“I tell these words to these girls who are being married and to you, ye bridegrooms...

Let each of you try to win the other with truth, for this shall be of good gain for each.”

Yasna 53.5

Aspy Engineer

17 year old makes history in 1930 flying his Gypsy Moth from England to Karachi
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Photograph of Aspy Engineer when he landed in Karachi from London in his Gypsy Moth - an achievement that made history. Courtesy Cyrus Aspy Engineer

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

WZO WEBSITE
www.w-z-o.org
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

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Volume LXIII - Issue 2|2012

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

Funded by: Happy Minwalla
Karachi, Pakistan

Cover design by: Tannaz Minwalla
Karachi, Pakistan

Design & layout by: Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan
From the Editor

A quarter of the year is already over and though time marches at a fast pace for most of us, a great many of our coreligionists in Mumbai seem to be quite content with the way things are. Other cities of India who are, shall we say brave enough or have the courage of their convictions, have made their own guidelines on what is permitted according to their reading of our religion. On the other hand some are still guided in their thinking by the mighty power of a few individuals.

The Parsis of India are once again appearing in their press, ever since we heard of the 3-judge bench of the Gujarat High Court ruling, given on 23 March to Goolrokh Contractor Gupta. Her petition was for a simple permission to be given by the Valsad Parsi Anjuman Trust to allow women like her, who having married a non Zoroastrian but retained their own religion, be permitted to attend funeral rites, in this case when her own parents died. The judgement was NO. Goolrokh is now taking her case to the Supreme Court of India.

We continuously hear how great we are, how educated and refined we are in comparison to others, but I wonder where compassion and the constant adage of “good words, good thoughts, good deeds” have vanished. I have no idea how many Parsis, note the word, live in Valsad, but surely this Anjuman could have had the foresight to have amended their ancient rule if it existed, enabling all Parsi Zoroastrians to be present for the prayers of the deceased if nothing else. It would certainly have saved the Anjuman time, costs and more important dignity in doing the right thing. Do a few individuals have the right to decide such a personal matter of attending funeral rites? And how does a person attending, taint prayers whether Zoroastrian or even atheist? It is a matter of paying respect to the dead before they become no more. We believe in one God. We are all the same especially when we die that is why we are dressed simply so all are equal, yet a person who marries a man from a different religion is not considered worthy of attending their own parent’s prayers. I find this viewpoint illogical. Unfortunately for Goolrokh the case has gone too public and too far for the Valsad Anjuman to retract on their principles, as it would need a great deal of courage to undo something that should never have come to Court.

My own father-in-law when he died years ago, due to his business and personnel friendship with a large number of non-Zoroastrians, at his funeral from our home, a great many came to pay their last respects to this very special man. They politely sat outside as in those days non-Zoroastrians were not permitted in front of the ‘body’. My husband invited each one to come in the room, as we felt these were his friends during his lifetime and had every reason to be treated with respect especially on this day. What is more we felt honoured as these friends had taken the trouble to attend even from Islamabad. As the ‘body’ was leaving the gates, a Muslim friend after asking permission, recited the fateaha, a simple gesture, but so valued. Permitting non-Zoroastrians to pay their last respects was a first, frowned on by many I am sure, including the attending priests who did object but gracefully then kept quiet; but a precedent had been set and today it is considered quite acceptable in our Karachi.

The President of the Tehran Mobedan Council (Anjoman e Mobedan) in his greeting for NovRuz writes, “May the Messages of Asho Zarathushtra spread and flourish bestowing world unity, peace and progress to all humans without any discrimination, evading all bloody wars and destruction. Atha Jamyath Yatha Aafrinamie.”

Let us make life easier for the next generation at least in matters that should be the norm.

Toxy Cowasjee, 2A Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530, Pakistan
Message from the Chairman

Dear Members,

A belated ‘NovRuz Farrkhondeh Baad’ wish for you and your family from all of us on the WZO Managing committee.

We are very pleased to inform you that thanks to the tremendous efforts of our Jehan Bagli and others, WZO Canada is now a registered charity. Donations given by our Canadian members and supporters will be tax deductible. More information about where and to whom the donations can be sent will be forthcoming. The initial Trustees of WZO Canada will be Jehan Bagli, Sam Vesuna, Nozer Kotwal and Khushroo Mirza. Canada is an important country for our community as the number of Zoroastrians migrating there is on the increase.

We are very excited about the development the new WZO website which has just completed its design stage and we hope it will be live during late summer. Our aim is to make this website not only a portal for WZO events, news and a source for information on Zoroastrianism, but also be able to disseminate information on other Zoroastrian organisations. We encourage you to send us your local information, your events and your articles for publishing on the website. A sub-committee has been formed to monitor its content and this is headed by your President, Shahin Bekhradnia. We will give you more information on the website in the next issue of the Hamazor but in the meantime, you can start sending her your information.

You may have read in the news that there were parliamentary elections in Iran on 2 March and are pleased to inform you that Dr Esfandiar Ekhtiyari has been re-elected the Zoroastrian MP in the Majlis. He polled 75% of the votes against two other candidates and this is a just reward for his dedicated work in representing the Zoroastrian community in Iran. We have sent him a personal letter congratulating him on behalf of the WZO members.

It is gratifying to note there is now widespread acceptance in India that a number of the rituals practiced there by the Parsis are in fact just that and not necessarily part of the Zoroastrian religion. Even the non-acceptance of inter-faith marriages and conversions is now acknowledged by many to be a Parsi rather than a Zoroastrian custom. WZO has been differentiating between the Parsi ethnicity and the Zoroastrian religion for many years and it is heartening to see its recognition. WZO is in favour of maintaining the Parsi ethnicity providing it does not infringe the liberties of Zoroastrians who choose alternative practices and rituals.

The WZO Trusts’ work in India were featured in a FEZANA-sponsored event entitled ‘NGO Learnings: Empowering Rural Women to overcome poverty and hunger’ at the 56th session of the ‘Commission on the Status of Women’ held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The activities of the WZO Trusts were presented by Freyaz Shroff, a member of the FEZANA welfare and critical assistance committee. The presentation included a 10 minute video of the workings of WZO which was conceived and produced by Freyaz who has been closely involved with the welfare activities of the Trusts for the last four years. We thank Freyaz for this wonderful portrayal of the WZO Trusts.

Finally, please be assured that the WZO Managing Committee are dedicated to moving your organisation forward and I will keep you informed of developments in future issues of the Hamazor.

Yours sincerely,

Darayus S Motivala
Chairman
chairman@w-z-o.org
Nowruz coincides with the astronomical Vernal Equinox Day or the first day of spring, which falls on March 21 and is celebrated by many communities throughout the world. On 17th March, WZO held its Nowruz function at the Hythe Centre in Staines in celebration of the Persian New Year.

In truly festive mood a vibrant and spirited crowd of friends and family accompanied by their children entered into the joy of bringing in the New Year. Exchanges of Nowruz Mubarak or Navruz Pirus around the Ha’ft Sheen centrepiece, decorated with the seven traditional items, reflected the long established traditions and culture of Zoroastrians in Persia.

These seven items displayed convey all that glorifies life and the values which enhance one’s existence. Sabzeh (wheat, barley or lentil sprouts, symbolizing rebirth), Samanu (sweet pudding or custard – affluence), Senjed (fruit of the oleaster or lotus tree – love), Seer (garlic – health and medicine), Seeb (apples – beauty and health), Somaq (sumac berries – sunrise), Serkeh (vinegar – age and patience), Sonbol (hyacinth – spring) and Sekkeh (coins – prosperity and wealth).

Social Secretaries Armaity and Benafsha Engineer, our mother and daughter team, did us proud once again with their extensive spread of traditional Iranian and Indian cuisine. With a choice of seven starters and nine main courses, we were spoilt for choice and everyone present only had praise for this excellent culinary extravaganza.

After dinner our guests took to the dance floor, where musician Ali Hussaini entertained us with traditional Iranian music. While the children had plenty to keep them occupied, family and friends enjoyed dancing into the late hours of the evening.

A big thank you to Armaity and Benafsha Engineer and their team of helpers for organising everything so professionally and making this occasion a truly enjoyable and successful event.
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

WZO Trust - An Overview of Welfare Activities for 2011

Dinshaw Tamboly, Chairman, reports -

World Zoroastrian Organization Trust (established 1991); WZO Trust for Women & Children (established 1993); WZO Trust Funds (established 1995) are registered as Public Charitable Trusts under Bombay Public Trust Act, and continue to serve the community in India through their multifarious welfare activities. The initiative to establish these Trusts’ for undertaking welfare work in India was the brainchild of Mr Shahpur F Captain, during his tenure as President of WZO, London.

Most know, but it is important for us to reiterate now and again, that we do not have funds of our own. We raise funds for every project that we undertake. Donors from all over the world support us in our work. It is therefore fitting that we first acknowledge with sincere gratitude the contributions made by various donors.

Whilst we extend our sincere appreciation to all our donors big and small, it is not possible to name each, however, we acknowledge the continuous and extremely generous support received over the years from:


Farmers Rehabilitation:
During the year 2011, 17 Zoroastrian farmers spread over 15 villages were rehabilitated; support provided was by way of sinking bore wells, submersible pump sets, levelling fields, pipelines, seeds and fertilisers, establishing a poultry farm and a brick kiln, expending Rs2,680,000/-. Since we undertook this project in 1991, we have participated in the process of rehabilitating 436 Zoroastrian farmers in 177 villages, totalling Rs56,363,651/-. 

Rural Housing:
Most of the indigent Zoroastrian families residing in the villages live in huts, the walls of which are made from mud and cow-dung patted on to bamboo poles.

In 2011 20 huts were replaced into cottages and repairs carried out to 15 cottages that were in dilapidated condition. So far 156 huts have been converted to cottages and were rehabilitated repairs etc., carried out to innumerable cottages. The cost of replacing a hut into a cottage is presently Rs350,000/-. 

Self Employment:
Interest free financial support is given in rural as well as urban centres to those desiring to be self employed. The maximum amount given to any beneficiary is Rs300,000/- which is repaid in 40 equated monthly instalments of Rs7,500/-. During 2011, 56 Zoroastrians located at 15 different locations in India were extended interest free loans to start their own businesses such as plying of taxi’s, auto-rickshaws, tractors, establishments for sale of religious artefacts, stationery, cosmetic products, machine tools, dance studio, X-ray clinic, photocopying and spiral binding shops etc.
Over a period of 16 years (1995 to 2011) we have assisted 787 Zoroastrians in over 103 locations in their endeavour to be self employed. The total amount was Rs121,130,543/-.

Educational Support:
During the year 109 students were assisted for education and the total amount disbursed was Rs3,757,126/-.

Medical Aid:
As per the 2001 census of India, only 5% of its population is over 65 years of age, whereas the Parsi Zoroastrian community has 24.1% of their members over 65 years, probably the highest ratio anywhere in the world. Ours is indeed an aging community as well as an ailing one, with community members requiring medical support on a regular basis. During the year 311 individuals were supported, amounting to Rs15,609,152/- to meet their medical and hospitalisation expenses.

Relief from Poverty:
For a community considered to be affluent there are vast pockets of poverty in both urban, semi urban as well as rural settlements. We find there are many elderly as well as handicapped individuals that require support to survive. During the year, to support 385 elderly/indigent Zoroastrians, funds amounting to Rs13,237,500/- were raised.

Periodically, we distribute food grains and other essential items to about 120 to 150 indigent Zoroastrian families residing in the rural areas of Gujarat.

Religious Activity:
a) To encourage and motivate young members from Athornan families to take up mobedi as a full time vocation the ‘Athornan Mandal – WZO’ scheme was launched in 1996. We initially raised an amount of Rs10,000,000/- as a corpus, the interest of which is presently disbursed amongst 49 young full time mobeds practicing at 13 locations in India. The annual shortfall is subsidised by us. During 2011, Rs200,000/- was expended to meet the shortfall.

b) In addition, financial support was extended to 38 elderly full time mobeds who having retired or near retirement and were living in conditions of penury.

c) From the funds received through Er Soli Dastoor of Florida, Navar / Martab ceremonies of three young Athornan children were sponsored.

d) Financial support was raised and passed on towards repairs of two agyaries.

Economy Housing at Navsari:
Many families having ancestral homes at Navsari gift them to us, to be redeveloped and used for the community. We in turn raise funds and construct apartment buildings that are then given out on economical monthly license fees.

Our 8th building at Navsari was completed in April 2011 on the ancestral property of Kersi & Zenobia Aspar of Japan, gifted to us, and an apartment building constructed from funds made available by the generous Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund. Cost of this project was Rs8,600,000/-.

Senior Citizen Centres at Navsari:
Our Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Centre and Dolat & Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre became operational at Navsari in January 1998 and December 2005 respectively. Our residents are encouraged to lead a full and independent life. Day picnics are organised for them, and biyearly, residents who wish for a change are sent on weeklong holidays to our sanatorium at Sanjan, from where they are also taken on a day trip to Udvada to visit Paak Iranshah.
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Sanatorium at Sanjan:
Our Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Sanatorium at Sanjan is a popular, much sought after community resort having comfortable rooms and serving sumptuous meals at extremely reasonable rates, Rs325/- per person, per day, for full board & lodge.

In addition to what has been mentioned, we also extended financial support to a few indigent Zoroastrians, mainly elderly couples and widows in need of recuperation, to go for holidays.

An annual gambar from the income generated from the investment of a generous corpus amount that was donated to us in 1995 by late Muljibhai Narsi of Mumbai, a non Zoroastrian who held our community in high esteem, is held.

To encourage our youth especially those in South Gujarat to excel in sports, we organize an annual athletic meet at Navsari. We have over the years been sponsoring a youth cricket team from Navsari and encourage them to participate in various tournaments in Gujarat and Mumbai. Whilst the cricket team has already won quite a few trophies, it is satisfying to see consistent improvement in the performance of the athletes from South Gujarat.

Students doing well in their academics are also encouraged by publicly felicitating them at an annual function at Navsari. Zoroastrian teachers who have been in the profession for 25 years and more are also periodically felicitated at this time.

On each Khordad-Sal, we sponsor a function at Navsari where Zoroastrian residents display their talents, participate in games and generally have a fun time.

It would not have been possible for us to undertake such extensive welfare programmes without support from our donors, and also our band of dedicated staff and volunteers, to whom we are indebted.

Donations for any of our projects are very welcome and may be forwarded by way of cheque / draft to.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust, or
The WZO Trust Funds
Shanti, 5th floor,
6, Banaji Street,
Fort,
Mumbai 400 001.

Donors in India are eligible for exemption under section 80G of Income Tax Act 1961. World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust and WZO Trust Funds are authorised to receive funds from overseas under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 1976.

Dinshaw K Tamboly lives in Mumbai and is currently providing consultancy service in management and marketing.

He is Chairman of WZO Trust Funds of India. He is also a Trustee of various hospitals, and charity trusts and foundations. Till September 2004 he was a Member of the International Board of WZO.
Zoroastrianism’s Influence on Christianity

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

This article is the second in a series of Zoroastrianism’s impact on the 5 major religions of the world – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. It is an abstract from the book: “Zoroastrianism – The Mother of the World’s Major Religions”, to be published in 2012.

Christianity: From Jesus to Paul to the Catholic Church

Christianity is the third in the line of monotheistic religions – after Zoroastrianism and Judaism – and owes much of its doctrines to these pace-setting faiths. Yet, no religion is as pervasive as Christianity, with a presence in every country of the world – a total of over 2 billion adherents. But while it has a core doctrine, it is split into 3 major denominations – Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox – each with its numerous branches, offshoots and communities, making it into a kaleidoscope of religious beliefs.

by keki bhote

While Jesus is – and will always remain – “the raison d’etre” of Christianity, he did not start a new religion. His was a reform movement of Judaism, with his simple and convincing logic of love for God and man, impeccable ethics and a plea for social justice. “In Jesus’ time, no organized body of doctrine existed. The master taught a way of life, where acts were more important than blind faith.”1 It was Paul, the real founder of Christianity, who metamorphosed Jesus into God, introduced concepts of his virgin birth, his crucifixion and resurrection as well as that of “original sin” and redemption only through Christ. The split between the Jewish followers of Jesus, (succeeded by his brother James) and Paul, with his base established in the Western Roman Empire, continued to widen over the next centuries. On one side were the Essenes, later Gnostic Christianity and the Bishopries of Egypt and Ireland. On the other was the dictatorial and intolerant Church of Rome.

Finally, in the ‘summit conference’ of Ephesus in 325 AD, the Roman Church excommunicated all other Christian movements – an over-powering dominance that continued till the reforms of Martin Luther and Calvin 12 centuries later.

Doctrinal Highlights of Christianity 2
• The divine name is love ...Love is God and God is love. God’s purpose is the growth and sharing of love.
Jesus’ quote: “Love thy God with all thy might ... and love thy neighbor as thyself” was the essence of his message.
• God-love is made visible only in the person of Jesus.
• Jesus’ suffering and death broke the chain of Original Sin for all mankind.
• Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control are the spiritual means to a Christian life.
• A way to salvation can only be through a relationship with Jesus. Those who lack this will suffer forever.

The Influence of Zoroastrianism on Christianity

“Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the world’s revealed religions, and it had more influence on mankind, directly or indirectly, than any
other single faith ... Its leading doctrines were adopted by Judaism, Christianity and Islam.”

Mary Boyce, Professor, University of London

For 600 long years – from the time of Christ and up to the last Zoroastrian Emperor in 652 AD Zoroastrianism was not a distant or shadowy presence, but the world's most powerful religion. During that period, Christians were accorded the same freedom of worship as had the Jews in the previous Achaemenid Empire, which in turn, earned their respect and admiration for Zoroastrian principles. What were these Zoroastrian principles that appealed so much to Christian theology? The worship of one supreme God, a belief of a saviour to come (Soshyant in Zoroastrianism, Messiah in Christianity), faithful adherence to a way of life which combined moral and spiritual aspirations with an ethical code of behavior, were all matters in which Christianity began to harmonize with Zarathushtra’s teachings.

The extent of that influence reached a peak in the Parthian period when Christianity, Gnosticism and Buddhism all bore witness to the profound effects of Zarathushtra’s precepts had in the entire Near East. Influence and the exchange of ideas were proliferating because the Greek language had become the lingual franca of the region, displacing the less understood Aramaic of Jesus’ time. Another development that bound Judaism, Christianity and Parthian Zoroastrianism into a tight embrace was their resistance to the encroachment of Rome. “Another piece of evidence that bound the religions together is the pervasiveness of the Zoroastrian prophetic tradition longing for the coming of the Soshyant intensified among the Iranians in the dark period after Alexander's conquest, and a rich apocalyptic and prophetic literature appeared which made the name of 'Zoroaster' famous in the whole region.”

