

publication of the world zoroastrian organisation

HAMAZOR

1
issue 2006



Nou Rouz
celebrated since
1725 BC till today



Sogdian merchants, Bezeklik, p 46

Contents

04	Zarathushtra - Collectors' cards
07	A couples' courageous life - mebraban shahrvin
13	International Women's Day at the UN - tenaz h dubash
15	Harmony in Paradox - dina g mcintyre
21	"Mama Neem" - kersi rustomji
23	Zarathushtra's seminal contribution to mankind beyond Theology - keki r bhote
27	The House of Song - raiond mirza
30	Nou Rouz & Nim Rouz - fariborz rahnamoon
34	The art of wine in Ancient Persia - touraj daryae
37	Silver Jubilee of WZO, India - godrej n dotivala
40	WZCC Trade Delegation to Irani - degdau mehta
43	Zoroastrians in China - jehangir s pocha
49	Ushtra - The two humped Bactrian camel - sam kerr
51	President of Religions for Peace - a Zoroastrian
53	Events that shaped our religion - rustom j kevala
59	Farsi article - fariborz rahnamoon
60	CNN interviews Meher Amalsad
64	A Global Patchwork - umbereen beg-mirza
67	Membership Form with details

COVER

Adapted from the illustration sent by Fariborz Rahnamoon which shows seven people from seven lands carrying Nou Rouz gifts at Takhte Jamshid, Persepolis.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

WZO WEBSITE

www.w-z-o.org

International Board Members



London, England

**Mr Sam H
Bhiwandiwalla**

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

Mr Rustam S Dubash

President
E-mail:
dubashrs@penningtons.co.uk

**Mr Darayus S
Motivala**

Jt Hon Secretary
E-mail:
darayus@motivala.me.uk

**Mrs Khurshid B
Kapadia**

Membership Secretary
E-mail:
kbk@mm-croy.mottmac.com

Dr Sam Kerr

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

Er Jehan Bagli

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

Mr Marzi Byramjee

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

Mr Dadi B Engineer

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

Mr Dadi E Mistry

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

Mr Rustom Yeganegi

233 Saadi Avenue
Tehran, Iran

Mrs Farah Unwala

Auckland
New Zealand
E-mail:
frkunwwala@yahoo.com

Mrs Toxy Cowasjee

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

Mr Russi Ghadiali

Singapore
E-mail:
RGHADIA1@irf.com

Mr Keki Bhote

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

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

Volume XXXX - Issue 1 | 2006

Printed by:

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

Funded by:

World Zarathushtrian Trust Fund

Cover design by:

Tannaz Minwalla
Karachi, Pakistan

Design & layout by:

Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan

From the Editor

to be in sync once again, Issue 1/06 comes to you within a month of the last publication.

Time goes in its own fast pace, and on looking back I find this is my fifth year as Editor of the Hamazor, which comes as a surprise to me. It obviously shows I enjoy doing the work, each issue being different, always a challenge to find diverse and interesting articles to share with you, and in the process of 'meeting' new individuals.

By the time you receive your copy of the Hamazor, Nou Rouz will have passed, but we at WZO wish all our members and friends good tidings for the new year, with the ever wishful hope of our community working together for the betterment and interest of us all. A dream to be nurtured and made into a reality!

We need new writers to come forward and share their thoughts, views and/or research findings, which may interest the vast majority of readers. There is so much potential waiting to be exposed in our youth if only they would come forward and be part of hamazori, instead of always saying "I have no time" when asked to contribute an article.

Through haste and not checking what had been typed, the previous two issues have been given incorrect volume numbers. Please note we are currently on the 40th issue of the Hamazor.

Now I am looking forward for a week at least to enjoy a good read.



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



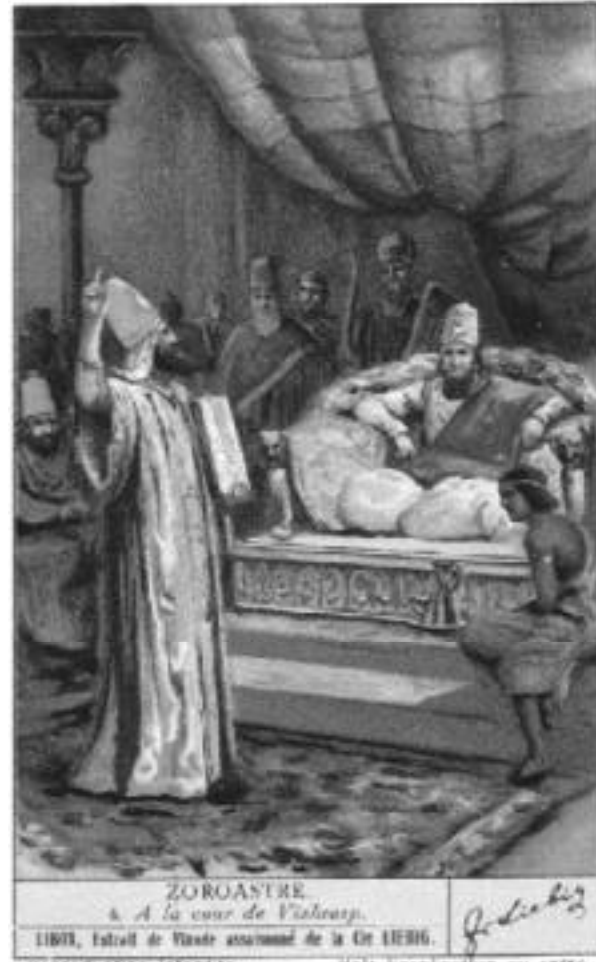
Zarathushtra - Collectors' Cards

As so many emails are forwarded around the world, I too received this interesting one on Liebig cards from Zarine Shroff. Wishing to find the source, the obvious selection was Google. The cards are there, and if one goes through the hundreds of sites on Liebig, one would gather the information written below which some unknown enthusiast has put together for us to share with you. - Ed



The Zarathushtra cards, are one in the series of Liebig cards. Hundreds of cards have been issued by Liebig & Co who used to make meat extracts for European cooking.

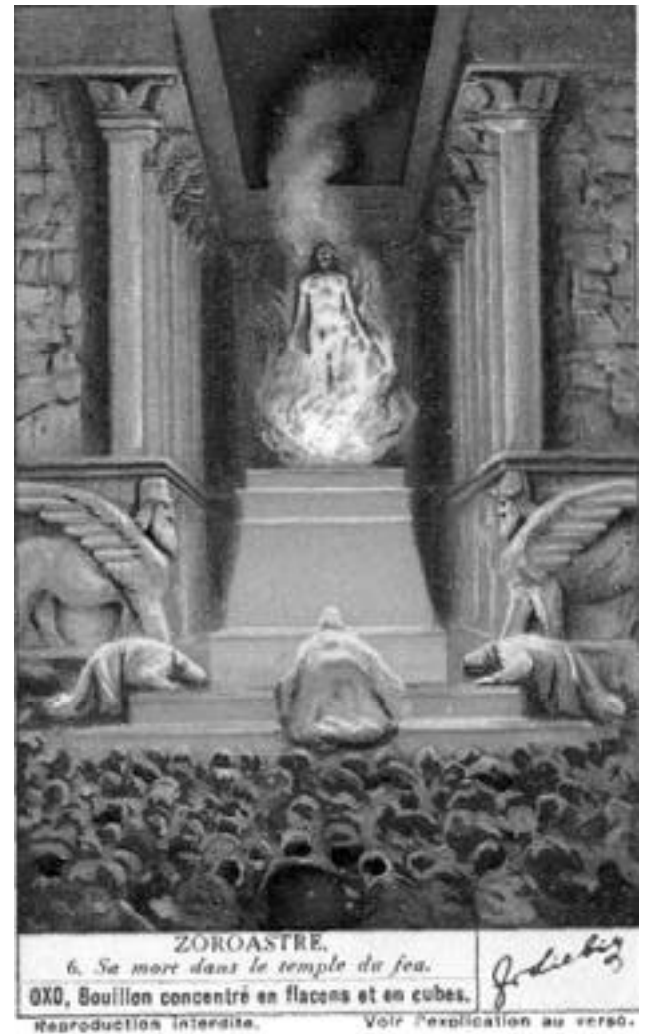
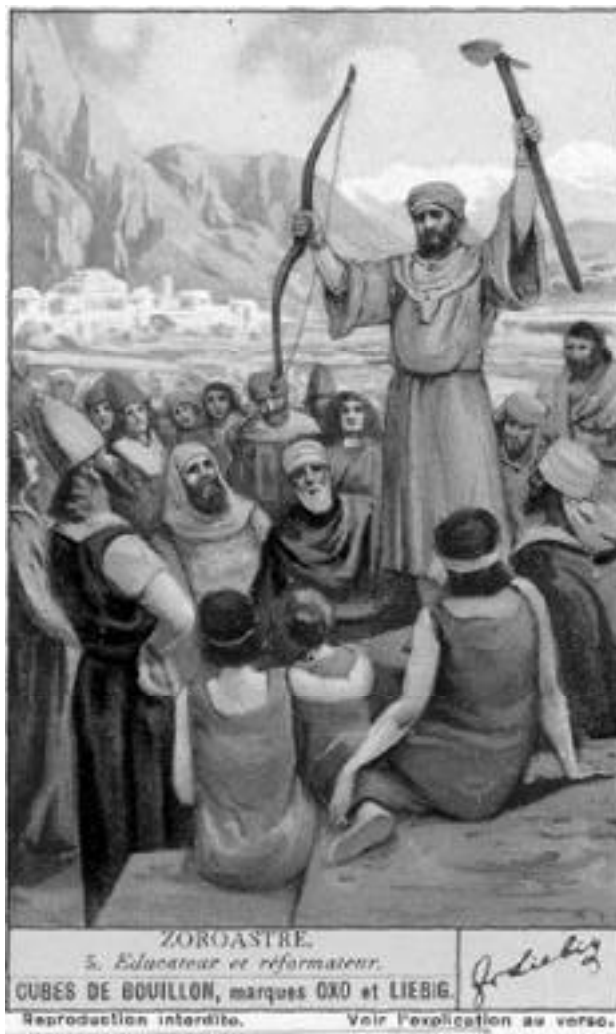
About a hundred years ago there was meat shortage in Europe and a surplus in South American countries such as Argentina. However, refrigerated ships were not efficient and the meat would invariably spoil. A German called Liebig started to import meat extracts that could be added to any dish or be made into a soup to taste exactly like meat. In the beginning there was little demand and sales were extremely poor, so an advertisement campaign was suggested to Liebig. Free cards



were printed and handed over to grocery stores to be given to customers as advertisements, much as today. Liebig, in his wisdom, had commissioned only the best artists to draw his cards, and soon people began to collect them and sales started to improve. Then Liebig had a bright idea! Why not make different series so that people would always demand cards to complete the series of each topic. About 11 cards were issued free for each series.

People began to collect them and sales were fantastic because of the advertisement of the collective value of the cards. By 1935 refrigerated ships had considerably improved and fresh meat could be imported without spoilage, also meat production especially beef had improved in Europe so Liebig then went on to other ventures.

However, some one published an entire catalogue of Liebig picture cards. These catalogues, in addition to the cards, have become collector items. As well as the series on Zarathushtra, there was one on Parsis.



A couples' courageous life

by mehraban shahrvin

With the assistance of son Mahyar, and niece Shahin Bekhradnia

Laal Shahrvin Bekhradnia : 11th August 1920 - 27th March 2004

There is no doubt Laal Bekhradnia had a rare and strong internal spirit that allowed her to overcome hardship. Few others have any experience or knowledge of the degree of difficulty she managed to overcome while still remaining optimistic and forward thinking. This account of her life will offer just a few insights into her power of mind over matter, of her forbearance and tolerance.

Her life history is remarkable, in fact stunning, and reflects her greatness. She was the daughter of a wonderfully gentle woman, her mother Gohar and her father Dastur Shahbahram, a highly literate priest, astronomer and poet. Brought up in the priests quarter of Yazd, with her surviving sister and brother Homayun and Mehraban and her deceased sister and brother Morvarid and Kaikhosrow, her childhood memories which she shared with her children, nieces and nephews, spoke of the simple pleasures of a pre-modern era, in a setting which today sounds like the Thousand and One Nights. Only a few days before she passed on, she was remembering with nostalgia the excitement and bustle of preparations for Nowruz in her childhood when about 10,000 of the 12,000 Zoroastrians of Iran lived in Yazd maintaining an authentic tradition that gave meaning and solidarity to the vulnerable and threatened community in which she was raised.

Not surprisingly for a daughter of a priest and with grandparents who were priests on both sides as was the norm in the Zoroastrian tradition, Laal was pious. But she was not superstitious, nor a dogmatist, and learnt from her father that to be spiritual



you don't necessarily have to engage in every single ritual passed down through practice and custom. Laal inherited the brains of her father and the kindness of her mother - the perfect combination for a perfect person.

Thanks to her father's foresight, learning and scholarship were highly valued in the household and she was the first Zoroastrian woman

from the normally conservative priestly class to be sent to Tehran to receive higher education. There she trained and practiced as a successful midwife - in itself quite a radical profession for a young lady of a priestly background since in more traditional families there were taboo issues of purity and pollution associated with that sort of work. Through her elder brother, an air force doctor, she met her husband to be, a young dashing army officer whose good youthful looks and reputation won her heart.

After their marriage, tragedy struck quickly and not only did she lose her first baby but her young husband lost his sight in the battle to repossess Iranian territory from Kurdish insurgents in Azerbaijan at the end of the Second World War, during which Iran had been occupied by Russian and British allied forces.

Laal was loyal, faithful and true and stuck by him through this terrible time, undoubtedly bringing him consolation and hope in his terrible moments of dark despair. She was his angel as she was to become for others also.

She was alone for the birth of their next child who survived, because husband Shahriar had been brought to Europe for medical treatment in the hope of restoring his sight. This proved impossible, but in 1950 she joined him with her little baby of one and a half to begin a new life in a foreign land, and with no knowledge of English. Life just after the war was tough for everyone with most foods rationed, and grim destroyed sites everywhere in London. But for foreigners who did not know the culture it must have been extra discouraging, plus the disability, and then there was the cold damp climate to contend with.

Laal and Shahriar had no choice but to live in a suburban one room bed and breakfast where their only way of heating up milk for the baby was on the back of an iron. Every time the baby cried they feared being evicted and took walks round the streets in the middle of the night to avoid this fate.

In late 1950 when they moved to Chiswick, Laal routinely coped with her blind husband's needs to be taken to work. She of course also had to deal with her by-now toddler son, and was now carrying their second child. The house was hardly ready for occupation and was full of damp plaster and paint. There was no central heating then. She had to fill the coal scuttle and carry it upstairs and empty the ashes, cook, clean and be her husband's eyes. Then a little baby girl arrived soon after they moved into their new home. There was no extended family network here, nor other fellow Iranian Zoroastrians to provide friendship and support.

What a super-woman she must have been to just get on with life and not allow those dreadful conditions to bring her down. Instead she enrolled in evening classes and learnt English, and cookery English style, using the little time she could find for herself constructively. She also cultivated her garden and had amazingly green fingers - anything she planted flourished and thrived, and on her last outing, her last Nowruz get-together, Laal delighted in the beauty of her

lovely spring flowers popping up in her front garden.

Many Zoroastrians from Iran used to send their offspring to UK for education or visit themselves for medical treatment throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s and although the Bekhradnia household did not initially know them, the visitors had heard of the Bekhradnias. They were all made welcome in their humble midst. Laal had time for everyone. Her house was always open and there was constantly a warm welcome for anyone who came to the door, whether friend or stranger. Too many to count are the friends that they made, who came to know them through an initial phone call to introduce themselves as having arrived in London. Nobody and nothing was too much for her. Many friends reading this will remember happy times at their home in Chiswick, later in Acton and finally in Oxford, when Laal's legendary cooking was enjoyed in a good company.

On top of everything else, she also brought up her disabled niece for the first few years of her life and helped transform her from a child whose prognosis for progress was severely limited, to one who was able to lead a fulfilled and meaningful life. In the meanwhile she developed severe colitis, which was to stay with her for over 40 years but she never allowed this terrible illness to effect her.

Laal was always selflessly charitable and made little economies within the household wherever there was a chance just so that she could save up and make donations to the many good causes which she supported. She used to walk from one end of the market to the other just to see where the fruit and vegetable were the best prices and passed her example of thrift and good housekeeping to many young people who came to live with them. She taught by example what it really meant to re-cycle, whether it was bottles, stamps or envelopes.

Her latest cause was the Pourchista Foundation in Yazd which brought benefit to

the community from which she had sprung herself. It would be true to say that her heart never really left Yazd. She very much wanted that the young Zoroastrians of Yazd should learn a skill and become optimistic about their chances of succeeding, despite all the obstacles life in Iran is putting in front of them these days.

What does all this tell us about Laal Bekhradnia? She was the incarnation of goodness, sweetness and light. She never complained about life's blows - she just took them in her stride and got on with making the best of whatever she was faced with. She has inspired many others to make light of their own temporary hardships and to look forward optimistically to better times. She sowed goodness and reaped happiness. She lived and breathed *Oshta Ahmai ye Heyat Ashaye Veheshtaye Asham*.

She will always be remembered as we celebrate the birthday of our inspired prophet, Asho Zartosht on the 6th day of Nowruz. Her husband Shahriar who only survived her by 7 weeks was adamant that a cedar tree should be planted over their joint ashes and that family and friends should picnic happily under their tree in years to come, thus providing pleasure to people even after life. She was always a happy spirit.

Shahriar Khorsand Bekhradnia :
July 1916-May 2004

Shahriar was always a man to look up to in the literal and metaphorical sense. His presence and character was so strong that despite his evident handicap he managed to exercise enormous authority and command respect from those who came into contact with him.

Born at the time of the 1st World War, son of a farmer, Khorsand, who died of typhus when he was but three, was brought up a poor village boy in Jaffarabad, Yazd where harsh desert conditions meant that his life was extremely tough and basic. He was a

boy of the land and experienced the devastation of locusts as well as the effects of drought, crop failure and disease, all of which meant hunger and poverty. However his talent was spotted by the local priest, who by wonderful coincidence was later to become his father in law, and he was sent off to the Marker orphanage school in the town of Yazd at eight years. From then onwards his natural ability shone forth and he quickly stood out from his peers.

Having finished his basic schooling at the age of 14, he cavalierly set off for India as so many were doing at the time in the hope of improving their life fortunes, most humble Iranian Zoroastrians working at tea houses in Bombay or officiating as priests. Shahriar however quickly realised that he did not want to stay there, because he had greater hopes for his future than a tea house waiter, and returned to Iran after about a year. Back in Yazd he became the junior school teacher at the village school of Narsiabad, paying his way for his mother and himself and studying to improve himself in the evenings. At the age of 18 he spotted an advertisement for the newly founded military academy in Shiraz where officer recruits could complete their school diplomas and go on to further studies, and receive payment for doing so. Shahriar therefore signed up as one of the earliest officer cadets and stayed on to develop into a fully fledged officer in command of a brigade.

Upon finishing his training and his early assignments, he was stationed in barracks



in Tehran, where he had a chance encounter with a fellow Zoroastrian from Yazd, an air force doctor, who introduced him to his own sister, Laal Shahrini. After a formal courtship they were married, Shahriar handsome at 30 in his officer's

uniform and Laal aged 24, and soon after that Shahriar was posted to Kermanshah

and Sanandaj in Kurdistan. Many have admired the dramatic picture of Shahriar in Kurdish clothing, looking like some film star out of a movie.

It was 1946, the aftermath of the 2nd World War, during which Iran had been divided and occupied by the allied powers of the Soviet Union in the North and Britain in the South. At this moment, these powers should have vacated Iran, and indeed it seemed that they had, but the Soviets had other plans - as indeed they had for Europe. They decided to attempt to annexe Iranian Azarbaijan and absorb its territory into their own Azarbaijan - and their local agents in this cause were members of one tribe of Kurdish insurgents whom they armed and supplied.

It was fate that sent Shahriar's brigade amongst others into the mountains of Kurdistan to flush out the rebels and maintain Iranian sovereignty. It was in the cause of Iranian nationalism there that Shahriar lost his sight when a mine exploded before him. The grim story he used to recount to listeners arouses shivers of terror: when he regained consciousness he became aware of the enemy finishing off those who were still groaning with life, and those who were dead were being inspected for and stripped of precious objects such as watches, gold rings and gold teeth. Thank God he didn't have any! He had to pretend he was dead to survive, which he did.

After an interval of several hours, when the news had percolated back to the army officials, a rescue party picked him up with three others as sole survivors of the ambush, and he was strapped to a mule to be taken to the nearest army post. From there, he was conveyed by a primitive vehicle to the next army post, basic first aid was applied and he was sent on to the next point and eventually he arrived by an antiquated plane in Tehran. By this time, days if not weeks had passed and it was beyond the ability of the medical teams to restore his sight. Shahriar lay in hospital for some months and his loyalty was brought to the attention of the young Shah who visited

him at his bedside and decorated him with a number of medals in recognition of his sacrifice. This was the source of great pride and also reinforced his belief in the decency of the Shah who clearly valued the fact that he was a Zoroastrian. After a brief and surely very poignant reunion with his young wife, Shahriar left Iran for Europe where he went in the vain pursuit of medical treatment.

