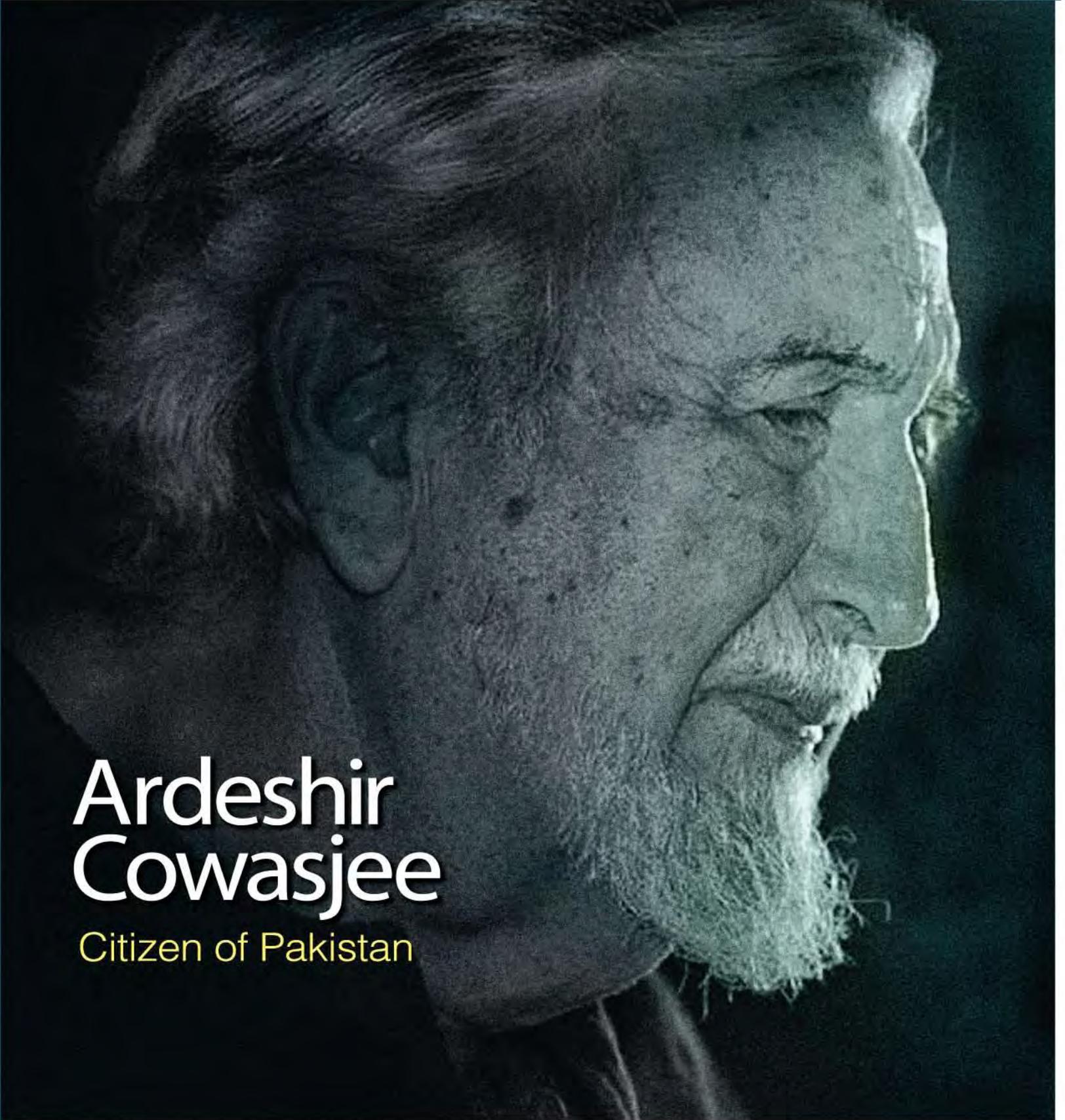


publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

# HAMAZOR

1

Issue 2012



Ardeshir  
Cowasjee

Citizen of Pakistan



Cyrus Mistry, p 23

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## COVER

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In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

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# Happy Minwalla

**d**arayus Cyrus Minwalla better known to all as Happy, is Karachi's well known hotelier, businessman and entrepreneur who has also been in the Aviation industry for 40 years with Cathay Pacific, and who today commutes between Dubai and Pakistan.

Why Happy? During the Second World War an American Colonel, Happy Henry Clarke, based in Karachi went to visit Mehra at the hospital a few days after her first son was born. He asked Cyrus and Mehra if he could be the boy's godfather, and after they agreed, said "from now on I am 'barra' Happy and this is 'chota' Happy." The rest is history.

Happy has led an endlessly interesting and varied life, always ready to try something new. Cars, boats, and technology – one can count on Happy owning the latest. He studied at Dulwich College, London, but soon discovered schooling wasn't his thing. He returned to Karachi in his mid-teens and started working with his father in the hotel business. Before long, when his father passed, he took over managing both properties: The Grand Hotel, Malir and The Metropole Hotel (a distinctive Karachi landmark located in the heart of the city).

In the early 60s, The Grand Hotel boasted the largest modern outdoor swimming pool in Karachi. Many of us still remember spending weekends there, attending weddings, navjotes and other celebrations. The hotel was also doubled as a favourite layover spot for airline crews, and this is where Happy made many of his early, life-long contacts in the airline industry. It is here also that Happy, at the age of eight months, fell into a cauldron of steaming soup — the first of many narrow escapes. This hotel, unfortunately, was sold and torn down in the 1980s.

Cyrus Minwalla opened The Metropole Hotel in 1950. It quickly built a reputation as one of the finest in Karachi: luxurious rooms, excellent facilities for entertaining, and a superb kitchen staffed with chefs flown in from Europe. Parsis remember the hotel as one of the choice venues in which to hold weddings/navjotes and formal banquets. The first of these, the grand opening, was presided over by Shah of Iran with his wife Farah Diba. Many such memorable events are part of the history of the Metropole. In the 1960s, the hotel opened Karachi's first bistro and first nightclub. Both Cyrus and Happy, whenever possible, employed Parsis who in turn gave the hotel and the Minwalla family years of devoted service. The hotel also housed the foremost international airline offices as well as many business establishments, making it a convenient stop for Karachiites. Sadly in 2004 the hotel ceased functioning, but continues to house shops and business concerns.

Happy then branched out on various business ventures in London, Canada and the USA. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto during her first government appointed Happy as her Ambassador-At-Large, with the rank and status of a Federal Minister, a position one could say was "made" for him, having attributes of natural charm and the flair to converse with anyone. She also made him one of her chief economic advisers.

Happy personifies his name – always smiling, there for anyone in need, generous to a fault with his friends and family. He has four living sons: Framji, Taimoor, Jamsheed, and Hormazd. In 1975, his youngest son then, Cyrus, passed away suddenly after contracting Hepatitis A at the age of seven. This issue of the Hamazor is dedicated to his memory.

WZO thanks Happy for sponsoring all four issues in 2012. Without his generous pledge, we would have been unable to produce Hamazor this year. - Toxy Cowasjee



In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

## Message from the Chairman



Dear Members,

Happy New Year to you and your family. May 2012 be full of joy, prosperity and good health for you all. This is the first message from me since our last AGM in September. I thank you for your continued support for WZO and your faith in me as your Chairman. At the AGM, two new members were elected to the WZO committee. Kersi Shroff from Washington, USA, comes with great experience in managing community matters at his local association, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington Inc (ZAMWI). Filli Vapiwala also comes with experience of participating in local Zoroastrian affairs in the UK. We welcome them to the Committee and look forward to their anticipated participation in taking WZO forward.

Shahin Bekhradnia continues to be your President and shares some of my workload. Last month, she was invited to give a lecture titled 'Some differences in practice and beliefs between Zartoshties of Iran and Parsees' at the seminar held in Delhi to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Kaikhusru Pallonji Katrak Dar-E-Meher. Whilst in Delhi, she met with Shri Salmon Khurshid, Minister of Minorities and Shrimati Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister of Delhi. Whilst in Mumbai, Shahin was invited by Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians (AIMZ) to give her talk to a group of invited Zoroastrians and she went to the offices of WZO Trust to meet some of the staff who diligently carries out the essential administrative work for the Trust.

We hope 2012 will prove to be a memorable year for the global community and WZO. The year started very well with our friend, Jehangir Sarosh, being awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year's Honours List by Her Majesty the Queen, for his services to Inter Faith Relations. Congratulations, Jehangir. It is well deserved.

We have seen a mood of optimism and conciliation amongst the Zoroastrian community which we hope will be consolidated in 2012. Let us hope and pray that high profile cases such as the Goolrookh Gupta challenge to the Valsad Parsi Anjuman and the banning of the priests to practise by the BPP will be settled amicably and by the end of the year they are just a distant memory.

WZO has always been tolerant and respectful of differing views on the Zoroastrian religion, culture and traditions. It will move further in offering its hand of friendship and co-operation to any Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian organisation to the benefit of the whole community. It will try to increase its reach to all Zoroastrians around the world. To this extent we are working on a design of a new website which will allow us to achieve our aims and our Youth Co-ordinator Monaz Dalal, will forge relationships with our youth using this new website and social networks such as Facebook. We are also hopeful that we will soon have charitable status in Canada.

This year will be an exciting and challenging year for WZO. I will keep you informed of our plans for your organisation during the course of the year.

Yours sincerely,

Darayus S Motivala  
Chairman  
chairman@w-z-o.org





The World Zoroastrian Organisation

## WZO Calendar of Events - 2012

WZO Navroze Dinner/Dance	Saturday, 24 March 2012
SOAS Kutar Lecture*	Thursday, 26 April
Annual Seminar	Sunday, 10 June
BBQ	July
Shahenshahi Nawroze	Saturday, 25 August
Farvardigan Prayers at Brookwood	Sunday, 09 September
AGM	Sunday, 23 September
Gala Dinner Dance	November

Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, Prof Almut Hintze, inaugural lecture as Zarthoshty Brothers Professor of Zoroastrianism at SOAS, will lecture on the *Archaic and Innovative Features of Zoroastrian Religious Belief and Practice* at 6:30pm at SOAS, Brunei Gallery, Russell Sq, London.

\*15<sup>th</sup> Dastur Dr Sohrab H Kutar Memorial Lecture by Prof Jean Kellens, College de France, Paris, on *Some thoughts on Young Avestan Yazatas* at 6pm at SOAS Brunei Gallery, Russell Sq, London.



In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

## Zarathushtra the Visionary – Reflections on Daena

A Talk by Professor Stanley Insler. WZO London: Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Summarised by Shahin Bekhradnia



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

WZO was delighted to host Professor Insler once again and to hear this world expert on the Gathas offer his interpretation of the worldview expounded by the founder of our religion.

In exploring what is the Daena found within the Gathas, that is to say the behaviour required of one who aspires to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra, Professor Insler took us on a journey which highlighted what was considered to be bad behaviour within the Gathas. From the negative forms of behaviour itemised in the Gathas, with the help of clear thinking, we can construe that the opposite behaviour is the ideal which should be our model. In arriving at this point, Professor Insler raised the question about the nature of good and evil, or the origins of the twin spirits Spenta Mainyo and Angra Mainyu. For a logical mind to comprehend what good means, there must be a concept and indeed an experience of the opposite of good, just as for us to grasp the concept of light, we must be aware of absence of light. The free will given to mankind to decide and exercise freedom of choice with the responsibilities that flow from the choices we make, are considered to be the most important aspects of Ahura Mazda's creation. Thus it follows that evil has to have been created by Ahura Mazda to allow humans the freedom to choose to reject it (a point which proved to be thorny for some of the audience). Professor Insler made it clear that unlike in the Judaic tradition, there was no intention to provide a scapegoat of the fallen angel to explain this, though in fact, there was mention of the Daevas (the other gods believed in at the time of Zarathushtra) who were in league with the evil spirit. Through an understanding of what is **not** desirable we can better comprehend what **are** the desired laws of Ahura Mazda, those of Truth. This was thus purposefully part of the great plan of Ahura Mazda.

Professor Insler pointed out the many pairings in the Gathas of the laws of Ahura Mazda and the word Truth with the concept of Law & Order—found in the questioning over the elements of the natural universe as well as in

the running of the home, clan, state and country. It was suggested that Zarathushtra was struck by the awesome regularity of order and harmony in the natural universe and was seeking a system to bring similar order and harmony to the society in which he lived. A striking example given in the Gathas (Y51.13) of behaviour which breached the acceptable standard was one of hospitality refused to an exhausted traveller (*writer's question: could this be the origin of the famed hospitality laws of the Iranians?*). Other breaches pointed out were those of non compliance and disobedience, cruelty, violence, bondage, strife, destruction, opposition, scorn, theft. When addressing his family members (Y46.15) he says good actions are part of the primordial laws of Ahura Mazda and his allies are those who follow the truth and the path of laws laid down by Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra listed as non allies of Truth/Law the deceitful persons and the karapans and in contrast names Vishtasp as his main ally – a ruler who was prepared to follow the truth and



good thinking. We know that this king, supposedly of Balkh (later Bactria), was the first of the Iranian monarchs who accepted the experiment of implementing Zarathushtra's principles.

The lecture ended with Professor Insler pointing out that the concept of the rule of law was regarded as being the greatest virtue that a King could bring to his kingdom as demonstrated by the inscriptions of several of the Achaemenid kings. He is convinced that it is not a coincidence but firm evidence that the Achaemenians were indeed Zoroastrian in that they constantly refer to the importance of upholding the truth and defeating deceit. In the Behistun inscription Darius tells us that he followed justice and conducted himself according to the truth, and that he was never a friend of a deceitful man. Finally, that he rewarded the man who cooperated with his house, but punished the one who was dishonest. Every act that Darius mentions in detail mirrors a statement found in the hymns of Zarathustra.

In order to press home his world vision and to ensure that that his compatriots would act with urgency he resorted to depicting an unhappy fate for those who failed to see that his vision of earthly harmony could be made into a reality – he wanted his vision of the rule of truth and good thinking on this earth to be accepted and spread. Vankuhi Daena could end the violence and tyranny that was plaguing his times - and still continues to do so in ours – this good vision coming from an understanding based on truth/law and order could be achieved. And the prophet's aspiration that such a rule would bring happiness and prosperity is well expressed in the words of Xerxes, when he speaks to the future person reading his words: "If you think, may I be happy when alive and blessed when dead, have respect for the laws which Ahura Mazda established. Worship Ahura Mazda and Truth with reverence. The man who has respect for the laws Ahura Mazda established and who worships Ahura Mazda and Truth with reverence, both becomes happy when alive and blessed when dead."



## *The Last Waltz*

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla reports

Billed as "Our Last Waltz – Our Sincere Thanks", the WZO Gala Dinner Dance, first started some 21 years ago by Rumi and Hilda Sethna, drew an enthusiastic crowd of lifelong friends, confidants, and business associates.



Rumi & Hilda Sethna

The evening commenced with ladies in their glamorous outfits and spruced up gents settling down for a sumptuous 5-course dinner befitting the occasion. During a short break between courses, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla spoke briefly and reminded the audience that over the past 30 years, Hilda and Rumi's roll was central to the on-going success of WZO. So much so, that the first steps taken in the amelioration of the deprived sections of the Zoroastrian community in Gujarat, India, commenced with their selfless fundraising started from their own home.

They were the primary movers and shakers in WZO and since then WZO has gone a long way. It not only supports Zoroastrians but also many non-Zoroastrian charitable activities and acts as a NGO in many regions of the world. Through their dedication and hard work over £200,000 has been raised through dinner dances and BBQ's and in addition they have always been extremely generous at a personal

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

level, always ready to step in when called upon to do so. The audience responded enthusiastically by giving them both a standing ovation.



L to R: Rumi, Sammy, Hilda, Arni & Darayus Motivala

Sadly they had now decided to call time and this was to be the last fund raising event they would be organising on behalf of WZO. As a gesture of our sincere thanks, Rumi was presented with his favourite

tipple, Blue Label Whiskey and Hilda, the poet in the family, with a Cross writing set. Rumi replied expressing their appreciation of this honour and praise bestowed upon them and also thanked the audience for their years of attendance, support and immense generosity towards raising funds.

President Shahin Bekhradnia introduced compere Barry Williams, who had entertained throughout these 21 years, with his delightful humour and gags. Barry was presented with a crystal bowl suitably inscribed in recognition of his

slick entertainment and organising skills at every occasion. Barry was visibly moved to receive this unexpected recognition of his services to WZO and thanked all those who were present.

A surprise presentation and well deserved accolade was awarded to solicitor Alex

Burns. Alex, a Trustee of the Dennis William Richards Will Trust, was instrumental in donating the princely sum of £400,000 in 2007 towards 20 charitable causes, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, in India through WZO. Well, the story does not end there.

Alex and his charming wife Valerie have continued to be generous and have supported WZO by regularly attending most of our fund-raising events and always making generous contributions to the raffles, auctions, fund-raising games, and offering items for auction. In addition, Alex is a senior partner at a firm of lawyers and has given WZO sound professional advice on a number of legal matters for just a fraction of his commercial charges. For the last three years, Alex and Valerie have opened their home and garden to WZO and friends by hosting our annual BBQ which have been particularly successful for WZO, thanks to the warmth and hospitality of the genial hosts, helping to boost significantly much-needed funds.

Chairman Darayus Motivala in recording our indebtedness to Alex announced that on this day WZO was conferring on him the honorary title of a "Fellow of WZO"; only the second time WZO has bestowed this honorary title. As a memento of this special occasion, Alex was presented with an engraved Mont Blanc pen and Valerie a bouquet of flowers.



L to R: Darayus, Valerie & Alex Burns

Alex thanked the Chairman for this unexpected honour and spoke briefly about the Dennis William Richards Will Trust. Faced with the task of distributing a substantial legacy to charitable causes, Rohinton Irani convinced Alex of the good work being done in the villages of Gujarat by WZO. It was his good friends Rohinton and Perviz Irani who first introduced Alex and his wife Valerie to the Zoroastrian community many years ago, when they, themselves, organised BBQ's annually for fund raising at their own home.

Subsequently, Alex and Rohinton, together with Ursula and Sammy Bhiwandiwalla made a trip to India to see first-hand what projects were being championed by WZO. Two years later Alex and Valerie followed up with a further trip visiting the various charities assisted, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, to get a measure of the improvement in lives of those who were assisted.

Alex concluded by expressing his deep admiration for the integrity and honesty of the Zoroastrian community which he had encountered all along.

The evening continued with two cabaret performances intertwined with Barry's hilarious witticisms. West End Live, a group of male and female singers entertained us with renditions of some of the top hits from such well known musical successes as Phantom of the Opera and **Les Miserable**. The band Triple Cream was no ordinary bunch of musicians. Their instrumental and vocal dexterity kept the audience in stitches right through their performance.

All in all a fitting but somewhat sad end to two decades of fun and entertainment coupled with support for many worthy causes, though this may yet be the start of something new. ■■■■



The World Zoroastrian Organisation



Ursula Bhiwandiwalla, Alex & Valerie



Sammy & Shahpur Captain, our two past chairmen



A game the ladies played - rolling the coin nearest to the Jeroboam [4 times the size of standard champagne bottle] wins the prize

## *Delhi Anjuman Celebrates the Golden Jubilee of their Dar e Meher*

WZO President, Shahin Bekhradnia was invited to speak during these celebrations. She shares her impressions with our readers. - Ed.

**t**he arrangements made by the organising committee of the Delhi Anjuman to mark this happy occasion of 50 years (1961-2011) since the consecration of the sacred fire were impressive. It was particularly felicitous that the present day resident priest at the Agiary, Ervad Cawas Bagli is the son of the first Agiary priest and that Dasturji Feroze Kotwal who helped to install the fire 50 years ago was once again present for this celebration.

Approximately 200 invited guests, speakers and prominent dignitaries came together over two days in the Anjuman building in New Delhi for a variety of events that culminated in Jashans presided over by eight priests inside the lovely agiary, and outdoors.



Notable persons such as Chief Minister for Delhi (Sheila Dikshit), the Minister for Minorities (Mr Salman Khurshid) and Mr

Fali Nariman (past Chief Justice) brought solemnity and dignity to the occasion with their thoughtful comments on the role and contribution of Parsis in the national life of India.