Further, the concepts of angelology and demonology, life after death and the Last Judgment – all mentioned only allegorically in Zarathushtra’s Gathas – took on concrete, personalized forms in later Zoroastrianism and passed on to both Judaism and Christianity.

Doctrinal Differences Between Christianity and Zoroastrianism
While the above concepts unite Christianity and Zoroastrianism, there are equally compelling differences in doctrine between the two faiths.

Concept of God: In Christianity, God is reached only through Christ. Further, if Zoroastrianism is labeled (falsely) dualistic, i.e. the equality of good and evil, Christianity can be called tripartite (i.e. the equality of God, the father, Christ the son and the Holy Spirit.) Such Trinitarian monotheism does not exist in Zoroastrianism, where God and God alone, is the absolute ruler and architect of the universe, with no intervening figure, man or divine, such as Christ.

Man’s Relationship with God: In Christianity, man is the servant of God, ever dependent on Christ’s mediation to seek mercy and continued existence. In Zoroastrianism, one does not fear God, for God is father, brother and friend with whom he can share his concerns, his hopes, his joys. Man is God’s helper in furthering God’s vision.

The Purpose of Life: For Christians the purpose of life is to acquire the love of God, but solely through Christ. “This is not an emotional love, but a salvific love, ie. a love that saves mankind form the sin in which all are born.” (Incidentally, the Eastern Orthodox Church does not accept this Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin.)

Zoroastrianism categorically rejects the notion that all of us – little innocent children included – are born of sin. God has given man the freedom to think for himself with the power He endowed in each one of the good mind and the sensitive conscience to steer him on the ethical path of Asha.

Further, the Zoroastrian purpose of life is far more meaningful, more panoramic. It is for man to be a soldier in God’s army to move our world to perfection.

The Forgiveness of Sin: In Christianity, the operative thought is to repent – for one's
own sins and for the sins of mankind. But there is a way out: The forgiveness of sin by taking Christ to your heart. To Zoroastrians, this seems like instant pudding. Sin all you want, then repent, ask for forgiveness and your negative spiritual bank balance is wiped off!

The Zoroastrian process of salvation is more rational and credible. Each person acts directly in relation to God. There is no mediation except one’s conscience and knowledge of God. One’s own thoughts, words and deeds are one’s own reward and punishment – the sum-total of a positive spiritual balance versus a negative bank balance.

**Death and Salvation:** The central event of Christianity is the death and resurrection of the God-man Christ. It is part of Christian teaching that Christ suffered on the cross and therefore the way to salvation is through suffering. “Without Christ, the Christian fears oblivion and utter destruction of the light of consciousness. The only refuge is the life that is to be found in Christ. Zoroastrians believe that in every act of goodness they are alive in the spiritual world accompanied by a vast universe of other good beings. They know they act with God not apart from God. Life is a contest against evil and human beings stand along side one another against the common enemy – evil.” 5

Was Jesus an Essenes (Dead Sea Scrolls)? According to Dr Paul Roberts 6, the world-renowned author, Jesus belonged to the Essenes, an ascetic sect of the Jews opposed to Rome. He became their leader after John the Baptist was beheaded. But the Essenes did not like Jesus’s pacification: “render unto Cesar the things that are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.

The three Magi kings who allegedly appeared when Jesus was born were Zoroastrians who mediated between the Essenes and the Pharisees/Sadducees after Jesus died. The Essenes retreated to the Dead Sea area where they buried their priceless Dead Sea Scrolls. Their literature shows an even more close resemblance to Zoroastrianism.

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**Reference:**

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**Chalk Blessings**

by shiraz engineer

This rare home is warm, minute, insignificant in the harsh bustle and trampling of an Islamic state.

Beyond the chequered windows lies a quiet heaven.
Walls gasp for breath under photos of grandchildren, enshrined forever.
Keeps them close.

Shabby and calm,
a purring ceiling fan muffles the crackling call to prayer.
Our prophet’s image in every nook smiles as I wander back and forth, restless and wilting.

As I tread the worn, smoky concrete ground past the kitchen,
chalk blessings adorn my dusty feet, whisper over my skin in the sleepy midday swelter, and I am cleansed.

---

Shiraz Engineer, 22, was born in South London. She is in her final year studying for a Bachelor’s degree in English at the Queen’s University of Belfast, Northern Ireland. In her spare time, Shiraz acts and directs for the Drama Society. This poem is one of a series about her trip to Karachi in November of last year.
Humanistic subjects were regularly defined in terms of language, but were much more than simply language learning. ‘Zend’ must have involved reading substantial parts of the Avesta in its original language, learning philological methods of interpretation, and studying the content with a view to understanding the early Zoroastrian religion and its historical background - just as ‘Avestan’ does at Oxford nowadays.

In 1886 a new degree in ‘Oriental Studies’ had been established within the Oxford Faculty of Arts, which hitherto had administered degrees only in Latin and Greek (‘Literae Humaniores’), Theology, Law (‘Jurisprudence’) and Modern History. Its creation was largely the result of the efforts of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Professor of Sanskrit, who in 1860 had defeated Max Muller in a famous public contest for this Oxford professorial chair. Two types of ‘Oriental Studies’ degrees were created: ‘Indian Studies’ and ‘Semitic Studies’. ‘Semitic Studies’ included Akkadian, Aramaic, Hebrew and Arabic, while ‘Indian Studies’ included the classical Indian languages Sanskrit and Pali, an impressive array of modern South Asian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Burmese besides modern languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan family), and also Persian. The course of study for most of these languages is indicated in the University Examination Statutes, but to begin with there are no such details for the special option in ‘Zend’. However, by 1895, the course for the option in ‘Zend’ was specified as:

“The texts printed in Jackson’s Avesta Reader. The language may be studied in Jackson’s Avesta Grammar.”

A V W Jackson’s Avesta Reader had been published in Stuttgart in 1893, and although it claims merely to furnish “in convenient form some material for those beginning to study the Avesta”, it in fact contains very substantial excerpts from the Yasna (Y26 and the Greater SroshYasht, Y57), Visparad, Yashts and Videvdat. This ‘Reader’ is a model of old pedagogical works of its kind, as Jackson supplied texts in the original Avesta script, short notes and a detailed vocabulary, but left the student to work out the translation for himself. The author’s preface stated “The selections here given are such as may easily be mastered by a class in one college term” and only later adds “It is presupposed, of course, that the student has made progress in Sanskrit”.

As normally during the nineteenth century in Europe, ‘Zend’ here means the very ancient Iranian language of the fundamental Avesta, which nowadays is called Avestan (with two distinct stages, Old Avestan and Younger Avestan). Later it came to be realised that ‘Zend’ properly applies only to the Middle Persian (‘Pahlavi’) translation and commentary (the ‘Zand’), which is often found in manuscripts of the Avesta, but it was a long time before this name was replaced at Oxford.
One may wonder whether this reflected Jackson’s own teaching experience at Columbia University, NY, and how the Oxford students who studied Persian rather than Sanskrit as their main subject fared.

However, for students studying Persian by 1895 there was also the possibility of selecting a ‘special subject’ in ‘Avestan Texts’, which involved reading the three volumes of *Sacred Books of the East*, containing the English translations of the Avesta by J Darmesteter and L H Mills (*SBE IV, XXIII, XXX*). The general editor and motivating force behind this series published by Oxford’s Clarendon Press (the forerunner of Oxford University Press) was Max Muller, who had been compensated for his defeat in the Sanskrit election by the creation in 1868 of a chair in Comparative Philology (and subsequently, when he threatened to resign, by the appointment in 1876 of a deputy, A H Sayce, to relieve Muller of the burdens of teaching). The existence of this ‘Avestan Texts’ special subject (and an alternative one in ‘Pahlavi Texts’ consisting of E W West’s translations in *SBE V, XVIII, XXIV, XXXVII, XLVII*) is a striking departure from the normal Oxford practice, that has endured to this day, of requiring students to study texts in the original language. It also shows the high regard in which the *SBE* translations were held in the nineteenth century. This regard lasted into the twentieth century even though in the case of Avestan and ‘Pahlavi’ the linguistic scholarship which underpins these translations was rapidly superseded.

Max Muller and his *SBE* introduced to Oxford the American minister of religion, the Rev Lawrence Heyworth Mills, who was to make the *Gathas* his life’s study. Mills had been invited by Muller to translate the *Visparad* and *Yasna* for *SBE XXXI* (published 1887) when James Darmesteter pleaded the demands of his post in Paris as a reason for not completing more than two of the three *SBE* volumes devoted to the Avesta (Darmesteter then went on to publish a complete French translation of the Avesta in three volumes, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 1892-3). In addition, in 1893 Mills edited the

*‘L H Mills’ shows the verse from the Gathas (Yasna 43.3) which Mills had engraved on the outer cover of his publication ‘A Study of the Five Zarathushtrian Gathas’. His translation is given on p14.*
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Say, “I am a Zoroastrian,” anywhere in the world and you will have to carry on a lecture in religion, philosophy, and history. You would still need to lecture in places like Iran, India and every so often in other parts of the world where someone may recognize the name by asking, “So, you’re a fire worshiper?”

Many of us have blamed misconceptions about our religion on others and hardly ever on ourselves. In the West, Zoroastrianism has mainly been explored and analyzed by scholars of other fields while they studied a project on various groups such as the Greeks, Armenians, Jews or other cultures. To many of these scholars Zoroastrianism was not the focus of their work and in some cases, some were devoted to their native religions and did not in full faith credit Zoroastrianism for its contributions to world cultures and religions, or for being the first monotheism, nor did they agonize about the true meaning of the doctrine and its attributes such as the Fire.

The School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University is offering an ambitious programme of expansion with the goal of becoming a center for inter-religious understanding. To that end we have a Board of Visitors from the world’s major religions that are helping the university with the curriculum. We are quite pleased that a Zoroastrian Council is among their number.

Zarathustra’s ethical school of thought is based on good conscience and wisdom; therefore best understood by those who are wise and intellectual. Unlike most faith-based religions it cannot be propagated door to door, the most appropriate place to create awareness about our religion is where people seek knowledge and understanding, such as a university. We could also reach out to a lot more people if we educate their teachers. These young PHD students will educate thousands of other students in the future, they will write books, essays and will create and help create curriculums for those who pay a tuition in order to educate themselves about world religions, including Zoroastrianism.

The Zoroastrian religion is relatively unknown in the US, although it has been an important influence on the progress of all the better-known traditions. The teachings and tenets of Zoroastrianism, one of the world’s oldest religions, have influenced the development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the West, Hinduism and Buddhism in the East.

One of the goals for the School of Religion is to provide graduates, who will go on to teach religion at colleges and universities, a thorough foundation to explain the close relationships among the world’s religious traditions. The School of Religion is offering courses in the Zoroastrian religion to highlight the importance of Zoroastrian teachings and their influence on later religions. With the guidance of our Zoroastrian Council we are bringing knowledge of this ancient, yet modern religion to our students.

The School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University would welcome Zarathushthis to study religion in Claremont. We offer both the MA and PHD in religion with over 250 students doing graduate work in religion, we are one of the largest doctoral programmes in the United States. The School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University is hopeful to expand its partnership with the Zoroastrian Community in reaching the highest standard of Zoroastrian studies in North America.
What the good Dastur had to say at the time on the Namagh’s reception is instructive for Zoroastrians and others of every hue and credence, well even into the 21st century. The text has reached us via translations into Pazand, Persian, and Gujarati, and some distressing effects ensued from its public readings, with embellishments and dramatic interventions. Here’s the Dastur: “… a few years ago, when the book used to be read before them, overpowered by consciousness of guilt, the punishment for which was so terrifically described, they, but especially the gentler sex, used to weep.” Hoshangji continues: “It was a most affecting spectacle to witness the awakening conscience exhibiting itself in trickling tears”!

So, what was all that fuss over? The answer emerges from its background – its vague setting within actual history, its religious development through priestly interventions, and the unsettling material itself.

The text begins with a forthright declaration that the Religion which Zardusht had received remained in purity for three hundred years. More importantly, it was disseminated worldwide. Significantly, it ends (Chapter 101) on those very notes with Ohrmazd’s exhortation – his parting sermon, andarz-fashion: purity of worship and a reminder that it was his Religion that Zardusht had received from him and propagated world-wide by Wishtasp. A sober injunction, in excellent Pahlavi, includes a paraphrase of Ys.72.11: “ek ast rah i ahrayih – rah i poryotkeshih, ud an i abarig rah hamag ne rah” – “There is but one route for Truth-followers; the way of the Ancients – all other ways are no ways!” A tail-piece is tacked on, urging all Mazdaeans to abide by the Religion through thick and thin, all of which is what our intrepid hero was expected to ratify in the first place! The opening and ending of our text are its raisons-d’etre.

But just who was this trusted envoy to the post-mortem celestial realms? Why was he singled out from a large, capable assembly of the earthly pious ones? How was his Afterworld itinerary arranged? What transpired there? These and similar considerations weigh upon this article.

Wiraz’s story unfolds thus: the truth, the validity and viability of the Religion – the din – had been seriously shaken after the murderous invasion of Alexander the gizistag, the accursed Macedonian, with its chaotic aftermath. Alien faiths, doctrines and heresies had ruptured on Iranian soil; doubts entered mens’ minds – had the din-i mazdesnan with
its rigid purity laws, rich ceremonial, and right rituals failed mankind after all? Visible signs were demanded, and the choice of envoy was crucial to the success of this enterprise.

At a meeting convened by the concerned Magians at the dar-i perozgar Adur-i Farnbagh, the court(yard) of the Victorious Farnbagh Fire, the highest grade Fire of the priests, seven goodly and godly men were invited forward to examine and adjudge the most suitable for this extra-terrestrial journey. From those seven, three were selected, and from the three, the choice fell upon Wiraz, a pious, observant lay Mazdayasnian, saintly as his Arda prefix implies, and reputed so to be sinless – or as near as fits!

The actual procedure for their choice bears comment. Some investigators have seen in this a very special kind of ordeal – a quite wacky one, in the opinion of this writer – it consisted of hurling lances (!) towards the chosen three, of which one such hurl launched the spear that landed nearest to Wiraz! Now, gentle reader, sit yourself down, cognac at the ready, and soberly contemplate the implications of the spear-throw. Was it to transfix Wiraz mortally and immediately release his ruwan for transit to the spirit world – in which event nothing further would be heard from his corpse! – and the entire exercise would have then become pointless.

Or could it be that an ambiguous Pahlavi term underlay this hazardous stratagem? The word for lance is nezag (spelt as nyck). Annoyingly for some whose enjoyment we are about to spoil is the nearness of wezag (spelt wyck) meaning something thrust forth or brandished, which, as lots, would credibly fit the context. How prosaic! (Pahlavi is notorious for such confusion – Wiraz’s very life depended upon it: but let that pass!).

Thereupon the three agreed to the draw, and Wiraz, so to speak, drew the short straw. But now it is Wiraz’s pre-acceptance plea: “Please do not administer the henbane against my will” that grips our attention. What was this henbane, and why was Wiraz so fearful of it? Had it been tried before for such purpose, and what were then its outcomes?

A succession of windows suddenly opens up. The dreaded henbane was to be dissolved in wine – a cocktail grandly named may ud mang-i Wishtaspan. Wiraz was to be given three golden goblets of the brew, one each for Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed. (Don’t try this at home!) His seven pious sisters rush up to tearfully protest against this removal of their beloved brother. Astute fellow that he is, Wiraz firstly draws up his will, then is offered food in preparation for a seven-days’ journey, reverently recites the Service for the Deceased for which he required special priestly permission.

At a chosen spot some thirty paces from the sacred Fire, Wiraz performed his ablutions, donned new perfumed garments. Beseating himself on a freshly made bed, he solemnly consumes – after taking baj (waz grift) – what may well be his last-ever earthly meal washed down with the three priest-shaken cocktails. His seven sisters and the clergy commence their full seven days’ vigil by Wiraz’s bedside whilst reciting nirangs and chanting the Gathas.

Among the items especially noticed is the baj. Observant Zoroastrians are aware of the social impropriety, cast as a religious injunction, of chattering whilst eating, and if something has to be said, it is in an undertone – sotto voce – or “in baj”. This solemn requirement is most frequently observed in its breach, as may be audibly verified to this day during gahanbars and other meal-time gatherings. But no matter, for Wiraz at least dutifully followed the ancient usage whilst eating: its inclusion in his Namagh is surely not accidental! The taking and leaving off the baj defined a long held socio-religious custom. Other similar side-shows will be duly presented.

To resume Wiraz’s narrative, our intrepid hero lay down on his bed after his pious preparations upon which the mang-i wishtaspan took hold and overcame his consciousness. His soul emerged from his living frame and set out towards the Chagad-i dadig, or “Peak of the Law” and on to the bridge-head of the dread Chinwad Pul (the “Bridge of the Separator”). There he was met...
by Srosh the Pious and the Fire yazad Adur who greeted the Mazdayasnian envoy effusively in welcome.

Taking Wiraz by the hand, his two celestial guides led him along the three sacred steps of Humat, Hukht, and Huwarsht and fearlessly over the Chinwad. There he encountered the souls who sat by the pious deceased chanting the Gathic prayer ahmai yahmai ushta kahmaichit – “Blessed is he whose goodness spreads benefit to whomsoever”! This all-embracing “whomsoever” should be especially noticed instead of the macaronic “Happiness to him who happiness gives”! It is exactly how the Pahlavi authors understood and continued to disseminate Zarathushtra’s Gathic teachings of some 1,200 years before. Wiraz felt himself engulfed by this uplifting goodness.

The episode follows of the beauteous maiden, described in a somewhat risqué fashion, who comes up in a perfumed zephyr from the south to greet the soul of the good person. Upon being asked who she is, her response is the significant “I am your own good thoughts, words and deeds. I was beautiful, and you have made me even more so!” Furthermore, “You had chanted the Gathas in the world of the living, and properly consecrated the Fire and the Water”. Very salutary!

