

JOURNAL

Dae –Behman – Spendarmad 1383 AY (Fasli) • Amordad – Shehrever – Meher 1384 AY (Shenshai) • Shehrever – Meher – Avan 1384 AY (Kadimi)

Ritual Implements In The Zoroastrian Tradition





FEZANA JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

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SPRING 2015
North American Zoroastrian Congress
SUMMER 2015:
Transmission of Zarathushti Values

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A Word from the Editor

DO WE KNOW OUR RELIGIOUS RITUALS?

2014 is ending on a positive uplifting note of the North American Congress. It took months of hard work by a group of dedicated Zarthushtis to deliver a sold out congress. Bravo. Awards were given to outstanding Zarthushtis of whom you will read in the Spring issue.

Through out the year we also had small melodies to soothe our mind and heart. The Summer issue of the FEZANA JOURNAL on Zoroastrians of Central Asia whose genesis was our trip to that part of the world gave us some historical and cultural background on the evolution and development of our religion. With renowned academicians contributing, the issue was much in demand with all our copies sold out. We had the visit of Dasturji Khurshed Dastur, Kersee Kabraji and Sarah Stewart to enlighten us on the different aspects of the religion. President Katayun has been working tirelessly promoting the FEZANA strategic plan. Both she and Roshan Rivetna were awarded the Community Service Award at the Enterprise Dubai in December. Our vice president Homi Gandhi continues to make inroads into the Interfaith community travelling to Seoul, S. Korea as an invitee of World Alliance of Religions for the Peace Summit. Our young Zarthushtis also blaze trails at the UN.

At the WZCC meeting in Dubai, Zarthushtis of North America won all the Global awards for 2014. Edul Davar of New Jersey won the Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Nina Godiwalla, the 2014 Professional of the Year Award. Shirin Kumaana-Wadia (a Parsi Khabar co-founder) won the 2014 Young Professional/Entrepreneur Award.

The Washington Dar e Mehr became a reality, and ZAGNY and IZA broke ground for a new Dar e Mehr as the existing premise was getting too small for their growing community.

The \$1.6 million Government of India Jivo Parsi program has produced some results with their invitro- fertilization program. It has also produced ads which has had mixed reaction from the community, especially the women, but I will leave that for you to judge. At least it got Al Jazeera and Wall Street Journal talking about the Zoroastrians!



But the saga of the BPP and the trustees continues, money disappearing, money found, staff resigning, law suits pending, all making front page news to the embarrassment of the community.

The winter issue is an extension of the FALL issue on Ghambars. In this issue we look at the different rituals, religious and social which we perform and the religious implements used to perform those rituals. It is guest edited by Firoza Punthakey Mistree of the ***Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*** and ***Across Oceans and flowing silks, From Canton to Bombay 18th - 20th C....***exhibitions fame. In earlier discussions with her it became apparent that there are many aspects of the rituals of which we are not aware. Many of us think of a ritual as a mobed sitting and reciting prayers for a jashan or wedding or funeral, some of us consider it “mumblings”. Some of us are more respectful but do not understand the significance. So we decided to look into the why and whereofs of the rituals a bit more deeply. We often hear of the word “Alat”, but do we know what it means, what it signifies?

What is a ritual? The broad definition of a ritual is a ceremony or action performed in a customary way. Your family may have a Sunday lunch ritual of Pizza and beer. But that is not the ritual we are exploring. The English word Ritual derives from the latin “ritualis” which pertains to rite, or *ritus*, (the correct way of doing things), in Sanskrit *rita* (visible order) the lawful order of the normal, and therefore proper, natural and true structure of cosmic, The word “ritual” is first recorded in English in 1570, and came into use in the 1600s to mean “the prescribed”. But what makes a

Editorial

ritual sacred, or spiritual? Is it the activity itself ? the location, the purpose. It is probably all three. A ritual can become sacred when it is performed in a special context and is intended to have a sacred meaning. (adapted from Wikipedia)

Ervad Gustad Panthaki sets the tone by describing the Yasna ritual and religious implements used, Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary describes the religious ceremonies performed in Iran as well as the places of worship. Firooza Panthakey Mistree talks of the ceremonies performed in India. Dastur Kotwal elaborates on the significance of the Holy Fire and Ervad Hathiram describes the making and sanctifying of the Afarganyu. Sarah Stewart follows this with a rendition of the **Atash nu Geet**. Prof Jamsheed Choksy writes on the symbolism of Gurz (mace) in the Zoroastrian religion, Prof. James Russell draws the connection between Zoroastrians and Russians. Qamar Adamjee, an associate curator at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco writes about a rare collection of a silver bowl gifted to the Institute.

Could it be a Mukta bowl? Emeritus Professor Shaul Shaked of Hebrew University talks of Magic in Zoroastrianism.

There are two pieces by Ervad Jehan Bagli and Khojeste Mistree on the bridge between the performance of rituals and spirituality. Does one lead to the other? On a lighter note we talk of the shops in Mumbai and Iran which sell sukhad, sapats and other religious implements. Finally Prof Richard Foltz, describes his visit to Kurdish region of Turkey and his experiences there with the Yezidis

I take this opportunity to wish each and every one of our readers a very happy and healthy 2015
I thank you for your support for without you there will be no FEZANA JOURNAL.

Best wishes



Yasmin Kevala

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A Message from FEZANA President

Editorial

Dear Zarathushtis

Greetings and Best Wishes from the FEZANA Family to You and Yours in 2015. Let us begin the New Year with love and understanding towards all Zarathushtis worldwide as well as all humanity and live in peaceful harmony.

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) was formed 27 years ago. Its founding principle was that each member association retained its autonomy for its bylaws, rules, guidelines, and customs. *It is this local independence that is the cornerstone of the successes and strength of FEZANA.* Women and men have equal status in all things religious, cultural, and social where it comes to FEZANA. **That is our overarching principle.** Individual associations located continent wide also follow an ethos of inclusion rather than exclusion, with slight variances, some tending to be more liberal, others tending to be more traditional.

As an umbrella organization, FEZANA supports and strengthens these basic principles with programs and activities, all with an eye to inculcating our core religious, social, and cultural ideals in the generations that grow up here. Regular bi-annual Congresses (Los Angeles in December 2014) showcase the rich and varied accomplishments of our communities. FEZANA's support of programs for youth, be it *Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYNA)* or initiatives such as the *Zoroastrian Return To Roots Program* -- a PARZOR initiative -- shows the commitment to investing in our youth and providing them with the right tools and value sets to become future leaders of our community.

FEZANA maintains a collaborative approach towards other Zoroastrian associations in India and around the world, respecting their autonomy while at the same time coming together to celebrate our commonalities. In that collaborative and cooperative spirit, FEZANA has been an active participant in the Global Working Group (GWG) of the worldwide Zoroastrian organizations.

FEZANA and its member associations have supported the teaching of our religion, history, and culture to the community children for decades. There are associations in North America where the second generation of children are now attending religion classes, many of them in the same Dare Mehr buildings their parents attended as kids. A new religious curriculum was released by FEZANA's Religious Education Committee at the XVII North American Zoroastrian Congress in Los Angeles on December 29, 2014. Visit www.fezana.org for more details.

With technology enablers such as social media, video chat programs and instant messaging, the world is today a global village. Let us continue to encourage our youth to



attend religious classes, learn about their roots and meet up at World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses. FEZANA has always encouraged inclusiveness at all levels, including the two diverse cultures of Iran and India. Parsi Zarathushtis celebrate Mehregan and Yalda and other traditionally Iranian festivals and Iranian Zarathushtis join in celebrating the Gahambars and Parsi Shahenshai New Year.

FEZANA now consists of 26 member associations and 14 corresponding groups and its activities are supported by 26 committees. We are recognized as a Faith-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by the Department of Public Information at the United Nations (UNDPI) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the U.N. The FEZANA UN-NGO committee has actively participated in the annual NGO conferences and Commission on Status of Women (CSW) meetings, successfully hosting panel discussions at these events. This has also provided an excellent opportunity to North American Zoroastrian youth as well as those from India and Australia to participate at high levels of international forums

North American Zarathushti community leaders continue to represent FEZANA at many interfaith gatherings on the continent and also at international interfaith assemblies. In 2015, FEZANA Interfaith Committee will actively participate in the *World Meeting of Families* on September 22-27, to celebrate the visit of Pope Francis to Philadelphia and also at the *6th. Parliament of World's Religions* in Salt Lake City, Utah, October 15-19.2015.

Let us continue working collaboratively with our sister organizations across the globe in promoting cross cultural dialogue and nurturing the worldwide brotherhood and sisterhood of Zarathushtis in the spirit of celebrating and cherishing our commonalities and respectfully understanding our differences.

Katayun Kersi Kapadia, President, FEZANA

FEZANA

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2015 FEZANA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dates: May 1-3, 2015
Location: Greater Philadelphia Area

Hosted by

Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania & New Jersey (ZAPANJ)

Ritual Implements

The Use of the Sacred

GUEST EDITOR Firoza Punthakey Mistree
Zoroastrian Studies

This issue of the FEZANA JOURNAL centres on the many ritual implements used by Zoroastrian priests, the existence of which is often taken for granted by those attending the rituals. The phrase “sacred implements” or the commonly used term *ālāt*, is applied in a broad sense, by practising priests- who view a whole range of objects connected with rituals, to constitute apparatus of the faith - as can be seen from the articles in this issue. Thus from sudreh, kusti, stone tables, the mortar and pestle, nirang, fire ash and vase, are all seen as sacred *ālāt*.

Zoroastrian ritual implements are said to be characterized by sacredness, when the implements are being used in a ritual by ordained priests. The implements are used by the priests to facilitate the ritual, endowing it with sacredness and *amal* (a ritual power) while in use.

A ritual is generically described as a series of gestures, accompanied by prayers and following a prescribed set order which when completed, renders the person, object or libation pure and sacred. The validity of a ritual and its effectiveness is subjective and its spiritual significance is cherished by the worshipper for whom, the ritual serves as a vehicle, through which the divine is propitiated and an intangible link with the divine is established. For those who view rituals as being ‘man made’, or view rituals as acts perpetuated for and by the priests to undermine the faith, may perhaps wish to consider that a religion sans rituals of any kind, remains in essence a philosophy and falls short of being a religion in the accepted sense of the word.

Historically, the earliest known image of a priest wearing a *padan* (a mask covering the mouth and nose) and holding a ritual implement i.e. Barsam sticks are to be found engraved on gold plaques from the Oxus Treasure (sixth to fourth century BCE, *photo left*). The appearance of ritual implements as decorative motifs on ossuaries such as the seventh century Mulla Kurgan ossuary (see FJ Summer 2014, *photo right*) is fascinating. It shows priests standing before a fire altar, wearing the *padan* and holding barsom sticks, using the exact same implements (chippy and *chamach*, ie metal tongs) which Zoroastrian priests use today,

while tending the sacred fire. Even more interesting, is the depiction of a small *afarganyu*, carved on the Northern Qi panel, funerary couch (housed at the Miho Museum in Japan, see FJ Summer 2014). The fire vase carved on the panel is in much the same shape and design as the fire vases used in the fire temples today. A third find, a seventh century stamped Sogdian ossuary in the Bishkek Museum in Khirgistan, depicts trays kept on two tripods which are seen placed on either side of an *afarganyu*, served by *padan* wearing priests. These tripod stands, with *khumcho* (trays), mirror in form and location, the two tripod stands which can be seen in the sanctum of the Banaji Atash Bahram in Mumbai. This is also reflected in an ancient Iranian tradition, as described by Mobed Firouzgary in his article. In Jenny



Rose's book, *Zoroastrianism An Introduction*, she mentions the existence of a seal found at Persepolis depicting a mortar and pestle placed on a table in front of a fire holder. A man is depicted standing before the fire holder with a bundle of sticks (baresman) perhaps performing a Yasna ritual, in which the Yazatas and the creations are propitiated with offerings, with a view to recreate cosmic harmony in the world.

On seeing such evidence in material art, some scholars may assert that the use of similar instruments within a ritual context may not, in itself, constitute confirmation of the practice of a Yasna ritual. However, the question that remains to be asked is, “*Could this all be coincidence or could it actually represent a fascinating record of the fidelity of religious transmission*”, which according to Mary Boyce, the Zoroastrians were well known for? This conundrum is for scholars and archaeologists to resolve but it nevertheless gives us a glimpse into a past long forgotten, now being slowly rediscovered. With its rediscovery, thirteen hundred years later comes perhaps an affirmation of many of our ritual practices. Objects such as a human headed mace and a silver toran (silver shield) - Dzhartepa temple, near Samarkand, (seventh to eighth century). The toran depicts the Creations in the same fashion as the ones on the sanctum door of fire temples in India. These are challenging even to sceptics, if only in similarity of form, as testified by the existence of these ancient artefacts.

We hope that the articles carried in this issue will help to illuminate the reader, about the importance and sacredness of ritual implements. The article pertaining to the use of ritual implements in fire temples in India, deals mainly with the Yasna ceremony, which every young priest has to perform for his navar ceremony. We are honoured that Dasturji Firoze M Kotwal has written in this issue, as he is regarded as the foremost expert on ritual practice and Parsi priestly history. Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary's articles on the practices as followed by the Zoroastrians of Iran, are illuminating and point to the ever harsh conditions under which the Zoroastrians have tenaciously safeguarded the spirit and practices of the faith. The readers will notice varying spellings for the same words used in different articles. This is largely due to the differences in pronunciation of the same words by the two traditions of the faith, one Iranian Zoroastrian and the other Parsi. Despite differences there is satisfaction in knowing that both great traditions stem from the same great Cypress Tree of Iran.



Firoza Punthakey Mistree works for Zoroastrian Studies Mumbai, a community based organization which disseminates information on Zoroastrianism and the Parsi community. She is the co-editor **A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture**, the world's largest visual encyclopedia on Zoroastrianism, (2002) and **The Everlasting Flame Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination and Across Oceans & Flowing Silks From Canton to Bombay 18th-20th Centuries and No Parsi is an Island.**(2013) She has authored several articles including **Zoroastrianism at a Glance** and was involved in editing the documentary **A Portrait of a Community** which visually portrays the role played by the Parsi Community in the making of 18th and 19th century Bombay. Her special interests are the costumes and textiles of Yazd and for several years, has been documenting the oral history of the Zoroastrians of Yazd.

She was a researcher and coordinator for the **Flame of the Faith**, an Exhibition, at the National Museum of Singapore (2004) and curated an Exhibition on the **Zoroastrian Faith and its Culture** in Ballarat, Australia for The Fourth World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (2007).

A founding member of the **Alliance for Religion and Conservation (ARC)** in India Firoza is a conservationist at heart and is passionate about saving trees. She is a recipient of the **Fezana Award for Humanitarian Services**, for coordinating a program to resettle displaced Iranian Zoroastrians stranded in India and Pakistan, working closely with **UNHCR** and the **Red Cross** for Vietnamese boat refugees stranded in India.

Firoza is married to Khojeste P. Mistree and they have 2 children.

Ritual Implements

THE CONTEXT AND MEANING OF ALAT

ERVAD GUSTAD M. PANTHAKI
TORONTO

Recently, the word alat is referred to the installation of consecrated fire in North America; but, with different meanings. This essay attempts to clarify and define alat.

ALAT DEFINED

Alat is an Arabic word that is used as a loan word in Persian and Gujarati, which means an apparatus or a weapon. In common parlance, alat refers to the instruments that priests use during ceremonies such as the *chippy*. However, strictly speaking, alat actually denotes implements used only in liturgical ceremonies such as the Baj, Yasna, Vendidad, and the Nirangdin.

The word *astama* is often used by mobeds when describing alat. According to J. J. Mody, *astama* is a corruption of *staomya* (Yasna 33:8)—the apparatus used in the praise of God and His Divine Intelligence (*staomi*, Yasna 26:1). Perhaps this has been taken from the Pahlavi *astameh*—fire-censer (Pahl. Vendidad 14:7).

In Avesta, alat is referred to as *zaothra*—an implement used in a ceremony and/or an offering made as part of a religious ceremony (e.g., milk, food, consecrated water (*zor*)). Alat technically includes fruits, milk, *chipiyo*, *chamuch*, fire, *sudreh*, *kusti*, *havanim*, *lalo*, *barsom*, *barsom-cin* (knife), and *varas*. In fact, even a pious mobed is considered to be an alat! The Avesta word *snaithish* (weapon), as used in *ahuno vairyō snaithish vista verethrajao*, ([Sarosh Yazata's] victorious weapon Ahunavar, Yasna 57:22) sometimes denotes alat. The Avesta word *zaya* also means weapon, as used in *amavastemem zaynam*, (strongest of [all] weapons; Meher Yasht:132) it also denotes alat. In Pahlavi, the word *abzhar* is used for alat by Manuschihar (881 CE.) who was the chief mobed of Pars and Kerman.

The number of alats depends on a ceremony or ritual being performed. In the basic *kusti-padiab* ritual, the alat is the *sudreh* and the *kusti*. The most important alat for a mobed is his *padan* (mouth-veil). So, when a mobed is not allowed to perform a ceremony, it is said that his *padan* has been taken away.

ALAT IN THE AVESTA

According to Yasna 9:14-15 and 57:22, Vendidad 19:2-9, and Yasht 17:20, the Avestan Manthra are regarded as spiritual weapons. Zarathustra was asked by Angra Mainyu (Vendidad 18:8) which word smites, which word destroys, and which well-made, spiritually-created weapon will destroy Angra Mainyu? Zarathustra answered, "*hâvanaca tashtaca haomaca vaca mazdô-fraoxta mana zaya asti vahishtem*"—"the sacred mortar, the sacred cups, the Haoma, and the Word taught by Mazda, these are my weapons, my best weapons" (Vendidad 19:9).

In Yasna 57:22 victorious Sarosh Yazata uses *Ahunavar*, *Haptan yasht* and *Fshusha Manthra*. While in *Ashishvangh Yasht:20*, Zarathustra smites Angra Mainyu by means of the weapon *Ahuna Vairya*, burning evil by means of *Asha Vahishta* (*Ashem Vohu*).

Vendidad 5:40 advises the removal of ceremonial implements (alat) from the house where a man or a dog dies, saying "*âtemca baresmaca tashtaca haomaca hâvanaca*"—the fire, the Barsom, the cups, the Haoma, and the mortar—thereby indicating that fire is also considered an alat. In Vendidad 5:40, five alat are identified: the fire, the *Barsom*, the *saucers*, the *Haoma*, and the *Havanim*.

Avesta Vendidad 14:8 contains ten instances of alat: *ashtray* (weapon), *gaoidhi* (milk sauce), *paitidana* (the padan, mouth veil), *khrafstraghna* (a weapon for killing noxious creatures), *sraosha-charana* (whip for punishment), *urnya* (vessel for myazad), *raethwish-bajina* (mixing vessel), *havana* (havanim/lalo, mortar/pestle), *tashta* (saucer/cup), *bareshman* (barsom).

The Vendidad 18:1-4 lists four alat: *padan* (mouth veil), *khrafstraghnem* (a weapon for killing noxious creatures), *barsom* (twigs/metal rod held by the mobed), and *astra* (an instrument for killing serpents).

Vendidad 19:9 lists four alat: *havanim*, the saucer, *haoma*, and manthra.

Visparad 10:2 mentions five alat: *asmana havana* (pestle and mortar of stone), *ayenghena havana* (pestle and mortar of iron), *tasta zaothra bara* (saucer for water), *vares-haomao angherejan* (strainer made from *varasia* [white bull hair for straining hoama]), and

Ritual Implements

baresmana (barsom).

Visparad 11:2 mentions eight alat: *haoma*, *haomaya* (saucer for hoama juice), *stareta* (mat, bedding), *myazad* (fruit, gift), *asmana havana* (pestle and mortar of stone), *ayenghena havana* (pestle and mortar of iron), *apa haomaya* (water mixed with hoama juice), and *baresmana* (barsom).

The Yasna 3:13 mentions nine alat: *bareshman* (barsom), *haurvata ameretâta* (darun), *gâush hudâ* (ghee), *haoma*, *para-haomemca* (a mixture of hoama twigs, pomegranate twigs, and water), *ashema* (fuel, sandal wood), *baoidhi* (fragrance, frankincense), *jîvyâm* (goat milk), and *urvarâm hadhânaêpatâm* (root of pomegranate, fuel with good fragrance).

There is a mistaken belief that thirty-three alat are used in the Yasna ceremony. This was first propagated by the author Harlez who, while extrapolating from Anquetil du Perron's translation of *thrayasca thrisâsca nazdishta pairishhâvanayô*, ("33 chiefs in proximity to Havan Gah"), surmised that thirty-three *ratus* (chiefs) must also equate to thirty-three *alat*. **K. R. Cama** pointed out this mistake, which is located in a footnote (the fourth) to the Gujarati translation of Yasna 1:10 by K. E. Kanga. This confusion may have originated from the Pahlavi interpretation of *havan*. In Pahlavi, *havan* has the dual meanings of *havanim* (mortar) as well as *Havan Gah* (second period of the day). However, in the Avesta, there are two separate words, *havan* meaning *havanim* (metallic mortar for pounding haoma), and *havani* (the time period of Havan Gah).

SIGNIFICANCE OF ALAT

The historic loss of about ninety percent of Avestan literature makes it very difficult to interpret ritual actions and the complete significance of alat.

In Zoroastrianism, all material objects in the physical world are represented and protected by the seven Amesha Spentas. In the Yasna ceremony these are:

Khshathra Vaiya (Dominion), represented by *barsom*, *mah-ruy*, and *havanim-tast*.

Haurvatat (Health), represented by water.

Ameretat (Immortality), represented by *hom*, pomegranate twigs, and date leaves.

Vohu Manah (Good Mind), represented by *varas* and *jiwam* (goat milk).

Spenta Armaity (Faith and Devotion), represented by *pavi* and stone *khuvan* (table).

Asha-Vahista (Righteousness), represented by fire, which is called the "son of God."

Ahura Mazda, represented by the priest.

When these alat are used in the Yasna ceremony, it is understood that they command the presence of the Amesha Spentas.

In ancient Iran, the Yasna ceremony was performed by eight mobeds, according to the Uzirin Gah 5, Vendidad 5:57 and 7:17, and Visparad 3:1. Presently, two mobeds perform the ceremony. In the same vein, the alat (implements) used presently are also different. Some of these historic developments are traced in the Avesta. Currently, the alat used are: *atar* (fire), *baresman* (barsom), *aiwyaonhana* (the band used to tie barsom), *havana* (mortar and pestle), *varas* (the hair of *varasya*), and *tashat* (a cup, a saucer). Figures 1 and 2 provide the overall view of the *urvisgah* (the rectangular area enclosed by pavis where inner rituals are performed) and have been sourced from *The Zoroastrian Paragna Ritual* by Firoze Kotwal and James Boyd.

"The Mystic Fire"

*I prayed before the mystic fire,
I prayed and gazed anon;
The flames they switched and leaped and
danced
And soon, as though in a golden trance,
The flames and I were one.
Gone were the sorrows of yesteryears,
Gone were the petty crippling fears;
A gradient stillness enveloped my being,
A warmth and peace beyond all reckoning,
I saw the others deep in prayer,
Their faces radiant in the ruddy glow,
And in the darkening gloom
Of that inner sacred room
I knew why, through the ages, Man
Before the fire had bowed in prayer.*

By Soonoo Engineer, 2006

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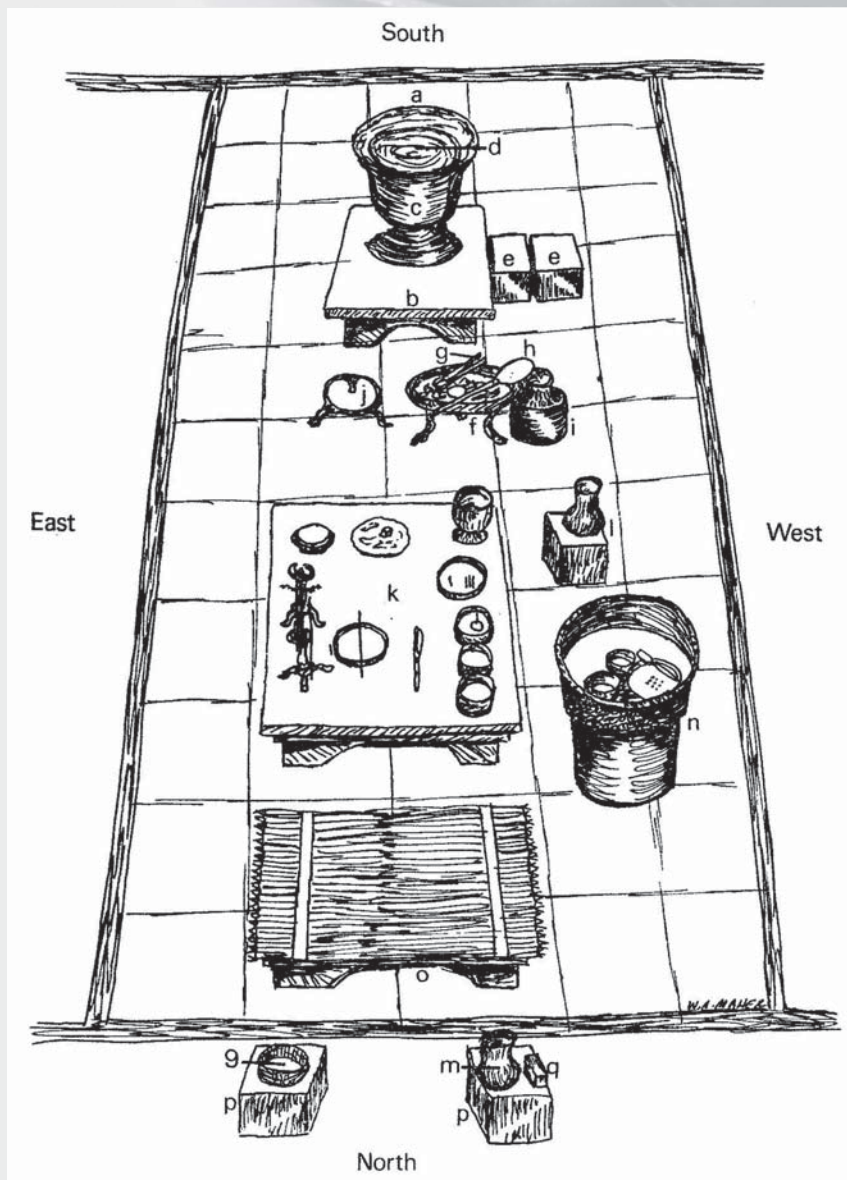


Figure 1. The yazisn-gah (urwis-gah); (a) pawi, (b) atas xVan, (c) afringanyu, (d) sarposh, (e) sang i esm-boy, (f) xVance (khumchi), (g) chipyo, (h) camac, (i) kaharnu, (j) stand for kaharnu, (k) alat-xVan, (l) karasyo, (m) karasyo (for jiwam), (n) kundi, (o) zodgah, (p) niches, (q) metal box containing hom twigs.

As a final word on the discussion of *alat*, it should be mentioned that four are treated with most prominence and importance: *nirang*, *aav* (water), *varas* (from the Nirangdin ceremony), and *bhasam* (ash from an Atash Behram's fire). This is because these aforementioned four *alat* are necessary to consecrate any new Atash Behram. Moreover, one cannot 'create' these *alat* for the purpose of the investiture ceremony of a new Atash Behram. That is to say, that one needs to 'receive' these four *alat* from existing *alat*.

The lore surrounding this belief originates from the *Kisse-Sanjan* by Behram Kaikobad, which mentions details regarding the establishment of the first Atash

Behram in India at Sanjan.

In addition, the *Kisse Zarathustiane Hindustan* by Sapurji Manecji Sanjana, notes that two *mobeds* were sent to Khorsan province in Iran to bring *alat*. A dissenting view on this practice of considering 4 *alat* of supreme importance is provided by *Kisse Sanjan A Palpable Falsehood* by B.N. Bhathena (a paper read by Jamshed C. Katrak in 12th All India Conference at Banaras, 1943-1944). One may also refer to B.T. Anklesaria who has expressed the view that the Fasli-*alat* were created without a Fasli link: "*Fasli-alat is no different than Shenshai or Kadmi*".

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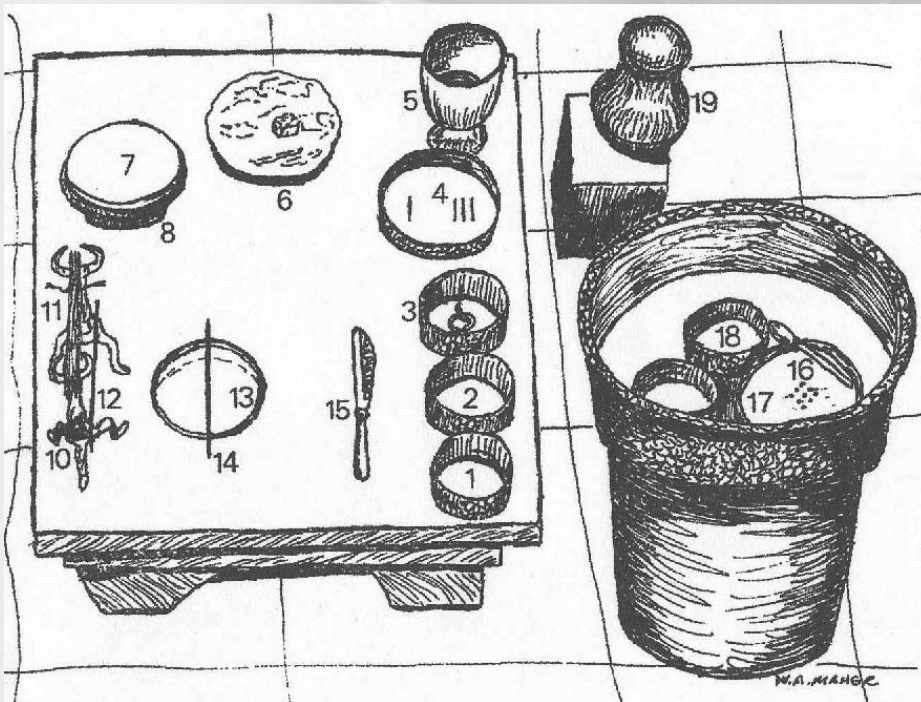


Figure 2. The alat-x^Van, indicating the position of all alat upon completion of the paragna. The view is from the zodgah facing south; (1) zohr fulyan, (2) zohr fulyan, (3) waras fulyan, (4) hom urwaram taste, (5) hawan, (6) dron taste, (7) inverted taste covering parahom fulyan, (8) parahom fulyan, (9) parahom fulyan (see fig. 1 in the niche behind the zodgah), (10) mah-ruy, (11) barsom tays, (12) (tay of mah-ruy, (13) jiwam taste, (14) jiwam tay, (15) barsom-cin, (16) pestle (dastag), (17) suraxdar taste, (18) fulyan (illustration shows two extra), (19) karasyo.

ADDITIONAL READING

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- Dastur Dr. H. K. Mirza, *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies and Introduction to Yajishne Ba Nirang*
- Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal and James Boyd, *The Zoroastrian paragna ritual*
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- Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, *The Baj-dharna (Dron Yasht)*
- Ervad Dr. Hoshang Bhadha, *33 Ala[a]ts in Nature* (viewed at <http://tenets.zoroastrianism.com/alaat33.html>)
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Gustad Panthaki was born in Udvada in 1940. He is proud of being ordained as a Navar at the Iranshah in 1952. Having obtained his electrical engineering diploma from Pune, he migrated to Canada in 1967 where he worked for Enersource Mississauga Hydro for over three decades until his retirement in 2005.

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THE YASNA CEREMONY AND THE RITUAL IMPLEMENTS USED IN ITS PERFORMANCE—A GUIDE FOR NAVARS AND MARATABS

FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE

Every year, a small number of potential young Zoroastrian priests visit Mumbai in the winter months to have their *nāwar* or *maratab* ceremony performed by ordained Zoroastrian priests in the Fire Temples of India. Mumbai is particularly important because it has two of the last surviving Zoroastrian *madrassas* (priestly seminaries where Parsi Irani Zoroastrian boys are trained as priests) and still has the largest number of Yogdathragar, Yogdathragar, priests—those priests that are skilled in the high inner rituals of the faith and who have the competence to teach, participate, and direct the rituals associated with the *nāwar* or *maratab* ceremonies.

The prospective priests come from the United States, Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore a few from the Emirates, and some from Mumbai. In recent years, two young boys from Yazd Iran, were trained at the Dadar Athornan Madressa in Mumbai. Three years ago, a young boy came from Pakistan underwent his *nāwar* ceremony; but, given Pakistan's miniscule Parsi Irani population, this is a rare occurrence.

Over the last ten years, I have had the opportunity to teach Zoroastrianism to some of the initiates who spend a month in relative solitude at the Vatchha Gandhi Agiary, prior to when they are formerly inducted as *nāwar* or *maratabs*. During the month that these young boys spend in seclusion at the Fire temple, they are trained to recite prayers by Ervad Aspandiar Dadachanji and his two sons: Hormuz and Mahraspand. Ervad Aspandiar, received his early priestly training at Navsari. During the 1950s, he served as a *boiwara* (one who serves the sacred fire) in the Navsari Atash Behram. He is perhaps one of the most experienced ritual priests today. He has consecrated several new fire temples and *dakhmas* and has performed innumerable Yasnas, Vendidad, and Nirangdin ceremonies. He is an exceptional priest, well-qualified to guide young *nāwars*.

When prospective young priests come for their

initiation, many are understandably quite unprepared for the complexity of the *nāwar* ceremony. They are also unfamiliar with the ritual implements they will use during the Yasna or *Ijeshne* ceremony, which is performed by the initiate on the day when the candidate becomes a priest. A prospective *nāwar* from the *madrassa* system is somewhat more familiar with the Yasna ritual because both *madrassas* have an *ijeshne gah* in which the ritual can be practised.

This article is intended to provide helpful and practical information to those potential *nāwar* and *maratab* candidates who arrive in Mumbai for their initiation. This article summarizes the ancient ritual and will make the transition into priesthood easier. The ultimate outcome of the Yasna ritual, which consists of 72 chapters, is the consecration of the *hom nu pani*, a sacred libation, which is sipped by priests and laity for good health and spiritual sustenance. The Yazata Hom is represented by the Haoma plant (ephedra), which is believed to represent the spiritual or celestial priest.

THE YASNA CEREMONY

The Yasna, which is another name for the *Ijeshne* ceremony, is a high inner ritual which is performed within the designated sacred area of the fire temple. It is an ancient ritual and is mentioned in sacred texts, such as the Bundahishn, Shayest ne Shayest, and the Denkard. Images of a priest holding *barsom* rods, which are used in the Yasna ceremony, can be seen in the gold plaques that form part of the Oxus treasure (sixth through fourth centuries BCE) that are housed in the British Museum.

The Yasna ritual is performed by two qualified priests, the *zaotar* (chief officiating priest) performs the ritual—they usually can recite the 72 chapters by rote. The *raspi* (assistant priest) stays with the *zaotar* throughout the ritual and helps him during the ceremony. The *raspi* is also the *atarvakhsh*, whose

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main task is to ensure that the fire burns throughout the ritual by constantly tending the fire.

When a young boy performs the Yasna ceremony for the first time, he acts as the zaotar or the chief priest, this action signals that he is formally ready to take on the role of being a Zoroastrian priest. The first Yasna performed by the young priest takes place before a *majlis* (audience) of Zoroastrians that consists of his family, friends, and priests of the fire temple who witness the initiation. A high priest or a venerable priest is invited to be present at the ceremony and the ritual is performed under his authority. The *Dasturi* (priestly vow) taken by the initiate is done before the presiding priest. The young priest-to-be must ask the High Priest or senior priest's permission to begin the Yasna ceremony; at the end of his ordination, he greets the High Priest and the senior priest involved in his training, by ritually shaking their hands. This ritual handshake is referred to as *hamazor* (being united in strength). After meeting the priests, the newly initiated mobed can meet members of his family.

The presence of a High Priest or senior priest gives spiritual sustenance to the candidate and throughout the performance of the ritual, the presiding priest gives directions and prompts the candidate during the recitation of the prayers.

THE DIVINE BEINGS INVITED TO THE YASNA RITUAL

The Yasna ritual is performed in the honor and glory of Ahura Mazda the Wise Lord, the seven Amesha Spentas, and the holy Yazatas—Ahura Mazda's army against the forces of evil.

In the Yasna ritual, Ahura Mazda and all the spirit beings of the Zoroastrian faith are invited to attend the ritual. Thus, each time a Zoroastrian priest performs the Yasna ritual, the celestial world is present as bringers of growth and prosperity and as givers of blessings to the world.

