31, 2013.

## WEDDINGS

Nevil Cursedji, son of Farida and Phiroze Cursedji to Ava Patel, daughter of Katie and Ervad Pervez Patel (New York) in Mumbai, India on December 5, 2013.

Arzan Bhagat, son of Percy and Meher Bhagat (BC, Canada), to Roxenda Tavarria, daughter of Homeyar and Neena Tavarria in Mumbai, India on December 24, 2013.

Tuzar Irani, son of Nargish Irani to Jasmin Mehroin, daughter of Fariborze Mehroin and Nerges Behjat in Toronto, ONT on December 28, 2013.

## DEATHS

Peter Patel, 80, husband of Daisy Patel in South Florida on October 22, 2013.

Goolu Roy Minwalla, 81, wife of Rohinton (Roy) Minwalla, father of Aderbad (Andy) Minwalla (San Ramon, CA) and Asfandiar Minwalla (Karachi, Pakistan), grandfather to Zara Minwalla in Karachi, Pakistan on November 4, 2013.

Jehangir Bejan (JB) 94, husband of Lydia, father of Claudia Tata Maxey (NJ) and Irene Tata (Washington DC), grandfather of Elizabeth Maxey, Sophia and Elena Kotschoubey in San Francisco, CA on November 7, 2013.

Behman Sethna, husband of Freny Sethna, father of Framroze, Shireen and Gulshan in New York on December 3, 2013.

Golkhandan Yazdgerdyan, 84, wife of Faram Godrej Irani, mother of Sohrab Irani, Dolly Bakshai, Rustom Irani, Darius Framrose, Roshan Irani and Kashmiri Torki, grandmother of Firoozeh, Shiraz, Fowzia, Darayus, Farah, Manijeh, Romin, Natasha, Roxana and Ryan in San Diego, CA on December 20, 2013.

Bomy Boyce, husband of late Dina Boyce, father of Jamsheed (Ottawa) and Phee Vania (Markham), and grandfather of Alison Boyce and Diana Vania, in Toronto on December 23rd, 2013

Mani Sam Haveliwala, wife of Sam Nouroz Haveliwala, mother of Sheroy (Yasmin) Haveliwala (Missouri City, TX), Yazdyar (Neena) Haveliwala (Karachi, Pakistan) and Behroze (Burjise)

# M I L E S T O N E S

as of April 1, 2014

- Bhada (Karachi, Pakistan), grandmother of Kevin, Fram, Natalya, Zal and Naomi in Karachi, Pakistan on December 27, 2013.
- Rustomji Katrak, husband of late Vera Katrak, father of Kamalrukh (Cyrus Edul Karkaria) Katrak (IL), Aban Katrak, Cyrus Katrak, grandfather of Rohaan Cyrus Karkaria on December 29, 2013.
- Roda Elchidana, 76 years, mother of Annahita (Jehangir) Jasavala (Northern California), grandmother to Navaz Jasavala and Rohini (James) Chitwood in Belgum, India on Dec 30, 2013.
- Goola Hoshang Mavalwalla, mother of Soonoo (Daraious) Billimoria and Nari (Perviz) Mavalwalla, grandmother of Xerxes Billimoria, Pakzaad, Sam and Jamshed Mavalwalla in Mississauga on January 5, 2014.
- Katy Jimmy Sidhwa, wife of Jimmy Pestonji Sidhwa, mother of Freddy and Meher Sidhwa on January 10, 2104.
- Shirin (Silla) Behziz, Wife of late Ardeshir N. Behziz, mother of Farokh (Viloo), Aspandiar, Sanober (Prakash) and Tanaz (Farrokh Bhandari, Toronto, ONT), grandmother of Zubin, Mahnaz, Manasi, Chandan and Khushnum (Toronto, ONT) in Pune, India on January 19, 2014.
- Dinoo Burjor Engineer, mother of Khurshid Yezdi Mehta (New York) and Maharukh Katrak, grandmother of Mrinalini Nair and Sherazad Mehta and Temilyn and Darius Mehta, great grandmother of Zane and Zia in Mumbai, India on January 21, 2014.
- Piroja Mogel, 101, mother of Behroz and Jehan Kasad (New Jersey) in Mumbai, India on January 20, 2014.
- Goodarz Rashidi, father of Homa Rashidi (Azarkeyvan) and grandfather of Nima and Negar Azarkeyvan, in California, on January 27th, 2014.
- Ardeshir Dastur, 78, husband of Renate, brother of Nergez Mehta (Mumbai) and uncle to Dilnavaz (Oregon), in Toronto on February 1, 2014
- Arnawaz Ardeshir Patel, 73, wife of Ardeshir Maneckshaw Patel, mother of Maneck (Anahita) and Nashman (Khusmede), daughter of late Eruchshaw and Jerbanoo Mehta (Ajmer, India), sister of Nari and Shernaz, grandmother of Natasha, Binaiyesha, Tanya, Jessica and Shanaya in South Florida on February 5, 2014.
- Judith Guenther, 76, mother of Megan, mother-in-law of Hormuzd Katki, grandmother of Rashni and Aban, in Kensington MD, February 11 2014.
- Nariman Jijina, 82, husband of late Jer Jijina, father of Sanaya Jijina and Dina Jijina, brother of Minoo (Aloo) Jijina (Los Angeles, CA), Homi Jijina (MI), Jiji Jijina (New Delhi, India), Dhun and Firoz Madon (Mumbai, India), Nerghis Kalyaniwala (Hyderabad, India), uncle of Khushrow and Corrine Madon (Waukesha, WI), Vispy and Selena (CO), Darius and Ashi Jijina (New Delhi, India), Cowsie and Janice Jijina (New York), Sam and Khurshid Jijina (India), Jereer and Viraf Kalyaniwala, Kayomarz, Rayo and Ryan Jijina (Seattle, WA) in Elmhurst, IL on February 12, 2014.
- Soonu Mistry, age 85, daughter of Goolbai and Nawroz Mistry, sister of Late Dinshaw, late Saker, late Veraf, late Rusi, Dara (Vancouver), Homai (Toronto,) Roshan (Saskatchewan) Arnavaz (U.K.) aunt of Yezdiar Kalyanivala died in Montreal, QC on 15th February 2014.
- Coomi Jassawala, mother of Rusi Jassawala in Queens, NY on February 20, 2014.
- Soli Irani, husband of Jeroo Irani, father of Farhad (Nina) Irani and Farrokh (Khushnam) Irani (South Florida), grandfather of Cyrus, Darius, Karina, Shania, Farah, and Natasha, in Mumbai, on February 24, 2014.
- Lily Dara Behrana, 80, mother of Nilufer (Kaika) Clubwala, grandmother of Rashna and Deena in New York on February 26, 2014.
- Dhunmai Cowasji Antia, mother of Ervad Jamshed (Arnavaz) Antia (IL), Roshan and Rusi Antia in Navsari, India on March 6, 2014.
- Firoozeh Manochchhri, 83, mother of Homa Jamshidi (Montreal) in Yazd, March 15, 2014.
- Jahangir Mobed Goshtasb Oshidari, 93, husband of Iran Taj Mobedshahi Oshidari, father of Noushin Oshidari Hemati, Shirin Hemati, Herman, Nariman Oshidari and Houman Oshidari, in Northern California, on March 18, 2014.
- Purvez J. Dholoo, 81, husband of late Lily P. Dholoo, father of Daisy (Rohinton) Randelia (New York) and Meher (Salim) Lokhandwala, grandfather of



## M I L E S T O N E S as of April 1, 2014

Alisha, Farah and Friya, in Mumbai, on March 19, 2014.

