

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

# HAMAZOR

Issue 2005



WZO  
Celebrates  
Twenty Five Years



The Chairman, WZO - p 24

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## WZO WEBSITE

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

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*Karachi, Pakistan*



## *From the Editor*

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Hamazor celebrates with WZO and its members, our 25th anniversary, date of which was 4 March, through this publication. At London, an event was held on Saturday 19th, to offer thanks and to acknowledge the generosity of the major donors enabling WZO to carry out its many projects and, a dinner-dance gala which followed. It needs to be recorded, that without the support of hundreds of individuals all over the world, WZO would not have achieved the myriad of activities mentioned on page 84 .




I have invited Shahpur Captain to be the Guest Editor for the articles appearing in this commemorative issue, who is our valued Board Member and was our former Chairman, President, Vice President and initiator of forming this world body in 1980. He started a simple newsletter far back in the early 80s in London, before Hamazor came into being under the editorship of Noshir Dadrawala of Bombay. Living in London, and having access to past records, Shahpur had to become researcher for data, overnight, which I wished to include, for which I thank him. Photographs of past events held in London have been sent by Shahpur, events and projects arranged by World Zoroastrian Trust through Dinshaw Tamboly and some highlights of Delhi by Dadi Mistry all through DHL and Karachi comes to you through myself. The photo display gives a good insight of the diverse work carried out by WZO.

This commemorative issue will be arriving late to your homes, which is intentional, as we wished to include the festivities of our Silver Jubilee. There will be no second issue as is the norm, as this volume is larger than usual and will incur more expense both for printing and posting. The second half of the issue which is entitled "Happenings" has been included by me for your reading pleasure as most of it is topical and will be out-of-date by the following Hamazor, which will reach you in September.

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



## *From the Guest Editor*



**T**oxy Cowasjee, our very competent editor very kindly invited me to be the Guest Editor for the 25th Anniversary commemorative issue of the Hamazor, as in her words 'I was the man who envisaged WZO and put it on the map.' I wish to record my sincere thanks to Toxy before proceeding further.

As I look back on the last 25 years of WZO's existence, I feel humbled and satisfied that from nothing the WZO has now grown to maturity and is generally recognised as an organisation that has changed the definition of charity. It has been a pleasure to work along with a small team of dedicated Zoroastrians intent on reaching out to the needs of the community in every sphere of necessity. I salute the team sincerely.

With regard to the articles in this issue of the Hamazor, all the authors have been connected with WZO in some fashion or another. Professors Helmut Humbach and Antonio Paniano delivered papers at two of the important seminars held by WZO on Zoroastrian religion. Prof John Hinnells has shown his deep interest in the study of our community that has now dispersed the world over besides having gone through all the files and records of WZO as a researcher. Dr Yasmine Jhabvala, and Dina McIntyre, both worthy scholars of our religion, have taken part at various times in our seminars. Dr Farhang Mehr, apart from

delivering papers a number of times at our seminars, was ofcourse responsible for inducing me to form The WZO. Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani is well known universally for his immense knowledge of Zarathushtra's message and has graced many of the our seminars. In addition, he has been a staunch supporter of the WZO, a member of the Board, to date, and at one time, the Vice President. Dr Kersey Antia, Adi Davar and Farrokh Vajifdar have delivered talks at seminars and have been committee members; the latter two having retired, whereas Dr Antia is still a member of the International Board. Noshir Dadrawala was our first and only editor for the Hamazor, till Toxy took over in 2002. Dinshaw Tamboly was a very active member of the Board till he stepped down at the last AGM in September, 2004 to devote more time to charitable activities of the WZO in India. Jehan Bagli, our Board Member and President of the North American Mobed Council and Mehernosh Bhadha both share their views; the experienced and the other on the brink of being an adult. We are privileged to have Dr Zartosht Azadi's article in Farsi comparing Valentine's day with Mehrgan and I am delighted that on this special occasion, we have been fortunate enough to have very interesting articles from Dr Dolly Dastoor from Canada, a former President of FEZANA and Rohinton Rivetna, who was responsible for the formation of FEZANA and its first

President. And our Grand Patron member, Ambassador Marker, for sharing his erudite article with us. To all of the forgoing, I wish to express my sincere thanks for their kindness in obliging me.

I hope that the members and readers of this commemorative issue of the Hamazor will find it interesting and thought provoking.

Allow me to dilate on a matter, I believe, is of utmost importance for the future of our community. The view expressed below are my personal ones and not of the WZO Board.

For well nigh 150 years, our community has been following a policy of 'we must be united.' Whenever anyone raised important matters concerning the attitude of the community to necessary changes, it was brushed aside on the grounds of unity. An integral part of this concept required our youth to marry within the community. A hue and cry was raised that the community will die out if unity was not enforced. Those who wished to deliberate were castigated, so were those who dared to marry outside the community. Unity was a catchword for papering over the chasm in the community between those rooted in the past and those who could see the danger facing the community and wishing to move forward.


In the past 50 years, this chasm has deepened and widened with more young Zoroastrians, both boys and girls marrying non-Zoroastrians and turning their back on the community. In India

roughly 30% and in the West 70 to 80% of our youth marry outside the community. Our children have moved on but not our elders, who have failed to recognise that time and tide waits for no one. The cry of those rooted in the past, who call themselves orthodox, and others as reformers, is that it is not the numbers but the quality that matters. As said previously, any rational discussion is taboo and is met with the cry of unity.

So what sort of unity should we have? Do we have the unity of dhanshak parties or unity of purpose. To move forward, it would appear that unity of purpose is more important, now that we face catastrophe a mere 20 years from now.

As I write this, news from India is that the 'orthodox' have formed their own world body. In the light of this development, it would be very wise of all those who seek to change the accepted practices in the community to join together and what better organisation to join than The World Zoroastrian Organisation, which has served the community with such enthusiasm, devotion and dedication.

May the pristine religion of Zarathushtra and not religiosity spread to hafta keshvar zamin and may our community blossom with progress and prosper in every way. Atha zamyat, yatha afrinami.




*celebrating twenty five years*



## The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 TENNISON ROAD, SOUTH NORWOOD, LONDON SE25 5NF

VISIT OUR WEBSITE : [www.w-z-o.org](http://www.w-z-o.org)

### *Chairman's Statement*



On 19<sup>th</sup> March 2005, the World Zoroastrian Organisation will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an organisation wholly dedicated to the welfare of the Zoroastrian community globally.

In 1980, the 26 signatories to the WZO constitution, young and vibrant men and women of their day, had a vision to see the creation of a World Body for Zoroastrians. The sixty's had seen a gathering of momentum in the dispersal of Zoroastrians from India and Pakistan to North America, Australia and New Zealand and no cohesive force existed to hold the community together. This shift in the population was further compounded as Iranian Zoroastrians flocked to the shores of the UK and sought sanctuary in the West during the time of the revolution in Iran.

It was with this background that, if ever there was a need for a World Body, which could act with cumulative strength and one voice, surely the time had come. Twenty five years down the road it would be hyperbole to pretend that this has been achieved universally and there are far too many complex reasons for this; though let me assure you that our efforts continue unabated.

So let us, on our Silver Jubilee, concentrate on our successes. WZO, through sheer hard work and perseverance has gone through a metamorphosis. It has stimulated the hearts and minds of the community to support some of the most worthwhile projects in our recent history.

For this WZO owes an insurmountable gratitude to the many individuals and charitable organisations across the world for their trust, moral support and generosity, in providing substantial funds and property for these projects.

During this short span of time it has done much to alleviate poverty amongst the Zoroastrian farmers of Gujarat, provided rural housing, created employment schemes, assisted the priests by supplementing their meagre incomes, provided medical support, residential homes for senior citizens, educational grants and continued to assist displaced Zoroastrians from various parts of the world by representing them at tribunals and Courts of Law.

In times of crisis such as the Gujarat and Bam earthquakes, we were able to obtain funds within a short space of time, thanks to the magnificent response from our community. All these activities and many more, done by honorary helpers are still continuing.

The community is currently facing fresh challenges with an ageing population and declining numbers in some regions of the world and sadly minimal involvement of our youth in communal life. Who will take the reins in the future remains a dilemma.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity in thanking all those who preceded me in the Chair and the small band of committee members and volunteers, here and across the world, for sacrificing their precious time for the upliftment and betterment of Zoroastrians wherever they reside.

We face a daunting task, but with your continued support and understanding we shall endeavour to steer the WZO to a secure and fruitful future.

Sam H Bhiwandiwalla





messages



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Esq.,  
Chairman,  
The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

The Queen was grateful for your message of loyal greetings sent on behalf of the Members of the World Zoroastrian Organisation on the occasion of their twenty-fifth Anniversary which is being marked today with a function at the Civic Centre in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Her Majesty was interested to read that the first three Indian Members of Parliament were Parsis and sends her best wishes to you all for a memorable and enjoyable event.

PRIVATE SECRETARY

19th March, 2005.



I am happy to know that the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) is celebrating its Silver Jubilee on March 19, 2005 and bringing out a souvenir 'Hamazor' to commemorate the occasion.

Since its inception, the Organisation has been having a progressive outlook by working for the welfare of the Zoroastrian community spread all over the world. It is heartening that WZO has taken up the mission of improving the lives of those who are in need, by not only providing medical, educational and financial help but also by sharing knowledge and expertise for entrepreneurship. This tool will not only provide them a better livelihood but will also provide employment to others.

On this occasion, I extend my greetings and felicitations to all those associated with the Organisation and wish the Silver Jubilee celebrations all success.

  
(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

New Delhi  
January 13, 2005





प्रधान मंत्री  
Prime Minister

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the World Zoroastrian Organization is celebrating its silver jubilee on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2005.

With their glorious record of service, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and spirituality, the Zoroastrians have played an immensely important role in enriching human civilization. They have also contributed to all round development of India and played a salient role in establishing the enduring tradition of tolerance, fellowship and brotherhood. In spreading the moral message of their religion, the World Zoroastrian Organization has registered impressive success in the temporal sphere. I am confident that the Organization will expand its activities, multiply its achievements and deepen its already rich legacy.

I congratulate all those associated with the Organization on the occasion of its silver jubilee and extend greetings and good wishes to them for the success of the celebrations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Manmohan Singh', is placed above the printed name.  
(Manmohan Singh)

New Delhi  
January 21, 2005

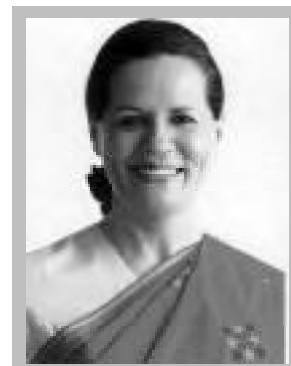


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## ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

24, AKBAR ROAD, NEW DELHI - 110 011

Sonia Gandhi  
President



### MESSAGE

On the happy occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, I send my congratulations and warm good wishes to all members of the Zoroastrian community.

In the rich mosaic of India's multicultural society, the Zoroastrian community shines as bright as a diamond. Its contributions to every aspect of national life and progress are in inverse proportion to its microscopic size; and its philanthropic spirit is an inspiration to all of us. The World Zoroastrian Organization's efforts to improve the lives and prospects of economically backward people in North Maharashtra and South Gujarat is in keeping with this deep tradition of generosity and humanitarian community service.

A community as small as the Zoroastrians must take special care to preserve its unique religious and cultural traditions. To this end, the World Zoroastrian Organization's efforts to revive knowledge of the religion, and encourage the younger generation to join the priestly profession, even as they benefit from a secular education, is indeed laudable. India, and the world, would be a poorer place if the unique heritage of Zoroastrianism were allowed to die out.

I am sure the Silver Jubilee celebrations on March 19, 2005 will be a joyous event, as the community looks back on its achievements in the past, and ahead to the future with new hopes and prospects. I send my greetings to all those participating, and wish you all success in the future.

New Delhi  
January 11, 2005



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Sammy H Bhiwandiwalla  
Chairman  
The World Zoroastrian Organisation  
135 Tennison Road  
South Norwood  
London SE25 5NF

8 March 2005

Reference: T9580/5

Dear Mr Bhiwandiwalla,

Thank you for your letters of 21 December 2004 and 30 January 2005 to the Prime Minister, asking him to provide a message of support for inclusion in a special commemorative issue of the magazine Hamazor. Your letters have been passed to this Unit and I am so sorry that you have not received an earlier reply.

No.10 Downing Street have asked me to say that the Prime Minister is well aware of the long and successful history of the Parsi or Zoroastrian community in the United Kingdom, particularly in the business world and in philanthropy. In the person of Dr Dadabhoy Naoroji MP, the community set a historic precedent for the involvement of British Asians in public life, one which the Government is still keen to foster today. The Prime Minister is happy therefore to congratulate the World Zoroastrian Organisation on its twenty-fifth anniversary, and to wish the WZO and the rest of the Zoroastrian community a prosperous future.

I hope this message arrives in time for inclusion in the magazine. If not, please accept our sincere apologies and do feel free to use the message in a subsequent publication.

Yours sincerely,

WARWICK J S HAWKINS  
Senior Policy Adviser, Inter Faith Issues  
Cohesion and Faiths Unit



THE OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Sammy Bhiwandiwalla  
Chairman,  
The World Zoroastrian Organisation,  
135 Tennison Road,  
South Norwood,  
London SE25 5NF

7<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Dear Mr Bhiwandiwalla,

Thank you for your letter to Michael Howard, regarding a message for your Commemorative issue of the Hamazor, as you celebrate this month your 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of service to the community.

Mr Howard wishes you well for these celebrations, and for the next 25 years.

I am sure your Commemorative issue will be most successful.

Yours sincerely,

*Peter Campbell*

**Peter Campbell**

Private Secretary to Rt Hon Michael Howard QC MP

The Rt. Hon. Charles Kennedy, M.P.  
Ross, Skye & Inverness West



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

**A Message from the Rt. Hon. Charles Kennedy MP**

I am pleased to send my congratulations to World Zoroastrian Organisation on your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

During the past quarter of a century the World Zoroastrian Organisation has successfully served the Zoroastrian community both here in the Britain and throughout the world and I wish you all continued fulfilment and prosperity for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles Kennedy".

**The Rt. Hon. Charles Kennedy MP**



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Mr. Shahpur Captain  
Guest Editor Hamazor

Dear Shahpur

27.01.05

Faith community bodies have great many responsibilities, and world faith bodies such as the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) have greater and diverse responsibilities.

They have to cater for the different cultural elements that taint the religious flavour; they have to cater for differing needs in countries as diverse as India and the USA.

On this occasion of the silver jubilee I am honored to congratulate WZO on tackling and sometimes attempting to tackle and meet the needs of so many. Like so many other world bodies its functions are restricted by its mandate and its organisational structure, yet it has carried out exemplary work in the area of meeting the needs of the weak and the vulnerable especially in India.

The Zoroastrian community has contributed in diverse ways and its work on interfaith and peace making issues is well recorded.

In our international organisation Zoroastrians have held the prestigious position of being presidents, Secretaries and the role of Zoroastrians in the World Conference on Religion and Peace has always been appreciated. Dastoor Minochehr-Homji led prayers from the Avesta at the First and Third Conferences in Tokyo and Princeton, as did Dr Homi Dhalla at the Second at Louvain, and Professor Jamshid Mavalwala at the Fourth in Nairobi. That tradition has continued, and leadership in national chapters and regional conferences has often included Zoroastrians, for example with Prof Mavalwala being joined by other Zoroastrians in secretarial and treasurer duties in Canada. Often this has been achieved with the blessing of WZO with other Zoroastrian organisation.

Recently, the President of WZO facilitated the distribution of Hamazor issue on the "UNESCO Celebrates 3000 years of Zoroastrian Culture" to various religious leaders in Europe.

My colleague, Mr. John Taylor, Former secretary general of WCRP pays tribute thus:

*"It has also been noticeable how Zoroastrian individuals and communities have worked tirelessly and effectively for example in reviving the inter-faith initiatives of the Parliament of the World's Religions based in Chicago, or in contributing to the long-standing work of the International Association for Religious Freedom. The experience of being a minority has given credibility and sensitivity to all these contributions. Most significantly their work has been done not out of self-interest or self-importance but in a genuine spirit of human solidarity and devotion to ultimate values of peace and justice."*

I pray that WZO continues its charitable work and co-operation with all. I believe working together within faiths and with other faiths and secular society is the only way of bringing about Frashokeriti.

With love and peace

Sangir. Sarosh,  
President, World Conference of Religions for Peace - Europe





photo from "Triumph over Discrimination"

## *Message to The World Zoroastrian Organization*

On this occasion of the twenty fifth anniversary of WZO foundation, on behalf of the Zarathushtis of Iran, all Anjumans, and the Iran Center for International Conferences, I wish to offer my heartfelt felicitations for the valuable achievements of the Organization during 25 years in preservation of faith through holding seminars and useful publications, greater unity of our coreligionists worldwide through interactions and distribution of information and finally finding shelters for Zarathushti immigrants.

You are aware the idea of formation of a Zarathushti World Body emerged in the first World Zarathushti Conference in 1960 and materialized in 1980 in London by a number of dedicated Zarathushti ( Parse) in London.

On this occasion we repeat our pledge of support and beseech Ahura Mazda's blessing for your greater success in future at the service of religion and community.

Iran Center for International Conferences

Dr Mahyare Ardeshiri  
President

**M. R. SHROFF**  
Chairman



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Office of the Trustees of the  
**DADSA BUNCHAVET FUNDS & PROPERTIES**

*Message*

I am pleased to learn that The World Zoroastrian Organisation will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in March 2005.

WZO has done laudable work in various spheres in UK and India. It played a significant role in the 1980s in the rehabilitation of the refugees from Iran which migrated to the West in the wake of the Revolution there. It was a sensitive and onerous task which the leaders of the WZO discharged with great skill and dexterity.

I am more familiar with the great strides which WZO Trusts have made in India under the very able Chairmanship of Mr Dinshaw Tamboly. Mr Tamboly and his lieutenants have done a remarkable job in ameliorating the pitiable socio-economic conditions of many Parsi farmers in South Gujarat. They have also initiated schemes for self-employment. What is most praiseworthy is the planning and effort put in to establish sanatoriums, senior citizen centres, to provide succor for the aged and the lonely. The inmates have been looked after with tender care. It is this excellent track record which has elicited so much financial and moral support for WZO from the Zoroastrian diaspora overseas.

These achievements are most admirable and worthy of emulation by other members of the community. It is only such dedication, commitment and genuine concern for the underprivileged men and women of the community that can give real substance to the true Zoroastrian ideals of charity and compassion.

I wish the WZO a busy future so that it can help uplift the community with added vigour.

Minoo R Shroff  
Chairman



**Mr Shahpur F Captain**  
**Guest Editor**  
**Hamazor**

4<sup>th</sup> February 2005

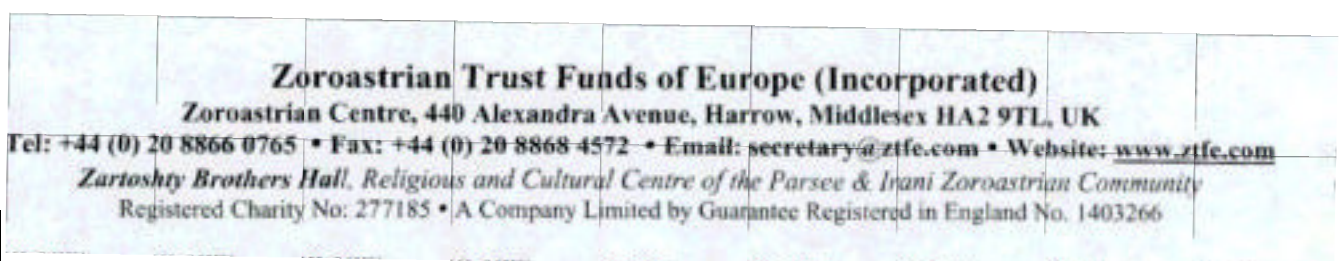
Dear Shahpur

I am very pleased to extend felicitations to you and to all past and present office-bearers of the World Zoroastrian Organisation on this Silver Jubilee. During these 25 years, WZO has done very commendable work for our community, particularly in social and economic amelioration in India. ZTFE can take legitimate pride in the fact that the WZO was launched in London and its founders included ZTFE stalwarts such as the late Dr Shirinbanoo Kutar, the late Bailey Irani, yourself, Shahrokh Shahrokh, Ruby Contractor and Rumi Sethna.

The Trustees and members of the managing committee of the ZTFE join me in extending our best wishes to WZO. We hope that in the years to come, our organisations will continue to move forward and work solidly for the good of our small but wonderful community. On a personal note, on this happy occasion, may I congratulate you on your own contribution and work in the service of our community.

Best regards

**Dorab Mistry**  
**President**  
**Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (Inc)**





Zoroastrian Association  
 of Alberta  
 Atlanta Zoroastrian Association  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Greater Boston Area  
 Zoroastrian Society  
 of British Columbia  
 California Zoroastrian  
 Center  
 Persian Zoroastrian  
 Organization (Center of  
 Tadmor, Maryland)  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Northern California  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of California  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Metropolitan Chicago  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of the Rocky Mountains  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Florida  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Kansas  
 Persian Zoroastrian  
 Association (New York)  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Greater New York  
 Zoroastrian Society  
 of Ontario  
 Ontario Zoroastrian  
 Community Foundation  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Pennsylvania  
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 Pennsylvania & New Jersey  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Quebec  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Houston  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of North Texas  
 Zoroastrian Association  
 of Metropolitan Washington  
 Zoroastrian Society  
 of Washington State

26<sup>th</sup> January 2005


### The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

135 Tennyson Road,  
 South Norwood,  
 London SE25 5NF  
 Attn: Mr. Sam H. Bhiwandiwalla, Chairman

Dear Mr. Bhiwandiwalla,

We are honored and pleased to send this message to you, on behalf of the Zoroastrian community of U.S.A. and Canada, represented by **FEZANA**.

We congratulate **The World Zoroastrian Organisation** and join you in celebrating its **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**, and recognize your contributions towards the welfare of the Zoroastrian community in far corners of the globe.

**FEZANA** has been fortunate to work with your London and your Mumbai offices, especially with Mr. Rumi Sethna and Mr. Dinshaw Tamboly, in forwarding the donations and contributions from **FEZANA**, for various good causes.

We are most grateful for your support in helping us promote education, provide assistance to our seniors and students, to alleviate financial burden, provide medical and welfare assistance, relief of poverty, natural disaster relief etc. to our community.

Thank you and best wishes for a very successful program.

With deep respect, appreciation and feelings of HAMAZOR.

Sincerely yours,

*Firdosh Mehta*

**Firdosh Mehta**

President **FEZANA** – for and on behalf of the Executive Officers.

[www.fezana.org](http://www.fezana.org)

**FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA<sup>50</sup>**

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## The World Zoroastrian Organisation, India

Registration No. F/14093 - BOM 12-10-1990



C/o. Union Press  
Zoroastrian Association Bldg.,  
13, Homji Street,  
Fort, Mumbai-400 001.

**22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2005**

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

***I am very pleased to send this brief message for the commemorative issue of "Hamazor", in my capacity as the President of the WZO (India).***

***It has indeed been a wonderful experience to be associated over the years with WZO and its various activities for the socio-economic uplift of the Zoroastrian community throughout the world. I have been closely associated with WZO (India) right from its inception and I am very happy to say that we have done what little we could in India to spread the message of WZO in India and to do a number of projects (big and small) in India for the Zoroastrian Community.***

***I recall my long and happy association over the years with such stalwarts as Shahpur Captain, Rumi Sethna, Dinshaw Tamboly, Dadi Mistry and a host of others. I would also like to place on record the considerable services of all my colleagues in W.Z.O. (India). On this occasion I also recall the fine contribution made to W.Z.O. (India) by the late Mr. Dara Marfatia..***

***I wish WZO all the very best in the years to come!***

**Dadi Engineer  
President, W.Z.O. (India).**



*Office bearers of The World Zoroastrian Organisation, London  
from 1st August, 1980 to date*

**Chairmans**

Dr Shirinbanoo S Kutar	01.08.80 - 01.12.91
Mrs Ruby N Contractor	01.12.91 - 13.10.96
Mr Shahpur F Captain	13.10.96 - 21.9.00
Mr Rumi Sethna	21.09.00 - 19.09.04
Mr Sam Bhiwandiwalla	19.09.04 to date

**Presidents**

Mr Bailey R Irani	01.08.80 - 28.09.87
Mr Shahpur F Captain	28.09.87 - 08.11.87
Mrs Ruby N Contractor	08.11.87 - 29.10.89
Mr Shahpur F Captain	29.10.89 - 13.10.96
Mrs Ruby N Contractor	13.10.96 - 14.12.97
Mr Rustam S Dubash	25.10.00 to date

**Vice Presidents**

Mr Shahpur F Captain	01.08.80 - 28.09.87
Mr Dadi E Mistry	28.09.87 - 28.10.89
Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani	28.10.89 - 11.10.92
Mr Mehraban Zartoshty	11.10.92 - 09.10.94
Mrs Roda Mistry	09.10.94 - 11.10.96
Mr Adi Davar	11.10.96 - 13.12.98
Mr Dinshaw K Tamboly	13.12.98 - 24.09.01
Mr Keki R Bhote	24.09.01 to date

**Joint Honorary Secretaries**

Mr Soli P Master	01.08.80 - 23.01.83
Mr Shahrokh Shahrokh	01.08.80 - 25.10.87
Mrs Ruby N Contractor	23.01.83 to 08.11.87
Mrs Mani Bhungara	08.11.87 to 27.09.92
Mr Rumi Sethna	29.10.89 to 11.10.92
Mr Rustam S Dubash	11.10.92 to 26.10.97
Mr Sam Bhiwandiwalla	19.10.03 to 19.09.04
Mr Aspi Mistry	10.10.93 to 08.10.95
Mr Darayus S Motivala	08.10.95 to date
Mr Filli Vapiwalla	26.10.97 to 20.9.01
Mr Cyrus K Nowroze	20.09.01 to 15.08.02
Mr Dinyar J Modi	24.10.04 to date

**Honorary Treasurers**

Mr Dinyar J Modi	01.08.80 to 01.12.91	Mr Sam Bhiwandiwalla	10.10.93 to 19.10.03
Mr Tehmasp Engineer	01.12.91 to 26.09.93	Mr Framroze R Joshi	19.10.03 to date

## **WZO International Board Members 2005**



**Australia**  
Dr Sam Kerr



**Pakistan**  
Mrs Toxy Cowasjee



**Canada**  
Mr Jehan Bagli  
Mr Marzi Byramjee  
Mr Rohinton Minwalla



**Singapore**  
Mr Russi Ghadialli



**France**  
Mr Abtin Sassanfar



**Sweden**  
Mobed Kamran Jamshidi



**India**  
Mrs Mani J Clubwala  
Mr Dadi B Engineer  
Mr Kersi J Limathwalla  
Mr Dadi E Mistry



**United Kingdom**  
Ms Shahin Bekhradnia  
Mr Sam H Bhiwandiwalla  
Mr Shahpur F Captain  
Mr Rustam S Dubash  
Dr Godafreed S Irani  
Mr Framroze R Joshi  
Mrs Khurshid B Kapadia  
Mr Dinyar J Modi  
Mr Darayus S Motivala  
Mrs Tehmi N Patel  
Mr Noshir J Umrigar



**Iran**  
Mr Mahyar Ardeshiri  
Mr Rostam Yeganegi



**USA**  
Dr Kersey H Antia  
Mr Keki R Bhote  
Dr Meherwan P Boyce  
Mrs Dhunmai P Dalal  
Mr Sohrab R Felfeli  
Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani





## ***Chairman, Sam Bhiwandiwalla's address, on the occasion of WZO's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations at The Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middx., on 19th March, 2005***



**S**hree Soumen Ray, Councillor at the Indian High Commission, honoured donors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman.

Today we are present here to celebrate the first 25 years of the existence of the World Zoroastrian Organisation.

In 1980, the 26 signatories to the WZO constitution, young, vibrant men and women of their day, had a vision to see the creation of a world body

for Zoroastrians. The sixty's had seen an increasing momentum in the dispersal of Zoroastrians from India and Pakistan to North America, Australia and New Zealand and no cohesive force existed to hold the community together. This shift in the population was further compounded as Iranian Zoroastrians flocked to our shores and sought sanctuary in the west during the time of the revolution in Iran.

It was with this background that, if ever there was a need for a World Body, representing Zoroastrians at a political level, which could act with cumulative strength and one voice, surely the time had come. Twenty five years down the road, we have progressed a long way in achieving this ambition, though universal acceptance still

evades us. There are far too many complex reasons for this; but let me assure you that our efforts continue unabated.

WZO, through sheer hard work and perseverance has gone through a metamorphosis. So let us, on our Silver Jubilee, concentrate on our successes and let us honour our donors, for thanks to them, we have initiated some of the most worthwhile projects beneficial to the community at large in recent history. For this, WZO owes an insurmountable gratitude to the Trustee's of all the Charitable Trusts and many individuals, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian across the world for their trust, moral support and generosity.

Of the thirty awardees today, ten are Charitable Trusts and twenty individuals.

Let me assure you that this list is incomplete for there are many more who seek anonymity. Many donors, with implicit faith have named WZO as beneficiaries in their wills. In addition there are many hundreds of donors who support us year in and year out. Many of them are of moderate means but with hearts of gold, for their generosity, their kindness, their appreciation of WZO is reflected in their actions.

One of our first donors was Mehraban and Goli Farhangi, individuals of immense foresight, possessing mutual respect for those who had worked so hard to form WZO. Their monetary support through the World Zarathushtrian Trust



Fund provided the financial muscle for WZO to fulfil its Aims and Objects at a crucial time in our community's history.

One of the first tasks that befell WZO was to assist displaced Iranian Zoroastrians fleeing to the West. WZO took up the task vigorously, first by letter to the State Department in Washington, USA, Prime Ministers and Ambassadors of Western Countries, the United Nations Refugee Commissioner in the UK and of course the Home Office. WZO officials attended tribunal hearings and were a source of strength to many refugees and we can proudly say that WZO played a defining role in the rescue and resettlement of many hundreds of Zoroastrians into the UK and the West. Humanitarian work in other regions of the world, such as seeking redress for properties confiscated by governments was also pursued. This task has not ended and even today we continue to act on behalf of refugees, attending hearings and lobbying MPs here and in Europe.

In 1989 WZO commissioned the Bhaya report, a survey of some 600 villages in Gujarat. What it depicted was the poverty stricken conditions of the Zoroastrian farming community. Somehow these groups of our co-religionists had been overlooked, failed to receive aid or assistance for even the most basic of life's needs, impoverished, destitute, facing hunger and suffering from ill health. Immediately, the WZO implemented the Gujarat Farmers Rehabilitation program and appealed internationally for funds to put into place a regeneration plan with our own team of farming experts. Since 1990, some 164 villages have been covered and 379 families have been assisted. Infrastructure improvements include homes built, repaired or shifted, wells sunk and repaired, pumps and diesel engines supplied, pipes laid, fields levelled, life stock supplied, dairy livestock and poultry farms established. The list is endless. So successful was this sterling effort that it has been duly acknowledged by the Government of Gujarat by having a representative of WZO on the Government's Environment Brigade.

### The Gujarat Project

has so far received donations of Rs.38 million (£475,000) and this has been expended. There is much more to be done in the remaining villages of Gujarat, so I appeal to the community at large to donate regularly so that WZO can help improve many more lives.

With the advent of the Gujarat Rehab Project, there was a resurgence of community spirit in India and the rest of the world. Our appeals were heeded and this resulted in the setting up of three charitable trusts in India, the World Zoroastrian Organisation Trust, the WZO Trust Funds and The WZO Trust for Women and Children. Through these trusts we have implemented a diverse array of projects and I will briefly review a few.

### Senior Citizens Centre in Navsari

Completed in January 1998, 20,000 sq ft of high quality accommodation, this facility currently provides living accommodation for 46 residents. This is a very vibrant institution, where senior citizens live in happy surroundings, spending the evening of their lives with their contemporaries, being independent and with self-respect and dignity.

### WZO Sanatorium in Sanjan

Completed in September 2001, set in 4.5 acres of land, a palatial building offering true peace and tranquillity in a pollution free environment. The sanatorium can accommodate a maximum of 30 at extremely modest prices of less than Rs 200 per person per day.

### Housing at Navsari

The WZO has constructed three residential buildings at Navsari, where the occupants live in fair sized apartments at very reasonable license fees. A fourth building, very near to the Atashbehram, is under construction and is expected to be ready shortly.

### **Rural Housing**

From funds that have been raised, financial support has been extended to over **29** Zoroastrian families to replace their huts made from mud and cow dung with brick built cottages, tiled roofs and solid floors. Replacement cottages cost Rs150,000 (£1800) and this project is beginning to change the skyline in rural areas.

### **Self-employment Schemes**

A 'self employment' scheme was launched in 1996. Initially the funding was made available from a very generous donor trust. Since the last three years the scheme is now being sustained from the repayments that are received.

'Interest free' financial support has been extended to 392 Zoroastrians, from 41 different urban, semi-urban, rural locations to pursue self employment in diverse disciplines of their choosing such as transport, trading, manufacturing/ workshops, electronic data processing etc.

### **Medical Relief**

Ours is an ageing as well as an ailing community. With the economic graph of the community showing a consistent downtrend and medical treatment becoming increasingly expensive, WZO uses its good offices to raise and disburse funds to meet hospitalisation and medical expenses. The N F Cowasjee Medical Benevolent Fund set up in London contributes regularly towards treatment and medicines not readily available or for medical conditions treated abroad.

Briefly we have many other schemes, The Mobed Welfare scheme which encourages young mobeds to take up mobedi as a full time profession, primary academic and vocational education for our youth, relief from poverty directed towards those who are to old or simply unable to work and fully paid holidays from door to door, for women and children to name but a few.

**Total donations received in India from various sources towards our projects amount to Rs262,263,540. (£3. 28 million)**

### **I now turn to WZO London.**

A special General Meeting of the WZO held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1993 under the able Chairmanship of Mrs Ruby Contractor took the first historical step in passing two resolutions, to establish WZO as a charitable organisation under UK law and the more profound and far reaching change in our membership rules. For the first time a Zoroastrian organisation had recognised that non-Zoroastrian spouses and their off spring were an integral part of our community, to be treated as equals, without the hideous sanctions heaped on them in the past. This was indeed a milestone and we can proudly say, 12 years down the road, that we are not alone. Since then most of the Zoroastrian Associations in North America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere have gone on to recognise the contribution made by non-Zoroastrian spouses in our religious, social and cultural life and the creation of a more balanced Zoroastrian society.

### **Education and Seminars**

Recently we commenced an annual scholarship scheme with the Falli Chotia Foundation based in the USA. The foundation selects a number of students embracing a wide spectrum of educational disciplines. WZO contributes 50% towards the scholarship awarded to these young men and women. The cost of higher education has escalated over the years and it has to be said that we are clearly under-funded in this area of our activity. Our resources towards educational demands leave much to be desired and we would be grateful if further funding would be forthcoming so that we can effectively respond to the constant flow of appeals.

WZO promotes and finances publications such as our own *Hamazor* and international

seminars and lectures on Zoroastrian religion, history and culture. The first Gatha Colloquium took place in the UK in November 1993 with the subsequent publication of the book titled "New Approaches to the Interpretation of the Gathas", edited by Mr Farrokh Vajifdar, containing ten lectures given by renowned erudite scholars.

On WZO's International Board we have none other than Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani, bestowed with the honour of "The K D Irani Chair of Philosophy" at City College City University of New York, USA with an endowment of \$2,000,000. A second past International Board member was Dr Farhang Mehr, Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Boston University, USA, an educator, lawyer and an economist. Both have made outstanding contributions to the furtherance of Zoroastrian Religion, History and Culture.

