



Zarine Kharas & the Albert Medal, p39

Contents

- 05 WZO celebrates Nowruz Iranian “Style”
- 06 WZO Trust Funds & WZO Trust activities
- 08 Cultural & Historical Perspectives of Zoroastrian Faith - Jehan Bagli & Daraius Bharucha
- 11 WZO & ZAGNY - Gatha Colloquium
- 14 Were the Achaemenians Zoroastrian? - kersey antia
- 18 The Northern-most Zoroastrian Fire Temple in the world
- 19 Recitation of Avesta after centuries at Shahr Rey Agiyari
- 20 Darius Hystapes: First Mazdaean Emperor - farrokh vajifdar
- 24 Life in Ancient Iran - notes, bella tata
- 27 Farsi article - parvin farin
- 28 “The Garden and the Fire” - overview, farrokh vajifdar
- 31 Zoroastrians in Serendib - jamsheed choksy
- 39 Zarine Kharas, recipient of Albert Medal - jenni mehta
- 41 Bahram Bekhradnia, career in Higher Education - soonu engineer
- 45 Mahatma changed one Canadian’s life - teenaz javat
- 46 Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman - jehangir mehta
- 49 Making winners with a difference - hufrish taraporewala
- 53 Keeping the flame alive - farishta dinshaw
- 56 Meher Toorkey plays music to save tigers - sammy bhiwandiwalla
- 57 Oxfam Trailwalker - The SoupA Stars of Auckland
- 59 ORBIS - katayoun bekhradnia
- 61 NouRouz, Pasargad
- 62 Thirst for water
- 63 Membership Form with details

COVER

A rendition of Yasna 10, illustrated on <http://www.avesta.org/gifs/samples.htm> as a celebration of the Gathas.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

WZO WEBSITE

www.w-z-o.org

International Board Members



London, England

**Mr Sam H
Bhiwandiwalla**

Chairman
E-mail:
sam@bhiwandi.demon.co.uk

Dr Sam Kerr

Unit 5, 'Agincourt'
10 Larkin Street\
Roseville
New South Wales, 2069
Australia

Mr Dadi B Engineer

President, WZO India
Mumbai, India
E-mail:
dbengineer@crawfordbayley.com

Mr Darius Mistry

Auckland
New Zealand
E-mail: darius.mistry@imagetext.co.nz

Mr Darayus S Motivala

President
E-mail:
darayus@motivala.me.uk

Er Jehan Bagli

Vice President
Mississauga, Canada
E-mail: jbagli@rogers.com

Mr Dadi E Mistry

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

Mrs Toxy Cowasjee

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

Mr Dinyar Modi

Hon Secretary
E-mail: djm@djmodi.com

Mr Marzi Byramjee

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

Mr Rustom Yeganegi

233 Saadi Avenue
Tehran, Iran

Mr Russi Ghadiali

Singapore
E-mail:
RGHADIA1@irf.com

**Mrs Khurshid B
Kapadia**

Membership Secretary
E-mail:
khurshid.kapadia@mottmac.com

Mr Keki Bhote

President, US Chapter
Illinois, USA
E-mail:
krbhote@sbcglobal.net

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

Volume LII - Issue 2 | 2009

Printed by:

*A A Graphics
1721/31 LAC No 2
Karachi 75420
Pakistan*

This issue is sponsored by:

*Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal &
Informal Religious Meetings*

Cover design by:

*Tannaz Minwalla
Karachi, Pakistan*

Design & layout by:

*Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan*

From the Editor

Parsi, IS thy name Charity? is the question we need to ask today of ourselves.

The sad reality of what happened was for no other reason besides bigotry - the death of a child due to starvation, and that to, a Parsi child of patrilineal lineage as BPP demands.

By the time this issue of Hamazor is published, most of you will have come to know of this tragic news, but if lessons are to be learnt, it is never too late to keep on trying to bring reality home.

On 2nd April, 7-year-old Farzin Bejan Batlivala living at a PARSIS TRUST flat at Vasai, India, died through starvation as the mother could not feed her three children or herself. Why you will ask? REASON - though she begged the Chairman according to 27 year-old Nisha or was it Trustee-Social Worker of BPP according to the Chairman, for help, she was refused till she could produce her marriage licence as proof of marriage to Bejan who abandoned the family seven months ago. This she did not have.

How far are the learned and elected Trustees of the BPP going to go in the exercise of keeping PARSIS of MUMBAI PURE? Why do we keep quoting "Good thoughts, Good words, Good deeds" if they have no meaning? Most of us hopefully would feed a stray dog if we found the animal wanting for food, yet the people who uphold our faith and vast finances found it difficult to help this lady because she could not prove she was married to a Parsi. Did they not stop to think how Nisha with a family of three children were occupying the Trust flat, that too belonging to an agiary if she wasn't entitled, especially as the BPP are so vigilant in the welfare of the community? And how long would it take to make a phone call to any resident of the building to check on the legitimacy of what Nisha said?

The icing on the cake is, father Bejan Batliwala was a 'solar concentrator operator' at Doongerwadi employed by the BPP, who resigned a couple of years ago! Leaving aside all the BPP red tape, I just keep thinking was it beyond whoever spoke to Nisha to put their hands in their own pockets and give the lady at least enough money to tide her over till they carried out their "investigation", if that was the intention. Subsequently we were informed Arnavaz Mistry did pay Rs1,000 to Nisha personally four months prior to this tragedy and Noshir Dadrawalla did offer his help. Neighbours who now say the children went without food often, could hear them cry, did not one person have the initiative to at least find help for the Batliwalas if they were unable to assist themselves? In this tragedy, one good human being, Dr Malcolm Pestonjee did come forward to help this young family for the moment with enough money for six months food, paid the outstanding rent and had the electric meter restored thereby giving electricity, but alas all too late.

Dinshaw Tamboly, Chair of WZO Trust Funds India, promptly sent the news item published on 7th April by the Mumbai Mirror to the present and past Chairmen of WZO and within minutes of receiving the email, Mr Sammy Bhiwandiwala sanctioned GBP1,000 to be used as immediate relief for the family with the added pledge that WZO would take care of



this family for their welfare and children's education. Persons who wish to hold office must have the commitment and courage to act promptly. To vacillate or pass the buck has no place in the life of the head of any successful institution. WZO is a world Zoroastrian organization and has proved it time and again, and we are here for all Zoroastrians. The saga does not end here and as expected once this shocking news was public, the Parsis of Mumbai did rise and show their indignation to the BPP. Pressure, threatened legal notices and the forthcoming election for the seventh Trustee of BPP, all helped in making the existing Trustees sit up and hastily announce their decision.

The WZO Trust (India) had also raised funds of Rs130,000 as well as received a commitment of Rs9,000 every quarter to be used for the welfare of the Batlivala family with further pledges for educating the two surviving children. However, after the BPP announced their decision to assist the family, the Trust was informed by an emissary on behalf of the Batlivalas, no further help was required by them. WZO Trust (India) has returned the funds to the donors and informed the individuals who pledged their goodwill, their assistance was no longer required.

To quote WAPIZ page in Free Press Journal issue dated Friday, April 10, 2009:

BPP Trustees Meet Nisha Batlivala

The sad demise of 7 year old Ferzin Batlivala has left the community inconsolable.

The Trustees met Nisha Batlivala, along with her 2 children Arzan and Yazdan at the BPP office yesterday (Thursday 9th April 2009) in the morning. The BPP Trustees expressed anguish that Nisha had not returned to the BPP with the required information, which would have entitled her to aid, which in turn, may have saved little Ferzin's life.

The BPP in an attempt to secure the long term interests of the family has taken complete responsibility for the needs of the 2 younger boys, in terms of their daily requirements as well as their education.

On 24th April, WAPIZ page, an announcement was made by Bomi P Sachinwalla, Trustee, Vasai Agiary and landlord of the building in which Nisha resides in. He claims the whole case has been misrepresented by the Mumbai Mirror and writes, "the most important thing – The cause of **Death of FERZIN is NOT STARVATION but may be ALLEGED BEATING, as Nisha was habitually thrashing her children and beating them ruthlessly.**" [reproduced as original]

Yet the official post-mortem stated **starvation**.

This Editorial is long enough and no doubt much can be written for and against what happened but nothing can alter the fact, a child died, due to one or all reasons - bigotry, lack of education or poverty.

Why do we have terrorism in this world of ours today? Lack of education, hunger, humiliation and injustice. The only way forward from this tragedy is to see that all the children of our Indian Parsi community who cannot afford education has a chance to learn which is every persons right, the mobeds are educated to think for themselves with reasoning and no person goes hungry. The emphasis on "Indian Parsis" is because the community of Pakistan are taken care of and the rest of the diaspora are self sufficient.



WZO celebrates Nowruz, Iranian “Style”

Darayus Motivala, President, WZO, reports

WZO in London celebrated Nowruz with a Dinner-Dance having an Iranian theme. There were around 150 guests, half of whom were Iranian Zoroastrians. The evening was a great success with WZO raising approximate £1,000 for its charitable activities.

WZO's Chairman, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, and President, Darayus Motivala, were at hand to personally greet the guests as they arrived whilst an Iranian band, *Atesh*, played in the background. They were from all age groups; from a baby of a few months old to senior citizens well in their 80s. They chatted to friends, old and new, whilst others took to the dance floor. The bar was ably managed by our Social Secretary, Noshir Umrigar.

After the starters which included *Mirza Ghasemi* and *Kashk-e-Baadenjaan*, the guests were entertained by Shebbie (real name Sebnam Gurhertas) with her sensual belly dancing, a popular attraction. Shebbie is a professional belly dancer from Istanbul, who has entertained us at WZO's social events for many years. After a couple of exhibition dances, she danced around the tables with a number of guests joining.

The main course for the evening included *Kabab Kubideh* with saffron rice and *Khoresh Bamier* with *Ghost* plus full trimmings. Both Iranians and non-Iranians commented on the delicious meal which was well laid out by the caterers. Our Committee member, Benafsha Engineer, and a few of her friends were at hand with the serving of the meal.

After dinner, *Atesh* played Iranian popular music with the guests exhibiting some very energetic dancing, Iranian style. There was a short intermission whilst the draw for the raffle prizes took place. It also gave the dancers a chance to recover their energy! The evening concluded with Shebbie providing a further exhibition of her exotic dancing. This time she persuaded a number of guests to come to the floor and belly dance with her.

At the end, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla thanked Shebbie, the *Atesh* band and the caterers for making the evening a success. He gave a special thanks to WZO's Social Secretary, Armaity Engineer, for organising such a wonderful evening and to all the guests for once again supporting WZO. These WZO social events are important as not only do they give our members and guests the opportunity to interact with each other but they provide a much needed boost to our funds.

A final comment from one of the guests: “Great venue; great food; great entertainment. The best Nowruz party I have been to for many years.” ■■■■





A synopsis of the multifarious welfare activities in India of the WZO Trust Funds & the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust in 2008

Dinshaw Tamboly reports

The WZO Trust Funds and The World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust are proud to present before their esteemed donors and community members all over the world, a synopsis of the major welfare activities undertaken in India, during the course of the calendar year 2008.

Rehabilitation of Zoroastrian farmers (Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

Rehabilitation inputs were made available to 17 Zoroastrian agrarians in 6 villages. The support has been in the form of sinking new wells, deepening old ones, supplying electric pump sets, diesel engine sets, pipelines, seeds & fertilizers and so on.

Between August 1990 to December 2008 we have so far provided financial support towards the rehabilitation of 398 agrarian families in 171 villages; the total amount disbursed by us so far has been Rs.50,712,400/-.

Rural Housing - the changing horizons (Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

From funds raised during the period January 2008 to December 2008, financial support has been extended to 30 Zoroastrian families to replace their huts with cottages the walls of which are made from bricks and plastered with cement, the floors made from stones and the roof from tiles. A total of 104 huts have been replaced by cottages so far.

The replacement of huts by cottages presently cost Rs.250,000 each; this project has begun to change the sky line in the rural areas.

Self-employment (Project of WZO Trust Funds)

During the year under review, 33 Zoroastrians from 14 different urban, semi-urban, rural locations have been provided funds to pursue self employment disciplines of their choice in diverse disciplines of their choosing such as transport, trading, manufacturing/workshops, electronic data processing etc. So far 638 Zoroastrians, from 88 different locations have been assisted thus.

Education - an essential investment for the future (Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

Education of 89 students was sponsored at different institutions. Erach and Roshan Sadri Foundation of UK established an education fund during the year under review. 39 students had applied out of which 17 were eligible as per criteria laid down by the donors. An amount of Rs.800,000 was disbursed. Rs.200,000 was disbursed from our Daulat Kershasp Dastur Education Fund. Numerous applications were recommended to various donor Trusts for considering support to deserving students.

Medical support (Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

331 individuals were supported to the tune of Rs.1,522,3000 towards meeting their medical expenses by raising funds from donor Trusts.

Relief from Poverty (Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

253 elderly/indigent Zoroastrians were supported through disbursement of payments on a quarterly basis. The total

amount disbursed was to the tune of Rs.72,86,400.

Holidays for the Poor
(Project of World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust)

Groups of senior citizens who are economically challenged, or have been ill and in need of change, are sent for holidays in the hills around Mumbai, with all expenses being paid for, from the time they leave home and return back being paid for.

Mobeds
(Project of WZO Trust Funds)

An amount of Rs.300,000 was spent to meet the shortfall of the 'Athornan Mandal/WZO' full time Mobed support scheme. An amount of Rs.456,000 was expended towards extending support to 38 mobeds. Navar/Martab ceremony was sponsored of one Athravan child from an economically challenged family.

Centres for Senior Citizens
(Project of WZO Trust Funds)

Both our centres for senior citizens are doing well, are very popular and much sought after institutions.

Sir Ratan Tata Trust provides very generous support towards the day to day running of the institution which enables us to provide quality services to our residents. In June 2008 we received a very generous corpus donation of Rs.300,00,000 from the Trustees of Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust towards enhancing and sustaining operations of our Senior Citizens.

Economy Housing at Navsari
(Project of WZO Trust Funds)

The construction of our 7th building situated at Kanga Street, Navsari was taken in hand from the funds made available by the generous Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund. This is the 5th building being constructed in the name of Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy. The construction commenced in March 2008; the building is scheduled to be ready for occupation by March, 2009.

Sanatorium at Sanjan
(Project of WZO Trust Funds)

The Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy – WZO Sanatorium has become a popular community resort. It is a haven for those wishing to enjoy holidays in idyllic surroundings and a pollution free environment at extremely moderate rates of Rs.300 per person per day for full board and lodge.

It would not have been possible for us to undertake our welfare activities without the generosity of our donors. We extend our sincere gratitude to all our donors big and small for their munificent support and co-operation. It is natural that we must acknowledge with immense gratitude the continuous support extended towards our multifarious activities by the Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund, Trustees of Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong Canton & Macao, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust, Behramji Nowroji Gamadia Parsi Hunnar Shalla Trust, Rena & Behram Baxter of USA, Erach and Roshan Sadri Foundation of UK, and the Executors of the Estate of Dennis William Richards who have been the main pillars of encouragement, motivation and support for the various welfare projects undertaken. Whilst we are proud of what we have done, we recognise the fact that very much more needs to be done. It is for this reason that we seek the continued support of our donors from all over the world to enable us to sustain and enhance our welfare activities.

Donations for any of our projects are very welcome and may be forwarded to us by way of cheque/draft. The name of our Trust undertaking a specific welfare project has been mentioned under each of the 11 welfare headings. ■■■■

Dinshaw Tamboly was asked by All India Radio, known as Akashvani in Hindi, to speak his views on various welfare activities/initiatives of the Parsi community on 2 April 2009 at 1130 hours. He took this opportunity of highlighting WZO's work in India.

Donations may please be forwarded to: -
THE WORLD ZOROASTRIAN ORGANISATION TRUST
Shanti, 5th floor, 6 Banaji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400 001.
[Donations are exempt under section 80G(5) of Income tax act 1961; permission valid till 31 March 2011]
THE WZO TRUST FUNDS
Shanti, 5th floor,6, Banaji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400 001.
[Donations are exempt under section 80G(5) of Income tax act 1961, permission valid till 31 March 2009. Renewal has been applied for]

A Report on the Symposium: Cultural & Historical Perspectives of Zoroastrian Faith

Compiled by Jehan Bagli & Daraius Bharucha

On a crisp day of March 29 2009, the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), in collaboration with the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) and the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) jointly sponsored a symposium titled "Cultural and Historical Perspectives of Zoroastrian Faith". The event was held at the Meheraban Guiv Darbe Meher in Toronto, Canada which was attended by almost 200 people with attendees being drawn both locally as well as from other parts of Canada (Ottawa, Montreal) and the United States (Illinois and Texas).

The symposium was organised as a part of Naurooz celebrations and was also the setting for this year's Khorshed Jungalwala Lecture which is sponsored by FEZANA, an event that is fast becoming the most prestigious lecture to deliver, for scholars of Zoroastrian studies. This year the Jungalwala lecture was delivered by Prof Oktor Skjaervo, the Aga Khan Professor of Iranian studies at Harvard University. The organization of the symposium was a result of the efforts and vision of Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli who took the lead in getting together an outstanding group of scholars for the event. Dr Bagli was ably assisted in putting together the event by a group of ZSO volunteers which included Mithra Jam, Sam Vesuna, Kevin Mancherjee, Ervad Kerman Katrak, Freddy Mirza and Daraius M Bharucha.

The morning commenced with the welcome by Kevin Manchejee, vice president of ZSO, followed by Keki Bhote, president, USA chapter of WZO, and Firdosh Mehta past president of FEZANA. This was followed by the first session of the morning, The Khorshed Jungalwala Lecture. Dr Bagli the Chair of this session, in his eulogy to Khorshed elaborated her achievements and contribution to the Zoroastrian community

locally and globally. He terminated his brief address by saying that, "*Khorshed had left with us memories that is a treasure beyond all measures*".

He then introduced the speaker Prof Oktor Skjaervo who delivered the lecture on "*Zoroastrian Literature as a part of The Cultural Heritage of Modern Zoroastrians.*" In the beginning of his talk he elaborated his encounter with the Boston Zoroastrian community and the impact it had on his academic activities. He then described his own journey into the rather muddled waters of the Gatha translations and initiated a discussion through a timeline on the heritage of literature available to Zoroastrians. During his talk, he referred to the inscriptions of the Achaemenian and Sasanian emperors, followed by the literature of the Zarathushtrian religion of the post Sasanian era. He stressed the fact that the text was only in the memories of the priests for nearly two millennia and must have been transmitted to students in the contemporary as well as old languages. He then went on to discuss the Iranian epics. Some of his interesting assertions with regards to the historicity and antecedents of some of the texts both intrigued and challenged the audience into a stimulating discussion that followed the speech.

The lecture was followed by a brief cultural interlude during which the Iranian Zoroastrian Choir lead very ably by Shahram Bastani provided a rendition in song of parts of the Yasna. As always the performance of the choir was very well received by the audience with much applause and appreciation.

Daraius Bharucha the chairperson of the next session, introduced Prof Jenny Rose of Stanford and Claremont Graduate University. The topic of her lecture was

"Keepers of the Flame: The Early Zoroastrians of Central Asia." At the outset she stressed the fact that Zoroastrian religion first took root to the northeast of Iran, amongst the Iranian peoples of Sogdiana, Margiana, and Bactria, lands which are mentioned in the *Videvdad* and in later Old Persian inscriptions of satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire.

Prof Rose's presentation focused on the early Zoroastrian faith that exerted considerable influence on both local and so-called 'Silk Road' culture and ideology. Her talk spanned the Zoroastrian interaction

with Buddhists from Ashoka (3rd century BC) to Kushan era (ca 3rd century AD). She

illustrated this with figures of Kushan coins depicting Iranian *yazatas*.

She further provided bases of the Sogdian expression of Zoroastrian religion both locally and along the trade route as far as northern China. This influence was substantiated by the evidence of centrality of fire, presence of fire temples, and ossuaries with Zoroastrian motifs in Samarkand and other Sogdian cities. She concluded her talk with the illustration of the Sogdian version of *Ashem Vohu* dating back to 8th/9th century.

This session was followed by a sumptuous lunch which was included in the cost (\$8.00) of the symposium and made possible through the generous sponsorship of ZSO, WZO and FEZANA.

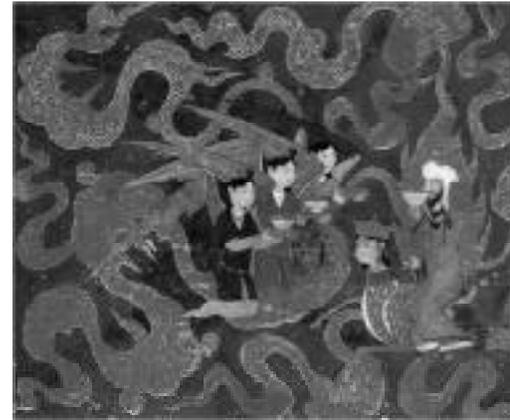
The session following the lunch break was chaired by Freddy Mirza who introduced to the audience, Prof Maria Subtelny, the professor of Persian and Islamic studies at

University of Toronto. The talk was entitled "*The Water of Omniscience and the Milk of Knowledge: Zoroastrian Elements in the Apocalypse of Muhammad.*" Prof Subtelny shared with the audience her study and understanding of several Zoroastrian elements that were incorporated into the early versions of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven. Specifically she focussed on the motif of the special drink consumed by the Prophet, and its relationship to such Middle Persian apocalyptic texts as the *Arda Wiraz namag* and *Zand i Wahman yasn*. She further elaborated on the motif of the cosmic cock which Muhammad encounters in the first heavenly sphere and its association with Zoroastrian divinity Sraosh. This

connection is mentioned in *Vendidad* (XVIII.II) regarding the bird that awakes the world for the prayers. The Mythic explanation of the five ritual daily prayers mandated to Islamic community, can also find a relationship in the liturgical practices of Zoroastrians.

This enlightening presentation was followed by the second cultural interlude during which some Zoroastrian youth presented a popular Iranian dance. The young ladies who presented this dance were Mahsa Khodadadi, Shahrzad Rahnamoun, Asha Farhadi, Mahshad Khosraviani and Anahita Dehmoubed, followed by a solo flute performance by Kaipa Bharucha who very skilfully and with great flair and mastery performed two pieces of classical music. Both the items were received by the audience with great acclaim and enthusiasm.

The final session was chaired by Ervad Kerman Katrak and the presentation was given by The Honourable Prof Jamsheed Choksy of Indiana University. Prof Choksy



Coin of Kushan King, Kanishka, with Mithra (Miuro) on reverse.



L to R: Professors Jenny Rose, Jamsheed Choksy, Oktor Skjearvo, Maria Subtelny with Jehan Bagli in the center.

was introduced to the audience in both English and in Farsi with the help of an Iranian student. His presentation was titled *“How a Minority Adapts: Zoroastrians in Ceylon/Sri Lanka from Antiquity to the Present.”* In his talk Prof Choksy provided some intriguing and fascinating evidence regarding the presence of Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka from the sixth century BC onwards, till the present time.