The balance of thoughtful talks, followed by spirited exchanges between the audience and the speakers, and the more light

hearted entertainment of a Parsi natak by Yezdi Karanjia, or the fashion show and singing by the young Farohars ensured that the pace was varied and that matters did not become too heavy or monotonous, though when discussions did take place, they revolved around serious and important matters. The Parzor Foundation had set up a small exhibition of costumes and they also provided some delightful examples for sale of the embroidered traditions of the gara saris. In between the talks and discussions there were well supplied tea and lunch breaks with excellent local delicacies. The presence of respected priests from Bombay and Udvada brought gravitas and authority to the discussions and although there exists a known difference in attitude between those from Bombay and the generally more liberal views of the Delhi membership, the discussions were respectful but also constructive. In particular, the address by Dastoor Khurshed Dastoor of Udwada made a plea for a more considerate and realistic remuneration of priests and his measured comments were very well received – indeed they seem to have jogged listeners' consciences. He pointed out the discrepancies in monies spent on a wedding cake, decorations, etc and the paltry amount offered to a priest who conducts the wedding liturgy. Few people had even thought of the health risks in terms of carcinogenic fumes from the burning wood and incense which priests are subjected to when presiding over the sacred fire for so many years of their lives.

Mr Fali Nariman's words, in particular resonated with the mood of the gathering when he expressed his horror at the anti Zoroastrian behaviour of intolerance and violence practised by a few of our co-religionists in recent years. He also asked that we should be rational and look at the

reality of our communities – engaging in change does not spell the end of our traditions or identity, contrary to some miscreants who peddle this misleading view.

The requirement for a change in thinking towards rituals, the quality of priests' training and the subsequent payments they might expect to receive, and the attitude towards married out spouses and their offspring, removing the differentiation of treatment in gender was regularly raised and frankly discussed. One speaker who represented the Iranian tradition provided texts from the several different ancient texts ranging from Gathic, Pahlavi, and 15<sup>th</sup> century Farsi, to demonstrate that tolerance and indeed acceptance were encouraged and considered meritorious by Iranian high priests from our prophet himself right through to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Parsis were still sending envoys back and forth to Iran for guidance (though latterly it became the reverse).

With this in mind, the talk which raised the demographic problem with the declining Parsi population in all areas of India apart from Pune was of relevance, and indeed ideas were exchanged about death of Athornan youngsters to enter the only remaining Madressa. The idea of following the Iranian model of Mobedyari was raised and we were told that this policy was already adopted in certain cases within the Parsi tradition but in the future maybe more focus on this as a solution may be necessary. A young Afghan archaeologist presented material on a possible shrine to Anahita with whose excavations he had been closely involved, and there was also a section of the two day talks devoted to the ecological concerns and aspects of our faith. Needless to say the matter of the Bombay dakhma raised its head, as we were reminded about the solar concentrators and the money being spent in researching the possibility of a vulture rearing scheme by the BPP. The problems of the felling of scented wood trees for the purposes of feeding our sacred fires was also raised and we were reminded that we

should be planting trees on a regular basis to replace those cut down. One idea of using



Jashan held outdoors

abandoned cemeteries for such purposes for the creation of a nature reserve was raised as was the beautiful tradition, now mostly forgotten, of planting a tree at the birth of a child, at marriage and upon the death of a parent. The fact that Delhi has actively taken on its responsibilities for improving the quality of the environment by insisting on the replacement by 28 trees for each one cut down and imposing a heavy fine is an indication of how seriously it now considers the environ, a matter which every true Zoroastrian should identify closely with. The many out of town attendees found comfortable accommodation provided in the conveniently adjacent dharamsala in which numerous rooms have been recently upgraded. Delicious Parsi dishes were provided for both evening meals with the food being freshly prepared on the premises. Thanks to a marquee type of arrangement and effective gas heaters, a very congenial atmosphere was created despite the cold Delhi temperatures.

The meticulous arrangements made by the committee who coordinated these two days paid off with a well coordinated and admirably run event. Timings were close to exact and the overall quality of every aspect of the activities was excellent. We now look forward to receiving the weighty souvenir edition magazine Dipanjali, launched by the Chief Minister for Delhi, which contains a transcript of the talks given and much else besides.



## Zoroastrianism's great influence on Judaism

First of a series of articles, how Zoroastrianism influenced other religions.

# N

No two religions are as closely intertwined – joined at the hip – as are Zoroastrianism and Judaism. The parallelism is awesome.

Z Each had a divine revelation

Z Each espouses a universal monotheism

Z Each emphasizes the highest secular ethics – good thoughts, good words, good deeds

Z Each cherishes life, especially education and learning rather than seeking to escape this world

Z Each believes in concrete actions rather than mere faith

Z Each considers salvation to be a lifetime of work

by *keki bhote*

### The Pre-Exilic Faith of the Jews

The term “Pre-Exilic” refers to the age before 586 BC when the Jews of Judah and Israel were carried off Enmassr to Babylon in brutal captivity. In that early age, Judaism's theology was modest, at best. Yaweh was a tribal God reserved exclusively for his chosen people – the Israelites. There was communal fear of God, enforced by clergy, and religion had little appeal. It was absolute obedience and subservience – a cringing and timorous obedience before God.

“Most astounding, the religion had nothing to do with morality. The issue of ethical conduct was never a part of the package. If one part was revolutionary in terms of its monolatry (ie. the worship of one God without denying the existence of others), extensive law, intolerance of other religions and concept of sin, the other part was autocratic, arrogance of the priesthood, partnership with the throne,

endless ceremony and pageantry and continuing sacrifices ... Religion had little appeal and less promise, and when death came, all departed to a gray and cheerless abode – the sheol – roaming in the nether world.”<sup>1</sup>

What started Judaism on its long and exciting journey to universalism was Amos (a prophet without honor in his own land) in 750 BC, and by a host of 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets.

### Cyrus Frees the Jews from the Captivity of Babylon

A cataclysmic disaster struck the Jewish people when the notorious King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, sacked Jerusalem in 586 BC, destroyed its famed temple and force-marched fifty thousand Jews to captivity and slavery in Babylon.

In 539 BC, however, Cyrus the Great, founder of the first Zoroastrian Empire of the Achaemenids, conquered Babylon. One of his first acts was to free the thousands of Jews held captive. Returning all of them to

Israel in complete freedom and paying for their re-settlement out of his imperial treasury. Further, he returned 5,400 gold and silver articles that the Babylonians had carted away from Solomon's Temple back to the Jews. And to cap it all, he authorized the re-building of Solomon's Temple. His successor, Darius the Great, funded the re-building and his son, Emperor Xerxes, funded re-construction in a land, scorch-earthed by marauding waves of Chaldens, Assyrians and Babylonians. The Achaemenid rulers were devout Zoroastrians and followed the teachings of the prophet for acting like statesmen instead of monarchs; and adhering to his guidance: "Government by the governed."

For Cyrus the Great's re-building the nation of Israel and powerful support for complete freedom of worship, the Jews came to look upon him as a messiah, fulfilling the prophet Jeremiah's prophecy:

"In the first year of Cyrus, the Emperor of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord, spoken by Jeremiah, that the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus to make a proclamation throughout his realm: "The Lord, the God of heaven has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem."<sup>2</sup>

### Zoroastrian Doctrines Penetrate Judaism<sup>3</sup>

Several Zoroastrian doctrines came to be adopted in Judaism by various Jewish schools in its long post-exilic period that stretched into centuries of close contact between the two faiths.

1. A Universal God: Judaism's God, as stated earlier, had been a tribal God. Zarathushtra's Ahura Mazda was not only for all humanity but for the entire cosmos. It was easy, therefore, for Judaism to make the leap from a narrow, jealous Yahweh to a loving, universal God.
2. Doctrine of Good and Evil: Zarathushtra, in his cogent logic, stresses a cosmic

monotheism for God and an ethical dualism for man. Good and evil, he clarifies, are not separate and primordial forces but the products of man's mind.

Early Judaism, as far back as the prophet Isaiah, believed that both good and evil emanated from one God. Satan played no role at the start of the Torah. God is omnipotent – he is also the source of evil temptations. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, however, Jewish texts had elevated Satan as a prince of darkness. "It is not coincidence that the most abundant evidence for dualism in Jewish texts corresponds to the Parthan period when Zoroastrian-Jewish relations were the closest ... and the nearly independent power of Satan was more important in the Judaism of that epoch than they are in modern, main stream Judaism."<sup>4</sup>

3. Man's Relationship with God: Given man's freedom to think and choose for himself, Zoroastrianism would be hypocritical if it advocated a servile attitude toward God. Zarathushtra looked upon God as a loving father, brother and friend to each person. Judaism, on the other hand, places God on such a high unreachable pedestal that the choices for man is filled with commandments – "thou shall" and Thou shall not".

4. The Purpose of Life: Zarathushtra stressed that the purpose of man's life on earth was not just to lead a vacuous existence but to be a soldier in God's army to move this world to perfection, to attenuate disorder and evil and to enhance order and goodness. Pre-exilic Judaism had no such visionary goal for life, no highlighting of ethics, no hope for an after-life.

The Post-Exilic period, however, saw a remarkable progression in Jewish thought as a result of close contact with Zoroastrian theology and the genuine respect for Zoroastrian rulers who gave the Jewish people complete freedom – religious, economic and social – perhaps for the first time in their war-torn history of the ages.

The two faiths ushered in a way of life that combined moral and spiritual values and a

code of ethical behavior that became the benchmark for the religions that followed to attain. But while other faiths required the ascetic life, celibacy and the renunciation of innocent pleasures, both Zoroastrianism and Judaism rejected these non-worthy ideas as alien to both human nature and God.

5. Philosophy: Zarathushtra had an abiding influence on the major Greek philosophers – Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – born of a deep veneration of the prophet's spiritual message.

The more modern philosophies of Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Hegel and Hunai closely parallel the universal metaphysics of Zarathushtra. Likewise the study of the Talmud by Jewish scholars in the inter-testamental period reflects deep philosophical roots.

6. Education – the Cement of Continuity: Zarathushtra placed the mind of man at center-stage to pursue free and independent life-long learning. The Jewish tradition of the pursuit of education was not only a central theme, but it also was the cement that held the Jewish community together through centuries of exclusion – other professions denied to them through subtle discrimination and – often – blatant persecution.

7. The Role of Science: We are only beginning to gauge the significance of Zarathushtra's teaching in this important discipline. He pointed out the relationship between light and matter. Science now points to a direct influence of light on how matter manifests itself in the physical universe. Science also reinforces the prophet's theory that all systems in the natural world are affected by elements of both order and chaos in a external struggle for supremacy. But science states that when any system tends towards chaos, patterns begin to emerge and order takes over, resulting in the triumph of order over chaos, good over evil, wisdom over ignorance.

The Jewish advances in science are of recent origin, but no less profound, as

evidenced by the fact that a disproportionate number of scientists winning Nobel Prizes are Jewish.

8. Civic Service: Zarathushtra encourages his followers to lead a life of action in the causes of the less fortunate among us – charity, economic uplift, social welfare and political reform – as the best way to serve God. In post World War II in America, the Jews have contributed mightily to all manner of civic services. Were it not for them, American culture would not be as sparkling. Similarly, only under the Shah in Iran in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and under the British in India in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did the Zoroastrians of Iran and the Parsis of India blossom into an explosion of civic services, so characteristic of their religious teachings.

There was one notable difference between Zoroastrianism and Judaism in the early treatment of women. Zarathushtra elevated women to political, economic and social equality with men, whereas in early Judaism women were considered "the property" of men – mere chattels. This of course, is no longer true, but the near-universal treatment of women as second-class citizens is still a black mark not only for the Jews of old, but also for 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization!

9. The Messiah and the Soshyant: In the exilic Babylonian period, the Jews had been so persecuted that they cried out to Yahweh for a savior – a Messiah. Again, after 300 years of total freedom under the Achaemenid Empire, the Jews once more became the victims of harshness under the Greek Seleucids; again they were rescued by the ecumenical Zoroastrian Parthian Empire. This time it was a secular rejoicing. Fate struck the ill-starred Jews a third time when Rome conquered Palestine, its iron grip triggering the enmity of the Jewish community. But a collective "Messiah" came to liberate them when the Zoroastrian Parthians defeated the Roman General, Crassus in 54 BC.

The Zoroastrians, too, developed a prophetic tradition, a longing for the

Soshyant (the Iranian equivalent of Messiah) and which longing intensified greatly in the dark periods after Alexander's conquest, and the Arab annihilation. It grew even more plaintive at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium in 1,000 AD, when the Zoroastrians fully expected a Soshyant to appear to relieve their miserable existence under the hated Arabs, but were deeply dejected "when he never showed up!" (In fact, Zoroastrian folk-lore states that the Soshyant would be born of a virgin mother"<sup>5</sup> apparently making the virgin birth in Christianity – a re-tread of a Christian tale.)

10. Eschatology and the Apocalyptic Tradition: In Zarathushtra's Gathas, there are only passing references to eschatology – life after death, and the concepts of heaven and hell, Zarathushtra's focus was on this life on this earth, with man at center stage. However, in later Zoroastrianism, long before Cyrus and the Achaemenids, and possibly in competition with other theories floating around in Mesopotamia and the Near East, later Zoroastrianism deteriorated into angelology, demonology and ritualism:

These later Zoroastrian eschatological concepts were embraced in post-exilic Judaism and formed the basis of a similar eschatology in both Christianity and Islam.

Let us conclude this remarkable alignment of Zoroastrianism and Judaism through the ages with the words of Harvard Professor James Russell: "Despite the frequent grimness of our historical position, our two people affirm, cherish and celebrate life, rather than seeking to escape this world. Perhaps the secret of our survival may be inherent, in some degree to this attitude."<sup>6</sup>

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*Assoc., Illinois. He is author of 17 books and recipient of civic honours from the city of Chicago, UN and US Dept., of Defence. Keki's community work on the North Shore is extensive. In his professional life, he heads his own company, consulting with over 450 companies in 34 countries. He was selected as one of the quality gurus of America.*

***There is no Editorial in this issue due to space constraints.***

***Just for fun***

**bawatip #115**  
 when the vulture said,  
 "i just ate aloo".  
 he wasn't referring  
 to potatoes.

## Heaven and Hell; Hokum and Humbugry

**F**

For his radical concept of the Ideal Existence, Zarathushtra, the Sage of Ancient Iran, utilized the powerfully coherent medium of his Gathas. Fortright and single-minded as ever, he projected his vision of a world made perfect through the perfection of all humankind. An enlightened humanity being the meeting-place between the spiritual and material worlds, he reasoned, could bring this about.

Among the shortest words in his Gathas are *im*, “this; here” and *nu*, “now” with *nuchit*, “right now; rightaway” for emphasis. From these wonderful Odes to the Good Life and moral Right-living, it is evident that Zarathushtra was a reforming prophet in a hurry, in a this-worldly setting.

by farrokh vajifdar

Zarathushtra never actually prophesied anything; instead he vigorously promoted a perfectible world. That ideal vision, he was convinced, would become real in his own lifetime (33.5; 51.1). Its unfolding, through a profoundly experienced inner revelation by Mazda, the Ahura par excellence, assured him of this approaching Reality.

Determined on that revealed course of action, the Sage urged mankind – all future saviours! – to remain steadfast: *“May we be those who shall revitalize this existence, O Mazda! With your helpmeets, with Truth-bearing changes and our thoughts concentrated, let us overcome any doubts!”* (Ys.30.9). “This existence” or “this life” is emphasized. The helpmeets are aspects of Mazda’s being, integral to His “personality”, and inseparable from Him. They were later to be separated out under their corporate name of “Amesha Spentas”!

Farther along, the message is expanded: *“Whoever, O Mazda, be it man or woman, will grant me that which You know as best for Life: reward for Truth, and Governance through Good Mind – for those whom I shall urge towards praise of You and Your kind – with all of these will I cross the Bridge of Judgement”* (Ys.46.10). “Your kind”, again, are Mazda’s aspects, Good Mind and Truth

being invoked with Him as “Best Ones”, with Good Governance, Right-mindedness, and Integrity with Un-dying-ness (a holistic, life-long union of body and soul). All are in marked dependence on Mazda; prayerful Zoroastrians will recognize them as the first seven days of each religious month in our devotional calendar.

The origins of conflict between the two *mainyus* or Primordial Principles are explained: one chose the worst in thought, word, and deed; the best-choosing became allied with Mazda. Their sharply dualist encounter is retailed in Ys.30.3-5; between them, the earthly partisans of Good versus Evil, of Truth against Deceit, exercise their respective preferences. The human sphere is where the counteractivities of the two *mainyus* become earthly mental states (30.4), one progressing (*spenta*), the other retarding (*angra-*), steering mankind towards either good or ill in Thought, Word, and Deed. An intermediate earthly state is posited for the waywardly behaved: it is *hamyasaite*, superficially resembling the Christian “Purgatory”.

Some 2,300 years later, the scholar-poet John Milton dictated his sonorous verses of Paradise Lost to his daughters. Blindness had overtaken him, yet his mind was

illuminated by the teachings of a revived NeoPlatonism which he had earlier known at Cambridge. He eloquently summed up what Zarathushtra had taught: *"The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven"*.

An enlightened High-priest of recent times, Framroze Bode, proffered his evaluation of Heaven and Hell: *"(They) are no places and locations; they are the subjective states of man's spiritual consciousness"*.

In the Gathas one meets with the Houses of Song and of Lamentation. The former is described as the dwelling of Mazda, the latter the place of woe, of vengeful souls, of foul food. Within these richly metaphorical allusions are seen the earthly rewards or chastisements for a good or evilly led life.

Evil exists everywhere as a deprivation; not a reality. The hostile mind – a casual epithet – was to become *Angra mainyu*, the later Ahriman, a dark force that Zarathushtra never envisaged in opposition to Mazda. His ethical dualism was based on Choice and Free-will. The charge levelled against Zoroastrianism as a "two-gods" dualism, of a good god (Ohmazd) being impotent before an evil god (Ahriman) is abhorrent. Yet it is repeatedly proposed, not only by opponents of Zoroastrianism from the Abrahamic faiths, but from unprincipled dualists within an uninformed faction of "believers" who pretend that Sasanian dualism held the real key to the Sage's teachings! A blatantly heretical theosophy masquerading as Truth!

For outsider faiths which actually create and have Evil harboured within the domains of their "monotheisms", their devils are real entities, promoted by every means that religious terror can conceive. Their failure to spot these major theological defects brings to mind Baudelaire's observation: *"The Devil's greatest mischief would indeed be to make it believed that he does not exist!"* The Christian Satan became a "Fallen Angel": an excellent antiquarian translation reads: *"And he sayde unto them: I sawe sathan, as it had bene lightenyng, faule*

*doune from heven"* (Tyndale trl. of Luke, 10.18). Angels ascending and descending along the staircase from earth to heaven formed the subject of Jacob's dream, with land-marking of a theocratic Jewish state and the promise of an expansionist Diaspora (Gen., 28.12-15).



Blake, Wm. Marriage of Heaven & Hell

In sharp contrast, Zoroastrianism represents an emancipation for devil-ridden souls. Wholly shameful it is to see and hear so-called guardians of Mazdayasna too readily invoking the Founder's name, yet going against the very spirit of his untainted monotheism – unlettered priests in the sway of self-serving charlatans doggedly toe this insidious line.



Blake, Wm. Ancient of Days

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla



Blake, Wm., Jacob's Ladder

That such false priests existed in Zarathushtra's times is evident from several verses in his Gathas. He calls them *karapans*: "mumbler priests", details their crimes, and assures them of their sojourn in the House of Deceit, *drujo.demana*, with their own deformed souls to torment them. It is the "hell" of their own making, seen clearest in Ys.46.11, supported closely with Ys.49.11, echoed by Yss.51.13 and 53.6, and arraigned in Ys.44.20.

That modern-day priests have fitted within their funerary rites the verses for the bereaved and mourning living – on the



Dante. Celestial Helmsman (Dore)

pretext that these are chanted for the salvation of the deceaseds' souls, is to be

deplored. The ignored real danger from such misdirected practices is that future generations, unacquainted with the true precepts will, through this constantly repeated disinformation, move away entirely from Zarathushtra and embrace some alien spiritual system to glean more credible answers.

Through these complex ideas, the best qualities for Life are seen shared by both Deity and human, being the reward for good moral living where non-differentiation of gender is especially noteworthy. The Chinvat crossing is the Bridge leading from brutishness to civilized norms of behaviour. Ever the realist, Zarathushtra brought down this potent psychological symbol from a make-believe, mythical After-world to a clear earthly level where his personal intervention amidst a turbulent mankind most preoccupied him.

