

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

4

Issue 2004



“Only
a life
lived for
others
is a life
worth
while.”

Albert Einstein



Prof K D Irani felicitated at the Pomona Darbe Mehr. Photograph coutesy, Hanoz Gandhi, p 66.

Contents

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 04 | North America's Great Zoroastrian - adi davar |
| 07 | An evening of Treasures, Traditions & Tributes - vahishta canteenwalla |
| 10 | Wither the Good Parsi - jehangir s pocha |
| 15 | Land of Fire : A Journey to Azerbaijan - rashna batliwala singh |
| 20 | The quality of life & social safety net for the Zoroastrian senior - dolly dastoor |
| 22 | Reflections on 9-11 - dina g mcintyre |
| 24 | Volunteering is a rewarding experience - tanaz khory |
| 26 | Yesterday's youth are not the same as today's - nikan h katibi |
| 28 | "Persepolis Recreated" - soli dastur |
| 30 | Mobedan-e-Mobed Dr Jahangir Oshidary |
| 32 | WZO International Board Members 2004-05 |
| 34 | A Time for Natak - aban rustomji |
| 38 | Parsis - The Zoroastrians of India - thrity umrigar |
| 42 | Music & Tigers - a profile |
| 43 | Zarathushtra's Genetic System - stanley insler |
| 50 | Takht-e-Soleyman |
| 51 | From the Oxus to the heart of Victorian London - vera s katrak |
| 56 | The Three Maji come to Harrow - noshir j avari |
| 63 | A Farsi Article - mehran sepehri |
| 64 | Snapshots of a Good Life - shazneen rabadi gandhi |
| 68 | Why not a World Body of Zoroastrians - keki gandhi |
| 71 | Membership form and details |

PHOTOGRAPHS

Courtesy of individuals whose articles appear in the magazine or as mentioned.

THE COVER

Photograph by Sooni Taraporevala

WZO WEBSITE

www.w-z-o.org

International Board Members



London, England

Mr Sam H Bhiwandiwalla
Chairman
E-mail:
sam@bhiwandi.demon.co.uk

Mr Rustam S Dubash
President
E-mail:
dubashrs@penningtons.co.uk

Mr Darayus S Motivala
Jt Hon Secretary
E-mail:
darayus@motivala.me.uk

Mrs Khurshid B Kapadia
Membership Secretary
E-mail:
kbk@mm-croy.mottmac.com

Dr Sam Kerr
Unit 5, 'Agincourt'
10 Larkin Street
Roseville
New South Wales, 2069
Australia

Er Jehan Bagli
Mississauga, Canada
E-mail: jbagli@rogers.com

Mr Marzi Byramjee
Oakbillie, Canada
E-mail:
marzi@regalpresscanada.com

Mr Dadi B Engineer
President, WZO India
Mumbai, India
E-mail:
dbengineer@crawfordbayley.com

Mr Dadi E Mistry
New Delhi, India
E-mail:
mistry@del2.vsnl.net.in

Mr Rustom Yeganegi
233 Saadi Avenue
Tehran, Iran

Mrs Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan
E-mail:
toxy39@attglobal.net

Mr Russi Ghadiali
Singapore
E-mail:
RGHADIA1@irf.com

Mr Keki Bhote
Vice President
Illinois, USA
E-mail:
krbhote@sbcglobal.net

Note: WZO's committee is extensive, these are just a few of the names given for member's convenience

Volume XXXVI- Issue 4 | 2004

Printed by:
A A Graphics
1721/31 LAC No 2
Karachi 75420
Pakistan

Funded by:
World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

Design & layout by:
Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan

From the Editor

Across the globe, our Zoroastrian community is concerned in the declining numbers especially in India, who have been quoting numbers of 80,000 - 90,000 confidently for sometime. With the various announcements made in their daily press regarding the fall in numbers both in Delhi and Mumbai, Parsiana, FEZANA Journal and Creatingawareness.com, have covered this subject ably. Besides concerned individuals writing about this issue, the BPP needs to address the problem NOW, so that the rest of the community may follow like-wise. This problem has been an on-going one since years and has been "swept under the carpet" rather than facing the issue and solving the matter once and for all. Our community who have settled in the New World fortunately have the will and strength to allow the navjotes of children born to couples of mixed marriages, welcoming the non-Zoroastrian spouse and their children to various activities, but the majority of Zoroastrians still reside in India.



Our community is an ageing one, with the elderly living alone and trying to cope without the support they need. It is hard to comprehend that (Zoroastrian) individuals in India do not have the money for a square meal, when we have so much wealth between us. Surely like-minded individuals and corporate magnets, for which there is no dearth of, can come up with a plan of action for this very humanitarian cause.

On a lighter note, 4 March 2005, WZO celebrates 25 years and we at Hamazor aim to produce a commemorative issue for this landmark occasion. Twenty-five constructive years with achievements is something worthwhile to celebrate.

Our past President & Chairman, Shahpur Captain has been invited by me, to be the Guest Editor of the next issue of the Hamazor, to which he has thankfully agreed. As he was the man who envisaged a World Zoroastrian Organisation and put it on the "map", who better to be the Guest Editor for our special issue.

We wish all our members and friends a happy, healthy, constructive 2005.

Toxy Cowasjee

Toxy Cowasjee, 2A Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530, Pakistan

North America's Great Zoroastrian :

DINSHAW FRAMROZE JOSHI

by adi davar

WZO's Tribute to Dinshaw Joshi's memory on his 1st death anniversary

November 1926 was a month of great joy in the Joshi family, in Bombay. Framroze and Dinbai had been blessed with their first son. They named him Dinshaw. But not in their wildest imagination did they dream that someday, he would become the first - and to date the only - Zoroastrian recognized in India and internationally as a world authority in the modern field of telecommunications, besides becoming a towering community figure in far-away North America. By the time he died in November 2003, their son had fulfilled that tryst with destiny.

Dinshaw grew into a young man determined to be an engineer. Preparing himself for that at Elphinstone College's Royal Institute of Science in Bombay, he won admission for mechanical and electrical engineering studies at India's premier engineering faculty at the time - Poona Engineering College. As always, Dinshaw topped all candidates while earning his Bachelor of Engineering from Bombay University, as well as in the all-India public service exams that led to his selection to India's vast Post & Telegraph Authority (P&T). Beginning as a Divisional Engineer in its Telegraph Engineering Department, he launched a career of national and international eminence in the then nascent field of telecommunications.

Its evolving technology fascinated Dinshaw. He absorbed it like a proverbial sponge. Recognizing his brilliance, and to hone his expertise in advanced telecommunications technology, P&T first sent him under a UN Technical Assistance Fellowship to Germany, Switzerland and UK and later, to other courses abroad. He was sent to others, including to the National Academy of

Administration and the National Defence College in India, to enhance his obvious managerial skills as well. As Dinshaw began proposing far-reaching engineering and organizational changes to modernize India's archaic telecommunications system and ways to realize them, his rise in P&T was spectacular. En route, he pioneered technologies, including in multi-exchange telephone systems for which he held a patent in India as well as in the UK.

While occupying positions of increasing responsibility, P&T concurrently assigned Dinshaw to visiting foreign dignitaries such as Eisenhower, Khrushchev, Queen Elizabeth II, the Shah of Iran and Jacqueline Kennedy. At a young age, it appointed him the General Manager of Bombay Telephones, India's largest telecommunications system, that cried for technological and managerial modernization. His success there, led to the pinnacle of Dinshaw's P&T career at a national level, when he was named its Deputy Director-General. **He was the first, and to date, the only Zoroastrian to reach such a national rung anywhere in the world** in the field of telecommunications.

But his engineering prowess soon led beyond the national, to a world stage. Dinshaw was recognized as a world authority on "switchgearing" which, in the early 70s, was at the cutting edge of telecommunications technology. Long-distance telephone systems in India and many developing countries from the late 60s to the early 80s operated on this system, which Dinshaw pioneered. **No Zoroastrian has yet achieved such world**

pre-eminence and recognition in telecommunications!

Dinshaw's professional successes went hand in hand with his marriage in 1956 to his beloved life partner, Goolcher Kotwal, and the birth of their adored daughter Shehernaz. Perhaps motivated as much by his desire to open better opportunities in life for them as to place his world-acknowledged telecommunications engineering genius on a broader international canvas, he accepted the invitation to join the World Bank in 1973.

During his 20 years in this pristine world development institution, Dinshaw master-minded technological and institutional improvements in the telecommunications systems of many countries, including Egypt, Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania and Thailand. In turn, that spurred the growth of their economies and improved the quality of life for their millions.

Even through his profession, he lived by the Zoroastrian precept of giving of oneself to improve the lives of others.

But unlike some who achieve pre-eminence and never let anyone forget that, Dinshaw refrained from doing so. He always remained modest and self-effacing, wearing his world and national honours lightly on his shoulders. Indeed, a hallmark of true greatness!

His towering professional pre-eminence was matched by his fierce devotion to living according to the principles of his faith, whose *navar* he had become when 12. Despite the demands of his career, he



always had time to help those who sought it and to serve the community wherever he lived - India or North America.

After resolving a long-festering dispute between community groups in Delhi, Dinshaw was among those at the forefront who shaped the Delhi Anjuman's constitution on a forward-looking basis and

later built its *agjary*. Soon after coming to Washington DC, he was drawn into the creation of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMWI). Its far-sighted constitution and practices, which welcomed into the Association, non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of mixed marriages (way before even WZO's constitution did) as well as persons of any ethnicity who believed in the faith, owe as much to Dinshaw's broad vision as to those of ZAMWI's other founders. Elected as its Founder-Vice President in 1978, he served as its President from 1982-84.

Dinshaw then turned his focus to a wider canvas, North America's Zoroastrian community. Drawn into its bi-national body, FEZANA, Dinshaw served it with great devotion and fervour from 1987 until he died. Besides participating in many of its committees, he chaired its Welfare Committee from its inception until 2002, and its Awards Committee from 1995 until his demise in November 2003. The community acclaimed him for setting transparent standards and rigorous selection processes for Awards given at FEZANA's bi-annual North American Congresses. In tribute, he was asked to head the Awards Committee of the 2000 World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston.

What is less publicly known is, that Dinshaw's sagacity and ability to quietly give sound advice based on true Zoroastrian values, made him a valued counsellor to successive FEZANA Presidents. They frequently turned to him for counsel on most North American community matters. He got no public recognition for his imprint on them. Yet, it is a measure of his greatness, that this mattered not one bit to him. What fulfilled Dinshaw was, that he could give of himself for the benefit of the community he loved. That was his true passion. Unknown to them, North American Zoroastrians are better-off because he silently played this beneficial role for years.

The North American and the global Zoroastrian community became poorer when this great, yet modest, Zoroastrian died a year ago, in November 2003. By then, he had fulfilled his destiny of professional and community greatness which Framroze and Dinbai had never dared to dream for their eldest son, Dinshaw Framroze Joshi.



(Note: Hamazor was unable to carry a tribute last year, as there was no 4th issue of 2003. A similar article appears on Vohuman website's "Series on Prominent Zarathustis" - Ed)



Adi Davar, till recently was a member of the WZO International Board of Trustees. Active in community affairs, internationally, nationally and locally. Researcher, writer and speaker on Zoroastrianism, its history and contemporary issues. Consultant on international economic development. Senior executive in the Tata Group and the World Bank - where he retired as a Director of East Asia & Pacific Region. Degrees in economics and law from Bombay. Masters in international law from Harvard.

25th

WZO celebrates its
Silver Jubilee

4th March 2005

Calendar for the year

Saturday 19th March - WZO 25th
Anniversary Year Celebrations

Sunday 5th June - Annual seminar on
Religion, History and Culture.

Sunday 10th July - Annual BBQ to be
held by kind courtesy of Mr & Mrs
Rohinton Irani at their home

Sunday 21st August - Shahenshai
Navroze Lunch

18th September - AGM

26th October - Mehraban Farhangi's
death anniversary

November Gala Dinner/Dance (date
and venue to be announced)

An evening of Treasures, Traditions and Tributes

- great-granddaughter, Vahishta Canteenwalla reports . . .

On Saturday, October 16th 2004, at 7:30 pm, the Library Committee of the ZAH Zoroastrian Heritage & Cultural Center, held a function to honour the late Shams-ul-Ulema Dr Dastur Maneckji N Dhalla, in Houston. It was called *An Evening of Treasures, Traditions and Tributes*. A collection of Dr Dhalla's books and memorabilia was exhibited at the cultural center library along with old saris, *garas*, pictures, *topis*, *kors* and *torans*.

The evening started out by Opening Comments from Aban Rustomji, Chair of the Library Committee, welcoming everyone. Virasp Mehta, Arnaz Marker, Vahishta & Jambi Canteenwalla were introduced, as were the Library Committee members, the Entertainment Committee and the ZAH Committee.

This was followed by a play *A Legend*, written by Shahnaz Sidhwa. The play was based on Dr Dhalla's book *Aek Atmakatha*, translated into English by Behli and Gool Rustomji. The play captured a few key elements of Dasturji's married life. It portrayed him and his beloved wife Cooverbai, sitting and reminiscing about their wonderful life together. Short vignettes depicting their marriage were presented. All aspects had been well researched and the audience got a good feel of the devotion between the couple. Bravo Shahnaz Sidhwa.

Following the play there was a book reading by nine members of the ZAH They read

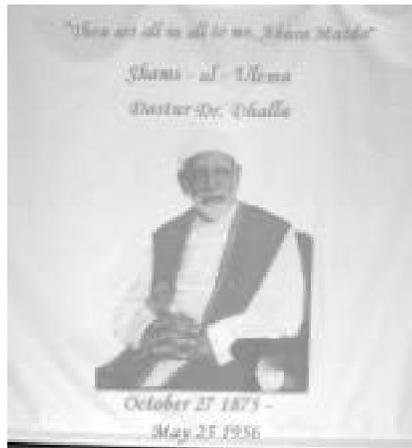
excerpts from his book *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda*. This timeless classic was brought to life by their eloquent rendition. It was

especially heartening to see so many people of all ages listening so attentively and with such interest.

Magdalena Rustomji gave a presentation of her poem written specially for the occasion.

Aban Rustomji thanked everyone and presented flowers and a copy of Magdalena's poetry to Vahishta Canteenwalla and Arnaz Marker. Vahishta Canteenwalla thanked the

organizers for honouring Dr Dhalla, her great grandfather, Arnaz Marker presented the Library with Dr Dhalla's PhD and Masters degrees from Columbia University. She urged people to read *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda* and to teach their children from that book as it is, as relevant today, as it was 60 years ago. Virasp Mehta also addressed the audience.



Banner at the ZAH

Arnaz and Vahishta were invited to open the exhibit. There is a special cabinet in the library room at the Center, which is filled with artifacts belonging to Dr Dhalla along with his books, donated by family, friends and admirers of Dr Dhalla. Also, there was an exhibit of some lovely old garas and saris, along with old topis, pictures, torans all belonging to members of the ZAH.

The evening ended with dinner and drinks for all.

The next day, on Sunday at 2 pm, there was a small informal discussion led by Virasp Mehta, where members shared their stories and memories of Dasturji. People asked Virasp questions regarding Dasturji and Cooverbai. Yezdi Rustomji had prepared a paper titled *Dastur Dhalla – an Intellectual Life*, which he read out to the group. This short discussion was very enlightening and I'm sure that people left feeling they understood Dasturji a little better. We have to acknowledge the good work that Virasp Mehta is doing through the internet regarding his monthly *Ushao* and his postings on Dr Dhalla's works.

We, the members of the Dhalla family, would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the organizers of this wonderful and touching event, especially Aban & Pervez Rustomji who have been working hard at gathering all the different artifacts for the library. We would urge people all over the world to donate Dasturji Dhalla's books, pictures, artifacts to the Houston Heritage & Cultural Center Library where it will be safely kept for future generations to study and admire such a great man. ■■■■



Vahishta Canteenwalla born in Karachi, educated at the Mama Parsi Girls School and St Joseph's College for Women. Emigrated to Montreal, Canada, in September 1975, married Jambhi Canteenwalla, and mother of two daughters, Shaama 26 and Zara 23. An active member, and past Secretary, of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, she is also very active in all community affairs. She has been working for a small chemical company in Montreal for the last 11 years.

Montreal for the last 11 years.

Ode to Dastur Dhalla

- magdalena rustomji

In this gathering place,
Houston, Texas,
we convene,
to pay tribute
to the good life
of a good man.
the 'better than good'
Dastur Dr Dhalla.

Dastur Dhalla,
the honest man
the serene man
the tolerant man
the munificent man.

Dastur Dhalla,
the man of devotion,
the man of equanimity
the man of progressive mentality
the literary man
par excellence

A man of Mazda
courageous by nature,
unwavering in conviction,
enduring cold receptions,
evil threats,
slander, bad will
in the Battle for Truth
and for Righeousness

His weapons were prayer,
Knowledge, the reflective mind
and the kind deed
and philosophy Asha,
the Zarthushti way of life

A man whose very life came to be
a prayer ascending to the clouds
a flame shining through the fog
touching hearts and minds then and now

And so in the words of Dastur Dhalla.
May better than the good come unto you
May better than the good come unto your household.
May better than the good come unto our village
and may better than the good come unto
'Our Perfecting World'.



Dr Dhalla receiving his PhD - private collection



Dastur Dhalla and Cooverbai, in their garden, a few months before his demise. Courtesy Pouruchisti Bharucha, granddaughter and mother of Vahishta



The Legend - on stage, young Maneckji comforting his wife.

Performers are - L to R: Sarosh Collector, Villi & Ken Bhappu



Amaz Marker addressing the audience



Exhibit of garas, kors, old saris and other items



Aban Rustomji felicitating Virasp Mehta

Wither the Good Parsi

by j e h a n g i r s p o c h a

Written for the Businessworld India, <http://www.businessworldindia.com/sep2704/invoque01.asp> and shared by the author with the readers of Hamazor.

He is an uncommonly seen but much beloved figure, the brunt of many jokes and the beneficiary of much respect. He is the one we love because he donated the benches in the neighbourhood park, and the one who causes road-rage when he holds up traffic by honking angrily at the potholes in the road. Often rumpled, always eccentric and never lacking for a uniquely blue turn of phrase, the Good Parsi has long occupied a place in Indian hearts far disproportionate to his number.

So it almost seems unfair that just when India, Inc. is facing new and seemingly infinite horizons, one of its oldest and most successful business communities is experiencing waning fortunes. **Or is it?**

The Parsis, once indomitable figures of Indian political, economic and social life, are locked into an emotional debate over how best to preserve their community, while also moving with the times.

Though the community has always been microscopic, its population is expected to slide from the current 70,000 to 25,000 by 2020, mostly as a result of its educated and increasingly secular youth marrying late and/or outside the community, and a refusal to accept converts.

"If this happens we'll be classified as a tribe," says Khushroo Madan, a self-described reformist priest in Bombay.

Critics also say Parsis are losing the spirit and innovation that allowed them become one of the wealthiest communities in the world.

"I look at young Parsi men these days and they seem content to just loaf around - they

think small and don't do things like they did in the old days", said Roxanne Pavri, 23, in Cusrow Baug, a serene Parsi housing colony in the heart of chaotic Bombay. Between the 1650s and 1947, Parsis in their distinctive white *duglees* and richly embroidered *gara* sarees established India's first steel mill, stock exchange, political party, university, public hospital, newspaper, printing press, film studio, private electricity plant, airline, modern dance company, movie theatre, construction company, bank, insurance company, and feminist movement. The community also dominated professions such as law, medicine and accounting, and Parsi traders were the first Indians to establish trading posts across the world, including Japan, China, Singapore, and Europe.

Significantly, Parsis were honest, patriotic in focusing their energies and generous in sharing their success. The Tatas, the community's first family and the country's premier business house, famously asked "what does India need" rather than "what will make us the most money". And despite the community's close association with the British, Parsis such as Dadabhai Navroji were instrumental in forming the independence movement.

Numerous portraits and marble statues of these and other intrepid and altruistic Parsi men and women still dot Bombay's landmarks in mute testimony to their accomplishments and benefactions.

But few statues are being erected of Parsis of this generation.

Around Pavri the truth of her words echo in almost every home. Cusrow Baug was originally built as charitable housing by the Wadias of Bombay Dyeing fame. Now many

of its residents, despite having progressed into the upper-class, twist laws and ethics to retain their hold over these homes. Their kids restrict their dreams to buying a Royal Enfield, and landing a safe job at Jet Airways. And the Wadias themselves, once princes of Indian industry, fail even to list amongst India's top industrialists.

Not surprisingly, the ratio of Parsis in India's best schools, professions, and top jobs is falling rapidly, even though it remains proportionately higher than for any other community.

Chasm over change

Madon, the priest, says he is trying to goad Parsis into responding to the possibility of their demise.

"We must become more broadminded and welcome children of mixed parents into our community," he says.

To Zoroastrian conservatives, this is heresy.

"Purity is more important than numbers," says Khojeste Mistree, a Zoroastrian scholar in Bombay. *"Our religion is interwoven with our ethnicity (and) can only be passed on through a Zoroastrian father."* To many this doesn't seem sensible or fair. *"I would have looked seriously at Zoroastrianism when I was choosing my spiritual path,"* says Sita Mani, 33, the daughter of a Zoroastrian mother and Hindu father. *"Its basic tenets - good thoughts, good words and good deeds - are so sound."* But since Mani was banned from even entering a Zoroastrian 'fire' temple, she says her interest in the religion waned, and she now practices Buddhism.

With the Zoroastrian community losing thousands of would-be members like Mani, Madon says he has started performing the *navjote* (a thread ceremony-like religious initiation) of children born of Zoroastrian mothers and non-Zoroastrian fathers.

Other Zoroastrian groups, such as one run by Ali Jafarey, a Los Angeles-based

Pakistani, have also begun to accept a few converts from other religions. But the blowback over this has been fierce.

Looking back as a way forward

The seeming contradiction between this myopic ethno-religious conservatism and the socio-economic progressiveness of the Parsis is rooted in their refugee mentality, says Dr Mani Kamerkar, a Zoroastrian historian and author of *From the Iranian Plateau to the Shores of Gujarat*, a chronicle of Zoroastrian emigration to India.

Though Zoroastrianism, generally considered the world's oldest prophetic religion, flourished in Persia (modern-day Iran) for millennia, greatly influencing Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it was virtually destroyed by the Arab invasion of Persia in 651. Though some Zoroastrians remained in Iran, facing varying degrees of prejudice over the centuries, others fled, mostly to India.

Legend has it that when these fierce looking warriors first landed in Gujarat 1400 years ago, the local king, Jadav Rana, sent them a goblet filled to the brim with milk to signify that there was no room in the country for them. But an astute Parsi priest answered by dissolving a handful of sugar in the milk, impressing Rana enough for him to grant the Parsis permanent refuge.

Though Parsis assimilated peacefully into Indian life, they did not intermarry with local communities and maintained their faith against overwhelming odds. (Conservatives like to point out there is no trace left of Zoroastrian groups who migrated elsewhere and intermarried freely.)

Now *"Zoroastrians have become obsessed with the idea of saving themselves, keeping apart from the Other,"* says Kamerkar, who is married to a non-Parsi man.

Though many modern Parsis are increasingly pushing to change this, conservatives such as Mistree say their

“over-westernization and over-secularization is killing our Parsi *panu*”, or way of life.

This lament finds resonance with many Parsis who believe the best way to secure their community’s future is to hold fast to the past. For example, more and more Parsis (myself included) have begun visiting Iran in an attempt to reinvigorate their affinities with Zoroastrian Persia’s grand past.