Dina Dara Hataria, mother of Behrooz (Mehroze) Mistry, in Toronto on March 21, 2014.

Dara Jamshed Hormasji, father of Dhun Kaiyan Kaikobad (Durham, England)

Meher Feroze Cawasji mother of Hoshang Hormasji (California, USA) in Karachi on March 22nd 2014.

Freny Mistry (Chinimini), 106, mother of Zarin Aspi Bharda (ZAGNY), and Nergis Jimmy Balsara, and grandmother of Shahveer Bharda, Spenta Bharda and Firoozeh Wilson, in New Jersey on March 23rd 2014.

Renate Dastur, 79, wife of late Adi Dastur, in Mississauga, Ont, March 30, 2014

Nergaze Unwalla, 88, mother of Jamshed (Khorshed Vakil), New Jersey, Zenobia, Pervez, grandmother of Ayana , in Pune, on March 31, 2014.

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**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](mailto:RRRivetna@aol.com).**

Female, 32, doctorate in Psychology (Psy.D), licensed psychologist living in Charlotte, North Carolina. [Fairbornwsu@gmail.com](mailto:Fairbornwsu@gmail.com) . [F13.23].

Female, 27, BS (Information Technology), living in the US, hobbies include traveling, listening to music, hanging out with friends, and cooking. Seeks suitable boy, preferably residing in the US. Contact [kanbawa18@zoomtown.com](mailto:kanbawa18@zoomtown.com). [F13.60a].

Female, 23, BA (History/English Lit), with Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism. Working at an international magazine in Mumbai. Enjoys traveling, photography, music, reading, movies. Interested in meeting an educated boy (preferably Athornan) between ages 25 to 30. Willing to settle in either Mumbai or North America. Contact: [nershahr@gmail.com](mailto:nershahr@gmail.com). [F14.05].

Female, 28, 5' 6", tall, fair, working as Credit Analyst in a financial institution in Canada. Interested in meeting someone from North America. Contact [zaar32@hotmail.com](mailto:zaar32@hotmail.com). [F14.08].

Female, 28, 5' 3", MBA (Information Systems) from US University, working for Deloitte in USA. Open to settle anywhere; invites correspondence from well-educated and settled boys. Contact [khushbuh66@gmail.com](mailto:khushbuh66@gmail.com). [F14.12].

Female, 36, BA (Economics). Working in Canada, in travel industry and also as pastry chef. Interested in arts, music. Contact [maazbin@hotmail.com](mailto:maazbin@hotmail.com). [F14.13].

Female, 39, with law background, currently studying for a Masters degree, residing in Australia. Enjoys reading, traveling, cooking, different cuisines, sports and theater. Interested in meeting man who is caring, down-to-earth, enjoys traveling and has a good sense of humor. Contact [dils74@hotmail.com](mailto:dils74@hotmail.com). [F14.14].

Male, 40, 5' 10", MS, MBA, Engineer and Project Mgr working in California. Good natured, kind, hard working, very thoughtful and caring; well-read with a good sense of humor and a variety of interests -- sports, music, movies, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Born and brought up in USA. Contact [ams21@outlook.com](mailto:ams21@outlook.com) or 208 297 4184. [M14.15].

Female, 33, beautiful, from reputed, affluent Parsi family. MBA (Finance), working in Mumbai. Enjoys music, traveling and reading. Parents invite correspondence from well-placed family of similar status. Contact [parsimatch@yahoo.com](mailto:parsimatch@yahoo.com). [F14.17].

Male, 31, good looking, from reputed, affluent Parsi family. MBA (Marketing), working in a software company in Mumbai. Hobbies include music, traveling and swimming. Parents invite correspondence from well-placed family of similar status. Contact [parsimatch@yahoo.com](mailto:parsimatch@yahoo.com). [M14.18].

Parents of 26-year old girl, Doctor by profession, currently doing her final year MD (Pharmacology) at Talegaon, near Pune at Maharashtra Institute of Medical Education and Research (MIMER), seek matrimonial alliance from well educated, well settled, good natured boys. She believes in simple living and high thinking, is fun loving at the same time spiritual. Enjoys movies, international travel and playing piano. If interested please send complete details along with a photograph to [sbwedding1987@yahoo.in](mailto:sbwedding1987@yahoo.in) or contact 91-9867612083 (Mumbai) or aunt in Boston at 781-248-1316. [F14.21]

Female 30, well-educated, Masters in Management Information Systems. Currently working in the US. Enjoys travelling, music, reading and the outdoors. Looking for well-qualified, educated man. Contact [mahruk@outlook.com](mailto:mahruk@outlook.com) . [F14.22].

**Looking for a Soul Mate? Try these matrimonial sites and services:**  
[www.chaalokaajkariye.com](http://www.chaalokaajkariye.com) (new website, launched in 2011)  
[www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com](http://www.Matrimonial.Zoroastrianism.com)  
[www.zoroastrians.net](http://www.zoroastrians.net)

[www.TheParsiMatch.com](http://www.TheParsiMatch.com)  
[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com); [www.ParsiMatrimony.com](http://www.ParsiMatrimony.com)  
[www.ParsiShaadi.com](http://www.ParsiShaadi.com)  
[www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com](http://www.MatrimonialParsiZoroastrianism.com)  
**Mrs. Gool Banaji, Parel, Mumbai, [goolpesi@gmail.com](mailto:goolpesi@gmail.com), tel: 91-22-2416 6120.**



## ADI DASTUR – Obituary

Globe & Mail – 1st Feb. 2014.

**Ardeshir Rustom Dastur** passed away on Friday, January 17, 2014 after a valiant struggle following complications of strokes. Leaving his loving wife Renate, his sister Nergez Mehta, Mumbai – and niece and family in Oregon, United States.

Ardeshir (known to everyone as Adi) was 78 years old and was born in Mumbai India on November 2nd 1935, where he obtained a BSc degree in 1955. Then he moved to Toronto and earned his BASc and MASc in 1958 and 1960 respectively, from the University of Toronto.

He Joined the Canadian 'Atomic Energy of Canada' to begin his long and outstanding career in nuclear engineering until he retired in 1995 and continued as an Engineer Emeritus. He earned many awards from the nuclear industry and other engineering organizations and societies in recognition of his many outstanding contributions, which are documented in over 100 journal publications and scientific reports.

He was the reactor physicist par excellence at Sheridan Park, the one that everyone wanted to consult about every project. Adi had a very deep, instinctive understanding of all the subtleties of reactor physics. He was therefore always sought out for

his insightful opinion on difficult questions.

Adi loved to apply his skills to improving reactor-physics methods. He was the developer of the CERBERUS computer code to stimulate for the first time at AECL spatial kinetics in 3 dimensions. CERBERUS is still – after all these years – the Standard Industry Tool for kinetics calculations.

Why did he call it CERBERUS? Well, of course, in reference to CERBERUS, the 3-headed dog guarding the gates of Hades in all 3 spatial directions.

Under Adi's direction huge computer decks were prepared to run the first version of Cerberus on the old mainframe computers. Adi also developed the MULTICELL method to determine the incremental cross sections of reactivity devices.