In Zoroastrianism, the world is seen as the battle ground where the forces of good constantly combat the forces of evil. In a sense, when a Zoroastrian priest performs the Yasna ritual, he is extending space in the world for goodness to prevail and, consequently, limiting the powers of evil. By the

conducting the Yasna ritual, the priest reaffirms that his role as a Zoroastrian priest in this world is to side with the good creations of Ahura Mazda against the forces of evil.

OUTLINE OF THE YASNA RITUAL

The Yasna ritual consists of seventy-two Chapters, including the Gathas. The ritual begins during the early morning hours, prior to the start of Hāwan gah, and takes two and one-half hours to complete. The order of the Yasna ceremony outlined below is arbitrarily divided into twenty-one sections and present a step-by-step explanation of the ritual.

THE PARAGNA RITUAL

The Yasna ceremony is preceded by the Paragna ritual, which includes:

1. laying the Yasna implements and tables within the pavi (sacred area, demarcated by furrows);
2. the ritual of consecrating implements;
3. the taking of goat's milk;
4. the ritual of cutting pomegranate twigs and strips of the date palm (which are interlaced to form a braid);
5. the ritual of taking libation(consecrated water);
6. the ritual of washing and tying the barsom rods with the braided palm leaf;
7. the ritual of consecrating the *hom* (Ephedra plant) twigs; and
8. the ritual of taking the *parahom* libation made by pounding *hōm* and pomegranate twigs in well water, then symbolically filtering it through three strands of hair (from a sacred bull) which are twisted and wound around a silver ring.

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Notes:

- Fire temples usually have a date palm and a pomegranate tree growing near the well and are used for ritual purposes.
- The *hōm* twigs come from Yazd, Iran or from Baluchistan in Pakistan.
- The *dron* (sacred bread) is daubed with previously prepared *ghee* (clarified butter).

First, an exchange of *baj* (a formula of prayers that is accompanied with offerings and ritual action—a prerequisite of the Yasna ritual) takes place, beginning with the recitation of the **Ashem Vohu**. In the *baj*, the chief priest acts as the representative of Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Wisdom) and recites a dialogue in which Ahura Mazda is asked by Zarathushtra to reveal the twenty-one words of the *Yathā ahū Vairyo*.

The *Yathā ahū Vairyo* embodies the entirety of Zarathushtra's revelation; the recitation of the twenty-one words is equivalent to reciting the twenty-one *nasks* (sacred books of the faith).

- **The *Yathā ahū Vairyo*** is the most powerful Zoroastrian prayer; it has the power to remove evil and transform things for the better by bringing Ahura Mazda's revelation to realization in the physical world.
- According to the Bundahishn, the ***Yathā ahū Vairyo*** was first recited by Ahura Mazda.
- **The *Yathā ahū Vairyo*** is also recited for the sustenance of the seven creations: sky, water, earth, plant, animal, man, and fire.

1. After recitation of the *baj*, the Yasna ritual begins with an invitation to Ahura Mazda, the seven Amesha Spentas, and all the Yazatas. [Yasna 1]

- The Yasna ritual requires the recitation of seventy-two chapters of the Yasna, which are usually memorized by a *yozdathregar* priest (a priest well-versed in the complex, high rituals of the faith).
- The seven Amesha Spentas or the Bounteous Immortals are the guardians of the seven creations and help Ahura Mazda sustain the world.

- The Yazatas are spirits worthy of worship—each is linked to its respective attribute. For example, the Yazata Behram ensures victory when invoked and Mehr Yazata oversees covenants and friendships.

2. The prayers related to the *barsom* rods are recited. [Yasna 2]

- The *barsom* rods are a bundle of metal wires about 8 inches long kept together by a cord made from braided date palm strips that are tied around the rods in much the same way as a *kusti* is tied round the waist.
- In the Yasna ritual, the rods are placed on the concave curve of the two half-moon stands called *māh rūy*, which establish a link between the physical and spiritual worlds.
- One metal wire is placed on the foot of each of the two stands and serves as a bridge that maintains contact between the two stands. Both the rods and the half-moon stands are archetypal symbols of the Yasna ceremony.

3. The ritual for tasting the sacred *dron* (consecrated bread). [Yasna 3- 8]

- *Dron* (*darun*) is flat, almost white, unleavened bread that is offered during the *baj* ceremony.
- *Dron* is made in honor of the Yazata Srosh who was the first to worship the seven Amesha Spentas with *barsom*. In Iran, *siroog* (a fried bread) is made for religious rituals; a small boomerang-shaped *siroog* is also made. This reflects an offering made to Srosh Yazata and represents Srosh's cummerbund.
- The *zaotar* or chief priest breaks a small piece and tastes the consecrated *dron* during the ritual.

4. After the recitation of prayers dedicated to the Yazata Hōm, the chief priest sips the *parahom*, which is a mixture of consecrated water, mixed with pounded hom and pomegranate twigs that was prepared earlier during the Paragna ritual. [Yasna 9- 11]

- The Yazata Hom is the plant ephedra and a celestial priest; by drinking the *parahom*, the *zaotar* imbibes the quality of this celestial priest who is said to give him the strength to perform

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the ritual.

5. The *Frastuye manthra* (I profess) is recited.

In this part of the Yasna, both priests promise to dedicate their lives to Ahura Mazda and promise that, as priests, they will do everything in their power to remove evil even if it endangers their lives. It is a personal vow to uphold righteousness and to be ethical, thereby bringing the world closer to the "Making Wonderful." [Yasna 12-13]

6. The date palm cord made earlier during the Paragna ritual and was tied round the *barsom* rods is wetted with a mixture of consecrated water and goats milk. [Yasna 14-18] A prayer to the Lord of all the manthras is recited. [Yasna 19-21]

- The cord that was tied round the *barsom* rods is knotted in the same fashion as how one would tie a *kusti* around the waist.
- The water and goat's milk mixture used to consecrate the date palm cord conveys the blessings of Good Health (water) and the Good Mind (milk).

7. The *hom* twigs are pounded with milk and water in a brass mortar and consecrated for use during the ritual. [Yasna 22-27] The ritual pounding of the *hom* twigs while reciting the Yatha Ahū Variyo prayer symbolizes striking the evil spirit, Ahriman, in the great cosmic battle of good against evil.

The chief priest now approaches Ahura Mazda with ritual offerings of milk, date-palm cord, water, mortar and pestle, the recitation of the Gathas, sandalwood, frankincense, and the ritual fire. While striking the mortar with the pestle, the *zaotar* recites the three words Yathā ahū Vairyō and begins to pound the *haoma* twigs. The pounding is seen as striking a blow at Ahriman the evil spirit and it symbolically signifies, the priest participating in the cosmic fight against the forces of evil.

8. Now that Ahriman is symbolically weakened by the pounding, the *zaotar* begins the recitation of the Ahunavaiti Gatha announcing the revelation of Zarathushtra. [Y 28-34] The recitation of the Gāthas or the revelation of Zarathushtra is believed to infuse the *haoma* mixture with spiritual and healing powers.

- The *hom* twigs are pounded three times.

- After the Yasna ritual is over, the *haoma* mixture is sipped by the worshippers to symbolically absorb the message of Zarathushtra, thereby gaining good health and the strength to perform good deeds.

9. The priest then praises all the good creations that promote goodness and prosperity in the world and that prevent misery and disease. [Y35-42] And so, the sky, water, earth, the good winds, and the fish and animals that bring bounty and well-being to the world are praised.

10. This is followed by the Ushtavaiti Gatha invoked in honor of Ahura Mazda, the purveyor of Happiness. [Y43-46]

- The Ushtavaiti Gatha is the Gatha of Happiness, in which the Lord of Wisdom is praised.
- The counsel given in the Ushtavaiti Gāthā is that the best way to gain happiness in life is by following the path of truth as directed by Ahura Mazda.

11. The Spenta Mainyu Gatha is then recited. It affirms that prosperity and the immortality of the soul in the spiritual world are granted through the power of Spenta Mainyu. [Y 47-50]

- Spenta Mainyu represents the Good Spirit of Ahura Mazda, which when accepted by human beings, results in immortality of the soul.

12. This is followed by the recitation of the Vohu Khshathra Gatha that establishes good governance and order on earth by putting the Good Mind in action. [Y. 51]

- The establishment of order is a theme that is seen throughout Zoroastrianism. Good governance leads to a replication of the order that is in the spiritual world; this, in turn, leads to a life based on truth, order, and happiness on earth.

13. The recitation of the final Gāthā is preceded by the recitation of Yasna 52 which bestows good blessings on all pious people and for the entire creation of Ahura Mazda, this precedes. This Yasna begins with the recitation of two Yathā ahū Vairyōs. The *raspi* or assistant priest joins in the recitation at stanza Y. 52.8 when blessings are invoked for the pious people and for the welfare of the world.

14. The final Gatha (the Vahishtoishti Gatha) bestows blessings of a good life on those who

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follow the commands of Ahura Mazda and warns that those who do not follow His commands are fated to be consigned to hell. [Y. 53]

- It is also called the marriage Gatha in which Zarathushtra asks his daughter Paouruchista to base her marriage on truth so that she may have a joyous marriage.

15. **The Airyaman Ishyo (Y.54) and the Staota Yasna (Y. 55)** are recited in praise of the men and women who follow righteousness and the truth—they also praise the Gathas as a source of untold wisdom for all.

- The Airyaman Ishyo prayer is recited four times during the ritual.
- The *zaotar*, in praising the Gathas, recites the dedicatory hymn of the Staota Yasna, which acknowledges that the rewards after death in the spiritual world depend on wisdom, charity, righteousness, and knowledge. Thereby summarizing the Zoroastrian ethos to which one must adhere during life.

16. **Two prayers dedicated to the Yazata Sarosh are recited that invite him to attend the Yasna ritual. [Y 56-57]**

- Sarosh Yazata is perhaps the most important deity as he is seen as the lord of prayer, appointed by Ahura Mazda as the chief of all the good creations.
- He is also the *yazata* who was the first to recognize and worship the seven Amesha Spentas and the first to chant the Gathas, hence his importance.

17. **The Fshūshō mantra which will be recounted at the end of time before the Last Judgement is recited for the prosperity and growth of the world. [Y. 58-59]**

- It affirms that the righteous ones and the Saoshyants will help the world to increase and prosper.

18. **This is followed by the recitation of the Dahman Afrin in which the triumph of righteousness, prosperity, Good Words, obedience, and peace are praised. [Y. 60-61]**

19. **The recitation of the Atash Niyash [Y.62] (the prayer in praise of Fire) is followed by a litany to the Waters [Y. 62.11-70] asking the creation of waters to accept the consecrated**

haoma libation. This is followed by praise of the whole creation. [Y. 71]

20. Then, the *zaotar* and *raspi* ritually shake hands and recite the word *hamazor*, which means, “May you be united in strength with all the Righteous ones.” The *zaotar* or chief priest then recites the *baj* in honor of the *yazata* in whose name the Yasna ceremony was performed. The *zaotar*, accompanied by the *raspi*, proceeds to the Fire Temple well carrying the vessel containing the *hōm* libation.

21. Praising the creations of Ahura Mazda, the *zaotar* pours the *hōm* libation into the well and, as the libation mingles with the well water, it becomes infused with the goodness of the *hom nu pani*. The *zaotar* recites an *Ashem Vohu* to conclude the Yasna ceremony while affirming that righteousness is best.

- The *hom nu pani* is believed to strengthen and nourish the creation of waters and therefore it is poured into the fire temple well.
- The remaining *hom nu pani* is offered to the family members of the person who requested the Yasna ceremony and is also given to other worshippers.

ALAT (IMPLEMENTS) USED IN VARIOUS ZOROASTRIAN CEREMONIES

The word *alat* (alat) means an instrument or implement used or required during religious rituals. *Alat* is a general term that refers to any of the many implements used in Zoroastrian religious ceremonies. It is also used to refer to the *nirang* sipped for purification during a *nahn* ceremony, *bhasam* (holy ash), *varas* (hair of the sacred bull), *hom* twigs, stone table used in the Yasna ceremony, and a variety of instruments used by priests during the performance of a ritual.

An interesting implement used in the past was a large silver fan. This was kept in the *sanctum sanctorum* and used to fan the fire and rekindle it during the *bōy* ceremony.

Another unique *alat* is the nine-knotted wooden stick used by priests during the *barashnum* ceremony when a priest is given a ritual bath.(see page 23). It is

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also used when the Vendidad ceremony is performed. The nine knots represent the 9000 years of conflict raging in the world between the forces of good and evil.

The *gurz* (bull-headed mace) carried by a newly initiated *nāwar* is an important symbol of priesthood; it is a priestly weapon to be used to safeguard the sacred fire during times of danger.(see page 35)

All *alat* are sacred and are treated with reverence and consecrated by the priest before use in a ritual.

THE ĀLĀT USED FOR THE YASNA RITUAL

Afarganyu, a metal fire vase used for holding the ritual fire. The present form and shape of the fire vase seems to have been developed in a much earlier period. The fire vase is a vessel with a wide mouth and lip. The sarposh (a concave cover) is placed on the fire vase; the fire rests in the concave holder.

Barsom-chin (knife), used for cutting strips of the date palm.

Chamach (ladle), used by the raspi to serve the ritual fire.

Chippyō (tongs), used to pick up sandalwood sticks for the fire.

Fuliyān, Metallic (cup), used to hold reserved parahom mixture.

Fuliyān, Parahōm , a small cup used to hold the parahom mixture.

Juliyān, Waras, a small cup that is used to hold the twisted strands of bull's hair wound on a silver ring.

Juliyān, Zōhr, a small cup that is used to hold the libation water.

Hawan, a mortar usually made of brass in which the hōm and pomegranate twigs are pounded with the abar-hawan (lālō). Images of the mortar and pestle have been found carved on the walls of Persepolis.

Karasyō, a metal vessel with a short neck used for pouring water.

Khumchās, metal trays of various sizes.

Khwan, Ālāt-, a stone table on which the instruments for the Yasna ceremony have been placed in a particular order.

Khwan, Ātash-, a stone table on which the fire vase is placed.

Khwan, Ēsm-bōi, small marble or stone slabs on which *sukhad* (sandalwood) and *loban* (frankincense) are placed.

Kundī, a metal vessel that is kept on a heavy stone cylinder.



Fire vase (*afarganyu*) on fire table (*atash khwan*)

Photograph: Noshir Gobhai



Mortar (*havan*) and pestle (*abar-havan*)

Photograph: Noshir Gobhai

Ritual Implements

Māh-Rūh, half-moon, three-legged metal stands. The metal wires (barsom tays) rest on the concave curve of the two crescent shaped stands which are kept at a distance of five to six inches. A *tay* (single metal wire) is placed at the foot of the two stands and creates a bridge that connects the stands.

Tashtā, Dron, a small saucer that is used to hold sacred bread (drōn) that had been daubed with ghee (clarified butter).

Tashtā, Hōm-urwaram, a small saucer that is used to hold hōm and pomegranate twigs.

Tashtā, Inverted, (saucer), used to cover a metal cup.

Tashtā, Jivām, a small saucer used to hold goat's milk.

Tashtā, Surakhdar, a small saucer pierced with nine holes, used to strain the hōm liquid.

Tay, Zōhr, a metal wire used to wet the date palm cord with goat's milk.

Tays, Barsom, (Av. **Baresmā**) a bundle of metal wires usually tied by a short metal chain. During the Yasna ceremony, the bundle is held together by braided strips made from the date palm. (*aiwyāhan*).

Waras, a cord of twisted hair that has been cut from the tail of a consecrated white bull.

Waras ni vitī, the silver band or ring, around which the twisted bull's hair is tied.

Zōd-gah, a stone seat, covered with a carpet, on which the officiating priest sits while performing the ritual.



Ritual table (*alat khvan*)

Photograph: Noshir Gobhai



Metal basin (*kundi*)

Photograph: Noshir Gobhai



Half-moon stands (*mah-ruh*)

Photograph: Noshir Gobhai

Acknowledgement: The information given in this article regarding the Yasna ceremony is from A Persian Offering The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy by Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal and James Boyd. It is an excellent book and is recommended for anyone considering the study of the Yasna ceremony in greater detail. This article would not have been possible without having this book as its primary source.

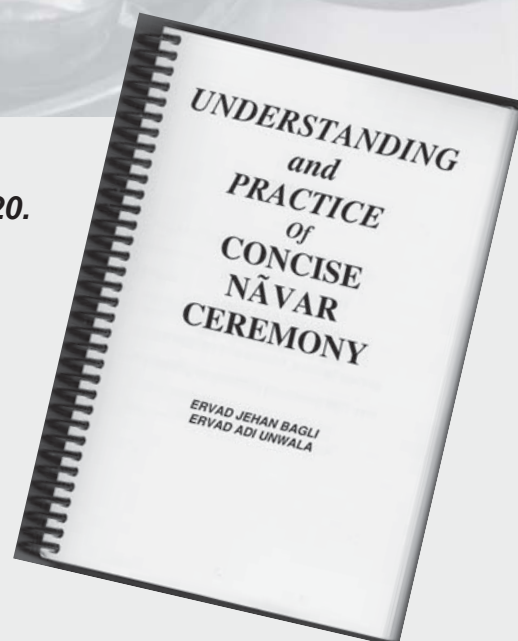
I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Dasturji Kotwal for the time he has spent and the innumerable hours of discussion and learning that I have benefitted from regarding the intricacies of Zoroastrian rituals, priestly history, and much more.

All images are from the catalogue The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination, edited by Sarah Stewart, published by L.B. Tauris


Ritual Implements

**This book is available for a suggested donation of US \$20.
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THREE RELIGIOUS APPARATUS CONCERNING FIRE

DASTURJI FIROZE M. KOTWAL

According to Firdosi's *Shahnameh*, from the time of the Peshdadian King Hoshang, the people of Iran have revered fire as the radiance and splendour of *Ahura Mazda*. For centuries, Zoroastrians have demonstrated their reverence by enthroning the Holy Fire in a special structure and by offering prayers to the Sacred Fire. It is through the Holy Fire that Zoroastrians have called upon *Ahura Mazda* for the welfare of their community, country, and the world. Zoroastrians view the Sacred Fire as their spiritual king, the unseen giver of blessings.

The priests who enthrone the fire censer in the *gumbad* (*sanctum sanctorum*) do so with the honour and ceremony befitting a king. While attending the Holy Fire, the priests will safeguard the fire's purity by using apparatus, such as, the ladle, tong, bell, logs of acacia wood, fragrant wood (e.g., *ēsm-bōy* (sandalwood)), *atash vazēnīdār* (fire-fan), swords, *gurz* (a bull-headed mace), and daggers.

Zoroastrian religious texts refer to ritual apparatus offerings made to atone for sins. For example, during Sasanian times, chief justices of the realm ordered transgressors to contribute firewood, ritual utensils, and other useful apparatus to the fire temple. There are references to this practice in the Vendidad's fourteenth and eighteenth chapters. The fire censer, fire-fan, and fuel are among the important apparatus dedicated to the Holy Fire; it is essential to clarify these three objects in the light of religion and tradition.

ĀTASHGĀH

Ātashgāh and *afargānyu* are interchangeable terms for the fire censer (or fire vase) in which the sacred fire is kept. Parsis use the word *afargānyu* and the repeated use of this word in the āfrīnagān ceremony seems to be the reason. For the *afargānyu*, the Avestan word *yaozdāni* and Pahlavi words *yōshdān*, *ādōst*, *ādurgāh*, *ādurdān*, *ādashgāh*, and *ādashdān* have been used. In ancient Iran, the Holy Fire was historically enthroned in a concave metal bowl inset in a stone *afargānyu*, which acted as a *sarpōsh* (cover). While excavating the site Pasargadae palaces—constructed by the Achaemenian King Cyrus the Great—a number of stone *afargānyās* were found, which were dated to 2500 years ago. For more than two millennia, the Holy Fires were installed on three stepped, stone pillars (i.e. *Ādōst* from old Iranian *Ātarē.shti* means “fire stand of stone”) located in Iranian fire temples. Probably, when the oldest *Atash Bahrām* in India, the Iranshah, was enthroned, it would have been installed on a stone *afargānyu*, in accordance with ancient Iranian tradition.

It was much later that metal censers of copper or silver were introduced in fire temples in India, which was replicated in some Iranian fire temples during the late nineteenth century. Even now, a few Iranian fire temples continue to have their Sacred Fire installed on a stone pillar or platform. Thus the primary religious implement in a fire temple is the Fire vase or censer on which the Sacred Fire is installed.

As with all sacred practices, a liturgy is followed when approaching the Sacred Fire. After performing the *farziyat* prayers (i.e. the obligatory prayers), Zoroastrians are required to bow their heads before the Holy Fire and recite the *Ātash Niyāesh*— a litany in praise of the creation of fire. According to our religious tradition, Zoroastrians should use their right hand for all religious activities (as a mark of respect). Sandalwood offered to the Holy Fire is offered using the right hand, after paying obeisance to the fire. In the *Pāv mahal* ceremonies (high inner rituals of the faith), the *drōn* or sacred bread and other apparatus are used and shifted ritually with the right hand. According to the Vendidad's nineteenth chapter, the left hand's function is to hold the *Barsom* (the bundle of metal wires) while performing the ceremony; this action has been followed and maintained by our mobeds for thousands of years. In the Yasna ceremony (chapters eleven and thirty-four), and before pouring libation in the well) the *haoma* libation which has been strained during the ritual, is first held before the

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Fire, as an offering and because of the respect for the ritual Fire burning in the censer, the holy apparatus i.e. the *hāvanim* (the mortar containing the Haoma juice) is held in the left hand and sandalwood is offered to the ritual fire with the right hand.

About 300 years ago, the *ātaš-khwān* (stone stool on which the fire vase rests) and the *ālāt-khwān* (a stone stool on which apparatus for the *Yasna* ritual is arranged) was positioned above the seated *zōt*'s navel. According to Zoroastrian texts, the area above the navel is tantamount to the confines of paradise (ms. F23, housed in the Meherjirana Library, Navsari). It was considered extremely meritorious to perform ceremonies after arranging the fire and ritual apparatus in this manner.

FIRE-FAN

On the inner wall of the *gumbad* (sanctum of some *Ataš Bahrāms* in India) a silver fire-fan is suspended on a nail—not for decoration, but when needed by the priest serving the Holy Fire during the *bōy* ceremony. In describing the shape of the fire-fan, the Vendidad (14.7) declares that it is “narrow at the bottom and curved at the top.” Extant Avestan manuscripts describe the *bōy* ceremony—specifically K-7, which was written in 1288 CE at Ankleshwar and is currently housed in the University of Copenhagen's library, is considered one of the oldest Avestan Pahlavi manuscripts. As mentioned in the manuscript, after the *Ātaš-khwān* has been purified, the mobed holds the fan and recites one *Ašhem vohu* while fanning the Holy Fire three times. During the *bōy* ceremony, two furrows are drawn on the ash bed of the sarposh on recitation of the first *Ātaš Niyaesh*, which is followed by the recital of two *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*s. If the fire has not been rekindled while the two furrows were being erased during the recitation of the third *Ātaš Niyaesh*, only then is the *bōywārā* allowed to use the silver fan in the *gumbad*. To reignite the flame, the fan is held in both hands and the fire is fanned with an up and down motion.

Among the *Bhagariyā mobeds* of Navsari, there is an old custom that if the fire does not blaze during the first three *Ātaš Niyaesh* then, after marking the *kash*, or circular furrows in the ash-bed, it is obligatory to enkindle the Holy Fire by using the silver fan as described above. About three decades ago, while performing the *bōy* ceremony at the Navsari *Ātaš Bahrām* during the *Ushahin Gāh*, the silver fan had to be used by the author to help the sacred fire to blaze, which was according to the custom among *Bhagariyā* mobeds. Although books written later, regarding the use of the fan during the *pāvmahal* ceremonies (as mentioned in the K-7 manuscript) by the Sanjana, *Bhagariyā* and Qadimi mobeds, do not refer to the use of a fan during the *bōy* ceremony, the presence of a large silver fan on the inner *gumbad* wall of the Navsari *Ātaš Bahrām* bears witness to this historical practice that is no longer in use today.

FUEL FOR ĀTASH PĀDSHĀH

According to Avestan literature, two types of wood were used as fuel for the Holy Fire in ancient times: hardwood (sun-dried) and sweet-smelling softwoods like *Urvāsna*, *Vohu-gaona*, *Vohu-kereti*, and *Hadhānaepatām* (wood of the pomegranate tree). Wood from the first three trees is difficult to identify. During the *Yasna* ceremony, while praying *urvarām hadhānaepatām*, a twig of the pomegranate tree is placed in the mortar. This clearly suggests that the word *hadhānaepatām* is used for the pomegranate tree. The well-known scholar Harold Bailey compared *hadhānaepatām* (used for pomegranate) with words in Yidgha and Waziri Pashto dialects and interpreted the word to mean “a fruit with seeds, pomegranate,” which is consistent with the translations of our scholar-priests of old. Today the *ēsm-bōy* offered in the *pav-mahal* ceremonies is sandalwood and a piece of *olibanum*, frankincense (*lobān*); however, in the Avestan literature it means “hardwood and sweet-smelling softwood.” To keep the fire burning continuously, the Zoroastrians of India use the slow-burning acacia wood (from the Bawal tree), whereas the Zoroastrians in Iran prefer the wood from the pomegranate tree (when unavailable, they will use apricot or pistachio tree wood). According to the Indian priestly tradition, a dried piece of pomegranate wood could be used

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in place of *ēsm- bōy*, as a reminder of the original mandate in the sacred texts of the Avesta.

The learned Sasanian Dasturs rendered softwood fuel as *bōy* (sweet-smelling fuel) in Pahlavi. It is stated that if the divine powers are offered *bōy* as an oblation, with chanting of the Avesta, the fragrance of *bōy* will delight them and, in return, they will give their blessings. The main object of the *bōy* ceremony is also to destroy the malevolent effects of the evil spirit and, as a consequence, delight the good spirits by welcoming them with offerings of sweet-scented wood and the chanting of prayers

FEZANA Journal, and readership are honored by the esteemed Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal's contribution to this issue. His life achievements are important and manifold; we regret that space limitations have constrained us from sharing the detail of Dastur Dr. Kotwal's accomplishments.

Notable highlights are:



Academic

1961—Trained at the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, Mumbai, where he obtained an M.A. with Distinction

1966—Ph.D. on *The Supplementary Texts to the Shāyest Nē- shāyest*, from University of Bombay

1973—Post-doctoral research with Prof. Mary Boyce on the *History of the Parsi Priestly Class from Parsi Prakash*

1973—Visiting Lecturer at SOAS University of London

1979–1980—Visiting lecturer at the Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University

1986–1987—Visiting lecturer at Colorado State University

Zoroastrian Honors

1977—Appointed Principal M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, Mumbai

1977—Appointed High Priest, H.B. Wadia Atash Behram for scholarship and work in Zoroastrianism

1985—Appointed Chairman of the Athravan Educational Trust, Mumbai

Scholarly Honors

1991—Made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland

2001—Awarded Visiting Fellowships at Clare Hall College, University of Cambridge, and Universität Heidelberg

2003—Awarded six Gold Medals by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Government of Iran, for Outstanding

Scholarship in Iranian Studies

2013—A Festschrift titled *Gifts to a Magus*, Indo-Iranian Studies in Honour of Firoze Kotwal

Publications

• *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān vols. I- IV: Nērangestān, Fragard 3*, co-edited and co-translated, Philip G. Kreyenbroek

• The Khorda Avesta and Yasht Codex E1 coedited with Almut Hintze

• Numerous articles have been published in *Encyclopedia Iranica*

• *A Persian Offering, The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy is the go-to text for the Yasna ceremony*

THE MEANING OF THE TERM ĀLĀT AND NINE KNOTTED STICK

FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE

ALAT

Ālāt is an Arabic term that is used in reference to the various implements used while performing Zoroastrian rituals. Prior to being used in a ritual, the *ālāt* is first made pure and then consecrated in order for the implement to be infused with sacredness. The term is also extensively used by priests in reference to other non-metal implements, such as consecrated *Nirang*, the holy Ash from the Atash Behram fire (*bhasam*), water which is made ritually pure, the *waras* (hair) of the sacred white bull (*varasyāji*), the *haoma* twigs, the vessels and stone tables used for religious rituals, the *sudreh* and *kusti*, and a variety of other items used for religious purposes. The *Pahlavi* word for *ālāt* is *abzār* but, for unknown reasons, this term is hardly used in reference to religious implements.

NAOGAR—THE NINE-KNOTTED STICK

Naogar (*graom nava-pikhem*) is a nine-knotted stick used by Zoroastrian priests during the Barashnum and Vendidad rituals. The nine-knotted stick used during the Barashnum ritual has an iron spoon fastened to one end. The spoon part of the stick, is used to pour gomez (un-consecrated bull's urine) on the priest's body while he is undertaking the purificatory bath, in accordance with Faragad 9.14 of the Vendidad.

When the Vendidad ritual is performed in a Fire Temple, the nine-knotted stick is used during the ritual to strike the floor of the urwisgah in an attempt to remove the forces of evil.

***“As we lose ourselves in the service of others,
we discover our own lives and our own happiness.”***

— Dieter F. Uchtdorf

THE ZARATHUSHTI SYMBIOSIS: GATHAS AND RITUALS

OP-ED ARTICLE

MOBED MEHRABAN FIROUZGARY

I rejoice in the younger generations' rekindled interest in the Good Religion; this resurgence is most heartening to me as a Zarathushti and, particularly, as a mobed. However, I despair that many well-intentioned youths are erroneously constraining their belief in our rich Zarathushti Religion by limiting their understanding solely to the Gathas—to the exclusion of our sacred rituals, even the Sedre Pushi (Novjote).

They argue that, by definition, as the Gathas are devoid of any specific mention rituals, they are, therefore, superfluous, irrelevant, and, for them, unnecessary to become a good Zarathushti. To them, the Gathas are all they need.

I beg to differ. I believe that rituals developed and were passed down through history to reinforce the Gatha's sacred words by tactile experiences. Over time, actions and objects (rituals) evolved that conjoined with the spoken/written word (the Gathas) to create a synergistic experience in the ancient human mind. I find it hard to believe that, during Zarathustra's forty-seven year period of prophesying, His followers and disciples relied exclusively on rote memorization. Rituals augment the Gathas, together they amplify our sensory experience and, through those experiences, the depth of our understanding and appreciation become expanded. Please note that most religions of the time employed rituals as part of their practices—why do we believe that Zarathushtra and His followers were the only ones that relied on the spoken word.

If anything, I believe that rituals were divinely guided to benefit future, far distant future generations. Us. How many of us can empathize (really empathize) with our forbearers' dependence on a knowledge of seasonal cycles, the cause and effect of droughts on crop yields, of despotic rulers, of no God, no afterlife? With our 140 character attention spans, nature and God have no meaning—to them, it was a matter of life, death, and afterlife.

Rituals provide a visual and tangible representation of Zarathustra's teachings in a way that all of us, young-old, Parsi-Iranian, mobed-layperson can understand. Yes, they are simple. Yes, they are ancient. But, yes, they are as relevant today as they were in Zarathustra's time. Rituals have enabled Zarathushtis to survive and continue their legacy despite the destruction of the printed word by Alexander the Great, the Mongols, the Arabs, and others that have followed in their steps. Rituals provide a continuing, uninterrupted connection with our sacred past.

Rituals AND the Gathas must be experienced together. Please do not limit your spiritual foundation solely to the printed word—bring the Good Word's richness to life in your heart by using all six of your senses. I welcome your thoughts and comments on these thoughts.

Bio see page 34

Ritual Implements

ZOROASTRIAN RITUALS IN IRAN

MOBED MEHRABAN FIROUZGARY

*Haomayo Gava, Baresmana, Hizvo dang-hang-ha;
Maanthracha—vachacha—shyaothnacha;
Zaothraa Byascha, Arshukhdha ei byascha, Vaaghzibyo. (*
Khorde Avesta, Yashts)

[Equipped with] Sanctified Haoma pounding extract mixed with milk,
[As well as a bunch of the] Barsam, [Using] Wisdom of the tongue
[Correct pronunciation and sweet voice];
[Our] *Manthras* (Prayers using implements) [Are being addressed to you—AhuraMazda]—
in words and in deeds [In full faith and with devotion];
[Thus we proceed to sanctify] these Offerings [Samples of AhuraMazda's creation],
with truly spoken words [Prayers].

This article focuses on traditional use of items that are used by Iranian Zarathushtis as ritualistic symbols in their rituals and celebrations. It will also discuss the religious implements that have been used in the past during high profile liturgies.

THE USE OF EVERGREEN PLANTS

Our ancestors' deep and profound respect for sacred rituals and implements, and piety of the Amesha Spentas, the Six Divine Attributes, was gifted to mankind by Ahura Mazda. And, if these moral principles and rituals were faithfully followed, godliness and immortality could be achieved. Apart from their moral and spiritual attributes, each of the Heptads (including Ahura Mazda) is believed to have been appointed as a guardian over an aspect of creation

Ahura Mazda's teachings and His "*Spenta Mayniue*" protect mankind and provide guidelines toward the attainment of godliness. *Bahman* (*Vohu Mana*) guards the animals; *Ardibehesht* (*Asha Vahishta*), the Fire; *Shahrivar* (*Khshatra Vaeria*), metals; *Asfandarmazd* (*Spenta Armaity*), the earth's soil; *Khordad* (*Haurvataat*), the waters; and *Amordad* (*Ameretaat*), the plantation.

Considering that most trees and vegetation lose their foliage in Iran's wintery cold and arid climate, the perennial and evergreen plants were considered to be the special favorites of Ameretaat Amesha Spenta and symbolized long-life, even immortality.

The evergreen dried leaves of *aavishan* (oregano and thyme leaves) and fresh cuttings from the evergreen *sarv* (cypress) tree are *de rigueur* gifts for all happy events. Bouquets of cypress branches are often displayed in flower pots or vases, and placed on the tables or sites where auspicious festivities and ceremonies are held—being regarded as a potent symbol of good fortune and longevity. Similarly, green is used to imbue celebratory items with good luck. Green ink is favored when writing greetings and notes for ceremonial gifts. After *aavishan* and *sarv* cuttings, gift exchanges often include green-colored handkerchiefs, prayer caps, table spreads, and the very popular green-wrapped sugar cones.

During the Jashans, or whenever any of the Afringans are recited, like the Gahanbars, the priest raises one branch of the moort (myrtle) at the start of the "Afrinami Khshatriane ..." and is joined by the congregants,

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who have each raised one finger, in a prayer that asks for the benefits of the ceremony to reach Ahura Mazda. Then, two moort twigs and two fingers are raised during the verse "*Humatanam ... Neinistaroo Yathanam Vohunam Mahi*," a prayer that asks that the benefits from the ceremony reach all those who follow Humata Hukhta Hwarshata. Before finishing, the priest, during the Yatha Ahu recital, touches the moort twigs toward the four geographic directions, designated by the lork tray's corners, and makes three circular motions around the tray. He then places the twigs at the tray's center and, praying the Ashem Vohu, asks

that the participants' wish that the benefit of the ceremony will reach the four corners of the world and, especially, the ceremony's location.

The *avishan* plant—exchanged or ritually used at all ceremonial events—has antimicrobial and other healing properties. Avishan is spread by a priest over the head, shoulder, and body of any person for

whom a Tendorosty, or other prayer (e.g., Atash Niyayesh), is prayed—this action solemnizes life events such as child birth, Novjote, and marriage. Priests often prepare, sanctify, and administer an herbal tea made from avishan and other medicinal herbs to the sick or injured—the tea and the priest's accompanying prayer facilitate healing.



A mixture of water and avishan being sprayed in front of a house while reciting short prayers to keep evil and sickness away from the house

In the old days, considerable amounts of dust collected on the cobbled streets abutting the entryway of a house. Controlling the dust was effected by spraying a mixture of water and avishan on the street, then sweeping it away—while offering short prayers to keep evil and sickness from the house. A similar mixture was splashed behind departing travelers, with invocations for a safe journey and good health. Avishan was ritually daubed on door hinges, the

peskam (a place reserved for prayers), and the corners of wood-fueled stoves for protection. The four corners of most ceremonial tables, as well as all gifts, simple and expensive, were also dabbed with avishan. The phrase, "Oh it is merely some avishan," was used to minimize any obligation.

Ritual Implements

Another natural item of ritualistic importance is the desert-grown *esfand*'s (wild rue) dried seed-carrying capsules. *Esfand* is frequently mixed with other sweet-smelling herbs for the daily "Loban" ritual during which an *afiringaniue* (brazier) and its smoking fire is carried throughout the house and out the main door during or after daily prayers. *Esfand* is popular in Iran for its antibacterial properties and as a sweet-smelling, lower-cost alternative for incenses like Loban and sukhad. When the seed capsules are burned, they burst and make a crackling sound (similar to popcorn)—the popping sound is symbolic of evil spirits being destroyed ("evil eyes" bursting). Woven pattern garlands of *esfand* capsules, called "Cheshm o nazar," are hung at strategic points around the house to drive away evil spirits.