This has given rise to what I call the uber-Parsi. uber-Parsis cruise public libraries and surf the web to excavate obscure facts and reacquaint the world with the ancient Persian Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian dynasties, which were the cultural and military super-powers of their times, eventually outlasting their rival superpowers, the Greeks and the Romans.

uber-Parsi are easily made, for Parsis are defined by how small they are in numbers but how great they are in their minds. But curating history can only go so far in energizing a community.

In many homes the attempt to cull present meaning from Persian history descends into farce. These are homes where glossy picture-books on ancient Persia lie strategically on coffee tables, a silver bookmark from Tiffany’s thrust carelessly between pages never perused. If at all the books are read, it is to satisfy the thirst for that latest trend of pregnant Parsi parents – the quest for a “different” name with which to title sons and daughters unborn. Names like Artaxerxes, Sohrushmani, and Cambyses bludgeon friends with their ancient authenticity, and reassure parents that their children will always be regarded as “special”, and they, as refined Parsis for naming them so.

A net too safe

Though Parsis are simultaneously an ancient and urbane people, very little of their present culture is their own.

Most authentic Zoroastrian culture was lost in Iran. The syncretic Persio-Hindu creed Parsis developed in Gujarat, where they

first landed as emigrants 1400 years ago and where they mostly lived until the 1800s, was cast aside in favor of Anglophilic norms under the British. As British influence in India faded one of the central inspirations behind (Anglo-) Parsi culture disappeared, and the community struggled with how to replace it.

Self-described “liberal” Parsis having little interest in, or knowledge of, their community’s inner dynamics, strayed towards a broad secularism. In doing so they left the home field to conservative Parsis who wanted no change, says Minoo Shroff, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchyat, the community’s apex socio-religious organization.

Recently, at a Parsi wedding where everyone including the couple was gazing disinterestedly on while priests murmured prayers in a dead language no one understood, I commented on how devoid of anything personal or even remotely romantic the ceremony seemed. I was immediately shushed. “*This is the way it’s always been,*” a friend said. “*We have to preserve our ways.*”

I was struck by the significance of what my friend said, even though, given the rapt attention with which he poured himself another shot of Johnnie Walker, he himself was not. It suddenly became clear to me that the Parsis have reached the ultimate nadir of any community: the point at which the perfect mimicking of an old custom, rather than any new innovation, becomes the ultimate accolade.

Kamerkar says this fear of change and lack of initiative is partly rooted in Parsi philanthropy, which is proving to be a double-edged sword.

Wealthy Parsis have endowed the community with free housing, education, health care and religious infrastructure worth more than \$500 million, says Shroff.

While applauding this largesse, Kamerkar says that over the years the assurance of inheriting free homes and a social safety net

has robbed the community of motivation and fueled a selfish desire not to dilute resources by accepting new converts.

To sidestep this, she suggests new Zoroastrian converts could form a separate sect and claim no Bombay Parsi Panchayat funds. Kamerkar's argument is that while being a Parsi or Irani means something specific – being a Zoroastrian from Persia whose ancestors settled in India – anyone can become a Zoroastrian if they choose. This is hard to argue with as Zoroastrianism has no Pope-like figure with divine authority over the faith.

Interestingly, Mistree, who lives in a Parsi housing colony, somewhat contradicts his earlier stance by saying he'd be delighted to see people convert to Zoroastrianism if they built up their own infrastructure and did not claim the Parsi community's wealth and facilities.

This urge to preserve old wealth and advantage is rooted in a widespread belief amongst Parsis that they will never again be able to acquire the riches and standing that came to them under the British. Most Parsis feel something mysterious happened when the British left India in 1947, something that sapped the confidence of the community and relegated it to a lesser position. It is this constant feeling of having the sun at one's back that is casting a shadow over the entrepreneurial dreams of many young Parsis today.

Rejuvenation?

Perhaps Parsis overlook that it was not they who changed as much as their environment. In the colonial era it was a favoured practice of the British to empower minority communities. This allowed the British to win local allies while keeping the majority of the country out of power. This, and coupled with their own capabilities, accounted for a lot of the Parsis' success.

When things changed with independence it was only natural that there would be a period of adjustment. But there is nothing

wrong, weak or wounded in the basic Parsi ethos that is rooted in a surprisingly modern and can-do philosophy. At its core, Zoroastrianism emphasizes personal initiative, both in making the right choices in the metaphysical universe and in securing happiness in the material world. It is a faith that asks one to live in and enjoy the material world, while not being seduced into forgetting that the higher purpose of life is to take the side of right in the battle of *Spenta Mainyu* (the Good) against *Angre Mainyu* (the UnGood).

From Zoroastrianism one can easily conjure the ideal modern man, what someone once called a kind of Zorba the Buddha - a contemplative man in touch with his spiritual side, yet completely at home in the material world, a man who knows the value of ethics as well as the rate of the Euro, a man who knows how to raise money from investors in Paris and how to lapse into meditation, a man who can excel at business and also ponder philosophy, who serves his own and also cares for others.

This philosophy is as alive in the community today as it ever was, even though this may be easy to miss, for it often articulates itself in small ways – the young widow who returns her husband's rented office to his landlord friend or the father who encourages his daughter's modern choices.

There is, already, a new generation of Parsis that has learnt to live and thrive in changed circumstances, both in India and abroad. These youths are not only looking to preserve their heritage, but to grow it. They are excelling in business, the professions, academia, the arts, entertainment, journalism, science, and sport, and many of them continue to give generously to their community and wider society.

As India opens up to the world there is every indication that Parsis could once again place themselves at the forefront of economic and social development. The community's high education levels, its familiarity with global culture and aptitude

for the arts positions it perfectly for success in the information and media economy.

If this upward trend continues, it will not be the first time the community rejuvenates itself. In 330 BC, Alexander destroyed Persepolis, the Persian capital, but his successors were expelled by resurgent Persian dynasties. In the 650s the Arabs conquered Persia and Egypt, but while they Arabized Egypt, they got Persianized. And of course Zoroastrianism itself survived, then flourished, in the magnanimous bosom of the civilization that is India.

From amidst the swelter and flour-scented air of the cozily antique Yazdani bakery in Bombay, Zend M Zend, baker extraordinaire and an Irani well known for his earthy philosophical views, says the time has come for the Parsis to stop *"this moaning and groaning"* about survival.

"Zoroastrianism has been left for dead many times. Each time it was our zest for life, our life-celebrating attitude that saw us through," he says. *"As long as we have that, we'll be fine."*



Jehangir Pocha, who is originally from Bombay, is a Beijing-based correspondent for The Boston Globe. His articles have also appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, India Today, Boston

Review and Businessworld.

"Never doubt that a small group of concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

~Margaret Mead

Zoroastrianism is undergoing a mild renaissance in the region of its birth, Central Asia. Though Iran's Islamic leaders "have tried for centuries to sweep away all trace of Zoroastrianism, many people still feel Zoroastrian in their hearts," says Sohrab Yazdi, a Zoroastrian community leader in Yazd, a quintessential desert city of adobe houses and looming minarets, where most of Iran's 30,000 Zoroastrians live.

From outside the shattered splendor of Persepolis, the ancient capital of Persia, Bahram Agaheri, a Muslim, talks in elegiac rhythms of how many Iranians want to rediscover the faith of their forefathers.

"People are tired of the mullahs. If we were allowed to convert many would," Agaheri says. *"I challenge the government to allow conversion out of Islam for even one day."*

He is unlikely to see that day for Iran bans the conversion of Muslims into other faiths by punishment of death. Yet it is believed that some Iranians practice Zoroastrianism in secret.

There is also evidence that the some Kurds whose Yezidi religion, which is centred around the town of Lalish in northern Iraq and which closely resemblances Zoroastrianism, are returning to what they call their "original faith".

Hameed Akhtari, an Iraqi Kurd living in Iran told me he has been smuggling Zoroastrian texts and holy books into Iraq since 1995. But he was at pains to emphasize that the books were used "only for religious research".

Zoroastrianism has also been experiencing a creeping renewal in southern Russia and some Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, which were historically part of the Persian Empire. Some leaders in these republics, particularly President Imomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan, are very supportive of this, partly in the hope of attracting investment from Indian Parsis and partly to offset the radical Islam being exported into the region.

Many Zoroastrian's are pleased with to hear of their faith's resurgence. But some are concerned that this could bring the Zoroastrian communities in Iran and India into conflict with Iran's Islamist extremists or India's Hindu chauvinists, both of whom oppose religious conversion.

That is something the community does not have the desire or wherewithal to face.

"You must understand our apprehension," says Yazdi. *"We are like a small, colorful fish in a big pond. One wrong move and we will be eaten."*

Land of Fire: A Journey to Azerbaijan

by rashna batliwala singh

When Zoroastrians think of the land of their ancestors, they most often think of Persia or modern day Iran. Yet there is a country whose very name should suggest to us that our ancestral history might also be located there. That country is Azerbaijan, which means “the land of fire,” a reference to the spontaneous ignition of surface oil deposits or to the fires fueled naturally by these deposits in the temples of the once-dominant Zoroastrian religion. Legend has it that the region derived its name from Atropates (meaning “protected by fire”), a Persian governor in Alexander’s command. Scholars believe that the country’s ancient names, *Atropatene* or *Atarbatakan*, became Azerbaijan in Arabic and that the semi nomadic Scythians settled in areas of what is now Azerbaijan in the ninth century BC.

The Medes, who were of the same ethnic family as the Persians, founded an empire that incorporated southernmost Azerbaijan a century later. The Achaemenid Persians, under Cyrus the Great, subjugated the western part of Azerbaijan in the sixth century BC, when they subdued the Assyrian Empire to the west. As he advanced eastward, Alexander the Great left the Achaemenid Empire, which he had integrated into his possessions in 330 BC, in the hands of Persian satraps to govern.



Celebrations in Baku, Rashna in the forefront

In June 2004 I spent almost two weeks in Azerbaijan to gauge for myself the presence of Zoroastrianism in a land that intrigued me. My daughter was conducting research for her senior thesis in Psychology at Colorado College and had become close friends with an Azerbaijani student. She

stayed a month to conduct her field investigation in Azeri concepts of depression and I joined her there. I was immediately struck by the infallible warmth and respect with which I was greeted as a Zoroastrian. The Azerbaijanis are, in general, an extremely hospitable, warm, and outgoing people, so it’s likely that most

visitors to their country would be greeted in the same way. But there seemed to be a special veneration reserved for Zoroastrians, whom they consider their ancestors.

Although officially an Islamic country, Azeris, for the most part, are not strict practitioners of Islam. While they identify as part of the Islamic world, that identification seems more political and cultural than religious. During the long period during which Azerbaijan was a Soviet Socialist Republic, overt religious displays or practices were strongly discouraged if not forbidden. In the process, the country’s Zoroastrian heritage was also suppressed and slowly relegated to the dusty shelves of memory. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, when Azerbaijan became an independent republic in 1991, the country

began to claim its Zoroastrian heritage with pride and to honour it as an integral part of its history and identity. Fire figures prominently in the emblem of the Republic, although the Islamic crescent and star are featured on its flag.

When I was introduced as a Zoroastrian by the friends with whom I was staying, I would inevitably be greeted with remarks such as “It is an honour,” or “You kept our traditions alive,” or “Because of you our history was preserved,” and other such statements. People wanted to know about India in general, but they particularly wanted to know about the customs we followed as Zoroastrians. “Our Zoroastrian heritage is an inseparable part of who we are,” they insisted, “It is ingrained in our identity.” Frequently, it seemed that their knowledge of the religion had been been perspectivized, inexorably perhaps, by Western commentaries and viewpoints. The result was a somewhat Orientalist understanding, characterized by terms such as “fire worshippers,” which they used frequently. Time and again I would explain patiently that “fire worshippers” was a label that Western scholars had stuck on us and that it was not strictly accurate. We venerate fire as a sacred symbol, I would point out, but worship only Ahura Mazda or God.

Nowhere was this confusion more evident than in the “Ateşgah” or “Atashgah” as it is more commonly transcribed, a fire temple situated at a distance of some thirty

kilometers from Baku in the southeast part of Surakhani in the Apsheron peninsula.

More bleak and barren surroundings for this mesmerizing monument cannot be imagined. As we approached the monument



The Atashgah in its entirety

on a warm afternoon, the landscape turned to a wasteland of derelict oil dykes and desolate terrain: flat, brown and austere. Our host’s neighbour, Eldar Guliyeb, an ethnic Azerbaijani immigrant from Georgia, offered to drive my daughter, her friend and me there.



Close up of the Atashgah

To my surprise, they had never visited the Atashgah before, although they were well aware of its existence. Nowadays, we were told, parties of schoolchildren visit on field trips and study passages in the Avesta as part of their curriculum.

As we left the outskirts of the city, Eldar turned to me suddenly and said, with emotion in his voice, “You were more faithful to the religion than we were.” Not knowing how to reply, I simply smiled and thanked him for his observation. Finding the Atashgah turned out to be no

easy matter. We stopped to ask for directions from a couple of men drinking tea in a roadside cafe. Of course I couldn’t understand Azeri, but even so the directions seemed elaborate, from all the hand waving and finger pointing that went on. Finally, Eldar decided he would be able to find his way and we set off again. We found the Atashgah alright, the Atashgah Restaurant! It took two more attempts to get accurate directions before we finally found ourselves at the shrine.

The Atashgah is a rather small, square structure, open on all four sides, at the centre of which is a blackened brick pit from which flames burn steadily, lit by gas, now piped in but originally emitting from a natural source. To the side of the building, in the courtyard, is a well that also emits flames. The structure is situated in a courtyard of baked mud from which scrubby grass struggles to escape. Flame also emanates from four chimneys on the roof. In the middle of the stupa like structure is a Shiva trident. This puzzled me, but what puzzled me even more were the dioramas in the pilgrims' cells that surround the central temple. In the dark and desolate cave like structures, statues of Hindu ascetics stand, sit, or lie, barely lit by the outside light, in contorted postures, emaciated and grotesque. One statue of a sadhu depicts him in chains, longhaired and gaunt. Another shows a sadhu in his death throes. One cell has been set up as a sort of contemporary Hindu shrine with a statue of Ganesh and pictures of Shiva, Krishna and Sai Baba. Incense and a string of Russian made plastic fruit and flowers grace a makeshift altar.

The caretakers invited us into their small rooftop office to talk. They asked about Firoz Gandhi and Indira Gandhi. They knew

the former was a Parsi, but was confused about the latter. They brought out the guest book, which we all signed, and told us that we had just missed meeting a professor from the Sorbonne who works with renowned Zoroastrian scholar, Mary Boyce.

As best as I could determine from various sources, the buildings of the Atashgah: including the prayer rooms, cells and caravanserais, were built between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. The temple is built on the site of a natural gas vent believed to have been sacred to the Zoroastrians since the 6th century AD. It was built, apparently, by merchants, many of them Hindu, who had heard on the Silk Road about the ever-burning Apsheron fires. Pilgrims followed merchants. They paid the local ruler for permission to build cells, prayer rooms, stables, and a guestroom (balakhane) at the temple. This must explain the Hindu symbols and puzzling statues, sculpted no doubt to represent these pilgrims. The

structure was restored again in 1975 by the government and is now managed by the state historical and architectural authorities. The Sanskrit, Gurmukhi and Hindi inscriptions in the stone plaques are testament to the Indian origins of these structures.

In 1858, the great French novelist Alexander Dumas visited the Caucasus.



Close up of the fire at Atashgah



Depictions of sadhus at Atashgah



Diorama at Atashgah

Dumas journeyed through the region for nine months and described his impressions of the Atashgah in his book, *Travels in the Caucasus*, which was published the following year in Paris. He has left us with an imaginative and poetic account of the temple as he saw it:

“There was a big quadrangular building that also was lit by a fire. Reflections of the flames danced on the walls of the building, making it seem like the building itself was moving. There was a white washed temple, surrounded by little ovens again filled with tongues of flame. The

gas burned with such loud noise that each of these little ovens sounded like a big furnace. On the roof, great tongues of flame were emitted from each of the four corners of the big cupola. But these flames were weaker than the fire nearby the Eastern entrance of the temple.”

The ritual Dumas describes, however, seems to be Hindu in nature. He exhorts his countrymen to hurry if they want to see “these fire worshippers” because, according to him, “The only worshippers left are an old man and two others around

30-35 years old. One of the young men had just arrived from India only six months earlier. That is, before him there were only two worshippers left at Atashgah.”

The natural vent no longer emits gas and the gas that fuels the fires at the Atashgah is now piped in. But one chilly night I saw for myself the magnificence of naturally occurring fire, burning with its own force and cadence. I saw a sight that awed me as it must have awed our ancestors, the Yanar Dag or burning mountain. It was there, under the stars and against a black sky that

I understood the power of fire far more than I had at the Atashgah or, indeed, at any human built structure. The Yanar Dag is not really a mountain at all, but the base of steep, sloping steppes where fires rage in a line of about 18 metres or so. The flaming torches of escaping methane were ignited accidentally in

1958. Some accounts claim, however, that the fires have been burning for centuries, from the time of Alexander.

Ulviyya’s Uncle, a gracious and humorous gentleman, took us there after dark in his aging Jiguli. The Yanar Dag is just outside Baku, and next to the bluffs is a somewhat

shabby tea house that nonetheless put on a spread for us: nuts and biscuits, jams, and of course the ubiquitous tea, taken with sugar and lemon in small, shapely glass tumblers. An Englishwoman, her Norwegian husband and their children were roasting wieners at the flames. They all spoke fluent Azeri and had lived in Baku, where he works for an aid organization, for some years. We climbed up the hillside and the young people ran down, being sure to stop well before the bottom of the bluffs where the flames burned wild and free. Standing under the stars at the top of the hill in the chill of the evening, the fiery flames below, it was easy to relive the wonder with which ancient Zoroastrians must have regarded these natural outcrops of fire and its life restoring warmth.

As we drew chairs as close to the fire as was comfortable, a breeze blew and billowed the flames out towards us. Behind us there was cool air and the Azeri songs from the teahouse. Before us was the intense heat of the flames and open steppes. Other than the music and the plastic chairs on which we sat, we could almost imagine we were nomads, alone in an ancient world.

The only other Zoroastrian site in the country, as far as I could determine, is another site of naturally occurring flame, but



Warming ourselves at Yanar Dag



Tablet at Atashgah

this one in a remote and relatively inaccessible region. But then there is the Gyz Galassy or Maiden's Tower, which dates from the 5th to 6th century, though some sources say the 11th. It's hard to pin down a date in Azerbaijani history. This cylindrical tower, 90 foot tall and erected on coastal rock, still stands as it did more than 1000 years ago. There are a number of legends that have arisen around it, but what fascinated both my daughter and me is the insistent presence of swallows that continually circle the tower. An intriguing platform that protrudes from the cylindrical structure made me wonder if this might have been some sort of tower of silence at one time, but this is pure conjecture. There is no historical or archaeological evidence to support this idea or, indeed, to support any of the contesting theories or legends about its origin and use.

More than in the monuments, however, the Zoroastrian heritage is evident in the lineaments of the people. No two Azeris look alike: some look Turkish or Persian or Arab, while some could pass as East European. But every now and then I would see a face that looked pure Parsi. This country, the denizens of which insist is the birthplace of our prophet, Zarathushtra, is a worthwhile travel destination for all Parsis. One thing is sure: they will be received like long lost relatives returned home. ■■■■

Some facts are taken from the following sources:

<http://www.azer.com/>

<http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Azerbaijan>

<http://countrystudies.us/azerbaijan/4.htm>

Rashna Batliwala Singh, born and raised in India, first came to the US for graduate study. After receiving her Master's degree in English from Mount Holyoke College in 1971, she pursued a PhD in English from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Thereafter she returned to India to teach at a postgraduate institution. Currently she is a Visiting Professor at Colorado College. Singh is the author of a pioneering study of British colonial literature entitled "The Imperishable Empire: British Fiction on India", published in 1988 by Three Continents Press. "Goodly is Our Heritage: Empire, Children's Literature" and the "Certitude of Character", is forthcoming from Rowman & Littlefield. She has also contributed to Asian American Playwrights: "A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook", published by Greenwood Press in 1988, and has written many scholarly articles and papers.

Appeal from Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust

Homi Daruwalla writes:

We had approached you in January 2003 with an appeal for donation to feed poor members of the community who do not even have a square meal to eat.

Fortunately, the appeal made almost two years ago, generated tremendous response not only from Godrej employees and their relatives, but even from members of the community. Fortunately, my e-mail was passed on to many Zoroastrians abroad and a sizeable amount of donation was received. The amount which kept on pouring in for the last one and half years crossed Rs100,000.

We are grateful to you for not only contributing generously, but also giving wide publicity to this noble scheme, which has benefitted a number of indigent and infirm Parsis staying in and around Dadar.

At present we have 24 old Zoroastrians who are alone. Most of them are frail, weak and bed ridden and do not have strength to go to the roadside food stall, depending solely on their neighbours to bring some food for them to survive.

Some details of the Food Scheme

Today, this Food Scheme is feeding the above mentioned 24 elderly and have also taken 31 school children of poor Parsis studying in our schools at Wadia Vatcha, DPYA and Maneckji Seth Agiary Hostel. The cost is Rs20 per meal, which is simple but wholesome. To feed one person for a year costs Rs14,400.

The Food Scheme is run by the charitable trust, MANCHERJI EDALJI JOSHI MEMORIAL TRUST, which not only supervises cooking of the food, but also delivers through the *dabbawalas*.

The total cost of feeding these 24 infirmed and 31 students comes to Rs4.50 Lacs annually and the Trust need your handsome contribution to keep the scheme running. Fortunately for us, we gathered a good donation last year for the food scheme to continue. However, anything new always begins with a great response, but if the response starts waning, we will have to stop the "Food Scheme".

Your donations can be made by cheque in favour of "MANCHERJI EDALJI JOSHI MEMORIAL TRUST".

I will be happy to answer any of your queries on the Food Scheme run by the Trust. Further enquiries are also welcome via e-mail to mejmt@mail.com or mithoojimi@rediffmail.com ■■■■

The quality of life and social safety net for the Zoroastrian senior

by dolly dastoor

Ageing is an evitable process of human development. We age from the day we are born. Some of us age well and some not so well. And what is the cause of this difference in ageing styles? Can science explain this? How can a woman closing in on her second century be as robust, almost defiantly, healthy while men and women decades younger are languishing feebly in nursing homes plagued with failing bodies and failing minds and wishing they had not been so unlucky as to live so long.

For most of human history, a long and healthy life has been shrugged off as a gift from the gods – or maybe the undeserved reward for a lifetime of plain cussedness. But to gerontologists the vagaries of ageing have become the focus of intense scientific research.

It is obvious even to non scientists that how you get to age well depends partly on the genes you are born with and partly on the life style, what and how much you eat, the alcohol you consume, the exercise habits you have, where you live and what type of trauma and stress, social, emotional or financial you experience, your psychological traits, the presence and absence of support from family and friends, the general role you play in society. The extent to which longevity depends on each of these factors was unknown until Swedish scientists tackled the problem in 1998. By looking at identical twins separated at birth and reared apart, they were able to determine that only 20% to 30% of how long we live is

genetically determined, and the rest is attributed to lifestyle.