Adi would have had many opportunities if he wanted to go into management. But he steadfastly insisted on remaining in the technical area. Adi analysed the Chernobyl accident and published the shocking conclusion that the Chernobyl shutoff rods actually worsened the accident – instead of arresting or mitigating it – by inserting positive reactivity into the perturbed neutron flux during the accident!

Adi had a passion for forward-looking studies, with the help of the analysts in his section on improvements to the standard CANDU fuel cycle – from the use of enriched fuel to update reactor power

to showing how CANDU can be used to achieve much more burn up from used LWR fuel, to simulating actinide burning in CANDU reactors.

Professionally he travelled widely, Japan, Korea, Russia, Chernobyl (Ukraine) and all European Universities and Institutions.

Adi was honoured with the prestigious Outstanding Achievement Award, which was presented to him by the Canadian Nuclear Society in 1994.

He had many interests besides Physics. Together with Renate he loved theatre, opera, museums and travel. He also was an excellent cook.

He joined the Royal Conservatory of Music for piano lessons in the 90's and became interested in building a Harpsichord. He finished the wooden case but a stroke hindered his progress to insert the strings attached to the key board. He was very approachable, carried an inviting pleasant smile. He was a gentle, lovable, positive, happy man. He will be sorely and dearly missed by all those who knew him particularly by many of his close friends and his beloved wife.

Funeral home service was overflowing with Toronto Parsis & AECL scientists from Sheridan Park.  
- E. Kanga.

**RENATA DASTUR, HIS  
BELOVED WIFE DIED  
MARCH 30, 2014**



**BOMY BOYCE, past president of World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) died December 23, 2013 at age 83.**

Mr. Bomy Boyce passed away on December 23, 2013 at age 83. Born in Mumbai, India, he was married to Dina Bilimoria and was the father of Jamsheed Boyce and Phee Vania and grandfather of Alison Boyce and Diana Vania.

He held senior leader positions in Killicks and IBM, where he was highly respected and his experience and expertise were constantly sought. He started his own company and espoused a global business environment years before others did. His vision helped companies expand internationally and facilitated technology and knowledge transfer across continents.

A firm believer in giving back to the community, he helped establish the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, and was one of its first presidents. Recently, he was the worldwide President of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce. In both roles, he strove to better our community's profile and prospects. His creativity and contacts led to securing the participation of Zoroastrian titans for the 2007 North American Zoroastrian Congress – an innovation subsequently continued by others.

Passionate about helping people and organizations, he helped youngsters fund their education, find jobs or start their own businesses. Regardless of his health or the inconvenience, the difficulty or the expense, he intrinsically believed that any opportunity to help was an obligation to help.

Passionate about helping people and organizations, he helped youngsters fund their education, find jobs or start their own businesses. Regardless of his health or the inconvenience, the difficulty or the expense, he intrinsically believed that any opportunity to help was an obligation to help.

Bomy spent much time in both Canada and India. He loved to travel and developed a warm, worldly sophistication. He was a global citizen, comfortable anywhere in the world and could always make a recommendation for a restaurant or hotel in any city. However, he was happiest in Mumbai eating Parsi food, hosting friends at the Willingdon Club or Bombay Gymkhana and visiting his favourite restaurants. He had a tradition of entertaining with style and graciousness, enjoying the company of good friends.

Throughout his schooling and boy-scout days, his travels around the world, his professional life, his community service, his charity work and his social circles, he developed friendships that spanned his lifetime. Equally comfortable with dignitaries or the ordinary person, he formed an instant bond with them by recounting an anecdote about his time in their country or finding something in common. He was a gifted raconteur and enthusiastically shared stories of happy memories and exciting adventures with long-time friends.

Bomy had an indomitable spirit, limitless compassion and an unending enthusiasm for life. He had boundless energy and he was always up for a challenge. Even during his illness he never took the easy way out. As people remember him before -- and through -- his illness they speak admiringly of his intellect and accomplishments.

Self-sufficient, strong, ethical, compassionate and giving, he continued the Boyce legacy of leadership and service. He was the son of Jamshed Boyce, who provided lifelong service to the community through his extensive years with Bombay Dyeing and his care of the Baugs. Bomy left his mark on his children, who, through their professions and community involvement, are constantly helping others. Whenever they get a compliment, in their personal or professional lives, their immediate and sincere response is, "My mum or dad taught me that".

**BOMY BOYCE**



# Obituary

## Richard Frye

1920-2014

Richard Frye, Harvard's Aga Khan Prof. of Iranian Emeritus (1957-90), passed away Mar. 27, aged 94. A friend of the Zoroastrian Community and the greater Iranian Community, he made an immense contribution to Iranian studies, which has been recognised worldwide.

Richard Nelson Frye the doyen of Iranian Studies in North America and in a long and illustrious career had authored or edited some 15 works on Iranian history, historical geography and archaeology. His 1946 doctoral dissertation at Harvard was on the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* [History of Bukhara]. His memoirs were published in 2005 entitled, *Greater Iran: a 20th-century Odyssey*. Besides teaching at Harvard (1948-90), Frye also taught at Habibiya College, Kabul (1942-44), Frankfurt University (1959-60), Hamburg University (1968-69), Pahlavi University of Shiraz (1970-76) where he also served as Director of its Asia Institute (1970-75), and the University of Tajikistan (1990-92). Frye was the founder of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard.

Before WWII, he had studied Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, Sanskrit, Italian and Armenian. Frye spoke Persian, German, Russian, Pashto, and French. After WWII, he came to SOAS and studied, alongside Mary Boyce, Avestan, Old Persian, Pahlavi and Sogdian with W. B. Henning in 1946-47.

His book "The Heritage in Persia" published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1962 as part of their History of Civilization series is still considered one of the best introductory books on the history of ancient Iran, which Prof Frye had dedicated to his Iranian friends (Afghans, Baluchis, Kurds, Ossetes, Persians, Tajiks).

Frye had delivered the Government Fellowship

Lectures at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), Mumbai in 1965. The preceding year he was part of the American delegation which attended the 26th International Congress of Orientalists, New Delhi, 1964. His last visit to India was in 1991 when he delivered two talks at the KRCOI as part of its year-long platinum jubilee celebrations. Frye had also arranged for Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal's sabbatical at Harvard's Centre for the Study of World Religions in 1979-80. Dr Kotwal jointly taught with William Darrow a course at Harvard on Zoroastrian rituals and observances. Kotwal's collaborative edition with Professor James Boyd of the *Erbadistan ud Nirangistan: Facsimile edition of the manuscript TD* (Cambridge MA, 1980) was published in the Harvard Iranian series under the editorship of Frye.

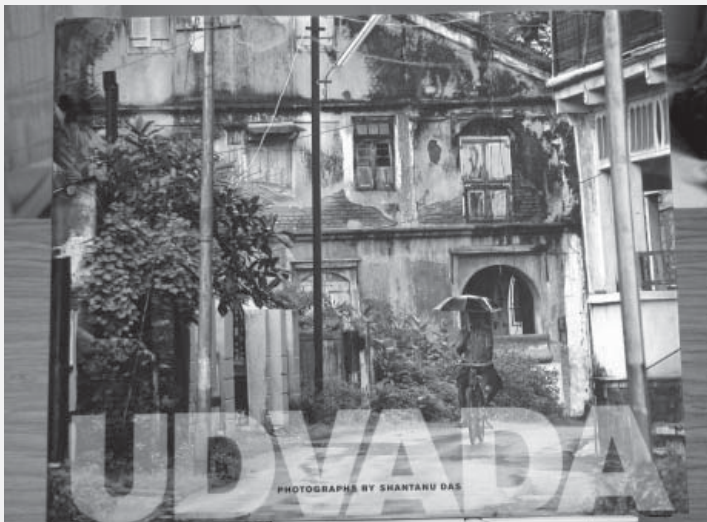
The late Ali Akbar Dehkhoda had given him the sobriquet *Irاندوست* or friend of Iran. In his last years, Frye had expressed in his will that he be buried by the Zayandeh river in Isfahan. The administration of President Ahmadinejad administration had approved this request in September 2007.