Esfand (wild rue)

THE MIRROR AND ROSE WATER

Soon after a guest arrives, a member of the host's family approaches the visitor with a rose water sprinkler in their right hand and a mirror in their left. After the exchange of a smile and due greetings, the guest (or even family members; in the case of Novrooz, birthdays, or other personal celebrations jublations) will extend their cupped right hand to receive droplets of rose water. The rose water is then rubbed onto the guest's left hand or their face. The person then looks into a shining mirror held close to their face. Undoubtedly, this causes the guest to smile; and, by seeing their reflection in the mirror, a lasting engram of a happy person will be created that erases any lingering grief or grudge.

An optimistic look into a mirror has long been considered a great way to uplift one's spirits, while bringing good luck and bright future. A mirror with the image of Zarathushtra, either etched onto the mirror or held separately, a rose water sprinkler, and a prayer book constitute the essential set of ritual items that should be placed on celebratory tables. These are also the first items that should be taken into a new home or business.

Ritual rose water is an extract made from rose flowers and is offered in lieu of a rose bouquet. Its water component represents the essence of life and symbolizes water's spiritual guardian, Haurvataat—progressive attitude and perfection.

RITUAL VEGETATION AND RELATED ITEMS AND FOOD PREPARATION

The numerous seeds found in pomegranates and water melons are symbolic of prosperity and child birth; their red color appealed to ancient Mithraistic beliefs. Apples are regarded for their nutritional value. Cucumbers' sweet smell, when freshly cut, is said to attract souls back to earth. These fruits are considered highly potent ceremonial items.

On the other hand, those foods with a strong smell are favored after death ceremonies. From a spiritual perspective, they are believed to attract and guide the soul of the departed soul and beneficial spirits to their spot. The principle food in this category is *seer o sedab*; which is prepared by frying very pungent sedab leaves and garlic in heated oil, then pouring vinegar over it while the sizzling concoction is brought to the prayer table. Similarly, flour dough used to bake flat breads is fried in hot oil and is also brought, sizzling hot, to the prayer table. This is the popular and tasty *seerog*, which appeals to everyone; except, perhaps, those abstaining due to elevated blood lipids. Other nutritious food items, made sweet smelling with the addition of rose water and cinnamon are prepared as well.

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The next popular food item for festive occasions, Gahanbars, and the after death ceremony is the *komaach* (a homemade cake). Note that the prayer table food items are samples of the worldly aspects of the Amesha Spentas—komach incorporates all aspects. (photo right)

The wheat flour in komach is a product of the soil, which is protected by the *Spenta Armaity Amesha Spenta*. The metal pot in which it was baked represents *Khshatra Vairya*. The Fire used to bake the komach represents *Asha Vahishta*. The eggs, butter, and milk came from the animal kingdom, which represents *Vohu Mana*. Water is used to make the dough. *Haurvataat*, the mixed dates or raisins, and crushed nuts sprinkled over the komach came from the plant kingdom and represent the *Ameretaat Amesha Spenta*.

A cup of milk, a lighted oil lamp, a zinc-metal bowl of water (with a floating apple and some avishan leaves), the sarve or moort branches and flower stalks (dipped in the water of a flower pot or the metal kalasiyu holders), the lork (a mixture of seven varieties of dried fruits), and the Sabze decorations are all visual reminders of Ahura Mazda's creations. They remind us of the Amesha Spentas and their spiritual aspects.

Coins are kept and don all tables at celebratory events, such as the Novrooz Haft Seen, Sedre Pushi, and weddings. Coins are items of permanent and tangible value that do not lose their value even with inflation. Rumors hint that a considerable stash of gold coins and bars may have been buried under *Afringaniuns* erected within the main *Adoraan* section of all Atash Behrams and Agiarys—these were hidden so that the holy place could be properly maintained during dire times of need.



Seerog and seer o sedab



Komaach

Over time, Barsam twigs, one of the highest valued ritual implements, has been changed from real tree branches to wires.

Scissors have multifaceted roles in Zoroastrian rituals. As part of the wedding ceremony, the groom's family presents various sewing implements, including a pair of scissors, to the bride. These scissors will remind the bride and groom that, like the scissors, they must move in unison to achieve their purpose in life and enjoy successful, happy lives together.

Scissors are also an important part of the Zoroastrian mourning ritual. Immediately after the deceased passes, their bed is cleaned and a new bed sheet placed on it. A small table is placed at the

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head of the bed to hold a lighted oil lamp, a flowerpot with white flowers, and a pair of scissors. These items will remain on the table until the *Chharom* (morning of the fourth day) prayers are over. Zoroastrians believe that the soul of the deceased will hover in proximity of their earthly abode for 72 hours after death—the light and flowers are meant to pacify the soul, as well as the relatives and friends. The scissors remind the living that the deceased's relationship with the corporeal world has ceased. It is now time for the living to forget the worldly aspects of how he/she behaved in this world and realize that their material form has become elevated to a higher form of life. This realization is important because extended mourning periods induce unhealthy stresses in the living friends and relatives

For a discussion of seasonal celebrations, please refer to the FEZANA Journal Fall 2014 Vol 28 .

CEREMONIES RESTRICTED TO THE YAZISHGAH OR “INNER CIRCLE” AND HIGHER LITURGICAL CEREMONIES

When writing about the *yashta khaneh* (*yazeshngah/Pav. mahal*)—the secluded place close to every Atash Behram Atash Adoran's (fire room) precincts and is restricted to priestly class rituals—I remember my early childhood years in Yazd during the early 1940s.

Even though I did not stay in Iran, to follow the deteriorating conditions; unfortunately most or all of these rituals are not practiced as in the past, or even missed today. In my opinion, the scarcities and hardships of the post World War II (something that encouraged mass emigration out of Yazd), the fast encroaching Soviet Communism and Baha'ism propaganda as well as the eventual and continued improvements in living standards may have forced mobeds to deviate from their old set rules to follow their profession.

Before my travel to India, I can recollect the scores of Mobed families that lined up the narrow alleys of the Yazd Dastooran Mohalle, purity was the order of the day and from using the pajav (bull's urine) as the first item early morning hand washing liquid along with the customary routine prayers (the Padyab ritual, derived from Pajav), walking past the neighborhood Noshva (nine nights of seclusion/Ave. *Bareshnoom*) places—where the ultimate Purity Rites used to be conducted to qualify priests for the Yezishngah rituals. Mobeds passing would avoid contact all the way up to the elaborate Yezishngah ceremonies lest they lose their purity rites, which, as a youngster, I have only had a few chances of observing them. Those ceremonies were mostly held after midnight and lasted for over seven hours and our elders, men and women, who attended would have taken their ritual bath and gone into a fast, the previous PM; a fasting that would last until after they partook of the sanctified Parahaom and any Chaashni etc. Youngsters would be left home to catch up with their sleep and not be a nuisance at such pious ceremonies of Yasna, Vandidad, and Visperat rituals.

The yezishngah was also frequented on the days when the *NovNaavars* (candidates qualified to undergo the Novzooty/priesthood initiation) would perform their first official Yasna performance (*Ijashny*) under the supervision of their Instructors.

The yazishngah has a boundary furrow digging around the periphery within which the performing priests (eight in the olden days but now two) carried out the ultimate ceremony. Along the wall, outside this boundary, sat numerous recently initiated or yet to be initiated young boys, with their Yasna books, who closely watched the Inner circle performances while, silently, reading the Yasna.

The implements, and facilities, that would be employed in carrying out the yezishngah liturgies included, besides the movable stone platform (the *khwaans*) settings of that room, the afringaniun and other metallic items, collectively called *alats* (implements) and which were left in their specified place all along, also called for

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an active water well, a palm and several pomegranate tree plantings, as well as the ritually chosen and kept up sacred bull and a milk supplying goat as essential facilities.

In a corner, close by, was also the kitchen where ceremonial food like the draona bread item for the yezishngah rituals and food for the priests were prepared; by women of priestly family only.

The draona bread, with *gaoshudu* (clarified butter), is among the items of the Yasna ceremony. Upon being sanctified by the *zaotar*, (the main performing priest), in the midst of the Yasna recitations (Yasna Haa 8) would pass it to the congregation, as tasting samples (*chashnee*). This was accompanied by a small portion of the *haomayo gava* (the sanctified pounded haoma juice mixed with the fresh milk of the goat (Ave. *jeevaam*) This was done after a portion of the haomayo gava Juice had been offered to the well water, as it is believed that the springs feeding that well were in contact with all the waters around the world. As such any water drawn from the Atash Behram well was considered to be of extra piety and all care were taken to keep that well and its surrounding free from any pollution.

All of the above facilities existed in the Yazd Atash Behram of those days and were all well-maintained.

Upon probing into the oldest available (400+ years old) Iranian volume of combined Yasna + Vandidad + Visparad manuscript as well as comparing my inherited volume of a 100+ years old Yasna, with that of the 1888 publication of Ervad Tehmuras D. Anklesaria's ***Yajehne Baa Nirang***, the implements and facilities as used in Iran and in India appear to have been the same in kind and procedures. However, further readings of the Rivayats and extracts from other scriptures like the ***Dadistan Dinik***, ***Hirbadestan***, and consultations with Avesta scholars could not shed any information on how these facilities and practices were transferred to India

Since the past fifty years, all existing Bareshnoom gaahs and, in general, all rituals which called for use of the Pajav or its sanctified Nirang have been closed down or demolished. The Yazd Yezishngah's Khwaan slabs have now been stored, piled one over the other, in a corner of that room; which now serves as the storage room for firewood. The metallic alaats are stored, unused, with the Yazd Anjoman; however, none of the other facilities remain, except some pomegranate trees kept merely for the value of their fruits.

Besides the Yezishngah items, the metallic alaats were owned by several prominent mobeds of Yazd as well. Some may have preferred to use their own equipments or they could have been presented to them by the laity, who had requested for frequent ceremonies on their own behalf. A few sets are believed to be still, existing besides the ones lying around in some of the active Fire Temples around Iran. They consist of:

1. **The haavan (Av. haavanim)—a mortar and pestle.** Haavan are among the most ancient of the metallic alaats. In addition to their ritual use for pounding the haoma twigs (Hindu rituals *saoma*), haavan are also used by priests to produce a reverberation that enhances their Mantras' spiritual effectiveness. The sound of the mortar being struck by a pestle announces the start of prayers to the nearby neighborhood—hence the name *Havan Gaah (Geh)* for the daily prayer period. Over time, haavan shapes have evolved; their construction materials have included stone, cast iron, bronze, and silver. The hanging bells used in the Adoraans may have evolved from metallic haavan because of their higher-pitched, more desirable resonance.(see page xxx)

2. **The barsam (Av. barasmana)—bunches of bronze and silver wire tied together** with a woolen thread or a fine silver chain. Barsam are believed to be as ancient and important as haavan. The ritual use of barsam could signify the importance of *hamaazoori* (unity) and the harmony of Ahura Mazda's creation (the law of Asha), as well as being a reminder to be grateful for Ahura Mazda's creation of the vegetation and metal worlds.

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3. **The maahrooy (moon-faced or -shaped)—a pair of metallic tripod stands with crescent-shaped tops.** They hold bundles of barsam and represent a spiritual circle that connects ceremonies to the lunar influences on vegetative growth. By pressing his fingers over the barsam on the maahrooy and, in conjunction with other gestures, like ringing the havanim, the performing priest attunes himself to cosmic vibrations and energy.



Maahrooy with five copper bowls and recaabees

(saucers with high rims), the havanim

4. **A silver ring, wrapped with woolen thread,** made from the white sheep's wool used for Kusti weaving, is used for filtering the pounded haoma and water mixture. The Avestaic term used for this

action is *Vareca Haoma angharezan* (Visperad Karde 10 para 2), which means "The hair for straining Haoma". In India, the tail hair from the sacred Varacyo Bull is used in place of a woolen thread.

5. **The pialeh (a set of five copper bowls) and recaabees (saucers with high rims)** are used for prescribed ritual purposes. One of the recaabees is *soorakhdaar* (with holes); it has nine small holes drilled in its center and is used to strain the pounded haoma solution into a *piale* that is kept under the *soorakhdaar*.

6. All of these items are kept in a large circular copper tray.

7. A sharp knife is used ceremonially to cut Barsam twigs and palm leaves.

8. One large copper pot and its accompanying *kalacha* (Guj. *Karacya/Kalasyu*) are used to store water for ceremonial purposes such as cleaning the implements for storage after their use.

After a gap of some thirty years, during which neither a Nowzooty (initiation into priesthood) nor any of the Yezishngah ceremonies had been attempted anywhere in Iran, the Tehran Anjuman e Mobedan took serious steps in 1981 to reorganize such essential liturgies. By this time, neither the trained candidates for Novzooty nor the essential facilities for the required purity standards of a Yezishngah were remaining and could not be revived easily. The use of any form of Pajav (Bovine urine) is, sadly, outdated and banned, which meant having to do away with any Bareshnoom purification and preparatory rites. Condensed Avesta classes were arranged for the mobeds who were doctors and engineers and needed religious knowledge. Age restrictions had to be overlooked and candidates were to be accepted as they applied.

Since then some twenty two Nowzootys have been performed. The candidate goes through three sets of trainings. Avesta recitations covering the entire Khorde Avesta, the Ahunavaiti Gathas plus the various Draon Yashts (all in Farsi) as well as a minimum of the first 21 Haities of Yasna, in the Avestaic (Din Dabire) script. They then have the test for religious knowledge, including the interpretation of the Gathas and other basic Religious Principles; finally they are tested for the knowledge and actual apprenticeship under practicing mobeds for ritual performances.

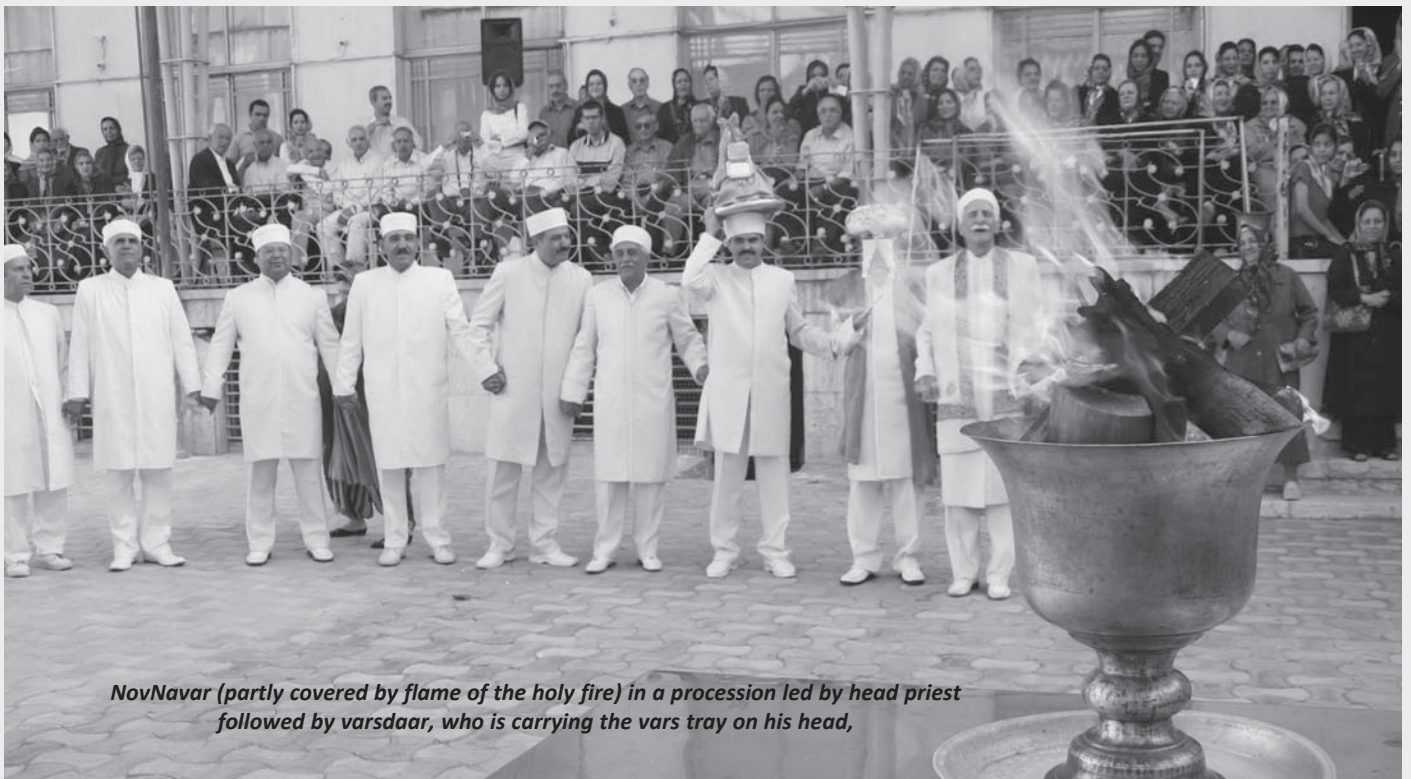
Ritual Implements

Having passed the above, the candidate is received in the morning of a prearranged day in the Yezishngah by a congregation of the available mobeds. He will have had, at home a simple bath, and reflect with devotion, at the time and efforts spent for an honorary service. He will be wearing, besides his new white clothes a special long cloak and pants plus a cap shaped Pagdee, stitched for him at the Mobedan Anjoman's expense.



A set of standard items, treasured from the past under the care of the Mobedan Anjoman, are laid out. The candidate wears the Turban, decorated with ornamentally arranged gold coins, the *panaam* (face-covering cloth), and decorated with a large golden ornamental plate and a large green shawl, which decorates his shoulders. The rest of the items constitute the contents of a silver tray in the center of which a conical hollow spiral item made out of dried pomegranate tree branches and tied with thick, white, woolen thread pieces while the whole item is wrapped inside a green cloth and is decorated with gold and silver ornaments; including a mirror. A silver rod, with a short blade nailed on its top, is also included. This tray is called the **Vars**.

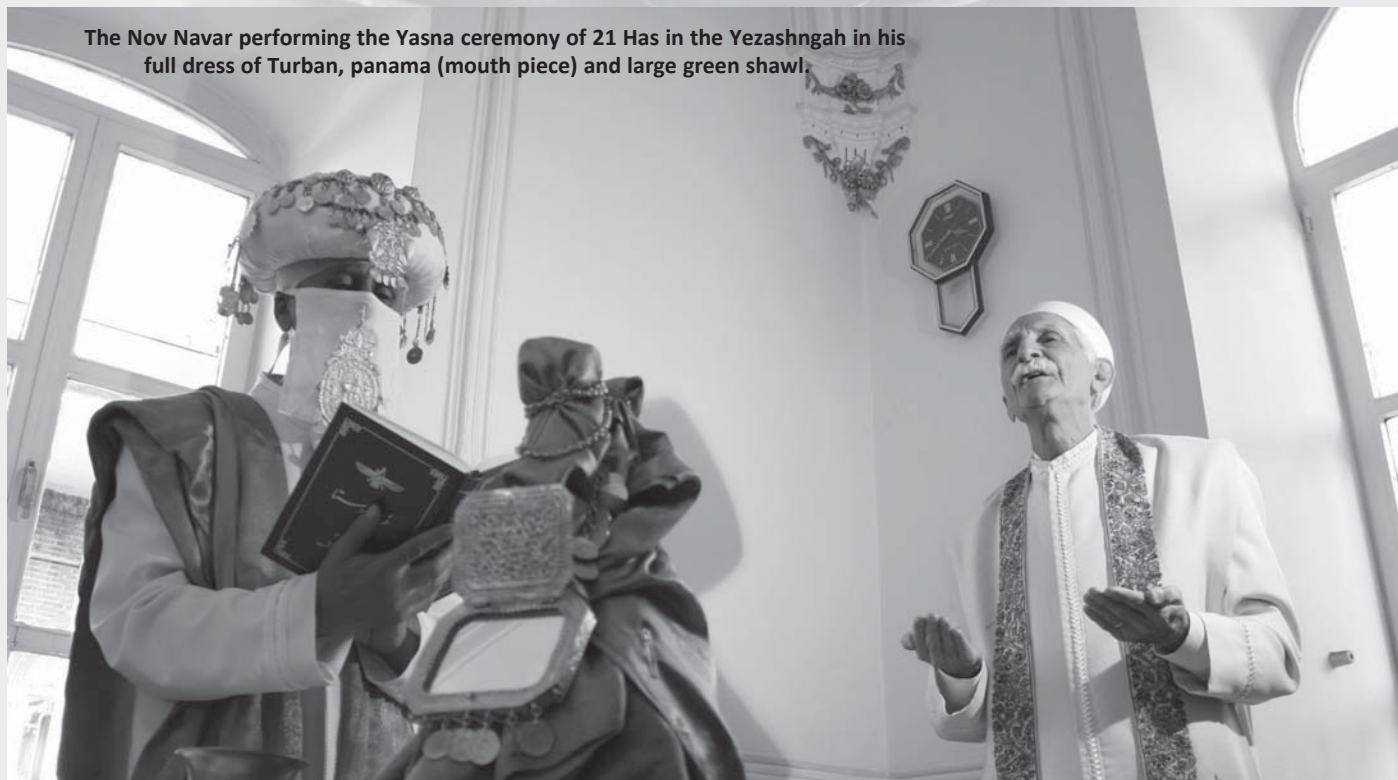
The new candidate (NovNavar) is welcomed by the leading priest and the congregation prays the Afringan of the NovNavar for his Tandorosty. He is then led by the Leading Priest followed by the *varsdaar* (the last person to have been initiated) who carries the vars tray over



NovNavar (partly covered by flame of the holy fire) in a procession led by head priest followed by varsdaar, who is carrying the vars tray on his head,

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The Nov Navar performing the Yasna ceremony of 21 Has in the Yezashngah in his full dress of Turban, panama (mouth piece) and large green shawl.



his head, after giving the silver rod with rotating blade to the NovNavar, he is then followed by the other priests in a row parading through the crowd of onlookers who have come for the occasion. While praying Atash Niyayesh, they circle a large burning fire three times then proceed to circle the Agyari water pond once, pose for a group photo and then disperse. All along the parading procession the NovNavar keeps the blade on the silver rod rotating. That action is interpreted as a wish that this kind of ceremony and its likely benefit to humanity may keep rotating and recurring frequently.

The leading Priest, the Nov Navar as well as the Varsdar go into the Yezeshngah and pray 21 Has of the Yasna, while the rest of the crowd gather within the Community hall for a celebration with speeches and entertainment by the Initiate's family

The Tehran Mobedan Anjoman revived another forgotten Yazishngah Ceremony, the "Vaaj Yasht e Gahanbaar," a symbolic lhashny that used to be performed prior to the start of every Gaahanbaar Chahre, symbolically, heralding the Gaahanbaar. The prescribed purification rituals are not observed as they should; however, the leading mobed takes a bath the evening before, washes and soaks Hoama twigs, the Yezishngah and the metal alats are washed and cleaned, water pots are cleaned and filled with pipe water and covered.

Around three o'clock in the morning the two main priests, usually joined by a third who is a novice, will meet in the Yezishngah and after the Ushahin Gaah Prayers and an Atash Niyayesh in front of the Adoran Fire, sit at a table where the tray containing the least metal Alaats are laid. The soaked Haoma twigs are drained and distributed amongst the three large water pots. A portion of the soaked twigs are transferred to the Haavanim and Yasna recital is started.

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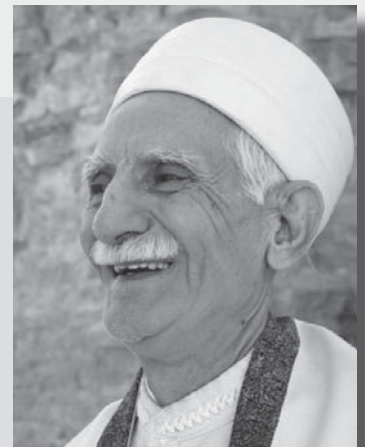


The diluted Hoama juice being distributed to the congregation

While praying the condensed Ijashny (first 21 Haas); between Haas, the Zaotar pounds the previously soaked Haoma Twigs and prepares the diluted Hoama juice by gallons, so as to suffice the multitude of attendants who have strong belief in its Positive Energy enhancing qualities. (The belief is that, in pounding and striking the Havaneem, while pressing on the Barasmana, this effectively draws in a portion of the vast storage of Cosmic Energy that surrounds us all the way up to the Heavens). Many from the congregation wish to take some portions home for their sick who could not attend. (photo above).

With the start of the *Havan Gaah* (Geh), on the first day, and at the start of every six Chahres of annual Gaahanbaars, several other mobeds come into the Agiary Hall, filled with devotees, and pray the concerned Chahre's Afringaans of the Gaahanbaars and related prescribed Prayers. After these prayers the diluted haoma extracts are partaken by the attendees, who then are served with the Gahanbar Lork and Chashnis, arranged by the Anjoman, as well as breakfast which is donated by individuals, on every occasion.

Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary is a member of the Board of Directors (Managing Committee) of the Tehran Anjuman e Mobedan having been elected repeatedly, for over 30 years, to serve and to manage the Anjuman's affairs and its constitutional duties. He has been authorized by the Iranian Ministry of Justice as the sole Zarathushti marriage license issuing authority in Tehran. Born in Yazd, he received his Electronics degree from St Xavier's Technical Institute in Mumbai and worked for J.N. Marshall in India and at IBM, Honeywell, a medical instrument distributor and as an Automation Consultant for several glass manufacturing plants in Iran



THE SYMBOLISM OF THE RITUAL MACE (GURZ) IN ZOROASTRIANISM

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The ritual “mace” in Zoroastrianism is referred to by standard Iranian words: Old Persian probably *vazra*-compare Avestan *vazra*- “mace, club,” preserved in Pahlavi as *vazra/vazr*, and in Middle Persian or Pahlavi as *wazr* which became *warz* by metathesis and subsequently yielded New Persian *gorz* and Parsi Gujarati *gurz*. Depiction of an ox’s head on the mace head was likely in part due to the linguistic metathesis that rendered the term for “mace” similar in pronunciation (though not in written characters) to the words for “agriculture” or “farming” (Middle Persian *warz*, but now New Persian *barz*) and hence by extension for “work” in general, for “gain” and “profit” specifically, and also for “ploughing and “oxen utilized for plowing” (both termed Middle Persian *warzāg*, New Persian *varzāv*). Similarly, the term for “miracles” and “miraculous power” was called *warz* in Middle Persian—especially that projected by Ahura Mazda, as noted in the ninth-century CE Pahlavi text

Dādestān ī Dēnīg “Book of Religious Judgments” by Manushchihir the son of Juwanjam who served as high priest of Fars and Kerman (36:18). So possessing God-given power made an individual *warzāwand*.

In the Yasht “Devotional Poem” or “Hymn” to Mithra or Mehr, that yazata or worship-worthy spirit is said to swing a “*varz* m/mace ... (which is) the strongest of weapons” (Yasht 10:96, 10:132) against evil spirits and deceitful persons even as he rewards the worshippers of Ahura Mazda with “herds of cattle” (Yasht 10:28).

Moreover, the shape of the Zoroastrian mace, i.e., a horned ox-head, links this ritual implement to the yazata Verethraghna or Wahram/Behram whose second corporeal manifestation, as he fights evil-doers alongside Mithra, is said to be “a mighty golden-horned ox” (Yasht 14:7).

Hence, presentation of the mace head in ox-head shape was clearly influenced by these early Zoroastrian beliefs as well for the Yashts were composed between the ninth and fourth centuries BCE followed by a process of canonization lasting into the third century CE. A mace is also said to have been part of the armament of the legendary hero Keresaspa in that section of the Avestan scripture (Yasht 13:61).



Figure 1. Very early example of a gurz, bearing a bead pattern, found at Quetta (now in Pakistan)

The Pahlavi Rivāyat or Treatise Accompanying the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, dating from the ninth-century CE, mentions a legend of Ahura Mazda providing to Ātash or fire a *warz* with the power to “cast down into hell” those who are evil-doers (18d:21). Likewise, close to the end of time during the lifetime of the first savior Ukhshyat-ereta or Hushedar, maces will be deployed against a monstrous wolf (Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 48:7).

Not surprisingly, the Old Persian adjective *vazaraka*-meant “great,” “big,” and “powerful,” meanings preserved in Middle Persian *wuzurg* and New Persian *bozorg*. A parallel to the power transmitted through a divinely-bestowed weapon is seen several times in

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the Rig Veda where *varja* designates the Hindu deva or shining spirit Indra's thunderbolt.

Maces have, of course, been used as weapons by people for millennia. Because of that martial power, the *gurz* became associated with pre-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian life and ritual through the scriptures in the Avesta and the exegeses of the Pahlavi texts. One very early example, bearing a bead pattern (Figure 1) and found at Quetta (now in Pakistan), dates from the Bactrian-Margiana Archeological Complex (BMAC) or Bactrian Bronze Age whose settlements extended across the northeastern and eastern borders of the Iranian plateau between 2100 and 1750 BCE followed by a period of dispersion onto the Iranian plateau from 1750 until 1200 BCE.

The BMAC culture preceded that of the historical Iranians and appears to have been the communities with which the origins of Zoroastrianism and the earliest Iranian language speakers can be associated chronologically and geographically. Another mace head, dating from the late seventh or early eighth century CE and depicting a human face, was discovered at the temple of Nana-Anahita at Dzhartepa (then in Sogdiana, now in Uzbekistan) where it may have been associated with Zoroastrian magian or priestly rituals.

In Iranian epics and miniature paintings from medieval times, the mace was linked with the legendary Pishdadian king Thraetaona or Fredon/Faridun who defeated the villain Azhi Dahaka or Azdahak/Zahhak—a story that entered the Persian Shāh-nāme “Book of Kings” from Zoroastrian tradition. Consequently, the iron *gurz* wielded by Faridun in texts and images bears the horned ox-head as its striking surface.

Similar ox-head maces are associated with the familial heroes Sam, Rostam, and Sohrab during their combats in the Shāh-nāme.



Figures 2A and 2B. Gurz were usually cast from iron and occasionally silver-plated

In contemporary Zoroastrian practice, the *gurz* (Figures 2A and 2B) usually cast from iron and occasionally silver-plated is largely associated with Parsi fire temples (called *dar-e Mehr* and *dar be-Mehr* “court of Mithra” following Iranian usage, and also *agīārī/agiary* in Gujarati) in India and with initiation of Parsi *mobeds* or priests.

The sanctuary within which a holy fire—usually at the rank of Ātash Behrām or Ātash Ādarān—is enthroned at a fire temple has a *gombad* “vaulted ceiling” and a windowless wall on which hang an ox-head mace, two swords, and a dagger intended to defend the flame.¹ There the *gurz* represents not only the mythical one given by Ahura Mazda to fire at the beginning of creation but also the weapon of Mithra in whose sanctuary the fire blazes plus the embodiment of Verethraghna who smites the foes of Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrians.

Because it is associated with priestly authority and clerical defense of the fire temple and the faith, the *gurz* is carried by Parsi priests during other temple-

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related ceremonies too—such as inauguration of the inner sanctuary in which a holy fire is enthroned.²

For similar reasons, a *gurz* is present as a ritual implement during the *nāwār* or first stage of initiation into the Parsi Zoroastrian priesthood. On the sixth day of that initiation, the candidate for priesthood dons white priestly raiment, take up a horned ox-head mace in his right hand, and is then ceremonially led into the *yazishn gāh* or *urwīs gāh* “ritual precinct” to perform the highest act of worship, i.e., the *yasna* “sacrifice, worship” ritual.³

An important focus point in Zoroastrianism since the second millennium BCE, the ritual mace bears meaning linking it to the central tenet of combating *drug* or *druz* “confusion” or “evil.” Said to have been produced by the creator Ahura Mazda and utilized by his spiritual agents, the *gurz* is still wielded symbolically by the magi in defense of the *weh dēn* “good religion.”

(Photos courtesy the author)

(Endnotes)

- 1 . James W. Boyd and Firoze M. Kotwal, “Worship in a Zoroastrian Fire Temple,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 26, 1983, p. 302; Faroukh Dastur and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, “Fire temples and Other Sacred Precincts in Iran and India,” in Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, eds., *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture* (Mumbai: Mapin Publishing, 2002), p. 319.
- 2 . Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, “Parsis of Western India: A Panorama,” in Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, eds., *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture* (Mumbai: Mapin Publishing, 2002), p. 686 fig. 2.
- 3 . Jivanji J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: British India Press, 1937), pp. 193–194; Firoze M. Kotwal and Khojeste Mistree, “The Court of the Lord of Ritual,” in Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, eds., *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture* (Mumbai: Mapin Publishing, 2002), p. 366 fig. 1, p. 374, p. 373 fig. 8.



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I dwell in Possibility By Emily Dickinson 1830–1886

I dwell in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –
More numerous of Windows –
Superior – for Doors –
Of Chambers as the Cedars –
Impregnable of eye –
And for an everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky –
Of Visitors – the fairest –
For Occupation – This –
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise –

Source: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* Edited by R. W. Franklin (Harvard University Press, 1999)

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A NEW AFARGANYU FOR THE PADSHAH SAHEB

ERVAD MARZBAN HATHIRAM

Ervad Marzban Hathiram was recently involved in the design and manufacture of a large afarganyu for the sacred fire of the Ustad Saheb Behramshah Navroji Shroff Dar-e-Meher at Behram Baug in Jogeshwari, a suburb of Mumbai. Ervad Marzban, who agreed to take responsibility for making a new Afarganyu, describes the project.

The *Afarganyus*, on which our ancient *Atash Behram* fires blazed, were made primarily of pure silver or copper. However, the beginning of the 20th century saw the introduction of “German silver” (which has nothing German or silver about it)—it is an alloy containing 60% copper, 20% nickel, and 20% zinc. The combination of these three metals gave rise to a shining metal that looked like silver, but was available at a fraction of the price of silver. The use of copper in the manufacturing of religious implements in our religious institutions began to drop while, increasingly, German silver began to be used. In many Agiaries and Atash Behrams, the use of copper vessels was discontinued in preference for German silver and, later steel or even aluminium—all of which are totally unsuitable. But worse was to follow. The sacred old copper Afarganyus of our Atash Bahrams and Agiaries were replaced with shining German silver! The most glaring case of this was in Dadyseth Atash Behram in Mumbai. Today, devotees can see the nearly 250-year-old copper Afarganyu lying in a corner of the Kebla prayer room (the Afarganyu was fabricated on the specific instructions of Dastur Mulla Kaus and his wise son Dastur Mulla Feroze in 1783). This original grand copper Afarganyu was discarded by the Trustees and replaced with one made of German silver. Old priests of the Dadyseth Atash Behram remark that the decline of the Atash Behram started at the time the Afarganyu was replaced and certain undesirable alterations were made to its Kebla.

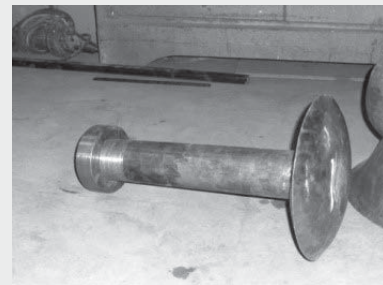
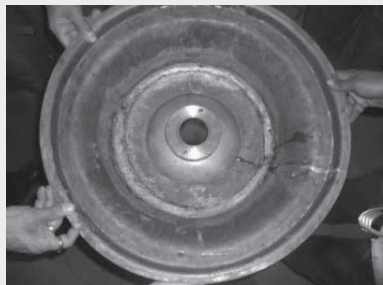
In 2001, the Trustees of the Zoroastrian Radih Society established the Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Daremeher at Behram Baug in Jogeshwari. Despite bearing the name of the *Khshnoom* Master, the *Daremeher* still had the Afarganyu which was made in German silver. When making the Afarganyu, the fabricator cheated the Trust by using one part of the Afarganyu from an older one and making a poor job of the rest. As a result, the Afarganyu shook and vibrated whenever heavy *Kathi* (wood logs) was placed on it.

In 2003, I took over as Panthaky of the Daremeher. During my numerous trips to Dadyseth Atash Behram, I saw the grand copper Afarganyu in the Kebla Hall. Every time I saw it lying there—discarded and useless—there arose a great desire in me to replicate the copper Afarganyu for our Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff Daremeher. This task would be difficult because there are very few fabricators left in Mumbai, who work with copper.

Things happen in nature only when they are destined to, not when one may want them! Thanks to the efforts of our colony residents, Mr. Homi Zaiwalla and Mr. Pervez Karbhari, who both work for Godrej, we managed to secure the services of Mr. Ramesh and his brother, Raju Panchal, who are good fabricators based in Vikhroli. I took the design inspiration from the 250 year old copper Afarganyu lying in the hall of the Dadyseth Atash Behram and made some changes to it. We then made the necessary drawings and entrusted the task to the Panchal brothers. Over a period of nearly 2 months, the brothers fabricated a superb piece using thick (three millimeters), 100% pure copper.