The first Iranians known to have reached the shores of *Senendiva* (Skn. ‘Island of Jewel’) sailed there over the Indian Ocean during the reign of Darius I. They were presumably Mazda-worshippers in keeping with the official devotion of the Achaemenians to Ahura Mazda. It was recorded in Sanskrit texts that later in the Sasanian era a magian (Zoroastrian) priest, who had accompanied mercenaries from Iran to a north central Sinhalese city, visited the ruling monarch of Sri Lanka and mentioned to him about the Achaemenian dynasty, its founder Cyrus II, and convinced him to achieve greatness by building a palace atop a summit similar to Pasargadae. In the twentieth century, researches by K D Choksy in collaboration with J J Modi attest that Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrian sailors and maritime merchants reached the Portuguese and Dutch

controlled parts of the island. Names of various Parsis have been identified on the gravestones. In the final part of his talk he elaborated with illustrations, the lifestyle of the Parsi Zoroastrians on the island during the late 20th century.

An open forum question and answer session with all the speakers followed the final presentation. This session was moderated by Dr Bagli and there were numerous questions and sometimes passionate declarations particularly by Iranian coreligionists among the audience, about the various topics that were presented during the day.

The symposium was brought to close by a vote of thanks from Sam Vesuna, President of the ZSO who congratulated all the speakers and presented them with small tokens of appreciation. In addition, Mr Vesuna also thanked WZO and FEZANA for their sponsorship and co-operation and on behalf of all attendees he thanked Dr Bagli and the organizing team for having put together an enlightening and enriching event.





WZO & ZAGNY present A Gatha Colloquium *Gatha Perceptions: from Past to Future*

Saturday 27 June & Sunday 28 June 2009
from 10am – 6pm
at Double Tree Hotel, 51st St & Lexington Avenue
New York City

Registration fee: US\$50 per person which includes lunch for both days
Registration before 10 June 2009

Cheque payable to ZAGNY and mailed to
Kerman N Dukandar, ZAGNY Treasurer, 96 Bernard Avenue, Edison,
New Jersey 08837, USA

Or register online : <http://www.zagny.org>

Perhaps unique in the history of ancient religions, the actual words of Prophet Zarathushtra survive in the form of the 17 hymns which constitute the 5 Gathas and are the foundation of the Zoroastrian religion. WZO, in association with the Firuz Madon Foundation, and ZAGNY are proud to present a Colloquium on the Gathas of Zarathushtra, bringing together many world renowned scholars of this subject. Such an international gathering of Gatha scholars takes place perhaps once in a decade and is a unique chance to learn about the fundamentals of the Zoroastrian religion as expressed in the Gathas, the nuances of many concepts that are in the Gathas as well as the relationship of some of the later Zoroastrian literature with the Gathas.

Renowned Scholars who will present their papers



Kersey ANTIA : *The multi-dimensional significance of Free-will in the Gathas*

Kersey ANTIA is a practicing psychologist in North America. An ordained priest of some 60 years' standing, he is well conversant with the doctrinal and ritual aspects of the precepts and practice of the Mazdayasnian religion. He has served the Chicago Zoroastrians as High Priest since 1977. He is an International Board member of the WZO.



Almut HINTZE: *Perceptions of the Yasna Haptanhaiti*

Almut Hintze is the Zartoshty Brothers Reader in Zoroastrianism at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies. She holds degrees in Indo-Iranian Studies, with special emphasis on Zoroastrian Literature, from the Universities of Heidelberg, Oxford, Erlangen, and Berlin. Her main book publications include the *Zamyd Yaat, Lohn' im Indoiranischen*, and an edition of the *Yasna Haptanhaiti*. She is currently working on a comprehensive edition of the full *Yasna*.



Stanley INSLER: *Law and Order*

Stanley Insler is the Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at Yale. Educated at the Universities of Madras, Columbia, Tübingen and Yale, he is best known to Zoroastrians with his publication in 1975 of the Text, Translation and Commentary of *The Gathas of Zarathustra*. Other publications include the Rig-Vedic hymns in *Agni* (1983), chapters in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra* (Pittsburgh, 1989-90). His articles appear in scholarly journals, and occasional popular writings for the WZO's *Hamazor*. He is a member of the American, French and German Oriental Societies, as well as the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain. His 65th birthday was honored by a Festschrift in the special JAOS 2002 publication. He was elected to Honorary Fellowship of the WZO.



Kaikhosrov IRANI: *The Gathic vision and its unfolding*

Bombay born, Kaikhosrov Dinshah Irani, studied Physical Chemistry, Physics, and then Law. Settled in the US since 1946; after completion of his studies began teaching Philosophy at New York's City College where as Emeritus Professor he continues with courses. He is a member of US scientific institutions, and the American Academy of Religion. He has lectured in the fields of Philosophy and Religion at several US and overseas universities. In 1998 he was honored with the establishment of the K D Irani Chair of Philosophy through a sizeable anonymous contribution by a former student. He is on the International Board of the WZO.



Ali Akbar JAFAREY: *The Gathas of Zarathushtra Spitama: their Order and Sequence*

Ali Jafarey obtained his PhD in the Persian Language and Literature from Karachi University. His fields of interest embrace diverse aspects of Indo-Iranian culture. He was an official for 17 years with the Ministry of Culture and Arts in Iran, and Director-General of the Iranian Anthropological Centre. Settled in the US since 1982, he co-founded the Zarathushtrian Assembly which he serves as Honorary Director for Religious Affairs. With several books and articles to his credit, he has participated in many national and international Conferences with Zoroastrian themes.



William MALANDRA : *Citations of the Gathas in the Denkard and their relation to the Pahlavi Yasna*

William Malandra is Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota, where he taught Sanskrit, Indology and Iranistics, including a regular course on Zoroastrianism for 30 years. His researches are mainly in the areas of Zoroastrian Literature in Avestan and Pahlavi. After retirement he devotes his time now between Washington, DC, and Durango, CO.

Dina McIntyre : *The Puzzle of the Singular and the Plural*

Dina McIntyre gained her Bachelor of Science degree from Carnegie Mellon University, and a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Thereafter she practiced Law in the US from 1964 and until

at the Colloquium on the Gathas of Zarathushtra

retirement, was a Member of the Bar of all Pennsylvania's Federal and State courts. In the 1980's she produced a 12-installment course "*An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*" which attained world-wide distribution. She has participated in many national and international Conferences on Zoroastrianism, and has submitted several articles on Zarathushtra's teachings in various journals and web-sites.



Martin SCHWARTZ : *The Theology of the Gathas – New Perspectives*

Martin Schwartz gained his PhD at University of California, Berkeley, in 1967. He is Professor there of Iranian Studies, Iranology, History and Literature of Ancient Iran, Old and Middle Iranian. Two chapters: *The Old Eastern Iranian World View according to the Avesta* and *The Religion of Achaemenian Iran* appeared in the *Cambridge History of Iran* (1985); his papers were published in various Festschriften including those for Mary Boyce, Humbach, Lazard, Morgenstierne, and the Memorial Volume for Jean de Menasce. With D S Flattery he co-authored *Haoma and Harmaline* in 1989. Several articles by him have been published in learned journals in the US and overseas.



Oktor SKJAERVØ : *Liturgical Functions of the Gathas*

After a degree from the University of Copenhagen, he taught linguistics and Iranian studies as Assistant Professor at Mainz. In 1981 he gained his PhD from Oslo University with his thesis on the Paikuli inscription, and a Doktor Habilitatus in Comparative Linguistics from Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz with his 1984 thesis on *The Khotanese Suvarnabhasottamasutra*. From 1985-1991 he was Assistant Editor for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. As Professor at Harvard he currently teaches Old Iranian Languages, Literature, and Religions. His interests extend to myth and ritual in Ancient Iran.



Elizabeth TUCKER: *How well did later Avestan composers understand the language of the Gathas?*

Elizabeth Tucker trained in Indo-European Historical Linguistics at the University of Oxford, England, subsequently specializing in the earliest documented Indo-Iranian languages. She holds a Senior Research Fellowship in the Oxford Faculty of Oriental Studies, where she has taught Avestan and Old Persian as well as Vedic Sanskrit and Comparative Indo-Iranian Philology. Students who follow her 'Old Iranian' course read Achaemenian Old Persian inscriptions, Gathas, and some Younger Avestan Yashts or sections of the Videvdad, and study the most ancient period in the history of the Zoroastrian religion. Elizabeth's publications on historical linguistic topics have appeared in various international academic journals. She has written entries on Avestan, Old Persian, and Indo-Iranian for the Elsevier *Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*. She is currently preparing an edition with translation and commentary of Book 11 of the *Paippalada Atharvaveda*, and revising A. A. Macdonell's *Vedic Grammar for Students* for the Oxford University Press.



Farrokh VAJIFDAR : *Changed Perspectives; Channeled Perceptions*

Born into a traditionalist High-priestly clan, Farrokh Vajifdar has been a student since his late teens of Indo-Iranian cultures and civilizations, specializing in the Zoroastrian religion and its practices. A Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, he referees articles and reviews publications on Ancient Iran and the Parsis of India and elsewhere. Internationally consulted, he has authored articles pertaining to particular aspects of Religion and Philosophy for various journals, and occasionally broadcasts on radio and television. More recently, he has edited the Proceedings Volume of the WZO's First Gatha Colloquium, and the English part of the *Soroushian Memorial Volume*.



Gernot WINDFUHR : *Cosmic Cycles in the Gathas?*

Gernot Windfuhr studied at the Universities of Hamburg, where he received his PhD in Iranian Studies in 1965, as well as Cologne and Tehran. Since 1966, as Professor of Iranian Studies, he teaches at the University of Michigan with Chair from 1977–1987. His research fields include Iranian linguistics, dialectology, literature and Zoroastrian Studies. Awarded Fellowships from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, he held the presidency of the American Association of Teachers of Persian, and the Consultant Editorship for linguistics for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. His recent articles include his perspectives on the Zoroastrian *Yasna*.



Were the Achaemenians Zoroastrian?

How do we resolve this question? - A Zoroastrian Viewpoint

by kersey antia

Whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrian or not has been “a hotly debated issue,” observes Edwin M Yamauchi in *Persia and the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, 418-433) and concludes there is no unanimity on this question among scholars. Joseph Wieseh ffer also maintains that “hardly any subject has led to as many arguments among scholars as the religious beliefs of the Achaemenid rulers (and their Iranian subjects)” in his masterpiece, *Ancient Persia, From 550 BC to 650 AD* translated by Aziz Azodi, I B Tauris Publishers, London, 1996, pp. IX, X.

Pierre Briant complains: “*How in fact can we contrast the beliefs of Cyrus and Darius, when the former never ‘spoke’ and the latter left conflicting messages for his contemporaries and the generations to come?*” (Cyrus to Alexander, A History of the Persian Empire, Translated by Peter T Daniels, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 2002.)

While a detailed response to this question could require a much lengthier treatise, to be attempted later, a succinct attempt is made here to address this problem from the point-of-view of a life-long priest and student of Zoroastrianism who is also a practicing psychologist for over four decades, mostly in USA, and thus is also prone to interpret events and personalities psychologically. However, there are many hurdles to cross before resolving this riddle, not the least being defining Zoroastrianism itself. Even if, as Mary Boyce and her followers contend, Zoroastrianism has not lost its continuity from its archaic beginning it is still sure to show some proclivities, peculiarities and propensities of a particular period.

Most of the inscriptions of Darius sound like hymns, and to a Zoroastrian they are also in

essence a direct or indirect rendition of Zoroaster’s own Gathic precepts: “*Ahura Mazda, the great God, who created this earth, who created the sky, who created bliss for men.*” Compare Yasna 44. As the word Ahura Mazda is generally known to be of Zoroaster’s own coinage, who was then Darius worshipping but a distinctly Zoroastrian deity?

He begins his very first attempt for kingship with a prayer: “*I prayed to Ahura Mazda,*” which reminds one of the Avestan tradition of initiating each and every prayer with Khshnao tra Ahurahe Mazdao – May Ahura Mazda be pleased (by my prayer)! He obviously struggles hard to cast himself persistently in the role of a true Gathic adherent by aligning himself with the forces of Ahura Mazda and casting himself against those of the drauga - liars. Compare Yasna 45.11 with “*Ahura Mazda was a friend to me.*” Again compare Yasna 46.6 and 47.4 with Darius maintaining at Nakshe Rustom: “*I am a friend to right, I am not a friend to wrong.*”

Darius calls Ahura Mazda “*the greatest of (the) Gods,*” which is often interpreted as a henotheistic rather than a monotheistic belief. However, it is difficult to interpret it as recognizing the existence of deities equal to Ahura Mazda in status or even worthy of any adoration even though he does not mention their names or their origin. He simply seems to be trying to depict his own deity as definitely the greatest and mightiest among other deities prevailing at the time. Since Darius often prides himself as being an Aryan and even laments that Elamites and Scythians (Eastern Iranians) did not worship Ahura Mazda, psychologically he seems to show, if not show off, his God as the greatest of the Gods of the time. As he repeatedly claims to derive all his powers from Ahura Mazda, who for his sake had to

be the most powerful deity so others could not dare invoke their own gods for equal or better help against his. Few monarchs in antiquity were so adept at self-promotion as Darius. The phrases like *“Ahura Mazda with all the gods”* (Persepolis, d) are viewed as problematic but they are quite consonant with the Gathic phrase Mazdaoscha Ahuraonghaho (Yasna 30.) – Mazda with other Ahuras (most probably Amesha Spentas). If not, they could be a reference to the Elamite gods worshipped right at Persepolis or to the Babylonian, Egyptian, or other gods of his time. The very fact that he regrets that the Scythians, an Iranian people, did not worship Ahura Mazda suggests he wanted them to adopt the reform of Zoroaster as he had. He wanted the Elamites to do so too, but for another reason – for avoiding possible revolts by them on religious grounds and securing religious unity of Iran.

While nobody is known to have had the name Darius before King Darius, it has a clearly Zoroastrian ring to it – meaning Dara, the good. Compare Yasna 31.7. Even Zoroastrianism was called the Good Religion, the fight between the good and evil being its hallmark. So the name Darius, Dara the good, seems to suggest a pure Zoroastrian mintage. Same could be said for the name of his father, Histaspes, though he possibly could not be the Vishtaspa of the Gathas.

What Darius claims to be in his inscriptions – *“I was not a liar, I was not a wrongdoer”* (Bahistun IV 63-4) shows him to be so Gathic in his statements. *“I am not hot tempered. What things arise in my anger, I hold firmly under control by my mind”* (Nakshe-Rustam, b, 11-15). Compare Yasna 44.20 and 48.12. No one in his day could possibly have come up with such a self-portrait without being keenly aware of the denunciation of Druja (the lie) and Aeshma (anger) and the development of Vohu Manah (Good Mind) and Spenta qualities propounded by Zoroaster in his Gathas, as none other than Zoroaster is known to have preached these doctrines before Darius’ times and they still remain

the core beliefs among his followers. Since Darius used the word Baga and not the Avestan word Yazata to denote God, some scholars regard it as evidence against Darius being Zoroastrian. However the Sasanian kings also used the word Baga to claim themselves as gods and Baga does occur in Avesta and the Vedas and may possibly be much older a word than Yazata.

As rightly observed by Martin Schwartz, *“Difference in vocabulary does not indicate difference in conceptualization or in our context, theology.”* (The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 2, Cambridge University Press, London 1985, 664-697.)

He points out that in divinities discovered at Persepolis, *“we have another difference of form, rather than concept, from the Avestan.”* Thus, Mazdushi, “the female angel” who bestows rewards seems to be the Avestan Ashi (Ashishwang to present day Zoroastrians). The fact that many Achaemenians bore names such as Rashnudata, Rashnika and Sausha indicate that the Achaemenians were quite aware of the Zoroastrian eschatology where in Rashnu and Sraosha play a prominent part. The most striking name found, however, is Mazdayasna – Mazda worshipper, since the word often used in Avesta to denote Zoroastrians is simply Mazdayasna. The same is also true of Sasanian inscriptions. If the word Sausha is interpreted as Saoshyant (The Messiah, The future Savior) mentioned in the Gathas, a word coined by Zoroaster himself and as such not current as a name or a concept before the time of Zoroaster, then it is evident that the Achaemenians had clearly adopted Zoroaster’s unique eschatology. This is further confirmed by the discovery of a seal inscribed with the name Zarathustris (See Pierre Briant, 2002, p.250). This seal carries the most visible and apparent symbols of Zoroastrianism – a fire altar that resembles the prototype of the fire-altars in use among present day Zoroastrians, and perhaps throughout the ages, flanked by two attendants, one with Barsom in his right hand and more elegantly dressed with a longer robe than the other - perhaps a

Zaotra or Xerxes or a prince holding a long stick like Barsom and the other on the right holding a libation spoon in both hands – a Rathwi (?) with the emblem of royal Farnah, or Ahura Mazda hovering over them. However, as both of the attendants do not wear Padaan (face mask) even when standing so close to the fire, they could be princes, and not priests. Or the attendant on the right was Atravaksha priest mentioned in the Persepolis tablets and Briant notes that *“in each place where Atravaksha is mentioned, there was a fire sanctuary”* and although so far *“we have no archaeological evidence from the Achaemenid period (about fire sanctuaries), but the importance of Fire sanctuaries in the Hellenistic period undoubtedly exhibits continuity with the Achaemenian period (p. 249).”*

Briant depicts a Hellenistic Persian coin showing a fire-temple which could be the arche-type of the modern day fire temples, suggesting some continuity through the ages. Briant also reports that Strabo (XV 3.15) found *“the places where the fire burns”* (Pyraethia) and *“where the Magi keep the fire ever burning,”* (p. 246) Asia Minor, which is not an Indo-Aryan tradition but clearly a unique Zoroastrian tradition, carried out to this day.

It is surprising that even though Achaemenians so apparently identify themselves with the Reform of Zoroaster and his monotheistic deity, Ahura Mazda, they do not even once mention Zoroaster. But then, nor do the Sasanian Kings. Perhaps the Achaemenians, being more ancient, followed the ancient Indo-Iranian tradition of not mentioning the names of the authors of various Avestan hymns – which had led some scholars to doubt if Zoroaster is the composer of the Gathas. A plausible psychological explanation could be that Darius emphasizes his status as a secular Ratu, the representative of Ahura Mazda on the earth, - a role that the most important Zoroastrian prayer of Ahunavar, as also the later Avesta, consistently assigns only to the prophet or his successor a role Darius contrived to appropriate to himself. So for political expediency and probably also for

theological coherence he had to avoid mentioning Zoroaster, while loudly proclaiming such adherence to Zoroaster's faith as would leave nobody in doubt about his faith. It should be noted that Xanthus of Lydia (500-450 BC) does not mention Zoroaster, even though he wrote a few years before Herodotus.

The famous Daiva inscription of Xerxes may strengthen the view that he was drawn by the Gathic injunction against Daevas, as prior to Zoroaster no such injunction ever existed or had even reasons to exist among the Indo-Aryans. The interpretation of Daivodana is rather difficult but the Zoroastrian kusti prayers may point to the houses of sorcery, witchcraft, heretics and the like. The Daivas he refers to seem to be either Iranian or of alien origin which was getting too prevalent or even popular in Persia, as he would have little familiarity with or pressing need to go after the Daivas in other regions, especially when he is known to have worshipped foreign deities for political or opportunistic reasons. Such an assumption is supported by the fact that he refers to two different places in this inscription.

Xerxes successor, Artaxerxes I, also confirms *“a great God is Ahura Mazda”* in the only inscription he has left us. Darius II (424-405) left us only two short inscriptions, one saying *“May Ahura Mazda together with the gods protect”* and the other saying *“by the will of Ahura Mazda.”* His successor Artaxerxes II (405-359) asserts *“By the will of Ahura Mazda the kingdom was bestowed on me. May Ahura Mazda protect me (Hamadan, c).”* But at Susa A, he includes Anahita and Mithra along with Ahura Mazda in such affirmations. In the Hamadan B. inscription, he names Mithra alone as his protector. In the only inscription we have of Artaxerxes III (359-338), both Ahura Mazda and Mithra are depicted as the protectors of the king.

The inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (405-359) have often led scholars to assume that the old pantheon rejected by Zoroaster crept back in Zoroastrianism, albeit after being

sanitized and Zoroastrianized. But to ascribe this development to him just because it is mentioned in his inscriptions raises many questions - do they represent the king's belief or an ultimate recognition by the King of what his people had believed over the years, as a king can hardly impose his own beliefs on his people and a sudden development of worshipping heretofore forbidden gods is so unlikely and psychologically so implausible to say the least. Anahita and Mithra were worshipped before the times of Artaxerxes and there were many Persians bearing the name of Mithra in Xerxes force, per Briant. For further understanding Artaxerxes' political motives in promoting the cult of Anahita, see K H Antia's treatise, *Zoroastrian Elements in the Syncretism that Prevailed in Asia Minor Following Conquests*, Journal of the K R Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1995 p.59-65.

For an excellent essay on the Old Iranian calendar, see Willy Hartner, Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 1985, pages 714-792. He believes *"the change from day numbers to day divinities belonging to the Magian tradition, perhaps 'was facilitated by Artaxerxes II's permissiveness."*

However, it is difficult for a Zoroastrian to agree with him, (though there is little reason to disagree with him on anything else), when he observes. *"It seems out of question that those day names could ever replace in popular usage the original day numbers; even in our days one would not expect common man to memorize a sequence of 30 deities for use in ordinary life. This practice was evidently limited to the clergy and to learned circles (p. 775-776)."*

As a matter of fact, quite the contrary is true: up to the present times, every practicing Zoroastrian, even in urban areas, knew the names of the 30 deities by heart just as they memorize their prayers in an unknown language. However, none knew them by their number. Even the illiterate Zoroastrians in small villages always readily knew the name of the day (roz) and month

(mah) but nobody tried to tell them by their numbers. It shows how Achaemenians even the present day Zoroastrians are in their observances.

Most of the essential features of Zoroastrianism practiced by present day Zoroastrians such as the quintessential Yasna ritual, the Zoroastrian calendar and the time for prayers for the five gahs, the essential design of a fire altar, the belief in "Ahura Mazda with all the gods," the exposure of the corpse, killing of noxious creatures, and the veneration of good elements of nature and injunction against their pollution, cosmic dualism, unfailingly memorizing the divinity names of each day of the month, covering the head and feet, all the time the Magis in white robes etc., etc. seem to have their origin in Achaemenian times. Therefore, they were apparently as Zoroastrian as the Zoroastrians of today.

As observed at the outset, it is as yet hard to define the exact nature of their Zoroastrianism for want of solid data. Hence, this effort at resolving this issue by taking a composite picture, avoiding a piecemeal approach and reviewing it from angles not studied so far, particularly from a Zoroastrian angle.