**Information received from Malcolm Deboo, President ZTFE, and reported by Burzine K Waghmar, Centre of Iranian Studies, SOAS, London University Doctorand, Iranian and Central Asian Studies,**



**UDVADA PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHANTANU DAS****152 pages, Rs 2000, (\$34)**

Published by Spenta Multimedia

Available at Parsiana Book Shop at [website.parsiana.com](http://website.parsiana.com)Available at FIRES [www.fires-fezana.org](http://www.fires-fezana.org)**REVIEWED BY ERVAD SOLI DASTUR.**

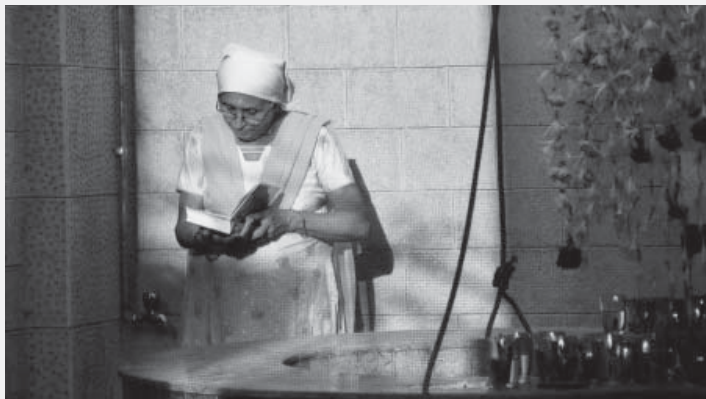
This beautiful book – Udvada, Photographs by Shantanu Das, is a resplendent photographic coverage of our amazing Udvada village where Pak Iranshah Atash Behram resides with radiance and glory. It is a keeper for all Zoroastrian generations! Commissioned by Parvez Damania, in dedication to his beloved brother, Vispi Damania, designed, printed and published by Maneck Davar's Spenta Multimedia with the generous help from The House of Godrej, this 152 page, 2,000 Rupees book by Shantanu Das brings back wonderful memories, awe inspiring reverence, and rapture and sadness in one wonderful package! I met Shantanu Das at the Mumbai World Zoroastrian Congress last December and was very impressed by his love and respect for Udvada and his zeal and perseverance to follow his art of photography!

**SO YOU WILL ASK: "WHAT IS MY CONNECTION WITH UDVADA?"**

Since Sunday October 28 1742 – some 272 years old! I am the 19<sup>th</sup> descendent of Dastur Khurshed Dastur Kamdin who brought Iranshah to Navsari from Vansda and my fore fathers came to Udvada in 1742 together with the Sanjana leaders Dastur Bhikha Dastur Rustom and Dastur Rustom Dastur Sheriyar! My father Ervad

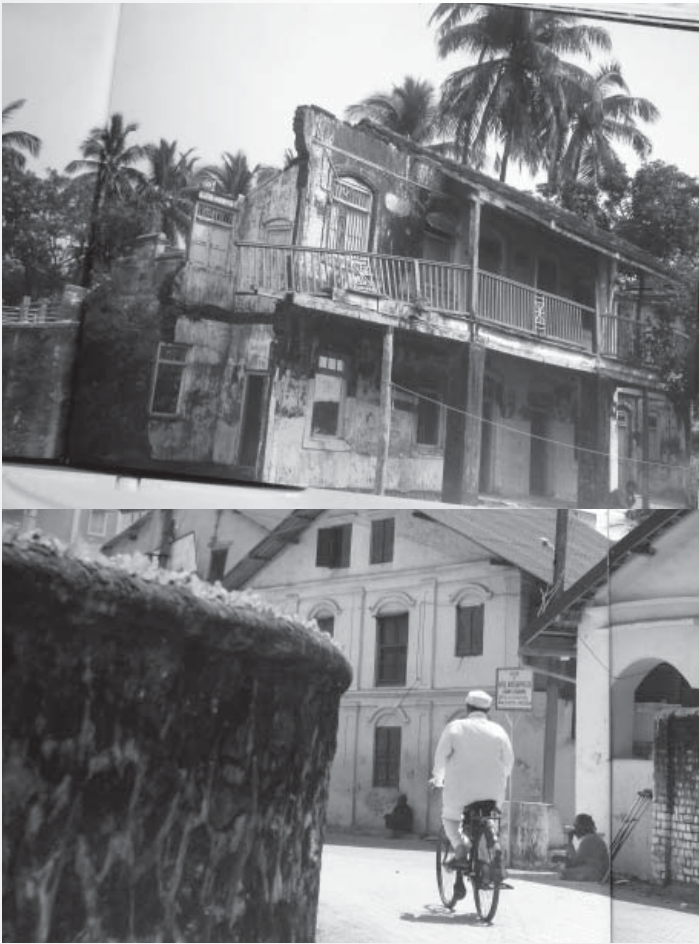
Pirojshah Dastoor went to Tarapur to serve as a Mobed and married the Panthaki's daughter and later became the Panthaki of Tarapur. Most of us eleven siblings were born in Tarapur. However, our connection with Udvada remained unbroken because of my father performing Iranshah Boi ceremony, as well as a number of our aunts and uncles living in Udvada whom we often visited.

Once a year during our vacation in May we visited our Kakaji and Kakiji in Udvada Station Wadia Dharamshalla where Ervad Jamshedji Dastoor was the Manager. Every morning, after our bath, we children were ready to pay our respects to Iranshah and if we were lucky, we even got to sit on the rumble seat of our Kakaji's big De Soto limo. After attending our wonderful M. F. Cama Athornan Institute and passing the exams, I was ordained Navar and Martab in Iranshah Atash Behram at the age of 13. My brother Palanji and I stood together in front of two Vada Dasturjis and over 60 Yozdaathregar Mobeds in the Atash Behram hall for the final oral Saamel exam required to perform Iranshah Boi and higher liturgical ceremonies. So, when you flip the pages of this Udvada book,



you ask: **"Where have all the Mobeds gone?"** Historically, in a photo of the Iranshah Osla (verandah) and terrace by a National Geographic photographer in 1905, there are over 100 practicing Mobeds in the photo. And even during my Navar, Martab and Saamel time, the whole Atash Behram was teeming





with Mobeds and all *Yazashne Gah Hindhoraas* were occupied for Yazashne ceremonies! You had to stand in line to get a Hindhoro to perform a Yazashne! Today, if you are lucky you might be able to see a Yazashne performed in Iranshah!!!

So, the book also shows that as the Udvada Mobeds have gone, the Udvada village is also going! Look at the forlorn streets, dilapidated heritage homes, shuttered doors and windows, and the future of this historic, beautiful village is in jeopardy! Wake up you Parsis and Iranis and save these homes from being erased for erecting high rise condos in their place!