How does this information translate into the Zoroastrian reality. What is the lifestyle of the Zoroastrian old? We are an ageing community with 33% of Zoroastrians in India over the age of 60. This percentage has increased from 17.9% in 1961 to 33% in 1999. (BPP Review, Summer 2004 pg 30) In North America, 10% of the Zoroastrian population are over age 65 (FEZANA Journal Winter 1999), in Pakistan, 36 % of the Z population is over 60 (Zarathushtrian Census of Pakistan 1995). (We have no figures for Iran). Of course this alarming rate of growth is the trend globally, causing much concern to social and economic planners. (India 7%, USA 12.7% and UK 15.7%) Providing services for this fastest growing segment of the population is a real challenge.

The problem in India is confounded by the factors of changing family structures, rapid urbanization and international migration. Added to this is the fact that in the over 60 age group 22.6% are males and 25.6% females, and of these 51% of the males and 37% of females are single. So where is the social safety net for this segment of the population? Who looks after this segment of the Zoroastrian population in India?

This touches many of us living in the diaspora, who have aged and older parents still living in the home countries, looked after by the goodwill of friends and distant relatives or at the mercy of temperamental paid help. But in most cases of Zoroastrians with no children or with no living relative, there is no one to provide support and help. The elderly live in neglected housing conditions, with limited financial resources, poor health, poor diet,

social isolation, vulnerable and easy target for financial exploitation and abuse. Some also suffer from cognitive and memory loss, which go undetected and undiagnosed making the older person the butt of ridicule and jokes.

Lifestyle is very strongly influenced by outside factors such as the people we associate with, where we live and the services that are provided to enable seniors to age well. Local communities, the voluntary sector and the government have roles to play in creating conditions that make successful ageing possible for seniors.

So what is the responsibility of every Zoroastrian in finding creative solutions of helping this vulnerable segment of our community. At the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, 2000, Soonamai Dessai had presented a very well thought out action plan, "Development of a support system of care for our elders based on values cherished by the Zarathushti community". (FEZANA Journal, Fall 2003, pgs 48-52). We can go even further taking the example of other communities and Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) like World Vision with their "Adopt a Gran" programme. It is generally agreed that giving a monthly stipend or a "dole" however "good" it may make the giver feel for the moment is not the right answer. It takes more than money to improve the quality of life and lifestyle of the elderly. A change in the mind-set that communal living in a supervised residence is not the ultimate fulfillment of the concept "abandoning your parents".

The "MANCHERJI EDALJI JOSHI MEMORIAL TRUST" currently operates a food scheme in the Dadar Parsi Colony area, Mumbai which feeds 24 old and infirm for a cost of Rs40 per day or Rs1,200 per month or Rs14,400 per year. ie. US\$360 per year or US\$30 per month. (*Appeal on page 19*) This information was obtained from the Trust Fund and also has been circulated on the Zoroastrian Women's International Network (ZWIN) and elsewhere. This food scheme has been

organized by Mithu Jesia. Contact numbers and email are:
Tel: +91 22 2414 9571; Mobile: 098209 82623
email: mithojimi@rediffmail.com or mejmt@mail.com.

But we need to go beyond feeding 24 people and broaden this food scheme to cover different aspects of care

ACTION PLAN

1. Develop a registry of people over the age of 65 in the community, their areas of concentration and their needs.
2. Assessing the type of need
 - a. financial help and budgeting their limited resources
 - b. social/emotional
 - c. practical assistance for home repairs, paying bills,
 - d. health and medications
 - e. ???
3. Check on resources available in the community at large
4. Develop a group of volunteers, preferably from the coterie of recently retired who like to keep busy
5. Each volunteer to be responsible for a group of seniors (needing assistance) in their geographical area to respond to the needs.
6. To involve seniors in productive activities. People who remain engaged in life and socially connected to those around them are happier and in better physical and mental health
7. A world wide appeal for a monthly contribution of US\$30 to sponsor/adopt an elderly Zoroastrian person. The sponsor to keep in touch directly or through their own local personal contacts. Annual report on the status of the sponsored individual to be sent

8. To appoint a co-ordinator of the project
9. Form a committee with expertise and interest in ageing issues to whom the co-ordinator is responsible
10. The project could be centralized through a central body like the BPP or WZO or through another NGO specially set up.

The time has come to organize ourselves and develop infrastructures for our community, to spread our individual wealth and good fortune around and to share our organizational expertise so that we are able to protect the needy and the vulnerable.

The aim is to create a local community where all older citizens can enjoy inclusion, safety, integration, engagement and choice. When the conditions are favorable, people have the resources and incentives to stay healthy and engaged and to cope successfully with limitations and change. Communities have an important role to play in fostering socialization and promoting engagement.

This is a preliminary skeletal plan. People interested in developing this further should contact the author at:
dollydastoor@sympatico.ca



Dolly Dastoor PhD, President of FEZANA 1994-1998, and co-chair of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress. She has attended and presented papers at the World Zoroastrian Congress in India and Iran and in North American conferences; at the World Parliament

of Religions in Chicago and in Capetown; Governor, 2002-2004, District 2, ZONTA International, a service organization promoting the status of women. Clinical psychologist by profession, Dolly is the Co-Director of Programme in Dementia, Douglas Hospital, McGill University and lives in Montreal, Canada.

Reflections on 9-11

by dina g mcintyre

(Dina had posted her thoughts on this subject on creating awareness and on Hamazor's request has made the same into an essay for us)

On this anniversary of 9-11-01, a day that is burned in my mind, a day that has brought about so much change in our beloved country, and around the world, I have been reflecting.

There are so many things about the United States that reflect the Zoroastrian principles that I love - the freedom to choose, the quest for truth and what is right, the rule of law (that no one is above the law) which reminds me of asha. The idea that we are all equal in the eyes of the law. The friendliness and generosity of neighbour helping neighbour. All very Zoroastrian. All very American.

Has 9-11 changed us?

I miss the freedom from security concerns that we so enjoyed in the pre-9-11 days. Will we ever get back to them? I wonder. Thinking about it made me realize that our "enemies" (the terrorists and fanatics) have changed us by their actions, without our consent. How do we deal with that in a way that does not allow them to define us. Because if we allow them to define us, they will have won.

To me, the rule of law is very dear. In the Middle Ages, in Europe, Kings could do whatever they wanted. They could do no "wrong" from a legal point of view. What they said and did, was the law, however unjust, and folks had no say about it.

Then came the Magna Carta. A document which the Barons in England made the King sign, which gave them certain basic rights, like the Writ of Habeas Corpus, whereby the Courts could require the King to produce

someone he was holding in prison, so that the Courts could determine by what right the person was being imprisoned. Thus was established a break from the old way of thinking that the King was the law and could do what he wanted.

In about the 16th century, the people of England got the idea that they should be able to elect representatives who would have some authority to pass laws, mostly the right to tax, at that time - requiring a sharing of power between the king and a parliament of elected representatives.

In the reign of King James I, in England, a famous lawyer and counsellor had the courage to articulate what the Magna Carta and the concept of an elected parliament had started - the principle that the King was not above the law.

And in 1776 and the years following, the American Revolution took a chance on a great experiment - a constitutional form of government that was elected by the people. Not many folks are aware of it, but the Constitution gives the government specified limited powers, and reserves all other powers to the people. It also put in place a system of checks and balances, allocating governmental power between the Executive (President), the Legislature and the Judiciary - each an independent branch of government - and the nation adopted a Bill of Rights as an amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed certain basic freedoms to



individuals which could not be taken away by majority rule.

Our system of laws is not perfect, (what human endeavor is!) but the United States Constitution, and the Constitutions of the various states in the United States, established the principle that we are a nation of laws. That no person is above the law. And no person is outside the protection of the law.

In Nazi Germany, Jews were declared to be outside the protection of the law. They

could not enforce leases. They could not enforce contracts. They could not enforce personal rights or property rights. They had no legal standing in the Courts. The Courts were closed to them. At first, the German Courts tried to maintain some degree of independence, and apply the law equally, but when the Gestapo started to "correct" the Court's decisions it had a very demoralizing

effect on the Courts, until finally, in a case decided in 1936, the Reichsgericht, the highest German Court, (whose judges well may have been stacked by Hitler), refused to recognize the Jews living in Germany as "persons" in the legal sense. It held that only Aryans i.e. persons of German origin, and persons who by law were declared equal to them, could enjoy all legal rights and privileges. (See Fraenkel, *The Dual State* (1941), page 39, and pages 93 — 96).



Dina G McIntyre, is a Zoroastrian, born in India and came to USA in 1956. She earned a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Law, has practiced law in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, since 1963, is a member of the bar of all federal and state courts in Pennsylvania, and the United States Supreme Court. She has been a student of the teachings of Zarathushtra since the early 1980s, and was the Editor of a 12 lesson course on the Gathas called An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra, which she distributed world-wide in 1989-90. She has lectured on the teachings of Zarathushtra at various conferences and seminars in the US, Canada, England and India. Her writings on the teachings of Zarathushtra appear on these websites: www.vohuman.org and www.zarathushtra.com

I hope that we do not allow the terrorists to change the fact that we are a nation of laws. That no one is above the law and that no one is beyond the protection of the law. We need to balance legitimate and necessary security interests in our fight against terrorism, with a commitment to preserve and protect the rule of law. For if we don't, the terrorists will surely have won.

But it isn't enough to protect and preserve the rule of law here in the United States. If we are ever to defeat terrorism, we need to think about how we can shrink their recruiting base. There is only one way in which I can think of doing that. With *asha* and *vohu mano* — backed up with a lot of *xshathra*.

Every act of injustice that we subsidize is the best recruiting device that the terrorists have. We need to find ways to stop subsidizing injustice, and adopt policies that give people in the Middle East a chance to live good lives — raise children, earn livings, own homes, own businesses, enjoy recreations, have some say in the rules that govern their lives, give them an interest in preserving what they have, instead of blowing things up because they have nothing to lose.

I cannot think of a single major religion that does not have a fanatic element - except Buddhism. Fanatics will always be with us. But at least we can use our minds and hearts to shrink their influence amongst average people. How do we do that if not by changing minds? by delivering what is wrong into the hands of what is right (as Zarathushtra said)? by promoting "what fits" (*asha*) with good thinking, good words and good actions?

The values that we cherish are not free. Each generation has its own challenges. Each generation has to win these values over and over, create them, and re-create them, with our (lawful) choices in thoughts, words and actions. Even the failure to choose is a choice.

Volunteering is a rewarding experience

by tanaz khory



I would like to share my experience of the month I spent in Madras, India, this summer, volunteering at the Siva Sakthi Home for the mentally handicapped as well as destitute children including orphans. The Home is a project of the Siva Sakthi Sathya Sai Charitable Trust. This was my first trip to India without my parents and I was accompanied with a student friend who was volunteering with me.

My interaction was with the mentally challenged including administering physiotherapy on some of them. Communication was difficult since they did not speak English, but spent most of our free time teaching them the language, whereas at work we communicated basically with hand signals and various words. Our time during the month was spent mainly with the children. We taught them a dance for a fundraising show the Home had to raise money for their new project in Kanchipuram. Our only desire was to be with these children, as they were a sheer delight. They had so little, but would still burst with joy and laughter for every simple thing. One day we gave them a sticker and pencil each and they were overcome with excitement. What a priceless experience to see their faces light up for these "luxury" items.

The trip truly was an experience to remember. It was an extremely hot summer with no rains in Madras in July, with power cuts and water problems, having to carry buckets of water down the street and up the stairs for our bath. Since our accommodation was a room in the home itself, we ate the same food they did (all vegetarian south Indian food), took part in



the sweeping and cleaning, washing and drying of clothes, and helped feed the handicapped.

In between our work we did do some travelling and sightseeing around Madras such as Mahabalipuram, Dakshin Chitra, Pondicherry, and took a short trip to Bangalore and Mysore. In Mysore we saw the Palace which was incredible with its unique mix of architecture, and highly decorated interior, including artifacts from all over the world. Pondicherry and the other places were quite touristy but still very ethnic and historical.

This was one of the most rewarding experiences I have so far in my life. Going to India with only a friend and spending the time in this facility with long days and hard work made me realize how very fortunate I am. Even with growing up in Saudi Arabia and having visited India about once a year, it was my first trip to southern India, changing my perspective of the world. I appreciate the life I have so much more, and wish I could help more people who are less fortunate.

Although my time at Siva Sakthi in Madras is over, I am currently the International Director for Queen's Rotaract, the university version of Rotary International, and I have chosen Siva Sakthi as our international project for which our fundraising money will be sent to.

I definitely recommend this experience to any other youth from Canada and the USA who wish to have a memorable experience and one that will change their outlook on the world forever. For more information on the Siva Sakthi Homes please visit www.sivasakthi.org or feel free to email me for any other information on tanazk5@hotmail.com ■■■

Tanaz Khory, 20, is currently in her third year of undergraduate Nursing Science at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. After being born in Calgary, Canada, she spent most of her life in Saudi Arabia. She has returned to Canada for her university education and plans to continue her graduate studies in the health care field. Within her university she is actively involved, being the International Director for Queen's Rotaract Club, volunteering at the Queen's University International Center, and part of Queen's Dance Clubs.



Spending quality time with the children after our daily dance class



Our evening English study time



The Siva Sakthi staff members and handicapped adults

Yesterday's youth are not the same as today's

by nikan h khatibi

- a youth's perspective

They have never known a world without cell phones, pagers, fax machines, answering machines, rap music, airbags, ATM's, MTV, CNN, McDonald's, and *USA Today*. They are better educated, more creative, and more techno-savvy than any other generation and can get information from around the world almost instantaneously. They're more alike than different, celebrate differences in culture, and are more entrepreneurial at younger ages. Most importantly, they're less discriminatory and less prejudiced than previous generations. These are just a few qualities that define today's Zoroastrian youth. With such a vast opportunity to network and connect with one another, why do our Zoroastrian youth choose to marry outside the religion?

One factor which influences the rate of finding and marrying someone is the availability of partners. If there are large numbers of people with a similar religious outlook, the chance of finding someone of the same religion is high. Thus in a small religion such as ours, we will find that our youth are limited in the number of choices they have to build a relationship with someone. This is in part the reason why so many of our youth are looking outside the religion for strong relationships. Interestingly enough, I also find that in communities where the concentrations of suitable partners are higher, there is a higher percentage of Zoroastrians marrying within the religion. As obvious as many of you may think this is, it has dawned on me why have we not done

our best as parents, community leaders, and youth leaders to create events or place a heavier focus on matchmaking/networking events in our congresses and local gatherings? We have done a great job to explore the academic realm of our community and share that knowledge through congresses, books, the internet, chats and I understand and appreciate this – but what about maintaining the vitality of our religion through social networking. This is another reason why it is important to organize more congresses that in my opinion, not only stimulate our academic senses, but are geared towards actual social interactions and opportunities for our youth to befriend one another.

As a youth looking at what parents have done, I must continue to encourage all parents to motivate their youth to marry within the religion. Most importantly, as parents, you must take an active role to help your youth meet other Zoroastrians who they can befriend and get to know better for their future. Simply taking an active role in your youth's social life takes us

one step closer to maintaining the vitality of our religion. Secondly, I have not seen enough support from the Zoroastrian associations towards social networking for our youth. We must realize that marrying within the religion should be held to the highest of priorities and every aspect of our local community must address this situation. Associations must work more effectively and efficiently to create programmes and events where our youth can come together and

"I have come to realize that it's so hard to make Zarathushti friends just because we are so spread out. The only time I ever get close enough to make friends would probably be at the congresses, but that's still only for a short time." - Delnaz Irani

"I get pressure from my family to marry someone inside the religion but sometimes I wonder if they realize how hard it is to find someone who I really can love. I agree with you Nikan, we are so spread out that there really isn't an opportunity to meet other Zarathushtis. We've got to do something about overcoming this challenge" - Anonymous

meet. Finally, we youth must do our best to attend events and congresses, no matter if you do not find them up to your expectations, because it allows you to interact with members of your own community and gain a personal insight into your past.

Now for those youth who are destined or who have already chosen a path to marry outside the religion, I encourage you to extend your circle to include this community. Share with your family the greatness that our religion stands for. Just because you have chosen a partner who is not a Zoroastrian does not mean that you are forced to lose ties with your community.

Instead, now is the time to strengthen your connection with the community and more importantly, bring your family alongside. It is your duty as a Zoroastrian to share your knowledge of the religion and the message of Zarathushtra and allow others to righteously choose their own path of worship.

Youthful Readers, when it comes down to it, I understand it is very hard for us to meet other Zoroastrians with similar likes and dislikes as we do. What we can do to improve our situation is to involve ourselves in local events, congresses, and really take an active role in the community to widen our horizons and likelihood of making other Zoroastrians friends.

To start with, I would like to publish what's going on with your youth group. Please send me an email with a picture of a recent activity or group picture and let me know what's going on in your city? Also, include any comments on events that you feel have been successful in your community. We'll be waiting.

Email: Nikan2@aol.com
 Wbg: www.JoinNikan.com
 Tel: 949-842-9628



Trusted experience, proven leadership and a dedication to improve the quality of life ... that's what Nikan Khatibi is all about. Recently graduating from the University of California, Irvine with a Bachelor in Science, Nikan is currently finishing up his Masters in Business Administration (MBA) with hopes of attending medical school in the future. At the age of 22, he is the youngest director for his city's Chamber of Commerce & Holiday Parade Commission, and is the founding director of Students for Success. Moreover, he is an editor for the 'Youthfully Speaking' section of the FEZANA Journal and is past president of the Youth of the California Zoroastrian Center.



These Zoroastrian youth have gathered at a local event in Washington DC

“Persepolis Recreated”

by soli dastur

Review of the book and DVD film

(Some of the review material and photos are taken from the website with permission of the producers of the book and DVD, “Persepolis Recreated” by Mr Farzin Rezaeian, Award-winning documentary and educational film producer and director: <http://sunrisefilmco.com/p4film.htm>)

"Persepolis Recreated" is a spectacular production that presents a virtual re-creation of the Palace complex of the Persian Kings at their highland capital of Persepolis in the province of Fars in southwestern Iran. The glories of ancient Persia unfold, thanks to the modern computer-assisted graphics. This film is like an expert x-ray eye, that probes through the ravages of 23 plus centuries starting with Alexander in "his drunken fit" in 331-330 BC, shaken by uncounted earthquakes, eroded by 25 centuries of rain, fluctuating temperatures and scouring winds and ending with the neglect and devastation by the ruling regimes, have laid bare the skeleton of the once grandest city of Persepolis, coined "the richest city under the sun," in the then civilized world of 500-300 BC, started by the Achaemenian "King of Kings" Darius I and completed by his successors Xerxes and Artaxerxes I.

"Yet, the ruins of Persepolis remain an awesomely impressive sight 2,500 years after it was built. Even today, those who step up to its gigantic terrace of 125,000 square meters and see its majestic columns are filled with a sense of awe drifting into a dream-like trance.

"A dream in which one tries to visualize the beauty and dazzling splendor of Persepolitan palaces before their sad destruction."

In this spirit of dream, imagination, hard work, exhaustive research, and computer simulations, Mr Farzin Rezaeian and his associates have clothed this magnificent

skeletal edifice of Persepolis ruins into a vibrant historical monument as it could have been in its heydays, two thousand plus years ago.

"Persepolis Recreated" is the name of this documentary DVD film and its companion book, produced by Mr Farzin Rezaeian's Sunrise Film Co., featuring some of the leading scholars of ancient Persia.

The companion book describes the important buildings in this Persepolitan terrace narrated in the film. Mr Rezaeian used some innovative techniques to show the present day ruins as they are and then with the use of one or more transparent colourful overlays have reconstructed ("clothed") these bare bone skeletal remnants with the richness and beauty as they might have looked in their heydays. The book itself is a very rich and colourful resource of these magnificent ruins.

The NTSC formatted DVD film takes the viewer a few more steps ahead and recreates in front of his/her eyes a magical tour of the whole complex as if he/she was there 2500 years ago. Imagine yourself as the head of one of the 28 countries' delegation invited to celebrate with the "King of the Kings" Darius I, the Now Ruz (New Year on March 21st) festival.

You arrive at the impressive Gate of Xerxes, from which a broad stairway descends. Xerxes, who built this structure, named it "The Gate of All Countries," for all visitors had to pass through this, the only entrance to the

terrace, on their way to Apadana Hall to pay homage to the "King of the Kings".

At the Gate, you are escorted by a Royal Guard up the stairways to the platform and then to the Apadana Hall to pay homage to the King of Kings and to present him gifts of silver and gold vessels and vases, weapons, woven fabrics, jewelry, and animals from your own country.

The film recreates this scene using beautiful computer simulations and "beams you back" to this magnificent celebration some 2500 years ago.

The film further simulates the other magnificent buildings of the time such as the Throne Hall, the Treasury, the Council Hall, the Palace of Darius and other notable structures. All along, it recreates the richness and grandeur of these buildings by floor carpets, wall mosaics, ornamental ceilings, and the ever present Farohar symbol.

Throughout the film, renowned scholars from France, USA and Iran have also commented on the splendour and the function of the Persepolitan palaces. *"Dr Matthew Stolper of the Oriental Institute was one of those specialists. He played an important role in the film by translating ancient clay tablets that had records of transactions for workers on the site. His findings helped lead to the conclusion that no slaves were used in the building of Persepolis. Rezaeian also said that some women were paid twice as much as men and even had supervising positions."* (Kat Glass, Chicago Maroon, University of Chicago Student Newspaper).

Mr Farzin Rezaeian, the Producer, is an award-winning documentary and educational film producer and director. He studied sociology, political science and communications at University of Illinois in Chicago. For the past twenty years he has researched and written for many educational and documentary films that he has produced or directed at Sunrise Film Productions. "Persepolis Recreated" is his most recent production.

The cost of the NTSC format DVD film and accompanying magnificent book is \$85 per copy plus \$10 for shipping and handling and can be obtained from:

Sunrise Innovations Visual Ltd.,
456 Washington Blvd., Oak Park, IL 60302
(Ph: 708-386-2720)



Soli P Dastur, born as the last of 11 children in a small village, Tarapur, India, to a priestly family from Udwada, he completed his high school in the M F Cama Athorman Institute boarding school, completing his Navar, Martab, and Samel ceremonies in Udwada. After the first two years in St Xavier's College, Mumbai, and completing his B Chem Eng from the Bombay University Department Of Chemical Technology in 1960, he proceeded to USA for his graduate schooling and received his MS and Ph D in Chemical Engineering from the Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He joined Procter & Gamble Co in Cincinnati in 1964 and worked there for 30 years (last 3 years in Brussels, Belgium) retiring in 1994. Soli then worked as a partner in the Partnering Group for 5 years consulting with the Grocery and Mass Merchandising Industries. He met Jo Ann in Cincinnati on a blind date and has been married to her for 38 years. They have twin daughters, Shirin and Anahita, and 5 grand children. Soli is fully retired and lives with Jo Ann in University Park, Florida. He is an avid tennis player and dabbles with the computer in his free time.



Mobedan-e-Mobed Dr Jahangir Oshidary

Courtesy: Mehran Sephri, Tehran

Memorial ceremony (*Porseh*) in honour of Jahangir Oshidary, Mobedan-e-Mobed, was held on Thursday 3 November at 5 pm in Iraj Hall of Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman.

Dr Jahangir Oshidary was born in Ganatestan, a village of Kerman in 1920 to a Zoroastrian priestly family. He graduated as a veterinary surgeon from Tehran University at age 22, and immediately joined the Iranian army and later headed the army's veterinarian division.

In 1973, he retired with distinction having attained the rank of a General, and has been living in Tehran since.

Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, he became an ordained mobed and served his community for over sixty years. He was a member of the executive board of the Tehran Anjuman for two terms. He published numerous scientific and religious articles, and frequently wrote in *Hookht*, *Faravahar*, and *Amordad* magazines. He is the author of 15 books, and received many awards and recognitions.

Dr Oshidary was an active member of Iran's *Kankash Mobedan* (Council of Mobeds)

since 1981, and was appointed as the head of Council for the past two terms, since the demise of the previous Mobedan-e-Mobed, Rustom Shahzadi. He spoke at several Zoroastrian congresses including ones held in Tehran in recent years, as well as the 2nd World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and the Interfaith Congress in Thailand, three years ago. Besides his wife, he is survived by 3 sons and 3 daughters, all of who are married and live in Tehran.



May Ahura Mazda bless his soul. *Ravanash Shaad Baad.*



(Note from Ed: Dr Oshidary had graciously written for the commemorative issue of Hamazor : Volume XXXII, Issue 3/03, pp 108 – 109)

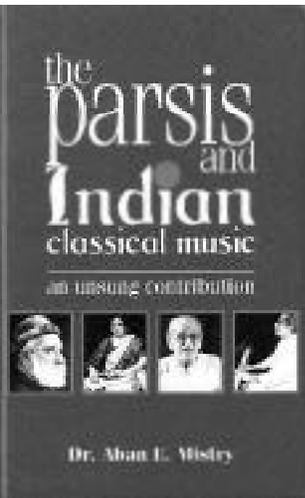
The parsis and Indian classical music

- an unsung contribution by Dr Aban E Mistry

Reviewed by Noshir M Lam

Published by Swar Sadhna Samiti, Jer Annex, 1st Floor, Jambulwadi, Dhobi Talao, Mumbai—400002

Hard bound, 138 pages Price Rs 300 : foreign Rs 465. Available from Parsiana Book Club — Website : parsiana.com



Before you pick up and read this book, you believed that Parsis have practically given none or negligible contribution to Indian music. By the time you are half way through it, you find out that their contribution is gigantic, if not, at least equal to that towards industry, science, politics, sports or any other field. You will then realise that your ignorance was because their contribution to music was unsung, now

being ably sung by Aban.

In the book, you will come across such gems as when you tune All India Radio first in the morning, the stations begin their day with a signature tune on the violin followed by the strumming of *tanpuras*, which is the work of Mehli Mehta, father of Zubin, who is a living legend of Western music. Then, we have Coomi Wadia, the director and conductor of Paranjoti Academy Chorus, whose singers are dubbed as “the singing ambassadors of India.”

You will read about the mind-boggling contribution of the Gayn Uttejak Mandli, started 150 years ago by Kaikhushru Kabraji, at the time when the society seethed with rage against music. He expired in 1904 and during his lifetime was editor of Raast-Goftaar, dramatist, novelist, lecturer and musician. The great musicologist and inventor of simple music notation, Pundit Bhatkhande was a student of the Mandli and later a teacher. It is said that nothing is infinite in this universe, - the Mandli became defunct in 1971.

As creation and destruction are a part of nature's order, the legacy of the Mandli's work was taken over by the Swar Sadhna Samiti, founded in 1961 by Pt Keki S Jijina and Dr Aban E Mistry. In due course, the Samiti has evolved to suit contemporary times, always encouraging new and budding artistes in music and dance through annual all India competitions, awarding scholarships and honouring talented artists and musicologists. In this book, you will come across many more Parsi names of musicologists and dancers, then Parsi names in any other book on industry, sports or any other field.

In the world of Indian dance, we have Shirin Vazifdar, Khurshid Chawada and Roshan, amongst others. Parsis have ignored no genre of Indian music. There are dozens of Parsi artistes mentioned in the book who are, like rare diamonds, and multi-faceted. Aban has discussed each facet of these bold and beautiful Parsi gems according to the relevant chapters like Indian classical music, shastria and lok nritya, sugam sanget, thumri, tappa, geet, ghazals, abhang, natya sangeet in dramas and operas and several other music art forms. Not only that, but she has dealt with dramas, operas, music direction, background music in films, record companies, sound recordists, in short each and every contribution of Parsis towards musicology. Surely, before putting away the book, you will clap and say:

“Well done Aban, you have wonderfully sung the song of the Parsi contribution to Indian classical music.”



Noshir Lam is BCom, LLB, FCA and the proprietor of N M Lam & Associates, Chartered Accountants, Mumbai.

He is the author of “Comprehensive Handbook for Non Resident Indians” and “Mauritius - International Business & Tax Strategies”. He published in 2004 “Parsi Zoroastrians on Stamps-Religion, History & Culture”, whose second revised edition is under preparation.





Australia

Dr Sam Kerr
Unit 5, 'Agincourt'
10 Larkin Street
Roseville
New South Wales 2069

Canada

Mr Jehan Bagli
1569 Wembury Road
Mississauga
Ontario L5J 2L8
E-mail: jbagli@rogers.com

Mr Marzi Byramjee
288 Alscot Crescent
Oakbillie
Ontario L6J 4R4
E-mail: marzi@regalpresscanada.com

Mr Rohinton Minwalla
27 Danum Road
Brampton
Ontario L6Y 3G2
E-mail: Rminwalla@aol.com

France

Mr Abtin Sassanfar
22 Rue Beauzon
Paris 75008
E-mail: sassan@wanadoo.fr

India

Mrs Mani J Clubwala
96 Santhome High Road
Chennai 600 028
E-mail: mclubwala@rediffmail.com

Mr Dadi B Engineer
President, WZO India
Jehangir Mansion (2nd Floor)
71 N S Patkar Marg
Hughes Rd
Mumbai 400 007
E-mail: dbengineer@crawfordbayley.com

Mr Kersi J Limathwalla
B18, Aidum Building
3rd Floor, 1 Dhobi Talao Road
Mumbai 400 002
E-mail: limath@vsnl.com

Mr Dadi E Mistry
C-4/4113 Vasant Kunj
New Delhi 110 070
E-mail: mistry@del2.vsnl.net.in

Iran

Mr Mahyar Ardeshiri
Khyabar Kargan Shomali
Rubesuye Kruje Daneshgah
Khyabar Parizdahom no 87
Tehran

Mr Rostam Yeganegi
233 Saadi Avenue
Tehran

Pakistan

Mrs Toxy Cowasjee
Editor Hamazor
2 A Mary Road
Bath Island
Karachi 75530
E-mail: toxy39@attglobal.net

Singapore

Mr Russi Ghadialli
19 Grange Road, # 20-21
Grange Height
Singapore 239 697
E-mail: RGHADIA1@irf.com

Sweden

Mobed Kamran Jamshidi
Saffransgatan 1 c
Angered 424 24
E-mail: info@webzc.com



Members for the year 2004 - 2005

United Kingdom

Ms Shahin Bekhradnia
Religious Coordinator
 The Old Mill
 Lidstone, Chipping Norton
 Oxfordshire OX7 4HL
 E-mail: shahinbekhradnia@hotmail.com

Mr Sam H Bhiwandiwalla
Chairman
 11 Beeches Wood
 Kingswood, Tadworth
 Surrey KT20 6PR
 E-mail: sam@bhiwandi.demon.co.uk

Mr Shahpur F Captain
Past Chairman
 Wood Lodge
 190 Birchwood Road
 Wilmington
 Kent DA2 7HA
 E-mail: sfcaptain@hotmail.com

Mr Rustam S Dubash
President
 48 Stanley Park Road
 Wallington
 Surrey SM6 0ET
 E-mail: dubashrs@penningtons.co.uk

Dr Godafreed S Irani
 16 Rowdon Avenue
 London NW10 2AL
 E-mail: goody@dircon.co.uk

Mr Framroze R Joshi
Treasurer
 83 Claydon Drive
 Beddington
 Surrey CR0 4QX
 E-mail: framrozejoshi@tiscali.co.uk

Mrs Khurshid B Kapadia
Membership Secretary
 "Rusalla"
 217 Pickhurst Rise
 West Wickham
 Kent BR4 0AQ
 E-mail: kbk@mm-croy.mottmac.com

Mr Dinyar J Modi
Jt Hon Secretary
 99 Furness Road
 London NW10 5UJ
 E-mail: djm@djmodi.com

Mr Darayus S Motivala
Jt Hon Secretary
 Shanti Bhavan
 Church Lane
 Chinnor
 Oxon OX39 4PW
 E-mail: darayus@motivala.me.uk

Mrs Tehmi N Patel
Jt Social Secretary
 20 Lake Gardens
 Ham, Richmond
 Surrey TW10 7SJ
 E-mail: noshtehmi@hotmail.com

Mr Noshir J Umrigar
Jt Social Secretary
 93 Heathlee Road
 Blackheath
 London SE3 9HS

USA

Dr Kersey H Antia
 8318 West 138 Place
 Orland Park
 Illinois, IL 60462
 E-mail: antia@juno.com

Mr Keki R Bhote
Vice President
 493 Woodlawn Avenue
 Glencoe
 Illinois, IL 60022
 E-mail: krbhote@sbcglobal.net

Dr Meherwan P Boyce
 2121 Kirby Drive, 28N
 Houston
 Texas TX 77019
 E-mail: boyceturbo@attglobal.net

Mrs Dhunmai P Dalal
 2906 Elvido Drive
 Los Angeles
 California CA 90049-1106
 E-mail: dhunmai@perversa.com

Mr Sohrab R Felfeli
 800 Sunrise Lane
 Elizabethtown
 Kentucky KY 42701-2137
 E-mail: sunrise@bbtel.com

Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani
 410 Riverside Drive
 New York NY 10025

A Time for Natak – History of the Parsi Theatre

by aban rustomji

Parsis are renowned for their own brand of humour and nothing illustrates Parsi humour like *natak* plays. But the contribution of Parsis to the realm of theatre in the Indian sub-continent is no laughing matter. In *Kim*, Kipling mentions the German painter who travelled with the Parsi theatre company to work on the set. Scholars attribute the start of the theatre in the Indian–Sub continent was by Parsis. Parsi theatre, while based on a British model, became an institution where educated people began to develop autonomy in their city and lives.

Evolution of the Parsi Theatre

In 1840, Framji Cowasjee, a prominent merchant prince, along with other leading citizens of Bombay submitted a petition for the construction of a new theatre to the Governor. After a campaign was carried out in the pages of the Bombay Gazette and in meetings in the Town Hall, the government agreed to underwrite the project. But the new theatre remained an unrealized dream until a generous contribution by Jamshedji Jejeebhoy in 1846 opened the Grant Road Theatre.

Thus began an epoch in the urban life of Bombay and its public culture. Initially the Bombay merchants with sharp business acumen were the pioneers in establishing a commercial theatre. The playhouse opened under English management, and the first plays performed were in English. Before long however, the Grant Road Theatre was recognized as the ideal locus for Indian theatrical productions. Parsi dramatic clubs chose this site for their fledgling efforts, and for the next three decades, Grant Road and its theatres were synonymous with the Parsi theatre.

For 100 years, from 1850-1950, Parsi theatre dominated the Indian culture scene.

In its most creative period from 1870-1890, it brought about a complete change in the attitude and perception about the theatre in the minds of the people. The first drama company named *Parsee Natak Mandale* was established in 1853. Faramjee G Dalal was the proprietor and the first drama staged at the Grant Road Theatre was *Rustom and Sohrab*. Also performed along with it was a farce *Dhanji Garak*. Thereafter twenty more Parsi drama companies were formed, giving a further momentum to the theatre activity. The Natak *Uttejak Mandali* staged 1100 shows over 16 years. Initially Parsis who took a lead in this movement were educated people, guided by a desire to contribute towards the betterment of society. They viewed theatre as a medium through which they could communicate with the ordinary people. The theatre that arose out of these motivations had themes that carried moral and social messages for the audience.

Theatre Productions

Productions by Parsi theatrical companies were large-budgeted affairs. Plays opened with actors in full makeup and costume - their hands folded and eyes closed, singing in a song of prayer song in praise of some deity - and generally ended in a tableau. Sometimes at curtain call the director rearranged the tableau in a split second and offered a variant. Actors were required to know singing, dancing, music, acrobats, and fencing and to possess strong voices and good physical bearing. In improvised auditoriums with bad acoustics and packed with 2,000 people, actors' voices reached the farthest spectator. Plays began at 10 o'clock and lasted until dawn, moving from comedy to tragedy, from pathos to farce, from songs to the rattle of swords, all interspersed with moral lessons and rhyming

epigrams. All playwrights took inspiration from Hindu mythology and Persian legends, transforming these tales into powerful dramas.

One is amazed at the level of sophistication that the early theatre companies undertook for their play productions.

A proscenium (seating) arch rose high above the stage, positioning the players with an expansive picture frame and separating them from the audience. Massive painted curtains sets that shifted between the scenes and lavish costumes created sumptuous atmospheres filled with exotic images. Gaslights placed on the apron of the stage lit the players from below accentuating their gestures in an uncanny way. Seats arranged by class and row announced times for starting and stopping, and amenities such as refreshments rooms and intervals added a sense of decorum to the proceedings in the hall. Family shows where special performances for women were also a feature of the Parsi theatre's popularity and growing respectability of the middle classes. Playhouses were set up so the children were tended by their *ayas*.

Emerging Middle Class attend the Theatre

If the playhouse with its proscenium stage defined the interior spatial set-up, it also altered the older fluid geographies of performances. Beginning with the Grant Road Theatre, theatrical entertainments were located within particular zones of the city. Parsi theatre introduced new equations between leisure and location.

As Bombay developed from a colonial port into a major industrial center, the city's theatre houses in their specific urban locations became indices of emerging social and cultural formations. A new class of Parsi merchant princes and influential citizens, the *shetias*, liked to think themselves as cultural

agents in the metropolis. They were savvy investors and profited by their investments in the theatrical world. Simultaneously it laid the foundation for much broader class participation. Parsi theatre companies were largely financed by *shetias* who bought and sold shares in them and stood to gain or lose sizeable amounts of money. The Parsi



1. The Helen Theatrical Company, photographed by Raja Deen Dayal, November 11, 1907. Photograph courtesy: Hemlata Jain

theatre depended heavily on the emerging middle class of Bombay for its audience and corpus of dramas.

A new theatre, the Gaiety Theatre, was built near Victoria Terminus. From the early days, there was geographical separation between the European business and residence in the south in the Fort area to the Native town in the north. Gradually, wealthy merchants, particularly Parsis, Baniyas and Bohras, dominated the northern part of the Fort. These affluent residents were among the first Indians to evince an interest in theatre, and they were well situated to observe the fondness of the British for the stage.

After the great fire of 1803, which destroyed much of the northern Fort district, Indian merchants were encouraged to inhabit a

Photographs 1 & 2 are from *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture* by Pheroza J Godrej & Firoza Punthakey Mistree. Publisher: Mapin Publishing Pvt., Ltd., Ahmedabad, with permission.

Works Cited:

Bharatiyadrama.com. "Parsee Theatre." 27 October 2004 <http://bharatiyadrama.com/parsee.htm>

Doshi, Saryu. "Of Costume and Sets: Parsi Theatre." *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture*. By Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree. Mapin Publishing, 2003. 485-491.

Hansen, Kathryn. "Parsi Theatre and the City: Locations, patrons, audiences." *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life*. 2 October 2004 <http://www.sarai.net/journal/02PDF/04spectacle/02parsitheatre.pdf>

Rivetna, Roshan. "On stage and screen." *FEZANA Journal* Vol. 16, No.4, Winter 2003: pp 75-76.

Vaidyanathan, P V, Dr "The Dream Merchants". www.screenindia.com. 29 August 2003 http://www.screenindia.com/fullstory.php?content_id=5694

separate Native Town. A significant reclamation project was the completion of Grant Road in 1839. Another theatre came on the scene. It was known as the Theatre Royal or simply the Play House (Pila Haus), a sole building on the street at the time of its opening. According to K N Kabrajee, the influential journalist, it stood "as an oasis in the desert".

Behind the Scenes: Parsi Theatre Innovators and Notable Actors

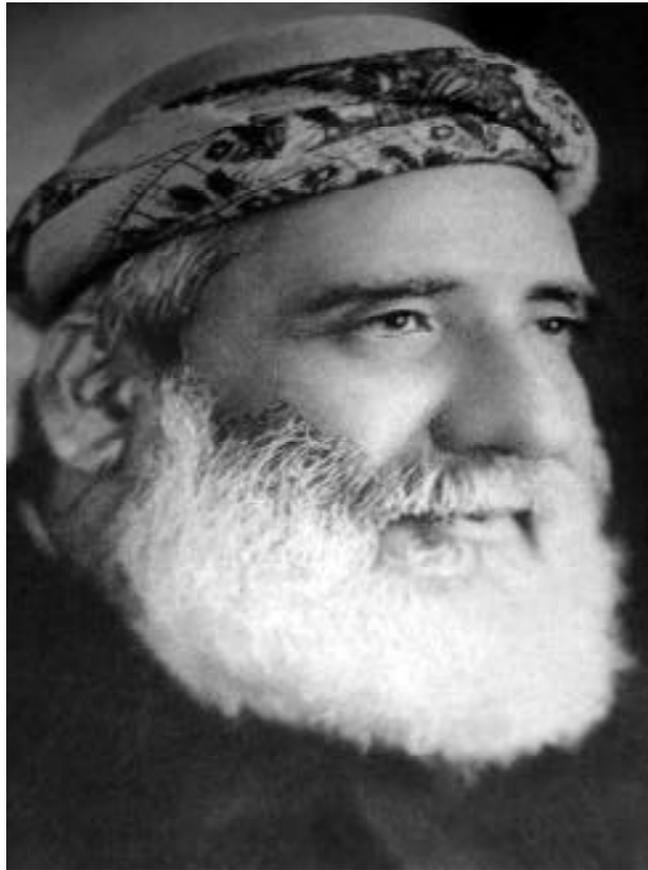
Kaikhasru N Kabrajee (1842-1904), an eminent journalist who edited the Gujarati newspaper *Rast Gofar*, established the Victoria Theatrical Company. A man of many talents - author, journalist, playwright, actor, singer, and director - he possessed the ability to develop and polish the different facets of a theatrical performances. He perhaps more than any other of his contemporaries, recognized the usefulness of theatre as an instrument for social change. For him, theatre could, through its themes, highlight the evils prevalent in society and simultaneously instill new values that were keeping with the times. He brought idealism, altruism, and enthusiasm to the theatre, which until then was considered disreputable.

Dadbhai Sorabji Patel

Kabrajee was succeeded by Dadbhai Sorabji Patel who brought innovative ideas

to it. It was he who produced the first Urdu musical play *Benazir Babremunir*. This delighted members of the Bohra, Khoja and Memon communities; he also took the bold step of introducing women on stage. Parsi

plays were performed in different parts of India, and troupes went to Burma and Singapore too. Performances of *Harishchandra* and *Alauddin* in London were graced by the presence of Queen Victoria and Edward VII and appreciated by them. The growth of the middle-class audience was aided and abetted by Bombay's assorted English and Gujarati newspapers, which displayed paid advertisements, commented avidly on performances and created a continuous furor of debate and sensation around the fledgling theatre.



2. Kaikhashru Kabrajee. Photograph courtesy: Zoroastrian Studies

As Parsi theatre entered the phase of professionalism in the 1870's, more of the actors were drawn from Bombay's lower classes, and class differentiation among the audience appears to have increased.

Kavasji Khatau, Jehangir Khambatta and other actors are known to have lived in the narrow lanes of Dhobi Talao, a poor district centrally located in the city.

Truly remarkable is the career of Jehangir Khambatta, who set out for London as a stowaway to see Shakespeare onstage, landed up in Java where he saw *Othello* acted by an Australian touring company, and went on to be a legendary man of the theatre.

Parsi play directors and actors were often feted publicly for their talent and contributions. In Allahabad, the Governor Sir Charles Monroe presented gold medal to Sohrabji Ogra and a hundred gold coins.

The prices for admission of tickets ranged from Rs 2.50 – Rs 3 for a box to less than a Rupee for a place in the pit. As the base for Parsi theatre broadened the audience would include Hindus, Muslims and non-Parsis spectators. The themes were now diversified. A bipartite structure of presentation was offered. Skits and farces whose performance time was not fixed and which can be assumed to have catered to a lowbrow audience followed the main drama.

Prominent among the lower caste audience were soldiers and sailors. The military forces invested in promoting theatrical evenings as a harmless form of entertainment. Soldiers were distracted from visiting the red light areas.

A favourable reception was demonstrated by loud applause, shouting and demands that a song or dance be repeated “once more”. Multiple curtain calls and showering of artists with cash or gifts or *inam* were also common. Hurling of *chappals*, rotten fruit, empty liquor bottles and shouts of “shame shame” indicated disfavour. Given all the obstacles it is no wonder that theatre managers spoke of their successful performances as victories and begged their audiences through their prologues and prefaces to show mercy and favour them with kindness.

Parsi Theatre in New Worlds

The Parsi Theatre took a new turn in post-independence India with the rise of the popular cinema.

The standard-bearers were Feroze Antia and Dr Ratan Marshall. Adi Marzban freed Parsi drama from the shackles of tradition and brought realism to the theatre. He was a playwright, director and actor and a script writer who received a UNESCO scholarship

and studied at the Pasadena Playhouse in the United States.

The legacy of *nataks* continues. In the last year alone I have read of several



Kaka Atakyo Bhatrijo Latakya written, directed and performed by Nozer Buchia. L to R: Kamarukh Gandhi, Peshotan Unwalla, Yasmin Medhora, Nozer Buchia, Persis Buchia, Kaizad Sunavala and Noshir Medhora

Zoroastrian associations around the world advertising *nataks* as fund raisers for their communities. Nozer Buchia and his troupe raised \$20,000 for the Houston Zarathushti Heritage and Cultural Center. This troupe travels to Toronto and Dallas in the effort of raising local and Houston funds.

And what better can be said about our talents and or history then what *Bombay Samachar* wrote August 1, 2004:

“We may be stupidly xenophobic. We may not pay any heed to doomsday demographics. We may be the most foolish of all Zoroastrians. We may continue to persist with the Towers of Silence even when there is not a single vulture. We may be cantankerous. We may totter on the lunatic fringe. But none can fault our sense of humor - natural, original, open, unmalicious and self deprecatory.”



Aban Rustomji, a high school media specialist, lives in Houston where she is the recipient of several educational awards. An advocate for education and libraries, Aban is currently involved in opening a library that will house books on Zoroastrian religion, history, literature and culture at the Zoroastrian Association of Houston. An avid reader and traveller, Aban visits Afghan refugee camps in Quetta, Pakistan. As a result of these visits she has been invited to work on an US AID project in Pakistan. Aban is also a team member of the creatingawareness@yahoo.com user group and values her connection with people on the cyber net world.