[Presented by Dr Antia at the V Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europea at Ravenna, Italy on October 6-11, 2003. Thereafter it was published by the society in their report of this conference.

Moreover, Dr Antia has expanded this paper into a booklet and will be glad to hear from those who would care to publish it. Email: dilshadantia@yahoo.com]



Dastur Dr Kersey Antia is a clinical psychologist in full-time private practice in Chicago for many years. He is affiliated with many private hospitals in his area, published numerous research articles in his field and is listed in many Who's Who publications. He has received international honours and recognition and is the high priest for the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, which he has served over 30 years. Kersey is happily married to Dilshad for the last 42 years, and has three children, Anahita, Ervad Mazda, and Ervad Jimmy.

The Northern-most Zoroastrian Fire Temple in the World

Source: Sasanika, The History and Culture of Sasanians, UC Irvine School of Humanities

The Caucasus is a land of diverse population and beliefs. Today, Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Yazidis live in cities and villages in the valleys and gorges of the region. One religion that had a strong impact on ancient Armenia, Georgia, and the Republic of Azerbaijan was Zoroastrianism. While the sources and views of Zoroastrianism are mainly from its homeland, Iran, Zoroastrianism also flourished in the Caucasus in conjunction with the local, native religions of the region.

Kartveli or Georgia was converted to Christianity in the fourth century AD. The traditional date given for this event in the history of Georgia is 337 AD. According to Christian sources, King Mirian (Mihran) converted from “paganism,” but a closer look at the sources suggests that the king and the people of ancient Georgia were worshippers of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda). Legend has it that at night the shepherds in the region used to call on Armazi (Ahura Mazda) for help, and that people used to offer sacrifices to their god Armazi at a location near the “Bridge of the Magi.”¹

At about the same time, the capital of Georgia was moved from Mtskheta to some 10 km further south to Tblisi by the national hero Vakhtang Gorgasali, who fought against the Sasanians. Subsequently, the Sasanians were able to retake the region and Vakhtang was murdered in 502 AD.² The remains of the northernmost Zoroastrian fire temple are located in Tblisi.

In July 2008, the Sasanika team of K Abdi, H Emrani and T Daryae along with A Gramian, L Kian and S Jilanchi visited Georgia to photograph and study the northernmost Zoroastrian fire temple which is known as the taagh “fire place” or “fire temple.” The location of the taagh was somewhat difficult to find and the locals in Tblisi did not have any knowledge about the building. The taagh was finally located below Kartlis Deda or “Mother Georgia”

close to Kldisubnis which may have been established in place of the fire temple. That is, the fire temple was not destroyed but rather a church was built next to it at a time when both Zoroastrianism and Christianity existed side by side. The taagh is walled off and can only be accessed through a hole. The Sasanika team was given permission to enter the house and from there to see the remains of the taagh. ■■■■

Reference

1. “St Nino and the Conversion of Georgia,” *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, translated by D M Lang, London and New York, 1956, pp. 22-23.
2. V. Silogava ... K. Shengelia, *History of Georgia*, Tblisi, 2007, p. 50.



Facade of the atasgah



Floor of the atasgah



Dr Abdi & T Daryae at the atasgah

Recitation of Avesta after centuries at Shahr Rey Agiyari

Behrooz Khalili informed -

After centuries Avesta was once again voiced in the Shahr Rey Agiyari. On a Friday afternoon (27th Feb 2009) we started our trip towards Shahr Rey (a city near Tehran) alongwith Mobed Hangami and some friends in our small Renault car. To our surprise the streets were crowded regarding the fact that Friday being a holiday the streets should have been less crowded, but we continued with our trip till we reached Shar Rey. Our aim was to reach the Agiyari but there were no road signs indicating this site. Changing our path many times and questioning passerbys (most of whom weren't even familiar with its name), we were able to reach the place where the Agiyari had been situated.

From the distance the greatness and magnificence of the Agiyari which was related to the Sasanian dynasty, stunned us and we couldn't wait to begin taking photos and videos till we reached the wooden bridge through which we had to pass to reach the hill where the Agiyari had been situated. Fortunately we were not the only visitors present, some Russian students had also come with a tour guide who only knew that an Agiyari is the holy place for prayers. Since the area of the agiyari and its surroundings were being used for excavation and repair purposes, visitors only with prior permission were allowed, but we were more importunate. Though the building was covered with protective equipment since the repair and excavation work was being undertaken, the two magnificent ceilings of the agiyari could be seen displaying its greatness and dignity. We wondered if in this present state it was so enthralling, what a magnificent structure it would have been during its best years. The jashan ceremony was performed by Mobed Hangami with the heartwarming recitation of the Avesta and prayers for the well being and health for all. At that moment everyone, even the guards and the people who were present were effected by the mystic effects of the recitation. Lork (dryfruits), special bread, fruits, were served to all present and finally after completing the ceremony we left, but with a feeling something of our own self was left behind. Thankfully, the great culture of our ancestors had been kept alive. ■■■■



Mobed Hangami performing the jashan ceremony



Bridge to Agiyari

Photographs by Bahram Yazdani

Darius Hystaspes: First Mazdaean Emperor

by farrokh vajifdar

Final part of The Trilogy

“Let lies be told where they are needful!”

Thus, according to Herodotus, reasoned Darius with his co-conspirators when plotting the overthrow of the impostor-priest who had usurped the Imperial Persian throne under the name of the murdered Smerdis / Bardiya, younger brother of Cambyses II.

But what was the truth behind the accession of Darius to the kingship? Two versions have come down to us: firstly, led by Herodotus the Greek who wrote under Xerxes I (486–465) from details supplied by Persian informants – with much embellishment; secondly from Darius himself, again with undoubted ornamentation.

Cambyses II had died childless. The rightful succession should have gone to the younger brother Smerdis/Bardiya, but the latter was murdered, says Herodotus, by Prexaspes on Cambyses’ orders. Whilst the Great King was still in Egypt, news reached him that Smerdis still lived and had seized and occupied the Persian throne. An enraged Cambyses set out hot-foot for Persia; he died on the way somewhere in Syria, but not before making a clean breast of his fratricide before some trusted followers. In his dying speech he counselled, *“I pray that the earth may be fruitful for you, your wives bear you children, your flocks multiply and freedom be yours for ever; but if you fail to recover, or make no attempt to recover, the sovereign power, then my curse be upon you – may your fate be just the opposite, and, in addition to that, may every Persian perish as miserably as I”*. In reporting this, Herodotus may have had before him a copy of a testament (see below) by the last of our first three Achaemenid Great Kings.

As Cambyses’ third cousin, Darius, son of Hystaspes/Vishtaspa (not to be confused with Zarathushtra’s famed patron), pressed his claim to the succession. But just who was the man claiming to be Smerdis? The story which unfolded in Herodotus’ Book III, narrated with

great gusto and with much garnishment, would easily cap every plot dreamed up by Hollywood thriller-writers for its swashbuckler epics. Let us unbuckle some swash.

The miscreant who darkened the dynastic throne was one Gaumata, a Magian, who bore a striking resemblance to the murdered Smerdis. The real Smerdis – alas now deceased! – had married one Phaidyme, of Achaemenid clan descent. Taking over the royal harem, the impostor apparently kept himself within the palace citadel at all times and refused audience to all but his closest associates. He had a brother, likewise a Magus, once entrusted by Cambyses, who managed the secrecy of the whole affair. Suspicion was first aroused in Phaidyme’s father Otanes, for even his daughter seldom saw the pretender, always believing him to be her true husband, the real Smerdis.

Otanes knew that Cyrus the Great had had Gaumata the Magian punished for some serious offence by having his ears cut off! The father now prevailed upon the daughter who saw her shadowy husband only in the marital bed (and in the dark!) to feel for his ears – if missing, the man was indeed not Smerdis but his look-alike Magian pretender. And indeed the fellow had no ears, of which absence Phaidyme lost no time in informing her outraged father Otanes as well as Cyrus II’s younger daughter Atossa/Hutaosa who had also been a virtual prisoner in the Magus’ palace.

Otanes set about confiding the matter to five trusted fellow-nobles of whom some had already formed their suspicions concerning the Magus. Together with Darius, son of Hystaspes, the Seven conspired to oust the sinister Gaumata. The passionate Darius urged action before the plan could be betrayed, for, he declared, *“There are many*

occasions when words are useless, and only deeds will make a man's meaning plain!"

In the meanwhile the assassin Prexaspes was taken into the confidence of the two trickster Magians, and promised vast wealth if he continued to keep the real matter concealed. Prexaspes, well respected by the Persian nobility, and having denied that he had anything to do with the murder of Cambyses' brother, was to declare that it was indeed the real Smerdis who occupied the citadel and ruled the land. This lie was to be broadcast from atop the citadel tower before the representatives of the Persian people.

Prexaspes, however, went against the Magian plan and instead delivered a eulogy of Cyrus and his great deeds, and then spilled the beans on the circumstances of the real Smerdis' murder. So declaring, he invoked a terrible curse on the Persians if they failed to win back the throne and take vengeance on the Magians, and threw himself from the tower, ending an honourable career made ignoble by his infamous act.

Much reassured by an omen of the sighting of seven pairs of hawks chasing and fiercely attacking two pairs of vultures – for so the Persian conspirators regarded these Median Magians! – the Seven nobles talked their way past the palace guards and through its citadel checkpoints, forced their entry into the presence of the two Magian brothers whom they engaged in close and bitter combat. As Herodotean history was to record, the Seven suffered minor casualties; the fatalities accrued to the priestly beastlies. The episode concludes: *"The anniversary of this day has become a red-letter day in the Persian calendar, marked by an important festival known as the Magophonia, or Killing of the Magi, during which no Magus is allowed to show himself – every member of the caste stays indoors till the day is over"!*

Five days later, three of the liberators met to debate the best form of government: Otanes spoke for democracy; Megabyzus recommended an oligarchy; but Darius, who won the day, urged the case for monarchy. Thereupon arose the difficulty of choosing a suitable monarch from amongst the Seven. The episode of Darius' clever groom, and the

stratagem whereby his horse was made the first to neigh at sun-up; the lightning and thunder from a clear sky confirmed Darius as the rightful King of kings of all Iran and its dependencies. Thus came Herodotus' Darius Hystaspes to the Imperial Throne!

High up on a cliff-face of the Behistun mountain between Kirmanshah and Hamadan may be sighted a large relief carving surrounded with carefully incised cuneiform inscriptions in three main languages of the realm – Old Persian, Akkadian/Babylonian, and Elamite. They represent a pictorial and scriptural record of the Great King Darius (522–486), the first of that name, who put together a mighty empire by conquest and made it a super-power of the times.

The figural depiction shows the standing Great King, holding his short bow in his left hand, his right hand raised in adoration of the winged figure floating above the scene of nine rebel prisoners, the first of whom lies prostrate beneath the king's left foot, arms raised in supplication. Eight others are standing before him roped together by their necks, the last being a figure in a pointed cap. Their names are given in little carved labels conveniently placed. Behind the king stand his personal bow-bearer and his spearman. Only the Great King is shown life-size.



Darius' pictorial relief is neither unique in concept nor Persian in origin. Herodotus' statement about Persians: "*No race is so ready to adopt foreign ways as the Persian*" should be borne in mind; to that could have been added "adapted". In the Behistun case, the depiction of the winged figure floating above the tableau – which some have asserted is a figuration of Ahura Mazda, and others as the Great King's *fravashi* or guardian spirit, is evidentially based on the composite of the investiture scene of the Lullubi king Anubanini (c 18th century BC).

This earlier rock relief from Sar-i Pul (west of Kirmanshah, in Iranian Kurdistan) indicates several features in common, yet with some symbolic differences: its king grasps his battle-axe by the right hand; the left holds a sceptre or wand of authority and the bow; the raised left leg crushes underfoot a naked rebel leader; the goddess Innana/Ishtar, represented also by her symbol of an eight-pointed star within an orb, extends the ring of victorious sovereignty towards the king with her right hand, whilst her left leads two naked captives fastened by a rope passed through nose-rings – they are shown kneeling in submission. On the lower register of this relief are shown six naked captives, hands tied behind their backs, being (?) marched perhaps towards a humiliating audience before the king. Alongside the latter are inscriptions in Akkadian.

The similarities between the Behistun and Sar-i Pul reliefs are undeniable, yet there are telling differences: Anubanini is clad only from the waist down; Darius, with crown, is fully clothed. Both Lullubi hands are occupied in holding weaponry – its king awaits delivery of the two kneeling rebels and does not extend his arm in reverence or to accept the proffered ring; Darius is plainly shown in an act of reverence towards the winged figure. Anubanini has no arms bearers; Darius has both bowman and spearman behind him. The Lullubi captives are all shown naked with rings pierced through their noses; the Behistun tableau shows a hovering supernatural winged figure as an object of reverence by Darius – it is not his investiture moment. The Darius captives, fully clad, are roped together

around their necks, standing abjectly to await the king's decision on their fate. Each set of captives totals nine. It is clear that we have to look further than superficial similarities. Both sets of captives were destined for slow, horrible deaths.

Darius presents his genealogy and his legitimacy as rightful ruler. He is from a collateral branch of the Achaemenid ruling clan. His distinctly monotheistic belief in Ahuramazda (with joined-up name!) is presented throughout the four Old Persian columns where he details his victories over rebels during his first year and his treatment of them. He lists 23 "provinces" or satrapies where trusted governors ruled with accountability only to the Great King. Bad rule caused rebellions and insurrections which were put down with the greatest severity. Smerdis/Bardiya, says Darius, was killed on the orders of Cambyses.

Gaumata the Magian from Media is extensively treated – Darius it was who slew the usurper. He lists other rebels and his victories over them, dated according to the Old Persian calendar where months were named and days were merely numbered. All his successes over the various rebels who rose up against him were gained by favour of Ahuramazda. No other gods are mentioned specifically, and when he refers to "the other gods", to this writer he clearly hints at the Amesha Spentas whom he understood as subservient aspects of his one true god Ahuramazda. History shows that whilst he tolerates "other gods of other lands", he does not accord them acceptance within his personal belief system. Was he then a Zoroastrian Mazda-worshipper? The absence of the name of the great reformer should not cause surprise – Darius plainly wished to owe his successes to a single divine agency and not to human intervention or intercession by a prophet or teacher, least of all by Magian priests!

It should suffice that Darius was Mazdayasnian – he worships only Ahuramazda whose ethical precepts he takes up and practices. His own moral qualities by which he rules as Great King and supreme

earthly arbiter are much vaunted on his Behistun autobiography. “According to righteousness I conducted myself” – “For this reason Ahuramazda bore me aid, and the other gods who are [clearly the Amesha Spentas!] because I was not hostile, I was not a Lie-follower ... I was not a doer of wrong – neither I nor my family. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong ...”

We recalled the wise injunctions of the dying Cambyses given in Herodotus – here now is Darius: “If this record thou shalt not conceal (but) tell it to the people, may Ahuramazda be a friend unto thee, and may family be unto thee in abundance, and may thou live long!” Then follows: “If this record thou shalt conceal, (and) not tell it to the people, may Ahuramazda be a smiter unto thee, and may family not be to thee!”

The Great King's blessing continues: “... May Ahuramazda be a friend unto thee, and may family be unto thee in abundance, and may thou live long, and what thou shalt do, that may Ahuramazda make successful for thee!”

Darius came to the Achaemenid throne with the help of his fellow-conspirators against the usurper Gaumata. On his great Behistun inscription he names them, with their patronymics, and then urges, for all the foreseeable future: “Thou who shalt be king hereafter, protect well the family of these men!”

It remains for us to recall Darius' moral character as inscribed on the facade of his rock-cut tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam: “... I am a friend to Right, I am not a friend to Wrong. It is not my desire that the weak man should have wrong done to him by the mighty; nor is it that my desire, that the mighty man should have wrong done to him by the weak!”

The building activities of Darius can receive only the briefest mention here. He completed the palace at Susa, his winter quarters for his family and court, commenced by Cambyses II. He himself was the initiator of the throne room and audience hall at the Persepolis/Parsa complex constructed on its massive terrace. His completion in Egypt of the Nile to the Red Sea canal to facilitate trade is too well recognized. The Naqsh-e Rostam rock-tomb with its politico-ethical inscriptions have

for long inspired historians, theologians, and archaeologists alike.

Foreign advisers, influences, and labour are known and recognized. Greek mercenaries served in the armies of the first three Achaemenids. Cyrus II had the beneficial advice of the vanquished Croesus of Lydia; Cambyses II was guided by the Egyptian preceptor Udjahorresne, as was Darius the Great who took him to Persia where he stayed as his personal physician for some years. The Greek physician Ctesias similarly attended Artaxerxes in the late 5th century. Ctesias claimed he was allowed access to the Royal Archives from which he obtained the material for his book *Persika* (“Persian Affairs”).

We came in “with the lie”; we conclude also “with the lie”. Herodotus, that famed storyteller, treated his sources on Persian affairs as reliable. Among them was Zopyrus the great-grandson of Darius who fled to Greece as political refugee in 440, and from whom the historian obtained much information about Persia and the Achaemenian court. But in the long course of collection and recording of factual material, less attention has been paid to the Greek's attitudes and approaches. Little wonder then that Herodotus soon acquired enemies, among them being Ctesias who constantly contradicted the older man, often calling him a *liar and gossip-monger*. Ctesias' accounts of Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, and Xerxes (I) are often completely different from those of Herodotus ...

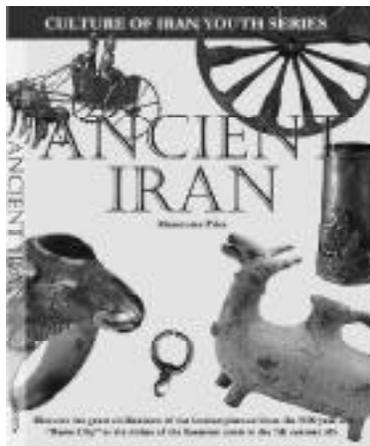
Reader beware!



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.



Life in Ancient Iran



On Sunday 26 April, Massoume Price shared a PowerPoint presentation accompanied by her commentary to an audience at Vancouver. Her new book 'Ancient Iran' has recently won an award for best multicultural non-fiction from the Moonbeam's Children's Book Awards. It is also a feature book at the British Museum's current exhibition "Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran".

Bella Tata on behalf of Hamazor took these notes during Ms Price's presentation.

Massoume was motivated to research on Iranian culture, to help the younger generation learn about their origins when her daughter who was born in Canada, grew up. She wanted her daughter to

know about her roots which motivated her to begin her research. She has launched on writing a series of ten books, and has completed the first one on "Ancient Iran". To obtain photographs of objects in the museums was in itself a formidable task, which took one and half years just to receive permission. Treasures from excavated sites are worth seeing. Her first book ends with the Arab invasion of Persia in the 7th - 8th Century AD.

Many interesting facts came out from her presentation. Haji Firruz has the oldest evidence of wine (6000 - 5000 BC). Susa is another major area founded in 4200 BC. From the excavations, many vessels of clay and marble were found - some of the jars were a meter long as cereals and grains were stored in them. Society was agricultural, and belief in the supernatural was a consistent part of Persian culture. They believed in divine intervention and paid attention to signs which pointed to either good or bad things occurring for that person. The Pro-Elamite period was from 3100 - 2900 BC. Ornaments and jewellery were buried in the tombs of high ranking males and females.

We wonder about the morality of our times, but in those ancient times, people were relaxed in terms of sexuality and morality. Life span was generally 30 years, so they made the best of the time they had. Board games were popular, and one game seems to have appeared in many forms in many places - the game of 58 holes.

Elam was the first local power, and Elamite cosmology included many gods and goddesses.

Goddesses and priestesses played a major role in this cosmology, and beautiful cups and figurines were found in the temple. Animals were sacrificed but it is not known whether babies were sacrificed. Ritualized sex was performed often in the temples as a tribute to fertility goddesses and to secure procreation.

Societies were class based, and within the royalty, the mother of the king was the most important person - more so than the queen. Kings and queens represented gods and goddesses. Musicians and entertainers were an integral part of their lives, and excavations found showed completely nude men and women in the temples. The Medes were the first Persian rulers of Mesopotamia, and a group of Median priests were known as magi. The Medes defeated the Assyrian rules of Mesopotamia in 612 BC, and formed the first Persian kingdom. Most people made their own wool, and clothing was made of animal skins, wool, cotton, flax and silk. Cotton is only documented as being in the region from 2500 BC, whereas silk came from China. Ancient Iranians dined on roasted meat, birds, fish, stuffed fruits and vegetables, and proof of this was found in Persepolis. The chief crop was barley and most breads were made from this. Ancient Iranians loved accessories - everything had symbolic significance. Breast shields of gold with divine figures were used as protection.

The Medes were the first Persian rulers of Mesopotamia, and a group of Median priests were known as magi. The Medes defeated the Assyrian rulers of Mesopotamia in 612 BC and formed the first Persian kingdom.

Now, we go to Persepolis and those times of Cyrus the Great. The clay cylinder of Cyrus the Great came into being during the Achaemenian Empire (559 - 530 BC). Cyrus made Pasargade his capital

where his tomb is located. It was the first capital city of the Persian Empire. Royal administrators conveyed their commands in Old Persian, and trained scribes translated these into Babylonian and Elamite. Now, the Khavarnah (a winged creature) known by modern Persians as the Faravahar, represents the metaphysical power that protects kings and justifies their rule on earth. Persepolis was built by Darius in 518 BC and burnt by Alexander.

Etiquette played a major role in court ceremonies. Darius the Great (522 - 486 BC) and his son, Xerxes, made the Persian army legendary. Only kings could have long beards, and when one sees a picture of men, the only one with the long beard is the king. The army was smart and the Persian cavalry used projectiles to go over the walls of the enemies. Zoroastrianism was followed, and dogs played an important role in their lives. Zoroastrian kings continued to rule. The Partians were master archers and ruled from 274 BC - 224 AD. The rich lived well. Ardeshir (224 - 241 AD) continued the Sasanian Empire, and tried to integrate religion into one another. The Sasanians and Romans fought one another for 400 years, after which the Arabs came and took over Persia in the 7th - 8th century AD.



Massoume Price, an active member of both the Iranian and Canadian communities, has been living in Canada since 1981. She is a social anthropologist born in Iran and was educated in Iran and United Kingdom at London University, Kings and University Colleges. Since 1995, she has devoted all her time researching Iranian culture and her many articles published in Iran and America have attracted a large audience.

Price has written extensively on many aspects of Iranian culture, such as, codes of behavior, male/female and parent/children relationships. Her web site, www.cultureofiran.com, is used extensively as an on-line reference source. The site provides credible information on history, symbolism, evolution and present practices of major Iranian rites, ceremonies festivals and codes of behavior etc. The site has become a focal point for both researchers and general public with respect to Iranian culture.

She has been extensively involved in organizing lectures, concerts, exhibitions and facilitating exchange and interaction between the Iranians and the Canadian community at large. She was also a commissioner on the Board of Vancouver Museum."