### STOP RIGHT THERE!

What about the beautiful side of Udvada presented in these photos also by Shantanu Das? Where would you find Mobeds sitting in their Sadra on the Hichkaa (swing) on their Otlā (verandah), or a woman sitting in front of your home selling vegetables, fish, etc., or a Dasturji drawing water from a well within his home for cooking Chokhkhā dishes for ceremonies, or four Vada Dasturjis sitting side by side out in the

open listening to Gujarat Minister Narendra Modi in Udvada, or a Mobed cycling from home to the Pundole Adarian, or a Parsi lady weaving Kusti on her Otlā, or a devotee absorbed in his prayers at Iranshah, or the beautiful reflections of heritage homes in the monsoon puddles, or a beautiful ornate pre Independence time balcony with “Chotlaavaali Queen” (Queen Victoria with braids), or panoramic views from up above of the roof tops of heritage homes, or a chef preparing delectable Parsi Gahambar lunch for over 2,000 hungry Parsis/Iranis on an open fire, or a Gahambar Pangat with over 200 people served simultaneously, or a cow coming all the way to your Otlā to get some food, or bakeries galore preparing all kinds of biscuits and sweets, or the delicious Doodh (milk) puffs unique to Udvada on a brisk winter morning, or the torans and torans, and garlands and garlands and Divas and Divas all over, or Maathu-baanu clad ladies feeding Varasyaaji, or a 1895 vintage Railroad station, or a lush greenery from the tree tops during a monsoon downpour, or a beautiful orange red sunset on the Udvada Beach!

Where else you will see all of these? Only one place: in this amazing Shantanu Das Udvada Photographs book of 152 pages for 2,000 rupees (about \$34, less than a dinner for two)! I am all wrapped up in this nostalgic book and I hope you too will rush out and buy one for you and may be for your grandchildren!



*Ervad Soli Dastur looking at the book during the Mumbai Congress. On his right Katayun Kapadia, President of FEZANA on left Behram Pastakia, Chair, Publications Committee, FEZANA*

**Photographs courtesy Shantanu Das**

## THREADS OF CONTINUITY

The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving

By Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala with Shernaz Cama

Published in 2013 by the Parzor Foundation

Pages 152; Rs 1,200 Order from [www.unescoparzor.com](http://www.unescoparzor.com) or available at Parsiana Store, Mumbai. ISBN 978-8191095715

Available at FIRES [www.fires-fezana.org](http://www.fires-fezana.org)

Reviewed by Yasmin Pavri

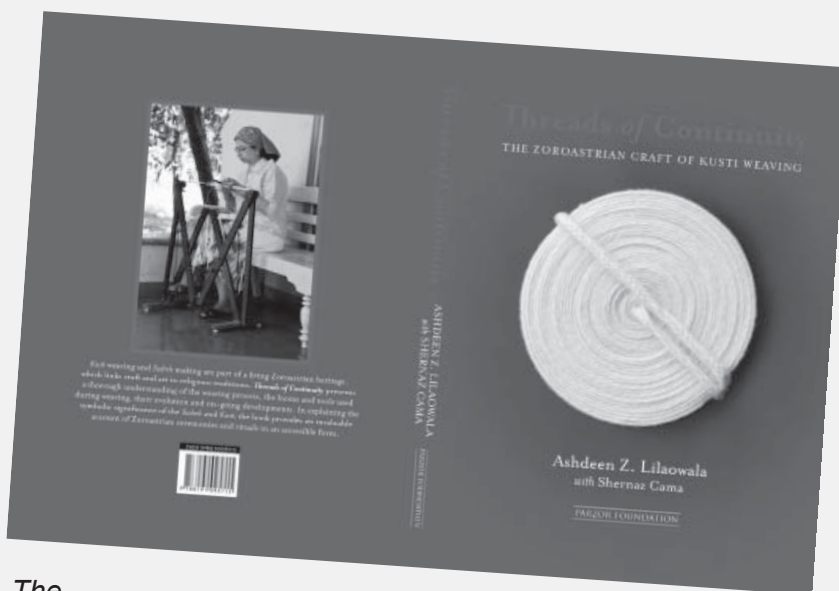
The book was launched by Lord Karan Bilimoria at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress, December 2013, Mumbai.

FEZANA partnered with PARZOR in publication of "Threads of Continuity".

I grew up in a family of Kusti weavers and know how difficult and painstaking it is to make those prized "jeeni" (thin) Kustis. Unfortunately I did not take the time and patience to learn this craft myself but my interest was piqued by subtitle: *The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving*. I was eager to read how well the author portrayed the intricacies of the craft of Kusti weaving. The subtitle however, greatly understates the scope of the book. True to the title, Ashdeen Lilaowala has included many more "Threads of Continuity" that bind our microscopic community together - our many rites and rituals are all included in this very readable book.

As Ashdeen Lilaowala stated in an interview with Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly, the book started as project of UNESCO and Parzor to study and document Kusti weaving in Iran and India. The project was part of his Textile Design Education Program at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. As he researched his project he realized that it was vital to understand not just the craft of making a Sudreh and Kusti but "the importance of these ancient symbols in the larger religious and ethical context of Zoroastrianism". Ashdeen's training as a textile designer comes through in the visual beauty of his book from the striking red cover, to the lavishly illustrated pages.

The first chapter, titled ***Symbols of the Faith***, describes the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism. It talks about the Gathas (Hymns), the 72 chapters of the Yasnas, and



the Khordeh Avesta, the compilation of prayers for daily use. The author states: *The Dadistan - i- Dinik explains that while the "sacred thread girdle was worn before the coming of Zarathust the Spitman", it was "he who provided the religious formula the Nirang-i-Kusti with which to tie it". The text also describes its partner garment, the sudreh or Vonumank vastra, garment of Vohuman, "destructive of the Power of Destruction - obstructive of the way to sin".* The author notes that while the Parsis have changed their language, dress and food habits to assimilate into India, the sudreh and kusti remained a constant "core armor".

In an interesting bit of research, we learn that in the Yasna ceremony when the priest ties the barsam with a strip of the date palm it symbolizes the bond of unity or *Aiwyaghana*. The word comes from the Avestan *Aiwi* 'round about' and *yaongha* 'to put on'. The same word is used in the Avesta to symbolize the Kusti.

The chapter titled ***Rites of Passage*** describes the rites as practiced by traditional Parsis in Navsari and Surat. The chapter talks in great detail what each ceremony is for, what it symbolizes and what you need to do for each rite. It starts before birth and takes you through pre and post pregnancy ceremonies, early childhood



ceremonies, the Navjote ceremony, the pre wedding and wedding ceremonies and finally ceremonies after death.

It is not till Chapter 3 that we finally get to the Kusti, which is derived from the Pahlavi 'Kust' meaning "direction or side" i.e. points you in the right direction. It is a fascinating read through the section that as it

steps before a kusti is ready to wear. Again the book has detailed pictures on each step along the way to a completed kusti. The next time you hear someone complain about how expensive Kustis are, ask them to learn the process and see if they agree that they are worth the price.

The last section describes the making the typical Parsi



describes the symbolism inherent in every facet of the construction of the Kusti such as the 72 threads, made up of 6 sections of 12 strands each. The next sections describe the various steps in the process: spinning the wool into a fine thread, double plying the thread for strength, the very intricate process of setting up the warp threads and finally the weaving process. There are very detailed pictures of each step for those who are interested in learning how complicated the process is. Even after the weaving is done there are many

Toran with pictures of very spectacular designs.

