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150 years of excellence

BVS



A Persian depiction of Gordafarid (at left) clashing with Sohrab, p 50.

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From the Editor

The WZO desperately needs financial assistance for publishing the Hamazor. This was mentioned in a previous publication but maybe it was lost amongst other topics discussed. You may be aware that The World Zarathustrian Trust Fund, which is a charity, has been financing issues of Hamazor and the postage since conception. Today with the very poor dividend income, this Trust has reached a point when nothing can be given for any cause till such time the corpus is once again healthy.



The last issue [2/2009] was generously sponsored by Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal and Informal Religious Meetings, both charities of Karachi. This issue is being financed by an anonymous donor but till such time the WZTF can once again take on the mantle of being our sponsor, I request you to come forward please. It can be in the form of half page or full page advertisement or generous individuals/Trusts simply assisting. Failing which the Hamazor may have to be terminated which would be a shame after so many years - presuming our readers do enjoy receiving this publication.

To keep you aware of what the cost entails today for the Hamazor to be printed in Karachi and then posted world wide, excluding India; a sum of Rs70,938 [GBP 536 or USD845] was paid for printing of 960 copies plus Rs144,360 [GBP 1,090 or USD 1,719] for postage. As you know Life Members pay a onetime subscription and Ordinary Members a marginal amount each year. This amount cannot help towards payment of the Hamazor and as such each member is receiving the publication virtually free of charge.

Another alternative would be not to have any hard copies and available for members only on our website, but there are many who are not computer literate or still prefer the conventional form of reading with a copy in their hands.

No amount is too small, so please come forward and save the day. You can either pay direct, a facility available on our website but stating it is for the Hamazor, or request another method of payment by writing/emailing to the President, Membership Secretary or myself. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toxy Cowasjee'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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



The Zoroastrian Migration to India - The Archaeological Evidence

by rukshana nanji

My sincere thanks to the Dastur Dr Sohrabji H Kutar Trust, late Mrs Shirinbanoo Kutar and Mrs Perin Parri-Hughes, and to the World Zoroastrian Organization who invited me to deliver this lecture on 30th April 2009 at the School of Oriental and African Studies as the Twelfth Dastur Dr Sohrabji H Kutar Memorial lecture. I thank Dr Almut Hintz, Mr Shapur Captain, Mr Sam Bhiwandiwala and Mr Dinshaw Tamboly for their efforts and hospitality.

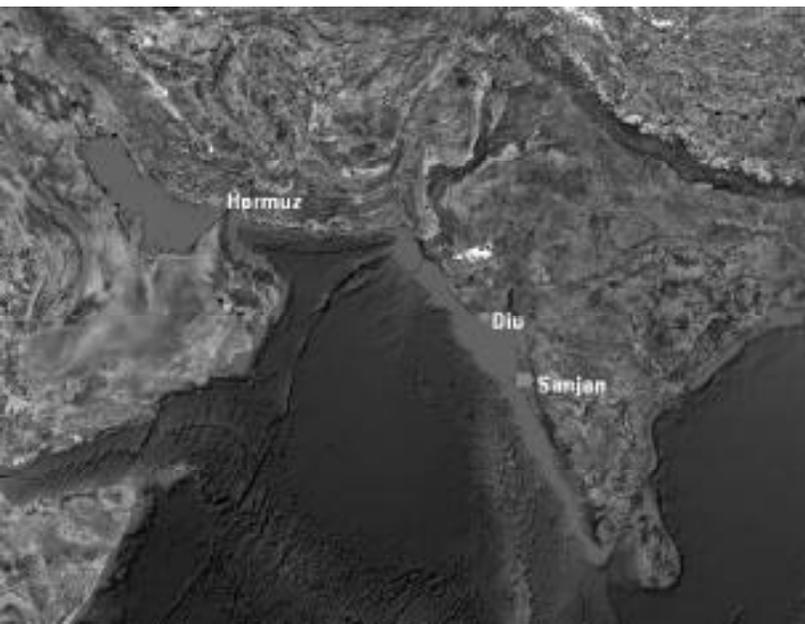
The Zoroastrian migration to India has long been an issue of interest and debate among scholars and historians. Legend and history have often become so entwined in the telling that it has been difficult to sift fact from fiction. This is because most scholars depend heavily upon a singular source for information about this event, the *Kisse-i-Sanjan* or the story of Sanjan as recounted by a Parsi priest in 1599 AD. No doubt the information provided by this narrative is invaluable. However, it is a retrospective account about events that took place centuries before the writer's own time and is based on oral traditions which can change in the retelling. Dr Homi Dhalla, Founder-President of the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation (WZCF) was the first scholar to recognize the need for a thorough archaeological and scientific investigation into the history of the Parsis. The WZCF undertook archaeological excavations at the site of Sanjan from 2002'– 2004 with the aim of establishing the veracity of these historical and traditional sources. The present author has been part of the excavation team and has completed her

Doctoral thesis on the study of the Sanjan ceramics. The following discussion is an extremely brief presentation of her research and conclusions, taking into account the historical sources and corroborating them with the archaeological evidence.

The WZCF Sanjan project started in 2002 with extensive explorations prior to actual excavation. Sanjan is located on the north bank of the Varoli River, about 5km upstream from the Arabian Sea. The ancient settlement is a large mound known today as Sanjan *Bandar* (port) and is presently under occupation. Explorations revealed that the ancient *Bandar* / port settlement was large – measuring at least 1.5km x 1km, if not more. Space to excavate was severely restricted by modern activity. Over the three years of fieldwork (2002 – 2004), four different locations were excavated – Atop the *Bandar* mound, at the *Koli Khadi* mound, at the ancient *Dokhma* and on the *Bandar* embankment.

Structures: All excavated trenches in the habitation areas provided evidence of a prosperous developed urban settlement. Burnt-brick walls, cobbled and paved floors, ringwells (soak-pits for drainage), fresh-water wells, brick platforms, etc. all provided evidence of intense structural activity on the *Bandar* / port. Two structural phases could be identified in the index trench – an earlier phase represented by a small brick wall at a depth of 2.02m and a later phase represented by a brick platform, paved floor and a 6m deep brick-lined well. The earlier phase has radio carbon date c. 830 AD and the later one 1210 AD associated with it.

The most important structure excavated at Sanjan was the *Dokhma*. Local legend has



it that Sanjan originally had nine *Dokhmas* (Menant 1917: 63), but so far only one is known. This site had been partially exposed by Dr Jivanjee Modi in the 1920s (Unvala 1951: II-IV and 9-13). The complex is situated on top of a high natural mound. It is extremely basic, consisting of an outer wall made of rubble, a parabolic mud-plastered floor (*pavis*) and a 1m deep brick-lined central well or repository for osseous matter (the *Bhandar*). Brick facings on the interior surface of the wall indicate at least one phase of renovation (Nanji and Dandekar 2005: 69). Potsherds found mixed up in the mud mortar indicate a 11th – 12th century AD date for its construction.

Human remains: Two excavated areas had human remains. The first was a mortuary complex at the *Koli Khadi* with six extended human skeletons. Analysis by physical anthropologists shows that two skeletons are male and three are female. One could not be identified due to damage and decomposition. Interestingly, they all belong to the age group 35-45 years (Gupta *et al.* 2004: 96; also, Mushriff and Walimbe 2005: 73-92). No ethnic identification has been done as yet.

The second location to have a large number of human bones was the *Dokhma*. The human remains belong to all age groups, infant to adult, and both sexes. The bones of about 400-450 individuals are estimated to be present in the central well of the structure (Dr Walimbe, personal communication). A detailed report on the bones is being prepared by Drs Walimbe and Mushriff. This deposit indicates the terminal use of the *Dokhma*. The bone samples have been tested for Accelerated Mass Spectroscopic (AMS) dates at Oxford University and the results narrow down the time bracket to 1410 – 1450 A.D. It should be emphasized that this date does not apply to the structure or its construction but only to the last deposition of bones.

Antiquities: These include large numbers of beads made of various materials such as glass, stone, terracotta, West Asian eye-

beads and segmented beads from the Red Sea region. Mesopotamian glass datable to the 9th – 10th century AD is also present. Large quantities of glass fragments of bottles, vials, bowls and other vessel forms have been found (Mitra and Dalal 2005: 62-68). Metal objects of iron and copper make up a large part of the finds, namely nails, rods, spikes knives, points, ladles, antimony rods, etc. A large number of rings (silver and mixed metal), bangles, some beads and a gold-foil earring were found along with the bones in the central well of the *Dokhma*. Some of the bangles were found *in situ*, still on the bones of the forearms. Silver / mixed



Human remains at Koli Khadi



Dokhma. Central well with lime-plastered brick facing and deposit of human remains

metal rings of the same kind as at the *dokhma* were found in the excavations in the habitation areas as well, providing a link between the settlement and the interred individuals (Gupta *et al.* 2005: 59).

Coins: A large number of coins were retrieved in the three years of excavations. They include an issue from the 2nd century AD, one possible Rashtrakuta coin of the 8th / 9th century AD, a fragment of a Sasanian / Abbasid-Sasanian issue, some Gadheya / Indo-Sasanian coins (8th – 11th century AD), one coin of the Sultan of Sind (early 10th century AD) and one surface find of Allauddin Khilji (1296 – 1316 AD).

Ceramics: The collection from Sanjan is one of the most unique and rich Early Medieval ceramic assemblage in India today, consisting as it does of glazed and unglazed wares from West Asia, particularly from the Persian Gulf, Chinese wares and indigenous utilitarian wares. These ware classes are chronologically specific and their occurrence patterns through the stratigraphic sequence are crucial in creating a timeline for the site and providing its socio-cultural and economic profile. The study of this assemblage and the occurrence pattern of ware classes made it possible to identify three ceramic levels and one sub-level in the occupation of the site.

Level I was the lowest level, representing the earliest phase of occupation. The ceramic composition of this Level suggests an early contact with West Asia. The goods imported into the port were items transported in amphorae and large storage vessels. No glazed ceramics occur, with the exception of Turquoise Glazed Ware. The port appears to be involved in coasting trade much more actively than in trans-oceanic trade. No structural remains are found for this early occupation. The ware classes suggest a chronology which extends from the middle to late 7th century AD to the middle to late 8th century AD, a period when the traditions of Sasanian wares were still current and glazed ceramics had not yet gained the importance which they enjoyed in the later centuries.

Level I (a) is actually the upper part of Level I. The ceramic assemblage is the same with one notable change taking place – the introduction of early Chinese ware classes associated with the earliest



Changsha under-glaze painted ware

structural phase, a small brick wall. Chinese wares, coupled with the continued presence of West Asian classes such as Buff Ware, Eggshell Ware, Torpedo jars, etc with pre-



Lustre painted ware (mid 9th century AD from the Persian Gulf)

Islamic history suggests that the settlement was not only expanding its sphere of trading activities but that trans-oceanic trade was gaining importance at the site. Direct and regular trade with the Persian Gulf is reflected in the increase in pottery. The suggested dates for this level are middle or late 8th century AD to early or middle 9th century AD. One radio carbon date available for the base of this level is c. 830 AD.

Level III represents the terminal period at Sanjan. It is a shallow deposit. A slight decline in the quantity of pottery and a marginal decrease in the West Asian wares is the only change seen. A simultaneous marginal increase is seen in the Chinese wares. There is no evidence to suggest occupation after early / middle 13th century. The port appears to have stopped functioning after at this time.

Historical information for the migration and settlement at Sanjan comes from the following sources:

- ✧ Literature (*Kisse-i-Sanjan*)
- ✧ Epigraphic records (inscriptions, copper-plate grants, etc)
- ✧ Epistolary data (*Revayats*)
- ✧ Accounts by Persian and Arab travellers, mariners and merchants.

When these are corroborated with the archaeological evidence, we get a new perspective of Parsi history and Early Medieval studies in India.

The *Kisse-i-Sanjan*, narrates the story of the migration and settlement. The question of whether a migration did take place, as the *Kisse* claims, is the first point to consider. That a Zoroastrian Persian community was settled at Sanjan is attested to by the presence of the *Dokhma*. This irrefutable archaeological evidence establishes that either one or several migrations may have taken place and that the presence of the migrants was considerable enough to require the construction of a large mortuary structure. Human remains in such large quantities – 400 to 450 individuals - in the central well of the structure indicate a very large population (Walimbe and Mushrif,

personal communication). The *Kisse* clearly states that it was only one group of Zoroastrians who chose to migrate. The fact that other Zoroastrians did not relocate implies that the situation may have been difficult, but not impossible. The other important point that the *Kisse* makes is that the migration was planned and organized, with the clear intention of sailing to India, indicating that the land of Al Hind was not unknown to them. Their arrival and temporary stay at Diu cannot be verified. It is clear that some contingency drove the migrants to set sail once again, this time for the mainland. They are said to have made landfall at Sanjan more by accident than by design. However, if the migrating community was as organized as is implied by the presence of a leader and if they owned crafts capable of trans-oceanic voyages, it appears unlikely that their arrival at Sanjan was an accident. It is more likely that their time in Diu was spent in establishing contacts on the mainland and deciding upon the most suitable and hospitable place for relocation. The first references to Sanjan in the *Kisse* are about the landing and the meeting of the Dastur with Jadi Rana, the king of Sanjan. The Sanjan *Bandar* would have been an ideal safe anchorage for ships. Rock outcrops in the riverbed of the Varoli make up-stream navigation impossible past the *Bandar*. It is most likely then, that the *Bandar* or port was the actual landing spot. The excavations did not provide any clues as to the identity of the king or the ruling dynasty as no king by the name of Jadi Rana occurs in Indian records. Present-day activity at the site also made it impossible to locate the *Atash Behram*. The text mentions the movement of the Zoroastrians to other places. It is important to note that the movements are to coastal towns and port sites along the Gujarat coast, all of which have a recorded Parsi history. Had agriculture been the mainstay of the migrants, it is logical to suppose that they would have chosen the more fertile plains of the hinterland. That the migrant community was engaged in trade is borne out by the trade ceramics, glass, beads, etc. Andre Wink is of the opinion that the mainstay of the migrant community was

trade and that the migration was “not so much a flight as a readjustment of commercial patterns that had arisen long before Islam” (Wink 2002: 105). If the migrating community was a mercantile group, it would explain the increase in the commercial activities at Sanjan.

The *Kisse* does not record any other migrations from Iran to Sanjan but there is every likelihood that there may have been several such subsequent migrations after the settlement was established and that the numbers of Zoroastrians grew large enough to necessitate the construction of structures such as the *dokhma*. The *Kisse* describes Sanjan as a desert where the migrants built a city, naming it in memory of a town in Persia. This is refuted by epigraphic evidence. The epigraphic sources mention Sanjan as a settlement going back many centuries prior to the supposed migration. The migrants may have built a satellite township or village to the existing settlement. The excavations certainly reflect the economic prosperity of the Sanjan population. Well-built brick structures such as wells, platforms and floors, the presence of ring-wells, expensive glazed ceramics from West Asia and China, imported glass, and other luxury items are all evidence of a healthy economy. The narrative mentions the invasion of Sanjan by Sultan Mahmud of Champaner. The suggestion that Sultan Mahmud was Mohammed Begada and that the settlement of Sanjan was sacked by him does not bear out in the archaeological record which clearly indicates that the terminal date for the settlement at Sanjan does not extend past the late 12th or early to middle 13th century AD, predating Mohammed Begada by almost two centuries. Level III does not have any evidence for the 14th century or later. There is also no archaeological evidence to suggest violence or the sacking of the town. The Sanjan battle may have taken place at some other location. It is possible that homesteads and farmsteads continued to exist, perhaps with remnants of the Zoroastrian population, as can be seen by the continued use of the *Dokhma* till the mid 15th century and the settlement at *Koli*

Khadi. The fleeing population of Zoroastrians next moved to the caves of Bahrot in order to protect the Holy Fire and resided there for twelve years. The presence of structural remains on the Bahrot hills and the caves themselves indicate the presence of an early settlement predating the Zoroastrian presence at Sanjan which could have been used for refuge.

The chronology established by the ceramic evidence, Radio Carbon dates and structural remains for the settlement on Sanjan Bandar provide a framework to evaluate the events mentioned in the *Kisse*. It would appear, that the earliest layers of Level I (middle to late 7th century AD – mid 8th century AD) would belong to the period when Sanjan was a small, regional settlement, functioning as a port for coasting and perhaps even for trans-oceanic vessels and showing an acquaintanceship with the Persian Gulf at an early date. The later part of this Level shows the development of this limited contact into a closer one, reflected as it is in the introduction and gradual increase of Turquoise Glazed Ware as well as in the range and quantum of pottery. Sanjan appears to be gaining prominence as a port. The dramatic increase in quantity and range of pottery in Level II and the introduction of tablewares and fine trade ceramics indicates not only an improvement in the economy at large, but also of a change in the demands of the market. A market for fine and expensive goods, not only for utilitarian items, suggests that there was a clientele rich enough to afford luxury goods and, more importantly, had a demand for them. The overall change in the consumption pattern could be reflective of a change in the cultural component of the population. It is possible that it was the migration that introduced the new cultural component to the settlement which changed both, the pattern of consumption, as well as the nature of the trade that the port was involved in. This is not improbable considering that the migrating community which may have comprised of merchants and traders would have had close contacts

in the home country and access to its resources. The know-how of the new migrants would have added an impetus to the trade and proved an advantage in a growingly competitive market. Excavation evidence would suggest that middle 8th century AD is a reasonable date for the migration.

The Nagarjunakonda inscription of Abhira Vasushena (278 AD) and the Nahapana inscription (32 – 77 AD), cave no.10 in the Pandulena caves of Nasik both provide evidence for the antiquity of Sanjan. The Buddhavarsa inscription (671 AD) mentions Western Chalukyan control over the region. The governance of this area by a brother of Pulakeshin II who had cordial relations with the Sasanians is relevant in the light of the migration of the Zoroastrian Persians. It strengthens the hypothesis that the migrants took an informed decision to settle at Sanjan since it was a known territory where they knew they would be welcome. The inscription of Amoghavarsa I (871 AD) mentions the administrative jurisdiction of Sanjan as covering a vast area, indicating the importance of the port and the settlement at this time. Level II, to which the date of this inscription belongs, is the most prosperous phase of the settlement. The Chinchani grants, spaced over a hundred and twenty five years, provide corroborative evidence to the archaeological finds. The mention of Sanjanamandala implies that at the time of writing (926 AD), Sanjan was not a singular settlement but was an administrative unit and an important settlement with a cosmopolitan population. The most important reference is to the appointment of Mohammed Sugatipa or Madhumati, a 'Tajik' to the post of Governor by the Silahara king Krishna II sometime between 878 and 915 AD. That Sanjan had become an important trading centre is borne out by the rich deposit of Levels I, I (a) and II. This is corroborated by the inscriptional evidence which indicates that Sanjan now merited a governor and that he oversaw the functioning of the port. The mention of the 'Hanjamanapaura' (derived from the Persian 'anjuman') or the Zoroastrian Persians confirms that by this

date the migrants had not only settled, but had established themselves as an important component of the population. The migration mentioned in the *Kisse* finds authentication in this record and establishes a date from which it is safe to infer that the migration took place certainly before the appointment of Sugatipa. It seems extremely unlikely that a group of migrants fleeing Islamic persecution in their home country would sail across the ocean to settle at a place governed by a Muslim. The inscription attests to the cosmopolitan nature of the settlement and to Sugatipa's benevolence. The 'Hamjamana' would have had no reason to flee as there was no persecution. Hence the opinion of scholars that the migration date was 936 AD is wrong on all counts. The continued prosperity of the port and presence of the 'Hamjamana' is corroborated in the next two grants in the set datable to 1023 AD and 1056 AD. The area mentioned is very large, extending inland. The reference to Sanjan not as a 'mandala' or group of villages, but as 'Samyanapattana' (a port and a market) makes it clear that the status of Sanjan was increasing in importance along with the growth of its commercial activity. It can be confirmed by the archaeological data that, by this date in the 11th century, Sanjan was indeed thriving as a market and a port.

The *Rivayats* or correspondence between the Zoroastrian settlers in India and their co-religionists in Iran provide evidence by omission. Sanjan is not mentioned in any *Rivayat* although other settlements are. Had Sanjan still been occupied and the Iranshah still housed there, surely this religious center would have found some mention. Sanjan was already abandoned at the time of their writing (1478 AD). This confirms the fact that Mohammed Begada cannot be the Sultan who attacked Sanjan as his date is almost contemporary to the *Rivayats*. The evidence from the excavations also supports the fact that Sanjan does not have a deposit datable to later than the mid 13th century AD.

The descriptions of Sanjan given by the many geographers, mariners and

travellers refer to the settlement as Sindan. Most writers like Al Biladuri, Al Ishtakri and Al Biruni give its location in terms of distance from other ports like Surabaya, Saymur, Debal Kanbaya and Broach. While the teak, bamboo and other goods of trade mentioned by writers like Al Biladuri and Ibn Haukal do not survive in the archaeological record, the fact that habitation deposits corresponding to the dates of these writers have been found in the excavations is evidence that the site thrived between the 9th and the 12th centuries.

The migration of Zoroastrians to the Indian subcontinent and settlement at Sanjan is amply attested to in the archaeological record, even if some of the evidence is counter to popular belief. It is hoped the new scientifically verifiable and archaeologically proven data will help sift historical fact from fiction.