It was the Shah who sponsored his move to England for medical treatment and so it was that he arrived in London via Rome and Paris taking one week to fly to the UK from Tehran because of the many refuelling and technical stopovers on the way. He was nursed at the Moorfields Eye Hospital in London where one of his Welsh nurses, Nonny, gave him hope and became a life long friend to the family. Thanks to another wonderful lady, Miss McAndrew, a volunteer worker in the admirable British tradition of worthy ladies visiting the sick, Shahriar learnt English during her visits to the hospital. She put him in touch with St Dunstan's, a charity for members of the British forces who are blinded. This organisation, exceptionally, adopted him and thanks to their ability to rehabilitate and Shahriar's own enormous courage, he learnt a range of skills and developed hobbies that are impressive in their range even for a sighted person. A photo exists of him holding a trophy for his team's win in the archery competition and countless were the lamps, ashtrays, cushion covers, tablecloths and string bags that he had made or woven, which were around his family home. Around this time he even participated as the Persian delegate at Paris, in a United Nations congress dealing with the development of Braille.

In England once he was ready to stand on his own feet, he was able to get a job as a telephonist and thus to earn his living in order to keep his wife and toddler son. Initially they were housed in a terrible bed and breakfast but their benefactor had arranged for them to have access to accommodation in Chiswick which became the Bekhradnia base for many years to

come. The family developed a daily routine consisting of Shahriar being taken to the bus stop, put on a bus for work in the morning, and in the evening a family member being at the bus stop to guide him back home. His weekly pay packet was opened every Friday in the kitchen where there was a £10 note with no pay rise for years! He embodied the work ethic which he successfully instilled in his offspring

Among the many things he managed to do by dint of his authority, was to instill the *Avesta* prayers in his children's memories and they were taken to Iran for their *sedreh pushi* but he did not accompany them. Indeed he never went back to Iran.

His mother came to UK when his children and wife returned from Iran but quite understandably, she could not adjust to life in foggy London, having spent all her life in a Yazdi village. So having seen her one and only surviving son after so long an interval, (she had lost her first child, a daughter, to typhus along with her husband, and her second son, Shahriar's brother Shirmard aged 22, to a mysterious death while on army training somewhere), mother Shirin returned to Yazd never to see her son again.

Shahriar was extremely pleased when through his daughter's involvement with David Frost's TV series featuring Iranian History, "Crossroads of civilization", it was his family traditions in Hassanabad which appeared on TV showing living Zoroastrian principles at work. However humble and simple his background, he was very proud indeed of his origins and felt this was something to hold up as an example to others.

Shahriar was the mentor and advisor on education to many Zoroastrian parents who wanted to send their offspring to England to study, and he helped select schools, have children placed there who came often to them during holidays. He also used to act as interpreter for Zoroastrians who needed medical treatment. His was always a bustling household. He and his wife Laal had a great partnership and they complemented each other's qualities well.

Shahriar was quite impatient and outspoken, full of forward-thinking, energy and vision - he had urged people to invest in the Channel Tunnel even though at the time it was still merely a concept 30 years before it became a reality. He also found certain things inspiring and fascinating such as geothermal activity in Iceland so that eventually he sent Laal and his daughter and grandchild there to experience it. He was a man thirsty for knowledge and always curious to learn more - he pushed the bounds out and encouraged others to do the same. He learnt to type in both Farsi and English and he even invented a device for the typewriter, which he tried to patent to warn when the paper was coming to an end.

He knew from experience and instinct that education, learning and moral decency were the keys to winning respect and success. He therefore left no stone unturned to ensure the best education for both his children and through his ambition and vision, and his son's own natural intelligence and aptitude, Bahram ended up at one of the best known public schools in the land, while his daughter Shahin attended one of the best known day schools in London. He used to encourage the children with their exam revision by learning the exam subject, for example history, with them as they revised aloud and then testing them. He even helped one of them learn Russian in the early stages by testing the new vocabulary as he learnt alongside. He was rewarded by the fact that they both were accepted at Oxford, the best university in the country.

He was courageous in allowing both his children to travel independently from a very young age - probably remembering his own adventures to India at the age of 14. While being very strict at home with his daughter, she was nevertheless allowed to travel three times a year abroad with girlguides or with school trips, and he encouraged Bahram to cycle alone to Brighton when he was only 12, and then to hitchhike all over Europe to Greece, and later to travel around Africa. Likewise he appeared to have no problem with his daughter Shahin travelling to Iran,

Afghanistan and beyond. This was happening at the time when the concept of the gap year had not yet become common currency in mainstream UK culture, let alone Iranian.

His own life was a model demonstrating the Gathic principle that we have control over and responsibility for our own life and what we make of it, and that even with all the odds apparently stacked against you, with good people around, and a positive attitude, life can be enriching, fulfilling and satisfying. He even managed to find positive things to say about his loss of his sight, pointing out that it was God's will that he should be blinded so that his children would be raised in Europe and benefit from the advantages of life over there.

He was an incredibly strong minded person and he was able to exercise his influence over many people, guide, advise and inspire them towards their future careers and life plans; and all this despite the fact that in reality he was totally dependent on others to help him in all manner of ways to compensate for the loss of his sight. His outstanding characteristic was that of a most moral man. He never betrayed his principles and those principles were upright and noble. He was a true Zoroastrian and insisted on the moral courage to stick to what was true and right. As a result he was outspoken and would not tolerate liars and wrong-doers. This character won him great respect, but also caused discomfort among those who could not meet his high standards.

Shahriar was nevertheless a really kind and soft hearted person and in his later years he regularly wept from compassion for the plight of the underdog, the hard done by and the persecuted within our community. He was also very charitable and put into action the principle for which we have a reputation as a charitable community, donating regularly as his means allowed, to a wide range of good causes. His and Laal's willingness to offer hospitality and support to all manner of people whether known or strangers is legendary, well known and experienced by many people.

It was his love for his homeland that not only explained his wife's and his hospitality, but also that yearning for Iran which rang through his speech. He was fiercely patriotic and proud so in recent years he was visibly moved when he spoke of Iran as it had been and Iran as it is. He knew his Iranian history and literature thoroughly as all well-educated people of his generation did. It was awesome to hear him quoting classical Persian poetry, plucked from the memory banks that were so full. He believed that the Shah's family had moved Iran forward and had rescued the country from obscurity and backwardness, where Zoroastrians were severely oppressed.

Endowed with a sharp memory and a great attachment to his Iranian homeland, it was his great pleasure to recount stories of the adventures that had been the hallmark of his life and that had brought him to England. He was also frequently overcome with tears of joy when he reflected over the achievements of his children, and of their children, his four admired grandchildren. It brought him great comfort to know they had all arrived at adulthood and were set for successful rewarding lives. It was also his great hope that one day they would appreciate the culture from which they were partly sprung.

He was a brave proud man whose life achievements are outstanding and of great honour to our community. ■■■



Dr Mehraban Shahrivini lives in Canada since 1980 and is a PhD in Health Science from the Tehran University. In 1986 he started Payk-e-Meher (Message of Kindness), a Zoroastrian cultural magazine, which is today distributed to 184 cities.

He has given more than 170 presentations on Zoroastrian religion and Persian culture, and written over 300 articles in international publications. He has also received communal and professional proclamations from Iran, Canada, Australia and USA. Recently he completed and published his research on the Sasanian library/university known as Gennadi e shahpur or Gondishahpour.

International Women's Day - at the UN

Tenaz H Dubash reports ...

On March 2nd I was invited to speak at the Tillman chapel housed at the UN in New York City. The chapel is an ecumenical chapel that serves the extremely diverse UN community.

How it happened

The occasion was International Women's Day; the context was the annual CSW – (Commission on the Status of Women) conference that attracts delegates from 80 countries. The themes for this year's conference were two-fold:

- 1 - Equal participation of men and women in decision making
- 2 - Enabling environments in development, health and education

When I heard the themes, I decided to respond to Kathleen Stone's e-mails and phone-calls. She, the chaplain at the UN, had contacted me to be a speaker on a panel of inter-faith women where the topic was -

Women who were wrestling with the tensions between their political aspirations and their religious traditions.

Having just had a root canal (I was dribbling and drooling for a day or two) I was not interested in taking on yet another project. My full-time job was sending me to Chicago, I was in the final four weeks of putting together a documentary that I had been working on for three long years, and had read enough *Oprah* articles to learn how to say "no" graciously and politely.

However, Kathleen was not taking "No" for an answer – she convinced me to speak on her panel and I had to agree after she mentioned the two themes –After all, wasn't Zarathushtra one of the first

environmentalists and the Gathas are full of beautiful passages that point to the equality of the sexes.

After agreeing, true panic set in! Me – speaking at the UN? Gasp! Groucho Marx's phrase of not wanting to belong to any club that accepted him as a member ran through my mind several times.

After a few frantic calls to Dina McIntyre, the angel, and some internet research, I felt adequately prepared to answer the questions. I was also excited to be able to show some clips, from my first film, *In the Footsteps of our Forefathers* where a bunch of us women, questioned why we could not become priests, at a temple in Iran.

The Day Dawns

March second, rolled around and it was a rainy, icy, miserable day. "Aha – they are going to cancel" – was my first reaction – but that did not happen.



L to R : Rabbi Melinda Zalma - Jewish, Ms Sarah Sayeed - Muslim, Ms Margaret Obaga - Christian and Ms Tenaz Dubash - Zoroastrian. Tenaz seems to have acquired two heads for this photograph!

I was joined on the podium by three other women representing Judaism, Islam and Christianity. It was a terrific learning experience. There were about 80 people in the audience. Homi Gandhi, the President

of ZAGNY attended. He had been instrumental in having me speak at the event. Other friendly faces included Ayesha Ghadialy who had accompanied me to Iran, Zia Bhaisa, my third (or is it fourth) cousin and my wonderful aunt - Dinaz Boga. Many of my non Zoroastrian friends and co-workers also attended. It was really gratifying to hear people, that I have known for over five years, say that they learnt more about my faith in the one hour that we spent together at the UN than in the history of our friendship.

My presentation began with a brief overview of Zoroastrianism that touched on our history and theology. I stressed the fact that it is not a prescriptive religion where there is a set of rules to follow – but a religion based on free will and choice. I followed this with passages from the *Gathas* and *Venidad* and pointed out the changes in the status of women over the years. I also spoke about the difference between a Parsi and a Zoroastrian and mentioned that some groups in the West are training women to become *para-mobeds*.

The exchange of ideas and philosophies continued at a wonderful reception on the 8th floor of the building. The shrimp and brie cheese were fantastic; and the view of the Manhattan sky-line above the East river definitely lent itself to lofty conversation.



Tenaz with her granname

Tenaz H Dubash received a Bachelors degree from Cornell University and a Masters degree in Television, Radio & Film from the Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University. In the year 2000, she travelled to Iran with 34 Zoroastrians, where she shot and produced her first documentary, entitled 'In the Footsteps of our Forefathers'

Her eight years of television production experience include positions at ABC, PBS and MSNBC.

She is currently working with survivors of human trafficking and is developing two new documentaries. Information about these projects can be found at www.tdfilms.info.

Esfandgan Celebration & Commemoration of Women

Forwarded by Dr Khosro Mehrfar, Orange county, Southern California

CAIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL NEWS © announced on 18 February, 2006 -

18th of February, the 5th day of the Iranian month of Esfand, is the day of Esfandgan celebrations.

In Zoroastrian religion, the whole month and especially this day marks commemoration of women, the oldest of its kind in the world.

In Zoroastrian religion the day belongs to the Amesha Spenta Spandarmaz/Spandarmad (Av Spenta Armaiti) holy devotion, the symbol of love and humbleness in the spiritual world and the guardian of the earth in the material one.

In the ancient Iranian tradition, women set aside the house chores and put the responsibility on the shoulders of their men for just one day. The men were also supposed to offer their women gifts.

To mark the day, the family would wake up earlier, cleaned the house, and celebrated the day by cooking *ash* - a kind of Iranian soup like stew - with special Zoroastrian bread.

In the West the idea of a Women's Day (March 8th) first arose at the turn of 20th century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.



A Woman

(Written in the Hebrew Talmud, the book where the sayings and preaching of rabbis are conserved over time.)

It says: "Be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears. The woman came out of a man's rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior, but from the side to be equal. Under the arm to be protected, and next to the heart to be loved."

Harmony in Paradox

The Paradox of the Freedom to Choose and the Inevitable End

by dina g mcintyre

Fourth and final in the series of 4 papers

We all know that the freedom to choose is a hallmark of Zarathushtra's teachings:

"... Reflect with a clear mind – man by man for himself – upon the two choices of decision ..." Y30.2¹

"... Him who left to our will (to choose between) the virtuous and the unvirtuous ..." Y45.9

It would seem logical to conclude, therefore, that if people are free to choose what is evil, we can never be certain that good will prevail and evil will be defeated. Yet in Y49.3, Zarathushtra says the exact opposite.

"However, it has been fated² for this world, Wise One, that the truth [asha] is to be saved for its (good) preference, that deceit is to be destroyed for its (false) profession ..." Y49.3.

An interesting paradox.

In my early years of studying the Gathas, it seemed to me that an assurance that good will prevail sounded like pre-destination and was irreconcilable with the freedom to choose. I was tempted to dismiss this sentence in Y49.3 as an aberration, the freedom to choose being so central a part of Zarathushtra's teaching. But long experience in studying the Gathas has taught me that it is never wise to dismiss as an aberration, anything that Zarathushtra says. It took me a quite a while to appreciate that indeed, as Zarathushtra says, the more free we are to choose, the more inevitable it is that good will prevail and evil will be defeated.

To understand this paradox, let us first consider Zarathushtra's notions of "good" and "evil".

If you look at each descriptive reference to "good", in the Gathas, you will see that it is the product of "right" choices – truth, beneficence, justice, solicitude, friendship,

compassion, et cetera. And if you look at each descriptive reference to "evil", you will see that it is the product of "wrongful" choices – murder, deceit, cruelty, fury, bondage, tyranny, et cetera.

Natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, locusts, wolves, drought, and illness, are not identified as "evil" in the Gathas (as they are in later Zoroastrian texts). Zarathushtra does not subscribe to the view (as did later Zoroastrian texts) that anything which causes us grief, or suffering, or loss, or inconvenience is, for that reason alone, "evil". I will resist the temptation to elaborate here on the validity of the view that natural calamities are not "evil", because this essay is about the freedom to choose. And while natural calamities can be made worse by wrong human choices, they are not necessarily caused by such wrong choices.

If evil is the product of wrongful choices, then if you do not choose evil in a given thought, word or act, it ceases to exist in that particular thought, word or act. Or stated another way, when we stop choosing evil, we deprive it of substance. It may still exist as a theoretical alternative, but it lacks existence in the reality of thought, word and action.

Let us take it a step further. We become what we choose. So the more we choose *asha*, the more *asha*-like we become, until eventually, choice by choice, we reach *haurvatat*, a state of being that personifies *asha*, that is pure goodness. If this is true, would it not be equally possible for a life

force to become pure evil through its wrong choices? The answer (as I see it in the Gathas) is that this is not possible. Let us consider the matter.

According to Zarathushtra, the good and evil ways of being (*mainyu*) are primordial, i.e. these two ways of being are a part of the original nature of all living things. Therefore as long as evil remains a preference in anyone's mind, and finds expression in that person's thoughts, words and actions, it cannot be defeated.

It is apparent, therefore, that evil cannot be defeated by divine decree, by God waving a magic wand, as it were. That might be a solution for robots, but not for life forms that think and have preferences.

It is equally apparent that evil cannot be defeated by punishment. The fear of punishment may induce a person to hide his evil inclinations, and not express them in word or action. But the inclination towards evil would still exist in his mind. Therefore punishment cannot truly defeat evil. It only suppresses its expression while the fear of punishment exists. Once that fear is removed, the inclination would again express itself in thought word and action. And evil would still be with us.

An effective way to defeat evil, therefore, would be for the inclination or preference for evil to change in all the living. For a true change to occur, the change would have to be something that is freely made, from the inside, by the person himself, without compulsion. And that is exactly Mazda's solution for defeating evil. His solution is the truth that underlies the way in which existence has been ordered (*asha*), its comprehension (*vohu mano*) and its realization in thoughts, words and actions (*aramaiti*³). Let us consider this solution.

Asha literally means "what fits" and it applies to both the material (physical) existence, as well as the abstract existence of the mind.

In the material or physical existence, "what fits" is what is correct, accurate – truth, the

laws that govern the universe – laws of physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy – the accurate natural order of things.

In the abstract existence of the mind, "what fits" is also what is correct – i.e. what's right. In the Gathas, what is right, includes such notions as truth, goodness, justice, generosity, solicitude, beneficence, loving kindness, compassion, et cetera. All these are a part of "what fits" – the true, correct, order of things in the abstract existence, the existence of mind.

In short, *asha*, "what fits" is the truth that underlies the way our existence has been ordered.

And according to Zarathushtra, *asha*, ("what fits") includes that perfect justice which sets in motion the law of consequences – that we reap what we sow, that everything we do comes back to us.

When the good we do comes back to us, it reinforces our preference for that good way of being. When the "evil" we do comes back to us, we don't like being on the receiving end of such experiences. We understand that this is not the way we want things to be. Such experiences increase our understanding, and help to change our preferences. The law of consequences is one part of the process whereby minds are changed so that we prefer what is true and right (*asha*) because that is the way we want things to be.

Now, we know that justice is a part of *asha*. But the notion of beneficence (which means "active goodness, kindness, charity; bounty springing from purity and goodness"⁴) is also a part of *asha*. Indeed, the Wise Lord himself is described as being beneficent through *asha* "... the Lord, beneficent through truth [*asha*], virtuous [*spento*] and knowing ..." Y48.3, indicating that beneficence is a characteristic of *asha*.

You well may wonder: How can justice, with its relentless, rigid, exactness, and the generosity of beneficence, both be included within the meaning of *asha*?

The answer lies, in part, in appreciating that both concepts are a part of “what fits”, *asha*. The answer also lies in setting aside our conventional notions of divine justice and attempting to ascertain Zarathushtra’s thought.

The notion of divine justice which has punishment as a means of dealing with wrongdoing, is a revenge-based notion of justice. Revenge is not a part of *asha* or its comprehension (*vohu mano*). Enlightenment is.⁵

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra often associates the law of consequences (which is a part of *asha*) with fire (which is one of his material metaphors for *asha*). For example:

“... those rewards Thou shalt give, through the heat of Thy truth-strong [*asha*-strong] fire, to the deceitful and to the truthful, ...” Y43.4.

If the law of consequences is a part of *asha*, (delivered through its material metaphor, fire) then, however painful or difficult the process might be, it can only deliver enlightenment, understanding, the comprehension of what is true and right (which is *vohu mano*⁶).

The Gathas themselves suggest that the law of consequences is not for punishment, both in the way it is implemented, and in the end result that it delivers.

Zarathushtra tells us that the law of consequences is implemented by Mazda through His **good** thinking.

“...May He dispense **through His good thinking** (each) reward corresponding to one’s actions.” Y43.16 (emphasis added)

He also tells us that the law of consequences is implemented by Mazda through a beneficent (good, generous, loving) way of being (*spenta mainyu*).

“Wise Lord, **together with this virtuous spirit [spenta mainyu]**, Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions

through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [*aramaiti*] and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking.” Y47.6 (emphasis added).

In Y45.6 Zarathushtra describes Mazda as beneficent through His *spenta mainyu*, his benevolent way of being: “... Him who is beneficent through His virtuous spirit [*spenta mainyu*] to those who exist ...” Y45.6. If beneficence comes from *spenta mainyu*, then the nature of *spenta mainyu* would have to include the characteristic of beneficence. If *spenta mainyu* is beneficent, and if the law of consequences is delivered through *spenta mainyu* [a beneficent way of being], then the law of consequences would have to be delivered with beneficence, i.e. not for revenge or punishment.

In terms of the end result, Zarathushtra tells us that the law of consequences delivers “satisfaction” and “the good” to both factions i.e. to those who choose correctly, and to those who choose wrongfully:

“...when the distribution **in the good** shall occur **to both factions** through Thy bright fire, Wise One.” Y31.19.

“Wise Lord, together with this virtuous spirit [*spenta mainyu*], Thou shalt give **the distribution in the good to both factions** through Thy fire, by reason of the solidarity of [*aramaiti*] and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking.” Y47.6 (emphasis added).

“The **satisfaction** which Thou shalt give **to both factions** through Thy pure fire and the molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and to save the truthful.”

Y51.9. (by “destroy the deceitful” and “save the truthful” I think Zarathushtra is referring, not to people, but to qualities – to destroy what is deceitful, and save what is truthful, in all of us, since even the worst of us has some good in him, and even the best of us has some wrong in him, at least in our present reality).

You well may ask: If, under the law of consequences, the evil we do comes back

to us, how can it be said to distribute “the good” and “satisfaction” to those who choose correctly and also to those who choose wrongly. Well, it is in the end result that the law of consequences distributes “the good” and “satisfaction” to all. It returns abundant good for the good done, and, through the painful, difficult, experiences resulting from our wrong choices, it helps to increase understanding which changes evil preferences into good ones as well, thus distributing “the good” and “satisfaction” to those who choose wrongly as well.

This conclusion is corroborated in a later Avestan text. In Yasna 62 (not a part of the Gathas), fire is described as the agent for the growth of the soul (verse 6), and as bringing about the renovation (verse 3)⁷ which corroborate the conclusion that fire, as a metaphor for *asha* (of which the law of consequences is a part), is an instrument, not of punishment, but of enlightenment.

Now, it is true that a person who has been abused, sometimes identifies with the abuser and inflicts the same abuse on others. A person who has experienced harm often hungers for revenge. A rigid tit-for-tat alone would not be sufficient to bring about a change of preferences. But the process that changes preferences is not just a rigid tit-for-tat. The process is *asha* (which includes beneficence), good thinking, and *aramaiti*.