یک پرسش از طراح هان این نیایش کده دارم: آیا تا کنون هیچ جای جهان دیده شده است که مسجد، کلیسیا، کنیسا و یا معبد بدون هیچ گونه سنت تاریخی و مانند خرطوم فیل ساخته شده باشد؟
از دید من و زرتشتیان دلسوز که بیرون از ایران زندگی می کنند بایستی با دید بهتر کار را از نو آغاز کنند بر پا کردن چنین ساختمانی دور نمودن زرتشتیان از سنت های باستانی خود می باشد.
کجا رفت آن دانش و دین ما که شد مهر میهن فراموش ما

سپاس گزار پروین فرین



Parvin Farin was born in Iran and decided to come to England for the education of her two young children. In her spare time, which was very little, she wrote two novels and eventually a history book on ancient Iran. She is very interested in subjects dealing with ancient Iran and present problems of Zoroastrians.



Documentary film "IRAN, The Forgotten Glory"

Coinciding with the arrival of the Persian New year, the much anticipated historical documentary film "IRAN the forgotten glory" directed by Makan

Karandish and produced by Mystic Films Intl. was released in Los Angeles, California, in two DVD's in the languages of Persian, English, and Spanish. According to Makan Karandish, director of the film "This film has been in production for more than five years and was shot in over 60 locations throughout the province of FARS. It is an attempt to re-capture the glory of the

ancient Persian empires and their influence of world history, art, and culture". The film's total running time is 95 minutes and was originally premiered in October 2008 at the Bogota Film Festival. For more information visit www.farsmovie.com



ماهنامه فروهر در همان شماره می‌نویسد: معیارهای داوری مسابقه طراحی آدریان نیز این گونه مشخص شد: رعایت دقیق برنامه فیزیکی ۴۴۴

تجلی فرهنگ دینی زرتشتی در طرح ۴۴۴

انطباق باضوابط و مقررات شهری و ضوابط خاص پروژه ۴۴۴

ای‌کاش نویسنده نوشته های بالا را کمی شرح می‌داد تا خودش به نادرستی آنها پی ببرد. شمار بسیاری غیر زرتشتیان و بیگانه گان در این مسابقه شرکت کرده‌اند البته این کار بسیار خوبی بود اما می‌بایستی دست‌کم از ساختمان های نیایشگاه زرتشتیان در ایران، در هندوستان و همچنین در امریکا و آشنایی داشته باشند. این کار کارهوس بازی نیست. این نمودار ارزش فرهنگ زرتشتیان ایران است.

ماه نامه در همین شماره می‌افزاید:زمینی که بیش از نیمی از آن را فضای سبز (باغ) در بر گرفته است به طور اهم سه عامل و پارامتر اصلی را ایجاد می‌کند.

۱- اثر نه تنها کمترین تاثیر تخریبی در بافت مسکونی و فضای سبز (باغ) زمین را داشته باشد بلکه باعث ارتقا و حضور فعال تر آن در محیط شود.

۲- در نظر گرفتن پس زمینه قوی و تاریخی ۳۰۰۰ ساله باسبک و نشانه های معماری ویژه

ای‌کاش بازهم نویسنده کمی می‌اندیشید و روی گفته های بالا اندکی موشکافی می‌کرد. ساختمان پیشنهاد شده کنونی نمودار یک ساختمان مدرن است که در اروپا و امریکا بصورت آزمایشی ساخته می‌شود و هیچ گونه سابقه تاریخی سه هزار ساله ندارد و این گونه ساختمانها هوس بازی ارشیک هستند و خوش بختانه نمونه آنها بسیار کم است، زمانی می‌خواستند در جلو موزه لوور در پاریس ساختمانی برای خرید و فروش بلیط بسازند. طراحی آن به مسابقه بین المللی گذاشته شد. برنده طرح یک چینی شد.

ساختمان از بیرون مانند پیرامید های مصریاستان است. این را می‌گویند سابقه چندین هزار ساله تاریخی. در پاریس ساختمان «جرج پم پیلوه» وجود دارد که جالب است اما نمی‌شود آن را جزو ساختمان های باستانی دانست.

دیگر این که حتا در نام پیشنهاد شده آدریان دو واژه عربی بکار گرفته شده است (مجموعه و اجتماعی) گویا از نوشتن واژه دین خود داری شده است. واژه آدریان از آذر و آگنی و انگلیسی آن «ایگنیشن» است و معنی آتشکده را می‌دهد. در هندوستان به نیایشگاه های درجه دوم که آتش در آن همیشه روشن نیست آگیری می‌گویند که از واژه آگنی سانسکریت گجراتی شده است. چرا نیایشگاه خود را پردیس فرهنگی، دینی و آیینی نمی‌نامید.

باستانی زرتشتی آدریان بزرگ در تهران

ماهنامه فروهر چاپ تهران شماره ۴۲۶ روی برگ بیرونی خود تصویر های کمپیوتری برنده ساختمان پیشنهاد شده آدریان بزرگ نزدیک ونک در تهران را چاپ کرده بود. این ماهنامه یا سابقه دیرین خود هنوز تاریخ زرتشتی را نمی پذیرد و یا از نوشتن آن شرم دارد. این درست برابر ساختمان پیشنهادی آدریان است گویا زرتشتیان از ساختن یک ساختمانی که نمودار ساختمان دیرینه ایران و زرتشتی باشد شرم دارند.

نمای بیرونی ساختمان پیشنهادی مانند آشیانه هواپیما است که در زیر سقف فلزی آن معمولا هواپیما را سرویس می کنند. یا شباهت دیگر که می شود به این ساختمان نسبت داد مانند خرطوم فیل است و باز هم از هواپیما گفتگو می کنیم در فرودگاه های نوساز، هواپیما بوسیله یک تونل موقت فلزی وصل می شود به سالونی که مسافرین وارد می شوند و به آن هم خرطوم فیل می گویند در آنجا نیازی نیست که مسافرین سوار اتوبوس شوند. شباهت سوم این ساختمان به یک قطار راه آهن است که سرو ته آن معلوم نیست از کجا آمده و به کجا میرود. شباهت های زیادی می شود یاد آوری کرد مانند تونلی که کشاورزان برای کشت سبزیهای بهاره از پلاستیک درست می کنند که از سرمازدگی فرآورده ها جلوگیری شود. بخش وردی آن مانند ساباتهای باستانی دخمه مردگان است.

داوران اصلی این ساختمان بی گمان زرتشتی نیستند و هیچ گونه آشنایی با دین زرتشتی نداشتند و کوشش براین شده است این ساختمان هیچ گونه همبستگی با سنت ساختمان های باستانی مانند تخت جمشید و تاق کسرا نداشته باشد.

ساختمان موزه ایران باستان (ملی) که در زمان رضاشاه ساخته شد نموداری از تاق کسرا در تیسپون است و ساختمان های بانک ملی و شهربانی سر ستون های تخت جمشیدی دارند.

داوران اصلی این ساختمان هر سه مسلمان هستند، و نام چند مهندس زرتشتی و غیر زرتشتی نیز دیده می شود. برخی از این جوانان با اینکه نام مهندس دارند اما مهندس برق و الکترونیک و کمپیوتر هستند. از همه خنده دارتر این که نوشته شده فلان مهندس در ساختمان نیایشگاه سررشته دارد. بایستی پرسید کدام نیایشگاه و در کدام کشور؟

اگر زرتشتیان نتوانند نیایشگاه خود را به شیوه باستانی برابر سنتهای گذشته بر پا کنند همبستگی خود را با نیاکان مانند هخامنشیان از دست می دهند به همان گونه که ساکت نشستیم و تا آرامگاه کورش بزرگ را به آب بستند که رشته همبستگی تاریخی از هم گسیخته شود.

“The Garden and the Fire”

An overview by Farrokh Vajifdar



“The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture” by Nerina Rustomji. Columbia University Press, New York, 2008. Pp. xxii. + 201 with 13 b&w illustrations. Hardback edition

For a Parsi authoress to engage so closely and effectively with purported Islamic major themes makes for a book event to be hugely celebrated. Nerina Rustomji is (at the time of publication) Assistant Professor of History at St John’s University in Queens, New York. Her profile had appeared in *Hamazor* 4/2007 with tantalizing mention of a forthcoming book dealing with wives and *houri*-s.

Well, here it is, in the sincere hope that this review of sorts will lead to its deeper study for a proper appreciation of its carefully researched and beautifully presented contents, bar one irritation – to be referred below. Readers are forewarned: this notice is a Zoroastrian overview for the obvious reasons that *Hamazor* is a Zoroastrian journal of the World Zoroastrian Organisation’s concept and design; because Islamic perspectives are not as unique as projected; because Islam has adapted and adopted very many antecedent Zoroastrian notions of *garo.demana* and *drujo.demana* and the later Pahlavi *wahisht-akhw* and *duzhakhw*.

These Zoroastrian *akhw*-s represent “mind”, “mental force”, and often “existence”, and are Middle Persian terms originally attaching to *wahisht*, “best”, and *dush* or *duzh*, “bad, evil”. Their implications are clear – they are *earthly* mental states conditional upon each individual’s behaviour and preferences during life, as befits an existentialism. Neither predeterminism nor predestination have any roles in Zoroastrianism. Over its long history, these originally abstract Avestic concepts acquired physicalities in an Afterworld of Heaven and Hell, the one eternal, the other of long duration. We still say *Behesht* and

Dozhak, both *menog*, “spiritual”, without, however, quite realizing their abstract beginnings.

Islam, in turn, inherited these notions and gave them its particular glosses: hence the real importance of Nerina Rustomji’s book to explain its especial ideas on the Afterlives in the Heaven and Hell of the Great Beyond. Their respective Arabic terms are *al-janna* (contrast the Hebrew *gehenna*) and *al/n-nar* (“fire” with its cognate *nur*, “light of the sun”). The fact that Fire is attached to Hell in Islamic belief should neither distress nor detain us here any more than the bitterest cold, blackest darkness, but limited duration, of the contrasting Zoroastrian hell – the first is, after all, the product of a desert people, the latter stems from the dread of the bitterly cold northern plagues for the Iranians.

With the exception of Israel, the lands of the Fertile Crescent are largely Islamic. The Garden and the Fire of the title are explained by the sub-heading “Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture” which is synthesized over seven chapters cradled between an Introduction – a very useful preamble! – and a sufficiently analytical Index. Nerina’s (if I may, † *l’amÉricain*) quite daunting range of reading – listed over twelve pages – which went into the making of her book, is very impressive. Indeed, relaxing, sobering, absorbing and hugely informative – are expressions that come easiest to mind when feasting on its contents. She has set out to explain Islamic perspectives and she has succeeded admirably well.

Thirteen carefully matched illustrations picture the themes of Chapter Seven’s ‘Legacy of Gardens’, but here this reviewer must register his disappointment with their reproduction: they are fuzzy, and they are monochrome. Were each picture to be worth the proverbial thousand words to tell its story, then only some five hundred could be read here. It would be nice to track down

the full-colour originals to enhance one's appreciation of Nerina's well-crafted prose. But enough on this!

The book is otherwise an unqualified success. The subject of Heaven and Hell in all cultures even today fascinates and frightens those of a certain temperament. Indeed it was people with peculiar mind-sets who thought up such other-worldly visions of bliss and bane, of morality and martyrdom. For our Zoroastrian readers we must stress the fundamental differences of standpoint between Mazdaism and Muhammadanism, between Aryan and Abrahamic beliefs on matters dealing with *post-mortem* destinations resulting from behavioural and credal attitudes.

Where we contemplate the beams of Truth in the sacred Flame, the Islamics see only its punitive aspects. Where we embrace life and abjure violence, Islam extols warriors dying for their faith and assures them its Heaven. Where Ahura rewards and Allah requites, their *post-mortem* fields of operation lie along different reaches. Informed students of comparative mythologies and religious beliefs will steer their own courses between various compatibilities and contrasts.

This reviewer was intrigued to note, for comparison, the inclusion of *Arda Wiraz* (here Wirag!). This text, whose original well predated Islam and previewed Alighieri Dante by even more centuries, had its foundation in Parthian times, and Wiraz was no priest. Sasanian elaborations led to this confusion. There is much in Wiraz's Grand Tour of the Hereafter that was taken up by Muhammad, and its reasons are not far to seek. Nerina rightly sees certain similarities of approach when detailing some hellish horrors – for instance, may misbehaved or non-compliant females be forewarned, for the majority of denizens there are women! And in their Islamic Hell they stay put without hope of reprieve.

The inequality of women in Islamic societies is underscored by their treatment in the Afterlife. Their low regard through their apparent lack of common sense was even seen to rob the wise of wisdom: blasphemy to the early Mazdaeans! They are made to suffer also for their

maltreatment and starvation of cats – Ahrimanic creatures for us, as are dogs in Islam! Whereas a dreary symmetry pervades the *Arda Wiraz Namagh* in the Hereafter inasmuch as the acceptance of women in the Mazdaean Heaven, we already begin to see the distinction and discrimination accorded to the fair sex. By the 13th and 14th centuries, the influence of Islam was clearly felt in the subservient role of Zoroastrian women in Islamic Iran, and indeed in Hindu India: gender equality was ruptured by the intrusion of alien structures.

In the *Namagh* too, the majority occupying hell are women, accused of terrible crimes during life, and accounting horribly for them *post-mortem*. But the similarities of Islamic texts with the Middle Persian concerning women should be especially remarked. Rustomji has quoted a *hadith*: "O womenfolk! ... I saw you in bulk amongst the dwellers of the Fire" – a shameful ontological standard "reinforced by the vision of the majority of hell being women". As in Zoroastrianism there is an Intermediate state in the Afterworld, so too in Islam where "Women occupied an intermediary place in the ethics of the afterworld, since they were allowed silk fabrics but also condemned to be the majority of the Fire". Indeed ethical norms were more stringently formulated in Islam – women "have more obstacles to overcome than men". Abandon hope, all ye you enter!

What could very likely apply more to Islamic women-folk in matters, for example, of dress fabric is the discouragement of silk. Mazdayasnanism (to avoid association with Mazdayasna) had long made its position clear: "*Silk may be good for the body; but cotton is decidedly better for the soul*". The silk-worm, *bombyx mori*, was categorized as Ahrimanic, but the magian classifiers were powerless to intervene in matters of fashion.

The position of *houris*, more particularly an Islamic *post-mortem* concept, is given an adequate exposure by Nerina: they are "the only females who interact in the public sphere". Clad in silk and brocade (!), they are musk-scented and gem adorned – we may compare with greater favour the ladies from our *Ashi Yasht*. There is wine in the Islamic Garden, for

it is served up in pearl goblets and silver cups by these delectable creatures for whom the worldly interdicts on such materials do not exist in Heaven. A transmutation in the Hereafter's Garden of execrated earthly material? Where Justice and Consistency?

Houri-s are well described by Nerina as the "teleological end(s) of the Garden". They have a quite different role in the Afterlife, being distinct from wives, *azwa*; being the highest ranking females in the Garden, they have servant girls. In a location beyond Time and Space, as all good Heavens and all awful Hells should be, "only the (doers of) righteous and ethical deeds will insure entry into the Garden" from which landscape families have been removed, and *houris* have become the main source of companionship" for the male occupants.

Where Mazdaism had taught of the *daena* as spiritual counterpart of the departed whom she greets in the Hereafter, either as beautiful maid or gabbling haridan, in Islam, which took over this concept as *din*, it all becomes terribly impersonal – hence seventy-two *houris* are required to fulfil the male's every requirement. The wives are honoured: that's all!

There are other background similarities too. Where Wiraz in Iran saw the dangers of the Mazdayasnian religion's dilution after Alexander, Muhammad in Arabia foresaw a diminution in worship of his new god Allah were overmuch Iranization to be allowed in. Hence he launched his tirade against Al-Nadr bin al-Harith (Sura 31.6-7) for his too enthusiastic retelling of the high deeds of the Persian kings and heroes. For his "frivolous" story-telling he was warned off by the Islamic prophet with a reminder of the life to come, and for whom "We have prepared a shameful punishment" – one generously extended also to unbelievers.

The real irony of this interdict lay in the Islamic vision of Heaven – having lifted away and reshaped entire sequences from Wiraz's *namagh*, the *Bundahishn*, the *Dina-i minu-i khirad*, and the young courtier Khwash-arzug whose tally figures in the Pahlavi *Khosro ud redag-e*. Issuing from the unrestrained luxuries of Khosro Parwez's times (590–628) with its *pairidaeza-s*, "paradises" or royal hunting parks, such accounts seemed fresh, immediate, and

very real to the austere neighbouring Arabs with their newly minted religion, yet seen as dangerous to its founder's propaganda.

The advent of the Muslim conquest of Iran had been accompanied by great religio-cultural destructiveness that increased with the accession of the first Omayyad *khalifa* 'Umar (634–644). Patriotic and patristic literature within Iran was discouraged and then discarded, since it was put about that the Qur'an alone contained the full and pure fount of all knowledge. Nor were infidels and unbelievers spared the wrath of the Arabian prophet: Sura 9, *At-Taubah*, "Repentance", rails against those who store up wealth: "Proclaim a woeful punishment to those ... The day will surely come when their treasures shall be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads, sides and backs branded with them"!

In Nerina's book, her single-minded exposition of the Islamic *post-mortem* perspectives is faithfully maintained. Yet the feeling persists that her material seems strangely familiar: we have heard and seen these ideas expressed and set down some place else, and from some time conveniently forgotten. One cannot help wishing that these earlier and necessary Zoroastrian precursors to her exemplary monograph would as fluently flow from her pen. Just think! – a diptych by her, hinging not on variances but on verifiables: there is, after all, an identity of constitution of the fear-driven human mind when addressing identical issues.

And how better to exercise one's visionary and speculative thoughts on the Hereafter than through tendentious religious dogma! The impetus of Mazdayasnian thought never disappeared but subtly permeated several areas to influence the thinkers of Islam whose productions would have been the poorer for lack of it. Specific acknowledgements to any earlier period anywhere were always out of the question: was it not, after all, the period of *jahiliyya*?

There remains no doubt in this reviewer's mind that after encountering Nerina Rustomji's quite wonderful tome, the exchanges will not be just "Have you read her book?" but "Have you studied her work?"



Zoroastrians in Serendib (Sri Lanka)

by jamsheed choksy

An abridged article of the paper read by Prof Choksy at the Symposium held on 29 March 2009 at Toronto. The paper is part of the book "Parsis in India and the Diaspora" edited by John R Hinnells and Alan Williams, published by Routledge in 2007.

It was recorded in Sanskrit texts known as the Sihigiri-vitara or Story of Sigiriya that a Maga Brahmana or magian (Zoroastrian) priest, who had accompanied mercenaries from Iran to the northcentral Sinhalese city of Anuradhapura, visited king Dhatusena (ruled 455–73) to offer service and counsel. The Maga Brahmana told Dhatusena about the Achaemenian dynasty, its founder Cyrus II championed the Persian custom of consanguineous marriage, and convinced the Sinhalese monarch to achieve greatness by building a residential palace atop a summit like that at Pasargadae (in southwestern Iran). Dhatusena appointed the magus as royal counselor, had him choose the site of Sigiriya, and placed him in charge of raising funds for a palace atop that rock through a birthday gift-giving ceremony in which subjects arrived with tribute offerings for their monarch (much like the apadana processional scene at Persepolis). Thereafter, palace construction commenced on Sigiriya under the magus' supervision.

There probably were other Zoroastrians on the island before that time. The earliest Iranians known to have reached the shores of Senendiva sailed there over the Indian Ocean during the reign of Darius I. They had been sent by the Iranian state to reconnoiter sea routes, lands, and resources of the Indian Ocean. The Greek historian Herodotus (lived ca. 484–430) provided a degree of correlation, having noted in his History that Darius after subduing the Indians 'made use of this sea'. The religious affiliation of those sailors is not stated in extant records, but presumably many were Mazda-worshippers in keeping with the Achaemenian empire's official devotion to Ahura Mazda. Most of them sailed eastward, as surviving documents claim. Some of the sailors may have settled on the island, intermarrying with the indigenous population



Sigiriya

and being assimilated ethnically, confessionally, and culturally. As a result, no further evidence of their presence can be traced thereafter.

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, Parsi immigrants from India purchased land for commercial and residential purposes in the seaport of Colombo and for small plantation estates in the provinces. About 100 Parsi men worked as planters in the central province or hill country, near the cities of Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, and as merchants, particularly in the Fort or Kotuwa of Colombo. Parsis gradually became major players in the transportation of durable and nondurable goods overland from the port and Fort of Colombo to coastal towns such as Mannar, Chilaw, Galle, Matara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee and to inland urban centers like Kurunegala, Kandy, Bandarawela, and Badulla. They also began to control maritime trade from Ceylonese ports to Male, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Chittagong, Hong Kong,

and Shanghai. Much of that trade was based on hundies or promissory notes.

Between 1930 and 1945, the Zoroastrian population in British Ceylon ranged from 350 to 450 Parsis. By then the community had been emphasizing secular education for several decades. Both male and female children were sent to primary and secondary schools run by private organizations, Christian missions, and the state. Upon completion of schooling, they were encouraged to attend universities in Ceylon, India, and England. Educated Parsi men took up professions such as law and medicine. Rustomjee Muncherjee had his son educated as a physician and surgeon in England to return to practice at Colombo in 1904. K D Choksy was among the first Ceylonese Zoroastrians to obtain electricity service to a private residence, during the first decade of the 1900s, so that his son N K Choksy could study indoors after dark with adequate lighting (rather than by candle light or by the light of a street lamp) and become an attorney. Parsi women, like the men, routinely completed secondary education at secular schools and began enrolling in, and graduating from, Ceylonese universities. Those women began to play prominent roles in garnering resources for furthering the knowledge, professional training, social welfare, and exposure to western medicine and science of their cohorts.

National statehood affected demography when Ceylon became independent from Great Britain in 1947 because nearly 50 percent of the Parsi community chose to return to India; the rest became citizens of Ceylon. When Sinhala became the official language of Ceylon in 1956, many Zoroastrians who were much more fluent in English than Sinhala began migrating too. Emigration from Ceylon, which became the Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972, continued as Zoroastrians sought educational and economic opportunities in the USA and Canada. Consequently, the community's population fell to 84 individuals in 1984 and to 60 by 1988.

By the 1950s, as a legacy of secular western education, the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka had begun to use English as their main language,

while most of them also spoke, read, and wrote in Sinhala as well, and many in Tamil. During the 1930s and 1940s, the community had commissioned the services of Parsi Gujarati language instructors from Bombay so that their children were multilingual. Use of Gujarati declined as Zoroastrians in modern Ceylon and Sri Lanka found fewer opportunities to communicate in it, and today only a rudimentary spoken ability and more often only an elementary, passive understanding of Gujarati survives. Use of Persian has never been common as a spoken or written language among the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka. Another consequence of westernization was that their dress increasingly became western in style, although Zoroastrian women still wear saris on formal occasions.