The Sanjan excavations were carried out between 2002 and 2004 by the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation and funded by the ASI, the ICHR and the Dorab Tata Fund. The Principals of the project are Dr Homi Dhalla and (Late) Dr Mani Kamerkar. The Director of the excavation was (Late) Dr S P Gupta and co-director Dr Kurush Dalal. The excavation team comprised of Dr R Nanji, R Mitra, Dr A Dandekar, R Pandey, S Bomble, S Kadgaonkar, R Abbas, Chaudhury. My thanks to all of them, as also to my PhD guide, Prof V D Gogte. This paper is a brief overview of the author's PhD thesis titled 'The Study of Early Medieval Ceramics in India, with special reference to Sanjan (Gujarat)' submitted to Deccan College (Deemed University) Pune 2007.



Dr Rukshana Nanji is a double post-graduate and has completed her PhD in Archaeology from Deccan College, Pune. She has years of experience as field archaeologist and ceramic specialist at numerous sites in India. Her doctoral thesis on the Sanjan collection is the first complete study of Early Medieval ceramics in India and is considered a benchmark work internationally. She has authored several articles and presented her work at numerous conferences in India and abroad.

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Concert for the WZO Education Fund

Reported by Soonu Engineer

The concert in May was a first for WZO on many counts. This was our first musical evening, starring for the first time two young musicians of Parsi stock, each from the culturally high end of completely different traditions - all in aid of our fledgling Education Fund

Rustom Pomeroy, who took up his violin at the tender age of three, has won scholarships to well known music schools, performs at esteemed classical music venues in the UK, played for the Queen at her Golden Jubilee, was the star billing on all those counts – except that, for this audience, his special attraction was that he is the grandson of our most respected, the late Jehangirji Moos, past President of ZTFE.

Rustom delighted the audience with a selection of pieces from Mozart, Beethoven, Ravel, Massenet and Kriesler. He was accompanied on the piano by Alisdair Hogarth, a versatile contemporary pianist who has made his debut as a soloist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. They bowed to rapturous applause.

The supporting artist was 13 year old, Jessica Mistry. Jessica also showed promise at a very young age and became the youngest pupil of Bansuri, at 7 years, at the Bhartiya Vidhya Bhavan. Initially, her teacher was unwilling to take on such a young pupil but was won over when he heard her play. Every year she travels to Mumbai to study at the feet of her *guruji*, the renowned Pandit Sri Hariprasad Chaurasia. WZO is proud to have sponsored her trip last year.

Jessica played a haunting *raga* on the Bansuri, accompanied on the tabla by Saleel Tambe. Later, she had the audience tapping their feet when she entertained them with some popular tunes from Hindi films.

As is usual with our functions, a delicious dinner was served. This was also a team effort with Tehmi Patel, Armaity Engineer, Ursula Bhiwandiwalla and Shahin Bekhradnia donating their culinary skills to provide a four course meal. The evening was sponsored by them and some other generous donors.

Unlike our usual functions, the audience listened with rapt attention. Later, they flocked round Jessica and Rustom and Alisdair, expressing their genuine appreciation - and pride. It was an elegant and delightful evening, dedicated to a worthy cause, and raised much needed funds for educational scholarships. Those of you who were unable to attend are invited to donate to this very worthwhile Fund which raised £3,224/- that night. ■■■

WZO wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the donation made by the Trustees of the Sadri Foundation to Jessica Mistry so she can pursue her musical studies for the next three years under Padma Bhusan, Pandit Shri Hariprasad Chaurasia in India.



Rustom Pomeroy is on the violin and Alisdair Hogarth on the piano.



Jessica Mistry plays the bansuri, accompanied on the tabla by Saleel Tambe



WZO Annual Seminar

Report from Shahin Bekhradnia

Qn Sunday 7th June the annual WZO seminar took place at the Gulbenkian room at the ISH in the centre of London. The overarching theme chosen to link this year's speakers was '*Debunking some Commonly Held Myths*'. As usual the purpose of the free of charge seminar is to educate and inform anyone who has an interest in Zoroastrianism and so on this occasion it was felt appropriate that some erroneously held perceptions should be clarified.

It was gratifying to the organisers to welcome the 80 plus participants who found the theme and the speakers sufficiently attractive to be present by 10:30 on a Sunday morning and be greeted with some well deserved coffee and delicious hand made biscuits.

Dr Alan Williams from Manchester University has been working on the manuscript of the *Qissa e Sanjan* for a while now and has recently seen his results published by Brill. Using slides from the original manuscript, he gave an impressive reading of a number of extracts from the text to demonstrate its literary merit as a mini-epic or foundation myth and provided his own new translation and commentary of the Farsi verse. He highlighted its dramatic content and posed the question of who it was written for, by whom and when.

Dr Constantine Sandis who teaches Philosophy at Oxford Brookes University took up the question of why Nietzsche used our prophet Zarathushtra as his mouthpiece. Dr Sandis emphasised that although Nietzsche found many admirable traits in our prophet, his own personal view of the world was very different to that of Zarathushtra. Thus he was merely a convenient foil or starting point for Nietzsche to propound his mostly diametrically opposed moral outlook. It would be quite wrong to naively think that

the philosopher himself espoused any of the values that we associate with our prophet. Indeed later the German philosopher was tainted with the accusation of having inspired fascism and intolerance.

Shahin Bekhradnia who has made nine visits to Tajikistan and collected material there for her M.Litt thesis at Oxford University discussed the reasons for the mistaken belief and reports of thousands if not millions of practising Zoroastrians in Tajikistan. She showed many examples of newspapers and magazines which promoted the awareness of Zoroastrianism and also pictures and images in everyday life settings which depicted our prophet. She linked this with the politics of the region



Dr Alan Williams with Chairperson, Farrokh Vajifdar



Constantinos Sandis with Chairperson Soonu Engineer

and the determined effort shown by the president of the republic to forge a distinctive identity for the new republic which reflects its Iranian culture without adopting the Islamic overlay zealously promoted by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The question and answer sessions were lively and demonstrated that the audience had been fully alert and appreciative of the issues aired during the course of the day.



Shahin Bekhradnia with Chairperson Dinyar Modi



WZO Trusts' bids farewell to Jal Engineer & Keki Palia

Dinshaw K Tamboly, Managing Trustee, reports



The WZO Trusts' in India have always been high on performance but lean on administrative outlays. Receiving multi millions annually in donations and disbursing the largesse received to a legion of beneficiaries in various areas of welfare activities has been the forte of the WZO Trusts'.

Institutions can only be effective and efficient as those associated with them in various capacities. Over the years, just three individuals have been holding the fort at the Trust headquarters. Jal Engineer joined us in July 1993 after his retirement from Indian Railways; Keki Palia joined us in December 1997 after his retirement from The Bombay Dyeing & Mfg. Co. Ltd.

Jal and Keki both proved to be sincere, committed and dedicated, carried out their duties ceaselessly and efficiently, their credibility, integrity and loyalty to the institution beyond compare. The human spirit may be strong but when the body becomes weak one must reconcile to the dictates of nature. Advancing age and indifferent health have caused Jal and Keki to slow down their pace, and the need to retire.

Though they have bid us farewell, they have left behind their mark as ideal role models of those who serve welfare institutions. It was a poignant moment for us when our two loyal colleagues said their 'goodbyes' on 3rd July 2009.

Fortunately for the WZO Trusts' the wealth of our human resources has not been depleted by the departure of Jal and Keki, for as good planners and controllers they have trained their successors and cast them in their own moulds. Our bandwagon will move on as usual for a very long time to come.

The WZO Trusts' express their sincere gratitude to Jal and Keki for their many years of loyal and dedicated service, wish them a happy retirement and good health all their days and will remember them for their sincerity, integrity and loyalty.



Of Gathalogues and Gathalogistics -

The 2009 New York Gatha Colloquium

WZO Report, ed. Farrokh Vajifdar

W

ith the banner theme *Gatha Perceptions: From Past to Future*, the World Zoroastrian Organisation's Second Gatha Colloquium got under way in New York, USA, over the weekend of June 27th and 28th 2009.

Jointly sponsored by the Firuz Madon Foundation via the WZO, London, and the

participants attended from far and wide to listen and learn more about the Sage of Ancient Iran, his universal teachings, their compositional arrangements and devolution, – and were duly rewarded with the latest and best in scholarship. The well-chosen twelve invited speakers declared themselves gratified by the

Yasna 29.4

Oruha OricIW Owh
TahMa Vn Aqa
TasaW Owh AqaY

Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York [ZAGNY], with the participation of the Federation Zoroastrian Associations of North America [FEZANA], this all too rare event was deemed a fine success. Conceived as an overdue seminar by Professor Kaikhosrov Irani of New York, and Farrokh Vajifdar, London, UK, this Gatha Colloquium was duly convened, thanks to its able organization and anxious supervision by Dr Lovji Cama and ZAGNY colleagues, with some input from the UK end by Vajifdar.

Totalling 145 in the audience, each registering with US\$50, at the Conference Hall in the Double Tree Hotel, Manhattan, the numbers were said to have exceeded the Hall's stipulated capacity, but the powerful lure of the Gathas of Zarathushtra somehow overcame the restriction. The

unexpectedly large turn-out of the committed and the curious, the inquisitive and the interested. Nine of those presenting their papers (some with on-screen text illustrations) were from North America; three ventured forth from the UK. For those two crowded days in June, New York became the happy meeting-ground of philosophers and philologists; priestcrafters and politicians were mercifully absent from the 12-speaker list.

In alphabetical order, they were Dr Kersey Antia, the Chicago High-priest respected for his accommodative outlook and serious-mindedness in his far-ranging researches; Dr Almut Hintze, the Zartoshty Brothers Reader in Zoroastrianism at SOAS, London, and Trustee of the Cambridge-based *Ancient India and Iran Trust*; Professor Stanley Insler, Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit at Yale, whose landmark English

translation of all 17 Gathas commands universal praise; Professor Emeritus Kaikhosrov Irani of City University, New York (where he is a very long-time resident) and still teaches courses in Philosophy; Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey, veteran founder and Director of the Zarathushtrian Assembly, California, who has attracted several devout Iranians to their ancient spiritual heritage; Professor Emeritus William Malandra, who taught Sanskrit, Indology and Iranistics at the University of Minnesota; Dina McIntyre, with a BSc and Law degrees from the University of Pittsburgh, famed for her "Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra" and her thoughtful articles on Zoroastrianism; Professor Martin Schwartz,

papers had indicated the breadth and profundity of their insightful lectures, in turn enthusiastically received by the eager listeners. The attractively produced Colloquium Programme bore *resumes* of their subjects, and notes on the speakers themselves with accompanying photographs. (The pleasant fact that, during the group photo session, each was presented *halfway through* with a plaque commemorating their insightful speeches showed all too clearly the sponsors' and organizers' anticipation of a uniquely wonderful Seminar. A DVD recording of the full proceedings is under way).

The Colloquium first day's sessions commenced with an over-long set of

*“He is the judiciary Ahura
It shall be as He wills it”*

who teaches Iranian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley; Professor Oktor Skjaerv̄, offering Old Iranian Languages, Literature, and Religions at Harvard University; Dr Elizabeth Tucker, Senior Research Fellow in the Oxford Faculty of Oriental Studies where she teaches Avestan, Old Persian, Vedic Sanskrit and Comparative Indo-Iranian Philology; Farrokh Vajifdar, Independent Researcher into Indo-Iranian cultures, and life-long student of Zoroastrianism; Professor Gernot Windfuhr, former Chair of Iranian Studies at the University of Michigan where he professes Iranian linguistics, literature, dialectology, and Zoroastrian Studies.

With such a formidable line-up of invited speakers, each enthusiastically presenting their latest researches and current thinking on the Gathas, this exceptional event was bound to be the evident success that its organizers hoped. The very titles of their

prayers sounded by clerics of the New York "orthodox" establishment – significantly including the *Kalma-i Din* of universalist embrace, not that they would have realized its true import. These were followed by a short speech by Shahpur Captain, a Trustee of the Firuz Madon Foundation, who briefly outlined its purpose in the convening with the WZO of this two-day event.

Thereafter the programme proceeded smoothly, as scheduled, in the easy buzz of an atmosphere lightened by the willingness of each speaker to address their chosen titles in relaxed fashion. The Gathas never are easy of exposition; the Colloquium theme, however, allowed the inroads of later Zoroastrianism to explain the how, why and what those remarkable hymns had become in the learned tradition and lax transmission over the millennia.

By way of sample, the lectures' titles ranged from "Free-will", "Law and Order", "The

Gatha Vision”, and “Changed Perceptions”, to their theology’s New Perspectives, their Liturgical Functions (with changed priestly perceptions), to the more technical Yasna Haptanhaiti, Gatha Order and Sequence, Denkard citations, “Singular and Plural”, Language understanding, and Dramatic Structure and Cosmic Events. Most hearteningly, the audience engaged and reacted with deep involvement – the surest evidence was in the several questions and pertinent comments that followed each presentation.

It was inevitable that there would be some overlaps, especially when the Sanskritists dealt with the background of the Gathas, but these served to add to the audience’s zest for more. When ritual, perceptions, and perspectives meet up against the macro-micro cosmos, and nail-clippings supplant reputation, the results were bound to be exhilarating, even memorable, if not enduring. The audience by and large wallowed in this rich diet of which it seemed they could not have enough!

From food for thought to nourishment of the person, the great venues selected ensured hefty indulgence during the lunchtimes and dinners when opportunities once more presented themselves for prolonged and animated discussions, and as far as one could tell, they still dwelt on the Gathas! Even the lure of first-rate Chinese, European and Parsi cuisine could not slow the flow of some tremendously fired-up audience members. External souls sated, the inner man dutifully returned for further spiritual treats.

The order of speakers was, for Day One:

Kaikhosrov Irani; Oktor Skjaervo; William Malandra; [Lunch]; Almut Hintze; Martin Schwartz; Gernot Windfuhr.

Day Two

had Ali Jafarey; Stanley Insler; Elizabeth Tucker; [Lunch]; Dina McIntyre; Kersey Antia; Farrokh Vajifdar.

Four chairs sufficed – they were Keki Bhote; Gev Nentin; Lovji Cama; Rustom Kevala.

Weren’t there any hitches? Of course there were! and quickly overcome they were too. The arrangement of the several well-appointed tables with all-round seating struck cold fear at first. Audiences were not daunted, for they soon resolved themselves in cosy semi-circles, all facing and in full view of speakers and screens. Then there were the interminable prayers, and the audience soon fell to talking among themselves, some pointedly consulting their time-pieces. Another time, and Dr Ali Jafarey was publicly referred to as Mister; this discourtesy was immediately challenged from the floor, to be followed by a fulsome, if belated, apology – the Programme too had “inadvertently forgotten” that good Zoroastrian’s title, but never mind, for ingrained prejudice dies hard. For Gernot Windfuhr, it was amusingly self-inflicted – with his ebullience and enthusiasm, he so warmed to his subject that he frequently left his microphone “cold”! Our perfecting world still has some way to go, but my goodness, doesn’t it go with a right Gathic swing and swagger!

Nor was it all garlands and bouquets. A scurrilous e-mail was being circulated in the name of an undoubtedly frustrated egoistic *Kerfegar (!)* denouncing some Professors on grounds that had nothing to do with Academia. Those who could be bothered to read it showed their disgust at this sleazy attack by remarking on the sender’s perverted mentality and binning the offensive item.



Kaikhosrov Irani Oktor Skjaervo William Malandra Almut Hintze



Ali Jafarey Stanley Insler Elizabeth Tucker Dina McIntyre



Thank you WZO!

Dear Trustees,

We have just returned from the most exciting and glorious experience of our lives, a visit to the world's most terrific city - LONDON. We have been students of The School of Classical Ballet & Western Dance here in Mumbai, learning classical ballet, jazz, modern, contemporary, Latin American and other dance styles for the past nine years. Our dance school in Mumbai is affiliated to the Royal Academy of Dance, (RAD), UK. We have always wanted to attend summer school at the RAD but this was beyond our parents' financial means. This summer our parents appealed to various trusts for funding so that we could finally achieve our goal. Many Parsi trusts came forward with generous amounts. But we were still short of what we needed. And then the WZO, UK responded to us with the balance. Knowing that we were finally going to make it there after all these years, was a dream come true. Thank you WZO, not only for partly sponsoring our fees but for also enabling us to discover so much more than just dance on our sojourn to the UK. Incidentally, we are the first students in the 44 years of our dance school, that have attended the "Performance Course" at the RAD.

The course brought together 82 students from 19 countries. Apart from dance, we learnt how to live and work together in complete harmony, fitting in different aspects almost non-stop all day as we had limited time. Among the other things we learnt were punctuality, discipline, stage craft, dance make-up, technique and movement. There were two performances at the end of the course, which we really enjoyed doing. We did ballet, hiphop, Bollywood, jazz and other contemporary dances in these shows.

We were also taken on many field trips. We went to see the musical 'Billy Elliott' about a young boy who wants to learn ballet. It was just fabulous. The school also took us to the famous store Harrods where we saw a memorial to Princess Diana. We went on the London Eye which is a giant wheel with glass cabins from where you can see the River Thames, Westminster Bridge and all the majestic buildings of historical importance in the area.

However, this was not all. After our dance classes ended each day, our mother who accompanied us

True to form, a WAPIZ advertorial posted in India cautioning against attendance at the New York Gatha Colloquium, predictably let rip against five of the well-chosen and well-received speakers. Thus Kersey Antia, Kaikhosrov Irani, Ali Jafarey, Dina McIntyre and Yours Truly were all dangerously heretical presences on the speaker roster. Whilst the first four named condemnees were shown with their respective photographs, what really irked Yours Truly was being deprived of the glory of depiction on the wonderful fortnightly page now put out of joint by this infantile procedure. Significantly puzzling was why WAPIZ did not direct its silly salvos against the other seven: it soon became very evident that the Mumbai thunderers knew nothing of those speakers and their subject (and of course, still less of the Gathas themselves). An additional point: it expressed surprise and regret that our all-singing, all-dancing "High"-priests had been omitted from the star-strewn list – in the rant of their childish tantrums they forgot that Parsiism's Indian clerics operate within an exclusively Zarathushtra-free zone. And don't some still recall "It is the fondness for the Gathas that is leading the community astray"? ■■■■



Martin Schwartz Gernot Windfuhr



Kersey Antia Farrokh Vajifdar



on this trip, felt we should not waste our precious time in London, and took us to many musicals and ballets to fill up our evenings. We saw the famous Kirov Ballet's, 'Romeo and Juliet' at the grand Royal Opera House. We also saw 'Wicked' which is a sequel to the 'Wizard of Oz'. This one had special meaning for us, as both my sister and I have sung the song from it 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' at many competitions since we were five. We saw the musical 'Chun Yi' which also had a ballet sequence in it where the dancers fly in the air. 'Dreamboats and Petticoats' had dancing and music from the 60's, which is very important for all students of dance and music to watch. But the best experience for us was actually being able to watch the 'Phantom of the Opera'. It was simply magical for us to watch the musical from which we have sung so many songs on stage and on television here in India. In fact, many people in London recognized Tara from her recent show on Sony TV. People stopped us everywhere and asked if she really was the Indian girl they had seen in 'Entertainment Ke liye Kuch Bhi Karega'.

We also experienced British art and culture throughout our stay there. We visited the Science Museum, Thorpe Park, and Victoria & Albert Museum. As Tara is fond of drawing portraits, we went to the National Portrait Gallery where we saw some wonderful portraits painted by master painters.

By this time we were exhausted so our parents took us for a few days to the lovely English countryside. We visited the university town of Oxford. They take their studying very seriously there, so cars are not allowed into the town and have to park outside and walk all around it. This way we got to see all the grand stone buildings and quaint country bridges with rivers flowing under them. We visited Blenheim Palace, near Oxford, which is the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. We also ate a pub meal and experienced a typically English tearoom. All these experiences helped us to understand so much about British culture.

Once again a big thank you to WZO for giving us the chance to spread our wings and not just fly, but soar. Without this encouragement we would not have had this wonderful experience. Opportunities like these are instrumental in guiding us to our final destinies.

Pia & Tara Sutaria



Pia & Tara, twins



Pia



Pia & Tara, with teachers Hubert, Ms Allen & Ms Berry



Tara with friends at RAD

Dance - a recognised therapy

by dilshad patel

Dance has long been fundamental to man's existence as an expression of life itself, and has been used therapeutically for thousands of years. The use of dance as a healing ritual goes back to earliest periods of human history. Although dance therapy is a relatively new profession, it is based on the assumption that the body and mind are in constant reciprocal interaction. Motion influences body image and leads from a change in body image to a change in psychic attitude. Perhaps the most profound catalyst in dance therapy is rhythm. We have all experienced the healing effects of movement, whether it is dancing the electric slide, Bollywood dancing, working out at the gym or even taking an aerobics class. Dance/movement therapy works from the premise that the mind and the body are inseparable, such that a change in one effects a change in the other. Movement therapy is a kind of psychotherapy based on the concept of using the body as a healing force for emotional distress.

The dance/movement therapist intentionally taps into the healing nature of movement by using the art of dance as an observation/assessment tool and then as a means of choreographing responses to issues and movements members bring to a group. The dance/movement therapist responds, echoing and answering each person's movement, thus promoting feelings of self-worth. By utilizing the physical elements of breathing, posture, gesture, tension, release, space, force/weight and time, patients gain numerous benefits. A number of quantitative studies have reported change in psychological variables such as depression, anxiety, body attitude, eroticized affection, self acceptance, integration of movement and anxiety for subjects without psychiatric diagnoses. Through dance and authentic movement people can identify and express their innermost emotions, therefore bringing those feelings to the surface.