We have already seen, through the verses quoted above, that the law of consequences is not a product of anger, revenge or punishment on the part of Mazda, but is delivered by Him through his good thinking, and with a beneficent way of being, *spenta mainyu*. However, to change minds, to change preferences, the process also requires the good thinking, the good words and good actions, (the beneficence, generosity, lovingkindness), of all the living, to help break destructive cycles of abuse and revenge. Such good thoughts, words and actions of *asha* is the concept *aramaiti*. The generous, loving, help we give each other is as important, and as indispensable,

as the law of consequences in changing minds.

“Wise Lord, together with this virtuous spirit [*spenta mainyu*], Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions through Thy fire, **by reason of the solidarity of [*aramaiti*] and truth [*asha*]**. For it shall convert the many who are seeking.” Y47.6 (emphasis added).

“... but in due course [*aramaiti*] shall come to terms with one’s spirit where there has been opposition.” Y31.12.

It is an interesting paradox that the defeat of evil requires both the exact workings of the law of consequences, and also the generosity that gives without looking for an exact (or any) exchange, bringing to life all that is good, with thoughts, words and actions of *asha* in mutual, loving help.

It is important to note that in the Gathas, the process of generating the law of consequences — that we reap what we sow — is reserved for Mazda alone. It is not man’s part to inflict pain for pain.⁸ Our good thinking is not so perfected as to be an effective instrument for delivering the law of consequences so as to bring about enlightenment, rather than repeated cycles of abuse or a thirst for revenge, on the part of the recipient. In the Gathas, the human soul is judged by Mazda⁹, and by the soul itself¹⁰.

In conclusion, the more free we are to choose, the more we experience the consequences of our choices. These experiences, together with our ability to understand, and mutual loving help, inform our preferences and, over time, lead us to want what is true and right, because that is the way we want things to be. Under this solution, the more free we are to choose, the more inevitable it is that everyone will eventually choose what is true and right for its own sake. Evil is checkmated.

It would surely be a very long process, for minds to change, choice by choice, experience by experience, through the law

of consequences, and mutual loving help, and the 1,001 other experiences, both earned and unearned, that we experience. But eventually, when each part of the life force attains a state of being (*mainyu*) in which it prefers what is true/right/good for its own sake (the *spenta* way of being), evil will be defeated. It will no longer have existence in the reality of our thoughts, words and actions.

It is interesting that this solution lays to rest the oft repeated philosophical dilemma that God is either not all powerful, or not all good, because if He allows evil to exist and cannot stop it, He is not all powerful, whereas if He can stop it and does not, He cannot be all good.

Zarathushtra discloses a third alternative – that of a Life Force who orders existence (*asha*) in such a way that the freedom to choose, which may increase evil in the short term, generates the experiences which ensure its ultimate defeat, thereby demonstrating:

His power (because He can defeat evil); **His goodness** (because He does so with the way in which He has ordered existence (*asha*) - the law of consequences, and the beneficence of mutual, loving help through good thoughts, words and actions (*aramaiti* and *vohu xshathra*); and **His wisdom**, (because with the way in which He has ordered existence, we come to the realizations (*vohu mano*) which defeat evil, for ourselves, freely and without compulsion - our freedom to choose being an indispensable requirement for bringing about the inevitable defeat of evil).

Thus we see that the paradox of the freedom to choose, and the inevitable end, resolves itself into the harmony of a beneficent existence. ■■■

Notes

¹ All quotations from the Gathas in this text are to the translation as it appears in Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra* (Brill, 1975), although Professor Insler may or may not agree with the conclusions I draw from his translation. Round parentheses () in a quotation

indicate an insertion into the text by Professor Insler. Square brackets [] in a quotation indicate an insertion by me, sometimes by way of explanation, and sometimes to show you the applicable Gathic words, but for convenience, usually without their grammatical variations. I leave “aramaiti” untranslated. A string of dots indicates a deletion by me.

² Insler translates the word “nidatem” as “fated, determined” based on its Vedic equivalent. Taraporewala translates it as “laid-down”. Sethna, in a free translation, translates “... righteousness shall prevail and falsehood shall be frustrated.” But not all translators translate the word in a way that generates the meaning of inevitability.

³ There is a great difference of opinion among linguists as to the correct translation of aramaiti. A contextual analysis, i.e. with the way in which Zarathushtra uses the word in the Gathas, shows us that it means making asha real, giving it life, substance, which can only be done with thoughts, words and actions: “But to this world He came with the rule of good thinking and of truth, and (our) enduring [aramaiti] gives body and breath (to it). . .” Y30.7; “. . . Through its actions, [aramaiti] gives substance to the truth. . .” Y44.6; “Virtuous is the man of [aramaiti]. He is so by reason of his understanding, his words, his actions, his conception [daena]. . .” Y51.21.

⁴ Webster’s International Dictionary (2d edition, 1956).

⁵ “Enlightenment” itself is a metaphor, indicating a mind full of light, i.e. a mind that sees clearly, a mind that understands the truth, which is another way of describing Wisdom personified. In the Gathas, light is often used, sometimes as a metaphor, sometimes as a simile, for Mazda and His divine attributes, the amesha spenta, including, specifically, asha and vohu mano. For example: “... the glories of Him who offers solicitude ... the Wise Lord ...” Y46.17; “... truth which attains glory. . .” Y51.4; “... Him who has the appearance of the sun ...” Y43.16; “... sunlike truth ...” Y32.2; “... the sunlike gain of good thinking ...” Y53.4.

⁶ “Give, o truth, this reward, namely, the attainments of good thinking ...” Y28.7. “Truth, shall I see thee, as I continue to acquire both good thinking and the way to the Lord? ...” Y28.5 (the “way to the Lord” being the path of the amesha spenta).

⁷ Mills translation, SBE Vol. 31, pages 314, 315.

⁸ As we have already discussed in *The Paradox of Being Bad to the Bad*.

⁹ “. . . The Wise Lord who, together with His clever advisor, truth [asha], has judged the just and the unjust ...” Y46.17

¹⁰ “... His soul shall vex him at the Bridge of the Judge surely, in that he has disappeared from the path of truth

by reason of his own actions and (the words) of his tongue." Y51.13; " During their regimes, the Karpans and the Kavis yoked (us) with evil actions in order to destroy the world and mankind. But their own soul and their own conception did vex them when they reached the Bridge of the Judge ..." Y46.11.



Dina G McIntyre, is a Zoroastrian, born in India and came to USA in 1956. She earned a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Law, has practiced law in Pittsburgh, Penn, since 1963, is a member of the bar of all federal and state courts in Pennsylvania, and the United States Supreme Court. She has been a student of the teachings of Zarathushtra since the early 1980s and was the Editor of a 12 lesson course on the Gathas called An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra, which she distributed world-wide in 1989 – 90. She as lectured on the teachings of Zarathushtra at various conferences and seminars in the US, Canada, England and India. Her writings on the teachings of Zarathushtra appear on these websites: www.vohuman.org and www.zarathushtra.com

Arthur Ashe, the legendary Wimbledon player was dying of cancer. From world over, he received letters from his fans, one of which conveyed: "Why does GOD have to select you for such a fatal disease"?

To this Arthur, Ashe replied: "The world over - 5 billion children start playing tennis, 5 million learn to play tennis, 0.5 million learn professional tennis, 50,000 come to the circuit, 5000 reach the grand slam, 50 reach Wimbledon, 4 to semi final, 2 to the finals, When I was holding a cup I never asked God, 'Why me?' And today in pain I should not be asking God 'Why me?'"

Happiness keeps you sweet, trials keep you strong, sorrow keeps you human, failure keeps you humble, success keeps you glowing, but only God keeps you going." (source unknown)

CAIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL NEWS ©

on 11 October, 2005 announced ...

An Achaemenid Golden Book Recovered from Smugglers

24 pieces of historical artifacts were recovered from smugglers in the "Bagh-e Feyz" district of Greater Tehran, according to Colonel Alireza Aqshat of Tehran Police.

The recovered artifacts belong to early 1st millennium BC to Achaemenid period. The most significant artifact in this recovery operation is an eight-page book made of golden sheets inscribed in cuneiform. This is one of the most unique objects from the Achaemenid era, since it is in a book format.

Other objects which are of historical importance are: a golden statue of an ibex, a necklace decorated with seven crescent beaded-tassels, a golden bracelet decorated with rectangular and triangular shapes, a golden bracelet with no decoration, 16 golden earrings, three strings of beads made of precious stones in various shapes and colours, two stone spindle-heads, two little-bells, seven bracelets and two rings made of bronze, two bronze objects in the shape of skeleton, bronze arrow and spear heads, one creature statute made of bronze and a turtle stone stataue, 5 bronze buttons, one copper and four bronze coins, two silver rods and one silver hawkbell.

A farmer from Rudbar also arrested, who found these recovered items, during the plough. The items were sold to smugglers, and were headed for foreign markets.

Tehran police will surrender the artifacts to ICHTO after completing their investigations.

(courtesy of Shahrooz Ash)

“Mama Neem” - Environmentalist Extraordinaire

by kersi rustomji

a petite Kenya Asian Parsi lady based in Kisumu, has been making an immeasurable impact on environmental awareness and plant regeneration and poverty alleviation in Kenya, for more than thirty years.

Perin Savakshaw Fitter, began her conservation work with Kenya Wildlife Association. She directed her efforts at the youth of the country, in the fields of wild life conservation, protection, and its significance as an irreplaceable national asset. By 1980 Perin had become Regional Coordinator for the Western Region.

In June, 1980, she was honoured by a visit to the Wildlife Club stall, by President Daniel arap Moi, during the Nakuru Agricultural Society of Kenya Show.

In 1991 Perin was in a coma for six weeks resulting in serious brain damage due to a



Perin with President Moi at ASK Show in Nakuru

terrible vehicular accident. However this did not deter nor discourage Perin, and with courage and determination she recommenced her work upon recovery. She continued her conservation work by introducing the neem tree to people in the places where soil deterioration, income depletion, and hopelessness pervaded. Known through the country as 'Mama Neem', Perin has been promoting the growth of the extraordinary neem trees, through her entirely voluntary efforts and programmes in conjunction with the Presidential Commission and projects of Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Kenya.

Operating from a bus donated and maintained by the donor, Perin has reestablished awareness of the neem tree, known to the coastal people as *mwarubaine*, the 'forty tree,' for the forty odd ills it helped them against, including the ever present malaria.

The full value of the neem as a pesticide and insecticide, without any damaging residual effects, as well as a large number of medicinal benefits, is well documented, and further research of its many benefits is continuing. The wood is viable for furniture and firewood.

Perin has also made farmers, youth and women's groups, more sustainable and income generating, from other neem products. This has resulted in alleviation of poverty in many rural areas. More than the financial benefits, women in particular have regained their dignity and self worth.

Farmers use it as fertilizer, as well as for its non-toxic non-residual pesticide properties to cultivate, protect, and store their crops, without the need of large cash outlay on unnatural chemicals.

Women's and other groups are made aware of the cheap but powerful medicinal, hygiene, mosquito and cockroach repellent qualities, they can cheaply prepare for themselves from the neem tree products.

Perin has developed a simple manual oil extracting process using a pestle and mortar, thus making it affordable for the low income groups.

Her programmes have embraced the whole of Kenya, from the Nyanza Province through the Rift Valley Province to the Eastern Province, and from the Coast Province to the Highlands, Perin has traversed the country. The adjoining countries of Uganda and Tanzania are keen to invite her to start projects in their soil and tree depleted areas.

Using her donated bus as an office, Perin gives a three hour talk in Swahili, accompanied with demonstrations, and a film show. Neem seeds are distributed and planted. As the

neem thrives even in harsh conditions, the people in such areas can regenerate a green belt. The planting of this extraordinarily beneficial tree is now a world project. Under Perin's personal and voluntary efforts, Kenya leads the world in this environmental, land rejuvenation, and poverty reduction programme.

Perin has also established the Kenya Neem Foundation in Kisumu, to further her work. It has gained international recognition by other world bodies, involved in similar work and is sought after to write or talk at world forums for neem awareness and the role of the neem in poverty alleviation in Kenya, receiving international recognition for her work. When the small funding Perin received in the early stages stopped, she utilized her own resources to continue the work, and where possible to attend

overseas conferences and seminars. The Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme, personally contributed \$500 towards her work.

Perin's efforts in environmental conservation, tree regeneration, offering sustainable and income earning projects through the propagation of neem trees, received its highest accolade, when in 1992, the United Nations Environment Programme created her a Global 500 Laureate.

Even with donors, funds, and sponsorships becoming less available, Perin continues her work voluntarily, utilizing her own finances.

"...I am missing my work in Kenya. Kenyan poors adore my services - in return I have blessings from God. Smile on their faces is my job satisfaction..." Perin wrote to Kersi Rustomji in 2005 while in England.



Mama Neem Perin Fitter at a coast field trip with neem berries



Perin elected as Global 500 Laureate



Kersi Minocher Rustomji was born in 1936, in Kampala, Uganda. He spent his early childhood in Tanganyika, now Tanzania. At the age of 11 his parents moved to Kenya, where he grew up. He trained as a teacher and taught both in Kenya and Australia. He has wide interests, with a special affinity with wildlife and environment. In 2003 he re-visited Kenya and saw the small exhibition on Kenyan Asians, by the Asian African Heritage Trust, Nairobi, Kenya. As it had very little information on Kenya Parsis, he wrote "Parsi Presence in Kenya", which he has endowed to the Trust. Kersi has also written "East African Animal Tales", with a message of living in harmony with all, revolving around the

Zoroastrian tenet of Humahtah, Hukhtah, Hvershtah. He now lives in Australia.

The Editor contacted Ms Fitter for any further information which she could share with the readers.

Perin Fitter says all the work she carries out is "with close consultation with NALEP SIDA project of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Office of the President." 'Mama Neem' as she is known, enlightens through talks and workshops at the grass roots level, with farmers, women's groups, youth groups, NGO's and individuals.

The Persian name for the Neem of India is Azad-Darakth or the Free Tree. The horticultural name is Azadirachta Indica and is derived from Azads Darakth. India has shared its Free Tree and knowledge of its utilization free with the world community and to continue this project, Perin needs funds which will be used strictly for travel by bus and overnight accommodation in temples and rest houses. "My actual budget of US\$3000 from SIDA came to an end after 14 years as a result of corruption in Kenya. Poor people need my services but this needs your support to serve them." She will be leaving Kenya in July 2007 for good. Perin may be contacted at Kenya Neem Foundation, P.O. Box 1268, Kisumu, Kenya.

There are 30 Neem Tshirts available in UK for £10 with her sister Mehru, at 18, Mary Herbert St, Cheylesmore, Coventry CV3 5ER, UK, which were made as a fund raiser.

Perin aims to bring about a Neem Awareness programme in India in Pune, Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Mysore, Secundrabad, Ahmedabad and Aurangabad in January 2007.

Zarathushtra's seminal contribution to mankind beyond Theology

by keki r bhote

Zarathushtra's theology, as the mother of all monotheistic religions is well known. This article seeks to shed light on the genius of his little-known secular achievements.

Zarathushtra's pristine Theology: A capsule summary

- ✧ **God as architect of the universe**
- ✧ **His Law of Asha governing order in the physical world and ethics in the spiritual world.**
- ✧ **Man's freedom to follow the ethical path or choose evil**
- ✧ **The consequence of the ethical path is happiness. Following the evil path brings suffering**
- ✧ **Gods' gift of the Good Mind, heart and conscience to guide man along the ethical path**
- ✧ **Man's active duty to fight the ills of society**
- ✧ **Man at center stage in moving mother earth to perfection¹**

We now move to Zarathushtra's outstanding secular contributions.

Creation vs Evolution: Zarathushtra's Unification

There is a raging debate between creationists, led by Christian fundamentalists and evolutionists about the start of life². The creationists start with Adam and Eve (or with "Intelligent Design" as a code word for God). The evolutionists say that the universe started with "the big bang" followed by the formation of stars and planets: molecules, DNA, biological organisms; neurological complexities and eventually to marine life, vegetation, animals; and finally man.

Zarathushtra brilliantly ties creation and evolution together in his Law of Asha. Even

evolution must have a creation, which he calls God. The law of Asha, while favoring order allows random order, even disorders to exist – in short, evolution, both in the physical and spiritual worlds. The miracle is that despite the many opportunities for disorder (e.g. earthquakes, wars), our world is evolving more orderly to God's goal of perfection.

Zarathushtra's impact on the Greek Philosophers

Westerners assume that philosophy started with the Greeks. The leading Greek philosophers, however, were deeply moved by Zarathushtra's philosophies.

- ✧ Pythagoras, stimulated by Zarathushtra's logic revised pagan Greek mythology.
- ✧ Socrates, moved by Zarathushtra's ethics, reformed the failing Greek material world with spiritual and cultural values.
- ✧ Plato was fascinated by Zarathushtra's precepts of God and creation, the Law of Asha: man endowed with reason, and the worlds slow but sure march to perfection.

Zarathushtra – the Eternal Poet

The Gathas are the quintessence of Zarathushtra's theology, but they also represent poetry at its finest; and sung as hymns they have a hypnotic effect of deep religiosity, as it undoubtedly captivated Zarathushtra's own audiences.

Further, poetry is easy to memorize, yet difficult to alter, so, as poetry, the Gathas were an ancient tape recorder, passed on from generation to generation without tampering. Without the poetic format, Zarathushtra's own words and the sublimity of his message would have been lost for eternity.

Zarathushtra's innovations in the Secular World

The enormity of Zarathushtra's many "firsts" in secular matters, can best be appreciated when we realize that he lived at the very

dawn of history – around 1700 BC according to Zoroastrian scholars or even further back around 5500 BC, based on the latest archeological research.

With the tools of the modern archeologist – satellite photography, atomic clocks, DNA sampling etc., all more accurate than the old carbon 14 dating – Historical milestones of the Neolithic period have been moved back in time by 3000 to 4000 years, placing Zarathushtra around 5500 BC.³

Zarathushtra – Champion of Agriculture

Of the 3 major revolutions of history – The agricultural revolution of Zarathushtra's age, the 19th century industrial revolution and the late 20th century digital revolution, the first was more fundamental and profound than the other two. It moved entire societies from the nomadic/hunter age to the agricultural age.

While Zarathushtra did not invent agriculture, he was a leader in its institutionalization. In the schism between the nomadic Aryans who wanted a nomadic life (and eventually wandered off to India) and the Aryans who opted for a settled agricultural life, Zarathushtra championed the farmer. He says:

“the earth is most joyous when the faithful sow the most grain, water the soil that is most dry or drain the ground that is most wet”.⁴

He championed three great innovations – the domestication of cattle; improving cereals by mutation and hybridization (ages before genetic engineering); and the beginning of irrigation.⁵ On this last point, he paved the way for Iran's world-famous underground canals to carry water from the snows of mountains to parched fields, without evaporation, hundreds of miles away – the great feat of emperor Darius.

Zarathushtra turns swords into plowshares⁶

Zarathushtra's people had been oppressed and cowed by rapacious warriors and

domineering priests. The patron saint of the warriors had been Mithra, the Aryan God of war. Zarathushtra not only undefiled Mithra, but also eliminated him completely in his Gathas. Instead he weaned the warrior away from senseless fighting on to useful help for the farmer.

Similarly, priests who had enjoyed the highest status in the old Aryan caste system, had been exploiting the poor. Zarathushtra put the tiller of the soil at the center of his religious system, ahead of both warrior and priests; he opposed the meaningless rituals of the priests and animal sacrifices. He lamented the mindless destruction of mother earth, symbolized by the innocent cow. He urged the clergy to pay less attention to temples and cleanse their souls by becoming rural social engineers!

Zarathushtra – The Economist

By championing agronomy Zarathushtra transformed the economic landscape. In the nomadic hunter age, people spent all their waking hours scrounging for food. In the new settled life they had more time for leisure. Arts and crafts flourished. Garments went from animal skins to woven cloth. Pottery – that metric of archeological dating – advanced to high furnace temperature glazes of excellent quality.

By dint of his personality, officials were persuaded to lower crushing taxes on the people. Prosperity became the new crop!

Zarathushtra – The Man of Science and Medicine

Zarathushtra freed the mind from dogma and superstition with God's gift of "Vohu Manah" – Good Mind. Zarathushtra stressed that the answers to life's mysteries lay not in others' opinions but in each person's scientific independent inquiry.

The study of astronomy started with the prototype Aryans during the long winter nights in the Arctic Circle before the ice age.

Zarathushtra channeled these studies so that the later Magi priests acquired world fame in astronomy. The Zoroastrian era spawned a whole body of knowledge in health and medicine. In those ancient days, the science of herbs cured a whole range of illnesses – from arthritis to cardiovascular diseases. Today, doctors roam the under developed world to search for herbal remedies! Unfortunately, Greek armies and Arab fanaticism destroyed whole volumes of Zoroastrian medical literature.

Zarathushtra – The Champion of Women's Rights and Human Rights

Zarathushtra taught that women should have equal rights with men – at home, in commerce, in temples and for inheritance. No other religion has elevated the fair sex to this level of parity.

His crusade extended to the larger issue of all human rights and justice – individual rights over state rights; the rights of the agriculturists over the warrior or priest; and of the oppressed over the tyrant. His was not the later Hammurabi Law code of 1750 BC but the higher law of Asha.

The Master Eco-Theologist

Of all of Zarathushtra's many-splendored contributions, none sparkled as much, or endures for eternity, as his eco-theology – the interdependence and unity of all the elements of mother earth – plant, mineral, animal, human – and its march to perfection.

✧ In today's world, still chocking with air pollution and contaminated water, Zarathushtra was the original environmentalist long before the Kyoto treaty! He preached that it was man's duty to preserve air and water purity as God had designed.

