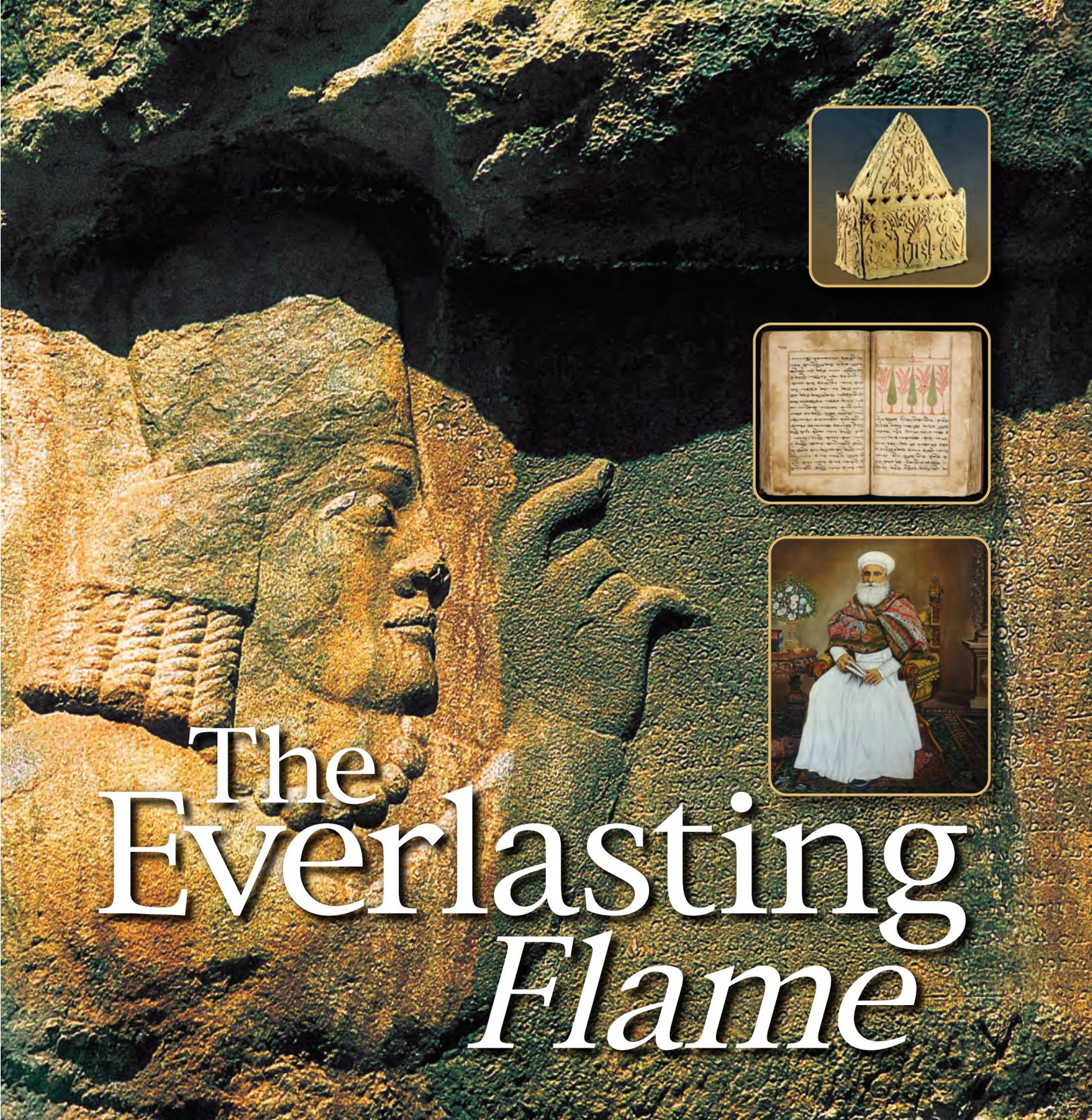


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

1
issue 2014



The Everlasting *Flame*



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

invites you to join us in uniting and
supporting the global Zoroastrian
community

Through our various charitable Trust Funds,
we support a wide range of religious,
educational, economic and welfare
activities in India and in Iran as well as
in other parts of the world.



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Canadian residents - application form and cheque payable in Canadian Dollars as "ZSO" and **marked WZO fees** to:

The Treasurer, ZSO, 3590 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M2M 3S6, Canada. Ph: (416) 733 4586.

New Zealand residents - application form with your cheque payable in NZ Dollars as "World Zoroastrian Organisation, to:

Mr Darius Mistry, 134A Paritai Drive, Orakei, Auckland, New Zealand



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COVER

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From the Editor

Readers may well wonder what happened to Issue 4 of the Hamazor which should have been with them by early November but was intentionally held back so that The Everlasting Flame at SOAS would be included. Thereafter an unintentional holdup due to lapse on my part, owing to health issues, for which sincere apologies to all. But here it comes, a bumper issue carrying the news some of which is now old, nonetheless important, and the very latest.

We have a habit of talking about the past - for what our forefathers achieved, but if one goes through the Hamazor, today too, we have exceptional men and women in our midst. We do not sail the seven seas to set up entrepreneurs anymore, but we do have adventurers scaling mountains physically, academically and culturally.

The Zoroastrians in the US, UK & India have had a very full and exciting 2013 with possibly an unprecedented year such as this one, at least for a very long time.

The Cyrus Cylinder visiting the US and now presently in Mumbai set the pace. It is said never before has such a large number of people visited any exhibition and London was no less. The Everlasting Flame, an exhibition displaying artifacts related to Zoroastrianism under one roof, was the first of its kind, visited not only by Londoners and from other parts of UK, but proud Zarathushtis flying from Europe and even further just to have a one time chance, to feast their eyes on this splendour. No sooner this exhibition came to an end, the focus changed to Mumbai where 1200+ Zarathushtis gathered for the 10th World Congress for a congenial occasion, an all inclusive exhibition having related events; and daily entertainment. These congresses are a boon especially for our youth now in the diasporas who have little chance of meeting fellow community members. Parzor have initiated a programme called Roots, a timely exercise in preserving our identity, which seems to have been the main concern discussed at the Congress. But as it happens in all congresses we hold - we meet, talk and then disperse - till the next time!

Prince Charles in November visited Mumbai during which time he made a trip to see the Godrej mangroves, the only ones surviving in this city, assiduously preserved and guarded by the family. Earlier, in September, a never before concert was held on the banks of Srinagar. Just reading about the location, the music, sounds of sheer magic were transported, yet when one thinks more deeply about it, was this the right place to make 'magic' for so few?

Transport yourself from the 'home country' back to UK. Two Zarathushti happenings which were 'firsts' - a Parsi Hill complete with a large steel Farohar right in the heart of the Midlands; and the formation of the Zoroastrian All Party Parliamentary Group. With so much taking place in this last year in the UK & the US, a conscious awareness has to come about amongst persons who were never aware of the word "Zoroastrian" and now Google to see what it is all about.

Wally Curajee

Abtin Sassanfar

mr Abtin Sassanfar was born on 9th Khordad 1307 in Tehran (*we are in 1392 now*) and his primary and secondary education was at Jamshid e Jam and Firooz Bahram schools. Subsequently having completed a law degree at Tehran University, he pursued his studies in law at the universities of Geneva and Paris and in Tehran he was appointed a court lawyer.

Alongside his professional practice as a court lawyer, he is involved in cultural activities including the publication of articles related to the culture of Iran and the Zoroastrian religion, the translation of Zoroaster's Gathas from the Avestan language accompanied by a commentary about the grammar covering 1100 pages and a number of other books concerned with Zoroastrianism.

As part of Mr Sassanfar's efforts to extend the culture of Iran, is the creation of a centre of Aryan civilisation in the town of Istravshan, in the province of Sughd in Tajikistan, known as the Palace of Culture. From six years ago till now, groups of young Tajiks attend this centre and are busy with the study of the language, history and literature of Iran.

In Paris he founded the Zoroastrian Association with the name of the Iranian Cultural Centre and in whose classes every year approximately 100 children of Iranians take lessons there. The building at this centre comprises of several halls and rooms suitable for lectures, exhibitions of artistic productions, and it also hosts gatherings and pot luck meals on the occasion of the monthly festivals.

He has also acted as a consultant in the production of the Encyclopedia Iranica and right now he is deputy chair of the managing council of the same. The 15th volume of the Iranica has been published in the name of Abtin Sassanfar.

He is currently following up on cultural research including the construction of an Iranian Cultural Centre and Zoroastrian House in Doshanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.

WZO acknowledges and thanks Mr Sassanfar for sponsoring the printing and postage of this issue of Hamazor, worldwide, who also happens to be our valued committee member. - Shahin Bekhradnia



Chairman Darayus Motivala's Report presented at the AGM on 22 September 2013



Past Chairpersons Ruby Contractor, Shahpur Captain and Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, WZO members and my fellow committee members, I welcome you all to our 33rd AGM.

We hope that you have had an opportunity to go through the 2012 Annual Report and Accounts by now. If you have not and would like a copy, please come and see any of the Committee members today as we have some spares for you. I offer my sincere thanks to Sammy Bhiwandiwalla for preparing the report and to Dinyar Modi for preparing the accounts.

As is customary in the Chairman's report, please allow me to update you on some of the projects we have been working on since the last AGM a year ago.

The revised website is now operational. If you have not visited it then we urge you to do so. It hosts a lot of information on WZO and the Zoroastrian religion as well as articles by established authors. It gives information on WZO and non-WZO news and events. We welcome other Zoroastrian organisations to feed in information about themselves for placing on the website. Members will be able to log on and inform us about their change of personal details, like correspondence address, telephone numbers, email ids, etc. Members and non-members can take part in discussion groups and contact any of the WZO Office bearers. There is an archive of all the Hamazors from Issue 4 of 2004 however the four latest issues are available for members only. Visitors to the website can now apply to join WZO through the website.

We have informed all of you through the Hamazor that it will cease general printing at the end of 2014 as WZO needs to take advantage of the newer technology and find ways to reduce its costs. May I please ask all our members to respond positively to Sammy Bhiwandiwalla's letter in the last two issues of the Hamazor and inform us of your email id. Please do not ignore this letter as you may

find that you will not receive the Hamazor in a year's time. We will use your email id to send you electronic copies of the Hamazor in the future and keep you informed about news and events. If you do not have access to the internet, please come and talk to us. We may be able to suggest ways in which you could continue to receive the Hamazor. Our special thanks go to Toxy Cowasjee for producing such an excellent publication every quarter. Through Toxy's hard work and dedication, the Hamazor has been firmly established as one of the best Zoroastrian publications of its type. Long may she continue to be its editor. WZO is indebted to Toxy for helping to raise our profile globally.

For many years we have felt that WZO has not been adequately represented in India even though it is a major area of our charity giving. The WZO Trusts in India, ably managed by Dinshaw and Bachi Tamboly, were set up by WZO for just this purpose and we will continue to work closely with them. However, as you well know WZO is more than just a charity giving organisation. Yes, our primary role is to assist all Zoroastrians in a socio-economic way but we also try to bring the community together by holding social events, to inform all about our great religion through seminars with eminent speakers and to support Zoroastrians who face repression from whatever source, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity and cultural differences. Outside of UK, we have co-hosted seminars with the local Zoroastrian organisation. We do this in all our other regions but not in India so we felt it had to change.

I am very pleased to inform you that as of last month, we have registered a new Trust in New Delhi called the World Zoroastrian Organisation Foundation which has currently three trustees who are Indian citizens and members of the current WZO Board of Directors. The Foundation will be able to operate as soon as all the formalities are completed. As with other regions, the Foundation will also be involved in interfacing with our members and recruiting new ones in India. Our

charity giving will not be restricted to Zoroastrian recipients only.

There is a widely held misconception that most of WZO's activities are restricted to charity giving through the WZO Trusts in India. Today, let me put the record straight through facts and figures collated by our President, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, and our Treasury, Dinyar Modi, to whom I am extremely grateful.

Since 2007, over a £1 million has been received and dispersed globally by WZO through the UK headquarters to recipients in India, Pakistan, Iran, USA and UK amongst others. In addition, we have hosted or co-hosted seminars in the UK and other parts of the world; continue to print and distribute our flagship publication, Hamazor, and carry out other charitable activities.

Yes, more than £600,000 has been dispersed through the WZO Trusts in India to Zoroastrian recipients. The money has been used to relieve poverty through micro-credit loans, replacement of cow dung/mud huts by brick built cottages, grants to offset essential medical costs, interest-free educational loans, upkeep of the Navsari Senior Citizen Centre and sponsoring the cost of school education for a poor child. In particular, we offer our sincere thanks to the Trustees of World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund, the Dasturji Sohrabji H Kutar Benevolent Fund, the Dennis William Richards Will Trust and the Erach and Roshan Sadri Foundation. We thank Dinshaw and Bachi Tamboly as well as the fellow Trustees of the three WZO Trusts in India for their dedication and the magnificent way they manage the trusts.

The next major region of Zoroastrians to receive financial support is Iran where over £30,000 has been dispersed. This is done mainly through the Pourchista Foundation and the Nikan Foundation in Kerman.

We have also dispersed significant sums for Medical and Educational purposes to recipients outside of India and Iran.

Around £250,000 has been dispersed to deserving non-Zoroastrian charities, mainly in India and Pakistan. When the time came, WZO responded swiftly and generously to natural disasters like the SE Asia tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake and floods.

The cost of printing and distributing the Hamazor has been around £10,000 per year over the last few years. This figure is slowly reducing, thanks to the favourable exchange rate changes between the Rupee and the Pound, and also due to the number of members who now wish to receive the Hamazor electronically. We have to reduce this figure significantly by more of you agreeing to receive the Hamazor electronically. We are very grateful to all the individuals who have sponsored the Hamazor issues over the last few years.

We also offer our thanks to the donors who have contributed to the costs of our seminars and in particular to the Firuz Madon Foundation.

All these donations have been received from Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, individuals and charitable trusts. We have built an enviable reputation for our attention to detail in carrying out the wishes of the donors and for our accountability to them. We are very grateful to all our members, individual donors and the charitable trust for their confidence and support and we offer our sincere thanks to all of you for donating this magnificent sum of over £1 million for all our activities since 2007.

WZO has achieved all this with a small band of dedicated volunteers who serve on the Managing Committee. Since its inception, we have worked from our homes as the small office we have is barely large enough to hold our monthly meetings or hold our files and equipment. This has hampered our ability to do more and we hope to correct this situation soon.

WZO continues to support Inter-Faith activities. As an example, the Balaji Hindu Temple in Birmingham is honouring the Zoroastrian community by erecting an 8 foot Farohar in their grounds next Saturday. WZO has been invited to participate with the event by the organisers. If you are able to attend this event which is free to all of us, please see the information sheet on the table. We would urge you to attend to show our appreciation to the Hindu community for this honour.

I would like to end my report by offering the managing committee's thanks to all our supporters and donors for without their financial help we would not be able to continue our activities. I have

already mentioned and thanked some of the major donors in the UK, earlier in my report.

We thank the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao, the Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Trust, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust and the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust for the substantial financial support they continue to give to the WZO Trusts in India.

We also thank FEZANA in North America which raises funds from their members for our charitable activities in India.

And we thank every one of you for your continued support and confidence in us.

My personal thanks go to all my fellow managing committee members for their support and guidance which made my role that much easier. This year, subject to your approval, the committee will be strengthened by two new members in the UK, Ervad Jimmy Madon and Mino Mistry. You will hear more of their special qualities by their proposers later.

The last four years have been an amazing time for me as your Chairman. It has been hard work but very gratifying and I want to thank you all for your support and confidence in selecting me as your Chairman. However, it is now time to move on so I will not be forwarding my candidature as Chairman for the coming year. I wish the new Chairman all the success and hope that you will give him the same level of support you have given me.

Thank you to one and all.



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

Darayus S Motivala was born in Bombay and moved to the UK as a teenager in 1961. He has a BSc (Hons.) in Information Technology from the University of Brighton. After starting his career in developing operating systems and compilers with a small British computer manufacturer, he quickly moved to Technical support and then on to Sales and Marketing. After more than 35 years in the industry, he made a career change and went into the hospitality sector. He has been on the WZO committee for over 16 years and is currently their Chairman.

Religions For Peace – European Interfaith Youth Network

Reported by Benafsha Engineer, who represented WZO & the Zoroastrian community and now is part of the core group of the EIYN.

The 9th General Assembly for Religions for Peace took place in Vienna, Austria. This year approximately 600 delegates from all around the world attended the conference, from different religions.

The theme, this year, for the Assembly was “Welcoming The Other.” The assembly proposed to bear contrast to the growing tendency to consider those who are different not with hostility, but promoting tolerance and acceptance of the other for the progress of human dignity.

The European Interfaith Youth Network (EIYN) Summit and Training programme took place between 22 - 24 November 2013 in Vienna, Austria.

Day 1

The Summit began with an introduction session moderated by Jane Braden Golay, representing European Union of Jewish students and a Core group member. The introduction session gave each representative the chance to formally introduce themselves, their organisation and its activities. As it was the first Summit I had attended, I was extremely pleased to see so many youths from different religions gathered together to work towards a common goal.

As the formal introductions ended, each representative from other organisations approached me and showed a great interest in understanding our Zoroastrian religion and enquired about where the religion originated and our beliefs.

Day 2

The day began with a presentation about the Religion for Peace Assembly 2013 and



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

EIYN activates for the past years, moderated by Daniela Malec Korin, consultant for EIYN. As I was new to the setup of EIYN, the presentation helped me understand the structure of EIYN and its activities since the last summit. The presentation highlighted four key aspects EIYN force on: Ecology, Economy, Education and Media.

The group participated, discussed and suggested future plans for EIYN campaigns and project ideas. The common message throughout the discussion was the need for a “Common Project – Standing for Unity.” We briefly discussed the structural changes required and whether the organisation should keep a formal or informal structure. The organisation representatives suggested that it would be beneficial to illustrate EIYN as a formal organisation to all European countries, but continue to work informally within the organisation to aid and make the decision making process easier. In addition to the structural change, we discussed the necessity to have more meetings, interaction with communities and greater information sharing, however the limitation of resources was highlighted.

The last summit in Lillehammer led to the creation of working groups, to help carry out work within the four key aspects. The progress and efficiency of these groups were discussed; unfortunately the working groups were not as effective as they were meant to be.

After hearing everyone's suggestion, an unanimous decision was reached, suggesting EIYN has “ONE EVENT, ONE TOPIC, AT A NATIONAL SCALE, KEEPING IT SIMPLE.”

The training session was conducted by Martin Hinrichs, ICAN. The session began with a quiz to gauge the knowledge of the group on nuclear weapons, each representative stood on an imaginary scale to illustrate their answers, it was surprising to realize how uneducated we all were on nuclear weapons. To my astonishment I learnt there are 19,000 nuclear weapons

worldwide, enough to destroy the population of the earth 19 times.

The trainer illustrated the story of how nuclear weapons came into use, by a picture story line. I found it extremely interesting to learn about the “International Humanitarian Law.” ICAN as an organisation focuses on promoting this law and emphasizes the need to respect and follow being humble and achieving humanitarian aims.

The ICAN continuously works on its International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons. The Red Cross assists the ICAN to promote the ban.

We watched a video of the effect of nuclear weapons, it was extremely disturbing and heart breaking to view the effects and see how people's lives have been affected. I personally believe watching the video opened my eyes and helped me understand the effects of nuclear weapons and how it can affect the human race.

ICAN efforts have brought together 330 partners across 80 countries to support the abolition of nuclear weapons. ICAN along with the Red Cross Movement has a four year plan in place to ban nuclear weapons without the nuclear armed states.

During the past years they have 151 nations supporting the ban, with 22 nations sitting on the fence, with UK being one of them and 22 nations opposing the ban.

We ended the training session by coupling business models such as situation analysis, SWOT analysis and SMART objectives, to help create a campaign. We presented our campaign to other group members.

The night ended with a celebration of EIYN – Five Years anniversary. We listened to music from English to Hindi to Arabic. We divided ourselves into teams and participated in the Quiz night. The questions consisted of the Religion For Peace conference, past events of EIYN and information of exiting members.

The Quiz night helped us all interact with each other, creating a lively and friendly atmosphere amongst all of us giving us the chance to get to know each other better.

Day 3

The day began with a presentation on Planning future of EIYN – Going Legal, structure, representation, moderated by Daniel Barton, representing the International Youth Committee (IYC) Of Religions for Peace. Daniel Barton spoke about the need to make EIYN a formal organisation, discussing their decision to register EIYN as a UK based charity, due to the advantages such as the comprehensive website, accessibility to information and a major reason being most of the members of EIYN and faith based organisation are in the UK. It was also expressed the requirement to have Trustees to manage the charity once it is registered and the need to have at least three UK based members.

After hearing the future plans proposed, all representatives expressed their views, clearing most of the misunderstandings.

Thus a final vote taken will enable EIYN to conduct its future business:

- (1) EIYN should be structured as a Formal Organisation.
- (2) EIYN should then apply for Registration as a Charity in the UK.

At each summit, representatives are given the opportunity to elect new members into the core group, which consists of five (5) members. Due to keen interest shown by representatives this year, the core group was increased to seven (7). I placed myself forward for nomination to the representatives present, and spoke about the ways I could assist EIYN in the future and also the necessity to have a Zoroastrian representative in their Core Group. Thereafter votes were cast and I was elected as one of the members for the Core Group.

The International Youth Committee was also elected at the Religions for Peace conference.

Overall the EIYZ Summit was very successful. Being also my first time on a representation of this nature, it did inspire me to feel proud, witnessing the combined dedication of organisations participating to achieve a common cause, to discuss and solve issues particular to each.

The organisation at the Summit was excellent and I personally wish to thank those responsible for the opportunity of an amazing weekend.



EIYN's Core Group (executive and representative group) elected at EIYN's Summit in Vienna. From left, clockwise: Zosia (Protestant) from Poland, Jane(Jewish) from Switzerland, Daniel (Catholic) from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Benafsha (Zoroastrian) from UK, Ilan (Jewish) from France, Tanya (Buddhist) from UK, Taoufik (Muslim) from Germany.



Benafsha Engineer, has been on the WZO committee since 2008. She has helped organize WZO's social functions along with her mother Arnaity and is one of the two WZO's youth representatives. Benafsha is keen to encourage young members to come together as she believes that the future of our community lies with the younger generation.

“Marriage Nu Spot fixing”

review by pauruchisty kadodwala



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

This Parsi New year [August], as is customary, saw over half a dozen plays in Gujrati being performed in different venues in Mumbai. The funniest of them all was one which tumbled out of the factory of Dinyar Contractor Productions titled “Marriage Nu spot fixing”.

Dinyar Contractor has been regaling Parsi audiences since the past 47 years.

Marriage nu spot fixing is a tale of two (not cities but couples) Tehmul and Pinky who are in love but not married and Munchi and Delna who are married but not in love.

Munchi is a writer (or he thinks he's one) ... proves Darwin's theory correctly that all our ancestors were apes. Tehmul the happy go lucky guy is sandwiched between his uncle Tehmton from South Africa (aptly rechristened to Tom and because of his explosive nature called Tom Bomb in South Africa). To add to this nucleus of cast there is also an Irani man servant Behram and a next door neighbour (who is habituated to enter from the window and not the main door and sleep on Tehmul's bed). You can imagine the audience laughter when Tehmul's bed is occupied by his uncle and the next door neighbour enters (seeing is believing).

In the role of Tehmul – Jim Vimadalal is suave, sweet, serene and sometimes stupid and amply proves he's an actor to look out for. Munchi – Farzil Pardiwala (Kodak) provides sufficient laughs to the audience with his clowning and circus tricks. The scene where he dances to the Bollywood tune *Maar dala* brought the house down and the auditorium echoed 'once more ... once more'. The Irani servant Behram – Errick Elavia with his twisted Parsi-Irani dialect added many a comic situation and provided laughs all around. The next door neighbour – Jamshed Bagli in this small role

aptly proved there are no small roles only small actors. Pinky (Thelma Suneja) and Delna (Reshma Shaikh) provided the required glamour quotient ... but how can we forget the Uncle roles the veteran of over four and a half decades, Dinyar Contractor who was fabulous on stage. His very entry on stage created a roar of laughter in the audience, every line he spoke was cheered by the audience. He can only be termed as the finest comedian this side of the Arabian Sea.

After the first show on Parsi New Year at Mumbai, the next show was held at Navsari on August 25, 2013 at the J N Tata theatre which was a complimentary one, enjoyed by Parsis and local dignitaries residing at Navsari. The Parsi cast performed gratis at the Navsari show, a gesture much appreciated by World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust who sponsored the 'Marriage Nu Spot Fixing' project.

At this event, WZO Trust took the opportunity to felicitate Mr Rumi Baria of Navsari who had recently received the Award of best Director, Writer & Actor at the National Film Festival for his short film *The Roommate*.

The cast were very thankful to Mr Dinshaw Tamboly who sponsored the project on behalf of World Zoroastrian Organization Trust and also for taking this show to Navsari for a performance at the Tata Theatre.



Pauruchisty Kadodwala is an educationist by vocation; she is the Principal of Sir J J Primary School (Gujarati Medium) at Navsari. She is also a Member of WZO Trust's dynamic Navsari local committee.

Be Good – Sing Ashem Vohu

by khosro mehrfar

The Project Team for *Sing Ashem Vohu* is grateful to the good offices of World Zoroastrian Organization London, for their involvement as the Trustees of this initiative. The idea of creating this song was manifested in the mid 90's when we saw a copy of a poem written by the late Professor Pourdavoud, whom I believe we, the Persian Zoroastrians, are in debt to him due to his pioneering academic works and helping to establish Zoroastrian studies at the University of Tehran. The poem was naturally in Persian language and titled "Khan Ashem Vohu".

I would like to clarify one issue that has been asked by some friends and that is the word "Khan". This word has two meanings in the Persian language, depending on how you write it. One meaning is really a title given to owners, Amirs or Sahebs, as known in Pakistan and India. The other meaning which is applicable here and as mentioned written differently, means "to read or to sing".

So, I chose a small portion of the long poem by the late Professor Pourdavoud and wrote a simple melodic song on it, shared it with my good friend Kaikhosrow Zartoshty better known as Kaikoo, who in turn helped tremendously to arrange the song. After several iterations back and forth, we finally recorded the final version in Kaikoo's studio in Hollywood, California in the late 90's. Ms Leyla Forouhar and Mr Morteza Barjasteh, two popular and famous Persian singers were the vocalists of the original song. Kaikoo and I did this purely out of our love and fascination with our Good Religion and the Universal messages of Zarathustra for humanity and did not expect anything else. However, as years went by, the song was being played at an increasing rate, at places all over the world as the beginning of official ceremonies. We know many Zoroastrian

and non-Zoroastrian organizations in the US, Canada and Europe who have been playing the song or have arranged for their own local youth to perform it. A few found on the Internet by a quick search are performed in Tehran, Yazd, Kerman, Chicago, Washington DC Maryland, California, Toronto, Brussels, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin and other places. A sample is shared below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRU9gtQJN0w>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekNNWCet_ro
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWBaoxX6aAo>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNHAXvFa684>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZkTpi_oe00
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWBaoxX6aAo&playnext=1&list=PL908A85C9E89ED46E&feature=results_video

The success of the song was very encouraging for both of us, but one issue remained, as we were told repeatedly. And the fact was, it targets only Persian speaking communities. I am sure most of the readers know that creating a song from scratch these days takes time, energy, budget and many resources if one would wish to do it professionally. So we delayed the English version which we thought could be simply a translation of the original Persian poem by the late Professor Pourdavoud.

About a year ago, the idea of creating a new song in English from scratch, with inspirations from ageless messages of our Zarathustra and the keyword of "Khan Ashem Vohu" was exchanged between Kaikoo and I; hence the concept of the new song was formed.

This time on suggestion of Kaikoo, we decided he would write the melody, chords and arrangements and I should write the lyrics. Again inspired by the ever-fresh, ever-lasting messages of love, peace, joy,

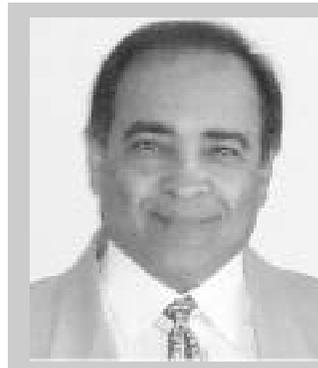
progress and harmony for humanity by our mantra Zarathustra and the three pillars of his messages of just being Good, we focused on the youth who are our future. Capitalizing on the well known and now popular keyword of “Khan Ashem Vohu” by the late Professor Pourdavoud, we wrote the first version of the song and just like the original Persian version after several iterations of changes, additions, deletions and modifications, the final version was recorded in February 2013 about eight months after the idea was manifested. This time, Kaikoo and I decided to get copyrights on the song which is already done, and dedicate any and all donations through direct or online contributions via ZmusicS.org to the educational expenses of needy Zoroastrian children. To have an overseeing body as a trustee to manage all donations, we had several choices of highly reputable Zoroastrian organizations and we chose the good offices of WZO due to their long lasting commitment to the betterment of Zoroastrian lives through their selfless dedication, being the shared common cause.

Our Project Team consist of two very talented Zoroastrian vocalists, Mehrbanou Mima Goodarz and Bestoor Behizadeh whom we are so proud of. Meher Amalsad helped to create an awareness of the song and is in charge of promotion to inform others, for which we are thankful. Kaikoo Zartoshty is a friend and a true Zoroastrian of Good Deeds and prefers to do his contributions and commitments as such. Since Kaikoo was instrumental in the creation of both songs, a brief introduction of him follows.

Kaikoo was born in Tehran and after graduating from Alborz High School he came to the US in 1973, and obtained his degree in Mechanical Engineering from Western Michigan University in 1978. He moved to Los Angeles, began working but soon realized that his passion was always music which was nurtured when learning the piano with the famous Mr Anooshiravan Rohani at the age of 12. Subsequently he wrote his first song at 15, which was a classical piece. Kaikoo has written and

produced hundreds of songs, and short musicals for movies since then. He entered the recording business in 1986, produced albums and soundtracks for movies.

I would encourage readers to visit www.ZmusicS.org for more detailed information. On behalf of the Project Team, I extend our gratitude to the good offices of WZO in US, UK, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia and also to the Hamazor publication for their invitation to write this article about the song ‘Be Good – Sing Ashem Vohu’. Thank you.



Dr Khosro Esfandiar Mehrafar was born in Tehran, Iran. He moved to US in 1979 to pursue his higher education. He has served the Zoroastrian communities in many capacities and was selected in 2012 as one of the 25 Zoroastrians who made a difference in North America in the last quarter century, along with Professor Kaikhosrov Irani, Arbab Rostam Guiv, the Zartoshty brothers, Farangis Keikhosrow Shahrokh, Dr Farhang Mehr, among other distinguished Zoroastrians.

Images for “Marriage nu Spot Fixing”



Structural Limits on Gatha Studies

by dinyar mistry

A curious thing that strikes even a casual reader of Gatha translations is the wide variation of interpretation from scholar to scholar.

I refer the reader to Professor William Malandra's discussion on Gatha Translations in the authoritative reference work *Encyclopaedia Iranica*¹.

Prof. Malandra gives examples of the number of different ways translators have interpreted the celebrated stanzas of the 'two twins' in Yasna 30.3 because of problems posed by interpreting the two terms "paouruyē" and "xrafstrā". To give a lengthy quote from his article²:

"A review of translations of a well-known passage will serve to illustrate some of the problems one can expect to encounter. Yasna 30.3 speaks of the twin spirits who in this Gatha choose between good and evil. The first two lines of the stanza read:

aztā mahyō paouruyē ā yamā xrafstrā asanētām

manahicā vacahicāšyāoēanō/nī mahyō ahmicā

Sarstobmaie (Smith, Minz): "The two spirits in the beginning, who revealed themselves in a dream-vision as twins are yet the good and the Evil in thought, word and deed"...

Lowrie: "In the two first spirits, which were perceived through a dream as twins are to be sure in thought, speech, and action the good and the Evil"....

Myberg: "The two primordial spirits the twin Sleep (and his brother) were, as it has been transmitted, the good and the Evil in mind, word and action"....)