Body language and posture are a reflection of a person's emotional state. Movement therapy corrects psychological and physical inhibitions by building self-awareness through body control, working from the outside in. The dance therapist facilitates gesture and postural awareness by empathizing and mirroring the participant's movements and thus unlocks blockages in the neuromuscular system.

What is the difference between Dance Therapy and Dance as Therapy in a regular dance class?

There is a vast difference between dance instruction (which uses dance as therapy) and dance therapy. Dance therapists encourage authentic movement to flow from the participants and do not rely on traditional dance instruction, which is actually the opposite of what dance therapists do. Dance therapy does not focus on dance technique rather its primary use is to encourage self expression. A person does not have to be a trained dancer to be part of a movement therapy session. In a dance therapy session, the movement comes from the participants through guidance of body awareness, whereas 'Dance as Therapy' implies that any dance class has therapeutic value that encourages the mind-body connection.

By getting people to express themselves through movement, dance therapy develops muscle co-ordination and mobility while improving self-awareness and interpersonal interaction. Dance therapists also help solve various physical and psychological problems for those recovering from illness, or dealing with physical, emotional or mental challenges.

I believe dance is therapeutic. Dance is the most fundamental of the Arts involving direct expression through the body.

Although it is very different from techniques used in dance/movement therapy, it stems from the same premise that the mind does not disengage as the body engages. Any kind of movement activity; be it running, jumping, yoga, dancing all have therapeutic effects on the mind and body. Certain changes in the body and mind occur when we dance .They are caused by the release of endorphins, natural opiates in the body that are produced after the body has been exerted.

Dance has been an integral part of my life. Since the age of five, I had the opportunity to train with a renowned Bharat Natyam (Indian Classical Dance) teacher Chayya Khanvate, and I was her disciple for twelve years. I later had extensive training as a dancer and instructor at the Shiamak Davar's Institute for the Performing Arts for another seven years. While teaching dance to children of sex workers, to orphans and juvenile delinquents and to those who were infected with HIV, or youngsters who were deaf and visually impaired, I learned about the various challenges and rewards of counseling kids with special needs. The children and adults I dealt with came from impoverished backgrounds. However, when they danced I connected with them at an emotional level using dance, exercise and music as a powerful medium to connect. Having seen a smile on every participant's face and being able to spread happiness in their stressful lives gave me a huge sense of satisfaction. Having an instinctive mode of teaching wasn't enough. I believed if I had the education, I could be even more effective at assisting those in need.

After completing my education with a double major in Psychology and Philosophy, I headed to the US and began auditioning and applying to various colleges that offered programmes in dance movement therapy. I was finally accepted into the very prestigious Harkness Dance Center in Manhattan, New

“Can't wean stress out of your life? All you need to do is sway to music, says dance therapist Dilshad Patel, who is making sure Mumbai's urban neurotics loosen up through a new age healing process” - Mid Day

York. This was the beginning of a new and exciting journey for me.

At the Harkness Dance Center I received specialized training in various dance styles such as Afro Caribbean, Contemporary, Salsa and Jazz. I got an opportunity to observe and teach at various schools, colleges, psychiatric departments in hospitals and residential treatment centers for teens with emotional and behavioral disorders. My hard work paid off and I was chosen as an artist-in-residence by the City School District in New York. Following which I awarded a scholarship to be part of a work-study programme at the Garth Fagan Dance School in New York. Working and training under Garth Fagan (Tony award winner for Best Choreography for the Broadway Musical the Lion King ,1998) was not only educational but an exhilarating and inspiring experience.

On completion of my training I returned to India to pursue my goal which was to start the first of its kind organization that would amalgamate exercise, dance as therapy and creative dance and movement therapy in one single class. I now conduct wellness workshops and classes that implement movement therapy for various size companies, schools, colleges, rehabilitation centers, prisons, hospitals and various populations and are able to help people through my solid educational background, and opportunity to train at Dance Schools and treatment centers in the US.

I am blessed for being given an opportunity to work with amazing teachers. Experience has made me rich and I would like to share my knowledge as to what the power of dance and movement can achieve. ■■■■



The ASHA Centre, in the Royal Forest of Dean

by zerbanoo gifford



he survival of Zoroastrianism is an issue never far from every Zoroastrian's thought. Should we allow conversions? Should we inter-marry? How can we make a religion relevant that has stayed relatively unchanged from its hey-day in ancient Persia before the coming of Christ and Mohammad whose teachings now dominate the world?

In other words, is Zoroastrianism a dying force only kept alive by a few determined souls? Or, does it live on abundantly in the lives of Zoroastrians around the world and in its essence in 'non-religious' movements which are helping to transform our modern world?

Zoroastrianism was never an other-worldly religion; its hallmark is its active participation in this world and a passion for the good life. The work at the ASHA Centre is the heart of Zoroastrianism for me. It is about action and taking responsibility for our environment, our own lives, and much more importantly the lives of individuals who have never experienced what it means to be cherished.

In the magical Royal Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, where JK Rowling's imagination was nurtured and JRR Tolkien was inspired to write his epic *Lord of the Rings*, the ASHA Centre has found its spiritual roots. Zoroastrianism thrives in this idyllic undiscovered part of Britain, an oasis of all that is good: the pure waters of the stream which flows through the ASHA grounds from the nearby sacred St Anthony's Well, ancient forests that have survived and protect the Georgian estate, air that is so fresh it takes the breath away! Nature embraces you here like the sacred geometry of a temple, in which one's spirit is lifted and one realises that Ahura Mazda is everywhere present.

Today society is becoming godless. We are bombarded with stories about the greed and

selfishness of those in power, fed images of violence and crudity, told to idolise temporary celebrities who have no value system except personal gratification and self absorption.

For those of us who don't like what's going on often complain and talk about the 'good old days'. But there's no going back. If we are truly Zoroastrians in our whole being, we understand that we are capable of changing not only ourselves but the world. We have free will to do good or to abdicate our responsibility. We can embrace life or retreat into the forest and detach ourselves from the struggle. But if true Zoroastrians retreat into the forest it is in order to strengthen themselves for the frontline! We are spiritual warriors. We might be few but we are joined by many who are also warriors, busy transforming our modern ugly world, be they educationalists, eco-warriors, artists, academics, industrialists or even presidents! They share an understanding that life is an opportunity to show a passionate commitment to something greater than themselves. The ancient religion of Zoroaster has shown the world for thousands of years that we are not pawns in some game of the gods but co-workers with the higher beings to bring about order from chaos to create something beautiful.

It is now acknowledged that Zoroastrianism was the first green religion; the elements are to be respected, not polluted, nature is there to be revered not exploited. The ASHA Centre cultivates its substantial estate in the biodynamic tradition, where everything is hand dug, and is in tune with the planets, a system which the ancient Zoroastrians were the first to implement. They were master astrologers and used the planets to advise them in agriculture and living. Before they cultivated the land, human beings were nomads; it was

Zoroastrians who realised the importance of stable communities. Like them, we at the ASHA Centre plant, prune and hoe with the moon and the cycle of the cosmos. We never use fertilisers or sprays or any form of chemicals, which only damage the earth. Our vegetable, herb and flower gardens are utterly beautiful.

On the 10th June, as President of the Harrow Zoroastrian Association for the past twenty-five years, I welcomed members to a special Silver Jubilee celebration, marked by the laying out of the rose garden in memory of my father, Bailey Irani, the founding president of the World Zoroastrian Organisation.

No-one who had ever met Dad would forget him. He was genuinely charismatic with an infamous sense of humour. He had a big heart and was noble. I remember him telling me on one occasion that he never promised me a rose garden. He loved roses and would always be seen sporting a rosebud in his suit lapel.

On the fifth anniversary of his death, I gifted over one thousand old English roses to the ASHA garden in his memory, knowing that it exceeded even the display of roses at Hampton Court laid out by King Henry the Eighth. I am in no doubt that this educated, despotic monarch, famous for his six wives, would have known that roses were first cultivated in our ancient homeland of Persia. It was the beauty of the Persian gardens that led Muslims to speak of Paradise as being like the gardens they had marvelled at when they conquered Persia.

I still remember the occasion last year when young Zoroastrians came and spent a long

weekend at the ASHA Centre. Although they enjoyed spending time with each other and being trained in leadership, voice coaching and personal presentation, the highlight was being taught about the importance of working with nature in the biodynamic tradition. They were able to pick their own vegetables to take home in baskets made by local people with special needs from the Camphill Trust.



Every week at ASHA we host young people from St Christopher's School in Bristol, who have a range of disabilities. They enjoy a day at the Centre and work on the land. They say it is the highlight of their week. I think it is wonderful to see young people with disabilities who joyfully show their abilities in practical ways for the benefit of others.

The ASHA team is keen that those who come and are inspired by the awesome beauty of the Forest and Centre should be able to add to our house and gardens, by planting trees and flowers in memory of loved ones and donating artefacts that will be used for generations to come by young people from around the world.

In addition to the Rose and Herb Gardens, the woodlands and wild flower meadow,

there is a substantial laid-out lawn, used for weddings and special occasions, as well as a football pitch for young people who come to the Centre, whether from Africa, the Balkans or young Arab and Jewish Israelis who have never experienced living together, let alone playing football with each other. After overcoming their initial hostility, the Arab and Jewish youngsters worked together producing the plays, *Arabian Nights* and *Grimm's Fairytales*, which they performed in Britain and at home in north Israel. It was the first time these two communities, who would otherwise never have socialised, came together, to see their young people stage a play in English. The Israeli and British media as well as the communities involved said that ASHA's productions made a remarkable contribution to the peace process in the Middle East. The visits by the Arab and Jewish youngsters had such an impact that it led to a request for Palestinian doctors and teachers from Gaza to come to the ASHA Centre. For the first time, a Palestinian group was given an audience in the House of Lords. I organised this through Lord Pearson, the leader of UKIP in the Lords, whose daughter had acted in one of ASHA's regular theatre productions for local young people. The Palestinians talked about the epidemic in Gaza of deaf children and the humiliation of doctors being held up at checkpoints when trying to enter hospitals.

Recently the author, Dr Kusoom Vadgama, celebrated her mother's 100th birthday with a special musical concert on our lawns and speeches from guests ranging from Prince Ali Khan of Hyderabad to a young talented Indian dancer who had spent three weeks at the Centre on a Leadership Course. Dr Vadgama commissioned the creation of the ASHA Herb Gardens for her mother's special birthday. She chose Stephen Crisp, designer of the twenty-three acres in Regent's Park of the home of the American ambassador. When President Barack Obama visited Britain earlier this year, he was heard to say he would have allowed Hilary Clinton to become President and he would have been happy to be the American ambassador to London so that he and his

family could have enjoyed Stephen's visually spectacular gardens.

The chair of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association and director of Tetrapak, Kirsten Rausing, is another sponsor of the ASHA's international vision. Kirsten's substantial donations have underpinned the refurbishment of the Georgian gallery for conferences and the library, which have been named after her Alborada Trust. Kirsten asked me why I named the Centre ASHA. Having been called Zerbanoo, and being a member of the Zoroastrian faith, I decided that the Centre would have to have a name starting with the first letter of the alphabet. I knew that there was nothing more important than ASHA. It encompassed everything that guided the Universe: the righteous way, divine justice, and finally, in many Indian languages the word means hope. I hoped the Centre would be a sanctuary not only for wildlife, but for timeless values that need re-nurturing in our modern world. I was tired of greed, selfishness, and the pathetic cult of the celebrity. I wanted a place where people immediately felt embraced by nature and by one another. I wanted people, especially the young, to be empowered with skills, confidence and the knowledge that they were loved, so they could return to their communities to help transform others' lives. I have not been disappointed.

So many young people have benefited from training at the ASHA Centre that there is now a growing global community of young peace ambassadors from the five continents of the world. They include the Chinese soprano, Sally Li, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London and has been sponsored by ASHA to attend the Cardiff Academy of Music. During one of her holidays, when she was practicing at the ASHA Centre, it was a remarkable sight to see workmen who were rebuilding the old Cider Press with traditional stone stop work not for their cup of tea but to listen to Sally sing arias. It brought tears to their and my eyes. They had never experienced opera except *Nessun Dorma*, sung by Pavarotti at the Football World Cup, and so Sally was also made to sing this famous anthem.

Athlete Cyprian Onderin from Kenya, is another ASHA ambassador, whom ASHA is sponsoring for his university education. Cyprian nearly missed his maths exams when he came from Coventry to be with a group of young South Africans from Johannesburg staying at the ASHA Centre. They had come to work on and present a play, *An African Love Story*, which they had rehearsed with Adrian Locher, ASHA's award-winning Director of the Performing Arts. Cyprian and the South Africans decided to play their drums and sing around a bonfire in the woodland late into the night. Cyprian quite forgot he wasn't back in Africa!

The young South Africans came from the Trevor Huddleston Centre, whom we had worked with in South Africa, a happy connection for me. I had shared a platform with Bishop Huddleston and Lord Kinnock, then leader of the British Labour Party in the early eighties, when we addressed an Anti-Apartheid rally of twenty-five thousand in Trafalgar Square, calling for full mandatory sanctions and the release of Nelson Mandela. Hosting the group at the ASHA Centre reminded me of the struggles of apartheid.

The setting up of the ASHA Centre was also initially a huge struggle. But then Ahura Mazda always tests you. Nothing is easy and many people thought the Centre would never be. I learned that you never know what is going to happen and that, though you will have disappointments, if you work with the right motivation, eventually good things happen at the place and at the right time for you and others.

ASHA is now somewhere all Zoroastrians should come to. The Centre would especially love to welcome young Zoroastrians from around the world and give them the opportunity to meet one another and return to their communities re-energised.

I remember what my extraordinary father used to tell me – You cannot have a rainbow without the rain. We certainly had both rain and sunshine on 10th June when the Zoroastrians from the Harrow

Association visited the Centre for the dedication of the Rose Garden. Just after they left, a magnificent double rainbow appeared in the sky, a wonderful reassurance from the world beyond.

ASHA has weathered the rain and is now enjoying the rainbow.



Author, human rights campaigner and founder of the ASHA Foundation and Centre, Zerbanoo Gifford holds the International Woman of the Year Award 2006 for her humanitarian work, which spans over thirty years of grassroots and global activism. In 1989, Zerbanoo was presented with the Nehru Centenary Award for her work championing the rights of women, children and minorities. Pioneer for Asian women in British politics, she chaired the Commission 'Looking into ethnic minority involvement in British Life' and was a member of the advisory group to the British Home Secretary. A former director of Anti-Slavery International, she was awarded the Freedom of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, for her work combating modern slavery and racism.

Zerbanoo has authored seven books including: 'Dadabhai Naoroji: Britain's first non-white Member of Parliament' and 'Thomas Clarkson and the Campaign against the Slave Trade'

From the Editor: The ASHA Centre is a lovely spot in England to visit and spend a couple of days. The rooms are ensuite, very comfortable and reasonably priced at £35pp, with breakfast. Where would one pay to stay and be treated as a guest in a country home, having fresh roses or sweetpeas in ones room? Meals can be ordered, a 3-course is for £15, very well cooked using the Centre's homegrown products. The red-skinned potatoes, simply boiled were the best I have ever tasted!

With the abundance of wood available, they are in the process of having eco boilers installed for the heating from this winter. The Centre is totally in sync with mother-earth.

As Zerbanoo said, everyone who knows her wonders how she left the hubbub of London to live in the country - something that I have been wondering myself for sometime, but after living at the Centre and having the forest and complete tranquility, I can understand why she has.



The Centre's front garden. The profusion of colour cannot be shared with our readers

For more information on Zerbanoo and the work of the ASHA Centre, please visit www.zerbanoogifford.org www.ashacentre.org

The Great Hedge of India

by yesmin madon

This interesting article came to fruition thanks to my friend Naval Dastur, who shared his magazine *Down to Earth* with me, where I read about the Great Hedge of India, and of course to Yesmin who took the trouble to put pen to paper. – Ed.

After a chance search in a secondhand bookshop, Quinto, in London, a conservator at the University of London Library, came across "Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official". He, in his own words, at first, merely on a whim; and later as something much stronger, became ridiculously obsessed with the idea of making a search for a hedge, which had been casually mentioned by the 19th century British colonial administrative officer.

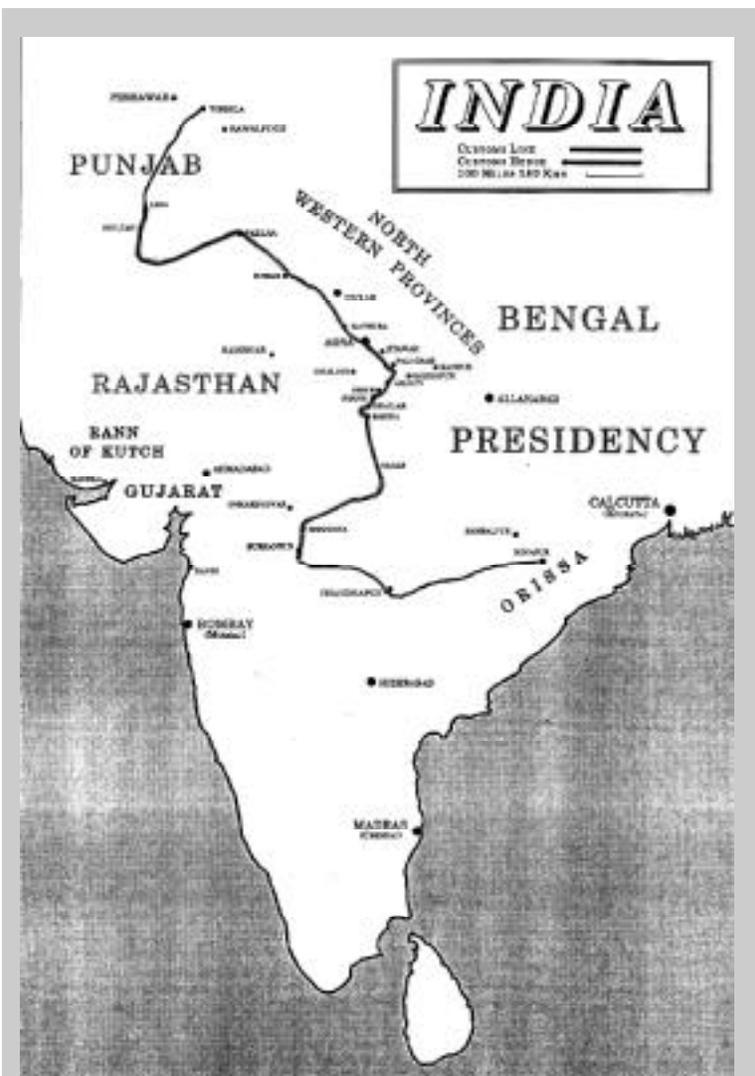
In his effort to confirm the existence of this green 2,500¹ mile long wall – 'one of the least known wonders of Queen Victoria's

India', it was discovered that the giant hedge which had been planted by the British across the Indian subcontinent, and which for fifty years had been tended by 12,000 men, had virtually disappeared from the memories of India and Britain!

In his search for the hedge, beginning in libraries and archives, and then on the ground, Roy Moxham took lessons in Hindi, and taught himself land navigation. He took three trips to India beginning in 1996, braving the harsh tropical climate, taking in exotic isolated villages, bandit-infested ravines unprotected and meetings with many unusual, inquisitive and apathetic people across the plains of central India. He rode in rickety *tongas*, overloaded three-wheelers, stuffy Indian trains – all to no avail thus far.

After many disappointments, - for it seemed that all traces and memories of the hedge had disappeared until in 1998, when, the author says, - his perseverance was rewarded. When he had decided to retreat for the season after having reached a dead end, Moxham was approached by an old bushy white bearded priest, who claimed he knew the *parmat lain* (permit line), and led the adventurer to whatever remained of it. This priest had been a dacoit in his earlier life, and was familiar with the terrain of the interior. Some help was also forthcoming from a retired college principal with a degree in geology, who showed Moxham a considerable portion of probably the last stretch of the unique hedgerow.

During his adventurous search, Moxham stumbled upon the shameful knowledge of what this wondrous wall stood for! This 'piece of eccentricity' turned out to be an instrument of oppression leading to many Indians suffering from salt starvation!



To clamp a tight control, the East India Company had planted a hedge across the whole of 19th century India. Beginning from Tarbela near Rawalpindi, it passed through some of today's Pakistan towns, then some areas in north India, again further down in the Central Provinces, finally turning eastwards from Chandrapur in Maharashtra in the direction of Calcutta.

The Great Hedge of India (a book of history and travel authored by Roy Moxham) was meant to be a customs barrier across India from the 1840s² to the 1880s to facilitate the British in collecting the heavy salt tax. Dileep Chinchalker says, 'It cost poorly paid labourers two months' wages for the price of a year's modest supply. The East India Company's restrictions led to short supply and trafficking.' According to the author, this was 'an instrument of exploitation employed by the most powerful empire in the world to extract money from its poorest subjects, by depriving them of the most basic food item.' The Salt March of Gandhi, a significant moment in the history of Indian independence, was precipitated by this salt tax which remained long after the hedge was dismantled. Moxham, in his exploits, connects this hedge also to the role it played in the famines of the late 19th century. He uncovered 'what remains of the British grand folly and restores to history what must be counted as one of the world's wonders – and a monument to one of the great injustices of Victorian imperialism'.