✧ In today's world recklessly wasting the earth's mineral resources Zarathushtra was the earliest conservationist. Even in that early Bronze Age, he decried the over-mining of metals like copper and not allowing land to lie fallow to replenish its nutrients.

✧ In today's world where there is still mindless cutting down of trees and disappearance of wooded lands and thousands of species of plant life, Zarathushtra was the premier botanist. He bemoaned the massive cutting down of trees that turned forests into deserts. He introduced and sanctified the use of fruits, flowers, grain and plants through religious ceremonies rich with their symbolic value to humans.

✧ In a world where there was wanton cruelty to animals and their slaughter in ridiculous religious sacrifices, Zarathushtra was the first animal rightist, evoking, in his Gathas, the tableau of a weeping earth witnessing such callous slaughter.

Zarathushtra charged that man alone with the gift of Vohu Manah, was the shepherd of God's flock. This was Ahura Mazda's grand design to move our world, however troubled it may be, slowly but surely toward perfection.



References:

¹ Keki R. Bhote: "The Quintessential Principles of Zoroastrianism", Parliament of World Religions, Chicago, IL. Sept. 1993

² Claudia Walis: "The Evolution Wars", Time Magazine, August 15, 2004

³ Mary Settergest: "Plato Prehistorian", Linois Farne Press, Hudson, New York, 1990

⁴ IBID

⁵ IBID

⁶ Mary Boyce: "Zoroastrians – Their Religions Beliefs and Practices", Rutledge and Kegan Paul; London



Keki R Bhote is Vice President of the World Zoroastrian Organization and President of its US Region. In 1964, he founded the Zoroastrian Association for all of North America. As a life-long student of Zoroastrianism he has addressed three world and eight North American Zoroastrian Congresses and two Parliaments of World Religions.

He is authoring a book on: "Zarathushtra's Contribution to World Religions and a Blueprint for Zoroastrianism's Renaissance".

Trita Parsi

- A profile
courtesy, Behram Pastakia

Discussing the Iranian nuclear programme on the Jim Lehrer show, January 12, 2006



Trita Parsi is a Middle East specialist at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, where he is finishing his Doctoral thesis on Israeli-Iranian relations under Professor Francis Fukuyama and Drs Zbigniew Brzezinski, R K Ramazani, William Zartman and Charles Doran. A book based on the thesis will be published later in 2006 by Yale University Press.

Mr Parsi is one of the few people in the US - if not the only one - that has travelled both to Iran and Israel and interviewed top officials in these countries on the state of Israeli-Iranian relations. He has conducted more than 110 interviews with senior Israeli, Iranian and American officials in all three countries. He is fluent in Persian/Farsi.

He has followed Middle East politics for more than a decade, both through work in the field, and through extensive experience on Capitol Hill and the United Nations. His articles on Middle East affairs have been published in the Financial Times, Jane's Intelligence Review, the Globalist, the Jerusalem Post, Bitter Lemons and the Daily Star.

Trita Parsi is a frequent commentator on US-Iranian relations and Middle Eastern

affairs, and has appeared on BBC World News, PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, NPR, CNN International, C-Span, MSNBC, Voice of America and Swedish National Television.

He has served as an advisor to Chairman Bob Ney (R-OH18) on Middle East issues and is a co-founder and current President of the National Iranian American Council (www.niacouncil.org), a non-partisan, non-profit organization promoting Iranian-American participation in American civic life.

Mr Parsi has worked for the Swedish Permanent Mission to the UN in New York where he served in the Security Council handling the affairs of Afghanistan, Iraq, Tajikistan and Western Sahara, and the General Assembly's Third Committee addressing human rights in Iran, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Iraq.

Trita Parsi was born in Iran and grew up in Sweden. He earned a Master's Degree in International Relations at Uppsala University and a second Master's Degree in Economics at Stockholm School of Economics. ■■■

Rooted on Channel 5

Dorab Mistry, of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe Inc, informs -

In August 2005 Young Zoroastrian Jessica Todiwala, daughter of Parvez and Bapsi Todiwala, appeared on an episode of *Rooted*. This was a Channel 5 TV series where children from different backgrounds go back to their homeland to discover their roots. Jessica was filmed on a trip to India discovering her Parsi Zoroastrian roots.

BBC Radio4 interviewed Jessica for their programme called "Go 4 it", which was broadcasted on Sunday 12th February at 7:15pm, on BBC Radio 4.

Rooted is currently in its third series on Channel 5. Out of 38 programmes, the Zoroastrian programme featuring Jessica Todiwala has been chosen as one of the few to be re-aired as a compilation series. ■■■

The House Of Song

by raiond mirza

Final part of a 3-part essay

*t*he first two instalments of this article began with wondering why of all the world's religions, Zoroastrianism had no music in ritual worship, and then reached up to the point at which I discovered ancient musical structures within the contemporary performance of prayers. My comparative research between Iranian and Parsi priests identified six common musical building blocks which I termed musical DNA. Interviews and historical data suggested strongly that these building blocks which link the sounds of Iranian and Parsi priests who otherwise had no contact are very likely to have been preserved since the last time Zoroastrians were a single community, 936 AD, the year many Zoroastrians fled Iran and split the community in two. The final questions facing me were:

? How did these performance features get preserved

? Were they all the music we ever had in prayers or were they the only survivors of an ancient practice that was once more complex and developed

? If so, what happened to that tradition

The answer to how performance features could have been preserved down through hundreds of years by two separate groups of men who had little if any contact lay in the training of priests and in the priestly culture in which young Mobeds are educated.

The training method can vary to the extent that some students receive a deeper education such as those of the Dadar Madressa and Cama Athornan in Bombay where the Avestan language is taught. However, the fundamental process of absorbing the prayers remains the same for all priestly students whether they are taught

at home or in an institution. They are apprentices. They sit with a teacher for years and learn prayers, line by line, verse by verse, imitating the teacher who reads first and corrects the student who repeats immediately after.

The important point revealed here is that students are only ever corrected on memorisation and pronunciation. The sound of the prayers, pitch, melodic lines, dynamics, any musical considerations at all are never discussed. At best, students receive an encouragement to pray in a full voice.

This also brings us to the issue of the priestly culture in which young Mobeds are made. It is an unquestioning, accepting milieu. The authority of the teacher and the specifics of received wisdom are never contemplated. This is partly due to Eastern deference for age and tradition and also because the sheer volume of prayers that need to be learned, dictate that over the years only so much information can be crammed into a young student's head. Especially if that student is learning a body of prayers in a dead language that he will never speak conversationally.

Be all that as it may, studying the education of a new priest showed that as a young boy sits next to a teacher for seven years repeating line after line, he absorbs the things he hears as much as the things he is told. Interviews and recordings revealed that young boys throughout the years were unconsciously picking up inflections, melodic lines and in short, the six performance features I had discovered and called musical DNA. In the same way that a father and son will look different from each other although they share the same genetic building blocks, so too will a student priest sound different from his teacher although his prayers are shaped by same underlying musical structures.

Therefore we can conclude that the performance features were passed down through centuries by boys who absorbed them from their teachers and then in turn

when they grew up passed them on to other boys, and all without discussion, without ever looking at the thing they were passing on. Usually without even knowing anything was being passed on. This last point was important in establishing the integrity of the information transferring from generation to generation and it can be summed up with one key thought. There is a good chance that the six performance features were being preserved faithfully because a messenger who doesn't know he is carrying a message cannot alter it. The unquestioning culture of the Zoroastrian priesthood has acted as a protective layer around the music we hear when prayers are performed.

If one accepts that these few musical building blocks are over 1000 years old, the inquisitive gaze is then pushed further back into their origins and we must wonder, where did they come from? Did they originate from the Sasanians (0-600AD), The Parthians (300 – 0 BC) from the Achaemenids (500-300 BC), maybe even from time of the prophet (1000 – 1,500 BC)? Unfortunately here the trail runs cold. As mentioned in the first part of this article, there are some ancient clues such as the term Gatha, itself meaning hymn, but nothing substantial enough to make a definitive claim.

There still remains, nonetheless, another question. Even if we don't know exactly when and where the performance features came from, is it possible to know if they are all the music we ever had in worship or are they perhaps, as stated at the beginning of this segment, the cellular remains of what might have been a more fully developed tradition?

The answer was surprisingly found, not within Zoroastrianism, but in a sister religion. Hinduism. It may at first sound preposterous that the world's first monotheistic religion could have anything in common with what appears to be it's largest polytheistic opposite. Again I am indebted to Almut Hintze who guided me at a crucial point in my research and suggested I

explore the commonalities between the origins of Hinduism and Zoroastrianism.

At first the only connection was linguistic. Indians and ancient Persians stem from the same tribe and so Avestan and Sanskrit both spring from a common proto Indo-Iranian language. The sample below shows that they are virtually identical in some cases.

Avestan	Sur m daamohu s vist m
Old Indic	Suram dhamasu savistham
Proto-Indo-Iranian	curam dhamasu vistham
English	strong, among the living the strongest

Avestan	mithr m yazaai zaothraabyo
Old Indic	mitr-m yajaai hŪtraabhya
Proto-Indo-Iranian	mitr-m yajaai jh-utraabhyas
	Mithra, I honour with libations

Further investigation highlighted some striking similarities. The Gathas of Zoroastrianism are hymns. The Vedas (divided into four parts) also have a body of hymns, the Rgveda. Many of the Vedic hymns are addressed to deities such as Indra or Agni. Zoroastrian Yashts, too are hymns dedicated to individual deities. To be a Zoroastrian priest is a hereditary position belonging to boys of an Osti family. The Vedic tradition is exclusively in the hands of boys born into the Brahmin caste. Young Zoroastrian boys are trained to be priests in an ostensibly oral tradition for seven years roughly between the ages of seven and fourteen. Young Brahmins learn their texts by heart during several years between the ages of five and twelve. Zoroastrians wear a sacred protective woven cord called a kusti. Brahmins wear a sacred thread called a krsnainam as well as a sacred rope, the mekhalaa. The Gathic and Vedic traditions also share a common word for priest, athravan/atharvan.

The list goes on extensively but one feature in the Vedic tradition is of particular interest, the Samaveda. The Samaveda is essentially the singing of the text of the Rgveda using a large number of musical notes. Most significantly, the Samaveda is specifically to be chanted by a special class of singer priest, the Udgatr.

Perhaps originally, Zoroastrianism also had singer priests and a version of the Gathas which was more elaborately sung than what we hear today and this brings us to the final question. If an elaborate tradition of music in worship had existed, what happened to it? Perhaps, in one word, Alexander. His invasion of Persia was notable for its tremendous slaughter of priests, particularly at temples. If a special class of Zoroastrian singer priests ever existed, it would be normal for them to mostly be found in temples and during an invasion that would have made them exceptionally vulnerable. It is likely that when they died, an entire body of knowledge and a musical tradition died as well. It could very well be that in the Samaveda and its singer priests, the Udgatrs, we have the modern, evolved, Vedic counterparts to what was lost in Zoroastrianism.

However, the abiding thought that my research left me with was not so much sadness at what was lost but rather the thrilling knowledge that something had been found and it had been right in front of us for centuries. The main accomplishment of my thesis was to place Zoroastrianism on the musical map of the world. Perhaps others can take up the work and make further discoveries.

Ultimately, leaving aside speculations of the distant past and possible future, it is sufficiently rewarding to know that when Zoroastrian priests pray and they manifest the musical DNA, they are making music, ancient music and when we hear it we connect to our ancestors, possibly to our prophet, and always, to God.



Dr. Raïmond Mirza, composer and writer, received his PhD from the School For Oriental And African Studies (SOAS) - University of London in 2004. His historical research and contemporary field work uncovered a previously unknown side of Zoroastrian prayer and identified music which is more than 1000 years old. His thesis, "The House Of Song" is currently being considered for publication. He has lectured at Cambridge - The Ancient India And Iran Trust, SOAS, and for The Temenos Academy.

He has composed numerous scores for film, TV, theatre and radio including the award winning "A Suitable Boy" and the current BBC Radio 4 nine hour dramatisation of "The Raj Quartet". His music for the Nigerian drama *Voices* was performed for the Queen on her last African tour and he won the public vote for his composition "Viderunt Emmanuel" in the BBC national new talent competition.

Nou Rouz & Nim Rouz

by fariborz rahnamoon



“The coming of the season at the proper time of the solar year”

Avesta Haptan Yasht (Ha-3)

The ancient Iranian calendar was a solar calendar. The fact is repeatedly documented in the ancient Avesta writings. One of the most important solar festivals is called Nou Rouz - the New Year. Nou Rouz literally means the 'New Day' and is celebrated on the vernal equinox in spring. It is the time of rejuvenation in nature, the beginning of a new life and what better time can there be to start the New Year than with nature itself.

Nou Rouz according to the Persian mythology is believed to date back to about ten thousand BC, when Shah Jamshid the Pisdadian king celebrated the first spring after the end of the last ice age.

The ancient Zoroastrian calendar consists of twelve equal months of 30 days each and between the last day of the twelfth month and the vernal equinox there are five free days or six in the case of a leap year. The



Nou Rouz is celebrated by the people of the lands that once formed the Persian Empire, irrespective of their present day political borders or religious beliefs.

leap year is automatically determined by the equinox and not by any belief or human agreement. Every year the equinox happens about 5 hours 48 minutes 20 seconds (.24190day) later whereby

automatically by the 4th year it happens 23:13:20 hour later making that year a 366 day year.

NIM ROUZ & NOU ROUZ

Nou Rouz is one of the only scientifically precise New Year celebrated in the world. The calculation and coining of the word "Nou Rouz" (New Day) as against "Sal e Nou" (New Year) was the work of Zarathushtra the sage of ancient Iran, who was also the first to envisage the concept of Meridian. Zarathushtra calculated the first meridian and called it "Nim Rouz", which means "Mid Day". The Meridian of Zarathushtra was located in ancient Sistan at 62 degrees longitude. Even today that location in Afghanistan is called the Nimrouz Province.

When it is mid day at the Meridian of Zarathushtra (62 degrees longitude) there is sunshine from Japan, the land of the rising sun, to the western tip of Africa. What better location can there be for an intellectual and scientific meridian.

Similarly the unequal relation between the revolution and rotation of the earth led Zarathushtra to calculate and derive the concept of Nou Rouz the New Day. Nou Rouz is when the sunrise coincides with the vernal equinox at a predetermined longitude. This event happens every year at a different longitude and has repeated itself at the same location once in about 1230 – 1240 years.

The fact is that the earth goes round the sun in 365.24190 tropical days, thereby every four years we have an extra 0.9676 day (0.24190×4), so we can add a day in the fourth year, although by that we are starting the fifth year short by 0.0324 day ($1 - .9676$) which means 46 minutes and 39.36 seconds short. To cover the short fall every 120 years we skip a leap year but even that results in a fraction $120 \times 365 + 1164 = 43829$ days accounted for by our system of recording leap years. While in fact the earth has taken $365.24190 \times 120 = 43829.028$ days. Thus the 120th year again

starts short by 40 minutes and 32 seconds (1440×0.028). Apart from these there are other factors that effect the time on earth, like the gravitational pull of various planets when they come close to the earth once in a few years, or a comet passing close to the earth, even a strong earthquake has an effect on the time on earth. Since the advent of the atomic clock these factors have been recognized by the scientific world.

Zarathushtra was a sage whose wisdom was far ahead of our time and even in times to come, for he understood the ultimate truth in nature – "Asha". He may be called a prophet as long as we do not categorize him and do injustice to his wisdom.

Zarathushtra always looked for solutions in nature. He realized that every year the equinox coincides with the sunrise at a different longitude and whatever fractional difference that remains in the calendar even after regular corrections can be zeroed out when the sunrise coincide once again at the same longitude.

His calculation showed him that in the year 1725 BC the vernal equinox would coincide with the sunrise at Sistan and so he named the New Year of that year as Nou Rouz the New Day.

As recorded in history on the spring equinox of 487 BC Nou Rouz was celebrated at Takht-e-Jamshid (Persepolis), when the first rays of the rising sun lighted the square stone set in the central hall of the Apadana palace. The next Nou Rouz in Iran was missed around 750 AD after the fall of the Persian Empire into the hands of the Arabs who followed the lunar calendar and the event went unnoticed. The ancient knowledge was lost and today Nou Rouz has become synonymous with Sal e Nou (New Year).

Nou Rouz has also been adopted as a religious new year by those modern Semitic religions that were started by Iranians in Iran. Like the Bahai's and the Ismaili's who have adopted it without knowing the real

significance of the festival or the origin of its name.

Nou Rouz as a new year shall one day be adopted by the intellectual world when their attention is drawn to the truth behind it.

HAFT SEENEE THE SEVEN TRAYS - ITS ANCIENT SIGNIFICANCE

Nou Rouz as a New Year festival is celebrated by symbolically arranging seven items on a green tablecloth. The Zoroastrians in Iran, who were concentrated in Yazd and Kerman, are known to have arranged the Nou Rouz table with seven trays, in which they put various items that were available to the family. Most of the items stood either as a sign of thanks giving for its abundance in the past year or for a wish for its abundance in the coming year. That what is of significance is the seven trays (Haft Seene).

Today in Iran seven items that start with the letter Sheen - or Seen - are arranged on a table. The Iranian Muslims use items starting with the letter Seen because they cannot place wine (SHarab) on the table. In either case the items have been given positive philosophic meanings, which are not necessarily known to all the people, for they follow it as a tradition. Those who know the meaning may only know a version of the new philosophic meanings but not the real ancient ones. The new meanings are the ones that have been repeated over and over again to disguise the real ones and thereby making it possible to preserve the ancient intellectual Zoroastrian culture and custom in Islamic Iran on a national level.

Like many other customs not only was the real symbolic meaning behind the seven trays disguised but even SHEEN was changed to SEEN so that wine (SHarab) could be replaced by vinegar (SErkeh) and the tradition preserved. A few generations having gone by even the Zoroastrians of today are oblivious of the ancient meaning and significance of this culture. They also

have started believing in some version of the new philosophic meanings given to the seven items. So while scholars are busy discussing if "Sheen" is correct or "Seen" the grocery shops make a few extra bucks selling both series of items.

With a view to the fact that in the near past seven trays (seene) were placed with any number of items in them, and these days we have seven items starting with Sheen or Seen, and the bas-relief's at Takht e Jamshid (Persepolis) depict seven people from each country carrying Nou Rouz gifts,¹ shows the importance of **SEVEN**.

The real significance of seven was to represent the Seven Eternal Laws, which embodies the Teachings of Zarathushtra.

It was a way of renewing the pledge to follow the path towards perfection as prescribed by Zarathushtra in the Gathas and later tabulated as the "Seven AmshaSepanta".²

The ancient meaning of the seven AmshaSepanta is as follows:

1 - BAH-MAN (Good Mind)
Zarathushtra in the Gathas wants us to **use our mind in a good way** and each one of us should use our mind to its maximum capacity. (VohuMana)

2 - ORDIBEHEST (The Ultimate Truth)
Using the mind in a good way leads to the discovery of the Laws of nature – the laws of the universe - the **ultimate truth** (AshaVahista).

3 - SHAHRIVAR (Good Guidance – Good Laws)
The knowledge so derived should be used to create **good guidance, good laws**, good invention, and good products (Khashatra Vairya).

4- ESFAND (Lawful Desire)
The person, the community, the nation following these good laws become righteous, whereby all **desires are lawful** (Spenta Armaity).

5 - KHORDAD (Perfection)

The people living in such a society progress **towards perfection** (Hurvatata)

6 - AMORDAD (Immortal)

Having achieved perfection one becomes **immortal** (Amartata). Immortality has two aspect, one - while a person is alive he/she does not fear death, and two - after death such a person is immortal because he/she is remembered for the extra ordinary good deeds.

7 - KHOD-AH (Self Realization)

A person who has gone through these stages in a life time achieves Self Realization (KHOD-AH) [which is also the word used in Persian, Urdu, Hindi and many other languages to mean GOD] and such a person sees and become one with the *Creator of Wisdom* Ahura Mazda, within oneself.³

The ultimate goal of the teachings of Zarathushtra is to lead the world towards perfection.

Truly the knowledge derived
By the good mind
Never before known
Among the wise and in the universe
With it make good rules and never
waning
Increasing righteousness
Leading us towards Perfection

ZARATHUSHTRA -Yasna Ha 28.3 (FR)

We need to truly understand the ancient Iranian culture and let others also know the truth about it. Truth and intelligence is a virtue and there should be no fear in advertising it. If you possess something good, which by sharing increases goodness in the world, why be afraid to share it.

Knowledge (of Asha⁴) when you gain
With minds good use
Having realized wisdom
The path to righteousness
The ultimate message of Wisdom
Through words excellent
We shall change (convert)
Those who do not know
By speaking

ZARATHUSHTRA -Yasna Ha 28.5 (FR)

Let us celebrate Nou Rouz with the knowledge of the real significance of this ancient Persian festival and the true meaning of Haft Seene/ Sheen/ Seen and resolve to use it in our daily life and help make the world a better place, a paradise, the heaven.



Notes -

¹ See picture on cover of Iran Zamin Vol -1 No.2 at <http://www.ancientiran.com>, which also appears on page 30 of this issue.

² The Seven Amesha Sepantas are also to be found in the New Testament. The first three are mentioned by Luke and Mathew while giving the meaning of the symbolic three gifts by the Magi's who were the followers of Zarathushtra, to baby Jesus and the last four are mentioned and explained by Jesus who was helped and influenced by the Magi's. Go to <http://www.ancientiran.com> and read "Influence on other religions" for detail and quotes from the Bible.

³ For the ancient meaning of the "Seven Eternal Laws" in detail please check the web site <http://www.ancientiran.com>

⁴ ASHA means - The ultimate Truth - Nature - Universe -The laws of nature - The laws of the Universe.