Duchesne-Guillemin: "Now in the beginning the two spirits who are known (...) as twins, are the one the better, the evil in thought, speech and action"....

Insler: "Yes, there are two fundamental spirits, twins which are known to be in conflict in thought and in word, in action they are good: the good and the bad."

Humbach (1939): "These are the two fundamental efforts, the twins, who are recognized as two sorts of knowledge and two sorts of words and two sorts of action, the better and the evil"....

Humbach (1991): "These (are) the two spirits (present) in the primal (stage of one's existence), twin spirits have become paired (manifesting themselves as) the two (kinds) of dreams, the two (kinds of) thoughts and words, (and) the two (kinds of) actions, the better and the evil."

Kellens and Pirart: "(I shall mention also) the two fundamental states of mind which are known as being twin dreamer in regard to thought and speech. In regard to (ritual) action, they are the better (action) and the bad (action)"....

Why is there no consensus and is this variation due to errors and omissions, lack of knowledge or a deeper structural issue?

In this paper I will explore the limitations on Gatha scholarship from an argument in the philosophy of language based on the work of the eminent American philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine which suggests that this variation is a structural issue.³

Quine has argued that when we are considering the study of languages where there are no native speakers or where there are no common speakers across languages then we face the issue of radical translation and that of inscrutability of reference. The former leads to indeterminacy of translation of the meanings of sentences the latter can lead to an inability to map concepts (ie specific thoughts, ideas and therefore words



Dinyar Mistry studied Philosophy at Sydney and Oxford Universities. He got interested in Zarthushtra's work after a visit to Sydney by Professor Kaikhosrov Irani. He lives in Sydney with his family.

(phrases) from the target language into our language. I have explored the indeterminacy thesis vis-à-vis the Gathas in an earlier paper⁴ and hence I will not develop that any further. Here I will explore the inscrutability thesis and its implication for Gatha scholarship.

First I will give some background by discussing one of the central problems in modern philosophy. In modern analytic philosophy one of the key questions has been getting an understanding of how a thought is realised by a sentence (ie what makes a sentence true) which has led to a study in the philosophy of language of the notion of reference and the associated concept of meaning. The basic intuition behind the concept of reference is to define the relationship between a word and the object in reality that it refers or points to.¹

Eg the statement "The cat is on the mat" is true if the term or word "cat" refers to the object cat which is actually lying on the mat. In this sense there is a direct one to one mapping between the word "cat" and the object cat and this relationship is captured by the notion of reference.

As this topic is a bit technical I expand it in the end-note of the paper for the interested.*

For a single language or even across languages where there are common speakers the referential relationships are generally determinate. However in the case of languages where there are no common speakers and no reliable translation manuals then the possibility exists for the referential relationships of some terms or words to become opaque and indeterminate ie we don't know exactly what the terms refer to. To give an example consider the concept of phlogiston before Lavoisier discovered Oxygen and its chemistry got understood.

In those times the entity phlogiston was postulated as being the agent which was subtracted from or added to air to perform what we today see as the processes of oxidation and reduction. However if anyone were asked to say what phlogiston is in terms of modern chemistry then we strike a problem as there is no way of establishing a referential relationship between the term phlogiston and the elements and processes of chemistry such as Oxygen, oxidation and reduction.

It is easy to illustrate such examples from the inability to map concepts from an old scientific theory into a new one and vice versa. Similar examples can be easily chosen from concepts in old texts eg consider Plato's dialog the *Charmides*. As a general rule each of Plato's dialogs explores in a simple and elegant way, from a philosophical point of view a concept, such as love (in the *Symposium*) or piety (in the *Euthyphro*). However even after over 2000 years of Platonic scholarship there are some concepts in certain dialogs that scholars still find very hard to understand and convey in a translation apart from in a roundabout way. In the *Charmides* Plato explores the concept of the Greek term 'sophrosyne'. Translators cannot find a single English word or phrase corresponding to it. For the Greeks this sophrosyne was a highly regarded ideal⁵, second to none however it is not a quality having the same value in our value system. Because of descriptions and discussions about it in other Greek literature translators have referred to it loosely as self-control, self-knowledge, temperance and the opposite of arrogance, insolence and self-assertion which was detested by Greeks.

Note that the discussions about sophrosyne in other Greek literature clarifies to some extent the referent of an opaque Platonic concept. If all this literature had been lost and 'sophrosyne' had only survived in the Platonic dialog then we would be hard pressed to map the underlying concept in Greek to our concepts i.e. its referent would be indeterminate.

Translators might say that the difficulty we have understanding this concept is because our worlds have changed. Plato lived in an ancient world we live in a completely different world and because the background world-view has changed, value systems have changed therefore we don't understand what Plato understands by this concept. Hence there is an assumption that in order to translate the meanings of words and sentences from one language to another there should be sufficient commonality in background culture,

Notes:

¹ Ref: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gathas-ii-translations>

² Quine was the Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy at Harvard from 1953-1972

³ Cf. FEZANA, Winter 2012

⁴ Eg it was a motto of the Oracle of Delphi at Apollo's temple translated loosely as "Know Thyself"

⁵ W. V. Quine, J. S. Ullian: *The Web of Belief* McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages; 2nd edition (February 1, 1978)

✱

All our discourse about the world does not consist of such direct observation statements as:

"The cat is on the mat"
Because all objects we deal with are not directly available to our senses. There are to name a few examples:

abstract objects eg Interest Rates in banking and finance,

theoretical objects eg atoms in an atomic theory,

fictional objects eg Mr Pickwick in Charles Dickens novel Pickwick Papers

Continued on facing page

customs and manners to determine the reference of a term and allow a straight forward translation of a word or a concept without having to explain the differences caused by social, cultural and other holistic factors.

Quine⁶ has cast the above intuition in terms of our belief systems about the world being a holistic web of belief with observations verifiable by our senses at the periphery of the web and more general beliefs about the world based on manners, customs, culture and science inside the web with the most abstract, theoretical and valued ones close to the centre. He also states that as our knowledge changes the corresponding beliefs in the web get adjusted with the least adjustment normally done to the cherished ones at the core. Hence it is not easy to map the referents of terms or concepts from one belief system to a radically different one in a straight forward way when there is no guidance available via unbroken tradition or common speakers or translation manuals.

This indeterminacy of reference Quine⁷ has termed the *inscrutability of reference*⁷ to distinguish it from the *indeterminacy of radical translation*.

Having set the scene I want to explore how this applies to the Gathas.

The first point to make is that since Zarthushtira's time (anywhere between 2500 to 3500 years ago) our world-view has completely changed and we do not share a common knowledge base, culture, customs, manners and language with people from gathic times. There is no way of going back to a temporally remote past as there is no unbroken tradition or records to guide us and there are no living native speakers of gathic.

The meaning and referents of some abstract social and ethical concepts of Zarthushtira's time spoken by him in the gathas that on the surface may sound the same as current ones have changed to the extent that in many cases the old referents are opaque and indeterminate leading to multiple interpretations by different translators.

At the end of the Malandra's quotation given earlier he says:

The greatest problems are posed by the words paouruyé and xrafná. While a general sense of the divin spirits comes through in almost all translations, one would hope for more common consensus on just what this verse so central to an understanding of Zoroaster's dualistic theology, really means. Opinions differ over whether the enaiyéh are also primordial spirits, impulses or states of mind, or whether the activities they are involved in took place "at the beginning" or takes place in the ever present. Are they themselves "divin dreams" or are they revealed to whom? "by means of a dream." And how are we to understand "dreams": simply as a "dream" or a "vision" or, as Henrik Samuel Nyberg elaborated in his commentary, a shamanistic "trance" personality? Only one translator, Duchesne-Guillemin, had the humility to leave the words untranslated.

This is a classic illustration of the "inscrutability of reference" as the referents of the terms "paouruyé and xrafná" so central to this passage are opaque and indeterminate and therefore open to multiple interpretations. This is a structural limitation and no analysis of the texts alone will reveal a way out.

This is one example among a number of other points Malandra makes on the guesses ladenness of all gatha translations. Are we condemned to this conceptual limitation or do we have a way of breaking out of this uncertainty to get a truer view of Zarthushtira's thoughts?

I conclude by stating that while I don't believe a deeper analysis of the texts alone will provide an answer as the limitations discussed are necessarily limitations on textual analysis however an integrated program to do more empirical work in archaeology, history, classical studies and exploring the tradition would possibly make translating the gathas less of a radical translation.

Continued from facing page

These are part and parcel of our discourse of the world. As a rule we handle them in our native language without ambiguity and sufficient clarity. That is to a large extent the referential relationship is always determinate once their context is defined. Where there is a problem we know easily that the relationship is indeterminate because the corresponding statement is either false or the object's context is not clear eg consider the statement:

"The present king of France is bald"

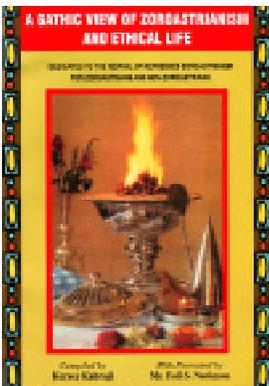
The referential relationship between the phrase "the present king of France" and a real person in the world is indeterminate as it does not point to a real person since France at present is not a monarchy. We would therefore rightly judge this statement to be false in the real world but however allow it to hold in a fictional work like a novel or a play and only in that context overcome the referential indeterminacy of the phrase "the present king of France".

A Gathic view of Zoroastrianism and Ethical Life

I A review of the booklet compiled by Kersee Kabraji.

I have gone over the booklet very carefully and am very happy to see this compilation from Zarathushtra's Gatha connected to an ethical life. Honorable Fali Nariman has given a very good Foreward with a helpful background on Zoroastrianism. The author has presented a number of useful stanzas from the Gathas to make his point of the ethical life propounded by our Prophet Zarathushtra. I especially enjoyed reading the quotes by famous scholars about Zarathushtra in particular, and his Gathas in general, a collection worth reading.

by soli dastur



Compiled by: Kersee Kabraji
Eight illustrations by Farzana Cooper
Pages: 53
Published by: ARZ, Mumbai
Price: IRs300

However, after a thorough examination of all the pages, as a mobed who has been trained in our scriptures from the M F Cama Athornan Institute over a period of nine years, I see in this booklet a number of issues that needs to be brought to the notice of readers in an impartial spirit. The following are my observations with the contents of this booklet:

1. Mis-spelling of words: With due respect to Honorable Fali Nariman, in his Foreword, it is mentioned on page 12: *"they are arranged according to their metres and named **Ahuravaiti**, **Ushtavaiti**, **Spenta Mainivu**, **Vohu Khshathra** and **Vahanishtoishti**: after their opening words."* I have never heard the names of the first and fifth Gatha as mentioned by Mr Nariman. The accepted names, as mentioned on page 22, are: Ahunavaiti and Vahishtoisht.

2. Also on page 12, the five Gathas are mentioned as: *"There are five Gathas comprising seventeen Hymns (Yasna xxviii - xxxiv, xii - xlv, xlvii - I, li, (iii))"* These Roman numerals are confusing and incorrect. It would be better if they were mentioned in the traditional way as: Yasna 28-34, 43-46, 47-50, 51, and 53.

3. On page 16: *"Zoroastrian morality is expressed in the three words, **humat**, **hukht**, and **huvarsht** - good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, and the greatest of these is good deeds."*

The correct words should be: Humata, Hukhta and Hvarshta.

4. On page 24: *"In a capsulated form the philosophy of Zoroastrianism is conveyed in three words:—*

- HUMATA, HUKHTA, HUVARESHTA (in Avesta)
- MANASHNI, GAVASHNI, KUNASHNI (in Paazand)
- GOOD THOUGHTS, GOOD WORDS, GOOD DEEDS (in English)." Should be: Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta (in Avesta) and Humanashni, Hugavashni, and Hukunashni (in Paazand) as we pray in the Satum no kardo. Manashni does not mean Good Thought, etc. Humanshni does, etc.

5. Mis-spelling of our Prayers: This is my biggest problem with this booklet. Most Parsi authors these days just present our prayers in Avesta/Paazand with incorrect pronunciation. Please note that in our prayers, 'a' can be pronounced as in

“another” or ‘a’ as in “father” and our Parsi authors use just ‘a’ for both of these pronunciations. eg. Yatha is used almost by all to represent Yathaa. This is a travesty and a very serious error on the part of authors since the uninitiated can pronounce Yatha in so many ways, whereas Yathaa can only be pronounced one way. Our forefathers in Sasanian times created an Avesta script which succinctly can be used to pronounce exactly what our prayers should be including our Prophet’s Gathas. I was trained to learn all our prayers in this Avesta script which is so precise. In this booklet, these prayers are spelt without the consideration of the original pronunciations and it is a disservice to our prayers and to our Prophet Zarathushtra as well as to all the mobeds who so diligently preserved the correct pronunciations of our Gathas and prayers over millenniums!

To illustrate this, in the booklet on page 25, the Ashem Vohu prayer is presented in correct inflection; whereas, on page 26, it is not so. And on pages 27 and 28, our most important prayer Yathaa Ahu Vairyo is not presented with correct inflection. In fact, on page 28, we are given:

“YATHAAHU VAIRYO ||
 ATHA RATUSH ASHATCHIT
 HACHA VANHAUSH DAZDA
 MANANHO ||
 SHYAOTHANANAM
 ANHAUSH MAZDAI
 KSHATHRAMCHA
 AHURAIA || YIM DRIGUBYO
 DADAT VASTARAM.”

Where did these words: **Vanhaush** instead of Vangheush, **Mananho** instead of Manangho, and **Anhaush** instead of Angheush, creep in? How can we mis-spell our basic prayers? The author should have consulted a learned mobed to go over the words of our prayers before publication.

And the Yathaa Ahu Vairyo prayer on page 27 is correct whereas on page 28 it is not! Who looked over the transcript of these pages?

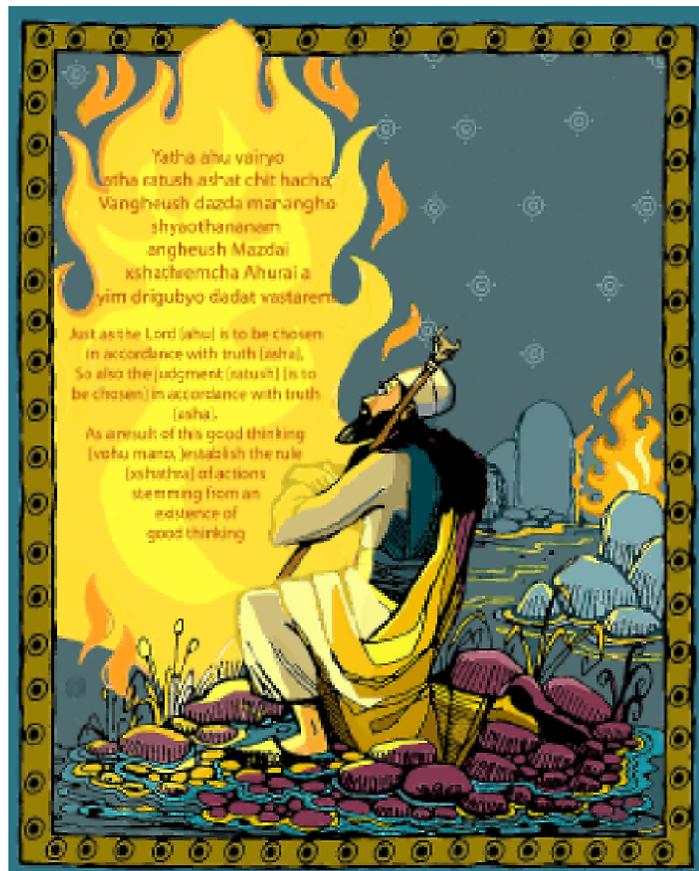
Same problem with Yenghe Haataam and Aa Airyemaa Ishyo prayers on pages 29 and 30.

6. “THERE ARE 4 BASIC PRAYERS WHICH ALL ZOROASTRIANS RECITE REGULARLY”

I take exception to author’s assumption that Aa Airyemaa Ishyo prayer is recited by all Zoroastrians. I very much doubt if even 50% of the Zoroastrians know this beautiful summation of the Zarathushtra’s Gathas.

7. Translations of the Gatha Stanzagraphs:

The author has presented the translations of many. Since he has not mentioned their source, it seems that these translations are his own. However, I have at my disposal, translations of 17 scholars, thanks to Dr Purviz Kolsawalla, Sydney, Australia, from his PhD thesis and I can compare the translations of the author with these 17 scholars. For instance, on page 32, we have the translation of Gatha Yasna 30.2 given by the author as:



“Hear the best (truth) with your ears and decide by your pure mind. Let everyone judge for his own self and find out what

he ought to do. Before the great trial let all wake up to this my counsel" (Ys.30.2)

From Kolsawalla's thesis, I find Sethna's translation is the same as above. This seems the author has used Sethna's translation without giving credit to him for this stanza.

Similarly, stanza Ys. 31-11 translation on page 32 is from Dastur Bode and Piloo Nanavuty, Ys. 43.5 translation on page 33 from Jafarey, Ys. 30.11 translation on page 32 from Jafarey, etc.

There may be more such stanzas and I feel the author should have given credit to the scholar whose translation he has used in the book. It is an accepted practice.

8. Multiple References for a single Gatha Stanza:

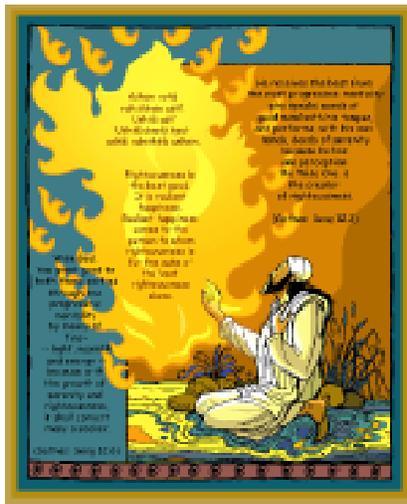
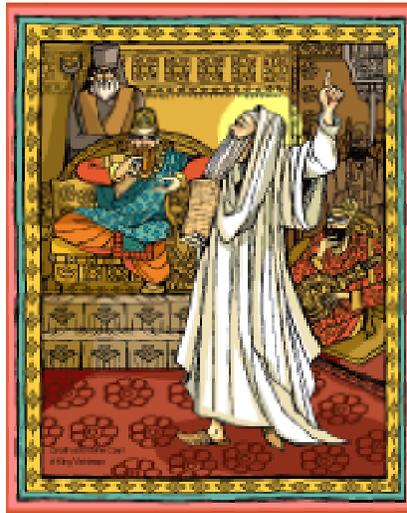
In the Gathas, the first verse of each of the five Gathas is repeated twice in the beginning as well as at the end of that Gatha Ha, similarly at the end of each Ha of the Gatha. In the booklet, the author uses multiple references for a single stanza which is not possible at all. Eg: on page 33, for Ys. 45.1, he uses: (Ys. 45.1, also 34.9,10,12,13 45.2,9, etc.), and on the same page for Ys. 43.5, he uses: (Ys.43.5 also 53.6,8,9), and on page 34, for Ys. 43.1, he uses: (Ys.43.1 also 34.3,43.6,44.12/13;50.3), etc. I do not understand what this means. As mentioned above, only first stanza of the first Ha of each Gatha is repeated twice at the end of each Ha for each Gatha. What do these multiple references mean?

9. Mention of Ahura Mazda in Cyrus Cylinder:

It is a well-known fact that no translation of Cyrus Cylinder mentions Ahura Mazda. Where does the author use Ahura Mazda in his interpretation of Cyrus Cylinder is beyond my comprehension.

Conclusion:

All in all, the booklet is a good help to Zoroastrians but it should be cleaned up with the suggestions made above. We wish the author the best in his future endeavors. ■■■■



Farzana Cooper is a freelance artist and illustrator. Her works have appeared in many magazines including Maxim, Vogue, Verve, Man's World, Femina, Discover India and Saturday Times of India.



Farzana has a degree in Fine Arts from Sir J J institute of Applied Arts. She lives with her family in Mumbai. Her other interests are evolutionary linguistics, politics and current affairs and south Asian history and archaeology.



Kersee Kabraji was a mechanical and electrical engineer before he retired. He has been reading extensively on Zoroastrianism since 1990, and realises what an enlightened way of life our religion is rather than one of blind faith. He considers himself as a rational and logical person and with this thinking believes the future generations are not going to accept dogma and beliefs blindly. With this in mind he has compiled his booklet.

Ervad Soli P Dastur, last of 11 children, completed his priestly studies as well as his SSC examination from the M F Cama Athornan Institute, becoming Navar, Martab and Saamel in the Holy Iranshah Atash Behram in Udwada. Soli with Jo Ann has been performing religious ceremonies all over the world when requested.



Farohar / Fravahar Motif

PART I - WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT?

W

What does the winged motif called the farohar / fravahar, which accompanies images of Persian Achaemenid kings, represent? The answers go beyond clarifying the motif's past use to the heart of present-day Zoroastrian beliefs – they define Zoroastrianism.

The farohar/fravahar motif of the type shown here usually accompanies the portrait of a monarch depicted on Persian Achaemenid inscriptions, tomb facades and artifacts – all royal settings. The Achaemenid dynasty ruled from around the 8th or 7th century BCE to 330 BCE.

by k.e. eduljee

A similar, older motif has been found on a tomb in an area once part of Persia's sister nation, Media. When Achaemenid rule ended, so did the use of the winged motif – until, that is, about a couple of hundred years ago or so – when the farohar motif began to be adopted as a Zoroastrian symbol to symbolize the faith.

We have not found any record of an intervening use of the farohar between the end of the Achaemenid era and its modern adoption as a common Zoroastrian symbol. The use of the farohar as a symbol of Zoroastrianism is therefore relatively modern.

We know of no direct statement that explains what the winged motif shown in the image above represents. Nevertheless, nowadays we read of three principal theories about the motif's symbolism, namely, that it represents:

1. God, Ahuramazda (Ahura Mazda);
2. A monarch's farohar (also called fravahar/fravashi), and
3. A monarch's khvarenah (also called farr).

To determine which of these three theories comes closest to what the farohar may have represented, we will examine the concepts behind the theories. We begin with a review of the Zoroastrian concept of God, Ahura Mazda.

1. Zoroastrian Concept of God, Ahura Mazda

The Zoroastrian concept of Ahura Mazda is found in the Avesta's Hormuz Yasht and is concisely stated in the Avesta's Sad-o-Yak Nam-e Khoda [Hundred-and-One Names of the Lord]. A few relevant attributes are:

An-aiyafah – Incomprehensible (understanding the true nature of God is beyond human comprehension). The Dabistan, 'The School',



Farohar motif at Persepolis



Farohar motif at the purported tomb of Cyaxares I (dated to between the late 7th to early 6th century BCE) in Qyzqapan, Iraqi Kurdistan and once a part of Media, Persia's sister kingdom. Image: Wikimedia.

describes the Zoroastrian concept of God by stating that except God, who can comprehend God? Entity, unity, identity are inseparable properties of this original essence.

θ An-ainah – Without form.

θ Mino-tum – Spirit-like (invisible). While the eye cannot behold God, and while the mind cannot conceive God, God is nearer to us than our own corporeal selves [cf. Pursishniha in possession of Ervad Tahmuras Dinshaw Anklesaria, 1842-1903 CE (also called Tahmuras Fragments) 58, 59].

Zoroastrian texts talk about the concept of a pure eternal spiritual light that casts no shadow (Denkard Madon 347.6-7).

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like Ahura Mazda

We have found no references in Zoroastrian texts that Ahura Mazda is bird-like or can be represented as part bird.

2. Fravashi / Farohar



Farohar of the facade of the Yazd Atash Bahram (Fire Temple).
Image: Terry Feuerborn at Flickr.

The Avestan word ‘fravashi’ has evolved to the modern farvard, faravahar/fravahar and farohar. The Avesta and Zoroastrian texts speak about the fravashi in two ways. The first is as a spiritual component of all creation including human beings where it is a companion of the soul. The second is as a spiritual entity that survives the passing of a righteous person to the after-life. Here, it has the ability to become a beneficent spirit – a guardian angel if you will. Both instances are explained in the Farvardin Yasht (hereafter Yt. 13).

In the first instance, the soul is a personal spiritual component while the fravashi is a universal component. The soul becomes good or bad depending on the choices made by its corporeal owner. The fravashi, however, carries asha, the laws of God, and is incorruptible. The soul can seek the assistance of the fravashi (perhaps through introspection). While goodness is innate within us, associating with it is a matter of free will – of choice. Wisdom is the soul’s path to uniting with the fravashi and it is in an ashavan, a righteous person, where the two are in harmony. Such an individual is divinely blest. With this endowed faculty embedded within us, we do not need to seek divine assistance from without – we need to look deep within. Grace is theirs who choose the right path (cf. Yt. 13 and 19, Yasna Y. 27.13).

In the second instance, Yasht 13 (reiterated in the Greater Bundahishn at 3.18) extols and memorializes the farohars/fravashis of the righteous, the ashavan, who have passed away. In this aspect, the fravashi and soul are seldom mentioned as separate entities. In Yasna 23.4 we have “havahe uruno fravashi” which can be read as “my own soul’s fravashi”. It appears that once united with the personal soul, the universal fravashi becomes personal.

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like External Fravashi

The united soul-fravashis of the departed can function as beneficent helpers i.e. as guardian angels. Farvardin Yasht 13.70 states that the asha-abiding fravashis come to assist those who are beneficent and not hurtful or offensive. To them, the fravashis will assuredly come flying like birds well-winged (meregh hu-parena ie. Huparena Murgh).

Thinking of the fravashi as winged like a bird, allows the external fravashi to be represented as a winged entity, thereby making the farohar motif a strong candidate for representing the winged fravashi.

What may work against this conclusion is that in Y. 13.70, the external fravashi as a “well-winged bird”, ie. angel-like, may not refer to the internal fravashi of a living person but rather that of someone who

has died and passed on to the spiritual realm. However, the Achaemenid reliefs show the person in the external farohar closely resembling the (living) king beneath.

One can postulate that this is a farohar of an ancestor. Alternatively, the image could seek to convey that the king being righteous, his soul and fravashi have reached, or will reach, this status upon passing away. In other words, the fravashi portrayed externally could represent that the king rules in accordance with the fravashi and therefore the king is an ashavan living and ruling in accordance with the laws and will of God, Ahura Mazda.

3. Khvarenah/Farr

There is yet another spiritual component that resides within us – the khvarenah (Avestan) or farr (New Persian). There are several aspects to the khvarenah. At one level, the khvarenah is the archetype of the person one can grow to become if allowed to grow to the limit of her or his capacity in grace, that is, in keeping with the fravashi and thereby in keeping with one's higher calling. As with the fravashi, the khvarenah is also a companion of the soul. In the righteous – the ashavan – all three work in concert as they did with Zarathushtra. Since the khvarenah is God-given, when a person works in concert with her or his higher calling, the closest English equivalent is to say that person is living in grace. [Yt. 13.40, 41; R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn & Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 151-3, 268; Mary Boyce quoting the Bundahishn 3.23-24 in her article *Fravasi* at *Iranica*.]

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like External Khvarenah

In addition to the internal khvarenah possessed by all, there is an external khvarenah, which comes to a person who is most deserving of that special (for the lack of better words) aura or charisma. The external khvarenah is more in keeping with the notion of the farr in Daqiqi and Ferdowsi's *Shahnamehs*. The royal Kava Khvarenah is one such unique external khvarenah with bird-like mobility while a person is still alive. The *Zamyad Yasht* has an enigmatic passage at Yt. 19.26 that can be read to mean the Kava Khvarenah settled for the first time over righteous King Hushang or that it formed a strong attachment to him. However, when a monarch uses his or her talents to achieve base ambitions rather than his or her higher calling, the Kava Khvarenah can fly away like a bird. The *Zamyad Yasht* at Yt. 19.34-35 tells us, "When he (Jamsheed) began to find delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the (Kava) khvarenah was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a Vareghna bird" to Mithra, guardian of the sun. In doing so, the (Kava) khvarenah became the Akhvareta Khvarenah – a non-personal khvarenah. The *Yasht* strongly implies that kingship and the mantle of leadership of the Aryan people must be deserved. It stays over a monarch provided he or she rules in grace, but flies away when a monarch violates a covenant embedded in Aryan history to rule as an ashavan.

We see that the Avesta figuratively describes both the external fravashi and the khvarenah as birds. Of the two, the exclusive bird-like external royal khvarenah has mobility while the person it patronizes is still alive. Its presence indicates a monarch is ruling in grace. This feature makes it particularly suited to be represented as the motif we now call the farohar. If this reasoning holds, the external royal khvarenah of Zoroastrian-Aryan monarchs could have been represented by what we call the farohar motif.

There are two principle types of winged motifs depicted on Achaemenid structures, one with a person within a central disk and another without a person. For our purposes, we call the former a personal or unattached farohar and the latter, an impersonal farohar. The first could be the attached Kava Khvarenah and the other the unattached Akhvareta Khvarenah. *[Please see the second image overleaf]*



Impersonal or unattached farohar depicted on glazed tile work from Palace of Darius I, the Great (r. 522-486 BCE), at Susa, now at the Iranian National Museum, Tehran.



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



Personal or attached farohar. A bas relief at Persepolis. Note the unusual position of the person placed above the impersonal farohar with a vacant circle. Usually, the figure of the person rises from within the circle. This motif also has an unusual combination of stylized appendages or 'feet' emerging from the waist of the person and wavy-pronged 'feet' emerging from the circle.

We suspect that different Zoroastrian-Aryan regimes would have had their own graphic representation of the khvarenah/farr. Popular artists' impressions of Zarathushtra have him portrayed with his khvarenah/farr as a halo – as the radiance of the sun (khvar/khor) emanating from his head (likely influenced by the Sassanian rock carving shown later).

B. Birds in Zoroastrianism

As we have noted, the Avesta compares the fravashi to a Huparena (well-winged) bird and the Kava Khvarenah to the Vareghna bird.

In addition, we find that in the Bundahishn, the largest of all birds is called the three-toed Sen-murgh or Saena-bird (at GB. 13.10 & 17A.1, tr. B T Anklesaria & Yt. 12.17 & 14.41). The Sen-murgh likely evolved into the Simorgh so central to Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.



Artist's impression of a Simorgh in the Walter's manuscript of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

The Shahnameh also mentions a farr-e Homai and a heavenly Homai (bird) that spreads its wings casting a shadow (over a king).

What is of interest to this discussion is that some depictions of the bird-like farohar motif show it with three-toed feet. The Saena bird – the largest of all birds in Zoroastrian texts – is also stated to have three toes. However, three-toed flying birds are relatively rare.

This author notes that nowadays, one of the heaviest creatures that can fly is the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*). A variety of the bird is native to Greater Aryana (Greater Iran). The male Bustard is typically a metre tall (three feet) with an average wingspan just under three metres (about eight feet). The Bustard has long feet that at times project beyond its body in flight – and it has three toes.



The head of a bird commonly said to be the Homa/Homai bird. Rock sculpture at Persepolis. Image: youngrobv at Flickr.

PART II – USE OF ICONS IN ZOROASTRIAN WORSHIP

1. Name of the Religion

'Zoroastrian' & 'Zoroastrianism' are modern English words. They are not found in ancient texts. If so, by what name was the religion known previously?

Internal name: The Avesta calls the religion 'Mazdayasna' and 'Mazdayasna Zarathushtrish'. Some modern writers use the word 'Mazdean'.

External name: Classical European writers called Zoroastrianism the religion of the Magi, 'MagiÉ' or 'Magian' if you will. To this day Arabs call Zoroastrians 'Majus' (i.e. Magian). Islamic writers called Zoroastrian lands 'Mughistan' (from 'Mugh / Magha').



Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)

In Alcibiades I, Greek philosopher, Plato cites the Magism of Zoroaster (Zarathushtra). Plato's disciple, Hermodorus, said Zoroaster was the first Magian i.e. founder of the Magi's doctrine (cf. Agathias' Histories).