The hedge, initiated in the 1850s², and at its peak till 1879, was abolished when the salt tax was rendered uniform throughout the colonial state. Ironically, after independence, the public works department found 'this formidable barrier ... the most suitable ground for building access ways in rural areas.'

Dileep Chinchalker in later years, found it 'exhilarating to be in the same place (Quinto in London) as the British writer who had been foraging literally in my own backyard towns in India.' He made efforts to trace Roy Moxham on the top storey of The Apple Tree – a boutique with a bright pink facade,

located on Neal Street which branches off at the top end of Shaftsbury Avenue.

Chinchalker mentions that smug in his thought of being the only Indian reader who had ventured this far, was taken aback when Moxham produced a Marathi translation of this book. But at the end of his very satisfying meeting with the author, he was gifted with an assignment to translate *The Great Hedge of India* to Hindi.

References:

1. Dileep Chinchalker - *Taxman's Hedge* appeared in *Down to Earth*, January 16-31, 2009, a Science & Environment fortnightly, published in New Delhi, India
2. The Great Hedge of India. The Internet.

Notes:

1. Chinchalker's article says the hedge was 3700 km. (2294 miles); web page on the Great Hedge of India says it was 2500 miles; the Wikipedia write-up says it was nearly 2000 miles; Roy Moxham himself says it was 1500 miles! Take your pick!
2. Similarly, disparity in the years 1840s or 1850's that the hedge was initiated.



Yesmin holds a master's degree in Microbiology, which enabled her to work as a Quality Control Chemist, Chief Chemist, and Works Manager – in that order

– in Karachi. In 1985 she joined her alma mater as a teacher, six years later she became the Head Mistress in the 'O' Level section of The Mama Parsi Girls' Secondary School. After a break of a couple of years she became Principal of two Montessoris simultaneously having to quit once again due to family health problems. She was employed by the Oxford University Press as an editor for a brief period in 2005, and as an Executive Secretary for another short stint in 2006, by a pharmaceutical company. Her volunteer work kept her busy as the Joint Secretary for three years with KZBM, and for three years with KPI, from 2000 to 2006.

A Chronicle of Parsis in Mombasa

by dara edulji patel

I was born in 1925, in Mombasa, where I spent the major part of my life. I would like to throw some light on the history of the Parsis in Mombasa, by providing pen portraits of some of the leading personalities there. The earliest accounts date back to the late 19th century. The biographical data was imparted to me mainly by my late father, Edalji Nusserwanji Patel, who from 1913 and for most of his life was an active member of the Mombasa Parsi Anjuman.

Dating the early Parsi settlement

Mombasa, 'Island of War' in Swahili, is on the east coast of Kenya, facing the Indian Ocean. Its lingua franca, Swahili, is a mixture of Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, Urdu, Hindi, English and little bit of Gujarati, reflecting its colonial past. The island was part of the 'Coastal Strip', ruled by the Sultan of Zanzibar, which the British leased in 1890 and later declared a British Protectorate - finally incorporating it into the British colony of Kenya.

The explorer, Burton, cited Parsis amongst the regular visitors to Zanzibar and Mombasa, since 1858. While there is no direct evidence, the general consensus is that Parsis started arriving in Mombasa around 1870. The first Parsi to settle in Zanzibar, in 1875, was Bomanji M Darukhanawalla and it is assumed that this marked the beginning of the early period of settlement.

These early settlers were mainly professionals: court officials, surveyors, engineers, marine engineers, contractors, lawyers, accountants, businessmen, senior railway drivers (with the Kenya Uganda Railways) and doctors. Several were officials and senior cashiers of the National Bank of India Ltd. Some were working in the Customs Department and the Treasury and Immigration Departments of the colonial administration.

Others worked for private firms such as Mackinnon Mackenzie and Co. Ltd. (later on Smith Mackenzie and Co. Ltd), and African Wharfage Co. Ltd (later, the Kenya Landing and Shipping Co. Ltd.) as managers, accountants, cashiers and shipping clerks.

They naturally called their relatives and friends over from India, Aden and Zanzibar. The leading Parsi families were Talati, Batliwalla, Kharas, Pandol, Patel, Mehta, Jabber, Vatcha, Mistry, Suratia, Sutaria, Dalal, Khajuri, Nekoo, Austin, Buhariwalla, Digaria, Dotiwalla, Daver, Mobedjina, Italia, Sethna, Karkaria, Jilla, Pithawalla, Jaffrabadwalla, Kotwal, Talavia, Avari, Bhathena, Bholia and Bajina.

The Mombasa Parsi Anjuman

Scanty records exist about the Parsi settlement prior to 1880; although some form of Parsi organisation is believed to have existed as far back as 1860. A Trust Deed of 8 October, 1897, names five Trustees: Rustomji N Talati (merchant), Rustomji Khajuri (pleader), Pestonji J Mehta (clerk), Perozshaw Kharas (cashier) and Khushedji Nusserwanji (surveyor).

From 1946, I was an active, elected member of The Mombasa Parsi Anjuman (MPA), and in 1966, was elected Secretary and one of the three Trustees of the Anjuman. As Secretary, I found myself in possession of four Minutes Books (one being current) and several correspondence files, all in Gujarati. The oldest Minutes Book was in a deplorable state, infested with termites and amounting to shreds of paper between the hard covers. I found it impossible, therefore, to ascertain in which year the Anjuman was established. I was authorised to destroy those damaged records which could not be salvaged. It was also resolved that all future records should be kept in English.

The first Rule Book (Constitution) of the Anjuman was also in Gujarati and was not registered with the Government. In 1945, the MPA revised its Constitution (in English), and registered itself under the Land Perpetual Succession Act of the British Kenya Colony. The new constitution gave women voting rights for the first time and since then, women frequently occupied the various elected positions on the Managing Committee.

Parsi Personalities in 19th century Mombasa

The Great Parsi Builders of Mombasa

Jehangir Bhedwar: Jehangirji was a builder who arrived in Zanzibar in 1875 and later established a depot in Mombasa. In 1880 he built the Old Port of Mombasa, which enabled small steamships to dock there. Even today, on the top of the main gate of the Old Port, there is a bust of this pioneer builder, wearing his black Parsi cap.

In 1891, he built the Sultan's Maiden Palace; and later on, in partnership with Sorabji Merwanji Mistry (my father's maternal uncle), he built most of the government buildings in Government Square, in the vicinity of the Old Port. They also built the old High Court building, old Provincial Head Quarters, old General Post Office, old Mombasa Railway Station, Makupa Cause Way, Government House, Treasury Building and several other buildings in Mombasa.

Jehangir Bhedwar retired and returned to India, it seems, as his grave is not in the cemetery of the MPA. It is not known if he was married.

Sorabji Merwanji Mistry: He arrived in Zanzibar in 1892 and then moved to Mombasa. Like Jehangir Bhedwar, Sorabji became a leading builder. He was also a Contractor for the East African Government. He later changed his name to M Sorabji and started an import export business.

Sorabji became a benefactor to the community by purchasing a plot of land from

Rustomji Dhanjisha Talati and Dhunbai Rustomji Talati (maiden name Dhunbai P Botliwalla) for the price of Rs 500. He and Jehangir Bhedwar built a Prayer and Assembly Hall for the community and donated the plot and the premises to the MPA.

He married Nawla Pandol of Zanzibar with whom he had three sons. Later on he settled in Nairobi, where he died and is buried in the Nairobi Parsi Anjuman's cemetery.

Prominent Parsi Merchants

Rustomji Dhanjisha Talati and Dhunbai Rustomji Talati (nee, Dhunbai Botliwalla): They were business persons, East African contractors and land owners. They arrived in Mombasa around 1880 from Zanzibar and prospered. In 1896, when problems arose regarding the burial of a deceased Parsi, the Talatis donated a piece of land for use by the community as a cemetery.

The prosperous Talati pioneers had two sons, Dhunjisha and Ardeshir, and two daughters, Soonamai and Shirinbai. The couple and their children died at an advanced age and are buried in the MPA's cemetery. Some of their great-grand children are still in Mombasa.

Parsi Advocates and Political Reformers

Kawasji M Dalal: Kawasji probably came to Mombasa in 1880, where he was highly regarded as an advocate and a leading campaigner for the rights of Indians and Africans in Kenya. He was concerned for the social and political welfare of the local population.

A news item, filed in the British Administration Gazette, stated that there were three advocates present at the opening of the first High Court in Mombasa in 1904, (built by J Bhedwar and S M Mistry). Two of these were Indians: Kawasji M Dalal and Byramji R Khajuri. Their photographs appeared in the said Gazette, together with British colonial officers and the representatives of the Sultan of Zanzibar.

The Gazette further stated that Kawasji M Dalal played a prominent part in the struggle for Indian and African rights in Kenya. Previously, Africans and Indians were not represented in the Kenya Legislative Council, which was solely made up of Europeans. Because of Kawasji M Dalal's efforts and spirited fight, two Indians were nominated to the Legislative Council by the Governor, one of whom was Kawasji.

However, Africans were still excluded and Kawasji M Dalal made repeated efforts in the Legislative Council to persuade the Governor to give representation to Africans. When he failed to prevail upon the Governor, he resigned from the Legislative Council in protest.

During his law practice, he represented a senior Masai Chief in a land case against the British colonial administration. The white settlers, with the active support of the British colonial administration, had forcibly grabbed large tracts of fertile land from the natives in the hinterlands and the Masai Chief was one of those whose lands had been confiscated. Kawasji M Dalal fought bravely against this British injustice but lost the case.

In 1924, the Indian National Congress sent Mrs Sarojini Naidu, one of its distinguished political activists, to Kenya, to investigate the agitation against the unequal treatment of Indians and the jailing of several Indians in Mombasa. Kawasji M Dalal presented her with a detailed memorandum, which was discussed by the Indian National Congress. Because of his memorandum, Sir Mancherjee Bhowanagare, a leading Parsi campaigner for the rights of Indians in East Africa, took up this cause in England.

It is not known if Kawasji M Dalal was married. It seems, he retired and went back to India, as his grave is not in the cemetery of the MPA.

Byramji Rustomji Khajuri: Byramji is believed to have arrived in Mombasa in 1880 and, like Kawasji M Dalal, was a distinguished advocate, who played a role

in the establishment of the first High Court in 1904 and was involved fully in the political and public life of the island.

He held the posts of Chairman and Trustee of the MPA for several years, from 1896. He was very popular amongst Indians, Arabs, as well as Africans. He had an Arab mistress who bore him a son, Mbarak Ali Hinawy.

Byramji Rustomji Khajuri's son became the first (half-Parsi) *Liwali*, or Representative of the Sultan of Zanzibar! When he worked for the Provincial British Commissioner, Mbarak had caught the eye of Sir Ali bin Salim, the Sultan's *Liwali*. The *Liwali's* own son, who drank heavily, was a disappointment to him. When the *Liwali* grew old, he advised the British administration to appoint Mbarak to succeed him. The local Arabs opposed this on the grounds that Mbarak was not a full blooded Arab; but their agitation was suppressed by the British who arrested the ring leaders and Mbarak became *Liwali* on the death of Ali bin Salim. Mbarak Ali Hinawy was the last *Liwali* when Kenya became independent.

Byramji never married and on retiring, he returned to India where he fell ill on arrival in Mumbai and expired within a few days.

To be continued

Dara Patel was born (1925) and bred in Mombasa. He supported the freedom struggle and served as the Treasurer and Publicity Secretary of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and as Treasurer of the Kenya Freedom Party (Asian political party, affiliated to KANU). He was a manufacturer with orchards and poultry farms in Mombasa and is now retired and settled in Canada.

"Every morning in Africa a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed.

Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle - when the sun comes up, you had better be running." - author unknown

Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School -

A Sesquicentennial Centenary - 1859 to 2009

by mehelli dinshaw

On 23rd May 2009 The Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School celebrated 150 years of continuous teaching excellence; a Sesquicentennial centenary from 1859 to 2009.



constructing the magnificent school building, making it into the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School, the pride of Karachi Parsis and the Soparivala family.

"... 150 years - what a momentous milestone. This institution is not just a part of Karachi, it is the heart of Karachi, in fact it is Karachi; a building more than 104 years, trees more than 100 years and knowledge imparted that cannot be measured in time" ... so said the Principal, Mrs Kermin Parakh.

Celebrations for this special day, a milestone in the School history, commenced with a Jashan ceremony in the late afternoon by nine priests, followed in the evening by an impressive function and sumptuous dinner on the School grounds. It was a day not only of celebration but also a day of humble remembrance of the great founder of the school, Seth Shahpurji Hormusji Soparivala, and his two illustrious sons, Seth Khurshedji Soparivala, Seth Jamshedji Soparivala, who were personally responsible for the later expansion of the school.

At the function the Chairman, Major General Kaizad M Soparivala praised the vision of his great-great grandfather, Seth Shahpurji Hormusji Soparivala for starting a small 'balakshala' in 1859 and later in 1870 for donating his personal house for the education of Parsi children in Karachi. He named it the Virbaiji Parsi School after his wife who had expired a year earlier. In 1906 his equally illustrious and noble sons, Seth Khurshedji and Seth Jamshedji, carried on his pioneering work of offering quality education to Parsi children of Karachi and expanded the School by

In 1959 when the School celebrated its 100 years, Khan Bahadur Sheriarji Contractor, the Honorary Secretary, wrote in the Centenary Volume: "... The far sightedness and generosity of this great yet humble man, Seth Shapurji Soparivala, the founder of this prestigious school, perceived that it was only on sound education that the security and destiny of the Karachi Parsi community rested, and that education was an inseparable companion and finally an investment in knowledge alone pays the best dividends ..."

To commemorate the sesquicentennial centenary, the Philatelic Bureau brought out a special Rs 5 commemorative postal stamp with the school building, the school shield and motto, and a first day cover. The daily, DAWN, Pakistan's premier newspaper, published a special colourful four-page supplement with the heading, "Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School, 150 Years of Excellence in Education". Special messages of congratulations were received from The President and Prime Minister of Pakistan, Governor of Sindh, the



Full front view of BVS School today, courtesy MD

City Nizam, the Minister of Education and senior officials of the Education Department, the Karachi Anjuman Trust Fund, the Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal, leading schools of Karachi and a host of others. Every guest, all teachers and students were presented with a memento bag, a specially produced sesquicentennial centenary school calendar, pen, key-ring and coffee cup, all emblazoned with the school's badge and motto, "Towards that Best Light".

Parsis in Karachi -

Parsis started coming to settle in Karachi around 1835 while it was still a small town with a new military cantonment, little commerce and a minor fishing industry. As was usual when the Parsis increased in

numbers anywhere, they first established a dokhma in 1848 and an agiary followed the next year. This shows that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Parsi community of Karachi had grown considerably.

Seth Shahpurji Hormusji Soparivala -

Legend has it that Seth Shahpurji came to Karachi in 1854 from Bombay by camel caravan through the Rann of Kutch. He is said to have started work as a billiard's marker in the Cantonment Officers mess and soon progressed to be an assistant in the firm of Mr W E Chamberlain. An enterprising man, he started selling tea and eatables in the mess and soon ventured

into business by taking contracts for the British Army; starting as a bedding supplier, he soon became the principal supplies contractor to the British Army Commissariat. Being a kind and sociable person he also took a leading role in the welfare of Karachi Parsis, built a 'sugdi' (fireplace) at the 'Dokhma', repaired the 'Nasasala' quarters and dug wells.

The 'Balakshala' -

The Parsi residents now felt the need to open a school for their growing number of children, to impart religious education and knowledge of Gujrati. It was decided to establish a small school through subscriptions. The principal donor was Seth Shahpurji Soparivala, and on 23 May 1859 a small 'balakshala' was started in the house of one Mr Dadabhoy Pallanji Paymaster in Saddar Bazaar on Frere Street. The first secretary was Seth Nanabhai Shahpurji Spencer and three years later this important post for the running of the 'balakshala' passed on to Seth Shahpurji Soparivala. The 'balakshala' then shifted to the Sargent's house which was on the plot where the present Saddar agiary stands. The School was not part of the Agiary as is wrongly assumed by some, as at that time the Saddar agiary was initially started in the Hirjikaka building opposite the site of the present Agiary. When the 'balakshala' was shifted to the Soparivala house, the new Hirjikaka agiari was built on the site of the old Sargent's house.

Parsi Virbaiji School -

With the Parsi population fast increasing in Karachi there was soon need for larger school premises. In 1870 Seth Shahpurji had taken upon himself the responsibilities of a Secretary, had been so far the greatest benefactor and patron of the 'balakshala'. Till now the small primary school had been under great stress for want of suitable larger premises. Seth Shahpurji came forward in his usual public minded spirit, and donated his personal two-storey house on Frere Street, which in those days was worth Rs10,000, to be called the Parsi Virbaiji



Seth Shahpurji, courtesy Creative Unit & JM

School in memory of his wife Virbaiji. Although Seth Shahpurji could not be called a very rich man in comparison to other Parsi



1873, Parsi Virabaji School, courtesy British Library. See Notes.

gentlemen in Karachi, he had donated his meager wealth and that of his family, to start a school that was to provide the best form of education for Parsi children. This single philanthropic act by him towards his community consolidated the seat of Parsi education in Karachi.

The Parsi Virbaiji School in its new Frere Street location was opened on 24th September 1870 by the then Commissioner of Sind, Sir William Mereweather. On this occasion the Parsi Anjuman of Karachi presented a 'Shawl of Honour' to Seth Shahpurji, and the then Educational Inspector of Karachi, Mr J H Muir, appreciated the educational efforts of the Parsis of Karachi.

The School was coeducational and a 'Vernacular' school, meaning all teaching was in the Gujrati medium. Subjects taught were Gujrati, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, History, Geography and needlework (to girls). From 1875 with the encouragement of Mr Fultan, the then Educational Inspector of Karachi, an English teaching section was opened and the school now became an "Anglo-Vernacular School". The census of

1872 shows there were only 777 Parsis in Karachi, 427 males and 350 females. The School strength is recorded as having only 82 students, with 54 boys and 28 girls, and the fees varied from 4 annas to Rs 1 per child with some indigent parents exempted.

On 1st Jan 1877 after the Indian mutiny, when India came directly under the British Imperial rule, Queen Victoria assumed the title of Kaiser-e-Hind, and annually awarded certificates of loyalty to her subjects. Seth Shahpurji was one of the first in the city of Karachi to receive this certificate.

The great founder, Seth Shahpurji, finally retired from active service but continued to keep a benevolent eye on the school. He is said to have travelled widely in India and died in Karachi on 25 March 1895 at the age of 72. The Parsi Anjuman called a special meeting to mourn his loss and in 1897 a special portrait of this great man was hung in the Saddar agiari. Every year on his death anniversary the school holds a special jashan in his memory. There is no historical document to tell us of his early life or schooling. He is said to have lived a hard life which usually started with prayers at four in the morning. His place of business was opposite the Empress Market where the rich and poor called on him for advice. His personality was said to be striking and he was a fair complexioned man. A lovely marble statue in the School entrance displays his gentleness and kindness.

School Expansion to new building -
By the start of the 20th century the Parsi population of Karachi had increased



considerably and there was urgent need for a much larger school to cater for their children. In 1904 a piece of land measuring over 9,000 square yards was acquired near the then Artillery Headquarters on Victoria Road. Once again the greatest contribution towards the building fund came from the sons of the great founder, Seth Khurshedji and Seth Jamshedji, and the Government came forward with a building grant of Rs20,000 and the Karachi Municipality gave Rs2,500.



Portrait of KSS, at Saddar agiary, archives of TC

On Monday 10th October 1904, Seth Khurshedji Soparivala laid the foundation stone for a new school, ground plus one floor. The architect in charge was the famous member of the Society of Architects, Mr Moses Somake and the building contractor was Messrs Abdulhusein Alibhai. The opening ceremony was performed on 24 March 1906, the 11th death anniversary of the founder Seth Shahpurji Soparivala. On this

great day the whole Parsi community was invited first to a jashan ceremony of thanks to the memory of the Late Shahpurji, and was followed by the consecrating and opening ceremony of the new School building. Had it not been for the tradition started by Seth Shahpurji and so religiously preserved by his large hearted sons, Seth Khurshedji and Seth Jamshedji, the Parsi Virbaiji School would never have expanded and moved from its small Soparivala house premises on Frere Street.

On commencement in the new building, the School records show that now there were



Portrait of JSS, at Saddar agiary, archives of TC

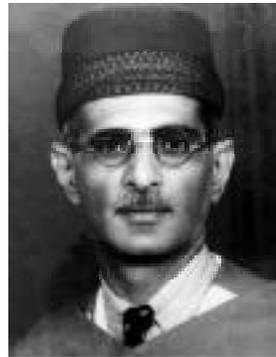
three departments, the coeducational Gujrati primary section and the middle school English section separate for boys and girls. The primary section from an infant class up to class four had 68 boys and 62 girls. The middle school English section for boys and for girls had only three classes having 39 boys and 29 girls in each. The separate girls school was housed on the first floor.

Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Boys High School. Dr Pithavala period -

Till about 1919 the Virbaiji Boys School was still an Anglo-Vernacular Middle School. After completing middle school at class seven, the students took admission in High Schools in Karachi. The boys usually went to NJV Government High School or St Patrick's, and girls to the Convent High Schools. As boys were finding difficulty in getting entrance to high schools, it was decided to start these classes for them. An appeal for this was made to the Parsis of Karachi for funds to make this possible, as it was poised by the need of the hour to be converted into a full fledged Boys High School. The credit for this leap into becoming one of the most progressive boy's high school of Karachi goes to the benevolent and munificent philanthropy of the Soparivala family and the vision of a great Headmaster.