Fariborz Rahnamoon was born in Yazd, Iran but lived and educated in Bombay. He was one of the directors of "Sazeman e Javanan e Zarthushti" a youth organization in Bombay which organized and performed most of the festivals and fasli gahambars. He returned

to Iran, married Manijeh and lived there till 1991 when he migrated to Sydney, Australia with his wife and three sons Farzad, Mehraban & Farhad. There he obtained permission to install the bas relief of Cyrus the Great, in the Sydney Olympic Park. He later moved to Vancouver, Canada. He is the Chairperson of the Arbab Rostam Guiv Trust in Vancouver, the editor of Iran Zamin, a cultural magazine and the webmaster of www.ancientiran.com (email ancientiran@yahoo.com).

The art of wine in Ancient Persia

by touraj daryaee

"I could drink much wine and yet bear it well"

Darius the Great, King of Persia, 6th BC

Athenaeus 10.45

The history of wine making and wine drinking is an old one in Persia, and today the Dariush vineyard in the Napa Valley which has become renowned in the art of wine making, is attempting to revive this tradition in the United States. Wine connoisseurs today may be familiar with the word Shiraz, the name of a town in southwest Persia famed for its grapes. Whether or not the Shiraz grape was the source of the Medieval Syrah, brought to France from Persia in the thirteenth century AD by the knight, Gaspard de

Sterimberg,¹ or not is not central to the issue. What is important is that the mere fact that Shiraz is alleged as the source of the Rhone Valley grapes in Avignon, makes it clear that the prestige of the town and its grapes was fabled in antiquity and the middle ages. It was the Shiraz grape, again, which was brought to Australia in the nineteenth century AD, and which now has become well-known in the United States.

But the history of wine making in Persia is much older. How old, one may ask? Archaeological investigations have shown that in fact it was in Persia that the earliest wine was made in world history.²

At Godin Tepe in Western Persia the earliest evidence for wine making and wine points to the fourth millennium BC.³

The jars found there have yielded evidence of wine residue and it is thought that they were used for storing wine as its funnel for the wine makers.⁵ The location of Godin Tepe along the east-west trade route also

plays along with the story of Shiraz grape having been taken to the West, and the evidence here suggests that wine making may very well have had its diffusion from this location.

It is with the first Persian dynasty, the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC), that we find the culture of wine drinking in the form of long drinking vessels known as *rhyton*. We hear that the Persian court was most

elaborate place of feasting that the Greeks knew. The existence of *rhytons* and the mention of wine filters (Greek *oino th toi*) in the antique literature from Persia, all suggest the importance of the drink.⁶

Herodotus tells us that the Persians were very fond of wine (Old Persian *btu-*) and that they made important decisions in the following manner.

First they became drunk, since they believed that only when you are drunk do you tell the truth. Then, the next day when they were sober they reconsidered the matter.⁷ Pliny



COURTESY THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

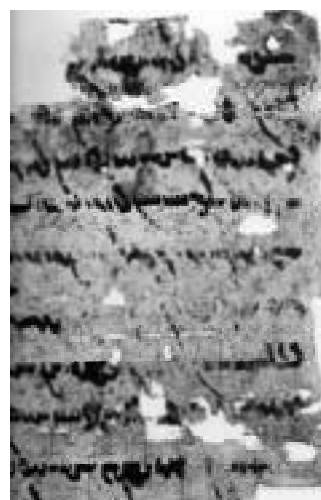


states that wine was also used with drugs for collecting information. The type of drug used with wine was called *Achaemenis* which had the following effect: "when it is drunk in wine, criminals confess to everything."⁸

This interest in wine in Ancient Persia is manifest not only in material culture such as jars, plates and cups but is also documented in the written sources. A Middle Persian text from the Sasanian Empire (224-651 AD) entitled (*King*) *Husraw and Page* mentions the best foods and drinks that are fit for a king. It is really a royal menu which is rarely noticed by food historians. The text was composed at the court of the King of Kings, Khosraw I in the sixth century AD, one of the greatest of the Sasanian monarchs who ruled Persia. What this text demonstrates that, just as today when we identify wines with regions such as France, Australia, Italy, California, etc. the Persians also were interested in wines from all regions. By this time the various kinds of wines were distinguished, by their color and filtering technique. In this passage from the text the king asks what are the best wines and the Page answers:

*gōwēd rēdag kū anōsag bawēd ēn
hēd may ī hamāg nēwag ud xwas
may ī kanīg kē nēwag wīrāyēnd ud
may ī harēwig ud may ī marw-rōd ud
may ī bustīg ud bādag ī halwānīg bē
hamwār abāg may ī āsūrīg ud bādag
ī wāzarangīg ēc may pahikār nēst*

"May you be immortal, these wines are all good and fine, the wine of Transoxania, when they prepare it well, the wine of Herat, the wine of Marw-Rud, the wine of Bust and the must of Hulwan, but no wine can ever compare with the Babylonian wine and the must of Bazrang."⁹



The taste for various wines included *may ī spēd* "white wine," and *may ī suxr* "red wine." These wines of course could have different qualities, such as *may ī wirāstag* "clarified wine," or also *bādag ī ābgēn* "crystal wine," which were served in a *dōlag* or *tong*. For information on the daily usage and consumption of wine we can look at the papyri which are basically letters written between Persian officers in the seventh century CE and which mention the following (Papyri 8809):

YWM 'št't HS y spyt 3 lkynk'
HS y gwahr 18 lkynk' gwspand
1...
*rōz ī āštād may ī spēd 3
lagēnag
may ī gohr 18 lagēnag
gōspand 1*

Day of Aštād, 3 containers of white wine
18 containers of stock wine, 1 sheep ...
With the coming of Islam the consumption of wine and other alcoholic beverages was deemed *haram* "illicit," but

Medieval Persian texts, especially the genre known as "Mirrors for Princes," demonstrate the continuing love of wine. Persians throughout their history have been able to compartmentalize their contradictory habits and mores. Thus, while Islam became an important facet of the Persian culture and, in turn benefited from that culture, *may* "wine" remained a constant motif in Persian literature. One can argue over the literal or metaphoric nature of the use of wine in Persian literature, but

this persistent mention is owed to the ancient Persian tradition of wine drinking and wine making. This reminds me of Prophet Zarathushtra who in proclamation against the drinking of Haoma brings us back full circle (48.10):

kadā mazdā manarōiš narō vī səntē
kadā ajən muθrəm ahyā madahyā
yā angrayā karapanō urūpayeintī
yācā xratū dušəxšθrā dahyunam

When, Wise One (Mazda), shall men desist from murdering?
 when shall they fear the folly of that intoxicating drink (i.e., Haoma), through the effects of which the Karpans (mumbling priests), as well as the evil rulers of the lands torture our (good) intentions in an evil way?¹⁰



Needless to say the Persians did not stop consuming Haoma and they still didn't abstain when the Prophet Muhammad proclaimed against the consumption of wine.



References:

- ¹ "A Short history of Shiraz," <http://www.uncork.com.au/tidbits10.htm>
 P.E. McGovern, "Vin extraordinaire," *The Sciences*, 36/6, 1996, pp. 7-31; P.E. McGovern, U. Hartung, V.R. Badler, D.L. Glusker, and L.J. Exner, "The Beginnings of Winemaking and Viniculture in the Ancient Near East and Egypt," *Expedition*, 39/1, 97, pp. 3-21.
 V.R. Badler, "The Archaeological Evidence for Winemaking, Distribution and Consumption at Proto-Historica Godin Tepe, Iran," *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine*, ed. P.E. McGovern, S.J. Fleming, and S.H. Katz, Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1996, p. 45.
⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
 Ph. Gignoux, "matériaux pour une histoire de vin dans l'iran ancien," *Matériaux pour l'histoire Économique*

du monde iranien, eds. R. Gyselen and M. Szuppe, *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 21, Paris, 1999, P. 39.

⁸ Herdotous, I. 135.

⁹ Pliny, *Natural History*, 23.17

¹⁰ D. Monchi-Zadeh, "Xusrov i Kavatan ut Retak," *Monumentum Morgenstern*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1985, p. 75.

S. Insler, *The Gathas of Zarathustra*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1975, P. 93.



Touraj Daryaei was born in Tehran, Iran in 1967. His elementary and secondary schooling was in Tehran, and Athens. Daryaei took his PhD in History at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1999. He specializes in the history and culture of Ancient Persia. He has numerous articles and books to his name. He is also the editor of The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies. Touraj Daryaei is the Associate Professor of Ancient History California State University, Fullerton. tdaryaei@fullerton.edu & www.sasanika.com

Correction in article appearing in Hamazor Issue 4/05 pp 22-25:

"Zoroastrians in the Pakistan Armed Forces' - In the paragraph on the Pakistan Air Force, in the old guard I had mentioned Squadron Leader Behram Pestonji. This was an error and intended to be Squadron Leader Jamshed (Jimmy) Pestonji. About Jimmy let me say that he held his own in the Air Force because at the time he was the only Zoroastrian in the force. I have recently come across some retired air force people who speak very highly of Jim when he was their instructor. Jim is married to Jal Golwalla's daughter Zarrin. My apologies Jim for the error. Behram Pestonji (Jimmy's nephew) too was in the Pakistan Air Force and has been mentioned later.

I would also like to apologise for leaving out some people who have been mentioned in the list added, courtesy Mahyar Dhatigara. I did not know of them; and still have not heard of them. However, just to set the record straight, Firoze Kanga was never in the Pakistan Armed forces - Firoze left the service before partition; this has been verified by his twin brother Beji Kanga." - Rustom Darrah

Silver Jubilee of WZO, India

Reported by Godrej N Dotivala

*t*he Silver Jubilee of the World Zoroastrian Organisation was celebrated by WZO India, when a thousand strong audience arrived at the Albless Baug on 7th December, 2005.

The programme commenced with a few dances presented by Hutoxi Doodhwala and Silloo Mahava.

Solicitor, Dadi Bejonji Engineer, President of WZO India, from its inception, extended a warm welcome to the eminent personages present – the theme being – “Happiness unto Others”. He expressed his sincerest gratitude to Dadi Mistry, Senior Vice President of WZO India from Delhi for obtaining messages from His Excellency Mr A P J Abdul Kalam, President of India and Honorable Mrs Sonia Gandhi, President, All India Congress Committee.

In his tribute President Kalam lauded WZO. *“It is heartening that the World Zoroastrian Organisation is working for the welfare and rehabilitation of the community by providing them self employment, education, medical and financial support. I hope the Organisation will continue its mission of improving the lives of those who are in need and will also provide them a better livelihood. This tool will not only make them self reliant but also make them prosper and become enlightened citizens.”*

Mr Engineer in his address recalled how the Organisation had primarily striven to enhance the socio-economic status of the

Zoroastrian community and had scrupulously avoided any controversies, religious or otherwise.



Silver handshake - L to R: Shahpur Captain, Dadi Misty, Dadi Engineer

He went on to innumerate WZO's significant achievements down the years.

☞ Educational grants/scholarships from the nucleus of Rs25 lacs (Rs2.5 million) donated by an anonymous well wisher.

☞ Medical aid wherever and whatever feasible.

☞ Assisting youth in computer education. So far over Rs11 lacs have been disbursed as interest free loans for this purpose.

☞ Agiaries and various other institutions have received donations both in cash and kind.

☞ Furniture, food grains, gas stoves, etc., have been provided to the khandhias (pall bearers of the community) and to poor families

in Udwada and other towns as well as villages of Gujarat.

☞ Providing residents of two widows' chawls with necessary wherewithal including periodical medical checkups and medicines.

☞ Pilgrims to Iran Shah at Udwada are offered short time lodging facilities at WZO's Katila lodge.

☞ Organised a walkathon and gave the proceeds to the B D Petit Parsi General Hospital.

☞ Volunteers of WZO in the age group of 18 to 75 periodically collect old newspapers, clothes and other items from the residents of the Parsi baghs and colonies, sell them and earmark the proceeds to the BPP for the Doongerwadi. In the past more than Rs8 lacs have been collected for this project.

☞ Felicitation functions have been arranged to honour India's first Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, renowned jurist Nani Palkhivala, Sir J J Irani of Tatas, former Attorney General of India Soli Sorabjee, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Fali Nariman, Tehmtan Andhyarujina, former Chief Justice of India Sam Bharucha, Justice Sam Variava and others.

☞ WZO (India) has also acknowledged professionals and sportspersons who had achieved distinction in the prime of their lives but were now all but forgotten. On one occasion 35 such persons were recognized.

After giving this resume of the projects and programmes of WZO India, Mr Engineer presented special mementoes to the dignitaries and requested them to address the gathering.

Mr Shahpur Captain, former Chairman and President of WZO is one of the prime pillars on which this worldwide edifice has rested all these years. He played a proactive role in the formation of the Organisation. It was thanks to the generosity of Mehraban Farhangi and his wife Goli that WZO was in a position to be formed.

Today the officials and members of the WZO can justly be proud of the amount of work it has done to represent Zoroastrians in every way, resettling many in the western world, managing to free Zoroastrians incarcerated in foreign lands, assisting youth to educate in universities overseas, giving medical help, uplifting the poor Zoroastrian farmers of Gujarat, helping in setting up small businesses, providing holidays to poor widows and their children, assisting destitute mobeds, setting up a scheme to ensure a good supply of young and educated mobeds, providing comfortable all found residential homes for the elderly and extending the frontiers of charity in every way.

BPP Trustee, Mr Dinshaw K Tamboly has been through the WZO Trust an immense benefactor to the community. He and his able wife Bachi had worked hand in hand and carried out yeoman service to the community all over the country and abroad.

A pioneer of WZO in India and currently its vice president, Mr Dadi Mistry first set up the concept of WZO in Delhi. It was at a later stage that the Organisation came into being at Bombay. Even today, all liaison work with governmental and other agencies is handled by him.

To mark the 25th anniversary, Mr Engineer honoured the following outstanding young achievers with awards and flowers.

☞ The famous architect and interior decorator, Jimmy Mistry of Delta Tecnica and his wife Delna who have sponsored this evening's function. Jimmy has completely transformed many of our old agiaries.

☞ Young entrepreneur with vision, Boman K Irani, who has built up an empire in the construction field.

☞ Consummate actor Boman R Irani who is making ripples in the world of films.

☞ The ever popular Tanaz Godiwalla, Parsi caterer par excellence.

☞ The doyen of the Parsi community Mr Jamshed N Guzder and BPP Trustee Mr Dinshaw R Mehta were also recognized.

Mr Engineer appreciated the services rendered by members of his managing committee especially Vice President Nozer Meherji, Jt Secretaries Rusi Bhumgara and Bahadur Mistry, Jt Treasurers Silloo Mahva and Merzi Vatcha and to the principal fund raiser, Soonu Andhyarujina. And to Silloo, his wife, who has always been a source of encouragement and assistance in all of his endeavours. Finally he expressed his gratitude to all the donors, advertisers and well-wishers for their munificence.

The evening ended with *Chaiye hame Zarthusti*.



From the left: Dadi Mistry & Dadi Engineer : Sponsor of event, Jimmy Mistry : Dinshaw Tamboly. Bottom: Young Achievers - Boman K Irani, Tanaz Godiwalla, Jimmy Mistry, Boman R Irani and evergreen Jamshed N Guzder



WZCC Trade Delegation to Iran

Report from Dogdau Mehta

The International Board of WZCC was keen that a Trade Delegation of its member from across the world visit Iran. As India had taken the lead last year to organise a successful trade delegation of WZCC to the Middle East, this year once again, they were encouraged to plan a trade delegation to Iran. In spite of the fact that there was neither a membership base nor any Chamber activities in Iran, a trade delegation was organised as it was felt that a visit would at least initiate the process of setting up the Chamber there. Further, members could also visit historical sites which are of interest to every Zoroastrian.

Meeting with WZCC – Iran

Ten members from Mumbai led by Kersi Limathwalla, WZCC Director, visited Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd, Shiraz, Hamadan and Kermansha in May 2005. On reaching Tehran, it was a pleasant surprise to learn that WZCC – Iran, though not registered and functional, had enrolled over 100 members. This was, indeed, a great achievement as barely four months ago there was no organization. However, it was later revealed that the Anjuman members in Tehran were enrolled free of cost, and a very generous WZCC member from Iran had agreed to contribute \$5 for every member enrolled in the first year. It was indeed a unique way of building up a membership base, although the Chamber would very soon have to face the challenges of mustering the support of contributing members and renewing subscription.

The Inaugural Meeting of WZCC – Iran was held in Tehran on May 15, and the Indian Delegation was warmly received. Amongst others, Kourosh Niknam – Member of Parliament, Parvez Varzavandi - eminent businessman and Khodayar Attaie – WZCC Director, were present.

The delegation was welcomed by the Zoroastrian community and the Anjuman in other cities as well. Mr Niknam was keen that WZCC should be formally set up in Iran to promote business between Iran and India and Zoroastrians in other parts of the world. Iran and India are ancient seats of civilization having rich heritage and are geographically, politically and culturally well positioned to compliment each other and build up substantial trade and business between the two countries.

While the Iran Chamber has been initiated, much needs to be done. The concept and objects of the Chamber needs to be understood. There is a false perception that large business houses from India will enter Iran through the Chamber and provide employment and opportunities, locally. This needs to be corrected.

- A core working group has to be put in place
- A base of subscribing members built up
- Programmes to be organised to ensure that sponsored members renew their membership
- Identify Chamber leaders in different cities (not necessarily Anjuman office bearers) who appreciate that the functioning of the Chamber is very different from the Anjuman
- Formalise the organisation, membership and its management

The above are some issues that will have to be addressed locally, although the International Board is always there to support all worthwhile initiatives that the Iran region would like to undertake. Language is a great impediment for members of Iran. The majority know only Farsi, and very few can speak English, but we have to overcome all obstacles, as Iran is important to the Zoroastrian community worldwide.

Meeting with Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Mines

With the assistance of the Mumbai Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a high-powered meeting was arranged with the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Mines in Tehran with the visiting delegation. The meeting was addressed by Dr Fereydon Entezari, Chairman of Iran India Business Council and Deputy President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Mines. Kourosh Niknam, Member of Parliament and Representative of the Zoroastrian community in the Iran Majlis and Kersi Limathwalla, Leader of the Delegation was also requested to address the meeting.

Iran is the 16th largest country in the world. While it has oil reserves of 10% of world reserves, its population is just 1% of the world population. Its oil reserves are the second largest (130.69 billion barrels) in the world after Saudi Arabia and its gas reserves (942.1 trillion cubic feet) also the second largest in the world after Russia. The recent development of the Iran India Gas Pipeline is a major break through in building up strategic business relations between the two countries and is bound to throw open several other areas where the two countries can mutually benefit through trade and industry.

Both the countries are emerging economies and are poised to grow phenomenally in the years to come. Although the economy in Iran is state control, 25% of the economy is in the private sector. Unfortunately in the post revolution period, the economy was badly affected by the Iraq war when industrial output had reduced by nearly 40% and population had doubled in 10 years. The Afghan refugee influx had added to the woes and the budget deficit had once gone to a high of 52% and inflation upto 20%. But post war, the economy had looked up. It has pursued free market economy and has made tremendous industrial and economic progress with budget deficit within manageable limits although foreign exchange debts continue to pose a problem.

A remarkable achievement recently is that half the foreign investments made in the last 10 years were made in the last year itself. Large industrial houses, namely the Tatas and Essar group from India have made large investments and are committed to Iran. The industries that are looking-up are steel, textile, food processing, canning, glass, cigarettes, building material, wood pulp, cement, carpet and handicrafts. Mines and minerals continue to be a major segment of the economy specially coal, copper, limestone, zinc, chromites, decorative stone and iron ore. Agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries also contribute substantially to the economy. In the field of import and export, Iran and India are very well suited to each other's requirements. Machinery and spares, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, meat and dairy products, drilling equipments and contracts, communication equipments, pesticide, steel, pipes for oil and gas are some of the items, which Iran imports. Exports of carpets, handicrafts, leather, caviar, textiles, food products, mineral, oil, petroleum products and dry fruits from Iran are well known for their quality and reliability.

The Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Mines is very upbeat on the potentials in business trade and industry and is in contact with several business chambers in India and has committed in building up further business ties with the World Zarthushti Chamber of Commerce.

Amidst rains, WZCC-I's Mumbai Chapter had a well-attended gathering for the insightful presentation by WZCC Director and Mumbai Chapter Chair, Kersi Limathwalla, on the recent Trade Delegation to Iran. In his lucid style Limathwalla captured the attention of a full house, taking members through a slide show of various sites and statistics about the country's economy and government policies. From the Zoroastrian perspective he focused on various shrines, fire temples, old 'dokhmas', priests, Zoroastrian families and their way of life. It was gratifying to learn that the soft drink very popular in Iran is aptly named 'Parsi Cola' – the presentation concluded with a picture of the same!

A further step in this direction has been taken by the formation of the India Iran Friendship Society under the chairmanship of Minoo Shroff and at the initiative of the Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mumbai.



L to R: Kersi Limathwalla, WZCC – Director and Leader of the Delegation, Dr Fereydon Entezari, Chairman of Iran India Business Council and Deputy President of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines and Kourosh Niknam, Member of Parliament and Representative of the Zoroastrian community in the Iran Majlis. The flags of India, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines and Iran are in the foreground.



Dr Fereydon Entezari presenting a memento to Kersi Limathwalla. Also seen Behnam Faramarzain on the left and Kourosh Niknam on the right.



The WZCC Delegation being received by the members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines. On the left Merzi Chinoy and on the right Dhunji Chichgar and Kersi Limathwalla.