Similarly, the notion of Mazda as Ahura, "Lordly Wisdom", is located within the human psyche – Zarathushtra's appellation of the right-living pastor as *ahura* (Ys.31.10) leaves no doubt that the divine presence is seen in all humanity; indeed, in *all* Creation. He has uniquely incorporated a practical psychology for social reform within his rich philosophy of Life: Mazda's New Heaven is to be here on earth – the Surreality becomes Reality!

One learns of the eight points of irreconcilable differences between the twin *mainyus* (Ys.45.2) followed by Mazda's warning to deceivers (45.3), and the right conduct (45.4) for the best existence. It is this foremost existence – Mazda's rule through Truth and Good-mindedness over a revitalized earth – which makes for one's proper understanding of Zarathushtra's teaching. There is nought else: neither "spirit versus matter", nor any After-worlds!

In the 11th century AD, and a very long way from Zarathushtra, the philosopher-poet and mathematician-astronomer Omar Khayyam penned some irreligious verses. Among those dismissing the very ideas of an After-world: "*I leave the idolators to their fantasies*

*in their Temple. Khayyam is game for hell, it seems – but who says so? Who has seen paradise? and who has returned from hell?"*

For one who, feet firmly on the ground whilst scanning the heavens, adored the Ancient Religion of Old Iran, and loved its wine and women, surely these were Paradise enough!

For this Eurocentric writer the flimsiness of After-worldly beliefs could be exposed by their shifting grounds: here are currently running definitions of Heaven and Hell:

"HEAVEN is where the police are British, the chefs French, the mechanics German, the lovers Italian, and it is all organized by the Swiss! ...

... HELL is where the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, the police German, and it is all organized by the Italians!"



Dore, Gustave., Satan, pertinent to John Milton's Paradise Lost



*Farrokh Vajifdar comes from a sensibly orthodox priestly family. Life-long student and independent researcher in Indo-Iranian cultures. Specializes in literature and languages of pre-Islamic Iran. Focuses on Zoroastrian religious beliefs and practices on which he writes, lectures, and broadcasts (radio and TV). He is referee and reviewer for (as Fellow of) the Royal Asiatic Society.*

## The Religion of Zarathushtra in Museum of World Religions

by Perviz Dubash

### Introduction

Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee, the great scholar of Zend, Sanskrit, Pali and Persian, once mentioned, that The Zoroastrians are well known for sharing their wealth, but they have not shared their greatest wealth - "The Wisdom of Zarathushtra." This thought stuck in my mind. The introduction of the Religion of Zarathushtra, in the Museum of World Religions is my feeble effort to rectify this situation.

### Vision of a Pure Master

Dharma Master Hsin Tao originated the idea to build a museum of world religions with the guiding philosophy, "respect all faiths, value all cultures and love all living beings." His mission is to work together to create a global family of love and peace. Apart from displaying artefacts of religious and cultural beauty, the museum employs the use of modern technology and multimedia facilities to enhance the visitors' spiritual stimulation. I quote, "... a tour of the museum is more like a spiritual baptism. It is not merely a religious exhibition hall, but a living organism, a safe haven in the secular world."

### MWR

Compared to the great Museums of China, it could be termed "a baby museum." The MWR occupies approximately 7,224 square metres in Yonghe city of Taipei county, Taiwan.

The visitors go through various facets of the museum, to name a few, Pilgrims way, Golden Lobby, Hall of Life's journey, Avatamasaka world. Finally the visitor reaches The Great Hall of World Religions.

My impression of the great hall were both exhilarating and depressing at the same

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

time. Hinduism, Daoism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and Shinto were represented. Astonishingly though, the religion that influenced and established many of the tenets of all the religions, the Religion of Zarathushtra, was not represented. That broke my heart. I met the authorities, put up our case as best as I could, they listened patiently, but they had a practical dilemma. Where could they house us? The great hall of religions was completely occupied. I could not give up. I would not give up.

I approached the Dharma Master. He listened to my plea through an interpreter. His demeanour exuded tolerance, and affection. Here was a man of peace. If he gave me his word, I could rest easy. He said something in Chinese to his assistant, some how I felt assured of a fruitful result. Weeks and anxious months passed by. Then one day I received a letter in broken Chinese/English. They would provide us a small place, ten feet, but was overjoyed. I thanked Ahura Mazda for his blessings, little realising that there were many hurdles yet to overcome. Finally a contract was signed, my wish for a permanent contract did not materialise. A three year period was assigned. Whatever the period, The Religion of Zarathushtra would now be represented.

### *Procurement of Artefacts*

A new phase had started in the quest. A hunt for artefacts. Genuine Persian/Zoroastrian artefacts were impossible to find. I discussed the problem with the curators. They understood my dilemma, and allowed us genuine replicas. One more hurdle was overcome. Minor miracles kept happening, one by one the artefacts were procured. Zarathushtrians from Iran, USA, India, Middle East and Australia, assisted.

### *The following artefacts have been submitted to the museum.*

Zarathushtra statuette  
Sogdian Chinese, Ashem Vohu calligraphy  
Bas relief of Cyrus the Great



The Religion of Zarathushtra - display stand

Fravashi image  
glass casting  
The Pious Slab  
Parsi religious  
apparel - Sudreh  
& Kushti  
Parsi headgear  
pagri



Parsi ceremonial items - Ses  
 Set of early Persian coins  
 Afarganyu and Takht complete with bell,  
 chipyo and chamach  
 Avesta prayer book  
 Gurz  
 Zarathushtrian credo, marble slab  
 Winged Bulls  
 Shahnameh  
 Cyrus' Cylinder  
 Tower of Silence, a small scale model  
*(Due to lack of space some items will be  
 displayed at a later stage)*

**Genesis - The Zarathushtrian stand**

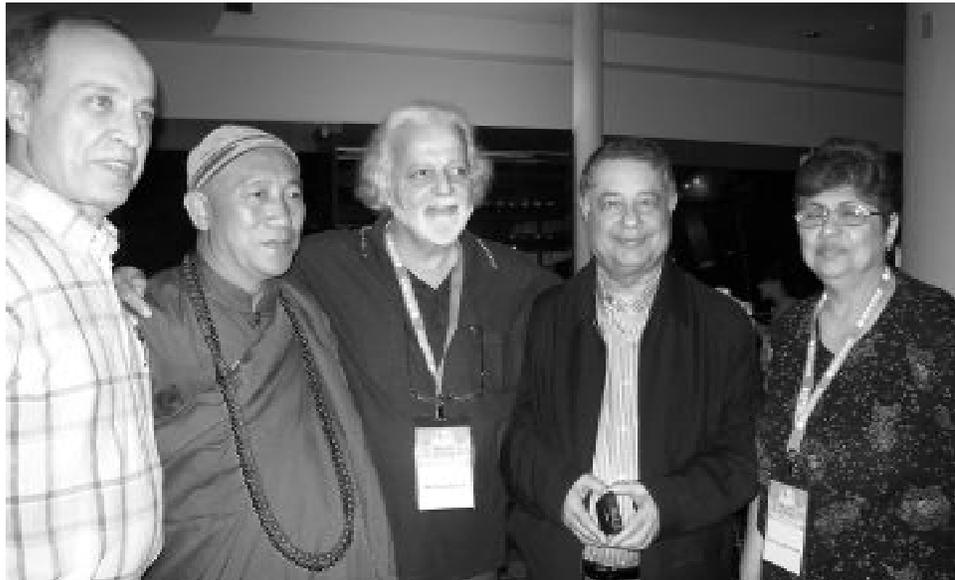
The hectic job of the Zarathushtrian display stand had started. It looked like an impossible job – sitting on a computer, miles away from the museum, organizing the descriptions of the artefacts; arranging of the multimedia facilities; the display boards scripts. And then a miracle occurred. Enter Alison Hsiang Yi Liu, Assistant Curator of MWR. Despite her very busy schedule, she took up the very, very hectic job of organising each and every detail for our stand. I called her “our guardian angel.” Truly the Divine provided the Zarathushtrians with a guardian angel, who worked day and night. She even referred lovingly, as ‘our display stand’. She learnt as much as she could about our religion, translated the scripts that we gave her from English to Chinese, educated the staff. I must honestly admit, that without her, the Zarathushtrian stand would not have been a reality being completed on the last hour of the final day.

**MWR Decennial Celebrations**

Respect, Tolerance and Love are the three solid foundations of MWR. These are the platforms for interreligious dialogues and understanding. The museum has now been recognised since ten years, and prior to that, ten years were spent in establishing the museum. The decennial programme has already begun initiating various missions for the following ten years. And what is the Master’s key to achieve this vision – he says, “True Heart has No Obstacles.”

MWR had invited various experts, scholars, and professionals to attend the symposium on Museum establishment, planning, finance, etc., with a view of replicating similar museums all over the world. His dream remains the same - Establishment of a Global Family of Love and Peace. At this point I wish to proudly mention, that a very good rapport between the global Zarathushtrian community and the museum has been established, and hope the world Zoroastrian bodies will come forward to act positively in the future.

**Visit to Wu Sheng Monastery, Ling Jiou mountain**



L to R: Azim Ejtehad, Dharma Master Hsin Tao, Perviz Dubash, Alayar Dabestani and Nergish Dubash

Visit to Ling Jiou is always a memorable spiritual experience. The Wu Sheng Monastery is perched on a steep mountain cliff with vast panoramas of the Pacific Ocean. It almost seems that one is breathing the breathtaking natural beauty of nature with the immense silence of the Divine. One is reminded of the old adage “The language of God is silence, the rest is all babble.” The monks and nuns display serenity and affection to the nth. degree. Here one can feel a living, breathing religion which is beyond words. All one has to do is open up your heart and clean up your mind.

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Here one can feel the true essence of all religions. Indeed we are one.

We had our group discussions and seminars and at night there was an informal meeting with the Master. He cracked jokes and related amusing stories, full of insight and wisdom. At the end, he taught us a 'One Minute Chan Meditation'. This was his last gift before we returned home.

### Sincere Thanks



Dharma Master Hsin Tao and Perviz Dubash

My sincere thanks go to Prof Emeritus Kaikhosrov Irani, for his thoughts and words which adorn our main board, Dina McIntyre for her commentaries on Gathas, Rohinton Rivetna for introducing me to the world Zarathushtrians, Alayar Dabestani for his invaluable gift of the Shahnameh and making

a genuine effort to attend the celebrations in Taipei despite his busy schedule.

Mobed Mehraban Firozgary and Houshang Kiani of Iran in procuring The Pious Slab from Iran, Hoshi Kyani of Melbourne for freighting the artefacts from this city, my cousins Pervez & Dolly Mistry and Hiloo Laly for procuring the artefacts from Mumbai, Members of California Zoroastrian Center and Zoroastrian Association of Victoria, Nadish Naoroji of ZAV who always rises up to the occasion and helps us in varied ways with his technical skills and photographic expertise. Mrs Pheroza J Godrej who gave her kind permission for the use of photographs from her book 'The Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture'. This book was a great help in providing valuable information to Alison Hsiang Yi Liu who in turn translated some rituals and traditions of Zarathushtrians into Chinese to inform the demonstrators who will man the stall.

Meher Bhesania of Dubai for her gifts of CD, DVD & coffee table book. Dr Sharoukh

Razmjou and Prof Azhideh Moqaddam for assistance in procuring a genuine replica of Cyrus' Cylinder from The British Museum. Dr Farzin Rezaeian for permission to display excerpts from Persepolis Recreated, Kaizad Bhabha of ZAGNY for permission to display 'Zoroastrian Journey', Dr Sam Kerr who provided his research paper on Cyrus the Great, and Phil Madon who introduced me to so many of his prominent Iranian friends, Dr Cyrus Irani who provided highly valued early Persian coins, all from Sydney, Jenny Rickards, the dedicated sculptor who undertook various jobs and achieved the impossible of creating four artefacts in the short period of time. And lastly my dear wife Nergish and family who are the real wind beneath my wings, who give me support and tolerate my endless whims to make my dreams come true.

And many, many more Zarathushtrians all over the globe who helped me one way or another on this project.

The Director, Curators and staff of MWR and finally Dharma Master Hsin Tao, whose pure desire makes every thing possible.

### Zarathushtrians United

I always dreamt of a global body of sincere souls who would have but one goal - to spread the recognition of our great Prophet Asho Spitaman Zarathushtra, to spread his wisdom throughout the universe for all humanity.

May we be blessed with Zarath (burning) Ushtra's (light), all consuming Wisdom.



*Perviz Dubash was born in Bombay. Obtained his Bachelor of Electrical Engineering, Indiana Institute of Technology Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA. Worked in a consulting engineering firm in St Louis Missouri, USA and as a Technical Officer at Air India, Bombay. He is settled with his wife Nergish in Melbourne. Co-ordinated Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia and initiated the representation of The Religion of Zarathushtra in the Museum of World Religions in Taipei, Taiwan.*

## Cyrus Mistry - A new leader in the making

T

*"The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it." - Theodore Roosevelt*

A wise old man once said that one should never ask a person to choose one's own successor - if one does, chances are that he or she would instinctively look for a clone. Distancing oneself from the process of selection, particularly when the choice was as wide open as this, was therefore an excellent idea. Ratan Tata, by leaving the task to a special committee, perhaps set a new benchmark for high-visibility successions, such as this one, which others will follow.

*from our mumbai correspondent*

When 'the successor' was finally announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011, the Press Release said that the Committee had met 18 times during the 15 months that it took for them to come up with a name. Although some have criticized the committee for taking so long, full marks to them for two things: Firstly, not a single rumour leaked out during that entire period and no one, not even close confidantes of the Chairman, had any clue about who the final choice of Deputy Chairman was going to be. Secondly, the choice itself was remarkably astute. Cyrus meets all the requirements of the job: youth, intelligence, good academic background, evidence of entrepreneurial ability and some prior knowledge and experience of the Group, having been on the Boards of Tata Power and Tata Sons for some years now. Most important of all, culturally, Cyrus fits the Group's credo perfectly and is someone who would effortlessly carry on the old core philosophy of "Leadership with Trust". Even today constructions done by the Shapoorji Pallonji Group always carry a sizeable premium, signifying the trusted quality of the work that went into the building.



Although it is a little unfair to both to draw comparisons between them, one cannot but help noticing certain similarities between them. At the same time CPM is certainly not an RNT clone. Cyrus is private and understated, perhaps just as private and understated as Ratan Tata was when he took over from JRD. Since being nominated Deputy Chairman he has neither been interviewed in the media, nor has he made any public statements. However, at the same time Cyrus is extremely friendly, approachable and easy to relate to and, as his father-in-law Iqbal (Mickey) Chagla says, he is one of the most humble and unassuming persons he has ever known. Cyrus is definitely very intelligent and one hears from Directors on Boards that he has been on, that he has the ability to disagree without being disagreeable. Another marked similarity to Ratan that one cannot miss is

that Cyrus is also a great dog-lover! He is a voracious reader and a compulsive book buyer – can never walk past a bookshop, without stopping for a quick dekho.

While Parsis around the world are understandably thrilled that one of the community continues to be at the helm, but really, in a

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Group as professional, as diversified and as international as the Tata Group, being a Parsi would have been one, but certainly not the only criterion behind the selection. At the same time, there is a sense of added comfort that some of the values that the Group has been well known for since the time of the founder, all of which have their origins in the Zoroastrian faith, will be nurtured and preserved in a Group that Cyrus heads. Many of Mumbai's elder generation of Parsis would remember that Shapoorji (Cyrus' grandfather) was a deeply religious man who never went to work in the morning without doing a round of the four Atash Behrams of Bombay and his old maroon-coloured Dodge, with the white-walled tyres and a seemingly endless stock of sukhad in the boot was a familiar sight, parked in the compounds of our fire-temples at the time. Pallonji and his siblings are also known to be very religious.

Cyrus takes over at a time when the world is going through considerable turmoil and it may be another few years before the business cycle corrects itself. It may be a time when leaders with the ability to think anew and 'unlearn' many of the unchallenged beliefs of the past will determine success hereafter. Youth, fresh ideas and the entrepreneurialism that he brings to the table will certainly help. He will also be assured of the goodwill and prayers of fellow Zoroastrians around the world who will be with him as he assumes the stewardship of this wonderful Group of companies that are admired the world over. Hamazor adds its good wishes for the young man as he takes charge!



Continued from facing page 25

Dr Shahrkini has managed to fit in time to write a history of the great library at Gennady Shahpur. His important service to the Zoroastrian community has been acknowledged by the granting of 25 awards and accolades from different bodies, including an honorary doctorate in Zoroastrian philosophy by Sepanta University in Mexico.

We congratulate Dr Shahrkini for making such heroic efforts to ensure that the voice of Iranian Zoroastrians is not lost.



*Some years after her first degree from Oxford university in MFL, her Iranian priestly background inspired her to do post graduate studies in anthropology again at Oxford university. She writes articles and is regularly invited to speak to academic audiences about Zoroastrianism, as well as takes part in Interfaith activities to promote understanding and knowledge about our religion. She is invited by radio and TV channels to speak on the subject which she does with passion. She has acted as expert witness in asylum appeal cases on behalf of Iranian Zoroastrians in the UK and in Europe. As WZO's religious affairs spokesperson she answers email queries on behalf of WZO and organises their annual seminar. Shahin is President of WZO.*

## *Payk Meher - 25 years young*

F

Farsi readers, and particularly those abroad, will be aware of the existence of this modest but unfailingly regular and lovingly compiled Farsi language news magazine which drops onto their doormat every three months.

Conceived and produced by Dr Mehraban Shahrvinī back in 1985, who like so many co-religionists had to leave Iran unexpectedly because of the intolerable conditions brought about by the Islamic Revolution. The primary purpose of the magazine was to ensure that other Zoroastrians in exile were able to keep in touch not only with the history and principles of the religion, about which articles were published, but also with news of Iranian Zoroastrians both in the very wide diaspora and also in Iran.

*by shahin bekhradnia*

It all began when Dr Shahrvinī arrived in Vancouver in 1983 and was encouraged to write for the ZSBC newsletter in Farsi by the late Jamshid Pavri (then the head of the ZSBC), as already by that time Vancouver was one of the favoured migration hotspots for Iranian Zoroastrians casting around for somewhere to make a new home.

Within two years of his arrival and the publication of his articles, Dr Shahrvinī realised that there was a demand and enthusiasm for a Farsi Zoroastrian publication from a fast expanding Zoroastrian exile community. Dr Shahrvinī's love of his religion, culture and language, inherited no doubt from his own father (the renowned Yazdi priest and poet, Mobeḍ Shahbahram e Shahrvinī), gave him the impetus to get going. The first issue containing 40 pages, and compiled with the help of five contributing writers as well as the editor in chief Dr Shahrvinī, was sent to readers in 14 cities. From these beginnings the publication began to appear



monthly in the first two years of its life though quickly it became apparent that it was more realistic to aim at quarterly issues, given the amount of work each issue involved.

Although Dr Shahrvinī initially funded the publication from his own resources, it had been hoped that readers would subscribe and send in their donations. Nevertheless as so often happens, the publication goes out nowadays to over 150 cities all over the world, no longer confined just to North America, but the financial support is not as forthcoming as one might have hoped or expected.

Notwithstanding, Dr Shahrvinī is determined to continue with his publication as long as he is able. In 1998 the Canadian Minister for Multi Culturism acknowledged his contribution and a presentation was made to Dr Shahrvinī on behalf of the minister, by the Mayor of North Vancouver. Even while keeping the community connected in so many far flung and distant corners of the world,

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In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

## *The B D Petit Parsee General Hospital*

The B D Petit Parsee General Hospital was inaugurated on 27 March 1912 and in March this year will complete 100 years of providing compassion, charity and care to our community.

The whole idea of building a hospital started with Sir Dinshaw Petit, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet who felt the need to build a hospital which would serve the small Parsi community. However, he unfortunately was not able to garner much support from other members of the community and the idea was initially dropped. Several years after his demise, his son, Seth Bomanji D Petit decided to fulfill his father's wish. He made a munificent donation of his immovable property called "Cumballa Hill Hotel" and the vast surrounding land situated on Cumballa Hill in Mumbai together with an initial amount of Rs50,000. It was then that the idea of building a hospital took a concrete step forward. Bomanji's son, Jehangir Petit, worked tirelessly and the credit of actually working to erect the hospital is attributed to him. Incidentally, it is the same Jehangir Petit who also built one of the best girls schools in Mumbai, the J B Petit High School. At present, the hospital is managed by an Executive Committee of which the present office bearers are, the President – Mr Homa D Petit, Vice President – Mrs Aban H Petit, two Joint Hon Secretaries – Mr Hector H Mehta and Mr Zarir M Bhathena, and Hon Treasurer – Mr Ardeshir Vazifdar.