Herodotus and Strabo knew of only one Persian religion. Albert de Jong in Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature states, "There is no trace of a plurality among the Iranians. On the contrary, in the (Greek and Latin) Classical texts, only one religion is recognized: the religion of the Persians. This religion is often connected with the name Zoroaster, who enjoyed a wide reputation in the ancient world as the founder of the order of the magi, and by extension as the founder of the wisdom and religion of the Persians."

2. Ancient Historians on Achaemenid Era Zoroastrian Worship Practice

Since surviving records of ancient Persian belief systems are found in the works of Classical Greek and Latin authors, their records can help us determine what the farohar motif could have represented during Achaemenid times. The earliest extant work is that of Greek author Herodotus (c. 485-420 BCE) who lived during Achaemenid times.

A. No Temples or Images of Deities – Persians Consider Image Use a Folly

Herodotus (at Histories 1.131): "They (the Achaemenid era Persians) have no images of the gods, no temples and no altars – and consider their use a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods (sic) to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine. Their wont, however, is to ascend the summits of the loftiest mountains, and there to making offerings to Zeus (Mary Boyce: "Ahuramazda's name was regularly 'translated' as Zeus by Greeks"), which is the name they give to the whole circuit of the firmament. They likewise offer to the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds. These are the only deities (sic) whose worship has come down to them from ancient times." Further, during offerings, a magus "chants a hymn, which they say recounts the origin of the cosmos."

The farohar motif was in use during Herodotus' time. If it had represented God, Herodotus would have been constrained to make the statement "they have no images of the gods"

First century CE Greek writer Strabo (in Geography 15.3.31), confirms that "the Persians do not erect statues or altars, but 'offer sacrifice' (i.e. worship) on a high place. They regard the heavens as Zeus (Ahura Mazda) and also worship (revere or extol) Helios (Greek god of the sun), whom they call Mithras ... and fire and earth and winds and water."

B. Heavens: Ahura Mazda's Cloak

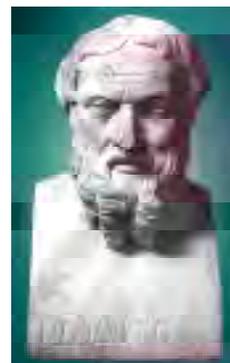
What Classical writers saw through their anthropomorphic (human-like) polytheistic frame of reference is that Achaemenid era Persians viewed the entire cosmos i.e. the heavens as a way to illustrate Ahura Mazda's nature. Perhaps we can allude to the heavens as the cloak of Ahura Mazda who is nevertheless unseen and spirit-like.

3. Unseen & Seen Deities. Aniconic & Iconic Worship

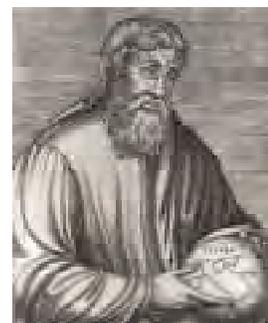
A. Chatterji: Asuras & Devas

In his The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra (published by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta, 1967), Jatindra Mohan Chatterji, a scholar of Vedic and Avestan texts, finds that the schism between the Iranian and Indian branches of the Aryan family took place over their theological systems.

"The difference," he states, "seems to have started over the use of icons in worship. ŌDeva came to mean a visible God (God represented by an idol) and Asura, an invisible (formless) God. Some people preferred the use of an icon – they were the Deva-Yasna. Others interdicted [prohibited] its use – [they were] known as Ahura-tkesa in the beginning and Mazda-yasna later on." "... the Deva-Asura war [was]



Herodotus



Strabo

a clash between the ideals of iconic and aniconic worship.” (p. xx) “There can be no compromise between iconism and aniconism.” (p. xxvi)

4. An Austere Worship Practice

A. The Austere Practice of Ancient Zoroastrians



Reading the oldest records, we see that the Achaemenid Zoroastrians were remarkably austere in their use of religious contrivances – so austere that they didn’t even have temples. All the rock engravings on the tombs depict the monarchs worshipping before the fire with the moon or sun in the sky – that is, in the open air with the earth as their temple and the heavens as its roof.

About 450 years after Herodotus made his observation that the Persians had no temples but worshipped in the open, Strabo noted that the magi of Cappadocia (now in Turkey) had “... Pyraetheia (fire-houses), noteworthy enclosures; and in the midst of these there is a fire holder on which there is a large quantity of ashes where the magi keep the fire ever burning. And there, entering daily, they make incantations for about an hour, holding before the fire their bundles of rods (barsom) and wearing round their heads high turbans of felt, which reach down over their cheeks far enough to cover their lips (15.3.15).”

Thus, we read that the magi had fire-houses (Persian atash-gah) in order to maintain an ever-burning fire in their role as keepers of the ever-burning flame (fire-keepers, athravans) and for their worship rituals. There is no indication that the community at that time joined the magi in rituals at the fire-houses (atash-gahs) i.e. the atash-gahs were not public temples. It appears the community continued to worship in the open.

Nevertheless, atash-gahs eventually became larger fire temples where people could congregate within and not have to brave the elements or climb a hill (institutionalized exercise). The earliest surviving atash-gahs are from the Parthian and Sasanian eras (from c. 250 BCE to c. 650 CE). They are austere hillside structures called chahar-taqi(s) meaning four directions.



Sasanian chahar-taqi at Niasar near Kashan, Esfahan (Isfahan).

No symbols adorn the temples. The only object in the temples would have been a fire holder or urn.

5. Pure Worship Practice

A. Ammianus Marcellinus: the Purest Worship of Divine Beings

Fourth century CE, Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus adds (Rerum gestarum libri at 23.6.31-32), “Plato, that most learned deliverer of wise opinions, teaches us that the Magian (religion) is (known) by a mystic name Machagistian*, that is to say, the purest worship of divine beings; of which knowledge in olden times the Bactrian Zoroaster derived much from the secret rites of the Chaldaeans.”

[*Note: Machagistian could be a corruption of Mazistha (greatest) or Mazdayasni. If Mazdayasni, then one of the few Western references to this name.]

Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee, author of The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra, also uses the term “pure religion” when referring to the religion of Zarathushtra (p. xxiii).



Plato

B. Pak-e Yazdan

In his Shahnameh, Ferdowsi states “Ma pandar ka atash parast bodand. Parastandeh Pak-e Yazdan bodand” which this author translates as, “We imagine they were fire-worshippers. They were worshippers of a pure Divinity (Pak-e Yazdan)”.

C. Pak-e Mazdayasna

The simplicity of ancient Zoroastrian practice, a profound philosophy, and the lack of religious contrivances or images could have been why Plato saw Zoroastrianism/Magism as, “The purest worship of divine beings” – a concept we might wish to reaffirm today – the pak (pure) yasna (worship) of Mazda (God).

Part 3 will be in Issue 2/2014



The Commemoration of the Zoroastrian (Parsi) Hill at the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple in the United Kingdom on Saturday 28th September 2013.

by jimmy suratia

On a bright Saturday morning in late September people of all faiths gathered in the heart of the United Kingdom (Tividale, West Midlands) to celebrate a historic interfaith event. Our hosts were the Hindu community; the venue was the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple and the event was the commemoration of the Zoroastrian (Parsi) Faith Hill and the unveiling of a steel Farohar.

The Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple and the concept of dedicating each of the seven manmade hills surrounding the temple to a different faith was the vision of Dr Narayan Roa.

The Farohar was sculpted out of Tata steel by a local Black Country artist Luke Perry, previously noted for bringing the Titanic’s anchor back home to the Black Country.

The commemoration of the Zoroastrian (Parsi) Faith Hill was of particular significance because of a beautiful legacy left by our Hindu and Zoroastrian forefathers and this was evident by the warmth and respect that was exhibited by all who attended.

Therefore, it was no surprise that over four hundred Zoroastrians converged on the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple from all parts of the country. Such was the desire for Zoroastrians to attend; four coaches were arranged by the North West Zoroastrian Community (thanks to Rushna Avari) and the ZTFE (thanks to Bomi Ghandi) and many had made arrangements to stay over in Birmingham.

It was truly a magnificent sight to see a procession of so many Zoroastrians dressed in saris, duglies, topees and fetahs lead by our ervad sahebs and dignitaries. The procession made its way to the main entrance of the Temple where we were personally greeted by Dr Roa (looking every part the Parsi in his red topee!) and a contingent of Hindu priests.

Recognising that people had travelled long distances our hosts extended the warmth of their welcome by serving everyone with refreshments. Over refreshments, I met members from other faith communities, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims; dear friends from interfaith organisations, Dr Harriot Crabtree (Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK), Yann Lovelock BEM (Trustee of the Birmingham Council



Ferdowsi



Jimmy Suratia was born in Mombassa, East Africa and soon after came over to the United Kingdom in 1965. With his wife Aban, two children Amy and Cyrus and mother Amy, they live in Birmingham. Jimmy is a Consultant in IBM for their Security & Risk Management Division. He was the former Chairman of the Birmingham Council of Faiths (the hosts of the Zoroastrian Education Day at Birmingham Town Hall in 2010) and the current Chairman of the North West Zoroastrian Community.

of Faiths), Dr Taunque MBE & Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands. What was noticeable was that everyone felt a sense of great anticipation of being witness to something very special.

After refreshments we were ushered to the hill for the unveiling ceremony where Dr Roa made his opening address. The key message of his address was that interfaith was not about people talking about interfaith but about action.

Raaj Shamji the Master of Ceremonies invited Lord Karan Bilimoria, CBE, DL and Kashmira Cooke (Freddie Mercury's sister) to unveil the Farohar. Thus the Farohar was unveiled to the dramatic soundscape of Strauss' Also Sprach Zarathustra. The beauty of the steel Farohar and the warmth of its golden-brown patina was awe-inspiring: for the first time the significance of this hill as a spiritual icon for Zoroastrians dawned on me. This significance was reinforced when prayers were recited by Ervads Rustam Bhedwar, Bahadur Nalladaroo, Ferdaus Nalladaroo, Zaal Sethna, Jimmy Madon, Zubin Writer and Yazad Amalsad. Our seven mobeds spanned the generations and continents.

Ervads Rustam Bhedwar and Zaal Sethna were representing our most senior and revered United Kingdom based priests. Ervads Bahadur Nalladaroo and Ferdaus Nalladaroo were our guest priests from Mumbai. Ervads Jimmy Madon and Zubin Writer were the new generation of stalwart priests in the UK. Ervad Yazad Amalsad was our youngest mobed, having just this year completed his Navar Martab training. They lead the Humbandagi where everyone joined in reciting two Yatha Ahu Vairyo's and one Ashem Vohu.

Even though we needed to move onto the marquee



Prayers being offered prior to the unveiling



The Farohar sculpted by Luke Perry from Tata Steel



for the speeches and cultural event it was clear that everyone wanted to spend time around the hill. The Zoroastrian (Parsi) Faith Hill was exerting its own divine gravity: the Farohar witnessed groups assembling for photo-opportunities and individuals gathered in quiet contemplation. Raaj Shamji persevered and exercised great patience to get everyone to the marquee. We left the hill with a landmark in our hearts for ever Zoroastrian.

Dr Rajah welcomed everyone and provided a brief history of the Temple and its vision as a truly multi-faith venue. Dr Rajah and his wife are both Trustees of the Balaji Temple and are both practising GPs in Birmingham who radiate warmth.

It was my privilege as the Chairman of the North West Zoroastrian Community (NWZC) to convey the thanks on behalf of the Zoroastrian community. I recounted the story of how our Zoroastrian forefathers convinced the Hindu forefathers that providing them with sanctuary would make all their lives sweeter. The consideration and thoughtfulness of the Hindu forefathers providing our ancestors with sanctuary has always been highly treasured by Zoroastrians and later our ancestors would be identified as an ethnic group called the Parsis. This story is the very epitome of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds. This tradition has been handed down through each successive generation and today it shines brightly on the Hill thanks once again to our Hindu brothers and sisters.

From the title of the hill which makes reference not only to the Zoroastrian faith but also to the Parsi ethnic group to the granite plaque with inscription 'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds – Humata Hukhta Huvarshata' only the Hindu community with its history and awareness could have carried out such a sophisticated tribute.

Dorab Mistry OBE provided a presentation titled 'HMS Trincomalee to Jaguar Landrover'. Samuel Cooke recounted fond memories about his uncle Freddie Mercury. Darayus Motivala (Chairman of the World Zoroastrian Organisation) spoke about the philanthropic work of the WZO. Malcolm Deboo (President of the ZTFE) gave an insightful presentation on the Zoroastrian faith, its history, the importance of the sanctuary that we were given and the significance of the Farohar.

Professor Lord Bhattacharyya KB CBE spoke with passion about manufacturing in the Midlands and

the positive impact that Tata's purchase of Jaguar Land Rover has had on local industry. He spoke about his relationship with Ratan Tata and their shared interests. Lord Bhattacharyya of Moseley is a champion of manufacturing in the UK and founder of the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) at Warwick University. Dr Kusoom Vadgama spoke with vitality about the contributions made by distinguished Parsi women such as Cornelia Sohrabji and Bhikaji Rustom Cama.

Other speakers included Luke Perry (the artist who was commissioned to create the Farohar), Matt Till (a local historian and Oxford graduate), Brendon Hawthorne (a Black Country Poet) who got everyone to sing "I'd like to teach the world to sing", Derek Gidden (Pastor of the Kingdom Concept Ministries, Handsworth), Abdul Hamid Malik (a friend of the Temple and also a friend of the Parsis based on fond memories of his childhood growing up in Navsari India). Lord Bilimoria pulled together all the different historic, regional, international and cultural elements of the event into a brilliantly personal and relevant summing up of the day.

The highlight of the cultural programme was a traditional South Indian dance Bharatanatyam, performed by a talented local student and a divine musical performance on the Bansuri flute performed by Jessica Mistry. The 'sweetness' of our relationship was exemplified by these performances.

Dr Roa closed the proceedings with a generous invitation to make this an annual event for the two communities to celebrate. I accepted this invitation on behalf of the Zoroastrian community by stating that henceforth the Zoroastrian (Parsi) Faith Hill Event will be noted in Zoroastrian calendars throughout the UK along side with Diwali, Christmas, Eid, Vaisakhi.

Our hosts ensured that everyone was fed and over dinner it was wonderful to realise that all those present were as excited as I, to have been part of this historic event.

The most profound message of the day did not come from the speakers but from the noise of all the children playing in the Diamond Jubilee Play Area in the Temple grounds which is overlooked by the Farohar on Zoroastrian (Parsi) Faith Hill. This was the sound of the next generation being handed the legacy of warmth and respect. To Dr Roa, Dr Raja, Jyoti Ramaiah, Raaj Shamji, Mahtab Nalladaroo and our Hindu brothers and sisters of the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple you have created something very special and we the Zoroastrian community thank you for this magnificent tribute.



Finding 'Sraosha, Tying Kusti' in Sogdiana

by kersi shroff

A JOURNEY TO ANCIENT ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES IN TAJIKISTAN, PART I

The names of several ancient lands once caught my eye in an old map on '*Regions inter Euphraten et Indum*.' In place of the familiar names of Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, the map labels the lands between the two great rivers with enchanting names, such as, Arachosia, Bactriana, Choresmia, Draugiana, Hyrcania, Margiana, and Sogdiana. The map continues to remind me of the lands that sadly have been absorbed within modern political boundaries. My knowledge of Avestan texts was meager enough not to know that many of them are listed in the *Vendidad*. For bringing their awareness to me, the credit first goes to a local Zoroastrian scholar, Adi Davar, who once boldly depicted these lands in a map of 'Ancient Zoroastrian and Neighboring Countries.' Later, a Parsi archeologist from India, Roxana Irani, and her husband, presented me with an issue of the 'China Archeology and Art Digest'¹ wholly devoted to 'Zoroastrianism in China.' In it are several reports, including on findings of Zoroastrian art of the Sogdians and a survey of the decorative elements of a Zoroastrian temple in Jiexiu, Shanxi. Further confirmation was found upon reading Jenny Rose's book recounting these lands in the chapter on 'The Zoroastrians of Central Asia.' In it she notes that *Videvdad* 1 calls the ancient regions "lands fashioned for the Iranians by Ahura Mazda after '*Airyana Vaejah*' – the Aryan expanse."²

Having been brought up on a simpler understanding of Zoroastrianism being rooted and promoted in what was greater Iran and later spread to the Indian subcontinent, these were strangely magnetic regions for me. Sogdiana, in particular, attracted me with the tales of Silk Route merchants who once created a magnificent civilization and carried it to western China. So last year when a call was made for participation in an archeological expedition to Tajikistan, the modern partial locale of Sogdiana (the rest of it is in Uzbekistan), I packed my bags. The program promised "visits to the most outstanding archaeological and architectural monuments of this ancient land of the Zoroastrians, its museums, volunteer participation in excavations of the tremendous site of Hisorak in the mountains of Central Tajikistan, and the Ancient Panjakent, the best documented Sogdian city with famous wall-paintings [and two temples]."

The archeological part of the trip was organized by Dr Pavel B Lurje ("Pasha"), the Director of the Panjakent, Tajikistan, Archeological Expedition of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. The travel arrangements in Tajikistan were handled by a Tajik, Mr Sanginov Shodmonkul, who runs a travel company. I was pleased to learn that we would be in the company of Dr Judith Lerner, PhD, Research Associate in New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and Dr Dolores Moody, PhD, an educator and avid world traveler. Dr Lerner has published scholarly articles on the Sogdians.³ Her presence helped to get a better understanding of Zoroastrian culture in Sogdiana.

As I found out, Pasha is a most accomplished archeologist and scholar⁴ who has excavated in Tajikistan for fourteen of the last twenty years. He was a student of the renowned Boris Marshak who excavated ancient Panjakent for over 50 years and, on his passing in 2006, was honoured by being buried there.⁵ Pasha is thus part of a rich tradition of quite literally ground breaking work in Central Asia.

In the sixty seven years of excavations in Panjakent, apart from uncovering the building structures, including two temples and residential buildings, the archeologists have discovered a multitude of murals and wall paintings. Pasha emphasized that many of these had clear Zoroastrian themes, including depictions of deities, religious festivals, and rituals relating to the sacred fire. It is near the temples that Dr. Moody and I picked up two ordinary looking stones which, Pasha informed me after my return, turned out to be a 6th century terracotta figurine identified as the image of 'Sraosha', Tying Kusti.⁷



The map was created by Microsoft Encarta and is available on the website of www.advantour.com

The route I took, went north from Dushanbe towards Zarafabad and east towards Dikhisor (where I visited Hisorak and Mt Mugh, which are not shown on the map); then north to Khujand; afterwards, south and west to Panjikent. Later, after returning to Dushanbe, we went south to Takhti Sangin (Oxus Temple) which is at the southern tip of Tajikistan on its border with Afghanistan.

The Journey Begins

Our journey started in Dushanbe where we spent a couple of days visiting museums and grandiosely designed gardens and buildings. These are a hallmark of the Tajik Government's attempts to modernize the country after a brutal civil war that ensued when the country ceased being a Soviet Republic and assumed independence. Of note in Dushanbe were the special section in the national museum devoted to the Zoroastrian period of Tajikistan, large paintings on public buildings depicting scenes from the Shahnameh and the name 'Avesta' given to a major hotel and grocery stores. Our first excavation site in the Upper Zeravshan Valley is several hundred kilometers north of Dushanbe. Among the many tunnels under the high mountains that we crossed was one five km long contrivance, called the Anjob Pass, half-abandoned by the Soviets, but later financed and 'completed' by Iranians. The tunnel was dark, flooded, and, in parts, narrowed to only one lane on account of potholes, fallen stones and other obstructions.

The sight of stranded hunks of trucks gave us a white-knuckle ride with little hope of emerging at the other end. Shodmonkul's imperturbable driving demeanor and dirt-road sense finally got us through after what seemed like hours.

Ancient site of Hisorak

We arrived at the village of Madrushkat, where we first met Pasha and his team of Russian and Tajik archeologists, graduate students, and Tajik school boys, who were part of the daily excavations. The village elder graciously opened his *mehmankhane* where we were served a dinner of hefty Tajik bread, yogurt, cheese and a rice and meat dish, much like a *palao*, and tea, and spent the night on splendidly decorated rugs and thin mattresses in the large room. Madrushkat is situated across a deep river bed from the ancient site of Hisorak, where after a history lesson from Pasha on the significance of the site, we started our excavation work. Hisorak, located on a steep terrace, is referred to as Martshkar in 8th century Sogdian documents found in

Notes

1. Vol. 4, No. 1, Hong Kong, Dec 2000. For related articles, see Frantz Grenet, Religious Diversity among Sogdian Merchants in Sixth Century China: Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Hinduism, 27 Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 463-478 (2007); and, Nicholas Sims-Williams, Some Reflections on Zoroastrianism in Sogdiana and Bactria, IV Silk Road Studies, 1-11 (2000).
2. Jenny Rose, An Introduction to Zoroastrianism 135 (2011).
3. For example, see Annette L Juliano & Judith A Lerner, The Miho Couch Revisited in Light of Recent Discoveries (2004?), a copy of which I found tucked away in a file on Sogdiana. It describes a 6th century gatepost found in Henan Province, China, "decorated with standing men ... who wear the Zoroastrian padam or mouth-cover, tending bowls that contain fire." The men, identified as Central Asians, either Sogdians or Hephthalites, are performing a Zoroastrian funeral ceremony known as sag-did ('glance of a dog'); Judith A Lerner, Zoroastrian Funerary Beliefs and Practices known from the Sino-Sogdian Tombs in China, 9 Silk Road 18 (2011).
4. See his masterly rendition on 'Personal Names in Sogdian Texts' in *Iranisches Personennamenbuch, Band II, Faszikel 8* (2009).
5. Boris Marshak's publications include: Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana (2002).
6. Sraosha is described as the destroyer of evil and other harmful beings to whom two Yashts are dedicated, Yasna 56-57, to be recited just before sunrise to "invigorate him for the showdown with the powers of darkness." Prods Oktor Skjaervo, The Spirit of Zoroastrianism 15 (2011).
7. Pasha calls it "Sraosha Binding Kusti".
8. Abstract of a lecture given by Pasha in New York, 2012.

1932-33 at Mount Mugh, located half-way between Hisorak and Panjakent. The Mount Mugh documents constitute a remarkable record of Sogdian history.

Hisorak, situated on 15 acres, has two citadels defended by steep cliffs and fortifications. According to Pasha, the soil and microclimate around the mountainous part of the Zeravshan valley is suitable for preserving organic remains, and numerous artifacts made of wood, leather, fabric, felt and grain have been discovered. Of particular interest are elements of decorated wooden ceilings, molded plaster decorations and wall paintings. The site is inclined to be dated to the second half of the 8th – early 9th centuries AD, but a number of materials from earlier and later dates have also been found.⁸ In 2013 there were significant finds of a wooden block carved with a lion and gazelle and a 8th century baked clay cooking pot.

During several days of excavations, we arrived at the site on donkey back at around 7am and finished by 2pm, to avoid the heat. I was assisted by young Tajik boys from Madrushkat who did the back breaking removal of mounds of ancient dirt, and was supervised by one or two of the Russian archeologists. The boys kept up a patter in Tajik, a dialect of Farsi and Dari, but one appeared to recite what sounded like a long passage from a profoundly sounding Persian poem. When the talk inevitably came to religion, and Zarthushtis, a couple of them blurted out "Pindare Nik, Guftare Nik, Kerdare Nik."

In the first room that I excavated, I worked on uncovering a *sufa* (a platform) facing what looked like two fire niches, one ceremonial and the other for cooking. After several hours of patient digging, the *sufa* was almost completely exposed, but no significant article was found buried around it. At this, I was dismissed by Nikita Semenov, Pasha's team mate, and asked to find something else to do. In the next room, the ceremonial fire niche was more pronounced, and close to it my trowel quickly hit several large and medium sized shards of fired clay which turned out to be an almost complete 8th century cooking pot with a handle, blackened on the outside. The supervising archeologist, Larisa Smirnova, dressed like a character in 'Raiders



A recently excavated ceremonial fireplace in a room in Hisorak (5-7th centuries AD)



An 8th-9th century baking pot uncovered in Hisorak.



A terracotta figurine of "Sraosha, tying kusti" found near the temples in Panjakent.

of the Lost Ark,' later declared it to be a significant find. Another smaller find was a partial clay pot which, too, could be due to my beginner's luck.

On the way back to the camp my tired donkey bucked going up the steep stony path to the camp, but the Tajik boys gently coaxed it to take another step. At the same time, they continued to discuss religion and that "of course, Islam is the best in the world." I firmly held on to the donkey.

The evenings at the Hisorak campsite were enjoyably spent by sharing meals freshly prepared each day by a different member of the team. Drinks, too, were plentiful, and an unrecognizable concoction in a soda bottle appeared to hold parts of a plant that can be seen growing around the mountainous areas. I was told that it was vodka steeped with the *Hoama* or *Soma* plant known from Avestan days, but I would not swear by the claim. In any case, it tasted too strong for me to imbibe in *Parsi peg* fashion. I did notice that after a couple of rounds of the tonic Nikita's jokes in Russian elicited a greater laughter. The day was well rounded off with Pasha's scholarly talks on Sogdian history and languages.

In the morning of our departure for the villages of Yagnobis, the direct descendants of Sogdians, a Russian TV crew was interviewing Pasha and his team as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the State Hermitage Museum. The interviewer asked us questions on our purpose in coming to Hisorak and on recognizing the Farohar symbol told me that she had taken a course on Zoroastrianism during her archeology studies.

Part II will discuss excavations in Panjakent, its temples, visits to Takhti Sangin (Oxus Temple), and Sarazm, a UNESCO World Heritage site which reveals four atash kadehs built over several centuries, with a short account of the Mount Mugh documents.



Entrance to Botanical Gardens, Dushanbe, depicting Achaemenian architecture and portraits of Persian heroes



Spectacularly rugged scenery on the road to the Zarafshan Valley

Kersi Bhikhaji Shroff, an Attorney, acquired an LL.B. from Karachi University, a Bar-at-Law in England, and a graduate degree of Master of Comparative Laws (American Practice). He served in the elite Senior Executive Service as Co-Director of Legal Research, and, Chief, Western Law Division, which provides legal services in international, comparative and foreign laws to the US Congress and Executive Agencies. He is a founding member of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, Inc.



The Cyrus Cylinder at the Metropolitan Museum of Art - the MET

New York City, June 20 – August 4, 2013

A photographic journey at the MET and a narrowing of facts and legends

M

Most Zoroastrians from the tri-state area walked up to the MET gloating Zoroastrianism was in the news again ... many New Yorkers were inducted into the concepts of the religion, some delved more, some had “googled” before they came to the exhibit, and sometimes you were even lucky to hear some rumblings amongst visitors of words like “Ahura Mazda” with anglicized intonations, and references to the simplicity of the religion based on three basic principles ... good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

by behroze clubwalla

Photographs
courtesy Astad
Clubwalla

Many Zoroastrians came to see the Cylinder and proudly proclaimed some strains of “apro Cyrus” and the warm greetings, nods and smiles from the Iranians who also came in large numbers to share in the legacy, left all who visited feeling proud, feeling happy to see a treasure to which each one of us would like to claim some lineage. There was a common bond, a shared pride in witnessing this valuable icon.

While all who visited knew that the cylinder was no more than 9” long, 3.25” at the ends and 4.50” in diameter at its widest in the center, seeing this really small cylinder in reality leaves everyone in awe. As Dan Sheffield said, just breathing the air around the Cylinder itself was a rare experience! While much has been written about the history, details / background of the Cyrus Cylinder in the FEZANA publication (Summer 2013 issue), and in the previous Hamazor publication following the exhibitions in Washington DC and Houston, I have tried to capture *some* simple highlights briefly. I had the pleasure of hearing Dan Sheffield’s lecture and attending the presentation by Dr John Curtis, OBE, FBA, Keeper of Special Middle East Projects, The British Museum. Both these events were organized by ZAGNY -The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York

and IZA – The Iranian Zoroastrian Association in New York at the MET.



Street view of the MET in New York City with the banner referencing exhibition on “The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia”.



Relief fragment – Cavalry men, along a stream in mountainous terrain. Alabaster (gypsum), excavated at Nineveh, Palace of Sennacharib, Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Sennacharib, (704-681 BC).



Head of a Persian Guard. Lime Stone, Southwestern Iran. Excavated at Persepolis, Achaemenid Period, reign of Xerxes the I, 485-465 B.C. This is a figure of one of hundreds of Persian guards represented on one of the stairway entrances in one of the monumental palaces at Persepolis.



The Cyrus Cylinder:

1. ... is one of the most famous surviving icons from the ancient world. Excavated in the ancient city of Babylon by Hormuzd Rassam. The cylinder is on loan for its USA tour, courtesy of the British Museum. Hormuzd Rassam was an evangelical Christian, a native Iraqi, born in Mosul, northern Iraq, who led the British Museum's archaeological team that discovered the Cyrus Cylinder in March 1879.

2. ... had a missing piece measuring approximately 3.75" by 2.50", which was at Yale University,



enlightened ruler largely because the Cylinder records how he restored shrines and allowed deported peoples to return to their homes.

5. ... has 45 passages some of which remain open to interpretation because of the missing text. One of the most significant is No: 20 which states, "I am Cyrus, King of the Universe, the great King, the powerful King, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkad, King of the four quarters of the world". Many translations exist of the text, but the one most referenced is by Irving Finkel, Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East, British Museum; (www.britishmuseum.org). Cyrus the Great laid the foundations for Persian rule by the powerful Achaemenid dynasty, which under the subsequent reign of Darius the Great (r. 522-486 BC) stretched from current day Egypt to India, and from Arabia to the Aral Sea. This first "world empire" shifted the ancient Near East's political focus from Mesopotamia to Iran. Several political and ceremonial centers and seasonal residences were established: Pasargadae – Cyrus palatial complex and burial place – Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), and Persepolis. Key to Persian imperial success was a policy of religious and cultural tolerance, which fostered political stability. The Achaemenid period witnessed changes in administrative practices, currency, language, writing, religion, and the fashioning of luxury goods, thus charting a new path for an empire – the largest the world had known.

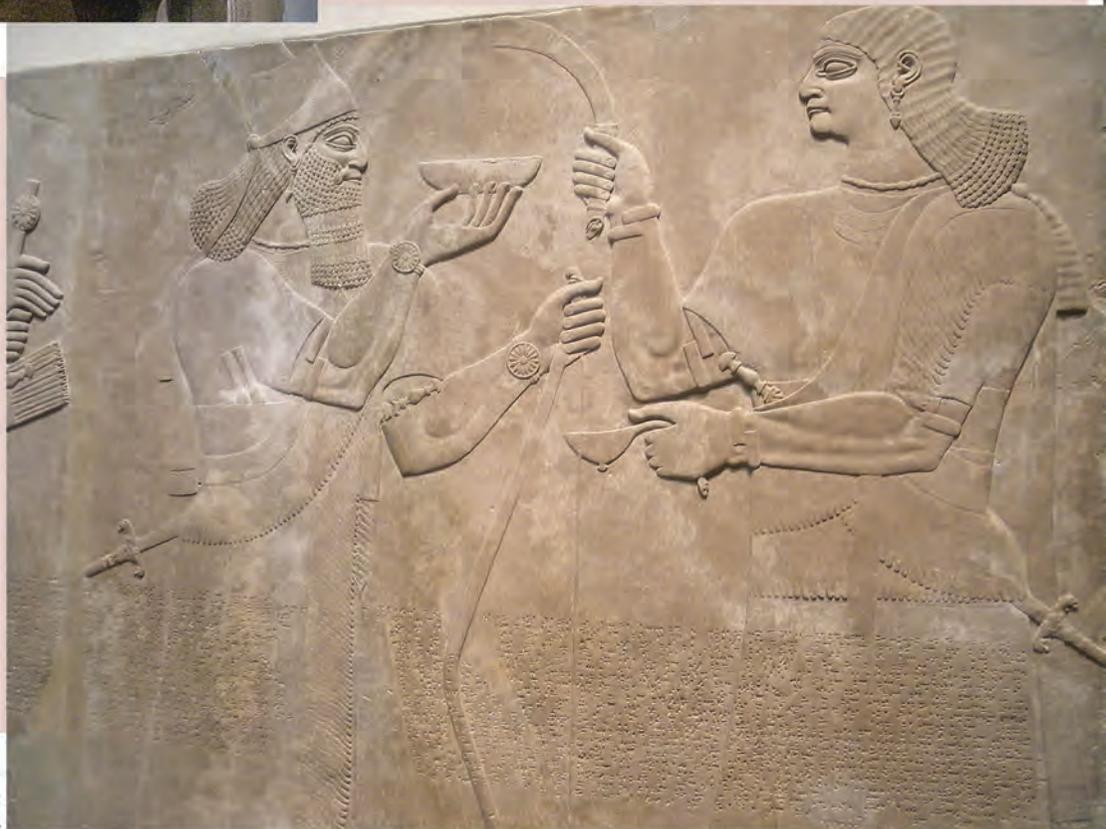
6. ... was never intended to be a document referencing human rights; indeed the concept of human rights did not even exist at that time. The Cylinder is correctly seen as a

The Palace of Ashurnasirpal II

Connecticut, USA. It was a significant piece as it gave us lines 36-45 of the Cyrus Cylinder text. This was significant because not all of the text is decipherable.