A section of the meeting.

Zoroastrians in China

by jehangir s pocha

When I moved to Beijing in 2003 most of my friends in India were astonished. China seemed like the dark side of the moon to them, which was strange because Parsis should be familiar with China, given how many of our homes are stocked with odd collections of Chinese artifacts. (The quality of which is more correlated to a family's taste than its social stature, for truth be told, I have seen the richest homes proudly show off the most atrocious porcelain, giving new meaning to the adage "people with more money than brains").

But most Parsis (and Indians) have absented themselves from the opportunities thrown up by the astonishing changes taking place in modern China. Perhaps the comfortable confines our community has built for itself in the gently derelict baugs and clubs that have somehow become the primary institutions of our society has made us a little less intrepid than our forefathers. For starting about 150 years ago, almost all of our community's wealth originated in the "China trade" – which of course was code for more plainly be called the Opium Trade.

While people below a certain age seem to have forgotten that, the people who do remember that the 'great' names of our community – Tata, Wadia, Jeejeebhoy, Petit, et al – all built up their fortunes running opium to China, now prefer to blush sheepishly as they gloss over this fact, making it one of the great unspokens of our community. [It would be wrong to claim, as some do, that to brand these eminent citizens 'drug smugglers' would be unfair as it would entail applying today's values to yesterdays world. Parsi opium traders clearly knew what they were doing was immoral, and the best example of this is that in the census of 1864, when the drug trade was in full bloom, not a single Parsi chose to identify himself as an opium runner].

But all great wealth is built on great wrongs, and while we all know this in our hearts, no community or nation appears to have set a particularly admirable precedent for the way they have admitted to the darker aspects of history – except under great duress, as we see in Germany and Japan. So, while we all know the very existence of the entire 'new world' is based in mass extermination, we are less mindful of how even today America's superpower-dom is undeniably rooted in the slave trade and exploitation of immigrants, particularly those from China, who together provided the cheap labour that created most of the country's wealth and infrastructure. The treasuries of European states and stately families are still reaping returns on assets acquired by colonizing half the known world, and more disturbingly, in China, India and most other states, the blatant exploitation of labour (otherwise couched as 'labour competitiveness') is still the predominant driver of economic growth.

Less understandable is why Parsis and Zoroastrians, as well as historians in general, have somehow neglected to examine the ancient ties between China and Persia, and how Zoroastrianism and its most famous heresy, Manichaeism, diffused across much of China, especially the regions in what today is western China. [Note: This entire region was not always part of China. In fact, when the Communists seized control of China in 1949, Mao Zedong forcibly brought two nations, Xinjiang and Tibet, which populated by ethnic Uighurs and Tibetans respectively, under Beijing's control. Since then both Uighurs and Tibetans have waged a war of varying degrees of fervor and violence against their Han Chinese overlords].

Now, over just the last few years, a handful of experts have begun focusing on just this

question, and what they have revealed is quite fascinating. Most importantly, their research shows that while examining some quarters of history can be uncomfortable – after all, who really wants to know that their great-grandfather ran opium to China and that most of those old Tata Steel shares that *mota-papa* left you were all originally bought with drug money – it can ultimately be incredibly uplifting. For what we usually end up seeing is that people and cultures we thought of as quite distinct and set apart from each other, are in reality all linked through thought, faith, art, trade and science - our different ways of pursuing our common endeavor as people, ie. to understand our world and our place in it.

New evidence of Persian Zoroastrian influence in China

Though there are only five Parsis in Beijing today, the first Persian Zoroastrians to come to China were probably magi who served in the court of the Zhou dynasty (1027 BC to 221 BC). Gore Vidal's epic book of fictionalized history, *Creation*, provides a brilliant and imminently readable account of these times. It reveals a world in intellectual tumult where four profound teachers – Zarathusthra in Persia, Confucius in China, Gautama Buddha and Mahavira in India, were reshaping three of what historian Arnold Toynbee called the world's four primary civilizations (the fourth is Greece). I've often felt that if I could be given just one ride in a time machine, this is the span of history I would most like to visit ... though I must confess that I'd miss air-conditioning and tomatoes!

However, until recently, the earliest firm evidence of Zoroastrian presence in China is found in the quaintly titled "Ancient Letters," that were found near Lou-Lan and which date to around 313 AD, when China was in the Western Jin period (265 AD – 316 AD) (Victor Mair, *"Old Sinitic *Myag, Old Persian Magus, and English 'Magician'"*, *Early China* 15 (1990).

It was only in 1999 and 2000 that some "spectacular archaeological discoveries



塔吉克斯坦的Yagnob河谷地帶的蘇特老人家
Ethnic Sogdian. Yagnob valley, Tajikistan

were made that clarified the wide-ranging influences" of Persian Zoroastrian culture in China, the *China Archaeological and Art Digest*, said in its December 2000 issue, titled *Zoroastrianism in China*.

In digs around central China, archeologists

stumbled two marble funerary couches (in which the Chinese traditionally laid their dead)

adorned with Zoroastrian-influenced markings of gods, music and dance, scenes of mourning, festivals, hunting, and feasting. The first couch, discovered in 1999 in the Jinyuan



甘肅博物館藏唐金棺
Sogdian gold coffin. Tang dynasty. Gansu Museum

district of Taiyuan, Shanxi province and belonged to Yu Hong (died 592), and second, discovered in July 2000 just north of Xi'an city in Shaanxi province, belonged to An Jia (died 579).

According to Rong Xinjiang, of the History Department of Peking University, whose

work features prominently in the digest, the couches proved that Sogdians, a Persian-ite Central Asian people who followed Zoroastrianism, had entered China several centuries earlier – Rong says during the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) – and spread their faith and culture widely before adopting Chinese customs such as burial, and finally assimilating into Chinese society.

[Matteo Compareti, of Naples University, describes the Sogdians as having “entered history with the conquest of the region by Persian armies of the Achaemenid Dynasty (559-330 BC). The inscription of the Emperor Darius I at Bihisutun (dated 6th century BC) counts Sogdians among the subjects of the kingdom. Sogdiana comprised Khorasmia, Parthia and Aria in the 16th Imperial Satrapy.”]

Rong writes that “when Sogdians first entered Chinese territories, most of them lived in their own enclaves. But in the late Northern Dynasties and the Sui-Tang periods, the Chinese court, in order to control these settlements, began to appoint officials of the sabao to supervise them. Later the enclaves were administered as districts.”

In a statement that is bound to bring a triumphal smile to the face of the ‘conservatives’ in the Parsi community, Rong asserts that over the years political and social constraints led the Sogdians increasingly to begin adopting Chinese ways, and that it was this assimilation that finally destroyed Sogdian-Zoroastrian faith and culture. (‘Reformists’ should note that the Sogdian story also gives them ammunition for their cause; precisely because the Sogdians, while cousins of the Persians, were not Persians, blowing a hole in



Tomb of An Jia

the rather odd theory put by conservatives that God sent the Good Religion of Ahura Mazda for exclusive consumption of the Persians).

“Sogdian funeral customs were not readily acceptable in metropolitan China,” Rong states delicately. So the Sogdians gave up the dakhma system and “adopted the Chinese style of burial” but retained Zoroastrian imagery on their tombs.

During transitional period, with no Dasturji Kotwals and Khojeste Mistrees to resist the pressures of change, Rong says imperial Han Chinese policies also led the Sogdians embrace other Chinese customs and within a few centuries the Sogdians ended up converting to Buddhism, and “many of their Zoroastrian temples were dismantled”, Rong adds.

Zoroastrianism prominent in Western China during 386-589 AD & 581-907 AD

But before the Sogdians and Zoroastrians disappeared in China, Chinese scholars such as Yin Shenping and Zhang Qingjie of



Detail, tomb of An Jia

the Shanxi Archaeology Institute, Jiang Boqin and Lin Wushu of the Institute of Art History at Zhongshan University, Shi Anchang of the Palace Museum, Beijing, Luo Feng of the Ningxia Institute of Archaeology, and Zhang Guangda of Peking University, say their influence diffused widely across Xinjiang, Tibet, Gansu, and other western provinces in modern China, and played a pivotal role in

shaping the regions art, music, architecture and religio-philosophical beliefs.

"The eastward migration of Sogdian people (a Persian-ite race) from Central Asia in the period between the Han and Tang

is an important component of the interaction between East and West in the early medieval period", Rong writes in his paper, 'From Sogdia to China'. "From their native lands, the Sogdians moved into the Tarim basin and China, on the one hand introducing elements of the Persian religious system into China and on the other absorbing elements of Buddhist and Han Chinese culture. Because of this, the culture of the Sogdian ÈmigrÈs is even richer than the culture found in the original Sogdian territories. This contact and interaction provides us with a wealth of material for the study of religious, cultural, and artistic change. The Sogdians and their culture are of the Persian type. Although Manichaeism (which originated in Persia), Nestorian Christianity (which saw Jesus as a prophet, not God), and Buddhism from India were all transmitted into Sogdiana, the official religion of the Sogdians was Zoroastrianism (called xianjiao - or The Religion of the Sky God [definition inserted] - in China), which also arose in Persian

territory. During its long-term development, Zoroastrian beliefs influenced law, ritual, architecture, and customs extending into many aspects of daily life."

In fact, Zoroastrianism became the predominant religion of today's western China during the rule of the Northern and Southern dynasties (386-589 AD) as well as the Sui dynasty (581-618 AD) and Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), when Han Chinese culture peaked. It and was particularly popular in the Turpan area, and the Gaochang state of that time even set up a special department with specially appointed officials to strengthen its control over the religion, according to the scholars.

Rong says the Northern Qi ruler, Emperor Houzhu, *"even incorporated Zoroastrian rituals into traditional court ceremonial observances"*, and that several temples in his domain, such as those at Panjikent and Afrasiyab, contain Zoroastrian influences. In general, according to the evidence from typical Sogdian settlements, there was a religious centre - a temple established for worshipping Zoroastrian gods - in each community, Rong states. *"Other documents also record that the local government gave material support to saixian - sacrificial festivals to the Zoroastrian gods held each year."*

Since the Sogdians were a mercantile people who operated trading caravans whose leaders were called *s'rtp'w* in Sogdian and *sabao* in Chinese, they moved rapidly across the country, gradually establishing settlements in several of the main cities and towns, Rong states. In this way, they left many archaeological remains (paintings, grottos and religious imagery) along the Silk Road as they travelled from Sogdiana to China, and it is the examination of these remains that have allowed Rong and other Chinese experts to throw new light on the cultural intermingling between Zoroastrian Persia and China.

According to Rong and Zhang Qingjie of the Shanxi Archaeology Institute even the world-famous Dunhuang caves in Gansu contain paintings of Zoroastrian deities.



Sogdian merchants, Bezeklik

"Dunhuang documents inform us that up to the tenth century there was a Zoroastrian temple on the east side of the caves ... for example the Shazhou tujing records a Zoroastrian temple in Dunhuang with constructed halls, painted images, and a total of twenty niches or caves", Rong writes. "Zoroastrian images have also been discovered at the ancient Khotanese temple site at Dandan Uilug in northeastern Hetian, Xinjiang province. 1992 article by Markus Mode determined that the images painted on wooden planks excavated in Hetian were not Buddhist but Zoroastrian images of Sogdian type, particularly a triad depicting the deities Ahura Mazda, Nana, and Weshparkar."

The Influence of Sogdian Zoroastrian Music & Art

Interestingly, while Indian Parsis have lost almost all their Zoroastrian musical and artistic traditions, Rong says that Sogdian Zoroastrian music and art went on to influence later Chinese dynasties.

"Zoroastrian temples were built in the heart of the Sogdian settlements. From records of sacrifices performed at these temples, we know that they were also centers of entertainment and music", Rong states. "Therefore, aside from their use by the Sogdian immigrants, their art was seen and admired and even copied by other peoples ... Just as Sogdian music influenced that of the Sui and Tang period (as demonstrated by Chen Yinke), the style of Sogdian artists of the Northern Qi was handed down to later centuries."

In the *China Archaeological and Art Digest* scholars also outline how new examinations of ancient Chinese religious structures and iconography dating back to 200 BC *"which had long been vaguely delineated or described as 'Buddhistic' and created in the 'Cao style,' (characterized by closely pleated garments clinging to the body as though they had just emerged from water) are also really influenced by Zoroastrian art and contain Zoroastrian imagery."*

Shi Anchang, a researcher at the Palace Museum in Beijing, has said that he discovered this only in the early 1990s, when he began to catalogue "foreign" material of unknown origin that had been first discovered in Luoyang and Anyang provinces in the 1920s. His findings appeared around the same time Russian scholar Boris Marshak was also writing about the iconographic similarities between some murals in the "Hall of the Ambassadors" at the Sogdian site of Pendjikent in Central Asia, and over the last three years there have been half a dozen major conferences on the subject, the most recent two held in late 2004 in Beijing and St Petersburg, respectively.

The findings accumulated from this research shows that in 494, when China was in the Wei-Jin period, one of the most remarkable phases in its history, more than one million Tungusic people (also called Tuoba-Xianbei, or Tabghach-Hsienpei from Pingcheng in present day Datong in north-eastern China, were led by Emperor Xiaowen to assume power in Luoyang, the ancient centre of Chinese power.

Xiaowen saw to it that his people quickly adopted Chinese ways, like other groups of northern pastoral nomads, were past masters of acculturation. But people's roots are not easy to change. Like the Patel who keeps his wife at home and insists on fresh *rotli* and *bheeda* for dinner despite having lived in the UK 40 years, the Tungusics held fast onto their culture. Since it was little documented, less understood or appreciated, it took archaeologists hundreds of years to figure out that the *"carved stones that appeared in the tombs of these new foreign rulers and aristocrats in the Luoyang area were decorated with images of deities, fire altars and various winged beasts ultimately of Central Asian and Iranian origin, including the senmurv, a fantastic beast known to Western art historians from Byzantine pictorial art"*, Bruce Gordon Doar writes in a review of Shi's book, *Fire Altars and Avian Deities as Sacrificial Officials*, in the China Heritage Newsletter published by the China Heritage Project at the Australian National University.

"The various iconographic elements indicated that many members of the Tabghach aristocracy ascribed to a form of Xianjiao (Chinese Zoroastrianism) clearly acquired from the Central Asian communities of merchants, mostly from Sogdia, who had settled through the urban centres of northern China during the late Eastern Han, Wei-Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties period", Doar adds.

Persian Zoroastrians in China during 6th century

Even as the Sogdian Zoroastrian civilization began receding in the early 600s, a new group of Persian Zoroastrians were making China their home.

In around the sixth century when the silk route was in full swing, Manichaeism, Mani's attempt to fuse Buddhist, Christian and Zoroastrian teachings, also reached Xinjiang. This set of a new wave of Persian culture in the region, which greatly promoted the translation of scriptures, the building of temples, the creation of grottos and frescoes and general spread of a Zoroastrian-influenced way of life.

Then, during the 7th and 8th centuries two new waves of Persians, as well as Arabs, came to China. The first group came in 651 AD, just after the Arabs conquered Persia, mainly to deepen trade ties along the silk route. The second group came between 758 and 1080 AD, when Chinese emperors requested the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad to send armies to help put down local rebellions in the provinces of Ningxia, Gansu and Yunnan. The Arab, Persian, and Central Asian soldiers who came on these expeditions stayed on in China, but like the traders before them, they soon intermarried with locals and disappeared as a distinct people. In modern China, the mixed race of Arab-Chinese and Persian-Chinese that evolved from this came to be called the Hui, and today they mostly live in central Chinese provinces of Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Hebei.

As the silk route became more entrenched, ties between China and Persia deepened. In fact, its not generally well known the Ming dynasty's famous white and blue pottery (Sunipo blue, or Sumali blue), which in faux form is so popular with wannabe Parsis, actually comes from Persia. But by then Persia was almost totally Islamic, and Zoroastrian culture faded in China as well.

The Parsis in China during the 1756-1949

It took the British adventure we now generally know as colonization to return Zoroastrianism to China, via the Parsis, who as aforesaid, found easy profit in running opium into the Middle Kingdom (as the Chinese call their nation). This story is well documented and so I won't repeat it here. Those interested to know more about the Parsi settlements in Shanghai, Canton and Hong Kong, can read numerous other books available on the subject, as well as a recent paper by Yan Kejia, an associate professor at the Institute of Religious Studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, titled the *The Parsi Diaspora in China: 1756 – 1949*.

In it, Yan tells of how the Parsis left Shanghai and China after the Communist revolution of 1949, and how the last tangible reminder of their presence, their 'panchayat' building, which also contained an agiary, was used by the Chinese government as office and school. In the mid-1990s the building was finally torn down to make room for a new highway, and with it went the last fragment of China's Parsi heritage.

Yan, who spent time at the Asiatic Society in Mumbai and developed an obvious affection for *bawas*, especially the inimitable Jal Kuka, the last priest to tend the agiary in Shanghai and who gave Yan valuable first-hand information, says the story of the Parsis in China should not just be seen as a footnote in history. Since Parsis played such a significant role in the development of India, and since so much of their wealth was made in China, Yan says it is possible to draw a direct line between the China trade and India's emergence as modern industrial state.

Now, as China forges its path beyond that and reaches for its own superpower-dom its nice to know there are at least a handful of Parsis involved in the process. But while none of us, as far as I know, are running drugs, we are also unlikely to make any discernable impact on Chinese culture or leave behind traces of Zoroastrian ideas and arts for future generations to examine - except one. Mehernosh Pastakia, who owns the Taj Pavilion restaurants in Beijing, has married a lovely Chinese lady, Wen, and they have a remarkable young boy, Kersi. When Kersi does his navjote he will become the only Zoroastrian Chinese citizen in the world.



Useful links:

China Heritage Newsletter
http://www.chinaheritagenewsletter.org/scholarship.php?searchterm=001_review.inc&issue=001

China Archaeology Digest
<http://www.chinaarchaeology.com/digest13.html>

Manichaeism in China
<http://www.ibiblio.org/radha/rpub014.htm>

Background on Sogdians - <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Geography/soghdiana.htm>,
<http://www.weecheng.com/silk/tajik/tajik1.htm>

Academic events/conferences
http://caea.uchicago.edu/pcs_detail/han_tang9901.htm



Jehangir Pocha, who is originally from Bombay, is a Beijing-based correspondent for *The Boston Globe*. His articles have also appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune*, *India Today*, *Boston Review* and *Businessworld*.

Ushtra - The two humped Bactrian camel

by sam kerr

The wild Bactrian camel, *Camelus bactrianus* lives in the Gobi desert and the grasslands (steppes) of Asia. In this harsh habitat of fragile desert ecosystems with very hot and very cold climates they have unfortunately become a critically endangered species. There are barely 350 wild Bactrian camels left in the Mongolian Gobi desert and about 650 further south in Xingjian province, China. Surprisingly, no specific plans are in place yet for their conservation. Although surrounded by nuclear radiation, they are immune to cancer genes (like the shark fish), which makes them an invaluable source for cancer research. Their preservation from extinction, thus, becomes all the more imperative.

They were domesticated as beasts of burden and as a source of wool, milk, and meat sometime before 2500 BC in Asia, well after the earliest estimates for the one humped Arabian dromedary. It is no wonder that by circa 1750 BC, around the time of Zarathushtra, the Gathic 'aspa' (horse) suffix in name-titles gradually changed to the 'ushtra' (camel) suffix. The Spitama family tree runs as follows: - *Spitama*, *Hardar*, *Hardarshna*, *Paitiraspa*, *Chakhshnish*, *HaĒchataspa*, *Aurvataspa*, *Pactiraspa*, *Pourushaspa* and *Zarathushtra*. Not only did our Prophet acquire the 'ushtra' title but also both his two elder brothers, Rata-ushtra and Rangha-ushtra.

The most distinctive feature of the Bactrian camels is their two humps, which have loose skin folds containing fat (and not water), used for nourishment when food is scarce. They have loose fatty layers of



Athenian vase showing a Persian riding on a Bactrian camel about 440 BC. Photo in 'The Persian Army' 560-330 BC, Bookbuilders Ltd., pp 51, Hongkong, 1992

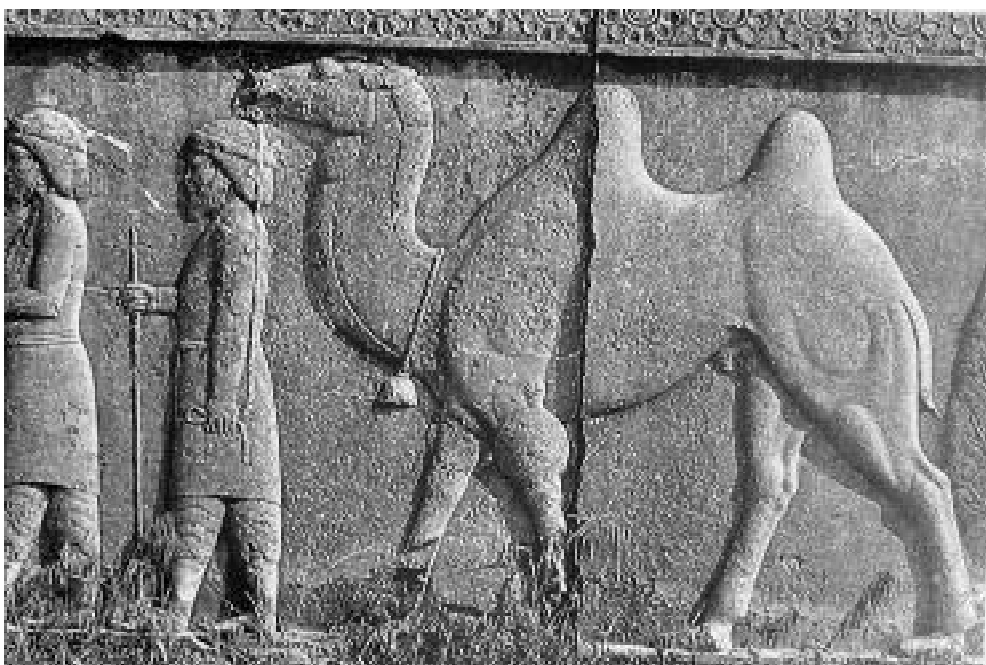


Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (London) and of several Colleges of Surgery, Sam Kerr was Surgeon/Lecturer, the University of NSW and College Hospitals, Sydney from 1968 to 2003. He is now Emeritus Surgeon at the University and Hospitals. He has initiated/been a founding member - AZA of NSW,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

folded skin on their shoulders, upper legs and chin, too. These camels can go without food and water for several days. In addition to the water that is normally stored in the body additional 1.5 gallons are stored in special sacks around its stomach. When water is available, they drink only to replace the water they have lost. If they have used up all the body water they are capable of drinking up to 32 gallons of water to fill up within about 10 minutes. They are extremely well suited to water conservation. They sweat very little, emit very little water as waste fluid and can change their body temperature threshold, depending on the ambient temperature to help contain water loss. **The Bactrian camel is the only mammal on earth that can survive on salt water when exposed to dire and parched conditions.**

As beasts of burden they are very hardy too, with strong legs and wide two-toed padded hoofs, well-suited to carry a great deal of cargo in the soft desert sand. They are a stockier animals than their Arabian counterpart, being able to survive from the scorching desert heat of northern Iran to the frozen icy winters of Mongolia and China. They are rather slow moving. A laden Bactrian camel will move about 2.5 mph, compared to the one-humped Arabian camel travelling 8-9 mph and are also able to cover only about 30 miles a day compared to the Arabian camel covering longer distances. But they live longer - upto 40 years compared to the 25 years of the Arabian camel.