### *reflections from homa petit*



Jehangir Bomanji Petit

Unbelievably, the hospital is off Warden Road, one of Mumbai's busy, premier and up market areas. The imposing building of the hospital faces a lush and beautifully maintained garden allowing the residents to be shielded from the cacophony of the hustle and bustle of Mumbai and providing them with a peaceful oasis. The large verandah overlooking the garden has comfortable seating so that a patient and relative can relax and enjoy the view.

clean clothes to wear in the premises; care by specialized doctors and housemen; care by nursing staff and lower staff; operation and after care; ICU and aftercare; and diagnostic investigation. Further, the hospital pays the entire bill in relation to those treatments and tests which cannot be carried out, such as MRI, CT scan etc., when the patients are sent to other hospitals like the Breach Candy Hospital. Unfortunately, it is not sustainable for the hospital to have an MRI or CT scan department as there aren't enough paying Parsi patients to make such investigations viable or, to even keep the machines in good working order.

For the past 100 years, the management has worked tirelessly to support an enormous amount of charity care to the poor members of our community. The free patients literally do not pay for anything which includes free beds; medicine; food;

The hospital today boasts of many excellent departments including a Radiology department with the latest x-ray machines, Eco Cardiogram and Sonography machines; a Blood Bank; Pathology

department; and Physiotherapy department. It also has four excellent operation theatres with state of the art equipments. All these facilities are sadly under utilized due to the

The free patients are nursed in bright airy wards and are provided with considerable amenities, including an overhead procedure light; fan; suction and oxygen piped gas; and call bells between two beds. The free



Aerial view of the Parsee General Hospital, Mumbai

diminishing community to keep these facilities busy.

From the 222 beds, 94 are for free patients and 25 beds are highly subsidized. During the year 2010 -2011, 54.8 percent of occupied bed days were utilized for free and highly subsidized patients. The hospital provides a substantial volume of charity care – in fact, the total cost of free medicines to the in-patients and out-patients amounted to approximately Rs107.20 lacs. This does not include paying a substantial amount for diagnostic and specialized investigation services for patients carried out at other hospitals.

patients are also provided with clean cotton pajamas and tops.

The hospital looks after the free patients so well that on many occasions they do not wish to return home after they are discharged by the doctors. In fact, elderly poor patients who have fully recovered, say that they are unable to maintain themselves at home. Many a times, sadly the children shrug off their responsibilities. Besides, occupying a bed which could be used by another deserving patient, it creates an additional financial burden on the hospital which many patients and relatives do not understand. On a lighter note, one recalls a

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla



Homa Petit was born in 1945, educated at the Cathedral & John Connon Boys High School, Bombay and thereafter joined the Sydenham College of Commerce gaining a BCom followed by an LLB from the Government Law College. After appearing for the Solicitors Professional Examination in 1970 he proceeded to London and passed the Solicitors Professional Examination of the Law Society, London and his name is borne on the Roll of Solicitors of the Supreme Court of England and Wales. Mr Petit returned in 1972, joined Messrs Gagrath & Co., becoming a partner in 1976. Mr Petit is also an Advocate of the Supreme Court of India. On dissolution of the firm in 2004, he, with some of his then partners started the firm of Vigil Juris and is presently a Senior Partner. Mr Petit is the President of The B D Petit Parsee General Hospital as well as being connected with other charities and institutions.

funny incident which the vice president encountered on one of her rounds of the free wards. She was trying to obtain feedback with regard to food. The first patient remarked, “*Mai, bhonu ekdham fikku che*” (Madam, the food is absolutely bland). She moved on to the next patient who promptly replied, “*Mai, itlu tikku che ke maari jeeb cholai jaich*” (Madam, it is so spicy that even my tongue is sore).

Moving to the third patient, she was told that the food was always excellent and far better than what they ate at home!

For the members of the community that do not require charity care, the hospital provides 60 very comfortable rooms with attached bathrooms. Each room has a TV and a very generous sized sofa for relatives or caregiver. Many a times unfortunately the affluent segment of our community do not take advantage of the hospital and admit themselves into other facilities. This again seriously affects the finances and today is proving extremely difficult to carry on with providing charity care for the indigent. The fastidiousness of our rich Parsis is best illustrated when the President, received an urgent complaint from a nursing home patient and on enquiry, he was told that although everything from the room to the care of the patient was perfect, the tray cloth did not match the crockery used for lunch and dinner!

Many individuals believe that since the hospital receives a large number of donations, it is the duty of this establishment to look after the indigent Parsis as a matter of right. However, this is a misconception – the hospital today does



not receive so many large donations so that it can cover the cost of the charity care that it is giving. Prices of medicine, food, salaries, taxes, diagnostic equipments etc., have increased to such an extent that the donations received in these days of recession, cannot in any way match the growing expenses. In fact, in the last year itself, the hospital suffered a net loss of Rs454.34 lacs after taking into account the donations and income from investments. In these difficult times, if the community wants the hospital to survive, we need to take some drastic action. Unfortunately, the average Parsi in the highly subsidized wards do not realize the benefits that they enjoy and the efforts that go into collecting money from generous donors. This is well illustrated by an incident when the Vice President met a gentleman in the concessional male ward who blessed the hospital's wonderful facilities and added, “Do you know, I have such contacts that I could have gone to any other hospital, but I felt, let me come to our hospital's concessional ward so that it can earn “*bey paisa*” (two paisa). It is therefore sadly a misconception that the free / concessional patients are bestowing a favour upon the hospital by availing of its facilities – this could not be further from the truth.

The hospital was described by the past President of the hospital, Mr Maneckji Dhunjibhoy Petit as, “a home away from home”. To illustrate this further Mr Dinshaw Petit, another past President narrated an incident where a person had been admitted, as he was grossly overweight and had been advised to lose weight to regain his health. He was admitted as a paying patient and on the first day, the gentleman concerned who was used to feasting on a Parsi “*paanch eeda no poro*” (an omelet of five eggs), was given one apple to eat for breakfast. His lunch comprised of a small portion of soup, boiled vegetables and one fruit – and not “*palao daal*” which he was otherwise used to eating. Needless to say, by teatime he was ravenous and the final straw which broke the camel’s back was when he received his tea with two “Marie” biscuits instead of his usual “*daar ni pori*” etc. His mind was working overtime on how to remedy this awful situation. He then hit upon an idea and told the nurse on duty that he had forgotten his clothes at home and was therefore going to step out for half an hour. The unsuspecting nurse agreed without a formal discharge. This routine continued for the next few days. Finally, the nurse grew suspicious, and requested a ward boy to discretely follow the gentleman. Lo and behold, he was found going across the road to the famous “scandal point” having a hearty helping of bhelpuri and mutton seekh kebabs etc. No doubt, instead of losing weight, he was actually putting on more weight!

We invite all readers to visit the website [www.bdpetitparseegeneralhospital.org](http://www.bdpetitparseegeneralhospital.org) which provides useful information on the hospital.

This hundred-year-old institution though founded and nursed by the Petit family, who have established many other charitable institutions such as J B Petit High School for Girls, Avabai Petit School, J N Petit Technical School, J N Petit Library, Sakarbai Petit Animal Hospital, sanitariums, widows’ chawls for the poor etc., has thrived on the philanthropy of the Parsi community. It is the management’s fervent

hope and prayer that generous donations will be forthcoming for this institution to survive and to continue the noble cause of caring for the health of any individual who seek its help.

Winston Churchill’s words are so apt when he said:

“We make a living with what we get, but we make a life by what we give”.



All photographs from the website of Parsee General Hospital



## “‘A Parsi by Any Other Name’: The Origin and Significance of Parsi Surnames”

In Rohinton Mistry’s novel *Such a Long Journey*, Dinshawji laments to Gustad Noble the loss of his familiar world in the change in old street names in the politicized world of modern Bombay city:

Names are so important. I grew up in Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly it’s on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life (p 96).

by jesse palsetia

The poignancy of Dinshawji’s complaint can be understood, as it represents the threat to self-identity, self-presence, and security. Yet to the observer and historian of the Parsis of India, there is something ironic in the angst, given the Parsi knack for adaptation and resiliency throughout their history from Iran to India and beyond. The one continuity in the history of the Parsis has been change, and their ability to preserve, adapt and compose a sense of identity under changing historical situations—including in the history of names.

As Rodney Ketcham notes, the study of the history of names can provide clues to the past and help better understand different cultures. It can demonstrate the orthographic originality of our forebears or their recorders, and further reflect past stages of the language, or dialectal variations which strengthen our awareness of the richness of the language as a whole. Particularly enlightening is the variation in surnames.

By definition a surname is a family name or last name, and is one that is passed **from one generation to the next, most often**

along the male line. In Europe, surnames began to be used by the 12th century, but it took several centuries before the majority of Europeans had one. The primary purpose of the surname was to further distinguish people from one another. From the 13th century, the use of the patronymic began. The patronymic identified a person by a ‘family name,’ as in ‘son of’. In some cultures, the matronymic or female name was utilized. Hence, in addition to a given first name, to uniquely identify an individual, reference was also made to their parentage or lineage as, for example, in William the son of John, leading to Johnson. A true patronymic is distinct from a surname, and may not pass down through many generations, as each new generation will have the name of its father, and the previous generation’s name being dropped. Over time, a patronymic may develop into a family surname, as an original ancestor’s name is passed down along successive generations.

The development of surnames also owed to other identifiers. Broadly, **most** surnames fall into four categories. In addition to the

family patronymic, in many cultures, names associated with occupation and the vocation of the bearer developed. In Western culture, examples include Smith, Clark, and Wright, as from metal smith, clerk, or cart wright. Originally the name may have started as for example John the smith, and developed into John Smith and Smith as the family name. The inheritance of occupational names was a logical development as societies progressed in a sociological sense from tribe to state, and societies became sedentary. Occupational specializations developed and became hereditary and lineal. In the case of some ancient cultures, such as Vedic India, occupational specialization developed religious sanction in the form of caste and subcaste.

Locational or topographic surnames also developed and derived from the place that the bearer lived or from where the original member of a family came. Examples include Hill, Woods, and Ford; as in William from the hill, later shorted to William Hill. Finally, surnames could derive from special appellations, distinguishing traits, or nicknames; for example, Red, Brown, Long, or Petit to distinguish an ancestor who was originally ruddy in complexion, or brown-haired, or long or small in proportions, respectively. All of the typologies of names would become hereditary and pass down along generations, until death of the male line or female marriage changes it.

The above four broad features are common to many cultures. In ancient India, Sanskrit patronymics appear and were the adjective form of the father or clan forefather's given name. An additional vowel was added to the first vowel in the patronymic, changing its phonology. In the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi's full name is Krishna Draupadi, or Krishna the dark skinned daughter of Drupada. Likewise, Siddhartha Gautama or the Buddha had the patronymic Gautama due to his lineage from Gotama. South India also maintained its own patronymic forms, and Muslim names in India also bear the imprint of their Indo-Middle Eastern **heritage, including father, grandfather, and family name in an individual's identity.**

There has never been a comprehensive study of Parsi surnames; however, the development of Parsi surnames share characteristics with the development of other culture's surnames and nomenclature. In the most famous of Parsi histories, written in the 19th century, Dosabhai Framji Karaka noted that "the Parsis have no surnames which go down from generation to generation in a family, as is the case among Europeans"(I: 162n). However, Karaka then proceeds to note how the Parsis utilized the process of patronymic, whereby an individual adopted the father's name following the given name, and how each generation dropped the grandfather's. He notes:

If the son is Ardeshir, and his father's name is Framji, the name he would always bear would be Ardeshir Framji. When this son attains to man's estate and a son is born to him, and supposing that he is named Pestanji, he is called Pestanji Ardeshir, and when again a son is born to Pestanji, and if he is named Jehangir, he is called Jehangir Pestanji (I: 162n).

Karaka further notes that the Parsis had the practice of adjoining 'ataks' or the name of the profession they belong to their names to further distinguish individuals from numerous similar names. Hence, Manakji Kavasji the carpenter added to his given name and patronymic the 'atak' of Sutar or Gujarati for carpenter. The 'atak' changed as new generations adopted new professions.

Karaka's account is interesting, for notwithstanding the lack of European-style surnames, the Parsis names conformed to the typology and process of adoption of names among other cultures noted above. The addition of the 'atak' by Parsis was also the beginnings of the adoption of surnames among the Parsis, including those that became fixed through the generations around a particular member of the family that first adopted a surname. Most interestingly, as evident in Karaka's examples, the Parsis combined features of their Iranian and Indian heritages. The given

 turn to p 36

## Ardeshir Cowasjee

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He lives in an old stone house, built in the 1920s, on Mary Road, in Karachi's Bath Island area – a road that luckily has so far escaped the 'developers' who have rendered Karachi into a nightmare of conglomerations of hideous concrete structures. He sits surrounded by his art collection, surveying the ample stretches of his garden. His companions at present are three Jack Russell Terriers, Billie the mother, Captain her son and Lulu her daughter who sadly went blind last year but manages to get about and around with admirable dexterity. Then there is Ben, the Australian cockatoo, who thinks he is a dog as he spends all day with them, preening their coats and generally rushing around as they go hunting in the garden. There is a house cat too, Tobey, who lives on the pantry table and ignores and is largely ignored by the dogs.

by *amina jilani*

He is Ardeshir Cowasjee, born in Karachi in April 13 1926, into the well known Cowasjee family of Karachi's Parsi community. His father, Rustom Fakirjee Cowasjee, was a ship-owner, and a leading businessman and merchant of Karachi. Ardeshir was schooled at the BVS, studied thereafter at DJ Science College, and when World War II broke out joined his family business in which his main interest was running the ships.

Ardeshir married Nancy Dinshaw in 1953. She died in London of heart related complications in 1992.

There were two children, a daughter Ava who works in the family business in Karachi and lives next door to him, and a son Rustom who is an architect in the US and visits when he can.

Ships were his passion and in the 1960s he spent three years in the UK, in Scotland,



Ardeshir with Lulu [top] & Billie, during Jashan ceremony at his home

overlooking the construction of his 'baby' the MV Ohrmazd, a passenger-cargo ship, acknowledged to be the finest ship in the Pakistan fleet when she came to Karachi and sailed between West and East Pakistan. The shipping company, East and West Steamship Co, was nationalized by the Zulfkar Ali Bhutto government in 1974 and the ships and assets taken away overnight – a very sore point with him to this day and he is still not reconciled to this loss.

Ardeshir runs an office from his house and though now retired remains in touch with all the various family businesses, Cowasjee and Sons being the main one now, looked after by his youngest brother, Cyrus, ably assisted by his partners.

He has had a fair amount of experience with dealing with governments and their

workings. In 1974, after he took the ships away, his friend Zulfikar Ali Bhutto appointed him managing director of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. It was an enjoyable post but short lived as Ardeshir is not known for his tact or diplomacy when dealing with officialdom. He then was made chairman of Port Qasim Authority and again, with his acerbic straightforward characteristics managed to alienate the powers that be and was relieved of that post. In 1976, for reasons still unknown, his friend Bhutto consigned him to Karachi Central Prison for 72 days rest and recreation. To this day, he still muses as to exactly why – probably some remark he made about Bhutto's style of governance.

During the first of the Zia ul Haq years he had a very brief stint as the general president's advisor on ports and shipping as his wit and temperament again saw to it that the posting was short lived. When Zia fell with his crate of mangos and Ardeshir's great friend Ilaahi Bakhsh Soomro as caretaker information minister freed the press from the severe restrictions imposed upon it, Ardeshir started writing letters to the editor of *Dawn*, Pakistan's leading newspaper, on various subjects concerned with human rights, press freedom, and in particular with Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and the manner in which he wished the country he had made should be governed. In 1989 his frequent writings culminated in his becoming a weekly columnist for the paper. He wrote his weekly column for 22 years, writing regularly, firstly on Fridays (when it was the official weekly holiday), and then on Sundays. In December 2011 he decided enough was enough and his last column was published on Christmas Day, also Jinnah's birthday.

As one of Pakistan's best known columnists for the lengthy period of 22 years, he has been a committed crusader (though he dislikes that word) against corruption and a dedicated campaigner against all sorts of environmental abuses, particularly the practice of land grabbing of amenity plots in Karachi and the violation of all building



At Gadani beach where mv Ohrmazd was scrapped by the government run PNSC



Ardeshir with Billie, photograph taken by one of Pakistan's foremost photographers, Tapu Javeri

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

codes, laws, rules and regulations. He wrote regularly and biting on the role of the government and administration, hand in hand with the builders' and developers' mafias, in the degradation of Karachi's environment. His exposure of corruption in his well researched columns has touched all levels, high and low. He has been equally impatient with incompetence, nepotism, outright or stealthful robbery and the total infringement of all laws in our statute books. He has spared none, from those at the pinnacle of power to the lower stooges who serve their purposes.

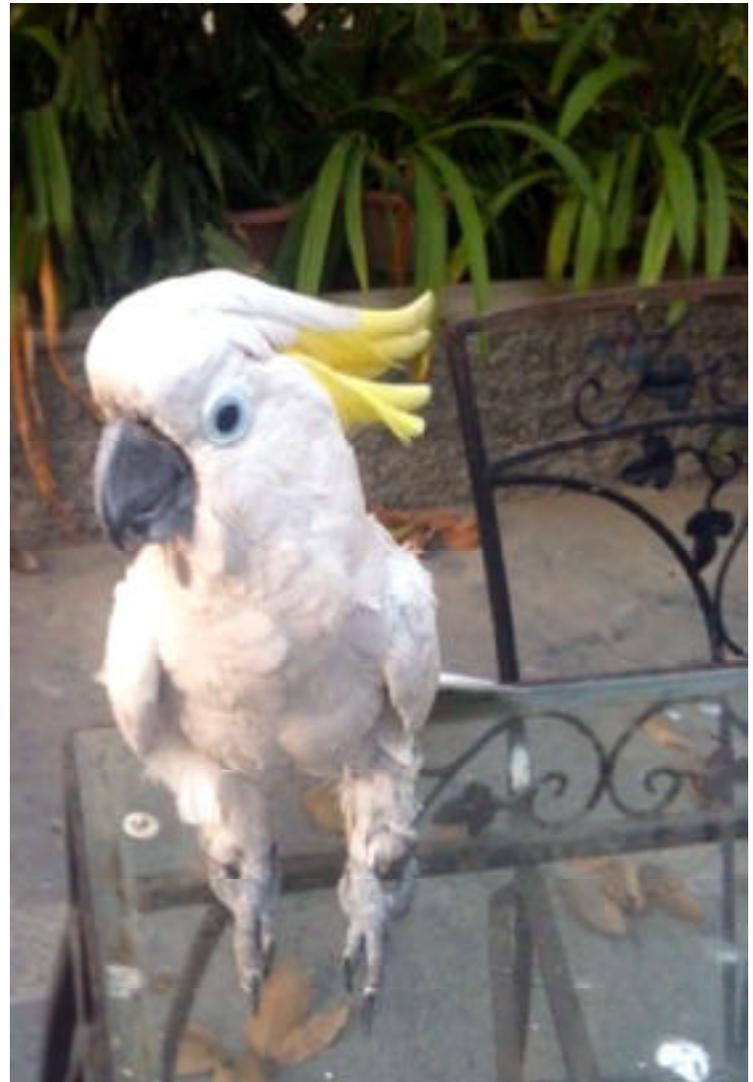
Jinnah was one of Ardeshir's main subjects in his writings and he has never failed to quote that great man, founder and maker of Pakistan, and to remind the people of what it was he wished for the country he made. Mohammad Ali Jinnah has been his guiding light, and the guiding light he has always wished to pass on to the new generations of a now benighted country.