I applaud the author for his detailed descriptions of the Rites of Passage and especially his painstaking research and description of the very complicated craft of Kusti weaving. This book is a must read for anyone interested in Parsi *Rit-Rivaj*.

**Photo Credit**

**Ashdeen Z Lilaowala, Parzor Foundation**

**Yasmin Pavri** is a long time resident of Houston, TX. She has served in several capacities on the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) Executive Committee and is currently on the ZAH Library Committee and on the Operations Committee of the FEZANA Information Research Education System (FIRES).



## PARSI BOL

Insults, entertainment and other Parsi Gujarati phrases

Compiled by Sooni Taraporevala and Meher Marfatia

Translated by Rutu Manekshaw

Illustrations by Hemant Morparia & Farzana Cooper

Pages 168; Rs 500 Published 2013: Good Books; 49/50 Books

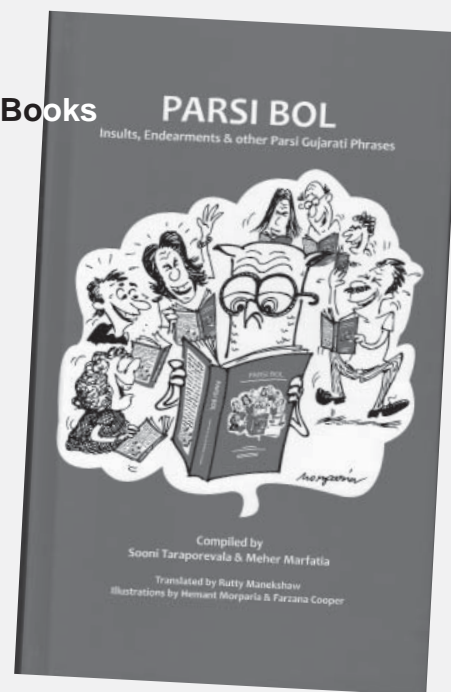
Reviewed by Aban Daboo

Available at FIRES [www.fires-fezana.org](http://www.fires-fezana.org)

Any time you are in the mood for nostalgia, a good chuckle, recalling family members or want to take a pass on the “Ellen Degeneres Show” get your hands on this unique contribution of Parsi Bol by Sooni and Meher. Every chapter brought back memories of some of my “maasees” and “fuijees”, (maternal and paternal aunts) neighborhood aunties and uncles. Memories of growing up in a Parsi colony with full exposure to all things Parsi – including our unique and titillating language. Parsi Gujarati is not an official language you learn academically – it is a timeless oral tradition. There is no grammar or text book. No language rules as per English or French or German... we Parsis just “TALK”! Most of our non-Parsi friends always find our language very sweet. My Gujarati and Bohri friends always tell me “*tameh Parsi-o vaat karo te bahu mithoo lagey ne automatically hasvoo aavey*”. I remember the first time my Gujarati friend heard me say “dahi naa kar” - she just went into giggles!

The contents are categorized into separate chapters – food, twin words, anatomy, money, nature.....each with its unique set of input from contributors from all over the world. Most of them were familiar to me and some were new ones – bringing a smile and a giggle. Even today we always say “*bhejoo naa khaa*” when we want someone to just SHUT UP. My personal favorite was the Twin Words chapter. “*Jaaro Padero*” (fat slob), “*Eskee Meskee*” (dressed fancy), “*chingo mingo*” (sly) to name just a few. “*Kasaaree na kaan*” (sharp ears) brought back memories of my office friend in Mumbai. If some managers were talking in low voices near my desk my friend (sitting two desks away) would say, “*Aban, kasaaree thaa*” meaning listen to what they are whispering in order to hear some confidential news. Unfortunately, as soon as she asked me to become “*kasaaree*” I would go stone deaf, could not hear a single word and irritate my friend!!!

The cartoons are tremendously funny especially the



one on page 103 of a busty woman admiring herself in the mirror and a “bawaji” smiling at her - the phrase... “*jetla motta tela khotta*” (all that glitters is not gold). Hemant and Farzana have done full justice to the cartoons at the beginning of each chapter and little caricatures amidst the various contents. It brought back memories of Bawaji cartoons by Mario Miranda. He had the unique ability to capture the true essence of all things bawaji! Today some of them are exhibited in Café Mondegar near Regal cinema.

My only wish is the title could have been more catchy... more “*dumdaar*”....something like “*Bawaji’s Bakvaas*”, or “*Parsi Bolbaalaa*”, or “*Parsi Patpataaro*”. The compilation is truly a labor of love and kudos to Sooni and Meher for this joyful reminder of our heritage to pass on to our future generations. It must have taken a whole lot of patience to collect all the contributions, compile them, get translations, categorize the chapters. In fact, I was most pleasantly surprised to see my name in the list of contributors. How coincidental is that! If you are looking to gift a friend for any special occasion this would be an ideal choice– short and sweet. Or, on a spring afternoon make a cup of “*fudina-ni-chai*” (mint tea) along with some “*Surti batasaa*” (savory cookies) get comfortable into an “*eejee*”

chair (arm chair) and relax for some quiet nostalgia and some “kheekhee-khakha” (laughter) on your own.

**ENJOY!!!**

***Note from the Editor***

***Sooni Taraporevala has been conferred the Padma Shri Award 2014 by the President of India on the occasion of the 65<sup>th</sup> Republic Day, in the category Art-Script Writing, Maharashtra.***



The advertisement for xpert tours features a world map background with a vintage airplane flying over it. The text 'xpert tours' is prominently displayed in a stylized font. Below the map, the tagline 'Your xperts in business & leisure travel.....' is written. A paragraph describes their services: 'We make packages for families & large groups... So let us plan for you. Have fun on a Cruise, a European, South American or China tour.' This is followed by four small images: a cruise ship, a gondola in Venice, a city skyline, and the Taj Mahal. The bottom section lists 'AIR FARES • CRUISES • PACKAGES' and 'In Business Since 1983'. It concludes with a call to action: 'Call today or visit our website for SPECIAL\$ 281-491-4000 www.xperttours.com'.

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## Barons of Banking – Glimpses of Indian Banking History

**Author: Bakhtiar K. Dadabhoy**

**Foreword by Yezdi H. Malegam**

**Published by Random House India in 2013, 478 pages; Rs 599**

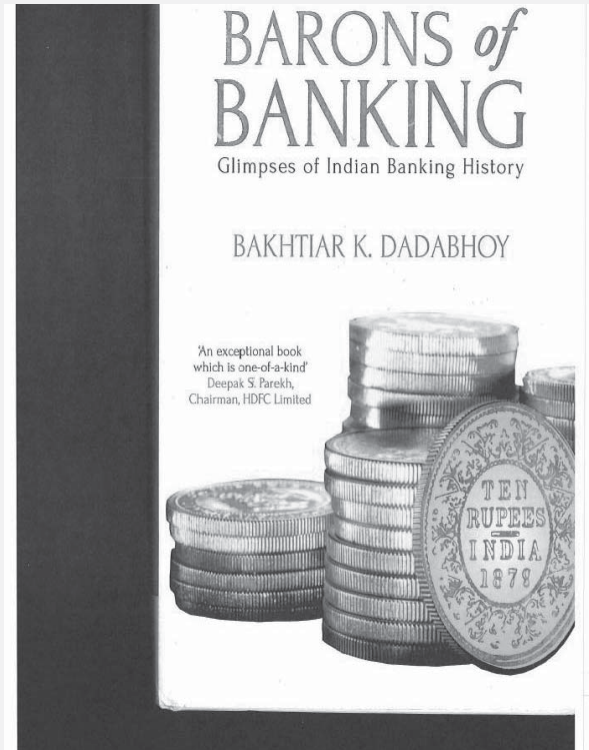
**Reviewed by Pheroze Austin.**

Author Bakhtiar Dadabhoy has succeeded in delivering both a scholarly and an entertaining chronicle of India's pioneer Bankers in his newest book, *Barons of Banking*.