Thereafter the Bridge widens to nine spear lengths (yes, it really does say “spear” this time!) which Wiraz, accompanied by his heavenly mentors, commences to cross fearlessly, in comfort, and under the protection of other high yazads. Now Srosh and Adur prepare Wiraz for the fragrances of Paradise and the stench-laden horrors of Hell, respectively the abodes of the Truthful and the Deceitful. We cannot use “Inferno” here, for reasons made clear below. Wiraz sees the intermediate condition of those whose good and evil deeds balance, where nothing much happens, and the souls effectively just stand around, neither in shade nor in ‘shine.

The bliss of Heaven unfurled for Wiraz in predictable manner along the lines of the socio-religious three/four-fold division of society whose post-mortem conditions were but good reflexions of their earthly status. Thus, he saw the moral and social classes — rulers and kings, warrior-nobles, and industrious labourers (farmers, pastoralists, artisans). Specially noticed were those who practised generosity towards others, Gatha-chanters, close-kin marrieds, and, above all, Truth-speakers in accord with Good Thoughts, Speech, and Works.

Most noticed were the richly-clad souls of piously observant women, singled out for their zeal in the care of the six sacred elements of Mazda’s creation. What will not please feminists are the terms of entry into Heaven for the souls of the gentler sex: they were noted for their subservience to their husbands — “submissive, respectful, and obedient”! Their descent from the Gathic position of full gender equality into the rigidly controlled world of later oppressive Sasanian priestcraft is made blindingly clear in our text.

So, what are the “later” and “below” bits promised earlier? Well, here they are, with the rought bits smoothed out and grisly details
suppressed. Having visually sampled the perfumed delights of Heaven, and the flat-lined nothingness of Hammistagan, Wiraz is led by Srosh the Pious and Adur the yazad to view the “darkness and constriction, discomfort and evils, distress, pain, sickness and horror, fear and brutality” of Hell.

Wiraz was immediately apprised of the terrible nature of the Mazdaean Hell: it extended well-like deeply downwards into a darkness so dense, in such intense cold that it could be grasped by the hand, and having so horrid a stench that it rent the nostrils, in so confining a space that each condemned soul imagined itself to be utterly alone. The diligent reader will see why it cannot be called Inferno, and the commonly used “As hot as Hell” becomes meaningless. The North, according to our commentarial texts is the inauspicious quarter whence all manner of plagues and pestilences descend upon Mazda’s good creation. (In India it is noted that the Hindus regard the South, their dakshina, as Hell!).

Hell, as by now gathered, is the complete opposite of the earlier stopovers. Wiraz, mightily affaered, but sustained by Srosh and Adur, sees there the noxious torments inflicted upon men and women who in earthly life had transgressed the civilized precepts of Mazdaean behaviour and had resorted to vile practices. Hell, with its horrors, takes up the bulk of his Namagh, and sorry to say, it is women who were deemed to practice the viler sins. Not wishing to initiate a new round of wailing and gnashing of teeth among co-religionists, only some lesser sins are presented here.

In far-off 13th-14th century Italy, Alighieri Dante composed his beautiful epic – his Commedia, so-called because of its happy ending. There, it will be recalled, his guide through the Inferno and Purgatorio was the Roman poet Virgil (1st century BC); Paradise was visited in the company of the delightful, chaste Beatrice. For Wiraz there was the consolation of his own beauteous Daena which, being a reflexion of his own goodness, sustained him through the bliss of Heaven, the awful rigours of Hell, and the lastingly uneventful Hammistagan or Half-way House, through which major stops his guides were the celestial Srosh and Adur.

Upon a brief return to the Chinwad to see how the souls of the wicked will fare, he describes the personification of the sinners as a hideous hag who hobbles across in a freezing, stench-laden, howling gale from the north to shriek a foul welcome in quite revolting terms. In keeping with our snooty standards we shall not venture further in repeating Wiraz. At any rate, this harridan drags off the errant souls into Hell. Gulp and good-bye!

And so, on to other side-shows: Wiraz comes to a mightily flowing river, one difficult to ford: it is the River of Tears formed by the excessive outpouring of tears of grief and lamentation for the dead by the earthly bereaved. He witnesses the souls of some who were unable to cross, others who managed their crossing with some distress, and the rest who forded the torrent with ease. Upon enquiring of his guides regarding the nature of these difficulties, he is informed that those held back
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Some mentionable sins of evil-doing men are: sodomy; copulation with women in their menses; murder of pious Mazdaeans; chattering whilst eating – not keeping the baj!; not performing the kushiti; disrespect towards parents; adulterating wine; bulking flour with sawdust; indulging in tyranny, torture, and unjust punishment; slander; provoking quarrels; etc., etc., etc.

Women get the roughest deal for the following transgressions: withholding sexual contact from husbands; throwing rubbish on to Fire; abortion; neglecting her children; cuckolding of husbands; adultery; prostitution; whew! you name it, she’s guilty of it! Others shall remain unspecified here.

The resolution to leave out the respective chastisements still holds. Only this may be said of them: they are r-e-v-o-l-t-i-n-g in the extreme.

But we must not forget Wiraz in all his lengthy sojourns in the After-world. The reader will be relieved to know that Wiraz arose from his Wishtaspan blot-out, his wandering soul happily reunited with his body, to the rejoicing of his seven sisters and the assembly of the Mazdaeans, and to the satisfaction of the pious Magians who noted the full vindication of their beliefs and practices.

A final note: at the first stirrings of the “returned” Wiraz, the priests crowded around the intrepid traveller in an unseemly rush to know and hear all from him, only to be stayed by Wiraz’s stern demand: “The first word is that one should firstly give nourishment to the hungry and the thirsty, and then ask questions and demand explanations!” It appears he was, after all, a proper Parsi who arranged his priorities correctly!

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Dante [Uffizi, Firenze]

were by their own tears of lamentation; those less lamenting were able to make their way across dangerously; and those self-restrained in their grieving made their crossing with ease. The guides accordingly urged Wiraz to warn his fellow-Mazdayasnians against excessive displays of bereavement. Point taken?

The incident of “Wet-wood” Wiraz cannot go unremarked. Expressing surprise at this strange greeting, Wiraz is shown a vast lake, created apparently by the vapours from unseasoned wood (less than seven years old!) carelessly used on earth to accompany devotional acts. Point taken?

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 House of Song is a metaphor for the high we experience when we sing or hear beautiful music. Devotional songs have been an Indo-Iranian tradition from ancient times. The Buddhists have gathas. The Hindus have bhajans. As late as the 20th century, wandering minstrels used to travel all over northern India, singing devotional songs. Rabindranath Tagore (a great admirer of Zarathushtra) said, “... one day I chanced to hear a song from a beggar belonging to the Baul sect of Bengal ... it was alive with an emotional sincerity. It spoke of an intense yearning of the heart for the divine which is in Man and not in the temple, or scriptures, in images and symbols ...”

The music of the Gathas, as songs, survived for many centuries. In a later text, the Aerpatistan and Nirangistan, we are told that if you hear someone singing the Gathas, whether along an aqueduct, or a river, or in the wilderness, or on the highways of commerce, you may join in. Sadly, we no longer know the music to which the Gathas were sung. We no longer know any of the other ancient “... songs of praise (sung) in universal glory of your kind, Wise One.” (Y34.2). And music, which so pervaded Zarathushtra’s worship, is absent from the forms of worship engaged in by Zoroastrians today. How could this have happened? Probably because of devastating wars in which the learned were killed, books burned, and knowledge of this ancient music (among other things) was lost. Perhaps today, as Zarathushtra’s beautiful teachings inspire the love and devotion they did in ancient times, Zoroastrians will once again express the devotional love they feel in music and songs.

In Zarathushtra’s thought, love is the foundation of prayer and worship. “Lovingly” is the word Zarathushtra describes how he prays. “Thee ... do I lovingly entreat for the best for Frashaoshtra ... and for me ...” Y28.8. And he tells us that if a prayer has two ingredients, the Divine will always answer. These two ingredients are good...
Zarathushtra does not dictate any specific prayers that must be recited. Instead, he talks to the Wise Lord, one to one, about anything and everything:

About his hunger for knowledge: "... which man did fix the course of the sun and of the stars? Through whom does the moon wax (now), wane later? These things indeed and others, I wish to know Wise One." Y44.3;

About his mistreatment at the hands of others, "Yes, throughout my lifetime I have been condemned as the greatest defiler, I who try to satisfy the poorly protected (creatures) with truth, Wise One..." Y49.1;

About his rejection by his community, "To what land to flee? Where shall I go to flee? They exclude (me) from my family and from my clan ..." Y46.1;

About his concerns regarding his mission, "... How shall I bring to life that vision of mine, ..." Y44.9; "... how shall I, with your accord, impassion your following, ..." Y44.17; "... How might I deliver deceit into the hands of truth, ..." Y44.14;

His grief, "... I lament to Thee. Take notice of it, Lord, offering the support which a friend should grant to a friend ..." Y46.2;

And he prays for guidance. "... do Thou, Wise Lord, instruct me ... through the eloquence befitting Thy spirit ..." Y28.11.

These are what I call 'asking' prayers. Some of us regard such prayers with disfavor, even scorn. But that is not reasonable. If those we love needed help, wouldn’t we want to help them? Is the Divine less generous than human beings? Now I agree that we should not regard the Divine primarily as a supplier of goods and services. However, mutual, loving help between the Divine and all the living, is at the very heart of Zarathushtra’s teaching. The Divine is so generous, that even when we pray in foolish ways, asking for foolish things, the opportunity is used to help us in some way. I don’t think any prayer, however foolish, is ever wasted. It will “not be left wanting.” Y28.10.

There are those who also disapprove of praying without knowing the meaning of the prayers. I once thought the same way. And in general, it is a good thing to know the meaning of prayers. But if a person derives peace of mind from praying in a language he/she does not understand, so what. The Divine knows the intent behind all our prayers – whether in Pazand, Pahlavi or English, whether we understand the words or not. The thing that matters (in my view) is that person’s state of mind / heart.

Zarathushtra frequently asks for help, for support, for protection, for himself and for others, but (as usual) with a difference. He does not ask the Wise Lord to make his difficulties go away. He asks Him for the tools – truth and its comprehension, good thinking – with which he can solve the problems that beset him. In Y49.12, he asks, “What help by truth hast Thou for Zarathushtra who calls? What help by good thinking hast Thou for me, ... “ Y49.12. In Y34.7, he says, "Wise One, where are those sincere ones who, through their possession of good thinking, make even immoral decrees and painful legacies disappear? I know of none other than you. Therefore protect us in accord with truth [asha-]." Y34.7. His reference to immoral decrees and painful legacies sounds a bit like what is happening in our own times, doesn’t it. But what, in his view, protects us from these immoral decrees and painful legacies? Truth (asha).

So far we have discussed ‘asking prayers’. However, most of us are aware through
experience, that it is impossible to teach without learning. It is impossible to give without receiving. And a similar paradox exists in prayer. It is impossible to experience the Wise Lord’s generosity in response to prayer, without being generous in return. In addition to ‘asking prayers’, the Gathas reveal a form of worship that I call ‘giving prayers’.

Zarathushtra teaches us to worship the Wise Lord with His own divine characteristics, the amesha spenta, an idea that is corroborated in many later texts. Here are a few examples from the Gathas (there are many more):

“Yes, praising, I shall always worship ... you, Wise Lord, with truth and the very best thinking and with their rule ...” Y50.4.

“I shall try to glorify Him for us with prayers of [aramaiti-], ...” Y45.10. Prayers of aramaiti – are prayers of thoughts, words and actions which embody truth.

“...Your enduring worshipful offering has been established to be immortality [ameretat] and completeness [haurvatat].” Y33.8. In this last verse, Y33.8, the “worshipful offering” – completeness (haurvatat) and non-deathness (ameretat) – is our own self realization, our complete and undying attainment of truth, which is the best worship offering we can give to the Wise Lord.

We also see this beautiful form of worship – worshipping the Divine with its own characteristics, the amesha spenta – in the enigmatic Y51.22 where Zarathushtra says: “I know in whose worship there exists for me the best, in accordance with truth. It is the Wise Lord as well as those who have existed and (still) exist [ie. the amesha spenta]. Them all shall I worship with their own names, and I shall serve them with love.” Y51.22. (Notice, the foundation of worship is “love”).

How do we worship the amesha spenta “with their own names”? We worship truth with truth – by being truthful. We worship good thinking with good thinking – by using our minds to search for the truth, and understand it. We worship aramaiti- with aramaiti- - by bringing truth to life, giving it substance, embodying it, with our truthful thoughts, words and actions. We worship good rule with good rule – by using whatever power we have to govern ourselves, our social units, our world, in accordance with truth (the true correct order asha-). We worship completeness and non-deathness by attaining and personifying truth completely, wholly (haurvata-) in an undying way (ameretat). We worship a beneficial way of being, spenta-mainyu- by being beneficial – good, generous, loving.

In short, in an age when men worshipped gods by slaughtering animals (and possibly each other) in stone temples, Zarathushtra introduces the idea of worshipping the Divine with its own qualities, in thought, word and action, in the temple of life – the ultimate ‘giving prayer’. I love this form of worship. It warms the heart and delights the mind. To think that one’s actions in the hustle and bustle of the ‘real world’ can be acts of worship if governed by truth and good thinking, gives meaning and beauty to the everyday things we do. Implicit in this framework of worship is the idea that the good end can be reached only by like means. The adage ‘The end justifies the means’ is not a part of Zarathushtra’s thought. Implicit in this framework of worship is the idea of a unity of endeavor between the Divine and the human. What the Wise Lord requires of us, He delivers of Himself – truth (asha-), its comprehension (vohu- manah-), its embodiment in thought, word and action (aramaiti-), its good rule (vohuxshathra-), its complete, undying attainment (haurvata-, ameretat-). Implicit in this framework of worship is the unique idea that even such divine qualities as truth and good thinking, to be worth anything, must be expressed, given life, in the material reality of thoughts, words and actions. “…May truth be embodied and strong with breath ...” Y43.16; “…Through its actions [aramaiti-] gives substance to the truth ...” Y44.6.

In short, he teaches us to worship the Divine by infusing the qualities of the Divine (the amesha spenta) into every aspect of our material reality, into each thought, word and action – at home, in the business world, in
academia, in government, in the practice of our professions, in our treatment of other life forms and the environment. A ‘living’ worship, in every sense of the word. Most religious traditions teach that to advance ourselves spiritually, we must reject the material. Zarathushtra’s teaching is so uniquely and beautifully different. Under his formula for worship, the material world is an indispensable matrix, through which we progress spiritually. His formula for worship, makes us aware of how inextricably interconnected we are, because when we so worship with the material reality of thoughts, words and actions, it is impossible to advance ourselves, spiritually, without at the same time benefiting each other and our world (the converse being also true).

So to Zarathushtra, the fragrance of a life well lived, is the incense of worship – the loveliest prayer of all. The ultimate ‘giving prayer’.

Of course, it is easy to articulate this beautiful form of worship. It is another thing entirely to implement it. What, in a given situation, is consistent with truth? What is not? The answers are seldom clear cut. But then, that is part of the fun, is it not? Figuring out these questions for ourselves, case by case, with good thinking (vohu- manah-)? Will we make mistakes? Inevitably. But with good thinking we learn from our mistakes – a necessary part of the growth process.

We sometimes question whether to Zarathushtra, truth (asha) is subjective or objective. Well, if to Zarathushtra asha is the true (correct) order of things in the existences of matter and mind, I do not think he could have seen asha as subjective. It is only our attempts at understanding truth that are subjective, that vary from culture to culture, from generation to generation. But as we grow through experience, our perceptions become more accurate until finally, truth, and our understanding of it, is the same. Until then, figuring out how to bring this beautiful ashavan order to life with our thoughts, words and actions is sometimes fun, and sometimes painful, but always the ultimate creative challenge.

There’s an old song called The Lonesome Train. It was sung many years ago by Paul Robeson, and was about the train that carried Abraham Lincoln back to Illinois after he had been assassinated. In one part of the song, Robeson sings:

“Freedom’s a thing that has no ending. It needs to be cared for. It needs defending. It’s a great big job for many hands, Carrying freedom ’cross the lands.”

All of the values that we cherish – the freedom to speak, to think for ourselves, to make choices, values such as justice, generosity, goodness, lovingkindness, friendship, truth, what’s right – all of these values are a part of the notion of asha- - the true (correct) order. These are not things that we can take for granted. These are not things that are handed to us automatically, free of commitment. These are values that we have to create, and recreate, give substance to, over and over, with our choices in thought, word and action, as long as we have life. Because if we don’t, we lose them. They cease to have reality in our societies and in our beings. It’s that simple.

Since this piece is about prayer and worship, I would like to close with a blessing. I originally crafted this blessing (to accompany the actions of the sÈs ritual) for my children’s weddings, but I think, with some changes, it is a good general blessing for all of us, because it reminds us of an essential teaching of Zarathushtra – that it is not enough for us to ask blessings from the Divine. We in turn have to bless each other and our world with our ‘giving prayers’.

May the Ahura Mazda bless us; May we bless each other; May we bless the world in which we live.

May He be generous with us; May we be generous with each other; May we be generous with all living things.

May He sweeten our lives; May we sweeten each other’s lives; May we sweeten the lives of all whom we touch.

May He instruct through good thinking the course of our direction (Y50.6); May He give enduring strength to uphold what’s true and right (Y43.1).

Let each of us try to win the other with all that is true and good and right (asha-), and we will all be winners (Y53.5).
Ladies and Gentlemen:
I have been asked to speak on
‘Contributions of pre-Islamic Iranian Culture to World Culture’, and the greatest contributions ancient Iran made to Western Culture were clearly related to religion.

Did you realise, for instance, that it is only an accident of history that European culture is not based upon a religion whose origins can now be shown to be Iranian? In the early centuries of our era two religions struggled for supremacy in Rome: Christianity and Mithraism. We find Mithraea, the ‘churches’ of Mithraism, throughout the regions where the Romans held sway, from eastern Turkey to Britain, and it is only because of the Christians’ intense hatred of Mithraism that most Mithraic monuments have been destroyed or defaced so thoroughly that only trained archaeologists can still find traces of them. There is a great deal of debate, of course as to the extent to which Roman Mithraism can be said to be of Iranian origin. In the early 20th century it was widely believed to be a corrupt form of Zoroastrianism, and when that turned out to be untrue, there was a reaction which led many classical scholars to regard Mithraism as a wholly Roman phenomenon with some vague references to Iranian cults. My own work shows that this is very unlikely, and that Mithraism, though not a form of Zoroastrianism, was a Western Iranian religious system in its own right, which was probably exported to Rome by soldiers who may have come into contact with the regiments of Curtii, or Kurds who served the Roman Empire in the borderlands between ‘Rome’ and Iran. I am very pleased to say that the academic pendulum is now swinging back, and several of those who rejected an Iranian origin only a decade ago, now admit that it is the likelier explanation.