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The following photographs show the various different pieces of the Afarganyu in the raw copper stage.



After the design was approved with some minor changes, the final, assembled Afarganyu in the raw copper stage looked like the right image.

Thereafter, the inner concave sides of the Afarganyu were treated with *kalai* (tin work) to protect it from the intense heat that would be generated. The outer surface of the Afarganyu was brushed, buffed, and then nickel-plated to give it a long-lasting shine and glow. Finally, the completed Afarganyu was delivered to the Daremeher on Sunday, April 17, 2011. The following photographs show the Agiary staff receiving the Afarganyu with a traditional Parsi welcome. The Afarganyu was thoroughly cleaned and washed by our volunteers and then taken inside the fire temple for consecration.



The total weight of the Afarganyu is 65 kilos, which gives you a fair idea of its sturdiness and high quality. The ceremony to consecrate the Afarganyu was performed by me during the morning of Roj Dae-pa-Adar, Mah Adar (Saturday April 23, 2011). The Afarganyu was consecrated in the name of our Master, Ustad

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Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff. After the second Havan Machi on the same day, the consecrated Afarganyu was transferred by two priests to the inner sanctum room (Kebala) and placed near the existing Afarganyu to begin the process of absorption of the divine energies present in the old Afarganyu.

Finally, after the Ushahin Gah Machi, the ceremony to enthrone the Padshah Saheb (Sacred Fire) on the new Afarganyu was performed. A metal chain was used to create a *paiwand* (connection), between the inner pavi, the old Afarganyu, the new Afarganyu, and the marble pedestal. Then with the chanting of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo, four priests lifted the Sarposh (the deep concave tray which was positioned on the old Afarganyu and, on which, the Holy Ash and the Sacred Fire rests), and placed it on the marble pedestal. Two priests lifted the old Afarganyu from the *khwan* (low marble table) and placed it to the side. Working quickly, the new Afarganyu was placed on the khwan, accompanied by loud chanting of the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer. Two small copper plates were placed inside the Afarganyu that had been inscribed with the date of its consecration and the names of all those who had worked hard to make it possible for the agiary to have a new copper afarganyu. Finally, the Sarposh was lifted from the marble pedestal and placed gently on the new Afarganyu, thereby formally enthroning the Padshah Saheb on His new throne.

The Paiwand chain was then lifted and removed and the pavi was properly cleaned and isolated again. Thereafter, all the priests recited the Atash Nyaesh in a loud and sonorous voice, finishing off with a Tandorasti for the Padshah Saheb and the Hama Anjuman. In this manner, the Padshah Saheb was presented with a new throne in advance of Roj Adar Mah Adar. At 6:15 a.m. the Hama Anjuman Machi of five kilograms was offered to the Padshah Saheb in the presence of over fifty colony residents who had gathered to witness the first Machi of the Padshah Saheb on the new Afarganyu.'

I am thankful to Mr. Homi Zaiwalla and Mr. Parvez Karbhari who worked and coordinated tirelessly with the vendor to deliver the superbly crafted Afarganyu on time. I am also grateful to the twenty-six residents of Behram Baug who gave generous sums of money to defray the cost of the Afarganyu. In keeping with our philosophy of silent and anonymous charity, no inscription or wordings have been etched on the Afarganyu.

If the Afargaganyu is ever lifted in the future, the inscription of how and when the Afarganyu was made may be read. May the new Afarganyu offer faithful service to the Padshah Saheb for many years. It is my wish and desire that more Agiaries and Atash Behrams follow this example and change their Afarganyas to pure copper.

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Ritual Implements

ATASH NU GEET (SONG OF FIRE)

SARAH STEWART
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Of the numerous wedding songs that mark the various stages of the Zoroastrian marriage celebrations most are festive songs with no particular religious content. The song that is unique amongst them is the Atash nu Geet, or Song of the Fire. Although traditionally sung by female singers, (goyans), at weddings and sometimes at navjotes in India, the song is in fact dedicated to the founding of the second *Atash Bahram*, an event that took place in Navsari in 1765. The song is also unusual because, although composed by laymen, it appears to have acquired a religious status independent of priestly usage. The stated purpose of the song is to obtain merit. According to the song, whoever commissions the Atash nu Geet will be given righteousness, good fortune, prosperity, sons, long life and finally a place in heaven.

The song gives an idealised description of the building of the fire temple and the installation of the sacred fire within it. Why it came to be sung at weddings is a matter for speculation but there may be some connection to the fact that the Adar mahino nu parab (when both day and month dedicated to Fire coincide) is the most auspicious time for people to get married. Prior to the 'birthday of the fire' women would spring-clean and decorate the fireplace, which, in former times, would be kept solely for worship. In the song we are told: 'Turmeric powder has been drawn in the shape of a moon all over the place,' something that was also done to decorate the domestic fire surround. The fire was sometimes kept alight during the whole of Adur mah, otherwise it was lit the day before and kept alight until the Ushahin gah, or dawn watch of Adar roj. In this context the song resembles an act of worship, or a prayer, as much as a festive song (Stewart 2004)¹. Although the Song commemorates the founding of a temple fire, its usage in connection with the hearth fire, and also with weddings, brought it into the domain of the women of the household. In a sense, it represented the domestication of the temple fire, with the priestly ritual for feeding the fire, the boy ceremony, being replicated by women in their devotional rituals for tending the hearth fire (Stewart 2007)².

Full performances of the song have been witnessed and written about by James Russell (2002)³ and

Jenny Rose (1986)⁴. Both authors refer to its ritual significance, for example the lighting of the oil lamp, incense burning and the festive silver ses, also priestly rituals such as the feeding of the sacred fire in the fire temple, the nirang, or consecrated bull's urine and the nahn or ritual purification.



In a version of the song published in 1879 it is clear that there is a lead singer, who recites the song line by line, and a chorus that chants 'O Friends let us go to the fire' after each line. This makes the song over 525 lines in length and it was said to take eight hours to recite correctly. In this version there are a number of direct references to the rituals performed by priests in the fire temple, such as the boy ceremony or feeding of the fire, as well as to the *ashodad* - gifts made to the priests in return for their work: 'the Dasturs shall be given a pair of bangles made of gold coins', 'we shall give the *Ervads* two rupees'. Once the fire is enthroned then comes the task of assembling all the implements and ingredients necessary to perform the inner rituals of the *ijashne gah*, or ritual precinct:

Let us make the *agiary* clean,

O Friends, let us go to the Fire * CHORUS

Take the pomegranate, the date palm, the *urvar*, and the *nirang* and let us give *nahn* to the *ervads*, *
Let us consecrate the *hindora* of the *agiary*, *
Let us call the son of the coppersmith and let us get the *havan* (bell) and *kundi* (vessel), *
Let us call the son of the goldsmith and get a set of gold chains, *
(these gold chains) shall be placed in the hands of the *Ervads*, *
Let us begin the work (consecration) of *Srosh* *
Let us begin the work of the *ijashne*, *
Let us begin the *Vendidad*, *
Let us begin doing the work of the religion, *
Let us ask the *ervad* to make the *drons*, *

Let us consecrate the *hindhora*, *
Let us ask the Dastur to consecrate the *patru*, O

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friend (one of the rituals usually connected with Srosh). *

Let us get milk, wine, and pomegranate, *

Let us do the *jashan* for the *agiary*, *

Let the whole *Anjuman* partake of the consecrated food, *

Let us call the son of the coppersmith, O friend, and let us get benches of copper, *

Let us call the son of the goldsmith and get silver pots, *

Let us enthrone the *Atash Bahram**

Let us call the son of the grocer,

O friend, and let us get sandalwood, frankincense and *agar* (sticks, sweet smelling, blackish/brown in colour), *

Let us do the *boy* ceremony of the *Atash Bahram*, *

Let us get sacred books from Iran,

O friend; let us ask the Dasturs to recite them, *

Begin the work of the *ijashne*,

Begin the *Vendidad*,

Begin the consecration of Srosh

Begin the work of the religion ...

In a clear reference to the divinity, Sraosha, the song continues:

Let us call the son of the poultry farmer, O friend, and let us get a crowing cock,

(With this crowing cock) the *Atash Bahram* will be awakened, *

The one who goes to the fire, in his or her (silver) tray are various things, the good Dasturs and the mobeds pray well at the *agiary*,

The good *ervads* pray well at the *agiary*,
All the good *behdins* pray well at the *agiary*,
Behdins distribute the *ashodad* among yourselves,
Ahura Mazda acknowledged Zarathushtra's religion.
The Parsis are great doers of good acts,

The one who takes a *nahn* and goes to the *agiary*, that good act which he has done has a spin off on the entire *tolah* (priestly community).

There are many versions of the *Atash nu Geet*, both published and hand-written, that I have collected and worked on with my colleague and friend, the late Mrs Shehnaz Munshi. It is she who translated the 1879 text for me and who remembered her mother singing the song while tending the hearth fire. A fully annotated translation is due to be published next year.

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Outer facade of the inner sanctum of the old Navsari Atash Bahram, before it was broken down.

Collection: Firoza Punthakey-Mistree
Photograph: Madhur Shroff
Courtesy of Godrej, P. and F. Punthakey
Mistree (2002), *A Zoroastrian Tapestry, Art, Religion and Culture*

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PLACES OF ZOROASTRIAN WORSHIP IN IRAN

MOBED MEHRABAN FIROUZGARY
IRAN

The Sassanians developed three grades of *AtashKade* (Home for Atash).

- The *Atash-e Verahram* (Parsis: *Atash Behram*) category is the most sacred and revered. Consecration ceremonies for this level of AtashKade are conducted by the most skilled and experienced priests who create its Fire from the Fires of sixteen sources. Maintenance of these sites is entrusted to only the most senior, highest caliber priests.
- *Dar e Meher* (Parsis: *Agiary*) is the next lower grade and are consecrated through simpler rituals. Their fire is made from the fires of 8 sources and can be maintained by relatively less experienced priests.
- The lowest AtashKade grade is the *Dadgah*, which can be maintained by laypersons in the absence of a priest. Although sanctified by a priest in a simple installation ceremony, its fire is not necessarily continuously maintained.

While every major city and populated area in Sassanid era Iran had its Atash-e Verahram and Darbe Mehers; nearly all were demolished or replaced with mosques after the Arab invasion. However, there are still Muslim places of worship where remains of an old AtashKade can still be discerned.

The Holy Fires of the three Atash-e Verahrams of ancient Iran (*Adur Gushnasp*, *Adur Farrabagh*, and *Adur Borzin-Mehr*) were once so highly revered that echoes of their fame can be heard, even now, in our ceremonial prayers (e.g., *vide Hamazoor Dahmaan*).

During and following the Arab invasion, the sacred AtashKade fires were preserved in low mud-brick buildings, indistinguishable from surrounding dwellings. Such fire chambers were paved and unelevated and, as a further precaution, were often hidden away within the recesses of thick walls.

As the cruel rulers' oppression slowly lessened during the late nineteenth century, Iranian Zoroastrians began rebuilding their AtashKades. The new AtashKades' architecture often mimicked local Iranian structures and followed the ground plans of their Parsi counterparts. Due to attacks from intolerant hooligans, new AtashKades were often located in more populated central areas of the community.

The first publicly enthroned Holy Fire was at the Yazd *Gahanbarkhane* (house for Gahanbar celebrations)—its name may have masked the first Formal Atash Bahram from hooligans. The front view

is a primary school with several passages that must be passed before the fire temple is viewed. It used the ancient Adar Khorreh Fire and a portion of the Adar Farrabaga Fire (of King Jamshed's Glory), which had been smuggled to Isfahan, as its Stem Fire. It appears that Adar Faranbagh (number 66 on the map) branched off during troubled times, one portion going to the vicinity of Isfahan and from there, after centuries of migration and safe keeping at different locations, to Sharifabad village, near Yazd.

New Dare Mehers were constructed in Kerman, Tehran, and Yazd. The late philanthropist Rustom Giev incorporated a Dare Mehr in the Rostam Baugh housing complex in Tehran Pars. This was followed by additional Dare Mehers being built in Shiraz and Isfahan.

The Atash Dadgah class of Zoroastrian places of worship and congregation were unpretentious and built away from populated areas. They were named "Shrines to the Yazatas," (like the *Verahram Izad* and *Meher Izad*, or *Peers*)—each claimed to enshrine a dead martyr. These shrines are similar to the Muslim Imamzades and were reasonably safe and easy to maintain.

Depending on the respective Peers budget, slow-burning and easily-lit hardwood was used for the fire. Dried pine cones and acorns were carefully stored and used for the Fire's tinder. Pistachio shells also served as tinder, producing a nice aroma when combined with its pungent, dried green fruit coverings. Once lit, the fire was kept aflame with dried wood, sweet smelling herbs like Esfand (wild rue), kondor, a crude loban, anise or fennel seeds, and a variety of

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Above, archaeological survey map of the seventy-seven excavated and recorded ancient Atash Kades. The three most ancient and revered Atash Bahrams are: Azargoshasp (10), near Takab; Azar Borzin Meher (21), near Mashad; and Faranbagh in Firuzabad (66), near Shiraz (identified with fully capitalized names).
 Courtesy of the author.

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locally available plants and herbs.

As places of worship, the Atash Kadehs in Iran are equipped with the basic, day-to-day religious implements typically found within a consecrated Fire Temple. The building's layout consists of the inner *Fire Hall* or *Adorian* (*sanctum*), which has a large *Afarganyu* at its center that holds a continuously burning fire—either flaming or smoldering under ashes. The fire vase is placed over a stone platform that is somewhat representative of a *Takht* (king's throne); it allows the sacred fire to be elevated and kept higher than the level of the worshippers' feet. A two-tiered, circular metal stand faces east in a corner of the sanctum. The top tier supports a bronze tray that holds a continuously burning oil lamp. The lower tier and its tray holds the *Chimto* and *Chamach* (tong and ladle) (Farsi: *Anbor va kafgeer*) that are used to tend the Holy Fire. When any of the implements are needed, a skilled metal worker from Yazd or Isfahan is commissioned to duplicate one from an original item.

Other implements are brought from India and donated by well-wishers. Brass bells are suspended from the ceilings in the two east-facing corners. Priests ring the bells during the *boi* ceremony. Narrow shelves, mounted waist-high on the inner wall behind brass-grilled windows, hold a metal bowl that contains *Rakhi* (fire ash), (Gujrati: *Rakhia*). They are also used to hold devotees' offerings of wood pieces, oil containers or, even, lighted oil lamps, while the devotee prays behind the grille.

The customary swords and shield wall hangings seen in Indian Fire Temple sanctums are not used in Iran. We believe the *Mazdayasnu Ahmi* (Oath of Allegiance to our Religion) and, for that matter, Zarathushtra's teachings taught nonviolence and the avoidance of bloodshed. Any additional items pertaining to the Holy Fire within the Adorian may be kept on the supplementary platform that is used to store logs and oil for daily use. The Adorian's entry and side railings are rarely decorated. Iranian devotees bow their heads to pay respect and never prostrate themselves. We do not kiss the threshold of the sanctum or the railings—such actions are considered by us as paganistic and unhygienic.

The implements presently used during the *Yezeshnigaah ceremony*, or *Alat*, are laid out as mentioned in my article on the subject [page 25]. As stated there, the full and exact performance of the *Yezeshni* is now defunct; many of the facilities needed for performing the various parts of the *Yezeshni*, namely, the *Bareshnumgahs* and the use of libation (e.g., taro or nirang) are no longer used or performed. A symbolic, abbreviated recitation of the *Yasna* at the start of the *Gahambar* days and a similar recitation during the performance of a *Novzooty* or priestly initiation is all of what remains today.

Water wells, once located near an *atash kadeh* (fire temple), are now sealed or filled. Only man made pools remain, a palm tree may exist but it does not have any special use. *Sedab* shrubs (Latin: *ruta graveolens*, a strong smelling rue) and *murt* (myrtle) and *sarve* (cypress) trees have been planted in atash kadeh gardens and fulfill the community's needs for festive days or death ceremonies. All Fire Temple complexes have facilities that are used for ceremonial cooking and small ceremonial functions. Halls, used for holding larger community functions, as well as other facilities of a library, medical dispensary, and shops that sell religious symbols or items, are usually located on the Anjoman properties adjacent to the Fire Temples.

Gahambars are widely celebrated by Iranian Zarathushtis. While the massive Gahambar cooking vessels are not regarded as ritual implements, some (more than a hundred years old) are kept by the Anjoman and are used only for ceremonial, religious food cooked during the Gahambar days. They may be moved to other locations and used to cater to the devotees who flock to the Tehran Aramgah on Zarathushtra's death anniversary and other major Zarathushti events. Every month on *Ardibehesht Roj*, a crowd gathers at the Tehran Darbe Mehr for mass prayers. At each of these events, a benevolent Behdin underwrites the preparation of Aash and Naan for approximately one hundred devotees.

Today, Fire Temples in India are better outfitted and maintained than those in Iran; whereas, millennia ago, the scores of Iranian Fire Temples were better equipped and maintained. The Parsis' religious devotion and ritual use of implements was learned from their Iranian counterparts and put into practice ever since their migration to India. In Iran, the calamities and relentless oppression experienced by the Zoroastrians resulted in our religious practices being driven underground and our symbolic implements destroyed or driven

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underground.

Beginning more than a century ago, and in a more tolerant Iran, Iranian Zarathushti religious practices and use of religious implements resurged, now closely matching that of the Parsis. Credit for the fortunate turnaround in our community's prosperity is, in part, due to Parsi benefactors such as Maneckji Limji Hataria and the few who followed after him. As such, most of our revived practices are in line with the practices of our Parsee brethren.



Takht-e Soleiman/Soleyman (Throne of Solomon), Azargoshasb, (#10 on the map) is a UNESCO World Heritage site located in Iran's Western Azerbaijan province. It is one of the most ancient Iranian Atash Behrams. Excavations indicate that it has been occupied since the Archaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 BCE) and reached its zenith during the Sasanian period (224 CE to 651 CE). Most likely, access to the Great Fire was restricted to the Sassanid kings, their royal court priests (Mobed Shahis), and noblemen. The king and his court most likely rode from Tisfun (in modern Iraq) to be blessed at the Fire Temple prior to going to war—they may have walked the last portion of the journey as an added tribute to the Fire Temple. It may also have provided a secure area to store war plunder and gifts. The complex is on a "platform" at

the top of an acclivity about sixty meters higher than the surrounding plain. On this 350 m by 550 m platform are an artesian lake, a fire temple, a temple dedicated to Anahita (the divinity of the waters), and a Sasanian royal sanctuary. This site was destroyed at the end of the Sasanian era, but was partially reconstructed during the Ilkhanid (Mongol) in the thirteenth century.

(Photo credit: "Takht-e-Soleiman.jpg" by Own work/ myself is licensed under CC-BY-SA-3.0 [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported]. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Takht-e-soleiman-1.jpg)

The Niasar Fire Temple (#38 on the map) was built by Ardashir I (180–242 CE) in the chahar-taqi (four directions) style. It is approximately 14 by 14 meters; its walls and openings face the four cardinal directions. In addition to being a place of worship, the fire temple was most likely used as an astronomical observatory that guided agrarian endeavors and determined seasonal changes and gahambar days. This ancient fire temple is located approximately twenty-eight kilometers west of Kashan, Isfahan province. (Photo courtesy of K. E. Eduljee, Zoroastrian Heritage, www.zoroastrianheritage.com)



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The Fire Temple of Isfahan (Ātashgāh-e Esfahān, #50 on the map) is located eight kilometers west of Isfahan, Isfahan province. It is part of a larger Sassanid-era complex and occupies the top of a hill that rises 210 meters above the plains. Like other Atashkades located near Silk Road caravan routes, the Isfahan fire temple was dual purpose: a place of worship and a navigational beacon to help guide caravan bashi. (Photo courtesy of K. E. Eduljee, Zoroastrian Heritage, www.zoroastrianheritage.com)

Palace of Ardeshir (Farranbagh/Atar Farnbag/Azar Faroo/the Fire of the Priests..., #66 on the map) is located on the outskirts of Firuzabad, Fars province, about sixty miles south of Shiraz. Ardeshir I, a mobed-king, is believed to have constructed one of his palaces around the Great Fire to confirm his worthiness, protect the Fire, and restrict access to the priestly class. Its more ancient history, as

stated by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: The Farnbag Fire was at first in Khwārezm, until in the 6th century BCE. According to tradition, King Vishtāspa (c. 660-583 BCE.) ... Zoroaster's protector, transported it to Kabulistan then Khosrau II (Chosroes II) ... the last great king of the Sasanian Empire, reigning from 590 to 628 ... transported it to the ancient sanctuary of Kariyan in Fars

... <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/201998/Farnbag-fire>. (Photo credit: "Ardeshir-palace-common.jpg" by Own work/Атаман Павлюк is licensed under CC-BY-SA-3.0 [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported]. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ardeshir-palace-common.jpg)



On the Word “RITUAL”

FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE

Rituals, within the Zoroastrian context, consist of a set sequence of gestures and actions, accompanied by the recitation of prayers performed within a demarcated and consecrated area. Rituals include rites of passage, purification rites, and rituals performed for the well-being of the world through the propitiation of the Amesha Spentas and the Holy Yazatas; which are performed according to a prescribed order established over time. In Zoroastrianism, an important aspect of rituals is the consecration of religious implements to imbue them with sacredness, thereby setting them apart from the profane.

- The word “ritual” originates from the Latin *ritualis* meaning that which relates to rites, *ritus*.
- In ancient Roman law, *ritus* was the correct and established way of doing something and in religious practice it was used to describe the exact performance of a custom or practice.
- In 1560 the word ritual entered the English language from Middle French as well as directly from Latin and was used in reference to a prescribed order of performing religious rites.
- In Sanskrit the closest cognate is *rtá* the establishment of order as propounded in the Vedas and refers to a cosmic order or a natural order.
- The closest word for ritual in Avestan is perhaps the word *yasna* which literally means offering or worship.
- Colloquially, Zoroastrian priests in India use the general Gujarati phrase *Kriya-kam* for rituals.
- In pure Persian, the word for ritual is *aayeen* (which is less used).
- In colloquial Persian, the more popular word for ritual is *marasem* (which is corrupted with Arabic).

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PERSPECTIVE RELIGIOSITY OR SPIRITUALITY

In discussing, the states of religiosity and spirituality, the terms are often used interchangeably and the difference in meaning of the two words is often obscured. Religiosity is a word used by social scientists to refer to the numerous aspects of religious activity, which a person adopts such as adherence to rituals, acceptance of religious symbols, deities and the acceptance of a defined doctrine allowing for acts of pious devotion. Therefore the implements used for the enactment of rituals are seen as acts of religiosity. They express adherence to the teaching of an organized socio-religious institution and practice and are of the doctrinal aspects of the religion.

Spirituality on the other hand, is a much broader term which does not necessarily require adherence to institutional affiliations. Spirituality is the way we are with ourselves, the way we are with Creation around us, and that is a consequence of the way we are with our God within. Spirituality is without border and in contrast, organized religions have created distinct borders to separate them in order for them to retain their specific identity.

Coming to ritual implements and why they are needed? The answer would be, that the use of religious implements in the performance of rituals, help in the outward expression of doctrinal concepts embodied in the theology of the faith. For example, the two priests present in a Jashan ceremony demonstrate the representation of the Material and Spiritual existence of *Getig* and *Menog* respectively. The flowers arranged in two rows are the embodiment of Yazata Ameretat. The descending and the ascending order of picking flowers up by the priest signify the journey of the soul from and to the spiritual domain.

In a similar manner the Yasna ceremony is a representation of Cosmic space and Creation. The entire consecrated ritual area and all the objects and enactments performed within it, become a microcosmic model of the larger reality that is the macrocosm. Duchesne-Guillemin in his book *Symbols and Values in Zoroastrianism: Their survival and renewal* states:

...figuration of the Sun, Moon, earth are easily recognizable. Fire is a substitute of the Sun: ... The Moon is present in the form of the two metal crescents on

ERVAD DR JEHAN BAGLI

which the barsom is placed ... As for the earth, it is the table, in front of which the chief priest sits ... It seems that this completes the cosmic definition of the ceremony in which all the elements take part: fire, water, vegetable and animal nature, ... The entire universe, as one may infer, is brought into play to avert the demons and death.

The main service of Yasna starts with the recital that in fact invites the Lord Wise, together with all its benevolent aspects, and all the spiritual components, to participate in this celebration, to receive the offering and bestow their blessings.

The main goal of the human life is to purify our mental and physical self, so that we can impart to the corporeal world, the Truth and Good Mind vested in the Divine. The major purpose of the Yasna liturgy is therefore synchronous, with this goal of human life, to help depict the purification of the *Getig* creation (physical world) to revive it to its pristine state, and to bring it in close proximity to the Divine Dominion of the *Menog* world (spiritual world). In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial to preserve to the utmost, the purity of the physical location, and to maintain the cleanliness and sacredness of all the ritual implements. This is basically achieved by performing the ceremony within the pavi (furrows made in the floor).

It is with the view to show the proper representation of cosmos doctrinally, that we have the *Yasna gah* arranged in a specific manner so that the performing zaotar, the principal priest, sits with his back to the North, and the sacred Fire, the embodiment of Ahura Mazda, is positioned in the south. The *barsom* that rests on the two crescent shaped stands symbolically serve as a channel that unifies the Material and the Spiritual existence. It also pays homage to the plant kingdom.

In order that all the requisites are made ready, with highest level of purity, the tradition has evolved a preparatory rite for the *yasna* ceremony, which is known as the *paragna* ritual. It is during this preparatory ritual that requisites such as *Jivam* (goat milk), *Haoma* (the plant twigs), and *Urvaram* (pomegranate leaves) are collected and consecrated. A similar rite is also

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performed for date palm leaves that are braided into a cord (*aiwyahan*) and used to tie the *barsom* wires.

The preparation of all these requisites and the utensils in this elaborate manner conveys the extreme importance of purity and cleanliness in Zarathushti lifestyle. This also reflects how mankind in general and Zarathushtis in particular, by emulating Ahura Mazda through Spenta Mainyu, can bring forth the manifestation of God in this corporeal existence.

Thus while spirituality is an individual's perception of the self, in connection with the divine defined by one's own personal religious norms, religiosity is

defined by the standards set by a religion or religious group that asks of its adherents to follow a defined prescriptive format of worship, giving the individual an experience of spirituality and a connection with the divine when conducted in the right way.



Ervad Jehan Bagli is the past president of North American Mobeds' Council, and co-author of *Understanding and Practice* series on Jashans, Navjote, Weddings and Obsequies and Navar ceremonies.

Mr. Fereidoon Demehri

1947- April 18, 2015

The Founder of Zoroastrian News Agency (ZNA)

Mr Fereidoon (Feri) Demehri of Vancouver, Canada died as a result of an unfortunate and untimely car accident at age 67 years. He was an icon in the Zoroastrian and Iranian communities and will always be remembered for his enthusiasm in culture, the arts, music, sports, films, ancient history, and charity. His contribution to the Zoroastrian community include his O'shihan Cultural Organization, ZNA, Z-film Festivals. His story is one of active generosity and a heartfelt devotion. For him, Zoroastrianism was more than a cultural identity, it was a way to bridge gaps and unite all cultures. It was more than an appreciation for the arts, it was about creating opportunity for our youth to shine as artists. It was more than announcements and events, but rather a vision



to create a global community that celebrated and honored the Zoroastrian culture and faith.

Fereidoon leaves a legacy that has and will continue to inspire many. He was the weaver of the web that has, for so many years and through so many initiatives brought us closer together to celebrate and to remember our rich cultural heritage. Let us celebrate and remember his life and his vision. May his spirit continue to inspire us and strengthen our community as he did so tirelessly when he walked amongst us. Ravaanash Shaad, Behesht-e Barin Jaaye Gaahash Baad!
Adapted From ZNA

Mr Demehri was a good friend and supporter of the FEZANA JOURNAL and we extend our most heartfelt condolences to his wife Parvaneh and his daughters Afrouz and Negar. The community was enriched by his presence and will be diminished by his passing away, Dolly Dastoor ED.

Ritual Implements

PERSPECTIVE

THE NATURE OF RITUALS IN ZOROASTRIANISM

KHOJESTE P. MISTREE

Rituals are a set of practices which when enacted in a given prescribed order, become the medium through which a person is able to experience the unseen spiritual world. Rituals are the outward manifestation of the principles intrinsic to the faith. If the tenets form the intellectual bedrock of the Zoroastrian faith, then rituals, give the worshipper an insight into an intangible dimension of spiritual reality. In Zoroastrianism, this spiritual reality is defined by a divine world, comprising Ahura Mazda, the Bounteous Immortals also known as the Amesha Spentas and including the Yazatas, Adorable Beings worthy of worship. It is in honour of this world that rituals in effect are performed.

The establishment and continuity of rituals, links a Zoroastrian to the past, and the recitation of prayers in Avestan and Pahlavi, connects the worshipper to prophet Zarathushtra, to the illustrious line of High Priests of the past, the *Buzorgans* or the pious ones, and to the *Ashavans*, the righteous ones, of the faith. Ritual implements on the other hand, are used to facilitate and enhance the performance of a ritual and are in themselves seen to be sacred.

The regular performance of rituals in a fire temple, creates

a spiritual energy, which the worshipper can experience, leading to an inexplicable sense of comfort and harmony within oneself and the community. It is through the performance of high rituals of the Zoroastrian faith that a consecrated fire is enthroned as the seventh creation of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. Ritual purity, cleanliness, pious devotion, prayers and the proper use of ritual implements, are important for the successful performance of Zoroastrian rituals.

According to Mary Boyce, 'Zoroastrian priests who solemnize the high rituals with scrupulous exactness in purity of intention, word and act', honor the Creator and bring benefit to the worshipper and the physical creations of Ahura Mazda. Ritual oriented religions often inculcate within its adherents a sense of collective identity and mutual acceptance, unique to the faith.

Zoroastrian rituals when enacted in the physical world are represented by the materials and implements (*ālat*) used; the psychological world comes alive with the exact performance of the ritual as experienced by the priests and celebrants; and the spiritual world unfolds for the participants giving an experiential dimension of reality, a mystical experience, unique to the faith.

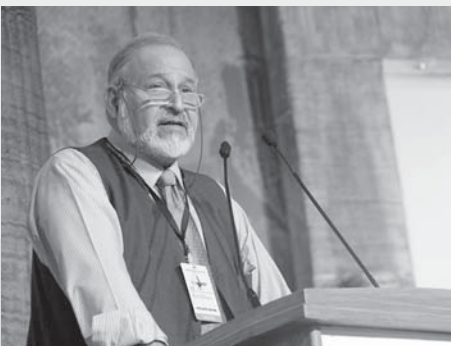
The role of a Zoroastrian priest in the enactment of a ritual goes far beyond the recitation of prayers. When a priest brings his consciousness to the ritual, he develops a ritual power (*amal*)

which is necessary to transpose the sensate physical parts of the ritual (eg. the implements used) into an unquantifiable, spiritual resource through the recitation of prayers (such as well water being made into *Hom nu pani*). The enactment of ritual gestures, brought alive through acts of devotion, piety and righteous living, brings benefit to the community.

It is the responsibility of every Zoroastrian to protect, safeguard and nurture the spiritual world through the regular performance and ordering of Zoroastrian rituals.

High rituals (*pav mahal kriyas*) are now performed only by a select group of Zoroastrian priests in India. In Iran many rituals are adhered to in spirit rather than the exactitude of a set form, as the exigencies of time and history have led to the emergence of fluidity in practice, a product of preservation founded on endurance and survival. In some of the village Atash Kadehs of Yazd, very special fires burn, which have a level of sacredness due to their antiquity and links to a hoary past. These sacred fires in Iran are often tended by old men and women from the non-priestly class, with a sense of devotion and veneration which is unequalled.

Ritual implements help to enhance the ritual process and when activated in unison, the priest much like an alchemist is able to generate a ritual power, *amal* which in turn ensures the effectiveness of the ritual for the worshipper.



Khojeste Mistree is the founder of Zoroastrian Studies and a Trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat

Ritual Implements

ANCIENT PERSIA MEETS COLONIAL INDIA: HISTORIES PORTRAYED ON A ZOROASTRIAN SILVER BOWL

QAMAR ADAMJEE

“Pull a thread here and you’ll find it’s attached to the rest of the world.”

Nadeem Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil*

Every so often one encounters an object from the past that intrigues a modern viewer. Separated from its original context, it appears at first to be one thing or another or raises more questions than are immediately answerable. But as one starts digging deeper, surprising connections emerge between distant places and cultures, or fascinating information surfaces about the human agencies that brought the object into being. Such finds reaffirm the idea that people and places—and in fact, the past—are oftentimes not as separated as they may seem.

One such object that invites reconsideration is a silver bowl in the collection of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (Fig. 1). Made in the late 1800s or early 1900s for a Zoroastrian patron in India, and decorated with scenes of ancient Persian kings, the bowl raised for me the questions: “what is ancient Persian imagery doing on a colonial period Indian object and how did it get there?” This launched a treasure hunt for information that showed, through the lens of a single object, a glimpse into the ways in which India, Burma, and Iran were connected by the Zoroastrian community during the British colonial period (1858–1947).

This short essay is a preliminary study of this bowl, and an initial step in ongoing research.



Figure 1. Ceremonial bowl with Zoroastrian themes, 1890–1900, view of Darius I imagery. India, probably Bombay (Mumbai); silver alloy with zinc and copper.

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; acquisition made possible by the Zarhosti Anjuman of Northern California, Rati Forbes, Betty N. Alberts, and members of the board of the Society for Asian Art in honor of Past President Nazneen Spliedt, 2009.25.

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The Asian Art Museum's (AAM) bowl is large in size, measuring 8 inches in height and 13 1/2 inches in diameter. It stands on a low foot with a wide base and has tall sides that curve slightly inwards near the opening. Its shape and size resemble a Buddhist begging bowl or water bowl, of the type seen frequently in colonial period Burmese silverware. The bowl is decorated with figural imagery and two different narrative scenes wrap around the body. The main designs are executed in a high relief technique (*repoussé*), and additional details such as facial features, costume patterns, and landscape elements are incised and chased on the surface. A finely worked lotus leaf band surrounds the base and a peacock adorns the bottom of the foot (Fig. 2).

The scenes on the bowl, one of which prominently features the *fravashi* symbol, immediately associated it with a Zoroastrian patron. This bowl came to the museum as an example of Burmese silver from



Figure 2. Ceremonial bowl with Zoroastrian themes, 1890–1900, view of Shapur I imagery. India, probably Bombay (Mumbai); silver alloy with zinc and copper.

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; acquisition made possible by the Zarhosti Anjuman of Northern California, Rati Forbes, Betty N. Alberts, and members of the board of the Society for Asian Art in honor of Past President Nazneen Spliedt, 2009.25.

approximately 1875, and based on our initial research, this attribution was plausible. Silverware was highly fashionable in 19th century India,¹ and richly decorated objects were produced at several centers, including Madras, Kutch, Kashmir, Calcutta, Rangoon, and Bombay. They were sold at silver shops in the major cities and were often made in workshops associated with the store. Among the prominent silversmiths were the Bombay-based Parsi companies of F. P. Bhungara and Ardeshir & Byramjee. Silverware was made for the affluent Indian market and, through customizable designs in catalogues, for the European market.

From its technical aspects, the AAM bowl related to known types of colonial period Burmese silver bowls; its Zoroastrian imagery was also unremarkable given the presence of a flourishing community in cities such as Rangoon. However, its stylistic features raised questions: the figures on the bowl had a different body type in comparison with other Burmese examples, they appeared in lower relief on the surface, and the relationship between the figures and the surrounding decorative imagery was also different. Together, these



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qualities suggested that the AAM bowl was likely not produced in Burma, but probably instead in the city of Bombay.

Bombay had steadily gained importance from the late seventeenth century onwards, and in 1858 it became the capital of the British Raj's Bombay Presidency. With one of India's finest harbors, by 1900 Bombay handled forty percent of India's trade, which among other commodities, included trade of silver bullion and silver objects. The city was a cosmopolitan center and offered employment opportunities in many fields. In a 1904 monograph on silverware, Cecil Burns, principal of the School of Art in Bombay, noted that silversmiths from Bengal, Lucknow, Kutch, and even Burma and Siam, came to Bombay for work, and he complained that "there is no style of work in Gold or Silver distinctive of Bombay City. 'Sonars' from all parts of India are brought by the wealthy firms of jewelers to work in their workshops."