Both Kaikhosrov and Farhang have been honoured for "Lifetime Achievements" by the North American Zoroastrians and I am privileged to have known and worked with them. Recently, we awarded the singular honour of "Fellow of the World Zoroastrian Organisation" to Professor Stanley Insler, Salisbury Professor of Sanskrit & Comparative Philology at Yale University, for his extensive and ongoing contribution to the learning and understanding of Zoroastrianism.

I would also like to thank our immediate Past Chairman Rumi Sethna and his wife Hilda who for the last fifteen years have organised barbeques at their home and dinner dances with immense success and raised in excess of £100,000 towards the Gujarat Appeal. I also extend my sincere thanks to both the main board in London and to the International Board for devoting their time and effort in making WZO what it is.

Last but not least it is my duty to thank Dinshaw and his wife Bachi Tamboly. Dinshaw is a past board member of WZO's main board and now devotes his time towards the charitable activities in India. So successful has his implementation of

WZO's projects in India been, as you will see in the video presentation, that one of his detractors who no doubt secretly admires him, has recently described him as the most powerful man in the Parsi community.

Ladies and gentlemen trying to compress 25 years of achievements into ten minutes is well nigh impossible. At best I can only leave you inspired and ready to come to the fore to help the less fortunate. Zoroastrians have a proud history of benevolence both within and outside the community and we must continue to practice this ethos.

Through WZO, the community has also responded effectively to the appeals for the Gujarat Earthquake Rehabilitation Programme, the Bam earthquake, Afghan refugees and very recently the Tsunami floods. Donations are the life blood of our organisation. Let me therefore conclude by saying we owe a deep debt of gratitude to all our donors across the world for without them very little would have been achieved and let us look forward to your continued support and to the next 25 glorious years of WZO. Thank you



L to R: Dinshaw Tamboly and Sam Bhiwandiwalla

## **25th Anniversary celebrations of WZO**

*– A brief report of the day's proceedings by Shahin Bekhradnia*

A

sparkling celebration took place on Saturday night, 19th March in London, with over 250 guests in attendance to usher in the Spring and to fete WZO upon its 25th anniversary.

This was not just any old dinner-dance: the atmosphere was warm and cordial and the bright yellow flowers and table settings provided a very tasteful backdrop for the evening, all organised by Tehmi Patel. For the first time in many years there was a notable presence of Iranian Zoroastrians among the majority of Parsi guests. This was indeed appropriate, given that the initial seed money and inspiration for this organisation came from Iranians: soon after the revolution in Iran had taken place, many Zoroastrians showed foresight and fearing the worst in an Iran run by a Muslim theocracy, they fled abroad. They needed help to gain admittance to Western countries and WZO was the organisation created to help in this way.

Darayus Motivala, Jt Hon Secretary of the organisation was the master of ceremonies. He started the proceedings by welcoming the guests and inviting Rusi Bhedwar to lead the congregation with a short prayer. He then explained that the order of the evening would be slightly changed due to the illness of the Indian High Commissioner. Shri Soumen Ray ably stood in for the High Commissioner.

The opening address was given by Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, Chairman of WZO, who took those of us present through certain milestones in the history of the organisation. Sammy's sincerity and dedication to serving the community was touchingly felt when his feelings showed through his voice which at times faltered with emotion.

To alter the pace and maintain interest, a film presentation was shown of the work done in India through the WZO Gujarat Farmers Project, thanks to Farohar films TV programme. Through this 15 minute edited down film version, the many schemes which had allowed hope to flourish where it was once dead could be graphically understood. It became transparently clear that whatever the original reasons for the setting up of WZO, it has gone a long way to alleviating misery, poverty, despair and loneliness within our Indian community. Dinshaw Tamboly who has been enormously proactive in maintaining the momentum of this scheme was also present during this evening.

After this, Shri Soumen Ray said a few words congratulating the community on their many achievements and contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of India and notably the charitable works for which Parsis in India are so renowned.

One of the main points of the evening was to give public recognition to those who have and continue to give generously to WZO or posthumously and who through their magnanimity had helped to provide the means for effective action by WZO. In recognition of the outstanding generosity of all those named, WZO had prepared beautifully calligraphed scrolls to be presented to these persons if they were in attendance or else their representatives. Shahpur Captain, a founder and Past Chairman of WZO, gave a short summary of the contributions to WZO by each of the 30 recipients. It was evident from the response



of the guests listening that their munificence was in many cases hitherto unknown, as they had shown modesty and reserve in not wishing to broadcast their charitable donations.

Past Chairman Rumi Sethna's famous fund raising dinner-dances and barbecues received an accolade as did the outstanding efforts of Noshirwan Cowasjee for the Medical Benevolent Fund. Farrokh Vajifdar's literary contributions which brought in funds also deserve special mention. Those receiving scrolls are listed below.

After the presentation of the scrolls, Darayus Motivala emphasised that whilst this evening was to publicly thank the major donors of WZO, there were a large number of donors who gave what they could on a regular basis, and their contribution was equally important to WZO. He then thanked these donors on behalf of the WZO committee.

Rustam S Dubash, President of the WZO, rounded off the formal part of the evening by thanking the donors and the board members and others who had worked extremely hard to make the evening a huge success. He concluded by telling the guests – "May the Zoroastrian force of good be with you all"

These formalities were the prelude to a much civilised 4 course dinner served efficiently by professional catering staff. The meal was very acceptable, exceeding the expectations of my guests and myself and our digestion was aided by the non-stop invitation to dance which was offered by the highly talented 4 person band, Black Velvet. Those who like dancing stayed on till the end and left the dance floor at midnight, a great testimony to the versatility of the musical group.

Those attending the celebration were requested to make donations when applying for the tickets. Any shortfall in the costs of the evening was underwritten by the generosity of an anonymous donor. A further spontaneous collection was made after the showing of the film presentation which raised in excess of £1,000.

There is no doubt that this was a very memorable social event and an enormous success. The guests who came expecting to have a great time and enjoy themselves were not disappointed and at the same time learnt something about the past 25 years of WZO's existence which have notched up so many achievements. The event confirms that WZO can organise a whole host of activities with professionalism, and yet keep the atmosphere civilised and enjoyable. We were there to celebrate the achievements of WZO thus far, and although it is not within the scope of this report to itemise these, the list is impressive and wide ranging. We must hope that in the future we will continue to source a similar level of dedication, energy and ability as those who have to date served on the executive committee with such impressive results.

### Names of Awardees

Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund  
Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao  
Sir Dorab Tata Trust  
Sir Ratan Tata Trust  
Bombay Parsi Punchayet Funds & Properties  
Behramji Nowroji Gamadia Parsi Hunnar Shalla Trust.  
Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust  
Settna Memorial Foundation  
Firuz Madon Foundation

FEZANA  
Goli & Mehraban Farhangi  
Mehraban & the late Faridoon Zartoshty  
Dinshaw D Mehta  
Rena & Behram Baxter  
Khorshed & Mahinder Sodhi  
Filloo & Eddy Lawyer  
Roshan & Noshir Pundole  
Jamshed P Antia  
Nanabhoy R Bharucha  
Zhooben Bhiwandiwalla

Zenobia & Kersi Aspar  
Sam K Dastur  
Farrokh Vajifdar  
Dr Mrs Shirinbanoo Sohrabji Kutar (posthumously)  
Mani Bhungara (posthumously)  
Barry Williams  
Wilson J Daruwalla  
Amy Bhabha  
Kety F Mehta  
Naju Bhabha



*celebrating twenty five years*



Darayus Motivala, Master of Ceremonies



Rustam Dubash, Shree Soumen Ray - Indian High Commission, Sammy Bhiwandiwalla and Darayus Motivala



Hilda receiving scroll on behalf of Mani Bhumgara (deceased)



Rena & Behram Baxters (donors) with Rumi & Hilda Sethna



Dinshaw Tamboly collecting scroll on behalf of various donors



Rumi Sethna collecting scroll on behalf of Barry Williams



Shahpur Captain & Sammy receiving scroll on behalf of Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Deed Of Settlement



The main table. L to R: Dinshaw, Lorriane & Rustam Dubash, Shree Soumen Ray - Indian High Commission, Sammy & Ursula Bhiwandiwalla, Behram & Khurshid Kapadia



President Rustam Dubash with Lorriane & Sammy. A floral presentation



Zarina Shroff receiving scroll on behalf of Zoroastrian Charities of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao



Ursula and Tehmi Patel Presentation



Khorshed & Mahinder Sodhi receiving scroll



Noshir & Frenny Umrigar and guests



Armiti and Terry Bedford and guests



Membership Secretary Khurshid and Behram Kapadia



Air Commodore Freedoon Amroliwalla & wife Coomie, Ruby & Nari Contractor



Zarina and Sharmeen Shroff, Thushna Ghadially and friends



Khorshed & Mahinder Sodhi and guests

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*celebrating twenty five years*



Dinshaw Tamboly, Lorriane & Rustam Dubash



Ursula Bhiwandiwalla receiving scroll on behalf of donor



Rena and Behram Baxter receiving scroll



Kershasp Pundole collecting scroll on behalf of donors Roshan & Noshir Pundole of Kuala Lumpur



L to R: Shahin Bekhradnia, Sammy, Shahpur Captain



Hilda & Rumi Sethna



Ursula & Sammy Bhiwandiwalla

# A brief exposition of spirituality in Zoroastrianism

by kersey h antia

Spirituality takes different forms in different religious philosophies. Almost all religions emphasize the need for good deeds but some may prescribe certain pre-requisites such as believing in the prophet as Saviour or the Son of God, or believing him to be the sole legitimate prophet on earth, or believing in the theory of reincarnation, or in a God involved in the history of survival of a particular race. In Zoroastrianism, while a belief in Zoroaster as a prophet is self-evident, what is crucial in attaining spirituality is applying his teachings in actual practice. It is not surprising therefore, that the name often used for Zoroastrianism in Avesta and Pahlavi is the Good Religion or the Mazdayasni (One-God-Worshipping) Religion. What then are Zoroaster's teachings for attaining spirituality?

## Zoroaster's teachings on attaining spirituality

I, for one, find a very short and sweet answer to this question in the very words of our prophet as so well expressed contained in Yasna 34.1: *"Let us fully emulate the ways of Lord Ahura Mazda, the way he himself has attained immortality, Asha, Good Rule and Perfection. Let us fully realize them in our own being and in our own life in full measure."* The same sentiment is explained in the beginning stanza of Spentomaiti Gatha (Yasna 47.1) but here in one stanza, as nowhere else in the Gathas, all the seven Amesha Spentas are mentioned along with Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficent Spirit or Godly Mentality. Of all the religions of the world, only Zoroastrianism, in addition to coining a name for the All Knowing God, Ahura Mazda – perhaps the first time in the history of mankind, also delineates seven attributes of Ahura Mazda called Amesha Spentas, Beneficent Immortals. As enough has already been written about these seven attributes and their corresponding material representation on earth, they are only briefly described below:



- Ahura Mazda - All Knowing Creator of Life – Man.
- Vohu Mana - Good Mind – Cattle.
- Asha Vahishta – Best (utmost) righteousness – Fire, Energy.
- Khshathra Vairya – Desirable Kingdom – Metal (sky, environment).
- Spenta Armaiti – Beneficent Right Mentality – Earth, Ecology.
- Haurwataat – Perfection – Water.
- Ameretaat – Immortality – Plants, Vegetation.

The message is thus very simple: when we imbibe all these splendid seven spiritual spheres of Ahura Mazda fully in our being and practice them fully and unceasingly, we attain God's own Beneficent Spirit (Spenta Mainyu) and become godlike. This also entails not only taking good care of elements of nature represented by the seven Amesha Spentas, but also furthering and improving them, as so vehemently exhorted in Yasna 30.9: *"Let us be those who bring about the renovation (Frashokereti) of the world by our actions."* Science, as long as it remains a handmaid of good causes and leads to Spenta

(Beneficent) progress is not antithetical to religion in Zoroastrianism. Thus Samuel Laing could declare in the nineteenth century that a Zoroastrian's faith is not compromised in any way by various discoveries of science. As long as science is employed for the cause of good (Spenta) and not evil (Angra), it only contributes to the advancement of Frashokereti, which literally means making (the creation) fresh or excellent.

Thus the reason Asho Zaratushtra assigned a prominent place to Amesha Spenta in his theology becomes apparent – it was to highlight the majesty of Ahura Mazda as well as to delineate in as simple terms as possible for his pre-historic times a way to attain spirituality in its seven-fold splendour.

Seven thus became a sacred figure and all basic rituals represented seven Amesha Spentas and thereby the seven elements of nature manifested by them. For instance, in a Jashan or Yasna ceremony, Ahura Mazda is represented by man, Vohu Mana by milk, Asha Vahishta by fire, Khshathra Vairya by metal like the fire-urn, Spenta Armaiti by the earth or the stone stool the priest sits on, Haurvataat by water and Ameretaat by plant products. As the corporeal or physical (Getig) world was conceived by Ahura Mazda in the spiritual (Menog) world as per our scriptures, it is natural that every thing in this world eternally possesses the divine essence of Ahura Mazda and Amesha Spentas. But human beings are endowed from the very beginning of the world with free will (Yasna 31.11) and exhorted to make the right choice again and again in the Gathas, particularly in Yasna 30 and 45. The evil is created not by Ahura Mazda but by the wrong use of free will made by humans by making bad choices endangering and compromising the existence. Mankind's task is to ensure that ultimately this physical existence is cleansed of all evil generating from the ungodly choices made by humans and restore it fully to the pristine condition in which Ahura Mazda created it and thereby leading it to Perfection/Resurrection (Frashokereti) in every way – Yasna 30.9,

etc. Such a theology could have vast appeal. Indeed, as Peter Brown noted long ago: *"The Christian Church had inherited through late Judaism, that most faithful legacy of Zoroastrian Persia to the western world – a belief in the absolute division of the spiritual world between good and evil powers, between angels and demons."* (The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750, W W Norton and Company, New York, 1959).

### **The robust importance of the physical world for the attainment of spirituality**

The souls coming down from the spiritual (Menog) to the material (Getig) world do not in any way constitute a fall as in Christianity or Manichaeism but signifies completion of Ahura Mazda's plan for us. Actually, the Getig world is better than the Menog world since it is in the Getig world that the Menog creation got an opportunity to receive tangible and sentient form. However, the Getig world is open to assault from evil in all forms since man's primary mission on this earth is to fight evil. It is for this reason that Fravardin Yasht (Yasht 13.17) acclaims that the Fravashi of the living person is generally the strongest.

A Zoroastrian therefore does not have to look elsewhere to seek spirituality: benefiting and improving all the creations and creatures of Ahura Mazda and devoting all our energies and intellectual faculties for the rightful, timely, well-done deeds and developing skills of every kind, knowledge and progress where there was none (Visperad 15.1) is a Zoroastrian's mission on this earth. Restoring it to the original, perfect condition created by Ahura Mazda by fighting evil every step of the way is the path to obtaining spirituality for us.

The prophet makes is very clear that *"This truth applies equally to men as well as woman."* (Yasna 53.6). Women, thus have equal opportunity to attain spirituality and salvation as man. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the Avestan word Mazda has a feminine base and three of the six Amesha Spentas are feminine. The door to

spirituality is thus open to both genders and it leads us right to the world and people around us - the opportunity is right where we happen to be and whenever and wherever we are placed by Ahura Mazda on this earth. We are but his Hamkaars (collaborators) living and breathing for Him and His creations, having our being and mooring in Him so we can expend all our physical and mental faculties for improving this world in any way, big or small, we can. Learning trades and new skills, pursuing education of every kind, keeping ourselves physically fit to serve our family, town and country, actively opposing the evil and evil doers, working hard to raise a family with many children and educate them in the ways of Ahura Mazda, taking care of the weak and the sick around us, honouring God, parents and (good) rules and rulers of society, participating in religious ceremonies, communal events such as Gahambars and contributing his/her share for them, observing purity in every way so as to avoid unnecessary illness and infection, improving God's creations in every way we can and spreading its knowledge everywhere so others can benefit by it, spreading knowledge about the Good Religion and observing it faithfully in our own life, not polluting any creation of Ahura Mazda in life or death, making sure our good thoughts, words and deeds far outweigh bad thoughts words and deeds, thereby ensuring a place for us in paradise. These are but a few examples. Even the Achaemenians 2500 years ago had scant knowledge of the Avesta but they faithfully carried out its injunctions. For instance the aqueducts and underground water canals (Quanaats) they skillfully made to make the arid land fertile are still visible. So is the canal they made to join the Nile with the Red Sea. Even the burial places of the kings carved out from rocks pollutes nothing. Forestation and preservation of nature and animals they provided in their paradise, which was so heavenly it became a word for heaven itself, is another example.

However, even more amazing is the phenomenon that the Parsis of early

nineteenth century did not know the meaning of the Avesta and its exhortations and yet they splendidly, faithfully, and zealously carried them out in every way they could as soon as they got the opportunity to do so. They devoted their effort not only to the technological and industrial development of the nation, but also to social causes, protection of the environment, emancipation of women, etc. Examples - ensuring fairness to the labour force and starting labour movements to ensure it even on the face of opposition by the British and that too by an aristocratic gentleman, Mr B P Wadia, fighting the British brutality such as Jalianwala Baag and that too spearheaded by the daughter of a Parsi baronet, Bapsy Sabawala, starting the independence movement in India as also laying the superstructure for its economic viability, openly rioting against the British in the streets of Bombay in the nineteenth century when it tried to get rid of stray dogs despite their otherwise amiable relations with them, fighting hard for the freedom of India by a tenacious wealthy lady, Madame Bhikhajji Cama, 1851-1936 even when expelled from India, starting innumerable communal and cosmopolitan charities, schools, colleges, hospitals, education scholarships, art galleries, orphanages, wells, aquariums, animal shelters, etc., etc. In other words they left the world much better than they found it – in whichever way they could as God's allies – Hamkaar. Surprisingly, I came across a further validation of these observations in an article by William Pfaff in Chicago Tribune (August 12, 1997, Section 1, p. 11): *"In India pre-Independence capitalism and industrialism developed chiefly in the Parsee community, Zoroastrians of Persian origin, who take a robust view of the struggle of good with evil and believe in individual human responsibility." He concludes: "The inherited values of a society do shape its modern practices, but in far more complicated ways than most present discussion acknowledges."*

The Iranian Zoroastrians did the same as soon as they got the chance to do so, even though unfortunately they always had to

labour under many restraints. The evidence of the munificence of Arbab Rustam Guiv and Zartoshti brothers is evident today in Iran, India, UK, Australia and of course all over North America.

It seems it did not matter that they did not know the Avestan language, because the religion had become a living tradition and was practiced faithfully to this day. For instance, there are so many Zoroastrian environmentalists even today who are not aware of what the Avesta says about the environment and ecology but are instinctively driven to protecting it at the risk of personal peril. Similarly, the efforts of Behramji Malbari (1853-1912) for the emancipation of Hindu women met strong resentment from the Indian nationalist leader Tilak who could not wait to avenge himself by faulting Malbari's reformist zeal for not fighting for the acceptance of late JRD Tata's French mother in his own Parsi fold.

The Iranian epic, Shahnameh, written by a Muslim poet, Firdausi Tusi, represents the Zoroastrian's constant struggle against evil. And even in our own times, The Times of India in its editorial on July 15, 1984 salutes the Parsis for their deep commitment for moral values: *"Think of a half a dozen leading dissidents who have stood their ground whatever the temptations, blandishments and pressures and if you like you can pick all six from among the Zoroastrians. It is a truly extraordinary phenomenon,"* more so if you compare the total number of Zoroastrians as under 100,000 compared to one billion population of India.

Books have been written on their accomplishments but even the most comprehensible one on this subject, Eckhard Kulke's, *"The Parsis in India – A minority as an Agent of Social Change"*, 1974, Bombay) could not do full justice to it. Their achievement in various spheres could only be described as a nascent inclination, embedded in their religious archetype, towards constantly working for Frashokereti, a view which Kulke also holds. Duschene

Guillemin, a great scholar of Zoroastrianism of our times, also attributes it to *"their religious commandments"* and describes Zoroastrianism as the religion of symbols – symbols which kept the religion and its message alive among the followers for millennia. For instance, the symbol of Sudreh-Kusti embodies the essential principles of Zoroastrianism.

### **The way to the other world is through this world**

Thus, for a Zoroastrian the path to the other world is through this very world – by being Ahura Mazda's co-worker (Hamkaar) in every way on this earth, making his creation Spenta (progressive/beneficent) and fighting Angra (evil) in every way and by realizing in one's own life all the attributes of the seven Amesha Spentas as best as one can. We will be judged in the other world by what we do for Ahura Mazda in this world while alive. The divine essence of Ahura Mazda lies in everyone as well as in everything good on this earth and the way to the other world is through incorporating it within our being while alive as well as promoting and perfecting it within us as well as all around us. Spiritual salvation is thus not far away for a Zoroastrian as the opportunity for it lies just where we find ourselves in life at a given time and clime. As the Hoshbaam Prayer tells us, we can become one (or friend) with Ahura Mazda by observing Asha Vahishta (Best Truth) as best as we can in our life and hereby removing all the (Angra) qualities lurking in us and around us. God has never forsaken us after creating this world but is dwelling in everything and everyone around us if we only care to recognize it and use our free will to side with him and help Him to bring about Frashokereti when only the eternal life and goodness will prevail on earth.

Thus, Ahura Mazda's reason for casting the material world in the mold of the spiritual world seems to be to ensure the spiritual sanctity and significance of this visible world as well as to ensure that His grace is evident every where in, the universe. His Holy Spirit. Spenta Mainyu, permanently



permeates the physical world, and cosmic consciousness, (Vohu Mana) and cosmic energy and light (Asha Vahishta) sustain and guide it eternally.

### Gathic way to spirituality

The divine intelligence/truth/Asha as represented by Asha Vahishta pervades the universe and therefore the prophet says: *"Yes indeed I have already come to know Thee O Mazda! as Spenta when thou didst come to me with Vohu Mana. My response to Thy inquiry, "Whom did thou wish to worship?" was: "Thy fire. As long as I have the ability to choose (or wish) I will bow to Asha with reverence as my gift."* (Yasna 43.9). Later on, that led to carrying a piece of wood to fire as a gift.

Yasna 43.9 should be read in conjunction with Yasna 30.1 where Asho Zarathushtra sings praise of Ahura Mazda, Vohu Mana and Asha *"so that one may attain the vision (Sanskrit-Darshan) of perfection in the realm of light."* The Gathas are generally free of mysticism but this verse is regarded by many scholars, particularly by G Gnolli, as indicative of mysticism. It is noteworthy that it centers on light, a dimension of divine energy/fire. This reminds me of what one Jewish friend turned Christian wrote to me on May 31, 1995: *"One of my major life goals was to see the sacred fire of the Parsis. When I finally did, my old mystical life was literally rekindled. I was surprised, because I did not expect the Zoroastrian fire to have such a direct and powerful spiritual influence on me. I had assumed that any mystical experience would be routed through Christianity alone. But I was wrong: The Lord does what He/She wills, despite the lines that we people draw to contain Him/Her."* Yasna 31.7 elucidates how the whole universe emanates with divine light which manifests itself through Vohu Mana and Asha since Ahura Mazda here says he is their creator. Yasna 34.15 (it is recited four times – which demonstrates its significance) compliments Yasna 34.1, as well as delineates the importance of following the best (Godly) advise and deeds mentioned in Yasna 31.11 and expresses

God's wish that we establish His Kingdom on this earth with Vohu Mana and Asha by making the world fresh (by working for Frashokereti) and full of truth. Thus, just as God wants us to make this world as spiritual as He made it in the beginning (Yasna 28.11), He also wants us to become spiritual and immortal (Amesha) by faithfully following his precepts so that we would acquire new vision, and see and fulfill His wish in everything we think, say and do, and live and breathe and have our mooring in Him.

### Concluding remarks

We can thus see how comprehensive and yet so logical, lofty, sublime and literally so down-to-earth Zarathushtra's philosophy is about attaining spirituality and how relevant, inspiring and practicable it is today as it was at the dawn of history. As a matter of fact, when people are turning away from religion and religious dogmas today, his theology holds promise for inspiring us to recognize and fulfill our spiritual mission so easily on this earth, a mission which is not far from our grasp if we only will it.



photo, courtesy Roshan Rivetna



Dastur Dr Kersey H Antia is High priest of the Zarathushti community in Chicago area since 1977, when he was awarded the Dastur's shawl by ZAC. He has served the community as an honorary priest for half a century. A fully ordained priest from the M F Cama Athornan Institute in Mumbai, since 1950, Dr Antia studied religion and Avesta-Pahlavi under Dasturji

Dabu and other learned priests, and was recipient of several essay prizes and Avesta-Pahlavi scholarships. Dr Antia has lectured widely since he was 17, and is the author of numerous papers on religion and psychology. He is a licensed clinical psychologist in full-time private practice in Illinois and is also affiliated with several hospitals. He is listed in several "Who's Who" and included among the "2000 outstanding Religious Personalities and Scholars of the 20th Century". Dr Antia is member of the International Board, WZO.

## Changing world of Zarathushti faith

by jehan bagli

The wonder and awe manifested in the power of Nature led primitive mankind to religious expression with no understanding of the relationship of the Truth vested in it. Mankind in an effort to win over some of the mysterious magic of Nature evolved the magic rites of their own out of fear or of greed of gain.

The Message of the first Aryan prophet Zarathushtra uncovered for humanity, the way to the freedom of moral choice, freedom from the dogmatic superstitions, and from multiple Divinities. Despite being surrounded by the believers in the magical rites, in a society that could barely distinguish the cause from its effect, the Prophet proclaimed a way of life, that harmonized human existence through Truth in its moral significance, and for mankind to uphold a life of thoughts, words and deeds following the Holy Spirit *Spenta Mainyu*.

This was the basic concept instrumental in the blooming of the Zarathushtrian faith in the Achaemenian era, among **millions of people of the diverse group of nations**, not only of Asia

Minor but also in Greece, Egypt, southern Russia as well as parts of China. In the sixth century BC before the fall of Sasanians the Zarathushti population was still several millions strong.

Careful scanning of the Gathic scripture reveals two fundamental facts. Firstly, the prophet unambiguously emphasizes, that his message is for the entire humanity (Ys 28.4; 28.5; 30.2; 31.3; 45.1; 45.5; 51.9). Secondly, the efforts of this extraordinary personality, are directed to convincing the

mankind of his era, to recede from the blind following of the Kavis (princes) and Karapans (clergies) and to pursue the Good Rule (Ys 29.10, 30.7, 30.8, 48.5, 51.1, 51.2) inferred from **Truth (Asha) and Thinking of Good Mind (Vohu Manah)**.



Was he converting people from one religion to another? The answer to this depends largely on how one defines the term 'convert'. It must be born in mind that in that era, there was **no institutionalized religion**. Hence there was no question of proselytizing from one religion to another. He was however attempting to bring the mankind on to the path of *Asha* and the quest for Truth, from the dishonest and evil practices that

prevailed.

The other primal fact worthy of consideration is that the Prophet did not want his notions imposed on the people. He emphatically states, "Listen to the best **with your ears**, ponder with a Good Mind..." before **you choose your creed** (Ys 30.2). Here he clearly alludes to the ability of human to think and exercise the fundamental principle of Freedom of Choice elaborated in the Gathas (Ys 31.11). The Prophet thereby proclaimed, that **a human**

**being is free to think and choose the path of Asha and Good thinking implicit in his message.**

Conversion is what Islam did to Zarathushtis, at the point of a sword, or for a right to all the property and family heritage, or to escape the Jizya tax. Coercion and persuasion are the hallmark attributes in conversion. Impelling conversion promoted by major missionary faiths is in fact, **untenable by Zarathushtrian faith** as it **violates the principle of Free thinking and Freedom of Choice.** In contrast, any human being is within their Basic God –given right, to choose the religion of Zarathushtra and is free to **go through the process of conversion oneself**, without assistance from a Zarathushti, and **no one can stop that.**

Present day people of Central Asia, and even those in South America have **chosen to follow the teachings of Zarathushtra.** No coercion or incentives were offered to them to follow Daena Vanghui. It would be **sinful to stop the spread of Truth (Asha), Good thinking (Vohu Manah) and Good rule (Khshthravairya)** among humanity to further the cause of accord among human brotherhood and bring peace to corporeal existence.

The question however remains, is such a person socio-religiously acceptable within the Zarathushti community? Is the individual, who chose the path of Asha proclaimed by Zarathushtra, eligible for that important socio-religious ritual of Navzote that integrates one within the community? It is **not conversion but socio-religious Acceptance** (Bagli, *Gavashni*, June 1983) **that is the basic cause of disharmony** in the community. How did this come about? It is logical to conclude, that in the early era, any individual who chose the path of Asha and the quest for Truth through *Spenta Mainyu*, was **acceptable as a follower of the Prophet.**

What has happened since the time of the Prophet to change this notion? It was the

Zarathushti exodus to India 936 CE and the subsequent evolution of the community there, that has markedly changed the course of history of the religion.

Zarathushtis who fled their homeland, with the fresh memories of the massacre and sacrilege by Macedonians, and subsequent slaughter by Arabs were sentimentally obsessed to protect their ethnic identity.

They did so by maintaining **rigid ground rules with sectarian attitude of exclusivity**, to preserve their religion.

These inflexible rules of selectivity, were **man made decree**, resulting purely from their historic experiences. The rules were set out to protect their religious heritage, but **these rules were not invoked by any doctrinal dictum.** Adherence to this rigid order, was perhaps essential under the prevailing circumstances then, and **they deserve full credit, for their wisdom.**

However in doing so over a thousand years, these **man-made edicts were dragged into the core of the religion** and the Universal message of a great Prophet paid a heavy price, by being reduced to a **racial heritage, treasured only by a tribe of people.**

Today more than thousand years later we notice some drastic changes in the world demography of Zarathushti Faith. It is high time that Zarathushties, and in particular Zarathushti priesthood reassessed **the position that divides the community.**

There is an unmistakable decline in the number among the Parsi Zarathushtis in India where these rules of exclusivity are rigidly adhered to.

These are the same exclusionary statutes, that has brought the Parsi Zarathushti community of India to a stage, where, some highly intellectual Parsis of India, are deeply concerned about the survival of the community in India. At the other extreme, there are also individuals, who see the writings on the wall, of losing the power and authority they have wielded over decades. Out of fear, all they can do is to instigate poor and less knowledgeable sector of the community, to put barriers to progress.

Zoroastrian community world-wide, is making an enormous effort, by promoting youth activities, to preserve the religious integrity through marriage within the community. However, when a minority is immersed in a vast culturally diverse majority, a percentage of interfaith marriages is a natural consequence. To alienate these innocent couples by declaring their inter-religious wedlock as a 'spiritual sin' is nothing short of being dishonest and un-Zarathushtrian. It is offensive not only to the couple but also to the religion of Zarathusht to deny blessings to the union, of two Righteous human beings, that Zarathushtra inspires in his Holy hymns (Ys 53.3-5).

For the larger good of the Zarathushtrian Faith, the children of interfaith marriages irrespective of the gender of the Zarathushti spouse, should be eligible to be brought up as Zarathushti, if unanimously desired by the couple. If an interfaith couple chooses to bring up their child to follow the path of Asha and Good thinking, by the teachings of the Prophet, that decision deserves to be respected. Refusing to do so is a direct breach of the prophetic message.

The Priesthood of the Zarathushti community outside India must be conscious of the fact that living in western social milieu demands certain adaptations of man-made socio-religious practices. In UK as well as North America we do not have facility of Dokhmenashini or consecrated Agyaries or Atash-e-Bahram. We adapt to that through alternative means. Time is here for the Zarathushti priesthood of the west to sit down together, intellectually dialogue and analyse the issue, rather than blindly follow the exclusionary socio-religious attitude evolved by the early settlers of Khorasan, more than a thousand years ago, in a different part of the world, under totally distinct set of circumstances.

In conclusion, do we need to wait until the survival of the religion of Asho Zarathusht is in the balance? Can we declare a

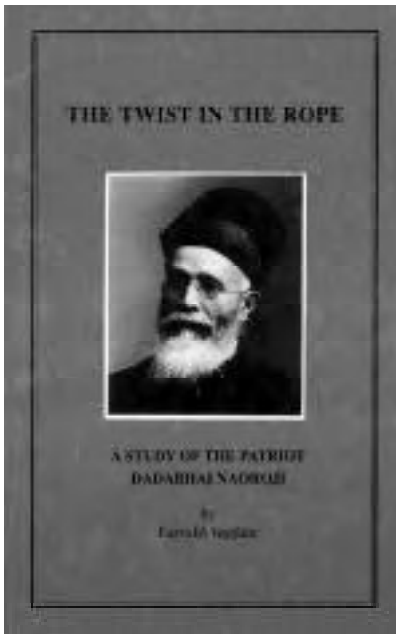
Zarathushti man or woman marrying a non-Zarathushti ceases to be a Zarathushti and that their children cannot be brought up as Zarathushtis? Doing that, would constitute a direct infraction of Basic Human Right to Freedom of religion in the western world. The bottom line is do we want the history to repeat itself?