PARSIS - The Zoroastrians of India

- A photographic Journey

by thrity umrigar

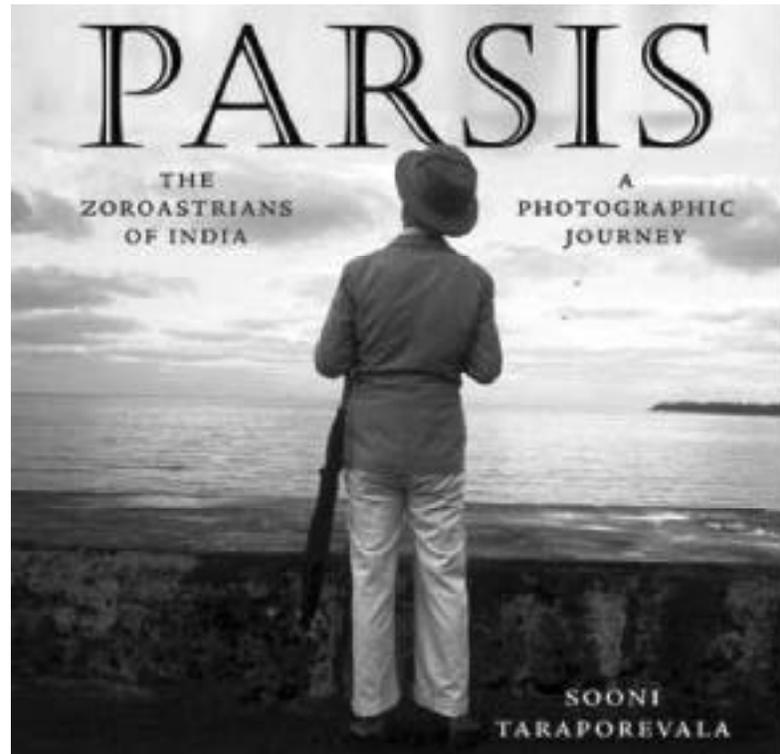
If the Parsi community has a Renaissance woman, surely Sooni Taraporevala would be it. An Oscar-nominated screenwriter, she is also a well-known photographer, whose work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe and India.

For the last twenty-four years, Taraporevala has also been photographing the Parsi community in India, amassing a vast collection of photographs that capture her subjects at home and in public places such as weddings, the fire temple, the street and at the Tower of Silence. Along the way, she has captured all the rituals of Parsi life - the festive Navjote and wedding ceremonies, the public prayers at the shores of the Arabian sea, the lighting of the divas at the fire temple and finally, the last journey to the Tower of Silence.

Now, this labour of love has been assembled in a beautiful hardcover coffee-table book titled *Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India A Photographic Journey* (Overlook Press; \$60).

There is such intimacy and immediacy to some of these photographs, that those of us born in India and now living in faraway places will feel our hearts involuntarily squeeze and sigh at the beloved familiarity and warmth of these pictures. The old men in their *daglis*, the bent old ladies in their cotton dressing gowns and head coverings, the elderly priests in their thick white beards and white *sadras* all of these photographs feel as if they've popped out of our own individual photo albums.

Taraporevala has also shot several portraits of Parsis whose names and legends we



grew up with – Sam Maneckshaw, Zubin Mehta, Freddy Mercury, Nani Palkhiwala, Dina Vakil, Farokh Udwadia. It will be a special thrill to readers of a certain age to see and recognize these faces, just as I suppose younger readers will rejoice at the photos of Simeen and Cyrus Oshidar, Navaz Bhatena and Shiamak Davar.

Some of my favorite photographs in this book are those of Taraporevala's own family - a wonderful portrait of her grandmother covering her face up as she laughs, her rail-thin grandfather dressed in baggy pants and a hat buying fountain pens at a roadside stall in Flora Fountain, and a candid, informal shot of the family spending an evening on the terrace of their building.

But as compelling as the photographs are, what really engaged me in this book was

the accompanying text. The writing in the book ranges from a heartfelt, personal essay titled “*My Bombay*”, where Taraporevala describes her close-knit, educated, cosmopolitan extended family, to interviews with a variety of subjects as diverse as Ratan Shah Katila, a priest who lived in Udwada, to Cyrus Oshidar, creative director of MTV.

The book also has a lengthy introduction, which mixes personal and political history. It is a masterfully condensed history of the Parsis and even though many of the stories will be familiar to Parsi readers, Taraporevala has an amazing way of polishing an old story so that it sparkles. For instance, one line in the Introduction gave me chills: “*Though most of us have no idea what we are praying, yet we have prayed these same prayers in an unbroken continuum from 1500 BC.*” That is truly an astonishing insight.

I was personally delighted to see that the last photograph in the book as well as the photo that graces the cover - is my favourite Sooni Taraporevala picture. It features an old Parsi man in a *sola* hat gazing out at the wide expanse of the sea. His white pants are creased and a little too short; his brown suit jacket is tight and ill-fitting. In his left hand he carries a big, black old-fashioned umbrella. But the sky around him is the color of the sea - silver and baby-blue. Although we cannot see the man’s face, something about the angle of his head, the tilt of his hat, makes me believe that he has a wistful expression on his face.

I fell in love with that photograph the instant that I saw it about four years ago. Something about this picture - something ineffable, something that goes beyond language - says Bombay to me. There’s something terribly familiar about this big sky, this infinite sea, this solitary man.

Not all of Taraporevala’s photographs have the same lyrical quality of this picture. But all of them serve another, useful purpose - they are vivid and permanent documents that testify to the daily life of a people who,



Singer Gary (Rohin) Lawyer, with a portrait of his idol, Freddie Mercury (Farrokh Bulsara) at the Freddie Mercury Photo Exhibition. Bombay 1999. 2004 Sooni Taraporevala



My grandmother. Bombay 1980. 2004 Sooni Taraporevala

according to the statisticians, may be on the verge of extinction. But look at the festive clothes, the warm bearhugs, the hearty laughs, the sheer vibrancy of the people in these photographs. Extinction is the last thing on their mind. As a caption on one of the photographs reminds us, “Parsis, love to laugh.”

Sooni Taraporevala’s book may occasionally make you laugh out loud. But mostly, it will make you do what all good art does - it will make you feel, think, smile, recognize. Above all, it will make you remember. ■■■

Thirty Umrigar is the author of a novel, Bombay Time, and a memoir, First Darling of the Morning. Her new novel, Thicker Than Water, will be published by HarperCollins next year.



An Exclusive -

author interviews photographer, screenwriter



Thrity Umrigar
author

Thrity : Many of the photos in the book date back to the 1980s. When did the idea of collecting them all in a book first occur to you? What were the circumstances that led to the idea?

Sooni : From 1975 to 1980 I was an undergraduate at Harvard. That's where I took up photography - bought my first 'real' camera. In that period I came home twice and both times I took many photos in Bombay - including my own family, particularly my grandparents, granduncles and grandaunts, who I was very close to. In 1982 I moved back to Bombay and met Raghubir Singh who saw my portfolio - he's the one who suggested I work on a book on the Parsis. He said it hadn't been done, I had unique access as well as a feeling for the community. So that's how it began ...



Sooni Taraporevala
photographer - screenwriter

Thrity : You have gained renown as a screenwriter as well as a photographer. What is your primary identity? How do you think of yourself - as a photographer or a writer? Why?

Sooni : I see myself as both - I was a photographer before I was a screenwriter though I have done a lot more professional work in screenwriting than in photography.

Thrity : Are there similarities between the two forms of artistic expression? What are they?

Sooni : The similarities are whatever you make of them. Personally - my photography spills into screenwriting through my ability to imagine visually. I prefer a style that shows rather than tells and I prefer minimum dialogue. My screenwriting spills into my photography through my love for story - many of my photographs capture a moment in time, and one can imagine a story around them, in the past and future. In fact I had married the two as an undergraduate. I had printed a set of 6 photographs - and for each photo had written an accompanying story.

Thrity : What are the circumstances that led to the photograph of the old man overlooking the sea that graces the jacket?

Sooni : It was *ava mahino, ava roj* - I have gone to Marine Drive every year to photograph. This was taken early in the morning. This old gentleman was at first witnessing other people praying - then he started praying facing the sea and I took the picture that has always been and continues to be my "top of the pops."

Thrity : Did living abroad for many years make you see your subjects in a different way? If so, can you describe that process?

Sooni : It didn't make me see my 'subjects' in a different way - though I began to see Parsis in a new light. Growing up in Bombay, as you did, one is always surrounded by Parsis - it was only when I left and went to America did I realize what a miniscule community we were - how 'irrelevant' we were to the world at large - nobody had ever heard of us (except for some super erudite intellectual types).

Thrity : Why was photographing Parsis an interesting subject for you?

Sooni : Because Parsis are close to my heart. Because I have this desire I guess, to inform and educate people about us - it's like saying "here we are! look at us! This is who we are, what we believe in, how we live."

Thrity : What are your current photography and writing projects?

Sooni : I have adapted Jhumpa Lahiri's book *The Namesake*, Hari Kunzru's book *The Impressionist* and Tony Kushner's play *Homebody/Kabul* - all for Mira Nair. I am hoping to start on a new photography project soon but till I do I'd rather not speak about it.

Thrity : What would you like readers of this book to know or understand about you?

Sooni : I'd like the book to speak for itself. It's intimate and personal as well as being a historical record. I believe that history is made up of individuals - I wanted to document the faces and voices of the community, for my children and others of their generation.



"Sooni Taraporevala's book on the Parsis of India is indeed the finest documentation of the life and achievement of our community in 20th century India." zubin mehta

"The visual feast Sooni Taraporevala provides is without doubt an invaluable record, ranging from the sacred to the profane, the everyday to the ceremonial. But it is more than that. The pictures tell a story. And, like all good stories, it reminds us once again about the unique contribution which all cultures and communities, large or small, make towards the richness and diversity of this world that is the human family." rohinton mistry

"Sooni's book is an intimate epic. A monumental book, magnificent in its sweep yet always retaining its love for the particular. This is a remarkable marriage of heart and mind—a book of photographs that tells many good stories alongside." mira nair

"As a writer, I am grateful to Sooni Taraporevala for launching us on this photographic journey of contemporary Parsi life, and for providing a book I can wholeheartedly recommend to those who want to know more about my community. Her book has a place of pride in my home." bapsi sidhwa

"Sooni Taraporevala's stunning achievement lies in providing Parsis with a vibrant visual identity that has often been overlooked in celebrations of contemporary Indian cultures and communities. Taraporevala has mastered the art of capturing, with an unerring eye, what is both personal and communitarian in the Parsi world. As a Parsi, these remarkable photographs bring to life the vivid pageant of living amongst my people." homi k bhabha



Young guests at a wedding. Bombay 2000. 2004 Sooni Taraporevala

Music & Tigers

- a profile

With permission, based on the information available on <http://www.associationsargam.com/> and from Meher Toorkey herself.

M

eher Toorkey was born in Bombay. She ranked first in India in the LRSM examination, winning the Sir Adrian Boult cup and shield conferred by the Royal Schools of Music. Meher was awarded a British Council Scholarship which enabled her to come to London to study with the eminent Swiss pianist, Albert Ferber, himself a pupil of Rachmaninov. In the past few years, she has worked with the distinguished pianist Katharine Wolpe.

Meher has performed all over India, Scotland, England and America. She has appeared at the Wigmore Hall where she premiered six songs by Albert Ferber, and has already given three highly successful recitals at the Purcell Room. Regular lunchtime concerts in the City of London and Westminster have been performed by her, and was one of the performers invited to participate in the summer festival of music organised by St Lawrence Jewry. Meher has also played for Central Television, a recital which was broadcast on both Channel Four and ITV.



She has repeatedly been sponsored by the British Council and the Goethe Institute in India and was invited to give a series of recitals and master-classes in October 2002 in America.

Reviews speak of her "... rich, ardent and intelligent playing ..." "... alive to breathtaking shifts of colour and impetus ..."
 "...Schoenberg's elliptical piano pieces Op. 19 and 33 played with clarity and lyricism..."
 "...distinguished performance of Rachmaninoff, strong lyrical sense to the melodic writing, passion in the more angst-ridden passages and spring in the rhythms..."

Meher saw her first wild tigers in India, and was so moved by the experience, she was determined to do everything within her power to

save these critically endangered animals. Loss of habitat and poaching, have taken a heavy toll on the wild tiger and if they are to be saved, something needs to be done now. And Meher has done just that. She has recorded a CD of Russian piano music - Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives*, Op 22 , & six Rachmaninov *Preludes*.

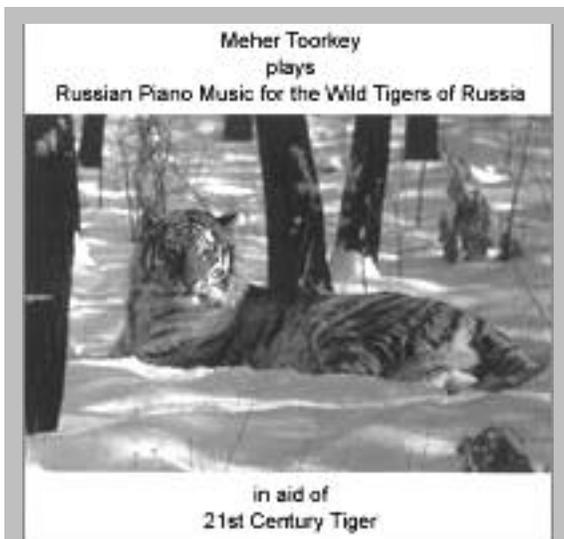


All profits from the sale of this CD, costing £10, go to 21st Century Tiger, a unique wild tiger conservation organization, which is a partnership between Global Tiger Patrol and the Zoological Society of London. These individual UK organizations have been working to save

the tiger in the wild for a number of years. One hundred percent of the funds raised, support tigers in their natural habitat. 21st Century has funded projects in India, Sumatra, Cambodia, and the Russian Far East. Each project is comprehensively vetted to ensure that they have sound practical conservation and/ or scientific credibility and are making a fundamental contribution to the conservation of wild tigers.

The Cds are available from :
 21st Century Tiger
 c/o the Zoological Society of London
 Regent's Park
 London NW1 4RY, UK
 Tel: 020 7449 6444
 Email: 21stcenturytiger@zsl.org

Or visit their website at <http://www.21stcenturytiger.org/home.html> for further information.



Zarathustra's Genetic System

by stanley insler

This paper is an expanded version of a lecture delivered at a WZO Seminar in London, 20 June 2004.

The year 2003 marked an important milestone in the history of Zoroastrianism. I am referring, of course, to UNESCO's declaration of 2003 as the 3000th anniversary of the remarkable religion and design for living founded by Zarathustra sometime around the turn of the first millennium before our current era. As many of you may know, special events were scheduled around the world to celebrate this turning point commemorating the survival of Zoroastrianism as one of the world's oldest living faiths. These events bear testimony of the pride and esteem that living Zoroastrians possess for their extraordinary religion.

There was an extremely interesting issue of *Hamazor* published in Karachi, with contributions that touched upon almost every important aspect of the history of Zoroastrianism and its contemporary conditions around the world today. A seminar on Zoroastrianism was arranged at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, in December, and a similar meeting took place in Anaheim, California, later in the same month. I was honoured to have participated in these events and I was delighted to have seen that both meetings attracted large and engaged audiences who were most eager to learn and discuss matters concerning the history and doctrines of Zoroastrianism.

And here I am again today among my Zoroastrian friends in London at this event sponsored by the WZO, convened once more in celebration of the UNESCO declaration. Suffice it to say, I am equally

honoured and pleased to be present today, especially among so many familiar faces. When asked why I am so fascinated by Zarathustra, my invariable answer is that I am a “Zoroastrian in spirit.” By that I mean to express that I believe in the message taught by Zarathustra, although I have not been born into the faith. For the simple fact is that the values and principles first promoted by Zarathustra are of such universal nature, they are immediately appealing and compelling to anyone who has studied them carefully. In my case, the study of them has endured through most of my adult lifetime.

Truthfully, sometimes I wonder whether I have anything new to say about Zarathustra, having written and lectured about him so frequently. And yet, each time I return to the subject from a different perspective, I realize that the extraordinary system designed by Zarathustra can be analysed quite productively from alternate points of view. So allow me to contrast two separate yet interesting ways of conceiving some of the fundamental concepts of Zarathustra’s philosophical religion.

A few years ago I delivered a series of lectures in London at Zoroastrian House, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the founding of The World Zoroastrian Organisation. One of them was entitled “*The System of the Amesha Spentas*”, and in that lecture I attempted to demonstrate that the traditional order of the six Amesha Spentas, or Holy Immortals, as depicted in later Zoroastrian texts was inherited from Zarathustra himself. Many scholars of course contest this view and attempt to defend their position by stating that nowhere in the Gāthās do we find an enumeration of the Amesha Spentas in the traditional sequence and that, in fact, Yasna 47.1 is the only passage in the sacred hymns where all of them are mentioned in totality.

These scholars, however, fail to grasp a fundamental and important notion that applies to all the sacred hymns of Zarathustra. The Gāthās, in truth, do not

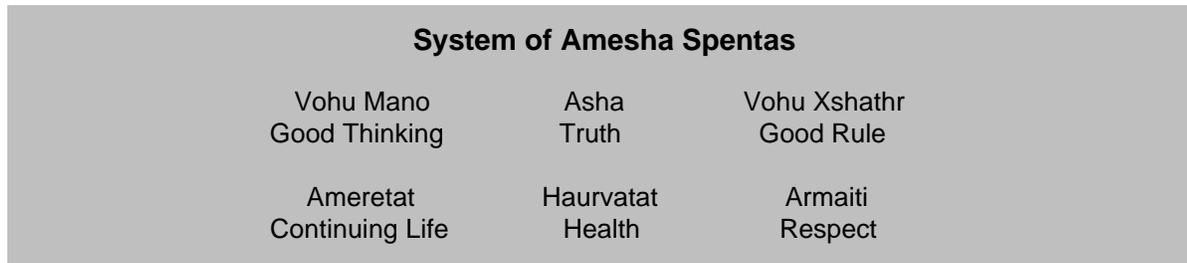
represent in any way an attempt at systematic theology. Rather, they represent for the most part Zarathustra’s poetic thoughts to Ahura Mazdā concerning the prophet’s own understanding of the origins, workings and relationship of the underlying group of six Amesha Spentas and their manifestation in the world of god and the world of man. Yet these poetic elaborations, in all their eloquent style and often complex formulation, cannot have possessed significant meaning unless they were based on the fixed and traditional set of the six holy immortals encountered in the later theological works. The place for systematic theology in the prophet’s time must have been in prose sermons that he delivered to his adherents, much as Meillet suggested in the 1920s. These formed the necessary instructional background for Zarathustra’s followers to grasp his important concepts in general, as well as to comprehend the highly poetic language of the Gāthās in particular.

Beyond demonstrating the necessary existence of the six Amesha Spentas in the Gāthās, I then turned to a much more important aspect of the group. I explored the question of whether there was any inner logic to the traditional ordering of these fundamental elements of the religion, and I demonstrated how the group of Amesha Spentas was precisely arrayed by the prophet to form a coherent, closed and productive system in which each member of the series was dependently connected to the adjacent ones. As in all true systems of this type, the links connecting the constituent elements were essential for the system to function properly. How did this system work?

Let me begin by recalling the order of the six Amesha Spentas:

- (1) Vohu Mano ‘Good thinking’,
- (2) Asha ‘Truth’,
- (3) Vohu Xshathra ‘Good Rule or Sovereignty’,
- (4) Armaiti ‘Respect’,
- (5) Haurvatat ‘Health’,
- (6) Ameretat ‘Continuing Life’.

Their interdependency can be described in the following manner. Good thinking leads to the understanding of truth. Truth, formulated as the laws of society, is the basis of all good rule or government. Good rule or government fosters respect for it. And when there is respect for the ruling authority or government, society is healthy and vigorous, thus encouraging further good and positive thinking among the people. In this manner the cycle of this closed system continues in a loop, producing the further external result of peace and prosperity for everyone. This system can be visualized in the following manner as a flow chart:



What is equally interesting, as I pointed out, is that the elements of this closed system can equally function in the opposite direction. Namely, health and vigour among the people encourage respect for their good government, and this in turn produces better laws embodied as social truths. These laws then lead to progressive good thinking, consequently strengthening the health and vigour of society once again. The system of Amesha Spentas therefore can function under optimal conditions in both directions as a productive and prosperous model for any society or social structure, and it is a tribute to Zarathustra's insight and ingenuity to have engineered this effective system from such simple elements that have universal import for all time.

The wisdom of Zarathustra's system is sadly seen in its perversion that seems to be the typical world situation today. By this I mean to say, wherever we look around the world, it appears that bad thinking has led to deceit and bad government, engendering disrespect, with the result that society has become unhealthy and its future quite uncertain. With more than a tinge of regret I am ashamed to say that my country is currently a clear model of the workings of such a perverted version of Zarathustra's system of Amesha Spentas. There false notions have led to ignoring both national and international laws, creating a misguided government for which little respect exists within the country or within the community of nations. And, as a consequence of the preceding issues, a large part of American society as well as foreign communities feel sickened and extremely negative about the future of the world. The net result of this, of course, is that instead of the correct system creating peace and prosperity, this perverted system has produced strife, terrorism and economic hardship both at home and abroad.

Our contemporary situation is undoubtedly similar to the one Zarathustra encountered during his lifetime. It was the large-scale spread of deceit, evil and strife in his world, documented so frequently in the Gāthās, that motivated the prophet to reflect upon the organization of his society and the elements within it that were false and corrosive, and how they had become that way. He understood, just as we do today, that the basis for the unrest and discontent in his world were false ideas, theft, exploitation of the poor, bad rulers who disrespected the laws of society, and every other sort of malignant social act and political policy. By examining what was wrong in his world, Zarathustra imagined a world in which everything could be right and true, resulting in benefits for all members of society. But, we may well ask, how could Zarathustra conceive of what was right by examining what was wrong?

The answer to this question is rather simple. From Yasna 30.6 we learn that Zarathustra conceived of the presence of evil in the world as a disease inflicted upon mankind, and from Yasna 31.19 we equally learn that the prophet calls himself a world-healer or physician. In fact, the whole plan for the restoration of the best existence in the Gāthās is conceived of as a curative and healing process.

Therefore, can we not conclude from these direct references that Zarathustra was not only a priest but also a physician? This dual role is in no way unusual in the ancient world because healing was considered a holy art, dealing most often as it did with life and death situations, and it was quite normal that adept priests, living in touch with the sacred, were also trained in the skills of medicine and healing. Consequently, like all physicians, Zarathustra had to have understood cause and effect, condition and symptom, which is the basis of all medical treatment, and his training as a physician was most helpful in allowing him to apply this knowledge to the construction of the system of the Amesha Spentas wherein, let us not forget, health (*haurvatat*) and continuing life (*amertat*) play a prominent role.

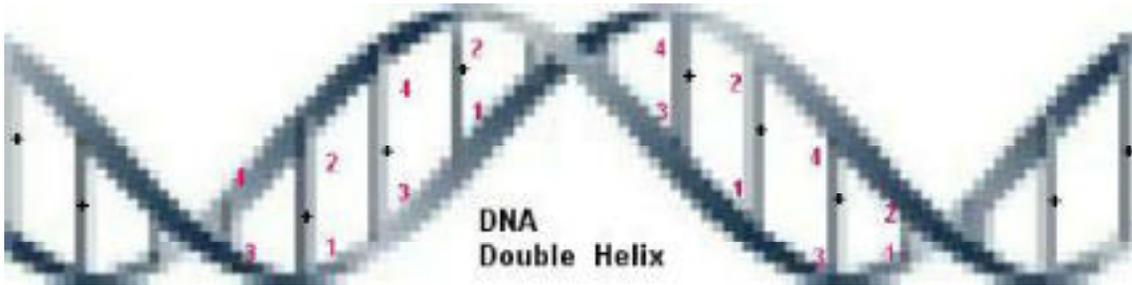
The mention of disease and healing finally brings me to the announced title of this paper, "Zarathustra's Genetic System," the second approach to analyzing the system of the Holy Immortals. I conceived of this idea because the year 2003 also commemorated the 50th anniversary of the publication by Crick and Watson of their classic paper on the structure and replication of DNA, the fundamental building material of all living things. Since we are celebrating the survival of Zoroastrianism on the one hand, and the Crick and Watson paper deals with the system of survival of living beings on the other hand, I wondered whether it could be possible to apply their insights concerning the structure and function of DNA to the system of the Amesha Spentas. In an unexpected surprise, this idea bore fruitful results. But before I can proceed with its exposition, some fundamental comments about cell biology are necessary.