3. ... is inscribed in the Babylonian-Akkadian cuneiform script from end to end of the cylinder. This is a wedged shaped writing system developed about 3,000 BCE for writing on moist, soft clay, by means of a blunt reed, which was hardened by drying in the sun or firing. It was inscribed by order of the Persian King Cyrus the Great (r. about 559-530 BC).

4. ... marks the establishment of Persian rule after Cyrus defeated the Median king Astyages, conquered the Lydian Empire and finally Babylon in 539 BC. Cyrus was regarded as a liberal and



Relief - two servants bearing food and drink. Limestone. Southwestern Iran. Excavated at Persepolis, Achaemenid Period, reign of Artaxerxes III, 358-338 BC.



Carvings on the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II.

royal propaganda tool that first came into public scrutiny, as a symbol, during the 1968 United Nations Conference on Human Rights that was held in Teheran, hence leading to the linkages and references to Human Rights.

7. ... actually gained world attention again when it became the official symbol of the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire when it was celebrated in 1971. The Iranian royal family presented a replica of the cylinder to the United Nations Headquarters in New York at that time.

8. ... references that Cyrus allowed the return of the Judeans to Jerusalem. Historically, when the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, he burned their Temple, carried off its treasures and deported many of the inhabitants to Babylon. Cyrus ended the Babylonian captivity in his first year as Persian King of Babylon. Some passages engraved refer to "good governance" by Cyrus and his advocacy to allow the Judeans to return to their homeland allows inference that he was an advocate of humane principles, justice and liberty and supports his understanding that people should be allowed to keep their own customs and beliefs.

10. ... has no reference to Ahura Mazda/Zoroastrianism or the fact that Cyrus the Great was a Mazda worshiper. Finally, what was evident was that the visitor to the exhibition found many artifacts and carvings carrying similarities to images that we as Zoroastrians have seen over the years. Interestingly, none of the visitors were allowed to even photograph the Cyrus Cylinder! The trip will remain special for all who had the privilege to peer at the Cylinder and wonder why such a small artifact could have such a great impact.

Behroze Astad Clubwala, is a ZAGNY member for 38 years and has dedicated much time and effort to support ZAGNY. She is currently the Human Resources Advisor, in the Bureau for Development Policy in the United Nations Development Programme in New York.



The Cyrus Cylinder's visit to San Francisco

The visit of the Cyrus Cylinder to San Francisco, ignited much interest in the hearts of all peoples of Persian origin, including the American Iranian community as well as the Zarthushti community of Northern California.

Even though publicity was low key to start off with, once the Cylinder was in place at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the opening week festivities got under way, with word-of-mouth publicity and that done by the Museum, the IHF (Iranian Heritage Foundation) and PAAIA, (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans) word got around and it was a full house for the Opening Day Panel Discussion, which was chaired by the Museum's Director - Dr Jay Xu. After a presentation on the short history of the origins of the Cylinder, given by Dr John Curtis, Keeper of the Middle East Collections at the British Museum, the panelists gave a lively presentation on the past and present in Iran and their thoughts and views on Cyrus and his legacy.

by nazneen spliedt

The panelists were:

Dr Mitra Ara - Assistant Professor and founding Director of the Persian Studies Program at San Francisco State University, Dr Trita Parsi - Founder President of the National Iranian American Council and an expert on the geopolitics of the Middle East and Iran and a Zarathushti, Reza Zarghamee - Author of the upcoming book – *Discovering Cyrus: The Persian Conqueror Astride the Ancient World*. He studied under Prof Frye and Prof Oktor Skjaervo at Harvard. Though a lawyer by profession, he has a keen interest in the ancient history of Iran.

Over 250 persons attended this sold out event.

Among the more unusual event was the performance of *the King Cyrus Symphonic Suite*, which was enjoyed by over 2000 persons. The concert was held in the auditorium of the Masonic Centre of San Francisco and accompanied by members of the San Francisco Philharmonic Orchestra. It featured performances by soprano Raeeka Shehabi-Yaghmai and pianist Tara Kamangar, both well known Iranian-American performers.

The King Cyrus Symphonic Suite was composed and conducted by Loris Tjeknavorian, an Iranian born Armenian, who studied violin at the Teheran Conservatory, before moving to Vienna to study at the Vienna Music Academy. In 1963 Carl Orff granted him a scholarship, which allowed him to reside in Salzburg and work on his Opera "Rostam and Sohrab".

Maestro Loris Tjeknavorian composed the first version of the King Cyrus Symphonic Suite in 1972 for the 2500th anniversary celebration of the Iranian Empire. A few years ago he revised and expanded the composition into a Symphonic Suite in three movements providing the listener with a musical portrait of the important episodes in the life of Cyrus the Great. This symphonic suite celebrates the life of Cyrus from childhood through the early years and culminating with his declaration of human rights. The composition is a masterful work bringing to life the ancient and rich culture of Persia and the human challenges faced by a benevolent and visionary leader.

The 1st Movement entitled: The Flood and the Vine introduced Cyrus' antecedents and his birth and the wrath of Astyages, his father.

2nd Movement called: A New Day dwelt on the pomp of his court and the love encounter with Cassandane and his wedding feast.

3rd Movement: Birth of an Empire, showcased the Battle of Sardis, his triumphant entry into Babylon, Song of the Israelites and his proclamation of human rights for all.

The music and the story were compelling and heart wrenching for those in the audience.

Another event of a different kind, was a talk by Forrest McGill, the Chief Curator of the Asian Art Museum on *"Cyrus in the Western Imagination"*. With illustrations and audio clips of music from Handel's Oratorio *"Belshazzar"* he showed us how Cyrus was perceived in the West, in paintings and poetry as well as the music of Handel.

How Cyrus became a model of a wise and humane ruler, respected by figures of the Age of Enlightenment, such as Thomas Jefferson, among others.

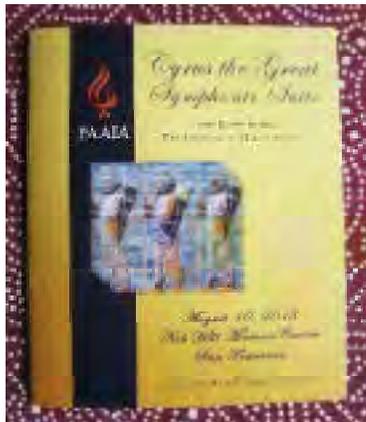
Another event that elicited a large sold out audience was the talk by Dr David Stronach, who was one of the archaeologists working at Pasargadae, Cyrus' palace and tomb complex and who was for over 20 years the Director of the British Institute of Persian Studies in Teheran. He regaled the audience of his many experiences as a young archaeologist working with the likes of Mortimer Wheeler, Max Mallowan and his wife Agatha Christie and the wonderful findings in the historical sites of Pasargadae, Persepolis, Tepe Nush-e-Jan, as well as in Nineveh, Armenia, Dagestan and Turkey. David is well respected and eminent in his field and has been well loved by his many students, who admire him for his humour and calm reserve in dire situations.

As of this writing over 20,000 persons have come to see this exhibition, and there are long lines on weekends and creating a lot of "buzz" and interest. Many Zarathushtis have also shown great interest and the Persian and Parsi communities have been well represented at all the events. Our school kids from our "Sunday classes" have had a special tour with a docent and story-teller and activities laid out for them at the Museum.

I hope this will help energise our young people to take a new look at an old empire and be proud of our heritage and ancestry and to continue to be "mazda worshipping" as no doubt Cyrus, the Great was, in his wisdom and edicts and benevolence for his subjects in that far gone Achaemenian empire. ■■■■



The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA



Programme of the Symphony Suite Concert, sponsored by PAAIA

Photographs courtesy Ehler Spliedt



John Curtis, Keeper of the British Museum, and Nazneen Spliedt, President of the Zoroastrian Anjuman of Northern California discussing the Cylinder over a glass of wine.

As there has been so much interest in the Zoroastrian community in North America, and unprecedented attendance figures in all the museums where the Cyrus Cylinder was displayed, it was felt to retain this information for the interest of the reader, even though the Hamazor has had a lapse in bringing out the scheduled publication earlier. It is heartening to be told that not only Zoroastrians flocked to see the Cylinder but Parsis were made museum goers, with the larger Iranian community being just as eager. The Cylinder ended its journey in the US at Los Angeles but the promised report was not received. Today it has travelled to Mumbai as a further outreach to our community and art lovers in general. - Ed

Nazneen is a proud Karachite, having been born and raised there. She is married to Ehler and they've spent over 25 years living and working in many countries, the last 14 of them in Hong Kong until they decided to retire in California in 1998. She is active with the Asian Art Museum and served for 8 years on the Board of the Society for Asian Art, the last two as its President. Since 2005 she is President of ZANC, the Zoroastrian association in Northern California, busy organising events and community activities. She enjoys her volunteer jobs and travelling.

Four Funerals and a Concert for “Peace”: Legitimising an occupation through music

On 7 September 2013, while maestro Zubin Mehta was trying to usher peace in one of the world’s highest militarised zone, he left the Indian security forces out of the loop. In Shopian, 50 km from Srinagar (where the historic concert was held), four civilians, including a Bihari labourer, were gunned down at a checkpoint by the security forces. Later that day, a bomb exploded in Pulwama, another southern district of Kashmir.

To protest the four killings, more people took to the streets and a fifth civilian was shot to death on 11 September. Avdocate Parvez Imroz stated, “...as the killings took place due to heightened deployment of troops to ensure a smooth concert, it becomes incumbent on the German government to not remain silent on these murders.”

by *dilnaz boga*

Ask the Kashmiris if they finally found that ever-eluding peace in soul-stirring sonatas that reverberated at Shalimar gardens on that glorious afternoon. But first, ask them the meaning of peace. In a land plagued by undeclared curfews, relentless bloodshed, illegal detentions, custodial deaths, mass rapes, torture and every conceivable form of structural violence perpetrated by state structures for several decades, words like “peace” and “normalcy” hardly matter. When staying alive and then staying sane is a priority, using the veneer of music and culture to gloss over harsh realities is not taken lying down by the people.

By organising a parallel concert aptly titled “Haqeeqat-e-Kashmir” (Truth about Kashmir), on the same day as (Ehsas-e-Kashmir) Zubin Mehta’s concert, thanks to efforts by members of the civil society, Kashmiris collectively reclaimed the space that the state is attempting to appropriate through culture. Haqeeqat’s artists told stories of oppression and resistance and held the locals spellbound, and in some cases, visibly moved.

The event included musical performances, poetry recitals, photography exhibits and

other performance art, showcasing Kashmir’s heartbreaking reality and “marking the terrors of the military occupation and celebrating the resilience of Kashmiris.”

The press release by Jammu Kashmir Civil Society (JKCCS), the organisers of the event, who have been instrumental in highlighting human rights violations by India’s armed forces in the war-torn region, explained, “We cannot welcome anything even remotely analogous in Jammu and Kashmir. Sadly, the occupation will be amply reflected in the demographics of the audience of the proposed concert – the list of—‘invitees only’ is bound to be restricted to the members of the apparatuses of the occupying state: from perpetrators of crimes, as heinous as murder, rape and torture, to the local collaborators of the State and perhaps some powerless, vulnerable and compliant few.”

The concert was broadcast live on dozens of television stations around the world as Mehta and the 98-member orchestra received a standing ovation. Ironically, members of Kashmiri folk group Soz-o-Saaz, which performed with Mehta, were



Dilnaz Boga is a freelance journalist and researcher based in Bombay. She has worked for Hindustan Times, DNA and the Times of India, covering issues like health, gender, conflict, human interest, civic, education and crime.

denied entry to a state dinner hosted by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre after the concert, an Indian newspaper reported.

Dismissing the notions of normalcy and contextualising the promotion of “peace through culture”, the press release stated, “The people of Jammu and Kashmir, for whom this concert is purportedly meant, have been subject to an occupation by the Indian State for the last 66 years ... The institutional culture of moral, political and juridical impunity has resulted in, by some estimates [as of 2013], enforced and involuntary disappearance of at least 8,000 persons besides more than 70,000 killings, countless cases of torture, rape, molestation and disclosures of over 7,000 unknown, unmarked and mass graves. There have been no effective prosecutions of the perpetrators to date.”

To further alienate an already brutalised population, a proposal to invite 230 Kashmiri students was also declined by the government. Out of a total of 758 invitees, only 102 were civilians, with no perceptible government connection.

“The German Ambassador is misleading the people by calling it an event for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a deeply political event for a political purpose,” said JKCS’s Khurram Parvez.

Ironically, the concert was put together by Germany’s ambassador to India Michael Steiner, with the aim of reaching “the hearts of the Kashmiris with a message of hope and encouragement.” But “healing” through music becomes a little tough if you are being chased and shot at while the violins play.

How then, can there be peace without justice? Will the notes penned by Wagner collectively soothe the wounds of the last few decades? Or will Beethoven’s symphony of war silence the guns forever? Peace only stands a chance after demilitarisation. Guns never fall silent. They just have to go. ■■■■



Bavarian State Orchestra and 40+ Kashmiri Troupe



Sadanand Memon, senior journalist wrote on 18th September 2013 in The Hindu an article “Zubin Mehta and the unequal music”. A poignant extract is shared.

“... Of course, Zubin Mehta is no apostle of peace like Mahatma Gandhi. His self-defence was strident and aggressive as he blamed Kashmiris for their troubles. ... How one wishes Kashmiri artists and intellectuals had managed to get to Zubin Mehta before the show and persuaded him to make a simple announcement that he was performing that day for the victimised people of Kashmir. That was all that was needed to balance it out. ... The ultimate irony in this musical caper will, of course, always be the historic irony of the date. Nothing incendiary was happening in Kashmir at that time and would not have been provoked had this ‘peace concert’ not been invented. But, on September 7, if the great man really needed to prove the efficacy of his genius, he should have diverted the entourage away from Srinagar and headed, instead, for Muzaffarnagar. After all, there too Hindus and Muslims needed to sit next to each other and listen to some equal music.”

To greatest heights: Dr Murad Lala scales Mt Everest

On May 19, 2013 at 9:30am when Dr Murad Lala scaled Mount Everest, he became not only the first Zoroastrian, but also the first Indian doctor to achieve this feat.

No stranger to adventure, Murad Lala can be called an adrenalin junkie due to his fondness for activities that push his mind and body to the edge. His form of relaxing after the gruelling 12-hour work days that he puts in as an Oncologist and surgeon is to take time off to do some bungee-jumping, scuba diving, white water rafting, sky diving or flying. Murad holds a pilot's license too.

by *beyniaz edulji*

Asked about his choice of career in the medical field, Lala says, "I trained to be a pilot but destiny thought otherwise and I joined medical school and went on to become a Surgical Oncologist." He is an extreme sports enthusiast and has participated in the "Raid de Himalaya" Himalayan Car Rally in 2007, 2008 and 2009. He and his wife, Dr Mamatha Lala, who is a paediatrician and an adventure sports enthusiast herself, were awarded the third prize in 2009. Dr Lala also participated in the Standard Chartered Mumbai Half Marathon this year.

Since his return from Everest, Dr Lala has been inundated with requests by the medical fraternity and Zoroastrian associations to give talks about his Everest experience and also to inaugurate events. On August 18, the Zoroastrian Club of Secunderabad and Hyderabad felicitated Dr Lala at their Navroze function. This was only fitting, as he was born at the Military Hospital in Secunderabad and his parents live a retired life there. He advised the younger generation to follow their dreams in his motivational speech. Making light of his heroic feat, Dr Lala says, "The miracle is not that I summited, the miracle is that I had the courage to take the first step." He summited the highest peak just before his 50th birthday but according to Dr Lala, "Age is only a number." Dr Lala never tires of saying, "Just

because we are ordinary people it does not mean that we cannot have extra-ordinary dreams!"

Dr Lala's love affair with mountains started when he did his schooling at Lawrence School in the Nilgiris - which are also called the Blue Mountains - at Lovedale near the hill station of Ooty. He won the Gold, Silver and Bronze medals of the Duke of Edinburgh Award while in school. He also won the All India Best Cadet (Air Wing) award and the Prime Minister's Gold Medal in NCC and represented India at Singapore in NCC. Along with him when he reached the summit were a farovar, the Indian Tricoloured Flag, his Hospital logo and the Lawrence School crest.

Dr Murad E Lala is a cancer surgeon working at Hinduja National Hospital and Research Center, Mumbai, for the past twelve years. After finishing his Master's in General Surgery, he successfully completed super specialization in cancer surgery in 1996 and went on to train in several centres of excellence in India and abroad. He has a number of publications in reputed journals and presentations in various National and International Conferences.

Murad says "I am young enough to seek adventure and mature enough not to be

foolhardy; I believe in getting out of my comfort zone and pushing the envelope.” He has made time away from his profession (not an easy task as an Oncologist) and challenged himself in other arenas of life to make him a more mature and complete person. By becoming the first Indian doctor to summit Mount Everest, he has just proved to himself what he always believed in: that limitation exists only in the human mind!

Towards realizing his childhood dream of summiting Mount Everest, in October 2012, Dr Lala went to Nepal in preparation for this year’s climb with Peak Freaks, an international team where he was the only Indian. He completed the “Triple Crown Expedition” in which he summited three 20,000 feet high peaks around Mount Everest. The training was conducted over four weeks on the three peaks named Pokhalde, Lobuche East and Island Peak. The vigorous training in basic and advanced mountaineering, rock climbing, crevasse rescue and snow craft geared him to take on the great challenge of summiting the highest point on earth. Here he was being constantly trained and assessed with acclimatization and fitness levels in mind as were the other 22 members of this camp. Only three were invited to join the Everest Mission. While in Mumbai, he cycled and ran the treadmill at a fitness studio that simulates air pressure found at 15,000 ft above sea level. He would walk from his home in Kalina to Hinduja Hospital in Mahim. He would shun the lift and use 16 flights of stairs at work too! But he says, “However much you train, at most times, the Everest can make you feel very inadequate.”

This year, Murad was part of the multinational team of “Peak Freaks” that spent about six weeks at Everest Base Camp which was a Boot Camp for training and acclimatizing for the summit push. Five members of the eight who initially set off, were successful in safely summiting Mt Everest maintaining the flawless safety record of Peak Freaks. Three climbers ended up not making the final climb to the summit, including a 71-year-old US citizen who had aimed to be the oldest American to climb Everest. The hundred percent safety records of Peak Freaks was one of the reasons Dr Lala had chosen this team.

All of April was spent in getting used to the bitter cold and high altitude. Everest Base Camp is at 17,700 feet, Camp 1 is situated at 19,900 feet and Camp 2 is at 21,300 feet. The team would head from base camp to Camp 2 and return many times in order to get used to the harsh weather conditions and follow the dictum of ‘climb high, sleep low’. At Everest Base Camp, avalanches are routine. The tents are pitched on a glacier which keeps on moving. At Camp 1, the team was caught in a blizzard. In May, when it seemed as if a four day window of suitable weather would last, the final team of five climbers, five Sherpas and a western guide under the leadership of the Canadian team leader, Tim Rippel, set off.

The actual summit push to Mt Everest from Camp 4 and the descent thereafter back to Camp 4, lasted almost 24 hours. On May 18th at 7pm, Dr Lala, other climbers and Sherpas entered what is termed “Death Zone.” The thin air does not allow one to breathe without the help of oxygen. The temperature there is minus 34 degrees. The climb is very steep. Dr Lala’s headlight stopped working and he had to take the help of other climbers. The Sherpas and team leader were of tremendous help due to their vast mountain experience. Dr Murad reached the summit at 09:10am the next morning. Dr Murad says, “The first feeling to hit me was one of relief: I had made it. But you immediately start calculating. You can’t stay longer than 10 minutes as the weather can get worse anytime.” Also playing on his mind was the grim fact that most deaths occur during the descent which is far more dangerous. The ten minutes were spent taking off his oxygen mask in order to take pictures as proof of his climb and appreciating the fact that he was so far on top of the world that he could actually see the earth’s curvature and the sun below him. Dr Lala was very impressed by the way the Nepal Government holds each team responsible for cleaning up. Murad is happy to say that he did not see any litter on this beautiful mountain called Sagarmatha by the Nepalese and Chomolungma by the Tibetans.

Asked about the real dangers of this expedition, Dr Lala says there are many, from the Khumbu Icefall which is one of the

toughest sections to negotiate because of its unstable ice blocks to the Hillary Step, the last obstacle of a 40 ft vertical climb on sheer rock surface, just before the final summit. Interspersed in between there are many other challenging hurdles: columns of ice formed by intersecting crevasses on a glacier, which are called Seracs and often fall without any kind of warning, the extremely treacherous Lhotse Face of solid blue ice and 70 degree incline, the many crevasses some of which may be so large and deep that you need multiple ladders latched together to get through, the narrow ridge in the death zone with dangerous drops of over 10,000 ft on either side, etc; the guidance from the Sherpas is indispensable throughout. Hypothermia, frostbite, acute mountain sickness, high altitude pulmonary edema and high altitude cerebral edema are the other medical dangers that may cause loss of limb or life in this region around Mt Everest.

Dr Lala's family has been very supportive. Murad's wife Dr Mamatha Lala, is a paediatrician and Paediatric HIV Specialist in various charitable hospitals including Wadia Hospital, Mumbai. She is focused into the care and treatment of HIV infected children and prevention of parent to child transmission of HIV. Mamatha has always been Murad's main pillar of support. They have been together since their days in medical school. They have shared many an adventure together and even won a joint trophy in the Himalayan Car Rally recently, said to be one of the toughest in the world, but this time she stayed back to let him go ahead with his dream. Dr Mamatha says, "One of us had to stay back to be there for our children." Also the financial cost of conquering Mt Everest without any sponsorship is staggering. ■■■■



Beyniaz Edulji lives in Secunderabad, India. A Law graduate from Mumbai, she also has Master's degrees in Economics and Politics from Mumbai University. She has written many political commentaries, sports articles (especially on cricket) and features on various personalities, travel, food and Geospatial Technology for magazines and newspapers in India and abroad. Her interests include adventure sports, cooking and travelling.



A tough terrain, using ladders



Inching towards the summit



On the summit with all without whom it would not have been possible



The smile says it all



With Zarathushtra all the way



With the Indian Flag



Team celebrating their success of summiting the highest peak

Outstanding Young Houstonian – Nina Godiwalla

by magdalena rustomji

The prime object of every person should be to make a better world in spirit and body. Human society must progress. Every member must persevere to promote it.

(found in Gatha Songs 3.9; 7.5; 11.9; 13.11)

From: *Salient Points of the Zarathustrian Religion* by A A Jafarey

Each year since 1932, The City of Houston Jaycees and Houston Junior Chamber Foundation in Texas present awards to five outstanding Houstonians between the ages of 21 and 40. The awards are based primarily on extraordinary achievements and contributions in many areas, which include athletics, politics, business, the arts, and community service.

Individuals honored by this award exemplify the Jaycee Creed:

- That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life;
- That the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations;
- That economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise;
- That government should be of laws rather than of men;
- That earth's great treasure lies in human personality; and
- That service to humanity is the best work of life.

Houstonians who have previously received this recognition include President George H W Bush, Howard Hughes, heart surgeon – Dr Denton Cooley, Lt Governor William P Hobby Jr, television anchorman Dan Rather and also, astronauts Gus Grissom and Ed White.

Recipients of the 2013 Five Outstanding Young Houstonians Awards were formally honoured at a banquet in Houston on October 17th of 2013. The first Zarthushti awarded this honour is Nina Godiwalla, author of *Suits: A Woman on Wall Street* – an insider's perspective on her experience at Morgan Stanley from the point of view of a first generation American Parsi woman (a review of *Suits* appeared in Hamazor in the Spring of 2011).

Nina is the CEO of *MindWorks*, which provides leadership, stress management, and diversity training to companies around the world. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas, an MBA from Wharton, and a master's degree from Dartmouth. Nina is often featured in major media including: *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Forbes*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *ABC News*, *NBC*, *Elle*, and *NPR*. She also writes for several publications including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wharton Magazine*, and *Houston Chronicle*. Institutions such as the White House, Harvard Business School, the University of Texas, NASA, and the Smithsonian consult with Nina for her expertise in multicultural issues and stress management in the workplace.

Nina Godiwalla grew up along with her three sisters, Shara, Shanaya and Amy, in Houston, Texas. Shara, Shanaya, and Nina are founding members of the very first Zarthushti Youth Group of Houston and Nina was the youngest member when the ZYGH went on

camping trips to the Hill Country and the Big Bend area in Texas. From this original Zarthushti Youth Group, there are two published authors, the other is Nerina Rustomji, author of *The Garden and the Fire*.

Nina has received statewide recognition for her accomplishments. In the fall of 2012, she was inducted into the *Women's Hall of Fame in Texas*, which honours the State's most accomplished women. Inductees include first ladies, teachers, astronauts, and athletes. And, on October 30, Nina was honored by *The Houston Business Journal* as one of Houston's Top 40 Under 40.

As Nina continues to be an ambassador for *doing the right thing* and for creating a culture of care and integrity in the work place, she expresses and stands for the Zarthushti tenet of good thoughts, good words, good deeds. So, Congratulations to Nina for one more well deserved accolade.

To read more about Nina and her experiences; the following articles are recommended:

- *A Woman on Wall Street*
Wall Steet Journal – March of 2011
- *A Zoroastrian's Walk Through Wall Street*
The Washington Post – March of 2010
- *What We Can Learn from Prisoners*
The Houston Chronicle – July of 2009

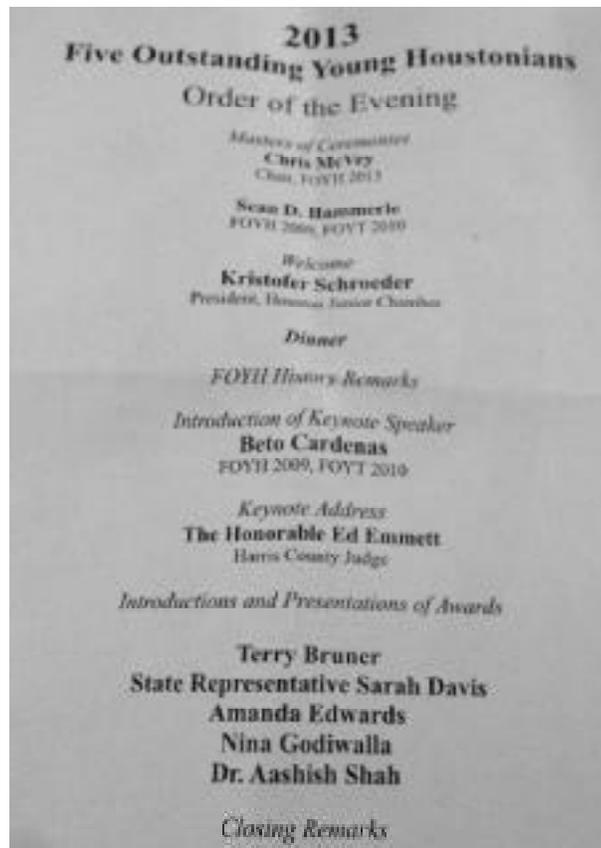


Magdalena Rustomji† was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico and immigrated to Texas as a young child. She is now retired after working for 27 years, as a Licensed Professional Counselor, with “recently arrived” immigrant high school students from all over the world in individual and group counseling sessions, as well as with the original Zoroastrian Youth Group in Houston. Now in retirement, she presents Poetry Workshops for teachers and other

groups. She has just begun a project to update the modules she used in her counseling work, believing in the healing power of Poetry and Writing.



Nina receiving award



The Jam e Janbakhtegan Games - July 22 – 26, 2013 Tehran

written in farsi by taj gohar kuchaki nee khadem
translated by mobed mehraban firouzgary

Iranian Society of Zoroastrian Students proudly welcomes you to 33rd annual JAM-E-JANBAKHTEGAN, one of the largest sport tournaments of Iran's Zoroastrian community. It is our goal to organize this sport event with the spirit of healthiness, honesty and fairness to help strengthen understanding, friendship and solidarity among Zoroastrians all over the world.
– so says their mission statement on their website.



This year in 2013 we had the 33rd annual sporting event of the Jam e (Trophy/cup of) Jan Bakhtegan (War Martyrs), at the Markerabad Community Sports and Cultural facilities. A total of 630 competitors had participated and some 50 games were played. They comprised of Zartoshti competitors both male and female from all over Iran, but mainly coming from Tehran, Yazd, Kerman, Isfahan and Shiraz.

The idea of having such sporting events came about soon after the imposed war of Iraq against Iran. Contributions for help towards the War effort as well as to the community households who had been displaced from around the war zones and thus impoverished, were needed from every possible source. Various community organizations raised funds and contributed. The Kanoon e Daneshjuyan (Association of the Zoroastrian University Students) chose sporting events for collecting the related contributions. For the first few years this was in the form of football matches between two favourite and skilled community soccer teams from Tehran. Tickets were sold and donations were raised which were contributed to the cause. For the sponsors and spectators the support was not towards the quality of the games or to which side won or lost. Crowds were drawn so as to support the cause and the responses were excellent.

Eventually we started losing Zartoshty youths to the warfront and the fervor for participating and the expansion of these games multiplied. Amongst them, the writer Mrs Khadem who lost her son – Farhad, an engineering student and an active member of the Kanoone Daneshjuyan who had joined the army – helped considerably in trying to increase the scope, enthusiasm, popularity and the need to expand these Games. She involved herself with the Sports Managing Committee of the Kanoon and encouraged other parents of the war martyrs to get behind these annual games.

Initially volleyball and table tennis were added to football. The venue was moved to the much more spacious and better equipped sports facilities of the Tehran Pars, Markerabad.

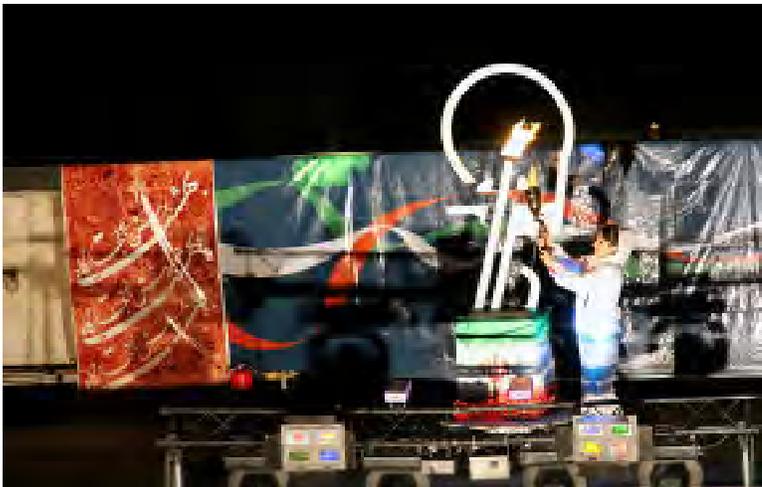
Participants from all over the country apply to the Kanoon in advance and after their selection and rigorous practice, arrive in Tehran on the appointed dates. Their boarding and lodging are arranged by the Kanoon, with the help of monetary assistance and hostel arrangements allotted by community members and organizations.

Indoor football, badminton, swimming, track events, cycling, mountain climbing and badminton have been added to the initial Games.