It's a unique read because the book crisscrosses between a heavy, laborious academic treatise in economics and early monetary policy in India circa 1873, and a light and temperamental account of the personalities of the great men who formed these same policies.

Dadabhoy's previous works include titles that are standard fixtures in most Parsi households; *A Life of JRD Tata* and *Sugar in Milk: Lives of Eminent Parsis* among them. And as is the case in these books, Dadabhoy repeats his exceptional skill of writing a duteous historical account of a very broad and deep subject, down to the sometimes painful narrative of a Bank's budgetary control systems (Book III, *The Talwar Years*).

Because the book covers such a broad spectrum, it is divided into four books, each with its own prologue; an uncontested requirement as most readers in Asian and North American markets of my generation (aged 40) would be hard pressed to step into the waters of Indian currency, Development Banking and Sterling Balances without some contextual framework. Each book covers one or more of the six men featured in the book, along with its own corresponding banking/policy legacy. Such as in Book IV, Ardeshir Darabshaw Shroff is featured in the context of the committee that he chaired that made possible the formation of a business development bank called the Industrial Development Corporation (now known as IDBI). And as history goes, few meaningful events ever occur in complete isolation of other significant historical moments and so it is not uncommon for the reader to reunite with early



characters such as when Indian Central Banker Chintaman Deshmukh, featured in Book II, appears in Hasmukh Parekh's Book IV (development banking). This continuity element to the story line is expertly well-written and allows the reader to finish the book with a sense of being comfortably encapsulated for the subject time period (1860-1970).

At 423 pages, the reader must be ready to make a medium-term commitment or at least agree with one's spouse to be absent from family life for a few days. In his 19-page introduction (more context), Dadabhoy encourages the reader to regard the book as a reference source rather than a novel and in the same introduction, calls the book a "brief history of banking in India". That said, the book reads and *feels* like a complete history of the development of Indian Banking. As a Banker, I appreciated the history lesson (more on this later), but I truly prized the vibrant description of the larger-than-life personalities that built India's modern day banking system.

You don't have to be a Banker to appreciate this book, though you may have to drag yourself through some of the more dense profiles of each sub-book. For example,



in book II, Part I, Dadabhoy describes the Hilton Young Commission. Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, eminent businessman who began his career in cotton trading, who served in India's legislative assembly and defended Indian interests against meddling British influences, served gallantly on this Commission in 1925-1926. The author, who himself has a strong background in economics, devotes no less than ten pages to the context and details of the statutory market ratios of Rupees to Gold.

While this Commission was monumental to the stabilization of the Rupee, this reader was overwhelmed, and I think that most lay-people would be equally (temporarily) overcome.

I think that Dadabhoy was working up to Thakurdas' "Minute of Dissent" in which this brilliant man stood up to numerous other influential British-centric committees on the same subject of paring the Indian Rupee. The story here was of a humble man, tokenized and underestimated by his British peers, rising up when the time came to defend an appropriate gold to Rupee rate that served Indian interests first and foremost above the interests of the British colonial powers. But to do so, Dadabhoy engages several long statistical chapters that apply some drag to the captivating human story at play here.

There are far too many story lines in this book to describe in these limited lines. But I have some favorites. Notably, the story of Sorabji Pochkhanawala, the founder of the Central Bank of India. If you're reading this review, you know too well the financial crisis of 2008 and the American banking debacle that led to it. And had the Bankers from 2008 read Pochkhanawala's story from 1913, it's hard to believe a banking crisis would have occurred. This is not to say that because the Central Bank in 1912 was considered "one big happy Parsi family" that a banking crisis could not have occurred, but consider this: Sorabji's most enduring legacy to India's early banking system was to steadfastly maintain "far greater liquid positions than necessary", even if it meant downward pressure on earnings. The idea of a *self-imposed* (and respected) 10-12% tier-one capital ratio is completely foreign to most bankers in 2014. Or the fact that Sorabji's long-term view of his role as a banker was to first and foremost supply credit to small businesses that would in turn bolster the economy when most bankers of the era were focused solely on hoarding deposits. Sorabji

wanted Indians to adopt what Dadabhoy calls "the Banking habit"; the introduction of cheque books, safety deposit boxes (made by Godrej, of course), and access to a national retail banking network. Sorabji believed in robust and transparent banking revenues from this type of activity above all, for all Indians. Contrast this philosophy to current day banking where megabucks can be earned (or lost) on billion dollar megadeals or sales of investments the likes of precarious subprime commercial paper.

There are times when I could hardly believe the biographies and the accomplishments of these characters. Take, for instance, AD Shroff in Book IV. Dadabhoy describes him as "one of the architects of free India's industrial development". Moreover, that there were "few fields in the economic life of the country" in which he *did not* inspire. Can you think of any people in our era with such extensive influence? Shroff was the first Indian apprentice at a London-based bank. He was educated at the London School of Economics. He championed free enterprise in India when the prevailing winds suggested that Indians couldn't do it for themselves. Shroff was the Chairman or Director of over fifty companies. I considered for a moment that Dadabhoy might have embellished the biographical or anecdotal stories of these personalities, but then I read the how Shroff discovered the remarkable Nani Palkhivala. Palkhivala is not himself featured in the book, but it was Shroff who asked Palkhivala to take his place and deliver post-budget speeches as part of his desire to exemplify strong business values with the survival of democracy itself. In my younger years, and every time we traveled to India, my Gran would make a point of visiting Mr Palkhivala at his home in Mumbai. The walls of his home were layered in photos of Palkhivala with personalities such as the Queen of England, Prime Ministers and Presidents from the G20, and, of course, AD Shroff. So I know firsthand that Dadabhoy's account is undoubted.

This book will be of use as a reference and of interest as a story to virtually any reader, equally among people with and without finance backgrounds. I strongly recommend it and consider Dadabhoy's purpose of the book beautifully achieved.

***Pheroze Austin, is a corporate banker in Montreal .***

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# FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (FEZANA)

**FEZANA Office:** 8615 Meadowbrook Dr., Burr Ridge, IL 60527

**Administrator:** Zenobia Damania [admin@fezana.org](mailto:admin@fezana.org) tel 630-468-2705

**Registered address:** 5750 South Jackson Street, Hinsdale, IL 60521 USA

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

## FEZANA OFFICERS

**President:** Katayun Kapadia, 33, Preamble Drive, Mt Laurel, NJ 08054, Tel 856-722-1030 [kkatayun@msn.com](mailto:kkatayun@msn.com)

**Vice-President:** Homi D Gandhi, 704 Harristown Rd, Glen Rock, New Jersey, 07452, Tel 201-445-3917 [homidgandhi@gmail.com](mailto:homidgandhi@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Nilufer Khushroo Shroff, 8, Highgate Lane, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003, Tel 856-489-0123 [fezanatreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:fezanatreasurer@gmail.com)

Saghar Javanshir-Behrooz, 4709 Seafarer Court, Flower Mound, TX. 75022, Tel 214-455-7572 [sjbehrooz@verizon.net](mailto:sjbehrooz@verizon.net)