Every cell consists of 3 essential parts: a nucleus, surrounding matter called cytoplasm and an encompassing membrane or cell wall. Although not directly comparable, one can visualize the structure of a cell in the form of a common egg, such that the nucleus, cytoplasm and membrane correspond to the yoke, egg white and egg

shell. Furthermore, the nucleus of every cell contains all the information that is necessary for the development, growth and future survival of the living being. One can easily comprehend this from the fact that a fertilized chicken egg will hatch a baby chick that in due course will develop into an adult hen or rooster. All this information is contained in the chromosomes of the cell nucleus on which are arrayed specific genes that determine the different inherited traits and characteristics that mark an individual's lineage and development. These genes are composed of DNA, the fundamental material of all living things.

In contrast to the cell nucleus, the cytoplasm of a cell contains the amino acids and proteins that are necessary to store energy and food for the continuing growth, development and survival of the living being. The production of the amino acids and the sustaining proteins is also ultimately controlled by the DNA in the cell nucleus in a totally dependent manner. However, their production involves a second intervening process that will be discussed below.

Crick and Watson determined that the structure of DNA is elegantly simple. It consists of 2 parallel chain-like strands on which only 4 distinct elements appear. These elements are called nucleotides and possess the chemical names adenine, thymine, cytosine and guanine, but we can refer to them as elements 1, 2, 3, 4. Furthermore, owing to their chemical properties, element 1 can pair only with element 2, element 3 only with element 4. As a result, where elements 1 and 3 appear on one strand of DNA, the complementary elements 2 and 4 must appear on the other strand, and as a consequence of the 3-d geometry of their chemical structures, both strands twist around each other in the form of a double helix. One can picture the structure of DNA easily in the form of continually twisting ladder, on which the rungs of the ladder consist of the paired elements 1 and 2 and the paired elements 3 and 4.



1 = adenine, 2 = thymine, 3 = cytosine, 4 = guanine

The picture of DNA shown above is depicted in its simplest, most idealized form. In reality, the structure of the some 20-30,000 genes in an individual can vary in every possible way. Forms of DNA can have the appearance of 1+2, 1+2, 3+4, 2+1, 3+4, 2+1, 2+1, ... or 1+2, 4+3, 4+3, 1+2, 1+2, 3+4, ..., etc., in almost every conceivable combination. Yet, what remains consistent in all arrays of DNA is the fact that elements 1 and 3 can only combine with the complementary elements 2 and 4, no matter on which strand of the double helix these elements are found.

DNA replicates, that is, reproduces itself by having the 2 strands of the helix separate. After separation, each individual strand serves as a template on which is built a new complementary strand that is identical to the one that has separated from the original helix and dictated by the principle of the pairing of complementary elements. All living things survive by continually producing DNA in this remarkably simple fashion.

However, as mentioned above, the DNA of the cell nucleus does not directly cause the synthesis of amino acids and proteins. There is an intervening process involving other nuclear matter called RNA, and the process can be briefly described in the following manner. The information, i.e., the linear sequence of elements contained in a particular form of DNA strands, is transcribed into RNA that acts as a messenger of this information, and for this reason this other chemical material is called messenger RNA (mRNA).

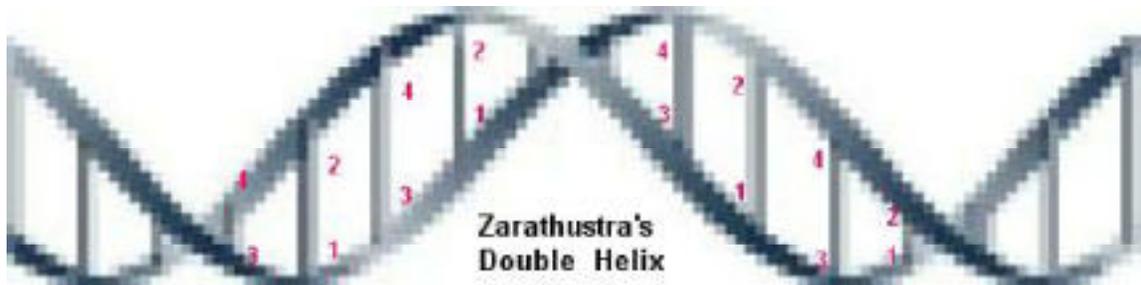
Once encoded into mRNA, the original DNA information is subsequently translated in the cytoplasm into enzymes that then trigger the formation of the necessary amino acids, proteins and other molecular components needed for growth and survival. Equally important is the fact that DNA also triggers in a similar fashion the antibodies that combat intrusive foreign matter that can cause disease. This complete process that begins with DNA, continues with mRNA and ultimately results in the synthesis of amino acids and proteins is called the central dogma of biology. It functions in every living creature, from the simplest form to the most complex one.

Let us now return to Zarathustra's system of Amesha Spentas and see how the DNA model might be applied to the basic elements of his design for living. First let us note that there is a basic distinction between the first 4 elements of good thinking, truth, good rule and respect on the one hand, and health and continuing life on the other. In the first place, it is clear from reading the Gāthās that health and continuing life for both god and man are dependent upon the existence of the prior four elements. Zarathustra continually stresses that neither health nor continuing life can exist for either god or man without the proper presence of good thinking, truth, good rule and respect. In this light, health and continuing life are the equivalent of the proteins and the amino acids in the cell's cytoplasm, the chemical entities that foster and promote the proper growth, development and survival of the organism itself. Therefore, just as the formation of proteins and amino acids are ultimately dependent upon the DNA in the cell nucleus, so too health and continuing life are

produced and dependent upon by these 4 fundamental elements of the Amesha Spentas which lie at the center of Zarathustra's ideas. There can be neither health nor continuing for man or god without the existence of good thinking, truth, good rule and respect. These are the fundamental elements necessary for the survival of both.

Secondly, Zarathustra makes it explicitly clear in his poems that truth and good thinking on the one hand, sovereignty and respect on the other, stand in complementary, dependent relationships. He repeatedly informs us that the understanding of truth comes only through good thinking, that rule or any other form of authority has no meaning without the proper respect for it. The interdependency of truth and good thinking is immediately encountered in the very first Gāthā, where the prophet asks: "Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire good thinking?" (Y. 28.5); and among many passages the interdependency of sovereignty and respect is found in the clear and unequivocal statement of Y. 47.1, "The Wise One in rule is Lord through (our) respect."

Therefore, we can map these 4 elements on to a double helix model in which good thinking and respect appear on one strand, and truth and good rule appear on the other, with the bonding between both strands formed by the complementary pairs of these basic elements.



1 = Good Thinking, 2 = Truth, 3 = Good Rule, 4 = Respect

Furthermore, we can equally understand how the system of elements reproduces itself in a manner similar to DNA. The 2 strands separate, and the one with good thinking and respect will form a new complementary strand with truth and good rule, and the strand with truth and good rule will form a new strand with good thinking and respect. This occurs because the elements on each strand cannot function without the complementary elements on the other strand. In this regard, the DNA model of the Holy Immortals is similar to the "systems" model first discussed. The two models function in both directions, and the elements of each model are dependent upon the others. Again, it is the simplicity of the organization of the DNA model that allows it to work so successfully.

Finally, there is a very important point that I need to underscore. When I began the discussion about DNA, I mentioned that Zarathustra considered evil and deceit to be a disease that has afflicted the world of mankind. Once the prophet has made this point in Yasna 30.6, in the very next verse he states that Ahura Mazda came into our world with his rule of truth and good thinking and that enduring respect gave body and breath to it. Here the 4 basic elements of good thinking, truth, sovereignty and respect are mentioned, as well as health and continuing life rephrased in the poetic terms body and breath. But the verse underscores the crucial notion that the continuing respect of man imparts life to the good rule of god.

By this statement, Zarathustra has pointed out two very fundamental notions. First, that the remedy or medicine for curing the disease of evil and deceit in the world is a sovereign rule that is based on

truth and good thinking. And second, that such a sovereign rule cannot exist without the respect for its authority. All four elements are necessary for ridding the world of evil and deceit and all four elements are equally necessary for the survival of both god and mankind. Cast in the simplest terms, truth, good thinking, enlightened government and respect are the basic genetic elements for the survival of the world, the only ones that can produce peace and prosperity, growth and stability, and all the healthy conditions that will promote the progressive advance of mankind.

Yet two aspects are missing to complete the homology with biological DNA. In the first place, what is the equivalent within Zarathustra's system that corresponds to messenger RNA (mRNA)? In other words, how do good thinking, truth, good rule and respect eventually become translated into health and continuing life? The answer to this question is furnished several times in the Gāthās, but one of the clearest instances occurs in Yasna 34.1:

By whichever action, by whichever word, by whichever worship, Wise One, Thou didst receive for Thyself continuing life ... and mastery over health, let these very things be given by us to Thee, o Lord, in the very greatest number.

Here Zarathustra reveals, as he does in many passages of the Gāthās, that the abstract notions of good thinking, truth, sovereignty and respect must be encoded into real and concrete processes. The messenger elements that perform this function are the other foundational concepts of the religion that every Zoroastrian understands: good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The prophet's notions here are easy to comprehend. One has to understand the underlying abstract system of the religion and its goals in the first place. However, this understanding must in turn be encoded into concrete good thoughts, good words and good deeds which subsequently will be translated into the manifold activities

and undertakings that produce health and continuing life for god and man. In this light, we may call Zarathustra's ideas of this system the central dogma of Zoroastrianism.

To grasp the prophet's ideas more easily allow me to employ a parallel analogy. The group of fundamental entities comprised of truth and good thinking, sovereignty and respect, is an abstract blueprint, much like the design or blueprints for the construction of a building. For the group of abstract ideas to be brought to realization, they must be encoded into concrete form through good thoughts, good words and good deeds in the same way that the blueprints for a building must be encoded into the real ideas, real orders and real labour necessary to proceed with its construction. Finally, when these procedures function properly together, a structure is produced that will survive and offer protection and permit growth and development to its inhabitants. This is exactly how Zarathustra's design for living is conceived.

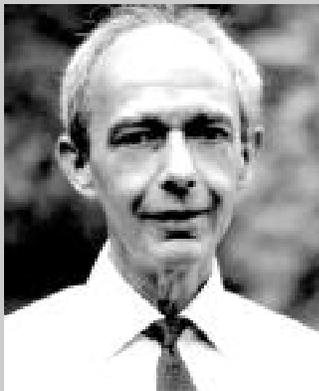
The second aspect required to complete the biological analogy can be phrased in the following manner: What corresponds to the cell's membrane, the element that encompasses the nucleus and cytoplasm of the cell as chemical processes take place? Here as well there is a clear answer. It is the *Spenta Mainyu*, the Benevolent Spirit. By this I mean to say that a person cannot comprehend either the knowledge or workings of the *Amesha Spentas* unless that person has the proper disposition or holy inclination to want to fight against evil and further good in the world.

In Yasna 43, Zarathustra himself explains that he began to understand the wonderful things that Ahura Mazda had created only when his own benevolent spirit had been awakened. That is to say, the prophet explains that a person's progressive spirit or nature is the underlying principle that motivates someone to understand the sorry condition of the world and to seek after those processes that will result in its betterment. Furthermore, it is the

recognition of such a spirit in others that permits good people to communicate with other good people and to forge an alliance for the good of mankind, much as membranes of cells communicate with each other in order to form a cooperative undertaking for the survival of the living being.

I am not suggesting in this paper that Zarathustra was the first biological geneticist. Rather, I do believe that the prophet was a physician and that he understood the relationship between disease and remedy. However, his great insight allowed him to view evil and deceit in the world as a disease and his great intelligence allowed him to propose a model for eliminating this disease and returning the world to a healthy condition by which it could survive into the future. That the model he proposed for world survival consists of 4 basic interrelated elements that find a direct parallel in the 4 interrelated elements found in DNA demonstrates that the most complex conditions and problems can most often be solved in the simplest and most elegant fashion. It is a pity that this approach is almost invariably ignored in our times and buried under the clutter and corrosiveness of overcomplicated and vapid proposals that lead nowhere except to further difficulties and maladies. On the other hand, the prophet Zarathustra's simple genetic system for survival has blissfully allowed a great religion to endure for 3000 years and to impart to its followers a simple and effective model for sustaining their own lives and those around them. ■■■■

Stanley Insler is Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at Yale University, where he served several terms as chairman of the Linguistics Department. He has written extensively about the literature and languages of both ancient India and Iran. Professor Insler is best known for his 1975 translation and commentary of the Songs of Zarathustra, which he is currently revising. Between his many academic commitments, he has often lectured on Zarathustra in India, Britain and The States. He is a member of many learned societies, including The American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



UNESCO World Heritage Centre

- Takht-e-Soleyman

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
Western Azerbaijan Province
N36 36 14.0 E47 14 06.0 : ref: 1077

A Brief Description

The archaeological site of Takht-e Soleyman, in north-western Iran, is situated in a valley set in a volcanic mountain region. The site includes the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary partly rebuilt in the Ilkhanid (Mongol) period (13th century) as well as a temple of the Sasanian period (6th and 7th centuries) dedicated to Anahita. The site has important symbolic significance. The designs of the fire temple, the palace and the general layout have strongly influenced the development of Islamic architecture.

Justification for Inscription

Criterion i: Takht-e Soleyman is an outstanding ensemble of royal architecture, joining the principal architectural elements created by the Sasanians in a harmonious composition inspired by their natural context.

Criterion ii: The composition and the architectural elements created by the Sasanians at Takht-e Soleyman have had strong influence not only in the development of religious architecture in the Islamic period, but also in other cultures.

Criterion iii: The ensemble of Takht-e Soleyman is an exceptional testimony of the continuation of cult related to fire and water over a period of some two and half millennia. The archaeological heritage of the site is further enriched by the Sasanian town, which is still to be excavated.

Criterion iv: Takht-e Soleyman represents an outstanding example of Zoroastrian sanctuary, integrated with Sasanian palatial architecture within a composition, which can be seen as a prototype.

Criterion vi: As the principal Zoroastrian sanctuary, Takht-e Soleyman is the foremost site associated with one of the early monotheistic religions of the world. The site has many important symbolic relationships, being also a testimony of the association of the ancient beliefs, much earlier than the Zoroastrianism, as well as in its association with significant biblical figures and legends. ■■■■



Courtesy Roman Ghirshman – The river Oxus and the Oxus Treasure on the north bank



Courtesy John Curtis – The Takht-i-Kuwad and the Oxus Treasure

resemblance to those from the Oxus Treasure. Undoubtedly, Bactria was the centre much renowned for the intricate skills of its goldsmiths, and their ornaments were greatly coveted throughout the Persian Empire. The three satrapies of Bactria, Chorasmia and Sogdiana were crossed by the great Oxus and, thus the interchange of their precious metals as also the finished products became inevitable. The ornaments made from Bactrian gold were highly prized items throughout the Empire and, this tradition was to continue later when the Bactrian-Greeks held sway in Persia. Such riches must have lured Alexander the Great not only to conquer this kingdom, but also to claim a Bactrian bride: she was Roxana, daughter of Oxyartes, Satrap of Bactria, and known as the most beautiful woman in all Asia!

It is generally considered that the Treasure from the Oxus was an accumulation of temple offerings, spanning several centuries. For reasons yet unknown it was buried probably in about 200BC, only to be rediscovered in 1877. Mainly Achaemenian in date, there are also some earlier pieces in the Median style and, some of a later period. Dr John Curtis^{iv}, at present

the Keeper of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities in the British Museum, writes in a recent publication: *“Altogether about 180 items are associated with the Oxus Treasure, the vast majority in gold or silver and mostly dating from the fifth to fourth centuries BC. There are just a few that might be either earlier or later In the absence of any first-hand accounts we can never be sure that all the pieces were found together in a single spot.”*

Professor Ghirshman^v believes that the Treasure belonged to the Bactrian temple of Anahita, goddess of fertility and war, located in the vicinity of the Oxus, at Bactra. The fifty or so gold plaques of varying sizes, decorated with male figures in Median dress holding bundles of sticks (the *barsom*), forming a significant part of the Treasure, may indicate their original use as accumulated votive offerings, dedicated to this temple deity. The reason for their sudden burial in c. 200BC along with elaborate ornaments of immense value, continues to be an enigma. Trying to unravel this academic puzzle, must at present remain a fruitless endeavour!

In 1905, O M Dalton^{vi}, an orientalist at the British Museum, was the first to produce a catalogue of objects recovered from the Oxus Treasure. This still remains the basic publication on the subject. Quite how this collection of mainly Achaemenian artefacts was initially found, then lost and, finally came to be housed in the British Museum during the nineteenth century, is a story with an almost

bizarre background and, simply must be told! Marjorie Caygill^{vii}, in her description of “The Treasure of the River Oxus”, succeeds in recreating the atmosphere of this strange episode, full of ‘blood-and-thunder’ – in fact, with all the trappings of a picaresque tale!

She writes:

“In May 1880, when Captain F C Burton was political officer in the Tezin valley, and resident at Seh Baba three marches from Kabul, three Mohammedan merchants from Bokhara, who were known to have a quantity of gold upon their mules, were robbed on their journey from Kabul to Peshawer by men of the Khurd Kabul . . . at a spot between Seh Baba and Jagdalak : they had foolishly gone ahead of the convoy escort, and were thus themselves partially to blame for their misfortune. The robbers made off to the hills with the booty . . .

“To understand some of the confusion, we should go back to this strange tale of the North-West Frontier of India in May 1880. Captain Burton, a British officer, later described how he was alerted late at night by the merchants’ servant who had escaped. He immediately set off with two orderlies and surprised the bandits quarrelling over the treasure. According to the account published by the Museum in 1905, Burton found four bandits lying wounded and the treasure strewn over the floor of a cave. He had the initiative, and so the robbers surrendered part of the treasure and the merchants. Burton, warned of an ambush, hid out during the night and only returned to his camp the following morning. He then threatened retaliation and the robbers, deciding on discretion, surrendered what was left of the treasure, the rest having been melted down or hidden. The grateful merchants declared that three-quarters of the treasure had been recovered. They allowed Captain Burton to buy a gold armlet which is now on loan to the Museum from the Victoria and Albert Museum and gave an

account of the treasure’s discovery three years earlier.”

The ‘treasure-merchants’ from Bokhara, whose original itinerary was from Kabul to Peshawer before they were robbed, pursued their initial plan after their reprieve. Their ultimate destination was the thriving gold and silver antique markets of Rawalpindi and Peshawer, the rendezvous of sharp dealers, eager buyers and, even expert forgers of old coins and antique ornaments. Many a purchase was made here at cut-throat prices and, if luck held, their booty often reached London and the western markets in due course.

Resident in Rawalpindi at this juncture, was General Alexander Cunningham (1814 – 1893), who was appointed the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1870. A collector and archaeologist in his own right, he was a well-known and respected figure in the flourishing antique trade of north-west India. Much of the Oxus Treasure was acquired by him from these local dealers; some pieces, however, found their way to the London antique markets. Sir Augustus Wooleston Franks of the British Museum purchased several items from this collection and, his discerning eye skilfully rejected certain dubious items offered for sale. Cunningham’s personal collection of the Treasure was later purchased by Franks, who ultimately bequeathed the entire collection to the British Museum at his death in 1897. Forming part of the Franks Bequest, the Oxus Treasure is today housed in the gallery of Ancient Iran at the Museum, keenly viewed and admired by all lovers of oriental art and antiquities.

So the chequered journey of this important treasure trove now comes to an end – from Oxus banks to Victorian London and, to a new home in one of the world’s greatest museums. It would seem appropriate to pay a brief tribute here to this legendary establishment, in the words of one of its former Directors, Sir David M Wilson^{viii} :



Courtesy Roman Ghirshman - The griffin armlets as royal tribute – the Apadana, Persepolis.

“The British Museum belies its name. It is not the national museum of Great Britain, although it is that too. Rather it is the museum of the cultures of the whole world. It was founded with this aim . . . To millions of tourists and visitors it brings a sense of

renewal, and to thousands of scholars a deep well of knowledge. It belongs to the whole world and is kept secure for all mankind.”

Appendix

Within the limited scope of this short essay, it would be impossible to discuss the individual items (180 in all) that form part of this Treasure, or even those of outstanding importance. Here is but the background to its discovery and final acquisition by British antiquarians, whose knowledge and appreciation of oriental antiquities has been the hallmark of the nineteenth century. Without being acquainted with its actual provenance, the study of this treasure trove would undoubtedly lack the authentic flavour!

In comparable collections of Achaemenian metalwork, both in gold and in silver, the Oxus Treasure stands unsurpassed. Generally dated between the fifth and fourth centuries BC, some pieces are in an earlier style, perhaps examples of Median metalwork. As observed in the stone reliefs of Persepolis, Achaemenian art is eclectic in essence; this aspect is further emphasized in the designing of the ornaments from the Oxus hoard. Birds, beasts and mythical creatures abound in early Persian metalwork, merging with the convoluted nomadic style of polychrome inlay, the handiwork of Scythian craftsmen in the main. This ornamental style was a cosmopolitan borrowing from diverse satrapies which geographically bound the frontiers of the Achaemenian Empire. Bactria, Chorasmia and Sogdiana, through which the Oxus flowed, were the centres which mainly fashioned these ornaments in gold, much coveted by Persian royalty. Some of these undoubtedly formed part of this fabulous Treasure, abounding in objects of great value – fit for the adornment of kings! No better examples display this grand “empire style”, than the pair of gold griffin armlets from the Treasure. Their dimensions (each armlet is 11.5cm wide) indicate that they were not to be worn, but to be displayed for royal pleasure on ceremonial occasion. According to Xenophon (*Anabasis*), such ornaments

were considered as gifts of honour fit for the King of Kings and, armlets of similar design were brought by several delegations as their annual royal tribute. The intricately carved stairway reliefs of the Apadana at Persepolis, show this to perfection.

Regrettably, there is a serious omission in the presentation of this essay, though quite unavoidable. The total absence of illustrations of these beautiful objects of virtue, calls for an apology*! However, to make amends, the adjoining bibliography includes books with relevant images of the highest quality, especially those published by the British Museum Press. Browsing through these is a reward in itself; short of a visit to the British Museum, which houses The Oxus Treasure as a centrepiece for its gallery of Ancient Iran, the reader need go no further in quest of this ever elusive Bactrian gold.

(*Note: There was not sufficient time before going to press to obtain permission for the reproduction of relevant illustrations from the British Museum.)

References:

- ⁱ a. Byron, Robert – The Road to Oxiana, Jonathan Cape Paperback, London, n.d
- b. Toynbee, Arnold J. – Between Oxus and Jumna, Oxford University Press, London, 1961
- c. Wood, Michael – In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great, BBC Books, London, 1997
- ⁱⁱ Sarianidi, Dr Victor – Bactrian Gold, p 54. Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad, 1985
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. pp 19 and 26
- ^{iv} Curtis, Dr John – Ancient Persia, p 62. British Museum Press, London, 2000
- ^v Ghirshman, Roman – Persia from the Origins to Alexander the Great, p 250. Thames and Hudson, London, 1964
- ^{vi} Dalton, O M – The Treasure of the Oxus, British Museum, London, 1905. (2nd ed. 1926, 3rd ed. 1964)

^{vii} Caygill, Marjorie – Treasures of the British Museum, p 24ff. British Museum Press, London, 1992 (2nd ed.)