Their long, thick wooly fur is usually a beige color with course hair the length of which varies with the season. The loose layers of skin with under-wool and fat keep them warm during cold desert nights and also



Persepolis Apadana bas relief- Bactrian two-humped camel photographed by Afshin Bakhtiar in 'Persepolis', Yassavoli Publications, pp 63, Tehran, Iran, 2001.

insulate against daytime heat. Herbivores, they eat grass, leaves, and grains. Their mouth is extremely tough, allowing them to eat even dry thorny desert plants during lean seasons. 8-10 feet long their height is over 7 feet at the hump and the weight in excess of 1,600 pounds.

To protect themselves from sand and the harsh conditions, they have bushy eyebrows, a double row of long eyelashes, hairy ear lobes and ear canals, and they can tightly close their nostrils and lips to keep out flying sand. Thick leathery pads protect the knees and chest. The tail is bulky and hairy.

The more durable Bactrian camels first began to arrive in Africa in the fourth century BC introduced by the Persian conquest of Egypt under Cambyses. It was not until the Islamic conquest of North Africa, however, that these camels became common as they were imported *en masse*. These domesticated camels were used through much of North Africa, and the Romans maintained a corps of camel warriors to patrol the edge of the desert.

President of Religions for Peace - a Zoroastrian

EL CORRERO, 15TH DECEMBER 2005, BILBAO

An interview by Cesar Coca

Jehangir Sarosh presides over the European organization of the Worldwide Conference of Religions for Peace. Of the Zoroastrian faith, a very old religion – the Three Kings, according to tradition, were Zoroastrian - and with very few followers, about 130,000 total in the world, Sarosh occupies executive positions in different organizations dedicated to conflict resolution. On this topic, Sarosh spoke with our newspaper regarding his attendance at the international Congress on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

“Do you think that your proposals have the same weight as those coming from leaders of religions with hundreds of millions of followers?”

“The truth is that in Europe, they tend to think in terms of numbers. Often one forgets that all people are important. I have been to congresses mainly in the center of Europe, where there are large monolithic religious communities, and they would ask me if my religion is registered and if it has more than 10,000 followers in its country, for example. I do not like those questions. Our minority communities have something very valuable: we do not threaten anybody. With me they can speak freely as a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew ... They know that it does not interest me to convert them. But in the end, we are minorities. To the large religions, we are minorities in many countries. A representative of Judaism has noted that, these days, the religious communities that achieve great power frequently forget spirituality.”

“Does the ability to speak with others lead to your playing the role of referee in disputes?”

“Not referees exactly, rather interlocutors. This also applies to other religions. For example, the Jews served as the bridge in

Bosnia-Herzegovina between Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim.”

“You live in the United Kingdom. What do you think of conflicts like the one in Northern Ireland, with a large religious component?”

“Most of the religious conflicts are based more on the economic marginalization of one of the communities. If there is food on the table and I feel safe, there is no reason to fight. I am going to return to the example of Bosnia of which I spoke earlier. There, was a conference amongst leaders of different religions, and the Muslims were very displeased, saying that there would not be true pardon without justice. ‘Give me back my house and then we can talk about the possibility of reconciliation,’ they said.

Recognition of fault

“You are president of an organisation of religions of peace. In the light of history, with so many religious wars, this could seem ironical ...”

“In 1970, when we held an organization conference, at the end of it, the religious leaders made a very important confession. They said that the religions have not been the cause of violence, but that the people of the religions have been the root cause. Two thousand years of Christianity, 3,500 of Zoroastrianism, 1,400 of Islam ... have not been able to solve that situation, and no religion will do it by itself. We need to work together, not just talk. For that reason, a



Jehangir Sarosh, “We minority religions did not threaten anybody.” Sarosh insists that different followings need to act together and that we should not limit dialogue amongst them.

motto could be '*different faiths, one common action.*' What's more, there is no alternative to cooperation. Our desires and necessities are the same. When we work hand in hand and share things, the perspective changes."

"One of the most popular sayings lately is that we are living in a new religious war. Do you also believe this?"

I do not believe that the problem is only in the conflict between Christianity and Islam. If you go to Eastern Europe, where the orthodox Church dominates, you find that it is closer to Islam, as far as spirituality, than to western countries, where secularism dominates. What bothers the Far East are the double-edged swords. Israel has the atomic bomb and nobody criticizes them. Nor do they speak of it. Iran says that it is considering it and the US demonizes them. Those double-edged swords are the things that create rage and wrath."

"What you think when a young person throws a bomb in a hotel and says he is acting in the name of God, or when Bush says that it was the voice of God that ordered to him to attack Iraq?"

"I love this parallelism between someone that throws a bomb because God has told him to and someone who immolates himself and kills others in the same name of God ... I do not believe that the boys who do this do it because they think that, this way, they will enter Paradise. They have to be desperate to submit their own life. The terrorists think that they are sacrificing their lives for their own communities. If they had an army, they would use it also ...

"Many can think that with leaders who continuously invoke God to kill or to wage war, it is better to be atheist ... In Christian texts, it is proclaimed that the name of God should not be used in vain ... Perhaps they should apply this to all names. Sincerely, I believe that when somebody says that God speaks to him and orders him to resort to violence, we are faced with a person who needs help."

"Of all the present religions at this congress, who are the closest to Zoroastrians?"

"If it had not been born through tradition and if its followers had been educated like followers of Zarathustra, I would feel that Zoroastrians are very similar to the Quakers and the Buddhists. In these three religions, more importance is placed on the construction of the kingdom of God on Earth than on one's own salvation; on the here and now than on the future life. I believe that we can leave personal salvation to religions, but working together, we can construct the kingdom of God on Earth."

(A translation of the original, sent through the courtesy of Behram Pastakia)

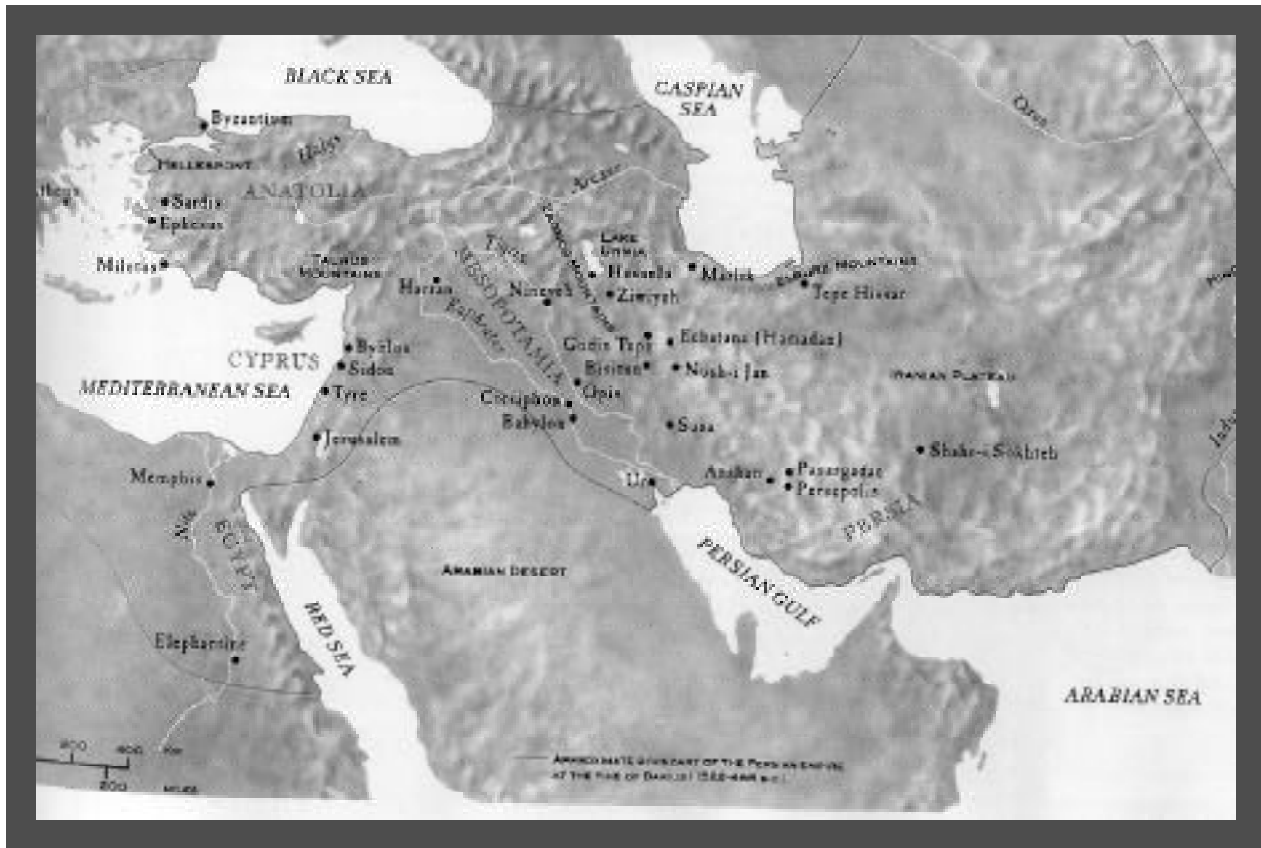


A boy with his dog, saying their prayers

Events that shaped our religion

by rustom j kevala

Part 1 – From Zarathushtra to the Achaemenian times



The Persian Empire at the time of Darius I (522-486 BC), showing major settlements and archaeological sites

Introduction

Major turning points in history have clearly influenced Zoroastrian religion and worldview. Our knowledge of the earliest history of the religion is based on archaeological findings, Indo-Iranian oral traditions, and the writings of early Greek historians. Naturally, there has been much debate as to exactly what Zarathushtra's role was in the development of the present Zoroastrian doctrine and liturgy; how religion influenced the actions of various Persian rulers; and what the practice of religion meant to the common people at different times.

Indo-Iranian Origins

Archaeological evidence suggests that early in the 2nd millennium BC, the Andronovo culture of west Siberian steppes entered into the region of the Aral Sea, northwest of the Hindu Kush. The Andronovans, identified as the immediate ancestors of the Indo-Iranians, used horses and chariots in warfare, which made them extremely mobile and allowed them to easily overpower the indigenous people throughout the Iranian plateau. The royal documents of the Mitanni in northern Syria, written on clay tablets around 15th century BC, commemorate the victory of the Aryans, the noble people, over the "black-haired people", the Hittites. The tablets include the

names of major Indic deities – Mitra, Aruna (Varuna), and Indra.

Indo-Iranians believed that specific deities, whom they called *devas*, controlled rain, wind, crops, animals and all that was important to humans. Fire was an important element in their religious rites. The immortal *devas* exhibited many human attributes such as pleasure, anger, and vengeance; and therefore had to be appeased through ritual sacrifices. The rituals, called *yagnas*, were always conducted by hereditary priests, who recited their chants and spells from memory. The expense of the *yagna* was usually borne by the tribal chieftain, who received the resulting boons from the *devas*. The chieftain, of course, amassed his wealth and power through warfare and plunder.

Zarathushtra's Revelations

Zarathushtra was born in the Aral region around the Amu Darya (Oxus) River, in about 1350 BC. He received revelation at age 30 and began to spread his message through a compilation of songs, the Gathas. Zarathushtra's influence resulted in the relegation of the Indo-Iranian pantheon of *devas* to the role of demons, or *daivas*. Naturally, there was much opposition from the priests and tribal chiefs; and Zarathushtra had to take refuge in the highlands of Baktria (in modern Afghanistan), where the chariot-riding warriors could not pursue him easily. The local Keyanian king, Kavi Vistaspa, not only gave him sanctuary, but accepted him as *ratu*, teacher.

Advent of Mazda-yasni

Zarathushtra's message was revolutionary. The Creator Ahura Mazda is all-good, all-knowing and all-powerful. Evil had somehow entered Mazda's good Creation; and Zarathushtra had been chosen to show mankind how this evil can be removed from His Creation. Those who followed his teachings called themselves Mazda-yasni, Mazda-worshippers.

The old Indic religion now migrated southeastwards into the Indus valley. Mazda-worship spread slowly westwards into Choresmia (Khorasan), Parthia and Media, where various Indo-Iranian tribes had settled.

Magian Influence

The hereditary priests of the Medes developed many of the *Yashts* and rituals, combining Zoroastrian concepts with Aryan and pre-Aryan mythology and ritual. The *Videvdat* (Vandidad) was developed from the essential elements of the anti-demonic culture of the pre-Aryan Elamites (although it was written down much later).

In 708 BC, the Medes allied themselves with Babylon and overthrew the Assyrian Empire. Yasna Haptanghahiti, written in prose form in Gathic dialect, was probably composed during this period. Significantly, it contains no direct reference to Zarathushtra. The religion is simply called Mazda-yasni. The six attributes of Ahura Mazda now became Archangels, to be worshipped along with Ahura Mazda Himself,

Cyrus's Religion

Cyrus II (Kourosh), son of a local chief of Anshan in Parsa, wrested power from the Median king Astyages, when the king's disgruntled general defected to him in 558 BC. By 539, Cyrus had added Babylonia, Armenia, Lydia and Ionia to his empire. Cyrus became "Great King, King of Kings, Ruler of all the Persian Lands".

Herodotus (484-425 BC) calls Cyrus a wise and thoughtful ruler. When the Lydian king Croesus was captured and ordered to be burnt alive by Cyrus's generals, Croesus is reputed to have prayed to his patron god Apollo. Soon, a rain shower appeared out of nowhere and extinguished the flames. When Cyrus heard about this, he ordered Croesus to be brought before him, spared his life, and made him the governor of Lydia. After this experience, Cyrus repeatedly claimed the support and blessings of the

local gods and actively participated in their propitiation rites. When he entered Babylon, he declared: "The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hand with the blessings of Marduk." He allowed all the temples to the local gods that had been destroyed by the Assyrians to be rebuilt and freed the Jews, who had been held in bondage by the Assyrians. He supported the priests of all beliefs. The Magi must certainly have received his support.

Cyrus died in 530 during a campaign against the Sakas, another Indo-European tribe that lived in the forest-steppes of the north. Cambyses, his elder son, conquered Egypt in 525, and following his father's example, assumed the Egyptian royal titles of Pharaoh, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, son of Re, and worshipper of Isis.

Magophony

Meanwhile, the Magi were not happy about the religious laxity of the rulers. They destroyed many of the temples that Cyrus and Cambyses had helped to rebuild. While Cambyses was in Egypt, a Magus named Gaumata usurped control over Media. He declared himself to be Cyrus's son Bardiya, and exempted the Medians from taxes for four years. Immediately, Cambyses marched to Media to reclaim his throne. But he died en route. His cousin Darius, descended from another Achaemenian line, killed Gaumata with the help of six noblemen. Darius was declared as the legitimate successor to the Achaemenian throne in 521, at the age of 29. Darius rebuilt Susa, the old Elamite capital, and made it his capital.

As soon as news of Gaumata's death became public, there arose a rampage against all Magi to exact revenge for the harsh treatment they had received from them. Greek historians have called this event as "Magophony".

Darius's Reforms

Darius has left detailed accounts of his battles and victories on rock inscriptions at

Behistun in Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian. Darius's inscriptions clearly say that he was a follower of Ahura Mazda and a recipient of Ahura Mazda's divine benevolence. Ahura Mazda is described as the greatest of gods, but not the only God. There are no references to Zarathushtra or the Magi.

Darius was a great administrator and greatly increased the prosperity of the Persians. He built roads for commerce, introduced standard weights and measures, coinage, and a very efficient communication system through the Royal Road. During Darius's reign, the Persians were highly respected and feared throughout the civilized world (see map).

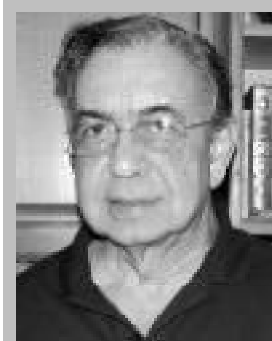
The Greek Wars

When Darius's army was repelled by the Greeks at Marathon in 490, he decided to wait for a more opportune time to conquer mainland Greece. But he died before he could accomplish this. Darius's son Xerxes I sacked Athens in 480; but his armies, led by an exiled Greek general, were routed in a decisive naval battle at Salamis. The only Persian ship that escaped was commanded by a woman admiral. Xerxes, watching the scene from a nearby hilltop, remarked: "Today, my men have become like women, and a woman has acted like men". Herodotus claims that the Greeks allowed the ship to escape because they did not consider it fit to pursue a ship commanded by a woman.

Religious Orthodoxy

Xerxes was deeply religious and was always accompanied by an entourage of Magis, who carried a burning fire and invoked the blessings of *Verethragana* for victory. He refused to allow his armies to cross any river on foot or horseback to prevent pollution of the waters. While returning from Salamis, Xerxes ordered the execution of King Croesus, whom Cyrus had spared, and captured his fabulous gold mines.

Herodotus writes that the "Persians have no images of gods, no temples, and no alters. Unlike the Greeks, they did not believe that



Rustom was born in Mumbai. He has served as the president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, chair of the Information Receiving and Disseminating Committee, which publishes the FEZANA Journal; and most recently, as Treasurer of FEZANA. Today, like many of us, he is intrigued by the questions: "Why is our religion so little known or understood throughout the world? Why do we seem so powerless to resolve the issues facing us?" He firmly believes that the answers can be found by taking a dispassionate look at our history. Rustom lives near Tampa, Florida, with his wife, Yasmin.

Bibliography

In Search of the Indo-Europeans, Language, Archaeology and Myth, J.P. Mallory, Thames & Hudson, 2003.

History of Zoroastrianism, Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, Published by The K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1963.

The Histories of Herodotus, Great Books of the Western World, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Editor-in-chief, William Benton, Publisher, 1952.

History of the Persian Empire, A.T. Olmstead, University of Chicago Press, 1948.

Persians: Masters of Empire, Time-Life Books, Alexandria, Virginia.

Zoroastrianism, A Beleaguered Faith, Cyrus R. Pangborn, Advent Books, New York, 1983.

the gods have the same nature as men. The most disgraceful thing for a Persian is to tell a lie."

Decline and Fall

Artaxerxes I officially placed Mithra next in honour to Ahura Mazda himself. The pre-Zoroastrian Meher Yasht was revived (which was later rewritten in Pahalavi during Parthian times). Artaxerxes II (405 BC) erected statues for Ardisur Anahita in Babylon, Susa, Sardis and Bactra. Avan Ardisur Yasht describes her as "riding a chariot of four white steeds – the wind, the rain, the cloud and the sleet. She helps men by bringing waters to their fields and women by causing them to bear safely. She obeys Ahura Mazda and hates the *Daevas*." Greek influence in Zoroastrian thinking is quite evident in this passage.

By now, Persians and Greeks had been in direct contact for over 100 years. The Greek notion of descent of the heroes from Gods is exemplified by Plato (390 BC), who wrote that "Persian monarchs were descendants of Achaemenes, son of Perseus, son of Zeus; and that Zoroaster was the son of Oromazdes". The splendour of the Persian court was viewed as synonymous with the splendour of the heavenly palaces of the Greek gods.

With the unexpected defeat of Darius III by Alexander of Macedon, the Achaemenian period came to an end in 330 BC. By now, the religion of Zarathushtra was the major religion throughout the Persian Empire. But its foundations were weakened by political expediency, misuse of power, and most of all, by the lack of any central hegemony to ensure an orderly development of a doctrine and belief system among the general populations.

What happened next will be covered in Part 2 - The Hellenic Period.

Alternative to burial and cremation

by noshir h dadrawala

Appeared in the Jame Jamshed in February, 2006

Courtesy of Roshni R Shroff

Vulture or no vulture, I am a firm believer in the long-standing and traditional system of Dokhmenashini. However, for those who prefer alternative systems like cremation or burial for the disposal of the dead, a new process called 'Promession' appears to be quite promising. There is no use of fire or electricity and what gets buried in the soil is compost.