He has made enemies, he has been threatened (as have so many others) but it has mattered not a whit and he has valiantly soldiered on. Tyrants, robbers and lawbreakers have been his target and he has written tirelessly to attempt to raise public awareness against the lawlessness and criminality that afflicts and has inflicted our society for as long as we can remember. One main target of his writings has been the vital need for an independent judiciary which can uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Not only has he been the nemesis of exploitation and corruption but his family trust fund of which he is chairman, the Cowasjee Foundation, the present trustees being his youngest brother Cyrus, Cyrus's wife Toxy and Ardeshir's daughter Ava (the latter two came in on the death in 2011 of the middle brother, Cowasjee R F Cowasjee, familiarly known as John) has been active in the philanthropy field. It has contributed towards the funding of the education of countless Pakistani students, both for higher education here and abroad, and for the schooling of children of deprived



Captain [the terrier] & Ben on the garden table during the Jashan



families. The Foundation has sponsored a TCF school, the Cowasjee Campus at Lyari in Karachi, the construction of the Cowasjee School of Midwifery at the Lady Dufferin Hospital, and a school being built on the NED University campus. Contributions have also been made to fine institutions such as SIUT where a dialysis ward and lithotripsy centre have been set up. NICVD has also benefited from the Foundation as has the Accident and Emergency Operation Unit at Jinnah Hospital, and the Dow University of Health and Sciences. A park, Bagh-e-Rustom, has been built at Clifton. Many other contributions have been made to worthy and deserving causes in the health and education field.

Reverting to his columns and his incessant attempts to awaken the nation to what it was Jinnah wanted of Pakistan, close on Jinnah's heels came the degradation of the city of his birth, Karachi. Steve Inskeep in his book on Karachi, *Instant City* (pub.2011 Penguin/Viking) when commenting on a well known encroachment into one of Karachi's open spaces, Gutter Baghicha, and a legal suit filed by an NGO in the Sindh High Court has written :

"It was not surprising that Cowasjee would attach his name to the suit. He was a constant presence in the city's debate over land use, and had managed to speak independently in Karachi for years. His eccentric columns in *Dawn* wandered from issues of municipal administration to ruminations on long dead European kings, interspersed with deadly little descriptions of powerful politicians, like the chief minister of Sindh 'with his freshly dyed Cherry Blossom hair and moustache and unchanging facial expression.' It was characteristic of Cowasjee's writing style that one of his articles in 2008 *began* with the words, 'To digress . . .'. But the digression had a sly purpose. He mocked Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari of the People's Party, for 'nepotism,' giving an aide's niece a government job. Then the columnist completely changed the subject to Gutter Baghicha. He proposed that a park there be named in honour of Zardari's martyred wife, Benazir Bhutto.

"In a single column he excoriated and flattered the president of his country . . . all the way through the column the old man was pursuing the public interest as he saw it. He opposed nepotism and also wanted to build support for the park . . . his spirit came through in his writing : 'What the few of us battling losers, concerned with open spaces and parklands in this congested overpopulated city, really want is money from those who have money and vocal support from the public, the awam, who are the ultimate grand losers when they find themselves with a city in which open spaces, parks and beaches are few and far between'."

On December 20 2011 he was given honorable recognition for his years of battling for various causes. The Jinnah Society presented him with the 2011 award for outstanding and dedicated services to Pakistan. His speech of acceptance was brief, and typical. He opened up with "A o A" which is the abbreviation for Asalaam-o-Aleikum used by official letter writers at the beginning of their missives. This was followed by, "I am overwhelmed and thank all of you who are here to waste a great deal of your valuable time."



*Amina Jilani, studied at the University of Cologne for a short stint, lived and worked at the Pak High Commission London, before returning to Karachi where she joined the Intercontinental Hotel till 1970. In 1971 she joined as a private assistant to Ardeshir Cowasjee till 1973 when she left for Paris working in an American law firm for eight years. Since about 1983 she has been working with Cowasjee running his 'home' office to date. She writes regularly for the national press.*

Photographs during Jashan, taken by niece Cyra

Continued from page 31

names cited are Iranian in origin, yet the patronymic added the Indian honorific of 'ji', and the ataks and the surnames that emerged all derive from the Indian or Gujarati names of the professions.

Parsi tradition notes the Parsis to have settled in India from Iran in the first half of the 8th century.

The arrival of the Zoroastrians to India entailed challenges, both internal and external. In relation to their external environment, the Zoroastrians now known as Parsis had to balance the extent of their integration into Indian society and their distance from it in order to preserve a sense of community and religious identity.

The history of the Parsis may well be interpreted as the attempt to preserve and shape a common community identity in India in the midst of historical change.

The settlement of the Parsis in India over centuries witnessed a pattern of response emerge, which Palsetia has characterized as 'accommodation, adaptation, and agency'. The Parsis accommodated themselves to their social environment, adapted and adopted the mechanisms of the social milieu to their requirements, and were the active agents of social change. Above all, this response dictated the Parsis' active involvement in exploiting and shaping those factors that bore directly on the welfare of the community and Parsi identity. From their accommodation to the social and caste society of traditional India, to the adoption and adaption of the panchayat model of government (an Indian institution), to the use of British legislation, to appeal to British law courts, and ultimately the Parsis' accommodation to nationalism, this pattern served the Parsis throughout their history. The Parsis pass through key phases, emerging from insular group to a highly Westernized community of pluralistic outlook. Their profile is of a highly socially adaptive community safeguarding an orthodox faith.

Whereas the Parsis developed a sense of community identity in the Indian setting, the term 'Parsi' does not appear to have been used by them in their early history in India. Parsi religious and other writings prior to the 18th century employ the term 'Zarthoshti' or 'behdin' or 'andhyaru' to describe Parsis, of lay and of priestly background. These terms convey the nature of the Parsis as defined by their religious heritage, as followers of Zarathushtra, and lay or priestly members of 'the good religion'.

In the 14th century, the first European reference to the Parsis of Western India appears in the work of the French monk Jordanus. Other Portuguese, French, Dutch and English accounts and descriptions of the 'Parsees' follow from the 16th century. Whereas, 'Parsi' has come to signify a member of the Indian Zoroastrian community and descendants, its original reference to 'Pars' as a province of Iran continues to link the Parsis of India to their Iranian roots. At the same time, it has accrued other meanings in the history of the Parsis, including a sense of cultural and ethnic identity.

The Parsis' process of both cultural adaptation and maintaining a sense of identity in India was clearly evident in the process of language and names. The Middle Persian or Pahlavi language literacy of the original Zoroastrian migrants to India was largely forgotten as the Parsis acculturated to the Indian social, cultural, and linguistic milieu. The Parsis adopted the languages of the regions and locales they settled in across India, and with a strong identification with the Gujarati of the original region of Western India they settled. The adoption of Indian languages was the most conspicuous example of the Parsis' assimilation to the Indian environment. They would over time add their own idioms and cadences to the language developing a form of Parsi Gujarati.

Parsi names and surnames reflected the interplay of Iranian and Indian cultures on the Parsis. The Parsis maintained a tradition of using Iranian given names

derived from Zoroastrian religious works or Iranian folklore. Among the religiously-based names may include the various names or the attributes of Ahura Mazda, the Yazatas (Adorable Ones), the six Ameshaspenta or 'Holy Immortals'. The Ameshaspenta include equally three male and three female attributes of God, and it is principally the two female names of Ameretat and Armaiti that were adopted as Parsi given names for girls. Parsi given names also derived from Iranian folklore and principally the post-Zoroastrian yet avowedly Iranian nationalist epic work the *Shahnama*. The names of the great heroes of Sam, Rustom, as well as royal names were and continue to be adopted by the Parsis.

Parsi given names also reflected the impact of the Indian social environment. Karaka notes how Parsis adopted the Indian custom or superstition to have either a Parsi or a Brahman 'joshi' or astrologer come a week after a child's birth and offer the names or consonants from which names may be chosen according to the affinity of the stars under whose influence the child was born, and the parents making the choice of one of them according to their preference. Whereas this is a superstition from the past, variants of this persist as quaint practice among modern Parsis.

Female given names in particular derive from the Gujarati, as for example from the names of flowers and jewels like Gulbai, Hirabai, and Sunabai. Furthermore, many of the Iranian-based names were Indianized and up to the twentieth century included the affix 'ji'. Significantly, unlike the Zoroastrians of Iran, the Parsis dropped or did not adopt the style of modern Iranian surnames, including such affixes as:

-i (of), zad and -zadeh (born of), -pur (son of), -nejad (from the race of), -nia (descendant of), -mand, -vand, -far (holder of), -doost (friend), -khah (seeking of), -mannesh, -ian/-yan and -chi (vocalic endings). Unlike the Iranians, the Parsis also adopted the male patronymic for females.

The process of accommodation, adaptation, and agency the Parsis followed since their

settlement in India continued to be followed in the colonial period. However, as with all other aspects of their history, it is in colonial times that the development of Parsi names and surnames gain a prominence. The colonial period was instrumental in transforming the economic, educational, and social state of the Parsis, as their ties and collaboration with British imperialism benefited individual Parsis and the community as a whole materially, and shaped a new cultural imprint. Parsi-British contact on a steady basis began by the early 18th century. Both fledgling commercial groups, the historical circumstances favoured their mutual cooperation. From the 17th to the 19th century, Parsis functioned as hawkers and traders, provision and supply agents, contractors, revenue collectors, bankers and brokers, and shipbuilders for the European and British trading interests.

The rise of Bombay as a British trading and political centre further favoured Parsi fortunes and the development of names. Many of the first Parsis to come to Bombay to make their fortune and name were the founders of great families closely connected with the development of the Parsi community. These Parsis were honoured with titles and rewards from the British. They assisted the arrival of other Parsis to Bombay, and were regarded as the leaders of the Parsi community starting the Parsi Panchayet or internal government of the Parsis at Bombay. Whereas two generations previously the leaders of the Parsi community in provincial Gujarat had been the priests, the exigencies of the new setting worked to elevate those with material resources and contacts to the status of leaders. The Patel, Banaji, Modi, Manock, Kama, Wadia, Dadiseth, Petit, Readymoney, and Jejeebhoy families emerged as some of the Parsi community and Bombay's most prominent names. The meaning and origin of these names is not clear. The names do not derive from place names, as all the original members hailed from towns and villages in provincial Western India, principally near Surat, unconnected to the family name. At the

same time, all the names bear a sense of their Indian origins and adaptations.

Dorabji Nanabhai (d. 1688) is regarded as one of the earliest residents of Bombay, and served the British collecting a tax on migrants to the city. His son Rustamji Dorabji also served the British and defended Bombay from raids by the Sidis during a cholera epidemic. In recognition of his services, the British made him a revenue collector and bestowed on Rustamji the hereditary title of 'patel' or chief, which the family took as its surname. Rustamji's son, Cowasji Rustamji Patel played a prominent role in the development of Bombay and service to the Parsi community.

Banaji Limji came to Bombay in 1690 from Bhagvandadi near Surat. He would build one of the first Parsi *adarans* or fire temples at Bombay, and his descendants were traders who patronized Bombay and the Parsi community. The Modis were of priestly background and were community leaders in Gujarat, and probably took their surname, from 'modi' meaning a grain or produce merchant, from their association with East India Factory in Surat as house stewards and supply agents. The founder of the Manock family, Rustam was the premier Parsi broker-merchant of the early to mid-18th century in provincial Western India, and his sons became important benefactors of the Parsis at Bombay. Kamaji Kuverji was the founder of the Kama family who came to Bombay from Tena, near Surat, in 1735 and died in 1773. His sons and descendants were pioneers in the China trade and were prominent in the history of Bombay. Kama became the family surname. It has a sense of Indian adoption, as 'kama' is one of the four *purusharthas* or goals of life; however, it may also be a corruption of the Iranian Kavasi. The Banaji and Kama family surnames appear to have emerged from the given names of the member of the family originally significant in the family history.

Percival Spear noted that "the Parsi shipbuilder rather than the English merchant was the true maker of Bombay"

(p. 71). The arrival in 1735 of Lowji Nasarvanji Wadia by invitation as shipbuilder and later master builder to the British in Bombay from Surat, witnessed the growth of Bombay as a major trading and industrial centre. The name Wadia became associated with shipbuilding and great wealth, leadership, and charity. Successive Wadias were members of the Parsi Panchayet of Bombay, and the Parsi community's patrons. The Dadiseth family took its name from Dadibhai Nasarvanji who was a great trader. 'Seth' or 'shet', which may be variously translated as 'boss' or 'head' or 'great', was a descriptor for individual prominent men, and as a class the prominent Indians of Bombay were referred to as 'shetias'. Nasarvanji Kavasji Petit, the founder of the family, came to Bombay from Surat in 1784, and was a supply agent and interpreter for the British, French and Dutch trading companies. He took his surname from the nickname of 'petit', the French attached to him for his slight build. Hirji Jivanji was the second of three brothers who opened trade between the Parsis and China, and owned several trading ships. They adopted the conspicuous moniker and eventual surname of 'Readymoney' on account of their wealth and charity.

Perhaps the most famous of Parsis of the first half of the 19th century was Jamsetji Jejeebhoy. Jejeebhoy was a China trader, member of the Parsi Panchayet and influential citizen and philanthropist. Named Jamshed by his father and mother Jejeebhoy and Jeevibai Vatcha, Jamsetji was the twelfth paternal generation from the recorded founder of the family Maiaji. It was from Jejeebhoy's great-great grandfather Vatchaji that the family assumed the surname Vatcha. Jejeebhoy Vatcha was a weaver in Navsari, and his mother Jeevibai was the daughter of Dhunjibhai Cowasji Dantra. In 1799, Jamsetji Jejeebhoy permanently settled in Bombay as a young man of sixteen, and was apprenticed by his maternal uncle Framji Nusserwanji, later to be his father-in-law. Jejeebhoy began on the road to self-made status by collecting and selling empty bottles. His contact with

Indians transformed his name from the Persian Jamshed to the Gujarati Jamsetji, and his trade in bottles now earned him the appellation or surname of Batliwala or Bottlewaller (trader in bottles). Jejeebhoy at times signed letters and business documents with the moniker; and Batliwalla was the surname the Parsis often associated with Jamsetji Jejeebhoy. In 1842 Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy became the first Indian knight and in 1857 the first Indian baronet, in recognition by the British of his many acts of charity, which at the time of his death in 1859 totalled in excess of £245,000. The Jamsetji Jejeebhoy name was passed down in perpetuity through the surviving first born male.

The settlement of Parsis at Bombay witnessed the growth of surname. Parsis adopted the surnames of the original towns, villages, and hamlets they came from as their family name, as well as assumed 'ataks' or incipient surnames of the professions they took up in the urban setting. By the 19th century, Parsi merchants and businessmen controlled an extensive commercial enterprise in Bombay and Western India that encompassed every scale of business activity. From the second half of the 19th to the 20th century, Parsi enterprise built on the accomplishments of previous generations. Names such as Davar, Petit, Tata, and Godrej became associated with the banking, insurance, cotton, and manufacturing industries.

Furthermore, as Parsi enterprise spread out across India and overseas, certain Parsi surnames became particularly associated with these centres of activity. Names such as Choksi, Mehta, Clubwala, Madan, Umrigar, and Chinoy were connected to parts of central, eastern and southern India. Parsis also adopted new surnames associated with the locales of the imperial era. The family Adenwalla took its name from the place the trader Cowasji Shavakshaw Dinshaw made a centre of business from the middle of the 19th century. A small community of Parsis established itself in Aden where Cowasji Dinshaw (Adenwalla) traded from Britain, India, and the Indian Ocean ports, and had a fire temple consecrated.

The new trades of the industrial era also shaped Parsi surnames. The carbonation of water and its sale produced the unique name of Sodawaterwala for the merchant who sold it; and its upshot in the singularly unusual and rare though eminently logical name of Sodawaterbottleopenerwala. Whereas such names appear quaint at best and ridiculously apish of Western idioms at worst, the adoption of such names by some Indians, and Parsis in particular was a reflection of Parsi ingenuity and agency to be involved in the rise of new and innovative industries and trades in India of the industrial era.

From the 19th century, the growing influence of the English language and British culture among the Parsis led to the Anglicization of Parsi customs, manners, and surnames, as Parsis either anglicised their surnames or took up uniquely English names. Doctor, Engineer, Printer, Writer, Cooper, Austin and other names were adopted by Parsis, as well as other Indians. Unique 'Indian-English' surnames also emerged at this time such as Bonesetter and Screwala. Again, these names were expressions of the advanced educational and social state of the Parsis to produce individuals trained in the professions or at the least with aspirations towards them.

The changes in Parsi names over the course of a century reflected the emergence of an adaptive community of pluralistic outlook. By the late 19th century, the Parsi community was one of the most urbanized, educated, and Westernized of Indian communities. Parsis were involved in all areas of economic, social, cultural and political activity. An individual such as Dadabhai Naoroji was a founding member of the early Indian nationalist movement. Born in Bombay in 1825, Dadabhai was the son of Naoroji Palanji Dordi and Maneckbai. Whereas Dadabhai was always referred to as Dadabhai Naoroji, or affectionately as DN, or honoured by the Indian nationalists as 'the Grand Old Man of India', Dadabhai noted that he came from the 'Dordi' family. 'Dordi', meaning a tough, coarse rope became a telling metaphor for the



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indomitable will and strength that Dadabhai brought to his life's work. Dadabhai was one of the first Indian professors at the Elphinstone Institution in Bombay, teaching mathematics and natural philosophy. He ran for a seat in the British parliament in 1886 unsuccessfully, and again ran and won a seat in 1892. The alliances he had formed while in Britain among Indians and British, and the good example he set were expressions of an educated Parsi's ability to function in any cultural and political setting. Dadabhai won his second election with the a small number of votes, though the difficulty many British had in pronouncing his name was eased as he affectionately became known as Dadabhai 'Narrow Majority'.

The study of Parsi names and surnames, their distribution and their currency provides an interesting and informative insight into the nature of a unique people and community. Whereas the Parsis of India and the diaspora have distinguished themselves in multitudinous areas of endeavour, 'what's in a Parsi name?' tells many a story.

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## The Padma Awards – 2012

The Indian Government announced the 2012 list of awardees on Republic Day for the highest civilian awards that the country bestows upon individuals. Three distinguished Parsis were amongst the list of 109 awardees.

### Dr Noshir H Wadia Padma Bhushan for Medicine & Neurology

An eminent Neurologist from Mumbai, is one of the most respected and leading personalities of Neurology not only in India but the world.



### Dr Homi K Bhabha Padma Bhushan for Literature & Education

Dr Bhabha is the Anne F Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language, and the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University. He is one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies.



### Yezeri Hirji Malegam Padma Shri for Public Affairs

Mr Malegam, is an eminent chartered accountant and currently the Chairman of National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards. He was the president of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India from 1979 to 1980.



“*When the cause is good – the means will follow*” -

Reflections on Dr Jamshed Bhabha and the National Centre Performing Arts in Mumbai

In the last six months we have had reason to be reminded once more of the extraordinary generosity of Dr Jamshed Bhabha. The bequeathing of his entire estate to the NCPA has resulted in a number of public auctions and Mumbai seems to have been transfixed again by the trappings left behind by this extraordinary man. When asked to write about the NCPA, but in particular Jamshed Bhabha – I found myself reluctant – for there were so many others whom I felt could have provided a more poignant view of the man that he was. And then I remembered, that - as fate would have it – my first connection with the NCPA in February of 2007 allowed me the honour of meeting him and shaking his hand during the second season of the newly formed Symphony Orchestra of India. And so, I am charged by his motto – “*When the cause is good – the means will follow*”. The physically frail man that I met on that wonderful evening was as ever, sharp as a whip – and somewhere in the aura surrounding him one could determine a life force that was different and somehow larger than most. It is this life force that draws me to his story – and it is this life force that informs the historical record that follows.

by zane dalal

The story of the NCPA begins with Dr Bhabha – because it was his idea. Not only his idea, but his ‘selling of the idea’ – that it was time for India, important for India and necessary for India to have a performing arts platform for the preservation and projection of culture in society. And so, in 1965 with blessings of the Government of Maharashtra – the temporary set up at 89 Bhulabhai Desai Road was incorporated and the search for land suitable for such a project began. Frustrated with unsuitable suggestions and wanting to provide a Civic Centre that was accessible to all – Dr Bhabha created land where there was none, reclaiming approximately eight acres from the sea and opening up a superb promontory at Nariman Point – now prime real estate under a 99 year lease from the State Government. No doubt, there were like minds to help – and Dr Bhabha had the indomitable clout of Bombay House (Tata HQ) behind him and an unassailable relationship of mutual respect and friendship with the great JRD (Tata). But no matter the help and the good intent –



Above - reclaimed land for the future NCPA.

Left - JRD laying the foundation stone

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

one needs an iron will, invincible determination to see things through and an inability to tolerate obstacles – all of which Jamshed Bhabha displayed on a daily basis – creating a mystique around his success, paeans of praise from supporters and plenty of displeasure from detractors. It was clear that there was to be only one way – his way!