On 1st June 1920 the Managing Committee of the School appointed Mr Maneck B Pithawala of Poona as Headmaster, who had the privilege to preside over its destiny for the next quarter century. Within three years he had worked out all the modalities to transform the School into a complete High School. Once again the Soparivala family came forward with a most generous offer of Rs200,000 to add a second storey to the School building and make it into a proper High School. After the death of Seth Khurshedji in 1915, the head of the family and Chairman of the School was now his brother Seth Jamshedji. Not many know that this great offer by him and the sons of his late brother, the family had to sacrifice considerably and sell their personal

Seth Khurshedji Shahpurji Soparivala, the elder son of Seth Shahpurji was born on 12 April 1852. He inherited a loving temperament from his mother and the indomitable will from his father. From early times he took great interest in the School and served as Chairman for 21 years after the death of his father. He died on 05 September 1915. His sons, Seth Edulji and Seth Kavasji continued the family tradition also serving as Chairman's of the School. Today his great grandson, Mehelli Dinshaw, carries on the tradition of holding office of Vice-Chairman.



Dr Pithavala Archives of TC

Seth Jamshedji Shahpurji Soparivala, the second son of the founder was born on 08 August 1854. He served the school as Chairman from 1915 after the death of his elder brother, Seth Khurshedji, till he died on 29 May 1931. His greatest contribution to the cause of the Virbaiji Parsi School was the munificent gift of Rs200,000 he raised from the Soparivala family in 1920 to add a second storey to the school building and to upgrade it to a full fledged High School. His patriarchal personality was familiar to all Parsis of Karachi as he also served on the Parsi Anjuman board. Today his great grandson, Major General Kaizad Soparivala, the only Soparivala heir, carries on the tradition by holding office of Chairman.

holdings, so that the Parsi community of Karachi could reap the benefits of a better education, and preserve the sacred memory of the great founder. The Soparivalas had donated generously, not only in the shape of money, but personal service as well towards the maintenance, upkeep and extension of the School. In fact to everyone in Karachi, Parsi education and the name Soparivala were now synonymous.

On 12th November 1923 in the presence of a large gathering, a Jashan was performed and the second storey was declared open, and a special presentation and casket was given to the Soparivala family. The crowning part of the function was the prayers offered and the Presidential address given by Shams-ul-Ulema Dastur Dhalla. The School was thereafter renamed

the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Boys High School.

The School now had 246 pupils and its strength rose to 428 by 1936. Mr Pithawala gradually took the School to great heights and the period 1920

to 1946 was momentous having the full support of the Managing Committee. He introduced a host of extra curricular activities which he strongly believed were required to build strong characters. He started religious education, introduced the school prefect system, 'House' system, and scouting and cubing. Three scout troops were formed, through the generosity of the Soparivala and Cowasjee families. There was the 2nd Karachi Cowasjee Variawa's Own, the 3rd Karachi Soparivala's Own and the 4th Karachi Darius's Own Scout Troops. In 1927 Fakirjee Cowasjee created the School band known as, Cowasjee Variawa's Own. In 1932, Pithawala gave the School its

motto, "Towards that Best Light". Physical culture and cricket coaching was introduced and the Karachi Parsi Institute offered their grounds for practice and matches.

In 1919, Fakirjee Cowasjee started the "Cowasjee and Virbaijee Variava Bhojan Fund" giving free lunch to deserving boys which continues till today. In 1940 Rustom Cowasjee secured for the School a spacious playing field on Sangster Road opposite the KPI grounds, and built a pavilion. In appreciation, the new sports ground and pavilion was called the "Fakirjee Cowasjee Playground and Gymkhana Pavilion". The new sports grounds saw the start of the Schools "House" system.

Pithawala retired on 20th November 1946 at the age of 60.

It may be of interest to mention here that today Karachi's oldest living Parsi gentleman, and oldest Virbaijeeite is 101-year-old Dhunjishaw Dadabhoy Mama. School records show he joined the school in the year in 1919 when the school was still an Anglo-Vernacular School. He is the nephew of late Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Hormusji Mama who founded the Mama Parsi Girls High School.

Girls School separated -

The Parsi Virbaiji School was still a co-educational and an Anglo-Vernacular School when it moved into its new premises. It was soon realized that with the growing number of Parsi girls now studying, the School could no longer be capable of teaching both boys and girls, and the School was therefore bifurcated into a Parsi Virbaiji Boys School and a separate Parsi Girls School. The Girls school was separately housed on the first floor of the new School building. Very soon a larger and separate premise for the girl's school was required and donations were received to build a separate school for them in Karachi. The principal donor with Rs 300,000 was Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Hormusji Mama, and a further sum of Rs150,000 came from the N N Pochahji Trust Funds (Messrs K & J Soparivala and K B Nusserwanjee R Mehta). With the



Cowasjee Variawa's Own, school archives, courtesy MD

necessary funds secured, land was purchased on Bunder Road and the school building construction began. In 1918 the girls school now called the Mama School was shifted out of the Virbaiji Parsi School building first to Mama Mansions (now known as Kothari Mansions), on Victoria Road (now Abdullah Haroon Road), and very soon moved into its new building and was called the Mama Parsi Girls High School. The 'balakshala' of old had now mothered two off-springs, one for its sons and another for its daughters. The two institutions ran independently but both having the same primary goal, the education of Parsi children of Karachi.

Partition, Pakistan & our Schools opened to all -

In 1947, after the partition of India, the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah the founder and first Governor General of Pakistan, made a survey of the schools in existence in Karachi and drew up his plans to provide education for the huge bulk of children who came in with the events of that year. He met the Karachi Parsi elders and requested them to take the entire Parsi community of Karachi into confidence to temporarily open both the BVS Boys School and the Mama Girls School to children of the Muslims of the new nation until new schools could be build. A 'Samast Parsi Anjuman' meeting was called and it was unanimously agreed that since schools were established to educate children, there could be no discrimination on the grounds of race and religion. The two Parsi schools immediately opened their doors to all non-Parsi children of Karachi, not temporarily but permanently.

Behram Sohrab H J Rustomji period & onwards -

Pithawalla was followed by Behram Sohrab H J Rustomji (1946-65), another fine teacher, an all-rounder and a great humanist. He nurtured the School following Mr Pithwala's good work of the



Behram Rustomji, archives of TC

last 26 years. He saw the School suddenly expand with the admission of non-Parsi children after the creation of Pakistan and maintained its great name and reputation. He was a dynamic person and introduced technical training classes in basic engineering and setup a separate workshop building for which he successfully obtained a gift of modern electric workshop machinery from the Ford Foundation.

The School celebrated its Centenary in 1959 with a grand function. Mr Mehmood Husain the Education Minister was Chief Guest and he read out a message of the President of Pakistan, General Ayub Khan. A special Centenary Golden Plaque of the School was presented to Khan Bahadur Sheriarji Contractor for his invaluable services to the School, and long service medals were also given to senior teachers of the School. Mr Rustomji's period was an eventful one, of great challenge for the School and its management which was tackled skillfully and successfully. Mr Rustomji retired after 19 years in 1965.

Then came Behram Minwalla and Russi Divecha, both of whom were there for a very short time. Dinoo Mistri (nee Soparivala), the great-grand-daughter of the founder Seth Shahpurji, took over as Principal in 1972. Computer classes were started in 1995 initially for the senior school and in the next four years every child from class one was attending these classes. The number of students had by now increased to nearly 1,000 and every class had three sections. Mrs Mistri retired in December 2004 due to old age and ill health.



Dinoo Mistri, photo courtesy Freddy R Sethna

The BVS High School today – Mrs Kermin Parakh period -

Mrs Kermin Parakh was appointed Principal from January 2005. With the full support of the Managing Committee she was asked to immediately embark on a course to modernize the School to meet the challenges and needs of the 21st century. Her enthusiasm to carry out this mission was soon visible in every part of the new and revitalized School. New syllabi have



Kermin Parakh, photo courtesy Freddy R Sethna

been introduced for English Language and Literature, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Urdu and Religious instruction, enabling the students to become thinkers rather than rote learners. Some changes have been inevitable and sadly the Technical section and the Montessori have been closed.

Mission Statement and Philosophy -

The Mission Statement of the BVS Parsi High School today is a “child-centered education where the emphasis is on making the child a thinker”. The new school philosophy is to teach by providing an environment which is intellectually stimulating, fostering a positive attitude towards learning, and contributing to the growth of a healthy and well-balanced member of the society who is aware of global issues eventually becoming a global citizen. Teaching methodology has changed in the past four years by moving away from the archaic teaching ways and today all subjects are taught through a multi-sensory multimedia method, which is activity based, with emphasis on experimenting, exploring and discovery for intellectual growth and creativity.

A new Cambridge section was opened in 2006, and the first batch of the students sitting for CIE Examination will graduate in 2012. The management also decided to move away from the Karachi Board of Secondary Education, where the syllabus which had not changed in the last three decades and depended on rote system, to the Aga Khan University Education Board (AKU-EB) from 2012, where the

examination system lays emphasis on the thinking and analyzing ability of a child.

The school has two computer labs with 36 computers each, one for the Primary section and one for the Secondary section and every student from class one onwards attend

computer classes. The computer department also maintains school records, tabulates the examination results and updates the school’s vibrant website.

From 2006 two libraries managed by four librarians now serve the junior and senior sections, and each is equipped with 12 computers for students’ research. An annual library budget ensures new books, magazines and newspapers are available for the students

The Art Department has dramatically come a long way as well. Four teachers, all trained artists, have introduced new techniques and mediums to the students, bringing the artist out in every child.

Four new trained physical education teachers have been engaged to rejuvenate the school’s sports and games. The Schools Inter-school sports participation has now moved beyond a cricket and volley-ball team, to teams for football, swimming, rowing, basketball and futsal.

School Building – Renovation and New Construction -

In preparation for the sesquicentennial centenary celebrations this year, the 100



Major General Kaizad Soparivala with great grandfather Jamshedji Soparivala, photo courtesy Freddy R Sethna



Photo courtesy Creative Unit & JM

year old lime stone exterior of the old main School building has been cleaned. A comprehensive new building programme in three phases has started to cater for the extra classrooms needed for the newly introduced Cambridge and AKU-EB sections. Phase-I completed in 2006, adding new classrooms, old corridors were widened and a new staircase was built. Phase-II completed in time for the sesquicentennial centenary celebrations on 23rd May 2009, adding more classrooms, toilet blocks, staff rooms, conference room and an office. Phase-III, to commence soon, will see even more classrooms, three new science labs for the Cambridge section, an audio-visual room and multi purpose auditorium for the whole school. All renovations and new constructions have been carried out ensuring that the early 20th century Raj architectural essence of the main school building prevails everywhere.

In 150 years the BVS has changed with time and today as this great School celebrates its sesquicentennial centenary of educational excellence, we are sure that the great Founder, Seth Shahpurji Soparivala and his equally illustrious sons, Seth Khurshedji and Seth Jamshedji, must surely be proud of the educational institution they started in 1859 being so carefully nurtured and maintained today in the 21st century.



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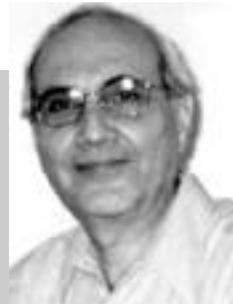
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Notes:

Credit for photographs - MD : Mehelli Dinshaw
 JM : Jamshyd Masood
 TC : Toxy Cowasjee, great granddaughter of Khurshedji Soparivala

General view of the exterior of the Parsi Virbaiji School, Kurrachi, 1873, on p32

Photograph of the exterior of the Parsi Virbaiji School at Karachi in Sind, Pakistan from the Archaeological Survey of India Collections: India Office Series (Volume 46), taken by Michie and Company in c. 1873. This image was exhibited at the Vienna Universal Exhibition of that year. The Parsis, followers of Zoroaster, were the descendants of those who fled Persia in the seventh and eighth centuries to escape religious persecution. Many indigenous schools were established by the Government during the nineteenth century and this one served the Parsi community.
 Photographer: Michie and Company
 Medium: Photographic print
 Date: 1873



Mehelli B Dinshaw is the Great-Great-Grandson of Seth Shahpurji Soparivala, a member of the School Managing Committee from 1978 and Vice-Chairman of the School since 1998. He is Executive Partner of Dinshaw & Company, today the oldest licensed Stevedoring firm in Pakistan, and is Director Projects & Consultant in Seatrade Private Limited. He is a Life Member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport of London (CILT) and represents International ship handling equipment and storage silos manufacturers in Pakistan. He is a consultant for Port related projects, the latest being the under construction Grain & Fertilizer Terminal at Port Qasim. He designs and flies model radio controlled aircraft.

Special events to celebrate the Sesquicentennial Centenary

23 May 2009 - Jashan and official evening function with dinner
 26 & 27 May - Art Exhibition
 14 August - Independence Day Function
 16 August - Scouts Grand Mela
 October - Alumni's evening function with dinner
 November & December - Primary School & Senior School Plays
 10 February 2010 - Science Fair

The modern Zoroastrian 'Pheto' worn on the subcontinent

by sam kerr



The word 'turban' is a corrupted adoption, loosely used in English to refer to several varieties of head gear in the form of cloth head-wraps. The word was derived from the Persian word 'dulband'. In the Islamic tradition it is composed of a length of cloth usually wound around an inner 'hat' of varying shapes as a head wear. The word 'dast' in Persian, meaning a head-wrap has been adopted by the Sikh community, a more respectful Punjabi word for a Sikh 'turban'. It is in fact a modified copy of the crowns of our Sasanian Emperors with the twisted length of the hair of the scalp tied into a knot (Gujarati word: *umbooro* / Greek: *orymbos*). The *orymbos* of the crowns was covered by silken cloth decorated with pearls and gemstones. The *orymbos* could be worn only by the ruler and the prince chosen as heir. The Sikhs use a square piece of ordinary cloth and cover it up with a flap end of the ritualistically elaborate making of their head-dress. In Hindi, a turban is called a 'pagri'. Unlike in the Middle East (and perhaps later in some African) tradition the *pagri* cloth in India is not wound around an inner hat. Among western societies the 'turban' is worn mainly by migrant Sikh men and sometimes by western women in the form of a tight fitting fashionable head wear.

Such head wraps that men wear in Asian and African cultures have different names and are worn in different ways depending on the region and custom. In India the size, colour, mode of wear slowly evolved into distinctive separate characteristics to become a sign of the wearer's status in society. A rich colourful turban is still particularly put on by the bridegroom during the marriage ceremony much in the same way as our Zoroastrian bridegroom wears the 'pheto' (or the unique Zoroastrian 'pagri') during the marriage ceremony.

The purpose of this article is to try and trace the evolution over the centuries from the

Iranian 'dast' to the modern Zoroastrian 'pheto' worn on the subcontinent.

History reveals that the 'diadem', which had been first worn by the Achaemenian Persian Emperors, has been acknowledged to be 'of eastern origin'. It was a fillet or band of linen or silk, plain or richly embroidered, and was worn tied round the brow of the forehead. It was adopted by the Greeks and the Romans. (see fig. 1). The Greeks called it 'diadema'. This cloth band on the brow was the precursor to the crown. Centuries later it was adopted by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine I (307-337AD) and, then, was adopted by all subsequent rulers of the later Roman Empire.



Fig. 1

It is important to remember the distinction, for, although diadem and crown are now used as synonymous terms, the two were originally quite distinct. The confusion between them has, perhaps, come about from the fact that the modern crown seems to be rather an evolution from the diadem than the lineal descendant of the older crowns. The linen or silk diadem was eventually exchanged for a flexible band of gold - the lamina, which was worn in its place round the forehead. The further development of the crown from this was readily effected by the addition of an upper row of ornament. Thus, the Sasanian crowns (224-641 AD) and the much later introduced crowns of England and the rest of Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire (the end started when Romulus Augustus was deposed as the Western Roman Emperor in 476 AD while still young. Rome had begun to decay and fall to a foreign power with the death of Justinian I, the last Roman Emperor who tried to reconquer the

west, in 565 AD. The subsequent spread of Islam after the fall of the Sasanian Empire in 641 AD - the final battle of Nihavand was the last nail.) The much later medieval European royal crowns and the more modern crowns were merely modified diadems and copies of the crowns of the Sasanian rulers.

To understand the origins of the '*pheto*' more closely let us delve further on the Sasanian crowns. I have taken the outline of the description of the Emperors crowns from my "The Sasanian Dynasty - Historical Perspective" www.Avesta.org. In the outline of the history of the dynasty I have used mainly a silver dirham (Greek: *drachma*) to represent the image of those rulers known to have minted coins during their rule. Here I am presenting only the bust of the rulers on the obverse side of the coins to describe the crowns.

Studying the obverse side (heads) of the coins:

The bust of the ruler: The face of the ruler always looks to the right (in contrast, all the Parthian coins show the king always facing left). The face looking forwards is seen only in some gold coins. Each royal crown made of gold represented the *Khwarena* of the ruler and, thus, was unique to each ruler. The crowns were commonly dedicated to the *Yazatas Verethragna, Mithra* or *Anahita*. The previous crown had to be replaced by a new crown if there was any interruption or major occurrence during the rule. This happened during a new phase in the rule or if the ruler was deposed and regained the throne or after a glorious victory in battle against the Romans, since the crown traditionally represented power, legitimacy, victory, triumph, honour and glory.

The golden 'tiara' - a thin rim or broad 'lamina': The tiara or diadem of gold was of variable thickness. The thin rimmed tiara of Ardashir I (224-240 AD) shows the huge *orymbos* covered over and supported by a jewelled silken cloth –



Fig. 2

called the 'cap' by numismatists (see fig. 2). It was either a thin ring, single or double rimmed, adorned with single or double layers of pearls or gemstones or a thicker lamina decorated with arcaded designs and studded with gemstones. The lamina was very thick in the case of Shahpur III (383-388 AD - see fig. 3). An exact replica of it was adopted centuries later in a royal crown in England. The tiara is open at the back to fit the head. The open end is suitably tied at the back with ribbon or held by a clip adorned with gemstones.

Extensions to the lamina: These were in the form of '*turrets*'. The number of turrets varied between one in front to three (with two on sides) or four (another at the back). Arcaded designs, wings (*Verethragna*), eagle head / boar head (*Verethragna*) (see fig. 4), rays (Mithra) (see fig. 5). Narseh's crown (AD 293-303) had a tiara showing palm fronds of gold as the Lamina with palm leaves in the place of turrets (see fig. 6).

Yazdegard I (AD 399-420) had a large crescent attached to the front of the Lamina. This was continued in all later crowns of the dynasty (see fig. 7).

The umbooro/orymbos in the head-dress: The makeup of the head-dress was unique, too. No one but the king could possibly sport an *orymbos*. Also permitted was the prince, after the Council of Nobles and the mobeds had officially and ceremoniously installed him as heir to the throne. However, the mobeds could wear the Mithra crown (see fig. 8). On the right is the priest tending the fire and wearing a crown of Mithra bearing the sun's rays. On the left is the King Hormazd I 271-272 AD, crown showing *orymbos*.

Nearly 1500 years later the Sikhs, a breakaway martial group from among the Hindus of the Punjab, adopted the



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 7



fig. 8

Sasanian head-dress using stiff starched cloth in the place of the gold lamina and other portions of the crown. Again, the eldest son of volunteering Punjabi families was ceremoniously invested with this unique head-dress covered by a turban. He was installed as a Sikh to uphold and defend the cause of Hinduism, while opposing the spread of Islam after the Moghul conquest during Aurangzeb's cruel regime.

For the Sasanian crown the top part of the long uncut hair from the vertex of the scalp was twisted like a rope, which was then wrapped into a large round (Greek word: *'orymbos'* Gujarati: *'ambooro'*), which was tied at its waist with a ribbon. The *orymbos* and the rest of the top hair was covered over by a silk cloth or felt, richly embroidered with gold and silver thread and studded with pearls and gemstones. The loose ends were tied again at the back by a ribbon in the form of fillets (like the *'mathubanu'* of the Zoroastrian women on the subcontinent or the *'lachak'* of the Iranian women).