So, Mithraism narrowly missed becoming the dominant religion in Europe. ‘So what’, you may ask. After all, if the Ottoman Turks had not been vanquished at Vienna in 1683, we might all have been Muslims, but we’re not. Neither are we secret Mithraists, of course, but it is surprising how many elements of that religion were apparently borrowed by Christianity. Two years ago, my wife and I were privileged to attend a jam ceremony of the Ahl-e Haqq in a village near Kermanshah. (Like the Yezidis, the Ahl-e Haqq are the heirs of the pre-Islamic Mithra cult in which Mithra played a prominent role.) During the ceremony, a
little food and water are ritually partaken of by the believers. My wife whispered, “What does that mean?” and I unthinkingly answered, “think Eucharist.” On our return home I thought I’d look into the possible connection between the two, and was astonished to find quite a bit of evidence that the Christians had in fact had to fight hard against a common belief that they had in fact borrowed the Eucharist from the Mithraists. Although the sacred meal can be shown to have been an age-old Indo-Iranian tradition, the Christians stood the argument on its head, and claimed the Mithraists had got it from them. St. Justin (103-165 AD) writes:

... for the apostles, in the Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.

According to the Christian convert Tertullian (ca. 150-230 AD), the meal in the Mithras cult was a ‘devilish imitation of the Eucharist’, and he adds that the initiates of Mithras believed that by eating the bull’s flesh and drinking its blood they would be born again just as life itself had once been created anew from the bull’s blood. This food and drink were supposed not only to give physical strength but also to bring salvation to the soul which would in time achieve rebirth and eternal light.

As you may know, some scholars also believe that Christmas goes back to a Mithraist celebration of Mithras’ birth at the time of the Winter solstice. This would seem to be corroborated by the fact that both Yezidis and Ahl-e Haqq celebrate the appearance oft he founder of their religion around the same time in mid Winter, but as the theory is rejected by many who know more about Roman culture than I do, I won’t go into it more deeply.

Another point: did you know that the very concept of ‘Religion’ we are used to, namely ‘an organised way of worshipping a divine Being or Beings that is fundamentally based on individual choice’, has its origin in Iranian culture, namely in Zoroastrian thinking? Possibly for the first time in the history of human culture, the Prophet Zarathustra offered his people an alternative to the tribal cults they were familiar with, namely a religious affiliation that had to be ‘chosen’ on the basis of personal belief. In other words, Zarathustra offered his people a different worldview – Av. Daena, which later became den and then Din – a worldview based upon the concept of human freedom to choose. For the first time in their history, and possibly in the history of religions, then, this Din of Zarathustra gave rise to the idea that ‘religion’ had to do – not just with traditional practices such as priestly rituals – but with personal, individual belief, and the consequences this belief had for the individual’s choices in life.

It was this novel element of choice that enabled Zoroastrianism to spread throughout Iran and to become a ‘religion’ in our sense. The worship of the Gods, which until then had been largely the affair of local priests who followed a local tradition, was transformed into a bond between men based on the acceptance of an explicit system of teachings, which anyone could choose or reject. In other words, while religion had always been a traditional, local phenomenon best understood by priests, now it could be understood by anyone. This concept of ‘religion’ shaped the way in which first the Middle East, and later the West came to understand the concept of ‘religion’.

In other words, Zarathustra’s Daena or ‘worldview’ did indeed give us Din or ‘Religion’.

Zarathustra believed that there was Evil as well as Good in our world, and could not promise his followers that their good
behaviour on earth would be rewarded with an easy life. However, he did promise them recompense after death: the soul of those who chose rightly would enter the Best Existence, **VahiatYm Ahu**, now known in Persian as *Behest* ‘Paradise’ (Paradise itself is an Iranian word, as you probably know). Those who had made the wrong choice would be relegated to the Worst Existence, or Hell, which for Zarathustra partly meant that the food would be awful. In Y.31.20 he promises them: ‘A long existence in the Realms of Darkness, where the food is bad and the utterance is ‘Woe’.’

But, on a more serious note, this is the first time that the concepts of ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’ as a result of our actions on earth – which we now almost take for granted and on which much of our system of morality is based – were formulated. Furthermore, Zoroastrianism appears to have been the first religion to postulate that the world had a Beginning – Creation – and that the world as we know it will have an end. All these beliefs entered Judaism as a result of the close contacts between that religion and Zoroastrianism from the time of Cyrus the Great onwards, and as you know they were more fully or clearly adopted in Christianity and later in Islam.

Zoroastrianism appears to have been the first religious system to come to grips with the concept of ‘evil’ in a fundamental way. It came to regard the world as a key element in the universal battle between those two powers, and was perhaps the first religion to postulate that humanity had a key role in the process. While, in the Beginning, the principles of Good and Evil were just that – principles or spirits without the physical ability to do anything more than coexist—Zoroastrianism believed that the Good Principle created the world as a battlefield, limited as to time and place, which would enable the two forces to fight to a conclusion. In this way, the physical world was created, and populated by physical good and wicked creatures, who have the capacity to fight. Of these creatures only Man, though essentially a good creation, has the ability to choose between Good and Evil, and as we saw earlier he will be rewarded or punished for his choice after death.

In the end the essential human goodness (well, Zoroastrians were optimists after all), combined with the inherent superiority of the good god Ohrmazd over the wicked Ahriman, will overcome all evil in this world, and thus reduce the cosmic Force of Evil, Ahriman first to an almost impotent force in the universe.

In order to render this victory complete, Zoroastrianism believes in the coming of a Saviour, who will bring to fruition the work begun by Zarathustra, and it was believed that the Saviour must be closely related to him. Since Zoroastrianism does not believe in reincarnation a myth evolved which may seems familiar. It is told that Zarathustra’s ‘essence’, i.e. his seed, is preserved in Lake Kansaoya (now Lake Helmand). In the fullness of time a virgin will go swimming in that lake, and her father’s worst nightmares come true: she comes back, still a virgin, but pregnant, and will give birth to the Saviour.

Another problem for earlier Zoroastrian thinkers was the problem of death. Death was seen as a fully Ahrimanic phenomenon, and was known to have lasting effects. And there was the rub! Zoroastrianism after all tells us that all traces of evil will disappear at the end of time. The solution, it seems, was soon found – at least it had been found by the time of the fixation of the Young Avesta, which I think took place in the Achaemenid period (ca. 550 -330 BC): after the Coming of the Saviour, there will be a resurrection of all the dead. Most of these will by this time already have expiated their sins in hell or purgatory, but some have not, and thus there will be a final Judgement; it is also said that a tsunami of molten metal will roll over the world, which will be like a pleasant bath those who are free of sin, but will literally burn all remaining sins away. Then all will exist happily ever after, in a timeless universe filled with joy.

You will have recognised such beliefs as the judgement of the soul after death, heaven
and hell, the Saviour born of a virgin; the Last Judgement, the Resurrection and the Final Battle as accepted parts of Christian teaching.

This incidentally suggests that Zoroastrianism may have been the first religion ever to postulate that this world is not as God wants it to be – a startlingly novel view of the role of the world, which was adopted by many later religions, not least Christianity. Whereas ancient religions simply regarded the world as the result of the Will of the Gods, which man could at most seek to influence by making sacrifices so that the Gods might be inclined to be benevolent, Zoroastrianism differentiates sharply between God’s fundamental purpose and the realities of terrestrial existence. This allows man a fully new freedom and independence, without which modern European culture could hardly have come into existence.

Perhaps you’ll agree with me that it all seems to make better sense in the archaic, dualist context of Zoroastrian eschatology than in modern, monotheistic Christianity. It was probably because of the very fact that a ‘worldview’ of such astounding coherence was developed in ancient Iranian culture, that many of its components travelled so far and lasted so long as parts of human belief.

Philip G Kreyenbroek (1948) is Professor of Iranian Studies in the Georg-August University Gottingen. His earlier researches concentrated on the culture and religion of pre-Islamic Iran and he continues to work on Zoroastrianism, on which he has published widely. Professor Kreyenbroek has also researched modern communities speaking ‘Iranian’ languages, such as the Kurds and Pashtuns and has published several books and articles on Yezidism, whose ancient Iranian roots had not previously been investigated. He is currently focussing on the Yaresan (Ahl-e Haqq) tradition.

"My Little Book of Zoroastrian Prayer"
a review by magdalena rustomji

Rebecca Cann has written a book which was greatly needed in our community. It is a book of prayers, activities and relevant questions to discuss with children. The book is published by Asha Publications and has beautiful illustrations by Nassim Azadi who is a children’s illustrator and a designer living in Dubai.

The first part of My Little Book of Zoroastrian Prayer includes prayers from the Gathas, Heptanghaiti, Yasna, Khorde Avesta, Yashts and the Visperad. Ms Cann has written the prayers in language that children can understand. Examples of prayers in the book:

- Being good is the best. It brings happiness. happiness comes to the person who does what is right because it is the right thing to do. Ashem Vohu

- May God give happiness to the person who gives happiness to others. I pray for power and courage to defend the good. O God, grant me peace and blessings. Song 8.1

- We honour the earth and the sky. We honour the strong Mazda-created wind. We honour the peak of the high Harati. We honour the land and all that is good. Yasna 42.3

In the second part of the book, the author addresses questions such as:

- What is prayer?
- Why do we have to be good?
- Why do Zoroastrians pray towards fire?
- What does having a good mind mean?
- What are some of the ways we can save the planet?
Questions are then followed by excellent activities which may help children to internalize Zoroastrian concepts. The activities can help teach how to make wise choices through critical thinking, supported by the basic tenets of the religion.

Ms Cann lives in Northern California and is the owner of Zoroastrian Kids Korner - a web site for Zoroastrian children. This site has been chosen by the American Library Association as one of the best sites for kids. It includes stories, prayers, games, and a Zoroastrian timeline.

My Little Book of Zoroastrian Prayer is a valuable resource and guide to help children understand some of the basic tenets of the religion and put into practice the Zoroastrian way of life: the Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

“Discovering Ashavan” Discovered Again

The recent addition of “Discovering Ashavan” by Farishta Murzban Dinshaw as an e-book has made this story available to a new generation of readers particularly non-Zarathushtrians. The revised North American version has extended notes about the historical context of the story and message of Zarathustra. Debbie Starzynski, a Toronto-based reader, reviews the book.

My first, albeit convoluted, introduction to Zoroastrianism was through Nietzsche’s “Also Sprach Zarathustra”. In his writing Nietzsche has credited Zarathustra as having been the first to articulate the complete and utter importance of the conflict between right and wrong, morality as “the very wheel in the machinery of things”. Upon hearing a brief description of Farishta Dinshaw’s Discovering Ashavan, I quite looked forward to reading the book. It would, indeed, be interesting to learn more about Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism.

At eighty-two pages, Discovering Ashavan can be read quickly unless the reader (and he/she should) takes time to contemplate the book’s rich themes and universally important messages. Beginning with the title, it is evident that this is a parable of depth. Ashavan is both the name of one of the main characters and a word meaning “righteous”. As such, the story is one of Ashavan’s self-discovery and Zarathustra’s moral imperative: that people discover their most righteous selves. The author’s stated purpose in writing the book is to give the reader an appreciation of Zarathustra as life-size, to make the larger-than-life influential philosopher more real. In this she is successful, all the while drawing the reader in to a delightful coming of age story unfolding in the Iran of four thousand years ago.
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Making a Difference

Jimmy Engineer believes that each of us can make a difference in his own way and he is the living example of his philosophy ... 

Jimmy was born in Lorelei, Quetta in 1953, the eldest of three children born to Fali and Perin Engineer. At the age of three the family moved to Lahore where Fali was engaged in important projects. There, Jimmy became extremely ill and was diagnosed as suffering from kidney failure. His parents were informed that there was no treatment available, and they gave him six months to live, sending them home with bottles of palliative medicine. Returning home by a horse drawn carriage, somehow the bottles were lost, but to the amazement of all, the child’s kidneys appeared to renew themselves, and Jimmy soon gained his health. This episode Jimmy Engineer refers to as his first miracle.

The boy’s parents were kind and caring people, Perin had been a trained nurse before marriage, and Jimmy remembers his childhood home as always full of neighbours needing medical advice or problems to be solved with Fali. This care for others of all denominations became an integral factor of Jimmy Engineer’s nature in the years ahead.

Growing up, while his brother collected toy cars and trains, Jimmy was happiest with coloured pencils, crayons and sketch pads. His first school was St. Anthony’s in Lahore, where art was encouraged. In 1960, the school held an exhibition of the student’s artworks and the exhibition was reviewed by the Civil and Military Gazette. Jimmy now laughingly refers to the event as his art ‘debut’ and his work was mentioned in the review: “The painting of young Jimmy Engineer aged six years could easily be named ‘The Peacock’, and show observation and thought.” This review was to be the first of many throughout his career.

As time went on Jimmy was eager to paint pictures on a large scale. It was a difficult time in his life. From 1970, he had vivid, disturbing dreams in which he became a terrified participant. He saw lines of frightened people carrying their children and their belongings, and he dreaded the sight of trains in flames and filled with dead bodies. Deeply troubled, Jimmy confided in a wise and trusted old neighbour who recognized scenes from Jimmy’s description and told him he was re-living the time of Partition. Jimmy could not understand why this should be as it all happened before he was born. He thought to exorcise the images by painting the details, and author Bapsi Sidhwa, kindly allowed Jimmy to use her spacious garage as his studio.

Finishing his formal education, Jimmy enrolled at the National College of Art, Lahore, and has warm memories of Shakir Ali, Khalid Iqbal, Sheikh Shujaullah and Colin David, all of whom offered understanding of his art potential.
Left: Black ink and oil paint on canvas. 2007 - Poverty series

Oil on canvas. 2004 - Memories of 1947 Partition of India

Detail of In honour of the men, women and children who laid down their lives in the struggle of 1947 for the creation of Pakistan. Oil on canvas. 1980.

Left: Black ink and oil paint on canvas. 2007 - Poverty series
Oil on canvas 7ft x 5ft. 2004 - a series of paintings on Pakistani Architecture

Left: Oil on board 15 ft x 10ft. 1982. Poet Allama Iqbal’s “Javid Namah”.
Right: Detail of the painting
Oil on canvas 7ft x 5ft. 1977. Refugees resting under a tree in 1947 - part of the Freedom Series which depict the Partition.
On 15 October 2003, Jimmy Engineer led a walk on International White Cane Day for blind people all over the world.

At the Zoo & Botanical Gardens, Karachi, Jimmy arranged lunch for the special children from Aghosh, Dar-ul-Sukun, Dar-ul-Khusnood, Asra, Hope & Faith, Ida Rieu, Bait-ul-Shafqat and Garage School. This was under the programme of food and music for special children.
In 1977, Jimmy participated in a group exhibition held at the Lahore Museum, his large oil on canvas entry depicted a scene from his ‘Partition’ series and earned him the First Prize in show; it was his first award. The following year he submitted two paintings from the ‘Struggle for Independence’ series and again was awarded First Prize, but the greatest honour was to have Sadequain as one of the judges, who later spoke to Jimmy and praised his work. Jimmy continued to suffer terrible dreams until 1980, when after experiencing the most terrifying dream of all, they stopped.

Throughout Jimmy’s life his time has been divided between art and his work as a social crusader. Later he confided in Sufi Barkhat Ali who concluded the visions sourcing the dreams were possibly shattered memories. He added that Jimmy should continue to paint these images for a purpose. Later he took the photos of the paintings in his hands and predicted they would travel far.

Jimmy’s work was exhibited in national exhibitions to great acclaim. Invitations came from abroad to show his work and Pakistan’s embassies were keen to arrange his talks and display his work. Since the paintings were so large, Jimmy was afraid the work may be damaged in transit. The problem was solved by making limited editions of prints of his work, mounted on canvas which could easily be rolled up and carried.

In 1981, Bapsi Sidhwa introduced Jimmy to Dr Javid Iqbal, and they discussed the long epic poem of Allama Iqbal, the ‘Javed Nama’. Though a few artists had painted a scene from the poem relating Allama Iqbal’s mystic journey through the seven heavens guided by Rumi, none had attempted the entire manuscript. It was eventually decided that Jimmy Engineer would paint the entire Javed Nama, and for that purpose, for one year he stayed in the house of Dr Javid Iqbal, where he set up a large board covering one entire wall on which to paint daily after discussions with his host. The completed work measured 10 feet by 15 feet and it was documented and filmed for telecasting by media agencies and global TV channels. Jimmy moved on with his life but kept in touch with Dr Javid Iqbal, who explained that after three decades, the painting was still bright and appeared freshly painted.

After this period, Jimmy became immersed in social work. Though he continued to paint, he became extremely involved with the hardships of people without recourse. He became aware of peoples lives and wretchedness and wanted to help them. Awareness of his art and social needs grew and Jimmy travelled abroad for the first time in 1983, when he visited Japan as a delegation member. The following year he moved to Karachi and soon became acquainted with the progressive and cultural activities of that city. He exhibited his work throughout Pakistan as well as furthering awareness of social issues. His entire family decided to move to the United States, but Jimmy explained he could never leave his country, Pakistan. After celebrating Jimmy’s marriage to Shiraz, the family left, but kept in constant touch with their eldest, beloved son. In 1986, there was great joy when the young couple’s daughter, Saraoashia was born.

Jimmy was keen to share his work with hospitals, schools, libraries and institutions in Pakistan and abroad and for this purpose made prints of his work in varying sizes and sent them throughout the country and abroad. In Karachi Jimmy has a pristine studio which, filled with large scaled canvases, is his inner sanctum, his solace and place of meditation.

Years of walking for a cause followed. In 1994, Jimmy walked from Karachi to Khyber, a journey of 4,700 kilometers. En route he explored villages, talked to people and discussed their problems. In the process, he settled many arguments and advised the villagers on numerous topics. In time he was able to find sponsors to set up hospitals and teaching centers in many of the hamlets.

Jimmy led public walks in many towns that year. In Hyderabad to create an awareness of the need for hospitals, in Sukkur many joined him to walk to create awareness of
health problems. In September that year a walk was organized to bring attention to the need of health facilities for needy people, and in October, he led a walk for the setting up of more hospitals throughout the country. The last walk took place that year in November when an enthusiastic band of people followed him through the streets of Rawalpindi.