I may get into trouble for citing these analogies, but in the history of institutions and countries, where democracy has not evolved into a blossoming process, communities and their aspirations have been best served by benevolent dictatorship. In the context of the Performing Arts, this analogy may not give enough credit to the countless volunteer boards and groups that concentrically contribute to great organizations, - like the great group of women who presided over the building of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, or the great groups of women who are the driving force behind the Chicago Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, or the Metropolitan Opera. Mumbai had its great ladies involved in all sorts of philanthropic activity and they got due recognition from the international roster they entertained, but Dr Bhabha specifically did not want this process for the NCPA. Conciliar rule by committee lost out to a more 'Papal' style of governance with strict adherence to the *magisterium*. One may not always agree with this form of governance, but we cannot argue that it provides strategically impregnable results. It was with this authority that Dr Bhabha set about making the NCPA a reality. Major patrons were courted, world famous architects and acousticians were hired, and the platform of excellence for which the NCPA is known – came to fruition with the TATA Theatre – inaugurated in October 1980 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Soon to follow were the 'Experimental' Theatre, the 'Godrej Dance Academy' and the 'Piramal' Gallery. In a very short time, it seemed, the NCPA had risen from the water to become a functional Performing Arts Centre. The indomitable spirit of Dr Bhabha is perhaps best shown in the building of the



Dr Jamshed J Bhabha



Entrance to the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre

Opera House that bears his name, the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre. Nearing total completion – on New Years Eve 1998 the building was gutted by fire caused by an electrical short circuit. The following morning, with the smoldering embers still giving heat – Dr Bhabha called a meeting – and without laying blame or heady speeches, said "Tomorrow we start reconstruction". A year later, on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1999 the JBT as it's affectionately known - the crown jewel of the NCPA campus was inaugurated.

Today, it serves as a versatile, modern, international theatre and when the acoustic shell is up – as the home of the newly formed Symphony Orchestra of India.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Dr Bhabha – was to ensure that his legacy would be well supported. This was, of course, not just in financial support – but in the vision for the future when he chose his successor to take on the responsibilities of the NCPA. There is a wonderful story to be told of the close working relationship between Khushroo Suntook and Jamshed Bhabha – which cannot be achieved in the scope of the present article. Suffice it to say, that the exponential expansion of the NCPA's cultural activities; its global outreach; its educational initiatives and its grand revitalization of many areas, have all taken place in the last five years.

Some of these areas include Indian Music, Indian Dance, Indian Theatre, International Theatre and Film, Photography, its great Library collections – its over 500 varied performances a year – and of course the whole fabric that is the Symphony Orchestra of India – none of which would be possible, nor have come thus far without Khushroo Suntook at the helm. I have had the pleasure of witnessing this explosion of artistic and cultural offering first hand. My years in Mumbai thus far, as part of the team at the NCPA, have coincided almost exactly with the Chairmanship of Khushroo Suntook and in my estimation Dr Bhabha would be delighted with his stewardship.

So what lies ahead? Beyond buildings, theatres, libraries and assets there lies ahead an exciting period of growth as the NCPA, Mumbai finds its global footprint. Our ability to stage internationally acclaimed productions of opera have been tried and tested. In 2008 the NCPA produced Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* – and followed in 2010 with Puccini's *Tosca*. This February, 2012 we will stage the famous double bill *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I*



The JBT stage with seating

#### *Pagliacci.*

These giant undertakings would not be possible without the fully professional Symphony Orchestra of India in the pit. Now entering it's twelfth season – the orchestra provides Mumbaikers with a series of concerts twice a year, which have been a



Khushroo Suntook

source of pride for the NCPA, the city and the nation. The love and support for Western Classical music in Mumbai is a long standing tradition. Khushroo Suntook recognized that it was long overdue for a local orchestra to play at an international standard – at last providing Mumbai with that orchestral cultural jewel in August 2006.



Zane Dalal has served as Resident Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of India since 2007 – and is a member of the management team at the NCPA, Mumbai.

The fact that the Symphony Orchestra of India has not compromised on its standards and is in the process of 'spreading its wings' has not gone unnoticed by the international music community. Our alliances in the Asian Pacific region, along with our growing number of friends in Europe and the United States are testament to this new age of growth. These alliances also point up the need for vigilance and constant reevaluation. The more we interact with our counterparts in Performing Arts Institutions across the globe, the more we learn about good practices that attain good results. We also realize that we face the same problems that face the global artistic community. In this day and age, of immediate gratification, instant war and shallow temperament, those of us who are artistically involved seem to have a hard time convincing the general populous that what we do is vitally important. Societies are judged by the culture they preserve. Cities are judged by the culture they support. Nations prove their global stability and prosperity by projecting cultural excellence. On the banks of the Arabian Sea – where neighbours sometimes lose sight of what might be important in civilized, progressive, democratic society – India has the perfect example of what is possible. Against the odds – and perhaps against modern global trends, the NCPA, Mumbai will continue to provide a platform of excellence for any and all Performing Art. There is a rich Indian cultural heritage that completely occupies the national psyche. There is much reason to enrich this heritage with opportunities to witness and engage in international culture and by doing so strengthen the bonds of global humanity.

What could be more important? If some might be daunted by the road that lies ahead – it is worth remembering – "*Where the cause is good – the means will follow*".

**Zane Dalal © 2011**



Photographs courtesy of Rashmi Dhanwani, PR & Corporate Communications, NCPA

## Rudy Cotton

by Soli Sorabjee  
President, Capital Jazz, New Delhi

**t**he musical nom de plume, Rudy Cotton, led many people to believe that India's ace musician was an Anglo-Indian. In truth he was a Parsi Zoroastrian named Cavas Khatau. His Parsi Zoroastrian father, Jehangirji Khatau was the producer of one of the now obsolete Gujarati 'natak' companies. Rudy started his musical career playing the trumpet with a musical group accompanying the theatricals organised by his father. Soon Rudy switched to tenor-sax.

Rudy was a member of the great Teddy Weatherford's band when it played in India. He is featured as the tenor sax in Columbia recordings of Weatherford's band in Calcutta in May 1943 and May 1944.

Some of the finest music Rudy made was with his legendary band at Hackman's in Mussoorie during World War II. He had with him Pat Blake, Danny Salvador and Frank Fernand on trumpets, Johnny Gomes on alto, George Bennet on tenor sax, Solo Jacobs on piano, Carl Evans on bass and Leslie Weekes on drums.

In my college days (1946-52) I had heard a lot about Rudy Cotton. The first time I saw, heard and observed Rudy in person was in April 1953 in Bombay. He was specially flown in from Calcutta to perform at an 'All-band Swing Concert' at the Taj. The concert was a big band affair with five saxes, two clarinets, three trumpets, two trombones and a full rhythm section. Rudy played only a few tunes. I was quite disappointed. He was nowhere near what I had expected. He appeared tired and was off colour.

Later in the evening I received a telephone call that an impromptu jam session was arranged at Bipin Patel's cottage in Chembur which was then a quiet, undeveloped part of Bombay, unravaged by



Rudy Cotton [presumed on left]. Only image found on the Internet  
<http://www.tajmahalfoxtrot.com/> - Ed

property developers. I was in two minds about going but was persuaded. And thank God for that. The jam session at Bipins in Chembur was one of the most exciting live sessions I have witnessed. Rudy was then in top form. He took a number of solos. His tone and his phrasing were so close to the great tenor saxophonist Lester Young (Prez) that I could have sworn I was listening to one of Prez' recordings. Rudy had a natural talent for busking and he was inspired by the other fine musicians who jammed with him. It was an unforgettable musical experience. The musicians started with a tune and then took a succession of choruses, totally spontaneous and improvised. Each melody lasted about forty to fifty minutes, and was just an excuse for expressing the individuality of the performers. It became clear that there were no jazz compositions, only jazz musicians who played them. A jazz musician does not express the musical thoughts and ideas of the composer. He is his own composer. After that Chembur session there could be no doubt that Rudy was the greatest living tenor saxophonist in India.

Improvisation is of the essence of jazz and improvisation came naturally to Rudy. At one of the afternoon performances in a Delhi restaurant, Laguna, in the fifties the band started with the standard tune "Undecided". It is said that Rudy's tenor solos lasted for forty swinging minutes. This was one of his breath-taking performances.

At that time technology was not advanced and unfortunately we have no recording of that performance.

In early seventies I used to meet Rudy occasionally at the Oberoi in New Delhi when I came from Bombay for my cases in the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court. Rudy was no more than a close acquaintance. Close friendship developed after April 1977 when I permanently stayed in New Delhi after assuming the office of Additional Solicitor General for India. It was then that I came closer to Rudy the man and the musician.

Rudy and I would be together about two or three evenings in a week. He talked about many matters: music and the woes of local musicians who were sick or out of employment or otherwise in trouble; the present day attitude of hotel managements towards musicians; corrupt politicians and rapacious landlords of New Delhi; the nouveau riche flaunting their ill-gotten gains at hotels and restaurants and making silly requests for pop tunes to jazz musicians; the lack of discipline everywhere. Rudy attached great importance to discipline. Listening with Rudy to jazz musicians on records like Lester and Billie Holliday, Stan Getz and Dizzy et al, was a stimulating experience enriched by his knowledgeable remarks about the musicians, anecdotes connected with them and the tunes they played. On one occasion he disagreed with the liner notes on the jacket of the record about the sequence of entry of Buddy Tate and Lester Young in the tune 'Taxi War Dance'. I checked it out. Rudy was right. Our conversation would end when the clock struck 7:30 because like a disciplined soldier he had to be in his seat at 8:00, ready to begin at the Captain's Cabin at the Taj Hotel at New Delhi where he played for a considerable time.

Rudy had the honour of opening the first Jazz Yatra in Bombay on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1978 by blowing the first note of his composition which was an adaptation of the Hindustani classical *Sone Raag* which was at one time the signature tune of the All India Radio.

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

The catholicity of his musical taste was remarkable. Essentially he enjoyed swing music, the big bands of Jimmy Lunceford and Duke Ellington and, above all, Count Basie. But he liked to keep abreast and was keen to listen to the latest recordings. He also liked classical music and enjoyed listening to Wynton Marsalis playing Haydn's trumpet concerto. He did not particularly care for free jazz or avant-garde music with its heavy emphasis on technique at the expense of tune and melody. But he was not harsh in his criticism. His comment would be, "those are very good musicians. Unfortunately I cannot understand what they are playing. But that does not mean that the music is not good." Intellectual humility was Rudy's outstanding trait.

Rudy's name and fame had spread far and wide. In India he was Mr Tenor Sax. I was agreeably surprised when Bill Coleman, a famous American jazz musician, inquired of me when I met him in Paris: Is that guy Rudy Cotton still swinging?

One of Rudy's remarkable qualities was his concern for fellow musicians. If he asked for a favour, it was not for himself but for helping another fellow musician in trouble, usually with his landlord or with the hotel management. He was a true god-father to fellow musicians in Delhi. He always had a word of praise and encouragement for the up-and-coming young musicians. Jealousy was alien to his warm heart.

The other facet of Rudy was his sense of humour which had a Parsi touch about it. He had jokes for all occasions and for persons of different ages and backgrounds. As a raconteur he was par excellence. It was a treat to watch him relate incidents, his eyes, his gestures, his movements. One of his corny jokes, which my youngest son Hormazd, enjoyed was "God asked Moses to come forth; he slipped on a banana skin, came fifth and lost the race".

Rudy's health gave him quite a lot of trouble. He would be miserable during the cold months and the return journey home on a scooter at one in the morning made

him feel terrible. But he needed to earn a living even in his old age. Many of his friends know about his bouts with the bottle, his scrapes and his inspired performances. Few know that he gave up drinking, except for a small one on his off days. A chain smoker, in later years he completely gave up smoking which, alas, by that time had played havoc with his lungs.

Zubin Mehta, the renowned Parsi musical conductor has made tremendous contribution to the world of classical music. Rudy Cotton, another Parsi musician, has left his footprints on the world of jazz in India. A true legend known for his legendary sartorial tastes, his legendary appreciation of feminine charm and beauty, his legendary prowess as a jazz musician and his legendary solos on the tenor sax.

Rudy passed away at night on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1985 at his small Jangpura room in Delhi. He rests in the Parsi Cemetery in Delhi. He is remembered fondly by his contemporary jazz musicians many of whom have departed from our midst. His music and memory are cherished by jazz aficionados of my generation, which sadly is a dwindling tribe.



*Soli Jehangir Sorabjee born in March 1930. Educated in St Xavier's School and College and Government Law College Bombay. Started legal practice 1953, became Solicitor General for India, 1977-1979; Attorney General for India, 1989-1990 and 1998-2004. He has appeared in leading*

*constitutional cases in the Supreme Court especially those relating to the freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Writes a regular column in a national daily. Conferred Padma Vibhushan [the second highest civilian award of the nation] in March 2002. Apart from law his keen interest are literature and music particularly jazz.*

## Selected reflections on the Game of Cricket

### Cricket & its Legends:

When one thinks about the game of cricket, words such as sixer, century, hat-trick, ashes, test match, and world cup come to mind. The game of cricket is filled with excitement and entertainment, especially when rival teams such as England vs. Australia or India vs. Pakistan play each other. For many die-hard fans, the game of cricket is a religion where devotion is intense, enthusiasm is obsessive, and passions run high.

Cricket, like other sports has its legends who have made the sport what it is today. Legends like Don Bradman and Dennis Lillee of Australia; John Hobbs and Len Hutton of England; Gary Sobers and Vivian Richards of West Indies; Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar of India; Richard Hadlee of New Zealand; Imran Khan and Javid Miadad of Pakistan; Muttiah Muralitharan of Sri Lanka, Jacques Kallis of South Africa. These and others have raised the bar and contributed tremendously to the standard of modern-day cricket playing.

*by shahrokh mehta*

The origin and roots of cricket playing go back to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century England. It was the English colonists that introduced cricket to North America and West Indies, while sailors and traders of the East India Company took the game into the Indian subcontinent. Traditional cricket playing countries like England, Australia, India, Pakistan, West Indies were later joined by others like New Zealand, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ireland, Netherlands and Kenya to make it the global game it is today. Like all sports, cricket has evolved over the decades from the slow-moving five-day test matches, where players generally wore whites and the familiar solar hats to the fast-paced one-day International (ODI) globally-televised matches watched by millions of cricket fans across the world in real time, where players wear now colourful uniforms and head-protection gear. The excitement and euphoria created by cricket today is incomparable, especially when a bowler like Jeff Thompson of Australia is clocked at 160.1 km/h (100.0 mph); and batsmen like Herschelle Gibbs of South Africa and Ravi Shastri and Yuvraj Singh of India have hit

six sixes in one over [36 runs in six consecutive balls]. And thus, cricket continues to be elevated to a new level of brilliance. The players are not just players anymore, but machines of strength and grace. They are their countries' heroes and their names have become legendary and immortalized. The prize money and gifts donated by private donors for players' performances have been unprecedented to the game. For example, Yuvraj Singh received \$250K and a Porsche 911 for his phenomenal "one over" performance of a T-20 World Cup in 2007.

For over a century the game of cricket was labeled as 'game of gentlemen' until of course the past decade or so, where the gentlemen's sport at times has been unfortunately marked by ungentlemanly behaviours, corruptions and in some rare instances – match fixing accusations.

With the introduction of one-day International (ODI) cricket events in 1971 and the world cup series in 1975, the game has become a world-wide event for

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

television and online streaming audiences – live and in real-time as new heroes of ODI emerge. Satellite dishes have become prevalent at homes of die-hard cricket fans throughout the world, including in countries like the United States, Canada and European nations with large immigrant populations. Personalities such as Michael Bevan and Ricky Ponting of Australia; Brian Lara of West Indies; Sanath Jayasuriya of Sri Lanka; Mohammad Azharuddin, Sourav Ganguly, and Rahul Dravid of India; Hashim Amla and Shaun Pollock of South Africa; Daniel Vettori of New Zealand; Saeed Anwar, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Yousuf and Shahid Afridi of Pakistan have become international heroes of ODI cricket. But, the name of contemporary cricket legend, Sachin Tendulkar of India remains in forefront in ODI cricket, considered by many as one of the greatest batsmen in history of cricket.

### Parsi Cricketers:

The tiny Parsi community in India was a pioneer in many cultural, political, artistic and sports-related activities including

cricket. It was the Parsis who took up playing cricket as far back as in 1840s, forming the first Parsi Cricket Club (the Oriental Cricket Club) in 1848. Also the first-ever team from India to tour England in 1886 consisted of all Parsi players, which subsequently paved the way for the English teams to visit and play in India.

Parsi cricket players of the time (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) were quite comfortable in playing with *bandis* and *pyjamas*. The Parsi players wore (tied) handkerchiefs on their heads to keep off the heat of the burning sun. Interestingly, wearing of the sun or solar hats (as worn by the local English players) was forbidden by the strict Parsi orthodoxy.

The London newspaper 'Graphic' of 10<sup>th</sup> August 1878, wrote as follows about the impending visit of the Parsi team from the Raj: *"It is not everywhere, however, that John Bull finds any of the natives inclined to join in the sport; they are generally content to 'assist' in the French sense of the world, by simply looking on. There are, nevertheless, exceptions to the rule, and in*



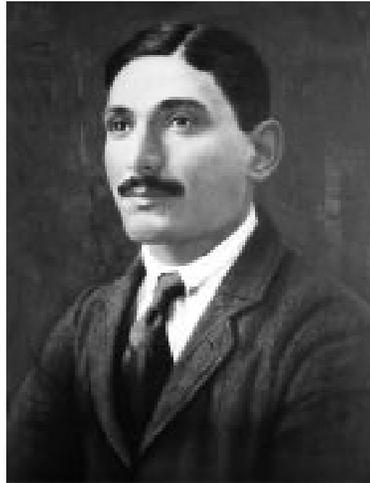
*the Bombay Presidency the Parsees, who have for long shown themselves superior to the prejudices with which other Indian races are more or less fettered, have come out quite strong cricketers. Before long, it is humoured a Parsee eleven will visit our shores for the purpose of contending with us on our native turf. We have already received several severe drubbings in the cricket field from our Australian cousins, perhaps next we are destined to be knocked (cricketically) into a cocked hat by the descendants of the Fire Worshippers of Persia."*

It is interesting to note, that the all Parsi Cricket team that visited England as far back as 1886 and captained by Dr Dhunjishaw H Patel, was composed of Parsi gentlemen who could afford to pay their own expenses, and this may speak well of the enthusiasm and sporting spirit of these pioneer Parsi cricketers. The tour to England was labeled as 'educational' as there were little expectations. Of the 28 matches played, only one resulted in victory for the Parsi team, with 19 losses and 8 matches drawn. The highlights of the tour included playing at the special request of Queen Victoria, against Prince Christian Victor's Eleven at the Windsor Great Park. The little success of the Parsi team on the cricket field was well compensated by the very favourable impression which the Parsi team made on the English sporting public resulting in strong ties between lovers of cricket in both countries. Three members of the team were from Karachi – P D Dastur, Dadabhoy D Khambatta and Burjorji Bala.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Parsis in India, who pioneered cricket almost one hundred years earlier, continued to lead and dominate Indian cricket. Parsi cricketer Homi J Vajifdar was the captain of the Parsi Quadrangular Team in 1925 and also the 'The Bombay Presidency Cricket XI' that played against the visiting MCC (Melbourne Cricket Club) team in 1933. Homi, also captained the Bombay City Team against the MCC in the same year. India was first officially invited into The 'Imperial Cricket Club Council' in 1926 and

made its debut as a Test-cricket-playing-nation in 1932, led by Major C K Nayudu. The match was given Test status despite being only three days in length.

"Older" fans, especially Parsi/Zoroastrians from India/Pakistan, will recall legendary cricketers like Polly Umrigar, Nari Contractor and Farrukh Engineer. For Parsis in Pakistan, the names of Parsi legendary cricketers such as Nadirshah M Dinshaw, Maneck P Dastur and Manchi Mobed in the 1930s and 1940s come to mind. At the Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI) an all Parsi ladies cricket team was formed in the early 1930s and remained active for



Maneck P Dastur



Manchi Mobed



Rusi N Dinshaw



Homee F Mobed

many years. In the 1950s and 1960s, players such as Rusi Dinshaw and Homee Mobed (both were sent by Pakistan Cricket Control Board for training in UK's prestigious

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Alf Gover's cricket school in Wandsworth, England) dominated Parsi cricket.