Western writers called this silk, stiff felt or *papier mache* head-dress the 'cap' and erroneously divided the crowns into 'capped' and 'not capped'. When the lamina was thick the 'cap' was, naturally not visible and the western writers erroneously deemed the crown as 'not capped'. It is interesting to note the later Sasanians did have a *firm cap* (made of firm felt like cloth and probably even made of *papier mache* looking like the Zoroastrian *'pheto'*) above the tiara, as in the crowns of Qobad I (AD 489-497), Khusru I (the great Anouseravan E Adil AD 531-579) and Qobad II (AD Feb-Sept 628). (see fig. 9). A close look at the 'cap' in the crowns of these three emperors clearly resembles the make-up and shape/size of the modern *'pheto'*.



fig. 9

The lowest portion of the *'pheto'*, which was once surrounded / wrapped around by a length of cloth in different manners (see fig. 10)- the *'pheto'* of the great industrial



fig. 10

pioneer, Jamshetji Nasarwanji Tata (1839-1904)]. It would appear from figures 11, 12 & 13, the modern took its present appearance sometimes during the early part of the 1900s. The painting of the young Parsi family in the early 1700s shows a distinct old fashioned turban, Jamshetji Tata's



fig. 11

painting perhaps done in the late 1800s shows a slight shift towards the modern appearance of the *'pheto'*. It seems that the young Kadmi gentleman in 1870 around the same time as Jamshetji Tata's painting is still proudly wearing an old fashioned turban. This could be in consistent with the Kadmi's of the subcontinent (as with their denominational compatriots in Iran to follow the old



fig. 12

ways inherited through the Sasanian times perhaps to try and emphasise their solidarity. It is of importance to let readers be aware that the Qadimis (Kadmis) of Iran particularly in the region of

Yazd still practice their old time-honoured ways, including following the old Sasanian calendar prior to the introduction of the Julian calendar. The acceptance of the Julian calendar in Iran (as the 'New



fig. 13

Calendar') occurred as late as 1079 AD during the reign of Sultan Jalal al-Din Malekshah Saljuq (1079-1092 AD). It is therefore called the Jalali Calendar having the insertion of an auspicious day (Ruz e Vahizak) on February 29 during each Leap Year. (see 'The day of NouRouz during Sasanian times'.

www.ancientiran.com)

The modern 'pheto' made of *papier mache* has since been cleverly devised for convenience and ease of wear by the replacement of the cumbersome wrapping of a length of cloth by a fixed lace of embroidered cloth wrapped around like a mini-turban about one and a half inches of the bottom edge. Clearly, it became more a convenient adaptation ready to be placed on to the top of the head to save time and effort. Further each 'pheto' comes with a



fig. 14

metal mould on to which it is fitted when not worn so that the *papier mache* structure does not shrink with the environmental heat and humidity.

The superstructure of some crowns: There is a suspicion that at least some of the later kings

used a firm cap to mask the sparseness of hair on the vertex of their head or perhaps even extreme baldness. In fact, these crowns had a superstructure above the lamina on which was exhibited a clump of artificial hair. This may well have been the beginning of the wearing of the 'wig or toupe' (see fig. 14 of Zamasp 497-499AD) by the royalty and nobles of the royal dynasties of Europe. Later, the wig was carried through to judges and lawyers in law courts. It is interesting to note that the English and European royal crowns, which had superstructures, were commonly worn by queens, princes and princesses in spite of their well endowed head of hair rather than the kings who, nevertheless

camouflaged their scalp area with a covering of red or purple silken cloth above the tiara/lamina portion of their crown.



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Captions for illustrations:

- Fig. 1 - Diodotus I c.246-250 BC, satrap of Bactria during the Seleucid era after Alexander.
- Fig. 2 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 3 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 4 - Busts of Varahran II & wife Esme.
- Fig. 5 - Bust of Varahran I
- Fig. 6 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 7 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 8 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 9 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 10 - comment in the text.
- Fig. 11 - 1900 photo of an elderly gentleman wearing a turban like pheto.
- Fig. 12 - The painting of the young Parsi family in the early 1700s shows a distinct old fashioned turban.
- Fig. 13 - Young Kadmi gentleman in 1870, still proudly wearing the old fashioned turban.
- Fig. 14 - comment in the text.



Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (London) and of several Colleges of Surgery, Sam Kerr was Surgeon/Lecturer, the University of NSW and College Hospitals, Sydney from 1968 to 2003. He is now Emeritus Surgeon at the University and Hospitals. He has initiated/been a founding member - AZA of NSW, Sydney. In addition to his professional writing he has lectured/published on the social, cultural, historical and scriptural aspects of the religion of Zarathushtra.

The Bapsy Bequests

by soonu engineer

For the past 14 years, since Bapsy Pavry died in India at the age of 93, local politicians and civil servants have been grappling with the vexing question of what to do about the 'Bapsy Bequest', a sum of £500,000 left in her Will - for the benefit of local people - which had grown into a handsome £1.4million. Coming from a wealthy, mobed family of Navsari, the generosity of this lady would have surprised no one, especially those who are familiar with the Parsi tradition of charitable giving for education, medical aid and the relief of poverty. But the local worthies, far from weighing the competing demands of these pressing human needs, were debating for over a decade whether to use the monies to refurbish their opulent municipal building or to erect a cultural and leisure complex in its grounds - in their affluent, English, city of Winchester.

How had it come to this? Why would a woman who had, in her dying years, felt the need to return to the comforting familiarity of home, endow a town she had visited only once, to benefit citizens who she felt had snubbed her? Why would she turn her back on the poor and the needy in her midst and squander precious resources on a relatively frivolous project? The answer lies in the squandered life of Bapsy Pavry.

Bapsy, born in 1902, was the daughter of Dastur Khursetji Erachji Pavry and styled herself abroad as the daughter of a 'Zoroastrian High Priest of Bombay' - as though it were a position akin to that of a Bishop or Archbishop in the Christian tradition. We do not know the source of her family's wealth but her travels in the US and Europe with her brother, Jal Curset Pavry, and her friendships with members of the British elite, indicate that the family had connections with high society amongst the imperial classes.

According to the records of the American Family Immigration History Centre, Bapsy

travelled from Le Havre to Ellis Island, USA, on 5 September 1924, at the age of 21. It is believed that she - or her brother - studied at Columbia University (Columbia will not confirm this). In 1928, Bapsy was presented at Court to King George V, grandfather of



Mrs Baldwin's Garden Party at No. 10 - 1928

Queen Elizabeth II. We have archive pictures of Bapsy at house parties given by high society women in London and there is a picture of her arriving at No. 10 Downing Street to attend Mrs Stanley Baldwin's garden party.

While welcomed by some progressive Establishment figures as an upper class, educated lady from the colonial subject populations, Bapsy and her brother Jal's attempts to fraternise with the great and the good in England earned them a degree of notoriety in those circles. According to R V Smith, of *The Hindu*, who interviewed her in the 1960s, 'the aristocracy in Britain did not take kindly to her and always treated her with disdain.' Like the wannabe celebrities of today, the pair were seen and photographed at the many exhibitions and private viewings: he in top hat and tails; she in long-sleeved bodice and regal, gujerati-style sari.



Private Views Day at the Royal Academy, with her brother, May 1934



Silverware Exhibition at Seaford House, 1929. [one of the grandest surviving aristocrat mansions in London]

Bapsy's desire to meet and know the rich and powerful did not abate as she grew older. In the 1960s, Bapsy got an audience with the Shah of Iran, as 'Bapsybanoo Marchioness of Winchester', ostensibly to persuade him to allow maintenance of the ancient Zarathushtrian places of worship in Iran. Ironically, she did not donate to the fund set up by UK Zoroastrians to build a dar-e-meher in London.

According to the Museum of Winchester's website, 'All through her life, Bapsy endeavoured to ingratiate herself with the famous; the world's political, social and

religious elite with whom, mostly through their private secretaries, she conducted a long correspondence.' While such a view may itself be a reflection of the snobbery rife among the imperial classes (then and now) whose members looked down on subject 'natives' however distinguished, erudite or enterprising, there is evidence that the Pavrys were in the habit of writing to public figures. There is an entry under 'Miscellaneous Correspondence' in the Papers of Lord Hailsham, twice Lord Chancellor, of two letters written in 1952; the Papers of Augustus Edwin John, the Welsh artist, held in the National Library of Wales, has a set of 24 letters written to Bapsy and her brother between 1932 and 1953.

Even Mahatma Gandhi was prompted to write to Bapsy, in response to her query regarding the saris worn by his late wife, Kasturba. An excerpt from the letter is quoted in the memoirs of his grandson, Rajmohan. [Readers may be interested to know that when Gandhi was preparing to take his wife and family to South Africa, he thought that their Kathiawari Bania outfits would appear 'outlandish' while western clothes were inappropriate. So he settled for a Parsi sari for Kasturba and Parsi coats and trousers for the boys, according to his biographer, Sankar Ghose.]

When Bapsy's brother died in 1985, she wrote 'informing the world's great and good of his death. As a result of the letters Bapsy received in reply, she was able to say that she had received messages of sympathy from all over the world,' continues the caustic commentary posted on the Winchester Museum website.

But then, they have much to be snuffy about in Winchester: Bapsy did manage to steal a march on potential carpetbaggers by becoming the last Marchioness of Winchester. How she managed to accomplish this remains a mystery since the 16th Marquess Henry William Montagu Paulet (1862 – 1962) was a mere 89 years of age on 5 July 1952 to Bapsy's 49 and – unusually - no family or friends were invited to the wedding ceremony in Caxton Hall.

Photographs are from the Internet and no copyright was required or asked for.

The Canberra Times noted that, 'two members of the Registry staff were witnesses.' Nevertheless, the marriage made headlines in newspapers all over the world; and they managed to capture both the age scandal and the race dimension (or scandal, depending on their perspective).

The dubious nature of the liaison was highlighted when the 'only Indian Marchioness in history' was abandoned two weeks after the nuptials in favour of the Marquess' ex-fiancee, the mother of the James Bond author, Ian Fleming. The 'Bombay Beauty' had been trounced by an ageing Mrs Fleming, with whom the Marquess lived for 10 years till he died.

Undaunted by the stir she had caused by marrying a man in his dotage, Bapsy courted further scandal by seeking divorce on the grounds that the marriage had not been consummated. She also sued Mrs Fleming in 1958 for 'enticement' and won; but the judgement was overturned by the Court of Appeal.

Bapsy and her brother Jal both authored books in their early years. He wrote *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life*, published by Columbia University Press in 1936. She wrote, *Heroines of Ancient Persia*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1930 and reissued by the K R Cama Oriental Institute in 2003. The book drew on Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* for the 19 biographies and is illustrated with 14 fine

reproductions of miniatures from Persian manuscripts. It is still cited in feminist bibliographies and this alone would have

kept Bapsy's name alive. It was a book that Jawaharlal Nehru listed in his prison diary 1930-34.

While the Pavrys were accused of seeking to aggrandise themselves and manipulate their way into high society, on the academic front there is one instance when they seem to have tried to get Jal Pavry an honorary degree from the University of Rome, by pressurising a Professor Pettazzoni with numerous correspondence, inviting him to England and asking him to review Jal's book. While he obliged with the

review, nothing came of the honorary degree.

The Pavris also managed to go as delegates to the January 1929 Religious Peace Conference in Geneva. H A J Hulugalle, in his book, *Selected Journalism*, mentions that Bapsy was at the post-WWII Paris Peace Conference where he sat in the gallery near Ho Chi Minh and 'next to the glamour girl.'

Bapsy had a penchant for making educational endowments. Like the modern



Portrait of Bapsybanoo Marchioness of Winchester, courtesy Ross Turle, Curator of Recent History Museums, Winchester City Council, Winchester.



Soonu Engineer is a freelance management and training consultant in UK, specialising in diversity management and conflict resolution. She is a member of the WZO UK committee.

day political donors who aspire to the peerage, she had a craving for recognition and respect from her western and imperial contemporaries and also to be remembered for the Marchioness that she was. To this end she has donated not one but two prizes to Oxford University: The Dasturzada Dr Jal Pavry Memorial Prize (£500) for a thesis on international peace and understanding and The Bapsybanoo Marchioness of Winchester Prize (£500) for a thesis on international relations, with particular reference to human rights and fundamental freedoms. She has also endowed a Marchioness of Winchester annual lecture on International Relations at Oxford. For all her pains, this year the 'Oxford Comedy Committee Star Prize' went to the 'Bapsybanoo, Last Marchioness of Winchester Visiting Lectureship Endowments Management Committee.'

Across the Atlantic, the Pavrys' generosity has touched the wealthy School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University with two Fellowships: The Most Honorable Bapsy Marchioness of Winchester Award in Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Dasturzada Doctor Jal Pavry Award for International Peace and Understanding.

Bapsy's largest bequest, however, was made to the people of Winchester who had so slighted her when they failed to turn out to welcome the new Marchioness in a manner she deemed fit. So she stipulated a community hall be built in the Guildhall or on its grounds, on condition that it was named the Bapsy Marchioness of Winchester Memorial Hall. She also donated, in 1972, a portrait of herself in regal robes painted by Frank Salisbury, to be hung in the hall. On 1st October 2009, her wish has been granted. Everyone will now know who she is.

Bapsy never returned to Winchester after that humiliating visit. She lived with her brother in Southampton and later in London. Parsis who knew her and her brother recall that she gave her address as c/o one of the prestigious Belgravia hotels. They say she and her brother pleaded poverty when they met fellow Parsis and therefore there was much surprise when her Will was published.



Women in Ancient Iran through Achaemenian Times

by dina mcintyre

W

e do not have extensive direct evidence, from Iranian sources, of what life was like in ancient Iran, in large part because of destructive major invasions that occurred around 331 BC and 647 AD. Most of the information we now have was written by those who were the enemies of Iran, and thus are slanted by their own cultural and political biases. But some ancient Iranian texts do remain, which have now been supplemented by archeological evidence, from which we can glean bits and pieces of what life was like for ancient Iranian women through Achaemenian times.

The earliest textual evidence comes from the Gathas of Zarathushtra, which many scholars believe were composed around 1,100 BC or earlier. The Gathas demonstrate a happy equality between men and women in religious and personal relationships, as do other Avestan texts written a few centuries later. Zarathushtra named his daughter Pouruchista which means "full of illumined thought"; - this from a man who considered good mind (vohu mano) to be a divine attribute. On her wedding day, he advised her "Do thou persevere, Pouruchista ... To thee shall He grant the firm foundation of good thinking and the alliance of truth [asha] and of wisdom ..." Y53.3 (Insler translation throughout). According to Zarathushtra, "good thinking" "truth" and "wisdom" are divine attributes – attributes of Ahura Mazda – which Zarathushtra thought his daughter capable of attaining, along with all the living.

On this same occasion, he gave the following advice to all the brides and grooms who were then getting married: "Let each of you try to win the other with [asha] ..." Y53.5. The meaning of "asha" includes the truths of mind and spirit - all

that is true, good, beneficent, (generous), and right. This is great advice for any relationship. But it tells us that in Zarathushtra's view, the marriage relationship is not one of domination / subservience, but of partnership, with each spouse making the same effort to win the love and respect of the other with truth, goodness, generosity, and what's right.

The later Yasnas are full of instances in which men and women are specifically mentioned together. An early Zoroastrian prayer starts with the words "Those men and women, both do we revere, whose every act of worship is alive with asha ..." (I J S Taraporewala translation). In an age when men worshipped gods by slaughtering animals (and possibly each other) in stone temples, Zarathushtra introduced the idea of men and women worshipping God - side by side - in the temple of life, by infusing His divine qualities into each thought, word and action.

In those ancient times (though sadly not today), this equality of men and women in religion, extended even to the ritual. The Visparad mentions "... the saints of the ritual, male and female." (Visparad 1.3; Mills translation in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 31, page 335). And a much later text (the *Aerpatastan* and *Nirangistan*, as translated by S J Bulsara), speaks of women priests, indicating that when it was necessary for a priest to travel, such priestly duties were allocated between men and women priests (not necessarily husband and wife) in a way that harmonized with family responsibilities, so that neither priestly duties nor family responsibilities should suffer. The text states that as between two priests who are married to each other, if both have control over property and can manage wealth, then either one can travel to perform priestly duties. If only the man has control over property and can manage wealth, then the woman priest should travel to perform priestly duties. And if only the woman has control over property and can manage wealth, then the man priest should travel to perform priestly duties (pages 17 - 18) -

indicating not only that women were priests, but that they had independent control over property, even after marriage. This text (written by Zoroastrian priests) also insists on a non-Zoroastrian woman's right to practice her own religion without legal or physical persecution. It states that if a man converts to the Good Religion (the name Zoroastrians called their religion in the ancient world because of its emphasis on goodness), he should not force his wife to convert. He is not permitted to strike her, or stop supporting her, nor does she pass from the condition of being his wife, because she refuses to convert (page 40). Regrettably, it also suggests that the newly converted Zoroastrian husband should not sleep with his non-Zoroastrian wife (surely a subtle, but unworthy, effort to persuade the wife to convert!). Whether this suggestion was followed by such husbands, the text does not say.

This equality in personal relationships and religion, extended to governance as well. The *Haptanghaiti*, (a text close in time to the *Gathas*), prays: "... May a good ruler, man or woman, thus assume rule over us ..." Y41.2 (Humbach translation), indicating that in those ancient times, it was taken for granted that women could not only rule over tribes or nations in their own right ("... man or woman ..."), but could be good, respected, rulers as well.

In the early 1900s, an archeological dig in Persepolis, the palace of Darius the Great, discovered hundreds of clay tablets (now known as the *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*) some of which are discussed in Brosius, *The Women of Ancient Persia, 559 - 331 BC*. These tablets included payroll records which showed that the numbers of male and female workers were "well balanced" (Brosius, page 182). Women were employed as both workers and supervisors, received the same rate of pay in wine, beer, grain or silver, as their male colleagues (pages 182, 153 - 160), and received additional pay as mothers - unfortunately with preferential treatment by one (but not all) employer, for a mother of boys (page 172, 178, 182). These tablets

also show that women owned, and had full control over, their own estates throughout the empire, were involved in the management and administration of these estates, disposed of their rents and income, employed work forces, paid taxes, and enjoyed economic independence. They had their own personal seals, and issued orders in the form of letters under seal, to various administrators (page 180). They had the legal right to act independently from their husbands (page 197), and participated in public feasts and in the social life of the Court (page 96).

Moving along to a few hundred years after Alexander's invasion, Moulton, in his work *Early Zoroastrianism* (Lectures delivered at Oxford and at London, 1912) mentions the report of a foreign diplomat Tchang K'ien, who wrote in 128 BC that in Khorassan and Bactria he found two classes of population, the nomads, and the "unwarlike". The "unwarlike" in Bactria who were agriculturalists, he describes as follows: "... there is no supreme ruler, each city and town electing its own chief. They pay great deference to their women, the husbands being guided by them in their decisions." And Moulton concludes "... the agricultural population, dwelling among the nomads, reflects the features of the Gathas sufficiently well." (page 85).

The freedom which women enjoyed in ancient Iran, is also depicted in the Shah Nameh where for example, Gordafried, the daughter of a garrison commander was described as "well versed and unrivalled in the arts of warfare." When Sohrab laid siege to her father's garrison, she challenged Sohrab to single combat, during which the tip of his lance caught her helmet, and her long hair streamed out as she rode, causing Sohrab to exclaim in astonishment: "If the women of Iran are so valiant, what must their men be like!" Similarly, Rustom's daughter, Banoogoshab, was described (by her husband) as a knight in her own right. It is interesting that these legendary stories of women warriors are echoed factually in the Cambridge History of Iran which mentions that the women

warriors of a Persian satrap, were introduced to Alexander at a banquet in Ecbatana (Vol. II, page 484). There is even mention (in the CHI) of a woman admiral in Achemenian times, but I cannot at this time find a page reference for it.

In conclusion, it would be simplistic (and possibly inaccurate) to state that there were no differences at all between the treatment of men and women in ancient Iran. Unbiased evidence of life in ancient Iran is sparse. But what little remains to us, establishes that women were regarded as capable and respected equals - an equality that in some ways is unequalled even today in the United States (for example, in matters of equal pay, the glass ceiling, as well as women rulers and priests). This evidence establishes that ancient Iranian women enjoyed an unusual degree of legal and social equality and freedom in making their life choices - in worship, in entering the priesthood, in marriage, in owning and managing property, in ruling kingdoms, in earning livelihoods in the workplace, and even in warfare.



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 and practiced law in the United States, since 1964. Prior to her retirement she was 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

“Shir-Zan” – the Persian Lioness

by rashid mehin

With thanksto Shahrokh Mehta, Syracuse, USA, for the introduction.



he young Iranian girl Neda Agha-Soltan who was shot by security forces on Tehran’s Karegar Street on June 20, 2009. Neda represents the immortal spirit of the women of Iran who have often been at the forefront of political and social change across centuries of Iranian history.



Though fallen, Neda represents the immortal spirit of the women of Iran. This article aims to highlight the importance, leadership and deeply rooted courage of Iranian women throughout the history of Iran since ancient times. The women of Iran have been participants and engines of civil and political change throughout Iran’s ancient history. Below are a few examples that highlight the role that Iranian women have played in the history of Iran.

The ancient Burnt City (3000 BC): The Status of Women.

Archaeological evidence at the Burnt city near Zabol (in the province of Sistan-Baluchistan in southeast Iran) dated to 2000-3000 BC has revealed dramatic proof of the status and power enjoyed by the women of ancient Persia.

Although much of western scholarship has been primarily focused on investigating the rise of urban civilizations in ancient Mesopotamia, it is now acknowledged that the Iranian plateau has had an ancient urban tradition of its own.

The Burnt City (which encompasses 300,000 hectares) was a thriving and highly developed metropolis and host to four distinct civilizations. The site has yielded remarkable finds with respect to pottery and jewellery. In November 2004, archaeologists discovered the world’s most ancient backgammon game set (alongside its 60 related game pieces, dice, etc). Other discoveries at the site include the most ancient artificial eyeball, caraway seed and animated picture or “film”.

A report on the Burnt City was provided by the Cultural Heritage News (CHN) Agency of Iran by late December 2004.

One of the most interesting finds was the discovery of a large number of seals in the graves of women. Seals in antiquity were often symbols of power and authority. The Burnt City seals are of two kinds: governmental and personal.