One of Jimmy Engineer’s favourite causes was to do with special children, to bring joy into their lives, and he was often seen with a band of children off to play or to McDonalds and sometimes taking tea in smart hotels. He organized games, art exhibitions and matches for the children; there was not a hospital or centre for handicapped people of all ages he was not in touch with. Everyone knew and loved ‘Uncle Jimmy’, and that is a constant factor.

Throughout the years, Jimmy has travelled extensively and showed his work to great acclaim in many countries of the world. He has been greeted by presidents, royalty, politicians, artists, film stars and icons including Mother Theresa, in many parts of the world and has the highest regard for social workers and patrons in Pakistan. It is difficult for him to show his work in Karachi as few suitable locations have the required space. He is not a commercial artist but has sold work on occasion and the money he earns is spent on his causes.

Jimmy worked hard to create awareness regarding crippled beggars, and his desire is that centres should be established where they can be rehabilitated, fitted with limbs, and taught skills to lead productive lives. He also started a campaign to rehabilitate drug addicts and the work continues.

He was involved in the building of the first judicial complex in the country, outside Central jail, raising funds through the Khadim Ali Shah Bukhari Foundation.

To relate all Jimmy Engineer’s efforts to help the needy and the success of his constant striving would fill the pages of a book. A book launched recently by BBCL titled: In Search of My Master, contains around 600 pages and focuses primarily on his work in art. The fascinating story of his social crusade would take that much space again. He is known to hundreds of people whom he accompanies to the police station when required, regularly visits in hospitals and fills in countless forms. He is an enigmatic figure, always calm, always kind and never turning anyone away. Dressed in his black kamiz and white shalwar, he strides along the streets hailed by many. He can enter any office, is known to those in high places as well as the lowly, all are treated with the same courtesy and consideration. Whether taking the handicapped and special children on a monthly lunch outing to the Salt ‘n’ Pepper, distributing medicines, writing reports and letters, and helping people at police stations, Jimmy appears to be unfazed, softly spoken.

Jimmy is a very patriotic Pakistani. He has travelled extensively both east and west, explaining the history, art and culture of his fellow countrymen and answering countless questions of his audience. Wherever he goes he is at home and at ease, a moderate man who eats little and drinks only water. His friends cherish him and each has a tale to tell.

Since 1976 he has received numerous awards and medals, for both the great interests of his life; including the Lifetime Achievement Awards for Humanitarian Services and for his social work, and the Sitara-i-Imtiaz for his art. In all there are twenty-seven awards, and no doubt many more to come.

Regarding his activities, one often wonders where he gets the energy from to lead the life he does; there is no doubt his inspiration is from a spiritual source.

Marjorie Husain is a well known Karachi based art writer and author whose articles have appeared in numerous newspapers and journals. She has curated exhibitions of art from Pakistan in New Delhi, Germany and in the UK, and has lectured on Pakistan’s art and artists in Pakistan, the UK and Singapore. She has written about artists past and present and has recorded for posterity their achievements. In 2000, she published the first Textbook for Art Students and Teachers of Art in the country which is widely used; organized and coordinated exhibitions in Karachi and Lahore; launched various books, interviewed by BBC on Pakistani art and in 2004 was awarded the Fatima Jinnah Gold Medal. In Search of my Master: Jimmy Engineer, is her latest contribution to art.
The Eighth Outrage

The main character in this real-life drama well-known in the England of early 20th century was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of the Sherlock Holmes fame; the supporting actor, who we wish to focus on, was one George Edalji who is the lesser known in the current era to most of us. Julian Barnes’s book *Arthur and George* that almost won the Man Booker prize in 2005 has unfolded the drama for the readers of this century, and his version brings to the forefront Conan Doyle’s campaign in clearing the name of the young and defamed George. The book has been translated in many languages and finds itself in many a book-lover’s home.

Another writer, Roger Oldfield, having an insider’s perspective of the Edaljis, rightly believes that the family has been robbed of the revelation of its fascinating history; this led him to write ‘*Outrage: The Edalji Five and the Shadow of Sherlock Holmes*’.

by yesmin madon

The head of the Edalji family – Shapurji – brought up as a Parsi in Bombay, was married to Charlotte Stoneham of England (not Scotland, as some wrongly believed), the niece of a parish priest, and whose 17th century ancestors were merchants, soldiers and sailors ‘involved in the forging of British domination of India’. She came from a family with a colourful history of involvement in what Salman Rushdie once called the ‘400 hundred years of looting and conquest’ which have ‘left a stain on you all’.

During his stay in India, Shapurji had made notable contributions of having written *A Gujarati and English Dictionary and A Grammar of the Gujarati Language* which remained in use for many years after his departure.

The Edalji children – George, Maud and Horace – were Anglo-Asians brought up in an isolated English mining village of Staffordshire.

Of Shapurji’s remarkable life, Oldfield contributes that he ‘attended the Elphinstone Institute, at which Dadabhai Naoroji taught at the time and where he was a classmate of Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha. At the tender age of about 15, Shapurji Edalji outraged the Parsi community by converting to Christianity, and his parents disowned him.’ The missionary John Wilson belonging to the Free Church of Scotland, took him in and Shapurji found himself ending up ‘as a missionary, and alone among the pre-literate Warli people of the north of Bombay.’ Shapurji then went on to anger the Free Church of Scotland by defecting to the opposition – the Church of England in Bombay. Under the aegis of this church, Shapurji went to Canterbury to train as a Church of England missionary.

‘Once his Canterbury training was over’,
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

continues Oldfield, 'he infuriated his new masters by refusing to go to India as a missionary on their terms. They abandoned all interest in him when he stayed in England and was ordained as a priest in Oxford.' After many years of travelling within England as a curate, he was finally made Vicar of Great Wyrley, where he served for 42 years until his death.

There is evidence that some of the people of Great Wyrley did not accept him because they did not understand how an Asian man could be a minister of a Christian church. Oldfield reckons that Shapurji 'could well have been the first South Asian to be made a Vicar in England.'

In their village, as in other parts of the then England, attitudes were shaped by British imperialism, and racial profiling came to the forefront when George Edalji was falsely convicted in 1903 on a charge of maliciously ripping open the belly of a pit-pony and received a seven year sentence of penal servitude.

This belly-slitting was “The Eighth Outrage” in a series of gruesome acts against horses, cattle and sheep in the Edalji’s home village. But this act was not committed by George!

George Edalji’s family had been the victims of a long-running campaign of untraceable abusive letters and anonymous harassment in 1888 and 1892-5. Further letters in 1903 alleged that he was partially responsible for the outrages and caused the police suspicion to focus on him.

‘There were rumours that he had sacrificed horses to his alien gods but the evidence against him was threadbare and distorted. The fact that the Edalji family were Christians also made it seem unlikely that he would have been guilty of such an act. The police appear to have dedicated most of their efforts to proving that George Edalji was guilty instead of trying to find the real culprit. When the incident occurred, the police went straight to George’s house from the field where the injured animal was found before carrying out any other investigation.’

George, who had been harassed and intimidated by the bigots of the English Midlands, begged of the man of the Sherlock Holmes fame to take up his case against this great miscarriage of justice. And ultimately this verdict was overturned by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s passionate campaign of eight months of marching into battle to prove the victim’s innocence. The book Arthur and George thus came to be written. [reviewed in Hamazor Issue 2/2006, p70.

Edalji was released in 1906 after the Chief Justice in Bahamas and others had pleaded his case. But he was not pardoned, and the police kept him under surveillance. He was exonerated by a Home Office committee of enquiry, but no compensation was awarded.

George Edalji died at 9 Brockett Close, Welwyn Garden City, on June 17, 1953, from coronary thrombosis.

‘Until the 1980s every writer on the case repeated Conan Doyle’s version. Yet, again, a local researcher Michael Harley investigated the previously hidden records at the Public Record Office, and suggested that the gullible author had been taken in by a scheming George Edalji.’

Note: Our own Renu Setna [originally from Karachi] played as Reverend Edalji, and Sam Dastoor as George, [both Londoners] in the episode of the 1972 BBC anthology series The Edwardians about Conan Doyle which centres on his involvement in the Edalji case. Written by Jeremy Paul and directed by Brian Farnham, it stars Nigel Davenport as Conan Doyle.

In the Recall of Times Lost - (À La Recherche Du Temps Perdu - Marcel Proust)

I have had the good fortune to have lived all over the world, and the even greater good fortune and privilege to have enjoyed hospitality in some of its most hallowed halls: The White House in Washington DC, the Kremlin in Moscow, the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, the Palace Elysee in Paris, and the Delegates' Dining Room overlooking the East River at the United Nations in New York. But the most nostalgic of my memories, and one that never fails to bring a smile to my face as I think back over time and space, is the recollection of the moments that I spent with the Parsis in Bombay during the mid 1940s. It was the most agreeable of times, in the most agreeable of cities, amongst the most spontaneously agreeable of people.

by Jamsheed Marker

I was a young Naval Officer, newly arrived in town, whom the community took immediately to its heart. Perhaps they thought that I should be shown a good time before I got blown up or sunk, but more likely it was sheer Parsi generosity of heart and spirit. I do not think they either knew or cared that my salary was Rs350 per month, plus board and lodging, the amount being doled out by the ship's Paymaster officer, after due deductions for items like wardroom bills and tailor's charges. I was welcomed into their homes, including of course those of my relatives, their clubs and their parties. Bombay of that period was a busy, bustling city, throbbing with commerce and all its urban trappings, including a superb transportation system with suburban electric trains run by the BB&CI (Bombay, Baroda & Central India) Railway and the GIP (Great Indian Peninsular) Railway, while the ubiquitous red double deck buses and tramcars of BEST (Bombay Electric Supply & Tramway Company) provided cheap, clean, and efficient services to the city's residents. The busy port, which was the lifeblood of the country, provided a magnificent azure backdrop as it enveloped the bristling metropolis in its arms.

For me, as I came ashore from ship or shore establishment, the recreational facilities were as endless as they were delightful. In retrospect, I would put them into two categories: restaurants (usually before or after cinemas), and clubs. The first traversed the entire scale from cheap to expensive in price, and from rudimentary to sophisticated in ambiance. At the bottom of the scale in cost, but mouth watering nevertheless, was Vithal's open air stall at Flora Fountain, where we would gather for lashings of bhel puri dispensed in paper packets at four annas a piece. Seventy years later its sharp, tangy flavor still tingles the palette. Next in scale were the Irani cafes, named in fervent fealty after members of the British royal family – Cafe Victoria, Cafe Albert, Cafe Victoria & Albert, Cafe Edward, Cafe George, Prince of Wales Cafe, and, for some odd reason a Cafe Leopold. The distinguishing feature of these establishments, apart from large helpings of rich food at modest prices, was the entirely aural conduct of business: there were no bills or receipts. The owner sat on the gala at the entrance of the cafe and collected from the customer the amount due as shouted out by the waiter “aik chai, doe pattys, aahnt anna”. No one ever made a mistake in the transaction. Next in scale were the Chinese restaurants, ABC (for America, Britain, China, the World War II alliance) and the quasi-European cafes, like
Marosa’s, situated close to the Stock Exchange, serving the strongest coffee and best chicken patties in town, and where at exactly 11am I used to sometimes meet my harassed Parsi stockbroker friends (sala nakhot geeyoun, aajay steelnu bhav ekdum pari geeyoon). Also included in this category were Purohit, where we could share vegetarian thals, or the Parisian Dairy, situated by the sea on Marine Drive, and serving delicious sausage rolls and milkshakes to a clientele that included some very pretty girls. The high end of the restaurants was, of course, The Taj Mahal Hotel, with its magnificent dining room and its ancillary facilities such as the Palm Court (Mehli Mehta and his Sextet at tea time) and the Harbour Bar. These were far above my pay grade, and almost the only times that I visited them was when my parents were in Bombay and lived in the Taj.

During the mid 1940s Bombay possessed a large number of clubs, reflecting the variety and numerical spread of the various communities and occupations that covered the city. As a serviceman I was admitted to some clubs, but it was the kindness and warmth of my Parsi friends that got me into others. The Cricket Club of India (CCI) at the Brabourne Stadium possessed all the facilities of a first class club, and one which I used to the full – squash court, swimming pool, restaurant and dance floor. Within the Stadium itself, during important or international matches, pavilions were allocated to different communities – Hindu Pavilion, Muslim Pavilion, Parsi Pavilion, and other general pavilions, but none of them were exclusive and could be occupied by any spectator. Although it was much after my time in Bombay, my friend Omer Kureishi told me that he always sat in the Parsi pavilion because there one got the best food and heard the choicest language. On one occasion he had a particularly rambunctious and vocal Parsi neighbour, who was as enthusiastic about his cricket as he was about his beer, and was cheering his home side and abusing the opponents with equal fervor. Just then, one of the home fielders dropped a catch, which sent this Parsi supporter into a paroxysm of abusive fury. “Salo maderchod, behenchod, andtro chey? Toonay konay cricket rumwa sikhawyoon? Ay madarchod kon chay?”
[excuse the French here and later please!] When informed that it was Umrigar, the response was immediate. “Arrey apro Polly! Sun in the eyes! Clear!”

The Wellington Sports Club and the Royal Bombay Race Club, both situated at Mahalaxmi, were way beyond my membership range, but I did go to both, from time to time, as a guest. My recollection of the former is of an opulent ambience and well heeled members, sipping Scotch and soda, discussing stock market reports and golf handicaps. Meanwhile the ladies, clad in slinky saris and low backed gowns, gossiped away while seated at round tables resembling witches’ cauldrons. As for the Race Club, since I was not a betting man I had time to observe the beauty of the magnificent race horses without having to pick the winner of the next race. I did, however, notice a number of Parsi gentlemen with furrowed brows, sweaty hands and haggard, desperate looks, ties loosened and China silk suits rumpled, dashing up and down and waving their race cards at each other. I was told that they were victims of an unfortunate tendency to pick fast women and slow horses.

There was also a Ladies’ Club, organized (of course) by Parsis, called the Time and Talents Club. The members possessed plenty of time, but I thought talent might be somewhat scarcer. They used to meet once a month at the Taj Mahal Hotel for an elegant tea and a lecture by a notable personality. They also undertook a number of activities for charities. The members, including Dowagers and Ladies of the Realm, wore their magnificent saris and jewelry, and looked like the handbags in Whiteway Laidlaw – white, crinkled and expensive. They also thought that a plethora of pearl necklaces might divert attention from blubbery, quivering chins. Sometimes they did.

The Ripon Club was situated on the first floor of a building on Hornby Road right
opposite the Rajabai Clock Tower, in the very heart of Bombay. When I became a member, thanks to my friend Noshir Cooper, the club was in its heyday, and was open only to “Parsi gentlemen of good standing”. The Club, which was open for weekday lunches, was renowned for its cuisine, of which dhansak served on Wednesdays, and akuri, served at any time, were the most famous. I have never tasted better. In the clubhouse was a long table at the center of the room, and a number of small tables against the walls. The front half of the room, overlooking Hornby Road and Rajabai Tower through large windows, was furnished with large, comfortable leather armchairs, and large, cane reclining chairs (standard in Parsi homes) with folding armrests. On the coffee tables were the daily newspapers, and magazines including, of course, the latest issues of La Vie Parisienne. The long table at the dining room was sacrosanct, and even more so was the seating, which was reserved (no place cards) for the seniormost members of the community, or the Club, which was often the same. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Sir Dinshaw Petit, Dr Jal Patel, the Mehta brothers, Fali, Jal and Rusa, and other eminent Parsi citizens each had their unmarked but recognizable place at the long table. The conversation and language that permeated the lunch sessions at the Ripon Club were as hot and delicious as the food. I always emerged from the Club on to Hornby Road with body replete and mind newly charged with infusions of Gujerati invective. Years later I revisited the Ripon Club, having retained my membership (mahra sahib, tahmunay dhansak moghoon paryun hosay), to find to my horror that it had lost its exclusivity: there were parjats present, and even ladies. Noshir and I joined a disgruntled old member morosely munching lunch at his table. We both had always enjoyed his turn of phrase, but now frustration and fury flew from every aspect of his visage. Sala hoon toe ghunghrai gayo, maharethi vaat nathi thanoon. Hoon bhou nathi khai sakhto. I asked him how the disaster occurred. Maderchod patawalla saathey office ma circular resolution moklay. Benchod circular resolution kon vanchay? Sahi kari nay moklavy apyoon. Thus did the Ripon Club change with the times.

My last assignment in the Royal Indian Navy was as Group Testing Officer at a Services Selection Board in Lonavla, a picturesque little resort town in the Western Ghats half way between Bombay and Poona. The Board and its staff were quartered in a cluster of small houses surrounded by tropical bushes and trees. On the evening of the first weekend after my arrival I heard the sounds of a large gathering of men in the hitherto vacant, big house situated next to mine. Then I overheard what sounded like a roll call: “Pesikaka – Hajar Seth. Umrigar – Hajar Seth. Lakdawalla – Hajar Seth. Nanavati – Hajar Seth” and so on. My curiosity aroused, I made my way to the group of jolly Parsi gents disporting themselves in the shady forest. It seemed that they were members of a Masonic Lodge that met on the last weekend of each month, assembling in Lonavla on Friday evening, holding the Masonic meeting and banquet on Saturday evening, and returning to Bombay on Sunday. I joined the group, and once I had introduced myself as both a Parsi Naval Officer as well as a brother Freemason, the avalanche of Parsi hospitality overwhelmed me and I was a guest of the Lodge for the rest of my stay in Lonavla. The Bretheren usually arrived from Bombay by the Deccan Queen on Friday evening, casting off their office dress of black coats, ties and white trousers, and getting into comfortable sadra / leghas, which they wore for the duration of their stay: suits were, of course, worn during the Masonic meeting and banquet. A permanent feature was a large matka filled to the top with toddy, and accessible to the Bretheren at all times: if its level dropped below half, the rama got a cuff on the ears. The meetings and rituals were conducted with due solemnity, decorum and good order. But once that was over, the members changed from being good Freemasons into being good Parsis, and jollity and good fellowship reigned supreme. I vividly recall an instance when, during a particularly
raucous banquet the toastmaster tapped
the table and commenced, “Worshipful
Master, Worshipful Bretheren and
Bretheren”, and had to do this three times
without obtaining silence from the tables,
whose occupants were more concerned
about getting their food and drink ("Boy,
whisky laav, soda laav"). Finally, the
toastmaster hammered the table hard
enough to make the crockery jump, and
bellowed “Sala ghela madarchodo samji
maroni”. In the silence that immediately
ensued, the toastmaster resumed his
solemn introduction, “Worshipful Master,
Worshipful Bretheren, and Bretheren ...
"

Does this Lodge still exist?