In addition, according to *Rohit Kulkarni*, the director of a documentary film, "*Pitch of*



Karachi Parsi Institute's (KPI) all Parsi ladies cricket team formed in the early 1930s

### Sources & Acknowledgements:

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Parsis & Sports (H D Darukhanawala)  
Facebook (Delkash Shahriarian)  
Photographs of Karachi cricketers (Toxy Cowasjee)

In the early 1950s, and 1960s, Parsi cricket commentator Jamsheed Maker (along with Omer Kureishi) pioneered the ball-by-ball commentary into the homes of millions of cricket fans. (Later, Jamsheed became Pakistan's longest serving Ambassador to more than a dozen countries). Legendary Parsi broadcaster Ardeshir Talyarkhan (popularly known as AFS Talyarkhan) did a splendid job on the Indian side.

### Cricket in the United States

Popularity of cricket as a sport in USA is in no way comparable to mainstream sports such as American football, baseball, and basketball, which have tens of millions of devoted fans. However, over the past few decades, the interest in playing and watching cricket is definitely on the rise. According to *John L Aaron*, executive secretary of USA Cricket Association (USACA), "there are 15 to 20 million cricket fans in United States" and many of them are expatriates like Aaron himself, who grew up playing cricket in Guyana.

*Dreams; Cricket in America,*" it is believed that there are more than 100,000 active (men and women) cricket players in the United States. Cricket in United States remains an "underground movement and a well-kept secret" according to Kulkarni, who grew up in Pune, India. According to Kulkarni, "before baseball (the great American sport) became baseball, it was cricket – the Number 1 team sport in the country. Since the newly formed nation of United States was looking for its own identity, baseball evolved and cricket went down." However, the large immigrant community since the 1950's is bringing cricket back into the United States. Also, many colleges and universities in the United States have 'cricket clubs' and play regularly scheduled cricket matches.

It may come as a surprise to many readers, that cricket has been played in the United States since it was a British colony. In fact the troops of the man who would become the nation's first president, George Washington, played cricket! The grandfather

of the nation's third president, Thomas Jefferson, played cricket.

Women's Cricket in United States is relatively new, but is growing rapidly. It came on the international scene in the mid 2010, when the United States defeated Canada in all three matches of its International Cricket Council (ICC) Americas Regional Qualifier to reach the 2011 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Bangladesh. The 2011 United States Cricket National Women's Championship was held in July in New York City, with the Tri-State Lynx winning the title. The majority of players and interest in the Women's Cricket currently come from the immigrant communities of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

#### **Delkash Shahriarian:**

Cricket in North America and female players may be a rare combination, but cricket in North America and a Zarathushti female player on the US national team, is an exciting and exceptional occurrence! The Parsi/Zarathushti community is proud to have one of its very own cricket players in Delkash Shahriarian.

Delkash, is originally from Rustom Bagh in Mumbai, India, and was captain of the local 'Sir Ness Wadia Club.' During the 2004-2005 season, Delkash led the 'All Parsi Women's Cricket' tournament to victory for two consecutive years, over supposedly stronger teams from Godrej Bagh and Dadar Parsi Colony.

Delkash came to US to pursue a Masters in Architecture at Pratt Institute, NY after earning a Bachelor's degree in Architecture, from Rachna Sansad Academy of Architecture. She received "Best Student of the Year" award in 2005 by Pidilite Industries and was nominated by Practicing Engineers Architects and Town Planners Association (PEATA) from Academy of Architecture. She currently works as a practicing Architect in New York.

Delkash continued her passion of cricket in the US by co-forming a cricket team with

other local female cricket players and named the women's cricket team 'Phoenix.' As vice-captain of 'Phoenix' she won second place at a national level, which gave her the much-needed exposure and an opportunity to join the United States national team, as a wicket-keeper. Delkash also represented the 'New York Warriors' women's cricket team in 2010.

Delkash is an avid batswoman and her strength is in making quick runs with big hits required for a T20 caliber tournament. Delkash has also made numerous boundary hits and made significant catches during her first-class women's cricket career, representing the New York Warriors team. As a member of the US national team (US T20), Delkash, the first Parsi/Zarathushti to have earned this honour, played in Bangladesh in November 2011, for placement in ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in 2013, hosted by India. Unfortunately, the US team lost against South Africa.

Delkash's name will be forever etched among the pioneers of women's cricket in the United States and in the sports archives of Zarathushtis in USA. Zarathushtis all over the world and especially in United States are proud of Delkash Shahriarian's remarkable achievements to-date and wish Delkash continued success in her professional as well as her cricket careers.



Delkash Shahriarian

*Shahrokh does not claim to be a good cricket player or a die-hard cricket fan. Growing up in Karachi in the mid-1950s, he used to listen to cricket commentary by Jamsheed Marker and Hamid Sayani on the radio and watched India/Pakistan test matches at the national stadium in Karachi. As a member of the Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI) he remembers watching Parsi/Zarathoshti cricket stalwarts including Rusi Dinshaw, Homee Mobed, Burjor Jagus, Soli Mavalwala, Murzban Dinshaw, Hoshang & Rohinton Minwalla, Behman & Khodabux Irani, Jangoo Collector, Rusi Sarkari, Noshir Kanga, Jamshed Gati and many other fine cricket players of the time in action. Shahrokh also had the privilege of meeting visiting cricketers from India, including Polly Umrigar and Rusi Modi. Shahrokh left Karachi in the mid 1960s and lives in Syracuse, NY with his wife Gool.*



## Growing Up Parsi and Gay in Bombay 1958-1968

Ten years of a Parsi Purgatory! But that still did not prepare me for the American 'Paradise'!

In 1958 in the proverbial sexual encounters of Bombay's fast trains I came to know about sex. We lived in Bandra, school was in Churchgate. So every morning I had undiluted fun for a full half hour. I had a first class train pass but I'd prefer to go second-class thinking the proles would be more obliging. Wrong! I looked an upper-class kid and the 'aam-admi' was more afraid of the 'saheb log' then than now. Looking back, I had an easy run. In today's metropolis I would be murdered as that poor boy Adnan was a few years ago when he went on a blind-date rustled up on the Net only to encounter the local bully and Death! I was seduced in class VI. I couldn't tell my older sister till class XI. I had no one else to confide in, due to fear and shame of being outed.

by hoshang merchant

So there be pros and cons. I am Parsi. So let's start with the pros. Parsis then as now were Westernised. So I was sent to a psychiatrist instead of being beaten up by macho elder men in the family as they do Hyderabad. Dr Vahia secretly told my father, 'Your boy is highly intelligent. And it will be hard to change him. Any way it is almost impossible to change homosexuals to heterosexuals. Just let him do what he wants.' I knew this only two years ago. My father had confided this secret to elder sister who revealed it to me before she died. Of course, the psychiatrist blamed me and not my parent who was paying his fees. Then it was Freud oedipal paradigm that ruled. Now homosexuality is considered to be genetic.

Hence I lived for 20 years under the guilt bred by the Parsi religion. I understood when I was in Iran that Zoroaster was pro-life. So dead bodies, menstruating women and homosexuals were taboo. But the second item in the above list bred the third in Iran. Alas! Dr Dasturji Kooka's book on *Zoroastrianism* in English explained to me at 30 the meaning of the 'Jashn' ceremony

performed in our fire temple. The initiate (young priest) holds the flower of evil for long but forsakes it for the seven flowers of good, strikes the waters of experience nine times for the nine directions and having experienced evil and chosen good returns to life (the older priests). Zoroastrianism is a mature religion. Its interpretation is narrow.

Of course, patriarchal religions and societies breed machismo. Men are men; women, women. Zoroaster was no metrosexual, god forbid! So my mother became my enemy when she found out that her son was a sissy. This was an unbearable cross to a sensitive boy who loved his mother who shielded him from a disciplinarian father.

I am giving you the anatomy of a Parsi household of the '50's which bred social and sexual hypocrisy. Men had mistresses if they could afford. But for social occasions it was always the wife. Discovery led to social humiliation. I saw this in the case of my own father. So I decided early on that whatever I do I'll do openly. (As a single

man I could afford this decision that householders cannot.)

When I was growing up under then India's Victorian laws, a homosexual's testimony counted for nothing in the Parsi Matrimonial Court even if he was honest and an eyewitness to a crime, as I was during my parents' divorce trial. Under such a regimen it is hard to love yourself and grow up guiltless. Strike down clause 377(b) of the Indian Penal Code, I say!

In a small in-bred community adolescent homosexuality thrives (among cousins; schoolmates) but conversely it also encourages subterfuge and silence on the issue due to naming and shaming by community busybodies and gossips. Hence the conspiracy of silence: Don't ask / Don't tell. I was dis-inherited for being gay. Relatives use this as a moral excuse to veil their own greed while depriving gay children of their patrimony.

The coming-out ritual of America is typical Puritan truth-telling, very in-your-face. It does not allow for the 'letting-be' and the delicacy of social compassion of older societies.

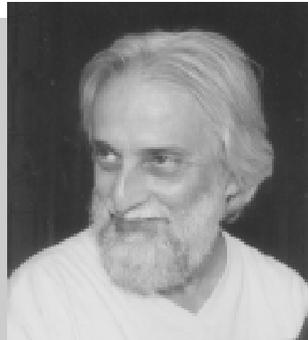
This Christmas Day my gay Shia friend died in Hyderabad and was given a Shia burial with full Moslem rites (which incidentally is denied by the Sharia to Moslem homosexuality). Not only that, I was informed of his death by the family and of the place and time of the funeral. They honoured my 20-year friendship for a gay scion of their family whom they had secretly ostracized for 'coming-out' under my tutelage! I was so touched, I honoured them by not weeping. I buried my brave friend bravely.

America by contrast lives by ghetto-isation. Jewtown/Fagtown/Indian town actually exist in Chicago. Fagtown became upmarket due to the Pink Dollar and Jewtown became Indian-town where the upwardly mobile Jew moved out of the ghetto to the suburbs. An American brother-in-law of mine took my sister dancing to Chicago's gay clubs 'for

the new music' but could not brook me, a queen, for a brother-in-law. I will not even speak of sissy-beating.

I myself am no paragon of virtue. When Dina Mehta published both Firdaus Kanga and me in the now-defunct *Kaiser-I-Hind* in the mid-1980's I refused to meet poor Firdaus. Being a lover of beauty like mentor Anais Nin I quoted her on my fear of "ugliness"!

I decided to write my book not only out of a queen's exhibitionism but also out of a Parsi sense of do-gooding because even now young gays routinely commit suicides.



Born in 1947 to a Zoroastrian business-family in Bombay, India, Hoshang Merchant graduated second in his BA Class (1968) with a major in English and a minor in the culture of India. From his mother's family he descends from a line of preachers and teachers. He holds a Master's from Occidental College, Los Angeles. At Purdue University he specialized in the Renaissance and Modernism. Anais Nin and he corresponded for four years. His book on Nin, *In-discretions*, earned him a PhD from Purdue in 1981 and is published by Writers Workshop which has also published twenty-one books of his poetry since 1989. He helped establish the Gay Liberation at Purdue. Since leaving Purdue in 1975, Merchant has attended the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Centre, Massachusetts, and lived and taught in Heidelberg, Iran and Jerusalem where he was exposed to various radical student movements of the Left. He has studied Buddhism at the Tibetan Library at Dharamsala, north India, as well as Islam in Iran and Palestine. Rupa and Co., published his book of poems *Flower to Flame* in 1992 in the *New Poetry in India* series. Merchant edited India's first anthology of gay literature, *Yaraana: Gay Writing from India* (Penguin, 1999) and is the writer of five collections of criticism. His latest book is "The Man who would be Queen", an autobiography but part fiction. Currently he teaches Poetry and Surrealism at the University of Hyderabad and is unmarried by choice.

Photo credit: Ashutosh Panda, Mumbai  
Written by Prof Merchant especially for Hamazor for which we thank him - for his honesty and forthcoming.

## *Fedallah the Parsee*

**I**n my grandfather Khan Bahadur Ardeshir H Antia's house, where I spent most of my childhood, there was one bookshelf which preserved the detritus of a couple of generation's occasional reading. In idle moments I would thumb through the books and wonder.

There were my young *mama's* collections of Kahlil Gibran, which even at the age of eight I suspected of being fraudulent poetry. There were condensed books from The Reader's Digest library, easy reading which my aunts must have collected. There was the Oxford Book of Modern Poetry, which I knew was one of my mother's reference books and there was my grandfather's own collection consisting of works by Gandhi, Nehru and a few black listed works which were, I was warned, anti-Indian. Among them there was Katherine Mayo's supposed travelogue called Mother India and a book called Judge or Judas by Beverley Nicholls.

by *farrukh dhondy*

These were the secular texts. There were Zoroastrian prayer books and the most curious volume in the collection, a book called 'Parsee Lustre on Indian Soil'.

My friends and I had hours of fun with this tome which on every page had the photograph of an august Parsee personage and a paragraph of their "achievements" in over-egged, flattering prose. One might have, reading the title, opened it with a view to discovering the Parsee Newton, Darwin, Shakespeare or even Bertrand Russell. No such luck. The very substantial volume was filled with entries such as "Mr. Minocher Jehangir Toot, Pioneer of the Sandalwood Retail trade and sole proprietor of Toot and Toot, sandalwood merchants of Udwada. A philanthropist, leader of the community and pioneer of commerce."

Another item, with the photograph of a bold-faced lady might feature next to the immortal legend: "Mrs Tehmina Toddywalla, the first lady in the world to play tennis in a saree."

Of course I had, in those years of childhood and adolescence heard of Dadabhoy Nowrojee, Ferozeshah Mehta, the

endeavours and capitalist establishment of the Tatas and of Shapurji 'Saks' Saklatwalla, the cousin of my great grandfather and the first Communist MP in the British parliament. I had heard of other quoted and noted real achievers, but this book of 'lustre' did tend to give me a feeling, despite the desperate boasting, of the marginal achievements of the individuals portrayed whom I took, because they were in a book, to be representatives of our community. If this was lustre, then how did one define 'dull'? My grandfather emphatically told me that it was vanity publishing and everyone who was included had paid to be there.

Time and again my adolescent friends and I would refer to the book, contrive our own entries - as the first person to have a roller-skating accident on Khan Road or the first ever eat an ice-cream standing on his head - to mock the vanity of trivial achievement.

It was part of the necessary mockery of adolescence. We were not kind. We would stand at street corners in Poona (now Pune) and jeer at bald passer-by shouting 'Karom-board' after them alluding to the smooth and shiny nature of their scalps.

Now, so many happy years later, my own hair begins to recede. I am becoming the 'Karom board' whose shiny polish we used to deride. And worse! I begin to notice and collect — to each his own — the allusions to Parsees in universal culture or in English literature.

I don't mean the contemporary novels by Parsee writers. Of course they dwell and dawdle and there are other contemporaries who feature Parsee opium traders or doctors in Bombay and the like. Not them. I mean I begin to notice and hoard the allusions that, for instance, Kipling makes to the Parsee in his Just So stories:

*"Them as takes cakes  
What the Parsee man bakes  
Makes dreadful mistakes!"*

So I hope I am not falling into trivia when I draw attention to the fact that one of the central books of the American cannon, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* prominently features a Parsee who is integrated into the plot and soul of the novel.

I don't need to preface this investigation with the caveat that Melville gets us Parsees all wrong. He gets everybody else wrong too. He has a principal character called Queequeg who observes the rituals of Ramadan by fasting but is certainly not a proper Muslim because he worships an idol which he balances on his head while going hungry during the night! Any Muslim and even most kaffirs know that in the month of Ramadan eating is allowed at night and idols are not at any time.

Melville is very erudite about western culture and alludes copiously to the bible, to Greek myths, French philosophers and the whole caboodle of Western thought but about Zoroastrians and the true faith he seems to know nothing.

*Moby Dick*, with all its boasts about whaling and the history of the sea Leviathan, which one has to acknowledge is a great work of literature and an unprecedented opening to the understanding of America, assembles an internationalised crew of characters. There is the African, the Native American,

every breed of European, a Muslim and several Chinese in its pages.

But where the hell did he get Fedallah the Parsee from and why did he give him that only partially plausible name?

Melville was a seaman and probably came across the Parsee *laskars* such as my great great granduncle Faramji Masa (Of whom more later) who manned the East India Company's ships, some of them engaged in the ignominious opium trade with China, in the nineteenth century.

Melville, after his seafaring days settles down, starts writing books and becomes a famous author. In *Moby Dick* there is a passage about the changing eyes and visage, like successive compelling mirages of the dying Zarathustra. I haven't found the text or myth from which he may have derived this description. Melville uses it to instil a deep sense of universality and humility before infinite space and time and to capture some intangible, inexpressible quality of mystery and wonder.

Somehow he doesn't connect this scene with the faith of Fedallah the Parsee, not even acknowledging that a Parsee in his day would have been a follower of Zarathustra. Fedallah appears in *Moby Dick* as a strong imposing figure, a man wearing black Chinese hessian, who takes his jacket off to reveal an athlete's body — (more Freddy Mercury than me, I am afraid!) — in the chapters in which he is seen as a dominator of the protagonist Captain Ahab's soul.

The other characters of the novel and I fear Melville himself see Fedallah as an incarnation of the devil. He is there to drag Captain Ahab with his obsession with white whales (what does the black studies movement made of that?) to eternal hell.

He makes a prediction. Melville gives his Parsee psychic powers. Fedallah tells Ahab that he will not die till he sees the vision of two hearses upon the sea and one of them will contain himself, Fedallah who is

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla



*Farrukh Dhondy was born in Poona (now Pune), went to school and college there before Cambridge University, UK. He writes fiction and screenplays and recently translated a selection of Rumi into English.*

destined by Fate to go before Ahab and to foreshadow Ahab's death. He predicts that even though he be gone, he will reappear to take Ahab with him. Wild stuff! Predicting Parsees? Not unknown, but certainly not reliable – Oh my Captains, Oh my Kings!

Fedallah is also portrayed as a worshipper of light, of the sun, of tongues of flame and even of the representation of the sun on a gold doubloon. It's an understandable misinterpretation. The first Monotheists of human civilisation have through the ignorance of history been characterised as 'fire-worshippers'. Let it be – light upon light – Ahura Mazda will not be displeased.

As one expects in a novel of fate, Fedallah the Parsee's prediction comes true. Ahab is as deceived as Macbeth was when he was told that he would not be defeated till Birnham Wood came to Dunsinane and that he could not be killed by anyone who was woman-born. The operative word there was 'born' because Macduff who killed him claimed he was not 'born' but 'untimely-ripped' from his mother's womb.

So with Ahab. Fedallah falls into the waters as the crew pursue the white whale, is drowned and reappears lashed by the lines of rope the crew have deployed in their battle with the whale to its mountainous body.

'The Parsee, the Parsee', Ahab cries as he sees the prophecy of his death in progress. The Parsee has appeared to fetch him – he was gone but has returned. Two hearses on the waves were predicted and the first was not a horse and black carriage but the whale carrying the body of the Parsee to its eternal rest.

The second hearse upon the waters, the ship, the Pequod itself, takes Ahab and his obsessions to oblivion and to hell.

The other characters play important parts in the drama of the novel. Starbuck, Ahab's First mate (after whom the coffee house chain is named) urges him to forego the fatal obsession. The others figure in similar ways in the plot.

Fedallah the Parsee stands out. He is not a character and doesn't interact with any of the

others. He is a spirit that moves across those troubled waters. He is not Ahab's doppelganger, but rather his spiritual guide shackled to him in mutual doom.

Melville is good with whales but not with Parsees. I don't know any Parsees who wear their long hair wrapped in a huge white turban. Kipling's Parsee in the Just So stories is described more accurately with a shiny Bakelite hat that reflects the rays of the sun. We wear them to weddings and navjotes and call them 'phentas'.

Melville also thinks that Parsees are somehow in league with the devil. I only know one Parsee of whom this may be true, it's not a general characteristic. That Fedallah has lived for very many years is of course not that outrageous – walk down Grant Road in Mumbai and you will spot many such. That he worships light is as accurate as saying that Christians bow down and worship fragments of wood when and wherever they are nailed together.

One aspect of the description of Fedallah that struck me as plausible is the rough clothes and wide black Chinese trousers he wore. In our family the story is told of Faramji Masa, an uncle of my grandmother's who was a nineteenth century Parsee mariner who sailed all his working life, from the age of fourteen to China as a handmaid of the opium trade.