University-level education served as a mechanism for Zoroastrians becoming established prominently in Ceylon. Adoption of English as their public language, in addition to assimilation of European mores, was reinforced via secular university education. That education transmitted to them knowledge, values, aspirations, and opportunities which had become a part of European societies during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The education, with its concomitant language and cultural facets, provided smooth entry into a rapidly westernizing and secularizing urbane Ceylonese society. In that society, the Parsis began to make their mark as learned, enterprising, elites who were loyal to the democratically elected civil administration.

Their choice of professions – especially law, medicine, and public service – was shaped by university education and influenced by aspirations for social advancement. Parsis involved with the legal profession included Justices of the Peace such as K D Choksy and Pestonjee D Khan, proctors such as F Rustomjee and B K Billimoria, and Queen's Counsels such as N K Choksy (whose wife Khorshed was the granddaughter of Pallonjee and Meherbai Kapadia by their daughter Aimai who married Cowasjee Lakdawalla), who subsequently served Ceylon as a Justice of the Supreme Court. Homi F Billimoria, who was the first Ceylonese to graduate from

Liverpool University and be elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, designed the Independence Hall at Colombo and a palatial house that became the official residence of the Speaker of Parliament. He served as Chief Architect to the Government of Ceylon from 1953 to 1956. His architectural contributions were recognized by King George VI, who appointed him a Member of the British Empire in 1951, and Queen Elizabeth II, who conferred on him a Coronation Medal in 1953 and appointed him an Officer of the British Empire in 1954 while Ceylon was part of the British Commonwealth. Nariman N Jilla, like other Parsis contributing to the new nation's administration, was a member of the Ceylon Civil Service during the 1950s and 1960s. On the medical front, Dr Rustomjee served as Director-in-Charge of the Leprosy Asylum at Hendala, Dr Khurshed D Rustomjee worked with the anti-malaria campaign and the Cancer Society, and Dr Jamshed Dadabhoy became Chief Surgeon at the Colombo Eye Hospital. In the field of education, Kaikhusroo F Billimoria functioned admirably as the first Principal of Dharmaraja College in Kandy until his retirement in 1933. In each instance, the choice of profession enhanced the socioeconomic stature for the individual, his or her immediate family, and his or her descendants by contributing to Ceylonese society.

Rise in status brought with it civic obligations, and public generosity of money and commitment of time by Parsis to Ceylon's society continued in the period after independence from the British. Perin Billimoria established the K F Billimoria Memorial Trust Fund for scholarships at Dharmaraja College in honour of her late husband's principalship there. Ruttonshah Rustomjee Bhoory, whose firm of Ruttonshah Rustomjee and Company exporters of tea, spices, and coconut products was elected to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in 1944, donated classrooms to Wesley College at Colombo in gratitude for education received. Dosabhoy Marker, who immigrated to Ceylon from Peshawar and Quetta (now in Pakistan) in 1904 and became a successful rice broker, built a lecture hall for the Ramakrishna Mission in the Wellawatta neighborhood of Colombo. N K Choksy and

F Rustomjee, among others, took active roles in the Theosophical Society and the Order of Freemasons.

The Ceylon Parsi Anjuman was established in 1939 to consolidate control and administration of the hitherto separate trusts and funds for fire temple, priests and rituals, and funerary sites. A Scheme of Management for the funds was outlined to the community on November 30, 1924, and was adopted at a general meeting on March 6, 1939. The Anjuman is based at the community's prayer hall called Navroz-Baug. Three trustees are elected every five years by the voting members of the Anjuman. Modest funds are generated through annual membership fees and voluntary donations for community activities and maintenance of Anjuman properties. The Anjuman maintains written records relating to the Zoroastrian community.

The Anjuman retains the services of a mobed or Zoroastrian priest, appropriately trained and ordained in India, who conducts rituals for the behdins or laity. Occasionally, among the community, additional mobeds are present who are not full-time and are engaged in other professions. The Colombo Parsi Priest Maintenance Fund had been started in 1910–11 to pay for rental of prayer halls for the community and residential quarters for visiting priests. As a result, Ervad Sohrabji Maneckji Dastur Meherji Rana served as a visiting panthaki (or 'family priest') from India to Colombo in 1910. The first resident community mobed was hired in 1912, also from among the Zoroastrian clerics of Bombay. Pallonjee N Kapadia provided the impetus to ensure that 'clerical oversight of rites became standard' among Ceylonese Zoroastrians. Thereafter, a permanent location for Zoroastrian devotions was constructed in 1927 on approximately a third of an acre of land at 40 Fifth Lane, Kollupitiya, through an endowment by Meherbai Kapadia in memory of her husband Pallonjee. The Parsi architect Homi F Billimoria designed the agiari or fire temple there called Navroz-Baug.

Navroz-Baug includes residential quarters for the mobed and his family. Because they live on an island and their priests are hired from

India, Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka (unlike their coreligionists in India) do not regard the amal or ritual power of clergy as being vitiated by the act of crossing water by ship or plane. In another adaptation to circumstances, arising from Zoroastrians having always been a tiny minority in Sri Lanka, only when religious services occur is access to the prayer hall confined to Zoroastrians, for the practical reason that the caretaker in residence at the fire temple is usually Sinhalese of Buddhist or Christian affiliation. The Anjuman also augments its trust funds by leasing commercial buildings, adjacent to the rear wall of Navroz-Baug, to businesses run by non-

Zoroastrians; this is done without the traditional Zoroastrian concern about the danger of ritual pollution by non-Zoroastrians to Zoroastrian precincts.



Navroz-Baug Fire Temple



Navroz-Baug centers around a prayer hall where votive rituals are conducted in the presence of a dadgah or hearth fire on a small metal afrinaganyu (afarganyu) or altar. The fire is lit from a divo or oil lamp prior to religious rites, and then fed with sukhar or sandalwood

and loban or frankincense by the officiating priest and by devotees. Gahanbars or communal feasts, like that endowed by Bhoory to be held annually around the date of his demise, occur at Navroz-Baug.

Following Parsi terminology, the initiation ritual for boys and girls is termed the navjote. Navjotes

are officiated by one (more infrequently two) priest(s), and are conducted either at the fire temple, the sports club, or at secular locations such as hotels. The Anjuman follows historically Irani and Parsi tradition by regarding religion as transmitted from one generation to another along patrilineal lines. Therefore, the Anjuman's charter defines a Zoroastrian as a person whose father was a Parsi Zoroastrian or Irani Zoroastrian and who, if an adult, has undergone the navjote initiation. Consequently, boys and girls whose fathers are Parsi Zoroastrian or Irani Zoroastrians can be initiated into the faith and their navjotes are recognized by the Anjuman which accords these individuals full rights within Sri Lanka's Zoroastrian community even when their mothers are not Zoroastrians. The Anjuman does not recognize the children of Zoroastrian mothers and non-Zoroastrians fathers as having valid claims to membership even if navjotes have been undergone. Those individuals (and there have been several such persons over the past 100 years) are not permitted into the fire temple during rituals, but they can attend any religious ceremony that is not held at the fire temple (and consequently is open to the general public) including navjotes and funerals. They also can become members of the sports club. An additional rule of the Anjuman precludes Parsi and Irani Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians from holding office as trustees. That rule ensures no change can be made to the Anjuman's existing definition of who is or is not a Parsi or Irani Zoroastrian. If the resident priest is unwilling to perform the navjote of a child whose father is a Zoroastrian but whose mother is a non-Zoroastrian, then a mobed who will perform the initiation is °own to Sri Lanka from India.

Property at Bloemendhal Road, Kotahena (a suburb of Colombo), was deeded to the community in 1826 by Cowasjee Eduljee for a funeral site. The Colombo Parsi Burial Ground Trust was established by deed No. 1179 on April 19, 1847, with trustees. A dakhma or funerary tower was constructed. But within a few years, exposure of corpses was phased out because of complaints from nearby residents. Inhumation was introduced in an aramgah or place of repose (burial ground or cemetery) on the same property. As the aramgah at Bloemendhal Road

became full, the community made plans for another funerary site at a different site. After 1861, the dakhma and aramgah at Bloemendhal Road were closed and walled off. Cowasjee Eduljee funded construction of the wall and the community retained control of the site until 1967 when it was sold.

Two and a half acres were obtained from crown land by the British government, in 1887, at Jawatta Road in Thimbrigasyaya, another neighborhood of Colombo, for a funeral



Jawatta Road Funerary Complex

grounds with a burial ground, funerary building, and a caretaker's residence. A circular aramgah or burial ground was constructed, enclosed by a wall with a gated entrance, so that it visually resembled a *dakhma* or funerary tower. The burial area's base was lined with granulated rock, then topped with six to seven feet of sand, in which the corpses were laid, to prevent ritual pollution. The earliest burial took place in the first aramgah at Jawatta Road in 1894; other burials followed.

When that first aramgah became filled with graves, a second aramgah was constructed in 1921 on the Jawatta Road funeral grounds along similar ritual lines but surrounded by a rectangular wall. Burial occurs in rows, irrespective of gender, age, and family ties, by chronological order of demise. Recently yet another aramgah was built on the Jawatta Road property, although it is not in use as yet. Now each corpse is surrounded with stone or concrete slabs to ritually protect the environment from pollution. The corpses are lowered into the graves using a metal winch

to prevent ritual pollution from spreading to living persons. Gravestones mark each burial. Dogs are kept on the premises for the rite of *sagdid* to symbolically disperse any demons who may approach a corpse. As in the case of the *dadgah*, the caretaker in residence at the aramgah is usually a Sinhalese of Buddhist or Christian confessional affiliation.

Walking funeral processions from a deceased's home to the aramgah continued into the late 1970s, but were discontinued as motorized and pedestrian traffic made such processional movement impractical and not conducive to maintaining ritual purity. So now each corpse is driven to the funerary site in a hearse followed by relatives and friends in a motorcade. The community in Sri Lanka never had its own professional funerary workers, such as are customary in larger Zoroastrian communities, namely *pakshus* or corpse cleaners, *kandhias* or pall bearers (who transport the corpse to the cemetery), and *nasa salars* or corpse-bearers (who carry the corpse at the place of death and at the cemetery). All handling of corpses used to be performed by volunteers from among the Zoroastrian laity, who subsequently underwent purification via an abbreviated *Sade Nahn* (in which only ablutions were done). Those volunteers cleansed and dressed each corpse in white clothes, then covered it with a white funeral shroud. These activities were transferred gradually to professional, non-Zoroastrian, undertakers during the 1980s and 1990s. Such adaptations were not too controversial within the community.

Religious education among the community in the 1960s and 1970s was championed by Framroz Rustomjee, who produced a compendium of texts and translations entitled *Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians*, among other religious writings. Rustomjee was the instructor of choice for many Zoroastrian parents when it came time to have their children taught prayers in preparation for *navjotes*. In old age he eventually emigrated to Australia to join his son, who had been a surgeon in Ceylon, and grandchildren. Despite such attempts at religious education, orthopraxy declined as the community

integrated within Sri Lankan society during the twentieth century. Most Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka know and recite the basic prayers – such as the Ashem Vohu, Ahuna Vairya, Kem Na Mazda, Ohrmazd Khwaday or Kusti Bastan, and Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda – essential for the kusti rite and for daily piety, but rely on Roman script texts in prayer manuals when reciting other litanies.

Flower garlands and coconuts used during religious rites would be tossed into the Indian Ocean; so too were damaged kustis. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Parsis would gather informally to recite prayers like the Khwarshed and Mihr Niyayishns facing the setting sun, but that practice declined in frequency. Likewise, until the late 1970s, traditionalists would recite the Atash Niyayishn to the hearth fire in their homes, often in conjunction with lighting a divo and carrying a fire in a small brazier through each room of the house during the loban or incense ritual. On the day dedicated to Ashi (the feminine yazata or worship-worthy spirit of recompense) in each month, Zoroastrians would visit the fire temple to recite the Ard Yasht or hymn in her honour. Given the financial and social success achieved by Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka, their minority status notwithstanding, this yazata and her yasht remain popular, but veneration now takes place at home.

The Parsi Sports Club began as the Parsi Youth's Sports Club in 1927, then changed its name to its present form a year later. Since 1947, it has occupied the Parasmani Hall at 11 Palm Gove, Kollupitiya. The site was donated to the community by the scholar of Zoroastrianism, Framroz Rustomjee, in memory of a deceased young son. Ruttonshah Rustomjee Bhoory, who had come to Colombo at the age of 14 from Billimoria in India, funded construction of a single-story

clubhouse on that site in memory of his parents. The sports club, with facilities for badminton, tennis, and table tennis plus a banquet room, has its own trust deed and financial trust termed the Parsi Social Centre. It is administered by an elected board of trustees which can appoint members to planning committees. Unlike the fire temple, from which its governance and finances are separate, the Parsi Sports Club witnessed active involvement of women in its administration. For example, Piroja Billimoria, an avid tennis, table tennis, and cricket player, and daughter-in-law of Bhoory, was elected the first female president of the Parsi Sports Club. Lectures on subjects of interest to the community, gatherings to play board games, sports events, and musical performances are still held at the Parsi Sports Club.

The total population of Zoroastrian men, women, and children within Sri Lanka numbered approximately 61 in the year 2006. Of these, 56 individuals were on the Anjuman's membership roster; about five had not listed themselves with the Anjuman. Very occasionally the Anjuman receives news of other Zoroastrians who live in Sinhalese and Tamil villages. The Anjuman's members are all Parsis, with no Iranians and no converts. The number of non-Zoroastrian spouses (husbands and wives) was approximately ten in 2006. Children of Zoroastrian women and non-Zoroastrian husbands numbered around five, but as noted previously those children are not recognized by the Anjuman's trust deed as Zoroastrians. The last national census, conducted in July 2001, placed the total population at 18.73 million, so Zoroastrians comprise 0.0003256 per cent of the population of modern Sri Lanka! A majority of Sri Lankan Parsis trace ancestry to families who arrived in Ceylon during the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries as subjects of the British Raj. Most Zoroastrians in Sri Lanka have



Parsi Sports Club

residences and family members in the west coast metropolis of Colombo, even though some of them work and reside in other parts of the country, such as the city of Kandy.

Marriage between Parsi Zoroastrian men and Sinhalese Buddhist, Burgher Christian, and Tamil Hindu women began during the 1950s and has become increasingly frequent. Approximately 50 per cent of children from such unions are raised as Zoroastrians and initiated into the faith. A few Parsis do frequent Christian churches, Hindu kovils, and Buddhist temples – in addition to the fire temple – claiming they are venerating the same god. On the other hand, conversion to Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam has never been a major force due to the sectarian nature of Sri Lankan society.

The Anjuman maintains and staffs the fire temple, funerary grounds, and sports club from funds collected through annual membership dues and donations. The elderly are generally cared for within the family unit, even in cases where they physically reside in retirement homes or hospice settings. Therefore, the Anjuman does not maintain its own dharamsala or hospice. However, a few rooms adjacent to the priest's living quarters at Navroz-Baug are made available to visiting Zoroastrians, if requested, for short stays.

Most Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka graduate from high school, and many pursue university-level education. Professionally they have ranged, during the past few decades, from architects like Pheroze N. Choksy, attorneys like Vishtasp K Choksy, and financial directors such as Pilo M Lakdawalla of the Central Bank of Ceylon (later his service continued with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka), to naval officers, civil aviation officers, and army physicians like the brothers Homi N Jilla, Kairshasp N Jilla, and Minocher N Jilla respectively. Major financial involvement in the economy of Sri Lanka has been accomplished by another long-settled mercantile family, the Pestonjees, in electronics and transportation from the 1970s onward through a nationwide company, Abans, which is named after its founder Aban Pestonjee. The Captain family, whose commercial beginnings lay in the textile

industry, diversified first into paint and furniture manufacture and subsequently into corporate investments under Soli E Captain. Political involvement in the Republic of Sri Lanka occurred when Kairshasp N Choksy, who is an attorney and President's Counsel, became a Member of Parliament, Minister of Constitutional Affairs, and subsequently Minister of Finance.

Social work by Parsi women such as Perin E Captain, through organizations such as the Cancer Society and the Child Protection Society, has helped the nation considerably. Journalism with major daily newspapers in Colombo has been an occupation for insightful columnists such as Roshan Peiris. Education is a third field where Parsi women have contributed as teachers. Parsi men like Burjor Billimoria and Jamshed Nilgeria served as Presidents of the Sri Lanka Rotary Club. Cricket, golf, and table tennis have served as sporting outlets for Zoroastrian boys and men from the Billimoria, Captain, Jilla, Lakdawalla, and Pestonjee families to contribute to Sri Lankan society.

Generally, the ethno-religious conflicts between Sinhalese, Tamils, and Moors of the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim faiths have not affected the Zoroastrian community directly. That particular situation is as true now as it was during the ethnic riots of 1915. Indirect consequences to economic and social activity are, on the other hand, a fact of life. On a more positive note, as Sri Lankan corporations established global alliances, a few Zoroastrians from other countries have begun to work in the island nation – augmenting the local Parsis who welcome their coreligionists to communal gatherings.

Three phases of settlement by Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians occurred in Ceylon. The first phase lasted from Antiquity into the Middle Ages as evidenced by the presence of maritime traders, mercenaries, and priests. The second phase lasted from 1600 into the late 1700s as attested by coastal and provincial gravestones of Iranian and Parsi sailors, planters, and petty traders. The third phase from the late 1700s to the present witnessed Parsi merchants and professionals

immigrating from British India to establish a multi-generational community. On the other hand, the major reasons for migration away from the Zoroastrian community in modern Sri Lanka have been the rise of Sinhalese nationalism and the economic opportunities of the West.

Trade in durable goods, visits to relatives in other Parsi diasporas, marriage between individuals in the internationally scattered communities, recruitment of priests to staff the fire temple in Colombo and perform rituals, occasional pilgrimages to holy sites in India and Iran, and, most of all, cooperative goodwill between members of the diasporas, have ensured that ties endure across generations. The constant contact has ensured that the Zoroastrian diasporas have been highly permeable ones. Permeability and travel continues between the Zoroastrians of Sri Lanka and their families, friends, and business associates on a global scale.

Within Sri Lanka, Zoroastrians have been counselors who served ancient kings and ministers who guide modern governments, soldiers who served the country and physicians who cure the masses, traders who exported resources and industrialists who shape the economy. Their endeavors have been shaped by personal, communal, and altruistic goals – seeking betterment for themselves and for the country in which they live. In the words of a member of a family whose ancestors immigrated from India: ‘We are here on a beautiful island, and so we prosper when possible while having a good life and sharing Ahura Mazda’s generosity.’ So cultural identity and confessional allegiance have persisted albeit with modification to changing times and situations.



Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and however early a man’s training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly. - Thomas H. Huxley



Khan Memorial Clock Tower

The Honorable Jamsheed K Choksy is Professor of Central Eurasian Studies, of History, of India Studies, and Religious Studies at Indiana University.

*He was nominated by the President of the USA and confirmed by the US Senate as a member of the US National Council on the Humanities (2008 – 2014), overseeing the National Endowment for the Humanities. His BA degree was in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures from Columbia University (1985). His PhD was in the History and Religions of the Near East and Inner Asia from Harvard University (1991). Choksy is the author of three books: *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002); *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) with a New Persian (Farsi) translation as *Setiz va Sazesh: Zartoshtian-e maqlub va mosalmanan-e qaleb dar jame-ye Iran-e nakhostin-i sadeha-ye Islami* (Tehran: Qoqnu Publications, 2002); and *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). He is a consulting editor of the *Encyclopedia Iranica* (New York: Columbia University).*



Zarine Kharas - recipient of Albert Medal, 2009

by jenni mehta

When a colleague ran the London Marathon a few years back she told me about this “brilliant” website where her sponsors for the charity she was supporting could arrange to give their donations easily, safely and painlessly via the internet. I was proud to tell her that I have known the person who had this brilliant idea since we were both students.

On 22nd April 2009 at the Royal Society of Arts in London, Zarine Kharas received the highly prestigious Albert Medal from the Society, for her “contribution to social innovation” as the founder and CEO of *Justgiving*. The Society sees itself as “a cradle of enlightenment thinking and a force for social progress”. It has awarded medals throughout its history to outstanding achievers who have been innovators in the liberal arts and sciences and contributed to progressive social change.

Zarine Kharas is an admirable recipient of this award.



The Albert Medal is the Society’s oldest award, established in 1864 as a memorial to Prince Albert, for his untiring work in promoting the Arts and Commerce. As the 2009 recipient, Zarine is in

excellent company; other beneficiaries include:

Professor Stephen Hawking; Louis Pasteur; Tim Berners-Lee; Michael Faraday; Karan Bilimoria; Marie Curie; Lord Olivier; Sir Shridath Ramphal and HRH Prince Charles.

Her plan for a business that would harness the internet to make charitable giving effective and low-cost has made *Justgiving* a world leader. Zarine has helped change the face of charitable giving in the UK and now also, as *Firstgiving*, in the US. Her

thoughts regarding business profits and the utter uselessness of corporate organisational structure may well have even greater impact on the world.

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive of the RSA

has said: “In creating *Justgiving* Zarine Kharas changed the rules of the charity game, bringing web technologies within the reach of every charity in the UK, and making it easier for all of us to support great causes. Hers is an inspiring example of the long-

lasting social value that a company can deliver under the right leadership.”



Zarine, daughter of Cursetjee & Parin Kharas of Karachi, arrived in the UK in 1969, heady days for a girl just out of Karachi Grammar School. After achieving her BA in Law at Girton College, Cambridge, she established herself in London working for Linklaters as a solicitor and later moved into investment banking for CSFB in the mid-80s. She structured and executed the first transactions in the Euro-equity capital markets and advised on some of the earliest privatisations. In the mid 90s Zarine led the launch of MC Securities’ operations in Warsaw, responsible for strategy and operations, including public market and private equity.

The late 90s saw her reassessing her career. Zarine’s interest in the arts, film and theatre has always been broad but I doubt she ever saw herself involved in this world. Momentary thoughts of an idyllic life olive farming in Italy were quickly replaced with something more commercial and her mail

order company was Zarine's introduction to the world of retail sales and marketing. For selling thousands of "snore-repressing" widgets – surely a boon to mankind - she should have been considered for a medal award. Did they work? Zarine said enigmatically that few were returned for refund.

Justgiving was created in 1999 and opened on the Web in 2000. To date used by nearly 7million people to process £370 million UK charity donations, 100% of donors' contributions go to the charity with *Justgiving* claiming approximately 5% after the Government's Gift Aid contribution.