As one Ervad from Mumbai has said, **"We have tried everything to increase our number . . . but all have been of no avail. Let us now do the right thing. Turn back to Zarathushtra and to him alone."**

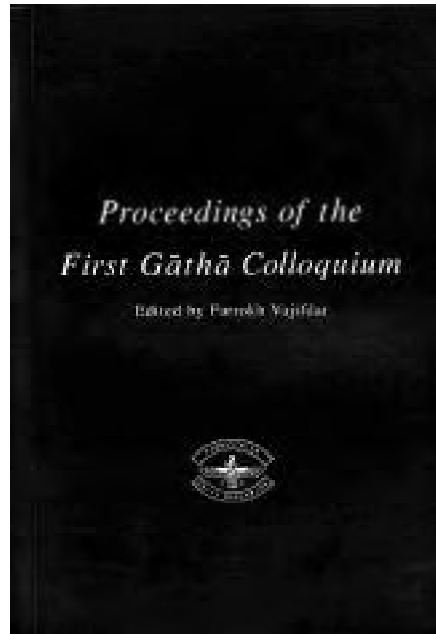


*Ervad Dr Jehan Bagli retired as Distinguished Research Fellow from Wyeth Research. He has PhD in Medicinal Chemistry and is an ordained priest through Navar and Martab ceremonies. He was the founding president of ZAQ, and editor of North American periodical Gavashni*

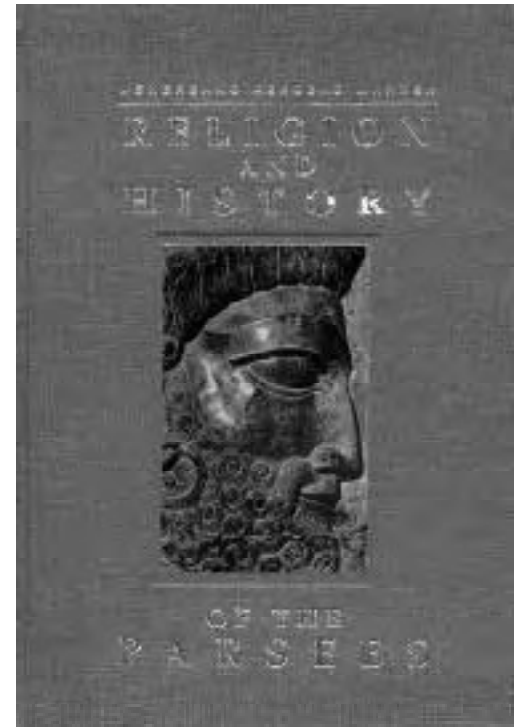
*for 16 years. Presently he is chairperson of Research and Preservation committee of FEZANA, and president of North American Mobed Council. Jehan is a recipient of FEZANA excellence in Profession/business award, and author/coauthor of two books: Understand and Practice of Jashan Ceremony and Religion of Asho Zarathusht and Influence through the Ages.*



The Twist in the Rope – written by Farrokh Vajifdar and published by an anonymous donor - 2500 copies and sold for £10 to generate funds for the Noshirwan F Cowasjee Medical Benevolent Fund

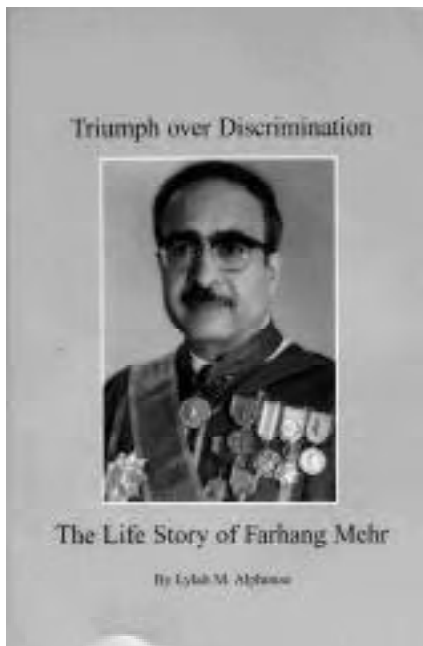


Proceedings of the First Gatha Colloquium – edited by Farrokh Vajifdar, published by late Mehraban Farhangi – 1500 copies and sold for £15 to benefit WZO

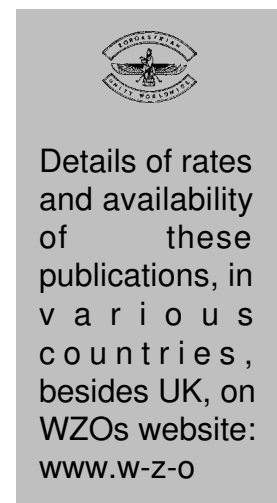


Religion and History of the Parsees – written and published by Meherbano Kekobad Marker – 1000 copies and sold for £10, to generate funds for the indigent Zoroastrians of Mumbai

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Triumph over Discrimination – The Life Story of Farhang Mehr - written by Lylah M Alphonse and published by Hilda & Rumi Sethna Charitable Funds – 1000 copies and sold for £10, proceeds benefitting various charities including WZO



## *How can Zoroastrianism be practiced in a practical way in the future*

by mehernosh m bhadha

- a youth perspective

**T**he youth of today, have a very special role to play and perform in the preservation and prosperity of the Zoroastrian religion in the 21st century and beyond.

I personally feel "the future depends upon how much we will invest in the present." We can only build our future on a solid foundation if we share, dialogue and learn from each other.

Today's youth are more confident, better educated and are more involved in community affairs. The fire temples, religious classes and talks are now being frequented by the youth where ever the facilities are available, which was not so some two decades ago. Our elders and community leaders need to come forward and extend such facilities to more and more places in India, Pakistan and other countries which have a reasonable numbers of Zoroastrians residing. While today's youth are receptive to what they are taught, they think rationally, analyse objectively and execute decisively. Such trends are illustrative of leadership qualities, and we all are fortunate that our youth today have been so blessed.

Before the youth are ready to embark on a mission to practice Zoroastrianism in a practical way, they first need to have absolute faith in our beloved religion and even more so, unflinching faith in its customs, traditions and rituals that our ancestors have believed in for thousands of years.

Religion, it is said "Begins and ends at Home".

Therefore, to strengthen its roots, parents need to play a vital role and take up the initiative to correctly educate and encourage their children with proper Zoroastrian way of life as they do with them in pursuing their academic career. It is felt that parents, elders and religious scholars come up with practical suggestions on how to transform knowledge through various mediums especially the essence of various ceremonies and rituals and to appraise the youth of our heritage and culture.

A beginning in this direction has already been made by the various Zoroastrian Organizations world wide, which tend to hold conferences with no boundaries and where diverse choices, ideals and thoughts are allowed to flourish simultaneously.

Exchange programmes for the youth are held, wherein new blood bring in thoughts and ideals from across the world, and the flooding of religious information on various web sites, all of which go a long way to help educate and guide the community.

As witnessed today, considerable bickering and infighting has surfaced amongst fellow Zoroastrians, who have even gone public in the print media to settle their scores with one another. This must immediately be discouraged by one and all, and all Zoroastrians should support fellow Zoroastrians. The community needs to do some brainstorming as to how to cope with difference of opinion of our rituals and traditions by some of our fellow Zoroastrians. It is expected of our community to be more vibrant, open-minded and accepting.



As the saying goes, if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future.

Most important of all, I certainly need to emphasize on our community to hold our reverend priests in high esteem, as it is our priesthood that holds our community together. As the priesthood goes, so does our community, and if we show disrespect to our priests, we disrespect ourselves.

Prayers have a very vital role to play in our daily lives. One has to have a very strong belief in the power of our prayers. They may be recited individually, but are most beneficial when recited in a group and for mental peace of the participants. A *hum bandagi* congregation of devotees, conducted in the *Aiwisruthem Geh*, on a fortnightly or monthly basis, will give the participants immense pleasure to observe a large number of devotees - both young and old Zoroastrians, converging at an Agiary. This is practiced in the city of Mumbai on a weekly basis with great success and should be carried out in other places wherever possible.

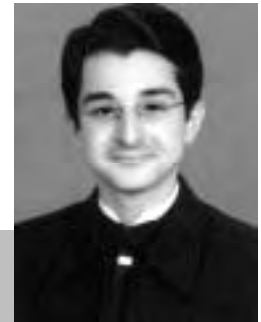
At my presentation in Toronto while attending the Xth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress in July 2003, I had strongly suggested that parents create an awareness and encourage their children to become *navers* and *martabs*.

It is strongly felt that presently most of the young *navers* simply learn essential prayers by rote and are initiated into priesthood, without having the slightest knowledge and experience of performing the very basic ceremonies and rituals. It is suggested that to begin with, since Mumbai is the place where probably most of the children are initiated into Zoroastrian priesthood, those aspiring to become *navers* need to undergo a training programme on various rituals and ceremonies in addition to the learning of the required prayers, before their initiation.

Probably, every year during school vacations, a short training camp could be held for all aspiring *naverians* from within India as well as from Pakistan and overseas. Only after

having attained proper guidance in these very basics, should a child's *naver* ceremony take place. We shall thus have useful and enlightened priests to lead the community. Some may disagree with me, arguing that a rigid stance may scare away a few aspirants from becoming *navers*, but are we only looking at numbers and priests, who hardly tend to practice priesthood? Surely not.

Considering the fact that Zoroastrianism is said to be a microscopic community worldwide, yet its followers make their presence felt and are considered noble souls wherever they are whether in small or big numbers. It is my firm belief that in spite of all odds, our religion has survived all through these years and shall continue to live till the end of time should we Zoroastrians continue to follow the teaching of our Lord Zoroaster, that the world is a battleground between good and evil and it is the duty of each one of us to foster good and fight evil.



At the age of 10 plus, Mehernosh Bhadha had the distinction of being Pakistan's youngest Zoroastrian priest. In 1999 he was ordained a *navar* and the following year, a *martab* with Ervad Aspandiyar Dadachanji, Head Priest at the Vatcha Gandhi Agiary, Mumbai. Karachi-ites were rightly proud as they had produced a priest after almost 45 years. During his schooling at the BVS Parsi High School, Mehernosh won the English & Urdu elocution competitions, and became Head Prefect in 2003-2004. He also won the Jamshed Mehta Elocution Shield in 2001 & 2002, held annually for Zoroastrian children. He is the recipient of: the New Millennium Gold Medal in the boy child category, a Gold Plated Trophy & Certificate of Excellence in the field of education at the Xth Star Awards 1999 presented by the South Asia Publications. He was selected from the whole of Pakistan in this category. Mehernosh was sponsored, and actively participated in the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress held in Houston, Texas - USA, in 1999-2000 and also sponsored to make a presentation at the Xth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in Toronto, Canada in July 2003 representing youth *mobeds* from Pakistan. With the shortage of priests in Karachi, Mehernosh finds time from his studies and assists whenever called upon to perform *Jashans* and *Navjote* ceremonies. Recently, at the age of 16, he performed a *Navjote* ceremony independently. During the *Muktad* periods, he actively assists in the daily prayers and *jashans* held at the *Anjuman agiary*.



*celebrating twenty five years*



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benefitting farmers of Gujarat & Medical Benevolent Fund

# *Through WZO, lasting friendships of outstanding*

## *Zoroastrians*

by shahpur f captain

When I started on this journey over 25 years ago, I did not have a clue as to the course WZO will take in the future, the number of Zoroastrians and others I was destined to meet who would enrich my life with their friendship and warm heartedness. A few of these personalities I wish to share with the readers.

Although I did not meet Dasturji Sohrabji and Shirinbanoo Kutar through WZO work, I cannot pass by without mentioning their names. Ours was a long lasting friendship going back to 1960. As Dasturji, Shirinbanoo and myself had worked in tandem in the affairs of The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, it was but natural that we continued to do so in the enterprise of WZO. Shirinbanoo became the Chairman and I the Vice President. Her great gift was to support me whole heartedly in every thing I did for the community and debate matters relevant to the community with openness. Besides, we all believed in religious tolerance, which Dasturji had put in practice for many years in the UK. It was a partnership that benefited the community not only in United Kingdom but in the world.

When Iran was going through political turmoil, many Irani Zoroastrians migrated to London. Amongst them were Mehraban and Goli Farhangi, two most wonderful people I have had the good fortune to meet and befriend. Mehraban was a man of tremendous fore sight. He realised the potential of WZO and asked me to work for WZO on a full time basis, offering to pay my salary and travelling expenses, which I declined. So, instead he wanted to give a donation to WZO, but as it was not a charity, I persuaded him to set up a Trust, the income of which could be used for the expenses of WZO. Thus came about the

establishment of The World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund. But for the magnanimity of Mehraban and Goli, the WZO would not have been able to get off the ground at all. Their munificence was kept anonymous till his passing away. He has kept his Fund open to others to join, and I sincerely hope that other Zoroastrians with fore sight will add to this.

It has been my great pleasure to cherish the friendship of Farhang Mehr, another stalwart with great fore sight and wisdom. It was Farhang who got me going on WZO way back in 1978/79 and he has supported WZO through thick and thin since its establishment.

Noshirwan Fakirji Cowasjee, who had lived in the UK for many years, suddenly emerged on the scene in 1986. He was implacably opposed to those who denied the right of freedom to worship as also those who wanted to set up another world body. He soon joined the WZO and worked incessantly for it. He was keen to see WZO prosper and took on all sorts of mundane jobs, such putting circulars and accounts etc in envelopes, sticking addressed labels on the envelopes and posting them to all over the world by himself. Our offers to help him were rejected forthwith. Then, Noshirwan seized upon the idea of collecting a fund for medical relief. He devoted his life to collect at first £100,000 and as soon as he reached this target, set himself another target of £250,000, which he valiantly achieved at tremendous cost of time, effort and his pocket. It was a labour of love for him as he felt compelled to assist those poor Zoroastrians requiring medical and surgical treatment in the West. Not a day went by without him telephoning me with advice, queries and suggestions. Although small of built, he really walked tall.

Mehraban Farhangi had introduced me to Firuz Madon in Vancouver. I knew that Firuz lived in London but had never met him. On return to London, we met for lunch when I informed Firuz about the activities of WZO. After reading the constitution of WZO, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the membership clause, which was narrow. He wanted it broadened to include all those who believed in Zarathushtra's teachings and practiced it. He was quite prepared to donate one million pounds to WZO, if WZO changed its membership clause.

Regrettably, this was not possible. It was heart wrenching to lose such a fabulous sum of money. We met regularly and had pleasant times together.

On my first visit to New York in 1982 to talk to the ZAGNY Committee about the formation of WZO, I had the very good fortune to meet Prof Kaikhosrov D Irani. I have the highest admiration and respect for him and his dear wife Piroja. Soon thereafter,

Kaikhosrov joined the WZO Committee and almost every year since then, except the last few years, Kaikhosrov has given talks on Zoroastrianism under the auspices of WZO. His immense knowledge, erudition, his humility and humour has endeared him to all those who have listened to his talks. He joined us in our negotiations with the BPP and FEZANA. It was Kaikhosrov, who suggested to me that WZO should hold a Gatha Colloquium and guided me on which scholars to invite. We held the Gatha Colloquium for the first time in 1993 and it was a resounding success. His suggestions on seminars were always accepted and acted upon, and he graced them all.

Dinshaw Tamboly is now a well known name in the Zoroastrian firmament. My dear friend of many years, Ruby Contractor suggested to me, that Dinshaw should be asked to join the WZO Committee. I met Dinshaw on my regular yearly visits to India and we hit it off instantly. Bachi and Dinshaw are not only staunch supporters of WZO, but they are also our very special friends. He joined me in our meetings with the BPP & SPP. At the end of these, we exchanged our views and uncannily they coincided. Bachi and Dinshaw were itching to do some constructive work

and as soon as we commenced the project for the Upliftment of the poor Zoroastrian farmers of Gujarat, they found a niche on which they have showered their labour of love. At the beginning, Dinshaw and myself worked on this scheme hand in glove together. WZO was also very fortunate to receive the voluntary services of Firoj Panthakey, a retired forestry officer and Farrokh Kasad, a farmer himself, who visit

the villages and farms and submit reports how the farmers can be assisted by WZO. They too are lovely friends and whole heartedly supportive of WZO. Since early 1990, WZO has branched out into many spheres of assistance to the Zoroastrian community and Dinshaw and Bachi have taken these on in their stride. I take this opportunity to thank Bachi, Dinshaw, Firoj and Farrokh for their selfless and dedicated services to the welfare and upliftment of the down trodden Zoroastrians.

Dadi Mistry of New Delhi was the first one from India to join WZO. In fact, he is one of the Founder members. His and his wife



Nergish's support for WZO is 100%. Whenever required, he has responded magnificently. His namesake Dadi Engineer of Mumbai agreed to be the Chairman of the WZO India way back in the earlier years after hearing me speak on WZO at Zal and Roshan Contractor's house. Dadi has played an invaluable part in keeping WZO going in India. Lawyer by profession, Dadi has the knack how to smooth rough edges at meetings with appropriate wise cracks.

At the beginning, WZO's offices in India were located at Dadi Mistry's office in New Delhi. Thereafter, it was moved to Mumbai in the home of Zal and Roshan Contractor. I can never forget their kindness to WZO when it was most needed and always a pleasure to meet them on every visit of mine to Mumbai.

Our first effort at sending out news bulletins to our members was made by me from London. Subsequently, it was moved to Mumbai and Noshir Dadrawalla did everything within his power as its editor to popularise the *Hamazor*. I loved meeting Noshir and many times with his young son and discussing the problems facing the community, despite the fact that our views were at different ends of the spectrum. I am so happy that he has contributed an article in this issue of the *Hamazor*.

I can go on endlessly with the list, but I have to stop somewhere. And so the last but not the least is my very good friend Jehan Daruwalla. I met Jehan in London on 18th July, 1980 when WZO was officially launched. His knowledge of the Zoroastrians of Mumbai and India was just staggering. Besides, he was a widely read person and had deep understanding of the Zoroastrian religion. My second port of call when in Mumbai was his office at *Bombay Samachar*. Here I learnt about the state of the affairs of the community, of the politics of various Panchayets, the dasturs of India and the ins and outs of statements of complaints made by Zoroastrians against those in power and how the latter tried to silence his pen etc, etc. The incisive insight of Jehan helped me a lot in my dealings with various people in India. In addition to this, Jehan supported WZO to the hilt. Jehan was an extraordinary personality and it was a pleasure to know him as a friend.



Shahpur Captain, originally from Karachi, immigrated to UK in 1956. He served the community in UK and overseas for 40 years. His contribution to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) have been outstanding. During these 25 years he extended the existing Zoroastrian House, placed its finances on a strong footing, forced the Brookwood Cemetery company to cede the freehold of the existing burial ground and provide further lands for just GBP1 and converted the association into a charity. In 1980, Shahpur formed the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) London and worked ceaselessly for 20 years, stepping down as its Chairman two years ago. He still plays an important role as one of its Board Members.

## Down Memory Lane

by noshir h dadrawala

I am pleased to know that this year the WZO will be celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its formation and service to the community. As the first editor of *Hamazor* it gives me great pleasure to write a few words for this special issue.

The term 'hamazor' captures the essence of attunement, friendship, solidarity and unity - an appropriate name for the official publication of an organization aiming to promote Zoroastrian unity worldwide.

*Hamazor* began in the early eighties as a modest four paged monthly newsletter printed by xerox offset process on simple A 4 size paper. Besides reporting on WZO activities, I used to cull out news, views and events from various Zoroastrian newsletters that I used to receive from various anjumans and associations both in India and abroad. The exercise was a celebration of unity in diversity.

As the years rolled by *Hamazor* began to grow both in terms of size, format and content. From xerox offset it graduated to printing, first at Kaiser-e-Hind and later at Union Press. At Union Press, *Hamazor* truly blossomed from a mere pamphlet style newsletter to a proper journal/magazine with colour sections and attractive covers. I guess when the printer and the editor work as a team and for a common purpose; the result is bound to be good.

On a personal note, I would like to add that the professional relationship that I enjoyed with the printer, late Rohinton Chinoy, flowered over the years into an abiding friendship. I have always measured my true

wealth in terms of friends who have touched my life. In my emotional books of account, Rohinton was a capital asset and his departure from this world is a deficit that just cannot be filled.

I have fond memories of several evenings spent at Union Press with Rohinton Chinoy and Dinshaw Tamboly, discussing besides *Hamazor* and WZO, the various social, economic and political affairs of the community. We had our differences but did not allow them to affect our friendship. Each one of us came from a different background and conditioning and it was natural for us to think, plan and act differently. What bound us together was a common passion – the socio-economic welfare and prosperity of the community.

I have always admired WZO's significant role in the socio-economic rehabilitation of the marginalized and forsaken members of the community, particularly in rural South Gujarat. And I do think that the fame and credibility that WZO enjoys in India is thanks to this enormous work undertaken almost single handedly by Dinshaw Tamboly.

The Senior Citizens Centre in Navsari is a model institution with hardly a parallel in this country. Once again, I have fond memories of being present for the inauguration and experiencing a one night stay at the Centre on a twin sharing bases with Rohinton.

WZO's largesse has touched several lives. Be it someone suffering from a serious ailment or an aspiring student or a promising



sportsman or a young entrepreneur, the assistance is extended effectively and handsomely and without the pain of excessive procedure and inordinate delays.

Today, the name WZO evokes mixed feeling and response within the community. Some admire it and others are envious of it. Many love it and quite a few hate it. In my opinion, WZO is loved and admired for its humanitarian work, but disliked particularly by the traditionalists within the community, for its reformist views and policies.

On a happy occasion like this I would not like to talk about my dislikes and disagreements and create a controversy. I have therefore tried to walk down memory lane and reminisce only about all that I think was good and positive about WZO and *Hamazor*.

As human beings we fiercely value and guard our individuality and the freedom to think independently. When the time comes for disagreement we should certainly disagree, as long as we can do so in an agreeable manner.

I have my share of differences with WZO and some of its office bearers. But I also cherish happy memories of working so closely with so many of them, particularly Late Rohinton Chinoy and Late Zal Contractor and among those who are happily still with us, Shahpur Captain and Dinshaw Tamboly.

May your humanitarian work keep you glowing and God keep you going!



Release of the book, "Zoroastrian Manthric Elixir to Lead a true Zoroastrian Life" by Rusi Besania, sponsored by WZO.



*Noshir H Dadrawala has authored books, done research papers, given talks and conducted seminars at national and international level. He is also a trustee of various foundations/councils. Professionally he is an Executive Secretary at the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy.*

*His research projects have been for John Hopkins and Harvard Universities as well as for the London School of Economics. He has also travelled extensively and earned fellowship/membership of international bodies. He is also an editor of a few publications.*

## ***Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Reflections on 100 Years of Zoroastrianism in North America. Will we survive?***

**by dolly dastoor**

**C**ongratulations on the historic occasion of celebrating 25 years of the World Zoroastrian Organization. The history of Zoroastrians in the diaspora began much before. They began arriving on the shores of North America around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is almost 100 years since our arrival on this continent and much advancement has been made in the history of Zoroastrianism which historians will judge and write about in the next 50 years. The story is unfolding dramatically and its chapters are full of progress and hope. Zoroastrians in North America have matured as a community, we have become the largest population outside India and Iran. We realize that we are living in rapidly changing times and we do not have the luxury of taking for granted the infrastructures that were inherited by us in our countries of origin. We are creating our own infrastructures, making our own mistakes, as we go along and putting our own stamp on the practice of the religion as all generations do. We have created an unparalleled range of centres that house our religious social and welfare needs, 8 religious centres have been established which to some may seem like a travesty of the practice of religion but to us are very precious.

Yet, as much as we have changed some things remain the same. This anniversary

gives us pause to consider where we are headed as a Zoroastrian community in North America.

After many faltering steps the Zoroastrians of North America established a Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) in 1986, bringing together the 20 odd individual associations which had mushroomed all over the continent. This was a major achievement both structurally and functionally, which allowed the community to move forward in one direction with some obvious deviations. We were the first community to develop a 10 year strategic plan for the advancement of the Zoroastrians of North America based on a holistic vision for the future. Many of the milestones we set for ourselves have been achieved through the collective efforts of all



generations. In order to help our co-religionists lead a Zoroastrian life we have developed materials for religious education, published books, developed a syllabus for religious education, promoted and motivated the establishment of structured religious classes for young and old. We have produced CDs and inspirational films with a religious motif. To help our youth achieve excellence we have set up an academic scholarship program and instituted a FEZANA scholar. Religious scholarships have also been instituted for encouraging studies in higher religious education. Three editions of the printed North American Directory (1996, 1998, 2001) and a CD (2004) have been produced.

We have established two Mobeds' Council to help guide the spiritual needs of the community. And we initiated the establishment of the World Chamber of Commerce, the Creatingawareness network and Zarathushti Women's International Network and a critical assistance network. We are an active member of the United Nations Religious NGO with category III status. Our youth have organized and participated fully in workshops and seminars of the UN in New York.

Gatha conferences, Avestan conferences, the biannual North American conferences, sports events, film festivals, book readings of Parsi authors all take place on a regular basis. The World Congress was a singular achievement of mobilizing the diaspora to come together for a purpose. We have been successful in achieving this in an open and pluralistic society where so many competing demands are made not only on our time but on our psyche and our intellect. We have been able to withstand the daily onslaught.

And all this in less than 100 years!

And yet my generation is obsessed with the idea whether the Zoroastrian religion will survive us i.e., will the next generation do as good a job as we have done. I think that is a bit presumptuous. I do not remember my parents and their friends debating this question back in India wondering how would their children practice the religion. They saw the practices change, they saw that we did not pray every time we went to the toilet, they saw that we did not cover our heads 24 hours, they saw that we did not observe the laws of purity strictly during menstruation. But they accepted these changes as they knew that, in spite of all these outward changes in the cultural practices we were all Zoroastrian at heart. We had our identity, we knew who we were and everybody else knew who we were. And we have done them proud by our adherence to the religion and customs albeit in our own way.

But the situation for our children may be different. They do not have a strong

Zoroastrian identity, how could they when people say "Zoroastrian what is that? They are drowning in a sea of different cultures and religions, but the need to search for one's "roots", the need for connections is a very strong innate human desire, and they are fixing their own stamp on the practice of the religion and faith.

At the 13<sup>th</sup> North American Zoroastrian Congress held in San Jose in December 2004 there was a very interesting session where the participants were divided into different age groups (under 30, 30-40; 40-50 and 50+) and each group had to answer a series of questions all related to the overall question "What does being an Observant Zoroastrian Mean" in North America. The views expressed in this discussion group were a true picture as there was a cross section of the community represented in the room judging from the ages they represented. There were 44 individuals under the age of 30, and 52 individuals over the age of 50 suggesting an inverse bell curve with 29 between the ages of 30-40 and 15 between the ages of 40-50.

All age groups had an opportunity to dialogue with each other and to ask for clarifications about issues which were bothering them. But after being with the group for 3 hours in the same room and then hearing the summary of the discussion of each age group, I came away with the feeling that the practice of the religion is safe in North America, maybe not in the same format that I was used to 40 years ago in India, but so what, I too have changed, I have dropped many of the peripheral customs and rituals but I think I have become a better Zoroastrian out of choice rather than simply by virtue of being born into a Zoroastrian family.

Many of my generation on coming to North America, practiced a sort of "protectionist" "insular", philosophy, which is understandable for all first generation immigrants. Research shows that the first generation tends to keep together, live in close proximity to each other, work very hard to preserving the culture of the lands



they immigrated from. But this changes with each subsequent generations, and we are no exception. Now this second generation does not see the relevance of the need to be insular and protectionist and are proud to spread out, they have informed themselves about the Zoroastrian theology and doctrine, they are ready to participate fully in the mainstream life, they are ready to create awareness about the religion, they have received nominations from both the republican and democratic parties of the United States of America, they participate in interfaith events. When they marry a non-Zoroastrian spouse, they integrate them in the cultural and social life of the community.

100 years later we face new challenges, the challenge of blurring boundaries of a "global village", the challenge of "human rights" and "gender equality", the challenge of reconciling with a world, where people who wish to practice the Zoroastrian religion, and people who want to keep them out, the challenge of "defining a Zoroastrian", the challenge of finding leaders who will put petty differences behind them and lead us to form a virtual nation, "a world body", the challenge of finding priests who would lead us to a spiritual enlightenment and revival, the challenge of setting parameters for practicing traditions and rituals, the challenge of a paradigm shift in the balance between communal authority and personal autonomy, the challenge between survival of demographic numbers or spiritual regrowth, and most important of all the challenge and courage to stand on our own, responsible for our own actions, respectful to all but beholden to none.



Seminar on 20 June 2004, Darius Irandoost speaking on Tajikistan



Prof Stanley Insler on "Zarathustra's Genetic System" at the same seminar as mentioned above.



*Dolly Dastoor PhD, President of FEZANA 1994-1998, and co-chair of the 7th World Zoroastrian Congress. She has attended and presented papers at the World Zoroastrian Congress in India and Iran and in North American conferences; at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and in Capetown; Governor, 2002-2004, District 2, ZONTA International, a service organization promoting the status of women. Clinical psychologist by profession, Dolly is the Co-Director of Programme in Dementia, Douglas Hospital, McGill University and lives in Montreal, Canada.*

*It is the greatest houses and the tallest trees that the gods bring low with bolts of thunder. For the gods love to thwart whatever is greater than the rest. They do not suffer pride in anyone but themselves. Herodotus*

# Restructured WZO : A long term vision

by adi j davar

## Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, our community faces a world of extraordinary challenges and interconnections. It is as vulnerable to new threats such as the world knowing nothing about it or its faith, as to old ones stemming from living on past glories, bickering, or clinging to outdated approaches on community matters. Both are evolving in unpredictable and complex ways.

It can give responses that will isolate it further from that world and divide its tiny numbers. Or, sharing a commitment to its perpetuation, it can rally through its world body, the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), to meet the challenges.

However, a long-term vision needs to be first evolved for this body, irrespective of the restructuring alternative the community ultimately adopts for it, i.e., WZO's proposals under discussion over 11 years, or the "compromise" agreed upon in mid-2004 by Zoroastrian leaders, which the Federation of Zoroastrian Parsi Anjumans of India (FZPAI) apparently rejected in December 2004. To understand why a long-term vision is at all needed, let us recapitulate the leading factors which shaped those alternatives.

## Factors leading to WZO's restructuring

The community's odyssey for its world body began in 1960. It ended 25 years ago, with

WZO's creation in 1980. It has since served as its world body, including by dealing with governments and international bodies to protect Zoroastrians, undertaking social amelioration within the community and promoting understanding of our faith.

No more than a handful of local Zoroastrian associations existed in the world in the late 70s. No regional federations did. In that social landscape, the only way to give WZO a widespread democratic basis was to offer

membership to individual Zoroastrians and associations, and allow both to elect an International Board to run its affairs.

Several individuals, families and associations became members. But the two biggest associations did not: BPP, because it feared loss of influence in this milieu; and Tehran Anjuman which supported WZO's creation, but feared repercussions from Iran's revolution. So while governments quickly accepted WZO as our world

body, thus enabling it to arrange asylums for thousands of displaced Zoroastrian families, its acceptance as such within the community was not universal.

Meanwhile by the early 90s, the community's social structure changed drastically. Associations proliferated worldwide. Regional federations were born, FEZANA in North America and FZPAI in India. Some of their leaders then began making divisive demands that WZO cede its external functions like relating with governments to a separate world body of federations-associations, and become a separate world body of individuals dealing with the community matters like social amelioration and education.



### **WZO's proposals**

To respond to the societal change, and yet ensure that the community only had one internationally recognized world body, WZO offered to restructure itself in 1993. Details of its proposals have since been periodically amended, to reflect 11 years of discussions with Zarathustis around the world. But, in essence, the principle underlying them remained the same.

WZO proposed drastic revisions in its constitution, through which its ongoing structure would be replaced by: a virtually-independent Individuals Council elected by WZO's individual members, to handle the community internal matters; a similar Federations Council elected by WZO's association-federation members, to handle its external functions; and an International Board consisting of the two Councils sitting together, to loosely coordinate their work. Central to its proposals was retention of WZO's unitary structure and membership, while responding to the substance of the demands stemming from the societal change.

### **The agreed "compromise"**

Ultimately in mid-2004, leaders from major countries agreed to that split of responsibilities. But true to the community's traditional divisive nature, their "compromise" rested on WZO having a different organizational structure consisting of 3 totally-independent arms, each separately-incorporated in 3 countries (India, North America and UK) with own constitution and membership: WZO-Federations to do external work, through a board elected by its member associations-federations; WZO-Individuals for social amelioration and education, through a board elected by its individual members; and exchange of views between the two through a parent – "International Zoroastrian Organization (IZO) – created, and having a board elected, by both. Thus, WZO's integrity as a single body would disappear, despite 2 of the arms bearing the words "WZO".

No community has a world body with such a triple-armed organizational structure. While no compromise is ideal, it is particularly saddening that in a century where it is critical for our community to remain united, and be seen united, the chosen design stresses separateness, not oneness.

Even then, FZPAI's recent decision, mentioned before, may preclude India from joining. Whether WZO is ultimately restructured based on WZO's proposals or the "compromise", either organizational design **must be made to work** if community interests are to be served in this century. This is what necessitates a bold long-term vision for a restructured WZO.

### **Vision to meet the challenges**

Let us outline its possible features, and their rationale:

#### **■ Design and implement the vision so that the world perceives the restructured WZO as a single world body serving community interests.**

Only then will it have a voice as powerful as those of the world bodies of other numerically small faiths like Buddhism and Judaism. The design of the vision will be flawed, if predicated on the false Zoroastrian egocentric belief that "everyone knows about us". That would doom the community to greater irrelevance and non-recognition in this century.

#### **■ Nurture the restructuring carefully.**

To do that, the 2 Councils or the 3 arms will need to pull in the same directions, always giving paramountcy to community interests, not regional jealousies or personal agendas. This will ensure that although restructured, WZO is seen by everyone as a single institution focused on Zoroastrian interests.

#### **■ Consider re-naming "IZO" as "WZO-International", if the chosen organizational design is the "compromise".** If this coordinating arm

has “WZO” in its name like the other two, it will reinforce to the world that the 3 arms are merely a reformat of the internationally recognized WZO, and will function as one.

■ **Evolve details of the vision with foresight and imagination.** Find innovative ways to: make the world aware of Zoroastrians and their faith; influence political authorities everywhere they live; participate in inter-faith activities; build bridges of mutual understanding with other faiths; and sustain external public relations focused on these goals. The Federations Council, or WZO-Federation, should spearhead this focus while continuing WZO’s current work of internationally protecting Zoroastrian rights.

■ **Envision getting non-Zoroastrian, besides Zoroastrian, audiences for the restructured WZO’s talks, programmes and research work.** This should be an essential element of the vision. Because, the commonplace world, not its super-intellectual elite or Zoroastrians alone, needs to be made aware of: the essence of our faith and history; what our faith shares with other faiths; who we are; what we stand for; and contributions we can make to fellowmen everywhere. The Individuals and Federations Councils, or WZO-Federations and WZO-Individuals, should both sustain this focus through local, regional, national and international forums. Otherwise, further non-recognition will marginalize the community.

■ **Devolve leadership to new and younger hands.** Our young adults and adults are proceeding on separate paths. Heal this schism, by boldly envisaging how young leaders can be brought-in as equal partners to the vision-shaping and policy-making tables of the restructured WZO and its association-federation members. The young’s passion to stand for office and serve is dampened by the present leaders’ tendency to hang-on, and of a few to even usurp credit for achievements solely initiated and accomplished by the young.

Present leaders need to step down gradually. Otherwise, the community should demand that its associations and federations elect the young to represent them in the Federations Council or WZO-Federations. Individual should elect similar representation in the Individuals Council or WZO-Individuals. Our world body and the community will benefit from their fresher ideas, pragmatic leadership, and fine-tuned awareness of today’s world.

■ **Foster tolerance of differences about the basis of one’s belief in Zoroastrianism.** WZO is not a religious organization. It therefore embraces all who practice Zoroastrianism, irrespective of such differences. No Zoroastrian perpetuation is possible without community solidarity. That will only come through tolerance and respect for each other’s differing beliefs. Hence, the restructured WZO should envisage that its social and educational programmes, discussions and publications even-handedly foster: airing of differing beliefs; understanding of their rationales, through a civil dialogue; search for common grounds that permit each to live with the other’s viewpoints; stoppage of mutually self-defeating attacks and futile efforts to force one’s views on the other; and bridging of differences. Let us also be aware that if it is a body opens only to those born Zoroastrians, it will not win United Nations recognition which the community seeks.

■ **Ensure that young adults continue to take pride in being Zoroastrian.** Put-off by community controversies, they particularly fail to understand why fellow-Zoroastrians enthuse at the news that some in Russia, East European, Central Asia and Latin America - none born of Zoroastrian parents - are practicing Zoroastrianism and yet, they do not easily tolerate their friends’ or their non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of mixed marriages. They perceive the roots of this, and most community issues to be social, and wonder why they are allowed to masquerade as “religious”. 69,000 Indian Zoroastrians (2001 Indian census), now exceeded by those in Iran,

constitute only 25% of our world community of over 275,000 (2000 World Congress estimate). Hence, the young wonder why that 25% (in the unlikely event that they all support such intolerance) should hold many in the remaining 75%, who might think otherwise (including in Iran), hostage on such issues. Given these apprehensions, should not the restructured WZO boldly envision fostering of livable solutions to this, and other socially-rooted, issues? Otherwise, the pride of our youth in being Zoroastrian will be increasingly eroded. That would be fatal for a tiny and aging community, and accelerate its marginalization in a connected world.