Bombay was also home to a sizeable and prominent Parsi community. They prospered in various professions, such as builders and managers at the Bombay dockyard, pioneering middlemen in the lucrative Chinese and East African trade, textile manufacture and trade, and the stock market. After the 1820s, when western-style education became available in India, the Parsis seized that opportunity more than any other community and began to hold positions in fields such as medicine, law, engineering, and technology. The growth in material prosperity facilitated participation in other spheres of social, political and intellectual activity, as well as in artistic and creative avenues, such as art and literature, sports, and theater. Thus, within a relatively short period, the Parsis had grown from an insignificant minority community to becoming one of the most influential.

Several important family names such as Tata, Jeejeebhoy, Petit, Wadia, Readymoney and others, appear in nineteenth century Parsi history. They made important contributions to Bombay's civic life, shaping the city's culture through major works of public philanthropy that included hospitals, causeways and bridges, religious and educational institutions. In other words, Parsi wealth was not only considerable, it was also highly visible. This increased prominence also had implications for the Zoroastrian religion. Leading community members perceived their social and political positions not only as personal achievements but also in terms of religious responsibility and community well-being. They actively supported religious education, translations of religious texts, and religious reform. The chief objects of Parsi public works were fire temples: by 1900, there were nearly 120 Parsi temples in India, of which one-third were in Bombay alone. The community-building efforts of the Indian Parsis extended beyond the subcontinent. They formed the organization Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia, which from 1854 onwards established contact with co-religionists in Qajar Iran, and aimed at improving their legal, infrastructural, and sociopolitical conditions.

It was in such an environment that Parsi intellectuals looked to ancient Persian history, particularly to the glories of the Achaemenid and Sasanian dynasties, which they perceived as the "their" history. They documented that past, traced it to their present day, and situated themselves within that history. With the coalescing of a community identity and growing public visibility, there emerged a need for a recognizable visual identity. The Parsis looked therefore to historic sources, to artistic forms associated with the Achaemenids and Sasanians, and incorporated varied historical elements into the newly-built public institutions. The use of the *fravashi* symbol or of the bull capitals from royal palaces in Persepolis are two such examples. Ancient Persian imagery also featured on other types of objects such as the silver casket with "Persian" scenes gifted in 1897 by the Bombay Parsis to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee, and the AAM bowl.

The AAM's silver bowl gains new meaning within this socio-cultural context. Its entire decorative scheme is an assemblage of motifs from various sources, and their combined presence on a single vessel makes this object particularly intriguing. The figural imagery, appearing with overall accuracy on the bowl, comes

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from two well-known ancient Persian rock reliefs dating to the Achaemenid (550–330 BCE) and Sasanian (224–651 CE) periods depicting victory scenes of two important rulers of the ancient world.

The first scene (Fig. 3) derives from a sixth century BCE Achaemenid rock relief at Bisutun, located high on a cliff-face in northwestern Iran (Kermanshah province). It shows Darius I (ruled 521–486 BCE) accompanied by his attendants, facing the image of the winged divinity in a solar disk and standing victorious over his vanquished enemies. The second scene (Fig. 4) is from a Sasanian rock relief in southwestern Iran (Fars province) and depicts Shapur I (ruled 241–272 CE) triumphant over the Roman emperors Gordian III (in 244 CE), Philip the Arab (Gordian's successor who negotiated a peace treaty in 244 CE), and Valerian (in 260 CE). This triumphal image, variations of which appear at sites like Naqsh-e Rostam, Darab, and Bishapur, conflates three separate historical events, and in so doing creates a potent symbol of royal power.



Figure 3. Triumph of Darius I relief, 521–518 BCE
Iran, Kermanshah province; Achaemenid period (550–330 BCE)

The presence of these scenes reflects a carefully considered and erudite selection process. It is no accident that specific imagery—that of victory scenes of important Achaemenid and Sasanian rulers—was chosen. The Achaemenid Empire was the largest in the ancient world, extending over a vast territory for over 200 years. Darius I was the dynasty's third ruler; he expanded the empire to India, built roads

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Figure 4. Triumph of Shapur I relief, approx. 250–300 CE

Iran, Fars province; Sasanian period (241–650 CE).

Image source: Khojeste Mistree in *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture*, 2002

for communication, and established new systems of administration. His most significant architectural achievements were the royal buildings at Susa and Persepolis. The Darius relief at Bisutun is important for several reasons, but most relevant for the present discussion is that the divinity Ahura Mazda is mentioned here by name in the extensive inscription (in three languages and over 1,000 lines), and is for the first time, juxtaposed with the image of the winged disk figure. While the concept of Ahura Mazda and the image of the anthropomorphized sun-disk have a long history in ancient Mesopotamian culture and religion, over time, these became key philosophical and visual concepts of Zoroastrianism and the image of the winged divinity in the sun-disk, *fravashi*, serves as the most recognizable symbol of the Zoroastrian faith.

The powerful Sasanian dynasty followed the Achaemenids nearly 600 years later, and also ruled over an extensive region. Shapur I was the dynasty's second ruler, who expanded and consolidated the empire, gained decisive victories over the Romans, built major cities such as Bishapur and Ctesiphon, and was known for his tolerance and intellectual curiosity. Zoroastrianism was revived as the official state religion during the Sasanian period, and all the extant religious sources that had developed over centuries were canonized and put into writing at this time as a single tradition.

These important Persian dynasties were early followers of Zoroastrianism, their achievements symbolized power, influence and creativity, and their histories were particularly relevant for the Parsis of India as they formulated their own religious and community identity.

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While it now makes sense to find imagery from notable ancient Persian sculpture with significance for the Zoroastrians on an object made for a wealthy Indian Parsi patron, the question of how this imagery made its way, relatively accurately, from remote areas in Iran to a silver making workshop in India remains to be answered. I suggest that the workshop had access to source imagery available through printed materials such as lithographs and prints in books, journals, newspapers, and travel accounts. These prints would have been copied on paper and translated as designs on objects such as the bowl. The images from the rock reliefs were not straightforward copies, however. The artist (and/or craftsman) added his own mark by variously using artistic techniques of simplifying or stylizing (e.g. the figures); adding details not present on the original (e.g. the mountainous background, the sari-clad female figure); and consciously or mistakenly changing some elements (e.g. a Roman emperor's cloak becomes an angel's wings). In the final result, the bowl's design program permits recognition of the source imagery and its layers of meaning—both old and new—while speaking to the artistic skill and creativity of its makers.²

In all, the Asian Art Museum's wonderful silver bowl offers a window into the networks of artistic and intellectual exchange that connected ancient Persia, India, Burma, England, and the Parsi community over centuries. It testifies to the ability of objects from the past to serve as keys for unlocking now-lost, yet rich and interconnected histories—cultural, economic, and political—that have shaped our present worlds.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Burma was annexed as a part of the British Empire in 1862 until its independence in 1948. A sizeable Zoroastrian community flourished in Burma, especially in the city of Rangoon (Yangon), during this time.
- 2 In the above essay, I did not touch on the function and use of this bowl, which is a topic of ongoing research. The bowl does not fit the types used for the *muktad* ceremony, nor does it seem appropriate as a ritual *alat*. (I extend thanks to Nazneen Spleidt and Dolly Dastoor for their input and assistance on this). The appearance of victory scenes, rather than the depiction of religious rituals, raises the question of whether the bowl would have been used in some secular context. The significance of the figure of the woman in a sari, standing beneath the sun-disk with her hands bound behind her back, is also presently unclear.



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MAGIC IN ZOROASTRIANISM

SHAUL SHAKED

PROF. EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

It is not easy to define what we mean by “magic” when we talk about Zoroastrianism. Very often magic is discussed by historians of religion as being in contrast to religion. This is a questionable juxtaposition in other religions, and especially in Zoroastrianism. ***Zoroastrianism, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, condemns witchcraft in very strong terms and regards it as one of the most grievous sins that exist. The term that designates it is jādūgīh in Middle Persian, and anyone who is guilty of it is guilty of a mortal sin. Jādūgīh is the work of the demons, and a Zoroastrian should keep well away from it.***

Unfortunately, however, we do not speak Middle Persian, and we tend to apply the term “magical” to many actions that are part of the venerable old tradition followed for many generations in Zoroastrianism. It should be noted that this is not a dilemma that is limited to Zoroastrianism, but is also present in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and probably of several other religious traditions in the world. Thus, if we have a member of the household who is sick with fever, we tend to seek help from any quarter. We would request assistance from a doctor, but if the disease turns out to be serious, we would also turn to spiritual and magical practitioners. We would then be told that there are certain actions that need to be done and certain formulae that should be recited in order to cause the person to be healed. Here are two examples of instructions to follow from the collections of the *nīrang*s:

The *afsōn* of fever.¹

The thread spun by mother and daughter should be folded three times in the name of that person.²

If the fever is quattrain, the handful of the straw that was left on the wall should be taken, and three handfuls should be made in the middle of it, three handfuls on one side, three handfuls on (the other) side, and two on (a third) side.

If it is a cleaning time (?), three handfuls should be

made in the middle, one in one side, and one on (the other) side.

If (the patient is) a man, (one should tie it) on the arm; if a woman, tie it on the arm.

Afsōn and nīrang xūn abāz ēstādan rāy³

An *afsōn* and a *nīrang* in order to block (the flow of) blood.

One should perform the *wāz* (formula) from Ardwahišt and say it over (the patient) seven, eleven, or twenty-one times. This is the *afsōn*:

Whoever stopped the water from the spring, did that by order of the valiant Frēdōn. He came down from the mountain. With (his) body he covered the race-course, with (his) body he measured the race-course, and he holds in his hand nine battle-axes.

Frēdōn, mentioned in the second spell, is a famous name in Zoroastrian mythology. He figures prominently in the Avestan texts (where his name is ***Thraētaona***), and is mentioned as one capable of healing itching, hot fever, humours and cold fever (***Fravardin Yasht***). In several texts, and especially in the later Persian epic tradition, in the *Shahname* of Firdowsi (10th century), he takes part in the story of the demonic figure Zahlāk, a terrible tyrant who had two serpents that grew out of his shoulders. These snakes needed to be nourished every day by the brains of two young men. This sacrifice was offered to them regularly for a long time, until the hero Fereydun came with his *ox-headed mace* (known as *gāv-sār*) and smashed the head of the tyrant, and occupied the throne in place of the demon.

In Plate 1 Frēdōn is seen as imagined in the Parthian period

The visual representations on the metal amulets

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Plate 1. Parthian Seal amulet. Note the ox-head mace in the hand of Feridun, which is being used for killing the demon. Private collection of Mr. Richard Falkiner in England. Permission to reproduce courtesy of the author. ⁴

fulfill apparently a function of healing in the hands of Frēdōn as does the text of *afsōn* quoted above. It was published by David Bivar, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Vol. 30 part 3. 1967 and stolen in June 2012.

Another engraved gem which must have served as an amulet is found in the British Museum.

Another Iranian amulet, in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inscribed in Pahlavi, but perhaps produced by a Christian practitioner, was published some twenty years ago.

The text around the figure may be translated as follows:

*From Sasan to Sasan-marg the demon.⁵
Peace be upon you.*

Now, as you may see this letter, may it be to you in the name of Jesus.



Plate 2. A Pahlavi amulet on a plaque of metal. A demonic figure is depicted with an inscription in Middle Persian surrounding it. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1989.123. With permission, see endnote 5, also see www.metmuseum.org

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May this be an admonition and a reminder to me [...] the righteous [...] and his son, the chief priest,⁷ made the (following) admonition?

Now, this Pērozdukht, the name of whose mother is ---⁸ and the name of whose father is ---,⁹ and who is of the village ---.¹⁰

May no bliss come to you,¹¹ and do not seize her, and if she is seized by you, then indeed let her quickly go back (?), so that she may not be seized by you again, and may there fall on your head a punishment (from) afar.

[The rest of the inscription does not allow a clear reading and interpretation.]

The spell aims at giving protection to its bearer by driving the harmful demon away and not letting it come back. The patient who seeks help is a certain woman by the name of *Pērōz-dukht*. This name should be followed by the name of the mother in most magical traditions of the period, but here we seem to have a preparation for giving both the mother's name and the father's name, in addition to their place of dwelling.

These are however mere preparations. There is a blank space left for adding in the names of the parents and of their village at a later date, but the names were never supplied. It is difficult to imagine, an alternative scenario may be offered. The text of the amulet on the object is engraved in the negative, like a seal. This means that the inscription on the surface of the tablet is scratched with the negative form of the Pahlavi alphabet. The result is a mirror shape of the text. When one wishes to create the actual amulet, it is enough to press the plaque with the inscription against a surface of a soft material, such as clay, and the inscription is reproduced in the correct shape on the surface of the newly shaped amulet. The printed clay retains also the blank spaces, and the missing names can be engraved on the soft clay before it is hardened. The picture that accompanies this article is also taken not from the actual object in the museum (where everything is written in reverse), but from a squeeze made on a Plasticine-like material.¹²

Since Jesus is invoked in the text, it is quite

possible that the amulet was done by Christians (or by Manichaeans, who could also legitimately invoke the name of Jesus). A point that may strengthen this assumption is the Greek word that comes up in this text, a reflection of the adjective *makarios*, which might be typical of an Iranian Christian living in Byzantium. But this is not the only possible hypothesis as to the persons who made this amulet. Magic in antiquity as well as in more recent times tends to be open to syncretistic influences, and it is quite likely that Zoroastrians (and of course also Iranian Manichaeans) would invoke the name of Jesus. We have some instances of Jewish magic bowls referring to Jesus and the Christian Trinity.¹³

Talking of magic bowls, one should mention the fact that a large number of earthenware bowls have come down to us from the Sasanian period, especially from Babylonia and the surrounding areas (some also from Western Iran). These are usually plain pottery bowls of various sizes, but mostly the size of a bowl for soup, which served as a surface on which full-length amulets were written. The bowls were inscribed by ink in one of the forms of Aramaic current in late Babylonia: *Jewish Aramaic, Mandaic and Syriac* (two varieties of Syriac script were used). These scripts and languages were distributed among the religious groups. *Jewish Aramaic was used by Jews, Mandaic by Mandaeans, and Syriac by Christians and pagans.* One may well ask: were there no bowls written by Zoroastrians or for them? The answer is twofold. Many of the bowls written in Jewish Aramaic must have been produced for Zoroastrians, and the same is probably true of the bowls written in Mandaic and Syriac.

Apart from the bowls inscribed in different forms of Aramaic, we have also bowls written in Pahlavi, the language which was identified with Zoroastrians. Unfortunately, the cursive Pahlavi script is notoriously difficult to read, and as long as we have no firm clues as to reading these magic texts, the texts on the bowls are doomed to be unread. Some of the Pahlavi bowls may not even represent real texts, but only imitations.

Two Pahlavi bowls are given as examples for the type of writing and text that we possess.

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Plate 3. A magic bowl with a text inscribed in Pahlavi. Private Collection.

The field of amulets and magic in the Zoroastrian tradition has not yet received the attention it deserves, and readers who have such objects are invited to write to FEZANA Journal and send photos of them.

It seems clear from the material discussed in this article that the magic texts and images complement and fortify the community of Zoroastrians in their fight against the evil powers. **Zoroastrianism, as a religious system, is dedicated more than any other religion to the fight against evil and to the increase of the beneficent presence in the world. This is done by observance of purity, by the fulfillment of the religious duties, by acts of kindness to fellow human beings and to the beneficent creatures. The texts and the artifacts of what we call magic bolster and complete the arsenal of equipment that helps the believers in their battle. Far from standing in contrast to the requirements of ritual devotion, these private acts—the *afsōns* and the images that personify the Zoroastrian struggle—make it easier to concentrate on one's religious duties.**

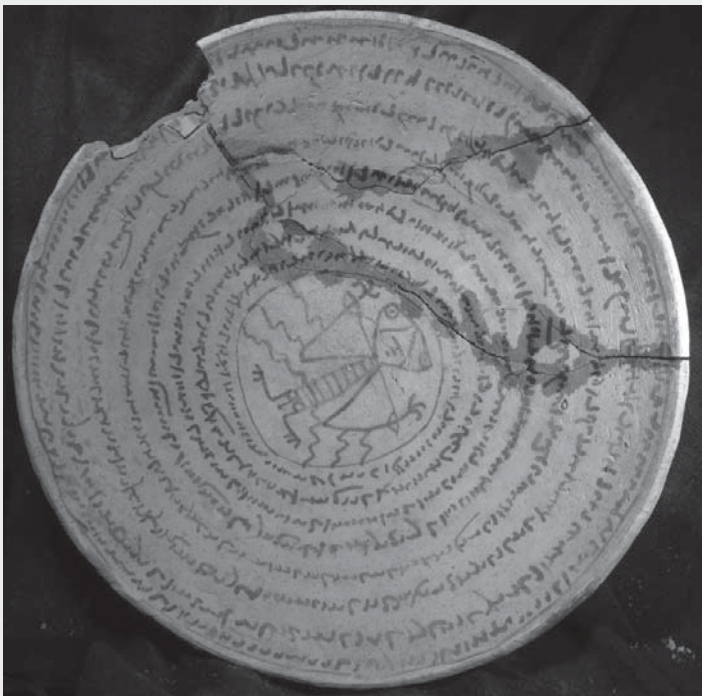


Plate 4. A magic bowl in Pahlavi, with a drawing of a demon in the center. Private collection.

Each one of the religions with similar concerns with regard to purity, the enhancement of the material world, and helping one's fellow creatures, has grappled with similar problems. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, like Zoroastrianism, have struggled to define the frontiers that separate what is part of the legitimate religious expression and what is better avoided. Zoroastrianism has arguably found a most harmonious balance between the fulfillment of the prescribed duties and the freedom to indulge in private ceremonies that add a personal touch without upsetting the proper measure.

Endnotes

- 1 From the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, ch. 63. The meaning of *afsōn* is "spell, charm".
- 2 The sick person is meant.
- 3 *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, ch. 63.
- 4 The amulet was first published by A.D.H. Bivar, "A Parthian amulet", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 30 (1967), 512-525, esp. Plate 1, A1.

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5 Sasan is the name of a deity in pre-Islamic Iran, but is not part of the regular Zoroastrian pantheon. This is a name that was also given to several prominent Iranians in history, chiefly

among them the ancestor of the Sasanian dynasty. A different view has been expressed by Martin Schwartz, who regards this deity as a descendant of an ancient Babylonian deity Sesen, and puts it apart from the semi-historical figure of Sasan, after whom the Sasanian dynasty was named. Cf. Schwartz, "Sesen: a durable East Mediterranean god in Iran", in: N. Sims-Williams (ed.), *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies held in Cambridge, 1995*, Part 1: Old and Middle Iranian Studies (Beiträge zur Iranistik, 17), Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 9-11. Sasan-marg, the addressee of the missive, is presumably a demonic figure whose name means "possessor of the death of Sasan". What we have here is conceived as a letter addressed to the demon.

6 A small portion of the text is lost at this point.

7 The term used here is *rad*, attested in the Middle Persian writings of the Sasanian period.

8 No name is given, and there is a blank space instead.

9 Again a space is left blank for the name to be supplemented later.

10 The name is not written, and a blank space is left, presumably in order to be filled in later.

11 The word in the Pahlavi is probably to be read **mklyy**, so far unattested. It appears to be a loan-word from Greek *makarios* "happy, blissful, blessed". Such a word is likely to have been used by Iranian Christians living in Byzantium.

12 The presentation here is based on the articles by P.O. Harper, P.O. Skjærvø, L. Gorelick and A.J. Gwinnett, "A seal-amulet of the Sasanian era", N.S. 6 (1992), 43-58; S. Shaked, "Notes on the Sasanian amulet and Sasanian courts of law", N.S. 7 (1993), 165-172.

13 See D. Levene, " '... And by the name of Jesus ...': An unpublished magic bowl in Jewish Aramaic *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), 283-308; and Shaked, "Jesus in the magic bowls. Apropos Dan Levene's '... and by the name of Jesus ...', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), 309-319..



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Россия и Зороастрийцы (Russia and the Zoroastrians).

JAMES R. RUSSELL,
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The Russian Empire—its successor, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—at the point of its greatest extent was the world's largest country, covering one-sixth of the land surface of the globe, its shores washed by the Baltic Sea on the west and the Pacific Ocean on the east and by the Arctic Ocean on the north and Black Sea and Caspian and Aral Seas on the south. Although modern Jewish culture was born in Russia and the country has significant Muslim and Buddhist minorities, it is a predominantly Christian land: most Russians adhere to the Orthodox faith, regard Moscow as the Third Rome—successor to Rome and Constantinople, the earlier strongholds of Christ's Church—and write using the Cyrillic alphabet, a script created by Sts. Cyril and Methodius on the basis of Byzantine Greek and Hebrew. But Russia's ties to pre-Islamic Iran are old, strong, and deep. On its southern tier, the territory of the USSR included Sogdia, Chorasmia, Georgia, and parts of Parthia, Media, and Armenia—lands where Zoroastrianism once prevailed that are mentioned in the Avesta itself or in the later Middle Iranian documents and inscriptions. It is possible that the homeland of the Prophet Zarathustra himself, Airyana Vaejah, was also on Soviet territory—in present-day Kazakhstan.¹ A number of Iranian languages were spoken in the USSR, including Kurdish (principally in Armenia and Azerbaijan), Tajiki Persian (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), Yaghnobi (neo-Sogdian), and an array of Pamir languages. And there is Ossetic.

Ancient North Iranian Scythia lay almost entirely within Soviet territory: the "Royal Scythian" domain mentioned by Herodotus of the Paralatai (Avestan *parodhata*, Persian *Pishdadian*; the honorific name means "created before") was in the southern part of the Ukraine and the kurgans, or grave mounds, have yielded exquisite treasures in silver and gold that one can see at the Hermitage museum. The permafrosts of Siberia and the Altai have preserved perishable, organic remains of Scythian material and spiritual culture: these include wooden objects, felt horse trappings, woolen pile rugs, tattoos preserved on human skin, and the burnt remnants of hemp in

incense containers. In the north Caucasus, the last living descendants of these Scythians, the Ossetes or Alans, preserve many of the pagan customs known to the ancient Greeks and recite the only known great literary monument of Scythian culture: the heroic epic of the Narts.² The base language of the text, whose name means "the manly men," is Ossetic, though the Narts are now recited in most languages of the Caucasus. The Nart heroes drink deep of *rong*, "mead," from the *nartamonga*, a chalice that never empties if a hero holds it, in the great *nikhas* hall. They battle monsters and dragons, and at the end their magic sword goes back to a lady of the waters. If all this sounds like Arthurian epic and Excalibur, that is probably because Alan horsemen in the Roman legions took their stories with them to Celtic Europe.

The Scythians rode fast, played hard, and had little time, it seems, for autocratic monarchs: Darius had them all lined up against him for battle when they saw a hare and galloped off after it, forgetting all about the great king and his big plans. Most Scythians were not Zoroastrians, either; but one who was, is perhaps the single most important figure in all of Iranian literature save perhaps Zarathustra Himself—the hero Rostam *sagzi* ("the Scythian") of the *Shah-nameh*. His name in its original form, **Rautas-takhma-*, means "having the strength of a river;" and the name of the great Leningrad scholar of Achaemenian Babylonia, my friend Professor Muhammad Abdulkadyrovich Dandamayev, a native of North Caucasian Daghestan, echoes it. For the surname is North Iranian *dan-damai*, "river-tamer!" Rostam's name may be attested in that of a hero of Russian folk epics, Ruslan, now best known from Alexander Pushkin's poem *Ruslan and Ludmila*.³ We may recollect that Rostam ostensibly served various kings, and Ferdosi's epic is supposedly about the latter, but Mahmud of Ghazna, the poet's not very pleased royal patron, saw through that. And the tragedy of Rostam and Sohrab was what we would nowadays call a setup: had father and son lived, the kings of Iran and Turan might have faded into irrelevance.

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Russian and Soviet scholars have made immense contributions to the study of ancient Iran in archaeology, linguistics, history, literature, and the history of religions: to name but a very few, we may note the late Russian Jewish archaeologist and art historian Boris Marshak, of the State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, who devoted his life to the study of the frescoes of Sogdian Panjikant, which bear eloquent testimony to the rich and cosmopolitan literary and spiritual culture of that far-flung Iranian people.⁴ The Russian Jewish philologist Vladimir Livshits, of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad, has among his many other contributions to scholarship published the vast corpus of inscriptions found on ostraca (broken potsherds used for short notes and records in the ages before there was paper) from Nisa in southern Turkmenistan, the sacred capital of the Parthians. These have established beyond any reasonable doubt the Zoroastrian faith of the Arsacid kings. (Another Russian émigré scholar in the UK, Vladimir Minorsky, identified the Zoroastrian features of the romantic epic *Vis and Ramin*, and established also its Parthian roots.) The interest of Russian readers in Zoroastrianism is intense: a translation into Russian of Mary Boyce's popular book on the Zoroastrians has sold out several large printings. The translation of *Gathas* of Zarathustra into Russian by the Iranist Ivan Mikhailovich Steblin-Kamensky, of St. Petersburg State University, has proven equally popular—and thanks to the morphological and etymological kinship of Russian to Avestan the translation has an easy, elegant stylistic similarity to the original that translations into other languages have not and perhaps cannot achieve. Steblin-Kamensky's pupil, Victoria Kryukova, has published in Russian a superb new introduction to Zoroastrianism that subjects some of Professor Boyce's views to searching criticism and re-examination. Among Russian Iranists abroad, the Israeli scholars Dan Shapira and Reuven Kipperwasser have begun groundbreaking work.

Archaeological finds attest to contacts between Iranians and the inhabitants of northern Russian lands in antiquity: 82 silver vessels have been found in the Kama River basin from Iran proper and Central Asia (mainly Sogdia); half are dated to before 700 (the time of the Muslim conquests of Central Asia). Some are inscribed with their weight: this indicates that they were used for trade. An Iranian legend, transmitted

from Armenia, may underlie the name of the Mother of Russian cities, Kiev, itself: according to the Primary Chronicle its green hills rising over the wide Dnepr river were settled by three brothers, Kii, Shchek, and Khoriv. Kii gave his name to Kiev. According to an earlier Armenian text, villages in the vicinity of the ancient shrine of the Zoroastrian yazata Verethraghna (Armenian Vahagn) bore the similar names of Kuarr, Meltes, and Khorri; I have tentatively proposed that the first and third names in each list be derived from Iranian *kavi-* and *khwarenah-*, that is, the *kayan farr* "Kayanian royal glory" of Avestan lore and later Persian epic.⁵ Prince Vladimir of Kiev converted to Christianity in CE 988: before that, the pantheon of Rus included a sun god Khors, whose name clearly derived from Iranian Khwarsh(ed) (Modern Persian Khorshid), and the magic bird Simargl, that is, Persian Simorgh. Armenia, the earliest Christian kingdom, had been a Zoroastrian land till the fourth century CE and Russians and Armenians seem to have been in contact from an early stage: the Armenian church of Aghtamar is rich in bas-relief carvings of the simurgh and other creatures with an Iranian pedigree, and Armenian art seems to have served as a conduit for the image of the Simurgh as we find it on the walls of Russian medieval churches.⁶

Finally, one would propose that Russian folk literature preserves a text that recapitulates the central teachings of Zoroastrianism in a strikingly archaic fashion.⁷ Стих о голубиной книге "The Rime of the Book of the Dove" was only recently committed to writing—like the oral literature of the Iranian *gossans*, the Russian poem was recited from time immemorial by *kaleki perekhozhie*, wandering minstrels. The "dove" (*golubinaya*) of the title may be a Christianizing correction, perhaps with reference to the Holy Spirit, of another, original word that in Russian is quite similar, *glubinnaya*, "deep." Now, Zarathustra in the *Gathas*, in the climactic 30th chapter of the *Yasna*, declares that Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu—the good God and His evil opposite—came to be renowned (*asrvatem*) in a dream-vision (*khvafena*). The Prophet calls his revelations *guzra* "deep" sayings (*senghangho*). In the Russian poem of the "deep book" Prince Vladimir of Kiev has a **dream** in which he beholds the cosmic battle between *Pravda*, "Truth," and *Krivda* "Crookedness." The latter takes over earth; but the former rules undefeated in heaven. Much of the text is phrased in question-

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and-answer style. This is not unique to the *Gathas*, to be sure, but it still reminds one of the series of “sacred questionings” (*spento frashna*) of *Yasna* 44. The Russian poem also enumerates the “chiefs” of the various categories of earthly beings; and here one recalls that the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, or book of creation, does the same thing after recapitulating the cosmological scene of the manifestation of good and evil and the incursion (*ebgad*) of the latter into the material world. In the Russian poem the chief of the good creations is the animal called *indrik* (from *edinorog*, “one-horned” which translates Greek *monokeros*, meaning the same, that is, a unicorn). Defeated by the lion (an evil animal to Zoroastrians but a regal one to everybody else), the *indrik* takes cover in the caverns of the earth, presumably till the final battle. Why a unicorn? In Chapter 24 of the *Bundahishn* it is the three-legged ass, also a unicorn, that purifies the world-sea of Vourukasha when the evil creatures of Ahreman poison it. (Western Christian mythology received the creature together with its cosmic function from Iran via Byzantium; so the lovely white unicorn on its tapestry in the Cloisters museum in New York City can be seen plunging its healing horn into the waters of a fountain.)

How did this reworked paraphrase of the *Gathas* and *Bundahishn*, with its enumeration of core teachings in the order the Iranian texts present them, find its way to the Russian bards? One possible vector of transmission would be Parthian and Sasanian Iran to Armenia, by the 5th century and from there to the Balkan peninsula in the esoteric teachings of Tondrakite and Bogomil heretics in the 8th century. The traditions are carried northwards in the 9th–10th centuries into Kievan Rus and diffused from there to the north and east, mingling perhaps with dualistic cosmological legends shaped or borrowed by local Finno-Ugrian peoples such as the Mordvinians. The Book of the Dove continues to intrigue the imagination of Russian readers and artists: Nicholas Roerich, who designed the sets for the premiere of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*, executed several paintings of it.

These brief considerations come together to create a picture: for centuries before the formation of the Russian state, the Slavs interacted with different Iranian peoples all along their southern borders, trading, conversing, imbibing religious and literary ideas, artistic forms and themes, and reshaping

them as the national culture of Rus attained its own integrity and symmetry. In later ages, as the Russians became the bastion of Eastern Christianity and the Iranians were engulfed by Islam, contact became confrontation. The Russian port of Astrakhan faced Iran's Caspian coast; in 1828 the Tsars wrested the Khanate of Erivan from the Persians. The vast empire of the north came into possession of ancient Iranian heartlands and began to excavate them, to study rediscovered languages and their testimonies on potshard and stone, but then to find the message of those vanished cultures embedded within its own heritage as well, in the living words of wandering bards, in the vivid strophes of heroic epic. We often think of Iran in terms of its neighbors in a band to the west and east—Ancient Greece, Vedic India—or south—Mesopotamia, Arabia. But these brief notes invite the reader to reset the orientation of the map and to think from Iran northwards as well: sipping tea from an *estekan*, nibbling *simichki*, one discovers a neighbor who is not really unfamiliar at all and in many ways an old friend.

(Endnotes)

- 1 See James R. Russell, “The Place and Time of Zarathushtra,” in P.J. Godrej and F.P. Mistree, eds., *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion, and Culture*, Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2002, pp. 29-39.
- 2 See James R. Russell, “Argawan: The Indo-European Memory of the Caucasus,” *Journal of Armenian Studies* VIII.2, Belmont, MA, Fall 2006 [2007], pp. 110-147.
- 3 See J.R. Russell, “The Curving Shore of Space and Time: Notes on the Prologue to Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila*,” in Steven Fine and Shai Secunda, eds., *Shoshannat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, pp. 318-365.
- 4 The name of the city of Sudak in Crimea— a Russian peninsula in the Black Sea— has generally been believed to derive from Sughdhak, “Sogdian”. The recent discovery on the nearby Taman peninsula of a earthenware jug handle inscribed in Sogdian with the same *Shafnoshak*, “Believer in immortality”, would tend to support this interpretation.
- 5 See J.R. Russell, “*Solov'i, solov'i*,” *St. Nersess Theological Review* 10 (2005), pp. 77-139

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(published in Russian in *Rossiia XXI*, 2006.4, Moscow, pp. 156-197).

- 6 See J.R. Russell, "Iranians, Armenians, Prince Igor, and the Lightness of Pushkin," *Iran and the Caucasus* (forthcoming 2015), in which this writer argues also, following the insights of Vladimir Nabokov, that the ancient Russian epic Слово о полку Игореве, "The Song of Igor's Campaign", is a verbal expression of the same themes and symbols that find pictorial representation in the so-called "Animal Style" of Scythian art.

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- 7 See J.R. Russell, "The Rime of the Book of the Dove (*Stikh o Golubinoi knige*): From Zoroastrian cosmology and Armenian heresiography to the Russian novel," in Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke, and Antje Wendtland, eds., *From Daena to Din: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009, pp. 141-208 (*Festschrift Prof. Dr. Philip Kreyenbroek*).



SHEHNAZ M. BHUJWALA a "Southern California Rising Star"

Shehnaz M. Bhujwala, resident of Los Angeles, a strong advocate of consumer rights in civil courts and the California Legislature, is a partner of Boucher LLP, a plaintiffs' litigation firm based in Woodland Hills, California. The firm specializes in complex civil litigation, including class actions on behalf of consumers and employees.

Bhujwala is recognized for her work as a consumer attorney and some of her cases brought to resolution through settlement and trials over her legal career include

A \$58 million jury verdict for a construction worker who suffered severe burn injuries from a defective O-ring part on his construction vehicle

A historic settlement on behalf of hundreds of survivors of childhood sexual abuse against the Los Angeles and San Diego Catholic Archdioceses

Bhujwala has held leadership positions in numerous professional organizations, including: Consumer Attorneys of California - (Board of Governors – 2011-2015; Chair-Elect, Women's Caucus – 2014, Chair, Woman's Caucus – 2015) Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles - (Board of Governors, 2013-2014) Los Angeles County Bar Association - (Litigation Section, Legislative Chair – 2014, member of Judicial Appointments Committee)

Shehnaz received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Southern California's Gould School of Law. During law school, she externed for the Honorable U.S. District Court Judge Robert Takasugi of the Central District of California and counseled victims of domestic violence through the Los Angeles County Bar Association's Barrister's Project.

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OF SUKKHAD, SAPATS AND RELIGIOUS IMPLEMENTS

FIROZA PUNTHAKEY MISTREE

PARSI SUKKHAD—ESTABLISHMENTS TODAY

Parsi religious life in Mumbai would not be the same without a number of small establishments that provide religion-based services to the community, some of which have been in business for more than a hundred years. Several shops—colloquially called *sukkhadwallas*—that sell a variety of religious implements, artifacts, and apparel connected to the faith, are usually situated close to a fire temple. These establishments provide a vital support system for the community's religious life. Names such as Appoo Menesse, Naoroji Shroff, Kerawallas, Fareedoon and Burjor, Dadabhoy Motabhai, and, of course, the well-known Mullas, at the H.B. Wadia Atash Bahram, are familiar Parsi names.

Unique among these is the small, nondescript shop located diagonally across Cama Baug—**Jai**

Khodiyar. As the eye scans its shelves, heavily-laden with items of every kind (from silver and beaded torans; to gleaming Parsi wedding Ses; divo holders; and innumerable images of Zarathushtra, Mushkel Aasan, and Kookadaru), one is impressed by the quantity of *gurz* (bull-headed maces, the Zoroastrian symbol of priesthood). *Sanjay Jayantilal Sohni* is the owner who runs the shop with other members of his family.

When I asked him about Parsi religious implements, he amazed me by briskly giving the Avestan and Gujarati names of all the implements used in the Yasna ceremony, with the fluency of a Yozdathragar Mobed!! He told me that he has made entire sets of Yasna implements for use in fire temples for years. He then listed the items and explained them to me: *Kanu-a* (deep vessel); *arni* (small three legged table usually made of brass); *Mah Ruy* (half-moon stands); *khumchis* (round trays in varying sizes); *kundi* (large basin with a lid or cover); the *karasyo* (small-necked vessel to pour water); the *kaplo* (a knife to cut date palm strips); the *barsom tays* (metal barsom rods); the *hawan* and *lalo* (mortar and pestle); eight *rekabi* (saucers, one being a *nav surakhdar raqabi*, a saucer pierced with nine holes); and eight *fuliyan* (metal cups made of German silver). The words, a mixture of Avestan and Gujarati, rolled off his tongue with an ease that was surprising (his name suggests



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Sanjay is a Hindu).