^{viii} Wilson, Sir David M. – The Collections of the British Museum, pp 7 and 13. British Museum Press, London, 1989



Vera S Katrak holds a PhD degree from the Institute of Archaeology, University of London. Her doctoral thesis is entitled: "Analysis of Achaemenian Art and Architecture, with reference to Origins, Influences and Development." She conducted her research under the supervision of Sir Max Mallowan, renowned for his work at the site of Nimrud, in Mesopotamia. She also has a BA degree in English Literature, from the University of Bombay. On completing her academic pursuits, she returned to resettle in Karachi, her birthplace.



Update on WZC2005

World Zoroastrian Congress 2005 online registration and credit card payment system is now live on our website.

Please visit www.ztfe.com/Congress005 to view further information on the event and to register. You will also be able to reserve and pay for your Congress Brochure advertisements and/or exhibition stalls.

The congress package includes delegate fees for the 8 day Congress, 2 Variety Performances with dinners on both 24th and 26th June and 4 additional dinners on 28, 29, 30 June & 1 July.

The early bird offer rate of £200 per adult delegate will end on 31st December 2004. This is a huge saving of £150 from the full package rate of £350. See the website for full details. Please ensure you book early to avoid disappointment.

The Three Maji come to Harrow

by noshir j avari

Senior Trustee of ZTFE, Mr Noshir J Avari shares his Keynote Address delivered to the Harrow Inter Faith Council on Tuesday 29 June 2004, on the occasion of Harrow Council's anniversary of 50 years as a Borough. The following is condensed, without compromising on the contents of Mr Avari's address.

It is very gratifying to me personally, and to my Zoroastrian community in general, to be invited on this auspicious occasion by the Harrow Inter Faith Council to deliver this keynote lecture.

There are two reasons why it happens to be an auspicious occasion. First, this year we, the citizens of Harrow, celebrate the Council's anniversary of 50 years as a borough. In these last fifty years since 1954, the face of Harrow as a borough has changed very considerably. From being a predominantly English speaking, Christian, Anglo Saxon society, Harrow has over the years become a very multi-cultural society. I believe that this cosmopolitan and diverse composition not only makes the society culturally rich, but indeed it adds vibrancy to the entire nation state of Great Britain.

I believe that the present diversity found in the UK is further given a great deal of momentum by an organisation such as the Inter Faith Council. I believe the Inter Faith movement continuously strives to promote peace and understanding between members of various faiths. It is this that brings me to the second reason for my rejoice this afternoon. The choice by the Harrow Inter Faith Council to invite a representative of the Zoroastrian community – perhaps the smallest ethnic community residing in Harrow today – to deliver this keynote lecture, is indeed very gratifying.

In giving to my lecture the title *The Three Majis come to Harrow* I do not need to stress that ecclesiastical scholars of biblical studies already accept that the three wise men, that is the three majis mentioned in the New Testament of the Christians, were indeed Zoroastrians. The word "magic" in



English originates from the word "majis". Good evidence of the claim regarding the Majis and the New Testament is found in the San Vitale Church in Ravenna, Italy. There we find a mosaic showing the three Wise Men, that is the Majis, named Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar, in Persian attire carrying gifts for the baby Jesus.

Mr Jehangir Sarosh, who, in the year 2001/02, was the first Zoroastrian to be elected to serve as the Vice Chairman of the Inter Faith Network of the United Kingdom, is now also serving his second term as Chairman for Europe of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. I believe these are unique achievements for a British Zoroastrian citizen.

The Zoroastrian community in the UK is in the throes of moving its administrative, cultural, social and religious headquarters from West Hampstead in north London to

Harrow in Middlesex. Work is shortly to commence on converting the former Grosvenor Cinema to be adopted for the Zoroastrian community's religious and social usage. Thereafter, the Zoroastrian community in the UK shall firmly become an integral part of Harrow. The Zoroastrian Association in the UK was founded as long ago as 1861, which makes it today the oldest Association of the Asian ethnic communities settled in the UK.

Turning to Zoroastrianism, ladies and gentlemen, Zoroastrianism is reckoned to be mankind's oldest monotheistic religion dating back to some 4,000 BC. The religion was born at the same time as civilisation was born on the plateau of Central Asia along the banks of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The Aryan race came down out of Central Asia and settled on the land below the Caspian Sea and in the course of centuries reached the Iranian plateau.

The teachings of Zoroastrianism are acknowledged to have had a profound impact on other major religions of the world, to include Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Zarathustra was born in the town of Rae, on the River Darji, in the province of Azerbaijan on *Kurdad*, on the sixth day of the month of *Farvardin* in 4000 BC. The babe smiled at his birth and his parents named him Spitama Zarathushtra, that is, the Golden Light. At the age of fifteen, without word or warning, Zarathustra disappeared from his home and wandered into the wilderness, into the hidden heights of the mighty Elbruz Mountains to converse with his divine Lord and Master. There he spent ten solitary years in prayer and contemplation calling upon Ahura Mazda for help and guidance.

Then came the revelations, the time when Zarathustra's spirit left his body and moved to the highest level seeking enlightenment. Under orders from God, Zarathustra wended his way towards the court of King Vishtaspa, who ruled over a kingdom seething with dreaded magical practices. The entire Zoroastrian literature, starting with the *Gathas*, is said to comprise two

million verses divided into 21 books called the *Nasks*. Apart from their theological scripture, the *Nasks* dealt with subjects as profound as medicine, astronomy, agriculture, botany, philosophy, government, home management and personal hygiene.

When Cyrus the Great established the Persian Empire in the 6th century BC, Zoroastrianism became the official religion of what was then the largest empire in the world. However, the 7th century AD saw the end of the imperial phase of Zoroastrian history as Islam conquered Iran and over the next 1,300 years gradually reduced Zoroastrians to be the world's most microscopic community. There are today no more than 100,000 Zoroastrians throughout the world, with the largest number to be found in India, particularly in the city of Mumbai. Others are dispersed throughout the world to principally include Iran, Pakistan, United Kingdom, USA, Canada, Australia and Hong Kong.

After their arrival to India 1,373 years ago, no great historic events took place other than a few massacres of Parsi settlements in the 10th and 11th centuries at Cambay and Variav in Gujarat. Time and again the Parsis moved from town to town with their sacred fire.

Finally with the arrival of the British in India in the early 17th century, the Parsis began to enjoy a place of prominence in British India. It was, however, a Frenchman called Anquetil du Perron who was hailed as the Godfather of the Zoroastrians. From thereon European scholars became interested in commenting upon the sacred books of the Zoroastrians. Eminent and devoted Western scholars, such as Spiegel, Haug, Westergaard, Geldner, Max Muller, West, Mills, Jackson, Boyce, Williams, Hinnells and Hintze are amongst the few who are today regarded as the eminent voices of Zoroastrianism in Western circles.

From 1825 onwards the Zoroastrian religion inspired a great deal of scholarship all over the world. Scholarship has been valued by Zoroastrians for centuries. In London, the

Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe has encouraged religious educational programmes over the years. Zoroastrianism was displayed as one of Britain's nine major religions in the Faith Zone at the Millennium Dome. Some of the greatest scholastic contribution to the religion is from European scholars – notable among them today are Professor Mary Boyce, Professor John Hinnells and Dr Almut Hintze. Amongst the Parsi Zoroastrian scholars, the leading lights have been Mr Cursetji Rustamji Cama, Dr Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Dastur Dr Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla, Dr Erach Taraporewala, Sir Rustom Masani, Dastur Dr Phiroz Kotwal, Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo Jamaspasa and Mr Khojeste Mistree.

Therefore, although the religion of Zarathustra lay in ruins for centuries after the fall of the Sasasian Empire, with the arrival of the British in India this once most ancient religion, which ruled over two world empires, suddenly was reborn for the Parsis, particularly in the province of Gujarat. It was in Surat that a Zoroastrian called Rustom Maneck was born in the year 1635. He was a chief broker for an English factory in Surat. He advanced the cause of the English interests in that town. He often smoothed over the difficulties which arose between the English and the Moghuls who then ruled India.

The first Parsi, indeed the first Indian, who came to England was Naoroji Rustomji in April 1724. From here on the story of the Parsis in India and in Britain became one of legendary proportions.

The British gave India what is popularly called the 3 Cs – the Civil Service, the Civil and Criminal Justice system, and above all the game of Cricket. The Zoroastrian community has over the years provided to India a long list of eminent doctors, lawyers, accountants, High Court judges, scholars, statesmen, musicians, amongst others. Of the twelve Supreme Court judges in India today, two, and indeed the second most senior judge, Mr Sam Variava, is a Zoroastrian Parsi. What requires to be appreciated about the impressive league of

achievements that I am now to outline to you, is that there are only about 60,000 to 70,000 Zoroastrian Parsis living in India. The acknowledged top most civil barrister in India today is Mr Fali Nariman. Then again, the late Mr Nani Palkhivala was India's foremost constitutional lawyer becoming in 1977 India's Ambassador to the United States. Tata Consultancy Services - has at any given point in time some 1500 software consulting engineers stationed in the UK alone. India's biggest industrial conglomerate is a Zoroastrian enterprise - the Tatas. Today at the United Nations, Mr Jamsheed Marker, from Pakistan - a career diplomat - is held in the highest regard by the Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan.

In the armed forces as well, the Parsis made their mark in India. The first Indian to be appointed Director-General of the Armed Forces Medical Services was a Zoroastrian – General Masters. In the Indian Air Force, the four Engineer brothers, Aspi, Minoo, Jangoo and Ronnie, are amongst the most highly decorated. When aviation was in its infancy, Aspi Engineer and J R D Tata were the first two Indians to fly solo from India to the UK in a monoplane. Indeed, Air India was actually founded by J R D Tata. Aspi Engineer became an ace pilot and went on to become India's Air Chief Marshall. In the Indian Navy, Admiral Jal Cursetji was appointed the Naval Chief of Staff in 1976. The most charismatic Indian to have served in the Indian Armed Forces is the Chief of the Armed Forces – Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw – the only Indian to hold the rank of a Field Marshall. His gallantry when serving the British Armed Forces in the Second World War earned him the award of Military Cross.

Turning to achievements in science, Dr Homi Bhabha was indeed the first to have founded and developed India's atomic research. Jamshedji Tata, a Zoroastrian from Navsari, pioneered modern industrial India. Another Zoroastrian industrial house was that of the Wadia's of Surat. They were master shipbuilders.

The Zoroastrian contribution to public life in Britain is equally noteworthy. The founder

of the Zoroastrian Association of the United Kingdom in 1861, the body to which I proudly belong today as its senior trustee, was Dr Dadabhai Naoroji. Then again from 1895 to 1905 Sir Muncherjee Bhownagree, born in Bombay in 1851, the son of a wealthy merchant, who having studied law and being called to the English bar in 1885, within ten years from there, in 1895, captured for the Conservative Party the constituency of Bethnal Green. And yet again, another Zoroastrian, Sir Shapurji Saklatvala, commonly known as Comrade Sak, took his seat in the House during the inter war years from 1922 to 1929 as a Communist MP, the only Indian to be elected to the British House of Commons as a Communist.

I would be failing if I did not, at this juncture, mention how the Zoroastrian religion continued to survive in Iran over fourteen centuries after the Arab conquest of Iran in the 7th century AD. Our co-religionists in Iran had kept the torch alight despite 1300 years of adversity. The first-ever non-Muslim to be elected to the Iran Parliament or Majlis was Arbab Kaikhushrov Shahrokh. I am delighted that Arbab Kaikhoshrov's grandson, Shahrokh Shahrokh is here in our midst today. A Zoroastrian also rose to become Deputy Prime Minister of Iran, Prof Farhang Mehr.

In more recent times, a young Zoroastrian born in Zanzibar and brought up in the priestly class decided that music truly is the spice of life. In the same vein as the world-renowned Zoroastrian conductor, Mr Zubin Mehta, the late Freddie Mercury of Queen, brought great fame to the people of Britain via his talents as a rock musician. In the year 2001, the Asian Woman of the Year award in Britain went to a Zoroastrian - Ms Shernaz Engineer. Then again, in the year 2003, Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award went to the Chief Executive of Cobra Beer - a Zoroastrian - Mr Karan Billimoria. You may also be aware of the BBC newsreader, Matthew Amroliwala, whose father, Wing Commander Amroliwala, is indeed the honorary surgeon to HM The Queen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have outlined to you the doctrines and the history of the world's oldest monotheistic religion. I have also given to you some account of the followers of the religion and their salutary achievements, both in India and in the UK. It is a matter of great pride for my community to be honoured today in this way by asking a Zoroastrian to make this keynote address in this auspicious year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the London Borough of Harrow. I trust my talk in my official role as the Senior Trustee would send a fine signal to the political leaders of the Harrow Council that in the years to come Harrow will see great benefits having opened its doors to the Zoroastrians and welcoming the Zoroastrian community in its midst.

May God bless you all.



Noshir J Avari was born in Mombassa, Kenya, and came to the UK in 1962 for further studies. After reading politics, economics and law at Exeter University, he joined the Inland Revenue Department in 1968 and served the Department for over twenty years, during which period he rose to the rank of HM Senior Inspector of Taxes. In 1988 he set up a tax investigation consultancy called Avari and Associates, which now regards itself to be a leading tax investigation consultancy in the UK. † The Consultancy specialises in assisting individuals and corporations who may come under serious scrutiny of either the Inland Revenue, or the VAT office of HM Customs and Excise.

Since 1986, Mr Avari has been involved with the Zoroastrian community affairs in London. He was Honorary Secretary of ZTFE from 1987 to 1990. In 1992 he was elected a Trustee of the Association and was re-elected in 1999, making him the Senior Trustee. He was the youngest elected Trustee in the history of the Association founded in 1861.

Advertisement

Companion Wanted SINGLE BLACK FEMALE seeks companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I am a very good looking girl who loves to play. I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping, fishing trips, and cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hands. Rub me the right way and watch me respond. I'll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Call (404)875-6429 and ask for Daisy. Over 15,000 men found themselves talking to the Atlanta Humane Society about an 8 week old black Labrador.

Opportunity knocks - a dream realised

by sarosh cooper

“One Man’s loss is another’s gain!” This was exemplified for this writer, when he got a call from his cousin Colonel Firdosh Mehta expressing his deep disappointment for not being able to participate in a World Record Breaking attempt, due to an urgent medical problem. He wanted to know whether, at short notice I could take his place?

The attempt was for the first time in the history of World Motor-biking, a team comprising of six members would complete the ‘TVS Fiero FX Out-There Adventurers World Record Challenge’ to set a world record by covering the world’s four highest mountain passes within a time span of 24 hours. A feat un-attempted till date.

Of the six members, two were Parsi brothers, Burgess and myself, motorcycling enthusiasts from early childhood.

So what is so special about a bunch of crazy adventurers riding up into the wild yonder? Let us try and put things in perspective. Our planet is divided into seven continents – North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Antarctica, Oceania and Asia. One fourth of this planet covered by land are also with some great mountain ranges in every continent. Let us take a look at the highest points in each of these continents.



So what’s the big deal? Now let us look at the World Record Challenge. For one, this route is considered by many (including the famous Lonely Planet) as one of the ten toughest rides in the world. The four passes that the team covered are:

- **Marsimik La : The highest pass in the world (18,652 feet)**
- **Khardung La : The second highest pass in the world (18,380 feet)**
- **Tanglang La : The third highest pass in the world (17,582 feet)**
- **Chang La : The fourth highest pass in the world (17,350 feet)**

When one looks at the altitudes alongside the highest peaks in the seven continents, it is found that each of these peaks is higher than the highest points in Europe, Oceania and Antarctica. In fact Marsimik La is just 700 feet short of the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro, the highest point in the African continent. This leaves the two American continents apart from the mighty Himalayas, with points above the altitude travelled by the team during the challenge.

At the time when the teams were standing atop the highest passes, there was no person anywhere in the world apart from those climbing Mount Everest or some other high mountain peak than them – the teams were literally on the ‘Top of the World’

Not only it’s a fact that these passes are higher than most points in the seven continents, but altitudes of around 18,000 feet is considered the beginning of the Death Zone beyond which there is no possibility of the body acclimatizing to the elements. The body gradually starts deteriorating and finally with prolonged exposure (which in some cases can be mere hours) slips into coma and then death.

The expedition was formally flagged off from New Delhi on July 21st, 2004 and after thorough acclimatisation which included sleeping in the open on a heli-pad at altitude of 14,000 feet plus, reached their starting point via Leh [Capital of Ladakh].

In addition to the four highest passes, the team's journey also took them across three other 15,000 ft plus mountain passes i.e. Lachulung La (16,616 feet), Baralacha La (16,500 feet) and Nakeela (15,547 feet).

The record breaking attempt in the great Himalayas was kick started at 00.00 midnight of 31st July 2004. The date was especially chosen since it was a full moon night. However on the D day, little benefit could be derived from the moon as the night was freezing cold and cloudy. Nevertheless, the commitment of the team, sponsors and support personnel was total and the world record attempt was flagged off as scheduled. The team had to cover a total distance of 638 km, crossing the world's four highest passes within a 24-hour period.

The dedication, determination, courage, planning and excellent team work finally triumphed over all the arduous challenges such as lack of oxygen, rugged terrain, snow fall, melting snow, raging rivers, landslides and avalanches.

It must be mentioned that the Indian army had extended its full support to the expedition, without which the attempt would not have been possible.

It was a feat attempted for the first time, by anyone, any where in the world. The Limca Book of Records has recognised the event as a 'World Record' and attempts are being made to approach the Guinness Book of Records to create a new category for the event. The event was aired on 10 Sports, NDTV and Headlines Today besides being covered in most leading newspapers.

We, the Cooper's believe passionately in the statement – Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely, in a well-preserved body, but to rather skid in sideways, totally worn out shouting '....' what a ride.

Only those willing to risk going too far can possibly know how far they can go.



Sarosh Cooper says: "I am a typical crazy bawaji (38 yrs old, with wife and daughter) doing adventure sports since nearly 20 years. Am a certified advance alpine skier, basic mountaineer (climbed till Everest Base Camp amongst various others) and also Padi Scuba diver. Have also done a bit of para gliding, water skiing, rafting." Academically, a BSc and working as a senior manager in Marketing & Sales at Perks Engineering, owned by a Parsi, who are the pioneers and leaders in the field of shrink and stretch wrapping machines in India.



آورده اند که شاهزاده (شاهویر) در آتشکده آذربرین مهر در خراسان بر یکی از زندانیان نمایان میشود، او را بر اسب مینشانند و همان دم در جایگاه سنی پیر فرود میآورد و میفرماید تا سنی پیر را بنیاد گذارد. بنا بر تقویم قدیم زرتشتی روز اشتاد روز اشتاد از ماه بهمن به مدت یک روز زمان برگزاری نماز همگانی در این جشنگاه بود.

پیر نارستانه Pir-e Narestaneh

زرتشتیان همه ساله به مدت ۱۰ روز از روز سپندارمذ تا روز آذر از ماه تیر (۲ تا ۶ تیر) به پیر نارستانه میروند و آداب و رسوم نیایش اهورامزدا و برپایی سنت های شاد را به جا میآورند. آورده اند که این مکان مقدس، شاهزاده اردشیر را برای در امان ماندن از دست دشمنان در خود گرفته است. شاهزاده اردشیر بر شکارچی روشن بینی نمایان میشود. شکارچی بنا به خواست و فرمان شاهزاده اردشیر، پیر نارستانه را بنیان مینهد. بنا بر تقویم زرتشتی از روز دی باآذر از ماه اسفند به مدت پنج روز زمان برگزاری نماز همگانی در این جشن گاه بوده است.



Dr Mehran Sepehri is currently a Professor of Management at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran and a member of Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman. He was born in a Mobed family in Kerman, Iran. He earned a Ph.D. in Engineering from Stanford University. He served previously as the secretary of FEZANA.



Pir-e Naraki



Pir-e Herisht



Pir-e Sabz (Chak-Chak)



Pir-e Banoo-ye-Pars



Pir-e Narestaneh



Pir-e Seti-Pir

پیر هریشت Pir-e Herisht (مکان در ۱۰ کیلومتری یزد و ۱۲ کیلومتری روستای شریف آباد)

زرتشتیان هر سال از روز امرداد تا روز خور از ماه فروردین (۷ تا ۱۱ فروردین) برای برپایی آیین های دینی این زیارتگاه گرد هم می آیند. آورده اند که مکان مقدس گوهربانو، از دختران یزد سهریاری، را در حدود نرسه است. گوهربانو بر کودکی نرسه نمایان شد و به او نرسه نام نهادند. پیر هریشت را بنیان گذارد. بنابر تقویم قدیم زرتشتی در طول ماه آبان هر بهدینی میتوانست به این جشن گاه آیین ویژه زیارت را بجا آورد. جشن آتش افروزی (ومبا) را زرتشتیان شریف آباد در ۲۶ فروردین در زیارتگاه برگزار می کنند.

پیر نارکی Pir-e Naraki (مکان در ۱۰ کیلومتری شهر یزد در نزدیکی ست)

زرتشتیان همه ساله از روز مهر تا ورهرام از ماه امرداد (برابر با ۱۲ تا ۱۶ امرداد) با گرد هم آمدن در این مکان به نیایش اهورامزدا و برگزاری آیین دینی و مراسم سنتی که با شادی همراه است، میپردازند. آورده اند که مانروای پارس به نام (نازیانو) مکان مقدس در خود گرفته (نازیانو) بر بیابانگردی روش پارس را در بنیاد پیر نارکی بنا نهاد.

پیر بانوی پارس Pir-e Banoo-ye Pars (مکان ۱۱۲ کیلومتر، شهر یزد)

از روز مهر تا روز ورهرام ماه تیر (۱۳ تا ۱۷ تیر). همه ساله زرتشتیان باین آیین های دینی و سنتی در گاه گرد هم می آیند. آورده اند که شهبانوی پارس را این مکان در خود است. شهبانوی سوب سیسی نمایان شد پس از سوب سیسی او را سیسی پیر بانو نام نهادند. بنابر تقویم زرتشتی روز مهر از ماه اسفند به مدت پنج روز زمان برگزاری نماز همگانی در پیر بانو بوده است. مانک جی سود قربانی کردن گاو را در این جشن گاه از میان برد.

پیر سبز (چک) Sabz (Chak-Chak)

زرتشتیان به مدت پنج روز از روز استاد تا اتارام از ماه خرداد (۲۴ خرداد) در این زیارتگاه گرد می آیند و آیین دینی و سنتی خود را به جا می آورند. آورده اند که این مکان مقدس (حیات بانو) یکی از شاه های ساسانی، در خود گرفته است. چوپانی در آن حیات بانو را به خواب میبیند که به او میفرماید تا پیر را بنیان گذارد. هم قدیم زرتشتی از روز استاد (۱۳ ماه بهم) مدت پنج روز زمان برگزاری این جشن است.

ستی پیر Pir-e Seti-Pir

هر سال در روز استاد از ماه خرداد (۲۴ خرداد)، زرتشتیان به زیارت پیر ستی پیر که به قلعه هستند میروند. نیایش و مراسم اهورامزدا و برگزاری مراسم دینی، از آداب زیارت این پیر است.