Image 2

Mansour Sajjadi the Iranian archeologist supervising the Burnt City excavations, reported to CHN that: *“In the ancient world, there were tools used as a means of economic control. Whoever had these tools at his disposal was among the most powerful people in the society ...”*

Another remarkable series of discoveries at the cemetery of the Burnt City by the Sajjadi team was that 90% of the graves in which the seals were discovered belonged to women. Conversely, only a miniscule 5% of the seals belonged to men. Sajjadi further avers that: *“Since we know that seals were buried with their owners 5000 years ago, it*



Image 1

is reasonable to think the most important seals for the economic activities in the burnt city belonged to women. As the men worked as farmers and craftsmen away from the city, they reasonably had to give the seals to women who were always in the city, so that they were able to solve the problems of the city immediately.”

More recent discoveries at the site indicate that the women of the Burnt City lived longer than the men. This was reported on June 22, 2009 by Iran's Press TV News Service. The leader of these particular excavations at the Burnt City was Farzad Forouzanfar. Forouzanfar has noted that men only lived to the age ranges of 35-45, while women survived as late as their 80s. His team also found that the number of inhabitants at the site stood at 6,000, revising the previously estimated number of 5000.

Noting that the area saw a number of population drops over time, Forouzanfar also stated that: “...the number of the female inhabitants of the area was more than the males ... The team also found that the remains of nearly 30,000 burials exist in Burnt City.”

Ancient Iranian women at War: The “Amazons” and the Achaemenids (5th century BC - 333 BC). One of the areas that have received the least amount of attention by scholarship is the role women warriors of ancient Persia. The role of ancient Iranian female warriors can be traced back at least 2000 years, to the time of the Parthians (250 BC - 224 AD).

A Reuters newscast from Tehran in December 4, 2004, reported on the findings of an archaeologist who had been engaged in excavations near Tabriz, in Iran's northwest province of Azarbaijan. A series of DNA tests revealed that the 2,000 year old bones of an entombed warrior and accompanying sword belonged to a woman. As noted by Alireza Hojabri-Nobari to the Iran-based *Hambastegi*

Newspaper: “Despite earlier comments that the warrior was a man because of the metal



Image 3

sword, DNA tests showed the skeleton inside the tomb belonged to a female warrior ...”

According to Nobari, there were 109 such warrior tombs, and plans were in place to conduct DNA tests on the skeletons of the other ancient warriors of those sites as well.

The women warriors, known as “Amazons” by the ancient Greeks, were typical of such fighters who prevailed in Iran's north (modern Gilan, Mazandaran, Gorgan) and northwest (modern Azarbaijan in Iran) as early as the 5th century BC or earlier. There have been numerous finds in the gravesites of ancient North-Iranic warriors known as the Scythians (*Saka* in Iranian) and their Sarmatian (or *Ard-Alan*) successors.

As noted by Mallory (1989, pp. 48-56, 78) these ancient north Iranian peoples were predominant in much of what is now known as the Ukraine, the northern Black Sea region in general and parts of Bulgaria and Rumania at the time of the Achaemenids.

The burial mounds of the ancient Scythians/Saka known as “Kurgans” have often yielded the remains of women warriors who were buried alongside their swords. These Kurgan mounds have been discovered in various forms from the southern Ukraine all the way into the Caucasus and Iran (to the north and northwest).

By the time of the Achaemenids, women were also seen in positions of military leadership in the imperial armies of ancient Persia.



Image 4

Roman historical sources have reported on the exploits of the women warriors of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 AD). Zonaras (XII, 23, 595, 7-596, 9) states in reference to the forces of Shapur I that: “... in the Persian army ... there are said to have been found women also, dressed and armed like men ...”

As the Sasanian Empire collapsed to the invading forces of Islam from Arabia, a number of female resistance fighters rose to

prominence, examples being Apranik (the daughter of General Piran), Negan, and Azadeh (who did much to prevent the invaders from entering northern Persia). As noted by Overlaet, "*Daylaman* [in modern northern Iran] remained unconquered ... until at least the 8th century AD ... early Daylamite rulers even exhibited extreme anti-Arab attitudes and sought the restoration of the Persian Empire and the of the ancient religions" (1998, p.268).

The exploits of Persia's female warriors are recalled in the post-Islamic Shahnama epic of Ferdowsi. One sample quote states of the female warrior Gordafarid that: "... as she was turning in her saddle, drew a sharp blade from her waist, Struck at his lance, and parted it in two."

The Post-Islamic Era

The last great revolt against the Abbasid Caliphate (816-837 AD) was led by Babak Khorramdin (798-838 AD) who from his base in Iranian Azarbaijan led a powerful resistance movement from 816-837 AD. This was the last great Iranian revolts which sought to re-establish the ancient Zoroastrian and other related ancient Iranian cults such as Mazdakism.



Image 5

The Abbasid Caliphs had murdered Abu-Muslim of Khorasan (700-755 AD), despite the assistance he had afforded them against the Ummayyad Caliphate (661-750 AD). This was due to the increasing popularity

of Abu-Muslim of Khorasan among the Iranians. The Caliphate was concerned with the possibility of an Iranian revival towards independence. The death of Abu-Muslim of Khorasan also made clear to the Iranian populace that their hopes for greater autonomy within the Caliphate were dashed. It was under these general circumstances that a major rebellion was to break out towards the northwest of Iran in Azarbaijan.

What is notable is the role of Banu, the wife of Babak Khorramdin during the revolt. Banu,

alongside her husband Babak, led the 23 year rebellion against the Abbasid Caliphate from their base in Azarbaijan. Despite the eventual defeat of the movement by 837 AD, the memory of the Khorramdin uprising was to become etched in Iranian culture and folklore.

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The Constitutional Movement (1906-1911)

One example of the importance of women in the political and social evolution of Iran can be seen during the constitutional revolution of Iran (1906-1911). The Iranian Constitutional Movement was the first of its kind in advocating human rights, equality and democracy in Western Asia. The aim of the Iranian Constitutionalists was to limit the absolute powers of the Qajar Shahs in favour of a democratically elected parliament.

The constitutionalist movement was brutally suppressed, an action which roused the anger of British Professor Edward Browne (1862-1926) who accused the British parliament at the time of tacitly approving Russian actions against western Asia's first democratic movement. Russian Czarist forces and their allies†bombed the Iranian parliament housing the democratic-minded representatives of the people of Iran.

During these epic moments in Iranian history, Iranian women were at the forefront of encouraging the constitutionalists to fight back against the Czarist Russians and their allies who were advancing towards Tehran. Morgan Shuster (1877-1960) who had been appointed by the Constitutional government to organize Iran's finances (May-December 1911), has written about the crucial role played by the women of Iran. Below are some quotes made by Shuster (1912, pp.183-189):

"... the Persian women played the crowning act of the noble and patriotic part ... the Persian women since 1907 had become almost at a bound the most progressive ... in the world. That this statement upsets the ideas of centuries makes no difference. It is the fact ... the women did much to keep the spirit of liberty alive ... overnight became teachers, newspaper writers, founders of women's clubs, and speakers of political subjects ..."

Despite the application of brute force, the ideals of the Constitutional Movement were never to be forgotten, thanks in large part to the women who had played a crucial (but as yet unappreciated) role in those events. Then as now, women have always been at the forefront in the promotion of human rights in Iran.

This short essay has endeavoured to expostulate upon the critical role that the women of Iran have

played as engines of social and political change from antiquity to the present day.



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Captions for Images:

Image 1: The Persian Lioness as depicted by Dr Musi Dorbayani. Iranians often refer to their women as "Shir-Zan" or Lioness in reference to their role in history and as champions of Human Rights.

Image 2: An ancient seal from the Burnt City

Image 3: An ancient Greek vase depicting an Amazon female warrior (mounted on horse at left). Note the ancient Iranian dress, such as Medo-Persian style trousers, tunic, footwear, etc. The Greek warrior to the right appears with weapons and shields but no attire.

Image 4: A reconstruction of a female Achaemenid cavalry unit by Shapur Suren-Pahlav. Many of the tribal elements in Iran, such as the Kurds and Lurs have been reported as fighting from horseback as late as the early twentieth century.

Image 5: A Persian depiction of Gordafarid (at left) clashing with Sohrab.

Image 6: The Castle of Babak in the Kalaybar region in Iran's Azarbaijan province. Every year people from Azarbaijan and all across Iran come to this fortress to commemorate the exploits of Babak and Banu.



Rashid Mehin was born in Kerman, Iran and now lives in Carlsbad, California with his wife Afsaneh and son Mehraban.

Would You Permit Me?

by Jamsheed Kanga

with apologies to Nizar Tawfik Qabbani



Nizar Tawfik Qabbani
Born: 21 March 1923,
Damascus, Syria.
Died: 30 April 1998,
London, England.
Occupation: diplomat,
poet, writer, publisher.
Nationality: Syrian

In a community/religion where thinkers and writers who question so called scholars of the religion are considered as blasphemous, and infidels and books and writings are condemned, in societies that refuse the other, and force silence and forbids thoughts and to question is a sin, I must beg your pardon, would you permit me? Would you permit me to bring up my children as I want, and not to dictate on me your whims and orders about our sacred religion?

Would you permit me to teach my children that the religion is first to reach God, and not for religious leaders or scholars?

Would you permit me to teach my little one that religion is about good manners, good behaviour, good conduct, honesty and truthfulness, before I teach her with which foot to enter the bathroom or with which hand she should eat or how many times she says her kusti prayers?

Would you permit me to teach my daughter that God is about love, and she can dialogue with Him and ask Him anything she wants, far away from the teachings of anyone?

Would you permit me to mention that those who are not born of both Parsi Zoroastrian parents are not bastards and hence forfeit the right to pray with other Parsi Zoroastrian children with whom she plays?

Would you permit me to teach my daughter the tenets of the religion and its culture and manners, before I force on her the duty to recite prayers which are in a strange language and which neither she nor we understand?

Would you permit me to tell my young son that hurting people and degrading them because of their religion as per the rules laid down by self styled exponents of our Zor religion, is considered a big sin by God?

Would you permit me to tell my daughter that revising her homework and paying attention to her learning is considered by God as more useful and important than learning by heart prayers from the Avesta without knowing their meaning?

Would you permit me to teach my son that following the footsteps of the Honourable Prophet begins with his honesty, loyalty and truthfulness, and not by indulging in meaningless ceremonials?

Would you permit me to tell my daughter that her non-Parsi Zoroastrian friend is not an infidel, and ask her not to cry fearing her friend will go to Hell? And if such a friend accidentally enters our agiari, he is not committing an act of desecration requiring the agiari to be purified. And be grateful to his religion for allowing us Zoroastrians fleeing from persecution to settle and practise our religion and prosper in his country – India

Would you permit me to request our so called scholars and priests to show in which holy book does our great prophet Zarathushtra direct that the beautiful religion is only for a few and under no circumstances can a person acquire the faith even if he loves it more than a true born Zoroastrian? Even though learned scholars and priests with higher credentials, including their own ancestors have in the past held a different view on permissibility of conversion.

Would you permit me to say that the survival of the religion is vital, and that barring others including children born from Parsi mothers from becoming Zoroastrians is the surest way to extinguish it from the face of the earth?

Would you permit me to argue, that God did not authorize anyone on earth after the Prophet, to speak in his name nor did he vest any powers in anyone to issue unreasonable interpretations of the prophets words in the Gathas, based on text prepared by priests later for their own benefit and supremacy?

Would you permit me to say, that God has no where dictated that only those whose mortal remains are disposed off by exposure to the vultures, will be permitted entry in his presence, even though in the absence of vultures the bodies rot for months in the doongerwadi; and that any other method of disposal is a sin; and any priest encouraging this is a renegade?

Would you permit me to say that the so called protectors of the true faith, and true Parsipanu are sullyng the fair name of the Parsi community by publishing in national dailies†our internal feuds and thereby giving an opportunity to non Parsis to mock us and degrade us? This is not true Parsipanu!

Would you permit me to teach my children that God is greater, more just, and more merciful than all the (religious) scholars on earth combined? And that his standards are different from the standards of those trading in the name of religion, and that his accountability is kinder and more merciful?

Would you permit me?



Jamsheed Kanga received his BA, LLB from the Nagpur University, India and a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University, USA. Ever since he was selected for the Indian Administrative Services in 1956 he has served as the head of four postings, been the Secretary in the Government of Maharashtra in four departments. He was the Administrator and Municipal Commissioner in the Bombay Municipal Corporation; served in the Atomic Energy and Commerce departments and headed the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India. Though retired he continues to head various companies, was a trustee of the BPP in 1975-1994 and is involved in a number of initiatives regarding the city of Mumbai.

Parsi Zoroastrain Association of South East Asia, Singapore

National Harmony Celebrations report from Jasmine Dastoor

Imagine an evening of fun, fanfare and throbbing with culture. That was exactly what we experienced on the 18th of July 2009, when we celebrated an evening dedicated to National Harmony organised by the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO). Groups of people, young and old, danced in rhythmic harmony to the beats of that which is unique to their own typical culture and yet so well-blended into our modern local society. There were costumes and masks, face paint and jewellery, fashion and fiesta. *Apru Parsi nu tolu* was the talk of the evening. Particularly our little ones under the guidance of Daisy Subaiah, who directed them in an enactment of the famous landing in Sanjan. They were just beyond compare. Not far behind were our lovely ladies in their finest garas sashaying the ramp and flooring the audience. To top off all the excitement was an exclusive chance to meet one-to-one (even if only for a minute) and have a photo-op, with our very own President Nathan, (President of Singapore) who presided as the Chief Guest of the evening. ■■■



Culinary links between Parsi Zoroastrians and the Persians of Iran

by niloufer mavalvala

Stories, imagination, and hearsay have left us to decide for ourselves how history connects us to what was once the Ancient Persian Empire. It is this history and the artefacts left behind that reveal to us the traces of some shared past, until we take the opportunity to step further and learn about Persian culture: their food, the basis of their palates, their gastronomic delights. For to extend our knowledge of history and really make this knowledge meaningful, we must apply it to simple things in our everyday lives—and what is more basic than the food that we eat?

For artistic people in the food world, cooking is also an art. The palate of the tongue and taste buds to the gourmet are like the palette of the paint to the artist; both are a channel of expression and experimentation.

Most people I have met are under the impression that Persian food is bland, tasteless, and begins and ends at the infamous *chelow kebab*. I can assure you that it is not true. A little culinary journey through their kitchens of time could inspire some of you to try and venture towards a good local Persian restaurant soon.

The Persian table of Navroze or Naurooz has always been fascinating to me. Although I grew up in Karachi, we traditionally visited families who ritually shared the festive table.

When we moved to Dubai, I met many Iranians. I fondly remember Maryam Appa, well into her 80's with the spirit of a 20 year old, who shared with me the importance and the wonderful essence of having such a table in one's home. Later on, I also had the good fortune of being introduced by affectionate neighbour Baki, to one of her lovely Iranian friends who prepared in our honour a banquet of her amazing Persian dishes: foods like the *Khoresh*, *Dugh*, *aab*

dugh, *Khira*, *zereshk palau*, and *jujeh kebabs* to name but a few. Explaining their origins and links to us only began to raise my curiosity levels about our own foods being linked to theirs.

Soon we moved to Canada. At this point in time, I started reading up on the different Persian culinary feasts; cooking being my passion.

After learning about their background and customs of cooking, I was amazed to find that their centuries-old cuisine has definitely been carried with us through the years, from the days of Ancient Persia to our years in the Indian subcontinent and on to wherever our community has migrated.

Food seems to be everyone's passion and it speaks volumes when one needs to make friends, socialize, or simply enjoy an evening at home with family. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Zoroastrians have taken all our culinary delights and continue to proudly share it with their new neighbours. Many of us have shed our *sadras* and *kustis*, even forgotten the strength of our prayers and downsized our customs and traditions, but none can be neglectful of *dhansak!*

From our life and times in India, we have added on the Indian curry with its spicy spices like the red and green chillies, and curry *pata*, and the use of coconut to our repertoire—in abundance to our foods. However, we continue to use the original spices of the ancient Persian land of cinnamon sticks, cloves, green cardamom, black pepper etc., now perhaps making this the recipe of a basic fragrant *gharam masala* that we so love?

Trade was difficult and far different from today even 25 years ago. Every cuisine used what grew easily and in abundance

around them. As we sailed away from the shores of Persia, we left behind the use of berries which is used in plentiful in their food. *Zereshk* or the barberries, *sumac*, and our significantly favourite pomegranate, are vastly used by Persians to this day.

Amazingly, the three main ancient foods known to mankind all came from Persia. Pomegranate, probably the oldest fruit known, along with the eggplant and yoghurt as we know it, all started from this part of the world. Saffron — also referred to as the golden thread — pistachios, walnuts, almonds and raisins are all still very much a part of our cooking. After the hundreds of years, isn't it amazing that the western world has suddenly discovered the pomegranate fruit? Its juices are available everywhere and it is advertised as being the fruit with the highest natural antioxidant.

Lemons are still freely used in their food as they are in ours. The idea of having "*ma gosh*" is also in the Persian cuisine; they call it *Khoresh*. They enjoy the idea of having nuts in their daily food. Of course, nut allergies, which are growing at an alarmingly high rate in the West, were almost nonexistent then.

Sweet and meat? *Jardaloo ma gosh* (dried apricots with meat) is very Persian. Also, the ever favourite eggs, with *tomato per eedu* (eggs on tomatoes) and *papata per eedu* (eggs on potatoes) are seen used similarly in Persian cuisine.

Rice is such a favourite of all Parsis. Which meal is complete, especially lunch, without some rice? And the same goes for the Persian foods. Like their palau, we love our

palau (we have the same name), and of course, it is originally saffron—which must be the most loved spice of the Empire—that flavoured and coloured the rice, not to forget adding a touch of raisins and almonds to make it a special occasion. Our Indian forefathers may have exchanged the dill for coriander but that was once again being used depending where one was.

Isn't the very essence of anything sweet, the fragrance and taste of the cardamom, nutmeg, rosewater and saffron that immediately remind us of being so "Parsi"? Think of the *badam pak*, *vasanu*, *rava*, *chapat*, *nankhatai* that may all be Parsi in name, but definitely Persian in roots.



Above - Parsi palau, below - Persian palau

It is fun to point out that the nutmeg used mostly in Parsi cuisine amongst the many Indian regional cuisines, was carried forward from our ancestral birthplace of Iran.

Ironically, they still serve *dal* and rice after a funeral, much like we have our *chorum nu dhansak* (fourth day after the death of a person).

Our love for *fudna* (mint) in our tea with spoonfuls of sugar is a lasting ancient love of our ancestors and heritage. We have added the milk to our tea, perhaps due to that lingering hope for the fair colour rather than the *saamri* (dark) that we genetically talk about!

Lavash is the flat bread that our ancestors made fresh and had with their tea and meals. Our later forefathers in India adapted to the *chapattis* instead. Ever wonder about the bread and butter we all dearly relish?

Did you know -

The omelette is thought to have originated in ancient Persia. Beaten eggs were mixed with chopped herbs, fried until firm, then sliced into wedges in a dish known as kookoo. This dish is thought to have travelled to Western Europe via the Middle East and North Africa, with each country adapting the original recipe to produce Italian frittata, Spanish tortilla and the French omelette. [source W i c k e d f o o d Newsletter of 8 May 2009] - Ed.

The use of butter is more than abundant in the Persian cuisine. They use it liberally in making their rice and of course in their version of *batasas* and *khatais* as well. Just to remind us that the best tasting *dals* still need a generous knob of butter for that cutting edge!

Have we come full circle? Cinnamon is great for a cough and cholesterol, turmeric is great for coughs, phlegm, blood clots, boils of sorts ... No, this is not a medical report, but the ancient spices of yesteryears are the sought after natural remedies of the 21st century.

And so we come on to the powers of our wonderful food. Healthy and hearty, the Parsi food is all balanced, all middle ground and one is happy to hear that we should be eating just that to get a balanced nutritious meal. The garlic, ginger and turmeric, with a touch of cinnamon, some sort of vegetable, and meat/protein speaks volumes for a very healthy, balanced, well-rounded meal.

Do not underestimate the power of good food, for we are what we eat.



Incredibly diverse, is how her life is best described. Born and raised in Karachi, Niloufer's creativity and enthusiasm to learn has given her every opportunity, from banking to medicine, business to catering gourmet meals, she has found her niche teaching international cuisine. She pursues community work and travelling. Her present endeavor is Property Management and working on a jointly published cookbook. Residing in Mississauga, Ontario with her wonderful and supportive family she continues to be a free spirit.

Kunal Vijaykar (Foodie – Times Now) travelled to Udwada, around 250 kms away from Mumbai. Foodie went to the place on a food pilgrimage.

Part I – The Parsi Dhabha – Urvaksh Hoyvoy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvEuaRnyBS4>

Part II – Globe Hotel— Zenobia Sidhwa

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFKdK4NopVQ>

Part III – Hormazd Bakery – Jehanbux Motiwalla

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

[watch?v=QTMWwHqLw38&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTMWwHqLw38&feature=related)

Parsi cuisine in Los Altos?

Town Crier Staff Report writes on Wednesday, 10 June 2009 -

Around the corner from Spicy Leaves, Panini's proprietor Dinyar Anklesaria has an exciting sideline to his main business of providing sandwiches for the lunchers of Los Altos (California). Anklesaria, Indian born and of the Parsi minority, cooks some Parsi classic dishes on Saturdays for those who know enough to request them.