On that April evening at the Royal Society, Zarine gave an impassioned lecture¹, eloquently and provocatively addressing the necessity for us *all* – not just the not-so-great and the good – to think in a different way about how we do business, whether as a shareholder, manager, supplier or customer :

"The New Business of Business"

"... what is needed above all is an understanding of how a variety of organisations ... can together contribute to producing a more decent economic world." - Amartya Sen

Zarine believes that companies should exist primarily to create social value and that "*a radically new mindset is needed to develop a general consensus that success should not be measured only in profits and growth*"; that "*profit should be a bi-product of something much greater: creating a great product, developing employees, serving customers in a brilliant way*" and supplying *long-term* value for shareholders.

Declaring herself to be "*a fundamentalist – a fundamental atheist*" and, using some perhaps unfashionable words: courage, duty, responsibility and personal accountability, Zarine highlights the need for businesses to throw away the rule book as she argues "*it is only in the absence of rules that a business can get the best out of people*

and become truly excellent". In a time of failing financial institutions and disappointing politicians, business and society need people who will find a better way of doing things.

This is merely a brief overview of Zarine's speech to which I urge you to listen at the link to the RSA below.

It is sad that both Zarine's parents passed away well before the announcement of this award. How justifiably proud - and perhaps not a little surprised - they would have been to learn of their daughter's recognition for her achievements. However, Zarine's family, friends and colleagues agree that this is a most well-deserved honour. They are thrilled for her personal success and that of *Justgiving*.

Zarine's innate modesty will probably lead her to slip this quite large golden medal into a drawer somewhere and not to discuss it further - unless it were to benefit the goals of her organisation or her greater vision of social value in business. When others of her generation are contemplating winding down Zarine has sought to break through barriers and to think about business in a different way. Long may she seek to innovate and inspire those around her to replicate her sincere and courageously spirited lead.

Note:

1. To see and hear the speech go to www.thersa.org/events/vision and to know more about *Justgiving* - www.justgiving.com



Jenni Mehta was born and lives in London with her husband Soli and has two adult daughters. Trained in textiles and stained glass design, Jenni enjoys the varied London arts, music, film and theatre. She is fond of visiting woody British landscapes in autumnal weather and major artistic European cities - always realising her schoolgirl French is almost totally inadequate.



Bahram Bekhradnia – a career in Higher Education

by soonu engineer

The day I met Bahram Bekhradnia, he had just been offered the prestigious position of Special Advisor to the Parliamentary Select Committee dealing with higher education. “It’s still unofficial,” he beamed conspiratorially. His would be the guiding hand behind the powerful, bipartisan committee of MPs that scrutinises all aspects of the government’s role in higher education and can call any government department or person to account.



It is not surprising that Bahram has been chosen to support the Select Committee in its deliberations. He is Director of an independent think-tank, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), and has behind him a long and eventful career in the education department of the civil service and in a government ‘quango’ that

funds the higher education sector. He is Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education and the University of Bath and has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of North London.

During his 30 years in education, Bahram has been associated with some ground breaking initiatives. From his civil service days, he’s particularly proud of the ‘fast track’ programme for teachers that brought in a new breed of educators into schools: people who had already proved themselves in other professions and were willing to bring this experience and expertise to bear in the service of children’s education. He offered them sufficient financial inducements to make the switch from their respective professions and gave them a ‘fast track’ into gaining qualified teacher status and the possibility of rapid promotion.

A more controversial initiative was the Licensed Teacher scheme. Mature students,

who had not completed their higher education, could gain a teaching qualification by learning from mentors in schools and on-the-job training. It has now been discontinued. “The Trade Unions hated it. They claimed it deskilled teaching,” he says, with a wry smile.

Though Bahram fits the popular image of the Oxbridge-educated mandarin, he is critical of the culture of the civil service which, he believes, is responsible for “a great waste of all that talent and ability.” He goes on to explain: “Top civil servants are very clever people. They are loyal, diligent and very conservative. Their instinct is to say ‘no’ and to make the fewest changes possible. You don’t get promotion for making changes; there is no reward for risk-taking and innovation but you are punished for making mistakes.’ He left, because ‘my inclinations are better served outside it.’”

After leaving the civil service, he joined the University Funding Council and later, in 1992, became Director of Policy at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). There his name became synonymous with the RAE – the Research Assessment Exercise – which was a method used, until this year, to allocate research funding for universities. The polytechnics had recently been granted university status by the Thatcher government, and the elite universities feared that their research funding would be swallowed up by the new institutions if everyone got an equal share. “A rudimentary system for assessing scholarship existed but it hadn’t been developed or used to inform funding,” says Bahram. He refined the RAE, developed a set of criteria which made the allocation of research funding subject to a competitive process and built in quality assurance through an exhaustive system of peer reviews and expert panels.

But it didn’t please everyone. In a caustic correspondence on the subject, Professor Wiseman of Exeter accused Bahram of being ‘dismissive’ of the possibility that scholars in the Humanities regularly made significant

advances in their field - and these, said the professor, took time and could not be captured by annual assessment exercises. Researchers were in danger of being treated 'like battery hens' he warned and the 'entire culture of scholarship in arts subjects was being debased.' It was ironic that Bahram, who had studied Classics at Oxford, should be so accused.

Nor were all the scientists content: there was 'acrimony, name-calling and threats of legal action' according to the science journal, 'Nature'. In July 2002 Bahram faced the ire of Heads of Environmental Science, who were furious at being assessed as the weakest research discipline in 2001. They threatened to have the assessment process put to judicial review in order to halt the closure of a number of their departments. Bahram's response was, some would say, a clever combination of bureaucratic fait accompli and tactical compromise: first he announced that they could not test their argument in court because all the evidence had been shredded to comply with the Data Protection Act! But, he did undertake to carry out a case by case review of their objections. He also promised to draw up an investment plan for the subject and deftly channelled their energies from contesting the RAE to campaigning, instead, for more research funds.

When talking to Bahram, it is hard to imagine that this mild-mannered, gently-spoken man had drawn so much academic blood. But he points to the results: the system is credited with raising the standard of British academic research, especially in science subjects and is much admired abroad.

Another cause that Bahram took up – and still pursues – was to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. "Universities can't ignore teaching: they do not devote enough time to it. I realised that teaching had to be recognised and encouraged and I was ready to use the funding levers to do that." Previously, government funding of colleges depended on the numbers of students on roll. To improve the standard of teaching, Bahram introduced incentives such as Teaching Fellowships, which were awarded

to outstanding teachers, and opened up 20 centres to support teaching in different subject areas.

Perhaps the cause dearest to his heart is that of 'widening participation' – policy jargon and government mantra for bringing in children from lower socio-economic backgrounds into higher education. "We had about £8 billion to allocate each year and we devised a formula that gave a premium for recruiting students from underprivileged backgrounds: you got 10% extra if you could do that." Bahram had himself benefited, as he sees it, from the many opportunities offered to him and his family in England and he is passionate about opening the doors to children whose families are poor, marginalised or outside the educational mainstream.

His own parents, he says, came from relatively humble backgrounds in Yazd, Iran. His mother, Laal Shahrkini, trained as a midwife in Tehran. His father, Shahriar, was a plucky 14 year old when he set off for India to seek his fortune. He returned after a couple of years, taught at a village school for a while, "mugging up on lessons the night before to be one step ahead of the pupils." The couple had a "classic and successful arranged marriage."



Shahriar then enrolled at a military academy to train as an officer. In 1947 he was blinded in a war with the Soviet Union, in Azerbaijan, and decorated as a war hero. He was flown to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. Laal, who was pregnant with Bahram at that time, joined him later.

The couple knew no one here and spoke no English. They were assisted by a charity, St Dunstan's, which supported people who had lost their eyesight

Young Shahriar Bekhradnia in full Kurdish dress

while in the armed services. The family decided to settle here and Shahriar retrained as a telephone operator. [article in Hamazor Issue1/2006, pp 7-12].

Bahram came with his mother to London at the age of 2 years. His father was determined to 'bring him up as English' and Lord Ian Fraser, Chair of St Dunstan's and his wife, Irene, assisted this project by suggesting that the bright and promising lad should apply for admission to the public school system. Bahram duly won a scholarship to a prep school in Buckinghamshire at the age of 9 years and after that to the prestigious Wellington College, a public school in Berkshire, followed by admission to University College, Oxford. Having spent most of his formative life in boarding schools, not surprisingly, "school was the dominant culture."

He could have said that it was the dominant counter-culture. His parents spoke to him at home in Farsi but the future scholar of Latin and Greek didn't manage to become fluent in his mother tongue. Their home was a magnet to visitors from Iran. Bahram reels off the names of distinguished Zarthusties who visited his parents whenever they were in London: Farhang Mehr and his wife, Parichehr, the Zartoshty brothers, Rustom Guiv and many more. He associates them with "pistachio, nuts and caviar" – exotic items for any English lad – "but the downside of here (English influence) is not wanting to know the Iranians." His parents took him to the original Zoroastrian House in Olympia where he met Parsis and found their "Hindu-type practices rather odd."

He did learn enough of the Avestan prayers, though, to have his navjote in Tehran when he was 11 years old. "Our father taught us the prayers while walking in the park," he recalls. "Although very pious and praying four times a day, our parents never pushed us to get involved with Zoroastrians. They did give us a very strong moral foundation: telling the truth, being charitable, good thoughts, words and deeds. Without thinking about it, we imbibed it. I think my children have done the same."

But he didn't keep the Faith going with the next generation. "I didn't do anything consistently

at all," he says in his characteristic, frank manner. Not even their navjotes. Bahram met his wife, Jean, when he was in the civil service. She is a special needs teacher. Their children, Josephine, Elizabeth and Daniel, have Persian names too - tucked away, discretely, a second choice should they want it.

I wondered if he was a member of the WZO. "Yes, because my father made us Life Members." Did he read the Hamazor? "We do look at it occasionally and have a bit of a giggle," he says. What about? "Well, it can be funny, really; some of the things in it are quite amusing." This has the faint echoes of the burra sahib amongst the natives. Sensing this, he adds, "I actually find it quite interesting in parts, and charming." When I asked to interview him for Hamazor, he was most obliging and co-operative.

In fact he's recognised by journalists as being 'media friendly.' He's happy to talk to them, unlike many civil servants and bureaucrats. But then, Bahram is full of surprises. After three decades in government jobs, he has become a social entrepreneur, launching the independent think tank, HEPI, because he "saw a gap: we were doing the thinking for today's policies but there was no one doing a critique of what was happening or looking speculatively at the future. I saw a big need for this." The past Chairman of the Education Select Committee, Barry Sheerman, has welcomed HEPI enthusiastically as, 'one of the best things to happen in Higher Education in the last 10 years.'

Initially, HEPI got most of its income from government-funded agencies. Now it raises nearly £300,000 per annum independently, from running conferences, providing consultancy to universities worldwide and forming partnerships with businesses. In the last few years, Bahram has reviewed funding and governance in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Palestine. And sometimes, they do listen to his advice: "In Lithuania, they dropped the proposal for an education voucher scheme. In Jordan, I helped the relevant Ministry develop the arguments it needed for negotiating with the government for more funding and greater autonomy. In general, universities that are autonomous and free tend to

be better than those that are constrained. If they are made to operate just like any other government department, they will never be world-class and dynamic.”

Bahram is full of praise for what he found in Palestine. “Of all the Arab countries, Palestine has the most admirable university system. Most of it is run by NGOs and not the government. 25% of the population there goes to university. But they suffer intolerable conditions. Students can’t get into the campus till after 11:00am because of the checkpoints. You can’t have normal exchanges between universities and academics there – forget about the rest of the world. The only purpose of these checkpoints is to humiliate and show who’s boss. Even if they had the money, they wouldn’t be able to access the equipment. Going there was a very moving experience. I was so impressed by how resilient they are and how they survive despite the extreme circumstances they are living in.”

Would he support an academic boycott? “The evil that’s being done in Palestine,” he says with feeling, “is so great that though I’m against academic boycotts in principle, if it galvanises international opinion against it – though I doubt it would – if there is a reasonable prospect for any or some of these things being exposed, then we should look at it as a serious possibility.”

What else can be done? “We can provide expertise and persuade gifted academics to work there. They need partnerships with British universities so that they can come here and do research. There is also the massive Palestinian diaspora that is not benefiting.”

Later he sent me a note: “I have been thinking of my attitude to boycotts. The reason I am against them in general is because, often, they hurt those they are trying to support; and as a principle I think dialogue is better than confrontation. But if they are likely to have a real impact I would support them. I supported the South African boycott, and for similar reasons I would support a boycott of Israel if it looked plausible. But I am against token gestures.” So his considered response was in essence the same as what he had said with emotion.

Has HEPI been invited to provide consultancy for Israel? “They haven’t asked and I wouldn’t accept it.”

And what of Iran? “The British Council had asked me to speak at a conference on higher education in November last year. But in September, the British Council in Tehran closed down!”

I asked Bahram how he could help Zoroastrians here or in Iran. He said he would think about it.

In response to the editor’s request for his picture, he sent, instead, photographs of his father in full Kurdish dress! One got the feeling that for Bahram, this article – about his achievements - was a tribute to his father. “He just assumed that his children would always get the best results and achieve.” And his father was not wrong. Both his children, Bahram and his sister, Shahin, went to Oxford and went on to hold positions of responsibility in society.

Bahram Bekhradnia is fiercely proud of his parents, appreciative of the sacrifices they made, respectful of their Iranian roots and mindful of his Zoroastrian heritage. A journalist once described Bahram as a ‘very British, Civil Servant.’ As I left him to catch his train back to Oxford, he seemed to me a very civil, British Zoroastrian.



An article appearing in the St Petersburg Times Newspaper on Sunday 29 March ‘09

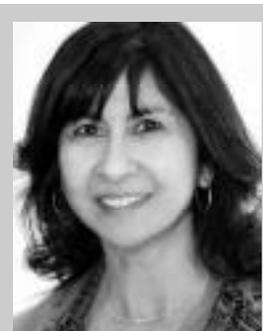
The Business Section asked readers for ideas on “How Would You Fix the Economy?”

Dear Mr President,
Patriotic retirement:

There are about 40 million people over 50 in the work force; pay them \$1 million a piece severance with stipulations:

- 1] They leave their jobs. Forty million job openings - Unemployment fixed.
- 2] They buy new American cars. Forty million cars ordered - Auto industry fixed.
- 3] They either buy a house or pay off their mortgage - Housing Crisis fixed.

All this and it’s still cheaper than the “bailout”.



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

How a chance encounter with the Mahatma changed one Canadian's life

by teenaz javat

First published on January 29, 2009 on CBC.ca : reproduced with permission

From his small apartment in a seniors building in Mississauga, Ontario, a retired Canadian law professor reminisces about how a chance meeting with Mohandas Gandhi all those years ago changed the course of his life.

At the time, Fali Balsara was a young police officer recruited by the British under the Defence of India Act. There were many perks that came with a government job like that. But one of the discouraging elements was the fact that if recruited under this act, leaving the service of the Raj could entail imprisonment. A uniformed position in India in those days came with considerable clout, but unconditional loyalty was expected in return. This was August 1942, when the young and dapper sub-inspector was sent off on his first assignment.

Arrest Gandhi

At that point, Gandhi and members of his Indian National Congress had just launched the Quit India movement in Bombay (now Mumbai) to try to move the British colonial powers out of India.

Already a beloved political and spiritual leader, Gandhi's non-violent approach of passive resistance had taken the country by storm. But this was still in the midst of the Second World War and the authorities were not about to have any challenge to their order. As a result, Bombay's deputy commissioner of police, H E Butler, dispatched Balsara and his team to arrest Gandhi.

"I was dumbstruck," Balsara, now 90, recalls. "We used to call him Bapu, meaning father. However, it was part of my job so I complied."

Balsara and his team were to escort Gandhi in a special train to Poona, a quiet city 192 kilometres south of Mumbai, where he was to be held at the Aga Khan palace. That

train journey changed the course of Balsara's life.

'Humble to a fault'

"Bapu spoke to us," reminisces Balsara, "His calm demeanour amid so much uproar over his arrest completely took us by surprise. He was humble to a fault and respected all who served him."

Balsara recalls that, by the time the train reached Poona, he and his police guards were thoroughly mesmerized by Gandhi's personality and his unshakable belief in India's right to its own destiny.

In those few hours it dawned on him that the path of non-violent resistance that Gandhi had chosen to guide India to freedom was so completely at odds with what he was doing as a police officer.

"We were so influenced by Gandhi's charisma and his captivating toothless smile that on reaching Poona we decided to quit our jobs, even though we knew quite well that we would be imprisoned," said Balsara. That is exactly what happened: all six police officers became prisoners of the Raj.

Mahatma Gandhi

Just over five years after this incident, on January 30, 1948, Gandhi was killed, felled by an assassin's bullet in New Delhi while on his way to prayers. He was 78 years old and had lived just long enough to see India's independence from Britain the year before. Since, 1934, there had been six attempts on his life. A lawyer, politician and, many say, saint, he is now officially remembered as the Father of the Nation.

Change of direction

They went on to spend 14 days in close proximity to Gandhi as the British considered them mutineers.



Fali Balsara, then 82, at the Zoroastrian cultural centre in Toronto in July 2001. (Courtesy Fali Balsara)

"The days I spent in jail with Gandhi, I remember vividly to this day," Balsara says. "He convinced me to become a teacher, as according to him it was the noblest of all professions."

Back in Mumbai, Balsara's mother was worried that her son, then just 23, was now a prisoner of the Raj and in so much trouble with his employers.

However, her brother, who worked for the governor of Burma, was able to pull some strings and appealed to the governor of Bombay, Lawrence Roger Lumley, to pardon Balsara for his youthful enthusiasms.

On being pardoned, Balsara was discharged from service and went back to school where he would earn a doctorate in social science and then emigrate to Canada in 1964, first to teach at the University of British Columbia and then in Toronto.

Balsara taught at several universities and colleges in Canada before retiring as a professor of law and economics from York University.

The lessons he learned from Gandhi, Balsara says, have stayed with him his entire life. *"He taught me that one's worth as an individual lies only in your action."*



Teenaz Javat is a Freelance writer and part-time teacher at Sheridan College's Internationally Trained Writers programme. She writes for several publications in Canada, India and Pakistan namely the Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, Canadian Newcomer Magazine, Hamilton Spectator, Dawn newspaper and FEZANA Journal, while also working on a part time/casual basis at the CBC. She is also the Associate Editor of her community newsletter the Zoroastrians Society of Ontario. Having come to Canada with an MA in Economics, she received the President's medal on graduating from the Canadian Journalism for internationally trained Writers program at Sheridan College in June 2008. She lives in Mississauga with her husband and two young children.

Writers program at Sheridan College in June 2008. She lives in Mississauga with her husband and two young children.

Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman - Making A Difference And Creating Harmony

by jehangir mehta

I left my birth country India, twenty years ago, but there is something that still stays in your system, the desire to see places in India that you missed out when you were there. Travel to India can make us humble in our knowledge and about our place in the world when you view this from an enlightened perspective of an immigrant.

My travel to Mhow via Indore in Nov 2008 began with my search for a comfortable resting place in Indore. Thanks to our philanthropic ancestors, there are dharamshalas in almost all the cities in India. The vice president of the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman, Dara Unwala ensured that my mindset was oriented towards staying at their wonderful dharamshala.

Indore dharamshala is not flash or fancy, but it was just spot on for my needs. Clean and well

maintained, the dharamshala is capably managed by Thrity Adil Dossabhoy. A young energetic and hard working mother of triplets and an 8-month old boy, Thrity's life is full, with home duties,



Thrity with her family

administrative work, cooking for passengers, and setting up the hall for weddings and other functions. Always ready to oblige, Thrity has never experienced a dissatisfied passenger departing from their dharamshala in the last ten years. The room charge is a nominal Rs50 per day and the meal costs Rs250 for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Once a thriving and vibrant community (population of 500, some 100 years ago), the Parsis in Indore (Madhya Pradesh) lived in the Parsi mohalla. The settlement of the Parsis started in 1873. In 1879 a businessman Hormusji Maneckji Bhamgara built the Atash Dadgah (agiary), a prayer hall in the mohalla, which was subsequently repaired three times in 1920, 1972 and in 1989 through various donations. Three generations of the Rao priestly family dedicated their lives to the spiritual needs of the Zoroastrian community of Indore.

In 1894 Bai Dinbai Petit built the Seth Jamshedji Nusservanji Petit school. In 1964 the Indore community benefited from the munificence of Dr Motibai F Thanewalla when charity blocks were constructed for the use of needy families. Further donations by families of Godrej, Dundas, Kerawalla and Marfatia saw addition of more charity blocks. In 1920 a Parsi entrepreneur by the name of Godrej Edulbehram started the automobile dealership business, which has since flourished and the name Noshirwan & Co has become a local byword. The Dharamshala was built in 1880 by Mr Hormusji Bhamgara in memory of his mother Bai Cooverbai. As the building had become decrepit and old, it was demolished and a new dharamshala was constructed and opened in 1999.

Today the Parsi mohalla is devoid of any Parsis except the family of Colonel Allavali. At present there are about 130 individuals residing in Indore and the demographics suggests that sixty percent are mixed marriages. In light of the demographics and the need of the hour, the Anjuman committee has been very pragmatic in dealing with socio-religious and socio-cultural issues to bring about greater harmony and camaraderie within the dwindling community. The Indore Anjuman is not a rich association and while the housing needs of the economically disadvantaged families are being met, the Anjuman constantly has to find new ways through fundraising and appeals for medical needs of the community.

Some of the changes that has allowed the community and its non-Zoroastrian

spouses, with a wider circle of non-Zoroastrian friends and families to coexist in a happy and peaceful way in Indore are:-

After the Paydast-Geh Sarna ceremony, the body is brought out from the bungli and kept on a stone slab for wider viewing by non-Zoroastrians. Whether the face should be covered or not, is a personal matter, to be decided by the family of the deceased. At this stage no one - Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian - is allowed to touch the body due to the danger of contagion. In earlier times after Alexander, and later during the Arab conquest, the disrespect and desecration during Zoroastrian ritual was a common occurrence. Consequently non-Zoroastrians were barred from witnessing any Zoroastrian rituals. This prohibition was extrapolated to the last rites ceremony resulting in prevention of non-Zoroastrian friends paying their last respect to the deceased face to face. There is no doctrinal justification why non-Zoroastrians should not be allowed to pay their respect before covering the face.

An hour and half after the Uthamna ceremony, another Uthamnu ceremony is held for non-Zoroastrians outside the hall. This time gap is intended, so that the non-Zoroastrians do not have to wait while the Zoroastrian uthamnu prayers are being held. A photo frame and flowers are kept for viewing and they have an opportunity to meet the family of the deceased.

Anjuman has no objection to a Parsi woman who has married out, to come in the agiary, provided (1) she has not renounced the Zoroastrian religion, (2) she is professing the faith (3) she is practicing the Zoroastrian religion. This position is also respected by the Panthak priest of the day.

Non-Zoroastrian spouses also partake in eating at the various Ghambhars. Only a small portion of the food made by the priest is sanctified. This way everyone in the community is able to enjoy. Families volunteer to make dal, rice and kebabs. This kind of thought and action spreads the goodness in the whole community.