Snapshots of a Good Life

by shazneen rabadi gandhi

The Felicitation of Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani : Pomona Darbe Mehr, November 20, 2004

A couple of months ago, my husband and I were asked to assist in connection with an event honouring Prof Kaikhosrov Irani on November 20, 2004. We readily agreed. However, come November 20th, little assistance was asked of us, because of the number of people who had already volunteered to assist with the event. There are few people in this world who invoke as much admiration, respect, and apparently, volunteerism, as Prof Irani and his wife, Piroja. About a 150 people – Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrians, from the New York area and from far away – were already there when we arrived. “What is all this? I never expected so many people ...” Kaikhosrov said as we greeted him, shaking his head gently.

The official programme for the evening began with a benediction by Ervads Pervez Patel, Darius Antia, Kersey Antia, and Rohinton Madon. Kaikhosrov himself had selected the gathic verse for the benediction and Ervad Kersey Antia translated it. This was followed by two brief lectures by former students of Prof Irani and other brief reflections by a variety of people from all walks of Kaikhosrov’s life. In short, it was an evening full of reminiscences, good wishes and gratitude. It was an illuminating celebration, which provided insight into the life of a most noble couple and the impact of their good deeds on others. An album of sorts filled with snapshots of a good life lived by a couple most loved.

Slated to speak regarding *Philosophy Now, and What K D Irani Taught Me Then*, Dr Kenneth Stern noted that Kaikhosrov had “civilized” him in various ways, including, instilling in him a taste for Indian food

(further enhanced by Piroja’s excellent cooking) and an appreciation for the opera. Dr Stern recalled how Kaikhosrov inspired him to major in philosophy and mentored him spiritually and academically. Now a Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York, Dr Stern recalled Kaikhosrov’s advice to him when he first started teaching: “Remember, you’re not teaching a course, you’re teaching *students*.” Kaikhosrov had said. Speaking about the discipline of Philosophy itself, Dr Stern provided the audience with a peek into the professional life of Prof Irani.

Dr Oscar Muscarella, a former student of Kaikhosrov and presently, an archaeologist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gave a talk entitled, *An Archaeologist’s Involvement with Zoroastrianism*. Dr Muscarella came to learn of Zoroastrianism because of his curiosity about his favourite professor at City College. Kaikhosrov was the first Zoroastrian Dr Muscarella had ever met and after describing his work with Zoroastrian artifacts, Dr Muscarella mused that he had never expected when he first met Kaikhosrov, that his career would involve him with Zoroastrian culture as much as it had.

The impact of Kaikhosrov’s life on his former students is undeniable. Dr Martin Tamny a former student and later a colleague of Kaikhosrov described how in 1997, he came across a former student of Kaikhosrov who made large yearly donations to City College. After Dr Tamny arranged a lunch meeting for the student and Kaikhosrov, the student was so pleased to have reacquainted himself with his favourite professor that he donated \$2

million in stock to the City College Fund to sponsor the "Prof K D Irani Visiting Professorship in Philosophy at the City College". Dr Tamny described the donation as "a testament to the high regard that Prof Irani was held in by his students." Having known him for 42 years, Dr Tamny stated, "Along the way he has taught me through his own actions the importance of good thoughts good words and most of all good deeds."

Prof Irani's Zoroastrian scholarship was also honoured. Dr Farhang Mehr stated that, in his opinion, "nobody as much as Professor Irani has discerned the true meaning of the philosophy of Zarathustra." Dr Ali Jafarey, with whom Kaikhosrov and Piroja, among others, founded the Zarathustrian Assembly, stated that the Assembly owed its success to the couple. Dr Lovji Cama, ZAGNY's Dean of Religious Studies spoke of the concrete contributions Piroja and Kaikhosrov had made to ZAGNY over the years, in arranging religious seminars and religion classes and serving the community as board members. In particular, Dr Cama spoke of the impact of Kaikhosrov's lectures at ZAGNY youth camps, stating that "his wit, his sense of humour, and his ability to tailor his discourse to the level of his audience, made him an engaging speaker and a great teacher for the youth."

Providing a different perspective on Prof Irani, Dr Jacob Stern, a colleague observed that "there is only a thin line which separates Prof Irani from Don Quixote. Both men have carefully trimmed chin beards, both wear slightly bizarre clothes (though I admit I've never seen KD in

armour), but most importantly, both men set out to act as just men *should* act in a world who's most outstanding characteristic is its injustice. Don Quixote does not exactly understand this fact about the world and, therefore, we think him mad. KD, on the other hand, understands well that the world in which he attempts to act justly is itself an unjust place. Yet, he seems to me, constantly astonished at that knowledge. This, I think, accounts for what seems to me a most

notable feature of his personality: that he is totally without cynicism and without any mocking sarcasm. Among the Hasidic Jews there is a traditional belief that in this world there are at any moment in history thirty-six just men. It is because of these thirty-six just men and the web of their ongoing goodness, that God has not annihilated the world. The thirty-six are, in a quite literal sense, the salvation of us all. I

should I suppose confess to a long held suspicion that KD Irani might be one of these thirty-six."

Describing Prof Irani as "the very soul of City College," Dr Stern stated that "thousands of his students and colleagues - both past and present - will attest to the depth of his knowledge, his intellectual honesty, his wisdom, and most importantly, to the profound influence he has had on their lives If ever there was a man who's good thoughts and deeds give us hope for the world's renewal that man is K D Irani." Another colleague, Dr Frank Grande, described how a reference letter from Albert Einstein helped Prof Irani to get his first job at City College.

Providing insight into his personal life, Zarine Weil, the Irani's niece began her remarks by stating, "I cannot say a few words about Kaikhosrov without also talking



Prof K D Irani addressing the gathering.
Photograph courtesy, Hanoz Gandhi

about Piroja. She is his biggest fan and foremost champion. Each is a pillar of strength to the other. They are the sort of devoted partners we all hope for and hope to be.” Speaking of her impressions as a four year old, which was when she had first met him, Mrs Weil stated, “I remember being charmed by the bright-eyed man with the pointy beard who seemed to have an endless supply of stories to tell and a sweet lady who took such delight in every joke her husband told. That was a long time ago. But what struck me about them then, remains true even now.” Describing their more recent family reunions, Mrs Weil told of a charming essay written by her ten year old daughter in which she nominated Kaikhosrov for the “relative of the year award”.

Other persons from the community who spoke in honour of the Iranis included, former FEZANA President, Framroze Patel who spoke with great gratitude to the Iranis for bringing him back to his religion after a period of disillusionment with it in his younger years; Daraius Antia, who like Dr Cama thanked Kaikhosrov for enlightening him through the adult religion classes; Arnavaz Patel, who informed the audience that “if you do a google search on his name you will find exactly 5,162 results” for your search and thanked Kaikhosrov and Piroja for being “like grandparents” to ZAGNY’s youth; Shahrari Shahrari who spoke of his experience of making the documentary *Domains of Belief* as an amazing and exciting intellectual adventure; Aysha Ghadiali, who read messages from all over the world communicated through the Creating Awareness Network and presented the Iranis with a compilation of such messages; Kersi Antia who thanked the Iranis for standing by him in challenging times; and Rustom Kevala, who spoke of his experiences with the Iranis in the course of his work compiling Prof Irani’s papers for publications.

On behalf of a grateful community, Zareen Austin and Shiraz Unvala presented garlands made by Sheroo Kanga, to Kaikhosrov and Piroja Irani. ZAGNY member Erach Munshi presented Prof Irani with a framed *maan patra*.

With humility and gratitude, Kaikhosrov Irani thanked the audience for their presentation.



Photograph courtesy, Hanoz Gandhi

With characteristic wit and humility, he said, “Thankyou ... I really thank you. And I really appreciate this. You must realize that this is a slightly embarrassing situation for me. I have been praised beyond my conception. And

this was an occasion where critical comments would be filtered out, but these are the kinds of things that happen at memorial meetings. Fortunately, I’m alive and I have the opportunity to hear them and I do appreciate that. And you must realize that if I were dead, I couldn’t have been requested to speak. But now, I shall speak, because I rather like that.”

To an eager audience, Kaikhosrov spoke of his career in philosophy and in Zoroastrian studies. Of the latter he concluded, “Religion without vision is blind. Religion without a way of life is empty. But there are people who think that if we perform these rituals and those rituals and so on and join in them then that is religion. That is certainly something one should do, because that’s part of the social structure of religious life, but if you think that is religion you are missing something.”

After a few more remarks, Prof Irani left the stage to resounding applause and a standing ovation. As dinner was served, messages of good will and gratitude continued to be read. As the event wended down, a reluctant group said their fond farewells to the honoured couple, taking with them these snapshots of a life well lived and, probably, “much hope for the world’s renewal” as well. ■■■

Shazneen Rabadi Gandhi lives in New York City. She writes as a hobby.



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 TENNISON ROAD, SOUTH NORWOOD, LONDON SE25 5NF

VISIT OUR WEBSITE : www.w-z-o.org

The International Board of The World Zoroastrian Organisation, London is very pleased that our co-Board member, Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani will be honoured by ZAGNY on 20th November. We are in full accord with your sentiments.

Kaikhosrov has been our International Board member since 1984 and one of our Vice Presidents as well. He has been a strong supporter of The WZO and his contribution is very valued by the other members of the Board.

It was Kaikhosrov who suggested to our ex Chairman Mr Shahpur F Captain the holding of a conference on Gathas of Zarathushtra. This idea was immediately put into effect and the First Gatha Colloquium was held in London in 1993 and amongst the galaxy of international scholars who spoke at that Colloquium was Kaikhosrov.

In fact, Kaikhosrov took part in all the WZO Conferences on Zoroastrian Religion, Culture and History. His talks were extremely enlightening, interspersed with humour lucidly delivered in measured tone, thereby captivating his audiences. His vast knowledge of Zoroastrianism was patently obvious. The questions and answer sessions were delicately handled and the message was firmly driven home. His most endearing quality is humility and in variably always during his talks he would deprecate himself in a very amusing way.

Kaikhosrov's contribution in the negotiations with BPP and FEZANA to persuade them to join the WZO were positive and fully supportive of the stand taken by WZO. It is a pity that 25 years on, both these organisations have still not joined WZO.

In 1990, The World Zoroastrian Organisation decided to honour Kaikhosrov, along with other distinguished Zoroastrians to mark the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of The WZO. It was an honour richly deserved by this noble personage.

In his own professorial field, Kaikhosrov's intellectual brilliance is well known and recognised. The fact that "The K D Irani Chair of Philosophy" was established in October 1998 at the City College, City University of New York speaks volumes for Kaikhosrov's knowledge and mastery of his subject of the Philosophy of Science and the manner in which he imparted his vast knowledge to his pupils. We in WZO are proud of the fact that Kaikhosrov has been immortalised by the creation of a Chair of Philosophy in his name.

We salute Kaikhosrov and his ever-supportive wife Piroja, for the lustre they have brought upon the community. May Ahura Mazda bless them with good health and happiness.

For and on behalf of the WZO Committee.

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla
Chairman

Date : 3rd November 2004

Why not a World Body of Zoroastrians

by keki gandhi

Printed in the Fed Newsletter, November 2004 and shared by the author with Hamazor. We are thankful for the courtesy shown.

CREATING AWARENESS

A hue and cry has been raised against the formation of a truly representative World Body of Zoroastrians. The readers of this newsletter in India and overseas might have read in the press reports of what was said at the October 21 Public Meeting and protest letters to the editors. The Chairman and Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet have also been bombarded with such letters, copies of which have been doing the rounds through private circulation.

The information given in this column is intended solely to apprise its readership of the factual position and to allay any misgiving and misapprehension arising out of misinformation and misinterpretation.

Much is being made of the fact that in the name of the World Body the word 'Zoroastrian' is used and the word 'Parsi' is not used. It has been alleged that this is indicative of the intention to de-link the ethnicity of being Parsi/Irani from the Zoroastrian religion in a move to facilitate the entry into the faith of any person professing to be a Zoroastrian. In other words the entire World Body is being created to facilitate the entry of neo-converts and to diminish and erase the Parsi identity.

In January and February, 2004 issues of this newsletter, extracts from the 1908 Judgement of the Bombay High Court in the case of *Petit v/s Jeejibhoy* had been reproduced to establish beyond any doubt that "*The word Zoroastrian simply denotes the religion of the individual. A Zoroastrian is a person who professes the Zoroastrian religion - The word 'Parsi' denotes nationality or community and has no religious significance*".

In India we do identify ourselves as 'Parsi Zoroastrians' which means a 'Parsi' professing the Zoroastrian religion and though the term 'Parsi Zoroastrian' as defined in the 1908 Judgement includes Iranis, whenever the word Parsi is used even in India our Irani brothers and sisters feel excluded.

In places outside India our co-religionists identify themselves as Zoroastrians and not as Parsi Zoroastrians. Even their associations are named Zoroastrian Associations and the word Parsi is not used by them. The Federations in North America and in Europe are also respectively called the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America and Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.

Since the word 'Zoroastrian' means a person professing the Zoroastrian religion it automatically includes Parsis as well as Iranis professing the Zoroastrian religion and there is no reason why Parsi Zoroastrians should feel that they are excluded from the term 'Zoroastrian'.

The purpose of forming a World Body of Zoroastrians is to bring together under one umbrella, Zoroastrians living in different parts of the world in diverse circumstances and situations.

The proposal to form a World Body of Zoroastrians has been on the anvil since the nineteen sixties when the first two World Zoroastrian Congresses were held. It was also discussed as a special topic and unanimously approved at the third World Zoroastrian Congress held in Mumbai in 1978. Four more World Zoroastrian Congresses have been held in India and overseas. Three World Zoroastrian Youth Congresses have also

been held so far in USA, England and India. No objection has ever been raised against the omission of the word 'Parsi' from the names of those Congresses. No wild, unwarranted and unjustified allegations have been made about the intentions of the organizers of those Congresses.

In 1980 the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) was registered in UK and it continues to survive and thrive to this day in India and elsewhere.

The issues relating to the formation of a truly representative World Body of Zoroastrians have been discussed and debated repeatedly at the Federation meetings in the past and the free and frank discussions as also the view points expressed are reported in the minutes of the meetings which are circulated to all members of the Federation. These discussions are also reported in the *Parsiana* and *Mumbai Samachar* for the information of their readers. Hence, the allegation of lack of transparency is baseless.

The individuals who are now so vociferous and aggressive in objecting to the formation of the World Body without the use of the word 'Parsi' in its name, saw nothing wrong in it for four decades. It is not as if the word 'Parsi' had always been used earlier and is suddenly being omitted now.

It has already been explained as far back as in June, 2003 that the umbrella organisation namely "International Zoroastrian Organisation (IZO) will have two arms the World Zoroastrian Organisation of Individuals ('WZOI') and the 'World Zoroastrian Organisation of Federations ('WZOF'). The two arms will function independently of IZO and of each other. They will submit to the IZO periodical reports on the activities already undertaken and/or reports, and make its recommendations, but neither the WZOI nor the WZOF will be bound to accept or implement such recommendations nor will WZOI have any say in the functioning of WZOF and by the same token, WZOF will not have any say in the functioning of WZOI. This is the same principle as is applied to the relationship between the

Federation in India and its member Anjumans and Panchayets.

The same principle of autonomy is enshrined in the proposed Constitution of WZOF and each regional Federation will enjoy complete autonomy vis-à-vis the WZOF, the IZO and the other regional Federations who will be members of the WZOF.

Thus the fear that pressures will be brought on the Indian Federation by the other regions and our religion, customs, community institutions and funds will be in danger of being taken over by the converts is a figment of the imagination of those who are spinning horror stories to frighten the community for reasons best known to them. It belittles our intelligence and self confidence in the eyes of our fellow Zoroastrians in other parts of the world and makes them feel as if we consider them to be monsters who have evil designs on our infrastructure and funds as also on our religion which is also their religion.

If this is allowed to happen it can only result in dividing the community world wide and in creating discord and disdain among co-religionists.

Thanks to the good sense of the members of the Federation, this will not be allowed to happen and instead of spreading enmity, distrust and casting aspersions on each other's motives and future conduct, FPZAI will be able to work in harmony with the Federations of other regions as also with the existing WZO which will hereafter be known as WZOI.

In India, the Indian Federation and WZO India have no differences, both are supplementing and complimenting each other's efforts and the same spirit will prevail between WZOI and WZOF at the IZO level! Amen!

PARSIS AND CENSUS 2001

The figures are given on the next page, for the Parsi population in India, in different age groups, area wise. Numerous questions are bound to arise in one's mind when one examines these figures.

Parsis in numbers:

1991 – 76,382
2001 – 69,601

National (India) birth rate:

26 births per 1000
– All India
6 to 7 births per 1000 – Parsis

National (India) death rate:

8 deaths per 1000
– All India
16 to 18 per 1000
– Parsis

Age Profile Population under 6 years:

14.9% - All India
4.7% - Parsis

Population over 60 years:

31% - Parsis (highest in the world)
Under 5% - India
15% - In Japan (considered to be very high)

courtesy Dinshaw Tamboly

| Age Group | Maharashtra | Gujarat | Others | All India |
|------------|-------------|---------|--------|-----------|
| 0-9 | 3719 | 1029 | 320 | 5068 |
| 10-19 | 5559 | 1381 | 399 | 7339 |
| 20-29 | 6210 | 1401 | 399 | 8010 |
| 30-39 | 6307 | 1482 | 376 | 8165 |
| 40-49 | 7327 | 1675 | 441 | 9443 |
| 50-59 | 8043 | 1517 | 428 | 9988 |
| 60-69 | 7780 | 1477 | 385 | 9642 |
| 70-79 | 6446 | 1167 | 351 | 7964 |
| 80 & above | 3348 | 465 | 169 | 3982 |
| TOTAL | 54739 | 11594 | 3268 | 69601 |

How did the enumerators know whether the person counted as 'Parsi' was really a 'Parsi'? Merely because the person identified himself as a Parsi? Did he go into the definition of the word Parsi? If so which definition? Both parents Parsis? Father Parsi - mother Non-Parsi? Father non-Parsi mother Parsi? By whichever definition he went, was the family tree examined? If so, to how many generations did it go back? Since legally one can only be born a Parsi (either to both Parsi parents or to a Parsi father/non-Parsi mother), and there were no Parsis in India until the first batch landed in India, the family tree must go back to the ancestor who landed in Sanjan or came to India later on.

It seems that according to the research currently being made, the Parsis landed in Sanjan in boats similar to those used in the 10th century by Sindbad the sailor. Assuming that there were three boats which could have carried between 30 to 50 people, about 150 men, women and children would have landed in Sanjan. Subsequently, there were migrations over land.

Now! Is it fair and reasonable to expect that the census enumerator should have asked each family to prove that they are descendants of one of the 150 who came to Sanjan in the three boats or the ancestor who first came to India was a born Parsi and in all subsequent generations there was no 'garbar'? Let us therefore, not raise this issue for questioning the accuracy of the census figures, because we can simply ignore them and continue to remain complacent in our belief that Dadar Ahura Mazda will ensure survival of His chosen people!

But what about the sanctity of our holy places of worship and the safety of the crores of rupees of our trust funds which are meant only for Parsi Zoroastrians?

Are not the Trustees of those institutions and funds legally bound to seek proof from every entrant, and every aspiring beneficiary, about the Parsi parentage going back to the first ancestor who came to India?

How many of us will be able to pass this acid test laid down by the Bombay High Court Judgement of 1908 in the case of Petit v/s Jeejeebhoy, by which the Trustees are legally bound? The acid test is - to quote:-

"(a) Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants and who are born of both Zoroastrian parents and who profess the Zoroastrian religion;

(b) The Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion who came to India temporarily or permanently; and

(c) The children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion."

If in such matters of vital importance like admission to our holy places of worship and granting of benefits of our trust funds of the value of crores of rupees, we are compelled to close our eyes to strict adherence to legalities, then why so much fuss is being made about the word 'Parsi' not featuring in the name of the 'World Body'.

If we, who have been residing in India, cannot stand the acid test, how can we expect that others, who migrated from India years ago or those who never came to India but went straight from their earlier locations to current locations, must pass that acid test.

Keki Gandhi is the indefatigable Jt Hon Secretary, FPZAI (Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India).



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 Tennyson Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF

Registration No 1510380 Cardiff, England

A Company Limited by Guarantee

Incorporated 1980

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP

_____ 20 _____

The Joint Honorary Secretaries
The World Zoroastrian Organisation

Dear Sirs,

As I desire to become Grand Patron / Patron / Life Member / Ordinary Member / Student (delete as appropriate), I request you to submit this application to your Committee.

I am a Zoroastrian / non-Zoroastrian spouse of a Zoroastrian / born of Zoroastrian parents (delete as appropriate), I agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles and Rules and Regulations so long as I remain a member of The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

I note that the annual subscription for Ordinary Membership is payable on 1st January of each year. In case of arrears, I understand that my membership will be terminated after three months of sending the reminder.

Yours truly,

Signature

Block Capitals please FULL NAME _____

PROFESSION/OCCUPATION _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

ADDRESS IN COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE _____

TEL RES _____

OFF _____

E-MAIL _____

Proposed by _____

Seconded by _____

Note: The Proposer and Secunder must be Zoroastrians. For subscription fees please check overleaf.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

| Date | Amount Received | Date of Membership | Register of Members | Mailing List |
|------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | | | | |

Membership Fees

For Indian residents

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Grand Patron | Rs10,000 | Patron | Rs5,000 | Permanent Assoc Member | £ 150 |
| Ordinary Assoc Member | £10 pa | Life Member | Rs2,500 | Student | Gratis |
| Ordinary Member | Rs450 for 3 years | | | | till 21 years of age |

Please send application form to: The World Zoroastrian Organisation (India) to Union Press, 13 Homji St, Fort, Mumbai 400 001. Tel: (022) 2660357 or 2665526

For UK residents & other countries

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------|-------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Grand Patron | £ 500 | Patron | £ 250 | Permanent Assoc Member | £ 150 |
| Ordinary Assoc Member | £10 pa | Life Member | £ 100 | Ordinary Member | £ 10 pa |
| Student | Gratis | | | | till 25 years of age |

Please send application form and cheque payable in Sterling to WZO, London to: Mrs Khurshid Kapadia, 217 Pickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0AQ. Tel +44 020 8777 5778

For USA residents

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Permanent Assoc Member | \$ 225 | Ordinary Assoc Member | \$ 25 pa |
| Life Member | \$ 150 | Ordinary Member | \$15 pa |
| Student | Gratis | | till 25 years of age |

Please send application form and cheque payable in US Dollars as "WZO US Region" to: Mr Keki Bhote, 493 Woodlawn Ave., Glencoe, Illinois 60022. Tel: (847) 835 1984

For Canadian residents

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Permanent Assoc Member | C\$ 325 | Ordinary Assoc Member | C\$ 30 pa |
| Life Member | C\$ 200 | Ordinary Member | C\$ 20 pa |
| Student | Gratis | | till 25 years of age |

Please send application form and cheque payable in Candian Dollars as "ZAA, WZO Fees" to: Mr Firdosh Mehta, 73 Douglas Woods Manor, SE, Calgary, AL T2Z 2E8. Tel: (403) 203-2722

For Pakistani residents

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------|---------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Grand Patron | Rs10,000 | Patron | Rs5,000 | Permanent Assoc Member | £ 150 |
| Ordinary Assoc Member | £10 pa | Life Member | Rs2,500 | Student | Gratis till 25 years of age |

Please send application form and cheque payable in Pak Rupees as "WZO" to: Mrs Toxy Cowasjee, 2 A Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530. Tel: (021) 5867088

“...Fame

is to serve Thee and the truth,
Wise One, under Thy rule. ”

yasna 32.6
Inslar translation