■ **Engender alliances for social amelioration work between the restructured WZO and Zoroastrian institutions.** Community needs are large, but its human and financial resources limited. Yet, instead of pooling resources, most Zoroastrian institutions duplicate this work and put their labels on it. Further, most give aid without applying comparative criteria of eligibility or need. These old approaches need change. WZO pioneered a new one two years ago, by agreeing to: (i) add its monies to those of US's Fali Chothia Trust for award of scholarships in the Trust's name, without any mention of WZO; and (ii) rely solely on that Trust's proven processes, including its comparative criteria, to select scholarship winners. Deserving students now benefit by receiving significant, not meager, scholarship awards. The long-term vision could pioneer other new approaches, or at least embrace extension of this one to the institution's other social amelioration programs. Its association-federation and individual members could also be encouraged to do the same with it, or between themselves. This formidable community challenge can thus be won in today's interconnected world.

## Conclusion

United under a restructured WZO through whichever format, associations-federations and individuals everywhere, share socio-economic-political responsibility for our community's and its perpetuation. That must command their highest priority, transcending personal or regional jealousies and quarrels. Let each summon courage to do so.



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



WZO committee members on constitution brain storming debate at Rumi Sethna's residence, Purley, England



Seminar on "Religions & Secular Literature of the Zoroastrians" at Zoroastrian House on 16 & 17 November, 1996. Fourth from the left, Prof K D Irani, Prof Gershavich & Farrokh Vajifdar.

# The Emergence of the World Zoroastrian Organization: A History

by john r hinnells

When I wrote the piece on WZO in my *Zoroastrians in Britain*, it was rightly criticized by some for being based on external sources, mostly from records held by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, and from a few notes, cuttings and some personal contacts. This piece, written at the request of WZO, is based almost entirely on WZO's own records which were made available to me in 2002. A more extended version of this short article appears in my forthcoming book *The Zoroastrian Diaspora* (Oxford University Press, 2005 pp. 605-635). As ever, it is important to stress that my role is as an outside historian; my task is to sift sources and reconstruct as accurate and sensitive account of the Organization as possible - it is not for me to say whether there should be two world bodies or to advise on future plans.<sup>1</sup>

The person widely credited with the first call for the formation of a world body was Bailey Irani at the first World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran in 1962. He made this proposal with the prior support of the Managing Committee of the Zoroastrian Association in London (hereafter ZTFE). It was supported by Congress delegates who reaffirmed their support at subsequent World Congresses in Bombay in 1976 and 1978. The early assumption was that such a global body should be based at the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). Independently of these appeals, a number of American Zoroastrians had, during the 1970s, sought

guidance from Bombay on various religious issues and called for directives on what should happen e.g. in rituals in the diaspora (*Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p. 487). There was no response to these calls.

The perceived need for a world body was to have an organization that could speak at a global level for vulnerable Zoroastrian minorities, the examples then cited were groups in Pakistan and East Africa. In the later 1970s concerns grew for Zoroastrians in Iran. Prof Farhang Mehr, then Chancellor of Shiraz University and former Deputy Prime Minister in Iran, urged Shahpur F Captain, then President of ZTFE, to take the initiative and start a world body based in the politically stable climate of Britain, where foreign exchange

would not be a problem, as it then was in India.<sup>2</sup> Another leading figure to encourage such a move was Dr Jal Bulsara who had considerable experience with the United Nations. He led a seminar on the subject at the London School of Economics in 1977 – though he suggested the headquarters should be in India with offices in Britain and America.<sup>3</sup> Bulsara went with Sohrab Godrej to the Trustees of the BPP to urge them to set up such a body. No action was taken. At the 1979 AGM of the ZTFE, Farhang Mehr again urged Captain to take an initiative.

The first formal meeting to establish the WZO was held at Zoroastrian House in London on 18 July, 1980 – some eighteen



years after the Tehran Congress had called for the establishment of such a body. Speaking at that first meeting, Captain outlined his vision for WZO. Currently, he argued, Zoroastrians identified themselves by the locality in which they lived – Karachi Parsis, Calcutta Parsis etc. Local leaders equally, he argued, had a local vision. He called for an international vision of Zoroastrianism (reported afterwards in *Parsiana*, Sept – Nov 1988 pp.1f.). Later Captain explained that his emphasis on the importance of individual membership was born of exasperation at the unwillingness of major bodies to act. In a letter to Mehraban Zarthoshty (21 April, 1981) he elaborated his motives namely that he wanted grass roots support and involvement. Only individual membership, he argued, could generate a truly democratic institution. In order to move events forward at an international level, founding members were invited from different countries, individuals who had a proven record of action – in Iran, Arbab Rostam Guiv, though by then he was resident in the USA, as were some other Iranian founder members Prof Farhang Mehr, Mehraban Zarthoshty and Rostam Yeganegi. There were seventeen founder members in Britain, the larger number was because it was expected that most work would be undertaken in Britain. The emphasis on the importance of involving leading international figures was supported by many, for example the then forceful leader of Zoroastrians in Anaheim, California, Farangis Shahrokh<sup>4</sup>. These seventeen included individuals from different backgrounds for example from the Orthodox side were Ervads Jal and Darius Sethna, Shahrokh Shahrokh represented Iranian Zoroastrians and Bailey Irani was naturally one of the founder members. In the USA the Founder members were Dr Kersey Antia and Dr Rostam Sarfeh. Initially from Bombay there was only Noshirwan M Irani and from Delhi Dadi E Mistry. Many other prominent Zoroastrians were invited to become members, and many did including, for example, Dastur Meherjirana from Navsari, Jamshed Pavri from Vancouver, Shrivastav Nargolwala in Delhi, Nani Palkiwala in Bombay and Noshir Irani in Sydney At

that early stage the only person who declined an invitation, or to be precise did not reply, was Jamshed Guzder of the BPP. A Constitution was drawn up and circulated to founding members. Disputes quickly broke out. Jamshed Pavri complained that many early members had not been consulted about the constitution; he objected particularly to the exclusion of non-Zoroastrian spouses and resigned.

Pavri's resignation was one of the first of many disputes. Tensions inevitably grew with the BPP. At the World Congress in Bombay in 1981 Guzder and Dr Aspi Golwala (then chairman of the BPP), stated from the platform that they would not start a rival world body and discussions with WZO were promised. Whenever an officer of WZO visited India they met with Trustees from the BPP to try and forge an agreement. From the outset a problem for the BPP was the WZO emphasis on individual membership. They argued a world body must be an apex body of Anjumans, chaired by the BPP. A number of Indian anjumans (for example Bangalore and Hyderabad) expressed concern over what the WZO would say regarding intermarried Zoroastrians. Their fears were raised, at least in part, by the membership of Kersey Antia of Chicago who had been the most vocal defendant of, as well as participant in, the Peterson Naujote in 1983.<sup>5</sup> One of the early supporters in India was the editor of *Bombay Samachar*, Jehan Daruwala, a further factor in the suspicions of the Orthodox. Some of the founding members later became stern critics of WZO, notably Shrivastav Nargolwala in Delhi, Ervads Zal and Darius Sethna in London. At a later date Mehraban Zarthoshty also withdrew his support, which was a major loss to WZO.

Outright opposition from the BPP – rather than passive ignoring of the WZO – became more public at the World Congress in Bombay in 1984. The Congress organizer Jimmy Guzder proposed that the fifth of the main topics for discussion should be 'a properly constituted and representative



world body.' He made no reference to WZO; indeed WZO members were only accepted as participants after a protest letter from Captain.<sup>6</sup> Even the Trustee most sympathetic to WZO, Eruch Desai, argued the world body must be based on Anjumans not on individuals. Farhang Mehr was asked to chair the session on a world body. The debate concluded that there should be only one world body; individual membership should be retained but a bi-cameral body should be developed to involve the Anjumans. It also concluded that the headquarters should be in London. But the BPP and the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans in India remained opposed.

In the mid 1980s problems grew back in Britain for WZO. There were ferocious debates concerning the presence of a non-Zoroastrian widow at the *Farvardigan* prayers at Brookwood. In 1987 Dr (Mrs) Kutar, Captain, and four other committee members resigned from ZTFE in protest at what were seen by them as improper pushing of issues apart from the committee process while their 'opponent' Captain was in hospital. The division was not simply on personal issues, there were also issues of Orthodoxy and Reform. WZO was told to remove its files etc from Zoroastrian House.<sup>7</sup> The divide became deep, bitter and long lasting.

WZO has undertaken a range of activities; the best known is its work for poor farmers in Gujarat. That is indeed important work, but the organization's officers feel that it is commented on to the exclusion of its other activities, so it is important to discuss those before turning to the work in Gujarat.

The WZO constitution, although taking some eighteen months to draw up, was based in many ways on that of ZTFE, which from the outset in 1861 had given a priority to the study of Zoroastrianism. This became a priority for WZO also. The first academic conference was organized in 1984 and brought together both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian speakers with a second in 1986, the first outside Britain in Chicago in 1987 and the first Youth Congress was held

in 1987. Perhaps its biggest congress was focused on the Gathas held in London in 1993. Most of the outstanding non-Zoroastrian academics were involved – Professors Paul Thieme and Helmut Humbach from Germany; Drs Ilya Gershevitch and Philip Kreyenbroek (then still at SOAS) from England; Professors Stanley Insler and Martin Schwartz from the USA. Naturally there were also Zoroastrian speakers, for example Dastur Dr H D K Mirza from Mumbai and Farrokh Vajifdar from London who also edited the proceedings (published 1998). One of the remarkable features of the various congresses was that they were published expeditiously, something academics are often slow to do. WZO has supported other educational ventures, for example, through its good offices a grant was given to Manchester University for the purchase of books on Zoroastrianism and memorial lectures established at both Manchester and SOAS in honour of Dastur Kutar. Perhaps its best known publication is this journal *Hamazor*, started in 1985 and originally published in Bombay.

Some of WZO's critics have dismissed WZO as 'merely' a socio economic body. The religious work it has undertaken therefore merits comment. It has raised sponsorship for Parsi boys to study at Dadar Madressa and in 1995 was running a poor priests' project supporting a hundred retired mobeds. Doctrinally, religion and health care have been central to Zoroastrian belief and practice from ancient times.<sup>8</sup> Medicine has been a major focus for WZO activity, indeed a study of the financial accounts of WZO shows that in many years more money has been allocated to medical causes than to the Poor Farmers Project. The major figure in this work was the late Noshirwan Cowasjee. On his death it was estimated that he had raised over a quarter of a million pounds.<sup>9</sup> In addition there have been countless appeals for seriously ill Zoroastrians requiring specialist medical treatment in the West. WZO has undertaken numerous projects back in India, for example, a house in Delhi for the mobed, the renovation of two Parsi chawls in Bombay and the Parsi infirmary at Navsari

where the Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Centre for Senior Citizens was opened in 1998 and a rest house has been opened at Sanjan for Zoroastrian visitors to the holy sites in Gujarat. The way WZO has functioned has been to identify clear and specific needs, to have the work costed and overseen carefully and on this basis approaching potential benefactors. Benefactors have generally preferred to give in this way rather than by adding sums to a general corpus where the use cannot be monitored. WZO's funds for daily running costs are taken from the interest on an endowment of £150, 000 made in 1983. The money was originally given anonymously, but later the benefactors agreed their names could be revealed, they were Mehraban and Goli Farhangi.

Iranian Zoroastrians have always been involved in WZO. Not only was the first call for a world body made at a Congress in Tehran, many of its early members were Iranians and so have been many of its benefactors. The person charged with implementing the resolutions of the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress in Iran, Dr Mahyar Ardeshiri from Tehran, supported the WZO in some of its major disputes with the BPP in the late 1990s (though he called for the centre of the World Body to be in Iran.).<sup>10</sup> WZO did more work for refugees on the fall of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic than is widely realized. For obvious reasons, it would not be wise to publish individual cases any more than it would with other bodies who aided refugees. But I have personally seen details of such campaigns by WZO. What can now be published are letters sent to Iranian leaders at the time of the revolution to plead for the Zoroastrians in Iran. To Ayotollah Khomeini they wrote:

"Your Holiness  
May the praise of Almighty  
God be on you. We the  
representatives of the  
Zartoshtian Community of  
Europe, send greetings of

good health, peace and  
prosperity to your Holiness  
and the Iranian Nation  
under your spiritual  
leadership.

The Almighty God is  
merciful and as the Imam  
we are sure that our  
Zartoshtian Brothers of  
Iran will be under your  
protection and will  
continue to live in peace  
and harmony under your  
benign Benevolence."

Clearly such letters had to be carefully and diplomatically phrased.

Although the Poor Farmers Project in Gujarat is only a part of WZO's work it is important and merits description. Two studies of the plight of poor Parsis in Gujarat had been published in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately both remained on library shelves collecting dust. Erachshah A Gandhi of Mandvi had conducted something of a campaign on the subject pressing his views at the Third World Congress in Bombay in 1978 and on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1981 he wrote to the BPP, but nothing came of these moves. A little over two weeks after writing to the BPP he wrote to Dr (Mrs) Kutar as President of the WZO. After committee discussion Captain wrote to Maneck Gheyara, then President of the Surat Punchayet, seeking their collaboration in a Survey to establish the facts. Gheyara said the money would be best spent on a poor Parsi.<sup>13</sup> Later that year, however, he agreed they would share the costs and would proceed with the study. Cashmera M Bharucha (later Bhaya) a lecturer at the University of Baroda, was commissioned to undertake the study. She and her assistants visited 687 Parsis in 209 villages in South Gujarat. Her report was published in 1988.<sup>14</sup> WZO, (funded at this point by the World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund) initially in conjunction with Surat Punchayet began the necessary work. Later the Bombay Parsi

Punchayet made a single payment. There are several key factors in the project. One was the active involvement of Davar Kavasji T Modi of Surat visiting the villages in the region and Dinshaw Tamboly making regular (usually monthly) tours of villages around his native Navsari, some of them very remote. He was helped in this work by Firoj Panthakey, a retired forestry officer, and Farrokh Kased, an experienced farmer, both of whom advised Tamboly on feasibility of proposed projects. From this first hand experience WZO generated effective publicity, both videos for WZO officers to take on visits to communities around the world and newspaper articles in *Bombay Samachar* and *Parsiana*. The narratives of the extreme poverty and deprivation came as a huge shock to the world wide Zoroastrian community. The WZO formulated clear policies to determine where assistance was given. The funds were not to be seen as hand outs but as loans to allow Parsis to obtain equipment or training to enable them to become independent and when a profit was made then the loan was to be repaid. Having talked to numerous benefactors, it is clear that a key factor in eliciting funds was that each project was investigated individually, especially by Tamboly and his advisors, precise costings were obtained reports and receipted accounts were submitted to benefactors. Tamboly was willing to return negative reports where he thought necessary. He thereby gained trust and further support for WZO. By the year 2,000 WZO had worked in 149 villages assisting 355 families, with 164 families supplied with pumps to irrigate their farms, and 149 with pipelines for the same purpose. Parsis were also enabled to enter businesses, for example loans were made to purchase a taxi and/or motor mechanic training.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from continuing charitable works both religious and secular, the dominating theme of the history of WZO at the turn of the millennium is the international disputes over the formation of a second World Body and the constitution of the existing body. The opposition came from BPP, the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans in India, the North

American body, The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and from ZTFE. The arguments have changed little. Above all the dispute is over the representation of Anjumans or the traditional democratic principle of one person one vote. Against this it is argued how can a single person's vote balance that of the world's biggest Zoroastrian body the BPP? There have been many alternative proposals,<sup>16</sup> some involving a bi-camera solution with one body for Associations (or regions such as North America and Europe forming a Council of Federations) and one for individuals. There have been many counter proposals of amendments to the WZO constitution. Various meetings have been held in America and India, although these have not always involved WZO representatives. Some long standing WZO members have begun to despair of finding a middle way. From an external perspective it seems as though few significantly new points have been made and energy which could be used for aiding needy Zoroastrians has been spent in community debating, or as Tamboly wrote to Captain on 13 Jan 2,000, he did not wish to be involved in further debates but preferred to 'get on and use time constructively'.



## References

- <sup>1</sup> A Short History of the World Zoroastrian Organization was published by WZO in 1991 written by S F Captain.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter Captain to Mehr December 28, 1978. Mehr confirmed his initiative in a letter to Adi Davar, 13 May, 1993
- <sup>3</sup> Letter Bulsara to Rohinton Rivetna 13 March, 1979.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter to Captain 30, June, 1981.
- <sup>5</sup> See Zoroastrian Diaspora, pp. 478-83.
- <sup>6</sup> Captain to Guzder, 27 October 1984.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter to Captain, 29 October, 1987.
- <sup>8</sup> See 'War and Medicine in Zoroastrianism', in Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies: Selected Works of John R. Hinnells, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 277-300.
- <sup>9</sup> Hamazor, Summer, 2001, pp. 4-6.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter to Jamshed Guzder, copied to Dolly Dastoor, Rohinton Rivetna and Shahpur Captain dated 7 August, 1997.

- <sup>11</sup> Letter dated 14 February, 1979 and reproduced along with a letter to the new Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan in my *Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p. 614.
- <sup>12</sup> B V Shah, *The Godavara Parsis: A Socio-economic Study of a Rural Community in South Gujarat, Surat 1954* and M. P. Mistry, *Report of the Survey of Gujarat Parsis (Rural)*, Bombay, 1967,
- <sup>13</sup> Letter to Captain dated 29 January, 1982.
- <sup>14</sup> Report of the Socio-Economic Survey of Rural South-Gujarat Parsees, Surat, 1988.
- <sup>15</sup> Information supplied by Dinshah Tamboly during my visit to India 2001-2 when he also arranged for me to visit some of the villages and projects of WZO for which I am most grateful. For a more detailed account of the project see my *Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 617 – 622.
- <sup>16</sup> Hinnells, *Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 624-635 on the countless debates.



*Prof John Hinnells is one of the foremost scholars of Parsi and Zoroastrian studies. A scholar of comparative religions, he founded the department of the Study of Religions at the prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies. He has held several prestigious teaching posts and has had the unique distinction of starting either degrees or departments of Comparative Religion in five universities of the UK. He is the author of five books on Zoroastrianism and Parsis. His forthcoming book, 'The Zoroastrian Diaspora' is being published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, and will serve as a companion volume to his book, 'Zoroastrians in Britain', 1996, Clarendon Press, Oxford. Archival, survey and field work for his forthcoming book on the Parsi diaspora has taken him to several countries including India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Australia, and the North American continent among others. He has co-authored several books on theology, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism in addition to editing such definitive works as 'A New Handbook of Living Religions' (1996/8, Blackwell/Pengion) and 'A New Dictionary of Religions' (1995/7, Blackwell/Penguin). Ashgate has published a selection of Hinnells' works and his papers have appeared in several edited volumes and journals.*



Farewell to Mani Bhungara, past honorary secretary & then membership secretary



Farewell to Dr Shireenbanoo Kutar, Chairman of WZO

*celebrating twenty five years*



International



Finalisation of the amended Constitution in a 3-day meeting with the full International Board, in September 2003, at Croydon, England



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# *The Pahlavi-Chinese bilingual inscription from Xi'an – Prov. Shaanxi, PR China*

by hulmut humbach

In a communication entitled “The Chinese Connection” published in Hamazor issue 3/ 2004, p.5f., Cyrus P Mehta states: *“The Chinese records . . . reveal that after the downfall of the Sasanian dynasty Iranian princes and nobles and a large number of Iranian populace had gone to China ... . Unfortunately there is no trace today of any claim or family that migrated to China.”*

In this respect, attention has to be drawn to the Pahlavi-Chinese funerary inscription kept in the Archaeological Museum of Xi'an (Chang'an of the Tang period). It was unearthed in an ancient burying field which had been discovered in connection with the development of the airport of the city. The inscription consists of a Pahlavi text written in the ductus of Zoroastrian Book Pahlavi, which is followed by a Chinese text referring to the same event. In accordance with the Chinese burial custom of the time, the inscription was not incised in a headstone but in a slab of 39.5 x 35.5 cm. This was placed on the earth above the breast of the deceased person. The ductus of both the Pahlavi and the Chinese texts is rather faint and number of details are obliterated on the squeezes available. In consequence it was necessary to inspect the inscription personally. The inspection not only resulted in a more reliable constitution of the Pahlavi text, but it also became evident that the two texts are less parallel than previous authors had taken for granted. The inscription is not bilingual in the strict sense of the term, but

its Pahlavi and Chinese texts are quite diverging versions of what in principle was the same message.

As a whole the inscription commemorates the death of a lady of Zoroastrian faith who was of the age of 26 years. The Chinese date of the year, viz. year 15 of the Chinese emperor Xiantong (874 AD), is recorded in

both the Pahlavi and the Chinese versions. The Chinese date is preceded in the Pahlavi version by the Zoroastrian date year 240 of the Yezdegird era (incorrect for 242) and the Islamic date year 60 of the Hijra (incorrect for 260).

The death took place on 19<sup>th</sup> March according to Chinese calculation which is given in both the Chinese and the Pahlavi versions, but in the Pahlavi version it is preceded by the Iranian

day, date of the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Whereas the 19<sup>th</sup> is the official date, the 22<sup>nd</sup> is not of secular but of religious nature: as Werner Sundermann pointed out, it denotes the fourth day after the passing away, on which the soul of the deceased pious person leaves the earth to proceed towards Paradise.

The name of the deceased lady is partly obliterated, but we can be quite sure that her name was M[āh]anōsh. She was a daughter of Farrokhzād, son of Farrokhzād, son of Dādwindāy; she herself or her ancestors originated from a place whose name unfortunately is not clearly identifiable but looks Chinese rather than Iranian.



M[āh]anōsh was married to a Chinese official of whom we do not know whether he was of Iranian origin as well.

Although the two versions refer to the death of one and the same person, they follow two different patterns. Whereas the Pahlavi version is a private text in which emphasis is laid upon the religious affiliation and piety of the deceased person, the Chinese version has the character and style of an official document, the widower presenting himself as a titular officer of high rank. Being a bureaucrat rather than a soldier he confined himself to indicating the exact time and even the hour of his wife's death. It was not his affair to refer to religious traditions and chronological preferences of refugees and their descent, but by virtue of his office he was obliged to insist on consistent integration. The official procedure of this could sometimes be somewhat forced, as is exemplified by the transformation of M[āh]anōsh, the given name of the lady in question, into the very common Chinese family name Ma, calling her Ma-shi 'descendant of the Ma family' in the Chinese version. Yet such intervention was certainly less grievous to the Zoroastrian refugees in China than the necessity of burying the dead bodies of their co-religionists in the earth and thereby abandoning the ancient custom of exposing them to vultures.

#### **Translation of the Pahlavi version:**

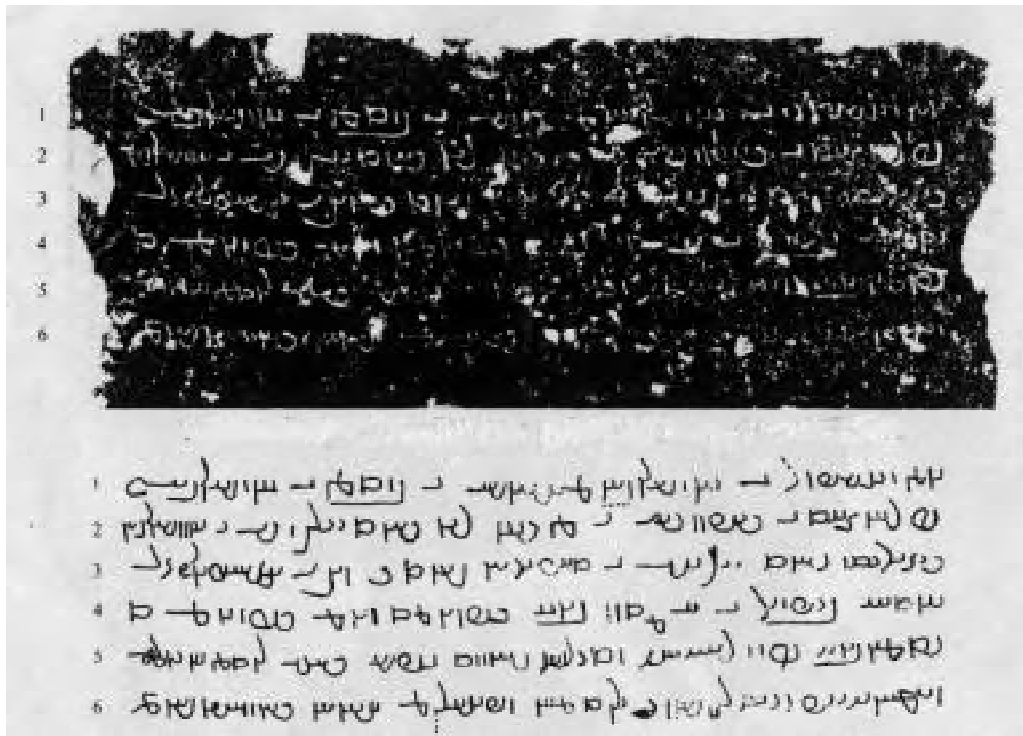
This is the tomb of the deceased Māh[an]ōš, the daughter of the deceased Farroxzād, (son) of Farroxzād, (son) of Dādwindāy from Gāwlin (?).

In the year 24[2] of Yezdegird, year [2]60 of the Tājiks (= Arabs),

- in the year 15 of the always victorious ruler Ziantong, the Son of God – in the month Spandārmāt, on the day Spandārmāt [22<sup>nd</sup> March 874AD]

- in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, on the 28<sup>th</sup> day [19<sup>th</sup> March 874 AD] – she passed away.

Let her place be with Ahura Mazdā/Ohrmazd and the Amesha Spentas/Amahraspands and let the light of Paradise and best life be (granted her). Peace.



**Translation of the Chinese version:**

The lady (coming) from the Ma family,  
 Wife of Suliang, titular general of the left Shence army,  
 Born in the year Jisi [849 AD],  
 passed away at the age of 26 years in the 15<sup>th</sup> year (of the period) Xiantong, the year Jiawu [874 AD],  
 In the second month Xinmao, a Jian month, on the 28<sup>th</sup> day Dingsi [19<sup>th</sup> March], at the daytime  
 Shen [15h-17h]. For this reason this was written down.

- |            |                                       |
|------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. 左神策軍散兵  | <i>zuǒ shén-cè-jūn sān-bīng-</i>      |
| 2. 馬使蘇諒妻馬  | <i>-mǎ-shì Sū-liàng qī Mǎ-</i>        |
| 3. 氏己巳生年廿六 | <i>-shì jǐ-sì shēng-nián niàn-liù</i> |
| 4. 於咸通十五年甲 | <i>yú xián-tōng shí-wǔ nián jiǎ-</i>  |
| 5. 午歲二月辛卯建 | <i>-wǔ suì èr yuè xīn-mǎo jiàn</i>    |

Text of the Chinese version

A detailed treatment of the Pahlavi-Chinese inscription was published by Helmut Humbach in cooperation with Wang Shiping (Xi'an) in : A Green Leaf. Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P Asmussen. Leiden, Brill 1988, pp. 73-82 (Acta Iranica 28).



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## What is the Zarathushtrian Commitment?

by kaikhosrov d irani

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The doctrine we can obtain clearly from the Gathic verses is what one might call a 'Religious Vision'. By that we mean that the religious conception offers not stories about gods, nor prescriptions imposed by God, nor again God's will manifested in history. The religious vision, here, is a 'View of the World', ie. a perspective from which one may view the world such that it leads one to a 'Way of Life'. The fusion of the two constitutes a religious vision.

The Gathic vision portrays the world in radically moral terms, that is, it sees a good world contaminated with evil. The 'good' here is taken to be the perfect design of the world, called *Asha*, the Truth. This, the ideal truth, is the divinely given good, acting in accordance with which is 'Right Action'. One who chooses to live thus is called an *ashavan*. Any individual can live such a life, since we are all equipped with the 'Good Mind' (*Vohu Mana*) which is the intrinsic power to reveal to us how *Asha* applies to any situation. Thus acting to implement *Asha*, as disclosed by *Vohu Mana* is the resulting ideal way of life.

This is what Zarathushtra asked humanity to live by. It is the Mazdayasni faith he preached. Of course, religious institutions usually embrace more than religious vision; they develop rituals and social practices, often based on legendary histories and myths, cosmogonic and historical.

Rituals developed naturally, some having a clear ritualization of the religious vision, and some not. For example, the initiation (*navjote*) ritual is one where the initiate declares his/her choice of the worthy way of life - a life of good thought, word and deed. Similarly, the marriage ceremony over and above being a declaration of mutual commitment to each other, is also a joint commitment to *Asha*.

When you look at one of the high rituals of the Zarathushtrian church - the Yazeshne ceremony - the recitation of the 72 ha's of the Yasna are recited when the *haoma* juice is extracted, the relation of the ritual to the original vision is quite obscure. This ceremony of high sanctity has been maintained by an inviolable tradition, because of the historical association with the pre-Zarathushtra concept of religiosity involving

*haoma*, even though the ritual is unrelated to the vision of Zarathushtra. It will thus be performed less and less, and may in time disappear, which would be a loss. Hence one should attempt to preserve at least that part of the Yasna that is related to the original vision.

The principle for evaluating tradition, obvious to all rational human beings is this: the primary focus of the faith must be clearly recognized and explicitly preserved, as well as the ideals that emerge from it. Rituals and social practices must be seen to be related to the articulation, veneration,



or reinforcement of the primary articles of faith.

Notice what is, and what is not being suggested. Not the abandonment of ritual or social practice, nor replacement of the same, but their adaptation so that they may become significant to the contemporary mind and conscience, and in that form, live in the minds and hearts of believers. Rituals and social practices must live as meaningful and pleasant aspects of one's life, and not become the repetitive residues of an uncomprehended past.

The application of the principle of adaptation to social practices of the religious group evokes divisive discourse. This is because the Zarathushtrian community after the loss of its empire had to live in a tribal society framework, both in Iran and in India. The tribal feature of the religious outlook implies that a person requires a religion by birth. This may well have been the case with Iranians of the pre-Zarathushtra period, as it was with the Vedic Indians.

By contrast, Zarathushtra offers his message to humanity. According to him the religious vision is accepted by the believer, a human being, upon reflection and an explicit act of choice. This, of course, is no secret. It is declared by each initiate at that ceremony in the recitation of the *Jasa me avanghahe Mazda*. Nowhere in the scripture is the universality of the faith denied or compromised the least bit.

Now, if a person accepts the vision of Zarathushtra and considers himself/herself a believer in that faith, such a relation is one between the believer and God. The crucial social issue is this: How should such a person be received by the Zarathushtrian community, ie., have him/her be welcomed, allowed, or excluded from participating in its ritual life?

As far as I can see, to disallow such a person is contrary to the position of the theology, and violating the intent and spirit of Zarathushtra. I know, however, that there are some members of the community

who would disagree. That could be only on grounds of traditionality, even though it runs counter to the theology! Here we see the pernicious manifestations of traditionalism; the maintaining of the tradition even when it has run amok.

In the atmosphere of cross winds of opinions, what is, or what should be the commitment of a Zarathushtrian?

This is how I construe the teachings of the prophet, who calls upon us in social situations to be "healers of existence." Instead of repeating one's position, one should try to justify it, not by involving just tradition, but by formulating the core of the prophet's teaching, and examine which policy alternative is consistent with it. The discussion is to be governed by understanding and reason (*Vohu Mana*) and with exchange of reasons and insights (*Spenta Armaiti*). This, I take it, is *Hukhta*, exchange in good words.

These individual and social attitudes and resolutions may be taken rationally to be what this writer considers the 'Zarathushtrian Commitment'.



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# Singularity & Universality of Zoroastrianism<sup>1</sup>

by yasmine jhabvala

ever since it found refuge in India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the community henceforth known as Parsi has been considered as the sole depository of the Iranian prophet Zarathustra's religion<sup>2</sup>.

From the moment they arrived in that country, the Parsis established a community at once characterized by its fierce determination to preserve its religious identity and by its widespread, indeed "universal" beneficial activity, particularly in the social and economic spheres.

Conscious of their new-refugee status in their adopted land, the Parsis organized their community so as to preserve its inner cohesion which they saw as the main support of their identity and religious survival.

Thus their choice of endogamy (intermarrying within the group) is a natural result of this traditional need to meld inner cohesion and religious identity, ethnicity and religion. Consequently, until recent times, were recognized as Zoroastrians only persons "born as such", ie. whose two parents were Parsis.

Within India's political, economic and social context, this insistence on exclusivity where Zoroastrian identity is concerned is amply justified, if only for reasons of self-preservation and continuity. However, this imperative contradicts the universal goal of the religious message as outlined by Zarathustra in his hymns, the Gatha<sup>3</sup>.

Currently scattered on all five continents in what can be truly called "a diaspora", and having chosen to settle in the midst of various differing cultures (notably from linguistic and political

standpoints), Parsis today are unavoidably faced with the necessity of reevaluating the blend of ethnicity and religion which originated mainly as a result of their living conditions in India.

Indeed, a person who wishes to live in a new cultural environment, foreign to his own, must first be able *to situate himself in relation* to this environment, which in turn raises the problem of his insertion – and potential integration – within this other foreign culture, and thus inevitably, a reassessment of his own religious identity : doesn't a questioning of others' values and beliefs bring about a reappraisal of one's own ?

In this context, many Parsis have come to question their identity, such as it was inherited from their history in India : indeed, today, in their eyes, any believer in the teachings of the prophet



Zarathustra can claim to be a Zoroastrian – and not, as before, only a person “born Parsi”.

Thus, in this new historical framework which has now been fostered for several decades by a fraction of Parsis, the definition of the identity resulting from their refugee status in India is no longer felt to be as exclusive. The situation now calls for a reassessment of the components of this identity which are necessary to perpetuate it inasmuch as it requires from them a real ability to become full citizens into cultures profoundly different from India's.

In other words, while in certain historical conditions, a group's cohesion may effectively ensure the survival of its singularity, and allow it to take its place in history and in the world as a coherent cultural unity, in much altered conditions, it is not sufficient to define the group's religious identity.

The community, therefore, finds itself today in a quandary which I believe is the unavoidable consequence of a core question : how is a group's religious identity defined? In this regard, the community's quest for answers within itself is proof enough of its difficult dilemma : is religious identity purely the result of a history, a tradition, and specific social structures, or is it much more essentially characterized by a spontaneous belief in a given religious instruction? How can historical legacy and theology be reconciled in this instance?

The question implies, at the very least, that the community be willing to truly debate it, ie. to acknowledge its unavoidable necessity and not engage in polemics in this respect.

Men are moulded by history, and so are their ways of thinking and being. However, history does not just hand down traditions; history is also the stage of human revolutions, on a spiritual as well as on a social level. To deny this reality would be the equivalent of placing the meaning of human actions outside history's context,

and consequently, of erasing one's own identity instead of preserving it.

Thus the polemic generated within the Parsi community as to the current validity of practicing or not practicing endogamy (excluding or integrating non-Zoroastrians within the community) seems sterile to me inasmuch as the real problem is elsewhere.

Indeed, the problem is not to declare oneself for or against one or the other of the above alternatives, but rather to find a way of **unifying** them taking into consideration the different historical contexts and steps (places and dates) which a growing number of Parsis have reached during their recent migrations to the four corners of the world.

Religions are living organisms. If the organizational and social fabric on which they have an incidence progressively becomes their legacy as they evolve through history, what then can be said to constitute the very heart of their permanence – and therefore of their actuality – if not the spiritual message they transmit?

Consequently, for Parsis who have left India, preserving their identity today is no longer just a matter of remaining faithful to their various religious centers – if only for reasons of geographic and cultural distance. Their main imperative is to integrate **Zoroastrian spirituality** within the various cultural contexts which they have adopted as their “new country”.

To my mind, what is at stake here today for the community consists of “a rethinking” of the relationship between its living tradition and its live spirituality, **keeping in mind the perpetuation of the Zoroastrian heritage in its entirety.**

What, then, is this Zoroastrian spirituality?