Spectators of these games include community members who attend free of charge and special invitees which include community leaders, our MP and the likes. The cost of the prizes that are awarded to the winners are contributed by community members and charitable organizations.



Photo courtesy Homayoon Mehzad



Lighting the Flame. Photo courtesy Homayoon Mehrzad



Photo courtesy Pedram Behmardi

Taj Gohar Kuchaki (Khadem) did her schooling from community schools in Kerman. She is married, living in Tehran, having a son and two daughters. Served as a Secretary with the Ministry of Finance, eventually being in charge of a section of the Tax Collection department. She has served four consecutive terms on the Tehran Zartosthi Anjuman mainly as Secretary and a Social worker. She teaches the Avesta script and Gatha recitations at community primary schools. The Peyk e Mehr published in Canada by Dr M Shahrivini, nominated Taj Gohar as the Model Zoroastrian Mother.



G K Mhatre (1879-1947): Pioneering Sculptor of Pre-Independence India

N

Nineteenth century India witnessed a great renaissance in arts and culture. G K Mhatre, who left his indelible footprint in the field of sculptural arts, was considered to be the greatest of all sculptors to have lived in colonial India. His student work caused a sensation and catapulted him to a fame rivaling that of painter Raja Ravi Varma.

Born on 10th March, 1879, in Poona, Ganpatrao belonged to the community of the Pathare Kshatriyas (also called the *Pachkalshis*). The transfer of his father Kashinath Keshavji Mhatre (1838-1920) working in a clerical post at the Military Accounts Department from Poona to Bombay, is considered to be the turning point in the life of young Ganpat. He was initially schooled in Marathi medium in Poona, then studied till the 5th standard in English in Bombay.

Young Ganpat resided in Mangalwadi, Girgaum where he came into contact with the famous idol maker G V Gokhale, who was popular for making very graceful and artistic Ganapati idols. He must have imbibed the finesse of idol making from him. Finally after much practice he succeeded in making a bust of his younger brother which pleasantly surprised the elders in the family. In 1891 young Ganpat decided to join the painting classes at the Sir J J School of Art, encouraged by his father and elder brother Dwarkanath Mhatre, who himself went on to become a celebrated painter. Painting class students were also sent to the stone carving class, started under Sir Lockwood Kipling, to gain experience of sculptural principles.

Eminent painter Rao Bahadur M V Dhurandhar (1867-1944) in his book *Kalamandiratil ekechalis varshe*, recalls the young Ganpat as being a good

painter and praised his water colour and still life drawings. Ganpat would frequently absent himself from class for days on end much to the annoyance of the principal. At the age of 16 years he presented to the world, a life size figure of a young Maharashtrian girl draped in a traditional nine yard sari on her way to worship at the mandir, in Plaster of Paris, titled "To the Temple". He strategically placed his labour of love at the entrance to the hall being the daily pathway of Principal Greenwood. Far from rebuking him for his frequent absences, an ecstatic Greenwood exclaimed: "How could you produce such a sculpture?" This masterpiece was purchased for Rs1,200 and adorns the entrance of the Sir J J School of Arts to this day. In 1896, Ganpat K Mhatre was awarded the Victoria Medal for Sculpture and Mayo Medal for excellence in painting.

"Another chief feature of the exhibition is no more nor less a surprisingly good piece of sculpture by a young Hindu, G K Mhatre. If any one doubts whether a prophet can come out of Nazareth, let him go and see this figure of a Hindu girl going to the temple ... it is a work of genius." - *The Times of India*, 13th February 1896.

Sir George Birdwood, volatile British art critic, said, " 'To the Temple', is already a provisional masterpiece, and an unequivocal pledge of the



'To the Temple' c 1896

complete future mastery in the art to which Mr Mhatre is to devote himself. I, indeed, doubt if any living English sculptor could produce a work in which the refining and elevating inspirations of the artist, and the sleights of its technical dexterities, would give so unaffected an expression of truth to nature as we find in young Mhatre's so to say 'Diploma piece' ". - Bombay Gazette, 26th November, 1896.

Eminent painter Raja Ravi Varma declared it to be "The most beautiful production of the kind I have ever seen by a native". Ravindranath Tagore appreciated the art of the artist and wrote two articles in the Bengali monthlies, Bharati and Pradeep.

"To the Temple" was displayed in the annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society in 1896, and was awarded the silver medal. It was awarded the gold medal in 1902-03, in the Delhi Durbar Exhibition. Thus, Ganpat Mhatre, who had enrolled as a painter emerged as the first academic sculptor. It may seem curious in country like India, where sculpture was regarded as a highly developed art form since ancient times had produced no salon sculptor until Mhatre. British art teachers did not consider Hindu sculpture as high art in the classical sense and they were caught totally unprepared in Mhatre's triumph which seem to vindicate the Indian ability of absorbing Graeco-Roman precepts so effortlessly. Bombay had always been the commercial capital of British India. Well-heeled patrons had always encouraged artistes by commissioning marble or bronze busts and life size statues. Usually major art works were only given to well established senior European artists. With Ganpatrao's growing fame, this perspective soon changed. Mhatre outgrew the limited scope of sculpture as was then taught at the school of art, left his job of teacher and started working as a professional sculptor.

Mhatre's brilliant "Saraswati" was awarded honourable mention, diploma and a bronze medal at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1900. Mhatre's beautiful "Parvati as Shabari" (Delhi Durbar Exhibition, 1903) revealed his technical mastery of neo-classical proportions and won several medals

as well. Mhatre became much sought after for executing marble busts and equestrian statues. He was the first Indian to have been commissioned to execute Queen Victoria's bust for the Kolhapur State and for the full size seated statue for the memorial at Ahmedabad. He also executed numerous busts and a life-sized one of King George V which was installed at Apollo Bunder facing the Gateway of India.

Noteworthy marble works included statues of Seth V Madhavdas (1902), Sheth Gokuldas Tejpal (1911), Rao-Saheb V N Mandalik, Justice M G Ranade (1913) and G K Gokhale (1921). Justice Ranade had a dislike for the camera. Mhatre acquired the only photograph available to sculpt this statue – even the defect in the right eye is clearly captured. Mhatre's clientele included several influential Parsis – Dr Tehmulji Nariman (1899), Nusserwanji J Wadia (1900), H J Rustomji (1901), Lady Jerbai Masina (1941), Lady Pirojbai Broacha, Sir Shapoorji Broacha, Alpawala (1940-1), Mr Mody, Sir Pherozechah Mehta (1917, 1924), Sir Sorabji Pochkhanawala (1935) and Sir Cowasji Jehangir (1936). Mhatre's famous



Queen Victoria, Ahmedabad



'Saraswati' c 1900



'Parvati as Shabaree'
c 1902

works - "After the Bath", "Art of the needle work" and "Bairagi" were displayed in exhibitions all over India.

The statue of H H Chamarajendra Wodeyar of Mysore State originally done by William Colton, became controversial because it bore no resemblance to the face of the Maharaja. Ganpatrao Mhatre, arguably the most prominent Indian sculptor of that era was commissioned by the royal family to make the necessary corrections by sculpting a new head. The entire area where the statue had been installed, was walled off for several weeks. The head of original statue was replaced clandestinely since it was considered an unlucky omen to behead a monarch albeit in marble, with the joint line cleverly concealed by the strategic placement of a necklace.

H H of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar, patronized Mhatre by extending multiple orders and assisted him to buy land for setting up his studio at Sandhurst bridge, Bombay. Ganpatrao Mhatre was treated as a palace guest whenever he visited Mysore. Many princely states including Panna, Rewa, Kolhapur, Ratlam, Porbunder, Jodhpur, Alwar and Gwalior approached him for executing marble or bronze works. Gwalior state ordered eight statues including two of H H Mahadji Shinde. Ganpatrao Mhatre's equestrian statues of Prince Shivaji, Kolhapur (first ever-bronze statue made by an Indian); Chhatrapati Shivaji, Baroda; Maharaja of Rewa, Maharaja Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand are all masterpieces.

Mhatre was awarded title of "Rao Bahadur" in 1929 and was nominated "Justice of Peace". Rao Bahadur Mhatre later shifted his studio from Girgaum chowpatty to Vile-Parle.

In 1945, the Indian Zoroastrian community commissioned a bronze statue of the poet Firdaws (weighing 2.5 tons and in a seated position) for the Iran League. This statue was paraded around Parsi inhabited

areas in Bombay before shipping it to Iran where it was unveiled by HRH Reza Shah. Today, it sits at the entrance to Tehran University.

Ganpatrao, in his youth was unable to go abroad to study the finer nuances in sculpture because of severe economic constraints. He sent his eldest son Shamrao, who later on also excelled in sculpture to France. Shamrao is best known for his statue "Dancer", which won the Bombay Art Society Gold Medal in 1926. "Bhima" and "To the Well" were the other two well-known masterpieces made by him.

G.K Mhatre was founder member, life time Patron and President (1918-1929) of the Art Society of India. He was also a visiting faculty at J J School of Art. Under his tutelage were students such as Talim, Karmarkar, and the Goregaonkar brothers, each of whom became eminent sculptors.

Ganpatrao Mhatre bid adieu to this world on 30th April, 1947. His contribution in the field of sculptural art in India (7 equestrian, 62 life size and 260 busts) will keep on inspiring future generations of artists. ■■■■

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Prince Shivaji



Dr Tehmulji Nariman [1899] at Parsee lying in Hospital, Mumbai



Nusserwanji Wadia [1900] at Parsee lying in Hospital, Mumbai



H J Rustomji [1901] in the garden of late Ardeshir Cowasjee, Karachi. Photo credit Toxy Cowasjee



Lady Pirojbai Broacha : Masina Hospital, Byculla, Mumbai



Sir Cowasjee Jehangir [1936] at Bank of India, main Mumbai branch, Fort

Dr Pathare informs the editor: "The biography on my great grandfather RB Ganpatrao Mhatre will take at least 9-12 months to complete. I have asked Mr Vithal Shanbhag, MA, ex-head of the Dept of Sculpture, Sir J J School of Art, Mumbai to author the book (in Marathi language). Sandeep Dahisarkar, BA is currently pursuing MA in Ancient Indian Culture and Archeology at St Xavires College, Mumbai. We (Sandeep and myself) are in the process of compiling the data and collecting photos from all over India. I myself have made numerous trips to the various cities and states to photograph his works. Additionally, I have taken on myself the task of translating and editing the book into English for simultaneous printing and release."

Dr Pathare requests through Hamazor, if individuals / institutions who do have sculptures executed by his great grandfather to approach him so that these works may also be documented. He knows at least 25 prominent Parsis have been sculpted and is midway in compiling a list of 260 busts and 60 life size statues with photographic evidence. Contact: HEMANT PATHARE <hpathare@yahoo.com>



Rao Bahadur Ganpatrao K Mhatre c1930

Credit for all images :
Dr Pathare. Under copyright

Dicky Rutnagur, the Zubin Mehta of cricket broadcasting

kersi meher-homji reminisces on a fellow cricket scribe and friend

As a student in 1950s and 60s, I remember following Test cricket on All India Radio through the eyes of Test great Vijay Merchant, statistician Anandji Dossa and the dulcet-voiced commentator Dicky Rutnagur.

So it was a thrill meeting Rutnagur in person several times at the Sydney Cricket Ground press box in 1970s when I migrated to Australia and he came all the way from London to cover Test matches down under. To witness two Parsis typing away their columns in a Sydney press box was a unique event. Especially when joined by Test cricketer Polly Umrigar, the manager of the 1977-78 Indian cricket team.

It was Umrigar who introduced us during that tour. Soon we became friends and Dicky visited our home in Sydney several times. I enjoyed his free and no-holds-barred views on cricket and cricketers. But he saw to it that my wife Villie, not a cricket-lover, was not left out as he regaled us with funny stories involving cricketers. He also enjoyed Villie's dhansaak. A close friend of Farokh Engineer and Rusi Surti, he narrated amusing anecdotes at our Sydney home.

Only once he declined invitation to our place as he had to report a one-day international between Australia and New Zealand at Melbourne in January 1981. That was the infamous match when Australia's captain Greg Chappell had ordered his brother Trevor to bowl an underarm delivery. It produced a huge controversy which is still hotly debated. *"Just as well I attended this spicy hot match, else I would have been in big trouble with my editor"*, he told me with a wink the following week.

When I asked him about his most memorable moments in fifty years as a journalist, he said, *"Do you know that I am the only person to have watched both of two high flying cricketing feats? I was present when the great Garry Sobers of West Indies hit six sixes in an over from Malcolm Nash in a county championship match in Swansea in 1968. Sixteen years later I saw India's*

tall Ravi Shastri hit six sixes in an over for Bombay against Baroda in a Ranji Trophy match in Bombay. The bowler was left-armed Tilak Raj."

When we took Dicky to Bondi in Sydney which has the world famous Bondi Beach, we discussed the problems surrounding Indian cricket. He had the highest opinion of Sunil Gavaskar but when I asked as to who was the better opening batsman, Vijay Merchant or Gavaskar, he replied *"Merchant"*.

Born in Bandra on February 26, 1931, Dicky Jamshed Rutnagur was educated at St Xavier's College, Bombay. Journalism was in his blood as he started working in the family business which published *The Indian Textile Journal*. Soon he began his illustrious freelancing career, writing for *The Bharat* and then for the high-circulation *Hindustan Times* from 1958 to 1966. He also contributed richly to *The Hindu* and *Sport and Pastime*.

Subsequently he became a freelance writer based in England. He covered cricket, squash and badminton for *The Daily Telegraph* from 1966 to 2005.

It may not be a world record but Rutnagur covered over 300 cricket Tests in a career that spanned five decades. To quote Rusi Sorabji, *"Dicky and Bobby (AFST) Talyarkhan*

were the last of two great Zarathusti cricket commentators of the last century.”

Dicky co-edited *Indian Cricket-Field Annual* with Anandji Dossa from 1957 to 1966 before migrating to England. He also authored two books *Test Commentary (India v England 1976 -77)* and *Khans Unlimited*, the history of squash in Pakistan in 1997.

At times he wrote for two national newspapers in UK at the same time, using the pen-name Dileep Rao when covering matches for *The Guardian* and his own name when reporting for *The Daily Telegraph*. He first wrote for *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, the “bible of cricket” in 1963 and his most recent article appeared in the 2007 edition.

All through the bribery corruptions and match-fixing controversies which has plagued cricket in the last few decades, Rutnagur reported events as they occurred in his own inimitable and balanced style with a touch of Parsi humour. He was not afraid to investigate match-fixing allegations during Pakistan’s series in India in 1979-80, even when threatened by bookmakers.

Genial Rutnagur was one of the finest Air India Radio commentators and sports journalists. He was honoured with a “Lifetime Achievement Award” by the Indian Journalists Association in 2010 for his rich contributions.

His second marriage to Dilshad Karanjia, a journalist and programme producer of note, sadly ended in divorce.

In later life he suffered from cancer but went on writing regardless. He passed away in London on June 20, aged 82.

At his memorial service held in London on July 14, the mourners were led by his son Richard, with many cricket correspondents present. It was fitting that it was held during an Ashes Test between England and Australia. Richard Rutnagur was an Oxford Blue and represented his University in 17

first-class matches as a medium-pace bowler and a useful lower-order batsman. This was a matter of great pride for dad Dicky.



After the funeral, there was a gathering of the Rutnagur family and friends in the Writing Room at Lord’s, a ground he loved above all others.

Rutnagur’s first wife, Doris Cassim, a Trinidadian air hostess with British West Indian Airways, whom he met during India’s tour of the West Indies in 1962, was present at the Memorial Service. So was his middle sister, Arnavaz Dubash, who had flown in from Mumbai. Youngest sister Shernaz Sukheshwala could not get a visa in time.

Not many know that Rutnagur was fond of classical music. As he told Amit Roy, “I would say that cricket has been almost – almost – all consuming. But I am very fond of classical music and jazz. Mozart and Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, and latterly in the last few weeks I have been listening to a lot of Beethoven.”

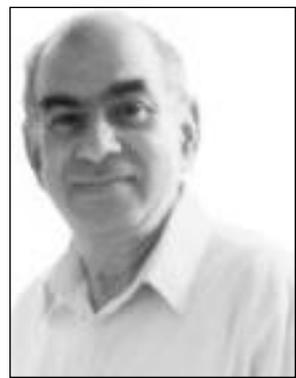
The veteran sports writer Raju Bharatan described Rutnagur as the Zubin Mehta of cricket writing.

Writer, commentator and a caring jovial personality, Rutnagur is survived by his sisters Arnavaz Dubash and Shernaz Sukheshwala and son Richard.

Well played, Dicky.



Kersi Meher-Homji is a retired research Virologist having worked for his post-graduate degree on poliomyelitis in India and on hepatitis and AIDS viruses in Sydney. He has published many research papers on Virology in India, Australia and the USA. He is also a prolific cricket author having published 14 cricket books in Australia including The Waugh Twins, Nervous Nineties, Six Appeal and his latest Cricket Conflicts and Controversies. He writes sports and humour pieces for Sydney Morning Herald, Inside Cricket, Indian Down Under, Parsiana and Mid-Day.



Nelson Mandela -

18 July 1918, Mvezo – 5 December 2013, Houghton Estate, South Africa

the editor writes -

When such a monumental human being like Nelson Mandela leaves this earth of ours for his heavenly abode, something should be written in the Hamazor even though this publication is centered on Zoroastrians or their faith.

We have been reading the tributes which poured in and the events leading to Mr Mandela's resting place. I wanted to give our readers a glimpse of this one in a million human being, a person South Africa and the world was fortunate to have.

Knowing fully well that our Ambassador Jamsheed Marker must have met Mr Mandela at some stage during his illustrious career, I asked if he would share his experience.

In his book East Timor, which is a memoir of the negotiations for independence, he writes about Mandela, and I quote:

"When President Nelson Mandela visited Indonesia in July 1997, the main purpose of his visit, was essentially a goodwill gesture of thanks to Suharto and the Indonesian Government for the substantial support that the latter had rendered to the ANC during its long struggle against apartheid. But obviously Mandela's concern over the East Timor issue was not going to be suppressed. ... Mandela not only called for the release of Xanana Gusmao, but insisted on meeting with the latter – and got his way.

"There is a report that Suharto at first refused Mandela's request to meet Xanana with the question, 'Why do you want to meet him? He is only a common criminal' when Mandela responded by saying 'that is exactly what they said about me for 25 years,' Suharto promptly and magnanimously responded by arranging for Xanana to be brought from prison to the State Guest House for an intimate dinner with Mandela.

"I cannot vouch for the veracity of this story ... the fact remains that Xanana did have a most useful discussion with Mandela in Jakarta.

"President Mandela received us in his office in Pretoria on August 26, 1997, first in a tete-a-tete with me, followed by a fuller meeting when we were joined by Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, Abdul Minty and Tamrat Samuel. Later Tamrat Samuel said to me that meeting Nelson Mandela in person was probably the most moving and emotional moment in his life. As for me, I can only say that I was not too far behind Tamrat in his sentiments, and that on meeting Mandela one immediately realises that everything that has been said about him is true. Courteous, soft-spoken, gentle, and with a quiet sense of humour, he radiated dignity in his person and his bearing. His eyes are deep set, kind, and thoughtful and expressed in a deep glow the humane sensitivity that seems to emanate from his personality."

In November, Jamsheed returned to South Africa when he joined Mandela for a press conference, to find a peaceful solution to the problem in East Timor.

"The breaking news that day was F W de Klerk's resignation from the leadership of his party, and the press corps was obviously keen to have Mandela's reaction to the announcement. The President said that in the first place this was a matter between the party and the leader. 'But having said that' Mandela added, he personally felt that de Klerk had made a mistake, 'as we all do from time to time. Be



Jamsheed K A Marker is a veteran Pakistani diplomat. Reportedly, he is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as having been ambassador to more countries than any other person. He has served as United Nations Under-secretary General, as a special advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and won praise for his role in bringing about the resolution of the East Timor conflict and the independence of that nation. He speaks English, Urdu, Gujarati, French, German, and Russian and has written three books.

Ambassador Marker has represented Pakistan in the United Nations, the former Soviet Union, Canada, East Germany, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, and other countries. He became Ambassador to the United States in 1986 and helped negotiate the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

that as it may,' he continued with quiet emphasis, 'let none of us ever forget the vital contribution that Mr de Klerk has made toward the creation of new South Africa.' This generous, thoughtful tribute, spontaneously conveyed in Mandela's customary dignity, put an end to further questions."

Ambassador Marker shares with us a poignant part of his conversation with President Mandela which sums up this great human being.

"Mr President, you must have been asked this question many times before. When you were released from prison, did you not feel a sense of intense bitterness towards those who had deprived you of so many years of your life?". Mandela's response was, 'as I walked out of Roben Island I did have the bitterest feelings and anger. But then I turned around and looked at the gates of the prison and said to myself that I may be out of jail, but as long as I have these feelings of anger I shall always be their prisoner. I need to shake off this anger if I want to be really free'".

Nelson Mandela showed how one man could change the world. As one says, - the rest is history. ■■■



Mandela and F W Klerk receiving their Nobel Peace Prize. courtesy Getty images



Pretoria: South African President Nelson Mandela (L) shakes hands with Jamsheed Marker, the UN special envoy for East Timor 26 August [1997] after their meeting where president Mandela offered to host talks in this country to help solve political problems of the troubled territory of East Timor. AFP photo

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

The Autobiography of
NELSON MANDELA

*To Mr Marker,
Best wishes to a highly
capable & experienced
Diplomat*
M. Mandela
26.8.97

Little, Brown and Company
Boston New York Toronto London

Many of us are aware of Dr Frene Ginwalla, South Africa's journalist, politician and the first Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa during the years 1994 – 2004. She has played an historical role in the ANC and though 'retired' she serves in a number of organisations one of them being Trustee of Nelson Mandela Foundation. It would have been fitting on this occasion to share her thoughts with our readers, but so far have been unsuccessful in the past. Hopefully one day Hamazor will be able to share this Lady's story whom we are proud to call a Zoroastrian. - Ed

Jamsheed recalls this quip from Mandela when he was requested to sign it. —“You read such rubbish? I never do”.

The 3D Mandela Memorial



Photograph taken from the side to show the full width of the sculpture



Close up of the laser-cut steel plates



Sculpture of Nelson Mandela



“To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrest of Nelson Mandela, South Africa unveiled this monument in August 2012 on a highway near Howick, some 60 miles south of Durban. It marks the site where Mandela, traveling under the pseudonym David Motsamayi, was stopped and arrested on August 6, 1962. He spent the next 27 years in prison before being released in 1990, and became South Africa’s first democratically elected president four years later.

Designed by Marco Cianfanelli, the sculpture is composed of 50 steel rods rising over 30 feet into the air from a cement base. To a passerby, it resembles an array of thorny prison bars, before showing, at the proper angle, the contours of Mandela’s face, and then sliding back into abstraction. It’s not urban, but it’s a great example of public art that uses perspective and place to its advantage.” – Henry Grabar

photo credit, Marco Cianfanelli.

An optical illusion has been made by the sculptor

History in the making

by farida master

As glowing tributes to the iconic hero of all nations, Nelson Mandela continue to flow in from every corner of the globe, word has it that *apri* Zerbanoo Gifford, human rights campaigner and founder of the ASHA Centre in the Royal Forest of Dean, England was Mandela's pin-up girl.

The reason behind the light hearted comment is the recent speech by former Labour leader of the British Parliament Lord Neil Kinnock who was widely quoted in several newspapers saying how humbled he was when he met Mandela in Stockholm, Sweden.

"I have spent years looking at your face. I had kept photographs of all my supporters around the world on my wall cells," said Nelson Mandela to him.

Neil Kinnock together with Zerbanoo Gifford, the Calcutta born, first British-Indian woman to stand for British politics had addressed a massive rally outside the stone edifice of South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, asking for the release of Nelson Mandela. *"We were in one of the photos that had given him hope while he was in Robben Island,"* said Neil Kinnock of the extraordinary moment. One of the key moments in Zerbanoo's life was speaking alongside Neil Kinnock and Oliver Tambo in the June 1985 to an audience of over 25,000 people in Trafalgar Square calling for full mandatory sanctions against apartheid South Africa and the release of Mandela.

Zerbanoo was honoured to present a petition with Bishop Trevor Huddleston, who spearheaded the churches' fight against apartheid in South Africa. The petition was signed by over hundreds of thousands of people in Britain calling on Mrs Thatcher and her government to use their power to ensure the end of the racist apartheid regime.

Distinctly remembering the moment that made history, Zerbanoo recalls, *"I still remember walking down 10 Downing Street, as a young mother then, feeling that the British people knew that apartheid was wicked and could not be sustained. Ordinary, descent people were using their buying power to boycott goods from South Africa, closing their accounts with banks trading in SA and even students were keeping a 24 hour vigil outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square until the release of Mandela."*

The ASHA Centre has been working closely with the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre in Johannesburg. Together, they have created an exchange programme, through which young black and coloured youths from the townships of Johannesburg have visited ASHA and devised theatre productions which have toured the UK as well as being performed in South Africa. One of these, on the history of their nation, was performed specially for Mandela at his home. It was a known fact that Mandela never invited people into his sitting room unless he was very pleased. The young ASHA actors were ushered in his private room where they were allowed to have a photograph taken.

Makhomo Tsepa, from the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre, currently on a theatre internship at the ASHA Centre pays homage to one of the most influential and courageous icons of our times saying, *"Without Mandela and his colleagues who fought for my rights, I wouldn't have this opportunity to be on a theatre internship in Britain."*

South Africa's greatest statesman of all times, Nelson Mandela had always urged that the children are our future in whom we should inculcate a passion for peace and progress. The ASHA Centre in Britain is undoubtedly living the political rock star's message as the youth converge on the navel of the Royal Forest of Dean to become better leaders empowered to change the world. It's a beacon of hope not only for the youth in Britain, India and South Africa but the world over. A legacy Nelson Mandela would be proud of. ■■■■



Farida Master has been the editor of several publications in India which include 'Stardust', 'Society Fashion', 'Citadel', which are magazines, and the 8-page lifestyle supplement of 'Pune Times Of India'. She has also authored, 'The Making Of A Legend', a biography of Dr K B Grant. In Auckland, Farida has been the Features Editor of 'The Aucklander' a magazine. Currently she freelances with a host of publications in New Zealand and India.

Please turn to p99 to see image of actors with Mandela.

The Everlasting Flame at SOAS, London

11 October - 14 December 2013



The Invitation

The Inauguration

by
sammy
bhiwandiwalla

The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination was the first exhibition of its kind to provide a visual narrative of the history of Zoroastrianism, its rich cultural heritage and the influence it has had on the major world religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The exhibition held at SOAS, University of London, took you on a journey from the earliest days of the religion to its emergence as the foremost religion of the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian empires of imperial Iran.

A preview of the exhibition was launched on 10th October 2013 in the presence of an invited group of Zoroastrians from home and abroad, major sponsors, donors and contributors. Also present were academics, lecturers and members of the team from SOAS, PARZOR and ZTFE responsible for the collaboration and preparation of the exhibition and concurrent lectures to be held over the following two days.

The event commenced with Patron Zubin Mehta conveying by video recording a message of joy and honour at being invited to participate in an important event such as this in London and the need for Parsees to learn more about their religion.

The first speaker Professor Paul Webley, Director of SOAS, stated that SOAS was very proud indeed both of the distinguished researchers and teachers of Zoroastrianism who have been members of the school in the past and of its continuing commitment to the study of Zoroastrianism. SOAS held an endowed chair in Zoroastrianism and a lectureship in Zoroastrianism, which represented a wonderful pool of expertise.



The Champagne Reception

They were also very grateful for the generous support received from the Zoroastrian community to continue this work. So it was a real pleasure that they were hosting an exhibition on the history of Zoroastrianism - there was no better location for this and he had looked forward greatly to the opening of the exhibition.



Professor Paul Webley speaking, Homa Zarhosty & Dorab Mistry

Professor Webley praised the high level of exhibits mounted for the exhibition some of which were hauntingly beautiful. A fascinating and diverse collection of artefacts, texts, paintings and textiles are on display alongside spectacular installations that include a walk-in fire temple and a ten-metre glass etching based on the cast of the western staircase from the palace of Darius at Persepolis in the British Museum.

In his opinion the subsequent two day conference organised by the centre for Iranian studies at SOAS and the participation of scholars and speakers from various parts of the world would enhance the culmination of the whole event.



Clockwise: Dr Sarah Stewart, Malcolm Deboo and Zarir Cama

The next speaker was Dr Sarah Stewart a lecturer in Zoroastrianism in the Department of the Study of Religions at SOAS, who headed the Curatorial team. She praised the efforts of her co-curators from London and India for their significant contribution in providing many of the artefacts on display and making a landmark exhibition on Zoroastrian religion, history and culture possible.



Subsequent speakers Malcolm Deboo and Zarir Cama heaped praise on Dr Sarah Stewart for her stalwart effort in bringing this exhibition to fruition. It was her brainchild for many years but through dedication and hard work it had become a reality.



Zarir Cama laid great emphasis during his speech on renewing and strengthening our ties with Iran. Our presence on this celebration of Zoroastrianism was more to do with our ancient roots than anything else and we should never forget that.

A befitting end to the evening was the presentation of the publication "THE EVERLASTING FLAME Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination" to Homa Zartoshty the daughter of Mobed Mehraban J Zartoshty. A richly illustrated and compiled record of Zoroastrian religion, history and culture, the book was dedicated to the memory of Mobed Faridoon B Zartoshty and Mobed Mehraban J Zartoshty.



Homa Zartoshty



L to R: Lord Karan Bilimoria, Mr Malcolm Deboo, Mrs Homa Zartoshty, Professor Paul Webley, Dr Sarah Stewart, Mr Zarir Cama, Mr Dorab Mistry

Courtesy of the
*Everlasting Flame:
Zoroastrianism in
History and
Imagination*
exhibition, SOAS
2013.

Photos shared by
John Hollingworth



Sammy Bhiwandiwalla together with his wife Ursula started their own company in 1970 supporting the foundry and industrial model making industry. After 35 years in business they decided to call it a day and devote some time to a rapidly expanding second generation.

Ursula and Sammy have always taken an active interest in community matters in the UK and were greatly influenced by the actions and sincere beliefs of individuals such as Noshirwan Cowasjee, Shirinbanoo Kutar, Shahpur Captain and many others, that in a changing world it was necessary to create a more balanced and equitable community within the UK. He joined the WZO Board in 1988 and since then has served in various capacities including Chairman of WZO.

Zarhoshti Identity through Recourse to the Past

SOAS Conference on 11 & 12 October 2013

by soonu engineer

Zarhoshties in the UK have regularly organised conferences and symposia on the Gathas and other religious and historical topics, over the past 40 years at least. An annual conference is organised, for example, by the WZO in London and Birmingham, at which scholars of international repute are invited to speak on topics related to specific themes. Usually, around 150 people attend, most of them *hamdeens*.

So it was a surprise to be told that 'Looking Back: Zoroastrian Identity Formation through Recourse to the Past', was the first such conference. Perhaps what was meant was that it was the first time a British academic institution, in this case the Centre for Iranian Studies at SOAS, had held an event entirely devoted to a Zoroastrian theme. Even this may not, in fact, be entirely accurate.

It was organised on a grand scale though, at great expense, over two days, "a vast banquet with 18 courses", as one of its conveners, Professor Alan Williams (Manchester University), put it. Fifteen Scholars from all over the western world and three from India were invited to deliver papers on one of the six themes related to the examination of 'the patterns of identity formation in ancient, medieval and recent periods, looking at how texts, traditions, icons, rituals and symbols have been used to form Zoroastrian identities.' Some 225 people attended on each of the days. Sadly, there were hardly half a dozen young Zarhoshtis amongst them.

DAY ONE

The conference was promoted amongst both academics and non-academics, so a greater effort to set the context would have been appreciated by those (your reporter included) who were not familiar with Iranian Studies or a particular specialism. It was hard going.

Even some of the academics admitted to me that they were lost at times, because the area covered was so vast. So it was reassuring when a paper on 'Uranology and Astrology in the History of Zoroastrianism', by Antonio Panaino (University of Bologna), occasioned a couple of learned comments and even a suggestion on where the professor could look for helpful material. I took away with me a miniscule but enchanting nugget: our ancestors, in the very distant past, saw the fixed stars as 'astral fighters', upholding virtue in the cosmic order against the witchery of falling stars.