His dhansak, a chicken or lamb stew with four kinds of lentils, vegetables and spices, harkens back to his ancestors' Persian origins. Request the dhansak, a kebab or his oven-baked halibut, wrapped with mint in a banana leaf for a delicious change. Call ahead to make sure he's cooking the week you want to try a dish, at 941-7616.

Panini's is located in the Village Court shopping Center, 4546 El Camino Real.

Own 'Facebook' to spur Parsis to marry their own

Excerpted from DNA, 3 August 2009

Mumbai: Worried about outside-the-community marriages, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) has come upon a proactive solution. It plans to launch its own youth club and a social networking website to promote interaction among the community's youth. BPP chairperson Dinshaw Mehta said the Punchayet will launch the Zoroastrian Youth Association or ZYA (the name is yet to be finalised) "with a big bash" in November, targeting 4,000-5,000 youngsters in nearly 5,000 flats across 12 Parsi colonies in Mumbai.

Though primarily meant for the 15-30 age group, the association will have members till the age of 40. "We want our youth to marry within the community. By forming such a group, they can meet often and hold events. This will encourage interaction," said Mehta.

"The website will be ready by October, and we have kept aside a budget of Rs17.5 lakh for the association," he said. "The association will have an office at Gamadia Colony in Tardeo and a hall to host events in the Khareghat colony, Grant Road.

"Membership will be free and a core group of 10-15 young minds will do the planning," Mehta said. "Another group of 50 people will be formed to organise events while staff will be hired for the administrative work".

From Dr Shernaz Cama, Director of PARZOR, New Delhi, India

We are pleased to inform you that PARZOR will be putting up the Parzor Textile Exhibition at the Congress in Dubai.

This will comprise of four cultures - the Persian, Chinese, Indian and European, truly a Heritage of Humanity.

We know that several Zoroastrian homes contain things of historical value and perhaps more important, many of our elders carry memories so PARZOR encourages them to share details/ items.

In Calcutta, an especially interesting pair of *sapat*, donated for the exhibition, taught about the Parsi textile links with Afghanistan and the Silk Route. In Hong Kong, they learnt about the Parsi settlement in region. In this way, community research benefits.

As the Congress will be a mega event, we request you to circulate this information to your family and friends and those members who are interested in sharing details /showcasing items are requested to send PARZOR photos or scans of those textiles or accessories of interest, so that it can choose the most unusual for the Textile Exhibition at the Congress in Dubai.

PARZOR's team consists of textile experts and they assure that great care will be taken while displaying the textiles. So please mail your photos to:
ashdeenl@rediffmail.com and
sethnaadi@hotmail.com

An excellent short presentation about Zoroastrian history and culture and a useful documentary to enlighten our non-Zoroastrian friends and create awareness amongst them. Show this video at your association's function and at family and social/cosmopolitan gatherings. Click on the link below, turn on your sound, enjoy, then pass it on.
<http://www.vidoosh.tv/play.php?vid=4489>

Zoroastrian Stimulus Plan: Private Job Search & Career Counseling Service

Looking for a job or contract work? Thinking about starting your own business? Seeking career guidance?

FEZANA and the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) are excited to offer this free, private Job Search, Career Counseling, and Entrepreneur Mentoring service to the worldwide Zoroastrian community. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/zorostimulus> to register for this service

We'll work with Zoroastrian associations across the world to help connect you with other Zoroastrians who can be of assistance in finding job opportunities, career counseling, starting a business, etc. The service is designed to protect your privacy, so your name and contact info will not be shared broadly. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/zorostimulus-listings> to see the latest job and mentor listings.

Know of a job opening you'd like to share with the community? Want to help out as a Career or Entrepreneurship Mentor? Visit <http://tinyurl.com/zorostimulus-help> to post a job opening or to sign-up as a mentor Visit <http://tinyurl.com/zorostimulus-listings> for profiles of Zoroastrians seeking jobs / guidance

More details are available at <http://tinyurl.com/zorostimulus>. If you have additional questions, feel free to email zorostimulus@fezana.org.

This effort is being organized as part of the World Zoroastrian Congress' Youth Leadership Enhancement Program by Jasmine Dadachanji (Victoria, BC), Eric Engineer (Dallas, TX), Carl Irani (Orlando, FL), and Afreed Mistry (Toronto, ON).

"One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating." ~ Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, Pavarotti, My Own Story

Trio - by Boman Desai

TRIO
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 Number of pages: 390
 pages

Boman Desai grew up in Bombay and lives in Chicago. He studied Architecture and Philosophy, got degrees in Psychology and English, and was set to become a market analyst, when an encounter with Sir Edmund Hillary (who had an office two floors above his own) brought him back to writing novels. He got his first break when an elegant elderly woman submitted his stories to *Debonair* in Bombay. The stories were published, but the woman disappeared. Her identity remains a mystery. He has since published stories and articles in the US, UK, and India, won an Illinois Arts Council Award and the Stand Magazine Prize for fiction, taught at Truman College and Roosevelt University in Chicago, and currently teaches at the University of Southern Maine. He is the author of four other novels: *The Memory of Elephants*; *Asylum, USA*; *A Woman Madly in Love*; and *Servant, Master, Mistress*.



Synopsis: Johannes Brahms was just twenty when he fell in love with Clara Schumann (wife of Robert, mother of eight, and the greatest woman pianist of the age). He was also indebted to Robert who got his first six opuses published. Robert soon committed himself to an asylum where he died two years later. Clara was forbidden to see him because the doctors imagined she would excite him too much, and Brahms became their go-between. His love blossomed, Clara welcomed his affection, but both loved Robert too well to abuse his trust. Brahms learned to associate love with renunciation, "and, coupling this love with early experiences playing dance music for sailors and prostitutes, he became a victim to the Freudian conundrum: Where he loves he feels no passion, and where he feels passion he cannot love." Firmly grounded in fact, the book unfolds like a novel, a great read for the beach, the summer, the winter, "a book in which one may live for a while, a narrative of love, insanity, revolution, politics, war, and music".

ZUBIN MEHTA (Renowned conductor & musician)

Boman Desai has dramatized the story of the Schumanns and Brahms in the form of a novel, citing their original correspondence among his sources. He has researched this most romantic of stories thoroughly, but writes so compellingly that it is like discovering the story anew. The great composers of the age make appearances when their lives intersect those of the trio, and I was glad to see that Desai presents them to us, with the deepest sympathy and understanding. It is perhaps his greatest achievement that they appear as fullbloodedly as if they might have been his neighbors.

DIANA ATHILL (British editor of Norman Mailer, John Updike and V S Naipaul)

I loved and admired this book.

VERNON A HOWARD (Taught aesthetics at Harvard for 20 years)

I have just finished your novel, "Trio," and found it compelling and illuminating. As a scholar and sometime singer, I fully appreciated the immense scholarship and empathy that went into it. Would that the reading public could appreciate such a story as well told. It's a story that Tolstoy might have told in similar terms, and I do hope that it eventually gets you the recognition it deserves.

SOONI TARAPOREVALA (Screenwriter: Salaam Bombay, Mississippi Masala, Such a Long Journey)

I loved your book. You completely transported me. I read it through at a gallop. The love & feeling you have for the subject comes through – you disappeared & they appeared on the page, in the flesh, & I could hear their music. Congratulations.

PAUL POLLEI (Founder/artistic director, Gina Bachauer International Piano Foundation)

Gentlemen (to the publisher): This is an inquiry to seek the information concerning the publication of Volume 2 of TRIO by Boman Desai. I thoroughly enjoyed Volume 1 and look forward to ordering and reading Volume 2. Thank you very much for any information that you might send by e-mail.

ADRIENNA DE LA TORRE (A reader in Mexico)
I got your book TRIO and cannot put it down. When I discovered there were no books in Spanish on the Schumanns and Brahms, I thought of writing one myself and looked for the biographies. When I started reading your book and saw how thick the volume is, I was afraid you would take forever in petty details, but was immediately impressed with the pace and detail (only enough to set the atmosphere). I also love the way you capture the personalities of the characters. I would not dream of going through the research you have done and I know I could never write a novel as good as yours, but I would be thrilled to translate it.

PHIROZ TARAPORE (Med student and pianist)
It is, quite simply, a work of genius. I am so moved by the final pages. The decline of Robert, the struggling love of Clara and Brahms as they lose the common bond of Robert, the wanderlust of Brahms and the neediness of Clara. These are things I will remember forever.

STEVE CONSTANTELOS (Schumann enthusiast)
I've been reading your novel, Trio, and am rapidly nearing its finish, despite the deliberate delays people erect when they don't really want a story to end. I've long been fascinated by Schumann, especially, so I was happy to find you'd devoted so much time to creating this work.

BARBARA JESKALIAN (Retired music librarian, at San Jose State for 30 years)
Your book, Trio, made quite an impression on me. As a result of my profession, the period about which you wrote is one I know a great deal about and being a pianist – and at one time, a mediocre cellist, I know a lot about the composers you brought so effectively to life. The neurasthenia of Chopin, the incredible musical and personal integrity of Mendelssohn, the Brahms that truly existed beneath the cummudgeon he presented to the world, and on and on. Of all the biographies I've read of these men, and the definitive one on Clara Schumann, I think you brought me closer to their essence than anything I'd yet read about them. I am glad I bought the book because now I can read it again as I surely will. I look forward to reading the second volume and while it grieves me to think of the death of Brahms under any circumstances, I'm sure you'll do that singular event justice. I think you are doing something so good that it has been a long time that I've been so affected by a work, and especially a novel as I seldom read them. There are scenes in your book that are still with me. I think Schumann's disfunction was not overkilled and I admit to prejudice (in the good sense) but I love to read about Mendelssohn and if there's any composer I'd have loved to have known it would be Mendelssohn. Mr Desai, you are definitely on to something. Don't give it up. ■■■■

City of Thieves - by Cyrus Mewawalla

Cyrus Mewawalla aka Cyrus Moore is a UK-born Parsi whose first book was recently published in the country.

Synopsis: Nic Lamparelli works for a leading US investment bank in London. Starting at the bottom, he rises rapidly through the ranks to reach the pinnacle of his profession. Even at the top, he holds true to his principles while those around him abandon theirs. And that's what makes him special. Soon he has it all: a beautiful girl, a high-flying career, an overpaid City job with a reputation as one of the bank's star analysts. Then one day he wakes up to find that things can go wrong – fast. His closest childhood friend Jack, also a star in the City, uncovers a plot to implicate Nic in an insider trading ring. And that is just the start. Before long, everything Nic has built up starts to crumble to pieces: his relationship, his career, his reputation. But can he hold true to his principles in the face of everything? Or will he succumb to temptation like so many others ...?



Cyrus Moore is the writing name of Cyrus Mewawalla, who was born in 1966 in Farnborough, England. He was educated at St Mary's International School, Tokyo and at Dulwich College, London. In 1988, he graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in Economics.



In 2002, after 14 years in the City, he left corporate banking to start a small research house with the objective of providing truly independent investment research, untainted by the conflicts of interest that have so badly tarnished the reputations of rival research analysts within larger investment banks. In 2006, Bloomberg ranked him the number one telecom analyst in the UK.

His first novel, City of Thieves, is a controversial City thriller set in London in the days leading up to the credit crunch. The novel tells the story of one man's fight to protect his honour in a world where honour holds no value.

Cyrus lives in London with his wife and two children. ■■■■

Cusrow Baug, Bombay - 1934



Sent by a resident of Cusrow Baug, to our Chairman - Sammy Bhiwandiwalla. "Interesting picture, circa 1934 - nothing but greenery on other side of Colaba Causeway. The grandeur of CB when built, this picture was taken by none other than CB resident - Cusrow Minocher Homjee's dad, the late Nariman on his own Kodak Box Camera, and has been retained by him for the past 75 years."

Jerbai Nusherwanji Wadia (1852 – 8 March 1926). Few individuals have left a legacy like Jerbai Nusherwanji Wadia. As a result of her vision, business acumen and philanthropy, today thousands of Zoroastrians in Mumbai have a roof over their heads. She was the pioneer of low-cost housing complexes or baugs that are an intrinsic part of Zoroastrian life in Mumbai.

In 1907, when Jerbai inherited Rs900,000 from her husband Naoroji, she decided to use it to build homes for the aspiring immigrants from Gujarat. She arranged for land to be purchased at Lalbaug, and personally supervised the design and building of eight apartment blocks named Naoroji Baug in memory of her husband. Jerbai also took responsibility for allotting the apartments and fixing the rents. In many cases, she waived the rent till the tenants found their financial feet. This Baug later grew into a colony of 32 apartment blocks.

In 1917, Jerbai established the Naoroji Nusherwanji Wadia Building Trust Fund. Jerbai was the driving force behind the building of Rustom Baug in memory of her youngest son who died in 1923, as well as Jer Baug. Her other sons Cusrow (Sir Cusrow Wadia b. 1869) and Ness (Sir Ness Wadia b. 1873) continued her mission and built Cusrow Baug and Ness Baug after her death. Between 1908 and 1956, a total of five baugs were built - the Nowroz Baug, Rustom Baug, Bai Jerbai Baug, Cusrow Baug and Ness Baug.

source: *Daughters of Mashyani* - Hall of Fame & the Wadia family link on the Internet.

Claude Batley (1879 in Ipswich - March 20, 1956, Bombay) was an English architect who left for India in 1913 and started a successful practice there in 1917 with Gregson and King, a firm of architects which is still extant under the name of Gregson, Batley and King. Among his works are the Bombay Gymkhana (1917), Wakaner House (1933) now the American Consulate, Bombay Central Station (1930), Jinnah House (1935), Round Building (1937), Cusrow Baug in Colaba Causeway (1937-59) and its Agiary, known as The Seth Nusserwanji Hirji Karani Agiary (1938), Bombay Club (1939) now the Nataraj Hotel, Lalbhai House (1942) and Breach Candy Hospital (1950).

He became a visiting professor in the J J School of Art in the year 1914, and its principal in the year 1923. He held this post for a period of 20 years, during which he took his students on trips all over the country making measure drawings of buildings of architectural significance. He spent a lot of time in research and documented Jaipur's architecture. He was the president of the "Bombay Architectural Association" (now merged into The Indian Institute of Architects) from 1925 to 1926.

He died in the mid 1950s in one of the buildings he had designed—the Bombay Club.

source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Batley

Life in a Parsi Baug

SHERNAAZ ENGINEER peers into the minutiae of life in the Parsi colonies (or our baugs bustling with busybodies) and dishes up some delightfully saucy details. [Through the courtesy of Jehangir Bisney]

In Mumbai, you will unarguably find the largest concentration of Parsis in the community's many 'baugs', or exclusive residential areas where despite the illusionary calm there is, very often, simmering strife, racy rumours are perennially rife, and there is many a shrieking wife ...

Parsi women of a certain vintage are blessed with a booming voice box that often entertains an entire block with its blasting blah-blah, and it is not unusual for family quibbles and complaints to be broadcast aloud – not so much by design as by default because, '*dikra*', what do you do when manic 'mumma' loses volume control?

Then, in the baugs, you also have any number of aunties in their nightgowns, regally rechristened as 'gowns', and worn throughout the day, often even on errands in and around the baug, expanding their ample lungs and expending admirable vocal energy not just within their homes but beyond as well. It is not unusual to see them standing at their windows, which, incidentally, in the baugs, is a revered tradition, engaging in loud words with one another ("*kem chey, soo karech, aaje su randhiyu*" – a sort of standard polite talk that centres around what each one is doing/ cooking), as well as hollering at sundry hawkers and summoning them at their beckoning.

The hawkers who populate the Parsi baugs make for an interesting exhibit in themselves – and should Madame Tussaud's ever decide to cast them in wax, they would be infinitely more interesting than Shah Rukh Khan in a '*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*' jacket or Amitabh Bachchan in his latest toupee.

Parsi colonies are home to some really eccentric and exotic types, and we don't just mean the folk who live there but those humble minions who bring them their daily sustenance right to their doorstep. The baugs have a great network of hawkers of all hue, right from the early morning milkman (in the days before the Parsi Dairy Farm family fallout and lockout, their '*bhaiyyas*' in blue were a hallmark). Then, there is the ubiquitous '*pauwalla*' or bread man, who brings warm bakery '*pau*' in a wooden trunk strapped on to a cycle, and goes from flat to flat slicing up one little round mound after another, based on personal preference: thick slice, thin slice, '*karak pau*', '*naram pau*'.

Parsis love their '*pau*', and seldom eat the more wholesome/wholegrain '*chappati*'. The '*pauwalla*' is, hence, not just a very welcome visitor but almost an extension of the family, winding up as he does on the doorstep every day, sometimes morning and evening, and although generally from Uttar Pradesh or Bihar, like the '*doodhwalla*', he invariably speaks perfect 'Parsi Gujarati', perhaps even down to all the colloquial cusswords if you cared to find out.

Once a year, he unfailingly disappears on an extended visit to his hometown in some interior hinterland, leaving behind a nephew, who, rather quickly, becomes as familiar with the families he helps feed.

The Parsis may not be many things, but they are a friendly lot who almost immediately and instantly appropriate virtually every stranger as "*aapro*" something-or-the-other – and this is a particularly baug thing. So there's "*aapro doodhwallo*", "*aapro pauwallo*" "*aapro goswallo*" ...



Shernaaz Engineer began her career as a journalist in the mid-1990s, writing on Mumbai life, women's issues, and television. In 1997, she won a US Government fellowship to spend a month at various universities across America as part of an international study group on women's rights. She counts it as an amazing experience and wrote prolifically about it. Shernaaz later went on to work freelance as a columnist and writer, writing weekly columns on the social landscape of Mumbai's movers and shakers, and wrote a 'Page 3' column for the Bombay Times and for many others. Then followed a stint as Editor of a fashion and lifestyle magazine, *Oomph!* that prompted her to start her own publishing company, *Zaanrehs Publishers*. She continues to work full time in writing and publishing.

Ah! The *goswallo* is, perhaps, the most wanted of them all. For a true-blue Parsi non-vegetarianism is a virtue that cannot be eschewed, and, indeed, must be diligently chewed (bones and all) meal upon meal. So the meat and fish vendors are pounced upon by hasty housewives keen to complete their culinary chores.

Not surprisingly, then, in most 'baugs' the smells that assail you upon arrival will be overpoweringly fishy and fleshy, especially in the forenoon, as kitchens emanate the odours of fish, fowl or four-legged beast being basted and broiled.

With younger wives working and having no time to cook, the '*dabbawallas*' come in handy. Or, else, there's RTI that sends in the tiffin, with its printed menus circulated at the start of every month.

Other than food, fun is on most people's minds. Friendly football/volleyball/throwball matches are routinely played, as are tricks of all kinds – generally in good humour, although not always so!

Life in the 'baugs' is not entirely without controversy and cacophony.

But, overall, it's a blessed existence. Where else in Mumbai will you get airy environs enhanced by the genteel grace that the Parsi colonies emanate, and for many non-Parsis these are much-envied havens of solitude and seclusion. For most Parsis they are a way of life, as, for the better part, no matter where they roam, at the end of the day, one or another baug is invariably home.



BAUG STEREOTYPES

The 'Maijees' - They wear 'gowns' (nightgowns) through the day, both in and out of the house, sometimes changing them as often as three times before finally going to sleep in them. They virtually live their lives on their windowsills, vicariously watching what goes on, with whom, where, and what-have-you!

The 'Bawajis' - They wear their 'lehgas' (loose and flapping above the ankles), with their 'sudreh-kusti' on top, and if someone arrives at the door, or they need to step out, a hasty shirt is slipped on. They generally took voluntary retirement eons ago and take an avid interest in world affairs, such as oomphy Hollywood actresses (old and new) and female tennis stars (Maria Sharapova, Anna Kournikova, but with the exception of Martina Navratilova!)

The 'Cutlets' - They range in age from 16 to 60 and generally ride aimlessly on motorbikes around the baugs. They check out women all the time, greet each other affectionately with a volley of abuses, and are about as bright as dead meat. Hence, the nickname: "Cutlets"!

The 'Fatakrees' - Parsi colony girls are, by and large, comely and rather coveted. Making the most of their slinky youth, they strut around in strappy tops, too-tight jeans and preen over their own peaches-and-cream perfection. These fetching firecrackers ('Fatakrees') sizzle briefly (till they catch the eye of some 'Cutlet' and coyly become his side-dish), after which they fizzle into oblivion and their grandmothers' nightgowns.

The 'Chuckoos' - Every baug has a few over-smart sorts who manage to make it big, or, at any rate, pretend that they have. They flaunt, flash and fling in everyone's face the symbols of their come-too-quick success. From their swollen-headed swagger to their several cars that mess up everybody else's parking space, to the lavish money-burning 'navjote' ceremonies of their children, these showoffs ('Chuckoos') reinvent one-upmanship all the time.



Chorus of Chaye hame Zarthosti, as sung by the Karachi-ites

*Oh tokhum Kyaani, Oh jug mashoor
Oh suve sadgoon ma sachi ne bharpur
Kayem rahi jaluvje subh tuj jome
Abadi sathe tu rehje Oh Parsi kom.*



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

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Please send application form with your cheque payable in NZ Dollars as "WZO, New Zealand", to:
Mr Darius Mistry, 134A Paritai Drive, Orakei, Auckland.

“To what land to flee?

Where shall I go to flee? They exclude
(me) from my family and from my clan.
The community with which I have
associated has not satisfied me...
How then shall I satisfy
Thee, Wise Lord?”

Yasna 46.1

Inslar translation