The answer to this question is to be sought by means of a study of the Gatha, the only texts which are explicitly attributed to Zarathustra.

The Gatha are religious hymns which transmit Zarathustra's teachings and his vision of a supreme deity, Ahura Mazda.

They constitute an important literary document, indeed the oldest one available for Ancient Iran. Unfortunately, they cannot be dated precisely as the exact date and place of birth of the Iranian prophet are unknown. The Gatha give us no indication on this subject. As a result, it is from non-gathic sources that Iranists have often attempted to reconstruct Zarathustra's life and to situate his writings within Iranian history.

Furthermore, we cannot say precisely how Zarathustra's theology is integrated within the history of Iranian religion. The Later Avesta itself does not give us any information as to religious traditions contemporary with the preachings of Zarathustra. What is more, we do not have any source external to the Gatha which could shed some light on their meaning.

As can be readily seen, this field of study presents great difficulties for historians of religions. How are these texts to be approached? How can one select an appropriate methodology in the absence of any internal or external corroboration?

If Iranists often give divergent interpretations of the hymns, in particular because of this complete absence of any historical information, they all agree on one fact which, to my mind, is primordial : the Gatha constitute a homogeneous whole, whose grammar and vocabulary, which differ from those of the Later Avesta, present remarkable features.

The Gatha take the form of a monologue which Zarathustra addresses mainly to Ahura Mazda.

The name "ahura" can be translated as : the lord, the mighty, the spirit, and the name "mazda" by : wisdom, memory. Thus, "Ahura Mazda" is the lord, the mighty, the spirit of wisdom whose distinguishing characteristics are memory and remembrance.

The names "Ahura Mazda" are found either together, or separately, in Gathic texts. But the two names are never fused into one "Ahuramazda". The deity may be designated or called for only by the names of Ahura or Mazda. Be that as it may, the two names whether side by side, used together or separately, do indeed appear to designate one and the same subject. Furthermore, one never appears as an aspect of the other.

Ahura Mazda's characteristics are diverse. On the one hand, certain epithets, such as the best, the holiest, the one, designate him as the superior being in all things, the supreme being. They underline his might, his moral qualities and proclaim his permanence : he remains what he is. On the other hand, certain terms – which may designate either notions or entities, we are not sure of this – associated to the name of Ahura Mazda in different ways, assist us in discovering the qualities of his being<sup>4</sup>.

These "entities" qualify at once aspects of Ahura Mazda and human qualities.

Any person reading the Gatha is surprised to find that while a first reading enables him to translate the name of these "entities", their identity nevertheless escapes him.

Indeed, in some stanzas, these "entities" seem to possess a certain independence. However, in others, they seem to be aspects of Ahura Mazda. "Persons without personality", they are not worshipped independently from Ahura Mazda. Nor are they integrated parts of a whole, by reason of parentage, descendance or genealogy. Finally, in the Gatha, there is no name other than "ahura" to designate the divine.

Yet – and even more remarkably – the name "ahura" is at the core of rather curious grammatical paradoxes. A thorough study of the Gatha shows that these linguistic difficulties cannot be cleared up by any means external to the text.

As "symbolic presences", accompanying man throughout his interaction with Ahura

Mazda and Ahura Mazda's interaction with the world, the Gathic "entities" actually guide our way to Ahura Mazda. In the nature of a spiritual search, this singles out the unique characteristics of Zarathustra's teachings among the religions of the world.

In other words, **translation** of these words does not help us to **understand** their meaning in Gathic thought. Nor does the historical context – in whatever form – shed any light on this meaning. Indeed, while a first reading of the hymns allows us to catch a glimpse of the meaning of each of the Gathic concepts, as well as that of the name "ahura", and of the name "mazda", we find ourselves unable to **readily comprehend** what is the Being of Ahura Mazda<sup>5</sup>.

In reality, the remarkable specificity of religious Gathic thought, as exemplified by such linguistic paradoxes, impels us to search for its meaning **within the framework of its own dynamic**. In other words, in my view, the community's effort to perpetuate its identity at this time, is more contingent on its future willingness **to embody the Gatha's spiritual message than on simply "appropriating" this identity in an exclusive manner for historical reasons**.

Survival is a self-preservation decision. To live and prosper is an act of faith in the present and the future. For the Zoroastrians this is always an expression of their religious beliefs. Thus, the "social" manifestations of the Zoroastrian spiritual heritage have survived thanks to the "worldwide" efforts of the Indian Parsi community. Today, the Zoroastrian diaspora needs to "integrate" its spiritual experience within its new living environments, and acknowledge its global specificity, ie. take into consideration its historical singularity as well as its universal aspirations.

In any case, all through its long history, the main imperative of Zoroastrian thought has remained the absolute necessity to

preserve its singularity in the world **by means of** an open mind towards all others and **by means of** its worldwide beneficial reach : is this not indeed the core message of the Zoroastrian triad "Good Thought, Good Word, Good Deed"?

A unique happening in a given space and time, any religious creed is mandated to bring forth throughout history the universal message which it claims to represent.

**All matters pertaining to identity are first and foremost of a human and spiritual nature. The question of identity is therefore not to be apprehended solely from a standpoint of self-preservation or perpetuation, i.e. looking at the problem from an economic or political angle. In fact, the nature of the problem requires precisely the opposite: a spiritual vision is first needed in order to formulate a moral and political outlook; it is only then that the economic means needed to achieve this aim can be defined.**

It follows, in my opinion, that to look at the problem solely from an economic standpoint would have serious consequences for the community: finding itself in disagreement regarding the social means and framework necessary for the survival of its identity (endogamy or exogamy), which would prove to be a dead end paradox. In time, this would be equivalent to losing one's life . . . in a quarrel on how to survive.

Identity cannot be equated with "identitarianism"<sup>6</sup>. To perpetuate one's identity does not mean remaining the same, but rather evolving in time while retaining the same aspirations.

In other words, it is the destination which defines the voyage . . . and it is the meaning of the voyage which determines the traveller's aspirations and identity.

[Dr Jhavbala welcomes comments/ interaction from/with the readers, and may

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> In order to remain within the article's required length, I have had to limit myself to a history of the Parsi community. Needless to say, this article is incomplete, especially as it does not take into account the contribution of the Irani community which has remained in Iran.

<sup>2</sup> The term << sole depository >> reflects here the opinion of non-Zoroastrians regarding the Parsi community. It is not meant in any way to exclude the Irani community.

<sup>3</sup> See hereunder.

<sup>4</sup> There are nine of them. To simplify, I shall list here only the six known as the amesha spenta (Immortal Saints) in the Later Avesta: asa (Justice, Order, Truth), vohu manah (Good Thought), xsathra (Kingdom), armaiti (Devotion, Piety), haurvatant and amaretat (Perfection, Integrity, Immortality).

<sup>5</sup> For further information, please consult my Doctorate thesis: << Vers Ahura Mazda >>, Publications Universitaires Européennes, Peter Lang, Berne 1992.

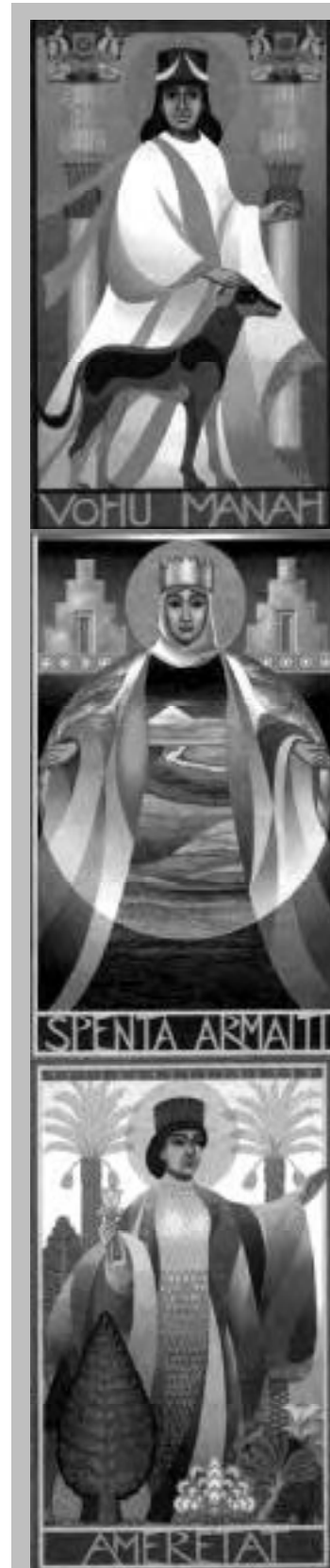
<sup>6</sup> In French in the text.



After obtaining her degree << Licence en histoire des religions >> in 1978, from the University of Geneva, Switzerland, Dr Yasmine Jhabvala began the study of the Avestan and Pahlavi languages. In 1979, she spent several months within the Parsi community in Bombay, furthering her knowledge of Zoroastrianism and of the Gathic language.

Back in Geneva, she became the assistant of Prof. Rudhardt in History of Religions and began teaching on Zoroastrianism. In 1991, she defended her doctoral thesis "Vers Ahura Mazda", in which she presented a new vision of the Gathas of Zarathoustra. During these years, she has also participated in different congresses organized by the University of Geneva or by the Zoroastrian community.

Illustrations by Helen Shapero, an interpretation of the Amesha Spentas



# Zoroastrians in the new Millenium

by jamsheed marker

“Harken with your ears to these Best Counsels  
Gaze at these beams of fire and contemplate with your best judgement.  
Let each man choose his creed with that Freedom of Choice each  
Individual must have at Great Events:  
Oh ye, be awake to my announcements”  
Yasna 30:II

As the most ancient of the great monotheist religions enters the fourth millennium of its existence, it might be appropriate for its adherents to review and reaffirm their belief in the practice of their faith. This could be a complicated task, considering the assaults and deprivations to which Zoroastrianism has been subject over the centuries. A large portion of our holy scriptures were destroyed in the barbaric sacking of Persepolis; Avesta and Pehalavi, the languages in which these texts were composed, have been out of usage for centuries and are now known to only a few scholars; Nietzsche and Strauss, the German philosopher and composer, have used the name of Zarathustra in their works which are profound in themselves but bear no relation to the tenets of the faith; and through the years the practice of our rites and rituals have been considerably overlaid by the customs of the other religions and civilizations with which Zoroastrians were obliged to co-exist throughout our history. This phenomenon is by no means as disastrous as it may first appear. On the contrary, it has imbued Zoroastrians with a combination of idealism, tolerance and flexibility which has enabled them to survive in harsh times and to flourish when conditions become favourable.

The Islamic surge of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD completed the assault commenced by

Alexander on the then existing Zoroastrian geopolitical primacy and, in accordance with the immutable laws of nature, closed one chapter in the historical process and opened another. The adherents of Zoroastrianism, who once ruled a large part of the known world, were inexorably reduced to a minority, a status which is now being further compressed to microscopic proportions in a world which is otherwise undergoing a population explosion. And yet, while history has imposed a devastating reduction in the numbers of Zoroastrians, it has at the same time strengthened the spiritual faith, fortitude and capacity for initiative in the conduct of its adherents.

I am neither a scholar nor a theologian, and it is therefore with feelings of hesitation and trepidation that I express my views to a readership that contains so many distinguished and eminent experts, practitioners and specialists in our great

religion. But in the eighty years of my existence I have had the great good fortune to have journeyed all over the world, met many peoples of different races, religions and civilizations, and dealt frequently with their leaders, their monarchs, presidents and<sup>1</sup> prime ministers. In all of these activities, which could be burdensome, difficult and very complicated, posing problems of moral issues as well as those of





statecraft, I was sustained by my faith as a Zoroastrian, a faith into which I was born and which I accepted with full conscience at my Navjote, even though my current personal adherence to the rituals is somewhat peripheral.

The values of truth, of honesty, of hard work and independence, which form the core of our religious faith, are as manifestation of our belief and trust in Ahura Mazda, and have guided our destiny throughout the ages. And it is with pride and dedication that we will continue that belief and promote those virtues. We all have our individual moments of crisis and difficulty and we all know that these can be overcome by faith and prayer. I have endured moments when problems confronted me not just as an individual, but could have consequences of much wider implications, effecting peoples and nations. On such occasions nothing has sustained me more than my faith in Ahura Mazda, and the recall of words from Yasna 30 of the IX Gatha.

“So may we be like those making the world progress towards perfection:  
May the Lord and His Angels help us and guide us through Truth,  
For a thinking man is where Wisdom is at home.”

I have silently carried this prayer into The White House, the Kremlin, the Elysee Palace, the Chamber of the Security Council of the United Nations, into the crude polling stations in the jungles of East Timor, and into a great many other places. And it has always guided and sustained me.

One might mention two aspects with regard to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, which is being held at a particularly significant moment in Zoroastrian history. In the first instance, we find ourselves in what could well be the second Zoroastrian diaspora. Only this time the motivation is not flight from persecution, but rather an inducement and incentive in the drive towards participation in the new and changing global environment. As

always, the Zoroastrians have discerned an emerging trend in its early stages, and are determined to participate in it, bringing to bear their rich talents of foresight, initiative, enterprise and industry. But it is always easier to seize an opportunity than it is to develop and expand it. We may succeed in moving into the process of globalization, but once there what do we do with ourselves? Some adjustments in thinking, attitudes and life style are inevitable and we will have to adapt to them. But what about our beliefs and our values? They have sustained us through centuries of vicissitudes, are eternal in concept, and I certainly do not see any need for change. What we need to do is to ensure the constancy of our values even as we adjust to changes in our environment.

The second issue that we need to consider is one that has been a cause for concern to many. Preliminary demographic indicators reveal that the Parsi community in India is declining at the rate of 10,000 persons per decade. This is clearly an alarming situation that calls for urgent and pragmatic measures. I understand that there is a UNESCO assisted project for preserving Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage, which is being undertaken under the able guidance of Dr Shernaz Cama. Schemes for providing incentives for younger families are also being undertaken but are handicapped by lack of funds.

Apart from the second Zoroastrian diaspora, we are today also in the process of a transition to the Second Millennium. In “The Magic Mountain” Thomas Mann wrote, “Time has no division to mark its passage. There is never a thunderstorm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins, it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols.” This evocative passage, it seems to me, could well apply to the Zoroastrian religion, which first proclaimed monotheism, and went on to flourish throughout two millennia, without interruption or the flurry of trumpets and bells. What is the reason for this extensive longevity and formidable resilience? The distinguished French authority on

Zoroastrianism, Professor Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, believes that *"Zarathushtra makes a distinction, which he formulates expressly, between the world of the body and that of the spirit. His religion, his cult, are pervaded with spirituality. But contrary to Plato, he does not reject the body in the name of the soul. He gives it a role in the present duties as well as in the future rewards. He suggests no renunciation, he preaches the maintenance of life."*

In recounting the history of the Parsees, Duchesne-Guillemin observes, *"Under persecution and exile, these resistors were going to manifest extraordinary qualities... For nearly ten centuries, in fact, the community lived in a small way by agriculture, until the English, bringing commerce to India, made it possible for the Parsees to display their capabilities. But then, the Parsees must have maintained these capabilities until that time. How and why this latent survival? It seems to me that the explanation can be looked for in their religion. With some reflections on this subject we will once more, and in conclusion, salute certain aspects of the Zoroastrian doctrine. Their faith did not turn them from the world and from action . . . . Each individual has the duty to found a home and to work the earth, agriculture having for centuries succeeded cattle-raising as an essential resource of economy . . . . This precept also must have strengthened, in exile, the feeling of social solidarity, already prompted by the religious dogma of the choice, by the duty of helping the good and fighting the wicked. At every moment the Parsee can feel himself engaged with his co-religionists and under the guarantee of a just and good God, in a vast enterprise, the range of which extends to the universe but embraces also the humblest labours without which life could not be maintained and multiplied. In harmony with the celestial powers, but with both feet on the ground: this equilibrium is the fundamental characteristic of Zoroaster's doctrine, and this has perhaps made the strength of his disciples."* (Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "The Hymns of Zarathushtra").

Possessing a religious faith as profound and noble as Zoroastrianism, and a history as long and as inspiring as ours, we need have no apprehensions for the future. But we do have responsibilities for upholding and maintaining our faith, and responsibilities for our conduct, so that we deal with the problems of a rapidly changing world with imagination, boldness and pragmatic ability. Above all, we have the duty to pass on to the next generation the best that we have inherited in our noble traditions.

The task is not an easy one, and much of it falls upon the youth and younger generation of Zoroastrians. They will have to reconcile the compulsions and demands of computers and cyberspace with the eternal truths of the Zend Avesta. And do not think that one can exist without the other, because if you do the future is lost. A blind faith in technology alone can be as disastrous for our community as a blind adherence to obscurantism. In a famous lecture to the cadets at the French military academy of St. Cyr in 1921, Charles de Gaulle said, *"Remember this lesson. History does not teach fatalism. There are moments when the will of a handful of free men breaks through determinism and opens up new roads. People get the history that they deserve."* It is particularly important that our youth display daring in their thoughts and in their spirit. Do not, I beseech you, be afraid to question, to enquire, to explore. The whole world is open to you: it is neither for you nor against you: it will become what you make of it. Do not accept dogmas and superstitions blindly, or timidly, or worst of all, through indifference. Challenge them, enquire from them and study them dispassionately. Then make your decisions based on your faith and your God given power of reasoning. And once you have made your decisions, pursue them fearlessly. Our future as Zoroastrians depends on you and your constancy and determination and, above all, in your initiatives and your daring.

In his play "Don Carlos", Friedrich von Schiller expresses this idea in a beautiful passage:

"Tell him  
That he should hold the views of his youth  
In reverence, if he would be a man:  
That he must not expose the tender heart  
Borer of reason, praised by all; that he  
Must not be led astray when groveling  
prudence  
Blasphemes that ardour which is heaven –  
born  
In us. I have told him so before."

The timing of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Zoroastrian Congress is indeed most propitious, for we need to know where we go from here. We need to look back at our past, we need to look hard and closely at our present, and we need to examine the course that we must adopt for the future. Above all, we must carry out this exercise as a cool analysis, free from prejudices and preconceived notions, free from cant and hypocrisy, and free from the personality cult. We should apply to it the virtues that have stood us in such good stead for so long, those of unity, of charitable disposition, of discipline both personal and collective, and with a profound faith in Ahura Mazda. It is important that we not only allow for the expression of all points of view but that we also take them into consideration. There will always be differences of opinion, and this is to be encouraged. For there is nothing that can give greater strength to a democratic community than a tradition of discussion and debate, conducted in an honest and civilized manner. None of us has a monopoly on wisdom, and none of us can be wholly right or wholly wrong in any of our views. As the old Persian proverb says,

"He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep: wake him.  
He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is humble: help him.  
He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool: shun him.  
He who knows, and knows that he knows, is wise: follow him."

There is much to be done in the exciting years ahead, and this is as appropriate a

time as any to get started on our collective new adventure. We have to sail the ship of our faith, which has already so nobly and gloriously endured the longest of voyages, into new uncharted seas, and to do so with confidence in ourselves and our future. And as we set about chartering our course let us remember Parmenides' immortal exhortation: "heed not the blind eye, the echoing ear, nor yet the tongue, but bring to this great debate the test of reason."

[Note: Some of the views expressed in this article were mentioned by the author in his keynote address to the World Zoroastrian Congress 2000, at Houston, Texas.]



*Jamsheed Marker, senior statesman of Pakistani diplomacy, Jamsheed Marker is a man of varied interests and multiple achievements. He served in the Royal Indian Navy in World War II and subsequently joined the family business in Quetta and Karachi. Marker's distinguished diplomatic*

*career began in 1965, when he was appointed Ambassador of Pakistan. He has since served continuously in that capacity in 15 countries, including Ghana, Romania, the former USSR, Canada, the German Democratic Republic, Japan, France and USA. From 1990-95, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York. Ambassador Marker was the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations, for East Timor, with the rank of Under Secretary-General. During his tenure in Washington DC, US State Department officials described him as "tough, shrewd and cultivated". In short, the ultimate diplomat.*



Prof Stanley Insler presenting award to Dr Shireenbanoo Kutar (left) and on the right, to Noshirwan F Cowasjee, both octogenarians receiving a standing ovation

# WZO

honoured its own



Adi Davar with his wife Pervin, on the left



Keki Bhote

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13 May 2000



Dinshaw Tamboly



Dr Farhang Mehr

## Awardees

*Keki Bhote, Shahpur Captain, Noshirwan F Cowasjee, Jehan Daruwalla, Adi Davar, Dadi Engineer, Mehraban Farhangi (postumously) and Goli, Farrokh Kassad, Dr Shirinbanoo S Kutar, Dr Farhang Mehr, Davar Kavasji Modi (postumously), Firoj Panthaky and Dinshaw Tamboly.*



Shahpur Captain

# Harmony in Paradox

## *The Paradox of the Material and the Spiritual*

by dina g mcintyre

First in a series of 4 papers

Our reality can be classified in many ways. One of these is to see it in terms of the physical and the abstract, or as Zarathushtra puts it, the “existences... of matter as well as of mind...” Y28.2.<sup>1</sup>

Before we go further, let us be clear about Zarathushtra’s notion of “mind”. To some extent, we all are the prisoners of the languages and cultures in which we have been raised. But Zarathushtra shared neither our linguistic nor our cultural conditionings. So to understand his thought, we need to remove the spectacles of such conditioning and see his thoughts with fresh eyes.

Historically, our cultures have associated the mind with the intellect, logic, et cetera. And historically, the heart has been associated with the emotions, creativity, intuition, et cetera. Yet, the discoveries of science have now made us aware that although the heart is a wonderful and indispensable organ, it is nothing more than a pumping machine, responsible for pumping our blood through our bodies. The heart has nothing to do with emotions. Even when the heart pounds with love or fear, we know that it’s muscles are merely responding to hormones released into the blood stream by the brain. It is the brain that governs both intellect and emotions. The left side of the brain governs the kinds of thoughts and perceptions which historically our cultures have associated with the mind. Whereas the right side of the brain governs the kinds of thoughts and perceptions which historically we have associated with the heart.

Zarathushtra may not have known about the left and right sides of the brain. He may not even have been aware of the functions of the brain as an organ. But to him, the abstract, the existence of mind, includes the functions expressed by both sides of the brain. And the distinction he makes is not between intellect and emotions, but between the good and wrongful use of each of the many functions which our brains enable us to express or generate.



To Zarathushtra, “bad” (aka) thinking is ignorance, false understanding, (left brain functions) as well as such qualities as hatred, cruelty, greed (right brain functions). By the same token, included within the functions of good thinking (vohu mano), are not only such qualities as the ability to discriminate for example between what is accurate

and inaccurate, true and false (governed by the left side of the brain) but also such qualities as solicitude, love, and the good emotions (governed by the right side of the brain). And he describes vohu mano or good thinking as an attribute of the Divine, one of his names for “God” being Mazda — Wisdom personified. So to him, Wisdom personified comprises not just intellect and the qualities it comprises, but intellect committed to goodness, as all of the good emotions — solicitude, benevolence, friendship, generosity, loving kindness et cetera.

You well may ask: if the intellect and the emotions are expressed by the brain (which is a physical thing), and if intellect and emotions committed to goodness are also *vohu mano* (good thinking), is *vohu mano* physical or abstract? And more important, does *vohu mano* exist outside of the human brain? An excellent question, and one that I have pondered for quite a while.

We know from the Gathas that good thinking (*vohu mano*) is an attribute of Mazda. Therefore it must have an existence independent of the human brain. I therefore conclude that to Zarathushtra, *vohu mano* is part of the abstract existence and exists independently of the physical body and its brain. And I speculate (since Zarathushtra has not specifically addressed this question) that perhaps the brain is like a lens, one of the physical media through which our souls experience reality. I am inclined to think that each life form enters this world with a material shell (body) which is like a set of tools with which to address the experiences which the person encounters. The fact that one person has a specific tool (like intelligence) does not make him superior or more worthwhile than a person who has a different set of tools (like mental retardation, or schizophrenia). The tools that a person has, have nothing to do with that person's worth or value. Even what we do with the tools is simply a process. If we use these tools to make "wrong" or "bad" choices (such as choices which harm others), we retard spiritual growth. If we make good choices, we promote spiritual growth.

Returning to Zarathushtra's view of the existences of mind and matter, our religion enjoys many similarities with other religions. And also some differences. It is good to celebrate the similarities, as we do with inter-faith activities. And it is also important to be aware of the differences, not for the purpose of condemning what is different, but in order to understand Zarathushtra's teachings.

Those religions which urge us to set aside the "mind" and go with the heart, are quite

different from Zarathushtra's teaching, which sees "mind" as including all abstract functions, (including those which our cultures associate with the heart), and which requires us to commit all such mental processes to what is good and true and right.

An even more important difference is Zarathushtra's view of the roles that mind and matter play in bringing about spiritual growth and the desired end.

Conventional religious wisdom teaches that to achieve spiritual growth, we must renounce the material. This teaching is implemented in a variety of ways, ranging from the simple, such as not eating things that we like ("I promise to give up sweets for Lent"), to the more serious, such as fasting, embracing poverty and celibacy, renouncing the ties of family and friends, asceticism, and even "mortifying the flesh" such as wearing hair shirts and flogging the body, as was the practice in some monastic sects in the Middle Ages. The underlying premise of such a belief is that what pertains to the material – especially material things that give us pleasure – is "bad" and must be rejected, if we are to grow spiritually. I find this approach to spirituality problematic. It not only categorizes a large part of our existence (the material) as "bad", but raises the notion of a Deity who is displeased by us enjoying ourselves, and is pleased by our deprivation and discomfort. For self denial alone does not automatically bring about goodness unless the mind bends itself to achieving that end.

Very different is Zarathushtra's understanding. To him, the existences of matter and mind are neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically bad. It's how we use them that counts. A moment's reflection validates his view, for it clear that good spiritual values cannot exist in a vacuum. To be worth anything, (at least in our reality), they have to be expressed through the material medium of thoughts, words and actions. And in the same way, material thoughts, words and actions that are empty

of good spiritual values are not worth much either. The happiest result occurs when material thoughts, words and actions are infused with good spiritual values.

That simple Zoroastrian maxim: good thoughts, good words and good actions, which unfortunately it has become fashionable today to denigrate, is actually the means by which we fulfill the two-fold purpose of life which is: (1) to advance each individual spiritually towards *haurvatat*, (perfection, completeness) with each good choice in thought, word, and action, and (2) in so doing, make our world a better place, for it is impossible to think a good thought, say a good word or do a good deed without benefiting the people and places affected by such thoughts, words and actions.

Just as a musician uses material instruments to express the music in his soul, just as an artist uses the material medium of paints and canvas to express his vision, so too Zarathushtra teaches that we should express the divine values of truth/right (*asha*), and good thinking (*vohu mano*), through the medium of our material world, using material things, with our choices in thought, word and action (which incidentally, is the concept of *aramaiti* – making *asha* and *vohu mano* real with our thoughts, words and actions).

I rather like Zarathushtra's approach to the existences of matter and mind. It relieves the material existence — so large portion of our reality (of what "God" has provided to us), from the status of something that is "bad", to something that is capable of advancing each soul, and our world, towards the desired end. But even more, it shows us the generosity of the Divine in crafting a medium that so often gives us pleasure, while we use it to achieve the desired end.

In Zarathushtra's understanding of reality, the spiritual is advanced through the material. And the paradox of matter and mind resolves itself into the harmony of a beneficent existence.

### Note:

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the Gathas in this paper are from the translation of Professor Insler in *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (Brill 1975), unless otherwise indicated, although Professor Insler may or may not agree with the inferences I draw from his translation. Round brackets ( ) appearing in a quotation are in the original and indicate an insertion by Professor Insler, indicating his understanding. Square brackets [ ] indicate an insertion by me. Such insertions by me are provided to show you applicable Gathic words (although not with their grammatical variations) or by way of explanation. A string of dots in a quotation indicates a deletion from the original. Often a verse contains many strands of thought. Deleting from a quotation those strands of thought that are not relevant to the discussion at hand enables us to focus on the strand of thought under discussion.



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## Achievements of 25 years service to the community

- Helping Iranian Zoroastrians to settle in the West.
- Obtaining release from prison of Zoroastrians incarcerated in foreign lands for serious offences and re-uniting them with their families in their home countries.
- Holding the first academic conference on Zoroastrian Religion, Culture and History in 1984 in London and in 1986 in Chicago, followed by the first Youth Conference held in London in 1987.

### with dedication

- The first Gatha Colloquium held in London in 1993, in which outstanding non-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian scholars from USA, Germany, UK and India participated.
- Holding a seminar on Religious and Secular Literature of the Zoroastrians in 1996.
- Holding every year, in London, a seminar on Zoroastrian Religion, Culture and History.
- Printing the lectures delivered in some of the above listed conferences.
- Recovering the estate of deceased Zoroastrian in one country for the family resident in another country and remitting the same to the latter.
- Helping a Zoroastrian to settle his debts to various Zoroastrians, who had to be traced all over the world.
- Printing and distributing, gratis, a unique Zoroastrian calendar each year, enabling *Faslīs*, *Shahenshais* and *Kadmis* to follow.
- Publishing and distributing the *Hamazor*, quarterly publication, with interesting articles from all sections of the community and various scholars, gratis
- Upliftment of the poor Zoroastrian farmers of South Gujerat with sterling success. Till December 2004, 164 villages have been reached and 379 families assisted.



▄▄▄ Commenced self-employment scheme for the first time in Zoroastrian history with 400+ individuals becoming self-sufficient.

▄▄▄ Extending financial assistance to countless Zoroastrians for medical and surgical purposes.

▄▄▄ Establishing and running a Senior Citizens Centre at Navsari and providing medical care to the these residents.

▄▄▄ Establishing and running the Sanjan Sanatorium.

▄▄▄ Athornan Mandal & WZO jointly formulated a scheme to encourage young mobeds to become full time mobeds. WZO raised a substantial amount and gave the same to the Athornan Mandal as a corpus. At this moment 34 young full time mobeds are being remunerated each month.

▄▄▄ Supported hundreds of youths in their pursuit of education, academic as well as vocational by way of grants and interest free loans. Students from indigent families are supported through a “student sponsorship scheme” .

## and forthrightness we have achieved

▄▄▄ Providing housing at low rents at Navsari.

▄▄▄ Providing housing to Zoroastrians living in the villages of Gujerat.

▄▄▄ Providing relief to Zoroastrians, mobeds and behdins, living in poverty.

▄▄▄ Raising funds to help the victims of natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, floods etc., and for the Afghan refugees.

▄▄▄ Extending financial assistance to the Pourchista Foundation who does excellent work in Yazd, Iran.

▄▄▄ Assisting in the repairs of *chawls* in Mumbai.

▄▄▄ Help in building accommodation for mobeds in New Delhi.

▄▄▄ Setting up a holiday programme to enable poor widows with young children to go away on holiday for a fortnight with all expenses paid for.

**We are deeply indebted to all the donors for their munificence enabling WZO to serve our community as mentioned above.**

*celebrating twenty five years*



Prof Insler & Farrokh Vajifdar



Profs Insler & K D Irani

# millennium lectures 2000



Prof Insler & Shahin Bekhradnia



Prof Insler & Dina McIntyre

# Twenty Fifth Anniversary of WZO

by farhang mehr

In the first World Zoroastrian Congress in Tehran in 1960, the idea of creating a world Zoroastrian body originated. It was proposed by Behram (Baily) Irani, a member-delegate from London from the organization currently called the Zoroastrian Trust Fund of Europe. In that Congress, besides this organization, only the representatives of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat of India, the Karachi Parsi Anjuman of Pakistan, and the Zarathusti Anjuman of Tehran representing smaller associations in Iran (the host country), participated. On other continents, associations had either not yet been formed, or represented tiny communities of Zoroastrians. Behram Irani's proposal was unanimously carried. But no mechanism was discussed or set up, for its implementation.

Initially, the motive behind the decision of Zarathushti Anjuman of Tehran to convene this World Congress, was twofold:

➤ to rally of world Zoroastrian community behind the Iranian government's forthcoming 2500 year anniversary celebration of the reign of Cyrus, the great "Kurosh Kabir" and

➤ to bring about a closer unity (Hamazoori) and collaboration among Zoroastrians around the world.

Since the Arab conquest of Iran in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Zoroastrians of Iran had suffered loss of life, forced conversion and humiliation in the ensuing 1370 years of Islamic domination. Laws that were enacted

by many Islamic regimes in Iran discriminated against the Iranian Zoroastrians and other religious minorities and treated them as second class citizens. This bitter history highlighted to the Iranian Zoroastrians the need for unity and cooperation among Zoroastrians everywhere, in order to survive. Support given to Iranian Zoroastrians by the Parsis in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries generally and the services of Parsi representatives to Iran like Limji Manekji Hataria, Kaikhosrow Saheb and Ardeshirjee Edulji in particular,

significantly ameliorated the lives of Zoroastrians of Iran. That emphasized the benefits that could flow from unity and cooperation. Interaction between Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians did enhance the religious knowledge of both communities, and strengthen their joint efforts to preserve the faith.

Further, increased contacts and exchange of ideas and information about our religion between our co-

religionists, has enhanced our religious knowledge and awareness, and contributed to the survival of our community and preservation of our faith.

Unfortunately, the difference of opinion among some leaders of the Zoroastrian community of Tehran about the best locality and country for the headquarters of such a World Body, the indifference of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat to the creation of a such a Body anywhere outside Bombay and disinterestedness of other Zoroastrian communities at the time, contributed to the failure of Behram Irani's vision to create a Zoroastrian World Body which would be as



internationally recognized like the world bodies of other smaller faiths and communities. It had to wait until 1980, when the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) was founded in London.

In 1978, on the threshold of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, I stopped in London on my return from the US, to meet with Shahpur Captain of the Zoroastrian Trust Fund of Europe. In the light of the new political development in Iran, and the advice of leading politicians in many western countries that the Zoroastrians must establish a united World Body that could speak for the community internationally, I urged that his Association might take the lead. It could assemble a group of Zoroastrian leaders from around the world with the aim of expediting the formation of a World Body, which the 1960 Tehran World Zoroastrian Congress and subsequent Congresses had mandated. It could then serve as its secretariat to facilitate its work.

This group decided that the headquarters of the World Body should be in London, produced a draft constitution for it, and sent it for comments and approval of the very few Zoroastrian associations in existence at the time. Thereafter, the World Body named the World Zoroastrian Organisation, was established in 1980. Its founding members included a number of Zoroastrian leaders from various countries, including those from the Iranian Zoroastrian community like Arab Guiv, Mehraban Farhangi, Mehraban Zarathusti and myself. The subsequent story of WZO is fairly known to many Zoroastrians.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WZO this year, and as a first-hand observer of events leading to its birth and life, I wish to register my recognition for the dedicated and selfless services of individuals who have generously committed time and effort to further causes of the Zoroastrian community. In particular, I would like to recognize Shahpur Captain, Dr Shirinbanoo Kutar, Rumi Sethna, Rustam Dubash, Dinshaw Tamboly and other officers of WZO for their tireless efforts over these past 25

years. I offer my respect and appreciation for their enthusiasm, creativity, commitment and compassion, particularly in assisting hundreds of Iranian Zoroastrian families to find refuge in Europe, USA, Canada and Australia after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Their continuing efforts to this day, to find refuge for other Zoroastrians as well as to protect Zoroastrian rights, wherever transgressed, is equally commendable. This work has been complimented since 1985 by the exemplary and indeed praiseworthy efforts of WZO in India. For those efforts as well, I offer my heartfelt praise and gratitude.

However, the quest for forging community unity which underlay WZO's creation in 1980, was thwarted in 1983 by the opposition of certain leaders of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat, the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe and some other regional and religious leaders, all with different motives. As a result, the process of establishing a unifying World Body to protect and enhance community interests, actually encountered new wedges in the path of such unity.