It was only when he died at a ripe old age and his body was being carried to the Towers of Silence that his old wife and grown up children noticed a Chinese woman and her children crying at the gates through which they were not admitted. On enquiry it was established that the Chinese lady claimed to be Faramji Masa's wife who had been brought from China and established in a separate part of the city from the family home to bring up the children she bore him.

This second secret Chinese wife must have tailored precisely the sort of clothes Fedallah wore and it would certainly have helped him pretend to his Parsee wife and family that he had been away on that six month voyage to China.



# The Political Novel

In September 2011, I was invited by the South Asian Women's Creative Collective to participate in their literary festival. This year's theme was Open Fire: Writing about Radicalism and Revolution. The festival was an exploration of the role stories play in affecting political change.

The topic was a perfect fit for me, given that my new novel, *The World We Found* (Jan. 3, 2012), tells the story of four middle-aged women who first meet as young, idealistic political activists in college in Bombay in the 1970s. The novel is an exploration of how they, and India, have changed over the past 40 years.

On the opening night of the festival, I read and spoke with the delightful Bangladeshi-American writer, Tahmima Anam. During the panel discussion that followed our readings, we were asked: Do you consider yourself to be a political writer?

by *thrity umrigar*

There are two answers to this question. Here's the short and easy answer: Yes.

Here's the longer and more nuanced answer: I actually believe that all writers are political because the act of writing itself is a political act. For instance, most people would not consider a Harlequin romance novel to be political. But in its depiction of gender roles, in its bland acceptance of the patriarchy, a romance novel is as political as anything written by Toni Morrison or John Steinbeck.

I know that some critics consider it a kiss of death to label a work as such. Many of these critics are found in America, where it seems fashionable to sneer at work that calls itself political. The basic assumption seems to be that a novel that wears its politics proudly, is by definition dogmatic, clunky and inferior. I find this notion to be laughable. Someone try telling this to Dickens or Joseph Heller or George Orwell or Garcia Marquez.

To me, politics is another word for life. My morality, my value system, is informed by my political beliefs. But although I'm a news junkie, my novels don't usually have too

many contemporary references. I'm interested in politics in the more timeless sense – to examine the dynamics of power, the emotionally-fraught relationship between those who have power and those who don't, to look at class and gender differences and how those express themselves in the lives of individuals. I think the exploration of a single human life can bring all of these issues into play.

One of the great contributions of the feminist movement was to make us rethink our definitions and terms. In the days before feminist consciousness, it was believed that only novels (almost always written by male writers) that dealt with 'serious' and masculine subjects – war, revolution, the birth of nations, the struggles in the corridors of power – were 'real' novels. But feminism taught us that what happens within the home and family can be as politically charged as anything happening in Security Council meetings or in war rooms. That family dramas can be as gripping as palace intrigue. That the personal is political.

For instance, one of my novels tells the story of the relationship between an upper

middle-class Parsi woman and her illiterate, poor domestic servant. This is politics at its most basic, at the domestic, family level. And yet the interactions between Sera Dubash and Bhima illuminate all the themes that I'm fascinated by – divisions of class, gender solidarity, family bonds, the use and abuse of power. And so I consider

*The Space Between Us* to be a political novel.

My new book, *The World We Found*, is inspired by a real-life event – the Hindu-Muslim riots that tore Bombay apart in 1992-93. I was inspired to write the book after a chance meeting in India with a friend I hadn't seen in over 25 years. We got to talking and at one point she mentioned how deeply she'd been affected by the riots. She said the event changed her life, made her shy away from her earlier political activism. Even though I disagreed with the conclusions she'd reached, I understood her visceral reaction of horror, disillusionment, and sadness. I had moved to the US a decade before the riots but had also been emotionally devastated by this seminal event.

Our conversation got me thinking about religious and political fundamentalism, about idealism and disillusionment, and about the passage of time. And I wanted to write a novel that did two things: one, that talked about religious fundamentalism from an Indian perspective, not from an American or a 9/11 perspective. And two, I wanted to say something about globalization and its impact on countries like India.

*The World We Found* tells the story of Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita and Nishta, who were friends during their university years in Bombay. When the novel opens, Armaiti, who is now living in the United States, calls her friends in India with sad news and a request – she is fatally ill and wants to see the three of them one last time. This sets off a search for Nishta, with whom the others have lost touch. When they find her, they are shocked to discover that her husband, Iqbal, has become a conservative religious ideologue. As they make travel plans, each woman has to deal with her memories, regrets, and unfulfilled dreams.

Confronted by long suppressed secrets and guilt, each is reminded of her past idealism and the dramatic ways in which reality has tarnished that idealism. No longer the women they once were, each faces down her disparate political and religious beliefs and sifts through the circumstances that have turned her into the woman she has now become.

But the novel is more than an exploration of the four women. It is also a look at modern day India and how decades of globalization have affected it. Although they are former fellow activists, Laleh and her husband, Adish, now have divergent views on whether globalization had been good for India. Laleh believes that it has mostly resulted in superficial changes (“So they built a few dozen more malls for people like us. What does that change?”), whereas Adish insists that globalization has unleashed a new dynamism.

Each of the characters in the novel questions whether the sacrifices that he or she made in their youth to the “movement” were worth it. And although they all feel differently about their past (“That was the essential difference between him and Laleh – when she thought back on their college days, she saw them as a template for the rest of her life; Adish looked back on those days as a lovely dream from which it was difficult, but essential, to wake up.”), eventually they all come to recognize the value of what they had once shared. As the dying Armaiti says to her daughter, she's unsure of whether the world they once dreamed of creating was an illusion, but of this she is certain: “That my desire for that world was true.”

In India, the Parsis are often considered to be an apolitical group, a community that pretty much minds its own business. I find this ironic because I think the status of Parsis as the ultimate insider-outsiders, has influenced my work. In some sense, all writing is commemoration, remembrance. And the act of remembering may be the most political act of all. I think the knowledge of the impending extinction of this quirky, warm-hearted, generous

community that I was raised in, also informs my writing, in that I want to capture on paper its customs, traditions and values.

Growing up Parsi, we were also constantly reminded that we had a moral obligation to contribute to our society, to “sweeten” the lives of those around us. The legend about the glass of milk and sugar, that all of us were told during our childhood, is so deeply ingrained in us. And I remember its moral each time I write a novel – that a story has to stand for something, it has to have a certain integrity. That it should attempt to transform and sweeten the lives of its readers.



*Thrity Umrigar is the bestselling author of a memoir and five novels, including *The Space Between Us* and *The Weight of Heaven*. She is a professor of English at Case Western Reserve University.*

## Review : *The World we Found*

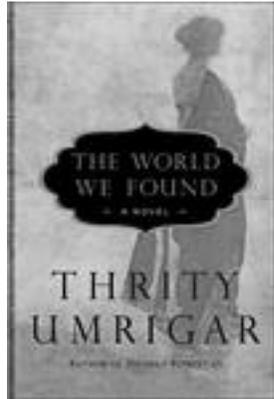
by zehra bharucha

**t**hrity Umrigar, the acclaimed author of ‘The Weight of Heaven’ returns with a new novel exploring the lives and friendships of four Indian women. Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita and Nishta met at college as young activists determined to build a ‘new India’, a country free from corruption and poverty. Unconventional and defiant, they challenged the mores and norms of 1970s India with revolutionary fervour. But thirty years have passed now and the friends have taken different paths through life. Busy with new interests and families to raise, the fire and passion of their youth seems a distant memory. Laleh married her college boyfriend Adish and is now a wife and mother, living the life of an upper class Bombay socialite while Kavita is a

successful architect with a string of international projects to her name. Laleh and Kavita have managed to stay in touch, but Nishta has lost all contact with them while Armaiti has moved to America with only occasional emails to remind them of her.

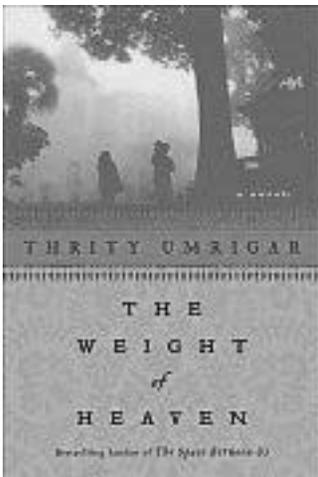
The four friends might never have met again but fate has other plans. Armaiti is diagnosed with an inoperable and aggressive brain tumour and has only a short time to live. Realising that her chances of survival are practically non-existent she has decided to die on her own terms, refusing treatment much to the horror of her ex-husband Richard and her daughter Diane. Instead of spending the last few months of her life at the mercy of doctors and confined to a hospital Armaiti has decided that she has one last important thing to do in her life. Before she dies she wants to see her old friends one last time and introduce them to her beloved daughter.

Spurred on by the knowledge that time is short Laleh and Kavita swing into action looking for Nishta, who married a progressive, idealistic Muslim fellow student and was disinherited by her family. When they do find her, they get a shock- because Nishta is now ‘Zoha’, swathed in an all-enveloping ‘burkha’ and living in a run-down exclusively Muslim neighbourhood. Her husband Iqbal, embittered and made resentful by the violent Hindu-Muslim riots of 1993 has abandoned his bank job and become a fundamentalist. It soon becomes clear to Laleh and Kavita that the biggest obstacle to their plans will be Iqbal’s refusal to let Nishta go. After their first meeting they discover that Nishta’s phone has been confiscated and that Iqbal has no intention of letting her see her friends again. Desperate to get Iqbal to agree, Laleh sends her husband Adish to see Iqbal, hoping that the past friendship between them will be enough to change Iqbal’s mind. But Adish and Iqbal are now worlds apart and it seems that too much time has passed and too much has happened for them to find themselves able to be friends. It is Iqbal’s sister Mumtaz who proves an unlikely ally and is determined to get Nishta to fulfil the wishes of her dying friend.



During their struggle to get to America, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita and Nishta must revisit old secrets, acknowledge promises unfulfilled and confess guilty secrets. In doing so, they find personal redemption and the rekindling of friendships that have never really faded. They come face to face with their innermost demons and desires and explore their capacity to cope with love, betrayal, death and loss. It is only by facing up to their shared past that the four women are finally able to acknowledge their secrets, issues and guilty feelings and let them go. And always in the background is India - a modern nation steeped in ancient tradition, always struggling with issues of religion, gender divides and the gap between rich and poor - a struggle mirrored in the lives of four very different women seeking a final chance to reconnect. This insightful and powerful novel explores the nature of love and friendship and the relationships people build and maintain throughout their lives. It forces the reader to confront the very human fear of dying and the possibility that one day time may run out. Like her previous novel 'The Weight of Heaven', Thrity Umrigar's latest offering is a must-read and highly recommended.

Hamazor acknowledges Harper for sending us the advance reader copy for review.



### **The Weight of Heaven Thrity Umrigar**

2009, Harper (USA),  
Hardcover, 365pp

When Frank and Ellie Benton lose their seven year old son Benny to illness, their perfect, liberal, white middle-class lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, are suddenly revealed as meaningless and empty. Seeking an escape from the memories of the past, salvation comes in the form of a new job

opportunity for Frank. In an attempt to start again, they find themselves across the world in the small Indian village of Girbaug. Here among the lush trees and restless ocean, they will attempt to salvage their crumbling marriage and try and forget the grief and pain of loss.

In a beautiful ocean front luxury home complete with domestic staff, Frank and Ellie soon settle into the routine of expatriate Americans everywhere and Frank begins his new job as head of Herbal Solutions, an American pharmaceutical company offering a cure for diabetes made from the leaves of a local tree. But things quickly go wrong when a young man protesting against Herbal Solutions' decision to ban the villagers from using the leaves of the trees is found dead in mysterious circumstances. Frank's handling of the crisis and his reaction makes Ellie realise that Frank is having a difficult time coping not just with a new job, but with India as a whole. The grief continues unabated and the marriage is on shaky ground. India is a bewildering mix of contradictions and he is quickly floundering and out of his depth. Ellie finds solace in helping out in the women's clinic where she quickly finds that her experience as a psychologist provides no solutions for women trapped in and endless grind of poverty and deprivation.

In an effort to recreate something from the past, Frank befriends Ramesh, the ten year old son of their housekeeper, and tries to bury his grief by tutoring him and taking a great interest in his welfare. But this decision and Frank's increasingly desperate attempts to make Ramesh a substitute for Benny has consequences he could never had dreamt of.

Ellie watches the growing feelings Frank has for Ramesh with dismay, seeing what Frank cannot: that the child's father is bitterly jealous of the casual way in which Frank has appropriated his child. But Frank is blinded by his grief and sense of loss and sees in the bright and articulate Ramesh a chance to recreate what he had before. His

increasingly grandiose plans for a glorious future for Ramesh in America are resented by Ellie who feels that Frank is forgetting Benny in his desire to fill the void in his life. It soon becomes very clear that India is not going to be the fabulously exotic backdrop for a loving reconciliation, but instead the stage for a tragedy that will be much more devastating than anything that has gone before.

An exploration of grief and loss, *The Weight of Heaven* is a portrait of a marriage that fails under the weight of guilt and resentment. Frank feels that it is Ellie's 'fault' that Benny is dead: what kind of mother falls asleep when her child has a fever? Ellie feels loss, guilt and shame in equal measure and is numbed by her loss. She and Frank find that they have broken 'into separate people', their previous charmed life just a hollow shell with no substance. The clash of cultures and the effect of American capitalism on a Third World country is just one strand of a story that is primarily about the human heart and the depths one can go to for love and redemption.

Thirly Umrigar's powerful novel resonates deeply with the universal themes of love, betrayal, guilt and despair. The starkness of grief and the anguish of losing a child, the descent into obsession, and the desire to atone - the reader is pulled along into a world of bereavement and loss from where there is no turning back. This is a searing and insightful novel and one that should not be missed.



Originally from Karachi, Zehra Bharucha has lived and worked in Sydney, Australia for the last 11 years.



When not at work, she can usually be found with her nose buried in a book. When she stops reading, she heads for the kitchen where she is famous for turning out exotic foods to the great delight of family and friends.

## Cuisine for a Cause

- a review

**CUISINE FOR A CAUSE** is a unique cookbook that includes recipes of two kinds – the traditional gastronomic variety, and the ones that make up the philanthropic success stories that Parsis are equally renowned for. The book profiles 37 organisations which Parsis have founded, head, or are part of. From **Aban Bhote**, a committed volunteer for the last 25 years to institutions such as the **Sir Ratan Tata Institute**.



Additionally, the book has a special treat for fans of the legendary Parsi 'Lagan Nu Patru'. It chronicles the life and times of **Tanaz Godiwalla, Kaizad Patel** and **Kurush Dalal** and also gets them share their signature recipes. **Russi Lala** shares his thoughts on Parsis and Philanthropy.

The book has been compiled by **Meher Gandevia-Billimoria**, a consultant with **Centre For Advancement of Philanthropy (CAP)**. "To commemorate the 25th year, we have decided not only to recognise the work achieved by these organisations, who have benefitted from our advisory and training over the years, but also give a larger audience the opportunity to know them better through a medium that appeals to every heart – food; specifically, Parsi food."

CAP guides and assists philanthropic organisations (donor or donee) in India stay legally compliant and well-governed. The organisation was founded among others by Late H T Parekh (HDFC), Russi Lala and Darius Forbes. Noshir H Dadrawala has been Chief Executive of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy since inception.

## In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla



The Team

Food preparation for the recipes was done by Hoshang Velati, senior lecturer, for the Hotel Management Course at Sophia Polytechnic. His speciality, other than Parsi cuisine of course, is Italian. He comments, "I have catered for several functions and also organised many food festivals, but the first time I cooked for a photo shoot."

His food styling skills were matched with Beynaz Mistry's photographic elan. She has 15 years of experience as a Visual Effects Artist. "Cooking with love is something my mother always believed in and endeavoured to imbibe in me. I find the same love resonating through this book."

Lisa Battiwala, the copy editor was part of the mainstream media. "Working on this project was an opportunity I welcomed since it allowed me to be part of producing a cookbook for social impact."

Feroza Unvala has elegantly designed this book making it an excellent corporate gift. She is an artist and designer with her own brand consultancy in San Francisco. Her 25 year experience includes a diverse client list from technology, healthcare, retail and publishing industries.

Her designing skills have been well complemented by hi-class printing by Jehangir Surti. His company Prodon Enterprises has always believed in 'quality over quantity'. As a result, they have been recipients of several awards for excellence in the field of printing.



Meher with Farzana

The book was launched by Farzana Contractor, Editor - Upper Crust on 14<sup>th</sup> December at an evening attended by over a hundred CAP's well wishers.

'Giving', which was the theme of the book, resonated all through the evening and the soulful songs by the children of the Happy Home and School for the Blind fuelled the philanthropic spirit even further.

During this festive season, Cuisine for a Cause created interest beyond mere curiosity with Radio Mirchi as also The Bombay Stores promoting this book. ■■■■

## *In Search of my Master*



**Jimmy Engineer**, painter and crusader for the oppressed, the disabled and mentally challenged, so that more individuals would have the opportunity of seeing his work.

Jimmy has created more than 2000 artworks and nearly 1000 calligraphies. Over 200,000 prints of his work are in private collections in more than 50 countries. His canvases are more than large, with meticulous detail, encompassing the epic saga of the Partition, Pakistan's Architectural Heritage, Landscapes, Drawings and Nature. Displayed beautifully in the Convention Centre for the invitees and Press were 80 works of art.



To quote Susan Saleem in the Khaleej Times: "His imagination is nature. His drive is his country Pakistan. And his passion is to change the perception people abroad have of his country".

This handsome tome is a limited edition, having 616 pages and measuring 14 x 10 inches.

Hamazor in the next issue will be covering Jimmy Engineer. - Ed.



Launch of the large coffee table book - *In Search of my Master* - was held on Friday 27 January at the Convention Centre, Defence Golf Club, Karachi.

Marjorie Hussain who is a well-known art writer, curator of art exhibitions in New Delhi, Germany, UK and Pakistan, was commissioned by BBCL Publications to write and immortalise the work of

## *Homai Vyarawalla*



**Homai Vyarawalla, the first Indian lady photo journalist, passed away on 15 January 2012, at the age of 98,** leaving behind a treasure trove of archival material recording the passing away of the colonial era and the early years of independent India. Working quietly amongst hardened male journalists, she became the legendary, 'Lady in a rough crowd.'

She worked closely with her husband who was, himself, a photo-journalist; they often had to share a Roliflex on the same assignments! Homai started as an assistant to her husband but quickly got her own commissions. She was present at all major state functions and her pictures captured important historical moments - until that history turned sour with the imposition of Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency' and Homai decided that it was time to pack up her camera for ever. Decades later, when there was a desperate search for photographs to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence, her wonderful photographic archive was rediscovered by a grateful nation.

Homai's professional skills are much admired today but what is less known is the idealism that lay behind her work. She refused to take posed portraits in a studio. Spontaneity was what she was looking for and it is this that lends poignancy to her oeuvre. She was a firm believer in letting the photograph tell its own story. Speaking at the age of 95 to media students in London, she advised them "not to put your own thoughts in the picture. Don't manipulate photographs with technology. Respect other people's privacy." She practiced what she preached, and on one famous occasion, refused to publish a photograph of a Russian dignitary falling off an elephant in order to protect his dignity, she said.

Homai is feted for her photographs of famous people but she took great pride and pleasure in photographing life in rural India. She and her husband spent days in villages and amongst fishing communities paying tribute, as she put it, to their "hard, extraordinary work." It was this idealism and respect for ordinary people and her deep commitment to democracy that compelled her to oppose the Congress party during the dark days of forced, mass sterilisation. She could not bear to carry on working in those circumstances and she also disapproved of the way the press was conducting itself at the time. She decided then that her professional life was over.

Homai continued to live quietly for another four decades, driving her car in her late 90s and travelling abroad to address admiring media students at Harvard, Chicago and London universities. Having photographed the icons of her age, she remains herself an icon in the world of photo journalism.

She donated her meager belongings including more than a 100,000 of negatives to the Alkazi Foundation for Art, New Delhi.

- Soonu Engineer



Hamazor carried a full perspective on Homai written by Sabeena Gadihoke author of "Camera chronicles of Homai Vyarawalla" in Issue 2/2007 pp 44-46 followed by a report on her talk in London in Issue 2/2008 pp 53-55 by Soonu Engineer. – Ed.

“...I realized  
Thee to be (ever)  
young in mind,  
Wise One...”

Yasna 31.7

*Inslar translation*



The World Zoroastrian Organisation