Antonio Panaino
[Hamazor]

The Significance of Scripture for Tradition

Happily, the conference began with a very accessible presentation by Almut Hintze, Zartoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism at SOAS and one of the conference conveners, entitled, 'A Zoroastrian Vision'. She explained that the Vision or *Daena* is what one sees in the mind's eye. Our *deen*, or religion, is in fact the Zarhoshti Vision of the Good.



Almut Hintze [Hamazor]

Incidentally, *Mazda Yasni* – worship dedicated to Mazda – was how the religion was known through the ages, until the 19thc when western scholars dubbed it 'Zoroastrianism' and the Parsis meekly imitated! (This 'ism' glares reproachfully out of the 'Everlasting Flame' exhibition posters dotted all over the Underground - see p65)

In the *Avesta*, the soul encounters its *Daena* upon death. The *daena* of the truthful soul appears as a beautiful majestic maiden, walking on perfumed ground and is revealed to be nothing but the embodiment of our actions; while the *daena* of the deceitful soul "scuttles about nervously", on cold and stinking soil, speaking in a corrupted form of verse which is not in the usual *gathic* meter.

Each man and woman must discern rightly what choices they make in life. Almut Hintze explained that, according to ancient texts, the criteria for good *mazdayasni* behaviour were the correct recitation of the Avesta and the performance of other rituals and outward observations such as the *kasti*. This fell far short of the expectations of Zarthushties in the audience, who might have expected the ethics and values expressed in the *gathas* to be of major significance. Since modern Zarthoshtis have little time for rituals and other such observances, where would that leave them? “This is not the religion that I recognise”, protested one dismayed listener at the end of the morning’s session.



Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal
photo credit: Dolly Dastoor

Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal of Mumbai described, through a case study of the Bhagaria priests of Navsari, the various controversies that surrounded ritual practice and recourse to the authority of different texts. Should one recite the Avestan alphabet, deemed sacred, after or before the *din-no-kalmo*? The Bhagarias favoured the former; not so, the Sanjana *panthak* of Udvada. Each had a different edition of the *Khordeh Avesta* (KA) to back their case. Should one bow to the sun during *Khorshed* and *Meher Nyaesh*? This practice began in the 9th AD to show veneration, and in 1478, Iranian priests opined whether a bow or full prostration was required. While the 1551 KA advised some form of bowing, the *Kadimi* KA in the 19th c and a later *Shahenshahi Avesta* excluded it.

There was further controversy when priests in Iran simplified the barsam ritual. And in the 19th c, ritual innovation was the means by which Mumbai priests made a bid for independence from the authority exerted by the *panthaks* of Navsari. Some rituals were entirely dropped, such as the practice of *Atash Zohr*, when a sheep or goat was sacrificed and its fat offered to the *atash*. In 1823, the Mumbai Parsi Panchayat suppressed this practice via *fatwas* issued by the dastoor of Mumbai. Thus ritual practices have changed, been adapted or dropped entirely.



Alberto Cantera
photo credit: Parinaz Gandhi / Jehangir Patel

A complex account of the antiquity and variety of the *Yasna* ritual, involving animal sacrifice and the consumption of the *Homa*, was the

scholarly contribution of Alberto Cantera (University of Salamanca).

Tradition & Innovation

How did Zarthoshtis preserve their histories? Alexander’s vandalism had been “devastating” in this respect and the next “calamity” was the Arab invasion. Touraj Daryaee (University of California) traced the many routes for the retrieval and preservation of the true meaning of the *Behdeen*, or Good Religion. The Sasanian Kings felt the need to construct their geneology to connect with Iran’s ancient rulers. They therefore modelled themselves on Avestan kings and began the process of using religious and mythical traditions to establish their own legitimacy. In 544CE an ecclesiastical council was called to preserve the *Avesta*. A mythical history of Iran, the *Khudainamag*, was also compiled. But later, Arab rule meant that “Islamic historians were appropriating the history of the vanquished” and ancient Iranian epics were being absorbed into Islamic literature as well as into Firdausi’s Persian epic, the *Shahname*. Iranians struggled, within the Islamic milieu, to remember and record their traditions.



Touraj Daryaee

At this stage in the proceedings, a reflection on the methodology for the study of Zoroastrian themes was presented by Yuhan Vevaina of Stanford University. Scholars, he said, “don’t do living religion – just ancient texts”. Modern Zarthushties were “told” what and whether their practices conformed to an “authentic” past by scholars who were entirely outside their tradition and who based their views on different interpretations of the texts. Yuhan examined the spectrum where there is at one extreme, the complete outsider or observer of the tradition and at the other, a



Yuhan Vevaina

complete participant of the faith. Yuhan suggested that, for a 21st century approach to Zoroastrian studies, “the chasm between the two, needed bridging by collaborative and blended” work.

Symbols & Icons

There followed a whole afternoon on Zarthoshti symbols, icons and imagery in art and architecture through the millennia. Frantz Grenet (College de France, Paris) served up a feast of symbolism in a 7th century Bactrian silver plate! Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis, of the British Museum, described some of the symbolism associated with the Zoroastrian faith, including the *Farohar*, and demonstrated how the iconography of sculptures, reliefs, coins and other small objects from Parthian and Sasanian times expressed the desire of the Kings to assert their legitimacy through association with Zarathushtrian deities and rituals. The Sasanian kings are often shown receiving a symbol of kingship and the divine glory from the *yazatas*, *Anahita* and *Mithra*. “Royal Sasanian art and Zoroastrian iconography were inseparable,” said Vesta, “and just because the Parthians used the Greek language for their official inscriptions, and a Greek-style iconography, it does not mean they were not Zoroastrian.”

This theme was continued by James Russell (Harvard University). He pointed out that, for *Mazdayasnis*, Zarathushtra is neither a divine being nor immortal. Hence, before Christians dubbed *Mazdayasnis* as ‘Zoroastrians’, depictions of the image of Zarathushtra were rare or non-existent. He identified a figure of *Mithra*, the law giver, holding a staff and scroll, from 3rd century AD Dura Europos (in modern Syria), and explained why this may be a possible model for the modern representation.

The first day was rounded off by a keynote speech from Philip Kreyenbroek (University of Gottingen). The paper examined Zoroastrian formulations of an ideal past, how these changed in different periods and their influence on other major religions in the region. No doubt it will find its way, in a shorter version, onto the pages of the Hamazor.

DAY TWO

The second day of the conference moved to the Islamic period, relationships between the Arabs and Zoroastrians, and from there, on to the modern period and the diaspora.

Cross fertilisation of Ideas



Frantz Grenet



Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis



James Russell



Philip Kreyenbroek

The traditional narrative of the post-Islamic period depicts Zoroastrians as sullen rejectionists of the emerging order, “a moribund society” wallowing in the “decadence of the present and the glories of the past”. As if, says Albert de Jong (University of Leiden), they were not active participants in the evolution of the new culture. “The history of Zoroastrians was written as a history of Zoroastrian texts”, from which the Zoroastrians themselves were expunged. Yet it was in Islamic Baghdad that the *Denkard*, a massive compilation of Zoroastrian beliefs and practices, was put together under the aegis of Zoroastrian scholars. So there must have been a lively Zoroastrian community in Baghdad during the Abbasid period and it needs to be unearthed and brought into the light of day.

This inspired call, to breathe life into the forgotten ghosts of the past, was followed by Jamsheed Choksy’s (Indiana University) lyrical invocation of Zarthoshti concepts of *doosti*/friendship and *ishq*/love, found in Old and Middle Iranian texts, which provided, he said, a fertile source for the Medieval classical prose and poetry of Muslim Iranians.



Albert de Jong
photo credit: Parinaz Gandhi / Jehangir Patel



Jamsheed Choksy
[Hamazor]



Ashk Dahlen
photo credit: Parinaz Gandhi / Jehangir Patel

Similarly, Zoroastrian myths, traditions and writings, as well as the *Gathas*, were drawn on by the Persian poet, Firdausi, when composing his *Shanameh*, the Book of Kings. Ashk Dahlen (Uppsala University) examined the sources for Firdausi's depiction of Zarathushtra, his conversion of King Goshtasp and the founding of the first Zarthoshti community. Legends and stories had been transmitted orally till Sasanian times, when they were compiled and written down by scholar priests. While Arab writers of the 9th and 10th centuries and Persian scholars such as the poet, Tabari, "portray Zoroastrianism as a false religion based on superstition", Firdausi, who lacked royal patronage, gave a very different account: he presented Zarathushtra as a majestic visionary, and cautioned, "Do not mistake them as worshippers of fire, but they worship God."

Minority Status



Dan Sheffield [Hamazor]

Travel a few centuries forwards and you have a Persian mystic, Azar Kayvan (1533-1618), making a valiant attempt at synchronising the beliefs of Zoroastrians and Sufis, and presenting himself in India as the true interpreter of the Zoroastrian religion. Dan Sheffield (Princeton University) described this millennial and syncretic movement as an example of the shifting sands of religion and culture whilst the Safavids established themselves in Iran.



Jenny Rose

The focus of the conference then turned to the diaspora. Jenny Rose (Claremont University) gave a fascinating account of the early links that Parsi businessmen, particularly the Wadias, forged with the New World in the 18thc, acting as brokers for American trading companies who preferred doing business with Parsis rather than with British agents. Various American travellers took an interest in the Zoroastrian religion. In 1771, Benjamin Franklin, one of the American Founding Fathers, sent a copy of a book on the Zoroastrian religion to a library in Rhode Island. American missionaries in Mumbai saw Parsis as a possible target for conversion and there were Parsi/Anglican debates in the early 19thc. There were no conversions.



Khojeste Mistree

Relations with other communities were not always harmonious. Khojeste Mistree (Zoroastrian Studies, Mumbai) recounted the legendary *Jhang i Variav* in the 12thc when Parsi women, dressed as men, drove away the mercenaries of the Rajput chieftan who attacked their village while their men were away. On discovering that they had been routed by women, the Rajputs returned with renewed

ferocity. The women threw themselves in the nearby river Tapti, choosing death to dishonour. In the 16thc there was a massacre of Parsis by wealthy Hindus, allegedly in retribution for violence perpetrated against them; and there was a 160 year dispute over communal property in Mumbai that ended in 1941 with Parsis losing their claim. In 1851 and 1856, there were attacks on them by Muslims and in 2002, after the riots in Mumbai, the *Athornan Mandal* in Dadar thought it might be prudent to rename their madressa, '*gurkal*', to avoid a case of mistaken identity.

Balancing Modernity and Traditional Culture



Shernaz Cama

The symbolism of the *Sudreh* and *Kusti*, as sacred armour, and its significance as a badge of identity was explored by Dr Shernaz Cama (Parzor and Delhi University), who also provided a detailed description of the intricate craft of *kusti* weaving and the effort being made to revive it.



Richard Foltz

Another kind of revival became the subject of the final paper delivered at the conference. Richard Foltz (Concordia University, Montreal) has made a study of the strategy of the ex-Soviet State of Tajikistan, to build its national identity round Iranian and Zoroastrian symbols. Zarathushtra is cited as one of the three Tajik founders of the nation and the

country hosted a '3000 years of Zoroastrian Culture' festival in 2003 - though the majority of Tajiks are oblivious of their supposed Zoroastrian affiliation and content to remain Muslims. This fascinating study of a bizarre case of identity construction provided an upbeat end to what had been an absorbing and exhausting two days.

Professor John Hinnells, long-standing friend of the Parsi community and revered authority on diaspora studies, was sadly not able to attend the event. He sent a message that summed up the theme of the conference. It is fitting to end with an excerpt from it:

'The memories that fashion and affect identity are multiple, complex but hugely important. The identities which are formed and interpreted by a history of personal and communal experiences require not only a sophisticated but also the most sensitive study.'



John Hinnells [Hamazor]



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Sammy Bhiwandiwalla



Posters put up in 150 Underground stations in London, arranged by ZTFE. Photo credit: Aresh Rustomji, Houston

Review of the Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination

by rosheen kabraji

On 10 October 2013 the highly anticipated exhibition *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination* opened at the Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies in London. A historic first, this exhibition presents a rich visual tapestry of the multiple strands of Zoroastrian beliefs and practices that have developed over the past 3000 years. The sheer geographic range from where the artefacts are sourced, ie. which include Uzbekistan, Iran, Russia, Pakistan and India, is astounding. As remarked upon multiple times during the week that marked various events around the exhibition, never before has London, or Europe, seen in one place, rock reliefs from Persepolis, Persian miniatures and illustrated manuscripts depicting hell's inferno, let alone a fire temple, a tower of silence or a Parsi salon.

The distinctive nature of this exhibition stems from its combination of three principal sources, as described by one of the lead curators, Dr Sarah Stewart of SOAS: the Iranian tradition that gave birth to the religion, the Parsi tradition established in India after Iran became a Muslim land, and the western, predominantly academic, tradition that emerged when Zoroastrian religious texts became of a focus Oriental Studies in the later eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The exhibition is divided into ten discrete sections that blend seamlessly by taking you through a journey of Zoroastrianism over thousands of years through to the contemporary world of Zoroastrians and Parsis today. Upon entering the gallery, the origins of Zoroastrians are placed in geographic context of the world view of ancient Iran and pre-Zoroastrianism. You are then transported into a circular chamber where you hear the recordings of two of the most well-known Zoroastrian prayers, the

Ashem Vohu and Yatha Ahu Vairyo. As these prayers echo around you, alongside you read a selection of passages from the Gathas, which are presented in the original Avestan script as printed in the late 19th century edition of K F Geldner with a translation below. The familiarity, for Zoroastrians, of hearing those prayers recited in an exhibition in London in and of itself is one of my favourite parts, particularly if you visit during quieter hours making it an odd blend of familiarity in unfamiliar surroundings. For visitors who are less well versed with the sounds of the Avestan prayers it brings to life the words on the walls and some of the ancient texts that follow including a copy of the Khordeh Avesta from 1673. The curators' decision to include an audio recitation of the prayers is particularly important given the oral traditions of Zoroastrianism. It was not until the Sasanian period (224-651 CE) that they were finally written down in Avestan.

The section on funeral rituals and practices, perhaps one of the Zoroastrian rituals the general public is aware of but also shrouded in mystery and intrigue, is explained through a combination of photographs of the outside of dakhmas in India and Iran and model of the tower of silence in Mumbai built by Heatherwick Studios, which incorporates proposed aviaries and a dakhma chart. The journey then moves east to the Silk Road, Central Asia and China, where archaeologists have found a wealth of material including Aramaic manuscripts and the base of a funerary couch from China. The role of Zoroastrianism in the western world is explored in the Judeo-Christian period with some never before seen 15th century manuscripts housed in the British Library's collection. The figure of Zoroaster elicited much curiosity in Medieval Christendom where the Prophet became associated with magic. This includes the *// Tesoro*, where

Zoroaster is portrayed as the founder of magic; and another manuscript which describes Zoroaster as the founder of the seven liberal arts. The influence on western arts is illustrated through a video of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, where the high priest Soroastro is believed to have been based on Zoroaster. The love of classical western music lives on in many Parsi households today.

By far one of the most unique aspects of the exhibition is the recreation of a Zoroastrian fire temple (*agiary*) as you enter the lower level of the exhibition. Beside the agiary is a display of all the objects that are used for the inner ritual of the *yasna* ceremony, brought to life in a video recording of priests in Mumbai conducting the ceremony. In this space you enter the more religious elements of the exhibition associated with rites and rituals with displays of some of the daily ritual objects including the *avesta*, *sudreh kusti*, *navjote cap*, and *ses* and *lobandan* which are integral to Zoroastrian religious rituals.

Artefacts, coins and stone reliefs from the Alpaiwalla museum in Mumbai and from the British Museum bring to life Zoroastrianism as the religion of imperial Iran. It is during the Sasanian period that the Avestan alphabet was invented and the compilation of the Great Sasanian Avesta took place. The narrative moves from Zoroastrianism as a religion of an empire to one under a conquered minority. The newly converted Zoroastrians, however, maintained their pre-Islamic Iranian identity and literary conventions. Through various texts and imagery one witnesses the gradual decline of Zoroastrian Iran through the Safavid period in the sixteenth century. Illustrated texts of the *Shahnameh* depict legends of local heroes which are found in both the Avestan *Yashts* and the *Videvdad*.

Following the invasion of the Seljuq Turks in the eleventh century and the Mongols shortly after, most of the surviving Zoroastrian literature and fire temples were destroyed. Most Zoroastrians then withdrew to the two main priestly cities of Yazd and Kerman where communities remain to the present day. As few exhibitions on Zoroastrianism would be complete without the Cyrus cylinder, popularly

viewed as the first charter of universal human rights, there is a replica of the cylinder placed poignantly in front of one of the most visually stunning pieces of the exhibition: an especially commissioned glass etching of a decorative stone relief which depicts a relief from Darius I's palace at Persepolis. Its intricate detailing made all the more dramatic by the lighting is another highlight of the exhibition which will return to India to be on display once the exhibition in London concludes in December.

The story then moves onto more familiar ground, especially for Parsis, as the exhibition traces the journey of Zoroastrians from Iran to India through the sixteenth century poem, the *Qesseh-ye Sanjan* (Story of Sanjan). While most Parsi children are made aware of this story along with their *navjote* prayers as 'fact', it is more a religious myth of community memory, as postulated by Alan Williams, rather than an historical document. Moving through various travellers accounts of the religion you enter the Parsi salon which houses stunning *gara* and *tanchoi saris*, beautiful old furniture, jewellery, and old portraits of Parsis in India during the colonial period. This section encapsulates the rich variety and fusion of material culture that came to symbolize Parsi identity during the British Raj. The success of Parsi entrepreneurs, including the *Wadias* and the *Tatas*, and the community affiliation to European culture, is depicted in the many paintings adorning the walls of this exhibition. This includes a never before displayed posthumous portrait of *Dhunjhai Jamsetji Tata*, the daughter of nineteenth century industrialist, *Jamsetji Tata*.

Finally, the narrative takes us into the present day depicting the global Zoroastrian diaspora and the roles the communities have played from North America to the UK. The exhibition concludes with a small modern collection of paintings and sculptures by the Iranian Zoroastrian artist *Fereydoun Ave* depicting the interaction between fire and water.

For Zoroastrians in the diaspora, particularly the youth, discovering and rediscovering the history of our ancestors and community is a



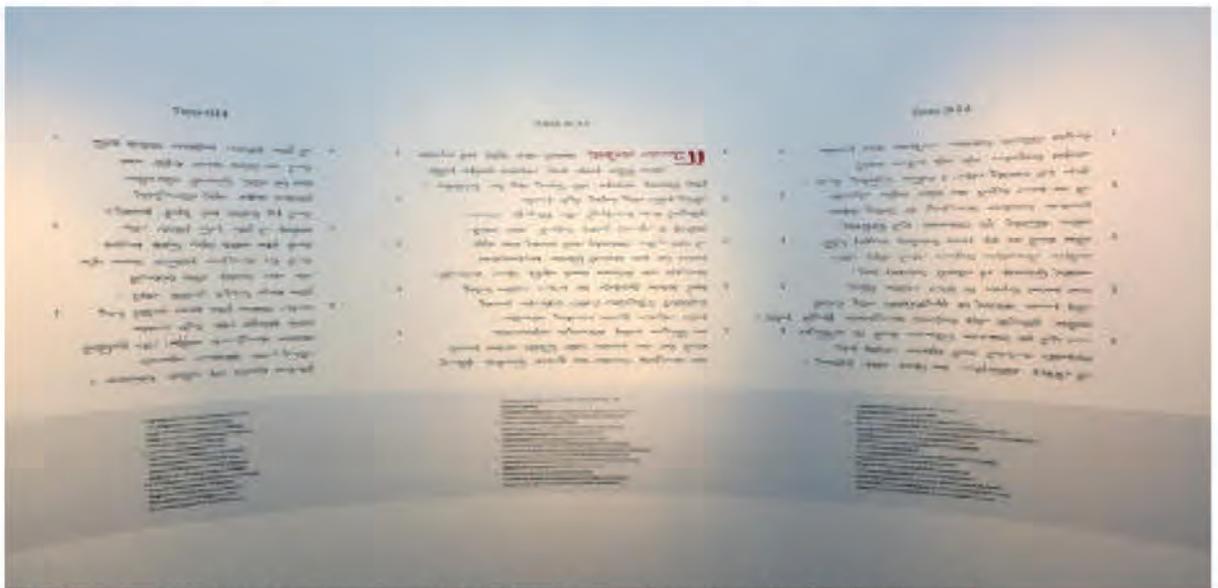
Rosheen Kabraji is currently Asia Programme Manager at Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs), a foreign policy think tank in London. She was a researcher for the 'The Everlasting Flame' exhibition and is a representative of the 'Zoroastrian Return to Roots' project. Rosheen has a BSc in Anthropology from University College London and an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge.

lifelong endeavour, for those who seek to engage with their roots and heritage from Central Asia to Iran. This exhibition, hosted in London — one of the world's most vibrant, historic and multicultural cities — was a reminder of the Zoroastrian community's own vibrant past, present and future.

In many ways, what gives this exhibition depth, and makes it special, is the vast range of individuals and institutions across the world who have come together to create it: from the museums and textile world, to individual art collectors, craftsmen, academics, theologians, priests, artists, and individual members of the Zoroastrian community across the globe who worked tirelessly to ensure its success, particularly co-curators Firoza Punthakey Mistree and Pheroza Godrej. The exhibition is also set to be recorded on video so that all those interested in Zoroastrianism living across the globe can also engage with the exhibition virtually. One can only hope that as the title of the exhibition suggests, the flame will be everlasting and this is only the first of many worldwide exhibitions on Zoroastrianism.

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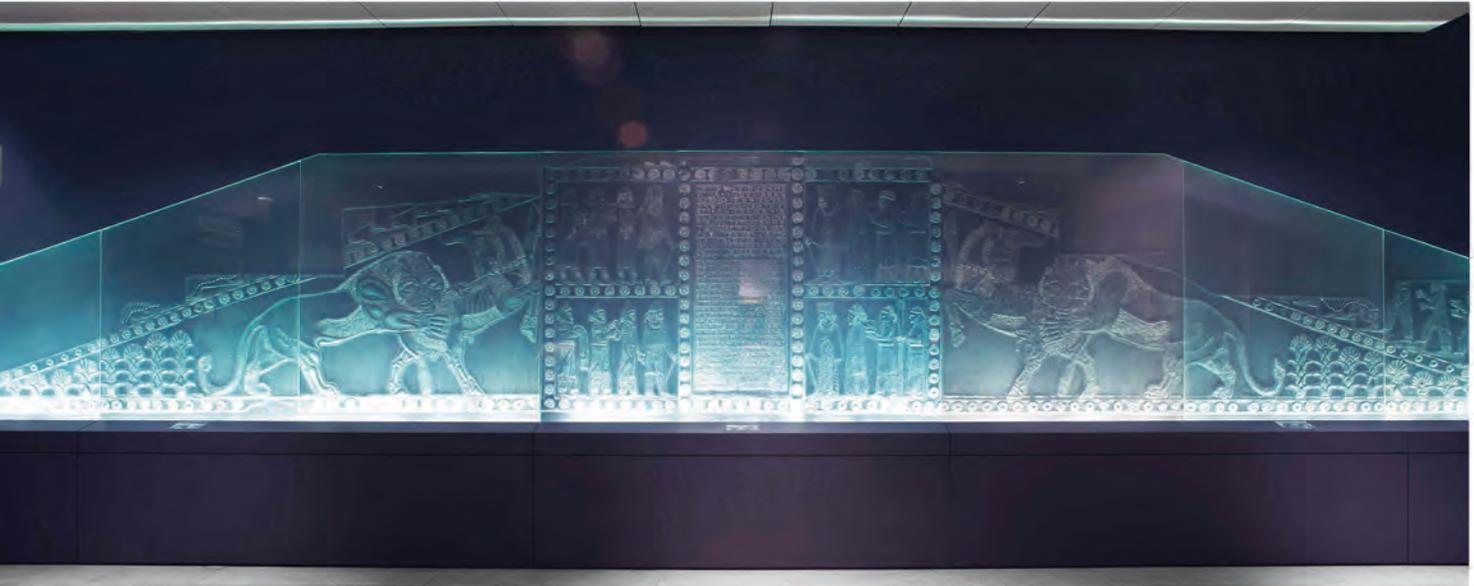
A visual walk through the galleries



The Yasnas on the wall both in Avestan and English translation. Photo shared by John Hollingworth



Left: Photographs of the outside of dakhmas in India and Iran and model of the tower of silence in Mumbai. Right: The inside of an agiary



Glass etching depicting a relief from Darius I's palace at Persepolis



Parsi Salon - A display of intricately carved antique furniture, portraits, and garas



Portraits of illustrious Parsis of Bombay

Courtesy of The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination exhibition, SOAS 2013.
Photographs © Glenn Ratcliffe



Painting by Iranian Zoroastrian, Fereydoun Ave



Kirdir inscription at Naqsh-e Rajab. Photograph Khojeste Mistree
The High Priest, Kirdir, was chief magi for over thirty years to several Sasanian kings. He left various inscriptions including an important one at Naqs Rajab in Iran.



Tanchoi sari Private collection. Photograph © Glenn Ratcliffe
This unusual tanchoi sari was probably woven in the Joshi family workshop, Surat. It combines within its weave typical Chinese pagodas and architectural features together with tropical vegetation. It also displays European figures, a scene at an inn and a pattern consisting of dogs and the gul-e bulbul (a flowers and birds design) on the border.



Ossuary from Mullah Kurgan, Samarkand Museum, Uzbekistan
Photograph © Noshir Mulla, 'A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture'. The Mulla Kurgan ossuary was found by farmers near Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The Lower register shows a Zoroastrian scene and the upper register a heavenly one.



Ewer depicting senmurv and the Tree of Life, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.
Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum /Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.
The ewer's body is decorated with two medallions surrounded by wreaths containing Zoroastrian mythological creatures known as senmurvs, winged animals with a peacock's tail and palmettes on their necks. The front of the body is decorated with an exotic flower, a symbol of the Tree of Life.



Illustrated Videvdad sadah. © The British Library Board RSPA 230

A beautifully written and decorated illustrated double folio from the Zoroastrian law-book Videvdad, an Avestan text mainly concerned with purity rituals.

Below on the left:

Zoroastrian lady in traditional dress. Collection: Fereydoun Ave.

In nineteenth-century Iran there were a number of regulations governing the everyday lives of Zoroastrians. These were intended to marginalize and distinguish them from the majority Muslim population and included strict dress codes; Zoroastrian men were obliged to wear garments of yellow ochre or unbleached cloth. In Yazd and Kerman, Zoroastrians were not permitted to buy cloth by the yard.

Shopkeepers would collect the strips of leftover fabric and leave them in bins outside their shops for Zoroastrians to buy. These were laboriously stitched together to make the shalvar and kamiz and were often embroidered with a variety of designs, including flowers, fish and geometric patterns.



These seven images are reproduced with permission



Brass bowl. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The frieze shows six scenes of horsemen, loosely based on the Persian epic the Shahnameh. In one scene, King Faridun is shown riding an ox, followed by a captive on foot. The snakes growing from the captive's shoulders identify him as the evil king Zahhak, whom Faridun overthrew. In the Shahnameh, Zahhak is the enemy from the Arab lands whom Ahriman kisses on both shoulders causing two serpents to grow, whose daily diet must be the brains of two Iranian boys.

Zoroastrian All Party Parliamentary Group

report by jack tindale

The launch of the first-ever Zoroastrian All Party Parliamentary Group took place on Monday 14th October, 2013 in the historic surroundings of the Members' Dining Room in the Houses of Parliament.

Representatives of the British and International Parsi community were in full attendance, in addition to leading Parliamentarians and the Indian Acting High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Dr Virendra Paul. In his opening remarks, Dr Paul praised Zoroastrians in both India and the UK as *"high achievers"* adding that *"Parsis have dominated not only in business but excelled in several other fields including defence, medicine and technology."*

All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are run independently of Parliament in order to promote national groups, hobbies and areas of interest. The Zoroastrian APPG, chaired by Lord Bilimoria of Chelsea, has an official remit to promote interests in the Zoroastrian faith and community and to develop links between Zoroastrians and Parliament.

Opening the founding AGM, Lord Bilimoria noted the historic links between Parliament and Zoroastrianism. Citing the legacy of the Zoroastrian Parsis, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Mancherjee Bhowanagree and Shapurji Saklatvala - the first Indian MPs to sit in Westminster - he noted that they were also the only Asian MPs elected prior to India's independence in 1947. He noted that between them, *"they represented the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Communists (with Labour support) respectively. So an All Party Group would certainly be in keeping with Zoroastrian political history!"* Lord Bilimoria was then unanimously elected as the Group's founding Chair, with Gareth Thomas MP, elected as Secretary/Treasurer. Mr Thomas congratulated Lord Bilimoria's efforts in founding the APPG, and described himself as an "Honorary Zoroastrian." The Zoroastrian Centre is located in Mr Thomas' Harrow West constituency.

Lord Paul, the Chairman of the Caparo Group of companies added *"I have had a long relationship*

with you [Parsis], not only in India but also in the UK. One of the largest suppliers to Caparo is the Tatas in India. We all admire what Zoroastrians have done both in India and here."

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was the guest of honour. In his speech, he noted that the first Indian Member of Parliament, Dadabhai Naoroji, was a Zoroastrian Parsi. *"What took you so long?"* he added, noting that Naoroji had been elected over a century ago, in 1892. Mr Pickles was then presented with a medallion by representatives of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe - who helped to organise the event.

Other speakers included; Lord Popat of Harrow, a Conservative Whip in the House of Lords and the founding Chair of Conservative Friends of India, Lord Dholakia, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords, and Keith Vaz MP, a former Labour Minister and the Chair of the influential Home Affairs Select Committee.

The Zoroastrian APPG hopes to develop a programme of events in 2014 to showcase the tremendous efforts and the long-standing links between the Zoroastrian Parsi community in the UK and India. ■■■



Jack Tindale is Executive Assistant and Researcher to Lord Bilimoria CBE DL. He graduated from the London School of Economics in 2012, followed by a year in which he served as Community and Welfare Officer for the LSE Students' Union.



Platform Party, Member's Dining Room, Houses of Parliament. Photo credit: Duncan McKenna



Zoroastrianism in the 21st Century: Nurturing Growth and Affirming Identity

December 27 to 30 - Mumbai 2013

by meher marker noshirwani

The 10th World Zoroastrian Congress began with a Jashan at the Wadiaji Atash Behram on 26 December 2013. At 10 am while Princess Street over flowed with traffic, the courtyard at the Wadiaji was filling up with Parsis who had come to attend the Congress. For those of us who live outside Mumbai a jashan at the Wadiaji is no ordinary jashan, though access to an agyari is easy for us, but to an Atash Behram only when we visit Mumbai. And this Jashan in honour of the WZC was a rare event with almost 100 mobeds and the Vada Dastur leading the prayers. The main hall was filled with young and old priests, in starched white garments, and while we sat in chairs along the wall praying or listening to the prayers, the jashan ceremony began. The atmosphere was one of reverence, and as I glanced around the room, I saw men and women, young and old who had come from different parts of the world to attend the Congress. The reaffirmation of our faith and identity had begun.

Exhibitions and Publications

Later that evening an exhibition "Across Oceans and Flowing Silks: from Canton to Bombay, 18th to 20th centuries, and no Parsi is an Island" was opened at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA). Based on "research which has been done, is being done and indeed needs to be continued," the exhibition traced "the extraordinary evolution of the Parsis in trading with Canton, China- their shipbuilding, trading and banking activities in Bombay, as well as their associations with the Portuguese, English, Dutch and French East India Companies, and the free trading houses of the West."¹ Spread over three floors of the NGMA the exhibition allowed one to get a sense of the rich and diverse history of our Parsi heritage, and see objects of art, furniture, fabric, clothes, sari's, paintings, porcelain, and portraits, which one would not have had an opportunity to see anywhere else. So, walking around the exhibits and reading the detailed explanations of each item was a learning experience, and a visual pleasure. Unfortunately, the acoustics in the Gallery were not very effective, and those of us who were sitting on the second and third floor could not hear the speakers, so we wandered around to see the objects on display. Since the space was limited, and although a separate room with a video screen was available, a limited number of people were able to sit on the ground floor close to the speakers, so some of us missed out on the speeches and overview of the exhibition. However, this was made up by the book which was launched at the end of the evening, which is a superb documentation of the entire event. This publication, *Across Oceans and Flowing Silks*, is beautifully produced, contains pictures and valuable information, and has a number of essays in it which describe the trade, commerce, and entrepreneurship of our forefathers. I managed to buy one copy, although I was very tempted to get more, but since this was the first evening of the Congress, I knew there would be more books on sale, and dreading our overweight luggage for the flight back to Karachi, I restrained myself from indulging my passion for books, and lived to regret it.