Anjuman has no objection if the Anjuman priest conducts a private jashan at the homes of individuals where non-Zoroastrian spouses are also present.

Numerous Parsi/Zoroastrian fetes are held where Parsi food is sold. Non Zoroastrians also take part in the festivity. Due to wider acceptance of the non-Zoroastrian spouses in Indore, there is 90% attendance at functions such as Navroze, Pateti and Ghambars.

Indore has a Dokhma and a burial ground adjacent to each other. The Anjuman regulation is clear on the burial issue. Any Zoroastrian wishing to be buried are able to have all the religious ceremonies performed at the agiary. Priests selected by the Anjuman have to abide by this regulation.

On the cremation issue, the Anjuman is flexible. If the priest appointed by the Anjuman has no objection and as long as the priest does not feel threatened by political pressure, the death ceremonies may be conducted at the agiary.

Due to shortage of firewood, sandalwood, and Kathi funds, the priest has been instructed to keep the kathi in the Agiary burning at slow combustion. This indeed is a divine thought and action on part of the Anjuman to maintain equilibrium of the natural resources like wood which are fast depleting in India.

In a small community which relies on the goodwill of each other, *behdins* like Jasmine Bharucha, Jal Kapadia, Percy Kapadia, Shazad Irani, Shazad Anklesaria, Farid Boga, Naval Pavri and Dara Unwala back up as pall bearers, and look after the needs of Dokhmenashini and the Doongerwadi formalities. The upkeep of the Doongerwadi is supervised by Col (retd) Adi Patel. They are very helpful and nothing is too small or too big for them to give the dead a dignified and a clean farewell. Loss of habitat and lack of bodies has seen a rapid decline of vultures. While carrying the body into the Dokhma is a divine act which would please the Almighty, it is not for the weak hearted and indeed the *behdins* who perform this act of charity and service would like to see changes in the custom of disposal of the dead.

A priest in the community must have certain basic human qualities. He must be friendly and approachable, caring, understanding, considerate, forgiving and well mannered.



Mobed Kersasp with his brother

Indore Anjuman is indeed blessed to have a young Mobed Kersasp Dhunjisha Karanjia as the panthak of the agiary. In today's world when most people are in

various stages of economic migration to cities, Kersasp instead chose to return to Indore from Mumbai to honour and respect his father's wishes; to carry on the work his father gave up due to ill health and old age. While never complaining too much about the monetary conditions and the social lifestyle that he left behind in Mumbai, Indore to him is a community full of understanding and kindhearted people. His greatest joy would be to see more people come to the agiary on special days when jashans are held. Kersasp is an example of a priest, understanding the changing needs of the community and adapting to the 'Winds of Change'.

So here lies a community in the middle of India where the pragmatism of the Anjuman, the ingenuity and entrepreneurship of the business fraternity, the adaptation of their priest and the kindness and generosity of their people which truly lives in the spirit of human brotherhood, can best be described as a role model community. The prosperity of the community is not in just having money, but having a prosperous soul filled with love. It is heartwarming to see the signs of change. Eckhart Tolle in his book *A New Earth* talks about this shift in consciousness – "a growing number of followers of traditional religions are able to let go of dogma, and rigid belief systems and discover the original depth that is hidden within their own spiritual tradition at the same time as they discover the depth within themselves."

Indore is the commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh. It has also produced some great sportsmen. Late Jal Godrej represented India in table tennis in 1940's, legendary



Jehangir Mehta, with his wife Phyrooza lives in Perth, Western Australia.

batsman late Capt Syed Mushtaq Ali was the first Indian to score a century away from home, a feat he achieved in England in 1936 with the opening batsman Vijay Merchant at old Trafford. His house lies adjacent to the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman in what was once the famous Parsi mohalla.

The Anjuman is looking for kind donors for their *Kathi* fund and repairs to the Agiary. Bank drafts/cheques can be drawn in favour of Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman and sent to: 80, Usha Gunj, Parsi Dharamshalla, Chawni, behind Sanyogitanganj police station, Indore 452001. The president, Bomi Heerjee can be contacted on boshheerjee@hotmail.com.

My journey from Indore to Mhow (30 kms) saw me travelling south along the Mumbai-Agra highway. Mhow which once boasted a cohesive population of rich and famous eminent Zoroastrians and philanthropists, including some famous war time heroes and army personnel, have many tales to tell of life in 1800s, the current diaspora of the ageing population and the stiff challenges faced by the Mhow Anjuman.

Reference:
The Parsis in Indore - A History by Jal Munshi



An Appeal

Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Agiary is a 166-year-old Institution located in the heart of Pune Camp area. The large Baug surrounding the agiary is regularly utilized by Zoroastrians for hosting functions. Our agiary with its surrounding areas and buildings are in urgent need of extensive repairs and renovation. Repair work on the main agiary building has already begun.

The trustees appeal to all fellow Zoroastrians in India and overseas, to please help us in this worthy cause by donating generously. Your contributions should be made in favour of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy First Baronet's Poona Fire Temple Fund and sent to:

The Chief Executive, Sir J J Charity Fund, Kalpataru Heritage, 127 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Fort, Mumbai 400 001, India.

[Contributions from overseas may be sent in the same manner as necessary permission has been obtained by the Trust]

Making winners with a difference

by hufrih taraporewala

Mickey Mehta is no fluffy brand name. He is consistently consistent at making winners who have excelled on an international level. He has shaped the destinies of numerous Miss Worlds, Miss Universes, Grasim Mr Indias, a Ford International super-model, Channel (V) pop-stars, Indian Idols and numerous Miss Indias amongst other famous people.

Many have cooked the perfect recipe for success but a precious few have managed to achieve great personal milestones in their own careers. The ingredients for his recipe are simple and his methodology is perfect. When I first read his catchy slogan, *"makes winners with a difference"*, I always wondered what that meant till I met the man himself.

I met Mickey Mehta by default! Many moons ago I was active with the World Zoroastrian Organisation back home in India. The then President of the Youth Wing thrust the responsibility of arranging a fitness seminar on me. A particularly famous fitness expert could not make it. Destiny decided otherwise. The editor of a health magazine parted with Mickey Mehta's mobile number. Just one phone call and he was at my office door the next morning. Thus started a wonderful working relationship that I will always treasure.

His hard-core professionalism was a lasting impression. As they rightly say *"first impressions are lasting impressions"*. The fitness session went swimmingly. His first claim to fame was his unique ability to teach swimming in less than 24 hours. This has earned him a mention in the Limca Book of Records. His tip on learning swimming is simple as usual. *"Befriend water, make love to water"*. He regaled the audience with his tips on health and fitness. What was clearly evident to one and all was his sincerity. The media report was well received by the Parsi community. This report was incidentally my

first tryst with writing. An astrologer's prediction that Mickey will make a fortune in the water came true.

At a recent examination at the University of Westminster in London I bagged one of the world's highest scores. When I was complimented by one of the examiners, I had a very strong urge to mention the strong and positive influence of Mickey Mehta in my career. Mickey Mehta is a small man who walks tall. There is something about him that sets him apart from other famous people who run success institutes and hold seminars worldwide. I have had the opportunity to attend quite a few but none have impressed me like the successful work and talent of Mickey Mehta. His holistic health centres have mushroomed all over the city of Mumbai and he has very realistic plans of expanding overseas. Nothing succeeds like success. Success has opened many doors for him.

This remarkably fit, talented and disciplined man has the knack of helping people excel. His students are all winners in their own right. He makes them better than the very best. Besides fitness he brings much more to the plate. Washing karmic debts, prayers, meditation, finding the 'still centres' are some of the interesting things that he covers in his training sessions. The sessions are both rigorous and gruelling. The self-discipline of this karate black-belt has to be seen to be believed. He is on time every single time. You can set your clock by his punctuality. We practised what he preached because he has learnt to obey before he commands. We respect his occasional temper because we know that he means well. He is cruel only to be kind. His self-discipline and goodness rubs onto whoever comes his way. He is no perfectionist. Never bothers to dot every 'i' or cross every 't'. He encourages people to

make big moves in their lives and career. His tip is to take calculated risks and move on to something bigger and better. As they say, "*One who is over cautious, accomplishes little*".

For around three years I served as Mickey Mehta's Public Relations Consultant. He is so respected by the fourth estate that it made my task very simple. His articles were accepted with effortless ease. Mickey has been the columnist to many prestigious publications. His article in *Mid Day* wherein he filed a fitness report on top cops of Mumbai is particularly interesting. Being an ex-Police Commissioner's niece myself, I simply adore that article.

I have won two awards in web designing and have been interviewed by CNN for my work. When he requested me to make his official vortal, I promptly agreed. Making his site; www.mickeymehtahbf.com was a labour of my love for his talents. Talents that know no boundaries. Talents that have transformed and metamorphosed rather ordinary looking Miss India contestants into svelte and ravishing beauties who have gone on to make their mark on an international level year after year. His ambitious project of making one of the world's first web gymnasium is worth a mention.

The URL:

www.mickeymehtawithouthismoustacheandmousy.com would have sounded rather cute. Just joking! Like the famous Wimbledon champion who says similar things to his kids, Mickey Mehta once challenged a Miss India contestant that he would shave half his moustache if she won the crown. She did win the crown but he did not shave half his moustache!

Mickey Mehta's secret for success is simple. He once taught me that the



best things in life are simple. His weight training methods are simple and yet so effective. His in-depth knowledge of nutrition and holistic health is exceptionally thorough and well-updated. The brass tacks are remarkably strong like the man himself. If you want to succeed, listen to him. If you want to retire early, work for him. If you want to look attractive, follow his diets. And then be prepared to stop traffic and make heads turn.

Taking into consideration his celebrity status, Mickey Mehta remains a humble man. *"Pride comes before a haughty spirit and arrogance before a fall"*. This has been mentioned in the Holy Bible. I have always pondered over these lines and watched quite a few famous and arrogant people fall. Lord Ganesha has one missing tusk. 'One' is the symbol of maya, illusion, from which everything has emerged. The missing tusk symbolises the necessary breaking of the ego before spiritual progress is possible.

"Pride will take you places", he once told me when he was teaching me fitness walking at Priyadarshini Park. Today I am very proud of my humble guru.

Despite a packed schedule Mickey finds time for wit and humour. He is a good mimic who has his friends and staff members in splits ever so often with his wise cracks and mimicry. Even his naughty jokes are a source of inspiration. He once remarked jokingly that it would take me 20 years to become famous. I took his remark in good spirits in which it was intended. I called him the very next day to make him eat crow. He is good at work and equally good at play. He will take the bull by the horns at work but will also be the life of a party. This has kept him balanced.

When Mickey Mehta spots talented people, he fires them up. He actually allows you to run neck to neck with him. We have mutual admiration for each other when we are regularly interviewed or endorse the black brands. This quality of his makes him a rare entity. Ever so often he has improved the health of business tycoons, media moghuls, beauty pageant contestants, Bollywood stars and airline crew. His clientele reads like a who's who list. Mickey Mehta is a luxury only

billionaires can afford. Unlike most obnoxious braggarts, Mickey never resorts to name dropping. He teaches us to rise above the lesser mortals who are ruthlessly jealous of our success. We soar with the eagles and not with the sparrows. We certainly do not associate ourselves with crabs.

Mickey Mehta transforms people holistically. He focuses on the mind-body-and-soul connection. His is not a fragmented approach. His approach to health is holistic and it integrates saatvic diet, yoga, meditation and Pilates. In addition to a perfect 10-body he helps improve the stamina and mental strength. In short, he helps models, airline crew, beauty pageant contestants and other mortals blossom holistically. His methods of heightening perception are exemplary. Mickey served as the brand ambassador and spokesman for Evian International Mineral Water for the South Asian Region along with endorsing the product. He is the official ambassador of the world's number one sports drink. He is a vegan who whole-heartedly supports PeTA (**P**eople for **E**thical **T**reatment of **A**nimals).

Let me narrate a personal experience. Just before I married Aspi and moved to London I was facing a rather alarming problem of burning out. I had raced so much in my career that I had not stopped to gasp for breath. So many achievements on a regular basis had left me drained and unable to tap my potential. From writers' block to diffidence, I was experiencing it all. It was a crucial time in my personal life and my career. My otherwise strong confidence was sagging. I approached Mickey at the office and poured my heart to him. As usual, his cure was simple. He asked me to sit quietly in any peaceful place of worship. That did it and I bounced back with more fervour. Discovered talents whose existence I was not even aware of. I surprised myself with my renewed and rejuvenated self. I myself do not know what I was capable of achieving. Till today I cling to his every word. He has made me a very contented and confident achiever.

"Be in utmost passivity. Let quietude be your state. Let your mind dissolve into awareness progress into

consciousness. *Let consciousness take you beyond nothingness, hollowness, emptiness and wholeness and may you be in blissful harmony.*" This was once the voice mail of Mickey Mehta, one of India's finest and highest paid holistic health gurus whose *"blood is deep into spirituality, deep into faith, deep into prayers"*. His hands that give are holier than his lips that pray. The good that this do-gooder keeps doing keeps coming back to him in multitudes.

Let me take this opportunity to discuss the enormous powers of prayer in medicine. An American physician has researched the powers of prayer to heal patients. He has written many interesting books on this topic. An exceptionally interesting one cautions you to be careful what you pray for, for it may just come true! Patients in hospitals in USA that have a chapel have a higher recovery rate than hospitals that do not have a chapel in their midst. Bernard Russell once mentioned, *"God heals, the doctor only collects his fees"*. Mickey Mehta's spiritual powers are so powerful that his sincere prayers go from his lips to God's ears.

Mickey Mehta has been interviewed on BBC extensively on his unique philosophy of *Health Beyond Fitness* which has an all encompassing approach to health. *Health Beyond Fitness* is a mission that aims at holistic health by building your spirit and not just your body. Its prime objective is to liberate the human society from suffering of diseases, ailments, surgeries and sail through life with joy, peace and fulfilment. It has inter-weaved the essence of the Vedas, Yoga, Zen, Tao, Tantra, to transform and enhance lives and lifestyles for the better. He has spoken on holistic health and spirituality at the Indian Business Report on CNN. He has been an expert panellist of shows on CNBC and answers queries on Microsoft MSN messenger. They say that unless you seek publicity, you may never get it. Mickey Mehta has proved the PR gurus wrong. Publicity and success follow him wherever he goes. He commands respect and even his rivals grudgingly admire him. We have great respect for the man who has made us. I would not mind getting under his car and fixing his tyres. Something I will never do for my own car.

Incidentally Mickey is a school drop out. When you hear Mickey speak he does not sound like a man who had dropped out of school. He sounds like he is straight out of a top business school. He is a good orator who speaks from a position of strength. When I was 26 years old I had made a company along with graduates from a top business school in India. Mickey was gracious enough to support us and lent his name to add credibility to our web-site. Needless to say that we merged the company with India's second best health site. Even his name spells success. Nothing succeeds like success. You do not need a degree from a top business school to be super-successful. Life has a lot to teach you and the lessons are free. Coyotes learn from their own mistakes and grow. They learn to survive against all odds and thrive.

Till today he remains a very caring son to his old parents. The hand that once rocked his cradle still rules his world. He let his old mother recuperate in a nursing home for quite a while whilst he got a new house done up for her. He is a rough-weather friend who will stand by you in hard times, an excellent teacher who sets good examples and above all an exceptionally good human being. The man above has made him with care and at absolute leisure. God has blessed him with so many good qualities that I have lost count. His random acts of kindness are a daily affair. He is truly a rare delight.

As I write this article I am listening to the famous song *"The winner takes it all and the loser is standing small"*. The same song that is played at many a beauty pageant that I have attended. I conclude this article with heartfelt gratitude to the adorable winner responsible for so many super-achievers. He has made such good friends on his way up that we ensure he remains on top and enjoys the magnificent view forever. This is the rise and rise of Mickey Mehta who started small. May there be a life coach like Mickey Mehta in everyone's life and a son like Mickey Mehta in everyone's home. He is a wonderful piece of work.

"Sir, Thank You for making me,/ I will fly with the eagles./ But may you soar so high,/ That you reach out and touch the SKY!" ■■■■



Dr Hufrih Taraporewala is a dentist by profession and a prolific health writer by choice. She has also been a successful dotcommer. She is the author of a book *Doctor are you Internet Savvy?*, the contributing editor of Indian edition of the American journal *Ophthalmology Times*. Hufrih has two national medical records to her credit; widely interviewed by the media for her contributions in the *Times of India*, *Business India*, *NRI & Employment Times*, *Mid Day*, *rediff.com*, *CNNIndia dotcom* to name just a few. Her official web-site www.drhufrih.co.uk showcases her work and contributions. Hufrih is based in London with her husband Aspi, where she is currently studying for her Overseas Registration Examinations.

Keeping the Flame Alive

by farishta murzban dinshaw

In today's world, "religious education" has taken on a negative connotation, evoking visions of suicide bombers and brainwashed youth, particularly when you hear in the media that although Taliban fighters are Afghani, almost all of them, including their commander Mullah Omar, studied in *madressahs* (religious schools) in Pakistan.

Yet, Pakistan is also home of innovative programmes in religious education in the Zoroastrian community. Shams-ul-Ulema, Dastur Maneckji Dhalla described religious education in Karachi in his autobiography in 1946, *"The Parsi populace of Karachi dates back to about a hundred and twenty-five years. The first institution established in 1859 was called, as in the township of Gujarat and the schools of Bombay, The Karachi Parsi Balakshala for teaching Gujarati and Zend Avesta. Of course the knowledge of Zend Avesta in such schools was limited to making children learn by rote the prayers necessary for the Navjote ceremony and whatever moral instruction the mobed was capable of imparting ... Arrangements to educate the children of the community in Karachi commenced from the time the Parsis settled here. As time passed the schools progressed and within three decades fine and spacious separate High Schools situated in large compounds started functioning for boys and girls. From the beginning the pupils of these schools were being taught prayers that were necessary for the performance of their Navjote. Formerly, when the boys and girls schools had not yet been separated and classes were conducted only up to the Gujarati 6th grade, an Athornan teacher took the children to the Agyari on every Hamkara day and made them recite the Atash Nyais and other prayers ... In 1926 the benevolent heirs of the Eduljee Dinshaw family donated a sum of Rs100/- every month to the Trustees of the Anjoman here on condition that I give certain periodical religious instruction in both the schools. Not on the wide scale as is done in the schools of Bombay of teachers being appointed by various organizations to impart religious instruction daily, but I was to teach combined higher classes in both schools only twice a week and for half an hour at each turn."*¹

Karachi was fortunate that there were many individuals who followed in Dastur Dhalla's footsteps to impart in-depth knowledge about Zarathushtra's teachings, such as Dr Maneck Pithawala, Tehmurasap Sethna, Ervard Godrej Sidhwa, Dr Ali Jafarey, all scholars and authors in their own right. However, Karachi was particularly fortunate to have two innovative programmes that were initiated in Karachi, but outreached the Zarathushtrian diaspora worldwide thanks to the dynamism, creative talent and dedication of the two individuals who almost single-handedly kept the flame alive - Virasp Pirozshah Mehta of Informal Religious Meetings (IRM) Trust Fund, and Arnavaz Murzban Dinshaw of The Friday School for Little Zarathushtis.

Virasp Mehta was one of a group of individuals who got together regularly to discuss Zarathushtrian teaching amongst themselves. In 1975, these informal meetings were formalized as Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund (IRM) and he became one of the Managing Trustees of its Trust Fund from its inception till his death. He was the guiding light of the organization, tirelessly and selflessly organizing lectures, quizzes, competitions, so that the community could learn about our religion and history. He was self-taught, reading extensively and going to lectures by Karachi's own scholars like Tehmurasap Sethna and Ali Jafarey as well as visiting



Virasp Pirozshah Mehta

scholars like John Hinnells and Meher Master-Moos. One of his lasting legacies to our community and for anyone interested in learning about our religion is the collection of monthly newsletters (named *Ushao* in 2000 to mark IRM's 25th anniversary) that he produced almost single-handedly as a labour of love. He took the newsletter from a single cyclostyled sheet first churned out on a creaking machine in a backroom of Bhedwar Library in 1979 to a 16-page e-newsletter that was distributed in hard copy and online to thousands of readers worldwide.

Virasp uncle was also prolific playwright. He also wrote many plays produced under the aegis of IRM. The first one was *The Dream Comes True* in 1977, but of more than 30 plays that he wrote the most popular was *Navjote nu Band* which went on for many encore performances due to public demand. They were all entertaining plays with social or moral messages and

epitomized his teaching philosophy that you do not have to hammer your point of view when you can gently educate the audience.

One of the many things I valued about my relationship with Virasp uncle over the span of thirty years was his unending patience and courtesy. Even when I was a fifteen-year old sulking through class because of having to miss a picnic to help out at Friday School, his gentleness and generosity would nudge me into wanting to do the right thing. One of the things I learned from him

was the "leap and the net will appear" kind of faith. He was always ready to publicize an event or publish a book even when all the ducks weren't lined up in a row, and time and again, things would work out in the

end. But perhaps the most important gift that I received from him was a deep appreciation for Zarathushtra's message. He unveiled for me the profound beauty and the timeless, universal appeal of the Gathas. From Virasp uncle I learned that being a Zarathushti is not a cultural or a religious identity, but a quest to discover what is best around us and within us, to strive to serve and refresh the world, to practice *humata, hukhta, hvarshata* as a way of life. I learned a lot about "walking the talk about *humata, hukhta, hvarashata*" from my mother as well. In 1970, a personal tragedy changed the course of her life. My nine-month old brother Darius suffered irreversible brain damage when food got stuck in his trachea, cutting off oxygen to the brain and leaving him with minimal responses

to his environment. My mother began searching for answers in philosophy and spirituality, never losing faith in God or becoming bitter. She used to say, "When you fall into boiling water you can become soft and sweet like a potato or hardboiled like an egg. I pray 'God, please make me a potato'." She read books on Zoroastrianism, attended lectures and corresponded with scholars.

One day, I came home from school and asked a lot of questions about our religion because our Urdu teacher had told our class

After an absence of nearly eight months, USHAO (The Dawn) is back. Virasp Mehta's demise in June 2008 was followed by the disbanding of the Informal Religious Meetings (IRM) Trust Fund in Karachi. The funds were handed over by the Trustees to Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal. This issue of the Hamazor has been sponsored through these funds, courtesy of KZBM. IRM's monthly newsletter, USHAO, also ceased being published at that time.

As a tribute to Virasp Mehta's forty years of dedication to keep the flame of knowledge and Zoroastrian faith alive, Farishta Murzban Dinshaw and Jamsheed Virasp Mehta have decided to produce quarterly issues of an electronic version of *Ushao*. It is fitting that the first edition of e-*Ushao* was circulated at Jamshedi NoRooz (March 21), a time for new beginnings. Please send an email to ushao1@yahoo.com if you would like to be added to the mailing list.