**Asst. Secretary:** TBA

## FEZANA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

**Zoroastrian Association of Alberta, (ZAA):** President: Hosee Karanjia [Hosee.karabjia@nov.com](mailto:Hosee.karabjia@nov.com) [zaacalgary@gmail.com](mailto:zaacalgary@gmail.com)  
ZAA Rep Neelum Austin 316-30 McHugh Court N.E. Calgary, Alberta T2E 7X3  
Tel 403-271-1273 [bapajji@shaw.ca](mailto:bapajji@shaw.ca)

**Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC):** Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, 8900 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2R5, Tel: 604-420-3500, President: Fariborz Rahnamoon; Tel 604-986-2077 [fariborzr@hotmail.com](mailto:fariborzr@hotmail.com)

**Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation (OZCF):** 4244 Taffey Crescent, Mississauga, ON L5L 2J2, President Firdosh Bulsara Tel 905-824-7692 [president@ozcf.com](mailto:president@ozcf.com)

**Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO):** Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2M 3S6, Tel: 416-733-4586, President: Bina Behboodi (acting) [president@zso.org](mailto:president@zso.org)

**Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ):** President: Dolly Dastoor, 3765 Malo, Brossard, Que, J4Y 1B4 Tel 450-656-2036 [dollydastoor@sympatico.ca](mailto:dollydastoor@sympatico.ca)

**California Zoroastrian Center (CZC):** 8952 Hazard Avenue, Westminster, CA 92683, Tel: 714-893-4737 [info@czc.org](mailto:info@czc.org)  
President: Shiva Khorshidian; Rep Dr Sohrab Salamatipour tel 949-640-7612 [salamatipour@yahoo.com](mailto:salamatipour@yahoo.com)

**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](mailto:nazehler@aol.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) President:** Tehmi Damania, 1424E Walnut Avenue, Orange CA 92691 Tel 949-583-9973, [tdamania@zacka.org](mailto:tdamania@zacka.org)

**Persian Zoroastrian Organization (California) (PZO):** 10468 Crothers

Road, San Jose, CA 95127, Tel: 408-272-1678, President: Delbar Jahanian [delbarj@yahoo.com](mailto:delbarj@yahoo.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Rocky Mountain (Colorado) (ZARM):** President: Neville Rustomjee, [Neville\\_rust@hotmail.com](mailto:Neville_rust@hotmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc. (District of Columbia and Washington DC suburbs) (ZAMWI):** President Navroz Gandhi [zamwi\\_president@yahoo.com](mailto:zamwi_president@yahoo.com); Rep Shehraz Verahrami Tel 301-355-8460 [sverahrami@yahoo.com](mailto:sverahrami@yahoo.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Florida (ZAF):** President: Furrokh Irani, Tel: 305-281-0971, Address: 16586SW, 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Miramar, FL 33027 [firani@aol.com](mailto:firani@aol.com)

**Atlanta Zarathushti Association (Georgia) (AZA):** Representative: Cyrus Aidun : Tel 404-894-6645 [Cyrus.aidun@me.gatech.edu](mailto:Cyrus.aidun@me.gatech.edu); Farzan Bharucha, President, [farzan.bharucah@kurtsalmon.com](mailto:farzan.bharucah@kurtsalmon.com)

**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](mailto: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](mailto:djahanian@gmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana (ZAKOI):** President: Bakhtavar Desai Tel 5130829-7818, [bfdesai@aol.com](mailto:bfdesai@aol.com) [www.zakoi.org](http://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](mailto:aspidengineer@gmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Michigan (ZAOM) President:** Shernaz Minwalla 16040 Mountain Side Drive, Macomb Township, MI 48042 Tel 586-216-3341 [Siminwalla@gmail.com](mailto:Siminwalla@gmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania, New Jersey & Delaware (ZAPANJ):** President: Havovi Jokhi, 207 Avonwood Rd, Kennett Square, PA 19348 Cell : 302-753-6904; Res 610-925-3905 [hjokhi@yahoo.com](mailto:hjokhi@yahoo.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (NY City Area) (ZAGNY):** 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY 10901, Tel: 845-362-2104, President Astad Clubwala 973-238-0630. [clubwala@aol.com](mailto:clubwala@aol.com)

**Iranian Zoroastrian Association (New York City Area) (IZA):** 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY 10901, Tel: 845-362-2104, President : Shirin Kosravi, Tel: 212-757-1679, [sherrykiamane@hotmail.com](mailto:sherrykiamane@hotmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA):** President : Sarosh Sepai, Tel 724-234-2228 [president@za-pa.org](mailto:president@za-pa.org); [secretary@za-pa.org](mailto:secretary@za-pa.org)

**Zoroastrian Association of North Texas (Texas) (ZANT):** President Keshvar Buhariwala Tel 972-898-8991 [keshv@msn.com](mailto:keshv@msn.com) rep Sherazade Mehta; [sherazadem@yahoo.com](mailto:sherazadem@yahoo.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Houston (Texas) (ZAH):** 8787 West Airport Blvd, Houston, TX 77071, Representative: Roshan Sethna, Tel 713-856-9359 [rosh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rosh@sbcglobal.net)

**Zoroastrian Society of Washington State (ZSWS):** President: Afshin Sepehri [info@zswa.org](mailto:info@zswa.org)

## FEZANA CORRESPONDING MEMBERS (SMALL GROUPS)

**Zoroastrian Association of Atlantic Canada (ZAAC):** President Firdaus Bhathena [bhathena@gmail.com](mailto:bhathena@gmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Arizona (ZAAZ):** President: Jamsheed Mehta Tel 602-243-1311; [jamsheed@yahoo.com](mailto:jamsheed@yahoo.com)

**San Diego Zoroastrian Community:** Chair: Hoshang Khambatta, Tel: 858-450-0190, [khambatta@sbcglobal.net](mailto:khambatta@sbcglobal.net)

**Central Florida Zoroastrian Community:** Chair: Sarvar Demehri, Tel: 407-767-9799, [1sarvar@gmail.com](mailto:1sarvar@gmail.com)

**Zarathushti Association of Tampa Bay (ZATAMBAY):** Chair: Soli Dastur, Tel: 941-351-2240, [dastur@comcast.net](mailto:dastur@comcast.net)

**Zarathushti Association of New Orleans: (ZANO):** Chair: Rohinton & Armin Tarapore, Tel: 504-443-1929, [rktarapore@cox.net](mailto:rktarapore@cox.net)

**Minnesota Zoroastrian Community:** Chair: Jehangir Rudina, Tel: 952-898-2980, [jerudina@aol.com](mailto:jerudina@aol.com)

**St. Louis Zoroastrian Community:** Chair: Persis and Minoo Mehta, Tel: 314-569-1828, [pmhelix@yahoo.com](mailto:pmhelix@yahoo.com)

**Cleveland Zoroastrian Community:** Chair: Kamal Mehta, Tel: 440-944-1181, [knmkersi@aol.com](mailto:knmkersi@aol.com)

**Zoroastrian Contact in Austin Texas:** Ketty & Aspi Wadia, Tel: 512-263-3131, [kettywadia@gmail.com](mailto:kettywadia@gmail.com)

**Zoroastrian Association of Virginia: (To be ratified):** chair: Romy Mohta, Tel: 804-639-6977, [richtrvl@aol.com](mailto:richtrvl@aol.com)



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