There is for me a nostalgia for Bombay of
those days that is almost idyllic. There may
be people who have lived in better times
and better climes, but not many could have
matched the contribution to the life style of
the city made by the Parsis. It was an era of
civilized, peaceful and happy co-existence
between its multiracial citizens, whilst the
rest of the world was tearing itself apart in a
fearsome war. But I knew, even then, that it
would not last, and that the consequences
of this conflict would be the destruction of
this genteel social fabric. Like a lovely,
delicate and fragile cobweb blown away by
the gust of a dusty wind.

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

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

The Zoroastrian Association Of Greater New York in partnership with Iranian Zoroastrian Association invite you to The XVITH NORTH AMERICAN ZARATHUSHTI CONGRESS August 02 - 05, 2012 at The Hilton Westchester in Rye Brook, NY.

The Congress will bring together Zarathushtis of all ages from all over the world to celebrate our community and explore the theme of “ZARATHUSHTI EXISTENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD”. What makes someone a Zarathushti? What can we do to make navjote a more meaningful ritual for children? The Congress will provide a forum for these and other questions, the opportunity to strengthen old friendships, and to create new ones.

Through lectures, seminars and exhibits, we will look at who we are, who we want to be, and what we have to do to not only survive as a community, but thrive. Speakers include respected scholars and historians, distinguished community members, and people who are making change in the world. We welcome you to bring your ideas and expect to participate fully.

We also welcome you to take part in unforgettable entertainment programmes and social events throughout the Congress – from casual youth events to the formal Gala Banquet to an opportunity to explore New York City’s landmarks, take in a Broadway show, or admire the breathtaking view of the city from a boat cruise.

For up-to-date information about the 2012 NAZC Congress or to register ONLINE please visit http://nazc.zagny.org

For all general queries about NAZC 2012, please contact:
Gev Nentin, Congress Co-Chair NAZC 2012 & President, ZAGNY. Tel: 1-631-462-0763 or gev@zagny.org

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The story begins with stable hand, Ashavan, taking a moral stand against the stable foreman’s cruel treatment of a pregnant dog. As a disfigured orphan, Ashavan holds no power in this situation and is forced to flee. In flight he meets Zarathustra, who becomes friend and soul mate. This relationship pleases and surprises Ashavan beyond belief because he, heretofore, had been shunned—his less than perfect leg the “cause” for suspicion of his attachment to “Dark Forces from the North”. It is at this point in the story, the meeting of the two boys, that the imminent story of good versus evil becomes also a transcendent exploration of Zarathustra’s notions of morality and truth. Toward the end of the book Zarathustra, in laughter, observes that he and Ashavan spend an inordinate amount of time discussing issues of right and reason over ignorance and wrong. Yes, they do and it makes for thought-provoking reading.

Unbeknownst to Ashavan, he has broken the law both by carrying the body of the deceased dog and by entering the family home of Zarathustra without cleansing himself first. Ashavan is praised for having stood up to the foreman but taken to task for his “transgression” by Pourushaspa, Zarathustra’s well-meaning father. If Pourushaspa stands for all that is status quo and accepted on principle, Zarathustra, with his well-earned reputation for asking questions, represents a new world order. He questions the imposition of rules of law “blindly, without wisdom and compassion” as unjust. Zarathustra contemplates the difference between unintentional and wilful offenses and reasons out that his new friend, Ashavan, is not, in truth, guilty.

Ashavan, at Pourushaspa’s insistence, is to appear before the Judge regarding two transgressions: to confess his own and to accuse the foreman. Ashavan posits that “right is right” in a universal sort of way and queries how he should present his story to the Judge. Zarathustra responds that he only knows what is right for himself, not for anyone else. He assures Ashavan that he should discern his own way, with nothing to fear as long as he tells the truth. Later in the story and after a resolved misunderstanding between the two friends, Zarathustra asserts that right can exhibit many faces—that each of them had been right, that each position had merit.

Ashavan’s hard-earned gleanings shed further light on the nature of righteousness. During a thanksgiving ceremony, Ashavan finds himself wishing for a world filled with the same joy and love that he, at that moment, is feeling. This thought is suddenly followed by the premonition that Zarathustra would be the one to show the way for this to happen. At the end of the story when the two friends are parting, Ashavan credits Zarathustra with all that he has learned: self-respect, honour, courage, generosity—to be his most righteous self. And because of this self-discovery, the vindictive foreman’s efforts to discredit Ashavan fail and Ashavan is recognized by all as the righteous person he truly is. The story succeeds as a parable; its message about righteousness is clear. Righteousness is reasoned and inspired; Zarathustra inspires but ultimately the individual is responsible through reasoned self-reflection to behave righteously. And within the pages of this book, righteousness triumphs over evil.

Discovering Ashavan is a satisfying read. I cared about Ashavan and Zarathustra, happily anticipating the next opportunity to pick up the book and carrying with me that “good book” feeling. And I learned something.

Debbie Starzynski has a Master of Arts degree in Immigration and Settlement Studies and works as a social worker with the City of Toronto. She has studied comparative religion at the University of Toronto and is currently taking Buddhism classes at Kadampa Temple. She is an avid reader.
Dilemmas around Development

Homi Khusrokhan, President of BNHS speaks about some of the issues around Conservation in India today.

Conservation and climate change are today burning issues for our generation and the pace at which development is taking place in countries like India, China and Brazil terrifies, not surprisingly, other nations of the world, far more that it worries our own citizens.

Before speaking of conservation and the associated dilemmas of development versus destruction of the environment, a quick snapshot of BNHS may be useful to the reader: The Bombay Natural History Society was founded in 1883, making it one of the oldest natural History Societies in the World. It was started by a group of eight individuals who began exchanging notes on areas of interest in natural history and put together a collection of specimens that they were gathering as hunters.

The collection grew rapidly and specimens began to flow in from various parts of the sub-continent – including some of our neighbours like Burma, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Today the BNHS has specimens of 18,500 mammals, 29,000 birds, 5,400 bird eggs, 8,500 amphibians and 50,000 insects. This 125 year old collection has become a valuable source of our natural history heritage and is of enormous interest to researchers in fields like taxonomy and molecular studies involving genomics and DNA. The BNHS also has a library of rare and irreplaceable books. Amateur naturalists, lepidopterists, herpetologists and mammalologists regularly refer to our specimens and the library for their research. BNHS is known to ornithologists the world over, thanks to the untiring efforts of India’s greatest ornithologist, Dr. Salim Ali, (the “birdman of India”). The BNHS Headquarters are at ‘Hornbill House”, near the Price of Wales Museum, (now, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalya). It is well known for the high quality of its publications and its Scientific Journal and the Hornbill Magazine are true collector’s items.

BNHS is different to other modern organisations presently engaged in conservation. Firstly, it keeps a fairly low
profile. One never sees 'ban-the-dam' or 'save the turtles' protesters in the streets wearing BNHS caps and tee-shirts. But you would see lots of these on programmes like nature trails and in game reserves. Secondly, BNHS believes that everything it does must be based on sound science. It plays a quiet but significant part in conservation through its white papers and research publications. It comments on the impact of proposals like the location of ports, dams, energy-plants, mines, etc. with complete independence for decision makers, who rely on the credibility and reputation of the findings. There are several examples where the BNHS report has conclusively swung a decision and a project in its original form has either been aborted or shifted. Like most scientific organisations of this kind, funding is always a problem but BNHS is very selective about who it takes funding from and thereby maintains its reputation of being completely independent and non-influenceable.

One of BNHS’ on-going projects which is generally of considerable interest to the members of our community is the Vulture Breeding project started around 2000 as a joint initiative by BNHS and RSPB (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). This is scientific project conceived along the lines of the very successful captive breeding project for the near extinct Californian Condor in the US. There has been a precipitous fall in the number of White-backed, Slender-billed and Long-billed vultures across South Asia because of the use of the wide-spread drug diclofenac sodium in veterinary practice. Although now banned for veterinary use, the damage has been done and over 97% of the population of these vultures has been wiped out over the last two decades. Breeding vultures in captivity is difficult and although the results achieved at our four breeding centres has been scientifically hailed as a great achievement, it will be several years before the first release of these birds, bred in captivity, can be considered.

The World Economic Forum places India’s infrastructure 89th among 133 countries and the challenge of improving India’s poor infrastructure over the next five years is one frightening proportions. More than 600 million Indians live today without electricity. An increase of 60% is planned over the next five years and most of this increase will be thermal power generated from coal from our own and imports from countries like Indonesia and Australia, devastating several of our forest areas and placing a huge burden on our ports. Indian Ports today have a capacity of handling 1,020 MMTPA and the addition planned in the 12th Plan is 1,352 MMTPA (ie. our handling capacity has to be more than doubled). Roads is an area where there has been some progress over the last decade but the 71,000 Km of roads managed centrally needs to be enhanced by 24,000 Km and the 4.1 L Km of state and rural roads requires enhancing by 186,000 Km. Comparisons with China show that even at the end of the next 5-Year Plan we are nowhere near China and India has a long way to go (see table below):

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sector</th>
<th>India today</th>
<th>India in 2017</th>
<th>China</th>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>177,000 MW</td>
<td>280,000 MW</td>
<td>950,000 MW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
<td>1,020 MMTPA</td>
<td>2,472 MMTPA</td>
<td>7,670 MMTPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>71,000 Km</td>
<td>95,000 Km</td>
<td>3,860,000 Km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads (State &amp; Rural)</td>
<td>410,000 Km</td>
<td>596,000 Km</td>
<td>3,860,000 Km</td>
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India’s poverty alleviation and human development tasks are also staggering. Despite the progress of the last decade, GDP per capita in India is $1,527 versus Malaysia’s $8,716, Thailand’s $5,281 and Indonesia’s $3,469. In terms of our...
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Human Development Index we rank 134th out of 187 countries. Faced with this reality, the task for organisations like BNHS, that make conservation their mission in life, is certainly frightening.

Recently one of members of the BNHS Governing Council, Mr Sanjoy Monga brought out a beautiful publication called “Journeys through India’s last Wild Places” and I quote from the introduction to this magnificent pictorial volume: “... this country’s geographical extent holds nearly 100,000 species of fauna, amounting to an eighth of all avian (bird) and piscine (fish) species and over 15,000 (c. 6%) of the world’s known diversity of flowering plants.” He goes on to explain that India has “688 sites designated as Protected Areas, covering an area of more than 1.5 lakh (0.15 mn) sq. km.”

This is the natural heritage at risk today.

At the last bi-annual COP last held in Nagoya in October 2010, Mr Pavan Sukdev, a former Indian Banker, released a report on the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). This report shows that the economic value of the services provided by our ecosystems is worth billions of dollars. Unfortunately, both economist and politicians tend to be mesmerized by one statistic and one statistic alone – ‘GDP growth percent’ forgetting the opportunity cost of the value being forgone if we disregard our environment. Our defense budget is about Rs 2 L Cr. and by comparison the amount we spend on preserving ecological security is almost negligible. In the long-run, our ecological, water and food security will depends on the ecosystems that we preserve, viz. our forests, grasslands, wetlands and rivers.

Another very important reason for saving our indigenous species and ecosystems is their importance to a new developing science called bio-mimetics or popularly known as bio-mimicry. Despite all our technological achievements, we have not yet been able to make an aeroplane that can fly like a gull or a mechanical fish that can swim like a cod or a shark. The natural camouflage of a chameleon is even today a riddle as also the strength of the fibres in a spider’s web and the slippery movements of snakes.

However, nature has its own way of surprising us. Over the last few years the mud flats of Sewree in Mumbai witness a migration of thousands of flamingoes and Mumbai now has an annual flamingo festival where hundreds of bird watchers gather to witness the strange tapestry of these magnificent pink birds, with electrical transmission towers and buildings as the backdrop.

As with most NGO’s engaged in areas other than health and education, funding has been and continues to be a major constraint for BNHS and the low / scientific profile the organisation keeps has not helped. The membership of BNHS continues to be tiny – just ~4,500 members while international organisations such as Bird Life International boasts of a membership of around 2.5 million. However it is encouraging today to see some of our younger members taking a great interest in nature. Many are encouraged by their schools, who send them to us for nature trails and learning programmes at our Conservation Education Centre (CEC) adjoining the Film City in Goregaon. If BNHS can succeed in inculcating a sense of empathy for the environment in young minds, then hopefully we will have created a generation of future champions who will carry on the battle for preservation of our environment in the years to follow. Young Zoroastrians please note!
Aspy Meherwan Engineer - His magnificent obsession with the flying machine

First historical landmark in the annals of Aviation achieved both civil and military in the Sub-Continent - The Aga Khan Race 1930

The birth centennial anniversary will soon be upon us of this legendary young lad born in Lahore on the 15th of December 1912 who carved a place in the annals of Aviation as a teenager. And this is his story, a tribute on his hundredth birthday.

Growing up in Delhi in the 1930s, (before the advent, at least in our house, of telephones, radio, TV or cable) the main source of "news" about international events available was, what the parents at the dining table passed on during 'after dinner talk'. While there was a lot happening elsewhere, it was an era of the airplane and all about flying.

by rusi sorabji

Aspy when seven years old, one fine day was fascinated by seeing an aircraft land in the Race Course grounds right opposite his father's railway bungalow in Hyderabad, Sind. It happened to be the famous English aviators, Alcock & Brown, who made an emergency landing. It was love at first sight for the seven year old and the beginning of a life-long love affair with flying, flying machines, and flying as a profession. In his unfinished memoir he states, "I dreamt of nothing else thereafter but aircraft landing on the roof-top of our spacious bungalow."

This dream later carried on through the Billimoria Parsi School years, from where he matriculated. But then having seen the table land plateau above the school in Panchgani, the dream was "of landing on the Panchgani table-mountain's flat top ...".

In 1929 Meherwan's present for his eldest son's 17th birthday was a second-hand DeHavilland, Gypsy Moth, bi-plane, which at the time was the most popular aircraft with the Aero Clubs, the Royalty and the High Society in Britain. It was a two seater, open cock-pit, 30ft wing span, wood and fabric structured aircraft with a four cylinder 100 hp engine. After quickly obtaining his license from the Karachi Aero Club and flight training of less than three months, Aspy with his friend R N Chawla took off for England on 3rd March 1930 to participate in the Aga Khan Cup, with a farohar painted on his aircraft and registered as VT.AAZ.

To popularize and promote aviation in India, His Excellency the Aga Khan had offered a...
handsome cash prize of Pound Sterling five hundred, for the first Indian to fly solo between the two countries England and India. The flight could be in any direction, from India to England, or in the opposite direction, but it was to be completed within 30 days.

It is difficult to comprehend that in less than three months of owning a plane, obtaining a license to fly, the boys were undertaking a flight of 5,000 miles. It was like shooting for the impossible, considering a major portion of the flight was over deserts with little known air strips, scant refueling facilities and involving sea crossings. Besides, it was being undertaken at a time when Radio Communications or Air Traffic Control were unheard of. Under the circumstances, one can have nothing but admiration for the pluck of this teenager and a determined pilot. But, Aspy also firmly believed in his mothers’ dream that he’d come back a winner of the race.

In his excitement to get off to London he did not carry maps or directions beyond Egypt, hoping to collect them in Cairo, which then was an established airport. To make matters more difficult, the Gypsy Moth was a light airplane with rudimentary instrumentation and no communication equipment. The pilot in the open cock-pit was to be on his own, keeping visual topographical contact and no communication equipment. The flight could be in any direction, from India to England, or in the opposite direction, but it was to be completed within 30 days.

With three forced landings and much luck, they made their way across North Africa, Malta, Italy to north of France in 17 days. They missed Paris and landed near the Belgium border. Then misunderstanding the French instruction, they were lost over the North Sea in cold heavy rains. As their fuel was running low and head wind reducing their speed considerably, Aspy spotted a tramp steamer and was able to get directions in ‘sign language’ as they flew low around it. Correcting their course in the direction their unknown benefactor had indicated, they finally struck land in the evening and force landing on a farm. Later they discovered they were in the village of Thetford in Norfolk, quite some distance north from their destination, London. They were met by a very angry farmer, who turned very co-operative once he heard their unbelievable story and taking pity on their bedraggled, frozen conditions and their youth, invited them to his house. And just as they were enjoying the “roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and a large tankard of brown ale”, the pressmen arrived to join in the dinner and collect their story. It seems the farmer had phoned Croydon of the arrival of the boys from India and invited the press assembled there for a quick dinner.

Next morning 21st of March 1930 they flew into Croydon at 11am where the Mayor of London and the English press awaited them with garlands.

These were the first Asians or Indians ever to fly from India or the East to England. Two high spirited boys, one 17 and the other not much older. Unlike their American or British contemporaries they had no sponsors, they were on their own helped and financed by Aspy’s father, Meherwan Engineer.

After the plane was serviced by the manufacturers DeHavilland, Aspy participated in the Aga Khan Race, setting off for Karachi one fine morning on the 25th of April 1930. With meticulous planning and preparation, his flight was uneventful.
throughout, except that he experienced engine trouble at Benghazi, so did Manmohan Singh. However Aspy with his engineering skills was able to get going to Alexandria, where he met JRD Tata heading for England. When Aspy informed JRD of his engine and spark plug problem, JRD offered him a spare spark plug. In return Aspy gave JRD his life belt for the sea-crossing. This saved Aspy several days of waiting at Alexandria for plugs. He later faced severe sandstorms on his flight between Bagdad and Basra, but was able to hop into Karachi at 4:10 pm on the afternoon of 11th May 1930. Next day the Royal Aero Club, London, cabled confirming Aspy as the winner.

JRD Tata’s flight to England clocked 20 hours over Aspy’s time. Though Manmohan Singh landed in Karachi earlier than Aspy, he was disqualified as his flight took much more than the specified 30 days.

Of the three Indians who took part in the Aga Khan Race two were Parsis, Aspy Engineer, 17 yrs from Karachi, and Jehangir R D Tata, 26 yrs from Bombay, heir to an industrial empire. The third man Mohan Singh, 24yrs was from Rawalpindi, a qualified flyer and an aeronautical engineer, but had bad luck, crashes and injury on his flights from England. The first of his three attempts to fly to India was on 11th January, 1930. All the three flew Gypsy Moths.