Note.

1. *Across Oceans and Flowing Silks. From Canton to Bombay 18th - 20th Centuries.* Eds. Pheroza J Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree with Sudha Seshadri. 2013

The drive from the Taj in South Mumbai to the National Sports Club of India (NSCI) in Whorli took an hour on average, so the commute every day to the Congress venue was a trek across town, with no chance of going back to the hotel during the day. Shuttle buses would have been useful, since Mumbai



Jashan at the Wadiaji Atash Behram led by Dastur Khurshed Dastoor

traffic is a nightmare, so we had to add extra time to the commute each day. Registration at the offices of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet or at the NSCI went off smoothly, and as the first day of the Congress began, the excitement of being among over 1,200 Parsis was evident. Laughter, old friends meeting each other, the pleasant sight of gara's and kors, duglees, and topis, and a general atmosphere of fun, friendship, and enjoyment prevailed over the next four days. The auditorium at the NSCI was large enough for all the delegates, and as I looked around the room as the doors opened and we all rushed in to get good seats, that not since the last World Congress in Dubai had I felt the same sense of collective strength in numbers which one only gets at a Zoroastrian Congress. The back drop of the stage was simple yet effective, and there were no audio visual special effects for the official opening, but as the speeches began, I felt we were at the core of the community as it exists in today's world. The conflicts, and contradictions, issues, and

difficult decisions which confront each of us individually and collectively, were in that auditorium.

Setting the Stage

The Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastur brought greetings from the Iranshah and performed the Benediction and lamp lighting ceremony. Young women from the Avabai Petit Girls School sang a few Monajats, and messages from Indian and Iranian dignitaries were read out. Translations for the Iranian delegates were provided in a separate room, and while the Iranian delegates spoke in Farsi their speeches were put up on the large screens in English for the rest of us to read. In the Welcome address Dr Cyrus Poonawalla spoke of the WZC that was held in Bombay 23 years ago, and that the theme of the present Congress; Nurturing Growth and Affirming Identity, was reflected in all the topics of the speakers. He addressed the youth of our community, and urged them to "follow the

path of our ancestors”, because “we grew from nothing to this”, and emphasised the need for the younger generation to have the courage to go into business because the old industrial houses were declining, and young men and women must take the risk and initiate new business enterprises.

Then Lord Karan Billimoria traced the Zoroastrian heritage from Cyrus the Great to the present day, emphasising the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder as a legal instrument which is widely recognised as the first Bill of Human Rights, and incidentally was on display at the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai during the Congress. The tenets of the Zoroastrian faith, tolerance, freedom of choice, the essence of the Gathas as guiding principles, and the unbroken thread of faith, were elements of our identity he stated. With reference to history he said that “we are a community of achievers, with multiple identities, we Parsis have always been givers, with a deep sense of integrity, and you cannot practice integrity without being whole, and inspiration comes from our heritage, to always do the right thing.” After this inspiring speech we heard Nadir Godrej tell us about Bombay and the Zoroastrians in a poem which was both informative, and entertaining. And this is where the contentious issues were raised in a subtle manner. “Now should our pool be shallow and wide, or narrow but quite deep? And can we bravely turn the tide, or let the water seep? Maybe we are destined to last, or maybe we’ll disappear. But we can glory in our past, and hope the world will cheer.” The stage was set to address the future.

The Issues of Identity

The panel discussions which followed through the rest of the day, focused on the issues of Identity, other problems specific to India, and an overview of the Parsi General Hospital. A number of books were launched during the Congress, which added to the growing literature on Parsis, and since these books were being sold in the lobby they were hard to resist. And finally the President of India inaugurated the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress. The Zoroastrian’s in India were recognized for their achievements and

significant contribution to the social and economic fabric of the country.

The rest of the evening was spent in making new friends, networking, and socializing till dinner, and watching the Darpana Performing Group enact the story of the arrival of the Parsis in India. At the end of the first day, various themes had been set, the question of identity had been raised, the declining numbers emphasized, and the conflict which had occurred within the BPP which almost derailed the Congress was mentioned a number of times by different speakers. The leadership was urged to resolve their differences in private, and demonstrate unity in public.

The question of identity was repeated throughout the presentations during the Congress. What does it mean to be a Parsi, the physical manifestations, the stereotypes, the changing identity in each country, and the fact that it is almost impossible to have a global identity because it is different for the Diaspora in each country, was discussed and debated. Inclusion or exclusion, marriage within or outside the fold, tradition versus change, continuity or extinction, and conflict which had recently occurred within our small community which cannot afford to polarize itself, was serious and thought provoking. As Dadi Mistry said “we are only as strong as we are united”. Thus, all the main issues had been mentioned in one way or another by the speakers, as we moved into the second day of the World Zoroastrian Congress.

The themes of identity were explored further the next day, in the Panel discussion on Practices of the Zoroastrian Faith in India and other parts of the World, where the speakers gave an account of how the Diaspora had adapted to its host country, and ways in which they dealt with change, and attempted to preserve traditions, while adjusting to new challenges. Again the youth was the main focus, since they are the future of the community. But although the Congress focused on the youth in the speeches, it did not provide them the space to interact with the speakers, the question and answer sessions were too short because the sessions ran into one another, and time was not

efficiently managed. It may have been more useful for the youth, to spend time with the speakers who could have taught them a great deal and answered many questions if there had been smaller interactive sessions, instead of a series of lectures all day. Also there were no social events for the young boys and girls who would have liked to meet after dinner. Although groups of young people did organize their own social activities late evening, it would have been easier if it had been officially arranged. Zoroastrian Youth for the Next Generation (ZYNG) had a session of its own to introduce itself and its activities, but the opportunity provided at a Congress where so many young Zoroastrians are together in one place for four days is a unique opportunity to mentor them, provide direction, and most of all to learn from the leadership of the community. Some of the young men and women I spoke to had many questions, to which I had no answers, and I could feel the thirst for knowledge and inquiry, which was left disappointed.

The Debate Continues

Among the various sessions of Day 2, the Key Note address by Darius Khambatta was extremely informative, and challenged the status quo. It was received with great enthusiasm, and many of us wanted a copy of his speech. The theme of identity was discussed again, “we do not need to sacrifice our identity to save our religion” we were told, and “although there are two sides the debate must remain dignified,” and using the concepts of Asha and Urvan, the question posed to the audience was “do we look towards Bombay or to the diasporas in the future?” Using history, and law, as arguments we were forced to think of the complicated and difficult issues at stake.

The breaks between sessions were a welcome respite since we Parsis take food very seriously. Slightly disorganized on the first day, with long queues and not enough food stations to meet the hungry participants, the second day was smooth, tea and coffee was easily available, free water bottles were in abundance, and the “bhonu” was a mixture of vegetarian, non-vegetarian, and plenty for



The auditorium at the NSCI

any kind of requirement. Seating was short, so balancing a plate of dhan-dal-patio, with handbags, books, and away from a sari required some skill, but we all managed to eat and drink, amidst the general camaraderie which automatically exists when the Parsis come together in large numbers. Another manifestation of identity?

And so the debate continued. The issue of identity was discussed again by Khojeste Mistree, who presented a detailed historic and religious overview of Zoroastrianism, focusing on tolerance as an integral aspect of our faith and history, and referred to the legacy of Cyrus the Great as “deeply embedded in our minds and hearts”. Going over each historical period of Zoroastrian history to the present, he said “change does happen”, but “the religious and ethnic is interlinked”, and urged us “not to breakdown the traditions”, and once again forced the audience to face reality of an uncertain future. The divergent views within the community cannot be ignored, and change is taking place, and we were told that “if you want to move into the modern, or the new ways, do not break our traditions.” So by the middle of the second day of the Congress, the issues had been laid bare. In Mumbai the speakers did not hesitate to say what they thought, and the controversial issues were discussed. So whereas Mumbai did not have the glamour and sophistication of the North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston,

or the dramatic visuals and beautiful music of the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai, it raised the relevant issues, allowed different opinions to be presented, and went to the core of current debates.

Other Perspectives

Since concurrent sessions were taking place, one had to choose which session to attend, so a few interesting discussions were missed, but as I wandered into the side rooms there was full attendance in all of them. The youth were the focus of discussion in “Are the present day Parsis versatile and illustrious like their forefathers?” This plenary session had a clear message to the younger generation; that they had become complacent and lost the spirit of competition, expected the community to support them, did not want to take risks, and had become content. “We have to tell our children to move away from the beaten track, that the world has changed, there is more competition, and this is the new reality”, said the speakers. The shift from business and entrepreneurs to professionals, and white collar jobs has taken place, and resulted in the decline of old business houses, and left a vacuum where Parsi trade and commerce once stood. So the younger generation were asked to take on new challenges, and continue the legacy of the pioneers. This is where the youth would have benefited from an opportunity to interact with the experienced business professionals at the Congress.

Another interesting Panel was the Zoroastrian Link to Conservation. Understanding the link between conservation, and elements of Zoroastrianism was a theme which had not been discussed before, and brought a different perspective to the discussions. Given the awareness towards conservation issues and climate change in today’s world, it was inspiring to realize that Zoroastrianism spoke of the respect for nature centuries before the environment movement as we know it began. This was indeed a humbling experience.

The Declining Numbers

And finally, The Zoroastrian World – A Demographic Picture, brought the stark reality

of numbers into focus again. Based on a survey compiled by Roshan Rivetna, the population figures of each country were presented. Not an encouraging picture emerged, and the importance for a clear strategy for the future was evident. The declining numbers, a shrinking community, and greater dilution as we spread to remote corners of the world, what does the future hold?

In an earlier session one of the speakers had said, “how long can we take refuge in our past, and unless we develop a clear direction for the future, and decide where we want to go, any road will take us there”. So the challenge for the discussions the following day, was an attempt to find answers and seek solutions.

As I walked through the stalls which had been set up in the lobby, I saw more symbols of our identity. A toran stall, with little old ladies from the Fort area selling handmade torans, the Parzor Foundation with handbags, gara’s, and stoles, keeping the legacy of our embroidery alive, the Parsiana bookshop, the Ratan Tata Institute with its delicious snacks, a stall with farohars and chains for sale, the bookstall where the books launched at the Congress were available, and ZYNG with their T-shirts, I realized yet again the importance of a Congress such as this which pulls us together from different parts of the world for a few days, but which makes a lasting impression on us for a long time.

Discussion Panels

On the third day of the Congress there was a mix of topics; the Zoroastrian Women’s International Network (ZWIN) had a session, the forthcoming Youth Congress in 2015 in New Zealand made a presentation, the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), a Historical and Contemporary Perspective of the Parsi Community in Pakistan, the Parzor Foundation Return to Roots Programme, and a slide presentation on the Shahnameh, were concurrent sessions. In the plenary there was a panel on Demography and the Way Forward, Women’s health from birth to menopause, Medicine: Past, Present, and Future, Parsi Philanthropy, Parsis in Sports,



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and Enterprise Dubai. Among these the one that focussed on the youth and has begun to raise awareness among the younger generation is the Parzor Foundation's Return to Roots Programme. It offers an opportunity to the younger generation to learn, understand, and visit places of history, culture, and religious significance of our Zoroastrian and Parsi heritage.

What next?

So although the Congress raised the relevant issues, it was unable to provide solutions, or to give direction for the future course of the global community. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect this, since this is a complex issue, and as we heard, each group of Zoroastrians in different parts of the world have adapted, adjusted, integrated, and retained elements of our identity and religion. And there has been a recent revival in Zoroastrianism as well. International exhibitions such as The Everlasting Flame in London in 2013, the establishment of a Chair in Zoroastrian Studies at the School of Asian and African Studies (SOAS) to encourage academic discourse, the Parzor Foundation's research and preservation of crafts, and various independent publications have added to the growing body of information and material which did not exist in the past. And more important are the activities of the many Zoroastrian Associations all over the world which have increased the knowledge base and maintain communication within the home countries and the diasporas. Perhaps it is initiatives such as these which will eventually provide the way forward.

Later that afternoon, we were taken to the RWITC Mahalaxmi Racecourse, to enjoy the Zoroastrian Million and other Races. Dressed in formal attire, this was an amazing experience and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. The day had been dedicated to the Zoroastrian community, and reinforced the significance of the Parsi contribution to the city of Mumbai.

Unfortunately, we missed the last day of the Congress because the PIA flight schedule meant we had to leave on a certain day, or

RWITC Mahalaxmi Racecourse



remain in Mumbai for the rest of the week. So on the fourth day, as the sessions continued and we passed the NSCI on our way to the airport, I asked my children, Arish, Sohrab, and Rustam, if the trip had been worth

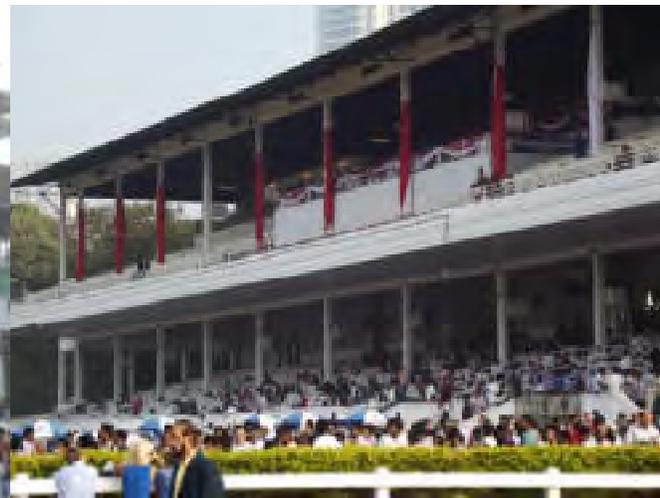
Issue sponsored by Abtin & Mehrafsoon Sassanfar

it. The long tedious visa process, the anxiety of exams and flight connections to get to Karachi and to Mumbai in time, and the hectic schedule of the last five days, was it worth it? Did they enjoy the Congress? Did it reinforce their identity? Did they understand the legacy we have inherited? Did it reaffirm the values of our ancient faith?

These were their answers:

Will you take us to the North American Zoroastrian Congress in 2014? Can we go to the Youth Congress in 2015? And when will the next World Zoroastrian Congress be held?

I rest my case. ▮▮▮▮



Would Zarathushtra be Turned Away from a Parsi Agyari?

by soonu engineer

how many Parsis were present at the 1st Zoroastrian Congress in north-eastern Afghanistan, some 3400 years ago? There would have been none, mused Darius J Khambata in his keynote speech to the Zoroastrian Congress in Mumbai, in December 2013. There would have been only two people present, Zarathushtra himself and his cousin, Maidhyamaha, neither of them Parsis – and neither of them born into Zarthushti families.

So would Zarathushtra be turned away from a Parsi *agari* if he were in Mumbai today? The current criteria for admission would surely bar Zarathushtra, his cousin and also King Vishtaspa and his consort.

It took a few centuries after Zarathushtra that Parsis, ie. the people who settled in Pars in south western Iran, accepted Zarathushtra's religion. Darius Khambata's contention is that 'whether we like it or not, historically and racially we are all descendants of converts to Zoroastrianism.' The true believer is one who freely chooses to follow Zarathushtra's teachings rather than simply being *born into* a community of the faith.

Since that conversion of Maidhyamaha Spitama, millions were gradually converted. During the Sasanian Empire, 'the fire spread by proselytization to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Syria, Cappadocia (in modern Turkey) and even Albania.' After the defeat of King Yazdegerd III, in 642 AD by Arab tribes, and the beginning of Muslim rule in Persia, conversion to the Zarthushti faith became unthinkable in that land.

Religious persecution resulted in the flight of Parsis from Iran. In 917 AD, the first group arrived at Diu, on the shores of western India. The local ruler, Jadi Rana, set five immigration conditions, none of which, according to Khambata, forbade conversion: 'there was

and is no condition that we would not accept any non-Parsi into our religion or permit any non-Parsi to be enlightened by the message of Zarathushtra.'

Why then have Parsis been averse to conversion? Why do they bar converts from their places of worship and why do they consider patrilineal descent the only legitimate basis for being a Zarthushti? Why does the majority see ethnicity (being a Parsi) as a necessary condition for membership of a religion (being a Zarthushti)?

Khambata's research suggests some startling answers. The categories "Parsi" and "Zoroastrian" had 'become synonymous in India not because of religion but **because of caste**. That is why whilst caste made the Zoroastrian religion hereditary in India, the great Persian priests in the *Rivayats* or answers sent [from Iran] to theological queries from India maintained conversion of non-Zoroastrian servants to Zoroastrianism was permissible albeit if ritual was strictly followed.'

The Bombay High Court's judgement in the 1910 'Parsi Panchayat case' (related to the Panchayat's refusal to allow JRD Tata's French mother, who had become a Zarthushti, from entering any agyari) made it clear that there was no religious bar on converting persons of non-Zarthushti parentage to the religion – indeed, such a bar would be "essentially, distinctly irreligious" – and that once such persons had gone through the correct rituals, they could enjoy 'the full rights and privileges of a Zoroastrian.'

But the Court also noted that Parsis had internalised the tenets of the dominant host culture to such an extent that their religious practices reflected caste prohibitions and taboos. Hence, 'the term Parsi had acquired a caste connotation'. Khambata maintains that because caste is inherited through the father,

'that is why we bar worship in an agiary to children of non-Zoroastrian fathers It is a manifestation of caste, pure and simple.'

The Court felt it reasonable to assume that those who had endowed charitable Trusts for the benefit of Parsis would have expected the beneficiaries to comprise of the descendants of the original emigrants (provided the father was a Zarthushti), and Iranis who professed the religion. Thus property law, with its associated caste restrictions, has become the basis for settling the question as to who is or is not a Zarthushti. Religious belief is considered immaterial: Zarathushtra's call to each individual, to exercise their own judgement in deciding which path to follow, is set aside and a caste qualification is superimposed.

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

'To monopolise Zoroastrianism is to kill it. We do not need to sacrifice our identity to reclaim our religion. That is a myth that is being propagated. It is a sobering thought that today a Zoroastrian from Uzbekistan (the birth place of Zarathustra) or a re-converted Zoroastrian descendant of any of those valiant [Persian] kings, would not be able to assert a right to enter an agiary since he or she would not fit within the strict confines of the Parsi Panchayat judgment. ... I wondered whether Zarathustra himself – born of parents who were neither Parsi nor Zoroastrian – would be able to get admittance today to an agiary as a matter of right. Perhaps, not. That is, at once, both farcical and tragic.'

Khambata makes an eloquent plea to open the doors of the agyari to anyone who sincerely professes the faith. Failing that, new agyaris should be consecrated, open to all, regardless of ethnicity. He concedes that finite resources, such as housing, education and health, may continue to be reserved 'strictly

in accordance with the inferred desire of the settlor (benefactor), ie. only for Zoroastrians born of a Parsi father.'

'The choice is clear: we must either allow the fire to spread or risk its extinction. The keepers of the flame must not lock it in their embrace and extinguish it!'



The Keynote Address made on 28 December, 2013 by the Advocate General of Maharashtra, Darius J Khambata is available on:

<http://wzcmumbai.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0d073286e90c0260cb5fe242f&id=bea6c79fe5&e=e608bdfc8a>



Some further food for thought -

Bombay Parsi Panchayet; Restoring its Stature

by dinshaw tamboly

history of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) is an informative book written by Sapur F Desai in which the history for the period 1860-1960 has been interestingly recorded. The very first chapter of the book places the actual birth of BPP to be between the years 1672 and 1675.

BPP has always enjoyed a position of pre-eminence in the community. During its existence, it has by and large provided the community with outstanding leadership and governance, women and men everyone was proud of, individuals of standing and repute.

If the history of BPP were to be written from 1961 onwards to the present time, one would be assured that it would progressively project the institution and the individuals who ran it in rather an uncomplimentary fashion.

S o o n u
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With the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress having now concluded, I am taking the opportunity of sharing a few thoughts and observations, not about the Congress but my annotations about the current standing of BPP and the need to restore its stature.

Ever since the differences between the present BPP Trustees erupted into the public domain, the entire community has been witnessing an extremely messy situation the likes of which has never before been experienced.

The 10th World Zoroastrian Congress was the perfect opportunity to enhance the standing of BPP, showcase the capacity and capabilities of present Trustees as individuals that could rise to the occasion and display their competence in taking the community forward. The opportunity was unfortunately completely wasted.

The congress was salvaged due to the intervention of many individuals, but it was very sad, akin to a tragedy, to observe all the elected Trustees being relegated to the background during the congress days. My sympathies were with the Trustees whenever I heard delegates making unkind comments about them during their internal discussions.

Managing the BPP is an extremely complex matter at the best of times; earlier celebrated Trustees with time, commitment, dedication, vision and experience have also found it difficult to steer BPP.

From my experience of having been a Trustee of both BPP (12.5 years) and WZO Trusts' (22 years and continuing) I know how important it is, that for a Trust to function effectively and efficiently, the Board of Trustees should comprise likeminded individuals whose intention is only to serve, not to push their own ideologies.

My own self assessment is that as a Trustee of BPP my performance was mediocre on account of the Board not having likeminded individuals, whereas in the instance of the WZO Trusts, it has been publicly acknowledged to be a different story altogether. This is simply because each one

of us on the Board of WZO Trust and our band of volunteers work as a team, likeminded in our desire to serve the community, in spite of having differing ideological viewpoints.

Everyone talks about the necessity of restoring BPP to its past glory. As a former Trustee of BPP, I believe it is very possible. However, if we genuinely wish to restore the stature of BPP it will require all concerned - leaders and the community - to display maturity and sagacity of a very high degree.

Three elections to BPP Trusteeship have taken place since the introduction of 'universal adult franchise' in 2008. It is a known fact that each of these have been contested with acrimony which has done no credit to the institution or to those who offered their candidature. In the run up to all the three elections, the focus was more on attacking opposing candidates, their track records and ideologies and less on projecting plans and strategies to service the community. The electorate was induced with grand dining and entertainment. The few assurances and undertakings that were given to the electorate during campaigning have been forgotten.

With the experience of the past three elections behind us, whenever the next election or elections are announced does anyone seriously believe that individuals with credentials and standing, who genuinely wish to provide their time and expertise to the community will come forward to offer their candidature for Trusteeship? If individuals of outstanding calibre and experience shy away from offering their time and proficiency to BPP there can be no hope whatsoever to bring it back anywhere near to the esteemed position it once had.

Having been a Trustee of BPP, I genuinely believe that it is absolutely imperative that all seven Trustees should be likeminded. I therefore recommend and appeal to all sections of our community to consider that for the next election or elections, expected to be held in 2015 or earlier, we must consider requesting seven eminent Zoroastrians of Mumbai, acknowledged leaders in their

respective professions, who are interested and willing to invest their time in the welfare of the community to offer themselves as candidates for BPP Trusteeship.

A small group of individuals, selected from various segments of the community can be entrusted the assignment to bring together such a group of candidates. This should not be a very difficult objective to achieve.

What will however be very important from the entire community's perspective is to ensure that these selected seven women and men of standing, should be allowed to be elected Trustees without having to go through the rigors of fighting an acrimonious election.

To me, such an action at this point of time seems to be the only way to bring back stability to the BPP Board. As a community, whilst we are indeed well educated it is now time to establish that we are enlightened as well.

Finally, lest it be misunderstood, I must clarify I have written the above simply because I care for my community and its premier institution BPP. I do not have any personal agenda to pursue, and having already served the BPP I am not looking to be a Trustee once again. I do hope that what has been proposed will be considered by the community in the positive spirit in which it has been written.



Yazdi Tantra has already started a poll on this article where you can voice your opinion by saying a 'yeah' for a panel of eminent Parsis to be selected, or that Universal Adult Franchise should continue, and with a further option of ticking against 'not sure'.

Please visit <http://zoroastrians.net/2014/01/05/should-the-bpp-trustees-be-selected/>

Reviews of Books Launched at the Congress

One Town, Many Deep Emotions

Udvada Photographs by Shantanu Das unwittingly draws our attention to the truth that we are all servants to the basic human emotions of God, family, love.

Designed, printed and published by Spenta Multimedia, this pictorial coffee table book is one, big, hugely enjoyable Parsi treat and feast.

For Rs2,000, which is way less than what a family would pay for a reasonable meal, this is lifetime food for the soul. Memories mingle with montages, words bring to life the sleepy town of Gujarat and the photographs by Shantanu Das showcase vividly, the people, the places and the many moods that make this place the childhood memory that it is, for almost every living Zoroastrian.

While Udvada has a universal appeal, the essay in the book rightly says that everyone has a personal memory of the religious town. High Priest Dasturji Khurshed generously shares his own memories with the editors of this illustrious coffee-table book. "We schooled at the Dadar Madressa in Mumbai, then Bombay, and all our vacations were in Udvada", he says. "Home has been the same house I live in today when in Udvada — a traditional, ancestral home over a hundred years old. The vacations were beautiful; we went to meet our parents ... what days they were. Meeting with my parents, sitting down for *ghambhars* where such good food would be served, we'd all sit on *setranjis* and have those meals. Walking on the beach, so clean then, is a fond memory. In the evenings, we'd all meet at the Udvada Gymkhana. I remember going into the *Atash Behram* and seeing rows and rows of *mobeds* reciting their prayers and performing ceremonies; today, you don't see so many. Being young, I would be scared of them and, if we were even a little mischievous, through clenched teeth (as they would be saying prayers in *baaj*) they would hiss at us. Mostly all Parsis knew each other

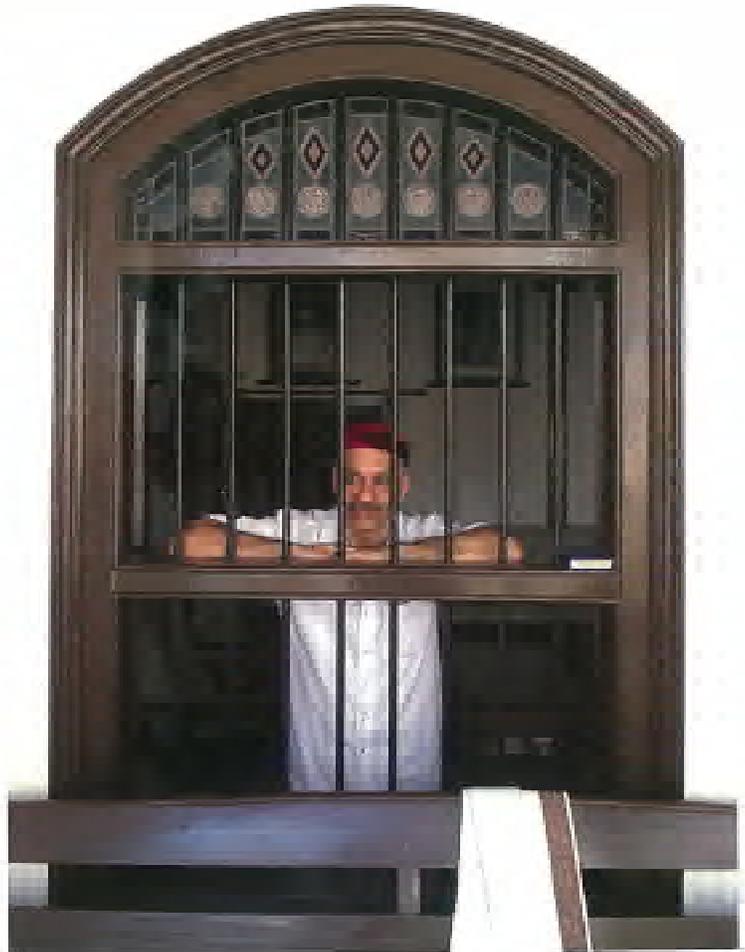


Dinshaw Tamboly has actively associated in community welfare activities since 1983. He is a Trustee of the three WZO Trusts in India spearheading their activities; as well a Trustee on various Trusts, Hospitals and an Agyari. He was on the International Board, WZO London from 1983 - 2004 and Trustee of BPP from 1996 - 2008. He has received awards for services to community and humanity, from institutions both in India and overseas, the most prestigious being two awards from WZO, London in 2000 & 2005, and the Community Service Award received at the World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai in 2009.

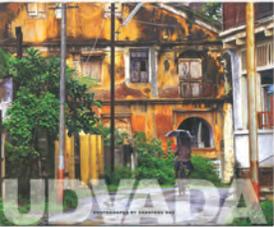
in the town then and we would meet in the evenings for get-togethers or just have celebrations. Such fun! Even today, every weekend, I drive down; every single weekend. It is still a peaceful place; the atmosphere is calm. Many people visit Udvada, thanks to the good roads we have been given. Even the vegetables and mutton till today taste better in Udvada.” When asked what he would like to see changed in Udvada, he says without missing a beat: “Nothing. It’s still a perfect little place despite the few drawbacks. I only wish that more Parsis would buy the bungalows going up on sale, so that non-Parsis don’t swoop down and build tall buildings.”

The book by concentrating on the spirit of love and good times had in Udvada, automatically steers clear of the overtly religious and thereby brings to life the merriment and sincerity of the Parsi community worldwide. Across 151 pages we see images of praying, eating, fellowshiping; adults, children, the elderly, all reflecting the spirit of life itself. Indeed art does imitate life as of itself art has no power to create something. A young boy looking over the shoulder of an adult carrying him, two elderly ladies in *mathubanus* sitting besides a clock, these and many more specific images speak volumes. Of looking into the future while living in the present and of time going by. Without even captions, they tell the perfect story. Shantanu Das who has had four solo exhibitions and countless group exhibitions searches for the story behind his subjects and this is translated perfectly. He has not only zoomed in on the distinctive heritage in terms of architecture, lifestyle, food, but has ably brought to the fore the human element so essential in any photograph. “Udvada has a unique culture, a serenity and simplicity that is worth a watch”, says Shantanu.

And it is this culture that prompted Parvez Damania to host an exhibition of these pictures and thought of putting them together in a book form. In the book dedicated to his brother Vispi, he writes in the foreword: “Udvada is priceless and must be preserved in any way possible. While we should not resent the march of time for all the progress and largesse it bestows, we also need not hold it solely responsible for erasing something



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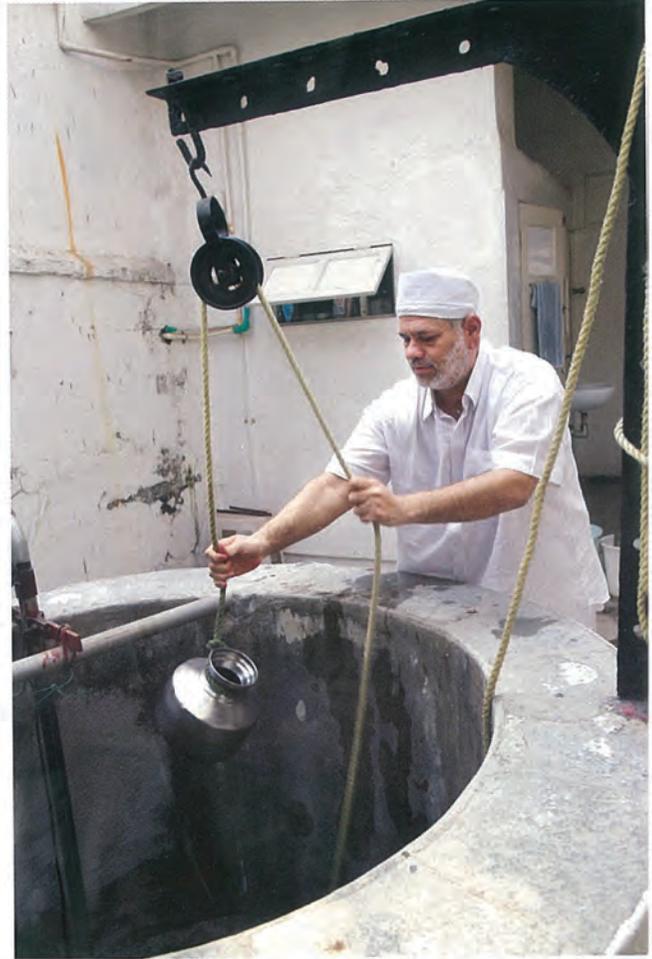


Udvada Photographs by Shantanu Das
Designed printed and published by Spenta Multimedia, Mumbai
Pages: 151
Price: Rs2,000/-

when we most certainly have the power to preserve what is important to us. The coming generation must not be denied the Udvada we knew as children”.