Arnavaz, my mother

that only Muslims can enter heaven. Recognizing that Zoroastrian children in non-Parsi Pakistani schools were inundated with Islamic or Catholic images and information, she spearheaded a movement to start religious classes for them. She volunteered her Montessori school premises for weekend classes for children where they could learn

about our religion through activities, songs and stories and she ran the Friday School for Little Zarathushtis for over twenty-five years. My sister Diana and I were “voluntold” into helping out every Friday [and later on Sundays]. As I was in my mid-teens at that time, this was not my preferred mode of spending a weekend morning, but I learned a lot about our religion and history from that experience. She developed a series of four Activity Books and a series of history books to teach children religion through puzzles, stories and games. The Activity Books are used by Sunday School teachers and parents around the world. Over the years, Friday School students put up many successful concerts and plays. Virasp uncle composed the songbooks for Friday School’s lavish musical performances open to all community members: *Song of Sanjan*, which told the story of the Parsis’ arrival in India, and *Shahnameh Cavalcade*, which depicted stories of kings and warriors from the Shahnameh.

One of the traditions my mother started at Friday School was Jamshedi Navroze celebrations, which, unlike Christmas or Valentine’s Day, were unfamiliar to many Parsis. She read up on the history and traditions of Navroze so we began to set the *sofreh haft-seen* – or tablecloth with seven gifts of Nature with names beginning with the Farsi letter “seen”. Eggs are an integral symbol of rebirth and rejuvenation, and are therefore a big part of Navroze celebrations. I remember that every year on the night

before Friday School’s Navroze party, we would sit around our dining table with sheets of newspapers covering the tablecloth and bowls of food dyes in front of us as Mummy, Diana and I painted enough boiled eggs to offer every child.

From my mother I learned an appreciation of the deep meaning of our prayers. If I had to single out *one* lesson, it would be the words from the *Jasa mein Avanghe Mazda* prayer, “**Astuye humatem mano**. I choose to think good thoughts. **Astuye hukthem vacho**. I choose to speak good words. **Astuye hvarshthem shyaothnem**, I choose to do good deeds”. My mother emphasized that free choice and individual responsibility were the cornerstones of Zarathushtra’s teaching. I remember Alexander Pope’s words that my mother wrote in my autograph book when I was eight-years-old and which have shaped my values and work ethic, “Honour and shame from no condition rise; act well your part, there all the honour lies”. Both Virasp uncle and my mother were exemplary teachers who gave “religious education” a positive connotation.

Reference

1 “As A Teacher Of Religious Instruction In Schools” (Chapter XLIII). *Dastur Dhalla, The Saga of a Soul: an autobiography of Shams-ul-ulama Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla, High Priest of the Parsis of Pakistan / translated into English by Gool & Behram Sohrab H. J. Rustomji. Karachi: Dastur Dr. Dhalla Memorial Institute, 1975.*



Farishta Dinshaw has teaching in her genes. Currently she works as a Community Development Worker, Family Violence Initiative, supporting 11 ethno-cultural agencies in Toronto to raise awareness about violence against women, children & elders.

She has presented papers on various topics relevant to the Zoroastrian religion and community at three international congresses. Farishta is also the author of the insightful story of a fictional boy befriended by Zarathushtra called “Discovering Ashavan”.

Meher Toorkey plays music to save tigers

by sammy bhiwandiwalla

In chic Hampstead, tucked behind the boutiques and trendy eating places thronged by the 20 plus brigade, nestles the Rosslyn Hill Chapel first erected in 1692, an oasis of peace and tranquillity, welcoming people of all religious faiths as well as those who are humanistic.

This small Gothic structure was the venue for an evening of classical music in aid of the charity Global Tiger Patrol. Amada Bright, a solicitor by profession and Chairman of GTP gave a brief introduction on the charity's activities in minimising the threat that is posed to the fast diminishing numbers, currently as low as 1,411 of this magnificent species. Poaching, habitat encroachment, depressed reproduction and demand for tiger skins and body parts primarily in China were to blame.

GTP's strategy involves Protection, Habitat conservation & reclamation, People-centred conservation: without the support and co-operation of local people the tiger has no chance of survival.

Research and data collection: To save the tiger, it is crucial to know numbers, where they live and how much they move in search of new territory and different mates (to maintain a healthy population). Projects in India are run in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya and Uttar Pradesh etc.

The evening's programme [20th March] commenced with the Brunelleschi String Quartet playing Schubert's – Quartettstanz No 12 in C minor. This was followed

with Hayden's – Symphony No 26 in d minor under the baton of Conductor Patrick Noronha and The Patrick Noronha Camerata, a small ensemble of talented young musicians who executed their performance with professionalism.

Gabriela Di Laccio a very talented young Soprano from Brazil with Operatic and Baroque repertoire, performed Mozart's - *Ah se in ciel, benigne stele*, K538 which concluded with enthusiastic applause from the audience.



After a brief interval the second half commenced with Mozart's – *Ch'io mi scordi di te*, K505 sung once again by Gabriela Di Laccio and accompanied by renowned pianist Meher Toorkey and the orchestra.

Meher needs no introduction as a pianist. Meher has performed in India, America and at UK's leading concert venues like Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and the Fairfield Halls where she played Beethoven's Triple Concerto. Her performances have also been televised on Central Television, Channel 4 and ITV and she has given masters-classes in the US to aspiring young musicians. [see *Hamazor* Issue 4/2004]



Perhaps not so well known is her other passion, animal welfare. Meher has given several concerts in aid of animal welfare organisations including recording a CD of Russian piano music for 21st Century Tiger. <http://www.21stcenturytiger.org/> Today's concert was the second occasion in aid of Global Tiger Patrol. www.globaltigerpatrol.org

The evening concluded with the much awaited performance by Meher of Mozart's – Piano Concerto in E Flat Major, K271. A rapt audience, captivated by her svelte fingers on the keyboard listened spellbound to a brilliantly executed and masterful performance.



Sammy Bhiwandiwalla since arriving in the UK was in employment and in 1970, formed his own company together with his wife Ursula, trading in chemical products for the foundry and model making industry. After 35 years they hope to call it a day soon, with four grand children to occupy them in the future.

Ursula and Sammy always took an active interest in community matters in the UK and were greatly influenced by the actions and sincere beliefs of individuals that in a changing world it was necessary to create a more balanced and equitable community within the UK. He was requested to join the WZO Board and in 1988 was elected as Community Relations Officer. Later he was elected as the Hon Treasurer, followed as the Jt Hon Secretary and since 2004 the Chairman.



Oxfam Trailwalker – The SoupA Stars of Auckland

"Oxfam Trailwalker is an annual fundraising event organised and promoted by Oxfam New Zealand. The trailwalker challenges teams to walk or run 100kms through Taupo in central New Zealand in 36 hours. That's not all, teams must also raise funds – a minimum of \$2,000 to help support Oxfam's work to overcome poverty and injustice in the worlds poorest communities.

"This year, Trailwalker had a team of young Zoroastrian students from Auckland walking the 100kms. SoupA Stars, a team of friends consisting of Perzen Darukhanawalla (21), Kashmira Medhora (21), Nazneen Sukhia (19) and Xerxes Sukhia (16) joined the event in the hope that all the training would make them 'fit'. They also wanted to give something back to the community. "We took part in this because our funds were not merely going to be given to the poor. Instead, Oxfam helps develop sustainable business within a village and actually lifts them out of poverty" says Perzen.

"The event is all about teamwork and the right mental attitude. Members have to train together, fundraise together as well as start and finish the race together. It therefore requires great mental strength as members must not only push their bodies beyond its limit but also encourage the team to do the same and not fall apart under pressure. The walk was very tough on all four of the members who were suffering from lack of sleep, sore knees and ankles, blistered feet and fatigue. But, they finished it in 33 hours and 47 minutes. It was a commendable effort on all the team members and especially Xerxes who is only 16 and was the youngest participant on Trailwalker. The support crew consisting of the participants parents', Shahrukh, Farzana and Niki deserve a special thank you for all their efforts as the team could not have finished the walk without them. "They met us at every checkpoint with food, drink, foot massages, medication, hugs and most importantly moral

support and have also helped us through the whole fundraising process” says Kashmirira. We would also like to thank everyone who has donated to our team and supported us at every fundraising activity. The race is over but we still need your support and you can provide this by donating on our team webpage.

http://www.oxfam.org.nz/events/teams.asp?a=show_team_pages&eventid=23&teamid=3470

“Walking 100kms showed us that we truly are SoupA Stars. Unleash the SoupA Star within you and help us create an environment where the under privileged can help themselves. Thanks!
SoupA Stars”



L to R - Nazneen Sukhia, Kashmirira Medhora, Xerxes Sukhia, Perzen Darukhanawalla



Sitting, L to R: Xerxes Sukhia, Perzen Darukhanawalla, Nazneen Sukhia, Kashmirira Medhora, Pervin Medhora. Back: L to R: Niki Sreen, Shahrukh Khambatta, Firoz Sukhia, Zarin Sukhia, Kersi Medhora, Sarosh Petigara, Farzana Dumasias, Shernaz Petigara.

Parsi Zoroastrian Association of South East Asia (PZAS) - Singapore

“Plant-A-Tree Programme: Contribute to Our Environment”

“**Thirty** Zoroastrian members and their families planted trees in conjunction with the National Parks Board on Saturday, April 25th, 2009. We were allocated a scenic plot of land along the Geylang Park Connector overlooking the Geylang River. Two types of trees were provided for us, the pretty flowering pink Mempat (Cratoxylum Formosum) tree, and the Glum tree (Puteh, Melaleuca Cajupati) with a paper-like bark which is indigenous to the area. Everyone was very excited to be part of this project especially the children who couldn’t wait to get started on planting their trees.

“So we put on our gloves, picked up our gardening tools, dug deep into the ground and left our marks, forever, in Singapore.”



Warren Buffett’s advice for 2009

- Hard work: All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.
- Laziness: A sleeping lobster is carried away by the water current.
- Earnings: Never depend on a single source of income. (at least make your investments get you second earning)
- Spending: If you buy things you don’t need, you’ll soon sell things you need.
- Savings: Don’t save what is left after spending; spend what is left after saving.
- Borrowings: The borrower becomes the lender’s slave.
- Accounting: It’s no use carrying an umbrella, if your shoes are leaking.
- Auditing: Beware of little expenses; a small leak can sink a large ship.
- Risk taking: Never test the depth of the river with both feet. (have an alternate plan ready)
- Investment: Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.

Mr Buffett feels certain those who have already been practicing the above principles remain financially healthy and those who resolve to start practicing these principles will quickly regain their financial health.

ORBIS

by katayoun [lizzie] bekhradnia

In January 2009, I started working for a charity called ORBIS - a global non-profit organisation working to save sight and eliminate avoidable blindness across the developing world.

I was thrilled to be offered the job. Not only is ORBIS a fantastic organisation, working for a hugely important yet understated cause, but it is also an issue with which I have a strong affiliation.

In 1947 my Grandfather, Shahriar Bekhradnia – an officer in the Iranian army and a Zoroastrian - was blinded in a border dispute between Iran and the Soviet Union. Despite the best efforts of the medical team in the hospital in Tehran, they were unable to save his sight. He came to London for specialist treatment, but it was too late to help him. Having been told he would never see again, he made the difficult decision to move to London where the quality of life for a disabled man would be far greater than in Iran. It would be two years before his wife and not yet born son (my father) were able to join him. [refer to pp 42-43 & *Hamazor* Issue 1/2006, pp 7-12].

My Grandfather's story is all too familiar in the developing world where, due to lack of appropriate facilities and treatment, millions of people suffer from blindness. Luckily for My Grandfather, he was able to move to London where he was taught a skill, and was able to claim a decent standard of life for his family. Unfortunately, for millions across the developing world this is not a possibility. What is worse is that for most of them – unlike my Grandfather – their blindness is easily avoidable.

Why ORBIS?

It surprises many people to learn that blindness affects over 37 million people in

the world, and that around 75% of these cases could be prevented or cured with the right eye care resources and medical interventions. Though 90 percent of the world's blind people reside in developing countries these treatments are often not available there.

ORBIS provides the tools, training and technology for local doctors and health care professionals to develop solutions to tackle avoidable blindness in their own countries. By building long-term capabilities in eye care institutions, ORBIS supports its partners in providing quality eye care services that are affordable, accessible and ultimately sustainable.



DC10 photo courtesy ORBIS

At the heart of ORBIS's work is the Flying Eye Hospital. Established in 1982 and staffed by crew and volunteer medical faculty, this 'hospital with wings' is a fully equipped

teaching facility built inside a DC-10 aircraft. ORBIS also carries out hospital-based training programmes in the countries where the need is greatest and has established long-term country programmes in Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, India and Vietnam.

What are the benefits?

The benefits that ORBIS brings to developing countries are phenomenal and can be seen for years after leaving a country. ORBIS never simply flies in, operates, and flies out again, but ensures that sight-saving work will continue through the training of local doctors and nurses. What is more, these ORBIS trained doctors and nurses can then train others meaning that people will continue to benefit from ORBIS's work for generations to come.

Not only is ORBIS's work sustainable, but the effects are real and immediate. For example, cataracts are the most common cause of blindness, and a simple sight-saving cataract operation takes no longer than 20 minutes to perform. At only £19 per operation, few acts of charitable giving can have such a profound and immediate effect on one person's life. Just think – a single £20 donation can save the sight of one person.

ORBIS does not work in Iran, the home of my Grandfather and father. But it does work in India which, sadly, shoulders the world's largest burden of blindness. So I do have the satisfaction of knowing that through my work I may be helping Zoroastrians among the thousands of people whose sight ORBIS saves in India each year.

My next step working for ORBIS is to raise awareness of the work that ORBIS does amongst different communities within the UK, particularly among those with links to the countries which benefit from our work. To start, I hope to find volunteers in different communities to put on various events to raise funds and awareness. From social activities like cake sales and coffee mornings, to music nights and dinners – for us raising awareness of our work and the severity of the issue of avoidable blindness across the developing world is just as important as raising money.

If you are interested, or know anyone else that would be interested, in helping ORBIS in any way, if you have any questions about this article, or more generally about the work that ORBIS does across the globe – or if you would like a speaker at an event - then please do get in touch. You can write to me on the address below, email me at community@orbis.org.uk, or you can call me on 020 7608 7278.



Katayoun travelled for several months in Central America before returning to the UK and began working for ORBIS UK in January.

The daughter of Bahram, and granddaughter of Shahriar and Laal Bekhradnia, Yazdi Zarthushtis, Katayoun (Lizzie) was born and educated in England, graduating from the University of Manchester with a Bachelors degree in Ancient History. She worked as a fundraiser first for Oxfam GB and then for a charity in New York for a year. After leaving New York,



Santosh Das at post-op examination



And two days after surgery

Photos courtesy Matt Shonfeld

Santosh's Aunt Sona was distressed and worried about the surgery, she spoke of Santosh's life before he developed cataracts. "I feel very dreadful that Santosh cannot see, before he used to play and share things with his brother and sister. At first the cataracts were only small and didn't cause too many problems but they gradually got worse, he couldn't even see things to pick them up of the floor."

When asked what his mother will think about his new eye Santosh replied: "She will be so happy and have a big smile."

When Dr Smith saw the grinning Santosh the following day she was delighted: "That was the first time I've seen him smile, I didn't even realise he had no front teeth, that's amazing" she beamed.



Nand Pramod giving the thumbs up. Photo courtesy ORBIS

From a mother of a 7 month old called Devprasannaraju, from India, who suffered from cataracts as a result of an infection during his mothers pregnancy. "We named our son as 'Devprasannaraju' which means God's gift. God has gifted him with multiple diseases, but given us a ray of hope as well in the form of ORBIS-Sankara." He was treated at Sankara Eye Hospital where an ORBIS trained Paediatric Ophthalmologist worked.

NouRouz, Pasargad

Hamazor has refrained from carrying news on how NouRouz was celebrated around the world as Fezana's Journal will be carrying this event.

Fariborz Rahnamoon sent this particular news which I feel is rather special, especially as it was celebrated by non-Zoroastrians at Pasargad. - Ed.

Authorities made it difficult for people to visit the tomb. They were not allowed to park at the parking lot and public transport was not made available. But that did not stop the youth from visiting the tomb of Cyrus, specially at the time of the Equinox when the new year begins. For the last few years people

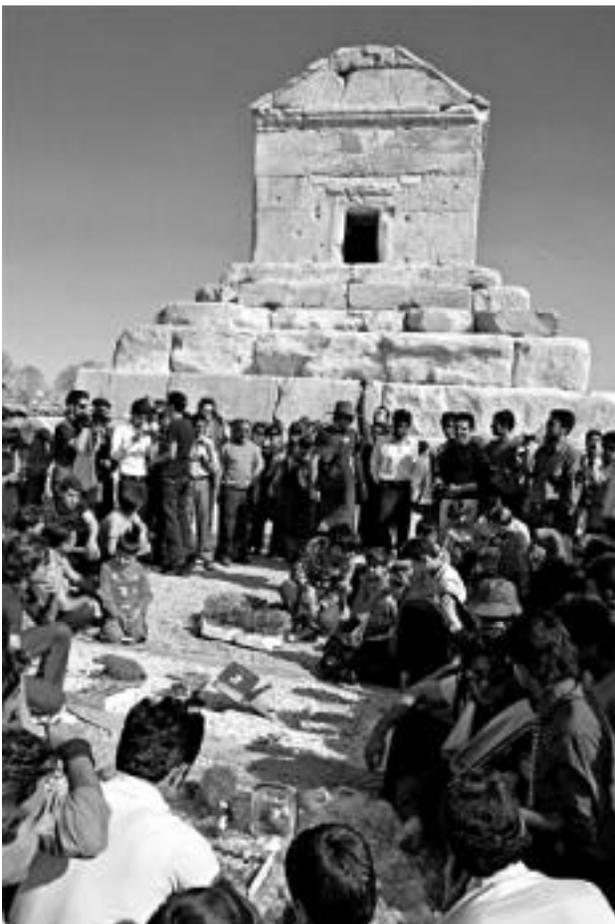


At the tomb of Cyrus, people showering flowers

walk long distances to be there at the time of the NouRouz and shower flowers on the tomb and spread their Haftsein table with the holy book of Avesta and Shahnameh. Prayers and national songs, "Ey Iran", were chanted by all.

There were no Zoroastrians among the crowd.

This movement has started among the new generation of Iranians which is not stoppable by the regime. - FR.



Thirst for water

Thirst – verb. To feel a need to drink. To have a strong desire for something.



Did you know?

We are all water creatures, making up 60% of your body, 70% of your brain, 80% of your blood.

While you can go almost a month without food, your body cant survive a week without water.

The same water that existed on earth billions of years ago still exists today. It covers most of the planet, but just 3% is freshwater and most of that is ice. Less than 1% of all freshwater is readily accessible for human use. To put it another way less than 0.007% of all the water on earth is available to drink.



Did you know?

A quarter of all the clean water that enters your home is used to flush toilets, one toilet flush uses 3 gallons, a single load of laundry 40 gallons, a 10-minute shower 50 gallons, brushing your teeth with the tap running 4 gallons, but with the tap off 0.25 gallons.



Did you know?

A water crisis is looming. Our water sources are under pressure. In the 20th century the world's population tripled and the use of water grew 6 times. By mid-century there will be an additional 3 billion people. Most will be born in countries already experiencing water shortages.



What will that mean for water use?

The Los Angeles basin can support about 1 million people with its own water. By the year 2020, the population is expected to reach 22 million. El Paso and San Antonio could run out of water in 10 to 20 years. Central Florida could run out in less than 5.



Did you know?

Millions of people in the world live on less than 3 gallons each day. The average American uses about 160 gallons. 25 million refugees were displaced by contaminated rivers last year, that is more than were forced to flee from war zones.

1 in 3 people lack access to adequate sanitation.

1 in 5 don't have access to safe drinking water.

According to the UN, a child dies from a water-related disease every 15 seconds.

The emerging worldwide water shortage is serious. Its been said, we are going to run out of water before we run out of oil. Due to over-pumping the groundwater in several countries is almost gone. Depleted aquifers lead to cutbacks in grain harvests which lead to more food shortages and higher prices. China is already developing large grain deficits, as India, Pakistan and Egypt. Our water problem is fast becoming a hunger problem.



So what does it all mean?

It's a thirsty world, industry is thirsty, agriculture is thirsty, we are thirsty, what will be the straw that breaks the camel's back?

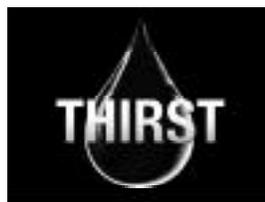
Its time to give water a second thought

Use less

Save more

Advocate always

Now you know





The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 Tension Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF

Registration No 1510380 Cardiff, England

A Company Limited by Guarantee

Incorporated 1980

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP

_____ 20 _____

The Joint Honorary Secretaries
The World Zoroastrian Organisation

Dear Sirs,

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

I confirm that I am (Tick as appropriate):

- (a) person born into and confirmed into the Zoroastrian faith
- (b) non-Zoroastrian spouse married to a Zoroastrian
- (c) a child of marriage as described in (b) above

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

Yours truly,

Signature

Block Capitals please FULL NAME _____

PROFESSION/OCCUPATION _____

IF STUDENT DATE OF BIRTH _____ E-MAIL _____

ADDRESS IN COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE _____

TEL: RES _____ OFF _____ MOBILE _____

Proposed by _____ **Seconded by** _____

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date	Amount Received	Date of Membership	Register of Members	Mailing List

It may be more convenient for you to apply for or renew your membership of WZO through our website, www.w-z-o.org, and paying by a Credit or Debit card.

Membership Fees

For Indian residents

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

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

For UK residents & other countries

Grand Patron	£ 500	Patron	£ 250	Permanent Assoc Member	£ 150
Ordinary Assoc Member	£10 pa	Life Member	£ 100	Ordinary Member for 3 yrs	£ 30
Student	Gratis till 25 years of age				

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

For USA residents

Permanent Assoc Member	\$ 225	Ordinary Assoc Member	\$ 25 pa
Life Member	\$ 150	Ordinary Member for 3 yrs	\$45
Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

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

For Canadian residents

Permanent Assoc Member	C\$ 325	Ordinary Assoc Member	C\$ 30 pa
Life Member	C\$ 200	Ordinary Member for 3 yrs	C\$ 60
Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

Please send application form and cheque payable in Candian Dollars as "OZCF, WZO Fees" to: Mr Marzi Byramji, Regal Press, 3265 Wharton Way, Unit, Mississauga, Ontario L4X 2X9. Tel: (905) 238 8005

For Pakistani residents

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

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

For New Zealand residents

Grand Patron	NZ\$1,500	Patron	NZ\$750	Life Member	NZ\$300
Ordinary for 3 yrs	NZ\$90	Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

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

“...let us reverently give

an offering to Thee, Lord, and to truth, all of us
creatures under Thy rule whom one has
nourished with good thinking ...”

yasna 34.3

insler translation