Aspy’s heroic and record setting flight thrilled people throughout India, but the public celebrations, awards or ticker parades, that greeted his more senior US contemporaries like, Charles Lindberg, Amelia Earhart on achieving similar feats, were missing. Whereas the US President Calvin Coolidge awarded Lindbergh the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his flight to Europe from America, there was nothing like that in store for Aspy from the Government. The BVS school band, known as the Cowasjee Variawa’s Own, played as he landed. The large crowd that had gathered cheered him. He was garlanded by the Mayor of the Karachi, Jamshed Nusswanj and congratulated by the Chairman of the Karachi Aero Club and by the President and Secretary of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman. Next day the Royal Aero Club, London, cabled confirming Aspy as the winner.

The Karachi Parsi Institute did have a celebration in their spacious grounds to congratulate Aspy for this outstanding achievement under the then President, KhanBahadur Kavasji H Katrak.

At the reception in Karachi celebrating his winning the Aga Khan Prize, asked by a reporter about what he saw in his future, the young man replied, “I would love the chance to serve my country in the Air Force”. A wish that soon came true.

The Legislative Council of India awarded Aspy Engineer a special prize of Rs10,000. Sir Frederick Sykes the Governor of Bombay State which then included Karachi, upon learning that Aspy was the winner wanted to honour him with a suitable public reception in Bombay. Taking off for Bombay, much against the
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

wishes of his mother, Aspy was injured when he crash landed at Bhuj and could not make it to Bombay. Instead, upon recovering he flew in to Panchgani and landed on the rough Table Land plateau, his old School’s playing field, fulfilling a dream and keeping the promise he made to the boys at school and his Principal before he matriculated.

Late Mr K T Satarawalla of Delhi, then a student at the school, remembers how the whole school and the people of Panchgani had gathered to welcome Aspy and how the Governor of Bombay visited the school to present a ‘Big Cup’. This was in addition of being honoured and facilitated by the Principal of the School. Aspy’s son Cyrus Engineer, tells me he has the movie that was taken of the presentation.

Life in the RIAF

On commissioning from Cranwell, he joined the “A” Flight of No 1 Squadron, of the two-squadron Royal Indian Air Force. He was first posted at Drigh Road, Karachi and later to the North Western Frontier Provinces as a flight commander.

“The main equipment of the RIAF, eg. the aircraft we flew were really antiquated. The Westland Wapiti was an ungainly biplane and carried a pilot and rear gunner in open cockpits. We had none of the air-brakes, flaps or even wheel brakes. No R/T communication”, wrote Aspy.

In 1939 Aspy Engineer’s “A” Flight executed 403 hours of relentless operations bombing and strafing Waziristan’s restive tribes. Once according to my father, Aspy returned from a sortie with more than a dozen tribal bullet holes in his fabric and wood Westland Wapitis fighter. Waziristan was as dangerous then, as it is now. Kohat and Miranshah were at that time under the domain of the Faqir of Ipi, with sharp shooters carrying long barreled home-made guns, who could shoot at night from the surrounding hills with only the burning end of a cigarette as their target.

Aspy was continuously mentioned in dispatches for bravery in action and in 1942 became the first ‘native officer of the RIAF’ to be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for action in the NWFP. He became the Officer Commanding Kohat. He also
briefly saw action in Burma against the Japanese before being posted back to the NWFP. Later towards the end of WWII he gained the rank of Wing Commander. The start of World War II necessitated the expansion of the RIAF. This found Flt Lt Aspy Engineer on various selection committees. And here is what young Hoshang Patel of Nargol had to say about his meeting Aspy at the job interview.

Good conversational English was a prerequisite for joining the RIAF as an Officer. Since Patel was poor in English he was told he may not get in as an Officer. Without much deliberation Patel asked, if he could join in as an Airman. Flt Lt Engineer who was on the interview board, dissuaded him from joining as an airman saying, “Hoshang, don’t join the ranks, Parsi boys from Bombay can’t take the tough life there”. Meanwhile a skinny Malayali Corporal came to Aspy for some signatures or something. After the Corporal left, Patel asked, “who is that man?” he was told he is a Corporal in the RIAF. So Patel asked the selectors, “will you ask him to wrestle with me, run 100 yards or a mile race with me? I will beat him in all, and I mean it!”

“So you still insist on joining?” asked Aspy. Patel agreed. “You promise never to blame me? Because all the Parsi boys who have signed up are blaming me, saying that I promised them heaven”, said Aspy.

Patel who joined the RIAF in the ranks, retired as Wing Commander Hoshang Patel.

During my conversation with Wing Cdr H Patel (then 88) in Bombay, in November 2010, slip-of-the-tongue I addressed him as ‘Squadron Leader’. Pat came the loud rejoinder, as if from a senior Englishman, “Wing Commander, to you Sir!”

At the time of Partition and the bifurcation of the old RIAF into IAF and the Pakistani half, found Group Captain Aspy Engineer and his senior Subrato Mukerjee as the topmost RIAF officers. Accordingly, the Indian side of the Air Force part of the Partition Committee comprised of these two. When they turned down the offer by the British Chairman of the Partition Committee for seconding RAF Officers and Senior NCO’s to staff the Indian Air Force during its early days, the Chairman after a deep breath said, “Engineer, I suggest you go take a cold shower and come back. This is a serious matter and I give you three months before the IAF collapses and then you’ll ask for a larger number of RAF NCO’s”.

Engineer’s response was, “Sir as a matter of fact I had to have a cold shower this morning as the heaters had packed up.”

Both Mukerjee and Engineer were convinced it was the right decision, as IAF had to be Indianised so as to be able to stand on its own feet.

Rapid expansion of the IAF began in 1947 and rapidly became an all-jet Air Force that gave a good account of itself in the war that soon followed over Kashmir. Before long, he was promoted as Air Commodore and given command of No1 Operational Group. Later he took charge of Personnel & Administration at Air Headquarters. During the 1950’s the IAF deputed Aspy on a one year course at the Imperial Defence College, London. On his return he was assigned to various posts and led several missions abroad meeting with heads of States and arranging for the training of pilots and technicians of countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq and Afghanistan at the same time overseeing the expansion of the IAF to a 64 Squadron force.
When the Hindustan Aircraft Ltd factory was experiencing serious labour trouble, Aspy was appointed its Managing Director (1958-1960). Before long the labour problems were resolved and the factory gainfully embarked on several new projects including the construction of a new engine factory. It was during his short tenure that HAL did pioneering ground work in the development and production of the first jet trainer and the designing of the first indigenous jet fighter.

On 1st December 1960, upon the sudden demise of Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee, Aspy assumed the office of the Chief of Air Staff, Indian Air Force. Twenty seven years after commissioning from Cranwell, Aspy Engineer was heading the Air Force of the most populous nation of the Free World.

During his tenure as Chief of Air Staff, the Indian Air Force saw action in Goa, and a detachment of Canberra bombers were sent to the Congo where they took part in action against the Katangese.

Aspy the engineer, though he was the Chief of Air Staff took keen personal interest with engineering and modifying the two engine propeller driven C-119 Packet aircraft, by adding a jet engine innovatively mounted on the top of the fuselage. This was to make the C-119 operate from short runways at higher altitude. Air strips carved out of mountains at heights never before heard of anywhere in the world. It was indeed a feather in the IAF cap, when for the first time in the annals of aviation, on 23rd July 1962, a C-119 landed and took-off from an airstrip at 17,000 feet. This created lines of supply for the brave soldiers guarding the country’s frontiers along the very high Himalayan border.

In the 1962 sneak Chinese invasion of India, IAF was unable to provide air support to the brave Indian soldiers at the borders, as the Government did not allow the IAF to deploy combat formations against the Chinese invaders. After the war, Aspy Engineer was responsible in overseeing the expansion of the IAF. Besides setting up new training facilities and infrastructure, this period also saw the induction of the first supersonic fighter, the MIG 21, and the augmentation of the transport and helicopter fleet.

He retired on 31st July 1964. But, that was not the end of the love affair with flying that started when he was seven. He continued to see his younger siblings who were influenced by his remarkable attainments, make history in trying to almost out-perform him.

This was one unique family of four gallant aviators and two outstanding musketeers. More of that at some later date.

Three DFCs in a family? I doubt one can find another example. The DFCs were given to Aspy for action in the NWFP, Minoo and Rohinton Engineer for action against the Japanese in Burma in WWII. Nor of two brothers as Air Marshalls, Aspy and younger brother Minoo; one a pioneer and the other the most highly decorated officer for gallantry in the Indian Air Force or in the Indian Armed Forces.

After retirement from the Indian Air Force, Air Marshal Engineer served as India’s ambassador to Iran. In 1990 or so he
settlements in Southern California and was a founder member in establishing the California Zoroastrian Center, in Westminster. Later he returned to Bombay where he died on 1st May 2002.

The 1930 Aga Khan Cup Race became the first historical landmark in the history of Indian Aviation, both Civil & Military. The two Zoroastrian Aviators who were the only ones who successfully completed the Race, were later to become the main builders of the Indian Aviation, Aspy the Architect of the Indian Air Force and JRD Tata the Architect & Builder of Civil Aviation in India, starting with the Tata Airlines and then Air India International, what used to be a world class airline, the pride of India.

“Should we forget such an achievement and example set by Aspy for our young?” asked K T Satarawala.

The pride of being a Zoroastrian is something that is passed on by parent to child, a parent whose intention is to convey what was the best and most noble in their heritage. As each generation of Zoroastrians dissolve further into the global melting pot, it becomes more urgent and necessary to recognize the talents and contributions of our forebears. I feel it is essential for individuals with Zoroastrian background to recognize the contributions of their ancestors and to pass on a sense of Zoroastrian pride to their children and grand-children. My parents did it; I did it, now I leave it to you.

Acknowledgement:
My thanks go to each one, without whose assistance this story would not have been complete:-

Mrs Farida Singh, daughter of Jehangir Engineer Cyrus Aspy Engineer, for providing pictures, newspaper cuttings and his father’s story
Air Chief Marshall Fali Major Bharat-rakshak Samir Chopra
Air Commodore M Mehta Wing Commander H Patel
Sam Pedder, RIAF & Air India Mehli R Bandrawalla, Indian Air Lines & UN

Air Marshall Engineer
The Origins of Sexual Freedom in the West

Faramez Dabhoiwa has caused something of a sensation in the UK with the publication of his book, ‘The Origins of Sex.’ Unlike the courtesans and kiss-and-tell paramours of the 18th and 19th centuries, who have a special place in his book and whose memoirs satisfied the salacious appetites of their readers, the punter drawn to Dabhoiwa’s book by its title and seductive cover may feel a little disappointed – cheated, even. This is a scholarly history of the fundamental change in ideas and attitudes towards sex which began in the 18th century and which, we are told, is a central legacy of the Enlightenment: a revolution not only in ways of thinking about religion, morality, and sex, but also in sexual relations, ways of living and public policy in the western world.

by soonu engineer

Though Dabhoiwa warns us that he is not about to “enter the bedrooms and between the sheets of the past”, he paints a lurid picture of the pre-Enlightenment, public obsession with policing and suppressing sexual relations outside marriage. There are anecdotes of ghastly punishments meted out to transgressors; tales of bizarre sexual practices, letters and pamphlets describing the adventures of famous concubines published for financial gain and celebrity, accounts of the religious fantasies of homosexuals, and a wealth of other details that makes his book a fascinating if not sensational read.

This is a painstaking work of scholarship, over 10 years, for which the historian travelled extensively to gather original material. In an interview he gave to CanAsian Times, he says: ‘Most of the materials – for which I travelled all around the British Isles and North America – had never been published before. Amongst the papers of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, for example, who was probably the most influential English thinker of the 18th century, I discovered a treasure-trove of manuscripts on homosexual freedom. I’m equally proud of the stories I’ve rescued from the archives about ordinary people, unknown to history. Some of them were punished for illicit sex – like Susan Bounty who was probably the last person in England to be executed for adultery in 1654. Others argued eloquently for sexual freedom, like William Brown, who said when arrested for sex with another man in 1726: ‘I think there is no crime in making what use I please of my own body.’

The ‘Origins of Sex’ is about the emergence of sexual freedom, in thought and action, in a society that for over a thousand years was censorious, restrictive, and punitive in its approach to sex. This negative attitude is traced back to the Stoics who thought of sex as a ‘low and dangerously corrupting pleasure’ and to the Hebrew scriptures that depicted sex as ‘brutish and defiling’. Apart from the purpose of procreation, sex was considered ‘unclean’.

Christianity absorbed these influences and went further by declaring marriage to be a ‘less pure and desirable state than celibacy’. St Paul warned of the dangers even in marital sex. St Augustine attributed Adam and Eve’s ‘Fall’ to sexual feelings for which ‘guilt ... is contracted from birth’. By the 12thc, the church in Europe tried to
suppress clerical marriage altogether and carried out public inquisitions against sexual misconduct. In England, up to 90% of litigation in the church courts involved sexual and marital cases and this continued into the early 16thc.

Sexual discipline was considered a public priority because moral laxity not only corrupted the individual but brought down the wrath of God on the whole community. Patriarchal attitudes meant that illicit sexual relations with a woman were seen as an assault on family property and family honour (and likely to cause problems with inheritance if there was an illegitimate child). The growth of towns, poverty, the spread of venereal diseases and the difficulties of imposing moral discipline on urban populations, led to further tightening of sexual controls. The Protestant Reformation resulted in more draconian laws, and the zealous application of moral policing and brutal, public punishments.

The major ideological challenge to this system of social control came from the forces of ‘nonconformity’ – the sectarian divisions within the Protestant church – and the struggle for freedom of worship and religious opinion, which led to the Toleration Act of 1689. The concepts of personal liberty and individual conscience were used to critique sexual policing by church and state: just as religious belief was a private matter, so should sexual conduct. Religious toleration led to sexual toleration. Religious diversity allowed for a plurality of sexual opinions and beliefs.

In medieval times, the public policing of sexual behaviour had the consent and support of the community and was easy to enforce in rural settings. The anonymity of towns and a breakdown in the moral consensus in the 18thc made it increasingly difficult to prosecute sexual immorality. Priests were mocked and beaten up and citizens gathered spontaneously to defend people being apprehended by the moral police or to prevent prostitutes from being arrested.

Dabhoiwala produces a wealth of evidence from a variety of sources to show that the Enlightenment principles of individual liberty, privacy and equality had a profound impact on sexual relations, though not necessarily to the advantage of all sections of society, initially favouring heterosexual men of property. While sexual pleasure was no longer considered corrupting or reprehensible, sexual behaviour among the lower classes remained a matter for public concern since illegitimate births could be a burden on the public purse. Pseudo scientific arguments were advanced to support the ‘natural’ sex drive of heterosexual men and the theory that women were naturally the more chaste sex – a surprising reversal of the millenia-old image of women as the sexually more avaricious. Lower class women, however, were seen as easy prey for predatory men. While homosexual acts were punished with even greater severity in the 18thc, there was a parallel, semi-clandestine movement justifying same-sex relations.

Ever since those heady days of Enlightenment thought, there has been permanent tension between ideas of personal sexual freedom and where the line may be drawn to protect public morality and allow for public interference and sanctions. Dabhoiwala has traced the interplay of different forces that has shifted that line, at various times in the past 300 years. However, there is no going back, he says, from the position that consensual sex is a private matter, regardless of marital status, gender and sexual orientation and that there is a distinction between the private and the public. Gender equality and equal rights for homosexuals is also legally binding.

This book is essential reading for those in the west who look upon modern freedoms as intrinsic to Christian civilisation. They forget or are ignorant of how recent this development is, how imperfect and vulnerable. Dabhoiwala reminds them that religious and sexual coercion and the absence of individual liberty was, until recently, ‘a central feature of Christian civilisation.’ This has angered some liberal
reviewers of his book who have lashed out against such ‘generalisations’.

Closer to home, this book is an antidote for those who gleefully stereotype entire nations and religions. For them, the suffering of populations at the mercy of theocratic autocracies, or the atrocities perpetrated by a minority of zealots, is an opportunity to malign the people who are suffering under them and to libel their religion. They forget that, in parroting the calumnies broadcast by reactionary ideologues, they are aligning with the most backward forces in the western world. In the words of the author and historian, the practices we so abhor, ‘are the same practices that sustained western culture for most of its history. They rest on very similar foundations – the theocratic authority of holy texts and holy men, intolerance of religious and social pluralism, fear of sexual freedom, the belief that men alone should govern.’

Farmerz Dabhoiwala responds (or not) to questions

About the Author: Farmerz Dabhoiwala is the Senior Fellow in Modern History at Exeter College, Oxford. He follows in the footsteps of the illustrious 19th century Parsi social historian, R P Karkaria, as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He is 43 years old and lives in Oxford with his partner and two children. Farmerz gives no inkling of his Parsi or Indian heritage in any of the biographical sketches published about him and a search amongst the list of 32 people acknowledged in his first book, or in the dedications, brings up not a single Parsi name. An interview on behalf of Hamazor was refused to me but he answered some of the questions which were emailed to him.

Q: How did your academic interest develop?

A: I became a historian almost entirely by accident. I was born in England but grew up mainly in Amsterdam in the 1970s and 80s and went to a Dutch school. I went up to the University of York to study History and Politics: before long I’d dropped the politics and became passionately interested in art history and the history of the middle ages.

I wanted to do work in women’s history and gender history, which was then just developing, and was inspired to work in the early modern period by two books: Keith Thomas’s ‘Religion and the Decline of Magic’ and Simon Schama’s ‘The Embarrassment of Riches’. I thought that I wanted to write books like that myself. So off I went, and got my doctorate at Oxford. I then took up a Research Fellowship at Sheffield, led by the brilliant Ian Kershaw. That was a fantastic stroke of good luck, and then I had another, just a few days after
my D.Phil. viva, when I was elected to a Research Fellowship at All Souls College, back in Oxford.

By that stage I realized that I’d stumbled across a really huge historical subject – what I ended up calling ‘the first sexual revolution’. For a while I seriously contemplated becoming a human rights lawyer, or a diplomat. Then a permanent University Lectureship came up at another Oxford College, and I realized I couldn’t let go of this fascinating research – the more I pursued it the richer and larger the questions and the materials seemed to be.