He told me that his family's association with the Parsis began about sixty years ago when Ratanji Jehangir and Company (located in the Fort area of Bombay and well-known for the religious *vasan* (implements) it sold to the community) sent their *mehtaji* (accountant) on a mission to locate someone who could manufacture Zoroastrian implements (*alat*) in German silver. The *mehtaji* found his way to the workshop owned by *Jayantlal Maganlal* (Sanjay's father), located on Boiwada Street in the Zaveri Bazar area. The *mehtaji* gave Sanjay's father a silver divo holder made in Germany and asked him to replicate it. Sanjay said that at the time all the goods Ratanji sold in his

shop were manufactured in Germany and exported to India. He believes that it is still possible to come across large *Khumchas* and *karasyos* bearing the "Ratanji Jehangir and Company" legend with "Made in Germany" engraved on the reverse.

The first piece that Sanjay's father made for Ratanji (known to everyone as "Major") was a filigreed silver divo holder that allowed the light of the oil lamp to shine through. His work so delighted Ratanji that he stopped importing items from Germany and gave all his business to Jayantlal. Thus began their long association with the Parsi community.

As Sanjay put it, his work follows the Parsi religious calendar and everything is made seasonally. At *Muktdad* time, *Muktdad* vases are made; during the wedding season, the *ses* is in great demand; and during the *navar* season, *gurz* and vessels for the *Yasna* ceremony are made on order for priests of fire temples.

According to Sanjay, he supplies the Parsi community with everything from "***Sagan to Maran***" (i.e., from happy occasions to things needed at the time of death). This pretty much sums up his work. He has worked in this field since 1980 and, as the business of other Parsi establishments (such as the Kotwal brothers and Coronet) waned, Sanjay stepped in by opening the present shop in 2001.

MULLA AND COMPANY

Among the Parsi establishments, *Noshir Mulla's* shop at H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram is one of the oldest, established by his grandfather in 1893. Noshir says with pride that his father, who passed away in 2000 at ninety-two, worked in the shop for eighty years. Noshir has worked in the shop for fifty-five years.

Noshir is a man of many skills: he is interested in photography, skilled in repairing antique watches and clocks, and has a perennial interest in Zoroastrian theology and history. Apart from selling *sukkhad* and *loban*, Noshir sells a variety of religious apparel, such as *sudrehs*, *kustis*, *chahrum shiav* (clothes worn to honor the

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dead), prayer caps for all ages, and the occasional ses.

Speaking of sudrehs, he recounted that, in the old days, Parsi women would beg his father to allow the sudrehs sewn by them to be sold in the shop. In those days, women who supplied stitched sudrehs, but lived in the suburbs, were rejected by his father as he believed that distance would keep them from delivering their product. “Sadly, times have changed,” said Noshir, “today it is difficult to get sudrehs sewn in commercial quantities by Zoroastrian women.” Presently he has only two women on contract who sew sudrehs in large quantities—one lives in Vasai (60 miles from Mumbai), the other lives in Dhanu (124 miles from Mumbai).

Noshir is the second largest seller of kustis; selling roughly a hundred kustis a month. The kustis are brought from Navsari by an enterprising young Parsi who collects the kustis from Parsi weavers and then sells them at wholesale rate to Noshir.

Noshir, who taught photography at Xavier’s college, said he was proud to tell his students that we Parsis are the only community in the world that has faithfully continually used an archaic Persian unit of

measurement—the *gaj*. Once it was used throughout Asia to measure everything from cloth to horses. The *gaj* is divided into twenty-four parts; each fractional unit is one and one-eighth *tasu*, which equals twenty-seven inches. Noshir said the *gaj* can be roughly measured as the distance between the tip of one’s nose to the tip of one’s finger with the arm fully extended. *Mul mul* or muslin for sudrehs and the *kusti*, in particular, is measured using the *gaj* system. The yardstick, so to speak, that he uses in his shop for measuring kustis is in *gaj* units and was imported by his father, many decades ago, from China.



Tanaz Kerawalla in her family shop

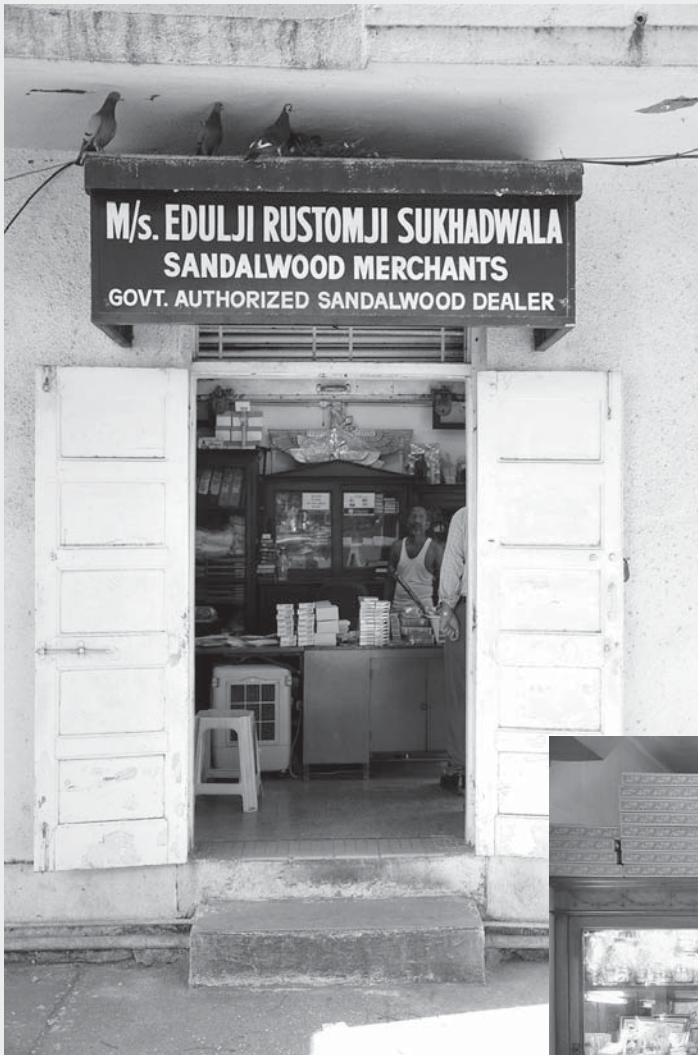
Noshir would like to sell his shop to any Parsi willing to continue running it after him; he strongly desires to have a continuity of Parsi establishments selling religious apparel.

SAPATS AND SLIPPERS AT KERAWALLA

Across the road and behind Parsi Dairy, is *Rustamji Nusserwanji Kerawalla* and Company, which is run by the feisty *Tanaz Keki Kerawalla*, who took over the establishment after her husband, Keki, passed away. She supplies sudrehs, kustis, bundles of

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akhand shiav, prayer caps, embroidered scarfs, and sandalwood used for machiis. However, her establishment is the only one remaining in Mumbai that makes *sapats* (leather slippers worn by the Parsis). Sapats made for men are in shades of red, while women wear maroon and black velvet. Another of their specialities is *mojris* (shoes with up-turned toes, specially crafted for Zoroastrian priests). Tanaz bemoans that it is increasingly difficult to get good craftsmen. However, she is pleased with the way young people often come to her shop and demand “proper” *sudrehs*, with full nine parts, and *kustis* made with 72 threads. She notices that more young people visit the fire temple than ever before.



Tanaz says that her favourite fire temple is the Anjuman Atash Bahram; its rear entrance is diagonally across from her shop. She believes that the Atash Bahram's ritual well is a “wish fulfilling well” and has great faith in the presence of *Pariya mai* who is said to dwell there. *Pariya mai* is believed to be a sprite who fulfils wishes and is often referred to as chief of the fairies. Iranian women who need a wish to be fulfilled will lay out a *sopra* ritual in her honor.

Kerawalla and company was established in 1887. Tanaz is hopeful, that her two boys will one day take over the running of the shop but until then, she remains the lady-in-charge of the shop that is the only “go-to” place for *sapats* and *mojris* in Mumbai

SANDALWOOD SHORTAGE AT EDULJI SUKHADWALA

Nestled in a corner of the Banaji Atash Bahram's compound, *Rohinton Contractor* sits in his maternal

grandfather's shop, continuing the family tradition of selling *sukkhad*. Rohinton is part of a new breed of Parsi men who are willing to take the leap and explore the unusual, if only to become his own master.



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Soon after the Banaji Atash Bahram was consecrated in 1845, Rohinton's maternal great grandfather, *Edulji Rustomji Sukhadwala*, established his firm that specialized in selling sandalwood and loban to the worshippers that thronged to the Atash Bahram.

Rohinton started managing the firm in 1987 after *Faramroze Edulji Tavadia*, his maternal grandfather, was unable to cope with the work load owing to his ill-health.

As the fourth generation in the company, Rohinton is immensely proud of being able to successfully continue the family's tradition of selling authentic sandal wood. He says with a smile, *"It is not a high flying job but I am my own master and I earn much more than I used to in a regular job."* His advice to Parsis in Mumbai is to be an employer and not an employee and to climb the ladder of success. *"A bonus,"* he says, *"that goes with being in the shop all day is the interaction you get with the community. You get to hear all sorts of views, some of them fanatical, some traditional or liberal, and some totally nonsensical, but always amusing."*

Rohinton's main concern is that sandalwood (*Santalum album*), a highly fragrant wood, which is auctioned annually by the Government of India (at Tirupattur and Salem in Tamil Nadu) is becoming far too exorbitant to purchase. The price of Malabari sandalwood (the best in the world) has risen by 47%. The market's future, he says, is quite murky. The sudden influx of buyers from South East Asia and China—despite the ban on the export of sandalwood—is puzzling and leads one to assume that there must be a large underground sandalwood smuggling network, which has exacerbated the already high prices.

Other factors affecting the price of sandalwood, asserts Rohinton, are the antiquated Forest Laws made during colonial times. These laws make people afraid of growing sandalwood on their farms as it could lead to requisition of land under the archaic forest land laws. The shortage of sandalwood inventory has resulted in lower quantities of sandalwood being made available for auction. An increasing number of foreign buyers, as well as poaching and smuggling, have pushed prices beyond what the average Parsi can afford.

Beyond the world of sandalwood, Rohinton sells loban, *dhoop*, *agarbatti*, sandalwood garlands, Ses, Divo holders, small *afarganyus*, and a variety of Zoroastrian items.

Sporting an emerald green *paghri* at weddings and *navjotes*, Rohinton cuts a striking figure as the youngest entrepreneur in the retail sandalwood market.



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For Parsis living in Mumbai, these shops are the norm, but when the winter months arrive and the start of the wedding and navjote season begins, the rush at these shops is unbelievable. Crowds of Parsis from abroad visit their favourite sukkadwalla to stock-up on the many items to cover their religious needs. Parsis come from as far away as South Africa, South America, and across the border from Pakistan on a regular basis to buy their stock of sudrehs, kustis, sukkhad, and loban.

Some of these establishments have been there for more than five generations and stand as testimony to a thriving religious trade.

Photos courtesy Kaiyan Mistree

RELIGIOUS IMPLEMENTS IN IRAN RASTI CALENDERS SHOP

The most popular shop in Tehran selling religious materials is that of the **Rasti Calenders**, (see page 72) run by **Mrs. Parirokh Ghanimat**, nee Rasti. with the help of her son Ramin Ghanimat. It is situated about a mile north of the Tehran Agiyari. There are no other permanent shops near Tehran, or at the Tehran Pars Agiyaris. There is only a small display at the Tehran ShahBehram Shrine.



Mrs. Parirokh Ghanimat, nee Rasti is the daughter of the Late Kekhosrow Rasti, the first Zartoshti who established a printing press in Iran with the purpose of furnishing religious books and our Calendar, for the Iranian Zarathushti community. They run the most popular and best stocked display of our religious calendars, books and ceremonial items.

The Rasti Calendar establishment, is a very active cultural centre today, for it not only maintains and aesthetically updates the Rasti Calendar, helping in the revival of ancient manuscripts, but also encourages Z talented artists to produce and market their products at their display centre, while distributing these items to other smaller distribution centres around Iran.

The **Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman**, in association with the **Tehran Zoroastrian Women Association**, set up periodical sales centre at the Anjoman Hall, so as to encourage the talented members of the Iranian Zarathushti community to display their products. (photo left)

INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY MOBED MEHRABAN FIROUZGARY

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ZOROASTRIANISM AND THE KURDS

RICHARD FOLTZ
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The Kurds have a fascination for Zoroastrianism. I first became aware of this some years ago in my hometown of Montréal when walking by a café on St. Catherine Street calling itself “Avesta” and advertising “Fine Cuisine Turque.” As a scholar of Zoroastrianism, curiosity prompted me to go in and ask the owner, a Kurd from Turkey, what had inspired him in naming his establishment. “Zoroaster was a Kurdish prophet,” he explained to me, “and Zoroastrianism was our ancient religion.”

More recently while visiting the Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iraq, I was able to see further signs of this interest in Zoroastrianism. The city of Diyarbakir, which Kurds in Turkey consider their capital, has not one but two Avesta cafés (with different owners), an Avesta Insurance company, and a bookstore called Avesta which also has branches in Istanbul and Ankara. Stacks of a recent Turkish translation of the Zoroastrian sacred text are prominently displayed in the centre of the store, and the owner, Songül Keskin, told me that they are selling well. (Unfortunately the Turkish translation was done from James Darmesteter’s outdated and unreliable nineteenth-century English edition.) When I asked Songül what the Avesta meant to her personally, she replied simply, “wisdom.”

A few days later in the southeastern city of Mardin I noticed a shop near my hotel called Avesta Market. Then, crossing the border into Iraqi Kurdistan, in the city of Duhok I saw a large clothing store near the main bazaar called Avesta. Further south, the following week at the American University in Sulaimani I had lunch in the student cafeteria, again called Avesta, which turned out to be run by a restaurant in town with the same name. What was it with the Avesta and the Kurds?



Avesta Clothing Store



Avesta Book Store



Avesta Restaurant

In all my studies of Zoroastrianism I had never seen any mention of Kurdish Zoroastrians. For the past thousand years or more the vast majority of Kurds have been Sunni Muslims. They have lived alongside

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minority communities of Kurdish Alevis, Christians, and Jews, as well as ancient Iranian sects such as the Yezidis and the Yaresan (also known as the Ahl-e Haqq), but there are no historical mentions of Kurdish Zoroastrians, and there is no living Zoroastrian community in Kurdistan today. So where does the attachment to Zoroastrianism one sees among many modern Kurds stem from?

The sentiment would appear to originate with the claim first expounded by the brothers Celadat and Kamuran Bedir Khan during the 1930s in their Kurdish nationalist newspaper *Hawar*, that the Kurds of pre-Islamic times were Yezidis and that their religion was a form of Zoroastrianism.¹ In recent years this view has been extensively elaborated by Cemşid Bender and M. Siraç Bilgin in a number of works.² Zarathushtra, according to this view, is claimed to be a Kurdish prophet, drawing on the ahistorical claim found in some late Pahlavi texts that sought to place him in Media as a way of linking him to the Median priestly class known to the Greeks as the Magi. In this reconstructed scenario Zarathushtra is presented as having reformed the “Median” religion, which is said to have been Mithraism.

That the ancient religion of the Kurds was a predominantly Iranian one should not, in my opinion, be a matter of debate. However, there is considerable evidence that the Kurds’ religious traditions ran *parallel* to Zoroastrianism, as opposed to following it. The Iranian elements surviving in the religions of the Yezidis and Yaresan (some of which, such as an annual bull sacrifice, do appear to be Mithraic) provide ample evidence of this; both groups maintain a number of mythological features in common with Zoroastrianism, but often with strikingly different meanings and interpretations.³

Moreover, the core aspects of these faiths have little in common. Classical Zoroastrianism is a dualistic religion with an extensive body of texts to support it, whereas the Kurdish religions are oral traditions that are essentially monotheistic. The ethical division between good and evil is starkly drawn in Zoroastrianism, but ambiguous among the Yezidis and Yaresan. (The respect accorded by the Yezidis to Iblis, or Satan, which mirrors that found in Sufism, has led them to be falsely characterized as “devil-worshippers.”) The undeniable differences between “orthodox” Zoroastrianism as embodied in the Middle Persian texts and what can be reconstructed of the beliefs and practices of the ancient Kurds have led to much confusion and misinformation about the relationship of the Kurds in general, and the Yezidis in particular, to Zoroastrianism.

Indeed, the Yezidis’ strong sense of separate identity, expressed in an origin myth according to which they alone of all peoples are the true descendants of Adam, presumably goes back to pre-Islamic times and may reflect their desire to resist and distinguish themselves from the powerful Zoroastrian priestly elites of the Sasanian period. Noting that the Yezidi and Zoroastrian creation stories seem to be variations on the same original myth, Christine Allison suggests a taxonomy according to which “*Yazidism would be, not a form of Zoroastrianism, but a religion possessing an Iranian belief-system akin to it.*”⁴

One of the most important Yezidi rituals is the annual slaying of a bull, which the Iranian scholar Mehrdad Bahar takes as evidence that the religion is fundamentally Mithraic.⁵ Bahar also sees echoes of Mithraism in the fact that Yezidis pray facing the sun. Another ancient element surviving in Yezidism is the myth of the hero who slays the serpent, a tale which appears in virtually all Indo-European cultures and must therefore date back at least to the common Indo-European period more than five or six thousand years ago. In the Yezidi versions of the myth, Shaykh ‘Adi is given the hero’s role; in an interesting parallel with a feat attributed to Indra in the Rig Veda, Shaykh ‘Adi not only kills the serpent but “releases the waters” which have been sequestered within the rock.⁶

Yet another fairly transparent Iranian survival is the Yezidi belief in a Divine Heptad, called by them the Seven Mysteries (or *haft sirr*), mirroring the Zoroastrian paradigm of Ahura Mazda plus the six *Aməša Spəntas*. In the Yezidi version, the identities of these seven holy beings are blurred and somewhat fluid, an ambiguity explained by the notion that in the end they are all expressions of the Divine. This confusion of identities is

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compounded by the fact that Yezidis believe in reincarnation, which they refer to as “changing the shirt.” Thus, when referring to saints or holy beings they may name any number of individual manifestations. As is well known, however, the Yezidis pay special reverence to a Malak Tavus, the Peacock Angel, who is their most prominent divine figure. Four of the other aspects of the divine heptad are associated with the elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, and at times with the Islamic archangels Jibra’il, Mika’il, Israfil, and ‘Azra’il. The remaining two divine aspects are identified with Shaykh ‘Adi and one of his successors, Shaykh Hasan.

Like the Zoroastrians, the Yezidis believe that the world will be perfected at the end of time following a final struggle, after which it will be “smooth like an egg,” with neither mountains nor sea. The Yezidis also have numerous taboos against polluting nature, as well as restrictions on interactions with “impure” outsiders. The notion of ritual impurity also applies to women during menstruation.

Similar to other Iranian peoples, the Yezidis have four seasonal festivals. They celebrate the Iranian new year, *Nō rūz*, on March 21, but consider the new year to begin slightly later on Čâr šanbe sūr, which is celebrated on the Wednesday after *Nō rūz* instead of before it as the Iranians do. More important is the Festival of the Assembly (*ježna jema’iyye*) which takes place in early autumn. The latter celebration likely came to fill the place of Mehragān, the festival of Mithra, which was probably the most important annual event for Iranians in pre-Zoroastrian times, being superseded by *Nō rūz* only from the Achaemenid period onward; as in other respects, the Yezidis here seem to be preserving a more ancient form of the religion than the Zoroastrians.

The primordial sacrifice of a bull, which follows upon the process of creation, is a basic feature of the common mythology shared by the Kurds and their Persian Zoroastrian cousins. But in contrast to Zoroastrianism which attributes this act to the evil deity, Ahriman, the Kurdish Yezidis see it as a positive occurrence, because it makes possible the generation of subsequent life. Since in the creation story found in the Sanskrit Vedas this primordial sacrifice is also seen as beneficial, Kreyenbroek proposes that the Zoroastrian version must be a later innovation, with Mithra having been the original sacrificer.⁷

Another cosmological difference between the Yezidis and Zoroastrians is that the Yezidis see good and evil as coming from the same source, as opposed to Zoroastrianism dualism which posits a radical separation between the forces of good and evil. This places Yezidism closer to Zurvanism, which was described as a heresy in the Zoroastrian texts but apparently was a strong rival to Zoroastrianism during the Sasanian period.⁸

This analysis strengthens the argument that Kurdish religion was a parallel tendency to Zoroastrianism during the Sasanian period, in fact a rival to it. The Middle Persian priestly texts, which are rife with anti-heretical polemics, bear proof that throughout the Sasanian era there was not one but many competing Iranian religions, of which Manichaeism and Mazdakism are merely the two best known. The “div-worshippers” of Mazandaran are surely just another indication of an Iranian people who followed their own version of ancient religion rather than the rite promoted by the Mazdaean priesthood, and the religion of the Kurds almost certainly falls into a similar category.

ZOROASTRIANISM AND YEZIDISM IN KURDISTAN: THE POLITICS OF CONFLATION

Given the clear differences outlined above between the Yezidi religion and Zoroastrianism, how have the two become conflated in the minds of so many today? In recent decades the claim of Zoroastrian roots among the Kurds has been closely identified with the socio-political agenda of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, or PKK), a Marxist-Leninist political organization founded in 1978 which led an armed struggle for independence from the Turkish Republic from 1984 to 2013. The group’s leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has advocated a secular society while championing Zoroastrianism as the “original” religious identity of the Kurds. For him, and for the PKK at large, Zoroastrianism has been more of a cultural symbol than a religious one.

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The PKK has moreover followed earlier nationalists such as the Bedir Khan brothers in conflating Zoroastrianism with Yezidism, the latter appearing as a temptingly authentic “Kurdish” religion, which unfortunately, as we have shown, cannot be aligned with the former tradition. Indeed, while this was not always the case in the past, most Yezidi religious leaders today emphatically state that they are not Zoroastrians.

The official PKK view was articulated by the party’s emissary to the former Soviet republics, Mahir Welat, during a visit to Armenia in 1998. *“I am a Muslim Kurd,”* he stated, *“but I honor all religions. All Kurds used to be Yezidi [Zoroastrian] in the past. Some of us were forced into becoming Muslim, but now it is our intention to return and to educate ourselves again.”*⁹ The position officially (but not particularly emphatically) espoused by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq has also been that Yezidism was the original Kurdish religion.

The Yezidis’ own position regarding their relationship to Zoroastrianism has not been uniform. In 1983 a prominent Yezidi, Prince Mu’awiya, published a book entitled *To Us Spoke Zarathustra*, in which he echoed the assertion that all Kurds, including Yezidis, were originally Zoroastrian.¹⁰ During the course of fieldwork in northern Iraq during the 1990s, British scholar Christine Allison found that *“Almost every Yezidi man I encountered, and many of the women, volunteered the information that the Yezidis were ‘the original Kurds’ on first acquaintance.”* Allison found that Iraqi Kurds typically referred to the Yezidi religion as “Zoroastrianism,” but she attributes this to the association of the latter with the ancient Iranian empires and a lack of knowledge regarding any possible alternatives. *“Few if any informants in the field,”* she notes, *“had a clear idea of the beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism.”*¹¹

Again, the conflation of the Yezidi religion with Zoroastrianism is not supported either by similarities in doctrine or practice nor by any historical evidence. The Yezidis do not recognize any Zoroastrian texts and do not engage in Zoroastrian rituals, and their own hymns and celebrations are based on Yezidi deities and beliefs, not Zoroastrian ones. The fact that Kurds celebrate the Iranian new year (which they call *Nawrôz* in Kurdish) does not make them Zoroastrian. Indeed, Zoroastrian Parsis in India have actively sought to dispel any connection between the two religions: as Pallan R. Ichaporia put it to the Bombay Samachar in 1993, *“if some insist on believing that there are Zoroastrians in the Kurdish nation, they are welcome to live in the dream world.”*¹²

Even so it is clear that many such “dreamers” exist throughout the Kurdish diaspora today, especially in Europe. Freed from the constraints of living in their traditional communities in the Middle East, significant numbers of Kurdish exiles have gone beyond the rhetoric of nationalist ideologues and sought to put Zoroastrianism into practice. In Sweden, where Kurdish converts to Zoroastrianism are now claimed to number three thousand or more, a fire temple was opened in Stockholm on the occasion of the Iranian New Year in 2012.¹³ The whole issue of Zoroastrianism being embraced by people not born to Zoroastrian parents is highly controversial within traditional Zoroastrian communities, especially Parsis; some welcome converts—or “reverts,” as Persians and Kurds might prefer to call it—but the conservative Parsi leadership is staunchly opposed to accepting anyone new into the Zoroastrian community.

The attempts by some Kurds to appropriate the Zoroastrian heritage in recent decades mirror those seen in Iran under the Pahlavis and by opponents of the Islamic regime there since 1979. Specifically, these efforts posit Zoroastrianism as the “original” and authentic religion of all the ancient Iranian tribes, and by extension of all Iranian peoples today. The logical corollary is that contemporary Iranians of all stripes, if they wish to be true to their cultural origins, ought to revalorize Zoroastrianism, if not embrace it outright.

Many Zoroastrianists in contemporary contexts tend to reify Zoroastrian history while also simplifying it, stripping the religion of its legal and ritual aspects while emphasizing the ethical core of “good thoughts, good words, good deeds.” The principal motivation for this “revival” of Zoroastrian identity would appear to be

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political, a way of differentiating and distancing oneself from Islam which is perceived as foreign.

While sympathizers with this approach may be numerous, very few individuals actually take the step of seriously learning about the Zoroastrian tradition or putting it into practice in their own lives. Many advocates of “Zoroastrian” identity are in fact suspicious of or even opposed to religion, and see a streamlined Zoroastrian ethic as a harmless substitute.

In terms of historicity the Kurdish claim to Zoroastrian heritage is extremely problematic. The origins of the Kurds as a distinct ethnicity are unclear. They may derive in part from the ancient Medes, as many of them claim, but this is just as likely for Azeris; the Kurdish language may indeed be descended from Median, but the same is true for Old Azeri, a west Iranian language which disappeared by the seventeenth century. The Adur Gushnasp fire temple, one of the three great Zoroastrian temples of ancient Iran, is situated in what were the western Median lands (near modern Takab in the Iranian province of West Azerbaijan), and is claimed by both the Kurds and the Azeris. Interestingly, DNA tests have shown that today’s Kurds and Azeris descend to a large extent from a common ancestral people.¹⁴

In my view, which follows that of Vladimir Minorsky,¹⁵ Kurdish ethnicity most probably evolved as a synthesis between intrusive Iranian tribes such as the Medes with the pre-existing local inhabitants—including perhaps the descendants of the Lullubi and the Gutti known from Assyrian sources—during the early first millennium BCE, just as Persian ethnicity resulted from a mixing of the immigrant Parsa tribe with the indigenous Elamites further south.

This would account for the presence of non-Iranian elements which can be detected even in the oldest strata of Kurdish religion and myth, particularly among the Yezidis and Yaresan. The Iranian elements in these same traditions, meanwhile, as has been noted, would seem to derive from an ancient pool that provided a source *common* with Zoroastrianism, rather than from Zoroastrianism itself. As for the Kurdish claim to Zarathushtra, it is unfortunately baseless, since the language of the Avesta places Zarathushtra in eastern, not western Iran.

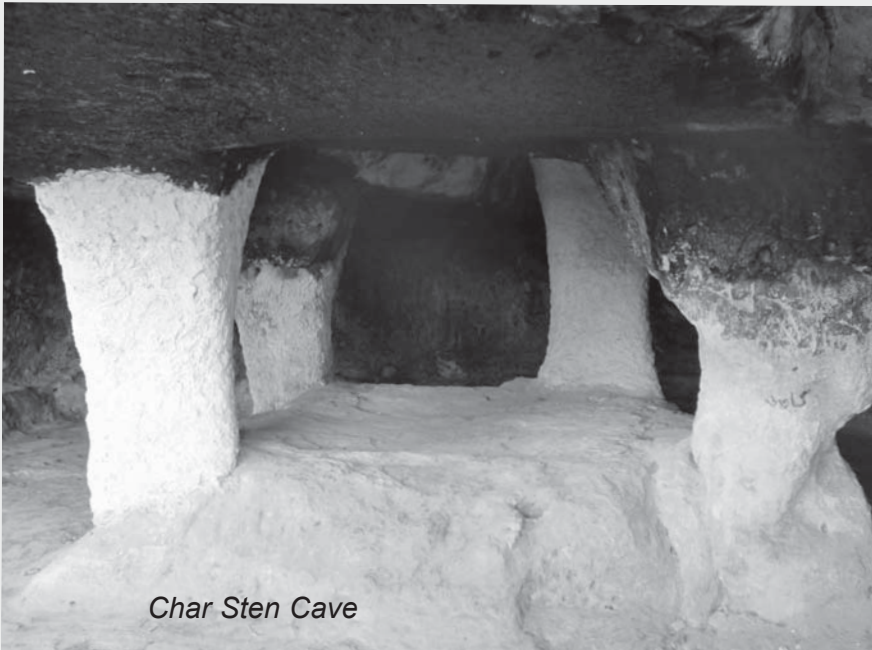
While there is no indisputable evidence supporting the claim that the pre-Islamic religion of the Kurds was Zoroastrianism (or even Yezidism, which didn’t take its present form until after the 12th century), there are a number of archaeological sites in Kurdish territory that seem to have had a religious function and can be associated with ancient Iranian religion. In fact, the KRG’s Directorate of Antiquities tends to label any pre-Islamic building they find as a “Zoroastrian temple,” but these identifications require further research before they can be confirmed, and in some cases the structures in question may not have been religious sites at all.

Perhaps the most intriguing of these sites is the temple complex known as Châr Stên (Persian *čahâr sutûn*, “four pillars”), located on a hilltop just outside of the city of Duhok in northern Iraq. The main feature of this site is a cave containing a large altar connected to the ceiling by four thick pillars. The cave was used by Kurdish Peshmerga rebels as a hideout during the time of Saddam Hussein; two of the pillars were damaged by bombing raids and have since been restored.

In 2005 Kurdish archaeologist Hasan Qasim, now Director of Antiquities for Duhok province, began excavating around the cave and unearthed a number of interesting discoveries. These include several additional sacrificial sites, one of which is served by a water channel and may have been associated with Anahita, an elevated stone gravesite which was exposed to the sky, and across an unexcavated area on the other side of the hill, a trough which may have been used to grind haoma. Rock carvings of solar and lunar symbols are visible at several locations, and may represent Mithra and Anahita.

Of all the pre-Islamic sites in Kurdistan, the Châr Stên temple seems most likely to have been Zoroastrian. On the other hand, even if it is, this should not necessarily be taken as evidence that the local population

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Char Sten Cave

practiced the religion. While the region was indeed under Sasanian control and thus the religious authority of the Magian priests, from the Middle Persian texts we know that much of the Empire's subject population resisted the state-imposed religion, and the evidence from Yezidism would indicate that the Kurds' version of Iranian religion differed from that of the Mazdaean priests. Qasim argues that the historical name of the Duhok region, Bahdinan, derives from *Beh-dīnān*, which would point to a Zoroastrian identity. Historical sources, however, claim that the name derives rather from a Kurdish Muslim ruler of the fourteenth century, Baha al-din, who founded a dynasty that ruled there until 1843.¹⁶

Other archaeological evidence from Kurdistan provides many traces of ancient

Iranian religion, but none are as clearly Zoroastrian as Châr Stên and may derive from parallel traditions. The Yezidi shrine complex at Lalish features many solar symbols that can be construed as Mithraic, but sun worship is a central feature of the Yezidi religion and is not specific to Zoroastrianism. The Mithraic image of a lion killing a bull—which represents the primordial sacrifice in Mithraism but not in Zoroastrianism—abounds throughout the Kurdish lands, including the main entryway of the 11th-century Seljuk mosque at Diyarbakir and the Armenian Orthodox St. Giragos Church in the same city. Solar discs, which are also associated with Mithraism, are found abundantly as well, notably adorning the entry gate to the former Bahdinan capital of Amedi and the Median tomb attributed to Cyaxeres at Qyzqapan near Sulaimani. The royal tomb at Qyzqapan bears images that are recognizably Zoroastrian, including two or possibly three priests, a fire altar, and a *fravahr* that strangely has four wings instead of two.

In conclusion, one may affirm that Zoroastrianism certainly had a presence in Kurdistan during the pre-Islamic period. However, it is not clear whether these traces were left by foreign elites from Iran or if they actually represent any degree of penetration among the local population, which more likely followed parallel traditions.

As for contemporary Kurdish notions of a Zoroastrian past, they are

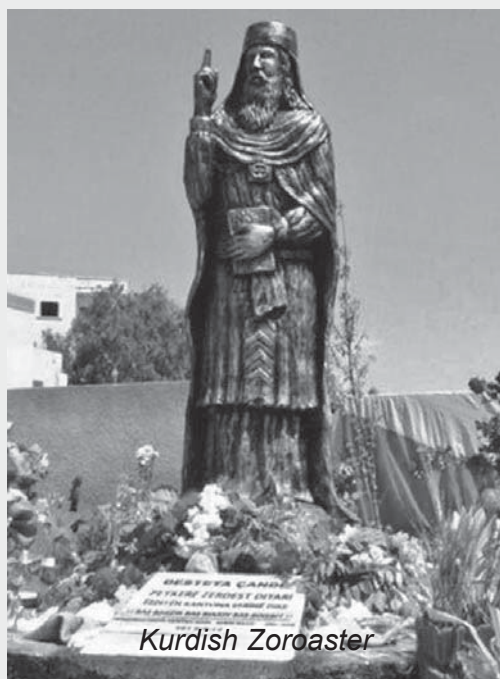


Four-winged Fravahr

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demonstrably the product of modern nationalist ideology with little in the way of unambiguous historical support. One might argue that claims of unique or privileged ownership over an ancient cultural heritage are, in the end, somewhat meaningless, and that one should rather consider the way individuals and societies draw upon the past in order to construct an identity in the present. After all, identities are never static, but are always evolving through the dynamic interplay of diverse elements. What Kurds today say about Zoroastrianism and their relationship to it may not be a reliable source for their own objective history, but it can shed interesting light on the ways in which they are attempting to find their place and face the challenges of living in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

(All photographs courtesy of the author.)



Sasanian Building, Darband-e Khan

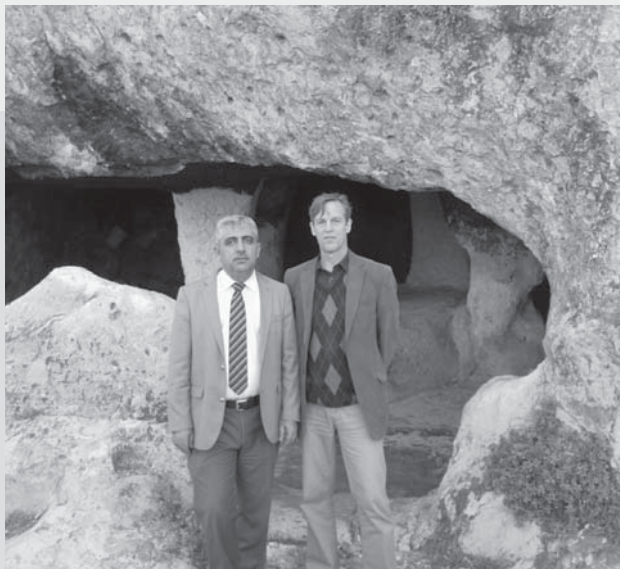


Rock Relief at Qyzqapan

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(Endnotes)

- See Christine Allison, "Representations of Yezidism and Zoroastrianism in the Kurdish Newspapers *Hawar* and *Roja Nû*," in Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke and Antje Wendtland, eds., *From Daēnā to Dîn: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009, pp. 285-91.
- 2 Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds as Objects and Subjects of Their History: Between Turkish Official Historiography, Orientalist Constructions, and Kurdish Nationalists' Reappropriation of Their History," Revised version of a paper presented at the conference 'Between Imagination and Denial: Kurds as Subjects and Objects of Political and Social Processes', organized by the Kurdology Working Group at the Free University, Berlin, May 19-31, 1998, p. 10.
- 3 For a detailed overview of Yezidi religion see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: its Background, Observances and Textual Traditions*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.
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- 5 Mehrdad Bahar, *Az ostūreh tā tārīx*, Tehran: Češmeh, 1376 [1997], p. 302.
- 6 This parallel is discussed in Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, pp. 48-50.
- 7 Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, pp. 56-9.
- 8 See R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- 9 Onnik Krikorian, "Kurdish Nationalism in Armenia," *Newsline*, 6 January 1999 <www.rferl.org/content/article/1141815.html>
- 10 Christine Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 41.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Noshir H. Dadrawalla, "The Yezidis of Kurdistan – Are they Really Zoroastrians???" <<http://tenets.zoroastrianism.com/deen33f.html>>.
- 13 "Kurds Open Zoroastrian Temple in Sweden" <www.kurdistsans-zarathustrian.org/?p=1216>.
- 14 Ferdinand Hennerbichler, "The Origin of the Kurds," *Advances in Anthropology* 2/2 (2012): 64-79.
- 15 Vladimir Minorsky, "Kurds, Kurdistān. History A: Origins and Pre-Islamic History," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009, v. 5, pp. 447-49.
- 16 See Amir Hassanpour, "Bahdīnān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online.