Opposition in North America, with its growing number of Zoroastrians, was based on two grounds:

1. the equal voting rights given to association members of WZO and its individual members, and
2. difference of opinion about the best locality country-wise, for the headquarters of WZO.

The first concern was voiced first in the 1983 World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay. This was a valid objection. It was accepted on the spot by Professor Kaikhosrov Irani and me, as both of us were serving on the WZO Board at the time. Professor Irani therefore proposed a bi-cameral system, which I seconded. I still think that this is the best approach to resolving this particular issue. However, the interim committee formed to deliberate on the proposal and report back to that Congress, did not adopt the bi-cameral system. The matter remained unresolved.

For some years thereafter, and particularly after the formation in 1987 of FEZANA, a regional organization for North America, individuals continued bickering on it without any constructive conclusion.

Subsequently at the suggestion in 1993 of Adi Davar and me, members of WZO's International Board of Trustees agreed to place the matter once again on their agenda. After lengthy discussions, the Board members unanimously agreed that an organizational system with two independent organs, be devised and adopted: one for associations, and one for the individuals. Both organs would exist under the umbrella of WZO to represent the community world-wide, and have an International Board comprising of the Board members of both. The wisdom, ingenuity and problem-solving ability of Adi Davar in finding fair and balanced solutions in this process, was remarkable. He persuaded WZO that its Constitution should be amended to incorporate such a radical restructuring, and the resulting draft submitted to all associations world-wide for comment.

All was done. For reasons of accessibility and distance, London was chosen as the most convenient place for the WZO headquarters under the proposed organizational system. Comments of various associations, as well as of Zoroastrian leaders from every country where Zoroastrians live, were sought on the revised draft constitution and taken into account to the extent possible. Rumi Sethna travelled extensively to various countries, even as far as Australasia, to discuss it and solicit comments. Numerous negotiations took place in North America and India, to many of which Kaikhosrov Irani, Adi Davar and I were invited to facilitate convergence. I witnessed how much thought, energy and time went into this process until 2004.

After some modifications by various associations and federations, the revised draft constitution, was approved by a majority of them – including Iran. At a historic meeting in London in 2003, a

majority of WZO's present International Board approved it. In mid-2004, at a further meeting in London of WZO, FEZANA, the UK and the Indian associations, the proposed concept was accepted, although on the basis of 3 organs to be separately incorporated in 3 countries. While that solution reflected our community's unfortunate divisive nature, it was nevertheless a very optimistic time for the Zoroastrian community that after so much discussion and discord, agreement was at long last reached by all involved parties.

At the last moment, on the verge of moving ahead with this agreed solution, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Associations of India opposed the entire arrangements in December - and wrecked the boat. As things stand, the Zoroastrian community of India is holding up the creation of a true umbrella World Body for the Zoroastrian people. Thus, regretfully, India's Zoroastrian community now numbering only 25% of the world Zoroastrian population, is obstructing the finalization of a restructured WZO as the all-embracing World Body of our community.

In these circumstances, it is but a source of great regret and disappointment to me that the unity envisaged by the creation of a World Body almost half a century ago in 1960, has not materialized, despite the enormous amount of time, effort and personal sacrifice of those who tried to bring the goal to fruition. And at the rate at which the present negotiations are advancing, I suspect - as the only living survivor, neither young nor in the best of health, of the first 1960 World Zoroastrian Congress - that I may not have the satisfaction of seeing a united World Body in place.

I encourage the existing WZO to continue its valuable activities with the same dedication and enthusiasm that they have displayed up to now. I pray that the community supports it financially and physically, in the absence of a better substitute. Community progress lies in unity (Hamazoori). Let us not act in a way that will disappoint our future generations.



*Farhang Mehr is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at Boston University. A dedicated Zoroastrian he has spent all his life serving the cause of the Zoroastrian religion and the community including 16 years in Tehran Zartushty Anjuman, 12 years as its President. As an educator, lawyer and economist, he held high position in the Government, including Vice-Prime Minister, acting Minister of Finance, Governor for Iran in OPEC Board of Governors, President of Iran National Insurance Company, and President of Pahlavi (Shiraz) University. He has authored many books and articles, given interviews to several world and local radio and televisions. He is the co-editor of Bilingual Humata Journal published in USA. He is married to Parichehr and they have three children, Mehrdad, Mehran and Mitra.*



Tehran Anjuman members

Shahpur Captain's visit to Tehran, Iran, in January 1998, to meet officials of the Anjuman and all Zoroastrian associations leading to the setting up of WZO representatives in Iran



Captain, third from the left, with Tehran Anjuman members



Lady members of the Tehran Anjuman



Mobed Shahzadi, Captain and Tehran Anjuman members



## Ahremen's end between theology and philosophy

by antonio panaino

The final combat at the end of the Mazdean cycle of 12.000 years between the armies of Ohrmazd and those of Ahremen is an intriguing subject in particular with regard to the very destiny of the Lord of the Darkness. We know, in fact, that after the resurrection and purification of the dead started with the arrival of the third Saoshyant, Ohrmazd with the Amahraspandân will enter the historical time descending on earth and the Archangels will immediately destroy the Arcidemons. Only Ahremen and Âz will survive for a while. Then, it is Ohrmazd who will celebrate a sacrifice, reciting the *Gâthâs*, acting as a Zôt priest with the help of Srôsh as his Râspîg. With the completion of the ritual sacrifice, Srôsh and Ohrmazd can finally smite Âz and Ahremen; but, at this point, the Pahlavi sources present us with a peculiar situation: e.g., according to a *Rewâyat* (see R. Ch. Zaehner, *Zurvan*, a *Zoroastrian Dilemma*, New York 1972, p. 354-355), Âz would like to swallow the same Ahremen, who, in his turn, will invoke the help of Ohrmazd asking him to be judge over both of them. This is a dramatic moment, when all the entire evil antagonist "creation" of Ahremen is destroyed and his last fellow, Âz, is ready to eat him. Ohrmazd cannot save and forgive Ahremen; Srôsh and Ohrmazd have to smite both demons, although this happens in a very peculiar way. But, while Srôsh smites Âz, the *Rewâyat* states with regard to Ahremen:

*"With all the foul(?) darkness and misery which he brought into (the world) when he first rushed in, he*

*is thrown out of the sky through the hole by which he rushed in: and at that hole he is laid low and made unconscious so that he (will) never again arise from that low estate."*

The text adds:

*"There have been some who have said that he will be forever powerless and, as it were, slain, and that henceforth neither the Destructive spirit nor his creation will exist" (Zaehner, *Zurvan*, p. 355).*

Very insightfully Zaehner (*The Teachings of the Magi. A Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs*, London - New York 1956, pp. 143-144) remarked: "The accounts in the Pahlavi books which describe the final overthrow of Ahriman seem uncertain as to whether his overthrow means his actual annihilation or not. On balance it would seem that the orthodox view was that since he is, by definition, a substance, he cannot be actually reduced to nothing. He is, however, by the unanimous consent of all the sources, reduced to absolute powerlessness. His position

*seems to be analogous to that of the human body at death: he is not destroyed but disintegrates into unconscious and inoperative atoms which have no power of reintegrating themselves into a unified being with any power to act. Thus there can be no possibility of Ahriman's resuming his aggression against the reconstituted world."*

These remarks by Zaehner are very important, because they show how deep was the impact of the Aristotelian philosophy on the basic patterns of Sasanian theology. We know that many Greek concepts entered the culture of Sasanian Iran, where in fact various works by Plato and Aristotle were translated or at



least sufficiently known (see H W Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, Oxford 1943, Second edition with a new *Introduction* by the author, Oxford 1971, pp. 87-92 and *passim*; cf. also A Panaino, *L'influsso greco nella letteratura e nella cultura medio-persiana*, in *Autori classici in lingue del Vicino e Medio Oriente*, Roma 2001, pp. 29-45).

Sometimes the presence of these Western doctrines was contradictorily mastered and we find, for instance, an interesting interpretation of the *mênôg* which seems to refer to the idea of an intangible and invisible primordial "matter", according to the interpretation of Aristotle. A patent example, strictly connected with the most important ideas contained in the Aristotelian *Nicomachean Ethics* can be seen in the development of the Zoroastrian ethical principle of the "good mean", which places the virtue as an intermediate and balanced point between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Pahlavi texts, in particular the *Dênkard*, show a direct knowledge of Aristotelian sources and quote a number of precise physical categories of Aristotelian origin such as, in particular, in the case of the doctrine of the four *stoicheia* (Pahl. *zâhagân*), hot, moist, cold and dry and of the four basic natural elements (fire, air, water and earth), which will be also very significant in the development of Sasanian astrology. Technical and philosophical words like "form" (*dêsag*), "mixture" (*âmêzishn*), "generation" (*rawishnîh*), "being" (*bawishn-âstishnîh*), no doubt translate Greek terms, such as *eidos*, *mixis*, *genesis* and *ousia*. For instance, according to the *Bundahishn*, 181, 6, the "substance of Ohrmazd is hot and moist, bright, sweet-smelling, and light", while that of Ahreman is "cold and dry, heavy and stinking" (181, 11; cf. R. Ch. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, London 1962, second impression London 2003, p. 203).

These data suggest also that the final destiny of Ahreman was interpreted according to speculations not only based on the traditional religious background, which

included the obvious complete destruction of the Prince of the Darkness, but more precisely on some philosophical categories. Thus, the idea that Ahreman will << laid low and (will be) made unconscious so that he (will) never again arise from that low estate >> strictly follows these Aristotelian patterns. If nothing can be really destroyed in its primeval matter (being in fact the primordial *mênôg* matter the spiritual "thing" of which Ahreman is made of), also the Antagonist and Bad Spirit (Angra Mainyu) cannot be completely extinguished in his totality. Using the same Aristotelian language, we could say that he will be put in a state of *in-potentia*, where he will be powerless, because his matter will be suspended in a condition from which it would be impossible to return in movement (or better *in actu*). From a philosophical point of view Ahreman's destiny will be a sort of eternal and permanent suspension. We can also note that such a solution seems to be consistent with the radical dualistic scheme of the Sasanian Zoroastrianism, where Ohrmazd and Ahreman existed as two primordial and antagonist beings. As the creation was not arranged *ex nihilo* (i.e. from an original nothing and void state), and the same should be supposed for the Ahremanic contro-creation, so also Ahreman's substance cannot be reduced to an absolute nothing.

It is clear that this kind of solution had nothing to do with the earliest Mazdean tradition, where the theoretical and philosophical complexity of these problems was absolutely out of discussion, but is also shows the deep approach of the Zoroastrian theological schools, which tried to apply some Greek concepts to their own religious speculations. Ahreman's peculiar end suggests, however, that, on the one hand, his own ontology, his "ipseity" (if we must say so), was conceived as non-existent, because intrinsically negative and mortiferous, in the *gêtiġ* state, but, on the second hand, it was assumed to be as given of its own (reversed and opposite) properties in the *mênôg* dimension.

Ahremen's expulsion out of the sky through the hole by which he rushed in the creation at the begin of the *gumêzishn*, the period of "mixture" (i.e., the period in which we live), involves also a double result:

- 1) the elimination of the devil from the earth, but also
- 2) his expulsion from the time, both limited and unlimited.

This explanation is confirmed by the third book of the *Dênkard*, chapter 114 (see J de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dênkart*, Paris 1973, pp. 117-118), where it is clearly shown with direct reference to the destiny of the Gannag Mênôg that the destruction and the mortification of any substance does not correspond to its total annihilation, but that it is throughout the separation and the dissociation (e.g. of the soul from the body) that something can be made powerless and completely inactive.

L C Casartelli (*La philosophie religieuse du Mazdéisme sous les Sassanides*, Louvain 1884, pp. 58-62: English translation by F J JamaspAsa, *The Philosophy of the Mazdayasnian Religion under the Sassanids*, Bombay 1889) was the first to realize the importance of this doctrine; in particular, he supposed that the author of the *Dênkard* tried to counter the doctrine exposed in the *Bundahishn*, which simply presupposed the final destruction of Ahremen, declaring that, while Ohrmazd "was, is and will be forever", Ahremen "was, is, but we will not exist forever." More probably both authors were trying to focus on the same problem from different perspectives; the author of the *Dênkard* was discussing a philosophical subject concerning the immortality of the substance, concluding that also Ahremen's very substance cannot be simply eliminated, while the latter desired to insist on the final result of the expulsion and destruction of Ahremen's presence from the good creation, probably following a pattern of mythological kind, thus more elementary and clear. This difference is linked to the different approaches to the same question, but it is difficult to see the actual presence

of two clashing theologies or of two schools, because the levels and the frameworks of the two different treatments are no doubt placed on distinct interpretative levels. In any case, according to the author of the *Dênkard*, the circle (*gird*) of the solitude and of the unconsciousness will descend upon Ahremen. Such a perspective seems to be worse than death, because this condition will put Ahremen's entire being out of any conscience without any possibility of resurrection.



Antonio C D Panaino is a full Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Bologna, branch of Ravenna, where he is also the Dean of the Faculty for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage. He has been secretary and then president of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, and is director of the



Emilia-Romagna branch of the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO). His main fields of researches concern the Pre-Islamic Iranian cultures, particularly Avestan and Middle Persian philology, the history of Iranian religions, and the development of Mazdean astral mythology and astrology, all subjects on which he has written many articles and studies. He has also edited the Avestan hymn to the star Sirius (*Tishtrya*, vol. I, Rome 1990, in English) and published a second volume dedicated to this Avestan yazata (*Tishtrya*, vol. II, Rome 1995, in English); among his other books, we can mention the edition of the Pahlavi text concerning the Explanation of the Chess and Backgammon (Milan 1999, in Italian), an another study dedicated to the Names of Ahura Mazd, and Vayu (Rome 2002, in English); he has recently published in the series of the Wien Academy of Sciences his "Quatre leçons at the Collège de Franc", entitled *Rite parole et pensée sand l'Avesta ancien et récent* (Wien 2004).



# 1st G A T H A

At the First Gatha Colloquium held in Croydon, England in 1993 by WZO. Front L to R: xx, xx, Dr Phiroza Modi, Dina McIntyre, Dastur Mirza, xx, Dr Pallan Ichaporia, Rohinton Rivetna.  
Middle L to R: Prof Helmut Humbach, Chairman WZO Dr Shireenbanoo Kutar, Farrokh Vajifdar, Shahin Bekhradnia  
Back L to R: Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Prof Stanley Insler, Prof Martin Schwartz, Dr Ali Jafarey, Adi Davar



Prof Helmut Humbach



Prof Martin Schwartz

*celebrating twenty five years*

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L to R: Prof Stanley Insler, Mrs Thieme, Prof Paul Thieme



Dastur Hormazdiar K Mirza

England  
1993



Shirinbanoo Kutar & Dastur Mirza



L to R: Jal Amrolia, Prof Humbach, Dastur Mirza. Backing, Dr Ichaporia



L to R: Dr L M Singhvi, Ruby Contractor, Dr Shirinbanoo Kutar and Dolly Khambatta

# Dadabhoj Naoroji



Dr & Mrs L M Singhvi, (front row), at the Seminar held at Mahatma Gandhi Hall, Indian YMCA, London



L to R: Adi Davar, Shahpur Captain, Dr L M Singhvi, Indian High Commissioner in UK, at the Indian YMCA

# Centenary Celebrations

# London

# **A Global Community Without Borders**

## ***Learning from the Past, Building for the Future***

**by rohinton m rivetna**

### **Lessons of History**

**h**istory will indeed be the judge of our actions. With three millennia of history behind us, will we heed the lessons of history, or will we allow history to repeat itself?

We know that when we have lost compassion for each other's view, we become prey to passionate violence. We know that when there is disharmony amongst us, we are easy prey to those forces who wish to see us destroyed. We know that when we insist on defining the undefinable, we create schisms within the community. And we know that matters of faith and belief cannot be resolved with a vote; but with mutual respect and tolerance.

All this we know, and yet we find ourselves losing compassion, as we see in the unbridled attacks on each other in recent times. We are witness to disharmony in our ranks, stirred up mostly by extremist positions. We insist on enunciating clear definitions of who is a Parsi, who is an Irani, who is a Zoroastrian, when we know it leads to naught, except a great divide within the community; we try to push ours as the "only true path," when we know that in our pluralistic and individualistic society, all that leads to is rancor and discord, gnawing away at the very foundations of our fragile community.

A case in point is the issue of "conversion/ acceptance/neo-Zoroastrians/offspring of

mixed marriages" for which clear-cut resolutions are attempted, to the utter decimation of our community harmony. We have wrestled with this issue for centuries, with no definitive resolution in sight, nor is one to be expected. The rule to follow is to allow it to run its course, and over time a natural balance will be struck. In the meantime, we must not allow this divisive issue to destroy the very fabric of our community. Our faith as it has developed in India over the last 1,000 years, has not been an expansionist faith, and therefore those of the traditional persuasion anguish deeply at the rationalization of their faith

by the new "Zoroastrians by Choice" founded in reason and intellect, rather than belief and heritage. We need to make sure, however, that our fervor does not turn into fanaticism.

Our people have a mind of their own. When there are pulls from rigid extremist positions, the vast, silent majority "votes with it's feet." Turned off and disenchanted, rather than stand up and fight, they walk away, do not participate in communal affairs, and sometimes we lose them altogether. They are doing so now - the distressing picture is related in the Winter 2004 issue of FEZANA Journal.



We have inherited a “system” - of traditions, practices, a way of life, thinking and beliefs - developed and honed by our forefathers over several millennia, in Iran, and then India. There is a wealth of inherent wisdom implicit within this “system,” which many of us see fit to question. It behooves us, rather, to try and seek an understanding of this system which ensured our survival through the vicissitudes of history.

This “system” which has served us well thus far, is albeit yet evolving, and will continue to evolve into the future, adapting to the times and climes. Change cannot be rushed. And change cannot be arrested in its path. Change will come about through evolution, and not revolution; imperceptibly, over time, through customary practice.

The ingredients for a renaissance are all there. We can synthesize and mold them to take our community to greater heights. Or, if not mindful, we can misuse the same, to polarize and destroy. We are at a crucial juncture when our actions today, may well define our future. Learning from history, I offer the following suggestions in the conduct of our affairs:

- Be mindful of our rich traditions, heritage and history. Do nothing that will undermine or tarnish it. Observe and preserve all you can. Always remember the story of the “Sugar in the Milk,” and the pledge made by our forefathers.
- Develop an understanding and respect for “the system,” albeit yet evolving, that has preserved and protected our community over the centuries.
- Do not expect clear-cut globally acceptable, definitive resolutions in communal matters. Allow these to develop over time and give gentle direction – through natural evolution and customary practice, not rigidity and revolution.
- Seek to develop harmony, even above unity. While one may be firm in one’s

own religious beliefs, convictions and position, develop respect and tolerance for the other. With appreciative enquiry, try to understand the other view.

- Above all, civility, good grace, understanding and compassionate action precede all else.

### North American Diaspora

The North American chapter of Zoroastrian history is unique in that the Zoroastrians that first came and settled in the 1960s and 1970s came mostly as students, in their 20s, in search of higher education and the “good life” in America; unlike the first diaspora, a thousand years earlier, who fled to India for fear of their lives and to preserve their faith. It has been said that for Zoroastrians, North America could be the bastion of hope and survival, given its tradition of freedom of worship and the separation of Church and State, unlike anywhere else in the world.

The first generation of American and Canadian Zoroastrians, as they began to raise their families, felt the need to come together locally, and then nationally (as FEZANA). To their credit, this first generation established an infrastructure of associations (currently 24) and built *darbe mehrs* (currently 8). They have moreover established a noticeable presence (in spite of their miniscule numbers) in the interfaith arena and are now counted as one of the major religious/ethnic groups in USA and Canada. They have established the groundwork.

After 40-50 years now, it is time for the second generation to pick up the reins. It is my personal observation that the old-timers are rather reluctant to step aside; but then again, neither are those of the next generation standing in the wings, rearing at the bit. This in my opinion, is the challenge for the next generation – to begin to take over the reins for a smooth transition. While there are a comforting number of inspired leaders among them, there is also a



## Caveats

Data gathered on population and marriages is presented in tables (FEZANA Journal, Winter 2004, pp 22-24) with copious explanatory notes in the articles on succeeding pages. This data could be misleading, if reproduced out of context, without the accompanying explanations.

FEZANA Journal presented the raw data as submitted by each respondent. With the limited time and resources available, only minimal verification or validation of the submitted numbers, was possible. As such, there may be inconsistencies from respondent to respondent - in the counting process used as well as in the definitions of who is to be counted. This data should be viewed as 'a first draft'. It can be safe to say that the population numbers presented here are on a lower limit - of Zoroastrians that could be counted; the actual numbers could be much higher. Additions and corrections, if forthcoming, will be presented in future Journal issues. The data presented here is not an official census, just a flavour of the Zoroastrian world.

*Hamazor*, acknowledges and thanks Roshan Rivetna for the details mentioned above, and the map with the population figures.



# the Zarathushti world

a demographic picture



disturbing number that have drifted away, are disinterested or not committed enough to make the necessary sacrifices. With each passing year, this becomes increasingly urgent.

### Community Without Borders

Unlike 50 years ago, today, by an accident of history, Zoroastrians are spread throughout the globe. Unintended, we find ourselves to be, perhaps, the first global "Community Without Borders." Ours is a fraternity unlike no other, providing instant bonding among strangers. This fraternity was not born yesterday – it has several millennia of heritage behind it. Let our actions be deliberate to strengthen, not fragment, this remarkable bonding.

It has been said of us that never have so few given so much. This has been our heritage. This has been our history. Let future historians write that these were the people with wisdom and vision that made the difference. For we, as a community have so much going for us, that we could in fact, by our example, make a difference to the world.

### Global Alliance of Zoroastrians

There is one bounden duty the first generation of the diaspora must perform before they pass on the torch – and that is to establish connections between the Zoroastrians of the diaspora with their roots in the mother countries of Iran and India, and with other Zoroastrians now spread alarmingly thin, across the globe. It will be harder for the second generation to do so, and well nigh impossible for subsequent generations. All this is in the present quantum of time. Perhaps in the future, English-speaking countries of the world might form a union, which might make the union of Zoroastrians even simpler.

Such a "Coming Together" of Zoroastrians worldwide, could take the form of the world body model presently on the table [see *FEZANA Journal Fall 2004*], suitably tuned to assuage all fears. This model proposes

an IZO (International Zoroastrian Organization) with two autonomous arms: WZOI (the socio-economic-welfare arm comprising of individuals) and WZOF (representation and governance arm, comprising of regional federations).

My vision is to extend this concept to a "Global Alliance" of not just the two arms, but to encompass all the institutions of humankind – Religion (the Mobed's Councils), Arts and Culture (WZCF-the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation), Business and Enterprise (WZCC-World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce), Education and Scholarship, and any other world-level entities that wish to participate in the alliance. The Global Alliance could facilitate a "Coming Together" of these world-level institutions, each completely autonomous, for discourse and dialogue, with the common goal of perpetuating the religion and strengthening the community.

May Ahura Mazda protect and preserve our global community.



Rohinton M Rivetna has devoted a lifetime building infrastructure to perpetuate the religion of Zarathushtra in North America. In 1976, he spearheaded the founding of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, and has served as trustee and president. In 1983, he mobilized the Chicago community into constructing the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, and served as its architect and general contractor. Rohinton was the prime architect of FEZANA and its Constitution and served as president for eight years. He is now working towards a strong, truly representative world body. In 2000, Rohinton spearheaded the founding of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce and served as its first president. He was founding vice president and trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, and is a founding member of the United Religions Initiative. In 1990, he (with wife Roshan) was awarded FEZANA's "Outstanding Zoroastrian Award". Rohinton recently retired as Director of Environmental Engineering at American National Can Corp.





L to R: Mrs Nariman, Fali Nariman, Farhang Mehr. At the back Rumi Sethna, Chairman at that time: corner Sammy Bhiwandiwalla, present Chairman



Rumi Sethna, addressing Fali Nariman and the gathering

Function held on 6 October, 2002, at Rumi & Hilda Sethna's residence, to felicitate Mr & Mrs Fali Nariman, when he received the Peter Gruber Foundation Award



Shirinbanoo Kutar presenting flowers to Mrs Nariman



Roshan Mistry, President of South London Association, addressing Fali Nariman, and guests



Chairman Shirinbanoo Kutar presenting a scroll of appreciation from WZO to Shahpur Captain, President, on 27 May, 1990



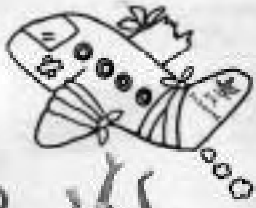


Annual BBQ at the residence of Hilda & Rumi Sethna, proceeds benefitting the Farmers of Gujarat



celebrating twenty five years

Amateur  
Theatre  
Company



*Air Farokh - great people to cry with*



A hilarious natak especially performed and written for the purpose of generating funds for the Noshirwan F Cowasjee Medical Benevolent Fund on 23 July 1994

# highlights

On the right: Scene from "Aapro Karachi". Below: The three Association members of WZO welcomed Mr Rumi Sethna, Chairman WZO, who highlighted the new constitution and with his wife Hilda were entertained to a song and florid show, "Aapro Karachi" on 24 January 2003. L to R: Adi Madon, Chairman, Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan, Rumi Sethna, Dr Gool Talati, President Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal, Cyrus Cowasjee, President Karachi

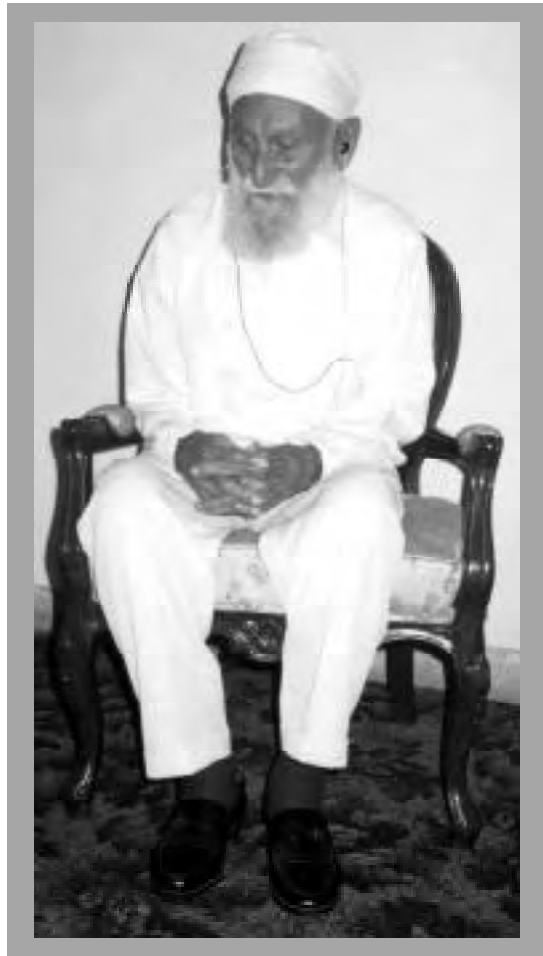


On the right: A fashion show on 19 February, 2004 to welcome Mr Rumi Sethna, President WZO, & Mrs Sethna; and to generate funds for Noshirwan F Cowasjee Medical Benevolent Fund





WZO felicitated and acknowledged two centenarians in Karachi, both of whom were Quetta-ites. Above, Meherbanoo Marker, on 21 July 2001, who was a staunch supporter of WZO, both during her lifetime and even when she died on 20 January 2004, through her will. On the right, Mobed Sohrabji Dastur on 26 March 2003, a much loved figure, having served his community from 1919 till he died in February 2005. Both photographs taken on their 100th birthday.



# of karachi and



Karachi-ites contribute handsomely, through WZO & KZBM in December 2001, in aid of the Afghan refugees. Above, trucks ready to leave with food hampers to Afghan border.





Welcoming late Rajiv Gandhi Prime Minister of India



Late Rajiv Gandhi Prime Minister of India, being presented papers showing the work carried out by WZO in India. Centre Nergish and on the right Dadi Mistry



Conference on Zoroastrian Religion, History & Culture, 1984. Shahpur Captain introducing Dr Paul de Breuil. Sitting L to R: Aban Bana, Dadi Mistry and Dr de Breuil

WZO members who met Mrs Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India. L to R: Nergish Mistry, Dadi Mistry, Shahpur Captain, Roda Mistry (member of Indian Parliament), Ruby Contractor and Shahrokh Shahrokh.

# the delhi scene



A delegation of WZO members had visited the late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi along with late Roda Mistry, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. L to R: Mrs Indira Gandhi, Shahpur Captain, Shahrokh Shahrokh, Roda Mistry, Nergish Mistry, Ruby Contractor and Dadi Mistry



Late Indira Gandhi on the left with Nergish Mistry



*celebrating twenty five years*



Beautification at Mumbai Doongerwadi undertaken by Mrs Mithoo J Jesia with the assistance of WZO



WZO remembers Parsi stalwarts of yore. Jimmy Sidhwa, awardee, offering his thanks

wzo trust  
india



Navjote ceremony of Parsi children from an indigent family arranged by WZO



L to R: Rumi Sethna, immediate past Chairman & Dinshaw Tamboly, Chairman WZO Trusts India with Rattu Dastur



WZO & Zoroastrian Women's Assembly of Surat – release of the Directory of Parsi Residents of Surat





Sanatorium at Sanjan : on the right, a bedroom : below, the garden in front of the building



Beneficiary who received auto rickshaw for self employment. Over 40 such rickshaws given to date



Cottage built for a family



Grocery store opened for an economically challenged family

*celebrating twenty five years*



Mother and son in their field



Poultry farm

## work done in the villages of gujarat



Young Parsi dairy farmer



Buffalo farm. L to R: Dinshaw Tamboly, farmer, Mani Clubwalla, Shahpur Captain, committee members of WZO





with the  
support of WZO



Village home



Education for girls and boys



## **WZO - Fostering Zoroastrian Unity Worldwide; Celebrating through Service**

by dinshaw k tamboiy

The first twenty five years of an institution that is destined to function in perpetuity cannot be called a beginning. It can at best be termed to be the very beginning of the beginning.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation, popularly and affectionately called WZO is a unique organisation. It is distinctive in many ways. There has perhaps been no other organisation that has endeared itself to everyone, be it donors, beneficiary, its member, or even the lay members of the community.

I personally do not know of any organisation that has so successfully created confidence in the minds of everyone in so short a time, nor established credibility of the high degree achieved by WZO.

The credo of WZO has been to foster "Zoroastrian unity worldwide" and to "celebrate through service".

The performance graph of WZO is akin to the profitability graph of the most successful corporation on planet Earth. WZO, the organisation has not only grown, but those who have been fortunate to have been associated in its activities have also grown, richer in terms of knowledge gained, satisfaction levels experienced, respect received. These milestones have been achieved because all concerned have worked in tandem, not only with commitment, dedication and transparency, but very importantly without ego and self centredness.

The success achieved by WZO has been on account of the working philosophy followed, whereby no beneficiary is ever made to feel humble or humiliated. The focus has never been to take a short cut and provide temporary relief by simply providing a dole, as it is recognised that such an act consciously or subconsciously invariably

affects the self respect and dignity of any human being. The effort has always been to tread on the long and hard road that would ensure that the self respect of beneficiaries was never compromised, but always remained intact, and at the same time they were adequately motivated to work hard, put in strenuous efforts that would integrate them into a rapidly changing world and rejoin the mainstream of society.



WZO has always addressed both donors and beneficiaries in the same language, using the same voice and tone with everyone. Whilst the self respect of beneficiaries is always upheld and respected, donor satisfaction is generally at a peak due to deft handling of their funds, detailed reporting and transparency. This policy has ensured that the pipeline of donations has never run dry.

WZO has touched the lives of many, all for the better. Be it the rehabilitation of poor

farmers or financial support towards self-employment, the pursuit of education or financial support for medical treatment / hospitalisation, providing relief from poverty, furthering the cause of full time mobeds to earn a decent income, assisting in repairs and renovations to places of worships, looking after the senior citizens through the establishment of residential senior citizens centres, building apartments for the poor, assisting in the prevention of community real estate assets from being encroached upon, converting huts into cottages, providing sanatorium facilities and so on, WZO has been very much there in the thick of things. Wherever there has been a cause worth supporting, WZO has always played a proactive and dominant role.

I have no doubts at all that till such time Zoroastrians walk on the face of this planet, WZO will continue to be there to assist, help, support, guide, strengthen, motivate, unite and lead the community.

May Ahura Mazda always continue to shower His blessings and grace on the wonderful world of WZO that He has created.

*Hamazor Hama Asho Baad*  
— Let us be one in strength and righteousness.



Dinshaw Tamboly unveiling of portrait of Late Davar Kavasji Modi at Surat, a WZO stalwart

A set of six books in English (all paperbacks) have been reprinted this year by Bombay Parsee Punchayet.

1. Famous Parsis - Biographical and critical sketches by G A Natesan
2. N M Wadia and His Foundation by R P Masani
3. Extracts from History of Holy Iranshah by S K Hodiwalla translated from Gujarati by Dastur N D Minocherhomji.
4. The Influence of Iran on other countries by Sir J J Modi
5. The Bombay Dockyard and the Wadia Master Builders by R A Wadia
6. Homage Unto Ahura Mazda by M N Dhalla

The set of six books are available at a nominal price of Rs.225/ (postage extra), directly from Bombay Parsee Punchayet.

Tel: 22617421-22-23

E-mail: ppbombay@vsnl.net

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

*He is Chairman of WZO Trust Funds of India. He is also a Trustee of Bombay Parsee Punchayet and of various hospitals, and charity trusts and foundations. Till September 2004 he was a Member of the International Board of WZO.*





*celebrating twenty five years*



Residents spinning the wool for kusti and below making the kusti



Opening of Senior Citizens Centre. L to R: Mrs Mehroo Meherjirana, Dastur Meherjirana, Dadi Engineer, Shahpur Captain & Dinshaw Tamboly.



Off on a picnic



Talent contest of residents. The winner with her doll



WZO team who take care of the Centre

# senior citizens centre at navsari



The dining room at the Centre

*What will matter is not what you bought,  
but what you built.  
What will matter is not what you got, but  
what you gave.  
What will matter is not your success, but  
your significance.  
What will matter is not what you learned,  
but what you taught.  
What will matter is every act of integrity,  
compassion, courage or sacrifice that  
enriched, empowered or encouraged others  
to emulate your example.  
What will matter is not your competence,  
but your character.  
What will matter is not how many people  
you knew, but how many will feel a lasting  
loss when you're gone.  
What will matter is not your memories, but  
the memories that live in those who loved  
you.  
What will matter is how long you will be  
remembered, by whom and for what.  
- author unknown*



A bedroom at the Centre



Self Employment Scheme – Indian savoury factory



At Iranshah, Udvada



Outing to the beach



Self Employment Scheme – chaki owner



# Man and Divinity in the Gathas

by farrokh vajifdar

Careful examination of the Gathas of Zarathushtra Spitama reveals an extraordinarily profound mind prompted through supranatural inspiration. It is difficult to trace the thought processes of a radical thinker expressing himself through direct grasp of a higher, superior intelligence. What remains astonishing is that, in a society of semi-settled pastoralists newly come to agriculture, such consistently lofty thoughts generating a sublime spirituality should have exercised an Iranian-speaking sage in remote South Central Asia so early in the socio-religious history of mankind.