The job I still have, gave me the freedom to ignore the ridiculous nonsense of ‘research assessment’ and the endless pressures that now beset young academics. In return for this gift, I was determined to write a book that was worthy of the subject, and that everyone would want to read.

Q: The title of your book is misleading but eye-catching. Is this a publicity ploy?

A:

Q: You draw attention to state policing of sexual morality in some Muslim countries today and the cruel punishments meted out to sexual transgressors which would not have been uncommon only a few hundred years ago in Europe. Might the Western presumption of superiority in this area be based on ignorance of its own history (which you describe) or, even, on hypocrisy?

A: My book is about the evolution of Western sexual attitudes, and how they came to be so different from those that prevail in other parts of the world today. It shows both why sexual freedom is a good thing, and how its evolution has raised new and difficult moral questions, with which we continue to grapple today.

Q: Are there interesting parallels that you can see with countries like Iran and Pakistan in the area of sexual and cultural politics?

A: Yes, though that is particularly something that I hope readers in those countries will pick up on and draw out for themselves. Indeed, I have been very struck by how much my history of the origins of western attitudes has resonated in other parts of the world. When extracts from it were published in The Guardian, people across the non-western world read it and tweeted and blogged about it, and used it in discussions they were already having – about the tensions in their own societies between moral policing and moral norms, and greater sexual freedom and interaction between the sexes. People in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and India are having these debates anyway – I’m delighted that they might find my work enlightening on why the west is different.

Q: The change in western sexual attitudes combined with modern technologies has led to mass dissemination of pornography and the exploitation of women and children for perverse sexual ends. What are your thoughts on this?

A: A central theme of The Origins of Sex is that the first sexual revolution, as I call it, had very unequal effects – for men and for women, for heterosexuals and homosexuals, for people of different classes (and indeed races). It also traces the role of the mass media in the commercialisation and exploitation of sex right back to its origins in the eighteenth century. So the book is centrally concerned with both the negative and the positive consequences of sexual freedom, and their ramifications for the world we live in today.

Q: You show that the emergence of sexual freedoms and equality was not an unimpeded development. Do you think there could be a successful backlash in the UK against modern permissiveness, say by Christian and Islamic groups joining forces to achieve agreed ends?

A: No. Even if they could claim to speak for a majority of the population (which they
can not), one of the developments I trace in the last part of the book is the evolution of the presumption that, in the sexual sphere, individual rights are more fundamental and tangible than any notion of the common or the public good.

**Q:** In an article about your book in the ‘Mirror’, an Indian publication, you are referred to as a ‘Parsi-Brit’. On the other hand, you write about pre-Enlightenment European culture as ‘our own culture’. How do you see yourself?

**A:** I am an atheist Englishman!

**Q:** Are you aware that the Christian theological attitude to sex is alien to Zoroastrian philosophy? To what extent have you been influenced by your own religious heritage and traditions?

**A:**

**Q:** Is your young family being brought up to be aware of and take pride in their father’s historical roots as much as in their western heritage? What are the challenges in this area?

**A:**

**Sexual Policing in England**

**1550:** In Rye, sexual transgressors were forced to wear yellow and green collars.

**1570s:** On Sundays, in Bury St Edmunds, sexual offenders were marched to the whipping post to which they were tied and the women’s hair shorn off. They were left there till the following market day, when they received 30 lashes in public.

**1589:** A special prison was built in Dundee to incarcerate ‘adulterers and fornicators’.

**1610:** Women who bore children out of wedlock were whipped, imprisoned and, if indigent, sentenced to hard labour for a year.

**1612:** An unmarried couple, found guilty of illicit sex, was banished from the city. The judges ordered they should be stripped to the waist, tied to a cart, and whipped while being dragged through the City of Westminster.

**1624:** A law decreed that any unwed woman, who hid the birth of an infant that was later found to be dead, may be presumed guilty of infanticide and executed.

**1632:** An innocent young woman in Waltham Cross was raped and beaten after being dragged across fields. She was forced to do penance.

**1650:** Parliament decreed that brothel-keepers could be branded on the forehead with the letter B. Adultery was made a capital offence. Prostitutes could be executed.
1656: Soldiers were sent to London to round up a thousand ‘loose’ women and transport them forcibly to populate the new colony of Barbados.

1666: Samuel Pepys, his wife and friends were coming home late one evening. Their coach was stopped and they were interrogated to ensure the couples were married.

1726: There were a series of raids in London leading to the execution of homosexual men.

1830s: Until the 1830s Englishmen were regularly executed for homosexual acts. Thousands were publicly humiliated and jailed.

1928: A novel, sympathetic towards lesbians, was banned.

1950s: Thousands of homosexual men were prosecuted every year, amounting to 20% of all prosecutions for, ‘crimes against the person’.

From, F. Dabhoiwala, ‘The Origins of Sex’.

Reliable sites on Zoroastrianism on the Internet

Don’t believe everything that you read on the internet! There are multiple websites on Zoroastrianism but only a few are truly reliable. Below is a list of some university-affiliated websites that offer information on Zoroastrianism, and the Zoroastrian community, based on solid academic research and work. We strongly recommend relying on these sites for facts on history and the religion. This is not an exhaustive list, of course, and there are many non-academic sites that also offer good information.

Encyclopedia Iranica: This is perhaps the best academic resource on the internet for Zoroastrianism. It contains comprehensive, well-researched articles on ancient Iran, medieval Iran, Zoroastrianism, other religions in ancient Iran, early Muslim Iran, Iranian Zoroastrians, Parsis, religious texts, and much, much more. The authors are some of the world’s top experts in their respective fields and their scholarship has offered new insights that oftentimes challenges common belief.

Musee Achemene: This site on the Achaemenid empire, the first Persian empire, is run by Pierre Briant, who has authored a magisterial 1100 page tome on the same subject.

Persepolis Tablets: Extremely, extremely little written material survives from the Achaemenid era. Learn more about the Persepolis tablets, which constitute the most important trove of written material from that era. The tablets are essentially account ledgers and other ‘bureaucratic’ documents that shed light on Achaemenid-era administration and – indirectly – religion. The University of Chicago currently holds the so-called Fortification Tablets.

Sasanika: This site is run by Touraj Daryaee at the University of California, Irvine, who has recently written an extremely good book on the Sasanid empire. The site contains information on the Sasanids, their society, and current research. Great images, as well!

Oriental Institute, University of Chicago: This site contains hundreds of images of Persepolis and other ancient Iranian sites. The images were taken in the 1930s, which make them all the more interesting!

Avestan Digital Archive: The project is run by Alberto Cantera, University of Salamanca, and includes digitized images of various Zoroastrian manuscripts.

Parzor: Website of the UNESCO-sponsored Parsi Zoroastrian (Parzor) Project, run by Dr Shernaz Cama of the University of Delhi. The website includes images, information, and an increasing number of articles on the Parsi community.

Iranian Studies at Harvard: Professor Oktor Skjaervo has put online an extremely large amount of material, including tutorials on ancient Persian languages, his translations of the holy texts, and his scholarship on Zoroastrianism.

[Through the courtesy of Dinyar Patel]
As a freshman at UCLA, I was often left confused by my meal plan for the dining halls and was left figuring out how much I should eat and when to eat it. At the end of each quarter (or semester), students usually have several meals leftover, which they could potentially ‘swipe’ for food. UCLA Dining profited from these unused swipes, resulting in very beneficial financial ways. This represented a waste of both the money, as plans are pre-paid, as well as food that could go to help those in need. And there are plenty of them in the greater Los Angeles area. At any given night, there are roughly 60,000 homeless people on the streets, lacking a single warm meal a day. UCLA students have long recognized this problem, acting on it and feeding those in need, in line with the True Bruin values of community.

Swipes for the Homeless was started when Thach Nguyen and Bryan Pezeshki, my fellow classmates at UCLA, came up with the idea of having students sign up to donate their extra left over swipes, which would then be collected and converted into real food by UCLA Dining. This way more food could be collected and more lives be touched each day. However, not everyone thought this was a great idea. UCLA Dining would have to cut into their profits and would not be receiving thousands of unused meal swipes. There were also legal barriers as previously, food was not permitted to be taken off campus and consumed in homeless shelters, fearing individuals suing the university for malfunction or food poisoning. After negotiating through these and several other red-tape obstacles, Swipes for the Homeless eventually took off in March 2010. Students tabled during the last week of school outside all the dining halls on campus, asking students to sign up their left over swipes. Students were educated about the homeless in Los Angeles, how they could help and where the food they were assisting to collect was going. From Monday through Friday of tabling for swipes, we usually collected around 4,000 meal swipes each quarter. And with an approximate value of $7 per swipe, we collected roughly $28,000 worth of food during each swipes drive! From these swipes we then obtained different types of food; either non-perishable canned goods for food closets in the Los Angeles area, including UCLA’s very own food closet, or the food in the form of actual hot meals which were then taken to shelters such as Midnight Mission and House of Hope, and distributed during meal times.

Swipes for the Homeless is now more than just a student group. We are a registered non-profit in the United States with full 501c(3) status, making individual donations tax deductible. We now have other
programmes beyond just the collection of swipes at the end of each quarter. We engage the Greek community on campus by having sorority vs. fraternity food drives, to see which house can collect the most amount of food. We raise money for food vouchers where a homeless, hungry person is given the opportunity to physically eat a warm meal inside a UCLA dining hall. Our work has been popularized through local media and we have 10 other chapters, including USC, UC Berkeley, University of Texas-San Marcos, and even the University of Paris.

With all these achievements behind us, we applied for The White House’s College Champions of Change event in November 2011. In the words of the President, “All across America, college students are helping our country out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. I hope this challenge shines a light on their efforts, and inspires Americans of all ages to get involved in their communities.” After applying we were ecstatic to hear back in February 2012 that we made it to the final round of 15 applicants. The top five vote getters were to be invited to an event at the White House, where they would be honoured for their innovation, determination, and engagement. The five winners would also be featured by mtvU and be given the opportunity to host an episode of mtvU’s signature programme, “The Dean’s List.”

With a trip to the White House on the horizon, we were determined to win and end up in the top five. All 20-odd members of the group pulled out their networks and spent every waking hour on their laptops, sending people towards the website and informing them how to vote. We ran newspaper articles, radio shout-outs and other embarrassing favours to try and win as many votes as possible. March 3rd was when voting closed and the tension was palpable. As the minutes ticked down to 8:59 pm, we saw ourselves in a comfortable fourth position, and before we knew it the voting period ended. Swipes for the Homeless came fourth out of fifteen finalists and we were going to the White House! Since most of you reading this are probably Zoroastrians, I’m proud to mention the phenomenal support shown by my community towards Swipes to Homeless and helping to get us to the White House. Extended networks were activated via email and Facebook, not only in Los Angeles and California but also back home in Karachi. It humbled me to see, how close knit our community is, and how we rally behind each other’s cause. The Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) in conjunction with Zoroastrian’s Stepping Forward also awarded me a recognition certificate last month, to commemorate the work Swipes for the Homeless does, which hopefully will be the first of many such accolades that’s bestowed upon fellow Zoroastrians.

So after another round of harassing friends and family, this time for donations to fundraise our trip to DC, we finally made it to the White House for the March 15th event. There were fifteen Swipes for the Homeless members on the trip, and it was a great
experience for all, not just in terms of being in DC and at the White House but also to network and meet the other four winning teams. Ideas were shared and friendships were made, hoping that all the colleges present can benefit from each other’s programmes and help their communities even further. In the morning we were all taken on a special tour of the East and West Wing of the White House, being shown all the rooms that we could imagine seeing on TV! Later in the afternoon, the Champions of Change event took place, with introductory speeches from various White House advisors and delegates. And then, to the surprise of most of the audience, the biggest champion of change himself, President Obama entered the room. There was a collective gasp in the air as everyone realized they were not more than 15 feet away from the President and experiencing probably a once in a lifetime experience! To those interested, Obama is fairly tall and much more than what he appears to be on TV. His eye contact and aura whilst speaking is something that can only be glorified by those who have actually seen him talk in person. Soon after his five to seven minute address, he left the event and then a panel discussion took place. One representative from each of the five winning groups was on stage, along with a moderator, and questions were exchanged on the work being done at each campus, the challenges they faced, tips for fellow students who would pursue something similar and most importantly, the group’s plans of moving forward.

Swipes for the Homeless intend to use the publicity and flood of support, by adding more programmes to our existing model. Over twenty college campuses requesting assistance to set up something similar at their schools have also contacted us. With an idea as simple and basic as helping the homeless and hungry, it’s our aim to spread the organization to every college across the United States. Our website is: http://swipesforthehomeless.org/

‘You can’t live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.’ That’s my favourite John Wooden quote – the late UCLA basketball coach, philosopher and mentor. Community service is often a term thrown out with good intentions but poor executions. It’s often misunderstood as something extravagant and life changing. Yet, all of us can contribute to our communities in whatever way possible. Feeding homeless individuals is not a revolutionary idea, yet Swipes for the Homeless works and helps thousands of people each year. It’s fun being part of an organization you helped start from scratch and to see how many lives you’ve tangibly improved. I urge all to further the philanthropic culture amongst Zoroastrians to give back in their own way possible and be proud of their work and efforts!

The following information is added in case other University students or individuals wish to contact Rustom Birdie:

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Email: rustombirdie@gmail.com
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/rustomzbirdie
Twitter: @ZeBirdman
For most Indians, colonial British India exists only in movies or Kipling’s novels. But in a 152-year-old shop in this Dharamsala suburb the British Raj continues to live on. Located in the heart of McLeodganj, the shop takes you back to India’s colonial past by exhibiting relics of the bygone era. Set up in 1860, Nowrojee and Sons General Store is one of the oldest shops in Himachal Pradesh. It is still working and has maintained its original grand wooden structure.

Set up by a Parsi business family, the Nowrojees, the store has seen five generations of the clan. Nauzer Nowrojee, a friend of the Dalai Lama, looked after the store-cum-residence set up by his great-grandfather for over 60 years. The eldest of five brothers, Nauzer, whose sons are now in tea estate business in West Bengal, was born in 1915 in Karachi and died here at the age of 85. Nauzer’s bachelor brother Jimmy, a former banker also associated with the store, died two years ago at the age of 82.

Caretaker Joginder Singh said that the shop once used to take care of the daily requirements of the British officers and their families. It sold a variety of goods from bakery items to tobacco to toiletries and liquor to even arms and ammunition. “Initially, it was a general merchant shop. Later, arms and ammunition were also sold here. When the British were here, it was doing roaring business,” he said of the shop that now sells only newspapers, magazines and confectionery.

One of the oldest antiques in the store’s possession is Petromax 835 Special, a German-made hanging wick lamp. Boxes of imported cigarette brands like ‘Passing Show’ Craven ‘A’ Virginia Cigarette, Number Ten Virginia of James Carlton Ltd, London, and Cavander Ltd of Godfrey Philips Ltd, London, are showcased in the store. These brands were quite popular among the British at that time. A box of Cuticura Soap is also displayed. The US-made soap was advertised for curing sensitive skins and for skin purification. Vinolia white rose soap of Vinolia Co Ltd of London and Calvert’s carbolic medical soap of F C Calvert and Co Ltd of Manchester, England, can be seen as well.

There are other relics from the past-small posters of German-made Sun brand wick lamps, Blue Bird toffees, shoelaces of Warrior and the Majestic porpoise boot laces of England. A large number of wine and liquor bottles with their soiled labels and antique glass jars are also lying in the shop. Singh said a 12-litre empty bottle of Beck’s beer is among the priceless relics in the possession of the store.

Old timers in McLeodganj remember the store with much affection. “The store has still not lost its British colonial charm. And it has stood strong all these years. It even withstood the devastating Kangra earthquake of 1905,” said octogenarian Subhash Sharma, who is settled here since childhood.

Singh attributes the store’s retaining its colonial charm to Nauzer and Jimmy. “After independence, the Nowrojees became less flush with money but Nauzer and Jimmy helped retain the store’s past glory,” he added.


[Though effort was made to contact this reporter through the Times of India with the hope of having a more in depth article, they could not assist as it is an agency story. Hamazor has published this short article, giving due credit to the source, solely with the idea of sharing this past era and preserving our history. - Ed.]
In loving memory of my son Cyrus Happy Minwalla

Parsibol

Meher Marfatia & Sooni Taraporevala are compiling a Parsi Gujarati phrase-book. Meher writes, "we wish to record these phrases for future generations who would otherwise lose our wonderfully colourful language. Calling for contributions. Please share with us all the phrases you can recollect, like ‘ghora ma ghadero’, ‘sagan no gaathio’, ‘mai muro baap gaajar’ . . ."

English or Gujarati script is welcome, with English translations wherever possible.

Contributions used will be credited.

Email us at: parsibol@gmail.com

or write to:

Meher Marfatia, 33 Peacock Palace, 69 Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 26, India.

Searching for my Indian Parsi roots

My name is Franziska Lalan Merkel and I am from Konstanz, Germany. I am trying to find out more about my Indian Parsi background. I was born in Bombay on December 14th, 1981 and then given to Shradhahanand Mahila Ashram, Matunga the next day, on 15th of Dec 1981. Not much is known about my biological parents. From the beginning I bear the name Lalan which might as well have been given to me by the sisters in the children’s home or by my birth mother. Four weeks later, on January 15th 1982, I left to Germany together with my adoptive parents. With them I grew up in the most loving family imaginable. And still I feel very much connected to my Indian roots and my natural parents who should be in all probability from Parsi community as confirmed by the lawyer involved in the adoption court case. I have just finished my PhD in cross-cultural psychology. I am currently in India for a short while and I would be very glad about any hint to trace my origin...

If you know anything about my family of origin please contact me at: fla.me@gmx.de

Thanks in advance for your help.

Back cover:
The quote on the back cover of this issue, is from the Gathas, which shows that to Zoroastrians, the relationship between man and woman was not one of dominance and subservience, but of equal partnership. This is the advice Zarathushtra gave to the assembled brides and grooms on the occasion of his daughter, Pouruchista’s wedding. [courtesy Dina McIntyre].

Hamazor acknowledges and reminds its readers, that since Issue 1/2002, the quotes appearing on the back cover have been thanks to Dina supplying them to me, from the Translations of the Gathas by Prof Stanley Insler, with his generous permission. - Ed.
“I tell these words to these girls who are being married and to you, ye bridegrooms...
Let each of you try to win the other with truth, for this shall be of good gain for each.”

Yasna 53.5
(English translation)