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In photo the author on right with Dr. Qasim at the Char Sten cave temple

ZOROASTRIAN ACCEPTANCE

DINYAR MISTRY, AUSTRALIA

All living religions exist because its believers subscribe to some or all of its tenets—rational and irrational—some of which may not relate to its prophets' teachings but are drawn from their local culture's manners and customs.

Most religions actively propagate their beliefs and recruit believers (such as Christianity and Islam), while others may not seek believers and, in some cases, actively discourage proselytes (like Zoroastrianism in India and Iran). As the Zoroastrian community in India is patriarchal, this ban has caused considerable angst and anger among intermarried women—who are the largest group in India affected by this proscription. They are forbidden to enter temples and attend funeral ceremonies for close family members; further, their children are not accepted as Zoroastrians. Zoroastrian women in Iran are legally barred from raising their children as Zoroastrians when married to a Muslim.

Global diasporic expansion has loosened the ties that historically bound Zoroastrian *émigrés* to their home communities in India and Iran. Consequently, the intermarried “issue” is being resolved outside India and Iran as priests in many expatriate communities willingly perform marriage ceremonies and *navjotes* for their children. Note that this leniency may not extend to India—there is anecdotal evidence that these Zoroastrians are being challenged or refused entry to agiaries and athash behrams in India based on their looks, speech, or attire. Similarly, Indian “gatekeepers” may challenge children of Zoroastrian parents from foreign countries, based on their appearance or demeanour.

However the diaspora has not addressed the issue of acceptance of others who wish to become Zoroastrians. In some cases, this has become a bitter source of friction in the community (e.g. in the UK).

I have titled this paper using the word “acceptance”—as contrasted to conversion—to distinguish the passive act of acceptance from the active action of proselytising and conversion carried out by Christians and Muslims. Acceptance, then, is the act of recognising those people who, of their own accord, have chosen to or wish to become Zoroastrians. I see such acceptance as the next step in the journey for the revival of Zoroastrianism, as it

means a change in attitudes and an introduction of new people, ideas, customs and behaviours.¹

Apart from the families of the intermarried Zoroastrians, there are two groups of people who may desire to become Zoroastrians. The first will be those with a historical and emotional attachment to Zoroastrianism. These are people with a race memory, some may even have a living relative or close friend who is or was a Zoroastrian, who they loved and admired. Many from this group may be refugees or natives of the Iranian regime or surrounding countries that once had large Zoroastrian populations.

The second is composed of individuals who, as a result of their study of Zoroastrianism, make a choice to become Zoroastrians based on their acquired knowledge and beliefs. The classic case in the United States is that of Joseph Petersen whose *navjote* was performed by Kersey Antia. (Petersen's contribution to the community was the creation of an invaluable, dynamic internet resource of all Zoroastrian religious and related literature.)

As Zoroastrianism has no recognised central authority (*vis-à-vis* the Pope), individual groups and communities will need to decide their respective acceptance policy. I suggest that there are three options:

- full, unconditional acceptance to one and all,
- conditional acceptance, or
- covert acceptance that is valid in only certain countries like Iran and Pakistan, where freedoms in this area are severely restricted.

Full unconditional acceptance is the easiest and most straightforward option. Unfortunately, in any enterprise where there is drastic social change like unconditional acceptance, there are also risks. However, the fear of risk should not prohibit change. Rather, prudent steps can be taken to identify and guard against the risks. I believe the following requirements are fair and reasonable minimums:

- a sincerity test,
- a “no advantage” test,
- a knowledge test, and

Ritual Implements

- a character reference.

1. The **sincerity test** is aimed at weeding out pretenders² and others who have an ulterior motive for becoming a Zoroastrian for other than true spiritual reasons. Unfortunately, the sincerity of a person is difficult to judge from a conversation. However, a structured interview—supplemented with reference and background checks made by a community panel—would be a starting point. This will be a learning process and, as experience is gained by the community, they would develop the skills and experience needed to weed the charlatans.

2. The **no advantage** test is related to the sincerity test. Zoroastrians have large community endowments in India and Iran and growing ones in the diaspora. Zoroastrians are also very generous by nature. A way to ensure the veracity of a person's request to become a Zoroastrian is spiritually-driven is to have a no advantage policy that restricts endowment benefits of newcomers by imposing time delays and/or financial caps. Whether this is legally enforceable in the terms of current trusts is a separate issue that each trust will need to consider. For example, non-Zoroastrians in Iran have claimed to be Zoroastrian to obtain immigration visas³. Other examples can be cited where the risk of not having a controlled policy would undoubtedly attract some "converts" who have an ulterior motive to become Zoroastrian.⁴

3. The **knowledge** test would ensure a basic understanding of Zoroastrianism.

4. **Character** references would ensure that the person is of good character and standing in the community and worthy of its acceptance. Part of this must be the encouragement to practice Good Deeds for the community, as enjoined by Zarthushtira.

Because of the preceding, the conditional acceptance option may be more acceptable to orthodox communities. I suggest that this should consist of a four step process:

- the clearance of a number of tests to cover identified risks,
- imparting sufficient knowledge of Zoroastrianism for initiation (if required),
- a probationary period, and
- the navjote or *sudreh-pushi* ceremony.

The second and last item are fairly standard, the first being Sunday School courses and activities that

all Zoroastrian children go through and the navjote or sudreh pushi. The policies and procedures should be re-examined from time-to-time to identify and remedy weaknesses and to assuage concerns of outside groups and individuals. The probationary period requirement (like what the Jews have in conversion) is up to the accepting community. This is recommended to make the accepting community and the initiate feel comfortable. It also gives both sides an opportunity to either terminate the process or proceed with the navjote ceremony.

Zoroastrianism is the religion of good conscience that views the world as a moral universe through a moral lens, with humans being moral agents who are free to choose, while bearing personal responsibility for their actions. All Zoroastrians are enjoined to do the right thing at all times. Albeit, one can fulfil the obligations of the basic Zoroastrian ethic without being part of a Zoroastrian community.

In sum, the constructive thing for community groups to do—before it is too late—is to establish their blueprint for acceptance and decide which procedure they will follow if they decide on conditional acceptance, and how they will flesh out the four level tests described earlier to suit their situation.



Dinyar Mistry read Philosophy at Sydney and Oxford Universities. He lives in Sydney, Australia with his family.

Ritual Implements

COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN ON THE TOPIC OF CONVERSION BY VADA DASTURJI KAIKHUSROO JAMASPJI JAMASPASA OF ANJUMAN .ATASH BAHRAM**



Bombay
5th Gatha 1272 Y.Z.
14th September 1903

Dear Shams-Ulema Ervad Jivanji Jamshedji Modi
Secretary of the B.P.P (Bombay Parsi Panchayat)
Dear Sir,

You have requested me to give my opinion on whether or not to allow non-Zoroastrians to convert to Zoroastrianism.

In reply, I have to state that there is no bar in our religion, to accept non-Zoroastrian converts. Every Zoroastrian reciting his obligatory daily prayers, such as Khorshed & Meher Yashts, prays that our Mazdayasni religion may spread to all the *Haftkeshwar Zamin*. (i.e. the seven regions of the world).

The athornans of days gone by did not just sit around wishing this (spread of religion) to come true, but traveled to distant lands to spread the Zoroastrian religion (Refer to Yasna 42.6). Such athornans met with opposition from many people (see Yasna 9.24). We have referred to only two passages from the innumerable in the Zoroastrian Scriptures confirming that the conversion of *juddins* to Zoroastrianism is permitted.

The second edition of Ervad Tehmurasp Dinshahji Anklesaria's "*Treatise on the Conversion of Juddins into Mazdayasni Religion*" has just been published, in which this able Ervad Saheb has quoted examples from Avesta, Pahlavi, & Persian Texts and we totally agree with quotation / examples. In the second edition of "*Passoxi Nirangi Javit Dinan*" published in 1252 Y.Z. (1883 A.D) by our dear departed Dastur Jamaspji, further examples / quotations have been given concerning the conversion / acceptance of juddins into the Zoroastrian religion.

From the writings of Ervad Tehmurasp Anklesaria and our departed Dastur Jamaspji, it can be said that there is hardly any material left on this matter for further research by any scholar. Therefore rather than state more quotations / examples it is best that we give to your Sub-Committee these books referred to above.

Yours Sincerely,

Dastur Kaikhushroo Jamaspji JamaspAsa

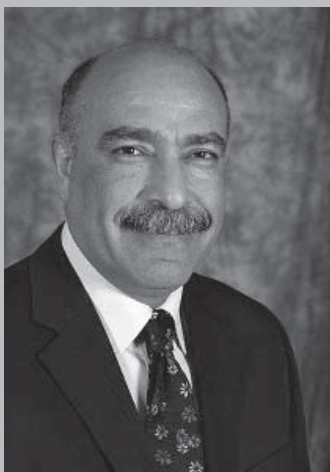
"a copy of a letter written on conversion by Vada Dasturji Kaikhushroo Jamaspji JamaspAsa of Anjuman .Atash Bahram, (Grandfather of the current Vada Dasturji K. M. JamaspAsa), who had performed the Navjote of a French lady and also solemnized her marriage with Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata (parents of JRD Tata), as per the Zoroastrian rites in 1903".

Ritual Implements

(Endnotes)

- 1 a) *Note that historically active conversions, as a community enterprise, were carried out in all Zoroastrian empires. Mention is made of this in the Farvardin Yasht, which praises the priests who went on hazardous journeys to faraway lands to do these meritorious tasks.*
- b) *The mobedan-mobed Kartir has recorded in stone how he persecuted Buddhists, Jews, and Christians, forcibly converting them to Zoroastrianism.*
- c) *Mihr-Narse, Prime Minister under three notable Sassanian kings took an army to Armenia and forcibly reconverted them from Christianity,*
- d) *The scholar Pallan Ichaporia made a speech at ZAGNY recently(see their website) in which he mentions a department for conversion in Achaemenean embassies and the existence of close to a million Chinese converts in Sinkiang in post Sassanian times.*
- e) *See my end note on Conversion in the Avesta at the end of this paper.*
- 2 *There was a case in USA of a group that claimed that as neo-Zoroastrians the Hom ceremony enjoined them to smoke marijuana and therefore under US freedom of worship laws they were legally in their right to smoke marijuana without persecution by the authorities for drug use.*
- 3 *I am aware of an Information paper by the Australian Immigration Department on Zoroastrianism as many of the asylum seekers who were landing by boat were claiming to be Zoroastrians facing religious persecution in Iran.*
- 4 *I am aware of two European Iranian groups one in Norway and the other in Brussels that are performing navjotes of anyone who wants to become a Zoroastrian. I understand they mainly get Iranian subjects. I don't know if they have any controls in place.*

In the News



Appointment to the Editor-in-Chief

Shahrokh Khanizadeh appointed as Editor-in-Chief by Francis & Taylor Group to oversee the Archives of Phytopathology and Plant Protection (APPP) journal.

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/gapp/>.

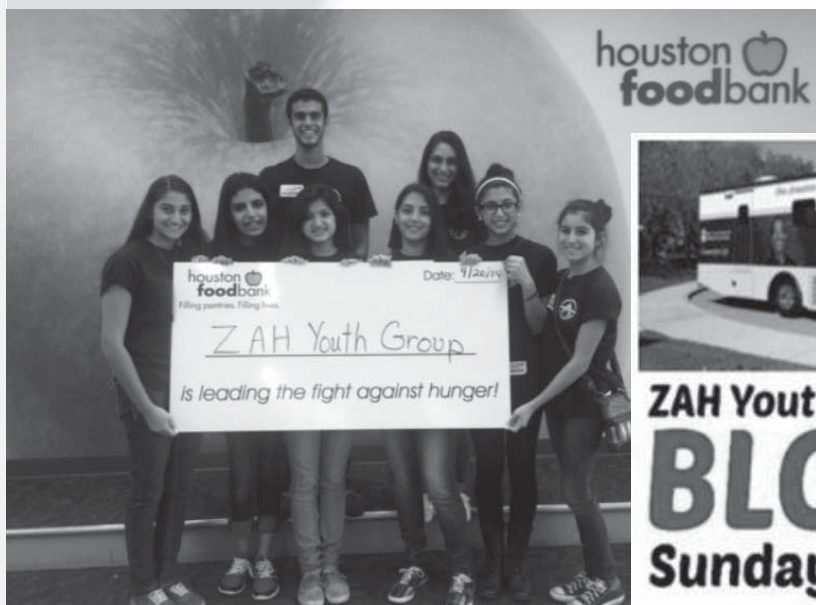
APPP publishes original papers and peer reviewed articles covering all scientific aspects of modern plant protection, including phytopathological virology, bacteriology, mycology, herbal studies and applied nematology and entomology as well as strategies and tactics of protecting crop plants and stocks of crop products against diseases and environmental stress.

Shahrokh volunteers his time to do the graphic and layout for the FEZANA journal and the ZAQ website. <http://khanizadeh.info>

In The News

Zoroastrian Association of Houston Youth Group - MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY!

The Zoroastrian Association of Houston Youth Group has been focusing its efforts this year on community service for our ZAH Community members and for Houstonians at large. A couple of initiatives we have undertaken so far which were entirely managed and delivered by our Youth Group members are:



*Donor coach
drives can process
about 8 donors
per hour!*

ZAH Youth Group hosts the
BLOOD DRIVE
Sunday, October 5th, 2014
10:00 A.M.-2:30 P.M.
Every donation
saves 3 lives!



**Gulf Coast Regional
Blood Center**
www.giveblood.org
Commit for Life®



**If you have any questions or
want to register please contact**
Friyana Sidhwa at
friyana.sidhwa@gmail.com

1) The ZAH Youth Group members, mentors and parents went to the Houston Food Bank on Sept 22nd to volunteer, and we packed approximately 150,000 pounds of food which equated to almost 8000 meals for 1500 people.

2) The ZAH Youth Group decided to partner with Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center on Oct 5th 2014, who got their mobile coach and conducted the drive in our parking lot. We had a great turnout from the community with over 32 members willing to donate blood and help save lives. It was conducted befittingly on our Gahambar day, thereby continuing the spirit of charity and togetherness. The Gulf Coast personnel applauded the ZAH Youth Group for carrying out such a noble task for the entire community and commented that we surpassed all expectations. They have shown willingness to partner with us again in the near future.

We will continue to focus on Community service this year, will have more such initiatives and try and make a difference!!!

ZAH Youth Group

In The News

THE ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH OF NEW ZEALAND (ZYNZ)

ARE THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THAT REGISTRATION FOR THE 6TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONGRESS (6TH WZYC) IS NOW OFFICIALLY OPEN.

The idea behind the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held every four years across the globe is to unite the young Zoroastrians from all over the world and allow them to connect with their roots. The stunning destination of the 6th WZYC taking place between 28th December 2015 & 2nd January 2016 is the spectacular city of Auckland, New Zealand. This invitation is extended to all Zoroastrians between the ages of 15 and 35.

ZYNZ, the Organising Committee of the 6th WZYC has confirmed Kings College as the venue, which will be home to all delegates attending the Congress. Kings College offers top class facilities including a number of boarding houses, large dining rooms, world class sports grounds, lecture theatres, halls and fitness facilities (including gyms and a heated swimming pool). The venue will also have round-the-clock security to ensure top safety of all those who attend.

The Congress will host world-class speakers that will empower and encourage the youth to add to the great Zoroastrian legacy. It will be packed with exciting activities that will allow the participants to explore the vibrant city of Auckland and connect with each other whilst networking.

The delegates will be taken on a journey that will engage and motivate them to embrace New Zealand's treasured culture, enhance their unique traditions, whilst simultaneously forging a united Zoroastrian future. The Congress is designed to educate the participants about the rich Zoroastrian culture and take pride in who we are and where we come from.



In The News



We look forward to Zoroastrian youth from all over the world attending in large numbers to have an experience of a lifetime.

Save the date and some money and get in quick before time runs out!

Pricing brackets are as follows:

Early bird registration fee: NZD\$1049.00

(valid from 1st December 2014 - 12th April 2015)

Casual registration fee: NZD \$1199.00

(valid from 13th April 2015 - 16th August 2015)

Late registration fee: NZD\$1349.00

(valid from 17th August 2015 - 13th December 2015)

To register and for more information please visit: <http://www.6wzyc.co.nz/>

In The News

Artist

Siamak Jamshidizadeh

ASHKAN KHOSROPOUR, A YOUNG ZARATHUSHTI JOURNALIST IN IRAN, DISCUSSES ART CREATED BY SIAMAK JAMSHIDIZADEH .

CALLIGRAPHY OF GATHA:

As this sentence of Avesta "*Ashem Vohu*" has got a message which is not only nationwide but also, world-wide, I used the face of an American woman (as a symbol of modern society) and a drawn picture (Miniature) of an Iranian woman in Islamic era in Iran, to show that Zarathustra's message can be used everywhere, anytime and by all nations. The passage is written in Din-Dabireh, one of the oldest writing systems in the world.

Zarathushtra's Gatha has been written with the help of that alphabet. *Ashem-vohu, Vahishtem Asti, Ushta Asti, Ushta Ahmai, Hiat Achai, Vahishtai, Ashem.*



Siamak Jamshidizadeh - Born in 1975 in Tehran. is a graduate, with a drawing major, of the University Of Art And Architecture, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran.

REPORT FROM THE NEWSLETTER OF ZAQ,

For more about the artist and his work visit :

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/arts-and-culture/113162-painter-uses-songs-to-draw-people-to-art-exhibit>

<http://www.mehrvaartgallery.com/en/Artists/ArtistInfo?artistId=55>

In The News

The Botos of The Amazon

MEHER SIDHWA



During my tenure at the Amazon rainforest, I discovered a whole new world of nature and habitat in the Brazilian Amazonas—from meeting large sized bugs to swimming in the black river, from sleeping in the hammocks to waking up to the sound of the birds. The lungs of the Earth—Amazon—cope with various challenges regarding its preservation. Apart from this there are numerous beliefs associated with the rainforest. For example, illegal loggers hearing crying sounds in the forest; they believed it to be the sound of *Gaia* (Mother Earth). One of the many beliefs that I found interesting is about the Amazonian dolphins.

Boto is another name for pink dolphins that inhabit the rivers of the Amazon. They are different from the dolphins found in the sea and they have relatively good vision as compared to other dolphin species. The Portuguese name of these dolphins is *Boto Vermelho* (*Vermelho* means red). They also turn pinker when they are excited, pretty much like us humans when we blush; also males are pinker than females. The pink dolphins are also known to be the most intelligent of all dolphins. They are medium-sized freshwater dolphins with a dome-like head.

It is believed that the dolphin (boto) turns into an irresistible man at night and impregnates a woman. He then turns back into a dolphin and returns to the water. Later when I returned to Manaus city, I saw a t-shirt showing a handsome man as a boto. So I asked the lady if she believed it to be true. She mentioned that this is an age-old belief as a woman was known to have experienced it and she also pointed out that the analogy could be drawn due to the resemblance in certain body parts of men and botos. So if you are at the Amazon and if someone stops women from swimming at night, they are certainly not discriminating.

The river dolphins are one of the most endangered species of the world. The botos (as you see in the picture) are very friendly; however, increasing traffic in the Amazon River is eventually harming them. The increased noise of the motor boats affects their natural navigation system and the propellers of the boats can accidentally cut or hurt them. On one hand, there are people illegally hunting down botos for fishing; on the other hand, there is the tourism industry that arranges boat trips to feed the botos. However, once you learn about the hazards caused by the motor boats, you might want to step back and let the botos feed themselves. I truly hope that the Amazon is able to sustain its biodiversity in the years to come.



Meher Sidhwa is a backpacker, engineer and sustainability professional. In July she was among 15 selected sustainability professionals worldwide for the Amazon Summer School which involved staying in the Brazilian Amazon Rainforest with indigenous people, brainstorming solutions to their sustainability challenges, growing demand of forest products, international trade, deforestation and land-use. She has 7 years of work experience on renewable energy and sustainability projects that qualified under the climate-change treaty of the United Nations. FEZANA was instrumental in part funding her participation through the Zarathushti Youth Without Borders (ZYWiB) initiative. Zarathushti Youth interested in availing of funding opportunities through ZYWiB can contact Behram Pastakia, [bpastakia\(@\)aol.com](mailto:bpastakia(@)aol.com) Terms of Reference are at www.fezana.org

In The News

E-Course on Zarathushti Religion

ZARATHUSHTI LEARNING CENTER OF NORTH AMERICA

6943 Fieldstone Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527-5295, 630-654-8828, kayomehta@aol.com

With the goal of providing sound knowledge of the fundamentals of Zarathushti Religion, the Zarathushti Learning Center of North America will offer an E-Course on Zarathushti Religion starting in January 2015. This e-course will be emailed free of cost to all interested individuals, one lesson each month.

The lessons are based on the teachings of Dastoorji Navroze Minocher Homji. These lessons were developed by Kayomars Mehta in Chicago over the last 30 years. They continue to be in use in the Religion Education Programs at several locations worldwide. The lessons concentrate on understanding the fundamental concepts of our religion, as expressed in our daily Avesta Prayers. Mastering these concepts will enable us to recite our prayers intelligently with full understanding of what they mean. They will teach us as to how to live our daily life according to the teachings of our religion. Mere muttering of Prayers without understanding their meaning might indicate faith in them; but, such muttering leaves the Spiritual Thirst of our Soul unquenched. Let us mend that mode. Let us discover that there is more to our religion than just Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds. If you are interested in receiving these lessons of the E-Course on Zarathushti Religion, please send an email to kayomehta@aol.com expressing your desire to register for the course.

Zarathushti Learning Center of North America was established as an independent Foundation in 1999 by Nergish & Kayomars Mehta of Chicago, Illinois, USA. The Foundation is committed to serve the educational needs of Zarathushtis worldwide. **Kayomars Mehta** is a Religion Education Teacher, Chair of Religion Education, a Director, a Trustee and the past President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. Kayomars has served as the Chair of Religion Education of FEZANA and is a recipient of the Outstanding Zoroastrian Award of FEZANA. Kayomars is currently serving as the President of World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) US Region.

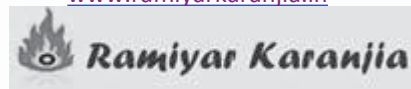
ERVAD DR SOLI DASTUR, FLORIDA, USA RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Tele Class Videos presented by Ervad Soli P. Dastur
Available at: <http://zoroastrians.net/category/z-tele-class/>

Weekly Zoroastrian Scripture Extract. (WZSEs) (90 in all) are available on Internet at: <http://www.avesta.org/wzse/index.html>

Daily Zoroastrian Prayers in mp3 format recorded by Dasturji N.D. Minocher-Homji and Ervad Soli P Dastur : <http://www.avesta.org/mp3/index.html>

www.ramiyarkaranjia.in



This website created by Ervad Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of the Dadar Athornan Madressa , Mumbai provides a wealth of information for our future generation to benefit from.

Religion is a fascinating journey. Since it is often misunderstood, misinterpreted, misrepresented and misquoted, many are hesitant to undertake this journey. One of the biggest misconceptions is that this journey is best undertaken only at a later stage in life. But the sooner one embarks on this journey the greater are the benefits.

Do join Ramiyar Karanjia on this journey.

Please share this with your circle of family and friends

YOUNG PARSIS LEARN XYZ OF THEIR HISTORY

The Xtremely Young Zoroastrians (XYZ) of Mumbai have initiated a series of community programmes of fun activities, alternate Sundays, to stop the "growing ignorance" about Zoroastrianism among children. The children will be taught about the religion, community literature, folklore, contemporary iconic personalities and even Parsi cuisine and language. The program is open to children between ages 5 to 15 years, for Rs 1000 per year. Sessions will be held at seven centers in the city — Colaba, Tardeo, Parel, Dadar, Andheri, Santacruz, and Byculla. This initiative could prove to be a landmark in the community's contemporary history. Dasturji Khurshed Dastur will provide religious knowledge. Hoshaang Gotla and other like-minded Parsis have initiated this series of community programs.

Adapted from Parsi Khabar December 25, 2014

Personal Profiles

SARAH STEWART

The Star of Everlasting Flame Exhibition.

Sarah Stewart is a gentle soft-spoken person in quiet conversation, and brings the same gentleness when she stands behind a microphone, but then her voice changes to that of authority, the voice of one who has studied Zoroastrianism over the years and the voice of one who loves the Zoroastrian community.

Sarah was born in Germany, but the connection to India goes back to her grandfather who was an Englishman sent to India to build roads and bridges in Jaipur. Her father was seconded to a Gurkha Regiment as a British Army officer. So Sarah went with her family to India, where she lived in Calcutta and Nepal, and eventually went back to England to a boarding school with very fond memories of India. As a young girl she explored the world backpacking and joined ANU (Australian National University) Canberra, where her parents then lived, majoring in South Asian Studies under Professor A.L. Basham.

This brought her back to India, where she fell in love with the country all over again and studied South Asian History in greater depth. After starting a family (she has a son and 2 daughters), she went back to academic life as a mature student joining the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which is the world's leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle east. She completed her master's degree in Ancient Indian History, which included a module in Zoroastrianism with Professor Mary Boyce. Sarah was among her last batch of students. She then received a fellowship for her doctoral degree from the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) and undertook fieldwork in Panjikent, Tajikistan, working on an archaeological site under the famous Russian archaeologist and art historian, the late Prof. Boris Marshak.

Her early contact with Zoroastrianism came from her studies at SOAS as a postgraduate student when she visited Bombay as a guest of Khojeste and Firoza Mistree and their family. There she met the late Mrs Shehnaz N. Munshi who was fluent in Gujarati and had a long family attachment with Vyara and Tadgaon - two villages in Gujarat. It was with Shehnaz's help



that Sarah began her first articulation of the *Atash nu Geet*, a song written in Gujarati to honour the establishment and consecration of the Navsari *Atash Bahram*. The *Atash nu Geet* became a central theme in her doctoral thesis.

With Professor Philip Kreyenbroek and Shehnaz Munshi, Sarah worked on a series of interviews mapping the historicity of a variety of beliefs held by Urban Parsis. These interviews were then published in a book by Kreyenbroek: ***Living Zoroastrianism Urban Parsis Speak about their Religion***. More recently Sarah received a British Academy research grant to study the Zoroastrian communities across Iran and to map socio-religious changes that have taken place since the Revolution of 1979.

During her doctorate Sarah started working at the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at SOAS, overseeing its transition to the London Middle East Institute (LMEI) where she later became Deputy Director. She also taught Zoroastrianism in the Department of the Study of Religions at SOAS.

In 2014 she joined the Department full time as a lecturer in Zoroastrianism. She is an Advisory Committee member for the Centre for Iranian Studies at SOAS and a

Personal Profiles

member of the LMEI's Editorial Board. She has recently introduced a Foundation course in Zoroastrianism and also convenes a course on Islam in Britain and a distance-learning course on Muslim Minorities. She is the co-editor of the six – volume series ***The Idea of Iran***, which includes (with Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis): ***The Birth of the Persian Empire*** (2005), ***The Age of the Parthians*** (2007), ***The Sasanian Era*** (2008) and most recently (with Edmund Herzig) ***The Age of the Seljuqs*** (2014). She has Book Chapters on (with Shehnaz Munshi): 'Observances of the Faithful' in Godrej, P. J. and Mistree, F. P., (eds.), *Zoroastrian Tapestry, Art, Religion and Culture* (2002), 'Parsi Prayer and Devotional Song in the Indian diaspora' in Hinnells, J. R. and Williams, A., (eds.), *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (2007), 'The Atash nu Geet : A Parsi lay Ritual' in Stausberg, M., (ed.) *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (2004), and articles that include 'The Politics of Zoroastrian Philanthropy and the Case of Qasr-e Firuzeh.' *Iranian Studies*, 45 (1) (2012).

A great lover of the Parsis and the Zarathushtis of Iran Sarah has contributed hugely to the academic studies concerning both communities.

Prepared by Dolly Dastoor

Most recently Sarah was the project director and one of the curators for the much acclaimed exhibition: ***The Everlasting flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*** which showed at the in the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, in Autumn 2013. This exhibition was the first of its kind to give visual expression to Zoroastrian history, culture and religion. It also explored the wide reach of the religion in the ancient world and its influence on the major religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The exhibition was very well received with a footfall of over 23,000 visitors and there are plans for it to be shown in the National Museum, Delhi, in 2016, sponsored by the Government of India.

To commemorate the exhibition Sarah was the co-editor of a richly illustrated book based on the exhibition. She was invited to Houston, in November 2014 to make a presentation to the members of the community and to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston where she drew a packed audience.

The success of this exhibition was in no small measure due to the tireless efforts of Sarah Stewart and to the generosity of Zoroastrians around the world. The community is eternally grateful to Sarah for putting the Zoroastrian religion on the world map and in the tube stations of London!!





HOUSTON CHAPTER

WORLD ZARATHUSHTI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

For many years now, the Houston Chapter of the World Zoroastrian Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) has presented numerous events for the benefit of its members and non-members. The presentations, featuring accomplished experts in several fields and addressing topics related to personal and professional development, have been much appreciated. This Chapter was put together by members of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH)



The formation of this Chamber was inspired by Zarathushti entrepreneurs who had met on several occasions at North American Congresses and at multiple Business Conferences. The end result of these meetings was the development of The Chamber, its Charter document and Worldwide Chapters which together form an organization recognized as "WZCC".

WZCC history began with its launch at a North American Congress in Houston and WZCC. Three members out of the ten on the World Board were from Houston! They were Homi Davier, Sarosh Collector & Meherwan Boyce. After completing two four year terms they have since stepped down and we then we had another Houstonian as the Global Board Member, Rustom Engineer who was elected as the new VP at the 2006 AGM. The Chamber's primary motive is to encourage networking amongst Zarathushti businesses worldwide. Additionally the Chamber would encourage professionals (physicians, scientists, technicians, engineers, students etc.) to join our Chamber in a quest for opportunities in their personal fields

The Houston Chapter was formed in April of 2001 right after the launch of the World WZCC at the 2000 World Congress in Houston. Ever since then we have seen steady growth and heard numerous success stories from members residing in the Greater Houston area. The strength of this Chapter is two-fold and lies firstly in its dedicated executive team and the operating style that borders around the plan to showcase the inherent talent & success stories of local Houstonians ZAH.



THE HOUSTON CHAPTER EXECUTIVE TEAM

L - R Jehangir Mistry, Rustom Engineer, Sharmeen Irani, Zarir Sethna, Kershaw Khumbatta, Homi Davier & Jal Sethna

‘WOMEN IN BUSINESS’ a business forum..... Nov 12, 2014

In keeping with this tradition of excellence, WZCC is proud to present three accomplished members of our community on Wednesday, November 12 at the Madras Pavilion. Sonia Rash, Tenaz Sunavala, and Nasreen Khosravian will share with us their experiences, achievements and unique issues faced by “Women in Business”.

OUR TAKE ON THIS SEMINAR.....It was a terrific opportunity for WZCC - Houston to showcase our three entrepreneurs; to listen and learn from these successful women. In Houston we are blessed to have an enviable membership list and especially if you have not attended a WZCC event in the past, we urge you to join the group of loyal attendees who regularly attend and appreciate what WZCC offers at such Seminars.

Based on the favorable feedback we have received, we have decided to continue the same format that promotes networking and discussion in an informal setting where we showcase different talent within our midst. The Houston Chapter model has always been one where the Executive Team work as a body to enhance the image, offer mentorship & interesting seminars.

Here is a brief synopsis of what each speaker stated:

SONIA RASH..... Attorney at Law.....Behrana Law Firm

There are many reasons to start your own business. For me, I wanted to spend more time with my family. I know it may not be the best reason for many people and it's not the most exciting reason, but it was my reason to start my own business. So I gave up my corporate job, safety in salary & benefits and jumped into being my own boss



Some of the challenges or frustrations made the start difficult, what do I practice? Where do I start? How do I succeed? Will I be able to produce income for myself? No one will be feeding me, not my clients or work if I do not do well. These very thoughts were the impetus that propelled me into starting the Behrana Law Firm..

Then came my goals and how to achieve them. I would now have to pay my own taxes & healthcare there was no salary deductions anymore. One must do many things for oneself, from setting up the office, phone system to buying paper.

But, there are also some benefits of having your own business and they consist of: a flexible schedule. More time with your family. Select the type of product or case you want to work on. There will now be no one to micro manage you. However, careful now, you must be disciplined and self-motivated to get the work done.

These are all things you have to consider. It is hard work having your own business, but the benefits can outweigh the frustration if you do your homework and prepare. If you feel passionate about starting your own business and you are willing to work hard, you can accomplish your goal.

Lastly, never let anyone stop you.



TENAZ SUNAVALA.....Founder & President.....PEGASUS VISAS.

It was an absolute novel event WZCC- Houston, put together on November 12, 2014. I was honored to be invited as one of their guest speakers on the topic "Zarathushti Women in Business"

*From being a home maker and raising two awesome college going kids, I founded Pegasus Visas International Consulting. What started as a home grown business is now a full service travel visa company offering visas for individuals and corporations. I faced many setbacks and challenges but my motivation, faith and a positive attitude allowed me to keep the momentum going. The road to my current success was difficult, I did stumble along the way but always asked questions, learned and forged ahead. **Once determined to succeed, It is not that difficult for women to enter Mainstream USA's business world and carve out a niche for oneself.***



*Starting next year, Pegasus Visas will offer Passport Renewals (US and non-US) and will receive accreditation from the Board of Immigration Appeals to offer Immigration services and work with Immigrants and Corporations. **We work with clients globally and share with pride the fact that our clients love our top quality customer service.***

NASREEN KHOSRAVIAN -Founder & Principal .. Kids R Kids Schools in Sugar Land

My desire for owning and running a successful business was in me for a long time. I knew I could not work for someone else all my life. It is like a gut feeling you have where, when the time is right you just want to push forward and venture out on your own.

The choice of going with a franchise was because I knew I would get a lot of hand holding initially and I would always have a continuous support in marketing and other materials that are so important to take off in a business. My husband and I opened our first school in 1999. I could not have done it without my husband's support. He had his steady job to put the roof over our heads so I took this opportunity to branch out and start off the business. Why childcare? My kids were still very young and they were my first priority. So I needed to be there for my family over the weekend. Opening the doors of my school the first day was heartwarming to me. Now I had to fill it up and make it successful. It did not come easy. Many trying days dealing with teachers. But I had no choice but see it through. Today my husband and I own two schools and are building our third. That first step in anything you take is hard, the second and third gets easier.

Looking back at our accomplishments, I feel that we have done and made a great difference in many children's lives in providing a good early education to many children from different backgrounds.



The Editor, FEZANA JOURNAL



January 09, 2015

Editors,
Jam-e-Jamshed,
Parsiana,
Parsi Times,
Hamazor,
Fezana Journal.

Dear Mesdames, Sir,

With a view to provide a level playing field to all individuals contesting future BPP Trustee elections, former Trustees of BPP along with some prominent community members had been discussing with the present Trustees, since early 2014, the necessity to introduce a 'Code of Conduct' that would govern future elections for BPP Trusteeship.

This communication is being released as many - individuals as well as community media - have been enquiring about the progress made in introducing the proposed 'Code of Conduct' under which future elections for trusteeship of BPP would be conducted.

After much deliberations and holding of several meetings a final draft of the 'Code of Conduct' has been evolved and forwarded to the present BPP Trustees for consideration.

As elections to BPP Trusteeship are conducted under a 'Scheme of Elections' framed by the Hon. Bombay High Court, a revised Scheme of Elections has been framed into which the 'Code of Conduct' has been incorporated, that would before implementation, first need to be approved by present Trustees and thereafter sanction sought from the Hon. Bombay High Court.

The salient features of the Code of Conduct that has been forwarded to present BPP Trustees in November 2014 are reproduced hereunder for the information of all those who have been enquiring about the same.

1. The Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet shall constitute an Election Commission (EC) having an Election Commissioner and four other Additional Commissioners, being individuals having impeccable integrity.
2. The Additional Election Commissioners ("AEC") shall work under the directions and supervisions of the Election Commissioner.
3. Trustees may nominate 2 "reserve members" of the EC who shall be called upon to officiate as Additional Commissioners if one or more Additional Commissioner cannot officiate as such, for any reason whatsoever. In addition the Trustees may co-opt members as required to assist in the conduct of elections and supervising/manning of EVMs.

4. The Election Commissioner and his Associates shall oversee the electoral procedure carried out by the Administrative staff of the BPP, and shall endeavour to ensure that the elections are conducted in a transparent, free and fair manner.



5. The EC shall oversee the Election Process at all times - from the announcement of the elections until their completion with sufficient administrative help and staff of the BPP to conduct the election.