From the outset it must be established that their composer made no claim whatever to any divine status. This in itself is remarkable, for our *ereshi* (Vedic *rishi*, Ys.31.5) held communion with a Supreme Entity **as friend to Friend** (Ys.46.2; 43.14; 44.1)! How then did he become “Lord” Zarathushtra, and just who was the Friend?

Inserted between the Gathas Ahunavaiti (Yss.28-34) and Ushtavaiti (Yss.43-46) is a prose series of Seven Chapters — the Haptanhaiti (Yss.35-41) — similar in dialect to the Gathic Avestan employed by Zarathushtra in his metrical poems. They are “cushioned” from the Prophet’s sacred verses by two (Standard) Avestic sections at their beginning, and from the ensuing Gatha group by the Avestic Yasna 42, regarded as a Supplement to the Haptanhaiti. Whereas in the verse Gathas Zarathushtra proclaims their authorship, all mention of him is pointedly dropped in this “prose Gatha” as, in fact, is the hallucinogenic *haoma*, supposedly

execrated in his authentic poetry (Ys.48.10). Whatever the demerits of the latter absentee, it is equally the fact that both *ereshi* and *ahura* powerfully resurge in Yasna 42.2 where *as payushcha thworeshtara rnazdamcha zarathushtremcha yazamaide*, both Mazda and Zarathushtra are accorded combined worship! Zarathushtra has been awarded semi-divine honours! As a very human supplicant (Yss.28.3,9; 29.8,9; 33.11; 34.5,6) he would not have wished to be placed on a “Lordly” level with the source of his inspiration! We conclude that Zarathushtra’s apotheosis was the work of

later exegetes who wished thus to dislodge him as spiritual guide and interpose themselves as religious leaders — the Revelation had become, in their hands, the instrument of a formalized religiosity (eg. Ys.37.5; 39.2 of the *Yasna Haptanhaiti*) which had reintroduced several elements of pre-Zarathushtrian worship.

Haoma had likewise been welcomed back (Ys.42.5), though it must be

reemphasized **not** in the *Haptanhaiti* itself, as restorative and promoter of the welfare of this world. We will set aside this adjunct to man’s supposedly heightened perception of the unseen world of the spirit, for it does not bear upon our argumentation here. Zarathushtra was very much the Prophet of the Here and Now, and he was a Prophet in a hurry (Yss.30.9; 51.1; 33.5; 46.19; 28.11; 48.6).

What he had instead proposed, under the steadfast inspiration of his chosen sole deity, Mazda, (Ys. 34.5,7) was man’s participation and **full** co-operation with this



supreme Entity for the regeneration of **this world** (Ys.30.9; 34.15; 50.11; 51.1). This Renovation, *frasha*, would be achieved through the good thinking, right speaking and beneficent activity of the collective of mankind, the *frashocharetars* and *hamkars*, guided steadfastly through Mazda's precepts. As this was unambiguously a matter of Choice between Good and Evil in every field of activity, it was incumbent upon all mankind to understand and to realize the Ideal that Mazda represented by promoting His precepts, and to expedite the Renovation.

To this end, Zarathushtra carefully explained the nature and essence of Mazda. The deliberate choice of Mazda, "Wisdom", by the Prophet to represent the totality of Goodness and Benevolence prompts us to investigate the character of this Being regarded as Supreme, Almighty, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. It is evident that He has no opponent, that He stands above and beyond the conflict of Truth and Deceit — the respective modes of operation of the Primordial Cosmic Principles which have **chosen** to introduce Good and Evil in the affairs of this world to shape the activities of Man. These Principles are described as Twins to denote their coequality, their powers and their intentions. As *mainyu*-s or behavioural influences, they have occupied the mind of Man who through his Free-will must determine his own *modus operandi* in this life. Zarathushtra is quite clear on this crucial point which leads Man on to the development of his individuality, his consciousness, his purpose, and the fulfilment of his true destiny as Saviour and Renovator. It is evident that the Prophet intended every high-minded human to be a world-healer, an *ahum-bish*, and thus to be regarded as saviour. Nowhere does he subscribe to the later Fravardin Yasht scheme of three millennial *saoshyants*! It has unfortunately become the blindly stubborn custom to preach this *non*-Mazdaean notion, effectively removing individual responsibility and free-will in the exercise of the good in thought, word, and deed (Ys.34.13; 48.12).

Of Mazda's essence, it is noted that the term signifies Wisdom. It analyses as Creator of Thought, Giver/Establisher of Thought; Wisdom itself is a compound of Knowledge, Experience, Understanding, Common Sense and Insight, all of which elements the Prophet has worked into his Gathas to fully expound his choice and use of Mazda as sole and Supreme Deity. Mazda's unity was upheld with the most rigorous emphasis in the Gathas with the vital corollary that there has to be diversity within that unity for it to be a fruitful doctrine. Furthermore, such conception frees Mazda from material and external confinements. It was truly a spiritual monotheism.

It is noteworthy that in his sacred verses Zarathushtra never uses the usual IndoAryan words for god, *baga*, or *yazata* for worshipful being. Instead he opts for *ahura*, the equivalent of the Old Indic word *asura* for creator god. Chief among them was Varuna, the Creator *par excellence*, King of the gods of the Indic pantheon, and Supreme Judge — he was the creator and celestial protector of the Cosmos and Cosmic Order. Allied with Mitra, the *asura* who is the terrestrial paradigm of sacred Friendship and the enforcer of the solemnly given Word or Contract, the divine pair were adopted and adapted by Zarathushtra to fulfil the chief function of Mazda, Wisdom, which is Lordship. Having discarded conceptions of Deity which failed to satisfy his spiritual sense, he taught that **there is no other than Mazda** (Ys.34.5,7), all others being **false gods** together with their feckless devotees (Ys.44. 11) who have imbibed erroneous spiritual teachings (Ys.49. 11). Their wrong choosing is met with sober warnings (Yss.46. 11; 32.11-14; 44.19-20).

Strict monotheist that was Zarathushtra, his teachings on the unity of Mazda were too austere and difficult for the popular mind whose deeply ingrained religious habit demanded the return of the very two main "components" of Mazda, both Mitra and Varuna, through their early associations with Fire and Water. That return was made

complete under Artaxerxes II (404-358 BC), having been previewed in the Seven-chapter Yasnas 36.6 and 38.1,3: the first as Sun, the latter through the *ahuranis*, the water-goddesses who are the “wives” of Ahura Mazda! The Prophet would have been nonplussed, and doubtless enraged, by these wanton compromises and readmissions.

If Mazda is Zarathushtra’s sole deity, why then does he sometimes address Mazda in the plural (Yss.28.2,9; 30.9; 31.4; 33.8, 34.6, 50.8, etc.)? The answer lies in the essence of Mazda — He is Truth, Good Mind, Right-mindedness, to all of which abstractions he is ascribed “paternity” in the sense of similarity of temperament (Ys.28.8; 29.7; 51.20), **not** separate identity. Truth and Good Mind are presented as “Best Ones” together with Mazda (Ys.33.7) with whom they are intimately and most frequently linked. They are Mazda’s lordly aspects, *ahuraongho* (Ys.30.9; 31.4), as inseparable from Him as are the facets on a diamond. They are concepts which are within the Prophet’s concept of Mazda, **non-separate** attributes of his unique supreme deity and, as His creations, are thought into being solely through His act of intellect, *khratu* (Ys.31.7,11).

These eternal aspects or attributes of Mazda are mediating functions between man and Divinity: Good Mind unites man to Mazda and activates Rightness in him. Reciprocally, through Rightness or Truth man is instructed to tread the straight paths of the Good Mind to where Mazda dwells (Ys. 34.12; 43.3). Besides, he addresses Mazda as Friend (Ys.43.14; 44.1; 46.2)— a relationship which is noteworthy later echoed far to the west by the Achaemenid Darius I (522-486 BC) on his Behistun inscription: “... may Auramazda be a friend unto thee, ... and what thou shalt do, that may Auramazda make successful for thee!” (DB.IV. §66). On his tomb inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam he declares: “I am a friend to right, I am not a friend to wrong... What is right, that is my desire” (DNRm. §8a,b). Furthermore, he claims to have “acted according to Rightness” (DB IV. §63). We

see Zarathushtra’s teachings on a 6th century BC ethico-political autobiography of a Mazdayasnian emperor!

This approachability, indeed assimilation, of man to Deity, is further emphasized in the Gathas whose **non-speculative** philosophy leads to a thoroughly **practical** psychology, free from mysticism and asceticism. It was a conception of the Divinity conspicuous for its **ethical** character, for the qualities of *ahura* are ascribed also to the right-living — cattle-breeding — pastoralist! In Ys.31.10 he is described as ‘truth-possessing lord’: *vastrim ... fshuyantem ahurem asharanem*. Earlier we noted the *ahuraongho* or lordly aspects of Mazda: in a special sense this title applies also to the human who lives steadfastly according to the new moral order — he follows Truth and cultivates the Good Mind; he is a saviour (Ys.49.9). From such persons, one anticipates good rule (Ys.48.5). For them Mazda has devised enduring moral power, *utayuniti tevishi*, and the divine gifts of *haurvatat* and *amereatat*: Integrity and Undying-ness, denoting the unification of the spiritual and physical spheres of human existence (Ys. 43.1-3). He attains to what the Prophet describes as the Foremost Existence, the *anhush paouruyo* (Ys.28. 11, 44.2, 45.3, 48.6) and a lifetime of Good Mind (Ys.28.8; 43.1).

The above argumentation developed its direction from Gathic teachings, and the inclusion of references are intended to assist readers. With increasing concern for those Zoroastrians initiated and settled overseas who are instructed to blatantly ignore Gathic precepts and follow unquestioningly the irresponsible directives of visiting priests and preachers towards the abracadabra of ritualism and into the confused jumble emanating from post-Sasanian commentarial galimatias, these timeless expositions of a universal spiritual system by Zarathushtra himself are offered in the spirit of the Founder of our unique Code for Right-Living.

True monotheisms, especially Zoroastrianism, require only that their

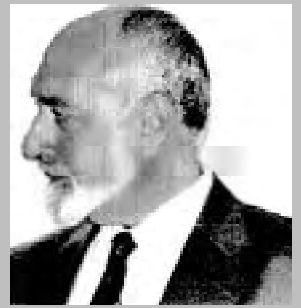
adherents be their own priests, respecting their own consciences and spiritual views. Those from our priesthood claiming to exercise some especial influence with the Deity on our behalf are quite simply out of touch with the reality that is our true religion. We do not need opportunistic prelates, or those who flout the authority of our Founder — although always using his august name — wilfully replacing his clear teachings with some low-grade productions of their own. After long study of our ancient texts, the famed prelate Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi had, in 1917, boldly declared: "I do say and believe that the worship of a pious Zoroastrian does not need priestly aid" (quoted, with lead-in, in J H Moulton, *The Treasure of the Magi*, p.206, note 2).

It is hardly surprising that would-be community leaders in India have tried to suppress all discussion on the Gathas and their study, our true religious calendar, initiation, conversion and gender issues. When we read that some of our present-day clergy have marginalized Zarathushtra and his teachings, we feel it only appropriate that we cease to accord respect to those who do not respect our religion.

If and when these self-serving "guardians of the faith" realize the enormity of their deception and the depths of their ignorance, and take up serious study of the **religion** of Zoroastrianism, and disengage with the **politics** of Parsiism, only then will the grand dimensions and high ideals of Zarathushtrian Mazdayasna be placed at the service of a world distracted by superstition and base beliefs. May that time of pure thought, right speech, and goodness of deeds come soon!



Farrokh Vajifdar was born in Bombay into a priestly family; now long settled in London. He is an independent researcher, involved for several decades in studies on Indo-Iranian culture with special emphasis on the Zoroastrian religion, its literature and languages. He is ultra-orthodox in outlook and genuinely traditionalist in attitude towards Zoroastrianism on which he writes, lectures and occasionally broadcasts. He is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and contributor to its *Journal*.



## Earth Day

courtesy Behram Pastakia on creatingawareness.com

*"The vernal equinox calls on all mankind to recognize and respect Earth's beautiful systems of balance, between the presence of animals on land, the fish in the sea, birds in the air, mankind, water, air, and land. Most importantly there must always be awareness of the actions by people that can disturb this precious balance."* - Margaret Mead

John McConnell, the 89-year old founder of Earth Day, first introduced the idea of a global holiday called Earth Day at a UNESCO Conference on the Environment in 1969.

UN Secretary-General U Thant supported John McConnell's global initiative to celebrate this annual spring equinox event. In his statement on 21 March 1971, Secretary-General U Thant said: "May there only be peaceful and cheerful Earth Days to come for our beautiful Spaceship Earth as it continues to spin and circle in frigid space with its warm and fragile cargo of animate life."

The March Equinox was chosen for Earth Day in 1970 - the first Earth Day. The idea was not local convenience or comfortable weather, which varies from place to place, but a day suitable for international celebration. On this day, night and day are equal. This day is a million year symbol of the balance of nature and the equilibrium we seek on Earth.

Each year, since then, the Peace Bell at the United Nations has been rung on Earth Day at the moment Spring begins. This is followed by silent prayer - a time for heartfelt commitment to think and act as Earth Trustees.



از نزامی (نظامی) گنجه ای:

ببردی هوش خلق از مهرگانی

چو تو کردی نوای مهرگانی

رسانه های پارسی زبان چرا نمیتوانند بهنگام مهرگان با آوردن اینگونه چیزها هم فرهنگ ایران را به همگان بشناسانند و هم زنان و مردان را به هم نزدیک کنند؟ والتنلین راستین ایرانیان مهرگان است ولی چه کسی بجز رسانه ها میتواند این به مردم بگوید و بشناساند؟ پیشنهاد من این نیست که به والتنلین نپردازیم. ما چون در پرونمرز زیست میکنیم باید به فرهنگ پیرامون نیز ارج گذاریم ولی ویژگیهای فرهنگ ایرانی را هم باید نگاه داریم و بورزیم.

به گزارش شاهنامه فردوسی مهرگان در زمان فریدون جم پادشاه پیشدادی ایران بوده شد. ان تاریخ از زمان هخامنشیان و هاتا (حنی) از زمان زرتشت و زمان رستم پهلوان هم کهن تر است و شاید ریشه اش به پنج شش هزار سال پیش برسد. بگذارید نکته هایی هم درباره والتنلین بگویم و روشن کنم که مهرگان بسی ریشه دارتر و بنیادی تر از والتنلین است.

التنلین جشن باروری و زایش در امپراتوری روم پیش از پیدایش مسیح بود. این جشن در روز پانزدهم فبروری بنام «فانونس»، خدای کشاورزی برگزار میشد. از کارهای گوناگونی که در این جشن میکردند یکی هم این بود که دختران نام خود بر کاغذی مینوشتند و این نامها را همه در کیسه ی بزرگی میگذاشتند. پس از آن پسران میآمدند و هر یک یکی از آن نامها را بر میداشت و با دارنده ی نام دوست میشد. نوشته اند بسیاری از این دوستی ها به همسری میکشید.

یکی از امپراتوران روم در سده سیم ترسایی «میلادی» دریافت که در جنگ ها سربازان بی همسر بهتر و بیشتر از سربازان همسر دار می مانند و می جنگند. او از افروزی همسرگیری را برای برای نوجوانان تاروا (ممنوع) ساخت و فرمان داد که روحانیون نوجوانان دختر و پسر را به همسری بکنیگر در نیاورند. یکی از کشیش های مسیحی از این فرمان سرپیچید و کار همسرگیری جوانان را پنهانی انجام داد. امپراتور او را یافت و در سال ۳۷۰ ترسایی (میلادی) او را کشت. این کشیش نامش والتنلین بود.

در دهه های پس از آن امپراتور روم و به پیروی او مردمان رومی مسیحی شدند و مسیحیان نیرومند گردیدند. در سال ۴۹۸ ترسایی، پاپ گلاسیوس روز چهاردهم فبروری را روز والتنلین نامید و انرا جانشین جشن باروری رومیان کرد تا هم والتنلین را که کشته شده بود ارج بگذارد و هم یک آیین رومی را رنگ مسیحی یزند. والتنلین این گونه نهاده شد و در سده های پس از آن، در همه کشورهای مسیحی گسترش یافت.

من درخواست میکنم که رسانه های ایرانی، پرداختن به فرهنگ ایرانی و شناساندن آن و بکار بستن آیین های انرا بخشی از کارها و بایاهای (وظیفه های) خود بدانند و در این کار هرچه بیشتر بکوشند. در این دوران تنگ ما سازمان دیگری نداریم که انجام چنین کارهایی را از آن چشم داشته باشیم.

برگردم به سروده های مسعود سعد سلمان که نامش را بیش از این اوردم و یکی از سروده هایش را نوشتم. او سروده دیگری هم دارد که چون دراز است تنها یک خاتمه اش (بیت) را میآورم:

شرم دار و به خویشتن پرداز

چند باشی به این و آن مشغول

Dr Zartosht Azadi's article is on Valentine's day and its relationship with Mehrgan. - Ed



Zartosht Azadi was born and raised in the town of Mayman, Province of Pars, Iran. His education was mainly in Shiraz and Tehran receiving a BA in Social Sciences and MA in Education from the University of Tehran. Dr Azadi worked as Principal and teacher of Nomadic schools, Supervisor of Rural Cooperatives, Education Director in the Central Organization for Rural Cooperation and faculty of Rural Development at Open University of Iran.

In the United States he studied Sociology and received his PhD from Colorado State University. He has taught sociology at various universities in the states of Ohio, Indiana, and California. He has published various articles on Persian culture and language, his latest publication being, "Persian Vocabulary for Persian Speakers" (Vaa.:jehaay e Paarsi baraay e Paarsi Zabanaan). Dr Zartosht Azadi lives in Southern California.

دکتر زرتشت آزادی

کالیفرنیا

## در پیرامون روز والتناین

رسانه های پارسی زبان برونمرزی روز والتناین را که روز چهاردهم فیروزی است، همواره گرمی داشته اند و شادباش گفته اند. در این یکی دو سال من در شبکه ی جهانی رایانه ها خوانده ام که در ایران نیز برخی از جوانان این جشن فرنگی (۱) را ارج نهاده و در بستگی با آن، کارهایی کرده اند. این چیزها از دو سوی مرا به شگفتی میاندازد که در این نوشتار آنها را با شما در میان میگذارم.

نخستین شگفتی من از این است که رسانه های پارسی زبان واژه ی والتناین را به عربی بر میگردانند و برای اینکه «سنگ تمام» گذاشته باشند آنرا به صیغه مبالغه عربی (۲) «عشاق» مینامند و نه به نام ساده ی «عاشق». یا «عاشقان». بر من روشن نیست که این «سنگ تمام» گذاشتن برای عاشقان است یا برای زبان عربی، که رسانه های پارسی زبان بسختی به آن پایبندند تا جایی که واژه های فرنگی را نیز به عربی بر می گردانند و بکار میبرند.

در زبان پارسی، واژه های هم معنی با هم جم والتناین فراوانند، از اینرو بر من روشن نیست که چرا رسانه های پارسی زبان آنها را بکار نمیبرند و به واژه های عربی میچسبند. نمونه هایی از واژه های پارسی هم معنی والتناین اینها است: مهر، دلدادگی، دلباختگی، دل بستگی، شیفنگی، و دوستگانی. برای اینکه گفتارم را استوار کنم اکنون برخی از این واژه ها را سروده های بزرگان ادب پارسی نشان میدهم. از کتاب ویس و رامین بخوانید:

کنم با تو به مهر امروز پیمان / که زین پس مان دو تن باشد یکی جان

و نیز

که رامین را به تو دیدم سزاوار / تو را دوستگانی او تو را یار

حافظ شیرازی:

بباختم دل دیوانه و ندانستم / که ادمی بچه ای شیوه ی پری داند

چرا رسانه های پارسی زبان نمیتوانند روز والتناین را به زبان پارسی روز مهرورزان یا دلدادگان و یا دلباختگان نامند و با این کار پارسی گویی را رواگ دهند؟ اگر رسانه ها هیچیک از واژه های پارسی را در خور و هم معنی والتناین نمیدانند چرا خود واژه ی «التناین» را بکار نمیبرند؟ و چرا آنرا به زبان عربی بر میگردانند و میگویند و مینویسند؟ مگر «التناین» و «عشاق» هر دو واژه های بیگانه نیستند؟

شگفتی دیگر من این است که چرا رسانه های پارسی زبان وبه پیروی از آنها جوانان ایرانی ارجی را که به روز والتناین میگذارند به روز مهرورزی ایرانی نمیگذارند؟ آیا این کار، از خود بیگتگی را نمی نمایاند؟ روز مهرورزی ایرانی روز مهر از ماه مهر است که آنرا مهرگان میگوییم. مهرگان دامنه های گوناگون فرهنگی، تاریخی، اجتماعی و دینی دارد و فراگیر (جامع) ترین و پر دامنه ترین جشن ایرانی است.

بیشتر مردم تنها یک یا دو دامنه از مهرگان را میشناسند. شاید رسانه ها هم چنین باشند. من به یاد ندارم که رسانه های ایرانی چه در برونمرز و چه در برونمرز به مهرگان ارج بایسته بگذارند و آنرا بنام روز دلپندی و دوستگانی بشناسند.

بگذارید گوشه هایی از دامنه ی مهرورزی مهرگان را از راه سروده های پارسی نشان بدهم. اینها نزدیک به یک هزار سال پیش سروده شده اند. از مسعود سعد سنیمانی:

روز مهر و ماه مهر و جشن فرخ مهرگان / مهرافزای ای نگار نازنین مهریان  
مهربانی کن به روز مهر و جشن مهرگان / مهربانی کن به روز مهر و جشن مهرگان

از ادیب صابری:

تویی که مهر تو در مهرگان بهار من است / تو بی چهره ی تو گلستان و لاله زار من است  
بهار و سرو و گل و سوسن ای بهارتیان / چو در کنار منی جمله در کنار من است  
قرار من همه در زلف بی قرار تو باد / که تاب و حلقه ی او منزل قرار من است  
تراوتی که غزلهای ابدار مرا است / ز عشق تو است که در عالم اختیار من است



## The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 TENNISON ROAD, SOUTH NORWOOD, LONDON SE25 5NF

7<sup>th</sup> March 2005

### **WZO, London cautions members of the community not to fall prey to false and contemptible propaganda**

It has come to our attention that grossly misleading and dishonest statements are being made by some individuals opposed to the creation of a Zoroastrian World Body, in which the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) is participating along-with other Federations. **Members of the community are being misinformed and misled into believing that WZO is a hot bed of converts to the Zoroastrian faith and accepts neo-Zoroastrians, whatever that means, as its members. The malicious campaign also alleges that WZO has Navjotes performed of non Zoroastrians. There is absolutely no truth at all to these false allegations.**

Rather than WZO's opponents indulging in false propaganda, WZO would welcome receiving from them

**specific examples** of any activity undertaken by WZO that has been anti-religious or detrimental to any cause of our community.

Such totally false and insidious allegations can only be an act of desperation on the part of those who are envious of the successes achieved by WZO in their public welfare activities resulting out of continuous confidence expressed in WZO by many donors worldwide. It is a known fact that WZO has no funds of its own. All our activities are supported through donations raised.

WZO has made no secret of the fact that it has a few non-Zoroastrian spouses as members of the organisation. In 1993, WZO held a ballot amongst its membership which, overwhelmingly voted in favour of the change. Out of a membership list running into a few thousand, there are six or so non-Zoroastrian spouses who are our members. WZO has always respected the sentiments and practises prevailing in different regions of the world, consequently the membership in India is restricted only to Parsi / Irani Zoroastrians. Perhaps our membership's perception of the community's needs to hold

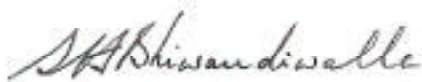
the family together is deeper and more profound than those who malign worthy organisations such as WZO from the roof tops to achieve their devious goals.

**Much is being made of pictures showing Navjote ceremonies of some non Zoroastrians being performed that were published in our *HAMAZOR* as a news item. *HAMAZOR* is an internationally recognized publication which is circulated globally and the pictures received were published only by way of information. It certainly does not mean that WZO has had any role to play in any of such Navjotes. *HAMAZOR* will continue to disseminate information on Zoroastrian matters and practices globally.**

**It is also a matter of profound regret that attempts are being made in India, by those opposed to WZO and the proposed World Body, to indulge in mischievous propaganda against WZO & Mr Dinshaw Tamboly who is actively involved in its welfare work. There is absolutely no truth in such propaganda.**

WZO has successfully completed 25 years in the service of the community globally. Whilst WZO takes great pride in what it has achieved over the years, it remains aware of the fact that any single organisation can only do so much. The needs of any community are infinite, whereas availability of resources is finite. WZO recognises that whilst it has performed satisfactorily, there is much more that still needs to be done to alleviate the poverty in which many Zoroastrian families still live in villages, towns and cities.

Notwithstanding anything, that critics or those opposed to its activities may have to say by way of wild sweeping unsustainable criticism, WZO remains undeterred and will continue to focus on and address the many spheres in which the community needs to be strengthened through its welfare activities.



Sammy H Bhiwandiwalla  
Chairman



# “It just wasn’t my time”

by usheen davar

I am a firm believer that if it is your “time to go”, it’s your “time to go” and there is nothing you can really do about it. On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2004, for whatever reason, I guess it just wasn’t “my time to go”.

Since “Zoroastrian News” seems to travel at the speed of lightening, I’m sure most of you may know by now that “a Parsi girl from New York” was involved in the tsunami disaster in Phuket, Thailand on December 26<sup>th</sup>. For those who are not familiar with my experience from that day, if you are really curious, you can read about it following this article.

The goal of the next few paragraphs is not to describe how I survived the tsunami, as my story does not even compare to some of the heart-wrenching stories we have heard about in reference to the people who didn’t survive the disaster. My goal is to discuss three points from my experience: your senses & thoughts, strengths & instincts, and the value of friendship.

Like me, I’m sure every now and then all of you get strange thoughts or feelings about certain things but you tend not to think about them much, take them seriously, or even stop to evaluate them. When I look back to the days or weeks before going on my trip, I realize that I myself had many of these.

For example, three weeks before leaving the US, I wanted to cancel my trip (Dubai, Bangkok, Chaing Mai, Phuket, Koh Samui, and Karachi) and I didn’t know why. A week before I left, I sat and wrote down two pages of important/confidential information (bank account numbers, pin numbers, where I park my car, what my work id # is, etc) and gave it to my parents to keep on

file. A few days before leaving, I opened up a safety deposit box at a bank and put in it some valuable jewelry and paperwork I had sitting in my apartment and gave the spare key for the box to my mother. Neither of these are things I have ever done before going on a vacation.

Two days before leaving, I called up my landlord and told him I would be out of town for three weeks and to take down my sister’s phone number incase there were any emergencies (eg. water pipe bursting, flood, etc). He said it wasn’t necessary and hung up the phone. A half an hour later, I rang him up again insisting that I really wanted him to have this information and to please take it, as emergencies never come with warnings.

And the day I was leaving there were two very strange events that occurred. As I was leaving work, my colleague asked if I was excited about my trip and I recall replying back, “I’m really nervous and I just don’t know why”. For anyone that knows me, travelling around the world is no new thing for me. I am on a plane going somewhere in the US or overseas almost every eight weeks. Though the years, I have had many adventures and done and seen a lot. And getting nervous before a trip is definitely not normal for me. I am usually bouncing off the walls in excitement whether it’s a trip for fun or work.

The last strange “sense” I had was later that same day. After I turned off all the lights and locked my apartment door to head to the airport, I stopped and found myself suddenly unlocking the door. I went back into the apartment and stood there looking right, left, up and down (the lights were still off) and thinking that this final look into my

apartment would be my last memory of the place and the last time I would see it. Having that thought, slightly freaked me out and I quickly closed the door, ignored what I had just thought and headed for the airport.

The reason I tell you all of this is to make all of us realize that we need to be more aware of our senses and thoughts. We need to take the time to evaluate them and understand them. Living in NYC, my life operates at 200 miles per hour everyday. Between work, going out to dinners, events, community service projects, attending concerts, travelling, and being involved in numerous other organizations, I truly live the life of a Manhattan woman.

Had I tried to take some time to understand or question some of the things I felt or was thinking before this trip and the actions I took a few days before, I may have just decided to cancel it.

Granted, what I was involved in was a natural disaster and out of my control, it's impossible to say that I could have prevented it. But what I could have done was to try to evaluate and comprehend the thoughts/actions I had prior to leaving.

Next, I'd like to discuss strength and instincts. Let me assure you, I didn't realize how important these were until I was on the roof of my hotel watching the water rise higher and higher as it broke portions of the structure with its force. There was a point when the situation got very intense, we got very nervous, and quick decisions needed to be made. Our instincts gave us the tools

for survival and our strength made us get through it.

The strength wasn't just the strength to survive, but the strength to help other too. Prior to December 26<sup>th</sup>, the sight of blood would make me faint, getting a paper cut would make me complain for days, and even at my age, going to the doctor I would try to avoid, as I have always been scared of doctors and hospitals. That all changed that day on the roof. I saw this unexplainable strength come through and

found myself trying to help the injured women who was caught in water neck deep and had a heavy object fallen on her leg. Or aiding the man next to me whose leg was bleeding heavily. Or comforting the father who was holding his son so tightly and wondering if his wife ever made it to safety.

And just when we were thinking of giving up on saving ourselves, I found another kind of strength arise.

That was the strength to live. With that and our instincts on what to do next, unlike many others we were able to escape the situation and figure out a plan for our own safety. The fear we had took a hiatus as determination took over. The hours ahead and the experience we went through that day and night until we finally left Phuket could be a story-line in an adventure/action movie. A movie, I would definitely never want myself or my friend to "star in" again.

Friendship is the last point I would like to discuss. That day on the roof when I thought that I may only have an hour to live,



Photograph taken by a mobile phone at Phuket of the tsunami. - unknown source

it was truly mind-blowing to reflect on what I thought about and who I thought about. I played out clips in my mind of various events in my life and had visions of the people who mean the most to me. I wasn't scared to come to the realization that in a few minutes it may be "my time to go", for I realized at that moment that I have thus far lived an "awesome" life, have had no regrets, and have been so fortunate in so many ways that I cannot even begin to describe.

The friendship of my family, friends, and colleagues has been absolutely overwhelming to me. The phone calls, emails from family/friends and their friends and friends of their friends, and the constant visits have been indescribable. My experience has affected them in so many ways that I didn't even realize until I went to Karachi for a week and then when I came back here to New York. I don't think I have ever seen half of them tear the way they did when they saw me or describe their affection as they have done. It has been a truly touching moment for me and I'd like to say "thank you" to all my family and friends across the globe.

No text book in the world can prepare you for what I went through, but it's your friends and family that can assure that you remain standing tall and strong and they won't allow you to fall down. And with their help and support I am standing taller and stronger than ever before and have no intentions of falling down. I plan on living a very happy, successful and long life.

So, as 2005 unfolds, take a few minutes each day to give yourself some personal time to understand your thoughts for the day, listen closely to your instincts, trust that your strength can get you through your daily challenges, and create time for your family and friends, as this will prove to be priceless.

As the beach-side fortuneteller in Phuket told me, in his broken English at 11pm on December 25<sup>th</sup>, "You, you, you, going to be very, very, very lucky girl this year, very

lucky. Very, very lucky." With six days till the end of the year, I was wondering when the luck would come, as prior to December 25<sup>th</sup>, I wouldn't have considered 2004 by any means a lucky year for me.

Fortunetellers have instincts too. I was indeed lucky, very, very, very lucky. And as a result, "it just wasn't my time" to go.



Usheen was born in Karachi, Pakistan and moved to the USA at the age of six. She is an Advertising Sales Executive in New York City and can be reached at Usheen@aol.com. Since coming back to New York City, she is involved with a very unique project taking place to rebuild a children's school in Phuket, Thailand. It was destroyed by the tsunami on December 26th. For more information on this project or to make a donation, please log onto [www.phuketproject.org](http://www.phuketproject.org)



### From the Editor:

WZO has appealed to its members, through their International Board, residing world-wide, to collect donations for the tsunami victims, which has been implemented, with a very good response. As this natural disaster has been quite unparalleled for many a year, *Hamazor* is sharing with it's readers various stories.

For me, amongst all the misery and devastation that took place, the following is one more wonder of nature.

Reported from Nairobi, "a baby hippo that survived the tsunami on the Kenyan coast has formed a strong bond with a giant male century-old tortoise, in an animal facility in Mombasa. The hippo nicknamed Owen and weighing about 300 kgs, was swept down Sabaki River into the Indian Ocean, then forced back to shore. ...he is less than a year old ... has adopted a male tortoise ... who seems to be very happy, with being a 'mother'. After it was swept and lost its mother, the hippo was traumatised. ...Fortunately it landed on the tortoise and established a strong bond. They swim, eat and sleep together. The hippo follows the tortoise exactly the way it follows its mother..." - source DAWN, Pakistan.



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**Series: THE DISASTER IN SOUTH ASIA**

**The shout from lobby was no joke: 'Tidal wave!'**

**By BRIAN DONOHUE**  
**STAR-LEDGER STAFF**

It started as another day in paradise. As Kim Selby sat eating breakfast at a beachside cafe in Phuket, Thailand, she saw the ocean turn a strange color, from crystal blue to brownish. Weird, she thought.

The water hadn't changed color. It was rearing back, exposing the ocean bottom.

Minutes later, Selby and her friend, Usheen Davar, were clambering to the hotel rooftop as the sea surged into the lobby and through the streets of Phuket.

Speaking by telephone from a Bangkok hotel room yesterday, Selby and Davar recalled their narrow escape from the tsunami that has left tens of thousands dead across South Asia.

"I'm shaking as I talk to you," Davar said, more than 48 hours later.

For Selby, 36, and Davar, 29, two vacationing Manhattan professionals born in New Jersey, it had been their third day on Patong Beach, one of several beaches on this island off Thailand's southern coast that had become a mecca for sun-seeking tourists, mostly from Europe and Australia.

Davar, a Metuchen native living in Manhattan, started the day checking her e-mail in the lobby of the Bann Laimai hotel. She noticed an Internet news item about an earthquake in Indonesia. Only then did she realize the slight rumbling that had awoken her an hour earlier was not a dream.

"You're not going to believe this," she told Selby, a Cherry Hill native now living in Hoboken. "There was an earthquake here last night."

The women dismissed the temblor as a minor curiosity, then moved to the beachfront buffet.

Returning after breakfast to their second-floor hotel room to retrieve their bags, they heard a man running through the lobby screaming, "Tidal wave!"

Selby thought it was a bad joke. Then she saw the water-ankle-deep at first, rushing into the bottom floor of the hotel; then, deeper, darker, pushing branches and bricks.

People rushed into the hotel from the street: an elderly couple struggling to walk, a man with a look of horror on his face as he cradled an infant, people "bleeding all over."

Selby and Davar climbed the stairs to the roof of the hotel, where a group had already gathered. They watched the streets turn into a fetid rapids carrying cars, bodies and telephone poles.

"People being washed into the sea, vehicles flying, blood everywhere," Davar later wrote in e-mail to friends.

Perched on the roof, Davar borrowed another woman's cell phone, called her sister and said goodbye.

"I left the message you never want to leave someone in your life," she said.

The water receded once, a giant tease. Then it slowly rose again, filling the hotel and streets a second time.

For two hours, the group huddled on the roof, trading rumors and conflicting advice.

If they stayed on the roof, another wave could come and sweep them away. If they fled, they could be killed before reaching higher ground.

“We went through this whole decision-making process,” Selby said. “Do we go? Do we stay? We just said, look, we have to rely on our instincts and get the hell out of here now.”