According to this process which has been developed in Sweden to address the shortage of burial spaces and reduce the mercury pollution created by dental fillings during cremation, the corpse is freeze-dried, shaken to a fine powder and used as compost.

It involves freezing the coffin and body to -18° C before lowering it into liquid nitrogen at -196° C, which makes both the coffin and corpse extremely brittle. A vibrating pad is then used to reduce the remains to a powder and a magnetic field removes all traces of mercury and other metal residues from fillings or hip replacements. The remains are then put into a biodegradable coffin made from vegetable matter which in turn could be buried in a shallow grave in one's own backyard or garden, where it can be absorbed into the earth within six to twelve months. Loved ones could plant a tree or shrub on top to absorb nutrients from the remains, supporters of the 'Promession' system suggest. The cost of the process is expected to be similar to that for a cremation and around one-third of the price of a grave plot and traditional burial in Europe.

The town of Jonkoping in Sweden is planning to turn its crematorium into a 'Promatorium' shortly because of the multi-million-pound cost of introducing mercury filters to meet emissions targets.

It must of course be remembered that from a strictly Zoroastrian point of view, it is not just disposal of the mortal remains that is important, but also the transmigration of the soul which according to orthodox beliefs requires the corpse to be placed in a ritual manner on the pavi of a duly consecrated dokhma. However, in the meantime, for those who do not care much about the orthodox theory, 'Promession' seems promising. At least it appears to be more eco-friendly than traditional burial and cremation



۲- با بکار بردن خرد و با بیشترین توان در راه درست میتوان به هنجار هستی و قانون طبیعت پی برد و فرآیند آن دانائی و یابش رازهای نهفته جهان هستی و طبیعت است - **اشا وهیشتا** - والاترین راستیها - اردیبهشت.

۳- با بدست آوردن دانش و بازبایی رازهای نهفته میتوانیم آیین های خوب و برست های (قانونهای) نیکو بسازیم و فرآوردهای بهتر فراهم نموده و راهنما و کمک کار مردم باشیم - **خَش اتر ویریا** - شهریاری نیک - شهریور

۴- دستاورد خَش اتر ویریا، راستی و درستی، برپا سازی همبودگاه درست کردار و ساختن بهشت (فردوس) در این جهان است، که مردم در آن زندگانی هم آهنگ و همخوان، هم با خود و هم با جهان هستی داشته باشند. جایی که در آن جنگ، بیماری، دروغ، آلودگی، ترس و نگرانی نخواهد بود. **سپنتا آرمیتی** - خواسته ی درست - اسفند.

۵- در این همبودگاه درست کردار، خَرَد و هوش آدمی افزایش یافته. تن او توانمند و روان او به والاتی میگراید و دستاورد اینها رسایی روان است که در هر پیشه و هنر پدیدار میگردد- **هورواتاتا** - رسایی - خرداد.

۶- رسائی، پایگاهی در اندیشه و فکر و هوش و زندگی آدمی میسازد که آزاد از ترس و نگرانی است. آزاد از ترس مُردن (زمان) و نیستی (جا) و هرچیز ناشناخته دیگر. در این مرحله از زندگی، آدمی دیگر دنبال خواستهای مادی نیست بلکه در اندیشه ای است که در آن دیگر زمان و مکان، مرگ و نیستی پایگاهی ندارد- **امرتات** - دور از ترس مرگ و نیستی - (زمان و جا) - امرداد.

۷- با رسیدن به رسائی و از دست دادن ترس و نگرانی، آدمی خَرَد در آفرینش را در مییابد و با آن یکی میشود. خرد در آفرینش (مزدا اهورا)، آن نیروی بزرگ، آن دانش زندگی و کارآمد و سازنده، آن نیروی فراگیر و گسترده که زنجیره ی جهان هستی را به کنش و واکنش وا میدارد، آدمی را به شناخت آفریدگار این خَرَد، **اهورا مزدا** میرساند. (خد - آ)

سال نو ، باستانی بر همه
خجسته باد

تاریخ نشان می‌دهد این پیش آمد در سال ۴۸۷ پیش از میلاد هنگام برابری شب و روز در بهار و تابیدن نخستین تابش خورشید بر سنگ چهارگوش میان تالار مرکزی تخت جمشید بود که بنام «نوروز» آن سال جشن گرفته شد.

در ایران باستان، برپایی «نوروز» بر شالوده دانش ستاره شناسی و دانش طبیعی بود. چون گردش زمین به دور خورشید کمی بیشتر از ۳۶۵ روز است (۲۴۱۹۰-۳۶۵)، ایرانیان در یافته بودند که افزودن یک روز (اَوَرَداد) پایان سال در هر ۴ سال (سال ۳۶۶ روزی) و نیفزودن این یک روز هر ۱۲۰ سال این دشواری را از میان نمی برد، چون باز هم کمبودی در آن میماند و تنها با یاری گرفتن از طبیعت میتوان آن را از میان برداشت که هر چند سد سال یک بار پیش میآید.

هفت سین یا هفت سینی

نوروز به گونه نمادی، با چیدن هفت چیز بر روی سفره سبزرنگ، جشن گرفته می شود. تا پنجاه سال پیش در یزد و کرمان زرتشتیان «هفت سینی» از فرآوردها گوناگون خوراکی که در توان و دست رس خانواده بوده و هر کدام نشانگر سپاس از فراوانی در سال پیش، و یا آرزوی افزونی آن را در سال آینده داشتند، فراهم میکردند.

امروزه در ایران سفره را با هفت فرآورده خوراکی که وات نخست آن «سین» یا «شین» باشد می چینند. زرتشتیان سفره «هفت شین» و مسلمانها چون شراب را ناروا میدانند سفره ی «هفت سین» میآریند. با آنکه هر آنچه که روی سفره می چینند، هر یک معنی و فلسفه ی ویژه ای دارند، آرش راستین آن بر ایرانیان پوشیده مانده است.

شماره «هفت» در هفت سینی یا هفت سین یا هفت شین یا آن هفت نفری که با پیشکش های نوروزی بر روی کنده کاری های تخت جمشید دیده میشوند همه گویا و بیانگر «هفت رهنمود جاویدان» زرتشت است که بگونه ای گذرا از آنها در اینجا یاد میکنیم.

۱- خرد را در بالاترین گنجایش باید در راه دُرست بکار برده شود.

وهومنا-خرد نیک - بهمن.

آنچه که در باره ی نوروز و هفت

سین

برایمان ناگفته مانده

فریبرز رهنمون

نوروز از پر ارج ترین جشنهای ایران است که در نخستین روز بهاری و هنگام برابری شب و روز جشن گرفته می شود. در این روز طبیعت جوانی را از سر میگیرد و زندگی تازه آغاز می شود و بهترین زمان برای آغاز سال نو میباشد. این روز، روز شادی و شادمانی است .

تاریخ نشان میدهد که شاه جمشید پیشداده ی پس از یخ بندان بزرگ، نخستین روز بهار را جشن گرفت و این جشن را بنیاد گذاشت. گاهشماری ایرانیان گاهشماری خورشیدی بود، در هپتن یشت هات ۳ و یسنا چنین آمده «هر بخش از ۴ بخش سال، در زمان خود با گردش زمین به دور خورشید سامان می یابد.» این نمایانگر آن است که در ایران باستان گاهشماری خورشیدی نگاهداری می شده.

اگر چه از دانش کهن چیزی در دست نیست ولی از فرهنگ پربار آن زمان بی بهره نیستیم. با اینکه ایرانیان از ناهمسازی دو واژه ی «سال نو» و «نوروز»، بی خبرند، با اینهمه بدون اینکه به ریشه آنها بیاندیشند این دو واژه را جداگانه از هم نگاه داشته و بکار میبرند. در زبان دَری که کهن ترین زبان گفتگوی برخی از ایرانیان و بویژه زرتشتیان است، به جشن آغاز بهار «سولِ نو» میگویند که همان «سال نو» است نه «نوروز».

در ایران باستان هر سال در آغاز بهار، هنگام برابری شب و روز را بنام «سال نو» جشن میگرفتند و همچنین هرچند صد سال یکبار هم بنام «نوروز» در این روز جشنی برپا میداشتند. نوروز روزی بود که هنگام برابری شب و روز با برآمدن خورشید یکی می شد ایرانیان این پدیده ی طبیعی را «نو روز» میگفتند و پاس میداشتند.

CNN Anchor Colleen McEdwards interviews Meher Amalsad, FEZANA

CNN INTERNATIONAL WORLD NEWS – Live on SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2006 at 3pm EST



Colleen : Well, it was an idea with some humble beginnings. An email to an internet subscriber list for the tiny Zoroastrian community in North America; one of the world's oldest religion where followers are dedicated to what they call the 3-fold path that they call 'good thoughts, good words and good deeds', and perhaps because of that creed this lone email has led to a global effort to help earthquake victims in Pakistan. And to talk more about this we are joined from Los Angeles by Meher Amalsad, he is from the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. Thank you so much for being here.

Colleen : Just tell us how this all got going?

Meher : Well, as you indicated, it started with an email which inspired the North

American Zoroastrian community and mobilized this relief effort.

Colleen : So exactly, what are you doing?

Meher : I am the project coordinator on this particular project on behalf of FEZANA.

Colleen : What kind of relief are you doing? Just tell us what's going on?

Meher : What happened is that while we were working in getting this relief for the people in Pakistan, UPS CEO Mike Eskew in a press release mentioned that UPS will be willing to help out in this relief effort. So we contacted his office and through the UPS Foundation, we were told that they would ship for free to Pakistan, all goods collected by our community.

Colleen : Well I understand, you sent a lot of clothing, a lot of things that were really needed especially in those winter months.

Meher : Yes we did. It was a massive effort by the Zoroastrian community in North America, which included our communities in Montreal, Washington DC, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Houston and California.

Colleen : You know Mr Amalsad, a lot of people no matter what religion you practise, a lot of people around the world, especially lately have been asking themselves, how to deal with these global disasters, the Tsunami, the earthquakes, a mud slide in the Phillipines, a lot of people have this

question, how you explain the acts of God within any given religion and just tell us a little bit about how a Zoroastrian would deal with this issue here.

Meher : The fundamental tenets of our religion is focused on good thoughts, good words and good deeds. We truly believe in prayer through service. We have a very unique identity, but while we maintain our unique identity, we respect diversity in humanity. That's the key that one needs to have if we want to create unity within diversity in humanity.

Colleen : All right Meher Amalsad. Thank you for your thoughts. Appreciate it.



Summary of distribution of clothing sent by FEZANA to Pakistan for the affectees of the earthquake which took place on 8th October 2005, and distributed by Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation.

*A*pproximately 20,000 lbs of clothing was sent by air during the period of February 2006 from FEZANA North America through the courtesy of UPS.

470 cartons of heavy winter clothing arrived in Islamabad, from which 2,529 children, 1,573 women and 2,066 men benefited, residing in 48 villages and two tent villages. All these villages come under the districts of Abbottabad, Battagram and Mansehra of NWFP.

111 teddy bears 'popped out' of the cartons which were distributed to the children living in the villages of Kopanna, Pazang and Sobrian.

Meticulous documentation has been carried out by Ali Asghar Khan and his team of workers, accounting for every garment given, to whom and where. We have been fortunate in having this reliable and able team working and distributing on our behalf.

This now completes the generous help sent by North American Zoroastrians and their friends when these unfortunate people had to face the severe winter. A very big 'thank you' from all of us, the citizens of Pakistan.

Toxy Cowasjee
Karachi, Pakistan

[See Hamazor Issue 4/05 pp 66-69]

Distribution of clothes sent



OAKDF Team of 12 men



Travelling by jeep to the villages



Village of Dheri Seri



Village of Khokhrialala - he is wrapped in the most stunning purple shawl!



Children with their anoraks, Khokhrialala



Teddy bears at Kapanaa

by FEZANA to Pakistan



The reality of reaching the villages - Kund & Sakkargah



Unloading clothing at Kund & Sakkargah



Systematic distribution



In the freezing weather, just rags as walls



Children expressing their thanks

A Global Patchwork

by umbereen beg-mirza

Published in The Friday Times, Pakistan, 3 - 9 March 2006 (*a weekly paper*)

Five months later, the earthquake that devastated the Northern Areas of Pakistan has become a faint memory for many of us. The servants are back, the requisite period of mourning has passed and so much more has happened since - Americans have bombed civilians in Bajaur, a quasi state of civil war exists in parts of Balochistan, Bryan Adams has been to Pakistan, the KPT has inaugurated a Rs.240 million jet fountain that spews sewage in the faces of Karachiites ... life has gone on.

But even with the limelight gone, many have continued to work tirelessly for a cause that has transformed them with its enormity. One such person is Toxy Cowasjee who not only continues in her efforts to raise money, but also to find effective means of disbursing the aid. She is currently in possession of an exquisite "Kimono Quilt", donated by the Dulwich Quilters to raise funds for earthquake relief. Toxy plans to use the proceeds to construct and run a school for earthquake victims in collaboration with the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation. *(As there is a desperate need for shelters, with permission of the DQ, the proceeds are for this purpose, or whatever is required at the time. Umbereen has inadvertently made an error, but there is hope of constructing a school or something else to benefit communities in close proximity - Ed)* To date she has received a bid of Rs100,000 for this piece of art, but is hoping for more. The story of the quilt, its origin and its intended use has captured my imagination.

Dulwich, now a part of London, in fact no more than five miles from Charing Cross, was once a village. One of London's oldest recorded villages, the area was named "the meadow where dill grows." Over the years, Dulwich has managed to hold on to that village feel - it is a Conservation Area, which

means that many of its buildings are at least two hundred years old. A leafy, affluent London suburb, Dulwich is prominent for two main reasons - Dulwich College and the Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Dulwich College was founded by local resident Edward Alleyn. A contemporary of William Shakespeare's, Alleyn had made his fame and fortune as an actor and then moved to Dulwich where he purchased the manor house. Wanting to do some good, Alleyn founded a college for twelve poor scholars in 1619. The College later became the alma mater of writer P G Wodehouse. The Dulwich Picture Gallery is the oldest purpose-built public art gallery in England. The Picture Gallery boasts paintings by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Canaletto, Gainsborough and Murillo.

The Victorian philosopher-writer John Ruskin was a resident of Dulwich, the poet Robert Browning, was also excessively fond of the area and the surrounding woods, and even Charles Dickens sent Mr Pickwick to retire in Dulwich. It is an interesting little community, steeped in a long history of philanthropy, and well-established aesthetic tradition. Appropriately enough, it is here that a group of women decided to form the Dulwich Quilters in the mid-1980s. The group has always had an international flavour with members from the UK, Holland, Norway, Italy, Germany, the US, Canada, Brazil, Spain and even Pakistan - Khurshid Bamboat, Toxy Cowasjee's sister.

Many of the women have had an enduring interest in sewing in some form or another, although only one, an American Adele Corcoran, came from a long tradition of quilting. The Dulwich Quilters meet twice a month to quilt and discuss projects. Over the years, the Dulwich Quilters have gained international recognition in the world of quilting. Members routinely exhibit their

individual and group projects, often donating their work to charity. In the past, the group has given pieces to St Christopher's Hospice, British Home for Incurables, and Fine Cell amongst others. They have also gifted their pieces to children's hospices and trauma centres.

The Dulwich Quilters like to set themselves challenges - this year they are working on "an extra special quilt in Amish colours." In 1998, the group had worked on a Basket quilt - each member making an identical basket block but filling it with whatever they fancied, thereby added a personal touch to the hanging. According to Khurshid Bamboat, members are encouraged to come up with ideas for the group quilt and then co-ordinate it. Lynne Seaman who was a DQ member at that time (also from USA) thought it would be interesting for the group to make a Kimono quilt after seeing examples in books and exhibitions.

Each participating member was given a square of black "brocade" fabric together with two strips of Japanese inspired fabric. The brief was to construct a 12" block, one half being black, and the other using strips of patterned fabric of their choice that would continue the Japanese theme, the idea being that each quilter would contribute their own choice of colour and design, thereby making it more personal. The block design is called Rail Fence. Sixteen members took part in this hanging which was then made up to resemble a kimono. The black areas were then hand quilted in gold thread, using traditional Japanese 'sashiko' patterns.

Sashiko was originally a Japanese mending method, consisting of a simple running hand stitch for reinforcing worn out work clothes especially fisherman's clothes. As Khurshid is quick to point out *"A lot of people wrongly believe that patchwork and quilting come from the USA; it*



The Kimono Quilt, 70" x 59".
Photographed gratis, by Tapu Javeri,
one of Pakistan's leading photographers

doesn't. There has been patchwork and quilting since centuries. However the Americans were instrumental in reviving the tradition for their bi centennial celebrations and Britain followed. For a long time, Europeans were considered the 'poor relations' as regards quilting and patchwork but this has all changed. Japan - who has no history of patchwork and quilting has some of the most well known and respected quiltmakers today and the same applies in Europe."

Quilting is indeed an ancient tradition. There are examples of quilted garments from Ancient Egypt through the Middle Ages, not only in Europe but in many other cultures. In fact, it appears likely that quilting was brought to Europe through the Crusades. The victorious Muslims wore tightly quilted clothing as part of their armour and this was soon adopted by medieval European soldiers. Our own region has a rich quilting history, with *rallis* from the Thar region renowned for their superb workmanship.

Like many crafts, quilting has its origins in frugality - cloth was often too expensive to be wasted, and quilting was a way to get maximum usage out of the cloth. Interestingly, in the first wave of impulsive donations to the earthquake victims were large quantities of "inappropriate" clothing- summery frocks, men's ties, negligees and the like. Some enterprising women, unable to see heaps of clothing going to waste, decided to rip open the garments and transform them into much needed quilts for the earthquake victims.

Quilting is also a wonderfully convivial tradition. Even in my grandmother's time women would gather together for the final basting of quilts - or "*doray dalna*." For generations, quilting bees have offered women an opportunity to socialize, learn skills, and work together as a team, blending their individual efforts into a seamless whole. For Khurshid *"It has been my salvation, it keeps my mind and myself active and through this medium I have met so many interesting people and have a good circle of friends. It is quite amazing*

where quilters pop up and it is a universal language - go to a quilt exhibition or shop and you will soon find out."

To my mind, a patchwork quilt is a wonderful metaphor - a making of something useful, and something beautiful, out of unwanted scraps, using methods passed down through the generations. The victims of the earthquake have had their lives torn asunder, and now they too must piece together a new existence from the rubble around them, from sheer dint of perseverance and of course from outside assistance such as this exquisitely compassionate gesture from the Dulwich Quilters.



Umbereen Beg-Mirza is a freelance writer, contributing regularly to The Friday Times and Visage magazine. Stealing occasional snatches of time from her full-time job parenting two young

children, Umbereen is also working on her first novel. Her other hobbies include travel, cooking and reading. In fact Umbereen spends most of her free time reading books she wishes she had written.

An Update ...

No sooner had this article been written to promote the Kimono Quilt, it was sold to a Pakistani lady in London for £2,000 (Rs200,000+), thanks to the effort of my friend Tammy Haq. The Quilt has travelled round the world and returned to its original home after raising a handsome amount!

The efforts for collecting funds for the relief operations continue and further news will be given in the next issue of the Hamazor - Toxy Cowasjee.



The World Zoroastrian Organisation

135 Tonnison Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5NF

Registration No 1510380 Cardiff, England

A Company Limited by Guarantee

Incorporated 1980

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Joint Honorary Secretaries
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 born of Zoroastrian parents / Non-Zoroastrian spouse of a Zoroastrian (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 _____

IF STUDENT DATE OF BIRTH _____

ADDRESS IN COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE _____

TEL RES _____ OFF _____ E-MAIL _____

Proposed by _____ **Seconded by** _____

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date	Amount Received	Date of Membership	Register of Members	Mailing List

Membership Fees

For Indian residents

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

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

For UK residents & other countries

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

Please send application form and cheque payable in Sterling to WZO, London to:

Mrs Khurshid Kapadia, 217 Pickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0AQ. Tel +44 020 8777 5778

For USA residents

Permanent Assoc Member	\$ 225	Ordinary Assoc Member	\$ 25 pa
Life Member	\$ 150	Ordinary Member	\$15 pa
Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

Please send application form and cheque payable in US Dollars as "WZO US Region" to:

Mr Keki Bhote, 493 Woodlawn Ave., Glencoe, Illinois 60022. Tel: (847) 835 1984

For Canadian residents

Permanent Assoc Member	C\$ 325	Ordinary Assoc Member	C\$ 30 pa
Life Member	C\$ 200	Ordinary Member	C\$ 20 pa
Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

Please send application form and cheque payable in Candian Dollars as "OZCF, WZO Fees" to:

Mr Marzi Byramji, Regal Press, 3265 Wharton Way, Unit, Mississauga, Ontario L4X 2X9. Tel: (905) 238 8005

For Pakistani residents

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

Please send application form and cheque payable in Pak Rupees as "WZO" to:

Mrs Toxy Cowasjee, 2 A Mary Road, Bath Island, Karachi 75530. Tel: (021) 5867088

For New Zealand residents

Grand Patron	NZ\$1,500	Patron	NZ\$750	Life Member	NZ\$300
Ordinary	NZ\$30	Student	Gratis till 25 years of age		

Please send application form with your cheque payable in NZ Dollars as "WZO, New Zealand", to:

Mrs Farah Unwala, 35 Marriot Road, Pakuranga Heights, Auckland 1706. Tel: +64 (0)9 576 7204

“...the Lord,
beneficent through truth,
virtuous and knowing...”

yasna 48.3
Insler translation