6. While the Trustees of BPP shall have the general superintendence and control of the EC & the elections, all the BPP sitting trustees will remain outside the election fray at all times unless a trustee is offering himself for re-election.

7. The EC will oversee all matters pertaining to the Election process. All complaints relating to the election and/or breach of any of the conditions of this Code shall be specifically dealt by the EC.

8. Full co-operation shall be extended by the Trustees and BPP staff to the EC and the team appointed by them at all times to ensure peaceful and orderly polling.

9. Three months prior to the election date, the Election Commission will invite applications from prospective candidates, depending on the number of vacancies, for Trusteeship of the Parsi Panchayet of Bombay. Prospective candidates would file their nomination with the Election Commission and lodge a deposit of Rs 50,000/-. A candidate not procuring at least 5% of the total votes cast shall forfeit the deposit. The deposit amount shall be pegged at the prevailing cost of living index for future elections. After the Election of 2015, the BPP Trustees shall for such future elections declare in advance, the amount of such deposit.

10. The candidate would submit personal details as per a standard format devised by the Election Commission. The candidate would also submit a short bio-data with an Election Manifesto and Vision Statement of not more than 2000 words. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Election Commission would result in the candidature being rejected by the EC.

11. All the candidates will maintain an account of all the election expenses that they have personally incurred and will submit the same to the Election Commission one day prior to the last polling date, as all campaigning activities would have come to an end 48 hours prior to the date of election. Each candidate will be permitted to spend no more than Rs.3,00,000/= (Rupees three hundred thousand) for their entire election campaign.

12. The Election Commission, shall consider all written complaints by the voters/candidates about irregularities committed by any candidate and/or by his/her supporters, All the EC appointees shall consider the complaint and then give their decision, by way of a simple majority. In case of a tie, the Election Commissioner shall have a casting vote.

13. Posters will be displayed as per the guidance of BPP and all efforts will be made by EC to see that these are not destroyed, removed or defaced.

14. The Candidate will hold meetings after seeking prior permission of EC on 1st come 1st serve basis & statutory authorities including Police.

15. No incentives or inducements of any kind (including food boxes, lunches/dinners, gifts etc) will

be provided to the voters who attend such election meetings, at the venue or outside or sent at home in order to maintain a level playing field for all the prospective candidates.



16. Negative criticism of the other candidates shall be restricted to their policies, programme, past record and work, only. No personal, defamatory attacks or character assassination will be allowed against any candidate.

17. Candidates can campaign outside Greater Mumbai City limits if they choose to do so but the expenses incurred will be within the permissible ceiling of Rs.3,00,000/=.

18. No moneys for any transportation (including hiring of buses) or food will be permitted or arranged directly or indirectly to be given to any voter be it from Mumbai or out of station who comes to participate in the voting.

19. None of the Fire Temples of the community or the Towers of Silence complex or any other place of worship shall be used as places for election propaganda, including speeches, posters, music etc.

20. Whilst candidates are permitted to undertake house-to-house campaigning the timings are left to the 'good sense' of each candidate. It will be the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that no nuisance is caused to residents by them or their representatives and supporters whilst house to house campaigning is under way.

21. All campaigning, including house-to-house shall end 48 hours before the scheduled day for holding of the election in the geographical area in which polling is to be done.

22. All activities which are corrupt practices or electoral offences such as bribery, undue influence, intimidation of voters, impersonation, are prohibited and shall be dealt with severely.

23. Any type of Demonstration, gherao or picketing before the homes or places of work of candidates by any one protesting against the candidates opinions or activities is barred and if resorted to shall be dealt strictly and appropriately by the EC.

24. All efforts should be made by the candidates and their supporters not to create disturbances of any kind, like hooting, booing, interrupting, sloganeering at public meetings and/or processions organized by rival contesting candidates.

25. Entry into the Polling Stations shall be restricted to EC Staff, those authorised by the EC, in writing which would includes paramedics, if any, and voters when they are operating an EVM to cast their vote.

26. The Polling Precinct shall be the general area outside the Polling Station and will vary from venue to venue. For each venue this area shall be suitably marked by the EC and promulgated to all concerned. Entry into the Polling Precinct is restricted to EC Staff, those by the EC for manning of Registration and Authentication (manned by candidates representatives) Desk, candidates with two of their authorised representatives and voters standing in a queue to cast their votes.

27. Posters, flags, symbols or any other propaganda material shall not be displayed in the place/s being used on the day/s of polling for any purpose by the candidate.

28. No candidate shall be permitted to provide transport to the voters. The EC shall organize a sufficient number of mini buses/ vans that would ply on a pre-determined and publicized route with timings, for the voters. No remuneration of any kind shall be given to voters nor should any moneys be paid to the voters for transportation to the Polling Precinct and back.



29. Each voter shall bring his / her Voters ID Certificate at the time of voting, without which the voter will not be allowed to cast his / her vote under any circumstances.

30. On the day of polling, no Parsi who perceives himself to be under a security threat and has therefore employed security guards, armed or otherwise, shall enter the vicinity of a polling station precinct with security personnel only after obtaining permission in writing from the EC. If the Parsi who has employed security guards also happens to be a voter, then he or she shall strictly restrict movement of his/her security personnel in the election precincts. Such a voter, accompanied by security personnel shall be permitted to vote only after previous intimation to the EC in that behalf.

31. Candidates and their accredited representatives (not exceeding 2 for each candidate), shall be permitted to enter the Polling Precinct but not the Polling Station under any circumstances.

32. Only Parsis with a specific valid authority letter from the EC can enter the Polling Station. No exceptions will be made on this issue.

33. No sitting Trustee or any other Parsis shall enter the Polling Precincts except when coming to cast his/her vote. Admission to the Polling Station will be open only to members of the Election Commission and BPP administrative staff authorised in writing by the EC. if any, as provided in the Scheme.

34. The EC shall have the power to investigate the issue of a breach of the Code of Conduct or any irregularity/ illegality relating to the election process by a contesting candidate / his or her party workers, suomoto or on a complaint received by the EC, in writing. No Parsi shall be entitled to raise any objection to the election of any Parsi as Trustee unless the Parsi raising such objection shall have been entitled to vote at such election and no objection shall have any validity nor be entertained unless the grounds of such objection shall be stated in writing together with a statement of particulars on which such objection is based and such writing shall have been lodged at the office of the EC not later than 14 days on the date of which the result of such election is published by display upon the notice board. If the office of the EC is closed on the last day for lodging such writing it may be lodged on the first working day thereafter and amongst the particulars required to be stated may be such as (1) the name of the voter in personated (if it is alleged that someone else voted for him), (2) the name of the voter prevented by force from voting (if it is alleged that there was such prevention and particulars as to how and when such force was used).

35. If any objection to an election of any Parsi to be Trustee shall be lodged at the office of the EC in accordance with the terms of the last preceding rule the EC shall have full power and authority to determine the same in such manner as they deem just and right after hearing the parties or their legal advisors, and their decision shall be final and binding on all Parsees concerned.

36. The EC shall be guided by the following among other principles in deciding such objections :-

a) If the election of a candidate whose election has been published is set aside, the candidate who has obtained the largest number of votes out of those who have not been elected and against

whose election there is no valid objection shall be declared to be elected. If there are several such candidates who have obtained the same number of votes the question will be decided by drawing lots. The setting aside of the election of any candidate shall not affect the election of any other elected candidate.



b) No objection shall be entertained on the ground that a candidate who has not been elected was disqualified.

c) If any voter is proved to have been prevented from voting by force or owing to omission by mistake or otherwise of his name from a register or List of Voters or the error of an election officer and raises his/her objection within 48 hrs of the counting of votes, such voter may be given an opportunity of recording his/her vote or votes and the votes recounted thereafter and the result declared accordingly. Votes under this sub rule may be recorded in any manner the EC deems just and fit not necessarily in accordance with the foregoing rules.

d) No election shall be set aside for any irregularity in procedure unless the irregularity is proved to have materially affected the final result.

e) If the decision involves the setting aside of the election of any Parsi or the declaration of the election of any other, the result of such decision shall be published in the same way as the result of an election.

f) The fact that the election of a candidate is set aside shall not affect the validity of any act of the Trustees in which such Parsee may have taken part, if such act would have been valid without his taking part in it.

37. The Election Commission shall, within 15 days of the receipt of the complaint and hearing the complainant, within this period and considering oral or written evidence and / or submissions that may be made by either party either disqualify the candidate from contesting the election or if the election is complete, disqualify the said candidate from assuming the office of Trustee or should the candidate have assumed the office of Trustee to disqualify him / her from continuing as a Trustee.

38. In order to hold free and fair elections, the Election Commissioner will be entitled to adopt any other additional measures as he / she may deem fit.

It is now for the present Trustees of BPP to consider implementing the Revised Scheme into which the Code of Conduct has been incorporated and move the Hon. Bombay High Court for its sanction.

Jamsheed G. Kanga,
Minoo R. Shroff,
Dadi B. Engineer,
Burjor H. Antia,
Dinshaw K Tamboly
Maneck H. Engineer,
Noshir H. Dadrawala,
Homi R. S. Khushrokhana,
Farokh K. Kavarana,
Fali P. Sarkari,
Comm (Retd) Aspi Marker.
Former Trustees & other concerned Zoroastrians.

BIRTHS

Julian Neville Cooper, a boy, to Farrah and Neville Cooper, brother to Arianna, grandson to Farida and Dara Bhesania and Aniheeta and Kersi Cooper in Markham, ONT on April 18, 2014.

Rayan Sanjana, a boy to Khyati and Ervad Kurush Sanjana, brother to Jia grand-daughter to Freny and Ervad Bomanshah Sanjana in Austin, TX, on April 26, 2014.

Jaiden Gandhi, a boy to Farrah and Himesh Gandhi, grandson to Zarina and Jamshed Elavia and Manju and Mukund Gandhi in TX on June 25, 2014.

Aarya Dastoor, a girl, to Neville and Suki Dastoor, granddaughter to Firdaus and Tehmi Dastoor (Houston, TX) in Virenza, Italy on June 29, 2014. (below)



Iyana Parakh, a girl, to Eddie and Nazneen Parakh in Vancouver, BC on July 21, 2014.

Viraf Motafram, a boy, to Shenaya and Pirzad Motafram, grandson to Silloo and Erach Tarapore (Lafayette, CA) in Los Altos, CA on July 22, 2014.

Ava Pavri, a girl, to Numazer and Shermeen Pavri, granddaughter to Dinar and Dinyar Pavri in Pleasant Hill, CA on August 21, 2014.

Luke Neville Bharucha, a boy,

to Jaclyn and Neville Bharucha, brother to James, grandson to Roshan and Jimmy Bharucha in Bryn Mawr, PA on October 5, 2014.

Serena Svetang Desai, a girl to Diana and Svetang Desai, granddaughter to Yasmin and Rustom Engineer, niece to Eric and Thrity Engineer and cousin to Aaron, on October 11, 2014.

Zane Gohel Shetty, a boy, to Varun and Niki Shetty (Brooklyn, NY), granddaughter to Behroze and Sugandh Shetty (Novi, MI) and Narendra and Bharati Gohel in Manhattan, NY on October 22, 2014.

Nathan Robert Voss, son of Negin and Michael Voss, grandson to Farida and Houshmand Sharyari and Sue Voss, great grandson to Nergish Sharyari, Keki and Irandokht Kianipour, in Naperville, IL, October 23, 2014.

Zeena Dumasia, a girl, to Rashna and Zubin Dumasia in Brentwood, TN on October 26, 2014.

Zinaya Choksey, a girl, to Delzin and Shiroy Choksey, granddaughter to Viloo and Sohrab Choksey and Thrity and Yazdi Tantra in Los Altos, CA on October 27, 2014.

Zayna Nevin Dubash, a girl to Roxana and Nevin Dubash, sister to Aliza and Zach, granddaughter to Jeroo and Nozer Dubash (Dubai) and Nergish and Kayomars Mehta, in Naperville, IL, November 18, 2014.

Vivian Cyrus Irani, born to Lillian and Cyrus Irani, on November 18, 2014. Proud grandparents are Adil Bharucha (Houston) and Fareida and

Behram Irani (Dallas).

Jahan, a boy, to Dilnavaz Bamboat and Abhishek Vanamali in Santa Clara, CA on November 24, 2014.

Arshan Homi Contractor Bodhanwala, a boy, to Laila and Homi Bodhanwala, brother to Iyana, grandson to Houtoxi and Farhad Contactor (LA) and



Dolat and Viraf Bodhanwala, nephew to Cyra and Farzin Morena and Nozer Bodhanwala, cousin to Ryaan and Riaa Morena in Southern California on October 21, 2014. (picture above)

NAVJOTES

Zia Dumasia, daughter of Binaifer and Malcolm Dumasia (Northern California) in Hyderabad, India on June 28, 2014.

Milan and Zane Boga, children of Cyrus and Shernaz Boga (Danville, CA) on July 3, 2014.

Anjalee Patel daughter of Ronnie and Elvia Patel, in TX on August 2, 2014

Khshaeta and Mithra Cama,

M I L E S T O N E S

children of Farzeen and Xerxes Cama, grandchildren of Roshni Cama in Dallas, TX on August 17, 2014.

Alea Rivetna, daughter of Jamshed and Tamara Rivetna, granddaughter of Roshan and Rohinton Rivetna, Ray Davis and late Peggy Akin, niece of Cyrus Rivetna and Darius and Zenobia Damania in Naperville, IL on September 27, 2014.

Sanaz Naterwalla, daughter of Jasmine and Urmaze Naterwalla and **Cash Patel**, son of Neville and Melissa Patel, grandchildren of Dhunji and Gulmai Naterwalla, Lovji and Gulnar Patel, Yasmin and Rustom Kevala, Diane and Raymond Kilthau in Portland, OR on October 25, 2014

Officiating Mobeds Kobad Jamshed and Minoo Katrak both from California. (photo below)



Nariman Bharucha, son of Jarafreen and Darius Bharucha, had his Navjote performed on December 28, 2014. Many of his relatives from out of town came especially for this auspicious

event.

Yohan and Iyanah, children of Liley and Cyrus Mehta (New York) grandchildren of vera and dara Mehta and Daisy and Yezed Gheewalla, in Mumbai, on December 30, 2014.

WEDDINGS

JASMINE KAPADIA, daughter of Jimmy & Roshan Kapadia to **YOHAN VAJIFDAR**, son of Dinyar & Farshak Vajifdar (Mumbai, India) in Houston, Texas on December 21, 2013.

Zarin Behramsha daughter of Persis and Naozer Behramsha to **Jorge L. Rodriguez Jr** son of Jorge Sr and Lucia Rodriguez in Austin TX, on April 26, 2014.

Mandana Namdari, daughter of Golbai and Namdar Namdari to **Ardeshir Behi**, (Vancouver) son of Parichehr and Rostam Behi in Tehran, Iran on July 1, 2014.

Mandana Edalati, daughter of Keikhosrow and Mahin Edalati to **Mehrban Rahnmoon**, son of Manijeh and Fariborz Rahnmoon in Vancouver, BC on August 1, 2014.

Roxana Mehrfar, daughter of Roya and Khosro Mehrfar to **Ramtin Jamshidi**, son of Shahla and Rostam Jamshidi, in Laguna Beach, Orange County, CA on August 9, 2014

Armin Buzorg to **Pouyan Azarshahri** in Yorba Linda, CA on August 29, 2014.

Sheri Nentin, daughter of Aban and Gev Nentin to **Joseph Graniero**, son of Lillian and George Graniero in Rochelle, NY on November 1, 2014.

DEATHS

Bouzarjomehr Mehr, husband of Homa Rashidi, father of Mehraneh and Mahnaz Mehr in North Vancouver, BC on September 12, 2014.

Putlibai Tarachand Mehra, (104), wife of late Tarachand Mehra, mother of Katusha (Ravi) Kumar, aunt of Veera Zaidi, Jimmy Patel, grandmother of Sarika and Sareena, great aunt of Sunny Patel in Kanpur, India on September 24, 2014.

Nari Patel, husband of Perin Patel, brother of late Nergish Homi Pavri, late Khorshed Khurshedji Gandevia, late Roshan Patel, Jeroo Polly Sidhwa, Ruby Sam Bengalee, uncle to Jimmy and Arnavaz Gandevia (VA), late Niloufer Michael Hagen, Farida Richard Tinker (MD) and Jasmine Ness Shroff (OH), brother-in-law of Mehroo Minu Patel (IL) in Miami, FL on September 25, 2014.

Rusi Sethna, father of Yasmin Madon (NY) in Mumbai on September 27, 2014.

Dhunjishaw Nagarwalla, 98, father of Yasmin, Rohinton, Kaizad and Jehangir Madon in Mumbai, India on September 27, 2014.

Dolat Vandrewala, mother of Behram Baxter, Aban Mistry and Najoo Panthaky, sister of Jamshedji Buhariwala in ONT on September 30, 2014.

Tehmurasp Meherjibhai Mistry, 78, husband of Tehmina Mistry, father of Sarosh (Kim) Mistry (Orlando, FL), Sheroo, Behroze and Manashni, grandfather of Zuleika, Regan, Malcolm, Pashin, Nishtas, Meher, Kainaz, Persis and Vispi in Mumbai, India on September 30,

M I L E S T O N E S

2014.

Khorshed Chothia, mother of Feroza (Mark Fitch), grandmother of Cyrus and Neville, in Bethesda, MD, on October 7, 2014.

Banoo Yazeshni-Khorshidian, wife of late Mobed Fereidoun Khorshidian, mother of Parvaneh, Cyrus, Poursan, and Farin Khorshidian, mother-in-law of Rostam Sedaghat, Tahmineh Hakhamaneshi, Mobed Jamshid Jamshidi and Parviz Gharibshahi in North Vancouver, BC on October 11, 2014.

Eshrat Sepanta-Dini, 83, mother of Mehrtaj, Bahram, and Minochehr Dini in Surrey, BC on October 14, 2014.

Kamyar Behdinin in CA on October 17, 2014.

Bapsy Hiraji Anklesaria, mother of Dilshad (Dara) Todiwalla in Ahmedabad, India on October 27, 2014.

Rostam Homati, brother of Parichehr and Parvaneh in Southern California on October 30, 2014.

Azita Darabian, 51, daughter of Pooran and late Esfandiar Darabian, sister of Hida and Hooman Darabian in North Vancouver, BC on October 31, 2014.

Jal Kaikhushru Pooniwala husband of Freny father of Rashna (Hervez) Bharucha, Adil (Rashna) Pooniwala, grandchildren Zenia Bharucha, Percy Bharucha, Cyrus Pooniwala, (all of Illinois) in Surat, on November 2, 2014,

Mitra Khoubyar, 58, mother of Arina Aboonabi, mother-in-law of Siamak Arzanpour, sister of

Nasrin Khoubyar, sister-in-law of Behrooz Maneshni in Burnaby, BC on November 8, 2014.

Rusi Naoroze, husband of Pilloo Naoroze, father of Hutokshi and Spenta in Sydney, Australia on November 9, 2014.

Peshotan Bhada, 97, father of Sam Bhadha in Houston, TX on November 10, 2014.

Karl Daruwala, son of Vispi and Percis Daruwala in Monroe Township, NJ on November 10, 2014.

Ardeshir Elavia, husband of Roda Elavia, father of Kashmira (late Cyrus) Suraliwalla, Hootoxi (Arda-e-Viraf) Minocherhomji, grandfather of Havovie Suraliwalla, Adil and Farhad Minocherhomji in Richmond, BC on November 14, 2014.

Tehmina Naoroji Billimoria (97), mother of Godrej (Avan) Billimoria. (Illinois) Jerroo (Marzban) Sarkari, Katy (Noshir) Daruwala, late Meherji (Bachi) Billimoria, in Billimoria, on November 20, 2014.

Aloo Furdoon Wadia, wife of late Furdoon Nadirshaw Wadia, mother of Kanizehn Vistasp Patel and late Benaifer, grandmother of Pinaz and Delna in ONT on November 25, 2014.

Nariman Sohrabji Rustomi, husband of Goolcher Rustomi, father of Farahanaz Pervez Iranpur, grandfather of Vilruza and Friyana in Jacksonville, FL on November 28, 2014.

Roshni Aibara, wife of Kersi Aibara, mother of Nazneen and Natasha, sister of Firdaus Bhathena (Toronto, ONT), daughter of late Pestonjee and Alamai Bhathena (Mumbai, India), in Adelaide, Australia on

December 3, 2014.

Khurshed Fredoon Gazdar, brother of Sam (Dhun) Gazdar, uncle of Aban, Roy, Diana, Natasha, Kashmira, Mikiyo Nina, Cyrus in Oakville, ONT on December 6, 2014.

Darius Sidhwa, son of Dinshaw and Elsa Sidhwa, grandson of Bejan and Dinoo Sidhwa and Alejandro and Carmen Rosario, nephew of Phil and Shahroukh, and Alehandro Jr. and Orlando in Atlanta, GA on December 7, 2014.

Sirous Anvar, husband of Mahin Noshiravni, father of Avid and Faramarz Anvar, brother of Rostam Anvar in Los Angeles, CA on December 17, 2014.

Sarosh Rohinton Motiwalla, 50, husband of Khurshid Daruwala, father of Kainaz, son of Rohin and Prochi Motiwalla in Uxbridge, ONT on December 18, 2014.

Khurshed Mehta, husband of late Freny Mehta, father of Jer and Farokh in Riverdale, NY on December 19, 2014.

Dinyar Mistry, husband of Lucia Mistry, father of Zarina and Danielle, brother of Arni Presswala, Eruch Mistry and Kerman in ONT.

Freny Naushir Daruwalla, wife of Naushir, mother of Behroze (Houston) and Kersi (late Silloo) on January 9, 2015, in Mumbai.

Fereidoun Demehri, 67, husband of Parvaneh Jamshedian, father of Negar and Afrouz Demehri; father-in-law of Alborz Zinabadi and Siavash Fooladian; brother of Jamshid Demehri; on January 18, 2015, in Vancouver, BC.

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR MILESTONES TO
MAHRUKH MOTAFRAM
TEL 425-961-0298
Mahrukhm83(@)gmail.com



NEKZAD ILLAVA A NEW ERVAD IN ONTARIO

The Navar Ceremony of 11 year old Nekzad Illava (Grandson of Keki P Illava and son of Aspi and Tanaz Illava) studying in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada was performed at Motlibai Wadia Agiyari, Malcom Baug, Jogeshwari on December 21st 2014 Roj Khordad Mah Amardad 1384 YZ.

Nekzad was trained under the able guidance of Ervad Jal Noshirwan Panthaky in Mississauga, Canada.

Matrimonials for Winter 2014 -

FEZANA JOURNAL will coordinate initial contacts between interested parties. We do not assume responsibility for verifying credentials. Contact Roshan Rivetna at RRRivetna@aol.com

Female, 26, 5; 2", slim, Bachelor of Business & Information Management, awaiting CA registration, working as Financial Accountant in Auckland, New Zealand. Enjoys baking, music, traveling. Willing to settle abroad. Contact skermanian@xtra.co.nz. [F14.27].

Female, 27. Residing in Scarborough, ON, Canada. Bachelors in Dentistry (Maharashtra, India), PG Diploma in Health Information Mgmt. (Fleming College, Peterborough, ON, Canada), interested in pursuing a career as a Healthcare Professional after she gets her license. She is rooted in family values, is friendly, sociable and fun-loving at heart. Contact zarirmehta@yahoo.co.in. [F14.28].

Male, 32, 6' 1", M. Ed. In Elementary Education. Settled in Boston, MA, working as a teacher. Enjoys travel, sports, trying new restaurants, and movies. Interested in an alliance with a girl with good values

and a good sense of humor. Contact meshroff@yahoo.com. [M14.30].

Female, 23, 5' 4", fair, slim, Masters in Computer Application, appearing for CA from Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Bachelors in Commerce. Enjoys sports, computer games, Internet, movies, music (plays guitar), dancing, reading, different cuisines. Contact farhad_savai@hotmail.com. [F14.31].

Female, 33, 5' 2", Associate degree in Web Development and Graphic Arts. Working at Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Very social, honest, loving, sensitive, understanding and easy to get along with. Has some difficulty walking and uses a walker at times, due to bad balance since birth. Interested in meeting an understanding, loving and smart man, looking for a long term commitment. Contact heavenly_destiny81@yahoo.com.

[com](http://www.facebook.com/afsaneh.irani) or <http://www.facebook.com/afsaneh.irani>.
[F14.32].

Male, 30, CPA, BSc from Indiana University and MBA/MA from Wharton/UPenn, working in finance at a global investment bank in New York. Love to travel (have visited about 60 countries) and spending time in the outdoors. Looking for a Zoroastrian woman from any country. Contact arzanr@gmail.com or 262-724 6251. [M14.46].

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. [F14.17].

Male, 31, good-looking, 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. [M14.18].

Female, 25, 5' 6", currently working in Abu Dhabi as an HR and Finance co-ordinator. Willing to settle in India or abroad. Interested in meeting young man with an out-going personality, from a good family. Contact parinaazdaruwalla@yahoo.co.in. [F14.47].

Male, 27, smart, good-looking, software engineer, with fun, easy going personality, living and working in US. Looking to meet suitable Parsi girls. Contact mahruk@outlook.com. [M14.48].

Female, 24, Lovely, educated Business Analyst, currently working for multi-national in Mumbai. Enjoys traveling, music, cooking, willing to relocate. Contact mahruk@outlook.com. [F14.53].

Female, 28, pharmacy technician, brought up in Canada. Currently working for a multi-national company on the West Coast. Interested in meeting a loving, smart, understanding, family-oriented, professional gentleman, settled in Canada or USA. Contact puccoparso@gmail.com. [F14.54].

Male, 27, physician (MD Path) brought up in Canada. Currently doing Residency on East Coast of USA. Interested in meeting a loving, smart, good-looking, understanding, family-oriented girl settled in USA or Canada. Contact puccoparso@gmail.com. [M14.64].

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Parsis and the Law

By: Mitra Sharafi



Published by Cambridge University Press.
pps 343. ISBN is 978-1-107-04797-6.

Reviewed by Cyrus D. Mehta

Some of the most distinguished lawyers, jurists and judges in India have been Parsis. Mitra Sharafi's *Law and Identity in Colonial South Asia, Parsi Legal Culture, 1772-1947*, Cambridge University Press, provides fascinating insights into how Parsis from the 18th century onwards used the legal system to settle their personal and religious disputes, successfully

lobby for changes in marriage and inheritance laws, and how they rose to dominate the legal profession in colonial India.

Although the book's focus is until 1947 when India gained independence, it explains why Parsis still resolve their religious disputes in the courts today. For instance, the present day litigation relating to the barring of two priests from praying in the Towers of Silence because they conducted funeral prayers of people who chose cremation follows on the heels of the early 20th century landmark cases of *Petit v. Jijabhai* and *Saklat v. Bella*, where the secular courts were asked to decide whether non-Parsis could have access to Zoroastrian religious institutions. Unlike other communities, which may have more authoritative ecclesiastical bodies to resolve disputes, the Zoroastrian priesthood in India has never commanded that kind of authority. On a more prosaic level, most of these disputes involved an interpretation of the trust deed, which a court could effectively interpret after reviewing the customary religious practices of the Parsis.

In some ways resorting to the courts to resolve religious disputes may have positive benefits as both sides can vigorously present their best case in order to hope for a just outcome along with rights of appeal. Such a process, especially when violence tends to ensue from religious conflict, may be preferable than being subject to a "fatwa" or receiving some sort of arbitrary sanction by a religious figure. When Parsis resorted to litigation to resolve their marital and inheritance disputes, often airing their dirty laundry in public, it allowed for disputes to be settled in a peaceful manner rather than through blood feuds. Parsis vented by throwing eggs at public meetings rather than through retaliatory killings! Perhaps, it was the strong emphasis in Zoroastrian doctrine to tell the truth and to follow the path of righteousness that compelled Parsis to resolve their most bitter disputes through litigation than resort to violence. After all, the Anglo-American adversary system encouraged the pitting of two adversaries so that the truth would emerge at its



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sharpest, and this was not lost upon the Parsis who became westernized and learned to speak English quicker than other communities in colonial India.

The deep involvement of Parsis in the colonial legal system would not have occurred had they not entered the legal field themselves and become successful barristers, solicitors and even judges. Sharafi vividly describes the doyens of the legal profession in those days, including the versatile and talented solicitor D.F. Mulla, who founded a law firm Mulla & Mulla in Bombay, which exists even today, and who wrote treatises ranging from Hindu and Muslim law to contract and insolvency law. Parsis even published textbooks on something as arcane as club law. Then there was the famous Jamshedji B. Kanga whose “devils” become giants of the legal profession in independent India such as H.M. Seervai, Nani Palkhivala, Soli Sorabji and Fali Nariman – the latter two are still leading legal luminaries.

Not everything is about Parsi glory in the legal field in Sharafi’s dense scholarly work. Parsi men sought to preserve their right to use violence against the spouse in the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Acts of 1936. A Parsi spouse could file for divorce if she could establish “grievous hurt” inflicted by the other. Parsi organizations successfully lobbied to remove from the “grievous hurt” definition the fracture or dislocation of a bone or tooth or any hurt that caused severe bodily pain for twenty days or that prevented a victim from following ordinary pursuits. One example provided to justify the need to restrict the “grievous hurt” definition was that if a husband out of provocation slapped his wife and a decayed tooth dropped out, it would be a ground for divorce. Women were conspicuously absent in the legal profession in those days.

Sharafi also goes into fascinating detail in describing the formation of the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court, which till this day has a jury, although the jury system has long been abolished in India. The plaintiffs were mainly moderately poor wives rather than husbands who came to the Parsi jury for relief. Affluent wives found support in their families and the very poor wives could not afford the legal fees. Many of the documented cases were for annulments based on fraud due to mental illness or impotence or both, mainly launched by wives and they were mostly successful. In one case, colorfully discussed, the husband was

diagnosed with chronic dementia and was admitted to the Colaba Lunatic Asylum in South Bombay. He also did not understand that he was married, and according to a Dr. Boyd, “the patent’s sexual organs had also atrophied, one testicle shrinking to the size of a pea.” The doctor further reported, “He seems to have no sexual inclination whatever.” Medical experts examined both spouses in such cases to confirm the husband’s impotency and the wife’s virginity.

Sharafi does not look too kindly upon Justice Dinshaw Davar, an orthodox Parsi, who issued the ruling in the landmark *Petit v. Jijabhai* case, and who interestingly got assigned to most of the Bombay High court cases involving Parsi disputes in the early 1900s. The judge had previously sentenced Lokmanya Tilak, a nationalist hero, to six years of rigorous imprisonment. The *Petit v. Jijabhai* case involved a French woman who had married into the illustrious Tata family, and had been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion through a navjote ceremony. The question was whether Mrs. Tata could have access to Zoroastrian institutions such as enter a fire temple. Davar was at first open to the idea of allowing ethnic outsiders convert to Zoroastrianism and benefit from Parsi trusts, but he later changed his mind and held that there was no history of Parsis converting when they settled in India even though there was evidence of conversion before they came to India. At issue was the distinction between the terms “Parsi” and “Zoroastrian”. One could only be born a Parsi, although a Parsi who chooses to practice Catholicism still remains ethnically a Parsi. One must be both a Parsi and Zoroastrian to have access to Parsi institutions. Only one born of a Parsi father can be a Parsi. This rigid distinction continues to inform community controversies even today.

The subsequent landmark case of *Saklat v. Bella*, decided by the Privy Council in 1925, followed the same rigid distinction. At issue was whether Bella, who was presented as the biological child of a non-Parsi father, could enter the Rangoon fire Temple. The Privy Council interpreted the fire temple’s trust deed to have been created for the benefit of ethnic Parsis who were also religiously Zoroastrian. Although the trustees were free to admit Bella into the fire temple at their discretion, Bella by right could not enter the temple as she was not born a Parsi even though she chose to follow Zoroastrianism. An interesting insight

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that Sharafi reveals, and not known elsewhere, is that Bella was actually born to a Parsi father, who was the younger brother of the Parsi man who adopted her. For public purposes, though, Bella was presented as the orphan biological child of an Indian Christian and a non-Parsi woman.

The book is refreshing because it deconstructs in the second decade of the 21st century many assumptions that may have thought to be valid in the 19th and early 20th century. While one would agree that the matrimonial laws were shaped to suit the interests of the Parsi male, there may be other perspectives from what have been presented in the book. Even if Justice Davar ruled the way he did because of his orthodoxy, which according to Sharafi he carried on his sleeve, he carefully and faithfully examined the customary practices of the Parsis in India before rendering a verdict. Did the Parsis use the law to shape their identity as Sharafi suggests, because they thought they were different and exclusive, or because it was a practical

way to resolve disputes, especially asking a court to interpret a trust deed? Although Sharafi has written on a narrow legal subject that is well researched and fully supported with citations and references, it promises to be a fascinating read for anyone who wants to delve into an important vignette of Parsi history during British India. The reader will be surprised by how much the book reveals that has hitherto never been told.

Cyrus D. Mehta is a leading immigration attorney based in New York City graduated from Cambridge University and Columbia Law School. In addition to practicing law, he also writes about immigrants and immigration. His previous article in FEZANA Journal was entitled **HOW CYRUS' VIEW OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION MAY HAVE INSPIRED THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION**

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A Legacy Driven Life:

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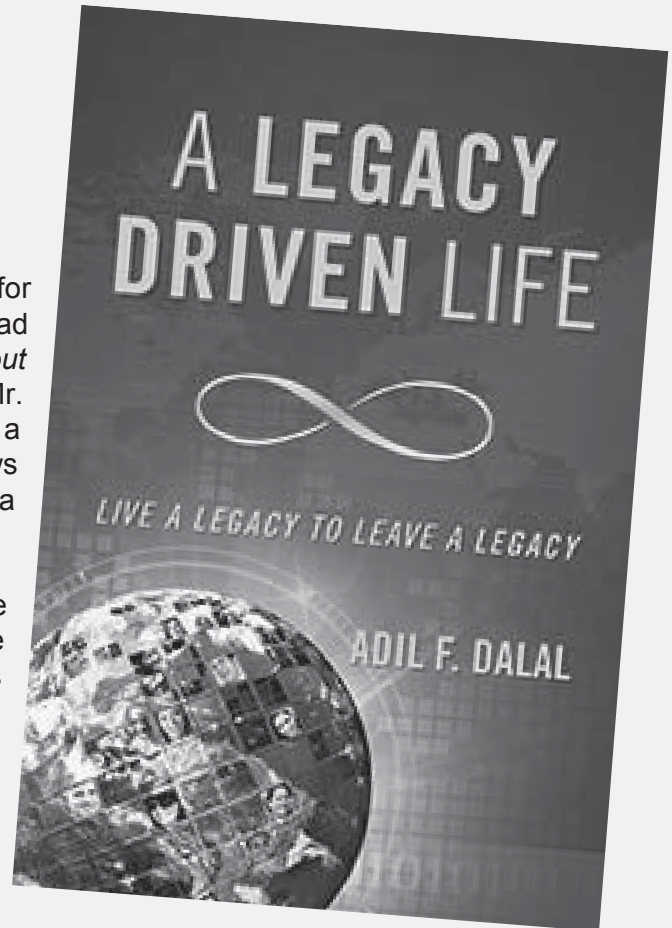
Reviewed by Rohintan Deputy

We live in a chaotic world and are struggling for excellence. Do you have your “true north” which will lead you to your true legacy? *“Changing the world is about improving just one person – YOU!!!”* rightly identifies Mr. Dalal. The book helps an individual think: Why-to leave a legacy, how to design a personal legacy and interviews of five amazing individuals who turned adversity into a legacy driven life.

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We know, realize and apply “A picture is worth a thousand words”. Mr. Dalal proposes a persuasive concept “Visualization-Factor” (V-Factor) to tap the power of our brains and the ultimate potential we have as humans. All of us have our favorite leaders, heroes and role models. Since they have touched our lives - we read about them, learn from them and want to emulate their principles. Using the V-Factor an individual can develop a “gold standard legacy” based on: legacies others have left for you, and a legacy you want to leave for others. Designing your personal legacy will take visualization, energy and effort. The final and the most important step is to implement your legacy by “*living your legacy*”. A five step process for implementation is outlined in the book which can be a great guide; one can use this process when one runs out of energy, runs into road blocks or runs into a wall.

The power of visualization is a very strong phenomenon; utilize it in articulating your future plans. All of us want to leave a legacy behind us, how do we prioritize it? The inspiring work done by Mr. Dalal and his step by step approach will help you unleash your vision and mission in life, and help you leave the legacy of your choice. A must read for all ages.



Rohintan K. Deputy lives in Sugar Land, Texas with his wife Mahrukh. He is a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) and serves on it's Executive Committee and Investment Management Team.

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