And thus the many candid shots of priests, of kusti-weaving, of bakeries, of quaint homes, of cows roaming the streets, of heads bowed in prayers, human emotions, devotions and the essay reflecting the power of love.

Till you are able to make the three-hour journey from Mumbai, lean across the table, pick up this perfect book and enter into Udvada's gates with thanksgiving.



Images courtesy of Spenta Multimedia

Threads of Continuity - The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving

reviewed by ardeshir marker

I must confess that on first hearing the title of this book, I was a bit perplexed, even somewhat intimidated ... a whole book on *kusti*-weaving! How could one possibly write an entire book on such a topic ... how much information could there possibly be? The answer is, that when the information is as beautifully illustrated and as well presented as in "Threads of Continuity" all our misconceptions are laid to rest

"Threads of Continuity – the Zoroastrian Craft of *Kusti* Weaving" is not only about the threads of the *kusti*, but is a fascinating and in-depth analysis of the various threads and strands that make up and define our identity as a community. Lavishly illustrated with detailed photographs that complement and enhance the text perfectly, the book is divided into sections such as "Rites of Passage" which includes chapters on Pregnancy, Birth, the *Navjote*, Marriage and Death. Our daily practices and customs, and the rituals that govern (or are supposed to govern) our everyday lives, and that make up a traditional Parsi household are covered in this book in a detailed yet light-hearted tone. But the aim and purpose of this book is also to record and to explain the reasons and the rationale behind our numerous and elaborate rituals and customs, and this it does very well.

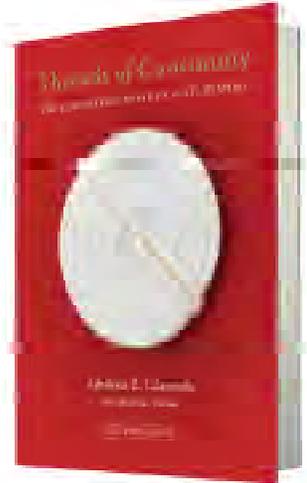
Based on a study on *kusti* weaving by the Parzor Foundation, which took over ten years, and focused mainly on the Gujarat and Navsari region, the book argues that "*The rites of passage described are those followed by traditional Parsis in the Navsari and Surat regions of Gujarat. These are the families who have kept alive traditions and crafts, kusti and toran weaving, music and songs, which highlight the Parsi ethos*".

It is difficult to disagree with this, since Navsari and the Gujarat region are where, as the book goes on to elaborate, traditional *kusti* weaving and *sudrah* and *toran* making are still seen

as worthwhile and relatively profitable pursuits for Parsi families. More controversially, however, the book also argues that the community in the diaspora (Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA) has "lost" many of these traditions, especially by the second or third generation and that they are therefore "*best seen in interior Gujarat where several social customs were created and have been preserved and are the threads that all contribute to a tightly knit social and community life*".

There is a chapter on *Sudrah* making, and even a chapter on "*Toran*-making". We learn that *toran*-making does not generate as much income as *kusti*-weaving. The book therefore successfully highlights the economic dimensions and the dynamics of *toran* making versus *kusti* weaving, and the dilemmas and challenges involved in trying to keep traditional customs and crafts alive by making them economically viable and profitable.

The longest and most detailed chapter in the book is of course, on the *Kusti* – the sacred cord. Often as we tie and untie our *kusti*, we forget the painstaking and intricate detail and efforts that are undertaken whilst weaving a *kusti*. The book makes clear that this is often seen as an act of love and devotion. The chapter covers in detail the origins of the *kusti*, and says that "*later Pahlavi texts show that Zarathustra initiated the rite as it currently exists, adapting an existing Indo-Iranian custom, in which men put on a woven cord during an initiation, as a sign of their membership into the religious community*". We also learn that King Jamshed of the Peshdadian dynasty is believed to have used the *kusti* as a symbol to "*remind his people of moderation*". The symbolism, and the various steps in making a *kusti* are discussed in clear and concise language. The different types of spinning tools (the *Chaatri* or *Tikli*), the



Threads Of Continuity -
The Zoroastrian Craft of
Kusti Weaving
Published by The Parzor
Foundation
Pages: 152
Price: Rs1200
Order from
www.unescoparzor.com
or available at the
Parsiana store, Mumbai

Spindles, the differences between the normal loom (*Jantar*) which is regularly used today to make *kustis* and the old loom (the *Janu Jantar*), which was used in the old households of Navsari and was much larger in size, all these details highlight the complexities and efforts involved in weaving a *kusti*.

The book ends on a positive note and points out that there is a resurgence of pride in the ability to weave a *kusti* and that it is a skill that is increasingly being recognized and valued, in India at least, so much so that *Kusti* weavers have travelled from Navsari to Mumbai and Delhi to participate in international programmes and to display their craft.

This book itself is a testament and an ideal record of the threads of continuity that continue to bind our community and its traditions and values together.



The warping sequence:
1. The *chaaterdo* is used to stretch the warp.
2. A detail of 12 threads on each fork of the *tan-khuta*.
3. The first unit of 12 threads is inserted in the *veesoon*.
4. All three units are sealed with a *sall*.

5. A lace is placed to separate the first set of 36 threads.
6. The second unit of 36 threads are divided on the three *khutas*.
7. The ends of the warp are tied with a knot.
8. The fourth set of twelve threads is placed in the *veesoon*.

Pages 112 & 113. Courtesy Ashdeen Lilaowala, from his book

Ardeshir Khursheed Marker is an MSc. graduate from the London School of Economics. An economist by training, and a businessman by profession, he is currently busy promoting his latest business, selling roasted coffee beans via his new venture, the Green Bean Coffee Company. Based in Karachi, and married with three children, his interests include music, travel and reading.



Parsi Bol

Insults, Endearments & Other Gujarati Phrases

reviewed by ardeshir marker

Parsi, *thy name is charity* ... is a popular saying that is often used to describe us as a community. But another unique and distinct characteristic of our Parsi community, for which we are supposed to be much admired, is our sense of humor and our ability to laugh at ourselves. Certainly, I can think of no other community that could compile such a long list of insults, endearments and popular phrases, many of which are still in common use today!

This is a wonderful book. An attractive, brightly coloured cover catches the eye at once. Inside, there are plenty of humorous illustrations to illuminate the text and the phrases. There are 716 Phrases in total in this book, each written in Gujarati and Roman scripts, followed by the literal meaning and lastly the idiomatic meaning. Compiled by Sooni Taraporewala and Meher Marfatia and illustrated by Hemant Morparia and Farzana Cooper this is a book to treasure. It is an important and significant effort, as these phrases encapsulate, in many ways, our history, our culture and our moods as a community. It is worth recalling that the phrases are not only humorous but also often have a deep philosophical meaning attached to them. The book, therefore, while slim in size, captures a collection of *kehvats* and phrases that serve as a record and a testament to our rich and vibrant oral heritage. The book also enhances, in a way, our Parsi legacy of theatre and *nataks*, by reproducing many phrases that we have often heard in the *nataks*. This is a cultural trait that we as a community have long been famous for, and recognized, especially in India and Mumbai.

The effort must also be commended for the sheer scope of topics covered: from Sarcasms to Insults and Food (of course ... one of our favourite topics of discussion!) to Anatomy and even Nature, Animals, Birds and Insects. Many phrases the reader will probably be

familiar with, or recall as sage advice from an elderly relative in the not too distant past.

Then there are other phrases that will make you laugh out loud (at least I did!) One of my favourites was "*Wicket puree guyee*" (Wicket Fell – died). And another one, "*Evun toh photo frame thai guya*" (he became a photo frame – died). There are familiar phrases such as "*Kusaree na kan*" (Ears of a cockroach – one who has sharp hearing) and "*Thakee neh thoos*" (Exhausted) and some phrases that I found wonderfully obscure: "*Gudhero durakh chavee guyo*" (The donkey ate the grapes – The fool got away with the important thing) and another one of my personal favourites "*Nakeh nuv deeva bureh*" (Nine burning lamps balancing on the nose – overly vain).

While leafing through the volume, I for one, was surprised to realise that this seems to be the first time that such a compilation has been published. That it was not thought of before means that we owe the authors and compilers a huge debt of thanks, not only for producing such a splendid volume, but that by doing so, our Parsi Gujarati speech with its colourful and pithy oral heritage has been preserved for future generations to come. What is even more encouraging is that the authors are planning to bring out a second volume soon. Their confidence again underlines the richness and variety of our Gujarati language. Prepare yourself to be charmed, humored and intrigued by this book! As the saying goes the book is "*Suttana noo soonoo*" (97 Carat gold – The Best). Truly an appropriate phrase with which to end a review on this unique and enthralling collection.



The President of India has approved the conferment of Padma Shri Award-2014 on the eve of the 65th Republic Day to:
Sooni Taraporewala - Art-Script writing,
Maharashtra
25.01.14



Parsi Bol
Compiled by:



Published by: Good Books
& 49/50 Books
Pages: 150
Price: Rs500



Image credit:
Hemant Morporia

Gaan vugur no loto
A vessel without a bum
Fence sitter



"Rajajee nee juga ma derkajee" appears on page 150
image credit: Farzana Cooper



"Loocho lufungo" appears on page 62
image credit: Farzana Cooper

Images courtesy of
Sooni Taraporewala & Meher Marfatia

Across Oceans & Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th – 20th Centuries; and **No Parsi is an Island**

by veeranganakumari solanki

When the Zoroastrians fled Iran and landed in Sanjan (c 936 CE) on the west coast of India seeking refuge, they were, according to the oral tradition at first refused by the king Jadav Rana. He sent them a bowl of milk filled up to the brim with a message that his country was full and there was no place for them. In return the leader of the Zoroastrian group, a Dastur (High priest), put sugar into the milk and dissolved it without the milk overflowing, as a symbol of intermingling and becoming one with the people. – Kissa-i-Sanjan (The Story of Sanjan)

The Zoroastrian community has ever since contributed greatly to trade and development in India with their foresight and philanthropy. The exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai (formerly the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall, another landmark of Parsi philanthropy in Mumbai) – ‘Across Oceans and Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th – 20th Centuries’ curated by Pheroza J Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree; and ‘No Parsi is an Island’, curated by Nancy Adajania, Ranjit Hoskote and Pheroza J Godrej – maps out the history and contributions of the Zoroastrian community along with detailed insights into their personal lives and homes. The exhibition opening in December 2013 significantly coincided with the Tenth World Zoroastrian Congress, which took place in Mumbai.

‘Across Oceans and Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th – 20th Centuries’ begins from around eight hundred years after *The Story of Sanjan*. By the 18th century, the Parsis had settled well around towns in Gujarat and had begun nation-building primarily through trade, followed by establishing many industries, and later through philanthropy by the Parsi *Sethias* in the form of institutes, public galleries and hospitals, housing, roads and bridges. The exhibition journeys through this time period and into the 21st Century of ‘No Parsi is an Island’.

Entering the exhibition through a street view in Yazd, the viewer encounters the lives of

the Zoroastrians who are still in Iran – with an introduction to their long standing customs and practices. Subtly weaving a thread with continuous references to their traditional attire through the four levels of the exhibition, one notices similarities of the garments from Yazd with the adapted *tanchoi* and *gara saree* (which also bear witness to opium trade) by the Parsis from when they settled in Gujarat. With references of maps and documentation in the form of letters and lithographs, the exhibition display proceeds towards the trade routes of the Parsis – first in Surat and then in Bombay – with China (primarily in Canton and Guangzhou). The ‘Opium Route’ is plotted out alongside views of ‘Guangzhou Godowns’, the ‘Canton Harbour’ and the ‘Suratte Port’. These are interspersed with portraits of Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, Hormarjee Bomanjee Wadia and Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, who were the primary Parsi entrepreneurs to encourage trade to flourish in India with the Hong Merchants and others in China.

Along with commercial trade, porcelain and ornamental goods from China adorned Parsi homes back in India, particularly in Bombay. The viewer enters the third level of the exhibition to witness a reconstructed porcelain and silk shop which introduces itself into transported homes of the three Parsi baronets – Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit, and Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney. A small section from each of their homes’ grandeur is presented here. A

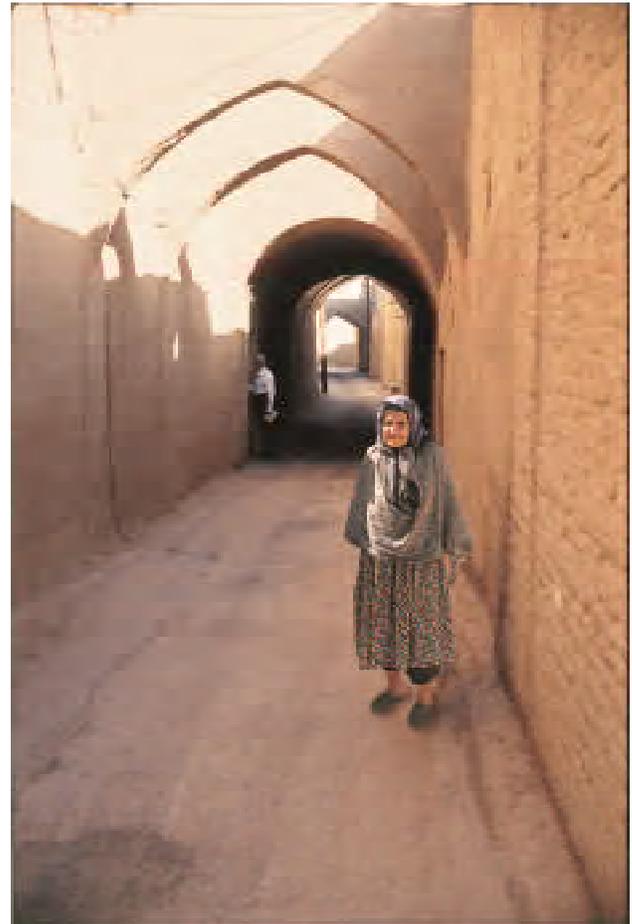
rare view of the medals, letters and invitations to the three Parsi baronets are on display alongside ornate densely carved furniture, crystal and family portraits; and their philanthropic contributions.

This is the last section of 'Across Oceans and Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th – 20th Centuries'. The 20th century grandeur has extended into the 21st century; a transition that one also sees through the works of Parsi artists in the final level of the exhibition, which comprises of 'No Parsi is an Island'.

'No Parsi is an Island' is a presentation of the Parsi artists who were actively involved with local artists and also exhibited their works within the domain of Indian Modern and Contemporary art. The artists range from Pestonji Bomanji, the Pithawallas, Jehangir Ardeshir Lalkaka, to Nelly Sethna, Pilo Pochkhanawala, Adi Davierwalla and Shivax Chavda; and further to current contemporaries such as Jehangir Sabalva, Homi Patel, Mehli Gobhai and Gieve Patel. The works selected by the curators are those which have rarely been exhibited publicly. Photographs, sculptures, illustrated books, preliminary sketches, videos paintings and wall hangings by these artists provide insights into their working methods and also (as seen in Gieve Patel's section) draw parallels with their contemporaries.

On completing the visual narrative in the rooftop gallery of the National Gallery of Modern Art, one retraces their steps through the homes of the Parsis, retraces the trade routes and one walks out through Yazd back into the streets of Parsi Bombay!

The exhibition is accompanied by a copiously well-illustrated and informative catalogue with scholarly essays by the exhibition curators, Pheroza Godrej, Firoza Punthakey Mistree with Sudha Seshaderi, Homi K Bhaba, Ghulam A Nadri, Jesse S Palsetia, Amitav Ghosh, Tithankar Roy, Rusheed Wadia, Mariam Dossal. A series of outreach programmes accompanied the exhibition, through January-February 2014, titled : 'A Zoroastrian Rhapsody' comprising of film-screenings, talks, plays, poetry readings and musical evenings. ■■■■



View of side street in Yazd



View of Surat



Garo (Gara) Chinese Embroidered Saris. Finely embroidered sari lengths on translucent silk, woven in China became very popular with Parsis in Bombay and were referred to as Garas. The Gara was introduced by Parsi merchants trading in China.



Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy



Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit



Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney



An Artist's Rendition of a Porcelain Shop in Canton.

Porcelain shops such as this were seen in streets such as New China Street or Hog lane which were frequented by visitors, Company officials, merchants and sailors. The blue and white porcelain so popular in Parsi homes was particular to Canton.



Densely carved dark wood furniture, popularly termed as Anglo Indian or Indo Portuguese, was popular with wealthy Parsis of the 19th century. Their homes displayed a wealth of Chinese artefacts, porcelain and portraits brought back by Parsis involved in the China Trade.

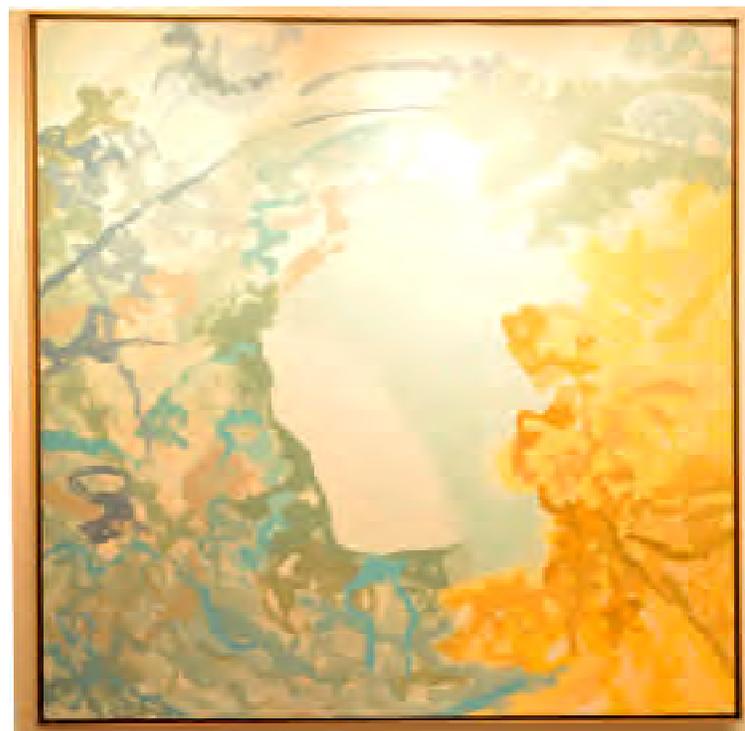




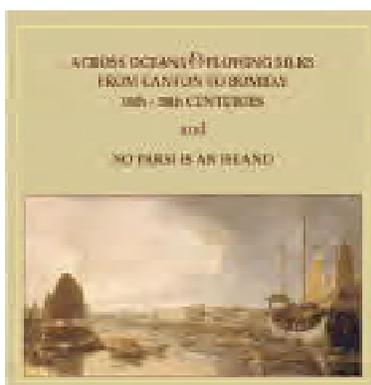
Nelly Sethna combined her practice of weaving with a vigorous concern for research writing and documentation in the domain of traditional crafts and she contributed significantly to the revival and transformation of Kalamkari art.



Adi Davierwalla drew images from as diverse arenas as the world of scientific inquiry, from Greek myths and Christian symbolism. His research into metallurgy and the techniques of welding and casting gave life and form to his sculptures.



Gieve Patel's works reflect his abstractionist tendency and the influence of his artist friends such as Sudhir Patwardhan, Atul Dodiya and Anju Dodiya. The plurality of his creative skills include painting, poetry, and his work as a playwright.



Across Oceans & Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th – 20th Centuries; and No Parsi is an Island. Designed, Printed and Published, by Spenta Multimedia on the occasion of the 10th World Zoroastrian Congress 2013.

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Zoroastrian Return to Roots Inaugural Tour

by sasan jahanian, diana vania, and rosheen kabraji

The PARZOR-Return to Roots (RTR) Programme is a youth-led initiative designed to foster our community identity across the global diaspora. The inaugural tour of Return to Roots was held 23 December 2013-6 January 2014 with our first 16 Fellows arriving in India from Canada, USA, UK and Pakistan. Their time in India was spent in Mumbai, including attendance at the World Zoroastrian Congress, and Gujarat. For some of our participants this was their first visit to India. The Fellows came from a range of professional and educational backgrounds and included four participants of Iranian Zoroastrian heritage.

Designed for Zoroastrian youth who live in the diaspora, the RTR program aims to 'return, reconnect, and revive' the religion and community. One of the reasons this project exists was to reconnect youth from across the diaspora with their roots. Fellow, Kurush Italia, (USA) describes the sense of belonging he felt by returning to India: *"I have gained a sense of belonging to something important. Being from the United States we don't have the feeling that we are an important culture because no one even knows what our religion is but in India Zoroastrians are very well respected and celebrated by all. It has made me feel like I am a part of something much bigger than I realized."*

With the support of scholars and archeologists, Fellows travelled along the paths of their Parsi ancestors from Nargol to Sanjan, Udvada, Surat, Navsari, and Mumbai over a period of two weeks. For many of the participants, this experience provided insight into the positive influence that Parsis have had on the development of India, as well as enabled them to learn about our different religious practices. Bezan Irani, (Canada) describes his experience: *"What was great about the learning aspect of the trip was that you got a taste of both the religious and factual points of view of Zoroastrianism. With exposure to both points of view,*

each person was able to make their own decision on how they felt about our beliefs."

The tour began on the bustling streets of Mumbai where Fellows were able to see for themselves the Parsi legacy of both the past and present in India. On their first day, they visited the prestigious headquarters of Tata Group, Bombay House and were exposed to the history and entrepreneurial insights of one of the oldest and most successful global companies. Subsequently they met and were generously hosted by successful Parsi entrepreneurs including Jimmy Mistry, delighted in scrumptious lunches at *Jimmy Boy* restaurant, and *Britannia* where the fellows were privileged to be able to interact with the owners of these established Mumbai stalwarts of the Parsi restaurant business. Beyond the city into the quiet of Gujarat, the fellows were exposed to a much less seen side of Parsi entrepreneurship in rural India at Munshi Farms. Here, amongst the mango trees and fields of sugar cane, our gracious hosts told us the story of what it takes to sustain a farm whose existence pre-dates the American Revolution. In Surat, we visited *Dotivala Bakery*, where Cyrus Dotivala gave us a personal tour of the bakery at peak time where we not only got to see how these delicious batasas, naan khatai, and mava cake were baked but also sampled these freshly baked goods as they came out of the ovens. Everywhere we visited, there was always a 'secret' as to why these family run businesses had succeeded. The secret might just be in the 'family' part and it is something that did not go unnoticed by the group who, through the trip, also developed into a family. As one of the Fellows, Vandad Pourbahrami remarked: *"the 16 of us on the trip have naturally formed a great bond, like a family."*

For many of the participants, it was the quest for where their family, their roots, their community came from that led them to apply

to participate in this tour. Rustom Kapadia (UK) explained how *“one of the most important aspects gained from the RTR trip was a sense of identity and enjoyment in being a young Zoroastrian. Understanding my religion on a cultural, political and social level gives me a great sense of pride and ambition to become more involved in the community. It has also inspired me to work on giving back the way our forefathers and previous generations have.”*

When we listened in, and eventually said hello to one of the Fellows’ father in California read out the daily itinerary over Skype to his son at breakfast the first morning, it was clear, thanks to technology, that the experiences of the Fellows would be shared with their families and local communities in real-time. Burzin Tampal, (Canada) told us at the end of the tour what he was leaving India with: *“I have gained two of the most invaluable assets: knowledge and friendship. Knowledge of myself, my community, and my history. Friendships formed from wonderful life experiences surrounded by amazingly talented people from all walks of life.”* The hospitality we were met with throughout the trip, from Mumbai to Surat, has been humbling reminder to both the Fellows and organizers of the true spirit of what it means to be a Zoroastrian. Semira Jehanian, (USA) told us how: *“I really have a sense of belonging now as before the trip I really didn’t have any Zoroastrian friends. I honestly feel that I am part of a religion that is genuinely unique and enlightening.”*

Participants were eager to visit the exact spot where Zoroastrians landed on the Indian shores of Nargol. It is here where the RTR Fellows returned to their roots and saw how a small community has made a huge impact on such a vast population. During the tour, the Fellows visited eight agiaries and Atash Behrams in Mumbai and Gujarat. One of the more special experiences was visiting the Iranshah at Udvada at night as the Nargdin ceremony was conducted. Jennifer Rostami, (USA) describes her experience: *“I have gained a deep sense of connectedness with our religion, to a point where I have gained confidence talking about the religion because I now have a substantive understanding of our practices and symbolisms.”* We also visited the Dadar Athoran where we met with the principal of the school, Ramiyar Karanjia, who explained to us about the daily

routine of training young priests while the Fellows got to also interact with the young priests in training and appreciate the commitment and dedication that is required to ensure the continuity of our priesthood.

The Fellows also visited Parsi General Hospital, the orphanage and WZO Senior Citizen home in Gujarat where they were able to see where and how they could give back to the more underprivileged parts of the community. Jehangir Madon, (USA): *“I was glad to gain more knowledge about our achievements in India and to see that so many trusts and funds were set up by Parsis in order to take care of the less fortunate.”*

In Navsari, following a morning visit to the Atash Behram, the Fellows were shown ancient texts and manuscripts that have been restored and others that need restoration in the Meherjirana Library. Here they learned about the painstaking effort of preserving and restoring their oral and written tradition. *“Visiting Parsi landmarks and learning the richness of our wonderful religion through excellent scholars and priests have made me more religious minded and I truly feel blessed to be born a Zarthushti”* said Fareeza Doctor (Pakistan).

Fellows Diana Vania, Canada and Sasan Jahanian, USA describe why they feel this programme is important: *“The RTR program is essential in order to maintain our Zoroastrian values, ideas, and traditions for future generations. Each member from the first RTR trip sincerely hopes that more Zoroastrian youth from around the world are able to engage in future trips. We hope to form a global network of RTR alumni who are committed to serving their local Zoroastrian associations, giving back to the community, and encouraging other youth to participate in RTR. As we constantly hear about our dwindling population size, it is imperative that we support our youth in returning to, reconnecting with, and reviving our community.”*

After completing the programme, Fellows hope to impart knowledge about our small but powerful community, spread awareness about the RTR programme, and help garner funds and sponsorship for subsequent Roots trips. As put by Cumbysis Tampal, (Canada): *“I will be sure to spread the word and to teach people the*

Issue sponsored by Abtin & Mehafsoon Sassanfar

things I have learned. I would also be willing to create a small group, and go back to India and show them the things I've seen so that essentially the flame that I've received can be passed on and ignite another mind."

The next RTR trip will take place later this year. If you are interested in supporting us or in becoming a Fellow for the next trip, please visit our website for more information: www.zororoots.org.

The Zoroastrian Return to Roots programme is an umbrella project within the UNESCO-PARZOR Foundation. ■■■



RTR group day 1: Front row L-R: Shireen Havewala, Anahita Sidhwa, Fareeza Doctor, Jennifer Rostami, Binaifer Daji, Diana Vania, Semira Jehanian, Armeen Mistry, Farzin Avari, Aban Marker Kabraji.

Back row: L-R: Dinsha Mistree, Rustom Kapadia, Jehangir Madon, Kurush Italia, Burzin Tampil, Bezan Irani, Sasan Jehanian, Cumbysis Tampil, Vandad Pourbahrami, Rosheen Kabraji, Shahyan Dastur. copyright RTR



Sasan Jahanian is an Iranian Zoroastrian born in Baton Rouge, LA, growing up in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He has recently completed his Masters in Biology while developing a non-profit outreach program providing oral hygiene education to rural and low-income families in California.



Diana Vania is a Global Health graduate student from Canada. She is interested in health and social policy in India. She was born and raised in Toronto, but has visited India several times and hopes to move to Mumbai in the future.



Rosheen Kabraji is the RTR Representative UK, Europe, Iran and Pakistan. She is Manager of the Asia Programme at Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) in London.

Continued from page 57



Nelson Mandela with actors trained by Asha Centre, in his sitting room

“Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.”
- Nelson Mandela



Their Language of Love - Bapsi Sidhwa

reviewed by lylah alphonse

bapsi Sidhwa's book of short stories, *Their Language of Love*, offers a lyrical look at the less-glamorous aspects of life. Many of the stories feature details from Sidhwa's own experiences, which lend them a vividness and a sense of urgency that one rarely sees in short-story form.

Some of the stories share characters – the reader first meets Zareen as her family flees Lahore in *A Gentlemanly War*, for example, so when she is reintroduced in another story it feels like reconnecting with a family friend. The stories that don't instead share situations so familiar to so many that it's easy to identify with the tiny betrayals or serious struggles for safety, identity, or family. But the real thread that ties these tales together is the way the women in them bridge several worlds at once – rich and poor, faith and failure, America and Pakistan, Parsi and non-Parsi – and how, ultimately, they have to choose one side or another.

For the first generation of children raised in America, perhaps the story that most hits home is *Breaking It Up*, in which an older Zareen travels to America to meet her daughter's Jewish fiancé with the express purpose of undermining the relationship. Originally published in the 1980s, it was eventually expanded into Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat*, which was later made into a play.

"You are robbing us of a dimension of joy we have a right to expect," she tells her devastated daughter, Feroza, calling her selfish for falling in love and "thinking of no one else." "What will you bring to the family if you marry this David?" she asks. After berating her daughter about how she's tossing her heritage aside, and accusing David of forcing Feroza to sacrifice her family for him, she switches tactics. "Darling, I can't bear to see you unhappy," she tells her. And then, changes tactics again, intimidating David by detailing her community's expectations for their wedding - "if there is a wedding," Zareen says, confident that now there won't be.

Some of the stories are composites of Sidhwa's real-life friendships with women in Lahore. Her character Ruth is the wife of an American doing business in Pakistan. In spite of the ease with which she fits in to her adopted country, she is constantly reminded of her status as a foreigner, with all the perils and privileges that go with it.

"The two stories about Ruth were written only a few years ago," Sidhwa writes in her introduction. "In these stories, particularly in 'Ruth and the Hijackers,' the role I assigned Raj is interchangeable with the character of my brother, Minoo Bhandara, and the role he played in providing me with the dramatic incidents that propel the story."

The drama isn't limited to Ruth and her sticky situations. *Defend Yourself Against Me* is the story of Sikander Khan, whom Sidhwa met at a party in Houston, a world away from the Pakistani slum in which he was attacked by Sikhs as a child.

"The boys and some of the men in the village, I am informed, were huddled in a dark room at the back of a barn when the Sikhs smote the door shouting, 'Open up. Open up!'" Sidhwa writes. "And, when the door opened, the hideous swish of long steel swords dazzling their eyes in the sunlight, severing first his father's head, then his uncle's, then his brother's. His own merely sliced at the back, and his neck saved, because he was only nine years old, and short. They left him for dead."

Khan is friends with Sikhs in America, a relationship that would be nearly impossible in Pakistan – a point driven home by his mother's reaction when his friends try to apologize for the sins of the generation before them. The heart-wrenching, compelling tale didn't make it into another of Sidhwa's Novel, *Ice-Candy Man* (known in the United States as *Cracking India*), but it's perfectly placed here, in an ending so powerful that it leaves both reader and author without words.



Lylah M Alphonse is the Managing Editor for Special Reports at US News & World Report, and the Consulting Editor for FEZANA. Follow her on Twitter @WriteEditRepeat or on her blog at WriteEditRepeat.blogspot.com.

“...I choose (only)
Thy teachings, Lord.”

Yasna 46.3

Inslar translation



The World Zoroastrian Organisation