First downstairs to their hotel room, grabbing bottles of water from the wet bar, a bag of chips and some bedsheets. Then out into the flooded streets, wading in their flip-flops through the town’s maze of alleyways, scaling brick walls until the two women reached the Montana Grand Hotel, a 17-story high-rise about two blocks farther inland.

They met an Australian man and his niece from Argentina, who let them stay in their room. The Australian used his cell phone to send a text message to a friend in Sydney, who called Davar’s father to let him know the women were safe.

Even at the Montana Grand, people were fearful.

“I started to panic and said, ‘This was the wrong decision - we should have gone to the hills,’” Davar said, referring to the slopes rising just outside the town. “That was the longest night of our lives.”

They passed the night on the floor, their passports tucked in their shirts, ready to flee. At first light, they caught a cab to Phuket International Airport and a flight to Bangkok.

Selby and Davar were among thousands of Western tourists who had packed the beachfront resort. Authorities struggled yesterday to identify bodies as tourists gathered at city hall to wait for news about missing loved ones. At local hospitals, people pored over lists of injured and looked at photos of unidentified bodies.

Selby is trying to catch a flight home Saturday. Davar is headed to Karachi, Pakistan, where her family is vacationing. “We were so extraordinarily lucky,” Selby said. “The people from our hotel - a lot of them aren’t alive.”

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**This is a sad story ... Anosh Kersi Fouzdar, aged 12 years, is missing since the tsunami disaster. The family was at Hotel Yalla Safari Lodge on the east coast in Sri Lanka.**

**Anosh is unfortunate to have lost both his parents. However, his younger brother (aged 10 years) has miraculously survived and is in Mumbai, India now.**

**Recent information received indicates that Anosh could very possibly be in Germany.**

**Please forward this information with his picture to as many people you can and help reunite the two unfortunate brothers. Any information should be e-mailed to [anoshfauzdar@yahoo.co.in](mailto:anoshfauzdar@yahoo.co.in)**



## Journey to tsunami affected area

by niloufer randeria

The sun was slowly going down and we were walking on the flattened houses and shattered dreams in Tharangampadi and Akkrappettai. The earth was absolutely flat at a place where once a whole community flourished. It was hard to believe that the sea, which was so innocent looking, could have devoured 781 and 400 lives respectively, and left many in a state of shock. A woman in her late twenties wearing a sari was praying for the souls of her dead husband and son who were on the shore on this black day. She is now alone with three young children aged 6 months, 1.5 and 3 years. When we went near her she just greeted us with a smile and spoke trying hard not to reveal her sorrows. Nothing was left of whatever they owned. Her only source of livelihood – vending fish her husband caught, had now disappeared. She was staying in the relief camps at the railway station and would be shifting to the interim shelters. The tsunami had left many such stories in this coastal district of Tamilnadu, India.

Indeed the killer waves have wreaked havoc. There has been a wave of sympathy and people all around the world have made contributions generously. The four of us (myself a nutritionalist, Sachin Patel, Social Work graduate, G V Sarat Kumar and Kumar Anshul, both Rural Management graduates) also thought of contributing, in terms of fund mobilization at personal level and voluntary services at the site of destruction. Although we were eager to be involved as soon as possible with the tsunami tragedy, we did not rush into these areas. We contacted and researched about several civil society initiatives, to determine the kind of work done and what their requirements were. We were looking for something that is inherently a local initiative with a professional approach. Based upon

our research and our background and experiences, we volunteered our services with South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (which is a Co-operative representing the South Indian fishermen). We found that immediately after the tragedy there was a large and adequate influx of volunteers and NGOs into the affected areas. We were informed our services would be optimally utilized in the third to fourth week, the time when relief operations were almost over and the long term rehabilitation phase would be commencing. We were also posted in the district of Nagapattinam, one of the worst districts affected by the tsunami tragedy (out of total 9000+ deaths due to tsunami in India, around 7000 were in this district alone). We read up as much as possible about the tsunami affected areas before heading out, and about disaster management. We were also rigorously involved with fund raising efforts, and managed to raise a little over Rs100,000.

SIFFS along with SNEHA (Social Needs Education and Humanitarian Assistance), both of which have a local presence, have come together to set up the NGO coordination centre. The primary role of the coordination centre, as its name implies is, to develop guidelines, provide status reports and technical information to the NGOs and government, update the public about the situation, to act as a clearing house of information and coordinate forums for discussion on policy issues. Through this process it aims to support both the government and the NGO sector to make informed choices that will have maximum benefit for the people. It draws on its links with the grassroots through organizations in the region like SIFFS as well as other technical institutions or professionals with expertise in the disaster management/development, ie. relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and livelihoods.

"Nothing is more gratifying than being able to help people in need - as I experienced once again when I witnessed the tsunami relief operations in Indonesia and Sri Lanka," the statement said. "It is also a critical part of making the world a better place for all of us." - Paul D Wolfowitz, Nominee to head the World Bank.

Source: "Tsunami Tour Said to Spur Wolfowitz Move"

The NGO coordination centre (NCC) is set in the campus of the district collector of Nagapattinam. The backbone of the NCC is its pool of dedicated volunteers who have come not only from all parts of the country and but also abroad. The NCC is facilitating access to information about the rescue, relief and rehab process to the public, through a committed group of 10 village coordinators from SIFFS and SNEHA, who in turn are coordinating with the village level local volunteers in the 53 villages in the district of Nagapattinam. The local volunteers being from the affected villages are conversant with the culture and people. Their function is to determine the needs of the villagers and the work that is carried out by different NGOs in the area and report to the village coordinators. The coordinators interact closely with the village panchayat (local government) and the villagers. They collect data on almost a daily basis and report back to the centre twice-a-week. Various NGOs have also submitted requests to the co-ordination centre, and after scrutinizing the demand, vis-a-vis the demographic and damage data, the appeal for help has been put on the web site. A beautiful and comprehensive web site - [www.tsunami2004-india.org](http://www.tsunami2004-india.org) - is being maintained by the NCC which is updated on a daily basis.

We at the NCC are looking into various issues. One of our main responsibilities is to support and (to a certain extent supervise) the activities of the network of co-coordinators to ensure the quality of the data that is coming from the field. The village coordinators bring the requisition of various items and accordingly we contact various agencies and corporates to procure the items and distribute them. In addition, if we find out that a certain village has not received sufficient government assistance, we inform and try to follow-up with the government. People with grievances and complaints also come to the NCC, to get guidance petitions to the government regarding their grievances. One of us is following up with the government on the status of these petitions and accordingly informing the people. We are also trying to link the various NGOs working in the area

so as to try avoid duplication and excess of services and material provided.

Another major role of the Coordination centre, is to get various NGOs on a common platform to deliberate and come out with draft policies to be presented before the government, to look at things through various angles. One of the other responsibilities is to moderate and coordinate meetings with NGOs working in specific areas, such as livelihoods, shelters, health, women issues, water and sanitation etc. The aim of such meetings is for NGOs to share their work experiences, challenges and constraints faced. The ultimate aim is to set up the groundwork for a master plan for disaster management (relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction) that can then be shared with the government, and be utilized in policy making.

We are also responsible for documenting the process of setting up the NCC, along with the roles, responsibilities, successes, challenges and constraints. Such documentation would enable us to learn from this experience, so as to cope both with this disaster as well as future ones.

In order to perform the above roles effectively, it is important for us to understand the field conditions, and therefore we visit the tsunami affected areas and interim shelters built by the government and various NGOs on a regular basis with some of the village coordinators and volunteers. We interact with the people and hear their stories, concerns and needs.

Our experience here certainly has been life altering. It is hard to explain the impressions that the tragedy has left on our minds. For us, it has been a great learning experience. We have observed and learned the complexities and issues involved with disaster management. In addition, we have had the opportunity to interact with volunteers worldwide and made friends we hope, last a lifetime. We realize that our efforts are just a drop in the ocean, but we hope and that the drop did make a minute difference.



*Niloufer Randeria was a student at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland a few years ago completing her Masters in Public Health. At the time she represented the Zoroastrian youth at the headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington DC at a special session convened by the Congressional Hunger Center where faith based NGO's were brought together with funding agencies to discover areas of commonalities and explore areas of collaboration. She is presently working in Ahmedabad, Gujarat for an NGO and took time off on her own initiative to travel to the coastal villages of Tamilnadu in the aftermath of the Tsunami for a two-week period. The WZO and FEZANA have both sanctioned funds to help Niloufer with the relief work.*

## Nuturing Navsari

A report sent by Dinshaw Tamboly, Chairman WZO Trust Funds, India

### SENIOR CITIZENS

Whenever possible WZO Trust Funds invite well-known personalities to Navsari to interact with our residents. On 27th December 2004, Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association (BASZA), visited Navsari and entertained the residents of WZO Trust Funds Bai Maneckbai P B Jeejeebhoy Senior Citizens Centre with an evening of music, dance and merriment. Zoroastrian senior citizens not only from our Centre, but from all over Navsari and of course the youth, were given the opportunity to have a rollicking great time.

Vada Dasturji Meherjirana attended the function in the presence of WZO Trustees and other dignitaries from Mumbai.

Once again Zoroastrian philanthropy manifested in the shape of the Trustees of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Charitable Trust providing us with gratis use of the auditorium in their Seth R J J High School, thereby enabling nearly 400 people to enjoy the show put up by the dynamic BASZA group. It is entirely due to them that so many could spend an evening that they would long remember.



The Entertainers

### YOUTH

It was a function with a difference. Three enterprising Zoroastrians, Pauruchisti Kadodwala, Cyrus Vandriwala and Aspi Wadia, all associated with teaching, as Principal, Teacher and Administrator, made a proposal to WZO Trust Funds to encourage and motivate Zoroastrian school students by acknowledging their academic prowess. The trio undertook to organise everything from A to Z.

January 15, 2005 was a very exciting day for as many as 316 children and proud parents, when WZO Trust Funds felicitated Zoroastrian children who had stood 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in their school during the last academic year. Over 700 happy faces were on view at Jamshed Baug.

Vada Dasturji Meherjirana and his gracious wife Meheroo presided at the function, once again provided gratis by the generous Trustees of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Charitable Trust.

Not only were the children felicitated but all the Zoroastrian teachers at Navsari who had played such a pivotal role in developing the youth, and who had retired were also honoured by WZO.

The success of the function was such that it will now become a permanent feature on the WZO calendar at Navsari. From next year onwards, Zoroastrian youth studying in different streams in colleges will also be included in the felicitations

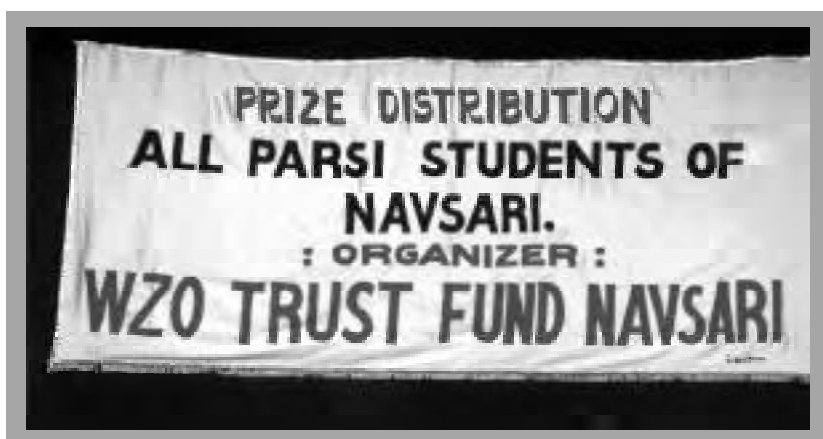
Plans are also afoot to further mould our youth at Navsari by organising an annual athletic meet under the auspices of WZO. WZO Trust Funds are indeed grateful to Pauruchisti Kadodwala, Cyrus Vandriwala, Aspi Wadia and their colleagues for taking the initiative that is bound to have a very positive impact on the youth at Navsari.



L to R: Bachi Tamboly, Vada Dasturji Meherjirana and Dinshaw Tamboly



Performing the Garba in the auditorium



Children who secured the first three positions in their classes



Children singing "Chaiye hame Zarthoshti"

## Looking for Issues, Searching for Answers: XIIIth North American Zoroastrian Congress Report

Aban Rustomji reports on [creatingawareness.com](http://creatingawareness.com)

**M**y memories of the 13th Congress are still fresh. But I have had time to process all that I heard, learned and felt, and my mind turns to the future.

The top four reasons for attending these Congresses for me are:

- Meet people with whom to network
- Get new ideas
- Learn about our religion
- Build a partnership in our larger Zoroastrian community

I did all of the above. I saw a host of young, vibrant and interested young people. I connected with my friends and a number of you came and introduced yourselves. It made me very happy. Thank you.

The sessions were diverse and interesting. The entertainment was fabulous. We honoured our award winners. I left feeling inspired and excited that our younger generation's participation is vital. From our ability to care for each other to our capacity to stand up for what we know is right, the characteristics that make us human are commonplace. The time has come to protect our values and characteristics that are critical to shaping the kind of world in which we want to live.

The theme of the Congress "Looking for Issues, Searching for Answers" was clearly outlined. Welcoming participants to the Congress, Erach Tarapore in a voice packed with emotion expressed his personal tribute to a lady whose kindness he still appreciates and perhaps values even more. As a student in a boarding school, where there were a handful of Zoroastrians, Erach enjoyed Sunday lunches and religious sessions at the home of the wife of one his teachers. The lady, a

Zoroastrian, did not enjoy the freedom of practicing her own religion as she had married a non-Zoroastrian.

However, she continued to live her life with dignity and was firm in her religious beliefs.

Erach went on to express the incredible dedication of priests, and highlighted a young priest who in 1911 sailed to NY and obtained his PHd. The priest was none other than Dr Dhalla who too searched for answers to various issues.

Tarapore charged participants to stop coasting, "as coasting is an activity that only goes downhill".

### Looking Forward by Looking Back

Here is what I took away from the Congress as the most important "lessons learned".

The exchange of ideas, stories and information reinforced the participant centered approach of the Congress.

In "The Internet Age" session, Lovji Cama pointed out the numerous Zoroastrian sites and the validity of good ones. Khosro Mehrfar had some excellent suggestions on spreading the word and networking. Examples given were celebrating Earth Day on Zoroaster's birthday, wider publicity of Cyrus' declaration of the Human Rights. Jamshid Varza focused on [www.vohuman.org](http://www.vohuman.org) and the possibilities of preserving oral history through media presentations.

The next session was one I chaired on "The Excavation of the Central Temple at Tepe Nush-e Jan" near Hamadan. The possibility



of linking Zoroastrian themes and practices to ancient sites is fascinating. David Stronach, a renowned archaeologist, shared his expertise and told us of his upcoming book that features his findings on this excavation. Stronach was followed by Cyrus Rivetna's pictorial journey on the various Fire Temples from Achaemenian times to India. Cyrus ended with a hope that we in the West should have a temple of our own soon.

Thursday, December 30th started with re-creation of Parsi and Iranian wedding ceremonies and the significance behind the practices.

This was followed by a session on the relevance and impact of our Zoroastrian faith. Weaving the tapestry from ancient times Jenny Rose talked about the impact Zoroastrianism has on the major religions of the world. And Farhang Mehr involved us in a passion for our own that is truly contagious and inspiring.

The afternoon session on Dec 30th was a lively discussion on "Growing up in a Zoroastrian family". Chaired by talk show host Fereshteh Khatibi, I was very impressed and comforted with the sentiments expressed by the young panel, Parmis Khatibi, Shenaya Tarapore and Jimmy Antia. There was the depth of compassion, the wackiness and the fun of it all.

Interfaith marriages, Dari language, PARZOR's preservation of Mehrjirana Library both by Malcolm Deboo and a paper read by Dolly Dastoor for Dr Shernaz Cama, provided insight into the treasures that lie in a neglected condition and something needs to be done. Arman Ariane shared the exciting graduate programme studies on Zoroastrianism at Claremont and thrilled us all with a short clip on last years Jashan-e Sadeh celebrations.

And then there was the Award ceremony with a tribute to Dinshaw Joshi. The evening entertainment with fabulous dances and

music especially on the Persian Night Gala that made the events memorable.

The end came too early and too fast but I have to share with you the flavour of this Congress. It was one that was light and joyful. To see a number of young people in attendance that is willing to work for real and meaningful change, and to connect with young and old was a thrill. My only regret was I couldn't attend ALL the sessions that were running concurrently.

For the first time the Proceedings of the Congress, in a summary form, was available during the Congress. For those of you who are interested in a copy, there are a few copies still available for \$7.00.

Kudos to the Bomi Patel and all the Congress Organizers for a job well done!



Executive Committee of the XIII North American Zoroastrian Congress.  
Front row, L to R: Annahita Jasavala, Nazneen Spliedt, Minoo Italia, Feroza Unvala, Sillo Tarapore  
Back row, L to R: Kathleen Chothia, Ehler Spliedt, Bejan Malbari, Bomi Patel, Erach Tarapore (photo courtesy Nazneen Spliedt)





## From Parsi to Past-si

by bachi karkaria

Bachi Karkaria reports for The Times of India and since much is being reported regarding the rapid decline amongst the Parsis, Hamazor is reprinting this tongue-in-cheek humorous article, with due acknowledgement. - Ed.

Poli Solicitor shuddered at the Census sentence, knowing there was no reprieve. Nusli had an asli aneurysm at the prospect of the makers of Bombay dying out. Jimmy Gymkhanawalla went into a paroxysm of population push up.

Home-for-the-Aged Homi's thoughts strayed far from his hernia. Kawas clutched on to his Kawasaki bike, trying not to fall off the seat and the map. But it was of no use.

The writing on the wall was as clear as a fire-temple bell. The latest Census had confirmed the continuous demographic decline of the Parsis; now they were down to a critical 69,601. How soon would the world say Ta-ta to the grand old community?

For a long time already, Mumbai's Dadar Parsi Colony had looked like a museum-piece, preserving what had disappeared elsewhere in Mumbai - low-slung houses, leafy lanes, table manners, and the increasingly rare species of Homo Sapienwalla.

But now, a pall of gloom enveloped the enclave like an old shawl swathing Ivory Ava's shoulders. In deference to the decline, 'Benaifer Boobs' raised her notorious neckline, and 'Jabri Jer' lowered her shrill haranguing of Docile Dinsu, the dhobhi and the neighbour's Doberman.

As they huddled over their lunch of crisp-fried bumla, the Parsis in baugs and colonies trembled at the prospect of being out for a Bombay duck themselves. What would apro Nari, Polly and Rusi say!

As they dipped their RTI bhakras into their afternoon mint tea, Bachelor Bomi and

Spinster Spenta rued the fact that they were among the large segment that startled sociologists and Shata-bens alike.

The 'Never Marrieds' had created the uniquely Parsi phenomenon of most of their flats being occupied by adults who weren't spouses. Brother-sister, mother-daughter, and uncle-nephew lived under one roof, bound by blood, RBI bonds and bickering.

Spenta, 68, said, "I sacrificed marriage because I had to look after Pappa." Bomi, 70, said, "I couldn't get married because Mamma, bless her departed soul, wouldn't give me a divorce."

Kekoo Kaka, 83, ambled in humming the Parsi song, 'Bachelor Boy'. That jolly gentleman, with a gleam in his eye and glaucoma, was determined to uphold the community's philosophy of 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die out'.

No, Sir, they wouldn't just wither away: they would go out in a burst of farce and *murghi na farcha*. Kekoo Kaka decided right then that on the New Year's Eve at the Willingdon Club, he would not sing something as depressing as 'Auld Lang Syne-off'.

Instead, he pulled out his father's gold-nibbed Mont Blank, and composed an adaptation of a more cheerful song of the season.

To 'Rudolph's jaunty tune, he would belt out:

*'Rustom, the hook-nosed Parsi,  
Had a very distinct nose.  
And if you ever saw it,  
You might even think it grewed.*

*All of the other Indians  
Used to laugh and call him names.  
They never let poor Rustom  
Join in any desi games.*

*Then one stormy Census eve,  
Banthia came to say,  
"Rustom with your numbers, plight  
I will spell your doom tonight."*

*So all the other Parsis jumped  
up and down with glee  
They said to long-nosed Rustom,  
"We'll pass into his-to-ry!"*



## For the love of India

A review of the book, by Adi Davar

As Zoroastrians everywhere and most Indians and Pakistanis know, Jamsetji Tata is proudly regarded on the sub-continent of India and across the world, as the "Father of India's Industrial Revolution". Yet, a worth-while biography of this great man - whose contributions are unique and unparalleled among Zoroastrians and Indians/ Pakistanis anywhere in the world - had not been written until now. But all of you and your friends may be interested in knowing, that this is no longer so.

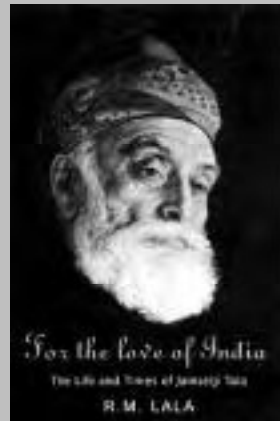
Russi M. Lala, a well-known Zoroastrian journalist and author of many best-selling books (some so popular, that they have even been translated into Japanese, Hindi & Gujarati), has just produced a superbly written and meticulously-researched biography: "FOR THE LOVE OF INDIA: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMSETJI TATA (ISBN# 0-67-005782-7).

A person no less than, President Kalaam of India, launched it on July 23, 2004. By doing so, he honoured the world-wide Zoroastrian community, the author and above all, Jamsetji Tata as a person who "loved with a love that knew no bounds, the land that gave him birth".

This magnificent biography insightfully explores how a man of humble birth, living in the 19th century when the sub-continent was firmly under British rule, implemented visionary projects which laid the foundation for his nation's industrial development. Jamsetji did so with the unerring instinct of a man who knew what it would take to restore the pride of his subjugated nation, and prepare it for an eventual place among the leading industrialised countries once it became independent. Indeed, a century later, it did become the world's 6th largest industrialised nation thanks to his far-sighted endeavors that included: The Indian Institute of Science - to nurture cadres of versatile scientists it would need; an integrated textile mill - to undercut the monopoly of UK's textile industry; a large integrated steel plant - to provide meaningful sinews for the nation's industrial base; hydro-electric generation - to harness cheap power that its industries would need; a world-class hotel - to tap India's world-tourism potential; and a shipping line - to break the stranglehold of British carriers on India's trade, are amongst those "first ever" projects he pioneered out of an abiding passion to advance his nation and her people. An added achievement was to bring them to fruition against huge political odds and that too, by tapping financial capital from the Indian public through shares, bonds etc which were unknown in the sub-continent till then.

Thanks to Russi Lala's fascinating penmanship, the saga of Jamsetji's life and his tryst with his nation's destiny, is now available for Zoroastrians as well as Indians and Pakistanis everywhere to know. Both will want to share it with their young ones, to make them aware of this unique Zoroastrian and his towering national achievements. If they and their children read the biography, it can only redound by creating a great pride in our unique community.

Those in India can buy this hard-cover book for a meagre Rs 395, since it is published and marketed by Viking-Penguin Books of India. Those in North America, Europe, UK, Pakistan, Australasia and other countries, can order it by going to [www.Parsiana.com](http://www.Parsiana.com). Parsiana accepts payment by any credit card from anywhere in the world.



## Two Parsis make the world's billionaires list

Source: *Forbes World's Richest People 2005*

Seventy Five year old 'construction empire' giant, **Pallonji Mistry**, is ranked 170 among the 691 world's billionaires, with net worth of cool \$3.2 billion. He was ranked 230 in 2004. Mistry's construction empire now includes the building of two 60 story apartment towers - Mumbai's tallest buildings.

Sixty two years old and Mumbai's biggest landlord and consumer goods conglomerate giant, **Adi Godrej** (and family), is ranked 355 among the 691 world's billionaires, with a net worth of \$1.9 billion. He was ranked 277 in 2004. ...

Mistry and Godrej are 5th and 8th richest in India. A total of 12 Indians made the world's billionaires club in 2005. The steel titan, **Lakshmi Mittal**, age 54, is the third richest man in the world with a net worth \$25 billion. Only (aapro) 49 years old **Bill Gates**, the richest man in the world for the 11th consecutive year with net worth of \$46.5 billion; and, 74 years old **Warren Buffett**, the second richest man and net worth of \$44 billion, exceed (aapro) **Mittal**.

Of the 691 billionaires, 50% are from United States. The total net worth of 691 billionaires is \$ 2.2 trillion. (\$2,200,000,000,000). ...

## Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe

report sent by Kobad Avari, Jt Social Secretary, ZTFE

On Saturday 12th March 2005, at exactly 10 minutes past 6:00 am, the *Vendidad Sadeh* was accomplished.

Our Ervad Sahebs led over 100 Zoroastrians in an emotional *Humbandagi* in the beautiful new *Setayesh Gah* and outside to mark the successful completion of the historic *Vendidad Sadeh*.

Our Mobeds had started the recitation at 15 minutes past midnight and the prayer lasted almost 6 hours.

At the end, the 110 strong congregation broke into spontaneous applause and raised 'three cheers' for the mobeds who had displayed such stamina despite their age. A special 'cheer' was raised for the two young mobeds - the two Zubins who had participated in this unique prayer.

We salute the commitment and dedication of our mobeds - Rustom Bhedwar, Jal Karkaria, Marazban Dastoor and Erach Daruwlla who recited the *Vendidad* and Homi Desai, Zubin Writer and Zubin Bhedwar who looked after the *atash* in the sanctum and prayed separately throughout the 6 hours.

Ervad Bhedwar recited the prayer from the Avestan text. Ervads Karkaria, Dastoor and Daruwalla used the Gujarati text especially gifted to ZTFE by the Dadar Athornan Madressa and its principal Dr Ramiyar Karanjia and carried to London for this occasion by Khojeste Mistree.

The *Vendidad Sadeh* function commenced at 10:30 pm with a lecture by Dr Rashna, writer on the history and significance of the *Vendidad*. Ervad Rustom Bhedwar then explained the religious content of the *Vendidad*.

A congregation of over 250 Zoroastrians filled the newly renovated Zartoshty Brothers Hall and gave a big ovation to architect Shahrokh Shahrokh on the magnificent renovation work.

By a telephone link, the ZTFE's munificent benefactor Mobed Mehraban Zartoshty spoke to the congregation from his home in USA and congratulated the ZTFE on accomplishing the renovation and on this

historic prayer. Mr Zartoshty was cheered to the echo as a sign of heart-felt gratitude by the congregation.

Of the 250 devotees, about 110 stayed until the end and partook in a sumptuous breakfast of *akuri, poro, scrambled eggs, potato poori, sev, ravo, dahi, koomaas, bhakra* and other items brought by them.

The historic function ended at 8:00 am.



## Definition of the word Zoroastrian/Zarathushti

courtesy creatingawareness.com

Recently there has been some discussion about the definition of the term Zoroastrian/Zarathushti. It is of interest to remind the Zarathushtrian community of North America of a resolution that was passed at the 13th AGM of NAMC. The underlying principle of this important resolution is essentially lost to the community. It is certain that some in India will just disregard this, as the work of *altoo faltoo* (worthless) Zarathushtis. Be that as it may, this was an effort of several dedicated mobeds who spent precious hours of serious discussion, before this was achieved to tear through the traditional **synonymity of a Parsi and a Zarathushti**.

**NAMC (North American Mobed Council) at its 13th AGM in the year 2000 passed following resolution unanimously with one abstention. This was during the tenure of presidency of Ervad Jal Birdy, present vice-president of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman. The resolution reads:**

- ◆ **Parsi is a race**
- ◆ **Zoroastrianism is a religion**
- ◆ **The term Parsi applies to the descendents of the original migrants who left Iran to settle in India to preserve the Zoroastrian religion**
- ◆ **A Parsi is a person born of both Parsi parents who has an inalienable right to practice the Zoroastrian religion**
- ◆ **A Zoroastrian is a person who believes and follows the teaching of Zoroaster**
- ◆ **It is recognized that Zoroastrianism is a universal religion**
- ◆ **It is further recognized that a Zoroastrian is not necessarily a Parsi**

It is a pity that despite this publication, in a short report in FEZANA Journal (Summer 2000, pg. 9) it has had no impact on FEZANA, its member Associations, or grass-root community to awaken their querying for the notion **"Who is a Zoroastrian/Zarathushti?"** It is invariably chronicled that NAMC should act to lead the community in North America. However something as fundamental as a question of **definition of a Zarathushti** has been overlooked, and *ad nauseam* the discussion continues.

With Guidance and Enlightenment from Mazda  
Jehan Bagli, Toronto, Canada, President NAMC  
(North American Mobeds Council)

to create new traditions and songs that Iranians will be able to enjoy around the world. With such a talented star like Andy, we will achieve this," commented Shabnam Rezaei, the producer of the Babak and Friends – A First Norooz.

The animation project was written by Dustin Ellis, a half-Iranian half-American animator who always wanted to have cartoons that were more relevant to his life. Ellis, who has formed a production company called Norooz LLC, is also directing the film. "If our project is successful, we hope to bring many more entertaining stories to our audience in the future," said Mr Ellis. Babak and Friends – A First Norooz is due out this March, in time for the Norooz festivities around the world. The 30-minute movie is being produced in both English and Persian and can be pre-ordered on the company's website [www.babakandfriends.com](http://www.babakandfriends.com) starting in February. *(It is now available - ed)*

In addition, there is more information also available on our website [www.babakandfriends.com](http://www.babakandfriends.com). The site includes info on screenings and lots of activities for children this Norooz.

Shabnam Rezaei

Producer

917.402.2004

Babak and Friends - A First Norooz  
[www.babakandfriends.com](http://www.babakandfriends.com)

[http://www.babakandfriends.com/babak/story/trailer/first\\_norooz\\_240.mov](http://www.babakandfriends.com/babak/story/trailer/first_norooz_240.mov)

Pre-orders on the DVD at:

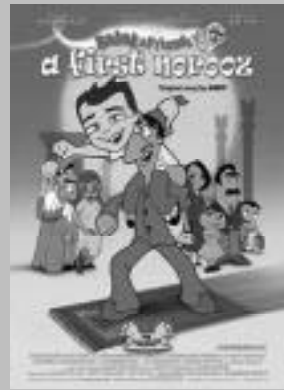
<http://www.babakandfriends.com/babak/about/babakstore.htm>

Games for the kids:

<http://www.babakandfriends.com/babak/games/games.htm>



[www.jimmyengineer.com](http://www.jimmyengineer.com)



Shabnam Rezaei informs, "the cartoon is about a little boy named Babak who is caught between two cultures and is trying to understand the beauty of Persian culture through celebrating Norooz. Amoo Norooz and Haji Firooz are there to help him through this life-changing process. They take him on an epic stroll through the halls of Persepolis in his dream, and teach him about his great heritage. Our stars include Oscar Nominee Shohreh Aghdashloo (House of

Sand and Fog), legendary Iranian actor Parviz Sayyad, Catherine Bell (lead star in CBS Show JAG) and Ali Pourtash. We also have Pop Icon Andy doing an original Norooz song especially for this movie. The animation is 30 minutes, produced in both Farsi and English. Set to beautiful classical Persian music, the cartoon is the first of its kind, high-quality and an instant classic, with a universal theme showcasing the human spirit."

## Jimmy Engineer honoured in Washington DC

courtesy Behram Pastakia, Washington

The auditorium at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC was filled to capacity on the evening of March 22nd 2005, as Jimmy Engineer, the artist, humanitarian, peace activist and world citizen was felicitated by the Ambassador of Pakistan to the USA, His Excellency Jehangir Karamat.

Introducing Jimmy as his friend, well renowned Prof Akbar S Ahmed of the American University in Washington DC, extolled Jimmy's contributions in trying to bring world peace through his art. Drawing a lesson from Indian history, where art played a significant role in promoting civil society, Professor Ahmed reminded the audience of Emperor Jehangir, one of the most powerful personages in the world of the era, gazing lovingly at the portrait of the Madonna - sending a clear message of religious tolerance during his reign. Jimmy's paintings of the massacre of millions in 1947 at the birth of the new nations of Pakistan and India, bear witness to the horrors of violence. His work draws attention to the tremendous tragedy of 1947 and challenges us, not only in the Indian sub-continent, but indeed the entire world, to try and resolve conflict through dialogue and discourse rather than through killings, genocide and mayhem. In his remarks, Jimmy said: "Peace will come, when individuals realize this for themselves in their own hearts. Speeches and words can only go so far. Change comes only through action."

## Parisa Khosravi - a profile

by cliff johnson

**W**hen Parisa Khosravi started at CNN in 1987, she says she needed the experience more than the money. *"As an Iranian who left Iran just before the revolution, news was a big part of my life,"* she says. *"I wanted to be right in the thick of breaking news events since high school."* So after completing seven experience-rich internships during her Columbia College education in Chicago, Parisa received a bachelor's degree in journalism and immediately secured a job as a CNN Video Journalist (VJ). Fourteen years later she has an executive office, but says she rarely sees it.

From VJ, Parisa was promoted to Playback, where VJs cued and loaded tape directly for air. She loved having to think ahead of directors. She then was offered a position as an assistant assignment editor at the International Desk, where she gathered news from around the world and provided it to all CNN news entities. *"I took pride in elementary work like fonting,"* she says, *"the process of formatting scripts for a teleprompter."* Within a year she became a full-fledged Assignment Editor, talking to reporters in the field and deciding what to cover. In her continued rapid ascent, Parisa was eventually promoted to Senior Editor, then Director of Coverage, Vice President and finally — at least for now — Senior Vice President and Managing Editor.

When asked about CNN's brand of news, Parisa offers up how many bureaus CNN has around the world that provide comprehensive coverage.

On occasion, Parisa performs field duties. In 1995, she secured an exclusive interview with Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Two years later, she produced CNN's live coverage of the 1997 Iranian elections from Tehran. Parisa has received many awards including a 1993 Golden

CableACE for CNN's coverage of the Gulf War; a 1992 Peabody Award for CNN's coverage of the attempted coup d'état in the former Soviet Union. She's also won awards for covering Somalia, Bosnia, the Moscow Uprising of 1994 and the 1996 crisis in Zaire and Rwanda.

*"Opportunities can come at you from any level at any time,"* says Parisa. *"You can knock on anybody's door."* She believes that expectations are beneficial, but stresses working on the basics. *"Pay your dues; you don't realize what you're learning. I can now anticipate what will happen in the newsroom because of what I learned in the beginning. Don't be unrealistic, but you can go to the International Desk and ask to observe. You can be writing your own practice versions of scripts all along and find someone to look at them."*

She also believes that creativity makes the difference. *"Once I had to get our equipment and people from Cyprus to Somalia to Mogadishu, but I couldn't find any flights. I asked an airline if they'd make a stop,"* she says, grinning. *"They laughed, then asked how much! I spent 26 hours straight in my seat making contingency plans in case it all didn't work out. Finally our people boarded the plane. Ironically, the airline was packed full of journalists from London already on their way to cover the same story,"* she says, grinning even wider.

Parisa says pursuing a journalism career in the United States had its difficulties in the beginning. *"English was my second language. Some of my journalism teachers told me that journalism was such a tough field. If I had listened, I wouldn't be here now."* Today Parisa still happily abandons her office on a regular basis in favour of the newsroom. As Senior Vice President of CNN, however, the duties she learned as a VJ continue to serve her as she gathers and delivers news for CNN's newest formats, from television to the Internet.



# The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 Tennison Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF

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Incorporated 1980

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The World Zoroastrian Organisation

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sirs,

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

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

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

Yours truly,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Block Capitals please** FULL NAME

PROFESSION/OCCUPATION

DATE OF BIRTH

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**Seconded by**

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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

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

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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



# “...Let wisdom

come in the company of truth  
across the earth!...”

yasna 50.5

*Insler translation*

